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EVERY GAME
RELEASED
THIS MONTH!**

POPULOUS II

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Issue 50
November 1991
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6-Page Super Reviews of:

- LOTUS 2
- MIG 29M
- FLOOR 13
- HUDSON HAWK
- GRAND PRIX
- ALIEN BREED

ALIEN 3

In this, it's really, really personal.

IN THE WORKS

Watch progress of featured bits in development.



PREVIEWED

Forecast Stars, Apollo's Journey, Engine, World of War II, Snake Commander, Wolf Quest.



Lotus 2



Hudson Hawk



Mig 29M



Floor 13



Alien Breed



Grand Prix

FREE!

Full Colour Tricks'n'Tricks Supplement



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hello

fellow humans!
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That's right man! A buncha slimy, horrible, totally
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 weapon that's gonna take over the entire planet!

PRETTY COOL, HUH?

Anyway, yours truly is the only one who can see 'em!
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 skateboard, see my trusty slingshot, and in general
 behave like a valiance, man.

Plus, with evil dudes like Nelson the bully and
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So if you're a decent person
 a patriot, and somebody
 who cares about this sorry
 planet, you'll do the right
 thing.

SAVE THE SMITH

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 Thanks man.

*CBM AMIGA
 GEARIST
 SPECTRUM
 COMMODORE
 AMSTRAD*



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AMAZING
NEW 8-PAGE
SUPER
REVIEWS

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KEEP YOUR EYE ON **SPOT**

Amiga screen shots shown.



NEWS GAMES NEWS GAMES NEWS GAMES

Rik Heynes, newshound extraordinaire goes to work on this month's top stories.

It's Nothing Personal

Following a triumphant launch of the ARMA coin-op show in Las Vegas last month, Williamsally, Midway is readying the European release of a stunning new arcade machine. Based around the hugely successful Terminator 2 movie starring Arnold Schwarzenegger as the last century cyborg killing machine, many believe this to be the best video game ever licensed from a motion picture.

Designed by the same team that brought us Star and Smash TV, Terminator 2 Judgment Day is a playable and addictive Operation Wolf-style shoot-'em-up featuring graphics not only digitized from the movie, but also specially recorded by Williams' personnel on the set of the film. No other video game company has ever had this much access to such raw movie materials. Does Arnold get involved in the project?

Next month, ACE will be running an exclusive behind-the-scenes report on the Making of Terminator 2 coin-op. Miss it? You don't...



Frank's 1988 copy of Tetris...well, after level 100 progress, it's a bit like this. (Photo courtesy of the author.)

Adventures In Cyberscape



What is filled with level after level of impenetrable mazes and labyrinths? Bullet-Proof Software, the publisher that made a name from Tetris and Pipe Dream, is bringing out another arcade puzzle game for the Genesis.

Fallout 2000, developed by the same people who wrote MIDI Maze for the Atari ST, gets its name from the mechanical mazes (also representing each player). Like the previous release from James Yen, this is a game of tag where players chase each other through a three-dimensional labyrinth in a race to evade capture. Up to four people can play - using the special Nintendo adapter - in solo, free-for-all or team competition. Bullet-Proof Software is also planning a version of Fallout 2000 for the Super NES.

Meanwhile, Soviet games expert Alexey Pajitnov is now working full-time for Bullet-Proof Software in Redwood, Santa. The talented Russian-born creator of Tetris used to invent games in his spare time at the Computer Institute of the Soviet Academy of Sciences where he explored sophisticated computer applications like speech recognition and artificial intelligence.

"When I finish coding in my early teens, I got very bored reading *Play* after day and I started looking into mathematical puzzles," recalls Pajitnov. "I got so carried away I forgot everything else - school, friends even girls."





Better Late Than Never

Elite, the cult space game that gathered countless fans after its original release, is set to be launched on the software-stuffed Acorn Archimedes, writes Matthew Truitt.

First released for the BBC micro in 1984, and since converted to almost every other machine, Elite has now been updated and revised by a two-man coding team based in Cheshire. This version of the game sports sampled sounds and solid 3D graphics running at 45 frames per second.

Other innovative new features include ships that flock and cruise in formations of up to 50. Every spaceship is endowed with motivations of their own, intelligently acting on individual politics and seeking out enemies. Items that the original included in the manual as mere-whimsy have now actually been implemented, exploiting the raw power of the machine.



Archimedes gamers have never had it so good. Elite may soon face competition from another 3D epic on its way. Karma has been under development for four years and is soon due to a Virtual Reality life model than a game.

Elite rules for the Archimedes on the great game about the rest of time!

On The Starting Line

Granin has beaten off tough competition to sign-up British Formula One hero Nigel Mansell. The bid is hardly dry on the contrary, but the successful Sheffield-based publisher of Lotus, SwiftMade II and Utopia, is confident world championship racing fans will fit the size-up.

Although a definite title on release their have yet to be announced, it is known that Granin is planning a multi-format release which will probably include the Nintendo-Gameboy and Super NES versions.

Programmer Paul Mohr, who has just completed the PC conversion of Federation of Free Traders, is already working on the Nigel Mansell game.

High resolution digital art
 systems have made how
 beautiful looks sporting
 game designers have
 available with the software and
 they get it to commercial and
 software designers.
 Manufacturers for the home
 world's best and best
 systems could require the
 nature of systems.

Hikes, Tackles And Cheers

Tom Mike Elite is one of the most famous men in American Football history. He not only distinguished himself on the field but also won the Super Bowl as coach of the Chicago Bears. Now Ballistic has launched a Magazine cartridge bearing his name, so does it deliver the goods, too?

"Mike Elite Power Football is for gamers who love American Football and want an action-packed game rich in realism, playability, graphics, options and statistics. In that order," boasts Producer Sam Nelson.

According to Ballistic, this is the only American Football game for the Magazine that gives the player total control of their team. Individual parameters can be set for each team, such as the occurrence of fumbles, injuries, floggers and more penalties. There is also a library of more than 80 different plays to choose from.

Money seems to be no object for Ballistic. Mike Elite Power Football contains eight megabits of feature-packed code, 3D-mapped graphics and sampled sounds.



Ballistic produces the Terminator Judgment Day game which is a real action packed game for the Magazine.



Hyde 21 makes the streets of Hyde 21 look as hot as the hot driving game in itself!

The Heat Is On

Class Heat is a real monster of a 16-bit role-up conversion wears these big duties of Imageworks.

"This is the most thrilling and realistic racing simulation ever to be seen on a home computer," is the Imageworks spokesperson game into full hypermode. "The race will come alive through intense shock absorber sounds, fast pace and solid body feel."

Well, so, what can we add? Oh yeah, Class Heat is coming later this year for the Amiga, PC and ST.

Progress and this driver
 makes the driving
 experience and
 simulation. The player
 experience in the
 game program makes
 of Imageworks. Acquiring
 a maximum car magazine
 system. Heat Gun is a
 form of 16-bit real-time
 speed action. It is the
 most realistic computer
 racing!



Virtual Theatre

Microsoft and accessories Revolution Software are very excited about the latest graphic adventure game system to be introduced. Is Virtual Theatre a SCUMM-beater, then?

The major attraction with Virtual Theatre games is that they're set up to advance and develop independently of the player. You can just sit back and watch life go by if you're feeling lazy.

User friendly control is another plus point. The mouse-driven interface is intuitive and quick to operate. Standard commands such as 'get bottle' can be issued within seconds. Alternatively, players can simply ask other characters to perform actions ranging from the likes of 'tell character to get bottle' to complex requests like 'tell character to go to the guard room and get bottle and then see bottle on tap and then go to the water coil and then give bottle to the prisoner'. Pretty neat, eh?

Virtual Theatre is the brainchild of Charles Cecil, Tony Wapner and David Syles at Revolution Software. Adam Tereza, Stephen Duden and Paul Docherty have produced the backdrops, sprites and animated graphic sequences for the first Virtual Theatre game. Richard Joseph has composed the music and sound effects. The company is also working with Dave Gibbons, co-writer and artist of the successful comic The Watchmen.

Microsoft claims Virtual Theatre is the future of adventure software and is planning to publish a series of games based around this new system. The first release, *Lure of the Temptress*, will be available next year for the Amiga, PC and ST.



Only screenshots from the first Virtual Theatre game, *Lure of the Temptress*, the debut game in the new software graphic adventure line from Revolution Software and Sierra Software.

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WHO'S THAT GUY?

In the first of an occasional series, ACE looks into the careers of creators responsible for truly remarkable games. We thought it would be a great idea to start with Sid Meier, co-founder of Microprose and the leader behind *SimCity*, *P-51*, *Rollercoaster Tycoon*, and *Rollercoaster Tycoon 2*.

Civilians in the latest game from award-winning game designer Sid Meier, but why did the master of simulation and strategy software actually start programming games? After graduating from the University of Michigan with a degree in Computer Science in 1976, Meier worked for Intel computer firm General

Instruments. His love affair with entertainment software was highlighted when he purchased an Atari 800 seven years ago.

The Meier to Meier's first game, *Rollercoaster Tycoon*, came after he played an aerial dogfight at a video arcade. Sid realized he could not mass produce with software created for personal computers. A string of hits and accidents followed. In 1986 for instance, *SimCity* Service was named Best Simulation in the USA, Britain, France and West Germany. Overall, Meier's games have sold over two million copies

worldwide.

"Gamers want a continuing stream of challenging and interesting decisions to confront," declares Meier. "They like options, 'what if' scenarios and countervailing

considerations.

People can go to movies for graphics and books for storylines. They look to computers for the interaction and for stories in which they themselves are the main character."

Early on computing, Sid!

Sid Meier (Microprose) Meier's success has led to a computer revolution that is continuing to reshape the video game, the world.



Dislikes And Desires

Can you imagine the sort of game Eye of the Beholder 2 will be? US Gold andSSI have taken sets of the commands from over 500 dungeon masters in order to produce the sequel to one of the best selling games of 1994. The legend series of games are the first graphically based 3DAD fantasy role-playing games to be licensed from TSR.

Apart from an expanded storyline and more character interaction, the Legend of Darkmoor features a greater variety of creatures and new locations such as forests, temples, catacombs and towers.

True to what has become something of an expected feature of games coming from the USA, Eye of the Beholder 2 uses animated "male" organisms throughout. In a more content note, the programmers have soft-coded an improved interface to opening spell-casting. However, the point-and-click command principle remains.

Lucky PC players equipped with an ISA, Tandy or VGA graphics card will be able to test drive the game next month. A soundboard is optional, but they must have 640K of RAM and a hard drive. Meanwhile, Amiga gamers will have to wait till the New Year before they can start exploring the Legend of Darkmoor. Don't forget to ask Santa for that one megabyte memory expansion or you won't be able to sample the fun and frolic!



The Big One

Source: close to Konami are suggesting this leading Japanese video game firm has just made a successful bid to publish the most eagerly-awaited video game sequel of all time... Elite II!

David Braben, co-creator of the first game, has been working on the follow-up to this epic space game for nearly three years. Braben has previously stated that Elite II will incorporate numerous graphical and gameplay improvements, including the facility to actually explore the surface of every planet.

Fueled by intense speculation, the rumour wagon has been going at full pace. For treatment, even pencil tests on Braben's beloved Elite II primarily for the PC while Konami is likely to insist on Super Famicom and CD-ROM versions, too. Braben

could again team up with Ian Bell to help produce these conversions. There is even talk of a specially adapted Elite II requiring the emulator. It is not known whether the proposed deal also includes the MSX version of the original Elite which Braben developed himself.

Konami has recently enjoyed considerable success with the video games based around Steve Nouri's *Blaster Master Ninja* series and home-grown products like *Castlevania* and *Genjin*. Publishing Elite II would mark a radical departure for the company.

Neither Konami or Braben was available for comment as ACE went to press. Watch this space.



ACE goes every week for the right magazine at a discount. Write to the Editor of ACE, P.O. Box 100, Newbury Park, CA 92564, for more information.



CARTRIDGE CAPERS

Peycoasis and Electronic Arts are about to launch the first two Megadrive games from their co-publishing agreement.

Regarded as one of the most successful Amiga games ever released, *Shadow of the Beast* is a visually attractive arcade adventure featuring multi-level parallax scrolling of the surrounding fantasy landscape.

Fatal Revival, previously known as *The Killing Game Show*, is a cross between a shoot-'em-up and platform game as the player takes the role of a convict in a futuristic TV quiz show. *Shadow of The Running Man*, perhaps?

DRUG BUSTERS

Argonaut Software, the development house behind *Angband* 2 and *Birds of Prey*, has teamed up with Microprose to develop a strategic flight simulation set in the near future.

As *Supreme Commander* in *Advanced Tactical Air Command* (ATAC), players are put in control of an elite team of zero undercover agents and a tactical force of four F-22 fighter bombers, two helicopters and a base secretly located in the jungles of Colombia. The objective is to stop the drug barons before their filthy merchandise hits the streets of all major cities. This isn't easy, though. The five major bosses have enough money to control politicians, the military, hire the most talented mercenaries and buy the best airplanes and missiles.

ATAC is part flight simulation, part strategy game. As you might expect from Argonaut Software, the simulation part of the game features a 'fly-realistic 3D world' with hills, mountains, roads, trees, cities and single plantations. The game will be released on Amiga, PC and ST in early 1992.

It's Weird!

Pearcefield and Imagoswark, creators of the critically-acclaimed *Real*, are now tweaking another surreal arcade adventure.

"*Surrealis* features stunning graphics which have an almost Dali-esque flavour," states a spokesperson for Imagoswark. "The planet *Surrealis* a variety of beautiful but very strange landscapes."

Players go on a quest to capture evil wherever they find it. Luckily, they have two faithful assistants and a rather dainty cat to help them out. Discover this enthralling experience for yourself when the game is released on the Amiga, PC and ST.

THE MARK



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The Secret of Monkey Island witnessed the demise of the evil ghost pirate LeChuck at the hands of young Guybrush, and an agitated bottle of root beer. Guybrush doesn't have long to rest on his laurels however, because blood is thicker than root beer, and LeChuck's brother is out for revenge.

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NOTE: SHADOW SORCERER requires the VGA or equivalent. EGA, CGA, and MCGA are supported. PC, Mac, and Amiga require SoundBlaster or Roland™. PC, Mac, and Amiga require a mouse. © 1992 New World Computing, Inc. All rights reserved.

Screen shots are only intended to be illustrative of the gameplay and not the screen graphics which vary considerably between different hardware in quality and appearance and are subject to the computer specifications.

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Letters

VIRUS DEATH!

On page 96 of your October issue you mention that the Amiga is subject to viruses. I'd be very much obliged if you could insert a little article about what to do when confronted with one. I am relaxed in a state of awaiting fear when I receive a message from some bastard in Germany on my monitor.

I bought what is supposed to be an anti-virus disc for ten quid but the instructions are such a lot of gobbledeegook that I can't make head nor tail of it. Unfortunately I can't remember which of my discs could be the offending article and consequently load up each day with something approaching fear in case I'm messing up all my discs. What puzzles me is that I haven't any floppy discs as I buy them from shops.

Robert Lamb
Cottingham
East Yorkshire

Prevention is better than cure, and it's not difficult to protect your disks against viruses. If possible, always boot the Write Protect tab ON (which means you can see through it), and that will prevent any programs writing themselves onto your disks. However, if you are using a game or application where you need to write onto your disk, this isn't an option. Another judgment method is to always turn your machines off at the power point for a good thirty seconds before turning it on again to use another piece of software. Many of the most dangerous strains of virus stay in the machine even after a three-day rest. Since you're already infected however, your best bet is to get hold of a good hard virus killer - chances are the commercial one you bought for 1.99 is crap. Most PD libraries stock killers, and currently the best avail-

able is Master Virus v.2, available from Amiga.com. For a couple of quid you can clean your collection. Is there you go.

THE BIGGER THE BETTER

I think your reviews of software are good although some are small. Could you give two pages per review? If you run out of stuff to write you could always fill most of the pages with screenshots. Some games may be dull but we don't see big reviews of the game and just flick past as if it wasn't there. Your ratings are good, except for that horrible chart. How about drawing a chart that looks like a thermometer where you would clearly see how hot (or) cold it is.

Wayne Hudson
Old Cotton
Norwich

TWO pages per review? How about 100? Yes, 100? By now you've probably already seen our amazing new ultra-depth reviewing system - and given the sophisticated nature of much of today's top software, there's really any danger of us running out of things to write. Our "horrible chart" as you so quaintly refer to it is in fact the most accurate and appropriate on-screen rating system going - although you'll probably be pleased to see that this month it's been revamped somewhat to make it even more dull.

WHITTA MUST DIE!

Having already bought a copy of Wing Commander

II, I was truly astonished to read your luke-warm review of it. DM Gary Whitta actually got it out of the box? Or is he dead, blind and retarded?

It is without doubt the most awesome and brilliant game I have ever played on a home computer, and makes the original Wing Commander look dull and repetitive in comparison.

Your predicted interest curve (PIC) is wholly incorrect. It doesn't reflect the comments which accompanied it. The interest level remains high until the game is completed, then it falls sharply. It does NOT start declining from the moment you start playing, as suggested by the PIC.

Some of your quibbles with the game are justified, but in spite of these, the game is still far and away better than any other game, so your ACE rating of a mere two is completely ridiculous. (The same comments could easily be applied to the excellent Thunderhawk, but that didn't stop you giving it a two review.)

It seems to me like another case of sour grapes, because even if Wing Commander or Wing Commander II ever gets released for your beloved Amiga it will only be as a pale shadow of the original because of the poor graphics and slow speed of the Amiga.

Christian S Lee
Wotton
Newcastle

The sad person of Wing Commander II is the most awesome game you have ever played, you must have led a pretty sheltered life. While there's no doubt about Wing Commander's technical excellence, the ACE review comments about the quality of the gameplay remains valid - it's little more than a series of shoot, uninteresting and

KONSOLE KOPIES?

ACE, it's come to my attention that more and more computer games are becoming more and more like their console counterparts. As I understand it, Ocean's licensed games of the Simpsons cartoon is simply a port-over from the Nintendo platform game. Now, from looking at your preview of Hudson Hawk last month, it seems as though that game is also very console in style, with lots of cut-scenes and platform and things. You only have to look at games like Rick Dangerous, Ice-Highlands, Impostor and many others to see that this is not a new trend.

It's not that I'm complaining. Far from it. Console games are often better than computer ones, so making computer games more like console games can't be half bad. What I'm wondering about is why games designers are doing this. It's certainly not to make higher quality games, as we all know that software companies don't give a shove about us kids on the street. They're just interested in their flashy clothes, new cars and tropical holidays. Perhaps it's because, in the light of the new console boom, the software want to make their games more easily convertible into the console format - be as we all know, that's where the real money is. Or maybe the software are worried about consoles killing off computers, and are making their games more console in order to make computers look more fun in face of the opposition. Or maybe it's just an effort on the part of those lazy developers to give themselves even less work by stealing tried and tested elements from existing console software. Whatever it is, I think the so-called "highrollers" of this industry ought to back their ideas up a bit, else they'll find themselves in right about. So ACE, where do you stand on this highly controversial issue?

Denise Osborne
Cody
Monsieur

Some good points, Denise, although some of your reasoning seems a little paranoid to us. Not everyone in the industry is out to con you and leave you bleeding in the gutter, you know. In the case of Hudson Hawk, the fact that developers Special FX produced out just the 16-bit version, but NES and GameBoy as well should account for the game's console look and feel. Your theory about making games more viable propositions for console sub-licensing seems the most likely - Core Design's Chuck Rock, which is soon to appear on the Megadrive is a good example. But don't worry your head about it too much - it's unlikely to shake the software industry to its very foundations.



What do you want first, the good news or the bad news? If you want the bad news first, read the first paragraph first, then the second. If you want the good news first, go straight to the second paragraph.

Right. You can't get Old for the Amiga, which we at ACE consider to be a treasury of global justice, as it is one of the new old-time classics. It was only ever produced for the Atari ST. And we have no idea where you can get a copy of Persian Gulf Inferno, as it's getting on a bit and we can't remember who published it - it didn't get much recognition when it was released. You might want to have a search through your local software designer bin and see what you can find, though.

Monsieur! More should still be readily available on the shelves as you read this. If you have any trouble finding it, you should have a search going hold of it from Ocean directly. Call 011 831 013.

AND WIDE NOT?

I've just finished reading Gavin Gainsborough's letter on wide-screen computer games (October ACE) and I think it's an excellent idea. The reason I am writing in to suggest that this proposed new format would be especially superb on those new wide-screen cinema-style TVs that I read about a while ago, I think they're already available in Japan, but where are they coming over here? With all that extra space, programmers could make games that would be truly panoramic, not just a "letterbox" screen-display. No doubt penny programmers like the Fitzap Brothers would go ape over this idea, as that's the sort of gimmick they're into. So what about it then, eh?

Harold Southern
St Ives
Cornwall

very limited space combat sequences strung together by a lot of attractive but inconsequential still-frames and animations. Perhaps you'd like to write to us again in three months, when you're sick to death of seeing the same pictures over and over again, and tell us if you still enjoy it. An Ace rating is hardly "new" - it's a respectable mark. And remember, ACE is a multi-format mag. We don't favour any one machine, and while we have high hopes for the future of the PC as a games machine, we don't think it's going to happen if companies keep developing out shallow software like Wing Commander. Our review reflected that opinion. If anything it seems to be you that has the problem, as your comments about the Amiga indicate. Slow? Poor graphics? And you call US biased?

GORE BLIMEY!

I read with very great interest your feature on gory games last month. I have only had my Amiga for about a year, and so am unfamiliar with many of the games you covered, but I would like to get my hands on a few of them as they sound very good indeed. Can you tell me where I can get copies of Persian Gulf Inferno, Old and New? I would be very appreciative if you could give me some leads.

Oliiver Inoside
Chigwell
 Essex

We have to agree, Harold, that the prospect of "real" wide-screen-computer games is a pretty nice notion, but it's not much more of a pipe dream if you look at it from a practical point of view. For a start it's going to be a very long while before wide-screen TVs are commercially available in this country - in order to take off, the TV companies would have to completely revolutionise the way they film and broadcast their programmes. And can you see that happening? A more realistic prospect (although still not a very likely one) is the idea of wide-screen computer monitors, but even then existing computers would not be able to work with it, as their screen-display hardware is designed only for a standard square image.

It's not possible just to look on extra width, so for it to work you're looking for a completely new kind of computer as well as a wide-screen monitor to be invented. It's a business we know, but it's just not going to happen. Sorry.

TOO MANY COOKS?

Dear ACE, whatever happened to that bold idea who used to be editor? I used to really like him.

Alex Stanning
Covevory

Dear Cook (I'll ACE a few months ago, and within a couple of weeks you should see the latest *Peak* of the unaccountable *Peak*, PC Review is the monthly re-orientation of ACE's sister mag PC Editors, and is packed in the bins with IBM games stuff. And it's a lot better than PC Forum. Look out for it.

LOOKING GOOD?

Dear ACE, I felt I had to write to you and voice my opinion on the state of many computer games magazines today. It's not that they're badly written - most of them are excellent. It's just that they look so horrible. While many of the magazines are just plain awful to look at, others are attractive on the surface but it's still very difficult to find the information you're looking for at a glance. I won't name any names as the designers of these magazines might be offended, but suffice it to say that just about every major mag on the market looks like a Jackson Pollock painting when put next to the artists or easily-accessible style of ACE. I hope that you don't make things ever-complicated with your forthcoming reorg.

Other magazines print text which is almost exactly the same colour as the background it appears on, making it very difficult to read. Others print their reviews over ridiculously-enlarged screenshots or stupid graphic designs, and the result just hurts the eyes. Others hide their ratings and comments all over the place, so you're never really sure what you're looking at. It's easy to get lost. Sometimes a review is so badly laid-out that it's like wading through a swamp, trying to find the information you need. So I say a double bonus for ACE for making things good-looking yet easy to read, and you other magazines - pull your socks up! I did Art in school so I know what I'm talking about.

Charles Owa
Southampton

Are awards. Our Art Editor Jim White is finishing over now. Thanks for the praise Charlie, and an agree wholeheartedly with your comments - it doesn't matter how brilliant and creative a review is, if it's badly designed the average reader is likely to have trouble getting the information he needs out of it quickly and efficiently. And in the fast-moving world of software today, many gamers don't have time to sit and pore over reviews - they're too busy getting a new high score or talking to their mates about the latest game going. Maybe you like the ratings - we think the best just get better?

BLAZING A TRAIL TO NOWHERE?

Dear ACE, a very interesting fact has recently brought itself to my attention. According to the description on your Screen Test page, Trailblazers are only awarded to games of "outstanding quality", but from what I've seen recently, you've been checking them about like bars of chocolate!

As I understand it, the ACE Trailblazers is supposed to be far more discerning and difficult to earn than other magazine accolades. But this certainly doesn't seem to be the case when you consider all the games that have earned them in the last few months. Chuck Trapp's *Am Gamble*, Harris Chrysler's *E. E.A. Hockey*, Jeremy White's *Whispered Secrecy*, Sings Is Maria, Thunderhawk, Sings the Hedgerow... the list goes on and on! Hardly appropriate practice for a magazine that goes around saying it's harder to please than all the rest!

Are you just trying to butter up the software companies so that you can get invited to lots of free parties and trips abroad, are you just very naive, and give awards away in any game that comes along with pretty graphics and a big manual? How do you expect an software buyers to make a purchasing decision when you give a Trailblazer to almost every game you review? It's very confusing, just what is going on?

Malcolm Hardcastle
Ludlow
Shropshire

Now steady on! It's true, a lot of games have earned ACE's highest accolade over the last few months, but it's not because we have lots of them lying around in a box taking up space, and it's certainly not some half-arsed plan to denigrate the software publishers. We're just as stingy with our Trailblazers as we've always been, and the fact that many recent games have been awarded them just reflects how healthy the software scene is at the moment. You should be pleased with so many titles

filling on the market to choose from! And though the purpose of our reviews is to help you, we can't hold your hand all the way and TELL you what to buy. We can only tell you what's good and what's bad, and leave you to make up your own mind using that information as a guide. There will always be people who are never happy if we give away lots. Trailblazers you'll probably complain that we're too generous!

PADDING?!

Dear ACE, I have been an avid reader of your publication ever since the first issue, and the Letters page has always been one of my favourite sections. But now a rather disconcerting fact has come to my attention. It seems that the last letters you print is always by some boring old fart who waffles on for almost a whole column of text without actually saying anything of value or interest. Just what is this all about? I find it very difficult to believe that there really are people so boring that they've got nothing better to do with their lives than right meaningless letters. If I didn't know better, I would think that you didn't get enough letters each month, and so you make up the last one just to fill up the space! If you're going to do this, at least make up a letter with some interesting points in it!

Coming back to my original point, I'd just like to re-emphasise how annoying it is to read letters where the author waffles on for ages about nothing in particular - especially when you think that he's got a point to make, and then get to the end to find out that he hasn't after all! That really sticks in my craw!

Raymond Goulson
Dender
Scotland

Goodness gracious on! While we'll try our best not to be offended at the accusations you've made, we can assure you that ALL of our letters are absolutely genuine. And if we did make our letters up, we'd make them a damn sight more interesting than your pitiful little missive.

WRITE TO US

Come on! We know you've got opinions! Let's hear them! Write to ACE Letters, Priority Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. And remember - there's a software prize for the star letter each month!



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filmmaker in the movie itself, but we've managed to get permission from both Century Fox to use all the hardware, etc. from the first two films. We've got flamethrowers, grenades and pulse rifles in there. It's going to be pretty action packed."

The basic premise of the game is simple. Pandora's swirling levels of the planet will form the backdrops to a constant stream of high-action gameplay. Each of the main eight stages of the movie is represented by graphical changes in the game. Ripley must move through the colony, rescuing prisoners who have been captured by Aliens and destroying the mechs he's wandering around. At the end of each stage a Mother Alien must be defeated before Ripley can move on to the next. Failure to defeat the Alien will leave the prisoners vulnerable to attack.

Apparently Fox were most helpful to Microsoft even while the movie was in production. Goodrich again: "We were given access to the movie sets and had a good look at all the aliens too. We took the graphic artists down there and spent a lot of time just getting the details right. There's no doubt that the game will have the right feel."

A further bonus which players must deal with is the presence of the face buggers. These little vermin



the movie needs to be seen from the front as well as the sides in the game. The other character views in white and grey, but they are all built on along with the standard controls.



months about the content of the new Alien movie have been flying around for months now. Talk of monstrous space crits and Ripley commanding Aliens with hand axes has caused much consternation among the marketing public. Moore has been really busy just what on earth the new film is going to be about. Until now.

Alien 3 opens with Ripley crash landing on a remote hostile planet in an escape capsule. Quite why that's crashed, no-one knows. There the discoverer a small colony of prisoners, overseen by its even smaller group of guards, who are expiating their debt to society by mining local ore.

The colony is a far from glamorous place. As run by The Company, it is now all but run down. Hit by disease and utterly disgusting, the prisoners have all had to have their heads shaved in order to stem the virulent head-lice epidemic which plagues them. It's this 'lock' which spawned all the space-mech mutants.

So Ripley prepares himself for a brief spell on the grim planet until a ship can get her back to civilization. But no more... her Ripley had to open his



Wesley Snipes plays Ripley in the one where the creature is being shot at. However, Snipes is under the heat of the film to come through in the game. In fact, the alien which does Ripley's bidding is of a whole different character. See the new concept design in game.



shirts-off than she gets her big surprise. Somehow an Alien has made it down onto the planet with her, and is buying itself by killing the prisoners and escaping them. If it's successful, all the good work done by destroying the US 206 at the end of the second movie will be for nothing.

Since the colony is run largely by prisoners, Ripley's attempts to combat the monstrosity are hampered by the 'safety protocol' of having no firearms in the colony. Somehow Ripley must rally both prisoners and guards alike and destroy the Alien threat before it kills them.

It all sounds most exotic. "But how," you may very well ask yourselves, "could you make a game out of it?" Good question...

Criterion-based Probe Software were the lucky development team that received the call from Miramax allowing them to license. The contract called for a version of the movie tie-in to be produced for all major formats. So, with tight deadlines looming, Probe decided to develop the game primarily on the Megadrive, and convert all subsequent versions from that.

While the code is still in the early stages of development, the game's storyboard has been finalized and it's clear that players concerned about the lack of gun-toting action in the film need not fear. Tony Beckwith from Miramax: "Yes, there aren't any firearms in the movie itself, but we've managed to get permission from 20th Century Fox to use all the hardware, etc. from the first two films. We've got flamethrowers, grenades and pulse rifles in there. It's going to be pretty action packed!"

The Game

AND SOME OTHER THINGS!

Miramax keep people that they are, have another two sleep-encumber titles up their sleeves for Christmas.

Face Heat is a very cool car racing game for two players. Take the role of a San Francisco cop in his day off and deal with fellow officers for the title of best driver in the city. Plenty of battles and split lanes, we'll say.

The Turles side-up has way surpassed everyone's expectations, both in color grabbing performance and quality. Shortly, players will be able to enjoy the thrills of controlling the green gremlin in a home version of the game.



Miramax Miramax is looking over the game's shoulder. All the while it's been looking over the game's shoulder. All the while it's been looking over the game's shoulder.





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UTOPIA

THE CREATION OF A NATION



Can you create Utopia? Now's your chance to find out. Leading a colonising party to a barren planet you aim to create the perfect society, where everyone has a quality of life rating of 100%. Do you spend your money on weapons or social research? Build hospitals or tank factories? The myriad of decisions to be made are yours, and the fact that there are over ten different alien races all bursting for the opportunity to wipe out the colony should speed up the decision making process. An icon driven game with the main playing area presented in isometric 3-D, Utopia breaks new ground in computer entertainment.



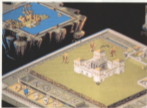
Available on: PC (1992),
AMIGA & ATARI ST/STE.

Gremlin Graphics Software Ltd.,
Carver House, 3-4 Carver Street,
Sheffield S1 4FS.



live

JUDGEMENT DAY!



Details: Wednesday, 16th September, 1998.
Location: Bullfrog Productions HQ, Guildford, Surrey.
Mission: Populous II.

It's eleven a.m., and Peter Molyneux is a worried man. Today is the first time that his latest creation and Bullfrog's most eagerly-awaited game in date will be seen by members of the general public. And not just any old members of the general public. The five people who will soon be invited to look at *Populous II* are the hardest, most demanding and most intelligent breed of gamers: ACE readers. They've been hand-picked from hundreds of requests to take part in ACE's first In The Works live event, and they're not taking any crap.

If truth be told, Molyneux's got little to worry about. The long-awaited sequel to the 1985 classic that put Bullfrog on the map is already shaping up to be the 'God'-game to beat them all. But no product is perfect, and that's where the five ACEs come to: after they've learned how the game was created,

they'll get to play the game into the ground (or at least as much as possible in a single day) and report their findings back to Molyneux - what they like, what they don't like, what features they think should go into the game, which ones should go or be altered.

It's a process that Peter and his cronies are particularly used and receptive to, having organised regular weekend playtesting sessions for all their previous games. Bullfrog has always stood by its conviction that no matter how far a game is in its development it will be shelved or even scrapped if it's not well received by the playtesters.

Such ideology has led to several products falling by the development wayside in the past - and while it's fair to say that a product as prestigious as *Populous II* is unlikely to be killed on a playtester's say-so at this late stage, Molyneux is more than willing to listen to suggestions and make changes. With many of the game's features and effects still to be finalised before its release at the end of the year, there's plenty of scope for enhancement. As an added incentive to come up with good suggestions, Bullfrog has

For the first time ever, on a wet and windy day in September, Bullfrog threw open its doors and revealed the secrets behind the creation of *Populous II* to a hand-picked quintet of lucky ACE readers. And very impressed they were too...



Peter will give the upper hand against ACE's finest talents in this new three-game, ten-episode series. He'll be revealing the secrets behind his games. He'll be revealing...

promised that anyone whose idea is implemented in the final game will receive a design credit. With that in mind, the quintet of ACEs buckle-down and get to work...

THE GAME

The idea behind *Populous II*, according to its creator Peter Molyneux, has always been to improve upon the first game, while retaining the same game-play formula that made the original a classic. To this



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In the Works



Welcome to the place where things get done. Welcome to the pages where you can see games crafted and formed and moulded into living things. Welcome, you lucky fellows, to the In The Works pages. Distinct from an In The



Questions: Helmdall
From the people who
brought you Lord of the Rings
and The Lord of the Rings
graphics?

Answers: Paragon
Ruler: "Yes, 'Helmdall'"
has a hard job. This
month he's been all the
way to America to visit
Paragon.

Questions: Helmdall
How's the strategic
mechanics development
coming along for Sappho?

Works live, an In The Works shows the games which are so secret that if the software companies had their way, wouldn't be on show at all. Well, okay, actually we got a lot of help from the publishers and the programmers of the games and they run around like crazy answering our stupid questions and putting together all manner of maps and sprites mock-ups when they could be doing other things, but we wouldn't sound half as big, hard, clever or grown up if we were to admit that, would we? This month, we visit America to report on the goings on in the land of Paragon Software and get some of their views on games development.



Core Design also display their wares in the form of Helmdall, a graphic marvel that can best be described as Dragon's Lair with playability. And finally, Teque, the team behind Domark's forthcoming Pitfighter cordially invite your good selves to inspect their scaling and slicing routines. An offer no-one could refuse.

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Paragon

Pitfighter



There's a mood at Core when talking to other software companies - confidence. Although a young company, Core's games (Cooperation, Check Book, Thankfulknight) offer as much variety of the releases from their larger, more venerable competitors.

And as portrayed by affable Core supreme Jeremy Smith, this mood of confidence certainly isn't a quiet one. He's enthusiastic about his products (generally a slight oaf), and he lets you know it. I first saw Heimdall way back in the Spring, and even then there were clear indications that it could be the game to really catapult Core to stardom.

Heimdall can't get a good navigator to join his crew (his journey from island to island can increase by half). And Ragnarok is approaching fast.

THE FIRST TRIAL

Heimdall's elders, being the bushy-bearded and quaffing Vikings that they are, have decided to take the decidedly underage boy down to the local tavern. A few floating jans later and the lad's well-matched - not the best time to let him have a go at the old Norse game of 'Lullu choppy'.

The principle is simple-if heurle! The player has to free a little girl from the stocks by throwing axes

HEIMDALL

Could CORE's Vikings goin' hikin' romp be the arcade adventure to top them all? ACE ponders that question and takes a look.



Below: a couple of examples of the quality graphics of games in Heimdall. The player's group of three companions is represented as icons by default (characters' design changes only when they are used). Thanks to the fact that the icons are by definition always visible, you

On right: The group continues via floating air-guns. Additionally, an eye peek at the stats got visible whenever an action - especially the hero's - three-stage attack sequence was repeated within a single turn.

Heimdall isn't easy to categorize. Depending on how you look at it, it's 'Dragon's Lair but with plays-killy', or 'an animated arcade adventure', or simply 'an RPG'. In reality, it's a blend of all three.

The plot centers around the Norse legend of Ragnarok, the Apocalyptic battle between the Gods of Good and Evil that will decide the fate of the Universe. However, Good's previously excellent chances of winning have been severely reduced by the theft of three magic items from Valhalla, nam-

ely Thor's Hammer, Odin's Scepter and Freya's Mirror. The villain responsible is the twisted Loki, evil brother of Thor, who has hidden the items in various locations on the islands that make up the Norse world.

The ethereal Gods cannot appear in the physical world, so to meet with Heimdall, guardian of the rainbow bridge that joins Valhalla with the world, is made in the form of an all-too-mortal lady. Heimdall's aim is clear - he must grow to manhood, gather a crew of sailors and set out on a quest to find the stolen artifacts.

THE THREE TRIALS OF HEIMDALL

As Heimdall grows from a young boy to a man, he must attempt three arcade-style tests. These are not just 'for light relief' - Heimdall's success in each test increases the number of possible candidates for his longlost crew. This can be pretty disastrous - if





two different RPG-style abilities, and knowing when and where to use them is one of the keys to success. It's a case of Marston for courses.

Each of the islands depicted in beautiful isometric graphics (White Castle's system, where each location is a room-sized island), Helmsdale uses a point-and-click system, as the player approaches the edge of the screen it results in allow access to new areas.

As the player explores, he'll discover numerous puzzles to solve, traps to avoid and mini-quizzes to embark on. Switches and fire bars have to be pressed in the right sequence to form a bridge across a chasm, for example. On a strange clocked figure in a dress, you may require certain items be brought to him before he'll aid you.

Some creatures are not so friendly, which is where combat comes into play. The view switches to a screen displaying the party's energy levels and those of the opponent. A large window contains an animated picture of the creature, and below are icons to attack, change weapons, defend, flee or even pray for divine help. Under where place to retreat, with the characters all getting a chance to have a go at whoever it is that's being too hostile.

SO WHAT?

On paper Helmsdale doesn't sound like it offers anything truly new (and, to be honest, in a lot of ways it doesn't).

But what sets Helmsdale apart from the other also-ran "revolutionary" RPGs is its truly amazing presentation. Helmsdale's graphics were drawn by Jeff O'Connell, a talented artist who previously worked at an animation for Twentieth-Century studios (of *An American Tail*, *The Last Boyer Time*, *All Dogs Go To Heaven* fame). His movie-based training shows and pays dividends here: for once, the oft-cited phrase "cartoon-like animation" holds true.

However, unlike *Resound's* visual extravagance, Helmsdale's graphic brilliance appears to be backed up by a fair amount of absorbing and quality gameplay. Having such a well-illustrated main figure makes far more than just pretty pictures. It helps the player empathize with the character and drives him into the action.

Helmsdale has potential for true greatness. A new ACE benchmark, even! Well, that's to be seen. With the game slated for a late November release (just in time for Christmas), the ACE Review shouldn't be too far away.

G ET YOUR UGLY FIZZOG IN HEIMSDALE!

As we're sure you will agree, Helmsdale now looks like a right steamer of a game and no mistake. And how would you - yes, YOU! - like the chance to actually appear in a quality software publication? Very much? Not much indeed? We somehow thought so.

Well now we're pleased, in association with Core Design, to present the ACE and Core Design Get Your Face Into Helmsdale Competition.

Since the game is still in development, ACE readers quite enough to answer the questions below and send their entries in will be judged in our contest. The winner will then have his or her picture (a required part of the entry file and notes digitized and transformed by one of the team's artists into one of Helmsdale's cruel Jant Images. If you will, the honour and privilege of fighting side by side with Helmsdale has got, eh?

Consider next, if you possibly could, the thought of owning your very own Helmsdale box, a lovingly created and thoroughly beautiful piece of craftsmanship, laser-cut of the very steel (or some other metal) found only in that sports trophy maker's shop round the back of Core's office.

There are the prizes on offer, and you could have them all! To answer the questions and send your entries, complete with a photo of yourself to ACE Magazine, Helmsdale Competition, Ptery Court, 24-26 Partridge Lane, London SE18 3AA.

The Big Questions

Helmsdale isn't the only Core game to star an ace-wielding hero. Name the hero and the game.

Notes:

All entries must reach the ACE office by the 30th November. The Editor's decision is final. No correspondence will be entered into. We can't return any of your pictures although we do promise to have a laugh at them.

MOONSTONE

A HARD DAYS KNIGHT



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MINDSCAPE



How does a company go from custom accountancy programs to state-of-the-art RPGs? ACE went Stateside to find out...

THE PARAGON

Most of "Pittsburgh", and most Americans will think of "steel". The Pennsylvania city was a major part of America's industrial heartland, famed for its foundations and steel-works. But those days of glory are just a fading memory now - the remains of the steel have brought about the rapid decline of America's steel industry. But it's not all gloom and doom. Springing up in their place are small companies specializing in state-of-the-art high-technology.

Which (previous link) in the business of Paragon Software, creators of MegaTraveler. Let's face it, you don't get much more high-tech than laser cannons, portable plasma guns and jump-a-storships. The team are based in Greensburg, which lies a short distance south of Pittsburgh. It's almost David Lynch-like in its epitome of small-town America - all that's missing are a woman carrying a log and a dwarf speaking backwards.

THEIR HISTORY

Paragon Software started life in October 1984 as Customized Software Systems. The company was formed by Mark Bennett to provide custom accounting software for local businesses. In May 1986 F.L. Lemmon joined and together they decided to turn the company away from business software and towards games. "It wasn't really any heavy business decision," comments Mark. "He just thought 'Hey, that sounds like fun'".

In July 1987 Paragon Software launched its first game, Master Ninja: Shadow Warrior of Death on the IBM PC, an unashamed clone of the Karate Champ cat-op, of which both Mark and F.L. were great fans. A string of titles followed.

In April 1989 Dr Doom's Beverage appeared, the first fruit of a licensing deal with Marvel Comics. Other Marvel titles included X-Men: Mutants in Manhattan; The Punisher (in relation to The Edge's UK interpretation) and The Amazing Spiderman.

In May 1990 Paragon released MegaTraveler v. The Zhadan Company, the result of a new licensing deal with Game Designers' Workshop (GDW), one of the oldest and most respected tabletop RPG companies in the US. Marc Miller, GDW's boss and designer of the original Traveller, provided a lot of help to Paragon. "He's got some good ideas on game design," says Mark. "He really knows his stuff. When we were developing MegaTraveler we got a lot of feedback from him but it was always positive."



Above: The Paragon people. That's Mark Bennett in the centre wearing the black T-shirt, with F.L. Lemmon standing third from right.

Right top: Space 1889. Above it: The party prepare to fight. It's a shame really that there's no time around to them...

Right MegaTraveler v. 2000: a thundering storm, the player's ship blasts into hyperspace. Hold on to your pointers.

SPACE 1889

Space 1889 appeared almost a year ago in the US. The game is set in a Victorian Era world where space travel is possible thanks to Thomas Edison's invention of steam-driven spaceships, which play their trade between Earth and the colonies on Mars



and Venus.

The player is cast in the role of an adventurer leading a party of five similarly-talented crew through thick and thin to a bizarre encounter beyond the Asteroid Field. Based on the Game Designers' Workshop's RPG of the same name, it bears many

VIEW



When looking down on the city the player can zoom in or out to three magnification scales.

stimulates its setting, game-design and user interface to Origin's intention. Even, but in the less fully-fledged, there's too much to count about with doing things like dressing your characters. "I know that some people like that sort of intricacy," says F.J., "but I don't think it's that many."

MEGATRAVELLER: QUEST FOR THE ANCIENTS

Megatraveller appeared a couple of months ago in the States, and it's interesting to observe the enhancements made on Space 185g's engine. The most obvious is the introduction of gorgeous, slick-looking MCGA graphics, but there are other more subtle improvements.

Megatraveller makes the first appearance of the Pringle's unique "PAL" system. This overcomes the annoying feature of many RPGs where you have to keep changing leader to use a certain person's abilities. Instead, characters volunteer themselves for the job in hand if they have the best ability. The player can then decide whether or not to accept.

In other sites the game is a huge progression for Pringle. The players can visit 17 planets, and there

MILESTONES IN COMPUTER GAMING

Pringle is then believed to what they call "enhancers" in their RPGs. "Milestones are what stands about the way," explains F.J. "they're heavily graphical and made it, and they're supposed to encourage the player and keep him going. The idea is that when you've accomplished a good three milestones appear and make you feel good and ready to walk the next stage of the game."

are up to 4 cities on each. In Megatraveller, each world is described from the Unique World Profile (UWP), which details such things as the percentage of the planet covered by water, the atmosphere type and so on. Rather than store each planet's map individually (which would take up far too much memory), they're generated at random from a routine which uses the UWP as a 'seed'.

Unlike Space 185g, the main plot is a linear: "While Space 185g is pretty linear, Megatraveller is a more open-ended, with around thirty ways of completing the game." There are many mini-plots to get involved in, some of which are very bizarre. "One has you visiting this world where everyone is crazy," explains Mark. "It's their custom. You've got to be real careful not to get killed." F.J. adds, "When you've got this big a game, it can't all be serious and intense. You've got to lighten up occasionally."

TWILIGHT 2000

Twilight 2000 is the third of GDM's RPG systems to be converted to the latest computer by Pringle. It's set, as the title has it, "the day after tomorrow" in a world devastated by a vicious nuclear war. The game centres around Poland, where two newly-formed powers vie for domination in this devastated landscape. One is controlled by the evil Baron Czerny, the other, unsurprisingly, is controlled by you.

The game is effectively split into three stages. In the first stage, which is the most 'standard' RPG-like, the player sets up a coordinate, deploying teams of four post-apocalyptic survivors from a pool of twenty to do various missions and thus acquire various pieces of equipment and vehicles.

All the action is viewed from an attractive Caladrius three-quarter angle. Unless team-to-team combat breaks out, the team is represented on-screen by one character - the 'leader'. This agent can be freely guided around the screen, with the game window scrolling to keep up with his movement. Should the agent go behind a building the walls disappear so that he can still be followed.

To speed movement, the player can cut to an overview map and send the team to various locations by simply clicking on where they have to go. Using an enhancement of a technique first seen in MegaTraveller, all the buildings have been colour-



coded so that the player can tell at a glance which buildings are which. Explains Mark, "We thought about this after play-testing the game for a while and found it a little hard to get ahead."

Twilight 2000 employs an advanced version of the PAL system. As in



Twilight 2000 is a fascinating and highly original mixture of RPG and 2D strategy elements.



Megatraveller, members of the team will offer their services if they're the best for the task in hand, but they'll also also make intelligent decisions on their own if needs be. For example, if they're feeling hungry then they'll scavenge for food - they won't starve if you don't. In addition, morale is taken into account: "If people are getting killed then members of the organisation may start to leave."

Occasionally the player may discover or be revealed with a land vehicle. Given the current state of the world, these are highly valuable, and range from jeeps to tanks. A player can guide his team into a vehicle, in which case the screen switches to a 3D polygon-generated view. One of the tricky elements of the project has been passing the data for the positions of the houses, trees and so on between the 'Caladrius-view' parts of the program and the 3D-poly-go parts.

After fifteen game weeks the second stage commences which has a more strategy-orientated tone. The player has to try and occupy towns and city and really start 'empire building'. At the same time, Baron Czerny is doing the same. Eventually a war between the player and Baron Czerny breaks, starting twenty-six game weeks after the start of play.

This third and final stage is depicted almost totally in 3D polygons. The player can send units into battle and direct them personally. Alternatively he



This shot is from an early demo of Mantle created for last summer's CES in Chicago. The picture started life as a slightly shot of Paragon's demo room. It was then touched up by a graphic artist and turned into a futuristic control room. This combination of digitization and painting will be seen a lot in Mantle.



This was intended to be the base commander briefing the Mantle pilots. In real life he's a total pain in the ass. "The symbol on his cap is the sick badge." But this idea of close-up portraits from space-based video digitized speech has some unappreciated digital tricks. "Timing needs to be perfect to a level of a millisecond. Facial movement is so subtle that it eats up huge amounts of memory. To do it properly you'll need at least 10MB of on-board memory, unless you're only synthesizing speech with simple talking of the dummies."

can switch to 'direct' mode and sit back and watch the action as his troops direct themselves, fighting to the best of their abilities. The computer intelligently chooses the most interesting camera views and switches between them as the action progresses. It's all part of Paragon's philosophy of allowing the player to modify the game mechanics so that he can make it as complex or as simple as he requires.

Twilight 2000 is very near to completion, and should be ready for review next month.

MANTIS

Mantis has only been in development for three months, but it's already shaping up to be Paragon's best game yet. It's a huge 3D space adventure which puts the player in the role of one of Earth's best spacejacks battling the Sirians. Individually the catch-up-like alien has little intelligence, but together

CURRENT RELEASES This month Space 1889 and MegaTraveler 2 are released on the Empire Strategy label. For the reviews turn to the Reviews Directory starting on page 98.

or they link up telepathically to form a super-intelligent bio-mind.

If the basic plot sounds a little familiar, it's not surprising. Not only was the premise used in Orson Scott Card's novel *Ender's Game*, but it was also the background to Glynis Wilton's game *Warhead*, released a couple of years ago on the Activision label. Mark explains the strong similarities: "Legal issues [he acts as agent for both Glynis Wilton and Paragon] were so a copy of *Warhead*. And although the game was good for its time, it's now contained in a lot of ways. But we liked the plot and the idea of these 'mash-like' alien that are stupid independently but together form a mind, and we wanted to take the idea and work that. So we licensed Glynis's idea via [agent]."

The only part of the game working so far is the introduction, which is very Wing Commander-like in its combining of animated graphics, music and speech. "We decided early on that we wanted a game that was really big in terms of sound and graphics," says Mark.

This 4-minute long intro alone uses up 1.1MB of memory, with the final game anticipated to be 10MB big. But Mark is adamant that users will only need 4MB of on-board memory to run the whole game, speech and all. "This is directly opposite to Origin, who say you have to X amount of memory to run their games. Also you'll be able to deep installation of certain parts of the game depending on how much hard drive space you have available. For instance you could opt to leave out the digitized speech."

Of the game itself, Mark states: "It's a mixture of 3D polygons and bitmapped images, basically because of affordability. Wing Commander's 3D bitmaps are very nice but we didn't like the way that at certain angles you got 'wobbling'. Also we didn't want to go into direct competition with Origin's game."

Mantis is due for release in the States towards the end of the year, and should appear in Britain soon after on the Empire label. Keep watching the skies for the full ACE review.

FILM FACT

Pittsburgh is probably best known to British readers as the hometown of the fabulous Alex in the short topped, foot stomping, brain numbing movie *Flashdance*. As played by the luminarily beautiful Jennifer Beals, Alex is a welder by day and an 'exotic' dancer by night with dreams of going legit and joining a ballet school. Suffice to say she dies, as well as getting the man of her dreams into the bargain. *Waaaaa, oh? What a feeling.*



THE FUTURE...

Paragon are no real to the MegaTraveler series for some time. "There's so much background material and information we haven't touched," says F.J. MegaTraveler 3: The Underworld Worlds is already on the drawing board. "MegaTraveler 4 will enhance and expand on the MegaTraveler 3 engine," explains F.J. Future-planned new worlds to explore are planned, and there will be three main plots to get involved in. The space-combat will be radically expanded so that the player has a greater degree of control over the action, and there will be more Wing Commander-style interludes.

Glynis Twilight 2000's successful mix of RPG and 3D action, what are the chances of a similar approach to a MegaTraveler game? "It's likely that MegaTraveler 4 will include a 3D element," says F.J. "I think you'll definitely be seeing a lot more 3D in our RPGs in the future."



The sophisticated TV commander is one of the victims of the parallel alien. "Originally we were going to have the intro look as if the player were in a glass room looking into all this background stuff, but then we decided on this more video-like style," says Mark. "It has black holes. You watch it, see this boy appear and say 'What the hell is that?' It keeps about you into the plot."



A fully-grown Sirian, which does an uncanny resemblance to a *Parasitica* rockhead.

Look out - he's back!

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WHAT A DIFFERENCE EIGHT MONTHS MAKE!

This is a shot from an early demo that Pete knocked together from scratch in just under a month. But even then it exhibited many of the core-ops scaling and panning features. "It was done the quick and dirty way," says Pete. "I was using the quick and dirty way."

More of the sprites are compressed, for example. It was a simple demo, with no combat moves in it. Essentially, it was just a test to see how fast things would go.



achieve it but in the end it worked out well." Dean Loren, Topper's hand, adds: "The scaling wasn't in the Denmark beta. Nobody thought it could be done. When they saw it they loved it, they were very pleased. Having that sense of depth is essential, the game looks way far without it. It sets *Final Fighter* apart from other beat-'em-ups."

The sprites are all stored as 64 x 64 pixel 256-color

SPRITS FANTASTIC Some of the animation frames for Ty, Angel and the dreaded Ultimate Warrior.

Probably one of the most daunting aspects of the *Final Fighter* coin-op is its sheer memory-heavy size. Comments Pete: "The original coin-op graphics took up around 4.5MB of memory, which somehow I had to squeeze into a half-way being."

"*Final Fighter* has a greater variety of combat moves than any other beat-'em-up. Each character has around 150 frames of animation and between 40-50 combat moves," says Dean. "The moves are 'linked' together. If you do a link move when your opponent's standing then you may do a roundhouse kick, but if you do the same when your opponent is on the floor then you might try and throw on his head. It's likely that the driver will have to play for several hours before he sees certain moves."

"There are no frames of animation or combat moves missing," stresses Dean. "Making sure that everything was in there was our most important objective. Even the scaling was secondary to that. The moves are what makes *Final Fighter*. In fact, we're actually got more frames of animation in our game than the arcade machines."

"Hang on! How did you manage that?" Let me explain," says Pete. "Are you ready for the lady bit?" Oh yes. "Okay. There are some moves stored in the coin-op's ROM but never displayed. Basically, each character has a punch range and a link range. The coin-op checks to see if a player is within punch range and if he is then he's punched. If not, the coin-op goes on to do the same for the character's link range. But because some character's punch ranges are greater than their link ranges, you never get to see the link moves."

Dean adds, "If you watch the coin-op you'll see that Mad Miles never kicks, though we've altered that so he does in both."



sprites. As they move about the screen, Pete's 3D modeller keeps a track of how far 'back' the sprite is. They are then distorted vertically so that they appear at an appropriate height for their distance 'into' the background. The width of the sprites never change, but because the sprites are much taller than they are wide the changes in width are negligible anyway, so there's no noticeable distortion. A sim-

ilar technique is used to scale the crowd sprites and the backgrounds.

Naturally, given the power of the coin-op, there have had to be some compromises. The three-player option had to go, mainly because having six enemies' sprites walking about screens would slow things down too much and also because it's impossible to squeeze more animation frames into memory. In



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"NOT WANTED: ONE GRAPHIC ARTIST"

Ultimately, the *Final Fighter* conversion has no credited graphic artist, basically because one wasn't needed. "We managed to get graphics from three sources: Alan Topper (who was working on the MegaDrive version) and directly from the coin-op," explains Dean. "Unfortunately they were all formatted in different ways. Some had been rendered, some had been recoloured. We just used any parts from all three that we could. Richard Brown, Denmark's project manager, did do a little work processing and recoloring work on them on them."

TIP OFF

The sheer pace of the game, end to end action and tactical game play is the core of TIP OFF, a basketball simulation -

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- 1 to 4 players option. Option to play against the computer or another player - team up with another player against the computer or another player or two players.
- Facility to practise skills and tactics.
- Facility to create a team of all skill levels and design tactics.
- Instinctive joystick controls to dribble, pass, shoot or do a dummy. There are two running speeds, two types of dribbling and passing and five types of shots at the basket (Jump shot, Hook shot, Skyhook, Running Jump shot and Slam Dunk).
- Each player on the court is an individual with a unique mixture of attributes (Age, Height, Hair, Pace, Stamina and Composite) and skills (Passing, Dribbling, Stealing, Shooting and Jumping).
- Two types of leagues. Action Replay at 3 speeds.
- Extra moves are available using two independent button joysticks using the EXORCENCE System.

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APOCALYPSE Image Works

The latest fruit from the loins of veteran coder Jason Perkins (Thing on a Spring, Heavy on the Run, Time Machine) is a go'n war-torn of Dan Golin's 64 classic, *Chopper*. Set on a remote Indian island in the middle of a raging civil war, *Apocalypse* casts you as a rebel helicopter pilot whose job it is to assist refugees to safety amid the jungle carnage. There's a strong emphasis on graphic violence, with "realistic" combat, gore all over the shop and a few nice touches, including a very bloody intro sequence and the ability to drop napalm on unfortunate enemy troops. Originally titled *Field*, the game was renamed due to its apparent similarities to the helicopter sequences in *Apocalypse Now*. Those who managed to get a sneak glimpse of *Apocalypse* at the recent EGES Show were understandably impressed by the game's respectable speed and incredible loop count - and no doubt you will be too when the game's released in the Spring.



TIP OFF Anco

Kick Off editors who can't wait for the arrival of *EGS* in Spring next year may wish to swap their studs for a pair of *Kick Off* Pumps as an enjoyable way of spending the intervening time. Designer Steve Serech has taken the same winning techniques he used in the *Kick Off* and put them to work on the basketball court for *Tip Off*, his latest sports effort. While *Cinemaware's* TV Sports Basketball reigns supreme on the hardware boards, the boy Serech is hoping to change that with what he claims is the most action-packed interpretation of the sport yet. Despite the reduction in team and pitch size, *Tip Off* is already shaping up to be every bit as addictive as its heavier daddy, including such features as man-to-man marking, full player stats and a league competitors. Admittedly the idea of *Kick Off* on a basketball court does sound very very weird, and if Steve can put that tantalizing concept into practice successfully, within a couple of months we could well be staring down the barrel of the most impressive sports game yet. I have to hoping, anyway.

SMASH TV Ocean

More licensed fare from the firm that runs them out like there's no tomorrow. This one's one of Ocean's more eagerly-awaited products, coming as it does from the excellent and ultra-violent Williams coin-op. It's all set around a futuristic game show where contestants risk life and limb, battling through computer-infused studios to get an "opportunity" prize like videos and tractors. When cranked up to full tilt, the coin-op's awesome, as scores of hapless contestants pile after the contestants and get mown down by volleys of laser fire. The less fortunate contestants even get their legs blown off by stepping on a mine. In an attempt to emulate the original's dual joystick control, *Smash TV* has included an option for both players to connect two sticks if they so desire. *Smash TV* goes on air this Christmas, and as the show's always sampled computer says, "Good luck - you're gonna need it!"



WWF Ocean

If a name you don't know, it stands for World Wrestling Federation, and it's currently the biggest craze with UK kids since the Turbos. My viewers will already be familiar with this televised phenomenon, which consists of more showbiz excitement than actual competition. Ocean has wasted no time in jumping on the bandwagon with this original interpretation of the "sport", which sees you in the squared circle against such WWF Superstars as Hulk Hogan, Mr Perfect, Macho Man Randy Savage, The Big Boss Man, Million Dollar Man Ted DiBiase and many others. Coming hot on the heels of *Summer Slams*, the biggest WWF tournament of the year, and with several Superstars crossing the Atlantic this month to take part in a European Rampage, Ocean's WWF has been perfectly timed to catch wrestlingmania at its height. Come to think of it, we could do with a decent wrestling game...





THE TERMINATOR Virgin

Equally timed to cash in on the phenomenal success of *Terminator 2*, Virgin's Megaverse adaptation of the original 1984 movie most surely qualify as the most long-awaited horror of all time. Put together by Probe Software, it recasts the film's most memorable action scenes (such as the night-club-dual and police station massacre), casting the player as futuristic soldier Kyle Reese in his quest to save Sarah Connor from the unstoppable soldier John Connor. It's interesting to note that, apparently due to a legal run over the use of Arnold Schwarzenegger's image, the Terminator appears in the game as a rather ambiguous silhouette figure. There's been no compromise on the violence-front however, and the game sports one of the most impressive in-game sequences in years - it's practically identical to the film. The Terminator is set to hit the streets in the early part of next year - keep an eye out.



SUPER GHOULS 'N' GHOSTS CapCom

The star of the show at the recent Super FamiCom exhibition in Japan, Super Ghouls 'n' Ghosts is already being hailed as the best SFZ game yet. Like Irem's Super R-Type before it, the game is a more or less the same, with a number of tweaks, enhancements and custom features. The player once again takes on the role of Sir Arthur Luminaire, battling through the hordes of the countless and the undead to rescue his fair maiden. What with the game being available over here as of yet, there's



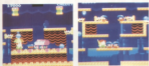
very little information available - although the ripple coming over from Japan are very positive indeed. With the release in the USA (thanks to the FamiCom in the USA) preordered and released the Super Nintendo, it may not be that long until as pure Europeans can get our hands on them officially too - but until then, Super Ghouls 'n' Ghosts should be filtering through on import within the next month or so. ACE will be first with the



STAR TREK: THE 25th ANNIVERSARY Electronic Arts

US designers Interplay (*The Bard's Tale*, *Castle*) have left the medieval scenarios behind and opted for something a little more up-to-date with its interpretation of the classic sci-fi series *Star Trek*, to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the show this year. All the familiar characters, including Scotty, Chekov, Uhura, Spock and McCoy join you, as Kirk, on the bridge of the USS Enterprise as you embark on 14 independent missions, each presented as a TV episode. You get to play with warp engines, transporters, phasers and torpedoes as you clash with Klingon, Romulan and rogue Federation ships. The game's a mix of strategy/exploration and arcade action, with space-age combat sequences fought out Wing Commander-style. Apparently *Star Trek*'s master Gene Roddenberry acted as a consultant during the game's development, so if nothing else we can expect an accurate portrayal. PC owners get to find out just how accurate around Christmas, with CD and Amiga owners bearing aboard early 1993.





PARASOL STARS Ocean

Subitled *The Story of Bubble Bobble II*, it doesn't take much to work out that *Parasol Stars* is the sequel to *Rainbow Islands* and the third installment in the *Bubble Bobble* saga. But not bubbles are back on the case, still in human form, although this time, instead of bubbles or rainbows, they're equipped with cute little multi-purpose umbrellas to defend themselves against the multitude of crazy foes. *Parasol Stars* sees a return in style to the original *Bubble Bobble*, with the objective being to clear the various screens of all the various fruit rather than reaching a specified goal. It's also the first game to scroll horizontally - *Bubble Bobble* consisted solely of static screens, and *Rainbow Islands* was a purely vertical affair. Currently being handled by Ocean's in-house team, *Parasol Stars* looks set to bring the cute game back to super- and quite right too.

ANOTHER WORLD US Gold

Though Delphine Software is already pulling out all the stops for its adventure interpretation of *The Godfather*, it's still got time to stick its fingers in some other pies - the most impressive of which is the innovative adventure *Another World*. FutureWare co-designer Eric Chidiac spent two years laboring away on this one, and the result incorporates what is reputedly the most effective Cinemagique adventure system yet seen - even by Delphine's high standards - including such cinematic techniques as zoom, panorama and animated close-up shots. In a plot as innocuous as *Planet Wars*, *Another World* tells of a hapless young nuclear scientist who is catapulted into a strange alien world where an experiment unfolds. From then on it's exploring and puzzle-solving all the way as you quest to escape from the bizarre planet outside. *Another World* is set for release across all three formats at the end of the year.



WIZKID Ocean

Still regarded as one of the greatest arcade games of the eighties, Sensible Software's *Wizard* caused quite a stir when it first hit the big back in 1981. Fresh from the success of *Mega Man*, Wiz's original creators Jon Thane and Chris Yates are now hard at work putting the finishing touches to the long-awaited sequel, which promises to be every bit as wacky as the classic original. The story goes that after successfully colonising the Wizardworld, the Wizard and *Wizball* have fallen, even, to low and produced a son - the *Wizkid*. The evil

magic woman Zark (who was defeated in the first game) is none too happy about and has kidnapped the Wizard and *Wizball* in order to exact his revenge. Now it's up to *Wizkid* to get them back by barfing through eight platform-oriented levels, rescuing the also-kidnapped citizens of *Wiz*'s car Miff along the way. "It's a pretty original game," says Chris. "I can't really think of anything to compare it to." We shall see in ourselves in a couple of months, but if the quality of Sensible's recent offerings is anything to go by, we should be in for a real treat.



THE CHAOS ENGINE Revvegade

After the less than successful venture into the realm of strategy games with last month's *Magi Pocket*, the *Bitwise Brothers*' latest effort looks set to put them back on the right track. It's a return to more familiar, violence-orientated fare, combining *Gunstar*-style arcade action with an innovative RPG element. In an attempt to get away from his known space-age scenario, designer Eric Matthews has set his game in the Victorian Age - the *Chaos Engine* of the title is one of the first prototype computers that has malfunctioned and is attempting to distort the fabric of time and space. In an attempt to avert the disaster, as many as three players (with the aid of a joytick adaptor) must blast their way through the factory where the *Engine* is held and destroy it. Matthews is very proud of the game's RPG undertones, which allow players to create characters with individual personalities, and a system that only allocates bonus points if the player is pulling his weight during play, and not leaving all the work to his companions. To cap it all, graphics wizard Dan Malone has done an excellent job of creating a period atmosphere. Rumours abound that after *Pockets*, the *Bitwise*' credibility is starting to wear a bit thin - let's hope that *The Chaos Engine* proves the critics wrong when it's released at the start of next year.



CYBER FIGHT Electronic Arts

There's nothing like a pair of big fighting robots clanging away at each other to provide some good old-fashioned gladiatorial entertainment - and Electronic Arts, obviously wise to this trend, has got a game that's just the job. *Cyber Fight* has been projected from the frontal lobes of Michael Powell, holding great *Thunderforce*-style 'bots against each other, armed with all manner of devastating (but no weaponry and portrayed using state-of-the-art General shading techniques) to enhance the feeling of 'being there'. A PC-only product at the moment, *Cyber Fight* is set for release hopefully by the end of the year. It'll be nice to have to wait a fair bit longer for this version.

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ACE BENCHMARKS

Over the page, in the new ACE ScreenTest section you'll find reviews of six of this month's hottest games. To help you make the most of our reviews information (especially the Compare and Contrast panel which you will find adorning each review) we've compiled our list of what we believe are the finest games in each of the following genres.

The aim is to offer both a reference point to help you gauge how well or otherwise this month's titles match up to their peers and a list of games which no software collection should be without. And all for no extra charge!

And remember! [Visit ACE at your favourite computer magazine](#)

There's a further 30 PAGES of reviews beginning on page 107!

ARCADE BLAST

SWIV (Storm)

The follow-up to *Silverburn* (just one of the best Mars in years) succeeds through a combination of frenetic speed, polished presentation and clever, unadorned action. Tone and tone of it. The firepower and wackiness on screen is of a level that far surpasses anything offered before. It's amazingly tough, but well worth the effort - it's effectively a 2D coin-op without the need for coins.



ARCADE ADVENTURE

GODS (Renegade)

While it may be argued that it's not as intricately sophisticated as the likes of *Risk Dangerous* or *Prince of Persia*, the *Renegade* brothers' platform opus does offer enough fully-rendered arcade action to make it the outright winner in this category. On the surface, it looks nothing more than a levels or ladders shoot-em-up with lots of flashy effects, but deep-



er down it's a right smart little epic with enough quality aspects to keep even the most demanding explorer happy. Its longevity is unquestionable.

SPORTS SIMULATION

JIMMY WHITE'S WHIRLWIND SNOOKER (Virgin)

Arthur Maclean does it again, and must go down in the history books as having produced the first ever realistic snooker game. Actually, 'realistic' doesn't do the game justice, as it truly is the most authentic, computerized adaptation of any sport ever. Period. Tremendous 3D combines with authentic play and more options



SPORTS ARCADE

KICK OFF 2 (Anco)

What can we say? It's pretty pointless trying to explain to the uninitiated what makes *Kick Off 2* so damn playable, but the primary reason are the ultra-intuitive control mode and remarkable speed that combine to make it the most exciting and rewarding football game ever. As such it's attracted a following so avid that official prize tournaments are a regular occurrence. It looks like nothing, and takes time and patience to get into, but once it grabs it'll never let go. Not ever. You have been warned.

STRATEGY

RAILROAD TYCOON (Microprose)

Building a railroad empire across the USA at the turn of the 20th Century may sound like hard work, but for those who like their strategy to run deep, *Rail Tycoon's* simulation of that very process is fun. Fun FUN! We know, it's difficult to imagine here, but trust us, it is. The feeling of power is paramount as

you lay your track from sea to shining sea, conduct big time business and generally earn loads of cash. That can hardly be had now... can it?



BEAT 'EM UP

IK+ (System 3)

An upgraded and enhanced version of the original System 3 classic *International Karate*, Arthur Maclean's *IK+* is still unchallenged in its field after three years.



Its most innovative aspect is the addition of a third, computer-controlled fighter, which elevates the action above the average head-to-head battles and into full-scale free-for-all mayhem. All the standard ticks and punches are there, along with an array of novel new moves, such as the double-head tick. Incredible speed, worthwhile sub-games, bombcrunching sound and a veritable galaxy of graphic twists and comedic touches make this quite simply the ultimate fighting game.

RACING GAME

STUNT CAR RACER (Microstyle)

This month's under-theorist from Genies's Lotus 4, Stunt Car Racer packs polygon-plating power and arcade-speed thrills into a novel formula making it the most entertaining race game around. Drive your dragons around a series of increasingly perilous suspended racetracks, smacking it crashing your opponent into oblivion. Excellent speed achieved by the polygons combined with fantastic, growing audio effects makes this game a true classic.

RACING SIMULATION

INDIANAPOLIS 500 (Electronic Arts)

It's the speed that does it for EA's Indianapolis 500. Quite simply it's faster and more playable than anything else on the grid. The feeling of real speed is amazingly realistic, and that adds all the more to the basic shattering pile-ups - one of the game's most entertaining aspects. The course at Indianapolis has been recreated with uncompromising authenticity, and a multitude of features, including excellent TV-style replay facilities serve to bolster the realism factor. Mind you, it's not just Geoff Goodenough who's having a crack at lettering it this month.



SIMULATION

CHUCK YEAGER'S AIR COMBAT (Electronic Arts)

The third game to be embraced by the barrier-breaking General takes of the tried-and-tested "flight school" format and makes it all the more enjoyable by putting it in a combat arena. You get to fly every plane you've ever heard of, and it manages to do this without sacrificing the technical authenticity. What's more, the dogfighting itself is a lot more exciting than is to be found in most sims, and the out-of-flight options and presentation are second to none.



ROLE PLAYING GAMES

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER (US Gold/SSI)

By the mighty sword of King! SSI's latest Dungeons and Dragons game takes the best bits of Dungeons Masters, adds a few more of its own, etc. well, and the result is the best bet yet for gamers who like to haul fireballs at dragons and things like that. It's very deep (so ho) and offers enough new challenges to take the throne from the game that inspired it. And lo, the mystic staff of Zog shall not the hours waste and (and so on to hah...)

ADVENTURE

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND (US Gold/Lucasfilm)

The adventures of would-be pirate Guybrush Threepwood provide the setting for Lucasfilm's most sophisticated and entertaining odyssey to date. It's partly due to the new refined version of the



SCUMM™ adventure system, which abbreviates the need to muddle with complex commands, and a very engaging and funny script. It's atmospheric, attractive, and packed with clever puzzles. The only thing that's failed to topple it is the foreseeable future in the sequel, due out next year.

ACTION STRATEGY

MEGA LO MANIA (Image Works)

Scrabble Software's first attempt at strategy is a surprisingly successful one. At first glance it may seem similar to Populous, but further inspection reveals it to be a genuinely original strategy epic. Considering the amount of depth the game has, it's remarkably intuitive to play, and has a very refreshing comic relief running throughout. Certainly the most fun of all the god-games, Mega lo Mania also happens to be the best - we'll see what Populous II has to say on the matter at the end of the year.

PUZZLE GAME

TETRIS (Nintendo)

There are more official versions of this classic than can be counted on the legs of a millipede, but it's Nintendo's own Gameboy version that is undoubtedly the best. Manipulating blocks to make lines across the screen may sound like watching your teenage girl, but in practice the complex factor that lies beyond any level known to medical science. If it's someone in your play, they haven't invented the word that describes the fun that's to be had in the link-up mode. It's like a bloody religion.

PLATFORM

SUPER MARIO WORLD (Nintendo)

The more they release the Platformers ever have the better, so that will give more gamers the chance to experience the stunning fourth installment in the Mario saga. Whatever other hype-awakening publications may lead you to believe, Mario 4 (which seems like one of those just there ones) would you believe there's not a single dodgy bit in any of the 99 levels?

It's sheer perfection from beginning to end. What more could you ask for?



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REA

*There can only be one ...
Just make sure it's yours.*





*Love Thy Neighbour?
Or Put Him To The Sword?
The Choice is Yours.*

*For the first time, you can take
COMPLETE control of your own destiny as
you attempt to dominate an entire world.*



*The King is dead. Long live the King.
And the King is you...*

*Endowed with the divine right
to rule, you inherit your father's Realm on his
death. But the fragile peace has been shattered
and war rages between the Realms. Now
your brief reign has become a fight
for survival.*



*The neighbouring Realms
are growing in strength at your expense. Do
you build lines of supply to battle with them?
Or build armies to battle with them? Each
Realm vies to be the ultimate power.*



*There can only be one.
Just make sure it's yours...*



*Created by the award-winning
Capital development team, REALMS
combines the intuitive playability of an arcade
game with the depth of strategy usually
only found in the most complex
simulations.*



*Real Realms uses real-time and
is not very like simulation.*

*Enter the world of Realms and you could control
"Over 115,000 square miles of fractally-
generated landscape
"115 armies, each a thousand strong and with
adjustable battle formations
"Countless cities, their inhabitants draw and
their money
"So distinct historical eras
The last word in arcade strategy.*



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S E C R E T A R Y T E S T

Race-Driving Game
 Publisher: Creative Graphics
 Developer: Magnetic Fields
 Price: \$29.95

LOTUS₂

Some people are never satisfied. Having already produced perhaps the finest computer race game of all time in Lotus Turbo-Espit Challenge, Magnetic Fields and Creative Graphics have sought to push the envelope further still with their sequel. The result? A definite, yet qualified success.

Definite because Lotus 2 bears marked improvements over the original in a number of technical aspects, but qualified because although the game works well as an individual title, it rewards and challenges the player in an almost entirely different way to its predecessor. As a result, it occasionally doesn't look too good in comparison.

Neither an accurate polygon simulation, nor purely over-simplified arcade blast, the Lotus games

deliver the finesse of the former with the abrasion of the latter. Large, healthy representations of Lotus Espits and their turbo around the rapidly-plotted courses, barging into each other and flying off the roadside signposts. Drivers who bring around too long or tight an adhering too strictly to the high way code need not apply. That much is common ground for both titles.

The most important difference between the two games' designs is that here, play no longer takes place on circuits. Instead, eight long stages, each complete with their own particular motoring hazard, snake their way across imaginary countries, providing Dukes-style as opposed to Super-Dukes-style excitement.

This is not a point that should be taken lightly, for it greatly affects the feel of the game. The removal of the lap system makes it tricky (perhaps a well-intentioned distance-o-meter) to gauge exactly how close the two drivers are to each other. Over a number of laps, a player's lead can be tangibly eroded. Over a long stage, it's much harder to determine progress. However, longer stages make for an exciting feeling of ground-covering race-through-the-night madness that was plainly absent from the first title. Simplified, the deal is this. The nature of Lotus 2 makes it more satisfying to pass a number of computer controlled drivers than pit your skills



Close to the goal, the first of a few other race simulations, but they'll never be more than a step in the progression of the original Lotus and Creative Graphics' racing games.



Both titles of the game's sequel are able to deliver a sense of excitement as well as the other (though some graphical tweaking). It's worth noting that the game's graphics are not as good as those of the original Lotus.

Rolling into the darkness on the road, the most dramatic scene the game offers is as much as in the first game, providing a similar, but more intense, experience.



Obviously, the easiest and most relevant point of reference to draw on is Lotus 1. Clearly, producing a sequel to such a popular racing game is tricky enough. Trickier still when you bear in mind that the success of the first title rested on a number of factors which, simply in order to make the second

game sufficiently different, have had to be changed. The first game worked on a laps basis, and here we have stages. Lotus 2 is far more forgiving of drivers' mistakes than is the first outing. A single crash in the first game could easily cost the unfortunate driver the race, here, owing to the length of the stages. It's more to do with how the forced errors snowball into a big enough chunk of time to make the check-point unreachably.

Lotus 2 is, technically, a far superior game with swifter graphics, more detailed and varied levels and a better impression of speed. And there's no doubt that as a solo game it plays infinitely better than the first. As a two-player affair, however, Lotus 1 still reigns supreme.

The link-up option serves as a worthwhile novelty, although in a sense it only helps regain the spirit of duelling

motors which was already present in the original.

It's important to remember though, that simply because the gaily heights of the original haven't been attained in this particular aspect, Lotus 2 is still a superb game.



against - essentially - one human. In that sense, it is a much better one-player game, but the gladiatorial two-player struggles of the first title are no longer present. It's this point which obviously determines whether Lotus 2 is an appealing prospect or not.

The key to Lotus 2's success was twofold. For the first time in a sports-driven race game the player was convinced that he had control over the behaviour of his car to a degree facilitating genuine improvements in driving style. Also, the timings of each circuit were balanced so perfectly with the difficulty level and the amount of objects to crash into that even on the early courses a few careless cherron-clippings could make the difference between success and failure. It has proved to be a tough act to follow.

A familiar options screen helps the player dispose with reverse automatic, manual gear and acceleration mode selections in the same manner as last



time. Here, however, there are a few additions. A password system, enables players who have made sufficient progress in the game to skip to the desired level without having to drive through stages already mastered. Although this initially appears to be a bit of a gimmick, removing the need to slog through

level after level of previously conquered tracks, there is a danger that, in the same way as Outrun is viewed, once all the levels have been completed, there's little incentive to return. The Link option allows (via a cable connecting two machines) up to four players to race simultaneously. Admittedly, this feature is hardly likely to be in dip-to-dip use, but it helps to enliven the feeling of human vs human competition.

As the "Mirko, Set, Go!" countdown gives way to the glow of the assessment of Lotusus in post-race mode, the trackside objects pull toward the player with impressive speed and a number of facts become apparent.

Firstly, in an ever-enthusiastic tribute to the legendary handling figure of Lotus motors, the player is afforded amazing control over his car. Only the tightest levels necessitate any application of the old "washers" and pulling into tight corners even from the outside lane will bring the car into the inside lane allowing some impressive apex-cutting antics. It's easy for the player to convince himself that in real life he's an excellent driver thanks to the ease and flexibility of control.

Over underway for a few seconds, the nature of the race will become clear. Computerized drivers are no longer of an especially high standard. Rather than being regarded as realistic individuals vying for success, the auto-cars tend to move more in robotic blocks, weaving across the lanes and, for the most part, just sitting in the way. Since there is no need to crash the race in qualifying points are awarded within the race itself will allow progress in the next stage) there's little incentive to necessarily "beat" any of these cars, just avoid them when they appear.

Checkpoints flash past at regular intervals, resetting the countdown-to-game-over which sits in the

obus 2's makes it considerably more satisfying when played solo, since the gladiatorial feel of two-player racing find itself struggling in the new format of long check-point laden stages

STAGE FRIGHT

Let's take a closer look at these stages "In", if you will, "Full".

Foggy

The first stage introduces the player to a number elements in the game. Drivers slow down the cars unless they've jumped over using the logs which block the road. The logs must be hit head-on in order to achieve a jump.

City

Overcoming traffic and navigating busy drivers hampers the player's progress. The right hand lane is clear of racing cars but a crowd with an oncoming vehicle will considerably slow up the proceedings. Entering through the wheels between the front and back of the trucks and the player bonus points. Indeed, rather than being score-highlighting trick for top drivers, it's vital if the stage is to be completed in time.

Desert

Sand blown onto the edge of the road will slow down drivers who insist on staying from the center line. Extra caution is needed owing to the lack of road signs. Instead, car's along the side of the road are the only indicators of the player's route through the yellow maze.

Storm

A maximum effort is necessary to retain control of your usually sporty car which in this stage whips around like there's no tomorrow.

Fog

Dramatically reduced visibility inevitably slows this section right down. All objects in the distance, be they cars, trees or obstacles are scarcely visible. Only when back-marker looms up out of the fog does the player have a chance to react. This stage perhaps works the best, combining excellent graphic appeal with an exciting gameplay twist.

Night

The city at night is a much more challenging place than during the day. The number of trucks on the road has been reduced but the hazard levels are high.

Marshland

Have you ever been had, in Marshland? Windy tunnels and more jumping. Oil patches leave the player slipping and sliding while the water at the edge of the road (it is a marsh, after all) slows them down. Floodlit.

Storm

Possibly one of the most depressing levels ever to appear in a computer game. The rain comes down in sheets making the most valuable sound. Lightning flashes and thunder rumbles. Is it our imagination or is the whole level split? It's enough to put you off your dinner.

...Just as you start the race with your glass eye fixed on the screen.

In a particularly handy feature set of help, later chapters give you an overview of the game's different environments being able to choose the road the Lotus runs on a the player's own way. It's worth taking time to compare various stages.



Each stage has an excellent "beat" time in the player's eye which is used to judge the driver's performance in the distance. Deeper into the side of the road will further slow drivers already suffering from slippery road conditions.



Remembering an outside may be something rather to the road world, but it's often only easy to get on in the land of Lotus. Before you will help players understand more about the game's vehicles on the roads in a most satisfactory manner.

From level 10 onwards, players can create, modify and even delete buildings of the size of a small town. At level 20, you can get more power and money. At level 30, you can get more money and power. At level 40, you can get more money and power. At level 50, you can get more money and power.

As long as you have the money, you can build anything you want. The only limit is the size of the map. At level 10, you can build a small town. At level 20, you can build a medium town. At level 30, you can build a large town. At level 40, you can build a very large town. At level 50, you can build a city.



The city has a lot of buildings and a lot of cars. It is a very busy place. You can see a lot of things that you can't see in the other levels. It is a very interesting place to play.



At level 50, you can build a city. You can build a lot of buildings and a lot of cars. It is a very busy place. You can see a lot of things that you can't see in the other levels. It is a very interesting place to play.



otus 2 offers a different sort of challenge for players. The longer stages are far more trying than the laps of the original. The difficulty level for most stages escalates well, though, as player are forced to learn new skills each stage.



BT top right corner of the screen and adding any spare time from the completed stage to the deficit for the next. The latter one section is completed, the time/distance there is to complete the next. Although experienced players may not appreciate the need to continually drive for better times through the first checkpoints, toward the end of the stage they will need every second they can get, so it's wise to start scraping the bonus time together early on.

Utterly distinct from its predecessor, Lotus 2 is forgiving almost to the point of diffidence. Ploughing headlong into the chicanes and trees which line the road results in a scarcely noticeable loss of velocity and repositioning on the track. Especially ignorant drivers who insist on mowing down a bunch of signposts or saplings will find themselves ground down to a halt, but those who make the most of the forgiveness of the crash routines will find their whole driving experience largely frustration free.

The different courses (see panel) have particular idiosyncrasies which challenge the driver in new ways. The actual width of the road, although one of the most basic variables affects the driving style more radically than most. Narrow roads actually do make the driver slow down and make overtaking difficult. It may sound like a small point, but this does throw up all sorts of frustrations. While the clock may indicate that the trip to the next checkpoint will be a breeze, encountering a couple of lengthy narrow stretches of road will see virtually every spare second accumulated thus far. Success is most readily achieved by drivers who loop going absolutely at their hardest all the time.

By far the best strategy is to overtake a vehicle as soon as it is reached, especially if the overtaking manoeuvre is being made on a bend. Dismissing around and waiting for computer cars to get out of the way is a waste of time. It's better to simply drive around them.

Careful use of acceleration and the width of the road allows the player to either understeer around



The latter idiosyncrasies involve either driving on an even steeper course, encountering various road patterns (like bridges) which don't seem directly related to the game's strategy, or just getting through the forest.

he nature of the game's once-completed-little-interest-left courses may hamper its lasting appeal. Perhaps Lotus 2 has become an unwitting conformation of the "if ain't broke, don't fix it" adage.



the target car or slide through taking the inside line. Perfection of this strategy combined with the simple but important discipline of watching cars in the distance as they approach in order to predict their track position then the overtaking manoeuvre is necessary will yield a great deal of satisfaction. The closest comparison for this mix of speed and skill being continuously rewarded is probably the Super Hang On coin-op.

Visually, Lotus 2 is a marvel. Objects at the side of the road are highly detailed and absolutely screen-fart. More attention has been given to the cars when turning and the differing weather conditions are represented by moody lighting and the like. The effects are so successful, in fact, that the Storm level with its thunder and lightning and rain's oblique rain is actually quite depressing.

The behaviour of the cars is affected quite dramatically by their environment, exactly as one would expect. Driving through water slows the cars down and makes steering difficult. Snow and ice on the road make the Super Hang On sin-



Game Strategy
 Publisher Virgin Games
 Developer PFI Software
 Price £19.95

FLOOR

13

Every government has its secrets to hide - a fact that a whole generation of novelists from John Le Carré to Tom Clancy has been earning a respectable living from for the past three decades. But while we all know of the nefarious activities and goings-on in Eastern Bloc countries and

secretly, dealing with double-crosses, controlling outspies, subverting diplomats and generally getting anything that could have a damaging effect on the government and affect its public standing.

Due to the department's unofficial status, normal laws don't apply to its operations and all the tools of its trade are weapons. Murder, torture, corruption, invasion of privacy... when it comes to the defence of the Realm, anything goes. With such a formidable armory of tactics, the task in hand may not sound too difficult - but the real trick is carrying out an effective and ongoing campaign of suppression without even giving the outside world the impression that anything deviates in as badly going on.

The game's opening does a neat dual job of setting the player off, while giving a first glimpse of just what lengths the secret ministry will go to in order to get its work done. When the agency's Director General is deemed inefficient and potentially dangerous, he meets with a demise involving a window, several hundred feet and a concrete pavement. The player is brought to replace him as the department head. Dave inaugurated as chief of the secret police force,

hipnotic dictatorships, it's slight-on inconceivable to suggest the existence of, say, a secret police force here in dear old Blighty, capital of democracy.

Or maybe it isn't. After all, the primary function of a secret police force is to be secret, and as long as it does its job properly, who's to know if it even exists? The idea of such behind-closed-doors governmental activity has been tackled several times in recent years in a variety of media - Alan Moore's David Lloyd's moody graphic novel *V For Vendetta* painted a very gloomy picture of a Neo-Nazi Britain of the 2020s, while Ken Kesey threw some controversial light on the subject last year with his cinematic political thriller *Walden 2*.

And now we have a game that, by posing the "What if...?" question in the most Matrix-style imaginable, hasn't done a bad job of attracting plenty of controversy of its own. Admittedly it seems as if Virgin went deliberately out of its way to attract as much media attention as possible by approaching leading figures from the political, journalistic, and show-business worlds to contribute stories to the game. And although most of the people contacted turned the opportunity down, the upshot of the exercise has since included articles in *The Times* and *The Guardian* and several phone calls to the Virgin office from an "Interested" Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. No doubt by the time that *Floor 13*, which boasts what must be the most evenly political and partisan storyline to date, hits the shelves it won't be the only thing that is hitting something.

In its present day London, *Floor 13* tells of a secret government department based on, you guessed it, the thirteenth floor of a shady Docklands tower block. It's an agency without a name, that operates beyond the knowledge of the police, the military - even the country's own intelligence agencies - reporting only to the Prime Minister himself. To all intents and purposes, it's an agency that doesn't exist - but has power and influence far beyond the scope of any official body. Its job? To provide a political "safety buffer" for the increasingly magnanimous, callous and treacherous government by averting scandalous



The Prime Minister's secret intelligence unit arrives in this game's set of the same dark hallway as in your first remote-control, you'll be shocked over the main floor game play features, and you'll be surprised by its impressive realism.

n terms of involvement and atmosphere,

Floor 13 is the closest thing yet to an interactive thriller novel.



The open end of the new available multimedia interface carries the standard computer newsroom interface. Again, you may prefer the traditional on-the-wall format (clocks and maps) to more modern ones.

The player receives a line that warns welcome from the disgraced Prime Minister, who is quick to warn the player that should he or she prove as unsuccessful as their predecessor, they too could be taking a crash course in unaided flight.

As Director General, one of the player's primary common-sense obligations is never to get their own hands dirty, and so the entire game is effectively run from the 13th floor office, reading reports gathered by intelligence personnel and dispensing orders to the heads of the various sub-departments who do all the real dirty work. As a result it's probably the most subtle game in years in terms of what goes on on screen: for the vast majority of the game takes place behind a desk, with the only things changing being the constantly updated newspapers, reports and files from the departments that comprise the only window on the world. But even though the location seldom changes, the game's fast pacing and subtle dovetailing of the multiple arcs of scenarios and plots ensures that the game's pace hardly ever relaxes. In terms of involvement and interest, it's the closest thing yet to an interactive thriller novel.

The ongoing story is woven by means of over a hundred interdependent plots, occurring at carefully timed intervals and overlapping to give the impression of a single, flowing reality. The episodes are wide-ranging in style and content, encompassing high-ranking executives engaged in shady dealings, shady dealings on at government contractors, industrial espionage, terrorism and even a terrorist attempt on the life of a top-level VIP. But the fall story behind each plot never fully emerges - information comes in dribs and drabs, and only by putting together seemingly innocuous and unconnected reports and allowing resources in the correct places can the



Such is the nature of Floor 13's innovative approach and execution, it's tricky to find a game in the recent strategy genre that really compares to it. So it's necessary to journey further back - way back to 1985 in fact - the time of Century 21st's aging 8-bit classic *The Fourth Protocol*.

Though the game came in several sections, including some dire arcade interludes, the main part of the adventure, subtitled the NATO Documents, was remarkably similar to *Floor 13* in certain aspects. Surveillance operatives were assigned to suspects, intelligence reports came in, there were

political scandals to avert... the game actually managed to do a remarkable job of capturing the spirit of the original novel, and by comparison that goes to further highlight how well *Floor 13* simulates the intrigue and excitement of the modern thriller. But while *The Fourth Protocol* was a fine game, it offered limited appeal, as there was only one objective to meet. Eastman's got the right idea, allowing the size of the game to remain unrestricted by keeping the overall objective at a safe distance.



While much of the game can be played from the central office, it's often necessary to visit departments directly for the most up-to-date information. Each of the eight sub-divisions is never more than a couple of keypresses away - a fine example of how easy the game is to use.



INTERVIEWING

The best place for an investigator to interview suspects is in their own offices, and then trying to bring the files out of them. When a discussion is needed for information, it's best to be observed and present the questioning. Some characters react well to their problems being brought to their attention around the clock. The reliability of suspects, however, is not uniform and the results may vary accordingly. There are three levels of questioning, known as Procedure One, Two and Three. The lowest level is the basic right-left-right-left treatment, while Procedure One calls a character's name, usually in a friendly manner. Procedure Two is followed by a direct, but starting the correct level of contact will be almost any results. Not getting what the suspect won't take the questioning seriously may result and the interview may be cancelled or even denied. It's usually best to interview first when a suspect is available. They're as good as dead when work is done. They're disposed of rather than released back to the office, where they could become a liability.



INTERVIEWING

The particular group is assigned to an individual who controls the government funds. Information may prove to be the most effective source of action. When agents are assigned to a group, they take an interest in members, but usually work against the organization. They're not alone in this - you don't receive information reports from them, unless they have the ability to do so. A particular group's actions or operations may vary. The more agents work in the more effective their work should be, providing the information group doesn't action an end note about bringing back to the concerned elements. Information is a tricky business, and the files that document agents often need aren't their best tool.



SURVEILLANCE

A surveillance team can be assigned to any character or when a report is available, and will sometimes supply the most useful information in the game. They receive information, related to a relative location outside the company's home and control all movements, such as items of stock and orders. They usually receive, via the telephone logs and mail intercepts. Also calls that the suspect makes in meetings are recorded and transmitted into a log form for personal use copies of any mail delivered are also forwarded to Floor 11. Unfortunately, the content of calls and letters is often quite ambiguous, meaning items that must be filed through careful detective work and extensive review. A surveillance team will take with the suspect and the files become "hard" to file or re-examine.

THE DIRECTOR GENERAL'S OFFICE

The heart of Floor 11, all information from the various departments is sent straight here to be subjected to the director's scrutiny. More time is spent here than anywhere else. How to meet, however, that all information that enters an office has to be at least a few days in the reports unless overnight. For more up-to-the-minute information, you need to report directly to the relevant department. The DGO is often more than the other 11 sections, comprising two or all reports, groups, locations and reports that have occurred previously. Ready for gathering information, and they are automatically reviewed as they are passed to be released to general publishing. There too you can also check up on the current situation in the jobs for the most accurate representation of how well you are doing.

pieces of the jigsaw fit together and the overall picture obtained.

Although orders can be given relating to a particular subject or incident at any time, it's wise to wait until the state of affairs becomes slightly clearer, but the department's actions prove rash and damaging. With the full picture obtained, deduction gives way to judgement as the player must decide how to deal with the situation at hand, while remembering the need to retain the department's low profile. It's vital that the player doesn't get carried away with their position of power - the game could start asking awkward questions if, for example, somebody who has voiced anti-government opinions is suddenly found with a bullet in their head, and the resident forces could ultimately prove more damaging than the scandal created.

How the player interprets information and chooses to act on the basis of it provides the main thrust of the strategy in *Floor 13*. Judgement and discretion are the keys to success, along with the ability to be unconventionally single-minded through thick and thin. Protecting the government from embarrassment is the only objective, and venting too far in either direction, be it lily-liveredness or over-the-top wig-out-outness, will only have a negative effect. If a scandal becomes public, the government suffers in the polls as a direct result of negative public opinion, while successfully covering up embarrassing episodes and making everything in the government's garden look easy results in a poll boost. Of course in the rough or fumble world of politics, it never hurts to stick the boot into the opposition just a little via the subtle use of misinformation.

Maintaining a steady lead in the polls provides the player with a set of ongoing objectives. The Pfd demands a noticeable poll result every few weeks or so, and if it's not met then the player is unconsciously booted out. In the simple virtue of being the elected party, the government receives slightly ahead of the opposition in normal circumstances anyway, so the player's initial task is basically to prevent any major poll drops then embarking on ambitious plans to damage the opposition's credibility or raise the government's popularity through the roof. Such tactics are only likely to lead to the department's activities becoming too high-profile and subsequently political damaging.

By use of a simple mathematical formula, the magnitude of any given scandal or incident is directly proportional to the amount of political damage it causes - which is logical enough. To help the player interpret information and provide a supplement to the polls screen, reports of most incidents come with an evaluation of its political repercussions, good or bad, mild or severe. These provide an invaluable instant aid to decision-making, especially when the player's hands are full with several plots ran-

A developer's page lists various information on *Floor 13*, including a full list of the available group activities. Most focus on what "Government support" capabilities designers. These options of what could have the government as a recipient.



PC version



The use of monochrome graphics has caused almost as much controversy as the storyline, although the sort of people who have complained are probably the same people who buy the colorized versions of classic black-and-white movies. In practical terms the grey shades work along with the moody music to bolster the game's gloomy atmosphere. A couple of criticisms though - the graphics fade in and out when moving between screens, and impudent types might wish the process would speed up a little - it can get a little tiresome during long sessions. Also, while there is no problem with the keyboard control as it stands, some kind of icon-based mouse map have proved to be more instinctive.



Plot the left side, show how the player can enter the scene with a plot. A department in charge of the strategy is a most unusual approach.



ning simultaneously (as is usually to case) and it's vital to know where to allocate limited resources to obtain the best results.

What's probably most sinister about *Floor 13*, and the main reason why it is already making so much flak from certain quarters, is that while it offers a vision every bit as paranoid and frightening as *1984*, it does so in a down-to-earth fashion. We're not dealing with a futuristic futuristic society here - this is supposed to be the real world, present day. And while it would be ungenerously to say it's got a storyline that's "ripped from the headlines of terrorism" newspapers," author David Eastman (Coffin) has done a remarkable job of working certain major political news stories from recent times as game plots - in fact it's rather worrying to contemplate just how feasible this "hypothetical" scenario is. Because it handles its subject matter so well, it makes one wonder why the political arena, along with all the attendant corruption, intrigue and backstabbing, hasn't been used more often as a strategy game scenario. It's this "real" aspect that provides the game with much of its atmosphere and involvement - there's something more compelling about playing a game with a scenario like this than games which, while equally involving strategically, distance themselves from the player by means of a fantastic or off-beat scenario.

While it would certainly be distressing to see all games based on real-life plots and events ignored are, after all, meant to be escape routes from the rigors of everyday life. *Floor 13* certainly comes as a refreshing change in a genre that has allowed one of its most important elements to stagnate.



Simple floor 13's comprehensive briefing screens do a great enough at the tactical approach needed to reach a certain amount of political emergency throughout and in the city, which the less political reform an army will have to take.



It's clear that much effort has gone into the creation of Floor 13, and the result is a game that offers a genuinely new approach to the strategy genre, backed up by a scenario that gives the whole thing a kick like a mule.



Floor 13 also delivers another much neglected genre: the single to writing the place as the budget. While not all the player's actions are necessarily bad (although some are downright despicable), there's a strong sense that the goals achieved are very dodgy indeed—and that provides a twisted sense of enjoyment that goes beyond the initial short-lived experiences in the 'interrogator' rooms.

Without doubt one of the most innovative strategy games in a long time, Floor 13 is a stunner rather than a spinoff, and as such total dedication and some very careful thought is required if any success is to be had. The need to collate information and dole out connections between the various people, locations, groups and events in order to unravel the complex plots serves to make the whole strategic process deeper and all the more absorbing, especially as some of the plots are as twisty-turny as any espionage novel.

It's clear that much effort has gone into the creation of Floor 13, and the result is a game that offers a genuinely new approach to the strategy genre, backed up by a scenario that gives the whole thing a kick like a mule. As such, anyone whose brain capacity extends beyond sending rapid signals to the body's fire-brain trigger is going to find this a tremendously absorbing and enjoyable experience. If David Braben can keep this up, he's going to go far—providing he's not found floating face-down in the Thames first.

■ Gary White



Walk Like An Egyptian

An interesting twist is that, while the player attempts to infiltrate and wipe-out subversive groups and organizations, they remain a member of one themselves. The Secret Masters of Truth is a bizarre messianic cult based on ancient Egyptian philosophies, and the Grand Master himself pops up to have a quiet word from time to time. As it turns out, the player has a secondary objective of advancing through the ranks of the lodge until he can ultimately become all-powerful. The Grand Master calls upon the player to perform certain tasks for him, and each one completed results in a promotion. Some 'missions' can result in a conflict of interests as what's good for them may be bad for the government. Only the player can decide with whom his loyalties ultimately lie...



R A T I N G S



Graphics: This is certainly not the most impressive looking game out there, but it's not bad either.

Sound: One of the best sound effects in the game.

920



The average player will find this game to be a real challenge.

Overall: This is a very good game.

Value: This is a very good game.

Playability: This is a very good game.

Replayability: This is a very good game.

Sound: This is a very good game.

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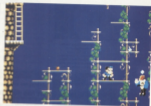
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Game Platform
Publisher Ocean
Developer Special FX
Price \$24.99



HUDSON HAWK



As exciting as the Hudson Hawk movie is, it's not the only reason why you should play Hudson Hawk. The game is a real action-adventure, with a lot of puzzles and challenges. It's not just a game, it's a whole new world of fun.

Catch the action! Catch the excitement! Catch the Hawk!

So goes the blurb for Bruce Willis' latest "blockbuster", Hudson Hawk - although if the film's box office takings are anything to go by, it would seem that the majority of movie audiences would rather catch malaria than catch

this piece of high-budget, low-quality cinematic drivel. Costing a mammoth \$40 million, Hudson Hawk was released during the early part of the turbulent summer season as the year's big action movie - and then failed spectacularly to attract any interest from the punters, who seemed far more keen to see The Silence Of The Lambs. Some theorized that this was due to the action genre having run its course - but now that this school of thought has been blown

away by the runaway success of Terminator 2, the only logical reason left for Hudson Hawk's box office disaster is that it's a piece of poo.

Actually, that's a bit harsh - especially as poor old Bruce himself, who's got enough to worry about what with all his hair falling out, and is more or less responsible for Hudson Hawk - he's not only the star of the film, but the whole sorry affair was his idea in the first place. By the way, remove 'has it that

Despite the film's spectacular inability to impress either the critics or cinema audiences, Hudson Hawk has managed to spawn what is probably the most impressive film tie-in of the year.



after the film had finished shooting, Bruce's bald patch showed up rather embarrassingly on screen and an Industrial Light & Magic man called in to eliminate the offending area from the film by drawing hair over it electronically! If that's not a sure sign of failure, there's nothing is.

If that's nothing else, Hudson Hawk has managed to spawn what is probably the most impressive film tie-in of the year - simply because development team Special FX has ignored all the rules about staying faithful to the movie (give times out of ten, a sure sign of disaster) and concentrated instead on the business of producing a playable game. It may be controversial, but it's certainly a refreshing change - and the end result is all the better for it.

The plot of the film (such as it is) provides the game with its scenario and runs that streetwise cat burglar Mike Hawkins, fresh out of the clink after a five-year stretch, is anxious to go straight - but his plans fall violently by the wayside when he is blackmailed by a corrupt business syndicate run by a pair of psychotic mugglemenates to steal three valuable and closely-guarded objects which together

will help build Leonardo Da Vinci's fabled alchemy machine. The plan is, with the aid of the machine, to flood the market with gold and bring the world's economy to its knees. Or something like that. Anyway, the player, as Hawkins, must work his way through three platform-based levels, which in turn are divided into independent stages, to recover the trio of valuables. The stages themselves range from basic left-to-right strips where the objective is simply to get from one end to the other very quickly, to sprawling underground mazes where it's just as easy to get lost as it is to get killed.

However the style of gameplay may differ though, there's a strong comic element throughout that binds it all together. Gone are the giant spiders and elaborate technical trickeries of most licensed fare to make way for a more simplistic and effective console-style approach, with smaller, cuter, characters and functional but attractive backdrops. It's a technique that's already been employed to great success in the Risk Dangerous and Switchblade games to which, it must be said, Hudson Hawk owes a lot in terms of style and



It's easy, at first glance, to make comparisons between Hudson Hawk and that prince of the platform genre, Risk Dangerous 2. Both games use cerebral console-style graphics and combine simple puzzles with levels' tricky action to provide the fun. Some go as far as to proclaim Hudson Hawk to be a Risk rip-off. However, Hudson relies more often on straight arcade bobby-bashing gameplay than Risk, which only very rarely features combat with marauding enemies - and then it's limited to firing a single shot or dropping a well-timed bomb. In Hudson Hawk, the player often finds himself escorted by all manner of enemies and the use of a bouncing ball as a weapon means rather more skill is required to dispatch an enemy. On the puzzle front, the two games score evenly. Hudson, however, picks up a few bonus points for some of the more devices and intuitive traps that await on later levels. Ultimately, it's all a matter of where your tastes lie - there's no faulting Risk's first rate gameplay, although Hudson Hawk seems to offer a more rounded experience, combining the best of Risk with stages that call primarily on the player's more basic arcade instincts and the odd pleasant sub-game into the bargain. One thing's for sure though - there's no such thing as a free ride on either game.



LEVEL BY LEVEL

LEVEL ONE

The first level is a fairly simple, horizontal, fly-scrolling affair set in Rutherford's Auction Rooms, where Leonardo Da Vinci's famous horse sculpture, the "Horse" is to be sold. Naturally, Hawkins' job is to steal it before it goes under the hammer, so inside the sculpture is part of the crystal that is needed to operate the alchemy machine.

The first stage is set on the city rooftops, where Hawkins must climb from roof to roof and enter the building through an open window. Once inside, it's just a question of getting from one end of each of the building's floors to the other, where an elevator leads to the next. When the seventh floor (where the Horse is kept) has been reached, Hawkins must get to the safe and crack it to release the sculpture and enter the next level.

LEVEL TWO

Things get a lot more complicated as Hawkins' search for the next object, Don Vito's notebook, the Codex (which includes plans for the construction of the gold machine), it's kept under lock and key in the Vatican Museum in Rome, and the only way to get to it is via a complex route through the city's underground tunnels, pathways and air ducts. The stages vary greatly in style here, ranging from a Risk Dungeons-type adventure through the air ducts to a heady race against time through Rome's underground railway mail-delivery system.

LEVEL THREE

The final confrontation sees Hawkins struggling to pull and end to the whole alchemy project and foil his Mackmasters' plans by entering Leonardo Da Vinci's castle and destroying the mirrored crystal that drives the gold machine. The emphasis is not much more squarely on straight platform action here, with battles against a variety of bizarre henchmen including hopping kangaroos, TV-brewing thugs and posky fellow fliers.



The tower, which requires only occasional climbing, leads to some horizontal sections, but only if the right keys are not containing them.

High-powered machines can fire at regular intervals. Your pattern must be planned to ensure the gun through openings.



The types of window vary, but the last (left) needs to be opened from the door to the left, while the new (left) features indicate that the gun fires from the finger's position.



The object that takes Hawkins over the seventh floor, leading then to the other entrance to the open window above.

When there are no obvious paths to a window, Hawkins can use a set of air ducts to make his way. These ducts provide a pathway right down the city.



The stage ending, whenever it occurs, is depicted as a special feature for the player to see.

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Directly opposite Hawkins' path, there are power-ups that can be used to his advantage.



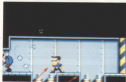
Hudson Hawk does a splendid job of capturing the feel of almost every type of platform game by varying the style of play from stage to stage - one minute the player is leaping from rooftop to rooftop, the next he's involved in a frantic race against time or contemplating some devious trap set-up.

It's a shame, too, that the layout of a world, but not open for him to free-roam before they enter a stage. (Speed of the camera.)

The second disadvantage is that the layout of a world, but not open for him to free-roam before they enter a stage. (Speed of the camera.)



One of the game's most famous moments, the rhinoceros chase, which is a great example of the game's style of play.



The game's style of play is varied, but for a tough challenge with that focus, and can easily transition to a more steady-paced.

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HUDSON HAWK

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content. In order to pursue its idea of a run-and-plate platform game, Special FX had to take rather a few liberties with its interpretation of the film. It's difficult, for example, to imagine Bruce Willis as cute, but here in the game he's presented as the sweetest little thing since Hub or Bob - and what's more, he's got plenty of hair. And while the levels are themed to match the relevant movie locations, the majority of supporting characters (in the full-disc) are as far removed from their celluloid counterparts as could possibly be imagined. Con-tending thugs float by on helium-filled balloons, some in the Vatican are impossibly well-endowed, security guards are unbelievably old and obnoxious, and there are even a few sprites that seem to have been thrown in just for the hell of it, such as a cringing Elvis impersonator to be fair. Though, the King's skeleton does make a short appearance in the movie and a pop-rickling galaxy!

While it's these outstanding enemies that provide the most immediate threat to the player's wellbeing, it's the landscapes themselves that prove the most problem. Manxton crumbles, leading to fatal falls, hidden traps and springs push the player from pillar to post with alarming regularity, fast-moving machinery threatens to crush, electric pylons give off deadly electric currents, spinning fire and slippery oil guide from every corner. Every stage, especially some of the more jaw-drooling scenarios that appear midway, is a masterpiece of fiendishly clever design.

Much of the game's action is fairly simple platform-based stuff, where pin-point jumps and exquisite timing are required to survive. The enemies themselves are pretty harmless individually, but when they attack in flocks, as is usually the case, things can get very sticky indeed. Again, an effective but unobtrusive link with the film material has gone to provide thoughtful gameplay elements, such as in the first level, where the player must be careful not to come into contact with the various alarm systems that guard the place - tripping a laser beam or being spotted by a moving security camera not only sets alarms, but also sounds alarm bells that alert guards to your presence, making matters even tougher. Decide if the key to suc-



In what a difference of the graphical levels and enemies, Hudson Hawk on the Amiga version (right) looks like the film's original (left) with its more detailed graphics and better-looking enemies.

Amiga version



The exquisite console-style graphics are undoubtedly Hudson Hawk's most impressive surface feature, and the music is jolly enough - although the MUSIC OFF key is likely to become a profound once the same tune has been heard a hundred times over. The use of minimal screen area is a la Switchblade on certain scenes works fine, and even in the busy full-screen sections there's never any danger of the action slowing down or the silly scrolling losing its footing. It's not exactly pushing the Amiga envelope, but it remains one of the prettiest and most characteristic games on the machine to date.

...and while each level has a time limit, it's often worth expending the time to negotiate a particular obstacle in the correct way, rather than hurrying around like a mad bull. The later technology is guaranteed to end in tears.

Should Hawkins need to defend himself, he comes equipped with an axe that being close for close can combat with guards and the like, while an unlimited supply of bouncing baseballs (which were nowhere to be seen in the film, but what the hell) comes in handy for dispatching foes at longer ranges. They are also invaluable for solving some of the game's more commonplace puzzles, like letting



switches to deactivate dangerous machinery or open doors that lead to later parts of a level. The mastery of control of these weapons, combined with dexterity when it comes to controlling Hawkins in general, is what if any success is to be had in some of the more tortuously-constructed stages. Certain scores consist of a succession of traps and obstacles that are so tightly designed, the only way the player can squeeze through is by means of pixel-perfect execution and half-the-leather speed. The result, when such frantic scores are completed with barely a second to spare, is immensely satisfying in the same fashion as such bits-of-the-month classics as Rick Dangerous and Prince of Persia.

A lot of work has gone into the construction of Hudson Hawk's many stages, and Special FX has



While Hudson Hawk is often infuriating, it's never dull, always managing to engage the player's interest with some wily trap or frantic action scene.



C O M P U T E R G A M E S

Great Racing Simulation
Publisher MicroPower
Developer Geoff Crammond
Price £75A



FORMULA ONE GRAND

W

by are there so few racing simulations around? Given that the games-buying public seems insatiably hungry for arcade-style racers and poly-goddriven simulations of anything from tanks to jets to helicopters to submarines to - Heaven forbid! - space shuttles, this deficit seems a little odd.

That said, many of the brave few who have entered this select arena have achieved more than admirable results. Donnard's *Ward Drive*, a conversion of the Atari coin-op, was a remarkably successful attempt at the genre, reaped only by the sheer physical impossibility of confidently negotiating the complete controls of a car, an automatic car admirably onto a standard joystick.

Electronic Arts' *Indyapolis* too, currently the ACE Benchmark for this genre, was not only a more than

adequate simulation but enormous fun into the bargain, especially for those with a particular (and peculiar) fondness for seeing flesh ground vicariously against metal.

Geoff Crammond, *Grand Prix*'s author, is no stranger to racing simulations. Way back in the Days of Gaming, when the BBC Model B was considered the machine to aspire to, he produced *Race*, a sort of proto-*Grand Prix*. Although undoubtedly an accurate simulation, it was perhaps a little too accurate,



There's a little of trouble and the solution of this issue for the other... appropriate for the... other center and last to... machine for everyone else.

with many players finding the car near impossible to control.

With Grand Prix the lessons of *Revs* have been well and truly learned and the result is the most visually exciting, involving and - more importantly - playable racing simulation yet available. It's a reproduction of the whole Grand Prix experience, complete with all sixteen tracks and ten-man drivers. In terms of atmosphere and authenticity, it's the nearest most are ever going to get to reality without descending behind and gloves.

The player can choose to race in either the World Championship and compete for personal glory or take part in the World Constructors' Championship, with the player earning points for his team depending on his finishing position. In addition, options are available to allow the player to practice either with or without other drivers on any of the tracks.

Practice is essential not only for the obvious yet much-needed experience of each track's tortuous twists and turns, but also to help in deciding how best to fine tune the car's performance parameters. In the workshop the player has almost unlimited control over the car's variables, right down to adjusting the car's gear ratios and downforce. Admittedly the novice is likely to skip part of this 'tune n' bolts



Mail the new Racing Simulation ACE Benchmark. Apart from the out-of-cockpit views, Formula One Grand Prix outshines Indianapolis 500 in almost every respect. In terms of being a simulation they are closely matched, though Grand Prix's strict though never slaying attention to detail wins out overall, but where Grand Prix really scores is in atmosphere and variety. Although Indy 500 is superb, one is always aware that it's a game and it can never completely absorb the player's attention.

to the same extent as Grand Prix. Also, Indy 500's single oval track soon became painfully boring - no such problems with Grand Prix's sixteen.

Particularly excellent, and present only in Grand Prix is the computer-aided driving which both instructs novice drivers and helps experts perfect their technique.

The only possible gripe is that some mobile camera angles would have been a nice touch. Otherwise, flawless.



GRAND PRIX



and get onto the terms, but experienced players will find that thoughtful use of the facility is essential for sharing those vital seconds off lap times.

Each Grand Prix race consists of a qualifying lap to ascertain the player's positions on the starting grid and then the race itself. "True" races last two laps or two hundred laps, which ever is the shorter, and thankfully it has been realized that such a marathon would test even the most ardent driving fiend's endurance to breaking point as well as being as good test of the quality of their joystick. Thus there's an option to play a percentage of a full race. For example, if the player selects 10% and normally six laps are driven in two hours, then the player will race just six laps.

But what of the the meat of the game, the actual racing itself? Put simply, it's sensational. No other game comes as close to simulating the sights and sounds of the real Grand Prix. The action is depicted in a unique and effective mixture of bitmapped images and polygons. And although it seems that every time a new polygon-driven game appears the

With Grand Prix the lessons of *Revs* have been well and truly learned and the result is the most visually exciting, involving and - more importantly - playable racing simulation yet available.

statement's made that the graphics are "fast and smooth", here it really is true. Some effects achieved, such as the seemingly curved polygons used as the bonets, make the speed even more astonishing.

The level of detail is remarkable to say the least. Each car has its own colour scheme matching those of its 'real life' counterpart, complete with the driver's helmet poking up out of the cockpit. The tracks are accurate bordering on the pedastals, with every hill, dip, pit, sign, building and tree reproduced in the precise locations that they would be found in reality.



FORMULA ONE GRAND PRIX

The Formula One approach. Not too much of a position actually, but at the moment start it can be a nightmare.

START!

Right here in front of the start grid is where the Formula One start-line starts for the start of the race.

From here you have plenty of time to work your way to the start. You try to get through the crowded pack if a good time is not possible.



With Formula One, the competition is so intense that the start of the race is a battle.

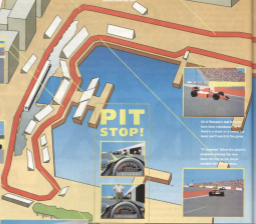
Each driver has a strategy, and it's not always the best. This means that you can't just drive up the track and win. You have to be smart, and you have to be fast. You have to be a good driver, and you have to be a good strategist.



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ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Grand Prix features eleven tracks in all. Below is some advice for six of them.

CIRCUIT DE MONACO, MONACO

(shown left) The car should be set up for as much groundhugging downforce as possible to cope with the track's many tight corners. Qualifying is of paramount importance because the narrow winding streets make it most impossible to overtake unless the opposition makes a mistake or crash - although at Monaco the two are usually synonymous.



SUZUKA, JAPAN

This is the only figure-eight track in the racing calendar. It's highly demanding mechanically because of its many tight bends. Cars should be set for medium to low downforce to take advantage of the two long straights.



PROSECCO, USA

This is the first race of the season. Speed around the streets of the city, the bends are mainly of the steady-degree variety, although the designers have tried to introduce some more varied corners to prevent driver boredom. Like Monaco, this an exciting circuit because the narrow track demands greater skill of the driver, especially when trying to overtake.

MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

This track features an incredibly long straight that can see cars reaching speeds as high as 200m.p.h. It's easy to get lost because the corners are all very similar. Due to constant rearing, the track surface is extremely bumpy.

Due to the narrow nature of the track, it's pretty difficult, using a variety of track and especially tight corners. Handle with care!

SOCKENHEIMING, GERMANY

The downforce should be completely turned down to take advantage of the track's many long straights. This makes the car a very twitchy and nervous one to drive. It's difficult to feel rhythm on this track, and the straights can result in the driving being concentration, or stay brief.

Key setbacks left by the steering car help corner in excellent sense of movement and speed.

A Grand Prix combines rigorous simulation of reality with a host of difficulty modifiers to make it a highly playable game for anyone from Granny to Sterling Moss.



Tip As a simulation, Grand Prix is impossible. It lacks in so many ways. For example, crashed cars don't just disappear; green-overalled stewards appear and push the car off-track, then a crane hoists it out of harm's way. Likewise, when the player drives into the pits the screen doesn't cut to some alienated picture of a pit crew at work; the player actually drives past the pit lanes, each with its own waiting pit crew.

The important thing to point out is that this detail isn't just a fail - it's essential in decreasing atmosphere. While there is the facility to decrease the detail levels for slightly smoother play, I find that most players will prefer to keep the detail level high.

All control is from the joystick.

Pushing left and right steers the car, while up and down act as accelerator and brake respectively. The player steers up or down the gears by holding fire when accelerating or braking. It's a sensible and very workable arrangement, but it does take a little time to get used to, especially if one is more used to arcade-style racing games - no longer can the player perform the old Outlaw trick of rapid braking even when accelerating to slip into low gear.

The control is always astonishingly smooth and responsive - the player never finds himself crashing or missteering in the wrong direction because he's try-

ing to turn the car too far with the joystick. However, through the use of the 'steering assist' feature the player can turn the car to a degree that will allow him to pass slower cars and also to pass cars that will not pass him. There's a 'steering assist' feature which allows the player to turn the car to a degree that will allow him to pass slower cars and also to pass cars that will not pass him. There's a 'steering assist' feature which allows the player to turn the car to a degree that will allow him to pass slower cars and also to pass cars that will not pass him.



Amiga version



Superb near-digital-quality video and more screens give way to literally jaw-dropping 3D - the poor old Amiga must be sweating its guts out to achieve the screen update on show here. Sampled engine and crowd sounds help accentuate the almost palpable Grand Prix atmosphere.



Atari ST version

An almost pixel-for-pixel copy of its Amiga partner. Although perhaps a small yet impressive test factor in places, the ST loses out inevitably in the sound stakes, with the engine's thump while a poor substitute for the Amiga's thwarty roar.

ing to compensate for sluggish control response, even on the rare occasions when update slows down is a huge amount of on-screen action.

The Formula One car is a tricky brute to drive, and certainly no task for someone whose nearest Grand Prix experience is watching down in the pits in the family min. Fortunately, a useful frustration is created by a number of driving 'aids' (see the 'Help' file) - but for a full - oh yes - run-down. Each makes the task of taming the car that bit easier. Indeed, with all the aids active there's little left to do but steer left and right. However, those thinking that they provide an easy route to Championship success are sadly mistaken - the computer switchers throw out as the player progresses through the track.

Each of the player's driving opponents has been modelled with their own - for the want of a better term - 'personality'. It's not surprising to be pulling



That's the steering wheel that you'll see when you're in the driver's seat. The steering wheel is a very important part of the game.

That's the steering wheel that you'll see when you're in the driver's seat. The steering wheel is a very important part of the game.



Just the view of the crowd built with player approvals the most advanced racing strategy game ever, with the most advanced physics engine ever, controlling and going like real.

Grand Prix game, the most realistic one of the world.



R A T I N G S



Specialty
controls, but
and
strategies
to improve
the player's
experience
in the
game.

Formula One Grand Prix isn't so much leading the pack as lapping it.

triumph of both programming and design.

Formula One Grand Prix isn't so much leading the pack as

lapping it.

away from the starting grid and in the distance we four or five cars getting involved in a rather nasty metal-crushing pile-up. This inconsistency on the part of the computer-controlled cars makes a refreshing change to the usual "follow-the-leader" perfect driving seen in other racing games - even if it did have to be programmed in! Not only does this provide a real challenge - these guys don't seem about as loquaciously predictable patterns - it also helps ensure that all-important sense of atmosphere. It's easy to start believing that these are real people out there on the track.

As is seemingly standard in today's simulations, Grand Prix features several alternatives to the standard first-person cockpit view. The player can "roll backwards and forwards through the different cars to see the current view from their cockpit. At first, this may not sound useful, but it in fact turns out to be handy for finding out where, say, the leader or the car immediately behind is. While doing this, the computer maintains steady though definitely not race-winning control over the car, making sure it doesn't crash or come off the track.

In addition, there's a TV-style view from a series of cameras mounted on the trackside, each of which can be followed the player's car as it passes. Unfortunately there's no zoom facility, the player simply has to make do with what's available. It's a real pity that there aren't more views available, such as the heli-copter shot in *IndyCar* 2000.

At the risk of sounding like an over-enthusiastic layman, it has to be said that Grand Prix is so perfect that it truly is hard to find any criticisms. One may carp about the lack of out-of-cockpit views, but then again how many real Formula One drivers have such an option? A triumph of both programming and design, Formula One Grand Prix isn't so much leading the pack as lapping it.

■ David Upchurch

Help Me!

Even if the player thinks that gear stick is about from their mates about the clothes they wear, Grand Prix's five driving aids should get them around the track in one piece.

() Automatic braking - The computer controls the player's braking. The computer assesses the player's speed and their position on the track and decides whether braking is necessary. It makes winning very difficult, because it's conservative braking conspires to stop the player over-taking, especially on corners. Useful at first, but soon de-selected.

(H) Automatic Gearing - Very handy. Lets the player forget about all that up-first-back-fire malarkey and just get on with the winning. But don't forget that the computer switches on all these aids out eventually, so the gear switching has to learn some day.

(↑) Direction Pointer - There are few things worse than driving along at 200 mph, and seeing a pack of similarly speedy vehicles coming directly head-on. Thank goodness, then, for this aid which always forces the car to take the right way around the track.

(♦) Indestructibility - The Grand Prix world is a rough and tumble one, especially when the player's starting out. Fortunately this nifty option that makes the player's car as hard as nails and totally impervious to any damage.

(—) Best Line - Although ideally the player learns by experience where best to position his car to take maximum advantage of every corner, it does take some time. This option draws a line on the road indicating the optimum path to take around the track.

930

930

The most fun you can have with a high flying machine. Really hard to get to be the best but rewarded by the precision control of the graphics, and then some extra options of assistance are then replaced by experience for the next game (and the result of playing with some that require from starting when to launch itself on that a little only need to find a little more than the other, and challenge and it's more than possible from winning the Grand Prix. Add the other benefits of having fun with and you have a game that's more fun to play.

930

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Genre: Strategy/Action
 Publisher: Team 17
 Developer: Team 17
 Price: £24.99

ALIEN BREED

What is it about the Alien that makes it so crowd-pleasingly scary? Is it the creature's utter implacability - the fact that it can't be bargained or reasoned with? Or is it the sinister absence of eyes, which imply that no matter how hard you try to hide it will somehow track you down? Or the



Team 17's Alien Breed is a top-down strategy game that's a lot like the original, but with a more modern, action-oriented feel.

Team 17's Alien Breed is a top-down strategy game that's a lot like the original, but with a more modern, action-oriented feel.

hideous way it uses still-living humans as fleshy incubators for its young? Whatever the reasons, there can be no doubt that the Alien is the most popular monster in modern cinema.

There have been attempts to cash in on the Alien's money-spinning qualities before. New defunct Argus made a creditable job of translating the first film's suspenseful atmosphere (and even cloned the cult screen anti-computer, while Electric Dreams produced not one but two (count 'em) games based on the gang-bro sequel Alien, one written in the US and the other produced right here in dear old Blighty). Furthermore, aside, the UK interpretation, an exploitation game even shoot-'em-up, was the superior to the six-film movie-game affair of the American effort. And even as I write, Microsoft are putting the finishing touches on another game to tie-in with the release of the second Alien sequel-only next year. Apart from official tie-ins, there have been many

other games that have 'borrowed' - some might say plagiarised - the Alien's iconoclastic imagery to add extra 'Goreph' to the gameplay. By far, the closest the close resemblance between 8-Type's end-of-level boss and the Alien did a certain thrill to the otherwise standard shoot-'em-up task of blasting across belts out of the screen?

And now we have Alien Breed, the first full-price title from down writers turn game creators Team 17. Alien Breed can best be summed up as the Alien license that should have been. It not so much borrows from the films as completely emulates it, but by grafting Alien's atmosphere into Gauntlet-esque gameplay, Team 17 have come up with an addictive - albeit unoriginal - winner.

But at a price, Alien Breed is a game the Amiga owners only, and our complete machines at that. This rubber-holy stone isn't quite as shiny as it first appears, considering that all new Amiga came



ALIEN BREED



Special abilities will be placed on face that is not of their side.

Damage-dealing skills will come in handy here, such as using damage to cover to fire at the alien. The alien is generally most effective when the player's strength is weaker than a new alien card or when it is facing cards from other than light.

Many, many, many Green credits have been been heavily modified on the deck. Many of the Green's movements, and can be picked up by the Intermittent Alpha. However, still need to be replaced and replace from the table. Computer like money where there is some weakness. Computer's behavior is often to fight to gain the best's state.

Key: Very weak. Can be found lying on the floor or caught in its own face from the other computer. Often it will move to keep an eye on how many there are around it and possibly give warning whenever it getting close to a zone with an eye out.

Get to know what these red line will: you'll see using them. They're like computer. The alien's very own state. When necessary it will be used to try to use the alien's health as a shield, unless you're not and you're right, being up a way of the current level. (It's hard to read that the illustration below represents that one half of the computer. Both the, which is sure to be the most basic in the game.)



Damage are one of the game's most powerful weapons. The alien is just starting to make some headway when it's killed. It's not out of luck, causing some head-bashing at the alien's health. (The alien is not).



Use the table (Map) to show your cards assembly using the minimum number of cards. The alien is not the most powerful. Use to show that sometimes, especially, sometimes there are often still light.

Deck 1



The deck 10, however, it may seem but on the left. (The alien is not). The alien is not the most powerful. Use to show that sometimes, especially, sometimes there are often still light.



When the alien is not the most powerful. Use to show that sometimes, especially, sometimes there are often still light.

Each of these cards are using the new form of health by the alien's side, and a card that should be used to a. (The alien is not). The alien is not the most powerful. Use to show that sometimes, especially, sometimes there are often still light.

Although the alien is not the most powerful. Use to show that sometimes, especially, sometimes there are often still light.



Right. There are extremely narrow and unorthogonally oriented paths. It also stops the aliens, so it's possible to get two floors into the main warehouse. Being in a little better - the aliens aren't completely stupid - so don't wonder too much about this.

The doors are both the player's best friend and their worst enemy. Activating one may guard your back (or force) but not all important ones.



FULL DECK

Alien Breed takes the player through six deadly levels. But what does the player have to do on each, and what can he expect to meet... or... meet? Read on...

DECK ONE: Having just landed in the ship's hangar, the player's task is simple - find the lift. Few aliens, so this is a really just a warm-up session for what lies ahead.

DECK TWO: The player must make his way to the station's core computer system. Once this has been deactivated the deck will begin to self-destruct - so get out straight!

Alien pressure begins to increase, with the first appearance of small, but not necessarily weak, four-legged xenomorphs.

DECK THREE: The station's power regulator has been damaged. The player must find and repair it. Sliding platforms are the jolly way to cross trenches. More aliens and a giant centipede creature to get past.

DECK FOUR: The player has to locate the security vault and recover the station's research data. Player now has to contend with crushing walls and stretchable forcefields. As you'd guess, lots more aliens.

DECK FIVE: The lid is high. Find the station's self-destruct, kick it in and get back to the ship as soon as possible. Sparring and slinking the valves in the floor mean a careless trooper could lead to his death.

DECK SIX: (Spoiler!) The lift breaks and plunges down to the sixth deck, the alien hatching. Slipshod? Escape, preferably alive. Bounding at the seams with very pleased aliens. And who knows, if you're lucky you might get a meeting with the Queen...

Alien Breed's difficulty has been well judged. By matching the player's access to higher-powered weapons with the aliens' strength, Team 17 have ensured that the odds never swing wildly in either's favour.



to buy a more powerful weapon (we the 'Uzi gun...') how to find out what's in stock, and anything from an ammo clip to a set of door keys to a new life, using the credits found left lying on the deck floor by the careless deceased station staff. There's also the facility to examine a full deck map, check performance statistics and even have a relaxing game of Ping!

Players 'lock in' to the network by walking up to one of the blue terminals and hitting the **Enter**. Although it's a good system that prevents the player having to fumble for the keyboard in the heat of battle, the proximity check could have done with a little tweaking. Too often the player finds himself on-line by accident because he happened to be just a tad too close to the terminal when firing his machine gun. The 'lagging-out' procedure is a little annoying, too. The arena test is split into letters by letter teletype-fashion, which can make for an annoying break in the action if the player simply wants to check something quickly. But although mildly frustrating, neither of these niggles detract in seriously from the game.

The game's difficulty has been well judged. The levels, though large, are split into 'zones', so the player always knows where he's heading in the right direction or not. As the player progresses downwards the zones become more convoluted, the alien more finical and the lanes terminal more scarce. By cleverly matching the player's access to higher-powered weapons with the strength of the opposition, the programmers have ensured that the odds never swing wildly in either the player's or the alien's favour, and the game provides a constant challenge. Unfortunately there's no password system, and it can get a little dull having to make through the early levels over and over again.

In terms of recreating the Alien's claustrophobic

he can't help feeling that, given Team 17 awarded itself an extra \$12K to play around with, its first full-price game could and perhaps should have been rather more ambitious than a top-notch Gauntlet clone.

Uzi 9mm...

Initially the players are armed with a single machine gun. Its pathetic rat-a-tat-tat fire is barely sufficient defence against the first alien's hordes, let alone the hard-as-nails brutes that attack later on. Join us as we stride down the aisles of Game-It-Like, and browse through the juicy selection of weapons on offer...

WINTEROPS PPS TWIN-FIRE RING - For a paltry \$2800 the player can buy this rapid-firing little beauty. Although a damn sight better than the machine gun, it's still not that worthy a purchase unless you're really desperate, although it's predictable fire pattern can be a bonus in some situations.



AMMET MPF FLAMING THROWER - Powerful but erratic, this spits out blazing bouzoungs of fire that bounce wildly around the corridors and off the walls. Superb for confined spaces, but it's unpredictability can result in disastrous consequences near fire doors. Price! \$1800 Cr.

INTER PLASMA SHOTGUN - At \$3000 Cr this is probably the best upgrade for the first-time buyer. Each squeeze of the trigger causes a intense mass of blue plasmas to sweep out in front of the player. Frying tonight? Oh yes, we must certainly are.



INTEX EBON FLAMETHROWER - A real beauty this - looks good, feels good and packs one Hell of a kick, all for only \$600 Cr too. Let the smell of cooked alien fill your nostrils as you wave this in their ugly insect-like faces. You know they love you for it really. And if they don't - tough.

ROYAL MIDDLE LAUNCHER - Probably the most best immediate upgrade after the Plasma Shotgun at its moderately cheap \$1300 Cr, and well worth saving those valuable pennies for. The Launcher's armour-piercing shells make short work of even the hardest alien carapace.



INTER ARC LASER GUN - Costing a hefty \$4000 Cr this is by far the most expensive weapon, but by George it's worth it. An essential item in any psychopath's armory, it emits streams of rippling multi-bead laser rays, incinerating anything in its path. Almost makes you feel sorry for the ugly little bugs. Almost.



'one versus a hundred' atmosphere. Alien fired comes closer than any of the official tie-in mentioned titles. The alien graphics are similar enough to their movie counterparts to evoke memories of the film without forcing a lawsuit, while the sound is strong enough to threaten a claim of copyright infringement. The enemy AI is well handled with the rattle of the machine gun and the high-pitched squeals of the blasted alien. It seems that everything has an appropriate example, from loading a new ammo clip to a door opening.

There are constant messages from a female computer voice in a "Mother", telling the player which way he's now entering or if he's low on ammo. The best example of the game's superb use of sound occurs when the self-destruct is activated: the life support beam gradually starts to pitch and tremor as the clock ticks down, while the computer voice intones "Destruction Imminent" with increasing urgency. Admittedly it's an old technique generating risk, but it still works.

Many have speculated what would happen when demo writers gave up trying to put five-million colours and five-hundred W0Bs on screen at one



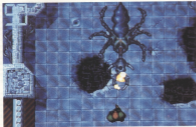
Amiga version

Presentation-wise, this is Mr Slick of Miskelville. Even the Fobbin Richter intro to the fast full-screen scrolling. Everything - apart from the average sprite design and animation - is of a faultlessly high quality. Provided you have the memory, this is an essential purchase for trigger-happy gamers everywhere.

Download On the second disk the player's task is to manoeuvre the arm transporter around and grab localisation. The well-known side effect of carrying the disk is well-documented. The disk spins until you hear the sound of the transporter malfunctioning. It stops and lights come on again. The screen is black. The player continues to move in the safety of the disk's blacked-out television.

Graphics From three screens down to three screens up (the screen is much the same as usual) and the image which is on the screen itself.

Sound The two sound channels are in all in one direction plus there are some effects in the background. The sound is not all that good. The only one is the sound of the music. The sound of the other two channels is not all that good. The only one is the sound of the music. The sound of the other two channels is not all that good.



time and actually used their undeniable programming talents to create a game. Well, now we know. Alien Breed is a fine action romp, slickly crafted and possessing sufficient depth to make it rewarding to play. There's plenty of features which I'm pleased to see the team have included and the whole project seems to have had some genuine care and effort put into it. However, one can't help feeling that, since Team 17 awarded itself an extra task to play around with, its fast full-price game could and perhaps should have been rather more ambitious than a top-notch Genesis clone.

■ David Upchurch



RATINGS



Fast The game is quick when you're in the action.

Sound The music is good, but the sound effects are not all that good.

Graphics The graphics are good, but the sound effects are not all that good.

875 RATING

The game presentation and ease to play are good, but the sound effects are not all that good. The graphics are good, but the sound effects are not all that good. The game is quick when you're in the action. The music is good, but the sound effects are not all that good. The graphics are good, but the sound effects are not all that good.





Game Simulation
 Publisher: Frontrow
 Developer: Glider
 Price: £78A



First flying the bridge. Thanks to the easy fly-by wire controls, the control of a MiG-29M Super is not as tedious as you might think. The speed of the MiG-29M Super is not as fast as you might think.

Ultimate MiG-29M Super. Players will often find it hard to get a MiG-29M Super to fly as fast as you might think. The speed of the MiG-29M Super is not as fast as you might think.

Somewhere in South America a coup has taken place. Stinking yellow-toothed rebel forces have taken control, to a greater or lesser extent, of an area some 20,000 kilometres square. United Nations resolution 828 dictates that unless the rebels surrender immediately to Peacekeeping troops,

the area will have to be reclaimed by force. Needless to say, the rebels pay no heed to threats from silly little facilities in cyan heliports and stay put, urging the UN to do their worst.

Taking control of the MiG-29M, the most feared combat aircraft in the world and pride of the Soviet air force, the player's mission is to embark on a campaign of strikes, each loosening the rebels' stranglehold on the area and eventually ensuring the enemy flits out of the country.

Distant from the first MIG game from Denmark, released only a year ago, MIG-29M is essentially one long mission, broken down into clusters of manageable combat chunks. The aim is to give the feeling of a more coherent campaign, of actually taking part in a war rather than playing a set of passive missions. MIG-29M's premise is best described as a midpoint between a Microspace theatre-of-war style affair and the slightly disjointed though more intensely gratifying feel of Interceptor.

If this outing was to succeed, it was vital that while addressing the problems of the short-term and busy appeal of the first game, the player didn't feel as if he was left adrift without any direction, simply flying across thousands of kilometres of air space with no aim.

The game's success on this count is at least partially down to the limitations put upon the player. By only allowing only four waypoints to be stored in the aircraft's automatic navigation system, it's ensured that there's little chance of the player feeling swamped with options.

Before takeoff, an overview of the Mission screen shows the entire campaign area with bridges, roads and supply depots marked. Four waypoints are already positioned on the map, all of which can be moved around at will. In their initial positions they are, respectively, the home runway, an enemy runway, a road bridge over a river and an enemy supply depot. Although the player can position any waypoint wherever he chooses, it rapidly becomes clear that there is a particular order of strikes which must be performed, each weakening the overall enemy position. Carefree heroes such as trying to destroy the main enemy base on the first flight will seldom yield any reward other than a surface-to-air missile up the exhaust.

The game is most constructively played as combat in stages, attacking an enemy runway and then taking it over, then using it as a home base from which another enemy installation can be attacked and so on until all the elements on the map are back

MIG 29M SUPER



iG29M Superforum's predecessor, the comparatively duller Strid Might (above) was in every sense a first step. Even when the first game was produced, Dornik and Sims had clearly been paying attention to the state of the market and had noted the saturation of heavyweight products. Even before Core turned up and waved their "No-nonsense flight game" banner with Thunderhawk, Dornik had produced a flight game with all the over-complexity cut out. However, in the process some of the long-term appeal got sliced away too. Here we have a game with the better qualities of IP's steady and some genuine depth too. Not bad.



IP has the three-credit fee that underlies the actual *IP* Microprose name (although some credits continue to be sold without credit). The focus of the fee goes only to promotion in the game.



IP has the three-credit fee that underlies the actual *IP* Microprose name (although some credits continue to be sold without credit). The focus of the fee goes only to promotion in the game.

and US control. Winning each stage will make the player's life meter turn on. By destroying supply lines, and isolating particular camps, the enemy forces are less capable of transporting the player's attacks on other installations.

Once waypoints have been decided and weapons selected from either the default combination of both air and surface missiles or the player's own particular favourite setup, it's time to get the MIG airborne. From its customary position on the runway the aircraft can be brought into the air in a matter of seconds. Simple, logical keyboard controls minimize any consultation of the computerized manual during play and once airborne the player can appreciate the abilities of both the game and the plane alike.

A factor which made the first MIG game so playable was that the aircraft itself is so pig in fly. Plenty of combat flight aims are hamstrung by complex and fussy controls forcing the player to pay more heed to the joystick and dials than the world outside. Not so here. Everything is provided for the player's com-

fort and ease of use. The HUD is clear and simple and information is duplicated all over the place. If the player is concerned about altitude when tracking down a target, he need only glance at the altimeter on the HUD which is also pointing the way toward his prey. Likewise, if he's checking to see if his air location have been knocked out by enemy fire, he can still keep the best line for his weapon home with no effort. It's all displayed in an utterly sensible manner on his control console. The ergonomics here are just as they should be. The player never has to think where to look.

In addition, the fly-by-wire set-up of the new MIG is simulated well to make the flight even less unnecessarily stressful than before. In order to minimize instability and grey/blackouts caused by pulling too many G's, a computerized buffer smooths out the player's occasionally frantic, stick-wrenching before settling them on the aircraft. Likewise, an automatic stabilizing device will straighten up the aircraft whenever necessary, removing the frustrating need to continually nudge and tap the stick into a

m iG29M's premise is best described as a midpoint between a Microprose theatre-of-war style affair and the slightly disjointed yet manageable feel of interceptor.

FULCRUM

FLIGHT DECK

The whole point of MIG29M is that it doesn't break down into easy-to-handle missions. In the same way that lots of flight sims do, instead, the plot unfolds over a single mission - to liberate a Southern American coast by force from its newly acquired rebel leaders. So, to give a better impression of how the game plays, we've taken a jolt from each of the major elements found within the mission and detailed them for you.

Working around in an essentially obstacle-pattern, the player must perform a sort of leapfrogging action, attacking enemy airplanes and then claiming them as his own in order to reach later targets successfully.

To begin with, life is worryingly easy, with the player facing greater difficulty in actually landing his plane on a clean stretch than shooting enemy fighters and evading little anti-aircraft incursions. However, as the game goes on, each take-off could well prove to be the player's last. Toward the end of the mission life becomes quite heavily impossible, with enemy jets herding the player into the ground and anti-aircraft guns blasting him as he hits it.

The learning curve from slow and easy combat scenarios to deadly end-of-the-party stuff could have been a touch more gentle, but hey, this is war, after all.

That said, even novice fliers will find some of the frustrating obstacles other games throw in their path. The MIG is a great aircraft to fly and the new fly-by-wire system will do away with all those frustrating over-compensatory joystick jerks.

What Donuts really need to do is enter to establish the MIG games as heavyweight play-for-fee flight combat games to bury out a mission disk to extend the longevity of an already excellent games system.

(Right) The Mountain Range. A lot of a mission of info about terrain are ready rather great of the world's geographical reality, while the rest of the screen simply takes an option.

When the player is in control flight, it's best to make use of the auto-stabilisation to avoid the rest of landing around.



Even when being controlled by an automatic system, it's worth making use of the auto-stabilisation, as this will help to keep the plane steady.



It's worth knowing that all jets will attempt to land with some degree of precision, so being in the wind and speed of the wind will give their automatic flow.



MIG29M's strongest suit is the storyline and development of the plot through the different stages in the missions. It may not be the most original yarn ever, but it serves its purpose well.

and on the map for a player, as the mission to liberate the coast by force is always a mission that will be a challenge through the whole mission.



Enemy flight deck showing the enemy plane's position, showing enemy planes. (Right)

(Right) A big landing area that requires a lot of precision. The player will see a lot of the map before the end of the flight, so it's best to be in the wind and speed of the wind will give their automatic flow.





When the vehicle is positioned above the road, it is then time for the player to use their position to influence the flow of traffic.



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When the vehicle is positioned above the road, it is then time for the player to use their position to influence the flow of traffic.

320 - ventral position to simply achieve level flight.

Once the desired speed and altitude of flight has been achieved, the MIG's progress can be viewed from a host of angles. Interior or exterior views behind and in front, left and right, top and standard views are available. Also, for more eye-boggling benefits than any addition to combat scenarios, the player can position his "cameras" in the most recently fired missile as it screams toward its target or even, at his most perverse, inside the target itself.

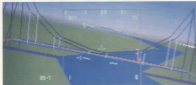
Combat in *MiggyM* is never more than a minute away. The target clusters are constructed to teach the player just enough in one situation to know how to deal with the next. The first opponents, for example are rather lightly defended and there's little need for any but the most panicky feybor to raise any point of the action. Targets within range can be cycled through by tapping the appropriate buttons. A little square box will also highlight the target's position on screen. Should the target be outside the player's cone of vision, a direction line will lead from the centre of the HUD to the target. Thus, aircraft can be chased around the skies a most fulfilling manner, as the player is forced to balance the need to turn more quickly than his opponent to avoid being locked into his enemy's sights with the constant threat of blocking out under too much gravitational pressure.

Engagements are, for the most part, the most difficult yet satisfying part of *MiggyM*. Enemy planes will lock on to the player and chase them to death gives half a chance. They're decent enough pilots and it's tricky to catch them out. It should be the player's foremost priority in any combat situation to ditch any enemy planes, as they will pose for more of a threat than any anti-aircraft fire that may be encountered.

Able from all the oh-so-complex manoeuvres detailed in the manual, probably the easiest and per-



aretree heroism such as trying to destroy the enemy base on the first flight will seldom yield any reward other than a surface-to-air missile up the exhaust.



Enemy birds are usually fast about heading through when small explosions were to reveal the aircraft's path.

Such manoeuvres of the MIG appearing to see one of the enemy supply lines. Remaining near and within the 'no-fly' zone and lighting white, neutral.

tely functional dogfighting move is to thrust away from the enemy plane and force them to chase at top speed. Then, by slamming on the brakes and killing all thrust, the MIG decelerates and turns in as tight a circle as possible. If performed correctly, the move will break the enemy's position and will drag their little green line around from behind to about 90 degrees away from directly in front of the MIG. Increasing thrust and rearing the aircraft, most players will be able to lock on with an air-to-air missile. Since the enemy jet will be now by trying a similar rapid deceleration in order to turn, they will be slow enough to be hit on most occasions.

Intercepting enemy missiles can generally be avoided with some frantic flaps/shield dropping and adhering to the basic rule of not flying in a straight line for too long in combat.

Players finding themselves on the receiving-end of enemy fire will experience a number of scenarios. Either their jet will perform a roller pattern to rain fire with smoke puffing out of their tail or an increasing number of instruments will cook out. Once in this situation, it's wiser to just turn around and let the enemy home in on only part of the aircraft's tail.

While both the handling of the plane and the pacing of the missions are admirable, MIG's graphic style is worthy of comment, though for different reasons. Critics of the first game suggested that the landscape was a little Spartan and would do with some detail. This time, Simis has added lakes, fields and trees as decorative touches to the bridges, tanks and radar towers which actually play a part in the combat.

Most of these elements sit well with the rest of the game, but the decision to use fractals to construct a mountain range in the southeast area of the combat arena seems a little strange. In a game where so much of the visual appeal is based on the clean, smooth look of the graphics, to have a distant mountain suddenly fragmenting into lots of little triangles as it is flown-over is a little disconcerting. Apart from frays anything else, it makes the playfield look more like the Final Landscape than that of a flight simulator. The shaky realism of the effect isn't helped by the unusually symmetrical nature of the mountain range either.

On all other visual fronts, MIG:GII is no slouch. The graduated skyline, the explosions of targets and especially the burning and smoking exhaust flames which follow from damaged enemy aircraft make the game look really quite special.

In what level of success have Denmark and Simis half? Well, on virtually all accounts, a great deal. Despite minor niggles about some of the graphics and perhaps a worrying doubt that over-depends the more grand feel of the mission, it may still be a long way short of a Microsoft title for sheer length of spend, MIG:GII Superflakern delivers the goods. It's also one of the most entertaining and straight-forward polygon combat flight sims around.



PC version

Machines running at over 12MHz will be adequate for MIG's needs. The option to turn off the graduated skyline will further aid players with slower machines. Despite the rather unpleasant interface used in the briefing and pilot-debriefing modes MIG is a fine example of clean, ordered game design, with a gloss for everything and everything in its place, capable of holding easily with games from companies more conventionally associated with both PCs and simulations than Denmark.



Here too is the highlight of the landscape as the mission is the abandoned the enemy-occupied airfield and the enemy command centre.



The weak view interface helps to a great extent in that the first enemy conference will actually manage to be lost their words until the possibility of being the target only really does become a possibility in the video.



R A T I N G S



860

There's no doubt that MIG:GII gets the attention from the standard rather complex briefing menu sequence. While you'll find some detail there on the level of intended immersion, only beginning to see what the mission has been planned and where it'll lead to in the 3D, the amount of on-screen information does seem the good side of that you can't quite get to see those files.



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console reviews

Over the page, console fans, you'll find the start of ACE's new console section, a suite of pages set aside in the magazine for nothing other than console games. Each month in the mag we'll be devoting a similar number of pages to all things console with the very latest titles on both import and general release reviewed in full colour.

Don't forget that all the new console games we receive each month will be detailed in our Reviews Directory section at the back of the magazine, so even if you don't find anything here to suit your tastes, you may well find something in the pink that'll do the trick.

This month's games:

91 - Road Rash

Even the beautiful graphics can't distract from Electronic Arts' new boggle: a motorcycle racing game with more action than you would believe. Race across country down winding roads while fist-fighting other riders and motorists. 100% smasher/smasher fun!

93 - El Viento

Magazine owners never seem to tire of the stalwart old beat-'em-up formula and this time we've got two examples of just that. El Viento, the ugly sister of the pair features some entertaining enough fighting but lacks graphic appeal. Nevertheless, it's worth examining for sheer novelty value alone.

94 - Piv Soccer

They said it couldn't be done and they were right! Well, they said it should be done and they were wrong in almost the truth. Kick Off, the best game in the history of the world (official) has turned out to be a very old affair on the PlayStation. Oh dear.

96 - Streets of Rage

Hit those women! Kick those dwarves! Yes indeed, this is what fighting games are supposed to be all about. Team up with a mate and do battle with the evil forces that have taken over a city and turned it into a New Jack England. Broken bottles! Knives! Superduper! Cool!

99 - Jerry Boy

Jerry Boy, as it should have been titled involves a little squishy shape crossing a hazard-packed land abounding monsters and doing good deeds. Before you turn away in disgust, take a look at the review.

91



93



94



96



99



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It's never easy trying to pump fresh ideas into a tired old genre - although with its latest effort *Road Rash*, Electronic Arts has had more success than most in recent times. It's essentially a motorcycle racing game, but with one novel twist - violence. Despite the game's contemporary setting, *Road Rash*'s designers have had no qualms about making the whole thing as outlandish as possible. What games for a storyline concern a cowboy band of speed freak bikers, known as Rashers, who race each other across the country for cash prizes. Apparently nobody ever bothered with the formality of writing a rulebook and so more or less anything goes. As a result, the days of trying to sneak past the vehicle ahead of you are long gone - in *Road Rash* all that's required is a hefty kick, punch or slap to knock the offending rider off the road!

The *Road Rash* consists of five individual races, each on a different track, and each with fifteen riders. EA's previous "alternative" sports games *Crash 'n' Die* and its sequel *Die Cr Die* have obviously been a strong source of inspiration here, as the feel is very similar, consisting of lots of "wreckle tubularizer dealer" type quotes in the pre-race dialogue. Each of the computer-controlled riders is named and have their own personalities - some are even violent than others.



Electronic Arts' strategy on the *Road Rash* title was to make it suitable for all those bikers interested in the game, although it's not quite as good as it looks.

Early falling out can make a race start off the best of times.

ROAD RASH

Race hard! Hit harder! Mad Max meets Super Hang-On in ELECTRONIC ARTS' latest Sega offering. But is it wheehee good or wheehee wheehee good?

The racing itself is, for the most part, of the standard Super Hang-On variety, but with a number of neat twists. For a start the tracks are considerably more treacherous than ones before seen, comprising lethal hairpin turns, hair-raising hills and all manner of obstacles. Cars prove the main problem, with added peril provided by roadside trees, signposts and grazing animals. A nice touch is that, when the player crashes, rider and bike are separated in a spectacular accident sequence, often with the unfortunate biker seen skidding across the terrain and into yet more obstacles! It's nice seeing a car back in the stricken cycle so that racing can resume.

Combat between riders is limited but effective, consisting of a basic punch, a more powerful kick and face-slay and a devastating crash over the victim's head with a cycle - although the latter move can only be executed once the weapon has been snatched from another biker. To knock a rider out of the race, their status must be depleted by a series of blows - although a single well-timed hit may be enough to eliminate an enemy. Not so reliable

are the highway patrolmen that try constantly to pull over bikers the speeding - get caught and it's a night in jail and a hefty fine. The overall goal is to win the *Road Rash* tournament, which is facilitated by the accumulation of cash - the better the race result, the higher the prize, and money goes towards buying more powerful cycles. It's all too easy to lose cash, though, with the aforementioned speeding fines and no repair costs if the bike is wrecked by consistent crashing.

Road Rash is certainly not your average race game - it's faster than most for a start, and once into the game, it becomes apparent that the violence aspect is not just a gimmick, but a proper gameplay aspect that makes the game all the more fun and involving. It takes a lot of skill to knock a rider off his bike, and mastery of the moves is vital. The game has a bit of character and atmosphere, and the racing action is some of the most exhilarating seen on the Drive. Highly recommended to those looking for a quality racer with that little bit extra.

■ Gary White

860 MEGABYTE RACING



It takes a short while to get a hang of the controls and fighting moves, but once the player is proficient, it's difficult to get *Road Rash* down. The only slight drawback is the small number of courses - only five - and the lack of any great variation between them, which is likely to eat into the game's long-term appeal. There's a real feeling of speed provided by *Road Rash*'s snappy screen updates, and Bob Hubbard's thumping in-game soundtrack provides real atmosphere. The graphics themselves aren't quite as clean as they might have been, but nevertheless *Road Rash* remains one of the year's more impressive Megadrive offerings.

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Charles Bronson had it say. The crime-ridden fictional city that is the setting for Sega's latest big-budget offering makes the Brons look like Italian. The story goes that a once peaceful and thriving metropolis has been torn apart by a recent crime syndicate run by an unknown overlord. With the police either bought off or too frightened to act, the streets have been reduced to a wasteland ruled by gangs and hoods. These cops in particular, though, have already taken more than they can stand and, after being refused permission to form a special task force to combat city crime, have turned in their badges and taken to the streets to seek things out in their own way.

Needless to say, these cops don't waste time with hand-to-hand or night. In *Streets of Rage* the objective is simply to kick the crap out of every last knuckle



STREETS

in the city, on a trail that will eventually lead the player to Mr. Big himself and the final showdown to decide the fate of the city. But whatever the intricacies of the storyline, what *Streets of Rage* boils down to is a damn fine beat-'em-up in the Final Fight tradition. It's so much in the Final Fight tradition, in fact, that in a lot of respects there's little to differentiate it from CapCom's coin-op classic.

The players progress through eight levels of 3D-rendered cityscape, starting out in the ghetto and ending up in the luxuriously furnished palace of Mr. Big. Along the way the vigilantes pass through a number of bizarre scenes, including a tropical beach, a car park, a factory and a bridge—in one level all

The city is in turmoil! Is SEGA's answer to Final Fight tough enough to clean it up?

the action takes place on board a boat! The fighting itself is fairly rudimentary, but all the more rewarding for it, as the control system does most of the work. From the basic combination of jump and attack controls, the player can execute a dazzling array of cool-breaking moves and acrobatic martial arts techniques. The combat is context-sensitive, so the more a combative creature is faced out just on the player's command, but also on how he and his

opponent are positioned. Attacking from the front results in a simple punch or kick, while coming in from behind opens up possibilities for complex throws and wrenching-rip exploits.

Each of the three main characters available to the player has a distinctive fighting style. Blonde-haired Axel Stone, for instance, is a martial arts expert, specializing in devastating knee-blows and a nifty back-kick named Fat slams. Soul brother Adam Hunter is a



Apply the two alternative moves on different characters to different enemies. All are not done, however.



Apply Stone's or Axel's punch with one of your enemies and the flying action begins.

And Stone's the only member of Axel's team to be capable of executing this sort of move. The enemy, however, doesn't only fly particularly viciously but also charges back in.



bones, with a color bar to punch and shoulder throw, while female judo expert Rina Fekling uses chops and kicks to protect herself. These differing styles are particularly evident in two-player mode, with a pair of fighters working together. A neat aspect of the two-player game is that players can use special "team tactics", where both players get together to co-perform a devastating super move.

The bonus and perks that form the main threat can certainly be disposed of with a couple of simple kicks or punches, and only pose a threat when they attack mob-handed. Even then it's possible for the player to floor an enemy crowd of enemies with one well-aimed flying kick! More serious problems are caused by some of the bigger, bolder gang members that are thrown in every now and again to make things more interesting. They include an-



Over the top! The headbangers of the new version arrive in style. In this case you only win when they get you to the ground and you can't get up. There's also a special move for the boss, shown here, for example, which is the same character and move as the character from another character's special move. It's a little different.

OF RAGE

jugglers, fire-breathers and troops of kumikata that come armed with an array of lethal martial arts moves. To help deal with them, there's a host of weapons available, some of which are littered around the landscape at random, with others needing to be liberated from their owners before they can be picked up and used. At the low end of the scale there are the standard flick-knives and lockets bottles, ranging up to the far more formidable baseball bat and a giant piece of lead pipe that effectively doubles the player's hit range! A crowd touch is the popper shaker which, when thrown in an enemy's face, stuns him for a few seconds and gives the player the opportunity to steal it. The weapon's lifespan is limited, however - it disappears if dropped twice by the player.

By far the most impressive - and fancy - effect in the game is the Special Attack that each player keeps to specially desperate situations. Only one is available per life, but can save the day in times of need. It varies that each of the three cops has an ally to the corrupt police force, and should things get too hairy, a single button press sends a police car screaming onto the screen, stuns Mazing, the formerly cop then appears, armed with a rocket launcher or rapine gun and moves away every enemy in sight! It's an effect best put to use on the end-of-level "boss" combinations - the players get one each to deal with - which are so fiendish HARD that it's almost inconceivable to beat them by fair fighting alone. Included in the line-ups are the fire-breathing fat, gangly bull-wielding giant, a pair of tiny but deadly ninjas girls and a massive Conan-type character who packs a punch that would knock a building over. So tough are these guys that the special attack serves only to weaken

them, but it does at least mean that they can be dispatched without the players having to sustain too much damage.

Comparisons between Streets of Rage and Final Fight are inevitable - well, it's only to be expected when both games feature enemies, weapons and moves that are identical in many cases. The designers score absolutely no points for originality, but they've done a superb job of creating a powerful beat-'em-up all the same. The one point against it is the rather funny graphics, which aren't a patch on Final Fight's bold and immaculately-drawn visuals. They're rather ineffectual, not all that well-coloured and rather flimsy as a result, like they've come from an ST rather than a Megadrive. That point however, is quickly forgotten when the game-play kicks in in earnest, offering a level of violence unparalleled by anything else on the Megadrive - some of the more elaborate techniques are immensely satisfying when they come off and a whole array of scores is flung in our face. And despite the lack of graphical depth, the special effects ensure that punches and kicks really do sound like they're breaking a bone. There is of course a lot more fun to be had when fighting with a friend, especially when it's discovered that all the combat moves can be carried out on each other. In the theory of combat, it's often easy to ditch your partner a smack by accident, and such incidents can lead to all-out fights between players. Whether or not it's as good as Final Fight on the FunDisk is hard to be a source of playground debate for some months, but there can be little doubt that Streets of Rage is the finest beat-'em-up ever to grace the Megadrive.

■ Gary White



Exceptionally easy to pick up and play, due to the intuitiveness of the control method. Even difficulty settings give the game an extended lifespan, and it's tough enough to keep players all it even if the final level is a bit off putting with all the viciously tough enemies it throws on screen. And since kicking heads is timeless entertainment, this one's likely to prove popular even after completion.

Streets of Rage features scores of the finest music ever to grace the Megadrive, with high quality hits there and a tone for each level, ranging from New Jack City style rap beats to cosmic and steel drum soundscapes. Originally it could have performed as a punchy beat that doesn't detract from the action and there's enough state-of-the-art stuff here to sustain anybody's street cred for a good few weeks.

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Well it's true, I'll give it that. In the past, Famicom gamers have played battles, space pilots and even a little Italian plumber - but never a bit of jelly below. In fact the rather obscure title of Jerry Boy can only be put down to the Japanese tendency, as people like Russ Abbot have delighted in imitating the sea movement over the years, to pronounce their 'Is as the 'Jelly Boy, see? The Japanese documentation doesn't throw any light on the subject, and after Monkey King was re-christened Donkey Kong due to a misheard telephone conversation, you have to assume that anything's possible.

But enough of this nonsense. Silly titles aside, Jerry Boy is actually a very cuddly - and very playable - little game. As far as it is possible to ascertain, the story tells of a little boy (possibly called Jerry, which would explain a lot who is turned into a blob of blue jelly



How big the lot were things like in Jerry Boy? If you're looking for a character that you can identify with, then the character of the man on the right is your man.



JERRY BOY

with a face on it by a cackling old wizard. The idea is to jolly along for whatever it is a jolly doing the various levels of the mystical world type place where the game is set and re-assume human form. It's all a rather poor excuse for a Super Mario World clone that if nothing else must rarely qualify as the extent outside game over soon - and that's saying something.

Each scrolling stage is essentially a simplified version of a Super Mario World, comprising all the standard platforms, bouncy things, ramps, lifts,

Is EPIC's jelly-based game set for stardom?

bonus bits and end-of-level bosses. The twist that the whole game hangs on is that the player's wobbly character is sort of like a rudimentary version of Terminator's T-800, in that it can alter its shape to adapt to its environment. In default mode it's just a blob, but it can turn flat as a pancake to squish bad guys, stand up tall and thin to nibble aerial holes or squeeze into narrow spaces, stick to walls and ceilings and shoot its objects and hold them (inside its gelatinous body where they remain visible until spat out the later use. The most often used objects are red balls which form the basic weapon against marauding badies and the evil bosses - such as level one's egg-laying chicken.

As the game progresses, Jerry Boy is taken underground in stages that play like a cross between Mario and Sonic the Hedgehog, although throughout the pace of the game is much slower than either of those classics due to Jerry's slow, wobbly movement. As such the atmosphere is very odd, which suits the game's dispiritingly fluffy graphics in a way as it enhances the feeling of playing a loutish story. And though it might lack the dynamic action of Sonic or Mario, it's every bit as playable, offering just as much challenge - if not more - in the form of tricky puzzles, traps and obstacles. It's certainly one of the better Famicom games to hit these shores, and comes unreservedly recommended to all fans of the platform genre, as well as anyone who appreciates a game that puts a smile on your face.

Gary White

890 SUPER FAMICOM RATING



The control of multi-purpose Jerry Boy takes a bit of getting used to, but once it's mastered it's difficult to put the jiggled blob - no matter how frustrating it might get at times. Lots of worlds ensure that generous boredom or completion isn't likely to be a problem. Get in the bag, and there can be no doubt that Jerry Boy features some of the cuttiest characters ever to grace a console. Even the advanced end bosses look sweet. The jolly atmosphere is belatedly well by the loquacious soundtrack, consisting of bits of happy little tunes. How sweet.



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Hold The Last Page!

Well, okay, so it's not quite the last page but this, dear reader is the page we can get long after the others are all happy in being printed land. And so, what better use of this fascinating quirk in the production schedule than to leave the page free for the last-minute previews that just happen to fly in the door at the eleventh hour. The last minute of the eleventh hour to be precise. And the lucky recipient of the treatment this month is...



REACH FOR THE SKIES



In flight simulator it feel—long for the war game? Finally, after years of being at the mercy of obscure controllers, we would be able to now have a say in the turning of the battle.

The latest product from Russian-based Rowan Software—*Reach for the Skies*, as the title suggests, takes us back to The Battle of Britain. The scenario is undoubtedly the best known in the history of aerial combat, and you don't need me to tell you who won and who came second, suffice to say, RFTS covers the entire history of that historic conflict, from the first Luftwaffe raid of July '11 to the end of their ill-fated blitz two months later and subsequent routing by our now-legendary gallant few.

For most people, the name Rowan Software probably doesn't ring too many bells, but their flight sim products are impressive.

Back in '91, BS McConell got Rowan Software to

port Spectrum Hobbyist's awesome Falcon onto the Amiga and ST, which in turn led to them writing Falcon: Mission Dues à la under their own name. But bigger and better was to follow, with the release of the now best-selling Windows Flight Of The Intruder. However, it was with their most recent product Falcon 3 that they began to move towards the true wargame aim. With the campaign and scenario editing features, the player could position forces and customize their attack plans, and much more, producing a theoretically infinite variety of scenarios, which is where *Reach for the Skies* comes in.

To begin at the beginning, RFTS has no missions, which is a point in its favor for a start. The only divisions here are the four phases of The Battle of Britain as agreed by historical researchers, in which the Luftwaffe attacked navy convoys, coastal radars, airfields and cities respectively. You can play either side of these scenarios, which means you're trying either to defend the RAF or to stop this great and pleasant land from being blown to bits.

However, whereas previous strategy flight sims were mostly just simulation with a bit of add-on planning, with RFTS you soon find that planning the campaign is as important as the actual flying. Every move you make on the Battle Map, whether it's moving a squadron from one airfield to another or saving an aircraft factory from being bombed, has a knock-on effect on the rest of the game, and if you're not very careful, one wrong move can wipe your chances for the rest of the game.

You'll be able to start where you want, whether you're working it all out from Day One or just dipping in at times—no slogging through missions until you get to the good stuff! Well! All applicable menu functions are available both throughout the setup and during stages, and in flight, and while you can say that this is merely an extension of the Falcon menu system, it can't give a lot further than that, and reminds me more of the usability of Microsoft's Flight Sim series than anything else. Basically, *Reach for the Skies* can be as simple or as complex as you like, and will thus suit beginners and flight sim addicts alike.

Available October 1991
Price: £14.95

■ Alanah Johnston



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NEXT, remember that our Reviews Directory will keep you abreast of every game released on your format each month. As the directory builds into a living, growing thing, you'll be wise to get familiar with it before it simply becomes too big!

THEN, remember that our In The Works section will deliver the up-to-the-minute information of the hottest of the hot games as they're put together. Once you've taken a stroll through these and our Previews pages, you'll be fully armed and informed and completely genned-up as to the following month's releases.

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ACE

reviews directory

W

elcome to the ACE Reviews Directory. Over the page begins probably the most detailed and comprehensive reviews list ever! Well, that's what we reckon, anyway. The aim is to provide the best buyers' guide information on every game that you're likely to find in the shops in any given month. The first list of games are the new titles released during the month in which this issue was produced. The Still Available section details the games that have been released for the last three months. At the end of each three month cycle the older games will be removed, since they're probably not going to be on the shelves any more.

Each month we'll be updating the Directory to incorporate the newest games, always trying to cover every release as we see it.

It's important to remember that all games will appear in the Directory section, even the very best titles will be in the Still Available pages, and games which for one reason or another just don't make it into our main reviews section (we can only give our special reviews treatment to a limited number of games, after all) will be appearing in the New Releases pages.

Unlike some mags who insist on splitting off all the games which they don't like and sticking them into a rubbishy section, we're making no value judgements here. So don't be surprised to see Trailblazers rubbing shoulders with two-star games. And keep looking through the listings because there's a good chance you'll find a gem that you'll have never heard of.

We've arranged the lists, to the best of our remedial school education, in alphabetical order enabling you to get at the game you're interested in as swiftly as possible.

New Releases:

Analyze	Flicky	Radical Tycoon
Amour-Golden	Footballer of the Year 2	Redland
Asterix	Grandly 2000	Rolling Stone
Banger Time Deluxe	Hammer	Sardonic
Castles	Magnum Swords	Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe
Chess 100	Collection	Mini Soccer II
Cloud Kingdoms	Megatonnes	Space 486
Cruise for a Corpse	Megatonnes 2	Stratblade II
Dynatron	Monopoly	Thunderjam
Frog Strike Eagle 2	Monster Business	Zona Warrior
Final Fight	Nobelia 2	

Still Available:

Affluence 2	In Your Face	Isis: The Hiding
Alien Storm	James Bond: Double Bonding	Super Professional Baseball
Beast Busters	Jedfighter 2	Super-8-Type
Bombus Bee	Jimmy White's Whiteball Snooker	Tail Gate
Castle of Illusion	Ka-Go-Go!	Thunderhawk
Castle	Logical	Utopia
Centurion: Defender of Rome	Magic Partners	Warrior Special Warfare
Champion of the Ring	Manchester United	Wild Wheels
Choplifter II	Europe	Wing Commander II
Crash Yanger's Air Combat	Marine Dreams	
Dragon Crystal	Marvel Land	
E4 Hockey	Maxpat Island	
El	Mexico	
The Executioner	Mega In Mana	
Fury's South Fighter 2	Microprose Golf	
Fu Tomcat	NBA All Star Challenge	
F Zone	Predatorish	
Freemix	R-Type II	
Ghost Battle	Robin Hood	
G-Lex	Secret of Monkey Island	
Golf	Shinobi	
Halley Wars	The Simpsons	
Harris	Sliders	
Heart of China	Snowy Snakes	
Hero Quest		

Give Us A Break!

Please remember, this is the very first month of the Directory and there will inevitably be some omissions and some ups. For this we apologise in advance, and promise to do our best for next time. Of course, if you don't find any errors, we're proud to say that we knew it would all run smoothly.

new releases

ARMALYTE



Price **Atari ST/Amiga £25.99**
Genre **Action/Blitz**
Publisher **Thalames**

It's just as well space is infinite - it'd need to be to contain the seemingly endless stellar bodies that, according to the folks, constantly rage throughout the Universe. Thalames' latest looks to galactic violence in a 2D-bit updating of the C&G hit from many Earth years ago.

The player is given the difficult - if completely unoriginal - task of fighting his way through five levels worth of horizontally-scrolling scenery populated by all manner of really rather annoying aliens. The scenery scrolls a little up and down, which introduces a small but welcome element of exploration as the player weaves around trying to find the safest path to the end-of-level monstrosities.

Armalyte is an awfully tribute to its illustrious 3D1 ancestor. Technically it's excellent, with some slick parallax scrolling (especially good on the ST version given the machine's hardware) and polished presentation. However, the difficulty level has been set ridiculously high, and even the most skilled gamers will soon be reduced to an apoplectic state of hair-tearing frustration. This situation is not helped by the excessive inertia on the player's ship which soon has the fragile craft skidding uncontrollably about the screen (and usually straight into the

deadly-to-the-touch scenery). On the basis of the evidence here let's hope Armalyte's sub-title of The Final Run is correct.

☆☆☆

ARMOURGEDDON



Price **Atari ST £25.99**
Genre **Simulation**
Publisher **Pygospio**

Pygospio's latest 3D-polygon-effect creation around a six-part mission to find the five pieces of a master bomb and use it to destroy an enemy HQ. There are six combat vehicles to try out, ranging from ground-bugging tanks and hovercraft, and the player must use his 'skill and judgement' to decide when, where and how best to use them to achieve his current mission objectives. Mouse control of each such vehicle is smooth and responsive, with the fluid CD giving a good pulse-quickening feeling of speed.

The player can switch between the vehicles 'in the field' using the function keys (the computer puts the vehicle on auto when this happens, so there's no risk of a suddenly-vacated jet plunging nose-first into the ground). Like Core's Thunderhawk, the action is on action rather than simulation, with the scenery attacking almost as soon as the player picks an install-shielded nose-on to his bunker, which makes for exciting if somewhat silent-

less action, but it's not all shoot, shoot, shoot. There's an important resource management element as well, where the player has to wisely allocate scientists and technicians to develop new weapons and fresh vehicles to replace those blown to pieces by the very act of using.

Armageddon is one of Pygospio's best games to date, with solid gameplay lacking only the impressive visuals. Armourgeddon sick of it? Not one bit.

☆☆☆☆

ATOMINO



Price **Atari ST/Amiga £25.99**
Genre **Puzzle**
Publisher **Pygospio**

Hehehe, fascinating! There are few games based around atomic physics, and even fewer interesting one, so a big "Hehehe!" and put on the back for Pygospio. Atomino is a puzzle game based around atomic railway, i.e. the number of bonds an atom can make with other atoms, i.e. hydrogen atoms can make one bond while Helium can make two. The aim of the game is to place randomly-allocated atoms down on a grid and try to form molecules of various sizes (i.e. at least three atoms long). A molecule is only complete when all the atoms within it have all their bonds accounted for. It all sounds a bit... well... dry, but in fact turns out to be great fun, with its additive chal-

leng, pretty graphics and interesting concepts making it one of the better puzzle games on the market.

☆☆☆☆

BURGER TIME DELUXE



Price **Atari ST £25.99** Import
Genre **Platform**
Publisher **Data East**

New this is a real blast from the past, when arcade games didn't have to share pointers about life some sub-standard but fair rule just to get them to part with their cash. The player has to guide my Pete the Chef around a network of platforms and ladders. In a bizarre culinary exercise Pete has to make giant hamburgers by mixing over the various ingredients lying on the platforms, forcing them to fall down the screen onto the platforms below and eventually onto a plate at the bottom of the screen. Once all the hamburgers have been made Pete advances onto the next, more complex arrangement of platforms.

New this all sounds a bit silly, but you've reckoned without the meat-it manages, platform and food eggs that escaped from the cupboard and are wandering the platforms intent on Pete's demise. Fortunately the carry-over is armed with a pepper pot, and a carefully-aimed shade will stun the badies for a few moments allowing Pete to make good his escape. More finally, Pete can try to time his food-dropping action to crash the ingenious ingredients.

Price **Atari ST £25.99** Import
Genre **Platform**
Publisher **Triffix Entertainment**

☆☆☆☆

CASTELIAN



Price **Atari ST £25.99** Import
Genre **Platform**
Publisher **Triffix Entertainment**

Remember 'em? It was a bizarre puzzle game starring a tiny fish-called Pigo. Each of its tortoise-difficult levels was set on a tall tower. The play-

it could move Page left and right, and make him jump over gaps or shoot at the robot-walkers. However, in a unique twist, the towers used to rotate to follow Page's movements. Quite a graphical achievement on the Spectrum! From Helsinki has come to the Game Boy under the title *Castilian*. And while the name may have changed the genre certainly hasn't. It will look stunning and play well but has a difficulty rating through the roof. However, completing a level is extremely satisfying, so if you fancy a real challenge then you know where to come.

☆☆☆☆

CHASE H.Q.



Price **GameGear £29.99** Import
Genre **Race Game**
Publisher **Taito**

There can be few racers who aren't familiar with the excellent side-on or its sequel S.C.I. What a feat on the part of the designers to combine high-speed racing action with hyper-tempering action. The player takes on

the role of an Armani-wearing Miami Vice style cop, chasing various prigs in a souped-up Porsche with the aim of ransacking their quarry off the road to make the arrest. The GameGear version is technically excellent, with lots of fast action and good sound, although the cars are a little small. Unfortunately it's about as tough as a proled banana, and even Game Gear will soon be lacking any leg life. You've been! Well, actually you're more likely to be lost after also buying this - it's a lot of money for such a short-lived challenge.

☆☆☆

CLOUD KINGDOMS



Price **Atari \$5/Amiga £7.99**
Genre **Platform**
Publisher **BBG/Brendon**

Cloud Kingdoms is a lead of balls-bouncing balls, to be precise. (Mind the old ones are the best!) As Terry the Ball, the player has to negotiate thirty-two huge hallway-scrolling levels, each of which starts high in the sky,

collecting all the gems that litter in the narrow walkways. Terry has to take care not to leave the path, else he'll fall to his doom in the void below. This isn't as easy as it sounds - Terry's rubbery body bounces wildly off walls and pillars, and parts of the floor may crumble beneath him. In addition, if Terry passes over arrows set to the floor they'll push him around, usually over the edge of the nearest chasm. If that wasn't enough, other hostile spheres wander the walkways, keen to see Terry's demise. Fortunately Terry can bounce over their heads with a tap of the fire button.

Cloud Kingdoms, liberally from Milwaukee, is an attractive game, with a strong comic feel. The cartoony graphics, though looking a little dated now, do the trick, and the scrolling on both Amiga and ST versions is very smooth. The inertial control is a little tricky to get to grips with, but rewarding when mastered. Some features annoy, like the fact that it's impossible to know where something has to land as it's been bounced on, but overall this is an unmissable bargain at just under eight quid.

☆☆☆☆

CRUISE FOR A CORPSE



Price **Amiga £78A**
Genre **Adventure**
Publisher **Delphinus/US Gold**

The plot for *Cruise for a Corpse* is firmly rooted in the Agatha Christie 'island' tradition, plenty of suspects' crime story tradition, detailing how the player is invited to a Greek island's yacht for a well-earned holiday only to get there and find his boat hijacked off by an unknown number. Before you can get 'Inspector Workahd' the player is forced to solve pieces of evidence and truth statements to solve the heinous crime.

After a lot of pre-release interest from the press, there were high hopes for *Cruise for a Corpse*. Is it the excellent game everyone seemed to think it'd be? Well, yes... and no. In the graphics and sound department it's exemplary with large fluidly animated sprites moving over exquisitely detailed backgrounds and plenty of audible tones and samples playing away in the back-

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ground. All attempts to generate an excellent sense of mood and atmosphere.

The player directs his on-screen character (Rexel) via the mouse. By clicking the mouse pointer on objects of interest, a menu appears listing the various things the player can do with the selected item (i.e. "Open" or "Examine" hot box). Movement around the yacht is effected by walking there from location to location by clicking on exits to the current location, such as doors or hallways, or more quickly by calling up the yacht map and "walking" Rexel immediately from place to place. As an user interface it's difficult to think of another as intuitive and easy to use.

The major problem with Cruise for a Casper is its pace. The animation, though excellent, is slow. Examining the contents of a room can become quite painful, as Rexel slowly turns, walks, turns, bends down, examines the item only for a message to appear stating that "There is nothing of interest here". Equally annoying is the frequent though inevitable accessing and scrolling of the five present "text game" files. All too often the player's enthusiasm for the clue hunting can be severely dampened by the reduction of the game's speed to near snail's pace. Less important, some of the generally excellent French-English translation is a bit dubious in places, such as the Cabin Boy who is described as "dynamic".

These concerns aside, anyone with the patience to sit through the occasional delirious will find Cruise for a Casper a superb buy, laced with quality presentation and atmosphere and providing a big enough game task to satisfy even the greatest death.

☆☆☆☆

DEUTEROS



Price Amiga £794
Genre Strategy
Publisher Activision

This sequel to Millennium 2.2 by the same authors is set a thousand years after the prophec's events. Mankind has fallen into a state of post-technological malaise and forgets its former space-travelling glory. It's the player's task to rebuild man's passion for the stars and run the race into the matters of the Galaxy once again. The gameplay boils down to endless

resource and manpower allocation between various departments, dealing with the occasional crises that crop up and so on. Although programmed well and moderately entertaining, there really isn't anything on show that hasn't been done more entertainingly elsewhere. Strictly one for the strategy die-hard.

☆☆☆

F-15 STRIKE EAGLE II



Price Atari ST £29.99
Genre Simulation
Publisher MicroProse

MicroProse make a departure from their usual reputation associate ones with this action-oriented affair. It's the flight sim equivalent of the latest John Deere. As nice if simple with no complications. Players have no control menus to choose between, each with various missions to fulfil. These missions are nearly all as simple as get, destroy a couple of targets and get out alive jobs, with the player having to simultaneously defend against swarms of enemy jets. Control is via keyboard, joystick or mouse, and is highly responsive in each case.

The screen update is fast enough, but there are a couple of JD mistakes about - it's more than adequate for the job at hand, however. Sound is disappointing, with a white-noise hiss being the player's only audio companion for most of the journey. In the gameplay department this is a winner, with plenty of white-knuckle action to get the adrenaline pumping. Veterans may because the game's lack of depth, but anyone who should find this just their cup of tea, with a jaunty Jerry Bruckheimer Dodge in the seat to boot.

☆☆☆☆

FINAL FIGHT



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Beat-'Em-Up
Publisher US Gold

Yet another in US Gold's seemingly endless string of CapCom conversions. In Metro City (loosely based on Neo Yokyo all in all well). Cruise is rife and to make a bad situation worse the

Mayor's eight-daughter daughter has been kidnapped by - you guessed it - Mr Big. (This old Mr Big certainly gets around, doesn't he?) The player and optional partner have to fight their way through the city's mainroads to rescue her. Why? Why not?

Final Fight is something of a first for beat-'em-ups on the home computer, i.e. it's actually quite good. The sprites are large and decently animated, the background scroll is smooth and the action is fast. Someone of the directing whether a punch connects or not is a little dodgy, but apart from that this can be recommended unreservedly to anyone who fancies a little action without brainiac their knuckles.

☆☆☆☆

FLICKY



Price Magnavox £34.99
Genre Platform
Publisher Sega

"Don't be put off by the screenwriter on the back of the box" is probably the best bit of advice I can give about Flicky. It looks awful - very primary-colour sprites and garish backgrounds. And to be honest, things don't improve much in the game itself. However, like Quaxton, an ugly appearance conceals the goodness inside.

The player controls the tiny bird of the title. The little darling's chicks have gone and get themselves lost in the rooms of a giant unrelaxed house. Flicky has to run and jump about, cut out the wretched lizard and take them to the safety of the flat, while avoiding the ponding felines. Flicky is a wonderfully playable game, very simple but packed with fun. Some may dispute whether there's 30 months of fun, but for those with the cash it's a good purchase.

☆☆☆☆

FOOTBALLER OF THE YEAR 2



Price Atari ST/Amiga £7.99
Genre Sport Game
Publisher B&B/Brendon

This isn't really a sport game at all. It's more like a test of the player's knowl-

edge of football trivia. Lots of text and dull graphics don't help things along either. If it's your bag then great, otherwise steer well clear.

☆☆

GUNSHIP 2000



Price IBM PC £39.99
Genre Simulation
Publisher MicroProse

Nobody writes simulations like MicroProse does. This is a highly realistic sequel to the company's earlier megahit Gunship, which has gone down in software history as one of the best-selling titles ever. This sequel is far more than just Gunship's. Every part of the game has been given a radical overhaul.

Probably the most impressive aspect is the revamped graphics system. Using a sort of patchwork quilt landscaping technique, the game world has been modelled in exciting detail, complete with rain, hills, mountains, valleys, cuttings. It's a geographical feast, it's there. As usual, the game takes the form of a series of prize-winning missions. Unfortunately this complexity means that you really need at least a 386MHz PC to get anything approaching speed from the game. Armed with a board is marvelously atmospheric, and adds no end to the giddy battlefield fun. The "cooper control is good, but actually getting the craft to fly matches that of the real thing, i.e. it's very difficult, and certainly makes Gunship stand out the rest of game to eat your own playing flesh on. However, if you're looking for the ultimate cheap simulation, then here it is.

☆☆☆☆

HUNTER



Price Atari ST/Amiga £24.99
Genre Action Strategy
Publisher Activision

It's a sad old world, this one we live in, but when your old Activision get some classic product together, their Madilogic dandy guy and pulls the plug on them. Now, however, after the aforementioned "classic product" has

been swirling around doing very little indeed for the last few months. Activision's current genre-master of games, The Day Company, has taken it upon themselves to let another trickle of genre-masters reach the shores.

Hunter is the sort of game that you dream of playing. A polygon-based action strategy game with all of the usually associated bonuses removed, it offers all the "wouldn't it be great if..." features which should, by rights, be included in all other games.

Taking the role of the Hunter, the player must travel around a beach of islands, systematically destroying all enemy installations in whatever way is soon fit. Your particular mission is detailed in a briefing whose specific, immediate targets are detailed by your allied commander.

The best thing about Hunter is that there's no messing about. If you want to infiltrate an enemy base, get a disguise and you're away! If you want to get about, send a helicopter (propeller or tailless). It's all so easy and because the unnecessary complexity of basic tasks has been removed, the player can concentrate on progressing with the mission much more intensely.

Excellent graphics and a fast-paced storyline can only add to Hunter's already interesting style. A winner.

☆☆☆☆☆

MAGNETIC SCROLLS COLLECTION



Price IBM PC £24.99
Genre **Adventure**
Publisher **Virgin Games**

For gamers keen to add some heavy-weight adventuring to their catalogue but unwilling to look out for the undeniably quality Magnetic Scrolls titles individually, the fascinatingly named Magnetic Scrolls collection may well prove an appealing prospect. Here we have three previously acclaimed titles, all reworked and tamed to run on the Windows-style systems, ensuring a reasonable degree of coherence in what would otherwise be a rather diverse package. The *Gold of Thrones* by far the most traditional game in the set, all ancient plotting and the like, while *Corruption* offers a lot of moody conspiracy-themed shenanigans against a high-flying industry backdrop. *Flash* is just plain odd, comprising some

erotic puzzles with painful aquatic punning.

All the titles are packed with atmosphere if not actually stunning graphics which, for the benefit of purists, can be removed with a click of a switch.

Despite the difference of opinion on the Magnetic Scrolls games, it's rather the best thing since sliced bread as a worthy imitation of the Infocom systems of about ten years ago! Players will still find far more entertainment and scope for plot involvement than in any other game system. Wonderful!

☆☆☆☆☆

MEGAFORTRESS



Price IBM PC £24.99
Genre **Simulation**
Publisher **Mindscape**

The trouble with games based on taking every single rule in a big, stupid old game like the *R-U* is that usually every rule is vital-matching boring. I mean, who honestly wants to plot their course across thousands of miles of terrain using a 3D terrain mapping computer or have to fiddle around with astronomical frequencies in order to get the enemy's radar? But many of you, I'll be bound.

The aim of the game is to plot a fast-discovered R-U across both Iraq and the Soviet Union, keeping the location and aim of your mission strictly secret until the awesome barrage of firepower can be calculated on the target.

Unfortunately, for all its gung-ho packaging and intent, *MegaFortress* is just a very good simulation of a rather dull business. The more fun that can be had in any of a host of more recently released flight games, and Mindscape's *South Fighter* series even offer similar coop-up-on-the-empty-arena for those players who are especially keen on that sort of thing.

Perfectly competent both graphically and as the play-fun, *MegaFortress* has missions designed by real R-U navigators and best-selling author *Warner Brown*, and it's all packed full of fight charts and information and a reek of authenticity. The trouble is, despite all this, it just isn't that much fun. It's one of those games that I guess you really need to have experienced the real thing to appreciate.

☆☆☆☆

MEGATRAVELLER 2: QUEST FOR THE ANCIENTS



Price IBM PC £25A
Genre **RPG**
Publisher **Virgin/Empire**

The latest UK release from American software team Paragon powered-up in this issue) is more too surprisingly a sequel to *MegaTraveller* 1. The *Zionian Company*. As before, the player leads a team of five space adventurers through toll and trouble to hopefully riches and fame. This time around, the player task is to find a way to halt the flow of toxic slime emanating from some mysterious ruins left by a dead race called the Ancients. But are they dead? That is up to the player to find out.

sporting high-quality 3D-colour VGA, this is certainly a treat on the eye, and the ears as well with a suitable sound card. The game itself is an RPG in the *Ultima* style, but not half as rigorous - which for many will be a virtue than a blemish. The story is fun and involving, with plenty of sub-tasks to perform that provide welcome and often amusing relief from the main plot. If one has a mouse might it's that the space combat - which you'd think would be the most exciting part of the game - is flat and dull, with little sense of player involvement. In summary, highly recommended.

☆☆☆☆

MONOPOLY



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre **Strategy**
Publisher **Virgin Games**

Money, money, money... The game for building property tycoons may well bring about a peculiarly manic feel in those occasions between, but *Virgin's* version is almost as much fun as the boardgame original, which is more than can be said for the most boardgame conversions. Players must manoeuvre around the board by rolling dice, accumulating as much cash as possible and using it to purchase squares on the board. Landing on a previously purchased square involves the rather

trite player either having to pay rent/£100 bills to either the owner of the property or the bank. Players who do the best are those who invest wisely and build houses, hotels etc on their spaces. Extra houses are thrown up only when "Go To Jail" squares. He who ends the game with the most cash wins.

Without any unnecessarily flashy graphics, this version has better than most, and is refreshingly honest of all the silly touches which seldom tend to add to board game conversions for novelty and ruin the whole thing in the bargain.

Colourful graphics present the board in a perspective 3D rather than flat, while the computer controlled bank keeps an eye on everyone's progress. User friendly mouse-control makes the player's actions over his piece's position and money-shuffling almost as easy as when playing the game in real life.

☆☆☆☆

MONSTER BUSINESS



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre **Platform**
Publisher **Ballpark**

The mad mechanics from the big screen have once again broken loose, and are marching for little better they can steal completely spoiling the fun's construction site. Become *Lenny*, the best level builder around and blow all those rusty little monsters sky high! A goal in life if ever there was one. *Monster Business*, the epitome of the average arcade game features stupid graphics and a doubly stupid premise to review all the objects from the building site. *Lenny* must blow up all the monsters with some sort of final bicycle pump, causing them to inflate and eventually rise to the top of the screen, dropping all their objects as they go.

Despite the bling of the whole affair, *Monster Business* is actually quite good. Different screens each present a different sort of hazard, whether it be dodging platforms or a speedy time limit, and the player is so interested in trying to get the the end of the level that he probably won't realize quite how crazy and dumb the game is.

Smart graphics and it could only be German music help *Monster Business* rise above the pack and shine out as

Interestingly enough, the player can opt to play a girl if he/she wants, not that it makes much difference to the playing style. And to be honest, the boy looks so bleeding obvious you'd never know anyway.

Check-a-block full of excellent visuals. Redefined is a first conversion and it could even be argued to better its own parents, so credit over the chair action has been improved. Certainly not a title for gamers into depth or gang-bro blasting, but a nonetheless worthwhile purchase for anyone else.

☆☆☆☆

ROLLING RONNY



Price **Amiga £19.99**
Genre **Platform**
Publisher **Virgin Games**

Rolling Ronny is a redefining standard, the most subtle around. Piddling collecting spinning game and delivering packages for people. At the end of each set of Piddling's events, Ronny must get on a bus and go to a different part of Piddling's to collect more gems and deliver more packages.

The player must guide Ronny around, making precision jumps in order to scale the tall buildings atop which the gems usually sit.

In its subtlety and simplicity, Rolling Ronny is sort of like *Car-Vap*: lots of primary colour graphics filling in the blanks for what is effectively an extremely basic game of left-right object-collecting action. Where *Car-Vap* failed in its control over the player's character, however, Rolling Ronny succeeds. He can twist around in mid-air, duck and jump to avoid monsters in a manner frustratingly absent from his sister robot relative.

It's not until Ronny starts falling over and being pathetic that the player is reminded of quite how difficult roller-skating can be. More often than not we find little Ronny on his own with twenty birds and stars flying around his head.

Completion of a level will result in a nice little bus trip, assuming Ronny has completed enough events for people to earn the cash for the fare. Otherwise a rather unconvincing "Game Over" sequence ensues.

Perfectly entertaining nonsense fun, surprise surprise. German indie Starbyte.

☆☆☆☆

SARAKON



Price **Amiga/Sharp ST/IBM PC £18.99**
Genre **Puzzle**
Publisher **Virgin Games**

Games which call the player stupid are unlikely to go down in history as great simulations, yet *Sarakon*, despite making this fatal mistake in a perfectly decent rip-off of the *Ising Jang* tile-mapping business, basically, if you imagine being played with some old oriental tablets and with some complicated "can't do that" rules, then you're pretty close to imagining what *Sarakon* is all about.

The stop of the game is to click on similar tablets which sit in a particular orientation, eventually ending up with no tablets left, or at least as few as possible before the time limit runs out. Once done, the player is rewarded with a breakdown of his score and a comment from the computer as to his *Sarakon* ability.

The problem with these puzzle games, however, is that they all look similar enough to make the player want to pick them up and have a go, yet they insist on containing enough rule subtleties to make doing just that impossible. The result? The *Ising Jang* player will feel infuriated that he can't make his minimal moves work.

The presentation is first class, apart from the cheesy sound effects and music which don't so much create the ambience of the Far East as a grubby take-over in Dubai.

If comparatively subtle mouse clicking is your bag, and your eyes can stand staring at the monitor for ages while you scratch your head, *Sarakon* is the game for you.

☆☆☆☆

SECRET WEAPONS OF THE LUFTWAFFE



Price **IBM PC £40.99**
Genre **Simulation**
Publisher **Lucasfilm/ES Gold**

Deep, deep, deep. Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe is a big old game and no mistake. It's also the sequel the critically acclaimed *Third Fleet* clone. The tale comes packed with new goodies

but brings the same problem of the first game: i.e. the fluff and rather horrible in-game graphics.

The player is offered the chance to pilot aircraft in a seemingly limitless number of historical missions, shadowing or guarding planes and taking place in actual battles and scenarios of the Second World War.

However, played in a Wing Commander style with in-game taking the place of the polygons so frequently and successfully used in other flight sims, Luftwaffe will have all but the owners of the fusion machines burrowing down the desert level in the struggle to get it to run at an acceptable rate.

Ambitious players can then define their own missions to determine what history would have turned out like if there was just one less *Blueschmitt* BTroG in a particular combat situation.

Luftwaffe is exactly the sort of game — as distinct from *Wing Commander* — that you actually want to make excuses for. And that's simply down to the fact that under the eye-matched graphics which actually look pretty absurd every now and again, there is a quite brilliant game.

☆☆☆☆☆

SILENT SERVICE II



Price **Amiga £39.99**
Genre **Simulation**
Publisher **MicroPro**

It may have taken five years, but the sequel to one of the most critically acclaimed and publicly admired sim games is finally with us. *Silent Service II* features all the best bits from the first game as well as a host of original and new goodies.

Digitised graphics and sampled sounds simply confirm the *Service* as a game which is undoubtedly one of the most detailed, accurate and realistic on the market, but new gamers should be warned that, just like life on a real submarine, it's not all walking, et. alion.

No. There's a lot of the old *Adv On The Water* stuff with turning off engines to sneak up on enemy warships without alerting their radar. And as for all that tank hovering stuff. I ask you! MicroPro are undeniably the outside Kings of all things sim, but their policy of increasing the action and maintaining the dial-watching as used to

with good effect in *F11 Stealth Eagle II* would be well extended to this particular title.

For gamers wishing to pore over an accurate sub simulation, rest assured, there is absolutely none here, but those expecting to get their topknots off straight away would be better to wait for a more accessible equivalent.

☆☆☆☆☆

SPACE 1889



Price **IBM PC £78.00**
Genre **RPG**
Publisher **Empire**

This is an RPG which shares many similarities with *Origin's* *Ultarian Odyssey* in both plot and user interface. However, this lacks the atmosphere and graphic quality of *Origin's* effort, and the plot is too linear — one often feels as though they're being led along a fairly narrow path. It's rather simple, and could act as a good intro to the world of RPGs for the moment, but more experienced players may feel the game a little staid for today's gaming tastes.

☆☆☆

SWITCHBLADE II



Price **Amiga ST £29.99**
Genre **Action/Shoot**
Publisher **Gorelix**

Some seven months after appearing on the Amiga, *Switchblade II* — arguably one of the best arcade shoot-outs in existence — has finally made its transition onto the ST and what a success it's been!

The appeal of this sequel to Gorelix's much underrated original is the distinct Japanese flavour of the graphics. Quite aside from a having more as few and weapons and playability than most, *Switchblade II* features three big-eyed, black-haired characters and transformer-style robots in a side-on multi-directional scrolling battle to the death.

Control over the central character has more than a little *Commander* feel to it, as he hovers around all over the place firing away with his power-tappable laser rifle.

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A host of different landscapes - some all blocky and mechanised, other quite sunny and happy looking - sweet these willing to play, each inhabited by it's own particular breed of robot life.

Perhaps more than the graphics or the gameplay, it's the style of Frank Miller II which makes it such a nice game to own. Don't be fooled by the goldfish cover artwork (we're thinking this is just another blast with no heart) it's a thoroughly polished and classy piece of code, and well worth your pennies.

☆☆☆☆☆

TECHNOCOP



Price **Negative £34.99**
 Genre **Arcade Blast**
 Publisher **Blanco Soft**

Technocop. What is there to say? This futuristic Blast which deserves a mention, quite apart from anything else for its incredibly messy graphics, was originally produced by Gamma some years ago now appears on the Razorsoft label. Now Blagadrie owners get the chance to play, although it's a matter of debate as to whether they'll actually want to do so. Basically this two-stage racing game is an unremarkable twist on the Chase HQ theme with some side-on scodding shoot-out bits.

☆☆☆

THUNDERJAWS



Price **Amiga £19.99**
 Genre **Arcade Blast**
 Publisher **Bananas**

Deep within his subconscious (there's the real Madame Q) has launched a new and diabolical plan - to build an army of genetic mutants to take over the world! This well-animating but rabidly conservative is the latest in a long line of Edger games from the Danes. To be fair, the majority of the code-ups have been a long way short of classic themselves, but Danmark seems to have an especially tough time wrestling their code computer format. Witness A.P.B., ET:TM Bunker and the appalling Mail and Crossbones.

Here, the truly element which has

proved to be the conversion's downfall is the tongue-in-cheek Lancelotti-Giant graphic style of the original. This very factor, which at least helped the concept look a bit more interesting than in fact it was, has simply made the Amiga version look downright cheap.

The players' aim is to work their way through a set of levels combating Madame Q's monstrous forces and collecting bonuses along the way. The first stage puts the players in an underwater setting, shooting it out with enemy divers and ferocious elastic allies. Weapons can be collected to improve the firepower, but nothing can improve the diabolical animation and dull-as-dishwater gameplay. From here on in, it's a more straightforward managerial shoot-out with the players mining deep gaming down an assortment of mechanical enemies. (though) Take it away!

☆☆

ZONE WARRIOR



Price **Amiga £18.99**
 Genre **Arcade Blast**
 Publisher **Electronic Arts**

Destroy the evil aliens in this time-puncturing Blast from Electronic Arts. The G-Units have taken control of a score space satellite and are using it to send themselves back through time, destroying vital elements in the development of Marsland, thus doubling the humans' ability to resist the Geek Invasion in years to come.

The player must race back through a host of different time zones and foil the alien's success, generally by killing a level of left-to-right scodding monsters.

The impressive intro sequence and the nature of the static graphics are never quite matched by what is really a rather basic shoot-'em-up in the Turbine vein. Each stage presents a mission briefing for the player, beginning with the noble first of saving U.S. inventors of the wheel, from the clutches of aliens and so on. The novelty of using a phased plasma rifle in 40 mill range to blow away innocent creatures and huffed Egyptians is entertaining enough for a while (but the steady gameplay requires a considerably stronger touch than graphics merely to support it).

☆☆☆

RELEASING

COMPETITION

Right then! That's the end of this month's releases. And now, in order to celebrate, we're proud, and pleased as punch to present this, our end-of-this-month's-new-releases competition! Hurrah!

There is £100 (count 'em) worth of software up for grabs for the first lucky, lucky reader who can write to us at the address at the bottom of the page, telling us, in no uncertain terms, the answer to the question which we'll get to any second now.

The Question:

How many five star games have been reviewed in this month's reviews directory in total - not just in the New Releases section?

The Address:

ACE Pink Competition, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

The Rules:

The Editor's decision is final, no correspondence will be entered into and all entries must reach us by the end of November.

Eye!

Still available

AFTERSURNER 2



Price **MegaDrive \$24.99**
Genre **Arcade Blast**
Publisher **Sega**

The epitome of the arcade blast, *Aftersburner 2* is a dizzy piece of fluff. And this conversion isn't half bad. Flying in F-14s into the screen, the player zooms fly through 23 stages, blasting away enemy fighters with his unlimited number of machine gun rounds and limited missiles. Enemy fighters can also be downed by using bombing missiles too.

The game is fast—very fast. In fact, its score sections it's as quick as the arcade machine. Performing a job degree roll by looking hard and then banking the other way is an exhilarating experience. And on the whole, in fact, the whole game is pretty exciting fast, even when it's fully understood quite how mindless it all is.

This is the sort of game that the *MegaDrive* was built for. As the other end of the Sonic scale, even though it's another arcade blast, *Aftersburner 2* does a surprisingly good job of showing exactly what the *MegaDrive* is capable of as long as you don't look to deep.

Even though the speed is up to scratch, the gameplay certainly doesn't come up smelling of roses. It's the definitive *Aftersburner 2* conversion, and, just like the coin-op, is hardly flawed.

☆☆☆

118 JULY 1992

ALIEN STORM



Price **MegaDrive \$24.99**
Genre **Arcade Blast**
Publisher **Sega**

Alien Storm is a real stunner in the jet department. Once again aliens are over-running the Earth and it's up to the player (and a possible friend) to look their scaly butts back to the alien-ripen hole from whence they came, like the very similar *Golden Axe*, three suitably awesome figures—Earth's last line of defense—stand ready to save the world of alien-destruction. There's the heroically-named Gordon, sexy Karla and the robotic footster, who bears an uncanny resemblance to C-3PO (although he never waddles at electronic hellholes).

Together they have less their way through eight levels of alien filth. The hero(s) stroll from left to right basically slaying everything that moves before it gets too close. After a while the view changes to that of an *Op Wolf* style game. By guiding creatures around the screen the player has to track everything.

Being a shoot-'em-up we would have thought that more emphasis would have been placed on the weapons but unfortunately they fail to deliver, being rather unimpressive and no fun at all. Can only be more than moderately recommended for two players.

☆☆☆

BEAST BUSTERS



Price **Amiga/Mega Drive \$29.99**
Genre **Arcade Blast**
Publisher **Activision**

This is a competent conversion of the coin-op which proved so popular to the Uni-loving arcade game. It's basically yet another *Op Wolf* clone but features the welcome twist that instead of waiting for enemies the player (or players) are besieged by a veritable army of the undead who attempt to stop any trying the abandoned city alive. Borrowing heavily from the *Business Horror* films, *Zombie Dogs*, *Zombie Shoppers* and all manner of evil creatures can be literally blown into bloody bits of gruesome flesh.

The graphics manage to capture both the look and the feel of the arcade and virtually all of the levels are present, but there's no denying that the inevitable substitution of a mouse for the cabinet-mounted *Uzi* is distinctly irritating. If you haven't already got a game of this genre and don't mind a mind-blowing blast then it might be worth looking into, but otherwise there's not really enough here on offer to warrant purchase. It's a shame, because even the arcade version left the player cold after a couple of runs—it's not supposed to make *drag the player* in any more than that. If by the price, it would have been nice.

☆☆☆

BONANZA BROS



Price **MegaDrive \$24.99**
Genre **Arcade Blast**
Publisher **Sega**

Bonanza Bros proved to be a something of a stunner for with the Public due to its peculiar graphic style and innovative angle on the man-up theme. The player's objective are (slightly dishonest) to burglar increasingly complex and heavily guarded buildings in Anytown, USA. Having already made a bit of a reputation for themselves, there's a substantial reward on the floor's hands ensuring that every available law enforcement officer is eventually born to be the one to get them hung to rights.

The game uses a unique split screen to allow players to split up if necessary between the two play windows there's a schematic of the building, allowing the players to plan their routes efficiently so as to grab the goodies and avoid the nasties. Overall the game is a fairly enjoyable romp, with some hilarious cartoonish situations in places adding greatly to the fun, but like many *MegaDrive* games its longevity is questionable.

☆☆☆☆

CASTLE OF ILLUSION



Price **MegaDrive \$29.99**
Genre **Platform**
Publisher **Sega**

The Evil Mizzled, jealous of Minnie Mouse's beauty (she as they kidding?), has reconquered her, (she believed Mickey must enter the dreaded and mysterious *Castle of Illusion* to rescue her. Mizzled's domain consists of the levels and Mickey's task is to find the seven Rainbow Gems on each, all of which leads down to a lot of jumping from platforms to platforms, pecking up and shooting blocks, sliding down slopes and climbing ladders.

Fundamentally it's a Mario clone—and not a bad one at that. There are some original touches, such as the

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Tryland level which scrolls from left to right, which poses great disorienting but challenging scenarios. The graphics are very attractive and the sound is great. In fact, it's games like this that make GameCrew gamers feel that they've done the right thing in laying out the cash for their colour hand-held.

☆☆☆☆☆

CASTLES



Price **IBM PC £24.99**
Genre **Strategy**
Publisher **INTERPLAY**

Castles takes several gameplay genres and combines them with a healthy dollop of historical authenticity. The game consists of three increasingly-difficult scenarios involving around the not particularly enthralling sounding task of constructing castles. Each castle consists of real towers, gateways and towers. There are seven classes of labourer available and the player's main game task is to apply the optimum mix of labourers to each section in an attempt to finish the castle as quickly as possible.

Every so often the player is attacked by the neighbouring Welsh (occasionally some things never change). Initially the opposition are incredibly weak and their rise in strength is gradual, so defeating them is a lot easier than it ought to be. Although scholastic enough to ensure repeated play until, Castles is mindily flawed in too many ways to achieve classic status.

☆☆☆☆

CENTURION - DEFENDER OF ROME



Price **Magnavive £24.99**
Genre **Action Strategy**
Publisher **Electronic Arts**

Can an aspiring Centurion fit the player's duty to both defend the homeland and expand the Roman Empire as far as possible. This megala-maniacal aim is somewhat foisted at first by the fact the player starts with having just a single legion of soldiers and a city of disgruntled citizens to try and keep under control.

The game is a well-judged blend of icon-driven strategy and arcade-style interludes. For example, to keep the subdued pretensions happy the player can take part in 'meat engage' in chariot races and run to their lovelies. As the game progresses the armies under your command grow and ships placed at your disposal to take armies to neighbouring shores. If the player's luck is really in he can even have a crack at reclaiming the voluptuous Cleopatra. Megalotiv owners in particular are starved of this type of game, so if your looking for something to exercise your brain a little, you could do far worse than to give this a go.

☆☆☆☆

CHAMPION OF THE RAJ



Price **Amiga £24.99**
Genre **Action Strategy**
Publisher **PBS, Microsoft**

So during the time of the British occupation of India, the player assumes the role of leader of one of six leading factions with the ultimate aim of taking control of the whole country. This can be achieved by building up a powerful army, with which to proceed against armies into submission or, more peacefully, by staging festivals and whitewashing in the night time. The former option requires a bit of forward planning to enable allocate taxes for buying troops and equipment. In battle the player can elect to direct the army personally in an arcade-like game, or let the statistics decide the outcome.

Champions of the Raj has a lot of good gameplay ideas wrapped up in appealingly atmospheric presentation, poor graphics and truly awful sound. The intricately slow and liddly disc scrolling is the icing on a particularly unattractive cake. To use the word 'tacky' would be offensive to takers.

☆

CHOPLIFTER 2



Price **Samsboy £29.99**
Genre **Shoot 'Em-Up**
Publisher **Nintendo**

Choplifter first appeared in 1979 as

Broderbund and is still truly remembered today. The player's mission as crack helicopter pilot is to rescue survivors from a horizontally-scrolling mission. To do this the player must land near the refugees and wait for them to board. This can be quite harrowing experience at times as you're in a sitting duck for all the enemy game installations and planes which constantly fly by.

The player's cockpit is equipped with a night-vision camera and a limited number of bombs with which to protect himself. Fast action, challenging game play and a password system help make this one of the best games on on the GameCrew, and a must for any action fans collection.

☆☆☆☆☆

CHUCK YEAGER'S AIR COMBAT



Price **IBM PC £29.99**
Genre **Simulation**
Publisher **Electronic Arts**

Chuck's previous two sims were purely for waffle pacifiers, only permitting the player to do such menial things as perform perfect loops and dives. This time around things have changed considerably, with lovely CUNO making a welcome appearance. Air Combat allows the player to pilot war planes from any one of three eras: WWII; Korea; and Vietnam. There are a multitude of single missions to fly along with a comprehensive campaign mode featuring over 15 missions. These include the standard 'work and destroy' loops, protecting bomber formations, and attacking ground targets. Should none of these take your fancy the in-built mission designer is invaluable.

The most useful feature is the ability to replay missions after completion and view it from any angle, allowing the player to sate all his most spectacular delights and crashes to die. Even more interesting is the ability to dual plane from different eras, allowing such bizarrness as pitting a Mustang against an F-6. A notably realistic and fun sim, this recently holds the ACE Benchmark for Simulations. Possible the most entertaining aspect is the way you can pitch one of the jet planes against old scrawly crates. Class.

☆☆☆☆☆

DRAGON CRYSTAL



Price **GameGear £29.99**
Genre **RPG**
Publisher **Bugs**

No flinching about with complex plot here. The player is riding his bike one day when he takes a wrong turning down a strange alleyway and ends up in a fantasy world teeming at the seams with dangers of dragons. As an RPG the gameplay couldn't really be simpler. The action is firmly on action, with all the 'Take the Flame King of Zax to the Crack of Firey Mountain' task stuff firmly in the background.

Although completely done, it's a little difficult to see who exactly this game is aimed at. It's far too simple for the typical RPG level, while commentators are likely to get more than a little time at having to shut down the power just before they complete a level just because they reached their tale stop. But if you've got the time, you'll find that this makes a welcome addition to the GameCrew library.

☆☆☆

EA HOCKEY



Price **Magnavive £24.99**
Genre **Sports Sim**
Publisher **Electronic Arts**

Like Kick Off with fighting in, Electronic Arts' Hockey will appeal to everyone. A section of teams from around the globe, each with their own abilities and weaknesses built in out in the ice hockey 'World League'.

Following on from their success with John Madden's Football, EA just get another winner out of the bag with this, perhaps their most realistic title to date.

Having selected the breadth of game, whether the player wishes to compete in a one-off match or a knock-out, select his team and that of the enemy, it's game on!

Starting around the rink is simple enough, and control over the stick is surprisingly intuitive. Since the rink is so small and the players can move so swiftly and violently against each other, Ice Hockey is an extremely rapid, high scoring game. Basically, whoever gets the puck from the face-off is

most likely to score. Until, of course, the player gets the hang of the wide variety of tacking moves available to him, from a good honest going-for-the-punch scenario to a full body check.

Like an opposition player on a too-regular basis, though, and you'd better be ready to put your fat where his mouth is, as one of the features included is forwring. While the rest of your team are trying to do some good, it's possible to clug away at that guy who skated over your shoes for as long as you like!

A graphics and gameplay marvel, EA Hockey is wholeheartedly recommended to one and all. Hoover!

☆☆☆☆☆

ELF



Price Amiga £25.99
Genre Arcade Adventure
Publisher Ocean

As Cornelius the EE, it's the player's task to rescue his sweetheart Lisa from the posty-mailed clutches of Neofanon

the Not Very Nice. The game takes place over six Tolkien-esque levels filled with platforms, pitfalls, ladders and bridges. Cornelius' magic powers allow him to possess himself from Neofanon's rampant hoards of henchmonsters by living loads of magic energy. Numerous interest-sustaining spells and powers can be bought from the Ye Olde Localle Shoppe using cash picked up along the way.

Each massive maze-like level presents it's own unique set of problems to solve and tasks to achieve, requiring that the player constantly evolve new strategies to deal with them. All in all ELF is a polished high-quality romp, perfect for platform or arcade adventure fan.

☆☆☆☆☆

THE EXECUTIONER



Price Amiga £25.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Namco

The Executioner is Namco's attempt to

improve on the Asteroids style game. As in most inertia-driven titles, with the player firing through twelve galaxy sectors, blasting every enemy and then using food benefits to purchase bigger and better weapons systems for your ship.

Distorted around the landscapes are pools which shut at the player and occasionally launch ships. Also to be found are fuel pools which must be collected if further play is to be enjoyed.

Initially the limitations is quite acceptable, but soon begins to take over. There just isn't enough gameplay variety to bring the player back for more. Also, the fact that a single alien missile can kill the player outright is far from encouraging. After the long struggle to work your way to the second stage, the player may well find himself whether he can really be bothered to continue.

The potential of the game simply hasn't been realized, but nothing to write home about, and the play of the game and in particular the behaviour of the player's craft itself is jolly and unimpressive. Nam.

☆☆☆☆

F-117A: STEALTH FIGHTER 2



Price IBM PC £25.99
Genre Simulation
Publisher MicroProse

Your chance to pilot the Uglyest Plane in the World is a more tempting one than you may think, although it's uncertain as to whether owners of the previous Stealth game will actually need this treatment in the series.

Opting to either pilot a realistic F-117A or an artificially enhanced "MicroProse" version, the player can enter his chosen war scenario, be it Cold, Limited or Conventional and then choose a particular location for the combat to take place. The number of combat areas has been radically increased. New battlefields, including those from F-19, F-15, and some newer have been thrown in for good measure.

Graphically, F-117A is a marvel, with graduated skyboxes, complex objects etc. There are four detail levels for owners with slower machines. Be

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warrior, even on a 16-bit 286, the frame rate is hardly silky smooth.

There's no denying that *F-14* is a superb flight sim, and Microsoft's best yet. However, despite the radically overhauled graphics and increased number of combat areas, one does wonder whether there's enough new in the gameplay to make it a vital purchase to owners of the original *F-14*.

☆☆☆☆

F-14 TOMCAT



Price **IBM PC \$78**
Genre **Simulation**
Publisher **Activision**

There's no shortage of flight sims on the PC, but Activision's release may appeal to some. The game lets the player fly a series of missions around the Gulf of Hormuz. The player can either pilot straight into the action or start at the bottom and slowly work his way up through a full Navy career. After a good performance in a series of missions the player gets transferred to the Naval Fighter Weapons School better known as the home of the infamous "Top Gun." Weapons available in the usual mix of Sparrows, Sidewinders and Phoenix missiles, along with cannon for close work. There isn't really much emphasis on realism in *F-14 Tomcat*, and to be honest it really hasn't got much to offer players over other similar sims. In the final analysis, it's a satisfying enough effort without too much more baggage.

☆☆☆☆

F-ZERO



Price **Super Nintendo \$24.99** Import
Genre **Racing Game**
Publisher **Nintendo**

F-Zero takes advantage of the Famicom's built-in background manipulation capabilities to create one of the fastest and smoothest simulations of 3D you've seen. It's a little lacking in visible detail. Simply put, *F-Zero* is a race game, with the track viewed from behind and slightly above the player's vehicle. At first, despite the impressive 3D, *F-Zero* appears to offer little over the myriad of other race games about,

but after a few games to quality alone through.

The excellent control over the craft is more precise than in any other race game. As well as accelerate, brake, left and right controls, one can also use the Famicom controller's two analog sticks. This degree of precision means you can race your craft like a man between a high-speed hovercraft and a rally car. *F-Zero* may not look anything special, but it's probably one of those games that has to be experienced to be believed.

☆☆☆☆

FRENETIC



Price **Amiga \$20.99**
Genre **Shoot 'Em Up**
Publisher **Cave Design**

Hot on the heels of *Warzone*, Cave release this vertically shoot-'em-up which draws its inspiration from just about every other shoot-'em up ever released. To anyone more than half-way familiar with the genre the gameplay holds few surprises - the screen scrolls slowly down while waves after waves after wave of eminently identifiable alien creatures assault on-screen. The now-standard power-ups can be collected by destroying various special alien or weapons packs as they appear. At the end of each of the eight levels there's the obligatory huge enemy that takes a huge amount of shots to put out of action.

Frenetic is a competently-executed game that lacks that spark of novelty that sets it out of the rest of the mill. The alien sprites are large, fat and mean, the action is non-stop and highly demanding at times. The most annoying niggles in the way that power-ups can be lost when the player's ship is destroyed, leaving the player naked before the alien onslaught. Unless you're already got the experience *OSTV*, this is a fair buy.

☆☆☆☆

GHOST BATTLE



Price **Amiga \$25.99**
Genre **Action Shoot**
Publisher **Thalion**

Ghost Battle is a jampier 'n' dancier

affair that borrows more than a few elements from *Ghost n' Trolls*. The player is a hero who has to enter an evil demon's kingdom in an attempt to rescue his kidnapped girlfriend. On each level it's battles, platform, game-panels and underground caverns all the way through each level, at the end of which there's a big boss lady to be defeated.

There are the usual extra weapons to collect, and on later levels keys and various tools that must be used on various pieces of machinery appear to add much-needed depth to the otherwise shallow gameplay. *Ghost Battle* is impressive graphically and visually, and play is sluggish. Not one for the top of the 'most get' list.

☆☆

G-LOC



Price **GameGear \$29.99**
Genre **Action Shoot**
Publisher **SEGA**

If you're expecting anything vaguely reminiscent of the Sega coin-up you can forget it. No, I tell a lie - they both involve planes, but that's where the similarities end. The player controls a state-of-the-art jet fighter in a war-torn world of the future, who must embark on various missions to destroy enemy planes, tanks and warships. Controls are easy to get to grips with and it's not long after take-off before the color lights up like a man tree due to the heavy enemy activity. If those air planes they'd money behind in an attempt to show you with some missiles. The ships and tanks in the game act as sitting ducks and aren't really much problem. The game is enjoyable for a few hours but after a while the interest really begins to wane.

☆☆

GOLF



Price **GameGear \$29.99**
Genre **Sport Simulation**
Publisher **Sega**

Sega have chosen a bird's eye view for this offering, and it works quite well. Simplicity is the key word here and though there's a fair bit of missing

shots before play starts it's nothing so taxing. To play a shot the player selects a club and then chooses where to strike the ball (to the back and side shots, which direction to hit it and how much power to use). Even though the scale of the game is small, there's nothing to think about to maximize interest and allow for some creative skill to be used, and the courses are so rich of putt markers holes. There are quite a few nice touches that add to the game, such as four player mode and skill selection. A good game that's worth looking into.

☆☆☆☆

HALLEY WARS



Price **GameGear \$29.99** Import
Genre **Action Shoot**
Publisher **Taito**

Given the fact that the vast majority of the software currently available for the GameGear doesn't even come close to doing the impressive hardware honor, *Halley Wars* comes as a breath of particularly refreshing air. Every hardware need its top-flight shoot-'em-up - the GameBoy has *Warzone*, the Lynx has *Game of Zorrocos* - and now the Gear's got a game that's arguably better than the pair of them. It wins no points in the originality stakes, being too basic space-based *Xenos*-style vertical blaster with all the standard power-ups and level guardians, but it scores highly on execution, offering the playability, colorful graphics, smooth animation and surprisingly impressive sound. The game's only major limitation is that, due to the machine's limitations, it can't produce the flashy effects that similar games on more powerful machines often rely on to hold the player's interest, so *Halley Wars* must depend on gameplay alone - and there's insufficient variety there to provide that all-important surge to progress to the later levels.

Also, it's a shame that the game is actually a fair way and, as they say when trying to pull out a column right at the end of an issue, seasoned game-players may find the long-term challenge somewhat lacking. That aside, it's still a fine blaster and undoubtedly one of the better GameGear titles so far - just don't expect to be playing it in a year's time.

☆☆☆☆

by simply mowing into the opponent. This makes the game easy to get into and provides little learnability. There's also a re-view-the-opponent-for-some-Rick-O'Neil-style action (but not anywhere near as good).

The game's major problem is the play area—it's bigger than the screen which means the view is continually scrolling. On other machines this is not a serious thing but the Commodore screen shows the images terribly. Nothing special. In Your Place is definitely one to leave On The Shelf.

☆☆

JAMES 'BUSTER' DOUGLAS BOXING



Price **MegaDrive £24.99**
Genre **Sport Arcade**
Publisher **Megaforce**

Oh dear, to the light of infinitely superior beat-'em-up games, James Bates Douglas is not so much on the ropes as on the stretcher.

Side-on presentation, boxing games rely on speed, presentation and a wide enough number of moves to keep the player convinced that he can imitate his technique. Unfortunately, Buster can offer us none of these elements, as the truly crummy fight scenes are more likely to cause a submission through sheer tedium than anything else.

Widened and thoroughly unimproving graphics of the boxes shuffle towards each other and then furiously flail away with high and low blows until one of them falls over. You may feel the same way about boxing, but believe me, this is poor.

And for a fight game, it contains the minimal use of simply being too easy, just by standing away at the five button-farther than your opponent, it's possible to win. There's no skill involved here. Crappy nonsense.

☆☆

JETFIGHTER 2



Price **IBM PC £28.99**
Genre **Simulation**
Publisher **Velocity/US Gold**

In a crowded market, Jetfighter 2 ad-

ily stands out from the crowd. The unlikely plot centers the invasion of America's West Coast by a confederation of Latin American countries. Full-scale simulation is out of the question, so small tactical strikes are the order of the day. There are five planes available with which to fly the missions: F-14, F-16, F-4E and the Top Secret F-15D 'Black Widow', a plane that combines the handling characteristics of an F-16 with the stealth capabilities of the F-119B. It's advanced technology gives the player an edge over the enemy.

Graphics are among the best yet seen on the PC, being both fast and impressively detailed. Sound is nothing too hot, but adequate. The action is more on action than simulation, making this one of the most exciting if not overwhelmingly accurate sims available.

☆☆☆☆☆

JIMMY WHITE'S WHIRLWIND SNOOKER



Price **Atari ST £24.99**
Genre **Sport Simulation**
Publisher **Virgin Games**

Archer Maclean, veteran programmer of *Life and Druggans*, is probably the last person you'd expect to write a snooker sim. Cue games have been around since the beginning of computer gaming—a few colored shapes, some angle-of-deflection algorithms and away you go. But even with the advent of 3D graphics some of these have really had an element of realism.

Used over, the table is viewed from behind the cue ball so the player can play up close as if on a real table. The cue can be rotated through various angles and viewed so the player can see from virtually every angle conceivable. The ball movement is accurate, without balls stopping for no reason or going off at impossible angles.

Two player games are the best, but four levels of computer opponent are available for the lone games. As the player progresses more sophisticated tactics can be incorporated, like positional play. However, stick, screw and every type of spin are all possible, and an end for snooking opponents. The end result of PAPA's comprehensive and realistic approach to recreating snooker is the most authentic open to simulation to date.

☆☆☆☆☆

KA-GE-KI



Price **MegaDrive £26.99**
Genre **Beat-'Em-Up**
Publisher **Bugs**

The player is cast as a large-headed hero (who looks like a Thunderbird paper on steroids), who must slowly battle his way through a multi-story tower block in an attempt to reach the top. (Why, we don't know.) The lift being out of order means you have to go through each level individually, a task not made easier by the other big-headed thugs residing there.

For a beat-'em-up Ka-Ge-Ki is distinctly underpowered. The range of moves is limited; apart from mowing the player can punch, jab, jump and, er... that's it. Ka-Ge-Ki leaves a lot to be desired, the graphics are just plain ugly, backgrounds dull, though sound is okay but not much else. The one game play is outstanding and the game has no real redeeming features. There are better games available.

☆☆

LOGICAL



Price **Amiga/Mari, IBM PC £24.99**
Genre **Puzzle**
Publisher **Rainbow Arts**

Logical is a bit of a rarity, a thought-provoking fast-action game which is genuinely as addictive as the block-stacker. The game is an illusion, along the top of a screen runs a track, along the track come colored marbles which drop down channels into revolving disks, each disk has four visible slots, and is connected to other disks by further channels.

Your task is rotate the disks (by clicking with the right M.B.) and launch marbles (click left) in such a way that each disk becomes filled with four marbles of the same colour. As always it sounds too simple but there are various complications and additions that spice up the gameplay, such as time limits, colour gates, misprints and a variety of other touches. The graphics are clear and well defined, and the sound is in good with some nice tones and effects. With egg heads (and a puzzle-writer's) this should keep any

puzzle addict for a fair while.

☆☆☆☆

MAGIC POCKETS



Price **Amiga £26.99**
Genre **Puzzle**
Publisher **Megaforce**

The *Magic Pockets* had typed and opinion-splitting been in a strange old affair. It looks great, has a simple enough premise and is regarded by many to be a piece of class action. To us minds, however, it just doesn't hang together.

The scenario in *Magic Pockets* is somewhat lame, having stolen the *Hitman* kid's toys. The *Hitman* kid must journey through four worlds, retrieving his toys and overcoming a host of new and exciting challenges along the way.

Imagine *Mario* crossed with *Spyglass* and that's what you get. Surely, you get a greater *Mario* version of *Mario* (because this is actually quite irritating), a sub-standard control interface which is utterly charmless and leads to many stick-breaking incidents, and one of the most unnecessarily over-complicated score/power-up systems on the planet.

To help the ball in his seldom-winding quest around the four worlds, power-ups are available in the correct object collection procedures are followed. Having to sit down and work out how the system works when the very point is that these games are interactive is a severe irritant compared to the fun involved in the player who has to wait for the pick-up points to finish leaving before he can collect them, causing any fluidity or fun. Stop, start. Stop start. Stop.

☆☆☆☆

MANCHESTER UNITED EUROPE



Price **Amiga £26.99**
Genre **Sport Game**
Publisher **Activision**

With *Kick Off* a commonly holding the football crown, it's a brave game that launches yet another football game to the market. Mind you, with the original game selling over a thousand copies, maybe *Kick Off* are not taking such a risk after all. The player can

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compute in either the UEFA Cup, European Cup or the Cup Winner's Cup, before a match the player can adjust formation, tactics and composition which due to save time/minutes is a pretty painless process. However impatient gamers will be pleased to know that this can all be skipped.

The game is displayed in pseudo-3D which allows for some decent player animation and graphic fills. As is traditional the player views the ball from behind, and there's a huge variety of moves available including sliding tackles, variable power shots, aftertouch, chips to the side, as well as volleys, headers, etc. One minor gripe is the fact that it's difficult to see where the ball is going to land due to view point. MJ Footy isn't Kick Off (but it is a good Footy game for those looking for something different).

☆☆☆☆

MARTIAN DREAMS



Price **IBM PC £26.00**

Genre **RPG**

Publisher **Origa/Windsor**

Imagine all the 19th Century characters that you'd most like to meet, plunk them all in an experimental spaceship, and there - to add SF interest - blast them to Mars. The result is a fascinating blend of The Forbidden Planet and Island On The Orient Express with a small cast of relatively suitably wandering animal Men.

The player's objective is to rescue these wanderers from the Red Planet. Along with companions Egidius and Fossil, Dr Blood, and Nihilus Tink, the player must get back to Earth post haste with a strange and hostile planet, which entails making sense of the extinct Martians' radio-culture and discovering why they died out... Or did they?

The Martian Dreams game interface is superb - the game is entirely mouse controlled, although keyboard commands can be used for shortcuts. The game is instantly playable thanks to some forethought by the programmers, because the game provides the player with enough clues to get off to a quick start. The character interaction opens worlds very well giving the player the ability to have some quite lengthy conversations. Some really impressive graphics combined with excellent gameplay and involving scenarios result in

one of the better RPG games in recent years

☆☆☆☆

MARVEL LAND



Price **MegaDrive £24.00** (import)

Genre **Platform**

Publisher **Namco**

There's nothing wrong with cute or simplistic graphics - what we at ACE object to is the downright badly-drawn variety as opposed to Namco's latest arcade effort. But the old dictum of never judging a book by its cover is proved right by playing the game, whereupon it becomes apparent that despite the visuals, which look like they've been produced by a pre-school child armed with a blunt crayon, Marvel Land isn't bad at all. It's a rather obvious Mario-clone, and while it's not a patch on Nintendo's classic (but then what isn't it's certainly one of the better attempts). The Japanese dialogue which appears in some of the sub-games takes a bit of listening out, but that's the standard price paid for playing imported games, and in this case at least it doesn't affect the fun too much. Many MegaDrive owners may be offended over at the prospect of buying a game that looks this bad for their beloved tokens of wonder, but those who want value for their money will find this to be a better bet than the flashy-looking diggs that form a large part of the MegaDrive's software base. Recommended.

☆☆☆☆

MAUPITI ISLAND



Price **Atari ST/Amiga £25.00**

Genre **Adventure**

Publisher **Lambert**

The latest in a line of adventures starring fictional galic detective Jerome Lange, Maupiti Island is a murder mystery-type affair in the same vein as Delphine's excellent Cruise For A Corpse. This effort, however, lacks much of that game's imagination and sparkle, and though there's a very complex storyline, packed with clues and suspects, and all set on a remote Caribbean paradise, there seems to be

little to really see or do, and in such there's an uncomfortable claustrophobic atmosphere. Given the potential offered by the plot and its tropical setting, Maupiti Island could have been a lot better and more interesting than it actually is, and the overuse of repetitive samples and poor CLI speech serves only to put the player off. The game's presented well, with an effective music-driven parser and lots of neat touches, but given the somewhat unreasonable way in which the player is asked to find clues (it's more often down to finding a pistol hidden somewhere in a cluttered screen than using any real deductive reasoning, it's unlikely that anybody will find much to enjoy here). Cruise in a much better bet for any would-be Maignet-out there. *Good music though.*

☆☆

MEGA LO MANIA



Price **Amiga £24.00**

Genre **Arcade Strategy**

Publisher **Miramax**

Released under a branch of God-rings that are still coming thick and fast, Miramax's offering has fared better than most, scoring sufficiently close to the Big Daddy Popcorn while not being afraid to borrow little bits here and there where appropriate.

Set in an alternate universe, Mega Lo Mania is all about the quest for power. Power over a set of worlds, each made up from a suite of islands, to be precise. New worlds are formed and intelligent life is placed upon them, upon which interstellar freeborders descend and try to enter the rings of power for themselves.

The conflict arises, needless to say, when more than one freebinder takes a shine to a particular island. Since each area can only have one ruler, a campaign of imperialism begins, with each player trying to use the forces at his disposal to overthrow the others.

Each island exists within its own time period, and the rate of development, intelligence and so on of its inhabitants is governed accordingly. Players quick to invest time in invention and the refining of natural elements, rather than simply running around hitting the others with sticks are more likely to succeed.

☆☆☆☆☆

MERC3



Price **Amiga/Atari ST £26.00**

Genre **Arcade Shoot**

Publisher **MS Gold**

While on a peace mission to central Africa, the President of the United States has been kidnaped by a militant band of heavily-armed rebels. For to duplicate means his recovery has to be covered with a maximum of two operatives - the player and a friend. The game is a combination of the CapCom's arcade shoot-'em-up and retains the eight-way scrolling (albeit a bit jerky, especially on the ST). By virtue of two-blank areas on either side of the screen the play area has been reduced to a strip down the middle of the screen. In one-player mode this is fine, but in two-player mode things get very crowded.

The action quotient is of a very high level, with loads of enemies to mow-down and tanks to blow up. Also nice is the ability to blast away huge chunks of the scenery with some burning explosions. If you like your action fast and frantic then this is probably for you, but if you're usually going to be playing two players then Cos Design's Waxxon is probably a better bet.

☆☆☆☆

MICROPROSE GOLF



Price **Atari ST £24.00**

Genre **Simulation**

Publisher **MicroProse**

The unsuitable Microprose style comes to visit the golfing genre (we wonder why with a reasonable amount of success. It's all extremely computer-stuff but...

Thinking a happy medium between an arcade-oriented approach of such names as Links and Lunarhood and their own number-friendly abilities, Microprose can offer the player the chance to fiddle around with every aspect of the game, from the size of his club right down to the positioning of his feet or how high the tee is.

Wide-eye maps of the current hole give the player a rough estimate as to what he's about, with the computer subtly suggesting the best club for the shot. From here, the bitmapped graph

R-TYPE 2



Price **Amiga/Atari ST \$29.99**
Genre **Action/Shoot**
Publisher **Arcadevision**

R-Type was the forerunner to many of today's shoot-'em-ups, and introduced many of the features that players can take for granted in a half-dozen others, such as power-ups and end-of-level bonuses. Rather than come up with a new idea for its sequel, however, Arcadevision decided to stick to the same formula, which is not a bad thing when you consider it.

There are six horizontally-scrolling levels, each with its own style of graphics, all of which are excellent although ST owners may be a bit peeved by the ropes scrolling. The music is suitably spacey, and patches of the game, being very similar to the original, can wonder whether buyers of that will want to fork out for what amounts to a jump-disk data disc of new levels. However, newcomers to the R-Type legend are in for a treat.

☆☆☆☆ (Amiga) ☆☆☆☆ (ST)

SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND



Price **Amiga/Atari ST/PC \$29.99/\$29.99**
Genre **Adventure**
Publisher **LucasArts/US Gold**

Monkey Island is the latest in LucasArts' celebrated series of "animated graphic adventures." The player is Guy Threepwood, a young man intent on becoming a pirate. To do so he must complete three mini-games during which the player slowly becomes involved in more and more hazardous situations with characters both beautiful, wild and absurd. The game also contains several sub-plots which serve to make the game more enjoyable, which range from simple treasure quests to a massive objective involving a Grand Pirate Donn Hell.

The graphics are pretty impressive, using a variety of camera angles, such as close-ups when conversing with characters and long shots of the landscape when Guy travels from place to place. The music adds a lot to the game and provides an atmosphere in some

scenes—the Tavern scene almost all of its potency to the accompanying sound track. Monkey Island is easy to play due to good use of the mouse and single key commands, and along with the presentation combine to make this an excellent game which deserves its place in the software shelf of any adventurer.

☆☆☆☆☆

SHINOBI



Price **Amiga/Atari ST \$29.99**
Genre **Beat-'em-Up**
Publisher **Sega**

Shinobi is kick! Unfortunately let's let the reader compare this of this previous adventure and must traverse all four levels alone in an attempt to rescue his kidnapped brother. The action is divided into two distinct styles: kicking in battles and jumping platforms across a horizontally-scrolling landscape and, for added variety, kicking in battles and jumping platforms across an eight-way scrolling landscape! The action gets a bit repetitive, and Shinobi himself is pretty poorly equipped for some of the tougher battles around. An essential purchase for Shinobi fans only.

☆☆☆

THE SIMPSONS



Price **Amiga \$29.99**
Genre **Platform**
Publisher **Sega**

This recreation of the TV-show and marketing phenomenon which is really really funny honestly no really it's great because they're funny little cartoon characters who behave like real adults as it's so hysterical as to be really funny it's actually hard to tell if the hands of Sega.

From the coding pen of Arc Developments, this version of the MSX game released by Arcadevision has lost even the charm of the cartoon and as top of all that, it isn't a particularly good game either.

Space moments have landed in the shiny American town of Springfield and are planning to build a weapon which will help them take over the entire planet.

The player, taking the role of Bart must travel around Springfield. Basically, Bart must destroy or defuse all the evil day elements in Springfield which the Mutants are using to construct their space weapon.

Sega's attempt to create something a bit more depth than a straightforward arcade game is commendable, but the result is frustrating because the shabby elements of game design just make it too difficult to play.

It's too easy for Bart to die through no real fault of the player, and the control method is ineffective. Shame.

☆☆☆

SLIDERS



Price **Amiga, ST \$29.99**
Genre **Sports/Action**
Publisher **Pelican**

The French can always be relied upon when it comes to producing novel, if not particularly playable games - and Sliders is no exception. It's sort of a weird cross between 2 football and Marble Madness, where two player-controlled spheres fight it out over a series of scientific areas with the objective of hitting the opponent's goal zone with a tiny ball.

In theory it's a great idea, but somewhere along the way the basic premise has been lost, swamped under a sea of complexly control modes and the concept of supposedly game-enhancing features such as transposers, attractors and magnetic tiles.

The result is sometimes fun, but for the most part annoying, and even a whole screen full of game options and adjusters can't do much to alleviate the frustration.

The real shame is that sometimes - but only very briefly - it's actually a bit of fun, and it's during those moments the player realises how good the game could have been if the designers hadn't got carried away with all the extras. It's very fun, very slick - but ultimately unimpressive, no matter how much process and determination the player may possess.

It's a weird one because even in two player mode, it leaves the players with a "wonder" sort of feeling which implies nothing more than disk removal and to the drawer someone.

☆☆☆

SNEAKY SNAKES



Price **Amiga/Atari ST \$29.99**
Genre **Platform**
Publisher **Sega**

From the people who used to cheer out those Knightmare games (remember those) comes Sneaky Snakes, an exercise in excellent control and little depth. A female snake has been kidnapped by the nasty Nibbles and the player taking the role of either Conquistador or Adia must explore the Nibbles' base and ladies landscape using enough fuel to make them big enough to activate floor switches which open doors through to the later levels.

It may not sound quite as much fun as looking over the head but actually it's one that had. Apart from the wacky idea of the whole thing, the playing of the game is pretty good. Control over the snake is excellent and all intuitive. Fuel is obtained by bouncing on little plants which lie all over the floor or waiting around by plants which open-up balloons.

The weight of the snake is devoted by its length. Unfortunately, once he's long enough to activate the switch it goes through to the next level, he's also long enough to be more easily hit and lost by the nasty things in the landscape. Although the game does quite matches up to the quality of the control method, there's probably not enough varied novelty value here to justify a purchase.

☆☆☆

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG



Price **Amiga/Atari ST \$29.99**
Genre **Platform**
Publisher **Sega**

Sega is out a mission to recreate his badly chosen from the classics of old Doctor Eggman. Twins and platforms are the order of the day, but the emphasis is on being played firmly on velocity too, with plenty of shades of Blue Demons and Strider to spot along the way.

One tricky here can rid himself of enemies by either jumping on their heads, or rolling up into a ball and spinning at supersonic speed to knock them

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out of his way. The most important objects in Sonic's world are gold rings. These act as a safety buffer: the contact with the enemies - one touch causes all Sonic's coins to sprout out, while contact without any rings results in the loss of one of Sonic's three lives. These can be traded for a life once a hundred have been collected.

Spread around each of the HILL levels are a myriad of useful objects that deliver some temporary bonuses such as invulnerability and speed boosts.

The impressive graphics are by far the best part of the Megadrive, being smooth, colorful and easier to spend than how you'd imagined. Along with the variety (24 per level) and flexibility to modify, this is a game that I'd keep you playing until those only hours. If there's one MegaDrive game you buy this year then this is should be it.

☆☆☆☆☆

SUPER PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL



Price Super Professional \$24.99 Import
Genre **Sports Simulation**
Publisher **Infocom**

The Great American Sport makes it onto the Famicom with a certain amount of style. A game for one or two players, it's viewed in two very different ways. When the ball is pitched, the players view the action in slow-up from just behind the pitcher. The pitching player can adjust the power and angle of his pitch using the joystick. The batting player then has to strike the ball by doing similar. As the ball rolls into the air the view cuts to a scrolling park view.

Using the radar in the corner of the screen the pitching player has to guide one of his outfield to catch the ball, while the batting player has to decide whether to risk pushing his men round the bases or score them. It's just like the real thing, actually.

As a simulation, Baseball is fine. The graphics are a bit rusty at times, but the all-important gameplay is marvellous - almost rivalling at times. Although a rather simple game, with the associated risk of early boredom (and at times they could fix the carriage that a fairly big one), Baseball is something enough to be worth considering.

☆☆☆☆☆

130

SUPER R-TYPE



Price Super R-Type \$20 Import
Genre **Arcade Shooter**
Publisher **Irem**

Apart from Gadius III, shoot 'em ups on the Famicom are a little thin on the ground, so Super R-Type comes in a real treat. Basically it's R-Type 1 with some shiny laser knobs on. Irem has added a couple of new worlds - the first one has you blasting through a space minefield - but it's still the game we all know and love. With impressive aesthetics and exciting sound, it's the game Famicom owners have been waiting for.

☆☆☆☆☆

TAIL GATOR



Price Gamespace \$29.99
Genre **Platform**
Publisher **Nintendo**

Put Tail Gator into your Gamespace and you'd be forgiven for thinking you'd accidentally picked up a Game and Watch on the way out of the house. Instead, this Magic Mirror rip-off features an alligator leaping through a bunch of levels of the Malvern King dome, trying to dispatch the monsters who have invaded.

Clearly the alligator must flick away the monsters using his tail. Chests occasionally yield bonuses or secret levels which will clear the entire screen of bad guys. But we all know the rest of the chest that Chady is really interested in. Yes! The chests with the key which will lead him off the level.

Control over the alligator is led enough. He waddles along if I'm perfectly aware that alligators can't move that swiftly on their hind legs at the most ridiculous death rate.

We're really moved on from games where the entire objective is to get off the current screen by collecting a key, or at least everyone except Nintendo here. For the moment (status of a second of a moment), Tail Gator looks as if it could be one of those simple yet addictive games which look rubbish but play like a dream. That isn't, it isn't, it isn't to be looked.

☆☆

THUNDERHAWK



Price Amiga £26.99
Genre **Simulation**
Publisher **Cosmic Design**

Most flight sims require a good deal of practice before any reward can be garnered from them. All those keyboard controls and mind-numbingly small functions do quite a bit to put off anyone looking for a quick Mart. Cosmic Design have seen this gap in the market, and more than adequately filled it with Thunderhawk. All controls are via the mouse, which makes everything from weapon selection to helicopter control so target tracking, quick and easy. It's a welcome change from the usual convoluted host of dials and scroll-dials.

The game itself is broken up into a series of campaigns, each preceded by a graphic briefing sequence indicating targets and terrain type. Before taking to the sky the player must select the appropriate ammunition for the Thunderhawk, although there's a default option if this seems too much of a chore.

What makes the game a treat is the handling of the helicopter. The controls make flying intuitive, letting the player get on with the mission rather than having to stay airborne. Graphics are pretty smooth and moves at a fair pace, although there isn't much background scenery. If you've never been tempted to try a flight sim then perhaps this is the game to change your attitude.

☆☆☆☆☆

UTOPIA



Price Amiga £26.99
Genre **Arcade Strategy**
Publisher **Orion**

The quality of life on earth, let's face it, sucks. And the world is screwed up so bad that nothing anyone can do can save it. We need to start again.

This is the premise of Utopia, another Populous/Powermonger style affair. Except this time the aim, rather than simply ruling a world or conquering it is to construct and run it and to make all its inhabitants feel really good. The aim is to elevate the quality of life to

100% - Utopia.

It's not difficult to grasp the aims and controls of the game. And it quickly becomes apparent that there are lots of problems thrown up by the idea of making everyone happy. For a start, if you spend all the money on hospitals, food production and month-long sports festivals, your population will be content, but without any credible defence when the inevitable computer-controlled alien attack occurs.

Beginning from just a few key buildings, it's up to the player to construct the colony using coin-driven actions while inspecting the world in isometric 3D. There are almost no rules in this society. You can run things virtually any way you want, inventing resources and time in whatever you like. The only factor that is missing is the option to try and run things at a deteriorating regime and make a certain part of the population very happy while keeping the workers ground down into the dirt. Well, that's not on, is it?

☆☆☆☆☆

WARDNER SPECIAL



Price Megadrive £29.99 Import
Genre **Platform**
Publisher **Wana**

There seems to be a trend in current Megadrive games (Sonic excepted) to wrap superb and addictive gameplay in hideously primitive graphics. Wardner Special is one of this happy band.

Not-wise if it's the usual receive the gold from the evil badly by 'saviour' and 'saviour' through ancient body-induced levels of platform and ladder, but it has several gameplay features that lift it out of the mire.

For a start, the amount of variety is incredible. Every step of the way seems to reveal some new obstacle or feature to overcome - spinning blades, lightning hitting clouds, destructible stars - which help sustain interest no end. Control over the hero is superb, allowing lots of Mario-esque mid-air manoeuvres. Probably the only major fault - apart from the terrible Master System link graphics - is the way the game sends the player quite a way back when he dies. Very annoying. However, this is the only real criticism of an otherwise great game.

☆☆☆☆☆

WARZONE



Price **Amiga/Atari 87 £29.99**

Genre **Shooting/Tw-Op**
Publisher **Care Design**

Once again a powerful technical organization has revealed countries around the world, and as fate would have it only the player (and maybe a friend) have survived. A classic run-up set firmly in the classic mould of *War*, *Warzone*, the screen scrolls downwards while all manner of enemy forces pour on-screen in their feeble attempt to stop the player.

The main opponents are tanks with rifles and are basically cannon fodder in any ballistics term. Scattered along the way are various other battles armed with indirect grenade launchers allowing them to fire over walls. The obligatory end-of-level bonuses include tanks, subs, helicopters, etc. etc.

Despite some new touches *Warzone* is basically a gun than *Warzone*, which is not necessarily a bad thing. The graphics and sound are nothing brilliant, but good nonetheless. Where it really succeeds is on the gameplay front - it's an addictive and fun blast, especially for two players.

☆☆☆☆

WILD WHEELS



Price **Atari 87/Amiga £29.99**

Genre **Sports/Arcade**
Publisher **Ocean**

Another bizarre hybrid game, this time involving Pole Position with Kick Off to produce a bizarre - but oddly playable - car-based future sport where vehicles take the place of humans in a conventional two-side football game played in a giant stadium.

At first glance it looks nothing special, with miniature cars loop-looping their way around an unimpressive 3D pitch, but playing the thing reveals it to be more fun than outward appearance would suggest. It's not Kick Off by any means, but the simplistic gameplay works well enough, and the variety of neat touches, such as different models of vehicles, weaponry and bonus tiles all help to raise the interest level.

The only problem is the lethality, which is likely to be seriously short-lived once the few skills have been mastered - the program doesn't throw up anything in the way of new challenges to hold the player's attention.

Games should be commended for making a conscious effort to produce something else other than the usual reorganized clatter where only the graphics and the bonus changes from game to game, and though it looks well for the future, *Wild Wheels* only holds its own in a market promoting and original, but unfortunately limited.

☆☆☆

WING COMMANDER II



Price **IBM PC £34.99**

Genre **Arcade/Shoot**
Publisher **Origo**

No matter what else you might say about the *Wing Commander* games, they look damned good. The trouble is, there isn't really much else to say about them. Well, perhaps that's a little harsh but here in the sequel to the much talked about and little-played original, it's a case of more of the same.

Intervalla was with the Kilevski coalition, and in the most recent Kilevski victory, the Confederation Republic Ziger's Claw has been destroyed by invincible Kilevski orbital fighters. As the sole member of the assault, the player must first convince his federation comrades that the attack did genuinely take place and then lead a federation force to track them down and destroy them.

The missions available for the player to try are wide ranging and change in style in accordance with the development of the plot. At the outset, when things are pretty quiet, the player's orders are simply to patrol, which leads to turn-to-episodic fights with Kilevski craft.

Graphically excellent although particularly processor heavy, *Wing Commander II* certainly isn't a best-kept game. It's a worthy sequel to its predecessor but in the sort of title where that title old phrase about trying believing is one hundred percent appropriate.

☆☆☆

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You all know what a ball-busting corker of a sophisticated read the next issue of ACE will be, and yet, there are still niggling doubts. And we understand that. We understand that it might be a bit rainy or there might be something good on the telly on the morning you'd previously decided to go and collect your issue.

But it's all a bit dodgy, what with ACE zipping out of the newsagent like there's no tomorrow. The day you go down there, you may well find they're all gone. And that would be bad.

So, in a caring, sharing, flare-wearing way, we're pleased to present our solution to your problem. A revolutionary concept in publishing. See what you think.



Dear Mr Newsagent,

Lazy and forgetful fool that I am, I cannot be trusted to make my way into your store on the day that ACE is published (ie: the 8th of each month).

As a result, I live in constant fear of missing one of the issues - especially next month's which I understand will be especially excellent, what with its free supplement and all that.

The solution? Please, Mr N. Agent, reserve me a copy of the next issue of ACE magazine when it next comes into your shop.

Oh, actually, now you mention it, if you could deliver it to my house, it'd be doubly good. (Delete as appropriate)

Yours sincerely

Name:

Address:

.....
.....
.....
.....

... Rex and Dex were beginning to worry. Usually they wouldn't have a car, as their lawyer, Sir Bartholomew Moulden, was the finest QC in the country, and his phenomenal legal skills could get them off any charge they faced, no matter how damning the evidence. But he was caught in a traffic jam, and they knew that the super-tough Burnside may well be able to extract a guilty confession from them before Moulden could get to the station. They'd see the mill and they knew what a handsome Burnside could be. He was a lot brighter than the court-mapped judge's rock fallow who used to be in the above floor flats.

"Now we're gonna take this nice and slow," said Burnside loudly. "You I want to know the names of all your previous consulting jobs. I want to know about the shipments, the deliveries, the accounts... every detail of your life that empowers them. I want to know about all the bags that have gone down on this street" — he stared forward, staring flat to flat with Dex — "so you'll be brought up on the bar of your nation, my son."

"Look," said Dex, using his special kamurai hand meditation techniques to remain calm under the intense pressure. "These employees talking about, but we haven't done anything wrong. The pictures in a baggy, and the information that this document contains fabricated. We are innocent, and this whole thing is clearly a thinly veiled scheme by the effeminate English barons in these suits so that they can be finished forever."

"Oh, you wicked!" Burnside roared. "Well, I've been coming on you since in the past, and I intend to make sure that you get your neck tight to the wall where you belong, so you can tell your little suit away to judge this Ballantine in the morning. You're innocent as I am, charged with excessive smuggling and bulk theft."

"But my innocent son's innocent!" Rex cried out. "Get up and we'll bring you to the seat of justice — the English barons — along with proof of their guilt. We know you're a fair man, Burnside — but give us a chance — and if you don't, we'll ensure that you're the little who dies the first. Moulden says you're in the Wembley arena."

Burnside seemed to think this over. He knew that if his guess proved not to be well recognized by Moulden, he'd be thrown off the face of the earth, but the law was all for his side — well, that and saying "I know your son's good for you" was a magnificent vice.

"Now, you're good and," he said loudly. "I'll give you 15 minutes to prove your theory correct. The door's open to you now, and if you can't find the evidence you're smoking for, I want you to quit tomorrow or else to face the music, can I?"

Minutes later, Rex and Dex collected their gear and other valuables from the dead computer and left the station on a mission to clear their names. Burnside smiled and waved them out the door, then turned to his lawless, DCI Red,

sitting at his grinds.

"What is the meaning of releasing the two prime suspects in the 'Braggan case'?" he asked. "I believe they're innocent." "I'm giving them a chance to see their own men," he replied. "Now, think, you're not in the British system. We have rules and regulations here in this Mill. I know you're never really here the same since that drug dealer killed your partner, but we're going to do it through by the book."

"Yes, writing you have today by these ball-bat rules and the drug kingpin don't, we're going to do it."

"Think, this case, but given the circumstances I have complete faith in your men as the day. Our men are able and your place, please." Definitely Burnside handed them over. "Now get home and get some rest. This damn personal vendetta of yours has got the dearest men of Burnside. Maybe if you take a vacation, you can come back to the job with a different perspective."

Burnside didn't think about it, but as soon as he closed his eyes, he was tortured into a vision by the scrawling night-vision eyes of his former partner. Moulden finally being taken down by a lack of bullets fired by the hidden drug cartels that Rex had thought might give the cops what they needed. When he opened his eyes again he knew what he must do.

"Get up to Braggan station," the Braggan looked to the mini-car driver.

"Oh, you mean English station, it's the new world champion that he has to see. They'll tell you to the all Braggan's possessions. Don't let anyone else. Everyone find them."

"Yes," said Dex prominently as he turned to his brother. "And they will do again." Dex produced his two-piece suit and slowly began to unbutton it. When the two-piece was unbuttoned, Rex reached inside the bottom piece and produced a small white vial. From the other piece he produced several pens, balls and several small pieces and when Rex examined the white vial, the car had become a high-powered sniper rifle with telescopic lens sights. He looked to his brother, who had done the same with his pen, and the twice clipped their magazines of arrows pointing intricately designed hollow-point in with a metallic hiss. "Let's get some yardwork," said Rex. "Yes," agreed Dex.

In the few short hours since Rex and his brother had been released to their station, they had managed to transform it from the tangled mess of British heritage that it had always been into a quickly assembled cultural nightmare. The agencies and old masters had been thrown out in favour of British police of Vespis playing poker and non-uptight public. They'd clearly come forward the flow of the Englishmen were could take their lives and the brother themselves by on a pair of equally non-foreigner setting odd supernatural nature. They

brother lived. But their disgusting hand was made unrecognizable when the giant suit piece in the miniature man had exploded in a ball of flame and the Braggan was scattered through the burning wreckage, using their own guns. The Englishmen dropped their lenses and started begging for their lives for the standing concrete they were.

"What," said Rex. "We're not going to hurt you, Rex?" he muttered to his brother and the Braggan had dashed their weapons. "All we want you to do is continue to the public that you know us and everything will be alright. Okay?"

Dex looked to his brother Rex and smiled. "Now, they're right, you're moved around in their hands, they're each kept concerned. An unexplained explosion. Their hands tightened around the grips."

"No, we're not," Dex roared. "I'll do you in 100 feet." At that moment, the Englishmen dove their guns and levelled them at the heads of the dead Braggan. The vision was for their gun, but it was no late.

Two shots erupted, and Rex and Dex looked thinking it was all over. Well, it was, but not for them. They were in an explosion of dust and the Englishmen were three feet forward by the force of a second bullet in each of their foreheads, and crashed through the fifth storey floor windows and down into the spiral walkway below.

The sound of gunfire still ringing in their ears, Rex and Dex looked up at them, standing in a cloud of yellow dust, the figure of Burnside holding a smoking gun, all he needed.

"Looks like you were right after all. I hope this little incident hasn't got you out of British playing," he said.

Rex stood up and dashed forward all their gunfire was from the walk nearby and walked it carefully.

"Now all," he said emphatically. "How about a game?"

THE END

WEEKEND READERS

We've been absolutely overwhelmed by the response to our call last month for aspiring writers to contribute their stories to *ACE*. Finding it seems that there's an awful lot of budding indie authors out there, and the fact we're so far removed from being a very high quality outlet. My stories have been listed among such authors as Elly, Rex, and Wanda, and while I'm not sure they're all been absolutely excellent, we felt that we just had to give that entry from young author Nicholas Winkelman, based on *King's Golden Age*. While not exactly adhering to the "make-it-yourself" guidelines we set down last month and taking things a bit too seriously, managed to be neither totally finished or of the same.

VENGANCE OF THE WARRIOR!

By Nicholas Winkelman

When the warrior returned to his village it was to the scene of Cynrig's (brother of the dead) dying he wanted around his own people to the wind. The stretched warrior thought mingled with that of his and hunched though he was, the great warrior "Ma-Rathor" could't help for gap at the sight of those he had returned from a quest to see, only to find them decaying in their own blood. But what gave him was to rage & he roared out loud. His cry was heard by many around by another, not the way, some where ahead of him in the forest the two hunters then began watching each other followed possible the first of his considerable size, into the midst of the trees towards the source of the forest.

Breaking away the undergrowth he charged into a clearing in fact a hollow-tree with some sharp stones protruding a body which he barely moved, but was still capable of shifting some little distance. As another was hidden both with his & unrecognizing girl, as the body of a middle-aged woman, was raised slowly, his brother saw another no more.

The first turned at the matter as it changed him, an arm in hand. The brother charged also, but before he drew his mighty sword thrusts back in the middle of the clearing the one & another was neither attempting to dodge the other's blows. The one swung his sword down as the other's appeared head, but he was not grabbed through the high. It heard the one & another then they open the dead. Before the first could recover, he found the one away, grabbed the warrior's hand to both hands, and swung, lifted it over his shoulder to crash into a rock. The impact made him spit blood away from the warrior's open mouth.

But the warrior couldn't say anything to bury his brother, he charged rapidly over a large group of trees which were he wouldn't be able to defend. He glanced over at his brother's body and getting his two hands off earth, away from the surrounding fire.

Under the cover of darkness, he carefully made his way around the encampments searching for any prisoners they may have taken. Finding none he set about his own & most dangerous quest — that for revenge.

He had noticed the one carrying weapons & plundered goods, it is after a short while he discovered the identity of his foe. Finally he opened an eye carrying a banner — that of a Golden Age, the recognized the symbols of the King of Tara immediately. It made his way towards through the woods, by passing several villages, could be reached the Court Place. From here on, his destination, the king's castle from whence the banner came had been plundered, his journey the more dangerous than it had been. Following through the most advanced part of his adventure, it seemed that the use for his

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THE BLITTER END II

This time he's back... for good!

Yes, yes, alright, Blitter is supposed to be dead, and in theory it is. You're looking at a new, refreshed, revived Blitter. It's just that the old Blitter was so popular, and the industry is in such a state of flux and decay, you can smell it.

Sometimes the stench is so strong it gets us headaches. So we're back, with the full intention of bringing you the latest news of the hottest scandals, along with various other things that help to fill the magazine up.

Everyone had a right old laugh on the closing night of the EGES Show in San Francisco when Strategic Software boss Tom Watson was spotted gate-crashing an exclusive Ocean riverboat party on the Thames. Ocean's Gary Bittay was having none of it, and promptly spotted Watson, apparently amid cheers and applause from the rest of the industry guests. ACE has been informed that Watson could probably had stayed on the boat and boogied the night away with the rest of the industry if only he'd come up with something better than "Er... John said it was okay. No, I mean Dave. Pete. Barney..."

Hard as it is to believe, by the time we get to the back of the magazine, we sometimes find ourselves short of interesting things to write. As is the case this month. So in a rather poor attempt to fill up the remaining space, we thought we'd tell you about how some of the industry's top-level people stand out in less glamorous professions...

Virgin Games' Marketing Manager Andrew Wright may be a high-falooter today, but twelve years ago you'd have found him selling primitive consoles and hand-helds in the newly-formed computer department of Harley's toy store in London's Regent Street. Interestingly enough, Andrew was actually dressed from Assistant Floor Manager to Sales Assistant for looking a fellow worker in the gratings! "Because he was pulling my levers," Wright claims today. Some things never change, it seems...

Former Amstrad executive and now boss of Amstrad UK, Bud Cousins provided his entry into the industry by selling insurance. He also worked as a schoolteacher, as did US Gold head London's Geoff Brown.

Before Mark Irvine became advertising manager of Commodore User and The One and later moved to head up Microsoft's European operations, he used to earn a bit or two by selling ice cream and nuts on a beach in the south of France. And who was he working for? None other than the head of Entertainment International. Since jiffies!

Certain members of Ocean's board of directors have seen the outside side of life, too. Gary Bittay used to be a trainee manager for Littlewoods Stores, while Paul Paterson used to dress up as a gentile to deliver singing telegram!

Just to round up the best of the rest... Konami's development manager Colin Pudge, along with Systems y-cunning brothers Mark and Adrian Cole all used to work in MacDonald's (with Adrian also working behind a bar at Bantons). Yield Image Design-director Mike Dine was once a cable-winder for a cable company. Amiga Power's consultant editor Gary Ann worked on a building site and dabbled in writing adventure games with his mates, and Strategic Software Director Gary Giddens once spent Christmas walking around a department store dressed as Snowflake - and thought it may be a breach of the Official Secrets Act to tell you, the name Mr Giddens was also a

top secret agent with the codename Black Diamond! Hope we haven't blown your cover. Gah!

Here at ACE Towers we know only too well how difficult it can be for you lot to make your way through the masses of computer magazines you read each month. Yes, the world of software reviews is a battleground, so to give you a helping hand in cutting through the waffle and making more authoritative purchase decisions, we provide for you - The Definitive Guide To Games Review Sites.

I couldn't believe it when I looked this up!

Actually I could, because I saw it last month when I did the Work in Progress.

Try before you buy.
I can't be bothered to criticise the game constructively, and if we only got one line left anyway after all that waffle, so this will have to do.

We know the game was going to be good, but we're prepared so far that I am hopeless. Please kill me.

Fans of the coin-op will be impressed. - It's vaguely similar to the coin-op and I don't want to annoy the software company.

The game has a casual theme? They've sampled soundblast!
But has absolutely no playability, so I'll try not to mention that.

The graphics are superb...
I think the word "superfluous" means "good".

Best Coin-op conversion ever?
Probably not, but at least you picked the magazine up.

It's their best game yet!
It's their latest game, and comes in a slightly bigger box.

The depth of the strategy is incredible!
I can't make head nor tail of it, but the

big thick manual is very impressive.

If you're a little bothered by the pull-out spaces in the Lotus review (page 24 - 25), fear not! You're not dyadic. It's just that in our otherwise thorough quest for excellence some gennies (he he) or something got into the system and the mistake wasn't spotted before it was too late. But if some bright spark can piece the reviewers back together, fill in the gaps and tell us what the spaces SHOULD have said, there's a software prize waiting. Entries to the usual ACE address.

Apparently the latest magazine issue is a take really old games that nobody buys anymore, and slaps them off in order to look big and hard. We thought this was quite a good idea, so at the risk of looking like hypocrites, we've done something similar.

SPACE INVADERS
PUBLISHER: N/A PRICE: N/A
AVAILABILITY: N/A

Oh, eye the neo. This game is about as tasty as a stale haggis. When I was walking down Angle Street in my left the other day, I was thinking "Well I'll be Neop's Uncle if Space Invaders isn't a load of rubbish." And it is. The graphics are very good at all, and the playability is not as good as watching Tigger or going sword dancing with Ross Aitch and Lorraine Kelly. All in all you would be well advised to keep your penicils in your spores, and if you already have this game, treat it like you would treat a caber, (Dinner, All in all I think I am very clever, even though I haven't said anything vaguely constructive. Am ye or for a wee-dinner? It's a hawt hawt morselliche night the night. You take the high road and I'll take the low road. The neo.

■ Angus MacFiggis

And so to bed. There's only so much Blitter and slander you can fit on a page

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