

QUEST BUSTERS™

#115

Special "Which Issue is This?" Issue

Not sold in time

DEATH GATE

The latest game in Legend's arsenal of quality adventures, *Death Gate* takes the same approach as *Xanth* in using a significant fantasy author's world as the basis for a graphic adventure, this time calling on the *Death Gate* novels of Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman for inspiration.

The novels lay the groundwork for an expansive quest across five realms that will take you a while to solve, but which won't drive you mad in the meantime. Game designer Glen Dahlgren (*Gateworld II*) collected an impressive array of puzzles, dramatic voice talent and special effects to enhance the captivating plot and interesting characters.

The story behind the *Death Gate* novels is perfect for a quest. I've never read any them, but the events

of this game must bring the plots of the novels to a fitting conclusion.

Magic is very important in the world of *Death Gate*. As you might expect,

some of the

magicians have turned evil (the Sartan) and decided to trap the Patryn race in a place called the Labyrinth for "rehabilitation." During the "sundering," they also broke the World Seal into four elemental realms (air, fire, stone and water) and the Nexus, an in-between

world where the Labyrinth is located. You control Haplo, a brave adventurer who volunteers to help Lord Xar reform the world by finding the pieces of the World Seal and discovering the fate of the Sartan.

You travel between realms in a solo flying ship that can reach a realm only if its naming rune is inscribed on the special navigation disk behind the steering wheel. The wheel takes you to different locations within a realm. Until you discover the naming rune for the air realm, you can only move around the Nexus.

Magic has a very distinct presence. You collect hexagonal runes on which are inscribed symbols. To cast a spell, you trace a symbol or a collection of symbols in the air. Throughout your travels, you pick up runes along the way and learn new spells.

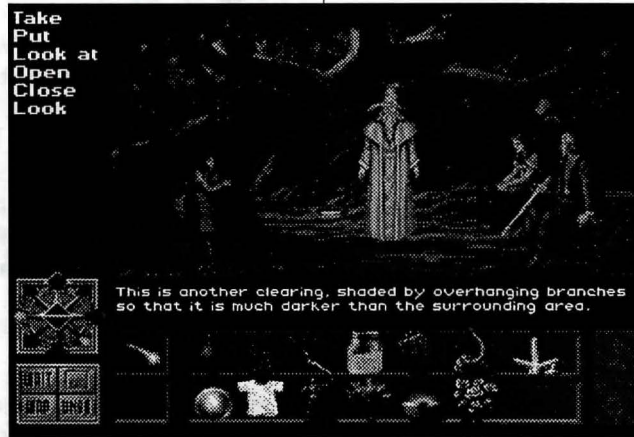
Death Gate's interface is very flexible and, as in every Legend game, employs a combination of mouse, keyboard and function keys for input. You can click on all game commands with the mouse, but will eventually enter some commands from the keyboard for quicker game play.

The main interface screen is set up with a picture at the top of the screen, commands in the upper left,

command buttons in the lower left, compass rose — for movement — above the buttons and the inventory boxes below the picture.

You can double-click on words in the picture that pop up over activated parts of the screen to perform some com-

mands or the command words and inventory objects for others. The command buttons access the map, Undo command, Wait command (idly pass time) and special functions like Save, Restore and music options. Veteran adventure game fans will be able play the game almost instantly, but novices won't find it much more



This is another clearing, shaded by overhanging branches so that it is much darker than the surrounding area.

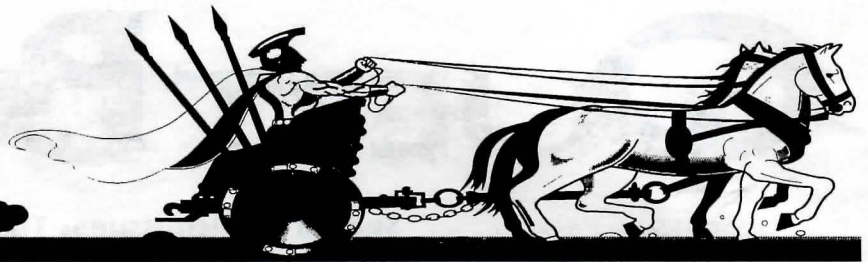
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by Russ Ceccola

Adventure Road



ROCK 'N ROLE-PLAYING

Look for *Ravenloft 2: Stone Prophet* in early April. SSI also has a role-playing game, *Thunderscape*, scheduled for June. Sir-Tech expects to ship *Jagged Edge* any day now, but don't look for another Wizardry this year.

DOOM DOOMED

The tidal wave of *Doom* clones has left the beach pretty messy. The latest is LucasArts' *Dark Forces*, which is the best-looking of these "shoot-em-up in-a-maze games." Interplay's *Descent*, however, will likely emerge as the top all-around 3D action game of the year. Interplay says it outranks *Doom 2* on the Internet. Maybe we'll start seeing more RPGs now that the "Doom thing" is done.

MISSION CRITICIZED

Not yet — hard to do when the game hasn't shipped. But *Mission Critical*, Legend Entertainment's next animated adventure, will hopefully hit in mid-summer. Legend products are distributed by Accolade. (Time-Warner recently bought a chunk of Accolade, which as a result will now focus on development and leave the distribution to another Time-Warner unit.)

INCOMING

Take 2's *Bureau 13* showed up this month. The key feature of this animated sci-fi adventure is its replayability. You can choose any two of six characters, from a vampire to a hacker, and many puzzles have alternative solutions based on the various abilities of your characters. *Bureau 13* was based on a cult paper and pencil RPG by Richard Tucholka.

IN THE OFFING

Domark plans to ship *Cerberus* in March. It's an animated adventure set on a research station near a black hole

called "Devil's Gate." A science fiction mystery from England, *Cerberus* employs rendered movie scenes and hand-painted backgrounds. Look for *The Orion Conspiracy*, another animated adventure from Domark, in May.

CGW to SF

The staff at *Computer Gaming World* recently picked up their toys and moved to San Francisco. Everyone but publisher Russel Sipe. A letter from the magazine explained Sipe had chosen to work on "special projects." The new publisher is.... What was it? I know I scribbled it down here somewhere (in pencil).

POWERHITS CD

Several good adventures and RPGs can be found on Activision's CD collection, *Powerhits SciFi*. You get *Circuit's Edge*, *Mines of Titan* and *Prophecy*, as well as the more action-oriented *Tongue of the Fatman* and *Deathtrack*.

Farther off in the offing, Spectrum Holobyte's *Star Trek* for IBM CD has been officially delayed. Spec-Holo says it won't ship by the end of March (their fiscal quarter) as planned, but should arrive by summer. The company will introduce the first in a racing series at the E3 show (Electronic Entertainment Expot) in Los Angeles in May, perhaps *World Circuit 2*.

X-COM SEQUEL

Micro Prose projects shipping several titles by the end of March. *X-COM: Terror from the Deep* will have micro-management-minded role-players standing in line at the stores. A couple of non-adventures may also be worth watching for, including *Machiavelli: The Prince*, *Pizza Tycoon* and *Colonization for Windows*. The first

Dear QuestBusters:

When does my QB expire? You used to put the expiration date on the label, but now it says "Expires 117." When is that? January 17th? November 7th?

Greg Orian

The number refers to the issue number, which appears on the top left part of the cover. (By tracking subscriptions according to issue number rather than calendrically, we avoid the errors and constant adjustments required by even the simplest calendar.) This, for example, is issue 115, so you have two more issues left. We send a postcard a month or so before your QB expires, and sometimes send another if you forget to renew (though sometimes we forget.) To discover the month in which a particular issue appeared, look in the bottom right column of this page.

QuestBusters

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DARK SUN: WAKE OF THE RAVAGER



gain we quest to the Land of Athas, the setting of *Dark Sun: Shattered Lands*. Except for references to the Veiled

Alliance, however, no vestige of the Shattered Lands is in sight. Athas has become a land of desert and waste. The oceans have been dried up, the forests and fields destroyed by magic.

The interesting storyline opens in the city of Tyr. Almost at once, a girl who is befriending you is killed. This leads to a conversation with another NPC who will tell you where to find the Veiled Alliance Headquarters. Naturally, you'll have to run an errand first, which requires performing another errand. And so the story begins.

Basically, you have a lot of combat in the city and a pyramid there, and more while fending off an attack on the Veiled Alliance headquarters. Soon you discover your main quest is to collect four items necessary to defeat the Lord Warrior. The first is acquired in the Headquarters, the second (the Hammer Promiere) must be

collected by going through the mines to the Underlevels and defeating a tribe of Illithid or Mind Flayers before you gain the Hammer.

To obtain the Fire Ruby, you must go through a tapestry, which is just

another sort of a Teleporter, and indirectly save the Verini from destruction. Finally, you must visit the desert and get a tapestry repaired so you can use it to reach the land of Giants and get the Magic Lyr. After completing these mission, you must go to the Warrior's Tomb in Tyre and destroy the Lord Warrior.

Start Your Engines

A single character, the party leader, moves across the screen while exploring. When an

encounter is imminent, all four characters are displayed. You can choose the party leader, transfer gear from one character to another, and in fact, even use the same weapon for all characters.

The game engine was improved, with only four basic symbols to worry about. Combat and exploration are the most important. An arrow and sword represents battle; the way the character is equipped determines whether it will be ranged or close contact. An eye signifies looking, the mode in which you can interact with NPCs.

The View inventory icon lets you use, ready, drop or transfer gear. Surrounding the active character picture are fourteen slots, each corresponding to a section of the character's head, leg, fingers, etc. When you pick up an item, the slots to which it can be moved are outlined in yellow.

You can also split a bundle of arrows or other items. Buttons to the left side of the character permit you to turn computerized combat on or off, and to select the leader. Along the

bottom of the screen are four character option buttons, the game menu button and the return to the game menu.

The CD version was enhanced with extra music, sound effects and digitized voices. Dialogue may be displayed as text for RPG fans who have poor sound equipment.

Points, Points, Points!

Experience counts in *Ravager*. As you progress, you receive 5, 10, or 20,000 experience points. All characters can reach the 15th level. As you

advance, you receive more hit points, magic points, combat ability, resistance to poison or magical attacks.

The previous five levels of magic spells in *Dark Sun: Shattered Lands* were increased to seven, and there are over two hundred spells. Of course, you will only use ten or so of the offensive spells. But healing spells will be in great demand.

A great many of the monsters will be familiar to *AD&D* game players, but there are also new ones like the Psurlon, Giant Sundew, Snapper Saw, Pyreen, Elder Brain, Intellect Devourer, Kartag, Soul Shards and the Verini. You should study the various monsters in order to find out their weakness and thus be prepared to combat them.

Automapping is a breeze. You simply click on the proper icon to bring up the area in which the party is located. A blue dot shows the party's location and red dots indicate an



Type Action RPG

System IBM

Required 386/33, 4 MB RAM, VGA, 21 MB hard drive, mouse. CD version: CD driver MSCDEX 2.2, drive with 350 ms access & 150 KB transfer

Recommended 486/50, uncompressed hard drive

Supports Aria, Sound Canvas, Soundscape, Wave Blaster, Soundman Wave, SW 32/GW 32, Gravis native mode, Sound Blaster family (except AWE) & 100% compatibles

another sort of a Teleporter, and indirectly save the Verini from destruc-

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by Clancy Shaffer

Winter CES

Many a fine product is rolled out at the Winter Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Vegas, but the latest crop of games was one of the least exciting in a long time. There were certainly some fine adventures that will come your way in the next few months, but most of the companies were saving product for the more significant Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) to be held in Los Angeles in May. Because won't be any car audio or pocket beeper exhibitors at that show, it will be a lot easier to concentrate on the games for a change.

So instead of covering games in this article, I plan to do my reviews of the Strip's hottest shows and then talk about the best show displays and hired models. First off, at the Mirage, Siegfried and Roy have trained a cockroach to.... OK, just kidding — an early April Fools' joke. But you get the picture. The products on display at most booths were already out, shipping soon, or are scheduled so far in the future that there was little to exhibit. The few games that survive those classifications are presented herein. Unless otherwise noted, they are all for PC CD-ROM.

ACTIVISION

There were no game scenes or even cinematics available for oohing and aahing, but Activision did show trailers for the upcoming *Zork: Nemesis* and *Planetfall* that, of course, show nothing of the game. For you '70's games fans, Activision will shortly release the Atari 2600 Action Pack, a collection of the most popular Activision Atari 2600 games converted for Windows with original graphics (ugh!) intact. It's only for the truly nostalgic.

BETHESDA SOFTWARE

Arena blew me away with its incredi-

bly realistic environment and open-ended plot. *Daggerfall* is bound to be the finest RPG of 1995. Even though it's a sequel to *Arena*, it will employ a brand new 3D system that even makes *Arena* look primitive in comparison.

The game's project leader, Julian LeFay, is a huge RPG enthusiast from the paper and pencil crowd, so he has imbued the game with as much complexity as he can possibly fit into it. Players will practically live in the game's world through their characters. No other RPG has come close to *Daggerfall*!

CAPSTONE

This company has produced many mediocre games in the past, although *The Dark Half* and *Wayne's World* are okay adventures if you want to take a few days off between mega-quests. This year will really change players' perceptions of the Miami-based publisher. *Crystal Skull* is an original adventure from Rob MacGregor, intimately connected with Indiana Jones through novels and the third film. *Witchhaven* is an RPG due out next October that uses an engine licensed from Apogee Software.

Dreamforge and novelist Roger Zelazny will join forces for an original adventure. Finally, Capstone will release a *TekWar* game next fall that will fit into the universe of the

William Shatner book and TV series — and involve the author in the development cycle.

CYBERDREAMS

Remember what a difficult time you had playing *Dark Seed*, but what a great game it was because of the

atmosphere, H. R. Giger artwork as back-grounds, and eerie sound effects? Well, Cyberdreams has *Dark Seed II* on the way, complete with the wonderful Giger graphics you would

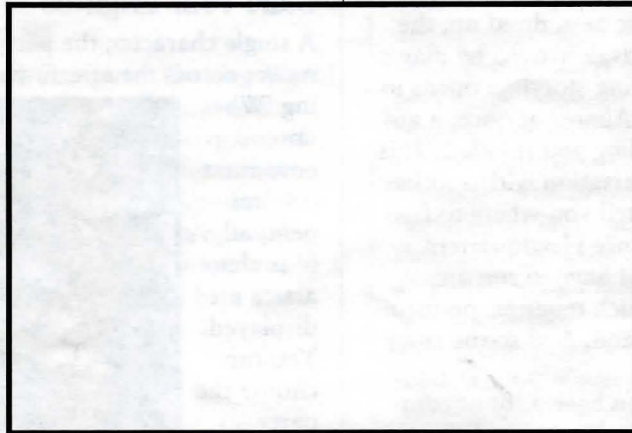
expect, a story that picks up after the first game and a *much* easier plot and game play. That will head our way in Fall 1995, but Harlan Ellison's *I Have No Mouth, And I Must Scream* will appear earlier in Summer 1995. It is a nightmare about survival after a holocaust committed by a super-computer.

FCI

Those fans of *Savage Empire*, the first of the two *Worlds of Ultima* games, will enjoy the conversion to the Super NES out soon. The interface is much easier to use, and the subject matter (dinosaurs, primordial jungles and natives) may attract more fans than during its original release because of the subsequent success of *Jurassic Park* and Barney.

I-MOTION

I-Motion games are always exciting because they have that slight twist away from the norm that makes them stand out. Two adventures and a



I Have No Screen Shot, And I Must Scream

by Russ Ceccola

strategy game (which should still appeal to adventure fans) continue in this vein of originality. *Prisoner of Ice* is a *Call of Cthulhu* adventure that takes place in the frigid South Pole. *Alone in the Dark 3* is a Western in which Edward Carnby has to fight those nasty undead again in the pursuit of a mystery's solution. *Marco Polo* is a strategy/adventure in which you must follow Polo's travel routes and revisit his adventures. It's anybody's guess when these games will really come out, but keep your eyes peeled here for the reviews when they do.

INTERPLAY

Interplay doesn't take its position as a leading game company for granted, but instead uses its leverage to produce great, original product. *Frankenstein* will not take the plot of the wonderful, but overlooked, Kenneth Branagh film and mold it to an adventure game format.

It instead takes an original approach to the classic tale. You play the monster who must resolve the mystery presented by his memories. You have to uncover your past. Tim Curry, quite ubiquitous these days both in film and games, plays *Frankenstein* very seriously. The photorealistic graphics and dramatic presentation of video and music could make this game a winner.

LEGEND

Never a company to disappoint gamers, Legend has *Mission Critical* on the way for this Summer. The game takes place in a future where the U. N. are the bad guys and a group of rebel states are speeding into outer space to resist oppression. Stunning graphics will remind players of *Myst*, but the architecturally accurate rooms and buildings make the game much more realistic. A CD version of *Superhero League of Hoboken* with voice support will be out in March and should be worth a replay because of the great Steve Meretzky humor in the adventure/RPG hybrid.

LUCASARTS

We've talked about *Full Throttle*

before — an adventure in which you play a biker whose gang has disappeared. The tongue-in-cheek humor and cartoonish graphics will attract bikers and questers alike. *Dark Forces* is sure to be one of the Spring's biggest hits. It should be out by the time this report is printed. The newest adventure from LucasArts is quite innovative. Hal Barwood took *Indiana Jones* to a new medium — Windows — with *Indiana Jones and his Desktop Adventures*. It is a completely randomized overhead mini-adventure for Windows. There are multiple

plots, objects and environments. You can play a full game in at most an hour, so this is the perfect product for players who need their shot of adventure or Indy every day.



The Riddle of Master Lu

MAGNET INTERACTIVE

Magnet Interactive is a very new company, but they already have an adventure on the way that makes me drool. *Virtual Hell* will be an adventure in the world of the Cenobites from the *Hellraiser* films in which you must survive, escape back to our world and humanize some Cenobites along the way.

MERIT

Merit promises that *Harvester* will be out in the Spring. If they meet this date, you can be certain that *Harvester* will *not* be the game to play after an Easter brunch. It is destined to be the sickest, goriest, most disgusting game ever produced. "Gratuitous" perfectly describes the violence. And designer Gilbert Austin is proud of it!

MINDSCAPE

They used to be called The Software

Toolworks, but the name change might have done the company well because *Code Red* looks like nothing that came out of the old 'works. A police adventure that takes place on a riverboat, it combines a *Doom*-type interface with *Police Quest* game play, puzzles and realism. Action's aboard! Also keep an eye out for an upcoming *Aliens* adventure game.

NEW WORLD COMPUTING

This company didn't have any straight adventures at the show, but instead exhibited one of the most

eclectic mixes of games: a mechanized robot strategy/action game, *Celebrity Poker*, a strategy-heavy *Heroes of Might & Magic*, and *Wetlands*, a Cyberia-style

mixed mode adventure that looked quite exciting.

PSYGNOSIS

Discworld teams Terry Pratchett's hilarious adventure stories with equally humorous voice work from *Monty Python's* Eric Idle and others for an original, challenging adventure. Psygnosis will also release *Presumed Guilty*, a sequel to *Innocent Until Caught*, a sleeper adventure hit that few players were able to enjoy.

SANCTUARY WOODS

The two new games from this company are exciting and visually beautiful. They also take place in remarkably different environments. *The Riddle of Master Lu* is a mystery game that takes place in a *Ripley's Believe It Or Not!* museum and features many of his most interesting exhibits. *Buried in Time* is a sequel to

Continued on next page

Winter CES ... from 5

The Journeyman Project that should impress enough players to stay glued to their monitor to experience this *Myst*-like science fiction adventure.

SIERRA

Phantasmagoria is definitely due out in May, and the hilarious *Space Quest 6* is also shortly due to hit store shelves. Coktel Vision, however, was still the only part of the Sierra

Family with a brand new adventure to show. *Woodruff and the Schnibble of Azimuth* uses Goblins-style goofy graphics and clever puzzles to challenge a player's creativity. It's tough to play these Coktel Vision cartoonish adventure games because they make you laugh so hard you lose control of your mouse.

SSI

Ravenloft was so popular that SSI decided to try another game in the same world. *Stone Prophet* features an Egyptian theme and mummies galore in a slightly revamped *Menzoberranzan* engine from Dreamforge.

Thunderscape is the first RPG in SSI's own *World of Aden* game environment developed after TSR announced that they would design their own adventures. It is a skills-based, open-ended game with beautiful SGI graphics and lots of replay value.

TIME WARNER INTERACTIVE

Software Sorcery developed a game called *Conqueror* that pays homage

to *Defender of the Crown*. But it offers many more styles of game play, from *Doom*-like exploration and overhead strategy to castle-building and combat sequences, that it should appeal to players across all categories.

Robot City from Byron Preiss Multimedia has an interesting concept for an adventure, challenging you to find the murderer of a human in a city of robots. The only problem is that you are the only other human and robots are programmed not to kill people.

VIRGIN INTERACTIVE

It's too early to comment on Westwood's new products — you'll just have to wait until May.

Seventh Guest: The 11th Hour should be out in May too. It will have more adventure and exploration elements (even a scavenger hunt!), but ultimately will still be at heart a collection of unrelated puzzles connected with a very good plot.

The Daedalus Encounter is part of the buyout of Media Vision games that were in development by Virgin. It's a science fiction game with a button-heavy interface and Tia Carrere. Schwing! Virgin also will publish *Hodj 'N Podj*, a funny children's product from wacky designer and proud father of two, Steve Meretzky.

BEST OF CES

Well, even though the show was pretty lame overall, adventure fans should still be pretty satisfied with the upcoming products until the huge influx of new games we can talk more about in the Spring. The best games of the show are not hard to pick, and I don't even have to split them into floppy and CD-ROM cate-

gories anymore. They are (in order of appearance in this article): *Daggerfall*, *Frankenstein*, *Mission Critical*, *Indiana Jones and his Desktop Adventures*, *Discworld*, *The Riddle of Master Lu*, *Buried in Time*, *Woodruff and the Schnibble of Azimuth* and *Conqueror*.

THE BOOK OF CLUES 2™

Our latest collection of solutions covers these quests:

Al-Qadim: The Genie's Curse

Alone in the Dark 2

Arena: The Elder Scrolls

Call of Cthulhu: Shadow of the Comet

Goblin's Quest 3

Hexx

Inca 2

Inherit the Earth: Quest for the Orb

Myst

Psychotron

Ravenloft

Return to Ringworld

Superhero League of Hoboken

Ultima VIII: Pagan

Wrath of the Gods

FREE SOLUTION!

This book includes a coupon for a solution to any of these games (* = available now):

- * Beneath a Steel Sky
- * Ecstatica
- * King's Quest VII
- * Noctropolis
- * Seventh Guest: 11th Hour
- * Stonekeep
- * Under a Killing Moon

SEE PAGE 13 FOR SPECIAL OFFER



X-Com: Terror of the Deep



CES PARTY REPORT

Though the game companies had little to show at Winter CES, they more than made up for it with the best batch of parties in a few shows. I went from one end of the Strip to the other over three nights' worth of soirees. What kind of gaming industry social critic would I be without a full report?!? Taxi!!!

Give Unto Caesar's (Palace)

The parties before the first day of the show are usually the most relaxed because you aren't worn out from having walked the show floor all day. Thursday's quadruplet of parties was a nice treat, but it was difficult to make all of them because of their scattered locations.

After a Nintendo press conference in a ballroom at Caesar's Palace, the company's president invited everyone to head over to another room for the Japanese giant's party, complete with cover band, great food and drinks. The party was elegantly decorated, low-key and tasteful — at least until they let in members of the video gaming press!

A quick hop, skip and a jump over Caesar's entrance pool, and I was at Acclaim's regular pre-CES bash. More food, more drinks and games were set up everywhere. Acclaim's president debuted their booth video and gave a lonnngg speech, but it was as fun as always in the Desert Inn. Sega also snuck in a party at the Alexis Park Resort. President Tom Kalinske and Deion Sanders donned Sega do rags, and a really cool cover band with a gal as lead singer belted out the tunes in a huge Sega tent appropriately dimly-lit. But the night was to end at Electronic Arts' bash at Caesar's Palace in the Forum Shops' Planet

Hollywood. EA rented out the upstairs of the restaurant and showed some new products too all under the watchful eyes (?) of a naked Stallone prop from Demolition Man. The EA folks are some of the best partyers!

The Mouth of Madness

Friday night was another four-parter of even more eclectic party locations. The madness began at the Alexis Park Resort — in the same room as the Sega press conference, but this time done up by Psygnosis for *Discworld*. Eric Idle wasn't there, but it was a fun celebration of their newest adventure nonetheless. Besides, who could pass up a party with an ice sculpture of Death — scythe and all?

Magnet Interactive broke all molds and rented out Circus Circus's Grand Slam Canyon theme park for the evening. They also hired ex-SNL member Rich Hall to deliver comedy and a few "sniglets." Circus Circus' rides and games beat MGM's Grand Adventures Theme Park by a mile, and the roller coaster is amazingly fast and exciting for a small park like that. It even surpasses most Six Flags coasters! After riding the coaster and laughing at Hall's jokes for more than an hour, I took a taxi to the Metz nightclub and Time Warner Interactive's party, which dispensed with any extravagances, and resumed the straight partying.

The Metz had another great band, a huge dance floor, three levels and the friendly TWI people. The evening lasted until 2 AM at the Shark Club, as everyone who could squeezed into a private party to see some of the game industry's conservative PR contacts let loose on the dance floor.

Rockin' with Al Lowe

Sierra threw a rollicking party that started early and went long in their demo room/party room/penthouse at the top of the Riviera hotel. Al Lowe played the sax and led the all-Sierra band in a host of familiar tunes. The food was great, and most of the typical partyers were here because of the absence of another big event that night. Al Lowe's band was good, but I still wonder if The Fat Man or Virgin's resident rock star Tommy Tallarico got up for a number or two.

The night ended bizarrely courtesy of Penn & Teller. Absolute Entertainment has developed a unique game/magic trick/gag with P & T for the PC CD-ROM and Sega CD game formats. In celebration of the download of P & T humor to CD, Absolute held a press conference with P & T and had invited some people before CES to attend the duo's performance that night at Bally's. The press conference was hilarious, with Penn cutting up a "virtual" Teller with an electric saw. Later, Gilbert Gottfried (a friend of P & T game designer Barry Marx) came out of the blue and sat down at my table with Marx. And P & T ended their show naked (except for white sheets) and covered in blood. What a CES!

Conclusions: A question and an observation remain after the CES parties. Why'd I run into so many comedians (P & T, Gottfried, Hall)? Maybe the industry has finally developed a sense of humor. Hmmm... And, after many parties at many shows, all press members agree that shrimp is the mark of a great party, and it's the perfect party food.. After such a great batch of parties, it will be tough to top the entertainment

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WOLF

A few years ago, Disney Software was showing demos of some really bad software — and *Wolf* led the pack. I never wrote a bad word about *Wolf*, or Disney's *Jurassic Park* takeoff, though.

Maybe it was the case of Wild Turkey that mysteriously appeared on my doorstep about the same time each demo arrived. Maybe not. Actually, definitely not: the games were still in development (apparently at Fotomat), and I rarely do previews of anything that isn't clearly close to release and is exceptional enough to warrant such treatment.

In the past year, Disney was

shrewd enough to sell *Wolf* and the other losers to various developers. Sanctuary Woods

Type Role-playing
System IBM PC
Required IBM 386SX/25+, DOS 5.0+, VGA, 4 MB RAM, CD drive or 3.5" floppy, 2 MB hard disk
Supports Sound Blaster & 100% compati-

picked up *Wolf*, and the rest is history — for at least the next five minutes.

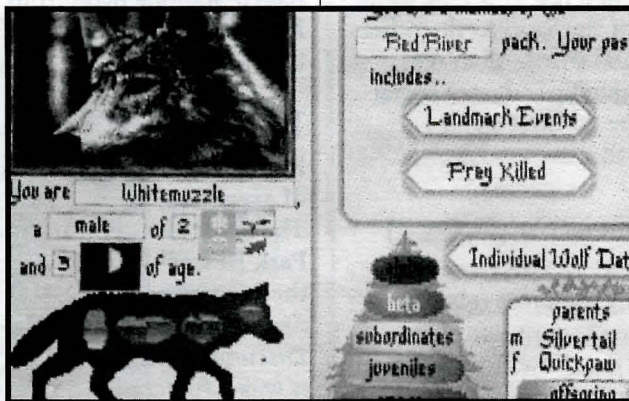
You can call *Wolf* role-playing, or you can call it a simulation. Just don't call it a game. That distinction would imply fun, and somehow I've never had much fun with scenarios bearing names such as "Kill a little rabbit." (Educational, maybe, especially for the little rabbit.)

Content is *not* King

Essentially the Disney developers attempted to recycle some of the company's film from a Fifties TV show by incorporating videos of wolves into a "you are the wolf" role-playing game. You direct the actions of a wolf as it hunts down food, mates, fights and sleeps. Numerous other nuances of the wolf

lifestyle are worked into the program, such as using smell to locate other animals.

The top two-thirds of the screen shows an oblique-angle view of a forest, arctic or plains scene, which scrolls in all directions. A picture of your wolf and the pack takes up the bottom part of the screen. Your wolf's innards are displayed as a way of indicating its health and other



RPG-type factors. The stomach is initially a solid color all the way to the top, and the level drops as time passes between snacks.

When you click on the wolf's nose in the bottom panel, icons appear in the top part of the screen. These depict the animals you can smell, and numbers beside each provide the necessary information for tracking down your prey. "Looking" by clicking on the eyes results in a similar display.

Howl at the Moon

You can play out various scenarios, or play the "simulation," whose goal is simply to survive. Another part of the program offers videos and text describing the wolf, but it's hard to call this educational. It's more like something to do when you get tired of killing little rabbits.

The digitized sound effects are great, though I've heard more convincing howls in *Abbott and Costello Meet the Wolfman*. (Actually, even Wolfman Jack does better howl than the wolves in *Wolf*.) And the videos were good enough to sustain my interest for about ten minutes. But no

amount of special effects can save *Wolf* from the trap.

Conclusions: Ripping red flesh off a moose's carcass, chasing rabbits through a field of snow, nosing up to another wolf in the dark — if this is your idea of a good time, *Wolf* is the game for you. I'll stick with Orcs and Gold Dragons any day. I will not succumb to the temptation to call this program a

dog, since that would be unfair to the canine world. Instead, I'll think of *Wolf* as just another "unique and innovative" attempt.

Adventure Road ... from 2

scenario disk for *Transport Tycoon* is also scheduled for March.

The major title Micro Prose will show at E3 will be *Magic: The Gathering*, which is due out this summer. *1944: Across the Rhine*, the just slightly overdue tank sim, will show 14 up about the same time.

ACS Club Update

David Young reports that the Adventure Construction Set Club is now part of the Unlimited Adventures Club, which, starting with six of Young's creations, now ACS games for IBM games as well as games created with SSI's *Unlimited Adventures*. Young also says that IBM versions of Unlimited Adventure game files may be transferred to Macintosh, so Mac owners may now join and obtain the IBM games. If interested, contact: David Young, Unlimited Adventures Club, 473-650 Audrey Dr, Susanville CA 96130

by Shay Addams

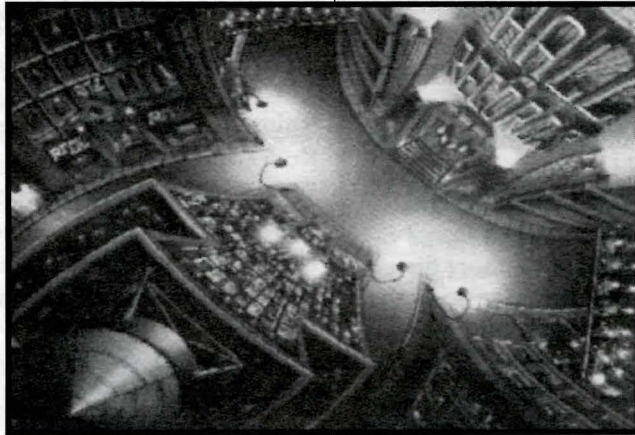
NOCTROPOLIS

While Noctropolis is also the locale in which Grey's favorite comic book hero, Darksheer, once kept these forces at bay. As Grey explores Noctropolis and talks with its denizens (by clicking on icons representing people or things), he learns more of the city's past. The city was rebuilt from the bottom up after a global cataclysm 100 years before his arrival. Ash from a nearby volcano keeps the city in perpetual darkness. Sort of like New York during a blackout.

Grey soon discovers that he is destined to assume the role, even the

uniform, of his former hero. He must dispatch a series of comic book-style villains and destroy Flux, an even greater evil whose master plan these fiends are carrying out.

informed that: "Over time, the hardwood strips have been worn smooth by the passage of customers, but lately your own feet have been the boards' sole traveler." Somewhat flowery, true — but in a comic book, or a comic-style



game, exaggeration is the order of the day, and what appears to be heavily overwritten prose is actually what you should expect from such a game.

It's a Comic Book, Dummy

The plot is linear, simple and without substance. But who looks for depth in a comic book? Gratuitous sex and violence, delivered with style, are the ticket, and you'll find more than enough of both in *Noctropolis*. So much, in fact, that EA recommends it for "Ages 17+".

Puzzles are typically object-oriented, and the necessary items are usually handy. To get past the creature guarding the Cathedral, for instance, you must use a piece of the fence and a wire, both found right there.

None of the puzzles will prove demanding for the hardened adventurer, though novices will certainly find themselves stuck in several places along the way. The most unusual puzzle involves moving different colored balls to align them correctly so you can proceed.

Interfacially speaking, there is good news: no icons, no icon bars. Single keystrokes, such as "G" for

get, govern ten basic actions. They're all labelled on a grey triangle you may bring up at any time, either to refresh your memory or to click on the desired command. (They are also conveniently listed on the back of the CD's jewel case.)

The simple interface, with no icon

bars, frees the entire screen for

Continued on page 14

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by Shay Addams

Type Graphic Adventure

System IBM Required 386/33, 4 MB RAM, CD-ROM, SVGA 256-colors VESA compliant, MSDOS 5+.

Recommended 486/33, Microsoft-compatible mouse

Supports Music: Sound Blaster family, MPU-401 General MIDI or 100% compatibles; sound & speech: Sound Blaster or 100% compatible, Pro Audio

Distinguished by some of the most highly stylized art and prose seen in recent adventure games, *Noctropolis* enjoys a clearly original look and feel that is clearly original, with no effort to look like a Sierra game. Characterized by dark colors that deepen the story's somber tone, it's the kind of comic art seen in *Heavy Metal*, not kids' cartoons.

The dialogue and text also stand out. Upon examining the floor of your book store, for example, you're

WALKTHROUGH

JORUNE: ALIEN LOGIC

GENERAL

The words, life and equipment in this world are so strange, a list of names and descriptions has been provided, with coordinates. You start with Tra-Sense. To discover hidden rooms and the like, hold the shift key and right-click anywhere in the display area. In the Weave World, capture the four small displays: Regenerate, Morph, Walk on Lava. If you have a Reco Respirator you can travel short distances under water. Before visiting the Temple at 179,167 in the center Doben-Al, be sure you have Walk on Lava from the Weave world.

COORDINATES

Crossroads of Warpworld in east Trinnu Jungle: 215,187. After they are replaced, warps will take you to Voligire at 206,74; Sillipus Islands at 217,246; and Lundere: 281,141. Ci-Ebba Dwelling of Do-Enesha: 200,173. Ca-Gobby temple of Sha-Yesh in central Anasan: 208,210. Ana Ci-Eshta's dwelling: 212,179. A warp here opens another warp in north Kodre Island. Underground complex near volcano in Doben-Al: 179,167. Tellemes in Ca-Tra dwelling: 281,116. Bring a warp-out Crundorra. Warp to the Sky Realms: beneath the Doben-Al in the lost temple of the Ca-Launtra. Double cle-eshtas of Ana Ci-Eshta: 173,176. The Guarded Place: 92,96. Ruins of Gama-El: 312,122. Shal-Shellan's dwelling in eastern Gilthaw: 371,36. Look for the secret room in the room with a pool of lava. Cle-eshta that opens warp to Drail: 205,161. Ruins of Iscin's lab: 146,142. Sus-Cassen, a Ca-Desti outpost:

by Clancy F. Shaffer & F. J. Philipp

171,238. Look out for Evids. Warp to the island of Eserran: 112,219 in western Drail opens warp Ruins Gama-El: 312,122, in north Kodre Island. Warp to Drail: open by using a cle-eshta at 205,161. Ruins: 158,116 has cle-eshtas but unable to use due to Shantha guardian. Cle-eshta: 173,177 in Trantter area opens a warp to the Dobre area at 241,113. Cle-esta: 219,283 can be used to warp, but no new warps opened. Cle-esras: 173,177-219, 183-204,189. Cle-estas: 209,207 adds a warp in Dobre. Cle-esta: 174,174 adds a warp at 184,162. Cle-esta: 297,145 adds a warp at 111,189 on island south of Temauntro. Cle-esta: 312,122 adds a warp at 359,46 in Gilthaw. Cle-esta: 377,93 does not add a warp in Voligire. Ramian's House: 355,84 in Voligire

ARDOTH

Before visiting the island of Delsha, you must be trained and acquire very heavy weapons. Also explore ancient cities and acquire ancient Knowledge. Solrough advises you go Ardoth and talk to Sha-Intha, the Shantha that rescued you. You will meet and talk to others in this city, where you move to the red points shown by going along streets and stopping at each of the red dots, the only places accessible to you.

If you consider the city a circle and put "1" at the northwest corner, "2" south and a little east, "3" north and a little east, "4" south and a little

east and "5" north and a little east and continue until you have a total of twelve numbers representing the following:

- 1 Daclish, who will give you the cork cutter.
- 2 Sarella, a girl who will take you to the Weave World. The first time she takes you for nothing, after that it costs six Gimlinksm and you will need your own weave crystals (about 100 per trip). Here you learn all the Dysha Shields and defenses.
- 3 A merchant who will sell you liminates of healing, Isho invisibility, protection from scragger, poison blood and more.
- 4 A merchant who will sell you bio corks, cut or raw, which are used to create Reco Diggers, Reco Miners, Reco Surgeons Reco Miners (you may also buy them complete).
- 5 Crystal Palace, where you can buy most crystals. Shop carefully, for prices vary.
- 6 Merchant who sells Bio-Tech
- 7 Merchant who buys Artifacts and sells warp crystals. Don't sell him Artifacts, but do buy his Crundorra. After collecting a few Artifacts, you can sell them for twice his price at a location given later and reached via warp or ferry (see "Dobre" section).
- 8 Bar or Tavern
- 9 Ferry
- 10 Training in Beasts (free)
- 11 Reptile who will buy dead Beagre and Scraggers from you, a good source of revenue
- 12 Healing Place
- 13 Asailia, a friend of long ago, who will force Daclish to give you the cutter

EXPLORING ARDOTH

Go to Daclish, who will send you packing. Visit Asailia, who will listen to your story and send you back to Daclish. After he refuses, return to the girl, then revisit Daclish, who will give you a Cork Cutter with which you can generate Diggers and other

Recons.

Buy as many healing liminates as you can afford. Also buy a Scragger liminate, which makes you unpalatable to the Scragger. Go to the Kearning Bay, and Sarilla will take you to the Weave World for free (this time). She will also supply the Weave Crystals. Go there and stay as long as possible to acquire as many different Dyshas as possible. After this, you must acquire your own Weave Crystals by digging or buying from the merchant. It will take about 300 crystals to gain full knowledge.

RUINS

Go north of the city and enter each circle shown and use the Power Orb to kill all Beagre. To distinguish between them and Scragger, use the Scragger liminate. These bodies may be sold to the Reptile at "11" in the city. Near 212,169 are the ruins of the dwelling of Ana Ci-Eshtha. Save before entering, and after each discovery.

Put power crystals in all outlets. Examine the two skeletons and get seventeen gemlinks from one and other items from the other. When you encounter an Evid, kill it with Power Orbs. They and other creatures of the ruins leave a Power Crystal behind after they die. If you have obtained a power regenerator from the Weave World, use this in front of a power source for healing.

Use Power Orbs at the green door to break it down. Enter and get the Sar-ceen which will teach you recon knowledge. After all the power sources are filled, you will be able to descend on the last of three lifts. If you have not activated this lift, jump down and use the Shanthic cle-eshta to open a warp from an island in north Kodre into the warp world.

SOLROUGH

Before investigating the new warp, go back to Solrough Gomo at the Mountain and attempt to see him. You will be stopped by Herrid Go-Atego, so leave the area and go to the group north of Herrid. They will give you a pass to see Solrough. Tell Solrough about your problems, because you must come back to see

him again.

Solrough has discovered the Crossroads of the Warp World ("see Coordinates" list). You must follow each quest from the Crossroads in order to thwart an invasion of Mountain Crown. There are many cle-eshtas at the Crossroads. But before doing this, go to the new warp in north Kodre.

There are several sites here containing Weave, Rate and Power Crystals, also liminates. The ruin at 158,116 has two wells. Go to the north well first and use a Power Crystal to turn on the power. Slay the Beagres. There is also a red locked door.

At the south well you will find an Artifact and a key. Take the key to the north well and open the door, then return to the south well. You will find three more artifacts, a key and two crystals. Blast the green door open, and an Evid emerges. Slay it and get the Power Crystal.

On the third elevator, go to the bottom and get the loot. On the floor above is a Shantha guardian and a cle-eshta. You cannot defeat him, so leave and come back after you are able to use all four of your offensive slots. This is vital, for you must eventually slay the Shantha. The Cle-estha he guards is the only one that will transport you into the Doben-Al area to meet with the Caluntra Shantas.

CROSSROADS

You may meet a girl called Cassy at the crossroads at 214,88. You will discover that all of the warp crystals have been removed from the cle-eshtas. Go to the bottom of the wells and activate all power lifts. Kill the red crawley things for crystals.

Return to Solrough Gomo and tell him about the crystals. He wants you to speak to the commander of the invasion army to ascertain their strength.

At 204,184 you will discover five circles, the fifth in the center. Enter this circle, and you will see a light blue marker in the west center. Go there, and you will again meet Cassy and learn about the Warp Crystals. Slightly to her left is the General of the Army. Talk to him, leave as soon as possible and go to 218,183. Use

this Cle-estha to reach Solrough.

He will now want eight warp crystals. Go back to the camp, and you will note eight mineral-bearing circles around it. Enter the first carefully and click to locate the dolomite holding the crystal; try to get there when the Clesh are elsewhere. You will have about ten encounters. Slay the fiends quickly, then jump on the first ledge and click on the dolomite. Get the crystal and leave. When you have all eight, go back to Solrough, who says that when you master 25 warps you will be considered the Master of the Warp Skys.

SETTING UP THE WARPS

Go back to the crossroads of the warps, reinstall the Warp Crystals and activate them to create the extra warps in the Warpworld. There are four Crystal Holders here, two on the top level and two on the bottom. Holder "A" will be on the west side of level one, with "B" on the east side. On the bottom level, "C" is on the west side, with "D" on the east. They create warps:

A in Voligire

B on one of the Sillipus Islands (at 217,246)

C at 281,141 in Lundere, the land of the Wolfcen

D at 68,83 on an island off the extreme west coast of the land of Temauntro, habitat of the Corondon

PREPARING FOR WAR

Return to the city and sell everything possible. Buy Weave Crystals and improve your fighting ability. You will find Crystals almost anywhere, but the Ice areas and Desert areas are the best. You also need Warp Crystals for the empty cle-eshtas. Get about 300 Weave Crystals for reaching the Weave World. You need about twelve Rate crystals to increase your Isho replacement speed, and should get two Santha Grud Crundorras to fill the two offensive slots in your Attack Dashia.

For the conclusion of this solution, send SASE to QuestBusters, PO Box 85143, Tucson AZ 85754.

Keys to the Kingdoms™

KING'S QUEST VII

Crystal Dragon Scales: Go to the bridge over the lava. Start across the bridge. Talk to the Troll as much as you can. Look at your shield in inventory. Remove the spike from the shield. In the northwestern corner of the room, you'll see a wagon. Look at it. It's missing a wheel, but you can fix that. Take your shield and use it to replace the missing wheel. Then take the spike and use it on the shield to hold it in place. Now ride the wagon. The troll is knocked off the bridge.

Continue across the bridge and exit east. to a room full of crystals. Continue east into the crystal dragon's lair. Walk to the bottom of the stairs, then talk to the mournful dragon. Use the lantern on him to give him back his spark. He'll give you a gigantic gem in return. Watch the ensuing cartoon, then return to the blacksmith's area. Give the gem to the jeweler, and he will give you his hammer and chisel.

Go back to the dragon. Stand at the bottom of the stairs, and watch his tail. Have the hammer and chisel ready. As soon as he puts his tail on the ground, use the hammer and chisel on it. Do not attempt this while his tail is on the pile of gems, or you'll be flattened when he lowers it.

Now you have all the ingredients for Mathilde's spell, so return to the throne room and talk to her. Give her the ingredients, then watch. You're back to normal, but here comes Malicia.

After the fireworks, you find yourself locked in your chambers. Look around. Smoke is coming out of the nose out of the picture: there's a secret passage behind it. Take the brown stool and put it on the floor beneath the picture. Put the green stool on top of the brown one, and finally, the blue one on the green one.

Climb up and watch the animation. At the end, you'll fall back into the throne room.

Pick up the dragon toad that you dislodged when you fell. Walk back to your chamber door, then watch the cartoon. Show the toad to Mathilde, and she will give you a magical rope. Here comes Malicia again. Notice that she doesn't like bats, rats, and snakes? When she leaves, head for the lower right exit. Malicia will appear again. Use the toy rat on her, and she'll run screaming. Use the rope on the makeshift elevator, then get in it and hold on.

Tracey Hicks

ECSTATIC

Getting Magic Book: Return to the sorcerer's tower. Go downstairs. At the statue, run past him and then attack from behind (he'll go stiff when he's dead). North (fight invisible warriors). North. Go around stairway via the path that goes past the dragon (avoiding his fire). Where the stairs meet again, you will have to tip-toe along a diagonal path across the intersection, or you'll be pierced by spears.

At the base of the stairs, enter the chamber in the middle of the room (run past the spikes). Open both caskets by walking next to them (you must slay the skeleton in one, and enter second after it opens — it will wrap you in armor. Use the "up" key to reopen the coffin and get out. Go under the stairs you just came down to will find another stairway down. Descend.

In the pool room, you will find another flight of stairs going down even further, so descend again. Cross the room (fighting the mirror image of yourself) and walk up to the skeleton king. When he's done talking, go back up to the casket level. Walk to the grate on the east side of chamber (from a perspective with the stairs to

the south). The grate will rise. Drop items before entering this passage. East (gets you caught and imprisoned).

In cell, move left and right arms (attack keys) until you free your arms from the shackles. Walk to cell door (guard will enter). Keep swinging until he drops. Exit room to cell entrance, killing the second guard the same way. Back in main chamber, take items back. Cross casket chamber and enter western passage. Get magic book from stand (you should now have both relic and book). Try to go south through doorway (dragon stops you).

Paul Shaffer and Michael Pearson

BENEATH A STEEL SKY

If you couldn't find the secateurs to cut open the grate while using the solution in issue #114, it was because a couple of lines were inadvertently cut (the omitted lines are boldfaced):

Pool Level

Now use the key card to enter the Linc terminal. Inside go to Security Service look at the new documents. Go to Special Operations and request a status change, which gives you unlimited access for 48 hours.

Descend one level, then go right to the ornate elevator. Take it down to the pool level. Go to the right, then around the pool to the left. Try to open to the door to the storage building. Look at the door. Use keycard on lock to open door. Inside, get secateurs (cutters).

C. F. Shaffer

BUREAU 13

The Gym's only purpose is to provide an alternate way to enter the Delivery Boys' Lockers. Have Thief open the

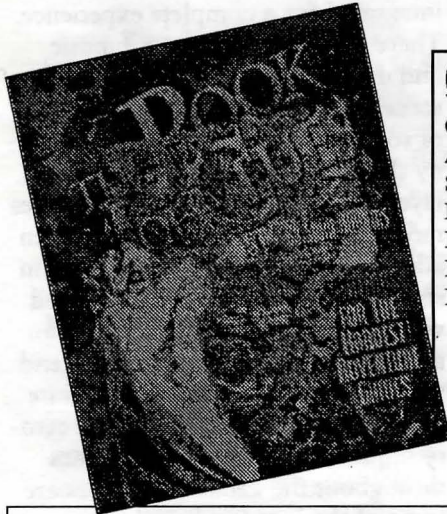
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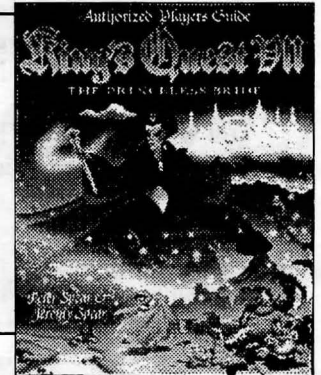
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graphics. When you move from one part of town to another, a city map fills the screen, and you can scroll it vertically to see more locations.

Full-motion video scenes are effectively used to dramatize some scenes. You also see the faces of characters as they speak. Sound effects are good, and so is the music. In fact, you can play the 20 minutes of musical selections on your audio CD player — I'm not sure if this will help in figuring out the puzzle on which you're currently stuck, but as any desperate adventurer will tell you, it's worth a try.

You won't, however, hear as much of the digitized voice support as in most games. A line or two of a character's dialogue is spoken, leading you into reading the rest.

Conclusions: *Noctropolis*, while lacking the heft of a Legend or Sierra adventure, is an originally illustrated work of comic art worth every comic fan's attention. With a more intriguing story and at least *one* plot twist, it could have been worth *every* adventure gamer's attention.

As gloomy as *Noctropolis* may be, it triggered in me an even gloomier prospect. The puzzles are clearly accessible to the neophyte gamer — that "mass market" every marketing director dreams of reaching. That means adventures could get "dumber" in the Nineties, and *Noctropolis* could represent the first sight of a "wave of the future" that actually represents an undertow to the past.

Difficulty: Novice

Company: Flashpoint/Electronic Arts

CES Party Report ... from 7

level in May, but any show so close to Hollywood might have a great advantage and wealth of cool party locations. Until then, I'll practice my best O. J. jokes and see if I can get Heidi Fleiss to arrange some party escorts while out in L. A. Schwing!

difficult to master the interface. In fact, a basic tutorial in the game's Help system walks the new player through the main game functions.

Both magic and conversations pop up on their own screens. In most conversations, you want to click on each of Haplo's available comments and listen to the character's comments, because the story develops through their knowledge.

The magic system is very flexible. Click on the magic icon on the main screen, and you will see a few runes and some command boxes. You can click on the Spell button, and then on one of the possible spell names or click on the particular runes for a spell. The latter method might make you feel a little bit more part of the world of *Death Gate*, but is functionally the same as the former.

From linear to non

Initially, you can visit just a few locations. As you learn more about the plot, you'll be able to wander a bit more and investigate the game's mysteries in a less linear fashion.

You can't simply stumble across the four parts of the World Seal. It will take many hours of mini-quests and puzzle-solving to even learn their locations. For example, you can't go anywhere until you learn how to guide your flying ship to the air realm. Once there, you won't be able to talk to the oldest dwarf in the realm until you repair an ancient machine that is now broken and drips black gunk on his head. There is much variety in game play, characters and location. The four elemental realms, with striking cultural and environmental differences, contribute to this mixture.

Death Gate's visuals look best in the Super VGA graphics mode for which it was designed. The characters are nearly lifelike. Landscapes and scenery are beautiful. Games like *Death Gate* make one wonder what "could have been" if Infocom had added graphics much earlier than they did. Even the map takes on the enhanced look of the game. When

you bring up the map, a traditional block map pops up, with lines drawn between blocks that indicate direction. There is a shrunk-down version of the particular location's scene in each block that retains the original SVGA detail and color quality.

Music & Sound Effects

Even the music and sound effects are integrated for a complete experience. There are both background music and dramatic music for special scenes. In any given scene, a variety of sound effects and speech accompany the musical passages and create a layered audio soundtrack that infuses more drama than many video-driven adventures. Random visual effects in some scenes are completely synched with the sound effects and music for a complete audiovisual treat. Legend upped their efforts with *Death Gate* — and it shows, from the introductory sequence to the common scenes throughout the game. The voices are some of the best I've heard in an adventure, even though Legend didn't hire on any "stars" like many other companies with lesser quality games might do.

Conclusions: *Death Gate* kept me at my computer for many hours at a time — enraptured with the story and many challenges. When I left the game for breaks or work, it was much like putting a bookmark in an unfinished book. The plot shows the talent of a fine storyteller and certainly pleases Weis and Hickman, who also wrote a special novella as a bonus for game owners.

The only complaints I have are the very long conversations and the slow mouse tracking within the interface, but that's just nitpicking for an otherwise excellent adventure. *Death Gate* mixes drama, multimedia technology and fantasy for the type of adventure game most players will thoroughly enjoy.

Difficulty: Intermediate

Company: Legend Entertainment

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Dark Sun 2 ... from 3

NPC or monsters.

You cannot adjust the speed of messages. On my 486/DX2/66, I often has to use the Turbo button to slow down the computer. Otherwise, messages flashed past so fast that they were unreadable.

If you have a saved game from the first *Dark Sun*, your team can continue in this one. But it is fun to create your own party, for the generation screen is well organized. Multi-character characters combine many of the best points for the game, but take longer too attain new levels than a single character.

Conclusions: This game holds together very well and was almost absent of bugs, It is very playable. An excellent game, *Wake of the Ravager* could be the last of the true action RPGs.

Difficulty: Intermediate
Company: SSI

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Trade/sell CDs: Arena, Menzoberranzan, Ravenloft, Day of Tentacle, Killing Moon, Return to Ringworld, Inherit the Earth, Myst. Floppy: System Shock, Ultima 8 version 2.12 w/speech pack. Sandy Poynor, 4742 Deer Run Ct, Alexandria VA 22306

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