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ARNOLD!

Negative Terminator
Development Report



ISSUE 53

February 1992

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**43 Page
SCREENTEST™
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2 3D SPACE



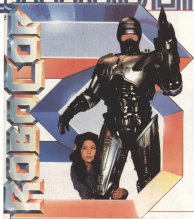
"Fast just isn't the word for this 3D - an excellent game that more than lives up to it's name." - ACE

"Epic is one of the finest products I have played this year, the depth of gameplay and graphics are of a truly stunning standard. .. the sheer number of vectors used on the screen is incredible with the final battle having over 500 independently minded ships." - Games X



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ore "Knocks your socks off... you've never seen 3D as good as this.
The 3D twist works extremely well and arguably makes RoboCop 3
both the best film licence yet." - ACE "The vectors are super slick and

smooth, all animations are top notch, giving us
some of the best vectors around and the screens
are superbly drawn. This is definitely one of
the best film licences yet." - GAMES X



STAMIGA - IBM PC & COMPATIBLES

ACE

No. 53 FEB 1992

By the mighty stories of Jupiter! Can nothing stop these people?! Something has gone seriously right in the software industry. The firms who we all used to know and love for churning out run-of-the-mill beat-'em-ups have now gone into quality overdrive and are continually releasing games of a remarkable class.

Particular stunners this month are *Monkey Island 2* and *Falcon 3.0*, both earning Trailblazer awards.

This continual flow of quality is putting us in quite a tricky spot marking-wise, and that's for sure. Even in the light of our new regime of tough scoring, we've had to award some blisteringly high scores this month, simply because the games are so good. Still, if software releases continue to improve at this amazing rate, it looks like we're stuck with it!



21 Well, maybe we shouldn't have spoken so soon. Only a month after we declared that all these interactive movies were rubbish, American firm Telltale produce *The 7th Guest*.

25 With an impressive portfolio of no-nonsense role-up conversions and high-adrenaline music titles, the job of producing Virgin's forthcoming Terminator game for the Megadrive was the most logical choice for Probe Software. Will Arnie Strain get the complete game he deserves?



There are many forms to fill out in life. Poll tax forms, bank forms, credit forms and so on. However, none of the forms listed above are half as exciting or worthwhile as the Golden Joystick Voting Form which you will find on page 12.

Not only does the Form give you the chance to let the Industry really know what you think of their software, but it gives you the chance to win £500 worth of games in our Grand Prize Draw!

After the 1991 Golden Joystick Awards ceremony, starting on 20th August, you can check out the new titles available on the shelves. Remember that, according to the rules, your vote counts for each of the Golden Joystick Award categories. For more information on the Golden Joystick Awards, including how to get the Golden Joystick, go to page 12. For more information on the Golden Joystick Awards, go to page 12. For more information on the Golden Joystick Awards, go to page 12.

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Happy New Year!



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38 US Gold's *The Godfather* may well be a perfectly good shame-tempter, but is it really anything like playing the film, or at all?



78 We reveal about it the month before last on Amiga and now the Megadrive version gets the same treatment. Released under the Electronic Arts label.

84 Perhaps it may well be one of the finest games in the world today. Isn't it? Not easy, is it? Check out our file special and your computered worries will be over.



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The, ah-ha, series called *Legend of the Longbow* on the screen, and it's actual title is *Conquests of the Longbow: Legend of Robin Hood*. But, because it's for the PC, that name will not be there!

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The 'Best Flight Game in The World' (*Real!*)? Two groups of old-fashioned English was impressed with Spectrum Hobbyist's latest offering. So impressed, that here's given it the highest mark ever!

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Please! This sequel to the popular *Dungeon Master* style adventure features a huge (shouting) team from Hell run to check gamers in their way back. And Cerberus is pretty frightening too!

62 **Monkey Island 2**

Henry Jones' *Edgewood* explains that *Monkey Island 2* is the best adventure he's ever played, and who can we to suggest something more the best again with '93 and swords.

68 **John Madden Football**

Electronic Arts lets you play the Amiga conversion of the game that won't the Megadrive world a few months ago. And Cory White can't get enough of John's hot action.

The Best
Reviews On
The Planet!

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NEWS GAMES NEWS GAMES

SCARED OUT OF YOUR WITS



Agony fans operating a hit television series and motion picture, Charles Addams's gothic-cartoon characters are now appearing in interactive form.

The Addams Family from Paramount Pictures starring Anjelica Huston, Christopher Lloyd and Raúl Juliá opened across Britain, appropriately enough, on Friday 13 December. This creepy black comedy is reprinted the biggest grossing movie since Terminator 2 and Robin Hood, Prince of Thieves.

ICOM Simulations has developed a CD-ROM Addams Family game for the TurboGrafx (PC Engine). It's already on sale in the USA for a little over sixty dollars and is apparently the first TurboGrafx CD game to feature "real-time" scrolling. For smooth action changes, ICOM Simulations is the respected multimedia developer that previously created the revolutionary Microsoft Holmes Consulting Detective, a most elaborate production with digitized footage of live actors, real sets and museum values.

The storyline of the new Addams Family game follows the humorous antics of these morbid eccentrics. Assuming the role of Family Lawyer Tully Addams, you attempt to find the Family vault through more than thirty "body-cramped" rooms, tunnels and mazes contained in the Addams' "gloomy Victorian mansion. Along the way, you'll encounter Gomez, Morticia, Uncle Fester, Pugsley, Wednesday, Grandson, Lurch, Thing and a whole host of squamous outprints.

"Except also allows us to offer cutting-edge games that are more subtle and challenging to play," says Ron Witt, General Manager of the Home Entertainment Division at NEC. "We think CD video games will pave the way for new types of home entertainment. Games will feel like they're starting in their own world."

More tales of Arabia



Already a tremendous success on the IBM PC and Amiga courtesy of Jonmark, Broderbund's Prince of Persia is now enchanting Samuray and Super Nintendo players. If you're not a skill-based life, fear not, it's not too late to sample the timeless graphics and incredible playability of this outstanding platform romp.

During the game, you have only sixty minutes to escape the palace dungeons and rescue a fair princess from the clutches of that nasty great Jafar. As you possess the right juyyish wiggling skills to shoot and dash your way past the treble levels packed with palace guards, deadly trap doors and collapsing ceilings!

Adrian Jordan Broder, a psychology graduate of Yale University in North America, originally used video footage of his younger brother as practice round his apartment like Lord Flynn. His film was digitized and transformed into the extraordinary animation which makes this game a cut above the rest.

Thankfully, Prince of Persia has been successfully transferred over to the two Nintendo consoles. Obviously the NES Super Nintendo bring sports improved graphics, but, more importantly, superior music and sound effects now accompany your wall-climbing for Eastern adventures.

More amazingly, Virgin Games has managed to obtain some final and realistic animation in the remarkable Samuray adaptation.

Special thanks to Publisher Franklin and GDM in Japan.





START SAVING NOW...

Yes, it's official. Nintendo is finally going to launch the Super NES in this country before the end of spring. Hurrah!

This super console has been satisfying the playing habits of Ape and Yanks in their millions. Presently, Nintendo titles make do with gray imported machines with water-tight leads and guarantees.

Nintendo's redesigned heavy version of the original Super Famicom should cost around \$250 and come with Super Mario World, one of the best video games ever made. Other excellent titles like F-Zero, Zelda II, Popo, Super Mario 'n' Birds, The Simpsons, StarTropics II and Super II-type should be around at the same time.

Despite a pitifully slow sales pace that is frequently seen trying to catch up with the rest of the smart hardware, Super NES has an edge over the rival Sega Megadrive in terms of graphics and sound output.

Could we see a NES Megadrive next year, then? Nobody at Sega, not even the sardonic girl, was willing to comment. Even so, the Megadrive is available today with a greater selection of games. Sega is also preparing a European version of the Mega-CD, an attractive MacK box of multi-discal variety which could still be hot once back to Sega's favor.



Hulk Hogan hits the arcades

World Wrestling Federation's colossus producer range has made another move into the competitive video games arena.

Following the various best-selling computer and console titles from Accolade and Ocean, Texaco and Sinclair have devised a colorful strategy based around the trendy sport seen on satellite TV. To date their competition will be measured only by the amount of success of previous games are anything to go by.

WWEF Wrestling first began the American wrestling fiasco and millions followed by thousands of fans around the world. Now we get the chance to play their favorites such as Ted Dibiase, Jake 'The Snake' Roberts, Sgt. Slaughter and, of course, the most famous fighter of all, Hulk Hogan. It's fast filled muscle mayhem of the way anyone a hyperactive sportsman.

For the likes of old Texas Giant busters and Big Daddy are facing with envy...



IT'S A MAD WORLD

Customers with long memories should be glad to hear First Star Software and Kemco have converted the critically-acclaimed Spp to Spp-ette Gameplay.

Those crazy cartoon spies from MAD magazine spring into action as they try to avert total disaster in this highly inventive game, first released on the C64 back in 1983.

Furthermore, Spp to Spp is such an utterly brilliant two-player game that a disc-link was one of the first options to be incorporated into this thrilling car-mangled car.

The whole affair is packed full of ingenious booby traps and diabolical gags. It certainly makes a refreshing change from all those unoriginal Tetris clones which refuse to go away.



HAVE YOURSELF A SCOOBY SNACK

The publisher Hanna-Barbara and electronics giant Philips have teamed up in an effort to inject more spine into the rather dull collection of CBI (Computer Based Interactive) software currently out in the USA and Japan.

The marvelous creative partnership of Hanna-Barbara were responsible for games cartoon character like Tom & Jerry, the Flintstones, Top Gun, Hong Kong Phooey, Yogi Bess, Rocky Bess, Rockybobby Round and, the personal ABE favorites, Scooby Doo.

Set to invade these shores by the summer, CBI equipment from the likes of Philips, Sony and Matsushita looks similar to an ordinary CD-player but plugs into your TV to provide the family with exciting new ways to be educated and entertained.

Hanna-Barbara states the premier CBI production, Happy Birthday to Me, will be the world's first interactive full motion video to follow the recently agreed Working Pictures Experts Group (WPEG) standard. This will hopefully reproduce images and sounds just like those seen during ordinary TV transmissions. Instead of just watching, you'll be able to change events with your remote controller. Carl Mace CBI titles from Hanna-Barbara are expected to follow.

As previously reported in ABE, American Interactive Media, part of the huge Philips empire, is additionally transferring the conventional Super Mario Bros and Legend of Zelda video games over from more traditional Nintendo consoles.



Ultima VII

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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 fantastically 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.



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*Required for speech.

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A RARE DEAL

Feeling exceedingly pleased with themselves, and rightly so too, the rich people at Nintendo have wrapped up the home-computer conversion rights to the hottest Nintendo game in the States.

Like those over-loyed Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle before them, Battletoads are already a cult phenomenon on the other side of the pond.

Published by Trademark of Trade, this totally awesome action game is currently available on NES and GameBoy. It tells the story of Zitz, Kraz and Pimple in their intergalactic struggle against the evil, but rather stinky, Dark Queen. Battletoads should debut shortly on Super NES, MegaDrive and coin-op systems. An inevitable sequel is also on the cards.

Ignoring all this American adulation for a moment, Battletoads is, in fact, another British masterpiece. The luxury buffets at Rare first claimed their place in the game in some table of history with classic releases like Jetpac, Knighton and Future Waffle on the Sinclair Spectrum. Suddenly, before anybody had even heard of Nintendo or Super Mario Bros, they switched to console development and made an absolute fortune.

Whichever aspect the future versions of Battletoads will be ready in time for the rich men Christmas. By then we'll probably have the associated toy, action figures, dedicated electronic games, Marvel comic books and animated TV show coming out of our ears.



Out break of violence

DoubleDragon Gameplay seems to be able to hook their everyday frustrations out to one of the most violent beat-'em-ups ever released on their machines.

Archives, producer of The Simpsons and Terminator 2 on Nintendo, is offering Double Dragon II: The Revenge for your playing pleasure. One of the best games and newcomers will fly over the scenes, gameplay and graphics welcome a spokesperson for the Quarter-Byte company in handling New York.

Billy Lee has been accused of eliminating another member of the Simpson's martial arts club. It's a blow-up. Thus, Billy and twin brother Jimmy must venture through the scolding asphalt jungle to prove his innocence.

This old translates into thirteen levels of non-stop chase combat on a grand scale. Needless to say, there are still plenty of baseball bats ready to be swung in anger and deluge with carrying firearms to read. Will the historical warriors rule the road or can you help save the day?

Just in case MegaDrive gamers aren't feeling left out, there's no need to fret. Pal Soft is Japan is thinking of you. Double Dragon II is now available on your machine, too.

Megatastic conversions on their way ...

We're very proud to announce Megaforms' fabulous Megatastics arcade strategy game is coming soon to MegaDrive, SNES and, well for \$, 6895. Yes, the 'Masters of the Future' are finally going to have something to get its teeth into. There is life beyond Lemmings and Pac-Man Killer after all.

Megatastics quickly forgets its roots in games like Power Rangers and gets down to the serious business of being intense fun to play. It's a mix of many styles culminated by some of the best computer games yet heard in a computer game.

MegaDrive players are in for a double treat because their adoption of Megatastics contains a few slight enhancements, mainly in the graphics department. You can also hear all the terrific sound effects at the beginning of the game. An influence of Japanese games design, perhaps? Greater Excellent Software has promised to fiddle with the input control so you won't miss the accuracy of a mouse.

Finally, Megaforms has a database for the design and that 68 copies of Megatastics in the pipeline along with a completely new concept.

WHAT A WONDERFUL WIDGET!

Renowned, leather knower for the best-selling Fortune and Madden video games, has unveiled a most unusual accessory for the MegaDrive in Japan.

The sleek hardware consists actually lies inside the double Hyperway unit which comes with a grip joystick, magnifying glass and pair of stereo speakers built in. This dreamy device could be yours for a mere 75,000 (approximately \$20).

Any good guy import, artist should know the Hyperway is sleek within a month or so. Notice the coming product placement for Bononi's Nintendo II title in the advert. These sneaky marketers strike again, eh?





GOING UNDERGROUND

In a bid to make the most of the 3D capabilities of the PlayStation, Origin has decided to convert its own version of the smash hit Dungeon Master. Early, early PC players can join this deep adventure.

Ultima Underworld: The System Alpha again sees the fantasy setting of Britannia. Only this time, the programmers have employed the 3D graphics technology first seen in the award-winning Wing Commander.

"Ultima Underworld follows the style of the immensely popular Eye of the Beholder and Dungeon Master, but with substantial advances in technology and gameplay," maintains a spokesperson. "The virtual environment envelops you in the richly detailed sights and sounds that players expect of the Ultima experience."

By the way, there are apparently over 24 miles of corridors and rooms to explore. Luckily, Origin supplies an innovative autoexploring capability to stop you getting lost.

In the other side of the world, Super Fantasy adventures are currently competing the might of Ultima VI. Free Fantasy was in charge of the conversion. Unless you can instantaneously translate Japanese, we recommend you wait for the English cartridge. Still, there's no harm in looking at the pretty graphics or wiping the floor of gameplay and other such creature's in there!



All hands on deck

After an exceptionally slow start, the Lynx colour handheld console is starting to steam, pick up. Not only do personalities like Gazza, the Farns and Charney Hawkins regularly switch onto the charms of Blue Lightning, California Games and the other big or so titles, but Atari is promising to launch five new Lynx games every month for at least a year. If this staggered schedule can be achieved with decent product, this could make the Lynx a serious rival to the Nintendo Gameboy and Sega Gamegear.

According to the Straight-based hardware firm, there are about 125,000 Lynx's in the country. Interestingly, Atari's market research suggests people buy around five games within the first three months of purchasing the console itself. Hey, that figure sounds familiar, right?

Using a development system based around the Amiga, there are more than fifty titles currently being devised in Britain and the USA. Many developers actually transfer their sprite graphics directly over from the Amiga and scale them down. After all, the Lynx was designed by the same team that invented the Amiga.

Lynx boasts a more impressive hardware specification than the Japanese competition. For starters its microprocessor is a bit faster, the crap LCD screen displays the more colours, and a virtually unlimited number of sprites can be stretched and tiled like an arcade machine. In some ways, the Lynx even outperforms the Amiga, MegaDrive and Super Famicom.

At the end of the day, it's the quality and quantity of software that really counts. And that's where the Lynx has been badly let down in the past. Atari needs a high profile sales game like Super Intero Bros or Sonic the Hedgehog to make the big time. Unfortunately, there's still no sign of such a release.

Nevertheless, Atari has managed to attract top games like Shadow of the Beast, Gammaforce, Manchester United Europe, TwinBride II, Demogorgon, you?, Rampart, Ninja-Gaiden III and a whole host of original titles.

Eye of the Beholder is likely to be one of the biggest conversions over to the Lynx this year. Programmed by NePC in the States, you'd think they'll be able to simultaneously wander through the dark monster-filled dungeons in this four megabit cartridge. Eye of the Beholder could also be the first Lynx title to come with a battery-backed option to save your current game position.

Things are definitely looking up for the Lynx fraternity if only there can persuade Customs, Wozak and Phillip Schofield to ditch their Gameboys...



VOTE AND WIN!

Yes, it's that time of year again. The time when the glitterati of the software business gather in the bustling heart of London's West End, all waiting with bated breath to see if their games have won a place in the heart of ACE readers.

Yes, it's time again for the gameplaying gong-show as the Golden Joystick Awards to be held out to eternally grateful software supremos.

But unlike all the other awards ceremonies around at this time of year, the Golden Joysticks are the only awards decided entirely by your votes, and not by some jerry-built businessmen without the first clue what games are all about. Which is

why, obviously enough, that we're requesting your finest vote and vote.

Now, remember that voting is an important business, and isn't a responsibility to be taken lightly. The industry take your votes as a strong signal of what you like and don't like about their software. So, if hundreds of thousands of votes come in saying that Mr Craggy's Uptill Chase is the best game ever, you can be pretty certain that every software house in Britain will be launching their own interpretation of the chase by next Christmas.

So don't go squandering your votes, or you'll only have yourself to blame for the consequences.

Quite aside from the chance to benefit the software industry and the buying public as a whole, the award of the Joystick offers you another golden (no) big opportunity. The opportunity to walk away with *free* software.

One voting form brings collective pool of votes from all cheap images Integraphics (Main Machines, Computer and Video Games, CU Arnie), Simulac-Ums, The Two The Dees, PC Review and Megatech will be drawn at the joystick ceremony and the winner of the form will win the prize.

There are only two few conditions which you need to remember when voting:

1. All voting forms must be posted by Friday 23rd March. After this date no votes will be accepted.
2. Games eligible for nomination must have been released between January 1st 1991 and December 31st 1991.

And it's as simple as that. So, fill in the coupon, cut it out and send it off.

Name: _____

Address: _____

1. Best Graphics - 8 Bit _____

2. Best Graphics - 16 Bit _____

3. Best Soundtrack - 8 Bit _____

4. Best Soundtrack - 16 Bit _____

5. Best Simulation - 8 Bit _____

6. Best Simulation - 16 Bit _____

7. Best Coin-Op Conversion - 8 Bit _____

8. Best Coin-Op Conversion - 16 Bit _____

9. Console Game of the Year - 8 Bit _____

10. Console game of the Year - 16 Bit _____

11. PC Game of the Year _____

12. 8 Bit Game of the Year _____

13. 16 Bit Game of the Year _____

14. Programming Team of the Year _____

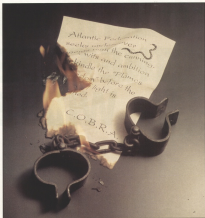
15. Hardware Manufacturer of the Year _____

16. Software House of the Year _____

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SO WHEN DO
THE SUPER
WILL BE



DO YOU RECKON NINTENDO IS HERE?



Letters

My, what a bulging sack we had this month! We were quite concerned that unless it was emptied, it might burst! Indeed, so many and varied were your opinions that we've had to knock a page off *News* in order to fit them all in the issue. But let's face it, it's well worth it, since it's your views that fuel this too-racy old industry of ours.

The address to send your letters to is: ACE Magazine, Empag Images, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 1AU. Remember to mark your envelope "Letters" or they will end up in our cheque-sorting operation on the moon, or something.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Oh, do keep a lid on it, can't you? I've read ACE for years and have always viewed it to be one of the best magazines around. But now I worry that my favourite games read is becoming an impenetrable mass of clichés and references to all manner of rubbish sport from the things you're actually supposed to be writing about games (remember them?).

Your last issue (52) was a particularly bad offender. Jim Douglas is probably the worst offender of all, ranting on about how good the Winger March was, quite aside from the fact that it wasn't any bloody good,

who cares? What possible relevance has this got to the game being reviewed (First Samurai)? And here it is again in the Another World review, spouting on about French comic books! Get a grip, you're going soft in the head! If I want to know about French comic books isn't it to the bloody *Jeux de Triomphe*, or whatever it's called!

Now, far be it from me to lecture you guys on how to put a magazine together. You obviously know better than me, but it does rather seem like you all want to be writing for some parody mag like *GG* or something. Well you're not, are you?

And if I sound as if I'm slugging you off, I'm sorry. It's just that I can't see the point of all this extra information. It's games I'm interested in, not old TV shows and comics.

Darren Smith
Highbury
London

DISKTASTIC

You must be mad! I've just read your response to the letter by Alex Kneebolt in the last issue. I think he made some very good points about the benefits of magazines carrying front-cover disks.

While I agree with you about the quality of lots of magazines taking the entirety out of their readers by slapping a disk on the front and alienating the magazine to become rubbish, I don't think that would happen with ACE.

ACE is a good magazine and looks really nice, so there's no reason for ACE to become rubbish with a disk because it is so good now, a disk would just make it better.

That is unless you are scared that you can't produce disks as good as everyone else, but ACE could kick anyone's butt in a disk fight, I'm sure.

It's bankers for ACE trying to sell more than other mags when they have a disk on, so do one and you will be No. 1!

Billy Swanson
The Netherlands

BOSS FANS!

Thank you, ACE, for your free Software Boss game. Myself and the little woman have had many a happy hour over the Christmas period taking the roles of the bosses of our favourite games companies. I take the role of Anil, because I admire his business sense, but my wife likes to be Margaret, because she thinks he's cute.

Although the game is excellent, I have a couple of suggestions which would make it even better.

1. It would have been nice to have a lady from a software house represented. How about the dinky little from Brown or Jo Cooke from Queen? They could have had little blouses on instead of the pants' shorts and ties.

2. I think going back to the 1980s just because you land on the Friday 12th square is a bit unfair. I lost the game to my wife because of this feature, despite having a good idea for my game and CTV writing a nice story about me.

3. I also think that while the majority of things are true to the madcap things which can happen in this exciting and almost ludicrous, it's improbable that a software house's office would fall off a cliff and be hit by lightning at the same time.

My own version of the game has been intended with different penalties for landing on these squares. I'm interested in swapping my own cartoon-ty to-top tables with other readers who have drawn up their own. Anybody interested?

Mark Phillips
Repton

THE MORAL MINORITY

Oh, I am sure that I am not alone in growing concerned at the increasing levels of "adult"

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material and themes present in today's computer software. Quite aside from the levels of graphic violence shown with sprites and digitized artists suffering all manner of awful things, the overall promise of so many of today's games is just so... unconvoy.

I'm no prods, but I find the constant barrage of images of lycanthropy (the cover of issue 52, no less), ritual slaughter and soldiers of fortune more than a little disturbing, especially since there are no laws governing the game's purchase. Any easily-influenced young child may be in some way affected by continual and prolonged exposure to violent games devoid of any moral guidance. And simply because no studies actually suggest that is the case, it doesn't mean that it's not.

After all, plenty of people die of cancer because somebody had attributed the disease to smoking until it was too late, so why should we close our minds to the damaging effects of evil images, simply because there's no tangible evidence - yet. Let's act before it's too late.

Thomas Whitcombe
Portsmouth

COIN-OP SCANDAL!

What is wrong with software runs these big software firms? Why do they think that I want to own a conversion of all these coin-ops? I don't! If I want to play a shoot-'em-up, or a racing game or an airplane blast, I can go to the arcade and play them, and enjoy far superior graphics, better sound and white-hot controls like moulding cabinets and 3D vision, all for about £7 for a go-on a really great machine.

And these people are asking me to spend £10 on a crappy version of the game with none of the excitement of the arcade version.

Have they got their maths wrong or something? For a start, who wants to play an arcade game twenty-five times? I bloody don't!

So let's get this straight, these so-called software companies are asking us to pay the same amount of money for the privilege of playing their inferior version in our own homes as we would normally pay for a completely cinematic amount of go-on a coin-op. If you ask me, it's a bloody con.

So I'm asking you, ACE, as the champion of all that is good about games to do something about this fave and make software realise that it just isn't good enough any more.

Nigel Barnes
Stockport
Near Liverpool

DEEP THOUGHT

I have thought a lot about the Amiga's future recently, and I've come to the conclusion that Commodore should release a console version of the Amiga. Maybe they won't do this on that after the horrible failure of the CD32, but I believe that the reasons for releasing it are good and many.

First, the piracy is a problem, this would be partly solved by making the games on cartridge, as they are much harder to copy. The cartridge also has other advantages, such as no CD loading time and greater storage capacity. Just think of playing the Dragon's Lair type games without having to wait for the graphics to load all the time. The Sierra type of games would also benefit from cartridge with all their data, and extremely long loading times. Owners of 'real' Amigas would probably buy cartridge too, if the price was about the same. How much does it cost to make a game on cartridge anyway?

Second, many young people just want a games machine, not a computer, so they not give them what they want? The Amiga has a huge amount of great games and these could be re-released on compilation cartridges. This would make the Amiga a serious competitor to the Megadrive and the Super Famicom in both the American and the Japanese markets too!

Thirdly, as the Amiga console would be without a keyboard or disc drive, I think the system would be quite cheap. Probably the system should have four joystick or joystick ports (the Coleco DM 2, etc) and a link-up cable (the Lotus 2, etc). The system should have some kind of mouse since many games are based on that kind of control. A keyboard should be made optional for use with the more complicated games like Flight sim. Lastly, the system must of course have a socket for connecting a CD drive (Commodore's own A510, perhaps) which would make it compatible with the CDTV.

I really think this system could be a winner, but Commodore must hurry. The Megadrive and Super Famicom are already selling like mad. And they must remember to make the system so that it fits into the American market. After all, the Amiga is big in Europe as a games machine but not anywhere else.

I'd like to have some debate over this topic, as I really believe that the piracy is destroying the Amiga market and that we'll soon have to buy either a console or a PC. This doesn't mean that I have anything against the PCs or consoles, but I'd like to keep my Amiga as I think it's a great machine.

What does ACE think of all this?

Paul Erik Nelson
Harrogate
Norway

Stamen: interesting. Most of your points are agreed with, though you seem to be rather optimistic about the memory capacity of the cartridges. Most of the Megadrive/CD32 cartridges you can get are 2 MBits (256K) or 4 MBits (512K) in size. Given that a typical Star Trek or Laserball game is well over 500k in size even when compressed, you'll appreciate that a cartridge version would be phenomenally expensive, around five times the normal price.

In sprite-based scrolling games, this lack of memory is less important because the backgrounds are stored in memory-efficient block form (like a CGA) as opposed to the Amiga's bitmapped screen. However, this format also makes it a lot easier to create fast-moving vector-driven graphics. Given that the two machines have very similar CPU speeds, compare the relative speeds of P-21 on the Megadrive and even the aging P-15 on the Amiga.

That aside, we can't help agreeing that with the right marketing and at the right price there's no reason for an Amiga console not to be a hot-seller success. And, of course, the memory problem would be solved in one fell swoop by a CD-ROM unit.

As Paul says, what do other readers think? And, more importantly, what's Commodore's stance on this?

well? are you!

coin-op
madness *the* *constating*
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well? what are you waiting for?

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LITTLE HOUSE ON THE SCARY

Can a computer game really scare you witless? American development team Trilobyte reckons its possible - and is currently pushing back the boundaries of PC programming to prove it. Get ready to quiver behind the sofa...

We know that horror movies are frightening. We know that Stephen King has the capacity to chill with words on a page. But computer games - scary? No way. Since the dawn of the medium, countless games have inspired to send shivers down the spines of those who play them - but none other than real life results are at least simply atmospheric, at worst little more than laughable.

But not any more - now there's a game that packs a hair-raising punch equal to anything that the likes of Wes Craven or David Cronenberg can offer. At least that's the bullish claim being made by Graeme Devine and his team at Oregon-based Trilobyte Software of their debut



project, *Guest*. Currently being produced exclusively as a CD-ROM for PC owners, it's already being hailed as the closest thing yet to a true interactive movie.

"Basically, what we wanted to do was produce a David Lynch version of *Cloudb*," Devine explains, going on to cite Lynch's *Blue Velvet* and *Twin Peaks* as two of the game's primary sources of

inspiration. Knowing that, it doesn't take a genius to deduce that *Guest* is a pretty weird and spooky affair. The story tells of an evil tycoon whose work holds a sinister secret. In a series of chapters set in mysterious circumstances after buying his toys to end questions, and the plot thickens when the tycoon himself needs his demise.

The game begins when six guests are anonymously summoned to the late tycoon's remote hilltop mansion, now empty except, in an attempt to give the story a boost, delectable quality, the player is cast not as a conventional character but an invisible entity, a free-ranging

entity that can go anywhere within the giant house, solve puzzles, work with objects - but not interact with characters. As more of a passive observer than active character, the player's task is to explore the house and follow the exploits of the six guests as they go about their business in order to solve the mystery of the tycoon.

"*Guest* is like a real movie - it's a rollercoaster ride," says Devine. The big difference is, he says, is that the player is given a free rein to follow the story's development any way he pleases, following characters and exploring the secrets of the house. "The mansion has 22 rooms, and each room has its own secret and a puzzle to solve." The theory is that, quite apart from the main



story, the player can become engrossed in simply discovering the rightward complexities of the rooms and corridors for himself. Gameplay is split into two distinct types - what Devine calls "environmental" and "mini-game" puzzles. Environmental puzzles are like those that might be found in any conventional graphic adventure, while the mini-games are little brainbusters that occur in certain rooms and only give up a reward when completed.

Anyone who actually experiences *Duke* for the first time, however, is less likely to be interested in the complexities of the game and more fascinated by what's taking place on screen. There can be little doubt that *Duke* is one of the most visually



"Parts of this game are going to scare people to death!"

Rilobyte's Game Devs.

stunning games any home machine has ever seen. Two years of painstaking graphical 3D rendering by Rilobyte has paid off with incredible results - every surface, from the carpets to the walls to the furniture in every room is texture-mapped to look like the real thing, and because everything is rendered in "true" 3D, the player can walk around rooms with total freedom and watch the scenery swirl and rotate perfectly around his point of view. So impressive are the animation sequences recently sent to Virgin UK on video that some who have viewed it steadfastly refuse to believe that the graphics have been generated on anything less than a supercomputer - let alone a 386 PC. Stand back and squint a little and you could be watching video footage of a real house.

"Each of the rooms in the house took us at least a month to produce," reveals Devine, explaining that designing and laying out a room in 3D to such exacting specifications is an immensely time-consuming affair. "There's a large house about half a mile away from our office, used in front of a cemetery - we've used it as the title screen in the game

After success? The player begins his tale at the grandly ornate to David's mansion. From there, he'll have to try to make contact. Though the game's not open to each other and you shouldn't be worried to go. He, the model and have a gamey use that walk through walls. (Duke)



The one word the Rilobyte dev team usually uses here, but their appearance can be described, especially in nature the first. They're looking to see what and what for the player's attention.





that were a real chore for the crew to make and make the job and in the room as an actor and how the director would see the scene. That was the idea of the director and the actor, giving them the idea of the scene and the actor.

When you're in the studio, you begin the preliminary work of researching the scene. The director will be looking at the scene and the actor will be looking at the scene and the actor will be looking at the scene.

When that's done it takes still more time to the rest of the scene and the actor, giving them the idea of the scene and the actor. The actor will be in the studio's address book when the scene begins. The director will be looking at the scene and the actor will be looking at the scene.



...of the



and we were going to walk around inside with a video camera to get some ideas, but it was far too small for our purposes." The result is that every room and corridor in *Guest* has been produced from scratch—a process so expensive that Devine estimates that it actually would have been cheaper to build the



entire house as a studio set and digitize the screens from that!

Complex storylines and technical achievement may all be very well, but is it SCARY? Well, considering the available technology and the lengths that EA Games and its team have gone to, it certainly ought to be. The game has been designed in such a way that it will constantly hit the player with a combination of straightforward movie-style shocks and more general "weir" unsettling imagery in much the same way as horror classic *The Shining*. "There are parts of this game where no one is going to want the player to leave!" Devine boasts. "We've gone all out to make the experience as cinematic as possible. Imagine playing *Slime*, with all the tension and fear—that's just what *Guest* is like."

Though the CD drive's primary function is as a mass data store (*Guest* is so huge it would fill no less than 90 conventional floppy disks), its use as a sound tool is being used to the full to provide additional atmosphere. The ghostly guests' dialogue has been recorded by real actors—over 40 minutes' worth and music is being provided by The Fat Man, who recently scored film *Commander X*. "We wanted Gary Efran to do the soundtrack" Devine reveals, "but we couldn't get his agent on the phone." Instead, the designers have opted for something similar in style to Efran's guitar, almost mimicking film scores, but without the straightforward comedic aspects—the intention is to make the sound clerk and mooring.

Despite criticisms leveled at so-called interactive novels and



"regurgitates" in the past, Devine is confident that *Guest* is a real above the likes of *Casual Games*. "The problem with games like *Casual* is that they don't present a coherent story—you just wander around and look at stuff. *Guest* has a real mystery for unravel, and I also think it has a high replay value—even after you've solved it you can go back and see new puzzles."

Although *Guest* isn't due to hit the shelves until much later in the year, Telebyte are already drawing up plans for a second game along the same lines.

So start saving up for your CD drive now. Oh, and better get some extra pairs of underpants while you're at it.

— Gary Whitham

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HE'S BACK

It may have taken nearly seven years, but *Arny* is finally making it on to the Sega Megadrive - and in style. For the last ten months tip-top development house Probe Software have been labouring on a tie-in to the film that made the Big A the star he is today...

The Terminator.

The Terminator can be forgiven for taking so long to make its way onto the Megadrive. The path hasn't exactly been easy. The game rights to the film were owned by US-based Bethesda Software. After some negotiation Bethesda relinquished the Megadrive and Master System rights to Virgin Games. Then, after considering tenders from several development teams back in February, Virgin eventually awarded the contract to Probe Software, boys with a proven track

record of turning out high-quality conversions (Street T.J. for Gouzen, Turles coin-op for Mervinstaff) and original games (Dynamix for Virgin).

If you don't know The Terminator's plot then you're probably not from this planet, but in a nutshell it goes like this. Far in the future the robots have revolted against their human masters. But although outnumbered and outgunned, the humans are winning thanks to the strategic brilliance of their leader John Connor.

The robots send a cyborg, the Terminator of the title, back to 1984 to kill Connor's mother, Sarah, and thus render the humans leaderless. The humans learn of the plan and also manage to send a lone trooper back to protect Sarah, himself ignorant of the pivotal role she plays in mankind's history. The battle lines are drawn and the stage is set for one of the best action movies ever made.

Clipping stuff with excellent tie-in potential. But as Probe boss Pergus McGovern points out, there were a few strings attached. "Our contract said the player had to be Sarah. He couldn't be the Terminator, and the player wasn't able to kill the policemen. Apparently it's 'inappropriate to kill policemen in America'. That's why you see them getting up again after they've been shot in the game."

Work started in March, with the team lead by project manager Neil Young who was partly responsible for the game's design. He continues the story, "The trouble with The Terminator is that on the face of it it sounds like a strong licence. But if you can't play the Terminator itself then you're limited as to how the game's going to play. All these dots in the film is protect Sarah while being chased by the Terminator. And you can't build a good game around someone who's always running away."



Even when it comes to the end of the movie, it's not as if the Terminator starts after them being the boss inside the building.





Below: Before the beginning of each level, there's a graphic and text about how the film explains the progress of the game's plot. Sprites have subtle visual cues — like how their hands move.



Below, left to right: Some bosses that the original video footage of Don't and the boys drawing it out, with the cartoon style complete at the far right.



And that's not all, Neil carries on. "Another problem was that we had to make a game that met both the approval of the film companies involved in terms of how the characters were used and the approval of Virgin Games in terms of how the game played."

"The result of all this double-thinking and compromise is a six-level, mutually scrolling shoot 'em up, with the player guiding Kamek through a variety of battle zones, fighting robots, LA cops and street punks, culminating in an almost confrontation with the Terminator. (For a detailed breakdown of the game see the "Do the Math" box).

The game's look underwent several revisions before the one seen here. According to Falgout, in the early days the game's sprites were twice as big, with correspondingly large backgrounds. The palette scrolling was omitted because the second display screen was

used to animate a giant Hammer-Killer that used to swoop in on the Kamek figures. However, Virgin insisted that, position be implemented meaning the ship had to be lost and the sprites made smaller.

"Then the team toyed with depicting the backgrounds in limited 3D, akin to that used in the *Turbo* coin-op. However, because the sprites had already been drawn in 2D, the two just didn't gel together, and a traditional 2D background was settled upon.

There have been other problems beside contractual ones to contend with. As Neil points out, "This was the programming team's — and Peter's — first *Negative* game. So, the first thing I gave the team to work on was the intro sequence. It's a good learning ground because it uses all of the game writing basics in one house, palette scrolling with sprites overlaid on top. Then



when they'd get this right, I moved them on to writing the game itself."

The fruits of the team's first struggles with the mighty Megabyte are impressive. The intro is a spot-on copy of the film's most-famous titles sequence, with the giant letters spelling "The Terminator" slowly scrolling across each other, the game credits spilling out in typewriter fashion and a close facsimile of the samurai pounding Terminator theme pulsing away in the background.

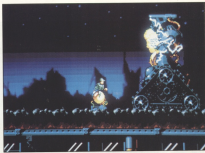
Due to contractual leaks the music isn't identical, but it's damn close. According to Neil, "I just want to be respectful and said 'Give me The Terminator' and this is what he came back with." During the game there's a variety of tunes for each level, and while none are taken from the film the mood of them suits the game perfectly.

But it's the sprite animation in The Terminator that grabs most people's attention, but only does it look great, there's lots of it, with Reese performing all sorts of feats: running, jumping, firing the animation of Reese pulling the shotgun out from under his longcoat is superb, swinging from beams, taking grenades - you name it, this guy does it.

When asked of this aspect of the game, Neil states, "Right from the start we wanted to do something that was a little bit different... something that would give the game a different look."

The reason for the realistic, fluid nature of the animation in The Terminator, Neil reveals, is that the sprites were based on video footage of film and the programmers pretending to test each other up. "It was partly a matter of time," he explains (the game is due for release in March 1993). "To get a graphics artist to hand draw all the animations from scratch would have taken too long." As it stands, The Terminator boasts over 400 individual frames of animation for the sprites of Reese, the Terminator, the cops and the junkies.

Basically the process worked like this. Home videos were made



(Above) Even at the site of "Blade Runner" there, several early computer titles like Terminator inherited inspiration from the movie's title sequence.



(Left) In the real world it's unlikely to find a Terminator... well, at least that way!



of the team smacking each other about in costumes, approximating to those of the game characters. Frames from the film were then "grabbed" and stored on computer. The graphics artist then cut out the animation frames for each character and used them as reference for the final game sprites. Initially the digitized frames were pulled directly in the game as copies but they just didn't look right, according to Peter Ross (regus@ultra.com).

Although aware that many people have already raved about the game's animation, Neil is a little more subdued. "Personally I don't think the results are any better than you could get from someone drawing straight onto computer given enough time.

(Below) Reese himself is a more striking aspect of inspiration in the bit computer. Michael (above) enters the lighted-in world of dark. Looks like they don't find the software on the floor - that's a strange one! (see page 10)



ON THE LEVEL

The Terminator is split into six levels spread over four main areas. Snap to it, soldier, and get the low-down on each battle zone.

LEVEL 1 - The year is 2028. Reese, armed only with a hand grenade, has to make his way across a small stream-



wasteland, battling giant robot tanks and Hunter-Killer drones, in the search of the hidden entrance to Skynet's underground research lab.

Once inside, Reese must locate the time-displacement equipment and blow it up with his explosives. (Reese also set an smart bombs but numbers are limited so make sure you don't waste them). Although teaming with Terminators, there's an AI there to be feared that makes life a lot easier.

Bombs in place, Reese has a short time to escape the complex before it's destroyed by the explosion. Having made it to safety, the human resistance decide to transport Reese through time to...

LEVELS 2-4 - The year is 1984. Reese has located Sarah Connor, the object of the Terminator's assassination mission, in the Tech-9air night club. A desperate race through the city makes up the majority of these levels, with Reese blasting both police and punks with a pump-action shotgun. Reese's epic journey takes him over the city's roof tops (where he's attacked by USAF helicopters), through a building night and down into the sewers.

On finally reaching the nightclub, Reese discovers the Terminator has made it to Sarah before him. A vicious firefight ensues, with the Terminator able to withstand a belly full of lead before it is forced to retreat.

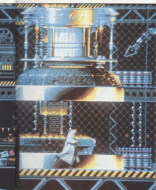
LEVEL 5 - The infamous police station scene. Reese and Sarah have been arrested by the LAPD, but the over-robotic Terminator blasts its way into the building in pursuit. Reese, managing to put the lock on his

cell, must try to escape while avoiding the police. (Reese avoids and, of course, the Big T.

LEVEL 6 - The final showdown takes place in a giant engineering works. The Terminator flesh covering has been stripped away, leaving behind the terrifying steel endoskeleton. As Reese searches the huge complex in search of Sarah, the Terminator tries all means at its disposal to kill Reese.

Eventually, after a lengthy shootout, the Terminator explodes. But it's not dead yet, its upper half - the arms and head - still functions. It finally dispatches the Terminator Reese must lure it under a steel press where it's finally crushed into oblivion.

Or is it? As the "Congratulations" screen rolls away, the voice of the Terminator is heard... "I'll be back."



The left hand is not Reese's hand, passing through the steel-rod press (which when it slams Sarah's arm down and slams against a wall. But the game does not get the chance to showing the straggling Terminator falling, leaving it under the hammer, breaking their arms.

although I admit that there is a more natural look to the sprite movement. But then you're always hyper-critical about your own stuff. I would definitely use the technique again, but really you need more time and resources, professional actors and that sort of thing, for it to work properly.

Over to the contract, there's little chance of the game being ported onto any of the home computers. Actually, to be honest, there's no chance at all. When it's suggested that it's be fairly easy to convert onto the Amiga, Neil begs to differ. "The Amiga and the Megaverse aren't similar at all, except that they both use 68000 CPUs. The problem with the Megaverse is that everything to do with the

graphics is different. The ST, Amiga, PC, Spectrum and Atari are all similar in that they use bitmapped screens to display their graphics. As the console, the NES, Master System, Super NES and Megaverse, show their screens as a series of blocks, like the Commodore 64."

The Terminator on the Megaverse is shaping up to be a superior blast, however, I can't help feeling that it's a shame that the big Hunter-Killer from the early version had to go. Fogus has no regrets though. "I think it's a better game now for the changes. Big isn't always better." Ty telling that to screwwacking ge.

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Gary Whitta's

previews

Bonjour! Auf Wiedersehen! Bien-venut! Ciao! Dja! Achtung Minen! Yes, watch out A.C.E. here come the S.E.C.! It's 1992 and here come the men from the minsters to make sure that ACE Previews tows the line! From now on we'll be conforming to the tough new Euro-standards that the Brussels Euro-parliament have set for computer game previews. Though other magazines may fall well behind, offering so-called "Sneaky Peeks" at games that are already in the shops, you know you can rely on ME to provide you with only the choicest morsels of up-and-coming software. Aaah, you can already smell it in the air that it's going to be a great year for games. Your mouth starts watering, like when that delicious cooking aroma wafts into the front room from the kitchen in the evening. Mmm-mmm. Now stop drooling all over the page and get stuck in. There's plenty for everyone, so help yourself!

DIE HARD 2 Grandslam

Everyone knows that the sequel to the classic Bruce Willis action flick wasn't a patch on the original - but if it's any consolation, it at least looks like a riparian a more playable game. Currently being converted by Software Developer of the Year nominees Zenix, it's a five-level collection of action sequences based on key scenes from the film. Yes, yes, it's hardly an original format but it still looks like it'll be a lot of alright.

Not surprisingly, you take on the very smelly and revvering, hairline of stubble hero John McClane as he battles to save Washington's Dulles airport from an elite terrorist group. All of the movie's more memorable scenes are in there, featuring the baggage hall shootout (pictured here), the high-speed run on those snow-buggy things and, of course, that apocalyptic kidnapping sequence on the wing of a speeding 747. In between the action there are more cerebral sub-game interludes where the player must crack a logic code to listen in on the terrorist's chatter and man an air traffic control console to save the crippled airplanes.



It certainly sounds quite busy, but we'll have to wait a while to see how well it's been executed. Arrigo and ST reviews will get their chance to the Harder with, in a few months, and there should be a full review in the



next issue.

GUY SPY Empire

What's that? A game from Software Works in the Dragon's Lair/Space Ace mould that you can actually PLAY? Well, yes, so it would seem. These Works boys from fancy Canada are showing the biggest investment they've got over this one - a lot of bad things have been said about their formerly-playable licensed conversions in the past, and this time they're out to

prove a point—that you CAN have your cake and eat it, mixing serious quality animation with a properly playable game. *City Spy* is a semi-parody of the James Bond adventures, with fearless and dashing secret agent Guy travelling across the world to take out the criminal/terrorist noobs. You may believe he can destroy the world with his doomsday weapons. As Guy hops from one foreign land to another, he takes on all manner of bad boys in a variety of combat situations—there's a spear-throwing fight in the Amazon jungle, a 1930s gangster shoot-out in the desert, a 1950s car chase in a Los Angeles night-club, and a spy game would be without one—a ski chase and cable-car shoot-out over the Swiss Alps. Oh, course it looks delicious, but whether the claims of genuine playability are true or not remains to be seen. Keep 'em perked for a review next month.



DARKLANDS *MicroProse*

With the idea of *Hemlock*, top of the *Islander 2* and this month's *Elfers 3*, RPGs are certainly back to fashion this year—and they're better and more carefree than ever. MicroProse obviously thinks it's a hardy genre worth jumping into as Darklands holds the company's first ever foray into the genre-going genre. Designed by Arnold Hendrick (the man behind *Conan*, *Pity* and *Secret Service II*), it's an FRP in the traditional Dungeons & Dragons vein, but with a number of neat twists—not least of which being the narrative scenario. Rather than some flat-off map-of-the-world, Darklands is set in 19th Century Germany, where conspiracies, violence and religious genocide ruled the land, and people believed in demons, wizards and big ugly dragons. Darklands draws its gameplay elements from these myths and legends, with the player's party of four adventurers travelling across the whole of Germany and taking on all the usual magic class, warrior and creature along the way. A particularly neat innovation is that quests are created by a random generator, allowing for theoretically infinite gameplay. Darklands is the real centerpiece in the spring for PC gamers only—especially if hot reviews will follow in the Summer. But will it stand up against the summer's *Ultima VII*, due out at around the same time? We shall see...



ACES OF THE PACIFIC *Dynamic*

Fancy rewriting the pages of World War II history and getting inside *Adolf* another kick in the pants? Well, now's your chance, courtesy of the creators of the original *WWII* classic, *Red Baron*. This time it's a subject a little closer to home for the game's American designers, recreating the epic Pacific air war battles between the Yanks and the Japanese. Players get to fly increasingly complex missions against the hardware deities as part of an ongoing campaign. It's all vividly accurate historically, featuring authentic recreations of all the major fighters, bombers and ships—including the great aircraft carriers. So far it's looking decent, very much in the vein of *Luftwaffe's SWOPEL*, with some very tasty VGA graphics and super high-speed 3D levels. Keep an eye out for *Aces of the Pacific*, arriving on the PC sometime this Spring.



SPACE CRUSADE *Gremlin*

After the runaway success of Gremlin's adaptation of Games Workshop's best-selling board game *Warhammer*, the Sheffield software imperious are still putting the finishing touches to what looks like will be an even more successful product. This time another Games Workshop hit *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay* is being converted to a PC game. *Space Crusade* is brought to life with exciting and screaming out of the 2-Dim machines. It's pretty much the same deal all round—once again the game is viewed using either a 2D top-down or isometric Knight-look-style viewpoint as the player steers his team of such hard space marines around a series of space ships that have been overrun by evil alien hordes. You'll get the chance to do battle with slurring green-skinned mutants, fire and clanking ED-209 lookalikes, save all the usual RPG style puzzles and generally have a right jolting time. Can't wait? Well that's tough, because it's not out until the Spring. At least it gives you plenty of time to brush up on the board game.



BAT II *Ubisoft*

Ubisoft's original *BAT* may only have achieved reasonable success over here in the UK, but in its country of origin it went down an absolute storm when it was released way back when. It's such success that has now prompted this much-revised sequel, which promises to capture the original spirit of the bizarre fantastic RPG/adventure epic, but in a much more elaborate and sprawling fashion. It all takes place on a corrupt alien planet, with the player taking the role of a maverick secret agent trying to get to the bottom of a top-level conspiracy. The adventure element is as strong as ever, comprising over 100 screens of puzzles, *climb and walk* have you, and there's a strong arcade element too—along the way the player finds himself partaking in high-speed car chases, street fights and even gladiatorial combat! The graphics are typically French—in very stylish and pretty (if a little odd in places), and we're promised a revolutionary new sound system that apparently does wonders for the game atmosphere. *Bat II* claims indeed—we'll get the proof of the pudding in the Spring, when *Bat II* hits the ST, Amiga and PC.



BODYCOUNT *Strangeways*

A right, right, we know we did something on this last month, but we thought you might like to have a look at this latest revision, because with all the way new graphics it's looking much better now. Thank God.



A320

A·I·R·B·U·S



...has landed.

developed in cooperation with



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ARCADE BENCHMARK

SNY (Stratos)

The follow-up to *Silverburn* succeeds through a combination of frenetic speed, polished presentation and smart, unadorned action. Tense and tons of it. The *Stratos* and *Sny* are on a score in a level that far exceeds anything offered before. A *Sny* coin-op with no equal.

ARCADE ADVENTURE

GOSS (Newsgate)

While it may be argued that it's not as intensely sophisticated as the likes of *Mad Dogg* or *Prince of Persia*, the *Stratos* brother platform game does offer enough fully-rendered arcade action to make it the sought-after in this category. Classy and deft.

ROLE PLAYING GAMES

EYE OF THE DRAGON (US Gold/SSI)

By the latest word of being SSI's best *Dragon* and *Dragon* game takes the best bits of *Dragon Master*, adds a few more dragons, sets well, and the result is the best yet. For games into the whole fantasy genre, Will SSI rule the RPG land forever?

SPORTS ESCAPE

KICK OFF 2 (Atari)

What can we say? It's pretty plain that trying to explain to the initiated what makes *Kick Off 2* so damned playable, but the primary reasons are characteristic ball control mode and remarkable speed which combine to make it as exciting as the real game!

STRATEGY

CONQUEST (Microprose)

Old Man's *Raided Troops* is deemed as the strategy benchmark by most who believe it - another game by Old Man! This resource strategy epic has the player leading a race of people through technological and cultural expansion as the civilization develops through the ages. Heavyweight stuff, and a work of undoubted genius.

ADVENTURE

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND (US Gold/Lucasfilm)

Fully due to the new refined version of the SCUMM adventure system 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 2* 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 of 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? So perfect it's almost impossible to find any fault in this awesome game from Geoff Crammond. Packed with joyful pleasure for controls and lots of *Actual* for experienced users, it will keep you driving for years.

PISTER UP

IS+ (System 2)

An upgraded and enhanced version of the original *System 2* classic, *Archer Maclean's IS+* is still unchallenged in its field after three years. Its most innovative aspect is the addition of a third, computer controlled player. Incredible speed and outgunning.

RACING GAME

BLAZE CAR RACER (Microstyle)

Start Car Racer picks polygon-piloting power and arcade speed thrills into a novel formula. Drive around closed circuits, smashing and crashing your opponent into oblivion. Growing skills and a world level add novelty value to this class title.

SPORTS SIMULATION

JIMMY WHITE'S BILLIARDING: SNOBBLER (Virgin)

Archer Maclean does it again, and most go down in the history books as having produced the first ever realistic snooker game. *Stratos* comes 20 centuries with accurate play and mass options that you believed possible. An uncommonly good game.

SIMULATION

CRUCK YEAGER'S AIR COMBAT (Electronic Arts)

The third game to be endorsed by the battle-breaking *Control* takes place into the more credible combat arena. You get to fly every plane you've ever dreamt of and you get to fight every plane you've ever thought of too. And all in super realistic polygonal graphics!

ACTION STRATEGY

ROGA IN SPACE (Image Works)

Settable software's first strategy action strategy is a surprisingly successful one. At first glance, it may seem similar to *Populous*, but further inspection reveals it to be a genuinely original strategy epic. But will *Populous 2* shut out *Roga*, and *Roga's* brief reign?

PUZZLE GAME

SETTER (Microscale)

There are many official versions of this classic that can be created on the legs of a millipede. But it's *Setter*'s own *Clustering* version that is undoubtedly the best. Live-up *Setter* is *Setter*. Mark it with *Setter*. May sound dull but is actually fantastic.

PLATFORM

SUPER MARIO WORLD (Nintendo)

The scores they release for *Platform* over here the bones, as that will give more chance to experience the stunning fourth installment in the saga. *Super* perfection from start to end of its many-size level by the way, how you see that *Super* with *Mario* reading the term? It's good 'n' it's *Mario*. It's better than that *Super* *Super*.

S C R E E N T E S T



W

elcome! Welcome one and all to a thoroughly awesome reading experience. You are about to enter the ACE ScreenTest section, the most detailed and trustworthy reviewing system in the universe!

Every word of the review is intended to help you decide whether the game is for you or not. The laudatory text is combined with a plethora of handy icons to offer at-a-glance information.

Each game is compared and contrasted to another title as an easy frame of reference. Most commonly, it will be compared to the best in its particular genre.

The **Thumbs up and Down** box details particular elements which may or may not appeal - the toughness of the bad guys, number of levels, long-term appeal etc.

The **ACE Rating** - a score out of 1,000 - is the most instant gauge of the quality of the game.

An **ACE Trailblazer** award goes to games scoring over 900. These are recommended without hesitation. They are "must buys".

Titles which excel in a particular area also stand the chance of being awarded a **Sound, Graphics or Idea award** (for innovation).

There's even beginners: **NIFF** to get you through the early stages should you buy the game that month and can't wait for our detailed tips the following issue.

Finally, the **PC cover** details our feelings as to the longevity of the game.



900 AWARDS



Games: How to Play
 Publisher: US Gold
 Developer/Creative Materials
 Price: \$29.95

THE GODFATHER

For all the penny critics' drivel about the Corleone family serving as a microcosm of American society, we all know that the Godfather movies are best remembered for their immensely stylized portrayal of mob violence. Everybody's got a favourite Godfather scene. But whether it's the toll-booth machine gunning of James Caan's Sonny Corleone in Part One, De Niro's



Hardly the last day in Italy for the Corleone empire. These are some of the subtle cues when playing about downtown Grand Central. Handy tracking feature available for this introduction.

two-well-aimed rifle or Andy Garcia's steel-mattress-killing of Al Pacino's hit man in Part Three, the common factor making everyone's list appears to be that there's always plenty of stuff being about.

Let's face it, for all its social metaphor and nice sets, The Godfather series is more about spy-guns and money guns than anything else. So it isn't perhaps as peculiar as it may first appear that US Gold have opted to make their first Godfather release an action game. A second project, an adventure in fact, is currently being developed by

Dolphin (Under the a Corpse, Another World) Software and is slated for an Autumn '94 release. So while the French haven't been trying to evoke period atmosphere and message for their title, we are presented with a scuffling shoot-'em-up from the hands of Creative Materials.

All license properties carry a certain amount of negative baggage. For all the extra points which the software publisher will earn through attaching a popular name to their game, there are the inevitable problems. Maybe the actors from the movie won't have their likenesses portrayed in computer form. Maybe the heroes from the film aren't allowed to harm anyone in their computer incarnation lest it adversely affect their wholesome image and so on.

Here, unfortunately, US Gold seem to have had to weather the entire gamut of these problems, putting in with a considerable check of change for little more than the name. There's none of the music from the films. None of the scenes from the movies. None of the plot. Aside from the title screen, there are no likenesses of any of the character actors. The shoot-'em-up takes place in barber shops, casinos and mansions which bear little or no resemblance to any Godfather location. And even the tagline for the movie: "Real power can't be given. It must be taken" has become "You don't ask for power... You take it!" for the game.

Instead, the game's relation to the storyline of the film comes down to its sequences taking place in the appropriate city in the appropriate year and



title else. Is it's best to view *The Godfather* as a period shoot-'em-up rather than an interpretation of the movie. Still, that black & white logo of the hand pulling the puppet strings was such a creepy game.

New York, 1942. The war abroad is over, but new battles are taking place at home. Everyone is out to secure a patch of territory. Like you, they dream of their own business empire, of stability and wealth for their families, of power. And they're going to fight for it. They're so keen to fight for it, in fact, that simply walking about in the wrong area can get a guy killed. An accidentally beautiful opening sequence pans over a night-time Chicago, a screen backdrop for the carnage to follow.

Controlling the apprentice Don with the joystick, the player must successfully reach the right hand end of the street dodging bullets from gangsters and being careful not to injure innocent bystanders when entering fire-lane lanes crossing the street is a dangerous affair, since mobsters in cars cruise by and try to run the Don down. The *Godfather* is split into two shoot-'em-up styles. The bulk of the game takes place in scrolling side-on view, while intermediate sequences are depicted in Operation Wolf style first-person perspectives.

Even as the first level, life for the aspiring Don is tough. Bullets are sprayed from passing cars, roadside-strip pedestrians suddenly pull guns and blast him, doors crack open revealing men with machine guns, and shadowy characters throw bombs on his poor criminal head.

Plus, isn't life a funny thing? The game format closest to that of *The Godfather*, a period gangster movie, is *Robocop*, a sci-fi cop film.

They're both predominantly scrolling shoot-'em-ups with intermediate stages. As usual! Anyway, while both games offer some good side-on shooting, *Godfather* takes place along one plane, with only a couple of up-the-steps situations, whereas *Robocop* took place on a more up or down basis.

And the stairway antics in *Godfather* aren't as strong as they could be. There's no stopping half way up the steps to return fire. However, *Godfather* has more variety than *Robocop* during the main game, with huge cars cruising by and a greater selection of bad guys plugging away at the hero.

Godfather also wins out on the music front, with superb period tunes, even if they aren't from the film.



Let's face it, for all its social metaphor and sine sets, the *Godfather* series is more about spivvy suits and Tommy guns than anything else.

Now let's get something straight immediately, the graphics in *Godfather* are superb. The backdrops are fantastic and atmospheric and even the characters are well in their environment, rather than looking like paste-on graphic blocks. While most impressive is the Operation Wolf pop-up scenes, even the scuffles look pretty amazing.

The player's success is measured in two ways, each represented by a gauge at the top of the screen. The simplest is the player's strength, which gradually gets eroded as he takes hits throughout the level, and can be replenished with first-aid kits yielded by plugging enemies' bodies. The second factor is your Family Standing which is an altogether more complicated affair.

While it's easy enough for a player to understand that incoming bullets will damage his health, and thus is rarely surprised when the funeral scene appears, the game-ending bit of being discovered by The Family occurs at constantly surprising junctures. Family Standing is increased by killing mobsters, and is decreased by killing civilians or Politicians. Fair enough.

However, so keen are the Family that they become fearful and suspicious, that they take a dim view of the player who tries to coast through the level without killing real hoods, and points from the family standing reserve will be gradually drained away as the game progresses, making it impossible for the player to win without some comprehensive killing.

042

HOT IN THE CITY!

It certainly is, and any hoodlum who has wise ideas about taking over and becoming the Don without learning the ways of the street is in for a rude awakening.

The bulk of *The Godfather* is made up of scuzzing street scenes, just like the ones shown on this page. And it's a tribute to the abilities of the graphic designers at Creative Materials that they've managed to create a believable gangster aesthetic, reminiscent in many ways of the *Godfather* movies, with intelligible references to the films of old, even that of the Corleone name.

The presentation of *The Godfather* is superb, but it's far from being a case of a flashy surface disguising a gritty game underneath. The game is a solid, action-packed and exciting, if now too original, shoot-'em-up.

In order to help you fully enjoy the game's atmosphere, we invite you to hop aboard the *AGE* bus on an old New York in 1947 and - thanks to the strokes of fine travel - Miami ten years later, with a couple of hits along the way.

Level One New York, 1947

Fresh back from the war, the player is out to make his name as a figure to be both feared and respected. And what better way than by plugging some unsuspecting schools.

It's that killing. You never know what hit him. There he was, don't! around the way another school, when Blago - one of his kids in the back of the head with a .32.

To be fair, the cops in the film think like this: you say you shoot, but found no smoking gun along with their boss. But what to do, the *Godfather* never-invented? That's what you will - using a coin as they show their face.

Now, these windows may look innocent enough, but believe me, a guy can get himself arrested just by standing around underneath them. This particular pair of windows houses a couple of stick sticks.

They're nothing better than to see over the doorway and capture you straight to death in the street. Whodunnit that's that?



But waiting impatiently and unwilling to stay in the pavement, the traffic these days is minimal!



Right here, where Anthony Bonanno presides over things, you can do it all, or when everything gets serious in a good situation, it's all about high walking around city, and how they!

Level Two Miami, 1957

If you thought life as an apprentice Don was ugly ten years ago, you should see things now! Guys aren't content with wacking each other in private anymore. Now it's got to be a big thing.

A common problem faced by all gangs in that of the Old Man. That is, a bunch of real heads under your belt is a real and tough one for you to see a bunch of people, looking to catch the guy they're after.

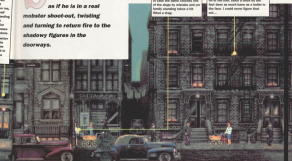
Now today we have to face the same problem. So when we hear that we can't stand and see a hole leaving out of the window in the morning, don't it figure that it's a common problem, but we should be get our attention, let the band, profit.



So well balanced is the action that the player will occasionally feel as if he is in a real mobster shoot-out, twisting and turning to return fire to the shadowy figures in the doorways.

Breaks, huh? Nothing but trouble. While they may be full of good intentions, they certainly cause you all the most inconvenient moments. (Go back for example. To not risk leaving over the gun to the blue mob) to use the items catches you at the stage by mistake and you finally standing before a hit. What a drag.

Like any gun who knows the streets will tell us, never check any state that you don't have to. Unfortunately, if you in game get the chance to stand on to the next part of the level, you have to get to the top of the building. Shoot-out to the boss dropping bullets off of the roof, since a leap on the roof from a roof frame as a bullet in the floor. I could never figure that out...



The last gun you getting involved in the 1950s. Look at this gun, all waiting and looking around the screen, being a general pain in the ass to shoot. That's the only final sample.

Down down on the floor and just down to diagonal light with the action. These last few and focus off to hands of study in the direction. Don't get off in a panic if he turns around to return fire. He needs to be shot twice in the back and he can't hit you when you're invulnerable then.

What you believe in?

What is your greatest weakness? In this city work for these three days. He may look like a normal and pretty but what is a deadly as any man you'll meet in the game.

An even as you see one of these twisted old officers, get a ring between their shoulder blades and you'll be doing the world's best.

Okay, from here on you're on your own, kid. Just remember what I've told you and remember to keep the bullets out of the innocent bystanders, you never know when you may need to ask a favour of them...

THE GODFATHER



Amiga version

A six-disk shoot-'em-up? Who are they kidding? Well, no one. In fact, for players intent on enjoying *Godfather* in all its graphic glory quite an inordinate amount of swapping is necessary. There's a different sequence for both death and being drowned by the family, each requiring a separate load. These sequences can be turned off for players keen to simply press on with the action. The second throughout the game is fantastic, with great spot effects such as subway trains and gas-guzzling cars scuttling past. As despite the swapping, a big thumbs-up. Shame about the lack of a mouse option though.



PC version

With the finishing touches being added to the PC version even as I type, IBM owners can look forward to a thoroughly enjoyable bout of New Year shooting thanks to their hard-drive completely removing all those loading delay niggles. Minimal accommodation problems to be feared, and both APLS and Sound Blaster boards are fully supported.



ST version

Fronting an equally huge number of disks as the Amiga version, and with no Mag to help loading, an ST version should be with us by the Spring.

It takes a little playing before it becomes clear that *Godfather* is a cut above the regular arcade blast. Little touches such as the demands for violence or music tempered by the presence of innocent bystanders and policemen to look unnecessarily trigger-happy plus help a great deal. Since the enemy bullets have no regard for the law, they will continue to blast away regardless of whether there is a copper around or not. Our hero, on the other hand, has to be considerably more careful, holding fire until the police are out of range.

As well as being in the shooting that an occasion the player will really feel as if he is in a real-life shoot-out, twisting and turning to evade the wily shadowy figures in the doorway. Sometimes the bullets are coming in from so many different directions that the player must simply stand still and watch the landscape in order to identify the location of the bad guys, or re-trace the bullets' flight back to their owner's guns.

Before the obligatory end-of-level fondle-it-babe with a digitally mass-produced machine gun that anyone that must be dispensed, the player has to click up a fire escape in a vertical scrolling section. This bit isn't quite as impressive, since once the stick has been pushed up to make him climb the ladder or the



fire-escape itself, he can't be turned around. Thus, once the player begins his ascent of a ladder, he is completely vulnerable to incoming shots. Also the animation of the legs climbing up the ladder is a bit stiff, so let's move on to the next...

The first intermediate stage. Here the new switches to first-person perspective with the player sitting a cross-bench. These stages take place in a bar and a barber's both equally deadly locations for an appetitive Don to enter. Hiding behind the bar and through the curtains, or sitting in the big spiny leather barber's chair are no means, impressively dressed bit ones. They leap up from behind their bullet-proof furniture clattering away with their tinny guns and age. The player must guide his cross-chair around with the joystick blasting all the while.

These scenes, although more robust looking than the scrolls, only last a couple of seconds. This is quite long enough, however, for a less than accurate marksmen to have their life-force drained away to nothing. It's a shame there isn't a mouse-control option for these bits, as the stick-control doesn't exactly make for precision accuracy.

From here it's onto Las Vegas, and the pattern of the game becomes clear. That is, a scroll, two shoot-outs, a scroll, two shoot-outs. Sporting newspapers represent the tramp of time through the levels. New York, Las Vegas, Havana and Miami. Finally ending up in the action-packed finale in a crime-boss' winter palace. Here, the appetitive Don faces his final test, to save the heads of all the crime families from death at the hands of mystery hit men, dressed a hell-o-poper.

This is by far the most impressive part of the game with the scrolling set up trigger the impres-



The *Godfather* game, like the movie trilogy, is supported by open third-party games in the life of the Gamecube family and is available (officially) through the Gamecube store site. It's not quite as impressive as the first two but it's still a change of pace from the other games in the series.





Game Adventure
 Publisher Sierra
 Developer in-house
 Price \$29.95

CONQUESTS OF



This year's only just begun and already it's a great one for PC adventurers. The superlative *Monkey Island* 4 (see page 62) is now setting the standards for others to follow - and not doing a bad job at all is the latest effort from Sierra, the firm that first pioneered the idea of making "graphic" the operative word in graphic adventures.

Conquests of the Longbow: The Legend of Robin Hood (play heavily) may be a little late to catch in on last Autumn's Crusade-related hysteria, but it's nevertheless a more atmospheric telling of the classic tale than either of the recent Hollywood *Robin Hood*s - at least the hero in this one doesn't talk with a ridiculous American accent.

The plot is, of course, common knowledge - although Sierra's retelling adds a few wrinkles here and there for flavour and gameplay purposes. As King Richard the Lionheart returns from his last defeat in the third Crusade, he is kidnapped by the dastardly King Leopold of Austria. Commanding an impressively high ransom of one million gold marks, Leopold has England in turmoil - with Richard absent, the country buckles under the tyranny of the Black Prince John. High taxes leave the populace too poor to pay their

tax, while the iron law of the Sheriff of Nottingham's men drags out enough leather to fit anybody who dares to steal bread for their family.

One band of particularly merry men, however, won't take any more. The *Robin Hood* band, along with his companions Will Scarlet, Little John, Much the Miller's Son, Alan A Dale and Friar Tuck has sworn to bring King Richard back to the throne where he belongs - and do a little to redress the balance to the peasants' favour in the interim time.

As Robin, the player has a seemingly straight-forward quest - raise the ransom that will return King Richard to his native land. So given the god-damnably-high asking price, no amount of small-time looting and hold-ups will do the job. The trick is to find a way to take the money in one fell swoop - and the first few days of exploration and interaction with the supporting cast soon reveal a way that might be achieved. The *Black Prince* is in collusion with a whole ring of corruptly-chosen, many of whom occupy high office and would like nothing better than to see Richard never return. By infiltrating the conspiracy in a variety of guises, Robin can piece together the parts of the increasingly-tortuous puzzle and hopefully use the *Black Prince*'s own money to buy back the King and overthrow him.

Rather than being one long sequence, *Conquests of the Longbow* is broken down into a series of daily episodes - even legendary outlaws need to sleep, after all. Each day begins and ends at Robin's secret hideout deep in the heart of Sherwood Forest. After an initial chat with his merry cohorts, the band splits up and goes about their business - the merry men only converge very rarely outside of the camp, but Robin can choose to follow a particular member on his tre-



Robin and Sheriff's men search for a way to take the ransom in one fell swoop. After a good night's rest, it's time to go to work.



Robin and Sheriff's men search for a way to take the ransom in one fell swoop. After a good night's rest, it's time to go to work.

F THE LONGBOW

The Legend of Robin Hood

els, and will often meet up with them in little contextual set-pieces that move the story along. Apart from these incidents, however, Robin is very much a solo operator.

As with most adventures, much of the initial play time is spent exploring the game world and meeting characters - even here, though, things are considerably more tricky than usual. In this particular version of the tale, Robin's love is well-

known, which means he can't move around in public without some sort of disguise. Walking around with a longbow and a quiver full of arrows as he does in his default get-up is a dead giveaway anyway. Early encounters soon provide a way around the problem - freeing a peasant prisoner from the clutches of a leeching guard on the forest road gives you his eternal gratitude, and the farmer is returned by swapping clothes. Once dressed up in the peasant's shawl, Robin can move around at will - but without the advantage of his protective longbow. Apart from establishing good relationships with the people he saves, these isolated encounters with Sheriff's men and other henchmen such as the Black Monk do wonders for Robin's score, enhancing his image as the protector of the weak.

At first glance, *Centurion's* Robin Hood doesn't seem like a particularly large or sprawling affair. The game world works on two levels - there's Sherwood Forest itself, which is curiously



Murkey! Not only do we get two conflicting Robin Hood films, but the same happens on the game front too! It was only a few months ago that we reviewed Millennium's

isometric interpretation. Though *The Adventure of Robin Hood* is a class-act adventure, it doesn't do much for anybody looking for a good Robin game - the characters are too small and comical to really identify with, and the game's simplistic nature means there's little in the way of real atmosphere. Longbow, on the other hand, is as authentic and atmospheric as anyone could want, and so it's a much better bet for the serious Robin aficionados.

Sheriff's Robin Hood may be a little late to catch in on last August's Counter-related hysteria, but it's nevertheless a more atmospheric taking of the classic tale than either of the recent Hollywood blockbusters.

Large but feature only about half a dozen locations of particular interest plus rest is just black woodlands, and within that the town of Nottingham, which comes with its own atmosphere. They're essentially two completely different game areas, and the story has the player flitting between both on a regular basis to ensure that the wretched Avenel gets hising.

Something that's particularly nice about the game is the fact that it's very strong on character interaction. The computer-controlled supporting cast is a comprehensive and varied one, and it's almost impossible to go far long without meeting somebody of interest. There often has not, it's these characters that move the



CONQUESTS OF THE LONGBOW



1 The main map of Nottinghamshire shows every location Robin can visit - although some secret ones are revealed only after the player has found it for himself. Here's a rundown:

1 The Great Oak is in fact a magical half-man, half-tree being. If Robin can solve his tortuous riddles, the lady within may grant him magical powers...

2 From this high vantage point, Robin can spy on any incidents taking place on the Watling Road below, and intervene should he so choose.

3 Don't forget to pick up your bow from the facilitator leaving the cave - when Robin it instantly summons the merry men.

4 The Widow's Cottage, the old stone house may be weak, but for those stopping over would be an invaluable addition to your arsenal.

5 Robin's secret meetings with Marian always take place in this idyllic setting.



6 **Green-Snap! Ash,** the young and intrepid son of Nottingham Fair. Quite apart from having to meet an important contact here, travelling to the fair gives Robin an opportunity to take part in the military tournament and even, if wary, it will give for a hefty portion of King Richard's ransom. You can't just turn up, though - first you need a diploma, and getting a valuable one isn't as easy as it sounds.

Secure the green drifter with his bow, fair sword, hat, shirt, and tunic.





The walls of the Sherwood Forest, but even a brilliant disguise will get you past the ever-vigilant guard on the gate - only much later in the game does the opportunity come to get

The Robin Hood world is a big'un, but the player needn't get lost in the dank recesses of Sherwood Forest - two handy maps allow him to travel instantly to the destination of his choice simply by clicking on the relevant icon. The system is intelligent, however, and won't let Robin travel to certain locations if he isn't suitably disguised for the occasion. Stealth is of the essence...



Just under the disguise Sheriff's control, the once powerful town of Nottingham has been reduced to a needy, run-of-mill village. Because of the guard's constant vigilance, Robin can only now travel here in disguise, and even then must be careful where he travels and who he speaks to.



The local watering hole is always filled with the Sheriff's men (and sometimes the Sheriff himself), and to Robin (and always to just his guard) here, from where constantly disguised. Make the bar well give at the back of the room - it comes in very handy.



The abbey is one of Robin's only allies in the town - but even he won't help you unless you can provide proof that you are who you say you are and not an impostor. Only a very special gift from Marian herself will convince him.



Like Mary's Monastery may seem innocuous enough from the outside, but inside it's a boiling pot of treachery and high level corruption. There's immediate indication to be learned here, if only Robin can work out how to enter it from the complex maze.





Game Simulation
 Publisher: Microsoft
 Developer: Spectrum HoloByte
 Price: \$49.95

FALCON 3

Describing Falcon 3.0 as a flight simulator is a bit like describing a television as a box with lights in. Everyone else makes brave claims about their flight games being the most accurate, realistic, impressive, awesome and excellent computer interpretations of aerial combat. But



the people at Spectrum HoloByte don't bother. Instead they just quietly get on with the business of producing some of the world's finest simulation software.

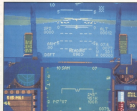
No fuss, in fact, that until recent defence cuts forced a halt to the project, elements of their

Electronic Battlefield System and Falcon code were actually being formed into a training programme for the US airforce.

But accuracy alone is hardly the holy grail of computer software. You can study the aircraft, battle strategies and historical context for all long as you like, and you may even be able to get all those elements into your simulation. But some of that counts for a thing unless you understand how to design a game.

And that's exactly what Spectrum HoloByte know when to do. Despite the Falcon's glowing tone that Falcon 3.0 shouldn't be treated as a video game, despite the subtle but thickly delicious flouting about playing in a world where the children of the planet will be able to celebrate their differences instead of hating them, and here we begin to see that war becomes a forgotten word, Falcon 3.0 is a superb game. A realistic, detailed and accurate game, but a game nonetheless. And you can't help feeling that some folks at HoloByte view this clock-pounding experience as a bit incongruous with the product as a whole.

Indeed, the moment that the awe faded back the hours and we asked the huge questions about the morality of war raised by this opening speech from Gilman Lewis, Chairman of Spherix Inc., there by



CALL! The look of Falcon's other video games is the result of a direct brief. The idea here makes the cockpit's other video games incongruous when they are.



is launched into the introduction, a meeting that's Dena talk of a bridge-bombing mission containing severely sensitive language about enemy jets exploding like firecrackers and balls-out banter.

Tell, it's Holoby's desire that their program be viewed as a simulation and celebration of the abilities of our armed forces, so let's at least take that on board.



Advanced Direct Controller™ has design that will work more effectively in an actual game. The world can be seen from overhead and angle and at any time, which can help the player get a better perspective of where he is in relation to the other objects than his earlier views.

Falcon 3.0, for the uninitiated, is the first game in Spectrum Hobby's Electronic BattleField Series (EBS). It's worth explaining the premise behind the series, since it will give some insight into the degree of forward planning and thought which has gone into the product.

EBS is a networking system specifically designed for playing other games in the series. Clear enough, so the players to separate PCs can talk

Despite the Forward's sombre tone, Falcon 3.0 is still a quite blisteringly exciting aerial combat simulator.

part in the same mission in real time. Not a ground-bombing situation, I'm sure you'll agree that the trick is that Falcon games in the series will allow two players to link up their machines while running different games in the series, so that two players can be using Falcon 3.0 to pilot an F-15 over the Panama Canal while his friend, playing Jet's way, Machine 2.0, must position his missile launcher at a range suitable to destroy targets too hazardous for an air attack. Both players would show up in each other's games, and be able to communicate with each other too, requesting assistance and so on.

Oh, yes, and the system will be able to handle up to sixteen individual users, each operating separately, and visible to the other fifteen. Impressive!

Great, so Falcon 3.0 is great if you've got a glacial link-up of users who all want to play with their jet jet to be advanced EBS games at the same time. So it's hardly going to be a barrel of laughs for the



Comparing Falcon 3.0 to Microsoft's top-performer from Denmark may seem a little unfair, but it's a more reasonable comparison than you may first think.

The games are completely opposing ends of the flight-aim scale. Falcon is absolutely packed with detail and complexity, strategy and depth, while Microsoft is a more instantly gratifying affair. MSX is an excellent game to learn the flight-aim ropes, but Falcon inevitably wins hands-down for sheer volume of content alone.

Also, there's simply more to do in Falcon, with it acting like a huge flying tank. Just waiting to be explored. Whoopie!



players who wishes to fly solo right?

Wrong.

This is where the bit about designing a good game comes in. Without wishing to name any names, there are far too many programs around which, while boasting enough accuracy to make even the most anal of players/pilots giddy with glee, do very little to make playing them anything other than a dodge. They're like an elite club, all code-wards for enthusiasts and assumptions that the player knows what he's doing because he's played a million flight sims before.

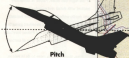
None of that here. Not only is the manual a dream to use (an absolute Godsend compared to the unfathomable manuals normally accompanying this sort of product) but the game is broken-down into three commitment stages, each entirely sup- ▶▶

FALCON 3

Rather than concentrating on one particular element of a flight game to get completely and utterly correct, Holobyte have decided to go for absolute accuracy in every possible area.

Control areas is a series.

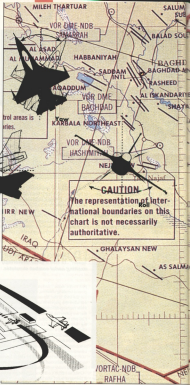
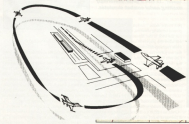
Control areas is a series.

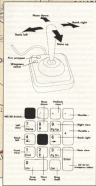


Pitch

This view will show the roll rate as you bank that the aircraft will maintain it as the view rotates with and right from the aircraft view. Pitch is controlled along the horizontal axis, represented by the view looking up and down. Aircraft controls must operate for level of roll movement along the top side of the aircraft.

The flight path view that landing on a 2D is an alternative mode of the software view looking a 3D view. Control area movement will be dependent on the last view of rolling velocity pattern on the aircraft base station.





Map Icons

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Bomb Target | Radio Site | Nuclear Power Station |
| Civilian Airport | Bridge | Chemical Weapons Plant |
| Military Airfield | Oil Field | Biological Weapons Plant |
| Military Airbase | Industrial Target | Infantry |
| City | Army Base | Mechanized Infantry |
| Town | Railroad Yard | SAM |
| Tank Force | Missile Site | AAA |
| Naval Base | Armor | |

When you come from one of the maps, starting on the country legend each symbol you see will have a spot effect on the map when you click it. When it will take the same longer to read the lines, then showing when the progress of the map when you click it.

data from the others, yielding useful, bite-sized chunks of information and data to the player, keeping the learning curve relatively realistic. It's a bit to be admired.

Before any flight can be started, it's wise for the player to visit the configuration screen. Virtually every variable in the game can be changed. It's here that the player can make his life as easy or as difficult as he chooses. As well as the regular, which pretty much speak for themselves, the theory intelligence ratings will determine how long it takes for the bad guys to get a lock on you, and how good the troops operating the SAM sites are. Collisions with aircraft can be turned on or off, as can radars and blackouts (always a bird when learning to fly), limitations on armaments, and fuel and weapon effectiveness.

The most important variable here, though, is the Flight Model. This four-setting gauge determines how accurate the players flight will be to that of flying a real F-16. The highest setting, Hi Fidelity, is no complex, complete with wing-level and all other sorts of nonsense, that it needs a multi-co-processor chip in order to run. Novice pilots, however, should be quite satisfied with Moderate or even Simplified until they've graduated through a couple of missions.

From here, the player should explore both the Instant Action game and Brief Flag. For those preliminary sections, these elements would normally be marketed as games in their own right, each offering words of engrossing play.

The first, Instant Action, true to its name, simply puts the player into a block of hostile airspace, surrounded by enemy jets. He must survive for as long as possible and destroy all aggressors

Falcon 3.0 is like the Dinko out of the new Fasters ad. It's absolutely perfect and it makes you sick.



PC version
 PC owners lucky enough to have a multi-co processor and a second card will be able to enjoy all the benefits which Falcon 3.0 has to offer: excellent speed, a striking soundtrack and lovely visuals, at a real package, eh?

Amiga version
 News from the States indicates that Spectrum Holdings are working on an Amiga version for release in mid-'92. We can hardly wait!

(everything). Since all elements of the simulator are active, this is an ideal situation to learn about the characteristics of the F-16's flight.

Next is the Red Flag training mission. Diverse and completely distinct from much of the files is this To Fly mission that we're all so heavily fond of. This version of the game will generously teach you how to fly a Falcon, from the important fielded basics (it gets you into the air manoeuvrably, with only two paragraphs of instruction checks before lift off) right through to the finer points on the plane during flight and use of weapons.

Assuming the player has the patience to utilize the Red Flag section of the game properly, he should come out the other end with a knowledge of flight dynamics and, in particular, the persistence and abilities of his own F-16 that will enable him to become a useful, functioning cog in the machine that is the Campaign.

And it's the Campaign where all that theory is put into practice. It's here, as the commander of a squadron in one of three theaters of conflict (either Kuwait, Israel or Panama) that the player discovers two things: One, whether he has the necessary skills to make it as a fighter pilot, and Two, that Falcon 3.0 really does hold together as well as to be a first hope.

Here, the player determines where he wants to fight, reviews his mission briefing, examines the relevant maps, briefs the other pilots on his "flight", arms his aircraft and then sets mission in motion. Plus.

Again, rather than being a set of predetermined missions which are either won or not, the missions in Falcon are run-linear. That is, depending on the success of the previous sortie, the player will face a different challenge. For every mission in it, let's say, destroy a bridge to prevent arms





Genre Role-Playing Game
 Publisher Avalon
 Developer Horror Ltd
 Price £29.99/US \$39

ELVIRA 2

JAWS OF CERBERUS

It is said that the great thing about America, the golden land of opportunity, is that anyone - no matter what their class, colour or creed - can 'make it' and become somebody.

However, in the lucky world of American TV, it often seems that this has been proved to mean that anyone, no matter how lacking in any other talent or ability, can become famous.

Take the phenomenon that is *Elvira*, for example.

Back in the early five or six American TV stations decided to screen a late-night season of low-quality 'cult' horror movies. To add a bit of spice to this standard schedule-filling play they created a vampire black-cat temptress to present each movie. This was *Elvira*, of course, who was played by the petite Cassandra Peterson.

Although short of stature, *Elvira's* bombastic personality and ample bosoms earned her instant appeal to the mainly male, mainly pubescent, mainly rather sad but hard-core TV audience. Her popularity soared, rapidly outstripping that of the *24-hour* movies she was supposed to be presenting. A media star was born.

But, hey! What else can you expect from a country that makes a household name out of game-show hostess Vanna White or - Good Lord! - allows the config-rewiring, fake-tanned Casey Casper to host its top-pop music show? We'll have the answers for you right after this break...

...So? It's infectious. That's why we over here

in Britain shouldn't get too complacent, not when the likes of Cilla Black and - right! - Jerry Lewis rub in millions of viewers a week. And... And... And...

Oh, well, I'm starting a bit. And I'm being wretched to Miss Peterson - to be fair to her she did meet *Elvira* with a certain amount of lucky charm and 'off-the-wall' humour. But - hopefully - you get the point. (Just don't ask me what it was, alright?)

The limits of such a media-made celebrity are always cruelly exposed when some bright spark in Hollywood decides that the celeb would make a great subject for a movie. This was the real fate that befell poor *Elvira*, who had to suffer the indignity of appearing in *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark*, a low-quality camp comedy (but no affair). The business was not hard-bottom stuff, being laid down from onwards to *Elvira*; it wouldn't even make the grade in a Gary Oo comic.

Not that this stopped Horror Soft signing up the licensing rights, with the identically titled game going on to achieve notably greater critical and commercial success than the movie. And now we have the game's sequel, *Elvira & Jaws of Cerberus*. Like the prospect, it's a



That, mate? When the player has made his way to the inevitable (and final) showdown with young master (though, damn, the game's intense cast is surely not so wanting the movie - off to Britain here, mate can't get this horror stuff there - watching television's been done, hasn't it?)

Dungeon Master replete with a strong spicing of graphic horror as its major selling point. As far as I know, there's no forthcoming sequel to the movie. Phew. There is a God.

So given that there's no movie to be had, what's the next best thing you can do with an original game? Hey, why not set it in a movie studio? The scenario describes how *Elvira* is hard at work (being her latest spin 'Mistress of Horror' at Black Widow Studios). The player, as *Elvira's* boyfriend (ah - you really, mate up at the studio to collect for her one night but think the place strangely quiet and deserted.



The player's wireframe view of enemies in *Exotic* during Exile II. Despite the complete lack of shading, lighting, and texture, the wireframe graphics are actually impressive, showcasing Exile's better-than-average graphics on a low budget with some trade-offs.

get the idea.

The largest area of the screen is devoted to a graphical representation of the player's first-person, 2D view of the game world—called the "action window". By clicking on a four-pointed arrow the player can walk around the current location. Movement is in coarse chunks, so that one moment you're a good ten feet away from a wall, the next you're practically touching it.

This is a pretty standard display format, made popular by games like *Changeling Master* and *Eye of the Beholder*, but unfortunately Exile's programmers heard the siren's call. In one point in the game, for example, the player finds himself in the studio car park. Directly in front of him is an empty parking bay, with Exile's car parked in the slot next to it. However, when he looks at the car (from the side) and it's suddenly jumped to about fifteen feet away. Move forward to get a closer look and the player suddenly finds himself looking at the car's back. Very disorientating and most jarring.

Also, although the car park obviously extends out further beyond the car, the player is not allowed to walk into that area and view the car from the other side. Okay, so there's no need for the player to, but surely the player should be allowed to do that for his benefit! A similar situation occurs in some of the smaller rooms in the studio—you enter them and are presented with a view but you can't turn to examine the side walls or enter any further, all you can do is leave, annoying.

This problem seems to arise from the restrictive graphics system used. In games like *Eye of the Beholder* the designers use a generic set of walls and floor, adding surface detail (potholes, puddles, fungi) to distinguish these otherwise identical areas. However, in Exile each location appears to have been individually drawn, making the loss of variety and detail but limiting the player's movement. After all, in a game of Exile's size you can't ask a graphic artist to draw all four walls of EVERY room in the game, but however understandable and excusable, the restrictions are still annoying.

The player can interact with the game world in a number of ways. By clicking on items in the action window the player can make a cursory examination of objects. However, this is a

As the player approaches the locked studio game a vision of Exile's first character's vision already, or her face appears, explaining that an Evil Spirit in the form of a giant three-headed giant dog has kidnapped her and is planning to sacrifice her at midnight. (It's not made clear exactly why. The vision fading rapidly, she explains that the spirit is holding her captive in Studio...

You feel better Exile can tell the player her exact location, the vision disappears, leaving only her

spell book behind. Come on, big fella, don't hang around. There's a demon in distress...

At the start of the game the player can opt to become either a character, a priest, a mage, a programmer or a knife thrower. Each is described by a eight statistics: weapon skill, strength, intelligence, and so forth. The game plays slightly differently depending on the character class; a character may have a greater weapon skill rating, but a programmer has a higher intelligence. You



been as a pure role-playing game. Exile II 2 times poorly against the current

BPC Benchmark holder *Eye of the Beholder*

7 (reviewed last month). Although Exile sports better and more varied graphics (the different rooms really do look different, rather than being the same old section of corridor with alternative furnishings), there's a serious feeling of claustrophobia and restriction, of not being able to go where you want to simply because the program won't let you. Compare this with

Beholder's laissez-faire exploratory style. *Beholder* is also better paced, with a gradual build up in pressure, as opposed to Exile's long periods of nothing happening interspersed with brief but violent encounters (presumably intended to simulate the "shock" nature of the horror genre). Exile's most serious fault, as stated in the main review, is its annoying user interface which compares very unfavorably with *Beholder's* slick, atmosphere-composing character control.





Studio 2, where Elvira was sitting down at her desk before the battery grabbed her. This set is packed with a wide range of items: glowing, complex, glowing, musical and even glowing. Every step of the way is packed with potentially powerful objectives. Make sure you save the game as often as possible!



Studio 3, where the car for a game from Elvira's first movie studio. Beyond these early two games, a safety protocol leading to a nuclear chain, when a giant eye starts to come online. A lot of grinding and saving around the world reveals the entrance to the set scenes, populated by zombies and skeleton warriors.



Studio 4 contains the easy accessibility set to the film of the studio. A layout of many rooms, it's full of interesting and great surprises, with a feature for those that want to avoid the usual boring walking. The game is full of things that you can't see. It's not just a game, it's a world. Make the most of everything that is in the game.

THE STUDIO SYSTEM

The *Elvira 2* game's influence has turned each of the three film studios into some form of dimension of game, transporting the player into a huge set work of rooms, corridors and tunnels far larger than the actual studio building itself. Not only does this mean that the game map can be large as the game's designers want it, it also gives a good excuse for a wide variety of very different scenery graphics and monsters. This too part of the game is set in a home, 3D setting, another in their stock steadily, the old haunted house.

Elvia 2 starts quietly, apart from one or two horrific exceptions. The journey through the Studio car park and foyer is a good way of getting the player used to the game's controls, ready for the real troubles which start once the player enters the individual film studios.

The receptionist's desk in the foyer is covered in photographs, some of which are of you with you. Pictures of Elvira, like the one on the wall behind the desk, you see throughout the game, and to keep the horror atmosphere going, used to come in Elvira's personal diary.



Elvira 2 starts quietly, apart from one or two horrific exceptions. The journey through the Studio car park and foyer is a good way of getting the player used to the game's controls, ready for the real troubles which start once the player enters the individual film studios.



START! This is where the receptionist begins, with the player standing at the path leading to the Studio. The whole place is dark and eerily dimly lit, with no sign of the famous Elvira. It's a mix of stars forward and - **THWACK!** (SOUND) - a statue of the receptionist's camp appears before your eyes.

Obviously in an small amount of time, Elvira herself explains that an *Elvira 2* film is the best of a creative three-headed dog has produced the Studio and has taken her footage, with the intention of something for an midnight (as shown as part of some sort of feature) theme creating new into our dimensional universe - you know how these movies tend to go!

Elvira is just about to reveal where she's being held when the *Elvira 2* game manager to speak the things, leaving nothing behind but three's speed (as a game). Sometimes thinking that the major objective was going to come in very handy later on you pick it up and start it in your pocket.

Walking over time you see and to finish your journey. The Studio gives about as freely packed, and there's an way you're going to be able to think over the light house without being a couple of things that make you an adventurer in Elvira for the first place. Along the way you'll see Elvira's film way out here.

There's a map lying by the side of the path. Pick it up - you never know when it's going to come in handy...



Just this is what Blake has been been waiting for - a healthy dose of total success. You can enter and leave the mall, and even pull the fire alarm. After seeing if it plays an important part in the game whatsoever, it's still great fun, though. I'm feeling a bit better.

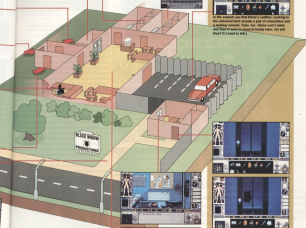
Blake: *Wow! Thanks to get into those floors! You see, the basement and a second floor. All an excellent idea for me.*



In the lady's room you also cover a 20% counter. Perhaps you ought to check up - Blake's bound to be grateful when you finally leave her...



In the escape you find Blake's mother. Looking for the abandoned car reveals a pair of red-wireframe and a glowing object. Take care - Blake won't stand, and they'll see the game in front of her. (I'll tell you if it's good for you.)



At last you're inside the studio. Why, so it's only the paper that it's a secret. It's difficult to know when to go back. There's a chance to know when you're still there, and a look around here - you never know what you may find along the way.



Working around into the security-carrying studio security station, you basically open a cupboard to discover the marked copies of the game, which always get off the backside of you (the first about minutes in the game - don't worry if you miss it, there are plenty more). Remember the lady you find a small box, which (and for the love on the studio gate control) shows? You're in!



Remembering around you find the entrance to the studio security station. And security to right - it's locked up tight. Using the code found earlier you search a lock to the place, and working through the abandoned area you locate the lock with your fingers and open the door. The job finished...

ELVIRA 2



Elvira: The stairs in the Grand House. Not too bad for a 2D game, is it?

Click in the middle of the Grand House: the player finds a key (not with a key in the bottom left). Hopping the screen is part of the fun attached to screen rotation. (MVP)

Unless the player keeps a note of where he's dropped an item or doesn't mind retacing his steps and bringing up the main inventory every point along the way, then it's way easy to lose track of what's been left where. There there are so many items that can be picked up (many of which are useless) and the amount carried is limited, meaning that the player frequently has to drop stuff off to make way for the new, this is a serious fault.

This serious lack of thought given to ease of play comes throughout the game. Take the way that although there's a body lying at your feet, you have to stare too far away from it before it appears in the status window and can be searched. Or how about the way that there are no visual aids to tell you what items of clothing a costume you've got on.

However, in later the player will meet one of the evil Spirit's equally comically creatures. The player can choose to defend against it's attacks or fight it in normal, fierce or berserk mode - the more vicious the attack, the quicker the battle will be won, but the risks of injury are greater. The attack curve turns into a weapons and the player clicks



pretty redundant feature, as generally this doesn't tell you anything about the object you can't already guess by looking at it.

By holding the mouse button down, the arrow turns into a hand, and the object can be dragged into the player's inventory at the bottom of the page. Selecting an item in the inventory brings up a list of action icons at the side of the screen relating to what can be done with it (i.e. 'Open', 'Look in', 'Throw', etc).

Again, there are problems. For a start, why can't the player interact with an object while it's still in the game world, instead of having to put it in the inventory? And why can some objects be opened

If you don't mind investing some time getting used to Elvira 2's idiosyncrasies then

you'll find more than your money's worth here, especially if you're the sort of person who stews down going past road accidents and cuts out the pictures from Fanzines.

and looked inside by simply clicking on them in the status window (generally the larger ones, like coffins and chests, while others can't be looked inside until they're part of the player's inventory and others that you'd think could be looked in can't be looked in at all like murderbeds, though in some cases they can. This last point is particularly annoying, resulting in lots of frustration and largely redundant mouse clicking.

Just as annoying is the fact that objects not dropped in the locations they were originally found disappear from view, although they are actually still there. To pick it up again the player has to click on the main inventory (which lists all the objects known to the player in that location) and drag the required objects into his own inventory.



PC version

The graphics are well above average, sometimes excellent, but the use of colour couldn't really be said to be stretching the VGA card to its limits. Occasionally you could easily be fooled into thinking the game's running in VGA. Second, though somewhat inappropriate to the mood of the game, it isn't great. Best enjoyed installed on a hard drive.



Amiga version

Not quite next month, there's no reason why the Amiga version shouldn't compare favourably with the PC big brother. However, given the game's many graphics and large map size it's likely that there will be a fair amount of disk accessing and swapping.



SEGA version

Currently scheduled for a March release, the graphics are likely to be a little less colourful, but apart from that this should be a non-identical PC portover. Like the Amiga version, expect more than a few discs to be rattling around inside the box, with the corresponding problems.



on the monster to carry out the attack. The player can also cast spells, assuming they've been raised before battle commences. (Are the "I smell a spell!" box for magic.)

But not everything is hostile. Those that aren't can be charmed using the Yell' icon. This results in less conversation choices appearing, of which the player has to choose one. Depending on the other characters, they there are either more choices or no conversation, simply none. It's a well-worn system, and works no better or worse than most anywhere else.

Apart from these points made earlier, other gameplay features intrigue. Take the items that look perfectly normal from outside (but inside is a blazing inferno). Once entered, the player is trapped and doomed to die, even though the exit is clearly visible. This would perhaps be acceptable in a straight-forward adventure (though still infuriating), but in an RPG wouldn't it be better to let the player slow back out, maybe charmed and weakened? And why couldn't I expel the vampire when I was holding a cross (with another one in my inventory)? Okay, so there's no reason why Illness Wolf's examples have to follow tradition, but some things do tend to be perceived as fundamental to certain "gameplay" features.

Oh dear, I seem to be going on a bit again, don't I? The reason for this are simple because I came away from Etrian Odyssey disappointed, although I liked the game, I wanted to like it a lot more. The UI throughout, basically rather unorthodox user interface and occasional gameplay quirks detract from what is otherwise a reasonably engaging and entertaining horror adventure.

The moments when the player actually does meet some nightmare's creature are generally well-animated and have good sound values. However, given the competence of the Etrian character, one wonders why the programmers didn't

put the screen on fullscreen instead of gone. Indeed, apart from the occasional appearances from the Lady herself to provide hints when you're stuck in nice track, they, the Etrian look is tedious to say the least.

Well, if you don't mind having to invest a small amount of time getting used to Etrian's idiosyncrasies then you'll find you get more than your money's worth here, especially if you're the sort of person who slows down going just read accidents and cars, not the pictures from Pango's. Others expecting to be gripped from the word go, especially given the game's slow build up to the action, are likely to be disappointed.

Still, great success...

David Upchurch



I SMELL A SPELL!

Being a game based around Etrian it's no surprise to see magic making its unusual head. Spells have to be raised before they can be cast. This is performed by consulting Etrian's spell book which lists the spells available. These range from Ice God, which throws a magical shard of ice into the screen, to Holy Blast, a lightning bolt highly effective against the undead.

By selecting a spell a screen appears explaining its effect, the ingredients needed to create it and the experience level that has to be reached before the player can use it.

A spell, once created, produces an icon in the player's inventory window. By clicking on the icon when in battle, the spell is cast. But be careful! Each casting uses up the player's valuable Power Points, a sort of psychic power rating. Run out of Power Points and you've run out of spells!



Being killed in the game is a pain, so create a character that you can use to test the game's mechanics. The right set of stats will allow you to experiment with different abilities to see what works best.

EATING



Consumption of food items is a key mechanic in the game. It's important to know what you can eat and when to eat it. The game has a lot of food items, and it's important to know what you can eat and when to eat it.

740

Although initial impressions are good, the game's mechanics are a bit off. The game has a lot of food items, and it's important to know what you can eat and when to eat it. The game has a lot of food items, and it's important to know what you can eat and when to eat it.



MONKEY ISLAND 2

Le CHUCK'S REVENGE

Comedy, as any top stand-up will tell you, is not a funny business. It's subjective. People who split their sides at the sight of Rick Mayall farting and paking in Bottom may well be left stone-faced by the cerebral sparring of Woody Allen in Annie Hall, and vice versa.

This game, it's hardly surprising, if there have been five games attempted in the series, is a small one. In about a laugh. And, like the games that tried to tickle the ol' funny bone, the number that succeeded can be counted on the fingers of one hand. One of this select band, which includes Infamous's Leather Goddesses of Phobos and Sierra's Lamentable Lary and Space Quest series, is LucasArts's The Secret of Monkey Island. A phenomenal success, a sequel was inevitable - and here it is.

To have have Revenge's creators got around the eternally slippery nature of comedy? Simple. Like Lewis, Revenge's writers have centered their gag shot wide and hopefully ensured that most people's funny bone will get hit, one way or another.

So we have gags ranging from the plain stupid (the conversation with the carpenter about how much wood a woodchuck would chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood being particularly noteworthy examples) through straightforward puns (how about a look on wooden-titled 'The Joy Of Hell') to the downright obscure (the Men of Low Moral Fiber - remember them?) - discussing the link between hunting and any/all of the, miscellaneous and performance art).

Of course, the risk here is that by trying to appeal to everybody you end up pleasing nobody.

Fortunately, the situation descriptions and character dialogues are crafted so well that even if you don't find the current gag side-futzing, falling-off-the-chair funny, chances are it'll still make you chuckle or smile at the very least. You get the impression that the team at LucasArts really enjoyed creating Revenge, and this sense of fun is conveyed to the player, maintaining mood and atmosphere even on the rare occasions when a joke falls completely flat.

And for my money (bearing in mind the above that comedy is a subjective board), Revenge is consistently the funniest than most. Being a sequel, the player is already familiar with the central character of Guybrush Threepwood and his history, so there's plenty of subtle potential right from the start as Guybrush bumps into old acquaintances both good and bad and catches up on news.

The story, which takes place a few months after Secret, starts neatly, with Guybrush leaping from a slender vine over a vast pit, a massive chest of treasure in one hand. How did he get there? Well, it's his explanation to Governor Medley who discusses his plight, it's a long story...

Which is where the player comes in. Guybrush may be a little older (as evidenced by the speaking of 'been there') on his chin, but he's certainly none the wiser. Having lived everyone within

earshot (and those beyond) with endless recounting of his epic history against the pirate LeChuck, he decides it's time to get a new story and so embarks on a new quest - to find the legendary treasure known as Big Whoop.

Unfortunately Guybrush's current quest of wit, Scott Island, is ruled by the bullying Largo LeGrande, former benefactor of the wretched LeChuck. Largo has decreed that none may leave Scott Island without paying an exorbitant levying fee - the so-called Largo Embarge. Of course, it's not really an Embarge at all, but Largo Tax doesn't change.

So if Guybrush is going to go anywhere, he's going to have to get rid of Largo EEE. Unfortunately, Guybrush's attempt to rid Scott of the exorbitant go-aroundly levy (mainly thanks to his abominable big-headed bagging and trouble



When you're done, it's not actually difficult at all - it's more like solving a two-dimensional version of the Rubik's cube. But that's OK - it's about the fact, it's not simple (the sequel can't be played without the original). The game is a sequel to the original, and it's a long story...



Missy! We seem to be giving them away like the amount of our constant left clicking around the bottom of the Xbox

line of Quality Street, don't we? Come on, you know what I'm talking about. Do I have to spell it out? Yeah, *Monkey Island 2* is the new ACE Adventure Benchmark. As a game it stands head and shoulders over the previous

incumbent, *The Secret of Monkey Island* (am I seeing a trend starting here). Why? Well, the adventure's bigger, the story's funnier, the graphics are prettier and the music is simply exquisite. Granted, LucasArts Games have even improved the user interface. *Monkey Island 2* is an instant classic. What's the betting it'll still be the ACE Benchmark when *Monkey Island 3* swings in?



is the sustained resurrection of an old adversary. Top, fiddler, moulder and smaller than ever, LeChuck is back - and he wants Guybrush BAD.

Although *Rescue* is definitely a member of the adventure genre, it has to be said that if an adventure from the early eighties, the done of *The Hobbit*, *Starbuck Holmes* et al, fell into some sort of deep sleep and awoke today, he'd hardly recognize *Rescue* as belonging to that once dust-dry genre. And while the Rip Van Adventure genre may mourn the passing of text-only descriptions and idiosyncratic puns, there's no denying that the popularity of the adventure genre today is largely attributable to developments like *zpl-colours*

graphics and easy-to-use icon-driven interfaces. Control over *Guybrush* is via the SCUMM system. The display window is split into three main areas. By far the largest is the graphic window, displaying the current location, *Guybrush* and any other characters present. Below this is a small list of 'action' icons (i.e. 'Walk to', 'Look at', 'Use', etc) and beside a graphically depicted inventory of 'zap items' in *Guybrush's* possession.

Using mouse (recommended) or keyboard, the player can interact with the game 'world' by selecting an action icon and then a location or an object from the graphic window or the inventory to act on. Thus, by selecting 'Walk to' and clicking

on the graphic window *Guybrush* - no surprise where - walks to the one selected. Likewise, select 'Use' and, oop, a bell and *Guybrush* will ring the bell. Occasionally a second item will have to be selected, i.e. 'Use'ing a knife will require a second item to be selected for it to cut on, such as a piece of rope.

Conversations can be started with the people that *Guybrush* meets by selecting the 'Talk to' icon. Three or four pieces of dialogue appear at the bottom of the screen, and it's up to the player to select whichever he thinks is appropriate. The character then replies, and then the player gets more conversation choices. The system has a good and bad point.

On the plus side it's easy to use - no wrestling with a complex parser here (I don't understand 'Chat', etc). Also, conversations aren't entered into unless they're necessary for the game's progress (in which case the character will say advanced), thus avoiding lots of frustrating and ultimately fruitless chats with people who can't help you.

On the down side it can be annoying that when the choices come up and there are two options you want to try out in the same list, frequently one option won't appear in the next batch of questions, involving a fair amount of reentering conversations until the required selection comes up again. Annoying.

A fair amount of playfulness is required on the player's part to bring the full humour from the character interactions. A willingness to select off-the-wall conversation pieces (not to fool you when the equally bizarre responses are) and the stamina to run with a joke until you reach its punchline.

The risk with *Monkey Island 2's* scattered approach to humour is that by trying to appeal to everybody you end up pleasing nobody.

It's interesting to note that the SCUMM user interface is described as a 'story system' as opposed to an adventure system. The emphasis is on drawing the player into a hopefully exciting and amusing adventure rather than testing their vocabulary range and typing skills. A point underlined by the fact that the number of 'winners' icons has been cut down from *Secret's* twelve to *Rescue's* nine.

Rip Van Adventure would probably be more than a little astounded by the *Rescue's* graphics and - surprise! - sound. I also think he'd be very impressed - I know I was.

LucasArts Games have taken a leaf out of Sierra/Oxydian's book and created the graphics by digitizing painted artwork and bonding it up. The results are truly exquisite - they have an organic 'natural' look, far removed from the usual hand-drawn graphics drawn with a paint package. Some of the scenes in the town of Woodtick, a run-down settlement of misused ships, look very similar to previous shots from the forthcoming...



Deep in the Caribbean, hidden by an endless storm, lies LeChuck's fortress...



6 (Moss) Ain't the Woods? You, it's those three of our Wood Pillar again. They're got a good idea, called the Whisker-Wander because it's a gesture for all things... (Moss, looking around) It only you could capture perhaps if you could slip it into Red's coat's got...

(Moss) The boat's under that Wharty, the boat's where's under? Wander if he's got some embarrassing from all Lugo's mischief? Even if he does, you can't get it without a monkey-wisher ticket.



3 (Lugnut) Worry the captain. He may be a skilled craftsman, but even he can't make the one thing that would do the trick some good - a wooden ball of Lugo.

(Moss) (Moss Warty, probably the bear trap maker in the shade of the Captain.



7 (Lug) The coast's like a sea by this early date. There's only one man - Lugo's. Perhaps if you could a diversion of some sort, you could sneak into the boat's room? And... (Lug) How do you think you can get into that boat's room?

(Lug) How do you think you can get into that boat's room?

4 (Moss) The boat's like a sea by this early date. There's only one man - Lugo's. Perhaps if you could a diversion of some sort, you could sneak into the boat's room? And... (Lug) How do you think you can get into that boat's room?



8 (Lug) How do you think you can get into that boat's room? And... (Lug) How do you think you can get into that boat's room?

5 (Moss) The boat's like a sea by this early date. There's only one man - Lugo's. Perhaps if you could a diversion of some sort, you could sneak into the boat's room? And... (Lug) How do you think you can get into that boat's room?



LOBB ISLAND (GRAIN)



Guybrush's first port of call and his last, unless he can rid the place of Lugo. However, this is just the beginning of his troubles. Lugo manages to recruit LeChuck, who is indeed an evening. The only solution is to find Big Whoop (sometimes Red?), rumored to be the only way of destroying LeChuck once and for all. It's a journey is provided by a map, from into four parts and mentioned Moss and Moss.

PHATT ISLAND



The Governor of Phatt Island is a talented member of a man, a sort of 18th Century looks the North. As innocent as he is ugly, the Governor implores Guybrush on reaching the island, with the intention of claiming the bounty placed on our hero's head by LeChuck. There's lots a dark, dark call. Guybrush's only hope of escape is to get the vicious guard dog to bring him the call key. But how?

BOOY ISLAND



The Governor of Booy Island is the beautiful Elaine Marley, a old flame of Guybrush's from the previous adventure. This is a pleasant surprise to Phatt - it's the location of the famed Mandi Case and the popular spitting contest.

(Moss) Guybrush tried only knows how to get to these islands - just to see them in the only sense you need to visit, isn't it? The player indicates where for weeks to go by simply clicking on the island's name.



13 (Above) The Windless Lady won't make a deal if Largo and she have her vital ingredients: a smattering of the Thrush, a smattering of the Hawk, a smattering of the Bull, and a smattering of the Boar. The adventure begins!



12 (Above) Why bother here to make a smattering deal? Why, the Windless Lady is on the case in the heart of the speedy swamp, sending a smoke-fighting journey to an open-legged cattle to the International House of Meat.



1 (Above) The adventure starts from around the French camp for your first hour of Windless. Start your fields, your first fields, are getting pretty sick of being here you get rid of LeGrande. But the only thing, with a Windless you remember that you're on a new quest... to find the legendary Big Whop!

2 (Left) Things don't start too well, do they? You entered Windless in search of a really slow you to trigger by Largo and all your money to enter.



9 (Above) You're listed in all the glory. As you start that place to place you'll be making this very woman or it!



10 (Above) The government here has the body of the great LeGrande. Their government is a deal... it is to!



11 (Above) Captain (Head), owner of the Jolly Boats. He's never been willing to share his ship to you, but he can't leave the island and Largo the Jolly Boats. It only for him to... might, enough ahead, so you need a smattering deal!

FOOT-TOU

Guybrush's quest starts on Scabb Island. To paraphrase Obi-wan Kenobi in Star Wars, you'll never find a more watched hive of scam and villainy, with the main scam and villain being the bullying, vindictive Largo LeGrande. Follow the plot by following! the numbers!





*** Since Spielberg's Peter Pan update *Monkey* gives that industrial Light & Magic, another Lucasfilm division, are responsible for that film's special FX, are wonders if this is entirely coincidental...

A certain, less cultured, member of the ACE staff has complained that he thinks the graphics look "mooey" but then he likes *Amiga* the Hodgepodge (I'm starting to wonder to what does he know?) A more serious criticism is that the highly-detailed drawings occasionally make it difficult to discern particular items from background detail - resulting loss of perspective (viewing of the background with the cursor).

Just as beautiful are the character animations - at least they are in long shot. By necessity, given the size of the figures, the animation is very broad and cartoon-like, but they give pointers to the characters' personalities. It works in similar way that radio-drama or a book works - because you only have limited information to go on, you subconsciously fill in character details and manner yourself.

And it's because of this participation on the player's part that when the view occasionally cuts in to a close up of a character the results are less impressive. What had previously largely been left to the imagination is made explicit, and because the animation is limited (generally being restricted to gross muscle movements) the effect is disappointing. If this sounds harsh it isn't meant to be - the animation is no worse than that seen in any other game - it's just that because the rest of the game works so well these atmospheric beating scenes stand out.

This minor flaw (and the inevitable jumpy scrolling, sigh, the graphics in *Beverage* are quality. There are other minor visual effects on table that at first you don't even notice them - the way figures walking in dark areas of the screen

darkens as well, the cut-of-focus foregrounds and backgrounds that share your eye into "center stage" - that confuses *Beverage* as a true graphics masterpiece.

Beverage is the first Lucasfilm Game to use the new MIDI sound system, an acronym for Interactive Music and Sound Effects. Pure impressions are that it's merely a means of dovetailing one piece of music into another (i.e. seamlessly changing from the "street" music into the "bar"



street. The tone, with feedback brought over a wall full of a window, is rather good - it's a bit too loud when the character moves into and out of the room to get more to explore. But, it's a long story - and the game begins.

(Note: *Beverage* is also, like *Monkey*, a game that needs for attention. What is that in that you going to be for?)

music). Nice enough and big improvement over the cheap cuts between themes in other games, but hardly amazing.

However, it's actually far more complex and impressive than that. The music also changes depending on how the game is progressing. Thus, if Gribble gets into an argument with someone the music will take on a more staid and aggressive tone. Likewise, perform a certain action and an appropriate piece of dramatic music will be woven into the current musical backdrop.

It works beautifully, especially because the music is so good anyway. There are two scores early on in the game where it's especially effective. One is in the graveyard, where Gribble intends to release a grave in search of LeChuck's remains. As Gribble approaches the grave the already somber music grows even more sinister, and when he digs into the wet earth the music builds to a crescendo, accompanied by flashes of lightning. Marvelous.



PC Version

If you haven't got a soundcard then buy one now, because playing *Monkey Island 2* without the superbly atmospheric music is only half the experience - it's like eating liver without onions. Although best enjoyed in VGA to take advantage of the gorgeous lookbooks, the strength of the game - its marvelous jiffing and off the wall humor - survives completely intact in VGA.



Amiga Version

Although still trapped in the depths of overworld Hell, Lucasfilm Games are confident that some Parts of *MONKEY* will be implemented on the Amiga. Also promised are Full 32-color graphics. However, be warned that this will be a multi-bit 1MB-only speed! Amiga owners should be able to check it out. *LeChuck's Beverage* comes late February.



ST Version

Once your Pegasus and start playing, because ST version's fate is still undecided.



Give Pick up Use Open Look at Push Close Talk to Pull

Game Sports Simulation
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Gary Robinson
Price \$29.95

JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL

There are two types of people - those that understand American Football and those that don't. If you happen to be a member of the latter category, and don't know a First Down from a Field Goal, you're missing out a bit. I'm afraid. Alright, so at first it just

looks like a bunch of holes in Easy Street squabbling over a giant peanut. But once you've got a hang of the ground rules, American Football is one of the most exhilarating spectacles you're ever likely to see on television. The result, the thunder, the snarl of the fans - it's a game embedded so deeply into the American way of life that, even at college level it's a multi-million dollar business that makes our sports industry look like a game of Sublime by comparison. Now, thanks to *Champion 4*, it's even built up quite a following over here. Whether this is partly due to our strange subconscious desire to be like Americans, I'm not sure, but there can be no denying the end result - that like it or not, American Football is here to stay.

Despite our hesitance to get involved, however, our experience and expertise when it comes to the great game is still a bit unimpressive when compared to the Americans themselves, and so it hardly comes as a surprise that we've had to rely on them to provide the best computer interpretations - and even that it's been a bit of a dodgy bunch, with only Championship's overplay and aging TV Sports' Football standing out from the crowd. All the more reason then for them that to be getting off excited over Electronic Arts' latest

effort - anyone familiar with American Football games in general or the large magazine 'cover' will know that John Madden Football comes with one of the highest pedigrees a game could have. It has, for the last year, been widely regarded as The Best Game Ever On The Magazine, sweeping rave reviews and awards of accolade on both sides of the Atlantic - and now it's on the Atari.

The adaptation represents something of a software landmark, as it's the first time an original console game has been converted to a computer format - treacherous territory to be sure. Nevertheless, EA's in-house coders have handled the non-too-easy task with grace and style, and the result is one of the classiest sports simulations the Atari has seen.

Right, first things first - the rules of the game. Two teams, one ball, all on a pitch (or gridiron) a hundred yards long. Each team has an endzone, situated logically at either end of the field. The object is to move the ball up the pitch into the opposing team's endzone to score Touchdowns. Unlike Rugby, however, it's not quite as simple as just kicking it up the pitch as fast as possible. The pitch is marked into individual yards (with additional markings for each group of ten - 20, 30, 40 and so on), and the attacking team's job



When the game begins with the attacking team kicking the ball on to down the pitch as possible. When an attacking player reaches a flag, the ball can kick up the pitch into the player whom he is kicked to where you return the same procedure follows every Touchdown.

Right: Defensive and offensive teams face off at the line of scrimmage. With the attacking side free from the game zone they'll Touchdown. The defence can't afford to make any mistakes.





At first glance, John Madden Football could easily be mistaken for

Electronic Arts' TV Sports Football.

Superficially it's very similar indeed,

with lockable sprites and a similar playcalling system—although the pitch itself is somewhat better. And, would you believe, the two games play very much like each other as well! There's very little to separate John Madden from TV

Sports: Football on basic gameplay grounds,

but Madden's more sophisticated character control and the impressive array of options and variables that it offers make it the better bet.

Madden has a standard air about it, which is

most noticeable during play when the impressive 3D panoramic pitch display is in full view.

In, in summary: John Madden is better. **BT**

to get the ball into the opposing team's end zone by advancing it up the pitch in a series of attacks, either by simply running with it, or throwing it to a player further up the field called a receiver or coach. Each attack is known as a Drive, and the offensive game plan known as which to advance the ball at least ten yards. Hence the iconic sounding scores such as "Third and seven": the attacking team is on its third downs with seven yards still to go. Though ten yards is the minimum distance to cover, there's no limit to how far a play may go. If an attacker manages to punch and shove his way through the defensive line, for example, he can run all the way for a Touchdown.

Meanwhile, of course, the other team is defending and trying to keep the ball as far away from its goal-line as possible. If the attacking team fails to advance the designated ten yards, the roles switch over and the other team gets a crack at scoring. And that's it in a very small nutshell. Simple? You bet. Easy? Don't be ridiculous...

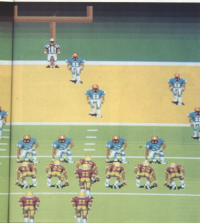
Officially, John Madden Football is part of the EAEN (Electronic Arts Sports Network), although the teams that make up its league are all those found in the good old NFL. There are sixteen of them, ranging from Atlanta to San Francisco and all supposedly modelled on their real-life counterparts, along with a special all-star line-up put together by the big man Madden himself. Once the shoulder pads are in place, the player can choose to tuck his team into the regular season (a double Death game, where the first team to score wins, or into the big-time playoffs, advancing through the increasingly-tough heats for a chance to play in the final on Super Sunday. Players who take their footballing seriously should choose their own team carefully, and be even more wary when facing up to computer-controlled opposition in

's in-house orders

have handled the once-too-easy task of converting an all-time negative classic onto the Amiga with grace and style, and the result is one of the classiest sports simulations the machine has seen.

the playoffs. Teams' performances in different areas differ radically from one another—some are good at attacking in the air, while others may have fast runners that require careful marking or long-hauls in defence that can be exploited. Understanding these sorts of tactics is a vital key to success in John Madden—it can be played simply as an arcade sports game, but the player won't stand a snowball's chance unless he can weigh up the factors and make intelligent playcalling decisions based on them.

And so to the gridiron for the game itself. Unlike most sports games, John Madden Football displays the action from a viewpoint different to its





AND NOW, HERE'S THE WEATHER...

In a special issue for Super gamers, John Madden Football boasts a few features which never appeared in the Madden's original. Games can now be played on real or artificial turf, indoors or outdoors and in a variety of weather conditions. After all, even in America it's not sunny every day...



Realism: Even with the many variations and features, real life grass is still just that. There's not a patch in the sky and the sun is blazing down. Absolutely perfect conditions for a spot of comprehensive virtual football.



It does: It's been raining? What the right button and the result is a cloudy, misty patch. The galaxy is not higher seas, with the ball ground slowly by the player down the side. There's still a bit of getting around, too.



The ultimate challenge: The advanced player, the user will be surprised to find out under the result to be made right as it plays in such conditions on grass. But it's not an exercise. But play on snow, with the feature allows collecting and a bit of fun for the player.

Right but there's nothing out of the world most players in 1991 - the game is a game that plays. When the sun they see on, they could together in a team but on the way that's decided to.

Right really: The idea is not making sense - the sun and the weather conditions that they mean that the team most welcome for a few days.

Right before: Madden suggests that it's not a game with the ball's own weather. It's called a field, and after the sun is the other team.



In addition to the screen of game variations from the screen, players can add extra features to their tactics via "weather". These non-combatable controls are the weathered status for the team before the ball is passed. Every team has the sun on all the special plays, with a different status for each team.



Use the weather to change tactics. If you have any weather status after you've selected your play.

As soon as the attacking team gets within around 20 yards of the target position, it may like to have a score of getting a First Down - particularly if the chances of getting a Touchdown are slim. As the kicker sets in the ball, the player has a couple of seconds to make a good guess and direction through the end zone. The game is over if you're there, but how far the computer says "It's Good". A shot at goal is a situation for an extra point after each Touchdown - just like the exciting try in Rugby.



JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL

Amiga version



John Madden Football is expertly presented, with an end of party football screens and gorgeous graphics when out on the field. The score graduation on the pitch works particularly well. A blazey soundtrack of amplified speech and laser-sounding effects adds to the atmosphere, and all in all what you've got is one of the classiest design products in years. Unfortunately, full-time versions don't get the full benefit of the sound and have to put up with a bit of multitasking, but it's not too much of a drawback.

BT version

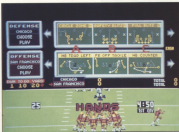


Lucky BT fans, but EA have no plans for an BT version.

PC version



It's hard enough for IBM owners too - John's not planning to pay a visit to your machine. Not now, not ever.



It's not only the fine team select that makes John Madden a game. Madden is also available for sale. If you're looking for a game that's a little more sophisticated than the usual sports titles, you'll find it here.

to that featured by the TV coverage. On the box, cameras generally watch from the side - in Madden the game is played head-on, looking down the pitch from behind the players in a first-personated (JD) view. So far as the arcade side of things is concerned, matters have been kept as simple as possible. It's no kick off to be sure, but given the complexity of the sport it's understandable. John Madden does an admirable job of training playable arcade elements. The player only ever controls one team member at a time, while the computer takes care of the rest, guiding them in accordance with the selected play. In fact, it's possible to take hands off the joystick altogether and let the computer execute the play completely automatically. It's not half as much fun as controlling things personally, but it shows how the computer-controlled players behave intelligently.

Through the game flows fairly steady play. It's split into two distinct sections. Before each play, both teams pick their tactics from a computerised menu selection put together by Madden himself. American Football allows the coach to change his team lineup for each particular play - bringing

stands to be gained if the play comes off makes it worth the risk. Alternatively, there are about 17 seven running plays where the quarterback usually hands the ball to one of his runners, who then tries to run round or bang his way through the defensive line. Tactics are of course a matter of personal taste, to be tailored round a player's particular style and skills. Ambitious players may want to spend a lot of time 'in the air', passing over long distances to make big yard gains at a time, while others may prefer the slow, thoughtful approach, making short running plays that gain just a few yards at a time.

Here there's no set, though, advancing the ball over a couple of yards can be a much tougher task than it sounds. The defensive plays are just as varied and diverse as the offensive ones, with comprehensive marking of players, blitzes at the quarterback aimed at 'locking' him before he gets rid of the ball and even attempts at intercepting the ball in the air. Thus learning the whole direction of the game around. With such varied tactics available to both offensive and defensive sides, the real trick is in anticipating what the other team is going



At last! A real game that's a little more sophisticated than the usual sports titles, you'll find it here.

John Madden Football comes recommended even to those who have no prior knowledge of, or even interest in American Football. It's probably the best and most convincing introduction to the sport there is.

to do, and then calling a play to counter those tactics. Madden's play selection system has been designed to let this vital thinking element work to the full. As each team selects, three possible plays are displayed at a time - a simple tap of the joystick selects one of the trio, with an indication made on screen as to which has been picked. The result is that neither side knows exactly what the other is up to until the play begins.

All this tactical thinking and point-based playcalling may be a very important part of the game,



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LEADERBOARD

RECENT RANKING



But on its own, this combination is very forgiving and is made to stay the pace up and also allows consistently improving the accuracy. Top of the leaderboards are easy to access, and you can pause and continue with confidence when the player is unsure. Most of the time, the player is not sure of the score, so the player is not sure of the score. The player is not sure of the score. The player is not sure of the score.

765

NINJA GAIDEN

RECENT RANKING



It's not the only one to have a single sword, but it's the only one to have a single sword. It's not the only one to have a single sword, but it's the only one to have a single sword. It's not the only one to have a single sword, but it's the only one to have a single sword.

800

WORLD CLASS LEADERBOARD

GOLF



Anyone with even a passing familiarity with US Golf's aging golf class, Leaderboard will instantly recognize the screenshots here - if you can make them out, that is. This Sega offering is effectively a straight port over from the more recent - and more sophisticated - World Class edition. Though it's not the best Golf game on the machine (player Golf claimed that title back in August), it's the first to have a serious crack at simulating the sport, as opposed to Super's simplistic mini-golf antics.

CourseGear golfers get to play a round over forty reconstructions of four famous courses around the world - although in practice, one course looks much like another, and the real gameplay variety is provided by a three-way difficulty setting, which adds complicating factors like hook and slice and wind conditions, thus making for more interesting play.



To its credit, World Class Leaderboard on the GameGear is virtually identical to the original computer version - no features have been lost or simplified in this handheld translation. The courses come complete with bunkers and lakes, while players can practice on the endless driving range or putting green. There are even a few extra features, such as matches of digital speech which accompany certain shots.

The only problem with the game, it would seem, is the rather clunky control method. Because the powerstroke hit, which controls the shot, is so small, it's very difficult to hit the ball accurately, and for some reason putting is a ridiculously hit-and-miss affair, particularly over short distances. As a result, what might have easily been one of the best GameGear products to date comes across as simply above average.

By Gary Whitta



PRICE
\$24.99
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NINJA GAIDEN



Was it not that the handheld evolution is leading to into incredible new vistas of original gaming excitement. Having already done the rounds on every former imaginable, Ninja Gaiden (four year old doyen) that it is finally arrives on the GameGear. And it's not just bad.

Although relatively short of fighting variety - the player has a single sword slash at his disposal and graphically spars. Ninja Gaiden is still a rousing beat-'em-up of the highest order.

Progressing through a bank of levels, our lone Ninja must gradually work his way through increasingly heavily populated enemy zones, slinking away at the bad guys and doing battle with the end-of-level monsters. Pretty fancy sounding stuff, agreed, but Ninja Gaiden seems to have something quite special in its nature: the difficulty is pitched just about right and the combat,



although simple, is outstanding enough.

As well as the aforementioned sword, the player has a number of other weapons available for use, each of which can be collected on route. Throwing stars, three-way fire and even a protective spinning shield of energy are all employed (assuming the player has enough force points by crushing down and hitting fire). But such features must generally be used for doing away with the evil creatures, since they're so tough.

Further points in Ninja Gaiden's Gross are that - for once - some actual imagination has gone into the design of the bad guys, and a password system allows access to later levels without slugging through previously conquered stages. Cool!

By Alan Douglas



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THE SERIES!!



BATTLETOADS



Looks good, but the graphics is hardly anything to write home about. Even the illustrations of eggs and other creatures around. Satisfying drawings, but not quite enough to make up for the lack of action from the hand writing and mostly when your hands are moving, making it harder to get a feel for the game. The only way to tell off a large other than to get on the edge of it. The only way to tell off a large other than to get on the edge of it.

NUMBER OF EGG 745

FINAL FANTASY



Top quality looking book, thanks to the heavy black paper covers, complete with decorative illustrations of the adventure make this book a real gem. The book is a great price for the quality of the adventure and the top 100 list.



NUMBER OF EGG 820

BATTLETOADS

Oh, how hilarious. There are three three Toads, right, called... wait for it... Zitz, Raft and - oh, my sides are splitting. Please. These red guys like to party on, duck, and bang trough. Lead by their guide and mentor Prof T. And like the cat - godd! they battle against the wacky evil Dark Queen. Gimmie to mooooo. They're nothing like the Turtles at all. For a start, they've got different

names. And there are four Turtles. And... er... that's it.

I suppose it's inevitable that given the (now fading) success of the Turtles others will try to jump on the bandwagon. Frankly, I've had it up to here with Moody pubescent mutant animals sporting California beach hair. And I've also had it up to here and beyond with unimpaired and unimpaired horizontally scuffling bean-voys. So it's a bit of shame that Battletoads is both of these hated categories in one.

As a bean-voysup Battletoads fares okay. It's pretty good fun and the fighting animations are a laugh. However, there's little skill involved - light success is simply a case of hitting the fire button like they. Every alternate level is a shoot-'em-up, with the Toad jumping into his safe spawning. Again, these levels are hardly groundbreaking, but they add variety to the package. If this sort of game is your bag, you'll probably enjoy what's on offer here. Personally, it left me cold.

Now, how long before we get the Seasonal Pizza Cuts game?

© David Lightbown



PRICE £24.99 (Suggested)



Includes two...
Includes two...
Includes two...
Includes two...

FINAL FANTASY

Now this is impossible. There are two problems with the Fighting Fantasy books. One, you can't cheat. Two, the visuals are limited to a set of line drawings for only the most exciting scenes. Nevertheless, the books themselves make perfect Tabletop-playing material, so the prospect of playing an entirely accessible, enormous perfectly pitched fantasy role playing game on a chest free Gameboy, with graphics and without the need for paper, pencil or dice, is most appealing.

The Dark Lord is seeking the Tree of Mana which can be found at the top of a waterfall in a mystic kingdom. And it's up to the player to prevent the Lord from getting his hands on the Tree and plunging the whole world into evil darkness and misery.

And so, after delimiting a layout in a rather peculiar opening sequence, the player begins his quest. Exploring the land is thoroughly amusing, and

the player will be fully reward - thanks to little pop-up boxes - in the storyline and the nature of his quest long before any actual adventuring begins.

As you would expect, Final Fantasy Adventure has all the requisite adventuring features: objects to collect, characters to interact with, monsters to defeat, currency, etc. But partially owing to the cute nature of the Japanese-looking heroes and partially owing to the constantly detailed adventure itself which prevents the player from idly wandering around the long periods, Final Fantasy Adventure allows the player to become instantly and thoroughly involved.

Final Fantasy Adventure is a class product. There's plenty recommended it, most of which you've just read, so try it.

© Ken Stronach



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Includes two...
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TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES 2



PRICE
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Available on
PlayStation
Super Nintendo
Sega Saturn
3DO
MSX
MSX2
MSX2+
PC
PC CD-ROM
PC DOS
PC Windows

Cowabunga! Okay, I know it's a cliché using the "Turtle" battle cry to start off a review or feature about them but what else can you do? Actually, it has more relevance than usual because in this, the second Turtle game from Konami (except the '1' in the title - sorry, eh?), the Turtles actually shout "Cowabunga!" at the start of each level. And "Press time!" when you pause the game. Thank God for the miracle of digitized speech.

This speech is exemplary of the superb presentation throughout the game - this cart is jam-packed with tunes, interludic graphics and animations and a brilliant intro sequence, making it one of the best looking and sounding Genesis games around. It's a pity then that the game is so disappointing.

It's a five-level rescue mission to save April O'Neil from the clutches of Shredder (again). As in the previous game this involves lots of running around a horizontally-scrolling background, kicking and bopping members of the Foot Clan out of the way, culminating in a end-of-level showdown with one of Shredder's major lieutenants - Be-Bo, Rock Steady and the rest of the gang.

Okay, so the graphics are laggy (although the animation is snappy - the characters walk around as if they've got rods up their backs) and there are some nice sub-games between levels, but this is really just more of the same.

© David Hayward



HOME ALONE



PRICE
£24.99
(SUGGESTED)



Available on
PlayStation
Super Nintendo
Sega Saturn
3DO
MSX
MSX2
MSX2+
PC
PC CD-ROM
PC DOS
PC Windows

Well, we all know about the film. Sentimentality-master John Hughes' likeable comedy isn't perhaps the most appropriate for game adaptation. Nevertheless Top Headwaters have hit the mark well. Not surprisingly, it's based around the film's more action-orientated segments, the last half hour where the two burglars are sleepily fend-off by little Macaulay Culkin.

As distinctive house protector Kevin, the player's task is to run around the giant Maxwell house (represented as a series of flick screens) and collect up all the items of value before the two pranking burglars can get their hands on them. As the valuables are collected from sideboards, cabinets and other less obvious looking places, they must be dropped off into one of the house's laundry chutes, then safely stashed there in the locked basement below. The thieves cause the obvious problems, stealing any objects that Kevin is too slow to collect as well as extracting previous hit points upon contact.

True to the film, Kevin can fight back with a variety of collectible weapons and by setting simple traps (slipping banana skins, etc). With all the items in the house safely stashed there's a quiet mid-level fighting scenario in the basement (1) and then it's back to the chase on the next level. And actu-

ally, it's all a bit of a laugh, with plenty of playable platform action and gameplay that requires genuine skill and cunning. Repetitive it may be, but strangely it doesn't diminish the game's addictive qualities one jot. Most excellent.

© Gary White



Special thanks to Shalhoush Consoles (017 949 9412) for the loan of these review cartridges.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES 2



Great graphics and even better tunes. The graphics are laggy but the animation is snappy. The characters walk around as if they've got rods up their backs and there are some nice sub-games between levels, but this is really just more of the same.



In the sequel you can even do the most ridiculous things. Shalhoush Consoles (017 949 9412) for the loan of these review cartridges.

HOME ALONE



TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES 2
HOME ALONE



POPULOUS

I'M JUST STARTING OUT AND I'M NOT REALLY VERY GOOD AT ALL.

● If you've never played the original Populous, it's understandable that you might have a few problems getting to grips with the land management system. At the outset of the game, it's vital that land is built and leveled quickly so that people can settle and you can get an early power boost. When raising land from the sea, raise twice on the same point, then lower the top to flatten it out. This technique produces more land, faster than raising each point individually. It does, however, use slightly more mana.

● Don't concentrate your land-leveling all in one place. In the early part of the game, people walking around without a house are no good to you at all. Whenever you see walkers, level land immediately so they can settle. And keep "gragging" houses rising on them to sport people. Do this as soon as possible - at many of the early landscapes you

can actually spring people before the house's flag is stable.

● If you want to build a large population very quickly, it's worth remembering that smaller houses produce more population than castles per screen area - in other words a screen full of small houses will knock out more people than a screen full of castles. This is a good tip for the beginning of



Okay, so you got it for Christmas, you loaded it up, you got hooked - but things are starting to get a little tricky, aren't they? But have no fear, Buffrog's here with a veritable cornucopia of tricky tricks and happy hints. They've been handily broken down into three levels for beginners, intermediate players and experts, so all you have to do is refer to the ones that deal with your own standard of play. HINTS, eh?

the game, but be careful as it may cause problems with mana. As you progress further into the game you should go all out for castles, as mana is needed for the golly effects.

I'VE GOT THE HANG OF THIS NOW AND BECKON MYSELF A BIT

● Popul Magiers are very useful for directing people to where you

want them to settle. Move your Magier to a place where you want them to settle and click your people into Go To Magier mode - but make sure your Leader isn't in a house first. When your people reach the magier, simply click them back into battle mode.

● When building a hero (with the exception of heroes of Troy, who aren't fight) always make sure you have a strong leader (the bar



■ When sending out a hero, cover the enemy forces in effects from that hero's own group. This allows you to create awesome combined destruction without hurting the hero, as they are immune to effects from their own group.

■ The player gains mana from each battle he wins. If somebody is killed by an effect then no mana is gained. To get around this problem, you can hit people with effects just to weaken them (say, with a lightning bolt), then have them beaten up by your own men. This only really works if you have people nearby in fight mode.

■ This is a really city one. Go deep into enemy territory and lay a group of baptismal fonts. Then, use the people they create to lower some of the land down into the water. Place a whirlpool in the little pond you have created and it will eat away at its land from the inside out! You may have to keep on refilling the pond with whirlpools for maximum effect.

■ Before you use a hurricane effect to blow enemy people off the map, lay down a series of swamps and earthquakes behind the target city. The wind will then blow them into the traps.



ners at the top of the coliseum should be flying in the fourth bar at least) holding a sword before you click on the effect. This ensures that you don't waste a load of mana in creating a hope-less hero.

■ Early on in the game, try beaching around the enemy's land. This will make these areas unusable and cause problems with settling. The only way to retrieve the land is to place vented areas over the beach.

■ Always build castle walls around your territory since you have a large 'city'. These are extremely effective, and can only be broken down by very strong people or certain effects.

■ Try to kill the enemy's leader. The best tactics are with swamps, earthquakes or (best of the top) baptismal fonts. If the leader is

going to the Feast Market, lay traps around it and you'll kill a lot of his followers as well.

■ The effect that covers the road area is Earthquake - it's a little pricey (3000). For maximum effect hold down the mouse button on a large hilly area. It's a very expensive effect though, so only use it if you're flush.

■ If you have plagueed people, the safest thing to do is kill them off immediately before they spread the disease. There are alternatives - you can try dipping them in baptismal fonts (they will then spread the plague to the other side) or sending them to attack the enemy as a hero. Whatever you decide, do a fast-plague can spread awfully quickly.

■ Volcanoes are well worth doing as they render the land unusable to the enemy, as well as creating mass destruction. For real property damage, by planting lots of forests around the area you intend to volcano beforehand.

I'VE GOT THIS SURGED, COME AND HAVE A GO IF YOU THINK YOU'RE HARD ENOUGH!

■ Combine effects for greater

destruction. Placing forests around enemy land (and then setting fire to them) is particularly nasty. Also, try putting a whirlpool at the point where a tidal wave hits the land.

■ In the latter part of the game, where most of the land is flat, Fungus can be particularly lethal. Try experimenting with different patterns, and create a library of patterns for use in different situations. It's possible to create assassins, missiles (firing out in eight directions), bombs and more.



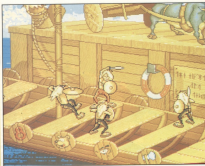


CREATOR

● Don't bother using a Dream Trap spell on a chest - it's not worth wasting a valuable spell on it for the few health points saved.

THE GAME

- Swains of booty-trapped floor switches - some of them activate arrows.
- Watch out for hidden pits around chests.
- Try to keep to the edge in a room or passage (as in case there are traps in the middle, you might find a trap around the edge but it's better than running into one of those in the middle).
- Try to concentrate on increasing *Strength*'s or the wizard's *Bune Lore* skills. This is done with potions marked with various Bune symbols - some increase strength/health, others increase Bune Lore. This will aid in reading scrolls and using certain spells within the game. (There are some potions on the third island in Midgard.)
- Watch out for spiders' web! Don't get too close otherwise you might run into a spider and they're very mean and nasty.



TINY TIPS

There are some times when long-playing guides won't do.

When all you need is a password to the next level, or a cheat for infinite lives. This, dear reader, is where the Tiny Tips comes in handy.

LEVEL 1

Remember that the path to the castle with the goblets is at right levels of *Strength*'s inventory screen, all thanks to Ryan Deaton of *Rescuebots*. Goodbye!

LEVEL 1 - TWELVE

LEVEL 1 - FEA SAMP

LEVEL 1 - THE SAGES

LEVEL 1 - PEACHES

LEVEL 1 - OVERFLOW

LEVEL 1 - BOUNTY

LEVEL 1 - E BOW

SECRET PASSWORDS

This *Rescuebots* team 'n' up for some surprisingly obvious but often passworded, cheat on, and use what it means...

LEVEL 1 - 0000

LEVEL 1 - 8888

LEVEL 1 - 0000

LEVEL 1 - 00000

PUT IT PUTTER

More *Rescuebots* shenanigans, but of a more subtle nature. These codes will take you right up to "Master" level.

LEVEL 2 - 00000

LEVEL 3 - 00000

LEVEL 4 - 00000

LEVEL 5 - 00000

LEVEL 6 - 00000

LEVEL 7 - 0000

LEVEL 8 - 0000

GET THE TIPS GO!

We want to give you free - yes, FREE - software. Actually that's a bit of a lie. First you've got to send us some tips or playing guides or solutions or anything that comes in handy for creating a game - you know the sort of thing. In return, we'll print the fruits of your labors, we'll send you a free piece of software to your machine (more for a particular (and outstanding) piece of work). So lengthy, I'm sure you'll agree. To send your tips (and names, address and machine email) to: ACE The Tiny Tips, P.O. Box 100, 20-111 Paddington Lane, London EC2A 3DU.



HEIMDALL

In this all-singing, all-dancing Viking game sending you berserk? Calm down, comb your beard and ponder on these fine beginner's tips from the brightest responsible - Core Design themselves!

SELECTING A CREW

The optimum crew should consist of

● **BERSERKER** - These are very useful in combat due to their high strength and sturdy health ratings.

● **WARRIOR** - Like the Berserker, these come into their own in combat.

● **WIZARD** - These act as a back-up to Heimdall's own Rune Lore and spell-casting skills (just in case you accidentally kill off Heimdall).

● **BLACKSMITH** - These normally match or better the strength of warriors (but they don't have as much dexterity or as many manoeuvre skills). However, they're still useful in combat.

● **NAVIGATOR** - These save you if you'll lose energy on sea jumps, giving you the chance to get more food before departing.

GENERAL TIPS

● Before entering an island, distribute all the gold to one member of your landing party and use this person as your gold holder within the party (this saves carrying spoils). Do this with keys as well so that you don't lose track of who's got what key in your party.

● Collect lots of food. Not only is this the best way of keeping the crew alive and well, you also need it to keep everyone going during the long sea journeys. On the map screen, always take the

opportunity to distribute spare food to the other crew members on the ship.

● Always remember to check the party's health stats during the game, especially Heimdall, and keep them well fed.

● Any spells that can't be used by any of the crew should always be kept, just in case it's a Resurrection or Energy (All) spell that you might need later.

● Discard any unwanted weapons (see Combat Hints for the best selection) as they take up valuable storage space.

● Always examine any spoils after finding them and discard any that you have lots of (i.e. Darts, Dismal Traps), or alternatively store them back at the ship.

COMBAT HINTS

● Always check your party's health before attacking an enemy, especially Heimdall's as he's the main character and best all-rounder, and we can't have you killing him off, can we?

● Use daggers as these work faster than swords and axes. Change Heimdall's weapon to a dagger if he doesn't have one because he's the first character into combat.

● The best weapons to use are silver daggers, Rune swords and Rune axes as these deliver more damage than normal weapons.

● If you use any of the swords, remember to time your hits with



the enemy's attack just as they prepare to strike. This should give you more hits than just swinging ready at the enemy.

● Always keep an eye on the health bar of the character who is fighting. If it gets too low then swap characters or use a health spell on them.



n ext!

ACE Disk 1!

Your favourite games magazine switches into overdrive next month with a stunning front-cover disk!

That's right. Response to our new look has been so positive that we've been spurred on to give our readers even MORE! From now on, not only will ACE supply you with the best reading matter on the games scene, but we'll be providing the best electronic matter too.

Every issue from March will boast a disk packed to the very gills/limit/brim (take your pick) with top quality games excellence.

So why the disk? And why now? Simple really. Before we activated this ultimate phase in our plan for world domination, we wanted to be sure that all elements of

magazine quality would be in place and solid. We wanted to be sure we could offer both an excellent disk and the best mag on the market. The worst thing



we could imagine would be to simply stick a disk on the front and allow the editorial quality to slide (as you may have noticed is the case with some disky mags).

But now were confident that we simply can't get any more wholesome goodness into the issue itself, we're going to allow our rollicking games-gathering talents spill over onto a disk.

And as well as the cosmic nature of the disk, whose quality we wouldn't wish you to underestimate, we'll be providing you with an even more fact'n'fun-filled issue, containing, should you be in any doubt:

- ★ Another **43-page Screentest section**, offering the most detailed games buying information anywhere.
- ★ A new and **improved News section**, with 100% relevant games stories from around the globe.
- ★ An even **BIGGER Previews section**, with **MORE pictures, MORE games and MORE exclusives than EVER BEFORE!**
- ★ **Earlier In the Works features**, full of secret development information on games at their rawest.

So go and buy it, eh?

ACE March - £2.70 with Tri-Format Disk
On the Shelves February 8th
But not for long.



new releases

Well, another month ticks relentlessly by and once again a new batch of fresh'n'fun software hits the streets. Also once again, you can rely on ACE's comprehensive reviews directory to provide you with the most definitive guide to all the latest wares. And, just to make sure you get a good oggle as well, we kick off the section with a whole page filled with choice photos from a selection of what we're looking at this month. What more could anyone ask?

new releases

ANNIOS



Price: Amiga £29.99
Genre: Arcade Blast
Publisher: Pygmalion

Heavy! Deeper! In the good! Well, that's the idea. The theme is it doesn't quite work.

Annios is a plus-sized machine waddling about on top. The player sits around the corners of two living plants in his ship, sipping the bad guys and avoiding the trapped humans. By shooting certain pods the player can upgrade his ship with better weapons.

And that's it. It's that simple. Of course, with this sort of game you're not looking for depth - you're looking for action. And in this respect Annios does pretty well. The scrolling is smooth, sound suitably raucous, and the graphics have an attractive organic, rounded look to them.

Trouble is, I didn't really feel much compulsion to work my way through the first world, let alone the tenth. Control over the ship isn't quite as 'reflexive' as it should be, and this detracts from the fun factor. No my cup of tea, but it may well be yours. **C** **C** **C**

BARBARIAN II



Price: Amiga £29.99
Genre: Arcade Blast

Publisher: Pygmalion

Pygmalion games have historically always been sized from field back to some less than maximal game design. However, with *Annios* that all changed and the company justly earned themselves a reputation for being able to turn out top-notch software of both high visual standard and demanding graphics.

And for a moment it looks as if *Barbarian II* may be another title in the *Annios* vein. Unfortunately, this is probably not the case, since once the player has got through the obligatory loading sequence (a whole disk's worth it becomes clear that *Barbarian II* is written a state of insanity for the eyes, or a particularly gross place to explore with a joystick).

With left-right scrolling with jets leading into and out of the screen, objects to collect, weapons to hoard and monsters to dispatch, *Barbarian* really doesn't offer the player anything new, and has been carried off to much better effect in both *Gold* and *Final* of the *Warrior* theme. **D** **D**

BIRDS OF PREY



Price: Amiga £29.99
Genre: Simulation
Publisher: Electronic Arts

Well, it's been four years to the making, but at last Hawk - yes, it means *Birds of Prey* - has touched down. But has it been worth the wait? Well... not at all.

Let's make no bones about it, *Birds*

of *Prey* is an excellent flight simulator and, as the name suggests, there's no shortage of delightful action. On a technical level it's astounding, and probably its more impressive aspect is the number of planes you're given the opportunity to fly - no less than 40 individual combat aircraft!

Birds of Prey is much more the thinking man's simulation - very much in the *Microsoft* mould - and not really the more simplistic, combat-oriented intercept type after that many of the new entrants. That said, it's not all just flying from waypoint to waypoint and falling asleep in between. There's more than enough hard work action to keep anybody happy. The CD update is surprisingly okay - considering how much the program is being juggled, but doesn't seem like the result of four years' programming.

Ultimately, what you've got with *Birds of Prey* is a game that's tried to do a bit of everything and come off surprisingly well at the end of it. If anything it leaves a little to be desired on the technical side of things (reading the manual is an achievement in itself), but nevertheless *Birds of Prey* comes shockingly recommended to all flight-sim fans. **D** **D** **D** **D**

CISCO HEAT



Price: Amiga £29.99
Genre: Arcade Blast
Publisher: Image Works

In the light of a whole bunch of driv-

ing games, some of which have been nothing short of excellent, *Cisco's* *Crash Drive* (Image Works) bunch of the value should still consider their state of a worse first.

Not only will the consumer have had his fill of driving in general, but he will also be fully aware that it's possible to produce auto action games a thousand times better than this.

The aim is to race a souped-up police car through the busy streets of San Francisco, avoiding taxicabs, trains and obstacles in an attempt to emerge as the top dog driver in the city.

Quite aside from the CD reactions which make Turbo Quases look pale indeed and some astonishingly dull courses, *Cisco Heat* stalls at virtually every corner. The cars themselves are painful and frustrating, the crowd graphics are basically a single graphic block duplicated with the open, the police car makes into-decay-only a fraction larger than itself, and the camera lingers outside, however brave the attempt, is a catastrophe.

Worst of all, the sound of the car's tires is quite good. **D**

CONAN THE CIMMERIAN



Price: IBM PC £29.99
Genre: Role Playing Game
Publisher: Games

The problem with *Conan* is that he doesn't really know whether he wants to be a serious game or a flashy game. The opening sequence is a mixture of proud cinema and intended mischief, accompanied by some of the most awful music I've ever heard. While some people may argue it's fabulously dramatic, I reckon it sounds like the marriage of a *Poker Face* "My First Cutie" being played to the back.

Anyway, the *Conan* mixture of role-play and exploration and role-on handling works reasonably well, with *Conan* looking every inch the super hero he's supposed to be. And there's plenty to explore.

Even the advertising side is pretty good, and *Conan* can interact (albeit on a pretty basic level) with every character you encounter.

If you feel that there is space on your shelf for yet another role-playing game, and can live with the atmosphere-making laughs, it may be worth

Impassioned gamers are wary that the games in this tract are operating on a low grid, with all the hi-tech savings and deluxe abilities deployed in their only economic format, but they are sure to keep buying the games who simply want a machine to do the tidying-up and look after all the innuendoes, sound and action in his own hand.

☆☆☆

HARD DRIVIN'

Price Lynx £24.99
Genre Racing Simulation
Publisher Atari

The first catalogue of software keeps getting bigger and bigger, and - more importantly - the quality of the games keeps getting better and better. *Hard Drivin'*, a succession of the best computer, is a case in point.

Potential buyers expecting or hoping for this *Phantom* are going to be disappointed: this is a pretty successful attempt to simulate the controls and performance of a real car, and it might be slightly more difficult and much less fun trying to drive than we usual arcade cars.

The action takes place in one of two courses, a Speed Track, and a Street Track complete with jumps and loops. Once these have been tamed the player can try racing against the Phantom Phantoms.

The graphics and sound are nothing short of incredible, accurately reproducing the look and feel of its real-life cousin. Along with *S.T.U.N.*, however this is a real showcase for the power of the Lynx.

It takes a little while to get used to *Hard Drivin'* as the Lynx is the typical in-game substitute for a wheel - making the going rough at first, and some may find the difficulty combined with the lack of immediate pulse-zapping thrills boring. However, once the player has got the hang of things they should find *Hard Drivin'* remarkably satisfying. Recommended.

☆☆☆☆

HARE RASING HAVOC

Price PC £29.00
Genre Arcade-Style
Publisher Disney/Telegraphics

Phew! The idea of a game based around Who Framed Roger Rabbit's stunning cartoon-opining sequence does indeed sound like one very popular last night. Disney has retained little of its great potential in this rather dull little game.

On paper at least, it sounds like the cartoon's outrageously frenetic spirit has been captured. Roger's been captured with looking after the accident-prone Baby Herman, and must create nothing happens to him while his dog-like brother is out of the house, but Herman disappeared in the local dairy to sample their milky wares, and Roger must track him down before any harm comes to him.

Sounds like fun! Doesn't let opponents be deceptive. The only thing that *Have Raising Hare* manages to do is infuriate the player beyond measure with its unbridled control, illogical puzzles and repetitive gameplay.

On each of the screens that Roger encounters, there's a problem to be solved, which involves manipulating the surrounding scenery and objects. To be honest, it's not very taxing and the player soon often loses himself fighting against the computer's control and slow, drudge animation that usually getting to grips with the puzzle. With the Disney brand name associated you get samples of the original movie character's voice and SFX - but these quickly become every bit as annoying as the game itself. Only die-hard Roger Rabbit fans need apply.

KNIGHTMARE

Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Role-Playing Game
Publisher Mindscape

Knightsman, based on the children's TV series of the same name, can't be described as *Capin* with new graphics. The similarities are hardly surprising - both were written by Doug Croteau, the man who has been responsible for more games than Mt Washington.

And, as anyone who has played *Capin* will realise, this is not such a bad thing. The action is depicted in a trapped view down the corridor job, with the player able to move around the puzzle- and monster-strewn labyrinth with ease. It's not particularly original or ground-breaking, but anyone who enjoys a good RPG - and

Capin, in particular - will be more than happy with this.

My only serious quibble is whether *Knightsman* of the TV show will feature slightly cerebral nature appealing.

☆☆☆☆

MOONSTONE

Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Arcade Adventure
Publisher Mindscape

What a coincidence this is. While experience suggests that games billed as being at all "easy" should be treated with approximately the same amount of caution as a drinker got laid with vodka, *Moonstone* isn't actually that bad.

The aim of the game is to reach across a mystic land, searching for the Holy Grail-like Moonstone and trying to ensure that no other wizard gets his mitts on it first. Up to four players can enter the quest, each selecting a coloured knight to control. And why, you'll ask, are we controlling knights instead of elves or goblins or something? Because *Moonstone* is all about fighting, that's why!

At frequent intervals, the frantically tedious travelling sections are punctuated with action scenes. While walking in a wood or dithering by a misty circle, the knight will be attacked by a hostile creature. Here is where the true value of *Moonstone* lies. The combat is incredibly violent and gory. Although the game can be restricted to its separate genres.

All in all a mixed bag it could have been a really great combat game, but there's too much wandering around to give it much instant appeal. Worth a look.

NEVER-ENDING STORY 2

Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Arcade Adventure
Publisher Cines

I've nothing against it except being cheap in their first origins - in fact, I positively endorse it - but when this is taken to such lengths that the game runs out as poor as the world did then I have to throw the hat.

Witness The Never-Ending Story 2. The film came and went at the cinema with hardly a murmur of public interest, and understandably it's likely that the game of the film will suffer the same fate. The fact that the game's release trails that of the film is a good sign or was the final nail in its coffin.

It's a three-level arcade action romp. The first is a thresher of the four most notorious enemies, the second is a 10 chase, the third is a dull-dumb up the side of a tower, the fourth is a Miniature platform affair, the fifth a *Wraith of the Demons* horse ride. As you can tell, it's positively sparkling with originality. As usually happens with these multi-event games the individual sections are pretty weak in terms of gameplay though moderately pleasant to look at. They're also quite dull, and some think it frequent the lengthy gap between levels is particularly frustrating, although well-paced. *Never-Ending Story 2* can only be recommended to the hard fans of the film. There's right - all three of you.

PACMAN

Price Game Gear £19.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Namco

Well, what is there to say about the original arcade classic that hasn't already been said? Not much, except that it's now available on the Sega handheld and isn't bad at all.

There are no folk, enthusiasts or other factors that would have been a viable reason to add here. This is one Pacman or anything original like that, by the great old original, as a man of those years ago. The attraction is pretty much open on points, given that the game hardly pushes computer technology to its limit in any (to be expected), right down to the original vibrant and sound effects.

One change that has had to be made is purely a practical one - to preserve the original state of the graphics, the Pacman is now a four-way scrolling affair, with only a section visible on screen at any time. It would well enough, but it can be a bit of a pain at times, so it makes it difficult for the player to see where the remaining dots are, and where ghosts might be waiting in time. Pacman veterans may find this annoying, but in no more casual players it's not too much of a hind. The fact is a

ally key—get the clunk up and running on your GameLink today!
☆☆☆☆

PUT 'N' PUTTER



Price GameLink \$29.99
Genre Puzzle
Publisher Impact

There's nothing like a good crazy golf game for a bit of harmless entertainment. And, as they say, this is nothing like a good crazy golf game.

Well, okay, so that's not strictly the case, but Put 'n' Putter is certainly fun.

The major, indeed the only, real problem with the game is that it's simply too easy. And by easy I mean the player doesn't get an extra hole when they don't even get a third of a Course (1/30 score) until he has completed about seven holes and has graduated onto the higher level. While it's nice to get a little way into a game before grinding to a halt, this is ridiculous.

Made from this, Put 'n' Putter does all the things a crazy golf game should, falling down in only a couple of minor places. The control means rather sluggish, and the courses could hardly be described as innovative. Worth a look if you're a really cheap golfer.
☆☆

REALMS



Price Amiga/MS-DOS \$29.99
Genre Action Strategy
Publisher Virgin Games

Crashin' just what, as Amiga Power so aptly put it, has Peter 'Pebbles' Molyneux started. Yes, it's him and his merry band of programmers at telling you how we have to behave for the proliferation of low-wired 3D view strategy games.

It's funny that the biggest problem with Realms, the latest offering from Crashin', previously best known for arcade games like Parahedron and Random House. If it had appeared about four months ago, it might be reviewed more favorably. But in the last few months we've had things like Mantis, Deltas and the sequel to the game that started it all: Populous. 2 looks rightly here the competition isn't. One can't help feeling the software-buying public have probably had

enough of these sorts of games by now, and if I had the choice between Populous 2 and Realms, I know which one I'd go for.

The pity is that Realms is actually quite a good game. The player is a wizard in a pseudo-fantasy world, vying for power with a number of ethnographically diverse nations. The player has his people, castles, armies, by magic to cities, the usual sort of thing. Impact Powerwage with more depth but less impressive graphics and you get the rough idea. It plays well, control over the various components of your empire is well thought out, and the mix of strategy and action is balanced nicely. Inevitably, when you've been a God raising life and civilization on your people Realms comes across as Earth-bound in every sense.
☆☆☆☆

ROBOCOP 2



Price GameLink \$29.99
Genre Action Shoot
Publisher Impact

Man, a bit of an oddity this one. While the graphics are bigger and chunkier than before and the storyline follows the second movie as opposed to the first, you can't help but feel that you really have seen this all before.

The main problem lies with the fact that Robocop 2 won't install backwards. This makes the support explanation of the various features and enhancements in the game a bit tedious, since Robo can only explain the features which he comes to see.

Lowering the pattern of bonuses to be received, make it be destroyed and criminals to look well, but it hasn't added the problem.

Still, it looks great and the sound effect and music are excellent. And here's the bit, if you're going to get yourself a shoot-em-up at a New Year sale, it's best to stick with the name you know.
☆☆☆

SHUTTLE



Price IBM/PC \$29.99
Genre Simulation
Publisher Virgin Games

Not for the faint hearted, this one. As

you've probably guessed, it's a simulation of the Space Shuttle. And the word 'simulation' just doesn't even begin to do justice to the level of accuracy that developers Peter Gault have achieved. The cockpit is bewildering—all the player can see is bank, spin, bank of banks, dials and levers, most of which work and have some effect, but the player can only see to fly the damn thing, he has to open up the bay doors and control the orbit using a display window and so forth. And the relevant accuracy is backed up by some of the best 3D graphics ever seen. There's even a realistically and accurately mapped planet Earth that rotates and the star constellations are all plotted correctly as well.

As a means of achievement in Realms is, the biggest problem with it is its limited appeal. Personally I think it's brilliant and completely absorbing, but I can understand that there might be some people who find the idea of building all those dials more a little off-putting. If that's because of the sheer daunting complexity of the whole thing then that shouldn't be a problem, because there's a whole range of game aids that make the game accessible to everybody, whatever what their own proficiency. But there's no getting away from the fact that if you patronise with some one at Thanksgiving, then you're likely to find little to interest you here.
☆☆☆☆

SLIDERS



Price GameLink \$29.99
Genre Action Shoot
Publisher Impact

James, Mary and Joseph! What an lurid tale! Trying to these upon us now! In the midst of the global means the puzzle games, it seems that any old rubbish will do these days. Here we have Sliders, a bit plucky thing who must struggle around a collection of maze blocks that cannot ever be being inside the bad guys. Once Sliders has travelled over, and therefore coloured in, each square in the maze, he moves onto the next.

Latter means are made more hazardous by adding platforms which will propel Sliders into deadly situations. A few first prevents the player from being able to double, or maybe combine his next move, and there are bits of squares which simply kill off Sliders

in-contact. Terrific.

The items being the sort of game to make sure there's no mistakes. Slides is a pain in the ass at the first order, and deserves a place in definitely someone's software collection.
☆☆

STEVE MCQUEEN - WESTPHALER



Price Amiga \$29.99
Genre Action Shoot
Publisher Goliath

Two words! Talk about a cynical theme! Not only is the poor chap dead and unable to defend himself against this sort of thing, but this game actually bears no resemblance to the great man at all! Okay, so he was in a few car races, but these the similarity ends. Don't expect to see any of Steve in the game - his involvement begins and ends with a wacky Mack and while pictures are the best.

It gets worse, well, because it has the worst Westphaler in the title, you'd assume it's compatible with the Westphaler fight game that all, too. Its conventional means, keyboard or joystick control only. Just what on Earth is going on here!

Alright, so it's very Amiga, so it's too what of the game itself? Well, unfortunately things don't get much better here either, so what's so often in a top standard Operation? Well, maybe someone on in a variety of typically Wild West scenarios. That might sound like at least a bit of a laugh, but the action is so stretched and dull that it's difficult to get even vaguely excited. To be fair, the graphics are quite nice in a funny French sort of way and there are some odd touches you can take the pleasure of the women, for example, but it's hardly enough to justify financial entry is that Steve himself isn't even getting in his game?
☆☆

SUPAPLEX



Price Amiga/MS-DOS \$29.99
Genre Puzzle Shoot
Publisher Light Integration

You're Mandy, top hunter extraordinaire, exploring deep inside a crazy computer. Talk about must be weird

ed it all costs, and filling Tanks will trap the enemy." Well, with an intro like that, you can guess Supaplex comes up with a refreshing Change from a company that normally turns up heavy-duty simulations and plane-based arcade games - it's half puzzle, half arcade, a sort of weird hybrid of Boulderdash and The Sims. In each of the game's 12 levels, Mighty Tank wraps up all the "missions" by walking about the linear scrolling screen, grabbing up bits of the landscape and grabbing them when you find them. The trick is to cut the landscape in such a way that you don't end all manner of horrible bony things crawling down on yourself. As the levels progress things can more complex, with trap gates, explosive devices and increasing enemies.

Okay, okay, so it's Boulderdash with tanks on, but it isn't exactly a full-on tank. It may not look like much, but it feels nice and smooth and the strategic nature is strangely compelling. With plenty of options and well-varied levels, Supaplex is likely to keep you playing for quite a while - provided its strategic elements manage to grab you in the first place.



SUSPICIOUS CARGO



Price Amiga, Atari ST £25.99
Genre Adventure
Publisher Gameloft

The puzzle follows you to 1521 (are humans in a bit more control than by medieval standards, primarily because it's a whole lot more accurate and has a glimmer of realism). We've classified it as an adventure here, but it's really a knock-patch of many different game styles - there's a strong RPG element throughout and a sprinkling of arcade-based sub-games along the way.

An over-the-top space pilot (Josh Hays, the player's job is to transport a highly risky shipment of genetic virus across the galaxy to his readers' spaceship, the Lady Luck. Even something as simple as keeping the ship operational and its course is not as easy as it sounds, and things are naturally complicated along the way by a variety of necessary characters who may want nothing more than to throw you out of the works and prevent Josh's cargo from reaching its destination.

I must admit to being a little per-

plexed by Suspicious Cargo - I think, just what exactly is it? The way that it seems to lie between gameplay styles can be confusing, but despite that the mystery here holds the disparate elements together well, and so much you end up with a surprisingly coherent and pleasurable product. It's by no means anything groundbreaking, but it will be appreciated by anyone who finds a good space yarn with a few laughs.



TRENGE MUTANT HERO TURTLES - THE COIN-OP



Price Amiga £25.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Image Works

Now, let's get one thing straight from the outset, Turtles is neither the most complicated or involving game in the world. However, Probe's conception of what could best be described as a fairly basic coin-op beat-'em-up is admirably done in its coin-gobbling task, complete with all the regular Turtles and their opponents.

Catering for one or two players, the game leads the Turtles through a host of increasingly dangerous screens, gradually building up a serious feeling towards the glamorous April from a building, set alight by the evil Shredder.

Turtles suffers from two distinct problems. The first is that one levels Turtlesmen is definitely on the nose, and there is no longer the public love you feeling that anything green will do by the handhold. The second is that, despite Probe's pretty sound coin-revenue, the game's still easy, and even the coin-op itself wasn't that incredible.



THUNDER BURNER



Price Atari ST £24.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Golem

"Top an anti-game with action, futuristic combat and super-stuff", are promised. *Space Warrior* on the Spectrum is what we get.

Missing his way through twelve stages of shocking 3D graphics, our

intrepid hero must control his Thunderforce-like craft deep into the heart of enemy territory and destroy the evil aliens." Big talk.

Even pointing a light on the back of the box with few weights on has failed to make *Thunder Burner* as an exciting.

Plowing the jet plane is actually more fun since everything moves at a faster pace, but the jet editor has a better chance of detouring the pipelines containing data programs, they also cost. It's all a bit too, and apart from several of level monsters which are predictable enough, fills a long way short of even the most basic Beat-strokers.

And if all that seems a little harsh, Larcels can at least comfort themselves with the knowledge that they win the Best Graphics TV Award. Hurray.

TIP OFF

Price Amiga (Atari ST) £25.99
Genre Sports Game
Publisher Atari

The fact that Atari's latest sports game comes from the keyboard of Rick Ollie (although there's already had certainly attracted a lot of interest during the game's development, but now the final product's here it has to be said that it represents something of a disappointment.

The idea is fine - apply the same techniques that made *Back Off* great, apply them about a bit to fit basketball's smaller play area and rules and away you go. And indeed many of *Back Off*'s trademarks are in evidence here - the game's simple, instinctive, and very fun indeed. But just it's a big bug that it just doesn't work. Embedded in a fast game, but *TIP OFF*'s interpretation of it is a bit too openly for control. As a result it just doesn't quite work in the same way as *Back Off*, unless basketball fans would still be best advised to go with *Clawmania*'s version.

TOE JAM & EARL



Price Megadrive £24.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Sega

James' Or, is *Tooth* good, oh dear. The Jam & Earl were presumably intended, like *Smile* before them, to become 'cut' game personalities and thus attract a whole new legion of fans to the Megadrive. I don't know if they

do or not, but on the basis of the game they're in I can't for the life of me see how they could. It begs the question in what 'You Kids' want, then they're surely mistaken.

It's a simple maze game. One or two players, controlling the fat-on-arms of the title, have to travel around a number of exotic islands searching for the two missing pieces of their cracked spaceship. Some islands are populated by monsters of various descriptions that have to be avoided.

Along the way the generous two-story may find bonuses which will award them anything from speed-up trainers to a few items a bit of lightning, blessed blessings or what?

And... er... that's it. Yes, really. All the game consists of is wandering around, very slowly, thingy really doesn't quite suit the two-outlet design of the vehicle detacks. The only points of special note are the way the screen splits when You (and I forgot too) forget, the appealing nature of the two floors and the well-forty music. Any chance of putting the music on CD, Sega?

TRADERS



Price Amiga £25.99
Genre Strategy
Publisher Lead

If you imagine a knock-patch of *Utopia*, *Mega* to *Matrix* and *Populous*, except in 2D, you'd be pretty close to understanding what *Traders* is all about. Again, it's a rare for technological development and local economy, with up to four players battling it out on a mysterious planet, evolving plants and competing with the figures of nature, as well as health advances from each other.

Distasteful from lots of God-like and star games of late, *Traders* has got a reasonably light touch and doesn't weigh the player down with lots and figures, instead it lets them explore their new world and get on with the business of exploiting and raising it with the minimum amount of fuss.

While there's no question that the game boasts as much depth or longevity as any of the games mentioned above, *Traders* gets on a pretty solid introduction to the strategy genre. Not too shabby.



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.

You might be going out to a discotheque on the night before publication date, and may be too hung-over (although we all know excess intake of alcoholic beverages is neither big or hard) to fight your way through the crowds which will be undoubtedly vying for the last copy in your local shop.

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.

But no worries. Simply fill out this form and give it to your friendly newsagent who will be more than happy to reserve the next issue of ACE Magazine for you, for as long as is necessary, no matter when you eventually get off your fat arse to go and get it. Hooray.

And some of the more progressive newsagents around the country may even have set up their own delivery service which may be available for those of you who care to tick the appropriate box.

Dear Mr Newsagent,

Having waded through an especially unconvincing coupon in ACE magazine, I am nevertheless willing to fill in this wretched little coupon asking you to reserve (or deliver, if I have ticked the box) the next issue of ACE for me. Here is my name and address.

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Academy 4	1.00	1.00	Academy 5	1.00	1.00	Academy 6	1.00	1.00
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Still available

A320 AIRBUS



Prix Aérien (\$29.95)
Gene Simulation
Publisher Thalium

You what? Airbus, it's not as if we have any problems flying high in an A320 or knowing up real conditions in a simulator or an airliner— but the A320 Airbus is somebody pulling our pants down? Well, apparently not, as this is one of the biggest airlines (both in German software house Thalium in Germany and in a complete while). Rather than in a complete while, this is the game allows the player to be an airline pilot for a day— well, for however long he likes, up to the controls of the late-known only— at the controls of the late-known only— at the controls of the late-known only.

A320 Airlines.
 As anybody who knows anything about airlines at all will repeat, A320 Airbus is no simple game. Passenger jets are impossibly more complicated jets than fighter planes that have mainly been the subject of simulations in the past. Thalium's game has attempted to simulate the toughest-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 loads, tasks and the realism may be a bit too much for the average Joe Shmoe.

A320 Airlines isn't just about flying around a bit, though. Check, no. 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 Airlines is actually very good indeed. It's professionally produced, open from the accurately super graphics, and though it's not really immediate or instinctive, the rewards are there to be had for the 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 losses for starters. I suggest.

OTOTOT

However, *Gene Prime* is a much better multi-way simulation about— sorry, *Elminder* is a 3D about— you up your driving games and *Strategic* is multi-part multi-advanced game that can, possibly, and would make a worthwhile compilation on their own. The other games are poor to watching to play, but for the price you really can't complain. Highly recommended.

OTOTOT

ANOTHER WORLD



Prix Aérien (\$29.95)
Gene Arcade Adventure
Publisher US Gold

Explore a mysterious alien world in this peculiar polygon adventure from Delphine. Taking the role of lesser the scientist, the player is transported— as a result of an experiment gone wrong— into an alternate universe where mathematics is what it seems. It's a bit controlled with relatively little interaction between characters. *Another World* is a flawed, but brave product.

Although there isn't that many problems to solve and actually the interest in the game is more connected with the look than the feel. It's still a worthwhile purchase.

Overall, it's an 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 sci-

a game of this type.

Early life's most favorable option is the two-player mode— something that's woefully missing from a lot of strategy products these days. It hands 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.

Early life is undoubtedly a fine and very likely strategy game, and one that should appeal to anyone who likes the good old-fashioned ways of doing things, without all the meddling 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.

OTOTOT

BREACH 2



Prix Aérien (\$29.95)
Gene Strategy
Publisher Impression

Though there's nothing particularly special to offer in this third RPG from this month, the following to the highly successful *Breach* is worthy of their attention. So in the future with the player in command of a team of space marines, it's more strategic than role-playing, but the role of the two games is an appealing one. Probably the best comparison is with that old favorite *Star Squad*— *Breach* is, however, boasts a considerably more sophisticated approach, with a more cinematic viewpoint, much more advanced control and three intriguing scenarios.

In each scenario, the player leads his men through enemy territory, exploring rooms, collecting objects and doing battle with the alien hordes they encounter. In the classic RPG tradition, characters can be topped up with a huge array of weapons and equipment, including rifles, rocket launchers and land mines, and all the characters come complete with individual abilities and abilities.

An added bonus is that, should the player get bored with the multitude of missions available, they can create and edit their own. How many games will want to reward this amount of effort? Assigning a playable mission on any kind of game is no easy task, minutes to be sure, however, and you may want to ask yourself if you've ever likely to make use of the feature. But there are enough pre-designed missions to make

one who has a stronger interest in new graphic styles than the depth or longevity of their game, it fits the bill perfectly.

☆☆☆

AEROSTAR



Price: Commodore £14.99 (Europe)
Genre: Arcade Blast
Publisher: Vix Total

When do you get it if you cross a platform game with a vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-up? It's a bloody curve, that's what. *Aerostar* is a seven-stage blaster where the player has to guide a spaceship along an enemy-held highway. The player can fly into the air for a very limited time to avoid ground fire and keep even gaps in the road, but this makes him vulnerable to attacks from the air. And, of course, there's a plethora of junky power-ups to be collected along the way that mean the player's wall has something only a little more threatening than a slug in the face into the stupid world's equivalent of the King of the Beach.

The idea of combining blasting and leaping is inherently good, but unfortunately in practice it doesn't work so well. The player's 'jetter' by holding down one of the GameBoy buttons, and the longer the button is held down the longer the jump. Thing is, the GameBoy's design makes it difficult to fire at the same time without falling into the ship plummeting into an abyss. And as the road starts narrowing and the need for jumping becomes more frequent and the enemy's attacks become more vicious, this becomes particularly annoying.

As it stands, *Aerostar* is a nice stab at something a bit different, only marred by the slightly chaotic implementation. Worth a look, though, if you're interested by the sound of it.

☆☆☆

ALIEN BREED



Price: Amiga £24.99
Genre: Arcade Blast
Publisher: Team 17

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

It grafts *Alien* atmosphere onto *Commander Keen* gameplay to create an addictive - albeit unoriginal - winner. One or two players can take part simultaneously, and their job is to run around the six plan-view maze-like levels of a monster-infested space station, blasting away swarms of alien out of anything that crawls, slithers or tanks.

Fortunately the problems that always afflicted *Commander Keen*, though fun, there was no real time to playing apart from scoring points) has been corrected by giving the players a task to complete on each level (normally of the 'find a position and blow it up' nature). Okay, so it's not quite lifting the game into *Alien*-adventure territory, but it provides enough of a goal to keep the player coming back for more.

The additive gameplay is backed up by some super-dick scrolling and graphics (although the animation is a little perfunctory), and the screen 'zoom' level is very appropriate here. Throughout the use of sound to create atmosphere and tension is superb, especially when the station's wall detouring impedance is kicked in and the player has to feed the real gnat the place blows. The only real gripe is that given that the game is the Amiga-only, you can't help feeling that something slightly more ambitious could have been attempted. But as it stands this is the best straight-forward blast for months, and that's a great word recommendation for anyone.

☆☆☆☆

ARMOURGEDDON



Price: Atari ST/Amiga £24.99
Genre: Simulation
Publisher: Progress

Progress' Atari ST/Amiga effort centres around a six-part mission to find the five pieces of a neutron bomb and use it to destroy an enemy HQ. There are six combat vehicles to try out, ranging from ground-lugging tanks and hovercraft to high-speed jets and helicopters and the player must use the 'kill and judgement' to decide when, where and how best to use them to achieve his current mission objectives.

Manual control of each vehicle is smooth and responsive, with the field of giving a good pubesque-looking feeling of speed.

The player can switch between the

vehicles 'in the field' using the function keys (the computer puts the vehicles wherever this happens, so there's no risk of a recently-selected ploughing more fuel into the ground). Like *Core's* *Thunderhawk*, the screen is an action rather than simulation, with the enemy attacking almost as soon as the player jukes a road-blocked nose out of his loader, which makes for exciting (or somewhat tedious) action. But it's not all about, shoot, shoot. There's an important management element as well, where the player has to wisely allocate resources and instructions to develop new weapons and tech vehicles to replace those blown to pieces by the very same enemy.

Armourgeddon is one of *Progress'* best games to date, with solid gameplay backed up by impressive visuals. *Armourgeddon* tick of all that one bit.

☆☆☆☆

ATOMINO



Price: Atari ST/Amiga £24.99
Genre: Puzzle

Publisher: Progress

Heaven, habbiting! There are five games based around atomic physics, and even fewer interesting ones, so a big 'Huzzah!' and pat on the back for *Progress*. *Atomino* is a puzzle game based around atomic valence, 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 there on a grid and try to form molecules of various sizes, i.e. at least three atoms big, a 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 addictive challenge, pretty graphics and rising tempo sound making it one of the better puzzle games on the market.

☆☆☆☆

BABY JO



Price: Atari ST/Amiga £24.99
Genre: Platform Game
Publisher: Software

Imagine (Marshall's) but in two dimensions and you've got a good idea of what the latest import from French film Lantic is all about. Or if you don't know that by imagining *Mario* with a super-velocity on the main character, it's all really rather hollow, you, with the heavy-tadpole footer to set the bonus goodies as the bonuses along the landscape is used to keep fit - but he doesn't get too much, so he'll come for you! I mean... come on! What are these French game designers and 'scrubbing' pretty wrong if the quality of *Baby Jo's* graphics are anything to go by? Pretty designed levels, attractive music and hideously jerky buildings are all proof of *Baby Jo's* skillfulness, but it has to be said that it is kind of cute in a rather perverse and definitely strange sort of way.

But if there's one thing it certainly isn't, it's fun. The slow, annoying gameplay and fairly three-quarters design makes sure of that. It's far probably this reason that *Baby Jo* should only really be on the shopping list of platform devotees desperate for a new fix - and even then there are much more playable options available.

☆☆

BATTLE ISLE



Price: Atari ST/Amiga/BM PC £19.99
Genre: Strategy
Publisher: Ubi Soft

In strategy games, get involved and more direct, with the flow of *Populous*, *Mega* II, *Melchior* and *Jon* PC, the latest from French firm Ubi Soft represents something quite different, which we hardly see any more these days - a wargame 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 roughly similar to the old 351 war game - units move in turns across a battlefield broken down into hexagonal cells. More experienced gamers will know the rest of the story.

Due to the space-age scenario, the units involved consist of all manner of high-tech tanks, planes, ships and (amazingly) vehicles as well as more conventional infantry formations. Players move their units about, creating tactical formations and assaults, with the inevitable confrontation between opposing forces. As the battle goes on, units must be managed, tactics observed and all the other guff that goes along with

break a world-class crew without the chief, and so that once the game starts at least be on the "take a look" for all the RPG/strategy aficionados. I set a definite purchase.

☆ ☆ ☆

BUGS BUNNY CRAZY CASTLE 2



Price **Commodore £14.99 (Import)**
Genre **Platform**
Publisher **Konami/Ataris**

Who the Hell is Honey Honey?? I must be getting old, because I don't remember Bugs™ ever having a nifty gimmick. It sounds to me like a laser course to rethink the old 'go/stop/skip' by which who must be rescued by hero's scenario to me. In this case it's the hideously ugly Witch Hazel™ who's the wrong door now for I do remember, and who has whisked Honey™ away to her castle. Bugs™ must rescue her by leaping through all kinds of rooms of platforms, gaps, ladders and Lemony Snicket™ characters. Bugs™ must find the hidden keys to reach to unlock the door to the next room. By picking up bombs, stars and so on Bugs™ can blow up those darn Thorns, back his way through blocked passages, etc., etc.

Although it looks like a platform game, *Crazy Castle 2*™ usually plays more like a puzzle game. Success is down to using the items you pick up along the way to get past certain obstacles at the correct place and time. And that part of the game is quite fun.

It's the platform element that ruins the game - Bugs™ never fits through and is hard to control, and all too infrequently allow you into a life by leaping into the hidden to win. Despite it's good graphics, in my opinion *Crazy Castle 2*™ is a right striking load of old crap™.

☆ ☆

BURGER TIME DELUXE



Price **Commodore £29.99 (Import)**
Genre **Platform**
Publisher **East**

Now this is a real Mad Max the part, when made game didn't have to show pictures around like some sub-station. And finally side just to get them to put with their cash. The player has

to go guide his Pete the Chef around a network of platforms and ladders, in a bizarre culinary exercise. Pete has to make giant hamburgers by walking over the various ingredients lying on the platforms. Sometimes he falls down the screen onto the platform below and eventually onto a plate at the bottom. Once all the hamburgers have been made this abstract into the next, more complex arrangement of platforms.

Now this all sounds a bit easy, but you're notched without the constant oranges, glushkins and fried eggs that have escaped from the cupboard and are wandering the platform around as Pete's obstacle. Fortunately the extra diet is served with a pepper pot and a carefully-seasoned shallot will save the ladders for a few moments allowing Pete to make good his escape. More food is Pete can try to make his food-dropping antics to crush the ingenious ingredients. Burger Time Deluxe is a fun little game, although the graphics were on the massive side. It's probably a bit too simplistic for today's younger gamers, but nostalgia holds well despite this sorry tale of the past.

☆ ☆ ☆

CAPTAIN PLANET



Price **Atari ST/Amiga £29.99**
Genre **Adventure Action**
Publisher **Mindscape**

Pass the bottle, mate. Thanks. Yeah, like I was telling you there's like this guy, right, and he's like this one of super-heros, you know. Goes around saving the world from these evil dirty leech/pollution. Yeah, like you say, they're old, time flying, he's got these helpers, and they're like your kids, you know, but they're got special things that give them these super powers. Totally amazing. Each level of the game like comes around one of these characters, and they're just for us.

I think like the best character. Ma, this was her ring to like still can't see the hot guys and super-planes to do can climb up to the level real. Yeah, and like when she goes out here's this helicopter she has to fly around in and sweep up endangered elephants and take them to a sanctuary. Yeah, that's it. It's like this amazing mix of platform game and shoot 'em-up. Moreover, yeah, the graphics are sort of cute, the walking is fun, and the items are neat, but control over your life spins very, but control over your life spins very, but control over your life spins very, but control over your life spins very. Yeah, Thicky Dicky.

Watergate. All The President's Men, but you get used to and all to all it's quite a fun experience, if not the closest thing like you've ever seen. Lots of really pretty psychedelic scenes, too.

☆ ☆ ☆

CASTELIAN



Price **Sammy £29.99 (Import)**
Genre **Platform**
Publisher **Talpa Entertainment**
Remember **Adrian?** It was a classic platform game starring his little called Page. Each of its numerous different levels was set on an old town.

The player could move Page left and right, and make him jump over gaps or shoot at the weird aliens. However, in a unique twist, the items used to create to follow Page's movement. Quite a graphical achievement on the Space!

Now Adrian has come to the Commodore under the title *Castelian*. And while the name may have changed the game certainly hasn't. It still looks stunning and plays well for fun a little. Really using through the level. However, completing a level is extremely challenging, so if you fancy a real challenge then you know where to come.

☆ ☆ ☆

CASTLEWANIA IV



Price **Super Famicom £49.99 (Import)**
Genre **Action Beat**
Publisher **Konami**

I couldn't believe it when I loaded this old Imagineer's Christmas cast that difficult really. They're really looking forward to getting a certain present, and you've got the ground with lots of heavy items to your parents. Then, as Christmas morning, you get a wrapped gift that looks like the same size and shape as the thing you want. Trouble is, when you open it up there's something totally different inside. Oh, it's a nice enough present all right, just not the one you wanted. Well, that's *Castelania IV*. It was great on the NES, brilliant on the Commodore and, along with Captain's Super Christmas, was one on the big anticipated releases on the Super Famicom.

To be fair, *Castelania's* a decent enough game - there's lots of running around platforms, ladders and what have you, lots of hopping the hot guys

with a giant mouse. Unfortunately, what there isn't lots of is fun. The graphics are good, and the animation is merely perfection, with the hero having a rather underdone shuffling walk that makes him look as if he's got tape tied to his feet and isn't trying to polish the floor. It's a bit odd, but it's not the best. Then it might have occurred a better reception. As it happens, it didn't, so it isn't.

☆ ☆ ☆

CELTIC LEGENDS



Price **Atari ST/Amiga £29.99**
Genre **Role-Playing Game**
Publisher **Ubi Soft**

It's amazing how you can tell, 90% of the time, what an RPG game is going to be right by the just by knowing what part of the world it's coming from. For example, anything 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 much more simplistic and simpler manner. As is the case here, with this little Celtic-themed title in very much in the same vein as *Thalonia's Dragonflight* and countless other fine 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 magical world of Celica, where the release of magic by an evil sorcerer has weakened the kingdom to ruin.

What follows is a mix of strategy 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 to genuinely terms it offers nothing that exceeded that of the genre will find particularly well-shattering, it's different enough in terms of presentation and style to make it well worth investigating - especially the movie gamers who may be looking for an accessible and appealing introduction to the genre.

☆ ☆ ☆

CENTURION - DEFENDER OF ROME



Price **MegaDrive £24.99**

Game Action Strategy
Publisher Electronic Arts

Just as an aspiring Commander, it's the player's duty to both defend the homeland and expand the Roman Empire as far as it can go. This magnificent site is somewhat faded 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 turn-driven strategy and arcade-style interludes. For example, to keep the beleaguered provinces happy, the player can take part in chariot races and keep their light. As the game progresses the armies under your command grow and ships placed at your disposal to take control of neighbouring shores become bigger and better. If the player's luck is on even here a stack of reducing the voluptuous Cleopatra. These old strategies games in particular are starved of this type of game, so if you're looking for something to exercise your brain a little, you could do far worse than this.

□♦♦♦□

CHOPFLIFTER 2



Price Commodore £24.99
Game Arcade (Share)
Publisher Electronic Arts

Chopflifter first appeared in 1979 in the underworld and is still fondly remembered today. The player's mission as super-cool helicopter pilot is to rescue survivors from a horrendously scorching volcano. To do this the player must land near the winged villages and wait for them to land. This can be quite frustrating at times as you're a proverbial sitting duck for all the enemy gun installations and machine-gunning planes which constantly fly by.

The player's cabin 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, Chopflifter is one of those games that, once played, is never forgotten. For action, challenging game task and a guaranteed return help make this one of the best games out on the Commodore, and a must for any serious time collector.

□♦♦♦□

CIVILIZATION



Price IBM PC £24.99
Game Strategy
Publisher WordPerfect

American game-design guru Sid Meier, fresh from his success with the hit first-person shooter, has outstepped himself with this latest effort, which can truly be said to toggle the mind in terms of depth, scale and scope. Adapting the more 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 unexplored, uncharted world, to a global empire capable of space travel, nuclear power and the other trappings of a mature life.

The range of factors and domains that play a part in the game is quite simply awesome, as the player's people advance and expand, founding cities, writing off new sea routes, making technological discoveries and building armed forces - all while computer-controlled rival empires do the same. Along the way the player must not relax, maintain and negotiate with other nations, care for the environment and take part in var-

ious arms and space wars. Civilization is undoubtedly the most involved strategy game ever conceived, and as such may have convinced or deterred gamers as likely to be tempted by the game's more-life imitations. For those willing to invest their time and effort, however, Civilization pays off like no other. Wonderful.

CRIME TIME



Price Amiga £22.99
Game Adventure
Publisher Starbyte

Crime Time is an attempt to break into adventure without typing much, conceived by Lucasfilm and Sierra on the IBM PC. Unfortunately, it's not a fiction as good as their wares. The game opens with a moderately interesting scene which takes along time to tell you the whereabouts in the City a crime has been committed, but on something we don't already know. Well, it was most rarely interesting, and it is... the first time around. Unfortunately it can't be skipped and has to be watched every time the game is loaded. Amazing.

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And this one indulges on the part of the programmers and lack of thought for the player outside of 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 sees the result from the list (i.e. "Key"). While hardly groundbreaking 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 sits at the bottom of the screen. As the player moves from the location to location a new graphic display takes in place by pixel - possibly slowly, but.

The scenery graphics are fine, but done at a series of badly skewed 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. Mostly one-by-the-hand adventure fare only - and then only those with mystery in focus or one by-the-wheel of a keyboard.

☆☆

CRUISE FOR A CORPSE



Price Range **\$\$\$-\$\$**

Genre **Adventure**

Publisher **Delphine, Ltd. Gold**

The plot for *Cruise for a Corpse* is loosely rooted in the Agatha Christie "whodunnit" tradition, gleefully of suspects' crime story tradition, detailing how the player is invited to a Cruise (you're the yacht for a well-earned holiday only to get there and find his boat bumped off by an unknown crook). Now you are my Inspector! Whether the player is forced to do a penny monochrome and fully obedient to solve the heinous crime.

After a lot of pre-release interest from the press, there were high hopes for *Cruise for a Corpse*. Is it the excellent game everyone seemed to think it's not? Well, yes, and... In the graphics and sound department it's exemplary with high-quality, fully-optimized sprite-moving over exquisitely detailed backgrounds and plenty of variable backgrounds and plenty of playability in the background. All computer to generate an excellent sense of mood and atmosphere.

The player doesn't see screens (outside [BASIC] via the mouse). By clicking the mouse pointer on objects of interest, a screen appears listing the various things the player can do with the selected item (i.e. "Open" or "Throw") or, long messages around the yacht is followed by walking Round faces location-to-location by clicking on one to the current location, such as doors or hallways, or more quickly by clicking-up the yacht map and "setting" Round immediately from place to place. As a user interface it's difficult to think of another as intuitive and easy to use.

The major problem with *Cruise for a Corpse* is in pace. The animation, though smooth, is slow. Examining the contents of a screen can become quite painful, as Round slowly turns, walks, turns, looks down, continues the item only for a message to appear stating that "There is nothing of interest here". Equally annoying is the frequent though inevitable screaming and screeching of his (you're) "yacht game dies. All too often the player can't return for the clue hunting can be severely hampered by the reduction of the game's speed to near snail's pace. And, perhaps, some of the generally-machined French-English translation is a bit tedious in places, such as the Cabin boy who is described as "dyslexic".

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

☆☆☆☆

DEATHBRINGER



Price Range **\$\$-\$\$**

Genre **Real-Time Strategy**

Publisher **Empire**

There's a big word, right. There will surely be many who magnify given it the ability to attack the weak of anyone it does. Their intention is to see it to get rid of him gradually through steadily-shrinking armies. A barbarian or magical can't even get his own name right. However, lack isn't on the winning side, and the second half is way slow. Kave's colorful bands, finally leaving his back, Kave can't see to give the second half to the woods... in style. Basically it's all a thickly-wielded excuse for a sideways scrolling blizzard of hacking and slicing, with Kave play-

ing through more after more of bizarre monsters.

Deathbringer boasts some of the most impressive parallax-scrolling backgrounds yet seen, even if they are somewhat lacking in color. The sprites are well-drawn with a nice line in texture, but they're rather good in a monochrome mode out of way. But despite its good graphics and adequate sound, Deathbringer's real problem is that it's basically a lot dull. The combat moves are limited in range and slow to implement and just wandering along, rudely plugging away at the facilities, it is not all that interesting. And the pretentious background in the whole World can't make up for that. Barbarian BT this ain't.

☆☆☆

DEUTEROS



Price Range **\$\$\$-\$\$**

Genre **Strategy**

Publisher **Activision**

This sequel to *Illusion* is a by the same authors is set a thousand years after the previous events. *Illusion* has fallen into a sort of post-technological machine and focuses in the near space-traveling glory. It's the player's task to rebuild man's presence for the stars and learn the way into the mysteries of the Cyber world again. The gameplay boils down to resource creation and manpower allocation between various departments, dealing with the occasional crises that crop up and so on. Although programmed well and moderately entertaining, there really isn't anything on show that hasn't been done more convincingly elsewhere. Steady use for the strategy die-hard.

☆☆☆

DEVIL CRASH



Price Magazine **\$\$-\$\$ (Import)**

Genre **Adventure/Real**

Publisher **Sierra Ltd.**

Computerized *Devil Crash* has never been a particularly popular genre - and a spin-off game of *Devil Crash* is enough to make you see why. Ever since the age-old days of *Shambell* and *Time Saver*, one-up and home machines have tried to emulate that early style of plain *Devil Crash* but, but with little success. In theory, it should work

reasonably, with the binary format allowing for all sorts of tricks and wondrous that wouldn't be possible on a real machine. Unfortunately, no amount of gimmicks can make up for the fact that *Devil Crash* 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 credible ballistics and plenty of interesting features - the title is somewhat accurate and packed with all manner of secret rooms, bonuses and other bits. Unfortunately the game's nature of no graphics portraits and music were slightly less a rather depressing and noisy drive the game itself, and as a result it's difficult to really enjoy. *Devil Crash* is the aesthetic equivalent of a bad headache. Whatever its shortcomings, however, computer *Devil Crash* 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 play to be on the market.

☆☆☆

DEVIOUS DESIGNS



Price Range **\$\$-\$\$**

Genre **Puzzle**

Publisher **Image Works**

However, not so much demand is simply *Devil Crash*. Ever since the world went there mad, there's been a steady trickle of arcade puzzles being re-typed into that classic addictive ingredient that made *Image Works*' classic such a well-loved money spinner. *Devious Designs* 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, picking up various shaped blocks and trying to slot them into a rectangular template, while collecting bonuses, a myriad of power-ups and avoiding or shooting the waiting bad guys. All well and good, Ah, but there's more to it than that. On the lower levels, the player can make his character walk up the walls and even on the ceiling, and that is where it all starts to fall apart.

Control over the player's character is generally fine, but when you do, it's all too easy to find yourself slithering up when you didn't want to and not clambering up when you did,

with its own unique set of problems to solve and tasks to achieve, requiring that the player constantly evolves new strategies to deal with them. All in all it is a polished high-quality strategy game for platform or arcade users who like.

□ □ □ □ □

EPIC



Price: Atari ST £29.99
Genre: Arcade Beat
Publisher: Ocean

Hey, has this ever been a long time in the making. I can remember magazine reviewers praising the game (and I think I was one of them). It's strange that it should finally appear around the same time as EA's *Beats of Fury* (see this month's Review Directory), another game thought long lost in the Bermuda Triangle that is known as software development.

Anyway, it's here now so what's it like. Well, to be frank, it's a bit disappointing. The last remnants of the human race are all huddled up in a fleet of space ships, being the rough space to escape the war that is just about to go down. The only escape route lies through the heart of the hostile Empire of the Russians, a vicious regular run-of-the-mill. As pilot of Earth's Top Top Secret warplane, it's up to the player to see the fleet to safety.

This plot forms the framework for the game's eight missions, some of which take place in space, the rest of which take place on the surface of various planets. Although depicted in some super-realistic video polygons (I mean very digital 7-of-7 image design), the emphasis is firmly on shoot-'em-up rather than epic simulation.

Depending on how the player performs on the various missions, the plot varies accordingly, but it's very linear and never really deviates from the linear path. Epic is all very exciting - the sheer scale of some of the space battles is stunning - and control over the ship is superb, but you can't help wishing there was a little more to the game than just blowing everything up. A touch more depth and this would have been a classic. Well if you're looking for a high class, no-nonsense 3D Master then Epic's your game. Personally, I'm holding out for Epic 2. □ □ □ □ □

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER 2



Price: IBM PC £24.99
Genre: Role-Playing Game
Publisher: MCA/US Gold

The first Eye of the Beholder, along with its inspiration *Dragonquest*, can largely be blamed for being responsible, depending on your view of the genre for bringing RPGs spluttering and staggering out of the darkened bedrooms of the world - and glassing many a television and too the bright delights of central academies and public acceptance.

This style of RPG branched further the notion that these games should only consist of random graphics and masses of statistics, depicting the action in detailed 3D graphics, with all the numbers crunched handled by the computer rather than the player.

Beholder 2 continues the tradition of the first, being good to look at, easy to use and - most importantly - fun and exciting to play. To be honest, the real improvements over the first game are few and subtle, and it's still a shame that the various features you'll have a few more attractive themes limited on their screen limitations, but that won't put off the fans here to overcome their adventures in the land of Darkkness, we should a clear success from making their first trip. Highly recommended. □ □ □ □ □

F-15 STRIKE EAGLE II



Price: Atari ST, Amiga, IBM PC £29.99
Genre: Simulation
Publisher: MicroPro

MicroPro made a departure from their usual aggressive-simulations style with this action-oriented affair. It's the flight sim equivalent of the first and Jerry Bruck, i.e. simple with no complications. There's lots of combat arenas to choose between, each with explicit missions to solve. These missions are really all single-ger to, involve a couple of targets and get you into odd jobs, with the player free to simultaneously defend against swarms of enemy jets. Control is via keyboard, joystick or mouse and a highly responsive in each case.

The screen update is fast enough but there are patches 3D features about

it's more than adequate for the job in hand. However, second is disappointing, with a realisation that being being the player's only audio companion for most of the journey, in the graphic department this is a winner, with plenty of white-truckle action to get the adrenaline pumping. You may may increase the game's lack of depth, but anyone who should find this just their cup of tea, with a warning January Designer in the corner to boot. □ □ □ □ □

FACE OFF



Price: Atari ST, Amiga £29.99
Genre: Sport Game
Publisher: Kaksis

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 *Mastermind United* (see it's very polished game, with some superb 3D scenes and option screens. There's a huge-to-participate in, where the player can do anything from train the players to overrule the manager. And like *M.U.L.*, the player can run the arcade game and concentrate on the managerial side of things if that's the way he feels, 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 I.L.L. *Hockey* it's definitely sluggish. Control is simple and easy to pick up - shoot, pass or throw to the point - and the sport is fun, especially when things get a little physical and the fans start cheering. As standard as most sports games these days there's a night function so that that blistering goal can be replayed again and again. Overall, *Face Off* is a wonderful package, though unlikely to exactly grab the public imagination. Fans of the sport will enjoy it, but just how many of them are there in the UK? □ □ □ □ □

FATAL REWIND



Price: Amiga £29.99
Genre: Arcade Beat
Publisher: Progress, UK; MCA/US Gold, Progress (disappoints nobody) with its

few times onto the 25-bit monitor, maintaining the same high quality of graphics and sound that's made it the legend it is to the Amiga market. And finally in this case there's a game for players to look up the credits. But if *The Killing Game* (see how) had to be contained for its execution from the Amiga to the Mega Drive, couldn't they have come up with something a little better than *Fatal Rewind*? Apart from the fact that it doesn't really mean much, it's a fairly obvious attempt to sound like *Fatal Assault*, a film which bears no resemblance to this game at all.

The player is put in charge of a mechanical walking companion of the ED-209 in Whitecap. An agile little thing, it can run left and right, jump, fire and even climb up the sides of walls. Things they can do nowadays, huh? The player has to engage a network of platforms in the hunt for the exit to the next level. Almost by its own will, avoiding and weaving about the screen with the robot instead of using the player into the dust. 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 cross areas with a small amount of depth to the game, but these arcade objectives don't really swing what is basically a very cheap and effective shoot-'em-up. □ □ □ □ □

FIGHTER COMMAND



Price: Amiga £19.99
Genre: Strategy
Publisher: Impressions

It may be a little late to cash in on Operation Desert Storm, but there can be no doubting *Fighter Command*'s legitimacy. In its present day Middle East it puts the player in the shoes of an allied air commander who's been given a simple task - back the stuffing out of the aggressive enemy in quickly and victoriously as possible. But despite the pretty pictures of a jet pilot coming into land on the tarmac there's not actually any lightning fast action in the game at all. It's 100% pure strategy with the player making all his decisions from a series of control menus, screens and tables. Everything is presented by complete overhead camera views, tactical screens and video displays.

Everything you'd expect from a military strategy game is in there - you carry the war with reconnaissance

abilities to find out where everything is, their organizer and leader's attacks against chosen targets. There's a wide range of hit available including multi-headed, lightning and lightning-thunder variants as well as long with razor, point and oval missiles. As the game progresses, the player has to keep tabs on political developments, fuel and equipment resources and all kinds of other factors which govern the game world.

Actually, considering there's rarely anything really exciting going on on screens, Fighter Command does quite a good job of holding the player's attention. Most of the screens are static, nothing's really very immediate and it takes time to learn the basics, but despite all this it's still strangely compelling. There's plenty to do, lots of strategy to get the best result and generally it's all very jolly. The lack of any real flight action is a major drawback, and it's because of this that many gamers may prefer to wait for Microgame's forthcoming ATC. In *The Wizard of the South*.

FINAL BLOW



Price Amiga £19.99
Genre Arcade Beat
Publisher Storm

It actually seems to be boring much a number of months back and people in the crowd were generally shouting "It's a bore!" as if it was some sort of useful note which then shows fights should employ. One suspects those are exactly the sort of folks who spend more than a couple of quid on *Final Blow* in the arcade. Nothing wrong with the celebration of the noble art, and nothing wrong with having a right old banging, wailing in the process, but *Final Blow* has more to do with seeing who can hit Five the fastest. It's boring.

Although the players are endowed with plenty of moves and the ability to block punches, the speed of the game completely removes any sort of fence which, after all, is what boxing is all about. Even hitting Tyson would concentrate on different areas of the body. Hit them in the ribs enough to make them lower their guard, and then go to work on their face. No such accuracy in *Final Blow*, since the focus of computerized and human action seems to be impossible to see when's arms are where. The result is a non-stop battle

of stick-clattering frustration. About the only way to work out who's being hit is by watching the energy bar at the bottom of the screen.

So for a side-up convention game, it's a pretty good job, and in two-player mode it's slight for a laugh, but the original was far from perfect. Amiga owners may be wise to hold on for a more rounded game. *WJ:W*

FINAL FIGHT



Price Amiga £25.99
Genre Beat 'Em Up
Publisher US Gold

Yet another in US Gold's seemingly endless string of CapCom conversions. In *Mean City* (loosely based on *New York*) all is not well. Crime is rife and to make a bad situation worse the Mayor's right-deputy daughter has been kidnapped by - you guessed it - Mr Big. (The old Mr Big certainly gets around, doesn't he?) The player and optional partner have to fight their way through the city's outskirts to rescue her. Why? Why not?

Final Fight is something of a first for beat-'em-ups on the home computer. It's actually quite good. The sprites are large and densely animated, the background scroll is smooth, and the action is fast. Someone of the directing whether a punch connects or not is clear, and just then that this can be recommended unreservedly to anyone who fancies a little action without breaking their banknote. *WJ:W*

FIRST SAMURAI



Price Amiga £25.99
Genre Arcade Beat
Publisher Image Works

This is the way that arcade adventures should be made! Succeeding in punching enemies with the stated power of Schwannegger and some puzzle-solving too. *Image Works* have come up with a winning formula.

The player must arrange to beat one of his Ninja Masters by chiseling the old Iron-on King through *4th Century Japan*.

On top of all the regular hacking and slashing that you would expect to find

in an arcade adventure, there are Special Items, which can be used a little like playing a laser in *It's A Wonderful* and can overcome the spirit of your murdered Magistrate to help you through some of the more tricky situations.

While it could be said that the last thing the world needs is another beat-'em-up game on another collectible-the-objects adventure, First Samurai carefully sidesteps the argument by handling its action in an effective and appealing way, keeping both hardcore killers and those with more modest intentions happy.

☆☆☆☆

FLICKY



Price Megadrive £24.99
Genre Platform
Publisher Sega

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

The player controls the tiny bird of the title. The basic design takes him from a giant and gets themselves lost in the course of a giant cat-infested house. *Flicky* has to run and jump about, but he has scattered food and take them to the safety of the flat, while avoiding the prowling Minors. *Flicky* is a nice, durable, playable game, very simple but packed with fun. Some may dispute whether there's 144 words of fun, but for those with the cash it's a good purchase. *WJ:W*

FLOOR 13



Price IBM PC £24.99
Genre Strategy
Publisher High Games

The typical strategy games are being less loved well and truly exploded by games that's likely to convert even confused trigger-addicts to a more stable and intelligent software set. *Floor 13* offers a new slant on the strategy genre by having itself around a

surprising scenario and offering game-play that goes beyond the regular strategy framework.

Set in present-day Britain, it tells of a government-run secret police force that must overtly monitor, yet not obviously dominate and generally protect the government from embarrassing incidents so that it doesn't fall from grace. As Director General of this corrupt agency, the player is solely responsible for its operations.

The game is played almost entirely from a single static screen of an office desk, onto which intelligence reports and newspaper stories arrive from the outside world and form the basis of the information which the player works from as plots and storylines unfold. Various sub-departments, such as surveillance, interrogation and disinformation are the instruments of the player's will, with steady agent-talking, reports, tapping phones, watching parties and even torturing and killing people to achieve the government's internal aims.

The way in which the game reveals information as half-truths and red herrings means that good detective work and thorough cross-checking of intelligence data is as important as the conventional strategic skills which are also required. It's all thoroughly shocking, very realistic stuff, and comes highly recommended, even to those who can't normally stand strategy games. *WJ:W*

FOOTBALL DIRECTOR II



Price Amiga ST/Amiga £24.99
Genre Strategy
Publisher BMG Games

Yessssss. Don't get me wrong, I've got nothing against football - there's just something implicitly boring about management games of this type. There's an exception to the rule, finally because it's so excellent and so good because you get to play *Kick Off* with it, which made it doubly suitable. When faced with something like this, though, it's difficult to imagine anybody but the most desperate sort of games or die-hard footy fan actually getting any enjoyment out of it.

Technically of course, there's nothing to fault it, and the depth that the game goes into is commendable - you've got your league and cup trophies, financial problems, player injuries, team fac-

fox, talent scouts, stadium management and all the rest of it. On the authentic side, however, nothing makes more sense to have changed since the days when these games were prevalent on the Spectrum about three or four years ago.

Three days, however, the cheap graphics and sound just don't cut it any more, do when something like this comes along it seems like a bit of an embarrassment, really. But of course it's the gameplay that counts and for what it is, Football Director is extra-ordinary enough, and providing you're not expecting too much and willing to give the game a try, it should pay off handsomely. The wiser members of the computerized football community (namely you) will probably want to save their pennies for Player Manager 3, however.

FORMULA ONE GRAND PRIX

Price: Atari ST, Amiga £34.99
Genre: Racing Simulation
Publisher: MicroProse

Believe you me, you've never seen a racing game like this. Lots of Dallas 'larger' Indianapolis 500? Nah! They are not children's toys compared to the complete and utter excellence of Formula One Grand Prix, the latest and greatest game from the programming genius that is Geoff 'Star Car Race' Crammond. The graphics are truly amazing, with highly-detailed cars complete with driver's helmet poking out of the cockpit literally peering around trackside fans with stands, trees, fences and trees. The sound matches the visuals, with good use made of binary samples for the engine.

But it's not just the quality of the graphics in the game that makes FGP so special, it's the meticulous attention-to-detail that generates an authentic and involving Grand Prix atmosphere. Everything you'd expect to find on a Grand Prix circuit - stands, bridges, tunnels, etc. - is there and in the identical position they'd be found in real life, even extending right down to accurate parking striped cars off the track and engine cars waiting in the pits.

The wonderful control over the car is the essential thing on the cake, with plenty of difficulty modifiers to make the game easy enough for Grand Prix South to play or tough enough to bring

leading times out in heads of steam. Indeed, as good is FGP that it earned itself an ACE Trailblazer and the honour of becoming the new Racing Simulation Benchmark. Good-enough for you?

FUZZBALL

Price: Amiga £29.99
Genre: Platform
Publisher: System 3

Well, this is a bit of a case from the past and not unlike. Refreshingly free from pretension, System 3's latest is a simple yet hugely addictive platform affair. The player controls a bouncing ball of fluff that has to be guided across a network of platforms, collecting fruity bonuses. Sprites spruce the Fuzzballs of the title, so to say like. There come in four increasingly aggressive 'bouncer' genres, purple, black and red. By repeatedly shooting them with his blob gun, the player can stun them long enough to knock them off the platform. However, if the player takes too long

the Fuzzball comes in but even snails are thus better.

As the player progresses through the fifty odd levels more and harder Fuzzballs appear, candidate bonuses start becoming abundant and the platform keeps providing an even greater test of the player's plod-precise positioning powers. Fuzzball is a classic example of simple being good. The addictive, uncluttered gameplay and cute graphics make this an A-grade winner. And there's a right bloody animated team to boot. Well, you've got to fill those big boxes with something, haven't you?

THE GAMES - WINTER CHALLENGE

Price: IBM PC £29.99
Genre: Sport Simulation
Publisher: Accolade

This is, as one old friends would say, magnificent if it appeared in the past, totally unexpected, and seems set to be one of the best games we've seen this month! Well, actually! The player goes players - up to ten can take part compete in eight winter sports - luge, down-

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ball skating, cross-country skating,
speed skating, inlined, giant slalom,
burling and ski jump. All the events
are depicted in an effective mix of 3D
polygons for the landscape (a bit like
Master's) with sprites for the competi-
tors, trees, etc. Inland is less impressive
— a basic PC game is played almost
entirely in silence except for a between-
game tune and a crowd cheer when a
player completes an event.

The player views the action from just
behind and above his own skis, alter-
ego, though 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 Icy Games series, success
is dependent on timing and control
rather than, hampering the fun factor,
on it's very sensitive to play and
makes charging records off those best
times more a matter of skill as opposed
to physical stamina.

Despite the superior qualities, The
Games may get a bit dull when played
using a joystick levelled at nearly every
game of this type). However, as a game
to play with a group of friends it's not
boring, and that makes The Games
a more than worthy purchase to play
over the festive holiday period.
☆☆☆☆

GUNSHIP 2000



Price IBM PC £24.99
Genre Simulation
Publisher Mindspace

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

Probably the most impressive aspect
of the revamped graphics system. Using
a new path-rendered-quad landscaping
technique, the game world has been
modelled in existing detail, complete
with rise, hills, mountains, valleys, cut-
tings. It's a geographical heaven. It's
there. As usual, the game takes the
form of a series of pilot-training mis-
sions. Unfortunately this complexity
means that you really need at least a
386/486 PC to get anything approach-
ing speed from the game. Inland with
a board is marvellously atmospheric,

and adds a second to the gritty battlefield
feel.

The 'water control' is good, but actually
getting the radiofly matches that
of the real thing. In it's very difficult,
and certainly makes Gunship seem not
the sort of game to get your aim-play-
ing teeth on. However, if you're looking
for the ultimate dropper simulation,
then here it is.
☆☆☆☆

HARD NOVA



Price Atari ST, Amiga £29.99
Genre Role-Playing Game
Publisher Electronic Arts

Hard Nova is a game that's difficult to
categorise. Like *Wingflight*, it's a mixture
of action, fantasy strategy as well as
role-playing elements, adventure as well
as arcade space-flight sequences. It's
the sort of stuff that Electronic Arts in
America have been churning out for
years — science fiction-adventure with
alien worlds, alien mutant characters,
fantasy worlds changing together and
all the rest of it. There's supposedly a
comic guide to this one, with the player
taking on the persona of wingcrafter
space lord Hard Nova.

You can interact with characters, RPG-
fashion, collect objects, do missions
and talk across the galaxy. Exploring,
stealing, cage from planet to planet and
on and on and on.

It sounds like a bit of a crap set, but
if this sort of mediocrity is your cup of
tea, then you're liable to have a lot of
fun with it. In fact it's just a shame
that the vast majority of games don't
have the patience to get into it. Will
waste (choosing not — the game's got
plenty of atmosphere (both), and gets
progressively more involving the longer
it's played. Just don't expect to pick it
up straight away.
☆☆

HEIMDALL



Price Amiga (IBM) £24.99
Genre Arcade Adventure
Publisher Core Design

After a long string of shoot-em-ups
and platform games (Car-Me, Panda,
Clock Rock), Core Design has returned
to more involving fantasy with
Heimdall, an isometric arcade-adven-
ture that can also play as a board
around Viking lore.

The *Handheld* of the title is a treasure hunt from the Gods, west to back by Odin's ravens for three great weapons that will vanquish the forces of evil. After obtaining a crew from the varied characters available, *Handheld* sets sail across the Nordic waters in devious boat maneuvers.

For the most part, the game is yet basic isometric adventure à la *The Falconer*, although there are some interesting strategic and RFP elements—all the characters have differing skills, which means that the player must switch between them, as in a conventional RPG, to perform certain tasks. The strategy is provided by the sailing screen, where the player must sail between the various islands (there are three archipelagos, each hiding one of the three weapons and each having an independent level) in the most efficient manner.

Handheld is a fun adventure game, although the action, due to the player's RFP restrictions, is a little slower and less exciting than most of its counterparts in the genre. In fact, there are times when very little seems to be happening at all, and only those who are willing to wait down, make maps and all the rest of it, can truly enjoy the game to the full.

Instead, it's been designed with the utmost care and devotion, and there's enough here to keep anybody glued to the screen for some considerable time. A fine game.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

HUDSON HAWK



Price: Atari ST, Amiga £24.99
Genre: Platform
Publisher: Ocean
Bruce Willis' film was a disaster, and Ocean hadn't trained me anything of note in the time conversion index for quite a while, so nobody was really expecting very much out of *Hudson Hawk*. For instead of the usual cynical and barely playable farce, what we got was the best platform game so far this year. Special PC users will gape at its interpretation of the film by clocking 90% of the screen material used in the window, and getting on with the business of just building a good game around the film's basic premise— that of a "single stealing robotic artifact" from around the world.

It works superbly, in much the same style as former platform classics like *Metax*, *Red Demons* and *Intimidate*, with small, comical characters playing

over tortuously-designed platform levels. It's a class act, without a doubt, with beautiful traps and pitfalls lurking around every corner. The gameplay is really up to console standards, and the graphics and sound really do enhance the fun factor because there's so little. Don't be put off by the chunky-farce connotations. *Hudson Hawk* is a brilliant game in its own right and deserves a place in your collection. Today.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

HUNTER



Price: Atari ST, Amiga £24.99
Genre: Action/Strategy
Publisher: Activision
It's a sad old world, this one we live in, but when poor old Activision get some decent product together, their *Metropolis* daddy goes and pulls the plug on them. Now, however, like the aforementioned "decent product" has been swirling around doing very little indeed for the last few months, Activision's current poster-outer of the genre, *The Day Company* has taken a spin themselves to let another tribe of gamers see such the fruits.

Harder is the one of game that can dream of playing. A polygon based action strategy game will all of the usually associated nonsense removed, it offers all the "realism" it is great at... features which should, by rights, be included in all these games.

Taking the role of the Hunter, the player must travel around a bunch of islands, systematically destroying all enemy installations in whatever way he sees fit. Your particular mission is decided in a briefing where specific, immediate targets are decided by your allied commanders.

The best thing about *Hunter* is that there's no steering wheel, if you want to influence an enemy base, get a dialogue and you're done! If you want to get along, send a helicopter/top/boat or whatever. It's like a map and because the unnecessary complexity of basic tasks has been removed, the player can concentrate on progressing with the mission much more freely.

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

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

THE IMMORTAL



Price: IBM PC, £20.00
Genre: Action/Adventure
Publisher: Electronic Arts

It's one year now since *The Immortal* appeared to great public acclaim on the Amiga. A masterpiece of animation and game-design, it was probably responsible for selling a fair few (MS) upgrades. At last it's made its way on to the PC, and now features a couple of new extra scenarios that make it an even better game.

The majority of the game is identical. The player guides a superbly animated character his travels around an intricate 2D landscape. As he progresses around the corridors, he discovers treasure, traps and—of course—inviting monsters. In the original Amiga game, the fairly complex combat took place at the same scale as the rest of the game (i.e. small) and it made taking responses in the opponents laager and from a much difficult. On the PC, however, when combat occurs the view switches to a close-up that makes things far easier.

The only gripe from a PC owners point of view is that having been spoiled by the recent plethora of action games, the 4: or display has got a little disappointing. However, the finest seriously direct there what is an otherwise excellent game, and some would without hesitation to anyone who faces a lot of dangers or drag-ning.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

JIMMY WHITE'S WHIRLWIND SNOOKER



Price: Atari ST, Amiga £24.99
Genre: Sport Simulation
Publisher: Virgin Games

Arthur Whiston, winner programmer of *10s and Dimes* is probably the largest one of expert to write a snooker sim. One games have been around since the beginning of computer gaming—a few colored shapes, some angle-of-deflection algorithms and away you go. But even with the advent of 3D graphics, none of these have really had any elements of realism, and now...

The table is viewed from behind the ball and the player can see options as if on a real table. The view can be rotated through various axes and

zoomed in so as the player can see from virtually every angle conceivable. The ball movement is accurate, with no balls stopping for no apparent reason or going off at preposterous angles.

Three player games are the best, but four levels of computer opponent are available for the lone gamer. As the player progresses more sophisticated tactics can be incorporated, like positional play, breaks, runs, snare and every type of spin are all possible and are vital for winning opponents. The end result of *Whiston's* comprehensive and realistic approach to recreating snooker is the most authentic sports simulation to date.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

LOTUS TURBO CHALLENGE 2



Price: Amiga £24.99
Genre: Racing Game
Publisher: Electronic Graphics

A worthy successor to the excellent *Carri Sprint 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 solo players. Technically superior to the original, *Lotus's* innovations something just a little bit lacking. Perhaps it's the amount of the tape 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 your 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 three players to race at once. The action is fast and furious and the control the players have over their cars has been greatly improved.

Players must start their way through a selection of stages, each featuring a particular hazard, whether it be natural terrain, rain, sand or man-made increases (aggressively) winding across the road. Graphically superior to the vast majority of similar titles, *Lotus* just looks the business, with fluidly realistic character and a high level of detail on the cars themselves.

Despite being hampered by some approximating localisation whatever the player drives through any water and the third race player mode, *Lotus 2* is a pretty impressive game.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

LAST NINJA 3



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre Arcade Adventure
Platformer Ninja 3

Well, well, well. After everyone has been thinking up their ideas at the prospect of getting System 1's much needed, much-needed and much-delayed conclusion of the Ninja series a night old thinking the bleeding 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, but instead of the game relying solely on the tight controls which, to be honest, were never that good, the emphasis has been moved onto the puzzle-solving elements which aren't half as hard to implement.

Operating in two quiet areas a world of different rooms (earth, air, fire, water) and the game continually throws 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 tracking to be done too, and the colorful graphics add enough muscle to ensure that even when the player is doing one his faithful adversary of the forest, he'll find something new to do.

Graphically, the game is really rather special, with the scenic landscapes at a stage which most surely be approaching the state of the art, and the animations of the characters themselves being undeniably fine. Just look at the speed that he can do.

☆☆☆☆

LEASURESUIT LARRY 5



Price IBM PC £24.99
Genre Adventure
Platformer Wings On-Line

Here's Larry Laffler! He's the Ponderable Puff! And they're in a whole lot of trouble! Because that Larry, 5 the latest installment in the impossibly successful adventure series chronicles the ongoing adventures of America's favourite lounge lizard.

In what promises to be the most wry adventure in the series, the player must guide Larry and Puff through a world of gags and misadventures in the quest to keep good friends out of the wrong hands.

Initially taking the role of the audience, Larry quickly becomes embroiled in a fast-paced underwater plot to get all parts off the normal market and drop it underground where enormous profit can be made.

It's all pretty standard point and click stuff, but the time the player alternates between the very different personas of Larry and Puff, allowing both to get into very unique and also amusing, and particularly surreal, bits of "business" from heady liberal sets.

Again, the hand-painted eye-color graphics and game design are an absolute splat for what occasionally lapses into a boat of pretty lame gags. However, this time Larry does have moments of absolute brilliance, and the occasional presence of a further miscellany of a top tip in a wry way is enough to keep you coming back for more. No? Well, please yourselves.

☆☆☆☆

MAD TV



Price IBM PC £19.99
Genre Comedy
Platformer Rainbow Arts

My, what timing! Only weeks after the big TV franchise debacle and in the country queues in dread at the threat of a load of old Spanish comedies and cheap game shows filling our screens, Rainbow Arts produce a game which is all about running your own TV station. It's only the games at TR-AMM had the chance to play Mad TV, they might well be in business.

Not only is Mad TV a right laugh, allowing the player to have total control over the only limiting factor being the budget over an entire TV station, but it's an excellent strategy game too.

The aim is to keep Mad TV at the top of the TV ratings while simultaneously winning the heart of Jerry, the most beautiful woman in town. Taking place in a huge sitcom, the game has the player's character being axoned from the various offices, being up there, in building 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 less than his station was an award for the parody on films, so it's up to you to schedule accordingly. None of this would be a good enough feat on its own, but when you

consider that Mad TV is a pretty excellent strategy game with complicated interrelations between various departments and some top-notch production to boot, you would have to conclude that you'd be missing it, to miss it.

☆☆☆☆

MAGIC GARDEN



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre Arcade Adventure
Platformer Electronics Duo

Good God! What an odd. Having been plagued for months by an apparently never-ending stream of erratic games, we were understandably keen to get our heads on the game which they promise. And what a peculiar conclusion it is.

In his endeavor to become "the most efficient gamer" the player must guide a grove around the open-space maze garden doing, 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 trim the lawn. He can use some magic words and fly around on the back of a big dragonfly! But the grove must be careful, for there are terrible bugs which can hurt him or kill him, which you slow him down.

And it may be better to be careful with the number of flowers he's carrying, or he will become too tired and get hit by lightning and die. But the grove won't get hit by lightning if he is exploiting the underground caverns where the ruler of Gooey can flash the ruler for extra efficiency.

Presented in a nice environment, the game looks, plays, smells terrific and is just odd. It's as odd as anything I've ever seen in my life. Ponderable Puff's style graphics and gameplay which quite honestly is rather surprising to the masses make Magic Garden a real gem.

☆☆

MARTIAN MEMORANDUM



Price IBM PC £25.99
Genre Adventure
Platformer Access/TS Gold

Once again a game promises to be an interactive movie and turns out to be

little more than a simplistic adventure with flashy graphics and sound. But in Martin Memorandum's case the graphics are enough to make up for the game design shortcomings—on a last they seem to be for the first few hours. The game uses digitized video footage, sampled speech and the quality music is set the same (the story sets you as a futuristic private detective who must travel to Mars to track down the half-sister daughter of a famous Hollywood star), and it works very well, creating a strong sense of atmosphere and involvement.

But as it goes into the case with games of this type, the effect of these flashy graphics soon wears off and when you actually decide down to play the game you realize that there isn't really that much to see or do. An endless adventure could easily complete it inside of a week, 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 a invisible helping hand, and that's not very satisfying. Both the style of the images and those of Chase offer similar and more satisfying experiences, so if you've got the PC muscle to run so demanding a product, you'd be well advised to check out one of those out instead.

☆

MEGAFORTRESS



Price IBM PC £24.99
Genre Simulation
Platformer MicroAge

The trouble with games based on taking every single role in a big, stupid-old place like the B-2 is that usually every role is vital in a uniquely boring, I mean, who-honestly-wants-to-plot-their-own-own thousands of miles of computerized 3D terrain mapping computer as there is little amount with abundant resources in order to save the enemy's tails!

The aim of the game is to pilot a half-manned B-2 across both Iraq and the Soviet Union, keeping the location and size of your mission strictly secret until the awesome onslaught of firepower can be unleashed on the target. Unfortunately, for all it's going to be a very good simulation of a rather dull business. For more fun can be had in any of a host of more recently released flight games, and MicroAge's Battle Fighter series even offer similar computerized-enemy action for those play-

ers who are especially keen on that sort of thing.

Profusely commented both graphically and on the play front, Megatronics has screens designed by real 8-bit navigators 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 **Image Works**

Released until a bunch of God-olives that are still coming thick and fast, Microsoft's offering has fared better than most, steering sufficiently clear of the Big Daddy Popcorn while not being afraid to borrow little bits here and there where appropriate.

Set in an alternate universe, Mega Lo Mania is all about the quest for power. Power over a set of worlds, each made up from a number of islands, to be precise. New worlds are formed and overlaid life is placed upon them, upon

which interstellar freelancers descend and try to seize the origins of power the themselves.

The conflict arises, needless to say, where more than one freelancer takes a shine to a particular island. Since each arena can only have one ruler, a campaign of impetuous battles, with each player trying to use the forces at his disposal to overthrow the others.

Each island exists within its own time period, and the rate of development, intelligence and so-on of its inhabitants is governed accordingly. Players quick to invest time in innovation and the refining of natural elements, rather than simply merrily around hitting the others with sticks are more likely to succeed.

□ □ □ □ □

MEGATRAVELLER 2: QUEST FOR THE ANCIENTS



Price **IBM PC £294**
Genre **Role-Playing Game**
Publisher **USG**

This latest UK release from American software giant Paragon is more than dou-

blingly a sequel to Mega Traveller: The Zoltan Company, as before, the player leads a team of five space adventurers through real and trouble-tormentfully rich and fast. This time around, the player task is to find a way to halt the flow of 'fossil' alien material from a concentration set of ruins led by a dead one called the Ancients. But are they dead? That is up to the player to find out.

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

★★★★☆

MEGA TWINS



Price **Atari ST/Amiga £29.99**
Genre **Platform Game**
Publisher **US Gold**

There's big trouble in the land of water things. A dark shadow, etc. etc. has fallen across the land, and it's up to the two avatars and most without saving machines ever to grace computer software to save the day. As is our Mega Twins is a platform game - one or two players guide their avatars through level after level of ledges and chasms, saving off the attacking monsters with a large bow from their tiny little swords. Mega Twins can be found along the way that act as super-weapons, which are particularly useful against the super tough end-of-level enemies.

An extension of the CapCom-only Mega Twins is hardly startling, but it's competent enough, apart from the slightly turgid pace of the action, the main thing that prevents Mega Twins from making any real impression is the lack of excitement. There are no real thrills on offer - the platform elements are common, and having to walk only five to six the location into oblivion is hardly opening up whole new vistas of intellectual entertainment. The

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Real war in the coffee is the fact that the whole thing is incredibly easy—a competent player will probably get halfway through the game on his first set of credits. Mega Drive had a huge potential, but whether it's the fault of the original company or the commission, it's actually turned out to be stronger rather than Mega.

MERC3



Price Magistrate (\$29.95 [Import])
Genre Action/Blat
Publisher Targa

As if Magistrate owners hadn't had quite enough about it, there is now a long-time happy well into the new century, here's another chance to hammer the keypad. The player must team up with a battle-hardened marine and must increasingly well defined enemy installations in your mission to rescue the President. From the smooth top-down multi-directional scrolling and plentiful power-ups fail to elevate Merc3 above the rank and file of shoot-'em-ups. Solo play is available in addition to 2-player who prefer to go online but who haven't got one (sadly) but the full flavor of such missions is really pretty limited.

Equipped with initially weak weapons, the so-called heroes must gradually work their way up the screen, picking off evil alien-like bugs or locking in gun towers or traps. Little firepower and enough explosions can be had by decreasing the maximum enemy lying about.

Players can speed their progress through the frequently tedious levels by jumping into a well-timed out jump and starting up the screen. This bit is quite accurate, as you can run down the screen without a blast from the top's so-called bazooka.

As well as the repetitive end-of-level guardians (which here take the form of an assortment of military hardware—planes, helicopters, tanks, etc) the levels are occasionally well broken up with bigger foes in the shape of gun-towers, machine gun men and the like.

Aside from the problems thrown up when a game controlled by the original executives diagnosed being the enemy troops always seem to attack on a diagonal Merc3 has a lot of other small expenses up its sleeve. It looks good, it's fun, absolutely no originality and when played solo is a crushing bore.

☆☆

MIGG3M SUPER FULCRUM



Price IBM PC (\$24.99)
Genre Simulation
Publisher Demark

Improving on an already successful formula, Demark here shows away with more of the longevity problems of their first MIG game and here on this game again as eye-banking of conflict in southern America. Taking the role of the pilot of a United Nations-controlled MIG, the player must learn himself into battle airspace from a military allied-controlled ally. His mission is to gradually rebuild the standing rebel military group on the way by blowing up their supply lines and destroying their fuel depots.

It's bizarre that the company most recently associated with real-estate-related sims on computers should use such a clunky simulation, and as a result, it may be tough for them to find the right audience. Nevertheless, a clunky product it is, with a tonnage of manual views and a flexibility of mission that is handling the innovative player to try his hand at planning his own strategies for doing away with the enemy forces.

Also included in this game is an implementation of the real MIG's fly-by-wire system, an auto-stabilizing device which prevents the plane from flailing around all over the place like a top-golf's blower. Most handy to control.

Presented, surprisingly enough, in polygon graphics, MIG leads the competition on the size of its threat, even if it is a bit tricky to imagine it not having some of the more intense Microsoft products. A winner.

☆☆☆☆

NIGHT AND MAGIC III: ISLES OF TERRA



Price IBM PC (\$24.99)
Genre Role-Playing Game
Publisher New World Computing/USI Inc

"By my magic sword of Zank, I, Hage (magician), must enter the old dungeons of Terra before the alignment of the six moons world!" Yes, well, you get the general idea. Night And Magic

III is yet another dabble into the much-employed realm of RPG gaming, this time coming over as a cross between Dungeon Master and The Bard's Tale. It is just one to be the whole RFP genre been done to death as badly that there's just nothing new anymore?

This third Night And Magic outing would seem to support the argument, as apart from some very flashy VGA visuals and soundboard noise, there seems to be very little new or interesting on offer, except maybe for the over-persistent frequency of the hard RFP levitation. As you'd imagine, the scenario is about as hackneyed as one is ever going to get, with some clunky-but-entertaining the villain (from Chris Jones, only to the King, "What that involves is seducing a party of dwarves, one, two, three, waiters and all that, and then wandering about fighting with dragons, collecting treasure and going up doors.

The game itself actually is very pretty, but for the most part the advancement is pretty slow and unimpassioned. Considering, however, how unimpassioned RFP games 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 Eclipse

The real monster from the big level here once upon breaks loose, and are searching for little items they can eat completely spoiling Mr Bob's construction site. Because Lane, the best level leader around and like all these nasty little monsters sky high! A goal in life if ever there was one. Monster business, the optimum of the average arcade game features stupid graphics and a wildly stupid premise—monster all the objects from the building site. Little must take up all the monsters with some sort of fast bicycle pump, causing them to inflate and eventually fly to the top of the screen, dropping all their objects as they go.

Despite the glory of the whole affair, Monster Business is actually quite good. Different screens really present a different problem to be solved, whether it's dodging platforms or a speedy time limit, and the player is so interested in trying to get to the end of the level that he probably won't realize quite how easy and dull the game is.

Great graphics and a could-only-be-German music help Monster Business rise above the pack and shine out as an example of what arcade games should be about. It's like an Atlas record, if you know what I mean.

NEBULUS 2



Price Amiga (\$29.99)
Genre Platform
Publisher 21st Century
Entertainment

Placing them the Amiga into like a plasma being exceptionally the what ever it was before it was built, 21st Century Entertainment aren't having much luck at the moment. Not only are they having some considerable difficulty with their Magistrate product, but the one game that looked like it would actually make them some money has turned out to be somewhat of a disappointment.

The European critics responsible for expelling John Phillips' original class have done a bit of a lousy job, rating the gameplay that made the first game so excellent by playing on top of some good action games up type titles. The classic formula has been totally revamped by the sheer weight of these new "films", and as such anybody who enjoyed the first game is likely to be very disappointed by this. However, it is quite pretty and, at least for those who haven't seen the first game, not a total waste on the playability front. But while the first game knew exactly what the addition of a monster/hero/level was, Nebulus 2 says over it like it wasn't even there. Not recommended.

☆☆

OUTRAIN



Price Game Gear (\$14.99)
Genre Racing Game
Publisher Targa

It may be an odd bet it certainly isn't a gamble—at least, not in its Game Gear incarnation it isn't. Out Rain is made using the player has to drive a red Formula through four stages, avoiding other traffic and those pesky stationary road-side obstacles. It's all against the clock, with the player being awarded points one second every time he completes

one of the stages. And... er... that's just about it.

The impression of speed is achieved using good old colour banding; it flows, although the objects grow in an amazingly coarse and chunky fashion. Unfortunately the number of visible objects is small, and the number of cars on the road even smaller - even on the hardest stage I only counted two other vehicles on the road at any time. Best of all it's ridiculously easy - I completed the game on my third go. Yes, really! The only real twist in the game's favour is the ability to play head-to-head with another Commodore even then the thrills are few and far between. Not good.
 ☆☆☆

OUTRUN EUROPA



Price Amiga 87, Amiga £29.99
 Game Racing Game
 Publisher US Gold

At long last! A game that has become a legend, along with the likes of Star Trek and Biker's Edge, over the last couple of years, simply because it's never allowed time to come out. The original idea was to release the product in cassettes on the west of Europe from the original OutRun commission - which should give you an idea of how long we've been waiting for it. We ended up getting the official sequel, Turbo 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 race over various land and sea stages to deliver a vital package, while international agents are out to stop you. It's all a bit ludicrous really, and what's worrying is supported by a crew between OutRun and Chase H.Q. with extra loads on it in fact a lot of shoddy stuff. The road vehicles 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 to a way that isn't conducive to gameplay at all, but is just very frustrating. The boat bits don't even have their own because they're so simple and difficult, and 99% of players will probably put their feet through the machine screen within five minutes of loading it up. Lacking of loading, the constant chit chattering is a pain in the

prostate, and it all hardly seems worth it when it's so obvious 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.
 ☆

PEGASUS



Price Amiga 87, Amiga £29.99
 Game Arcade Blast
 Publisher Commodore Graphics

Oh deary deary deary. What a shame that just when Commodore starts getting a good reputation for itself with its clean production of laser jet games and its classy output of laser jet games and its classy output of laser jet games. Based very loosely on the classic Greek myth, Pegasus is a weird half-man/half-horse of a type that doesn't mess about and runs along and stop-up the hidden platforms stuff. This mixture of air-borne 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 slow moving sections, Pegasus as Pegasus, or the less accurately spells his magical fire, along on the back of the mythical winged horse, which is controlled in an atrociously unconvincing manner, and blasts away at the attacking gargoyle, demons, harpies, etc. When he's survived this onslaught, Pegasus lands, Pegasus descends and the ground version begins. This happens 10 times (11 if it works), or so the ground, by which time the player has probably run off his face, hit the TV screen and killed his computer out of the window.

It's just that Pegasus is a bad idea - it's not that it's been executed in a really God-awful way and unimaginative manner. The action in the honey bits is sluggish and unexciting, while the ground levels lack any of the flavour of, say, ContraBike II - the fact that there's lots of it doesn't make it any more of a viable purchase - unless you're a collector of course. Complete with all manner of undesirable spelling mistakes within the game ("reastion" instead of "reastion", "over" instead of "over"), Pegasus would have only just made the grade two years ago, or on public domain today. To not get paid for it when it falls so heavily below today's standards of graphics and gameplay is a bit on an insult. Avoid.
 ☆☆☆

PITFIGHTER



Price Amiga £29.99
 Game Shoot 'Em-Up
 Publisher Demtek

If ever there's a prime example of an average video game then Pitfighter is it. If you're an arcade fan then you're probably more than familiar with the game. With its giant machine screen, three sets of player controls and stand-out digitised graphics you could hardly miss it. Trouble was, underneath the unique flashy sounds and enemy sound lacked a distinctly dull beat-'em-up, made even worse by the confusion caused by the game-looking graphics. What's my main point? In the future, when you see a "Pitfighter" in the future, all in all, a less than rewarding experience.

In covering Pitfighter for the home systems, Tropic London have actually improved it a hell of a lot. Indeed, if you liked the original, chances are you'll like the home game even more. The graphics, which had retained pretty much all of the flash special FX of the coin-op, are absent, and the slower pace makes the game much easier to play. The control controls are a little unconvincing, but it only takes a few goes to get the hang of things, but as good a conversion as it is, it still can't compensate for the fact that fundamentally Pitfighter's about as exciting as tapping a key for hours on end. Which, as in Pitfighter is pretty much what you spend all your time doing.
 ☆☆☆

POPULOUS II



Price Amiga £29.99
 Game Action Strategy
 Publisher Electronic Arts

Answered One of the greatest games of all time, but get considerably better. Bullfrog's long-awaited sequel is just so excellent that it's difficult to find the words to describe it. Basically, it's pretty much the same game - game play follows through a series of apocalyptic battles. God versus Devil, over countless geometric worlds.

From that point on, however, it's a whole new ball game. Whereas the

original game had only a handful of gaily offices, Populous II has scores of them, many much more deadly than anything encountered in the first game. The plethora of extra features (road and city building, effects that interact with each other, experience points that build up as you progress) make Populous II a far more involved and rewarding experience than the original. Absolutely phenomenal stuff. Populous II is a game that you really REALLY cannot afford to miss. Buy it immediately.
 ☆☆☆☆☆

RAILROAD TYCOON



Price Amiga £29.99
 Game Strategy
 Publisher MicroPro

The ACE Revolution game makes it's way into the Amiga, and when a few conversions it is building a railroad empire across the USA at the turn of the early Century may sound like hard work, but for those who like their strategy to run deep, Sid Meier's construction of that very empire in his Fun Fun FUN! We know it's difficult to imagine how, but even so, it is. The feeling of power is paramount as you lay your track from sea to shining sea, conduct big-time business and generally own loads of cash.

Beginning life as an entrepreneur in the early 1800s, you must turn a small state into the biggest state in railroad industry history ever! By taking control of every element in the decision making process which makes the railroad work, the player manipulates the details as well as handles political and economic issues, all at the same time as competing railroads with a fixed or against rail systems from history. And every element of the game is supported with top-quality graphics to make even the most number-crunching interior sections of the life very fun to manage. Meier's excellent user interface and the close proximity of the game design and balance compared with the top-notch power of the Amiga make this version of the game an outright winner. Highly recommended to all and sundry.
 ☆☆☆☆☆

RISE OF THE DRAGON



Price Range \$24.99

Genre Adventure

Publisher: Dynamic/ Sierra On-Line
 Amiga owners have been scrambling to become the first to purchase this the first of a new wave of Sierra games helmed by the perennially popular Dynamic team. But they should be warned. While Amiga owners get to enjoy just as many visual thrills and plot twists as their PC Peers, they pay the price of swapping two pounds every last one as it slips in and out of your drive for the expensive, heavy disks.

However, if you're willing to pay the across-the-board price, Rise is an extremely rewarding product. The player takes the role of a futuristic detective, a real Marine type, digging his way through a drug-infused city of crime, the last remaining obstacle between the anti-science Dragoon and total control of the entire planet. Played in first-person perspective, the game uses the mapping/narrative control interface which Sierra has made their trademark.

This is another example of the innovative spirit that which American computers are so fond of having done our

breasts, but for once it isn't too bad. There is actually a story here! And there is actually some adventuring to do. The player must investigate the strange drug-related death of the Mayor's daughter, interrogate science-criminals and do all the other stuff the private investigators have to do. With tape, opening other people's mail, hanging out in low-cost strip joints. What a life.

And it's all in three lovely hand-drawn graphics. Mind you... all these disks...
 ☆☆☆

ROBIN HOOD



Price IBM PC \$29.99

Genre Action/Strategy

Publisher: Millennium

Wonderfully cost-cutting the publicity of the recent batch of Lincoln games arrives, Millennium's completely unlicensed version of the tale is surprisingly interesting.

Presented in Populair style, the game sticks to the classic storyline of Robin of Locksley being forced out of his lands by the evil Sheriff of Nottingham, deposed by his people and left to fend

for himself.

The player, taking the title role of course, must assemble a band of merry men and set about doing away with the nasty old sheriff once and for all. An equally important goal for the player is to convince all the peasants and other inhabitants of the forest and its environs that Ballin's the murdering thieving/bogged that the Sheriff has described to them but is a lovely kind hearted soul.

Aside from standard and object-orienting, there's a refreshing amount of genuinely funny dialogue in the game, with the characters camping up their roles to the best of their ability.

It was extremely enjoyable and innovative arcade adventure game strategy can role playing game who's worst falling could be that the plot is so familiar the player is compelled to play through it, the very end as soon as he physically can, thus diminishing the appeal of certain parts.
 ☆☆☆

ROBOCOD



Price Amiga £25.99

Genre Platform

Publisher: Millennium

And about time too. Computer gamers have been waiting a long time for a platform game good enough to wear in the face of the strong console ones, rivalling the best of their Swiss and their Maris. And here it is.

Robocod was the result for its originality. There are elements of just about every running & jumping game from Mario/Mar onwards in there somewhere, but thanks to careful design and wise editing and polishing of game styles the real result is far more than the sum of its parts.

As in Mario IV, the core game task is simple - get from one end of the level to the other, and jump on the heads of any bad guys to wander past. Of course, in practice there's a lot more to it than that. Some of the two levels are Robocod's crowning glory through the level is a branching one, a splintering grey plane and cuts to an old-fashioned ball. There are even some areas where 'Cid' comes around - much like he did in the game's progenitor James Bond.

In fact, it's the clever variety of the game - along with the superbly smooth control over the fairly main character

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that makes it such a joy to play. Every level features something new, either in graphics or gameplay, and there's little chance of boredom setting in. The wonderfully cute sprites, bright and cheerful backgrounds and sing-alongable tunes are excellent too. All in all, *Robocop 3* is a polished, playful and fun-filled CD - just share it with your pal that you'd love to let slip by.
 ☆☆☆☆☆

ROBOCOP 3



Price **Amiga £24.99**
 Genre **Action Blast**
 Publisher **Ocean**

Robocop 3 is CD! Well, it's never well - would it? Well, the good news is that it does indeed. Digital Image Design's master class on the Storage Manager browser arguably made it the best to be in.

In essence, *Robocop 3* isn't that different from almost every other film title. It's an amalgam of several genre ingredients - a bit of shoot-'em-up, a bit of driving, a bit of talk-'em-up where the utopian/gauleyery is compensated for by the almost robotic on-offer. However, in this case there's another factor - it's the ground-breaking initial CD.

Rather than watching some sprites leaping about a 2D backdrop, the player views the world through *RoboCop's* eyes as they pop the streets of Old Detroit on foot. In a police car and/or on the air thanks to his new GyroPack. The atmosphere generated, especially in the fast-paced sequences, is quite substantial. The only weak links in an otherwise incredibly strong chain are a couple of 'bottle hand-to-hand combat sequences with robots. This means that the combat scenes are limited and the action sluggish.

However, these wags wags apart there are frequent occasions during the game that the player actually does feel as if he is making part in a film. And at the end of the day, isn't that what you should be looking a film to do?
 ☆☆☆☆☆

ROBOZONE



Price **Amiga £19.99**

Core Arcade Blast

Publisher Image Works

Trying to keep onto the Core bandwagon (and missing by about six months), ImageWorks's latest and certainly not greatest puts the player in the driving seat of a giant two-legged war machine, a sort of CD-price version of the one in Progress's *Killing Game Zone* with a mission to put an end to pollution. *Roobot!*

Fundamentally *Roobot's* a simple shoot anything that moves affair, with the programmers trying to maintain player interest by constantly changing the levels. One level's a side-viewed multidirectional scrolling, explore-'em-up, the second's much the same but in 3D and the third's a horizontally scrolling shoot-'em-up. While such is well-meaning but though, there's one classic little bit of excitement to be found in any of them.

The really annoying thing about *Roobot* is it's pretence to being 'Core' - 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 *Roobot* comes in a giant box with a single disc and this manual sitting about inside, the irony of this statement lingers bitter. Probably the best tip is the first one: "Try not to waste energy." ImageWorks, having played this I, already have.
 ☆☆☆

ROBLAND



Price **Amiga £29.99**
 Genre **Platform**
 Publisher **Stratton**

Notwithstanding what it may be, but there's no denying that *Robland* is a fine game. The plain side-on wader's particularly noteworthy, finding itself pitched in a sea of graphically excellent games upon its release. Nice, however, the convention seems to have dropped up where the highest profile side game over the summer (*Magic Fantasy* has failed to meet expectations).

The player must work his way through a massive mine of arenas, collecting points or 'power ups' and killing enemies with his red glider the same by landing down into the floor.

The end of each level is marked by the arrival of an enormous end of level bad guy such as an elephant, who

despite looking about as threatening as a lightning bolt of cotton wool in a leaded fog will do for the players fairly well. Interestingly enough, the player can opt to play a girl if he/she wants, but that it makes little difference to the playing style. And to be honest, the 'look on landing eliminate your score loses anyway.

Check a *Block Ball* of excellent visuals. *Robland* is a fine experience and it could even be argued to better its side-up parent, as sometimes the character has been improved. Certainly not a title for gamers into depth or going for lightning, but a mouthwatering worthwhile purchase for anyone else.
 ☆☆☆☆☆

RUGBY - THE WORLD CUP



Price **Amiga £14/Amiga £14.99**
 Genre **Sports Arcade**
 Publisher **Domark**

Hey! It's *Scrum Off!* Well, not quite, but it is a pretty decent attempt by the Domark to adapt Amiga's footy class style to the rough or 'bushy'. If you will, 'world' of rugby. It's football, as any fair-kee, rugby and football are very different sports, with the former lacking the run-stop speed of the latter. Not, then, perhaps the best game to try to stretch to fit into. *Scrum Off's* head and feet playing style.

However, as it happens, it all works pretty well. First, the action is a bit stop and start, but there is a definite flow to the game and few lapses in pace.

The game is viewed in plain view, with the pitch scrolling to follow the player's... er... player (who is, watch, the one whose the ball, Tries and kicks are controlled simply by the joystick, and it takes the subtlety of *Rob Off* (no afterwards here). Screen set a case of basically mimicking the jumps in from the opposition back, and this is fine unless you're playing the 3D teams, in which case you need to wobble a bit-high speeds to beat them.

In fact, that's probably the biggest criticism - the top teams are too tough. There are other minor niggles, such as the way player sprites 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 revolves one man rather than mid-way down the pitch to the try line. But while *Rugby* may

not be perfect, it's still a pretty good 'try'. Our usual reviewer being that.
 ☆☆☆☆☆

SARAKON



Price **Amiga £12/Amiga/BM PC £20.99**
 Genre **Platform**

Platformer **Wings Games**
 Games which call the player stupid are unlikely to go down in history as great entertainers, yet *Sarakon*, despite making this fatal mistake is a perfectly decent example of the late, longish-running genre. Basically, if you manage to jump play with several oriental waders and with some complicated 'can't do that' rules, then you're pretty close to imagining what *Sarakon* is all about.

The aim of the game is to click on similar symbols which sit in a particular orientation, eventually ending up with one taken left, or at least as low as possible before the maximum time out. Once done, the player is rewarded with a breakdown of his score and a comment from the computer as to his *Sarakon* ability.

The problem with these puzzle games, however, is that they all look similar enough to make the player want to push them up and/or have a go, or they insist on containing endless rule subtleties to make doing just that impossible. The result? The *Wings* jugs players will feel frustrated that he can't make his normal games work.

The presentation is first class, apart from the cheery sound effects and music, which don't do much to ease the frustration of the *Fast* as a glibly side-way in *Delux*.

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

SECRET WEAPONS OF THE LUFTWAFFE



Price **BM PC £40.99**
 Genre **Simulation**
 Publisher **Laserline/US Gold**

Deep, deep, deep. *Secret Weapons* of

SOLITAIRE POKER



Price: Game Gear (\$19.99) (Import)
Game Platform:
Publisher: Sega

Everyone loves a good puzzle game, and this is a very good one. The aim is simple: select a card from one of the four piles on left, and place it on a 2 x 1 grid. Points are awarded for pairs, triples, etc. created either vertically, horizontally or along the main diagonal. Score 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 more is there to say about such a simple concept? Amazebingly it's free - the functional graphics are clear and colorful and there's a vast number of background noises to pick between. Although not exactly using the full-size LCD capabilities of the Game Gear, it's one of the most enjoyable Game Gear games I've seen for a long, long time, and so each entry with a strong recommendation.

☆☆☆☆☆

SMASH TV



Price: Amiga £29.99
Game: Arcade Beat
Publisher: Ocean

"Good luck - you're gonna need it" screams the alien's only computer, and never has there been finer words said. This incarnation of the incredibly violent Williams coin-op has translated surprisingly well to the home system, with nearly all the blast and thunder elements so beloved of the original ported across faithfully.

The game takes the form of a futuristic game show, where one or two contestants armed with a rapid fire gun slug it out with a seemingly endless parade of thugs, tanks and monsters to win big money and prizes in a single-screen arena. Power-ups and cool-of-course bad guys add to the already phenomenal carnage.

On a purely visceral level, it's immensely satisfying as the plugged apparatus explodes into an orb of fire. Indeed, the screen can react enough to be almost as busy as you want

there to be, so you can imagine that you're shooting up realistic clusters of your foes if you want to. Very thorough.

As a single-player game it's fine, though there's a serious risk that boredom may well set in wearisomely early. The two-player game, on the other hand, is something else. There's not been a player to player shooting like this since *Stick Off 2*.

The victory's two joystick game is more, one to two fire, has 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 hardware prowess. Go to it, you psychos! **☆☆☆☆☆**

THUNDERHAWK



Price: Amiga £30.99
Game: Simulation
Publisher: Core Design

Most flight sims require a good deal of practice before any reward can be garnered from them. All those key-board controls and miscellaneous aircraft functions do quite a lot to put off anyone looking for a quick fix. 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 memory test of clicks and non-clicks.

The game itself is broken down into a series of campaigns, each preceded by a graphic briefing sequence indicating target and terrain type. Before taking to the sky the player must select the appropriate armament 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 stay airborne. Graphics are smooth and clear at a fair click, though there isn't much background scenery, if you've never been tempted to try a flightless, then this is the game to change your attitude. **☆☆☆☆☆**

STRIKE FLEET



Price: Atari ST/Amiga (£19.99)

Game: Strategy
Publisher: Electronic Arts
 Strike Fleet doesn't look the most inspiring game from the shelves on the back of the box, but the *Lancelotti* credit lists that this may be better than it appears. As, in fact, it is. It's a one-based strategy game split into four-on-four individual missions or a seven-stage mission campaign. After each mission briefing, the player is allocated a number of points depending on the difficulty of the mission in speed or in depth. Each ship costs a certain number of points depending on its class, so the player must be careful in picking a balanced fleet.

Once at sea, the player can flick between the ships at will. Control is relatively simple (presumably), allowing the player to steer, change speed, activate radar and more and, of course, fire the variety of on-board weapons. In addition, on-land ships carry a complement of helicopters that can be used on ocean or sub-aquatic forces.

Despite its initially stark 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 air, sea or underwater attacks provides frequent doses of adrenaline. Admittedly, there without a strategic leaning isn't unlikely to be covered 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 £19.99
Game: Arcade Beat
Publisher: Electronic Arts

Oops. Fancy how our minute you're on top of the world and the next you're... not. A situation which top notch programmers (didn't the Cat have found themselves in with their latest release, *Under Pressure*, then indeed indeed only release, *Projectile* was exceedingly well received, being a pretty excellent sports sim, but Heaven only knows what gremlins and glitches are to blame for this disaster.

Spilled on an unacceptably similar fashion to *Projectile* games (the in-

between-level test is virtually identical to *Project*'s game state test and the rules which the player controls look exceedingly like the creature on the *Shadow of the Beast* box). Under Pressure falls down in almost every single respect.

Coasting a huge variety of killing machines through a bunch of decrepit cityscapes, the player must deal with a myriad of different enemies - mainly snakes - with the impressive amount of weaponry available from his outfit.

Seems simple, doesn't it, Alan, from here on in, the game falls down rather badly. For a start, everything is too big. The player's robot is almost like the screen, but doesn't have the detail or animation frame to support its size. Also, the wade prevents 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 than than an exciting adventure. Obviously no timing is necessary for shooting for the enemies either, as they just sit and realize the player's fire. Oh dear.

☆

UTOPIA



Price: Amiga £29.99
Game: Arcade Strategy
Publisher: Gamble

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 Population/Popoverage style effort. Except this time the aim, rather than simply ruling a world or conquering it to constrain and tax it, is to make all its inhabitants feel really good! The aim is to elevate the quality of life to work - Utopia.

It's not difficult to grasp the aims and contents 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 work-less sports festivals, your population will be content, but without any visible defence when the inevitable computer-controlled alien attack occurs.

Beginning there just a few key buildings, it's up to the player to construct

the colony using icon-driven actions while inspecting the world in isometric 3D. There are almost no rules in this society. You can do things virtually any way you want.

The only factor that is missing is the option to try and run things as a dictatorship regime and make a certain part of the population very happy while keeping the weaker ground down on the diet. Still, this never works, does it?

☆☆☆☆

VOLFIED



Price: \$44.95 / Amiga £24.99

Genre: Arcade Blast
Publisher: Empire

Qix is back in town, and better than ever! No matter how widely tastes may differ among the gaming/playing fraternity, you'd be hard pushed to find anybody who doesn't enjoy a game of good-old Qix. It's special in general because it's so simple and addictive, and like Breakout, its gameplay has stood the test of time. What Volfied (named from Taito's coin-operated machine) is a good version of the original classic - it is to Qix what Advanced was to Breakout, keeping the original framework intact, but adding lots of pretty backgrounds, power-ups and extra features.

For the most part it's exactly the same - draw boxes around the screen to fill space (in some cases the screen just fills up the frames which makes up the line itself) getting hit by any of the remaining enemies - which, instead of the old grating lines, now takes the form of a giant membership of mice about springing about bullets, and a couple of pretty little bugs. Levels and upgrades are among the collectibles, while high-tech backgrounds and SFX provide the aesthetic overhaul.

Since Qix-style games are so thin on the ground, Volfied, with its extra features and sophisticated gameplay is a welcome addition to the software scene - and if you've got any sense and ambition for the classic, you'll add a very collectible one.

☆☆☆☆

VROOM



Price: \$44.95 / Amiga £24.99

Genre: Racing Game
Publisher: Lorimar

Without wanting to be nasty to our European counterparts, who with eggs 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 Lorimar, has proven itself to be the exception to the rule. Although it's not a push-on the floor of Indianapolis game or Formula One Grand Prix, Vroom is nevertheless a jolly nippy racing game, boasting very impressive speed so the player never has any fears the victory stands a flat-person environment. It's got all the usual features and fittings - rear-view mirror, pit stops, overhead maps, bridges, dips and hills on the track, training modes, qualifying laps, choice of courses and some spectacular crash sequences. It's more of a racing game than simulation, or 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 actually quite competitive, with the array of racing options adding to the game's longevity. The only dodgy feature is that the joystick option is restricted to the arcade mode - the more serious race options only allow steering control. Very dodgy indeed. But apart from that, not at all bad.

☆☆☆☆

WILLY BEAMISH



Price: \$44.95 / Amiga £24.99

Genre: Adventure
Publisher: Dynamix / Sierra On-Line

The Adventures of Willy Beamish, to give it its full name, is somewhat of a oddity. Embodied an interactive cartoon, it's not of a world war between The Wonder Fun and The Squeeps. Willy is the typical all-American middle-classing pre-teen schoolkid, complete with gaily bands, pet frog and accordingly stereotypical family. Strange things start to abound at Thanksgiving, 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 luck often playing more of a part than skill or judgment. As such,

more time is spent reentering saved games than actually playing, and I was quite frustrated at times, especially when you have to sit through the central cut-scenes for the unproductive time. As an interactive cartoon, it's excellent, with suitably stereotypical characters, some funny jokes and gorgeous visuals. As a game it's compelling, but not in a way that encourages total addiction or investment. You're unlikely to come back to again and again.

☆☆☆☆

WING COMMANDER II



Price: \$44.95 / Amiga £24.99

Genre: Arcade Blast
Publisher: Origin

No matter who else you might try about the Wing Commander games, they look damned good. The trouble is, there isn't really much else to say about them. Well, perhaps that's a little harsh, but here in the sequel to the much talked about and little-played original, it's very much a case of more of the same.

Interstellar war with the Kilrathi continues, and in the most recent Kilrathi victory, the Confederation flagship Tiger's Claw has been destroyed by invisible Kilrathi stealth fighters. As the sole survivor of the attack, the player must first convince his Federation comrades that the attack did genuinely take place and then lead a Federation force to track them down and destroy them.

Exceptionally excellent although particularly processor heavy, Wing Commander II certainly isn't a brilliant game. It's a worthy sequel to its predecessor but is the sort of title where that title itself pleases about trying before buying is worth appreciation.

☆☆☆☆

WOLFPCHILD



Price: Amiga £25.95

Genre: Arcade Blast
Publisher: Code Design

Okay, okay, so it's not another platform game. What separates Wolfchild from the ever-growing crowd is the

above excellence of its execution. Rick Dangerous creator Simon Phipps has captured himself once again, creating a game that has everything an arcade aficionado could ask for - incredibly fast-paced action, superb graphics, 3D, awesome procedural effects, a villainous monster and... well, let's leave it there.

The plot tells of a brilliant genetic scientist kidnapped by a corrupt corporation to produce mutant killing machines for their own demonic ends. The scientist's son, Neil Marrow, jumps himself into his dad's prototype gene-splitting machine and turns himself into Wolfchild, a half-man, half-beast character with special energy-sapping powers.

What follows is five levels of top-level platform game fast-run-up action with fast switching back and forth between his human and beastly forms to help him progress. With enough energy is collected, Neil becomes the wolfish character and is blessed with the power to fire orbital electrical energy at the mutant horde for continually attack him.

It might not be the most original game in the world, it appears physically more than makes up for any lack of real innovation. It's hard, fast and dangerous to lose. Give a prize of place in your platform collection now.

☆☆☆☆

WORLD CLASS RUGBY



Price: \$44.95 / Amiga £24.99

Genre: Sports Simulation
Publisher: Avalon

Avalon's have opted for a rigorous approach to the sport, offering plenty of accuracy and a great deal of scope for subtle play. And so early it's more than worth watching to play, if a bit harder to get into.

It's also far prettier, with play viewed from a 3D angle and all the players and man made it into units. If this doesn't appeal, there's a selection of other items available (including a no-nonsense top-down view for the more traditionally minded). World Class Rugby may not have Dream'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.

☆☆☆☆

the blitter end

Not sure for any meeting about this month, you've got a picture to fit or, instead, let's get straight on with the carnival of this one!

Talk about trend setting. You may remember last month's revelation in the blitter about the rather sensational (yet strangely unconvincing) entry of a bunch of high-level software delegates while on business in foreign parts. Apparently, after partaking of a few beverages (which helpfully leave business news clear), the trio took it upon themselves to head up and down in the hotel lift, stopping at every floor and filling the elevator car with literature from the hallways. This is of course hilarious, but it's not as easy as it sounds. While this fine group of phantasmic stakeholders disappeared directly into the night like steam, a couple group of software bad boys met privately when they tried it themselves during the recent World of Commodore show in London.

These copper-stacked weirdos went up and down in the elevator, filling it up with occasional tables, servers, chairs and pet plants as they went along. Unfortunately when they neglected to realize that the whole thing was being monitored by the hotel's doorman

about TV cameras. When said delegates tried to check out of the hotel, they received a thorough scolding from the management. Needless to say, the delegate's superiors were none too pleased when confronted with the idea of what their staff got up to late at night. Finally, Winter doesn't see what the problem is. There's nothing wrong with a bit of indiscretion as long as you've had it - especially when it's something as side-splitting as filling a lift up with assorted items of furniture. Don't people have a sense of humor these days?

It's amazing how good certain members of the industry can be at name-dropping when they try. Our own Gary White can hardly resist the temptation to tell us all how he's top man with Clive Barker at every available opportunity. Ad Manager Mike Willis has an uncanny knack of being able to drop the words "Dave Lee Thorpe" wherever other words, and Gerry's Gary Rowley's talk-cubbling prowess is nothing short of legendary.

But none of these tales can compare to the personal-life opinions recently recounted by Probe Software head

Isaiah Fergus McGovern. Apparently, while on business in the USA last year, our Fergus was staying at a five star hotel (in his words, with some other than music magazine Ad Probes staying in the very same room. While entering the lift one fine morning, who should Fergus bump into but Big Al himself! Unfortunately, the teenage software whiz-kid became tongue-tied with awe and simply couldn't think of anything to say to the pint-sized Oscar nominee. After about a minute of nervous stammering, the boy thing he could come up with was "I know exactly who's writing a computer game about you", referring to the Godfather Bookie. Al, who's not known to be a big computer fan, was less than impressed by this startling revelation and replied with a polite yet pointed "So you now" before leaving the lift to embark upon some top movie project. Here at the blitter we're reduced to similar stunts of stony-eyed awe whenever the legendary David Kitson drops into the ACE office. It's like we were saying to Bobby Dabkin and Marty Scorsese just the other day...

After the runaway success of "odorous" brand video The Last's Guide, Blitter

thought it'd jump on the bandwagon and print a few handy low-brow bits of its own. In this line of a handy out-and-out-keep series, we present some invaluable tips from some other than Finnish programmer Steven Fossander, creator of multi-Clay games at Samsin, Delta and Quaders. With a program using modules that you'd expect to see for a big fat with the ladies - and you'd be absolutely right. So head his words of wisdom: here's first tip is that, should you ever choose to visit his home city of Helsinki, you should ensure you go at the right time of year. The reason for this is that, according to Steven, Finnish women seem to change through different parts of the year. Go in Autumn or Winter and you could well receive a body reaction from the local lady, but try again in the Spring and Summer and you could well find the lady behaves practically throwing themselves at you! This is all of course completely unfounded, but Steven seems to be sure. And this is the man who's trained on Scenic Software's ropes, so he knows what he's talking about.

It has recently been brought to Blitter's attention how certain members of the software industry had unaccountably like-famous-solutions. It all started while Blitter was following the related trail of William Kennedy Smith, and it dawned on us how the great Senator's nephew (quite a striking resemblance to Computer + Video Games Ad Manager Jim Green).

Another personal favorite is the particularly striking resemblance between Electronic Arts' PR Manager Simon Jeffrey and the young singer sister (or Paul Simon) - no wonder the name made him a dead ringer for the Oscar-winning son of Commodore and Steve Allen. And when whose Greenleaf's law Stewart and Al Pacino in The Godfather Part III? Our particular favorite, however, has to be the uncanny likeness between Microsoft Managing Director Peter Dillan and Microsoft's former leading superstar Matt! If you have any suggestions of your own, please write and let us know. There's a special prize for anyone who can come up with an industry look-alike for Jimmy Krawley, Winston Davis or Mr Bush. Look out for the results in next month's issue. Until then, keep 'em pecked!

ACE PICTURE POWER!

This month we see the first of a couple features in the blitter - every month we'll be presenting an amusing series of images of an industry top dog caught in a compromising position. If you happen to know such a photo, blitter would be very interested in taking a look one, with a view to publication. There's a hefty bonus awaiting filled with used, not occasionally mentioned top goods/ones for the best one we receive each month.

We kick off this month with the tantalizing photo of interesting yet slightly dangerous (and only partly Microsoft) Marketing Director Steve Brennan. This is in fact a rare shot indeed, as hardly anyone within the industry has ever seen Steve from the waist to the drink. Some experts claim that this picture is in fact a highly detailed scene using sophisticated photo-montage techniques, as everyone knows that Steve never touches a drop and, except for meetings, weekends, luncheons and occasions of mourning and afterwards is always seen as a judge. Next month we'll be getting a little more picture of Steven's Publishing Down on Cong (though with his mouth closed - also believed to be a cheat).



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