y Mudgeon

COMPUTER & VIDEO GAME NEWS

STOP THE ASSASSINATION
Pouring millions of dollars into the development of this new title, Activision has now released Spycraft: The Great Game. This title, for PC and Windows 95 CD-ROM machines, brings William Colby, former director of the CIA, into collaboration with Oleg Kalugin, former major general of the KGB. Both consulted on this project and portray themselves in the game.

You must unravel an assassination plot the could well topple the fragile peace established by the Cold War. The renowned author, James Adams, is a leading news correspondent and he included a unique on-line component that lets you travel the Internet to investigate leads and gather news reports from a dedicated Spycraft WWW site. There are more than 100 cinematic sequences in the game whose plot revolves around an upcoming Russian presidential election. Of course, such an event is actually going to occur on June 16th!

You'll learn that the Russian presidential candidate has been assassinated and that the CIA has received some intelligence that the life of the US president may be in serious jeopardy. You must maintain national security while investigating this threat. You are sent to the CIA's training facility to learn to use the tools you'll need to succeed: lead a team of special forces, manipulate satellite photos, intercept radio communications, trace bullet trajectory, and electronically sketch potential suspects. Designed as a series of 30 puzzles, these tools are based on actual CIA covert tactics and ops.

You are faced with threatening scenarios and tough decisions that will ultimately determine the game's outcome. As you move through the game, the stakes rise and the choices become increasingly more difficult. You'll work closely with former Russian agents in order to gain crucial info. You can trade spy secrets and discuss the consequences of your decisions on the WWW site as well.

SPYCRAFT CONTEST
In conjunction with the release of Spycraft: The Great Game, Activision has also instituted a national sweepstakes offer. You could win a custom-designed, espionage vacation to the Bahamas, valued at around $30,000! Five grand-prize winners and their guests will assume the identity of covert operatives and be trained in the latest spy activities and techniques by private detectives, former Navy SEALs, and martial arts experts. Offered in the U.S. and Canada, the sweeps will run from March 4th through May 13th. Register on Activision's web site (http://www.activision.com), sign up via "take one" counter cards at national retail outlets; receive an entry form with the purchase of specially marked packages of Spycraft; or send in an entry to Activision on a 3-inch x 5-inch card. Ten secondary winners will receive a custom, leather Spycraft attache filled with such espionage essentials as binoculars, sun glasses, mini-cassette recorders, counterfeit detector pens and Sellout, the latest novel by author James Adams. 300 other folk, randomly drawn, will receive Spycraft brand merchandise including custom T-shirts and 3D mouse pads.

A TRUE BEVY OF TOP DOGS
The upcoming Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles, set for May 16th, is going to present a truly high-powered, 60-minutes of panel discussions regarding where interactive entertainment is actually heading. The executives who will comprise this panel include:
3DO's Trip Hawkins
Acclaim Entertainment's Gregory Fishback
Disney Interactive's Steve McBeth
Electronic Arts' Larry Probst
Microsoft's Patty Stonesifer
Nintendo's Howard Lincoln
Sega's Tom Kalinske
Sony Computer's Teruhisa Tokunaka

Moderating will be Viacom New Media's Ed Horowitz with Electronic Arts' Jack Heistand and the past and present Chairs of the IDSA Board of Directors. Topics will include the role of the personal computer, game consoles and DVD. Plus, Internet commerce and other challenges will be brought to the boil. Certainly appears to be a must-attend event!

A BIG MOVE
FormGen, the folks who brought us all manner of shooters for PC CD-ROM, is on the move to much larger quarters. Their new address and phone is:
FormGen
15649 Greenway-Hayden Loop
Scottsdale, Arizona 85260-1750
(602) 443-4109

CIVIL WAR SIM
The American Civil War: From Sumter to Appomattox is going to be published by Interactive Magic (http://www.imagicgames.com). You'll be able to command either side of this strat milsim that is being created for Interactive Magic by Adanac Command Systems of Vancouver, British Columbia. This is the follow-up title to a previous release from Adanac entitled The Road from Sumter to Appomattox II, which was sold only via direct mail and not through computer retail stores.

This title covers the entire Civil War and you may start play in the Spring of 1862 or 1863. You can win the game through either a military or political victory. An incredibly accurate

database offers 125 historical leaders, all rated for inspiration, aggressiveness, and combat skills. You'll have full control over leadership assignments and troop movements that spans from East Texas to Philadelphia, from the Bahamas to Kansas City. As we said, this is an all-encompassing Civil War sim.

The game is turn-based. Each turn represents one week in history. Introductory maps provide an overview and 40 interactive maps depict specific battles. The disc lets you trace the entire war, plus the CD contains a 175,000-word narrative text, photos of key Civil War leaders and battlefields, and period music. Included are a number of video clips of Civil War reenactments. This is a strategic Civil War game, versus tactical, and will be available this May for Windows-based computers.

GET SNOOKERED UP
One of Interplay's best-selling sims was one called Virtual Pool. That particularly title sold through more than 1/4 million units and also won a mountain of awards. Now Interplay has released the follow-up to that title--Virtual Snooker(TM). For PC CD-ROM machines, and developed by Celeris, Inc., this sim presents the play and action of the real game. The algorithms accurately calculate cushion response, cue ball spin and friction, and includes Tracking Lines to help you improve your game. Even pros can learn a thing or two about their game. The title offers some truly awesome 3D graphics and you also have realistic perspectives of the game. You can walk around the table, back away to view the entire table from any angle, or zoom-in for a more precise view. Included are 30 minutes of video footage from the six-time snooker champion, Steve Davis. This footage includes his historic 147 break. For those unfamiliar with Snooker, the winner is the one who earns the most points by sinking the colored balls. The highest value is the black ball, worth seven points, and at the other end, the red ball, worth one point. The other colored balls are worth form two to seven points each. This sim is a great way to learn how to play the game. More info can be obtained at Interplay's WWW site at http://www.interplay.com.

CREATIVITY FOR CHILDREN & MORE
From Microforum, Inc. (http://www.microforum.com), comes Let's Draw, the first computer-based illustration program specifically designed to help you create caricatures. In association with IKE Software, this title offers an intuitive environment which allows you to generate humorous likenesses of virtually anyone you wish. You use a structured graphics system that lets you create caricatures by selecting from an extensive library of image elements. You can then manipulate these drawings using special effects that haven't been seen before in other apps. Through the use of over 50 templates, included in the package, you can instantly create full-color greeting cards, posters, FAX cover sheets and wrapping paper. There are also over 100 completed caricatures of famous political, sport and entertainment figures. The title is for PC CD-ROM machines.

Another creative title is Jungle Kids, a program for children that introduces them to the world of computer animation. Users will be able to build animated movies against a choice of stunningly rendered 3D backgrounds that include forests, jungles, temples and tropics. Included are a large cast of cartoon jungle characters to use as stars in the movies--all the children have to do is choose from a variety of views and directions for movements. The program finishes the movie. There are a number of tools that enable children to distort, reflect, and scale any elements directly on the screen. Many drawing tools allow youngsters to add their own creations to the program. The preview feature lets them see their work at each stage of its development as well. Add in a large color palette, with shading and tinting abilities, and children will be proud to show off their work as their creativity and imagination are developed.

Also just released is Toonworks, the first interactive multimedia drawing program for children. Children can create their own, personalized cartoon characters and they are encourage to make use of color, painting, drawing and distortion tools. Children can create their cartoon characters from an extensive library of image elements. They can then manipulate their drawings by using a variety of special effects. Plus, there are over 100 professionally designed cartoons included in this package to help youngsters get started on their own projects. The offering is recommended for children ages 6 and older.

Also en route from Microforum is Shakii The Wolf, a unique arcade-style game for children ages 6 and older. A large cast of intriguing animal characters created in the latest Japanese-style of detailed animation surround children as they explore the world of Shakii, the guardian of the peaceful kingdom of Shake. The plot revolves around Shakii losing his power with the appearance of Midnight Sword, an almost invincible Lion Warrior. Forced to retreat to the edge of his former beloved kingdom, Shakii gathers his powers together as he prepares to do battle with Midnight Sword and his legion of merciless warriors.

ABUSE MAY BE FUN!
Coming later this month is the full retail version of Abuse for PC CD-ROM. Created by Dave Taylor (famous for DOOM & Quake), Jonathan Clark, Murray McMillan and Duon Nguyen, this title has been available as a four-level shareware offering from Crack dot Com, to be distributed by Origin (http://www.ea.com/origin.html). Seems as though a corrupt research scientist has isolated the specific gene sequences that causes violence and aggression in humans. This sequence, code-named Abuse, causes horrifying mutations and grotesque side-effects. You're the only subject who has survived--intact, that is. If you can solve the deadly puzzles and avoid all incoming fire, you may be able to halt this mutagen from leaking out and destroying the world.

The title offers 360-degrees of side-scrolling action and you can shoot in any direction necessary, regardless of which way you happen to be running. You'll find yourself having to navigate through a maze-like security facility where floors, walls and ceilings conceal hidden assets--and dangers. There are seven different weapons plus a network multiplayer mode that supports as many as eight simultaneous players. There's a built-in level editor so you can create and edit your own scenarios. A special in-box promo will give you the opportunity of submitting your newly created levels to Crack dot Com with the top subs included in a "best of" Abuse version to be released Thanksgiving of this year.

TURNAROUND HOPED-FOR
One of the most talked about companies in the past was Rocket Science Games. Yet, their financial ledgers were pouring red ink. Now the company has hired 40 new senior game designers to offer more vital titles for Windows 95, Sega Saturn and Sony Playstation. To accomplish this action, executives from Accolade and Sierra On-Line and others have been hired away by Rocket Science Games. You can check out the happenings at the company's WWW site at http://www.rocketsci.com.

FANTASTIC COMBATS
One company has, for many years, been known as the best in computer-based military simulation software. That company is Strategic Simulations, Inc., otherwise known as SSI. Just recently purchased by Mindscape, Inc., SSI's Panzer General and Allied General have constantly topped the sales charts for the milsim genre of product. Now they have focused

on enhancing their milsim offerings by tuning their game engine into one of the company's other strengths, the fantasy genre. The combination is Fantasy General(tm). This fanmilsim packs an awesome soundtrack that features a 36-voice choir to really set the fantasy mood of this game.

This title uses the same, easy-to-use interface, hexagon movement and combat that caused Panzer General to become a mega-hit. Only this time, fantasy features have been added for a unique game experience. You command the army of your dreams and recruit such shock troops as mystical creatures. You must also find those stalwart heroes who can turn the tide of battle, as well as glom onto magic items so you can cast spells. You must battle the cretinous Shadowlord and all of his evil minions. You wage combat over five continents, or you may enter the Arena and compose any sort of fantastic battle your mind can conceive. You may also play by mail with other opponents. Additionally, you can fight the Fantasy General campaign with four different heroes. The title is for PC CD-ROM machines.

DESCENT II DESCENDS
Finally, one of the most highly anticipated action/strategy games of the year has debuted. Yes, Descent II(TM) from Interplay is now out and about. This is a 3D, 360-degree action game that is packed with new features and game play, providing a truly fit sequel to the original smash-hit, Descent. There are 30 new levels that'll take you through missions on six worlds, including Water, Fire, Ice and the Alien Base. New intelligent robots who really dislike you, including one called the "Thief-bot," adjust to your game strategies. They'll hunt you down and suck up your energy supply, if you're not careful. There's added firepower with ten new, ultra-destructive weapons, from the Level 6 lasers to the EarthShaker Missile. Super power-ups include a floodlight that can be turned on and off while navigating the dark, deep tunnels. Plus you might obtain an afterburner which can really cook your speed by increasing it 100 percent. Thankfully, there is also a more friendly robot included, called the "Guide-bot." This unique addition will aid you through the turning and twisted tortures of Descent II.

This title was developed by Parallax Software and fully supports multi-player action via head-to-head, modem, and 8-player LAN play. There's a great soundtrack that includes original music by Type O Negative and Ogre of Skinny Puppy as well as other new Redbook audio and digital sound effects. The title is for PC CD-ROM machines.

KILL THAT TANK
A really popular line of flight sims was produced by Sierra On-Line, Inc. (http://www.sierra.com). They were known as the A-10 line and they have a new addition: Silent Thunder: A-10 Tank Killer 2. As part of the company's award-winning ACES series of milsim products. This title presents 24 missions that are played out with rendered worlds of waterfalls, rapids, burning seas of oil, rice paddies, gun boats, rigs and helicopters. Your mission is to eliminate three desperate men who are threatening to dissolve the longest period of peaceful coexistence for the world. You'll swoop in low over the realistic jungle terrain of Columbia to track down a serious drug trafficker. You'll find yourself in North Korea and the Middle East. The game offers cutting-edge graphics including 3D fire and explosions, texture-mapped 3D flying objects and incoming weaponry, roller-coaster scenarios, and texture-mapped terrain. Throw in top notch Redbook audio and a rock 'n roll soundtrack to aid your play and you may just save the world. This title is for Windows 95 CD-ROM machines.

CLIMBING ABOARD THE PSX

Long a player in the video game environment, T-HQ, Inc., is now debuting their very first title for the Sony PlayStation. This puppy, an underwater shooter, is called In the Hunt and is a conversion of the game originally developed by XING Entertainment which became an arcade classic under T-HQ's Kokopeli Digital Studios label. You are the captain of an attack sub and those rotten terrorists must be defeated as they launch unrelenting assaults from various, underwater bases. There are hundreds of enemies, dozens of weapon combs, and two-player, simultaneous warfare is offered as well. In addition to In the Hunt, T-HQ is also now shipping Disney's Pocahontas for the Game Boy, with Toy Story to follow next month for the same hand-held game platform.

GOOD THINGS CAN COME FROM STRIFE
If you haven't heard or know about or played a title from id Software, you're probably also unaware that spring is here (or on its way, for the colder areas of our fantastic nation). Their products, such as DOOM and HEXEN, have garnered enormous followings. In fact, even their older products remain transfixed upon hard drives throughout the world -- action gamers live and breathe these offerings. A new title, called Strife, is en route from id Software. And who has won the right to publish this highly anticipated title? Velocity, that's who! This game contains an element of fantasy adventure. You must interact with characters, other than kill them, and make serious choices that do affect the outcome of the game. Yet, there is still that gut-wrenching 3D action to make certain you realize you're still playing an id developed game. You must defeat the Order, a quasi-religious dictatorship that keeps the world of Strike in a constant state of warfare. There are 28 levels of play, each level representing a varied state of technology. You can download a demo of the game from http://www.velocitygames.com/. Over a net, eight players can get involved in the game. Velocity is also working on a modem version of this title.

HOT STAR TREK TITLE DEBUTS
Take the #1-rated weekly syndicated hour-long series and develop an interactive adventure and you should have a serious digital entertainment hit on your hands. And that's the thinking behind Viacom New Media's release of Star Trek: Deep Space Nine --   Harbinger for PC CD-ROM. This intergalactic adventure starts when you assume the role of a Tirrion envoy of the elite Federation Diplomatic Corps. The fate of a threatened Gamma Quadrant race and the Deep Space Nine Space Station lays in your hands. You'll join forces with the crew of Deep Space Nine, including Captain Sisko, Oddo, the notorious Quark and other familiar faces. You must track down the space station murderer, battle deadly, unmanned drones, and match strategies with a mysterious alien race. You'll also have the opportunity to embark on exciting training missions generated by Deep Space Nine's holo-deck.

The voices of STDSN's talented cast are brought to life in the CD-ROM game. Richly illustrated backgrounds depict the familiar locations on the Deep Space Nine Space Station, all created from actual blueprints and photos. First-person perspective lets you direct the action, all combined with a cinematic style created with film and TV "editing" techniques such as close-ups, wide shots and segways. The game was developed by Stormfront Studios.

SIZZLING SOFTWARE SUPPORTS SALES
An interesting survey has been released by Inteco. In their CD-ROM Title Attitudes Survey, results revealed that games and educational titles topped the 400,000 sales mark for January of this year. However, most of these titles were the result of bundle deals, such as games that come when you purchase a new computer system or buy a library of titles. Of these titles, 245,000 units were of the budget genre. Of all sales, the top sellers featured violent themes, such as WarCraft II from Blizzard and Star Wars Rebel Assault II from

LucasArts. Just those two titles alone sold nearly 94,000 copies in January. "Softer" titles, such as Myst and Microsoft' Flight Simulator, accounted for around 78,000 units, far fewer than those considered more violent in tone. Mayhem continues to drive sales, according to these estimates. And when you pack that violence into a bundle, sales increase.

DEVELOPER DUMPS

ONLINE VIDEO EDITING FOR MAJOR OS
MCXpress for the Macintosh and Windows NT machines has been announced by Avid Technology, Inc. The product is a PCI-based, digital, nonlinear online video editing solution that enables maximum project throughput, handles project scheduling, and produces pro-quality video for distribution on a variety of mediums. This turnkey solution's pricing starts at $15,000.

For Power Mac 8500 or 9500s, there is an easy-to-use interface that controls Avid's AVR75 60-field images. CCIR-601 media is supported for images at 720x485. This makes the product highly suitable for broadcast applications. Included is a QuickTime(TM) codec, real-time audio EQ, EDL support, four audio tracks, batch digitizing and advanced media management. The Mac product comes with the Avid Broadcast Video Board.

For Windows NT, MCXpress is the next iteration of the company's Real Impact(TM) product. There's support for CCIR-601 media, MPEG output, support for over 20 standard file formats and an AVI codec for full-screen, 24-bit color images. Integrated into the offering is a title tool, plug-in effects architecture, on-line help, plus a built-in media library.

DYNAMIC WWW PUBLISHING IS THE GOAL
One of the "problems" with the WWW is that design and typography is somewhat lacking. If one could only apply the desktop publishing metaphor to the WWW, why, there would be more interesting pages and more dynamic content. FutureTense, Inc., believes they might have solved this particular problem with a new product they are now beta testing. Called Texture, this offering is trying to bring the print and on-line environment together by enabling design and typography control by WWW authors. The final, small-in-size files, are displayed on the WWW using a Java-based viewer. Plus, Java is not browser-restrictive, so folk who are running any browser will be able to view the content the way the author planned. The Texture viewer is actually a Java applet which the user can either download for immediate use while on-line, or preinstall on his or her computer. Texture is going to deliver dynamic content. Authors will build a basic design template which will then be linked directly to a Web's URL. This, then, allows for the content to be updated whenever necessary. Text and graphics may be placed anywhere on the page. Run-arounds and sophisticated layouts are possible because text can be linked together. The authoring environment will ship during Q2 of this year for Windows 95 and Windows NT, with a Macintosh version to follow soon thereafter. The SRP for this program will be around $495. Texture viewers can be downloaded at http://www.futuretense.com.

iband JOINS THE BAND
A developer of Internet/Web development tools has come to an agreement with Macromedia wherein they will be acquired by the former. Should have seen this coming--iband developed Backstage and, with Macromedia fully forging ahead with their own WWW tools (such as Shockwave), the acquisition makes a great deal of sense. Now Macromedia will have a full suite of WWW tools, much as they do multimedia tools with their Director Suite of products

and their FreeHand graphics studio suite. The tools Macromedia is acquiring from iband will integrate page design with database connectivity, discussion groups and more with a visual, point-and-click environment.

Backstage Designer offers an easy-to-use page editor with full WYSIWYG functionality and will allow you to include pages with images, Shockwave movies and Java applets. Backstage Desktop Studio builds WWW sites and includes the Designer and the Backstage Objects. The latter is 16 built-in objects for adding desktop database connectivity, threads, forms, automated email and more. Backstage for Windows 95 and Windows NT may be downloaded from Macromedia's WWW site at http://www.macromedia.com while in its current beta stage. The Macintosh and UNIX versions are due later this year. For those interested in building their own objects, the Macromedia SDK will be also become available soon.

HEADING BACKSTAGE
Corel has plans for a new Internet product suite that'll release next month. Including programs such as CorelWEB.DESIGNER, CorelWEB.GALLERY and CorelWEB.TRANSIT, the company has decided to involve themselves in a strategic agreement with Macromedia, Inc. The result is that Macromedia's Backstage Designer for Windows and Windows 95 will be included with Corel's WEB.DESIGNER product. Backstage integrates page design into an easy-to-use environment that builds interactive WWW sites--without programming! You can investigate further at the WWW sites for Corel at http://www.corel.com and Macromedia at http://www.macromedia.com. In fact, at the latter site, you can also download the BETA version of the software. Awesome!

SDKs DRIVE DEVELOPER WORLD
There's a new developers program that will enable extensive tech and marketing support for Microsoft's Softimage subsidiary product, Softimage(r). Called the Softimage Software Developers Kit (quite appropro), developers will have access to nearly all aspects of Softimage 3D, the company's high-end 3D animation software. This SDK supports Microsoft Windows NT and Silicon Graphics platforms. Developers will have direct access to animation and modeling in the SAAPHIRE toolkit, rendering with the mental ray toolkit, and motion-capture controls with the Channels toolkit in this software program. Plus, apps can be run as standalones or they can be fully integrated into Softimage 3D for the Windows NT and Silicon Graphics IRIS programs. This new SDK replaces the D-Kit programming interface for Softimage 3D. The kit is currently in beta testing and will be available in mid-1996 when the Softimage 3D v. 3.5 ships. You may find more info on the WWW at http://www.softimage.com/ and http://www.microsoft.com/.

32-BIT EDITING SOLUTION FOR LESS THAN $1K
Bravo for Truevision -- they've intro'd their Bravado(R) 1000. This is a real-time 32-bit video capture and editing product specifically for Windows 95 machines. Priced at less than $1,000, this system uses a new PCI Motion-JPEG card from Truevision plus the new 32-bit version of Adobe Premiere(TM) 4.2. The board captures and plays full-screen, full-motion video. Plus, it supports composite and S-video I/O in PAL/SECAM and NTSC standards. This bundle allows you to edit as many as 99 tracks of video and to incorporate a variety of transitions and other video effects. Microsoft's Plug-And-Play initiative is supported under Windows 95. Expect this bundle product to be available within 30 days.

ON-LINE STUFF

GOODIES ENROUTE TO AOL
There are going to be some 36 new offerings provided by America Online over the next 18 months or so, and all from one important provider. AOL has just signed a new, expanded programming agreement with NTN Communications Inc. for such work. These new titles will be available in Sports Central and Games Studio. Other work the company is involved in includes content for ABC, MTV, Nickelodean and Ringling Brothers, also appearing on AOL.

CONSORTIUM JOINED BY APPLE
Affording the company the ability to contribute specs for technologies that will enrich pages, plus the ability to bring into play cross-platform ideas, Apple has joined the World Wide Web Consortium. This ISO is run by the Laboratory for Computer Sciences at MIT and develops common technology standards for the WWW. Expect Apple to intro advanced type technology with Netscape and Adobe, plus their 3DMF file format for 3D graphics.

WEB WORKIN' MADE SMARTER
There is sooo much to see and do on the WWW that organizing your access time can sometimes be difficult. There is that priority, and then this site reveals yet another layer, and, before you know it, your entire day is shot. CE Software believes they have a solution, and that solution is called WebArranger Software. The software works with Netscape's Navigator 2.0 and allows you to, automatically, monitor changes to your favorite WWW sites.

Plus, the company has a new WebArranger Software Development Kit. This offering allows you to capture, organize and automate the Internet according to your work requirements. Plus, you can integrate net-based info into your off-line computing time. With this SDK, developers can create plug-ins which extend product functionality. This SDK is going to be available, free of charge, via download from the company's WWW site.

ACADEMY AWARDS WWW SITE
There's a new, interactive, official guide to the Academy Awards on the Web. From Informix Software, using the company's Illustra database software, the site is called The Envelope Please and allows you to access info about the Academy Awards dating back to 1927. The site may be reached at http://oscars.guide.com. Plus, you'll find an Oscar contest plus interviews and a calendar of live events.

CONQUEST APPEAL
The first, single-game-dedicated WWW site is about to be launched by Interplay. Expected to open April 10th is the Conquest of the New World(TM) site and it will incorporate Shockwave technology from Macromedia. This means the site will have interactive multimedia content so when you logon to play the game you'll receive immediate, dynamic animations. Demos of combat sequences from Conquest will also be recreated for you to play free of charge without the need to download the game onto your own hard drive. THe game itself will go on sale on April 24th. You can access the WWW site at http://www.conquest.interplay.com.