ZShare
Ziff-Davis Interactive Monthly Shareware Review

May 1995
Issue Number 22

Newest Titles
Some new, some improved, all hot.

Featured Reviews
ZD Shareware Awards finalists--and more.

Action Games Roundup
The quick and the dead.

Zips and Zaps
Comments from Timothy Campbell.

Author Spotlight: William Soleau
Dancer turned programmer: Not so puzzling.

How to Download from ZiffNet

About ZShare and ZiffNet

How To Download from ZiffNet

If you are a ZiffNet member on CompuServe or PRODIGY, you can easily download all of the programs mentioned in this publication. If you are not already a ZiffNet subscriber, you can find out how to join by selecting "Becoming a ZiffNet Subscriber" below:

ZiffNet/CompuServe

All of the programs mentioned in ZShare are available directly from our Software Center (GO ZNT:SOFTLIB) or in one of the Public Brand Software Forums   (GO PBS). The correct forum is indicated in each program highlight, along with the specific library in which it can be found.

ZiffNet/PRODIGY

All of the programs can also be found on the ZiffNet for PRODIGY service. Simply [JUMP]: **ZiffNet** and select "Software Library" from the menu. Then perform a search--"Find a Specific Title"--for the program you are interested in.

Becoming a ZiffNet Subscriber

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Become a ZiffNet Subscriber

Anyone with a modem and communications software can discover for themselves everything ZiffNet offers. It's easy! CompuServe members can simply type GO ZIFFNET. If you are not currently a CompuServe member, just follow these easy steps:

1. Set your communications software to 7 data bits, even parity, one stop bit. Select a data transfer rate (bits per second) of 1,200, 2,400, 9,600 or 14,400 bps. Have your modem call the local ZiffNet number. (To find your local ZiffNet number: by modem, dial 800-346-3247 and at the User ID prompt type PHONES; by voice, dial 800-635-6225.)

2. Respond to the prompts by entering the information below:

When you connect: Press **CTRL+C**
Host Name: **CIS**
User ID: **177000,5555**
Password: **ZIFF*NET**
Agreement Number: **SREVIEW**

3. Register your name and credit card number for billing.

You will receive your permanent User ID and temporary Password online. Write them down and use them to log on. You will receive your permanent Password within 10 days, as confirmation of your new ZiffNet membership.

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NEWEST TITLES

Below are some of the newest additions to our libraries. These files are available for downloading on ZiffNet for CompuServe and ZiffNet for Prodigy.

Downloading from Ziffnet

Ziff-Davis Originals

ZDI's Construction Screen Saver 3-Pack Volume 2
Three all new Windows SCR modules are designed to make demolishing your desktop fun.
CompuServe: GO PBSUTIL, Library 8 (ZDI Exclusives), and search for ZCNST2.ZIP
Prodigy: [JUMP] ZIFFNET and Select Software Library, then "Find a Specific Title"

ZDI's Printer Changer
Change your printer and fax drivers directly from your desktop--quickly and easily.
CompuServe: GO PBSUTIL, Library 8 (ZDI Exclusives), and search for ZPRNTC.ZIP
Prodigy: [JUMP] ZIFFNET and Select Software Library, then "Find a Specific Title"

Tools & Utilities

File Finder/Grouper v2.01
Offers unlimited parameter options and extended DOS wildcard functions.
CompuServe: GO PBSUTIL, Library 3 (File Utilities), and search for FFG.ZIP
Prodigy: [JUMP] ZIFFNET and Select Software Library, then "Find a Specific Title"

TextPad v1.23
Fully featured text editor offers balloon help and lets you open multiple files.
CompuServe: GO PBSUTIL, Library 3 (Word Processing), and search for TEXTPD.ZIP
Prodigy: [JUMP] ZIFFNET and Select Software Library, then "Find a Specific Title"

Engage v1.2
Create and save easily configurable, floating toolbars.
CompuServe: GO PBSUTIL, Library 11 (System Utils-Windows), and search for ENGAGE.ZIP
Prodigy: [JUMP] ZIFFNET and Select Software Library, then "Find a Specific Title"

Fonter v7.0
TrueType and Adobe font manager for Windows creates personalized samples.
CompuServe: GO PBSSTU, Library 5 (Font Tools), and search for FONTER.ZIP
Prodigy: [JUMP] ZIFFNET and Select Software Library, then "Find a Specific Title"

Games

K-Chess for Windows v2.0
Instructional chess game sports an attractive, menu-driven interface.
CompuServe: GO PBSARC, Library 8 (Board Games), and search for KCHESW.ZIP
Prodigy: [JUMP] ZIFFNET and Select Software Library, then "Find a Specific Title"

Quatris II++
This smooth game offers excellent graphics, sound card support and tournament-style play.
CompuServe: GO PBSARC, Library 12 (Puzzles/Logic), and search for QUATRS.ZIP
Prodigy: [JUMP] ZIFFNET and Select Software Library, then "Find a Specific Title"

Business

FlowDraw Plus v1.0
Handsome program draws flowcharts, schematics, charts, and other types of diagrams.
CompuServe: GO PBSBUS, Library 3 (General Business), and search for FDPLUS.ZIP
Prodigy: [JUMP] ZIFFNET and Select Software Library, then "Find a Specific Title"

Budget Manager for Windows
Comprehensive personal finance manager organizes up to 75 funds and 20 accounts.
CompuServe: GO PBSHOME, Library 6 (Personal Finance), and search for BUDGT.ZIP
Prodigy: [JUMP] ZIFFNET and Select Software Library, then "Find a Specific Title"

Downloading from Ziffnet

REVIEWS

2DO   ***ZD Shareware Awards Finalist***
Helps You Sort Out Your Life

AnyView Professional
Get Better Video, More Memory in Windows

As You Like It   ***ZD Shareware Awards Finalist***
Reading Electronic Texts Has Never Been Easier

Crypto 95
Codebreaker Conundrums

Rock Man   ***ZD Shareware Awards Finalist***
Underground Puzzles: A Real Mine Game

SkyMap
The Night Sky's the Limit

ViaBase
Keep Data at Your Fingertips

WinZip Self-Extractor ***ZD Shareware Awards Finalist***
Extract Yourself From ZIP Confusion

2DO
Reviewed by Timothy Campbell

2DO ("To Do") is a Windows application that carries the trademarked label of "Personal Task Manager." It can help you organize your busy schedule and nag you when it's time to work on something important.

Each item of work is called a "Task." You can assign a title and priority to each task, and specify the date and time when it is due to be completed. Tasks can be classified by type, and you can associate

them with a list of people (known as "contacts") who are necessary to carry out the task.

2DO's most important window is the "To Do List." This summarizes all your tasks, sorted by Date, Priority, Title, Type, or Contacts. Adding a task to the list is easy: Simply click on the "Add Task" button on the tool bar to call up a New Task dialog window. In addition to the task characteristics already mentioned, the dialog lets you set up tasks that are repeated at specific times: daily, weekly, once every other month, and so on. (The author has provided a wide range of repetition cycles.)

You can configure the To Do List to display only those items that you consider significant, so you could have a To Do List that shows only task title and the day of the week. You can also filter the list to show only those tasks that are recurring, single-event, unscheduled, or overdue. With 2DO, you can maintain an unlimited number of To Do Lists, which means you can have a separate schedule for each of your employees or for each project.

While the term "user-friendly" may be overused in product reviews, 2DO goes a long way toward achieving that goal. It tries to mimic the way we think about tasks, avoiding the computer-oriented mentality of some scheduler programs. For example, when you set a starting or ending date, you can type in the specific date (e.g., 02/10/95), or select "Today," "Tomorrow," or "Friday." When setting a time, you can type the specific time, or click on "Start of Day," "End of Day" (both of which are configurable), or "Current" (i.e., Now), or select from a list of times spaced 30 minutes apart (or whatever duration you choose).

2DO further demonstrates its friendliness by letting a task go overdue. Some schedulers blithely assume that a task is completed once its due date is past, but 2DO retains the task on the To Do List and flags it as "backlogged."

After you have completed a task and checked it off, 2DO moves it to the Trash Can, which is easily accessed by clicking on an icon. When you empty the Trash Can, any recurring tasks are recycled back to the To Do List, with the completion date and time reset. You can either delete one-time tasks or save them to a "Finished Tasks" folder. You can have a different folder for each type of task. For example, you could create a folder for each of your customers, which would let you instantly call up a log of the work you have done for a client.

2DO version 1.2B was written by William P. Anderson of Kirkland, Wash. Considering the power, style, and friendliness of this program, the $30 U.S. registration price is most reasonable.

DOWNLOAD INFORMATION
COMPUSERVE: GO PBSAPP, Library 6 (PIMs), and search for **2DO.ZIP**
PRODIGY: [JUMP] ZIFFNET and Select Software Library, then "Search by Title"

Main Reviews Page

2Do - THISWEEK.2DO

File **Utility** **Window** **Help**

To Do List

		Priority	Date	Time	Title
▭	🕐	Normal	4/25/95	10:00 AM	ZiffNet Conference
▭		Low	4/25/95	12:30 PM	Lunch w/ Preston
▭		High	4/25/95	7:00 PM	Finish E-Menu Proposal
▭		Medium	4/26/95	10:00 AM	Meet with Software Group
▭	🕐	High	4/26/95	12:30 PM	Lunch with W. Gates
▭		Normal	4/26/95	7:00 PM	PTA Meeting

Trash Can   Router

Tomorrow

8:30 AM	
9:00	
9:30	
10:00	Meet with Software Gro
10:30	
11:00	
11:30	
12:00 PM	
12:30	Lunch with W. Gates

Ready   Tue 4/25/95   9:41 AM

AnyView Professional
Reviewed by J.W. Olsen

Sometimes the best shareware products blossom into conventional retail counterparts. But sometimes Fate also shines by handing us a highly popular and powerful retail product on the proverbial silver platter. This is one of those times. At an attractive $40, AnyView Professional 1.1 from Binar Graphics provides most Microsoft Windows 3.1 users with video features designed into the forthcoming Windows 95 operating system, plus other video and memory optimization tricks of its own that you won't want to live without. The exact features that are available depend upon your video card. AnyView supports most popular cards, exploiting their more esoteric features when possible. (Still, be sure to check BOARDSUP.TXT, a file found within this product's archive, before installation. The range of supported cards is sufficiently extensive that we're unable to list them in this review.) AnyView also requires that you run Windows in Enhanced Mode, as you probably already do.

The program's most obvious capability is virtually instantaneous switching of resolution and color depth without restarting Windows. A mouse click on AnyView's floating toolbar switches resolution or depth. You also can associate resolution and depth with individual Windows applications. For example, when you are tackling the day's E-mail, you automatically do so in 640x480 mode with 16 colors to reduce time and ease eye strain; when you switch to your graphics application to work on an image, you're in 24-bit 1,024x768 mode. At the same time, you'll appreciate a discernible increase in the speed at which screens are displayed. Further, you can color-calibrate your video and color-match it to the tones of a printed image.

If your hardware supports the following, you can also have a larger virtual desktop than your screen and can zoom into any area of it. The zoom feature is invoked by clicking an AnyView icon. The virtual desktop is automatic: Move your mouse cursor off the screen on a spreadsheet and AnyView moves the display accordingly. If you have EPA Energy Star and VESA DPMS-compliant video, AnyView will provide an energy-saver mode.

As a bonus, AnyView also optimizes Windows memory, so you can run more simultaneous tasks with the same amount of RAM. And if that still is sufficient to grab your attention, a click on Recover Lost Memory frees stray bits of memory that prior tasks failed to return to the pool, making them now available for other tasks.

Some downsides were encountered during testing, such as occasional odd placement of desktop icons, minor color shifts, and less-sharp fonts when switching resolution. Also, some characters oddly were inaccessible in certain circumstances. Lastly, some programs--such as Microsoft Word 6.0a--refused to recognize a change in resolution when switching modes after the application was invoked. This problem didn't appear when we switched modes before running the app or when we associated it with a mode via AnyView.

Overall, AnyView Professional may be the closest thing yet to a free lunch for those of us who need to manipulate Windows video characteristics on the fly, with memory optimization tossed into the deal. You no longer need to await Windows 95 to benefit from an immediate productivity boost available to you today.

DOWNLOAD INFORMATION

COMPUSERVE: GO PBSUTIL, Library 11 (System Utils - WIN), and search for **AVPRO.ZIP**
PRODIGY: [JUMP] ZIFFNET and Select Software Library, then "Search by Title"

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As You Like It
Reviewed by Thom Foulks

As You Like It is a Windows program that makes reading text onscreen easier. If Shakespeare were alive today, he'd probably enjoy using As You Like It (AYLI for short), which takes its name from the freeform romantic comedy The Bard wrote in 1600. Like the play, this text-display software lets you make of it pretty much what you want.

This isn't a product to simply scroll ASCII text on your screen. Each of the more than 200 classics published with the AYLI system has been formatted so that the text can fit your screen as you like it. You can pick your own fonts and sizes for the text, chapter headings, titles, authors, and emphasized words. You can read books in 1- or 2-page format, and change line and paragraph spacing, margins, justification, and just about anything else that affects onscreen appearance. You can read with page control keys or a mouse.

When you take a break from reading, you don't have to stick in a bookmark--AYLI remembers where you stopped, so you'll return to the same settings and page when you resume. If two or more members of the family are reading the same book, you can create individual icons for each so that their preferred settings stay in place. Clicking on their icon brings everything back as they like it.

Also, you don't have to store large ASCII files on your hard drive (the ASCII text of Moby Dick is more than a megabyte) because AYLI stores files compressed to less than one-third of ordinary text. Additions to AYLI in version 1.2 include a search function, annotations, and more color support.

AYLI was developed by the Ars Longa Group, Ltd., which is adding more classics to its list all the time. A list comes in this download; the list is updated frequently at the firm's World Wide Web home page on the Internet (URL address: http:/ /www.portal.com/~skip/ayli.html). The download version's sample is the Sherlock Holmes mystery "A Study In Scarlet." Eight other Holmes mysteries are currently available for Internet download, WITHOUT registration.

To help you learn about its hypertext system, AYLI uses tools named after members of television's "Happy Days" family--Howard, Marian, Fonzie, Richie, and Joanie. Each tool has its own icon so that you can follow it through a tour of the AYLI library.

Let's look over Howard's shoulder as he browses the first page of the library. It starts with a 640x480 VGA display whose window you can to your preferences. You see two pages. On the left are options to list all the books by title, author, or category. On the right is the list itself. Howard decides the text font is a little small, so he keys the + (plus) key, and the font immediately becomes larger. The - (minus) key has the opposite effect.

Clicking on the "Books by Category" line changes the display so that the options become such categories as Adventures, Philosophy, or Humor-Satire-Science. On the right is a description of the books available within that category. Clicking on the "Humor" hypertext link brings Howard a list of books by Mark Twain, Christopher Morley, and Charles Darwin.

Fonzie and Richie are reading Sherlock Holmes, but Richie is reading faster, so they have separate personal icons. Marian, using a fancier font, is browsing the poetry titles showing books by authors such as John Milton, William Wordsworth, and Edna St. Vincent Millay. Joanie is in the "(Mostly) For Kids" area, looking at books by Charles Dickens, Lewis Carroll, Gene Stratton-Porter, and others. Simply browsing the titles will show you a rich list of classics available for AYLI, including--of course-- all the works of Shakespeare, such as the original "As You Like It" (source of the "All the world's a stage..." speech).

Registration of As You Like It is $20, or $15 for students, teachers, and senior citizens. It's a

bargain, because it brings you not only the current version of AYLI but the next one as well. Customize your copy with a personalized dedication inside; you could even give the program as a gift. If you choose, additional books will be shipped to you by floppy disk ($2 per disk), or you can download them for free off the Internet. Once you register, you'll get free support via mail, online services, or telephone, and you'll receive a periodic newsletter detailing the latest titles available.

DOWNLOAD INFORMATION
COMPUSERVE: GO PBSEDU, Library 12 (EBooks, and search for **AYLI.ZIP**
PRODIGY: [JUMP] ZIFFNET and Select Software Library, then "Search by Title"

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Crypto 95

Reviewed by Russ Lockwood

If your brain is in need of a workout, John Allen's Crypto 95 may be just the Windows puzzle game to clear away the cobwebs. The game places a number of coded quotes from famous people upon the screen. Your task is to break the codes and decipher the quote.

Crypto 95 version 1.0 uses a simple cryptogram formula, where one letter always stands for another. The jumble of letters makes no sense until you start to experiment by substituting one letter for another. As you plug in letters, sometimes using the force of logic and other times making sheer guesses, the program automatically makes the substitutions throughout the puzzle.

For example, if you see a single letter all by itself in the middle of a quote, you can be reasonably certain that the one-letter word will be either "I" or "A." However, the letter in the code will be a substitute letter like a "Q." When you type in "I" for the letter "Q," every instance where the letter "Q" appears will immediately change into "I." If you change your mind, and want to insert "A" instead of "I," there is an Undo button to erase the last letter substitution. (Note: You will use this undo feature a lot!)

As you fill in letters, the quote starts to make sense. It becomes more like playing "Wheel of Fortune" than code breaking, but the result is the same as you lock in more and more letters. A row of buttons under the code displays one letter per button. Quite cleverly, a letter remains capitalized when unused and still available to plug into the code, but becomes lower case if you have already used it in the code.

Special buttons help you along. One called "Find E" automatically tells you the number of occurrences of a specific letter in the code. Since "E" is the most common letter used in English, this feature lets you pop the letter "E" into the puzzle with a reasonable chance that you are on your way to breaking the code. "Find T" and "Find A" buttons are also available.

Another shortcut is pattern matching, where you can see letter combinations in a word that might give you a clue to the word. For example, if you have a four-letter word and the middle two letters are "E," you can call up the pattern-matching feature and peruse the contents of the dictionary. It will show "MEET," "FEET," and other words to choose from. Crypto 95 contains 14 libraries of pattern-matching words. Sometimes it helps, sometimes it doesn't.

Crypto's interface does not follow standard Windows design, i.e., scroll bars, pop-up dialog boxes, and such. That does not in any way diminish the game play or the clever quotes, but it is not what you'd expect from a Windows interface.

Crypto 95 provides 100 quotes from luminaries such as Shakespeare, Groucho Marx, Sherlock Holmes, Mark Twain, and Jimmy Carter. It is a 105K download that expands to 300K on your hard drive. Registration costs $5 per additional 100 quotes. The quotes are mildly amusing, the tools at your disposal make codebreaking digitally painless, and your brain will enjoy the workout.

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CRYPTO 95

KDDK P DAMJOTJH Q AJTZ DS KWHJ KQBPTJ ZDWKU XQHPJM
BLPKU PK BLJ MJQ, QKH RJKB QKH MQB HDRK DK BLJPO
DBLJM BD EJJF BLJC SODC AJPKU MBDXJK. ~~ CQOE BRQPK

TYPE IN

ENCRYPT

y. Notice that all the J - to - E substitutions were made for you. Now let's find T.
 FIND T. CRYPTO 95 will do a letter frequency analysis to find the most likely candidates.

---- - ---E--E- - -E-- -- ---E -----E ----- ----E-
----- -- --E -E-, --- -E-- --- --- ---- -- --E--
---E- -- -EE- --E- ---- -E--- ----E-. ~~ ---- -----

CLEAR

UNDO

| B | C | D | e | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N | O | P | Q | R | S | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z | - |

FREQUENCY ANALYSIS

| D E | FIND T | FIND A | FIND TH |

PATTERN MATCHING

| IOVE | ADD | PRIOR | NEXT |

MOST LIKELY LETTERS REPRESENTING E

English	Cryptogram
E	J 20
	K 18
	H 8
	U 6
	L 5

FILE

RANDOM

SELECT

USER

Rock Man

Reviewed by Russ Lockwood

Despite the crude graphics and superhero-sounding title, Soleau Software's is not an arcade shoot-'em-up, but a sophisticated puzzle game you can play with one hand tied behind your back. The 15 puzzles included in the shareware version range from simple to complex and take from seconds to minutes to solve.

You see, Rock Man is a miner with an aptitude, not an attitude. He manipulates rocks, ropes, and occasionally a pickax in a precise sequence to create a path to freedom. Along the way, he must grab pink moths, avoid avalanches and lava, and cross bridges to get to the next puzzle. Forget about demons, zap-o-matic lasers, and other arcade bric-a-brac--Rock Man is a game for logic power, not firepower.

If this sounds familiar, you are absolutely correct. Soleau created and released a shareware game called Loader Larry in the spring of 1994. The puzzle premise and solutions are virtually identical--so much so that Rock Man could be called Loader Larry II.

This is a classic-style arcade game, where the objective is more important than the sounds, graphics, and firepower. That's precisely what makes this game entertaining. You can take your time discovering the solution. If you get trapped, you can immediately start the puzzle over again with a single keypress. While avalanches from above and lava from below pose some threat, your skillful manipulation of movable rocks keeps Rock Man intact. The nature of the puzzles is very compelling; as soon as you get hit by an avalanche, you'll be pressing the key to re-start the game.

Indeed, if there's one nit to pick, it's that gravity applies to Rock Man, but not to the rocks that float in the air. You can fall off a ledge, but the rocks remain floating. Go figure.

This is a quick 199K download and takes up only 362K on your hard drive. Registration is $12 and gains you 20 additional puzzles. Fortunately, Rock Man's potential to perplex and entertain is in inverse proportion to its minuscule size. Your fingers have wasted enough nasties, and this game helps you avoid wasting your mind. Rock Man offers a peaceful change of pace from the usual frenetic firefights and is well worth a try.

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SkyMap

Reviewed by Timothy Campbell

SkyMap 2.2 brings the heavens to Windows and OS/2! This beautiful planetarium program creates maps of the sky, showing stars, planets, comets, asteroids, galaxies, and so on. The shareware version's database contains more than 15,000 denizens of the night sky.

The program will be useful to amateur stargazers and even serious astronomers, but you can have fun exploring the cosmos even if you don't know a nebula from a black hole. Aficionados of astrology may find SkyMap helpful, too, since it can depict the planets and constellations from any place on Earth, for any date between 4,000 B.C. and 8,000 A.D.

SkyMap makes it easy to zero in on the information you want. If you spot something that looks interesting, just click on it with your mouse to get more information. On the other hand, if you aren't interested in a particular class of objects, you can temporarily eliminate them from view. If you wish, you can zoom in on a particular area of the sky for a closer look. SkyMap can also draw a line showing the movement of near-space objects (planets, comets, and asteroids). Once you've got the precise view you want, you can print out a high-quality map on almost any printer; even a 9-pin dot matrix printer produced good results.

To set up the program, just run INSTALL.EXE from the Program Manager; the process is quick and smooth. However, a warning is in order: SkyMap performs a lot of calculations, so if you are using a computer with only modest number-crunching power, the program can take a long time to start up. For example, it takes about a minute to initialize on a 33MHz 386, and during that time there is no indication of progress. Since the program starts up in a maximized state, you might think that your machine has seized up, whereas it's actually just very busy working out where everything is. If you have an older machine, it helps to have a math coprocessor--it'll make the program run about 10 times faster. SkyMap can run in 16-color mode, but you should have at least a 256-color driver to fully appreciate it.

Professional astronomers will be impressed by SkyMap's accuracy. For example, planetary positions have a mean error of less than half a second of arc, with corrections for aberration and diurnal parallax. Star positions are adjusted for proper motion, precession, aberration, and refraction. The program can also predict the view you will obtain with a particular telescope and eyepiece.

SkyMap was created by Chris Marriott of Cheshire, in the United Kingdom. Standard registration in North America is U.S. $39. This includes a database of 88,000 objects. A heftier version, with 259,000 objects (and the capability to read the Hubble Star Guide Catalog CD-ROM) is $49. In the United Kingdom, the prices are 20 and 25 pounds, respectively. There are special order forms for Denmark, France, Norway, Japan, Sweden, and a host of other registration methods.

You don't need a space ship or a telescope to go star-tripping. Just boot up your computer, and SkyMap will take you on a journey through the universe!
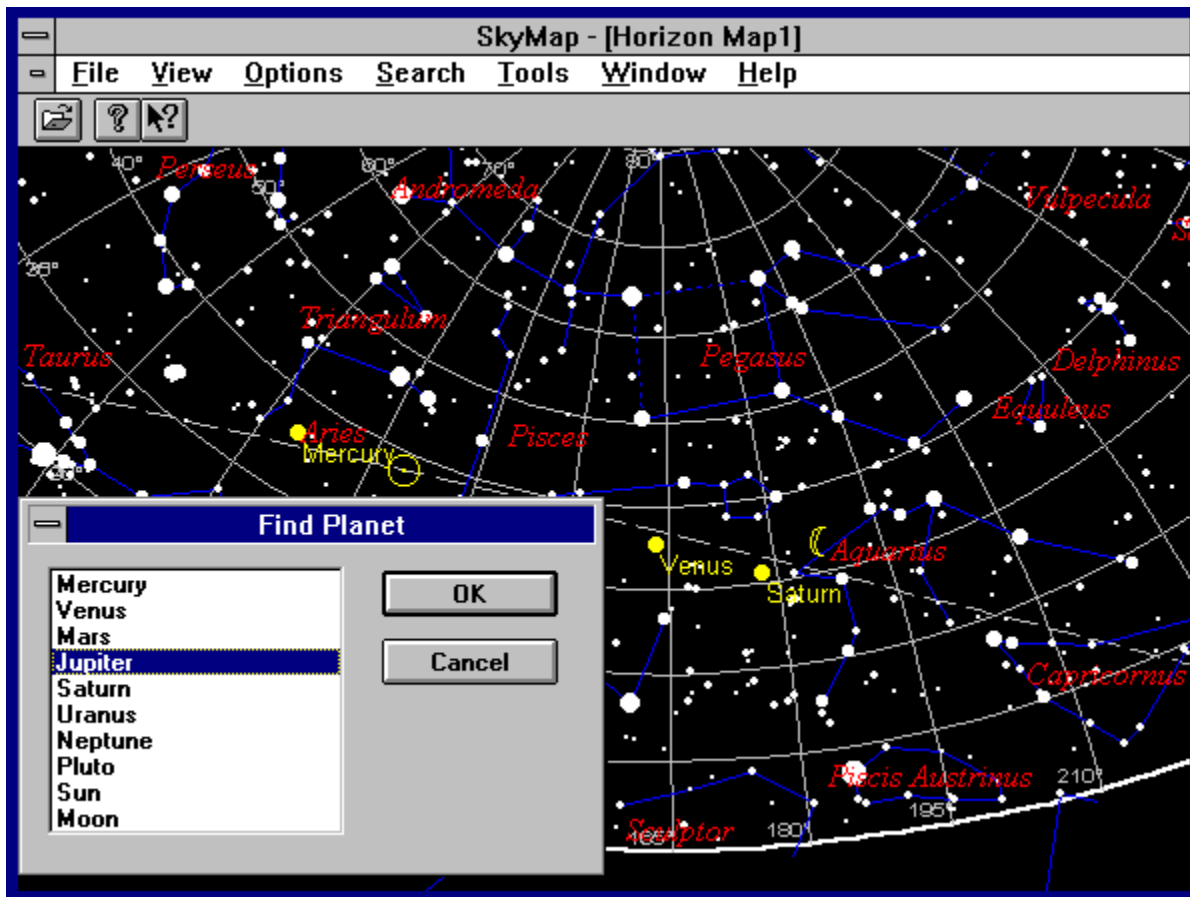
DOWNLOAD INFORMATION
COMPUSERVE: GO PBSHOME, Library 11 (Science), and search for **SKYMAP.ZIP**
PRODIGY: [JUMP] ZIFFNET and Select Software Library, then "Search by Title"

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SmartTracker Videos

Reviewed by David D. Busch

Movie buffs, film or video collectors, hobbyists, schools, libraries, and video-store operators will find SmartTracker Videos an essential tool for managing videotapes. Video titles, stars, ratings, and dozens of other facts can be cataloged, then used to search for titles that satisfy your craving for action features, weepy melodramas, or screwball comedies.

This Windows-based program has built-in fields and pull-down lists for just about any category of information you'd care to track. Most of them are optional if you want to spend a lot of time entering data. However, a few minutes updating your database each time you purchase a new video or laserdisc will reward you with a treasure-trove of fascinating information and statistics.

There's space for the title of the film, up to four leading actors or actresses, producer, director, and studio. You can enter the year the film was released, play time, and a reference number to help you locate each video quickly. Serious collectors will appreciate the ability to specify formats (letterboxed, scanned, matted, etc.) and enter recording speed and whether noise reduction, surround sound, or close captioning is included. Home tapers can log the counter start and end marks for cassettes that contain several items.

For most video buffs, the meat-and-potatoes information will include the category, ratings, and keywords data. A pull-down lists lets you choose from Action/Adventure, Drama, Horror, Musicals, Science Fiction, and 12 other categories. You may add your own if, for example, you collect films and videos about baseball, food, or another topic. Two ratings columns are available for both MPAA G through X designations and your own personal evaluation (in stars, or using descriptive terms of your choice--Total Flop to Excellent). Type in a personalized series of keywords, and describe the film in a few choice sentences, if you wish.

When you're hungering for a particular type of film, use SmartTracker's searching capabilities to scan through the database using any combination of the parameters you've entered. Search by title, a specific actor or actress, or get really picky and hunt for only Oscar-nominated PG-13 films in the Comedy category. SmartTracker produces a list of videos you can examine more closely by double-clicking on the title.

If you'd rather have a printed report, you can ask for several types of printouts, sorted by title, year, category, rating, or other criteria. SmartTracker has six different built-in reports which summarize characteristics of your collection. Several will be of interest to video-store owners and libraries, as they list total number of copies, list prices, and other sales information. In fact, if SmartTracker could track individual rentals or loans, it would be an excellent all-purpose retail or library program.

Most of the fields are customizable, right down to the colors used to display SmartTracker's windows. Users outside the United States can enter their own country's film-rating system. Personal ratings can include any descriptive terms you like, and SmartTracker makes it easy to create personalized reports that detail any information you happen to be interested in. Data can be imported or exported as comma-delimited ASCII files for manipulation in your favorite spreadsheet or database program.

This utility is an invaluable tool for anyone who owns more than a dozen or so videos. Registration is just $25, and brings you information about other SmartTracker modules that can be used for inventory, books, and stamp or coin collections.

DOWNLOAD INFORMATION
COMPUSERVE: GO PBSHOME, Library 4 (Collecting), and search for **TKV.ZIP**
PRODIGY: [JUMP] ZIFFNET and Select Software Library, then "Search by Title"

 Main Reviews Page

ViaBase

Reviewed by Timothy Campbell

ViaBase 1.4 is a fine database for Windows, the essentials of which can be mastered in a matter of minutes. The key to ViaBase's ease of use is its "drag and drop" design, which lets you define the database structure as you use it, rather than forcing you to use a specific layout selected at the outset.

The "drag and drop" procedure works like this: You enable "design mode" for a new or existing database by selecting Lock Design (hotkey: Ctrl-K), then select Add Field (Ctrl-F). This displays a generic field in the upper left corner of the window. Using your mouse, you move this to its correct position, taking advantage of the "snap to grid" feature for precise alignment. You may alter or eliminate the field label using a "click and type" technique.

You can then specify what kind of input field you want, using the Field Settings option (Ctrl-L). ViaBase lets you select the colors and fonts used by each field. Each database you design can contain up to 50 fields with all the standard field types (character, numeric, date and note), plus some types that are less frequently supported, such as picture, sound, formula and list. Picture and sound fields are actually links to separate files.

Only one aspect of ViaBase is not immediately intuitive. The labels associated with each input field are surrounded by what appear to be resizing boxes, such as are used in most page-design programs. As you position your arrow cursor over each of these boxes, you quickly realize that the only one that has any function (as shown by a change in the cursor) is the box that controls the length of the input field. There is no obvious way to use the other boxes, except as alignment guides. If you wish to increase the size of the field label, you must pad it with spaces. While this seems a bit inconsistent at first, it quickly becomes second nature.

This is a minor quibble, since all other operations are obvious. It would be helpful, though, if ViaBase had more import and export facilities, which are currently limited to ASCII files. The native database format is "VBF," so in order to export to another program, you may require an ASCII conversion utility, such as the commercial Monarch program or the shareware package Parse-O-Matic (PAR.ZIP), available in the Software Library.

ViaBase comes with seven sample databases, each of which highlights a different capability of the program. The examples include customer, contact, and invoicing systems (with built-in calculations); repositories for sounds, music, and pictures; and a freeform database.

Installation is straightforward: Just expand the ZIP file into a separate directory (named, say, VIABASE) and add the program to a Windows group. Detailed installation instructions are included in the file. ViaBase requires the support module VBRUN300.DLL; if you don't have this, you can download it from the Software Library.

ViaBase was created by Casey Butler of Viable Software Alternatives, located in Las Vegas. Single-user registration is $49.95 (U.S. dollars) in North America, direct from the author's company, or about 44 pounds via the author's European agent. Shipping and applicable taxes are included in both these prices. Registered users obtain information about updates and other programs, technical support, and a 50 percent discount on the author's ViaPrint program, which you can use in conjuction with ViaBase to print labels and badges.

DOWNLOAD INFORMATION
COMPUSERVE: GO PBSAPP, Library 5 (Database), and search for **VBASE.ZIP**
PRODIGY: [JUMP] ZIFFNET and Select Software Library, then "Search by Title"

 Main Reviews Page

ViaBase!

Create Colorful Custom Databases...

My Relatives and What They Owe Me...

Name: Anne Jones

Address: 9399 Beverly Heights Court

City: Los Angeles

State: CA   **Zip Code:** 93454

Country:

BirthDate: Jul 23 45

Relationship: Spouse   Add

Notes: I'll never see it, of course, but may as well keep track.

Owes Me:
$109,000.00

Interest Rate:
3

Amount of Interest
$3,270.00

Total For Me:
$112,270.00

WinZip Self-Extractor
Reviewed by Timothy Campbell

The WinZip Self-Extractor 1.0 (or WINZIPSE) is a Windows utility that, with the assistance of an archiver program such as WinZip or PKZIP, compresses a set of files and places them into an executable (EXE) program file. When the EXE file is run, the original files are placed in a destination directory.

Most compression utilities (such as PKZIP and LHA) can create self-extracting archives, but WINZIPSE adds two important benefits: It will suggest an installation directory (which the user can override), and it can run one of the archived programs when decompression is complete.

Therefore, you can create a file named MYPROG.EXE, which contains all the program, documentation, and data files required by your software product. When the user runs MYPROG from Windows' Program Manager, he will have the opportunity to pick a target directory or use the one you recommend. The decompression procedure can display a short message (512 bytes) as the files are copied to disk. Afterward, a setup or configuration program can start up, or the main program can be launched.

Without WINZIPSE, installation can be messy. The user downloads an archive file, drops to DOS, runs an extractor such as PKUNZIP, then visually scans the directory listing for something that looks important; SETUP.EXE or INSTALL.EXE are typical names. Some shareware authors attempt to make things easier by including an introductory file named READ.ME, README.TXT, or some variation on that theme. However, users learn from experience that READ.ME files often contain a lot of extraneous information, so they sometimes ignore them and forge ahead blindly, leading to confusion and botched installations.

One common setup problem involves subdirectories. If a user runs an unarchiver such as PKUNZIP without the correct settings, all the files will be dumped into the same directory. With WINZIPSE, you can preserve the original directory structure and restore it automatically.

A self-extracting EXE file created by WINZIPSE is a bit larger than a straight ZIP file, but considering the size of Windows programs these days--1MB files are becoming quite common--the extra 12K is a small price to pay.

The online help is marred by a few typographical errors, but its content can not be faulted. It explains in simple language what an archive file is, what a ZIP file is, why you would want to create an archive, and how WINZIPSE addresses various problems encountered by neophytes.

WINZIPSE version 1.0 was created by Nico Mak Computing of Bristol, Conn. Single-user registration is $49; a license for five workstations is $199, a relative bargain. It works well with Nico Mak's popular WinZip application, which can create and decompress standard ZIP files. Both WINZIPSE and WinZip are compatible with the industry-standard PKZIP version 2.04G from PKWare.

If you're a shareware author, it's tough to find fault with WINZIPSE. It provides the user with a pure Windows approach to installation. By sidestepping DOS entirely, it will surely reduce the number of support calls you receive from distraught and befuddled customers.

DOWNLOAD INFORMATION
COMPUSERVE: GO PBSUTIL, Library 3 (File Utilities), and search for **WZIPSE.ZIP**
PRODIGY: [JUMP] ZIFFNET and Select Software Library, then "Search by Title"

Main Reviews Page

Action Games Roundup: *The Quick and The Dead*
By Russ Lockwood

There are only two types of action game players: the quick and the dead. That doesn't mean such games are devoid of brainpower prerequisites--just that the key to victory lies in rapid reflexes, not intense analysis. Most action games grab their inspiration from either coin-operated arcade games or cartridge games for Nintendo, Sega, or other home systems. Yet the very best of these games go beyond simple imitation: They take full advantage of the capabilities of the PC, stretching graphics, animation, and music to create pure bedlam on your screen. Moreover, with the proper modem or network connection, you can even challenge friends and co-workers to risk digital life and limb.

With this in mind, we've gathered the five top shareware action games. They all run from DOS, take up megabytes of space on your hard drive, and require a hefty amount of RAM on your system. A faster system means better performance. These games offer considerable challenge, feature amazing graphics, provide exceptional replay value, and would be worthy additions to your computer. They are the most discussed, most appreciated, and most played of all the shareware games: Descent, DOOM, Heretic, One Must Fall: 2097, and Rise of the Triad.

Descent
CompuServe: GO PBSARC, Library 3 (Action Games), and search for **DSCENT.ZIP**
Prodigy: [JUMP] ZIFFNET and Select Software Library, then "Find a Specific Title"

Interplay's Descent sends you into sci-fi mines in search of hostages and robots. This 3-D shoot-'em-up offers true wraparound reality, so you twist (pitch and yaw) in any direction as tunnels spiral up and down in all directions--some even double back underneath you. Great graphics, fierce fighting, and considerable chair gyrations make it exciting and aerobic.

You're in the cockpit of the Pyro-GX space fighter, a compact cocoon of destruction sporting the latest in life-threatening lasers and missiles. As a freelance flyer for Post Terran Minerals Corporation, you're called in to crush a robot rebellion in the deep-space mines--just the type of corporate crisis that requires an overqualified, Type A, terminator personality like yourself.

Traveling around in three dimensions poses a whole new set of problems. As corridors branch, twist, and drop you into polyhedron rooms, it's very easy to get disoriented. Add in wild whirls and perilous pirouettes as you shoot your way out of numerous ambushes, and you'll soon be adding your own vocals to the technobeat music.

The graphics offer brilliant futuristic tunnels and rooms. The robots use polygon technology, overlaid with vibrant digitized explosions when you destroy them. You can shoot out computerized wall panels, which both satisfies destructive lust and acts as a trail of bread crumbs in case you get lost.

The game's map is a 3-D wireframe drawing that you can rotate in any direction. That truly takes time to comprehend--and you'll zoom and rotate extensively to figure out your location and heading.

As you try to fulfill your mission, you'll come across secret doors, color-coded keys for locked doors, invisibility devices (cloaking technology), bigger and badder weaponry, and refills for ammo

(power crystals) and health (shields and hull integrity). Registration provides 30 additional levels, deadlier robot enemies, meaner weaponry, and network and modem multiplayer modes.

DOOM

Id Software's DOOM is THE three-dimensional, in-yer-face, tour de force of mayhem and mutants in a spaceport of the future. Fast scrolling graphics, mind-altering mazes, and a blastomatic pace will keep you glued to the carnage for hours.

There's not much of a plot to DOOM. From the moment you start in the hangar, your mission is simple: search and destroy. Either kill the demons and mutated guards or be killed by them. Better still, you start with a miserable pistol, no armor, and no idea how to make it through buildings such as the nuclear plant, toxic refinery, and command center. Not to worry, though: You'll find plenty of armor and weaponry laying about, not to mention medical kits, healing potions, and the all-important access keys. The bad guys are so sloppy!

Your first-person perspective shows your hands holding a pistol, shotgun, chaingun, or other weapon. When firing, you need only line up the enemy on the horizontal plain--whether they're above or below you makes little difference. For example, shooting at a guard directly in front of you is no more difficult than taking aim at a mutant on a balcony, even though the two are at different heights on the screen.

DOOM doesn't carry a movie-style rating, but you should consider it on par with PG-13 films. When you fire at a demon, the body rips open as the slugs hit, then the corpse falls to the ground. Compared to "Rambo" or "Pulp Fiction," it's pretty tame, but "The Little Mermaid" it's not.

With the action so fast and furious, the controls are pleasantly simple. Use the cursor keys to move around, the Ctrl key for firing, and the space bar to activate gizmos or open doors. The numeric keys let you change weapons, and the function keys let you quick-save and restore games. All in all, DOOM's keyboard interface is a slick one.

DOOM offers five degrees of difficulty. (The middle one--Hurt Me Plenty--is the default, but until you get used to the decor whizzing by at high speed, take it down a notch.) Registration provides additional levels, weapons, and monsters, plus the ability to run user-created levels (known in the shareware world as "WADs"), thus extending the game's play value.

Heretic

Raven Software's Heretic offers the sword-and-sorcery version of DOOM, with wizards, golems, axe-wielding warriors, and spells aplenty. There's no real swordplay (sorry, you Conan wannabes out there), but the cartographic puzzles will amaze and entrance you.

Since Heretic uses the same 3-D engine as DOOM, expect the same speedy graphics response when walking or running through the corridors. The graphics tend to be drab at the start: Stone walls tend to lull you into distraction. Yet as you work your way through this opening nine-level episode, City of the Damned, color seeps onto your screen. Included are massive wooden beams, polished marble pedestals, Tudor-styled houses, and the most radiant texture ever: stained glass windows.

As in DOOM, you'll find crushing ceilings, death pits, and other damage-causing locations, but give Raven credit for creating other terrain effects. Some waterways now contain currents that will sweep you downstream. One pond mimicks swirling winds that move you like a drunken sailor. If something

falls into the water, you see splashes. You can pivot your view (and firing arc) 45 degrees up and down--something to keep in mind when firing up at balconies or down stairways. These touches make Heretic more graphically impressive than DOOM.

The monsters come in a variety of magical flavors, and you can almost pick out their DOOM equivalents. The bright-red winged demons sure act like the flaming skulls. The axe-tossing warriors sure seem like Hell Barons; they're not as tough, but they're quicker. Pale-yellow golems, like DOOM's pink demons, try to pound you into putty. Yet a one-for-one substitution oversimplifies Heretic's ingenuity. Some flying demons burp fireballs like imps, and a golem occasionally transforms into an electric yellow creature firing blazing skulls.

Heretic offers five levels of difficulty, and registration expands the game to a full 27 levels.

One Must Fall: 2097
CompuServe: GO PBSARC, Library 3 (Action Games), and search for **OMF.ZIP**
Prodigy: [JUMP] ZIFFNET and Select Software Library, then "Find a Specific Title"

Of the five, Epic's One Must Fall: 2097 comes closest to typical arcade action. This sideways-view robot kung-fu game pits two combatants in an arena where only one may survive standing. Punches, kicks, and a variety of "special" combinations make this a visually active and exciting game fit for the fastest fingers.

In the future, what we know as kickboxing is all the rage. However, instead of fragile humans entering the ring, human-controlled robots engage in mortal metal combat in the caged arena. You'll encounter a variety of heroes and villains as you fight your way to the top of the standings.

One Must Fall: 2097 contains one-shot matches as well as a tournament mode. The one-shot matches let you get a handle on the three different types of robots you may pilot and their special capabilities. The tournament mode lets you create your own personality and customize a robot in your quest to be champion. Every win provides prize money to repair damage and upgrade your systems. Of the two scenarios, the tournament mode is superior since you have a stake in winning and losing.

Split-second timing is needed to land kicks and punches. Of note are the "special" moves, like flying backkicks and judo throws that are sometimes unstoppable and oftentimes more lethal than the "normal" attacks. However, these special moves are generated by certain key combinations not stated in the shareware help, which almost forces you to register to get the strategy guide--a somewhat sneaky ploy. Your computer opponents have access to the special moves right off the bat, but when you see them in action, you're even more intrigued.

Two players may share the keyboard to play against each other--no need for modem hookups or a network. Controls are limited to cursor keys for movement and one key each for kick and punch. In tournament mode, you can increase your experience, which allows you to kick and punch faster and with more power.

Upon registration, you get additional robots, characters, and capabilities, including the aforementioned special attacks.

Rise of the Triad
CompuServe: GO PBSARC, Library 3 (Action Games), and search for **ROTT.ZIP**
Prodigy: [JUMP] ZIFFNET and Select Software Library, then "Find a Specific Title"

Apogee's Rise of the Triad ups the violence ante a bit with explicit 3-D carnage. The attention to visual detail is evident: Magical devices twirl and radiate, gunfire shatters glass windows, bullets pockmark the walls, and mini-trampolines bounce you over obstacles. Dizzying graphics, devious traps, dogged opponents, and diabolical puzzles may make this game too intense for your mental health.

As a lone scout for the high-risk United Nations Taskforce, you are on a recon mission to find (and presumably exterminate) a cult leader who threatens to kill millions of people. In order to succeed, you have to get past his Nazi-like minions and figure out some of the architectural enigmas. His fortress is beautifully rendered in multicolored 3-D splendor, and this game's special-effects trickery gets two thumbs-up. For example, circular stairsteps hover above the floor with no visible means of support, yet you can move over, under, and around them. Some lift and fall like an elevator, while others float about the buildings acting like an anti-gravity ferry.

You start with a pistol, but quickly expand your armament to include submachine guns, bazookas, heat-seeking missiles (!), and other weaponry. The bigger the weapon, the more graphic the on-screen carnage. Shoot an evil soldier with a pistol and you'll see a little blood, maybe even cause him to grab a shoulder in pain. Shoot him with the heat-seeking missile and you will obliterate him--but not before various body parts fly off in a variety of directions. No doubt such dismemberment will please many users, but more than a few are likely to cringe.

You'll pick up goodies such as food, gas masks, and armor, grab ankh medallions, and search for keys, switches, and hidden passageways. A multitude of circular trampolines catapults you skyward. Walk onto it and you bounce up and forward. Run onto it and you bounce forward even farther. Since the fortress is atop a cliff, it's possible to bounce right over the wall to your demise.

In modem/network play, you and your opponents can choose from several James Bond-ian characters. Registration gains you 30 levels, more weaponry, and adds four other characters (each with special abilities). A CD-ROM version and a network site license are available.

The Trophy

As we said at the beginning, all these games deserve at least temporary residence on your PC. But if you were stranded on the proverbial desert island with your computer and an eternal power supply, and you could have only one game on your hard drive, which one should it be? DOOM.
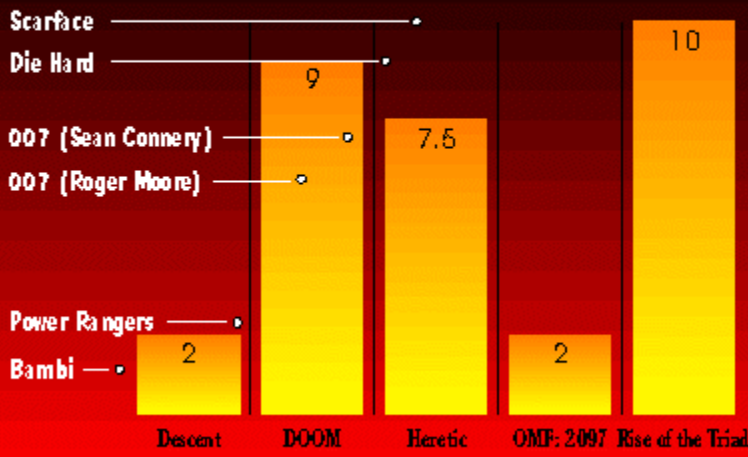

Although it's starting to show its age, you cannot begin to appreciate the other programs without playing the game that started the 3-D explosion. Even after you've played DOOM dozens of times, your pulse will still speed up when you hear the growl of a fireball-tossing imp around the next shadowy corner. And in multiplayer "DeathMatch" contests, few images can compete with the sight of a rocket being fired directly at you by a "friend." Should the time ever come when you have so totally maxed out on DOOM that you no longer find joy in the chainsaw, then try Descent: This dizzying, intense game pushes the 3-D envelope further than any other.
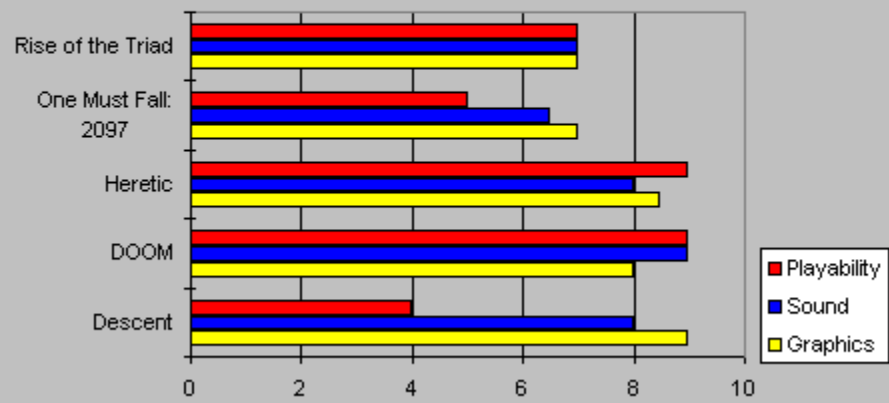
Let the mayhem commence!

THE CARNAGE FACTOR

Scarface
Die Hard
007 (Sean Connery)
007 (Roger Moore)
Power Rangers
Bambi

9
7.5
10
2
2

Descent   DOOM   Heretic   OMF: 2097   Rise of the Triad

ACTION GAMES
Roundup

Game	Playability	Sound	Graphics
Rise of the Triad	7	7	7
One Must Fall: 2097	5	6.5	7
Heretic	9	8	8.5
DOOM	9	9	8
Descent	4	8	9

Zips and Zaps is a monthly news and opinion column by Timothy Campbell, who has been writing shareware since 1986. In this column, Mr. Campbell presents his observations on computing, with particular emphasis on shareware and the online community. The opinions expressed in this column do not necessarily reflect those of ZShare or Ziff-Davis Interactive.

Our Best Pro File

In our continuing series of remarkable true tales from shareware professionals, we have this story from Patrick Birch (CompuServe/ZiffNet 74552,744):

```
     A friend of my mom's had just picked up one of those $1000
computer bargains and couldn't figure out how to use the mouse. On one
of my days off, I stopped by her house and tried to help out. "So,
what's the problem with the mouse?"

     "Well, I don't understand it."

     "It's fairly easy," I said consolingly.

     She picked up the mouse, put it on the monitor's screen and
complained, "I can't see what I'm clicking on!"
```

I wonder if this is the same woman who kept her backup diskettes handy by sticking them to a filing cabinet with a magnet.

Scamware

Back in 1992, a man claiming to be a shareware distributor (I'll call him Phil) asked if he could use my freeware file viewer (known as SEE) in a product he was putting together. I'm not psychic, but something about his tone made me ask, "Is this an MLM?"   Phil hemmed and hawed and said that, yes, it might be considered an MLM.

MLM (Multi-Level Marketing) is a perfectly legitimate way to build a sales force; I believe it's used by Amway, World Book and Britannica. But it's also used -- in a less than honest manner -- by people who are trying to mask a plan somewhat akin to a pyramid scheme.

A few days after the first call, Phil called me back to complain that his file had been kicked off the download lists on both CompuServe and GEnie. I'd been expecting as much.

That was a few years ago. Suddenly, though, I've encountered three different quasi-pyramid schemes in the space of one month -- and all of them claim to be shareware. So far, all of these gimmicks have one thing in common: whatever the product that is supposedly being sold (usually a bad shareware program, or evaluation disks of legitimate shareware), the actual thing being sold is dealerships. You're supposed to sign up dealers, take a cut of the sign-up fee, and spread the rest of the wealth further up the line of dealers.   I don't have room to explain all the pitfalls of this kind of thing, so I'll cover three good reasons why these things probably won't make you any real money.   I refer to these problems as pre-

saturation, pool depletion, and unverifiability.

Pre-saturation occurs because the founder of the plan widely distributes his sign-up package (hundreds or even thousands of copies), which means he's got a head start in getting dealers. One of the people who approached me with a pair of scamware packages said he downloaded them from the Internet! You can imagine how many people saw the original file from the person who started it.

Pool depletion is the basic downfall of all pyramidal plans. The problem is that such plans grow exponentially, rapidly reaching all the people who would be potential dealers, making it hard for you to find new participants.

Unverifiability means that these plans never define a method by which you can audit the mastermind at the top (who coordinates all the cash distribution), and you can't even be sure if all the other dealers aren't just alternative addresses for the head honcho.

Don't be fooled. If making money was as easy as sending out a few hundred letters via E-mail, we'd all be sipping mango juice on our yachts in the Caribbean.

So You Want to Be a Shareware Author?

Most would-be shareware authors have the following marketing plan: (A) Write a program (B) Do some other stuff. The results, predictably, are not encouraging. A lot of excellent programmers write marvelous programs, but when the program is sent out into the marketplace, it goes down in flames. But it doesn't have to be that way.

One nice thing about the shareware industry is that the star performers are almost always willing to help out new authors with advice. To compare this with the commercial software market, try phoning up Bill Gates for some marketing tips.

Since authors are such helpful people, wouldn't it be nice to sit in a big room with all the top authors and chat? Well, you'll be able to do just that if you attend the fifth annual Shareware Industry Conference (SIC), to be held from June 22 to 25, in Phoenix, Arizona. The conference, which is produced in cooperation with the three main shareware organizations (ASP, STAR and ESC) will feature a special "Newcomer's Track" -- a series of panel discussions that will explain what is involved in making a shareware product that sells. Some of the topics covered include "Preparing Your Distribution Version", "Hints from the Pros", and "Press Kit Mechanics" -- to mention just a few of the highlights.

Experienced authors will benefit from the "Business and Promotion Track", which features such topics as "Marketing in Multiple Channels", "Vertical Market Software", "Introduction to the Internet" and a discussion of the controversy surrounding patent infringements in the GIF file format. A "Programming Track" discusses current technical considerations, and will also cover upcoming developments in both Windows and OS/2.

Registration is only $75.00 U.S. Hotel accommodations are available at a special rate (as low as $69 per night). There are additional charges for special events, such as the Shareware Industry Awards Banquet ($25).

To register for the conference, contact FormGen Inc. In the USA, you can dial 1-800-263-2390. Outside the U.S., dial 905-857-4141. To arrange for a hotel room, call The Scottsdale Plaza Resort. A toll free number is available at 1-800-832-2025 for U.S. residents of the U.S. International callers can dial 602-948-5000. Be sure to mention that you are attending the conference to get the best rates.

This conference should not be confused with the Summer Shareware Seminar (SSS), which was held last year in conjunction with ONE BBSCON. A recent mailing describing this year's BBSCON made no mention of any events relating to shareware.

This Sounds Familiar

Diane Lewis, a friend of mine, is in the translation business. Trying to drum up some business,

she got on to the Internet, set up a home page, and started hanging out in the newsgroups dedicated to translators.   She volunteered to set up a list of people in the business, covering a wide variety of languages, so that everybody could pass along leads that they were not qualified to handle.   Share and share alike, right?

Within a week, Diane was receiving up to 50 E-mail letters per day.   For three months she coordinated all of this exciting traffic -- and didn't get a single job.   Nor did she set up any work for anybody.   What she did get was people asking her for work.   It appeared that the Internet was teeming with translators asking each other, "Do you have work?   Do you know where I can find some work? Got some work for me?   Hello?"

It occured to me that this sounds like an electronic version of The Gold Rush.   In those frantic times, people heard the call: "There's gold in them there hills!" and came from hither and yon, flooding sleepy little villages and turning them into boom towns almost overnight.   They found, to their dismay, that there was more gab than gold.   "The saloon keeper tells me he heard from a friend that his uncle's son-in-law knew a man who found a lump of gold as big as a horse!"

Still, there is some gold out there.   After three months (and some 1,500 letters), Diane finally got a solid lead to do some translation work for a company in Japan -- all via the Internet, and for top dollar, too!   Alas, the day before, she had received a 9-to-5 job offer from a local company, which she accepted. She'll try to do the Japan job in her spare time.   Meanwhile, the letters continue to arrive by the dozens. "Hi!   I can translate Spanish into Urdu!   Got any work for me?"

My personal experience, as a shareware author, is that the Internet doesn't produce much in the way of registrations.   I may be reaching thousands more people, but then, there are tens of thousands of distractions on the Internet.   My programs get lost in the relentless torrent of new software that arrives each day on the big distribution sites.   I feel like somebody standing atop a skyscraper, shouting into the wind: My voice travels further, but it's lost in the noise of the city below.

A Change of Pace

Next month, my column will be returning to the more news-oriented "This Month In Shareware" format.   If you know of any important news in the big wide world of shareware, drop me a line at 72241,2052 on CompuServe or ZiffNet.   (Via Internet, send to 72241.2052@compuserve.com)   I'd particularly like to hear from any shareware authors out there who are about to release the next DOOM. Well, maybe I'd better set my sights a little lower. Any new shareware development is worth talking about. All letters will be answered promptly.   Very promptly, in fact. You see, I've completed all the levels in DOOM.

William Soleau
Author of Rock Man, Ant Run, Bolo Adventures III

Author Profile

Name
William Soleau
Keywords
ARTISTIC, ROMANTIC, CREATIVE, ATHLETIC, DREAMER
Computer systems
Zeos 66 mhz, 16 meg Ram , 1.2 gig hard drive, Diamond Viper 2 meg.
Typical programming hours
You mean there are hours?
Favorite shareware program (not mine)
PKZIP
Favorite programming snack
True Blue's
Favorite music to program by
Classical: Faure, Hindemith, Stravinsky, Bach, Fine, Finzi
Marital status
Getting married this August. My fiancee and I have been together for over 10 years. She had me move the computer out of the apartment and into the office (my old apartment). Made me realize there is life beyond my keyboard...I think?
Last book read
The Greening of America by Charles A. Reich
Other hobbies/interests
Ballet choreography. (Actually, it's my other job). Also: Tennis, Tennis, Tennis, Chess
Favorite pizza
Vinny's Pizza on 63rd & Amsterdam Ave. Sausage..ahhhhhhh
Favorite movie
Casablanca
What kind of car do you drive?
1992 Toyota Camry (nice lines)
Favorite vacation spot
Saratoga, New York
Daytime job
In New York: Programmer
Out of New York: Ballet Choreographer
Predicted release data of Windows 95
GPF

The last place on earth anyone would find me
Bloomingdales
Words to live by
Breathe!

Biography

I began programming as a hobby in 1985 while still performing as a ballet dancer. My first few programs were uploaded to CompuServe and soon after I started receiving a lot of E-mail concerning my games.

As I began to create several more games and my programming skill increased, I began to see financial rewards as well. I stopped my active performing career eight years ago in order to devote more time to choreography. I have created ballets that can be seen in over 30 countries around the world on companies such as The Shanghai Ballet of China, The Icelandic Ballet, Ballet British Columbia, The Louisville Ballet, Ballet Florida, Ballet Austin and The Richmond Ballet.

At the same time, I found more time to program, which offered me a respite from my life within the arts. I started Soleau Software in 1992 with my business partner, Kevin Santee. The company is known for producing non-violent strategy logic games that appeal to a wide range of ages.

I've always enjoyed logic games. Usually I'd get hooked on one game and play it constantly until I either mastered it or became bored and moved onto another. As a programmer I found there was a lack of computer games that deal exclusively with basic problem solving and logic, compared to the endless number of adventure or shoot-'em-up games available. I do occasionally like to try blasting those incoming alien ships into oblivion. Yet over time the result is less satisfying for me than finding a solution to a simple logic puzzle. I decided, therefore, that my company would be known in the industry as a producer of this type of game.

In some ways, these non-competitive games help users develop problem-solving skills. The parents of children who play my games point to this fact over and over again. They see the games as a positive way for their children to have fun and perhaps learn something at the same time.

I've always been happiest when I can use both sides of my brain, and programming provides this other side for me. Though programming is more logical in approach and choreography more emotional, they present you with similar types of problems to solve. It is the tools which you use that are very different. The process of the creation is what has always interested me the most.

Soleau Software Games

Rock Man

Rock Man is a challenging logic/strategy game. Ingenuity is required for you to help Rock Man collect all the pink moths. Carefully position various rocks, ropes, and axes to work your way through the puzzle while avoiding dangerous lava rocks and disappearing bridges. The program comes with 15 puzzles; you receive 20 additional ones upon registration. Rock Man has a terrific demo, and provides plenty of options.

DOWNLOAD INFORMATION
COMPUSERVE: GO PBSARC, Library 13 (Puzzles/Logic), and search for **ROCKMN.ZIP**
PRODIGY: [JUMP] ZIFFNET and Select Software Library, then "Search by Title"

Bolo Adventures III

The object of Bolo Adventures, an arcade puzzle game with excellent graphics, is to get your man Bolo to the staircase in each of 20 maze-filled rooms. Obstacles include lasers, monsters, snakes, electric grills, and water hazards. Blocks, balls, and other equipment are placed in the rooms to aid in your quest. You'll solve some mazes quickly, others can take hours. If you get stumped, you can move on to the next floor. Thought process is more important here than fast reflexes.

DOWNLOAD INFORMATION
COMPUSERVE: GO PBSARC, Library 1 (Hot Off the Presses), and search for **BOLO3.ZIP**
PRODIGY: [JUMP] ZIFFNET and Select Software Library, then "Search by Title"

Ant Run

Race against the clock as you rotate tunnels for the ant to run through. Quick thinking and fast reflexes are required to keep the ant scurrying through the Ant Hill passageways. Gain extra points for bonus tunnels and other objects as you try for the Top Ten High Scores. Keep your ant on the move with various strategies for really high scores. Warning: VERY ADDICTIVE.

DOWNLOAD INFORMATION
COMPUSERVE: GO PBSARC, Library 1 (Hot Off the Presses), and search for **ANTRUN.ZIP**
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