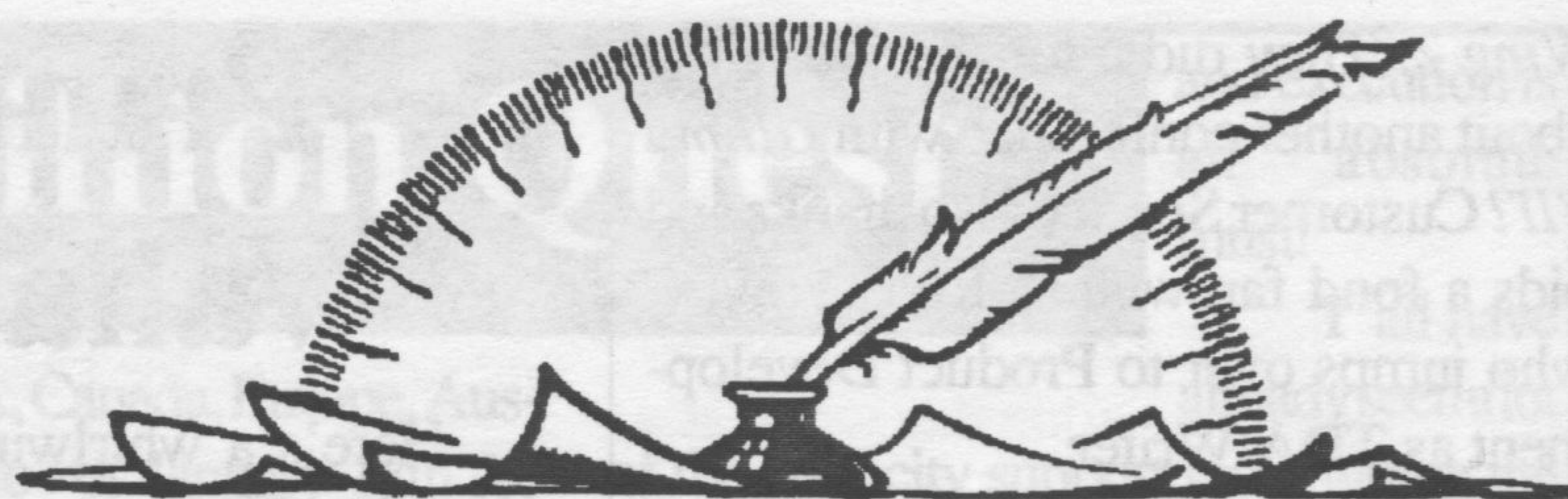


# POINT OF ORIGIN



More than 300 foisted monthly

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Friday, November 8, 1991

♦♦ Austin, Texas

## Euro-Press Wowed on Whirlwind Tour

The weather was unimpressive, but the international press corps we had this week seemed bowled over by ORIGIN itself. Dany Boolauck from *Joystick* in France, Christina Erskine from *PC Review* in England and Eva Hoogh from *ASM* in Germany jetted in to sneak a peek at *Ultima VII* and *Underworld*.

Dany said he'd never felt such hospitality from an American software manufacturer—and he's visited quite a few. All three journalists were taken with the technology in *U7* and *UW*. There should be some great press in these three leading magazines in December, just in time for Christmas shopping. We'll post copies when they become available.

Dany brought over the latest issue of *Joystick*, in which *Wing Commander II* gets a 100% rating. It's only the second time in the magazine's history for a game to receive that mark. What's the first, you ask? *Wing Commander*, of course!

*PC Review* is a brand-new publication in England. In its premier issue, it called *Wing 2* a "computer event." There were a few technical glitches, however, in terms of layout and typos, so Christina says *Wing 2* will get another mention in the next issue.

Another international team will be here in December to take on *Strike*.

### Also Across the Waters

Jennie Evans, our Brand Manager with Mindscape in England, took the tape demos of *Strike*, *Wing* and *U7* around to W.H. Smith, one of the U.K.'s biggest book/stationery/record/software stores. "They don't usually carry software for the PC," Jennie says, "but after I blew up some Kilrathi fighters, they were completely baffled (impressed)." Could this be another major product pipeline? We'll keep you updated.

*"After I blew up some Kilrathi fighters, they were completely baffled."*

*PC Format* is another new publication in England. In its second issue, the only game to rank higher than *Wing 2* was *Might and Magic*.

If you've been following the debate over *U7*'s MP-13 rating in *Strategy Plus* (as we have), you'll find our reply in the Letters to the Editor next issue as well as a 2-page spread on *Wing 2*.



Michelle "Morticia" Lindner picked up First Place and a \$35 gift certificate in the Halloween costume contest.

## Phone Sects

Customer Service is riding a wave of about 1300 calls a week, but Kay says everyone's hanging ten and keeping up. Michael Madewell has set up an ORIGIN Bulletin Board to upload demos and other info for customers. It hasn't been formally announced; reps are just mentioning it in passing.

Kay's still looking for 3-5 people to join the Entertainment Committee. That group meets every Monday at lunch for about 45 minutes to plan all the company parties and special affairs. Kay thinks a few folks from Art or Product Development would make a nice addition. Her extension is 604.

A couple of weeks ago, Mike Rundell had a conference on CompuServe with Ellen Guon and Steve Beeman for

(continued on next page)



*Wing 2*. They did a terrific job. How about another conference with *Ultima VII*? Customer Service also thanks and bids a fond farewell to Rudy Hovey, who jumps over to Product Development as TDA/Writer.

Tamara Harris is online in our Consumer Sales Department. Great timing, too. Orders are pouring in for *U7*, *Strike*, and *Special Operations*. Last month, sales hit \$17,000 (not bad, considering most of the orders were \$18.95 for the *Wing book*).

## When Joey Comes Marching Home

Prepare for a tearful homecoming in the Art Department. GI Joe, who posed for rotoscoping in *Strike*, flew into the sunset Halloween evening tethered to 30 or so balloons. He carried a note which implored his new commander to contact ORIGIN and tell us of his new assignment.

Now comes word that Joe is alive and well. Frank Kendrick works at the Lyondell petrochemical plant in Channelview, about 220 miles from here. He says he was driving along one of the plant roads Saturday evening when he saw the cluster of balloons under a tree. "About four of them were deflated, but the rest of them still had a lot of air, so I must have gotten there just after it landed," Frank told me. "When I picked it up, saw the note, and saw how far away it was, I knew the curiosity on the other end would be overwhelming. So I thought I had to give you a call."

The Art Department asked Frank

(continued on page 4)

## Prints Valiant

Here's a whirlwind roundup of recent ORIGIN press:

PC World's readers named *Wing Commander* one of the "Best 220 Products of 1991."

*Player's PC Strategy Guide* features a behind-the-scenes look at *Strike* on the cover of its special Buyer's Guide Issue. Great article, superb graphics reproduction and a poster to boot!

*Dragon Magazine* is giving *Wing 2* five stars. You may recall that *Wing* got the magazine's first six-star rating ever. Have we slipped? Not according to Editor Hartley Lesser. "We took some heat for the six stars. People would call and say, 'Yeah, it's the greatest game ever, but look how we have to enhance our systems to run it.' So we've given (*Wing 2*) five stars, which is still our highest rating possible." You know what they say: once you've been spoiled...

If you've been looking for a reason to buy *Penthouse*, *Wing 2* gets a mention in the "Power Plays" section of the December issue.

### Book Him, Danno!

*Quest for Clues IV* is here and looks great. Read more about it in Fred's column. Some publications (like *PC Consumer*) are taking us up on our idea to review Mike Harrison's *Wing Commander* book just as they would software. Keep an eye out for that.

Also watch for a review (glowing, we're told) of *Temper of Wisdom*, the new fiction from Lynn Abbey, in *Amazing's* next issue. The magazine will also carry an excerpt from the book, due to hit stores in December.

In the same literary vein, we're looking for a name and call sign for the main character in the *Wing Commander* fiction, since the PC game version can be any name the player desires. Anybody with an idea should e-mail or write David Ladyman (something heroic).

Our 16-page newsletter's finding its way to even more people. About 40K are going out in a direct-mail campaign to registration card customers. Another 120K will be distributed through Egghead, Electronics Boutique and Software, Etc. stores nationwide.

## Bytes to Chew On

- Marten has applied for SPA accreditation for *Wing 2* to go "gold." According to our calculations, it surpassed 100,000 copies in less than 60 days!

- The Wednesday cookout is now on a week-by-week basis, depending on the weather.

- Now for the latest scoop on the ORIGIN Christmas party. Michelle says it will be held at the Doubletree Hotel on December 14th at 6:00. The Doubletree is at 6505 North I-35, basically at the 290 interchange. Dress is formal—suits or nicer. Right now, it's an adults-only dinner. More details in upcoming issues.

## More From the Freditor

### CES Closing in Fast

The countdown is on: only 8 more weeks until the next Consumer Electronics Show is upon us! The dates are Thursday thru Sunday, January 9-12 in tawdry Lost Wages (Las Vegas for you



ORIGIN  
is about to enter  
the homestretch  
of this fiscal year,

# The \$6 Million Quest

and execution is  
an absolute  
must!

which ends February 29th, as we hit the Fourth Quarter with a host of important products still bucking for release. *WCII Special Ops I* looks promising for release on schedule in mid-November (congratulations to Ellen Guon & Team!). Despite hard work and herculean efforts, the other three Fall scheduled releases—*U7*, *Strike* and *Underworld*—will all miss Christmas (*U7* may catch just a hair of Santa's whisker). That means our entire company has its work cut out to still make the most of the immediate post-Christmas market opportunity. The potential value of the four products mentioned totals another \$6 million in revenue!!! That's 60% more revenue with only 25% time remaining. Yipes! Here's "The Plan":

We will be doing heavy pre-release publicity on *Underworld* during November and December to build awareness of this neat product and to generate major advance orders. The effort will include videotape and software demos sent into wide circulation, flyers, ads, news releases, and a cross-country sales trip by the Bulldog Team for personal demonstrations to all key buyers. This will be capped by a January CES "soft release" of *Ultima Underworld*. That means completed, shrink-wrapped, pre-release copies of the product will be handed out at CES to select VIP buyers and reviewers to help top-up sales orders for a planned rollout the week after the show.

We are trying to set in stone a

worldwide (USA, Canada, Europe, Australia) "street date" of January 18th for *Underworld* and, possibly, February 1st for *Strike*. Those are the dates that these products would first become available for consumer purchase at retail. Serious penalties are assessed against retailers who are found to violate a manufacturer's specified street date by selling products a day or two ahead of their competition (i.e.: they get shipped the next new release *after* the rest of the market).

The creation of "street dates" has proved very effective in the record, book and videotape industries. If executed properly, it gets consumers and retailers pumped up with anticipation over an upcoming release. Three important elements are required to pull this off: planning, promotion and shipping. First, heavy pre-release hype has to be organized and implemented to whet consumer appetites 2-4 weeks before "the date." Point-of-sale material is distributed to retailers for in-store display: empty product boxes with "Coming Soon: street date" signs affixed, posters, video and/or software running demos, etc. Retail pre-orders are taken from eager game players. In the meantime, the product is being manufactured and assembled simultaneously on two continents (USA and Europe) and shipped to all distributors and retailers to hold in backrooms until the morning of the designated street date. Of course, to make all this happen, flawless planning

Y'all have  
already seen a lot

of the publicity support work hitting the streets for these products: magazine covers, feature stories, complimentary poster inserts, ORIGIN newsletters, etc. The final round, for *Underworld*, will be seen in the January issue of *Computer Games Review* including the front cover, feature story and a powerful 8-page gatefold center section! Through the use of the "street date" program, we hope to continue the hype, the visibility and the momentum for our products until they finally arrive on store shelves.

Of course, maximum impact is achieved when all of the publicity explodes simultaneously with product release. However, the software gods have not been on our side this Fall, as we all know, and thus the Grand Plan is rather out of sync. Still, with these products clearly being breakthrough stuff, and if they don't run any later the current plan, we should still be able to pull off this \$6 million crowning achievement to a stellar year!

Sales and Marketing have done all they can to set the stage. The rest is now up to Product Development and Operations/StarPak to bring in the motherlode! (Plus a lot of post-release assistance by Customer Service and Tech Support to lock-in the sale by getting our customers up and running.)

Good luck TEAM ORIGIN!!!

Fred

non-gamblers). The setup crew pulls out on Wednesday morning, the 8th.

Hopefully, preparations for this show will require fewer "last minute" things to do since three of the four products should be at or near market release. That means that we will be able to play actual finished product (or fairly clean beta versions), rather than scrambling to

create special demos.

The two new featured titles will be: *Ultima Underworld* and *Ultima "7 1/2" - The Serpent Isle*. These will be shown in rotation on ORIGIN's usual 35-inch Mitsubishi mega-monitor rental unit with large stereo speakers. The other two products to be "re-introduced" are: *Ultima VII*, which will have been shipping for only a

few weeks by show time (we pray), and *Strike Commander*, which is expected for release within a few weeks after the show. We are also trying to arrange a second showing of *Strike Commander* in the nearby Ad Lib booth, possibly on a large monitor, and possibly featuring 4-speaker "surround sound" support of the new *Ad Lib Gold Card*.



## QFC IV HITS THE STREETS

The latest ORIGIN-published book rolls out to market this week. It's *Quest For Clues IV*, the (obviously) fourth annual installment in this popular series of multi-product cluebooks. QFC4 is another 200-pages jam-packed with hints and solutions to 40 of the top adventure and role-playing games of the past year. The content was compiled by longtime ORIGIN pal and honorary Knight Of Britannia, Shay Addams, and his QuestBusters Guild of fervent game-playing stringers. Kudos to David Ladyman on his second book editing job at ORIGIN! Great artwork from the sketchpad of Gary Washington, and clean and professional layout and design by Craig Miller and Debbie Nettingham, make this the smoothest and best *QFC* production yet!

A *QFC* future note: This series will undergo a complete redesign and new availability schedule beginning with *QFC5* next year. The annual edition will essentially be "split in two," for publication twice a year—in Spring and Fall—with 20 games covered in each installment. The intent is to get game solutions into print on hot new titles much closer to when the software title is being bought and played by consumers. The retail price will also drop from \$24.99 to the \$14-\$16 range to make it more of an affordable impulse buy. Discussions are also underway to possibly downsize the format to a trendier 7"x9" look like the PRIMA Wing Commander book.

### ...Joey Comes Home

(Continued)

if he could send Joe back, but Frank had already given him to a friend's son. Here's the tear-jerking part: the little

boy was already so attached to Joe that he was taking him to bed each night. So, out of the goodness of his heart, Frank bought the boy another Joe and will be sending Joe 1 back home. Frank doesn't have a computer, so we'll send him a hat and shirt for all his help.

In two short weeks:  
our Thanksgiving issue!



## Serious Playtime

Quality Assurance is really getting down to business these days. *Special Ops* is running smoothly in formal beta. *U7* isn't quite there yet, but according to Sherry, "the graphics and the music are holding together real nice. It's looking very good for that stage of testing."

English playthroughs for FM Towns is almost complete; there's still some Japanese work to do. And the gang has its hands on new CD-ROMs to test the *Wing Commander/U6* bundle from Software Toolworks.

## Top Ten Reasons to Become a Game Designer

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- 10) *Have a good excuse to drink Jolt Cola and eat Doritos all day.*
- 9) *Be able to impress 11 year-old kids with your important job.*
- 8) *So you can write off all the movies, books, comics and games you'd buy anyway.*
- 7) *To remove the anxiety caused by an excess of money and material possessions.*
- 6) *To get free games and magazines because you're "in the industry."*
- 5) *The intellectual challenge of deciphering royalty statements.*
- 4) *Seeing your name in 6-point type on page 64 of a 64-page manual.*
- 3) *So you don't have to go to work wearing a tie, or any other clothing, for that matter.*
- 2) *It explains to your spouse why you're always playing a game instead of working.*
- 1) *Babes, Babes, Babes!*