

INSIDE GAMES & ENTERTAINMENT UPDATE

Volume 2, Issue 47

Published by:
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COMPUTER, VIDEO & ON-LINE GAME NEWS

HOLY GRAIL--IT'S MONTY PYTHON

The name synonymous with the Bureau of Funny Walks, Monty Python, can now be a member of your most closely guarded software library through the release, by 7th Level, of Monty Python and the Holy Grail. Included in this new offering is an extra bonus. The original film's top-secret, never-before performed scene, King Brian the Wild, is included in this title. And it's up to you to find the Grail, which means you must use your wits. This is a strategy game that's an assortment of logic puzzles, games and clues, all linked together. The off-kilter hodgepodge disguises many of the solutions and you must make some sense of this assemblage of goofiness. When you complete your quest, you are rewarded with the aforementioned secret scene.

The comedy is everywhere! You don't even have to play the strategy game to delight in the foul pestilence, rude Frenchmen, lavish song and dance routines, and the delightfully devilish opportunities to suffer a vile and painful death as you become a participant with your favorite film bits. You'll encounter Sex-Starved Ladies of Castle Anthrax, unlock the secrets of the Black Knight, and play the arcade favorites of Drop Dead, Catch the Cow and Burn the Witch. Or how about matching your wits against the wily Bridgekeeper? The backgrounds and characters all taken directly from the Python film, plus there's new artwork as well as the quaintly grotesque creations of original Python artist, Terry Gilliam. There's also newly recorded voice material performed by Python members Eric Idle, Terry Gilliam, Michael Palin and Terry Jones. Eric was also the executive co-producer of this CD-ROM treat.

ALCHEMIST ADVENTURE

The evil Nemesis has imprisoned the four great alchemists of the Great Underground Empire. With richly detailed worlds, you must find the elements of air, earth, fire and water through exploration of the Asylum, the Conservatory, the Castle and the Monastery. These four ancient worlds are replete with puzzles and dangers and you must piece together past events to solve the mysterious curse you find in Zork Nemesis. Ahhh, yes, the next adventure in the famous Zork saga is unfolding from Activision for PC CD-ROM. This offering includes the company's 360-degree Z-Vision technology and a realistic virtual world as you, once again, enter the Underground Empire and the Forbidden Lands. There's more than 50 minutes of live-action video in this graphic adventure that features 14 Hollywood actors. Joe

Napolitano, who has directed such TV shows as The X Files, Murder One, Picket Fences, Northern Exposure and Quantum Leap, directed the game's video sequences. The visuals in the game were created by Mauro Borrell who was the production designer/director of such films as Batman Forever, Dracula and The Godfather II. And solve this mystery you must, otherwise you, yourself, will become trapped forever by the sinister Nemesis.

SOCCKER PLAYERS HAVE LEATHER...WELL, YOU GET THE PICTURE

Folks that follow soccer games are among the most enthusiastic and passionate fans in the world--they live and breathe the game. Addressing this rowdy crowd comes BMG Interactive, an emerging force in entertainment software that has signed a strategic licensing agreement with Major League Soccer (MLS), the new U.S. professional outdoor league, Division I that will debut April 6th. MLS will use the MLS titles, official teams, logos and players, as well as the technology from Z-AXIS, their development partner, whose most notable product is the John Madden Football series.

BMG's agreement with Z-AXIS is to publish several MLS games in the next four years. BMG has the bonus of Don Traeger, the company's VP who had been with Electronic Arts and was a co-founder of the distinguished EA Sports brand -- the industry's most successful line of sports games. BMG Interactive has already established publishing relationships with many of the industry's most promising developers who will produce timely titles for next generation systems under the BMG Interactive label. This growing list currently includes Boss Game Studios, DMA Design Ltd., Interactive Studios, New Level Software, NMS Software, and Z-AXIS. BMG Interactive is the entertainment software publishing arm of BMG Entertainment, the \$5.3 billion entertainment division of Bertelsmann AG, a \$13.6 billion worldwide media enterprise.

The first of the MLS titles is expected to reach retail shelves in spring 1997 for the next generation systems, that includes the PlayStation, Saturn and PC-CD.

PUMPIN' UP THE GRAPHICS

The enormous potential for 3DO to continue to contribute mightily to the digital entertainment world remains in place. With their M2 technology already acquired by consumer electronics megalith Matsushita, there are other 3DO technologies of interest to dozens of other companies. Cirrus Logic has decided they wanted an accelerator for their technologies and has licensed a 3D engine from 3DO Corporation. Christmas of this year is the expected delivery date of products incorporating this technology. Already validated in silicon, this engine was part of the 64-bit M2 platform and is able to process over 500,000 polygons per second at its peak performance and generate more than 100 million pixels per second with its rendering engine.

SOUND BECOMES USER DEFINABLE

Currently, you hear what you get with any multimedia product. Granted, sound boards elicit rave reviews as they deliver stereo and surround sound with a depth and clarity never before realized. You are in for a treat, however, because a just-delivered technology allows you to tailor your sound cards to whatever strikes your fancy. This is all due to SoundFonts which was developed by the Joint E-mu/Creative Technology Center and introduced at the Game Developers' Conference last week by Creative Technology. This is

actually a revision of the SoundFont 1.0 downloadable sample spec that was brought to fruition by Creative with Sound Blaster(R) AWE32. Changing sounds is going to be quite similar to the way you change a font in one of your word processing or desktop publishing documents. You'll simply load the SoundFont bank you wish to use, or create your own instruments. Current banks include pre-recorded instrument collections called World Instruments, Haunt Fonts, Arco Strings, 9-foot Grand Piano, and Woodwinds. The technology is xplatform and supports many wave-table synthesis-based platforms. More info is available at <http://www.creaf.com/emu>.

MODERN AGE SIGNS DEAL WITH ELECTRONIC ARTS

Electronic Arts, Inc., San Mateo, California and Modern Age Books, a Norwood, Massachusetts-based electronic publishing pioneer, have agreed to create on-screen instruction manuals for Electronic Arts' Top Ten Mac Pak II for Macintosh computer games. This joint venture enables Electronic Arts to offer an innovative way to make this line of Macintosh games even easier to use.

SOUND DEAL

Sound plays a most important role in digital entertainment, whether such is being pumped through your computer's bus lines from a CD-ROM drive, or through your modem, ISDN, T-1 or T-3 lines from an on-line source. To enhance such driving pleasures, Electronic Arts has now signed a license with Qsound Labs, Inc., to incorporate that company's 3D audio technology in their PC and Sony Playstation titles for the next couple of years. The sounds seem to come from around you as you play your game. The technology has been used by a number of entertainment "players," including the likes of Sting and Pink Floyd to IBM and Sega.

Electronic Arts has also announced that the company has a new senior producer in charge of their FIFA Soccer titles. He is Robert Leingang who was formerly with Acclaim Entertainment in a senior producer position.

JENNER DEVELOPMENT

Not only is Bruce Jenner, Olympic Decathlon Champion, endorsing a new software title from Interactive Magic, but he's also assisting with the game's development. Coming this May is Decathlon. This is a multimedia game that allows you to practice events and then assume the role of one of eight, world-class decathletes, all competing for the Best Athlete in the World title. This game is in real time and takes you through the ten individual events in a challenging, two-day competition. The title also contains a quick-start practice mode so you can move to individual events to hone your skills. You may select the physical attributes of your decathlete, from height and weight to sprinting, jumping and throwing abilities. These combos affect event outcomes and bring a strategic level to the game. The game is being developed for Interactive Magic by Dallas Multimedia Inc. in association with Holy Mackerel! Media, both located in Dallas, Texas.

BETTER BRIDGE

Featuring one of the most powerful and advanced algorithms ever developed for any card game, Interplay Productions has released Bridge Deluxe II with Omar Sharif(TM). This title is for PC CD-ROM machines and offers as your personal instructor none other than Omar Sharif, who happens to be an internationally renowned master bridge player as well as a famous actor. He

teaches beginners the game in full-motion video and digitized speech, while intermediate and advanced players can also practice strats and play at championship levels. Game play ranges from one player on a single station to four players over a network. The game offers various tutorials for beginners and intermediate players and advanced level options for bridge masters.

A number of playing options are available, such as Take-Out Doubles, the Stayman Convention, Jacoby Transfers and 20 other conventions. You can set up practice hands or opt for random or biased dealing. You have complete control over game play and can customize this offering to your own bidding and playing style. There's an on-disk glossary of bridge terms, a how-to when scoring the rubber, a bibliography of recommended reading, and a thorough and comprehensive guide to bidding.

PUMPIN' UP THE POLYGONS

Today's games are computing intensive little puppies. The polygons, sprites, music and animation all require algorithmic intensity that was unimaginable two or three years ago. To assist in bringing such capabilities to today's games, assistance is required in the processing department. To that end, Mindscape Inc. has just signed a strategic agreement with Yamaha Systems Technology. The latter company developed 3D RPA (Rendering Polygon Accelerator) which will be used in Mindscape's games. There are about 30 such titles now under development, all of which will use 3D RPA. One of the high points of the Yamaha technology is that it is register, backward and forward compatible with several OSs and advanced architectures. The technology accelerates the graphics display and performance making 3D rendered environments smooth and enhancements to game play, not CPU stutterers.

EGYPTIAN INTERACTIVE ADVENTURE SHIPPING

Take the enormous, multi-million dollar, Luxor(R) hotel/casino resort in Las Vegas and apply video footage and special effects from the hotel and you have the base for a new interactive CD-ROM interactive adventure entitled Secrets of the Luxor(TM) from Mojave Games. With a "MYST-like" experience, you'll travel through corridors that are elaborately created, always on the look-out for devious traps. The future and the past become intertwined as you seek an ancient obelisk that controls both space and time. Look for this new title to be released initially for Macintosh CD-ROM machines, with a Windows(R) version available by May of this year.

FREAK OUT YOUR FOE?

Perhaps you are able to recall some of the fights you've been in--whether as an adult or in high school--when someone's taunts tempted your temper into being lost and caused you to enter physical combat. Sometimes your combativeness paid off with a win. In many, many cases, such a confrontation ended up in defeat because you were annoyed. Annoyed folk rarely make good decisions!

And that's an extremely good reason why Mpath Interactive has decided to license Voxware's RT24 codec. The technology will be used in Mpath's Mplayer multigaming service and will allow gamers to actually cheer on, insult, or otherwise denigrate, other players due to the voice-processing capabilities of the Voxware technology. Shake 'em up, on-line! Set their fingers and minds to trembling, causing them to become unable to counter your latest

offensive move.

Now in beta testing, this real-time, player-to-player speech can even set-up specific conversation groups. In these groups, members of the same team can get into a strategy planning session and discuss tactics before re-entering their game. Mpath is currently working with several game developers to bring their digital entertainments to the WWW.

DOUBLE FUN FOR SNES

One hears the words "highly-anticipated" a great deal in the digital entertainment industry. In some cases, this phrasing is highly appropriate. Such is the case for Nintendo and their release this month of Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System (SNES). This is the first role-playing game that stars Mario. The title will also feature the graphics produced by Advanced Computer Modeling (ACM) technology and Nintendo's proprietary SA-1 co-processor chip. These technologies present awesome 16-bit graphics and game speed up to 10 MHz. The global smash-hit Donkey Kong Country and Donkey Kong Country II all used this exciting technology.

This new game is being directed by Shigeru Miyamoto, the legendary game designer and Mario's creator. You'll find that Mario can move in eight different directions, plus he can jump up and down, for true 3D motion. The classic characters and game play elements from the now world-famous Super Mario World and Super Mario Brothers series will all be found in this new offering. Plus there are new characters, friendly and not-so-friendly, introduced--Mallow, Geno, Smithy and Booster to name four. Battery-backup memory enables you to save as many as four different games. You'll also have multiple battle options, intricate mazes and challenging puzzles.

Set for a June release is the second SNES release: Ken Griffey Jr.'s Winning Run, a baseball sim with unparalleled realism. This is the first sports video game for SNES that features the same ACM as mentioned above. This is a 32-megabit, one- and two-player game, fully licensed from Major League Baseball Properties, Major League(TM) stadiums, with full uniforms and team logos replicated in the offering. You'll be able to control a moving camera that lets you have your pitcher instantly and smoothly sweep his vision from baseline to baseline to check base runner positions. You'll also have superior control of where and how you hit the ball, including sacrifice flies, hit-and-run grounders or pulling the ball down the line. You can change the positions of your fields to respond to the tendencies of opposing batters. Ongoing individual and team stats let you compare your skills against the rest of the league leaders in every offensive category. There are also secret codes to access hidden teams and other surprises. With four different modes of play, as many as eight gamers can take a team through the 1995 Major League Baseball schedule at the same time.

ULTIMA ON-LINE

One of the most popular fantasy role-playing games of all time is Ultima, in its various iterations, from Origin Systems. Now Ultima is heading for the Internet where it will be offered for multiplayer gaming. The Ultima Online Test is now in progress and will be in operation for one week with as many as 3,000 international participants. Seems as though everyone wanted to become a tester and the company had to halt the final number to the 3,000

limit. The game will offer players the ability to engage in combat and buy all of the items they'll need in the adventure. Plus, real-time conversations between players will also be possible. The characters are all customizable and the game is self-regulating and self-generating and runs native under Windows 95. All of those participating in the test will send and receive TCP/IP packets to and from sites on the Internet, SLIP or PPP based.

SEGA TITLE HAS RECORD SALES

With more than one million copies sold, seems as though Sega Rally Championship is doing rather well--both for QSound Labs, Inc., and the Sega Saturn platform. This title is turning out to be one of the Saturn's fastest selling titles and features QSound's 3D audio technology. The sim offers off-road racing with thundering engines and radical wipeouts. The company's technology has also been licensed by a number of other high-technology developers such as Activision, Capcom, Looking Glass Technologies, Sony Interactive and Yamaha.

JOINING JUBILEE

A new joint venture has now been initiated in the U.S. by Sega Enterprises, MCA Inc., and DreamWorks SKG. Called Sega GameWorks LLC, this company will create more than 100 amusement facilities in North America over the next five years. These centers will include restaurants as well as arcade areas. Seattle and Las Vegas will be the location of the first two such facilities, set to open by the close of this year.

E3 ENCOURAGEMENT

The upcoming Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles next month is now starting to elicit announcements from a variety of digital entertainment companies. Spectrum HoloByte is one of the first to let all know exactly what their "public" sightings will consist of, with the titles scheduled for Windows 95, PC DOS, and Sony PlayStation (PSX) platforms. Their booth number is 12011 in the South Hall at the Los Angeles Convention Center.

For all football sim gamers comes ABC Monday Night Football. The game will be hosted by ABC on-air talent and will feature all 30 NFL teams. Also incorporated into the game will be real stadiums, logos and 1996 player rosters. Game presentation will be in a TV-style "virtual broadcast" sim. This title is being developed for both Windows 95 and the PSX.

Another equally realistic sports sim is ABC Sports College Football which will feature 32 top college football programs for the past 25 years. The rosters of these collegiate teams will be filled with each school's all-time best players. Enhancing play will be cheerleaders, mascots, school fight songs, and the school stadiums. Development for Windows 95 and the PSX continues on schedule.

Citizens: Backwater Affairs(TM) brings to PC CD-ROM a cartoon-style, interactive soap opera. You influence the lives and loves of the various characters in the town. However, each time you play the game, the plot changes, with endless game possibilities the result.

Based on the engine that drove the award-winning 1942: The Pacific Air War(TM), now comes European Air War(TM). You'll be winging your way into the

fight for air superiority during the Battle of Britain and the invasion of Europe from 1943 to 1945 in this combat flight sim. The title will offer improved frame rate display, improved graphics and artificial intelligence (AI). Plus, you'll be able to play via local area network (LAN) or modem. This offering will be for PC CD-ROM platforms.

Falcon(R) 4.0 is a highly anticipated flight sim and this title will be the fourth iteration of the award-winning Falcon family of products. These puppies have sold more than one million copies to date. The new Falcon will feature more realism, super 3D texture-mapped graphics and the ability to select your own missions based on the context of the ongoing battle that is running in the background. Additionally, network play will be supported in this Windows 95 title.

Grand Prix II puts you in the hot seat as you practice, challenge for the pole, and go head-to-head with actual drivers on racing tracks around the world. Every aspect of the Formula One racing circuit is re-created. You'll experience full pitching and rolling, crashes, engine blowups, detailed 3D effects and, hopefully, a winning experience. This racing sim is for PC CD-ROM.

The most popular trading card game is Magic: The Gathering from Wizards of the Coast which has sold more than one billion cards across the world in six languages. MicroProse is developing a Windows 95 version of the card game and the designer is none other than Sid Meier.

Named the Strategy Game of the Year in 1993 was Master of Orion(TM). Now coming to a PC CD-ROM machine in your neighborhood is Master of Orion II: Battle at Antares(TM). This is a space conquest game that challenges you through the use of more technology, new high-resolution graphics, more alien races and multiplayer features including LAN, modem, and hot-seat play.

Based on the feature film of the same name comes Star Trek Generations which will feature a mix of first-person, action sequences, ship-to-ship encounters, strategy plotting missions in Stellar Cartography, and cinematic sequences. The plot will closely follow the film and involve Captains Kirk and Picard battling the evil Soran. This title will be initially released for Windows 95 with a Sony Playstation version also planned.

From the folk who brought you Master of Orion and Master of Magic, now you'll have the opportunity to lead your own team of super heroes against masterful, evil forces in a variety of exciting missions. Titled Super Heroes, this game will be released in Windows 3.1 format and offers multiplayer competition using your modem or via a LAN.

Licensed through Viacom Consumer Products, an action flying adventure is heading your way with Top Gun(TM): Fire at Will!(TM). For the PSX, this offering will feature full-motion video. You'll assume the role of Maverick at Top Gun fight school. Once you complete the school, you'll be heading around the world, dogfighting your way through combat adventures as you bust your afterburners trying to beat the enemy. The title stars James Tolkan, who appeared as the commanding officer in the TOP GUN film and plays a similar role in this title which has already been released for PC CD-ROM machines.

also can crop frame size numerically or in a WYSIWYG manner.

ANIMATION WITHOUT AGGRAVATION

If you create and design WWW pages, you've always wanted to add multimedia capabilities to your site. Consumers love to see the new stuff up and running on sites, and you want to be part of that crowd. That meant learning Lingo to use Director and Afterburner/Shockwave, or Java, or special CGI stuff, C++ . . . complex languages!

mBED Software has, perhaps, come to WWW creators' assistance. In March, the company announced mbedlets. This was an OOP-based multimedia description language that will let you create multimedia goodies through the use of tags, similar to the way in which you now use HTML to code your pages. A mbedlet use might be to animate an icon when someone passes the mouse over the element, or clicks on the icon. This language provides pointers to your multimedia files and describes the actions that is then interpreted by a Netscape Navigator plug-in for performance. GIF, JPEG, .WAV and .AU are supported by this system. To check out this technology, and to really see if it's less complex than other systems, head for <http://www.mbed.com> where you'll find the plug-in for Macintosh and Windows-based systems. A Java applet is also available that performs the identical functions of the plug-in can also be obtained at that location.

IF YOU'RE INTO TREES

One of the trickiest "objects" to model is a tree. MECN Graphics Inc. has decided to do something about that by introducing the MECN Tree Factory. This is a new modeling tool that is specifically designed for the quick generation of realistic, 3D, polygon-based tree models. Once they've been generated, the model may be explored in DXF, RAW or LWO (LightWave 3D object) file formats. Then, you can use them in your favorite 3D software program for final rendering and animation application. The company has also released the Tree Properties Collection 1 disk which contains 10 pre-defined trees for MECN Tree Factory. For more information, logon to the WWW and head for <http://www.telpath.com/mecngr/>.

GOO COULD BE GREAT

We all know of Kai's Power Tools and KPT Bryce from the company that can-- MetaTools. Heading your way this summer is a product that will PROBABLY be called Kai's Power Goo. This is an image-editing program that will let you airbrush nudge, smudge, stretch, twirl, an image. The cool part is that the program will automatically create animation morphs for you between your user-specified keyframes. Pricing is expected to be under \$100.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

mTropolis is a multimedia authoring system that was developed by mFactory, Inc. Now the company has announced Version 1.1 will ship later this quarter to upgrade this package and improve its performance by as much as 200 percent. Additionally, there will now be support for QuickTime VR from Apple for panoramic scene creation. Programmed behaviors combine graphics, sound, text and video. The Panorama Messenger feature triggers events when a user changes a node or clicks on a hot spot. Runtime cloaking, object destruction, and a new Media Cue Messenger are also added enhancements. You may obtain more information by surfing over to <http://www.mfactory.com>.

ON-LINE STUFF

AT&T: MAJOR DELIVERY AGREEMENT

As pundits, surveyists, analysts and researchers continue to banter "first" and "second" place in regards to the number of "active" users actually on-line with either America Online or CompuServe, the latter has now signed to offer their content and services to customers AT&T WorldNet Services. Being a two-way street, AT&T will also promote CIS and will incorporate this value-added content to their service by the summer of this year. Although AT&T states more information is available at <http://www.att.com/worldnet>, be advised we of the massive Inside Games & Entertainment editorial force have yet to hear back from AT&T with four messages sent to them requesting either a call, return email, a brochure, or even a polite giggle regarding the WorldNet services through that address. Our assumption is that unless your company is generating, or expects to generate, millions in on-line revenues, AT&T WorldNet is used to working with multi-national farmers rather than the small potatoes themselves. Good luck, CompuServe!

DOWNLOAD HASSLES NEGATED

Can you recall the number of times your FTP or other direct browser download has ended in disaster? System crash? Incomplete code received? Unable to unpack? Fret not, friend. 20/20 Software has debuted NET-Install. This is a program designed specifically that supports the distribution and set-up of software and data files through the auspices of the World Wide Web. Software distribution is now as simple as a one-button click-on by the consumer. Available for DOS and Windows (3.x, 95 and NT), the program creates setup screens and icons that may be added directly to your Windows desktop, plus the program can also uninstall the software as well. NET-Install also determines the type of computer that is requesting the download and only installs appropriate files for that OS or user-selected. There's a NET-Install Publisher's Toolkit available for folk who wish to use this technology for their apps and utilities that they wish to distribute via the WWW. Files may be protected on an internet server through a password-checking option. For more information, check out <http://www.twenty.com>.