

Point of ORIGIN

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More to come...

At CES, U7 picks up its first post-release honors, the "Golden Triad Award for Excellence" from the guys at Computer Game Review. The award goes to games which receive a rating of 90% or higher. U7 came in at 91%.

CES: A Trip to Bountiful

(Chicago)—ORIGIN managed to overcome missed flights and a flood of consumers to make Summer CES the most productive in company history. By now, everyone's heard about the "Tandy Timeclock," 20,000 units of Strike Commander due in Tandy's warehouse by November 27. Sales Standout **Karl Kabler** deserves a special thumbs-up when you consider that he'd almost wrapped up the deal about a month ago before Tandy brought on a new buyer. But after she saw the fab demo put together by the Strike team, she was ready to sign the check. The team worked on the demo up to the last minute (in fact, 48 minutes *past* the last minute) and the effort really showed.

While we're on that subject, thanks to the other teams—Serpent Isle and Translations—who pulled an all-nighter to get things ready, not to mention the other artists, musicians and programmers who burned some midnight oil as well. For the record, Christmas is December 25 and the next CES is January 10.

From a press standpoint, everyone's in a lather about our Fall lineup. It did them all some good to see the Strike interface. Especially impressed was the gang from *PC Entertainment* (formerly *Game Players*), with whom we still

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CES: From the Pound

by Marten Davies

After two days of being confined to an unfamiliar kennel, the Bulldogs happily emerged victorious. Job offers have been pouring in to the entire team from R.J. Reynolds, Camel, British American Tobacco and several highly-acclaimed mirror manufacturers. In concert with the A++ grade demos that the PD guys supplied us with, we really smoked 'em. The results are in!! Tandy—as perhaps some of you are aware—has committed to 20,000 pieces of the Strike product. As soon as we have finished EMPTY boxes, CompUSA will build endcaps of the product in all its stores to create pre-release hype. On release, they will replace these boxes with

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have the exclusive agreement for Strike coverage. The editors plan to start doing some advance behind-the-scenes kind of stuff pretty soon.

Computer Game Review stopped by to present Ultima VII with the Golden Triad Award for Excellence. CGR's June issue (which was being handed out freely at the show) has a 5-page play tip section for U7 and a separate 2-page review in which the game gets a 91% overall rating. That issue's now available in the ORIGIN Library. Next month should be the U7 month with the same amount of coverage in the same columns.

Computer Gaming World also made a cameo to say that we're a major contender in its awards this year. Wing 2 has been nominated as the Action Game of the Year and both U7 and Underworld have been nominated as Role-Playing Game of the Year. Nothing like a little friendly rivalry. The current issue of CGW has a nice 3-page review of Underworld and another great 3-page write-up in Scorpia's section. You can catch that mag in the Library, too.

If you ventured outside our maximum-security meeting room, you'd see a pleasant surprise at the Sega booth. Nine monitors, stacked three-high, were touting the new Sega-CD products while booming speakers blasted music from Nirvana, Hammer and U2. Mixed in with game clips from *Sonic the Hedgehog*, *Batman Returns* and *Cool World* were Wing and Underworld! Great exposure, let's just hope all the deals were signed in advance.

Nintendo's still keeping us on ice for its CD-startup, but has already inked an agreement with Virgin for *The 7th Guest* (formerly, just "Guest"). The clock's really ticking for Virgin. When we saw Guest at CES in January, it had been in development as technology for more than a year and had no storyline and no concept of a release date. Now, with all the publicity and agreements it has generated, Virgin's shooting for a Halloween release. They've slapped an exploration theme onto it—you try to find the ghost who murdered the six other guests—and are even in

defense mode already. One reviewer who saw the quasi-interactive demo Virgin put together quoted the development team as saying, "At least we're showing something interactive, while ORIGIN's just showing another demo where you just sit and watch." Ooooooh, touchy! In any case, Virgin has its hands full. 7th Guest is already at 1 gig and on two CD's, possibly three by release date ("Please insert Compact Disc #2 now").

For those of you keeping score, MicroProse's top-secret project, Johnny Crash, has been renamed Rex Nebular (is that better?) and is starting to advertise. Looks like it's shaping up to be a sort of Leisure-Suit-Larry-Meets-Leather-Goddesses-of-Phobos kind of thing. We'll keep you posted.

Aces of the Pacific was on the floor and drawing plenty of attention. Many reviewers said they considered it the hottest flight sim out right now, but after seeing the Strike demo, agreed that we will be setting the industry on its ear.

All exhibitors were braced for Consumer Daze. The widely-believed rumor is that AT&T had already written off the price of all the cellular, cordless and video phones it was showing, expecting them to walk away with the sticky-fingered crowd. Nintendo sealed off everything but the perimeter of its booth while Sega stayed open. Ticket sales for the show were reported to be 100,000-plus, most of which appeared to be 13 year-olds dropped off by their parents. They stood 40-deep waiting to play the stand-up arcade version of Street Fighter II.

In terms of other consumer electronics, Apple's Newton was the topic of a lot of morning coffee talks. Basically, it's Apple's move into the Casio Boss/Sharp Wizard field, but Apple's reportedly only looking for "partners" in development applications and marketing the Newton as a yuppie toy instead of a tool. Keep an eye out for it.

Finally, from the I-Don't-Know-What-I'd-Ever-Use-It-For-But-Richard's-Probably-Already-Got-It Department comes the PYXIS, a hand-held global positioning device from Sony which tracks you via four

satellites and tells you your latitude, longitude and altitude as well as your destination direction. Available now for \$1,195.

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FULL ones. They estimate they can sell 10,000 units through the Christmas period.

Other notable results: Micro Center, another superstore chain based out of Ohio and currently buying through distribution, has chosen to come direct. Western Merchandisers, which controls the Hastings Video and Record stores, is going to sign on direct after many months of courting. Best Buy has indicated that it believes the time may have come to create a direct relationship (135 stores by Xmas). Finally, we signed a new distributor, Software Resources, which supplies some currently untapped outlets such as Office Max, Office Depot, etc.

Europe, of course, arrived to see Jennie, who at that point was still standing and was not the gangrenous color which she attained by the time she returned back to Austin early Monday. Friday, in fact, was voted "Europe Day." The booth was absolutely packed with multilingual utterings of awe at the quality of the coming releases.

Overall, an outstanding performance. Congrats to one and all for the effort to make this a CES to remember!!!!

Birthdays



Cake and kegs for June birthdays: **Charles Cafrelli** and **Mike Chenault** (June 6), **Edward Maurer** (June 9), **Scott Hazle** (June 11), **Ron Kerwin** and **Norma Vargas** (June 12), **Chuck Zoch** (June 23), **Jeff Wilson** (June 28) and **Paul Isaac** (June 29).

Did we miss anyone?

Bio: Jennie Evans

Accent on Europe

Position: European Brand Manager

Start Date: September 9, 1991

For the longest time, New-Hampshire based **Diane Corcoran** held the title of being ORIGIN's "Most Remote Employee," but **Jennie Evans** beats her by more than a mile. Although Jennie works out of Mindscape's office about an hour south of London, she is an ORIGIN employee through and through.

Jennie used to sell advertising for a magazine publisher in England. She convinced the company to send her to Chicago CES last year to visit her clients, including Mindscape's **Geoff Heath**. "Geoff in turn invited me to a 'Mindscape presentation' in a large theater," Jennie recalls. That presentation turned out to be the Strike announcement. "I was really impressed," she says, "and I went home suddenly realizing that there's a bit more to computing than the old Amiga." About two months later, Geoff called Jennie and told her there was a position open at Mindscape with an American company. Jennie says it not only surprised her that the company was ORIGIN, but that it was based in Austin, Texas, where her grandfather lives.

As Brand Manager, Jennie covers everything: setting up media events, discussing reviews with magazines, sending out screen shots, overseeing packaging and artwork, compiling sales figures and designing point-of-sale materials. In her spare time, she and her husband, Martin, renovate old houses. A former aerobics instructor, Jennie's also an avid sportsperson.

Jennie only gets over to The States about twice a year—primarily for CES—but loves America. "Everything is exaggerated here, the types of restaurants where you can eat, the climate, shopping—everything. A lot of times that's a positive thing, but it can work the other way, too." How does she handle being the only ORIGIN employee so far away? "When I'm here," Jennie says, "I get such a family feeling from everybody that it really keeps me going. I know other people in England who work for American companies and never get that."



Jennie Evans

Dear Point Man

Dear Point Man,

I appreciate your efforts concerning the letter about business cards. However, I don't think it was adequately addressed in the area of allowing employees to pay for their own business cards. This privilege should be given to everyone in the company. If ORIGIN isn't going to pay for these things, the least it can do is make them available at our expense.

I ran this one around the management offices and there wasn't any disagreement about whether employees should be able to pay for their own cards—they can. In fact, ordering your own business cards is a great idea, if that's what you want to do. And the best way to do it is not through ORIGIN, but through any of the copying shops (Kinko's, Ginny's, etc.) or office supply houses (Office Depot, Bizmart, etc.) which offer the same service. It's the ORIGIN route which causes company considerations to come into play.

Dear Point Man,

Where is the long-awaited employee handbook? I sure would like to see ORIGIN's policies put in writing for the protection of everyone involved.

Checking back in the Point archives (Volume II, No. 14), that handbook is due in late Summer/early Fall. According to Fred, it's still "being addressed."

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Software, Etc.

Top Ten for May

1. Aces of the Pacific/3.5
(Dynamix)
2. Wolfpack (Broderbund)
3. Ultima VII
4. Lost Treasure of
Infocom (Activision)
5. Hardball III (Accolade)
6. SimCity (Maxis)
7. Stunts (Broderbund)
8. Monopoly (Virgin)
9. Aces of the Pacific/5.25
10. Out of This World
(Interplay)
13. Ultima Underworld

Check It Out

The Library's about to need branch offices. Look at all that's new:

Games:

Underworld (10 copies)
Ultima Trilogy (4)
Second Trilogy (4)
Hare Raising Havoc
NCAA Basketball: Road to the Final Four
PGA Golf Tour
Earl Weaver Baseball
Lakers vs. Celtics
4D Boxing (Amiga)

On CD:

Wing/U6
Wing Deluxe
Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective

Cluebooks:

Civilization
Mysteries of the Abyss (Underworld)
Key to the Black Gate (U7)
Book of Prophecy (U6)
Paths of Destiny (U5)
Way of the Avatar (U4)
Secrets of Sosaria (U3)
Savage Empire
Martian Dreams
Quest for Clues (issues 2, 3 and 4)

Reviews and Clippings:

Ultima 7 mention in OMNI
Ultima 7 in June Computer Game Review
Underworld In July Computer Gaming World
Bad Blood (?) in June Compute
Underworld from July PC Review (England)
U7 launch in England from Computer Trade Weekly
Underworld from Bitti (Finland)
Wing Commander, U6, U7 and Underworld from Kapa (Italy)
Wing 2 from June Computer Shopper

All of the resources of the U.T. Library system are now at your fingertips. The ORIGIN Library has a modem which accesses the U.T. database and can even check out books. See Materials Maven **Mary Margaret Ipser** for details.

The Library will be the new depository of all the reviews and articles written about ORIGIN. (That gets rid of at least one bulletin board.)

Some of the on-line/on-disk magazines will also be there for loading on your computer.

Robert Herrick's putting up the Microsoft Bookshelf CD on the net. It includes: The Concise Columbia Encyclopedia, Roget's Thesaurus, 1991 World Almanac, Concise Columbia Quotations, American Heritage Dictionary, Hammond's Atlas and Bartlett's Quotations. Mary Margaret wants to send a special thanks to **Marten Davies** for snagging that one.

For protection, the Library door will be locked when M&M leaves the building but producers and department heads have keys.

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Dear Point Man,

Since the Fourth of July falls on a Saturday, will the company observe the holiday on Friday or Monday?

You'll be able to get an early start on the weekend. Friday, July 3, will be the "officially observed" holiday.

Dear Point Man,

I know some people who would like to tour ORIGIN. I've seen press people and buyers taken through the building. What's our policy?

Right now, tours are done on a very limited basis for a couple of reasons. First of all, security considerations make tours tough. With game development costs topping \$1 million, you want to keep tight controls on who sees what. Second, with all the growth the company's gone through in the last year, there's really no good tour loop. We've got part of the Art Department upstairs, part downstairs. Teams are spread out and we don't even have a real lobby anymore. Hopefully, a lot of that will change with the new building (which, by the way, was officially purchased last Tuesday). There, it's been discussed that we might have a small, theater-like presentation room, award display area and maybe even a few other surprises. Team leaders and

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department heads will be talking about office layout options which could make walk-throughs easier, too.

Errata, Etc.

Once again, in a valiant effort to meet deadline for the last Point of ORIGIN, I (the normally foul-proof **Galen Svanas**) fouled up. The caption beneath the picture of the Operations gang listed one person as Donna Whitaker. As we all know, Donna Whitaker ceased to exist some time ago and was replaced by her equally lovable twin, **Donna Mehnert**. I apologize for any confusion suffered by family, friends, creditors, drivers license issuers or magazine salesmen.

Some of you may have noticed a job opening posted for Vice-President of Sales. Rest assured, Marten Davies is not planning a fast exit anytime soon. It's a part of the required application process for a green card to continue living and working in America. However, inquiries about the position will still be directed to Fred and Robert.

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