

playstation creator **KEN KUTARAGI** speaks out


TM

FUSION

SEGA FIGHTS BACK!

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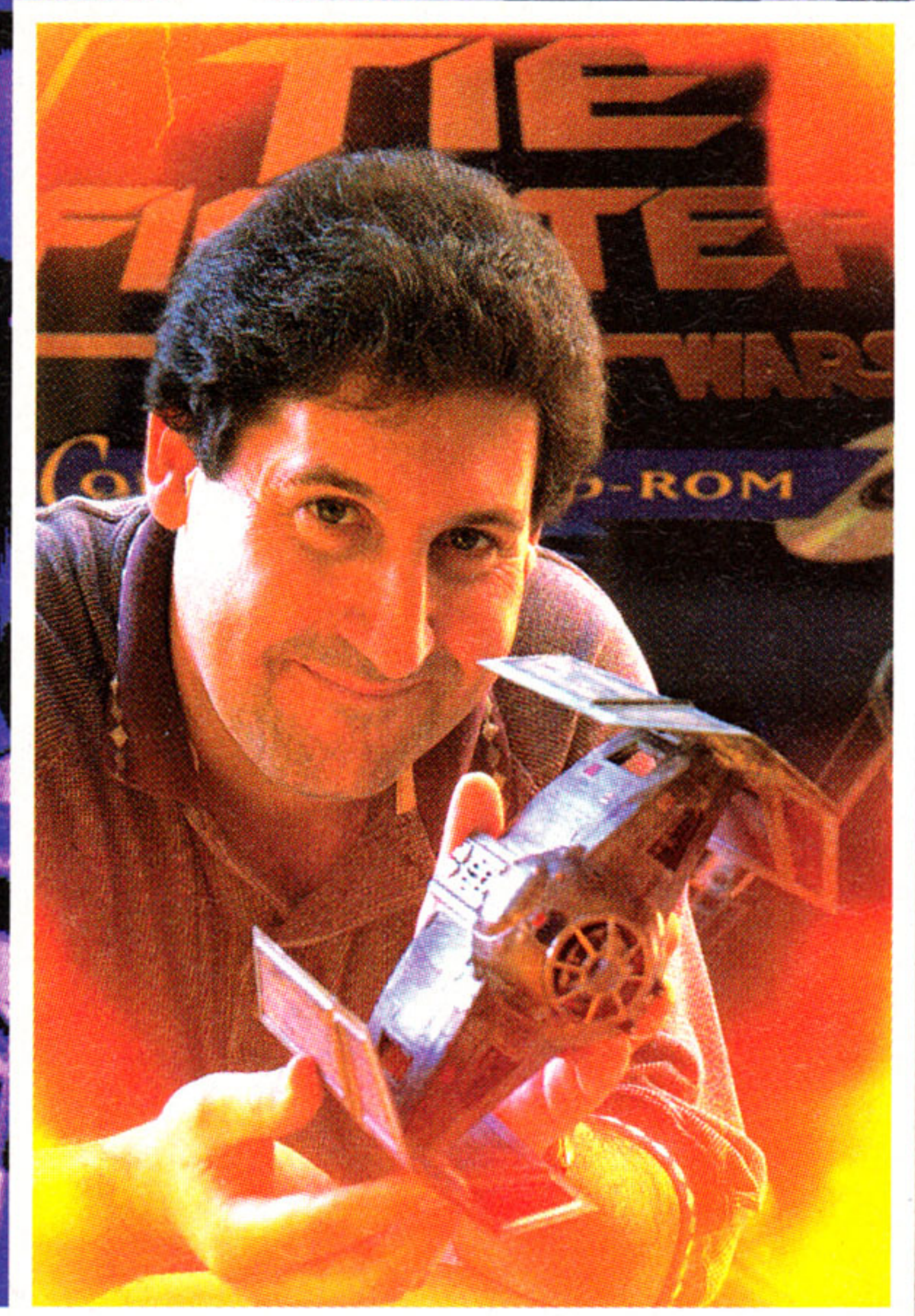
SEGA!!!

FUSION talks to the top execs at Sega and learns of their plans to contend against the Sony PlayStation.



FUSION would like to thank Holly White and Ideas in Action for our interview with Brad Hunt, appearing in the December and January issues. We would also like to thank Andrea Vassallo (Sony), Terry Tang (Sega), Sue Seserman (LucasArts), Sarah Ellerman and the *EGM* staff.

THANKS FOR BEARING WITH US DURING OUR REMODELING, WATCH FOR WET PAINT!

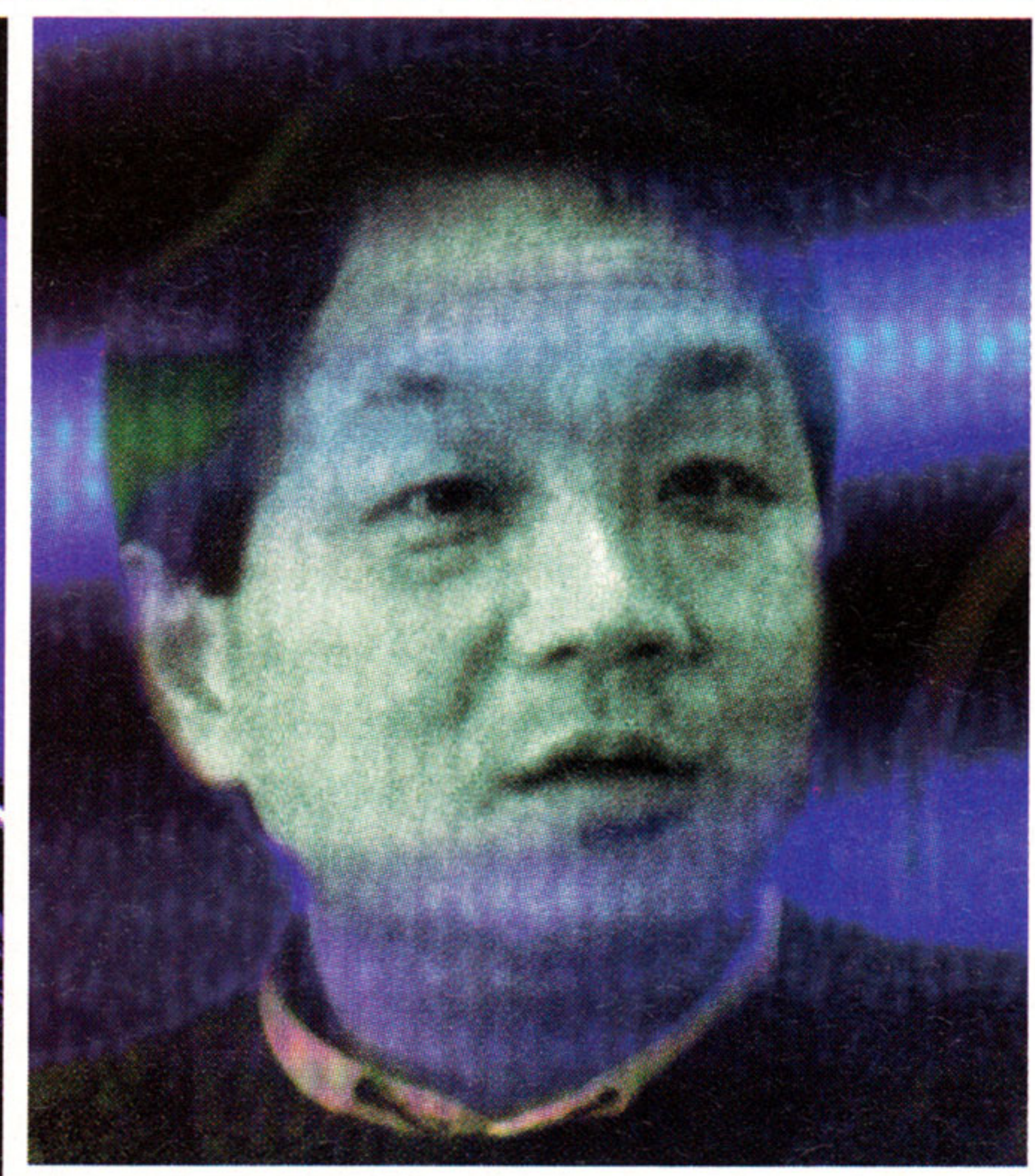


JEDI KNIGHTS

Meet the people who turned LucasArts and the *Star Wars* franchise into the best-selling PC publisher in the galaxy.

KEN KUTARAGI

Thank the man who brought the world the PlayStation! Hear how he did it and what his plans are for the future.



Don't Call It A Comeback

This month's look at Sega has not only raised some interesting questions, but has cemented in all of our minds just how much market perception is a fickle and funny thing.

While data had suggested that Sony's PlayStation was heavily outselling the Saturn, it now seems that Sega is coming on stronger than previously reported. But statistics have been so contradictory that it's really impossible to say either way. What is for sure though, is that several platforms will take the plunge in the year ahead, and next-generation overcrowding will likely return to a state of homeostasis.

To side-step the plunge, companies like 3DO and Atari have explored other industry options, including PC software and online gaming. Will ubiquity be the gaming wave of the future?

We at *FUSION* aren't so sure, but one thing we know is that Sega's second-generation games have been vastly improved over past titles, and they're far from being down for the count. At press time, Sega's hardware and software had gained respectable numbers, and they had released strong titles in *Virtua Cop* and *Virtua Fighter II*. Similarly, Sony has hits in *Twisted Metal* and *WipeOut*. So when you hear gamers discussing the issue of who's going to be the 32-Bit war winner, realize that the answer is: the consumer.

So thanks again for checking in with us, and get ready for some exciting months ahead. Expect fair and precise looks at gaming's major players (like this issue's focused report on Sega) and the up-and-comers looking to knock them off of their pedestals.

Be careful out there, The Management

We would like to clear the air in regard to the November news story, "Marty & Me." The story was written only in jest—*FUSION* believes that the Sony PlayStation is a viable gaming system, and we only wish Mr. Homlish the best of luck in his new position as SCEA President. Additionally, *FUSION* would like to make a correction to November's review of *Witchhaven*. The publisher of the title is not LucasArts, but instead Capstone. Finally, in December's Bits, Bytes, Buzz column, the Software Publisher's Association was named incorrectly as the "Software Protection Agency." We apologize for these errors.

"We've obviously been outsold by the PlayStation in November and early December. We believe we will capture them and pass them in these last 10 days of December, and that will make us about even for the year."

— Tom Kalinske, President and CEO of Sega of America



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PUBLISHER

Steve Harris

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Joe Funk

SENIOR EDITOR

Joe Fielder

MANAGING EDITOR

Dean Hager

NEWS EDITOR

Rob Bernstein

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Arnie Katz, Mike Stokes, Joyce Worley

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Scott Bunkleemann, Ed Finkler, Dave Gerding, Frank Kurtz, Mike Riley, Neil Shapiro, John P. Withers

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Photography by Jim Sugar

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John Born, Production Coordinator

Dave McCracken, Production Manager

Jennifer Whitesides, Managing Copy Editor

Gayle Schneider, Jennifer McGeary,

Copy Editors

Mike Darling, Ad Coordinator

CUSTOMER SERVICE

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Woodland Hills, CA 91364 (818) 712-9400

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NY Office: (212) 984-0730

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"When I graduated...I decided to go for it and dump what I had studied because there would be more growth and more fun in the gaming industry."

- Vince Lee, LucasArts programmer



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SONY



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Immersive Gaming, 3-D High and Still Rising

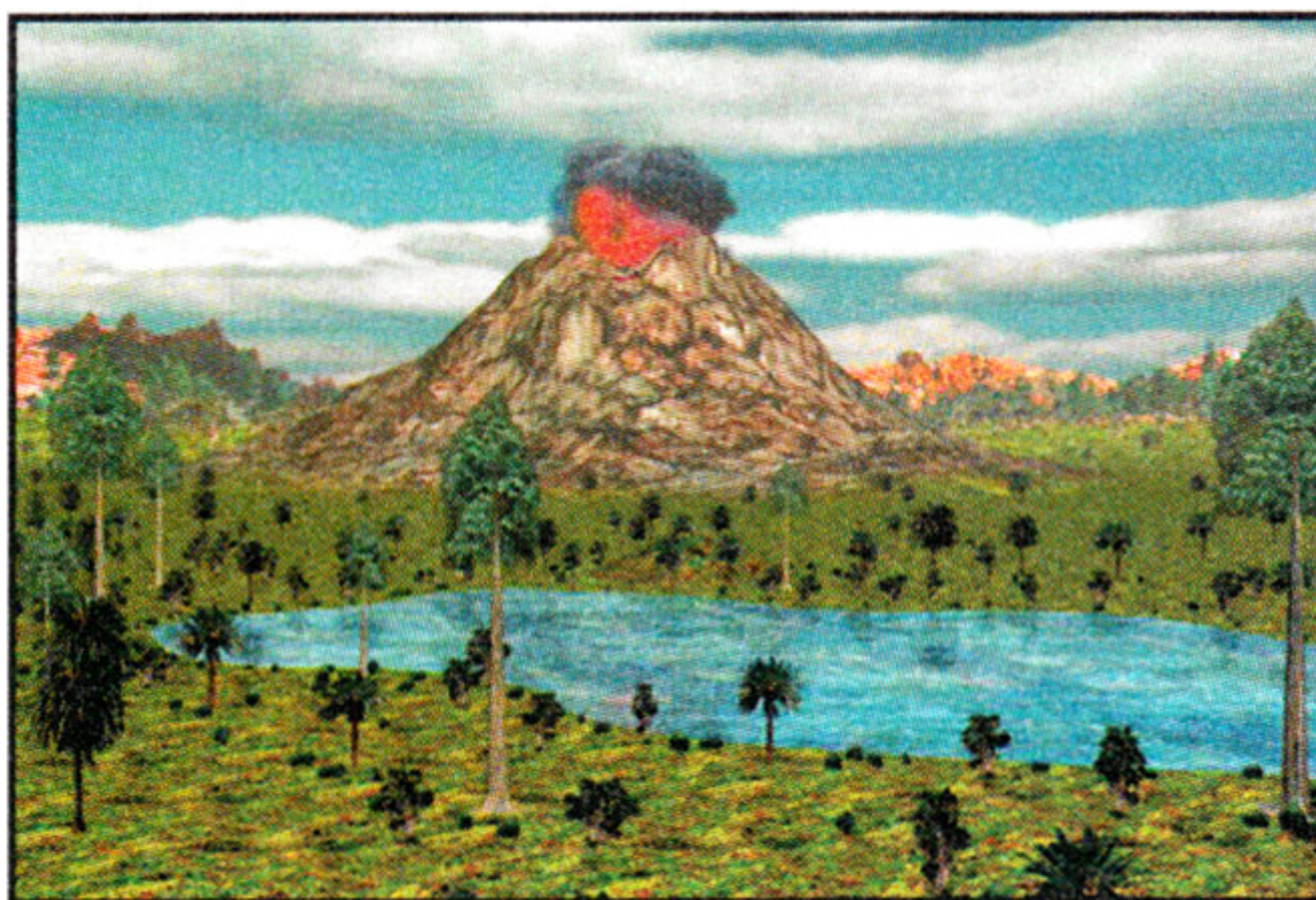
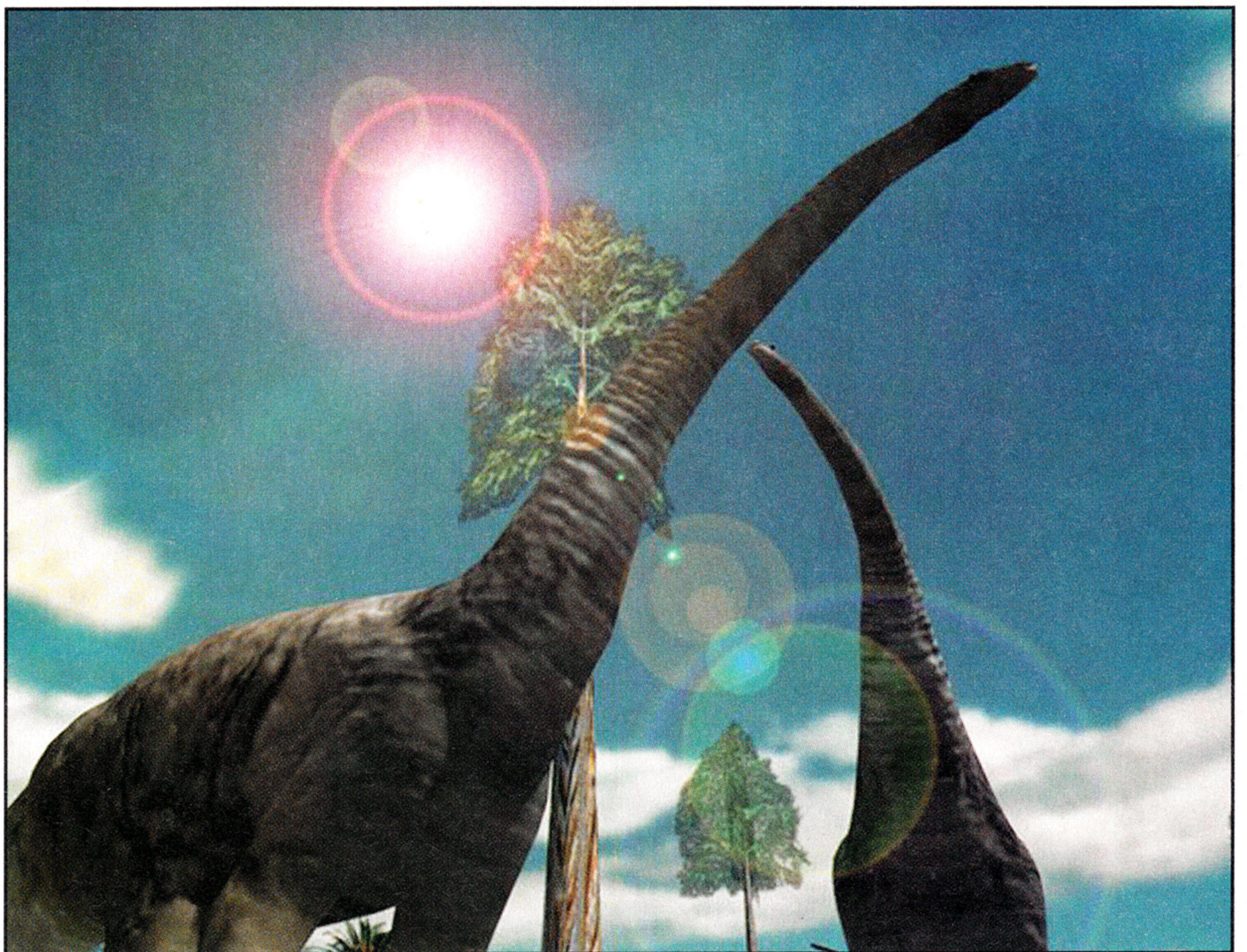
PC and Next Generation Platforms Promise To Deliver on Flat-Out 3-D

You can't get enough of a good thing, right? Well wrong, if you're talking about

Tarantino-esque filmmaking, Mexican food, or 2-D side-scrollers. While Mario and Sonic were great in their heyday, their limited, left-to-right maneuvering is now antediluvian. Energizing the needy little fingers of today's gamers presently demands that that pipe-happy plumber and that whirling dervish of a hedgehog get three dimensional.

But despite all the consideration that 3-D gaming has received in the foregoing months (programming software, accelerator cards and 3-D engines), many gamers and programmers feel it's not quite the second coming that had been espoused at Comdex. In fact, LogicWare programmer Bill Heineman explains that the hype surrounding 3-D came not from the actual developers of software, but rather from the publishers and marketers of the gaming industry. "They're pushing 3-D engines just because they want to say, 'Hey, we're using the latest technology.'"

So sure, marketers are ready for 3-D, but are programmers prepared to deliver the goods? Yes and no. Titles like *Doom* have pioneered depth-of-field gameplay, but as great as *Doom* is, it's not fully



The 3-D graphics (above, left and across right) are provided courtesy of Visual Software.

"We're writing the game in case you do have one of those 3-D accelerators, and the architecture of the game should port a little bit easier to the console games like the PlayStation because of the way that it's been written for the geometry engine."

Unfortunately, most programmers don't have the financial resources of id Software. Thus, they lack the means to hand-tailor new 3-D engines for each and every new game. To escape a 2-D fate,

3-D—you can't view the world in 360 degrees. Yes, that will change. id Software's John Romero doesn't feel at all limited in developing his new game *Quake*.

programmers must instead invest in a more generic 3-D gaming engine. The going rate: \$25,000 for the popular Renderware engine. But the problem with using a Renderware engine is that every programmer from here to Timbuktu has access to it—the specificity of its design is causing many new 3-D games to look the same.

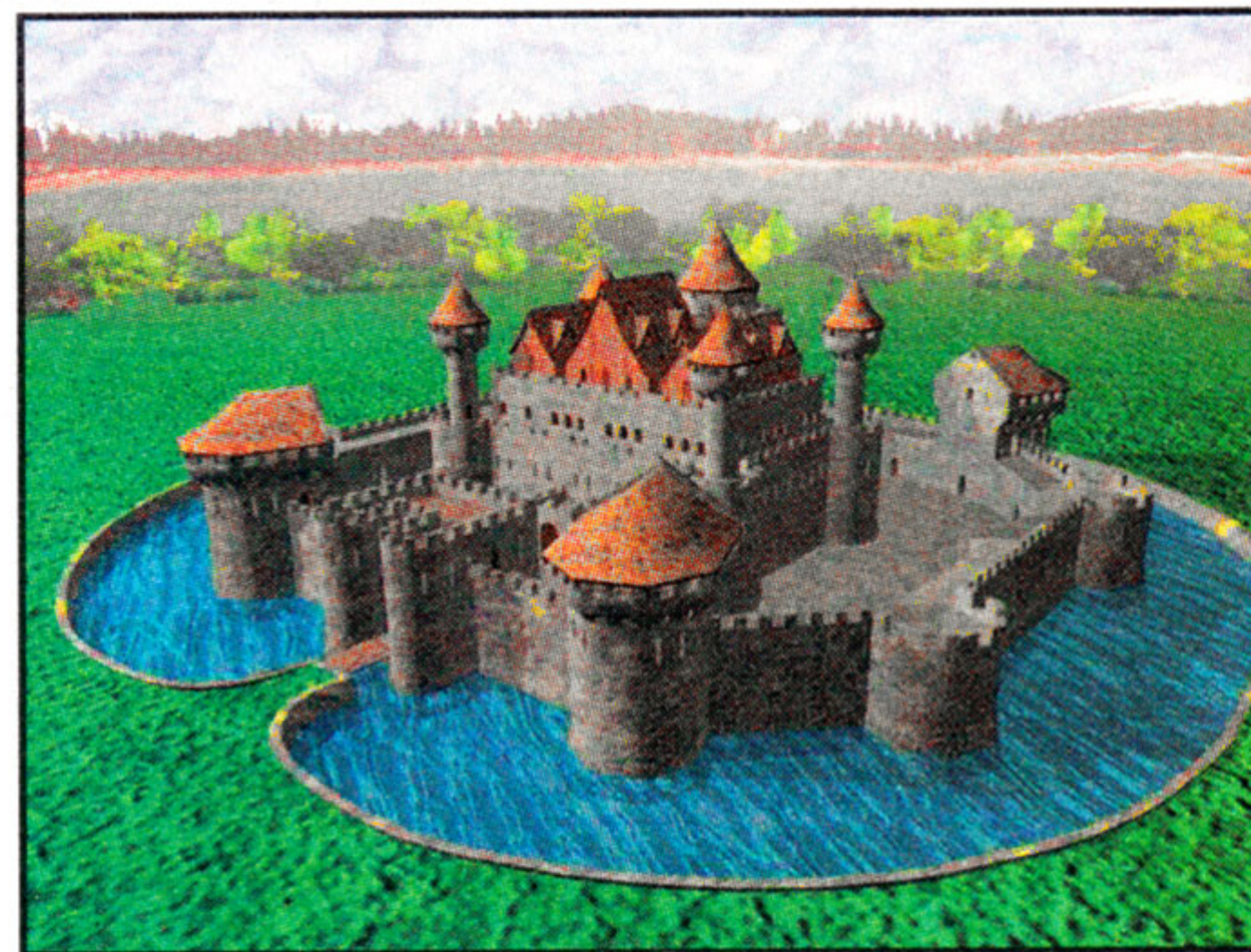
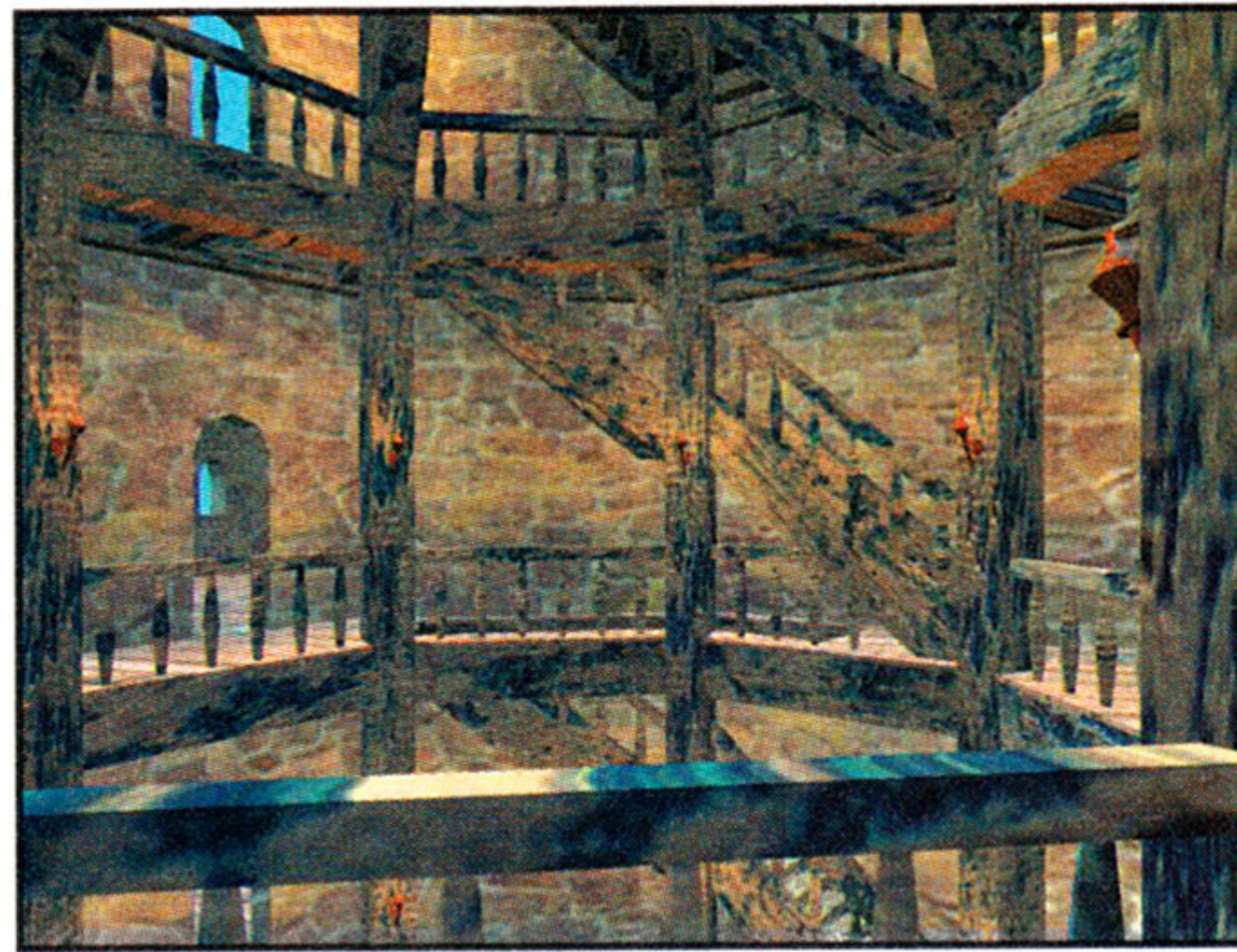
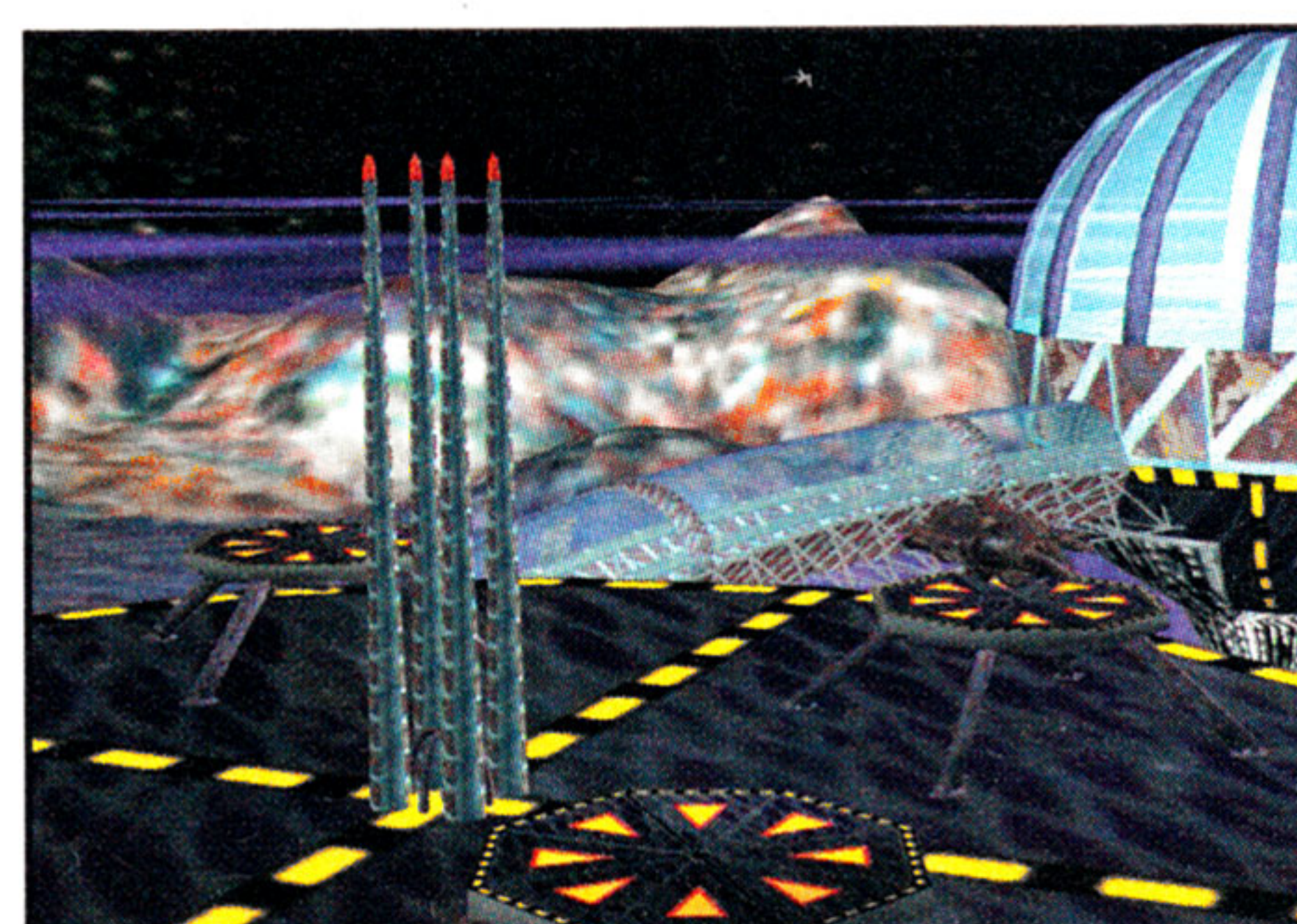
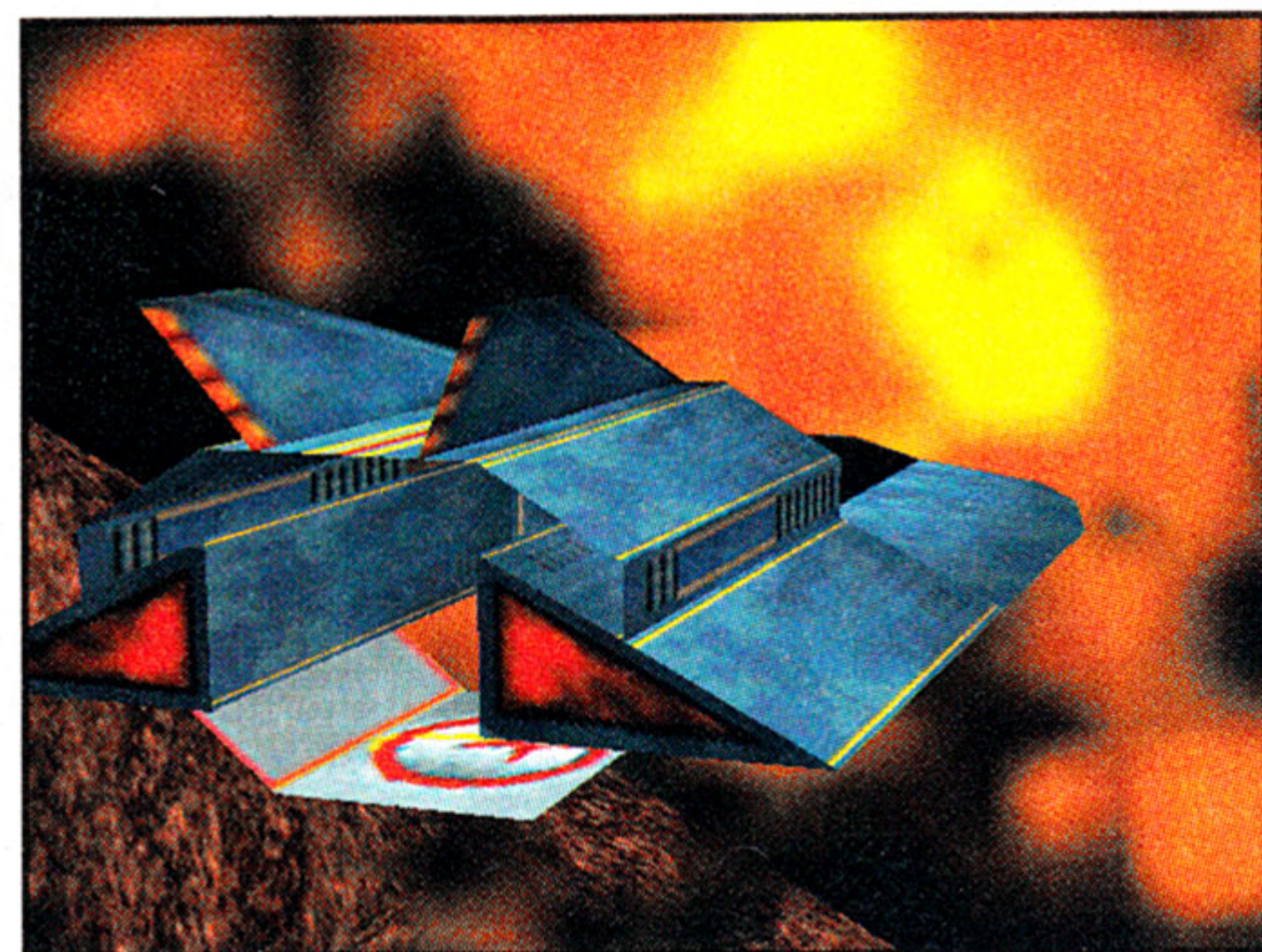
But at least PC users have the option of upgradeability. Console developers are in a tougher position. In regard to the Ultra, Heineman comments, "It's not like on the

"RIGHT NOW, CONSOLES HAVE A LOT OF HORSE-POWER, WHICH IS ALMOST COMPLETELY HAMSTRUNG BY THE LACK OF RAM."

— BRIAN WALKER
DOMARK SOFTWARE

PC where you have to write everything, all of the algorithms, all of the mathematics, all the tricks. [On consoles] it's harder to do something unique." Domark programmer Brian Walker also points out, "Right now, consoles have a lot of graphics horsepower, which is almost completely hamstrung by the lack of RAM."

Will Ultra's promises of 3-D be all that it can be? Electronic Arts programmer Mike



A world unto itself: Immersive 3-D will soon provide gamers with many homes away from home.

Rubinelli isn't so sure. "The bottom line is that Nintendo has a \$150,000 workstation trying to cram down into a \$250 chip set that can ship in the home market. And a lot of that's going to be compromised." Surprisingly, Rubinelli is as impressed by the Sony PlayStation's ability to render 3-D. "The Ultra's a nice machine, but it's not going to take the market by storm... The problem that the U64 has is that it has no bulky storage device that's going to be shipped with the machine [Nintendo has announced such a peripheral, but with no concrete release date]. So you have a 64-Bit processor, okay, great. You've got more colorful graphics and better sound. It all takes up more storage space...What the [games] are going to feel like are SNES games on steroids."

And with the slew of new accelerator cards available from the likes of Diamond Edge, 3-D Labs and 3Dfx, PC games are going to have an explicit special effects advantage over console systems. Just look at 3-D Labs' upcoming, second-generation Permedia chip, which can work over 25 million texture-mapped pixels per second.

Of course, you're talking about two discrete markets. The Ultra's low \$249 price will lure plenty of kids. But will its magnetic storage device deliver for 3-D gamers? ●

In-Your-Face 3-D Displays

Infinity Multimedia has reached an agreement with Thompson Multimedia for a potentially revolutionary 3-D display technology that eliminates the need for sphincter-upsetting virtual headsets or glasses (see diagram).

Infinity Multimedia spokesperson Peter Canepa explains, "The big problem with virtual headsets is when you want a person to see things when he moves his head, you have to track his head...The problem with that is, no matter how fast the computer, there's always a delay between when the computer determines the movement and the new image that comes up in front of the eyes."

Infinity's new 3-D display would not track the movement of a gamer's eyes, but rather emit a continuous series of segmented images. Come mid-'96, the first application for the 3-D display technology will appear in video arcade games. Soon after, promises Canepa, the technology will be incorporated into computer monitors and 3-D television sets. ●

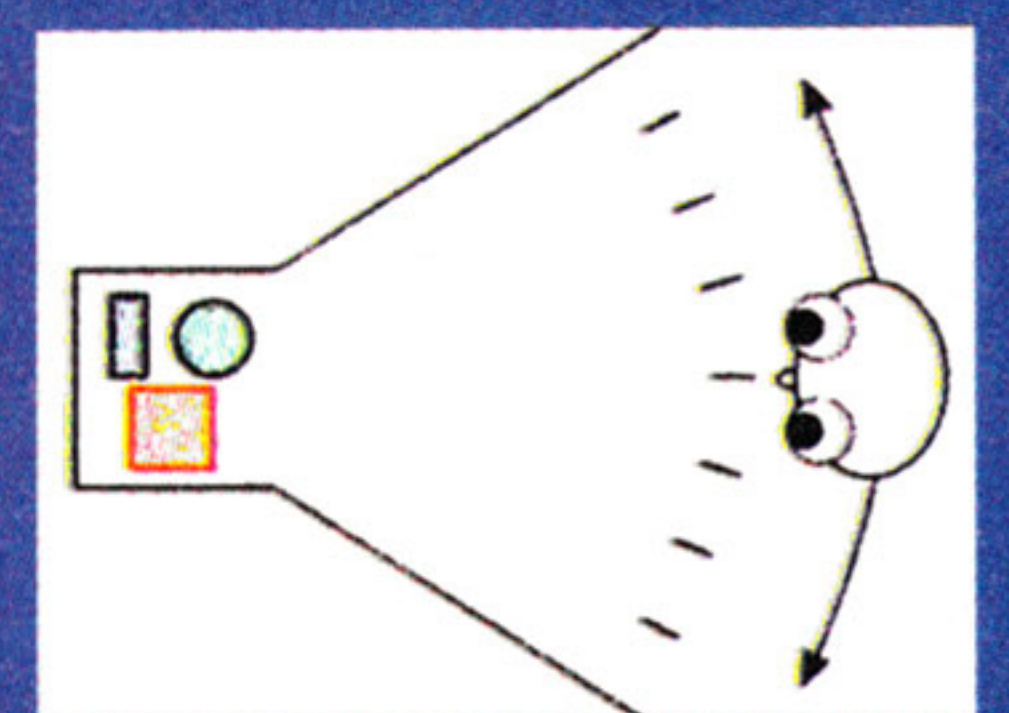
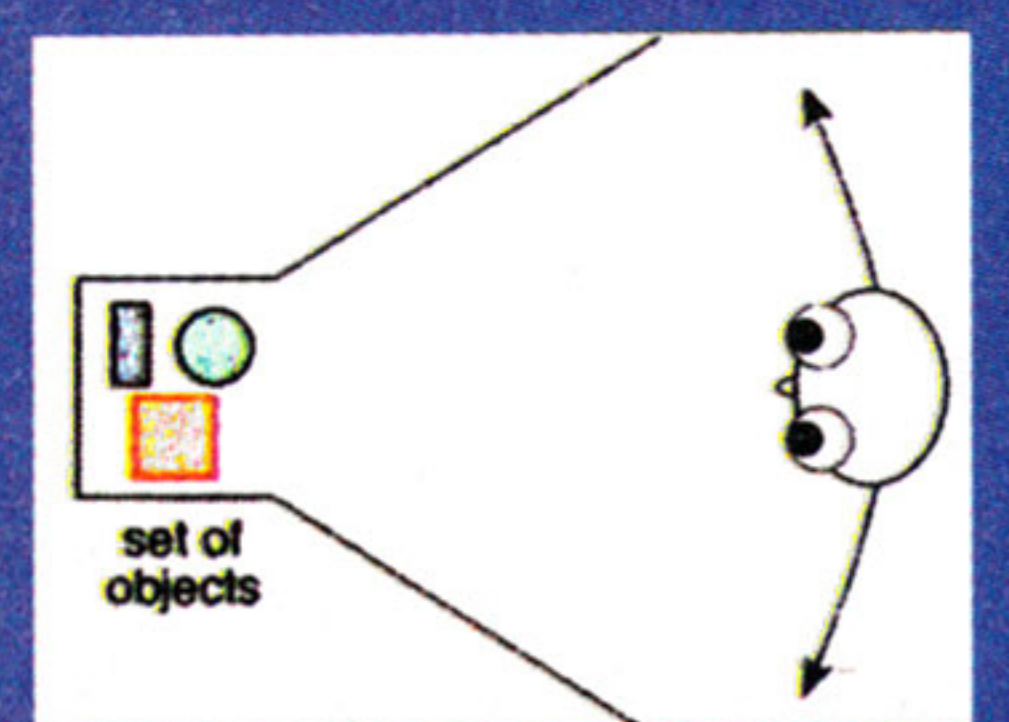
How It Works

Each eye sees a slightly different view of the world. The brain fuses these views to give 3-D depth

perception: stereo parallax. We also receive 3-D information when we move our heads from side to side: movement parallax.

The display technology divides the view space (or game screen) into a finite number of small segments

so as to provide stereo and movement parallax. When a player's head moves from left to right, the eyes unknowingly pass over segmented regions of the game screen. These segmented images fool the eye, consequently inducing a remarkable 3-D effect.



Washington Kombat Violence

Congressional Kibitzers Still Think Video Games Are Too Violent For Kids

A powerful undercut, and whoosh, an adversary hangs upside-down, impaled on a ceiling of spikes. Imagining the expression on the face of an incognizant parent who just witnessed the *Mortal Kombat* "Fatality" for the first time is strikingly comic. What's not so funny, however,

ation in rating games containing violence, nudity or profanity, they've encountered difficulties with many national retailers. On Dec. 13, 1995, Lieberman released a statement criticizing many retailers for not participating in the rating program. "The most troubling finding of our survey

heap as the top-selling game, and this year, a look at the hottest new video games shows that many are kid-friendly."

Nine retailers have committed to stop selling unrated video games (with the ubiquitous Wal-Mart leading the charge), but less than a handful



Parents are up in arms about ultra-violent games. From left to right: *Doom*, *Expect No Mercy*, *Mortal Kombat*, *Way of the Warrior*.

is that these same gape-faced parents are writing Washington by the mailbagful, and once again inciting Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), to review violence in video games.

On Dec. 9, 1993, Senators Lieberman and Herb Kohl (D-Wisc.) held the first of four hearings regarding violence in video games, after which, the "misogynistic" game *Night Trap* was temporarily removed from store shelves. Since then, two rating boards have been established: the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), managed by the Interactive Digital Software Association, and the Recreational Software Advisory Council, developed by a team of academics, parents and psychologists. While the senators are pleased with the industry's cooper-

"...the market has shown that you don't need to spew blood to reap profits..."

—Sen. Joseph Lieberman

was the fact that eight different stores—about a third—refused to answer questions about their policies...The one point I want to make about this today is that the market has shown that you don't need to spew blood to reap profits. Last year, *Donkey Kong [Country]* was king of the

agreed to do the same with PC titles. Additionally, of those retailers who made the rating commitment (Wal-Mart, Kmart, Sears, Best Buy, Target, Toys 'R' Us, Blockbuster Video, Electronics Boutique, Babbage's and Software Etc.), very few have been witnessed enforcing the age requirements printed on the cover of game boxes.

Currently, there's no law enforcing retailers to sell rated-only games, but be assured that there'll be much more noise from Capitol Hill in the near future. For now, Lieberman suggests that parents stop, look and speak up before buying video games. And that's just fine by *FUSION*, just don't take our *Mortal Kombat* away! ●

Nintendo Scores Ultra Sport Titles

While the November Shoshinkai Show featured screen shots of 13 upcoming Ultra 64 games, no sports titles were announced. The conspicuous absence of any such titles left the press and many gamers wondering about the future of a platform without a defining sports lineup.

Well, allay any doubt or fears because Electronic Arts and Time Warner Interactive have both joined the Nintendo team to deliver 3-D Ultra 64 titles. EA will be bringing an exclusive version of *FIFA Soccer* to the Ultra, and is scheduled for release sometime before the '96 holiday season. Time Warner will be introducing *Wayne Gretzky 3-D* (based on their coin-op), with three-on-three play and a goalie tournament option.

Additionally, original Dream Team party

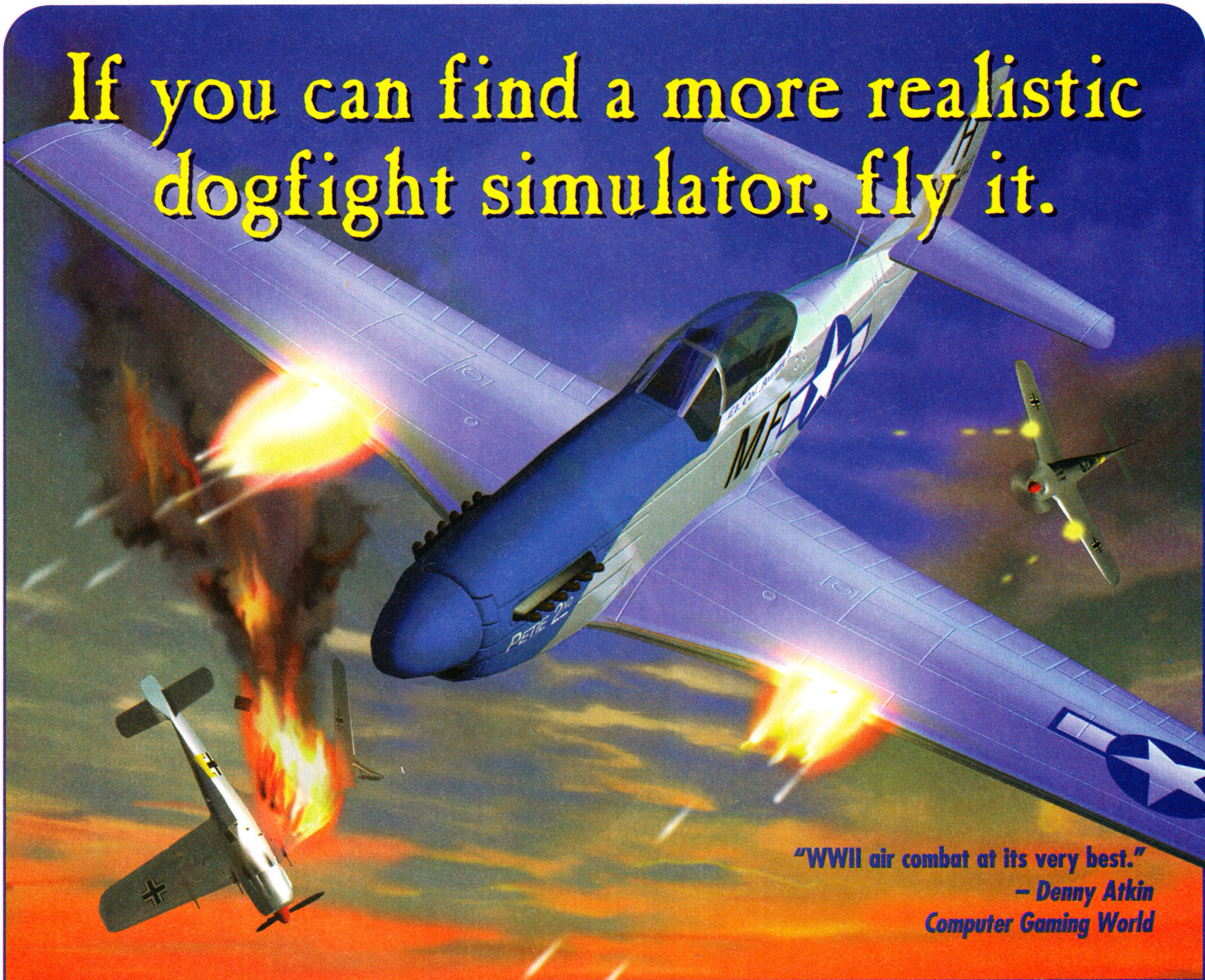


Angel Studios is rumored to be developing a 3-D Ken Griffey Jr. baseball title. So it seems Nintendo has the bases covered, except for a Football title. Hmmm... ●

Warner Bros. Signs Top Talent

Fans of sports titles will be happy to know that Warner Bros. Interactive, through their new Sports Licensing Division, has announced intentions to develop a series of exclusive games for 32-Bit systems and CD-ROM. Already, Patrick Ewing, Juwan Howard and Bobby Hurley have been signed to exclusive deals. The strange team of players has agreed to cooperate in a series of merchandising and promotional programs for the new interactive lineup. Ewing is one thing, but pray that WB keeps Starks benched. ●

If you can find a more realistic dogfight simulator, fly it.



"WWII air combat at its very best."
 — Denny Atkin
 Computer Gaming World

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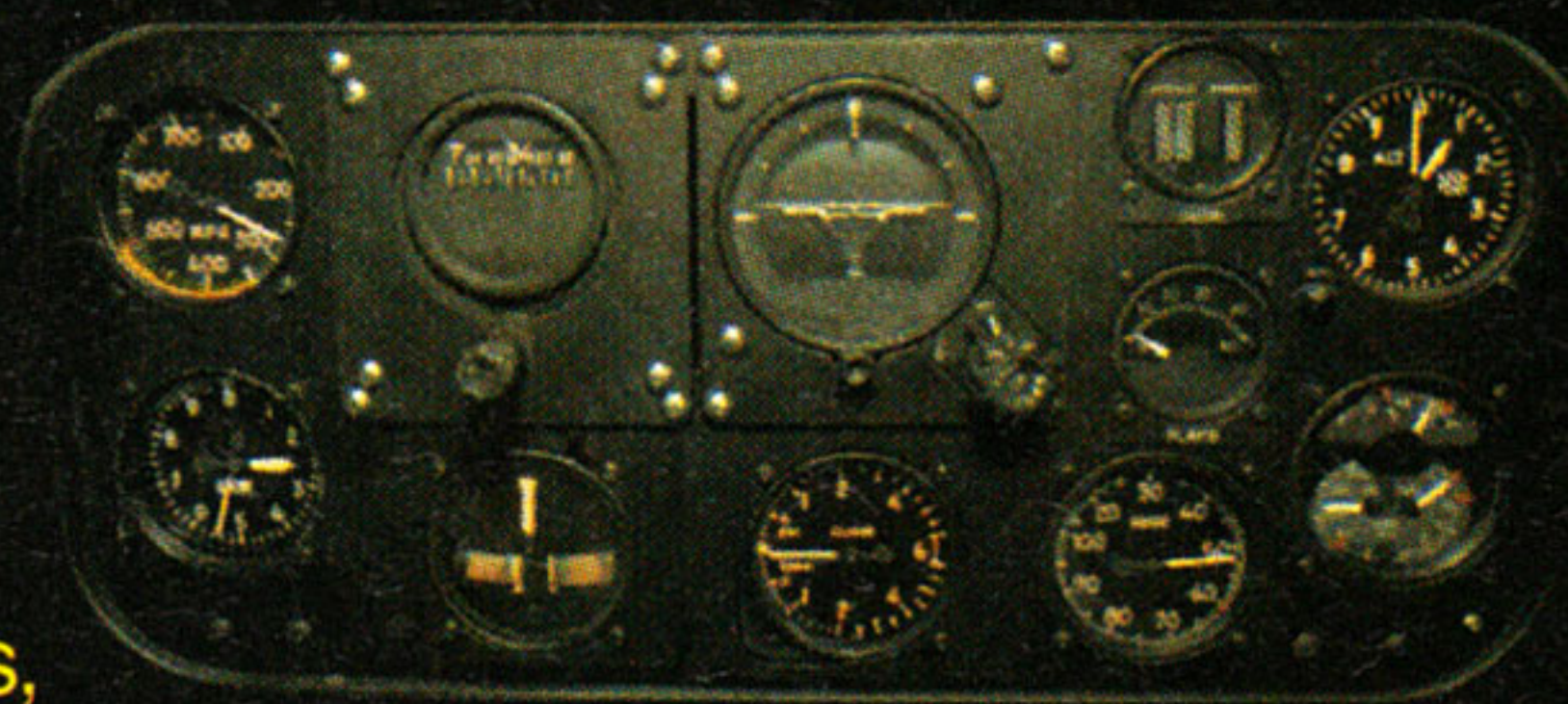


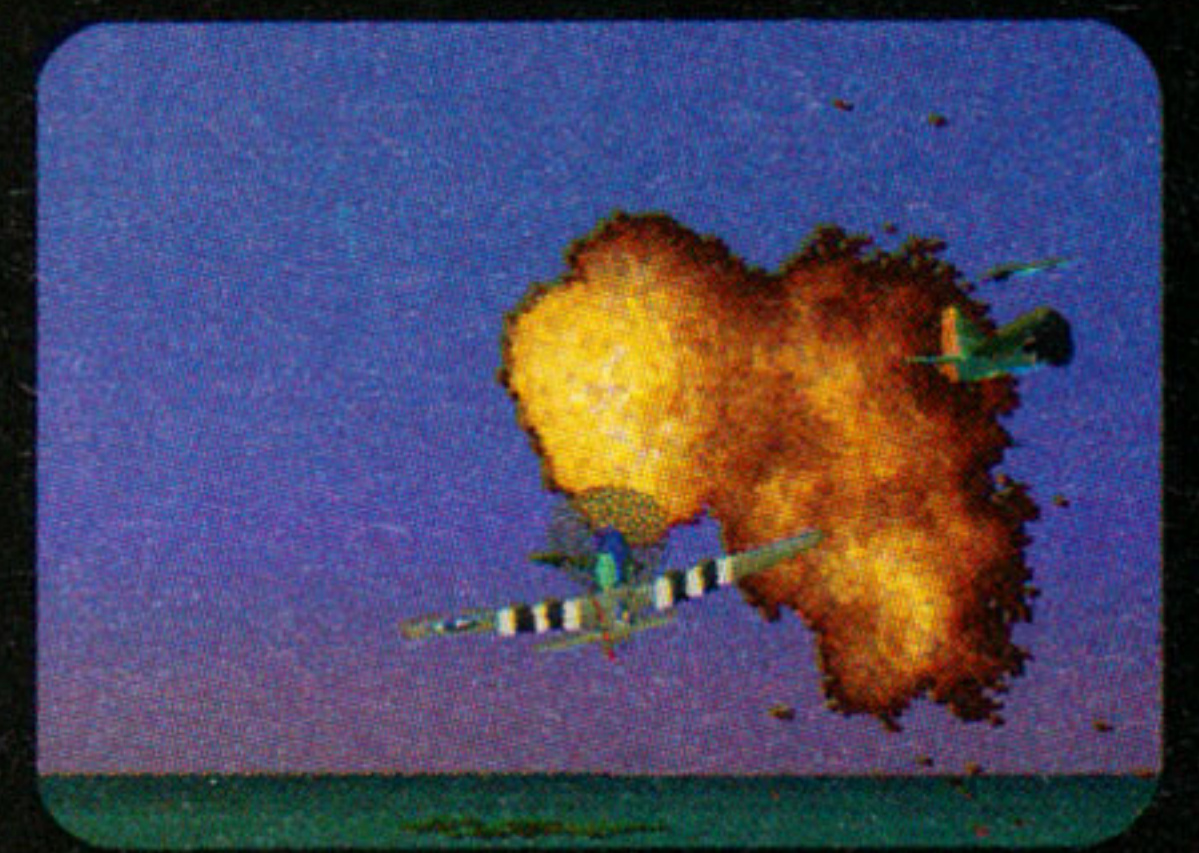
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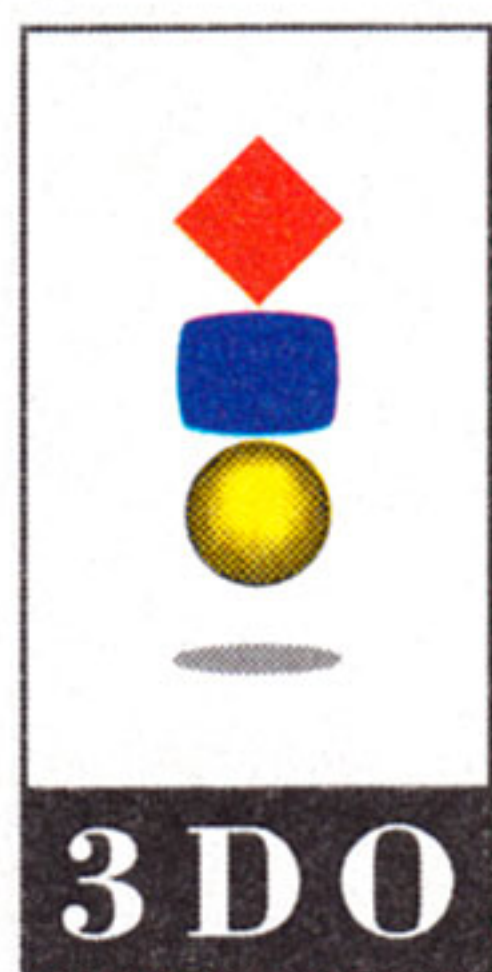
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"If you use a garden hose analogy, Nintendo might be taking graphics through their pipeline to the screen using a garden hose. And we're using 10 times the size fire hose. So it's how much water you can throw on the fire.

—Bob Lindsey, Senior VP of marketing



PC Means Profitably Correct

"Diversity" is the latest marketing catchword from console manufacturers who are experiencing the next-generation platform squeeze—there simply isn't enough room for everybody. But rather than raise the tattered white flag of surrender, industry aspirants hope to dodge market-share obliteration by testing heretofore, uncharted waters.

Breathing a sigh of monumental relief are the folks over at 3DO who have closed the \$100 million deal with Matsushita for the M2 license. With greenbacks in hand, 3DO is focussing on 10 new titles for the nebulous M2 platform. And in an attempt to bolster their very own Studio 3DO, they've laid down dollars to acquire software developers, Cyclone

Studios, makers of the titles *BattleSport* and *Captain Quazar*.

3DO will also port over existing platform titles to the PC market and develop Internet multimedia products to forty-nine the limitless caverns of gaming gold. Can 3DO turn it around? Well, if the M2 platform is cheap enough, and if the technology is as good as rumored, 3DO could be sitting pretty for Christmas '96. Who would have thought?

In response to next-generation competition (particularly Nintendo's forthcoming Ultra 64), 3DO's Senior VP of marketing Bob Lindsey comments, "Not only did we not go away but we're capitalized to be a pain in their side forever."

Also looking to turn on

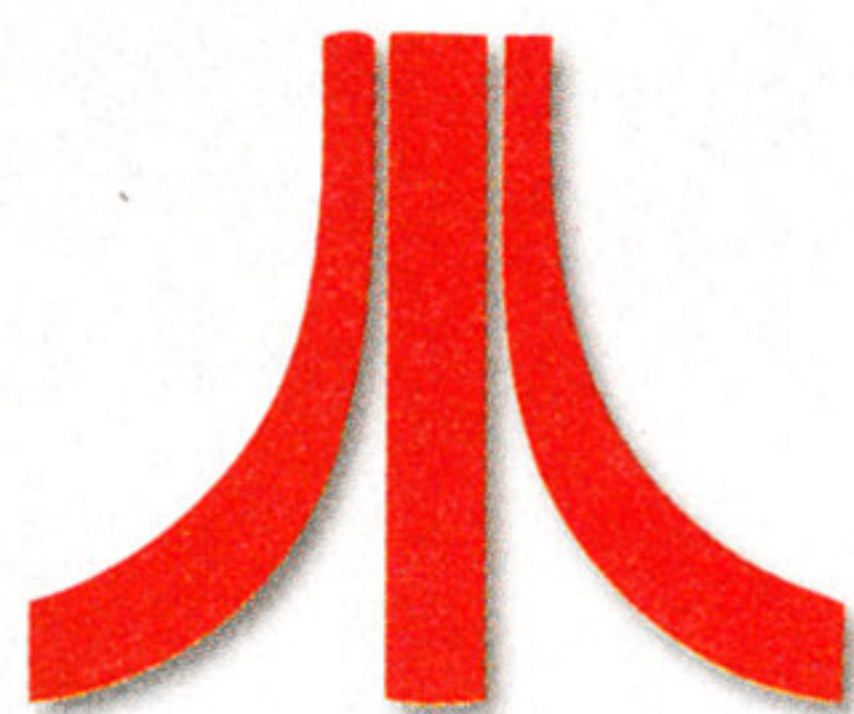
the heat is the diversifying Atari Corp. After slow Jaguar platform sales, they'll additionally turn to developing titles for the PC, and surprisingly, other competing consoles like the Saturn and PlayStation.

Does this mean Atari is abandoning their hardware? No, and they point out that the Jaguar (\$149) is still the most affordable alternative for gamers who can't lay down \$299. Ron Beltramo, Atari's VP of advertising and merchandising, explains, "Financially it helps to spread our assets over a multitude of platforms. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that the more bases you work off of, the better you're going to be in terms of your ability to turn a profit on any given property." ●

A Next-Gen Platform?

"There's been development work on it, but there's no information I can provide right now... In fact I would say that right now we're going to be working with the current Jaguar system, because we feel it's a good system as it is."

—Ron Beltramo, VP of advertising and merchandising



CONFUSION

UniForum Feb. 14-16, 1996, Moscone Center, San Francisco, CA; contact the Interface Group at (617) 449-6600. Trade only.

New Media Expo Feb. 27-29, 1996, Los Angeles Convention Center, Los Angeles, CA; contact the Interface Group at (617) 449-6600. Trade only.

Comdex/ComExpo-Mexico Feb. 27-Mar. 1, 1996, The Sports Palace, Mexico City, Mexico; contact the Interface Group at (617) 449-6600. Trade only.

Windows World/Mexico Feb. 27-Mar. 1, 1996, The Sports Palace, Mexico City, Mexico; contact the Interface Group at (617) 449-6600. Trade only.

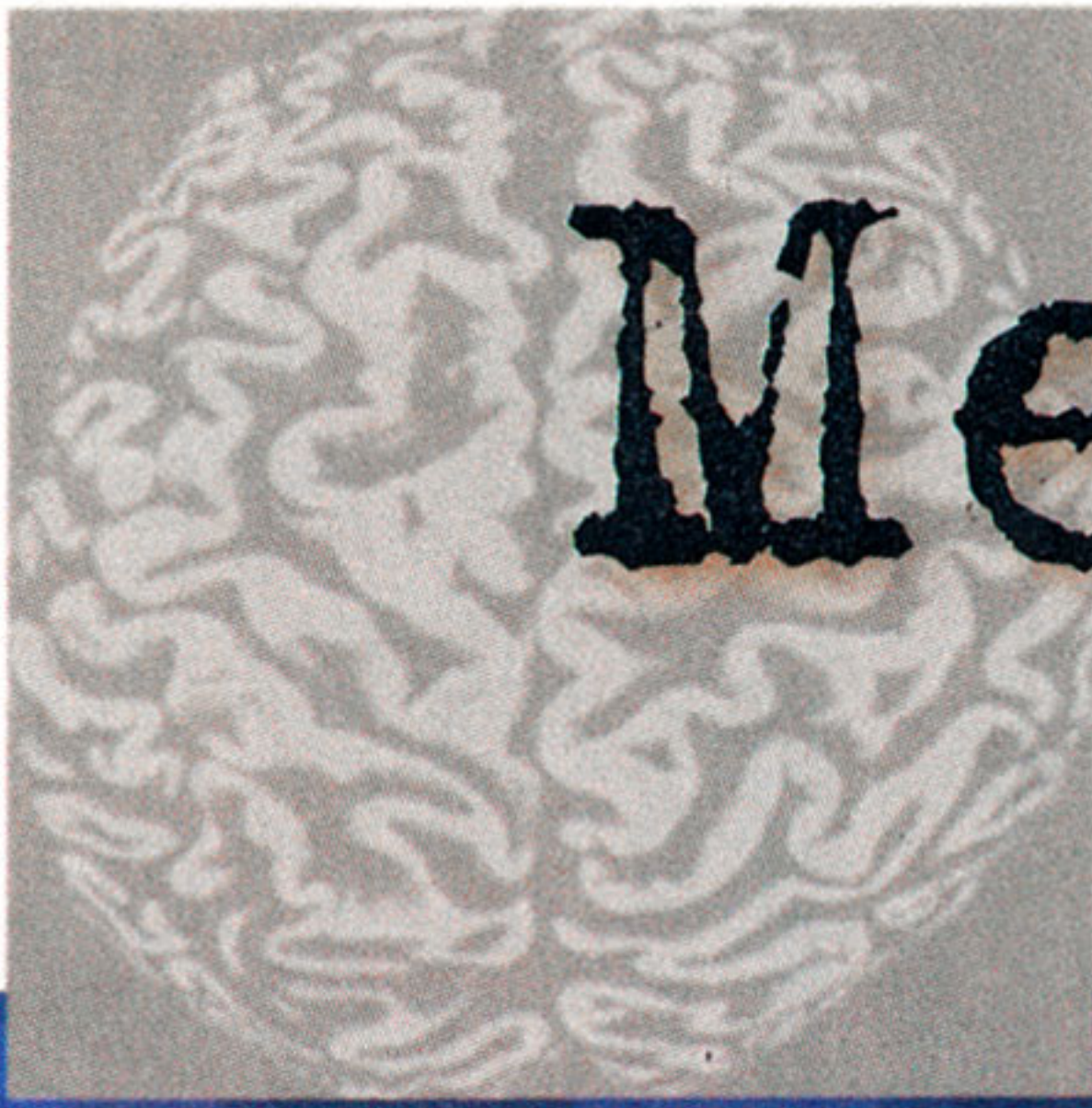
Enterprise Computing Solutions April 10-12, 1996, Georgia World Congress Center, Atlanta, GA; contact the Interface Group at (617) 449-6600. Trade only.

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BY THE NUMBERS

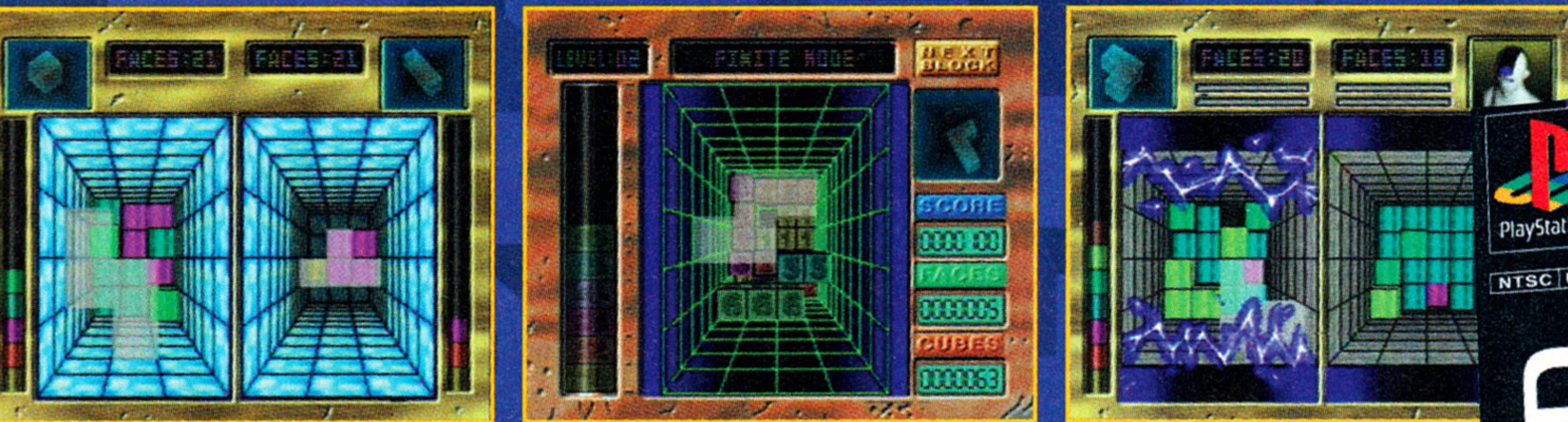
- # According to International Data Group, Sony PlayStation titles are outselling Sega Saturn games by a ratio of 2:1.
- # IDC also predicts that consumer online subscriptions will grow to over 14.5 million users. They predict that MCI/Delphi will surpass Prodigy in number of subscribers, making it the third largest commercial online service.
- # Good news for software developers from the Software Publisher's Association. The SPA reported that PC entertainment titles showed a 73 percent growth in '96. Also, there's an enormous grin on Bill Gates' face as 3Q95 saw \$1.86 billion worth of Windows sold. And now the number-one book in America? Wow.
- # Sierra On-line reports that their \$4-7 million development costs for *Phantasmagoria* were surpassed after only the first week of release. The title raked in \$12 million in seven days, with over 300,000 units sold.



Mental Block?

If old puzzle games leave you feeling flat,

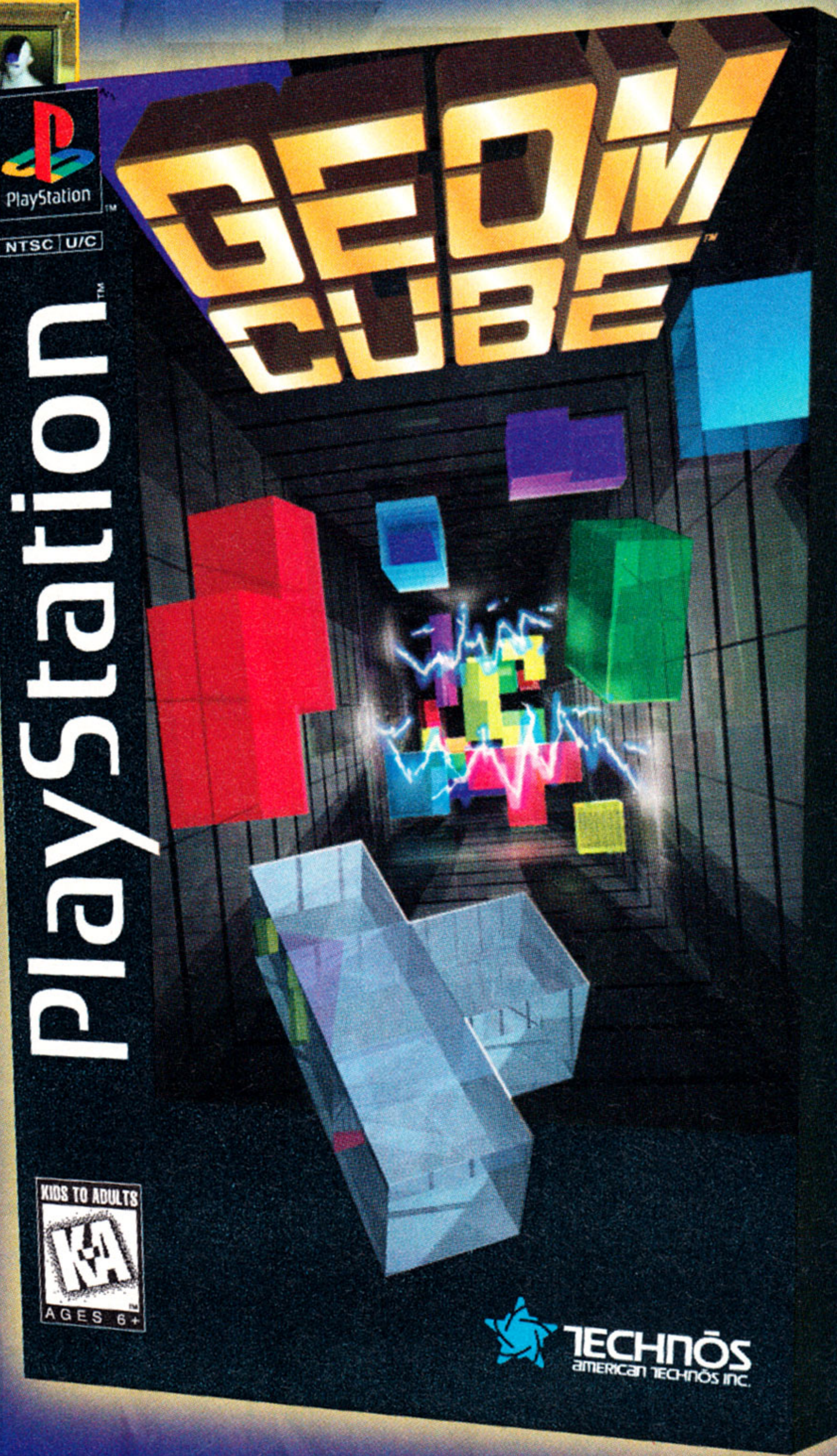
Try a new dimension in puzzling excitement



A 3-Dimensional Challenge!

GEOM CUBE

Treat your brain to a whole new sensation. Take on a friend or a clever CPU opponent and move shapes in a real 3-Dimensional environment!



The Next Dimension



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FILM NOIR?

If you're still smacking your lips from the pasty taste of video game-turned-film drivel, prepare yourself, because there's heaping spoonfuls more of where that came from. Aside from the continued rumors of a *Myst* movie deal, the silver screen conversion of *The 7th Guest* and *The 11th Hour* is the latest in hot product merchandising.

Interactive media developer and producer, Threshold Entertainment, is banking on the popularity of Trilobyte's horror-themed CD-ROM titles to pull in box-office success—and if anyone can do it, it's the company's Beverly Hills-based CEO Larry Kasanoff, who pulled no punches with hits like *True Lies*, and the more recent action-fantasy winner, *Mortal Kombat*.

"It's a great opportunity to turn the biggest CD-ROM game in the world into a classic updated version of an old horror movie," explains Kasanoff. "We want to make *The Shining* with special effects." Does it promise to be a box-office fatality, or will it come out kicking like the \$70+ *MK* megahit?

It's difficult to say. Certainly, *The 7th Guest* and *The 11th Hour*, whose stories will be combined into one script, don't have quite the widespread appeal of *MK*. But Kasanoff stresses *The 7th Guest's* story, and not the actual appeal of the Trilobyte game, as his reason for making his latest film.

No casting, writing or direction has been announced for either film, but expect the speedy Kasanoff to have the film released by fall '97. ●

Quips & Quicks

ENTERTAINMENT NEWS



Broadband Therapy

Finally an application for electronic multimedia that's really worth cheering about—the Starbright World Network is a 3-D virtual playground for bedridden children in hospitals nationwide. Children log on to the broadband network to meet one another, play games and explore a virtual terrain. Steven Spielberg and Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf joined the Starbright Foundation to celebrate the network's November premiere.

Ultra Chat With an Edge

Thankfully offering an intelligent alternative to the talk-show format, the new WJM Productions video release, *Ideas in Action*, features an insightful interview with Angel Studio programming marvel Brad Hunt. The show's host, James Valliant, and guest Hunt, tackle a range of tech-timely issues from virtual reality to the Ultra-secretive Nintendo 64 platform. Definitely worth checking out. (For more info, call 1-800-294-IDEA)



Never Say Never Again

No longer *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, former James Bond, George Lazenby, will be making a special appearance in Capcom's comedy-spy-thriller game, *Foxhunt*. Lazenby likens his disguise-changing character to the Bond films' Q. "He just tears around getting the main character Andrew out of trouble. I was playing Elvis one minute, a hippie the next and James Bond the next. It was rather pleasant actually." So pleasant in fact, that Lazenby smirkingly confessed to wearing the Elvis costume for the rest of the day after filming.



Patriot Games

Author Tom Clancy has gone multimedia crazy, teaming up with publishers at Simon & Schuster to codevelop three original interactive titles. The initial title will be

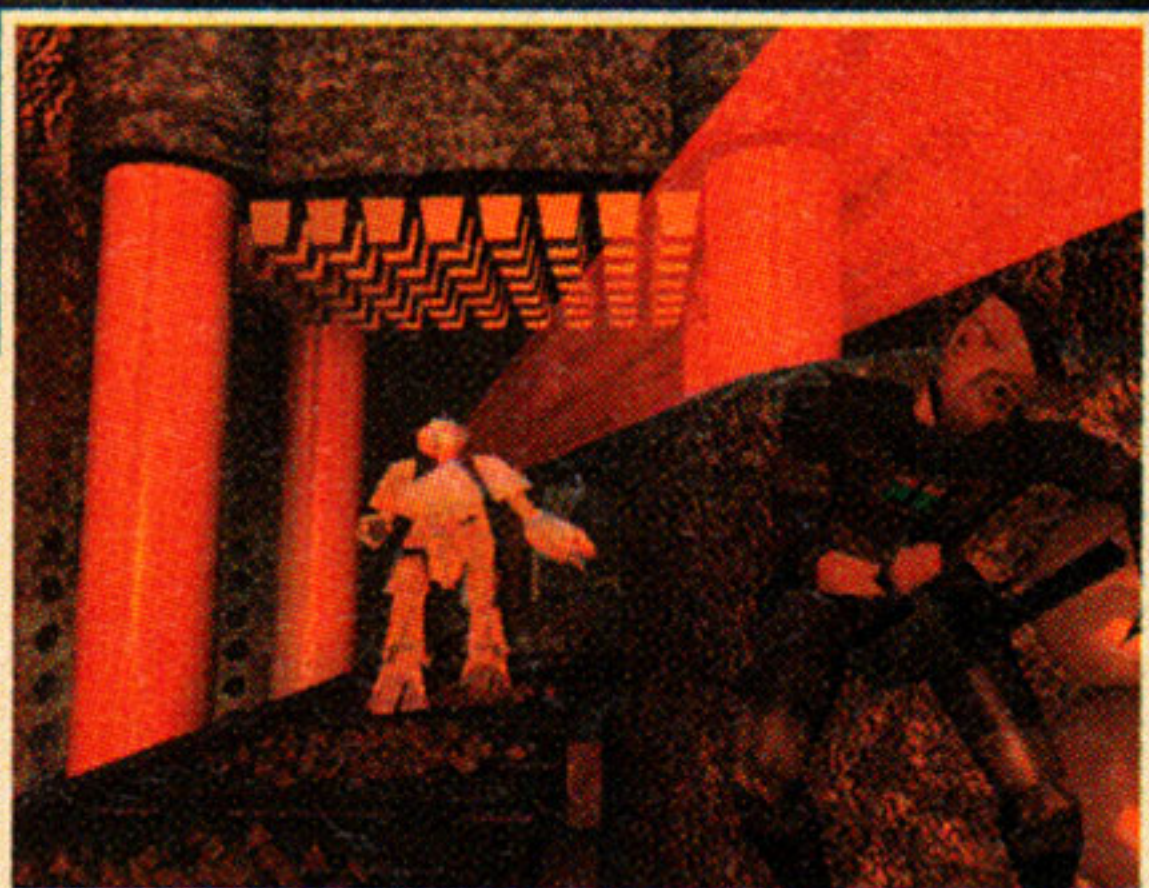


First Contact: Derelict, a 3-D space adventure game involving Clancy's fictitious character, Jack Ryan.

EXTRAS

Porchlight Entertainment, a motion picture, television and home-video corporation has inaugurated an interactive entertainment division....Both A&E Network and the History Channel celebrated new Web sites this past month at <http://www.aetv.com> and <http://www.historychannel.com>, respectively....Motion Picture Corp. of America (MPCA) is developing a title based on the film *Beverly Hills Ninja* for fall '96....Learn about sci-fi and Fantasy illustrator Rodney Matthews on Integrated Comm. & Entertainment's title, *Between Earth and the End of Time*. Former YES keyboardist, Rick Wakeman, provides the score.

HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS AND ANNIHILATE ENEMIES.



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planet. You quickly become friends with the local alien, Gaan. Together, you'll go from hauling butt through the forest to blasting into a bomb-filled mine shaft to fighting through an armory to destroy a reactor.

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adventure game technology. It's total

annihilation. But in a friendly sort of way.



Use teamwork to solve puzzles and outwit invaders.



**ALIEN
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PHILIPS



STAKE YOUR CLAIM IN CYBERSPACE

If you're miserably cold this winter, move to the persistently warmer climate of AlphaWorld (not to be confused with the over-sentimental '80s rock band, Alphaville). AlphaWorld is Worlds Inc.'s new virtual-reality, multiuser chat community that offers net-goers an easy-to-use software tool kit for building their very own surroundings.

Construct the home you never had, with a virtual mailbox for e-mail, a street billboard for advertising your home page or an ornamental fountain with running water—proximity sound allows users to attach sound clips to objects in AlphaWorld so that as you get nearer or farther from say, a fountain, the sound of running water becomes louder or softer. Currently, Worlds Inc. is working on a development project that would separate areas of the



online environment into zones, like a business district, gaming 'hood or dating center. A rapid-transit system is also in progress, as AlphaWorld pioneers are pushing the realm's boundaries to great virtual lengths. To download software for AlphaWorld, go to Worlds Inc.'s home page at <http://www.worlds.net>.

Similarly, NTT Software Corp. is offering CyberCampus (<http://is.ntts.com>), a 3-D world where users can wander through a virtual Tower Records, soar over San Francisco Bay or just talk to other users. ●

Wheeling & Dealing

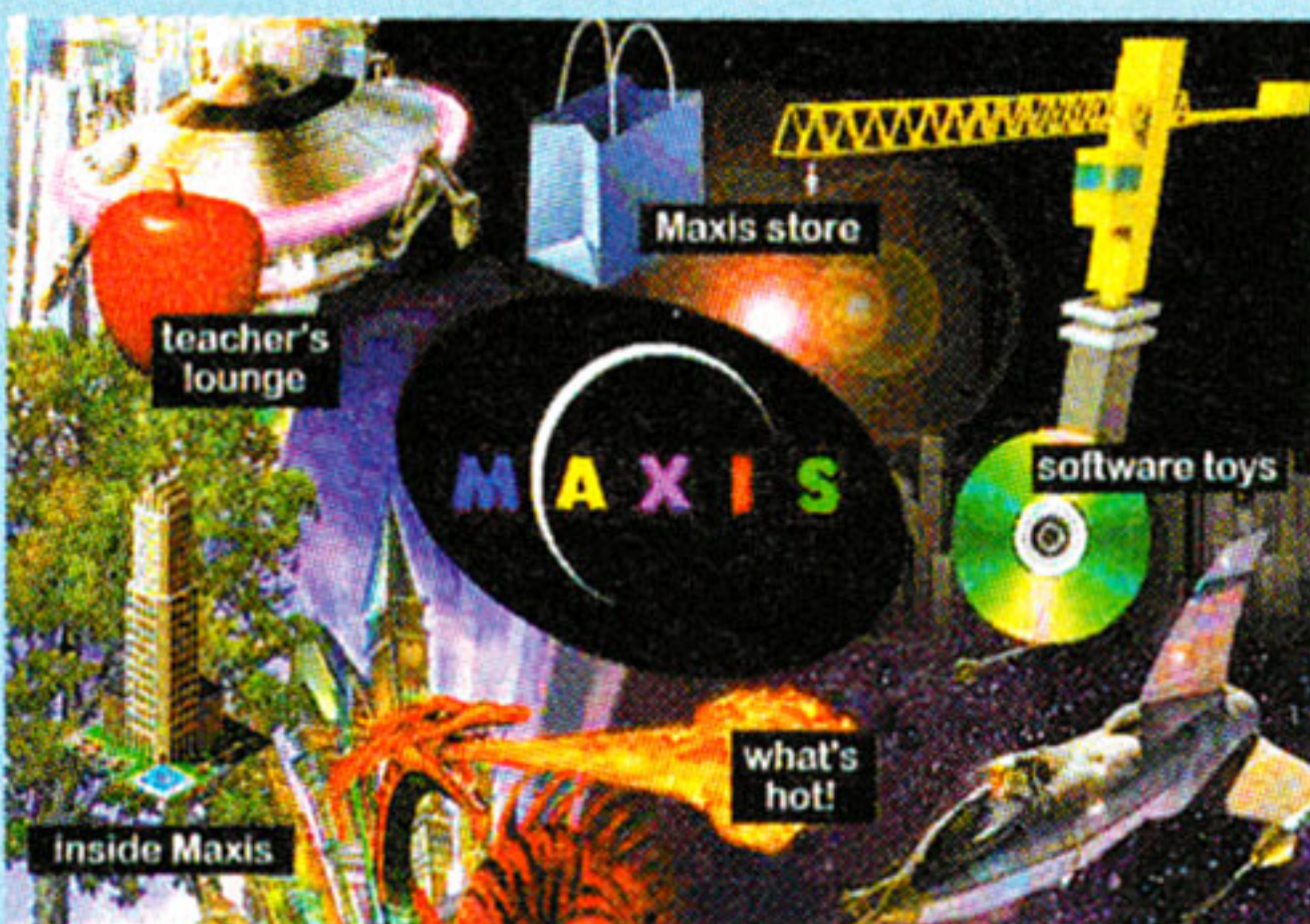
There's much ado about something in online gaming this month, as a slew of companies struck deals for bringing multiplayer action to life. The most interesting move was made by Spectrum Holobyte, who invested \$2.5 million into the Total Entertainment Network. TEN's president, Daniel Goldman explains, "We have a regular investment schedule, and this is part of it. We've been talking to Spectrum Holobyte for a long time."

In related news, Interactive Magic is staking out online ground with help from News Corp.'s Kesmai, while Apple Computer is allying with Bandai to develop a Pippin TV console video-game player. Sierra acquired *NASCAR* and *Indy Car Racing* developer Papyrus, and multiplayer service provider, Dwango, signed with Microsoft as the first online gaming service supported by the Win 95 DirectPlay API. ●

NEWLY-WEB

Sim Maxis

Maxis Software recently gave their web site a face-lift (<http://www.maxis.com>) offering users a graphically enhanced interface that includes a free, downloadable *SimCity 2000* Windows 95 *Theme Pack*, technical game support and a list of complete product information with demos. Check out the chapters to the original sci-fi tale based on Maxis' upcoming game, *The Mindwarp*. Interesting stuff.

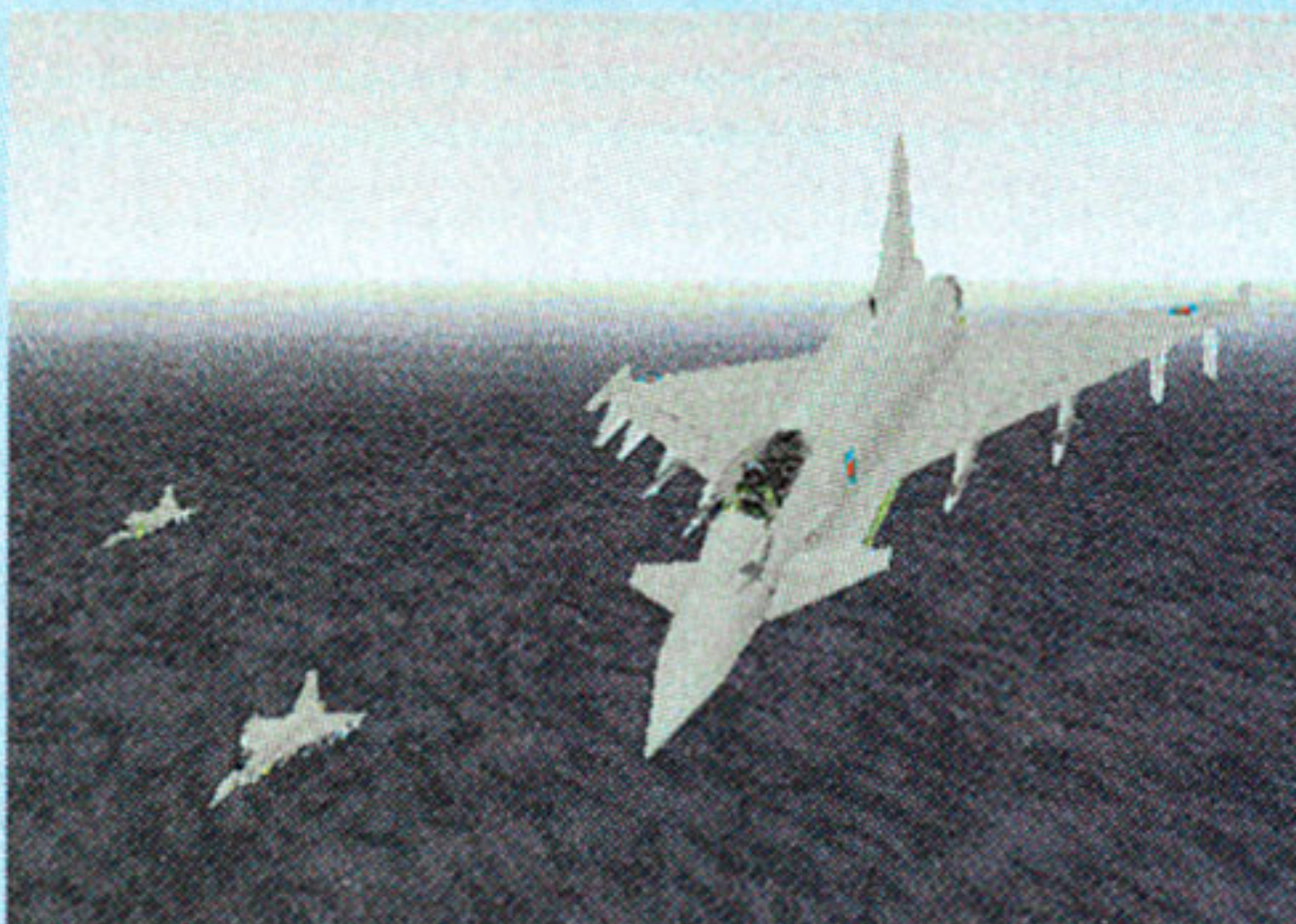


Witch Hunt

"Double, double, toil and trouble; fire burn and cauldron bubble." The Imagi-Nation Network is introducing *The Ruins of Cawdor*, the third in a series of role-playing adventures based on Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. This time around, onliners must band together to defeat a pair of evil witches. For more info on how to join the mad, mouth-foaming mob of witch-hunters, hypertext on over to <http://www.inngames.com>.

Aero-Dynamic Sim

Wanna take care of that Euro-trash once and for all? Designed to imitate the *Eurofighter 2000*, an aircraft once under development by Italian, German, British and Spanish military intelligence, Ocean of America's *EF2000* is the latest and greatest in network flight simulation. Up to eight players can battle nasty Ruskies in a very cool, 3-D-rendered battlefield environment. Your ticket to ride is at <http://www.ef2000.com/game>.



Utter Chaos

Domark continues to push into the world of online gaming with great titles like *Confirmed Kill*, *Tank Commander* and *Big Red Racing*. Most recently, they've licensed *Total Mayhem* from Cinematix Studios. Gamers ready for action can join the Mayhem through their modem, or link up with up to eight other players via Win95 networks. Check out <http://www.domark.com/domark/> for the latest.

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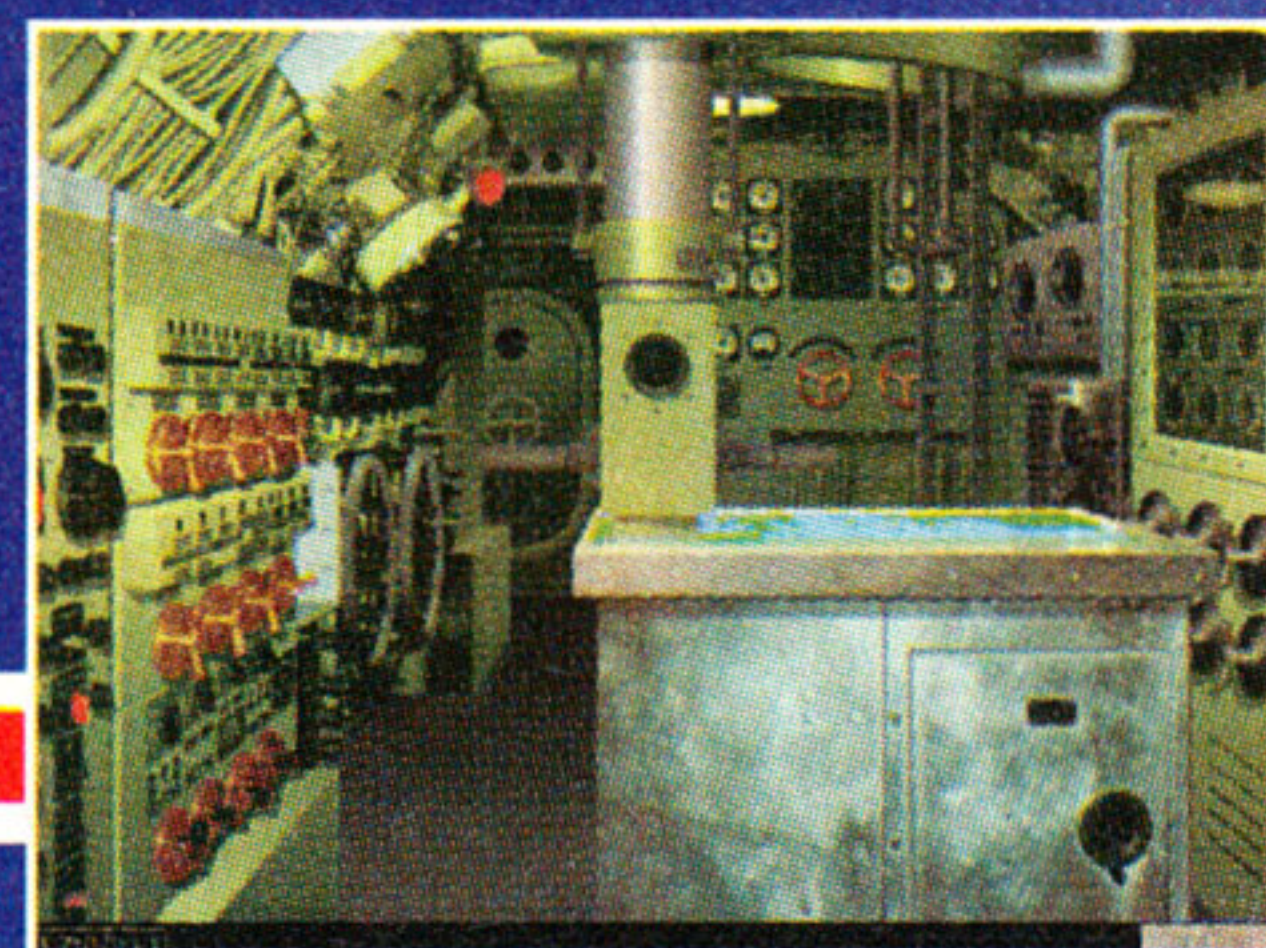
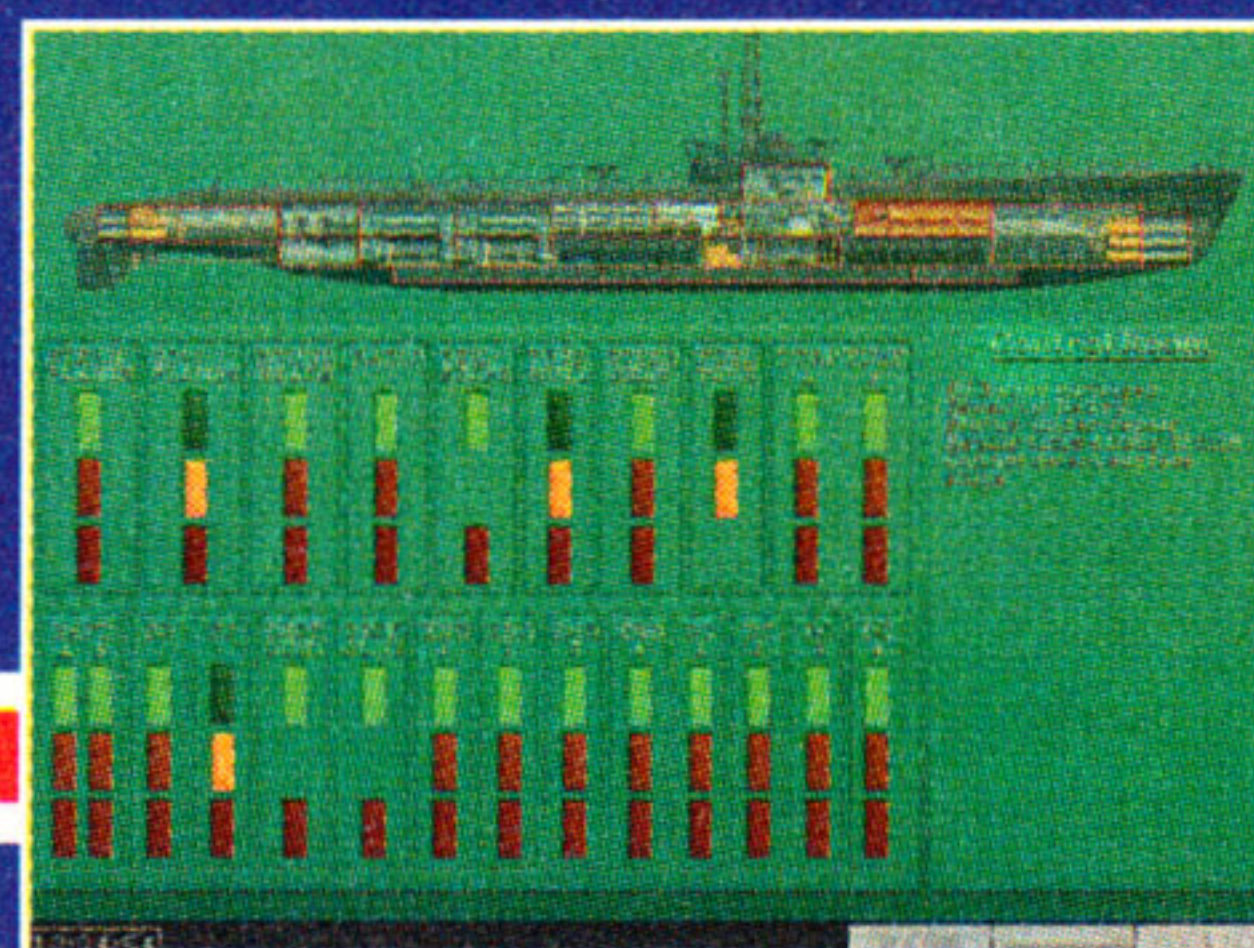
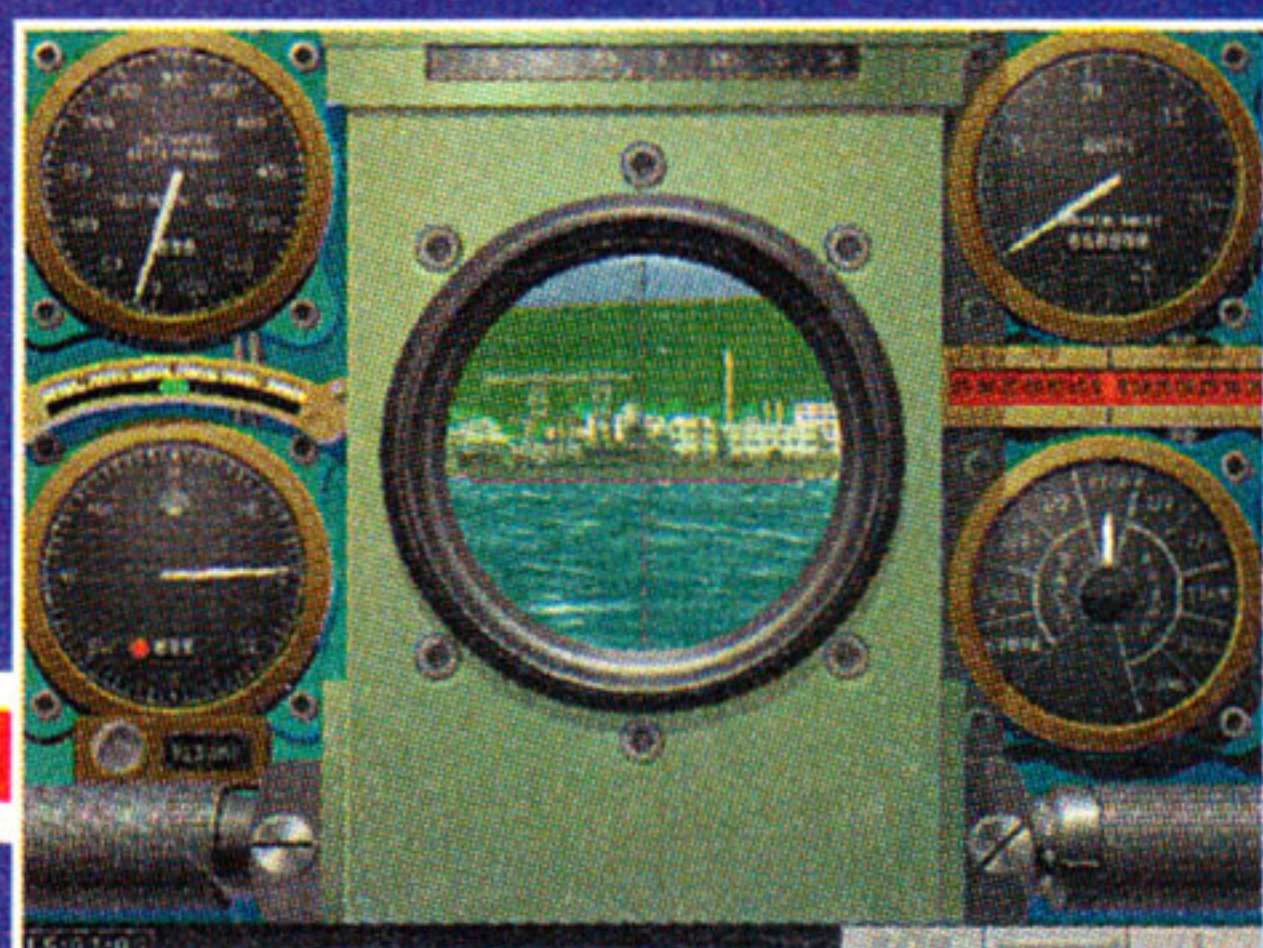
Call 1-800-771-3772
for Game Rating
information.



Technical Advisor William "Bud" Gruner commanded the submarine USS Skate during WWII, and was awarded the Navy Cross and the Silver Star. Commander Gruner provides narration of technical and tactical matters as well as personal anecdotes of his vast WWII experience.



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IBM 256-color SVGA

FUSION NEWS

Multimedia to Go

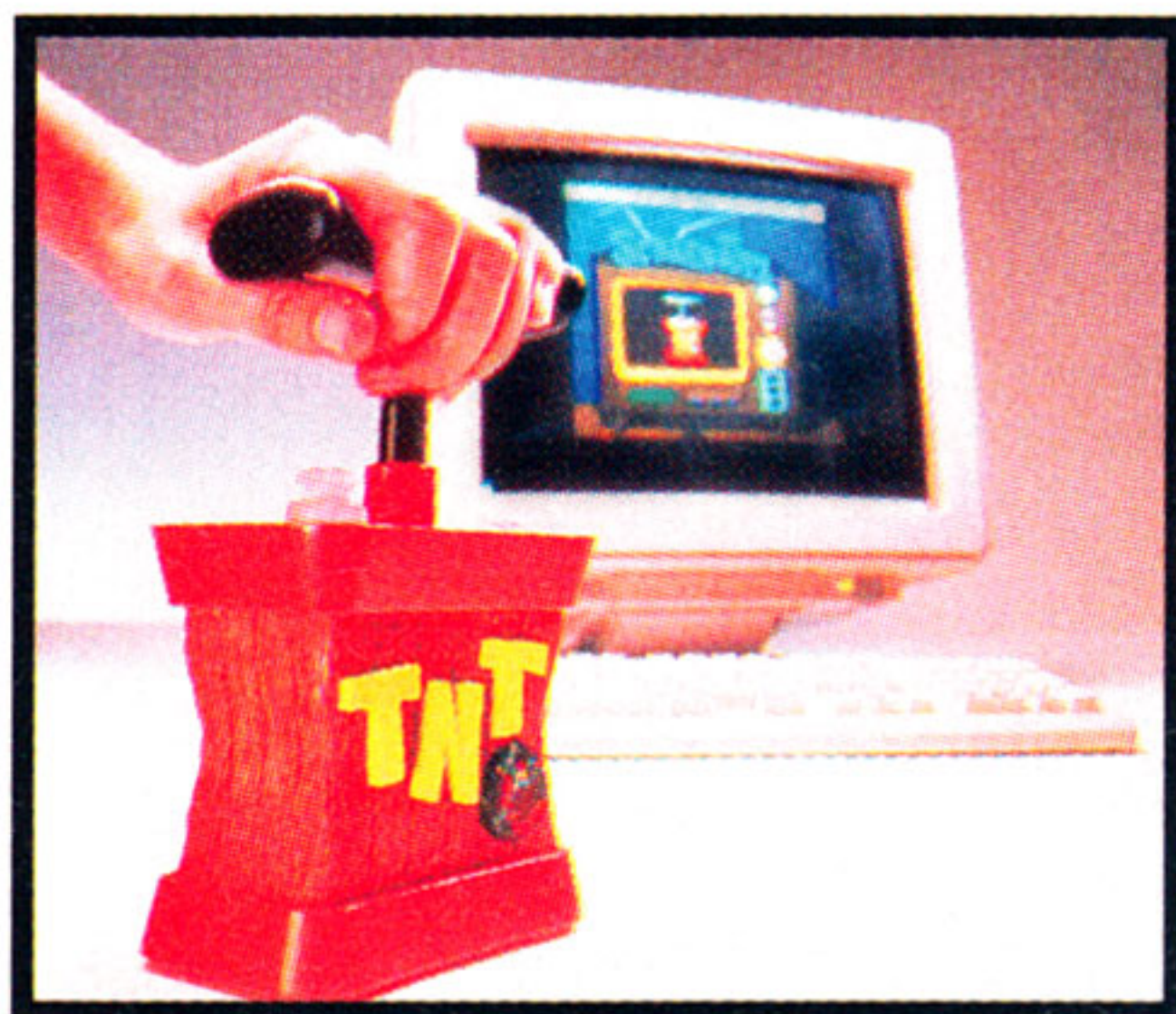
Panasonic has an incredibly cool new portable multimedia kit that includes a 2X CD-ROM drive, audio interface module, powered speaker system, sound interface card and microphone that can connect to your notebook computer. Take the KXL-D721 (\$499) to the beach, on the road or on a picnic with Grandma.



Blown Away

Work's a bear? Then blow it up with Contango, Inc.'s TNT Tad's Death-defying Detonator Screen Toyz (\$39.95). Feel the sadistic rush of pleasure as you explode your monitor screen image (sorry, not the monitor) into thousands of tiny pieces.

Other enjoyable Screen Toyz of interest: Latrina and her Slime-Filled Toilet (watch your computer screen back up with water) and Stitch and his Electrifying Switch (destroy the monitor image with your clumsy, overcharged Monster-friend). A valuable computer accessory for those who understand the pleasure of destroying things. Works with Windows 3.1 and up.



PRODUCT

Watch

Eight is Enough

"Damn it Scotty, I need more power!" Well, you've got it with Diamond Multimedia's 8X Multimedia Upgrade Kit 800. Turn your slow, jalopy-of-a-2X, 4X or 6X CD-ROM drive into some real horsepower: the IDE eight-speed drive offers a 1,200 KB/second transfer rate, an access time of 230 ms and a buffer size of 256 KB. The Upgrade Kit 800 comes with an eight-speed CD-ROM drive, an interface card, *Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia 1996 Edition*, and cables that'll work with any sound card.

Estimated retail sure does take a bite at \$399, but it's worth it for serious gamers. Turtle Beach Systems offers a comparable 8X speed upgrade kit, the TBS-8010.

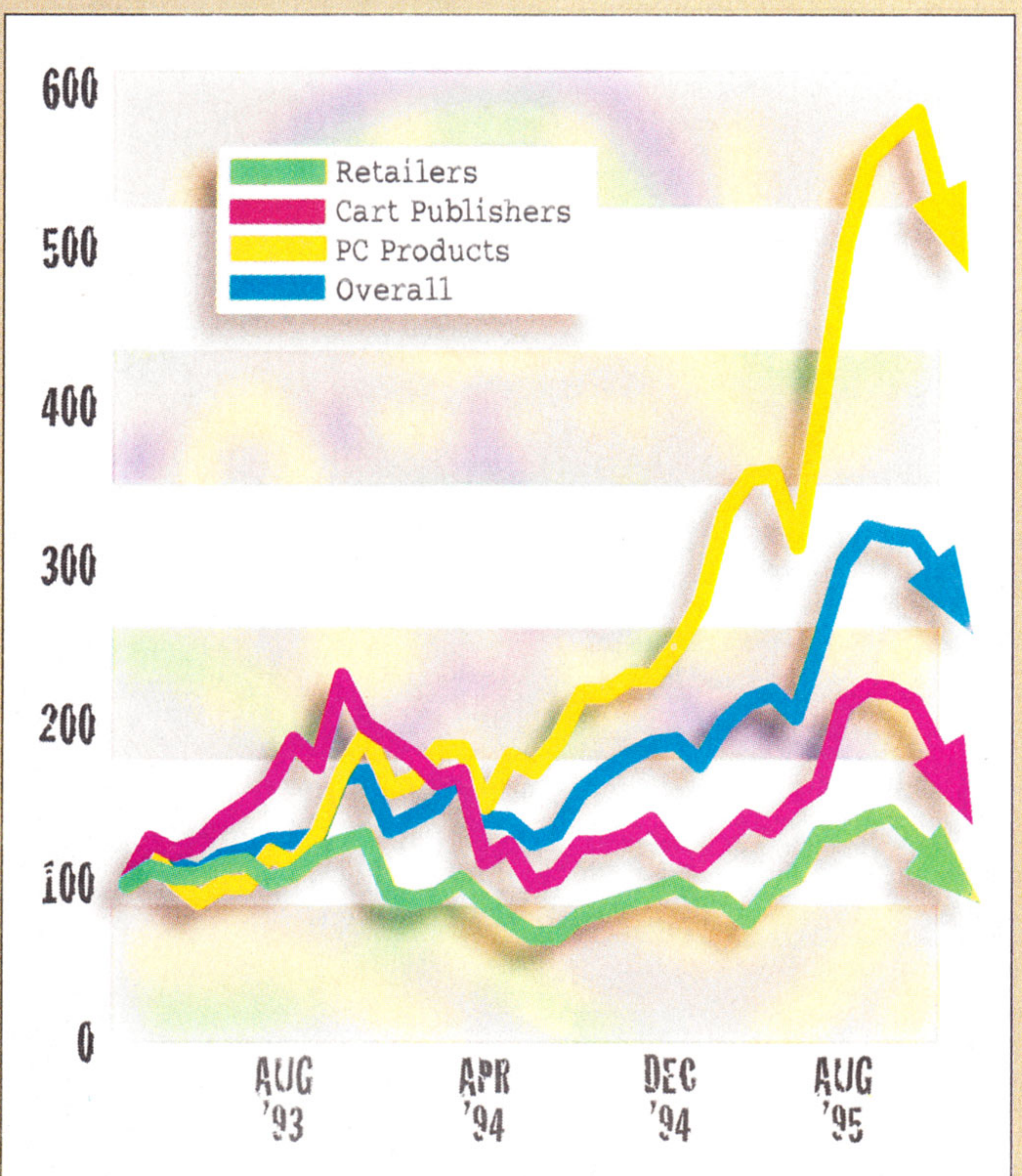


FUSION STOCK MONITOR

After rising a scorching 70 percent during the first nine months of 1995 and marking time in a flat October, the *FUSION* index of interactive electronic stocks dropped 7 percent in November. Investors sold the group for a variety of reasons, each of which created exaggerated price swings during the month. Shares of internet stocks skyrocketed—as Comdex attracted huge publicity to the online group—causing concern that game publishers and retailers would lose share of mind among consumers. As a result, both the PC publisher and cartridge publisher segments were down, 5 percent and 14 percent, respectively. Macro concerns about high consumer debt and a soft holiday season depressed retailer stocks in all economic sectors, and pushed down computer-related retailers by almost 9 percent. Companies that stand to benefit from sales of the Sony PlayStation were held in check because of concerns about supply constraints before the holidays. Finally, Nintendo's Shoshinkai unveiling of the Ultra 64 met with mixed reviews—really strong hardware, but limited software.

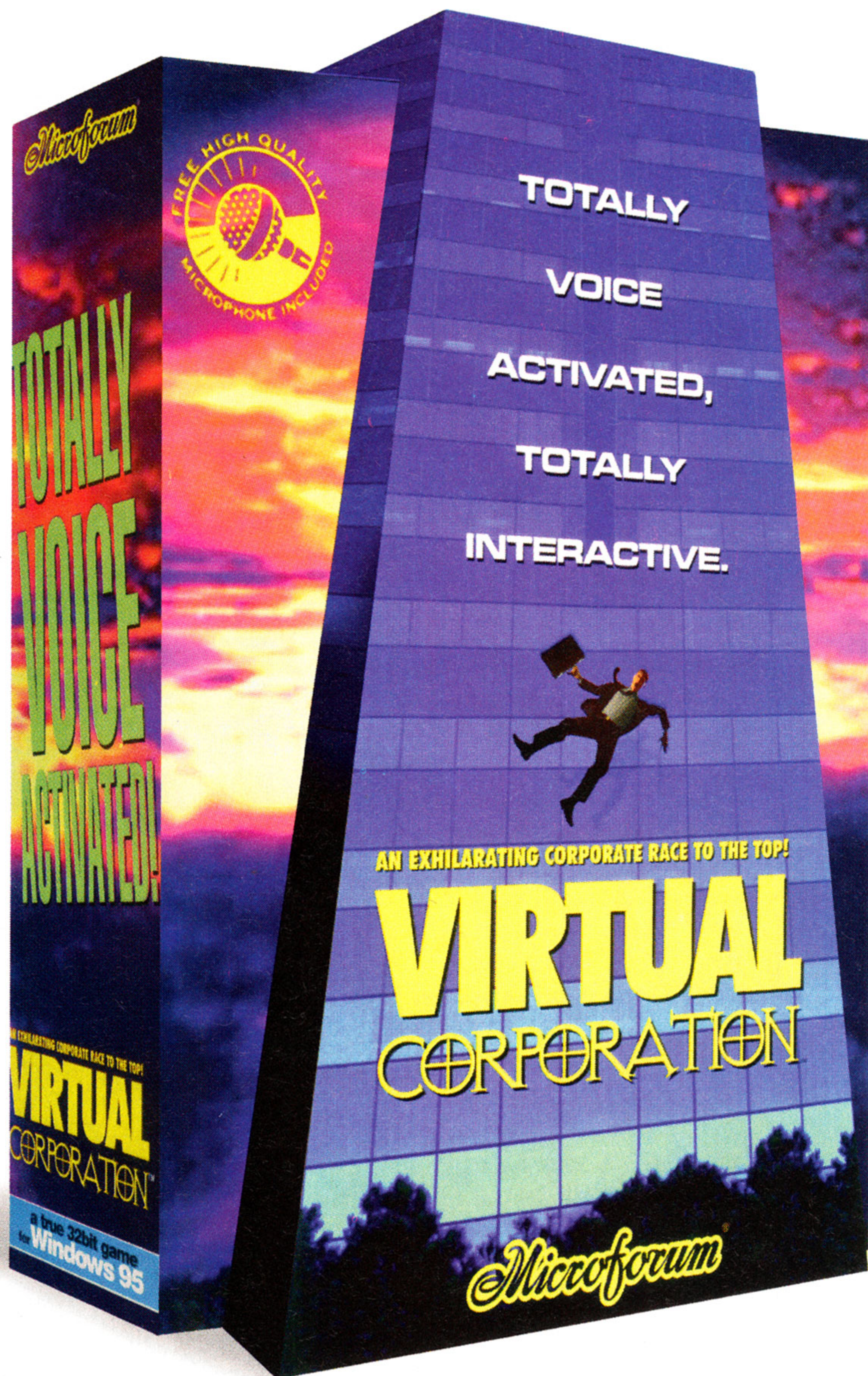
The list of winners was short this month. 3DO rallied 9 percent after Time Warner completed selling a substantial amount of stock, Egghead rose 20 percent off its 12-month low, and T*HQ jumped 16 percent on strong Game Boy sales. On the other hand, Davidson dove 30 percent on concerns about New Media Express, NeoStar fell 29 percent, Creative dipped 18 percent, Acclaim was down 15 percent, Electronic Arts slipped 13 percent and Spectrum gave up 12 percent. WMS slid 8 percent and Broderbund finished 7 percent lower. ●

— John Taylor, CFA, Arcadia Investment Corporation



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Microforum's Virtual Corporation, the first totally voice-controlled (keyboard optional) CD-ROM game for Windows® '95, takes you into a cold-blooded world where only the strong survive.

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Bits, Bytes and Buzz...

Reuters NewMedia Inc., Ziff-Davis Publishing, The Capital Group, Softbank Corp., Sequoia Capital and Open Text Corp. all made minority investments in Yahoo Corp....**Apple Computer, Inc.** released plans for QuickTime Live!, interactive entertainment that uses the QuickTake digital camera to broadcast live images over their Web site at <http://live.apple.com>. Most recently, Apple broadcasted the **Sundance Film Festival** live over the net....**GTE** gained exclusive rights to an NCAA line of CD-ROMs. Currently,

GTE has *NCAA Championship Basketball* in the works in preparation for March Madness....**3Dfx** teamed up with Alliance Semiconductor to provide 3-D graphics compatibility across a wide range of entertainment platforms....**Touchstone Software** and **Blockbuster Video** premiered their **PC Matchmaker**, software that compares a user's PC with the necessary hardware requirements of rental CD-ROMs....**Viacom** is releasing *MTV Unplugged*, a collection of moments from 70 different episodes of the show. ●

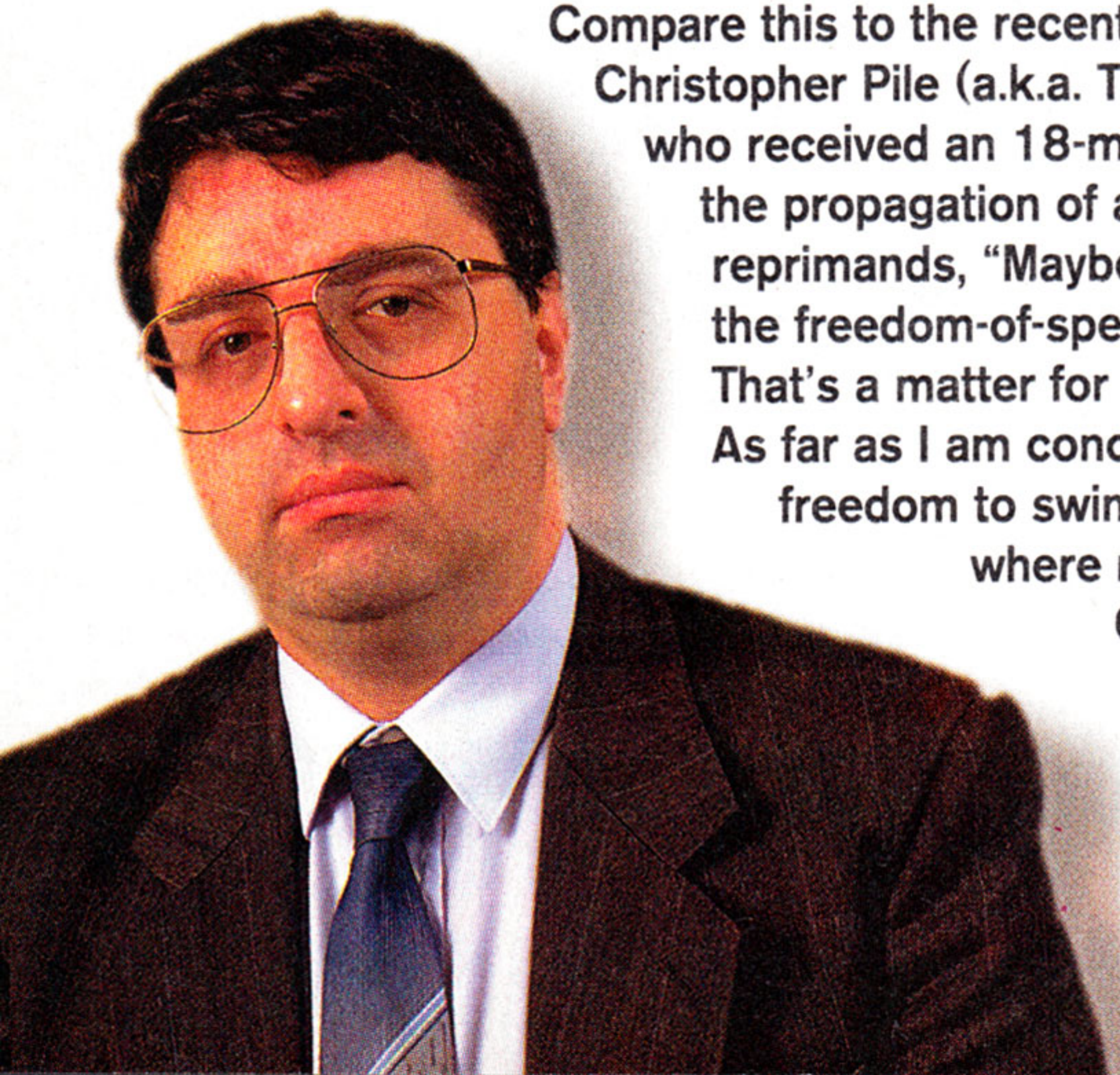
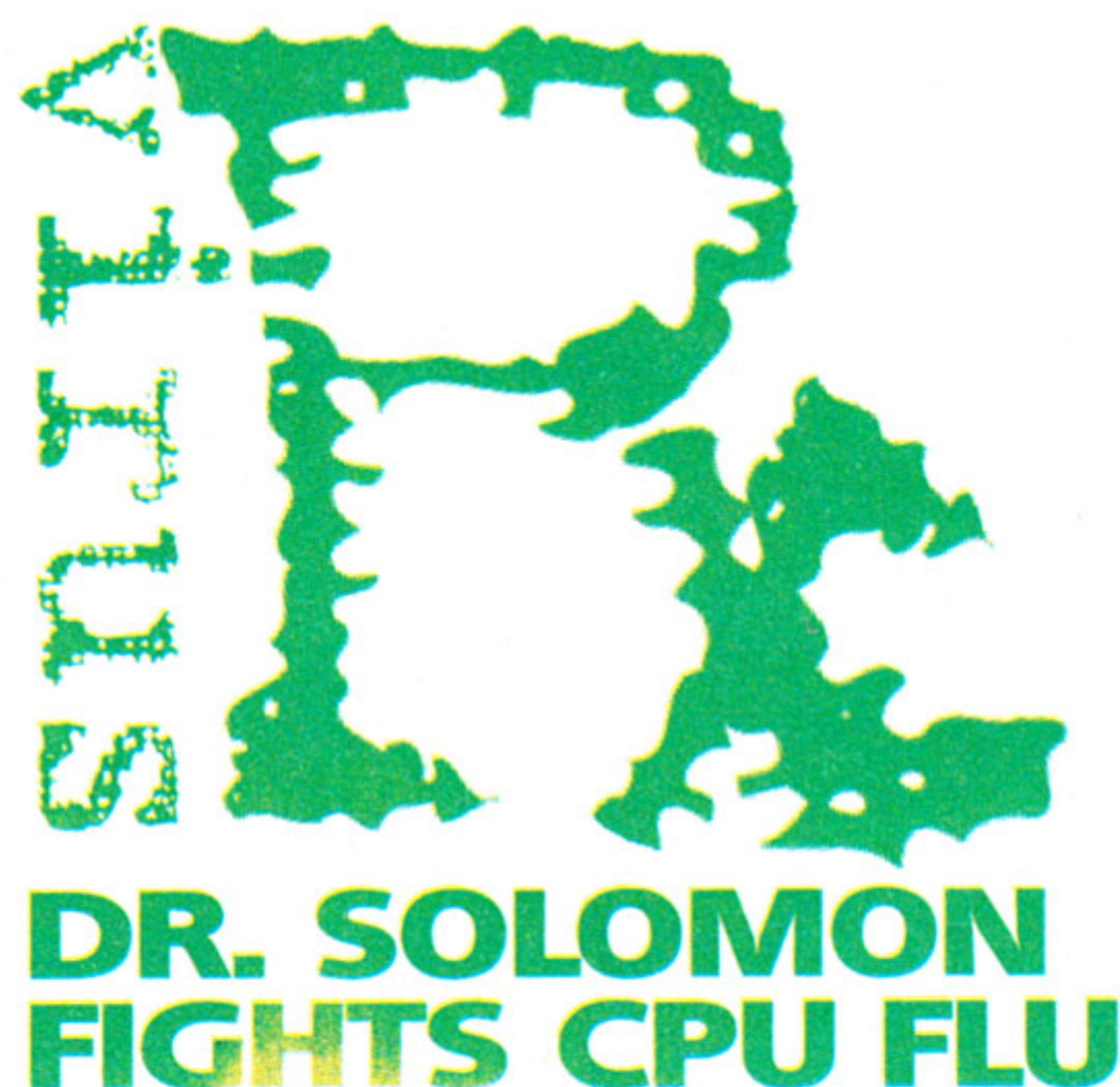
For those downloading games off the Internet, beware. According to Dr. Alan Solomon, inventor of *Dr. Solomon's Anti-Virus Toolkit*, damaging programs are running rampant over U.S. networks. While the international

community is making concerted efforts to prevent virus distribution, Solomon points out that the U.S. is irresponsibly lax. "It would appear that distributing viruses is not regarded as a crime in the U.S. There are people in the U.S. selling CD-ROMs containing thousands of viruses, there are people running Web sites containing hundreds, or thousands, of viruses."

Dr. Solomon also points an accusing finger at the U.S. Department of the Treasury who had been making hundreds of viruses available via their AIS download service.

Compare this to the recent U.K. arrest of Christopher Pile (a.k.a. The Black Baron) who received an 18-month jail term for the propagation of a virus. Solomon reprimands, "Maybe you agree with the freedom-of-speech argument. That's a matter for legal debate. As far as I am concerned, your freedom to swing your fist stops where my nose begins."

Consider yourself warned. ●



GAMING TOP TEN

FANNING THE FIRE

When you're hot, you're hot. Once again, *Ultimate MK3* takes top honors. *MK3* also stays strong with the number five spot. Lots of love going around Midway this February.



LAST MONTH VIDEO ARCADE GAMES

- | | | |
|----|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | 1 | Ultimate MK3 Midway |
| 2 | 2 | Tekken 2 Namco |
| 3 | 3 | Open Ice Midway |
| 4 | - | Marvel Super Heroes Capcom |
| 5 | 4 | Mortal Kombat 3 Midway |
| 6 | 5 | Viper Fabtek |
| 7 | - | Samurai Shodown III SNK |
| 8 | 8 | Raiden DX Fabtek |
| 9 | - | Bucky O'Hare Konami |
| 10 | - | Twin Eagle II Seta |

Phantasmagoria made a blood-splattering hit last month, but drops below *Command & Conquer* this time around. No surprises as Microsoft dominates with some flight-simulator action.



LAST MONTH PC GAMES

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | Microsoft Flight Simulator Microsoft |
| 2 | 4 | Myst Broderbund |
| 3 | 7 | Command & Conquer Virgin |
| 4 | 1 | Phantasmagoria Sierra On-Line |
| 5 | 3 | Ultimate Doom: Thy Flesh Consumed GT Interactive |
| 6 | - | Mortal Kombat III GT Interactive |
| 7 | 8 | Doom II GT Interactive |
| 8 | - | NHL Hockey Electronic Arts |
| 9 | - | Need For Speed Electronic Arts |
| 10 | 5 | Mechwarrior II Activision |

As expected, *Doom II* Gatling guns the competition. LucasArts continues to dominate the chart, not counting new releases: *The Dig*, *TIE Fighter CD* and *Rebel II*.



LAST MONTH MACINTOSH GAMES

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | Doom II GT Interactive |
| 2 | 2 | Myst Broderbund |
| 3 | 3 | Dark Forces LucasArts |
| 4 | 5 | Star Wars: Rebel Assault LucasArts |
| 5 | 6 | SimCity 2000 Maxis |
| 6 | - | Links Pro Access |
| 7 | 7 | Top Ten Pack Electronic Arts |
| 8 | - | Full Throttle Lucas Arts |
| 9 | 8 | SimCity 2000 Collection Maxis |
| 10 | - | Master Juggler Alsoft |

Video arcade game listing courtesy of RePlay Magazine.

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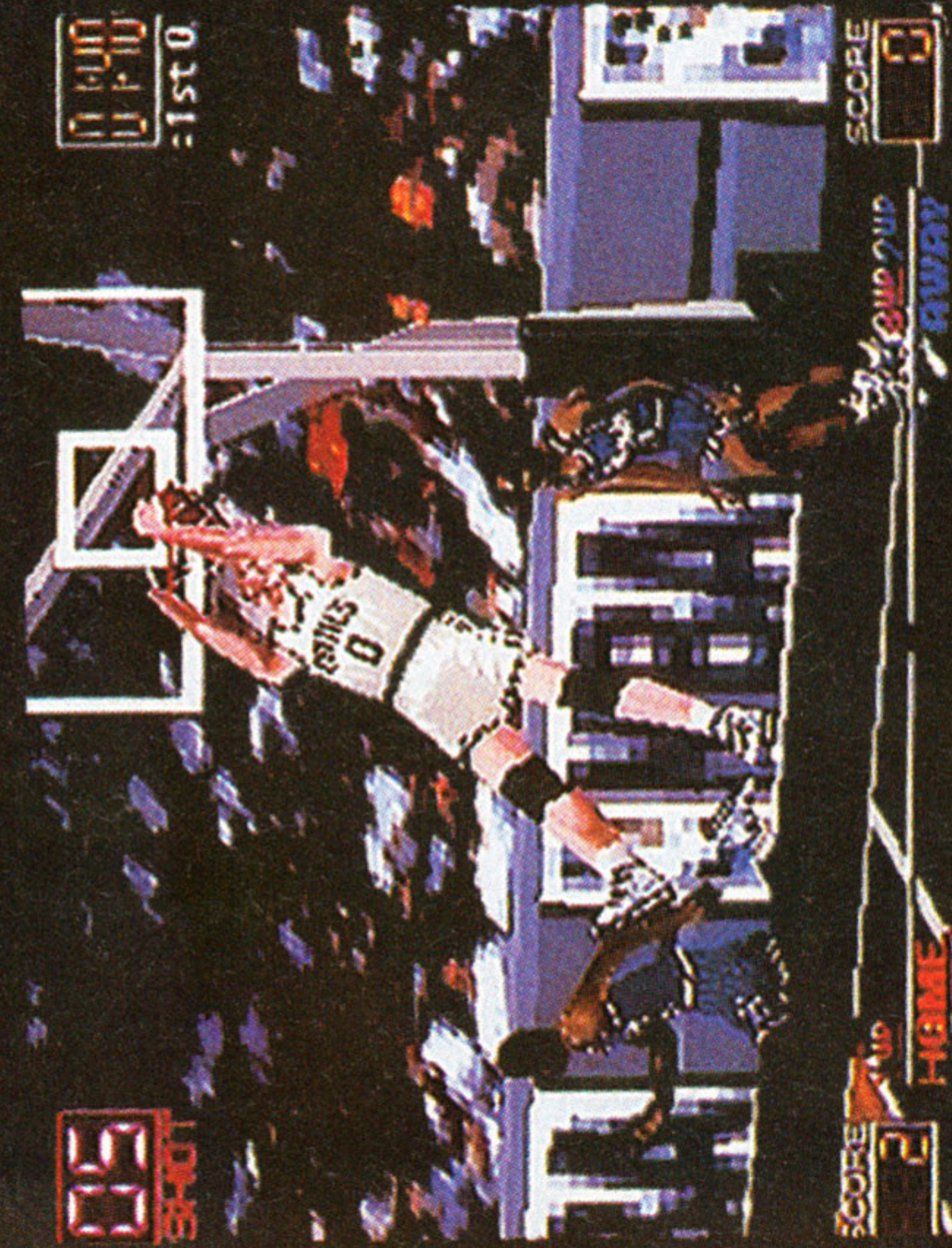
KONAMI XXL SPORTS SERIES



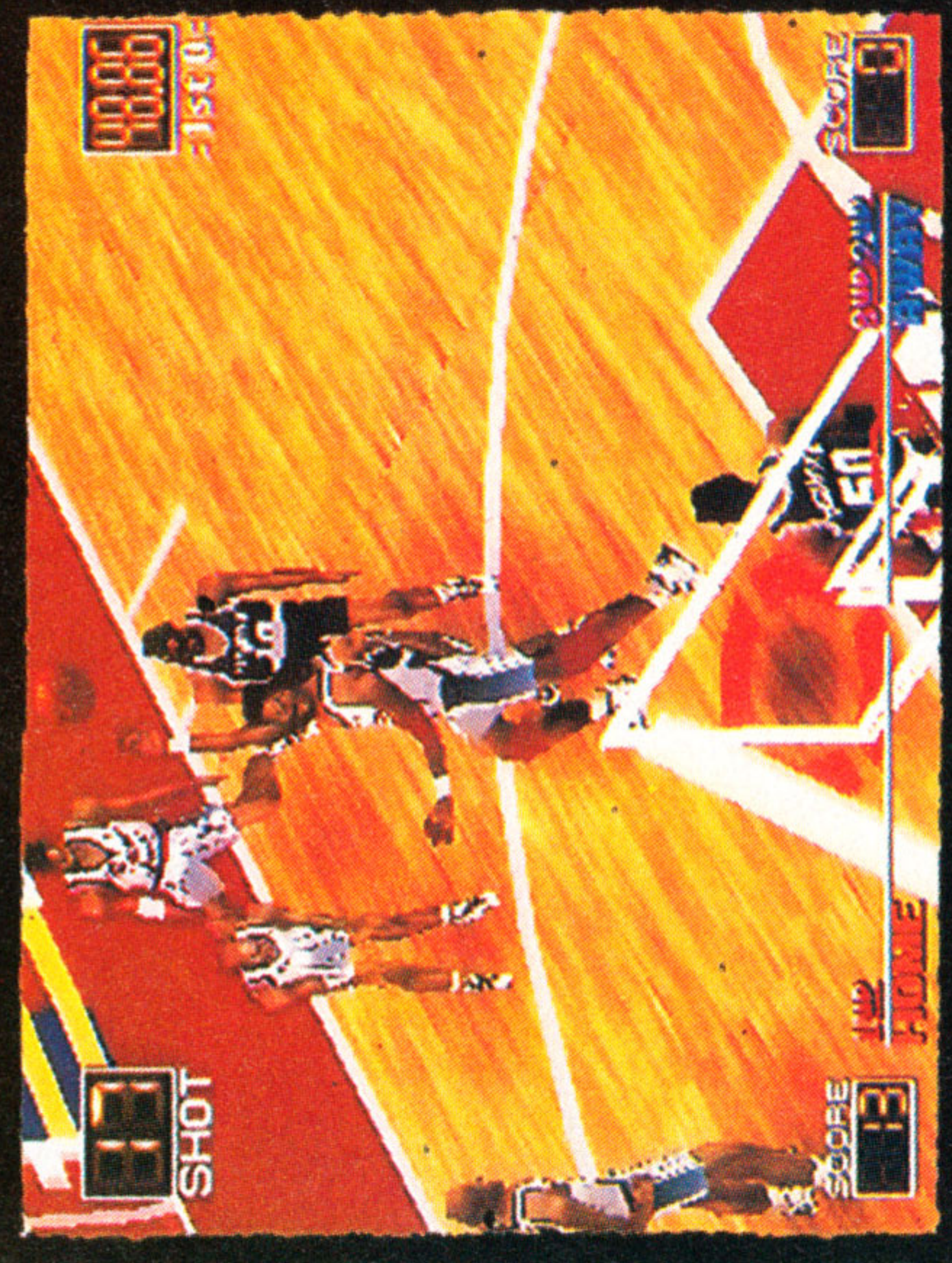
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IF YOU'RE NOT A FAN OF GOOD



S-ON-S ACTION
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YOU'RE NOT IN THE GAME

"NBA IN THE ZONE"



Masters of their Domain

Role-Players Reign Supreme in the Kingdoms of Online Gaming

Online gaming was practically invented for the adventure and role-playing genres.

Multiuser Dungeons were one of the first true online, multiplayer games. They used text engines run over national networks, and were the precursors to the current crop of wired offerings. By combining social interaction with computer gaming, MUDs found a place in the heart of the first, intrepid networked gamers, and still are a popular draw on the Internet and commercial services. As the technology progressed, fully graphical offerings emerged.

This link between online and the computer role-playing game is a natural. Pen-and-paper fantasy games, while they translate somewhat to computers, don't pack the same punch for some when played against machines. A good portion of fantasy and role-playing's charm comes from pitting wits with the spontaneous and creative real people. And while computer opposition is good at managing many tasks requiring graphics or number-

crunching abilities, responsive interaction isn't the long suit of computers and won't be for some time to come.

To gain the most satisfaction out of a computer role-playing game, many players need to hook up to other gamers. Online is the perfect medium to bring computer role-playing games up to their full potential. It allows for the creativity of a group of players and also for a cooperative gaming experience. While the current crop of online RPGs don't yet offer all the interaction of pen and paper, they still make for good sport. In the online world you can

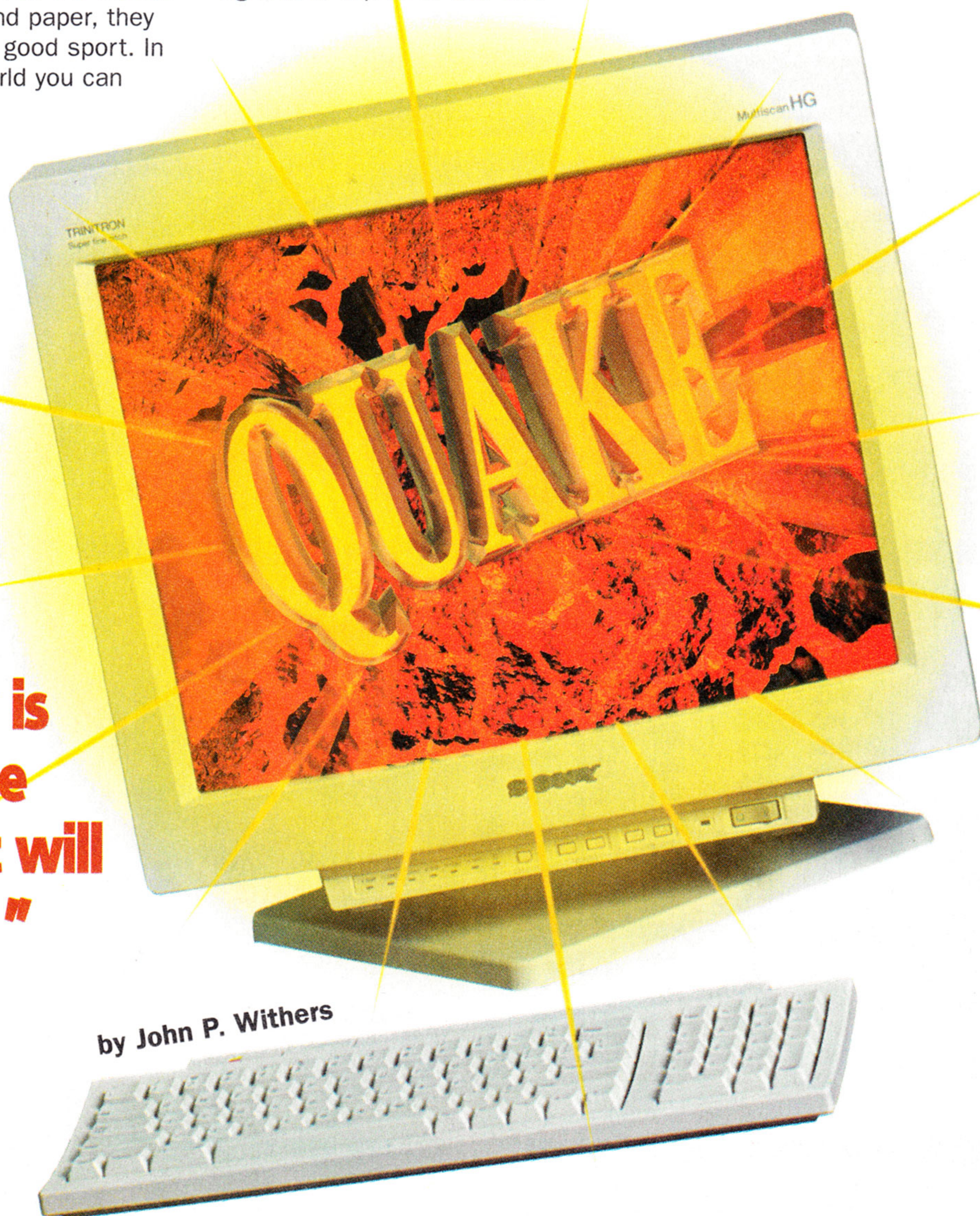
take on the role of a great fantasy hero and battle your opponents in a world filled with mighty deeds and great magic. At the same time, you can chat and interact with other players from across the world. The online RPG is a genre where players can work together to accomplish goals and build a world, rather than just trying to kill the other guy like in so many other multiplayer environments.

While there isn't a host of fully graphical RPGs online right now, expect to see this

field widen over the coming year as the next generation of online graphical titles fill the market. EA, Domark and other companies are all working on games to take advantage of the time-tested popularity of the RPG genre and the awesome growth of networking technology. We have rounded up the current kings of the online RPG world. So strap on your armor, ready your sword and fire up your modem for a quick look at wired RPGs.

"In *Doom*, the player is too removed from the violence...In *Quake*, it will be right in your face."

**- id Software Programmer,
John Romero**

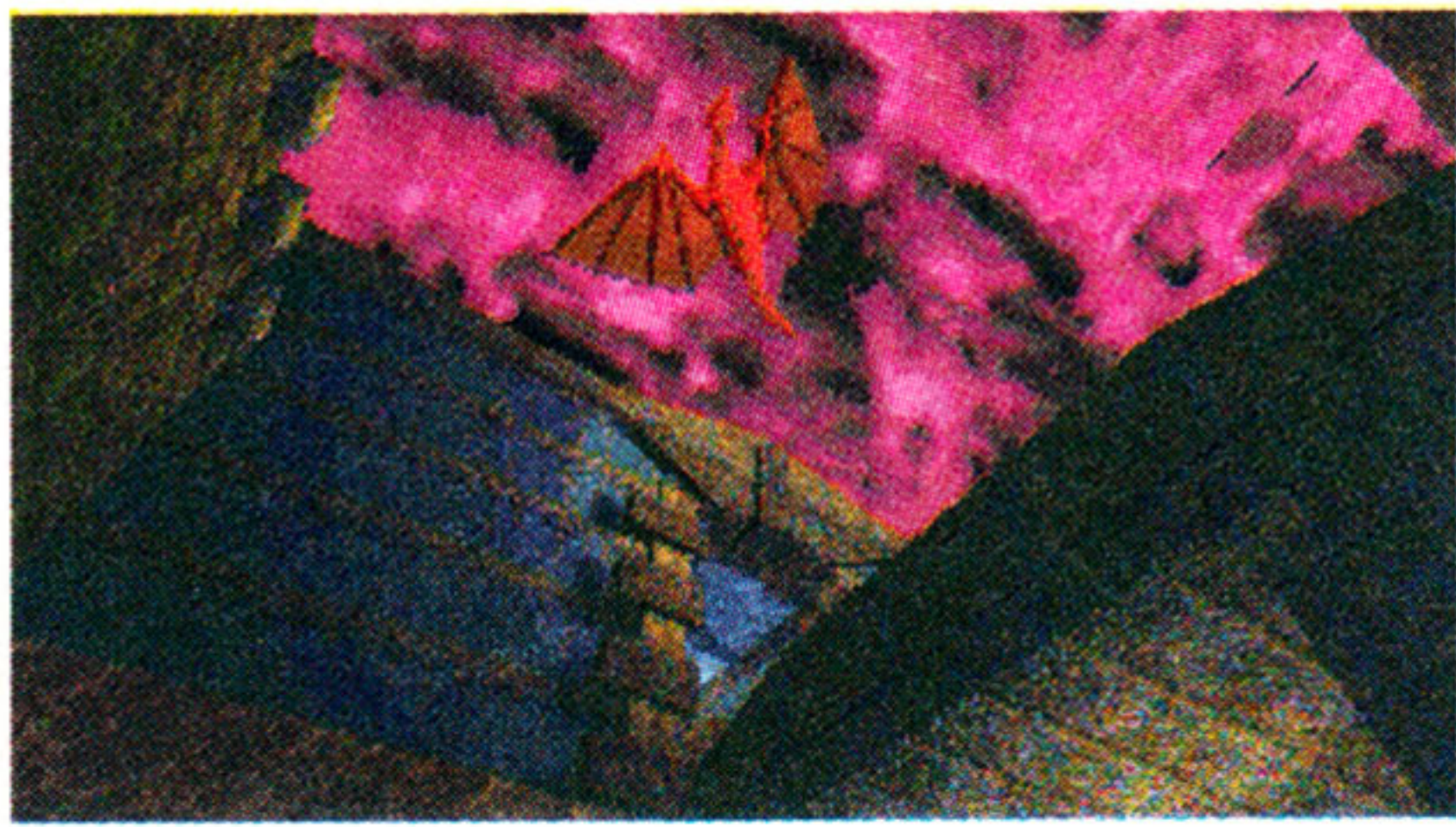


by John P. Withers

QUAKE

The looming specter over online gaming right now is *Quake*, the newest project from the guys who brought you *Doom*. However, hard and fast information on this exciting project is more than a little scarce.

Quake, originally slated to be out around Christmas, has been rumored to have undergone massive changes since code wizards John Carmak and John Romero started working [on it] over a year ago.



So what is *Quake*? Well, during the development phases of the project various definitions have leaked out, but we do know that it is going to be a game that directly supports online play, and that it will be even more intense than *Doom*.

More intense than *Doom*?! Yeah, well, if you don't believe it, check out this quote from a sit-down with John Romero: "In *Doom*, the player is too removed from the violence. I mean, you are behind a gun and just pulling the trigger. In *Quake* it will be right in your face. Going at it face-to-face with sledgehammers."

Quake is expected to be a fully 3-D engine, with a

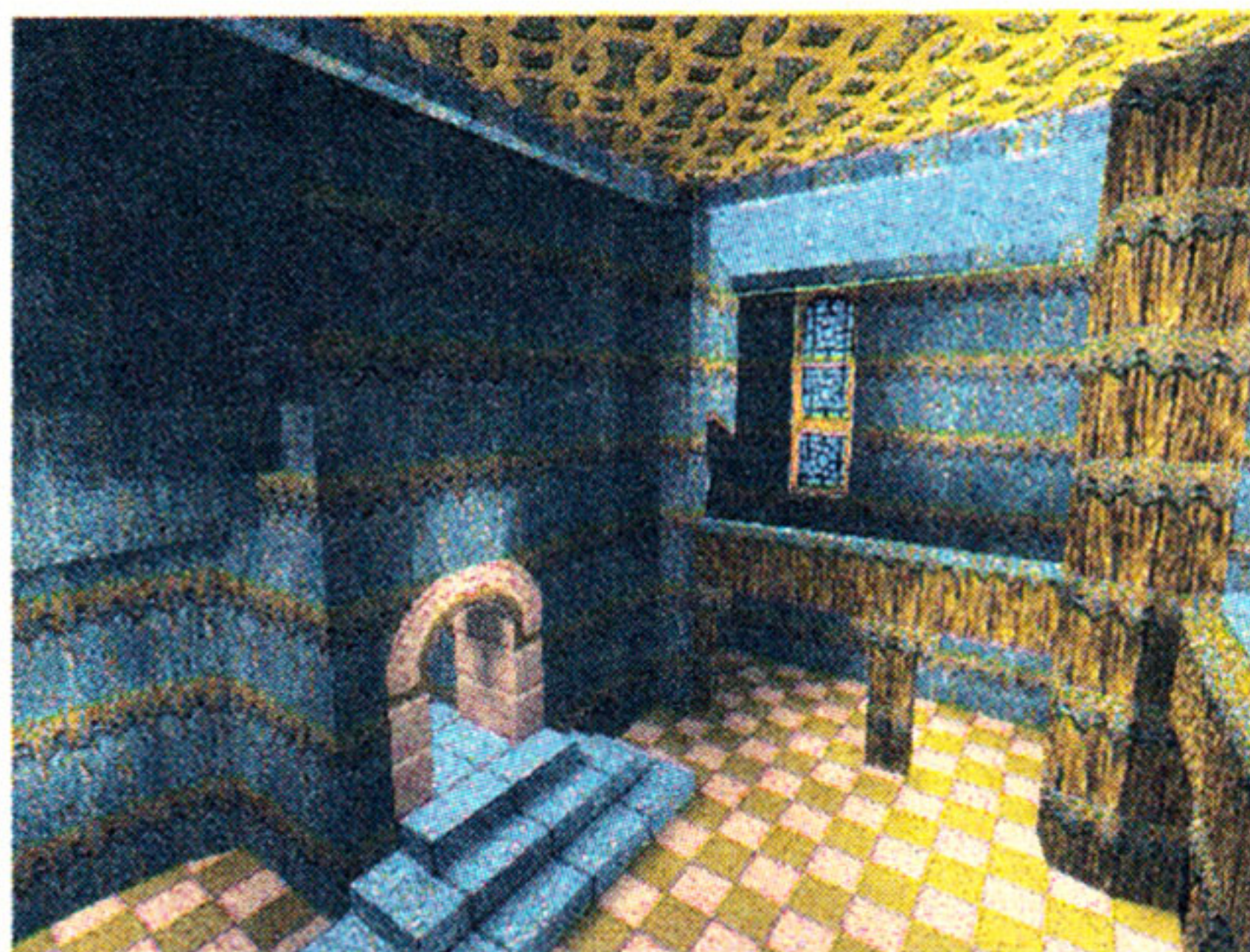
detailed combat model that keeps track of damage to specific body parts, allowing hand-to-hand combat with your adversaries. Last time we checked, the word was that individual combats are expected to take much longer, on the order of 15 minutes per opponent, and be filled with arm-breaking, head-bashing, in-your-face action.

While *Doom* had a networking option added, *Quake* is being built from the ground up with multi-player online gaming in mind. According to id's biz wiz, Jay Wilbur, Carmack has vowed that he will sacrifice some of the single playability if necessary to make sure that *Quake* kicks in

multiplayer mode. Wilbur says that *Quake* should be out in the first or second quarter of this year, but hedges, "that could be a complete lie. It will be done for sure when it is done."

With a track record like id has racked up, we're willing to wait and see. Expect *Quake* to send online gaming off the Richter scale.

Rating: N/A



Quake is being built from the ground up with multiplayer in mind.

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

Neverwinter Nights is the granddaddy of the online graphic role-playing game and still sits pretty much at the center of AOL's online gaming effort. While AOL has been making steps in recent months to try to beef up their gaming, *NWN* is a tough act to upstage.

For those who remember the Gold Box series of SSI D&D license games, *NWN* will be as familiar as an old, comfortable chair. The engine is the same, however, a number of enhancements have been made in order to take the game from single-player to multiplayer. For those who aren't familiar with the Gold Box series, the engine uses a first-person viewpoint during movement, switching to a 3/4 iso-view

during combat. Basic character types are taken from TSR's AD&D universe, and include the basic magic user, cleric and fighter flavors with rangers and a few other cool types thrown in.

The most interesting thing about *NWN* is the fact that this is a party game with up to six characters in a group using an engine originally designed for single-player use. Instead of beefing up the characters and orienting the game for one player, *NWN* still uses the party paradigm, but now each character in a party is controlled by a different online player. This requires a good degree of coopera-

tion and makes the game a fun group activity. Commands have been added to the core code to make this possible, such as follow a leader and chat functions so that individual players can communicate with their party.

Combat between players, however, is possible for those so inclined. When the code was originally modified to the online environment, the designers didn't intend for PvP (Player versus Player) combat to be a feature, however, codes existed to make it possible for a player to take damage during combat. Using a couple of tricks to exploit this feature, mayhem-minded combatants figured out how to conduct PvP fights. Now, PvP makes up a major part



Neverwinter Nights focuses much more on entertaining gameplay than graphics.

of the fun of *NWN* and contests and tournaments are held regularly.

The graphics for *NWN* are a bit dated by state-of-the-art standards, but still hold up fine for this full-blown, online adventure offering. However, there is no sound support other than tinny PC speaker music, so things can still improve.

Rating: B+

KINGDOM OF DRAKKAR

Drakkar, on MPGNet, is one of the most complex and richly detailed graphical role-playing environments currently offered online. It's a single character-oriented game with simple graphics shown in a 3/4 iso-view format. There's no transition between the normal views and combat views, and there's also little concession made to the idea of the party. While you can easily travel with other players and cooperate with them, no real provision is made in the interface to make this kind of play easy or natural

and even trying to chat while in the game is a bit of a hassle.

However, what is provided for in the interface is control depth. There are so many commands in *Drakkar* that it almost rivals MUDs for the number of user functions offered.

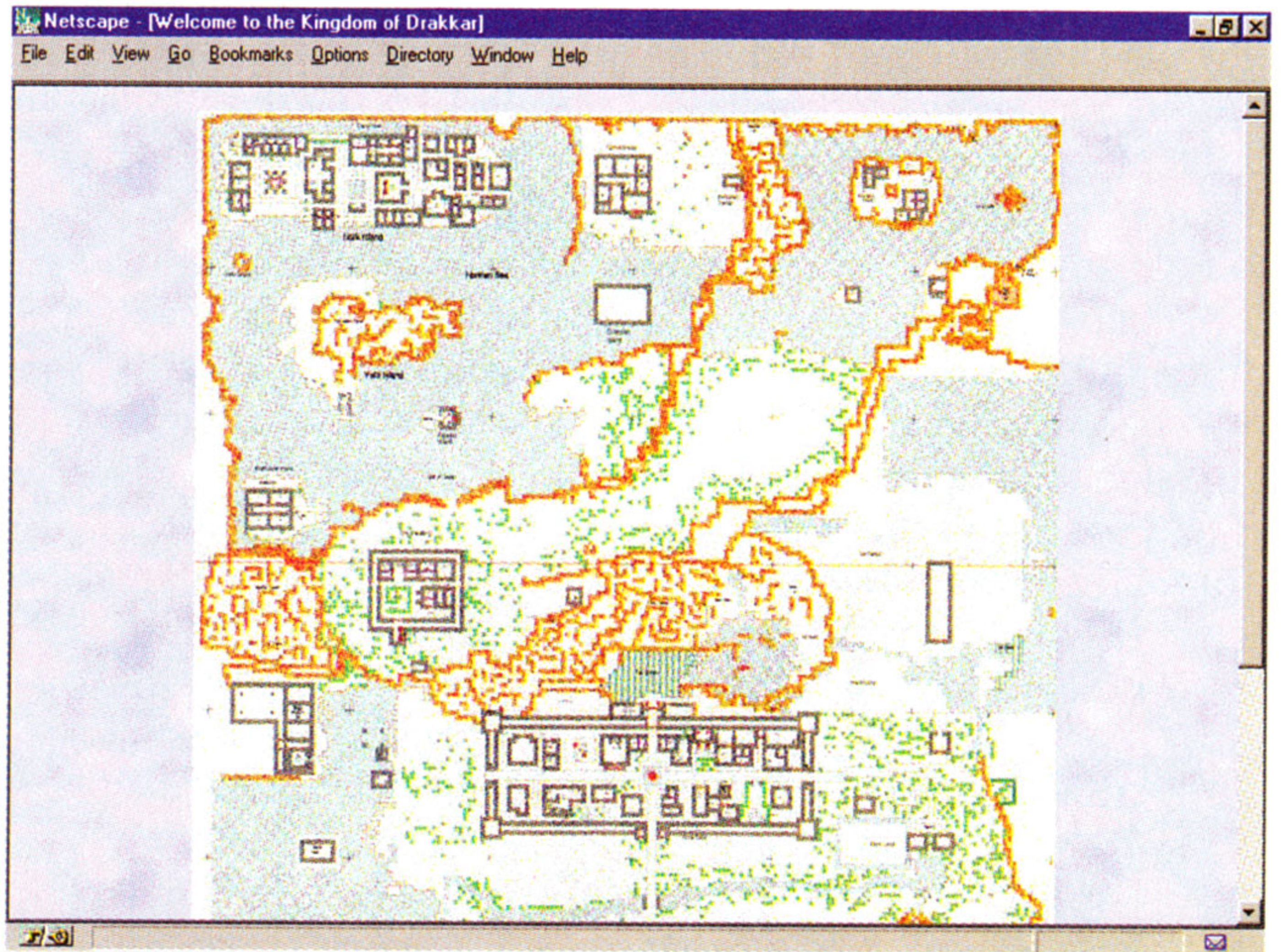
Players can take the role of all of the familiar fantasy character classes. But in addition to the class, there are also specific skills, such as fighting with individual weapons and working classes of magic that can be learned and must be upgraded with training as experience

increases. As for the adventuring, *Drakkar* has what seems to the novice an almost infinite number of sites to explore.

In all, *Drakkar* is something of a double-edged sword. It's a great and richly detailed

gaming environment, but the command interface is extremely complex. For those willing to put in the time and learn the game, it can be one of the more rewardable RPGs available online.

Rating: C+



Serious RPG players have mapped out the terrain in *Kingdoms of Drakkar*. Go to <http://arty.rutgers.com> for hints.

RUINS OF CAWDOR

Trouble is once again brewing in the Scottish countryside (circa 1200) as a pair of pernicious witches wreak havoc using their cauldron of unmitigating evil. It's your job to find a band of worthy travelers, using the ImagiNation Networks proprietary software, to journey deep into the *Ruins of Cawdor* and carve yourself some witches.

The software boasts six levels of gameplay, as well as The Rampant Cat Tavern (a chat room to find other suitable players), and Scrap Iron Sam's General Store and Guild Hall (a supply shop replete with armor and weaponry). Surprisingly detailed for a graphical online adventure game, *Cawdor* allows users to fashion a character with D&D-like attributes (strength, dexterity, etc.) and choose from a variety of classes and races, including spellcasters and purely, beef-headed fighters.

Several modes of gameplay will please the online adventurer, who can melee with just monsters, with other players, or in what's called "group battle" where players compete

against opposing guilds.

Continuous chat capabilities are probably the most enjoyable part of *Cawdor*, as you can taunt opponents as you hack away their insides.

Rating: A-



Cawdor features a metal shop, a tavern chat room, and six levels of gameplay.

DEATHTRAP DUNGEON

Entombed deep within the heart of a booby-trapped

labyrinth, you're still-bait for the evil Baron Sukumvit. Surrounded by rotting zombies, giant spiders and skeletal warriors (not to mention the poison darts stabbing into your bloody side) you think to yourself, "Where the @\$! am I and how did I get here?"

You're in *Deathtrap Dungeon*, a new 3-D-rendered RPG title release from Domark Software that allows gamers to view combat from any nightmarish angle. Based on Ian Livingston's and Steve Jackson's *Fighting Fantasy* publications, *Deathtrap* is the first in a series of development projects between Penguin Books and Domark. And rumor has it that the series is going online for multiplayer action. Domark hasn't committed to this yet, but keep your swords crossed.

Rating: N/A



It's still a rumor, but word has it that *Deathtrap Dungeon* is going online.

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It's inevitable.

The cast may be different, but the scene invariably stays the same: the two biggest kids on the block are doomed to tangle, over and over again. It's a rather over-used analogy, granted, but one that adequately sums up the current conflict between industry newbie Sony and video-game veteran Sega. Currently, the numbers place Sony's PlayStation system over Sega's Saturn, but that *can* change.

Sega's quite used to being the nemesis to number one. For years, they maintained an active thorn-in-the-side role toward gaming mogul Nintendo for supremacy of the market, alternately dogging their heels and taking away their lead position.

But Nintendo opted to stay out of this most recent battle, waiting until the smoke clears in the 32-Bit wars to introduce their Ultra 64 system this spring. No, the main contender right now in the beginning of '96 is Sony. With the multibillion-dollar parent company, Sony Electronic Publishing behind them as well as an all-the-right-moves September '95 launch, Sony has become a gaming force to be reckoned with virtually overnight.

Though new to the industry, Sony demonstrated a skillful understanding of how to break into a highly competitive and complex market. But even though Sega's moves haven't been nearly as perfect, that doesn't mean they're down for the count. Sega has stolen the lead in the systems race before...though whether they can do it once again remains to be seen.

WILL SEGA RALLY?

Sega Execs Fess Up
To the Mistakes
of the Past and Look
Forward to the Future

By Joe Fielder & The Editors of *FUSION*



The Facts Behind The Race

Several different factors compounded to steal the thunder away from the Saturn's launch. One numbered among them was the 32X, the Sega Genesis peripheral that the company introduced at the tail end of last year. The 32X promised to boost the system to "next generation" status, but Sega will be the first to admit that that unit "overpromised and underdelivered." Only three games—*Doom*, *Virtua Racing Deluxe* and *Star Wars Arcade*—were available that first Christmas. Besides that, the titles were largely disappointing, taking away from what the public expected from next-generation gaming. Not until the 32X *Virtua*

premiering the Saturn early in June (at \$399).

"We knew at that point, given our manufacturing, that we couldn't beat a \$299 price," confirms Tom Kalinske, president and CEO of Sega of America. "Therefore, we felt that since we had to go out at a higher price, it was important to lead the market. And I think history will bear that out.

"Just *imagine* if they got introduced when they did," Kalinske continues, "and we introduced at the same time, \$100 higher. We wouldn't have had the three months of consumer sales that we generated, and ergo the high interest in Saturn product.

"So, it was important for us to get it out early, to get consumers

I think we had to do. Frankly, we would have been in big trouble had we not."

Though the Saturn definitely had its pluses from its inception, the 32X was a much too recent memory for many gamers, and while many felt the \$150 32X was a bargain (being able to still play Genesis games), the Saturn's initial \$399 price-tag was more than they were willing to shell out.

Another problem with the early launch was that Sega's software lineup wasn't as graphically powerful as it could have been (which is quite evident when comparing *Virtua Fighter* with *Virtua Fighter 2*).

"Our first generation software wasn't going to knock down doors," admits Sega Vice

a good job of marketing the system. It's caught on extremely well, it's a great new product launch. They should be congratulated for it.

"I do think, however, that they're finding out that the video-game industry is a tough business to make money in," says Cohen, switching gears. "And that could impact them considerably in the short and long term."

It's a given that in the race to keep next-generation platforms down to an affordable price point, much more profit is going to have to come from the software than the hardware. While Sony has very little in the way of first-party publishing software, Sega is another story entirely.

"We make a lot of our hit

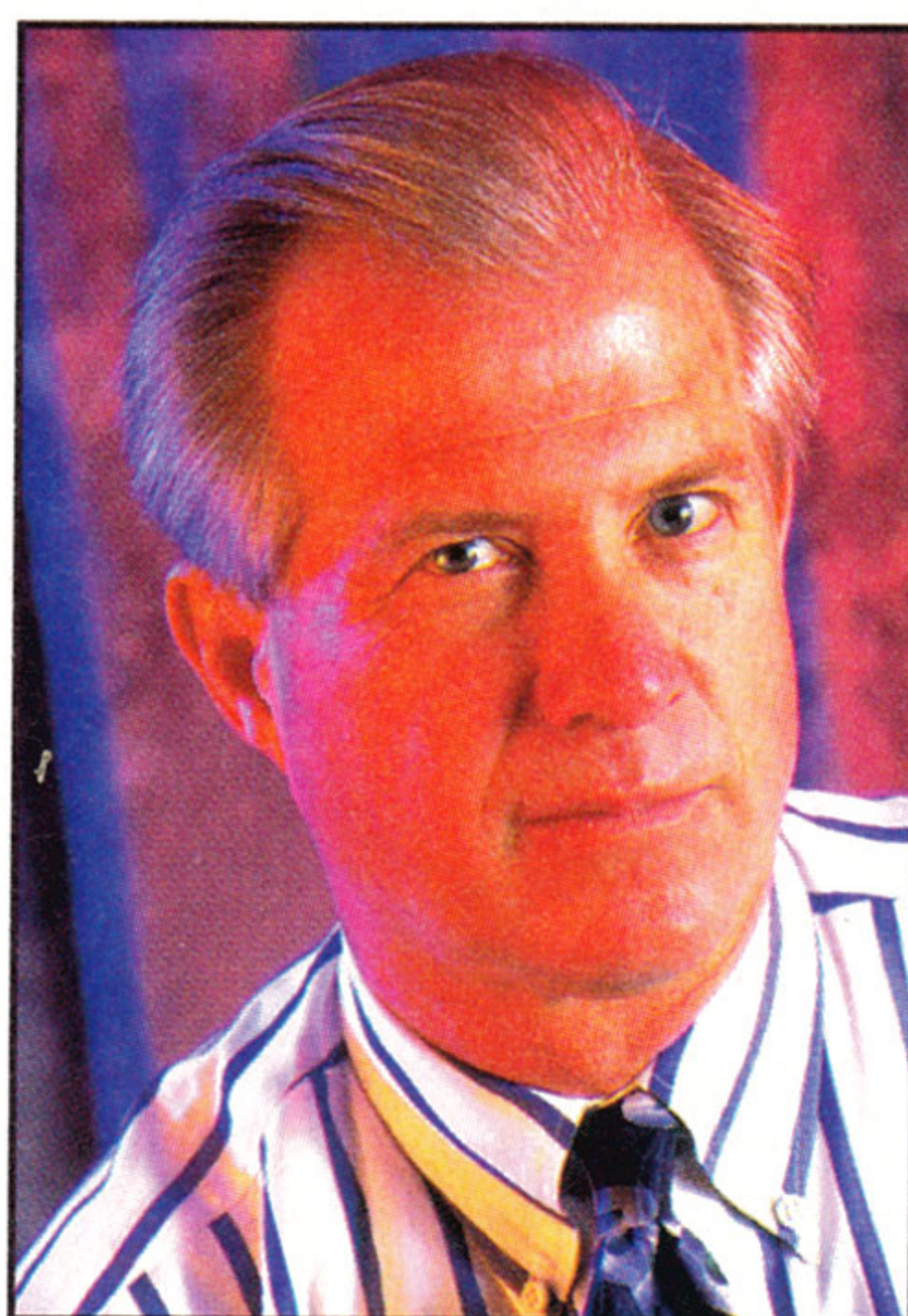


Sega Rally, Virtua Fighter 2 and Virtua Cop are new releases that really get under the hood of the Saturn, finally showcasing the real power of the system. Tom Kalinske, President and CEO of Sega of America, believes these titles are only the tip of the iceberg. PlayStation beware.

Fighter title hit shelves last summer did the peripheral really start to make good on its promises, and by then it was too little, too late.

When the 32X was introduced, Sega reported their Grand Plan was for the 32X to arrive at Christmas '94, build throughout '95, and burn out with the abandoned husk of the Genesis—after the '95 holiday season. The Saturn was to be seen as a luxury item, one that was priced above even the combined cost of a Genesis, Sega CD and 32X adapter. Sega hoped that the 32X would provide the Genesis enough support to stay alive until the price point on the Saturn reached mass-market levels. The plan obviously didn't account for the escalating focus on high-end systems (something the 32X would only confuse), or the PlayStation.

Believing Sony planned to launch in early fall at \$299, Sega surprised the industry by



excited about it [and] to benefit from the manufacturing of the hundreds of thousands of units that we made in that time period, in order to eventually be able to bring our price down to where we're slightly more competitive to them. I think we really had no choice. I know it wasn't a terribly popular decision with some people, but it was something that

President, Communications, Neil Cohen. "It was extremely playable, it looked good, but it didn't have the same graphic look that the Sony games did. Right off the bat, we said, 'Hey, Sony looks better,' but we weren't even leveraging the power of our system yet."

By comparison, Sony hit dead-on when they premiered. On the software front, Sony really had their software development out before Sega. Not only did Sony give themselves more time, but their PlayStation was much simpler to program for—and many of its eye-candy effects were easier to create, yet another reason why the system premiered with greater applause.

Still, every launch is flawed to some extent, even Sony's, right? Well, maybe it was perfect.

"I don't know if they've *made* any mistakes," Neil Cohen comments. "I've gotta give 'em credit where credit is due, they've done

software," Cohen points out. "While third-party support is incredibly important, [it] isn't *critically* important. Sony's done a good job of ensuring that kind of support, [but] for them to make money in the long run, and in the short run, they've got to be successful with first-party titles...and they don't have a lot of them. Conversely, you look at us, we've got titles we developed for the arcade, that we port over to the Saturn, and we can amortize that development cost over multiple platforms, and make more money off it. So, in essence, it's harder for them to make money right now than it is for us."

Another issue Sega feels is important to point out is that many of the current PlayStation hits will soon enough be "sharing the love" with the Saturn system as well. Where Sega has produced many of their hottest titles themselves (such as arcade favorites

The Game SHOW

Viewers should be quite pleased to find another late-night option than unrated films on Cinemax. Back in June of '94, the Sega Channel (a joint venture between Sega of America, Tele-Communications and Time Warner Entertainment) began a 12-market test of their cable-gameplay service, hitting a national launch in December of the same year. Sega Channel offers up to 50 downloadable titles a month through cable lines to Genesis owners that subscribe to the service (who are provided a special peripheral). Added features include preview gameplay of upcoming titles and special titles created solely for the service all at a monthly cost. Pricing varies from \$12-15 a month for partials of these titles. Games in their entirety are a bit higher, at \$2.95 for a two-day span of time.

Cable-line bandwidth restrictions currently keep a 32-Bit version of the Sega Channel at bay, but the upcoming Saturn Internet peripheral makes that a moot point anyway. But Sega Channel was the model, says Tom Kalinske, President and CEO of Sega of America.

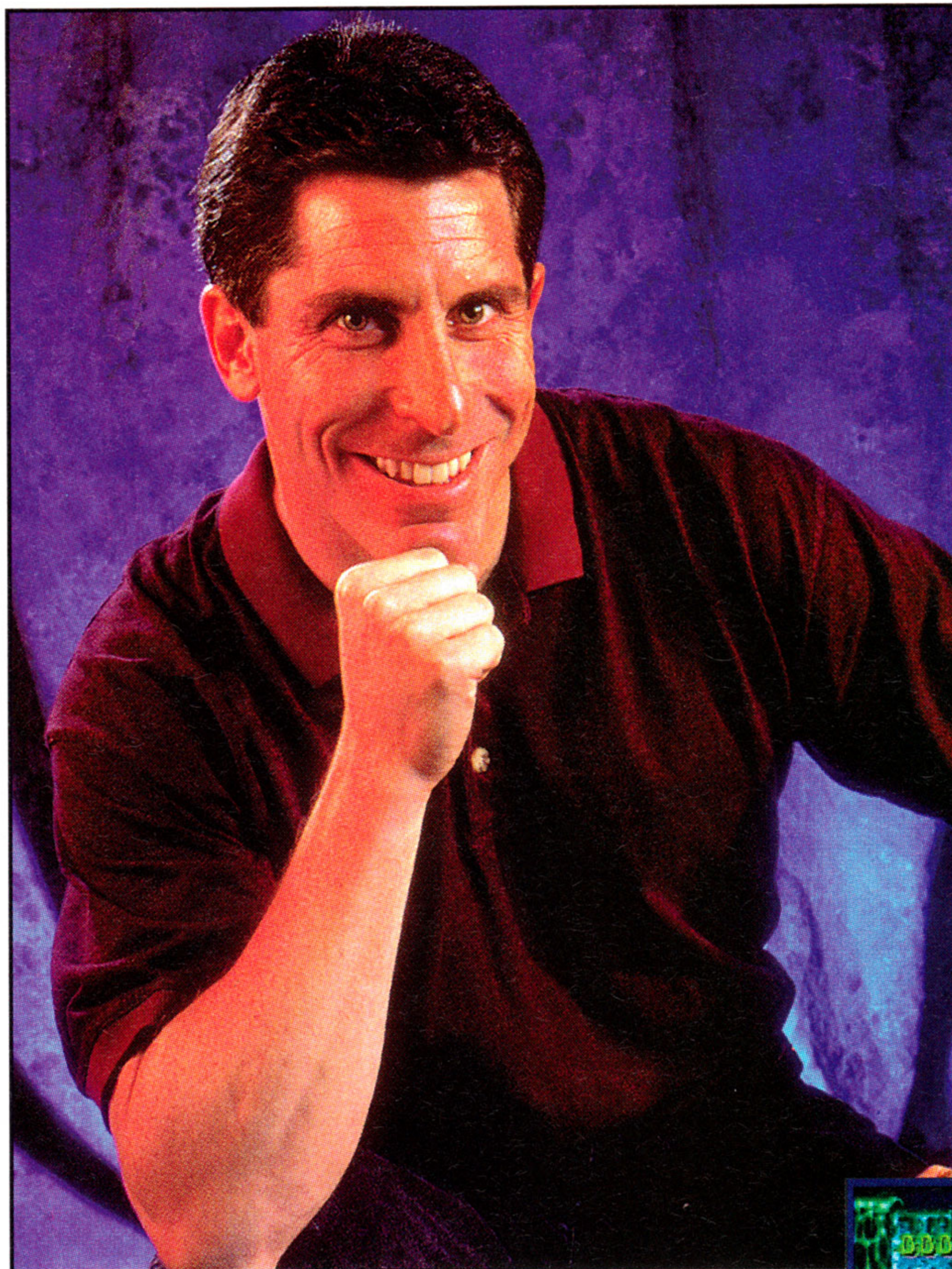
"The Sega Channel was both an effort to lengthen the life of the 16-Bit business to offer the consumer great value and reasonable cost," explains Kalinske, "and frankly, as a test for us of the future: How do you do gameplay online? Now, that happens to be a one-way test, but nevertheless, we have learned tremendously from it. I think that will benefit us in the future."

The service is one factor amazingly still keeping the Genesis system going. And unlike most spots on the cable dial, the Sega Channel luckily offers no annoying late-night infomercials. ●

like the *Virtua Fighter* line and *Virtua Cop*), Sony has largely arranged windows of exclusivity with third-party software developers to keep products, such as *Mortal Kombat 3*, unavailable to other systems for some time. This means, however, that PlayStation

port over or will impatience overbear them?

"As long as each platform has a proprietary weapon," answers Mike Ribero, Sega's Executive Vice President, Sales and Marketing, "I don't think it will hurt either [system]."



aggressively to make sure they not only have all the right tools, but that they have the advice and the consultation there for them as well."

While many programmers contend that the PlayStation is more user friendly to write for, Sega contends the Saturn is clearly a more powerful machine, and it

"Why would you buy a machine that paints you into a corner? They don't have all our great arcade titles, but we're going to have the best titles on their platform."

-Neil Cohen, Sega Vice President, Communications

titles like *Battle Arena Toshinden* and others will eventually be available for the Saturn.

"We feel that's one of our strong selling propositions," says Cohen excitedly. "Why would you buy a machine that paints you into a corner? They don't have all our great arcade titles, but we're going to have the best titles on their platform. So you get our great arcade ports, plus all the other great things Sega does and *Battle Arena Toshinden* and [the others]. I think it's a compelling reason to buy, for the consumer, one system over another."

So whereas Sony's windows of exclusivity helped the PlayStation take off at its launch, the long-term picture for Sega is beginning to look better. The question mark in the whole equation, however, is the always unpredictable consumer. Will Sega fans wait for Sony games to

Ace In The Hole?

Though the first generation of Saturn games were somewhat weak compared to the PlayStation's, their second generation has managed to surprise the industry, and convince them that the system has some life in it. And while the numbers aren't back yet, Sega expects that the triumvirate of *Sega Rally*, *Virtua Cop* and *Virtua Fighter 2* have performed well enough during Christmas to leapfrog Sony in the systems race. Buyers, however, must wonder why titles this strong haven't been out sooner.

"Quite frankly," answers Cohen, "we did not initially do a great job in getting the third parties the right tools. But we haven't let that go unaddressed and we've been working very



simply takes longer to figure it out.

"The Saturn was developed with the same technology that's used for the arcade games," says Diane Fornasier, Sega's Vice President, Marketing, "so that it allows us to convert very efficiently. And that's how we're able to bring these games to the marketplace not only quickly but also with all the quality that you find on a \$30,000 arcade machine. So in a way you're getting a real value; you're getting a \$299 machine with a \$30,000 dollar game experience."

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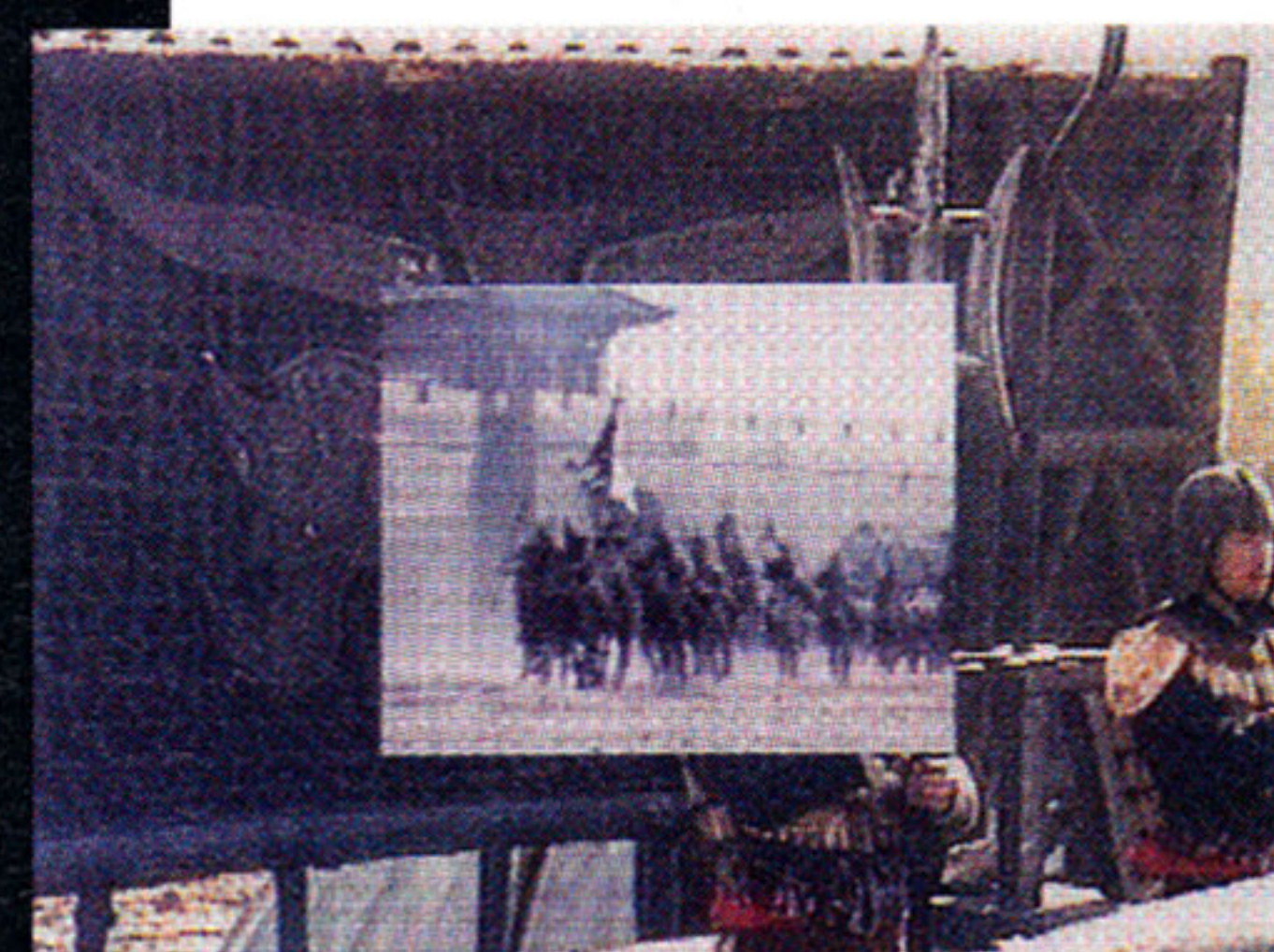
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The 3DO Perspective

While both Sega and Nintendo both declined to comment on Sega's place in the market, Bob Lindsey, 3DO's Senior Vice President of Marketing and General Manager Studio 3DO, offered this summary of the current 32-Bit systems race.

"Overall," Lindsey surmises, "the 32-Bit market did not meet expectations. Too many players are creating consumer confusion. I believe the peak year for 32-Bit is this one and it appears that only 1 million units will be sold in North America across all platforms. This is not big growth.

"Sega, Sony and 3DO sales have all been less than projected," Lindsey continues. "Sony originally projected 750,000 units in North America this year and recently stated that they have shipped approximately 300,000. Given the number and reports from retailers, Saturn sales are significantly lower and they had produced 600,000 units in North America. Saturn's price reduction to \$299 leaves Saturn a great deal on each system and with no possibility of cost reducing the machine.

"To compensate, Sega has implemented some cost-control measures such as the 1-900 line for customer inquiries, giving off their distribution facility in California to SoftBank and throwing their overhead. Not a sign of a profitable business. Sega has no 64-Bit plans yet. This will hurt them next year.

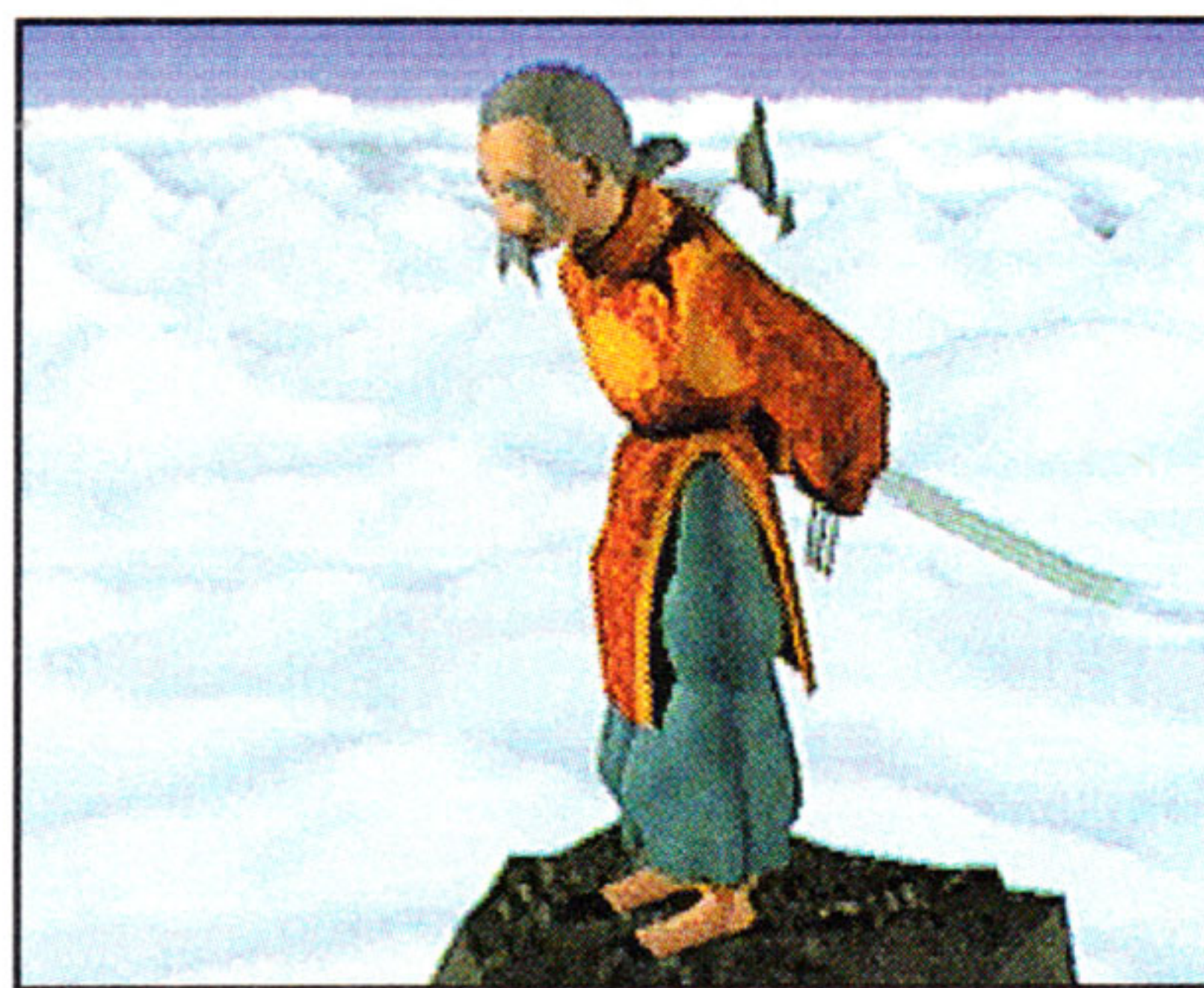
"Nintendo is probably the only one smiling," he adds, "since they decided not to get into the 32-Bit system blood bath." ●

"It's got more complicated architecture with a specialized microprocessor for all the different functions," explains Steve Payne, Sega's Vice President, Product Development. "[This] includes texture mapping, background graphics and scaling, rotation, reading off the CD and a whole specialized audio subsection. So the main processors don't slow down to do any of those specialized functions. All those things are farmed out to different processors and it's a coordination task. You have to know what each processor is good at and how to get maximum performance out of it. Some of the first Saturn games didn't even use both of the 32-Bit RISC processors. There's frankly been a learning curve.

"Some of the games out earlier this year didn't really have the chance to take advantage of everything the Saturn could do," Payne continues. "Since then, we put out the Saturn Graphics Library (SGL) and that kind of 3-D library really allows developers to focus on the game rather than on just the 3-D art. *Virtua Fighter 2* is one of the games based on that library, done by the AM group in Japan, some of our top programmers inside Sega."

For most gamers, the first thing that comes to mind when looking at these titles might be Rare Limited's *Donkey Kong Country* for the SNES. They proved, through whatever mysterious process, that the system was capable of bigger things than had previously been thought possible, a notion mirroring what many are now saying about *VF2*. But unlike with Rare, Sega is openly sharing their programming knowledge to their third-party publishers.

"The third parties have, on their second time around now, really learned what the machine can do and are actively taking advantage of it," explains Payne. "One thing we do is show them *Virtua Fighter 2* and they say, 'Oh my god. Okay, now we get it. Why didn't you tell us this before?' And then we tell them



When *Battle Arena Toshinden* hit the shelves for the PlayStation, it seduced many over to the Sony side. The Saturn version (seen above) makes the title the first game to escape from under Sony's windows of exclusivity.

how we did it. That gives them the example as well as some of the programming library to let them do that."

Buyers can judge for themselves when this year's generation of Saturn games hit shelves. Scheduled titles include current Japan hits *Fighting Vipers*, *Panzer Dragoon II*, a 3-D *X-Men* title from Sega, and another that's a conversion of Capcom's arcade hit *X-Men: Children of the Atom*, *NBA Action* and a 3-D polygon soccer title.

Sega's New Attitude

One of the important points in Sega's new master plan is a simplification of the choices presented to the gaming public. Sega reports that this simplification strategy was the reason why the Neptune (the combination Sega Genesis/32X unit) was aborted earlier in the year, and it's a policy that bodes badly for the 32X.

"I think what the company has realized from the past is that you can't overburden the consumer with too many choices when it comes to hardware," says Neil Cohen. "There's a limit to what the market will bear, and [also] withstand."

At its release, 32X was painted more as an upgrade accessory to the Genesis system, rather than an entirely new system. But the public, seeing two 32-Bit systems from Sega, was understandably thrown off. Consumers want things simple, so marketing to Joe Average means keeping choices as straightforward as possible.

"Hindsight being 20/20," informs Cohen, "I don't know if the company would make the same move now."

Well, it's a move they'll be correcting forthwith. "There's going to be some strong titles

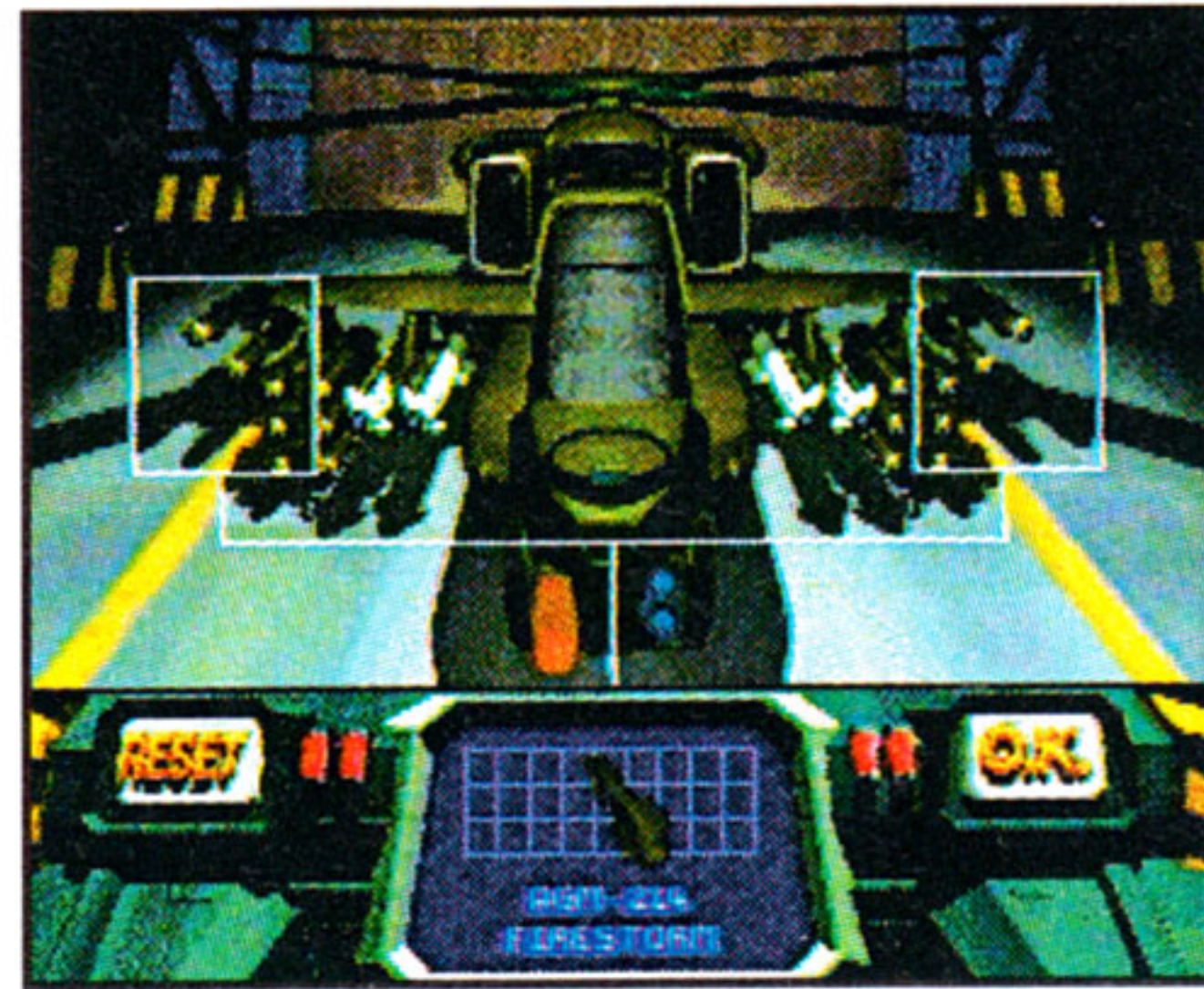
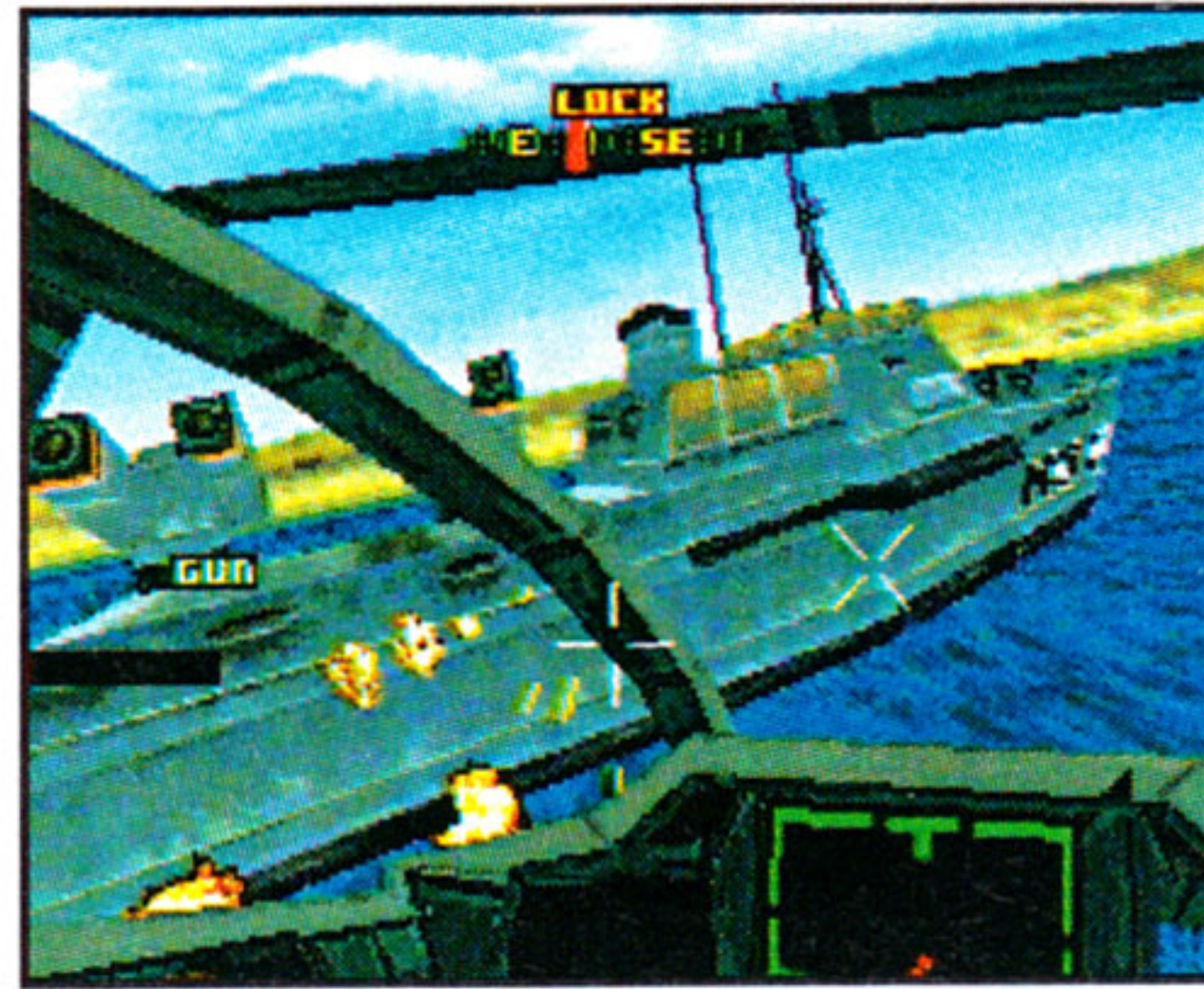
coming out, but we're not going to be doing any more software for the 32X." Cohen reports. "And it's fair to tell customers that."

The last four titles for the peripheral include another entry in Sega's *Spider-Man* franchise, *World Series Baseball* and two other yet unannounced games.

The final 32X title should be coming out in February or March and Sega has indicated that there is a good chance the 32X's price will come down from its current \$99 cost, arguably for a better shelf-clearing price.

Surfing With The Saturn

Several months back, Sega of Japan announced an Internet peripheral for the Saturn for second-quarter release. While they're not commenting on plans for a U.S. version, Steve Payne describes the system peripheral as, "basically everything you



Thunderstrike II is sure to turn a few heads with its 3-D, texture-mapped graphics and fluid gameplay.

convince some people to buy the machine over other machines, but I don't know if that's going to be an incredibly compelling motivator. I think where it really comes into play is when you talk about online gaming."

This type of gameplay has been heralded as the future of gaming in recent years, though it perhaps stands a better chance of hitting once people can access it in their living rooms. While Sega refuses to pin down a U.S. release date, sources place it at Christmas '96.



"One thing we do is show [third-party publishers] *Virtua Fighter II* and they say, 'Oh my god. Okay, now we get it. Why didn't you tell us this before?'"

-Steve Payne, Sega Vice President, Communications

need to get out to the Internet, including a browser."

If the project reaches fruition, the Saturn Internet peripheral could pose a serious threat to the recent talk of "dumb boxes," i.e., low-cost computers aimed at offering Internet access at low cost. While the extension's price has not yet been announced, Sega relates a price point of \$200 or lower. Combined with the \$300 Saturn, the system would weigh in at around \$500. While Oracle's Telecom 95 cost announcement for cheap Internet access rivals that \$500 price

point, it of course fails to provide for the Saturn's added functionality as a game system.

To boot, the equipment's modem would be a natural pathway for accessing network and online games. Players would be able to join up with or face off against people from all over the country in different types of game scenarios, ostensibly through Sega's own Web site.

"That's where the real market is," Neil Cohen adds. "That's what people want to see. I think the browser is a neat feature that people will like and use. It will

Industry Outlook

Marty Brockstein, the editor of *HomeWorld Electronics* bi-weekly trade magazine, offered this analysis on Sega's current standing in the systems race: "Sega hasn't had the buzz that Sony has had for a couple of reasons. One is that newer is perceived as better. Sega launched back in May with Saturn, and while that achieved some of their goals, by September-October, they didn't seem so new. Also, there were a couple of games on the PlayStation short term that proved to be pretty popular."

On the long-term outlook, he said, "One thing Sega has going for it with Saturn is its very active and vibrant arcade-game division. One of their strengths is the ability to create high-level games for the arcade exclusively for their own platforms. Sony does not have that kind of thing to fall back on. So right now while Sony is out-distancing Sega in the 32-Bit platform race, it's far from a done deal. Sega is a fine marketing organization, and people in some cases have been far too quick to make Sony the king."

John Taylor, of Arcadia Investment Corp. and author of the *FUSION* Stock Monitor column, offered a powerful statistic: "Fact: According to TRSDS (a retail sample of over-the-counter sales), in the period from September to October, in that two-month period, the PlayStation sold to U.S. consumers 106,000 units. The Saturn sold in that same time frame 17,500 units."

"[But] what happens this year has little bearing on what happens next year," he added. "The chief combatant in the next-generation wars has yet to introduce its product." ●

Sega's swank *Virtua Fighter 2*



Welcome to Sega City

Does Sega have their sights set on Disney, too?

Several years ago, Sega USA began their first venture into building their own interactive entertainment centers in Las Vegas' Luxor Virtua Land. Since then, they have continued with locations at Epcot's Innoventions Pavilion, Indianapolis (the first to officially be dubbed "Sega City") and most recently in Irvine, Calif. These sites not



only offer Sega arcade titles, but other cutting-edge technologies such as virtual reality and the like, explains David Wilhoyte, Director of Site Development for Sega Enterprises Inc. USA.

"We're looking for very themed entertainment experiences that really appeal to a broader demographic," Wilhoyte says. "We're trying to capture the sense beyond the actual game experience, to appeal to a broader audience and stimulate their curiosity into the new technologies that are available in the entertainment industry."

A rash of expansions is planned for Sega City, with some sites aiming at smaller arcade-type operations while other will swell to mini-theme-park size, much like Sega Japan's Joypolis and Galbo. In fact, 100-150 smaller venues, 60-80 mid-size and 10-15 mini-theme parks are set on the boards from now through the year 2000. Watch out, Walt. ●

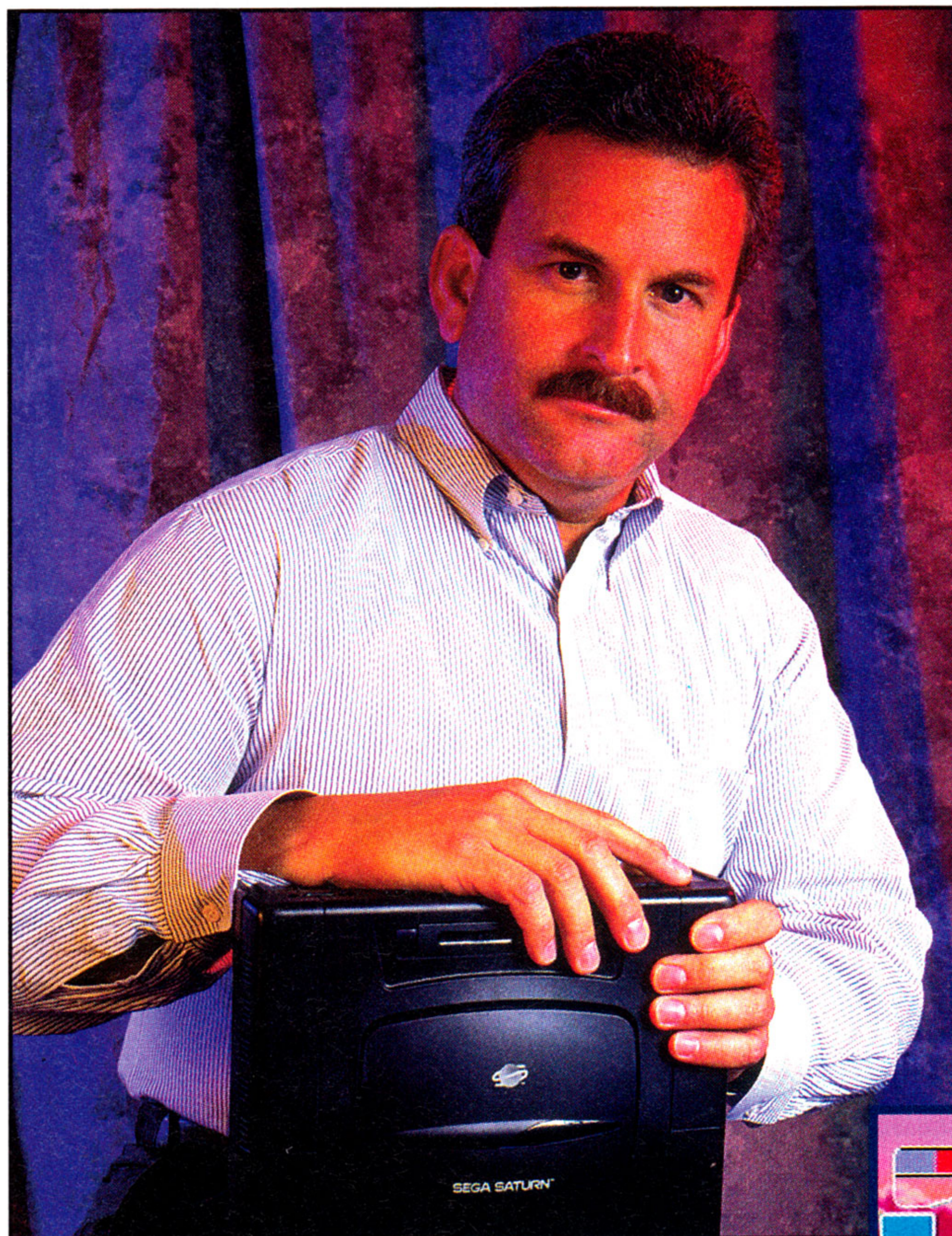
Variety Is The Spice Of Life

The key to Sega's marketing strategy doesn't lie entirely with either the Saturn or the long-lived Genesis. It's more encompassing than that. Their master plan is a multi-tiered approach hitting the consumer not only in

The Pico system introduces interactive entertainment to [children] ages 4-7, and hopes to attract parents through its educational skew. Then there's the Genesis system, which Sega feels will stick around a very long time by way of the 7- to 9-year-old crowd.

of some of the 16-Bit titles, and Saturn titles. And beyond that, additional features such as Sega's coin-ops and larger amusement ventures support the entire age spectrum in varying degrees.

"It's a product strategy that acknowledges the fact that different consumers have different



"What we have decided within Sega is that it's very, very important for us to offer a product for every stage of a prospective consumer's life."

-Mike Ribero,
Sega's Executive Vice
President, Sales and
Marketing.



Acclaim will be producing the U.S. Saturn version of Capcom's popular arcade hit *X-Men: Children of the Atom*. This title promises to be one of the best arcade conversions available on *any* system.



the teen and young adult years (the so-called "nerd dollar") but consummately, from cradle to grave. Diversification is the name of the game, and Sega appears to have dibs on the hardware.

"If you think about most marketing strategies," explains Mike Ribero, "they are predicated on creating a form of habit or inertia within a household. And then the competitors have a very, very difficult time, not getting people to try a new product, but just getting them to change their basic habits."

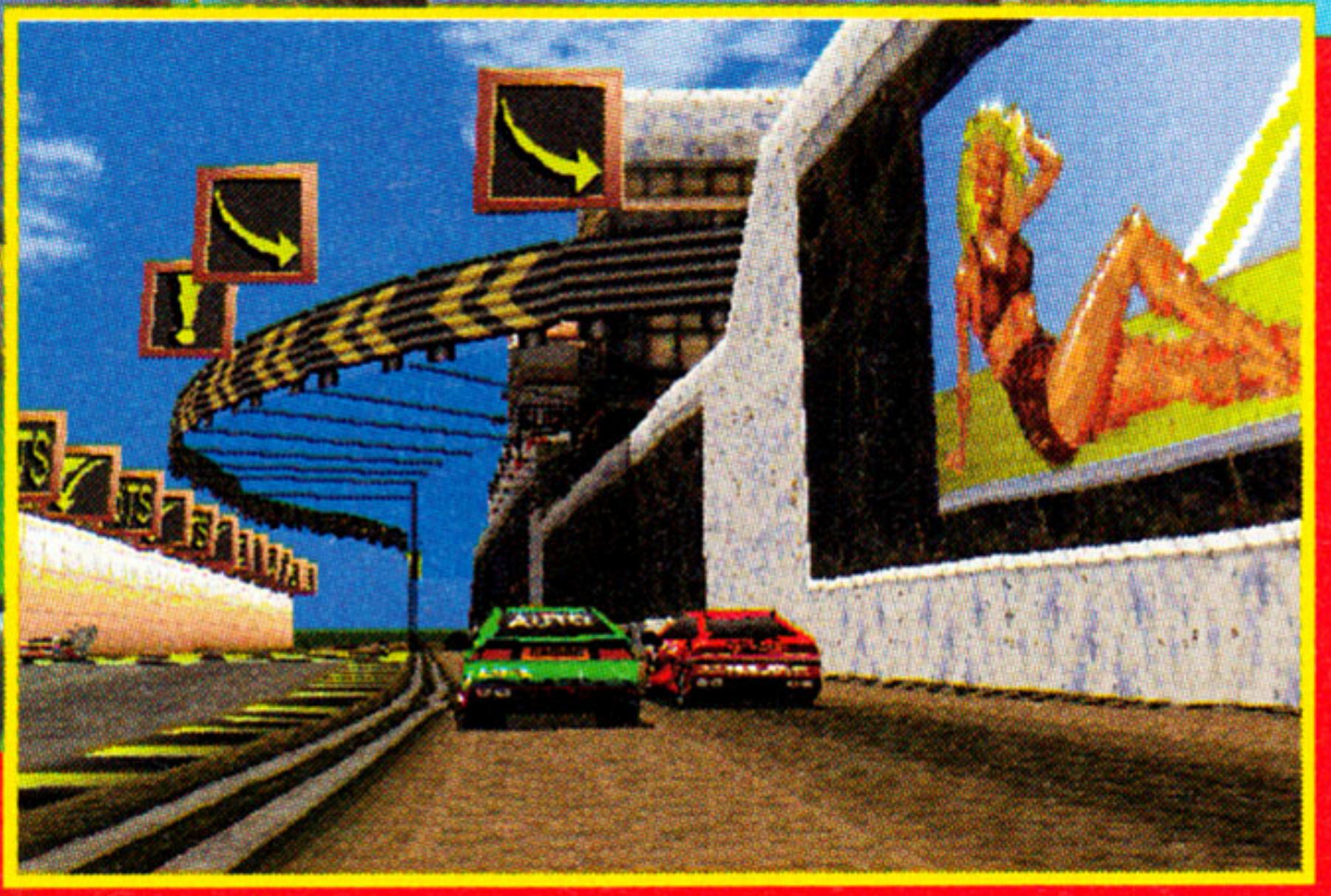
This market, which Sega reports will continue to see new titles, will be further supported by Nomad and the Sega Channel. Beyond the Genesis is obviously the Saturn system, but the buck doesn't stop there. Sega has recently begun converting titles from Sega CD and the Genesis for the PC market. Among them are the digital video flight/shooter *Tomcat Alley*, *Sonic CD*, *Ecco The Dolphin* and the more recent *Comix Zone*. Next year, the Sega PC plan is to develop about 15 or 20 titles, including conversions of

needs depending on what stage in life they're in," says Ribero. "But it clearly keeps them within the brand, so they don't have to go outside as they mature."

While the idea of a faceless corporate entity choosing products to usher you through different stages of life is inarguably scary, it's also a strong marketing strategy. Instead of focusing on the current game-buying demographic, Sega is targeting the entire population. If this scheme succeeds, they'll widen the audience and expand the market, not only helping themselves, but possibly the entire industry. ●

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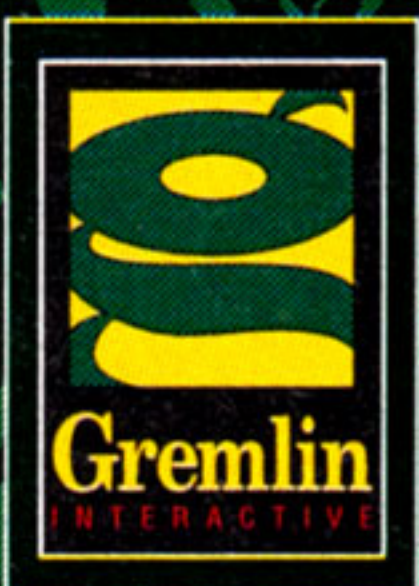
Actual IBM screen shots shown



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FUSION: How would you rate the position of the Saturn in the systems race—currently, six months, and a year from now?

Tom Kalinske: That's an interesting question. You know, the way we rate ourselves is how are we doing overall on the consumer interactive entertainment market.

I think the last TRSDS report, and we're confident the next TRSDS report [where] there will be more reports on what happened over Christmas, show us in total with the leading share of the marketplace. I think that that's the most important criteria that we can be measured by: How are we overall impacting the interactive market; are we still the leader? I think the answer would clearly be yes.

lots of platforms, as I mentioned. So it's really a very, very difficult marketplace. I'd say that's the main problem that we've had to face.

Of course our way of trying to deal with that is make sure we were offering the consumer a great experience at whatever price they could afford to engage in the market at. Our Genesis is selling very very well right now. We had to decide how many we were going to make way back in June, and frankly we kind of believed all the market pundits and analysts, and they told us the market was going to decline 40 to 50 percent, and they got to us, you know? And we believed that, and that's what we produced to about a 35 percent decline—well, the market *isn't* declining now. And

TK: Don't know. We'll see. Nothing to announce yet.

FUSION: In this business, profit only comes from software. Since Sony has less first-party software, where do you see them making their money? Is it from owning the factories that produce their hardware?

TK: I don't think they're making money on hardware, either.

FUSION: How do you respond to the rumors of a Saturn upgrade, titled the Saturn II, hitting the shelves next year?

TK: Again, we have no plans to do anything that would replace Saturn in any way.

The Last Wo

FUSION Talks With Tom Kalinske, President and CEO of Sega of America

Now, in the case of Saturn, at this moment—well, I don't know the sales for the last week, but we've obviously been outsold by the PlayStation in November and early December. We believe we will capture them and pass them in these last 10 days of December, and that will make us about even for the year. In the future, we intend to beat them.

I'm sure you're aware in Japan, PlayStation is now selling way under Saturn. Saturn is outselling PlayStation by anywhere from 3 to 1 to 7 to 1, and the average is probably around 5 to 1 for the last month. We've passed about 2.2 million units sell-through, and they're still down at one and a half, 1.6, something like that.

We're very confident the same thing will occur here as we get behind those great titles and do our normal marketing, advertising promotions behind them. So I would say six months from now, and a year from now, we intend to win in the higher tech systems race.

FUSION: What are some of the problems Sega has had to face over the last few years, and how are they overcoming them?

TK: This is one of the toughest marketplaces I've ever seen. The market is changing very quickly, transitioning from older technology to newer technology, the increased competition, new guys entering the business like Sony, lots of new software developers, many many new titles. [It's] very difficult for a retailer to determine what to put their emphasis behind,

we're sold out with a number of retailers.

So that's been a big issue, and a big problem. We could have done better on some of the older technology than we actually have done.

FUSION: What do you think is extending the life of the 16-Bit market?

TK: Very good gameplay, and terrific pricing. A \$99 experience is very affordable for most families. Certainly most channels of distribution want to get a part of that \$99 hardware action, and most software, of course, is priced at \$49 to \$59 for new titles. And then you have the phenomenon of older titles being priced down to \$29, or, on some occasions, less than that. So it offers great consumer value.

FUSION: The PlayStation does have some limited first-party titles—games like *WarHawk*, *Wipe Out*, *Twisted Metal*—some of their best games and they won't be available on the Saturn. How many titles will Sega have exclusively, compared to PlayStation exclusive titles?

TK: Well, we've got a *huge* number. I mean, we already have, I think, 25 that are exclusive. And then next year there will be at least another 30, minimally, that are exclusive on the Saturn. And some of the ones that you just mentioned maybe *won't* be exclusive on the PlayStation.

FUSION: Do you see First Trac or Psygnosis developing for the Saturn?

I think what happens is—you probably aren't aware of this: There are eight different versions of the Genesis on the market today. All of them are completely compatible with every other version, but each one has been an improvement, in some small way, over the previous one.

So, obviously, we have continuous R&D work under way on what we would call Saturn 2, 3, 4, 5, whatever. The consumer will never see a difference, they will all be called "Saturn." It's something we just continually do; improve the capability of the machine, and hopefully also by the way, at the same time, cost-reduce the machine. So, that's invisible improvements, and I'm afraid that some of the word that we're doing those things is what causes the rumors that you're alluding to.

FUSION: What sort of competition do you think the Ultra 64 will be?

TK: It's an interesting strategy, to do another cartridge system at a lower price. Obviously it's a cartridge system, reportedly at \$249, and I see it as kind of a Trojan horse. The cartridge model for a 32-Bit or 64-Bit system ultimately can't work. The cost of the ROM in the cartridges will ultimately be too high for any third-party manufacturer to partake of—and for that matter, for Nintendo to. But, it's certainly an interesting strategy to launch it that way.

Nintendo's got a lot of money. They can afford to subsidize the cost of five or six software titles that I'm sure will look



ord

beautiful. Whereas those products, software-wise, ought to cost \$100 retail, they'll probably subsidize it, bring it down to \$59-69, do the same for a few close friends, second-party publishers, hook the consumer into buying the system, then say, "Whoops! Gee, we just discovered we need a CD-ROM drive to hook to this. We'll really be able to show you great games in the future," because the economics don't work for either the consumer or for the retailer, or for the third-party manufacturer, when it's a cartridge-based system.

Secondly, from a consumer standpoint, I think it's kind of like saying to the consumer, "Gee, we've got this old 8-track system we want you to buy, instead of a CD system." I think eventually, that works against you. Initially, it's probably pretty smart, but I see the whole thing as a Trojan horse. You know, get them in the home, and then you switch them over to a CD-ROM.

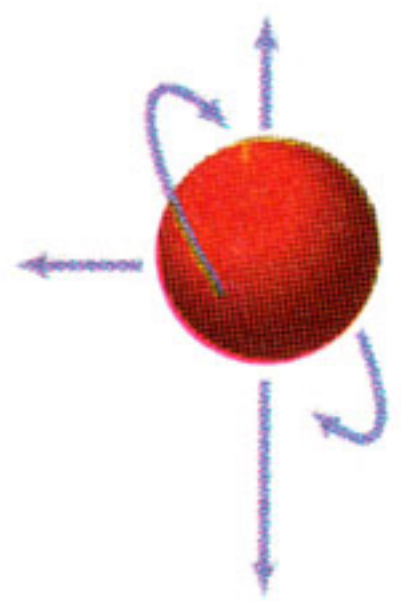
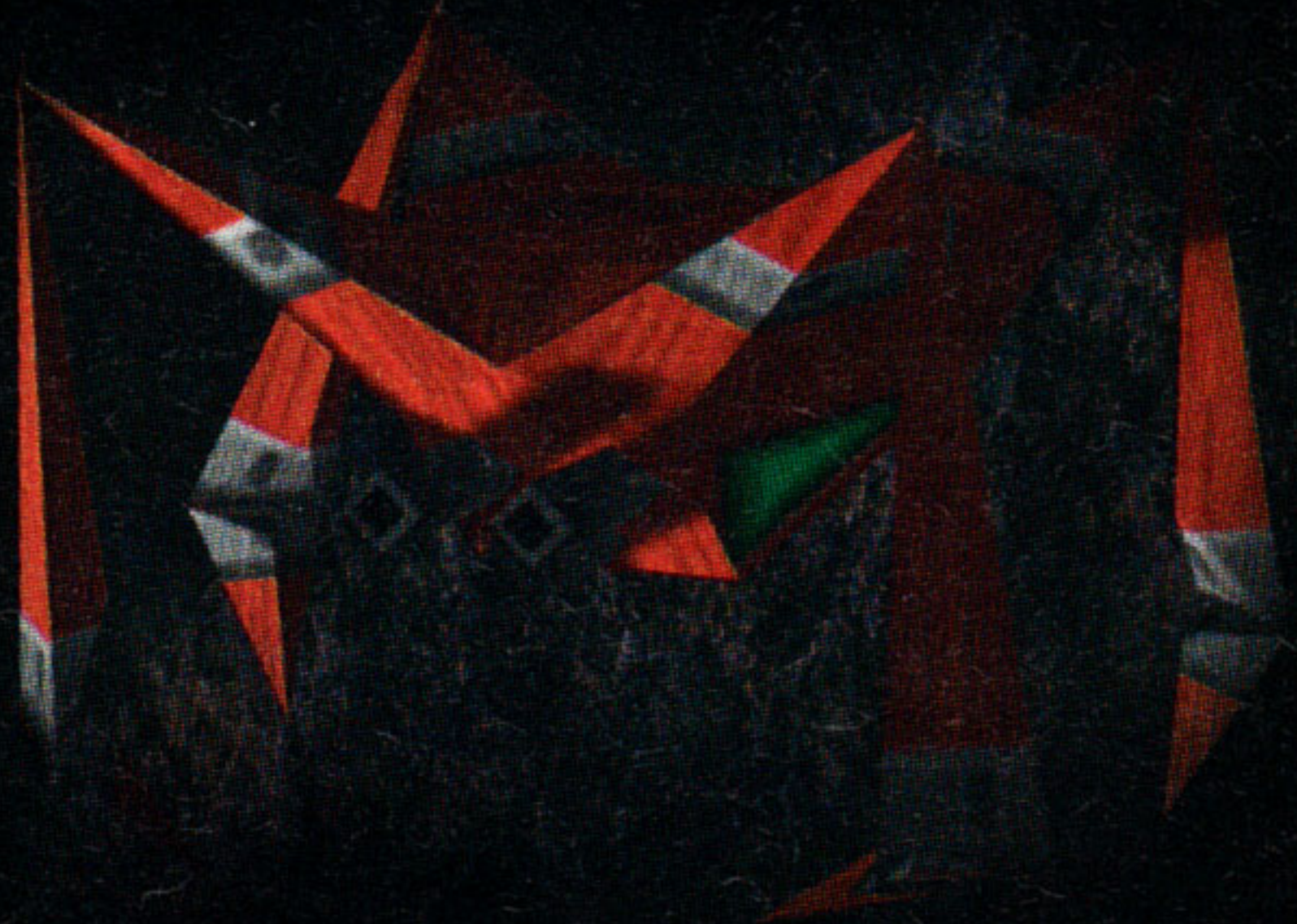
FUSION: What about their "magnetic storage unit?"

TK: Right. Sony had that; it was called Mini-disc, and it didn't do very well. ●

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WARHAWK

THE GHOST IN THE MACHINE

The Sony PlayStation burst onto the video-game scene like a tornado tearing apart the landscape and threatening to blow down the houses of any other system in its way. And in uncertain times as CD-ROM nudged its way into gaming and 16-Bit cartridge games headed for a dirt nap like so many systems before them, Sony Entertainment's Ken Kutaragi rode that twister into town until it had kicked up enough dust to grab the attention of every gamer in the free world.

Like the NES and Genesis before it, the PlayStation has emerged as the leader in the new wave of gaming, and Kutaragi couldn't be more pleased. "I always had a dream to make our own system," he says.

Having joined Sony over 20 years ago as an engineer, Kutaragi's earliest PlayStation ideas began hitting him in the '80s, when audio CDs and digital VCR systems were being developed.

"There was a lot of research based on computer science," Kutaragi says. "At that time, my colleague developed a superb digital video effector, code-named 'System-G.' The system could handle real-time digitized capturing, morphing and warping."

While the System-G was an interesting breakthrough, its 20,000 integrated circuits made the hardware too large to be used in a practical application, while in the meantime, Nintendo's 8-Bit gaming system took the world by storm.

"Even now, we are attracted by Nintendo's 8-Bit game system," he says respectfully,

remembering how it dominated the market. "It was a nice system, so I purchased one, and the gameplay felt nice. But as engineers, though, we had a dream. We hoped that sometime we could incorporate a system similar to our prototype digital-effects system into a future game machine."

He was approximately 10 years away from technology catching up with his dream. "We then formed a small team to make DSP [digital sound processors] for audio," he continues. "This was around 1987. My time focused on utilizing DSP in consumer applications. Using the technology at that time, we could not make real-time graphics, but we could make a real-time-based sound system."

This sound technology was actually utilized by



RIDGE RACER



DESTRUCTION DERBY



WIPEOUT

There's A Little Ken Kutaragi In Every PlayStation

Nintendo until 1990, when Kutaragi assembled a team of engineers to begin developing the PlayStation. "The actual board was made in 1993. The prototype of the audio part came from the audio we developed in 1989."

While the top game designers almost all agree that multiplayer Internet gaming is where the future of gaming lies, Kutaragi is hesitant to jump directly into the arena of online gaming with the PlayStation just yet. "I think game systems have to be designed as pure game consoles for playing games...It is about concept. Game systems have to attract gamers, so there are no future plans to remove something from the PlayStation console. This is a 100 percent pure game system...Other companies have created multimedia or multipurpose systems, which contain many features, but we do not agree with this approach."

This does not mean that the PlayStation mastermind will not enter the online arena with the

system he has created, but from a business aspect, the timing has to be right. "Our original intention was to develop the PlayStation as a pure game system, but we have included several slots in the PlayStation," Kutaragi says. "Communication is not a hardware environment; it's media, and it changes the business world. So of course, we are very interested in the communication capabilities of the PlayStation. But the reason why we call PlayStation, Nintendo and Sega systems 'video-game systems' or 'TV-game systems,'" he continues, "is because these systems use their current installed bases with a TV screen rather than a computer monitor. That's one infrastructure—the television. Another major infrastructure is the telephone. However, there are still bandwidth and security problems. Thus, the environment is not mature in this area. However, we can deliver many things using network capability and communications."

Kutaragi has no plans to release a new system, instead planning to focus on creating new and varied software for the PlayStation. "If you do not enhance or rethink the concept, you cannot be too strong. Based on content, there have been many similar types of games on the 8- and 16-Bit systems. We don't want to be in a situation where the things are repetitive and not creative. One day, we'll introduce a new system, but now we are totally committed to the PlayStation."

People who've experienced a tornado say that they sound a lot like a locomotive speeding across the landscape tearing through everything in its path with enough force to drive a pixie stick through a dump truck. It's no wonder then with Kutaragi's simple plan to stick with his groundbreaking system, making sure the games are unique and fun, that every time the lid of a PlayStation pops open, an Italian plumber and a hedgehog nervously inch closer to the crawspace. ●

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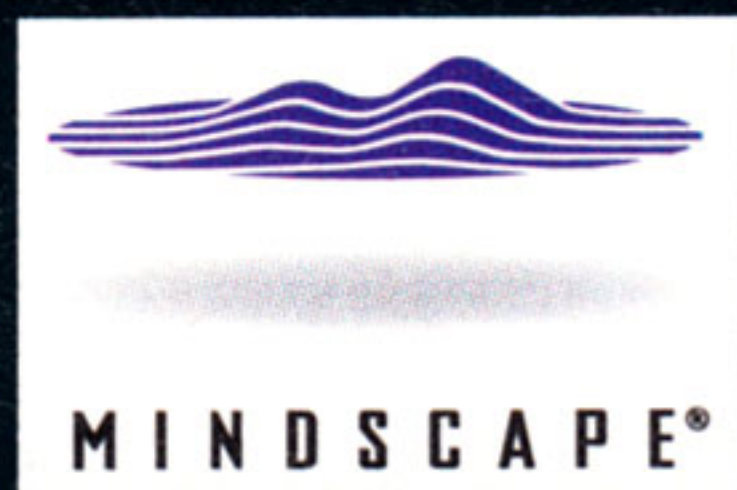
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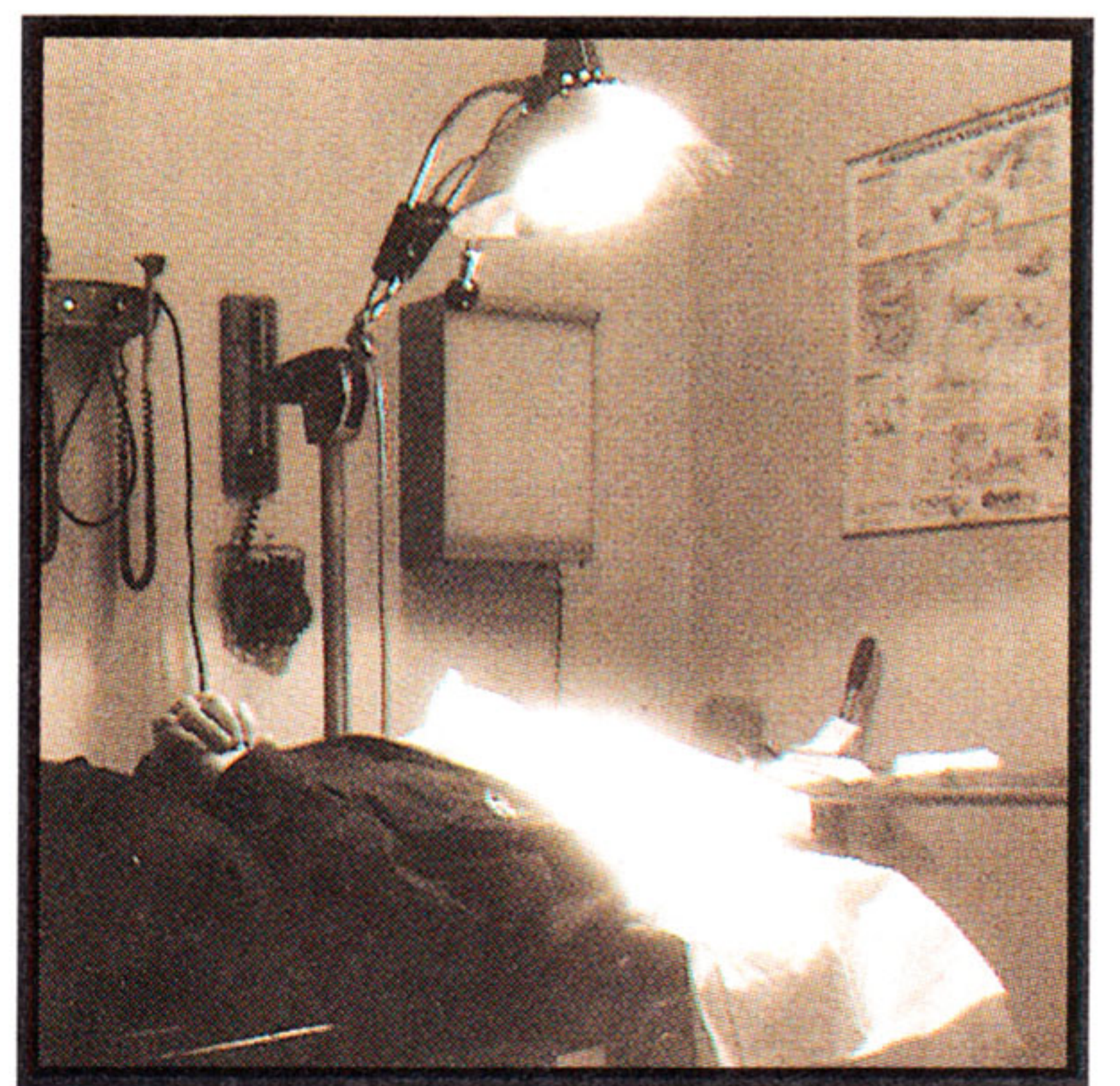
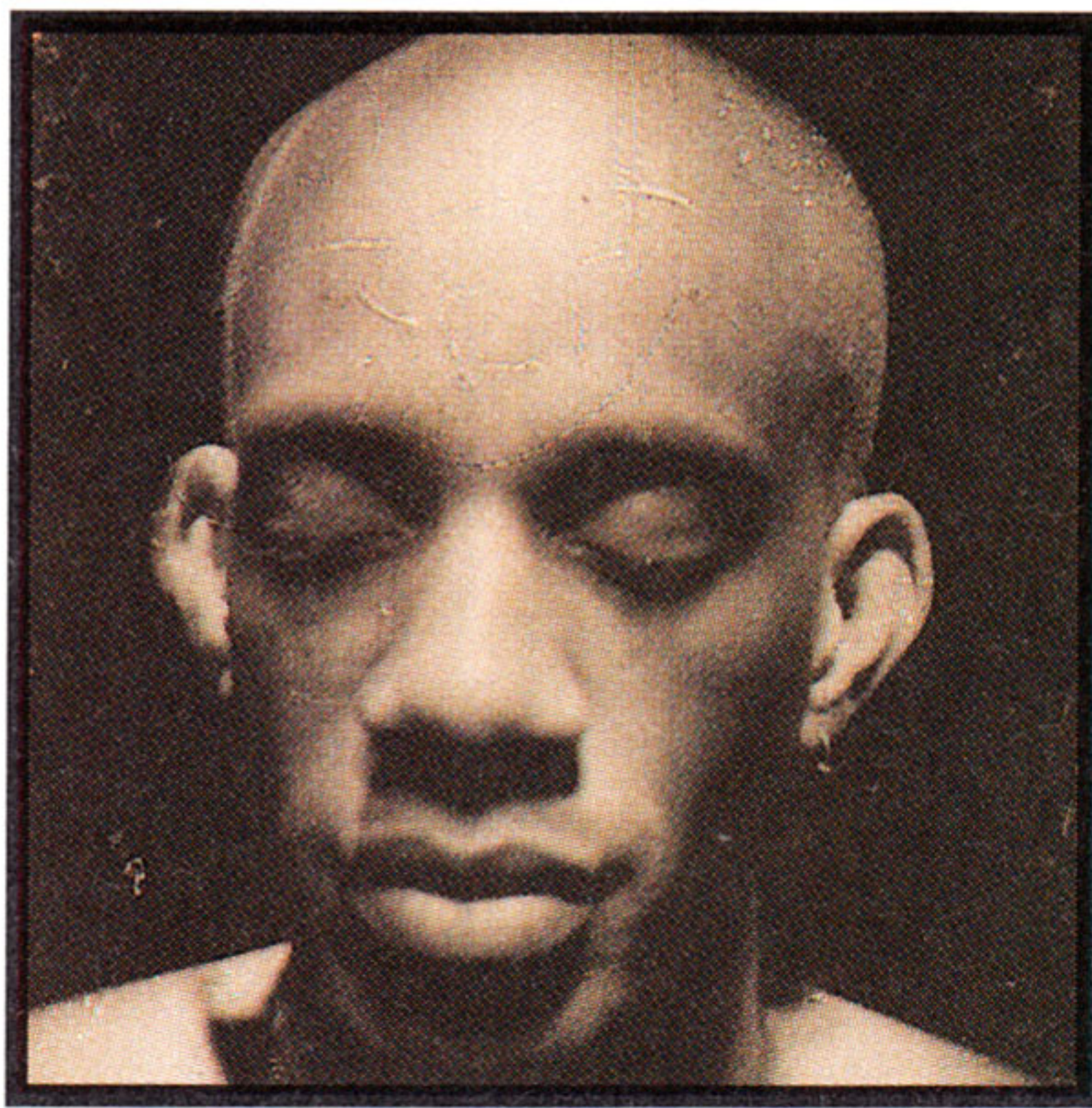
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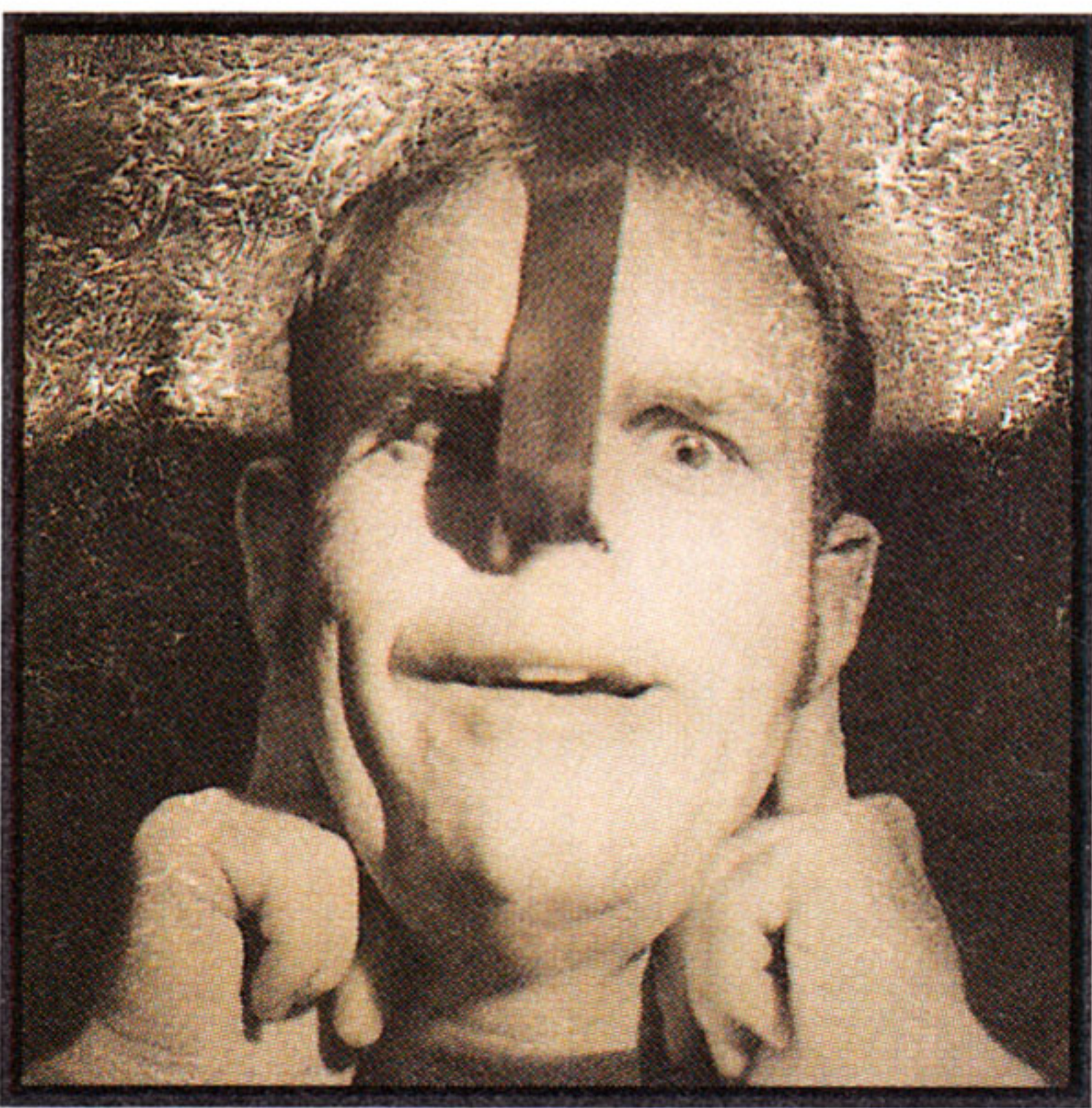
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INSIDE LUCAS- ARTS

An exclusive look
at the number-one
PC gaming empire

By Rob Bernstein

It's very nearly absurd how LucasArts employees heap compliments on top of one another—it's as if they were invariably trapped in a contest of "You're the man. No, you're the man." From the art director down to the newest product tester, there's no shortage of wonderment and applause for the fellow worker (you'd have to see it to believe it, and even then you'd think you were being kidded). Then again, considering the enormous pool of talent skittering about under one roof, their mutual respect for one another is quite understandable.



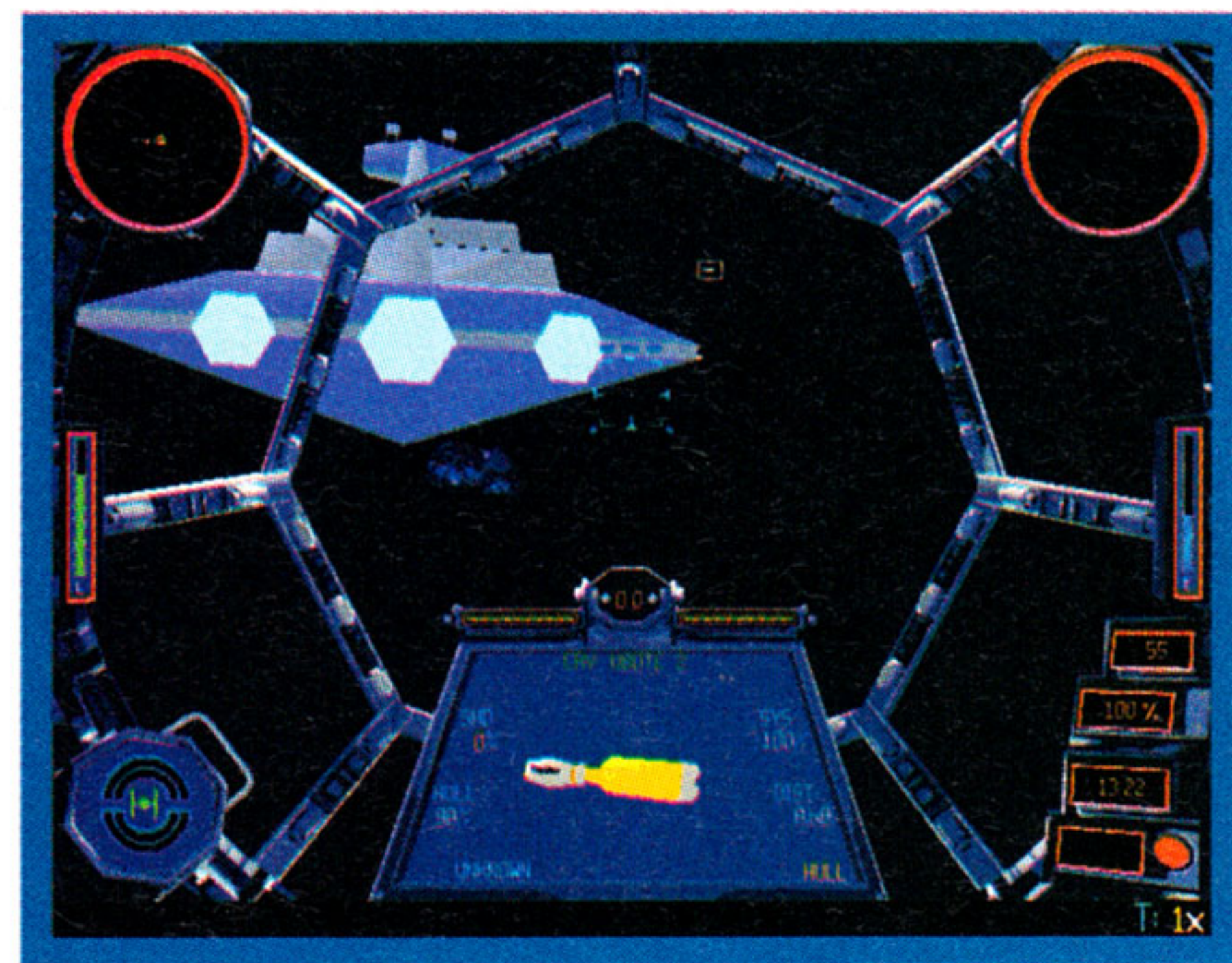
Vince Lee: Project Leader/Designer, *Rebel Assault II*

Above, the 27-year-old Lee, exhibits last year's Halloween costume, a loading dock vehicle a la *Aliens*. The gadgetry-man came to LucasArts almost straight out of UC-Berkeley, bringing his amazing knack for building toys and more importantly, building games.

Of course, let's not forget the "Jedi-force" as it were, the awe-inspiring talent whose very name drives the company's regardful attitude—George Lucas. Following his vision of a state-of-the-art, multifaceted entertainment company, the *Star Wars* patriarch founded LucasArts in 1982 to complement his already established film and special-effects groups, Lucasfilm and Lucas Digital. Fourteen years later, LucasArts is nested high above its competitors, currently the pinnacle among PC gaming studios. "It's really exciting

to have somebody like that at the top, sort of driving the creativity and that quality all the time," explains Collette Michaud, LucasArts' soft-mannered art department director. "There's always that standard of excellence to achieve, and everybody believes in it."

And what's not to believe in? LucasArts continues to draw aces, one after another with games like *Dark Forces*, *TIE Fighter* and *X-Wing*—games almost as unique as the company that designed them. Even the studio complex, housing 225-plus employees,



"THE FIRST DAY, PEOPLE ARE KIND OF DAZED AND WIDE-EYED, SO THEY'RE CAUGHT IN THE HEADLIGHTS. SO YOU CAN WALK UP TO THEM AND CUT THEIR TIES OFF."

—WAYNE CLINE, PRODUCTION MANAGER, TIE FIGHTER CD

personifies the cool genius that is Lucas. The sprawling San Raphael, Calif., ranch-style structure boasts an avant-garde aesthetic, with oddly beautiful artwork and plenty of *Star Wars* influence. Most offices and workstations are separated by labyrinthine dividers (which have nifty sliding windows) that wind every which way; some employees have covered their areas with enormous indoor tents or awnings, while others have marked the office decor with Christmas lights and life-size Easter Island paper-mâché statues.

Unexpectedly awaiting around hallway corners are lounge areas furnished with anything from zebra-striped sofas to comfortable bean bags. But perhaps strangest of all are the cushioned file cabinets that double as foot rests or alternative desk seats in all of the offices.

The physical design of the building was carefully taken into consideration when it was built—for every object, for every person, there's a logical place. The equipment technicians are next to the animators they work with, who are next to the programmers they draw for, who are next to the beta testers who play and test the programs, who are



Wayne Cline: Production Manager, *TIE Fighter CD*

As production manager, Cline, 30, (above) is somewhat of an in-house liaison, collecting all the components necessary to make a game come together. "I'm really trying to keep all the projects running smoothly, putting out the fires that come up." Cline received his break in 1990, when a friend saw an ad in the paper that read, "Play video games for LucasArts." The rest is history.

next to the product support tele-operators who provide gamers with technical and gameplay assistance. But while LucasArts is an extremely well-oiled corporation, it operates less like a perfunctorily spinning printing press and more like a wild, magical perpetual motion machine straight out of *The Nutty Professor*. And as for the people who run this madcap organization, well, they're an attraction all unto themselves.

Out of the nine LucasArts employees asked to describe the company in three words or less, eight used the word "fun." The ninth chose "exhilarating." Either they're hopelessly brainwashed (by a Jedi mindtrick no doubt), or they're genuinely having a good time. But while "fun" came up most often, it was not at the exclusion of words like "stressful, busy and chaotic." Game development is game development, and that translates into long hours and pressure-cooker deadlines.

A half-empty jar of Taster's Choice sits alone on a desk, giving testimony to the many late nights that have passed and will be again for *The Dig* Project Leader Sean Clark. "For a while it was 20 hours a day, every day, seven

"ALWAYS, IN THE BACK OF YOUR MIND YOU'RE THINKING, 'SPIELBERG, I CAN'T FAKE THIS ONE.'"

**—SEAN CLARK,
PROJECT LEADER, THE DIG**

days a week. It gets abrasive, and relationships can get a little tense." For Clark, one of the more extreme LucasArts moments came when he met with Steven Spielberg to discuss the story for *The Dig*. Spielberg conceptualized the game's original plot line (based on his two favorite films, *Forbidden Planet* and *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*), and Clark had scripted the dialogue with the help of *Ender's Game* author Orson Scott Card.

"Always in the back of your mind, you're thinking, 'Steven Spielberg, I CAN'T FAKE THIS ONE,'" laughs Clark. "So I went down to [Amblin

Entertainment], and we're sitting there at Universal Studios right after the earthquake, so all of his equipment was destroyed, his Irving G. Thalberg award had fallen off its shelf. And I'm sitting there in his office, like wow, this is Steven Spielberg's office...and my story is on the firing line here." Needless to say, things worked out with Spielberg, who in fact invited Clark to join him on a personal tour of the Studio's *Back to the Future* attraction.

Of course, as nerve-racking



Mark Cartwright: QA Supervisor

At any given time, Cartwright, 27, (above left) will have to swoop from above and crack the whip on slacking product testers. When he's not beating up on coworkers (actually, he explains they're some of his best friends), Cartwright is busy working on public-access media projects.



**Collette Michaud:
Art Department Director; Project Leader, *Mortimer***

When she's not fulfilling her long-lost dream of being a dancer, Michaud, 31, busies herself with running a 60-plus person art department. How does she keep track of all the projects: "My philosophy is, you hire really talented people, and you let them go crazy." So far, it's worked.

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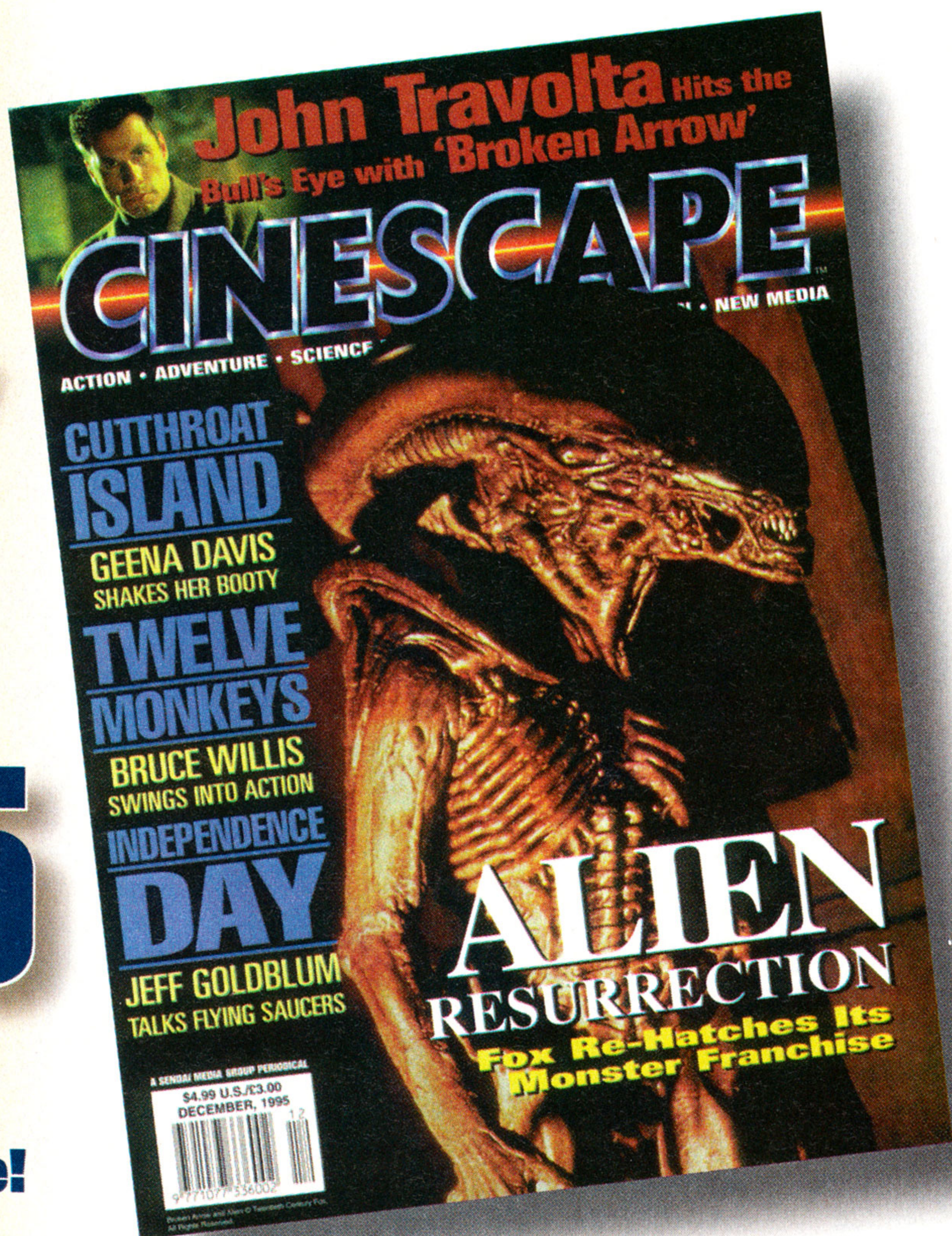
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#1 Dark Forces

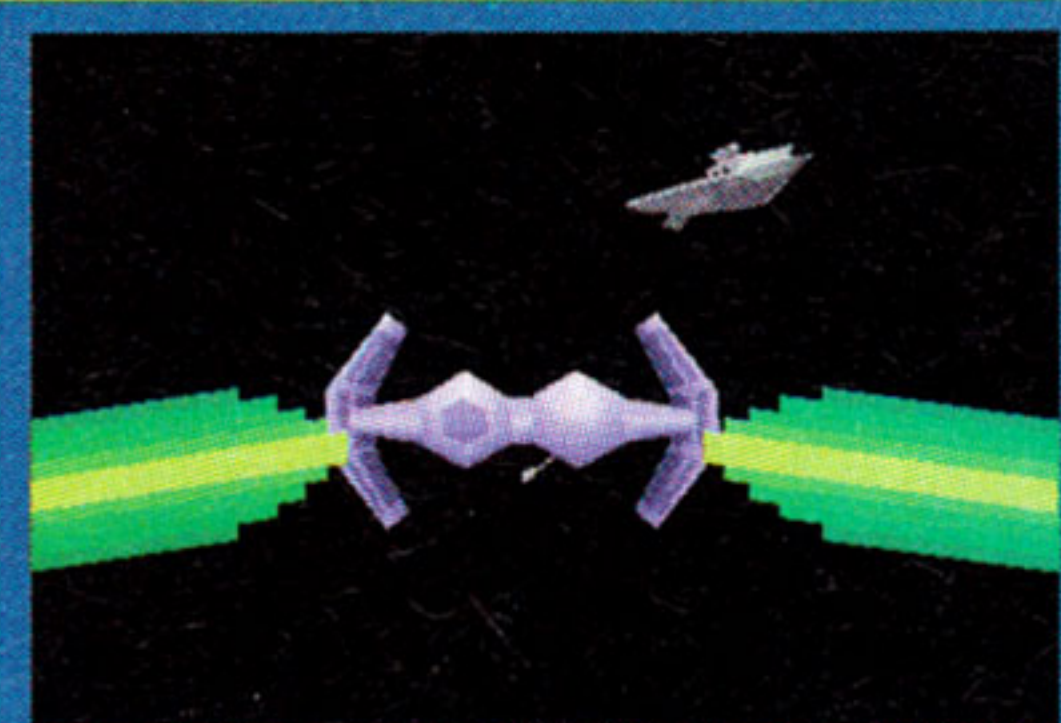
1995

Great graphical 3-D environments and sound effects make *Dark Forces*, dare we say, as cool as *Doom*. A whole-new *Star Wars* story line, and the Dark Trooper too.

#2 X-Wing

1993

Enter the boots of the Dark Side with LucasArts' space combat simulator. Add-ons *Tours of Duty*, *Imperial Pursuit* and *B-Wing* are equally as inspired.



#3 TIE Fighter CD

1994

The follow-up to *X-Wing* is as good as the original. Political intrigue and the coolest-looking spaceship in the galaxy make for incredible sim-combat missions.

#4 Sam & Max Hit the Road

1993

Free-lance police detectives, canine Sam Spade and carrot-juiced rabbit sidekick Max, take a bizarre road trip in search of the infamous Bigfoot. Cool, comic, animated!



#5 Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe

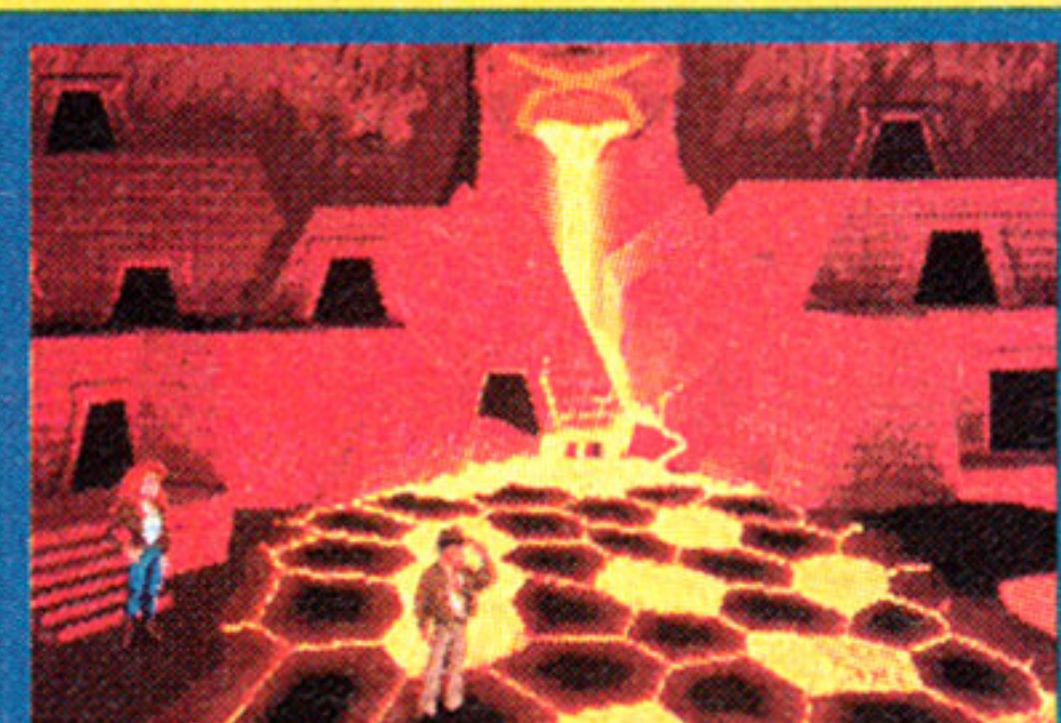
1991

Hardcore simulator lets the gamer join the U.S. 8th Air Force on their mission to cripple the German Luftwaffe during the final years of WWII. Can also play as Germany.

#6 Super Star Wars

1992

One of the SNES' best side-scrolling games ever. Play Luke, Chewie and Han Solo as you run through all of the familiar *Star Wars* terrain.



#7 Indiana Jones & the Fate of Atlantis

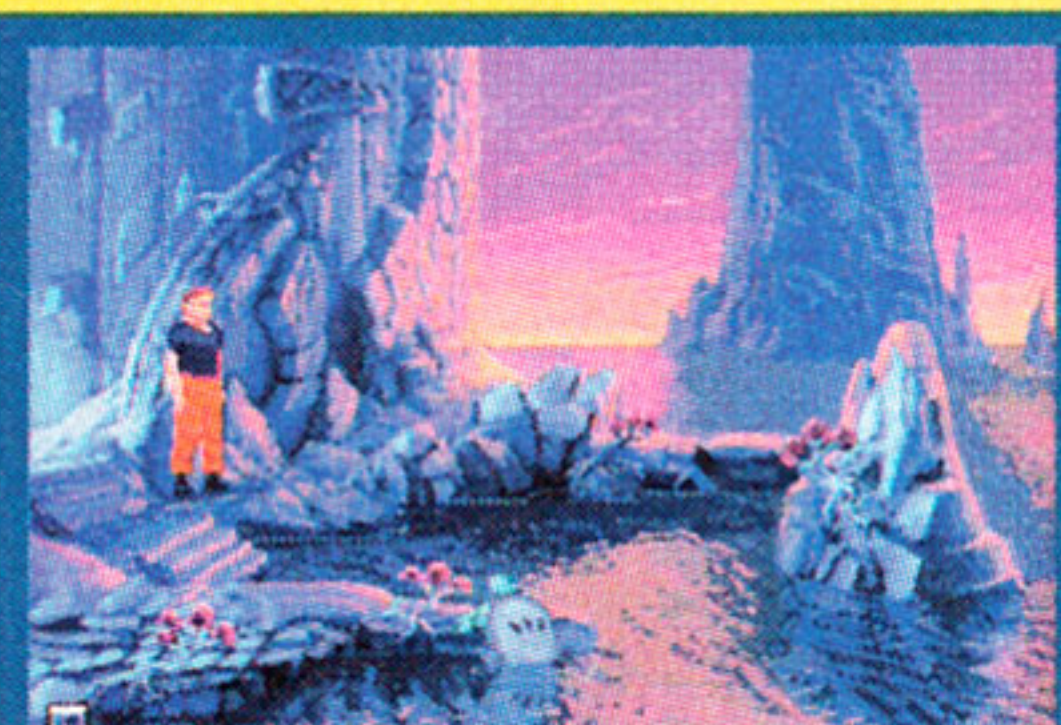
1992

Would you believe it? The Third Reich is in search of the Lost City's mythological powers. Cool video rotoscoping effects and three levels of play: wits, fists and team.

#8 Rebel Assault II

1995

The continued adventures of Rookie One, with fun, live-action video cut-scenes. Start-and-play action is addictive, especially with John Williams' soundtrack as score.



#9 The Dig

1985

The Dig received mixed reactions, but it's got cool animation, Spielberg conception, *T2*'s Robert Patrick on voice, Orson Scott Card on dialogue and strong programming.

#10 Monkey Island 2

1991

Also known as Lechuck's Revenge, this game sequel really improves on the original, as you guide aspiring pirate Guybrush Threepwood into the comic unknown.



as game-scripting can be, especially with Spielberg as an editor, it's only the beginning of a long, complicated and arduous process. The most time-consuming part of developing *The Dig* was the character animation, as explained by Chicago Bears fan and Lead Artist Bill Tiller. "It's just like any animation studio, except we have the step where we have to scan it into the computer. Actually, Disney does that now. They do all their color and inking on computer. So we took it one step further than they usually do...we had people animate shades and highlights. And then we took them in the computer and blurred them so they looked more 3-D, a little more rounded...We're practically a minor animations studio."

Two years, four programmers and 20 or so artists later, *The Dig* is finally complete. In addition to the staffers involved with the formidable task of animating the game, other technicians were brought onto the project to design an original gaming engine and a musical score using the interactive proprietary sound system, *iMUSE* (see page 54). At LucasArts, the saying is, "Off-the-shelf technology is the exception, not the rule."

And that applies to everyone. So for games like *Rebel Assault* and *Rebel Assault II*, which boast video gameplay, a completely separate 3-D Interactive Streaming and Animation Engine (INSANE) had to be developed.

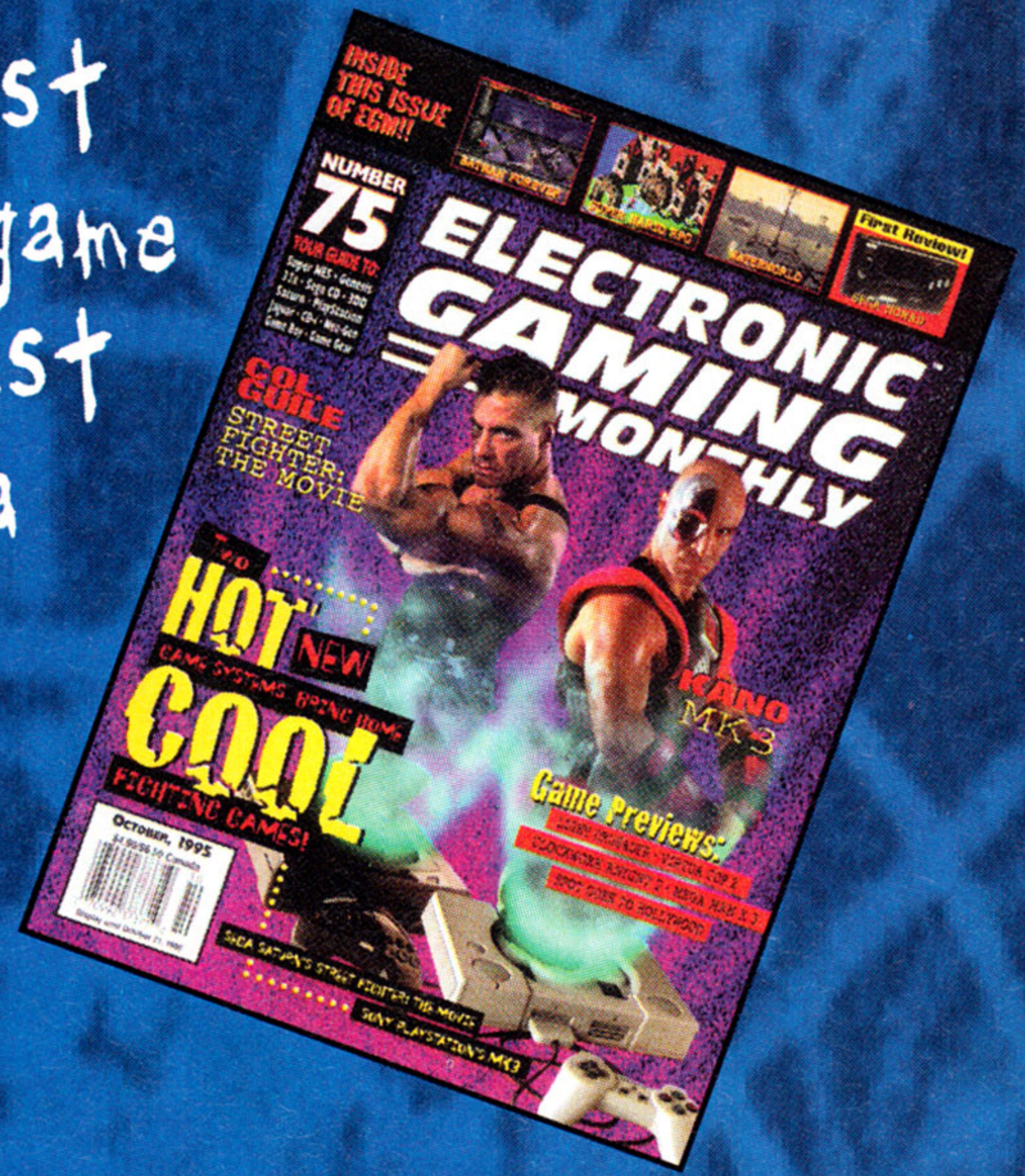
Sitting in his tech-cluttered office, with five computers, four speakers and a box of Little Debbie snack cakes, *Rebel Assault II* Project Leader (and Designer) Vince Lee explains the can of worms that video technology opens up. "We knew from a production point of view, it would be more ambitious than anything the company had ever done. It would require many more people, much more artwork. And trying to keep track of the multimegabytes and gigabytes of data that we generated, and how that would all filter down to a game, was a monumental task."

In designing *Rebel II*, Lee also had a hand in the video cut-scenes that play between game levels. Most scenes were filmed in front of bluescreens, with the backgrounds later detailed using CG technology—most of the spacecraft's internal shots were filmed on a blue platform rigged on top of truck inner tubes. Even parts of the actors' costumes were added in after the filming,

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because the real costumes were off in a traveling *Star Wars* show. Hardcore *Star Wars* fans might also notice that, while John Williams' score is legit in *Rebel II*, Darth Vader's voice was indeed a double.

When a LucasArts game reaches that nebulous place somewhere between the alpha and beta stages, it makes its way to the Quality Assurance Division (QA). Once there, it falls into the hands of product testers whose primary objective, often to the programmer's chagrin, is to break the assigned software.

The testers, who are the crème de la crème of Bay Area gamers, must also make sure that all LucasArts products match up with as many available peripherals as possible. The QA Supervisor Mark Cartwright, whose buzzcut matches his marine-like

"WE KNEW THAT FROM A PRODUCTION POINT OF VIEW, [REBEL ASSAULT II] WOULD BE MORE AMBITIOUS THAN ANYTHING THE COMPANY HAD EVER DONE."

— VINCE LEE,

PROJECT LEADER, REBEL II

discipline (alright, he's a nice guy), makes sure his Quality Assurance staff is equipped at all times with two or three motherboards, a sundry of sound

cards, interface cards, CD-ROM drives, mice and excessively sugared boxes of generic Frosty Flakes. Those are the essentials when going on a bughunt.

"A bug is pretty much anything that the game is doing that it's not intended to do," explains Cartwright. "Every bug is documented...the programmers fix what they can, and the process goes around and around until everyone agrees that it's clean."

After *Rebel Assault II*, *The Dig* and *TIE Fighter CD* were given the QA stamp of approval, all-new titles shipped into the division for product testing. On the examining table right now is the highly anticipated Ultra 64 game, *Shadow of the Empire*. The title is set in a far-off galaxy, sometime between *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*. During this time, Han Solo is frozen in carbonite, while Darth Vader seeks out his only son. Lo and behold, a "sinister new figure emerges from the

In Tune with the Universe

LucasArts' Sound Department Breathes Life into Space's Cold Silence

For LucasArts' Sound Department Manager Michael Land, duties have varied widely, from the solicitation of a local biker band for *Full Throttle*, to the development of a unique orchestral score for *The Dig*. It's not easy being the sound guy, but Land's versatility and ear for music has made him an invaluable asset to LucasArts.

Of all Land's talents, including his botanical expertise and remarkable stomach for Grape Nuts, perhaps his greatest skill lies in his rare understanding of both the art of music writing and music programming. Using a proprietary system developed by the LucasArts sound department, *Interactive Music and Sound Effects* system or *MUSE*, Land is capable of developing a score that responds to a player's unpredictable choices. "The music has to swim in place for an indefinite period of time, but then suddenly turn on a dime and go someplace completely different. So being able to do both of those things in such a way that the music neither gets boring nor abrupt, that's really the challenge."

MUSE was first used in 1991 for the LucasArts title *Monkey Island*, but perhaps its best application can be heard in Land's newest title score, *The Dig*. Setting both mood and pacing for the eerie space adventure, Land's dramatic soundtrack is easily one of the best gaming



31-year-old Michael Land (below, left) collaborates with his department cohorts for soundtrack music on the release, *The Dig*.

scores to date. As best described by Land himself, "The music is really seamlessly blended with a lot of sonic ambient sound, so occasionally the music will swell out and then sometimes sink back...it's actually layered with a lot of Wagner orchestral textures onto an otherwise, mostly synthesized score, and it really brought the music alive."

While graphics often overshadow all other aspects of a game, Land's passionate compositions play anything but second fiddle. In fact, his score to *The Dig* will be released separately as a soundtrack, available this spring on Angel Records. Dig that.



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— JOSEPH NOVICKI, PC GAMER MAGAZINE

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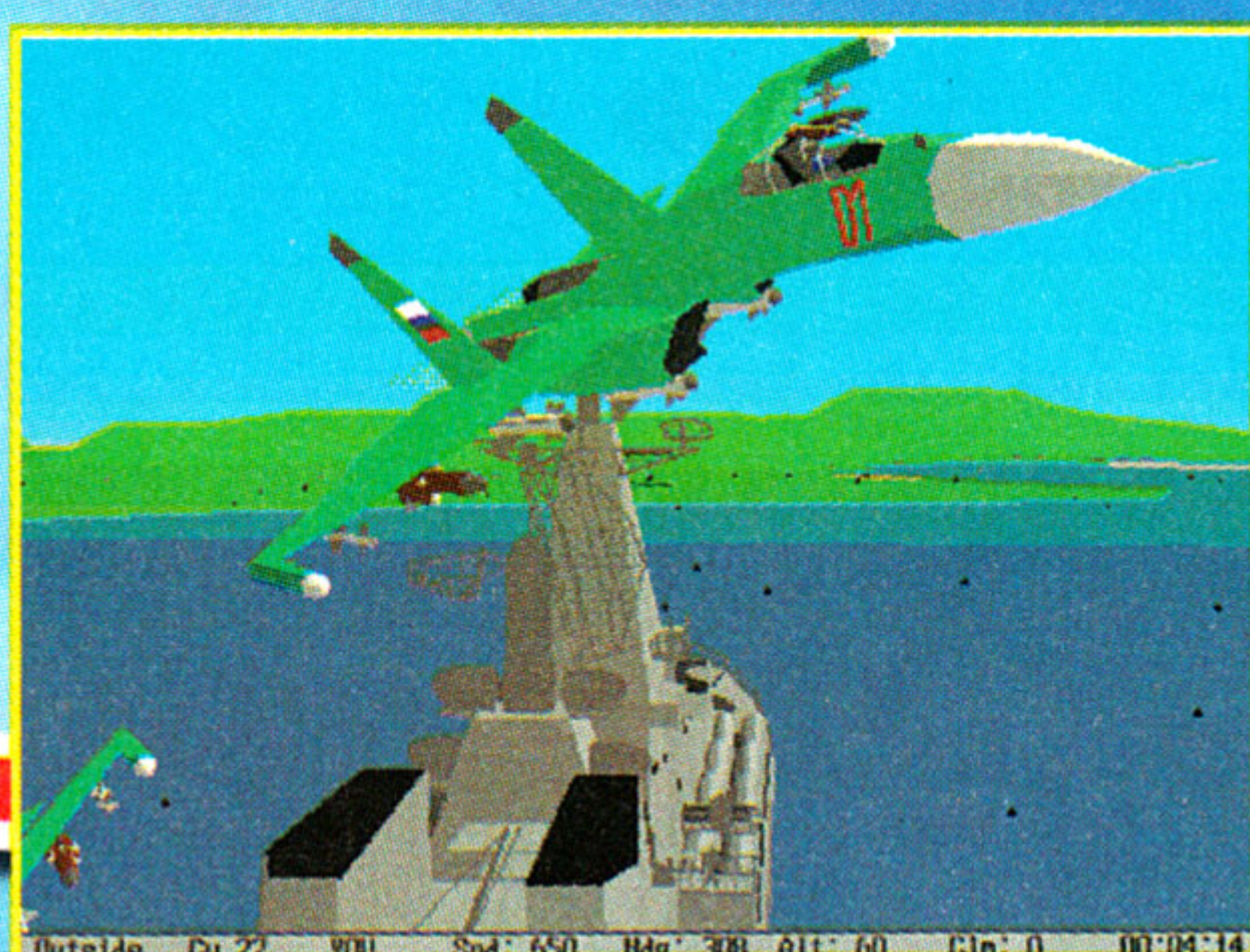
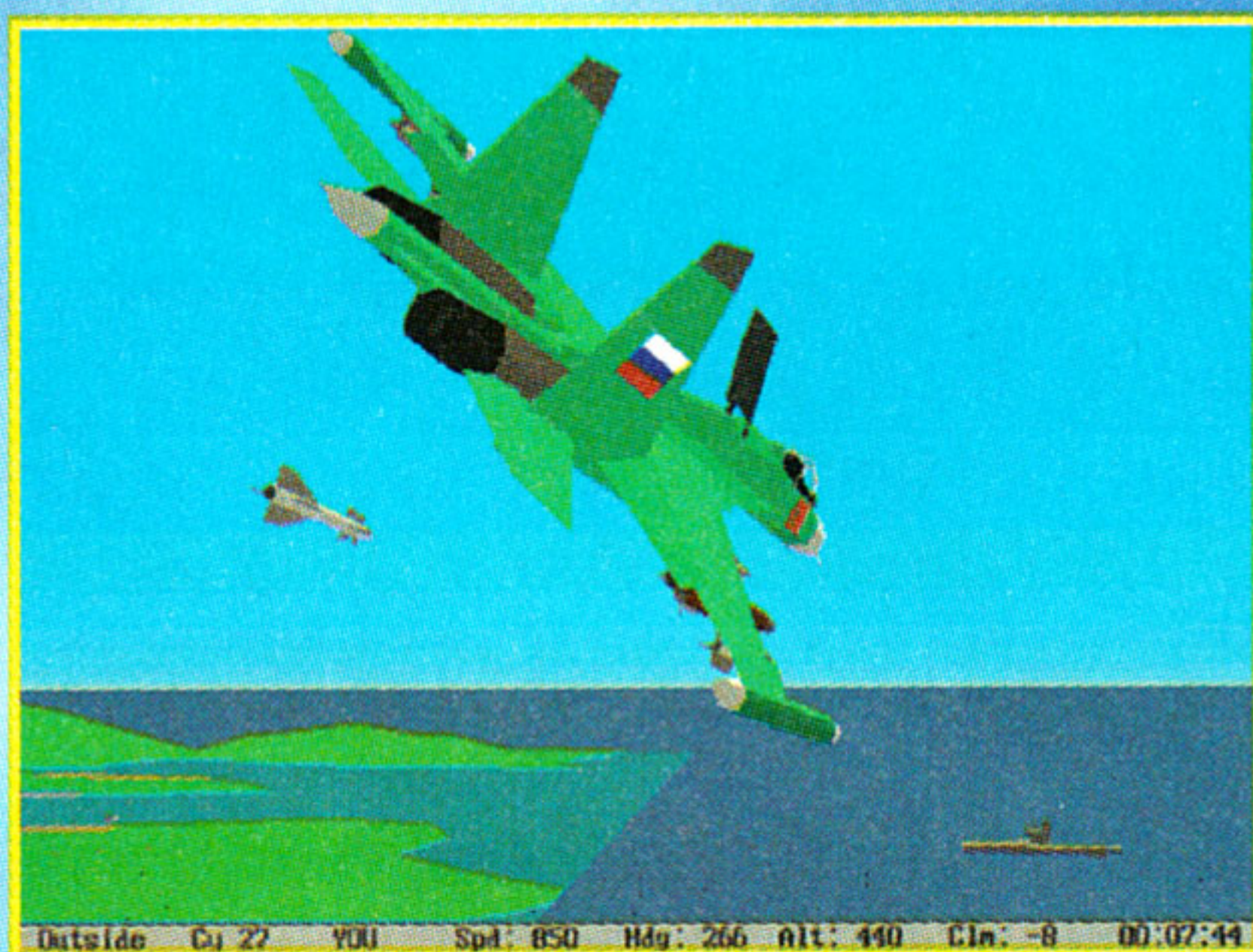
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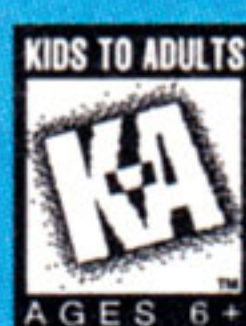


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Michael Stemmler: Project Leader, *Afterlife*

"In my spare time, I'm a pure geek," admits the 28-year-old, toy-crazed gaming maven. "I read comic books, I hang out on various online services, I watch way too much television. I'm totally immersed in the media. It's pretty sad actually." He failed to mention he likes toys: The "mad scientist's" office is somewhat of a game laboratory, filled with action figures, intimidating Nerf projectiles and Stemmler's very own Stanford University Marching Band clarinet.



Afterlife (above) puts you in charge of heaven and hell for a while.

underworld, threatening to further upset the balance of power in the universe." And that's all LucasArts will divulge for now.

Also due out in '96 is the Windows title, *Indiana Jones and His Desktop Adventures*; the graphically hip children's game, *Mortimer and the Riddles*



**Sean Clark: Project Leader, *The Dig*,
Bill Tiller: Lead Artist, *The Dig***

The Violent Femmes helped Clark, 29 (left), through the long waking hours of game development for *The Dig*, while Tiller, 28 (right), plugged into a series of intriguingly tragic audio novels. Next up for the dynamic *Dig* duo, a little rest and relaxation.

of the *Medallion*; and an incredibly "empowering," but yet unfinished sim, *Afterlife*, where the gamer is given the job of managing the powers that be.

In *Afterlife*, it's your duty to maintain an overcrowded heaven while simultaneously seeing to it that those in hell suffer miserably. Pennies from

heaven pay for new *Afterlife* structures and roadways, and disasters aplenty (like Taco Hell, Disco Inferno and Hell Freezing Over) make sure to keep you as honest as an angel.

Michael Stemmler, project leader for the game, wanted to design a title unlike the business-oriented sims that have recently flooded the gaming market. "I don't want to be a grown-up," he explains while waving his Fantastic Four Galactus figure in the air. "Why would I want to pretend I'm wearing a suit? I don't understand this."

No, a suit wouldn't suit Stemmler, nor most of the employees working at LucasArts. "Generally, the first day

**"I DON'T WANT TO BE A GROWN-UP.
WHY WOULD I WANT TO PRETEND
I'M WEARING A SUIT? I DON'T
UNDERSTAND THIS."**

**—MICHAEL STEMMLE,
PROJECT LEADER**

people come to work here, they're kind of dazed and wide-eyed," explains Wayne Cline, product manager for *TIE Fighter CD*. Grinning, Cline adds, "so they're caught in the headlights, and you can walk up to them and cut their ties off. And they'd easily thank you for it too."

TIE fighters—good; ties—bad. Relaxed is the key word, especially during the hairier weeks. Everyone releases in a different way: Some zip down the hallways in search of hapless victims with their Nerf rocket launchers, others head off to a nearby range to whack a few golfballs—and it's not unheard of to find programming hounds rollerblading through the building in the wee hours of the morning.

And that's not to say that the number-one holder of PC gaming marketshare lacks a sense of decorum. With anything Lucas, professionalism is a given. But at the same time, after spending just a single day there, it's easy to understand why "fun" was the first word to pop into everybody's mind. ●

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PlayStation

NFL GAMEDAY

58 PlayStation

61 Saturn

68 3DO

70 Sega 32X

72 Super NES

75 PC

FUSION game reviews are on a one through five scale, five being the best possible score and one the worst. See the corresponding ovals below for a more precise description of the ratings.

- 1 A seriously bad title that should be avoided.
- 2 A bad game, but that may have some good qualities.
- 3 An average game that you can give or take.
- 4 A strong title worthy of your hard-earned dollar.
- 5 The ultimate grade—seek it out and buy it.

Sony Interactive Sports' *NFL GameDay* has the aura of greatness. From the opening kickoff, the adrenaline-charged crowd begins stomping and clapping the *We Will Rock You* theme, and that intensity spills onto the field with fast action and bone-crushing hits.

Heavily reminiscent of the video gridiron style introduced in the *John Madden* series, *NFL GameDay* reaches a new plateau of realism and playability.

In spite of the old NFL adage that says good defense beats good offense, *GameDay* designers have done their best to turn the tables.

On the offensive side of the ball, four eligible receivers instead of the standard three create 33 percent more headaches for defensive coordinators.

For players fond of the old-time, smash-mouth running



Above: The San Diego Chargers' Natrone Means tries to rumble through the San Francisco 49ers' defensive wall using a halfback sweep. Linebacker Gary Plummer has other ideas as he zeros in on the running back to ring his bell.



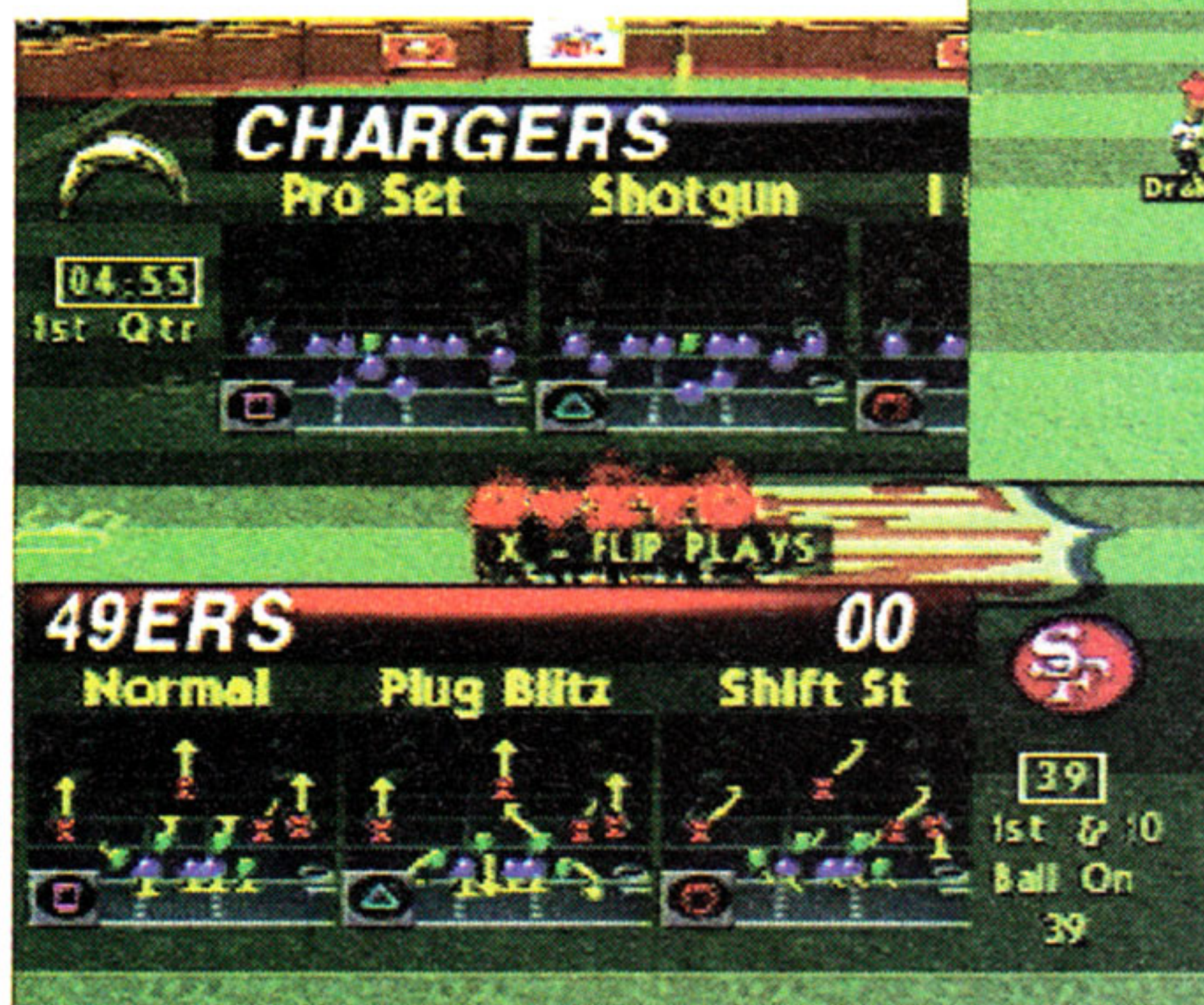
game (or anyone with Barry Sanders or Emmitt Smith on their team), ball-carriers have also been improved with the ability to hurdle, stiff-arm and juke tacklers.

Larger onscreen players have been scaled to the actual heights and weights

of their human alter egos and varying views of the field also add to the excitement whether you're playing in the Preseason or Playoff Mode.

For the most astute video football tacticians, instant replay allows you to check action all around the field, and player statistics are kept for an entire season. The most appealing and realistic feature for armchair quarterbacks, however, is the ability to make trades and sign free agents. The only thing missing is an option allowing players to uproot a team from one city and move it to another. On second thought, Sony's vision of the NFL may be more appealing to fans of the game than most of the NFL owners who control it.

—Mike Stokes



Top: Downfield perspective for the player is tremendous. Left: A huge variety of plays are available.

PUBLISHER: Sony THEME: Sports PLAYERS: 1-2

CRITICOM

PUBLISHER: **Vic Tokai** THEME: **Fighting** PLAYERS: **1-2** LEVELS: **3**

3½

Based on the sum of its parts, *Criticom* should be the ultimate fighting game. With elements from *Killer Instinct*, *Virtua Fighter* and *Toshinden*, *Criticom* features sweeping perspectives, 3-D animation and a relatively rich story line.

Does it achieve this lofty title? Well, admittedly no. But, at the same time, it doesn't come off as just

another by-the-numbers fightfest either.

Adding variety to the basic combat premise is *Criticom's* level system. Once the player beats the rest of the cast, his or her character is upgraded and must take on an upgraded cast as well. It must be said that these higher levels are *much* more fun.

The game's story line

revolves around a powerful crystal that several inter-planetary races are vying to control. Each fighter represents a different interest, from the traitorous Sonork, who looks out solely for himself, to Gorm, the representative of a dying race.

Besides S.I.D., a mindless experimental killing machine, the cast of characters is largely generic. However, even the most boring character is introduced with a stunningly lush 3-D-rendered sequence. The principal motivation to win the game is to witness more—and the endings definitely pay off. Instead of a normal text ending, the characters act out fantastic 3-D-rendered scenes.

Unfortunately, while enjoyable, *Criticom* suffers



from the ailment of many PlayStation games; it's over quite quickly. Granted the time spent is fun, but seems pretty expensive as well.

—Joe Fielder

PUBLISHER: **T*HQ** THEME: **Action** PLAYERS: **1-2**

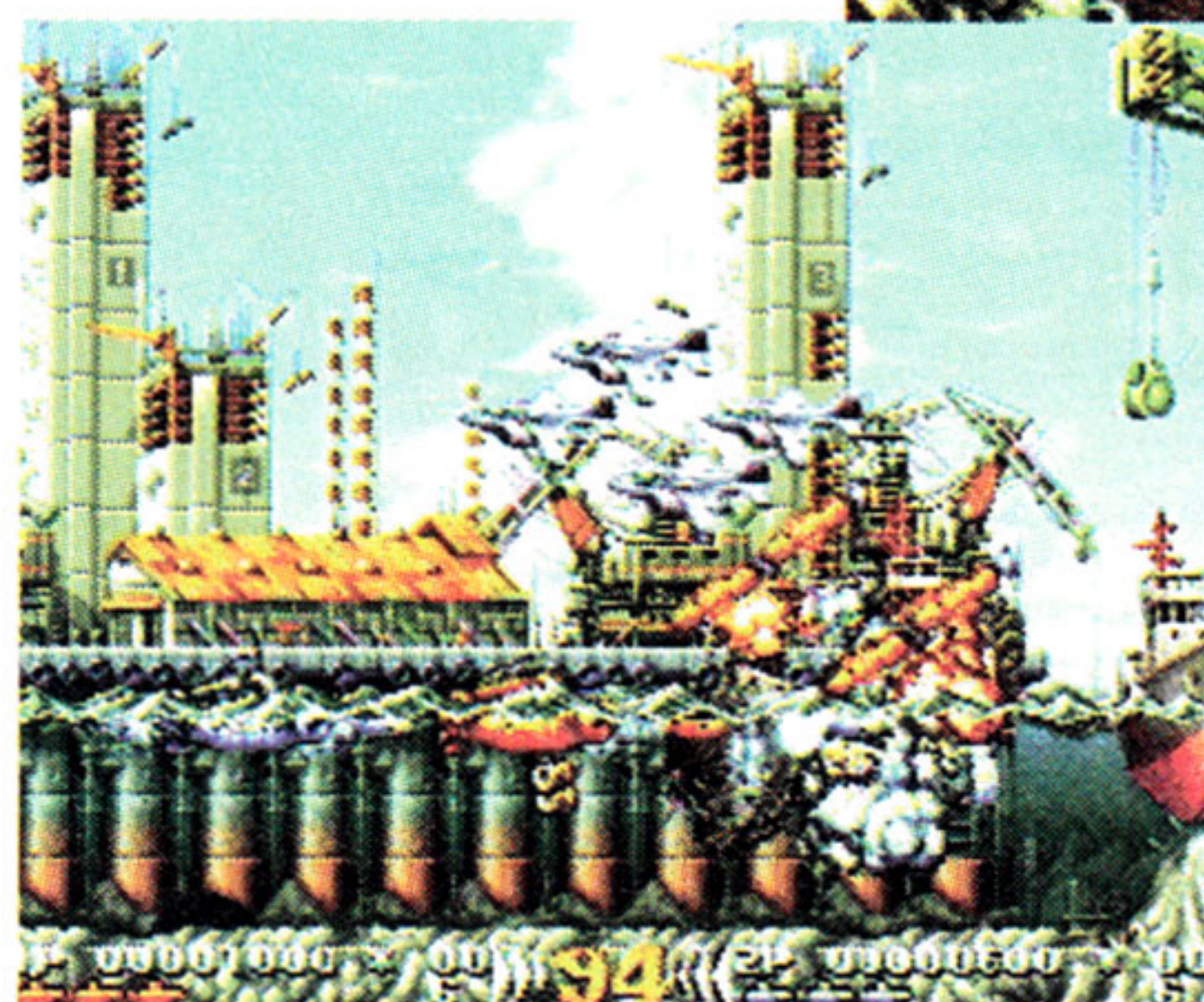
3½

IN THE HUNT

T*HQ is making a good name for itself, and with great games like this it's easy to see why. *In The Hunt*, an arcade port-over, will blow game players away with its crisp, cartoon-like graphics and playability. Maneuver the cute, but deadly, submarine through a bounty of hostile boats, mines, freeze rays, bombers, enemy subs, etc., and perhaps battle with the ultimate big boss will be a disturbing reality.

The side-scrolling action is reminiscent of some older 16-Bit games but the graphics here are much better than the old cartridge standbys. This kind of quality was only available in arcades just a few years back; now we can enjoy them in our homes through the miracle of the PlayStation. My one complaint: At times enemy forces were overwhelming while the chances of getting out using only one sub was slim.

—Dean Hager



Lower left: Get by the shipyards and you're just halfway through the first level. Conquer the following levels and get a chance to make old Stoney climb the walls.

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Saturn **HANG ON GP**

Racing sims are my favorite games. I could waste hours playing a good one just as many players would spend hours on a good role-playing game. Let me get it across clearly though: I will not be spending much time playing *Hang On GP*.

This motorcycle racing sim features 10 different bikes to choose from along with three different tracks to race on. Each motorcycle is differentiated by power, braking, frame strength and other handling variables. Yet, it's hard to tell just how each motorcycle differs on the track; in short, they all feel the same. Once the race has begun, the standard game of catch-up to the others begins, but the task is quite frustrating due to the erratic steering control. There is no way to turn left or right without laying the bike all the way

over. Then the bike immediately pops back upright like a weeble. This flaw makes the bike appear robotic and unnatural, not to mention making steering much too hard. *Hang On GP* invites the player in with its decent graphics and sound, but lets them down

with its game-play. If they'd simply fix the steering, Sega could have a winner on its hands. Until then, I'll stick to *Road Rash*.

-Dean Hager



Three views are available to the rider: cockpit, behind, further behind. The best results come from using the first behind view.



PUBLISHER: **Sega** THEME: **Racing** PLAYERS: **1** LEVELS: **3**

2



GEX

Probably the greatest thing about *Gex*, across all platforms, from the 3DO to the Sony PlayStation, and now to the Sega Saturn, is the comedic dialogue ssspoken by that



Traps spring unexpectedly in *Gex's* dangerous Toon Land.

fffearless lizard, Gex. Mostly pulled from contemporary film and television, the lines thrown out by the forked-tongued reptile are all dubbed by comedian Dana Gould, who spins off one-liners like, "This

(including the cool, rendered introduction) are a bit sharper as well. In comparison to the PlayStation version, Sega's *Gex* also holds its own—you'll get strong gameplay either way.

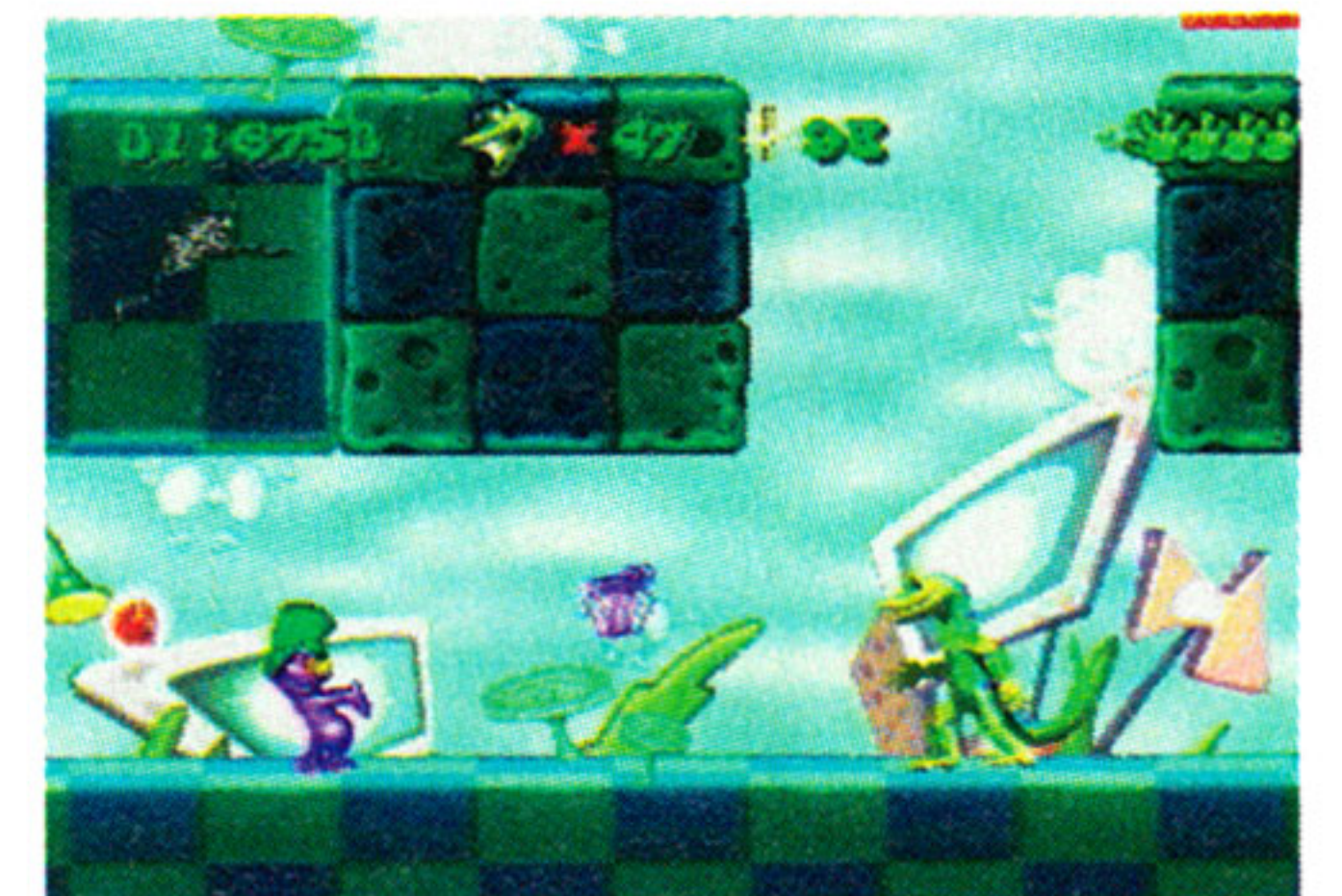
For those who haven't played *Gex* before, the title character is based on a Hawaiian variety of gecko lizard. While wasting hours of his life away in front of the television, a ratings-hungry, fly-like humanoid named Rez (Cronenberg would love this game) decides that Gex would make an ideal network mascot and so sucks him, or you, into his demented realm of television reruns and clichés. Trapped within, you must use your instinctual nerve to find the hidden remote controls that hold the secret to your release.

The structural design of the game, like nearly any good scroller, is drawn from a very basic format, with five main stages, including: Graveyard World, Cartoon World, Jungle World, Kung Fu World and finally, Rez's Nerve Center. Each stage ends with your typical boss stage (like the Lind-Blair, pea-spitting look-alike at the end of Graveyard World) and is fashioned with an average of five levels each.

So there's really nothing new from a structural point of view in *Gex*. But the maneuverability of the hero character is something else. The lizard can do some interesting tricks, including a tail-slash (for destroying the opposition), tongue lash (for grabbing power-ups) and tail bounce (by jumping on top of the gecko-adversaries). Most exciting, however, is the cold-blooded reptile's knack for climbing walls, which makes

for some really interesting gameplay challenge.

No side-scroller would ever be complete without an array of power-ups, and *Gex* is no exception. Often taking the shape of ladybugs, fleas and fireflies, power-ups provide Gex with nasty fireballs, ice spit and electrical bolts of phlegm. Additionally, gamers can pick up extra lives, centipede speed, grasshopper jumping power or caterpillar invincibility. So there are power-ups aplenty, but they are easily the game's least clever attribute.



Wise-cracking remarks and cool backdrops define *Gex*.



Move through worlds wrought with hysterical film clichés.

Golden flies are the Mario equivalent to coins, and one hundred of them add up to, yes, an extra life.

An abundance of bonus worlds, a unique soundtrack and the suction sound of Gex's feet will please most gamers. A lot of the title is derivative, but who cares? It's fun. Best of all, there's a real challenge level to the game—don't expect to complete *Gex* in under a weekend.

—Rob Bernstein

PUBLISHER: Crystal Dynamics THEME: Adventure PLAYERS: 1 LEVELS: 5 stages

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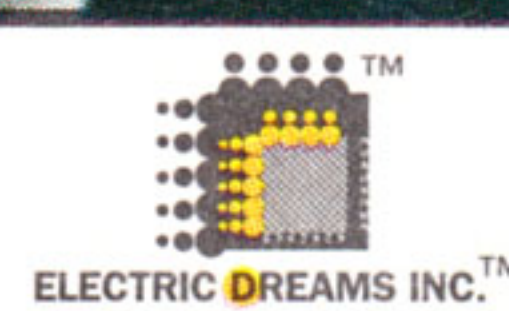
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VIRTUA FIGHTER II

5

PUBLISHER: **Sega** THEME: **Fighting** PLAYERS: **1-2**

Jackie Chan fans are in for a thrill, as *Virtua Fighter II* displays combat moves nearly as exhilarating as *Drunken Master II*. The trick, however, is learning the enormous catalog of over 1,200 moves.

Because of the complexity of play, many gamers will disagree as to whether or not *VF II* is just a good title or a great one. Well, it's a great one, and hardcore combat fanatics will recognize that, what might at first seem like an intimidating abundance of moves, is really a depth of gameplay yet unseen in the fighting genre. Sure, the *MK* games offer fast, furious and bloody action, but *VF II* sup-

ports a crucial attribute: variation. And variation translates into lasting gameplay and endless combat scenarios.

ports many fights consecutively as you can, and a Team Mode, where you can assemble a five-person squad for competition against another fighting quintet. Also rather exciting, but infrequent, is a round of "sudden death." In the event that a match ends in a tie, the fighting arena reduces in size, making combat way more intense and "ring outs" much easier to accomplish.

Another nice touch that, at first I was rather suspect of, was the inclusion of an AI to provide your opponents with a learning curve. Indeed, if you try to use the same maneuvers over and over again with the computer, you'll have your head handed to you. Again,

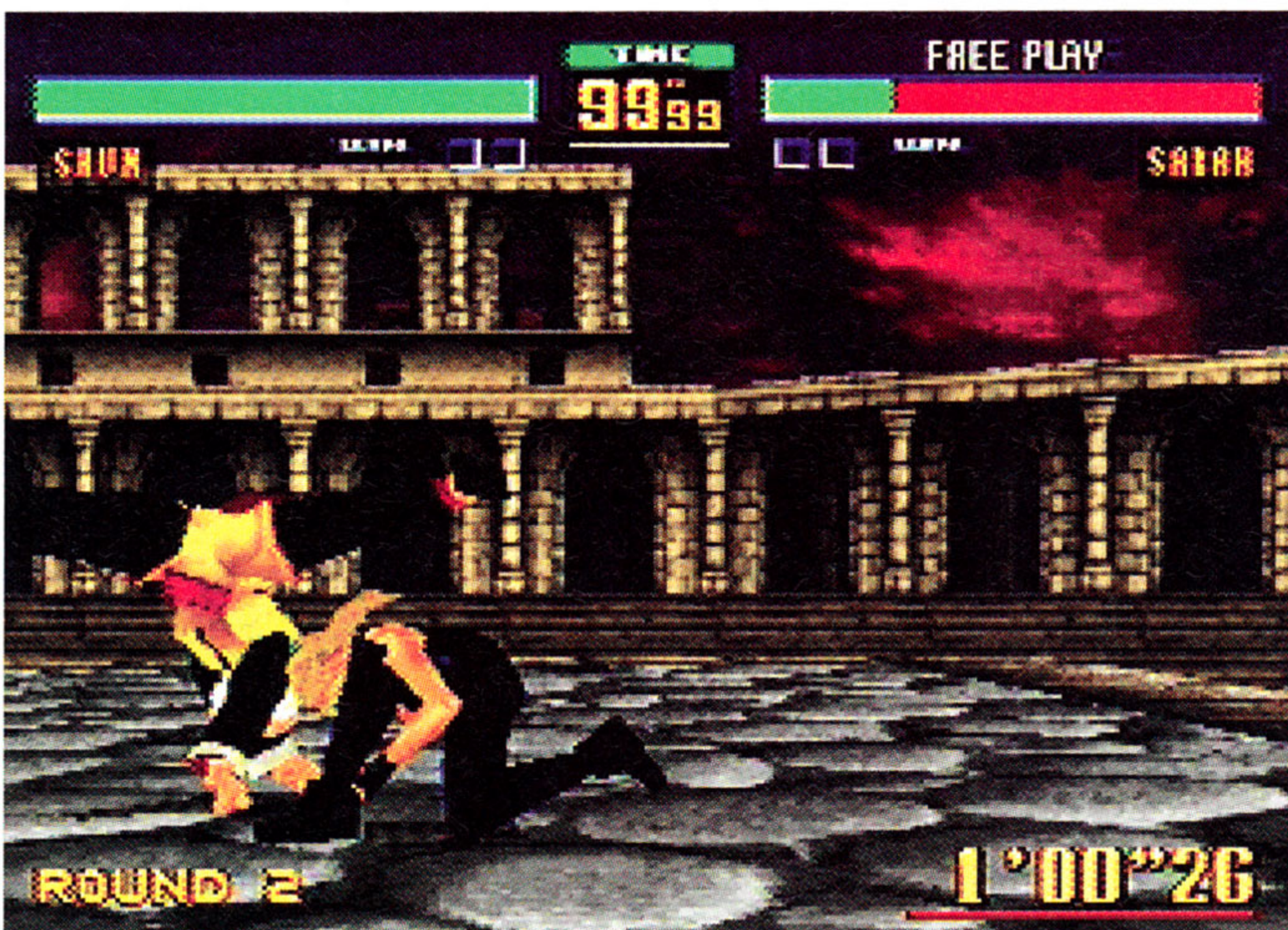
entrant, who's out to prove himself in the art of fighting. All other characters have been juiced up with new moves—I really enjoy the defense maneuver that allows gamers to slip out of an opponent's hold or throw.

Additionally, the extremely challenging end boss greets players at the close of *VF II*—Dural, the translucent Predator-like femme fatale. Be afraid, very afraid when she enters the arena; Dural retains the skills of every other fighter in the game, and if given the chance, will beat on your frail little body in every conceivable way. Learning her patterns proves difficult, as she attacks you with an unrelenting fury and that all-important AI edge.

So is it a flawless gem? Almost—the only things missing from *VF II* are the more detailed backgrounds of the arcade version, and a more interesting 3-D roving perspective. Graphically, the game is in 3-D, but the play action is still side to side. But hey, what fighter is truly three dimensional?

Sega fans should be pleased—they have the best fighter around.

— Rob Bernstein



ports a crucial attribute: variation. And variation translates into lasting gameplay and endless combat scenarios.

VF II also throws in some very nice features this time around, in particular, the different modes of play. The Arcade and Vs. Modes you've seen before. But in *VF II*, you also get a Ranking Mode that challenges you to win as

ports that complexity of movement raises the stakes and encourages gamers to mix it up a little.

Fans of the original will also be pleased to know that two new characters have been introduced: the "drunken master," Shun-di, who enjoys taking sips from his flask between punches, and Lion Rafale, the young



Sega's fighter, with 1200+ moves, is a sure-fire winner.



There's no magical moves in *VF II*, just fantastic fighting.



Play two new fighters: one being the "drunken master."

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don't just STAND there



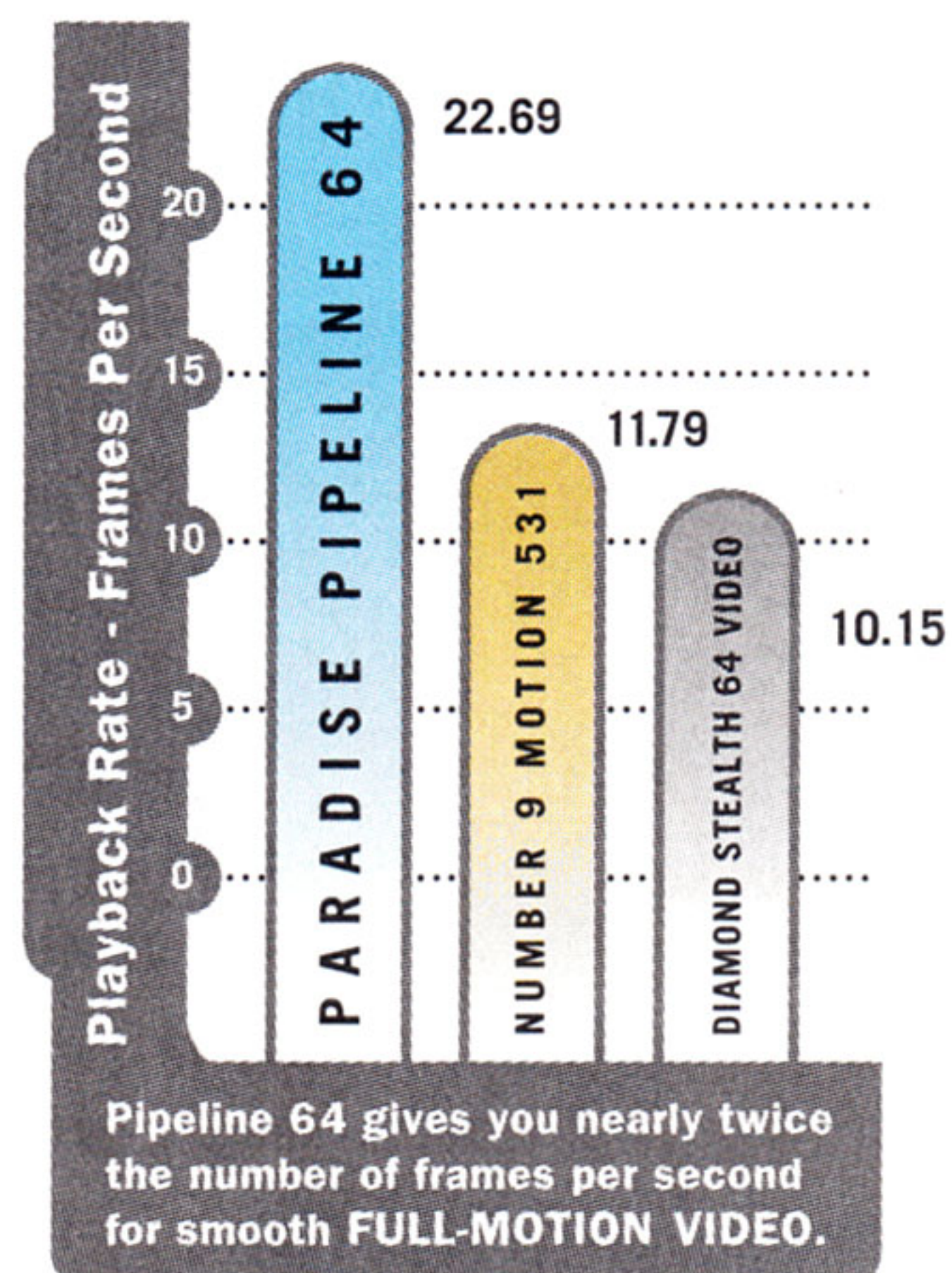
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WING ARMS

3½

PUBLISHER: Sega THEME: Action/Shooter PLAYERS: 1-2

"Build it simple and they will come." Is that how it goes? Maybe it was, "Keep it simple, stupid!" Either way, *Wing Arms* qualifies. A pure flight-sim shooter through and through, nothing more, nothing less!

Wing Arms is the anti-flight sim, meaning, compared to Microsoft's flight-sim series for the PC, *Wing Arms* looks like a child's toy! Yet, this is a good thing; who wants to read thick manuals just to figure out how to take off?

All comparisons aside, *Wing Arms* offers a solid combat shooter for those who enjoy the thrill of the dogfight. Smooth, easy flowing backgrounds coupled with very responsive flight control make the overall appeal of the game high.

Seven World War II-era

aircraft are available. All are prop planes with the exception of one lone, primitive jet. Players get their flight orders from a poorly animated, cross-eyed commander who informs them that they need to destroy all airborne enemies! (Remember, keep it simple, right). Even though the commander's animation is really quite bad, it's kind of nice to play an all-digital game, taking a well-deserved break from the spoils of full-motion video.

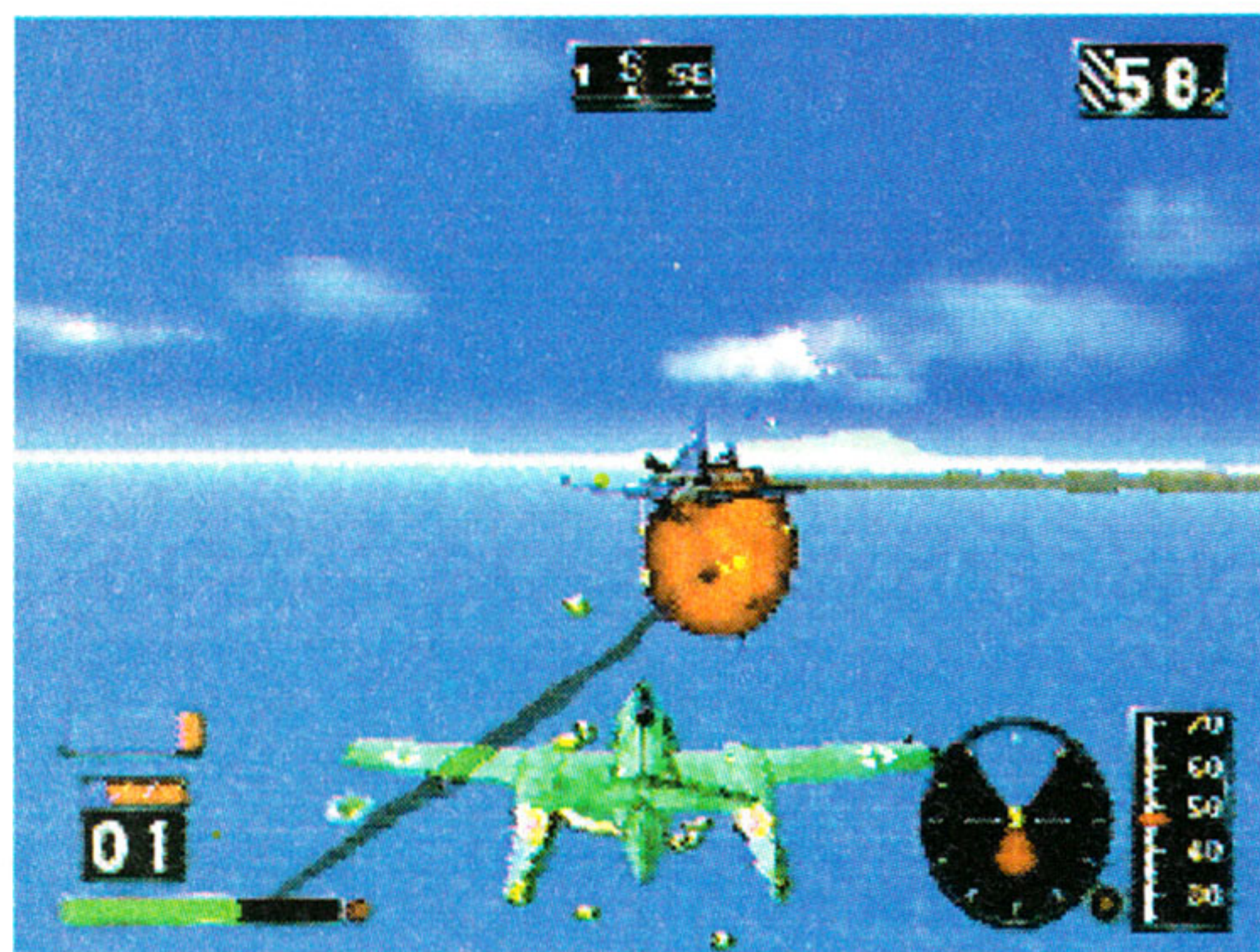
In actual combat, the enemy will do some strange things. For example, the first few squadrons attacked will stay in formation like sitting ducks to be picked off one by one. Later, they'll break away, making the pursuit a bit harder. But if the player is patient and flies in a straight line, the enemy usually

comes back and flies right in the bullet path. Not the best evasive maneuvering, but it's fun for the player.

To aid in locating enemies, a small red arrow in the center of the screen points toward the planes. Take them out with bullets or a limited amount of supplied missiles.

Wing Arms' simplicity is an asset to be admired. For what it is, no other flight game for the Saturn can compare to it.

-Dean Hager



The outside view offers the most versatility when it comes to tracking enemy planes as they circle overhead.



SOLAR ECLIPSE

A hundred years in the future, the LaGrange Mining Colony suffers a devastating surprise attack. The excellent non-interactive, full-motion video sequences suggest that the high command doesn't think much of your ability to combat this menace, but times are tough. Assignment as wing for a veteran flight leader sends your SCA-1116 Polecat through a connected series of eight missions leading up to a landing on Titan.

Solar Eclipse provides rocket jockeys with a fast and highly maneuverable craft bristling with cannons and missiles. During missions,



Full-motion video clips; nice but not essential to the game.



Sporadic stationary laser towers serve as easy targets.

bunkers yield icons that power-up an assortment of special weapons, like the maelstrom cannon and guided missiles.

The more icons you collect for a particular weapon, the more fearsome its power. Other icons give the Polecat extras like an additional life, a cloaking device, an invincible shield or supercharged engines. The

need for precision flying separates *Solar Eclipse* from a squadron of similar discs. Excellent controller manipulation is essential to success.

Excellent audio and extensive FMV interludes are fine game enhancements, but the basic contest offers little that is new or different. It's a good first-person shooter, but the backstory and action definitely do *not* go where no video game has gone before.

-Arnie Katz

PUBLISHER: Crystal Dynamics THEME: Shooter PLAYERS: 1 LEVELS: 30

3

4

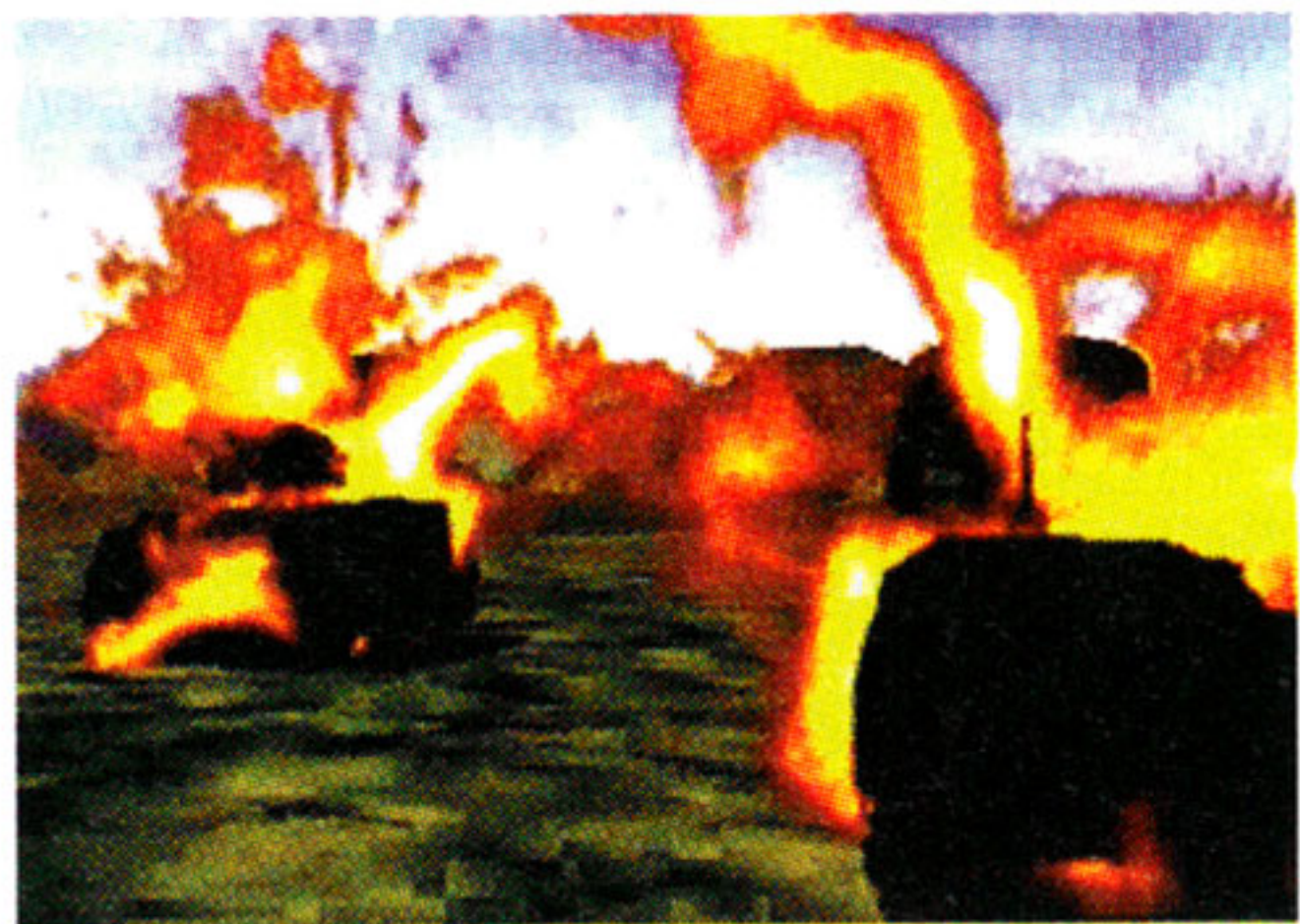
PUBLISHER: U.S. Gold THEME: Action PLAYERS: 1

THUNDERSTRIKE II

Chopper combat is an acquired taste for most game enthusiasts. The lure of a simple, quick-fix shooter or a fighting game can sometimes lead them away from really intense games like *Thunderstrike II* from U.S. Gold. If the player takes the time to learn the controls and nuances of this game, they



An unfortunate enemy tank destroyed by a cluster bomb.



Very impressive pregame cinema shots.



Cockpit view with lock-on sighting and instrumentation.

will be pulled into an entertaining combative hell. Seven separate scenarios ranging from escorting allied boats downriver to capturing enemy territory in the Middle East will challenge the eager pilot. Standard mapping and radar let the player know where the enemy is nestled along the course. Radar use is a must, due to the sometimes deceptive countryside. Another variable to consider changing is the view; the cockpit without the instrumentation opened up the view nicely. The option to load the helicopter with a personalized selection of missiles is a nice touch for destroying enemies most efficiently.

U.S. Gold has taken the time to produce another excellent chopper combat sim unrivaled by anything on the PlayStation or the 3DO. If the smooth, texture-mapped graphics don't pull the game enthusiast in, the massive theatrical explosions will. Add this game to the growing arsenal of great Saturn games.

-Dean Hager

VIRTUA COP

When *FUSION* previewed *Virtua Cop* a few months back, we sang its praises like love-sick school boys. Now that the game is out, along with the Stun Gun, we're doin' a lot more than just singing! The Stun Gun really makes this game shine but even without the light gun this game could easily stand on its own. Three exciting levels are available as well as a handy target practice range to sharpen shooting skills. Sit back from the TV, get the gun in a comfortable position and begin. The first-person perspective, smooth 3-D graphics and an ever-changing angle are quite convincing as the player scrolls through the drug lord's hideout waiting for the next sap to jump up and challenge them. For the most part, though enemies appear with about a half-second lag time before they begin shooting, this is more than enough time to level the gun and fire. Six shots and then a reload. Avoid shooting the hostages for they are the only real victims in this game of marksmanship. A game of this caliber is a big bright spot for the Saturn system. I hope to see more like it in the future.

-Dean Hager



The accuracy of the Stun Gun is very good, making targeting all the more user friendly.



PUBLISHER: Sega THEME: Shooter PLAYERS: 1-2 LEVELS: 3

4

STUNNER ARCADE GUN

Sega's Stun Gun is simply the best light gun available for home use. A step up from the "Menacer," Sega has outdone themselves for ease of use and accuracy in this laser-emitting gun. The gun will be compatible with other Saturn shooting games coming out in '96 as well.



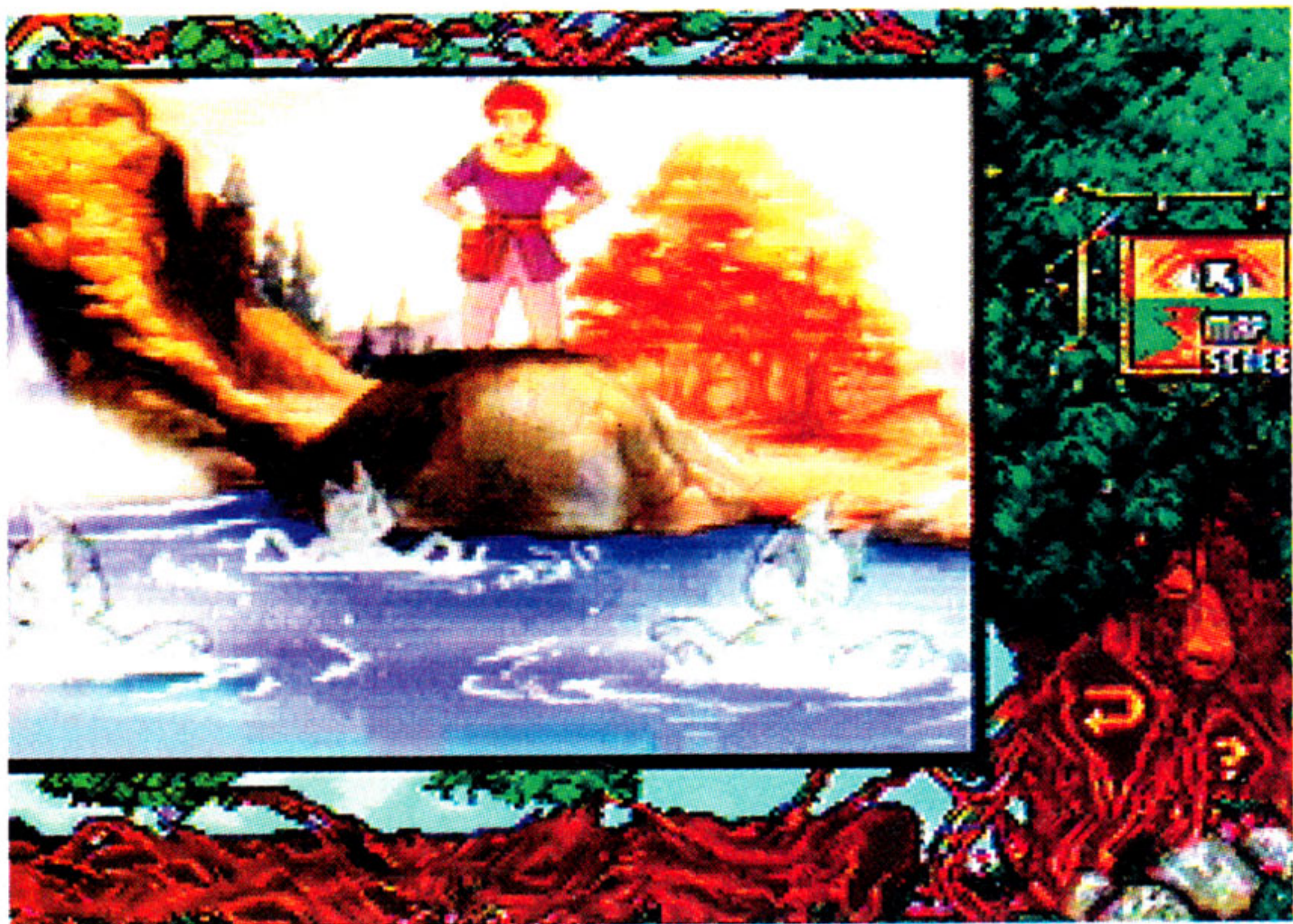
3DO

KINGDOM OF THE FAR REACHES

The 3DO has been under fire for quite a long time now for being the so-called "third" runner in the super system race. While many can argue the cons of the system, few will stick their neck out and explore all the pros of the oldest and quite possibly the beefiest 64-Bit system on the market. With Nintendo's Ultra 64 looming just around the corner, many believe the 3DO is destined to become the gaming public's next doorstop. Its saving grace? Imaginative and challenging games such as *Kingdom* to set it apart from the pack. *Kingdom of the Far Reaches* from Interplay is a refreshing and challenging role-playing adventure game. Of course, the basic story has been done to death since J.R.R. Tolkien long ago penned the then-unique lines of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Since then, how many thousands of authors and computer programmers have thrown together a quest wherein some small person must find various objects before an Evil One offs said small person and



Looking for clues at the Haunted Waterfalls.



the rest of the Land?

So it should come as almost no surprise that young Lathan, while an apprentice to the Good wizard Daelon, must find the five relics of the Hand of Mobus while the Evil One Torlok and his henchfiend, the Plague Magician, try to cook said Lathan's young goose. And, oh yeah, there's a princess waiting to be rescued. Princess Delight is her name.

This is all rather a fill-in-the-blanks sort of adventure story. On the other hand, there are some very good games like that and some very poor ones. This is one of the good ones.

It's one of the good ones thanks to the graphics, animation and general tone of the dialogue and settings. The graphics are crystalline with a crisp palette of detailed pastels and a look that can only be referred to as what American artists would do if our country liked "manga" comics more. Considering this is from the same people who brought the game *Dragon's Lair* to the arcades and CPUs of the nation the ancestry is clear.

Even better, the puzzles are



KOFR carries all the basics of a good RPG, namely, conflict.

mostly fair and not completely linear. If you want to explore the world rather than simply win the game, the game itself rewards you with areas to see and events to participate in that are there just for fun, just because the designers believed in their world and wanted you to also. This is one of the very few adventure games that you can return to in order to find new places after you have solved it once.

The interface supports the 3DO mouse but works well with keypad or joystick.

With two levels of difficulty (Apprentice lacks many puzzles and dangers) the game is appropriate for all ages and experiences. Maybe the story isn't brand new, but the game itself will send most players into a well-realized new world of adventure.

—Neil Shapiro

Save The Soul of Rock and Roll!



JOHNNY BAZOOKATONE

Includes title track featuring
Richie Sambora and Tico Torres
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You're the hottest thing in Rock'n Roll, and somebody just stole your favorite guitar. It was the devilish Mr. Diablo - resident hard-case in Hades, and he's not about to give it up. He wants to play hard-ball? That's just fine with you. Grab your heavy metal gear and amp-up to raze the dead with the meanest, coolest tunes ever composed for a video game! Let the hordes of the Abyss know that they took on the wrong Rock 'n Roller!



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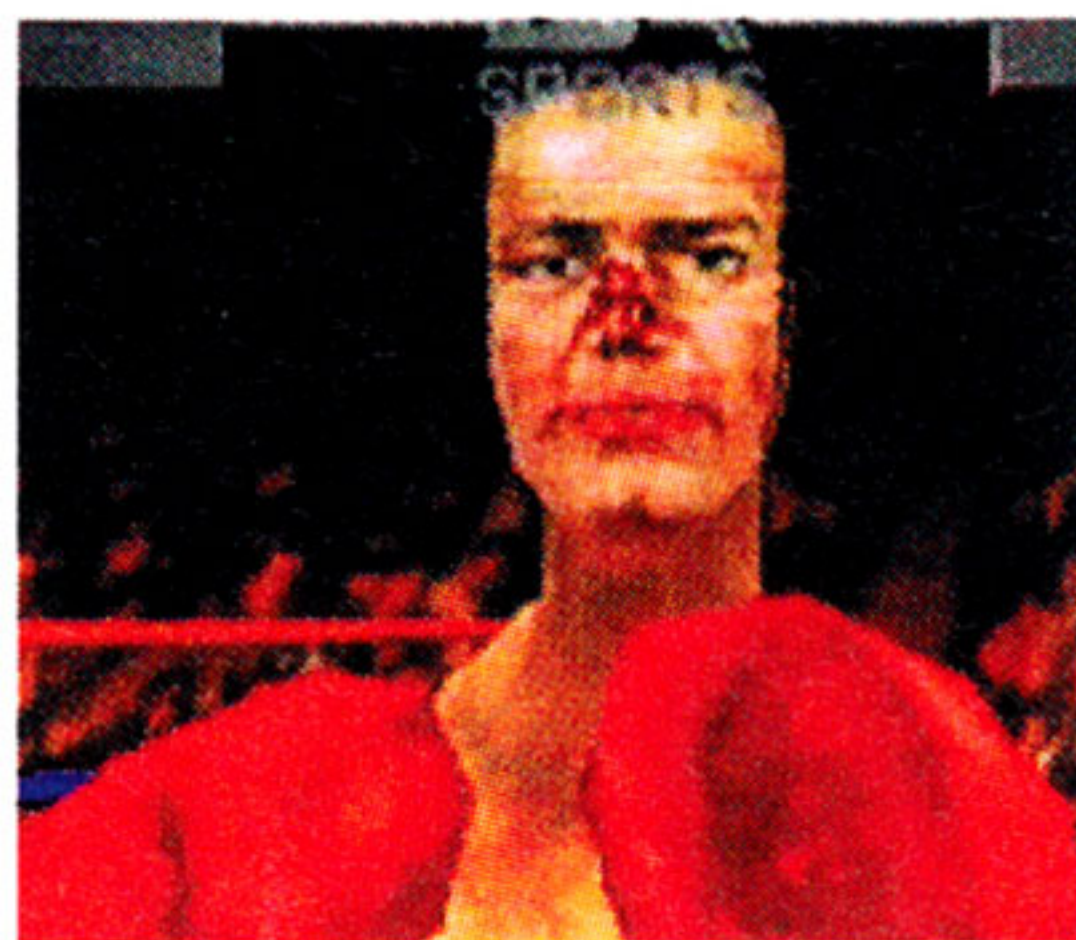
For all of the legendary pugilists featured in EA's *Foes of Ali* for 3DO, the science throws in the towel to a level of brawling usually reserved for toughman contests.

While there's no real strategy to the game other than keeping your fists moving faster than the palooka across from you, there are a ton of features and subtle extras that more than make up for it. Biographical information on Ali's rivals from Liston to Spinks (but not including Game Gear-star George Foreman) are detailed with still photos from their legendary meetings. Several views of the ring are available including overhead and judge view. From the boxer's point of view, when a player's eyes begin to swell, the game screen becomes clouded, and if an opponent hits you hard enough, double vision blurs the screen. As added bonuses, players choose how bloody a fight will be, while announcers call the action.

Foes of Ali does get frustrating in its inconsistencies. While a quick flurry can put one fighter down for the count, it seems impossible to put other fighters away no matter how many knuckle sandwiches they eat.

—Mike Stokes

Right: A bloodied Henry Cooper barely holds on.



Bottom: The overhead view of Ali landing a vicious left hook.



SEGA 32X

T-MEK

Nazrac Shung is looking for a few good fearless T-Mek operators. Those who live through the various Arenas are said to be given a planet to govern. But it isn't going to be easy. The T-Mek Arenas feature opponents that range from deadly to awesomely deadly. The different T-Mek hover tanks available to each combatant feature various combinations of firepower, defensive shields and speed.



Top: T-Mek training ground for those about to enter the battle arena.

Right: Choosing the properly equipped T-Mek is integral to victory.



In the lower levels, the Arenas are wide open. But soon they become filled with obstacles ranging from the bones of earlier opponents to wide-spaced columns. Then, at higher levels, the Arenas become areas of valleys that twist and turn through towering rows of cliffs and escarpments.

The full 360-degree play movement leads to a feeling of not only stalking, but of being stalked. The old run-and-shoot becomes your best defense as well as offense. The Sega 32X platform is put through its paces here with a challenging number of large areas to animate—and comes through with, well, flying colors. A two-player option allows for head-to-head action with a buddy.

It takes an awful lot to get to the game's upper levels but anyone who likes a good tank-style, first-person perspective game will find this a very rewarding journey.

—Neil Shapiro

PUBLISHER: Sega THEME: Action PLAYERS: 1-2

JOHNNY BAZOOKATONE

Color Me 'Cool' Contest

Win a Fender Electric Guitar



"Check Me Out In My New Video Game!"

1 Grand Prize: Fender Electric Guitar

3 First Prizes: Choice of Game System; Sega Saturn, Sony PSX or 3DO with accompanying Johnny Bazookatone title.

15 Second Prizes: Johnny Bazookatone of your choice (Sega Saturn, Sony PSX or 3DO).

25 Third Prizes: Inflatable electric guitar

Contest Rules:

1. No Purchase Necessary:

To enter, color the Johnny Bazookatone entry page found in **EGM** or color a photocopy of the entry page found in **EGM** and mail it along with a separate sheet containing your name, address and phone number to Johnny Bazookatone Contest, Electronic Gaming Monthly, 1920 Highland Avenue, 2nd Floor, Lombard, Illinois 60148. No purchase or payment of any money is necessary to enter. One entry per household. All entries may be colored in any form of color art except that computer-generated color art will not be accepted. Entries must be received by March 15, 1996. All entries become exclusive property of Sendai Publishing Group, Inc. and will not be acknowledged or returned. Sendai Publishing Group, Inc. assumes no responsibility for lost, mutilated, late, illegible, incomplete, postage-due or misdirected entries. Only one prize per family, organization or household.

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Entries shall be judged on the following criteria: (I) Color coordination (50%); (II) Neatness (25%); and (III) Originality (25%). Judging to be held on or about March 31, 1996. All prize(s) will be awarded. Prize winner will be notified by mail. Prize(s) are non-transferable. No substitutions of prize(s) are allowed, except at the option of Sponsor should the featured prize(s) become unavailable.

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4. Eligibility: Sweepstakes open to residents of United States and Canada only. Void in Rhode Island and Quebec. Non-compliance with the time parameters contained herein or return of any prize/prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected. Winners or their legal guardians shall sign an affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance within 30 days of receipt or forfeit prize. By acceptance of prize, winner(s) agrees to the use of his/her name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. Employees of Sendai Publishing Group, Inc., U.S. Gold, Inc. and their respective affiliates are not eligible. Neither Sendai Publishing Group, Inc., U.S. Gold, Inc. nor their affiliates, subsidiaries, divisions or related companies are responsible for any damages, taxes or expenses that consumers might incur as a result of this contest or receipt of prize. Winner accepting prize(s) agree that all prize(s) are awarded on the condition that Sendai Publishing Group Inc., and their agents, representatives and employees will have no liability whatsoever for any injuries, losses or damages of any kind resulting from acceptance, possession or use of the prize(s). Winner further acknowledges that Sendai Publishing Group, Inc. has neither made nor are in any manner responsible or liable for any warranty, representation or guarantee express or implied, in fact or in law, relative to any prize, including but not limited to its quality, mechanical condition or fitness.

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6. Restrictions: Void where prohibited or restricted by law. All federal, state and local regulations apply.

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Super NES

SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION

Picture your reviewer settled deep in a tan leather chair in a dimly lit and very quiet London club, tweed jacket and pipe, white hair waved back in a 1930s style, the music from *Masterpiece Theater* playing gently in the background as I say to you in a rich and very measured English accent:

"The idea of *Civilization* is a slow and painstaking process of dry and serious forces which, in combination, present us with a glacial-like feeling of inexorable and



Cities are constructed from the smallest of beginnings.



Choosing player rank at the beginning of the game.



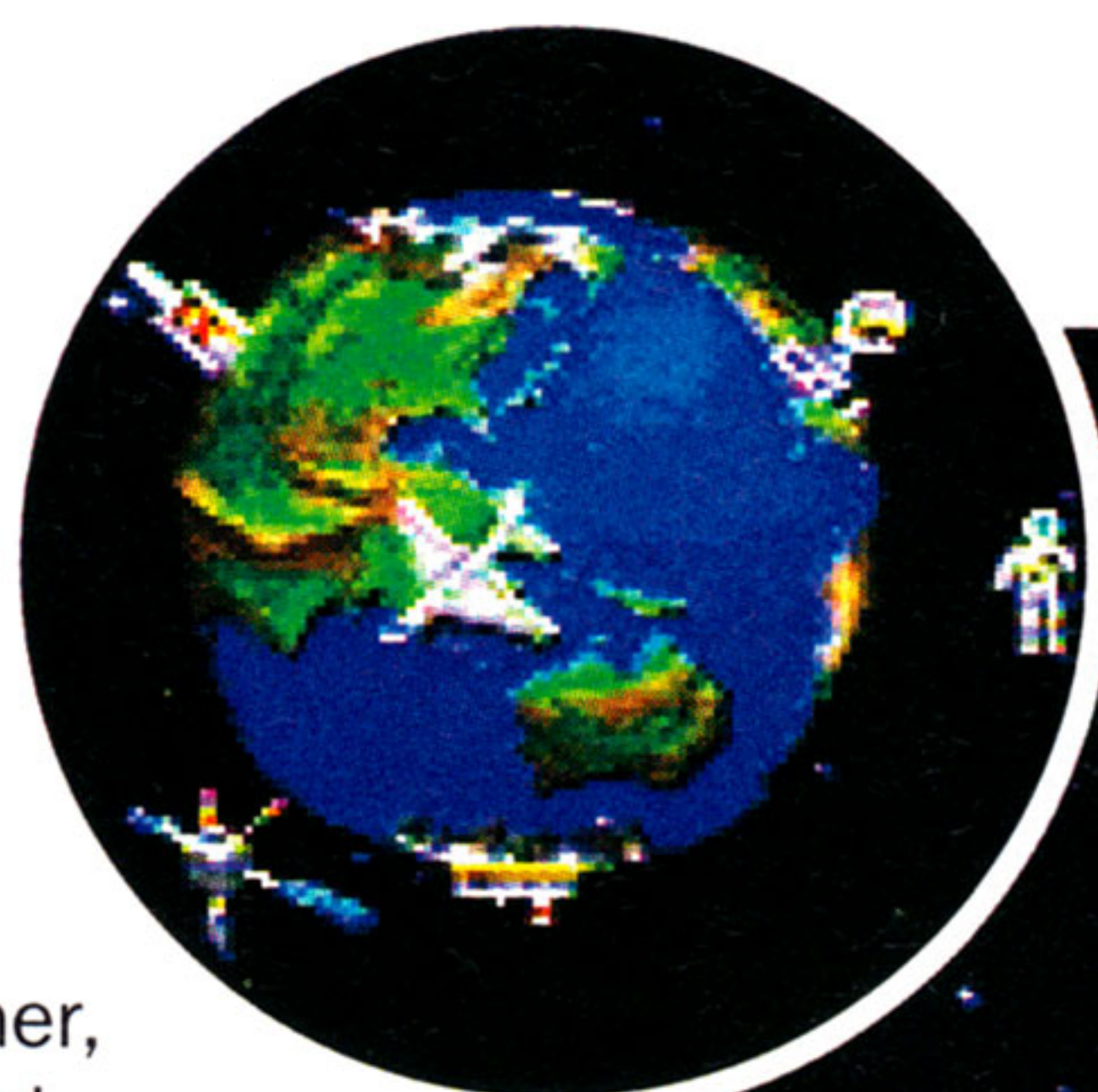
Every detail is important in the building process.

ponderous Time...." Not quite.

In fact the game of *Civilization* on your Super NES is a pot-pourri of challenges and tactical decisions that will keep you hopping and popping from one end of your onscreen map to the other, locked in competition and combat with your computerized opponents. On a world with random land masses or one with continents the same as Earth's, it's up to you to guide your Empire (at five levels of difficulty) out of the stone ages and to the stars before any other contender can grab the brass ring of supreme civilization.

Each player plants cities in strategic locations and then produces from the cities the soldiers needed to defend and expand the empire, everything from siege catapults to cannons to frigates to starships to run it, and all the time one must gradually discover technology. And, of course, if you want to eat, then one cannot neglect agriculture, farming and resources. All of this, of course, happens while up to seven other computer-run opponents try to make treaties with you, trade with you or just simply wipe the board with you.

The amount of detail in the game is simply phenomenal and it's all interrelated. You don't just, for example, send an explorer on a "Magellan Voyage of Exploration," which when



If KOEI got anymore belligerent in their attention to detail, players would find themselves overwhelmed with tasks; luckily somebody stopped them in time.

done increases the maritime movement factor of all units by one. Nope, first you have to have developed Navigation, which means you had to invent the compass and, of course, that was dependent on other inventions, too.

Combat is likewise complex but easy to handle with an interface that quickly lets you move military units from defense or sentry to active units. Even when you may have hundreds of such units onscreen, the control of them never gets to be so mind-boggling that you lose because you made mistakes in control rather than strategy and tactics.

All the game's details with the exception of the naming of other world leaders after

real historical people are impeccable. (It's pretty funny the first time Gandhi loses it and starts to threaten worldwide war, though.)

In fact, this would be a perfect game—a big 5 out of 5er—if it wasn't for one thing: the Manual. The manual lacks a useful tutorial, is written in a circular manner, has internal inconsistencies, is long where it should be short and vice-versa, and reminds this reviewer of assembly instructions that used to come with Japanese bicycles in 1952. So, throw the manual away, run to any software store to buy almost any of the third-party books now available to help you play this game—and give yourself the extra half-point.

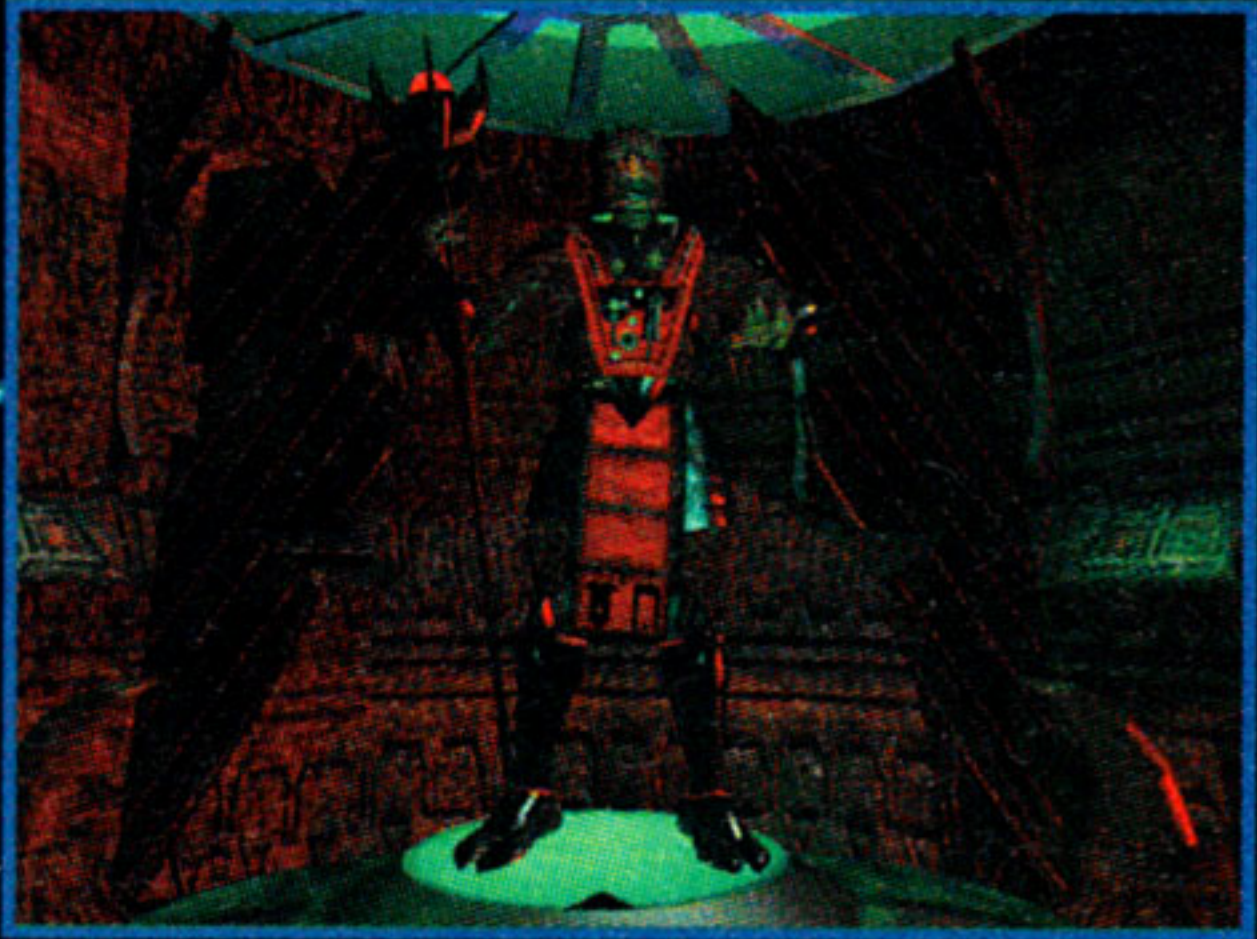
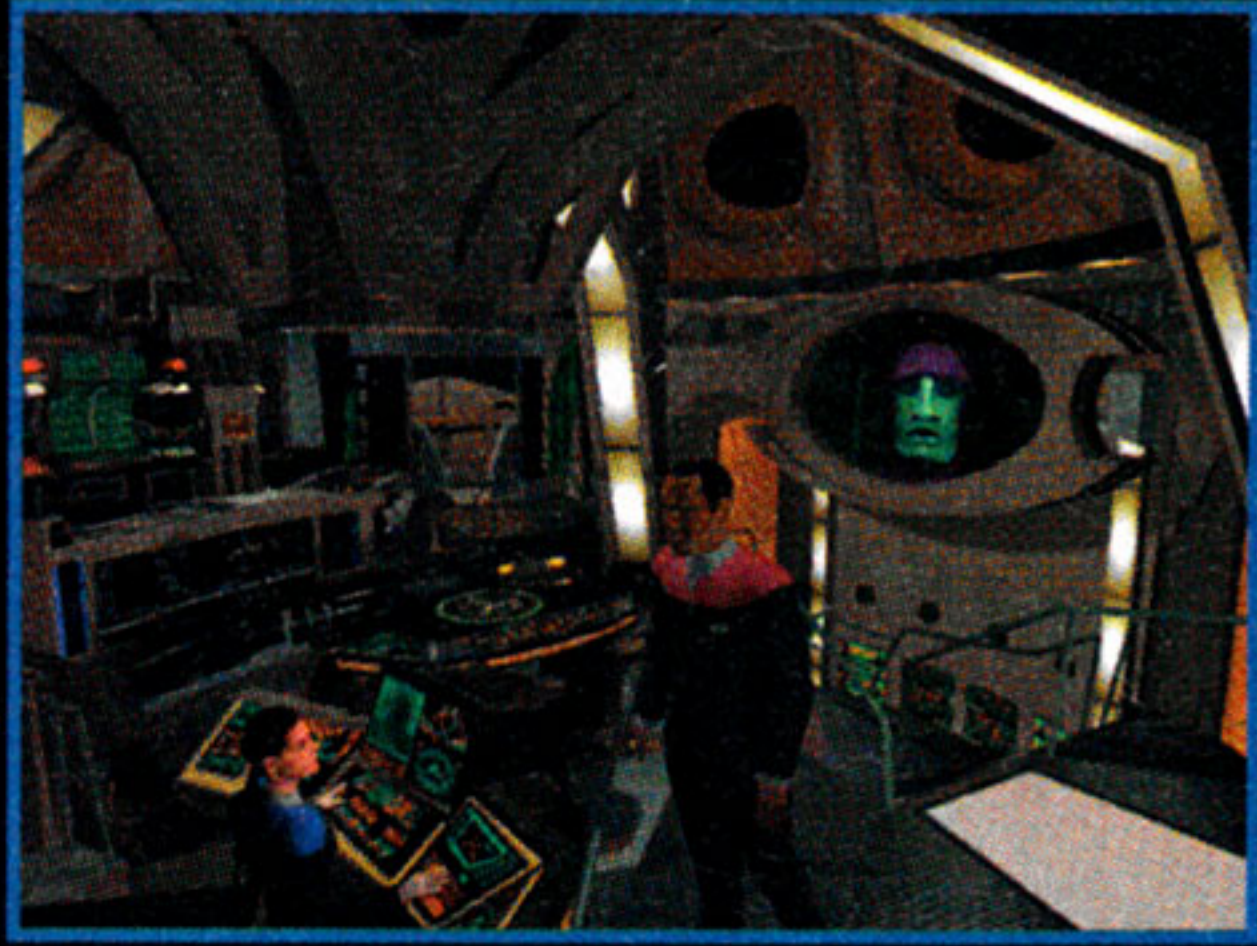
—Neil Shapiro

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PACIFIC THEATER OF OPERATIONS II

3½

PUBLISHER: KOEI THEME: Strategy Sim PLAYERS: 1-2 LEVELS: 50+

The traditional war game has come to the SNES with *P.T.O. II* and perhaps been slightly improved in the process (that's for hardcore gamers to decide). I have to assume that the previous version of this game had some of the same functions and that this version is even more detailed. Operating as a sort of quest game rather than what we think of in a war game, this title is indeed highly detailed.

The concept is to play out several scenarios that really happened during World War II in the war in the Pacific. Depending on the situation, you may be able to choose American or Japanese sides (except for the opening "Day of Infamy" scenario where you are only allowed the Japanese side) as well as both sides for a two-player game. The game includes seven short battle scenarios with basic goals and three long-term campaigns that involve a knowledge of or at least a feel for strategy on the military gaming level which take a little longer to play through.

The traditional style of war gaming is usually done on a game board with little tiles that represent what that force is (like a soldier, tank, plane, etc.), strengths, movements and whatever one would need to take on an enemy force with that piece or pieces. While that is certainly the case here, the "pieces" you move are differing forces of ships, planes and men that aren't really represented until later on. At the start of the scenario you're playing, you



A U.S. ship on the brink of fiery extinction.

receive your orders. You must then decide how to carry them out. You can determine a step at a time if your forces should occupy, attack or just keep an eye on your opponent to see what he or she does. At this point you also have the opportunity to check on each of your

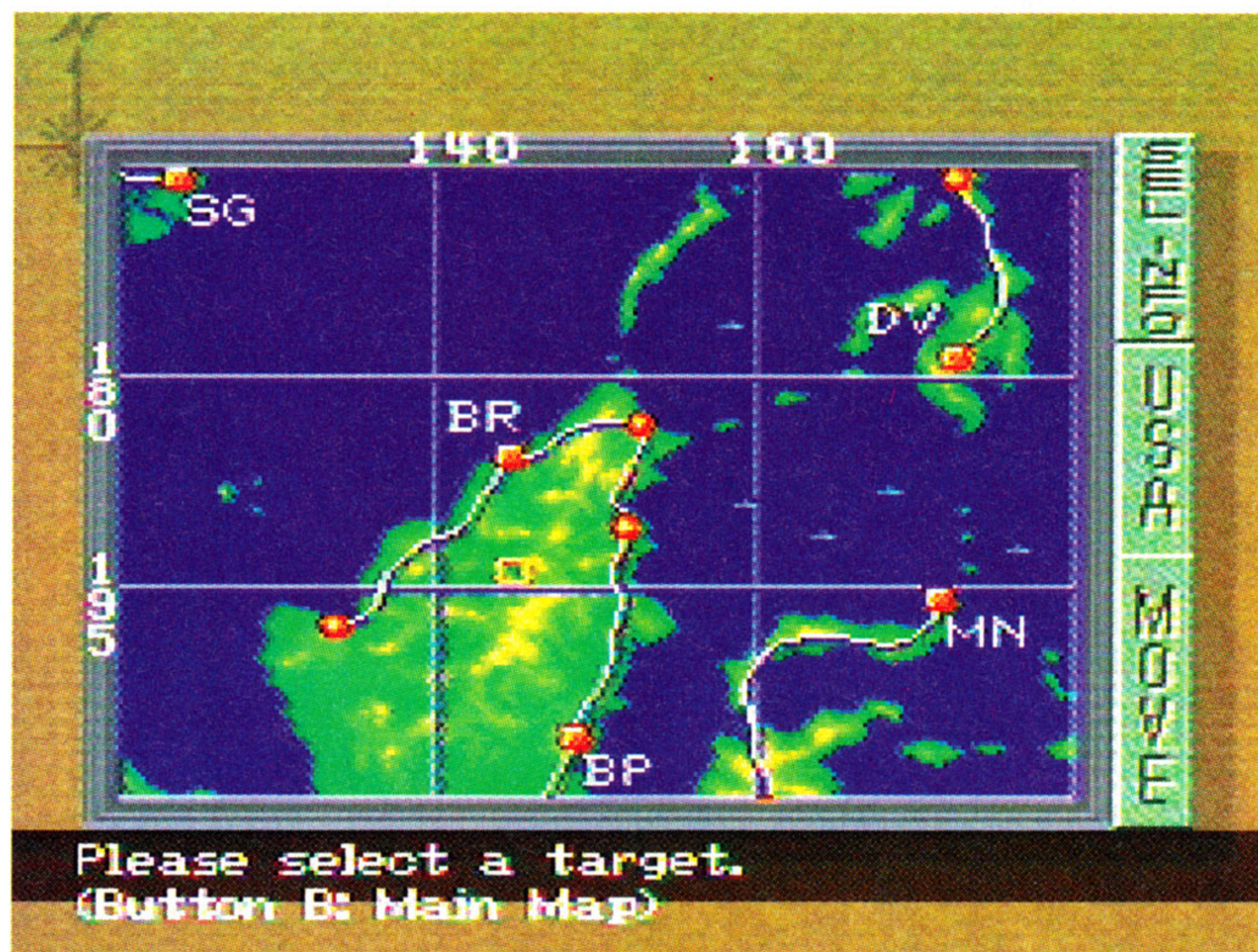
"pieces" and see what strengths they have and what they look like. You even learn who your ship commanders or plane pilots are and what they look like. Once you determine what action is necessary, you have the option of splitting forces and moving each as you see fit. The starting movement board is a whole map of the Pacific strategic points clearly shown as white dots. After determining your actions, there's a close-up map provided that shows exactly where your forces are at that location.

As a novice when it comes to war games, I'll admit to a bit of hesitation on my part, fearing I would utterly fail. I was pleasantly surprised to find that it was fairly easy to accomplish my first scenario of sinking six ships at Pearl Harbor. It really only took me a few minutes to figure out the logistics of the game to pull this off.

The only thing that bothered me was starting off as the attacking Japanese force on Pearl Harbor in the Day of Infamy scenario. I've always felt strongly about what happened there even after all these years, so it's a bit strange to play a game that re-enacts that day's events and have to play the wrong side sinking battleships. It's fun and sobering at the same time.

Still, war gamers should enjoy the quick pace of the game. *P.T.O. II* may also bring new war gamers into a hobby that celebrates a knowledge of history. Not a bad perk there at all.

—Frank Kurtz



Selecting a region to attack takes some careful planning. It would be a shame to induce a massive retaliation attack against your forces due to thoughtless attacking. KOEI paid special attention to enemy AI to make this a factor.



PC

BAD MOJO

You may have played games that had bugs, but *Bad Mojo* may be the first game you play that places you in an adventure from a bug's perspective. Specifically, the game treats players to gritty, hi-res realistic visions of dilapidated

abodes and pest-infested dumps, all from the perspective of a lowly cockroach. *Bad Mojo* succeeds at this level and many others.

The well-conceived and nearly comical Quicktime introduction casts players into the role of Roger Samms, an unfortunate victim of a teach-you-a-lesson keepsake, a roach-shaped locket. Seems that Roger embezzled some money and was about to skip town and skip out on his rent due to his grimy landlord, Eddie, when the locket kicks in and zaps Roger with its bad-mojo magic. From that point on, Roger becomes a perverse, exoskeleton '90s version of the Incredible Mr. Limpet.

What first struck me about the different approach this adventure offered, besides being cast into the personification of a well-animated cockroach, was the game's control scheme. Four keys—up, down, left and

right, are all that the innovative puzzles require. No cumbersome inventory keys, multiple mouse clicks, function keys, just four simple directional buttons. Not only do these match the physical capabilities of a cockroach, but it also makes the game quickly intuitive and pulls players that much closer into virtual roach immersion. The realistic, scum-ridden backdrops also wrap players into the close-up environments of the insect species.

Another aspect of the game that works well are the captivating Quicktime videos that seamlessly move the story along. Unlike other games that use loosely related digital video as a reward for unlocking a puzzle, *Bad Mojo's* cut scenes are placed in well-timed, sensible interludes. As for the actors hired for parts, I was glad to see that they didn't take their roles too seriously.

It was apparent to me that Michael Sommers, the lanky actor who played lead character Roger Samms, played his part as a cross between Norman Bates and Jim Carrey's *Dumb and Dumber* character. Mike Gilliam, playing the role of Roger's greasy, cigar-chomping landlord, overacts within his character's bounds, but also displays genuine emo-

tional aspects that make it hard not to feel empathy toward his character's predicament.

As puzzles are solved, the story unfolds into pulp fiction wherein each character's true identity is revealed. *Bad Mojo* could have quickly degraded into a cliché-ridden tale, and in some cases it does. But thankfully the acting, subject matter and over-the-top Quicktime animations prevent it from sinking to a bug's mentality.

Even though most intelligent gamers will solve the true origins of the main



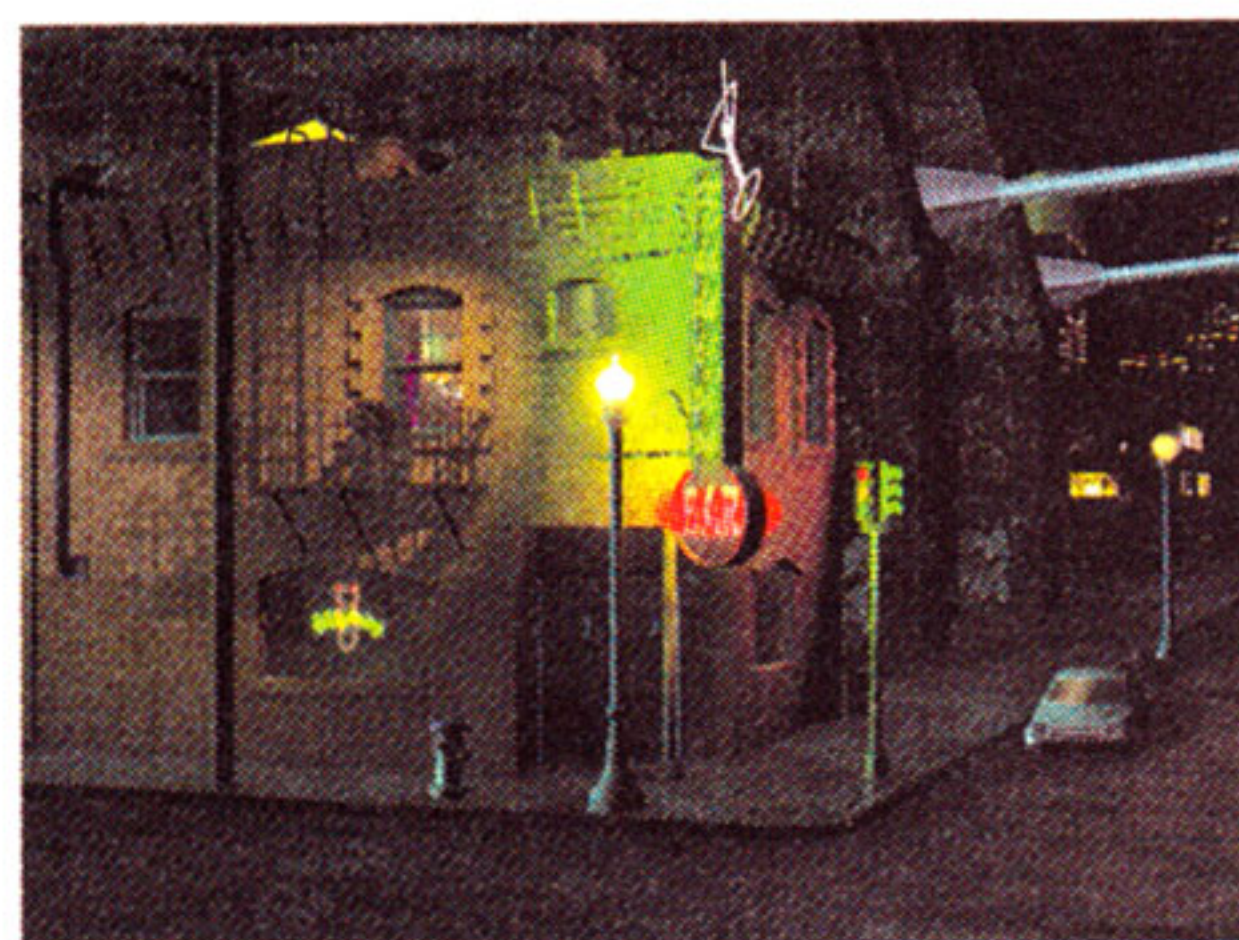
Butterflies are free to fly and are handsome bugs.



Who needs a fork when you can crawl in a bowl of chili?



Watch your step around sticky puddles of beer.



Bad Mojo's gaslamp district is a hotbed of bug activity.



characters midway through the game, *Bad Mojo's* videos provide obvious clues without insulting players' deductive capacities. They simply provide further insight into the misfortunes of the game's pathetic characters.

The puzzles themselves range from the relatively easy

positioning of objects to elaborate associations (the exhaust fan puzzle made me blow a fuse!), complete with a traditional adventure-style maze thrown in for good measure. After each "phase" is completed, players are provided brief Quicktime movie clues of how to solve the next round. These were a bit too revealing for me in some cases, especially since many of the movies contain obvious solutions in their playback imagery.

The game contains four possible endings, with only one being the rightful, happy ending. One of the game's greatest strengths, the Quicktime videos, is also its greatest weakness.

Like other games employing this technology, inquisitive players can simply open up the "MOVIES" directory and view all the Quicktime files that *Bad Mojo* has to offer. The other detraction of Quicktime is the limitation of the format itself. Grainy, 15-frame per second, limited screen playback detract from what could have been highly satisfying movie snippets. Instead, *Bad Mojo's* videos remind players of the harsh limitations of this playback technology. With technically superior games like Trilobyte's *The 11th Hour*, the Quicktime or AVI video playback methods won't be accepted by the quality-demanding gaming public much longer.

The other detraction is the 20+Meg hard-drive requirement. A majority of this hard-disk resident data is the sound files, with the ambient, entertaining music sound-



Top: *Bad Mojo's* blushing bride is left standing at the industrial altar. **Below:** A resourceful cockroach crawls across a makeshift bridge, showing its remarkable survival instincts.



track composed by talented musician Peter Stone taking up most of the space required. As with video quality, games are coming out supporting high-fidelity audio file playback directly from the CD-ROM without gameplay interference (Westwood Associates' *Command & Conquer* is a fine example of this).

These distractions are not the fault of the game design,

however. The problem lies in the hardware platform the game was targeted for. Had Drew Pictures and their newly merged Pulse Entertainment company been able to overcome these technical limitations, the game would have received a perfect score from this hard-to-please reviewer. For fresh, simple, interactive entertainment, *Bad Mojo* provides good medicine.

-Mike Riley

Sure, there are cheaper PC, Mac, and 3DO game controllers. But if you're ready to get serious, you need the high-quality, built-to-play-rough peripherals from CH Products.

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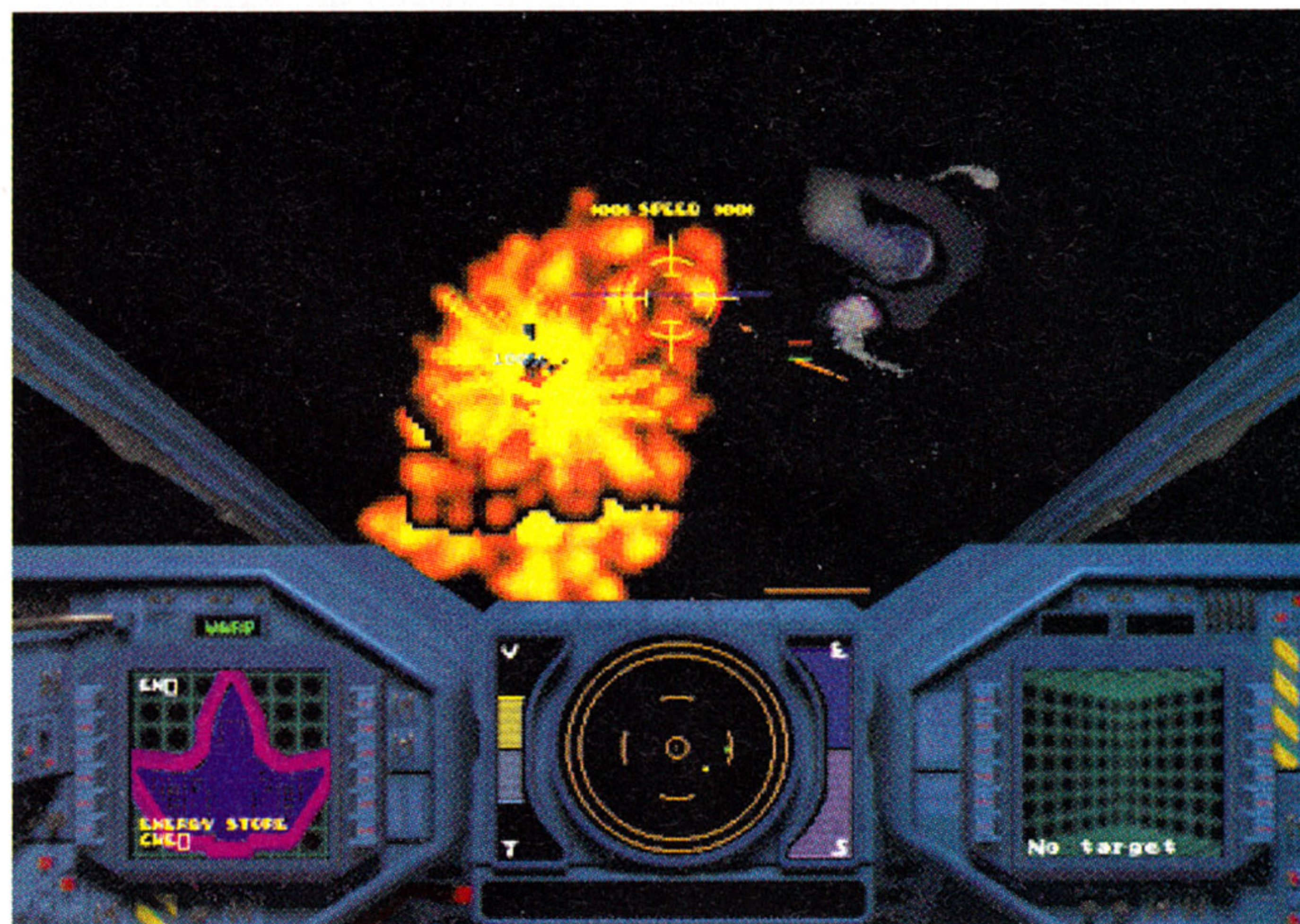
*Coming soon. First Quarter 1996.



STAR RANGERS

It is the 23rd century and you are part of an elite space fighter squadron called the Star Rangers. Your mission is to protect friendly ships, freighters and star bases against the advance of the evil alien Taureg race. You have a general purpose, warp drive-capable fighter ready to deliver interstellar justice, and with a wingman at your side. It's up to you to study the star map and decide where and how you will engage the Tauregs.

Hmmm...sound a little like *Wing Commander*? You're right, it is. *Star Rangers* borrows many ideas from that series, but publisher Interactive Magic says the main inspiration for this space sim comes from an old 1980s Atari series called *Star Raiders*. *Star Raiders* let you pilot a star ship as you strategically warped from sector to sector in pursuit of aliens



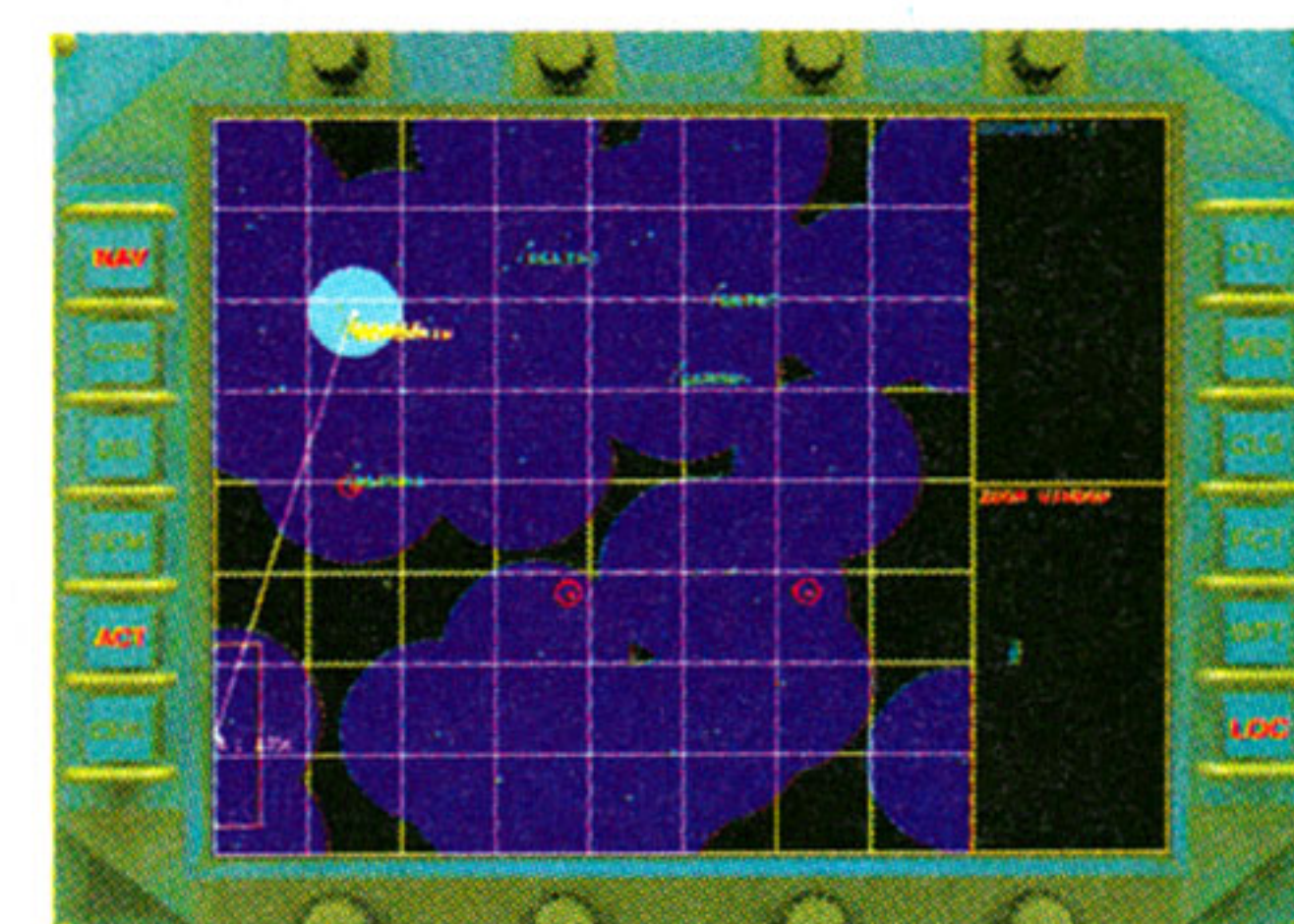
who attack you and your home star bases. Lose all the star bases and you lose the war. The player decides between who and where to attack vs. where and when to return to refuel, reload and repair the ship. Interactive Magic adds to this game idea a 1990s dose of 3-D high-resolution graphics, video film clips, wingmen and better sound—and wham, bam, you have *Star Rangers*, man!

In its favor, *Star Rangers* offers the "Star Raiders" strategy element that is unique to space sims of today. *Star Rangers* also offers a nice touch with explosions that cause damage to your ship if you fly through them. While other space sims have wingmen who pretty much stick with you and attack what you want until you send them away, *Star Rangers*' wingman can be sent to other sectors and wage battle for you to meet the Tauregs' multifront attacks. This is helpful when you need to be somewhere else but there is one or two stragglers you need to kill to clear the sector.

With all of this in its favor, *Star Rangers* is still a game



The hud helps you track enemy ships when they fly off-screen.



Call up the star map to check enemy strength and plan your next move.

that will stand in the shadow of *Wing Commander* or *The X-Wing TIE Fighter* series. *Wing Commander* has better graphics and both the *WC* and the Lucas space sims have better music, laser sounds and dogfight action. Even though *Star Rangers* is a solid game, it needs to implement its central strategy element a little better—it's too easy. This change would propel a future *Star Rangers* product ahead of the pack.

—Michael Stassus

FLY THE FRIENDLY SKIES

If you are having trouble kicking alien butt, here are some useful cheat codes to *Star Rangers*.

To activate the Cheat Mode, enter the word JAVA during the Flight Mode. You will get a message on your ship's instrument panel to know you are in Cheat Mode. After this, type the following words for the cheats you want:

SHAZAM	Makes you invincible
VITAMINZ	Full weapon reload and refuel
SCOTTY	Instant and infinite warp ability
ISEEU	View whole Star Map without the use of marker buoys
VOIZIS	Ends current mission as a success
DUST	Lets you fly through objects
CAMEO	Turns on warp tunnel autopilot
FRAMES	Displays the number of frames per second
BOGONS	Displays the faces of the Star Rangers Development team floating in space



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EARTHWORM JIM FOR WINDOWS

4

PUBLISHER: **Activision** THEME: **Action** MEGABITS: **7** PLAYERS: **1** LEVELS: **20**

For those of you who missed the worm phenomenon over on the cartridge side of the world, here's a brief recap: A common earthworm by the name of Jim is transformed into a superhero when an ultra-high-tech-indestructible-super-space-cybersuit literally falls on his head from outer space.



Earthworm Jim blasts his way onto PCs with new features, crazy villains and lots of fun.

PC owners everywhere owe Activision a debt of gratitude for bringing *EWJ* to Windows 95. Ports and translations are a dime a dozen.

Earthworm Jim, however, is worth the effort because it combines addictive play with inspired lunacy. From launching cows to lawyers from hell (er, Heck), *Earthworm Jim* will make you smile as you kick butt.

In New Junk City, menacing crows, giant mutant garbage cans, the junkyard's owner Chuck and his dog Fifi all want to welcome you to the junkyard in their own special way. On Planet Heck Evil the



Cat dances, while you wander through the devilishly tricky maze.

Bungee jumping is scary enough without Major Mucus trying to bash you into the walls, but that's exactly his plan. As your bungee cord gets thinner and thinner, your life hangs on a few measly threads! But that's not all.



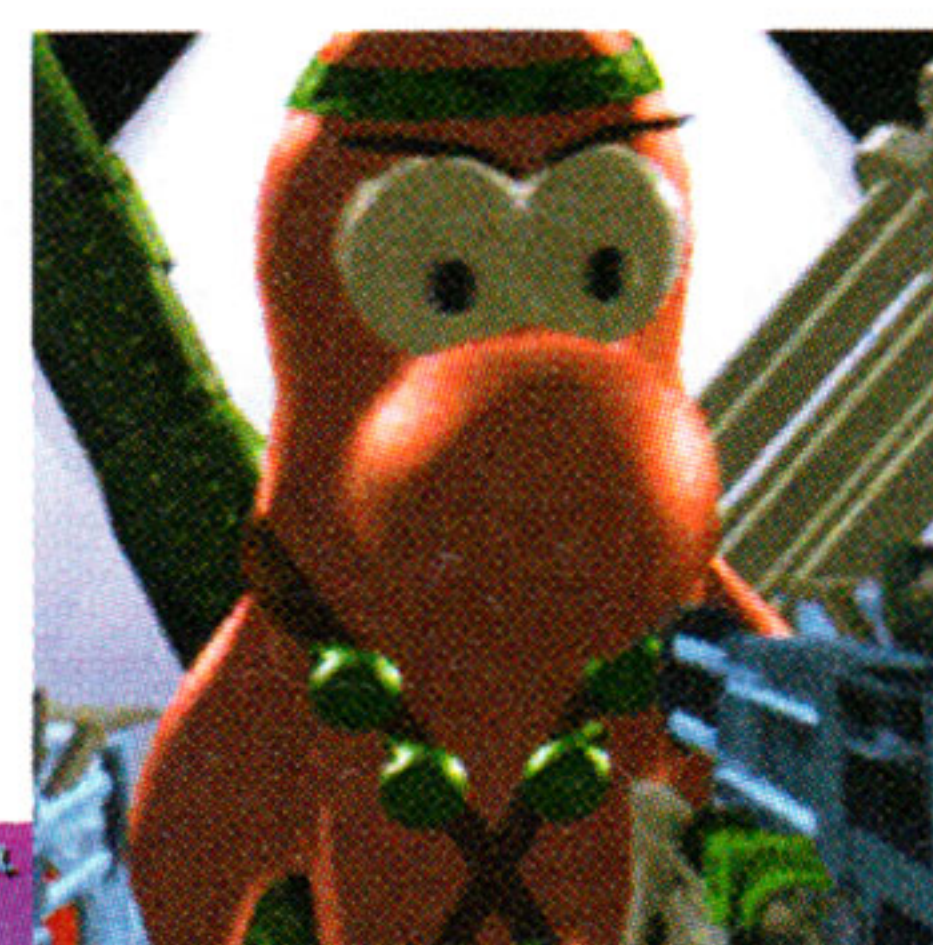
Another great extra on this Win95 version is the inclusion of an *Earthworm Jim* Windows 95 desktop theme. Install it and your desktop wallpaper is a huge graphic of the big worm himself. The theme also changes your cursor icons and Windows system sounds. When Windows 95 starts, for example, there is now the sound of sheep. (Are the designers trying to make a point?)

Even if you've played the original, this version is worth a look. If you missed it, *EWJ* is worth a very long look. Say 20 or 30 hours.

—Scott Bunkleemann

WORMS

When you think cuddly and appealingly cute, you *don't* think worms. Take away the slime, the stretchiness, stick some big eyes on it and give it an arsenal that a terrorist organization would die for, and you've got family fun.



Basically, *Worms* is a 2-D strategy game with some bits of action spicing it up. Up to four teams of four worms each are placed on a randomly generated landscape. Each worm gets a chance to move

around or attack other worms unmolested by the other creatures on the screen.

The variety of weapons brings lots of interesting twists, and in addition, worms can push one another and do a couple *Mortal Kombat*-type moves, accompanied by appropriately munchkin-like battle cries.

Graphically, *Worms* is less than impressive. The resolution is low, which works against the wide overview. One of the best things about the game, however, is the sheer multitude of options. Strategy can be greatly altered by limiting the number of times a team can execute certain commands.

There's no denying the fact that *Worms* is basically a more violent twist on the *Lemmings* concept. Not that this is a bad thing, *Lemmings* was a fab little piece of magnetic media, and borrowing from it is generally going to result in an entertaining software experience. Team 17 has done an excellent job with *Worms* by including tons of weapons and options to an already solid concept.

—Ed Finkler

PUBLISHER: **Ocean** THEME: **Strategy** MEGABITS: **13** PLAYERS: **1**

4

MONOPOLY

PUBLISHER: **Westwood Studios** THEME: **Strategy** MEGABITS: **8** PLAYERS: **1-6**

4 1/2

We've all played *Monopoly* before, right? Well, it's a whole new game, thanks to the outstanding CD-ROM version completed by Westwood Studios.

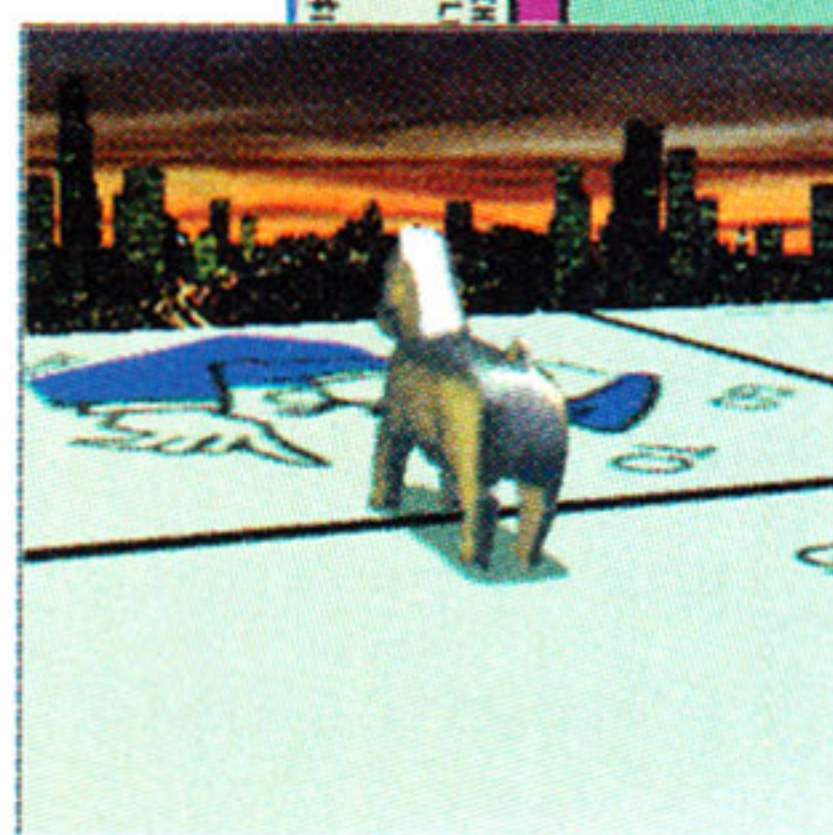
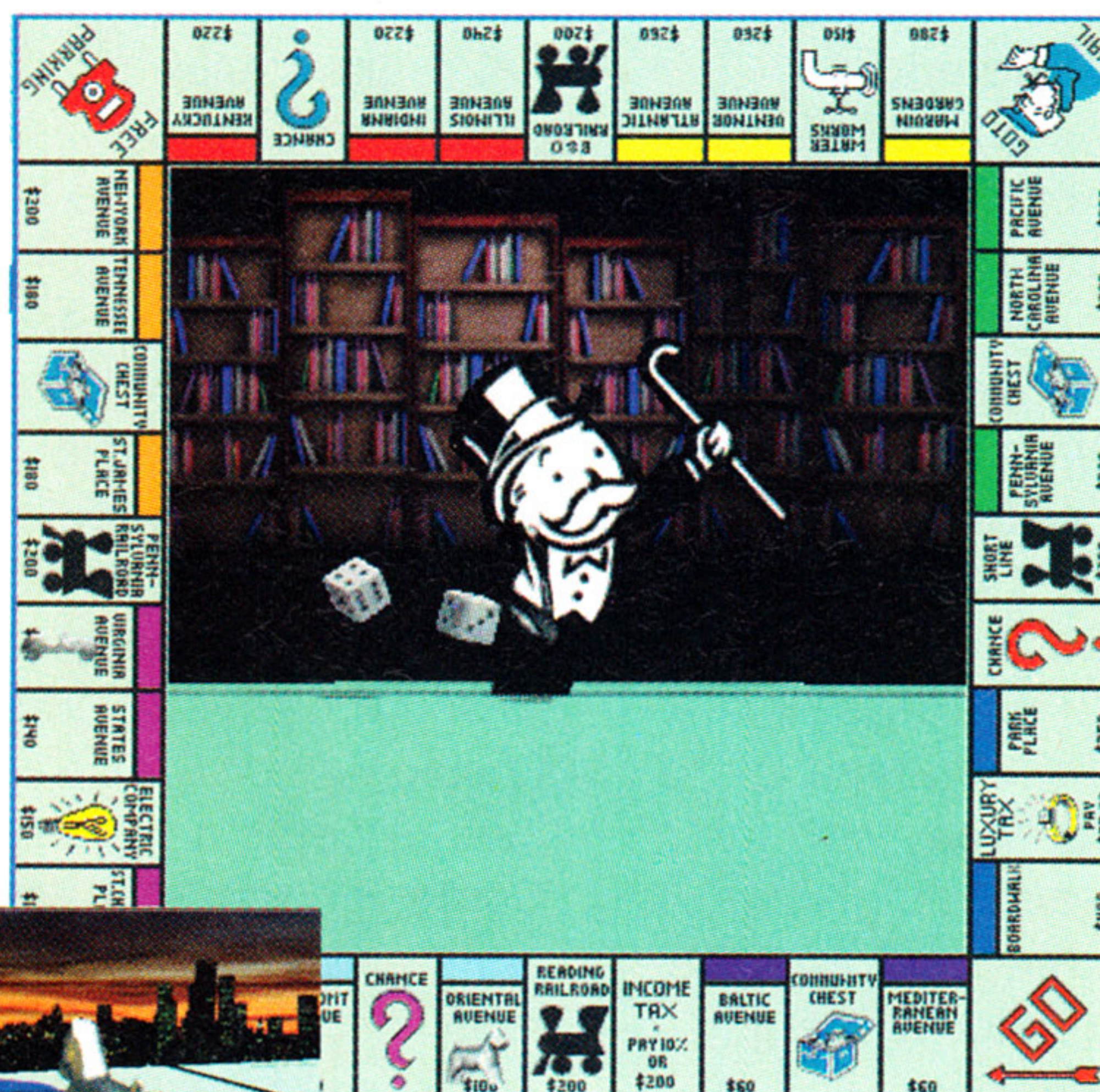
Westwood did a beautiful job of re-creating the classic board game, and the user has an array of options, most of which are not available on the non-electronic version. The game rules can be customized in 13 ways, for example, to double salary when landing on GO, hide or show cash, even to permit cheating. A set of International Options provides seven card styles (American,

U.K., French, German, Spanish, Belgian and Dutch).

The most intriguing way to play is online, where the gamer contests with others on the World Wide Web. The program translates funds and messages on the fly, so that each player sees local currency and reads the appropriate language. Although the AI provides good competition, there is nothing quite like facing off against human opponents. Doing it internationally adds an exciting spice.

Not much is missing from this excellent version, except the family gathered around the dining room table.

-Joyce Worley



Monopoly lets you play against the computer or go online and play against the masses.

Get A Taste.

Worms is a fast-paced game of strategy, wits and reflexes. We're so sure you'll get hooked that we're dishing out a free taste of Worms just for you!

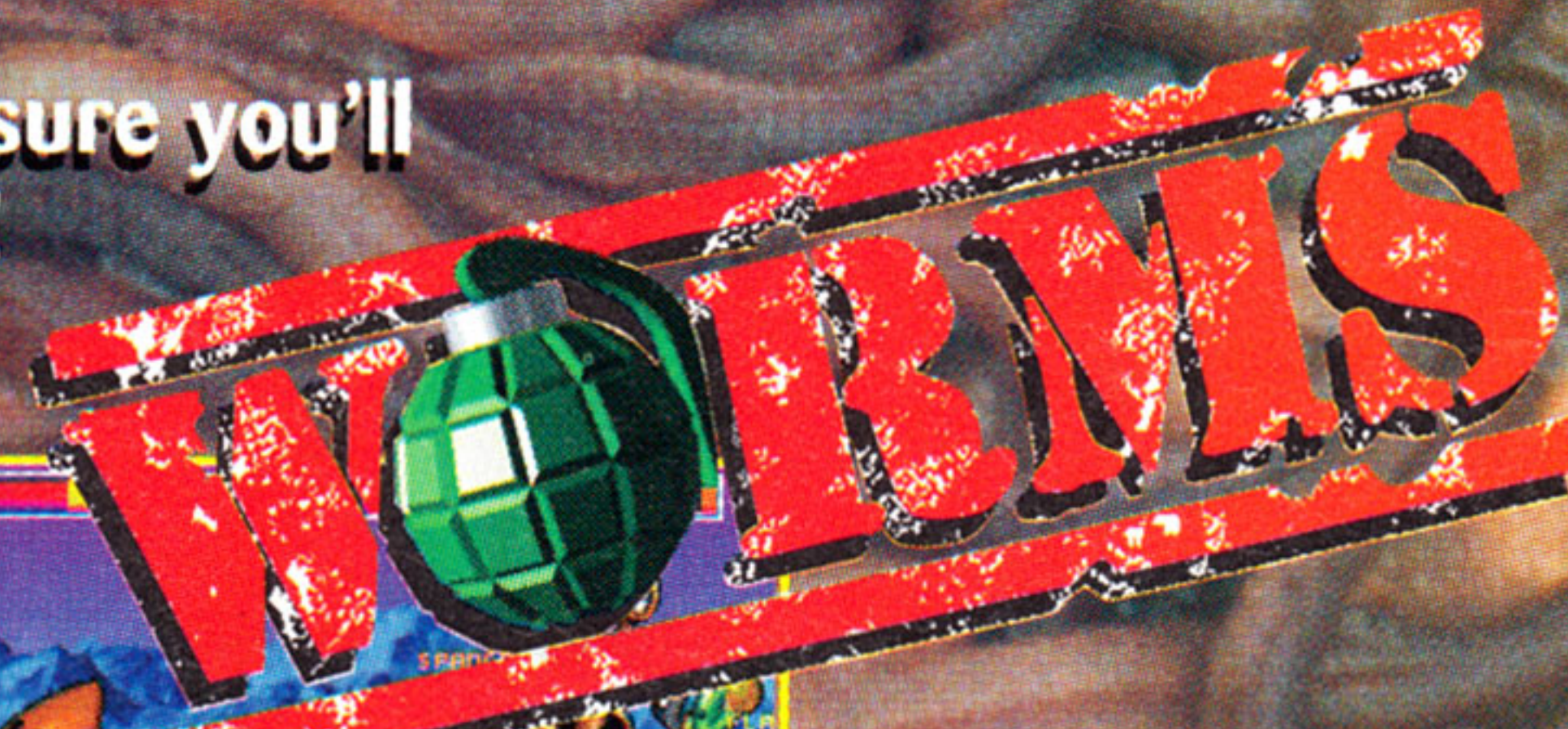
Check out the Worms web-site at www.worms.com/game to get a **FREE** fully playable version of the first two levels of this addictive adventure for your PC.

**So why wait?
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With four teams made up of four worms each, up to 16 players battle for the ultimate weapon: Killer Sheep.



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FIGHTER DUEL

There are entire squadrons of PC flight simulator games flooding the marketplace these days. All promise to deliver next-generation super VGA graphics, great flight models, hordes of texture-mapped enemies and a war campaign that will engage you for hours if not days. While most of these games try to please everybody with their legion of features, in the process, they end up pleasing no one except the guy selling them. *Fighter Duel*, created by Jaeger Software and published by Philips, promises only super WWII dogfighting action and great graphics. *Fighter Duel* scores a kill on both promises, making it one of those rare games that is simple to play, great to look at and all around loads of fun.

Fighter Duel lets you fly 13 different period planes including the P51-D Mustang, F6F Hellcat, two variations of the famous "Baa, Baa Black sheep" Corsair or four variations of the British Spitfire, the German FW 190, three variations of Messerschmitt or the dreaded Japanese Zero.

Each plane variation is featured in its historical paint scheme and is presented in ultra detail in Super VGA Mode, so you can tell them apart when the level of com-

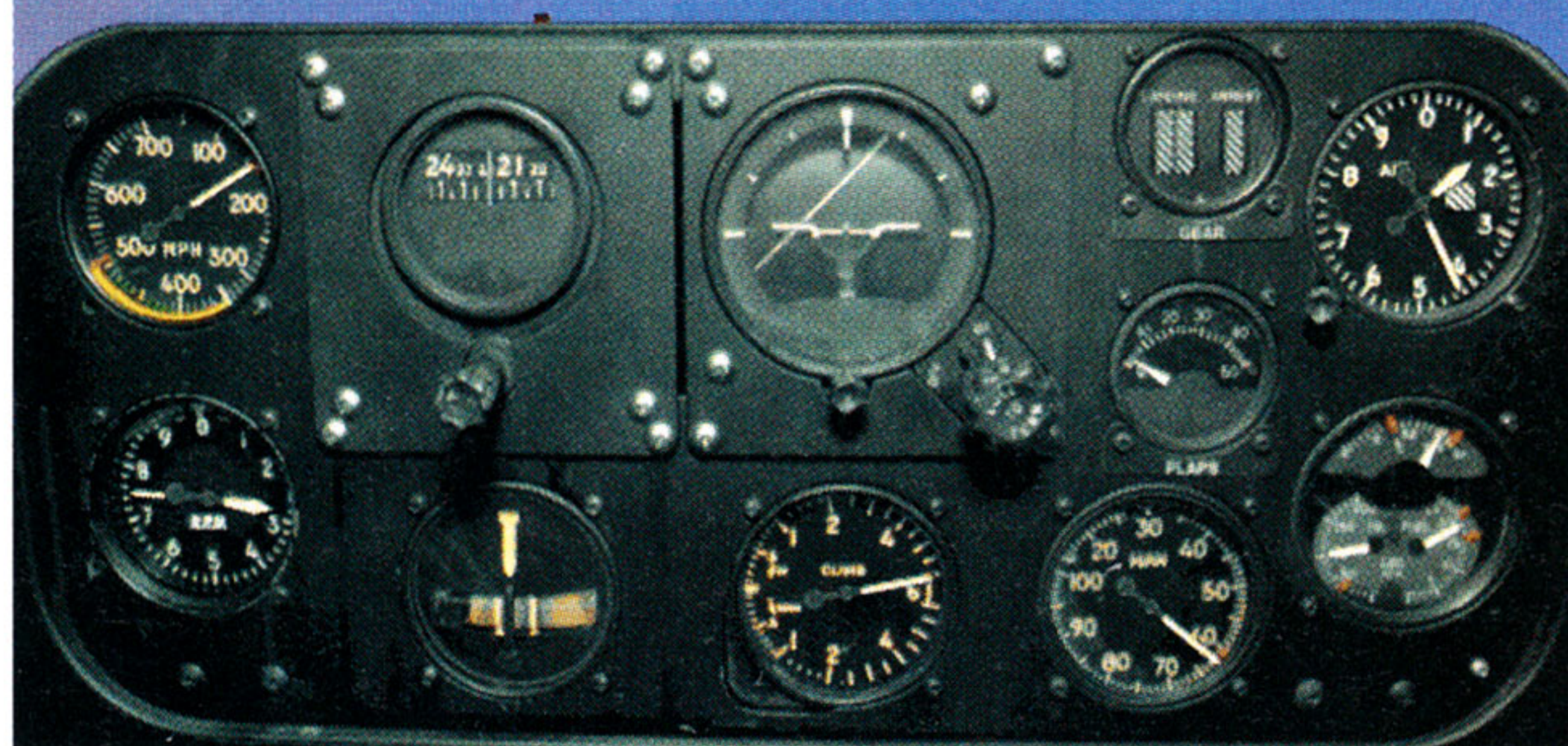
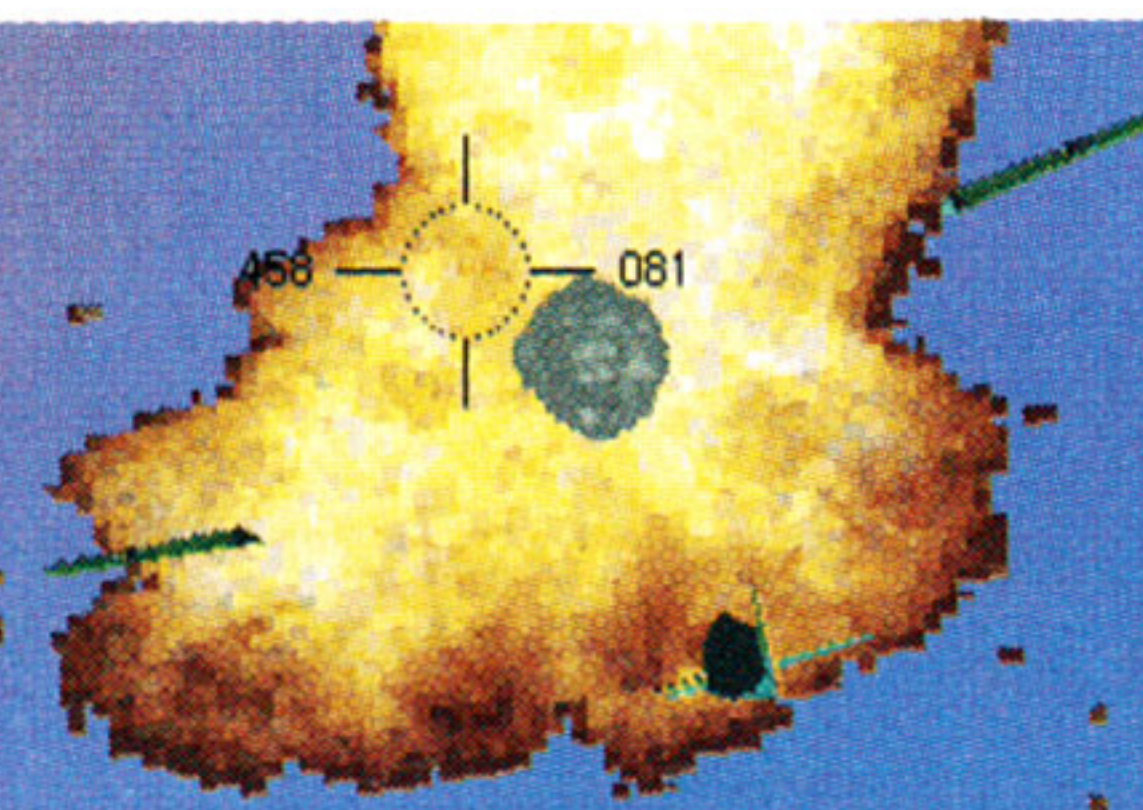
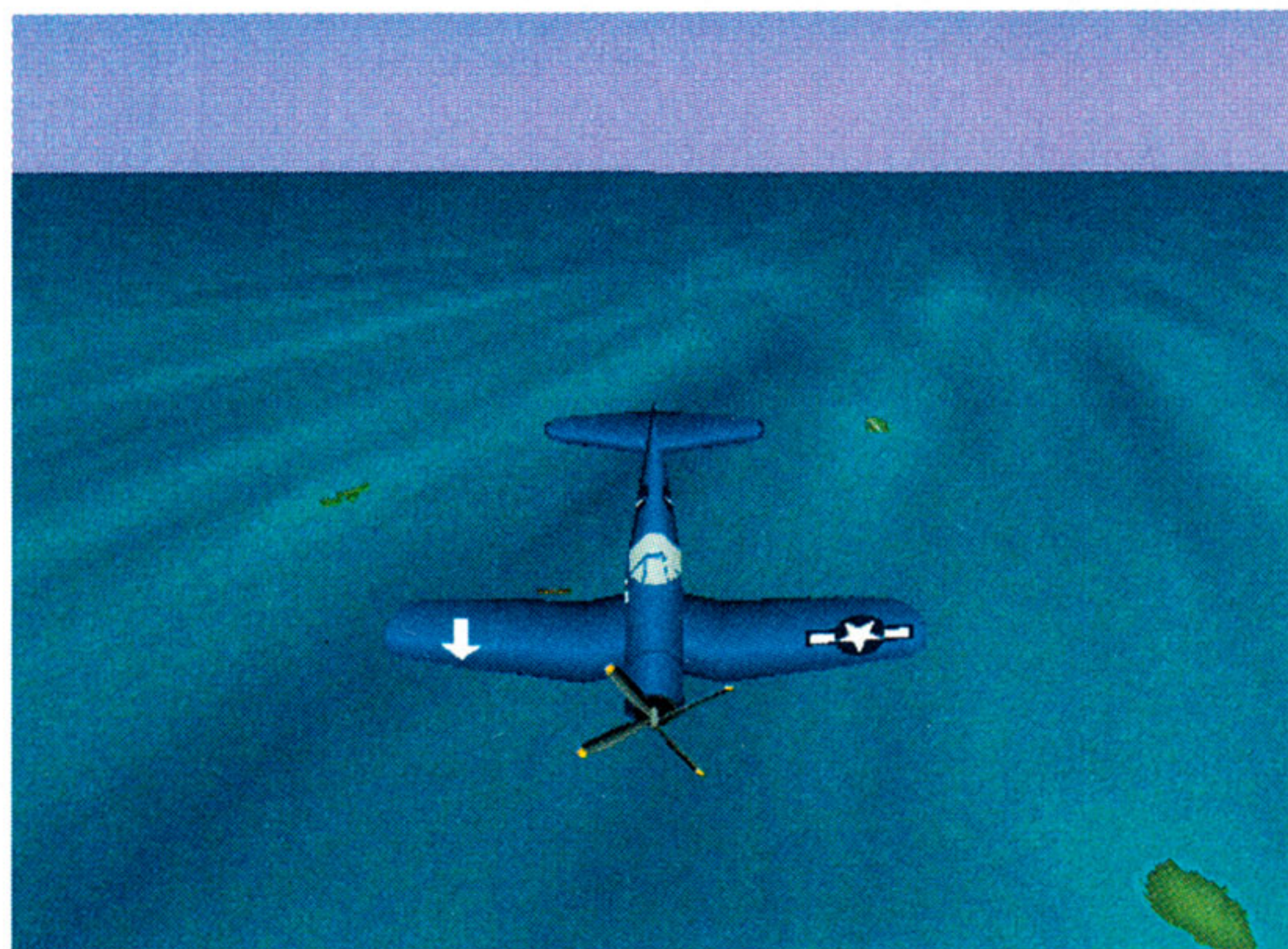
bat really starts to get hot and heavy.

While it is hard to notice the flight characteristics of each plane variation, it is evident that the flight models for a Corsair and a Hellcat are different from a Zero or Messerschmitt.

Some flight-sim purists will knock *Fighter Duel* for its lack of bombing missions, Campaign Mode or controllable and intelligent wingman, but for those who enjoy the close-range, turning dogfight action of WWII aircraft, the game is certain to become a well-loved classic.

Every battle takes place over the vast Pacific Ocean decorated with a few scattered islands (one with an airstrip) and an aircraft carrier for scenery.

Though sparse, the scenery features a great deal of color and appears extremely realistic. It is this simplicity that no doubt gives *Fighter Duel* the high frame rate that makes manning the controls of the game as smooth as silk.



Unlike modern jet sims, *Fighter Duel* gives you the satisfaction of close-range kills with explosions that send the enemy's plane into lots of pieces.

During combat you have all the views you would expect from a game like this, with the inclusion of a cockpit (which can also be hidden away for better flying visibility) with realistic gauges that really work.

The drawback to this, however, is that you have the same instrument panel for every one of the aircraft. This is something the pro-

grammers will hopefully fix if and when a sequel to *Fighter Duel* is made!

You have the option of starting battle in the air or on the ground either on the island airstrip or from the aircraft carrier. You can choose to fly against one to eight enemies depending on the amount of

RAM in your machine.

If you blow away all the bad guys, you can try your hand at landing the plane either on the island or aircraft carrier.

When you get tired of blowing up computer bogies, you can also play against a friend using a 9600 baud modem.

Although it lacks depth, *Fighter Duel* is a solid game that features fantastic graphics and top-notch dogfighting action. Best of all, there is a money-back guarantee.

If you buy *Duel* and hate it, all you have to do is tell 'em why, send everything back with a receipt and Philips refunds your cash. For more information on *Fighter Duel* check out the Web site at <http://www.philipsmedia.com/media/games>.

—Michael Stassus

RIPLEY'S BELIEVE IT OR NOT

The world of Robert Ripley provides a colorful background to this mysterious adventure. As Ripley explores the world, hunting for oddities to display in his museum, he learns of an archaeological treasure that could tip the balance of power in 1936.

Ripley's world is an enigmatic place with many things to examine, most of which have nothing to do with the plot. There's a curious mix-

animated sequences advance the plot.

The journey leads the hero through Peiping, Peru, Germany and other exotic hot spots, where Ripley can collect oddities, and find clues to the mystery of the powerful artifact he seeks. The trip is made interesting through the art: spectacular scenes are well-rendered backdrops to the digitized characters he meets along the way.

Many of the conversations

objects and people. It's part of his goal to accumulate interesting things for the museum, so examining things is an important part of the experience.

This involving exploration is accompanied by a pleasant but unobtrusive music score, in different styles for each location. The German estate uses lovely harpsichord music; in China, it's tinkling bells. These varied themes do add to the local color.

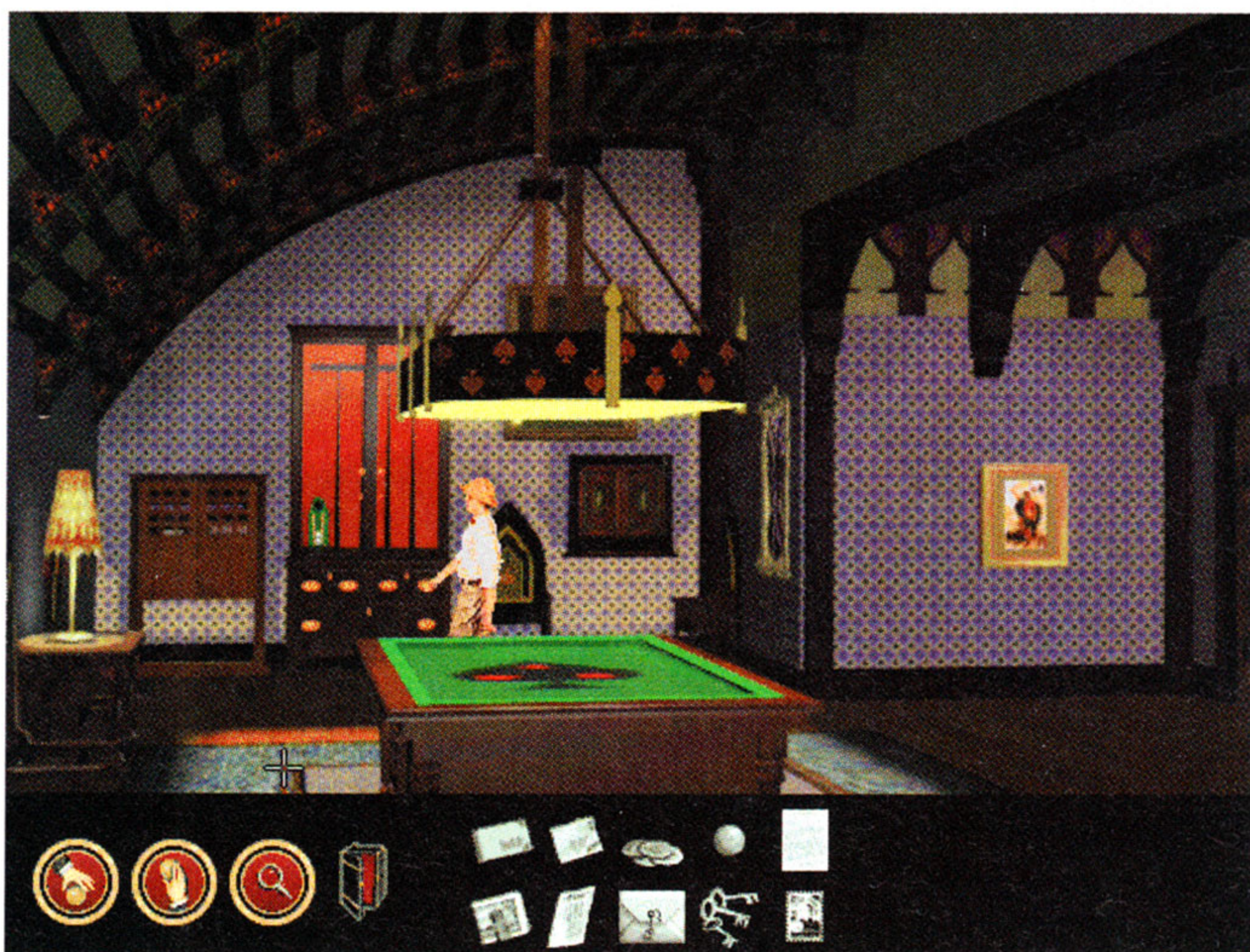
Unfortunately, the game doesn't work with Windows 95, and requires the user to go into an earlier version of MS-DOS. Loading time, for the maximized version of the game, is over a half hour. But once the entertainment starts, it's a fascinating travelog of Ripley's search.

The abundance of things actually makes the game harder to play. There is so much to do, so many things to examine, it's easy to get lost in the artifacts and not find the clues that advance Ripley's adventure.

Fortunately, Sanctuary Woods has an excellent player's guide (sold separately). All but expert players will need help to get through the world travels, to say nothing of finding the solution.

This is visually a showcase product that will impress everyone who sees it. Unfortunately, the actual adventure is overburdened with options, making it frustrating for players who try to solve the Riddle of Master Lu.

—Joyce Worley



ture of automatic actions and puzzles. In most instances, he knows just what to do, and information is dispatched to the player through his actions and conversations.

The interface is slick and efficient. As the cursor moves across items, it changes to indicate the logical action (examine, pick up and use). Similarly, a word balloon appears when conversation is possible. When Ripley uses objects correctly,

are automatic. If the player performs the correct maneuvers, the story advances in leaps and bounds, providing guidance for what to do and where to go next.

Ripley moves across the stage in splendid digitized movement that, despite the smallness of the figures, is lifelike and graceful. Since the sets are three-dimensional, there's a great deal of space for Ripley to explore, and it's filled with interesting



Filling Ripley's museum with artifacts is the goal.



There are numerous exotic locales to search for treasure.



Dead men do tell tales, and their Gothic gravestones are proof in this adventure.

FUSIONREVIEWS

THE DIG

Graphic adventures were getting a little threadbare in the originality department even three years ago, when word of *The Dig* first reached gamers.

Word leaked out that LucasArts was working on a graphic adventure with none other than Steven Everything-I-Touch-Turns-to-Gold Spielberg. LucasArts promised something new.

A graphic adventure with a Hollywood story line, powerful new levels of character interaction in the gameplay and Spielberg's magic touch. Three years later, *The Dig* has arrived. It delivers on the Hollywood story line, serving up a convoluted plot that would do any science-fiction fan proud.

Earth is threatened by a mammoth asteroid on a collision course with Earth. The player, in the role of Boston Low, a by-the-book career military man, leads a crew of astronauts to intercept the asteroid and divert it with nuclear warheads.

The crew quickly discovers the asteroid is not what it

seems, and while exploring its interior, the big rock up and warps to another solar system, taking the crew for a psychedelic ride. And that's just for openers.

Unfortunately, while *The Dig* delivers on story line, it doesn't succeed as well in other areas. Spielberg's role has been reduced to "based on a concept by" and additional story mentions in the credits.



Based on a concept by Steven Spielberg and brought to fruition by LucasArts, *The Dig* is full of the action, wonder and excitement for which the multimedia powerhouses are famous.

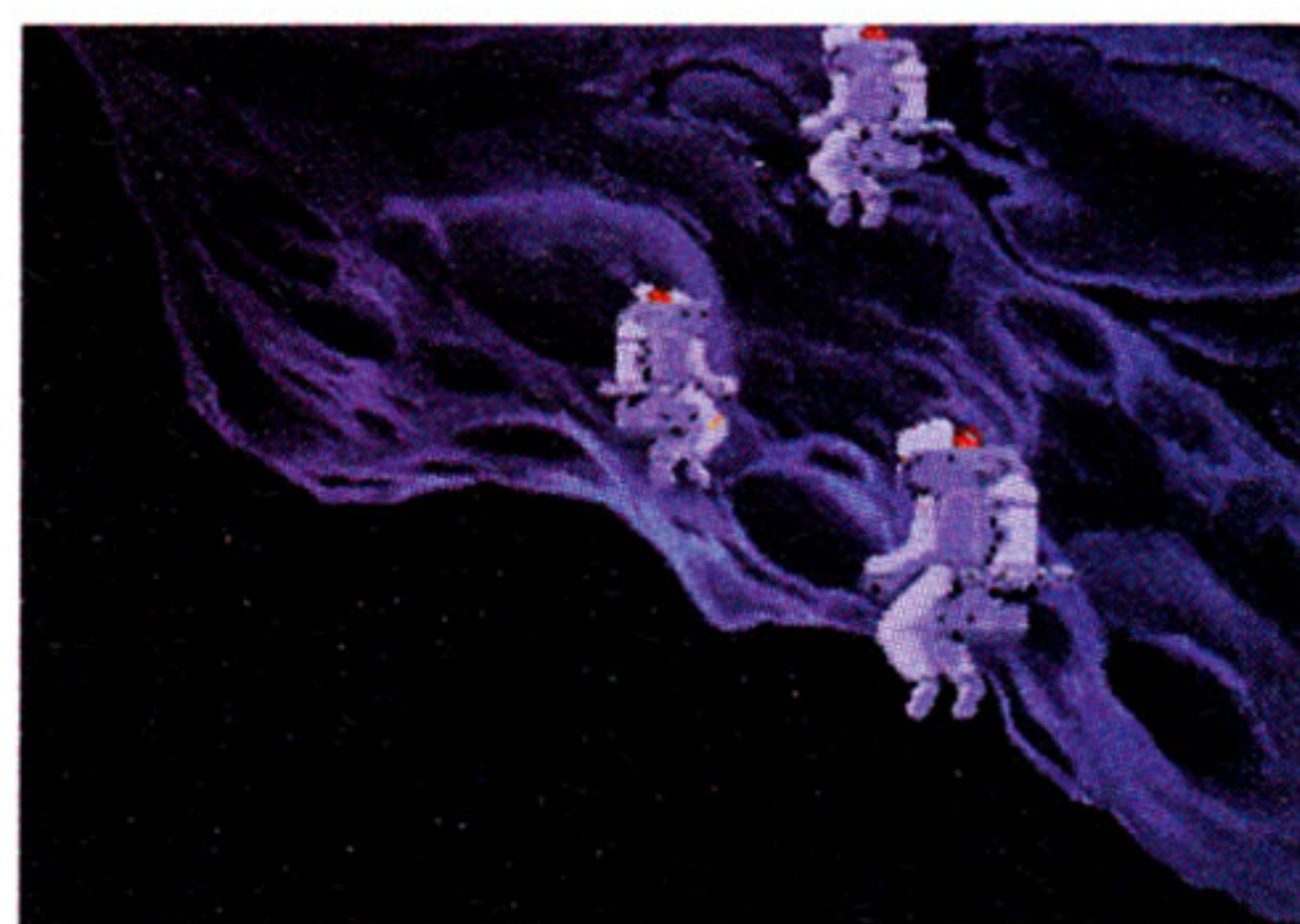
His demanding eye for production values is missed, as the weakest aspect of *The Dig* is its low-resolution graphics. In an age of SVGA eye-poppers like *Crusader*, *Dig*'s pixelated characters look astoundingly clunky.

The background art, however, remains handsome and otherworldly. Other highpoints include the soundtrack, which succeeds in setting the mood without ever becoming tedious or overly repetitive.

The good news is that *The Dig* breaks ground in terms of its interactive ensemble cast. Your two shipmates (rock-

mates?) don't simply follow you around blindly like zombies. They contradict you, insult you. In fact, they hardly stick around at all.

Much of your contact happens via radio. This brings up another strength of the game: a no-brainer conversation interface. You simply click on icons that represent the subject you want to discuss, then sit back and take in the dialogue that follows.



Dig outer space as it's made fun and simple on the shuttle.



As for the gameplay itself, *The Dig* comes up a bit short for experienced gamers. The designers relied on too many puzzles which are essentially combination locks.

Once you've found the combination, the door or obstacle pops open. Newcomers, however, will more than likely enjoy *The Dig* for its relatively straightforward progression and plenty of assists from the crewmates. Additionally, several of the obstacles will prove challenging to even the most die-hard adventure game fans.

-Dave Gerding



Meet the press to tell the world about your adventures.



PUBLISHER: LucasArts THEME: Adventure MEGABITS: 20 PLAYERS: 1

3½



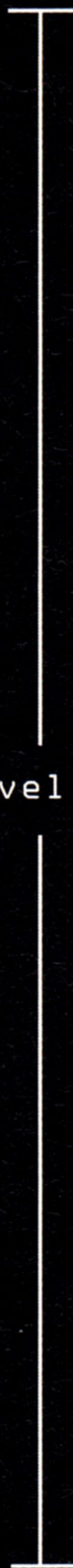
<http://www.atari.com>

Level 7

Level 25

Level 42

Level 100



3½

Technology caught *Old-Time Baseball* leaning the wrong way and picked it off third base. Like its compatible cousin *Tony LaRussa Baseball III*, this is an excellent statistical baseball simulation with a serviceable action mode. Also like *TLBIII*, its excellence is compromised by failure to stay on the PC cutting edge.

This enormous program requires DOS in this age of Windows 95. Even the stripped-down *OTB* won't fit comfortably on any but the most powerful 486s.

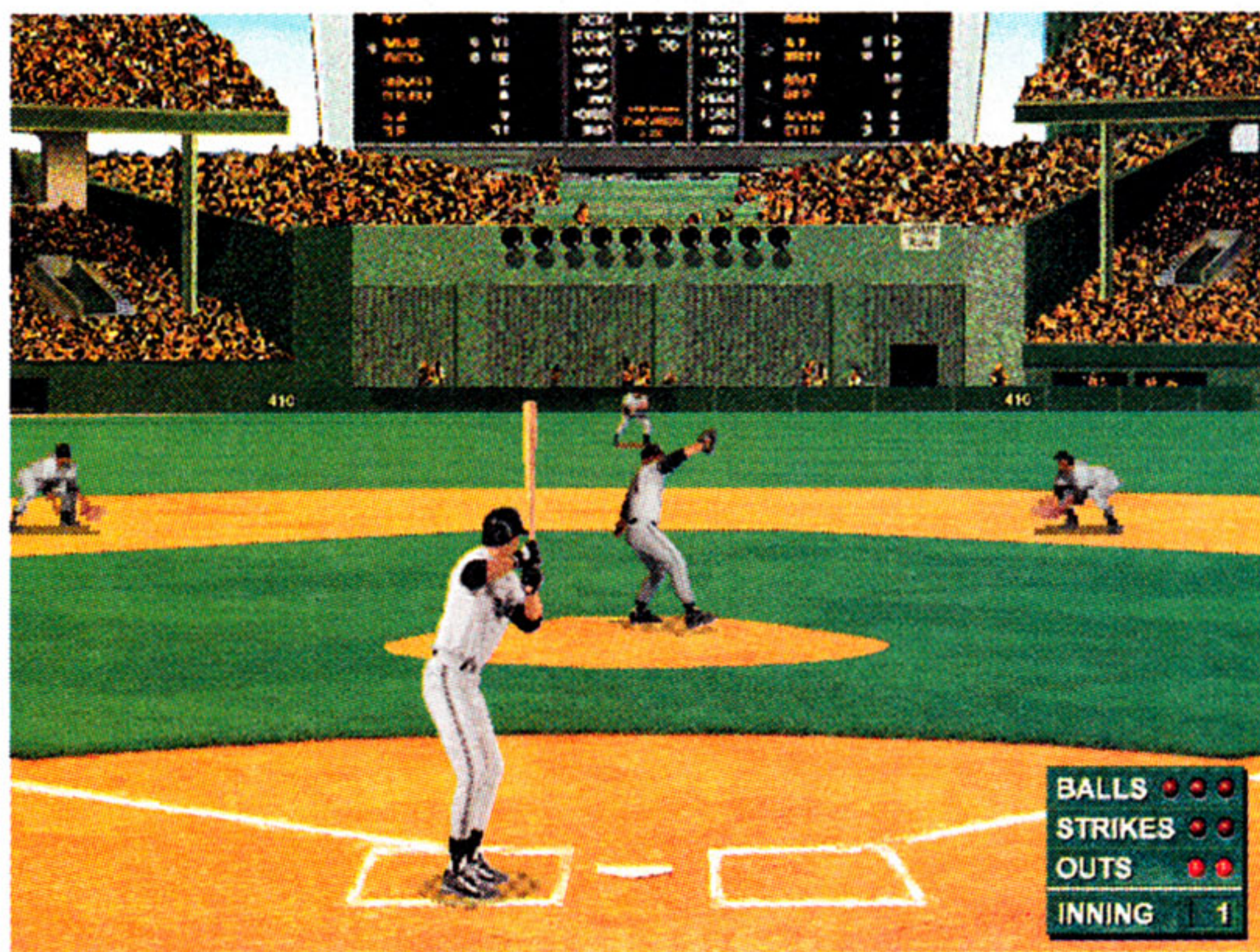
To add an extra twinge of frustration, *OTB* appears to install, checking memory, cards and so forth every step of the way. Only when the grandstand manager tries to run the actual program does the screen inform that there isn't enough memory to do the job. This is a home-run program, if you've got a nicely loaded Pentium or equivalent, but it's a strike-out on computers with less than 16MB of RAM and 50MB of free hard-drive space.

Simple menus configure draft day, including the order of selection. The option to use rotisserie ratings adds reality, because it forces GMs to budget points in order to get the best balance of stars and supporting players.

The designers of *Old-Time Baseball* have made a few errors, but this is a very compelling title, especially for serious students of the game.

—Arnie Katz

The stadiums are accurately depicted, but the graphics leave something to be desired compared to other baseball games.



MW2: GHOST BEAR'S LEGACY

Sometimes gamers need the real thing. Adventure games have their place, and no one will claim that a bit of *Tetris* or *SimCity* isn't fun from time to time, but days come when only hardcore heavy metal will do. And nothing can claim a much harder core than piloting a multiton mechanical man armed with missiles, lasers and other such implements of destruction straight into the heat of battle. In short: a *Mechwarrior II* fix.

For those who have already bested the original *MW2*, *Ghost Bear's Legacy* will prove just the thing



Arm your mech for bear and get ready for hours of fun with this action-packed sequel.

for a cold winter's night of gaming adrenaline. This expansion pack claims all the fire and fury of the first game, with plenty of extra missions, mechs and weapons thrown in for good measure. *GBL* starts after the Refusal War covered in *MW2*. It turns out that someone has stolen the genetic material that makes up the warrior legacy of the Ghost Bear clan. Your job is to take part in the strike missions to go and find it. Unlike *MW*, you can't change mechs at will. Instead, you must stay with your mech for multiple missions until you make it back to your homeworld in-between legs of the campaign. This also brings the game more into line with pen and paper and adds to the challenge of the simulation.

Those mech pilots who found *MW2* a bit too easy should find much more of a challenge in *GBL*. Some of these missions are definitely of the separate-the-men-from-the-boys variety. In short, if you liked *MW2*, you will love *GBL*.

—John P. Withers

3½

<http://www.loop.com/~bluesky> Seek The Signs Look To The Top Hole Rock It begins upon radiant mountaintops Ancient Travellers Cross Frequency/Full Bandwidth/High Fidelity
 Vibrations Magnetix 16 bit UltraStereo® Surround Sound Ultra High Resolution 24 Bit Color Escape φ διν τη αχινεντ συμβλοσ οτ λουνγκ ητε οσηγγαε Experience
 Μεσσαγες ιN Εητ ΧΡοτΣ Expand Outward Transcendental/Hyperdimensional Absence of Violence Find The Lenses + Nno Weapons + Gather Light From The Pharaoh's Tomb
 you're journey will be long,so let the sights and sounds surround your senses an experience like no other ΡοΧΚ αΔN ΡοΑΑ No Turn Back Uncover the Secrets of the Underworld Temples

WELCOME TO THE FUTURE

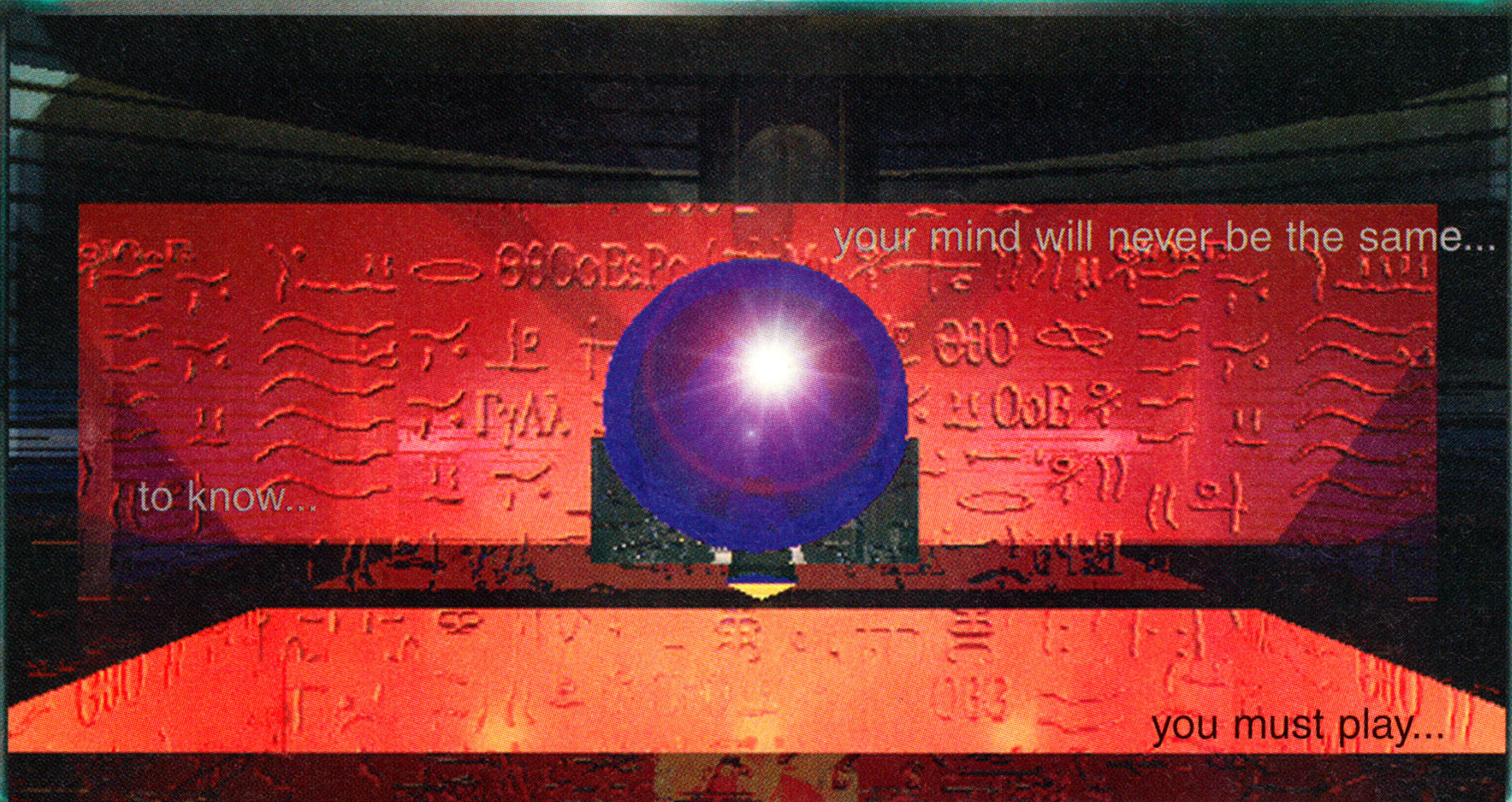
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so much more
than a game...

so good

seek the signs...



welcome to the future

ACTUAL SCREENSHOTS



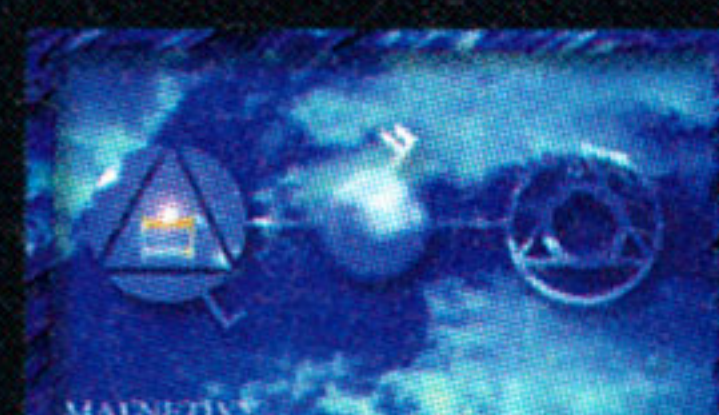
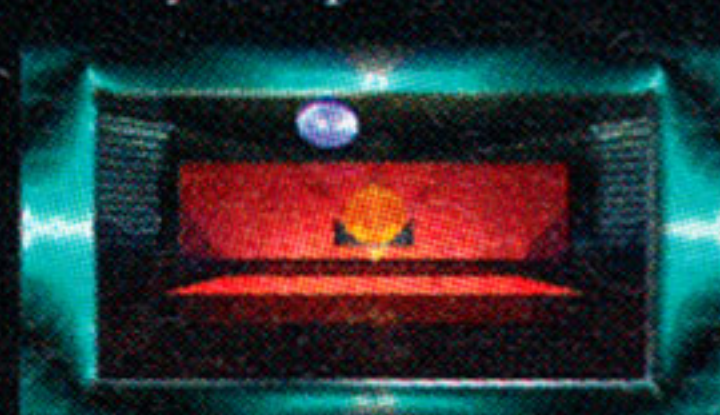
REACH OUT

EXPAND YOUR MIND

TOUCH A VISION



Explore surrealistic mountainscapes, go deep underground, fly over subterranean temples, gather the symbols and ancient artifacts to increase your power and unlock unseen treasures from the past. a cosmic first...



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coming soon for other platforms part adventure part prophecy all incredible over 25,000 frames of mind bending raytraced 3D completely different

"... you'll love this disc. 'Future' is a cosmic treasure hunt along sun drenched mountain paths and glittering animated subterranean worlds." Entertainment Weekly

"This thing is f%&in' AWESOME!" Digital Revolution Ελεχτριχ Ροιν ONE CDROM WELCOME TO THE FUTURE the-only-ultra-high-resolution-surround-sound-quest-for-the-VOYAGE

EF2000

We can cut through the chitchat right now. *EF2000* is the best modern warfare flight-simulator out there today. If you are a flight simulator fan who owns a souped-up system (P90 or better with 16 Megs of RAM and all the other bells and whistles) prepare to ignore your friends and family for weeks to come.

Digital Image Design, the creators of *EF2000*, have managed to mix the beautiful high-resolution scenery and virtual cockpit features of *Flight Unlimited* with a full-featured, modern fighter bomber aircraft. In addition to having a pretty environment to fly around in, all of the enemy planes and vehicles sport high-resolution texture mapping similar to *U.S. Navy Fighters* or *Dawn Patrol*. No attention to detail has been spared in this simulation from radar, weapon and fuel screens right down to the instruction manual.

EF2000 puts you in the seat of the British/NATO next-generation fighter plane that should see real action by the turn of the century. The *EF2000* is Europe's answer to the new F-22 fighter that is under development in the United States.

The reason this title is so awesome is that it delivers so much and is yet so simple. Flying the *EF2000* lets you engage both in air combat with wingmen using all the cool air-to air missile

toys and ground strikes with all the cool bombs modern warfare has to offer. And remember all this in a photorealistic environment.

The beauty of *EF2000*, though, is in the documentation and the actual flying experience. There are a number of pre-wargame simulator features that are designed to let you fly around and enjoy all the fantastic scenery without so much as a sam or bullet coming at you. If you are the button-pushing freak who wants to control every element of the plane, you're surely in luck as the aircraft is simulated in sickening detail.

Once you have completed training and are ready for action, you can try one of 12 premade missions or engage in an all-out campaign.

Within the Campaign Mode, the player can choose

the type of sortie they want to fly from a list of many as they continue the battle. There are also options for multiplayer over a network.

The only bummer with this game is you really need a beefy machine to get all you can out of *EF2000*. Be assured with the mighty P90 and 16 Megs of RAM the frame rate is okay.

Sometimes the sim will really slow down but it is always playable. This title is a prime example of something that could use a boost from one of those fancy new Creative Labs 3-D Blaster accelerator cards. There are a number of resolutions, though, so people without Pentiums can play the game both in low-resolution VGA or SVGA with just a polygon landscape. Hmm...how much is a P133 going for these days?

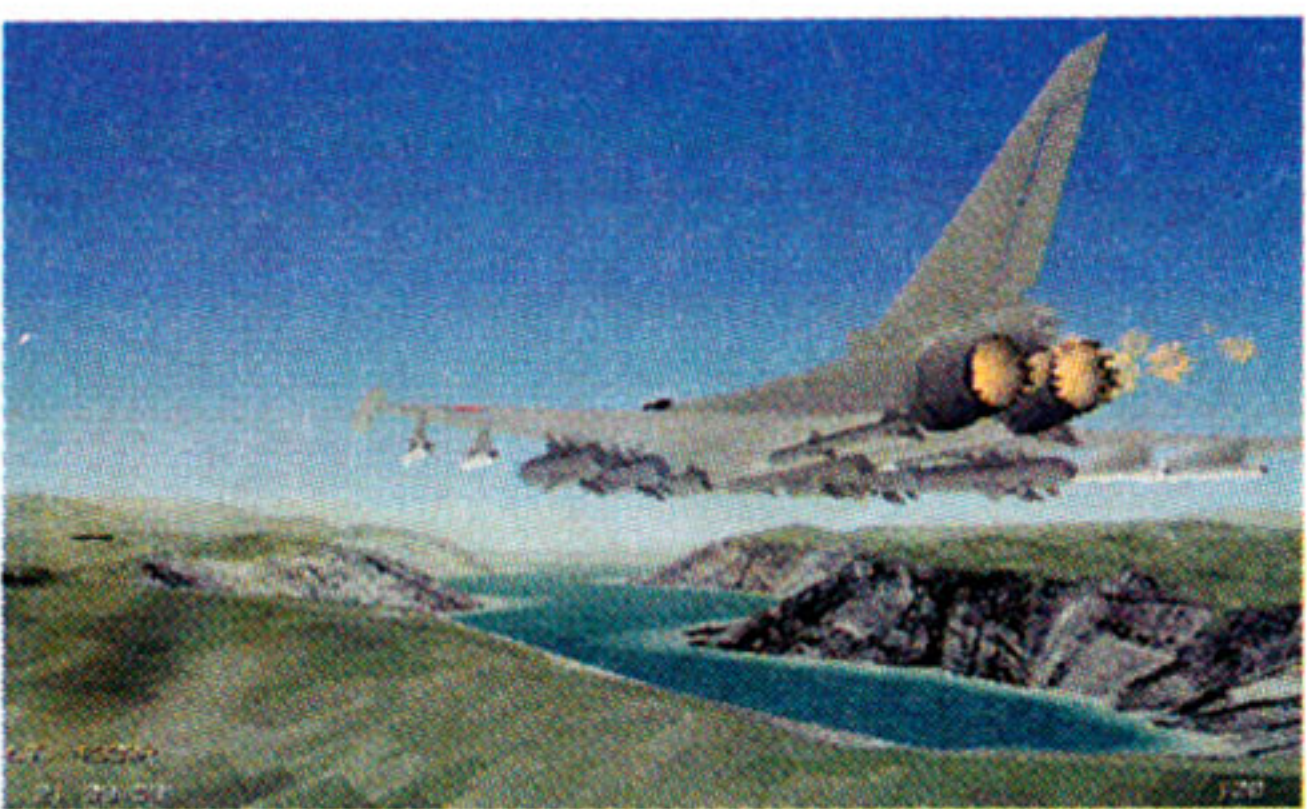
-Michael Stassus



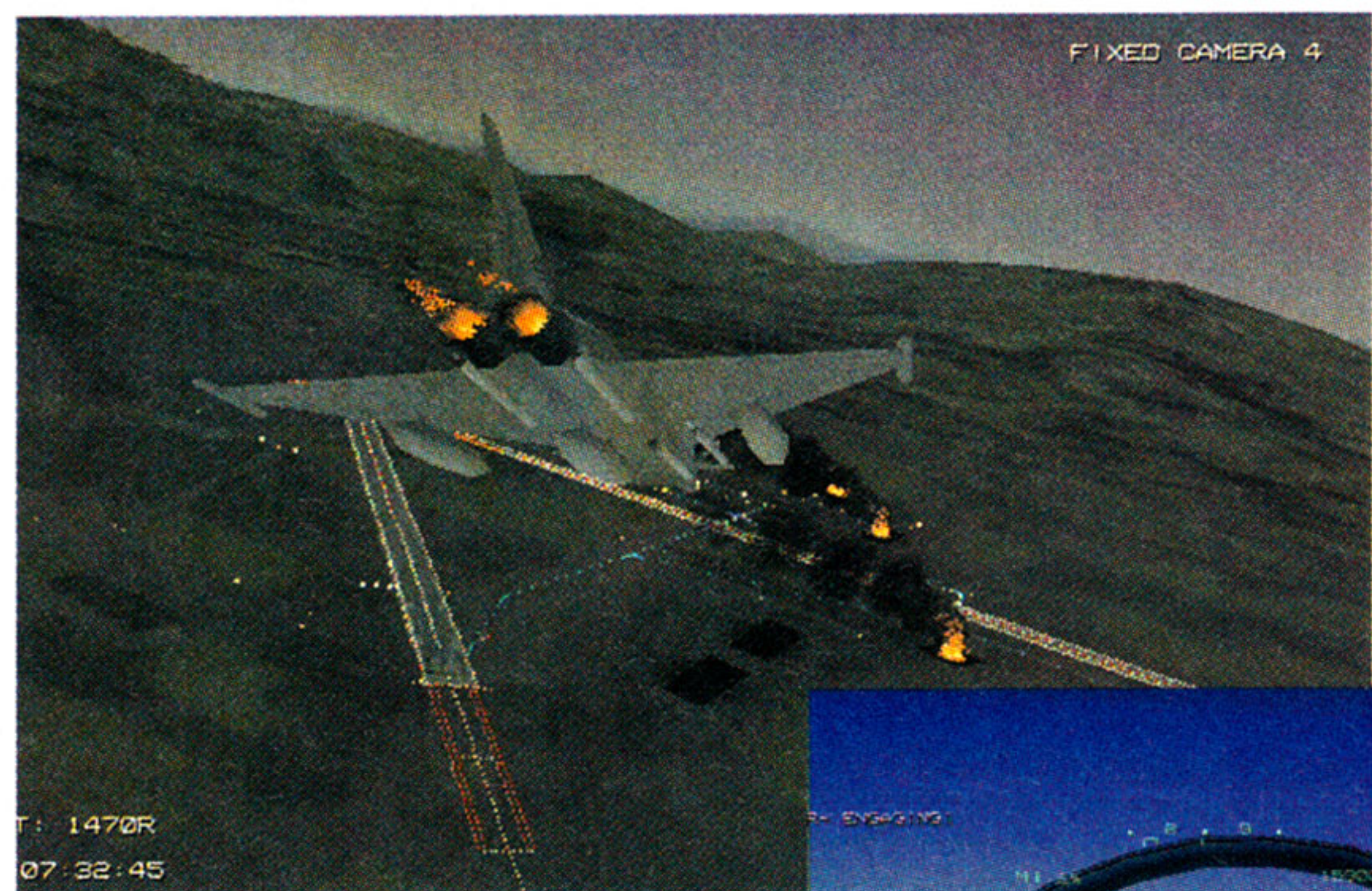
Line up on your target and blow it to smithereens.



Fly missions with wingmen who follow orders to the "t".



The landscape rivals even *Flight Unlimited* but you get to do some killin'.



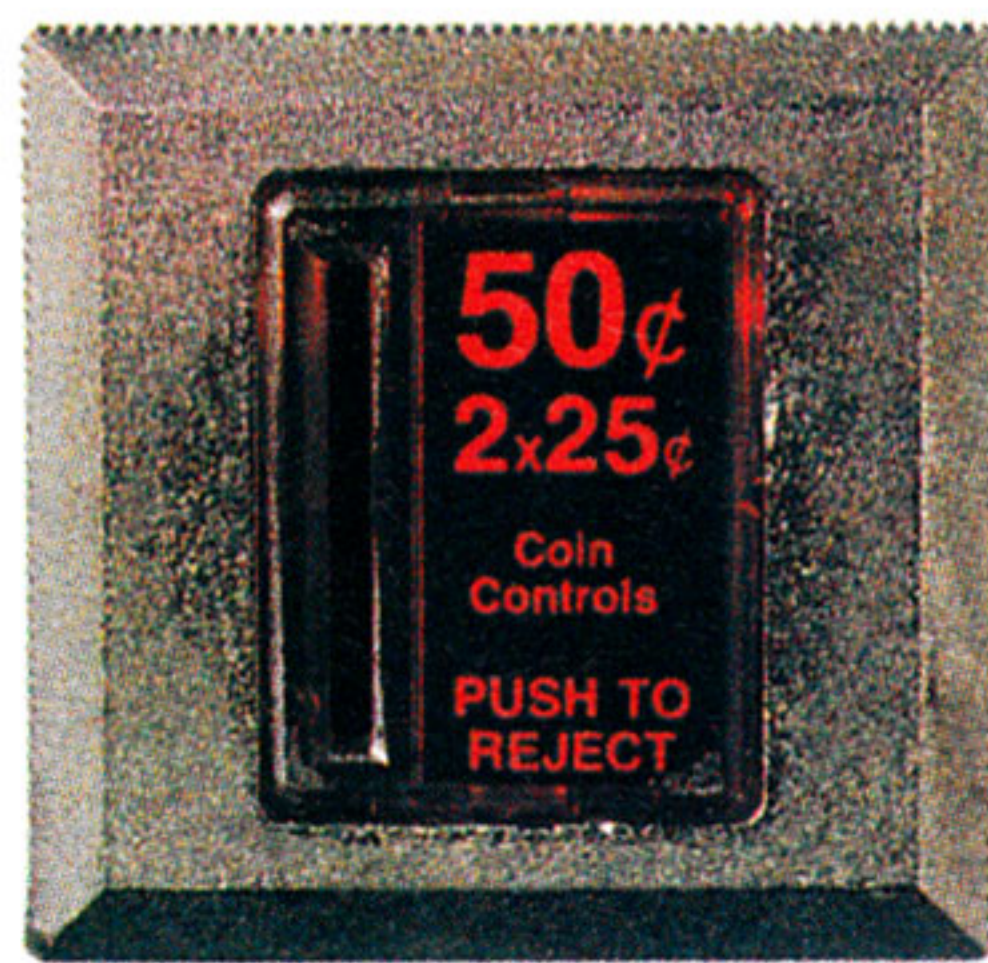
The explosions really make you feel like a man! There are even bullet tracks when you fire up the guns.



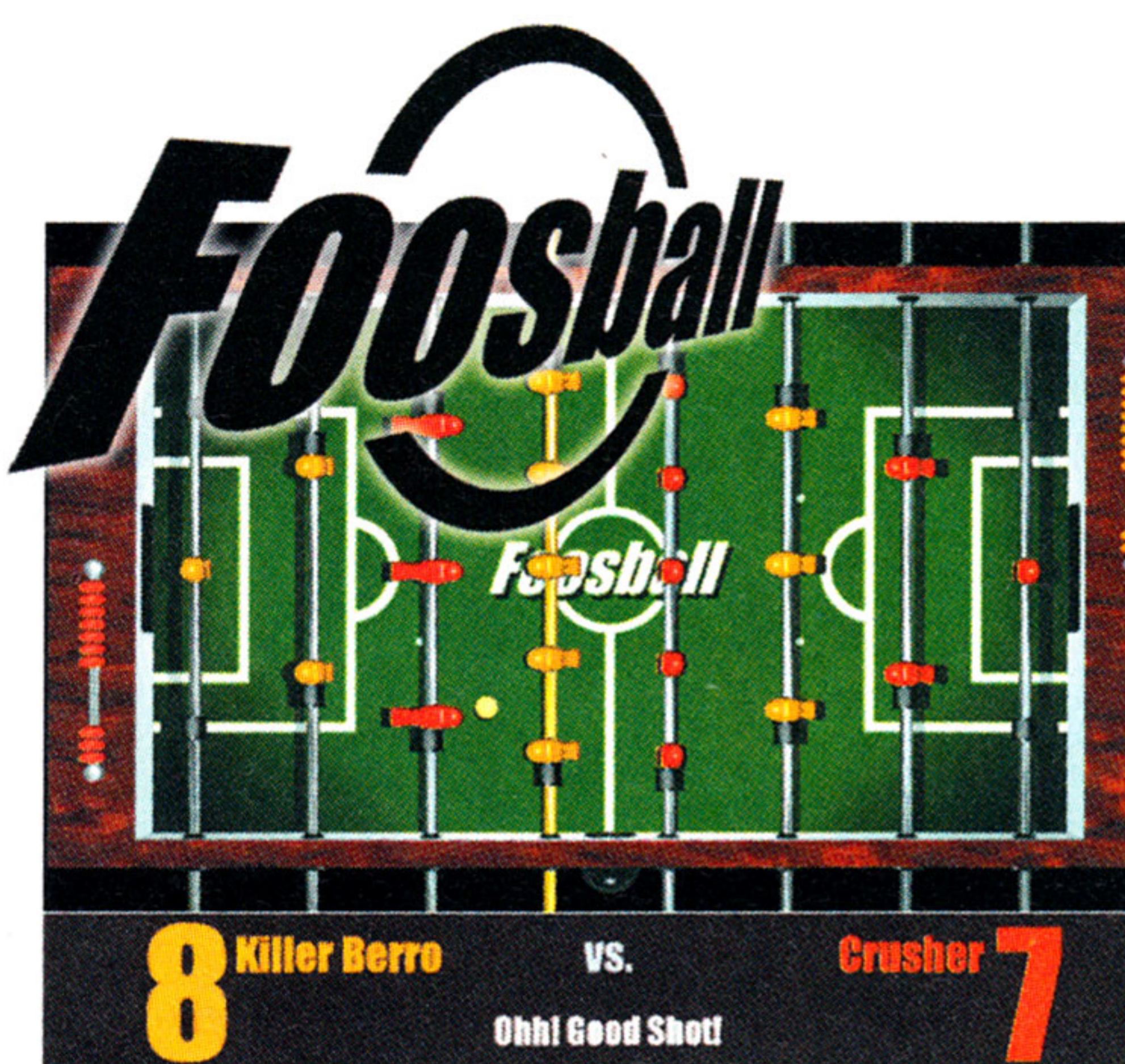
PUBLISHER: Ocean THEME: Flight Sim MEGABITS: 8 PLAYERS: 1

4½

3-D TABLE SPORTS™ WE'VE INCLUDED EVERYTHING...

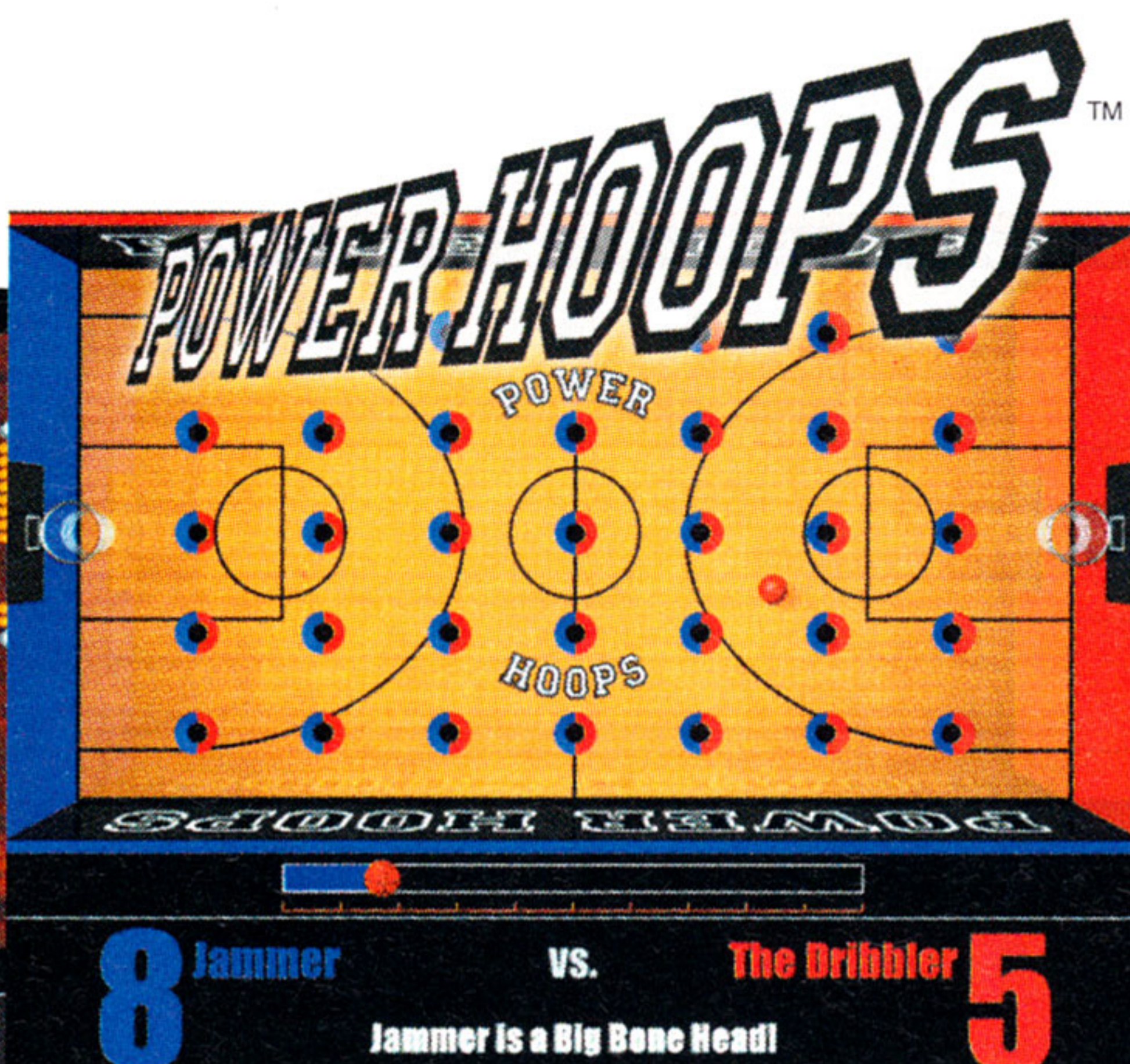


EXCEPT THIS.



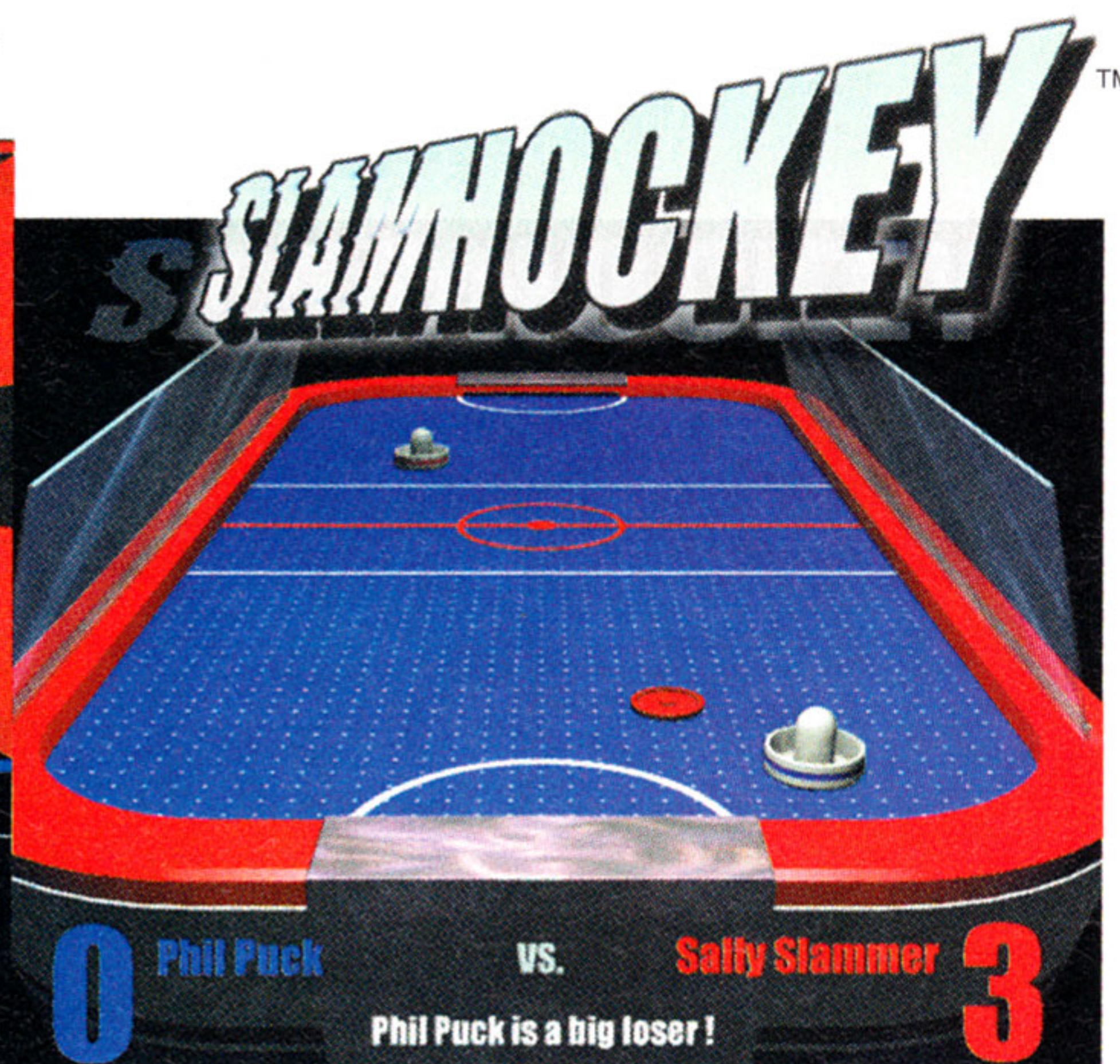
8 Killer Berro VS. **7** Crusher
Ohh! Good Shot!

Foosball: All the action of the original—spin, pass, block, and score!



8 Jammer VS. **5** The Dribbler
Jammer is a Big Bone Head!

Power Hoops: Block, steal or shoot, in regular or multiple ball mode!



0 Phil Puck VS. **3** Saffy Slammer
Phil Puck is a big loser!

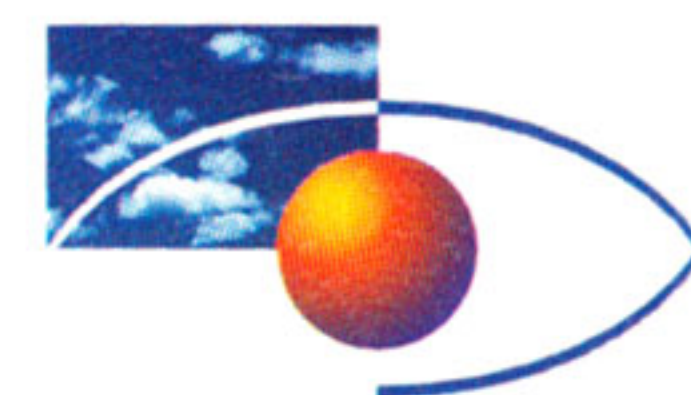
Slam Hockey: Chip it, chop it, cut it! Even go over the line in "super battle mode!"

If you're looking for classic table game action with a digital twist, 3-D Table Sports is it! You get Foosball, SlamHockey and Power Hoops, all on one CD-ROM. Each game features fully-rendered 3-D tables, lots of play options, 10 difficulty

levels, and network and modem support for tournament and league play. In fact, 3-D Table Sports gives you everything you could ever expect in a table game...except a place to put your quarters!



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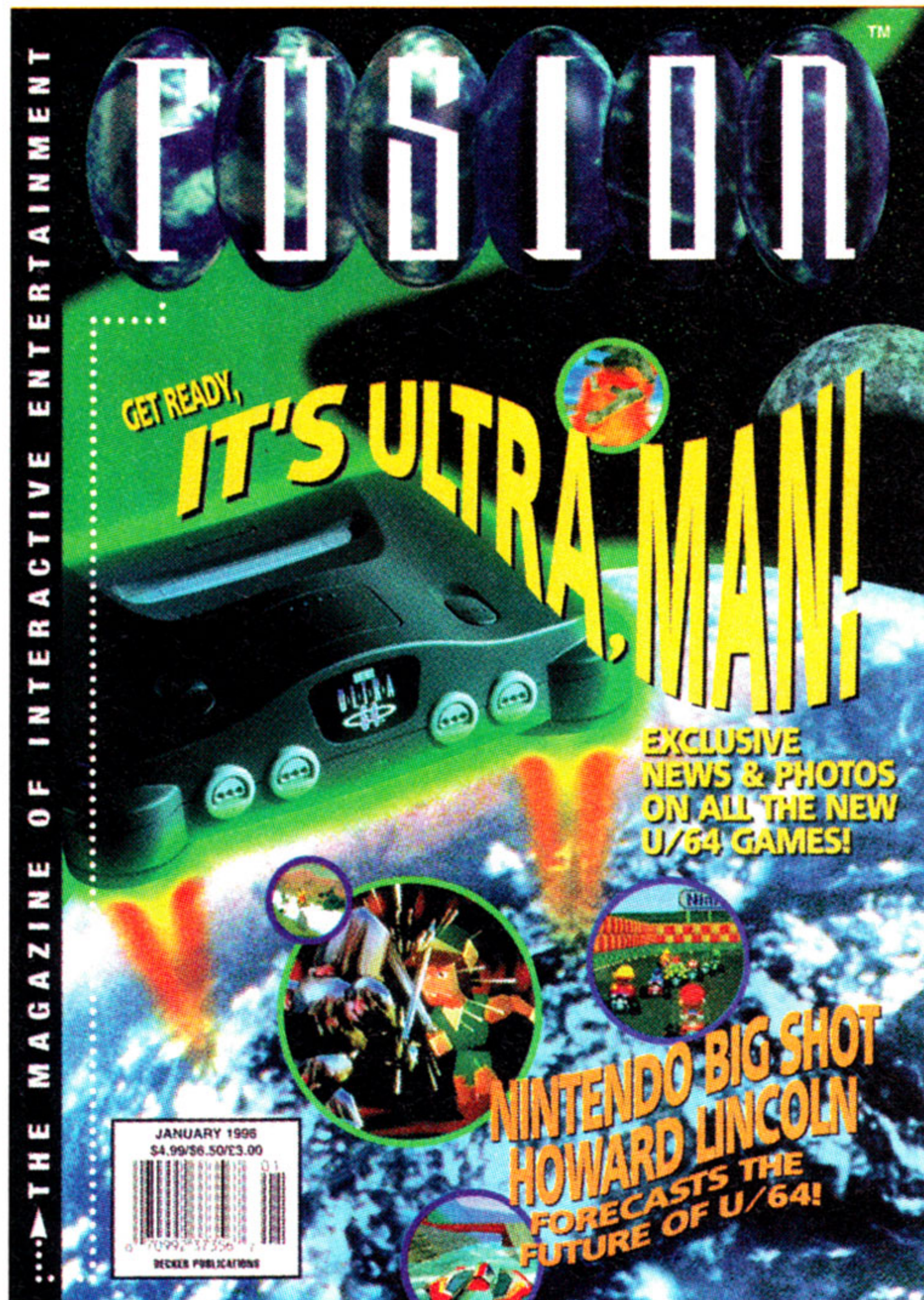
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EXTERNAL CORRESPONDENCE

COORDINATES: WEBMASTER@WWW.TRANSFUSION.COM



FUSION,

Great Ultra 64 story in the January issue! I have been chompin' at the bit for any and all info concerning the Ultra 64 and was pleasantly surprised when I found out the lead story was on the super machine! I especially liked the "innards" comparison between the Ultra and the other systems. I didn't know the 3DO packed so much memory and power in their machine. They are gonna need it to go head-to-head with the Ultra.

Keep me informed of all the movements of Nintendo and the Ultra 64 including games for the system.

Mike Ryan
Dallas, TX

We'll be having Ultra updates through its release date of April '96, Mike.

WAITING IN VAIN

Dear FUSION,

Why has Sega been so slow in getting new games out for the Saturn? I bought the system a little while ago and have become discouraged over the large amount of games available for the PlayStation and not the Saturn. I still like the Saturn a lot, especially *Virtua Fighter* and *Daytona*, but I see so many more games coming out for the Sony PlayStation that it makes me mad. I bought the Saturn under the impression that Sega was the established game company and it would be a safer bet than the as of yet, unproven PlayStation, only

now I am beginning to wonder if I made the right decision. I don't even want to think about what the Ultra 64 is going to do to the works. Please keep me updated on all the new Sega Saturn games coming out in the near future.

Tom Stellar
Columbus, OH

Tom, you will be happy to hear that Sega has announced over 80 new games to be released for the Saturn in the coming year. Also, check out the Saturn games in this issue's console review section; we think you'll find something you like.



GIVING THANKS

FUSION,

Thanks for printing the code for *WipeOut* that opens up the seventh track. I know that Sony is showing it in their frenetic commercials but who has time to record commercials and play them back frame by frame? As a marketing tool I think it's a brilliant idea, especially for the hardcore gamers out there who will do anything for a code. But me, I'm a little too lazy to actually record the commercial and look for the codes so please print more codes for PlayStation games!!! It's cool to find these codes and use them, so keep printing them.

Jason Perez
Dominican Republic



Sony's *WipeOut* holds a seventh track but only for the lucky few who know the secret code.



People say the moment of death is calm and serene...

ULTRA ANTICIPATION

Dear FUSION,

If the Ultra 64 is supposed to be released in April of 1996 why haven't we seen any of the games in development for the system yet? I like to see what I'm potentially going to make an investment in, especially when the games are forecasted to be quite "pricey." Are there going to be rebates on the price of the machine like there are for the PlayStation? I have heard the price of the Ultra is low because the machine uses cartridges. Is this right? I would think it is the other way around. Please let me know.

Stewart Pace
Oakland, CA

Nintendo had all of its game developers sign a non-disclosure agreement in order to keep the hype down and the anticipation high. There are no price rebates planned as of yet for the Ultra. And yes, it is cheaper to manufacture a game system without a CD-ROM drive.



Early shots of U/64 titles, *Super Mario Kart* and LucasArts' *Shadow of the Empire*.

Veiled in shadowy darkness, they await your return. Mechanical monstrosities. Shrieking invaders. You thought you had destroyed them. You thought the nightmare was over. You thought wrong.

Prepare yourself for the all new *Descent II*. Warped to a distant part of the galaxy, you'll battle all new enemies and all new terrors in a mind-twisting 360° 3-D environment that will challenge you like nothing before. Travel through cascading waterfalls, sink into deadly molten lava, and plunge into total darkness as you descend into the very heart of the enemy. At your command is a deadly



OBVIOUSLY THEY NEVER PLAYED

DESCENT™ II INTERACTIVE DEMO

arsenal of 10 new, configurable weapons and an all new Weapons Transfer system that allows you to assist buddies during multiplayer assaults. You'll also find a helpful robotic ally, all new power-ups, a rocking new soundtrack, explosive sound effects AND a high-powered headlight beam to assist you when things seem their darkest.

Descend upon the Interplay web page at <http://www.interplay.com> or check with your local computer software retailer for the latest release of the *Descent II* interactive demo. Available for IBM and compatible.

Watch for the full 30-level version coming this March.

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DON'T CALL ME DUMB BOX

Dear *FUSION*,

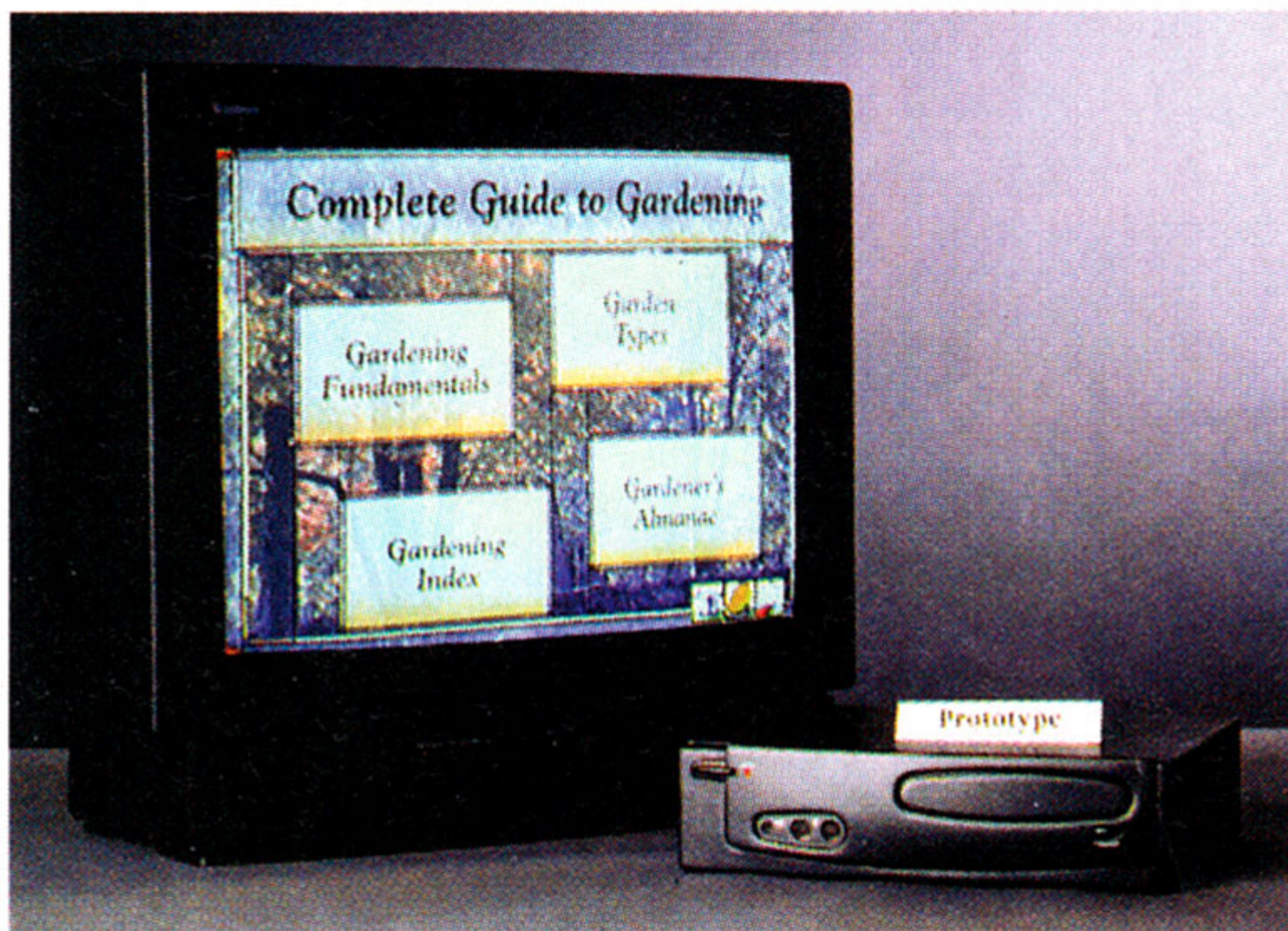
In your December issue, in the News section, you told us of the so-called "dumb box" computer that would serve as a glorified interactive telephone connecting people to the Internet inexpensively. I have to agree with Oracle that the computer will have to be \$500 or less to be practical for the

average citizen. But beyond that I also believe this is the future of the Internet. It seems so logical that to make the Internet more effective as a tool we need to set some parameters. Right now it seems like a huge unregulated mess. If millions more people get connected to the Net, logically systems and standards will eventually clean up the loose ends of the Net. I am not talking about regulation alone but the whole realm of Internet capabilities. My own personal belief is that the Net, for most people, will serve as a household tool just as a telephone or even a dishwasher does.

Mark DeAngelo
Buffalo, NY

"You plug in the dumb box and the idea is that applications are basically being downloaded as you run them....In some sense, it almost becomes equivalent to a multimedia telephone."

— Oracle's Vice President of New Media, Andy Laurson



Apple hopes to tap into the "dumb box" movement with their own entry, the Pippen.



NO NEED FOR WEB SITES

Dear *FUSION*,

I was interested to read your recent article on how the music world is embracing the CD-ROM revolution and also how musicians are getting into the online world in order to spread the word about their music. I think both trends are interesting, but I for one hope that these artists don't lose sight of what's really important. I mean, a band like Pearl Jam doesn't even have to make videos or tour very much, yet millions of people around the world buy their records because the music is great. So artists who want to promote themselves through these other means should realize that music should always be their main focus, and these other pursuits should be secondary. Besides, the online and CD-ROM worlds only cater to a small minority of geeks like myself. If bands really want to do well, they need to make cool music and get it played on the radio and on MTV, not worry about having a Web site or a groovy CD-ROM.

Frank Butler
Memphis, TN

Interactive Music CD-ROMS featured in *FUSION's* December issue.



FUSION

Thanks, everyone, for writing. We welcome your letters, e-mail and other unmentionables—the more the merrier! Send your snail mail to:

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Lombard, IL 60148
Webmaster@WWW.Transfusion.COM

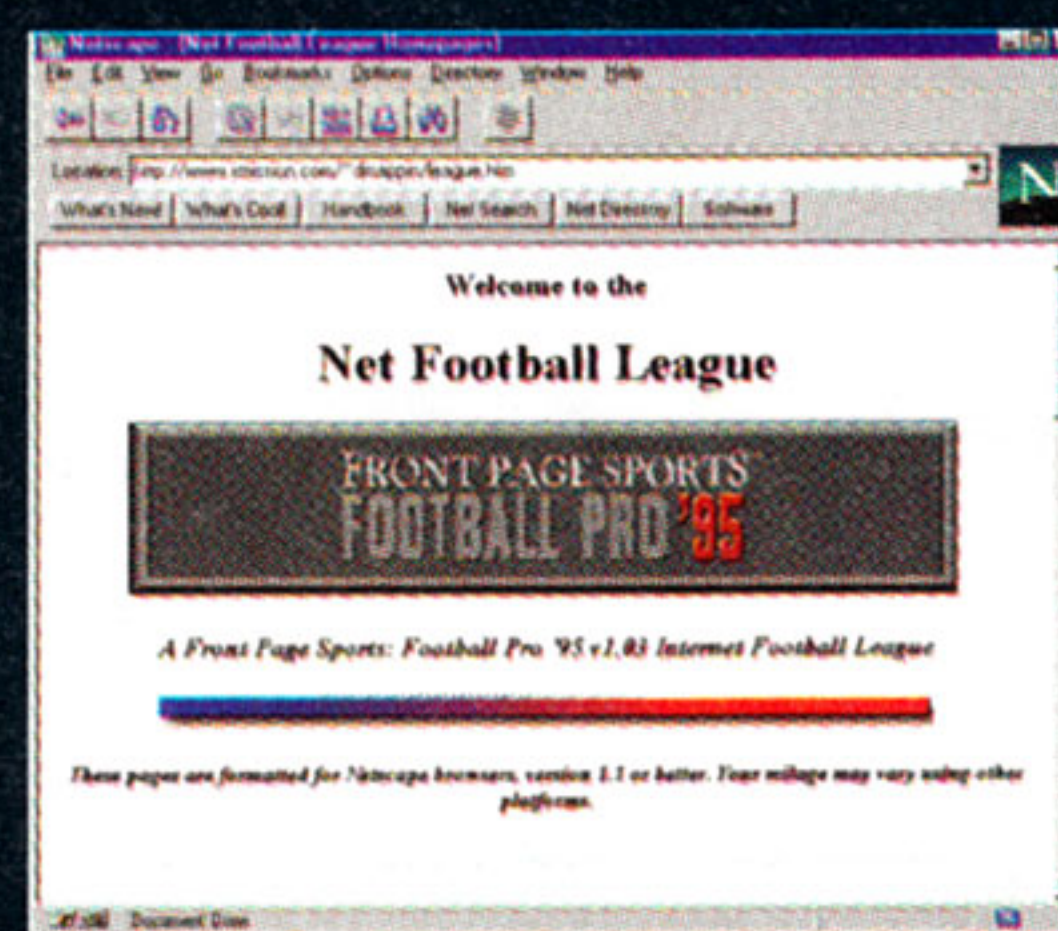
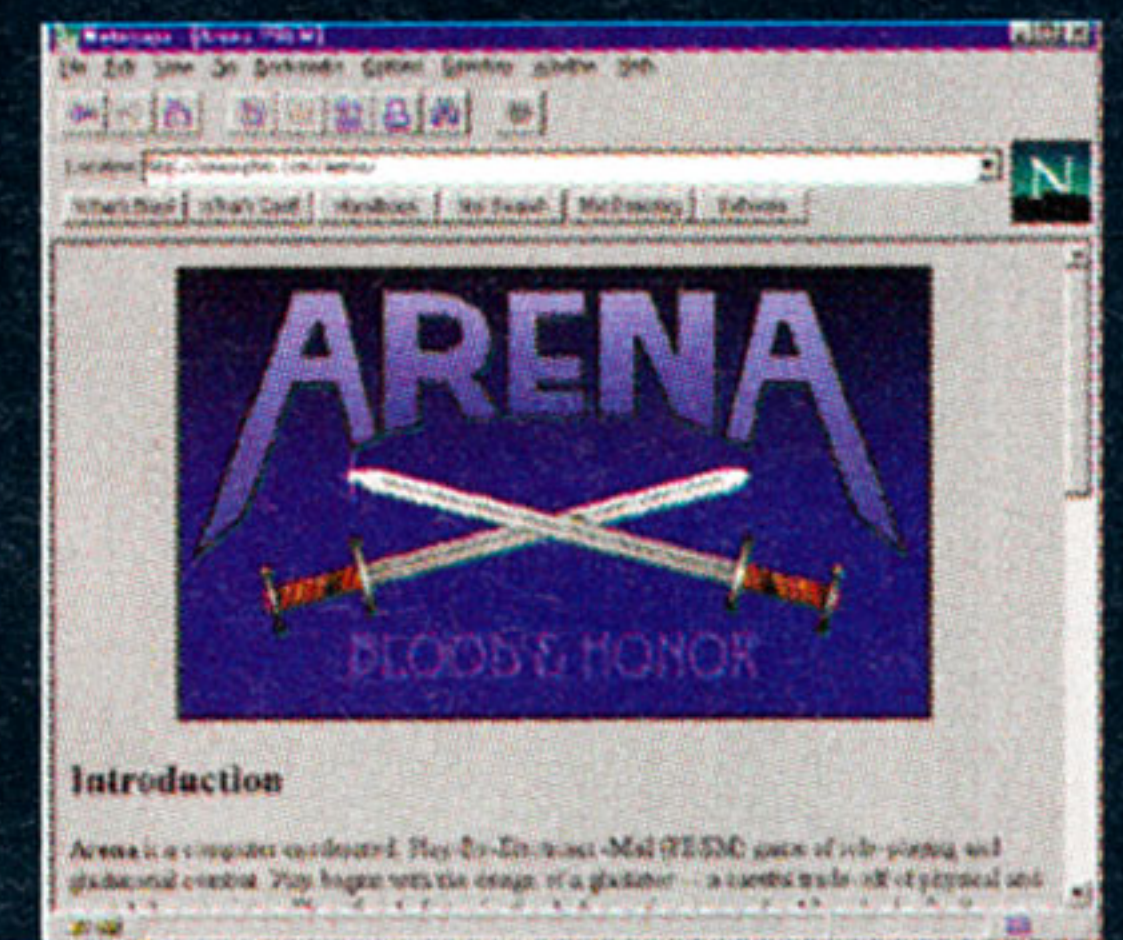
REACH OUT

TRY YOUR HAND AT TEXT GAMES AGAINST A HOST OF ONLINE PLAYERS

Arena

<http://www.pbm.com/arena/>

Create a Gladiator, travel to the Imperial City, learn the wicked ways of war, fight with the good guys or die most shamefully.



Net Football League

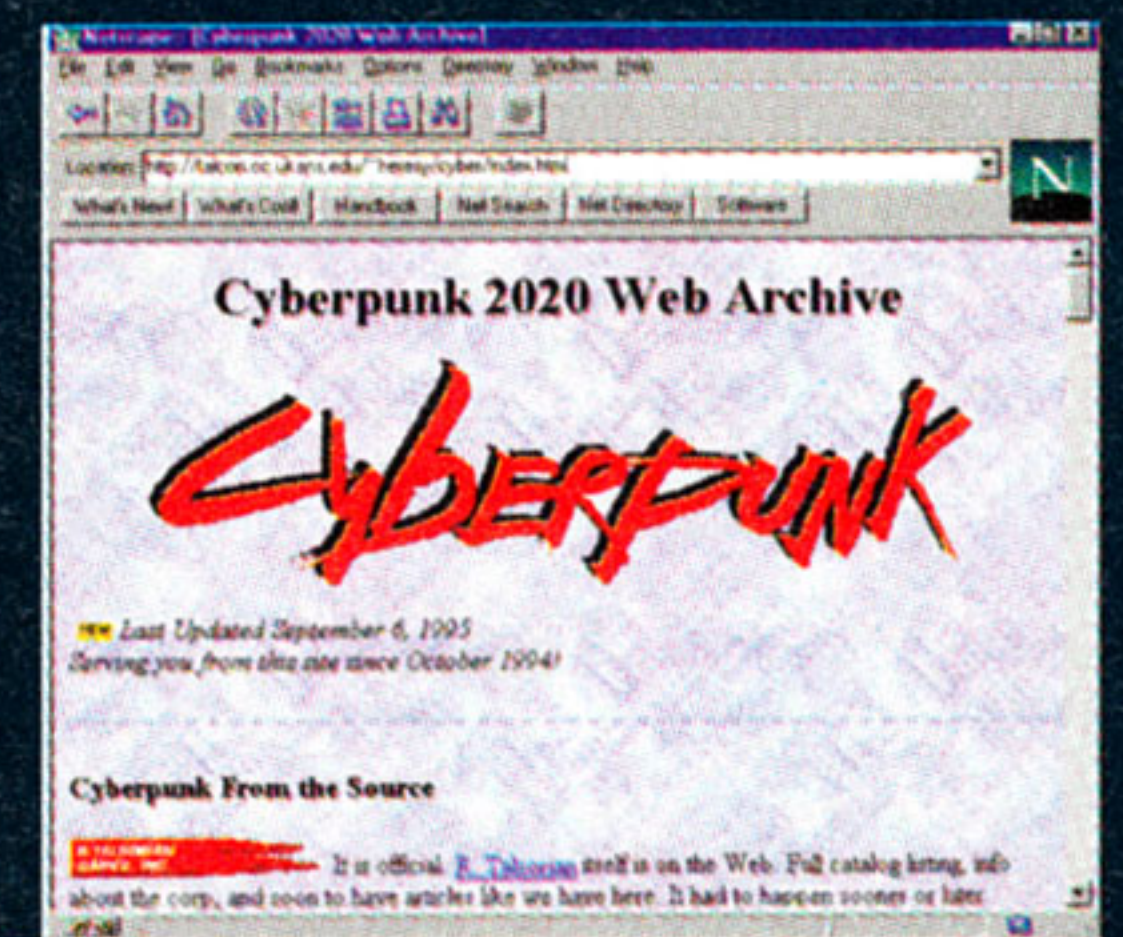
<http://www.xmission.com/~dmappin/league.htm>

Home copies of Sierra's *Front Page Sports* needed to own and manage one of 28 teams.

Cyberpunk 2020 Archive

<http://falcon.cc.ukans.edu/~heresy/cyber/index.html>

It's may just be cyberpunk heaven. Learn the slang, lifestyle, weapons, etc., go on a cyberpunk adventure.



VGA Planets Host Page

<http://www.dnai.com/~conquest/conquest.html>

Control 51 percent of the planets you find and you're a winner! Learn strategy, race relations and all that other stuff.

FUSION,

What's up with fighting games? The female combatants are always these hot-looking "chicks" dressed in tights or some other inappropriate "fighting" attire. Is that the only image game designers think a woman can be in a game? Give us a break.

Judy Robinson
Miami, FL



Unfortunately that is correct, Judy.

MUSIC REVIEWS REVISITED

Dear *FUSION*,

I'd just like to say that I like the fact that *FUSION* covers music as well as all the things that you'd expect it to cover—interactive games, CD-ROMS, online stuff and the like. I have to say I haven't been familiar with all of the musical artists that have been reviewed in *FUSION*, but it looks like the editors make sure that the music coverage is cutting edge and up to date. I'm a pretty hardcore gamer and I'm really into online stuff, but what a lot of people don't seem to realize is that people like me are usually into music as well. I've made several buys of CDs based on reviews that were in your magazine, and I haven't been steered wrong yet by your music writers.

In closing, keep up the good work and I hope your music coverage stays top-notch.

Sidney Lorrey
Princeton, NJ

Glad you like the reviews. In the future we are changing up the format a bit; in the interest of the magazine's commitment to interactive entertainment we will only review artists who put something out on CD-ROM.



The cranberries in repose, from *doors and windows*.

Dear *FUSION*,

I have been reading the last few issues of *FUSION* and generally [have] been enjoying it. How about an article on the creation of a Web site? I log onto WWW and see various levels of quality which always leaves me curious about how these things are done. I live in a fairly remote area which prevents me from interacting with people with the same interests who know how to do this stuff. Are there people who do the job for you? Can you do it yourself?

Dave Short
Wedron, IL

In general Dave, people have been building their own sites but if you want a truly cool site you need to hire a professional graphics person who knows how to use 3-D technology to make a killer site for you. 3-D seems to be the new trend in Web sites.

WEB SITE CREATION

WEB SITE OF THE MONTH

If anyone thinks the 3DO is dead, please don't tell Chris Long, creator of *Chris Long's 3DO Hideout*, <http://www.webcom.com/clong/random/3do.html>. One of the most comprehensive 3DO sites available on the Web, the site offers several interesting 3DO topics and subtopics to explore.

The standard fare of game reviews, upcoming games and industry rumors are available while more entertaining topics

such as contests in which the contestant must send in the most bizarre picture of

3DO President Trip Hawkins

they can find are also present. The contest is aptly named, "Bring Me the Head of Trip Hawkins."

Explaining why he holds these contests in which Web-heads can win new 3DO machines, Chris explains, "Because I'm strange, like the 3DO and have more money than I know what to do with." Chris, are you lonely? Other areas of the site include reprints of 3DO articles and game reviews from gaming mags, industry celebrity profiles, tons of information on the M2 chip, 3DO investment opportunities, lots of game codes and generally all the info anyone could want concerning the 3DO. ●

3DO Hideout



Arnie Katz has been a respected voice in the industry for a good long time.

Gaming's Sound and Fury

I grabbed a copy of *FUSION* #6 the minute my assistant Marcy Waldie opened the box. The new, cleaner layout made it easy to ego-scan the issue and find "EndNotes," the column I'd just inherited.

Then I noticed the blurb: "Arnie Katz has had strong opinions about the game industry since before you were in diapers." What a charming image! Me spouting off, you lying there bare-ass naked waiting for someone to shoot those little snapshots that now embarrass you at family occasions.

I bitched about that line to the ever-conciliatory Joe Fielder, but in my heart, I knew it was true. I've reported on interactive electronic entertainment since people cared about Atari.

The only reason anyone would do this so long is simple: I love electronic games. Forget the money, the celebrity, the phone calls from exotic Lombard, Ill; love is what keeps me playing and writing.

I thought about that while watching the clueless commercials video-game companies splattered across TV last December. The lack of direction—unless imitating Sega's 1993 Genesis campaign is a direction—is horrifyingly obvious.

The industry is frozen in place with no idea of how to jump-start the gaming bandwagon. Because few of them ever play the games, they view it as a fad instead of a hobby. They are looking

for a license or something that will set those cash registers ringing the way they once did.

Most TV commercials don't treat electronic gaming as an ongoing segment of entertainment allied to pop culture. The ads get louder and louder, more and more chaotic, as an alternative to actually analyzing the audience and addressing its tastes.

Despite the lame "play it loud" ads, Nintendo deserves credit as an exception.

Its franchise is the 8-12 age bracket, with a secondary mid-teen market for fight-

ing titles, and it beams its message directly to that potential audience.

Everyone else is stumbling in the dark. Marketing people are at a loss to blaze new trails that don't depend on track record. They know how to massage data, but they seldom understand who buys the products—and why?

The 32-Bit "next generation" consoles offer more of the same, only a little better. That's exactly what you should expect from people who don't love the games. Consumers want more than just glossed-up reruns; we crave innovative interactive experiences.

Nintendo didn't kick-start the video-game resurgence by rehashing the 2600 classic carts. Any video-game maker that expects multimillion-unit sales had better plan to extend the entertainment frontier, not just copy *Doom* or *Street Fighter II*.

The ads portray gamers as semi-psychotic junior high schoolers with attention deficit disorder. The publishers' own demographic research pegs the average gamer as early 20s. Why would an adult, or even a bright teenager, have anything but contempt for such condescending bullshit? Talking down to people, as the video-game manufacturers so often do, is the surest way to kill their enthusiasm.

Marketing is a necessary science, a valuable tool for the industry. But it's time to put that tool into the hands of men and women who genuinely love games the way we do. ●



Mature Game Commercials and Envelope-Expanding Next-Generation Titles? Arnie Katz answers, "You Are Not Ready!"

Beyond the Bounds

of ordinary interactive entertainment magazines, **FUSION** delivers news, reviews and insights in our own special way.

This Month in FUSION: Game developers unleash the untapped power of the Sega Saturn to make their games incredible. Also, Sega gets ready for the fight of their lifetime with their biggest rival—the PlayStation.

Game Reviews: NFL GameDay, Gex, In The Hunt, Criticom, Hang On GP, Wing Arms, Virtua Fighter II, Virtua Cop...PC Reviews: Bad Mojo, Worms, EF2000, Fighter Duel, Earthworm Jim, Monopoly, Star Rangers, The Dig, Mechwarrior II and many more...

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The Baron of Intellectual Addiction

Baron R.K. Von Wolfshield, creator of games such as *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* and *Return Fire*, left a flashy and high-paying career as an art director for music videos and commercials for a career designing decidedly not-so-flashy but incredibly popular video games. Extremely bright and outspoken, Von Wolfshield has been on the scene since he built his first computer in 1974 and continues to push the gaming envelope today.

How do you like to hear the games you've created described?

Of the reviews that were really interesting for me to look at of *Return Fire*...about 50 percent actually used the word "addiction" or "needed rehabilitation" in order to get unhooked from this game. That's what I want to hear on every single game.

With the new systems' technology, where do you see the future of video-game design?

The future of games is the combination of going back to hardcore, addicting arcade gameplay, and mixing that with movie-quality interface.

Do you think new games rely too heavily on style over substance?

Friends of mine have designed games I really didn't like. They call to ask me, "Did you like it?" I'll say, "No, I think you really failed here." Whereas I have zero flashiness and only gameplay, they have all flashiness and no gameplay, and they respect

the fact that I don't like their games. I'll think they did a good job; I'll think they really tried, but they keep forgetting the number-one rule: addiction. This is all about addiction. I left the music industry because I couldn't comprehend the idea that people blew white powder up their nose...It is from their addiction that I'm curious what it takes to create an intellectual addiction. An intellectual addiction comes in the form of something that requires special thinking that you want to exercise your brain with.



A *Return Fire* tank blows up everything in its way.

How do you feel about violence in video games?

I'm all for violence in computer games...I believe in complete freedom. However, I believe in absolute *pre-censorship*. This doesn't mean that you censor or remove something; it means that you preview it. [If] there's violence from a tank to a tank, and there's violence from an individ-

ual stabbing another human being to death and their blood being all over them, [they are] completely different types of violence... All of this is fine as long as they have a warning.

What do you look to for inspiration when designing games?

Good gameplay comes from the fact that I get bored so quickly. Since my boredom factor is so high, I tend to strip away the parts that don't interest me.

Where do you stand in the console wars?

3DO hit the shelves first, and everyone nails them con-

stantly for absolutely no understandable reason to me. They got out there first, with the right team of people, doing the right type of hardware and the right type of software, and I guess someone hated someone, that was obvious....The [PlayStation] is very cool—no argument. We've just finished doing *Return Fire* for the [PlayStation]...it's a faster game. Its frame rate can be twice as fast, because it's technology that came out later than the 3DO. But now the M2 is going to jumpfrog that, so we're back again. I'll mention Saturn just to mention Saturn, but other than mentioning Saturn, there's nothing to mention. It's basically just a 3DO made by Sega without an operating system and really bad development tools. Beside that, it's a nice little machine. ●





THIS MAN'S DYING WORDS WERE "PROTECT ME".

He died while clutching his neck to utter those words, utterly too late. At peace now in his postmortem state, he was a beaten, emaciated man trying to leave the town of Silverload. No one seems to know exactly what befell him, and not much was learned from the delirious rambling that came from his painfully parched lips. He spoke of vampires and vultures feasting on his legs, and something about cannibalistic children. Of course, we don't have a clue as to what he was talking about...

Come visit us soon; we'll be waiting for you. *The folks at Silverload.*



PlayStation™

NTSC U/C

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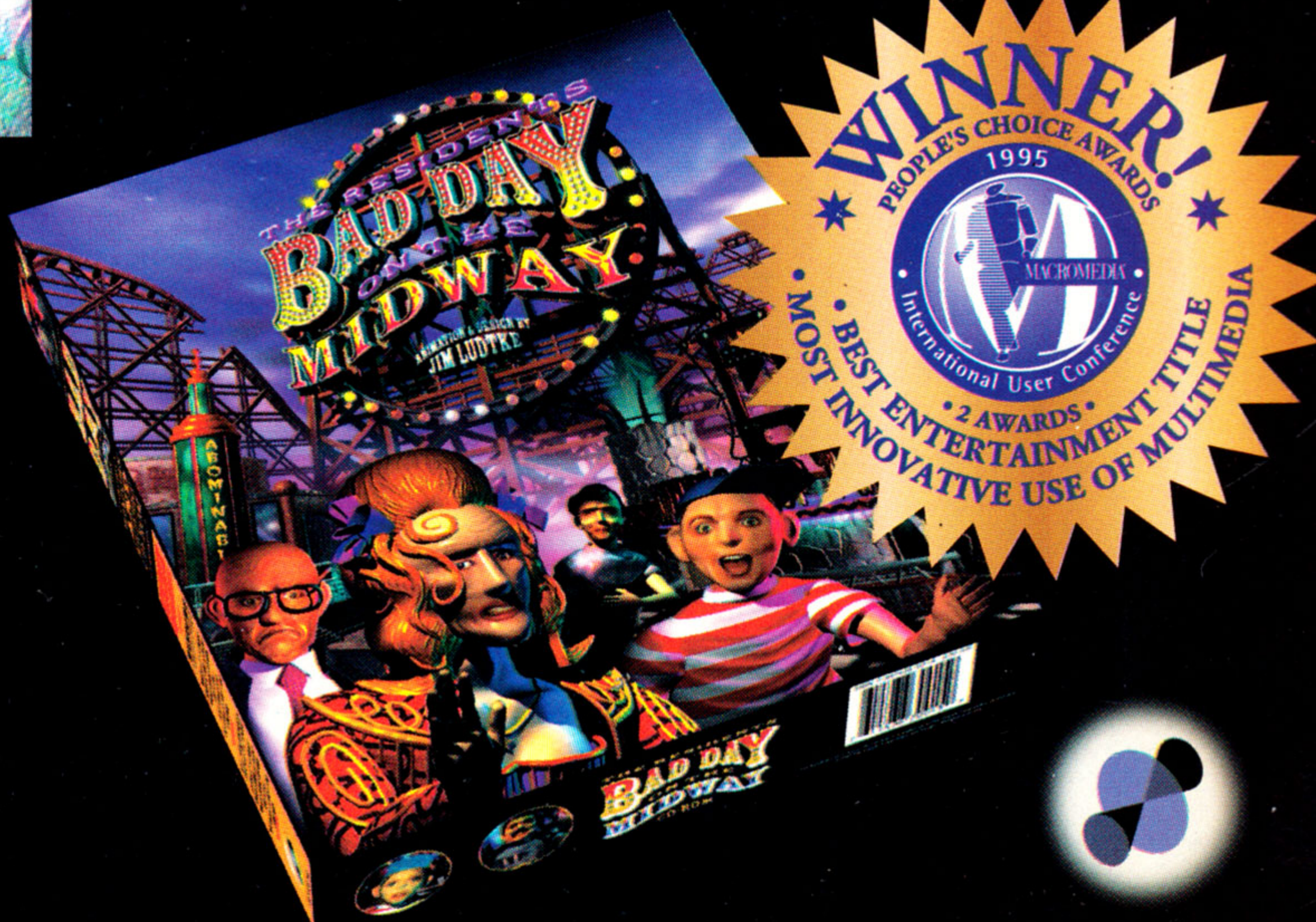
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