

Microsoft: DIRECT3D DRIVING DEVELOPMENT

Last week, Microsoft Corporation shipped their final version of their Direct3D(TM) API for Windows 95 as part of the company's DirectX(TM) 2 API SDK. This API offers real-time, software-based, 3D rendering under the Windows 95 OS. Driving the release was the fact that over 80 hardware and software vendors have already committed to product development using Direct3D. And this upcoming Christmas season should see over 30 titles that are based on Direct3D. The API improves game quality and performance and also enables Microsoft Internet Explorer to deliver 3D content on WWW pages, via ActiveX(TM) Controls.

The good news is that Direct3D runs on today's PCs--no special acceleration technology is required, but the API automatically gloms onto special 3D processors and other acceleration extensions such as Intel(R) MMX(TM). PC manufacturers will be offering Direct3D-based products just in time for the buying season. The list includes IBM(R) Aptiva(TM), Compaq(R) Presario(TM) and NEC Technologies PowerMate(TM) and Ready(TM). Standalone Direct3D-enabled graphics card releases include Creative Labs 3D Blaster(TM), Diamond Multimedia Systems' Stealth 3D(TM) and EDGE(R) 3D, and Orchid Technology's Righteous 3D(TM). These products all use Direct3D-based accelerators from 3Dfx Interactive Voodoo Graphics(TM), 3DLabs PERMEDIA(TM) and ATI Technologies' 3D RAGE(TM).

MICROSOFT PLAYS GAMES--11 OF THEM!

Microsoft has 11 new Windows 95 game titles for PCs that brings DirectPlay API technology into multiplayer games for entertainment across LANs or the Internet. Working with outside game developers, such as Terminal Reality, Inc., Atomic Games, and Rainbow Studios Inc., the following titles have been developed: Deadly Tide, Monster Truck Madness, Hellbender, NBA Full Court Press, GEX, The Condemned, Microsoft Flight Simulator for Windows 95, Microsoft Soccer, Microsoft Golf 3.0, Age of Empires, and Close Combat.

Deadly Tide is an underwater action shooter in which players must move from mysterious sunken ships to alien mining operations as well as command sea battle sim an attempt to save humanity from the enemy. Available this holiday season.

Hellbender, also an action shooter, is part of a science-fiction story that includes secret worlds, hidden objects, weapons, and lots of bad guys. The story is about the battle between the evil Bion aggressors and The Coalition of Independent Planets. The player is a skilled pilot of Hellbender craft who must use a combo of wits and air combat skills to avert total destruction. Gillian Anderson of the X-Files narrates this game that will be released in October of this year.

GEX is a side-scrolling game that is part of a goofy story. The game's hero, a gecko named Gex, involves players in classic TV shows and B movies. Silicon Graphics(R) 3D models bring Gex to life. Available November '96.

The Condemned, not exactly an upbeat theme--based upon prison inmates as they interact in intense battles for their freedom while being broadcast on TV (great for the ratings war).

Flight Simulator for Windows 95 turns players into virtual pilots with Interactive Flying Lessons that make it easier to learn to fly. There are two new planes, the Aerobatic Plane Extra 300 and Boeing 737. Coming in November '96.

NBA Full Court Press brings NBA-style action to the computer so that gamers compete against other players in real time, via modem or network, allowing any combination of two to four players to control a team in full, five-on-five basketball. Available this fall.

Microsoft Golf 3.0 is an upgrade with new features that include; instant hole rendering with no delay between shots, the ability to play against the computer, and 3D sounds. There are add-on championship courses that include Pinehurst (R), and Banff Springs where golfers can challenge friends to a round, get a lesson, or provide commentary on a match as well as chatting with other players due out in November '96.

Close Combat has players landing at Normandy on D-Day in World War II with unprecedented, battlefield realism. Soldiers possess personalities that are reflected in all of their actions and the decisions that take place. This is due in July '96.

Age of Empires spans thousands of years of evolution for a small, Ice Age tribe. This epic provides the gamer with nothing, yet you must try to build the tribe into a great civilization. Folks can conquer or cooperate with existing tribes in a multiplayer environment battling on land or sea or choose to be peaceful and cooperative while working with the resources at hand. Coming in the spring of '97.

Monster Truck Madness puts the player in the driver's seat of BigFoot(R). You select from 10 of the famous gigantic trucks that are a part of monster truck racing circuit. As players clearly try to break every rule possible, whether driving in an irresponsible manner off-road or drag racing, the mud flies. Drivers can adjust their vehicles to tackle elements such as mud, grass, sand and water. Noise is part of this event, and gamers will hear motors gunning and metal twisting and crunching. Thank goodness you don't have to report this to your insurance agent! Coming this fall.

Microsoft Soccer brings advanced artificial intelligence (A.I.) to this soccer sim that offers realistic player behavior. Included are crowd chants and noises as players choose kick styles and ball control while defining individual game strategies. This is expected in the '96 holiday season.

KIDS ARE PEOPLE, TOO, AT MICROSOFT

Many awards have been presented to Microsoft for the first of their titles for kids, Creative Writer. This has evolved into a writing application with awards such as Parent's Choice Award, Oppenheim Toy Portfolio Platinum Award, Newsweek Editor's Choice Award, The National Parenting Seal of Approval, and more.

Then came 3D Movie Maker, a title that debuted last holiday season, and it also received kudos such as 3D Movie Maker's product of the year, Oppenheim Toy Portfolio Platinum Award, and product of the year from Business Week and more.

Scholastic's The Magic School Bus Series is the fastest growing title in the kid's software market. This software is based on the popular characters from the PBS TV program geared for kids ages six to 10. A fourth title is Scholastic's The Magic School Bus Explores Inside the Earth.

MOVIELINKS FANS

MovieLink (<http://www.movielink.com>), the national online source for movie showtimes and tickets, reveals the next phase of its Internet service. The service features a

new look, more cities, and many more expanded features. MovieFone, Inc. is launching the enhanced version of MovieLink in conjunction with a summer-long campaign with Sony's Columbia/TriStar Motion Picture Group entitled The Sony Summer Sweepstakes, inaugurated by The Cable Guy, starring Jim Carrey.

Offering a unique database, MovieLink offers up-to-the-minute movie showtimes for 10,000 movie screens in 27 cities (accessible by title, theater, or browsing). Plus, there's a Parents' Guide to movie ratings, the ability to buy tickets, chat with other users, and download movie trailers. Additionally, MovieLink now offers such services as the MovieLink Store that sells merchandise from popular films, supplies information regarding release dates for upcoming movies, links to a studio and other entertainment-related Web sites and more.

MTV: SWIMSUIT EDITION--MUSIC TO MTV'S EARS

The House of Style, an MTV series on fashion trends, will provide a premiere swimsuit edition on Monday, June 17, at 10:30PM (ET/PT). Amber Valetta and Shalom Harlow co-host and will style and photograph Pat Smear of the Foo Fighters, and, Chicago Bulls super star Dennis Rodman tries on swimsuits (yikes!) with help from special guest, Cindy Crawford.

NCompass: GOING ACTIVEX

As Netscape(TM)'s Navigator continues to hold its own against all competition in the world of browsers, companies continue to produce new plug-ins that add more and more capabilities for net'ers. NCompass Labs, Inc., has now made available their NCompass ActiveX(TM) Plug-In Pro. This is the first product for the net that fully connects Microsoft's ActiveX technology with the Java(TM) programming environment of Netscape's LiveConnect(TM) Framework. The bridge is now complete between these two leading Internet object environments. ActiveX components can now be written using any scripting language to create dynamic apps that run under either "world." You could now develop features that are a combo of Navigator with Active Documents that include those that are produced by Microsoft(R) Excel, PowerPoint and Word. This is good news for intranet development issues. Additionally, the ActiveX controls cannot be altered once published, thanks to Pro's signing support. Basically, this plug-in actually brings about the integration of the major Internet technologies.

Netscape: ADVERTISING FOCUS OF INITIATIVE

As all who create content for the WWW know, earning \$\$\$ remains elusive as a means to sustain life and creativity. Netscape Communications, who wow'd one and all with the first truly popular browser, understands the need to make advertising far more responsive and easy to implement. To that end, the company has started the Netscape New Media Initiative. This is both self-serving and a technology tackle. There will be more in-depth info available at their own WWW site and flexibility for advertising banner placement. The company has developed a new program that manages advertising programs and improves tracking capabilities. These capabilities are implemented using AdServer advertising management software from NetGravity. Netscape has also appointed America Online and Softbank Interactive Marketing as official Netscape advertising sales reps. Plus, Netscape's advertising fees are now more competitive. With more than 70 million hits per day, Netscape's site is one of the most active in the entire global universe and attracts advertising like dragonflies

to tall, wheatgrass stems. Additionally, Netscape co-sponsored independent market research with AT&T New Media Services, Audit Bureau of Circulations and Infoseek that revealed 40 percent of current net advertisers will increase their spending on interactive ads by more than 200 percent in the next 12 months! You can read a summary of this research at <http://www.netscape.home/ads/interactive.html>.

NEWSEUM FOR NEWS JUNKIES

The Newseum, the world's first museum devoted to the past, present and future of news, is scheduled to open in Arlington, Va., in the spring of 1997. For production of the Newseum's signature film, the award winning filmmaker, Charles Guggenheim, has been commissioned. The signature film celebrates the history of the press and free-press values and is scheduled to be shown in the Newseum's 220-seat dome theater. Guggenheim has won top awards in every major international film competition, including four Academy Awards and the George Foster Peabody Award in broadcasting. He has received 11 Academy Award nominations.

NICKELODEON INCLUDES PRESCHOOLERS

Coming this Sept. 9 at 12:30 p.m. (ET), Nickelodeon will provide their first in-house, preschool production entitled Blue's Clues. Last year the commercial-free block on Nickelodeon enjoyed a 47 percent ratings gain among kids age 2 to 5. This prompted Nickelodeon to set aside \$65 million, up from \$30 million. Computer animation, a first of its kind for a preschool series, makes this program unique. The multilayered design is created through a combination of live-action and computer animation to encourage interaction between children and the live-action host who needs help figuring out the clues left by his animated puppy, Blue.

Nielsen Media: The top 10 programs on basic cable networks as compiled by Nielsen Media Research for the week of June 3-9--each rating point represents 959,000 households.

1. Rugrats (Sunday, 10 a.m.), Nickelodeon, 2.6, 2.4 million homes
2. Movie: Turner and Hooch (Sunday, 4 p.m.), USA, 2.5, 2.3 million homes
3. Aaahh!!! Real Monsters! (Sunday, 10:30 a.m.), 2.2, 2.1 million homes
4. Movie: First Blood (Thursday, 10 p.m.), 2.2, 2.08 million homes
5. Wrestling: World Championship Wrestling (Mon., 8 p.m.), TNT, 2.1, 2.02 million homes.
6. Hockey: NHL Stanley Cup Finals (Thursday, 8 p.m.), ESPN, 2.0, 1.9 million
7. Nickelodeon Sports Theater (Saturday, 9 p.m.), Nickelodeon, 2.0, 1.87 million homes.
8. TV Movie: The Sacketts - Part 2 (Sunday, 10 p.m.), TNT, 1.9, 1.85 million homes.
9. Rugrats (Wednesday, 6:30 p.m.), Nickelodeon, 1.9, 1.82 million homes.
10. Rugrats (Friday, 6:30 p.m.), Nickelodeon, 1.9, 1.80 million homes.

Nintendo: TRIO OF TITLES EXPECTED AT COMING-OUT EVENT

Expectation remains high for the yet-to-be-released Nintendo 64 video console unit. This 64-bit game machine will debut on June 23rd in Japan--but with only three titles available.

However, Nintendo Company Ltd. fully expects to have 20, solid software titles available in Japan before year's end. The U.S. debut remains this September and in Europe before 1996 turns into 1997. Latest info is that 10 software developers are producing N64 titles and that, by March of 1997, Nintendo expects to have sold five million machines worldwide.

Paramount Pictures: KURT RUSSELL HAS A BREAKDOWN

Kurt Russell, J.T. Walsh and Kathleen Quinlan will star in Paramount Picture's Breakdown. The movie is a fictionalized version of the horrible possibilities that could befall a motorist with car trouble when stranded on one of the nations scenic, yet deserted, highways. In Breakdown, Russell and Quinlan star as a married couple whose car stalls on an empty stretch of highway in the Southwest. A trucker, played by J.T. Walsh, offers to help, then disappears with Amy and a Jeff starts a terrifying search for his wife.

PIONEER PRODUCT IS NO COVERED WAGON

Pioneer and Pioneer Pro, aptly named, will provide this July authoring tools for the Internet that will let you build virtual reality Web sites with three-dimensional representation of information using VRML (Virtual Reality Modeling Language) environments based on Caligari's (<http://www.caligari.com>) 3-D animation and graphics flagship product, trueSpace2. Both Pioneer and Pioneer Pro use such 3-D modeling features as Boolean operations, adding and moving lighting in real time, and the extruding of 2-D objects into 3-D, as well as importing objects from other applications. The difference between Pioneer and advanced Pioneer Pro is that the latter displays the physical dimensions of an object within the virtual reality Web page. It also supports enhanced object editing, as well as multiple view windows to help users place an object accurately.

Price Waterhouse: FUTURE TECH

A report regarding Entertainment, Media and Communications Technology Forecast, compiled by Price Waterhouse, analyzes the future of the technologies used in the area of convergence between the entertainment, media and communications industries. This research is information from interviews with over 50 senior executives in these industries and the conclusion these folks arrived at are as follows:

global supercarriers will emerge to dominate the long distance and international telecommunications industry

wireless services will replace land lines as the primary local telephone providers -- interactive TV, video on demand and online games are unlikely to achieve widespread popularity before the year 2000 and low cost video conferencing via the Internet will be widespread

video on demand will precede interactive television and will be offered on computers rather than on specialized - computer games

video game hardware will lead to a shake out in the games industry -- DVD (Digital Video Discs) will quickly replace CD-ROM as the multimedia storage technology of choice, with double the video storage capacity and better

sound quality

online service providers will struggle to survive as they attempt to differentiate themselves from information available on the Internet

Psygnosis: PRODUCT LINEUP ONLINE

There is one element that attends WWW sites--redesign is a constant. As new technologies are birthed, new capabilities offered, page creators delve into these environs and bring forth their [hopefully] best efforts to increase readership of their pages. Psygnosis has done just such, redesigning their WWW site which may be viewed at <http://www.psygnosis.com>. You'll get a complete look at the company's entire 1996/1997 product lineup including game demos, press releases, screen shots, preview videos and sweepstakes and contests. Psygnosis is an in-house development unit for Sony and their products run on the PlayStation and PCs. There is a special "spy-cam" feature that will enable those who attended the Electronic Entertainment Expo to relive those hectic days, thanks to the four video cams Psygnosis had perched atop the madding crowd at their booth. The connect is via a T3 line, which runs at 45MB/second.

Sega: CHANNEL GAMING, EUROPEAN STYLE

The proliferation of games playable over cable continues. Sega has now intro'd the Sega Channel into Europe, distributed by Flextech Plc. That company is a cable and satellite operator based in the United Kingdom. Subscribers can play as many as 25 games for around \$15 a month. The folk behind the Sega Channel include Sega of America and Time Warner Inc. Of interest to cable companies is the hope that video games will bring new cable subscribers to their service as well as increase the use of the cable by subscribers already part of the service. (And, as we've always stated, everything's gonna end up on cable anyway!-Eds)

Sigma Designs: CONVERGENCE VIA HARDWARE

You've heard it all before...there's a merging of technologies as film and computer companies bring their talents together for new multimedia products. The convergence of computer and TV continues, as well. Sigma Designs is now shipping their RealMagic Ultra board, a video playback board that offers sound capabilities and support for output directly to television sets. Full MPEG-1 standards are incorporated into this board which supports 16.8 million colors and pumps out 30 fps full-motion video and fits into an ISA slot. You can also scale the images from full-screen all the way down to postage-stamp size. The board is solid Plug and Play compatible with Windows 95/NT/3.1 as well as DOS 5.x. Check out <http://www.sigmadesigns.com> for more info.

Sirtech Software: DEADLY ADDITION

One of this company's moves into the role-playing adventure genre was with a title named Jagged Alliance. Now, when you purchase Jagged Alliance--Deadly Games, you'll receive a Second Player CD-ROM. What this addition gives you is the wherewithal to hand this puppy to a friend, who can then boot up the game on his or her system and engage in multiplayer gaming--with you! Plus, your friend will also obtain full speech, sound effects and graphics

with this single purchase. Over 6,000 lines of spoken dialog are in the upgraded release, spoken by the 70-odd mercenaries that populate the game. Each mercenary also has his or her own personality. This sequel is expected to release sometime in August for PC CD-ROM.

Spectrum HoloByte: BECOME A PLAYSTATION PILOT

Already a hit on PC CD-ROM platforms is Spectrum HoloByte's Top Gun: Fire at Will, which is based on Paramount Pictures TOP GUN feature movie. Now available is the Sony PlayStation version of the game. Licensed through Viacom Consumer Products, Top Gun features full-motion video and more than 30 dogfighting missions. Each level of gameplay is more challenging than the previous and you'll find you can attack the enemy from any direction, thanks to the inclusion of 3D space. This combat flight sim also offers special weapons options that can be accessed from the more difficult levels. These include weapons such as the MIRV, the Nuke, Surefire, and U238. You also encounter level bosses that only appear once during the course of the game whose combat and flying skills are far superior to the typical enemy pilot. You become Maverick as you dogfight your way around the world. As the PlayStation game console utilizes JPEG compression technology, you'll obtain full-screen graphics at high resolution. More info is available at <http://www.microprose.com>.

SPIELBERG PULLS A CAT OUT OF THE HAT

The fellow who brought such marvelous characters to life as E.T. and Peter Pan in movies is now about to breathe life into the Dr. Seuss classic, The Cat in the Hat. Spielberg will produce The Cat in the Hat together with the efforts of screenwriter Eric Roth, who wrote the script for Forrest Gump. Spielberg bought the rights to the 1957 children's classic from Audrey Geisel, the widow of Theodore Geisel, who wrote under the name Dr. Seuss. Rumor has it that Tim Allen, of TV's Home Improvement, is being considered for a leading role.

Starbucks: WAKE UP AND SMELL THE STARBUCKS ON THE WEB

We are SUPER big fans of Starbucks Coffee Co. In fact, almost every morning a mug of Sunani or Kenyan coffee sits on this editor's desk. Stats indicate that 60 percent of Starbuck's customers are computer savvy, so the next step is a given--Starbucks will enter the digital world. Promising to be forward thinking in the manner it connects consumers with technology, a professional team from Digital Brands Inc., a New York-based interactive marketing group; digital media producers Watts-Silverstein and Associates, of Seattle; and San Francisco-based Cyberstruction Inc., which specializes in advanced World Wide Web-site design, will be perking to get the job done. There should be announcements about the new Starbucks Coffee site released over the next few months.

Oliver Stone: NATURAL BORN KILLERS

Imitation is the purest form of flattery, except in cases such as this--Oliver Stone is being sued by a convenience store clerk who was paralyzed as the result of a robbery-shooting spree that occurred after the accused felons saw the movie Natural Born Killers. Stone's 1994 movie stars Woody Harrelson and Juliette Lewis as a couple who kill 52 people in three weeks. Two teen-agers, Sarah Edmondson and Benjamin Darras, watched the movie before taking a trip in which Sarah is accused of shooting the store clerk during a robbery and Benjamin is charged with a killing in Mississippi the day before.

Proctor & Gamble: AIRING DIRTY LAUNDRY--HANGING OUT ONLINE

I guess it's a service that they think will be used, or else why would Proctor & Gamble present a web site that deals with laundry problems? Yes, folks, direct from Tide detergent headquarters comes advice regarding critical information for keeping the folded-laundry pile clean. The main body of information of the site, The Stain Detective, is a database of powerful laundry information which provides step-by-step instructions for cleaning the worst of stains.

Trilobyte: POWER PUSH

Trilobyte's *The 11th Hour* not only garnered rave reviews, but over one million in unit sales, as well. Now Trilobyte has signed an agreement with Electronic Arts for European and African distribution of their products. Electronic Arts will be distributing Trilobyte's next two titles, *Clandestiny(TM)* and *Tender Loving Care*. A third title has yet to be determined as falling under this agreement. You can check out Trilobyte's goodies at their WWW site at <http://www.tybte.com/>.

Turner: THIS CASTLE NEEDS A NEW KING

Several companies have shown an interest in purchasing Castle Rock Entertainment, the Hollywood studio that recently was put on the auction block by Turner Broadcasting System Inc. While no companies were named, it is believed that the list of interested parties includes most of the major studios. Experts believe that Castle Rock no longer fits within the Turner company as Warner Bros supplies the bulk of Time Warner's films--Turner's New Line Cinema also contributes to the process. Castle Rock did enjoy some hit movies, and then they had a few that landed flat such as *City Hall* and *Othello*. TV programs such as *Seinfeld* added a good cash flow after the *Seinfeld* series went into syndication.

USA Today: TOP 10 BOOKS FROM USA TODAY

The top 10 Best-Selling Books across the USA last week:

1. *The Runaway Jury* by John Grisham; Doubleday, \$26.95
2. *A Crown of Swords* by Robert Jordan; Tor, \$27.95
3. *The Green Mile, Part 3: Coffey's Hands* by Stephen King; Signet, \$2.99
4. *Falling Up* by Shel Silverstein; HarperCollins, \$16.95
5. *The Dilbert Principle* by Scott Adams; HarperBusiness, \$20
6. *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* by Terry McMillan; Viking, \$23.95
7. *Bad as I Wanna Be* by Dennis Rodman with Tim Keown; Delacorte Press, \$22.95
8. *Oh, The Places You'll Go* by Dr. Seuss; Random House, \$16
9. *Say Cheese and Die - Again!* by R.L. Stine; Scholastic, \$3.99
10. *The Green Mile, Part 2: The Mouse on the Mile* by Stephen King; Signet, \$2.99

Ubi Soft: RAYMAN FOR THE PC

PC gamers can enjoy the superhero, Rayman, that until now was available only on video

game systems (the Sony PlayStation, Sega Saturn, and Atari Jaguar). Ubi Soft Entertainment (<http://www.ubisoft.com>) reveals that Rayman battles more than 60 bizarre creatures who are tucked away in six different worlds. The bad guys range from giant percussion drums to fierce musical notes, and Rayman himself can hover, fly and turn into a projectile. There are up to 70 levels of non-linear gameplay that challenges the player to acquire and accumulate unique powers while you try to defeat enemies, rescue friends and bring about peace. Since September of last year, Rayman has sold more than 130,000 units.

VocalTec: MAC'ERS GET FREE FONE FACILITIES

One of the hottest areas on the WWW is that of telephony and the ability to make long distance calls anywhere in the world--all at the price of your monthly net-access service to your ISP. For Macintosh users, such capabilities were not in the cards, as most of the products were for PCs and Windows machines. VocalTec(TM) has changed that with the introduction of their Internet Phone(TM) for Macintosh OS. There's also a buy-one/get-one promo in operation for the product, wherein you can buy two product licenses for the price of a single license and give the second to a relative or friend. Using this product, you don't need to ensure the person you're calling has a Mac--Internet Phone let's you connect with anyone using this product, no matter their platform of preference. The Mac version has many of the same features as the Windows version, plus Chat Room privacy. You can glom onto a free demo of the software at <http://www.vocaltec.com>.

VictorMaxx: AUTODUEL BRINGS SKID MARKS TO THE INTERNET

Before year's end, VictorMaxx Technologies, Inc. expects to launch an Internet-based, multi-player, interactive game entitled AutoDuel Online based on the board game, Car Wars, which the company has licensed from Steve Jackson Games. Announcements that a new generation of 3-D accelerator boards would be in the market for this holiday season will make it possible for PC users to play a game like AutoDuel from their home PC.

Visioneer: BRINGING IN THE REAMS

A technology that has taken the OCR world by storm was a device created by Visioneer called the PaperPort. This is a scanner keyboard, for PCs and Macs, that allows you to input paper-based docs directly into your computer using sophisticated OCR software. What is most impressive about this technology is the low price of the device. Now Visioneer has signed an agreement with Netscape Communications to distribute their Navigator(TM) client software with their PaperPort ix(TM) scanner keyboard. Visioneer has also created a new PaperPort view plug-in for Navigator. This will allow you to view paper-based docs on the WWW via your email system, plus you'll be able to transmit paper-based docs anywhere in the world without any additional hardware. Enclosed docs are displayed in line with the text of the message. Plus, you are not using publicly-used fax machines and the Visioneer compression method allows you to manipulate far larger document files. More info is available at <http://www.visioneer.com>.

I pontificate to better all folks' lives through the absolute blessings of respite and relief in the knowledge that I hath spoken the truth about the ever-mystical world of digital entertainment.

In this sermon, I offer some humble opinions regarding:

--> BUMPER RELIEF

--> PREVIEWED TO EXHAUSTION

--> REVIEW: Tony La Russa Baseball 3, 1996 Edition,

BUMPER RELIEF: There can be little doubt, my friends, that one's attention whilst whiling away precious moments driving from hither to thither should rarely be diverted from the asphalt roadways that connect our lives so inexorably together. Yet, there are times when the thoughtfulness of those who are maneuvering the roadways before us can lift the veil of blacktop boredom into one of banal bemusement. To so bring a smile to one's otherwise furrowed brow is a gift all should be grateful to receive as we rush to and fro.

To that end, bumper sticker art and erudite sayings are an item I happen to notice as I tread carefully upon the road of life. Just three days past, I happened upon a blue Toyota pickup truck--aye, with camper shell--that definitely cheered an otherwise car congested afternoon. First, there be upon the left side of the camper shell a large blue and white bumper sticker that did read <http://www.byte.me.com> And low, upon the left, a statement that would endear the driver to all fans of the feline world, I LOVE CATS--they taste just like chicken.

And so, the bumper philosophy of the roadway is now placed upon you for either your enjoyment or your muttering. I am but a vessel bringing some sunshine into your net-weary lives.

PREVIEWED TO EXHAUSTION: Be there any about who, like myself, are somewhat dismayed at the film previews that currently expound the benefits of upcoming features in your local theaters and on the television? I have noted that, of late, these film previews are ALMOST as long as the film itself. Of concern, however, is the fact that these previews now contain all of the best segments of the film. See the preview, and you've seen the best part of the film. As most acting these days is secondary to the special effects that explode in a variety of computer-rendered delights, once the sfx are used to entice you to the movie, you no longer have much reason to attend the film. I take, for example, the previews for such films as Twister, Mission: Impossible, Independence Day and The Rock.

The super helicopter scene in the tunnel beneath the English Channel certainly informed one and all that Monsieur Cruise was going to survive all that came before, and all that came after, the sfx chopper collision with the train. This preview, therefore, truly negated patron concern and interest in his continued survival as such was now a given.

(By the way, unlike most critics, I did NOT enjoy Mission: Impossible. The reason? Quite simple--if you shall recall, the television series ran for a number of years on television, quite successfully, because Phelps was a grand man of high ideals and honesty with his team of specialists. Suddenly, in one fell swoop of a writer's pen and a producer's bankroll, Phelps is turned into an evil degenerate! Nay, my friends, such character assassination spoils what preceded this feature film. Film success is predicated upon individual suspension of belief--for myself, such an assumption could not become a reality, as my belief is that Phelps could

not morph into such a heinous individual. Such would not be part of his deepest character. This forced personality defect was unbelievable, and therein lies the rub--for myself, this radical change of character denigrated the entire film to non-enjoyment status!)

In regards to The Rock, the jumble of action events would normally have spoiled the film. Fortunately, The Rock is one constant flow of events, even to the point of excess. In this way, the producers of the film managed to avoid the over-exposure of other fine scenes for the movie go'er. And, as of this evening, thanks to quite a lengthy promo for Independence Day on HBO, I hope there are SOME surprises left in this feature science-fiction film that will still leave most patrons upon the edge of their seats.