

QuestBusters™

The Adventurer's Newsletter

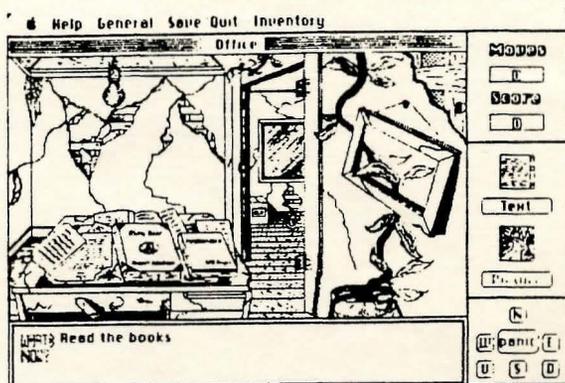
Vol. II, #5

June, 1985

GATEWAY: Graphics and Text!

For years the clash between all-text and graphic adventures has raged on. Some designers insist that graphic adventures are for people who simply don't have enough imagination to be stimulated by an all-text game, but illustrated adventures have proved exceedingly popular. *Gateway* melds these two styles into a refreshing hybrid by relying predominantly on prose but illustrating key locations and situations. For me, at least, it's a solid combination. I've always enjoyed graphic games as much as the all-text variety, but can't help thinking about all the memory each picture eats up and how much more effectively that disk space might be allocated by the game's creator.

Gateway's 16-page manual is subtitled "A journal by Bertrand Von Wyk," the latter described as your great-Uncle who recently died and left you an old building filled with antiques, books, and other trivia. You also receive a handwritten letter in which he reveals that a "gateway" into another dimension is hidden in the building. Reminiscent of Stephen King and Peter Straub's fantasy novel *The Talisman*, the plot revolves around an



evil being who has brought ruin to the world in the other dimension and now threatens to enter our world with the same intention. Naturally, your goal is to travel through the gateway, track down the villain and stop him.

In the first scene, you find yourself in the building's office. The office is illustrated, but you can toggle to and all-text by typing "look" or mousing over and clicking on the "text" button. (Conversions probably won't emulate these facets of the Mac version – but they should be in color rather than black & white.) A bit of exploration eventually leads to the gateway.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 3]

Adventure • Hotline

While waiting for Lord British to finish up Ultima IV, you may want to check out Origin's latest role-playing game -- AutoDuel. No dungeons, dragons or wizards here, for it's based on Steve Jackson's board game, Car Wars. You have to "earn" your car in Amateur Night before customizing it with weapons and other gear and hitting the road. The Apple version is set for June. We'll take it out for a spin next issue.

The only real news from Cambridge-by-the-Sea is that Infocom has moved to new and larger offices: 125 CambridgePark Drive, Cambridge, MA 02140. Oh yeah, Wishbringer should be out any day now.

At Electronic Arts, Trip Hawkins says the "median age of Adventure Construction Set owners appears to be close to 30 and ranges from pre-teens to senior citizens." The ACS contest will award \$1,000 to the best user-designed games in each of three categories: Fantasy/Medieval, Spy/Mystery and Science Fiction. Deadline is January 1, 1986.

Spinnaker's upcoming Nine Princes of Amber will be the first adventure in which the player doesn't have a real inventory or gather objects. That's because the game focuses on character interaction, requiring you to collect relationships (like alliances) with people instead of things.

Time Out: Imagic's Time Machine and MacBeth are on hold, and Time Machine probably won't even be produced. But Damiano is in beta-testing right now. Activision, whose Mindshadow looked good, has more "in the pipeline." And American Eagle's next release will be Fractured Fables by the Sherwood Forest team of Rick Incrocci and Dale Johnson.

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GATEWAY

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1]

If you get stuck, the game provides three Artext illustrations containing clues not revealed in the onscreen art or text. Unlike those from Forbidden Quest, these are color drawings. (Their true purpose is copy-protection, so the use of color apparently is intended to make it more trouble for a pirate to photocopy.)

THE POINT OF NO RETURN

We've all been there before. As in Sorcerer, Blade of Blackpoole and many other adventures, you must round up certain objects before moving on to the next phase of the game -- which in this case lies on the other side of the gateway. You can't just walk back through it if you realize you missed something (though you can, of course, restore a saved game). The on-line help feature introduced in Priority's Forbidden Quest can save you plenty of time in this regard, for it will tell you exactly which four items are needed and even where to find one of them. This will cost you points, naturally, the amount depending on whether you want a subtle hint, substantial clue or "the answer." Sometimes you won't be offered anything, and occasionally even "the answer" merely points you in the right direction, perhaps referring to how to use an object but not specifying where to find it. To attain the top score of 1,500 points, you must complete the game without any help. (A dialog box and buttons is to display hints on the Mac version.)

On the other side of the gateway, you'll wander into a world of dinosaurs, robots, and a deserted city where you find a woman locked in a cell. The journey is actually quite linear: after the building and office

problems, there's the jungle area, next the city and beyond to the Black Tower. You won't wander around in circles as much as in many games, and veterans may not even have to map the place. There are a couple of small but convoluted mazes, however. You can't move diagonally (northeast, etc.), which is standard for graphic games but odd for one with so much text. I don't mind, and wonder if anyone else even cares. [Please send postcards to: I Even Care, c/o QuestBusters™.]

Most of the problems are object-oriented, but you'll get a chance to chat with a few characters and ask them about the robot and other things. A Chesire Cat-like creature called K'rnth makes intermittent appearances and will dole out rhyming clues that don't cost a point -- if you know what to ask him about. As in Planetfall and Enchanter, you must eat, drink and sleep, but not so often that it gets tedious. A "diagnose" command lets you check out your immediate health.

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

The full-sentence parser has a 600-word vocabulary and understands many more ways of phrasing sentences than it did in Forbidden Quest. You can obtain hard copy as the game proceeds and turn off the graphics if desired. I didn't hear any sound effects. Due to the program's size, you can only store one game on the program disk, but can save an unlimited number on other disks -- and you can name, not number, them, which is always convenient. The "panic" feature shows a spreadsheet if the boss walks in while you're playing, which is good for at least one laugh.

Priority maintains its tradition of making the most of the Macintosh's special features. The scroll bar is active, so you can review

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Ready to Run

Last issue, we reviewed a program generator called AdventureWriter. Apparently a lot of people already knew about it, because the author program operated by the program's manufacturer has led to a whole line of low-priced adventures. They're called the "Ready to Run" brand because you don't need AdventureWriter to load and play them.

The main attraction is the low price -- \$19.95 for the two to three games on each disk. For now, they're all-text adventures that use a two-word parser. Future games will incorporate graphics at key locations.

Here's a rundown on what's currently available for the C-64: Sherlock Holmes Returns (two games); Time's Wrath (two set in "times past"); Trilogy of Time (three time-related titles, like "History's Twist"); The Day Before, Parts 1 & 2 (pilot a stealth plane to Russia and sabotage the missile base before it's too late); The Fortress Series (two games with lots of traps, pitfall); Thriller Series ("Revenge of the Moon Goddess" and two other exceptionally tough games); Thriller Series 2 (three more like the first, including "Frankenstein's Legacy").

For the Atari, there's the Casebook of Hemlock Spores 1 & 2 (a pair of detective games) and Casebook 3 & 4 (a two-parter called "The Case of the Elusive Motive"); and Star Voyages 1 & 2 and 3 & 4 (a Star Trek-style adventure).

The games load entirely into RAM, so there's never a wait for disk access. Sound effects outperform those heard in most adventures, and the color of the text and borders are changed to highlight important descriptions, names and directions. Some of the games take you to spacious worlds that require lots of mapping. Sessions can be saved in progress. The two-word parser is adequate, and the vocabulary's size varies from title to title. Playing these is somewhat comparable to the old Scott Adams' adventures -- but the Ready to Run games are



Announcement!



Wondering what happened to the May issue? No, the QuestBusters™ staff didn't fall through a Time Door. We've designated this the June issue to correct the fact that until now, the current month's issue always arrives the last week of the month. From now on, you'll get the current issue at the beginning of the month instead of at the end of the month. End of announcement. Now fall out and return to your mazes.

better written in most cases, with more interesting descriptions and unusual stories.

You won't find a Zork in this collection, but you won't find all three Zorks on a disk for under \$20, either. It's also fun to play games written by other adventurers rather than by professionals. And some of these, especially the Sherlock Holmes series, tell interesting stories with above-average prose. Codewriter hopes to have 100 titles out by the end of the year, and is already selling them through Crazy Eddies, Toys R Us and Children's World.

Computer: Atari, C-64

Skill Level: varies

Saves: unlimited

Price: \$19.95

Manufacturer: Codewriter Corp.

WE HAVE A WINNER!

Oliver Pike of Naperville, IL, won the March contest (name your 3 favorite adventures) and a copy of Mindwheel. To enter this month's contest, name the *worst* adventure or RPG you've ever played and, in 100 words or less, tell why. A free adventure goes to the most perceptive answer. Deadline is July 4, 1985. Void where prohibited by law.



Swiss Family Robinson



Based on Johann Wyss's novel, which also inspired that classic TV sitcom Gilligan's Island, this graphic adventure begins on the deck of an old wooden sailing ship whose only passengers are you and your family. The ship has been shipwrecked off the coast of an uncharted island. First you must figure out how to get safely to land, then deal with the problems of survival and eventual escape.

When you finally reach the correct stretch of beach, the family says they'll set up camp while you and brother Fritz start exploring. Upon your return, the family immediately starts whining. "We need a tent" is the first demand. But as soon as that's taken care of, they start harping about food. Though they seem like a demanding bunch, the family's constant requests serve the practical purpose of giving you an idea of what you should be doing next and looking for while exploring the place. Brother Fritz, though, turns out to be a real pain, always begging for something to eat or drink. That's really to let you know that *you* will die soon without the necessary nourishment.

The presentation is unusual. Below the graphics, a horizontal bar depicts the current location's takeable items. There's a text window under that, and an inventory bar below it. (You may also type "i" for a standard textual inventory.) But by looking at the bar, you can see when you're nearing the maximum number of items that can be carried.

This is important, for inventory management play a big part of the game. You're constantly carting things from belowdecks to topside, and after landing on the island will have to drag all kinds of stuff around to help the family set up camp and survive. The four-word parser is even more unusual than the graphic presentation, for it automatically supplies prepositions, and parts of often-used commands. If you want to say "Put matches in boat", you type "Put matches" and the parser immediately supplies "in" and waits for your next word.

Sometimes whole phrases are added in this manner: type "Launch" and the parser tacks on "boat to the" and waits for you to fill in the direction. If you hit the space bar after typing in first few letters of word, the rest of it conveniently appears. These features reduces need for typing skills, which older players will probably appreciate as much as the younger ones.

You get a poster called a Nature Key, with pictures and descriptions of the island's flora and fauna. Then you can look up this stuff in a "Guide to Nature" book found on the boat. By typing "Find Tiger", you may get more info that might prove helpful. You can also "tell family about tiger" or anything else you find in your trip around the island, which often provokes useful responses from them. The manual says they will also "sometimes make things out of the items you drop at our location."

Map-making isn't required, for the inventive Tom Snyder team incorporated something every adventure should have, a built-in map that starts out blank but is filled in with details of the terrain as you move around. The map appears when you "look map," and a blinking cursor pinpoints your location. When stuck, you can press the "?" key to view a screenful of verbs and nouns appropriate to the situation.

The graphics aren't as highly detailed as I'd like to have seen, but they're passable and the island boasts 223 distinct locations. Exceptional sound effects, not just snaps and beeps, accompany actions like sawing, hammering and digging. There's no score. Gabrielle Savage, the program's author, worked with a team of people at Tom Snyder Productions that went out of its way to create an adventure game that is more accessible to younger players. The result is a game that's less confusing for young adventurers and also enjoyable by the family that wants to play together. **SA**

Computer: Apple, C-64

Planned Conversions: Atari, IBM

Skill Level: Novice

Saves: 26 on game disk

Price: \$29.95

Manufacturer: Windham Classics (Spinnaker)

PHANTASIE

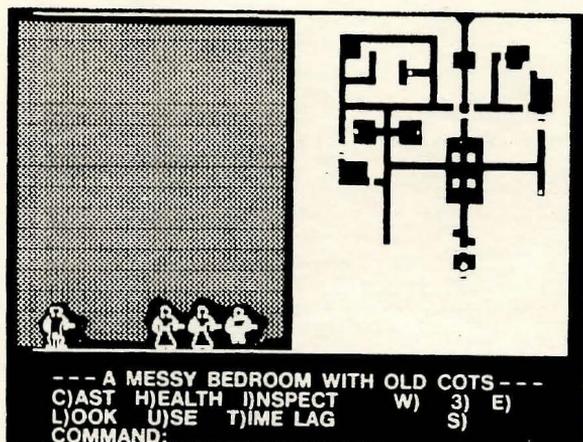
By Ronald Wartow, with assistance from
Ray Hakim and Dave Granite

[Ronald Wartow is still GAMESIG Chairman and Ray Hakim and Dave Granite are members of Washington Apple Pi, which is now an over 5000-member Apple Users' Group in the Washington, D.C., area.

Take a healthy portion of Wizardry, throw in a big chunk of Ultima, and stir on a floppy disk. What you get is Phantasie, a new multi-character fantasy role-playing game that is sure to ease what has become a seemingly eternal wait for the latest installments in those classics. While many aspects of Phantasie play like its predecessors and comparisons are compelled, there are other ingredients to keep the gamer interested and entertained for the at least 50 hours of playing time needed to finish this one. Therefore, to complete the recipe, throw in a decent smattering of Zork, and add a tightly woven plot that effectively holds your attention. Although the game contains one serious weakness and a few flaws, these are far outweighed by its strengths and innovation.

ON WITH THE PLOT

On the surface, the game looks cheap. The opening screen is plain, the game map small, and the graphics and animation during melee seem dated. The plot sounds familiar -- your questers must find Nine Rings and destroy the Dark Lord, battling the evil one's nasty accomplices while wandering through towns, differing terrain and dungeons. This makes no difference because your imagination, not your eyes,



rightfully gets the workout, ala Wizardry and the first Ultima.

All of the places and amenities that questers need are here. Each of the 11(?) text-screen towns contains a guild for spell and experience training, a bank, an armory for purchases and a mystic who will tell your current score. There is no temple. If a character has bought the farm, only a high-level Priest or Ranger with a resurrection spell can help.

ROLL 'EM UP, HEAD 'EM OUT

Character generation is standard, with the normal attributes (like strength, dexterity, hit points, age, etc. However, several interesting twists are employed. Each character initially generates magic levels and skills expressed in percentages that are necessary in the game -- attack, parry, unlock, swim (no ships here), find item, pick lock, listen, and disarm trap. Besides the usual races (human, gnome, elf, gnome and halfling) and classes (fighter, ranger, thief, monk, wizard and priest), you can add a random creature like an orc, minotaur, kobold or pixie to the group.

Your adventuring party of up to six (37 can be stored on the disk) can even bring along an earth, fire or water elemental for

fighting purposes. Hint: You won't get very far unless you develop characters with thievery abilities. Unlike in Wizardry, where thieving is really useless, you won't get through first few rooms of any of Phantasie's dungeon or survive long unless you have an effective lock-picker, trap-spotter, disarmer, and a monster-listener to stand effective watch.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

As you progress and earn experience points, you rise in levels, maximum hit points, skill percentages, magic points and spells available for learning (if you are smart enough). Any character with enough experience points to rise in level must first train. Depending on charisma, this could cost from a hundred to thousands of gold pieces. Even newly-available spells cost. You must find out how to increase your attributes because they do not increase merely when a new level has been reached.

The arsenal of weapons and spells is quite extensive. At least 54 spells, some progressive (like Mindblast 1 through 4), are at your disposal, including a few unusual ones, like turning a spellcaster into a ninja during combat. Each character can cast magic and each has a maximum number of magic points. The spells expend up to 4 magic points, which are replenished with potions by or resting at various inns. There are numerous weapons, shields, and armors, all rated for use by capable characters.

During encounters with monsters, you can fight, accept surrender, greet, beg for mercy or flee. Begging for mercy in a crisis costs you all treasures and gold on hand. If combat ensues, your party is shown side-to-side on the left half the screen, with the creatures above them.

(The right half shows terrain or dungeon.) The monsters can attack 3 ranks deep. All spellcasters and attackers are animated and there's a running text commentary. One excellent touch is that you don't have always have to kill every last monster, for they will sometimes run or surrender and you earn experience points and possible treasure. This holds true even if you kill a few and then flee successfully.

INTO THE DUNGEONS

The terrain ranges from deserts to mountains to water (including magical pools) to the dungeons. These 50 x 30 single level dungeons come alive because they are all separate locales (e.g. town, castle or cathedral), which your party unmasks with each step. Each square entered is accompanied by a short text description. The imagery is very effective as you walk down long halls lined with torches, come upon doors only opened with the proper skills or items, enter priest's rooms, weapons caches, jails and torture chambers. The dungeons contain little dots that, when stepped on, could be a valuable rune, a teleport, an adversary, a person who gives you valuable information, or other things.

Phantasie's real strength is its story, which unfolds as the game progresses. You must meticulously travel the land, for the "people" with whom you are constantly interacting and the information and items you find are needed to make progress further down the line. No advancing to level 2000, then plunging in to beat up the arch-villain. You must solve puzzles by carefully acquiring valuable items, information and the scrolls, and logical thought and note-taking are a must. For example, early on, an old gnome queries you about a

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 11]

MAC XYPHUS

For years, the worst part of playing manyrole-playing games on the computer has been the necessity for frequent reference to some over-quaintly phrased manual for descriptions of the creatures and other aspects of the scenario. You might as well be playing Dungeons and Dragons, for the point of computer games is to put *everything* in the computer and throw away the books. Finally, someone one has achieved this in a fantasy role-playing game. That someone is Robert Hardy and the game is the Mac version of Xyphus.

It's more than just another translation, for the new Xyphus transcends the accepted concept of a computerized RPG. Instead of having life and death hinge on abstract numbers that represent hit points, Xyphus portrays each character or monster's state of health with dynamic pie charts. (Which makes me wonder why they didn't dub the conversion Xyphus 1-2-3.) A "bar graph" shows a character's endurance factor, sliding to a shorter length as he grows weary from waving that sword around.

When a character is wounded in battle, a slice of his hitometer pie chart rapidly fills in with black. What would be a three hit point-wound in the original game looks like a tiny nick or flesh-wound in the pie chart, while you can almost feel the sword thwacking into your Fighter's side when a blow takes a big bite of the pie. After the pie is completely filled, indicating death, it caves in on itself like a collapsing star, shrinking down to a tiny dot that vanishes like a starship zooming into hyper-space.

FLASHBACK

There are other animated effects, and a more natural and transparent player-interface. But for those who are unfamiliar with Xyphus, let's flash back to the plot and style of the original Apple game: Long ago on the Lost Continent of Arroya, the lord demon Xyphus was defeated by a wizard who tore out the fiend's heart, a huge

gem. He hid it underground, but goblins grabbed up pieces of the crystal during the battle. These amulets (Xiphoids) are used to perform magic by your party and the demons. Your goal, of course, is to find and slay the demon Xyphus. The theme is familiar, but *numerous innovations* distinguish Xyphus from other RPGs.

War game-style tactics are emphasized (lots of maneuvering for position during battle); members in a party of up to four Spellcasters and Fighters are displayed as individual figures who can march to separate parts of the map; and no pooling gold or trading weapons is allowed (which forces you to develop each character as an individual). As in war games, terrain factors may slow down some characters in the mountains, for example, where other race right along. Six scenarios make up the game. You must complete each one's sub-goal before loading the next scenario.

WELL, WELL, WELL

Pull-down menus and optional keyboard short-cuts facilitate spellcasting, purchases, changing weapons, healing and everything else. The fact that it's playable entirely by mouse isn't as the overall fluid feel of the game that results from the way information is offered more visually than numerically. You can check any character's status by gliding the cursor over to one of the three cursor wells on the bottom right of the screen and clicking once to dip into the "?" well to activate that mode. The cursor changes to a "?", which you position over any character or monster. Now click once for a look at the hitometer and edumeter or twice for a detailed report or creature description.

Another well changes the cursor to a directional arrow. To move a character in one of six directions, you place the cursor in the direction you want him to travel. The arrow shifts as you move it around, always pointing in the direction he will move. If the terrain is passable and unoccupied, the character moves one space towards the cursor's position. If he can attack an adjacent creature, the cursor turns into a clenched fist when hovering over that

monster; a click executes a physical attack.

The third cursor well shows a hand that will be familiar to MacPaint users. It is used to "grab" the map and scroll it to reveal more territory once the party has reached the screen's edge. This is one of the few areas in which the game fails to surpass or even match the original, which automatically displayed the next section in this event. At least when it's a character's turn to move, the map still automatically flips to show the current surroundings of someone who has travelled alone to a remote part of the map.

Like the original Apple game, this one has no sound effects other than beeps when a character bumps into another one. But the artwork is much more finely detailed. The trees, forest, creatures are much easier to distinguish, and you can even see the tines on the Maripo goblins' pitchforks. Creatures appear to jump about in agitation just before they attack, and the spells are also animated. When a spell is cast, the display turns inverse, white changing to black. This begins in the Spellcaster's spot and quickly expands in a circle to indicate the spell's range.

Combined with the fact that you don't have to copy and play on a scenario disk, the ability to save up to four games on the game disk makes the MacXyphus an especially smooth-playing game. You can save a game, then launch an attack on the natives. If the going gets rough, you can get going right back to the saved position with a quick slide down the old menu -- no rebooting the program disk and loading a back-up scenario disk. Upon loading, the program opens up on the last saved game, ready to go. The only feature I missed was the Mac's notebook, which should really be part of any adventure or RPG for this machine. Created by Robert Waller and Dave Albert, Xyphus was the best role-playing game of 1984, and this is easily the best game of any type so far converted for the Macintosh. SA

Computer: Macintosh
Also For: Apple, C-64
Skill Level: Introductory/Intermediate
Price: \$39.95
Manufacturer: Penguin Software

MAC ULTIMA 2

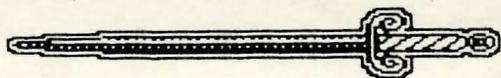
A conversion of the Lord British epic, Ultima II challenges you to track down and slay the fiend Minax. You direct the actions of a sole character rather than a group as in MacXyphus or Wizardry. Magic plays a key role in this long-playing game, whose geography is maddening to map because of the Time Doors that materialize intermittently and connect the five time periods.

With sufficient recognition and acquisition of various objects (blue tassels, magic boots), you can fly a plane, sail the seas between continents and even pilot a space ship around the galaxy. There are numerous towns to visit, and the map scrolls automatically as you travel. The towns do the same, and are full of characters who may offer valuable advice. (Some people have complained that there are too many unnecessary places to visit, like the abundant mazes.)

Unlike MacXyphus, this one may be copied to a scenario disk on which the game is actually played. It utilizes pull-down menus and command-key short cuts for actions such as spell-casting, and has sound effects during battle and travel, sharp graphics and animation, and an interesting "revert" feature that lets you restore the current game at the last place you entered a time door or town. That's new and useful, but you can save but one game in progress and then only by ending the session.

MacXyphus is combat-oriented and linear, explaining your goals in each scenario as you move from beginning to end. Ultima II is truly convoluted: you also have to unravel puzzles like the Time Doors. But MacXyphus makes far more perceptive and application of the Mac's potential and has a more practical save feature.

Computer: Macintosh
Skill Level: Advanced
Price: \$39.95
Manufacturer: Sierra





SWAP SHOP

Got a houseful of old adventures? Trade 'em off with a free ad in the next issue. (And let us know when to delete it.)

For C-64, I have Death in the Caribbean and Enchanter to trade or sell. Am also interested in purchasing your C-64 adventures. Chris Raudonis, 45 Pelham Rd., Hudson, NH 03051.

Will trade or sell Planetfall, Serpent's Star, Cutthroats, Deadline or Seastalker. Have hint books for all but last. Looking for any Infocom or Telarium, Mask of Sun, Time Zone or Adventure. (Apple only) Write first: John Lema, 431 Alphabet St., Holbrook, NY 11741.

Will sell or trade Shadowkeep and Amazon. Write first: Stanford Lin, 1702 Aftonshire Dr., Greensboro, NC 27410.

Will trade Sorcerer or Gruds in Space for complete copy of Robots of Dawn, Fahrenheit 451, Shadowkeep, Dragonworld, Adventure Construction Set or Mindwheel. (Apple only.) Mark Fujimoto, 1646 Komo Mai Dr., Pearl City, HI 96782.

Interested in trading off *original* Apple copies of Zork I, Enchanter and Starcross, complete with documentation but no boxes. Can also trade Infocom maps and clue hint books for these games. Looking for *original* Apple copies with documentation of: Sorcerer, Hitchhiker's Guide, Infidel, Cutthroats, Sundog or Coveted Mirror. Write before sending game: Philip R. Christensen, Academy for Educational

Development, 1255 23rd St. NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20037.

I have the following games for trade or sale: The Mask of the Sun, Serpent's Star, Oo-topos, Transylvania, The Wizard & the Princess, Xyphus, Seven Cities of Gold, Escape from Rungistan, Castles of Darkness, Time Zone and others. All are for Apple. Scottie Freeman, Knott Route, Big Springs, TX 79720.

I'm looking for Infocom games for CP/M 8" disk. Will buy or trade. David Aultfather, 13209 Dossau Rd., Austin, TX 78753.

Will trade most of the Infocom games (12 of the 14), all three Wizardrys, Ultima 3 and others. Send list of what you want and I'll try to fill the order. All are for Apple. Thomas Blake, 3002 Pendell Lane, Ft. Smith, Arkansas 72901.



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PHANTASIE

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7]

friendly lord. If you don't answer with a certain inscription found on the wall of another dungeon, the gnome won't tell you her name, which is vital knowledge in yet another dungeon. This is all very clever and makes for constant surprises in the game.

Other effective features abound. While each character can carry up to nine items, the party can carry almost 100 newly-found items. The game is entirely menu-driven with single key presses. You can backup your characters on a scratch disk, and your game position is saved upon leaving any town. The status of any dungeon can be saved upon leaving. Gold is automatically pooled when someone enters the armory. The 16-page manual is excellent and includes a handy reference card of all the spells.

Now for the bad news. The one huge flaw is a cumbersome and lengthy distribution and selling routine that is mandatory upon entering a town. You must divide all new experience points and gold among the returning members in from 1 to 3 shares. While this quickly (but unrealistically) builds up weaker characters, the program also forces you to redistribute or sell all items being carried -- so recently found weapons, etc., can't be equipped until you return to a town. This routine turns the usual simple matter of trading items between characters into torture. And with your characters abreast, you can't shelter weaker party members from direct physical attacks. This makes it tougher to build up powerful spellcasters, who easily die from a single blow in the early stages.

Still, we highly recommend Phantasie, a quality program available for playing now.

Commodore gamers (for whom Wizardry is still unavailable) should definitely try it.

Computer: Apple II family, C-64
Planned Conversions: Atari
Skill Level: Intermediate/Advanced
Price: \$39.95
Manufacturer: Strategic Simulations

GATEWAY

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3]

previous events. This and the notebook are Mac features that should be implemented in all adventures. (The notebook and alarm clock are the only available desk accessories, but that's all a MacAdventurer really needs.) There are buttons to push for moving around, and when you select an item listed in the pull-down inventory, its description is displayed -- the same effect as if you say "examine throwing knife."

Gateway's plot involves a couple of neat twists and surprises and isn't as stereotyped as most games, despite the inclusion of a "black rod." But the prose itself, sharper than that of Forbidden Quest, is disappointing. Written by Michael A. Banks, a writer with a long list of credits, the text pales beside that of Dave Lebling's Starcross and Marc Blank's Deadline. It's not bad, just not as good as I expected from a professional writer -- and the innovative story line makes up it. SA

Computer: Macintosh
Planned Conversions: Apple, Atari ST, IBM PC & jr, C-64
Skill Level: Novice/Masters Only, depending on use of hints
Saves: 1 on game disk
Price: \$44.95, Mac; \$39.95, others

🔑 WAITING FOR DUFFY

Duffy's dead, but if you're stuck, send in a brief description of the situation for a free ad in the next issue.

In Amazon, I need all the help I can get. Will pay for answers. Can help with Planetfall, Deadline, Seastalker, Cutthroats and Serpent's Star. John Lema, 431 Alphabet St., Holbrook, NY 11741.

I'm a new adventurer looking for help on Seastalker and Asylum. Have a C-64. Chris Raudonis, 45 Pelham Rd., Hudson, NH 03051.

How do you solve the final 1-person maze in Expedition Amazon? Gayle Ann Stanford, 3281 Foxgate Dr., Memphis, TN 38115.

How do you get the last 50 points in Hitchhiker? I'm desperate!! P.S. I can help people on Sorcerer, Planetfall, Witness and some non-Infocom games. Mark Fujimoto, 1646 Komo Mai Dr., Pearl City, HI 96782.

I would like to know the correct combination of the last doors in the expert mode of Amazon. Also, I can help anyone with Mask of the Sun or Dark Crystal. Stanford Lin, 1702 Aftonshire Dr., Greensboro, NC 27410.

Can help with Enchanter, Zork & Original Adventure for \$5 + map. Need clue on Ice Maze in new Adventure. Am looking for CP/M Infocom games for 8.5" disk. D. Aultfather, 13209 Dossau Rd., Austin, TX 78753.

In Enchanter, how do you: find where Krill lives; examine the translucent walls in the dungeon; follow that crazy map you find in the King's room or the SE tower? Mark Curtis, 3917 Shenandoah Dr., Oceanside, CA 92056.

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Every issue of QuestBusters™ features a contest in which you have a chance to win a new adventure game.

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Next Issue:

Essex, Synapse's latest Electronic Novel, is a science fiction text story. It's going up against a magical tale of an enchanted mailman, Infocom's Wishbringer. The long-awaited Ring Quest, Penguin's graphic adventure that was scheduled for review in this issue, is still long-awaited and will hopefully show up in time for next month.

There's a good chance that Crimson Crown: Transylvania II will arrive in time, and we hope to bring you an in-depth look at another sequel, Sierra's King's Quest II. The only role-playing game on the line-up is Origin's Auto Duel. Ultima IV and Wizardry IV are apparently lost in a maze in an alternative universe somewhere on the far side of time.

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