20 | Games & Hobbies

Despite what your boss might have you believe, computers can be excellent tools for relaxation and enjoyment. Some estimates suggest that up to 80 percent of computer owners use their machines for some recreational activity. In 1995–96, this fact alone transformed the trickle of recreational software into a tsunami, making kicking back on your Mac easier than ever.

Whether it's taking in a few rounds of golf at a world-class course or carefully planning the garden that tickles your fancy, the Mac has become an impressive instrument for exploring your favorite diversions. In this chapter, we'll help you get the most bang for your buck when it comes to entertainment and hobby software.

Contributors

Bart Farkas (BF) is the chapter editor.

Chris Breen (CB) is a San Francisco Bay Area writer and musician and the coauthor of *The Macintosh Bible Guide to Games* as well as a contributing editor for *MacUser* magazine.

Karen Kaye (KK) is the Senior Editor of *Inside Mac Games* magazine and a staff writer for *MacSense* magazine. She sublets her apartment from three gracious cats, who give her a break on the rent in return for services and various domestic chores.

Greg Kramer (GK) is a freelance writer and editor currently living in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. His column, "Cerebreality", appears monthly in *MacSense* magazine and he is a regular contributor to *Inside Mac Games* magazine.

Contents

~~~~~~

Games

Computers have long been touted as excellent tools for writing, bookkeeping, and graphic design. With those honorable intentions foremost in mind, people sit at their computers ready to attack the mounds of pending work. But as they boot up the machine they notice that copy of X-Wing that's been sitting on the bookshelf. "Maybe I'll just have a quick look at this," they mumble as they pick up the box. "Just five minutes, then I'll take care of that spreadsheet."

Four and a half hours later, the sun rises and they realize that although the Rebel Alliance has successfully quelled an Imperial attack on an Alliance fleet, those spreadsheets sit untouched. Thus is the nature of computer games. There are few computer owners without one or two games stashed on their hard disks. Whether for the kids, the spouse, or yourself, games have become an integral part of owning a computer. With the introduction of the Power PC-based Macintoshes, there has been an influx of quality games in the market. So loosen up your wrists and fire up the old noggin' as we take a look at the world of Macintosh games. It's recreation time!

Game Doctrine   (BF)

The world of Macintosh entertainment software has its own special rule set. Here are a few details that might help you in your quest for great gaming.

Shareware, freeware, and other ways to get gaming. Many great games are available as either shareware or freeware. Freeware can be described pretty much just as is sounds. Games distributed this way are free for the taking, and usually only require you to say a good word about the author. Shareware, on the other hand, is a "pay as you play" system that requires you to send a nominal fee (usually $5 to $20) if you decide you like playing the game. Some commercial games (such as DOOM) are released as shareware or freeware with extra levels and features available for an additional fee.

Where to get more. For a desk reference on Mac gaming, check out *The Macintosh Bible Guide to Games* ($35, Peachpit Press), a 500-page book complete with a CD-ROM chock full of games and demos. If you are looking for a monthly way of keeping up on Mac gaming, you can subscribe to the *Inside Mac Games CD-ROM*. IMG regularly reviews new titles and includes the latest demos and shareware. On-liners can inspect the *Macintosh Entertainment Forum* on CompuServe. In fact, most on-line services have a heaping helping of Mac gaming resources.

The best World Wide Web option is the *Macintosh Entertainment Software* page, at <http://www.usyd.edu.au/~dchallis/MacES.html>. This resource can direct you to nearly every important Mac gaming page on the Web. (For more details on the Internet, see Chapter 23.)

Hardware. Two major rules apply to Macintosh gaming today:

1. Faster is better. The speedier your Mac's processor and the more RAM you have, the more games you can play to their fullest. Games are always pushing the technology envelope, and even the top-of-the-line machines are only able to keep up with modern games for a short two years. There are still games for every Mac, however, regardless of speed and memory confines.

2. Get a CD-ROM drive. Over 75 percent of new games ship on CD-ROM. This is most likely due to a combination of burgeoning game sizes and the built-in copy protection offered by the medium (most of us don't own CD duplicating equipment).

Arcade/Action Games

Watch out for Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (see Appendix A) and repetitive stress injuries in this department. These games are about rapid fire, quick reflexes, and a supernatural sense of timing.

Prince of Persia I and II (CB). Ever since the days of Dark Castle, Mac gamers have shown a proclivity for catapulting their digital alter egos off high perches and across deep chasms. **Prince of Persia** ($35), and its sibling **Prince of Persia II: The Shadow and the Flame** (Brøderbund) are superior examples of the run 'n' jump genre. The graphics are excellent and character movement is quite lifelike. You'll find yourself gasping as you propel the Prince across a seemingly impassable void. Prince of Persia II features an expanded story line and even more challenges than its predecessor.
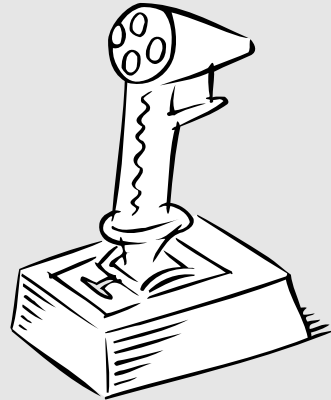
Macworld Game Hall of Fame (BF). This $40 five-game CD-ROM from Casady & Greene packs several great classic action games on one disc including the eternally addictive **Crystal Quest** and its sibling, **Crystal Crazy**. These two humorous titles have you flying a cow-laden ship around an enclosed screen, gobbling up crystals and yummies while avoiding nasty critters. Crystal Crazy incorporates many new twists into gameplay such as puzzle assemblage and sinking pool balls. It's a blast. Rounding out the disk are **Sky Shadow**, **Glider 4.0**, and **Mission Thunderbolt**, a perennial favorite sci-fi dungeon adventure/action game. Thunderbolt is now being marketed as shareware under the moniker **Jaunt Trooper: Mission Thunderbolt** ($30, Megacorp International).

Joysticks

For years Mac users had to attack their favorite games with a keyboard or a measly mouse. Anyone who has had to play an arcade game with a mouse knows this is no way to go through life. Thankfully, an explosion of good Mac joysticks and gaming peripherals has hit the market in recent years.

CH Products has an impressive line of Macintosh peripherals. The **Flightstick Pro** ($79, CH Products) is probably the best all-around stick on the market. By the time you read this, CH will have also released a **Pro Throttle**, **F-16 Combat Stick** and **Virtual Pilot Pro** to compete directly with Thrustmaster. A good low-end joystick is the **Mac Alley Joystick** ($35), and those with Sega/Atari or PC joysticks can look to Kernel Productions' **ChoiceStick** for a way to take advantage of existing hardware. Although only the Sega/Atari model is available as I write, the PC version should be on the market by the time you read this.

The Flightstick Pro from CH Products is one of the best all-around joysticks for the Mac.

For hard-core flight simulator junkies there's the **Thrustmaster Flight Control System** ($109), **Weapons Control System** ($59), and **Rudder Control System** ($125). These are best suited for real flight aficionados though, and the rather hefty price tag should deter all but the most obsessed.

Breaking out of this world of senseless violence is a truly pleasurable shoot-'em-up arcade game. **Power Pete** ($35, MacPlay) is probably the cuddliest arcade game going. You are Power Pete, a battery operated protagonist stuck in a toy store full of evil teddy bears, gingerbread men, heinous cavemen, and nasty little candies that want nothing more than to drain your batteries. Although this game contains some elements of violence, it is restricted to toothpaste guns and exploding birthday cakes. All in all, it's a great deal of fun. Its only drawback is the need for a Power Macintosh to make it run properly.

PegLeg (BF). If a simple arcade shoot-'em-up is the best medicine for what ails you, then I must recommend **PegLeg** ($35, Changeling Software). This is a bizarre mix of Asteroids and Space Invaders that will have you playing for hours—and will inflict serious damage on your trigger finger if you're not careful.

Apeiron (BF). The best Centipede clone on the market is **Apeiron** ($25, Ambrosia Software). Cartoon-like graphics and great gameplay punctuate this classic from Ambrosia.

ShadowWraith (BF). By far the best top-down view shoot-'em-up is **ShadowWraith** ($35, StarPlay Productions). Wraith includes ultracrisp graphics, speedy gameplay, and a CD-quality soundtrack. Any or all of these games are sure to be a blast (pun intended).

Pinball Simulations (CB)

Little Wing Productions. Although the PC offers far more pinball games than the Mac, few PC pin games match the elegance of design or accurate physical modeling found in the products made for the Mac by Little Wing (published by StarPlay

Loony Labyrinth from Little Wing is elegance personified and is just about as close to a real wood-and-glue pinball machine as you can get.

Productions)—**Eight Ball Deluxe**, **Crystal Caliburn,** and **Loony Labyrinth**. Developed by Yoshikatsu Fujita and Reiko Nojima, these three games are so close to the real thing that you'll be tempted to shove quarters into your floppy drive slot.

Published by Amtex, **Eight Ball Deluxe** is a re-creation of a classic '70s pinball machine. In contrast, Crystal Caliburn and Loony Labyrinth are completely original tables featuring gorgeous graphics, driving sound, ramps, and multiball play. All three games allow you to strategically nudge the table with the press of a key.

3-D Ultimate Pinball. Another option is Sierra On-Line's **3-D Ultimate Pinball**. What this title lacks in realism—the ball floats oddly about the table and is nearly impossible to trap in an upturned flipper—it makes up for in frenetic action. A hybrid pinball/arcade game, 3-D Ultimate Pinball comes with three highly animated tables that feature ramps, tunnels, hidden levels, exploding tractors, electric fences, and seemingly endless scoring options. To get the most out of this game you need a fast 68000-series or PowerPC processor.

3-D Action Games (BF)

The last couple years have seen a plethora of new first-person perspective shoot-'em-ups break onto the Mac market.

Marathon II. The big daddy of this genre is **Marathon II** ($45, Bungie) which uses high-resolution graphics and smooth 3-D scrolling to produce fantastic gameplay. Where M2 really excels, however, is in network gaming.

DOOM and DOOM II. Another classic of the genre is **DOOM** ($25) and its sibling **DOOM II** ($50, GT Interactive). These best-selling titles, ported from the PC world, have engrossing and hyperkinetic action, but also have particularly violent and disturbing themes.

Dark Forces. All the awesome technical achievements of the **DOOM** titles are featured in **Dark Forces** ($49, LucasArts) while keeping the violence at a more acceptable level, consistent with the original Star Wars movies.

System Shock. For a 3-D game of a different breed, there is **System Shock** ($59, Origin). Instead of killing everything in sight, you must play this game like an adventure, carefully assembling items and defeating puzzles to reach victory. The only drawback to System Shock lies in its high system requirements. Without an 80 MHz PowerPC 601 and 16MB of RAM, you can forget about playing this one. Lastly (but certainly not leastly), be sure to check out **Descent** ($48, MacPlay).

POWER MAC

The Path to Adventure (BF)

Adventure games are the backbone of every computer platform. From solving spine-tingling mysteries to saving the Rebel Alliance, the Mac has become a premier computer for these games.

Myst. If you want to start at the beginning and get indoctrinated in adventure gaming in true style, then take a look at the huge-selling monster known as **Myst** ($49, Brøderbund). Be prepared to spend many an hour attempting to solve the strange puzzles of Myst Island. Myst has a highly engrossing story line and one of the best musical scores ever produced for a computer game.

Journeyman Project II: Buried in Time. If you prefer to play something a little more recent, **Journeyman Project II: Buried in Time** ($59, Sanctuary Woods) should fit the bill. In this three-CD thriller you must travel through time to find the person (or persons) who has altered time to turn you, the hero, into the villain.

Dust. PowerPC technology has allowed computer games to venture ever closer into the realm of virtual reality. No game comes as close as **Dust** ($59, CyberFlix), a virtual Western drama which drops you smack-dab in the dusty hamlet of Diamondback, New Mexico, with its cast of 40 interactive characters.

Frankenstein: Through the Eyes of the Monster. Another alternative for the virtual reality experience is **Frankenstein: Through the Eyes of the Monster** ($49, MacPlay) in which you assume the persona of Mary Shelley's most famous creation. With photorealistic backdrops and Tim Curry as the over-the-top Dr. Frankenstein, Frankenstein is as visually stunning a game as you'll find.

The Riddle of Master Lu. Part of a new generation of adventure game that incorporates lifelike video characters into detailed computer designed sets is **The Riddle of Master Lu** ($59, Sanctuary Woods). Master Lu takes you on an Indiana Jones type adventure to capture a powerful talisman before it can fall into the clutches of evil. This title's breathtaking graphics and animation make it a solid choice for anyone feeling adventurous.

The Riddle of Master Lu is one of a new generation of ultra-realistic adventure games, but as with many new games, you can't play it without a powerful Mac.

Rebel Assault II. Many titles are becoming interactive movies, and none fit the bill more than Rebel Assault II ($49, LucasArts). This game has minimal arcade participation, but has beautifully rendered artwork and cut scenes.

Sinkha and Gadget. If a passive movie experience is more your style then check out **Sinkha** ($35, Mojave) or **Gadget** ($35, Synergy). These titles can best be defined only as 3-D multimedia novels. When it comes to just kicking back in front of the computer, these are a feast for the senses.

Role-Playing (Elf Games)   (BF)

There has never been a great selection of these games in the Mac world. There are, however, several titles worthy of mention.

Might and Magic: World of Xeen ($59, New World Computing) is perhaps the best of the lot, with great graphics, sound, and puzzles. Xeen is unique because it combines both *M&M IV* and *M&M V* on one CD, leaving it up to you to decide which areas to explore.

Other Options. The very serious role-playing gamer should also take a look at **Curse of Dragor** ($59, Domark), which combines an intuitive interface with challenging gameplay. **Ultima III** ($25, LairWare) and **Odyssey: The Legend of Nemesis** ($25, MacSoft) are both excellent examples of less sophisticated but nonetheless entertaining role-playing games.

Puzzle/Card Games   (BF)

Tang Chi. One of the newest on the market is **Tang Chi** ($45, Capcom). This delightful and unique brain game consists of 50 puzzles which require you to assemble several geometric shapes into a given design. Believe me, it's not as easy as it

sounds. Fortunately, there's a help feature to give you a boost, and when a puzzle is solved you're treated to a 3-D rendered movie.

Shanghai: Greatest Moments. Speaking of movies, **Shanghai: Greatest Moments** ($59, Activision) is a classic game reworked yet again. Loosely based on the ancient Chinese game Mah-Jongg, Shanghai required you to remove stylized tile pairs from a multilayered palette. Greatest Moments rewards you with highly entertaining video clips for every tile pair removed.

Hearts Deluxe and Power Poker (GK). One of the great benefits of computer gaming is being able to play multiplayer parlor games without having to muster the required number of opponents. Countless games, both shareware and commercial products, attempt to capture the complexity and excitement of these games with varying degrees of success. Two of the most notable are **Hearts Deluxe** ($15, Ian Lynch Smith) and **Power Poker** ($35, Electronic Arts). Featuring realistic gameplay, a full complement of rule variations, and entertaining playing partners, Hearts Deluxe is almost as much fun as a real late-night session of cutthroat Hearts. Smith and some third parties also offer a number of plug-ins (for about $10 each) which change your opponents to, among others, a trio of skeletons and the attendees at the Yalta Conference (Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin). For the green visor set, Power Poker is a truly superior poker simulation. With QuickTime rendered opponents and a dizzying variety of preset and customizable games, this title is perfect for the card shark and struggling beginner alike.

Eric's Ultimate Solitaire. For those who prefer Lady Luck as their opponent, **Eric's Ultimate Solitaire** ($35, Delta Tao) is perhaps the simplest and best all-around product on the market. You can even run this game from a floppy disk. Just about every solitaire game you can think of is represented in EUS, from Poker Square to plain old Klondike.

You Don't Know Jack ($35, Berkeley Systems) is a game show-like affair that almost defies description or categorization. To say Jack is entertaining is a profound understatement. Whether Nate, the host, is forcing you to answer questions because you're so far ahead of your competitors, or the questions posed to you seem truly demented, you won't go through a game without experiencing the gamut of emotions. It's infuriating,

You Don't Know Jack from Berkeley Systems is a fast-paced, hilarious trivia game. If it's attitude you're looking for, this game won't disappoint.

addictive, side-splittingly funny and intense. It's a beautiful rarity to come across a computer game so engrossing, so humorous, and with such replay value. You Don't Know Jack is the best $35 you'll spend all year.

Simulations

This is were you can find out what it's *really* like to fly an F/A-18 Hornet supersonic jet, or be mayor of a city for a couple hundred years. Sound like Fantasy Island? Well you won't need Mr. Rourke to enjoy these games.

Sim City 2000 (BF). Maxis has—and probably always will—dominated the sim genre of gaming. The crowning achievement is **Sim City 2000** ($60, Maxis), which allows you to micro manage a city literally from the ground up. Dealing with the complexities of supplying housing, power, and water will pale in comparison to the headache you'll get with your first bona fide earthquake. **Sim Farm, Sim Tower, Sim Earth,** and **Sim Ant** offer up varying levels of sim gaming, though none of these games have been able to capture the glory of the flagship products Sim City and Sim City 2000.

Flight Unlimited (BF). Modern computers have brought the average person incredibly close to the realities of flight. From a World War II dogfight to an imaginary mission in an A-10 Warthog, today's flight simulators offer a spectacular experience. If going for a casual flight in a private plane without the worries of getting shot down is more your speed, then check out **Flight Unlimited** ($69 Looking Glass). This flight enthusiast's nirvana includes multiple aircraft, 3-D photorealistic landscapes, and real-world physics. Flight Unlimited will permanently unseat the anemic Microsoft Flight Simulator as the leading noncombat flight sim.

A-10 Attack! and F/A-18 Hornet. There are currently two excellent combat sims coexisting in the Mac market. **A-10 Attack!** ($49, Parsoft) is easily the most complex of the current sims, and the graphics and physics of gameplay are the best available. The new Cuba missions should propel A-10 to the forefront of combat gaming. Not far behind is **F/A-18 Hornet 2.0** ($49, Graphic Simulations). Hornet is an order of magnitude simpler to fly, and the excellent networking features and fabulous graphics make it a better alternative for flight enthusiasts who don't have rudder pedals. Star Wars fans will be thrilled

Flight Unlimited from Looking Glass Technologies should easily unseat Microsoft's pathetic Flight Simulator as the king of nonviolent flight programs.

with **X-Wing: Collector's CD** ($60, LucasArts) which is superior in every way to its DOS counterpart. This is the cream of the crop in spaceflight simulations. The force is with us!

Links Pro CD and PGA Tour Golf III. (CB). Fans of the mashie niblick, brightly colored polyester shirts and spiky, two-toned shoes are in luck. Golf is well-represented on the Macintosh by **Links Pro CD** ($40, Access Software) and **PGA Tour Golf III** ($35, Electronic Arts). Both games place you behind the little white ball and demand that—with a couple of well-timed mouse clicks—you propel your digital Dunlop down the fairways of a variety of lush courses.

The trophy winner as the end-all and be-all of Macintosh golf simulations is Links Pro CD. Above par features include spectacular graphics, voice command with Apple's PlainTalk technology, narrated aerial flybys of the holes accompanied by a corporate-jazz soundtrack, and the optional caustic remarks of your virtual golfing buddy, comedian Bobcat Goldthwait. The game contains two courses, South Carolina's Harbour Town Golf Links and Banff Springs Resort Course.

Another worthwhile golf game is PGA Tour Golf III**.** This title boasts wonderful graphics and sound, flybys, a suitably hushed announcer who describes your lie on each green, three separate courses, and an optional caddie feature that recommends clubs for each shot. Regrettably, PGA Tour Golf III is not networkable nor are add-on courses available.

For those who don't have the kind of hardware muscle to drive these professional golf sims (you need at least a fast 68040 to run these babies), or who crave the simple pleasures of miniature golf, take a peek at Bob Mancarella's delightful $15 **GopherGolf**.

War Games (KK)

World at War. Traditional strategy board game designers favored famous land battles, and it should come as no surprise that these dominate the computer war game segment as well. The finest example of this genre is the **World at War** series. Available in three installments, **Operation Crusader, Stalingrad, and America Invades** ($42, Avalon Hill), each of these stand-alone titles designed by ATOMIC covers all aspects of a major operation during World War II. The nuclear boys are currently working on **Close Combat**, a squad-level war game to be published by Microsoft later in the year. Arsenal will shortly be shipping **Panzers East**, a much more sophisticated and graphically pleasing tactical combat simulator of the Russian Front during World War II. **Onslaught** ($46, Frontal Assaultware) is another worthy design that will appeal more to the casual gamer. This product is a cross between a war game and a conquest-type game like Empire. Two opponents fight it out with 1950s vintage military hardware in an attempt to control a continent.

TacOps. Some war gamers prefer to stay in the present instead of rehashing the past. The lethality of the modern battlefield is aptly illustrated by **TacOps** ($49.95, Arsenal). The graphics in this contemporary tactical war game are minimalist, but the overall combat simulation is amazing in its detail. Multiple two-player options are supported, and the illustrated weapon system database alone is worth the price of purchase.

Although combat animations in Allied General look nifty, they do not add to the game's depth.

Allied General. The above games are essentially board games translated to a computer format. **Allied General** ($49.95, SSI), however, was designed with no such preconceptions and is not burdened with the conventions of standard war games. Players command one of the Allied armies of World War II in a series of interconnected battles which determine the outcome of the war. Very easy to learn and use, this could be the product that redefines the concept of the computer war game in the coming years.

Drumbeat: U-Boat II. Submarine gamers have fewer choices of platforms when stalking beneath the waves. **Drumbeat: U-Boat II** ($44.95, Deadly Games) is a gripping simulation of World War II submarine operations where players get to compete with the great U-Boat aces of the war. The game captures the claustrophobic tension through realistic intercom sounds and actual photographs of the interior of a German submarine.

Hobbies

Although it may seem difficult to believe, there are *actually* many Mac users that do not play games, but nonetheless enjoy recreational software. This is where the fairly obscure category of hobby-related software comes in handy. As with the Mac entertainment titles, the field of recreation has seen a recent proliferation of new and exciting software. From fixing up your home to taking a journey through the essence of your personality, there's some sort of recreational software for everyone.

Home Sweet Home (KK)

Despite the associated taxes and the never ending maintenance work, home ownership remains an essential part of the American dream. A dizzying array of software titles promise to provide assistance on everything from home design to interior decorating.

Key CAD Complete. The best bargain of the bunch is **Key CAD Complete** ($30, SoftKey). It is a competent tool for mechanical and architectural drawings, and at this price it does not disappoint. **Design Your Own Home: Architecture** ($49, Abracadata) is a streamlined title that doesn't require excessive resources but still offers up the ability to work on most areas of home design. Multilevels, utilities (electrical wiring, water works), and even preset household fixtures make this a bargain for the designer with an older Mac.

Better Homes and Gardens: Planning Your Home. Because most of us have little free time and even less architectural prowess, it might be better to stick with a title such as **Better Homes and Gardens: Planning Your Home** ($40, or $50 with book, Multicom). Instead of offering an architectural angle, this software offers guidance on planning and selecting a professional home design based on needs and preferences. Over 500 floor plans are included, and several of these can be toured as 3-D photo-realistic walkthroughs, providing a unique opportunity to explore your future home.

The Home Depot: Home Improvement 1-2-3. With the cost of professional repair work skyrocketing, more and more people are doing work around the home themselves. **The Home Depot: Home Improvement 1-2-3** ($40, or $50 with book, Multicom) is a first-rate guide to over 250 projects, from installing hardwood floors to weatherproofing storm windows. Each job is described in detail either through animation or a narrated slide show. The program lists all the necessary tools, offers time estimates for the job, and includes useful safety tips.

In order to get the most out of Home Improvement 1-2-3, you'll want to print instructions and diagrams so that they are available right where you're working.

Landscaping and Gardening   (KK)

One of the best ways to raise the value of your home is to make it more appealing on the outside. Even if you're unsure of the difference between a dibble and a crevice trowel, you can beautify the grounds around your home with the aid of your Mac.

FLOWERscape. ($50, Voudette) is as handy as a good garden fork in helping you plant a beautiful garden. FLOWERscape contains a library of over 200 plants—each depicted as a digitized photograph—that can be searched by a variety of filters, such as required exposure to sun, planting season, and resistance to drought. The program takes into account the local climate and soil pH and is able to display the garden during any month of the year.

Mum's the Word Plus 2. Gardeners who require a more comprehensive landscaping program should consider **Mum's the Word Plus 2** ($95, Terrace Software). It contains an extensive database of over 600 plants, shrubs, and trees that can be searched through a myriad of options. The landscaped area can be depicted during various seasons and from several different perspectives. Unfortunately, the program is more akin to a CAD tool and uses abstract icons to depict the plants. Therefore, it may be of more use to the professional or avid gardener with access to other reference materials.

Better Homes and Gardens Complete Guide to Gardening. Neophytes who are ready for the seed of their ideas to mature to full bloom need the assistance of a manual such as the **Better Homes and Gardens Complete Guide to Gardening** ($40, or $50 with a book, Multicom). Although nothing that claims to be complete ever is, this well-illustrated CD-ROM is packed with a slew of valuable gardening information on everything from annuals to wildflowers. Best of all, the program contains video instruction on such knotty gardening jobs as planting a hedge and using a pruning saw.
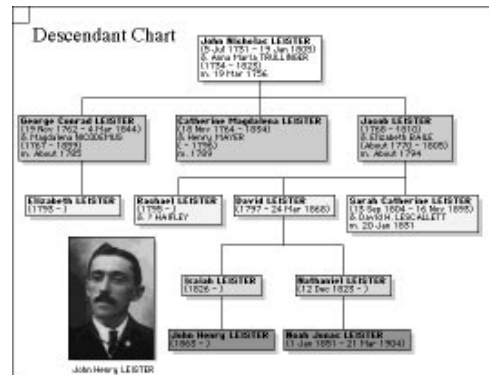
Genealogy   (KK)

Genealogy takes us from roots in your garden to your family roots. The study of genealogy has become a popular hobby for anyone interested in exploring their family tree, thorns and all. It should be noted, however, that none of these programs is a reference tool for locating long lost ancestors; they are primarily database shells that provide you with a convenient way to store and display family information.

Gene. First-time explorers of dusty attics and county archives should consider a basic and inexpensive shareware solution called **Gene** ($15, Diana Eppstein). It is a convenient way to catalog the members of a family and to display the complex relationships

in easy-to-understand charts. Although the defined fields in the database are limited, the program redeems itself by providing the option to link an individual to a scanned picture. Gene is simple and efficient, and it may be all the genealogy tool that most of us need.

Reunion. In order to go further back to your roots, you will also have to dig deeper into your pockets. **Reunion** ($100, Leister Productions) is a bit pricey, but it is the granddaddy of lineage hunting software. Reunion lets the user link scanned images to various entries, providing a means to create a visual record that com-

Reunion is not only attractive because it allows you to create colorful Descendant Charts with pictures, but also because data entry is the most intuitive of all the genealogy programs.

plements the family tree. Leister is known for excellent support and also maintains a Web page to assist those looking for reference materials <http://www.leisterpro.com>.
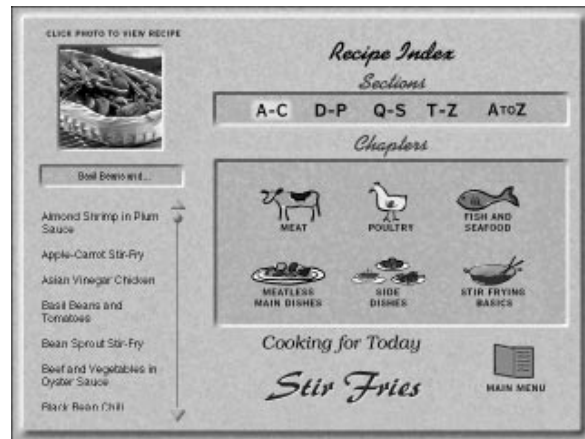
The Culinary Mac

The computer is an excellent medium for counting calories, getting the most out of your kitchen cupboards, or just learning to cook. The last several years have witnessed a gastronomical surge in culinary software on the Mac. So cleanse your palate and prepare to be impressed.

MasterCook Deluxe. ($40 Sierra) is a highly polished cooking companion which helps you manage meals, nutrition, and shopping (to quote Sierra). MasterCook contains a wide variety of recipes and offers great photos of dishes and snappy graphics. As with most titles in this category you can have an in-depth analysis of recipes including important nutritional information. **MasterCook Cooking Light** ($40) offers 1,250 low-fat recipes for your recipe collection.

Mangia! ($50 Upstill) is a perennial favorite on the Mac and, although not as flashy as some of the newer titles, offers many great features. From keeping track of your kitchen's supplies to adding and categorizing recipes, this is a great, flexible, and classic program.

Mealtime II. ($35 Chris Hostetter) is the blue-collar member of the cooking programs, but still has the ability to do what all other programs do (including scaling recipes). What Mealtime lacks in graphical prowess it makes up for in expandability and usability.

Better Homes and Gardens: Cooking for Today. ($32 Multicom) is a series of CD/book combination products each with a solid lineup of recipes complete with photos and a simple glossy interface. The most striking feature of these products is the inclusion of video help clips for kitchen etiquette, which function as an added safety feature for those just learning about cooking. Additional products include Stir Fries, Pasta, Chicken, and Great American Cooking. If you have the money for all the segments, this is an excellent collection.

Better Homes and Gardens: Cooking for Today is perhaps the best-looking cooking program for the Mac and has several add-on CDs.

If the Spirit Moves You   (KK)

From brewing your own beer to expanding your wine knowledge, this is an area that has undergone an excellent aging process.

The Beer Hunter. Beers of all varieties, especially from small independent breweries, are suddenly all the rage. In order to understand the origins of this beer renaissance— or simply to find out where and how to get in on the action—take a look at **The Beer Hunter** ($40, Discovery Channel Multimedia). The program educates the user with tasting notes on all major styles of beer and identifies U.S. microbreweries where the best samples of each can be found. Beer lovers who prefer their brew in a stein as opposed to a frosty mug should check out the **World Beer Hunter**.

Microsoft Wine Guide. Those who prefer the drink made from the fruit of the vine will find a bold, vibrant experience with a sophisticated finish in the **Microsoft Wine Guide** ($35, Microsoft). This slick multimedia title is liberally illustrated with the enthusiastic video commentary of Australian wine aficionado Oz Clarke, whose humorous observations reinforce his belief that enjoyment of wine ought to be a fun social experience. This title is also an invaluable reference tool with a superb atlas of wine-growing regions, and a searchable database of over 6,000 wines complete with tasting notes. Oenophiles may be attracted to the significantly larger listing of wines found in the **Wines of the World** ($40, or $50 with a book, Multicom). Sadly, bigger is not always better. It can take upwards of five minutes to search through the 28,000 items in the database.

Travel

While none of the titles discussed in this section can easily replace a printed travel guide from a reputable company, they do offer an invaluable source of travel-related information by taking advantage of the multimedia capabilities of CD-ROMs.

Nile: Passage to Egypt. The first software title that can claim the honor of being a true travel experience is **Nile: Passage to Egypt** ($50, Discovery Channel Multimedia). Billed as a journey of 4,000 miles and 5,000 years, this program unlocks a world otherwise not available to the majority of us. The sights are explored through a series of narrated photographs and video segments guided by such experts as Dr. Robert Fernea. Those considering a trip to Egypt would be well served to initially explore the cradle of civilization on this stunning CD-ROM.

Passage to Vietnam. A splendid chronicle, **Passage to Vietnam** ($40, Against All Odds) is both a physical journey and a spiritual one. The work of photographer Rick Smolan, the title seamlessly integrates over 400 photographs and an hour of full motion video organized along such topics as the central role of the Perfume river and the legacy of the American war. This is an unflinching portrait of the hardships and perseverance of the people of Vietnam—occasionally shocking or disturbing, but never manipulative.
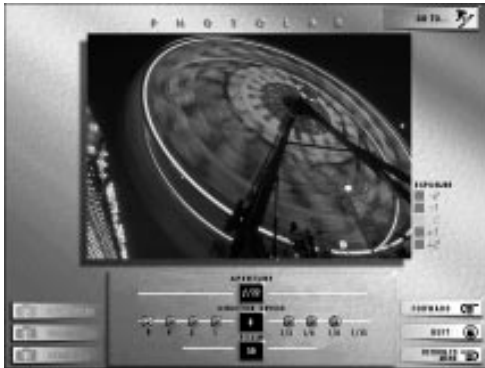
Route 66. The station wagon and the trailer may have been replaced by the minivan and the condo, but the desire to pack up the family and hit the road seems little changed from previous generations. **Route 66** ($80, Route 66 Geographic Information Systems) is a route planner that lets you select the shortest, fastest, and cheapest course from one destination to another. The program calculates expenses and travel time based on the user's specific gas mileage and cruising speed. When the other entries are complete, the software constructs an itinerary which indicates all significant points along the trip—complete with a corresponding time and distance chart.

Photography

Travel and photography seem to go together as naturally as chocolate and peanut butter. While camcorders are increasingly popular, the camera remains our favorite means of capturing precious moments. Unfortunately, what most of us see through the lens is not always what appears in print.

Better Photography: Understanding Exposure. This instructional package ($60, or $80 with a book, DiAMAR) is aimed at the amateur who is ready to move beyond the bland, overexposed snapshots found in most family albums. The program is not a dry, abstract textbook, rather it is more like a photography seminar held by the author, Bryan Peterson. An award-winning professional, Mr. Peterson builds his instruction

Understanding Exposure features a number of photography exercises where the user can instantly see the results of changing a camera setting—in this case shutter speed.

around an understanding of the three fundamental elements of a great photograph: film speed, aperture setting, and shutter speed. This is one of the most flexible titles of its kind, and among other things, it allows users to create custom workshop sessions on topics of particular interest.

Better Photography: Learning to See Creatively. Although no more complex than the product mentioned above, **Better Photography: Learning to See Creatively** ($60, or $80 with book, DiAMAR) seems to focus on enthusiasts who are ready to pursue their hobby more seriously. Learning to See Creatively unlocks the secrets of award-winning photographers by teaching the elements of their art as individual topics in separate sessions. The program also reveals the most hallowed secret of the great masters: Instead of taking just one or two shots of a scene, professionals will hedge their bets by taking entire rolls of film!

Movie Magic   (BF)

Finding just the right video in the sea of titles in most video rental stores can be challenging to say the least. These products are designed not only to help you pick out a movie gem, but they're often highly enlightening as well.

Movie Select. One of the original movie-related CD-ROMs was **Movie Select** ($60, Paramount Interactive). Movie Select's movie database is somewhat lacking when it comes to European flicks and the video clips promote only a few titles, but there is one feature where this product excels. The Movie Select Recommends command is an excellent way to make a list of potential rentals to suit your taste. Print your list, and you're off to the video store.

Cinemania 96. The current champion of the movie circuit and the classiest of the bunch is **Cinemania 96** ($69, Microsoft), which not only has photos and clips of many titles in its database, but also includes reviews by such critics as Leonard Maltin, Pauline Kael, and Roger Ebert.

Corel All-Movie Guide. The final product in this genre is the **Corel All-Movie Guide: The Ultimate Guide to the Movies** ($69, Corel). The All-Movie Guide allows you to create your own special lists of movies as well as order obsolete titles from within the program. There are also a few built-in games including a trivia game and a crossword game.

Collector's Heaven   (BF)

Although collecting is a relatively obscure software category, there is one company that covers all the bases.

Although this software department essentially has only one player, Ninga Software's products are worthy of mention. **Hobbysoft Comic Keeper** ($50) offers up the perfect alternative to a log book for comic book fanciers. With separate categories for DC and Marvel Comics this program has everything a collector could want in an electronic record. If stamps or coins are your preference, Ninga has both the **Hobbysoft Coin Collector** and the **Hobbysoft Stamp Collector** ($50). These titles have recently been upgraded from their rather ugly DOS roots, and although they won't be winning any awards for glitz, they serve a great practical purpose.

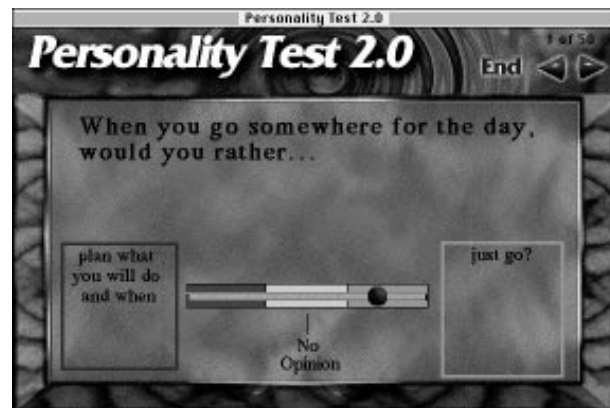## The Ego, Id, and IQ   (BF)

Personal exploration has recently become a software niche on the Mac. There is one thing that seems to be of interest to all people: themselves. Several titles have recently emerged in the introspective fields of IQ and personality testing, allowing Mac users to explore the inner workings of their minds.

IQ Test ($29, Virtual Entertainment) offers a CD-ROM based IQ test that will give you a reasonable idea of what your intelligence quotient is. Perhaps the most impressive feature is inclusion of video clips of experts describing just what an IQ test is and is not. It's a fun little diversion but folks should be cautioned not to take the results too seriously. **IQ Test 2.0** ($8, White Sands) is a shareware program that, surprisingly, produced similar scores to Virtual's IQ Test. This is a great program for those who want to check out their IQ without too much glitz and glamour.

Personality Test 2.0 ($17, White Sands) offers a different, perhaps more interesting glimpse at your inner self. Personality Test 2.0 is based on several respected personality tests developed in the early '80s. It offers truly fascinating and accurate insight into your behavior patterns based on your answers to a series of questions. If you pay the share-

After a series of 50 questions, Personality Test 2.0 from White Sands Multimedia can tell you a lot about your inner workings.

ware fee, you are given a code that lets you unlock the General Personality test, the Stress Indicator test, the Leadership Potential test, and the Entrepreneurial Drive test.

Editors' Poll:
What Are Your Favorite Games?

ML: My favorite game is Myst. The reason? Because I can't win.

KT: I turn to computer games to defrazzle myself, so I like contemplative things. Basically, I like solitaire games and image-matching games.

SA: I fall into the "Doesn't play computer games" category.

SS: My favorite games at the moment are Warcraft: Orcs and Humans, and Dust: A tale of the Wired West. I like Warcraft because of the challenge, and Dust because of the storyline.

TL: My all-time favorite game is Dark Forces, but it's not terribly replayable after you've finished it. For a never-ending source of fun, my favorite game is Cyrstal Caliburn. I still play it several times a week. Spectacular.

JC: My current favorite is Ambrosia Software's Swoop. Fans of the old-fashioned arcade game Galaga will enjoy this game.

BF: There are so many quality games available for the Mac now that it's hard to decide. However, I'd have to say that A10-Cuba (Parsoft), You Don't Know Jack, and any Ambrosia game would rate up there fairly high.

MEC: I don't get much chance to play games, but I tend to enjoy Apeiron, Crystal Crazy, Maelstrom, and Shanghai when I do get the chance.

TA: Marathon 2 is the best network game on the Mac. I usually play until I feel the tendons in my arms starting to tear. The best party game is You Don't Know Jack, unfortunately you need at least two people to play. Finally, Strategic Conquest is a classic military strategy game without the complexity of Civilization or the time crunch of Warcraft.

JH: My favorite game of all time is Myst; it's so involving that, over the three or four weeks I played it, I actually came up with solutions to some parts in my dreams! To this day, there are sounds I hear that remind me of the game. Nothing like it. A close second are the pinball games from Starplay (Crystal Caliburn and Loony Labyrinth).

BW: I don't play computer games per se. However, I do play a game of my own called "Thesaurus". Look up a word in the thesaurus, and then choose a synonym, and a synonym of that synonym. Then judiciously choose synonyms or antonyms to see if you can get back to the original word. Any electronic thesaurus will do.