

by Jay Winchester

System 7.1,

latest entry in
equivalent to saying
statements
inspiration and
This is not to
Einstein's equation.
challenging as

challenging
gleaming
game is simple:
onto the
flippers and

Empire Interactive, \$30. Requirements: PowerPC, 10MB RAM,
CD-ROM. Contact Empire at <http://www.empire.co.uk>

To say that Empire Interactive's Timeshock, the company's
its Pro-Pinball game series, is a digital pinball game is
Einstein's theory of relativity is a mathematical equation. Both
gloss over the fact that a lot of critical thought, creative
determined energy went into establishing both enterprises.
say that playing Timeshock is as difficult as figuring out
But solving this arcade wonder is, in its own way, just as
tackling the great equation.

What draws arcade fans-and pinball players, especially-are the
ramps, the circular orbits and the mesmerizing combination of
chrome, polished wood and neon-bright lights. Playing the
The player hits the plunger, sending a spinning chrome ball out
playing field where, through the skillful application of side
table nudging, the player steers the ball through a dizzying

maze of pre-
continues until
happen...does
you?) or the
parlance).
game's
masquerading

constructed
nature of time
crystallizes in the
becomes the past
a game!!
be
has released a
quest. And just
another game
crossing
dawn of time and
Once there,
future and

Fortunately, the
crude
British are
machine that might
fly the
assistant is

determined paths, scoring points all along the way. Play
either the player maxes out the points (good luck making that
the phrase "repetitive motion syndrome" have any meaning for
balls all exit the playing surface (called "draining" in pinball
That's the essence of the game. But again, it understates the
brilliance, because Timeshock is really a role-playing game
as an arcade attraction! No, really...you read that right.
Every aspect of Timeshock has been lovingly and skillfully
around the following scenario: A scientist discovers that the
is crystalline, meaning it flows from the future as liquid,
present and becomes solid and immutable as the present
(okay, nobody said the game had any basis in real science...it's
We're all in this for the fun, right?). Unfortunately, crystal can
shattered. And it's the discovery that his work on the future
temporal shock wave of anti-time that drives the scientist's
what is his quest? To find the Holy Grail...no, wait..that's
entirely...It turns out that, on its journey to the past, the wave is
our present. The only way to stop it from continuing to the
destroying history is to reach that era before the wave arrives.
the scientist can gather together the crystalline elements of the
create a counter-shock wave.

Unfortunately, time travel requires a time machine.
scientist has one (although he's apologetic about its rather
construction...he must be a British scientist, because only the
mannered enough to apologize for the appearance of a
very well save the world). Unfortunately, it takes two people to
craft-one to pilot and one to navigate the time stream-and his

into your Mac
candidate to
playing game).
zones in
the time
Herculean feats
metal) to
scenarios include:

successful
scenarios is
series of shots
zones, as well as
awards attached to
game, a certain
dominant success
a limited
player's score
way, it's
them. Although
connection, you
generous helping of
Finding the cow

minimum two
more advanced

missing. Fortunately, you've just bought Timeshock, loaded it and discovered that your love of pinball makes you an ideal replace the missing assistant (see...we told you it was a role- Together, the two of you must travel through four different time search of the crystal fragments. Of course, in order to unlock zones, you'll need to explore several continents, accomplish and survive terrible dangers to find enough Tachyonium (a rare unlock the zones. These explorations and time travel

- Chariot racing in ancient Rome.
- Battling futuristic robots in South America.
- Escaping stampeding herds of dinosaurs in the distant past.
- Climbing the face of Mount Rushmore.

These are just four of the tasks awaiting game-players. The completion and/or survival of these various explorations and predicated on the player's ability to complete the different and orbits each requires. Activating these time and travel ringing up the high point totals and collecting the random them, is totally dependent on the player's skill. As with any amount of luck is involved, but in Timeshock, skill is the factor. As one might guess, this all must be accomplished with number of balls (at first) and against a ticking clock. As the rises, opportunities for extended play are offered. Along the possible to collect an assortment of random awards. Save what you collect may or may not appear to have any useful might be surprised. And the developers have sprinkled a Easter egg surprises throughout the game. Just be aware! may not be as easy (or as simple) as it seems to be.

Gameplay is possible in four modes: Novice (guaranteeing a minutes of pulse-pounding action while making some of the

here);
refuses to
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developers have
game, Timeshock
far end of the
scenarios in

can make it
and action,
during the game. A
transparent. In this
screen as well
automatically
don't want to see
your way.

enabling players
features that
what percentage
can find
structure. The
testing the
Lastly, the menu

features easier to reach); Regular (the game being discussed
Challenge (a multi-player level so innovative, the company
discuss it); and Tournament (the master level; no extra balls or
awards allowed).

Looking at the pinball table itself, which is really the one and
component you need to play Timeshock, it's tempting to find
thinking, "Yeah, right. Where do I accomplish this quest? And
what's going on?" Those are two good questions, which the
solved with one good answer. Like most any modern pinball
comes equipped with its own Dot Matrix display, found at the
table. The action involved in the explorations and time travel
this game within a game are all projected here.

The display can be set in several optional modes. The player
appear solid, which makes for better viewing of the information
but screens out any pinball action which might take place
second option allows the screen to become partially
mode, the player can see both the information or action on the
as any balls passing behind it. Lastly, the display can be set to
come on when any event of importance is underway. If you
the display until you have to see the display, you can have it

Timeshock offers an extensive menu of audits and controls,
to track their progress, gather statistics and alter some of the
have been pre-set by the factory. If a player wants to know
of his flipper strikes have taken place using the right flipper, he
out by chasing that stat through the menu's branching
operator's menu also allows players to "service" their tables by
lights and solenoids which enable much of the game-play.

artistic
of art, each
and
and
real-world table
actual pinball
dweebs in the
designed and
delight in sharing
the table can

crafted. Transmitted
and clear.
composed
Stiff Little
who insist that
another layer
experience. Heck, it's

concisely-
scenario, the table
order to
gameplay, written
The Web,
that pinball
the machine
strategy and

allows players to examine in-depth the quality construction and merit of the board itself. Timeshock's playing surface is a work of chrome tube, wooden panel, and decorative accessory lovingly and painstakingly crafted by master designers. In fact, the design mechanisms behind Timeshock's table are so authentic that designers have used blueprints of its structure in building actual pinball machines. This isn't a game put out by some software-enabled dweebs in the hope of cashing in on a big pay day. Timeshock is a game designed and developed by people who care, actual pinball owners who delight in sharing the wonders they've discovered with others. During gameplay, the table can be viewed from any one of four possible viewing angles. Even the sounds come across as authentic and carefully crafted. Transmitted in Dolby Surround Sound, the audio portion of the game is crisp and clear. The game's musical score features over 30 digital audio tracks, composed and recorded by Bruce Foxtan and Jake Burns (of The Jam and Stiff Little Fingers fame). Now there are those pinball purists out there who insist that music is mostly a distraction for players. But this score adds another layer of enjoyment, enhancing and enriching the gameplay experience. Heck, it's great music to drive by, much less play by. Included in the packaging are two beautifully rendered and written manuals. The Table Manual describes the game features and the various paths and orbits players must follow in order to save time itself. There's even a section on tips for better gameplay, written by Jonas Martinsson, Worldwide Grand Champion of Pro-Pinball, The Web, Empire's previous arcade offering. If you've always thought that pinball was nothing more than flipping little chrome balls around while the machine eats your money/tokens, read it. You'll be shocked at all the subtlety you've missed. The Technical Manual describes the

table's in-game
offers

game will
anyway. Its
friends and
singing this odd
call him

options, details its graphic compositions and resolutions, and configuration and technical support information.

If you're into pinball, get Timeshock and see just how far this push your skills. If you're not into Pinball, get the game addictive nature will have you hooked in no time! And your family see how much you love to play Timeshock. they'll be little tune under their breaths whenever you're around: "They Flipper, Flipper...."