

reviews: **The Bottom Shelf**

The Bottom Shelf is where the older Mac games are usually found at your local software retailer. The games reviewed in this section have been released for some time now but are still selling, so you should get the Inside (Mac Games) scoop.

Mini-Review: **The Battle of Britain II**

By Richard Rouse III

Publisher: Deadly Games (516) 482-4000

Pros: Very realistic, great documentation.

Cons: Very difficult.

Requires: Any Mac with a hard drive, B&W or color. System 7 compatible.

attle of Britain II is a pure strategy simulation, true to the events and technology of the Battle of Britain. You are a placed in charge of the defense of all of Southern England, controlling the RAF from the War Room at Uxbridge. Each day you receive top secret reports which anticipate — sometimes successfully, sometimes far from it — where the Germans will strike today. In addition, you have weather reports that hint at how often and what kind of attacks the Germans will attempt. You can place any squadrons you want on patrol: after all, the Luftwaffe could swoop out of the air at any moment. The British RDF, an early version of radar, gives you some idea when the enemy is near, and you can put more ships in the air as you see necessary, wherever you think best, as long as it's within a twenty mile radius of their home base. Once the Germans are in sight you can "Detail to Raid" your already airborne forces, if they are in range. Like any pure strategy game, the battle itself is out of your hands.

A major problem with The Battle of Britain is that it's really not a computer game at all, but rather a board game implemented on a computer. Aside from the sounds, which are truly nothing special, there's little that couldn't be accomplished in a two or even one player board game. The Battle of Britain as implemented here would make a smashing great board game, and there's nothing wrong with board games.

I estimate, that if I were a strategy war game enthusiast, The Battle of Britain would be one of my favorite games. As it is, the game has kept me interested for several days, longer than any war game that has gone before it, the game's true strength being its historical accuracy. Be warned, even if I were skilled at war games, I think Battle would be a very difficult game indeed, and that is entirely fitting, as so it was for the British back in 1940.

Mini-Review: **VETTE!**

By Brian J. Thomas

Publisher: Spectrum HoloByte (415/522-3584)

Version: 1.01 (which fixes a bunch of bugs from the original 1.00 release)

Pros: Color, fun and fast, modem or network head-to-head options

Cons: Small gameplay window, buggy net and modem play, slow on early Macs

Requires: Black & White: Mac Plus or up, 1MB RAM. Color: Mac LC or up, 2 MB RAM, hard drive, 16-color (4-bit) video. Both versions: System 6.0.2 and up.

Protection: Manual-based questions each time game loads.

op into one of four progressively beefier Corvette models and hit the streets of San Francisco with tachometer flailing at redline. Race against such daunting adversaries as the Porsche 928S4, Lamborghini Countach, Ferrari Testarossa and the classic red F40 (isn't that Tom Selleck in there?) Or just terrorize the streets alone getting air over every hill and laying rubber on every curve. VETTE! brings to the Mac many of the traditional muscle-car affectations that continue to attract perennial teenagers everywhere.

VETTE! was at the time of release one of the hottest simulations ever anticipated (or so it seemed by all the yammering on AOL), and in many ways it delivered. In some it did not. The basic attraction at that time was a color simulation. It could have simulated green fleas on a red dog and people would have still bought it. But the Corvette was obviously a more sexy vehicle, and so SH went at it big time. And it was certainly a cut above the existing driving simulations such as Accolade's Test Drive: The Dual (which much to my chagrin I spent HOURS playing).

The basic sim-play is, pick your VETTE model (I always grabbed the vertigo machine: the Callaway Sledgehammer :-), pick your flavor of play (race or tour), pick your route or starting location, pick your opponent (if any), and stomp on the pedal. All of the controls can be handled via keyboard, or you can add a joystick (the v1.01 update included Gravis MouseStick settings). The view controls are fun, especially Helicopter View, which is like being a chopper CHiP (no one will ever admit they watched that show) chasing yourself down the highway. Even more fun, you can adjust many of the Vette's handling characteristics (this also requires a lot of experimentation to get right), including San Francisco's gravitational field strength, which when reduced significantly, your Vette cresting any major hill at 200 mph would literally become a something akin to an F-16. And if you took the gravity to the lowest setting, you would actually never recover from a good hillshot. I had more fun with this than anything, I think.

VETTE! has a lot of flash. The selection screens, maps, views and cockpit controls — all were founded in the Graphics Are Everything School of Marketing. And admittedly, it's what people wanted at the time (circa 1990). Something else everyone wanted at the time was multi-player games. VETTE! attempted (I can't judge how earnestly, though) to surmount this somewhat unexplored realm, but I gather it didn't deliver. According to a trusted friend

of mine (I never had anyone to play against, sniffle sniffle...), the net play in VETTE! is buggy and was never really patched. Apparently, every time you get onto the freeway your opponent would simply vanish (not a bad tactic, come to think of it :-). Not long after the original release, SH offered an upgrade to v1.01, which fixed annoyances (such as the cops pulling you over ALL the time), true bugs, and mistakes in the manual. My biggest peeves about VETTE! were the frame rate and the small display window (and two years later SH still used that small window in Falcon MC — go figure). It seemed a bit of a cop-out at the time. The cars are also a bit difficult to control. On the plus side, however, the game is amusing and fun, and the detail of San Francisco was state-of-the-art at the time. The mapping of the city seems very accurate, and you can even visit a digital rendition of Spectrum HoloByte and MACWORLD magazine's offices in your bright red Corvette. Don't forget to honk.