

INSIDE GAMES & ENTERTAINMENT UPDATE

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The Word Warriors
23115 Broadmoor Court
Auburn, CA 95602

email
gamesup1@ix.netcom.com
igufolk1@aol.com

Publishers/Editors: Hartley & Pattie Lesser
Associate Publisher: Tuncer Deniz
Senior Editors: Gary Le, Lance Forrest
Associate Editors: Sal Iva, Aleksandra Stuart
Field Editor: blud
Editorial Ne'er-Do-Well: Mudgeon

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[DISTILLATIONS: news and new products](#)

* COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT NEWS *

CAPCOM's NEW ENTRIES

The Sony PlayStation (PSX) is a video console that Capcom Entertainment plans to support quite solidly with new titles. In February will come Street Fighter Alpha which is based on the arcade hit that went directly to the top of those popularity charts. This title brings back the classic characters from the original game as well as the foes from the company's Final Fight title. Three new characters are also included in this game which Capcom feels will make it the most potent of all of their Street Fighter titles.

Then there's Resident Evil, an action game that combines role-playing and puzzle solving. You're within a mansion, most foreboding, where such nasties as zombies who enjoy a long neck nuzzle, spiders whose size is quite intimidating, and frog-men of a most horrific nature

do all they can to halt your adventure. There are tricks and traps throughout the game that'll keep you hopping from gory site to gory kill.

In 1994, Capcom's Darkstalkers coin-op was a chart topper. Now they're bringing it to the PSX. Head-to-head fighting by ten notorious monsters comes to life on your TV. This is a one- or two-player title that finds you, and the critters, in the fight of your life. Nasties such as the Succubus, Big Foot Frankenstein and the Mummy are all there to give you a wallop or two.

Fox Hunt is a comedy spy thriller that has you playing the game as Jack Fremont. But you're not really him--you just LOOK like him. You're a regular dude, now a spy, who must locate the launch codes of nukes that are aimed at Los Angeles. And folk are after you 'cause you look like Fremont. If you can get the briefcase full of diamonds and cash, even get the girl, all the while figuring out a blackmail attempt, mebbe you'll succeed. There are 10 possible outcomes in this truly interactive movie adventure game.

Two addictive arcade games compiled in the Buster Bros. Collection brings Super Buster Brothers and Buster Buddies to the U.S. These titles are based on both the U.S. and unreleased Japanese arcade versions. You must shoot a bunch of balloons with your rope gun as they bounce around the screen. When you shoot a balloon, the balloon splits into two smaller, faster balloons. Hit them, and they split, and this occurs again and again and again. These are killer balloons and there are plenty of power-ups to help you win the games. There's also a two-player mode for even more arcade action.

**** DIGITAL DELIGHTS ****

THE (SORT OF) REBIRTH OF AMIGA

Lo and behold, those many wailing voices at the demise of Commodore and the Amiga computer may now be stilled--just a wee bit! Most know that Escom AG acquired all of the Commodore and Amiga goodies last year. There's now an international license between Visual Information Service Corporation and Escom AG to incorporate "Amiga" technologies into the former's intelligent set-top box. What Visual may do is use, relicense and distribute the Amiga OS as well as parts of Amiga products in ITV devices. The resulting set-top box will bring into the television set such niceties as on-line services including voice chat rooms as well as the Internet. Games, home shopping, banking electronically and other services will also be manageable through this device.

VIDEO CAPTURE FOR NOTEBOOKS

A full-screen, full-motion 24-bit video capture card designed for notebooks and sub-notebook computer running Windows 95 has been developed by Toshiba Multimedia Systems. Called the JK-VC1, this Type II PC Card based on the PCMCIA standard lets you attach a video camera and then capture real-time video to your computer's hard drive. Video for Windows (AVI) files result from the saved capture video. You can capture and display NTSC, PAL and SECAM video at 640x480, 320x240, or 160x120 sizes at 25 fps. A computer with 8MB of memory could display 30 fps at a video resolution of 160x120.

**** OTHER ENTERTAINING NEWS ****

BORING FLICKS

The Boring Institute has released their 11th annual under-achievement awards for film. One nominee is none other than Joe Eszterhas' movie SHOWGIRLS. In fact, it was considered

soooo boring that an entirely new category had to be developed for the film--Most Boring Sex Film. Other nominees from The Boring Institute include Bad Company, Congo, Jefferson in Paris, Judge Dredd, Magic in the Water, Rangoon, The Tie that Binds, Under Siege 2: Dark Territory, Waterworld, and Wild Bill. The winners will be announced on March 11th. Last year, On Deadly Ground starring Steven Seagal was the winner. Ted Danson also won last year for his outstanding work in Getting Even with Dad and Made in America.

HARRISON FORD TO STAR IN NEW FILM

The star of numerous action and dramatic roles has signed on for around \$20 million to play a U.S. president who is being held captive on "Air Force One." With a budget of between \$60 and \$70 million, the film is to be produced by Beacon Communications, a unit of Ascent Entertainment Group. This group owns the Denver Nuggets and Colorado Avalanche sports teams. "Air Force One" is the first entry by Beacon into the action-adventure genre film with a script by Andrew Marlowe. Prior Beacon films include The Commitments (1991), Sugar Hill (1994), Princess Caraboo (1994), The Road to Wellville (1994), The Baby-Sitters Club (1995) and A Life in the Theatre (1994), a made-for-cable movie with Jack Lemmon and Matthew Broderick. Shooting will start in early October this year.

NEW ASIAN TV NETWORK

NBC is going to launch a new, Asian TV network entitled NBC in Asia. The network will offer English-language cable service, 24 hours a day. There will be a mix of both local Asian and global news as well as content ranging from documentaries and music, to sports and children's programming for that region of the world. An expanded network schedule should roll-out in April. The new network will be based in Hong Kong and will show material from its companion channel, CNBC Asia, and material from U.S. shows such as Dateline NBC, Leno's Tonight Show, and NBC Nightly News.

NEW SPORTS NETWORK?

By mid-February, Ted Turner will decide whether or not to start a new, 24-hour sports news network as well as networks for health and entertainment. This would put him in direct competition with ESPN. Considering that added sports news would cost little to add to his current cable offerings, especially as TNT and TBS already carry pro basketball and football and sports news is broadcast over Headline News and CNN channels.

COMPETITION FOR THE INDY 500

Championship Auto Racing Teams is going to televise via ESPN, and run at the Michigan International Speedway, the U.S. 500. The official announcement will probably come later this week and affords direct competition to ABC's broadcast of the Indianapolis 500. Many racing team owners will provide teams for both races.

* ONLINE STUFF *

INTERACTIVE CONTENT FROM COMPUTERWORLD

There's a new site on the World Wide Web that offers "interactive" content. This new site is @ComputerWorld and offerings will include a clearinghouse for rumors and even letters to the editor that are actually sound bytes. There will be two distinct sections to the site, one for business managers called TechCity, and the other to those with IT interests. Other content areas will include Quick Polls plus on-line forums held by industry experts. There's a

downloadable Computerworld Minute that is actually an audio news file. Books Etcetera contains a list of the top 15 high tech best selling books plus reviews of titles and an ordering capability. You can also expect a 3D VR world with avatars sometime in the not-too-distant future.

WWW CONTENT DEVELOPMENT COSTS

International Data Corporation (IDC) has released a new study that indicates that 80 percent of all costs associated with WWW site development are for custom software development and integration. Only 20 percent of those costs are actually for off-the-shelf software and hardware units. The largest commercial Web sites spent from \$840,000 to more than \$1.5 million on their sites, depending upon the level of security required. The key to successful interactive commerce requires end-to-end server software that reduces time-to-market with minimal custom code development required. Advanced functionality is also demanded from a site by sophisticated Web users, such as intuitive order entry, search tools, integrated order tracking and improved presentation. The survey reveals that what once was considered a simple marketing tool is now becoming a highly competitive arena.

DIALOG TO OFFER NY TIMES

Full-text, same-day access to The New York Times will now be available on the DIALOG on-line info service. Additionally, during February, the Times will also be available on the DataStar service. The on-line database includes articles, commentary and wire service pieces on the current day's news, available before the start of the business day, east coast time. Search costs are \$60 per connect hour and \$2 per record retrieved through DIALOG.

PRODIGY AD SALES GETS NEW VEEP

Coming to Prodigy Services Company is Scott Schiller. He'll be the new vice president, advertising sales. He joins Prodigy from MTV Networks where he held a top sales position and was a leading biller.

SUBSCRIBERS TOP 75K

PSINet continues to do well. The company now reports that as of December 31st, they provided services to 75,000 individual subscribers and 8,200 organizations. That's a 95 and 32 percent increase, respectively. PSINet now provides 241 POPs in six countries--227 are located in North America. At the end of 1994, PSINet had 82 POPs. The company also acquired EUNET GB in the UK, expanded to Canada, opened joint ops in Holland and South Korea, and hired a new president for PSI Japan.

ROCK 'N ROLL HALL OF FAME ONLINE

The 1996 induction of Rock and Roll stars to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame will not only occur in New York on January 17th, but also on the WWW. Thanks to Plain Dealer New Media, the site at <http://www.rockhall.com> will have feature bios of the new inductees as well as audio samples of their music. Since opening on August 21st, the site has registered some 10 million "hits." The inductees for this year include David Bowie, Jefferson Airplane, Gladys Knight and the Pips, Pink Floyd, the Shirelles, Pete Seeger, the Velvet Underground, Little Willie John and Tom Donahue. There will also be a contest wherein you could win a free weekend in Cleveland, where the Hall of Fame is located, from any location in the U.S.

**** DEVELOPER DUMP ****

WEB ANIMATION TOOL FOR WEB'ERS

Coming from DeltaPoint Inc. is WebAnimator for Macintosh. This is a new tool for web site developers that'll add animation to their pages through use of this new authoring tool. Graphics will be created far more quickly and with far less size than was possible before. Easy compression occurs for the WebAnimator objects which are created as shapes. These files can also contain bitmap info and movies, with one second of WebAnimator animation compressing to just 500 bytes. The cool aspect is the free plug-in component that'll allow others to view the WebAnimator scene even if they don't have the app itself. This plug-in will be distributed via on-line services and through DeltaPoint's Web site at <http://www.deltapoint.com>. Expect a price of around \$99 for the product.

ANOTHER WEB TOOL DEBUTS

Many publishers, especially in the book business, use Adobe FrameMaker(TM) to create their projects. Now, Harlequin has announced a new version of their WebMaker(TM) multiplatform system that'll convert FrameMaker v. 5.0 and 4.0 files into HTML. The SRP is \$99 and includes Internet-based tech support and docs. The new version is 2.1 and is available for Macintosh, Windows 3.0 and higher, and a number of UNIX platforms. For more info on this product, check out Harlequin's WWW site at <http://www.harlequin.com/webmaker/>. WebMaker 2.0 customers can easily upgrade to the new version, which is totally compatible with files created under the earlier version of the app.

WEB TOOL UPGRADED

WebSite 1.1 is the latest upgrade by O'Reilly & Associates to their WebSite(TM) 32-bit WWW server that runs under Windows NT and Windows 95. The product includes the highly-rated HTML editor with support for text formatting, link-building, forms and tables, plus an on-line tutorial, called HotDog Standard. Virtual servers are included as is multiple Web index searches through WebFind(TM). Using WebView(TM), you can also print a complete graphic schematic of your links and Web contents. Imagemaps build with other programs are also supported, as is support for HTML version 2 and version 3, plus Netscape extensions. At the WebSite Central site at <http://website.ora.com> there will soon be available a 60-day downloadable demo for your perusal. Also, this Spring, WebSite Professional will debut from O'Reilly Software. This puppy'll include all of WebSite 1.1's features plus two cryptographic security systems and a new API.

MPEG DEMAND INCREASES SALES

S3 has revealed that they have shipped more than 500,000 units of the company's Scenic/MX2 MPEG-1 decoder board due to market demand for hardware-based, MPEG playback capabilities. Scenic's decoders feature full-screen, TV-quality, 30 fps MPEG-1 playback and have been incorporated into products from Boca Research, Compaq, Diamond Multimedia, Number Nine Visual Technology, STB Systems and VideoLogic. There are approximately 300 MPEG-based titles on the market today.

Mudgeon: On Games(TM)

The Dig for PC CD-ROM
from LucasArt Entertainment

Is it any wonder that LucasArts Entertainment is the NUMBER ONE sales leader of PC-based digital entertainments? Look at their fantastic array of offerings--the new StarWars: Rebel Assault II--The Hidden Empire, TIE FIGHTER, X-WING and THE DIG. Although I personally feel The Dig is not as technologically-sound as the other mentioned titles, the offering has a great story line, some of the best cut-scene animation ever presented on a PC CD-ROM, and unarguably the best music soundtrack ever written to support a game.

Let me discuss the two elements I feel detract from this great title. Yes, you can still have a great game and not have total perfection in the final product. First, and foremost, the cartoon-like, 2D characters were a surprise. Considering the almost feature-film like look-and-feel of the other game elements (backgrounds, structures, and so on), they took me by surprise. They are rather blocky looking. The look and feel of the game reminds me of a Sierra graphic adventure title that could have been released a couple of years ago. (A fantastic writer friend of mine explained that the game required two years to complete. Within two years, computer game technology sped ahead, yet the title itself had to stay consistent with its original coding to stay within the original development plans if it was to be released in late 1995. Guess that's a pretty good excuse, for the coders, but doesn't say much for the company projections as staying up-to-date on the greatest and latest.)

Voices are also not in total sync with lip movements. Speaking of voices, you've never heard so much chatter in your entire life. The three main characters (before one becomes deceased as the result of a nasty fall) are in a constant barrage of chatter between one another. Some of the chatter is witty, but most of it is obnoxious banter. A couple of snide remarks and jokes are fine, but when the entire reason for discourse seems to be to belittle or make fun of another character, after a while, this becomes boring and slows game play. Plus, given the rather dangerous situations they find themselves in, I doubt whether such joking around would ever occur. I found the banter to actually detract from the game play. After all, if even the characters on screen don't find a situation dangerous, why should you, as the gamer?

Beyond these two negatives, and some may consider them major defects, the game itself is a thorough treat. The music score from Michael Land is totally awesome. There is not one moment within the game when the music becomes overly omnipresent and overrides gameplay. Each selection adds nicely to the feel of that particular scene and has been "orchestrated" beautifully.

The same may be said for the cut scene animations. They are beautifully drawn and animated and have the true feel of a feature motion picture. When you consider that the game's concept came from Steven Spielberg, who wanted to actually create a film based on the idea but such proved to be too expensive, it's no wonder there's a rich story line and a variety of unique environments to explore.

You control Commander Boston Low, who in turn commands a team of five astronauts, sent to investigate the Attila Asteroid that is orbiting Earth. With a decaying orbit, the scientific community believes a collision with Earth is imminent. A plan is conceived wherein your team will set small nuclear charges on the asteroid which, when detonated, will spin the asteroid away from Earth.

After you and your team manage to successfully move the asteroid away from Earth, an investigation of the asteroid begins. Suddenly, if you manage to activate the correct plates deep within the asteroid, the entire space-spinning rock turns into a magnificent spaceship and, faster than light, transports you to an entirely new planet in a new universe. At this juncture, you must determine what needs to be done to get back to Earth. With little in the way of equipment, you must solve a variety of puzzles in alien locales. Saving your game

should be a constant thought as one action here might cause an unwished for result--by returning to your previously saved game, you can avoid making the same mistake twice.

The mouse interface is easy to use. To pick up items, you simply click on them and they are placed into Boston's inventory. To use an object, you enter your inventory, select the item, then move it about the screen until a "blue" border surrounds it, indicating the chosen item can be used with or upon whatever element the item rests over. Be certain to use the magnifying glass in your inventory on items you find. You may believe you've seen everything there is to see about an object which you have retrieved. One click of the magnifying glass may help you see even more!

Although The Dig presents a less-than-current 2D animated set of characters and too much inane chatter, the plot itself is rich and diverse and will offer gamers hours of adventuring fun. The music and cut scene animations are superb and, when combined with the deep plot and exciting scenarios, The Dig is a title that will feel quite at home in your game software library. I believe you'll find yourself becoming quite attached to the game play and may wonder why you're suddenly late for dinner.--Mudgeon