

QUESTBUSTERS

The Adventurers' Journal

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Not sold in stores

FREDERICK POHL'S GATEWAY

Incredible as it sounds, one of my favorite adventure game designers just adapted one of my favorite science fiction novels as his latest tour de force. After reading *Gateway* several years back, I bought each sequel in this story of a galactic prospector sent out to unknown destinations on ships whose courses were plotted by the mysterious Heechee millennia ago. Now I'm "living" the story and enjoying it as much as Pohl's novel — which won the Hugo and Nebula awards for science fiction writing.

The action revolves around

Type: Graphic adventure

Systems: MSDOS (640K & hard disk required, mouse optional; CGA, EGA, 256-color VGA, SVGA & MCGA, TGA (hi-res black & white); RealSound (PC speaker), Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Roland)

Planned ports: none

Gateway, an ancient Heechee base circling Earth in the year 2012. Dozens of Heechee craft discovered here are being used by

daring explorers to visit new galaxies and planets in hopes of finding riches, new civilizations and — most significantly — more about the Heechee and their fantastic scientific knowledge.

New fish in town — and it's not a Babel fish

You are monetarily rewarded for each discovery. And after completing the requirements, you can advance to "green badge status" and obtain information on previous missions that isn't available to

"new fish," as newcomers to Gateway are called.

These and other elements of the adventure are faithful to the concept and setting of Pohl's novel, but the game uses them as a jumping off point to tell an original story with a different ending. Bates still captures the mood of the novels in every scene: the sense of apprehension, for instance, as you prepare to push the "go" button on the Heechee ship's control panel, not having the slightest idea where you might arrive moments later on the far side of the sky.

As in the *Spellcasting* games and *Timequest*, this is a smooth blend of all-text and graphic adventure. The full-sentence parser is the most refined in use today; lazy types can still click on word lists to assemble commands. You may also switch to an all-text screen, or view the one with the small picture and a text window below it.

And with this game Legend Entertainment has warped far beyond the realm of "illustrated text adventures" by incorporating full-screen SVGA graphics and animation throughout the quest. (The game looks almost as good in regular VGA, so don't feel left out if you haven't got SVGA.)

Clue book included!

The puzzle types will be familiar to anyone who played Bob Bates' *Timequest*. Object manipulation, timing, clever but not-too-maddening mazes, and a sense of imagination play key roles in a solid mix of logical puzzles. Several features alternative solutions.

I've been playing a lot of flight simulators recently, and found it encouraging that I was still able to solve the first few missions without referring to the clue book that is included with the game. (One thoughtful feature of the book: in some cases it not only provides the answer, but explains *why* the answer makes sense.)

Bates' adventures, stocked with challenging puzzles, are designed as a series of self-contained puzzle areas. Each consists of a half-dozen or fewer locations, and most of the things needed to

solve the central puzzle

there are found nearby. This makes the most demanding puzzle more accessible than if you had to race back and forth across the universe (which you still must do in some situations, of course).

And while you'll spend a lot of time

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by Shay Addams

Shay Addams'

Adventure Road

As midsummer arrived, so did several long-awaited quests. Sierra's *Dagger of AmonRa* and LucasArts' *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis* were the most notable new releases. SSI's

Prophecy of the Shadow also showed up. Interplay's *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* is shipping and should be on the shelves by now. These and more new quests — in their released version, not the betas — will be covered next month.

Look for

Crusaders of the Dark Savant in September. And Accolade is bringing over another European horror adventure from Horrorsoft in the fall. The working title is *Waxworks*.

TSN goes flat rate

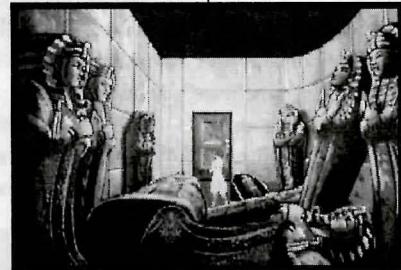
The Sierra Network is now much more affordable since they established flat rate charges across the country. You can play 30 hours a month for \$12.95. For hard-core modem maniacs, additional time beyond the 30 hours is also available.

Lost Treasures

EA lost their distribution rights for New World Computing in the USA (Broderbund is doing it now) but continues to market the games in Europe. EA is also no longer distributing LucasArts products or Prima Books.

Book of Orbs in orbit

Everyone who advance ordered *Quest for Clues: The Book of Orbs* from QB should have received it by now. If you ordered one before August 1 and haven't got it yet, please let us know right away.



Dagger of Amon Ra

Reruns at CES

One reason I don't attend CES twice a year is to avoid seeing the same games over and over. These are the games Russ Ceccola saw at summer CES and the previous winter CES — and which have still not been released.

Accolade: *Star Control II*

ASCII Entertainment: *SpellCraft*

Capstone: *The Dark Half*

Electronic Arts: *The Lost Files of Sherlock*

Interplay: *Buzz Aldrin's Race into Space*

Konami: *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (Gremlin), *Champions* (Hero)

MicroProse: *Darklands*

Origin: *Strike Commander*

Paragon: *MegaTraveller 3, Challenge of the Five Realms*

US Gold: *Cruise for a Corpse*

Virgin: *Fables & Fiends: Legend of Kyrandia, 7th Guest*

Five more years!

While some folks are shouting "four more years," QB members have been asking about special rates for five more years of the Journal. So we finally instituted this option, which is not only cheaper but also ensures you won't be affected if rates rise due to the inevitable hikes in postal rates.

USA, 3rd class: \$75

To USA, Adventure Express: \$100

To Canada/Mexico: \$115

Overseas airmail: \$160

(This offer applies through 1992, after which rates may go up.)

Simulations!

If you are already receiving *QuestBusters*, you can get our bimonthly newsletter on flight and *SimCity*-type simulators at a special low rate. To USA addresses, *Simulations!* costs only \$10. To Canada: \$14. Overseas: \$18. For a free sample, send \$3.

The Mail Maze



Dear QuestBusters:

What is happening with CD-ROM games? I still haven't got a CD drive because I'm afraid it will be obsolete two weeks later.

R. Young

CD-ROM games for MSDOS and Mac are actually about to take off — or at least get their chance to.

Egghead and Software Etc. are stocking them in specific sections, while record and video retailers and even Kroger (yes, the supermarket chain) are planning to test market CD games and other entertainment software.

Softkat, a major distributor, recently put out a CD-only catalog, and by Christmas there will be twice as many CD games from which to choose. When picking out a drive, be sure it's got at least a 500 ms access time (380 is even better) and a continuous throughput rate of at least 150 KB per second.

QuestBusters™ The Adventurers' Journal

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Ultima VII: Ye Black Gate

Contrary to comparisons with Spinal Tap's first album cover on "Smell The Glove," Origin Systems' SoHo-hip black, tech-noire cover shows that they take themselves seriously...perhaps a bit too seriously. Origin must have a deal going with Austin Computers or something: once again the "creators of worlds" have upped the hardware ante for playing their games. To play *Ultima VII* you will need — at the very least — a 386/25, 21 megabytes of free hard drive space for the game, and another 500K for each saved game. So plan to delete some games, files and utilities off your hard drive.

But don't worry about buying a better memory manager — *Ultima VII* actually provides its own, called

Type: Fantasy role-playing
Systems: MSDOS (386SX/20 or faster, 2 megs RAM, 21 megs hard disk space, 256-color VGA; Roland, Ad Lib, Sound Blaster & Pro; disk cache & mouse recommended)
Planned ports: none

Voodoo. You will, however, need your own boot disk, or use something like *DasBoot*, a shareware multiple boot configuration file.

If it seems Origin has gone too far, well...they have. For better and worse. A 386/25, mouse and a Sound Blaster are recommended, along with a disk cache. Rumor has it that Origin used *Hyperdisk*, available as shareware, during development and testing. (It's an excellent disk cache for general use.) Without a disk cache, animation is choppy even on my 486/33.

New and old

True to its heritage, *Ultima VII* uses the top-down view. (Earlier *Ultimas* did switch to a first-person view when exploring dungeons — perhaps one day the *Ultima* and *Underworld*

by Bernie Yee

engines will be combined for a real RPG knockout.) And following the trend set by companies like Sierra, *Ultima VII* sports a whole new interface — completely point and click, with no icons on the screen. Everything is controlled by clicking on characters, items and objects.

Is a "realistic" fantasy universe — an oxymoron? Origin doesn't think so. All objects possess physical properties: you can churn milk into butter or watch castle servants do the same as they go about their lives. Click on your character, and his display and vital stats appear. Click on his sack, and its contents appear [unless due to a bug in the first release, they have mysteriously disappeared].

Each display is a movable window, and items — which, true to the Origin philosophy, have physical characteristics such as size and weight — can be "drag and dropped." This tends to require a bit of a "pixel hunt" to discover important objects. Although *Ultima VII* doesn't require a mouse, the keyboard-only interface is clumsy. With a mouse, the interface is easy to learn and powerful enough to carry you through the game without a hitch.

A morality play

As in earlier *Ultimas*, Lord British seeks to provide a moral framework in which your character lives and acts. It may seem sanctimonious, but in fact, heroes always function under moral codes. *Ultima VII* just doesn't give you the option to be evil. Unlike in *Underworld*, there is no karma counter to penalize you for bad deeds, though stealing in *Ultima VII* is met by some pretty foreboding reprimands.

On one level the story line is standard *Ultima* fare. Britannia is in need again and you are summoned by a

glowing, ominous face — the Guardian — who tells you that he soon will take his rightful place as the ruler of Britannia. This is accomplished through an impressive multimedia introduction, complete with digitized voice and stunning graphics. Then you take that traditional leap through the Moongate and materialize in front of Iolo.

As in *Ultima VI*, issues of good and evil are omnipresent. The documentation

introduces the

Fellowship, an association of individuals dedicated to seemingly worthy ideals. But you've seen that before. They are based on the notion that the Virtues (which the Avatar embodies) are unattainable, so it's better to provide "realistic" moral goals for people. There's no doubt they'll be causing trouble, but in a brilliant stroke of moral ambiguity, you will be waiting for definitive proof for some time. Good and evil are never clear.

My name is Legion

The problems haunting Britannia are obviously based on current events. A serial killer seems to be on the loose. Magic no longer functions properly, and the youth are experimenting in escapist "reagents." And of course, the Fellowship is everywhere — people are either fanatical followers or vaguely suspicious of the zealots. Homelessness, poverty, pollution and taxes also crop up. *Ultima VII*'s strength lies in these plots and subplots, which provide mini-quests that aren't necessarily involved with the main quest. *Ultima VII* is definitely non-linear.

These moral dilemmas may be subtle, but the action is far from it. Though there is little combat at the



The ultimate Interface?

continued on page 14

THE DARK QUEEN OF KRYNN

by Al C. Giovetti

Dark Queen of Krynn concludes the epic that began with *Champions of Krynn* and *Death Knights of Krynn*. Set in the AD&D Dragonlance game world, it introduces new improvements in the sound, graphics and playability of the fantastically popular "gold box" game engine that may set it apart as the best title in this line of games.

After *Treasures of the Savage Frontier* and *Dark Queen*, no more gold box games will be produced. The 8-bit game engine will be retired for a new 16-bit engine in future SSI games. Originally designed to accommodate EGA monitors and the PC speaker, the 8-bit engine has been improved over the years — but only with patches that have allowed for

balance of good and evil. You and the Companions are to seek out the help of the original Dragonlance companions (Tasselhoff Burrfoot and Raistlin Majere) to foil this latest attempt to dominate the world and subvert Paladin's rule, order and balance. The conclusion requires a fight to the death with the Chromatic Dragon after companions manage to trap the Queen in the abyss.

Dark Queen's format resembles those of past gold box games. When creating a character you select from seven races of Krynn, seven character class and nine two-dimensional alignments composed of world view and ethics. Dual-class Humans may be created by changing classes after substantial advancement in their original class. Elves and half-elves can be multi-classed, with as many as three simultaneous classes.

Characters may be randomly assigned six ability scores and maximum hit points, or you can "modify" these points to create characters from books, comics, paper and pencil games and other fantasy games. To the great relief of reviewers and fans alike, characters from *Dark Knights* can be transferred with items and coin intact.

Character advancement in non-human races still reflects the illogical and "racist" limitations imposed by the AD&D second edition rules. (By racist I am referring to the limitations imposed on all non-human races by the rules of the game.) Elves continue to function under the limitation of not being able to be resurrected.

Dark Queen is a first-generation role-playing game, with advancement in levels of a profession or class rather than the assignment of skill points to a set of skills. Training and level advancement up to the 40th level (save for some non-human

classes) can be obtained for free in many of the training halls scattered throughout the land. *Dark Queen* also has vaults that allow you to store items and cash for retrieval when needed at a later date, making item management a less onerous task.

Combat still utilizes the less-than-intelligent auto-combat routines for non-player and player characters. In comparison with the autocombat's use of magic seen in *Ultima VII*, the old, out-of-date gold box intelligence is superior in many respects.

Autocombat could be improved by allowing for more precise instructions as to general courses of action in a battle. Combat occurs in rounds and allows for full control of player and non-player characters in manual mode.

Monsters galore

Dark Queen is stocked with a large variety of high-level monsters that will tax your combat abilities to the fullest. There are underwater combat scenes when you help the sea Elves defend their kingdom and save one of their cities from an evil plan. Sea monsters, underwater exploration and combat can be experienced in the early parts of the game. Beholders, enchanted Draconians, black pudding, hydras, gorgons and other fiends make for most interesting combat puzzles and strategies.

The game encompasses thirteen towns, cities and castles on the map of Krynn. You also get to explore the abyss of the Dark Queen — the five-headed dragon (referred to in the game as the Chromatic Dragon) also known as Takhiss. Your exploration of the towns and cities does not allow you to use the excellent automapping system.

Dark Queen's designers restricted

Type: Fantasy Role-playing

Systems: Amiga (one meg required), Mac, MSDOS (286, 640K, HD floppy required, hard disk recommended; EGA, 256-color VGA/MCGA; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Roland)

sound board capability and super VGA. With the new 16-bit engines under development, SSI games can go beyond the old 8-bit, 6-frame animation limitation (SSI gold box games use 2-frame animation) and provide an even better questing experience.

The story's still the thing
One thing I hope won't change is the depth of the storytelling. Playing a gold box game is like reading a fantasy novel over which you have control. Every word in the paragraph book, rule book, clue book and version card, each and every nook and cranny of every map were read and explored by me with hungry anticipation. I for one will join others at the wake and raise a glass to this dying old friend.

The plot involves yet another attempt by the Dark Queen to enter the world of Krynn and challenge the



Queen for a Day

the automapping so it works only in certain areas, and in others only after specific tasks are completed. This is no fun if you hate to map.

Dark Queen limits the use of non-player characters. At no time does the group have eight players travelling together. *Treasures of the Savage Frontier* does a better job with NPC interaction than *Dark Queen*. There are no new wrinkles here, and the old annoyances persist.

Sound effects, musical score, mood music and musical stings are very well done — if limited to short pieces — and must be heard to be believed. Compatible with many major boards, the sound is the best of any gold box game to date.

The player character icons are the most colorful and detailed of any gold box game. You can no longer customize player icons with color, but must now choose from a set of highly detailed and colorful ones, all less boring than those in earlier games.

Queen's interface is easiest to use with the keyboard, but the mouse is adequately supported. Attention to detail and refinement of the mouse interface and display have paid off in an effective use of mouse and icons, in addition to a simultaneously active keyboard-hot-key-based interface.

Copy protection is by keyword from the paragraphs book, which holds eighteen pages of text. The number of saved games is limited, and they cannot be user-labelled. *Dark Queen's* configuration file cannot be changed without reinstalling the game. The game boots and saves quickly, and the introductory and demonstration sequences can now be quickly bypassed.

Conclusions: If you like the gold box series, *Dark Queen* is highly recommended. I strongly suggest that you buy the clue book, since this game is very difficult.

Difficulty: Hard

Price: \$50, IBM & Amiga; \$60, Mac

Company: SSI & Micro Magic/EA



CES Party Report

by Russ Ceccola

Oh, boy! Here I am again with the "society column" section of *QuestBusters* — the official unofficial summer CES party report! Who's sleeping with whom? Who makes more money than anyone else? Who ran around beating those dagnabit kids over the head with a baseball bat for points in the Nintendo area?

I can't answer any of these questions! But I can tell you which parties were worth visiting at the CES, and how much fun I had at night in Chicago. Well, let's get gossiping....

Wednesday night

After a hard day's work at the show, I got back to my room in plenty of time to watch cartoons on TV and learn how to watch pay movies for free on the TV box before heading out for the parties. My first stop was Acclaim's suite at the Hyatt.

The place was packed and decked out well with upright arcade games near the entrance and video game machines all with their latest titles available to try out. The food was great, the bar was open and they even had a pig's head with an apple (the first I've ever witnessed up close and in person).

Acclaim's suite was classy, the atmosphere was fun, and many people who left returned later to hang out again. At one point in the night George Foreman came by to check out the activity, but not when I was there. He made repeat appearances on Thursday and Friday too,

The "Accolade in Motion" theme party in the Fairmont's Gold Room was my next stop. There was ample space for mingling, and lots more food and drink than at this party. Accolade set up a videocamera to capture attendees' favorite motion on tape, and lots of people did silly things that Accolade can dredge up for *America's Funniest Home Videos*.

Last stop for the night and best party of CES was the Electronic Arts

party at Red Kerr's restaurant. They had lots of food and drink, but also all their latest titles up on computers and videogame machines. The party had a sports theme, and announcer Ron Barr was taping a broadcast live from the party.

Also unique to EA's shindig were all the people crammed into the place (which seemed just about everybody of any importance in the game industry, and plenty of others too) and the fact that the party took up two floors of the restaurant/bar. People stayed until about midnight, and there were lots of EA giveaways like sunglasses, buttons and posters all over the place. Kudos to David Dempsey for putting it together.

Thursday night

This night was a lot tamer than Wednesday, but still a lot of fun. The festivities started off with an incredible dinner at the University Club of Chicago thrown by TSR and SSI. The food was the best I had the whole time in Chicago, and the dinner conversation — ranging from RPGs and TSR games to *Alien 3* and Chicago's traffic — was stimulating. Walking was tough after the dinner, but I managed to make it to Atari's Batman-themed party at the Barclay hotel penthouse suite. Typical of Atari's great hospitality, they had a caricaturist and fortune teller, as well as free Batman posters, a Batman stand-up and a princely night-time view of the city. This party was low-key by the time I got there (because I missed the lady who was levitated), but it had a neat atmosphere and laughs all-around.

Friday night

Friday was a bust because there were no major parties, but I made it back to the Acclaim suite, which was still rocking, with my buddy Robb Alvey and later at the "rock and roll McDonalds."

Summer CES: looking for

"New games were few and far between as far as adventures go, but those that showed up looked promising."

With all the new technology rearing its high-tech head, it's taking a lot longer to turn out games. Indeed, a lot of what I saw at summer CES in Chicago were games I saw six months ago in Vegas — just a lot further along in development. For this reason, I made a list of games shown at this CES that were also previewed at last CES and are now somewhere near completion (a few of these have actually been "previewed" at the last three shows!). New games were few and far between as far as adventures go, but those that showed up look promising.

Another emerging trend from this CES is the rapidly narrowing line between computer and videogames. Two years ago, maybe even last year, videogames were mostly action/arcade and adventure games popped up solely on computers because they were the only machines that could handle all the locations, objects, graphics and text of a good RPG or graphic adventure. Now CD software has begun the rapid devolution of the floppy disk for computers and the cartridge for videogames.

Also, there are many new videogame adventures and RPGs, as well as conversions of computer game winners, and I'll try to cover them as space permits in upcoming issues of *QuestBusters*. Before long, CD games will be simultaneously released for multiple computer and video-game machines with CD drives. It's happening quickly and, though I hate to keep on praising *7th Guest*, this game's almost simultaneous release for both the Nintendo CD drive and MPC-compatible PCs will break down many barriers that separate computer gaming from videogaming.

But now it's on with the show, as I cover the companies' new releases alphabetically (bad puns provided by the editor).

Disk ACCESS

Waiting for news about the latest *Martian Memorandum*-type game? Stay tuned until at least January. In the meantime, check

out their latest, Links 386 Pro, a major revamping of the Links system with the fastest redraw and best interface flexibility of any of the current golf games.

Hard ACTIVISION to Follow

Here's one for confusion. After Mediagenic filed for bankruptcy, they changed the company name back to Activision, the name they started business under oh so many years ago. So forget that Mediagenic era. You've gotta admire their tenacity. Activision now releases products under three names: Activision (general games and videogames), Infocom (adventures) and The Disc Company (a separate productivity software company with which Activision merged to strengthen their marketability).

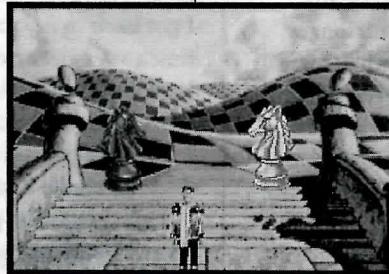
Activision is working on three game collections and one new game. The *Power Hits* products collect older games into single value-priced packages. In addition to the sports and movies collections, expect to see the *Power Hits Sci-Fi* collection

(*Prophecy*, *Tongue of the Fatman*, *Circuit's Edge*, *Mines of Titan* and *Death Track*) and the *Power Hits BattleTech* collection (*Mech Warrior*, *BattleTech I* and *II*).

Under the Infocom name are *The Lost Treasures of Infocom II*, which collects almost all of the remaining Infocom titles, and *Return to Zork*, a graphical Zork game not shown at CES but which purports to encompass the entire Great Underground Empire. Not an adventure game, but still a cool game for any comics fans out there, is Activision's forthcoming *Aliens vs. Predator* videogame.

Hitting the DOMARK

A European RPG is on the way through Domark's Accolade distribution, one that may hook many players with its wonderfully unique design style and logical interface. Called *Shadowlands*, it should not be confused with MicroProse's *Darklands*. As the ghost of a warrior slain on the battlefield, you must guide four



King's Quest VI (Sierra)

a hit in the fall line-up

warriors to enact your retribution.

Shadowlands uses three-quarters perspective like *Populous* and *Powermonger*, with lots of puzzles and traps to beguile the player. It's one of those games you might pass on unless told about. Let's hope it's as nice as it looks at the show.

ELECTRONIC ARTS & Crafts

Electronic Arts had only one game of their own worth mentioning. (The rest of their new titles are sports games.) However, a couple of their affiliates have forthcoming adventures.

The Lost Files of Sherlock: The Case of the Serrated Scalpel was previewed at the last CES, and since then have played a single-scene demo that shows off the system. It has the perfect interface for a Sherlock Holmes adventure, allowing you to gather clues, examine evidence and interrogate people with ease by using a command-selection system similar to the Lucasfilm adventures. The graphics are very detailed, and the music helps put you in that London state of mind (foggy). *Sherlock* is a hit in the making.

INTERPLAYBoy

Besides *Battle Chess 4000*, Interplay had only one new "adventure" on hand. *Castles II: Siege and Conquest* goes beyond the first *Castles* in strategy and adventure.

The main difference is that there are multiple barons you must defeat and whose land and people you have to control. This modification opens up a lot of new possibilities, including a multiple player option. VGA graphics and digitized video enhance the look of the *Castles* environment.

Also, rumors of another *Star Trek* game are true. It will not be in the form of a mission disk for the existing game, but instead a brand new game using the *Star Trek: 25th Anniversary* interface/system. Commendation points (or lack thereof)

will not affect you as negatively as they did in the first game's final battle sequence.

KONAMI goes Krazy

Konami once again will be storming the software market in the coming months with a lot of software titles in various categories and developed by a number of companies, including Hero Software, Gremlins, Renegade, Rizon and Spirit of Discovery (who have a few great edutainment and productivity programs on the way). But brand new adventures from Konami are scarce.

Utopia is a Gremlin game that looks a lot like the *Populous*, *Powermonger* and *Sim-Everything* games but offers a lot more, for the goal is to colonize a desolate planet and create the "perfect" society. The player controls many aspects of life on the planet, and game's scope the game is a lot bigger than other such games.

Batman Returns is billed as an adventure, but it looks more like an action/adventure hybrid whose goals are definitely adventure-like, but there are some arcade sequences to spice things up. The adventure part involves gathering clues to solve crimes in Gotham City and trap the

Penguin. Don't let past Batman action games warp your opinion of this game. It definitely has the adventure-game elements for fans of the movie. This should be a worthy title that lets you relive the movie and actually "direct" the computer game movie.

Finally, *Elite II* is a brand new sci-fi epic in trading and colonization that takes place in new galaxies and with new missions. The original game had a cult following and more gamers are sure to latch onto this sequel.

LEGEND in its own time

Showing only self-running demos, Legend has two upcoming games that are full of humor. One introduces a zany new character, another brings back an old favorite.



**Might & Magic:
Clouds of Xeen
(New World)**



Eric the Unready (Legend)

by Russ Ceccola

continued on page 9

Leather Goddesses of Phobos II

by Russ Ceccola

Subtitled "Gas Pump Girls Meet the Pulsating Inconvenience from Planet X," *Leather Goddesses II* is Steve Meretzky's latest game under the Infocom product name and the sequel to his hit all-text adventure from 1987.

The first true graphic adventure from Infocom, this is a bold step forward that works well — to some extent. Although the game is far too simple, it's a lot of fun while it lasts, has a decent interface and contains over an hour of recorded speech.

Bad boy Barth

The story starts on Earth and moves to Phobos and Planet X. You choose to play one of the three main characters: Zeke Zarmen (a relative of

Type: Wacky Graphic Adventure

System: MSDOS (640K required, mouse optional; EGA, VGA; Ad Lib, Sound Blaster, Roland; "Sound Enhancer" included)

Planned ports: none for now

Zarmen from the first game), Lydia Sandler (daughter of the town's professor) or Barthgub el Nikki-Nikki son of Jelgorbar el Zayda-Zayda (alien Pulsating Inconvenience from Planet X, known as Barth for short). Barth crash-landed on Earth, and the Leather Goddesses are after him and, consequently, all humans because they think we are harboring Barth.

In the first part you must repair Barth's ship, treat his wounds and leave Earth to save the planet by defeating the Goddesses. The three characters follow different plot lines, but they all meet at key points, so you can't stray too far. Barth's game is the easiest, while the others are harder.

The simplistic interface is too limiting. There are few objects in the game, and you spend a lot of time talking to one of the many characters to uncover clues. Using a "smart cursor," the interface is completely point-and-click. The cursor changes

to reflect your option: a hand cursor, means you can use or take that object. The cursor changes to an arrow that shows which direction you can move, and it's important to turn around at times in certain locations to see objects obscured by the forward view.

When you speak to a character, boxes pop up to the left with objects or people in them that you can discuss with the NPC. Other boxes let you greet, kiss or have sex with that character.

That's about it: talk to people, move around and use and take objects and you'll have the game down in no time at all. The ESC key accesses system functions. It's nice to see this back-to-basics approach in Infocom's first graphic adventure.

Funny as ever

Like the original game, the sequel features adult humor, graphics and plot development. Unlike the original, there is only one naughtiness level, so parents of younger players be warned. The game would be rated PG-13 if it were a movie, and the naughty parts are as tame as any of the soap operas.

The best thing about *Leather Goddesses II* is that it's a vehicle for Meretzky's wacky humor, which he promises to stop with each and every release. From the wild parties on Phobos, to the sheep mixed in with the girls in the whorehouse, to even the title of the movie playing in the local theater (*It Came On the Desert*), Meretzky lets loose. Your play sessions are sure to be filled with chuckles. Just listen to the sounds one of the gas pump girls makes under the hood of the car....

Graphics generally nice. There are lots of locations and screens, and the artists took advantage of the many colors available to them in 256-color VGA. The rooms and some of the outdoor scenes are a bit choppy, but

the characters, particularly in close-ups, stand out. And Earth, Planet X and Phobos come to life! I wasn't sure how graphics would change an Infocom game, but the result was pleasantly surprising. This one could stand on its own with or without graphics.

Even greater strides were taken in sound effects and music. I don't think the music ever stops in the game unless you turn it off!

Problem is, that even though it's

actually more exciting with all that music going on, but gets annoying when you try to listen to the characters' voices and the music at the same time. Fortunately, you can pipe the music one place and keep the levels low and pipe the speech somewhere else and keep the volume high.

The program includes the "LifeSize Sound Enhancer" so people with no sound boards can hear the music, voices and sounds by pumping them through a stereo. Kudos to Infocom for not requiring you to listen to each character's entire speech. As soon as the speech kicks in, you can hit the mouse or a key and move on to the next sentence.

Conclusions: *Leather Goddesses II* was fun, but way too simple for an Infocom game. A nice way to spend some time between games, it presents no challenge even at the harder levels. The interface works well, except the pre-named save game. *Leather Goddesses II* takes what started out as a text adventure and successfully translates it into a funny graphic adventure — and Meretzky's humor is the main reason to play this one.

Skill Level: Novice

Company: Activision

Price: \$69.95

QuestBusters price: \$55

Infocom failed to provide screen shot, despite several phone calls to Kelly Zmak

Summer CES.....from 7

Eric the Unready is a knight who seems to get all the dull jobs and the short stick in life. In this wacky adventure from Bob Bates, which pokes fun of lots of pop culture icons, you venture into the Not So Great Underground Empire to guide Eric on his quest to rescue Princess Lorealle from the evil Queen Morgana.

Ernie Eaglebeak survives another school year and makes it to *Spellcasting 301: Spring Break*. This series is quickly becoming one of favorites from past years and is certainly bad boy Steve Meretzky's finest set of games so far. Maybe fatherhood has something to do with it.... In *Spring Break*, Ernie and his frat brothers visit Ft. Naughtytail and battles it out with rival frat Getta Loda Yu.

Look for lots more babes and brewskis and all the other events *Spring Break* has to offer, from wet T-shirt contests to beer brawls. It brings back my memories of Fort Lauderdale spring break vividly. Oh, to be a sophomore again....NOT! Look for both of these in the fall.

MERIT Badges

Merit Software is publishing a game from Cyberdreams, and *Dark Seed* may wind up the sleeper hit of late 1992. The horror/sci-fi adventure thrusts you into a waking nightmare and boasts many horrific elements. But the game's real claim to fame is the graphics.

All the scenes in this nightmare world are scanned images of gorgeously detailed paintings by H. R. Giger, the famous German artist who created the *Alien* creature and many other monstrosities on canvas.

MICROPROSE & Cons

Darklands is next on the plate, and after that comes *Rex Nebular* and the *Cosmic Gender Bender*. This wacky graphic space adventure lets you control the titular Rex on the planet Terra Androgena, which is populated by alien women. They capture you, and your goal to escape. The graphics

are nice, and there are video-captured characters and multiple views and interface screens throughout. *Rex Nebular* is MicroProse's answer to Roger Wilco. This one should be fun.

Brave NEW WORLD COMPUTING

The next *Might & Magic* is on the way! Avoiding the use of a number in the title, this game will be called *Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen*. It takes you to an entirely new world and boasts better graphics than ever before, not to mention the classic *M & M* interface and a larger world than any of the other games. This game will certainly surpass *M & M III* in every way.

Spaceward HO! is a Western-themed strategy game that may appeal to readers because it's a game of exploration and conquest in outer space. The galaxy changes from game to game, and multiple-player games make this new title a fun way to challenge other adventurers.

ORIGIN & Tonic

This company is busy these days, and their next few titles will keep people busy for a long time. First off is *Ultima VII Part 2: The Serpent's Isle*. This is an intermediate game in the latest *Ultima* mini-series, one that ties closely to the story line started with *Ultima VII*. Britannia is once again faced with problems, particularly a strange sickness, and it is up to you to save the land. Graphics look a lot cleaner than other *Ultimas*, and Origin promises they'll check thoroughly for bugs before bringing it out.

Trade Commander is next in the *Wing Commander* series. Besides fighting space battles, you take over the life of the fighter pilot character in the Federation. The game's expanded scope may appeal to those who didn't like the *Wing Commander* games because they were

all-action games.

SEGA in the Bodega

Sega Genesis games may be a little too arcadian for *QB* readers, but a few of their RPGs and adventures like the *Phantasy Star* series and *Shining in the Darkness* offer more adventure than some computer games. With the advent of their CD drive, Sega plans to bring adventurers quality titles on CD. These include: *Ultima Underworld*,

King's Quest, *Wing Commander* and *Sherlock Holmes, Consulting Detective*. I wouldn't be surprised to see CD-specific titles on this system.



Rift Wars (Dynamix)

Super SIERRA & the DYNAMIX Duo

As expected, Sierra has a few titles that we'll all be interested in seeing. With the exception of the Dynamix RPG, everything was running in demo-only mode. On the way for Sierra adventure lovers everywhere are: *King's Quest VI: Heir Today, Gone Tomorrow*; *Space Quest V: Roger Wilco in the Next Mutation*; *Quest for Glory III: The Wages of War*; *The Island of Dr. Brain* and *EcoQuest: The Lost Secret of the Rain Forest*. All feature 256-color graphics and mucho sound support. Next fall and winter looks like a great time for new Sierra products.

Dynamix's new RPG looks like a landmark hit. *Raymond E. Feist's Riftwar Legacy: The Betrayal at Krondor* is the full title of a game that reveals a bold new direction in gaming for Dynamix. Produced by John Cutter, *Krondor* is a first-person perspective RPG that lets you explore a vast world of digitized characters and very realistic terrain. Combat feels like it's real time even though it's turn-based, because all the characters are animated during battle, not just during their turn. This game will be

concluded on page 11

WALKTHRU: Twilight 2000

Twilight 2000 was originally a scenario-oriented pencil and paper role-playing game by Game Designers Workshop. Players generally portrayed NATO soldiers who have suffered the loss of contact with their commanders and no longer have ready access to supplies and provisions. They are, therefore, now on their own in the middle of Poland during World War III.

The computer version allows a minor deviation in which the player has radio contact with Exor-1, your home base commander, who will assign you missions and keep you abreast of enemy troop movements. To win the game you will complete 60 missions, a trying experience. The "win screen," anticlimactic as it may be, does leave you with a feeling of accomplishment.

Character Generation

There is nothing wrong with using the pre-generated party. But if you do so, choose the option to "roll your own" and randomly roll up the stats of the character in question from the Manual Character Generation option. Patience is the key as you try for the highest possible Strength and Agility, which guarantees greater carrying capacity, extended range when throwing grenades, and a high number of actions per round. The highest stat possible is 10. Generate as many characters as possible, distributing skills evenly for maximum flexibility.

You should have a Doctor/Nurse/Paramedic with Medical of at least 4 or more, characters with good combat skills in Armor and Heavy Weapons, a Mechanic with Mechanic of 5 or more, and all possible Language skills. Do not bother creating Pilots, who have no value in this scenario. In fact, it is possible to crash the game if war breaks out while you are rolling up an Officer character in the Air Force.

The Scenarios & Solution

There are only eight possible scenarios, each with a few minor variants: Treat the ill or wounded citizens, Repair the vehicle, Hostage Rescue, Get the supplies and deliver them, Destroy the invading vehicle, Find the spy, Get the large supplies with the Deuce-and-a-half, and Stop the forces attacking the town. These, along with their locations, are randomly generated.

As this game relies on a random factor for the scenarios, a standard solution is impossible. However, a few tips on combat strategies will make the 60 missions go much smoother.

Party Composition

Develop your Leader as a Combat Specialist with Rifle, Heavy Weapons, Stealth, Foraging and First Aid skills at the very least (all should be higher than 5). Then develop a Combat team, a Mechanic team, a Medical team and an Interrogation team.

Each combatant should have:

- 1: a Rifle (M16A2 or the like, capable of automatic fire)
- 2: a Grenade Launcher (the Mk-19 belt-fed launcher or the Soviet AGS-17 are best, as you won't have to reload every other turn; but they eat grenades like popcorn, and you will spend a lot of time looking for 30- and 40-mm grenades)
- 3: an Anti-tank weapon with reloading capability, such as the RPG-16 (lean toward the TOW launcher or the AT-5 Spandrel)
- 4: the basic gear, including the flak

BY BRUCE E.WILEY

jacket or the Kevlar Vest and Helmet

Also make sure the party has at least one Heavy Machine Gun for backup. This provides the heavy support you'll need: battles can be easily lost if you fail to "bring enough smoke" against the foe. Snowshoes are necessary for speedy foot travel during winter months, and incidental equipment, such as a Hand-Held Radio, a tent, and IR Goggles are also a good idea.

All this gear will exceed the maximum weight a character can carry. But a little-known "feature" lets you exceed the maximum weight. After combat, scavenge all the equipment you can from the battlefield. When you can't pick up an item, move the character over the "footlocker" icon and click on the Inventory Icon. Scroll the left window down one step to the Weapons in Use area; then you can pick up the items from the ground and return them to the inventory back in Krakow, or carry them around. This will allow you to carry the heaviest of equipment without penalty.

The Missions

There are only a few basic missions, solving the game is simply a matter of enduring the repetitious play until the bitter end. The best tool for survival is to frequently save the game. Always save before moving to another map location and before engaging in combat! You can undo hours of effort simply by forgetting to save before a mission, then running into a random tank encounter.

Another "game-saver": be prepared to get out your tank at a split-second notice — you will escape being shelled into oblivion by incoming fire as the shell "magically" disappears.

When facing an overwhelming number of foes, arm one or two of your guys with the fastest reaction speed with belt-fed grenade launchers. ■

Summer CES..from 9

the first of a series and should open a lot of eyes.

For anyone planning on buying a Sega CD drive, Sierra will be right there along with you. These titles will be converted to Sega CD format in the near future: *King's Quest V*, *Space Quest IV*, *Willy Beamish*, *Stellar 7*, *Mixed-Up Mother Goose*, *Police Quest 3*, *Leisure Suit Larry I* and *Rise of the Dragon*.

SOFTWARE TOOLWORKS & SPECTRUM HOLOBYTE

Toolworks signed an agreement with Lucasfilm Games to put out three titles on CD-ROM. *Loom* is already out and rivals any other game on CD. *Monkey Island* and *Secret Weapons* are next on the slate.

Spectrum Holobyte landed one of the hottest licenses around — *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. They plan a PC adventure in the spirit of the TV show. Let's hope it's as good as Interplay's *Trek* game.

SSI of the Beholder

On the way are two fresh RPGs that sport new game engines and new worlds. *Dark Sun: Shattered Lands* takes place in the harsh desert "Dark Sun" AD&D world and sports 256-color graphics, lots of animation and an open-ended story and universe that allows you to wander around before tackling the main goal. *Shattered Lands* is an attempt to break away from the previous AD&D games and start off a new series with the new 16-bit engine.

M is SSI's science-fiction game that

Twilight 2000

Enter combat mode and fire the launchers. Just before the action is about to pass to the enemy, Flee combat. This resets the action pointer to the first combat action at the next round. Reenter combat and repeat. The enemy therefore will have no chance to shoot back!

The CES Questies

Now for a new computer game award — the *Questy*™ — in various strange categories, some of which make sense only if you were there.

BEST GAMES OF CES

7th Guest takes the top spot again because of its approach, graphics, story, interface and music/sound effects. It's light years beyond the competition, but the rest of the games in this category are still excellent. Only games in some form of completion count, not just demo graphics. They are: *The Lost Files of Sherlock*, *Batman Returns*, *Dark Seed*, *Rex Nebular*, *Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen*, *Ultima VII: Part 2*, *The Betrayal at Krondor*, *M* and *Dark Sun*.

BEST PRESS KIT

You get so many press kits at the show that it's tough to get the information you need quickly if they're not organized effectively. Sierra and MicroProse share honors for nicest press kit: colorful, informative, well-organized and containing slides. (Yea, I know this is a ridiculous category, but it's my category.)

BEST CES BOOTH/DISPLAY

Virgin Games grab this award because of their excellent back room setup for *7th Guest*. This was the nicest display I've ever seen at CES — other than the parties — and had musty old chairs, cobwebs, a grandfather clock, spooky music and even a smoke machine. The room was dark and a repeating video demoed the game. Cowls off to Lauren and Lisa at Virgin for putting all the elements together.

BEST SCENE AT CES

The funniest sight I encountered at the show was on Saturday, the first consumer day. Origin had taken down their meeting room sign so the public wouldn't storm the booth. I opened the door and saw Richard Garriott lying on the floor, and Chris Roberts and another Origin employee slumped in chairs, obviously all tired from the show. They woke up when I opened the door and gave me the strangest looks I received during the show. They deserved the rest, because Origin's booth was overrun by everyone from foreign magazines to local TV stations. They worked hard!

takes place on a planet called Monsoon. The object is to save a group of diplomats with a band of renegades from various alien races. Graphics and sounds are enhanced for this game as well, and you discover what "M" means as you go.

Like a VIRGIN

Though I saw both *7th Guest* and *Fables & Fiends: The Legend of Kyrandia* at the last CES, it's worth mentioning them again because of how far along they are now and how much they've changed. Both could be

major hits. *F & F* dwells on magic and fantasy, while *7th Guest* focuses on horror and mystery. *7th Guest* could easily be the first certified hit in CD gaming, and rumors have it that it will be packaged with the Nintendo CD drive — a coup for Virgin.

Other Virgin games visible at the show that should be out by now are: *Heimdall* (a goofy Viking adventure), *Floor 13* and *KGB* (political adventure-thrillers), *Realms* (a strategy adventure). The *Dune* sequel should appear some time in 1993.

Keys to the Kingdoms™

Planet's Edge: The Point of No Return

Important places to visit

Algibia Sector: Talitha 2, Subra 2, Koo-She Prime, Algibia 4
Alhena Sector: Procyon 3, Capella Prime, Alhena 8, Hyades, Prime
Zaurak Sector: Rana Prime, Rasalmothal 5, Diphda 4, Zaurak 2
Ankaq Sector: Formalhaut 6, Deneb 2, Alrai 2, Nashira 3, Ankaq Prime
Alnasl Sector: Vega 9, Ascella 2, Alnasl Prime
Kornephotos Sector: Ruticulus 2, Sabik Prime, Eltanin 7, Kornephotos 3, Kochab 2
Izar Sector: Alpha Centauri 2, Arcturas 3, Mizar 5, Izar 2, Alkaid Prime, Vindemiatrix Prime
Caroli Sector: Alula 4, Denboa 4, Cor-Caroli Prime, Merak Prime

Some planets to mine

Alien Crystals: Kitalpha Prime
Alien Gases: Kerb Prime
Alien Isotopes: Shedir Prime
Alien Liquids: Almach 4
Alien Metals: Miaplacidus Prime
Alien Organics: Scheat 3
Common Liquids: Chara 3
Crystals: Acamar 3
Heavy Metals: Sol 2
Inert Gases: Alphard 6
New Elements: Nekkar Prime
Organics: Alpha Centauri 4
Radioactives: Aldebaran Prime
Rare Elements: Misam 2
Soft Metals: Sirus 5

Getting started

Use the Ulysses to travel to star systems of interest and to check out planets for hostile aliens. Wait until you have built the Calypso to do any serious mining. Space battles can be won even in the Ulysses by using the

"sit and spin" technique of fighting: slow to speed 0 or 1, and while the enemy ship circles, set your weapon to automatic fire and keep your bow pointed at the enemy.

Travel first to Alpha Centauri 2. Land at the Alien Outpost and fight the hostile robots. Pick up any goodies you want. Talk to any intact androids, especially the one in the SW corner of the outpost. He will give you an android tool you can use to get info from the severed android heads lying about.

Next travel to Talitha 2. Talk to everyone, especially the queen, who will give you a test to prove your worthiness. Go to the arena and open the correct door (save first!). Take the banner back to the queen. Follow the hidden path in the garden to the lair of Geal. Fight Geal and get the amulet and the levitator.

Take the levitator to the princess, and move the wardrobe. Take the princess to the shuttle. Pick up the trinket she drops. Travel next to Subra 2. Get an Imastyl and talk to the fungus people's leader. Go across the bridge, and stay to the north or south to avoid fighting the guards. Watch out for the traps and Blood stalkers, and go down the hole in the ground. Talk to the outlaw, fight the bladderclaws, and get the Talking Stick. Give the trinket to the outlaw and take the Talking Stick to the leader to get the Algibian Invite.

Use the Invitation to gain access to Algibia 4. Talk to everyone. Show the amulet to the prisoners in the north of level 1 to get a clue about the sixth seal. Go get a press pass from the newspaper editor. Use the pass to see the president, then use the pass to talk to the president. Give him the amulet, then give him the seal. Explore further with pass — get plans for the Calypso (ship 2) and lots of items in the room north of where you beamed in.

Ed Reedy

Planets for finding building materials
(Don't remove all the units from a planet, or it will never produce them again.)

Alien gasses: Sar 1, Phaet 7, Deneb 1
Alien metals: Miaplacidus 1, Biham 1
Alien organics: Scheat
Alien crystals: Kitalpha 1
Rare elements: Misam 2
New elements: Nekkor 1
Inert gasses: Alphard 6
Radioactives: Aldhibain 1
Soft metals: Seginus 8
Hard Metals: Venus (Sol) 2, Nukasan 3
Crystals: Atria 3
Common liquids: Chara 3
Organics: Alpha Centauri 4
Seth Krych

Leather Goddesses of Phobos II

Planet X, Phobos and Earth: these actions are necessary and the same for any character you choose to play. Enter the hotel on Planet X and click on the box. You'll be summoned to the Council Chamber. Talk to the Council leader. (S)he will say your ship is fixed and give you the invisibility belt and self-recording record.

Get in the ship and you'll fly to Phobos. Enter the building and go through the kitchen. Wear the belt. Go through the blue curtains. Use the record. Wait until the conversation ends. When Lubanna says she didn't hear something, leave. Go through the center door. Click on the prisoners' manacles to release them. Go back to the main room and through the right door. Go to the war ships and enter the flagship.

Wait as before. When the Leather Goddesses leave the ship, do so yourself. Leave the angry crowd. Go to the radio station. Put the green record

on the turntable and flip the switch so the "on the air" sign lights up.

Peter Roest

Ultima VII: The Black Gate

The best weapon is the Hoe of Destruction in the shed of the "lunatic" farmer (east of Britain on the way to Cove). Use a powder keg to blow up the door.

To destroy the Black Gate, you need the wand from Rudyom's home in Cove. To disable the fields surrounding the Gate, use the three black prisms found after destroying the power generators. The first generator is in the dungeon on the isle north of Moonglow, the second in the dungeon NW of Britain (with the magic carpet outside), and the last is in a cave in the Fellowship Retreat (on an isle east of Serpent's Hold).

Use a glass sword to defeat the Ethereal Monster guarding the first generator. You will also need the Ethereal Ring (from Spektran, past the stone harpy), which must be enchanted by Penumbra (in northernmost house in Moonglow).

Use Nicodemus' hourglass (Paws' Antique Shop) to get past the red gate protecting the second generator. Use the Mark and Recall spells on the virtue stones you "borrow" from the Avatar Museum in Britain. Once you cast Mark on a stone at a particular spot, casting recall on it later will teleport you there (like Lloyd's Beacon in M & M).

Enter the final dungeon on the Isle of the Avatar with the big gold key from the chest in the mountain mazes of Buccaneer's Den. Inside, head for the curtain with the blue patch of water near it. A secret lever hidden there will open the iron gate.

For an easy way to get past the final battle, cast Armageddon. You may then use the black prisms to

remove the energy field protecting the Black Gate and destroy it with Rudyom's Wand. You don't have to buy the Armageddon spell; grab the spellbook from the Mage you meet in the last maze on the Isle of the Avatar.

How to kill Lord British: when he walks under the steel plate that says "Throne Room of Lord British," click on the plate (this is based on a true incident during the production of Ultima VI — see *The Official Book of Ultima* for the gruesome details].

Andrew Phang

To access the secret cheat menu: load the game by typing "ultima7 abcd".



Then with the numlock turned on, hold down the ALT key and type "255" on the numeric keypad. Press enter. The

function keys bring up a variety of options for obtaining objects and spells as well as boosting attributes and so on. (Make a copy of your saved game before using the cheats.)

Fred J. Phillip

Treasures of the Savage Frontier

Collect all the Lucky Papers (though one from each town should suffice). You need the red, blue and green crystals to read the Papers. They are obtained after the "final" battles in most towns, and in each battle you'll face three or more types of enemies. Make sure the first type you kill is different each time, otherwise you'll get the same crystal.

The toughest battles are the Fireshear/Firedocks battle and the final one. In the first, use lots of Fireballs to clear out the Yeti. After entering combat with the Beholder, cast Charm Monsters on foes near the

Beholder, as magic won't work.

In the last battle, cast Charm Monsters on spellcasting foes (especially those in the process of casting, as their spells will now be cast in your favor). The main tactic is to prevent the enemy from casting spells, so have Clerics cast Hold Person, or use Fireball or Lightning Wands to support your main Mage. Have your Fighters hack away at the Dragon while the Mage casts Hold Monster.

Andrew Phang

Ultima Underground

Mantras (see June/July issue for more)

Missile weapons: Fahm

Cast: Sol

Defend: Anea

Lore: Lahn

Mana: Imu

Picklock: Aam

Sneak: Mul

Swim: Ono

Sword: Amo

Traps: Romm

Spells found in Maze (not in spellbook)

An Corp Mani: Dispell Undead

An Sanct: Curse

Kal Mani: Summon

Uus Por: Better Jump

Vas Kal Corp: Destroy

Vas Ort Grav: Sheet Lightning

Ylem Por: Walk on Water

Greg Zeschuk

This month Greg Zeschuk and Ed Reedy were randomly selected to receive the game of their choice for sending in Keys. So send in yours today! (All submissions become exclusive property of Eldritch, LTD. until October 11, 2317 A.D.)

Ultima VII.....from page 3

outset (an excellent element of game design — to let you get your legs before forcing you to fend for your life), Origin has rated this game for mature players, due to the generous amounts of blood and atmospheric

tension that the music and other effects generate. As clouds pass overhead or lightning flashes, you get a foreboding feeling that all is not well in heaven and earth.

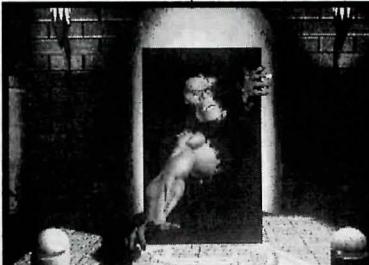
Your interaction with NPCs is handled with aplomb. Conversation choices are context-dependent and evolve as the conversations and the quest progresses. Unfortunately there is no note-taking feature, nor is there automapping — both should be standard equipment by now.

Voodoo....

I never liked the idea of having to gather reagents to cast spells, and Origin provided a reprieve in *Underworld*. But once again you're schmutz-hunting in order to cast spells of eight levels of power. The combat system is detailed but is conducted in real-time, which may be annoying to many. I found it difficult to figure what was going on during a full-scale melee.

Still, elements of strategy exist, as you can order your party members to carry out nine different combat modes. They can attack certain opponents, run or even protect the weakest party member.

There are many nasties for those inclined to hack and slash, but don't forget your main purpose on Britannia — it's easy to get lost amassing a body count or carrying out interesting side-quests. And it's tempting to get involved in playing with the world around you, but there is a quest to fulfill, after all.



I said close that door!

...Or that Old Black Magic?

Origin could have used a little enchantment for debugging *Ultima VII*, which takes up almost as much disk space as a full-blown Windows/DOS installation! I find the trend toward bigger, buggier

games a bit discouraging — *Ultima VII* is really a game that should be released on CDROM.

And like Microsoft, Origin is getting to the point where you should wait for version 3.0

to expect a reasonably stable product. The first major bug was where keys disappear from your inventory when you sleep. This was remedied by a patch now available from Origin or the major online networks.

I found that other objects may also disappear. Upon reaching the second murder site, I discovered the bodies and a piece of evidence were missing. I have even had entire towns disappear as well! On top of that, the copy protection requires you to trans-

late runes from your map — a true pain! Conclusions: Don't we deserve a bug-free game when we shell out \$79.95? Well we didn't get it in the initial release, which some people report having played to nearly the end and finding that bugs prevented them from completing. What we got was a cutting-edge, elaborately detailed *world* that is both fascinating and frightening. *Ultima VII*, the first release, at least, may be the *Finnegan's Wake* of computer gaming — a flawed masterpiece.

Difficulty: Intermediate

Company: Origin

Price: \$79.95

QuestBusters price: \$54

Gateway.....from 1

zipping through space, you can "go places" without leaving Gateway. A virtual reality machine (like the one in *Timequest*) facilitates visits to alternative "worlds" where you may ultimately find more than you will on other "real" worlds.

Several useful devices in *Timequest* have counterparts here: a portable Dataman and the PV terminal — store information on the Heechee ships' controls, details about life on Gateway, message from other prospectors and other things you might otherwise have to keep track of on paper.

The variety of music and noises sounded good on the Sound Blaster and the Roland. And the music changes occasionally even when you remain in the same location, unlike in most games.

Bates' sense of humor also sparkles in every corner of the story, such as the "trivia game" you must play in order to obtain a medallion. There is an enormous range and variety in the artwork as you move from world to world: some are stark black and white, others

ripe with hue and texture.

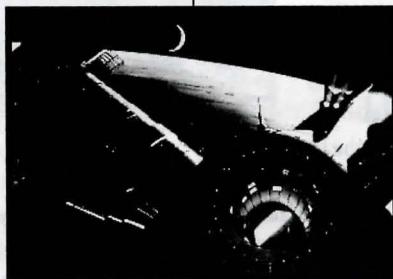
Conclusions: So far the best graphic adventure of the year, *Frederick Pohl's Gateway* more than fulfilled my expectations. I am not merely recommending it, but demanding that everyone with a taste for logical puzzle-solving in a science fiction setting play this game or cancel their subscriptions to *QuestBusters*. (Ok, just kidding...but it is that good.) Bates says Legend has the rights to a sequel, so let's hope we see part two somewhere down Adventure Road.

Difficulty: Tough but fair

Company: Legend Entertainment

Price: \$59.95

QuestBusters price: \$43



Returning to Gateway



Swap Shop

Trade or sell your old adventures with a free ad. Adventures and original programs only, limit 10 games per ad, one ad per issue. * = cluebook included.

Apple

\$5 @: Expedition Amazon, Times of Lore, 7 Cities of Gold, Gemstone Warrior, Gemstone Healer. \$10 @: Wizardry IV, *M&M 2, Dragon Wars GS. Write 1st. Gayle Ann Stanford, 3281 Foxgate Dr, Memphis TN 38115

For 2e, slightly older adventures for sale. Send for list. Take any reasonable offers. Harold Heck, 667 Geyser Rd Apts #2, Ballston PA 12020

Commodore 64

Many games \$5-10 @ plus postage. Except Ultima 5, \$15 + postage. C. Brouillette, 1845 Baseline Rd # 725, Ottawa Ont, Canada K2C 3K4

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MSDOS & Questalikes

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