

y Mudgeon

Editor's Warning: The following information contains not only information about Macintosh industry news and information, but also information about MS-DOS, 3DO, Genesis, etc. Readers who get squeamish when reading about other non-Mac platforms should skip this section.

* VIDEO GAME NEWS *

PINBALL FOR JAG'ers

A high-speed interactive pinball game has been released by Atari for the Atari Jaguar 64-bit game console. Actually titled Ruiner Pinball, there are two pinball games: Ruiner and Tower. Both feature bells, bings, clunks and poings plus a double-wide table for Ruiner, plus 3D animated enemies and targets. The Tower transports you to an eerie castle in a strange land where you must defeat an evil sorceress on a triple-length table through the use of three spells. Expect as many as 15 new Jaguar titles to be released before Christmas this year.

REBATE OFFERING

Depending upon who you talk to, the 3DO Multiplayer system is either a disaster or continuing to make the grade. In order to help boost sales of their 3DO unit, Goldstar is going to offer a \$50 rebate program that'll include a free, second controller.

DOUBLE FUN

A new technology that employs a double cassette system for the 16-bit Nintendo Family Computer game video console is going to debut next March from Hudson Soft. This technology will allow gamers to insert a chara cassette (which contains your characters) into the system cassette deck (which carries the basic game storyline). With this form of media, you'll get game variations simply by changing the chara cassette without having to purchase new game software.

L.A. OF THE FUTURE HOSTS CAR COMBAT SIM

Now arriving from Sony Computer Entertainment America (SCEA) for the Sony PlayStation (PSX) is Twisted Metal. This is a car-to-car combat game that has you running opponents down through 3D streets of a futuristic Los Angeles. You have the run of the entire city--there are no "set" paths or courses you have to travel. You can drive through parks, onto sidewalks, even fly off bridges if you prefer, as you hunt your prey. You can select from 12

different vehicles, each one armed with some of the deadliest weapons ever devised. There are six 3D environments. You start the game in an arena setting where you have to destroy an opponent's vehicle before you can progress to the warehouse district. Should you succeed there, it's off through more and more difficult confrontations until you end up on top of LA skyscrapers. You can retrieve awesome weapons as you play. This title is for one or two players and includes four playing perspectives.

COMBAT SIM FOR PSX

Also coming from Sony Computer Entertainment America is a new flight combat sim, WarHawk. This is an arcade-style, air-to-air and air-to ground combat sim that puts you in a futuristic aircraft that involves you in a non-stop blast marathon. There are 3D environments and game play designed by folk who used to create milsims and flight sims for the military. You'll encounter heavily fortified desert bases, narrow canyon passess, and the ultimate Storm Level. There are six missions, multiple scenario solutions, hidden zones and (the inevitable) increasing levels of difficulty.

SALES OVER 300K

According to Sony Computer Entertainment of America, sales of that company's PSX unit have now gone over the 300K mark since the unit's release on September 9th to retail channels. Additionally, titles like Battle Arena Toshinden (Sony) and Ridge Racer (Namco) sold at the same rate as console units at a 1:1 ratio, which is awesome.

NEW 3DO OFFICER & BUCKS SITUATION

Hugh Martin has been promo'd from COO to President of The 3DO Company, who just recently licensed its 64-bit, M2 technology to Matsushita Electric Industrial Company, Ltd., for a cool \$100 million. Throw in the ongoing royalties and the company suddenly becomes enormously viable once again. (Let's hope the licensing agreement wasn't simply to pay higher salaries for Martin and Hawkins!) Taking over the COO spot will be Paul Milley, formerly veep of finance.

Despite promotions, the company reported a net loss for the most recent quarter, which ended September 30, 1995, totaling \$8.8 million. That's not as bad as the net loss for the same quarter last year, which was \$12.8 million. The company had revs of \$7.1 million, which is a lot better than the \$5 million for the same quarter in the previous year. The increase in revs is claimed to be due to publishing revenue increases.

LUCASARTS TO DEBUT ULTRA 64 EXCLUSIVE TITLE

Shadows of the Empire is an action-arcade style Star Wars game from LucasArts Entertainment created exclusively for the Nintendo Ultra 64 and features an exciting new story that will release after this new video game platform becomes a retail reality. Set in the time between The Empire Strikes Back and Return of the Jedi, this title delves into the relationship between the Empire and the organized crime syndicate on which it has become increasingly dependent. You'll confront a threatening new Star Wars enemy, the power hungry leader of this growing syndicate, while contending with infamous characters such as Boba Fett, Jabba the Hutt, Darth Vader as well as the Emperor himself.

BILLIONS AND BILLIONS OF . . .

Nintendo has announced that the company has sold its one billionth video game worldwide. Since the intro of the first Mario game in Japan in the early 1980's, Nintendo has sold video games at the rate of nearly three per second every minute of every day for the past 12 years. This billionth sale means that the company has sold the equivalent of one game for every teenager in the world and, if these games were placed end to end, they would reach around the equator 2-1/2 times! Globally, more than 2,000 separate games have been created for activation on a Nintendo system. Fifty percent of those sold were for the original 8-bit NES that was intro'd in Japan in 1983 and then in the U.S. in 1985. The Game Boy is

responsible for 23 percent of the sales, and 27 percent were for the 16 bit SNES. Of all the carts sold, 44 percent were in Japan and 42 percent in the United States. Currently, the top selling game in Japan is Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island and in the United States Killer Instinct.

SPEAKING OF KILLER INSTINCT . . .

Never say Nintendo leaves any stone-or video game system-untuned. The company has now released Killer Instinct for the Game Boy and Super Game Boy. The new, portable version features the same fighting characters created with Nintendo and Rare's proprietary graphics design technology, Advanced Computer Modeling, that brings rendered character to life. There are more than 18 million Game Boy owners in America. The same game play has been captured in this portable tournament fighting game-Ultra Combos, Multi-Combos, Combo Breakers, Special Moves, Roll Moves and Charge Moves. In Tournament Mode, you can try to ascend the tournament ladder in best two-of-three battles against a computer controlled opponent of five difficulty levels, ranging from very easy to extremely hard. In Practice Mode, you practice your Killer Instinct moves against a motionless opponent. In Two Player Mode, two players battle each other by linking together two Game Boys and two Killer Instinct carts via the Game Boy Link connector. Nine of the Killer Instinct characters from the arcade and SNES versions are included in the Game Boy version: T.J. Combo, Fulgore, Jago, B. Orchid, Chief Thunder, Spinal, Sabrewulf, Gladius and the two-headed final boss Eyedol.

STILL ALIVE AND KICKING

If you believed the Neo-Geo was pretty much a dead machine from SNK, think again, gamers of the world. Now rumor has it that Sega and SNK_MIGHT_ be entering into a licensing arrangement that will enable SNK to port Sega games, new and old, and have them run on the SNK platform. Sega will be able to do likewise with SNK games, of which compelling titles are somewhat sparse in our humble opinion.

Also on the Sega front, wasn't soooo many months ago that all we heard was the hype and drive of the company as they released their 32X piggyback machine for their Genesis machine. Sales have been, to say the least, less than brisk, and now the 32X price has dropped to the \$99.00 SRP level. (In times of drought, these units make great toilet-tank water saving devices!)

NINTENDO STRUGGLE EXPECTED

As you have probably heard, the former Ultra 64 (now known as the Nintendo 64) was expected to debut in Japan before the end of this year. Now, the company will postpone that debut until spring of 1996. This means Nintendo is going to completely miss the New Year market, which is the busiest time of year for video game hardware and software in Japan. The hardware itself is ready to ship, but there simply aren't enough games to support it in the market yet. Right now, there are around 20 developers working on titles, and the machine is supposed to ship with two to three titles completed.

When this information was relayed to the general public, Nintendo stock plummeted due to the reported software development delays. Additionally, when you take into account the plans of Nintendo's competitors to start online entertainment ventures, the appearance is that Nintendo had not planned their course of actions very well.

SEGA SIGNS DEVS

Sega reports that more than 180 games are currently being developed by third-party folk for the Saturn. The platform already has more than 21 exclusive titles, with approximately 30 more titles ready for consumer consumption by Christmas of this year. This means that more than 50 titles will be available by year's end for this console system. Sega also claims that developers are ranking the Saturn the highest among other 32 bit platforms as far as its programming potential and game variety are concerned.

Some of the leading developers committed to the platform include: Acclaim Entertainment (Myst, Street Fighter: The Movie, Robotica, Alien Trilogy, Galactic Attack, NFL QB Club '96, Revolution X, and NBA Tournament Edition); Capcom (Super Street Fighter, Fox Hunt, Alpha, and Night Warriors); Digital Pictures (Night Trap, Maximum Surge, Corpse Killer Graveyard Edition, Quarterback Attack with Mike Ditka); Interplay; Time Warner Interactive (VR Virtua Racing, Primal Rage, Last Gladiators, Digital Pinball and Return Fire); and Working Designs. For more third-party developer information, or for more Sega insights, check out the Sega WWW site at <http://www.segaoa.com>.

SATURN TITLES ENROUTE

This November, watch for Last Gladiators Digital Pinball(TM) for the Sega Saturn(TM) from Time Warner Interactive. The company licensed the rights for this title from KAZe whose title in Japan has been a best-seller. This title offers 3D effects, some truly accurate sound effects, nudging of the play table, flipper-like controls, fluid ball movements plus video-game graphics, special effects, as well as a rock music soundtrack. You win through pinball victories, with four different pinball arcades games: Gladiators, Dragon Showdown, Knight of the Roses, and Warlock. You must rely on springy bumpers, flippers, ramps, elevated rails and hidden areas to score huge points, which can also be acquired through jet bumper or sling shot action as well as multi-ball action.

SATURN RECEIVES RACING SIM

V.R. Virtua Racing(TM) has now been released for the Sega Saturn by Time Warner Interactive, who secured the rights to produce this title from Sega of Japan earlier this year. Not only does this title stay true to the original coin-op hit, but new features have been added to enhance play. You'll find more cars, more tracks, and a bunch of hidden surprises, more so than can be found in any other release of this title. The game features a 3D polygonal environment, five different racing machines, 10 tracks, multiple views and a super fast software engine.

PC VERSIONS OF SEGA PRODUCT NOW SHIPPING

Comix Zone and Tomcat Alley are now shipping from Sega PC, the new computer games division of Sega of America. Shipping just before Thanksgiving will be Ecco the Dolphin, with Virtua Fighter Remix now available as part of a bundle with Diamond Multimedia's multimedia accelerator board called the Stealth54 Video 2001 Xle Multimedia Series. These games are fully compatible with Windows 95 running on Pentium based machines.

MOVING PRODUCT

Sony Computer Entertainment is quite delighted with their 300,000 Sony PlayStation sell-through since September, when this video console debuted. Software sales have already amounted to over 1 million units, with an average of four titles being sold for each console.

* Online Stuff*

POINT-TO-POINT GAME DEVELOPMENT

An agreement between America Online and MetaTools will result in a variety of point-to-point games and other goodies for developers using AOL's SDK (software developer kit). MetaTools is going to develop a variety of games under AOL's API. This will result in entertainments that will enable gameplay both within, and without, the AOL environment. Watch for these titles to release during Q1 '96. MetaTools is accomplishing their work as members of AOL's Developer's Studio.

MADDEN ONLINE CONTEST

The combo of EA Sports and Catapult Entertainment are bringing football sim gamers the

opportunity to engage in the First Annual Madden NFL 96 XBAND Challenge. This is a head-to-head, online extravaganza that'll give Genesis and SNES players to link up via Catapult's XBAND Video Game Modems to battle for the championship title. Through December 10th, there'll be 8 changes to qualify, with the final rounds to be held on December 16th and 23rd, final playoffs on December 30th. The winner will win a trip to Super Bowl XXX which will include VIP passes to the NFL Experience, an interactive theme park that's sponsored by the NFL. Plus, there will be passes to EA Sports' Madden Bowl, a star-studded video game competition. The XBAND Network allows Madden NFL 96 players to play head-to-head in real time against other Madden players anywhere in the US via the XBAND Video Game Modem and a standard phone line. To date, Madden Football sim titles have sold over 5 million copies.

APPLE INTEREST INCREASES

Apple Computer is so taken with America Online's performance that the company decided to exercise a warrant the company held for an additional 2 million shares of this commercial service. This'll cost Apple around \$12.5 million. As AOL is the base technology for Apple's dismal eWorld offering, there's more at stake here than simply a piece of the action.

BEEFIN' UP THE SYSTEM

Apparently the increased demand for frame relay services, as well as a highly optimistic projection of 5 million subscribers, is the reason that CompuServe (CIS) has selected the BPX and IGX async transfer mode switches from StrataCom to be the base of the online services' yet-to-be created ATM and broadband network.

PRODIGY PACK-IN

Although consumers have not necessarily claimed Prodigy as the finest of the finest as far as online services are concerned, Packard Bell, seemingly, has no problem with this commercial service. In fact, Packard Bell is downright delighted with Prodigy's numbers. So much so that Prodigy will be packed-in on all Packard Bell PCs sold. This adds to an already impressive list of bundle deals with the likes of Compaq, Dell, Gateway and IBM.

SPORTS TO SPAN THE STATES

With a focus on multiplayer interactive games, content, and distribution acumen, PSINet is in cahoots with Borta, Inc. This partnership is going to result in Internet-based multiplayer sports sims that'll be accessible throughout the United States. If you'll recall, PSINet also signed a deal with SAI/MicroLeague Software not long ago, for superior sport sim content. Add in Borta's technology, and you have a potential net sim powerhouse. Not only will critical latency issues be addressed, but real time speech will also be included in the products.

LURED AWAY

Seems as though the digital environs of CompuServe are more to the liking of Time magazine. Time, through some expensive luring, has left America Online and early next year, CIS will be able to offer subs early access to this news weekly's articles. There will also be a Time classroom publication as well as a mag that'll cover technology for home and work.

ONLINE STUDIO FOR DEVELOPERS

America Online has now brought forth the AOL Developers Studio(TM). This is a new program that enables third party developers to integrate AOL into their own software. They'll get software tools for adding this online functionality as well as tech support and product management. Partners who become part of this program will also have their products showcased by AOL online. Some early adopters of this program include Boxer Jam, Bureau of Electronic Publishing, Fog City, Graphix Zone, MacMillan Digital, MetaTools, Philips Media, Princeton Review, Simon and Schuster, Starfish Software, Starpress Inc., Virgin Sound and Vision, and Ziff-Davis. There are approximately 60 companies who have already committed,

or plan to commit, to this program.

In a related development, AOL has launched The AOL Software Greenhouse. This is a program that offers apps developers an opportunity to create titles that are specifically for the online marketplace. In return, these developers not only receive AOL support and industry know-how, but also a flexible toolset for both Macintosh and Windows platforms.

AOL AND VIRGIN S&V

Virgin's Virtual Valley is coming to America Online, thanks to a new alliance formed between the online service and Virgin Sound and Vision. There will be five worlds, each one dedicated to a specific entertainment or learning environment for specific age groups. These areas will all offer soundclips, contests, animations, product downloads and other material suited to each of the unique worlds. For example, the Cartoon Village is for kids aged four to eight and their parents and offers animated spelling bees and word games. Velocity Street is for kids under the age of 12 who enjoy puzzles, paper toys, and games shareware. For serious gamers, there's The Vault, which features Quicktime VR tours from Virgin upcoming releases, like Obelisk.

PROVE THE MURDERER DID IT IN CYBERSPACE

A new World Wide Web (WWW) site has been developed by Brøderbund Software related directly to that company's interactive entertainment CD-ROM In the 1st Degree(TM). Now you have the opportunity to prove James Tobin is actually guilty of murder in the first degree. Doing so could well award you one of 250 prizes, including a commemorative wooden judge's gavel with your name engraved upon it for the first 50 winners. A copy of the awesome In the 1st Degree novel from Prima Publishing will be awarded to the next 75 winners. Color boxer shorts with media headlines from the fictional case, known as legal briefs, will be awarded to the next 125 winners. All prizes are awarded on a first come, first serve basis to qualified entries at the WWW site at <http://www.broderbund.com>. There's tons of other Brøderbund goodies there as well, including a online shopping and product information.

WOMEN AND COMPUTERS

A new CompuServe(R) survey finds that female members of the service actually spend about half of their free time on computers. The results were compiled from a survey of 5,000 folk between October 9th and October 11th of this year. Nearly one-quarter of CIS' subscribers are women, who also stated that the leading barrier to spending more time online is that they don't have enough free time. The average number of hours women claimed to have free each day was about eight hours, of which they spend more than half on the computer. Other survey findings included that 62 percent of the women taking part in the survey actually manage their household's finances. Hmmm, seems as though this segment of our population should be a key group for online marketing efforts!

AUGUST GOOD MONTH FOR MOSAIC

During the month of August, according to Computer Retail Week, the Number One and Number Two spots in that publication's best-seller list for business productivity software was none other than Mosaic In A Box for Windows 95. The CD-ROM and floppy versions are the reason for the double-ranking. This package is an entry-level Internet solution for PC cyberwalkers. Versions are also available for Macintosh.

CHURN CONCERNS

According to Inteco Corporation, a strategic consultancy service, over 6 million PC users have canceled their subs to commercial online services. The service indicates that Prodigy has experienced more than 3-1/2 million disconnects, which is actually 1.8 million more than the service's current active user base. Other service indications include America Online with nearly 3 million cancellations (active base of 3.4 million), CompuServe with more than 2.1

million cancellations (with an active base of 1.2 million subs), and Genie and Delphi whose cancellations actually outnumbered subscribers 372,000 to 46,000 and 496,000 versus 93,000, respectively. Main cause is that there is absolutely no brand loyalty and high brand dissatisfaction. Many simply switch from one service to another to take advantage of the numerous marketing "freebies" and "deals" services offer to consumers to pull in users. Lack of compelling material keeps folk away. The Internet, on the other hand, has a lower churn rate than all of the online services, basically because those on the net are usually more experienced computer and online consumers. The consulting firm believes that in order for online services to become more compelling they need to deliver entertainment that can compete with television and other diversions, quickly and with slick programming. In order for that to occur, throughput must reach 100 Mbits/second and faster. These findings were based on 10,000 interviews conducted in homes throughout the United States.

SHOCKING STUFF

There's something new out there for online developers, and it's called Shockwave for Director from Macromedia. This new technology brings interactive MM goodies to the Web, including such niceties as animation, sounds and graphics, all optimized Director files. Folk like Silicon Graphics, Navisoft, Netscape and Microsoft have already adopted Shockwave technology which will allow Web cruisers to access online Director movies as digital images that are simply embedded into browsers and other tools. Afterburner(TM) is the program's post processor which actually does the file optimization, thereby enabling quick access for the content by the user. Expect Shockwave to ship sometime directly after Netscape's Navigator v. 2.0 gets to the shelves. More info is available at Macromedia's WWW site at <http://www.macromedia.com>.

ISDN IS DEFINITELY "IN"

What used to be just a matter of time is now becoming reality. According to Microsoft, Windows 95 will offer full support for ISDN by the end of this year. Free software will be available through the company's WWW site, the Microsoft Network and other online sites that will add this capability to the OS. Although the demand for ISDN currently is not high, powers-that-be at Microsoft feel such will not necessarily be true next year. Also of interest is that Microsoft Network will not charge more for single-channel ISDN access via the "B" channel. As of this writing, no date has been revealed by Microsoft as to when 3 channel ISDN support will be implemented.

SURVEYS CONTINUE TO PROVE INTERNET IS IT

The Homefront study, from Odyssey, reveals that more and more folk are dropping their online commercial service in favor of direct Internet connection. This study, which surveyed some 2,000 consumers across the nation, is conducted every six months simply to track the markets for online services, home PCs and CD-ROMs. Odyssey's latest report reveals that 13 percent of homes with PCs subscribe to America Online, and Prodigy subs dropped to 7 percent from 10 percent. CompuServe comes in third with a 6 percent base. Yet, 13 percent of all households with PCs use the Internet. As you can see, this means that as many folk who use the largest commercial service are on the Internet without the aid of a commercial service. Another interesting note is that 30 percent of those surveyed cannot name any online service.

WWW PAGE FROM PRODIGY

Looks as though Prodigy is going where most consumers are heading-the World Wide Web-in a big way. Prodigy intends to launch their first WWW page called Informed Investor to deliver to paying subscribers all kinds of financial info. This is definitely a test to see if the company can deliver their content via the net as an alternative distribution channel, other than the proprietary service they now operate. This new page will contain info that's been repackaged from the material found within their commercial offering.

* INDUSTRY STUFF: ELECTRONIC EXTRAS *

GETTING YOUR GAMES UNDER CONTROL

There's something new to help you control your entertainment desires- Blaster GamePad(TM) from Creative Technology. This is a new game controller for PC's that's optimized for faster response time plus fully compatible with today's and tomorrow's PC games. Plus, the controller is fully supportive of the company's new 3D Blaster(TM). This game pad ships with a collection of shareware games and patches that enable full operation of this pad with these games. Plus, it's fully supportive of the latest Direct Input of Windows 95. You can even have a single input split for two GamePad connections for head-to-head play. There are a total of 14 touch-sensitive buttons in an eight-position direction array, three major and three minor firing buttons, plus two buttons for start and select, plus a left and right index button on the sides of the unit. Each button can be configured to your own prefs.

GESTURES KEY TO GAMING

The Mandala System is new gesture recognition technology that has been created by The Vivid Group with a helping-hand from both Intel Corporation and S3. Using a video camera, gamers see themselves on the TV and, after each move, the virtual world created by the software responds to your movement. The neat aspect is that you don't have to wear a bloody thing-just reach out and you're VR'ing! The Vivid Group will shortly be showing a brand new game, Turbo Courier. You'll be a courier that uses a turbo-propelled skyboard to zip across a futuristic city skyscape. You'll lean in the direction you want your skyboard to travel and pick up points for every package you recover, as well as earn points by avoiding trouble.