

Panasonic FZ-10, GoldStar in the software business and two titles worth seeing

If there is one thing we can always count on it's change. Last issue, we told about the introduction of GoldStar's 3DO system. In this issue, we have a section in our report of the 1995 Winter Consumer Electronics Show with the announcement of Panasonic's new FZ-10 3DO unit for the North American market.

Still priced at \$399, the FZ-10 has a built-in Memory Management System which allows users to tell immediately whether there is enough memory space to save a game in progress. There is also an on-screen graph to illustrate the remaining memory so players can delete files.

Panasonic also redesigned the controller. The new controller is slightly smaller to fit younger hands. Alas, the new controller is without one accessory I wish they had kept. The headphone jack is no longer available and the cord is now shorter.

I enjoyed the long cord and the headphone jack. It was nice to be able to zone-out with a fast game, solid sound effects, and even theme music (Return Fire comes to mind). The really great thing was that you could do this, and the rest of the family could be in the same room and they would not be disturbed.

In Panasonic's defense, there was a problem with the older model and static electricity (see the What's Up section in the January/February issue). Unfortunately, the best way to alleviate the problem was to remove the headphone port. Even though there are stereo audio jacks on the base unit, I do wish they had placed a stereo headphone jack on it also.

While purists may balk at its smaller size and clam-shell style cover, the FZ-10 is a lot easier to

move around and it seems to fit in smaller places. While you may find it hard to place in a tight stereo cabinet, the cover appears to open well and is accessible in a bookcase. As far as placing it on a television, we just need to place it on top of everything else (VCR, cable box, etc.).

I am still playing with the FZ-10 and I will give you a better insight next issue. But my initial impression is that Panasonic has given 3DO users a wider selection of 3DO units from which to choose.

GoldStar Is No Slouch

In a counter move, GoldStar is now packing Shock Wave AND FIFA International Software in their 3DO units. At CES, I spoke with GoldStar's Jim Ireton (the interview is on page 40 in this issue) and I was impressed with the way he sees the entire 3DO business. While he never misses an opportunity to bring up the differences between the GoldStar 3DO system and the Panasonic system, he is always gracious to Panasonic. He recognizes the qualities of Panasonic's FZ-10, he just always reminds you that he likes the GoldStar unit better.

Hardware, however, is not the only place where these two giants will be competing. GoldStar, like Panasonic, has created a software division and they will be providing 3DO software immediately. Most of what they are doing is buying titles and helping small developers to get published. But, this is the same thing that Panasonic started doing. You know what? It works!

Small developers can create product and rely on a choice of publishers to help them. This is

important because most of the really great software innovations that have come about over the years have been from small developers.

PO-ed

A case in point is Any Channel and their new work, PO-ed. This sci-fi action shoot-em-up takes place in a 3-D environment. Similar to maze games like Doom or Monster Manor, PO-ed lets you fly with jet packs, fall backwards over cliffs, and face ugly aliens at just about every turn. I spoke with a programmer at Any Channel who confessed that they were a group of programmers working in a living room. If they can get this completed, to market, and it is as good as it appears, they will be another great example of small developers making better software.

Corpse Killer

In looking through the CES report, I notice we forgot Digital Picture's new release, Corpse Killer. Sorry DP, you have created a fun game and it should have been there.

For anyone who doesn't know, Corpse Killer works with a light gun or control pad and you must shoot the zombies as you make your way across a Caribbean island. Although I haven't finished the game (hey, I got work to do), I found the graphics fun, the action clever, and the difficulty very good. Of course, you must remember, I am always a sucker for a good Light Gun game.



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