Best quest of the month!

The Ancient Land of Ys—a Japanese RPG

Nineteen eighty-nine seems destined to be the year when the wavering boundary between computer games and video-games is finally shattered. With the release of *Legend of Zelda*, Nintendo showed the world that it was possible (and highly profitable) to create a video-game with classic role-playing features. It didn't take long for others to follow.

Last year Sega released three games almost simultaneously: *PhantasyStar*, *MiracleWarriors* and *Ys, The Vanished Omen*. Not only are all of these games deeply riveted in the RPG tradition, but the last one also bears a striking resemblance to the game I'm reviewing at this very moment—for both the *Ys* games were derived from a runaway hit Japanese computer game.

Ys? Because we likes youse

In *Ancient Land of Ys* you play the part of Arick, a lowly peasant. An evil
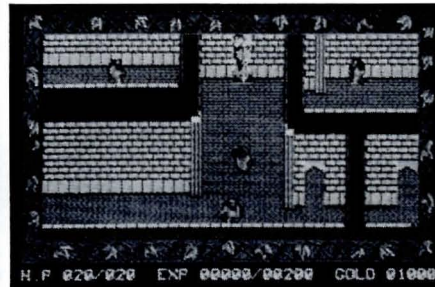
IBM version

wizard (yes, they have them in Japan too!) named Malificus, a descendant of one of the legendary ancient wise men, has stolen the six books of Ys and is using them for unspeakably hideous purposes. He has changed the guardian statues into mortal men and sent an army of monsters to harass the inhabitants of

By Stephen KIng

the land. It's up to you to use every resource at hand to find the six magic books and defeat the evil Malificus, restoring Ys to its accustomed prosperity. (This would probably make it a good game for librarians frustrated by people with long overdue books.)

You kick off the quest in the town of Minea. A humble peasant with no weapon or armor, not even any skill in the art of combat, you must use your life savings of a thousand gold pieces to outfit yourself with basic sword and armor. Without these essentials you won't last long outside the city gates.

Zepic Village, hidden deep in the forest, is your first destination. From here you may gather the hints necessary to help you battle your way through the Temple, the silver mine and ultimately the Dark Tower itself.

Like many recent action RPGs (*Times of Lore, Prophecy, Omnicron Conspiracy, Battletech* and so on), *Ancient Land of Ys* bestows upon you a bird's-eye view into another world. Arick remains roughly in the center of your screen as the background scrolls past and fully animated people or monsters amble aimlessly across the land.

> **Type:** Action Role-playing
> **Systems:** IBM (384K, DOS 2.1 or higher required; both disk formats in package); GS (512K required; RGB monitor recommended but supports composite; 3.5" disk); both support stick and keyboard, no mouse
> **Planned conversions:** none
> **Version reviewed:** IBM

War on Drugs Expanded to Fantasy Lands!

President Bush recently expanded his new drug plan to include certain herbs and other ingredients of various magical formulae and potions commonly used in most fantasy lands. In addition to military support, Bush announced financial aid will be sent to rulers of all fantasy lands willing to provide local farmers with substitute crops: instead of growing the exotic herbs and spices used to boost Strength and other traits, for instance, they'll be encouraged to plant fields of oat bran, granola and wheat germ.

Marines are being sent to Sosaria to uproot hard-to-find fields of nightshade and mandrake root, while Deruvia's mushroom crops and the Great Underground Empire's popular Spenseweed are expected to suffer the same fate. A 100-acre Spenseweed plantation, discovered in a remote section of Quendor last week, was incinerated with the assistance of Nancy Reagan's pet dragons.

Already, some realms have announced support of Bush's new plan. Freebasing toadstool power was outlawed in Gwydion last week, the Oriental land of Khantun banned mind elixirs, and Flatheadia shut down every Flat head shop in the kingdom. Albion's Queen Gloriana even announced a number of notorious citizens will be required to change their names.

Meanwhile, the insidious "Herb Cartel" has stepped up its campaign to intimidate judges on the verge of reinstating extradition treaties with the USA. Calling themselves "The Teleportables," they have already Fireballed a pub in Skara Brae, Lightning Bolted the Bank of Zork, Sand Stormed every major castle in Phlan, MIBLed all the guards in Thalen, Cleeshed a prominent candidate in Aquitania's upcoming presidential election, Magic Missiled an orb factory in lower Landor, and cast Hold Person spells on the entire parliament of CRON.
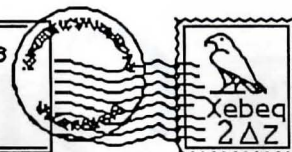
Adventure Hotline

Letters
to the
Editor

Xebeq
2ΔZ

More Science Fiction RPGs from Infocom and Activision

Minds of Titan, Infocom's latest RPG, is a science fiction mystery set on Titan, a Saturnian moon, where your multiple-character team must find out why communications have broken down between your base and the newest settlement. Look for IBM and Apple later this month. Activision's *MechWarrior* is an RPG based on FASA's *Battletech* game. The IBM rolls out this month, but no conversions are planned through Christmas.

New from New World Computing

King's Bounty is a one-character RPG in which you track down a weird assortment of villains in the future. But you're assigned a different collection of bad guys with each game, so there's plenty of replay value. We saw a beta version back in May, and the animation was amazingly fast and detailed. The Apple (128K) was timed for November. We are urging subscribers *not* fly to Japan to get a copy of *Tunnels & Trolls,* which was released there first—their IBM clone version will not work on American machines, so hold your breath till March, when we'll see *T & T* here.

ORIGIN Ships Fall Releases

Windwalker (*Moebius II*) and *Space Rogue* were set to ship in September for IBM and Apple. *Knights of Legend* was planned for an October release, with a 64 version to follow.

Join the Club—the Murder Club

Like *Ancient Land of Ys*, this is another Japanese computer game imported by Kyodai and distributed by Broderbund. It's a graphic mystery with menus in place of a parser, but looks weak.

Manhunter II: The Game

Sierra's latest sequel takes you to San Francisco, where you're once again wearing the robes of a Manhunter who's supposed to track down human lawbreakers for the aliens ruling the world. The IBM game is out now; it was developed with Sierra's earlier system, unlike other new releases.

CinemaWare's Latest Wares

It Came From the Desert was positioned for release this month for the Amiga. It's the first original title from CinemaWare's in-house Interactive Entertainment Group, who did the CD ROM version of *Defender of the Crown.* But it will probably go to CD ROM or CDI before being converted for another computer, since the IE Group focuses on games mixing live footage with animation. CinemaWare has some more adventures in development but won't discuss them yet.

SSI's Sword of Aragorn

SSI is calling this IBM product a "fantasy/strategy game," which we're interpreting as a "war game with magic." At first glance it looks like more tactical combat with no puzzles, but we'll take a closer look next month.

Keys Wanted: $5 Each!

We're going to try a new system for two months to see if it attracts more contributions to Keys to the Kingdoms. Instead of awarding two contributors with the game of their choice each month (whether their clues were published or not), we'll pay $5 for each one actually published. The more clues and tips included in your entry, the better chance it has of being used. This will cost us about twice as much as the current system, but hopefully will be a bit more fair and generate more Keys.

On the *Dragon Wars*path

Dragon Wars should *definitely* be out by now for the Apple.

Conversions of Cucamongaville

Amiga and ST versions of *Times of Lore* arrived safely, but the Amiga *Ultima V* probably won't show up till November. Sierra's new, enhanced Amiga games— *Space Quest III*, *King's Quest IV* and *Manhunter San Francisco*—should be hitting the shelves by now, and *Police Quest II* Amiga is set for November. Interplay's IBM *Neuromancer* was set for a September ship date (contrary to rumors, an unconfirmed sequel will *not* be called *Neuromancing the Stone*). The C 64 *Might & Magic II* is out there, with Amiga and Mac still set for late this year. *Where in Europe is Carmen Sandiego* has immigrated to the Mac and includes new features: a Crimestopper's Notebook and Factfinder's Database for keeping track of clues. The interface was also revised for the Mac, and sound and graphics have been enhanced. The Swahili translation of *Quest for Clues I* was delayed but should be out by Thanksgiving.

EA's Instant Classics

Modem Wars, just released a few months ago, has already been dumped into Electronic Arts' $14.95-$19.95 "Software Classics" line, along with *Mars Saga.* So

Letters to the Editor

Dear QuestBusters:
Your magazine's sense of humor is great, and the recent "Nintendo Booth Collapses" headline was outrageously funny! Stephen King, Bob Guerra and the others make even the dullest games fun to read about. On another subject, I don't enjoy reviews of games for only one system and think you should just cover those for two or more different computers. I usually read all reviews about Apple games, since I have a GS. I also want to commend you on your CES reports, and ask why not make Keys two-and-a-half pages?
Duey Hua

Then you'll be thrilled to hear we're dumping all game reviews and turning QB into a computer humor magazine: National Computing Lampoon. Getting serious for a moment (which is becoming harder to do every day), if we implemented your idea about one-system games, you'd never have read about Alien Mind or Dream Zone in QB, since when first released they were available only for the GS. Before expanding Keys again, we're going to see how it goes in getting enough clues to fill two pages. See the news item to your immediate left for the latest policy shift in this area.

Dear QuestBusters:
How about some personals on you and the other reviewers?
Fred J. Phillips

Coming soon at a QB in your neighborhood.

Spotlight on Spotlight

Total Eclipse and Dark Side

Most graphic adventures illustrate background scenes with predrawn pictures that remain relatively static. Onscreen characters may be moved around freely, objects could be rearranged, and perhaps a bit of spot animation is seen, but the basic backdrop for all the action is generally fixed for any given scene.

Imported from England and marketed as part of CinemaWare's Spotlight line, *Dark Side* and *Total Eclipse* are also 3-D graphic adventures—instead of giving you an onscreen character who can move around and interact with the scenery, however, both present your every move as well as various events from a first-person perspective: you see what the character sees rather than the character.

What's more, in both games you are free to move about and examine the scenery from any possible angle. As you turn to the right or left, your view changes appropriately. If you want to see what's behind a building, you simply move around it and take a look.

In this way, both *Dark Side* and *Total Eclipse* are actually simulations of sorts, and like other types of simulations (tanks, planes, boat, etc.) their worlds seem more real to us because they present visual information in a way that's much closer to the way we receive it in the real world. After all, most of us don't black out momentarily to the sounds of a disk whirring every time we turn a corner, only to open our eyes a few seconds later and find ourselves on a new street! (Well at least it hasn't happened to me since the last time I drank a cursed Heal potion.)

The 3-D modeling system used in both games is called Freescape, and the first time I saw it used was in Epyx' *Space Station Oblivion*, a British import that was called *Driller* over there). The British company responsible for *Space Station Oblivion*—Incentive Software Ltd.— is also behind both of these new titles. In fact, *Dark Side* can even be con-

sidered a sequel to *SSO*. Before I describe the premise for either of the new games, however, lets look at what they have in common.

I Get Around

The most obvious similarity between the two games is the method used to control movement. In each game you can move forward and backward, and turn to the right or left, by using the joystick or keyboard equivalents. Also, both games allow you to make a complete 180-degree U-turn with a single keypress. In addition, the distance you move with each press of the joystick and the angle of your turns can be adjusted to facilitate both rapid movement through open areas and precise maneuvering in tight spots.

Both games also allow you to look up to see the ceiling or the top of a tower that's just offscreen, or down to see something on the ground. Both games feature two modes of operation: a movement mode and an attack mode. In each case, the space bar serves as a toggle between modes and when the attack mode is accessed, an aiming crosshairs appears. The crosshairs can be moved around the screen with your joystick, while your position and view remain stationary. Finally, both games allow you to save games in progress to a separate disk and even name them.

Dark Side (of the Moon?)

As I already mentioned, *Dark Side* is somewhat of a sequel to *Space Station Oblivion*. This one takes place on Tricuspid. I know, it sounds like a tooth from space, but it's really one of two moons orbiting around the planet Evath (Mitral, from *SSO*, is the other.) The object this time is to stop the evil Ketars from destroying Evath. The Ketars have constructed a network of Energy Collection Devices (ECDs) all around Tricuspid that are used to power Zephyr One, a huge weapon aimed directly at Evath. By destroying the suspended solar cell at the top of each ECD, you can prevent the Ketars from getting the energy they need to fully charge the Zephyr One.
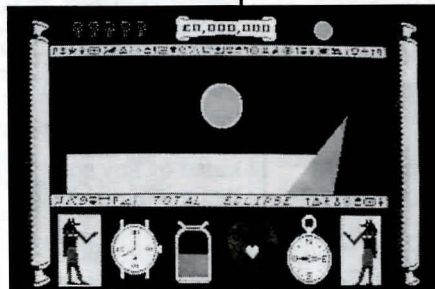
Of course, just finding all of the ECDs can be tricky. Though you are equipped

Total Eclipse on the IBM

with a jet pack that lets you fly around Tricuspid, you begin the game with a very limited amount of fuel. Fortunately, small stores of additional fuel are concealed around the planet, as are extra shields that can be collected. Also, some restricted areas can only be reached by using telepods, which are powered by telepod crystals. These crystals, like fuel and shields, aren't exactly plentiful on Tricuspid.

Even when you know where most of the ECDs are, another problem remains—plexors. These are stationary defense weapons that automatically attack when you get too close. They can be destroyed by your laser, but most regenerate before long. Finally, some of the ECDs can't be destroyed if they are connected between two active ECDs. Therefore, you must also figure out the correct order in which to blast them.

Total Eclipse

While *Dark Side* is a race to save a planet from one of its moons, *Total Eclipse* is a race to save the Moon from our own planet, Earth. Seems that back

<table>
<tr><td>

Type: 3-D Graphic Adventure "Simulator"
Systems: Amiga (512K, joystick optional); C 64; IBM (CGA, EGA, Tandy), ST
Version reviewed: C 64

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By Bob Guerra

Universe III

Hundreds of adventure and role-playing games have come and gone since the days of *Original Adventure* and *Dungeon Campaign*, but few can truly be considered classics. *Wizardry, King's Quest, Ultima, Bard's Tale*, to name just a few—only those that struck a common chord with the adventure gamers of the world have inevitably spawned sequels. Omnitrend's *Universe* is such a classic.

The original *Universe* was launched when the Atari eight-bit computer was still King of the Hill. Never before we had seen a game of such complexity. A complete history of mankind's adventures in space was provided. Money had to be borrowed so you could build a ship. You were nominally working for the government but could not rely on them. To support yourself and your crew, you had to make a go of it as a miner, trader, passenger carrier or space pirate—all the while seeking the elusive hyperspace booster that would pull your civilization from the depths of disaster.

Strategy and tactics were an extremely important part of a game stuffed to the gills with subtle nuances. Predictably, *Universe* was a huge success. Then *Universe II* came along, building on the game world's history. Play mechanics and objectives were similar enough to be familiar to the seasoned player, but not enough to make it just another clone [as with *Questron*].

Midcourse correction for Omnitrend

With the release of *Universe III*, Omnitrend has altered their course slightly, moving from the resource-management and ship-building activities that distinguished the series to focus more on logical puzzle-solving. Now, rather than building up your characters' attributes and making money, you concentrate of collecting objects that may or may not help.

Combat and interaction with NPCs are virtually non-existent, though you can glean a few clues by observing some of the NPCs. And one of the few combat scenes is solved with logical skills rather than a weapon. There's no space flight, so the space opera theme could easily have been replaced with a sea-going tale.

By Stephen King

Now let's see, where were we?

The third chapter of the *Universe* saga takes place a few years after the end of part two. You take the part of Alex G. Seward, captain of the FWS Union, whose job is to escort an envoy to the hyperspace booster at Ambergris to find out why the care packages from Earth have stopped.

Orbit around Ambergris has already been established, so you begin by reviewing your orders and reviving the landing crew from hibernation, then trying to board the shuttle without getting killed by any spies that might be lurking on your ship. You can get the whole crew to tag along, but only three of them are useful.

Upon landing the shuttle, you'll find your group alone in a dilapidated isolation facility where you seem to have been left indefinitely to your own devices. Escaping this enforced isolation and making your way to civilization compose a great deal of the game.

E. T. Go home!

After reaching the refuge of an inhabited area, you still need to be very cautious. An inexplicable hate of aliens has made the people of Ambergris wary of all strangers. This becomes evident at the quarantine area, where nearly every square inch of wall space is covered with anti-alien graffiti.

Eventually you'll confront the ruling council. Here you get a chance to explain the criminal actions you incurred in the course of escaping detainment—or face the consequences. To do so, you'll have to locate certain evidence about the missing shipments from earth and give it to the right council member.

The New Universal Interface

You manipulate objects by forming commands with words from three pull-down menus. First you pick one from the verbs list, then one from your items list, and a final word from a third list of things to be acted upon: put security card slot, for example. This kind of object manipulation is a major change in the *Universe* series: *I* had no parser, and *II* relied on an Infocom-style parser.

EGA version

Universe III also differs from the first two in its presentation scheme, giving you an omnipotent observer's view down into the floor plan of the ship, quarantine area, planet surface, etc. In fact, in this respect, *Universe III* is more closely related to Omnitrend's *Breach* or *Paladin* than to the previous *Universe* games.

Your character remains in center-screen as you scroll past the background by pressing the arrow keys. If you are using a mouse, there are several ways to move. You can place the pointer in one of the four squares adjacent to your player/icon and press the button to get him to walk in that direction. You can also place the pointer on one of the four on-screen arrows and click to move in a similar fashion.

The most efficient way to move, however, is by pointing at the character, clicking the button and then drawing a path to the square you want to end up on. This is much faster (did I mention that movement in this game is *slooooowww* on a stock PC or clone?). The only problem with the latter method is that it cannot be used if other people are in the room. This is necessary to keep you from completely avoiding trouble in some areas, but in most cases I found it was simply annoying to have to single-step through a room I could have crossed in a moment.

You also have the option of having the character's footsteps animated if you choose. My guess is that you won't. How many games have you seen whose special effects such as this one are turned off on default? In this case, even though watching the animation is more fun than the normal chessboard-like movement, the cost in speed is not worth it unless you are running at 12 MHz or better.

To the right side of the screen are several icons that can be used in conjunction with the mouse, allowing you to pick up/put down items, access the verb list and perform other necessary operations without having to touch the keyboard. In fact, apart from saving the game, I was able to play completely through it with my keyboard covered up and stored under the computer. Of course, all options may also be selected via control key sequences.

A bug in the BIOS?

Speaking of saving games, I noticed an apparent bug that scrambled the graphic window on saved games, sometimes even causing lock-up. It clearly did not like my

EGA card (an STB Multires II that has been known to disagree with a game or two about graphics), so I'm not sure if the bug was in the game or the EGA BIOS. Sometimes it would scramble as soon as I had loaded a saved game, sometimes it would let me play for fifteen minutes or so before lowering the boom. It never seemed to happen except with a saved game, so I suspect at least part of the problem lies in the program.

While we're on the subject of graphics, CGA and EGA are supported—but not Tandy TGA. Of course CGA does not support the sixteen-color modes, but the graphics for this game, while more than adequate, are not what I would call "state of the art," so four colors will probably suit you just fine.

The central character is displayed as a stick figure without arms, and most of the graphics in the main picture are too small to make out any details. The game compensates by introducing a graphic feature new to the *Universe* series. Some objects, such as the ultraviolet goggles, have a "close-up view" that displays a first-person, medium- to high-resolution picture of the item. Filling about a third of center-screen, the picture appears when you click on the object.

For your listening pleasure
One nice surprise was the audio. Besides the usual one-channel beeper, both Ad-Lib and CMS boards are well supported. I tried both and found the effects on the Ad-Lib were slightly more pleasing to the ear, which has been the norm so far.

An interesting thing about this sonic enhancement is that Omnitrend shied away from the expected musical riffs, concentrating on sound effects instead. I admit that I like a nice opening theme song as much as anybody, but the real power of these boards lies in their ability to produce realistic sound effects. This facet has mostly been overlooked until now. Some of the sounds—like the firing of the laser and the opening and closing doors—fit extremely well. Others, like the sound of the ladder, are not even meant to be realistic but add to the fun of the game nonetheless.

Faster than a locomotive, more powerful than a speeding bullet!
Another thing that makes this a fun game is its sense of humor, exemplified by a certain rickety robot wandering around looking for someone named "Will Robinson." But what really tickled my funnybone most was some of the unintentional stuff. For some reason, I thought I needed my first officer along on the trip to Ambergris, so I had him follow. Most

of the time he was just one extra body, and the game ignored him. But every so often he'd get weird: something about him speeding alongside a moving train just struck me as funny. Many things like this can happen if you get out of sequence or do something unexpected.

I got an unusual feeling of support when playing *Universe*. Modern Day Publishing supplies hint books for all the Omnitrend games. Their *Vidcomm* newsletter provides tips and clues, new scenarios for Omnitrend products like *Paladin* and *Breach* (which include construction kits) and even delivers original fiction set in the *Universe* universe. There are currently over 3,000 subscribers to *Vidcomm*, so playing *Universe* can almost seem like a group effort even when you are alone.

Universe III, like an ever increasing number of games, uses key word copy protection. Omnitrend does not hamper the owner's ability to copy files or store them on a hard disk, but, you're required to type in a word randomly chosen from the manual. I don't know about you, but I'm getting a little sick of keeping track of 50 owners manuals and enough decoder wheels to make the CIA awfully suspicious about my activities if they ever break into my computer room. [At least *Leisure Suit Larry II* used a clever variation by showing a picture of a woman from the docs and having you type in her phone number.]

Buy the IBM game in a store, and you'll get a 5.25" version that can be swapped for a 3.5" from Omnitrend. Or you can buy the 3.5" format directly from the company.

Conclusions: The best thing about *Universe III* is the effective use of sound effects and the way it wraps up the trilogy's long-running plot. The worst thing is the number of little things that aren't really bugs but which could have been caught by more extensive beta-testing, such as the way my first officer "interacted" with the speeding train. Still, the *Universe* series is one of the few successful series that retains its homey origins. It doesn't sport the best graphics you will see this year, but they're not the worst, either. It moves a bit slowly at times, and there are a few holes in the plot (like what could possibly make a law abiding captain kill four innocent guards), but these factors don't keep *Universe III* from being a solid contender in the medium-level RPG market.

Skill Level: Intermediate
Protection: Key Word
Price: $49.95
Company: Omnitrend

Adventure Hotline

were *Demon Stalkers*, *Bard's Tale*, *Wasteland* and a batch of others.

Weird Dreams
That's what someone at MicroProse must have had the night before writing the press release, since we've been unable to figure out what kind of game *Weird Dreams* is supposed to be. In fact, the press release makes a big deal out of their inability to do so. It *sounds* like it could be an adventure, but then again, it also sounds like an arcade game—what is this anyway, a Charades press release?

Mindscape Drops Copy Protection
All new and upcoming titles published by Mindscape will be completely free of copy protection—not even codewheels or key words. The catch is that software published by *other* companies and distributed by Mindscape may or may not be, depending on the publisher. And according to the press release, new versions of older titles published by Mindscape "may or may not include disk-based protection." Mindscape's *Star Trek V*, *Gauntlet II* and *The Colony* will still have manual-based or codebook protection, while the Mac version of *Gauntlet* is unprotected.

Ultima VI Update
ORIGIN now says they won't necessarily wait to finish all versions of *Ultima VI* before shipping any of them. If the IBM version is ready first, it will ship immediately. Apple and C 64 versions won't go unless at least one other version is also ready; otherwise, they'll follow the IBM. One way or another, it should ship somewhere between March and August.

Sierra Game Support
Sierra is giving its customers the best support of any adventure game company. They just added a 24-hour automated hint line (a touch-tone phone required) with 32 lines at 209 683-6858. (You can still reach live Customer Service reps from 8 AM-5PM PST.) Sierra responds to pleas for help on five national online systems, and their own BBS is at 209 683-4463.

Media Central
PC Games magazine is moving from New England to California to be closer to the game companies, but most of the staff is not making the trip. *Compute's Amiga Resource* officially started publishing every other month.

Quest for Clues Coupons
If you bought either book directly from

Death Bringer

This composite review was written by Ken St. André, Paul Shaffer and Shay Addams. St. André was stymied early on, Shaffer finished the quest, and Addams took care of the grisly details. We'll commence with Ken's introduction.

According to stereotype, when mighty warrior and wicked wizard meet in ultimate confrontation, the virtuous warrior will have the True Talisman or Mystic Orb that enables the oaf to destroy the sorcerer and save the land. That scenario played itself out in the green and rustic land of Mezron two centuries prior to this game's story, when Zator the Mighty vanquished Azazael the Overly Ambitious with the aid of five magical Power Gems. Zator ruled magnanimously for decades before he died and the five great jewels were lost. But guess what!

The Wizard faked it. He's ba-ack! And like undead wizards everywhere, he's overrunning the land with evil creatures. Good King Rohan needs a champion, but what he gets is you—a vapid, naked barbarian from the north.

The King makes quite a bargain here. He gives you a dagger, a lantern, one meal and a flagon of healing potion. In return, you're supposed to fetch five Jewels and slaughter every supernatural threat facing the land. Long odds, but you knew the hero business was dangerous when you got into it. On top of that, each Jewel is held by an evil-type fiend who can't be destroyed unless you're packing the appropriate item, so first you've got to round up these things.

I wish I could say I marched around Mezron destroying monsters, building my power and finally saving the day, but those monsters kept killing me left and right. Then my Amiga decided not to recognize disk two, which was probably due to the drive's speed being too out of whack, so I died one final death and moved on to the next adventure....

Next Reviewer, please

Six icons in the left corner, says noted Interface Expert Shay Addams, bring up related information in a text window to the right of the icons. Function keys also handle most of these actions. The Weap-

By the Usual Gang of...

ons option lets you equip one by clicking on its name in a list, for example. Fitness shows bar graphs for Strength, Health and Stamina. If an arrow appears beside the words Character or Objects here, it indicates their direction in relation to your character's position.

The Subcommands icon lets you talk to people, close and open things and so on. Graphics are interactive, so you click on a command, then on a person or thing in order to interact with them. Naturally, you've got Healing potions and Magic Scrolls (cast by clicking on the spell's name). The Compass icon show a letter indicating direction you're facing. Movement is handled by clicking on another set of icons.

Amiga version

Dialogue and other game text scrolls from right to left across the message window, actually a horizontal bar that looks like a Times Square neon sign displaying the latest headlines. NPCs spout repetitious one-liners, and you can't ask about specific things. Often several people are lined up in the same place, at least giving you several potential sources of information. (But don't believe *everything* you hear.)

You can view your character, gold and current weapon by clicking on the mouse's right button. (The character's body is unpleasantly illustrated, reminiscent of a medieval BVD commercial.) While viewing this screen, you can also drop down a pair of windows that show the objects in your inventory and "here." You can grab and slide these things back and forth, and some will open up as new windows if they can hold other objects (as in *Dungeon Master* and the ICOM adventures). To eat, for instance, you slide some food from your inventory window to the "here" window, then close your window and slide the food to your character's mouth.

To attack someone, you just click on his picture, then read the combat report in that scrolling message bar. A minimal magic system arms you with a few spells, such as fireballs and poison clouds, which are cast by clicking on a spell's name. St. André points out an unfair aspect of combat: monsters can appear on the scene

> **Type:** Fantasy Role-playing
> **Systems:** Amiga, ST, C 64
> **Planned conversions:** IBM (VGA, 512K; EGA will follow)
> **Version reviewed:** Amiga

during a battle as well as while you're just standing there, then attack from left or behind—you don't even know they're there until you're dead, dead, dead.

The interior mazes are small enough that you won't have to map them: just wander around till you find the main area. And all forests use the same map. Outdoor scenes are shown from a 3-D perspective, and a detailed bird's-eye view map shows your position and the location of cottages, towers, castles, forests and other structures—depicted with 3-D profiles instead of the customary flat rooftops.

Graphics and sound are fair, but incomparable to *Dungeon Master*. A few illustrations, like the forests and some monsters, are above-average. Bizarrely, the onscreen credits include one for the artist who did the mediocre title screen. The Amiga version does not support a second drive; no disk swaps are necessary during play, however. And you don't have to contend with copy-protection, since the Amiga version is not protected and there were no plans to do so for the conversions.

The Sword of Shaffer Strikes

Paul Shaffer "...liked the way some of the creatures and places are well-illustrated. But there are no 3-D effects, and though the Temple of Set offers a lot of diversity in the things and characters you find there, it could have been so much more. If you kill the priests you find holding a woman captive in the Temple, she just stands there. You can't do anything with her or even talk to her. It's like they had some good sub-plots going but didn't do anything with them.

"And gameplay was poorly documented on how to go about finding things and dealing with NPCs. Only when I got fed up with the game and started killing people did I find some of the things I needed. Also the game development was poor, and the only 'puzzles' are finding the items needed to slay the fiends who have the Stones, then matching up them up with the right bad guys. After figuring out what was going on, I only need five or six hours to finish the quest.

"I didn't like having to kill the Good Elves to get their armor: slaying the good guys in order to save the land is inconsistent with the plot. But the whole game was a letdown, even the ending: you just go back into the throne room and read a

Online   Orb-seeking

GEnie's Imagine Nation: an "adventurized" CB

I've never cared for the CB "chat" areas that attract so many people to online networks like CompuServe and Delphi, but when I heard about a new "Alternate CB" with adventuresque overtones, I decided to check it out. It was still in beta at the time, so consider this a preview.

Created by Simutronics, who also did GEnie's multi-player RPG *Gemstone*, *Imagine Nation* reminded me of an Infocom game without rules. Right now the world of Metropolis consists of 125 locations, ranging from forest paths to a zoo and a hotel. Future additions will take users' suggestions into account, and a "seasonal area" will be revised for Halloween and other holiday festivities. Though conversing with others is the main activity, the experience is closer to being a character in a fantasy land than to being a disembodies voice on a CB channel.

You walk around by typing standard directional commands, and may use the Poof command to teleport to many places, or even to a person in another location. Upon entering a room, you'll read its description; you can also "look" at the room, an object or person for its description—unlike typical CBs, *Imagine Nation* features a type-in parser like those found in all-text adventure games. It's a relatively simple parser but effectively facilitates object manipulation by including prepositions: you can "Look under table," for example, or "Give sword to Killer."

Zippy's Legendary Ringding of Power

Imagine Nation's most distinctive innovation enables you to create up to five of your own objects to fool around with in a variety of ways. I was soon toting Zippy the Pinhead's legendary Ring Ding of Power and a Bill Cosby simulator while wearing an Extraditables t-shirt everywhere I went. Objects may possess certain characteristics, such as wearable items or edible, conventional or futuristic weapons and things you can throw around, like a beach ball, or you can give them to people, which opens the way for bartering.

Even more unusual items can be created at a shop called WeeBee Objects. Magic wands, pets, weird weapons—capable of responding to other people's actions, special items like these will be even more interactive. It's up to you to tell the Simutronics design team what you want and what it should do. This can even include "all-text animation."

Did You Say All-text Animation?

While hanging out in WeeBee Objects with a dozen or so beta-testers one night, I noticed someone had a pet cat that would rub against your leg if you petted it. If ignored, it would intermittently do other cat-like things, the way non-player characters do in some of the old Infocom games. Because special objects require "scripting" and programming at GEnie, you'll have to pay a small fee for initial creation and a monthly rental charge; regular items are free, and there's no surcharge, so all you pay is the usual $5-$6 hourly rate. (The special objects may be free until the designers determine how much to charge to create and maintain them, which can't be done till *Imagine Nation*'s been live awhile.)

You also get to invent your character's description and name, which other people read by typing "examine Deadfred." (Fred's the name I use in most RPGs, since if I'm going to get killed, I might as well get a cheap laugh when the program announces "Fred is dead!") Gender may be male, female or neutral.

A lot of *Imagine Nation*'s potential hinges on the imagination of the people "playing" it. One clever person used the ACTION command to "slice Deadfred's head off." Then he created an objected call Deadfred's head and tossed it around the room!

Of course, you can just go in there and chat, banter or whatever you usually do on a regular CB. In that case you'll enjoy doing so in more exotic locations and situations where a lot more can happen—I'm sure that once *Imagine Nation* is online, even its creators will be surprised at what goes on there. And the commands, such as BLUSH, WAVE and SMILE enhance your own expressions by adding appropriate descriptions of your "action."

Another set of commands facilitate doing things: ATTACK (person), DROP, OPEN, etc., while another batch covers information such as checking your inventory and sending messages to people in other locations. While still in beta, over 75 commands were listed in the online help file, and any fan of all-text adventures can imagine the possibilities created with commands like BUY, JUMP, PULL and PUT.

The COM command is particularly clever. First you create a communications device. As with all objects, you do so by

assigning it an article, adjective and noun: the portable phone, for example. With the COM command, you "speak" into your phone, and anyone with a similar device receives your message.

The ACTION command lets you add your own text to the action. Type: ACTION grabs the map and rips it to shreds, and the program adds your name, then displays "Deadfred grabs the map and rips it to shreds" for all to see.

Games Too?

Though technically *Imagine Nation* is not a game, that possibility also exists. When I was there we played "Scavenger Hunt," in which you scored a point for each of 25 items you latched onto while racing through the place. The staff can also add locations, characters and items that you dream up, perhaps hiding a Mystic Orb as the game's goal.

Puzzles could be set up by creating special rooms that can't be entered unless a person possesses a specific item. You can also use the ROLL command to roll dice and conduct your own RPG, and the JOIN command lets you may join another character's "party," automatically moving when he, she or it does. Meeting rooms offer more opportunities, as do the hotel rooms, which can also be locked from the inside. If a person knocks on the door, those inside can "hear" it and decide whether to let them in or not. (Meeting Rooms could even be used for a *real* QuestBusters Guild get-together.)

GEnie anticipate it will attract text adventurers and the online multi-game gang as well as the CB crowd, not to mention people like me, who feel uncomfortable in the conventional, disembodied "chat" environment. (I spent a few hours in the regular CB—lounging around the Shangri La Bar—and was frustrated at the inability to examine the other people's descriptions, for example.)

Conclusions: An all-text rendition of what QuantumLink's *Habitat* might have been had it survived beta, *Imagine Nation* packs a lot of potential for fun and games—even if you're not wild about conventional CB. It was scheduled to go live in September, so any QBers on GEnie should look into it. (And let us know if you'd like to attend regular QB Guild meetings there, which we're considering if there's enough interest. That was our plan years ago with the ill-fated *Habitat*.)

By Shay Addams

Walkthrough:Corruption

The Solution

Time is of the essence. The solution, which covers 175 of the potential 200 points, follows a chronological pattern and mentions important "watch times." If playing a saved game in which you have already gone past certain events, you may have to restore an earlier saved game or start a new one. The verbs "examine" and "read" produce different results, so each should be used on all evidence you find.

Your Office, Margaret's Office, Hughe's Office

When David leaves, follow him. After his conversation with Margaret (note it), rush to the Dealing Room for useful information. Ask David about the **Tfsjpvt gsbve pggjdf** when he arrives. Follow David into Hughe's office and wait till you're forced out. **Mjtufo** through **xppefo epps.** (Go to the Cubicle in the bathroom.) Open the cistern. Get the bag. (You may **topsu** this, unless you prefer to say no to drugs.) (Return to your office.) Open the cabinet. Get the **tibsf dfsujgjdbuf** and **bnfoefe mfehfs.** Examine and read both. (Go to Margaret's office.) Examine **eftl.** Get **fowfmpqf.** Examine **difrvf** and **fowfmpqf** (note **beesftt**). (Go downstairs to Theresa's office.)

Theresa's Office

Be here by 10:00. After Theresa leaves, open **esbxfs,** get **csbtt lfz.** Examine **tisfefs.** Get letter (read it later, time is crucial here). Unlock door with **csbtt lfz.** Open door. Enter. Examine desk. Get cassette. Exit (close the door after you leave.) Go to Car Park. Read letter.

Car Park

Look in Volvo. Unlock BMW with **dbs lfz.** Enter BMW. Put cassette in stereo. Get cassette. Open **hmpwf dpnqbsunfou.** Get **tdsfxesjwfs.** Exit. Break window (of Volvo) with **tdsfxesjwfs.** Enter Volvo. Get folder. Exit. Open folder. Get affidavit. While waiting for David to arrive (around 11:00) examine and read the affidavit. When David returns, ask him about Jenny. Ask David about letter. Drop folder (but keep affidavit).

Following David after 11:00

Follow David to his office, then return to Margaret's office and wait until 11:20. At 11:20, get phone. Call David. Repeat until you eavesdrop on a message. Go to the Car Park immediately and follow David until you both enter Hughe's office and you get tossed out. Go to Theresa's office. When she leaves at 12:00, get phone. Call Jenny. Wait. Repeatedly phone Hughes between 12:05 and 12:10 until you eavesdrop on another message. Drop all your possession in the Boardroom on the first floor, before going to the Car Park.

Car Park and the Bomb

Enter BMW. Put car key in ignition. Start car. Exit. W.

Hospital Ward

Examine cabinet. (If you had any possessions, they will be here.) Examine empty bed. When the nurse heads for the corridor, stand, get everything (papers, pillow case and anything in the cabinet) and go south twice to the TV Room.

TV Room

Open locker. Get clothes. Get bear. Go to Emergency Room (where you'll be safe from the nurse). Save game.

Emergency Room

Read paper. Examine bear. Get tufuiptdpqf. Drop bear. Put all but paper and case into pillow case. Listen for nurse's footsteps in the corridor. When you think she's gone, go west twice (it's usually safe after you wait twice without hearing her). If caught, restore and try again.

Outside Operating Theatre

Lie on bed. Get **cboebhf.** Wear **cboebhf.** Wait (till you're moved into the ambulance).

In the Ambulance

Remove pyjamas. Wear jacket, trousers, shirt, tie. Drop bandage and pyjamas. Get up. Open ambulance door. Exit. Get out (when it stops at traffic light). Pick up your belongings at the Boardroom. Openn briefcase. Read organiser. Go to Le Monaco (by 2:00).

Lunch with Jenny at the Le Monaca

Wait outside the Le Monaco for Jenny. Follow her in. Tell Jenny about David. Show letter to Jenny. Ask Jenny about letter. Ask Jenny about affair. Eat meal (when it arrives). Wait (till Jenny leaves), then go the the Pharmacy.

The Pharmacy and your beard

Look in pocket. Get card. Buy soap and razor with card. Go to bathroom on second floor of office building. Put plug in hole (of sink). Turn tap on. Put soap in water. Turn tap off (when sink is full). Get soap. Rub soap on beard. Shave beard with razor. Drop razor and soap.

Open the Safe in David's Office

Go to Theresa's office and wait till she leaves at 3:30. Unlock door with **csbtt lfz.** Enter David's office. Move television. Wear **tufuiptdpqf.** Put **tufuiptdpqf** on safe. Turn dial (until safe opens). Get casino chips, full ledger and receipts. (Examine and read all.)

At Police Station

Give plastic bag to Russell. Tell Goddard about David. Tell Goddard about cassette, certificate and affidavit. (After telling him of each one, give him that item.) Tell Goddard about Hughes. Tell Goddard about (both) ledgers. Tell Goddard about receipts. (Also give him the ledgers and receipts. Wait till he throws you in jail.)

Jail

Ask McNally about matchbook (he gives it to you). Ask McNally about casino. Ask McNally about Le Monaco. Ask McNally about Charapontier. Ask McNally about cocaine (until he begins to riot). Get key (when Russell fights McNally), then go north twice. Examine table. Get all from table. Go south. Open door with large key. Exit.

Le Monaco and the Casino

Enter restaurant. Show matchbook to waiter. Knock on wooden door (make sure you have the casino chips first). Ask teller (in Casino) about credit. Return to Hughe's office.

Hughes' Office

Open door with **dsfeju dbse.** Enter. Open drawer with **tdsfxesjwfs.** Get document. Read document. Go to Police Station.

Police Station

Tell Goddard about **beesftt** (on the envelope). Tell Goddard about **dibsqpoujfs.** Tell Goddard about **qipof dbmm.** Tell Goddard about **cpnc.** Tell Goddard about **epdvnfou.** Yes (to Inspector). Return to restaurant.
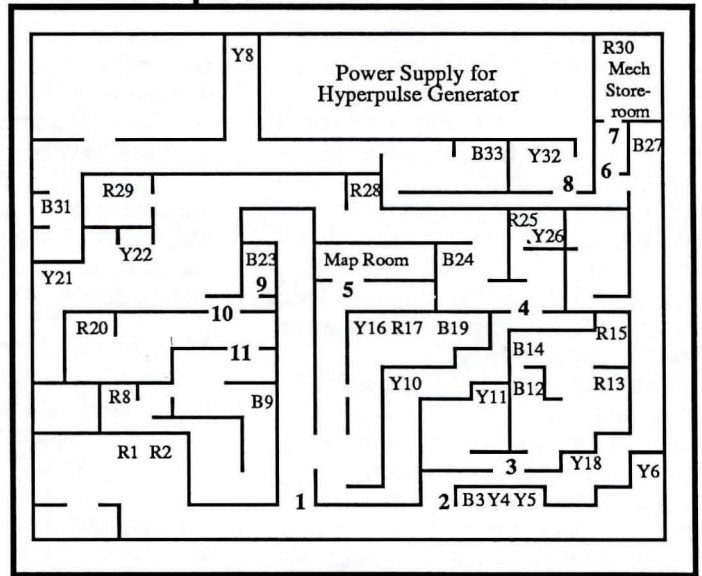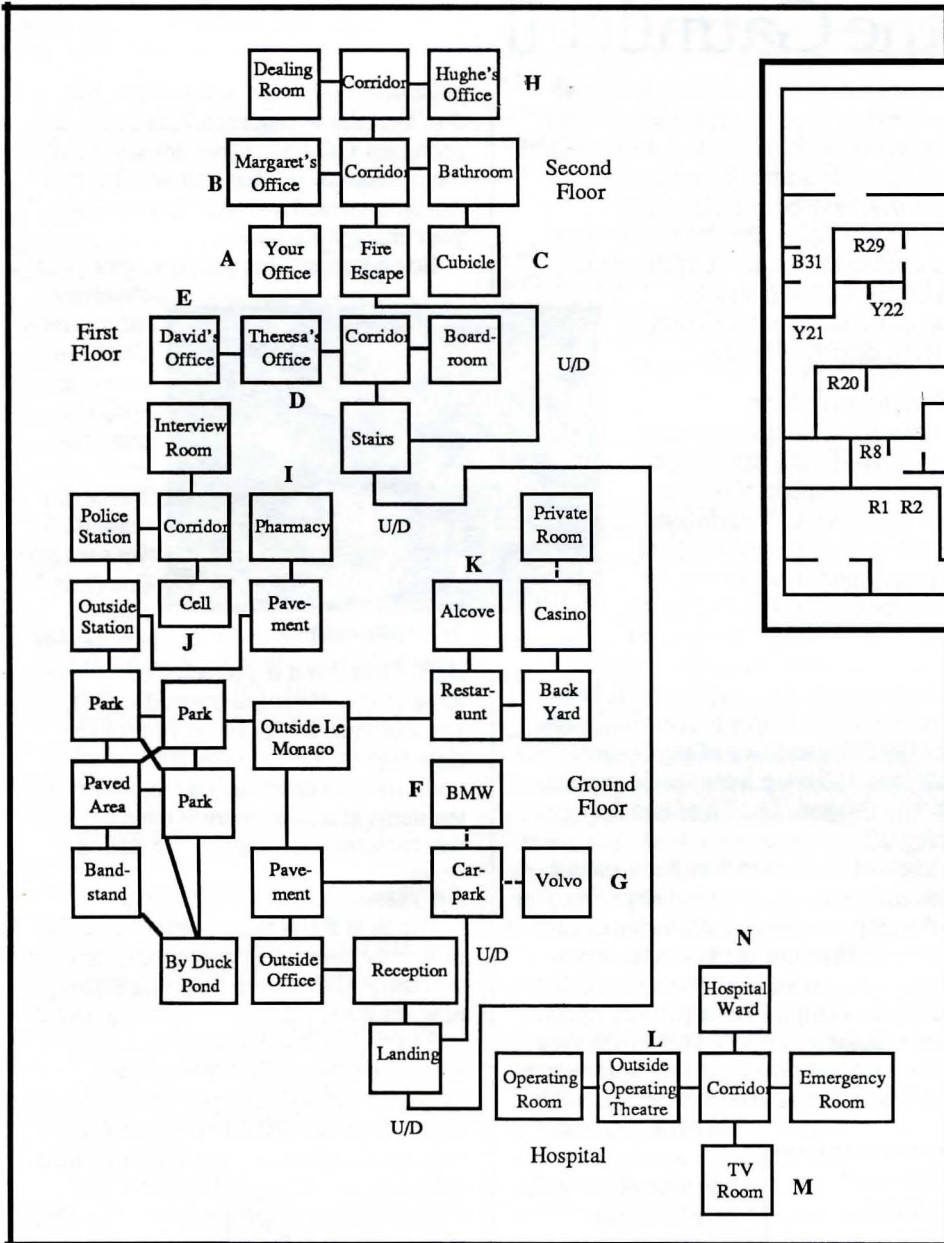
Le Monaco

Show **nbudicppl** or **dbtjop dijqt** to waiter. Knock on wooden door. Enter casino. Give **epdvnfou** to Charpontier. Wait till police arrive.

Verified by Paul Shaffer

By Andrew Phang

BattleTech Map

First Floor / Second Floor / Ground Floor / Hospital

Second Floor: Dealing Room — Corridor — Hughe's Office **H**; Margaret's Office **B** — Corridor — Bathroom; Your Office **A** — Fire Escape — Cubicle **C**

First Floor: David's Office **E** — Theresa's Office **D** — Corridor — Board-room **U/D**; Interview Room — Stairs **U/D**

Police Station — Corridor **I** — Pharmacy; Outside Station — Cell **J** — Pavement; Private Room **K** — Alcove — Casino; Restaraunt — Back Yard

Park — Park — Outside Le Monaco; Paved Area — Park; Bandstand; By Duck Pond; Pavement **F** — BMW; Car-park — Volvo **G** **U/D**; Outside Office — Reception **U/D**; Landing **U/D**

Ground Floor

Hospital: Hospital Ward **N** — Corridor; Operating Room — Outside Operating Theatre — Corridor — Emergency Room **L**; TV Room **M**

BattleTech Map

Y8; Power Supply for Hyperpulse Generator; R30 Mech Store-room; B33 Y32; R29 R28; B31; Y22; Y21; B23 9; Map Room 5; B24; R25 Y26; R20 10; Y16 R17 B19; 4; R8 11; Y10; Y11 B12; R15; B14 R13; R1 R2; B9; 3 Y18 Y6; 1; 2 B3 Y4 Y5; 7 6 B27; 8

Map Key: Corruption
A: stock certificate, amended ledger
B: envelope, cheque
C: plastic bag, cocaine
D: brass key, love letter
E: cassette, casino chips, receipts, full ledger
F: screwdriver
G: folder, affidavit
H: document
I: soap, razor, film
J: matchbook
K: meal
L: bandage
M: stethoscope, clothes
N: pillow case, papers

The gjobm edition of the QuestBusters Code: count one letter back—RC = QB.

BattleTech Map Update

Paul Shaffer spotted a bug in the Battle-Tech map in the August issue: locations were lettered in the Map Key but numbered on the map. This corrects that; the missing Y18 was also added. (This is not the sequence in which the doors are opened, however.)

Map Key: BattleTech
1: R15, Y11, B14
2: R1, Y5, B3
3: R2, Y18, B7
4: R13, Y4, B31
5: R30, Y32, B23
6: R25, Y10, B33
7: R8, Y21, B9
8: R28, Y16, B24
9: R20, Y22, B27
10: R29, Y6, B12
11: R17, Y26, B19

Throwing down the Gauntlet II

Gauntlet II was just one of countless sequels announced at the Summer Consumer Electronics Show. Like Hollywood, Silicon Valley understands the value of a title that's already familiar to the spending public. Thus, many of the software titles released over the past few months have included Roman numerals in their names. There was *Arkanoid II: The Revenge of Doh*, *F-15 Strike Eagle II*, *Space Quest III*, *Etc.*, and *Etc. II: The Revenge of the Pillsbury Dohboy*.

Gauntlet II is the kind of game I call "guilty pleasure." It poses no tough logic puzzles to solve, no damsels to rescue from distress and no noble causes for which to fight. Instead, it gives trigger-happy gamers (like myself on occasion) an unlimited supply of ammo, a wide variety of monsters to wipe out, plenty of treasure to collect and over 100 different dungeons to conquer.

Four on the Floor

You begin by choosing one of four characters: Thor the Warrior, Thyra the Valkyrie, Questor the Elf or Merlin the Wizard. The game manual rates each of these characters for armor, shot power, hand-to-hand combat ability and magic power. As you might expect, Thor excels in shot power, and Merlin is tops when it comes to magic.

The Amiga, Atari ST and IBM versions of *Gauntlet II* allow four characters to be active at once, but the C 64 version allows just two. When more than one character is in the maze, however, all movement is somewhat limited because both characters must appear onscreen at all times. This helps make the two-player version of the game a real cooperative effort.

No matter which character you choose, you enter the first maze with just 2,000 health points. You lose approximately one health point per second, and your health point total also decreases each time you're hit by a monster. When your health point total drops below 200, an audible signal warns that you are running low. Fortunately, 100 health points are restored whenever you find food or cider.

As you play, you view the action from overhead through a scrolling window. Besides the maze itself, the screen also displays each character's score and health point total. In addition, any keys or potions that have been collected along the way appear below the scores. The keys are used to unlock some of the maze walls and locked treasure chests. Potions have a variety of effects, described below.

Monsters Galore

One of the things that helps keep *Gauntlet II* interesting despite it's simplistic shoot-'em-up style is the wide variety of monsters, potions and magical objects found in the mazes. In all, there are ten different types of monsters in the C 64 version (thirteen in other versions). These include Ghosts, Grunts, Demons, Lobbers, Sorcerers, Super Sorcerers, Death, Acid Puddles and two of my favorites—It and That. (Missing from the 64 version are The Dragon, The Thief and the Mugger.)

Each of these monsters has a unique look and mode of operation requiring you to develop a variety of strategies to combat them. Demons, for instance, throw fireballs at you and will even bite if they get close enough. Grunts just run up and start smacking you repeatedly with their clubs. Lobbers are disgusting little wimps who toss rocks at you from behind walls. But once you make your way over to their side of the wall, they run away. Sorcerers use invisibility to protect themselves. Contact with Death, while not necessarily fatal, could cost you up to 200 health points. (With an assortment of enemies like these, who needs Dragons, Thieves and Muggers?) Since most of these hideous creatures are continuously pumped out of various types of monster generators, the elimination of these generators should be your first priority when trying to clear out a level.

Unfortunately, monsters aren't the only things to worry about down in the dungeons. You'll also have to look out for dangerous force fields, stun tiles, and poisoned food, cider and potions. But don't get the wrong idea. Life in the dungeons isn't all bad. There are several different types of potions and amulets that can be collected and used to increase your character's powers.

Some potions, for instance, give your character extra armor. Others increase the speed or power of your shots. Yet others magnify your magic power or hand-to-hand combat skill. Thus, even if you selected a character who is deficient in a specific skill, you can even things up by finding the right potion. While under normal conditions you can only carry a maximum of ten items at a time, there is even a potion that increases this capacity to fifteen.

An Assortment of Amulets

Amulets differ from potions: instead of simply improving your character's natural traits, they award with you entirely new abilities. Various amulets can make you invisible, invulnerable or repulsive to the monsters, allow you to walk through solid walls, or provide you with super shots that kill all monsters in their path, or ricocheting shots that can carom off walls and go around corners. The only drawback to the amulets is that their effects only last for a short time.

None of the various versions are copy-protected at all, a commendable move for Mindscape. Another one is on the back of the box, which shows screens shots of *all* versions, not just the best looking one.

Conclusions: Alright, so maybe *Gauntlet II* isn't exactly intellectually stimulating. Maybe it is just a mindless exercise in demonocide. So what? It's a lot of fun, and that's the first thing I look for in a computer game. If you liked the original *Gauntlet*, you won't be disappointed by *Gauntlet II*.

ST version

Type: Action Adventure
Systems: IBM (EGA, VGA, CGA), C 64, Amiga, ST
Planned conversions: None
Version reviewed: C 64

Skill Level: Intermediate
Protection: None
Price: IBM, $39.95; Amiga, $49.95, C 64 & ST, $29.95
Company: Atari/Mindscape

By Bob Guerra

Ancient Land of Ys

If you approach people from the front, a pop up window displays any hints they might have about how to proceed with your mission. This is one of the few areas where the Sega version of *Y s* has an advantage over the computer game. If you walk up to a person in the Sega game, they'll will turn and face you. In the IBM version they just keep on walking, so you have to be very precise about direction and placement. Since the inhabitants change directions rather randomly, this can add to the problem.

The Monster Mash

Outside the confines of the civilized areas you will find monsters and various bad guys. Your strategy with these will be somewhat different, since you have a decided advantage when attacking them from behind or the side (be careful, they spin around on a dime!). At first you will encounter only the weakest monsters, like mutant dwarves, Kaenine's (how many guessed this was a dog?) and Forrestwalkers.

Initially it will take several hits to dispatch these creatures. But as you build up experience points from previous kills, a single short thrust of the sword will do it. Experience also increases your defensive ability. Starting out with your chain mail and small shield, you have to be very careful not to go toe-to-toe with the bad guys. After you have reached level two or three, you can walk head on into the lesser ones without suffering damage.

The overland areas are really more of a training ground to prepare you for your real challenges: clearing out the temple, mine and eventually the Dark Tower in your attempt to recover the lost books. After you reach level three or four and have the medium-range sword and armor you should explore the temple in Vatare Canyon. This area is home to creatures stronger than you're used to dealing with, so you will have to turn cautious once again.

A Maze-ing

The temple is a maze of brick walls with doorways in all directions similar to the ones in *Prophecy*, but the silver mine is laid out as a natural limestone cave—unlike anything I've come across in a computer game. Readers of my previous reviews may remember that I see mazes as an unnecessary evil in computer gaming. The mazes in *Y s* are a refreshing change, though.

For one thing, there are several ways to get to your objective. Besides the usual blind alleys, there are multiple entrances into the same room. Also, since all the mazes are made up of several smaller networks, it is possible for a person with a good memory to do reasonably well without mapping. Even so, compulsive mappers will find the mazes sufficiently complex. The bottom line is that maps would have helped me a lot, but since I hate making them, I managed to get by with memory and perseverance.

In Control

When you first run the game, control defaults to the keyboard. On the IBM, the 2, 4, 6 and 8 keys control your direction; the arrow keys on my Tandy keyboard were not functional. If you'd rather use a joystick, simply press control-J and a calibration window appears. Incidentally, this game uses the best method I have ever seen. You can actually see the joystick being calibrated right on the screen.

The button summons a menu of options that govern checking your inventory, equipping yourself with weapons and armor, and checking your status. (The S and I keys perform the same function.) Several other keyboard controls facilitate saving and loading a game, selecting music, sound effects or no sound at all, and pausing or quitting.

Aside from armor, weapons and books in your possession, the inventory list shows any magic items or mundane tools you have collected. There are five different magical rings, several types of key, and even a magic seed that allows you to talk to certain plants. Some of these items can be purchased at the local pawn shop, like the wing that teleports you home, or the mirror that will put the "freeze" on monsters, but most have to be found in the dungeons.

Lights, Camera, Action!

A blurb on the box describes the graphics as "breathtaking" and the musical score as "award winning." While a bit of poetic license was taken here, this isn't too far off the mark.

Sound comes from the standard one-voice IBM stock speaker. You can opt for a constantly playing theme song that changes as you switch areas, or you can choose sound effects and hear battle sounds instead. A third option turn offs all sound.

It really is a shame no support was provided for any of the third-party sound enhancer boards like Ad-Lib or CMS.

That would have been a natural for a game like this, with such deep roots in the local arcade. Even without the enhanced sound, I was surprised at how good a job was done with the stock beeper. It was not unpleasant at all, but after several hours of playing, I predict that most people will be turning it off.

Graphics, while not "breathtaking," are certainly quite good. Sixteen colors are available in VGA, EGA and TGA modes, while only four show up in CGA. For folks who want high resolution at the cost of color, Hercules is supported.

The backgrounds were the best-looking scenes, especially the trees. People were much too small to be clearly discernable. But when you enter a shop, a small option window appears with a picture of the merchant. These pictures are quite cartoony. By contrast, their counterparts on the Sega version of the game are very realistic.

Apples and Oranges?

How do the two games compare? Well, the Sega game definitely sports better graphics and sound, but the IBM version has the advantage of size. The overland area and parts of the temple maze that I explored were at least two or three times larger on the IBM version. I guess that's the advantage of 640K.

Apart from those few things, they were very nearly identical. Oh, there are some superficial differences. The bad guy in the Sega game is Dark Dekt instead of Malificus, the Seer becomes a Fortune Teller in the IBM version, and Arick changed his name to Aron. All in all it's an excellent translation in both directions, taking advantage of the best features of both machines.

Keys to the Hard Disk Kingdom

A hard disk can be used, but "key disk" copy protection requires you install the master disk in one of your drives when you first run the game. After this, it should be removed to prevent catastrophic accidents.

Conclusions: If you are a fan of the bonding of computer RPG and video-games, this one is right up your alley. Graphics and sound are very good, if not exceptional, and the action gets fast and furious in spots. Add to this the character build-up and object-gathering activities of an average RPG and the game's unique mazes, and we've got a winner.
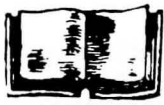

Skill Level: Intermediate
Protection: Key Disk
Price: $44.95
Company: Kyodai/Broderbund

Death Bringer

First head to Temple of Set, which has the most money. Then check out the Towers for armor and magic swords. Ignore the manual's advice about not killing people. Just get any information they possess, then wipe 'em out. (Yes, even the Good Elves, who have some of the game's best armor.) The priest gives false tip about location of **Dsptt**.

Paul Shaffer

Universe III

To get your blaster past the check-point where no weapons are allowed, eat the candy bar, wrap the blaster in the candy wrapper and put it in the hedgehog hole. He'll take it to the other side. There you get it back by punching buttons on the transceiver till you hit one that irritates the hedgehog and makes him drop it.

Stephen King

Manhunter San Francisco

Day 2: At temple in stairway with statues, read dragon note. Look at third statue on right (R3), first on left (L1), and fourth on right (R4). Fit words into the sentence. Rub statue with "**ifbwfo**" on it to get message **gpvs qjodift**. At dragon brand, don't brand yourself. Get scroll and jump out window. Move quickly to right and enter door. Take **gpvs qjodift** from container **tfdpoe** from left.

Steve Kehlet

Might & Magic II

The Path of Light to the Good Wizard Yekop is **uxp, uxp, gpvs, tjy, tjy, uxfmwf, B, E, G, J**; the access code is left **tjyuz-gpvs**, right **uijsuz-uxp**. The Path of Dark to the Evil Wizard Ybmug is **pof, uisff, pof, uisff** or **tfwfo, ojof, fmfwfo, B, D, H, J**; the access code is left **uxfouz-uisff**, right **gpsuz-tjy**. Each Talon is found in the corresponding element. Air Talon: **fmfwfo, tfwfo**; Water Talon: **ufo, ufo**; Fire Talon: **gpvs, gpvs**; Earth Talon: **fjhiu, fjhiu**. (Each Talon is well-guarded, so wait till your party is very strong.) To learn all spells, go to **Qjofivstu, uxp, pof** on lowest level. Bring along two million in gold. Don't free Corak until at least one Cleric can cast Holy Word spell. Don't steal Murray's gold, or your stats will be reduced. King Kalohn and the Mega-Dragon battled in the Ninth Century in C-4 at **gpvsteen, gjwf**.

Duey Hua

Day 93: have Cleric cast **Obuvsf't Hbuf**. This takes you to the bottom of the Dead Zone, where you can get Starburst. Get **Sfe Evlf** and **Sfe Fzf** in Ambush Valley as soon as possible. When earning Triple Crown, fly to E-2 and drink from fountain, then fly to Arena and fight. Tree at E-2, **uisff, tfwfo**, replenishes food supply, as does feast north of the entrance to Luxus Palace. Avoid the pool at E-3, 10, 12, which destroys all items in your packs. The Gourmet is at A-3, **tfwfo, tjy**. The Gem-maker (inside Volcano, **uisff, uisff**) gives you the Enchant an Item spell. At **tjy, ufo** in Volcano you'll find 800-1,000 gems. Get them, leave, return for more.

Brian Walker

To find hirelings Flailer and Fumbler, search all the **Qfbsm Jtmboes**. You'll be attacked by White Knights, so party should be at least level seven. Succeed and you'll get 3,000 points for killing each set, plus some good magic items. If you prefer to avoid the Knights, look for the hirelings on the **xftufso**-most island. For an easy 2-3 million experience points, flyr to E-2, go two north and teleport eight east. Drink from fountain, fly to B-2, got to **pof, ojof** and defeat the Cuisinart. Search for up to 5,000 gold each and items up to +28!

Jason M. Meagher

Curse of the Azure Bonds

To gain lots of experience, go to Hap right after Tilverton. Allow Akabar Bel Akas to join. Proceed to cave, then to Tower. Save game after first fight with Dark Elf Lord, before Challenge of the Sphere. Select Akabar to take challenge, an almost sure bet. This will net the party about 100,000 experience points to share. Save game (new save) and transfer characters back to previous position to earn more points the same way. The Dark Elf Lord has the game's most powerful weapon, and each win at the Sphere Challenge gives you another chance at good equipment, including Magic-user spells.

Dennis R. Ewell

In Yulash, everyone should at least have a Wand of **Jdf Tupsn** or **efgpmjbujpo** to defeat Shambling Mounds. Don't use Lightning or Fire, which heals them! In the pit, you'll find Alias and Dragonbait by following smell of baked bread. When Alias says Temple of Moander is beyond door in front of you, turn right or left and enter that door. After the battles with Cultists, rest twelve hours, fight some more. When fully rested, return to Temple for final battles, leading up to monsters with 140 HP! In Zhentil, Olive Ruskette takes you to Dimswart the Sage. To get rid of Zhentil mark, accompany woman in purple who asks you to go with her; Dexam removes it, but keeps Amulet of Lathander. When he leaves, remain in one-space shrine area and face wall and you only have to fight a few battles. While hunting for Dexam, bypass any Beholders with their main eye turned away from you: they're dangerous Gas Spores.

John Ransbottom

Ultima V

Upon entering Dungeon Shame, climb on the rocks in southwest corner of the room until you discover the secret passage. This leads to the first level of the dungeon. Before entering, make sure you have the Amulet (in Underworld on graves of Lord British's knights), LB's Crown (Blackthorn's Palace, level **gpvs**) and Sceptre (Stonegate), the Sandalwood Box (secret room in LB's chambers; play "Stones" on harpsichord to open door) and the Magic Carpet (in the same room; not imperative, but useful in traveling about the Underworld beneath Shame).

Scott Haverly

In Hap, enter every building, especially large ones in the center—you can rest in these. If overwhelmed in battle with Efreets and Dark Elves in barn, try again. The number of Dark Elves is randomized. When you finally beat them, take and use their armor for everyone in your party. Don't throw away old armor, since "drop armor" doesn't work in daylight. To win battle with Dracolith, cast **Cmftt, Qsbzfs, Qspufdujpo gspn Fwjm** before entering room of Dragon skeleton. Cast **Fireball** on creature. All characters must survive this battle, for it's a long time way back to town, unless you exit caves and go to Essemdrea, in which case you lose Akabar Bel Akas.

Nitin Kasturi

Because of their Giant-fighting ability, at least one Ranger should be in your party. **ujmwfsupo**: keep Dust of Disappearance handy for a very difficult situation. (Used in camp, it affects all members for several hours.) **Ibq**: magic is nearly useless against Drow. Defeat as many patrols as possible before battling the first Efreet; this way you'll face fewer Spellcasters. If Drow weapons are acquired, don't dis-

card previously held weapons. (You'll find out they disintegrate in daylight.) **Myth Drannor:** Don't loot anything in graveyard. Beware of unusual sightings, for things aren't always what they seem. Upon arrival in second ruins, help friendly Rakasha, a nimble Fighter if given a weapon. Cast silence spells on adjacent creatures to render enemy Rakashas almost harmless.

Patrick Knecht

After losing each bond, report to the Standing Stones for the next quest. When attacking Drexam, charm Medusa onto your side for help. The Wand of Defoliation destroys plants. Also charm a Bit 'o Moander onto your side, or you'll have a tough fight.

Patrick P. Jankowski

The Magic Candle
To raise Sunken Isle, pull levers in **Ebswbmf,Qjzbo** and **Jdf Qmbjot**. Teleport to Isle and ask book about Ritual of **Bxbsfoftt**. Unicorn (and Green Ring) is on **Ifbwfocz**. Chant Sherro's High Call to get it. Sargoz: portal from level 3 to 4 is south of time trap in middle of level, in small alcovel. Get Elven Cloak from Crezimas under Crystal Castle before tackling Furnace of Hades.

Brian Riggs

Hillsfar
Most important stats in character creation are Strength and Constitution, but Dexterity should be moderately high. Characters with high Strength should always try to force a lock, especially the simpler ones. If that fails, use a Knock Ring. Secret room entrances are always found in **dfousbm   opsuifso** part of building. Go **xftu** into walls till you find a secret door.

Nitin Kasturi

Space Quest III
Phleebhut: by heat resistant underwear at World of Wonders. When Arnoid comes, go to top of Moe's Head (west & up) and stand by north pulley. When he's a few steps away, **hsbc ippl**. Go down stairs and get Arnoid's invisibility belt. Ortega: wear underwear and find Scumsoft observational area to southwest. When observers leave, get **uifsnbm efupobups** from **dsbuf** and throw at generator in volcano. Get **qpmf** from **bofnpnfufs** to vault over crevice and return to your ship.

Brian Riggs

Neuromancer
To enter Bank of Gemeinschaft's vault, use passcode BG1066 (not coded). Use cyberjack to enter cyberspace, then use Probe program to find Bank of Zurich. Open an account and use trick from July '89 "Keys" to get 30,000 credits. To de-feat AI Greystroke, go to Free Side and enter Starlight door. Enter cyberspace, go left four and straight till you reach the next ICE (Fantom BBS). Break the ICE and use program Battlechess 4.0 to easily get past the AI. Get program Hemlock 1.0 and return to the city to confront Greystroke. Use Hemlock on AI. Get program from library and return to Starlight. This time attack the Starlight ICE and defeat AI to boost your Attack skills. Then go right four and straight to the next ICE. Break that one, and Neuromancer talks to you. Use any three Attack skills to escape prison, then use program you got from Greystroke and kill it like any other AI.

Steven Rankin

To get a discount on decks, ask Asano: "Why does Edo call you?" and then says "You don't like Edo." Next tell him, "Edo is a **hobu't fzfcbmm**." Don't sell your body parts or volunteer at Hitachi; upload all your money to your chip to avoid court fees. More money tips: For 7,500 credits, upload Comlink 6 to Hosakacorp (password fungeki). While there, put your name on the employee list, then go to Hosaka's office and get 10,000 credits. Call link-bozobank, use Sequencer on intro screen and open an account. Then call link-bankgemein (password verboten) and transfer 30,000 credits from account # 646328356481 to your Zurich account. Also, there are 500,000 credits in the Bank of Berne: authorization code LYMA1211MARZ, account 121519831200.

Ernest Lai

To get best software and make it to level six, jack into Bank of Berne and go to your right till you reach the next ICE. After breaking it, get program K. G. B. from library. Use it in cyberspace; it takes you to level six and the K. G. B. BBS—where you'll find the best attack software in the game. The database fro Maas Biolabs is also on level six. Break into it, then turn off the alarm and unlock the door. Go back to city and buy a gas mask at the office across the street to the Biolab. Then enter and say you want to test some cybereyes and that the test subject is you. Cybereyes lets you hold unlimited number of programs and offers best shielding.

Steven Rankin

Wizardry V
Here's how to get lots of gold in a hurry. (This is for the IBM version, but similar steps should work on all systems.) **A:** Make two copies of master disk "a" and label them Disk 1 and Disk 2. **B:** On Disk 1, create a character named Alpha. He needs at least 100 gold, so send him into combat if necessary. **C:** Put a write protect tab on Disk 1 and move Alpha to Disk 2. (The tab prevents his being erased from Disk 1.) **D:** On Disk 2, re-name Alpha "Omega." (You must use the Leave Game option to save the new name.) **E:** Switch the write protect tab from Disk 1 to Disk 2. **F:** Move Omega to Disk 1; add him and Alpha to the party and pool gold to Alpha. **G:** Delete Omega from Disk 1. Switch tabs again and move Alpha to Disk 2. **H:** On Disk 2, pool gold to Omega and delete Alpha. **I:** Repeat steps **E-H** until you have enough gold for really good armor, etc.

Joseph Lore

Level I: To enter Temple of Brotherhood at 17N, 8E, you need the Orb of Llylgamon from room at 9N, 18E. To get into this chamber, you must pick the lock (or cast Desto) on doors at 11N, 21E. Inside the Temple of Brotherhood (and carrying the Orb), go to 24N, 8E and ask G'Bli Gedook about Brotherhood, Gatekeeper, Orb of Llylgamon and Triaxial Gate. He has valuable info about your ultimate goal. He also has a Holy Relic (figurine) for $25,000 that will change one attribute of any one character, then vanish. To use the Castle Transport at 4N, 12E, you need the Bag of Tokens found by searching for hidden items among the bones and rustling armour at 4N, 4E. Before going after the Bag of Tokens, though, enter the Motor Room at 4N, 6E and shut off the motor. (Iron Nose will sell you the key to open the Room; ask him about the key after you buy it.) The sequence to shut off the motor is **EDCB**. Don't go into room at 1N, 12E unless hit points are high. The shaft dumps you on Level 2. (But if you've cast Litofeit, you'll just float over the shaft.) Once down the shaft and on Level 2, you'll find a rope at 2N, 5W that gets you back up to Level 1. (Watch out for pits.) Answer to riddle of Dark Statue of the Fanged Beast (at 27N, 20E) is **wbnqjsf**. It will move and let you pass. To enter room with Silver Door (27N, 5E), you need a Silver Key from pile of junk at 14N, 27E (search).

Sandy Poynor

End game: the four staffs need to win on level eight are on level **tfwfo**. Staff of Water: in pool at **ufo** E, **uxfmwf** N. This pool has some levels that heal, and level 10 restores magic—which is vital, since you can't return to castle after beginning final quest. Staff of Fire: **uijsuf-fo** E, **ojof** S; but first get Black Rod at **uijsuffo** E, **fjhiu** N. Staff of Earth: **fjwf** W, **uijsuffo** S, and you need wand from **Evdl** to enter. (Return his and buy another.) Air Staff: **uxfmwf** W, **tfwfo** S; you need caged bird from **Mppo** to enter. Answer to Bird's Riddle: **mjgf**. Cast Spell of Summoning quickly in final battle with The Sorn, or you won't be able to defeat her.

Fred P. Andoli

Dark Side, Eclipse
Continued from page three

in ancient Egypt, Hahmid III, a diabolical high priest of the sun god Ra, put a curse on the shrine of Ra. Any object coming between the shrine and the sun would be destroyed. Well, in just two hours there will be a total eclipse over Cairo—and unless you can find the shrine and destroy it in two hours of real time, you can just kiss the moon goodbye. Of course your motives aren't entirely altruistic. You also expect to find a fortune in treasure hidden in the shrine.

Besides your trusty pistol and limitless supply of bullets, you start the game with a wristwatch, a water bottle and a compass. These three items are graphically displayed at the bottom of the screen to indicate the amount of time remaining before the eclipse is total, the amount of water you have left and the direction you're facing. In addition, a beating heart shows you your current state of health. Each time you're injured—by falling from a high place or getting hit with poisoned darts—your heart beats a little faster. The faster your heart beats, the closer you are to a fatal heart attack. [As Sting said while playing the game, "Be still, my beating heart!"]

You believe the shrine to be located in the top of a huge pyramid, but making your way through the fifteen-level labyrinth of rooms inside is a real challenge. Many rooms are locked and can only be entered if you have an ankh, which serves as a key in this game. Ankhs can be found in various rooms in the pyramid, as can water troughs and pools to replenish your water supply, and treasure chests to satiate your lust for loot.

Though your pistol is sometimes used to defend yourself against dart-shooting mummies, it is more often used as a type of switch. You can, for example, open and close treasure chests, blocked doorways and mummy cases simply by shooting at them. In one room you can even make a stairway appear by shooting a solid block that's sitting on the floor. It is possible, however, to destroy essential structures such as walkways by firing carelessly, so think before you shoot.

The *Total Eclipse* package includes a pretty complete map of the the mazes, but the one with *Dark Side* is a primitive sketch. Docs in both are seven-page affairs that are well-illustrated.

Conclusions: I like both games because their solid, three-dimensional worlds make you feel like you're really part of the story—an actual participant rather than an observer. Also, both feature superb mood-setting musical soundtracks that can be toggled off when you just want the sound effects.

There are, however, a couple of drawbacks to both games. The first problem (at least with the C 64 version) is the slow frame rate of the animation. Because of the time required for the computer to calculate and redraw what the screen will look like from a new angle, it usually takes a full second or more to update the screen whenever you move. While a second may not seem like a long time, it is enough to interfere slightly with the illusion of free movement. The second problem is that the graphics of your surroundings, while colorful, are blocky and lack detail. Despite these problems, I still consider the Freescape system an impressive achievement.

If I had to recommend one game over the other I'd probably pick *Total Eclipse*. It's more original, especially if you've already played *Space Station Oblivion*. If this is your first Freescape adventure, than either title is a good bet.

Dark Side, IBM

Skill Level: Intermediate
Protection: None
Price: C 64, $29.95; others, $39.95
Company: Incentive Software/CinemaWare

Death Bringer
Continued from page six

congratulatory message. There's *no way* this is another *Dungeon Master*."

Conclusions: Maybe we shouldn't have saved England from the Nazis after all—just look at the software they're sending us! Well, maybe it's not *that* bad, just that it doesn't live up to the hype on the packaging: one quote from a British magazine says it has "…better graphics, sound and gameplay (than *Dungeon Master*)." How much Guinness did *that* reviewer have for lunch, we wonder? In the end, however, it is recommended for real beginners who aren't ready for a hardcore game like *Dungeon Master*, since magic and combat are unintimidat-

ing in this one.

Skill Level: Novice
Protection: None
Price: C 64, $29.95; others, $39.95
Company: Pandora/CinemaWare

Adventure Hotline
Continued from page five

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If you need help on an older game and can't stand waiting for Duffy, request a copy of the Key Club list. It gives names and addresses of QBers who will answer questions of specific games. Write to Brian Smith, 3035 Montego, Plano TX 75023 and send a self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you want to add your name to the Key Club—and can help with games released in the past year—Brian, the Official Keeper of the Keys—will be glad to add your name to the list.

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Keys to the Kingdoms Winners
This month Steven Rankin and John Ransbottom get the game of their choice for sending in Keys. Next month, in an effort to attract more clues, we'll pay $5.00 for each published clue rather than making it a contest—but will also work up some interesting contests now and then.

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