

QuestBusters™

The Adventurer's Journal

Number 108

Special Mid-Winter Issue

Not sold in dwarven mines

COMPANIONS OF XANTH

Cautious puns ahead! This warning sign should be posted all over Legend Entertainment's latest quest wherever it is sold, because there are more puns per kilobyte in *Xanth* than even in the early days of adventure, when the lack of graphics practically required the use of puns to work humor into a game.

It's easy to attribute the prevalence of puns on the demented designers at Legend, but Piers Anthony, whose *Demons Don't Dream* was the basis for *Xanth*, is as much if not more to blame. (You get a copy of the paperback with the game.) *Xanth* is a fantasy world dreamed up by Anthony, and *Xanth* is the first – and surely not the last – animated adventure to bring that world to life on your computer screen. (It's also the first in which your character is represented by a computer screen, but we'll get to that later.)

A Mundane bet

In the introduction, a pair of demons make a bet on which Mundane (the name they give to humans) can track down and acquire The Prize. The winner gets control of *Xanth*, so there's more riding on this quest than a mere Prize. They will be assisted by a Companion from *Xanth*, since the Mundanes are naturally unfamiliar with the ways of the magic- and mirth-filled world. The Companions possess unique skills and powers that may prove vital in the quest. Then again....

by Shay Addams

The story begins when you, a guy named Dug, accept a bet from a friend to play a computer game – *Companions of Xanth*.

Upon loading it, you see an elf-type person onscreen, choose one of three Companions, and go through the screen to set forth on the quest. Until you believe in magic, however, your character is depicted as a monitor – floating in mid-air in the animated cut scenes.

It won't take long to get to the first quest – to rid Isthmus Village of an oppressive "censor-ship" that is burning incense and "censoring every 'bleep bleep' thing we say, which is incensing us." (Now do you see what I mean about the warning sign?)

Solving this puzzle involves wrapping up several smaller ones, such as getting beyond the pail (a bucket that blocks your path to the Fairy Nuff – whose name won't make sense until you say it out loud) and finding the ingredients for a recipe. Puzzles are primarily object-oriented, but there are numerous nuances to their unravelling. You must pay attention to your surroundings in order answer questions posed later on, and the "wait" command is used more logically and more often than in other adventures.

Top score is 1,000 points. You can check the score and status at any time. Status, for

those who never played the *real* Infocom games, describes your progress in no uncertain terms: you initially earn the rank Never Done Nothin, and soon advance to

Nearly Neophyte. (I once took an oath never to use the words "Infocom" or "all-text" when reviewing a Legend product; however, *Xanth's* use of the word "Arggggh!" has freed me from this vow.)



The bigger picture

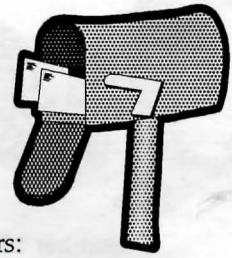
For several years Legend has turned out some of the best puzzles in the realm of adventure games. The game system, however, always relied on a small window for graphics. Most of the screen was covered with a text

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ADVENTURE ROAD



Theme issues

Not long ago, someone called to ask if *QuestBusters* comes out at the end of the month, or at the beginning of the month. "Depends on the month," I replied. Though the number of days in each month varies, only 30 days pass between the time a game is released, reviewed and the issue in which it appears is printed – so we are more significantly impacted by late releases from game developers (yes, it's obviously all *their* fault).

Though each issue we publish is timely, they sometimes do give the appearance of being late, so we have made a major design change. Inspired by the "new Vegas" on our recent CES trip, we have decided to toss out the usual monthly labels – seeing "January" or "March" at the top of the cover, just like every magazine, is so boring – and make each issue a theme issue. (How can we say we're on schedule simply because we are in synch with the Julian calendar, which is less accurate than the one used by the Maya?) For those hopelessly locked into the Julian calendar, the month in which each issue is published will appear in the lower right hand section of this page.

This issue, for instance, is the Midwinter Special. So you'll see lots of snowflakes scattered throughout, maybe an occasional snow man or pack of carollers rambling through the gutter.

To keep track of your membership's expiration, check the issue number on the cover with your mailing label (hope you didn't already throw out that envelope, Adventure Expressers!). This is issue #108, for example. If your membership expires with #108 or #109, renew today to ensure not

missing a single issue. And if you're confused, renew today, just in case!

CES preview

Next issue – which we'll probably call the *Winter CES Aftermath Special*, though it could have a Valentine's Day theme – Russ Ceccola will report on all the new adventures shown in Vegas in January. And top it off with his usual amazing CES Party Report. Until then, you'll just have to settle for a few casual observations of Ye Editor.

Graphically, I was most impressed by Origin's *Ultima VIII: Pagan*. Richard Garriott showed off the new monsters, created with 3-D Studio, and they were so life-like, I thought they were going to jump off the screen. Garriott added that *Ultima IX* may be the last one with a number.

Sierra is introducing hi-res graphics in their CD-ROM games, displaying samples from next Christmas' *Phantasmagoria* and others on the way far sooner. *Alone in the Dark II*, from Interplay, is in the offing and looking very appealing, while *Stonekeep* is a little farther off and looking even better.

Tsunami has a unique offer for new *Blue Force* purchasers. Send them a video of yourself, a friend or enemy, and they'll "video insert" it into the game as one of the characters a player is sure to meet. They also presented the upcoming *Protostar 2* and *Ringworld 2*, the latter looking much more challenging and involving.

New CD releases

The CD version of New World's *World of Xeen* arrived recently – on two CDs. It features over 200 talking characters and new cinematic sequences, and runs from the CD drive.

Legend Entertainment's *Spellcaster Party Pak* bundles all three of Steve Meretzky's hilarious *Spellcasting* adventures. In a real switch, the CD

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Dear QuestBusters:

I was going to order a clue book from you, but cannot figure out which is the most current – *Book of Swords* or *Book of Clues*? Please go back to numbering them, which makes it easier to keep track.

Chris Mannock

We would love to, but recently were informed that all Roman numerals were trademarked and can no longer be used without paying exorbitant licensing fees and royalties. We will never give in to these extortionate demands! Besides, the store managers always yank Book 4 off the shelf the minute Book 5 is released, not realizing that lots of people are still looking for the solutions in Book 4, and probably Book 3 as well. (Ok, I admit it - we stole the idea from New World Computing, which quit numbering the Might & Magic games for the same reason.)

QuestBusters

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Police Quest: Open Season

As homicide detective John Carey of the San Francisco Police Department, you are assigned the case of a serial cop killer. Follow police procedure, and keep sharp, and maybe you will not be the next victim. *Open Season* is the excellent photo-realistic first game of 43-year veteran retired Chief Daryl F. Gates.

It's the first *Police Quest* done by anyone except the series' creator and designer of the first three games, Jim Walls, a 15-year veteran of the California Highway Patrol. Like *Blue Force*, *Open Season* is about cop killers. It also uses fully digitized actors, involves murder investigations, follows authentic police procedure, and there are other similarities too numerous to mention.

Can Daryl do it?

The sheer media impact of Daryl Gates, one of the most visible and controversial law enforcement officers on the planet, and *ex-America's Most Wanted* producer Tammy Dargan, totally overshadow Jim

Walls' lack of involvement in *Police Quest 4*. Most of the hype concerning the game spends as much time on Chief Gates and Tammy

Dargan's backgrounds as on whether the game is any good. So the question remains: can an ex-television show producer and ex-police chief make a good game? Game design was certainly not part of their life experience and

training.

Digitized locations and actors are the hallmark of *Open Season*. Gates himself appears in the story as John Carey's chief. Carey spends as much time filling out reports, talking to his supervisor, practicing on the firing range, viewing vehicles at the impound lot, getting evidence stored and analyzed, showing his badge to the over-

amorous, airhead morgue attendant, and reading the 104-page Abridged Manual of the Los Angeles Police Department as he does investigating the crime scene or interrogating witnesses.

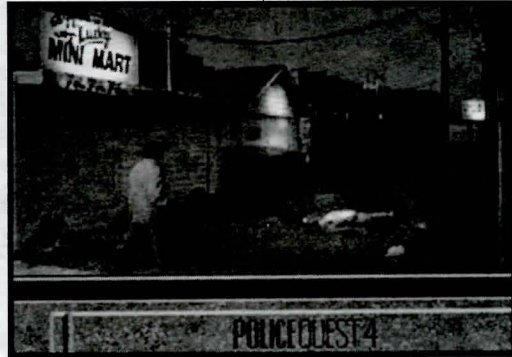
Don't get me wrong - I like the new game, the new interface, and even Daryl Gate's approach to the story, which has a real gritty feel to it, like dirt under your fingernails you just cannot clean up. The plot has everything, including encounters with rap stars, exotic dancers, white power extremists, and even a cross-dressing, mutilation-prone, sexual deviant serial killer.

The puzzles are as much procedure-oriented as they are the real treasure hunt-type puzzles we all like. *Open Season* even has a sense of humor, putting the lighter used to kill the serial killer in the mouth of the decapitated head in the refrigerator. All in all, the best part about it was that the lunatic killer did not make any sense at all, nor did he behave logically.

Derived from video-captured live actors, the animation is smooth and life-like, with very few illogical or unnecessary moves. The background art, pieced together from wide angle

digitized pictures, and digitized actors were colorful and attractive. Gates took the Sierra crew around L.A. to photograph the most effective locations with a Macintosh digitized camera, and the results are basically dirty and corrosion-

ridden colors and surfaces combined with a depth of detail only seen in film that produce the feel of being in a movie or being part of the actual scene.



There are times when the plot gives little direction as to what to do next, and other times when what to do was exceedingly obvious, especially if you read the manual carefully. You really get the impression of the life of a cop, in which you repeat actions over and over again until you are bored - interspersed with quick thinking and quick action or you die.

Shoot to kill

All Sierra graphic adventures have obligatory arcade action sequences that cannot be bypassed. *Open Season* is no exception. When confronting four perpetrators and possible suspects, quick, precise action is required or your character will die. Two other arcade sequences involve qualifying with a fire arm at the Police Academy range.

It was particularly aggravating to use the Beretta at the range by overlaying the sights of the gun on the range target, only to later be confronted by a punk with an assault weapon, and for the gun to have no means of aiming accurately. Eventual survival of the incident still did not excuse the lack of continuity between these two events. Other arcade

Type Animated adventure
System IBM & IBM CD-ROM
Required: 386+, 4 megs RAM, 21 megs hard disk, 100% Microsoft-compatible mouse, VGA, DOS 5.0+. Windows version requires Win 3.1 or higher, 640 x 480 video & 256-color
VGA Supports: Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Pro Audio & 16, Roland MT-32, Microsoft sound system, General Midi
Planned ports

by Al Giovetti

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Shadowcaster

Origin developed the earliest (and some still think the best) first-person perspective RPG system that scrolled smoothly and so completely simulated expected dungeon conditions that many players found themselves hopelessly addicted. This system took form as *Ultima Underworld*. Elsewhere in the market, ID Software released its *Castle Wolfenstein 3D* game. *Wolfenstein* used another first-person perspective system, but one that moves at incredible speeds and concentrates on combat and weapons.

The triple threat

Shadowcaster is the first joint project of Electronic Arts and Origin. Origin provided the story and adventure elements, while Wisconsin-based Raven Software designed the game engine. The result is an action adventure that moves as fast as *Wolfenstein* but plays like a simple RPG.

A little background information is necessary to understand the scope of *Shadowcaster*. You control a character named Kirt from his point of view as he explores the various levels of the environment.

Kirt is one of the last survivors of a species of shapeshifters who can alter (or "morph") their physical appearance and abilities to resemble any of six creatures.

You must eliminate hostile monsters and discover the secrets of the game's temple, in which an evil demon named Veste hides. Veste killed off most of the other morphing beings for his own profit and

needs to be stopped.

Shadowcaster looks like many of the existing first-person perspective games available, but outshines them in speed and ease of play.

You move around the locations with the mouse by holding down the left mouse button in the view window and adjusting the arrow cursor to

turn and move forward or back. You will encounter many monsters and find occasional objects.

Click and slay

You fight monsters by clicking on one of the hand (or appendage) icons, then on the monster in the view window until one of you is dead. If you have a weapon, you would drag it to the hand icon and drop it there before combat so you can use the weapon when you need to fight. Combat is fast and

exciting. Much of the game play involves the discovery of better weapons to survive combat against stronger enemies.

Other icons represent special abilities. As Kirt, your special abilities are a kick attack and jumping. Other

creatures have abilities more appropriate for certain game levels. For example, the feline Maorin form can use cat sight to uncover traps or find hidden passages. The ethereal Ophis form can scare monsters, stop time or throw fireballs. Simply click on an ability to use it.

Some abilities consume power. In these cases, your power bar will shrink as you use them. The blue power bar's length determines how long you can stay in a non-human form or how

many times you can use the special abilities. The red life bar reflects how much damage you can take in combat.

An RPG, or not?

Shadowcaster is

an RPG in the sense that you have to explore to find the objects, weapons and potions you need to discover and open passages to the next levels and to survive combat. But as an RPG, Origin eliminated many of the common features that sometimes frustrate players. You are not forced to eat, drink or rest, though all three may come in handy at times.

When you rest in Kirt's human form, you regain power and life, so it pays to sit idle in a safe place every now and then in order to conserve your potions. You may choose to eat or drink the potions and other magic items that help you, but you don't have to worry about passing out or dying because you didn't stop to eat. The game's automap further simplifies game play so you can truly concentrate on exploration, combat and fun.

The six forms Kirt can take are not immediately available at the beginning. You have to find obelisks in order to gain the ability to morph to a particular creature. You will find an obelisk within the first few screens at the start of the game. Clicking on the structure makes it disappear, and you can morph to the Maorin form from that point forward. The forms are varied enough that you will



Type First-person perspective action adventure

System IBM Required 386DX/33+, 4 megs RAM, 16 megs hard disk, DOS 5.+ , 100% Microsoft-compatible mouse, VGA
Supports: SoundBlaster & Pro, General Midi, Logitech Cyberman

Planned ports none

by Russ Ceccola

Continued on page 14

Dungeon Hack

Over ten years ago, Epyx produced the mega-hits games *Rogue* and *Hack*. Both were top-down perspective games with questionable graphics and sound, but which delivered unquestionable real-time combat fun. *Hack* and *Rogue* were so popular and sales so good, that these games were quickly translated into every computer format available at the time.

Now Jim Namestka and his co-workers at DreamForge, in a bid to recapture the fun of these classics, have created a first-person, real-time, *Eye of the Beholder*-like reincarnation of them that employs the newest technology. DreamForge hopes that the new *Dungeon Hack* will become as addictive as the classics were in their day.

Eye to eye

Dungeon Hack uses a modified version of the game engine and graphics used for the *Eye of the Beholder* series originally designed by Westwood Studios for SSI. Unfortunately, the interface is not identical to the original, and some of the differences make the current game more of a pain to play.

For one thing, there are no hot keys for using the weapons, spell books, and artifacts held in the two hands of the one main character. This means you have to use the point-and-scream mouse interface, which may be fine if repetitive motion pain does not yet haunt your game-playing.

Hack faithfully follows *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* Second Edition rules with six character attributes, six races, seven basic classes, over 49 monster types and over 200 artifacts

(weapons, armor, scrolls, etc.), including special long-lost artifacts that once belonged to legendary heroes. *Hack* supports multi-classed demi-human characters, such as the half-elf fighter/

cleric/mage character. Dual-class human characters are not supported.

Characters are rolled up randomly or manually modified to fit any

statistics desired, such as those from a favorite character from another game. Then a face icon can be selected from a bank of sixteen icons for each sex.

Non-racist levels

Attainable levels for demi-human characters are considerably higher than racial limitations imposed by other games. The maximum character class or profession level attainable in the game is 20, except for demi-humans; a half-elf can attain level 17 as a cleric or fighter, 19 as a ranger, and 15 as a thief or mage. Nevertheless the level limitations combined with unlimited monster generators make the game

extremely hard to play even at the easiest settings, since you can top out your characters' development very early in the game.

Roll your own dungeon

The most notable difference between the *Eye* series and *Dungeon Hack* is the ability to randomly generate over four million dungeons, plus the ability to set difficulty or to select 19 separate game settings. Dungeon depth from 10 to 25 levels can be selected. High, medium, low and none settings can be selected for amount of monsters, treasure, food, illusionary walls, keys, magic traps, pits, monster difficulty, magic power, food consumption, poison strength, and hints. Real death, enemy spells, magic zones, water levels, multi-level puzzles, and undead encounters can be either turned on or off.

By selecting different combinations of the 19 available parameters, you can generate a unique dungeon with its own 19-character code that can be used to generate an identical dungeon on another machine (with another purchased software package). This allows two people to play the same dungeon or to exchange dungeons, and enables several players to enjoy tournament play. This unique dungeon

generation system is in no way a dungeon editor, as was seen with the *Unlimited Adventures* game released for the Gold Box series. Character selection changes the dungeon in subtle ways, making it more of a challenge for the class of character that you are using to try to defeat the dungeon.

Items are stored on the 16-item paper doll inventory

and the 60-item pack inventory screens to the left of the first-person view window. A small automap unfolds under the character inventory display,



Type Fantasy Orc-slaying

System IBM disk or CD-ROM
Requires 386/25+, DOS 5.0+, 100% Microsoft-compatible mouse, VGA & color monitor, 15 MB hard drive space (3.1 MB for each saved games), 2 megs RAM (960,000 bytes free EMS for digitized sound effects, 1,048,576 bytes free XMS for optimal game performance)

Supports: SoundBlaster & Pro, Ad Lib, Roland. **Recommended:** 4 megs RAM)

Planned ports none

by Al C. Giovetti

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Xanth ... from 1

window, where you read the results of your interactions, and lists of nouns, verbs and other parts of speech. You could click on words in the lists to form sentences, or type in your command.

With a sweep of the magic wand, Legend have given us a much bigger picture, an icon bar for inventory, and a smarter than the average cursor that senses the usual way in which you will interact with an object. The word lists were reduced to a single column of seven standard verbs that are supplemented with a few others at the appropriate time.

Now when you place the arrow over a closed door, the words "open the door" appear automatically. If the door is open, you see "close the door."

For objects that may be interacted with in other ways, additional verbs materialize in the verb list. Put the arrow over the mustard in the refrigerator, for instance, and the words "take the mustard" are displayed. Simultaneously, the words "eat" and "squirt" show up in the word list. A couple of dozen keyboard shortcuts are available for commonly used verbs, movement and other functions.

The eight-point compass is used to move from one location to another; you cannot click on the picture to do so. You may, however, click on an item and then on another one to use the first object on the second, a system that opens the way for numerous variations on the object-oriented puzzle.

Other basic elements of the interface are icons to "undo" the last move, to access disk functions such as save and restore (you can name saved games, which are limited only by disk space), and to view the automap.

The automap is superlative (I was going to say "more superlative," but

will save that phrase for the next version.) Click the map button, and the picture is replaced with a black screen and icons that illustrate and name each location you have visited. You may travel to adjacent locations by clicking on the compass arrows, which saves time.

Wide range of humor

Humor encompasses everything from puns to sight gags, from obscure references ("Kenneth, what's the frequency?") to computer game jokes such as a line about The Master

Swordsman in Secret of Monkey Island and a scattering of trademarks symbols throughout the text. Even the credits are

amusing, the only game aside from Al Lowe's work to do so this effectively.

Who did all this? Michael Lindner is credited with the game design, programming and music system – as well as art direction and music. But the twisted humor of Bob Bates, Legend's president, is evident throughout *Xanth*. In the credits, Bates is listed as responsible for Game Design Assistance and Steerage. (I'm not sure what Steerage is, but whatever it is, Bates did a great job!) A half-dozen actors served as models for the animated characters, and the list of other credits is so long – and amusing – that you will just have to read them as they scroll off the top of the screen.

There are many entertaining cut scenes, all animated and supported by humorous prose. In addition to *Xanth*'s solid showing as an animated adventure, there is an abundance of text, particularly in the early stages of the quest. This should satisfy fans of the interactive novel as well as those of the interactive movie. In the music and digital effects arena, *Xanth* is proof that

you don't need "The Fat Man" to turn out a superior sounding game.

Conclusions: Legend Entertainment has finally moved "beyond the pail" – from the land of graphic adventures with a few animated graphics and into the world of truly animated interactive questing. Sierra and LucasArts have nothing on Legend games now, not with this new interface and animation – and certainly not with the Legend sense of humor. **RA**

News ... from 2

floppy.

Dungeon Hack is out from SSI. Psygnosis, better known for arcade games, has a relatively decent action-oriented quest called *Innocent Until Caught*. For more *Castle Wolfenstein*-type 3D questing, look for *Kronolog*.

More CD releases

Lawnmower Man, supposed to have incredible graphics, is due soon. Look for *Lands of Lore* CD in January, *Hand of Fate* CD by March, *Sam and Max* in February. *Critical Path* features live-motion video in a quest with a *Dragon's Lair*-style interface. *Alone in the Dark* CD includes "Jack in the Box, an I-Motion short story." *Gabriel Knight* CD enjoys brilliant voice-casting and animated sequences not seen in the floppy.

The CD version of *Star Trek: 25th Anniversary* shipped, boasting voices from the original cast of the TV show.

Add-on disk for Star Trek: Judgement Rites

Interplay is working on a "Movie and Sound Pack" add-on for the recently released *Star Trek: Judgement Rites*, endowing the original program it with new sounds and cinematic sequences.

Lowball adventures

Frogman Software has a variety of 3D "virtual reality adventures" that cost an amazing \$14.95 each. We'll look at them in a future issue, but meanwhile keep an eye out for *Lethal Tender*, *Rooms of Doom* and *Curse of the Catacombs*. (Or call 1-800-876-FROG).



DAEMONSGATE

A large, marauding Daemonic Army of unknown origin is laying waste to the lands of Elsopea. No one knows how or why this Daemonic Horde appeared. You, as Captain Gustavus (Gus) of the Imperial Tormishan Guard must discover the answers to these questions.

Hestor Quest

Trapped within the fortified walls of the besieged City of Tormis, you set out to find an elderly Elsopean, the first to set foot in the Kingdom of Hestor for over a millenia. He has recently been seen in the vicinity of the Attiean City State and may have some answers.

But for now, at least, that can wait. Your first task is finding a way out of the besieged City. The Daemons have the perimeter tightly sealed. There must be another way out. Speed is of the essence, for the Hordes could attack at any time and the City can't withstand a prolonged assault.

So begins *Daemonsgate*, designed by Imagitec Design and distributed by Electronic Innovative Design (EID) – an RPG of epic proportions, with potentially 150 hours of game play. There are thousands of screens to explore and a 70,000 word conversation system, so this game should keep anyone occupied for many weeks, if not months.

It is the first game I've yet seen to arrive in the stores on both disks and CD on the same day. Actually in the same Airborne Express shipment. Not only that, the game is very reasonably priced.

Gus and us

You don't generate your character, but begin the game in the guise of Gus the Guard. Summoned before the ageing Elders of the City Council, you have come up with a desperate plan to save the City.

Your characters will possess the usual statistics of Strength, Dexterity, Endurance, Wounds, IQ, Mana, Charisma and Reactions. These stats never change, unless a character is temporarily under the influence of Potions. Stats that do change are

Magic Points, Hit Points and Fatigue.

There are also many skills, such as Brawling, Hunting, Missile Weapons, Haggle, Pick Locks, and Loes. Each of these listed skills, and more, are rated from Inept through Master. These skills can be improved through training and practice. Only a Master in a skill can train others.

However, you will not be alone. By visiting the various Inns and Pubs of Tormis you will find many adventurers more than willing to join you in your travels. Up to six people can be added to your party. All are humans – no elves, dwarfs or goblins.

The graphic interface is a well-rendered, top-down view, depicting a small area of your immediate surroundings. You and your party are represented as a single character on the screen, who walks around, talks to NPCs and picks up and uses objects. Objects that can

be picked up have a black border around them, cutting down on what you need to concentrate on.

All actions are performed from pull down menus by clicking on Main Categories at the top of the screen. These main categories are Controls, Objects, Doors and Knowledge. These menus present you with the opportunity to Converse, Use, Swap, Drop, Give, Wear, Get, Save, Restore and Quit. Conversation is of the "start with a few, and build up to many subjects" category.

Your characters have multiple places to equip items into/onto, such as head, arms, chest, legs, hands, etc. You also have a backpack that can hold up to 32 items.

Sure is quiet in here

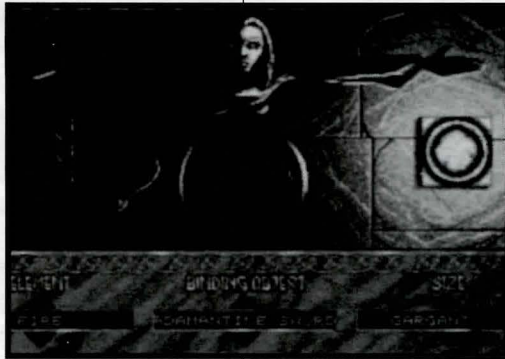
While the music is very good, the lack of sound effects was noticeable – especially in the introduction, where sound effects would have added immensely to the otherwise graphics impressive. There is no speech, and I was playing on the CD version. As best as I can determine, there is no difference between the disk and CD version.

The game comes packaged with a 96-page Manual of Instruction, a well done short VHS tape, a map of the city of Tormis with key locations marked,

and a map of the Kingdom of Hestor.

Additionally, the Manual contains a series of hints that tell you subtly,

leading up to specifically, how to escape from Tormis. This



Type Fantasy Role-playing

System IBM Required: 386/16+, 640K, hard disk **Supports:** Ad Lib, Sound Blaster, Pro Audio, mouse, joystick

Planned ports none

by Fred J. Philipp

QuestBusters

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CD CENTRAL

So what's a video board review doing in *QuestBusters*? [Especially when the company didn't even send a free review copy?!] Well, the ReelMagic board is designed to run only with CD software, and it very well could be the future of multi-media gaming for the next few years. If you've got a CD or are thinking about getting one, it's something you should know about.

The ReelMagic board uses MPEG (Motion Picture Experts Group) compression technology to run 30 frames per second of digitized video from a CD, rather than the standard 7-15 frames. It also allows for 32,768 colors instead of the usual 256 in full-screen rather than reduced format. For games with digitized video, this means incredible full-screen clarity, movie-quality motion/animation and no bothersome pauses while accessing the CD. The latter is possible because the ReelMagic board has its own processor chip that does all the decompression, leaving the easy stuff for your computer. Also built in is 16-bit sound card that has 8-bit SoundBlaster compatibility. So if you're considering a 16-bit sound card, this is an interesting bonus. And if you already have one, Sigma is supposedly planning a cheaper package that omits the sound card.

In 1994, we'll see full-motion video using MPEG compression in a form called VideoCD, which many folks are hoping will replace VHS. You may have already seen some for the Philips CD-I player.

The ReelMagic board can play VideoCD for your PC as well as run any CD software designed for the board – and there's the catch. You get enhanced video only if the software is 1) specifically designed for ReelMagic, or 2) it's a VideoCD, or 3) it uses MPEG technology. Your *Lord of the Rings* CD is going to look just like it always did,

unless it's a ReelMagic version.

So far a dozen or so software developers have contracted to support ReelMagic, and they are the big ones: Access, Sierra, Activision, Aris, Interplay, Psygnosis, Readysoft, Trilobyte and Virgin, to name a few. The board was supposed to ship with the ReelMagic version of *Return to Zork*, but it wasn't ready to ship with the board. Instead, the box contained Readysoft's *Dragon's Lair* and a coupon to send in for *Return to Zork*. Aside from a barely noticeable fuzziness, *Dragon's Lair* looks just like the arcade version and plays just as smoothly. And it has all the arcade scenes, from beginning to end – excellent!

ReelMagic requirements

To run the ReelMagic board with Windows, you must have version 3.1; with DOS, 3.1 or higher. Other system requirements are: 386SX/16+, 2 megs internal RAM, 2 megs hard disk space, a VGA/SVGA card with a VESA standard feature connector, VGA or multisynch monitor, and an MPC Level 1 + CD-ROM drive.

The card slips into an expansion slot and has a connector cable (complete with male/female hook-ups) that attaches to your VGA/SVGA card – the reason you *must* have a VESA connector on your video card. Sigma also offers a full CD-ROM upgrade package that has their CD drive plugged directly into the ReelMagic board.

Installing the board was easy, especially with a setup program that displays all the IRQs and DMA

channels being used and enabling you to change settings via software rather than manually flipping dip switches. It also has a "Snooper" program that automatically installs in Windows to sniff out TSR conflicts and fix them, and a Mixer for adjusting volume levels.



Reel problems?

I've heard of problems with the ReelMagic sound card and some MPC games the Snooper program may not have taken care of. Another QBer, Clancy Shaffer, reported lots of problems in getting it to work with his system, including crashes with the software bundled with the board. My only difficulty was a technical error where the *Dragon's Lair* CD wouldn't run because the ReelMagic manual failed to note I was supposed to load the full-motion driver in my hard drive. Once I did that, it worked fine (Up-to-date drivers have addressed many early problems and are available from Sigma's bulletin board.)

The main reason the ReelMagic board took the spotlight this month is because of what it represents – MPEG technology, a fantastic step in bringing realistic full-screen, real-life and animated video to PC games. The drawback, as with all new hardware, is the lack of software for it. That was true with the CD drive itself, which finally made it.

Right now you can get the ReelMagic board for about \$380. It has a 5-year warranty and includes the 16-bit sound card and *Dragon's Lair*, with *Return to Zork* on the way. Some software developers have put \$50 rebate offers for upcoming ReelMagic versions in their new releases' boxes. Current and future titles planned for ReelMagic include Sierra's *Outpost* and *Police Quest 4*, Virgin's *7th Guest: 11th Hour*, Interplay's *Lord of the Rings* and Access' *Under a Killing Moon*. ❄

by Paul Shaffer

LABYRINTH OF TIME

One of the pitfalls of multimedia technology is that the developers exert so much effort on the graphics, music, sound effects and other "bells and whistles" that they sometimes neglect the game play. This happened with Warner's *Hell Cab* and, unfortunately, with *The Labyrinth of Time*, one of Electronic Arts's first CD-ROM titles.

Players of both games will not in any way feel like they didn't get their money's worth in audiovisual elements, but they might get tired of wandering lost in the games' environments.

Labyrinth is an absolutely gorgeous game with an outstanding score. However, it may take hours before you feel like you have any idea of what's going on.

Goal to go

Labyrinth's layout extends throughout a number of time periods. The object of the game is unclear unless you read the part of the manual that describes the overall goal. A warning precedes this section, but it really doesn't give away any of the game.

King Minos of ancient Greece has called upon the spirit of Daedalus to build another maze like his famous design of the Labyrinth of Knossos. But the power-hungry Minos wants this one to span time and space, so he can attain complete control over the world. You must destroy the labyrinth by solving the puzzles in it and by using machines and objects to reduce Minos's power. Without this background information and Daedalus's introduction at the start of the game, you would be completely lost.

The interface is rather basic. Even newcomers to adventure games should be able to figure out the controls. A row of icons along the bottom of the view screen controls the action. These icons stand for: take, move, open, close, look, inventory, turn left and right, go forward and map. A separate inventory interface lets you use and examine your objects and access the

save game and load game screens.

Most of your time will be spent in motion around the many locations searching for

something constructive to do. There are few objects and puzzles in *Labyrinth*. Although this dearth makes it easier to solve the problems that pop up, it also makes *Labyrinth* tedious to play. The mirror maze, for example, is no real maze, because there are no tricks and the automap plots your every movement.

Labyrinth is really a showcase for the Super VGA 3D-modeled and rendered graphics that represent each game location. From the opening scene in the subway car to the Old West town to the diner with the jukebox, *Labyrinth* looks photorealistic, as do many of today's

CD-ROM games. The beautiful scenery injects some excitement into the "story," because you never know what you'll see next. The intricate connection of places and time periods is such that you can find warps and gateways almost anywhere.

Sound effects are nice, but rather minimal. The music, however, is outstanding and has the sweeping movements and variety of instruments that you would find in a film soundtrack. It also sets the mood for the game, injecting a sense of urgency and impending doom.

Labyrinth is perfect for players who want to show off their CD-ROM drive or experience an incredibly realistic world on their computer. If you first explore the limits of the game without using any objects or operating any machines beyond the elevator, the objects you find will make more sense. The key to success in *Labyrinth* is discovering which objects and actions will influence events in later time periods. That aspect of the game is quite interesting, but until you

reach that point you might think *Labyrinth* is nothing more than a travelogue. **Conclusions:** Those who delve into the game's backbone will find a neat time-spanning story despite

the confusing game play. Have some patience and you'll enjoy this modestly-priced CD-ROM game as the designers intended. **AA**

Skill Level: Novice
Company: Electronic Arts
Price: \$59.95
QuestBusters price: \$49



Type : Multimedia graphic adventure

System IBM CD-ROM

Required 381/16+, 2 megs XMS, VGA, DOS 3.3+, CD drive, mouse
Supports Sound Blaster, SVGA
VESA Recommended double-spin CD drive

Planned ports Macintosh CD-ROM

by Russ Ceccola

WALKTHROUGH

Innocent Until Caught

Touye spaceport

Get passport lying on the seat in the lounge. As you approach the turnstiles in the subway station, you will remember how you used to cheat your way through.

Go to the bar next door and sit on the end bar seat. Look at the next patron, and you'll see something green in his pocket, a pawnbroker ticket. Take it.

Go next door to the House of Ill Repute; you need a passport to enter. Talk to the Madam, who wants you to get a vase back from the Pawnbroker. Take the perfume and the used chewing gum from the receptionist. Pick up the cane. Go through the alley, pick up the bag, hose and can of beer, and note the beggar and hat with money in it.

Pawnbroker & Bikers

Go to the Pawnbroker, redeem the ticket and get a flash camera in return. Take the vase and put it in the bag. Check the vase and take the gum wrapper from it. Go to the House of Ill Repute and give the vase to the Madam. Get the ornament from her.

Go through the alley, past the beggar and back to the bikers. There is an electric outlet on the west corner of the food stand. Use it to charge up the camera flash. Look for a large egg in the trash and take it. Take the oil can. Talk to the biker in the northeast corner, and ask for the vest his friend is wearing. The biker wants the ornament. Exchange it for the vest, which is made of money.

Going back to the alley, use the flash on the Beggar. This blinds him, so you can take the hat. Take the money and return the hat.

Subway

Go to the bar and buy a drink. Use the change on the gum wrapper: you now have a subway cheat. Sit through the sequence where the gangster got killed. Get the ring after the gangsters are killed. Go to the back table and get the jar and cap. Put cap on the jar.

Enter the subway and use the oilcan to loosen the screwdriver. Take the screwdriver. Take the radio off the platform, go to the bar and call to Robot Server, then use screwdriver on him and get Circuit Board. Connect Circuit board to radio from subway to make remote control.

The Crime Lord

Go back to the bikers and continue north to the ship. Use the remote control to disorganize the Robot guard. Take the Captain Hat from the rail. Return to the Pawnbroker and trade hat for rug.

Get on subway, pick up aerosol can, go two stops to Hill and get off. Go past the Art Gallery to Camera guard at gate (show ring to camera to get admittance) Give ring to Crime lord, who will suggest sharing profits if you steal three things: an egg from a man-eating bird at the zoo, a trophy from the museum, and some bank bonds.

Note: The subway stops are Bad Side (your present location), Space

Port, The Hill (Stoneybridge Galley here), Reguri (Bank here), East Eruk (Zoo here) and The Bad Side again.

Go to the Gallery next door to the Crime Lord and use the airhose on the aerosol can. Get a pellet from the first exhibit stand. Use the airgun twice against the display case, then put the carpet down, use the airgun again and pick up the trophy from the carpet. Give the trophy to the Crime Lord. Get the mushroom outside the gate.

Hot dog!

Go to Reguri and take the bad hotdog from the hotdog stand. Use the jar on the mayonnaise and get mayonnaise in it. Cap the jar and stand under where the fly stops for a moment, Uncap the jar, and the big fly will enter the jar. Cap it at once.

Enter Police station and talk to the Sergeant. When he speaks about the drugs and flour, click your talk icon on these words. They will change color, and you can get the flour.

Blueprints & file

Go into the bank and tell the girl you want to make a deposit. Give her the bag of coins, and she will send you to the door. Give the coins, then buzz the door again and, when it's open, place the used gum on the door. Wait a short time, open the door and use the screwdriver two times on the lock on the top left side of the files. Take the file and blueprints, then leave.

Go to East Eruk, use the screwdriver on the balloon and get the string. Go back to the docks and get on the garbage truck. You will be dumped behind the zoo. Opposite you is a large animal on a pinnacle; use the perfume on it.

by Fred Philipp &
Clancy Shaffer

QuestBusters

The egg

Remove the straw and open the grate. Fasten one vine to the ring the grate was attached to, and the other vine to the stick, making a grapple hook. Look up at the roof, and you will see some cross girders. Use balloon string on the cane to make a bow, then shoot the grapple over the girders.

Swing across the chasm and give the hot dog to the man-eating plant. Put the big egg in the nest and take the real egg. Return to the vine and go down the hole into the sewer.

Bank bonds

Read the blueprint, which will direct you to go west two alcoves. Put the mushroom near the alcove wall, walk away and release the fly. It dives toward the mushroom blowing it up, along with the vault wall. Inside, you can see the bonds. Use the flour to see the laser beams, then walk between them. Get bonds and leave.

In jail

Your pacing is broken by the entrance of a small object through the window bars. Read the gadget. Press the button on the end of the gadget and blow a hole in the wall.

The hole leads to the next cell, and an inmate called Narm. Search the floor and lift the mat and trap door. To get out of the maze, work your way to the top right hand corner. After you and Narm emerge, you again read the gadget. Follow instructions, and a small space capsule appears. You both enter and find that you have been rescued to steal a Doomsday weapon from a would-be Conqueror.

The space ship

Take the flowers from the stateroom

and give to the newlyweds. Steal the groom's wallet, which holds a credit card and passport. Use the credit card to buy the largest bottle of booze you can get. Drink it, and you will awaken on the new planet near P'Pau D'P' Pau Palace.

Go into the hardware store and steal a screwdriver. Keep talking until the owner gives you a box of parts. Use the screwdriver on them to make a clockwork mouse. Talk about D'P'Pau, who will give you a book with a password in it.

Enter the bar across the street and talk to the man. A scientist for D'Pau and in love with Ruthie D'Pau daughter, he agrees to help you if you can get the letter to Ruthie.

Go back to the terminal and Narm, who is standing by the guard. Have him distract the old lady so you can steal her mink, which is on top of her luggage. You must move quickly to do so.

Ruthie

Use the password and go past the guards and around the first house. When attacked by the dog, put the fur on the gadget you made. The dog will chase it. Climb up the rose trellis and meet and talk with Ruthie. Tear up the letter.

Tell the Lab Technician you delivered the letter to get the key. Tell Narm to steal a uniform. Tell Narm you have a plan: he will impersonate Ruthie at a late night meeting. Outside the Lab, wear uniform. You must put it on while you are in the Control section of the game: when the Game icons such as "save, restore," etc. appear. Enter the Lab, and you end up in jail.

In jail again

Look out the window. When Narm appears, tell him to give Ruthie a poem from you (use all # 1 answers).

Once out of jail, talk to Ruthie in the bar to get a Travel Warrant. Tell Narm to get a crate (he's outside the Lab). Go to the spaceport and put the warrant on the large crate. Talk to crate. Get in it. Narm is already there.

You escape the crate in the next scene and enter the Escape Pod on the shuttle. When you reach the top of SkyCity, move the crate out of the doorway.

Girders

Cross the Girder and go down into the hanger. Get crowbar from floor, back up and cross the girder into the doorway. Drop to the next floor. Open the Crate by using the crowbar. Get canister and balloon. Try and use Plinth: you need a pass key. Use the canister on balloon to float up to the next level.

Go back and cross girder. Go down one level directly across the hanger into a room and talk to Ruthie. Get her pass key. Go back to Plinth, use pass key on plinth and get Crystal. Get another balloon and use Canister on balloon to go up one level. Return to Ruthie and put the Crystal on the large Console in the center of the room. Use console.

Dictator

Leave room, return and meet the Dictator. Bet him that he can't use the Transatron. After haggling, go to Ruthie and propose. Talk to Dictator and use the Dowry as a stake in your bet. As the Dictator is using the Console, your preprogramming transfers your IRDS debt to the Crime Lord. Narm appears and fires. ❧

Keys to the Kingdoms

Dark Sun

White Sands: find Laussa in this area, which is south of Tequauzel, and speak to her. After encountering Ssovan in the Salt Flats, return and tell Laussa about him. She will leave to find him; do not ask for a reward. Later, return to Salt Flats and speak to Laussa, who will offer you a reward; you'll get it whether you accept or decline: it's a Ring of Steadfastness (+3 Constitution).

Johnny Garrett, Jr.

Companions of Xanth

Finding Fairy Nuff and getting past the pail: Take rock. Unlock gate with key. Open gate. Go to pier. Take sailcloth. Talk to Nada. Ask her to get rope from ship (and anchor). Go to deck (noting # of censers). Go to crossing. Pry log with anchor. In town, give log to woodman. Ask him to make a board. Go to meadow and try to take pail. Return to town and get board. Go to path between cliffs and put board on boulder. Put rock on board. Ask Nada to hit board.

Go to meadow. Take pail. Go to screen door. Open mailbox and take envelope. Open envelope and read letter. Open screen. Talk to screen and ask about Ice Queen, Fairy Nuff, then solution. Open screen. Go to fairway, take tee. Go to fair. Give letter to Nuff. Ask Nuff about solution and explain the problem (getting recipe).

Paul Shaffer

Dracula Unleashed

Day One: At 7:00 AM, visit Annisette. You will pick up a strange white cloth. Travel to the Hades Club, then Newstand. Read articles in paper. Go to

Holmwoods for Harker's address.

Go to the Pub at 10:00 AM to get the Bookstore address. Go to Telegraph, hold Janos card and enter. Go to Bookstore for Asylum location and Occult book. Now visit Harker's Home (note roses) for card with Harkers Office.

Visit Asylum for blackjack. Check out Hades Club again. At 3:00 PM go to Holmwoods for gift. Go to Harkers office, hold gift, and enter. He will give you a cross amulet. Return to Hades Club.

Hold the amulet and check on Annisette. She will take the amulet, and Juliet will give you a rose. Now head for home. Hold blackjack, wait until 9:00 PM, and enter home. Read telegram from Janos. You will receive a Bowie knife. Check out the Pub, then on to the Asylum. Back home to sleep.

Fred J. Philipp & Clancy F. Shaffer

Gabriel Knight

Day Four: Get up, drink coffee, read the paper. Get the veve clippings from Grace. Go to the Napoleon House and get the bracelet from Sam.

Go to the overlook near Jackson Square. Click the "operate" icon on the binoculars and watch the drummer and another man talking with him. Go to Jackson Square and follow the other man to the Cathedral.

Use the Snake bracelet on Crash to make him talk. Ask about the Drummer. Ask about "Voodoo Hounfour." After Crash dies, look at him closely. Use the "Open" icon on Crash's clothing. This will reveal a snake tattoo.

Use the sketch book on the tattoo. You will have added "Rada Drums" to your topics and "tattoo tracing" to your inventory.

C. F. Shaffer & F. J. Philipp

The Hand of Fate

Inside City: Click on statue's mouth to get stick. Go east to street for spells, parchment, flask, orange peel, wrapper. Go Tavern. Go through musical color sequence again to enter Tavern. Talk, get mug, use on keg. Get taffy from barrel.

Removing trance: At the rabbit, get mud and use on paw for footprints. Put vinegar and taffy in bowl for sweet and sour. Add this to cauldron, along with the lucky horseshoe (use on Zanthia for clue), footprints and tears to make Skeptic Spell.

Go to the gorge, and use stick on rope to cross. Head for altar, put flask with potion on it, and get Strong Potion.

C. F. Shaffer & F. J. Philipp

Leisure Suit Larry 6

Lamp & tools: Go to beach and dig in sand (getting lamp). Go to bar. Take free matches on counter. In hall by ice machine, examine maid's cart (both sides). Take hand creme, washcloth, toilet paper, soap, toilet seat cover and dental floss. Go to bathroom. Take wrench and file from mechanic's belt (if you called him previously. You can always bring him back by flushing a roll of toilet paper and calling him). Take condom from bed.

Char & batteries: Go to mud baths. Examine and talk to Char (until you get points). Hitch a ride on tram in halls. Get off at end by electronic gate. Give

match to Art. While he takes a break, open back of tram. Use wrench (see previous section) to disconnect power cable. When Art returns, talk to him when he tries to repair tram (getting flashlight). Open flashlight (getting batteries).

Return flashlight to Art. Return to mud baths. Give batteries to Char. Go to make-up classroom. Take cord on floor. Return to mud baths. Use cord (strips away insulation). Plug cord into wall socket and connect other end to electric lock on electroshock door (getting sculpture). Return to shock room and get pearl on floor.

Paul Shaffer

Kronolog

Lab in Los Alamos: Take lithium battery. Note grinder. Go left, note Time Machine. Enter and observe. You'll be using this later. Go left to office, take glass pipet. Note cockroach enclosure.

Return to grinder and grind pipet. Go to cockroaches. Look at enclosure and insert pipet. You will see a playing card, 1/2 of Queen of Hearts with letters "hELZ." Go behind desk and stand on chair. Open vent and enter the Maze.

Maze: Put device in socket. Put battery in helmet and hold. Proceed S, W, W, S, S, W, W, S, S, EX, S, S, WX6, N. Remove device. Click on grill in floor to exit. Give device to Morissey, then talk to her. She gives you a pottery shard and poem from her. Open cabinet on left to travel to Lakona Pueblo.

C. F. Shaffer & F. J. Philipp

This month contributor Johnny Garrett Jr. was randomly selected to receive the game of his choice -- so send in your clues & tips today, so we can fill two pages in the next issue. (All submissions become property of

Eldritch, LTD until
May 12, 2317 A. D.)

Free Solutions!

The *Book of Clues* includes a coupon you can exchange for one or more free solutions from games such as *Lands of Lore*, *Return to Zork*, *Alone in the Dark 1*, *Gabriel Knight*, *Hand of Fate*, *Star Trek: Judgement Rites*, *Leisure Suit Larry 6* and *Quest for Glory IV*. It is only \$19 (see back for shipping.)

The Book of Clues

Alone in the dark
Amazon
Batman Returns
Betrayal at Kronodor
Bloodstone
Blue Force
Bureaucracy
Challenge of the Five Realms
Cobra Mission
Might & Magic: Darkside of Xeen & World of Xeen
Daughter of Serpents
Day of the Tentacle
Dusk of the Gods
Eric the Unready
Eye of the Beholder 3
Freddy Pharkas
Gobliins 2
Hollywood Hijinx
Inca
Koshan Conspiracy
Lure of the Temptress
Magic Candle 3
Protostar
Realms of Arkania
Return of the Phantom
Rex Nebular
Ringworld
Space Quest 5
Star Control II
The Prophecy
Ultima VII Part 2: Serpent Isle
Ultima Underworld 2
Veil of Darkness
Waxworks
Zork Zero (from Lost Treasures 2) 🐉

LIMITED TIME OFFER:

BUY 1 BOOK, GET 1 BOOK!

Our next clue book -- *Keys to the Kingdoms* -- will ship in March. It is too late to advance order at last issue's special discount. But we'll still send any solution in the book to you when you order. *Gobliins 3* and *Inca 2* have still not yet arrived, and may be replaced with other solutions. The book will still have at least 20, however, includes a coupon exchangeable for a solution to *Ultima 8*, *Stonekeep* or any of ten games not available in time to include in this book.

Keys to the Kingdoms

Bloodnet
Companions of Xanth
Dark Sun
Dracula Unleashed
Eternam (CD version)
Gabriel Knight
Hand of Fate
Innocent Until Caught
Kronolog
Lands of Lore
Legacy: Realms of Terror
Leisure Suit Larry 6
Lost in Time
Police Quest: Open Season
Quest for Glory IV
Return to Zork
Shadowcaster
Simon the Sorcerer
**Star Trek: Judgement Rites.*

(Solutions marked * are still in development.) 🐉

Police Quest ... from 3

incidents relate to the subduing of two violent citizens and killing the serial killer. In none of these events does the gun aim in the same manner as on the academy range.

Game options such as save, pause, sound volume, and load are superb, as with all Sierra games. But Sierra should consider having more hot key macros to relieve the repetitive strain injury computer users get from using the mouse continually. I especially like the Sierra save game system, where the number of save games is limited only by hard drive space.

Context-sensitive music includes rock, rap, and hip-hop and sound effects were of high quality, which make an entertaining background to the serious and often gruesome story of mutilations of police, women and a child.

Conclusions: The game deficiencies include a too-short story, no aiming device on John Carey's weapons in the south central LA shoot out, and lack of story direction and clues (too many red herrings). In spite of these, the story was entertaining, involving, and a most interesting, realistic view of police work. **Conclusions:** *Open Season* is recommended, with the proviso that someone looking for a continuation of the style of Jim Wall's earlier efforts will find little resemblance in Daryl Gates' continuation of the series. [Which must be the reason Sierra didn't call this *Police Quest IV*, but simply *Police Quest: Open Season*. ❧

Difficulty: Average

Company: Sierra

Price: \$69.95

QuestBusters price: \$59

Solution Needed!

We still lack a complete solution to *The 7th Guest*. If you can provide one expediently, we will give you a copy of the upcoming sequel, *7th Guest: The 11th Hour*.

Shadowcaster ... from 4

have fun trying them on various levels. Other than the Maorin and Kirt, you can morph to the gremlin-like Caun, the Beholder-like Opsis, the frog-like Kahpa, the dragon-like SSair and the golem-like Grost. You have to be careful in some circumstances, because Kirt will drown if you morph to a Kahpa and subsequently run out of power underwater.

Morphing & more

Shadowcaster's graphics and sounds are spectacular. The screens move by so quickly that you may have to intentionally slow down to catch the scenery. The morphing effects and other visual touches are nice.

The variety of the game's levels is even better. From mist and water to lava and shrubbery, *Shadowcaster* provides a visual treat as exciting as the action. The monsters are also drawn and animated quite well so that they each have their own "personality." Sound effects are very realistic and sometimes goofy (in combat). You'll hear grunts and yells during fights and creative in-your-face sounds at other times. The music is intense, but does not bother you while you play.

Conclusions: Origin and Electronic Arts should team up more often if they produce games like *Shadowcaster*. It will compel most players to finish just one more area or defeat just one more monster. The monsters are tough, and it may take a while to discover the best approach to each level, but you're sure to have fun with every attempt. The game is not terribly large, but it does have high replay value, because it assigns you a score and you can try the game over using the monster forms at different times than you did before. Think a little while you play, and you'll be able to survive all the way to the final confrontation with Veste. ❧

Skill Level: Average

Company: Origin

Price: \$79.95

QuestBusters price: \$69

Hack ... from 5

and can be clicked on to provide a full screen dungeon map.

The automap features self-coding for stairs, doors and other things Maps can be printed, but only to IBM character set printers, which requires you to spend some time in your long lost printer manual to get the maps to print. You cannot move around while the full screen map is displayed, which could have made the game play easier, since the automap is too small.

Under the first-person display window is the character face icon, two-hand activator buttons, a compass, and six mouse-activated movement icons. I preferred to use the number keypad to move around with my left hand while keeping my right hand on the mouse for untoward circumstances. More hot keys would have made the interface more user friendly.

Music and sounds are excellent. Graphics are not quite as polished or attractive as the original Westwood graphics they are based on. Game options are functional and conveniently placed in the camp selections.

Thankfully, resting is very easy, even when monsters are dangerously close, and there are no interruptions while resting. Saved games are limited to a grossly inadequate twelve. But the plot is the weakest element: a hero responding to the summons of a powerful Wizardress, who for some reason cannot search for a lost orb on her own. **Conclusions:** Despite all the deficiencies cited, and the obvious improvement that correcting them would have on the game, I found *Hack* fun and addicting, and continue to turn to it for diversion between playing all the other games that I have to play and review each month. While it is highly recommended, remember that there will be little or no help getting through the over four million dungeons in the way of specific hints. ❧

Difficulty: Average

Company: SSI

Price: \$60.00

QuestBusters price: \$50

Swap Shop

Swap Shop ads are no longer free! We are accepting nothing but clues for recent quests (to appear in our Keys to the Kingdoms section) in exchange for ads. Please type your ad and include with your clue. 10 games per ad, original software with boxes only. * = clue book included.

MSDOS & Quest-alikes

Sell: Day of Tentacle, Companions of Xanth, Shadowcaster, Hand of Fate. Will buy/trade for: Ultima VII & Silver Seed, and new CDs. Austin Hendricks, 155 Newell St, Pittsfield MA 01201

Sell only, \$19 each: Larry 1 (VGA) and 5, King's Quest 1 VGA, Police Quest 1 & 2, Manhunter 1 & 2, Quest for Glory 2, Codename Iceman, Gold Rush. Kevin Tyrell, 38 Coleman Rd, Arlington MA 02174

Trade/sell, \$30: 7th Guest CD, Prince of Persia 2, *Day of Tentacle CD, *King's Quest 6 CD, Maximum Overkill. \$20 each: Indy & Fate of Atlantis, Space Quest 5, Legend of Kyrandia, Eric Unready. Joe Marietta, 2812 W Meadow Wood Dr, Chesapeake VA 23321

Trade only: *Clouds of Xeen, Underworld 1, Dark Savant, Lands of Lore. Want: Krondor, Legacy: Realm of Terror, Space Hulk, Day of Tentacle CD, Eye of Beholder 3 CD. Johnny Garrett Jr, 41048 Brown Rd, Ponchatoula LA 70454

Trade/sell: Quest for Glory 1 (VGA), 3 & 4; Clouds and Darkside of Xeen, Inca, Space Hulk, Dark Sun. Want Larry 6, King's Quest 6, Civilization, Shadowcaster, Kyrandia 2, Xanth, more. Daniel Bulmer, 1163 Union Rd, Victoria, BC Canada V8P 2J2

Trade: Ultima 7, Spear of Destiny, *Dark Savant, Clouds of Xeen, Indy & Fate of Atlantis, King's Quest 6, Space Quest 4. Want Eye 3, Darkside of Xeen, Ultima 7, Quest for Glory 3, Kyrandia, or your list. Richard Carlin, 90-03 107th St, Richmond Hill NY 11418

Trade/sell, \$20: Dark Sun, Clouds & Darkside of Xeen, *Ultima Underworld,

more. Want Ultima 6, Dark Savant, etc. Write for list. Robert Olsen, 201 W Vineyard Ave #144, Oxnard CA 93030

Trade/sell, \$30 each: *Clouds of Xeen, *Darkside of Xeen (or World, \$50), Ultima Underworld 1 or 2 CD. *Gateway, \$20. Return to Zork, \$35. Want: King's Quest 6 CD, Gateway 2, Lands of Lore, Ringworld. Casey Lang, 203 E. Mitchell Ave, State College PA 16803

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Daemonsgate ... from 7

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Naturally there is combat, but to a tired old adventurer like myself (who would rather love than fight), a choice made during Set Up will allow you to escape all combat (except some important combats).

If you enjoy combat you can set up your own strategy with both offensive and defensive menus. Additionally you can rout, reform or use a "radar box" to display the complete combat area. Or, if you prefer, you can let the computer fight the battle for you.

And, of course, there is Magik in the forms of Herbalism, which consists of binding plants to produce potions. Elementalism, which binds the powers of the elements to various items such as swords and amulets. Daemonology, which binds the power of Daemons into finely crafted objects such as silver weapons or jeweled amulets.

Conclusions: A huge game of epic proportions and 150 hours of game play, this one will carry you throughout the Winter and into the Spring. All RPG lovers should grab this one up. ✻

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