The holiday of DOOM

BY NATHANIEL TUNBRIDGE

While you may have thought that the most important event in computing was Windows (or maybe OS/2), Nat Tunbridge sets the score straight with his review of DOOM.

I spent most of Christmas in Hell. Not just any hell, either. This was the most eagerly awaited hell in history. From id software, which gave us Wolfenstein 3-D, comes the most important event in computers since their inception, the unparalleled gaming experience that is . . . DOOM. The plot is simple and hideous. Something evil has emerged from the Gateway that had been created as part of research into interdimensional travel by the Union Aerospace Corporation on Mars. As the only living security guard for 50,000,000 miles, it's up to you to investigate.

DOOM's game screen is much the same as Wolfenstein's in that there's a view of your surroundings with an information bar along the bottom (although in DOOM you can expand your view to full-screen). Movement is smoother and faster than ever, at 35 frames per second (faster than most cartoons) but gameplay has been deepened with the addition of switches and levers. The graphics have as much similarity to Wolfenstein as the special effects in Jurassic Park do to *Blake's Seven*. The walls, ceilings and floors are all fully texture mapped, giving unparalleled detail, but it's id's incredible achievements in the area of light-sourcing that, when combined with the awesome dynamic directional 3D sound, make DOOM the most realistic virtual reality game ever. The further away an object is, the darker it becomes (and the less sound it makes). Corridors recede into darkness, and if there's no light sources around, there's no light! The readouts from your weapon provide a very faint illumination if you're close to an object, and when you fire any of the incendiary weapons, the spark provides a little light, but there's still an awful lot of pitch black rooms to cross, with monsters lurking around every corner!

And what monsters! The first to die was a bloodied, rotting zombie who tried to shoot me with a rifle, but who ended up being thrown backwards while being gouged by my machine pistol bullets. This was a Former Human. By the end of the game I had come across Sergeants, Imps, Demons, Spectres, Lost Souls, Cacodemons, and Barons of Hell. There's also the boss monsters: the near-invincible Cyberdemon Lord and the truly hideous Spideremon. To combat these mutants you have seven different weapons, including rocket launchers, plasma rifles and a chainsaw! There are also special items to help you, such as radiation suits, different types of armour, computer maps, and artefacts such as soul spheres and blur orbs.

The range of environments is stunning. Rooms can be of any size or shape and walls can be of any thickness. The walls could be made of metal plates leaking rust, plain grey slates streaked with grime, wooden boards banded by iron, bizarre hieroglyphic panels, pink pulsing flesh, sandstone blocks covered with ivy or racks of computer terminals. Ceilings may suddenly plunge down to just above your head, rise to a cavernous vault, or disap-

The Holiday of Doom
Distributor: Manaccom
Phone: (07) 368 2366
Price: $69.95

pear entirely to reveal the sky and Vistapro-style mountains in the distance. There are stairs, lifts, slime pools and lightwells, corrugated iron barrels filled with explosive waste, and a variety of dismembered and eviscerated humans. My favourites include the conveyor belt of tortured souls in the Unholy Cathedral, and the sea of fire in Mount Erebus. The climax occurs in a vast marble arena open to the blood-red sky of hell itself.

DOOM is so far ahead of everything else, it's difficult to fully comprehend, let alone describe. It' a quantum leap, a new standard. The multi-player option allows four players to play and interact within the same network game, making DOOM by far the best truly interactive virtual-reality game I've played. A few words of warning, though. There are impaled and crucified humans depicted in this game. Detailed full-body explosions occur. It contains frequent high-level graphic violence, and I wouldn't give it to any child under the age of 12 who you wanted to remain sane. For older players, however, this is the best game ever made. DOOM simply must be experienced again and again.

Blake Stone and the Aliens of Gold

Distributor: Manaccom
Phone: (07) 368 2366
Price: $69.95

This offering comes from Apogee, which was originally involved to some extent with Wolfenstein 3D. This is an attempt at following up that game without the benefit of the id games team. Even without taking the (awesome, hulking) presence of DOOM into account, it's a rather disappointing effort. British agent Blake has to work through six levels to kill the evil Dr Goldfire.

From the first second it's clear that Apogee has re-used the Wolfenstein game engine without making any great effort to extend it. The game screen contains upper and lower information bars which make the view of your surroundings smaller than ever, but then, there's not really much to see. A limited amount of detail has been added to the ceilings and floors, there's armoured

ceiling turrets and electric barriers, but it's really just Wolfenstein in space.

There are even some areas which use the same graphics files as Wolfenstein (remember the grey stone walls flecked with blood?). Sound is dynamic and directional but kept dropping out. There are white-coated bio-technicians, a wide range of slavering mutants, and weapons ranging from a pistol to a plasma discharge unit to shoot them with, but it's all so passe. Buy the indescribably superior DOOM instead for the same price.
Nat Tunbridge

Duke Nukem II

Distributor: Manaccom
Phone: (07) 368 2366
Price: $49.95

Much along the lines of the first, this game begins with a long introductory sequence where Duke is captured by the evil Rigellatin and imprisoned on their ship. Breaking out with the use of his explodo-molar, Duke must find a way back to dear old Earth!

There's plenty of demanding platform-style gameplay to be had. Duke can upgrade his pistol to a laser, a flamethrower or a rocket launcher. There's a huge range of 'Duke merchandise' items to be picked up in order to increase points, such as televisions, mobile phones and so forth, as well as the usual powerups (including cooked or uncooked turkey), plus special items such as fans that elevate Duke and bars for him to dangle from. There's an earthquake level with collapsing temples infested by androids and cybersnakes, and further levels have a slaughterhouse, greenhouse and computer theme.

Duke fans will probably enjoy this, but I couldn't see anything here that hasn't been done 20 times better by our very own Australian-made *Halloween Harry*, especially the sound and graphics. I'd like to suggest in the strongest possible terms that you check out the far superior Harry before buying this import, which is Hmmm.
Nat Tunbridge

Epic Pinball

Distributor: Manaccom
Phone: (07) 368 2366
Price: $79.95

The problem with most PC pinball games is that they fail to transfer the excitement of the pinball arcade onto a computer. This is one of the more successful attempts, thanks to some great graphics and sound.

Using the shift keys as flippers and holding down the space bar to fire the ball, I attempted the first of the tables included

here, Android. With left, right and central ramps, bumpers, skill shot and side vents, all the usual elements of a pinball game are here. What makes this one impressive are the polished graphics that give a fairly deep 3D feeling, and the sound, which is a constant litany of clunking, squeaking and beeping. Other tables include the 50s-style *Magic*, the Formula One theme of

Crash and Burn and the stunning, futuristic Enigma, where a constantly morphing background accentuates the fact that bumpers only appear when a ball hits them, and the rest of the time there's just your flippers over the void.

Within the obvious limitations that a PC presents, this is a great effort at simulating pinball, although it's perhaps a little pricey. For pinball addicts, recommended.
Nat Tunbridge

Brix

Distributor: Manaccom
Phone: (07) 368 2366
Price: $49.95

This is a remake of a very old arcade game, and may strike younger users as being a variant of the current arcade game which requires players to spin different shaped falling blocks in order for them to fit in with those below. Don't be fooled kids, this game is not only boring, it's unoriginal too!

The bricks of the title are square blocks with different coloured shapes on them. They can be moved sideways, and will fall to the ground, sucked by the remorseless spell of gravity, if unsupported. When two or more shapes of the same type are manoeuvred next to each other, they disappear. The aim of the game is to eradicate all of the blocks that appear on each screen. Obviously various obstacles appear to make this difficult to do; moving blocks, different-shaped fields of play, odd numbered amounts of (yawn) blocks, acid pools, lasers, strange (snore) blocks.

A game this simple needs some stunning graphics and sound to keep the interest up. Brix has neither of these. However, it does have a 'leave game' option, which I immediately took advantage of. Avoid.
Nat Tunbridge

Rebel Assault

Distributor: Metro Games
Phone: (03) 329 2999, (03) 328 2968 (BBS)
Price: $99.95

It's the arcade game we had to have. Lucas Arts has put Star Wars action onto a CD-ROM. You start your tour of duty as a rookie pilot (either sex). After training runs you move onto the real thing — fighting Darth Vader's ruthless henchpersons. The game is structured in 'chapters' where you need to complete one level to move onto the next. The game gives passwords at key stages. If you are stuck (and it's easy to be), words like *falcon*, *yuzzem* and *anoat* come in handy.

RA's graphics are strong. Flight sequences are introduced with near video-quality scenes. Darth does his thing, and we see a replay of Princess Leah secreting

the Death Star plans in R2D2. Like the three Star Wars movies, RA has a John Williams soundtrack.

RA is not a full flight simulator. The combat flight paths are preprogrammed, and you make small deviations from course to avoid obstacles or blast the enemy. These limits let the designers keep the graphic quality high, but may disappoint flight sim fans.

Lucas Arts has received many questions and brickbats on CompuServe from people who've had technical problems with RA. Pro Audio Spectrum sound cards and joystick sensitivity were the main problem areas. Lucas Arts' fix files should help. (The more recent one is available on
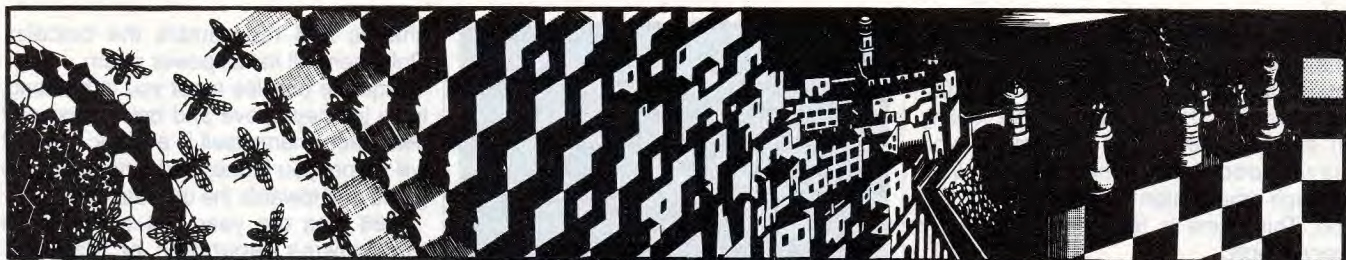
For the 100th issue of APC, we asked a number of self-confessed games junkies to report on their all-time favourite computer games.

A Mind Forever Voyaging

The poet William Wordsworth must have been greatly moved as he gazed upon the statue of Sir Isaac Newton, the world's greatest mathematician and physicist. Before the day had faded, he wrote of the statue, 'the marble index of a mind forever voyaging through strange seas of thought alone . . .'

Newton could hardly visualise the future, but he certainly helped shape it. Only a mind so free of prejudgment and day-to-day assumptions could ponder such thoughts as to why an object should fall to the ground rather than rise to the sky. In A Mind Forever Voyaging, such qualities (on a much lower level, of course) are needed. It is the qualities of

the unknown and the untested which makes it such a bold, outstanding game.

As Perry Sim, you must venture into the future with the lingering memory of a frightening disclosure: you have just discovered you are a computer. The life you have led — or thought you had led — as husband, father and writer, has been a miracle of artificial intelligence. You have now been programmed with the latest government plan for the future well-being of your country.

A Mind Forever Voyaging is as broad as it is sweeping. The game is not so much involved in the solving of puzzles as in the making of decisions and reporting back events as you interpret them. It is a complex game and it would be unfair to say it

is for the beginner. This one is a must for the competent player only.
G Hampson

Carmen Sandiego

Education has always been an important reason for purchasing an Apple computer. However, if one didn't have the appropriate software, all was wasted. 'Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego' was one of the best educational games ever to be released. For an educational program to be successful, it must be entertaining as well as informative. Carmen Sandiego is both.

The overall plot is to capture a perpetrator of some terrible crime (such as stealing the Crown Jewels). With a user interface that is simplicity itself, one journeys from city to city seeking clues to the criminal's identity. For example, on arriving in Sydney, an airline official might say that he saw a man with red hair asking which way the museum was. Following him to the museum might provide another clue. When you think you have enough clues, a visit to the crime computer is arranged. If identification is successful, a warrant for the arrest of the culprit is issued. This enables an arrest to be made once the bandit has been cornered. If, upon visiting a particular city, the bandit is not apprehended nor any clues given to his whereabouts, one then has to back-track to a previous location and try to pick up a stale lead. The only problem with this is that a time limit in which the crime must be solved is always set.

The program was so successful for Broderbund that it released another two scenarios: 'Where In The USA Is Carmen Sandiego' and 'Where In Europe Is Carmen Sandiego'. The USA program has questions that are more appropriate to students of that country, and although I have not seen the European version that may well be the same. It would be great if they would release an Aussie version!

Overall, this program is a winner, because it is easy to get into, is excellent educational value and overall, very entertaining.
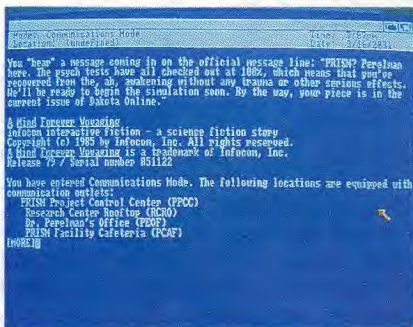*J Paske*

Arctic Fox

In choosing a game which deserves recognition as a real breakthrough in computer entertainment, the criterion in my book is 'will I still be playing it in a year from now?'.

One of the first truly great arcade games to be written for the Amiga was Arctic Fox by Electronic Arts. I played it regularly for well over six-months — and it is still one of my favourites after more than two years. As commander of the world's most advanced tank, you have at your disposal canon shells, mines and guided missiles to help in the fight against an alien invasion force which has put a force field around the Arctic regions. Enemy tanks, aircraft and floating mines are just a few of the hazards encountered as you make your way deep into enemy lines to destroy their fortress.

The joy of Arctic Fox is not just in destroying the enemy, but also in mastering the awesome potential of the machine at your command and recognising its limitations. Planning and strategy are called for throughout the game, ranging from a choice of best typographical positioning to simple hide-and-seek. Use of the tank's radar is absolute-

ly vital to survival, and the decision you make on spotting enemy targets will eventually be an indication of your worth as a planner. There is no greater feeling in the game than that of knowing you have hoodwinked the enemy, with enough ammunition on hand to finish the job. This game is for those with steady nerves only.
G Hampson

Microsoft Flight Simulator

As Lotus 1-2-3 is (or was) the definitive spreadsheet for IBM PCs, so Microsoft Flight Simulator is (and still is) the definitive game.

The flight simulator first appeared when the IBM PC was initially ascending to its position of dominance enjoyed today. At the time, compatibility was quite an issue, and the waters a great deal more muddied than they have been for years. MFS was not only the leading gameware available for the PC, but also the accepted test of compatibility — a great excuse for spending hours over a sweaty keyboard!

The challenge of MFS is its sophistication. Jet, another game from Bruce Artwick, the genius who originally penned MFS, never had the same attraction because the FA-18 is a 'fly-by-wire' computer-assisted aircraft, and so any accurate simulation of the craft largely removed the challenge of mastering flight in the primeval sense of the word. In short, it is very hard to stall a plane whose thrust is greater than its weight.

The original flight simulator, on the other hand, encompassed the thrill of flying a single engine aircraft — backed up by a degree of avionics, but still with sufficient sense of adventure to keep it exciting.

Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the original flight simulator was its degree of detail. Truly stunning. Aircraft behavior was mimicked down to a tee, with full environmental control — even down to the navigation lights burning out periodically if left on unnecessarily. Experienced pilots often commented that the MFS simulation was completely accurate, with its only shortfall being limited vision and the absence of any G-force on the 'seat-of-the-pants'.

But flight simulator was not left there. MFS version 2 incorporated the idea of interchangeable scenery disks, better colour on enhanced graphics screens, and a few other minor features.

Version 3 however, released in 1988, includes more aircraft modes including a 'Gates' learjet, multiple view windows and more environmental control. You

can even set a head-wind that is faster than the stall speed of the aircraft, and hover over the runway in much the same way seagulls do over beaches. The latest version also incorporates a tracker plane which provides a panoramic viewpoint on the aircraft's activity — perhaps one of the few graphical vistas which has inspired the breathless comment of 'what a view' from otherwise jaded magazine editors.

Its most impressive feature is the ability to link two PCs together by cable or modem so two players can fly in tandem. This works surprisingly well, even at 300bps. Orientation is often a little tricky, and sometimes the two machines get out of step, but the facility is still stunning.

The original MFS set a standard in gameware. The latest version of MFS redefines that standard and pushes it considerably beyond the reach of many other leading game products. Totally accurate simulations, cerebral challenges rather than shoot-em-up response times, and interplayerability establishes the benchmark for the next generation. I can only look forward to MFS version 4 which, I do not doubt, will include LAN support for squadrons and redefine 'workgroups' into 'playgroups'.
I Davies

Jinxter

The best plots are invariably simple: a magic bracelet has been stripped of its charms, thereby rendering useless its power to protect the community. It is you, the player, who must find the
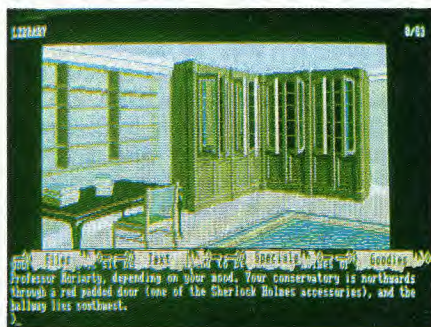
charms and reassemble the bracelet. Only then will its full power return.

Exquisite puzzles await you in the long, tiring journey above and below land and sea. Each charm itself is a magic key that will propel you further and further into the game and towards the ultimate goal.

1988 was the year that consolidated the growing reputation of Magnetic Scrolls as thousands of computer gamesters around the world flocked to buy their products.

As a relatively unknown software house in Britain, Magnetic Scrolls began to produce adventure games that, in quality and imagination, would challenge the mighty edifice of Infocom. Indeed, the name Magnetic Scrolls has become synonymous with excitement, challenge and puzzles. The Pawn and The Guild of Thieves were the stepping stones which brought this young English David face-to-face with the American Goliath.

Although Magnetic Scrolls has released yet another game entitled Corruption, it was surely Jinxter which proved once and for all that here is a company to be reckoned with. Innovation, beautiful graphics and a superb story-line makes Jinxter one of the best all-round games of the year.

Superlatives are wasted here — let me say simply that Jinxter is funny (hilariously so in parts), clever and extremely satisfying in its game-play.
**G Hampson**

Leather Goddesses of Phobos

'Tiffany is about your age and has a body worthy of envy: tall and well-built, with wide shoulders, a generous bosom, slim waist and long, tawny legs. The only minus seems to be slightly oversized feet, but even oversized feet are a plus if you're into toe sucking . . .'

With the knowledge that it is mostly males who play adventure games — and given that males are the way they are — more and more software houses are producing adventures with a distinctly erotic flavour.

Eroticism is a difficult subject at any time: it is so easy to succumb to temptation and reduce it to mere smut. In Leather Goddesses of Phobos, Infocom has put itself well above the navel, as it were, to produce a top-class adventure written with humour and savoir-faire. True, you manage to have your wicked way with a couple of the characters (complete with moans and groans), but this soon takes second place as you begin to realise the quality of the game.

Described as a racy, space-age spoof,

Leather Goddesses can be tame, suggestive or lewd, depending on which mode of play is selected. Naturally, everybody plays in lewd mode. Much of the fun is derived from the po-faced seriousness of the characters in even the most comical situations. Tiffany may
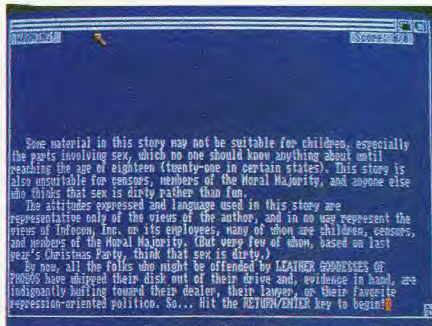
be voluptuous, but she sure ain't bright — a trait you will come to love.

Most of the outrageous scenes are written somewhat tongue in cheek. The spaceship is a 'potent-looking battleship with two pendulous, brimming fuel-tanks' — or what psychiatrists are apt to call a phallic symbol. Frankly, it looked remarkably like a penis to me . . .

G Hampson

Lode Runner

Back in 1983, a game most Apple owners were playing was Lode Runner. The power hungry leaders of the Bungeling Empire have pillaged a fortune in gold from the people by means of excessive fast food taxes. Your mission is to raid each of the 150 treasure vaults and recover as much booty as possible.

This is not an easy task, what with Bungeling guards and the ever present trap-door. However, with a keen eye and a reasonable joystick, the early levels (er . . . treasure vaults) are not all that hard. The real hassle comes when, after playing for three hours and attaining level 39, you are called to dinner. In order to sustain enough energy to manipulate a joystick, one has to eat, so switching off the machine is almost inevitable.

You see, in those good old days, saving the game was not part of the program.

It is so absorbing, with its ladders and hand over hand bars, that many an hour is spent trying to improve previous scores. Initially, you start on level one with five men, and for each completed level one extra man is added.

If you are having trouble with a particular

level, you can enter the cheat mode, giving yourself unlimited men to practise with. If you complete the 150 levels, there are two alternatives: firstly, purchase the scenario Championship Lode Runner (a much harder game); or secondly, make your own levels using the game editor.

Lode Runner is a good package, for not only does it contain an addictive game but also an excellent editor, with which you can create your own levels. This program is enjoyed by many Apple owners because it is easy to learn, absorbing to play and inexpensive.

J Paske

Mean 18

'And as Greg Norman lines up this 35ft putt for an eagle, a hush falls over the gallery'. This summer there will be a lot of golf played on Australian courses, and while it is not quite the same as playing the real thing, there are several golf games you can play on computer. The best I've come across is Mean 18 for the Apple.

Mean 18 from Accolade first appeared on a 3.5in disk, which contained three courses. An extremely useful module also included is the Architect facility.

Next player is WAL
SPACE to go on   0 Overhead

With the aid of the Architect you can design your own courses, right down to the slope of each individual green. In this manner you can construct your local links, then practise at will your favourite holes. Playing the game is a breeze, and up to four players can participate using either regular or professional tees. Mean 18 can be played using the expert level, and while this is slightly harder, both levels are fairly easy.

If you want to brush-up on your game there is a practice tee, green and hole. The realistic sounds of the GS machine come to the fore (pardon the pun) with simulated effects such as hitting the ball, sinking a putt and gallery applause for a good shot.

The popularity of Mean 18 can be gauged by the number of courses that computer golfers have created. The Sydney Apple Users Group, for example, has a large number available on library disks for a reasonable price to members. Mean 18 as a golf simulation is second to none.
J Paske

Phantasie III

Phantasie III is a computer-controlled role playing game, set up similarly to Dungeons and Dragons. You control a group of six adventurers out to save their world from destruction. To accomplish this, they must find and defeat the evil sorcerer, Nikademis. This entails searching through an entire continent, two alternative planes and eight dungeons scattered throughout the land and elsewhere. This is not as straightforward as it may seem, as the dungeons are heavily populated with various traps, monsters and puzzles, all of which must be overcome.

Play of the game is with a mouse and/or keyboard, but I prefer a combination of the two. Battle sequences are well done except for the spell casting, which the monsters do not use effective-

ly. The continent is very large and well spread out, the dungeons are deadly and the save feature on each is a necessity. Remember to thoroughly explore each dungeon.

Phantasie III has been well designed and should keep any game player actively employed for many hours trying to finish the quest. The graphics are excellent, with some of the best designed monsters I've ever encountered, but the animation sequences are almost non existent. (When will people learn how to port programs to the Amiga?)

All in all, an excellent game for role players, but anybody else would probably find the time taken to finish it too long.
K Currie

Shanghai

Every once in a while, a game comes along that is such a challenge to play and so entertaining at every turn, that it takes an honoured place in the disk storage-box. Shanghai is such a game; a perfect example of how a 3-D boardgame can be transported to a 2-D computer screen. Shanghai is immediately and permanently addictive. It is clever, easy to learn and beautifully presented. For years, I have encouraged my wife to play computer games (in the

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hope that I could see her more often), and I finally managed it with Shanghai.

One of many derivatives of the ancient game of mah-jong, Shanghai is played by removing matching pairs of mah-jong tiles until there are none left. As in any game involving a random spread of pieces, there is bound to be an element of luck, but strategy reduces this to a minimum. Careful thought and planning while removing pieces from play will bring its own rewards. Non-completed games can be saved to disk as well as resident games called to the screen.

The game can be played solo or in pairs and at Ordinary or Challenge level. At Challenge level, the player can select a pre-set time in which his partner must make a move before a gong indicates the turn of the other player. In this mode, it is deceptively exciting.

I first played Shanghai in 1977 and, with luck, I'll still be playing it in the year 2000. Come to think of it, I think I'll play it now . . .
G Hampson

Zork

Far better writers than I have put pen to paper to wax lyrical over Zork, the world's biggest-ever selling computer game. Incredible, unbelievable, terrific, stupendous — every superlative you can think of has been used to describe the unique atmosphere of this game and the cleverness of the puzzles encountered on the long, arduous journey through the Great Underground Empire.

Like a precious jewel designed to draw gasps of admiration from the throng, Zork is a masterpiece of craftsmanship against which all other games are measured. No-one, past or present, has equalled this outstanding game — and in this writer's opinion, no-one ever will.

In the true sense of the word, Zork is a classic within the adventure genre and was almost certainly written under the influence of J.R.R. Tolkien, author of 'The Hobbit' and 'Lord of the Rings'. The treasures, the troll, the thief — and in the later Zork releases which form the trilogy — the fire-breathing dragon and the virgin princess are just some of the things you will encounter.

The mailbox west of the house must be the most famous mailbox in history and the house itself has become a welcome beacon for all hardy adventurers. Here the quest begins and the sword is at hand. You will marvel at how easily it fits your grip and how quickly you master its power. You will need it before the day is done.

Zork is timeless and rich in wonder. It will ever remain that perfect creation for the child within us who yearns for excitement and the discovery of treasures unimaginable.
G Hampson

END

"Who's got the computer with the slow response time?"

«

Defend your front lines

The Human Spell Breaker is a powerful land-based unit with immunity to magic. Use its men on your front lines, secure in the knowledge that you can cast offensive spells like Blizzard over them with impunity (their magical immunity makes them impervious to the splash damage caused by these spells).

First strike

The Human Dragonhawk Riders are particularly useful for making your initial strike into enemy territory. Their Cloud ability also allows them to temporarily shut down enemy base defences (like towers). To fully exploit this ability, always provide Dragonhawk Riders with a decent support force.

Be forewarned

Tricky Human players can build farms around the map as a cheap scouting device. Prowling enemy troops will automatically attack them, giving you prior warning of offensive incursions and valuable time to prepare a defensive strategy.

Obsidian Statues

The Undead Obsidian Statue is a fortified structure that serves much the same purpose as a Night Elf Mana Well (ie. regenerates health and mana of surrounding friendly units). Obsidian Statues can also be transformed into the Destroyer form, effectively becoming a powerful air unit. Destroyers feed on magic (which they are also immune to) and then use it to attack land or air-based enemy units. Destroyers are therefore best deployed against enemy spellcasters.

Tower over opponents

Offensive towering is a sly tactic Orc players can use once they get the Spiked Barricades and Reinforced Defence upgrades. This tactic consists of sending a group of Peons near an enemy base (along with a backup force of Grunts, Demolishers and perhaps an Orc Hero), and then using them to build towers. The idea is to keep building and repairing the towers until you've ground your opponent into submission.

Heroes at hand

Remember that all base defences are eventually negated by long-distance attack units like Meat Wagons, Ballistae, Mortar Teams, Catapults and Dragonhawk Riders. Build a few early in a game if you want, but mostly rely on your Hero and his support force. To this end, keep a Town Portal scroll on your Heroes at all times so they can immediately return if your base is threatened.

STEP BY STEP: HALO: COMBAT EVOLVED

Here's a step-by-step guide to Halo: Combat Evolved's extremely tricky penultimate level, 'Light fuse, run away'. Your objective is to thwart the Monitor by rupturing the engine core of the ship, causing it to destroy Halo.

1 Make sure you visit the ship's armoury first. Your two weapons should be a shotgun and a rocket launcher. Max out on ammo for each weapon (60 rounds for the shogun, eight for the rocket launcher). Watch out for cloaked Flood creatures.

2 Once you reach Engineering, head right and up the ramp. Move across until you see a Level 2 sign and keep moving up and then go up the ramp to Level 3. You'll encounter a plague of Flood here, so keep the shotgun loaded. Now, look at your NAV system and you should see four orange arrows. Follow them to the exhaust manifold controls.

3 Once you push the button, the exhaust manifold retracts. Jump down onto it and fire a rocket through the glowing vent (you'll see an explosion when you score a hit). You need to do this four times. Watch out for Sentinels and the Flood. Once you're done, climb over one of the exhaust manifolds (it's in a corner of the room) until you see another level 3 sign.

4 Keep moving up the ramp until you come to a locked door. As soon as you enter, the door will explode. Move through until you reach the lift and prepare to fight about three Covenant soldiers. Now jump in the lift and ride it to the top.

5 As soon as you exit the lift, you have six minutes to get off Halo. Move through the doorway and jump in a Warthog. Now drive as fast as possible, following the orange NAV arrows. Don't stop for anything and if you see a hostile, just run right over it!

COLLECTOR'S
POWER TIPS
EDITION 2003

AGE OF MYTHOLOGY:
THE TITANS EXPANSION PACK

BUILD IN RECORD TIME

The Atlantean Citizen units also happen to be some of the fastest builders in Age of Mythology, and deploying multiple Citizens on specific construction tasks will speed up the process significantly.

Getting started

The new Atlantean civilisation featured in The Titans expansion pack is a great choice for less-skilled players, because it simplifies and streamlines many basic gameplay elements in Age of Mythology. Playing a Random Map is one of the best ways to learn the strengths and weaknesses of this new civilisation.

Atlantean pros and cons

Unlike the other three sides in Age of Mythology (Greek, Norse and Egyptian), the Atlantean civilisation features self-sufficient worker units known as Citizens. Citizens don't need to commute back and forth between buildings when gathering resources, so this makes them by far the most efficient worker unit in the game. However, they are also the most expensive unit of this type and take the longest amount of time to create.

Atlantean farms cost more than those of other civilisations, but the mobile nature of the Citizen gathering unit makes it perfectly suited to roving around the map, hunting wild animals or herding cattle. While these food sources are free, they also make your valuable Citizen units vulnerable to attack. As a consequence, you should always keep a squad of combat units in close proximity.

Build a manor

It's always wise to get the tedious task of house building out of the way relatively early in a game, so you can start cranking out an army. Atlantean manors provide a larger equivalent of the other civilisations' houses and you only need to build five to max out your population limit. Ensure that you fully exploit this by building as rapidly as possible, thus getting the jump on your opponents.

Using Lush

Choosing the Atlantean god Gaia causes buildings to produce Lush: an organic substance that regenerates structures. Also remember that your opponents cannot build on areas covered in Lush, something smart players can utilise to their advantage.

Don't wait

While many of the Atlantean god powers can be used multiple times in a single game, you have to wait for a set time limit to expire between uses. To fully exploit this, use your Atlantean god powers freely — don't hold them in reserve until the last minute.

Build the Titan gateway

Once you make the decision to summon a Titan, gather all of your builder units and reallocate them to the task of constructing the Titan gateway. Otherwise, the process becomes ridiculously slow and, as everyone in the game is publicly forewarned, your opponents can counterattack by summoning a Titan of their own.

Explore the potential

The new Atlantean myth units are among the most powerful in the game, so be sure to make full use of their potent abilities. Some of the better ones on offer include Promethean clay men who divide in two when killed; the acid-spitting, squid-like Argus; and Automaton metal soldiers who can repair or rebuild each other.

Economic Guilds

All Atlantean resource-gathering upgrades can be researched at one central location: the Atlantean Economic Guild. To fully exploit the impressive talents of the Atlantean Citizen unit, build two or three Economic Guilds, so that multiple resource-gathering upgrades can be researched simultaneously. The same strategy can be applied to military upgrades by constructing multiple armouries.

Working with Titans

Despite the fact that they are incredibly powerful and have about 7,000 hit points, Titan units are also incredibly stupid! Leave a Titan alone for two seconds and it's liable to waste valuable time chasing a solitary enemy unit around the map. As a consequence, they need to be carefully micromanaged. To cut off your opponent's supply of resources and troops, always make the destruction of important enemy buildings your Titan's first priority. >>>

STEP BY STEP: FREEDOM FIGHTERS

Freedom Fighters is a squad-based tactical action offering from IO Interactive. This step by step will guide you through one of the toughest sequences in the game (from the 'Governor's Island Boat Landing' level).

1 This is a particularly tricky mission, because the boat crashes into the ice upon arrival, scattering your equipment and your men. Scavenge as much equipment as you can (you'll see it lying around on the ice) and then find cover as soon as possible. Now, move cautiously around the boat until you can see the guard tower ahead of you.

2 These two machine gunners will cut you (and your men) up in no time, so you need to find a way to take them out. Move quickly across the ice and make your way left. Order your men to scout ahead of you and let them take the bulk of enemy fire. Keep moving in an arc towards the left until you spot the rocket launcher on an ice flow ahead.

3 Make a run for the rocket launcher and grab it. Quickly move behind the large piece of metal jutting out of the ice flow, using it as cover. Slowly edge out until you have a decent shot at the guard tower, then take it out with a rocket.

4 Once you've gotten rid of the machine gunners, you're free to move around the ice flows. Use this opportunity to pick up as many health packs as possible, and then heal your wounded men. Once you have a squad of about four or five men, make your way across the ice towards the base of the wrecked tower. You should see a ladder; climb it.

5 Carefully make your way left until you come to an open doorway. Go through the building, use the open metal gate and then head right. There are lots of Russian troops sneaking around, so be cautious. Clear the soldiers, replenish your equipment and keep heading right until you reach a wall. Climb the wall until you can see the soldiers on the other side.

6 Before you go over the wall, lob a few grenades to kill the soldiers on the other side. Send your squad ahead and make your way up the rear of the buildings as far as you can go. Now turn right and take out as many soldiers as possible, watching out for helicopter gunships. As soon as you have some breathing space, hoist the flag on the left to finish the level. **PCU**