

JAVA SHOPPING

If you're into Java applets, or wish to license a Java applet, you usually spend a great deal of time on the WWW simply hunting for this content. Now, EarthWeb has announced their Java Shop(TM) located in their Gamelan(TM) Site at <http://www.gamelan.com>. The shop includes access to the company's Chat client applet, at no cost to users for non-commercial use. This applet gives you real-time interaction on a WWW page that's updated each time it is launched on a licensee's Web site. EarthWeb Site Navigator and EarthWeb Site Tracker will also be available for sale on this site by the end of this month.

ANOTHER STEP TO DOMINATION

With Microsoft riding one of the biggest cyberboards on the WWW, they've now signed an agreement with Nippon Telephone & Telegraph Corporation that'll bring The Microsoft Network to Japan. This will happen within the next few weeks and there will be 45 access points for MSN through NTT PC Communications Group. Already, MSN has around 850,000 subscribers, and the Japanese additions will certainly aid in pushing the service to more than a million subscribers. And the European deals haven't even been announced yet.

NEW WWW DEVELOPMENT MAG

Those who design, develop and maintain WWW sites now have a new Miller-Freeman publication to encourage and help them with their work. The new publication is Web Techniques and the editor-in-chief is Michael Floyd. Technical editor is Peter Varhol. Both have in-depth experience in the computer publications arena, most specifically in on-line technologies. The goal of the publication is to deliver hard-to-find technical info and sort through all of the new products, services and technologies and bring some semblance of order to the miasma of materials for WWW developers.

ICE SLAMMIN' ON THE WEB

The first National Hockey League team to open a WWW site is the San Jose Sharks -- not surprising, really, when you consider their proximity to Silicon Valley. So the team has started a 100-prize, 30-day party. Each day, prizes will be awarded, with a true plethora of prizes to be given away on April 15th. That'll ease tax pains! Each day a new Sharks "not so trivial" multiple choice question will be posted for fans to answer on-line. Three of those who answer correctly will win each day, with 13 lucky winners selected on April 15th. Prizes will include autographed lithographs to souvenirs. Check the site out at <http://www.sj-sharks.com>.

WEB OLYMPICS

NBC is going all-out for their coverage of the 1996 Olympic Games. Not only on TV, my friends, but now also on the WWW and on MSN. All of these additional offerings will complement the television coverage and the cyberspace inclusions will present video, audio, text and photos of the Olympic events, pre-Olympic stories, and other value-added features. Once the Olympics are underway, NBC will feature nightly Golden Chats. These will present the notables, from athletes to coaches, discussing the day's events, plus up-to-the-minute stories from NBC on-air and on-line folk. You can reach the Olympic sites at <http://www.olympic.nbc.com/>.

The company has also come to agreements with Excite Inc., Infoseek Corp., Lycos Inc., The

McKinley Group, Inc. and Yahoo! Inc, which will result in a far more easy-to-use search and directory page. This new offering will be available to you when you access Netscape's Internet site using your browser which, of course, Netscape hopes is their Navigator. Future versions of Navigator will have a search button that'll link you directly to this search site. Once you're there, you may select the service you wish and obtain a preview and a link to the individual services. The Netscape WWW site already has more than 45 million hits per day.

TV GUIDE

You can get TV Guide program listings and grids at News Corp.'s iGuide Web service at <http://www.iguide.com/tv>.

HOME SHOPPING LIKE NEVER BEFORE

For all those of you who are shop-'till-you-drop spendaholics, there's a new cable TV home shopping show, the Outlet Mall Network, coming in July live from Sarasota, Florida. The folks in charge say that there'll be 10 million viewers when it debuts and will offer 12 hours of live, interactive programming on Saturdays and Sundays to cable operators who will get up-front payments of up to 8% and revenue-sharing guarantees. What makes this shopping show unique is that merchandisers will have the opportunity to own 15-to 30-minute time segments each week, setting their own retail prices--an advantage not available on any other shopping network. The Outlet Mall will offer brand-name home furnishings, gourmet cooking products, electronics, automotive items, fashions, jewelry and sporting goods.

ITT MAY TAKE OVER SPORTSCHANNEL NY

There's the possibility that the Sportschannel New York may be taken over by ITT Corporation because of negotiations regarding a loan made by ITT to Cablevision Systems Corporation.

\$3 MILLION INVESTMENT

SportsLine USA Inc. has received a \$3 million investment from Reuters NewMedia. This agreement gives exclusive rights to Reuters to distribute SportsLine content as an integral part of their sports news service. Additionally, minor stake investments have been completed to SportsLine by Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, TCI Online Sports Holdings Inc., Alliance Technology Ventures, and New York Life Insurance Company. You can reach the SportsLine WWW site at <http://www.sportsline.com>.

IS V FOR VICTORY?

The results are in, and Mr. Bill and the current administration will NOT be determining if certain TV programs will be banned in Boston thanks to the V-Chip. To further validate this decision, a survey was taken regarding a similar chip for computers. If you believe everything you read, the survey indicated that 97 percent of the parents polled would like to be able to screen and control what on-line information is available to their children. Additionally, 90 percent of the adults in this survey believe that a rating system should be in place to help monitor on-line/interactive services.

SHOW ME

Now you can logon to the ZD Net Trade Show Calendar at

<http://www.zdnet.com/zdi/calendar/calendar.html> for all of the information dealing with computer trade shows around the world. This tool was developed with Convergent Media Systems and is based on that company's recently announced Trade Show Central at <http://www.tscentral.com>. The ZD offering allows you to access data by designating computing categories of interest and then searching the database by location or dates.

SHARING THE GOODIES

One of the leading software shareware libraries has always been a Ziff-Davis tradition. Now they have furthered their usability by offering their ZD Net Software Library to WWW users. Without fees or registration requirements, other sites could learn a great deal from the way this unit manages their biz! You can reach the site at <http://www.zdnet.com/zdi/software>. You'll find over 10,000 items there, including software, shareware and freeware, all fully screened and recommended by the Ziff-Davis experts. The manager of the library is Preston Gralla, who is the ZD Net executive editor and who is also the shareware columnist for that heavy, heavy duty Computer Shopper publication.

PAPER INTO WWW PAGES

Xerox Corporation is going to make it possible, through some pretty interesting OCR technology, for you to convert your paper docs into HTML documents for WWW display. The product is called TextBridge Pro 96 and it is used in conjunction with HoTMetaL light from SoftQuad. Fully compliant with Windows 95 and Windows NT and Windows 3.1, you can obtain more info on this new offering at <http://www.xerox.com>.

OTHER FUN STUFF

20TH ANNIVERSARY OF STAR WARS

There never seems to be a void in the Star Wars ongoing promos. Now, 20th Century Fox and Lucasfilm will release Special Editions of The Empire Strikes Back and Return of the Jedi to theaters in 1997. These films will release after the release of the Star Wars Special Edition, all designed to help celebrate the 20th anniversary of Star Wars' initial theater release. These films will offer fully restored prints with enhanced visual effects, soundtracks that have been digitally remastered, and new footage. According to George Lucas, more than \$10 million has been invested in these films' restoration.

MEN IN TIGHTS

If you're sick and tired of George Clooney news, don't read this item. Another Batman movie will be produced, Batman and Robin, the fourth installment in the Batman series by Warner Brothers. Arnold Schwarzenegger, George Clooney, Chris O'Donnell, Uma Thurman and Alicia Silverstone are to star in this show of men in tights.

Clooney is Batman, O'donnell is the orphaned circus acrobat, Dick Grayson, and now for the feminists--Batgirl--by Silverstone. Good ole Arnie S. is the baddie, Mr. Freeze (no, not of the snow-cone dynasty), and Uma is Poison Ivy, a good-girl turns bad.

FILM & ARTS PRESENTS JAZZ LEGEND

The Film and Arts Network is going to present the TV premiere of one of the last recorded concerts by Miles Davis. This jazz legend may be seen in Bravo's Friday Night Jazzfest on Friday, March 29, at 10:10 p.m., E.T. The concert was taped at the Munich Klaviersommer in

1987 and Miles Davis and Group was joined by other talented musicians. The show was directed by Janos Darvas.

GOIN' COUNTRY

Wednesday, October 2, is the date set for the 30th Annual Country Music Awards, to be telecast from the Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville, TN. CBS will televise the proceedings with Walter Miller producing the show and Paul Miller directing.

ANIMATED ANNOUNCEMENT

MTV has just signed a major TV and movie development deal with one of the leading animators of TV cartoons -- Klasky Csupo, Inc. One reason for the success of this arrangement is Klasky's Rugrats series that is already a smash-hit on Nickelodeon which is, of course, a subsidiary of MTV Networks. The studio also draws USA Network's Duckman and CBS' Santo Bugito. You can now expect to see Klasky work not only on MTV, but they now have an "in" with sister divisions Viacom and Paramount.

RETIREMENT SHORT-LIVED

One of the most admired baseball players who played with the New York Yankees, Toronto Blue Jays and Cleveland Indians was Dave Winfield. As a matter of fact, he announced his retirement just a couple of weeks ago. Now, he's going to become a studio analyst for FOX as that company enters its first season covering baseball. Winfield was an active player in 23 major league seasons and is the first announcer Fox has hired for their baseball pregame show.

CAR-JACKED BY TOUCHSTONE

With director Steve Oedekerk of Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls fame, and Tim Robbins and Martin Lawrence as stars, Touchstone has announced they will begin production of a new comedy entitled Nothing to Lose this coming April. To be distributed by Buena Vista Pictures, the plot revolves around a high-strung ad exec (Robbins) whose life is slowly coming apart at the seams. To top things off, he's car-jacked by Lawrence. Fed up, the exec turns the tables on the kidnapper. Ultimately, the two consort and devise a plan to wreak vengeance upon the exec's unfaithful wife.

PUCK IT

With a half billion dollars on the table, there are rumors circulating that the Philadelphia Flyers of the NHL and the CoreStates arena might be bought by Comcast Corporation. Comcast is best known for their ownership of the QVC home shopping service and they also are involved in home satellite TV systems and cellular communications services. According to info, the founder of the hockey team, Ed Snider, will retain a minority interest in the new CoreStates Center arena. The Six'ers have not commented.

STRIKE VOTE IS IN

CBS is about to be struck by the Writers Guild of America after an overwhelming vote of the latter to walk out on April 1st when their contract with the network expires. The union represents desk assistants, editors, graphic artists, news writers and producers. The union has already settled with Capital Cities/ABC. With CBS' news ratings already in the dumper,

thanks to a lackluster Dan Rather and poor news direction, a strike is NOT what is needed by CBS at this time in their news division.

NFL PRESEASON SET

There are five networks that will broadcast the 15 preseason NFL games. The networks will have three preseason games each, with ABC broadcasting the Hall of Fame game at Canton, Ohio, on July 27th. That game will feature the Indianapolis Colts playing the New Orleans Saints. NBC, CBS, TNT and ESPN will divide the other available games. ESPN will broadcast the Tokyo game between Pittsburgh and San Diego on July 27th, and ABC will carry the Dallas versus Kansas City Game from Mexico on August 5th. Plus, each of these games will have instant replay that will incorporate a coaches' challenge system. No game interruptions are expected. We'll see . . .

GREATEST STORY ON CD-ROM

The greatest story ever told, now on CD-ROM, will be introduced by Charlton Heston on QVC on March 31 (Palm Sunday), from 8:00 to 9:00 am, and from 6:00 to 7:00 pm, ET. The actor will intro his new CD-ROM, Charlton heston's Voyage Through the Bible: Old Testament, which was produces by Jones Digital Century, Inc., in conjunction with Agamemmnon Films and Good Times Interactive. Heston will not only discuss how the CD-ROM was created, but also give additional anecdotes and insights about his Holy Land travels as well.

ANIMAL PROTECTION AWARDS

The Ark Trust, Inc., is a national non-profit organization that works with the media to publicize animal issues, such as animal protection. Each year, this organization sponsors an awards ceremony called the Genesis Awards that honors those in the media and the artistic community who have illuminated animal issues. The Tenth Annual Genesis Awards will occur on March 30th, hosted by Dennis Franz and Leeza Gibbons. Award recipients this year include Babe for Feature Film, Planet of the Apes (Film Classic), Chicago Hope (TV Dramatic Series), Mad About You (TV Comedy Series), The Simpsons (TV Comedy Series, Ongoing Commitment), In Pursuit of Honor from HBO (Movie for TV), 20/20 from ABC (TV Newsmagazine--Network) and The Economist (Periodical). Director Nicholas Brandt will be presented with the 1995 Doris Day Music Award for Michael Jackson's Earth Song video. The awards show will be telecast on the Discovery Channel on May 25th.

NEW TWOSOME

Damon Wyans and Adam Sandler are now actively engaged in shooting a new action-comedy film from Universal Pictures called Bulletproof. The co-star is James Cann, a drug kingpin, is the target of two friends: Damon, who is an undercover copy, and Sandler, a small-time crook. The director is Ernest Dickerson and the producer is Robert Simonds. Filming is taking place around Los Angeles and in Inyo County.

LIVE FROM OUR HOME OFFICE IN SOUIX CITY, IOWA

From USA Today come the ten best-selling titles. For the sixth week in a row Primary Colors, by Anonymous, which depicts a presidential election campaign that is rumored to be based upon Hill-Billy and Hillary Whatever-Clinton's campaign, remained in first place.

1. Primary Colors by Anonymous; Random House, \$24 (No.1 last week)

2. Bad Hare Day by R.L. Stine; Scholastic, \$3.99 (No. 2 last week)
3. Snow Falling on Cedars by David Guterson; Vintage, \$12 (No. 6 last week)
4. The Rainmaker by John Grisham; Island Books, \$7.99 (No. 5 last week)
5. Egg Monsters from Mars by R.L. Stine; Scholastic, \$3.99 (New this week)
6. Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus by John Gray; HarperCollins, \$23 (No. 8 last week)
7. Rush Limbaugh Is a Big Fat Idiot by Al Franken; Delacorte, \$21.95 (No. 3 last week)
8. The Glass Lake by Maeve Binchy; Dell, \$7.50 (No. 7 last week)
9. The Cove by Catherine Coulter; Jove, \$6.50 (No. 4 last week)
10. The Way of the Wizard by Deepak Chopra; Harmony, \$15.95 (No. 23 last week)

SPECIAL FX

Warner Digital Studios, a full-service digital visual-effects and model house, will provide special visual effects for Eraser starring Arnold Schwarzenegger and Mars Attacks! starring Jack Nicholson from Warner Bros.

Among the new staff members brought on board are George Joblove, director of technology, who came from R/GA Digital Studios, where he was director of technology. Joblove received a Scientific and Engineering Academy Award in 1994 for his work on the digital motion-picture retouching system, and was affiliated with George Lucas' Industrial Light & Magic from 1985 to 1993.

TV RATINGS SHOW NBC REMAINS IN 1ST PLACE

NBC continues to dominate television as the most-watched network. The network not only had seven of the top 10 shows, but 12 of the top 20 offerings, as well. The network ended up with an 11.4 rating and a 19 percent share of the audience. ABC came in 2nd place, and CBS third. However, even though Fox and UPN came in lower with 7.3 and 3.7 ratings respectively, those numbers are still better than their averages for the season-to-date. By the way, a single rating point is equal to about 959,000 households. The top 10 shows were:

1. NBC's Seinfeld
2. NBC's Friends
3. ABC's Home Improvement
4. ABC's 20/20
5. NBC's Caroline in the City
6. NBC's Frasier-Special
7. NBC's The Single Guy
8. CBS' 60 Minutes
9. NBC Monday Night Movies--A Face to Die For
10. NBC's Frasier

PERSPECTIVES: Rational Investigations of New Products

Bad Mojo from Pulse Entertainment
for PCs running Windows

by Lance Forrest

You're a cockroach, scurrying about in a seedy, dilapidated bar/apartment complex in San Francisco. You must navigate around roach traps, fly paper, wet paint, rodent carcasses, decaying meat (with maggots, of course), festering fish, and the list goes on and on, as you unlock the clues to your re-transformation. You see, you haven't always been a cockroach--you're actually a geeky entomology professor who turned a lifetime fascination with roaches into thesis work on the ultimate roach pesticide. That, combined with growing up in an orphanage, and looking like a cross between Pee Wee Herman and George McFly, was a pretty bad hand to be dealt. But as a cockroach, you can find your roots and the seeds of your paranoia, if you don't die first. That's Bad Mojo in a nutshell, or should I say exoskeleton.

Gameplay is ridiculously simple—the four arrow buttons are all you need to tell the cockroach which way to go. You can climb most objects, push small items around, catch a ride on an airstream, or a willing moth, and complete an electrical circuit (becoming an electrical conduit) without consequence, if you have to. Also, you have access to all of the building's plumbing systems so you never have to use a door. Sounds like fun--there are many deadly impediments for such a small insect . . .not to mention the voracious cat, Franz.

Despite its simplicity and gritty subject matter, this game is drop-dead gorgeous. The graphics are realistic and visually appealing. The cockroach you command looks and moves like a cockroach, with realistic six-leg mechanics as it walks from obstacle to obstacle and twitters its antennae. The kitchen scene is especially memorable with its cornucopia of colorful rotting meats and vegetables (thank goodness there is no smell associated with this game, or even an iron-gut like me would be losing his last meal).

There are a couple of caveats you should know before you buy this game. Gameplay is fairly short—around 20 hours for an average adventure gamer. That's about half a game in my estimation, but unlike many graphic adventures, you can explore different paths and check out the multiple endings if you want to play the game a second or third time. The detail to this game is astounding—there are many elements that you'll miss the first time around, like the eye pictures on Eddie's wall that blink or follow you as you move around, the weird movies in the liquor bottles on the bar when you climb them in the wrong sequence, and all of the backstory in various pictures and newspapers strewn about the building. For laughs, Pulse put an ad for Iron Helix just above the filthy urinal.

The other caveat is that gameplay pretty much comes to a halt when you can't find the next task or puzzle. There's lots of help in the game, though, with many helpful "visions" that lead you along the right path, yet there are times where an inexperienced gamer will have problems finding the next hot spot. Because of this problem, some gamers will stop playing before they finish: the story will not be compelling enough to carry them through the boring sequences.

Pulse Entertainment hit a triple with Bad Mojo. I would recommend this game to anyone who enjoys adventure games AND doesn't mind see putrefying meat on their computer screen--this really is a teenage boy's answer to Myst. If you like action, though, don't bother--the pace of the game is slow and requires patience as you explore the world as a six-legged creature. For those of you that take the challenge, it'll change the way you think about cockroaches. Besides, how bad can a game be when the credits thank the late author Franz Kafka and mythologist Joseph Campbell? --Lance Forrest

Game requirements

Bad Mojo requires a 486/66MHz or better, Windows 3.1 or higher, a double-speed CD-ROM drive, 20MB hard drive space, and 8MB RAM.

Cybermage from ORIGIN Systems
for PC compatible computers with CD-ROM

by Lance Forrest

Another Doom clone, can you believe it? Or maybe the question should be: Can you stomach another one? This time, though, it's a comic book world created by D.W. Bradley. You play the super-hero, of course, armed with a DarkLight crystal that bestows the magical powers of the Mara-Tach-Mang. The problem: your archnemesis, NeCrom has tapped into the same mana source. You must battle NeCrom's evil minions until you reach the ultimate 10th level, where you battle him directly. (You'll be hitting the space bar lots for this one.)

Gameplay is similar to other first-person action games which take the basic Doom shoot-everything motif. Although Cybermage may have a few adventure and RPG elements, it's primarily an action game, where spell-casting and trigger-pulling are the main tasks. You'll also have to fly around with a jump jet, drive a few heavy tanks and even try your hand at piloting a stolen police hovercar. If you're like me, you'll shout an emphatic "Sweet" the first time you drive a tank over a couple dozen bad guys, then catch all of the mana from their souls.

Don't shoot too wildly, though, because you'll frequently run into a friendly character who has something important to tell you. The only interaction here is for you to listen to what they are saying because there are no two-way conversations. This slows down the pace of the game a bit, and at times it becomes monotonous to listen to some of the longwinded soliloquies. Yet, these character interactions are a pleasant change from the no brainer "find the blue key for the blue door motif." There are also a few puzzles along the way, similar to those in Dark Forces.

Although Origin doesn't raise the ante much for this clone, it is filled with solid, enticing gameplay and Origin's attention to detail is wonderful. Graphics are gorgeous in SVGA mode and the stereo sound effects rock. When someone is talking to you, turn in a circle and you'll be amazed at the accuracy of the stereo effects!

Cybermage is a resource hog. On a 486/100MHz with 16MB RAM, it was sluggish at times, especially on the more graphic-intensive levels. A P90 with 16MB faired much better--in fact, flawlessly.

Don't buy this game if you don't like Doom. It's a first-person action shooting game. If you're looking for gameplay like Origin's System Shock, look elsewhere. Cybermage is Doom with a comic-book atmosphere and some character interaction and settings that raise it above

average. I found myself glued to this game until I fireshocked the evil NeCrom.--Lance Forrest

Game requirements

Cybermage requires a 486/66mhz or better, 10MB hard drive space, 8MB RAM and a double-speed CD-ROM drive.

Mudgeon: CyberChat

I honestly believe that, of all gaming genres, the realm of fantasy and science-fiction holds the most fun and intrigue for me. Because the possibilities are endless, because there are no limits placed upon the "could be" aspects of storylines, and because today's game developers understand that the suspension of reality requires a solid gameplay foundation, today's fantasy and science-fiction role-playing and fantasy environs are exciting and challenging.

Most FRPGs and science-fiction titles are graphic adventures with a first person or oblique perspective. You learn, you slay, you increase your character(s) characteristics, you acquire treasure, and you move on to increasingly more difficult challenges. Few stray beyond this most successful presentation. Those that do accomplish something new and unique, such as Bungie's Marathon and Marathon II, and Interplay's Descent, incorporate the sound elements of such design and move them into action-based delights. They garner enormous sales for their work. However, let us not forget that the basic grounding of solid entertainment will result in an evergreen title for companies, offerings that sell for months and months and stay on retailers' shelves because they are always in demand.

Such is the case for Fantasy General from Strategic Simulations, Inc. This is a true strategy game that builds upon the company's milsim successes of Allied General and Panzer General. As a true member of SSI's Five-Star series, Fantasy General applies the military controls you have come to expect from a superior milsim and then applied a thick veneer of fantasy. You command armies containing some of the most amazing troops one could ever imagine and, at the same time, determine what type of research should be undertaken to ensure you are never technologically-challenged without the best and most impressive forces you can bring to the field of play.

As is the case with SSI's Five-Star series, your area of command is depicted with hexagonal layout, much as milsim board games have been represented for decades. But there the similarity halts--the graphics are more than adequate, but the sound track that accompanies your game is, quite honestly, one of the most appealing to ever support computer game play. Using choirs and orchestras, your entire mood is inspired by the rejoicing of voices, the soothing tones of inspirational song, and the mood-altering Gregorian chants. The uniqueness of the sound track actually inspires you onward, for when you are victorious, the adoration in song is highly addictive--you want more!

The strategies involved depend upon the difficulty level you set for yourself. No matter where you start, novice or advance, your movements must always be based upon not only what you believe is an accomplishable goal (such as acquiring an enemy location), but also as to what you think might be needed defensively. For arrayed against you are the evil minions of the Shadowlord and, unless you are also taking care to protect your forces even while you are moving them offensively, you could find your entire plan disrupted, shattered and destroyed quite quickly. When your light infantry is suddenly assaulted by a group of

extremely strong flying monkeys that suddenly appear from out of nowhere, you may find your unit disrupted and fleeing the location.

Magic is employed both by you and against you. Although magic is a subtle part of play, the main course of events will be determined by your troops. Some have special abilities, such as immunity to magic, while others are specialists in support action only, such as your Archers. Believe me, their demise can be quite sudden. I did find that Archers could be adequately protected by one's own flying units, such as a Bombardier. You must learn which units are best employed against other enemy units. For example, your Light Cavalry are excellent scouts but do not fare well when brought up against heavier enemy units, especially enemy Cavalry. Yet, they can be employed well when chasing down vile hostiles that have taken losses and are attempting to flee the scene of battle. These obnoxious foes should be eliminated, otherwise you stand the risk of their healing themselves and coming back to haunt you later in the battles. Your Light Cavalry can pursue them and take them out of action. But be certain you don't send your Light Cavalry into a trap that finds them without support!

Experience counts! Whenever units succeed, whether your units or those cretins of the Shadowlord's, they become better at whatever they do. Therefore, you should remain cognizant of how well each unit is doing so you do not waste them. Sending a small, but experienced, force against a crowd of horrors will certainly accomplish your opponent becoming damaged--but at the expense of the possibility of your entire experience unit becoming unusable dust.

I found the Siege Weapons to be the most effective in confronting any enemy unit. They can not only tackle cities and heavy units, but also enemy flying units as well. With opposing Sky Hunters out for your Spellcasters, Archers, Apprentices and Bombardiers, your Siege Weapons can certainly shake the stuffing from their bodies. Plus, they offer support fire for your units that attack a city. Their drawbacks include speed of movement, which they lack. When you consider that each scenario must be completed within a certain number of turns, your plans for these units must be competent and exact to gain the best use of their capabilities.

Plus, you have certainly heard of the old adage To Divide is to Conquer. Such is also the case with Fantasy General. I learned, the hard way, that the enemy thoroughly enjoys trying to split your forces by using attack as a means of drawing strength from your main group. Protect your army as you move forward to acquire locations and succeed at your designated goal. Should there be multiple objectives, those that are further in distance need to be tackled by your mobile forces, but always keep in mind a split force is not as powerful as one held together by sheer force of numbers.

I beg you--do not pack your units together so tightly that there is no escape for those who may be taking a true beating in the front lines. If a unit is unable to move through your lines, it will simply remain where it is located and continue to be churned into broken bone and split skin. Always consider unit multiples to be your best method of success so that the enemy is the one always outnumbered, not you.

The game requires that you complete several scenarios as you win continent after continent away from the Shadowlord's terrible grip. There are five continents to defeat. You must select one of the four main characters as your hero. Each character has a specific set of attributes. For example, Knight Marshal Calis can heal all wounds on all friendly units once per battle. Sorceress Mordra, on the other hand, has a way with Beast units, which she can recruit rather quickly and she can summon two random Magical units at the start of each battle. Depending upon how you see your approach to the game, your hero selection plays

an important role in your ultimate success.

This is not a 3D graphic game full of whiz-bang special effects. This is a grand strategy game that will require brain activity to defeat the enemy. This is a grand software offering that incorporates the elements of fantasy into a darn fine military simulation offering. This is a game that I intend to enjoy for at least another hundreds hours or so, for the gameplay is exciting and the mood set by the soundtrack is awesome. I certainly recommend you take a gander at this title at your local retail store as a possible purchase for your software library if you enjoy strategy games.--Mudgeon