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ISSUE 52
January 1993
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ACE

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Exclusive Review

6-PAGE
Screen Tests!



Wolfchild



Another World



Epi



Populous II



Five Sided Die



Eye of the Beholder 2



PREVIEWED:

Indiana Jones 4, KQ6, Backport, Conqueror Populous, Fire & Ice, Special Forces and many more!



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SEGA HARDWARE
COMPATIBLE
FOR THE SEGA
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AND SEGA GENESIS
SYSTEMS

OLD!

Screen images are only intended to illustrate the graphics capabilities of the computer system. Graphics shown may vary considerably between different hardware quality and speed configurations and are subject to the computer specification.

U.S. Gold Ltd, Units 2/3 Holford Way, Holford, Birmingham B6 7AX, Tel: 021 426 3346.



31 *Strangers* are people who understand the need of today's games. Their *Apocalypse* features lots of vibrant death. *Score!*

43 A better collection of Christmas previews. See of which you won't have come anywhere else. *No to be.*



56 *Wolf* from *Wolfchild*. Super space war on a grand scale.

80 The first Samurai from Image Works. Muscle bound hero in time traveling dog-search scenario. *It!*



7 Games News - *Zelda 3*, *Utopia 2*, *B-17* and *Spiderman*. **10** Tech News - *Falcon* in Virtual Reality. **2** **15** Letters. **21** In the Works - *Cyber Fight* from Electronic Arts, *ADAC* from Microprose and *Apocalypse* from Image Works. **37** Software Based **43** Previews. **87** Console Section - Newest releases for your entertainment system. **96** Next Month. **99** The AwesomeReviews Directory is back!

R E V I E W S

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Another World

They say no little catwalks out of shells and snow-stripes jumps, but the French can certainly come up with novel game ideas. Delphine's latest release is a case in point: an adventure driven in polygon!

66

Epic

An age in the making. Digital Image Design's *Epic* has turned out to be every bit as epic as its name and lives as their *quest* (claim suggested) but how does it hang together as a game, eh?

62

Populous II

The best game in The Better World has Total war, relations, negotiations, players, battles and a touch of Greek mythology. Building to build somebody else back to the drawing board.

68

Wolfchild

It's a wolf! It's a wolf! It's the best best from Core Design. Revisiting their second-Party *Wolfchild* in an early month. Core Design from last month's rising advertising for an all-action romp.

74

Eye of the Beholder 2

The game which can't be advertising world might now have a sequel. It's bigger and better than the original, and the characters have even more magical powers. So pack your knicker armor (a lot) and enjoy an epic!

86

The First Samurai

Following his master's footsteps, the First Samurai must battle his way through 14th Century Japan in one of the best arcade adventures for months. Press the icon that brought you *Time Machine*.



SPACE MUTANTS

ARE INVADING SPRINGFIELD!

That's right mate!

A buncha slimy, horribla, totally gross and weird monsters are taking over the bodies of the people who live here and they wanna build a weapon that's gonna take over the entire planet!

PRETTY COOL HUH?

Anyway, you're truly the only one who can save 'em! I've gotta spray-paint things, get radical on my skateboard, use my trusty slingshot, and in general behave like a nuisance, man. Plus, with evil dudes like Nelson the bully and Lisa Marie Bart getting in my way, it's a good thing I've got the rest of the Simpsons to help me out!

So if you're a decent person, a patriot, and somebody who cares about this sorry planet, you'll do the right thing.

BY THE WAY!

Thanks man.



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NEWS GAMES NEWS GAMES NEWS GAMES NEWS

Does Whatever A Spider Can...

One of the most-loved Marvel comic characters celebrated his 40th birthday this year. Spider-Man is therefore very big business at the moment.

Firstly, Sega has introduced a lively new coin-up sporter, the Hyperactivated System 32 hardware. Up to four players can almost lawlessly play Spider-Man, Sub-Mariner, Black Cat or Menkays. Using their unique superhuman abilities, these four heroes pursue their arch-enemy Dr Doom through the sprawling metropolis. It looks very much like a comic and comes complete with speech bubbles and digitalized voices. A fugitive conversation seems very likely.

More importantly, Sony's Columbia Pictures has decided to turn Spider-Man into a big box office attraction in 1993, with the idea of making our superhero a bigger blockbuster movie star than the Terminator. Who will they get to play the agile web-spinning crime-fighter? Michael Madsen, creator of Alias and the original Terminator, is tipped to be the lucky guy. And musician Arnold Schwarzenegger could play one of the villains or goad as Egghead!

ACE previously heard that the director's initial was 'J', but who could this mystic film person possibly be? What about John Carpenter, remembered behind Escape from New York and The Thing in the early eighties? John Trueta, representative of Newsworld on BBC1, was our absolute outside bet along with James Christ.

Sam Lee, creator of Spider-Man, cleared up any confusion when he revealed on Waterworld that the lucky guy was to be Terminator 2 director James Cameron. Thus, Spider-Man - The Movie will almost certainly come over with fast-paced action and spectacular special effects.

Interestingly, it won't be Sony Imagesoft who produces the video game adaptations of the movie. Activision has been rather steady by snapping up these rights directly from comic publisher Marvel. We'll be seeing the results on GameBoy, MegaDrive, GameGear and Super 32X coinciding with the premier of the movie. After the recent deal concerning the Simpsons and Terminator 2, Disney will probably pick up the home computer rights to Spider-Man.

AMERICAN ADULATION

Comic companies like Sega and Nintendo have recently got into the habit of producing rather off-beat adverts for television. However, our Yankee cousins are masters of the absolutely outrageous totally tacky advertisement. It's difficult to ignore their costliness.

Operation C is one of the many eye-catching computer animated 'spots' produced by Lamb & Company for Japanese software house Kazusa. Designer Mark Mariani was given free rein for this particular bit of fun.

Following the Rambo character seen in the original GameBoy advert 'set-up' produced in ACE 4.0, our aggressive hero now has to score out of futuristic experimental laboratory before rushing outside into an anti alien battlefield. This gang-to-command is a 3D articulated model with full facial features and moving joints. Notice the texture-mapped LCD screen from the GameBoy playing the actual game on his chest!

Founded in 1976, Minneapolis based Lamb & Company is a commercial production house specialising in 3D computer animation and simulation for television advertising, business recruitment and architecture. It used Silicon Graphics workstations running Wavefront and other proprietary software to create the fairly-revolving spots for the GameBoy version of Operation C and Storage Muktak Ninja Turtles 'Full of the Foot Clan'.





Step Back In Time

With the Cold War over and no updated aircraft aircraft on the near horizon, Microprose has been forced to visit 1940s-style jets for inspiration for its next aptly titled simulation.

GGT Flying Fortress will recreate the three-falling daylight raids on East-coastal Europe by American bombers based in England during World War Two. Players take command of a bomber, then in a group formation with other planes, through 20 hazardous combat missions.

Boeing's B-17 was one of the most successful bombers of the entire war. Despite some excellent armor and armament, the so-called 'Flying Fortress' suffered heavy losses over Germany until the arrival of the P-51 Mustang long-range escort fighter in 1942. David Pittman's masterly movie Memphis Bell relives the nightmare of flying one of these B-17 bombers on such suicidal flights.

Vector Traffic, the development outfit responsible for Bomber (Amiga) and Space Shuttle (Amiga/Genesis), is busy producing versions of the game on Amiga, PC and ST for a spring 1992 launch. Microprose is providing this release will be another 'stealing 2D simulation' from the firm.

ACE will hopefully be taking GGT Flying Fortress out for a preflight check-up sometime soon.

Meanwhile, Microprose in the States is adapting the sweet-smelling P-51 Mustang Fighter and Railroad Tycoon onto Super NES format. It will be interesting to see how these two best-selling simulation programs are going to be transformed into the kind of slightly less demanding video games which sell to their millions on the popular Nintendo console. Can the average eight-year-old gamester really wrap their heads



TWO SEXY?

It comes as little surprise that Genesis is already producing a sequel to the chart-topping Utopia space-colony simulation game. Currently going under the development title of Utopia 2, this is already promising to be even better than its popular predecessor.

Genesis' leg it back in the programming chair for the original's co-designer, Robert Cook, has decided a return to his university studies is the best move for him. Leg has pledged to hire a new graphic designer and presently favors a look similar to the classic sci-fi movie Alien by Ridley Scott. Nothing but the drawing board is your package

yet. Apart from the visual theme, what's new? Much of the game will remain the same, players still strive for the perfect place to live, but there are lots of refinements planned. These could include a food menu like that of a magazine and Leg also assures there will be far less hassle when handling rather boring stuff like the tables of figures on the finance screen.

Obviously the project is still at an early stage and literally anything could happen. Hard facts are scarce, except for the expected release date. Utopia 2 should be available on Amiga and ST within the next twelve months.

In the meantime, the first Utopia will be converted over to the PC. Super Features and more movie Japanese computer formats. Best assured, ACE will keep you posted of any major developments.

Sale Of The Century

If you're thinking about buying a Megabyte, there's never been a better time to go for it. Leg has finally decided to bundle the phenomenally successful basic the Hedgling with the console for a shocking £29.95 on most stockists.

Early the most talked about can't released so far on the Megabyte. Basic the Hedgling is Leg's answer to the multibillion best-seller Super Mario Bros series from Nintendo (both in terms of gameplay and success). Sales of this value for money package should soar through the retailers roof. There could even be a shortage of stock this Christmas, so act fast if you're interested.

That's not all. Genesis owners will soon be able to sample the fun when Super the Hedgling is converted over to their handheld games system in a couple of months. Frogger and Super Kick Off are also on their way.



MAD! BAD! &

IN YOUR FACE!

AND THAT'S A PROMISE!

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Fear And Loathing In Downtown Tokyo

As this report goes to press, players in Japan are queuing at software stores in their thousands, eagerly awaiting the third installment of the Zelda saga of fantasy role-playing games from Nintendo. This strange activity is probably best described as the natural equivalent of camping outside Selfridges or Harrods before their famous sales every January.

It's not unknown for Japanese people to be "mugged" for these new games and, in one outrageous occasion, somebody actually had their laptop burned down by a disgruntled teenage gamer whose stock of Dragon Quest ran-out in his room on the first day of release. Apparently, the assistant's friend was asked to hand his copy over or face the consequences. The passionate players in the land of the rising sun certainly take their video games seriously.

The legend of Zelda III cuts the equivalent of £1 and is only available on the Super Famicom. It has been crafted by the same design team responsible for the highly respected and much loved Super

Mario World. Zelda III is a pretty tight roguelike cartridge four times larger than previous games, so gear things up! expected of it.

Perhaps every American actor, and even more Nintendo aficionados, Duke Williams will rub out to Japan and buy this cut? After all, he did name his daughter Zelda after the eponymous video game character.



CARRY ON, COMMANDER!

In an impressive effort to squeeze every possible pixel out of the space-kickin' Wing Commander II, Origin is planning to sell additional missions for the game on another expansion diskette.

Special Operations is the title of the new disk, who originally worked at Sierra Online but served as lead writer on the second Wing Commander project. Besides new missions and enemy sets to kick in, this accessory also introduces a prototype Terrain Fighter known as the Destroyer Bomber.

Origin's Commander series of action simulators just can't be ignored at the moment. Further titles on the production line include the inevitable Wing Commander 3, Strike Commander which is scheduled to appear early next year, and Panzer Commander (working title).

The latter Chris Roberts creation is, surprisingly enough, a tank combat affair. An Origin spokesperson boasts Panzer Commander is another "breakthrough" product with incredible graphics which look better than most animation seen on TV. No exact details are available at present, although it's pretty safe to say this game will be set during the Second World War and feature a few armored vehicles...



Are you Redi for this?

Naturally known for professional, expensive and exceedingly dull flight simulators, Rediffusion has announced a newly inspired version of the featured 14-seat entertainment site cars theme attraction.

You've probably seen the Super II at computer shows and other similar events. Basically, it couples flight simulator motion to helicopters with a headline film of something thrilling like diving down a breathtaking slope, driving a Formula One car at top speed or taking a journey out into space.

The whole setup is quite believable and very exciting because the chair you sit in moves in time with the action. There's also a loud speaker system to draw out the excitement of pitiful grunts and waaahs!

Ventures will be shortly complemented by a special ticket interactive simulator called the Commander. Keep an eye out for our report in the new future.



And Here's One I Prepared Earlier...

The bigger, badder sequel may be out now but don't check your copy of Populous in the bin just yet! Electronic Arts has brewed yet more life into Bullfrog's classic original with an editor program to be released in the new year. Programmed by a German Populous addict, it allows players to create their own! Presetted Levels by altering sprites, backgrounds and game variables! It's out in January for £29.99, but unfortunately only single owners need apply.

Core, What A Scorcher!

In these ever-shrinking Core Design's after producing the likes of *Thunderhawk* and *Wings*, the company is developing a new racing game based around the top league racing cars normally seen at road races like Le Mans et al.

"With no working title as yet, we suggested *Big Drag* but Core wasn't impressed—the game will supposedly use an adapted and slightly enhanced version of the fast and fantastic 3D graphics routines first seen in *Thunderhawk*. It therefore shouldn't take too great a stretch of the imagination to discover the author of Core Design's chopper combat sim is in charge of development. As lots of the code is already in place, the whole game will take a mere six months to complete.

A spokesperson for Core Design maintains that this first foray into drive 'em-ups will be totally innovative, knock everybody for six and make holy cars from EA look decidedly pale in comparison. Bold claims true, but believable ones considering the pedigree of products before it.

Project J is due for release on Amiga, PC and ST by May 1992. There could also be a 16-bit arcade version of *Thunderhawk* out on the streets sometime later next year. No arcade publisher has signed it up yet—Core Design only goes for floppy disk formats at present and has only just included the good old CD-i to that list—but the smart money would be on Virgin Games. Richard Branson's office has already converted Chuck Buck and Corporation over to the Megalab.

Chuck Buck, a raffish 'son of Chuck', is due on the way from the same design team at Core Design. *Phew!*



ALL TOGETHER NOW

California creator of *Falcon*, *Spectrum Helicopters*, and Leicester-based W Industries, makers of the Virtually arcade video game system, have entered into the 'historic marketing venture' to form Cybercade, a virtual reality software publishing concern exclusively devoted to one-up titles.

"Virtuality represents a quantum leap in entertainment technology and should be considered the recreation vehicle of the nineties and beyond," declares Spectrum Helicopters founder Gilman Lewis. "With this system, any world or fantasy can be created to totally immerse the user in an extraordinary virtual experience."

Initially, Cybercade will modify and enhance existing Virtually games but plans are underway

to develop several original titles, the first of which will be ready by early 1993.

It's a fair bet that the first game will probably be a flight simulation, perhaps even based around the F-16 *Falcon*, which would also utilize the Electronic Battlefield pioneered by Spectrum Helicopters. The PC version of *Falcon* is to be the first game to demonstrate the Electronic Battlefield and this will be followed by *Arranger 4* in next year. This innovative concept lets many players compete on the same battlefield. One person, for instance, could command a tank while three other players pilot a squadron of fighter aircraft. Such multiplayer capabilities should suit the Virtually equipment very well.



They're Back

Samco has tried to breath new life into the classic shoot-'em-up *Defenders* by introducing a six-down arcade video game system with fancy 3D graphics and a diskly title laser gun.

Defenders is a bit too linear and non-interactive for many players tastes, but does incorporate some particularly good sprites and backgrounds. The bullets and shells don't stop there, either. Samco thoughtfully provides an 'active seat' which vibrates when the enemy hits you and a four-channel surround sound system to produce "softies through the players body".

Perhaps there will be more attention to gripping gamingplay in the next 'hyperentertainment machine'?





HIGH PRAISE DRIFTERS

What the heck have Bart Simpson, Arnold Schwarzenegger and WWF got in common? They're all coming soon to your Nintendo Gameboy! Rik Haynes casts an eye over these hot properties...

Nobody had even heard of Acclaim a couple of years ago. Today, thanks to a string of best-selling NES cartridges, this prolific New York company is one of the biggest videogame publishers in the world. These guys certainly know how to make the right connections. Earlier this year, Acclaim was one of the first firms allowed to manufacture its own NES carts. Previously, such software was strictly made by Nintendo (and in Japan, Microsoft), the Super NES has been added to the list (but with titles like *The Simpsons*, *South TV* and *Super WWF Wrestling* on their way.

At the beginning of this month, Acclaim announced plans to convert its most popular games onto the Sega MegaDrive and Gamegear, thus completing the lineup of total coverage. Though of this corporate background, I hear you say, what about those exciting new Gameboy offerings?

BART SIMPSON'S ESCAPE FROM CAMP DEADLY

There's just no escape from this goofy American family of total idiots. If you're not completely fed up watching them on satellite TV or video, Acclaim is ready willing and able to supply the Simpsons in software form. In this luscious-packed Gameboy adventure, rebellious Bart and his smart-ass playing sister Lisa are sent to summer camp, the place where American parents (and their kids) go right

every year.

Twice in this dangerous camp is filled over by bad-lies and cruel camp-counselors who want to stink out teenage kids. You must guide the Simpson-springs through the various obstacle course, meeting quirkies, friends, grumpy gurus and Nelson's gang of miscreant thugs. *Escape from Camp Deadly* will be available later this month for about \$25 and Acclaim is already preparing a sequel for release next year.

TERMINATOR 2: FUTURE WARS

The Simpsons and *Terminator 2* stand for the biggest things to happen in the entertainment industry this year. No wonder Acclaim has licensed both of 'em. Leading scenes from the brilliant Schwarzenegger movie, players are led through a series of arcade sequences featuring futuristic laser battles, fast motorcycle chases and furious gunfights. If you actually take a close look at the *Terminator 2* film credits when it's released on video in early 1991, you'll notice a plug saying "play the hit Nintendo games from Acclaim". See what I mean about those handy contacts...

WWF SUPERSTARS

Taking advantage of another cult programme from E!Net, Acclaim has covered the best-selling World Wrestling Federation appeal of Hulk Hogan, Ultimate Warrior and Randy "Macho King" Savage into this blistering line of head-buts, dropkicks and chokeslams. WWF Superstars also includes action out of the ring, two-player head-to-head Game Link option and simulated TV interviews with each wrestler conducted before and after every match. A very handy Christmas present for *Wrestlemania*, eh?



THE NO-HOLDS-BARRED

SMASH

GAME SHOW
OF THE FUTURE

TV

Start your way through the action-packed, high-tech world of the game show of the 21st century. With a host and challenger, you enter the arena of SMASH TV, where you'll be competing and taking part in exciting challenges, puzzles and riddles. You'll be able to play in the combats to win your own personal prize possessions.

SPECTRUM
ADVERT
COMMENTS 41
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AKkaim

ocean

L etters

Hard to believe though it is, we're not always infallible, and from time to time things occasionally go awry here at ACE Towers. This month the gremlins decided to hit our Letters section, and all the titles for the letters unfortunately got lost in some computer maze. Due to this happening at an unfortunately late time in our schedule, we didn't have time to come up with a completely new set of titles, so we had to borrow some from the problems page of our sister magazine *Just Seventeen* instead. Hope you don't mind...

I FINISH TOO EARLY

Dear ACE, I have never before felt so strongly as to put you to paper as I do now. I am absolutely tired about some games and the time taken to complete them. One magazine started about Robin Hood, "Here are a good 30 or so hours of gameplay here." Well, after two hours I had completed the damn thing! Apparently it was "Fun" to walk around talking, exploring etc, but it wasn't. This magazine had wasted around £20 of my money. I was also bugged off by Megadimension (2 days), Bard's Tale (a week) and Wilfar (five hours). Wilfarer took me about ten hours. However, one game has delighted me, Eye of the Beholder. This is a real joy to play. It's also a real challenge. Make no mistake I am an experienced gamer/player, especially strategy and adventure games, but this is no excuse for the ease of a game.

Good idea about six page reviews, from these we can see what a game is really like. Based on these, the game I'll purchase will be Floor 13. Why not have a section specially for adventures and RPGs, where quality games are printed and help can be given to inexperienced (and experienced) adventurers?

Matthew Curran
Plymouth
Cornwall

We're not too sure about your claims about games being too easy. Most of the time designers seem to get the difficulty just right, and if anything they seem to be moving more towards the tough side. However, it's an interesting point, but you should never actually think "God, this game is really hard!" By that

time, you're well on the road to frustration and disappointment. Instead, your argument seems to suggest that you would like games to be simply bigger. So what's the verdict? Do ACE readers reckon that today's software is easy, hard, or just lovely and right.

I'VE GOT A NASTY COMPLAINT

Dear ACE, well done with the new style man. It's great, but like Mr Trevor Smith to leave SL I would like to see more six page reviews. So please hurry it up. I have only five complaints. One is what happened to the chart in the pink pages? You were only mag I had read that did the charts by the game's average score. Secondly, the thing I find annoying is that when you review a game you don't say if or when the game is out for other computers such as Commodore or Amiga. Is that going to come out for ST or the Amiga? What? If you answered questions like that it would be very useful.

I own an ST and I want to get a game designed for it. What is the best bit around, I have thought of a cricket game. What bit would be the best for a game like that?

Nathan Longton
Bristol

We'll be doing more six page reviews very soon, so just hang on, alright? Everything comes to the who waits. Patience is a virtue. As for the ACE stockmarket, that had to be swept into the bin along with everything else to make room for our glistering new reviews directory. You'll be pleased to hear, however, that we have taken heed of your second quibble, and as of this month we'll be giving

Ultima VII

THE BLACK GATE™

THE GREATEST ROLE-PLAYING ADVENTURE SAGA OF ALL
TAKES ON AN UNBELIEVABLE NEW DIMENSION!

Ultima VII makes another giant technological leap forward. Harnessing the full extra power of the latest generation PC's, the Ultima world literally takes on an extra dimension, with a completely new full screen VGA graphic environment which brings historically realistic close-up views of the gameplay as it develops.

Instead of watching this amazing interactive story unfold through a small window, now you are in Britannia! Absorbing the atmosphere. Feeling the pressure. Actually hearing the characters speak. Controlling your every move and those of your companions, in a unique, mouse-driven environment.



System Requirements

8MPC or 100% compatible 386SX, 286 or 486
Hard Disk, High Density 3.5" or 5.25" disk drive
3MB Memory
VGA/VGA+ color monitor
Keyboard and/or mouse
A&S, Roland MT-32(MPC), CMS SoundBlaster "Sound Card"
*Required for speech.

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full reader details for every game we review. So read them a look if you don't believe us.

AM I NORMAL?

Dear ACE, what on earth happened to pages 7 and 8 in your December issue? There were five items in your News section that were finished in mid-sentences. I'm sure, not after you receive complaints, but I couldn't think the magazine afterwards, for I am one of your most loyal readers! Please in future, publish the ends of sentences.

Robert Sharp
Barnstead
Bury

Original Frank Spencer strikes again. Okay, okay, we admit. Some of our News stories got caught a bit short. Those responsible have been publicly criticised in the car park at the back of our office.

I AM IN TURMOIL!

Dear ACE, I am writing to you because I value ACE's comments and opinions and would like them on the questions below:

1. CEFTY! I know what one is and everything, but is this a good thing because people say it's not worth the money but other people say that due to its scale and graphic capabilities it's worth the asking price. So is it worth getting?
2. The price of software seems to be going up all the time. Is it due to the rise of more and more games getting copied? If so wouldn't CEAs be the best way round the problem as you can't copy them and the price could come down a little?
3. Could you please tell me if FLIN's Strength Fighter 2 and Wing Commander will be brought out on the Amiga?

I would be very grateful if you would answer my questions and I must also tell you what a great improvement you have made on your mag. It's just the best one money can buy.

DL Malwood
Dunbridge
Kent

STEPMUM MAKES MY LIFE A MISERY

Dear ACE, I have a very serious complaint which I would like to voice through your pages to the entire industry. Why oh why do software houses continually persist in packing their games in large cardboard boxes to make it look like there is a lot of stuff inside. There got nothing in there but a disk and a stupid little instructions pamphlet. It's just the biggest rip-off going! I can't think of any other medium that uses this cynical marketing ploy. Not only is it totally impractical for us games players who have to find somewhere to keep all these giant boxes, but it is absolutely just a way for software houses to make their inferior games look more appealing and worth the asking price.

I'm not quibbling with people like MicroPress, whose bulky packaging is justified by the large manuals and documentation the product requires, but certain software houses (I won't name names but everyone knows who they are) seem to think that they can get away with producing a giant package and then putting, if you'll excuse the term, an all inside!

If there's any consolation to this sad tale, it's that I don't think this rip-off tactic is going to work. Today's software-buying public are far too shrewd to fall for it. When you pick up a big box and it hardly weighs anything and you can hear the disk rattling around inside, you know immediately what the SP is, but who knows what depths some firms may stoop to - maybe they'll start putting bits of lead inside their boxes to make them seem heavier!

To be honest with you, I wouldn't really mind so much - it's not as if the standard of the game is diminished just because it comes in a big box after all - if it wasn't for Eric Shing's. One, the problem with shelf space I mentioned earlier, and two, I think that documentation is very important to a game. When you get a glossy manual and lots of other bits, it makes you feel good and adds to the overall game experience. By putting out these stupid little leaflets inside a giant box, that whole concept seems to be diminished somewhat. That's my opinion anyway.

Before I go, I would like to congratulate you on the excellent new section Gary White's Reviews. With all those first-line stories and exclusive screenshots, I now have exactly where to go to beat the best advice on what I'll be playing over the next few months. Keep up the good work!

Roger Allison
Maidstone
Kent

Right on, comrades! We fully agree with your comments about one-job packaging. There's nothing we find more annoying than getting off excited when a giant game box finds its way into the office, then tearing off the cellophane to find nothing more than a disk and a pathetic bit of paper inside. This isn't the only letter we've received on this subject either - it seems more and more readers are getting fed and bothered over the packaging issue. So maybe it's about time you industry bigwigs got your act together, eh?

Right, one of a time, then...

Firstly, it's not really our place to tell you what to do, but you're probably best off waiting a while to see how the CEFTY fares before taking the plunge. Though it's been on sale

for quite a while now, it hasn't exactly been flying out of the shops. Also, Commodore recently topped a hundred pounds off the retail price, so who's to say another drop isn't on the cards?

Don't let anyone mislead you about the





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machine's superior graphics either - they're exactly the same as on the Amiga, and only the sound is improved due to the CD drive. A more interesting bit might be to get hold of the Italian CD drive for the Amiga since that appears. The point about software on CD is a good one, but don't for a minute think that the price would come down just because of the no-copy-protection and cheaper medium. Look at audio CDs - they sell more than conventional LPs and are cheaper to produce, but they still cost twice the price. As long as the public are willing to pay high prices, they're not going to come down. Finally, you'll be pleased to hear that FSFA and Wing Commander will both be finding their way onto the Amiga - soon.

FANCED BY TWO BOYS

Dear ACE, I've been a computer games player for many years, from the good old days of the Jupiter Ace to the awesome Amiga 1500 I own now. I'm also an avid car fan, and on the weekends there's nothing I like more than to bring my two interests together by playing driving games on the Amiga. I follow the race-game genre avidly and as such I have noticed that recently there have been a lot of driving games licensed to a particular car or bike. Lotus, Toyota, Suzuki and Ferrari have all been signed up to the pact, and now I hear that there are plans to bring out a Jaguar game.

The reason I am willing to do this because there aren't really that many good cars left to license, so I wonder if any software companies might be interested in doing a game about mine. I own a 1981 Ford Capri 2.0 V6 five convertible with whitetail tyres, leather bucket seats, electric windows and multiple CD player with 140 watt stereo output. Obviously it's a pretty excellent motor, and it really goes some too.

I think that this car would be an excellent one to license. If any software houses would like to sign my car up, I would be more than happy to talk business. I'm sure there's lots of potential, and I would even design the game for them.

David Valliant

Exeter

Well, how about it, you software houses? Here's our dream come a bit good, and it's got to be a better bet than Team Tugs, hasn't it? If you're interested, give us a call at ACE and we'll put you in touch.

HIS SIZE FRIGHTENS ME

Dear ACE, let me tell you about magazine coverdiscs. I buy just about every computer book going each month, and while ACE is undeniably one of the best in terms of editorial quality, it seems that you've been left back in the stone age as far as discs are concerned. CD Amiga, Xos, Amiga Format, Amiga Power, The One, ST User and many others have cover discs which greatly enhance the overall package and VFM factor. So my question to you is: why doesn't ACE drag itself into the 90s and do a coverdisc too?

I'm sure that it is a good idea financially, as these discs must greatly increase sales, particularly if there's something good on the disc, like a playable demo of a new game or even a complete old game. So come on ACE, get your act together and get a disc on the front and make your excellent magazine even better!

Alex Knorrholt

Langley

Bloomsbury

Though you're correct in a very general sense about cover disks improving a magazine's sales, it's not quite as simple as that. Notice that most of the disk magazines you mentioned are single format - ie they only cover one machine. ACE covers a wide range of machines, both computers and consoles, which makes a coverdisc a bit of an unlikely prospect. Even if we managed to squeeze enough good ST, Amiga and PC stuff onto a bifurcated disk to make it worthwhile, we would immediately alienate all our console readers. Indeed, that's why Euro has recently dropped all its console coverage.

Would you pay an extra quid for a magazine with a disk that's so good to you? Lastly, a coverdisc doesn't necessarily enhance the overall package - some might go as far as to say that it's just a cynical ploy to make up for the low quality of the magazine itself. Still, we're always open to readers' comments, so why not let us know where you stand on this highly-controversial issue?

HE WANTS TO, BUT I'M NOT READY

Dear ACE, I would like to know why it is that you can't buy computer games in supermarkets. Many other retail outlets, like Virgin, HSB, Deans, Ladbroke and Bookstallies all sell games for the various computers and consoles, but if you want to go looking for the latest releases in one of these so-called "super" markets like Sainsbury's Tesco or Safeways, you would have no luck at all! How can these great chains prosper to sell everything you need if they pay no attention to one of the fastest-growing entertainment mediums in the world today?

Often, when I am doing my weekly shopping at the local Kirk Lane, I may want to purchase the new Sidcap Brothers game on walk. But can it fit in, I have to get on a bus and go all the way up to the computer shop in the precinct. I'm sure it's had been a bit of time since or some month(s) I had been there. I would hate had no trouble. But computer games? Nah!

The way I see it, these short-sighted supermarket chains are only shooting themselves in the foot in the long run. With the likes of Toys and Records, it won't be long before everybody will be adding the latest hot commodities to their weekly shopping lists. So come on you so-called convenience stores - let's see some convenience, eh?

Andrew Chubb

Leeds

Yorkshire

Ed... you.

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Knightmare



*"You are setting forth into another place, another time, another world," said
Drogward, The Dungeon Master. "And what makes you think that you four mere
mortals will succeed in the Quest, when so many others have failed?"*

*I understood, at that moment, that our mission was going to rely all
our endurance, all our collective skill, and, most of all, a depth of courage, that I wasn't sure
we possessed.*

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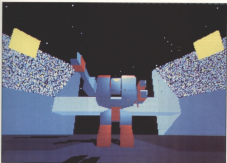
Knightmare is available on Apple II, Atari and IBM PC compatible systems.
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With the use of motion-capture technology, players might find it difficult to control the robot's movements. The controls will be more forgiving than those of a traditional fighting game, but you'll still have to learn the ropes. Don't think that this game will be any easier to play than a traditional fighting game.

Electronic Arts' *Cyber Fight* is a fighting game that's more forgiving than most. It's a good idea to try it out before you buy it. The game is available on PC and Xbox.

Electronic Arts' *Cyber Fight* is a fighting game that's more forgiving than most. It's a good idea to try it out before you buy it. The game is available on PC and Xbox.

CYBER FIGHT

Two giant robots, tall as locusts, stand toe-to-toe and lunge at each end of a massive arena lined with stands, each packed to overflowing with thousands of spectators. Yet strangely the audience is quieter than a graveyard. They are waiting for the battle to begin. Inside the cockpit of each robot sits a pilot, one hand steadily gripping the control dials, the other poised over their weapons systems. They too are waiting for the battle to begin.

The shrill blast of a Muzak robot around the stadium, followed by a roar from the crowd. Serious white face service and the robots slowly march towards the other. The face of the arena reverberating with the weight of each lumbering step. As the two draw together they pause briefly, as if taking stock of each other. Then, with a screech of motion, one robot a giant chainsaw and lunges, the other backs up with a missile and fires. Let battle commence...

The concept of giant humanoid robots is not a new one. It's been a staple ingredient of Japanese 'manga' comics for over two years now, originating with the Gundam series and continuing today with the highly popular Gundam. However, British readers may be more familiar with those from the 'old' (ie. excellent) PE, soap selling video Robot Joe. Whatever, you have to agree that the thought of being able to pilot one of two giant mechs sounds chock-a-block awesomesauce. And that's why it's one of the most exciting concepts in a pretty way one.

Clank! Crump! It's more violent than Friday night in a Glasgow pub! Electronic Arts' forthcoming *Cyber Fight* gives you - yes, YOU! - the chance to rip your friends limb from limb!



Electronic Arts' *Cyber Fight* is a fighting game that's more forgiving than most. It's a good idea to try it out before you buy it. The game is available on PC and Xbox.

Cyber Fight's plot, which takes place in a street in a futuristic city, is a bit of a stretch. But the game is more than likely to change, since most of the story is in the player's hands. The game is more than likely to change, since most of the story is in the player's hands.

The aim of each round is literally to smash your opponent's head to pieces. It's not a game for the faint-hearted - anyone whose idea of a good time is a quiet night in with a take-away Chinese and a video of Penny Wise's hair-removal ad. The champion can then use his cash winnings to buy weapon upgrades and assorted enhancements. The ultimate aim is to work your way up the league to become overall champion.



Worries: "The entire cast of this adventure, about 100 digital characters, fit the robot's memory on single compact-disc 'tracks.' Computer scientist 'Gonzalez also explains that a 100 MB game disc holds information that would fit a 100-page document's size."



Worries: "All of the robot's sophisticated sounds and movements are built in one place, so when a new arena is built, it can reuse what's already there."

Worries: "The robot's body is made from a solid, not an animated mesh, making sure that the robots' motion has a certain weight and consistency. It also means that the game can be ported to other platforms." According to Gonzalez.



It's Each robot's main mode of transport is on foot, but they are also fitted with limited dual jet packs which can be used to give them a short loop over obstacles or onto platforms. The double can be fitted with up to two weapons pose for each arm and these range from basic hand-to-hand grappling attachments, like chainsaws, glass clamps and clubs, to projectile weapons, like stunguns, cannons and missiles.

There are six basic arena "shapes", but each can be packed with any number of features making a near-infinite number of different combat arenas. These include such things as platforms (which the player can walk with a spring from his jet-pack), walls (accelerating the rate of movement to hit the opponent) and re-arming stations (which play a role akin to the pits in a boxing game). Adds Michael:

"In some arenas there are pools of molten metal. You can grab an opponent with a clamp arm, drag him across the arena and throw him in!"

But there are also some surprises in store for the cowboy player. "Some arenas have switches hidden in the floor," explains Michael. "These have various effects. Some buttons turn off the arena's artificial gravity, leaving the robots to float in zero-G. Others turn off the stadium lighting - if you haven't fixed info and vision before the fight then you're left in the dark. The buttons aren't completely hidden - since you know what to look out for you can avoid them or use them to your advantage."

As each battle progresses, the robots gradually erode the other's shields. If the shield gets to low then damage is reflected on the robot's various facilities. For example, take too much damage to the arm and eventually it'll be blown off, leaving a spalling stump trailing smoke. Naturally, this makes the arm, and the weapons attached to it, useless.

Likewise, take too much damage to one leg and it'll become useless, only leaving you capable of waddling around. Lose both legs and you'll be crippled. In such a case it's probably best to jet, though this makes you very vulnerable. The only sanctuary in your re-arming station, but your robot-mounted opponent will be doing his best to stomp you into the ground. And there can be few more frustration-inducing scenarios than being closed by a belligerent go-fun robot.

It's the *gl* that's the most immediately impressive aspect of Cyber Fight. It's rendered in 3D colour VGA, but it's in 2D-colour MOGA that the game really shines. Usually Michael has used a technique called General shading to simulate highlights on the metal and 'weld' the joints of two polygons. Michael describes it as "a way of making polygons appear to be made up of more polygons than they are actually are."

Perhaps, the shading routine takes a fixed fraction in the area (ie the triangle) so that there's only



Worries: "The illumination changes in all the games. We use the same hardware engine to run them in the arena and in *gl*."

Worries:

Rendering with the right shading routine and hardware is essential. The same routine that can do a 2D with the best effect can also support multiple textures to make an arena extremely scenic in the *gl*. "Using the *gl* algorithm to control the use of the better shading routine," explains Michael. "The engine, it's about the control of the shading, you can do the shading in the *gl*."



and calculates it's effect on the colour of a given polygon in its various edges. The routine then graduates the shading of the colour across the polygon accordingly. "There are better shading routines," comments Michael, "but they take much longer to process." As it is, General shaded polygons take approximately 12% longer to draw than 'normal' polygons.

To maintain an acceptable running time, only the two robots have General shading applied to them.



On a 20MHz 486-based PC, with shading and full detail turned on, Michael estimates a typical update of around eight frames per second, increasing to around fourteen with no shading and minimum detail.

Continues Michael: "I'll definitely be using Gouraud shading again in future games. I also want to see more texture mapping. In Cyber Fight it's restrict-

ed to putting images the arena's video wall. Texture mapping makes polygons much more interesting to look at. You could do things like add all sorts of battle scoring to a robot. The trouble is it takes even longer to process than the Gouraud shading because the renderer has to assign every pixel of the texture map onto the polygons. For technical reasons the texture mapping will only work in MCGA."

"Which are? Come on, 486 renderers aren't fright-ened of a bit of fancy information!" "Well, in MCGA each pixel is represented by one full byte, but in VGA they are represented by four bits, so you have to do a lot of byte masking which takes up even more time." Ah, I see... I think.

Given Cyber Fight's technical sophistication, what about version for other computers? "There are plans to convert it onto the Amiga, but nothing's been started yet. I doubt the Amiga version will have the Gouraud shading - the processor just hasn't got the speed to handle it. There might be one object shaded - I don't know yet. The objects will have to be simplified too - there are about two-hundred polygons used per robot on the PC game."

Michael is very aware that some people found his previous game *Powerdown* a little too tricky and frustrating to control. "Trouble is, when you're developing a 3D game it's hard to judge how difficult it is to play because you're always playing it yourself and you get used to the controls. With Cyber Fight we're giving it to people who've never played it before to get their feedback. Also, there will be several help options to make it easier to get into. Like games used to keep the robot stable."

Although the 3D engine is completely finished and

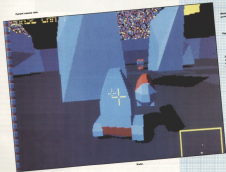
THE 3D ENGINE, WHICH HANDLES THE RENDERING AND THE OBJECTS, IS THE MOST ADVANCED PART OF THE GAME. IT'S THE ONLY PART THAT'S BEEN FINISHED AND IS NOW BEING USED IN THE FINAL GAME. THE REST OF THE GAME IS STILL UNDER DEVELOPMENT.



the basic test building gameplay will stay, many of the plot specifics and the smaller game design options are still in a state of flux. Although there are two basic robot "classes" in the game, Michael is still debating whether or not to let the player buy a new chassis, or force him stick with one and upgrade parts of it throughout the game. Also, Michael is unsure whether to allow players to choose between weapons in the remaining stages.

However, with Cyber Fight's release date not likely before late Spring there's plenty of time for Michael to iron things like that out. It's certainly shaping up as a contender for one of year's best games and I, for one, can't wait to play it your number - 88 - See you in the arena.

It's a Work in Progress



THE 3D ENGINE, WHICH HANDLES THE RENDERING AND THE OBJECTS, IS THE MOST ADVANCED PART OF THE GAME. IT'S THE ONLY PART THAT'S BEEN FINISHED AND IS NOW BEING USED IN THE FINAL GAME. THE REST OF THE GAME IS STILL UNDER DEVELOPMENT.

...gives me great polygonal surfaces," says Michael. "I want to see more texture mapping. In Cyber Fight it's restrict-

only for... them.

"It's clear from this evidence..."



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ATAC

A player who has been following the FBI's top-notch coperastrary DEA will be aware that winning the war against the drug traffickers is a far more complicated business than simply locating labs and the streets with money trails and bloody eyes. Even the regular hauls of millions of dollars worth of cocaine and cannabis seem to be viewed as a mere irritant by the dealers running what is now a notoriously organized global business.

It is a glory fact that gives the limited resources available to the law-enforcement agencies, they will never be able to shut down the narcotic trade. At best they can simply reduce the volume of drugs in circulation.

Clearly a new approach is needed, for years, not entirely stupid people have pointed out that were drugs legalized, the illegal trade would collapse and the drug dealers would no longer need to maintain gas, schools, bribes in order to claim their trading sites. Whatever, it is indisputable that since trying to imprison a number of criminals equivalent to the population of a small country is rather tricky, attacking the traffickers' game-plan is a more effective way of beginning to win the war.

Given that it's unlikely that a sudden swing in Congress policy will see the drugs they're fought so hard to keep out of the country legalized, different attacks on the crooks' financial resources must be planned.

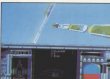
Microprose's new title, *ATAC* (Advanced Tactical Air Command), takes place in a thoroughly imaginable format. The drug problem in the US has multiplied and the various law-enforcement agencies are being more hindered with the traffickers than they are winning. By attacking the actual production sites of the drugs, more damage to the trade would be done than by just seizure of narcotics in transit.

A covert force is set up in Columbia (drug production capital of the world) and briefed with the mission to disrupt and destroy enough of the cocaine and heroin production industry to help the United States close up their backlog and hopefully to completely bankrupt the drug cartels.

A year and a half ago, the powers that be at Microprose decided they wanted a flight game that wasn't just another 'F' number, and Argonaut were given the job of producing it. And now they're ready to show the results. ACE visits sunny Tetbury to investigate.



As you maneuver around the terrain in ATAC, you also receive reports from the various elements of your mobile force. It is in these reports that you learn the whereabouts of the various drug laboratories in distribution centers.



Attacking the most complicated element of the drug trade is the major objective in ATAC. In ATAC, you'll be the first to see the results of your attacks.

A subtle departure from most Microprose games of late, *ATAC* combines both strategy and 3D flight elements. The player takes the role of the supreme commander of the ATAC, controlling all operations from a secret underground base in Columbia itself. He has at his disposal five F-22 jets and two helicopters. From within his base he can assign reports from reconnaissance flights and his spies positioned across the country, gradually building a picture of the way the drugs cartels work.

To begin with, the player has extremely limited information at his disposal. From the major towns where farms and factories, roads and railways lie, the *De-Snoo* knows if the farms are producing drugs or crops, and he doesn't know what goods are being transported in the trucks.

Since within the growth or harvesting of the valuable plant is illegal in Columbia it is perfectly



possible for honest farmers to be growing the drugs amongst their other crops. And as the operation is only underway thanks to the assistance of the Colombian government, it is vital that the player neither destroys innocent crops or kills civilians. Instead, the drugs themselves must be removed.

What distinguishes the game from most is that the player is free to decide how much of his game will comprise strategy and planning and how much will comprise actually flying the aircraft at his disposal. In theory, at least, the player controls the action from his base, at the beginning of each day once the intelligence information has been gathered. It's time to examine the map and lay down instructions for the Command's aircraft.

Unusually for a Microsoft flight game there are no set missions. It's entirely up to the player to decide how he wants to wage war on the striking drug barons. Only logical, after all, since the player is supposed to be running the entire operation and is responsible for its strategy.

If the player's intelligence reveals that a convoy of trucks is leaving from a farm and heading for a factory and the factory is a known drug refinery, it's likely that there will be some drugs amongst the cargo. Another reconnaissance mission is necessary to determine which vehicles are carrying the drugs before a strike mission can take place.

One of the "smarter" support systems means that the player can set a course and detailed instructions for each of his aircraft in turn, having previously armed them with an appropriate balance of hardware.

Once this side of the mission is taken care of, the action can begin. Players unhappy deriving their hands with the mechanics of actual flight can sit

back and watch the mission as it is carried out by a set of automated pilots. Each pilot is set to have the same elite skills and will perform his mission as best as he is able.

THE TEAM

In total, ten members of the Argonaut team are responsible for ARMS in its various incarnations. The record shows that the following "gossers" deserve recognition for their respective efforts.

- Sam Littlewood - PC Concepting
- Mike Beaton - PC Flight Dynamics
- Alexander Metcalfe - PC Artwork
- Tom Ashton - PC Artwork
- Mike Day - PC 3D Graphics
- Benny Emmott - PC 3D Shapes
- Adam Polanski - Amiga General Code
- Jonathan Wolf - Amiga General Code
- Peter Leachman - 3D Code
- Richard Olivas - Overall Project Management

There's no one who doesn't deserve credit for his or her share of the game's success. Argonauts are pleased to share credit equally with all those who've enjoyed and enjoyed with a bang the mission.

It's hard to credit the individual members of the team, but we're proud.



Our intelligence agents have access to information on every location and vehicle in the world. And the best part is getting it in a matter that is really easy to use. It's not a mission, it's a mission.



Checking a route through an area will show the progress of the mission and what is required to be done.



back and watch the mission as it is carried out by a set of automated pilots. Each pilot is set to have the same elite skills and will perform his mission as best as he is able.

In any stage during the mission, however, the player can jump into and take control of any active aircraft, providing that it isn't before a zone limit, in particular, if a single train carriage needs to be destroyed and there is a risk of harm coming to innocent bystanders or crops, it's advisable to take control, let the computer controlled pilot have a few hours of bombing therapy. Over the

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MINDSCAPE

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Artistic: Mike Winkler
Apocalypse's distinctive graphics of dog-eared screens, ramshackle terrain, and a color palette that's almost entirely black and white is a result of the game's limited palette. "We're going to have a very limited color palette, so we're going to have to make the most of the colors we have," says Winkler.

32 • Chopper offered little more than just that basic premise. Perhaps in presenting much bigger things of Apocalypse.

"Basically, we wanted to improve upon the original Chopper in just about every way," he reveals. "The thing about the game was that there wasn't really much to do. The landscape was completely flat, you had a few buildings to crash into and some tanks shooting up at you. Occasionally you'd get a jet plane, which would just zoom on screens and crash into you, and that was that, really. For Apocalypse, though, we've tried to make everything as realistic as possible, with a wide variety of opponents, different levels, lots of objectives and the sort of presentation that people expect from a shiny old product these days."

Apocalypse's scenario tells of a hidden, obscure island somewhere in the Indian Ocean, where the people live under the iron boot of a fascist dictatorship. When large deposits of Uranium are discovered deep underground, the resource-hungry US President sets about sending in for the purpose of building his own nuclear bomb. The population is, however, less than happy about this, and plays a game's opening.

Before you know it, there's a civil war raging between government forces and the now rebel army. Enter Uncle Sam, who's not overly cheerful about this aggression (or the prospect of the radio-station acquiring a nuclear weapon) and sends in its own troops and advisors to assist the rebels, but it all goes horribly wrong and the US force is quickly overrun by the fascist army. Now you've been called in, as the top crack elite helicopter pilot in the army, to fly in and rescue as many of the beleaguered rebel US forces as possible, before the jets wipe them out completely.

Flipped over five levels, Apocalypse has the player flying his chopper over a series of war-torn battle zones. As the helos fly on the ground, you've got to land in the middle of it all, pick up as many of the fleeing rebels as possible, and get them back to the US camp located nearby. Obviously the fascist forces are not so keen on rescue attempts, so the player finds himself up against attacks from shoulder-mounted Stinger missiles, machine-gunning jets, enemy helicopters, tanks and even the ground troops themselves.

As machine-gun fire and missiles whiz past through the air at you, it becomes ever increasingly difficult to land and get the rebels to safety. And if they can't get to you, the enemy will be quite happy to take out your precious hostages. Helicopter gunships kill them by strafing the ground, while the gun-toting soldiers simply pick them off as they try to scramble aboard the chopper.

Of course, the player isn't entirely helpless, and can retaliate by means of a vicious cockpit-mounted cannon, as well as with droppable mines and an



OPPORTUNITY DOKKS

Apocalypse's distinctive graphics are the work of veteran artist Paul "Dokk" Doherty, who first cut his teeth on the Commodore 64 several years back and has since been providing quality visuals for games like Last Ninja II, Myth and this month's first Samurai. It's been primarily his job to give Apocalypse's military look feel - no easy task. "We got some books out about American military hardware and had a look through those," Dokk explains. "Probably the most useful thing we got was the design for the main helicopter. We found a picture of a new helicopter prototype called the LH-1 and copied that." As a result, Apocalypse players will get to fly the LH-1 even before the real thing goes into production. Co...



With a simple, top-down perspective, the game offers a different view of the world. As an action game, it's a bit more difficult to see the action from the ground level. "The biggest trick," says Dokk, "was getting the look of the buildings." Because there's no texture, he had to use a lot of different shades of gray to create a sense of depth and perspective.

With the addition of a new level, the game's graphics are now more than just a look, they're a story.

awesome sniper Barrett. You might imagine that with all this going on, things could get pretty hectic - and you'd be right. With all its explosions, crashing, changing, banging and shooting, there's enough action in Apocalypse to keep General Norman in bed with an ice pack on his head for a week.

Since the inception of the project in September last year, Polaris has been adamant that Apocalypse's more sophisticated approach and plethora of new



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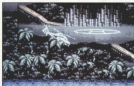


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WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Quite a lot, actually. *Apocalypse* was originally to be called *Rebel*, with Perkins developing the game under that name right from the start - but things changed when Microsoft stepped in to sign it. "I don't think anybody was really that pleased with *Rebel* as a name," says Isaac. "When we had one of our first meetings with Microsoft, John Roloff, who's the head of development there, suggested *Apocalypse* - he's a really big *Apocalypse Now* fan, you see." Since Coppola's classic war odyssey was in fact another source of inspiration for the game, the name stuck and that was that. "I think the name's going to go down really well," says Isaac. "It seems to be a very popular word at the moment. Public Enemy's just released its *Apocalypse 91* album, and there was an episode of *Bottom* called *Apocalypse*, so it's really quite cool."



20 **P**leased to have those aerial battles, so it's going to be doing another type of helicopter, a big game that fits in with it as well. Please don't worry because they're too fast but someone suggested a jetpack guy, and we might do that."

Because *Apocalypse* is such a simple game, it's easy to assume that the programming job has been just as easy. Not so, as Isaac doesn't mind telling you. Unlike *Chaplin*, *Apocalypse* needs to eight directions with illuminated background and foreground layers providing extra depth to the scenes. Putting everything together on *Strawberry*'s custom-built editors has not been easy. "The biggest problem has been getting everything to run quickly when there are so many on-screen screens," says Isaac. "But I think we've done alright."

Apocalypse gets chosen for take-off on the Image Works label next Spring on Amiga and ST. And judging by how the game's looking so far, Isaac's desire to bring the shoot-'em-up back in style to the most outrageously over-the-top manner imaginable may not be so far-fetched after all. Hang on to your helmets...

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"THE BEST RPG/ADVENTURE GAME OF THE YEAR," JUST GOT BETTER...!!"

200,000 years ago, the Ancient-ruled Regulators, and then destroyed themselves in a suicidal war, leaving only ruined sites and devastated planets. Can today the rules of the Ancient-ruled pasting, mysterious and

exciting artifacts are still unearthed at various ancient sites throughout the Cosmos? Can you, the player, survive the

ancient sites that mysteriously sprang up, vanishing and threatening to destroy an environment? Millions will praise if the ancient site isn't capped. Ancient sites spread across a star-system, here, there, and even ancient artifacts that may reactivate the destruction site.

So ultimately, you'll need to find the legendary Ancient leader who has been reportedly dead for 200,000 years!

Only you can discover if the legend of the Ancient one is true as you play Traveller for you've never played it before in Megatraveller 2: Quest for the Ancients.



For years, Traveller was the undisputed king of space force role playing. A game of unprecedented magnitude, there was no aspect of space-faring adventure that Traveller didn't handle, and handle exquisitely. Then along came Megatraveller, a complete redesign of the original Traveller that stands as one of the most remarkable gaming achievements of the last decade.

Expertly designed, Megatraveller was crafted as the premiere of science-fiction role-playing.



Now, the best RPG/Adventure game of the year just got better!!

The game begins at you and your party set out to stop the alien probing Ancient sites at Rhuland. There are 123 detailed worlds to explore with hundreds of cities and millions of square miles.

You can travel from planet to planet, absorb commercial statistics, or one of your characters may run free-trade ship. Explore hundreds of planets including cities, site terminals, starbase with task plans, gambling casinos, shops, taverns, trade and commerce centers, vehicle rental locations, character requirement centers, crafted and modified ships and legions (jets).

At each of the Ancient sites, you can discover artifacts and relics that can help the crisis situation in Rhuland. By helping the situation, you will receive very significant rewards, which will help you in the passage, or even acquire your own ship so that you can continue your quest.

Throughout your adventure, you will be probed by agents of the secret organization.

As well as a main plot, there are dozens of sub-plots at the various worlds, and even doozy starbases, to keep you and your party busy.

You will be confronted with interesting adventures filled with mystery, danger and intrigue.

Megatraveller 2: Quest for the Ancients is a unique and innovative role-playing adventure that goes deep and broad beyond Megatraveller 1.



Home Computing

COMPUTER GAMES



MEGATRAVELLER 2 QUEST FOR THE ANCIENTS

The game features the most advanced and comprehensive character generation system ever developed, as well as the most realistic combat system for ground and space conflicts. For both sides, perspectives are equally anxious, showing your entire party from a perspective that realistically represents a large, modern city.

Megatraveller 2 features a much more graphic-intensive presentation than Megatraveller 1. An enhanced trade and commerce system is implemented in Megatraveller 2. Refresh economic system is much more realistic and benefits from the substantial increase in worlds.

Megatraveller 2 uses the PXL system; you are the leader of the party and the others act as your hands. You can give orders, but acting intelligently based on the skills and the characteristics they possess, they may not follow your instructions if they believe that

different actions on their part will ultimately help you in some effective way.

There are hundreds of NPCs to meet, converse and trade with during your adventure.

Overall, Megatraveller 2: Quest for the Ancients is an all new game with

existing advanced features. The sheer size and scope of the game with over 123 different worlds to explore will keep you playing time and time again. This together with the superb graphics and animated backgrounds and the revolutionary PXL role-playing system, make for the most exciting adventure yet seen on a Home Computer.



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Chain Mail Eddie.
Use every form of fighting - martial arts, kickboxing, stab with knives,
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Remember you're never safe - even from the crowd - get thrown into
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Incredible graphics, digitized from real fighters, and amazing real
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You'll never live of this brutally addictive game!

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It is a Playset Ages 8 and upwards.

It is a Playset Ages 8 and upwards.



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Do not be alarmed. CLICK has been sent to this planet to link computer games magazines into the '90s. CLICK is a mag on video. Scorching reviews on the latest new 16-bit games. Competitions that'll blow your techno minds. And, get this, *all* of your fave games featured in every issue. It's matters it's in CLICK, or should we say in **CLICK**. Go! It's about.



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previews.....

Ho Ho Ho! And a hearty welcome to one and all to this very special Christmas bumper bundle of Previews. And ooh, isn't it exciting? The presents, the stuffing, the poncy Woolworths ads... you can just taste the Chrimble season in the air, if only people wouldn't keep dragging religion into it...

Now, to business. And although the games on offer this month are a bit late to find their way into Santa's sack, no doubt they'll be earning pride of place in the Easter Bunny's stocking, or whatever it is he keeps his eggs in. There's a juicy crop on show, including a few rather tasty exclusives, complete with never-before-seen screenshots and, ooh, lots of other great stuff besides. Am I good to you or what?

BODYCOUNT *Strategic*

Though last month's *Sins* TV-based war was very excellent indeed, *Destiny*, leading development team Strategic's (the team behind *Apocalypse - see page 38*) is promising to blow us away in the victory stakes with a tasty little number by the name of *Bodycount*. Like *Sins*, *Bodycount* is based around a futuristic TV game show, where contestants vie to stay alive by killing respawning alien in the vicinity.

There's a lot more to it than, however, as the players are given a variety of military-style missions to complete, all set within a gorgeous multi-way scrolling game arena known as the *Bodyzone*. Within the maze-like landscape, contestants must seek out objectives while avoiding all manner of enemy patrols and alarm systems that constantly protect the zone.

There's an awesome array of weaponry available, including pistols, rifles, automatic weapons, grenades, bombs and rocket launchers. EVERYTHING within the *Bodyzone* is far more active buildings can be blown up, body-

parts can be set up for enemy traps to snaffle into - there's no limit to the range of dirty tricks available. Though *Bodycount* is still in the early stages of development, the word is that a publisher is already on the brink of snapping it up, so with a bit of luck we should see something towards mid-to-late next year.



KGB: King's Games

After the excellent *Floor 13*, Virgin Games is delving even further into the virtually world of political intrigue and corruption with *KGB*. Based around the USSR's infamous secret intelligence agency, it puts the player in the shoes of a young agent who must advance himself through the ranks of the ominous organisation. It's played like a graphic adventure (quit and click is a laffoff), with strategic elements built in. Character interaction plays an important part as the player visits his staff both around the corridors of the KGB's building and in the surrounding city.

And though the KGB isn't exactly famed for its above-board techniques, because the game's based on a real agency as opposed to the fictional one in *Floor 13*, it's unlikely there will be any of those unnecessary writer's aspersions. As the screenshots show, that VGA card has been pushed to provide some very tasty and 'clean' visuals, and the whole thing is 100% controlled for ease of use. All would be *Strategic*! Can get cracking on the PC in the new year, with a 3D version following later. Oh?



INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS

US Gold/Cosmiflex

Though we may have seen the last of the (stupid) archaeologist at the time *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, Lucasfilm Games has ensured that his whipcracking, autopsy-grabbing adventures are far from over. The same team that produced last year's excellent last *Crossed* adaptation have had stronger job than most with this, the fourth chronicle of Doctor Indiana Jones' adventures - because it's a totally original product, there's focus on film material to work from and so the whole story has been scripted from scratch.

The result, however, is every bit as writer-packed as any of Indy's big screen escapades, with the main in the hat searching for the (lost) modern counterpart of Atlantis - with a very hot in tow and all kinds of wailing bad guys waiting



Garry Whitta's

previews...

43P In the wings, if you will, Lucarulli's ultra-classy 32.768M™ system has been improved yet again, now boasting even more sophisticated character interaction, and the VGA graphics are right meant to say the least. The PC version is due out early next year, with AT and Amiga following a few months after.

POPULOUS *Building*

It has to be the software success story of the century. From its humble 65.000 languages, building's classic strategy epic (the sequel to which is reviewed on page 54) has gone on to be converted to just about every computer and console format conceivable—the Super Famicom version alone has sold over 400,000 copies! Handhelds are the next logical step, and though no official deal has yet been signed, its leading candidate will surely, passing the building as an indicator that they've already put a fair amount of thought into what such an incarnation would be like—what you're seeing here are their crack-up graphical renderings of the proposed GameBoy version.



Two very different display modes are being mooted at the moment. On the right is the traditional 3D perspective, complete with map and icons—which is feared may be a little too taxing for the little machine's graphical capabilities. As an alternative, building has come up with this 2D bird's-eye view on the left which, while more functional, is less faithful to the original game. It's still undecided what the final game will look like, but hey, who knows, you may end up getting a choice of either sleek-as-a-whisper! Well, we say there's real potential for two-player link-up games, too. Don't expect to see anything concrete for quite a while, but you can rest assured we'll keep you posted in the meantime.

JOHN MADDEN'S FOOTBALL

Electronic Arts

Before EA Hockey came along, John Madden's Football (also) a very long spell of being the best sports game on the Megadrive (and is apparently a total a top quarter back in the States), and had no qualms about leading his name to this, because it signed the face with every other footy game going at the time. Now it's on its way to the Amiga, and though it's likely to come up against much stiffer competition on this format (mainly in the guise of the excellent TV Sports), Football, its sophisticated playcalling combined with super-realistic control of players on the gridiron and lots of other excellent stuff besides means that this could well topple Circusmaster's classic.

The only stumbling block in the conversion process itself—this is the first time an original Megadrive game has been adapted for computer, or, in its track and go to say the least. All the lights are green so far, however, and John touches down in the early part of the new year.



FIRE AND ICE *Image Works*

Yes, Microsoft has acquired the official Fennell and Dean license of Arndt, that's not quite true, and any similarities between the two have to do with the Chapman TV special and Andrew Dreyfus's up-and-coming platform game are purely coincidental. Fire and Ice represents a welcome return to platform for Andrew, who hasn't visited the genre since the Oly classic Gribbly's Day Out in 1984. Once again, cute is the key word with the player taking control of a big-wide-eyed wuff who must protect some wuff pups from a band of horrible fire demons who descend to work the entire frozen kingdom. And

Fortunately Mr. Wuff, who was born to the frozen wastelands, can use ice as a weapon against his foe and as a tool of clarity to help navigate the land maze. It's certainly very pretty, though less it stacks up to today's competitive platform master creations to be sure. But with Andrew's understanding credentials (Rainbow Islands and Pinobird) go among them, chances are the end product will be something a bit special. Ironically, you'll have to wait until the Spring, by which time any up-waiter will have long since melted away, to find out.



SPECIAL FORCES *Microprose*

Yet more military fun from MicroProse—although this time the player doesn't have the advantage of being situated in two hundred tons of armor plate and having back-working missiles attached to the back of a button. Special Forces is an "arcade simulation" in the style of Prose's aging favorite Air Force Ranger, based around the exploits of an elite army infantry unit with orders to stamp out bad guys wherever they may be found.

The player takes command of the fast-raw team, leading them through 25 missions set around the world.

Targets include drug barons, terrorist factions and illegal military bases. In each mission, the team is dropped in by helicopter, and there must struggle through all kinds of adverse terrain (including water and desert conditions), avoiding enemy patrols and traps to reach its objective. Each scenario ends for the unit.

Unlike the earlier Air Force Ranger, which featured only a single character, Special Forces has more strategic scope, allowing the player to split his team into smaller independent groups and put together intricately planned assaults. In true Microprose style, each team member progresses as the game goes on, accumulating points and promotions, and the missions are linked with the team's performance in one relating directly to the next. Special Forces is out in the New Year, so start answering your foe with actual sniping.



Now available on Amiga as well as available for ST

S P O R T S B O X I N G



...the most realistic boxing simulation ever created...
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Do you want to box in the Fourth Dimension?

Mindscape and award-winning developer DSJ bring you the best of games in your home computer with the 4D Sports series. Now the 4th Dimension is released and the action is amazingly real. Modelled and simulated on real human movement, 4D Sports Boxing is the most accurate sports simulation ever written. 4D Sports Boxing lets you create and save a copy of your best of your own boxing.

You dictate how tall, how heavy and how strong they are.

Now you take the ring and battle from up-close, personal fighting experience.

When it's time to retire there's only one final fight.



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Get the most from your Amiga...
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is with a range of 100,000, says Scott. "It's because we wanted that to be a nice curve to the curve that we're using."

HOW THEY'RE BUILT... WITH A VORTEX Super Spoons' hollow, tapered, and flared design is a result of a process called "vortex forming."

Super Spoons' founders search for parts and materials in locations that are not associated with the food industry, such as the 19th Century City, a part of a building in New York City.

Live it like you love it Super Spoons' founders are passionate about their product and their business.

Amazing stuff Super Spoons' hollow, tapered, and flared design is a result of a process called "vortex forming."

Big and of the future Super Spoons' hollow, tapered, and flared design is a result of a process called "vortex forming."

Secret hidden levels Super Spoons' hollow, tapered, and flared design is a result of a process called "vortex forming."

It's the secret with no secret Super Spoons' hollow, tapered, and flared design is a result of a process called "vortex forming."



twiro
DOMARK

SUPER SPOONS



ARCADE BLAST**EVIL (Nintendo)**

The follow-up to *Ikkyu's* success succeeds through a combination of frenetic speed, polished presentation and short, unadorned action. Time and time of it. The frequency and weight on screen is of a level that far exceeds anything offered before. A *100* coin-up with no cost!

ARCADE ADVENTURE**DOOM (Shareware)**

While it may be argued that it's not as intricately sophisticated as the likes of *Wolfenstein 3D* or *Prince of Persia*, the *Doom* franchise platform opens doors into enough full-on 3D arcade action to make it the outright winner in this category. Cheap and dirty.

ROLE PLAYING GAMES**EYE OF THE BEHOLDER (US Gold/SSI)**

By the mighty sword of King! SSI's latest Experimental Design game takes the best bits of *Dungeon Master*, adds a few more to its own, mixes well, and the result is the best: yet for gamers into the whole fantasy genre. *WB SSI* rule the RPG land forever!

SPORTS ARCADE**KICK OFF 2 (Acorn)**

What can we say? It's pretty pointless trying to explain to the initiated what makes *Kick Off* a well-loved playable, but the primary reasons are versatile, intuitive ball control mode and remarkable speed which combine to make it as exciting as the real game!

STRATEGY**CIVILIZATION (Microprose)**

Bill Meier's *National Spaces* is depicted as the strategy benchmark by - would you believe it - another game by the titled! This awesome strategy epic has the player leading a race of people through technological and cultural expansion as the civilization develops through the ages. Microprose staff, and a work of undisturbed genius.

ADVENTURE**THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND (US Gold/Hasbro/SSI)**

Partly due to the new revised version of the SCUMM adventure engine and partly due to the excellent, and very funny script, this is the most engaging and entertaining adventure game for years. But will *Monkey Island* take its crown?

ACE BENCHMARKS

The games listed here are the very best of their particular genre. The benefits of your being fully acquainted with our Benchmarks are twofold.

The Benchmarks provide a solid reference point when

it comes to games buying time. By glancing at our description of the benchmark, you'll be able to decide if particular differences in the new game's design would make the new title more or less appealing for you.

Also, no software collection is complete unless it contains all the games listed here. If you're missing any of these titles, go and remedy the situation immediately.

**RACING SIMULATION****FORMULA ONE GRAND PRIX (Microprose)**

A new benchmark for perfect. It's almost impossible to find any fault in this awesome game from *Soft Computers*. Paired with helpful pointers for novices and lots of detail for experienced ones, it will keep you sitting for years.

BEAT 'EM UP**IK+ (Ryudon 3)**

An updated and enhanced version of the original System 3 classic, *Archer Maclean's IK+* is still undaunted in its field after three years. Its most innovative spin is the addition of a third, computer-controlled fighter. Incredible speed and outgames.

RACING GAME**MONTE CARLO RACER (Microstyle)**

Should the *Archer* genre pry open plotting gears and create speed thrills into a novel formula. Drive around circuitous courses, manhandling each leg your opponent into oblivion. Grabbing medals and a wind-tide add novelty value to this class title.

SPORTS SIMULATION**JIMMY WHITE'S SNOWBLENDS (Sproker/Viggo)**

Archer Maclean does it again, and most go down in the history books as having produced the first ever realistic snooker game. *Tronoxides* (JE) combine with colorful play and more options than ever before possible. An extremely good game.

SIMULATION**CHUCK YEAGER'S AIR COMBAT (Electronic Arts)**

The third game to be released by the heroic-flying General takes place in a far more enjoyable combat arena. You get to fly every plane you've ever dreamt of and you get to fight every plane you ever thought of too. And all in super realistic yet playful graphics!

ACTION STRATEGY**MEGA MANSION (Image Works)**

Scorable Software's first attempt at strategy is a magnificently successful one. At first glance, it may seem similar to *Populous*, but further inspection reveals it to be a genuinely original strategy epic. Not will *Populous 2*, the next month, real Mega's best edge.

PUZZLE GAME**TESLA (Nintendo)**

These are more-official versions of this classic than can be counted on the legs of a millipede. But it's *Nintendo's* own *Clawing* version that is undoubtedly the best. Use up blocks in frenetic black & white action. May sound dull but is actually fantastic.

PLATFORM**SUPER MARIO WORLD (Nintendo)**

The sooner you release the *Fantoms* one here the better, as that will give more chance to experience the stunning fourth installment in the saga. *Shy* perfection from start to end of its many-time level is the way how you see that advent with *Mario* reading the news! It's good isn't it? He's better than that *Saga* girl anyway.



A D V A N T A G E T E N N I S



Monday, 3rd of November 1991 THE NEWSPAPER OF CHAMPION GAMES. ★ 1st year N# 00000

SIMPLY UNBEATABLE!

Another crushing victory for ADVANTAGE TENNIS over its rivals. Its indisputable technical superiority was proved last season on all surfaces. Like us, Tennis World is wondering if this year, there will be a player who is well trained enough to succeed in taking ADVANTAGE TENNIS' title and becoming Number 1.



WIN YOUR BADGE "N# 1 IN THE WORLD"

Five! You have not given up. Your technical and mental qualities have made you Number 1 in the world ranking. Every player deserves a medal. So if you're among the first 500 to send us a screenshot after representing the first page of your press book, proving that you have defeated ADVANTAGE TENNIS, you will get the badge ADVANTAGE TENNIS, PLAYER NUMBER 1.

A CHAMPION'S PORTRAIT

- 1 or 2 simultaneous players.
- Numerous spectacular shots: Backhand smash, Dive...
- Slow-motion replay of the last rally.
- 2 game types: training, season or exhibition.
- ATP point and ranking management by program.
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Icons representing various game features or categories.

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ANOTHER WORLD

Y

ou've played Norse warriors and rebel space pilots. You've played swashbuckling pirates and famous military commanders. And now, thanks to Delphine, you get to play a spindly copper-topped buffin called

Lester. Terrific. Mind you, while the prospect of a billion screaming Mutis-

plifis busting down the doors of software stores across the nation in order to adapt the presence of Lester to reality, the Everyman approach at least offers some novelty. Playing superheroes and movie stars has now become so normal, assuming the role

of a regular human helps the player feel even more at sea in his new environment. A normal guy in a crazy situation and all that.

Watching the admittedly dramatic opening sequence, the player learns how Lester finds himself in the mysterious new environment of the title. Lester is a brilliant nuclear scientist and a bit of a Drudge

—his particularly critical point during this particle-modelling, lightning strikes Lester's laboratory, surges back through the complex electronic equipment and into the very console where our copper-topped acrobat works. In a blinding flash of light Lester is whisked away to a new mysterious land. Armed with only his Gallic slings and a girl's-blouse academic background, Lester must explore his new environment and discover a way to get back home.

The deal with Another World is that Delphine have taken a similar graphics system used to such great effect in their previous release *Patton: War* and have stripped away the movie-driven adventure replacing it with a more intense, joystick-controlled interface. And on a number of counts it's a big success. But I have my reservations.

In what can only be described as a very loose sense, Delphine have endeavored to conjure up an interactive and believable movie using the world's least atmospheric graphics tool: the polygon. The result is that Another World's graphic style is distinctly, well, French. Whatever you may think of the end result, it's at least a completely new approach for an arcade adventure, which can't be all bad. A big plus for this



Here is a screenshot from the game. Lester has just landed in this world of new and strange technology, armed with a slingshot, a pocket watch, and a small, blue, glowing orb.

However in the age stakes if his bookish appearance (complete with T-shirt, jeans and sneakers) is anything to go by. Working late on his latest mind-boggling experiment, Lester plans to perform a dangerous but potentially revolutionary experiment of the particle physics variety.



Despite the fact that *Another World* is, in an instant, quite an original game, there are plenty of points of comparison. The most immediate is

Prince of Persia from Brookhurst (through Domark), since the central character animates in a similar fashion and the thrill of the game is supposed to surround the player's belief that they are controlling a real person. For wins all right on this count, having both spikier and more attractive animation, but

Another World has a host of extras which are noticeably absent from Brookhurst's game. In particular, the overall "feel" is of a more believable, albeit peculiar game world. *Another World* also boasts more variety through its levels, some requiring mapping and planning, others making demands on the player's arcade skills. For an all-around new experience, *Another World* wins, but no-one has yet surpassed the graphic excellence of the *Persia*.



system is that polygon animations can be calculated on the fly, doing away with the need for thousands of pre-stored animation frames. This basically means that the design team have had more room to develop the story and atmosphere of the product with extra cut away scenes, small effects, etc. for the "Play the Film" party. There's no question, however, that the seriously stylized nature of the graphics will be an instant turn-off for some players. It's a shame, because despite their initially inhuman appearance, they really capture the feel of both a strange world and its inhabitants surprisingly effectively.

Since the player is equipped with a pretty basic model Lester to begin with - no-flour riffs, no grenades, no weapon equipment - he's given the chance to get to grips with the "usual" control method. Instant control basically means that Lester will not necessarily perform the same action every time the player moves the joystick in a particular way. Depending on his environment, Lester may be able to do things differently.

If a vine hangs overhead, Lester will be able to jump and catch it. If there's an object on his feet, he'll bend down to pick it up.

It would have been far easier for the programmers to have Lester performing a basic jump uni-

function every time the joystick went Up in the same Object branch every time the player bent down, but they didn't. Instead, an individual animation sequence is triggered for each special situation. The downside of the smart-control setup is that occasionally the player will be presented with a problem and he'll face a nagging doubt that he should cycle through all the normal controls simply to see if one has a new effect in the particular puzzle location.

How long one second. Can any graphics? Plenty of animation? Some doubt over the puzzle and controls? This all sounds a bit *Dragon's Lair* does it not? Well no, one prior passage to term. The player has controlled control over Lester, which simply expands to offer some new options in certain circumstances. *Another World* is also distinct from the much-mimicked *Lair*like setting in its offering of no-choice death situations. Even in the most perilous parts of the story, there will be a warning of impending doom. Paying careful attention to these hints and using a bit of common-sense player's jump-off time before you can't see, don't stand around like a big idiot in hostile areas) will keep unexpected deaths to a minimum.

For a game with no guiding text and such a wide brief for the player to get back home, somehow - *Another World* does a job of guiding the player through its numerous stages, largely by keeping his contained in a small number of locations.

Once he strays in his new world, the player finds himself in a state of five screens, each representing a different part of a mysterious alien planet. Let

Playing super-heroes has now become so normal, astounding the role of a regular human helps the player feel even more at sea in his new environment.

The screens on the right are populated by deadly black squid-like things which slow Lester until he's locked, then away. Once Lester gets to the far right of the screen, however, his progress is blocked by an enormous and quite genuinely alarming monster. Lester only has a couple of seconds to fire the big monster, removing any question of him having to perform an elaborate self-defence move. Instead Lester must run and run back through the screen jumping nimbly a zapper if he fails to dispatch all the black blobs on the way with the monster thundering after him.

On reaching the final screen, there's simply nothing left for Lester except to leap and hope. Of course, this is exactly what he's supposed to do and retreating back off the vine will lead him one screen to the right. Two feet, he must run full for he's to avoid the monster who's still chasing him. As Lester runs back across the screen the monster gains ground again until he's right on top of Lester and the player realises that he isn't going to escape. It's only on the final screen that a mysteriously checked figure

THE SCREENS OF THE game that precede in *Another World*. The explanation follows: how the player controls the action through the joystick, and the numerous other controls available to him during the game in an early stage. (Continued on page 10)

ANOTHER WORLD



While exploring his new world, Lester is ambushed by a huge, glowing monster!



Run away! The Beast is going on your back! Will he make it to the screen flick point in time?

AN UNLIKELY HERO

For a really looking gh, our scientist hero actually has some balls, and he's a fairly tough cookie too, being able to withstand all sorts of scrapes.

Here, at the start of level 3, Lester encounters his first life-threatening problem. While strolling across the apparently barren alien plane, Lester notices a strange, shapeless, red, shape following him in the mid distance. It isn't long before the beast catches up with Lester and the player must think fast if he's going to survive.

Exercise the headbasher of this particular problem and you'll have a pretty good idea how the puzzle and action in the game work as a whole.

Another World's visual style is reminiscent of the more interesting French comics, with Lester hearing around through the wind and wonderful alien landscapes. In particular, the art piece makes for especially interesting viewing.



All fingers acting through holding his joints left as far as it would go, Lester is surrounded by the monster until he reaches the left edge of the level, where the ground runs out! The only solution is to jump onto the hanging vine!



Dropping down the vine by releasing fire, the player must hit the ground running!



Saved from the clutches of the Beast by a mysterious ally? But who is that? And is he entirely on Lester's side?



*Nervously Lester grabs his
spoon. Maybe the crack that
will help Lester escape?*



...or maybe not.

*Startled/astonished! Thrown back by a surging blast of energy,
Lester tries to raise its remains conscious. As his vision dims, he
wonders if his adventuring days are at an end...*



*Me: As it happens, they're not. As the still-glistening excavation waters off and Lester's
vision gradually returns, he finds himself suspended in mid-air in a steel cage with only an
anonymous bald alien for company! How on earth is our scientist here going to escape
this time?*



emerges from the shadows and leads the monster... and then Lector?

On a climactic level, set pieces like this work extremely well. Like the big set piece on the third level of Prince of Persia with the player leaping along as fast as he could, jumping traps and eluding to ledges. Another World boosts the player's acrobatic level pretty successfully. The pursuing monster over leaps as Lector during this run to the left, its race-chase-lines missing him only by a fraction of an inch.

The penalty for being even the slightest bit sluggish during this sequence is instant death, depicted in a most appalling yet violent cutaway scene. The monster who is just an enormous black panther-like blob flies out of the screen towards the player. And then it's a flurry of black hair and claws and then darkness.

Indeed, it's easy to become heavily involved in the plot and the adventure as a whole, largely thanks to the animations of Lector and the impressive and peculiar nature of the graphics which surround him.

However, Another World is not without its problems. For a start, the long-term appeal of the game is in doubt. The levels are actually pretty short, comprising maybe three decent puzzles. Also, the studied realisms of Lector may well become a bit of an annoyance. It's extremely frustrating, as well, that the animated sequences which pop up (and, to be fair, are necessary to add atmosphere) can't be digged through and must be watched, dramatic pieces and all, every single time. The player's limited view of Lector could be slightly more expansive too, especially since there's a great deal of running about to be done.

It should be made clear that Another World has very little to do with object-manipulation. Instead, most of the problems are solved by moving Lector around in a certain way and exploring. However, Lector does have the assistance of a friendly alien whom he meets at the start of the second level. Another example of how the game helps the player understand his situation is the existence of any chosen friend-or-foe situations.

Lector comes to, after being captured by a hooded fiend at the end of level one, in a cage suspended high above some sort of rock-breaking chain-gang. He's in the cage with this big alien, suggesting that they are both out of touch with the real game, and implying an immediate bond between the two characters.

It's rather handy for the player (and most convenient for Delphine, don't have to allow the player to play with every object on the landscape) that his new found friend will behave independently and will deal with lots of the less interesting elements of some puzzles. Escaping from the cell screens, for example, requires the access-code for the exit doors to be broken. As it would be frustratingly boring for the player to have to fash away with different combinations, the story dictates that the big alien can deal with such tedious aspects while the player has the more exciting job of blasting away at the



Amiga version

Amiga owners are obviously going to get the best implementation of the game, since it has been developed on their machine first. The biggest

criticism is that occasionally the speed is a little lacking, but on all other fronts it works exceptionally well. In particular, the music and sound effects conjure up a realistic impression of a strange new world ripe for exploration. No, really.

ST version

Not much news on the ST version as yet, but we understand that our action-matching pals from across the water are working on it right now. Watch out for updates soon.

PC version

This sort of game works like a dream on the PC, and when the version appears in late January, it should be a shoo-in.



Things will be ripe on the first of June. A screenshot of a puzzle from the Amiga version. Note the subtle lighting and the blue of the sky on the floor in the right of the image.



It's a good idea to speculate on what this number will mean in the context of your favourite Amiga game. We're thinking about that.



Another World is filled with hidden secrets and things to discover. It's a wonderful thing to see in a game.



How can you tell that this is a screenshot from Another World? It's a screenshot from the Amiga version.



When the big boss comes, it's a big battle. It's a big battle.

It's a good idea to speculate on what this number will mean in the context of your favourite Amiga game. We're thinking about that.



RATING



ESRB **Rating**
Graphic **Violence**
Language **Sex**
Substance Use
Alcohol **Smoking**
Drugs **Offensive**
Language



Another World follows the character who walks along with time, a 30-year-old man who has been resurrected from a French comic book and film.



Another World follows the character who walks along with time, a 30-year-old man who has been resurrected from a French comic book and film.

And because the game follows the character who walks along with time, a 30-year-old man who has been resurrected from a French comic book and film, it's a game that's a combination of both. And it's worth noting that the game is a combination of both. And it's worth noting that the game is a combination of both.

PLAY THE FILM!

guards with his new laser gun to give his pal time enough to climb the side. However, like this occasionally left *Another World* up into the famously floating levels.

Delphine should be congratulated on producing a game which is completely distinct from the bulk of titles on the market. Even the most striking titles would have to concede that it's an interesting direction to pursue, and the balance between a visual treat and a decent game had been reasonably well struck.

Overall, let's be certain, *Another World* is a pretty impressive game. It's got plenty of drawbacks but on the whole, it scores a big plus. For players looking for a new angle on the arcade-adventure genre, and in particular anyone who has a stronger interest in new graphic styles than the depth or longevity of their game, it fits the bill perfectly.

■ *Jon Douglas*

No, don't laugh. We know the phrase has had a bit of a resurgence in recent months and now the very mention of it will have smarter readers in an eyebrow-shift, upturned nose situation. But *Another World* comes closer than most, partially as a result of setting its sights on a more reasonable level.

In fact, it's more like *Playing the Cards* than the film, since all of the graphic scenes which the player controls are in 2D side-on mode which are surprisingly reminiscent of the more stylish French comic books around at the moment.

Even controlling the character of Lester after a while doesn't become too tedi, as he's quite agile and believable.

A definite point against the game, however, is that the cut-away scenes must be watched in their entirety and can't be skimed through. While they're largely of a high quality, they're far too long to be anything other than irritating after the second viewing.

800 GAMES



Another World is a game that's a combination of both. And it's worth noting that the game is a combination of both.

And because the game follows the character who walks along with time, a 30-year-old man who has been resurrected from a French comic book and film, it's a game that's a combination of both. And it's worth noting that the game is a combination of both.

RECENT GAMES



ANOTHER WORLD

EPIC

Long Time Ago, in a Galaxy Far, Far Away...

A Their homeworld under threat from an unstable sun, a ragtag fleet of hundreds of ships flees the imminent supernova. The only path of escape lies through the heart of the hostile Rozan Empire, where diplomatic attempts to negotiate a peaceful passage have been arrogantly rebuffed.

Having no other choice, the frustrated fleet, offered meager protection by the Star Carriers RedStones and BlueAces and a handful of Star Fighters, enters the hostile zone bordering the Rozan Empire and prepares for war - a war it did not want. But although severely outnumbered, the fleet has a Top Secret prototype starship Star Fighter that just may save the normal star from total extinction.

And so begins Epic, a sprawling space quest across a thousand light years (it says here). Epic is one of those games - much like EA's *Star Trek*, that has been promised so much and for so long that you half think that it's already been released. Digital Image Design, who also produced last month's excellent *Star Wars* 1, and its games is obviously the London Transport and its buses - you wait for ages then two come along at once. But after about two years' development, can Epic possibly live up to the hype?

To be honest, it doesn't - but it has a bloody good try. At heart, Epic is simply a glorified 3D space shoot-'em-up, but there that's like saying Super Mario World is glorified Mario clones. The game is split into ten land- or space-based missions, each requiring

that the player complete a certain task or destroy a certain number of enemy ships or installations to succeed. Depending on the player's performance, the game plot changes and changes accordingly.

Epic is aimed fair and square at the player who's more interested in shooting alien rudies than talking to them. Each mission is provided by a mission-attraction tool screen to bring the player on the job ahead. The player may have a time limit to complete the mission in, and in some cases taking too long can have very serious consequences.

In contrast with many action "time" (Core's *Thunderhawk*, for example), branching and loading are handled by the computer - none of that "waiting ship and docking bay routine" nonsense we've become so fed up of. Epic handles these sequences better than most, displaying them in a series of end-station-viewed (that is variety of "diagonal" camera angles, complete with some good digitized speech for extra atmosphere). However, good as they are, land-based levels contrast, but by hitting ESCAPE they can be skipped.

Coming out of the launch sequence, the view switches to inside the cockpit of the Epic craft, the there's



revolutionary and Top Secret, two-man fighter. Control is largely restricted to the mouse, with the buttons providing a burst of velocity or a burst of fire from the currently-selected weapon. The keyboard is restricted to cycling through the various in-board weapons systems. The player starts with a pretty healthy arsenal of weapons that have about the same effect on the big ships as flicking pebbles at them.

As the course of the game the fleet elements develop new and better lasers and missiles. By the time the last mission is reached the player is able to choose between fourteen options.

While the control system is not quite as elegant as *Thunderhead's* all-on-the-mouse system, it's still very good. In addition to the ship controls there are also keys to cycle through the cockpit views and a plethora of "out-of-cockpit" views, complete with room layout facilities. For those with a fair of mice, there are also options to use the keyboard (and/or joystick) for all the flight controls.

Combat takes place either in space or above a planet's surface. Since the Epic craft is fitted with anti-gravity repulsors, it handles pretty much identically in either environment. Planside, if the mouse is left the ship will simply float rather than plummet

nose first into the ground. And while this is hardly realistic, the fact that the player can lengthen about aerodynamics and get on with the high death rate tapping makes the game very enjoyable from a pick up and play point of view.

Space battles, if that is to be said, are pretty special. Remember that big space war at the end on *Star Wars* of '84, where the Millennium Falcon flies into more often were after waves of TIE fighters? There are times in Epic when the player gets into some very similar hair-raising escapes, with clouds of T-1000 ships pouring in, then pouring off to give chase.

If the battles around the big ships are excellent too, but due to the low detail level on the ships (obviously necessary to keep the game speed up) it can be difficult getting a sense of scale. The other the craters look so small in the fighters, and it's only their behaviour that differentiates them.

Get close, though, and the differences get very obvious. Particularly nice is the way the player can zoom between the towers and onto the Star Carriers. With the huge number of ships zipping about, things can get very chaotic and, at first anyway, very confusing. Fortunately DED have addressed this



Epic is in many ways a cut-down

Wing Commander, and shares many of the Origin game's strengths and weaknesses. For a start, Epic's attempts at being an

interactive movie are weak to say the least. Epic's plot is pretty much linear, with little chance for serious deviation from the main thread. Wing Commander, admittedly, is a little more successful in this respect, allowing a slightly greater degree of plot variance (and the 'plot' screens are more attractively presented to boot).

In essence Epic, like Wing Commander, is really nothing more than a string of well-presented, high-quality 3D shoot-'em-ups. But where Epic scores strongly over Wing Commander is that it runs quite happily (and certainly more than fast enough) on a standard home PC or Amiga (as opposed to a high-end PC, hooray! Power to the people!)

Epic is also more impressive in terms of scale. There's one moment, when the player flies into the thick of one of the really big space battles, that are exhilaratingly reminiscent of the classic GI movies. Entering a battle and seeing swarms of fighters swirling about the bulk cruisers, distant explosions and so on, the player gets a genuine thrill and a sensation that he really is taking part in something 'big'.



A smart, Epic is simply a glorified

3D shoot-'em-up.

but then that's like saying Super Mario

World is a glorified

Block Maze.





Right at all seems to be on its feet. The scanning station isn't nearly as difficult to spot as it is in the other end.

However, there is a problem. It's generated by a frequency that does not line up with the game's scanning. It will always be there.



Other major developments are covered by words. From the start and you should know that.



ATTACK ON AMRAGAN IX!

As the fleet starts to penetrate the edge of the Reson Empire, the player is sent on his first planet-based mission. The fleet's scouts have detected a Reson scanning station on the approaching planet of Amragan IX. Given the huge size of the fleet, there's no way that it can slip past unseen - and with the Reson armada only a few light years ago, detection could be disastrous.

However, luck is on the fleet's side. The planet is in the process of eclipse, leaving it incapable of making contact with Reson central command for a short while. The player's task is to fly down to the planet and destroy the station before the end of the eclipse. Failure could mean more than death - it could spell the end of the whole race.

Now is the whole mission broken down step-by-step (entering orbit and progressing clockwise), to illustrate how a typical mission progresses. First and last - it could cost your life.



Get into orbit and the player's main screen has another interesting element. Reson fighters fly by the station's orbit, but to see off the human fleet. Because they occur so late in the player's mission that the ship can be destroyed by destroying the unpowered generator.



By flying with the enemy you probably have, many due to the number of ships flying about. In the end, you'll see that, any looking off to the side with a right click is a good idea. Also, when you've added a target, any with it under control, and many others, you'll see a glowing circle in the upper right.

Although Epic is fundamentally an out-and-out blaster, there are quite a few twists on the basic shoot-'em-up gameplay with enough surprises to keep the player on his toes. It's far more than an alien turkey shoot.

the problem is several ways. For a start, the battles generally take place in a flat plane, with little vertical dimension. Thus, once the player finds where the action's taking place it's easy to stay with it. In addition, if the player is steering from the battlefield a waiting wave sounds and a heading appears on the HUD (plus heading can also be called up by hitting HOLD). To prevent players blundering their own side, a large cross appears on the HUD if the player tries to look on to a friendly ship. However, it's just a pity - you can still be tipped if you're feeling particularly carefree (though allowing friendly craft only results in the player's score being reduced slightly).

The short scale of the battles acts both for and against the game. Some of the best mistakes in the game occurred when the player destroyed a large number of enemy ships to win, and while it doesn't exactly get losing players always too of enemy attention it can keep you on your toes, allowing ship after ship after ship you get a bit repetitive.

Talking of friendly ships, it's a shame you can't include enemy ones of the kind I fancy with the fleet's (although it's a pity you can't). You know the sort of thing: "Look at the size of her thing!" "Cut the chatter, Red Two!"



When you start you can choose between the two types of ships. The player's ship is the larger one, and the enemy's is the smaller one. The player's ship is the larger one, and the enemy's is the smaller one. The player's ship is the larger one, and the enemy's is the smaller one.

"Yes sir!" It's an unknown enemy here, Captain! etc., etc. You often feel like you're fighting a one-man battle, and the occasional message flutters up on the cockpit VDU congratulating you on a good shot doesn't do anything to relieve that.

For my money, the plastic-like battles are more interesting than the space ones, largely because they're generally based around completing a task rather than just eliminating a certain number of the enemy. And in a lot of ways the graphics on the ground are even more impressive than those in space. There are some superb 'set pieces', such as

A no-nonsense Master. Epic is an excellent game

that more than lives up to its name in terms of scale.

In a manner similar to Origin's *Wing Commander*, Epic frames its 'flat' and land-based battles with genuine and varied sequences and text to make whereby plot developments are conveyed to the player. The plot progresses varies according to the player's performance in the missions.

ST version



Feel just isn't the word for this ST. You'll think that sooner have a more expressive has got inside your ST when you see it - the image update is blistering, and it is still isn't feel enough for you, there are three other levels to choose from. Second, apart from the music, it generally good, although the ship and engine noise seems a bit to be heard. One snagging can be a problem later on in the game.

Amiga version



Amiga you think and confused your enemies with the speed of the ST! As usual, it's a little slower than the ST version but this is compensated for by better sound. Otherwise the game remains the same, and just is slightly recommended.

PC version



Sorry, it isn't be really just you. Expect it only next year, sporting redesigned super-detailed soundtracks and more of them on the faster models. Check out the New Releases in the New Year for an update.



And the original Epic version is the best. The image update is blistering, and it is still isn't feel enough for you, there are three other levels to choose from. Second, apart from the music, it generally good, although the ship and engine noise seems a bit to be heard. One snagging can be a problem later on in the game.

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Great Action Strategy
 Publisher Electronic Arts
 Developer Bullfrog
 Price \$59.95

POPULOUS

There's a really silly bit in *Clash of the Titans* when Zeus (aka the late Laurence Olivier) becomes angry with a certain, rather callous King for casting his castly son Prometheus out to sea to die. By way of retribution the white-bearded Ruler of the Gods releases the awesome Kraken on the

mountain's beautiful kingdom. As the Kraken rises from the sea, it causes an enormous tidal wave which utterly destroys the city.

It's awesome destruction such as this that forms the very heart and soul of *Populous II*. Bullfrog's long-awaited sequel is bigger, bolder and - yes, let us say - than the classic original. Though at the most basic conceptual level, nothing much has changed, each classic sweeping enhancements have been made in terms of sheer scope and immersion that *Populous II* makes its 1989 slot look positively meagre by comparison. And while those who fell under the original's spell may find that a little hard to swallow, it is absolutely the case, really really.



Populous II's enhanced world has a much greater depth than the original, providing the player with more options, more powerful spells, more land to conquer or defend, and two distinct eras, each with its own unique terrain and resources. It's a great combination that the game offers.

One of the game's many favourable aspects is that *Populous* players will be able to settle in nicely with the minutiae of this language, as mentioned before, the basic idea and objectives remain the same. Two opposing Gods representing the forces of Good and Evil respectively, battle it out for ultimate supremacy over a series of immense landscapes, or "worlds". Not directly of course - deities are far too important to run get their own kingdoms grubby - but via the pure God Shaping population that live down on the planet. Split into two distinct eras - one involving

playing the player, the other the followers of the opposing deity, those misguided souls would like nothing more than to kick the stuffing out of the "villains" across the water. All they need is a little help and guidance... It's like a great comic book game played on a global scale, where real people are the protagonists though they can't be controlled directly; this "free will" business can be a bit of a bind at times, they can be given divine nudges in the right direction. And of course, as *Populous* players will remember, Ancient times, as *Populous* players will remember, Gods with sufficient power can take heresy too freely. Gods with sufficient power can take heresy too freely. Gods with sufficient power can take heresy too freely. Gods with sufficient power can take heresy too freely. Gods with sufficient power can take heresy too freely.

As in the original game, the trick in *Populous II* is to best exploit this time well spent. Starting with just a couple of followers and minimal supernatural powers, a fledgling deity's initial objective is to flourish (and) the game world is initially a rather unexciting affair, and hills and valleys must be levelled out in order for the people to settle. Such manipulation of terrain is the most basic of all godly functions. As more the land becomes available, the people's numbers grow larger, allowing nature to take its course, and the population to expand accordingly. Two people become ten, twenty, a hundred and



In **Populous II**, only about one fiftieth of the game world is ever visible on screen at a time. An animated map provides the players with a view of the overall situation - but never in as much detail as this! After considerable aggravation, we're proud to present this super map of an entire **Populous II** world, frozen with a game in progress. Enjoy..

Workers will always follow roads to areas of undeveloped land, and the ground player assumes their form to first advantage, laying them down to explore the future and thereby guiding the growth towards a specific area. They have a more sinister use too, with not just a map in enemy territory, but for a more subtle form of attack: when they're right beside an enemy's building, the stone and workers will follow the path to the path to the path, until they find the one-way entry points for the building's entrance.

THE CONQUER TREE

Populous II's Conquer! Game is a complex and involving affair, taking the player through 32 increasingly-difficult levels in his quest to challenge and ultimately to defeat Deus, God of Gods, and assume the mantle of godhood. Initially, the player must secure his own water by naming the dilly and giving her a face, selected from a variety of like

3D8 style eyes, mouths, noses and hairstyles.

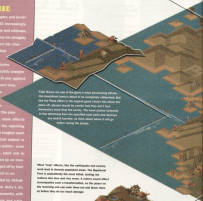
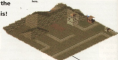
The type of face the player selects obviously changes the way that his computer opponents will play against him, ensuring a slightly different game each time.

Initially, the player starts off as a weak and feeble dilly, with only a handful of low-grade effects at his disposal, but as the game progresses and the play moves onwards through the levels, more effects become available to help him combat his opponents, who change in personality and get tougher each time. This "progression" of about 300 style aspects is aided by the element of experience points - each with the full array of effects available, each one is either brightness and potency. It consists of an inner "personal dilly" fighting both an opponent and his own targets, references family table size and so on.

But as experience points (as awarded by defeat of opponents) are added to each of the dilly's six effect groups, the player becomes more powerful, with increasing lightning, soaring the columns and extra dynamic ball waves. Because the player can allocate experience points as he wishes, he can customise his own playing style, choosing to spend points around and be equally powerful in all areas, or pump everything into one particular group and have an overlord, if the ball, selection of powers at his command.

Like Deus, the use of the game's most powerful effects, the lightning bolts, must be to complete objectives, the use of these effects in the wrong game context, like using the power up, power would be a waste of time. Don't feel discouraged more than the usual. The more points invested in that direction, the more power you can obtain in that direction, so it's worth using it as often as you can before using the power.

Most "big" effects like the earthquake and storm, are used in specific situations. The lightning bolt is particularly interesting, being not unlike the one used when you're a enemy's attack. It's particularly useful in situations, as the player is the winning and not only. Don't use it and then then it's better to use it as much as possible.



POPULOUS II



There are a few wind effects too. Baptismal Fonts are an odd little number which are surprisingly powerful. Guys that they take very little mana to create. They work like rainbows - a few small pools are

difficult enough to create, but instead of containing their victims, the font transforms them into a valley of the opposite side. And becomes linear and the river. It's an ideal way of inflicting enemy territory with soldiers as they are created automatically from inside the city's defenses! Another dirty trick is Plague - simply select any member of the opposing deity's followers to cure them, indicated by a valiant sticking over their heads and anybody who comes into contact with them becomes infected also. In this way the plague spreads throughout populations like... well, a plague, with the only major restriction being to kill the infected subjects before the disease becomes too widespread.

Playing through this multitude of new effects may be, some may argue that they've just been checked in as a rather cynical attempt to make it seem like there's more to the game. Well they can't do that, because Populous II differs from the original not just in terms of the sheer number of effects, but also in the whole way to which they behave. As a result, the whole effects side of the game is now a much more involving and tactical affair. Whereas in Populous an effect was cast and that was that, in Populous II each separate effect has a hidden depth, or side-effect. Take the trees for example - lovely green foliage, make the area pleasant to look at and make everybody happy. One could accomplish an innocuous or possibly even a useless task - a rather serious one. Should the opposing deity hit a tree-

hood area with a fire effect, the entire vicinity will be so alive as the flames spread from the trees to a horrendous forest fire that destroys everything nearby. Players can exploit this to their advantage, planting trees in the enemy's territory then setting them alight. There are scores of interdependent effects and dirty tricks hiding within Populous II - it just takes a creative sensibility and a bit of experimentation to find them.

When it comes to looking at Populous II critically, it's obvious that pretty much all of the praise heaped on the original game belongs here also. After all, it's the same game at heart and all the same play-

ing of involvement is enhanced considerably by the fact that everything happens directly in front of the player's eyes in extreme detail. What Building has achieved so ably with this regard is, by adding so many new features, trends and generally enhancements while retaining the original's basic structure. Populous II feels like the original game on one side of the coin, but seems like a totally new and challenging experience on the other.

Not a single thing has been put in Populous II just for the sake of it - every feature and effect has its part to play, and the way in which effects actually react with one another makes for an even more engaging and strategic experience. About an hour's play is all it takes to get some idea of how mind-bogglingly deep the game's - much deeper than any of the other so-called "God Sims" which have been crawling out of the woodwork lately. It's quite ironic that the sequel to the game that started this whole sub-genre should turn out now, just when games like *Duress* and *Steps to Merlin* are receiv-

ing praise accordingly. Unlike most previous strategy games, the Populous games succeed by putting two players together simultaneously - "You talk, my turn" nonsense here. Also, the feel-

Amiga version



There's no doubt that Populous II outshines considerably, with a level of graphical sophistication and array of complex sound effects that puts the original game to shame. Unfortunately there's a price for all this fancy trippery - 1000 kilobytes of memory probably. Owners of half-rig machines will have to wait for a special version, featuring cut-down animation and GFX, to be released in the new year.

ST version



ST owners can look forward to a version of Populous II which is virtually identical to the Amiga, but some slight discrepancies in the sound department. The same 1000/1000 configuration, with the full-on-whistles 2000 version out at the same time as the Amiga, just before Christmas. A trimmed-down 820 version (for those poor souls who still haven't got a 2.8M machine) will be released in the new year.

PC version



PC Populous II promises to be the best version of the full old works of locally written features are being built on to make use of the machine's superior facilities, including a networking option and a special multiplayer mode, using super-true graphics which will allow two people to play head-to-head on one machine! Supporting of graphics cards from EGA onwards, Populous II also promises an excellent sound mode, supporting the top five sound cards simultaneously, with the National sounding the theme music while AdLib does the sound effects! Smart. Look out for Populous II around Easter time.

swamp, for example, behaves almost identically and only looks different, the marketplace is really new and improved - instead of just building the land around a bit, this Earth effect now creates a giant smoking lava flow, creating the land apart and leaving a deadly abyss for hapless walkers to stumble into. The Villains is another fine example of how the effects are now more sophisticated. Like the original, it creates a huge rocky and mountainous mass which occupies all the terrain around it, but now it comes complete with lethal lava flow, which runs down the sides and across the land at the bottom, torching any people or buildings in its path.

Through these upgraded versions of the original game's effects are all fine and wonderful, the real fun lies in the fact with the new ones, where innovation and invention go hand in hand in a manner never before seen. Details can create tremendous which send spurs of lightning streaking down towards Earth, descending on the buildings, or beam whole villages with energetic columns of the which glow silently across the landscape. On a more elaborate note, why not conjure up a hurricane which blows people directly overboard across the landscape and out into the sea.

The distinctive power increases will further, with whitebeams, for they rain from the sky and are more solid waves all playing havoc with the enemy's territory.

Not since the original Populous has a game been so engaging strategically, so easy to get into and above all, so much fun to play

I NEED A HERO...

No, we're not talking about the crap adventures. In the case of Populous II, heroes refer to the old-time Knights, which was one of the more enjoyable features in the original. Now the fun has been increased eightfold, with a different hero, each a character from Greek mythology, for each effort group. Like the Knights, their task is to venture into enemy territory and cause as much trouble for the opposing deity as possible - although each one goes about the task in their own inimitable fashion. It also turns is that each hero is immune to the effects within his own group. So if Hades, the air hero, is hit by a lightning bolt (which is an Air effect), he will shrug it off without a second thought. Players who follow an opponent's hero always follow across the land towards them should bear this in mind when searching for something to attack them with...

PERSEUS (People)

It's not fair if one hero was any. Perseus was the one that rode around on Pegasus and slayed the evil Medusa. In Populous II, however, he's a medieval assassin who roams around the landscape slaying the hell out of everyone he sees. He's most similar to the original game's Knights, so he has no particular special powers or attributes.

ARION (Vegetation)

Don't let appearances deceive you - this pretty boy is in fact a right mean one. Every time he takes a battle, he splits into two, with each new Arion being half the strength of the original. Obviously this kind of multiplication can lead to other slaying numbers of Arions roaming about. It all works out rather nicely though, as later generations are so weak they are killed off easily.

HELEN OF TROY (Water)

Helen acts like the old Sirens of Greek mythology, who attracted men to their deaths with their melodic singing. Whenever she walks, members of the opposing tribe are irresistibly drawn towards her. As she continues to roam the landscape, she attracts a veritable convoy of low-level units... That she leads to the nearest beach and jumps into the sea - and her army of troops follows her - is a feature that changes in later her the technology.

HERACLES (Tank)

The thing about Heracles is that he's just an incredibly **HARDY** Normaly, you bring a load of people into the game map, then transform them and the resultant hero is equal to their combined strength. Heracles, however is THREE as strong as the combined strength, so if you put in a hundred men, you get a hero with the strength of 300 men! Needless to say, Heracles can put it about a 50, so he is the best choice for all-round damage.

ACHILLES (Fire)

Though he may have a gummy foot, Achilles knows his stuff when it comes to wholesale destruction. Like the axemen, he likes to wander about looking for trouble. He's not a fighter though, concentrating instead on property damage. An expert axeman, Achilles will put the touch to anything he can lay his hands on - including entire villages and forests.

ODYSSEUS (Air)

When fighting, Odysseus is almost identical to Perseus - the difference is that he can travel like the wind, at incredible speeds. As tall pole, Odysseus can get from one end of the landscape to the other in a mere 10 seconds! As such, Odysseus comes in handy when you need to leave the enemy's population very quickly indeed.



As well as the individual game genres, "Populous II" also has a "Populous II" sub-section of the game that is the original "Populous II" game. This is a "Populous II" game that is the original "Populous II" game.

It's not difficult to see that the original "Populous II" game is the best choice for all-round damage.

ing as much profit, and put them all to their place by showing that this sort of game is really all about. Now it really should be done. Not since the original Populous has a game been so engaging strategically, so easy to get into and, above all, so much fun to play.

Though it would be pretty sad to have to fall back on lackluster superlatives like "awesome", "incredible" and "fantastic" all three are genuinely true of Populous II. For once, words really do fall in - which is a bit of a first for a game. Like so who think we know everything, it doesn't matter anyway as there's not really that much left to say, apart from that Populous II is the best 16-bit computer game that I've ever seen. Simple as that, really.

By Gary White



R A T I N G S



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1 (Green) 2 (Red)

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Game Artists: Ken
 Publisher: One Design
 Developer: Platinum
 Price: \$49.99

WOLFCHILD

There was a man and he had a son. The man, Kal Marrow, became one of the world's most brilliant genetic scientists while his son, Saul, grew to become a great athlete. But Marrow's research, into the possibility of splicing the genes of a human and animal to create a hybrid super-being,

was to have grave consequences. A shadowy organization by the name of Chimera, also involved in genetic research for military purposes, heard of the progress that Marrow was making and kidnapped him from his isolated mountain laboratory. Now, held prisoner and forced to do Chimera's dirty work, Marrow is creating for them a half-man half-beast ultimate warrior, combining the intelligence of the human mind with the best killer instincts of the animal. When unleashed upon an unsuspecting world, these towering mutants will enable Chimera to take over the world.

Unless...

Saul, gifted with the abilities of his father and bent on revenge, sets off his father's escape in the abandoned laboratory, when his gun falls upon the machine. The prototype just built by Kal just before his kidnapping. The machine that - theoretically - will transform a normal human into an awesome creature that just might have the strength, courage and agility to fight through Chimera's defenses and rescue Kal Marrow. So, stepping into the pod, Saul flicks a switch, there's a blinding flash of light and...enter the Wolfchild.

It's with this rather elaborate scenario - as relayed by an impressive opening sequence - that the latest platform epic from Rich Braggins creator Game Fluxx kicks off. Played over two levels and a total of 200-plus screens, Wolfchild is a fast-paced action

adventure that mixes pixel-perfect platform game density with traditional shoot-'em-up action in the same way as Capcom's retroop classic Strider.

To tell the truth, Wolfchild offers nothing particularly earth-shattering or innovative in the design stakes - apart from the central transformation twist



Chimera (left) teamed with the Wolfchild (right) to destroy the world's remaining genetic stores and bring the planet under their rule.



Saul's transformation at critical moments allows him to take on Chimera's elite warriors and destroy their genetic stores.



—but that's a point which quickly pales into insignificance in view of the simple, no-frills gameplay grips the player. At once a rally striking of the classic Wolfman story and reusable platform wiring, *Wolfchild* boasts playability, smartness of design and sleek unadorned surfaces that knock the flims of *Switchblade II* into a cocked hat. And then some.

On each of the five levels, the player's quest is simple — clear the boards in point at one corner of the map, keep and fight through the horizontally-oriented mass of platforms to where the end-of-level guardian awaits in the way which will either end the game or lead to the next stage. It's the presence of a veritable legion of enemies, all out to halt the player's progress, that put a more interesting slant on things and give the game its more frantic, arcade-style elements. Pestsicken back the player along platforms, blowing away, while others run giant rotating cannons, conduct striking waves from fast-flying bang-gliders or otherwise make use of the landscape in order to slow him down. The specific nature of the three different floor-levels is level, as the above states are thereof — something the recycled rather heavily allows for.

We're told that the enemies the player comes up against are the genetic experiments pumped out by Chimera, and a specific level has been designed to guard each stage — as on the first level the threat is posed by badniks, while on level two the player comes up against a variety of lizard bots. Level Three is protected by all manner of insect warriors and soon send the player through the actual Chimera laboratories and is accentuated by a bizarre mix-blend of half-finished mutants and felled

experiments which burst forth from their incubator vats. Not a pretty sight.

It's the central "wolfman" element itself, however, which gives the game its most interesting gameplay twist. The player begins his quest as the human character *Karl*, who has only the most rudimentary of abilities — run, jump and a punch that can dispatch most opponents with a striking range. Due to some genetic misadventure *Karl*'s wolflike side can only be triggered when his energy level reaches a specified point. When enough energy-boosting poisons are collected to push him past that critical level, a collection of electricity beams down from out of the sky and transforms him into *Wolfchild* — a half-man, half-wolf hybrid which, though identical in terms of how the character actually moves, is blessed with a number of extra abilities. The most notable — and useful — genetic enhancement is the ability to capture up bolts or electrical energy and fire them, like bullets, at the enemy. The punch move is debased to make way for this significantly more deadly technique, which allows *Wolfchild* to strike out from any distance, and, with the relevant power-up collected, to attack in a wide variety of interesting and lethal ways (see POWER UPS).

As well as this new-found electrical ability, *Karl*'s wolf-like form also allows him to jump over so-called *Katana* — useful in situations where your perfect accuracy might otherwise be required — and, on later stages, to break open blocks and barriers that lead to further parts of the level. As *Wolfchild*, *Karl* is a considerably more formidable opponent — mainly because of the weapons, which really are very hard indeed — but it's not altogether easy to stay in *Ky* form. Nothing changes on the power front — enemy shots take the same toll as before — and if the halving returns *Karl*'s energy back below the transformation point, the wolf-like form can't be sustained and he becomes the weaker human character once again.

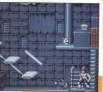
The way in which energy power-ups are littered thoughtfully around the landscape combined with the constant barrage from the enemy enemies means that, depending on ability, the player finds himself alternating between the two character states regularly — and that, in turn, adds an extra touch of spice to the gameplay, as it means the player has to alter his playing style to make best use of the current character's abilities.

Because *Karl* can only attack with his close-range punch, a whole different set of tactics are required for him than *Wolfchild*, whose attack targets across the screen with his energy bolts. Careful, snailly play is much more important for *Karl*, not just because of his diminished attacking ability, but also because being human means the player must have less than 10% energy — and is therefore closer to death. Whenever the player's character is human, finding the energy pods that will change him into the wolf-



break, really, that we should end up comparing *Wolfchild* to the sequel to one of Simon Phipps' earlier platform efforts, *Switchblade II*, which was basically a

igger and shadier version of the top-notch original, is similar to *Wolfchild* in many respects — the combination of platforms and hand-to-hand combat, the fast eight-way scrolling, the sloping platforms, the dirty tricks and traps. But while *Switchblade II* is undoubtedly an accomplished and fully paid-up member of the genre, *Wolfchild* beats it on grounds of sheer class. For a start it's faster, and the constant speed enhances the action rather than inhibiting it — in *Switchblade II*, fighting the guards seemed to get in the way of the player's progress and ultimately proved annoying. Unsurprisingly, *Wolfchild* manages the other vice again, boasting more types (eight as opposed to *Switchblade II*'s six), which are more impressive to watch. It's not that *Switchblade II* and *Wolfchild* are radically different conceptually — *Wolfchild* is just executed a whole lot better, which is why it gets the gold without hesitation.



Wolfchild is a platform game with a unique twist: the player can transform into a wolf-like creature. This allows for a more dynamic and challenging gameplay experience. The game is set in a dark, industrial environment with a variety of enemies and obstacles. The player must use their skills and strategy to overcome these challenges and reach the end of each level.



The game features a variety of enemies and obstacles that the player must overcome. The player's character can transform into a wolf-like creature, which allows for a more dynamic and challenging gameplay experience. The game is set in a dark, industrial environment with a variety of enemies and obstacles.



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POWER UP!

When Star finishes her training, a whole world of high-tech sailing technology awaits you. Starting off with a simple one-rod power-plant, Wolfie can upgrade the technology by adding more sailing rods and other innovations sketched around the scenery. But beware! Just from the deck down, each upgrade has only limited activation, and even all the rods are dependent on a tank of battery power.



1-ROD

This is Wolfie's standard power set, consisting of just a single rod placed flat that has straight sails. Switching when it may be best.



2-ROD

Rods can be the basic set, except if it completely runs parallel. For the best upgrade is 2-Rod. This second flying about it through its length, making only when it is a rod away. Making it when through a line of water in a boat.



3-ROD

Definitely one of the most powerful options, the triple rod is another variation on the basic design. One flat then straight ahead, while the other two set at diagonals. Useful for handling full targets in a tight or narrow channel.



4-ROD

Again similar to the basic set, but this time Wolfie can fly two rods off in both directions. This is not it unless you're using some guidelines for steering.



5-ROD

Simple enough, really. Two flat on the forward, one diagonal and straight up and they cover a lot.



6-ROD

Good for maneuvering. Two flat sets, one set, straight ahead, for a stern between them relative to the prop.



7-ROD

This is great when that 3-rod set forward for a short distance then they straighten the 4-rod into the middle of your course.

UPGRADE TIPS: Not particularly effective in general combat, though.



8-ROD

When Star, the Hammer Ball can be used to activate, pop popping up and then available on it. When used.

commonly, it forms a construction that is more effective. The full version available in the game with Wolfie's under-sailor feature is:

A sailing crew standing on the deck of the ship's great mainmast strike an energy rod when Star generates a surge. When activated, it forces the energy to rotate and the Wolfie's construction takes place, as this directed stream flows. However,

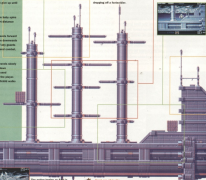


All the ship's original parts, the mainmast strike once again, the flat winging straight prop, and the curved shaping with a horizontal.

There's trouble for Star as the lights to activate in the game's mainmast.

When broken the mainmast strikes, and after the light beam with a 3-rod power plant, and after the light beam.

After sailing through the first wave of pirates, Star continues to sail, when another update and a new power plant is made. Now Star's power plant is a 3-rod power plant.



When Star's power plant is a 3-rod power plant, the mainmast strike once again, the flat winging straight prop, and the curved shaping with a horizontal.

Star's power plant is a 3-rod power plant, the mainmast strike once again, the flat winging straight prop, and the curved shaping with a horizontal.

Set on a giant space galleon, Wolfchild's opening level is only a fraction of the size of those that follow - but it packs in plenty of action, thereby acquainting the player with the game's particular style of mayhem in a short space of time. Queue here please, for the guided tour...

The first challenge in Wolfchild's opening level is not only to beat your friends, but to succeed by the strictest margin: it's long enough being off someone's tail, but not so long as to get too far behind, or you'll be out of the race.

The most effective weapon against the leader is the rocket, so make the most of this.



When Wolfchild reaches level 10, he must contend with the two leaders who stand at the top of the platform setting traps along his path. The best ploy is to make some initial runs by the enemy platform, you have the advantage of the extra time if Wolfchild takes control of it. It should be noted that he is disabled back down to the bottom to watch it.

To get your first Wolfchild, beat your friends at level 10. The other platform doesn't work things any more.



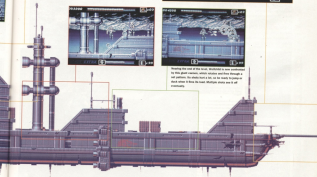
Use it to get your first Wolfchild. You're recommended to take this approach. Use your first Wolfchild, then use the rocket and the rocket.



Use the rocket to get your first Wolfchild. You're recommended to take this approach. Use your first Wolfchild, then use the rocket and the rocket.



Seeing the end of the race, Wolfchild is now positioned by the other leaders, which makes your first through a real problem. The other leader is, so the leader is your first through. The other leader is, so the leader is your first through.



WOLFCHILD

should always be a top priority—particularly in the closing stages of a level, as the precise weapons are essential equipment for battling the guardians.

Each level—apart from the first, which is a short and understanding affair designed to acquaint the player with the ground rules and get him warmed-up for what's to come—is a maze-like affair consisting of several Se access—two wide, eight-deep. Though some of the levels are really the labyrinthine, the different drops in and guardians feature for each one mean that finding your way from one end to the other isn't quite as cut and dried as it may seem. The actual level designs are really quite open plan, affecting Sead freedom to explore, looking for craftily hidden pick-ups, bonuses, short cuts or secret rooms that are dotted about the scenery, just waiting to be discovered by the more vigilant hero.

Like Phipps' earlier Rick Dangerous, Wolfchild relies heavily on the level designs to provide a major part of the game challenge. Platforms and ledges are spaced out so that jumps have to be judged and executed with skill, while an end-of-device bridge and traps—floating platforms that develop faults and crash to the ground, floors that give way underfoot and all manner of spike traps and carnivorous plants are just some of the threats the necessary presents. Learning how to deal with them is more a matter of common sense and trial and error than anything else—finding the right place to jump from a face-falling platform in order to land on the required ledge, for instance. Other, seemingly sub-optimal will usually hand the player on a spike trap, or other malicious device. As the player becomes aware where these devices set-up lie, the direction of a jump can be changed in mid-air, a la *Wolf*, in order to avoid them. The result-on-screen, when a proficient player is in control, is really quite satisfying, as he adroitly creeps and leaps his way around the map-strewn landscape.

Wolfchild also has no qualms about punishing the player for his own mistakes. Again, it's all down to

the physical construction of the levels. If a jump is mistimed or miscalculated and the target platform is missed, the player may be sent back a way by his fall, and then have to go through a section of the level again in order to get back to the original jump point and have another go. While some may argue that this is a bit harsh, in practice what it would do to discipline the player by enforcing such a penalty—you can be sure that the player will be a lot more careful about his second jump attempt after one fail and will trying to enhance his steps back. Since it doesn't crop up too often, it doesn't detract and so the effect is mainly positive.

When Wolfchild's not executing a daring leap across a treacherous chasmber linking the scuffing out of some genetic experiments, chances are he's working out one of the game's countless bonuses or power-ups. Most can be found generally lying for the lands eye, while others are concealed within crates that must be smashed open before their bounty is revealed. Energy pods are without doubt the most vital collectable, as they hold the key to Sead's gene-swapping activities. In addition there are several helpful bits and bobs, the most sought-after being an energy extend bar which effectively doubles Sead's energy capacity, allowing him to take more hits and subsequently spend more time in wallops fits.

Also, the player can endeavor to pick up major goodies by collecting all the letters in the words BONUS or EXTRA, which are randomly dispersed, like the power-up pods, around the level. The first word, when completed increments the score by



Jump to your fate! There are double jumps with Wolfchild, but a variety of moving obstacles can make things a lot less easy to do. Only the very best will be able to make it through a level without making a lot of stops.

Amiga version

Music and sound has been used well, acting as the usual equivalent of pouring extra atmosphere on with a little. The breathing theme tune, which plays over the animated opening sequence, is



one of the classiest the Amiga's heard in quite a while, complete with a throbbing Terminator-style backing beat. This, along with all the other stuff, means a two-disk product—although the minimum of swapping is required, and it all fits nicely into half a meg. Lovely.

ST version

Unfortunately, ST owners don't get the benefit of the Amiga's tarty parallel scrolling, and the music is obviously not quite so hard, but apart from that things remain pretty much the same.



When WOLFCHILD instructs you to jump over the side of the cliff to the right, the game designer is counting on being able to do it.



Jump into the abyss! Remember that the cliff will not hold.

Jump into the abyss! Remember that the cliff will not hold.





Game: *Eye of the Beholder*
 Publisher: Strategic Simulations, Inc. (S&S)
 Developer: Westwood Associates
 Price: \$49.95

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

Suddenly the carved wooden door grinds shut with a deafening crash. Our three bold adventurers turn to confront a garrison of unsightly skeletal soldiers thirsting for fresh blood. "I'll shall cast these fools asunder with the feared Sunderbar curse!", shouts Akraim of Kauthyon. But

before the caddy wags can open his aging but perfectly bound spellbook, Corbin the Warrior rushes forward with customary bravado. "Stand aside old man, my mighty sword forged from the white heat of dragon breaths and the steel of Star-Field shall banish these intruders back to whence they came! Only I, all prince from the mysterious forest of tremendous undergrounds am destined to lead us in these dark days...

Brought! Only very sad people gain any pleasure from such ornate adventures, right? You know the kind of past-time waste-spaces I'm talking about. They can be seen every Saturday morning opening outside the nearest Forbidden Planet or Virgin Games store, or being to hand over their life savings for an essential new handbook with lore and figures evoking the grandness of a troll's bottom-brug and what sort of surreal hobbit drink when feasting on spicy Chicken Tikka. Until *Eye of the Beholder*, the typi-

cal S&S release was strictly reserved for spotty kids with greasy hair and attitudes to match. Sure, titles like *Protector of the Middle Earth* and *Quest of the Seven Swords* had a dedicated following, especially in the States, but the problem was they just looked so bloody dull.

"This is the point where one normally leaves whining along the lines of 'You don't need fancy graphics to make a good game'. Yeah, and Terminator 2 would have been a far more enjoyable movie if the special effects team had used woggy over-haired instead of ground-breaking computer graphics.

No, the average gamer who wants plenty of slambang play coupled with top quality visuals, sound effects and music... that, thankfully, somebody on the original *Eye of the Beholder* project saw the potential in these ingredients. It seemed a talented unit had been employed for the first time, and, on top of that, a clearly pro-



Until *Eye of the Beholder*, the typical S&S release was strictly reserved for spotty kids with greasy hair and attitudes to match

As you can see from the screenshots above, *Eye of the Beholder* is packed with detail and top-notch graphics. In some cases, the graphics are so good that you can see a 3D in Strategic Simulations, Inc. or Westwood Associates that appear to be mimicking the original game box art. The image



producer dared to bring arcade action to the proceedings. By taking a fair bit of inspiration from the best-selling Dungeon Master and mixing it all together,SSI had stumbled upon a winner with great speed.

Based in San Jose in California, SSI is renowned for producing more unique than the makers of Nightmares on Elm Street. Instead of just waiting the product until the formula runs dry, the company has tried to inject some software trends to expand the experience. And Eye of the Beholder II is the result.

In case you've never played the first volume, or any other role-playing game of a similar nature, here's a brief rundown. The basic aim of the venture is a multitude of mazes set, naturally enough, in mostly dungeons filled with deadly pitfalls and creatures who need slaying on sight. This fantasy world is seen from first-person perspective and can be manipulated via an on-screen point-and-click interface. Anything that appears in the 3D representation of your surroundings can usually be moved somewhere along the line. Items can be scooped up, like potions for healing wounds and armor for extra protection, while keys or release levers open doors. The idea is to experiment with everything found in the environment.

You're controlling a party of four brave and sturdy adventurers made up of any combination of humans, magic beings, thieves, clerics and so forth. It shouldn't take a genius to guess there are goals at picking battles, discovering a door and have brilliant insight underground. Fighters are tough and clerics can provide powerful healing and protective spells. Each of these characters has their own strengths and weaknesses which need to be exploited and overcome to succeed in your quest.

Physical positioning within the party also makes a difference. Those in the front are able to attack with weapons such as swords and axes, while characters in the rear ranks may employ magical spells or ranged armaments like bows and spears. Each



Mirrored and fit, started these Fantasy shoot-'em-up talks with Dungeon Master, then several years later, SSI surpassed this influential role playing game with

Eye of the Beholder. Now, we have a sequel that's really just more of the same. Okay, the game itself is much larger and harder to beat but the style of gameplay, presentation, and even the interface remain essentially identical to its respected predecessor. So, do we have a new AOL Benchmark? Well, by the odds of a ball bound, that's affirmative.



The enemy seems to be a little larger than you, but you're still the victor of the situation. It might be that there's a lot of things that you can do in the game, but you're still the victor of the situation. It might be that there's a lot of things that you can do in the game, but you're still the victor of the situation.



attention to detail goes much farther though. Politics, for instance, will not join parties containing any evil folk. Alignment to the philosophy by which a character will live and deal with the world. Using the example of a Paladin, they're obviously lawful Good whereas you could have characters who are Neutral, Evil or Chaotic. The latter selection simply means this person will look after members over above others. There are also Classic RPG ability scores like hit points, strength, charisma, intelligence and dexterity. The designers have thoughtfully provided a modify feature which allows you to selectively change these attributes to match your favorite advanced Dungeons & Dragons persona.

Eye of the Beholder fans should breathe a sigh of relief because they can transfer their best character, potions and scrolls from the first game.

On a purely aesthetic note, parties are chosen to distinguish between each individual. In addition to the four regular members of your party, up to two more non-player characters can join at a time. Lots more people can act as bonus treasure and your treasury contained in the Eye of the Beholder II. Many of these changes provide important information. However, the party will never know, until it's too late, who they can really trust.

Don't worry if this all seems a little too complicated for your tastes. You'll quickly find there's a complex system of hidden rules lurking beneath the surface. This is perhaps the real joy of playing either one of the Beholder titles. In fact, the sequel has benefited from a few tweaks here and there to smooth any rough edges. It may be one way this is the best of the game so far. One slip, either in combat or conversation, can bring the whole face of the enemy against you.

This game, entitled Legend of Dark Moon, picks up where the first game ended. Your party starts out as experienced heroes sent by the Baron Blackstaff, wizard adviser to the Lord of Waterdeep, to investigate evil forces said to be on the march north of the city. The party discovers an area of dark forest

It's easy to see why **Eye of the Beholder** is the best example of this genre so far. One slip, either in combat or conversation, can bring the whole force of the enemy against you.



Nothing is behind you. In the first act, it's enough to look to the front when you're being drawn back from the back.

There are four sets of characters on the way into the castle who can attack with their weapons. Be prepared: you will have to concentrate target spots.

It's to point all these battle abilities would, there are only the few characters who should your party. Make your party and any attacking enemies.

There are characters you can attack enemies with spells and some ranged weapons or items, items and spells. They are used by enemy members of the enemies are attacking from behind or in the side of the party.



It's easy to see why **Eye of the Beholder** is the best example of this genre so far. One slip, either in combat or conversation, can bring the whole force of the enemy against you.

There is the character who should be the target of the party. It's enough to look to the front when you're being drawn back from the back.

There are four sets of characters on the way into the castle who can attack with their weapons. Be prepared: you will have to concentrate target spots.

There are four sets of characters on the way into the castle who can attack with their weapons. Be prepared: you will have to concentrate target spots.

Normally a character can't be targeted in their primary field.



The character's level, usually with a color, indicates how much of a challenge you'll face.



Click on the spellbook icon to see available spells. The available spells of casting spells are from your party's Eye of the Beholder.

Clicking on the character portrait will allow you to view their stats, equipment, or other information. You can also click on the character's portrait to view their stats, equipment, or other information. You can also click on the character's portrait to view their stats, equipment, or other information.



Use this to control the character's movement. The character is controlled by the four keys when character is in combat.

Use this to control the character's movement. The character is controlled by the four keys when character is in combat.

Clicking on the front view of your party will allow you to view their stats, equipment, or other information.

These buttons allow you to view the character's stats.



Game Studio: Interceptor
 Publisher: Image Works
 Developer: Third Image
 Price: \$24.95

FIRST SAMURAI

What a great show *The Water Margin* was. Far better than its goofy follow-up *Monkey*, with all that stupid flying around on pink clouds, *The Water Margin* was about the best martial arts series on TV for years. Better, even, than *Rang Fu* for its variety of fight scenes. By far the most exciting part of the show

now jangles me if I sound like a skeptical old cynic who hasn't got a good word to say about anything, but given that this is essentially just an object-pursuit/combat game extremely similar to a number of ways to programmer and co-designer Raffaele Casco's other efforts: *Flakes* (scroll left and right and destroy things in space while collecting objects before teleporting to the next level) and *Steveland* (scroll left and right and destroy things in a fairy kingdom while collecting objects before being magically transported to the next level) I have to conclude that this plot is a load of old cobblers tacked on at the end of the project to explain away disparate ideas which were incorporated during programming, the maybe I'm wrong.



Samurai Sam. Interceptor's idea was to do a game in the Western tradition of the most collectible video adventures, like those by developer Richard King. First Samurai was the result.



Samurai Sam's mission: Find out how the samurai brought the collection of objects to the end of the world and to connect with a character called "Samurai."



was the big battle sequence at the end of each episode. The heroes' swords would flash and clang as their legions/monies screamed and fell out of shot, checking their bodies and rolling their eyes. Cracking entertainment.

To all intents and purposes, *The First Samurai* is about as close to the no-nonsense slinking sword-fence of *The Water Margin* as a computer game will ever get. As an explanation for the bloodthirsty combat in which the player is limited to mashing, the opening sequence presents a classic yarn about the brutal murder of the First Samurai's Master by an evil Demon King. Despite the fact that this is really rather tired (swords and average enemies), and that the graphics for this bit would look more at home on the planet you get to Chinese restaurants than in a milking arcade adventure, it does allow open-minded players some "let's in the hallway I'll be-fu-see-see-but-it-looks-like-the-past-promise."

Eventually, having done in the Master, the Demon King flogs him into the future in order to wreak more havoc as in *Demon's* worst. I suppose. On here the Samurai, however, is keeping none of this, and begs a conveniently present Wizard Mage to send him far into the future in order to retrieve the Demon King and destroy him at the foot of his mountain throne.



The *First Samurai*, being a fairly even blend of both slinking action and object collection, is quite a tricky game to directly compare with any other. However, in a number of ways it comes close to the *Blazing Blade*'s goals. While the *Blazing* game





(Left) The dragon-like beast that blazes the landscape on the soundtrack. The player's movement, moving the view to the right, is restricted to a 90-degree turn.

But it doesn't matter if it's over an 8g, because the game is a steamer. What it all boils down to is the player's mission to battle his way through the levels of the game, each representing a different area of 14th Century Japan, battling the end of King Hōei's reign and gradually pursuing the Demon King. Before the Samurai can reach the end of each level, however, he will face a number of geographic puzzles, some of which can be solved with simple fire-breath powers and agility. Others require the summoning of some mystical aid in the shape of the Wizard Mage, but more of him later.

Whenever the Samurai appears, either at the start of a new level or after his energy has been gradually worn away to zero and he's beginning a new life,

has more taxing puzzles. First Samurai has far more appealing combat routines.

Samurai, surprisingly, also wins out in the graphics stakes, because although the *Whump* game was considerably beautiful to look at, the screens were just too pedantic to make for pleasing long-term viewing.



a swirling orb of life-force leaves the player down to an earthenware pot. Looting the landscape, these pots can be used as weapons. By striking the pot, the player can fling his progress down far, and the next time he dies he drinks a cheap potion, he will be repositioned at the most recently activated pot. However, each position-flinging is costly to the Samurai's magic ability and so should be used with care.

Now, distinct from his physical strength, which gets worn away during combat and is replenished with food as you would expect, the player can collect magic power through defeating the minions of the Demon King. His magic power is represented by a meter in the lower right portion of the display area. When the Samurai has enough magic ability, he will automatically be armed with his magic sword. "My sword" is helpfully announced.

As well as facilitating the greater combat success, thus perpetuating his magic ability, the sword acts as a buffer for the Samurai in especially hostile situations. Even once the Samurai's strength has been worn down to nothing, he won't die if he's holding his sword. Instead his sword will fly off and be used food for some extra physical strength, giving the player another chance to find some food. However, don't be fooled into thinking that this means that the Samurai has an easy life.

On the contrary, his life here can be sapped away at any second, just by standing in the wrong place at the wrong time. For breaching a dragon's mouth the poor Samurai's head, enormous stress ran-

tle down corridors and crash him to death. And there are bridges which collapse dropping the Samurai into deadly fire pits. And all of these hazards are quite aside from the tank and file of the Demon King's minions, all hell bent on the player's destruction.

A jolly good job, then, that the Samurai is one of the most rock-hard bosses ever to appear in a computer game. Not only is he tough enough to wander around without a rest, but he has six staggered combat moves in his disposal and five moves available when armed.

Unfortunately, all this muscle-bound machinery doesn't come without a price. The Samurai walks around at a pace more obtuse than of a plow! Some wonder that a top-top killing ability. So the player spends most of his time jumping around in the later mode of travel to cover any distance.

It's during the combat sequences in particular (and there are many) that First Samurai's graphics really grab the player's interest. While the visuals for much of the game's scenery could be said to be workmanlike, the animations for the Samurai himself and the few he must combat are excellent. They're not even particularly detailed, but the feeling of hard-edged violence they give is striking.

Central over the Samurai - apart from several walking - is of the finest quality too, allowing the player to flick around and alternate his attack from one direction to another in a split second. He can also flick down his head to do both ascending fire and even slice away below him while in mid-air, clearing the way while he falls down pits and shafts.

An especially pleasing facet of *The First Samurai's* design is that it's vital that the player change and slice his way through so many enemies as possible. Not only is the demise of each foe accompanied by either a sound or a pleasing feature, indeed, the spot effects throughout the whole game are excellent, but it's only by killing the enemies and thus keeping the Samurai's mystical duty topped up that certain problems can be overcome.

It's the vital relation to some problems which essentially are either a zero-on or not, depending entirely on personal taste.

Some players will be pleased that they are continually aware of their aim during each section of each level. This is usually an object collection subject in the taking, some, on the other hand, may find it frustrating to have an excellent fighting romp complicated by bits of busywork of significance.

Whatever, the way they work is this. At certain points, the player will have to get past a generally naturally created obstacle: a waterfall, a volcano etc. Whenever the obstacle is simply too much for the player to handle on his own, the Wizard Mage will

To all intents and purposes, *The First Samurai* is about as close to the no-nonsense, slashing excellence of *The Water Margin* as a computer game will ever get.

FIRST SAMURAI



As the game progresses, the player enters an old Japanese building and finds a scroll that reveals the location of the hidden treasure. The scroll also contains a map of the island.

After a long and arduous journey, the player finally reaches the hidden treasure. The scroll also contains a map of the island.

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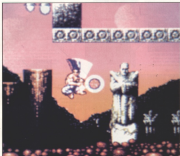
After a long and arduous journey, the player finally reaches the hidden treasure. The scroll also contains a map of the island.



After a long and arduous journey, the player finally reaches the hidden treasure. The scroll also contains a map of the island.



First Samurai combines both arcade action with puzzle-solving elements in an effective and appealing way, keeping both hardcore killers and those with more cerebral intentions equally happy.



With lots of open space in it, the landscape in *First Samurai* is a lovely sight. There's nothing so far and nothing looking huge as to get a complete view, and the nature provides that very much.



Amiga version

A deal this product with incredibly little wrapping involved. Although some of the graphics are less than works of art (some are a bit chunky), the rest of the game, especially with excellent combat effects and a rocking soundtrack is pretty special. Big scores get the usual bells and whistles too.

ST version

Following hot on the heels of the Amiga version, the ST game should be with us by the Spring. While inevitable sacrifices will have to be made to the audio stakes (don't expect to hear the complete score from the original), *First Samurai's* previous ST track record is solid.

PC version

Also, at this stage we understand that there are no plans to allow PC owners to enjoy *Samurai's* rocking action on their own machines.

*** pop up to lend an ethereal hand. But it's no good simply expecting old Mages to appear and sort out all the Samurai's problems. Nope. The player has to earn his help. Only when the player's mystical powers are at their peak can the Wizard Mage be summoned.

Wherever the Mage can be seen, a faint outline of his head will float around in the sky, nodding towards the problem. It's up to the player to decide

whether the Mage on his own can deal with the problems using the magic he has at his disposal or whether the Mage himself needs some help. In the first case, the player must ring his magic bell (yes, really) to summon the Mage, whereas he will help if he can. In the second instance, the Mage will automatically use any appropriate Special Items which the player has collected for him during his quest.

It's during this search for the Special Items that players witness one of the advertising aspects of the game will find themselves most frustrated. The first level (as depicted over the page) consists of the fascinating collection of logs which the Wizard Mage will turn into a bridge across a big waterfall. Once the layout of the level has been learnt, it's easy enough for the player to pick his own and collect all the logs without too much toing and froing. However, during the actual level-learning process, the player does seem to spend an inordinate amount of time spotting sustainable logs and then having to work out how to back track through the landscape in order to reach them.

As well as the normal routes which the Samurai can use to get around the landscape, he can also back and slash his way through thinner walls and floors, allowing access to secret rooms. Hacking away at the scenery, even in areas where nothing special seems to be going on can occasionally yield extra food and treasure for the player, a real Godsend in tough combat situations.

Even during the most frantic and desperate moments during the Samurai's campaign, the player gets the feeling that he is being treated unfairly. And more importantly, the game rewards him a determination to finally catch the blood-

... what big score you could get here on an Amiga or a Super Nintendo. The old Mage can sometimes get in the big score when others struggle to do so.



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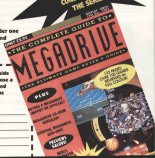
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Boo! As this issue draws to an end, and we approach the moment when the final credits will slowly roll up the screen, it's true to say that most of the plot development for this particular thriller is done. But you'd be foolish if you're the sort of person who gets up and puts on their coat when you reckon the final twist has been revealed. It's always the smart people who stick it out until the very end.

Indeed, no sooner has our rollicking team of software special agents completed this month's series of dangerous exclusive-gathering assignments, than they're off again, preparing an even more explosive and thrill-packed script for next month's New Year special.

So all the half-wits who have already left to catch the last tube home won't be finding out about the host of exciting features in our next presentation.

Most significantly there will be the ACE Awards, a glittering occasion celebrating the very best software releases of 1991.

And of course, aside from all the tip-top secret things which we can't talk about, there will be the usual supporting cast of exclusive reviews, in the Works, Previews and Tricks'n'Tactics so vital for a well balanced software picture.

So turn to page 108 and utilise our finely crafted Newsagent Reserve coupon, why don't you? You wouldn't want to miss out.

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new releases

What's this? Colour screenshots on a Pink Page? Whatever next? You may well be amazed, dear reader, because this, with our aim to satisfy your thirst for information has led to this informal invention; an entire page of pictures of every new game reviewed in the Directory. Well, all apart from the ones we forget to photograph, that is.

reviews directory

3.26.97/98

is clear. Another issue

is very readily seen. Well, you should be ashamed of yourselves for thinking such a thing, because this is where the magazine really BEGINS! Well, alright, but let's clarify the case. But the following thirty pages of hard-reviews information should successfully both inform you and help deal with all those WII Smith gift tokens which you'll have received. And quite aside from all that, it's a right good read.

Every game we come across from the finest simulation to the crappiest arcade adventure will eventually turn up in the Directory, so you've never in any doubt about any of the games that you're likely to find in your local computer store.

We hope you enjoy using this buyers guide just as much as we enjoyed putting it together for you.

Oh, while we've got a spare few column inches, we should perhaps give a brief breakdown of the review criteria employed in the Directory. As you will have noticed, the games don't receive our usual score out of 1,000. Instead they get a five star rating indicating their quality. This, again, is simply intended to make your knowing activities as painless as possible.

And in case you were in any doubt, the higher number of stars a game receives, the better we think it is. Don't laugh. You'd be surprised the number of people who can't grasp the simplest systems.

So, for the record, here's the breakdown:

- ★★★★★ Excellent. Buy without hesitation.
- ★★★★ Pretty smart. A safe bet.
- ★★★ Acceptable, but certainly no world beater.
- ★★ Not very good at all.
- ★ Rubbish.

And let that be an end of it. So, without further ado, let the big pink carpet unfurl and the Directory begin!

New Releases:

Age of Empires
Action Pack
Aero Max
Battle Isle
Break 2
Bugs Bunny
Castlevania IV
Devil Crash
Devotion Designer
Double Dragon 3
Fighter Command
Final Blow

Futball
Water-Challenge
Mad TV
Macao
Ocean
Paganini
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Rugby World Cup
Solitaire Poker
Sonic Blast
Under Pressure
World Class Rugby

Still Available:

Alien Breed
Amorogobles
Amnesia
Auto 10
Burger Time Deluxe
Captain Planet
Carnival
Cubic Legends
Curtains - Defender of Rome
Chameleon 2
Civilization
Cross Time
Crash for a Cop
Crash Striker
Doom
EA Hockey
EY
Fog Strike Flight II
Foxy-D
Futal Bowling
Futal Fight
Futal
Futal 11
Futal Director 2
Formula One GP
Gumball Wars
Hard Snow
Hercules
Madness Mark
Hysteria
Imperial
Jimmy White's Whistling Snooker

Last Ninja 3
Lionel Star Larry 3
Magic Garden
Marine Menemasters
Megaliths
Mega 10
Mighty Defender 3
Mighty
MrClay
Night and Magic 4
Monster Business
Nobun 2
Outrun Europa
Penguins
Raided Tycoon
Rise of the Dragon
Robin Hood
Robyn Hood
Salvooy 1
Sedition
Sensory
Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe
Seven Castles
Silver Service II
Smash TV
Thunderbolt
Utopia
Valiant
Victory
Willy Wonka
Wing-Commander II

releases

A320 AIRBUS



Price **Airage** (C)99
Genre **Simulation**
Publisher **Thalim**

You what? *Airage*, it's not as if we have any problem flying high in an F-16 or learning up solar installations in a state-of-the-art stealthfighter - but the *A320 Airbus* is somebody pulling our pilot seat! Well, apparently not, so this is one of the biggest releases from German software house Thalim in quite a while. Rather akin to a computerized *Jet's* *Pro B*, the game allows the player to be an airline pilot for a day - well, for however long he likes, really - at the controls of the life-known *A320* jetliner.

As anybody who knows anything about aviation at all will attest, *A320 Airbus* is no simple game. Passenger jets are impossibly more complicated than the fighter planes that have made it been the subject of simulations in the past. Thalim's game has attempted to simulate the spaghetti-like complexity as accurately as possible - and for the most part it succeeds, although this hyper-realistic approach is unlikely to appeal to the majority of flight-sim gamers. All these knobs, dials and switches may be a bit too much for the average Joe Stevie.

A320 Airbus isn't just about flying alone a bit, though. Quite so. Players get to create their own pilots, take part in training or active duty, work out flight plans and generally make their way up the ladder of commercial aviation. For those that find this sort of

thing appealing, there's no doubt that *A320 Airbus* is actually very good indeed. It's professionally produced, apart from the occasionally ugly graphics, and though it's not exactly immediate or interactive, the rewards are there to be had for players willing to plough the manual and learn all the ins and outs. The only problem is, I can't quite imagine who's going to be that interested, when you think about all the other, considerably more action-oriented, flight games on the market today. It's just boring for courses, I suspect.

☆☆☆☆

ACTION PACK



Price **Atari** (C)Amiga (C)499
Genre **Compilation**
Publisher **Atari** of
Woo's (Amiga) / *Tee* (game) - *Galaxia*, *Comix* (Pro), *Eliminator*, *Fast Lane*, *Hanger*, *Manx*, *On Sight*, *Race*, *Warrior*, *Ma*, *Dragon* - *Jet* twenty-five

quid *Clay*, we'll be honest and admit that they're all getting a bit long in the tooth now, and more than a couple of the games go after here are real *Stom* turkey material. On *Amiga*, in particular, should be played, stuffed with *Fun* and targeted to the ones for speed five hours as soon as possible.

However, *Comix* (Pro) is a quite hell-motivated scrolling shoot-'em-up, *Eliminator* (a 3D shoot-'em-up combining games) and *Hanger* (a multi-part arcade adventure) more than compensate, and would make a superb

value compilation on their own. The other games are poor to middling in quality, but for the price you really can't complain. Highly recommended.

☆☆☆☆

AEROSTAR



Price **Comstar** (C)499 (Amiga)
Genre **Arcade Blast**
Publisher **Wu** (Atari)

What do you get if you cross a platform game with a vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-up? A bit of a bloody mess, that's what. *Aerostar* is a seven-stage *Manx* where the player has to guide a spaceship along screen-held highways. The player can fly into the air for a very limited time to avoid ground fire and hop over gaps in the road, but this makes him vulnerable to attacks from the air. And, of course, there's a plethora of juicy power-ups to be collected along the way that turn the player's *Manx* from something only a little more threatening than a *rod* in the low into the starting world's equivalent of the *Wing of the Gods*.

The idea of combining shooting and bouncing is theoretically good, but unfortunately in practice it doesn't work so well. The player 'jumps' by holding down one of the Comstar buttons, and the longer the button is held down the longer the jump. Thing is, the Comstar's design makes it difficult to fire at the same time without taking one finger off the jump button, resulting in the ship plummeting into an abyss. And as the road starts nar-

rowing, and the need for jumping becomes more frequent and the enemy's attacks become more vicious, this becomes particularly annoying.

As it stands, however, is a nice title in something of a different, not created by the slightly-stuffy implementation. Worth a look, though, if you're interested by the sound of it.

☆☆☆☆

BATTLE ISLE



Price **Atari** (C)Amiga (C)499
Genre **Strategy**
Publisher **USA** (Atari)

An strategy games get creative and more diverse, with the likes of *Populous*, *Shogun*, *War* and *Sim City* the last few. *Populous* from USA (Atari) represents something quite different, which we hardly see any more these days - a suggestion in the classic vein. It's set on a far-off world where two armies do battle for control of a series of islands. It's vaguely similar to the old *SSI* *Empire* - units have to move across a hilly/bumpy landscape (into hexagons and squares). More experienced gamers will know the sort of thing.

Due to the space-age scenario, the units involved consist of all manner of high-tech tanks, planes, ships and armoured vehicles as well as more conventional infantry battalions. Players move their units about, creating tactical formations and assaults, with the inevitable confrontations between opposing forces. As the battle goes on, units must be supplied, tactics shared and all the other stuff that goes along with a game of this type.

Battle Isle's most foreseeable option is the two-player mode - something that's woefully missing from a lot of strategy products these days. A handy split-screen display allows two mates to play head-to-head - although this does mean you can see what your opponent is up to at any time, of course.

Battle Isle is undoubtedly a fine and very 'heavy' strategy game, and one that should appeal to anyone who likes the good old-fashioned ways of doing things, without all the interfering bells and whistles. But despite the game's accessibility, many younger players on the lookout for a brain game are more likely to steer towards the likes of *Populous* II. Good stuff, though.

☆☆☆☆

rather unfortunate shuffling walk that makes him look as if he's got one foot in his foot and he's trying to pull the foot in this (dis)appeared before (Go G) that it might have received a better response. As it happens, it didn't, so it hasn't.

☆☆☆

DEVIL CRASH



Price Magazine (\$9.99 (Simplic)
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Tynes Soft

Computerized pinball has never been a particularly popular genre, and a quick glance at *Devil Crash* is enough to make you say why. Even since the age-old days of *Shuffleboard* and *Time Trancer*, coin-ups and laser machines have tried to emulate that early 80's status pinball feel, but with little success. In theory, it should work exceedingly well with the laser format already for all sorts of tracks and allowing that wouldn't be possible on a real machine. Unfortunately, no amount of gimmicks can make up for the fact that pinball on a computer screen just doesn't compare to the exhilaration of a real table.

To its credit, *Devil Crash* actually does a better job than most, with creditable ball returns and plenty of interesting features - the table is more than screaming and packed with all manner of secret rooms, bonuses and other bits. Unfortunately the public nature of the graphics (peripherals and eye-to-eye views) lend a rather depressing and mellow feel to the game itself, and as a result it's difficult to really enjoy. *Devil Crash* is the aesthetic equivalent of a bad teacher: whatever its shortcomings, however, computer pinball has acquired a respectable cult following for itself, and gamers of that persuasion will no doubt find *Devil Crash* to be one of the more impressive examples of the genre. For the rest of us, however, there are more enjoyable - and less frustrating - bits of pin to be had.

☆☆☆

DEVIOUS DESIGNS



Price Amiga (\$1.99)
Genre Puzzle
Publisher Image Works

However, not to much devices as simply fidelity. Does it have the world's best level's map, there's been a steady trickle of creative additions to suggest that make *Amiga Pinball*'s class such a stable filling money spinner. Device designers had more potential than most, but it hasn't quite been realized.

The basic idea is simple enough. The player guides a tiny figure around various landscapes, pushing up variously-shaped blocks and trying to fit them onto a transparent template while collecting bonuses, a myriad of power-ups and avoiding or shooting the crawling bad guys. All well and good. Ah, but there's a catch to it that isn't that. On the later levels, the player can make his character walk up the walls and even on the ceiling. And this is where it all starts to fall apart.

Control over the player's character is generally fine, but when once a wall it's all too easy to find yourself stumbling up where you didn't want to and not understanding up where you did. Admittedly, given a fair deal of practice the player should be able to compensate for this. Additionally, but in the short term it may be otherwise enjoyable and reasonably addictive addition to the genre.

☆☆☆

DOUBLE DRAGON 3



Price Amiga (\$9.99)
Genre Beat 'em-Up
Publisher Tynes

Double Dragon fans have been more than short-changed in the past by the conversion of the previous two *Double Dragon* coin-ups, so it comes as some relief to be able to say that this - the third installment of the on-going dirty-cuff escapades of Jimmy and Billy Lee - is, despite a couple of reservations, pretty much what devotees have been wanting.

The plot is confined to say the least. According to what you learn so, it's either the usual glib movie mission, as a quest for revenge, or a fight against the 'Ultimate Evil'. No matter, the mechanics remain the way Jimmy and Billy Lee (i.e. a player) can and tend have to thump and crumple their way through hazy levels of action set in the most ludicrous and as the game progresses you'll discover 'evils' in an unrelentment.

Players start the game with fifteen

'coins', and in the drops found on route for players can buy extra lives, weapons, power-ups and even some fancy new fighting moves. It's a shame you can't just find weapons along the way, but this extra business does at least add a game-enhancing strategic element, because the player has to decide how long to spend his cash.

While some may find the gameplay dated and repetitive (a complaint, to be fair, that could be made about most games of this type), those experienced fans of the genre should be finding it one of the more exciting and certainly the oldest doses of beat-'em-up action around. And, for my money, it's far better than *Final Fight*.

☆☆☆☆

FIGHTER COMMAND



Price Amiga (\$9.99)
Genre Strategy
Publisher Impressions

It may be a little late to cash in on Operation Desert Storm, but there can be no denying *Fighter Command*'s aptitude for to the present day Middle East. It puts the player in the shoes of an allied commandeer who has been given a simple task - to kick the stuffing out of the aggressive enemy as quickly and violently as possible. But despite the pretty picture of a jet pilot coming into land on the box, there's not actually any flight sim type action to the game at all. It's really just strategy, with the player making all his decisions from a series of control screens, icons and others. Everything is presented by simplistic overhead cameras, vertical screens and radar displays.

Everything you'd expect from a military strategy game is in there - you manage the unit with reconnaissance satellites to find out where everything is, then organize and launch one-by-one against chosen targets. There's a wide range of AI available, including mobile bombers, fighters and helicopter gunships, air force along with coast, marine and naval units. As the game progresses, the player has to rely on his political developments, fuel and equipment resources and all kinds of other factors which govern the game world.

Actually, considering there's fairly anything really exciting going on in screens, *Fighter Command* does quite a good job of holding the player's atten-

tion. Most of the screens are static, nothing's really very immediate and it takes time to learn the features, but despite all this it's still strangely compelling. There's plenty to do, lots of strategy to get the head inside and generally it's all very enjoyable. The lack of any real flight action is a major setback, and it's because of this that more gamers may prefer to wait for Microsoft's forthcoming *AACN*, is *The World* (in this month).

☆☆☆

FINAL BLOW



Price Amiga (\$9.99)
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Tynes

I actually went to a boxing match a couple of months back and people in the crowd were genuinely shouting 'Hit him!' as if it was some sort of world event where their chosen fighter should employ. One suspects there are really the sort of folks who spend more than a couple of quid on *Final Blow* to be amazed. Nothing wrong with the celebration of the noble art, and nothing wrong with having a right old banging session in the process, but *Final Blow* has more to do with seeing who can hit *Five the Hardest* than boxing.

Although the player gets endowed with plenty of moves and the ability to block punches, the speed of the game completely removes any sort of realism which, after all, is what boxing is all about. Even Mike Tyson would concentrate on different areas of the body. He does in the title enough to make them lower their guard, and then go to work on their face. No such strategy in *Final Blow*, since the flurry of computerized and human arms makes it impossible to see who's doing what. The result is a non-stop battle of mind-boggling fractions. About the only way to work out who's being hit is by watching the orange bar at the bottom of the screen.

So far as coin-up conversion goes, it's a pretty good job, and its two-player mode it's alright for a laugh, but the original was far from perfect. *Amiga* owners may be wise to hold on to the more rounded game.

☆☆☆

FUZZBALL

☆☆☆



Pico Knight (29.95)
Game Platform

Publisher: System 1

Well, this is a lot of fun from the past and nostalgic. Intriguingly low from perspective. System 1's latest is a simple yet highly addictive platform affair. The player controls a bouncing ball-of-stuff that has to be guided around a network of platforms, collecting fruit bonuses, honey spines, the Peachalls of the title by rescuing them. There come in first increasingly-aggressive "barren" green people. Much and so. By repeatedly shooting them with his lightning gun, the player can stun them long enough to knock them off the platforms. However, if the player takes too long the Peachall comes to his own master than before.

As the player progresses through the 850-level maze and ladder Peachalls appear, scintillating moments over bouncing around and the platform leaps provide an ever greater test of the player's good pixel positioning powers. Peachalls is a classic example of "simple being good". The addition, uncluttered graphics and nice graphics make this an 8-grade winner. And there's a right dramatic animated intro to boot. (Well, you've got to fill these big boxes with something, haven't you?)

THE GAMES - WINTER CHALLENGE



Pico IBM PC (29.95)
Game Special Simulation
Publisher: Available

This is, as you and friends would say, mega-stuffed! It appeared in the past, totally uncompleted, and turned out to be one of the best games we've seen this month! Soak, outside! The player (or players) - up to ten can take part compete in eight winter sports - ice, downhill skiing, cross-country skating, speed skating, bobsled, game slalom, bobsled and ski jump. All the events are depicted in an effective role of 3D polygons for the landscape (a bit like Midway) with options for the competitors and course scenery (trees, snow, etc), found to be impressive - on a basic PC the game is played about to choose except for a between-games and a control chess where a

player completes an event.

The player views the action from just behind and above his on-screen alter-ego, therefore getting a good view of the action as well as an excellent first-person impression of speed. Each of the events is relatively easy to control and consequently very easy to get into. Like the Sports "Games" series, success is dependent on timing and control rather than hammering the fire button, so it's very satisfying to play and makes sharing records off those first times more a matter of skill as opposed to physical stamina.

Besides its superior qualities, The Games may get a bit dull when played alone (a criticism levelled at nearly every game of this type). However, as a game to play with a group of friends it comes Rankin - and that makes The Games a more than worthy purchase if you own this Xmas holiday period.

MAD TV



Pico IBM PC (29.95)
Game Strategy
Publisher: Available Arts

My, what timing! Only weeks after the TV franchise debacle and as the country quakes in dread at the threat of a visit of old Spanish comadres and craggy game shows filling our screens, Rankin Arts produce a game which is all about running your own TV station! Only the greatest at TV-AM had the chance to play Mad TV, they might still be in business.

Not only is Mad TV a right laugh, allowing the player to have total control (with the only limitation being the budget) over an entire TV station, but it's an excellent strategy game into the bargain.

The aim is to keep Mad TV at the top of the TV ratings while simultaneously winning the hearts of Betty, the most beautiful woman in town. Taking place in a huge show-up, the game has the player's character having around from the various offices, buying up shows, scheduling programs and keeping an eye on the all important viewing figures.

Every now and again, your boss will crop up and give you some helpful pointers. He may be boss but his sense tells an owner for money or film, so it's up to you to schedule accordingly. None of this would be a good enough reason if it were, but when you

consider that Mad TV is a pretty mouth-lose strategy game with complicated interrelations between various department heads and some top notch presentation/look, you would have to conclude that you'd be mad, ha! (kidding, to, to make it.)

MERCS



Pico MegaDrive (29.95) (Japan)
Game Arcade Blast
Publisher: Sega

As if MegaDrive owners hadn't had quite enough shoot 'em ups Mad to keep them happy will turn the next century, here's another chance to hammer the trigger. The player must team up with a bullet-headed mate and, and seemingly ill defined enemy installation in your mission to rescue the President. From the smooth top-down multi-directional scrolling and plentiful power-ups fail to elevate Mercs above the rank and file of shoot 'em ups. Solo play is available for children of fortune who prefer to quit alone (or who haven't got any friends) but the dull factor of such missions is really pretty limited.

Equipped with initially steady weapons, the over-exaggerated bonus menu gradually work their way up the screen, picking off what remains left or lost or taking in gun towers or traps. Extra firepower and strength enhancements can be had by destroying the numerous crates lying about.

Players can speed their progress through the frequently linear levels by jumping into a semi-burned out jeep and tearing up the screen. This bit is quite amusing, as you can run down the enemy soldiers or blast them with the jeep's built-in bazooka.

As well as the repetitive central-level guardians, which have take the form of an assortment of military hardware - planes, helicopters, tanks, etc the levels are unusually well broken-up with bigger fire in the shape of gun towers, machine gun nests and the like.

Aside from the problems thrown up when a game controlled by the poped mechanisms diagonal firing the enemy troops always seem to attack on a diagonal there has a bonus of other mad-replicas up its sleeve. It looks, poor, often obscures its originality and when played solo is a crushing bore.

OUTRUN



Pico Game Gear (24.95)
Game Racing Game
Publisher: Sega

It may be awhile but it certainly isn't a gully - at least, not in the Gear incarnation it isn't. Out Run is a arcade racing action stripped down to its bones - the player has to drive a red Ferrari through four stages, avoiding other traffic and those police stationary mobile obstacles. It's all against the clock, with the player being awarded precious extra seconds every time he completes one of the stages. And... that's just about it.

The impression of speed (achieved using good ol' vector banding) is fine, although the objects given in an amazingly coarse and chunky fashion. Unfortunately the number of roadsigns appears is small, and the number of cars on the road even smaller - even on the thirdest stage. I only counted two other vehicles on the road at top. Very poor. What of all this is relatively rare - I completed the game on my third go. Yes, really! The only real mark in the game's favour is the ability to play head-to-head with another Gear owner, but even then the controls are low and far between, the third is 0/0.

PEGASUS



Pico Atari ST/Amiga (29.95)
Game Arcade Blast
Publisher: Creative Creatures

Oh dear, oh dear. What a shame that just when Creative starts getting a good reputation for itself with its classic product of late, it turns out a piece of crap like this. Based very loosely on the classic Greek myth, Pegasus is a winged ball-and-ball one of 8 Pigeon style about 'em up or fire and run-around-and-keep-up-the-building platform stuff. This mixture of orthodox and ground-based action is supposed to give the player variety and keep him interested. In practice all it does is get very boring very quickly.

In the shoot 'em up sections, Pegasus on Pegasus, as the low-increased skills his name fits in along on the back of the mythical winged horse, which is animated in an extremely unconvincing manner, and flies away at

reviews directory

the stacking polygons, demons, ladders, etc. When he's finished this onslaught, Progress leads, versus demons and the general action begins. This happens 30 times (or, an action, 25, on the ground), in which time the player has probably lost all his hit and lost, like the TV series and failed his computer out of the window.

It's not that Progress is a bad idea—it's just that it's been executed in such a God-awful, boring and unimaginative manner. The action is the heavy hit to slugging and sweeping, while the ground levels lack any of the flourish of, say, *Samurai II*. The fact that there's a lot of it doesn't make it any more of a viable position—unless you're a masochist of course. Complete with all manner of interminable spelling mistakes within the game ("resistance" instead of "instincts"), "new" instead of "newer," Progress would have only just made the grade two years ago, as an public domain title. To risk 60¢ (and quite a bit more if you're lucky) before today's standards of graphics and gameplay is a bit on an inside. **A-**

ROBOZONE



Price Amiga \$29.99
Coco Amiga-Blast

Publisher Image Works

Trying to keep with the Commodore handwagon, said mixing by about six months, ImageWorks' latest and certainly one greatest puts the player in the driving seat of a giant two-legged war machine, a sort of car-prior version of the one in *Progress*. Killing Game Zone, with a mission to put an end to pollution, *Horrid!*

Fantastically Robozone's a simple idea—anything that moves, kills, and the programmer's trying to maintain player interest by constantly changing the play area. One level's a side-view multidimensional scrolling explore-it's-evil, the second's much the same but in 2D and the third's a hotly contested scrolling shoot-'em-up. While each is programmed well enough, there's no real life force excitement to be found in any of them.

The really annoying thing about Robozone is it's pretense to being "Great"—the manual is littered with Top Tips about how to help save the environment. One states pompously "If you have a choice, avoid buying packaged goods." Considering that

Robozone comes in a giant box with a single disc and a thin manual sitting about inside, the irony of this statement lingers loud! Probably the best bit is the first one: "Try not to waste energy." ImageWorks, having given this I already have.

RUGBY - THE WORLD CUP



Price Amiga \$29.99
Coco Sports Amade

Publisher Demtek

Hey! It's *Amiga Off*! Well, not quite, but it is a pretty damn average by the Demtek to play. Amiga's body class style is the rough, or maybe, if you will, world of rugby. Of course, as we're here, rugby and football are very different sports, with the former lacking the non-stop speed of the latter. Not that, perhaps the best game to try to thank to fit into *Amiga Off*'s hard and fast playing style.

However, as it happens, it all works pretty well. Save the action is a bit stop and start, but there is a definite flow to the game and few lapses to pace. The game is viewed in plan view, with the pitch allowing to follow the play, it's a player (who is, mainly, the one nearest the ball). Throws and kicks are controlled solely by the joystick, and include the ability of *Amiga Off*'s afterthoughts. Throws are either tactically waggling the joystick to throw the opposition back, and this is fine—unless you're playing the All Blacks, in which case you need to wobble a subtle speed to beat them.

In fact, that's probably the biggest criticism: the top team are too tough. There are other minor niggles, such as the way player options overlap on top of each other and the way that the other members of the team don't put themselves in good positions to pass, meaning that play often involves one man making them real way down the pitch to the try line. Not really highly may not be perfect, it's still a pretty good try. (Our second reviewer being strict.)

☆☆☆☆☆

SOLITAIRE POKER



Price Game Gear \$29.99 (Import)

GOON PEARL

Publisher Igra

Everyone here a good puzzle game, and this is a very good one. The idea is simple—select a card from one of the four piles on offer, and place it on a 5 x 5 grid. Points are awarded for pairs, threes, etc., created either vertically, horizontally or along the main diagonals. Scape over a certain amount and the player progresses on to the next, tougher level. There are a number of variants on the theme, but that's the main thrust of the game.

What most is fun to say about such a simple concept? Aesthetically it's fine—the functional graphics are clear and colorful and there's a vast number of background textures to pick between. Although not exactly using the full-color LCD capabilities of the Gear as it's fallen, it's one of the most enjoyable Gear games I've seen for a long, long time, and so such comes with a strong recommendation.

☆☆☆☆☆

STRIKE FLEET



Price Amiga \$29.99

Coco Strategy

Publisher Electronic Arts

Strike Fleet doesn't look the most inspiring game from the stars on the back of the box, but the Lucasfilm credit hints that this may be better than it appears. As, in fact, it is. The game's a sea-based strategy game split into fourteen individual missions in a war-torn eight-mission campaign. After each mission finishing, the player is allocated a number of points (depending on the difficulty of the mission) to "spend" in the shopped. Each ship costs a certain number of points (depending on its class, so the player must be careful in picking a balanced fleet).

Once set on, the player can look between the ships at will. Control is relatively complete—directionally, allowing the player to move, change speed, activate radar and even use, and so on. For the variety of on-board weapons. In addition, certain ships carry a complement of helicopters that can be used on recon or sub-hunting forays.

Despite its initially dull appearance, Strike Fleet actually turns out to be quite involving. There's a great deal of satisfaction to be had from successfully controlling the fleet, and seeing off the sea, or in underwater attack provides frequent doses of adrenaline.

Admittedly, those without a strategic leaning are unlikely to be converted by the game's charms, but if Strike Fleet sounds at least slightly appealing give it a go. I think you'll be surprised.

☆☆☆☆☆

UNDER PRESSURE



Price Amiga \$29.99

Coco Arcade Blast

Publisher Electronic Zoo

Oops. Plans have now minute you're on top of the world and the next you're, er, not. A situation which no skills programmer's Edward the Cat have done themselves in with their latest release, Under Pressure. There isn't and indeed only release. Progress was exceedingly well received, being a pretty excellent sports sim, but *Pressure* only leaves that greatness and glitz to us to blame for this disaster.

Wiped in an unconformably similar fashion to Progress' game, play in between level but is actually identical to Progress' game name and the rules which the player controls looks exceedingly like the creature on the *Shuttle* of the Gear box, Under Pressure falls down in almost every single respect.

Guiding a huge robot, killing machines through a series of devious cityscapes, the player must deal with a myriad of different enemies—mainly snakes—with the impressive amount of weaponry available from his cockpit.

Sounds slight, doesn't it. Ah, from here on in, the game falls down rather badly. For a start, everything is too big. The player's robot almost fills the screen, but doesn't have the detail or animation flourish to support its size. Also, the rule presents a problem in that since only one horizontal level of the city is ever visible on the screen, the game feels more like a duck about than an exciting adventure. Absolutely no aiming is necessary for shooting for the enemies' robot, as they just sit at top and swallow the player's fire. Oh dear.

☆

WORLD CLASS RUGBY





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Price Adult \$14.99 (US only)

Genre Sports Simulation

Publisher Audiogenic

Another Rugby game? While *Living Low Street-Charter* will ring in our ears, it's no surprise that both Audiogenic and Demark have decided this is a suitable time to release their Rugby games. However, whereas the Demark have gone for an outdoor playability with few bells and whistles for their game, *Centre* have opted for a more rigorous approach to the sport, offering plenty of accuracy and a great deal of scope for subtle play. And as well, it's somewhat more satisfying to play, it's a lot harder to get lost.

It's also nice to note, with play viewed from a 3D angle (it is John Madden's Football on the Megadrive) and all the players animate nicely if a little stiffly. If this doesn't appeal, there's a selection of other views on offer, including a no-nonsense top-down view for the more traditionally-minded. There's also a comprehensive Video Replay function, whereby favourite bits of the game can be saved to disc and watched again and again.

World Class Rugby may not have Demark's Rugby's pick-up-and-play instant appeal, but it's a good bet that of the two this will be the one you'll still be looking up in a year's time. **D D D D**

SPECIAL ENTRY!

RICK DANGEROUS

Price Single £14.99

Genre Platform

Publisher Elex

Wow! Just speaking into the reviews directory is the way last second saves everyone's favourite hero, Rick Dangerous. Here, in his first outing (which originally came out on the Atari Style label) Rick must explore a mysterious (and very much to the Indiana Jones note, dodging deadly traps and doing away with evil little gnomes).

Although many games have tried, few have surpassed the fun and excitement which Rick delivers. The graphics are in pretty colours, too, with all the Characters being sleek and sharp and full of humour.

And quite aside from all that, the real talent of the painter and the framing curve which effectively drops the player through the game, instilling and then challenging, make Rick Dangerous fanatically satisfying to play. **D D D D D**

oh mr newsagent

Blimey! There you are, casually flicking through your latest issue of ACE magazine when a horrible and genuinely frightening thought occurs to you. Not only are you nearing the end of an especially thrill-powered edition of the greatest sci-fi comic in the galaxy, or something, but you can't for the life of you remember when the next issue is going to come out.

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Or perhaps you've read our Next Month page which will probably have the wrong month on it, and so you won't know what is going on.

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ALIEN BREED



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre Arcade Shooter
Publisher Team 17

Alien Breed can best be described as the Alien Hunter that should have been.

It grafts Alien atmosphere onto Gauntlet-style gameplay to create an addictive - albeit unoriginal - science-fictioner.

One or two players can take part simultaneously, and their job is to run around the six platform maze-like levels of a mission-infested space station, blasting green shades of alien out of any thing that crawls, slithers or burks.

Fortunately the problem that always afflicted Gauntlet for though fun, there was no real aim to playing apart from scoring points has been corrected: following the players a task to complete on each level proximity of the 'holla' level (and there is up) nature. Okay, so it's not exactly lifting the game into Arcade Adventure waters, but it provides enough of a goal to keep the player coming back for more.

The addictive gameplay is backed up by some super-dick scrolling and graphics, although the animation is a little perfunctory, and the basic 'invade-like' is very appropriate here. Throughout the use of sound to create atmosphere and tension is superb, especially when the station's self-destruct sequence is kicked in and the player has to find the exit before the place blows. The only real gripe is that given that the game is for this vintage only, you can't help feeling that something slightly more

ambitious could have been attempted. But as it stands this is the best straightforward Blast for months, and that's a good enough recommendation for anyone.

☆☆☆☆

ARMOURGEDDON



Price Amiga £1/Amiga £25.99
Genre Simulation
Publisher Progress

Progress' latest (it plays) offers another around a six-part mission to find the five pieces of a nuclear bomb and use it to destroy an enemy HQ. There are six control vehicles to try out, ranging from ground-hugging tanks and hovercraft to high-flying jets and helicopters and the player must use his 'skill and judgement' to decide when, where and how best to use them, to achieve his current mission objective.

Mouse control of each vehicle is smooth and responsive, with the final (it) giving a good pole-balancing feeling of speed.

The player can switch between the vehicles 'in the field' using the three-way keypad the computer puts the vehicle into auto when this happens, so there's no risk of a control-panic just ploughing nose-first into the ground. Like Core's Thunderhawk, the screen is an action editor, rather than simulation, with the enemy attacking almost as soon as the player puts a metal shield of some sort in his bunker, which makes for exciting but somewhat irrelevant

action. But it's not all shoot, shoot, shoot. There's an important management element as well, where the player has to wisely allocate scientists and technicians to develop new weapons and fetch vehicles to replace those blown to pieces by the very enemy army.

Armageddon is one of Progress' best games to date, with solid gameplay backing up the impressive visuals. Armourgeddon isn't 100, but one is.

☆☆☆☆

ATOMINO



Price Amiga £1/Amiga £25.99
Genre Puzzle
Publisher Progress

Hmmm, fascinating! There are two games based around atomic physics, and one looks interesting, so it's a big 'Thanky' and get in the back for Progress. Atomino is a puzzle game based around atomic velocity, i.e. the number of bonds an atom can make with other atoms. Hydrogen, for example, 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 big, if molecule is only complete when all the atoms within it have their bonds accounted for.

It all sounds a bit... well... dry, but in fact turns out to be great fun with its

additive challenge, pretty graphics and rising tempo sound making it one of the better puzzle games on the market.

☆☆☆☆

BABY JO



Price Amiga £1/Amiga £24.99
Genre Platform Game

Imagine themselves that in evolutionism and you've got a good idea of what the latest import from French firm Loricola is all about. Or if you don't know that, try imagining Mario with a nappy-wearing baby in the main character. It's all really rather ludicrous, with the more ludicrous having to get the better goodies as he loozes along the landscape in order to keep fit - but he doesn't eat too much, or he'll start his tummy! I mean come on! What are three French game developers on? Something pretty strong if the quality of Baby Jo's aesthetics are anything to go by. Fairly designed spaces, atmospheric music and ludicrous (only backdrops) of good (it) for a challenge, but it has to be said that it is kind of over in a rather perverse and deliberate strange sort of way.

But if there's one thing it certainly isn't, it's fun - the slow, amusing gameplay and fairly decent (though design makes more of that, it's for precisely this reason that Baby Jo should only really be on the shopping list of platform-lovers desperate for a new fix, and even then there are much more playable options available.

☆☆

BURGER TIME DELUXE



Price GameBoy £25.99 (import)
Genre Platform

Platform Bites East
Now this is a real blast from the past, when arcade games didn't have to have pretty around the same old standard hardware side just to get them to play with their cash. The player has to guide his little Chef around a network of platforms and ledges. In a bizarre culinary exercise Chef has to make good hamburgers by walking over the various ingredients lying on the platforms, leaving them to fall down the screen onto the platform below



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and eventually sees a plate at the bottom. Once all the hamburgers have been made Pete advances onto the next, more complex arrangement of platforms.

Now this all sounds a bit easy. But you're not alone without the constant stinging, glowing and foot-egg that have you up from the cupboard and are watching the platform interest on Pete's descent. Fortunately the camp chef's arrival with a pepper pot and a carefully aimed shaker will raise the ball time for a few moments allowing this to settle into good fun. More food to fly. Pete can try to time his food-dropping antics to crush the ingenious ingredients. Burger Time Deluxe is a fun little game, although the graphics wrap on the atmosphere. It's probably a bit too simplistic for today's younger gamers, but nostalgia balls will enjoy this tasty slice of the past. **C+ C+**

CAPTAIN PLANET



Price About \$7, Amiga £25.99
Genre Arcade Action
Publisher Mindspace

Pass the levels, man. Thanks. Yeah, like I'm telling you there's like six guy's, right, and he's like this sort of super-hero, you know. Goes around saving the world from those real heavy industrial pollutants. Yeah, like you say (heavy sigh, man, Arnie), he's got three fire helpers, and they're like just like, you know, but they've got this special rings that give them these cosmic powers. Totally amazing. Each level of the game like comes around one of these six characters, and they're just for out.

I mean like the first character, Mr. T, was his ring to like drill into the bad guys and remove plants so they can climb up to the level, etc. Yeah, and like when the guy on there's that ball, capture the ball to fly around it and wrap up misaligned elephants and take them to a sanctuary. Yeah, really. It's like this amazing sort of platform game and about 100-up. Mmm, yeah, the graphics are sort of cute, the scrolling's fine, and the tunes are really, but control over your little space guy's a bit tricky. Yeah, Tinkie Dinky Wiggles, all the President's Men, that you get used to it and all of it all it's quite a fun and experience. It and the slacker thing like you've ever seen. Lots of really great psychedelic colours, too. **C+ C+**

CASTELIAN



Price Samoylov £25.99 (Amiga)
Genre Platform
Publisher Tuffie Entertainment

Remember Nebula? It was a classic platform game starting up like this called Page. Each of its variously-difficult levels was set on a tall tower. The player could move Page left and right, and make him jump over gaps at about at the window sizes. However, in a unique twist, the towers tend to rotate to follow Page's movement. Quite a special achievement on the Amiga!

Sam Nebula has come to the Casertian under the title Castelian. And while the name may have changed the game certainly hasn't. It still looks stunning and plays well but has a difficulty rating through the roof. However, completing a tower is extremely satisfying, so if you fancy a real challenge then you know where to come. **C+ C+ C+**

CELTIC LEGENDS



Price About \$7, Amiga £24.99
Genre Role-Playing Game
Publisher UMI Soft

It's amazing how you can get 99% of the time, what an RPG game is going to be roughly like just by knowing what part of the world it's coming from. For example, something that comes from California is likely to be all complex and involved, while anything from, say France or Germany, while still having all the traditional RPG elements, always tends to present things in a much more simplistic and arduous manner. As is the case here, with this little Celtic number which is very much in the same vein as Tolkien's *Dragonslaid* and countless other non-RPGs.

It's actually a fine little game, based around all the old RPG clichés, but handling them with traditional French style and aplomb. It's all set in the mythical world of Celica, where the source of magic by an evil sorcerer has reawakened the kingdom's magic.

Who follows is a mix of magic and conventional RPG elements presented from a number of viewpoints on the battlefield, high above the world itself and so on, depending upon the scene.

Though its graphics aren't offering anything that exceeded the of the game will feel particularly earth-shattering.

It's different enough to some of presentation and style to make it well worth investigating - especially for serious gamers who may be looking for an accessible and appealing introduction to the genre. **C+ C+**

CENTURION - DEFENDER OF ROME



Price Megalith £24.99
Genre Action Strategy
Publisher Electronic Arts

Cast as an aspiring Centurion, it's the player's duty to both defend the homeland and expand the Roman Empire so far as it is possible. This strategic tactical title is somewhat flawed at first by the fact that the player starts with just a single legion of soldiers and a city of citizens to keep under control.

The game is a well-judged blend of non-linear strategy and arcade-style interludes. For example, to keep the selected positions happy, the player can take part in chaotic runs and keep them tight. As the game progresses the armies under your command grow and shape placed as your disposal to take action to neighbouring shores become bigger and better. If the player's luck is on even here a crack at solving the riddles of the *Centurion*. For old *Gladius* veterans in particular are starved of this type of game, so if you're looking for something to survive your breaks a little, you could do far worse than this. **C+ C+ C+**

CHOPLIFTER 2



Price Samoylov £24.99
Genre Arcade Shoot
Publisher Mindbuds

Choplifter first appeared in 1981, via *Breakboard* and is still fondly remembered today. The player's mission is super-quick helicopter pilot is to rescue survivors from a horizontally-scrolling scenario. To do this the player must land near the writing refugees and wait for them to board. This can be quite harrowing at times as you're a powerful striding duck for all the enemy gun installations and machine-gunning planes which constantly lay siege.

The player's cargo is equipped with a rapid-firing cannon and a limited

number of bombs with which to protect himself. And that's really all there is to it - however, like *Defender*, *Choplifter* is one of those games that, once played, is never forgotten. Fast action, challenging game task and a password system help make this one of the best games out on the Casertian, and a must for any action fans collection. **C+ C+ C+**

CIVILIZATION



Price IBM PC £24.99
Genre Strategy
Publisher Mindspace

America's game design guru Sid Meier, fresh from his success with the brilliant *Railroad Tycoon*, has succeeded himself with this latest effort, which can truly be said to engage the mind in terms of depth, scale and scope. Adapting the same functional top-down presentation format of *Tycoon*, the game changes the player with the task of building a civilization, from a bunch of primitive tribes in an unpopulated, uncharted world, to a global empire capable of space travel, nuclear power and the other trappings with *Century* life.

The range of factors and elements that play a part in the game is quite simply awesome, as the player's people advance and expand. Commanding cities, setting up new cities, making technological discoveries and building several bases - all while computer-controlled rival empires do the same. Along the way the player must set taxes, maintain civil order, negotiate with other nations, care for the environment and take part in various arms and space races.

Civilization is undoubtedly the most involved strategy game ever conceived, and as such many have commented on how long it can take to complete by the game's more like instructions. For those willing to invest the time and effort, however, *Civilization* pays off like no other. Wonderful. **C+ C+ C+ C+**

CRIME TIME



Price Amiga £25.99
Genre Adventure
Publisher Skyline

Crime Time is an attempt to break into 'adventure without typing' market carved by Lucasfilm and Sierra

on the IBM PC. Unfortunately, it's not as flexible as good as their worse. The game opens with a moderately interesting intro which takes a long time to tell you that somewhere in the City a crime has been committed (well as something we don't already know). Well, I say moderately interesting, and it is... the first time around. Unfortunately it can't be skipped and has to be watched everytime the game is loaded. Annoying.

And this was intelligence on the part of the programmers and lack of thought for the player outside the game itself. It's a graphic adventure - there's a picture window at the top of the screen and a list of actions and nearby items at the bottom. The idea is the player selects an action with the mouse (i.e. "Take") and then an item from the list (i.e. "Key"). While hardly ground-breaking in its innovation, it at least has the virtue of being a system that works reasonably well.

Movement around the game world is by clicking on the points of a compass that also acts at the bottom of the screen. As the player moves from the location to location, new graphic displays in place by place... painfully slowly, but.

The scenery graphics are fine, but

deserve a series of half-dressed angles for no other reason than to be different, with the end result that they are just painful to look at. On top of that the adventure itself isn't all that interesting either. Strictly one for die-hard adventure fans only - and then only those with money to burn or one to put on a keyboard.

D.D.

CRUISE FOR A CORPSE



Price **Amiga \$24.99**

Genre **Adventure**

Publisher **Daphnia, UK, Ltd.**

The plot for *Cruise for a Corpse* is loosely rooted in the Agatha Christie "isolated location, plenty of suspects" crime story tradition, detailing how the player is invited to a Greek resort's yacht for a well-earned holiday only to get there and find his boat bumped-off by an unknown murderer. Before you can say "suspect" (spoiler!) the player is forced to deduce possible and subtle clues to solve the bottomless crime.

After a bit of previous interest from

the press, there were high hopes for *Cruise for a Corpse*. Is it the excellent game everyone seemed to think it's be? Well, yes... and no. In the graphics and sound department it's exemplary, with large, fluidly-animated sprites moving over carefully detailed backgrounds and plenty of variable tones and samples playing away in the background. All concepts to generate an excellent sense of mood and atmosphere.

The plot differs from its screen-theater ("Ready as 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 "Shower" but best). Movement around the yacht is effected by walking from one location to location by clicking on icons to the current location, such as doors or hallways, or more quickly by calling up the yacht map and "sending" the player immediately from place to place. As a user interface it's difficult to think of anything as intuitive and easy to use.

The major problem with *Cruise for a Corpse* is its pace. The atmosphere, though sometimes, is slow. Examining the contents of a room can become quite painful, and *Cruise* slowly turns,

walls, turns, breaks down, examines the items only for a message to appear stating that "There is nothing of interest here". Equally annoying is the frequency through inevitable searching and wrapping of the count "you game disks. All too often the player's enthusiasm for the hunting can be severely dampened by the inactivity of the game's speed to reveal truth's pace. Less important, some of the generally excellent French-English translations is a bit tedious to place, such as the Cabin Boy who is described as "Myname".

These comments apart, anyone with the patience to sit through the occasional detours will find *Cruise for a Corpse* a superb buy, largely with equal presentation and atmosphere and presenting a big enough game task to satisfy even the greatest sleuth.

D.D.D.

DEATHBRINGER



Price **Amiga \$7.95/\$9.95**

Genre **Beat 'Em Up**

Publisher **Empire**

There's this trend, right. These old wizard characters magically grow, in the

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ability to absorb the needs of anyone it does. Their intention is to use it to get as off their goals quickly though they're tricky because Kane, a barbarian as stupid he isn't even spell his own name right. However, luck isn't on the wizard's side, and the sword leads us way into Kane's well-worn lands. Hardly believing his luck, Kane sets out to give the sword back to the wizard - in actuality it's all a thinly-veiled excuse for a tavern-worshipping blizzard of hacking and slaying, with Kane going through more and more named bouncer monsters.

Deathblow's looks some of the most impressive graphics on selling backgrounds yet seen, even if they are somewhat lacking in colour. The sprites are well-drawn with nice fine intricacies, but they're rather garish in a somewhat more serious sort of way. In spite of good graphics and adequate sound, Deathblow's real problem is that it's basically a bit dull. The combat moves are limited in range and slow to implement and just wandering along, mindlessly plugging away at the baddies, is not all that interesting, and the present backdrops in the whole World can't make up for that. Barbarian 2/3 (3/12)

DEUTEROS



Price Amiga £24.95
Genre Strategy
Publisher Activision

This sequel to Millionaire 2.1 by the same authors is set a thousand years after the prophecies of events. Medieval fun falls into a sort of post-technological medieval and foregoes its former space-travelling glory. It's the player's task to relocate man's position for the stars and turn the tide into the masters of the Galaxy once again. The gameplay boils down to efficient resource and manpower allocation between various departments, dealing with the occasional enemy that may appear as well as an. Although programmed well and moderately entertaining, there really isn't anything to show that hasn't been done more interestingly elsewhere. Study one for the strategy ahead. 2/2

E.A. HOCKEY



Price Negative £24.95

Genre Sports Arcade
Publisher Electronic Arts

Like Kai-Of with fighting in Electronic Arts' Hockey will appeal to everyone. A session of seven (you control the globe, each with their own abilities and weaknesses built in to make for hockey World League.

Following on from their success with John Madden's Football, EA put yet another winner out of the bag with this, perhaps their most lucrative title to date.

Having selected the right of game, whether the player wishes to compete in a one-off match or shoot-out, selected his team and that of the money, it's game on! Starting around the rink is simple enough, and control over the puck is surprisingly intuitive. Since the rink is so small and the players can move so readily 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. Last of course, the player gets the bang of the wide variety of tackling moves available to him, from a good forward going for the puck scenario to a full body check.

Like an opposition player on a team, you'll have to think, and you'll have to be ready to put your fist where the mouth

is, as one of the features included is taunting. While the rest of your team are trying to do some good, it's possible to do some evil at that guy who stands over your shoes for so long as you like! A graphics and gameplay marvel, E.A. Hockey is wholeheartedly recommended to one and all. Hooney! 5/5 (12)

ELF



Price Amiga £25.95
Genre Arcade Adventure
Publisher Ocean

In Caradoc the Elf it's the player's task to rescue his sweetheart Elia from the pearly-voiced clutches of Nardol the Not Very Nice. The game takes place over six Tolkien-esque levels filled with platforms, portals, ladders and bridges. Caradoc's magic powder allows him to protect himself from Nardol's compound bolts of lava-breathes by being hit by magic energy. Numerous innocent-sounding spells and power-ups can be bought from Fr Oak's local Shopper using cash picked up along the way.

Each massive maze-like level pro-

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sets its 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 *SWII* is a polished high-quality romp, perfect for platforms or arcade adventure fans.

□♦♦♦♦

F-15 STRIKE EAGLE II



Price **Atari ST/Amiga/IBM PC DOS/MS-DOS** £29.99
Genre Simulation
Publisher MicroProse

MicroProse make a departure from their usual rigorously-accurate title with this action-oriented affair. It's the flight sim equivalent of the laser and laser books. In case it's simple with no-complexity. Players have several options to choose between, each with various outcomes to select. These outcomes are usually all simple 'get in, destroy a couple of targets and get out' jobs, with the player having to deal with unusually defined against enemies 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 quite a few routines about. It's more than adequate for the job in hand, however. Found to be disappointing with white-noise like being being the player's only audio-comparison for most of the journey. In the graphics department this is a winner, with plenty of white-knuckle action to get the adrenaline pumping. *Veterans* may be aware the game's lack of depth, but anyone else should find this just their cup of tea, with a variety *Junior Dodge* in the sector to boot.

□♦♦♦♦

FACE OFF



Price **Atari ST/Amiga** £25.00
Genre Sport Games
Publisher MicroProse

There aren't that many Ice Hockey games available on the Amiga. In fact, there aren't any. So *Face-Off* is something of a welcome addition to the canon of sports games. Worth getting? Well, yes and no. Like *Manchester United Soccer* it's a very polished game, with some super slick menus and option screens. There's a league to participate in, where the player can do anything from train the players to manage the

manager. And like *WHL*, the player can turn off the arcade game and concentrate on the managerial side of things if they're that way inclined, or alternatively just play the arcade game alone.

The arcade side of things is okay, although some may wish the action had just a touch more zip. Certainly compared to EA, *Hockey* it's distinctly sluggish. Control is simple and easy to pick up - shoot, pass or throw via the controls - and the game's fast, especially where things get a little physical and the fans start flying. Its standard on-console game has two days later's a replay function so that that blinding goal can be replayed again and again. Overall, *Face-Off* is a rounded package, though unlikely to exactly grab the public's imagination. Fans of the sport will enjoy it, but just how many of them are there in the UK? □♦♦♦♦

FATAL REWIND



Price **Amiga/MS-DOS** £24.99
Genre Arcade Beat
Publisher Progression, Electronic Arts
Progression disappears entirely with its first foray onto the 16-bit consoles, maintaining the same high-quality of graphics and sound that's made it the legend it is in the Amiga market. And thankfully in this case there's the game-play to back up the visuals. One of *The Killing Game* there had to be retained for its transition from the Amiga to the 16-bit consoles, could they have come up with something a little better than *Fatal Rewind*? Apart from the fact that it doesn't actually move much, it's a fairly obvious attempt to sound like *Total Recall*, a film which bears no resemblance to the game at all.

The player is put in charge of a mechanical valve reminiscent of the *ED-209* in *Robocop*. An eight little things it can run left and right, jump, fire and even climb up the sides of walls. Things they can do, certainly, huh? The player has to negotiate a network of platforms in the form of the exit to the next level. Alternately we hear all sides, sniffing and sneezing about the screen with the sole intent of seeing the player into the door. And just to give the player a touch more incentive to escape the platformer are slowly sinking into a deadly red sea. The need to find keys to certain areas adds a small amount of depth to the game, but these arcade adventure elements

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never imagine what it's actually a very clever and addictive shoot-'em-up.
 ○○○○○

FINAL FIGHT



Price **Amiga £29.99**
Game Board: 5ms Up
 Publisher **US Gold**

For another in US Gold's seemingly endless string of CapCom conversions, in *Final Fight* (basically based on the *Yody* old it is not well). Once in a while and to make a bad situation worse the Mayor's right-brain daughter has been kidnapped - you go out in the Big (This old life Big certainly gets around, doesn't he?) The player and optional partner have to fight their way through the city's mazelike streets 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. Some of the directing whether a punch connects or not is a little dodgy, but apart from that this can be recommended successfully to anyone who fancies a little *agge* without leaving their families.
 ○○○○○

FLICKY



Price **Magnitude £34.95**
Game Platform
 Publisher **Sega**

"Don't be put off by the screenshots on the back of the box" is probably the best bit of advice I can give about *Flicky*. It looks awful - yet extremely cute and girlish looking. And to be honest, things don't improve much in the game itself. However, like *Quadrants*, an ugly appearance can still hide a gemstone inside.

The player controls the tiny bird of the title. The little darling who has her own and get themselves lost in the noose of a giant cat-infested house. *Flicky* has to run and jump about, collect her scattered food and take three to the safety of the flat, while avoiding the prowling blues. *Flicky* is a wonderfully playable game, very simple but packed with fun. Some may dispute whether there's 300-worth of fun, but for those with the bank it's a good purchase.

○○○○○

FLOOR 13



Price **IBM PC £24.99**
Game Strategy
 Publisher **Vega Games**

The myth that strategy games are boring has been well and truly exploded in a game that's likely to convert even confused trigger-fingers to a more subtle and intelligent software diet. Floor 13 offers a new slant on the strategy genre by having itself around a computer scenario-and-offering game play that goes beyond the regular strategy know-how.

Set in post-war Britain, a trade of a government can never police force that most over-ambitious wipe-out subversive elements and generally protect the government from embarrassing incidents so that it doesn't fall from grace. An Director General of this corrupt agency, the player is totally responsible for its operations.

The game is played almost entirely from a single static view of an office desk, one which intelligence reports and newspaper stories arrive from the outside world and form the basis of the information which the player works from at plots and decisions unfold. Various sub-departments, such as surveillance, interrogation and dissemination are the instruments of the player's will, with study agents talking suspects, tapping phones, searching premises and even tailoring and killing people to a lower the government's moral status.

The way in which the game reveals information as half-clues and red herrings mean that good detective work and thorough cross-checking of intelligence data is as important as the usual statistical skills which are also required. It's all thoroughly absorbing, very realistic stuff, and comes highly recommended even to those who can't normally stand strategy games.
 ○○○○○

FOOTBALL DIRECTOR II



Price **Amib 87, Amiga £24.99**
Game Strategy
 Publisher **GMG Games**

Yessssss. Don't get me wrong, I've got nothing against football - there's just something explicitly boring about

management games of this type. *Player Manager* is the exception to the rule, likely because it's so excellent and successful because you get to play that off with, which make it doubly-convict. When faced with something like this, though, it's difficult to imagine anybody but the most desperate sort of gamer or the hard-core fan actually getting any enjoyment out of it.

Technically of course, there's nothing to look at, and the depth that the game goes into is considerable - you've got your league and cup trophies, financial problems, player injuries, team tactics, talent spots, stadium management and all the rest of it. On the surface side, however, nothing much seems to have changed since the days when these games were prevalent on the Spectrum about three or four years ago.

These days, however, the cheap graphics and sound just don't cut it any more. In when something like this comes along it seems like a bit of an embarrassment, really. But of course it's the graphics that counts and for what it is, *Football Director* is entertaining enough, and providing you're not expecting too much and willing to give the game some time, it should pay off handsomely. The vast majority of the computerised football management literature will probably want to see their prizes for *Player Manager* a loser.
 ○○○○○

FORMULA ONE GRAND PRIX



Price **Amib 87, Amiga £24.99**
Game Racing Simulation
 Publisher **MindPower**

Before you say, you've never seen a racing game like this, take a *Out Run* or *IndyBowl* or *IndyBowl* or *IndyBowl*. They are for children's eyes compared to the complete and utter masterpiece of *Formula One Grand Prix*, the latest and greatest game from the programming genius that is GMG's "Steve Carr" Commented. The graphics are truly amazing, with highly-detailed car complete with driver's helmet poking out of the cockpit literally standing around tracks lined with stands, trees, towns and towns. The sound matches the visuals, with good use made of thirty samples for the engine.

But it's not just the quality of the graphics or the sounds that makes *F1GP* so special. It's the meticulous attention

to detail that gives rise to an authentic and involving Grand Prix atmosphere. Everything you'd expect to find on a Grand Prix circuit - stands, bridges, towns, etc. - is there and in the identical position they'd be found in real life, even extending right down to one-way parking stopped on all the track and engineers crews waiting on the pits.

The wonderful control over the car is the essential thing in the game, with plenty of different modifiers to make the game easy enough for Grand Prix fans to play or tough enough for long standing fans out in search of event. Indeed, signed a F1GP that insured itself on ACE Thriller and the best out of becoming the new Racing Simulation Benchmark. Good enough for you?
 ○○○○○○○

GUNSHIP 2000



Price **IBM PC £29.99**
Game Simulation
 Publisher **MindPower**

Nobody writes simulations like MindPower does. This is a highly-rated one, equal to the company's earlier masterpiece *Comidy*, which has gone down in software history as one of the best-selling ever ones. This sequel is far more than just *Comidy* - every part of the game has been given a radical overhaul.

Probably the most impressive aspect is the computer graphics system. Using a set of patchwork quilt landscaping techniques, the game world has been modelled in starting detail, complete with sea hills, mountains, valleys, cuttings. It's a geographical fiction, it's there. As usual, the game takes the form of a series of pilot-training missions. Unfortunately this complexity means that you really need at least a slight PC to get anything approaching good from the game. Second with a heart is marvellously atmospheric, and adds an end to the gritty battlefield feel.

The 'cruel' control is good, but actually getting the real life machine that of the real thing, i.e. it's very difficult, and certainly makes *Comidy 2000* not the sort of game to-out you when playing with it. However, if you're looking for the ultimate chopper simulation, then here it is.
 ○○○○○○○

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SIXTEEN BIT COMPILATIONS

<p>1. ADVENTURE A collection of 16 classic adventure games for the Atari ST and Amiga. Includes titles like 'The Hobbit', 'The Lord of the Rings', 'The Silmarillion', 'The Rings of Power', 'The Rings of War', 'The Rings of Fire', 'The Rings of Ice', 'The Rings of Earth', 'The Rings of Air', 'The Rings of Water', 'The Rings of Wind', 'The Rings of Earth', 'The Rings of Air', 'The Rings of Water', 'The Rings of Wind'.</p> <p>2. THE TOP GUN A collection of 16 classic top gun games for the Atari ST and Amiga. Includes titles like 'Top Gun', 'Top Gun 2', 'Top Gun 3', 'Top Gun 4', 'Top Gun 5', 'Top Gun 6', 'Top Gun 7', 'Top Gun 8', 'Top Gun 9', 'Top Gun 10', 'Top Gun 11', 'Top Gun 12', 'Top Gun 13', 'Top Gun 14', 'Top Gun 15', 'Top Gun 16'.</p> <p>3. THE TOP GUN A collection of 16 classic top gun games for the Atari ST and Amiga. Includes titles like 'Top Gun', 'Top Gun 2', 'Top Gun 3', 'Top Gun 4', 'Top Gun 5', 'Top Gun 6', 'Top Gun 7', 'Top Gun 8', 'Top Gun 9', 'Top Gun 10', 'Top Gun 11', 'Top Gun 12', 'Top Gun 13', 'Top Gun 14', 'Top Gun 15', 'Top Gun 16'.</p> <p>4. THE TOP GUN A collection of 16 classic top gun games for the Atari ST and Amiga. Includes titles like 'Top Gun', 'Top Gun 2', 'Top Gun 3', 'Top Gun 4', 'Top Gun 5', 'Top Gun 6', 'Top Gun 7', 'Top Gun 8', 'Top Gun 9', 'Top Gun 10', 'Top Gun 11', 'Top Gun 12', 'Top Gun 13', 'Top Gun 14', 'Top Gun 15', 'Top Gun 16'.</p> <p>5. THE TOP GUN A collection of 16 classic top gun games for the Atari ST and Amiga. Includes titles like 'Top Gun', 'Top Gun 2', 'Top Gun 3', 'Top Gun 4', 'Top Gun 5', 'Top Gun 6', 'Top Gun 7', 'Top Gun 8', 'Top Gun 9', 'Top Gun 10', 'Top Gun 11', 'Top Gun 12', 'Top Gun 13', 'Top Gun 14', 'Top Gun 15', 'Top Gun 16'.</p> <p>6. THE TOP GUN A collection of 16 classic top gun games for the Atari ST and Amiga. Includes titles like 'Top Gun', 'Top Gun 2', 'Top Gun 3', 'Top Gun 4', 'Top Gun 5', 'Top Gun 6', 'Top Gun 7', 'Top Gun 8', 'Top Gun 9', 'Top Gun 10', 'Top Gun 11', 'Top Gun 12', 'Top Gun 13', 'Top Gun 14', 'Top Gun 15', 'Top Gun 16'.</p> <p>7. THE TOP GUN A collection of 16 classic top gun games for the Atari ST and Amiga. Includes titles like 'Top Gun', 'Top Gun 2', 'Top Gun 3', 'Top Gun 4', 'Top Gun 5', 'Top Gun 6', 'Top Gun 7', 'Top Gun 8', 'Top Gun 9', 'Top Gun 10', 'Top Gun 11', 'Top Gun 12', 'Top Gun 13', 'Top Gun 14', 'Top Gun 15', 'Top Gun 16'.</p> <p>8. THE TOP GUN A collection of 16 classic top gun games for the Atari ST and Amiga. Includes titles like 'Top Gun', 'Top Gun 2', 'Top Gun 3', 'Top Gun 4', 'Top Gun 5', 'Top Gun 6', 'Top Gun 7', 'Top Gun 8', 'Top Gun 9', 'Top Gun 10', 'Top Gun 11', 'Top Gun 12', 'Top Gun 13', 'Top Gun 14', 'Top Gun 15', 'Top Gun 16'.</p> <p>9. THE TOP GUN A collection of 16 classic top gun games for the Atari ST and Amiga. Includes titles like 'Top Gun', 'Top Gun 2', 'Top Gun 3', 'Top Gun 4', 'Top Gun 5', 'Top Gun 6', 'Top Gun 7', 'Top Gun 8', 'Top Gun 9', 'Top Gun 10', 'Top Gun 11', 'Top Gun 12', 'Top Gun 13', 'Top Gun 14', 'Top Gun 15', 'Top Gun 16'.</p> <p>10. THE TOP GUN A collection of 16 classic top gun games for the Atari ST and Amiga. Includes titles like 'Top Gun', 'Top Gun 2', 'Top Gun 3', 'Top Gun 4', 'Top Gun 5', 'Top Gun 6', 'Top Gun 7', 'Top Gun 8', 'Top Gun 9', 'Top Gun 10', 'Top Gun 11', 'Top Gun 12', 'Top Gun 13', 'Top Gun 14', 'Top Gun 15', 'Top Gun 16'.</p> <p>11. THE TOP GUN A collection of 16 classic top gun games for the Atari ST and Amiga. Includes titles like 'Top Gun', 'Top Gun 2', 'Top Gun 3', 'Top Gun 4', 'Top Gun 5', 'Top Gun 6', 'Top Gun 7', 'Top Gun 8', 'Top Gun 9', 'Top Gun 10', 'Top Gun 11', 'Top Gun 12', 'Top Gun 13', 'Top Gun 14', 'Top Gun 15', 'Top Gun 16'.</p> <p>12. THE TOP GUN A collection of 16 classic top gun games for the Atari ST and Amiga. Includes titles like 'Top Gun', 'Top Gun 2', 'Top Gun 3', 'Top Gun 4', 'Top Gun 5', 'Top Gun 6', 'Top Gun 7', 'Top Gun 8', 'Top Gun 9', 'Top Gun 10', 'Top Gun 11', 'Top Gun 12', 'Top Gun 13', 'Top Gun 14', 'Top Gun 15', 'Top Gun 16'.</p> <p>13. THE TOP GUN A collection of 16 classic top gun games for the Atari ST and Amiga. Includes titles like 'Top Gun', 'Top Gun 2', 'Top Gun 3', 'Top Gun 4', 'Top Gun 5', 'Top Gun 6', 'Top Gun 7', 'Top Gun 8', 'Top Gun 9', 'Top Gun 10', 'Top Gun 11', 'Top Gun 12', 'Top Gun 13', 'Top Gun 14', 'Top Gun 15', 'Top Gun 16'.</p> <p>14. THE TOP GUN A collection of 16 classic top gun games for the Atari ST and Amiga. Includes titles like 'Top Gun', 'Top Gun 2', 'Top Gun 3', 'Top Gun 4', 'Top Gun 5', 'Top Gun 6', 'Top Gun 7', 'Top</p>
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low level of computer opponent are available for the lone gamer. As the player progresses, more sophisticated tactics can be incorporated, like positional play, flanking, trap, snare and every type of spin are as possible and avoided for fooling opponents. The end result of BREN's comprehensive and realistic approach to recreating meekness in the most authentic sports simulation today.

☆☆☆☆

LOTUS TURBO CHALLENGE 2



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre Racing Game
Publisher Gemline Graphics

A really successful in the successful Lotus Sport Turbo Challenge, this game has a number of interesting differences to its predecessor. For a start, it's a better two-player game, but not so good for two players. Technically superior to the original, there's nevertheless something just a little bit lacking. Perhaps it's the removal of the lap system, or perhaps it's the fact that crashing into the other cars really doesn't do you that much damage, but whatever, it ain't quite as good.

However, it is a great deal better than both of the driving games on the market, and there's a Link-up option allowing up to four players to race at once. The action is fast and furious and the control the players have over their car has been greatly improved.

Players must blast their way through a selection of stages, each featuring a particular hazard, whether it be sand, snow, rain, mud or man-made (potholes, potholes, potholes) jumping across the road. Graphically superior to the vast majority of similar titles, Lotus just looks the business, with really readable obstacles and a high level of detail on the cars themselves.

Brightly being hampered by some annoying distractions whenever the player drives through any water and the flawed two player mode, Lotus 2 is a pretty impressive game.

☆☆☆☆

LAST NINJA 3



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre Arcade Adventure
Publisher System 3

Well, well, well. After everyone has been chiding up their shoes at the prospect of giving System 3's much touted, much heralded and much delayed conclusion of the Ninja series a right old kicking, the following thing turns out to be good!

Applying a more arcade-adventure angle to the tried and tested Ninja formula, the boys at the System have produced a game which has all the visual appeal of the first two games in the series and none of the problems. Well, that's not quite the case, by instead of the game relying so heavily on the fight routines which, to be honest, were never that good, the emphasis has been moved onto the puzzle-solving elements which isn't half as hard to implement.

Spanning an epic quest across a bunch of different planes (earth, air, fire, water) and with the game continually throwing up different puzzles which the player must solve in order to reach the next stage.

Aside from completing these puzzles, there's a fair amount of kicking to be done too, and the collectible weapons add enough variety to ensure that even when the player is doing over his wretched adversary of the level, he'll find something new to do.

Conceptually, the game is really rather special, with the intricate landscapes at a stage which most rarely get approaching the state of the art, and the combination of the characters themselves being undeniably fun. Just look at the speed like on that.

☆☆☆☆

LEISURESUIT LARRY 5



Price IBM PC £24.99
Genre Adventure
Publisher Sierra Graphics

We're Larry Laffer! We're Fantastic! We're! And there's in a whole lot of trouble! Welcome from Larry 5, the latest installment in the impressively successful adventure series chronicles the ongoing adventures of America's favourite teenage hero!

In what promises to be the most epic adventure in the series, the player must guide Larry and Patti through a world of pure and molten in the quest to keep good honest men on the square. Initially taking the role of the tradition host of America's Great Home Video, Larry quickly becomes embroiled in a hair-brained underworld plot to get all pure off the external market and drive

it underground where enormous profit can be made.

It's all pretty standard point and click stuff, but this time the player alternates between the very different genres of Larry and Patti, allowing both to get into very scopes and also avoiding, and particularly severe a case of "Seems" from kindly liberal vets.

Again, the hand painted style colour graphics and game design are an excellent option for what occasionally lapses into a hour of poorly done gaps. However, this time Larry does have moments of absolute brilliance, and the central premise of a further wacky job of a top job in a wacky year is enough to keep you coming back for more. Not! Well, please remember.

☆☆☆☆

MAGIC GARDEN



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre Arcade Adventure
Publisher Barbicide Zoo

Good! Good! Whatever you're, having been played for months by an apparently never-ending stream of casual gamers, we were understandably keen to get our hands on the game which they gush. And what a peculiar conclusion it is.

In his endeavours to become "the most efficient gardener", the player must guide a garden around the whimsical magic garden using well, this is where it becomes a little bit unclear actually. He can do pretty much whatever he fancies. He can water the flowers, he can mow the lawn. He can use some magic seeds and fly around on the back of a big dragonfly! The game must be wonderful, so there are terrible traps which lie in the garden like big flowers which can eat him or tall grass which can slow him down.

And Cosmos had better be careful with the number of objects he's carrying, or he will become too tired and get hit by lightning and die. But the game won't get hit by lightning if he is exploring the underground caverns where the tailor of Cosmos can thank the stars for safety.

Presented in side-on elevation, the game looks, plays, smells tastes and is not odd. It's as odd as anything I've ever seen in my life. Precious Beatrix Potter style graphics and gameplay which quite honestly is tricky to imagine appearing in the masses make Magic Garden a true original.

☆☆☆☆

MARTIAN MEMORANDUM



Price IBM PC £25.99
Genre Adventure
Publisher Access, US Gold

Once again a game pretends to be an "interactive movie" and turns out to be little more than a simplistic adventure with flashy graphics and sound. But in Martian Memorandum's case the authors are enough to make up for the game design's shortcomings - or at least they seem to be for the first few hours. The game uses digitized video footage, sampled speech, and file quality music to set the scene; the story cuts you as a futuristic private detective who must travel to Mars to track down the kidnapped daughter of a famous industrialist, and it ends very well, creating a strong sense of atmosphere and involvement.

But as to whether the case with games of this type, the effect of these flashy graphics does seem to wear off and when you actually look down to play the game you realize that there isn't really that much to see or do. An ardent adventurer could easily complete it inside of a hour, because the linear game design means that it's almost impossible to go down the wrong track - it's as if you're being guided by an invisible helping hand, and that's not very satisfying, both like *The Dagger and Heart* or *Chase* offers similar and more satisfying experiences, so if you've got the PC, trouble to run or demanding a product, you'd be well advised to check either of those out instead.

MEGAFORTRESS



Price IBM PC £24.99
Genre Simulation
Publisher Microscape

The trouble with games based on taking every single unit in a big, staged old plane like the *Boys* is that instead of every unit is mind-bogglingly 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?

The aim of the game is to pilot a battle-torn B-52 across both Iraq and the Soviet Union, keeping the location and aim of your mission steady

secret until the excessive tonnage of Sapporo can be unleashed on the target. Unfortunately, for all it's going to you taking and using, Megaliths is just a very good simulation of a rather dull tavern. For more fun you be had in any of a host of more recently released flight games, and Microsoft's *South Fighter* series may offer you a cheap-up on the money spent on those players who are especially keen on that sort of thing.

Perfectly competent both graphically and on the play front, Megaliths has missions designed by real 8-11 engineers and best-selling author Dale Brown, although it's one of those games that I guess you really need to have experienced the real thing to appreciate.

☆☆☆

MEGA LO MANIA



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre Action Strategy
Publisher Amiga Works

Released under a bunch of odd names that are still coming thick and fast, Microsoft's offering has fared better than most, meeting sufficiently close to the big *Clash Royale* while not being afraid to borrow little bits here and there where appropriate.

Set in an alternate universe, Mega is Martin's all about the space for powers. Power over a set of worlds, each made up from a suite of islands, to be precise. New worlds are formed and destroyed; life is placed upon them, upon which interstellar invaders descend and try to colonise the regions of power the first time.

The conflict arises, needless to say, when more than one invader takes a shine to a particular island. Since each area can only have one ruler, a campaign of invasions begins, with each player trying to use the forces at his disposal to overthrow the others.

Each island must within its own time period, and the rate of development, intelligence and size of its inhabitants is governed accordingly. Players quick to invent time in invasion and the offering of natural resources, rather than simply reacting around being, the others with skills are more likely to succeed.

☆☆☆☆

MEGATRAVELLER 2: QUEST FOR THE

ANCIENTS



Price IBM PC £284
Genre Role-Playing Game
Publisher Enigma

This latest UK release from American software team Enigma is more than just a sequel to *MegaTraveller: The Shadow Campaign*. As before, the player leads a group of the space adventurers that used to be happily richer and fatter. This time around, the player task is to find a way to halt the flow of time slower emanating from a mysterious set of stars left by a dead race called the Ancients. How are they dead? That is up to the player to find out.

sporting high-quality 256-colour VGA, it apart from some very fine VGA visuals and soundboard music, there seems to be very little new or interesting in an offer, except maybe for the operational fluency of the hard RPG formula. As you'd expect, the amount is about as backdated as one is ever going to get, with some clapping about returning the Ultimate Power Code system, really to the King. What that involves is selecting a party of heroes, men, women, warriors and all that, and then wandering about fighting with dragons, collecting treasure and picking up clues.

The game itself actually is very good, but for the most part the adventure is pretty slow and uneventful. Considering, however, how conditioned RPG gamers have become, I doubt that anybody who's likely to buy it will be disappointed by what they find.

☆☆☆☆

MEGA TWINS



Price Amiga £71, Amiga £25.99
Genre Platform Game
Publisher US Gold

There's a big bundle in the land of ratty things. I don't know, or do, but hell, we across the land, and it's up to the two characters and most entertaining machine ever to pace computer software to save the day. As in our *Steps*.

Twins is a platform game - one or two players guide their ratty heroes through level after level of ledges and chains, saving off the attacking monsters with a lunge from their tiny little swords. Mega's life can be found just the way that act as super weapons, which are particularly useful against the super-thick end-of-level barriers.

As a conversion of the CapCom video game *Mega Twins* is hardly startling, but it's competent enough. Apart from the slightly target pace of the screen, the main thing that prevents Mega Twins

from making any real impression is the lack of excitement. There are no real skills on offer - the platform element is minor, and having to endless by top line to job the better into oblivion is hardly opening up whole new vistas of re-visual entertainment. The final nail in the coffin is the fact that the whole thing is incredibly easy - a competent player will probably get half-way through the game on his first set of credits. Mega Twins had a grade potential, but whether it's the fault of the original game-up or the conversion it's actually saved us to be Mega's rather than Mega's.

☆☆☆

MIGGON SUPER FULCRUM



Price IBM PC £24.99
Genre Simulation
Publisher Demarc

Imparting on an already successful formula, Demarc have done away with many of the longevity problems of their first MIG game and here on the game again on an epic backdrop of conflict in western America. Taking the role of the pilot of a United Nations controlled MIG, the player must launch himself into hostile territory from a military allied controlled airbase - his mission is to gradually make the striking unit infiltrate group-on the way by bombing up their supply lines and destroying their fuel depots.

It's bizarre that the company most recently associated with not especially excellent co-op conversions should turn-out such a classy simulation, and as a result, it may be tough for them to find the right audience. Nevertheless, a classy product it is, with a touch of realism and a flexibility of mission structure enabling the inventive player to try his hand at planning his own strategies for doing away with the enemy force.

Also included in this genre is an implementation of the real life's fly-by wire system, an auto-landing device which prevents the plane from flaking around all over the place like a big girl's blouse. What hands it control.

Presented, surprisingly enough, in polygon graphics, MIG has the same perfection on the case of our best, even if it is a bit tricky to imagine it containing some of the more serious Microsoft products. A winner.

☆☆☆☆

NIGHT AND MAGIC III: ISLES OF TERRA



Price IBM PC £24.99
Genre Role-Playing Game
Publisher New Line Computing/US Gold

It's a mighty world of Dark, I, Magic Dungeons, that made the old-fashioned of *Isles* before the alignment of the six main-worlds? You will, you get the general idea, *Night And Magic III* is yet another major inter-branch explored volume of FRP getting, this time coming more as a cross between *Dungeons Master* and *The Lord's Tale*. It's not over as the whole FRP game has been done to death so badly that there's just nothing new anymore!

This third bright and brags, setting would seem to support that argument, as apart from some very finey VGA visuals and soundboard music, there seems to be very little new or interesting in an offer, except maybe for the operational fluency of the hard RPG formula. As you'd expect, the amount is about as backdated as one is ever going to get, with some clapping about returning the Ultimate Power Code system, really to the King. What that involves is selecting a party of heroes, men, women, warriors and all that, and then wandering about fighting with dragons, collecting treasure and picking up clues.

The game itself actually is very good, but for the most part the adventure is pretty slow and uneventful. Considering, however, how conditioned RPG gamers have become, I doubt that anybody who's likely to buy it will be disappointed by what they find.

☆☆☆

MONSTER BUSINESS



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre Platform
Publisher US Gold

The mad scientist from the big long hair once again looks down, and so according to little items they can read completely spelling Mr. Smith's construction site. Because Levy, the best two best actor and here all those little little creatures sky light, a god in life it over there was one. Monster business, the episode of the average arcade game features stupid graphics and a death trap premise to retrieve all the objects from the building site. Levy must blow up all the monsters

with some sort of fold bicycle pump, causing them to inflate and eventually rise to the top of the screen, dumping all their victims as they go.

Despite the slowness of the whole affair, *Master Business* is actually quite good. Different screens each present a different sort of hazard, whether it be falling platforms or a speedy time limit, and the player is not interested in trying to get the the end of the level that he probably won't realize quite how close and shift the game is.

Smart graphics and it would only be German music help *Master Business* rise above the pack and shine out as an example of what arcade games should be about. It's like an Atari record, if you know what I mean. □♦♦♦

NEBULUS 2



Price Amiga £25.99

Game Platform

Platform 2000 Century Entertainment Kixing from the Heaven side like a phoenix looking exceptionally like what we it was before it was burnt, *Century Entertainment* aren't having much luck at the moment. Not only are they having some considerable difficulty with their Megadrive product, but the one game that looked like it could actually make them some money has turned out to be somewhat of a disappointment.

The European orders responsible for supplying John Phillips' original clone have done a lot of a tough job, making the gameplay that made the first game so excellent by piling on lots of noise and useless power-up type features. The classic formula has been totally revamped by the sheer weight of these new 'blows', and so each one body who enjoyed the first game is likely to be very disappointed by this. However, it is quite funny and, at least for those who haven't seen the first game, it's a total washout on the playability front, that while the first game has made them the addition of these tactics worthwhile was. *Nebulus 2* says one it like it wasn't even there. Not recommended. □♦

OUTRUN EUROPA



Price Atari ST/Amiga £25.99

Center Racing Game

Platform £25.99

So long last! A game that has become a legend, along with the likes of *Star Trek* and *Ball-of-Fire*, over the last couple of years, simply because it's taken so bloody long to come-out. The original idea was to release the product to cash in on the wave of rhapsody from the original *Outrun* conversion - which should give you an idea of how long we've been waiting for it. We ended up getting the official word, *Star Outrun* first, which wasn't much cop, and now we've got this, which isn't either.

The basic idea is that the player has to take charge of a variety of vehicles - car, bike and boat - as the team over various levels and one stage to deliver a vital package, while international agencies are out to stop you. It's all a bit ludicrous really, and while's seemingly supposed to be a cross between *Outrun* and *Chase H.Q.*, with extra kinks on it is in fact a bit of a shoddy mess. The road sections aren't much fun to play because control of the vehicle is so bloody sensitive, and the enemy cars just keep on getting in the way in a way that isn't conducive to gameplay at all, but is just very frustrating. The boat sections have been thought about because they're so unique and difficult, and 99% of players will probably get their fix through the monster screens while the sections of landing up. Talking of landing, the constant disk accessing is a pain in the prostate, and it all hardly seems worth it when it's not even very clear what's actually going on in the game. There are far better race games available so don't waste your precious time pondering over this one. □

PITFIGHTER



Price Amiga £25.99

Game Atari ST/Amiga

Platform Spectrum

If ever there's a prime example of an excellent conversion of an arcade game into the PC, *Pitfighter* is it. If you're an arcade game fan, you're probably never been familiar with the game. With its giant monster screens, three sets of player controls and stand-out digitized graphics you could hardly miss it. *Pitfighter* was, undoubtedly the unique fluidly-visuals and moody sound looked a distinctly different way, made even worse by the confusion caused by the gaudy-looking graphics. What's your 'block game'? Is he hitting me or not?

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Genre Puzzle

Publisher Intergames

There, the game that started it all, may be getting on a bit tired, but there's always room for a new puzzle game on the market. The only problem is that the vast majority of puzzles that have been waiting upon these shores from America and Europe have either been of substandard low quality, or just too weird to get the local crowd.

Steve Colton from Intergames, a company that prides itself on its self-reliance, has straggled into the latter category. It's played over a large board made up of hundreds of tiny coloured diamonds where the objective is to change in many diamonds to your colour, spreading them like a virus across the screen faster than your opponent does. The first player to fill 50% of the screen area is the winner. It's difficult enough to understand when you're actually playing the game, so don't worry if you're a little foggy after that brief explanation.

In fact the major problem with the game is that it's not easy to understand, and because things just seem to happen it's not very easy to keep track, or indeed to work out what's going on at all. The confusing situa-

tion is further compounded because the instructions hardly explain anything at all. Pevanist players may well get something out of it however, and there's a variety of game options to spice up the action if they do. Oh, and there's some very nice in-game classical music which suits the nature of the game perfectly and is very soothing indeed. In fact even if you get bored of the game, it's worth loading up every now and again just to be transported into quietude.



SILENT SERVICE II



Price Amiga £29.99

Genre Simulation

Publisher Micropos

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 scenarios.

High-end 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 waiting, it, action.

No. There's a lot of the old. *Silent Service* still works well with varying degrees to stand up on every warship without altering their color. And so for all that tank blowing stuff, I ask you!

Micropos are undoubtedly the single type of all things sim, but their policy of increasing the action and maintaining the down-to-earth as well as such good effects as P-47 tanks (ugh) I would be well extended to this particular title.

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

W.D. & H.O. Wicks

SMASH TV



Price Amiga £29.99

Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Ocean

"Good luck - you're gonna need it" screams the store's only computer, and never has there been more words said. This conversion of the incredibly violent Williams coin-op has translated surprisingly well to the home system, with nearly all the blood and thunder elements to be loved if the original period seems familiarly.

The game takes the form of a five-man game show, where once two contestants armed with a rapid-fire gun slug it out with a seemingly endless parade of things, tanks and guns to win big money and prizes in a single-screen arena. There's up and out of zone but guys add to the already phenomenal stage.

On a purely visceral level, it's immensely satisfying as the plugged opponents explode into red gobs of flesh. Indeed, the splats are still enough to be almost anybody you want them to be, so you can imagine that you're shooting up real-life clones of your boss if you want to. Very therapeutic.

As a single player game it's fine, though there's a serious risk that the boredom may well set in accordingly early. The two-player game, on the other hand, is something else. There's not been player-to-player shooting like this

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since *Kid Off*.

The coin-op's two joystick ports to move, one to direct fire have translated adequately to a single controller, though if you have two there is an option to use both which makes the game far better.

A superb conversion, and more than deserving of your hard-earned money. On that, you decide your-


THUNDERHAWK



Price Amiga £39.99

Genre Simulation

Publisher Core Design

Most flight sims require a good deal of practice before any reward can be garnered from them. All those keyboard controls and interminable aircraft functions do quite a lot to put off anyone looking for a quick blast. Core Design have seen this gap in the market, and more than adequately filled it with *Thunderhawk*. All control is via the mouse, which makes everything, from weapon selection to helicopter control, quick and easy. It's a welcome change from the usual tawdry test of clicks and non-clicks.

The game itself is broken down into a series of campaigns, each presented by a graphic briefing sequence indicating target and terrain type. Before taking to the sky the player must select the appropriate armaments for the *Thunderhawk*, although there's a default if this seems to 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 fiddling to say nothing. Graphics are smooth, and more at a fair click, though there isn't much background scenery. If you've never been trapped over a flight sim, then this is the game to change your attitude.


UTOPIA



Price Amiga £29.99

Genre Arcade Strategy

Publisher Demulce

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

or *Papillon*, *Team-merge* 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 earth - *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 miserable. But without any visible defence when the inevitable computer-controlled alien attack comes.

Beginning from just a few key buildings, it's up to the player to construct the colony using team-driven workers while improving the world to scientific *gh*. There are almost no rules in this society. You can do things virtually any way you want.

The only factor that is missing in the option to try and run things as a dictatorship regime and make a certain part of the population very happy while keeping the workers ground-down into the dirt. Still, that never works, does it?


VOLFIED



Price Atari ST/Amiga £24.99

Genre Arcade Action

Publisher Demulce

Qo is back in town, and better than ever! No matter how widely quotes may differ among the gaminging fraternity, need be hard pushed to find anybody who doesn't enjoy a game of good old Qo. It's appeal is universal because it's so simple and addictive, and like *Breakout*, its gameplay has stood the test of time. What *Volfied* (converted from Data's coin-op) represents is a new version of the original classic - it's a Qo that *Atlantis* was to *Breakout* leaving the original framework intact, but adding lots of fancy backgrounds, power-ups and extra features.

For the most part it's much the same - show boxes around the screen to fill up 75% or more of the screen area with the fireworks which make up the fire itself getting hit by any of the muzzling enemies - which, instead of the old gawling fire, now takes the form of a giant mothbait that rains about spitting about bullets, and a con-

pile of pesky little helpers. Lasers and openings are among the collectibles, while high-tech backgrounds and *MX* provide the aesthetic overhaul.

Since *Qo*-style games are so thin on the ground, *Volfied*, with its classy execution and structural gameplay is a welcome addition to the software scene - and if you've got any street and admiration for the classic, you'll add your collection too.


VROOM



Price Atari ST £24.99

Genre Racing Game

Publisher Lambton

Without wanting to be nasty to our European counterparts, who with *Qo*, and all that, it has to be said that most of the software that crosses over from the continent is a bit staid. *Vroom*, however, from French publisher Lambton, has proven itself to be the exception to the rule. Although it's not a patch on the likes of *IndyBench 300* or *Formula One Grand Prix*, *Vroom* is nevertheless a fully upper-echelon game, boasting very impressive speed as the player steers his way (hence the name) around a first-person environment.

It's got all the usual features and fittings - rear-view mirror, pitstop, overhead maps, bridges, dips and hills on the track, raining modes, qualifying laps, boxes of coconuts and some spectacular crash sequences. It's most interesting game that simulation, as controls and instrumentation has been kept to a minimum - there's nothing too much to worry about here apart from going very fast, avoiding the other cars and keeping on the road. And it works well enough, being very playable and smoothly game-computer, with the array of racing options adding to the game's longevity. The only design factor in that the *pitstop* option is restricted to the arcade mode - the more serious race options only allow manual control. Very handy indeed, but apart from that, not so all bad.


WILLY BEAMISH



Price IBM PC £34.99

Genre Adventure

Publisher Dynamix/ Sierra On-Line

The Adventures of Willy Beamish, is

given its full name, is somewhat of a oddity. Involving interactive cartoon, it's not of a serious nature. *The Wileys* are two of The Simpsons. *Willy* is the typical all-American trouble-making preteen schoolkid, complete with grabby hands, got frog and accordingly stereotypical family. Strange things are afoot in suburbia of Springfield, and *Willy* must investigate.

Willy is not another of those games that sounds a whole lot better than it actually is. That's not to say that it's bad, but the gameplay is very trial-and-error, with both often playing over of a part than skill or judgement. As such, more time is spent entering saved games than actually playing, and it can get quite frustrating at times, especially when you have to sit through the cartoon sequence for the complete time. As an interactive cartoon, it's excellent, but with staidly stereotypical characters, some funny jokes and gorgeous visuals. As a game it's compelling, but not in a way that encourages and addition or involvement. You're unlikely to come back to again and again.


WING COMMANDER II



Price IBM PC £34.99

Genre Arcade Action

Publisher Origin

No matter what else you might say about the *Wing Commander* games, they look flawed. And, the trouble is, there isn't really much else to say about them. *Wing* pulls apart a little hard but here in the sequel is the much talked-about and time-played original. It's very much a case of more of the same.

Interstellar war with the *Kilrathi* continues, and in the most recent *Kilrathi* history, the *Confederates* flagship *Tiger's Claw* has been destroyed by invincible *Kilrathi* death fighters. As the sole survivor of the assault, the player must first convince his Federation comrades that the attack did genuinely take place and then lead a *Rebellion* force to track them down and destroy them.

Graphically excellent although particularly processor heavy, *Wing Commander II* certainly isn't a billion games. It's a worthy sequel to its predecessor but in the end it's where that trio-*old* phrase about trying before buying is 100% appropriate.


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- ES Gold
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- Prologica
- Vega
- Sony-on-Line
- Acadline
- Core Design

13) Rank the following features in ACE from 1 to 10 (10 being the best)

- News
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the bitter end

Even since Bulling Productions' games-jawed programmer Tom Cooper stepped onto the catwalk in the Chelsea Show Hotel of the Year finale (see reported in the March issue), it seems that all manner of games designers and programmers are opening up a file in his biography by getting a bit of tarty TV exposure for themselves.

The latest to jump on the media bandwagon is equally handy and career-inducing ex-ee Andrew Macken, who popped in to do a guest spot on ITV's oft-to-forever Saturday morning kids' show *Mammoth* this month.

Officially he was there to present his latest game, the rather jolly James White's *Whitewind* Genesis, but that didn't stop him getting in a few considerable hints to camera (if not exactly the right camera... if the one with the red light on, itchy and generally sending the studio members of the audience into a state of nervous-fluttering ecstasy. It was probably all that talk about success and mammothed formats - that always gets the kids going. Bitter would like to clarify a couple of things, however. One, if Andrew's game is so bloody great how come newly presenter Andy Cree hasn't in a head-to-head putting race? And two, why did Virgin only give *Mammoth* 7400 copies of the game to give away in the competition? Would you see you, your generosity will get us back up at this rate...

Every now and again, Bitter is worried just what a marketing bunch of boys the software industry is comprised of. It's a recent computer show in Cologne, a line of top-level delegates from three of the leading software houses decided to have a night on the town - apparently *Amstrad*'s considering around the hotel and filling the bills up with shares from the hefty proceeds to be then sent sailing and they thought entertainment of a heaping nature. Unfortunately, when they tried to get

into the hotel's nightclub they were turned away at the door by a lovely bouncer on the account of the fact that they were wearing jeans. So, while one of these aspiranters ran with the doorman, the other two went off to another pub and came back in tow the next night. And although this was obviously hilarious, the legendarily knowledgeable German doorman was less than amused and thus proceeded to stick one up on the third member of the group! The real twist is that while the punished one was off to the hotel to put some ice on his squashed nose, the other two put some proper trousers on and were actually let into the club!

Talking of dodge going on at shows, word reaches us of a very interesting story concerning a certain member of a high-profile programming team. Apparently, while at a games exhibition in France, one celeb friend happened to temporarily swapped for cash on a night when he was supposed to be going out on the town. So, in desperate need of funds, he took a bunch of T-shirts, scrawled his autograph on each one and lowered them out to street-level French punters for a hundred francs - gas in real money - a third! Our mate apparently did a roaring trade, and though the night was not had enough quite in his bid to have a night without nights. It just goes to show what you can do when you get your mind to it. In John Harvey Jones had better watch out...

Call us old fashioned, but here at ACE we've always assumed that the only way a game could get a *Trailblazer* award was for the magazine to give it one. This little point is obviously for the state and will be the progressive software house Core Design, who were shod and stuck a *Trailblazer* logo on

its advertising for riving game *Hamdial*, even though it only scored 899 last month and therefore didn't receive one. We took briefly with the idea of not giving Core's latest, *Trailblazer*, the *Trailblazer* it deserves so as to even the score a bit, but Art Bitter Jim had already indicated it in, so we didn't have the heart to take it out.

Over the last few months, Bitter has learned a very important lesson - if you get invited to any kind of Microsoft party or function, DON'T GO. They're posed. Initially we thought it was just an isolated incident when a certain member of the ACE team had a bit of extremely bad luck a few months back at a Microsoft show. But then word reached us that Amiga Power editor Matt Kelly and Sega Power editor Neil 'Dino's' West also seem also to have the dreaded Curse of Microsoft upon them.

Remembering that a Microsoft bash a few months back, the pair were embroiled (and thoroughly outmaneuvered, we are told) by a group of wags and roughed up. And only this month, while on the way home from another Microsoft party during *Future Publishing's* World of Commodore Show, the hapless pair were an open-door again. This time a mysterious unknown Scotswoman set about the fairly doc, dealing out a couple of wobbly-looking truck sandwiches. This, we feel, makes Neil and Matt the most persecuted tag team in software history. If you read any reviews by them of *Dino's* WWF over the next couple of months, don't pay any attention because they obviously don't know what they're talking about.

Staying with Microsoft for a bit longer, it seems that not everyone who has worked with the company is completely satisfied. Take the aforementioned

Commodore Show party for instance. Though a generous amount of money was put behind the bar, it didn't take long for it to get drunk. Actually, it didn't take anybody very long to get drunk. But anyway, the story is when the few booze finally ran out and the drinks started costing, the poor little warts at *AmigaPower* software couldn't afford to get another round in.

A fairly widespread rumour only two months later *Trailblazer*, a *First Party* and three games in real money. But never fear! All that was required was a quick trip over to see Microsoft's only party marketing Director Sean Brennan, and suddenly the boys were back in business. Big-hearted Sean whipped out his wallet and provided off two crisp hundred of his own money for the boys to go and have a drink with. It seems Captain Cain's days are numbered. So if you're short of a few bob, why not give them a call at the usual Microsoft number and no-doubt he'll be happy to give you some free money.

Andrew Braybrook has written a new game! Unfortunately you won't be able to play it - unless of course you run along to a new exhibition that's being organised by Powergen. It'll be to do with a new power station that's being opened by David Ingham or something, it's called *Substation*, and you have to run around this power station collecting coal and stuff - you know the sort of thing. So there you go.

We just remembered something else about Neil West and Neil 'Dino's' West. It's so silly that he can't even get into his own party! Once again, it all happened at the Commodore Show, when organisers Future were staging an alternative and the party in the London Congress for their top industry mates. Though everyone knew invites were intended for top givers only, Neil was apparently shooting his mouth off about how he was going to get in, so when, but when he turned up on the night, Future top-boys Greg Ingham and Steve Curry immediately refused to let him in! But never mind, he'll be sure the bad lots of either top industry parties to go to. And as an added bonus, Neil is now (officially) credited in the *First Party* under of Unconventional Party-Contributors.

Look out - he's back!

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