

# **QuestBusters**



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# CinemaWare sale sunk, company still afloat

I t was the best of times, it was the worst of times—it was the computer games industry. It was CinemaWare and MicroProse "retrenching" by freeing a total of 55 employees from the burden and pain of having to show up at work every day. Neither company attributes the actions to declining software sales.

Dirty Dancing

Firings at CinemaWare followed several unsuccessful attempts to sell the company. First Columbia (the motion picture company, not the South American country) approached CinemaWare, but that deal dissipated after several months of talks.

Then, says Bob Jacobs, CW president, Electronic Arts tried to buy the company. So they danced with EA awhile, but ultimately — though EA's key people, including Tripp Hawkins, favored the deal — the board of directors turned it down. (That's what happens when you go public: you might make a bundle on stock, but lose control of your own company.)

Jacobs says they realized last year the company would have to cut back, due to the high cost of developing technology that hasn't yet paid for itself because games employing it haven't reached the market. "And the cost of

major projects was so high, we couldn't do it with a staff our size.

"All our sales are fine," Jacobs says, refuting rumors of impending bankruptcy and a garage sale at his house next Tuesday. "We have five computer games in production for Amiga and IBM, and five videogames." He calls CW "nondenominational," meaning they'll support all the videogame machines. CW cut loose 25 employees, of which 14 were in product development, "mostly in multi-media," leaving a staff of about 15.

#### MicroProse opens Mideast office

Meanwhile, on the East Coast, MicroProse released 35 hostages from their work stations, mainly from the coin-op, marketing, sales, and playtest departments, plus a few from the "warehouse."

This was due to poor sales of a coin-op arcade machine based on one of their flight simulators. With the war going full blast, MicroProse sales (especially their jet fighter simulations) have actually soared.

#### New quests coming

This month, synchronistically enough, press releases arrived heralding two imminent releases by MicroProse. MegaTraveller II: Quest for the Ancients is set for April

on MSDOS. It's supposed to have over 100 worlds, design and interface enhancements, and three former employees in each box. Also produced at Paragon is Twilight 2000, another pencil and paper RPG converted for MSDOS. A post-WW3 scenario, it is expected this spring. The Amiga version of Bane of the Cosmic Forge arrived, in ye official box (we saw dozens of beta versions). SSI's Mac version of Azure Bonds also showed up.

#### Ceccola on cable

Ace QB reviewer Russ Ceccola will soon be haunting you on TV too. He just signed up to do the games segment on Software Review, a cable show. (We tried to convince them to call it The Pee Wee Ceccola Show, but no go.)

#### Sierra delays CD-ROM package

June is the new target date for Sierra's \$750 "multimedia" board that will have CD-ROM capability, a Sound Blaster and other 'next year's state of the art' features. They'll wait and reconfigure it for fully compatibility with Microsoft's "Level Two Multimedia Standards."

#### Adventures still #1

Electronic Arts just announced they have sold over 15 million games since starting up in 1982. Of the nine titles that went Platinum, three were questoriented games: *Bard's Tale* (407,000), *Starflight* (264,000) and *Populous* (292,000).

#### Railroad Tycoon: The Book

QB publisher and "real railfan" Shay Addams has written his first game book that's not about a quest. His strategy book on Railroad Tycoon is on the way from Osborne-McGraw Hill, so accept no soybean substitute. (Addams is so far the only person to beat the game at 100% while blindfolded, basing all his moves solely on the sound effects.)

#### Collectors item

Origin will not be reprinting the first volume of *Quest for Clues*, so this will soon become a collector's item. You can, however, obtain copies of individual solutions directly from QuestBusters. See page two for details.

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### Shay Addams' Adventure Road

Before passing along the latest batch of rumors, I am compelled by the canons of Ethical Journalism to report at least one fact: other magazines don't publish rumors. At best, they publish press releases that haven't been typed up and mailed to the magazines yet, and call them rumors.

So when you read a "rumor" somewhere else, you can be sure it's merely information the company or individual wanted to publicize anyway. Often a company will "reward" an editor or reviewer by giving them such news before releasing it to the competition. But not in QB, where we publish all the rumors that fit (though I have to file down the corners on a few to make them fit).

And that's not all. The insidious computer games industry even has an underground system, LEAKFAX, dedicated to supporting this nefarious transmission of "rumors" to "journalists." When someone has a story they want "leaked" to the media, they transmit it via LEAKFAX. (Considering the way things have been going lately in the industry, LEAKFAX may soon be followed by RESUMEFAX.)

Globo Strikes Since QB isn't wired into the LEAKFAX network, this one qualifies as a genuine rumor. Seems that Allen Varney Games is on the verge of licensing Globo, and may have a five-cartridge deal with Nintendo.

Road Commander Rolls On One of last month's rumors said Origin is doing a game based on the Mad Max character in Road Warrior. Turns out they're not seeking such a license, though Chris Roberts is working on Road Commander, a follow-up to Wing Commander. (A fresh rumor says the next sequel will be Scudd Commander.) It will employ similar technology in a post WW3 story.

Quest for Clues III: The Bug The apparent flaw in the Bad Blood solution, mentioned last month, is apparently not a bug after all. A letter from another subscriber says so, anyway. Now we're just waiting for letter number three....

No more Apple games Several times a week, people write QB to express their outrage that the industry is no longer supporting Apple. Most stopped doing Apple games because of the machine's limited memory and graphics capabilities. Many users have upgraded their machines, but compatibility problems with the assorted hardware brands still bar the way for new Apple games.

If it's any consolation, game companies are suffering as a result. Many people with C64s and Apples, unable to upgrade to an IBM, get videogame machines. That deprives developers of an entire market of consumers, one that generated steady, if not spectacular, sales.

With CD-ROM appearing on the horizon as next year's "must have" piece of hardware, the chances of upgrading to an MSDOS system will recede into the distance. Already, you need a VGA adaptor and monitor, a third-party sound board, and a mouse to get the most from an IBM games.

Ouest for Clues I Yes, it's history. But you can still get genuine photocopies of solutions from the book, available exclusively from QB. They are \$2 each. Postage is included on USA and APO/FPO orders. Canada: send fifty cents extra for the first one, fifty cents extra for each additional pair of solutions. Overseas: same formula as Canada, but a dollar instead of fifty cents.

In case you missed one, available solutions are: Amnesia, Rambo, Labyrinth, Ballyhoo, Roadwar 2000, Bard's Tale 1 & 2, Lurking Horror, Borrowed Time, Space Quest, Spellbreaker, Might & Magic, Bureaucracy, Destiny, Stationfall, Moebius, Goldfinger, Universe 2, The Pawn, Voodoo Island, Wrath of Denethenor, Phantasie 1, 2 & 3, Hollywood Hijinx, Fractured Faebles, Indiana Jones Revenge of the Ancients, King's Quest 2, AutoDuel, Rings of Zilfin, Leather Goddesses, Shadowgate, Shard of Spring, Mercenary, Breakers, Brimstone, Star Trek 2, The Mist, Moonmist, Essex, Trinity, Ultima 4, Gunslinger, High Stakes, View to a Kill, Wizard's Crown, Nine Princes in Amber, Three Princes in Corduroy, Neverending Story, and Tass Times in Tonetown.

Renewals: check the mailing label on this issue and renew if it's due to expire soon. Special thanks to Michael Metzger for his recent fiveyear renewal.



Dear QuestBusters: Assuming a lot of subscribers are on Prodigy, maybe you could put people's ID numbers in Swap Shop ads to speed up contacting them. Norman Hughes

Ok, we'll give it a shot. CIS and GEnie members, do the same.

Your decision to eliminate previews is a good idea, but I very much enjoy your in-depth reviews. Don't change them. But put the coded clues back in! I like to get only perhaps that one word or clue at a time.

Jim Hale

Thanks for getting rid of the coded clues in Keys to the Kingdoms and the walkthrus. It always drove me crazy having to decode them.

Larry Dempsey

I just read a terrific article in a back issue, "Death in Adventure Games: is it really necessary?" I was extremely pleased to see a "commentary" type article in QB and would love to see more from truly literate people with valid points and opinions.

Joe Terwilliger

Ok, Ken St. Andre and others are busy sharpening their points for future essays, commentaries and think pieces" on adventuring.

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# Best Quest of ye Month: Lord of the Rings

several attempts at computer games based upon J. R. R. Tolkien's classic fantasy works have preceded this one. Some were fair, some were bad, and all failed miserably at capturing the chimeric imagination of Tolkien and transferring it to electronic media. Finally, someone has done the old boy justice by creating a game worth playing.

Volume One is based upon the first book of Tolkien's Lords of the Ring trilogy, The Fellowship of the Ring. The story roughly follows the story, from Bag End in the Shire almost to the breaking of the fellowship near the Falls of Rauros. It let you live out the original story in intricate detail.

One difference between the Interplay game and efforts by other companies is that this version lets you explore the maps and investigate the nooks and crannies of the original story. Anyone familiar with the tale should ignore the numerous warnings to hurry — take your time, explore and enjoy the rich plot and happenings.

In The Hobbit, Tolkien's novel that

Type: Fantasy Role-Playing Systems: MSDOS (512K required; CGA, EGA, Tandy, MCGA & 256-color VGA; Ad Lib, Roland and Sound Blaster, mouse and keyboard interface; hard disk recommended) Planned conversions: Amiga

preceded the trilogy, Bilbo and Gandalf found the One Ring of Sauron. It was one of the rings were forged by Sauron and Celebrimbor to preserve and sustain Middle Earth. The rings were given to the Elven lords, the Dwarven lords and the

Numenorian princes.

(April)

Sauron betrayed them all by forging the One Ring to rule all the other rings. A great war ensued, and in the war the One Ring was cut from Sauron's finger by Ilsidor, who took the ring as a trophy. The ring fell into the hands of Gollum, who possessed

the Ring when Bilbo found it.

The quest commences

The Fellowship of the Ring begins with Frodo inheriting the ring from Bilbo when Bilbo disappears. Gandalf the wizard warns Frodo that Sauron may know of the Ring, and that it should be destroyed in Mount Doom.

The story continues as the hobbit travels east to meet new friends and find adventure on the way to Mount Doom. The Shire, Bree, Weathertop, Old Forest, Brandywine, Rivendell, Moria — these and many more exciting places are waiting to be explored.

Lord's interface consists of a full-screen overhead view of the characters and game map. Pop-up menus can be accessed by hitting the space bar or clicking the right mouse button. Ten icons appear at the bottom of the screen and can be clicked on with the mouse or accessed via one-letter hot keys from the pop-up icon menu.

A second pop-up menu is accessed with the "O" key (for open), and this allows for saving or loading of two saved games. Two saved games seems grossly inadequate for a roleplaying adventure game of this depth. It is impossible to understand why Interplay did not provide for an infinite number of save games.

The sun rises and falls in Lord, adding to the realism but detracting from the ease of play. Items are harder to see at night, and you will find yourself squinting frequently. The characters do not require rest, and except for night and day, the passing of time is not a factor.

Thrills and skills

Lord's skills include twelve active ones, such as traditional climb, hide, jump, etc.; five combat skills, such as swords, bows, axes, etc.; and ten Lores, such as Numenorean, Hobbit, Ranger, Wizard, Dark, etc. You may acquire a maximum of eight skills in all three of the types. This magic maximum of eight extends to spells and inventory.

Eight as a maximum for skills, spells and inventory seems severely limiting in today's world of roleplaying. You must be very careful which eight skills you choose. And you also have to leave open spots for spells, skills and items as you travel, lest you not have room to acquire an essential item, spell or skill due to the lack of an open slot.

Lord has no character generation routine. Instead, you recruit pre-rolled



Lots of "specials" and 256color graphics give Lord a look all its own

characters. Hobbits, elves, dwarves, humans, and the five wizards of the Council can be recruited throughout the quest. Certain characters will join the group for a short time if you agree to help them with their quest, while other characters will tag along until killed or dismissed. Many characters will not join the group unless you give them something or use something (an item, skill or spell) to induce them to join.

There are two types of magic: spells and Words of Power. Spells are divided into white magic and black magic. All magic is weak, unreliable and dangerous. White magic is practiced only by the White Council (Gandalf, Radagast and others) and powerful elves (Galadriel and Elrond), but Black Magic can be used by humans, Ringwraiths and orcs. While magic spell can be used repeatedly, Words of Power can be used only once before they disappear from the caster's magic inventory. Luckily, the game lets you to cast these Words of Power only at the right moment, preventing you from wasting these essential magic skills.

Lord has many weapons and artifacts. Your group of hobbits will find weapons and artifacts hard to come by in the early game. Weapons, armor, artifacts and companions can be found if you take the time to look and explore the map sufficiently. One should leave the Shire with no less than four hobbits, a dwarf, a Ranger and a Witch. Good weapons and

armor will be found in Barrow Downs and near Bombadil's house.

Bilbo Baggins meets a bug

Bugs in the initial release that caused it to lock up or to simply fail in a number of situations. Interplay responded immediately to the bug reports and developed a new version of the program to fix all the bugs (version 1.2 or 1.3 is the one to get). Their quick response to customer

The topdown graphics have a Dragon Wars feel



complaints marks Interplay as a quality game company that stands behind its customers and its products.

Character interaction consists of uttering short phrases of one or more words in length to NPCs. Exhaust all possible hints before recruiting a character. Some characters have as many as ten paragraphs of dialogue they can reveal to the party if the right phrases are used.

Some conversations may deteriorate into battles. Others may lead to acquiring items if you use an item, a skill or a spell from your inventory. Simply by using the skill of Perception, you can discover useful items in many locations. Shopkeepers will exchange items for silver pieces.

The graphics are very nice and colorful, utilizing 256-color VGA. The best graphics in the game are the "specials," cartoon-like pop-up graphic screens that illustrate unique situations, such as the gates of Moria, or Frodo's exit from the Shire. Character icons and maps are done well, exhibiting good detail and color. The game does have a somewhat awkward feel at first, but it fades as you grow more familiar with the graphics. The features on the map are confusing until you become familiar with what the graphics represent.

Lord's interface is awkward, due to several glaring inadequacies. There is no diagonal movement, which makes it difficult to follow the many diagonal paths. In order to speak with someone, you spend a lot of time jockeying the character who has the necessary item, skill or spell into the

exact position before the encounter can take place.

As a result, I found Lord awkward to play in many aspects. Some of the awkwardness disappeared after extensive playing game. Other uncomfortable feelings stayed with the game until the end. Many areas made me wish for automapping and autocombat and a smoother interface.

Using skills

There are a considerable number of available skills, items and spells, all acquired in unique and innovative ways throughout the game. As in *Wasteland*, you must choose an item, spell or action from a menu in order for a related skill to work. This requires spending

considerable time working your way through the complex menu structure. This could be alleviated if the use of the skill was automatic.

Characters have a very limited number of available spots for spells, items and skills. You are limited to eight of each item. It is easy to use up all available spots, and not have room for essential skills, items or spells.

Also, the game doesn't keep track of which spells and skills you have, and if you learn a spell or skill a second time, you use up two of your limited number of spots for the spell or skill.

Graph paper sales skyrocket!

Unlike Dragon Wars, Lord of the Rings does not have an automapping system. This makes traversing the huge, seven-map world of Middle Earth disorienting. Manual mapping is difficult, due to the large scale of the characters and landscape, and the lack of landmarks allowing for precision cartography. The scope of the game and the difficulty of manual mapping makes the lack of an automapping system even more upsetting and frustrating. Considering the number of other Interplay games with sophisticated automapping, it is hard to believe that Lord did not have a such a system.

Lord also has no autocombat system. [If it were a car, it would probably not have an automatic transmission.] Combat occurs in rounds. Characters with higher dexterity have the first strike in combat and are better at avoiding opponents strikes.

Fighting the combat system

Combat is awkward, due to the size of the characters and the proximity needed to use melee weapons effectively. The lack of a structured combat system with actual hexes or squares is realistic, but it makes combat cumbersome. You spend much time and effort moving about in the menus and jockeying for minute changes in character position rather than concentrating on battle strategy.

The game uses off-line paragraphs in the book to supplement the conversations with non-player characters and description of situations. Very easy to use, the paragraphs added a lot to the game's depth and texture, already rich with detail.

A hint book should be out by now, with details on all the subplots and other aspects of the game. You will really need the hint book to see and do everything in this world.

The game is rich in detail and adventure, endowed with a sense of realism and depth missing even in *Tolkien*'s work. Its abundance of detail and beautiful graphics kept me coming back for more. Once you get a feel for the lay of the land, which may not happen till you get halfway through the game, you can really enjoy yourself.

Conclusions: This is a good game that is worth your attention and your hard- earned cash. Like many Christmas releases, it was rushed to market, and shortcuts apparently resulted in major errors not normally found in Interplay products. The company responded with an immediate fix.

So I concur with QB editor Shay Addams' observation, "The Tolkien estate finally made the right choice," a quote that appeared in Interplay's ads but was inadvertently attributed to *INFO* Magazine rather than the author.

I enjoyed the game and still find myself returning to Middle Earth, even though I finished it weeks ago. I recommended this game for role playing adventure gamers who like detail and mini-quests, as well as to all Tolkien fans.

Skill Level: Intermediate Protection: Manual Price: \$54.95 Company: Interplay

## The Prognosticator

As you may or may not have noticed, I tend to always start off my column by making some holiday comment about the holiday of that particular month and some computer related item. This being the March column (though it was written early in February in true Prognostication form) leads me to think about my Irish roots and St. Patrick's Day.

Luck of the Irish, or at least that's how the saying goes isn't it? Irish luck must contain some form of matter that gets totally offset by St. Patrick's Day anti-matter. I have come to this conclusion because my recent luck has been immense. Too bad it all came in the form of bad luck.

Be careful what you wish for ...

I have often wondered what would happen if some brave developer decided to finally jump over the moral fine lines and release a game that was truly sexual and blatant, not just risque. I had pictured Leisure Suit Larry without the innuendo, but what I got was blunt male-oriented sexual fantasy. This came about when one of our clients asked for my personal opinion of a game called *Geisha*.

A little background is in order. Geisha was obviously written by the Japanese. You can always tell when a Japanese person translates text into English: it reads just like your printer manual or multi-I/O card directions. Anyway, the Japanese wrote the game for the French market, and we all know how tolerant they are about sex. The basic idea of Geisha is to locate your kidnapped girlfriend before an evil laboratory scientist tries to use her to create the perfect cyborg.

His previous attempts to fuse a robot and a woman have only resulted in the destruction of both. So far so good, but from the game turns into a string of feminists' nightmare after another. The game starts out from the viewpoint of a 35mm camera that you can aim around the room. Your girlfriend is in the room (as yet unkidnapped) and just happens to be nonchalantly modeling for you completely in the nude. Quite convenient, isn't it? I know my house is like that every day. Do you mean to say that yours isn't?

Geisha then has you take part in several sexual activities that you must succeed at to win the game. One involves the Hologram Sensations Room, which you play much like the old game of Mastermind. You must guess five numbers and put them in the correct order. The closer you get to the correct answer, the more "active" a woman becomes satisfying your hologram and the closer you get to...I think I need some air.

To sum up the rest of the game, I will leave you with the names of the "puzzles" you encounter. They are: To Seduce, To Caress, To Submit, To Excite, To Undress, and let us not forget To Penetrate.

There are a few others that I choose not to mention in a family publication like this one (even one published by the Addams family). The problem here is obvious. The developer stands to make a lot of money by hyping this product and putting it on the shelves, where I have no doubt that it will sell. But is it really worth the trouble?

The mere mention of this type of game has got me in hot water with the women here at the test center. I don't even want to get into the problems I had explaining this game to "my better half." I know if it is sold, which is still being debated, the program will have a large sticker on it professing the explicit subject matter.

You might just as well put a large "BUY ME" sticker on the game since most children buy their own software. I would really like to hear your opinion on this. If you care about the ramifications of this, please write to me care of *QuestBusters* and I'll see that your opinion is well represented.

Where is the Krynn place, anyway?

The SSI folks continue to find ways to stay in my column. The testing on Death Knights of Krynn has begun just as the testing for Eye of the Beholder ends. I am going to be very curious to see how Death Knights will sell, following so closely on the heels of a great game like Eye. Death Knights of Krynn get you back into the "Gold Box" world of games and further improves the Secret of the Silver Blades/Buck Roger interface. There is going to be a very heavy push to support digitized sound



effects in this game (finally). I'll have more on Death Knights next month.

I thought they knew better

For those of you who read PC Magazine, did you notice all the talk about the demise of the Sound Blaster in a recent issue? Seems to me that every editor at PC Magazine must have spent lots of time at the Disney booth during the recent CES trade show. I must have seen four references to Disney's Sound Source product being mentioned as the upcoming defacto standard in the PC entertainment market.

They touted it because it only costs \$30 and plugs into your parallel port, yet provides 8-bit digitized sound effects. I find this troubling, because so far not a single developer that we test for, nor any I have talked with, has even mentioned the Sound Source, let alone ask about it. I'd just like to know how a product can be "well on the way to becoming the standard" when not a single developer other than Disney current has plans to support it. My Sound Source is in the mail, and as always, I let you know what I think.

Some of you have asked what makes the Sound Blaster my choice. In addition to wide support by game developers as well as Ad Lib compatibility, it features digitized sound effects and has a built-in amplifier. Roland still has the most impressive music, but no digitized sounds or amp, and Ad Lib also lacks both.

#### By Rich Heimlich

Rich Heimlich is President of TCSC, Inc., a quality assurance testing firm specializing in entertainment software.

# Best quests at CES, and exclusive party update

s usual, the Winter CES was in "sin city," Las Vegas, from January 10-13, 1991. There were plenty of adventures, mostly on the IBM and Amiga. Very few are on the way for the C64, and assorted conversions will come along sometime. I won't make any promises about release dates, but most of these games will be out before June. But first, let's talk about the parties.

Best party awards for 1991

Lucasfilm gets awards for coolest party, but Interplay and NEC ran very close seconds. Depends on your mood, really. NEC's party, announcing the release of *Sherlock Holmes* for their CD system, took place in an elegant mansion, where I received my very first Sherlock Holmes-type hat and met some of the actors and actresses from the game. I actually got to play the finished product (a rare occurrence at these unveilings). Hats off to everyone at Bohle and Nintendo.

Then I ventured into Lucas-land. These people certainly spend money on parties. It would have been enough to have Darth Vader walking through, escorted by two stormtroopers in authentic costumes. But it didn't stop there. There was a Vader ice sculpture, the band wore Canteen creature masks from Star Wars, a mad scientist's contraption a la Maniac Mansion towered behind the bar, and glass cases held the actual Yoda, the Millennium Falcon and more props. And the films were showing in the background. Sue Seserman, take a bow!

Next was the Interplay party for the release of *Castles*, appropriately held at the Excalibur Hotel. What a place! Walking down the halls of the hotel makes you feel like you're in a game. At the party was yet another ice sculpture. This time it was a castle, and *Castles* was running on an IBM, while wenches, lords and at least one knight cavorted amongst all the press and unfamiliar leeches who were just there to get taken to the show at the Excalibur. Now, on to more pressing thing: new games! Ha-zaaa!

#### Accolade

Accolade will produce at least two that I saw at this show. Conspiracy:

The Deadlock Files will finally be released in 1991. The game puts you in the role of an ordinary citizen accused of killing a CIA agent. The game has an intricate plot and point-and-click interface, but the graphics are its most interesting feature. Most of the scenes are actual digitized locations in and around the Big Apple. Looks captivating.

Accolade is also importing four games from U.S. Gold, one of which should appeal to all of us questbusters. The Gold of the Aztecs has gruesome graphics and lots of screens, animation and sound to grab you and not let go. Though it appears to be mostly an action game, the adventure elements are more than enough to keep you happy.

#### Broderbund

A Macintosh *Prince of Persia* is on the way, but Broderbund has no true adventure games coming out. Watch for *Sports Simulated Boxing*, an absolute knockout.

#### CinemaWare

Enemy Within is a spy game in which you have a female partner/buddy and must knock out a deranged man trying to take over the government. The graphics are like most of their other games, and it looks as if the gameplay will be as good as in Came from the Desert.

#### Electronic Arts

I spent little over an hour checking out EA's affiliated labels — and paying \$1.35 for a can of Diet Coke from the CES vendor — what a ripoff! New World Computing has two games that are going to sizzle up the sales charts. *Planet's Edge* puts you in charge of recovering the Earth after its disappearance, by exploring over 60 completely unique worlds and finding pieces of an alien device to restore Earth to our reality. Graphics are beautiful and speech is incorporated into the game.

And Might & Magic III is on the way! With better-looking monsters and larger graphics than ever, M&M III takes the popular system a tremendous leap forward. The interface has been cleaned up a lot, without removing any of the essential ingredients, and the game supports

the mouse for the first time. Add scaled monsters, and speech and everyone's happy.

The Magic Candle II from Mindcraft should be out anytime soon. The most significant modifications are the ability to truly split up your party in any way you want and control them all



Russ Ceccola, after sampling punch at Lucasfilm party, tries to recall location of next party

independently, the inclusion of a notepad for scribbling anything you need to remember during the game and the addition of all of the commands to the game screen. It keeps the spirit of the original alive.

Finally, SSI has a couple of games coming out in their AD&D series. Death Knights of Krynn, the sequel to Champions of Krynn, improves a bit on the system. All the menus will now be on the screen, the combat graphics are better, and it will support most major sound boards.

The nicest game at CES was Eye of the Beholder. Everything you've heard about this game is true. It takes place entirely in the dungeons underneath the AD&D world and is the first game to use AD&D Second Edition rules. The graphics are beautiful, and the monsters can be viewed from any side — depending on how you approach them. Look for this one to be adventure of the year!

#### Interplay

Interplay was happy to announce their status as an independent developer and distributor, but even happier to show your (by now) thoroughly partying reporter their new stuff. The two new ones to look out for are Castles and Cruise for a Corpse (not like Toxic Avenger at all). Castles is the first game that allows you to build, defend and campaign around a castle of your own design. You don't have to play the game at all. You can just sit back and

watch the peasants build your creation...but who would stop there?

Cruise for a Corpse is not about a necrophiliac singles bar. It's a mystery game from Delphine Software (Future Wars and Stealth Affair) set on a cruise ship. The variety of views and screens keep it refreshing, and the animation and character drawings look wonderful.

#### Konami

Never a big adventure company, Konami has one on the way that is weird and puzzling. Theme Park Mystery throws you into all types of lands to search for keys and other objects to avenge your uncle's death. The different worlds are creative, and the gameplay is easy enough for the game to be addictive. Look for this to be a sleeper hit.

Mediagenic

Though they had no new adventures to show, I am happy to report that Mediagenic is back to stay as both a computer game and video game company. Each of the games that they were showing were well-made, creative and fun. Now, if they'd only get some adventures ready, I'd have more to say.

#### MicroProse

A new adventure from the kings of simulation games may surprise a lot of people. *Darklands* takes place in medieval Germany and uses a menubased system for all choices. The

Blasting off for Mars in Martian Dreams, from Origin



game looks very easy to use, and what is most impressive, is the degree of realism in the characters, locations and goals. You lead a band of characters and confront appropriate enemies: covens, dragons, alchemists and knights. As a new direction for MicroProse, it looks like they've done it right.

From Legend Entertainment, one of the companies MicroProse distributes, Bob Bates brings us *Timequest*. The second Legend game, it takes you through nine time zones and six geographic locations, trying to undo the work of an evil man

attempting to alter historical events. With some very creative time travel puzzles, great graphics, historical characters and the interface introduced in *Spellcasting 101*, there's no question that *Timequest* will be a lot of fun. Look for this company to be the next Infocom.

Origin

Martian Dreams, the next game in the Worlds of Ultima series, combines the best elements of Ultima VI and

Savage Empire in a game set on Mars, with characters from Victorian England. You, the Avatar, must journey through time and space to track down Rasputin, the mad monk, and meet such people as Sigmund Freud, Thomas Edison, Teddy Roosevelt and a bunch of others along the way. It should be a lot of fun and the interface, graphics and sounds are better than either of its predecessors.

Wing Commander II: Vengeance of the Kilrathi takes the game a lot further — into the realm of movies. With a VCR interface for putting together "movies," a lot of speech and sounds, more characters and missions and a cinematic presentation, it should grab your attention. Designer Chris Roberts is appropriately happy.

Sierra

Not much new to see here, except from Dynamix, but I picked up some news nonetheless. First of all, Roberta

Williams is as endearing a person as I've always heard. It was a pleasure to meet her and listen to her explain her work on the CD version of King's Quest V, her current project.

Right now they're trying to find local people to audition for the voices in the game. There will be no text, and all the graphics will be scanned from the original art for the game.

The new interface will remain intact. Rise of the Dragon from Dynamix should be out by now and is a lot of fun to play. The graphics are really sharp. Heart of China is still in production. Last bit of news: there will be no Leisure Suit Larry IV. The series will jump straight to V. It looks like our favorite nerd misplaced the disks for IV! No kidding!

Software Toolworks

Before long, a hit game from Europe should be here. Another sleeper hit, *Captive* is very addictive and extremely simple to play: I picked up on it while the demonstrator walked away to get a drink. Taking fifteen months of design time by one person, *Captive* puts you in charge of four droids you must use through remote control to break yourself out of prison.

You send them to infiltrate various bases on planets to get closer and closer to your goal. Their testers take about three weeks to finish a game, and it is physically impossible to



Castles: a strategy game & simulator with a fantasy theme

complete all the scenarios. This one is truly a different game every time you play. Looks very promising, especially with the intuitive interface.

Spectrum Holobyte

Yet another import from Mirrorsoft, Cadaver is my kind of game. (Just look at the title.) Cadaver puts you in the role of Kardoc, a knight sent into a castle with five levels of over 70 rooms each, to track down a mass murderer.

Billed as an action/arcade game, *Cadaver* has a variety of rooms, objects and monsters, and the gruesome, colorful graphics certainly made me drool. It reminds me a lot of *The Immortal*, but with all its features multiplied a thousandfold.

Virgin Mastertronic

If Spirit of Excalibur kept you busy for many hours, Vengeance of Excalibur will do more of the same. In this sequel, the titular sword has been stolen and taken to Spain. Using the same interface, you have to recover the sword and perform other tasks along the way. It looks just as large as the original.

Involving more side views and less historical locations, *Conan* uses a similar interface to *Excalibur's*, but with more action elements. The graphics are grittier and gameplay a little faster, but the epic proportions of the game are still there.

Overlord (formerly called Quasar), an outer space colonization and conquest game, should be out soon (see our last CES report for details). It's not a quest, but look out for Space

Shuttle. It lets you use every control on the panels of the shuttles and perform missions around the Earth, even with the disastrous Hubble telescope (maybe you can get it to work!).

Post-games wrap-up

Well, that's enough for now. As you can see, there are hundreds of hours (and dollars) to be spent in the coming six months to keep these game companies alive and creative. Special thanks to everyone at all the software companies who showed me games at the show and kept me away from McDonald's with food and drink at their suites, parties, etc. Picks of the show are (drum roll, please, Anton): Eye of the Beholder, Castles, M&M III, Timequest, Captive, Martian Dreams, Conspiracy and Enemy Within. Happy questing and blood and guts for all!

DarkSpyre

he first game from a small,
Pennsylvania-based software
company called Event Horizon
Software, DarkSpyre was released in
competition with the Christmas
blockbusters of the major companies.
Surprisingly, it was professionally
done, bug free and fun to play.

The philosophy of the company, says president, James Namestka, formerly of Paragon Software, is to produce real-time games that are fast-moving and, like *Dungeon Master*, very realistic in style of play. Faithful to this philosophy, *Spyre* is a success.

It gives us the same old "save the universe from the evil wizards" plot. In this case, the universe is your home planet and the evil wizards are the supreme gods of intellect, war and magic. You are the last chance of your people (sound familiar?).

The evil wizards have placed the DarkSpyre on your planet as a test of its worthiness to survive. Only one champion needs to complete this test, though many have tried and failed to traverse all 50 levels of the Spyre to save the world from destruction.

The object of Spyre is to survive to explore and accumulate the five runes of strength, accuracy, talent, endurance and agility. You must also solve the puzzles of the maze, specifically the puzzles of the five runes and the puzzles of intellect, magic and war. Without the runes you

will fail. And unless you solve the puzzles and advance to the end game, you will fail. Failure means the destruction of your people, your planet and your way of life.

Spyre is a one-character game. Your champion is generated via a standard character generation scheme. You get to choose which hand you are best with, and your sex. The computer rolls up attributes, which you can assign, or let the computer do so. Strength and endurance seem to be the most important attributes.

Weapons and related proficiencies are divided into seven groups, with no overlapping of proficiencies. Weapons are found on the ground or bodies of defeated monsters. Weapons break, so carry spares.

Like weapons, armor is found in the maze. There are shields, helms and a combination breast plate and grieves (referred to as armor).

"Armor" can become worn and loose its protection. Helms and shields do not wear out. You must check your armor periodically to see how worn it is, and replace it when necessary.

Magic and magic proficiencies are divided into six groups. Magic is

essential, and you will find it impossible to finish the game without developing proficiencies in all types. Found on scrolls, spells can be incorporated into your spell book, or used up to cast their powers directly from the scroll. Spells are readied in advance and activated quickly via a hot button or by clicking on an icon with mouse or joystick.

ST

The interface is simple and easy to use once you get the hang of it. You have a full screen 3-D overhead map with your character in the center. A character screen can be accessed by dragging with a mouse or joystick, or spacebar toggling the use of cursor keys to move a pointer or the champion. The keyboard interface uses hot keys effectively to perform all functions, including the manipulation of the character screen.

You use the joystick like a mouse, and can drag the screen upwards to obscure more of the overhead map, and click on the icons to move objects, inspect character statistics or object condition, or activate the activities of the game such as in combat. I found the keyboard interface smooth and efficient.

Combat is real-time, with no autocombat. As in *Dungeon Master*, you click icons or press hot keys to activate options like swing, bash, and cast or ready spells. To end combat, you move away from the foe by punching cursor keys.

Arrows and thrown objects move through the air and can be dodged. Thrown objects rebound off walls and come to rest when their momentum is spent; then you can pick them up. In some situations you can throw the same object at an opponent repeatedly simply by picking it up after it falls to the ground.

Rune for your life!

Type: Fantasy Role-Playing

required; CGA, EGA, Tandy &

16-color VGA; Ad Lib, Roland

joystick & keyboard interface;

Planned conversions: Amiga,

Systems: MSDOS (512K

and Sound Blaster, mouse,

hard disk recommended)

Found in the maze, the runes of Spyre are at once frustrating and interesting. Runes are small coins with runic writing on them endowed with certain powers. Without the runes, you cannot save the game or use the automap feature. This added an extra dimension to the

game, but one I found very unpleasant. The ability to use the auto-mapping feature and to save games should not be based upon finding objects in a maze. Runes can also be used for performing magic and increasing attributes.

Potions can be found in the maze, or made with an appropriate spell called 'liquify," and in some cases with an appropriate gemstone. Some potions permanently increase attributes, others heal and cure, while still others poison.

Drop it!

Spyre has a sophisticated object management system. Objects dropped in the maze remain where they are dropped and can be picked up again later. I have not observed other characters picking up objects and carrying them off. This type of object management system is a good feature in any game and shows the sophistication of the Event Horizon programming and design team.

By Al C. Giovetti

Illustrations are simple VGA graphics that are as colorful as 16 colors can get. It is really a pity that the 256-color VGA is not supported. The program supports Soundblaster, Ad Lib, Tandy 3-voice and IBM 1-voice music. The sound effects and music are adequate to the task, but nothing to write home (or *OuestBusters*) about.

Spyre is strewn with traps and puzzles. You not only must traverse the maze, but you also need to find essential items to open doors, and



DarkSpyre, the MSDOS version

figure out how to bypass and solve puzzles and traps that bar your progress. There are levers to move, balls to dodge, walls and balls to push, plates that are weight-triggered, and traps to defuse and avoid. Naturally, you'll also be confronted with riddles. The game itself is a problem to solve, a clue to find and correctly interpret.

A \$9.95 clue book has complete maps of all set levels, general strategy and tactics, listing of the magical properties of runes, spells and potions, specific solutions for all levels and an objects list describing weapons, armor and special items.

For \$19.95 you can get a Drawing Board program and edit maze levels and character icons, creating a new game with fresh challenges. It also includes levels not in the original. Conclusions: Spyre is a complete game system that gives you realism and a real-time challenge. Though the professional appearance and functioning of Spyre enhance the game, it is, first and foremost, pure fun to play, recommended for anyone who likes challenges.

Skill Level: Beginner Protection: In manual

Price: \$49.95

Company: Event Horizon/Electronic

Zoo

# Walkthru: Dark Heart of Uukrul, part two

by C. F. Shaffer, edited by Al C. Giovetti

#### Urlusam

Urlusam is made up of caves, mostly running east to west, with smaller sections of to each side including the Pool of Testing. Exiting the east side of Urlusam takes you to a north-south passage. Orcs with very few treasures are in the south. Via a large cavern, go north to the next sanctuary. There is one rule in the large cavern: a secret door is hidden opposite each light. Ignore the secret door that leads into blackness, as it goes nowhere.

Some rooms have treasures. Use Search at each step to find the many secret doors. The bats are bad here; run when you can. The cavern narrows, and you will come to an oak door. To the south you will find the puzzle that leads to Sagaris and the Pool of Testing.

There are five button teleporters and a five-letter riddle with clues given in inscriptions and sketches on the walls. For the first teleporter by the hangman sketch, press button "C." Press button "A" on the second teleporter. Press button "D" on the third teleporter. Press button "C" on the fourth teleporter. If you want to back out, press "? A C". The answer to the riddle is faith.

From the fifth teleporter, a secret door leads into the room of Sage Sagaris. You must use the above answer to open another secret door to the Pool of Testing. Your Priest must reach into the Pool to get a small black object. Sagaris takes it and give you the Wand of Potency, which helps open Secret Doors. Search the cavern to find the Elfin Chain Mail, excellent good armor for your Priest.

#### **Urran and Heart Three**

The most important thing east of Urran is the Medal of Escape. The medal will teleport you back to the location you where you find it. Right next to the medal is the teleporter Melas. To obtain the medal and stone heart number three, go east from sanctuary Urran into a large room with 25 doors. Take the middle door in the north wall and go north two steps, then turn around and take three steps, to avoid a spinner. Take the elevator to the room with the heart.

Return, then take the east door in the northeast corner of the room. Follow this path to an empty room five by five squares in size; it smells of ozone and is full of traps. To cross the room safely, move: N, W, W, S, W, S, W, S, S, E, E. Once you get the medal and visit the teleporter Melas, you can return as often as you like for another medal. Medals can be used only one time and are not replenished immediately after each use. Often you must wait a long time to get another medal from the box, so use the medal sparingly.

To get to Urshas walk east, straight through the room with 25 doors into a second room of 20 doors. Continue east to the next sanctuary. You can explore north and south to try and find Kiriys tomb and get a Scrying Mirror, but it's not worth the trouble.

#### Urshas, Areth's Plaque, Another Heart

East of Urshas is the Dragon and Puzzle region, shaped like a large Diamond. The Kauri mirror is in the most northern central region. When you look into the Mirror, you will see Uukrul mocking your team. It is important to have your Priest stand in front of this mirror and say the prayer of Kuuraoth; otherwise you will be unable to defeat Uukrul. Solve the puzzles here, and you'll get Areth's plaque. Areth's plaque bears a legend you need to know to enter the Throne Room of the Palace.

Climbing down a hole in the floor of the center of this large diamond takes you to an area shaped like a crossword puzzle. At the end of each word corridor, you will be asked a question. The answers to the crossword puzzles are: (1) Frail, (2) Inside, (3) Need, (4) Dragon, (5) Teeth, (6) Hum, (7) Engrave, (8) Knee, (9) Ash (10) Underfoot, (11) Renounces, (12) Icicled.

These answers will open secret doors which have patterns of diamonds and squares on the wall. This inscription tells you how to use the answers: "Where diamonds outnumber squares, use top symbol, converse use lower." When you reach the Rhombus Room buttons, push 1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 1, 2. This lets you into the Dragon Room at the bottom of the Diamond. A heart and a valuable treasure are here. You will need a strong party to get the treasure. When your party gets stronger, you can come back to Urshas or Ureal Sanctuary to retrieve the treasure, as long as you do so before Uroqlamn.

Stay tuned for the next exciting episode!

# Tunnels and Trolls: Crusaders of Khazan

E lizabeth Danforth's entertaining and well done conversion of Ken St. Andre's tried-and-true pencil and paper role-playing game to the computer environment has finally reached America.

Along with her own imaginative contributions to the design and story, Liz worked three solo T & T quests and other elements designed by Ken. She also incorporated several published and unpublished T & T mazes and characters created by others into the Crusades of Khazan scenario, which was programmed primarily in Japan.

Released there last year, it grabbed a large portion of the market. T & T is enjoying well-deserved, widespread popularity here too, if the high activity on computer bulletin boards across the USA is any indication.

#### Ye Plot

For centuries a great Wizard's war raged across the Dragon Continent. The great wizard Khazan united the prejudiced "humankin" of Man, Elf, Dwarf and Hobb to make for his kingdom a golden age of 600 years. Then the evil monsterkin found a

Type: Fantasy Role-Playing
Systems: MSDOS (512K
required; CGA, EGA, Tandy,
MCGA & 256-color VGA; Ad
Lib, Roland and Sound Blaster,
mouse and keyboard interface;
hard disk recommended)
Planned conversions: None

leader in the death empress, Lerotra'hh, who united the forces of evil and challenged the empire of Khazan. Lerotra'hh and Khazan forged a peace treaty, and Khazan was banished to his island of perpetual sleep.

Wake up call for Khazan
Now Lerotra'hh and her lieutenant,
Khara Kang, have broken the peace
and united the evil monsterkin to
wipe humankin off the face of the
earth. From a small tavern in the
southern city of Gull, you are called
to lead a band of four adventurers to
collect the artifacts needed to wake

Khazan, who will restore order to your world.

A rich game system is reflected in *Tunnels*, with cities, swamps, oceans, mountains, forests and fortresses. Within the game box lurks a different world, a place with a unique calendar, an organized society of guilds, and nineteen different languages to learn. Shops close at dusk, when the taverns open. A certain event in a certain temple in Gull only works at a particular time of the night, so the timing of your visits is important.

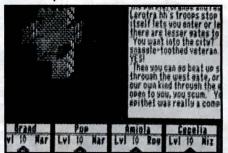
The calendar has its own system of days, months and holidays, reflecting the amount of planning that went into this game system. Languages are well conceived and thought out. As you learn them, you begin to understand the writing and talking of the races, which gives the game a feeling of reality.

Appropriately, "TNT" is the command that starts this dynamite game from the DOS prompt. You can start by creating up to four adventurers, or selecting four adventurers at the various guilds or at the tavern in the starting town of Gull. Character creation allows you to choose from four races (Human, Elf, Dwarf and Hobb), the two sexes, and three character classes (Warrior, Rogue and Wizard). A balanced party is composed of two Warriors, a Rogue and a Wizard, which essentially gives you two spell casters and two fighters. Each character receives a random amount of the seven standard attributes and gold.

Characters of the three professions can be recruited in the taverns and various guilds (Adventurer, Wizard and Thief). Character recruitment may occur at any point in the game a specific profession is needed, or when a character dies. When a new character is selected, he or she enters the game at a level that is average for the remaining adventurers. This makes the character recruitment function useful even in the end game, when your characters are at a very high level.

These non-player character recruits do not have impressive statistics, however. You still may be well advised to reboot if one of your player characters dies. Gameplayers who are short on cash can use the NPCs to recruit and loot.

Rogues and Wizards are the spellcaster, with spells of protection, offense and healing. There are 63 combat and non-combat spells, divided into 11 levels. Rogues can be taught spells only while in the Rogues Guild, or by a Wizard with the



T & T has plenty of prose and icons, but is weak in graphics and special effects

Teacher spell. Wizards learn spells only within the Wizards Guild, or with several magic scrolls found in high-level treasure caches. Rogues can be taught the first nine levels of spells. Surprisingly, some spells can only be acquired by Rogues.

Tunnels and Trolls is full of weapons and artifacts. If you are careful and search out every square in the game, you will find god-like weapons and armor. Some artifacts are essential to success, yet Tunnels does not have an advanced object management system like Dungeon Master or Ultima VI. Anything you drop disappears, so use caution.

Essential items can be exhausted, so refrain from using them. These include the death wand, crystal skull, heart of fire, horn of Ulhong (or Lakrimuss horn), demon's eye, Khazan's staff, and bag of winds (can only be used two times). A bug in the game results in some items being described as exhausted when identified — even when the item can still be used many times. Unfortunately, some of the items identified as exhausted are exhausted.

Tunnels is a minefield of traps and pitfalls. Demons lie, and even many of the clues given by the gods are false or misleading. You do not need a female dwarf in your group to win the game. Some monsters do not fight fair and cannot be defeated no matter how high your statistics and level. Healers cannot heal the very worst and unusual afflictions

Purposely randomized, combat is often purely unfair for your opponents

— and sometimes for you. As in real life, some situations and people in the game will not take "no" for an answer. You must save the game often. Unfortunately, the five save game slots are not enough for the many dead ends that exist in the game.

The 16-color EGA graphics are pretty but simple. Undoubtedly the best graphics in the game are the character icons seen with the view command of the interface, and the pop-up windows illustrating certain special events. There is an interesting sequence that dresses and undresses (within limits of modesty) the characters each time they are viewed.

Anyone who likes to read will find the profusion of mood-setting text more than compensates for the weak graphics. These stories are so wellwritten and absorbing, they could have easily have been adapted for publication in fantasy magazines or a series of novels.

The mouse and keyboard interface is adequate but can be confusing at times. "Move" was perhaps the most confusing command. I spent most of the game walking along leading my horses because I did not understand that you had to first select "move" from the keyboard or mouse, then select "horse" from the pop-up menu.

I also spent most of the game thinking the mountains inaccessible, since I did not realize you must select move, and then climb, from the popup menu to climb up into the mountains. If you are in horse and climb mode, you move automatically to walk mode upon entering a town or leaving the mountains. But you do not move automatically to climb mode when attempting to enter the mountains or upon leaving a town. This seemed illogical to me. It also made me feel pretty stupid when I found out and had to start the game over.

The Good, the Bad and the Bugly

The automapping feature made the "magic square" game design tolerable. Events are triggered by hot squares. Unless you step on every square of the game, you will miss something. The automapping is adequate and makes the exhaustive task of exploration easy. There is a lot to do in this game, and I consider that a big plus.

Combat had some very illogical aspects that were not worked out. Characters in the dark knew exactly where you were and could hit you as if it was not dark. If you switched to autocombat, you have the same

advantage. Invisibility was also very odd. In autocombat, you went straight to an invisible being and struck him. Conversely, when you were invisible, the opponents could not strike you in melee, but were able to hit you with missile and magic. Conclusions: In spite of all its problems, I found Tunnels and Trolls very enjoyable and realistic. Do you really expect gods and demons to lead you about the game on a leash and tell the truth about everything? Do you really expect combat to be balanced in all situations? Do you really expect people to accept you at your word at all times? Expectations such as there are rather unrealistic, even naive, and their fulfillment would not necessarily make a better game. T & T has the unbalanced, intentional feel of the original pencil and paper game, which makes it worth your time, effort and money. I enthusiastically recommend this quest not only to die hard Tunnels and Trolls enthusiasts, but also to anyone who enjoy the computer role-playing game.

Skill Level: Intermediate Protection: Manual

Price: \$49.95

Company: New World Computing

# Spellcasting 101: "Son of Infocom" visits the islands

since this is such a wacky and fun game, I decided to get in the spirit and try an experiment. Instead of my normal routine, I think I'll review this game while listening to music — namely, Aerosmith's latest album, Pump. Maybe it will help me speed things up. Drop that needle...now!

Anyway, this is the latest game from former Infocom mutant, Steve Meretzky, author of games like

Type: Graphic adventure Systems: MSDOS (512K required, hard disk recommended, mouse option; CGA, EGA, 16-color VGA & MCGA; Ad Lib, Roland, Realsound

Leather Goddesses of Phobos, Planetfall and, his crowning achievement until now, Zork Zero. (I

Planned conversions: Amiga

still haven't finished that one and learned the origin of the little white house.)

In this new game, you are Ernie Eaglebeak, trying to maintain a normal life in the land of Peloria while attending Sorcerer University — until everybody disappears, and you have to save the day. Unlike the hero in a typical adventure with such a plot, your character is the exact opposite of the typical hero. He's a nerd through and through, down to the pocket protector and tape in the center of his thick eyeglass frames.

Interfacial update

Oh, well...the game has an updated and improved interface, with everything the graphic adventurer could want, even the ability to play it as an all-text game. The standard interface has a window for graphics and animation, a compass rose and function buttons, command and object menus, and a text window. You can put different things in the

graphics window, like the picture itself, a map on which you can click to move around, your inventory, a room description or status information. I prefer to keep the location picture in the graphics window, but the map is certainly useful for finding hidden rooms, since it is not the standard box-and-line map, but an overhead view of the island or place you're currently exploring.

The command and object menus, compass rose and function buttons are geared toward the player who desires to use only the mouse. These interface elements work well together. I played the game this way for about 15 minutes before deciding to bag it and type in all my commands. For me, this was quicker. Personal preference definitely comes into play here.

You can also get rid of the menus and have text displayed across half of

By Russ Ceccola

the screen. I opted for the standard interface because I could always look at the object menu to see which objects were in the room. Enough on the interface, let's get down to business!

College-bound

Meretzky has definitely surpassed all his previous work with this one, which has the most humor and diversity of any other game of its type. You can actually attend classes at Sorcerer U., where you'll be as bored as the other students. Actually, General Magic 101 was interesting.

But there isn't too much to do at the University until everybody disappears and you are knocked out shortly after your mother shows up to hand you a talisman. At this point, you have to find a means of transportation from the University (a surfboard, actually) and visit a few islands to find more objects and solve mini-quests.

While at school, you get to attend a couple of frat parties, look after the president's very drunk daughter, and seduce your professor's wife. Oh, did I mention the game has two modes — naughty and nice. Needless to say, I put it in naughty mode right away. It isn't too bad. The average high school kid has seen and heard worse. If you're worried about the naughty mode, the nice mode doesn't lose any of the humor.

The adventure, like a book, is divided into chapters. In the first, which allows you some room to get used to the interface, you have to escape from your mean father to go to the University. Appropriately titled 'Escape!', it is followed by 'Sorcerer University,' the second chapter. What comes next depends on which island you choose to visit.

What? No Gilligan's Island?

There are really only five other main locations: The Island of Horny Women, The Island Where Time Runs Backward, The Island of Lost Soles, The Restaurant at the End of the Ocean, and — stand by for a mouthful: the Fortress of the evil people who stole the parts of the Sorcerer's Appliance and caused the mystery of the disappearing people. There is also an island with a storm cloud pictured on it on the map that comes with the game, but getting there is another puzzle entirely. There are a whopping 1,000 points in the

game, and right now I've got about half of them. Still, I'm told I'm near the end of the quest.

As an apprentice sorcerer, you get to use spells in the S101 course at college. These range from the commonplace to the bizarre. You acquire these spells by opening boxes with the spell names on them. They are then written into your spell book. So far, I have seen four levels of spells, from Level 1 BIP, which produces soft music, to the Level 4 BUNDEROT, a spell of decomposition. The neat thing

decomposition. The neat thing about spells is that you can reuse them again and again. If you want to levitate an object, type in "FRIMP (name of object)." You don't lose a 'charge' by casting the spell. A couple of moves later, after the object has sunk down to the ground, you can FRIMP it again.

The puzzles are very creative and some of the best Meretzky has ever put together. Each island has a different type of major puzzle. Some are pretty obvious, but others are very challenging. Indeed, I banged my head against the wall for hours to try to use the SKONN spell (increases bust size). The solution involves not thinking dirty. It's pretty obvious from there.

On The Island of Lost Soles, you have to restore 80 souls of people who were transformed into objects and animals. Most are common, but some people have unusual names that will trip you up. In any case, the feeling of accomplishment after tackling a Meretzky puzzle is like no other. That guy is one tricky, undermining, dirty dog of a designer. And that only covers the easy puzzles. Still, the overall difficulty of the game is intermediate. Just remember to think clearly and logically. Simplicity is the key, for the puzzles are not as complex as they seem. This approach is the only way you'll solve the mystery of the Maize rooms.

Meretzky at his funniest

The humor is not touched by any other adventures out there. From the manual to the pictures themselves (check out the Brit on The Island of Lost Soles), you'll be laughing all the way. In fact, anyone who sees you playing it will think twice about your mental state. Definite scenes to check

out are the frat party and the cafeteria. Read the manual thoroughly, even the 'legal stuff' in the back, for that is where the funniest stuff is located — and in the fine print, at that.

This is the first game from Legend Entertainment, so I really didn't know what to expect. I was very happy with the result of all their hard work in developing an interface that should become a standard. All future Legend games, including *Timequest*, the next



Legend's games have the best graphics ever seen in a text adventure

one, will use the same interface. What struck me the most about the game is that it is exactly as I would have expected Infocom games to be if the company was still together and the veteran designers were still working in the industry. I kid you not when I say to watch Legend over the years. They are the 'son of Infocom.' Indeed, *Timequest* looks like a great follow-up.

Sound effects included the expected moans and groans, and they even sounded good on the PC speaker. A sound board makes you feel as if you're really there.

What's left to say? Meretzky has struck again and snuck away quietly after the kill. I am still trying to finish the game and can't wait to see the end. Keeping with the theme, I'm sure that Ernie will be swarmed by the women of Sorcerer University. I think he's/I've been lucky five or six times so far. Thankfully, AIDS is no problem in Peloria Conclusions: In any case, dig in and

enjoy this one. I'm told that
Meretzky's already working on
Spellcasting 202, so hurry up and
finish. It looks like we have yet
another nerd hero in Ernie, following
on the heels of Larry Laffer and Les
Manley. Unlike those guys, Ernie
scores a lot more! Now get outta here
and go SKONN your favorite girl!

Skill Level: Intermediate Protection: Manual

Price: \$59.95

Company: Legend /MicroProse)





# Keys to the Kingdoms



Lord of the Rings

Bag End: Avoid Buckland Bridge. Go to Green Hill Country for important encounter with Hawkeye. After he says leave, take his sword, as he is immediately killed. Also get sword fragment and signet ring. Sneak into Brandy Hall, use Perception to get pipe in downstairs bedroom. Use it in front of ghost to make him disappear. Use Perception in bathtub to find gate key. Weathertop: you need a rope and someone with boat skill (Merry or Aragorn). At end of small stream is a small hole. Use rope. You must also get by web to reach the chest. Bill Borre

Money: Willow tree SW of bridge. Hill NW of bridge. Hill (crypt) E of barn. Stones far E of barn. Dig. Goldberry: S to hill. Dig. E to waterfall. In. Use gold token on Withywindle. Trade springstone (get as close as possible). Bombadil: to get him to join, let him handle Ring. Fred J. Philipp

Forsaken Inn: buy Green Skull in Staddle, stand on bed in SE room of Inn to find secret entrance down.

Weathertop: cavern entrance at river's source (lots of orcs and trolls. Use "climb" at ruins due south of Weathertop to find Thadred's Tomb (you need Rose's Token). Secret door in tomb wall leads to Weathertop cavern. Rivendell: at Elrond's house, get free supplies, healing and skills from Elrohir, lores from Erestor. Lindir the Smith (SW of Elrond's) will forge Anduril Sword from blade part and broken wing).

Mike Prero

Legend of Faergaile Riddle answers: Earth Elemental, plough; Dwarven Blacksmith, Spingo; Air Elemental, Echo; Fire Elemental, Eyes; Water Elemental, Fire; Earth Elemental, Daughter. Other riddle answers: J, something, circle, frost, and, stairs.

**Edgar Lasky** 

The pre-rolled characters are best used by selling all their possessions and giving the money to a new character. Leave a slot open and, upon leaving Thyn, let Siegurd join the party. He'll resurrect anyone slain in his presence (twice). The Blade of

Power, SW of the city, regenerates hit points when wielded by low-level characters. Give your Amulet to the Priestess SE of the city for a helpful gift. Most fountains, in dungeons and wilderness, around Thyn, heal all hit points. Others do nothing.

G. Franklin Moore

Bane of the Cosmic Forge An effective party: Lord, Ranger, Priest, Mage, Samurai, Ninja. A Bard is also good, since they have magic powers when playing instruments. After advancing to a new level, use some of your skill points to increase magical study and scout, which don't change automatically. Level 1: you need a skilled Thief and Knock Knock spell to open all the doors. Chests are nearly always trapped. From the start, go north into alcove, then through left or right door (they go to the same place). Go north along either wall to find two chests, one with scrolls and Amulet of Life (Resurrection), the other with Sword +1. Due north, use fountain. Back of fountain are two sets of stairs and a central door. Go through door to grill, open by pushing nearby button. Inside, kill snake. Search for Key of Ramm in northwest corner. Go south back to entrance gate. Go east, enter first south door for another chest. Items in this area are randomized. Stay on level one till you've entered all doors and gained experience. The next area is reached by going downstairs in the southeast corner.

C. F. Shaffer

Say snoopcheri to L'Montes (in one of the towers). Give him stuffed beagle. Find a rope in the belfry; get hook from Captain's Den; use "merge" to combine them and cross chasm. Useful passwords: skeleton crew, giant mountain. There's a locked door near the Oueen's bedroom that can't be opened, so don't waste time on it. Find the two secret passages near King's bedroom. Code for Altar near his room is in his diary; the "use" command in "review" screen lets you read it. Important keys: gold, silver, spade, Ramm, jailer, dungeon. Note: keys will disappear when you open the last door with them. There is an important secret passage in the room with graffiti on wall; you'll have to "use" cheese to open it.

R. T. Vicedomini

Spellcasting 101 The House: Open desk, get all. N. Open door. Move potty, open grate, down. Take rock, take key, take rock, hit Beancounter with rock, unlock door with key. Open door, west. Take and wear overalls, east, east. (In alley, make sure you have application.) Frat Parties: get SKONN at Tappa Kegga Brew. At I Phelta Thi, take girl to room, lie her down and search her. Key opens door to get FRIMP (used to open trap door when no one is around). Cast SKONN in library. Up. In stacks, get KABBUL. Get DISPAR (to obtain BUBBA) and surfboard. Maize maze: cast THIS WAY OUT, or go SE, S, E, E, SW, W, S W, W, D. Get DISPAR. Restaurant at End of Universe: Reach for spell box. Enter restaurant. Order pygmy shark. Cast BUNDEROT on shark. Get and open spell box. Exit. Cast MAJJELLO on

Charles D. Jones

dial to reach Isle of Gods.

Tunnels & Trolls

Character tips: 16+ Speed allows three space movements in combat. When you advance a level, increase Luck until your combat adds are over 80. This makes you strong enough for most hand-to-hand battles. Avoid monsters that have a combat add 30 points higher than yours, unless you like to die a lotl. When a character dies, use Essensense of Blackpool or Funny Once Gem to cast Born Again. Within Galoe's Temple (N7 on Island Chasara( you can restore attributes to full level.

Red Circle Riders: say redflag. Dragon in lair at D-2, K-10: say nepenthes. Spells: learn Elemental Earth & Air at E-2, N-15 by selecting in order, North, South, both doors. At A-4, C-12, you can learn Elemental Water & Fire by choosing East, West, then both doors.

Mark Koropatkin

To find the Goddess Goloe, take a ship N from Knor between the Island of Garr and the shore, try to save an older lady on a life raft, and she will direct you to her temple. After arriving there, go into the water on the E side of Temple. Investigate the bottom at H-7 or J-8. If you enter the grotto you will be at B-13 or 14; you want to reach J-15. There is an

airpocket nearby. Rest in J-15. Look for a hidden door, it will take you to the Goddess Goloe, who will give you Kazan Wand.

In the Valdemarton, seek the cellars (at H-1). Follow paths to O-2 to get the Hero's Sword, then back up to H-3, E to H-7 and S to O-6-7-8-9, where you will find three pools. Drink from the one at O-3 first, then N-6, then N-10. Save first, but if you have the Heros sword, you can see in the dark, plus your Con and Strength are increased greatly. Leave if you find the Mushroom patch; do not eat. Go NE to the Gas Chamber at D-14. Crawl to the SW corner thru a door. Then to D-1 for an exit. Kazan is sleeping on The Uncertain Isle. Lerotra is in her stronghold at D-4 in the Kargash Mountains. The password is Empress. Kara Khag is under the city of Khazan. There is a secret entrance E of the Throne in the palace in Khazan; you can leave by seeking a hidden room at the S end of the banquet table. Going thru the door in the normal way will take you into the hall. To proceed further before facing the door, cast Fly and use the increase to four times. Then fly thru the door. You will arrive at another room, search for a door on the NW corner, use the stairs. You will be in a room with a pentagram. After talking to Demon, ask all the questions except the one about Kara Khag; save that for last, as the demon will then disappear. Do not try to go thru the obvious door. Instead, go to I-8 and use the "Oh there it is" Spell. Go south to K-8, then east to K-13. Use same spell on the North Side. You will meet Kara Khag. Kill Him if you can. You need the Wand of Death, The Spell "Twine Time", Horn of Lakri Muss and the Star Stone Ring, as well as wand of Khazan. Goblin Mountain is in D-4 at D-7 Enter from the south. Don't use side tunnels. Go E, then N, then W. At C-3 go S, not break any eggs with wrinkled shells; they will poison you. Break all others. Return to C-12m go south to J-12 and kill the Queen, then back N to C-12. You can go east here to G-14, S and out. The Helm is in M-3 at D-4. Hole to treasure is in J-3 at C-4. Don't put your hand in hole. Helmet is in D-4 at M-3. Lerotra'hh is in the Digs B-4. Go to N-14, talk to guards, tell them Dudley sent you. The password is Empress. Go to 2nd level of Digs. Go S, find secret door at K-6 to treasure room, then secret door at O-2. Then east and S to Bedroom. Save at this point.

Kara Krag and Leratra'hh must be dead before you can seek Kazhan. C. F. Shaffer

King's Quest 5

Gnome: Give spinning wheel to man and get marionette. Give it to toymaker and take sled. Go to fortune teller and take tambourine. Scare rattlesnake with tambourine. At Beach: Use beeswax to fix boat. Sail south, then eat to island. Play harp for beings. Take shell on way out. Go to man and give shell to him.

Mordack's Castle: Take fish. Use iron rod to open gate. Give tambourine to Dink. Mordack's presence is randomized. Don't play organ when going through hallway. Chris Kelly

Mage's Island: Get dead fish. To pass Gargoyles, use crystal. To enter castle, go east, open grate with crowbar, climb down. In maze, find beast and give tambourine. Get hairpin. Find door; use hairpin to exit. Get dried peas from cupboard on right. Give locket to girl. Get henchmen to capture you. In Prison: use fish hook to get moldy cheese. Girl will help you out. If blue henchman comes after you, use peas. To capture cat, give fish to cat. Use empty pea bag to put him in. Charles D. Jones

Savage Empire Hidden City: Opening is just SE of main teleport pad. You'll need Crystal Brain and Gold Head to enter. Crystal Brain: Inside cave with Fritz. NW edge of lake. NW of Pindiro. Gold Head: Tichticatl. N building. Room to east of parrot. Giant Ape: Walk along edge of river N of Barako. Proceed along W bank. Continue N to waterfalls. Move along falls till you see a boulder above you. Boulder: Hold bomb. "Attack" just east of boulder to dislodge. Spider webs: disintegrate with torch. Location of Lab: Go due S from SE hut in Kurak village. Cross river, using stones. Go E to opening S. Go S till blocked. Go E to next opening to S. Go S to clearings. (Eagle Eye will show these.) Look for horizontal green bars (Lab). Tips: to make locations of pads, drop items along path. To conserve pinde, cast Eagle Eye, then rstore. In Myrmidex Caves: send Yunapotli ahead to pave the way. To scout areas, have Triolo go alone to cast Eagle Eye. Then restore when ready to move on. Fred J. Philipp

giant. To map. While knights are gathering troops, have Constantine go to London to talk to Clariance. Return Constantine to Camelot.
F. J. Philipp

This month Chris Kelly and Charles D. Jones were randomly selected to win the game of their choice for sending in Keys. Send in yours today! (All clues become exclusive property of Eldritch, LTD until October 11, 2137, A. D.)

Chaos Strikes Back Beyond the Diabolical Demon Director lie four pathways to the four pieces of Corbum. After disposing of each piece in the Fulya Pit, you'll eventually end up back at the entrance to the DDD, so it's advisable to leave most of your heavy chests here. Paths to the Corbum are filled with traps, and speed is essential in bypassing them and the pits around the pillars. Overweight characters will slow you down considerably. Next to the DDD is a chamber opened with a sapphire key. One is found past the Black Flames on the DDD level, or you can use the one floating around the pre-DDD NETA path (just before the Slime Devil). Inside the chamber is a slot machine. With coins, you can get items such as magic boxes, magic shields and Boots of Speed.

Andrew Phang

Spirit of Excalibur Episode Three: Pick any one knight. Leave. Withdraw from giant. Go to map. Locate Bedivere on road to W. Send to Tintagel. Locate Lancelot/Nineve (to W). Send to Almesbury. Send Nineve to St. Albam, Lancelot ot Canterbury. (Note: you must talk to people at all locations in order give to move program on.) Have Nineve reenter St. Albams and use "charm" on Friar. When Bedivere reaches Tintagel, enter and get shield and armor (use Bedivere's iron key). Send Bedivere to Glastonbury. Send Nineve to Oxford, Lancelot to Cambridge. Send Nineve to lake N of Oxford; Lancelot to Oxford; Bedivere to Salisbury. At lake, have Nineve goto and withdraw. Return to lake and cast undine. Go to Oxford. Give Excalibur to Lancelot. Join forces. To Salisbury. (To fight giant, have them withdraw.) When all parties reach Salisbury, have Bediver give shield and armor to Lancelot. Have Lancelot use: Excalibur, shield, armor, then go to Anored (to SW) and kill him. Search. Use gauntlets. To Camelot to kill giant. To map. While knights are gathering troops, have Constantine go to London to talk to Clariance. Return



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