* ONLINE STUFF *

JUMANJI ONLINE
Despite reviews that have been far less than complimentary, movie-goers seem to be pronouncing Jumanji a winner through votes with their dollars for tickets. There's a new Web site dedicated to Jumanji, but because this site is so heavily dependent upon graphics and other enormous file downloads, you'd best have a 28.8 bps modem when getting into this area. What you get is not only QuickTime trailers for the film, some facts, but an actual Jumanji game itself. When you roll the dice, you get a new situation or a riddle that moves you forward or backwards on the Jumanji board. Action games must be downloaded which require you to master them before you can return to the on-line game itself. These modules are built using Macromedia Director and are for Power Macs and Macs based on the 680x0 CPUs. When a game segment is completed, you'll get another password, until you actually finish the game. Do this, and you can register directly with Sony. The company will then enter you into a contest where Jumanji memorabilia and other prizes can be won. This unique site is located at http://www.spe.sony.com/Pictures/SonyMovies/Jumanji/index.html.

ON-LINE SERVICES HELD RESPONSIBLE
Thanks to a ruling by the New York Supreme Court, on-line operators are going to face legal responsibility for libel written by subscribers that appears as content on their services. This ruling by Judge Stuart Ain upheld an earlier decision that found Stratton Oakmont, a brokerage firm, who sued Prodigy for libel. What this boils down to is that if a service provider holds editorial control, then they are going to be held to the same standards as any publisher.

** PERSPECTIVES: RATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS OF NEW PRODUCTS **

A Personal Perspective: The Sega 32X, One Year Later

When, in the tranquil serenity of the midnight hour, you speak of a PC colossus, you cite DOOM in hushed tones.   When, in the soft, silent moments when darkness descends, you discuss arcade giants sotto voce, the names Star Wars, Virtua Fighter and Virtua Racing ease breathily from between your lips.   When, in the enduring process of human fraternity, the topic of 32-bit gaming is argued, you utter the mystical, mythical phrases Sega Saturn, Sony PlayStation, or perchance 3DO.   Right?   Wrong!   I say, in a loud, clear, firm voice -- Sega 32X!
    Right now, those of you who have not simply blacked out, completely surrendering to unconsciousness, are presumably suffering an unusual degree of adversity to reading any further.   That's okay. I'll pause while we wait for the gag reflex to unclench inside your esophagus and the blurring of your vision to abate.   Am I crazy, you ask?   Oh, yeah...crazy like a fox.
    For those of you who currently possess a 32X and were preparing to use it as an uncommonly superior golf tee, drop your driver and continue reading.   If at present, however, you can merely boast ownership of the Genesis system exclusively, it is with a thoroughly clear conscience that I invite you to purchase a 32X, and here's just one of the reasons why: polygons, polygons, polygons!   Flat-shaded, gouraud-shaded, texture-mapped...the 32X can sling 'em!   Hoo-hah!
    Last Christmas season when introducing the 32X to the market, Sega's game plan for their Genesis upgrade depended on what appeared to be the understandable, sensible certitude that a majority of the populace would not be inclined to shell out $300+ for a modern 32-bit system.   They were right...sort of.
    It would feasibly be the understatement of the decade to casually observe that the 32X

did not quite catch on.   Folks, that boggles my mind.   For my money, here then is an even better reason to acquire a 32X: once you strip away the hype and hyperbole, Sega delivered precisely what it promised with the 32X -- 32-bit gaming with a dramatically diminished capital outlay.   The loathing I have noticed aimed at the 32X, especially by 32X owners who evidently consider themselves deceived in some fashion, puzzles me.   As a satisfied 32X owner, I believe I have earned the right to point out that you get what you pay for, and...this is not a bad thing.

"What!   What!   Why?" you might ask.   Well, I will tell you why.   Another sphere in which the 32X demonstrates its efficacy is The Waiting Game.   The 32X is a means by which patient gamers may fill the 32-bit void in their lives while prudently, frugally contemplating the prospective purchase and/ or relative merits of other next generation home consoles.

What defines a patient gamer?   The patient gamer is the antithesis to the early adopter.   The patient gamer does his (or her) homework.   The patient gamer reads the specs.   The patient gamer play tests all available platforms, not just once but many times over.   The patient gamer waits until the dross and the chaff are culled out, leaving only the genuine goods.   The patient gamer waits until the price on his preferred hardware dips to a comfortable level then makes his acquisition, flush with a glowing satisfaction.

Some constituents of the gaming collective might contend that with the 32X, Sega also delivered dramatically decreased performance.   Possibly.   However, at heart, I do not believe that to be so.   In fact, I believe the decreased performance contention to be artificial; an insincerely manufactured polemic.   Personally, I have exactly as much fun playing Virtua Racing Deluxe on my 32X as I do playtesting Sega Rally Championship on a Saturn at Incredible Universe.   In my opinion, that is the test of authentic performance in a home console.

The reason clichés are clichés are because they are truths; truths that are so true, so pervasive, they have stormed John Q. Public's consciousness like daytime soaps or talk shows.   Here, then, is a cliché: in the end, it all comes down to software.   Were I able to purchase a 128-bit platform at this very moment, I would no doubt possess the single finest paperweight/ doorstop in the history of the civilized world because there would be no software, my friends.   It is my contention that of the roughly two dozen 32X titles commonly obtainable, these four game titles alone merit the price of admission: DOOM, Star Wars Arcade, Virtua Fighter and Virtua Racing Deluxe.

All four titles sport magnificent , unbelievably artistic 3-D graphics, with color and sound boosted to honest-to-goodness 32-bit caliber.   The three arcade translations are seriously bordering on flawless.   Sega compensated for slightly reduced polygon counts by augmenting these 32X carts with options and features unavailable on the arcade versions.

Star Wars Arcade includes astonishing introductory animation; an experience akin to a first time viewing of the opening sequence of the film.   Pick from two flight views as you dogfight non-stop through eight levels.   Your final objective is to jam that awesome torpedo right down the Death Star's maw.   Virtua Fighter offers eight fighters, 360(combat and unbelievably fluid combos, plus a tournament mode, multiple camera angles and full match replay.   Virtua Racing Deluxe includes three cars, four views, five tracks and a multitude of gameplay options.   Virtua Fighter and Virtua Racing Deluxe, in particular, are lightning quick and so much fun to play your head may just explode.   Speaking of exploding heads...DOOM! DOOM, people!   Not DOOM, Jr., not DOOM-lite, DOOM!   On my 27" television screen!   This is all I have to say about that: BFG 9000, baby!

As far as quality software is concerned, every platform since the dawn of gaming has had its fair share of stinkers, including the 32X.   However, augmenting the marvelous titles previously spoken of for the 32X, you may discover these additional superb titles, currently available: Kolibri, Mortal Kombat II, NBA Jam Tournament Edition, Shadow Squadron, World Series Baseball, and WWF Wrestlemania.

Which (nice segue, huh?) brings up an issue that's been irritating me.   Not long ago, I noticed an ugly inclination towards arguable bias amongst my fellow gamers.   Perhaps forced to the brink of madness by their ever deteriorating purchasing power, yet confronted with the dire apprehension of so many premium 32-bit and 64-bit platforms hitting the

market with exorbitant price tags (with attendant high end, high cost software), what I refer to as 'system sniping' commenced in earnest.   "My hardware is bigger than your hardware!,"   "What do you think you're you doing playing with your hardware?,"   "I haven't played with your hardware, but it's limp and impotent anyway!"   Blah, blah, blah.

    Let me take a moment to get more comfortable on my soapbox.   Done.   Holy Moses, people, gaming is all about having fun!   At least, in a perfect world, it should be.   Honestly, I have never played a game on an Atari Jaguar or Big Daddy Trip's 3DO.   I have seen them in action.   Was I impressed?   No.   So, do I detest these two platforms?   No!   Why should I? As long as the people who own Jaguar's or 3DO's are having fun, who cares?

    I delight in my 32X.   I derive joy from my 32X.   Is the 32X the preeminent gaming system?   Of course not, don't be silly.   Is it, however, a reasonable means of upgrading the elder statesman of 16-bit consoles to 32-bit gaming power?   Yes, yes, yes!   In the end, I suppose I have only this to declare: buy your system, shut your mouth, and have some fun, d@mn it! -- Brian D. Boyle

PS   Feel like arguing with me?   E-mail me!   Bboyle123@aol.com

32X Technical Specifications:
CPU: 2 Hitachi 32-bit RISC processors; 23 MHz/40 MIPS
Coprocessing: Genesis 68000
Graphics: 50,000 polygons/ sec.; 32,768 simultaneous color display
Memory: 512K internal RAM

Mudgeon: On Games(TM)

Until now, I really have not enjoyed racing sims. Especially not sims for PCs. Oh, sure, there are many titles that are quite at home on video game machines. But racing sims just didn't make it on DOS or Windows platforms. Their graphics were bit-mappy, the action slooooow, and the game play less than intriguing. No strategy, no thrills.

    Until now, that is . . .thankfully, Sony decided to initiate development of games for the PC and, via their Psygnosis development team, produced WipeOut Ballistic Racing. More than just a racing game, WipeOut presents anti-gravity racing with anti gravity racers on six different circuits. Now, this sim is fun! You can play WipeOut as a single player, in a multiplayer engagement for as many as eight of your friends, via a two player serial link between computers, or via a network.

    Your vehicle actually "floats" above the track. When you jump or swerve, the feeling is quite unique as your view can move skywards and then back to your forward perspective. The speed you can attain is awesome and the motion of your vehicle is more of a free-fall than the rigid requirements of road-based racing.

    You may control your antigravity racer using the keyboard, mouse, or joystick. I tried all three I/O options and found my NEW CH Products F-16 Combat Stick to be the best. (This joystick, by the way, requires no special drivers, but offers several advanced features to make your racing, flight, or other sim extremely controllable!) Once you've decided on your I/O device, you can configure it to the game specs through a special controller configuration selection. You may also select how close or how far you wish the game's horizon to be (the faster your CPU, the further away your view can be), high or low resolution, your screen size and whether you wish texturing turned on or off. Those without Pentium-based computers will be better off selecting fewer of these features.

    The game starts with your racing class being Venom. To move to the much faster Rapier class, you MUST win the Venom Championship first, and that's no easy task. You can decide to participate in a time trail where you're simply competing against the clock. Or, get into a single race against other pilots after deciding which track you wish to race on. And then there's the Championship race itself, where you must finish as one of the fastest three pilots

in order to move on to the next event. Don't forget, however, that you only have three lives, and there are weapons and other obstacles that can permanently put you in the final defeat of all, death, if you're not careful.

Team Selection means varying types of antigravity craft, different countries of origin and individual pilots who have various skill sets. One might be an expert in high speed flight and weapons, another a better test pilot, and so on. Some of these pilots are committed rivals of other team pilots, so you have to learn how best to parlay their expertise for your chosen team.

Once you're on the track, what's really cool is to look for and "activate" specific power-ups and weapons on the track. Even though your racer is equipped with a number of offensive weapons before the race, you can't activate those weapons until you find their associated Weapons Grid on the track itself. There are a number of shields (protects your craft), turbo boosts (speed increased), mines (slow down other craft who hit them), shock waves (control difficulties when hit), rockets (straight line of fire, slow down other craft when hit), and missiles (heat seekers). The latter are quite powerful and you must watch for the missile lock symbol to appear on your screen before you fire this puppy at your opponents. When in multiplayer mode, there are additional weapons that include revcon (reverses the craft's controls) and a special Huh? icon that is really quite powerful--after you figure out what it does, that is!

One small piece of advise is to simply get used to handling your craft on various tracks before even attempting to race the competition. You'll actually feel yourself become more and more experienced as you try and try again to beat the clock. But never get too cocky, my friends. Once you're up against other, experienced pilots, you'll soon feel your confidence wane. And don't concentrate on their destruction, at least, not initially. You'll find yourself losing control as you try to line up an opposing vehicle in your sights to fire your missile or rocket. Your concentration on your own piloting skills becomes secondary as you enter that "hunt and hurt" mode and you'll lose precious time. Wait until you become truly proficient with your piloting skills before you decide to become too aggressive with your weapons.

WipeOut--certainly not a revolutionary game, but one many PC gamers will thoroughly enjoy playing. I certainly acquired a new perspective as far as PC-based racing sims are concerned, and this title helped overcome my prejudice against such titles. This is pure fun.--Mudgeon