Up Close and Personal with Peter Cartwright

Ambrosia Times: Sir, do you have an appointment?

Peter Cartwright: No, but come the revolution, appointments will be demanded of no man.

AT: Then who are you? Where are you from?

PC: I come from wherever there is injustice - I am the revolutionary Prince Klo - Sorry, got a bit carried
away there. I'm actually Peter Cartwright, from Ipswich, a small outpost of civilisation in the depths of rural
England, though I currently dwell in the distinctly more urban Nottingham, where my official purpose is to
study Russian and Serbo-Croat at university.

AT: Ah, I think I have heard of you.... You're the creator of that new EV universe known as Override. What
exactly is that, again?

PC: As it happens, I recently discovered the original 'idea sheet' for the whole project. It began as a set of
six or seven names of space-faring races, with a few notes on their goals and nature, and what their ships
were like. The names have remained, but the universe has evolved a lot since then. To the best of my
knowledge, it is the largest and most detailed, not to mention only, stand alone EV scenario not based on an
existing sci-fi universe. (Not wanting to hype too much, or anything).

AT: Yes! I am so enthused. My neighbor is really looking forward to the new version of EV. What should I
tell him is most amazing about the new game?

PC: Well, I wouldn't want to say too much about a product not even in beta, blah, blah, blah ... But
personally I would say the varied storylines, and the way they integrate with the changing of the universe's
systems and so forth. EV originally didn't make that much use of plot-line missions, as I call them, whereas
Override has well over a hundred, as well as the usual, repeatable, constant EV elements.

AT: Very well. You seem to know a great deal about interstellar travel. Where did you learn all of

this?

PC: I have the usual background of interest in various sci-fi; Star Trek, Star Wars, Babylon 5. Long ago
(about ten years) I did own a very early version of Elite for the BBC micro, with wire-frame ships in
black&white which you could see the stars through. I never made it to Elite rating, though I think I got to
Dangerous once. This made the appearance of Escape Velocity that much more interesting, and it turned out
to have all the features you would expect, and its editable capabilities made it something else.

AT: How can you juggle software development and academia? Do you find it difficult?

PC: Yes. I'm currently torn between reading Pushkin, and working on an extremely complex model for an
Override station. Guess which one's winning. Most of the work on Override got done last summer, and over
the year before that, on-and-off. As long as you have the ideas and plot and the rest of it in your head, and
are in the right mood, the actual writing out of the data for the scenario file isn't that hard. It's the play-testing
and balancing that takes forever - I don't like to think about how many times I've 'Rescued Voinian Defector'
(one of the early missions).

AT: What else happens in your life? Tell me about your aspirations.

PC: Projects like Override tend to be my curse. I have also been interested in role-playing and war games in
the past, and have always been full of ideas for new worlds, game systems and scenarios which never got
anywhere. Override has been the exception. I attempt to write various fiction occasionally, but find it hard to
stick at things for anything longer than a short story.

My main aspiration at the moment is to see more of the places I am learning about, and speak the languages I
am learning with native speakers. I have only been to Russia for short periods and never to (the former)
Yugoslavia. In the long term, I would like to eventually write at least one full-length novel, and perhaps get
some work in translation or something along those lines. And getting Override polished off is high-priority at
the moment too.

AT: Are you related to anyone famous, either in the present day or in history?

PC: My mother has been researching our family history for some time (discovering many relatives in
Australia during the process), but has yet to find any truly famous relatives. Some distant ancestors of ours
were part of a riot against the mechanisation of their paper industry. After imbibing considerable quantities of
cider at the local, they set out and smashed several paper mills before the militia arrived. Following this, these
notorious felons seem to have gone on the run, ending up somewhere remote like Devon. Family traits don't
seem to have been passed down too well, as I only rarely have an urge to smash the computer screen.

AT: Describe your favorite ship in Override.

PC: Override's ships are one thing about the scenario that I do feel a little more at ease in talking about, as I
didn't design most of them. Most were a collaboration between my rough impressions of what they should
be like, one friend's drawings on paper, and another's Infini-D interpretations of these. My favourite is the
Azdara, a strange alien fighter. It is exceptionally manoeuvrable, with superb acceleration and top speed.
Watching these things zip about as interceptors is incredible (even on a slow machine), and being attacked by
them is infuriating. The unusual thing about its Azdara is its four wings, which don't appear to be attached to
the main body of the vessel. Unfortunately you can't see all four on the main top-down view, but I may do a
few special shots of Azdaras showing off.

AT: What inspired you to take on such an endeavor?

PC: To start work on something of the kind seemed the obvious thing to do for someone like me, especially
with a mostly empty summer coming up. I had originally expected that there would be many other similar
style scenarios in due course, and didn't initially plan mine on a vast scale. As it has turned out, the entire
'EV community' obsessed on awkwardly integrated plug-ins - very few of which, in my opinion, have
'worked' - and the few entirely new scenarios that have appeared have all been based upon one existing sci-fi
universe or another. All this was very disappointing to me (as I'm sure it was to many other EV-

ers) so I
decided to try and set a better example. As more and more people got involved, and I received (even in the
early stages) more positive feedback on the project, I was ever less inclined to give it up - and by the time it
was half-done, there was no question of abandoning it.

AT: Excuse me for asking a question about being British, but is it true that you know the guy in the Mentos
advertisements?

PC: Unfortunately, I currently reside in a dark, dank prison cell (a.k.a. a student flat) where we are rarely
able to find food and water let alone a television - whenever I go home I am glued to the TV even during ad.
breaks, because I've never seen any of them before. I may know him, but I've never seen the ads.

AT: Also, what kinds of things can you find in vending machines there, besides (as is customary in
America) the carbonated beverages, snack foods, and automatic firearms?

PC: Actually, the most bizarre vending machine style thing I recently heard about was Japanese (but coming
soon to all 'civilised' countries, no doubt). Apparently, after responding to a few questions asked by the
machine in a painfully cute voice, you get a personalised talking key-ring, which, when dropped into boiling
water or something like that, will say 'Hello, I'm a keyring', or something equally banale. Far more
dangerous to your health than automatic firearms if you ask me.

AT: What do you plan to do with your earnings?

PC: Well, if there's anything left after the requisite celebratory pub-crawl(s), perhaps I'll be able to afford a
few priceless student luxuries like chocolate, new clothes or a haircut. Or maybe I'll try and bribe my
flatmates to keep the place totally clean just for one week (could be _very_ expensive, though).

AT: Do you believe in ghosts?

PC: Only some of the time.

AT: What is your favorite nursery rhyme? Will you incorporate it into the EVO X-key message?

PC: After Three Blind Mice, it would have to be:

Oh, The Grand Old Duke of Voinia,
He had ten thousand men, [well, aliens, but it's got to rhyme]
They all jumped into the Sol system,
And never came back again.

As for the X-key function, that would require careful negotiation with Grand Duke Burch himself.

AT: If you could be any vegetable, which would it be?

PC: A turnip, for obvious reasons.

AT: Do you think you'll be involved in the development of more games in the future?

PC: I would like to be. The main problem is that I actually have very little programming knowledge or
experience, and (although I'm getting better at ship designs) I'm no great artist. Plots, text and stories I can
do, and scenarios or levels for any straight-forwardly editable game. Unfortunately (and not just for me, in
my opinion), not that many games fall into the sort of category where plot and well-written text are a vital part
of things. I've recently been considering writing an Exile (another of my favourite games) scenario; and
Override itself will probably not be the last EV-related thing I do.

AT: Where do you think Mac shareware is going? Where do you think the Mac is going?

PC: Mac shareware seems to me to be going well at the moment. I'm not especially well-informed about
these things, but at least half of discussion on most of the general mac games newsgroups seems to be about
shareware (Realmz, Exile, and EV, particularly), and any new Ambrosia game always has a flurry of
discussion about it for at least a month or so following and preceding release. As for the Mac itself, I'm even
less well-informed, but I hope its not going too far away. I can think of few things more annoying than being
stuck only with the sort of awkward, imitation, PC Windows computers, like the one I am forced to be
typing at right now.

AT: Describe your ultimate dream game.

PC: It would be some kind of flexible role-playing style game, which had a variety of interfaces

and ways in
which it operated. Not purely the strategic top-down view, but not constant action either. Perhaps an Elite/EV
style game in which you could actually do a wider variety of things planet-side as well, with more flexible
role-playing options with the people and ships you encounter.

AT: Well, it was great to shmooze with you.Stop by again soon. You won't need a reservation.

PC: Zdravo, druze, as they say in Belgrade. And may the revolution(s) never die!