

Point of ORIGIN

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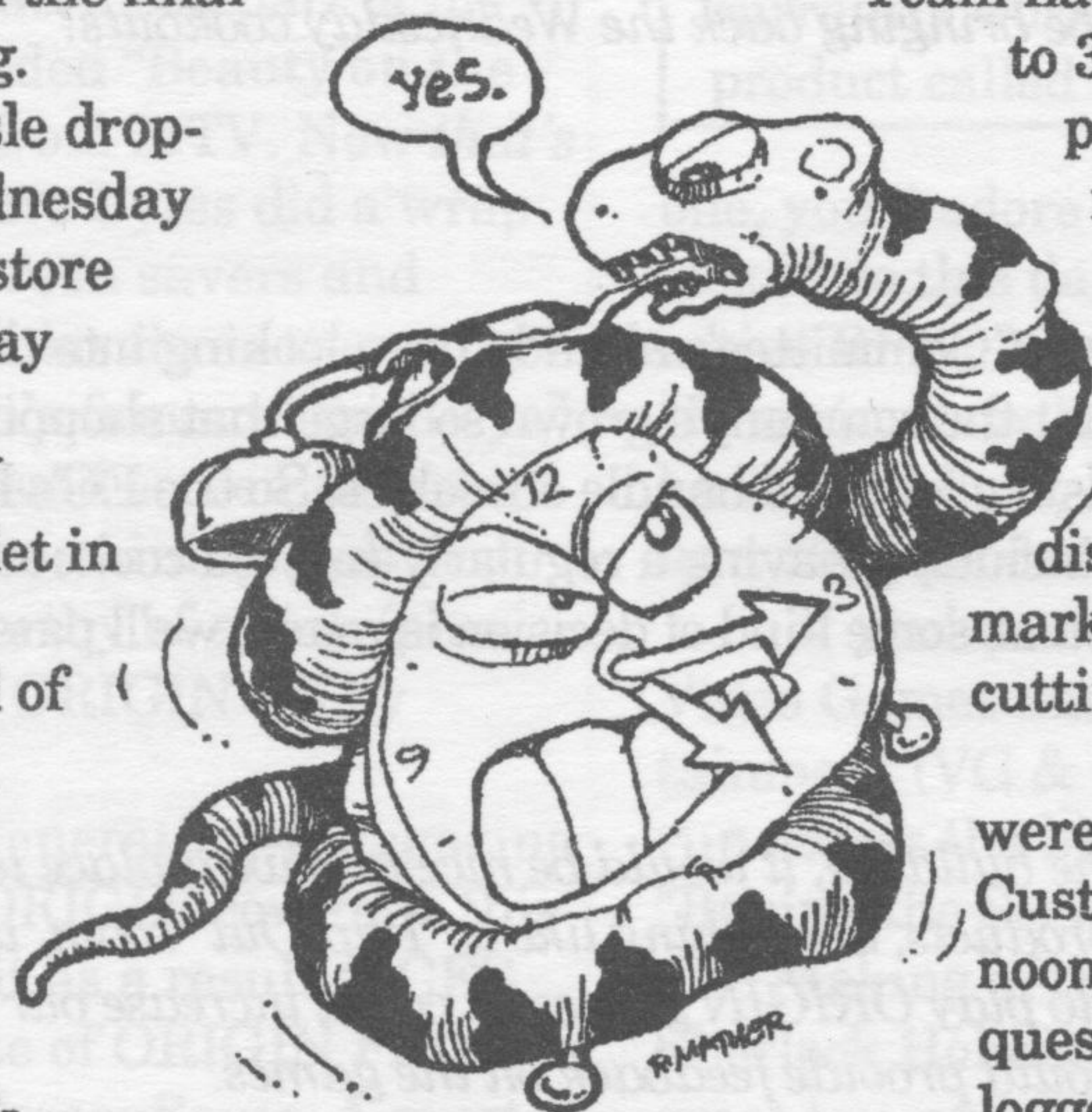
Happy New (Fiscal) Year!

Serpent Isle Beats the Clock

Hits Shelves on Last Day of Fiscal Year

Call it ironic justice or some kind of cosmic payback. When U7 ran late, ORIGIN lived off of the income from the Commander line. Now, an Ultima has come to the financial rescue while Strike makes its way through the final stages of testing.

Serpent Isle drop-shipped on Wednesday and made it to store shelves yesterday morning. That helped ORIGIN dodge a big bullet in terms of The Budget; instead of a shot through the heart, we were more or less grazed. It was a real nail-biting, butt-puckering roller coaster ride to get there, though. Serpent only made it under the wire because of the tireless efforts of the development team, the sleepless gang in QA and the dauntless folks in Operations. They hadn't faced a challenge like this since...well...our last release.



The Sales Team proved that they can sell a game if you just put it in their hands. Domestic rollout for Serpent was roughly 27,000. But by the time duplication began, Serpent was already in short supply; the Sales

Team had pumped up orders to 31,000. Across the pond, EAUK coordinated the simultaneous worldwide release with European orders at 9,500. That should dissuade too many gray market copies from cutting into sales.

Anxious gamers were already calling Customer Service by noon with installation questions. One even logged onto CompuServe and said: "I'll be danged if I haven't gotten better looking in 18 months! Must be the air in Britannia."

We probably won't have any solid feeling for sales until Monday. That will give players time to find out the game's been released and go to the stores to pick it up.

(1)

Top Honors

Beginning today, ORIGIN is kicking off its Employee of the Month award. During the first two weeks of each month, members of a nominating committee (department heads and managers) will each nominate one person, either from within or outside of their own department. That nominee will be chosen based upon the principles of ORIGIN and EA's "global corporate culture"—ACTION. In this case, it means:

Achievement
Customer Satisfaction
Teamwork
Integrity
Ownership
Now (enthusiasm; they needed an "N")

All of these traits must be tied to a specific event, project or activity of

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In this Point...

The Christmas Party already?
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There may be a new look for the
Wednesday cookout.
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The latest from Wall Street
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The full scoop on Shadowcaster
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Misc.

Programmer **Alex Jen** managed to deliver a product before the end of the fiscal year. He and his wife, **Marian Chou Jen**, had a little baby girl Wednesday morning. She weighed in at 7 lbs. 15 oz. At press time, the new arrival's name was still a mystery. Congrats!

The Entertainment Committee has some new members in its ranks: **Rebecca Heidt**, **Brian Martin** and **Glenn Garvey**. They will be carrying on the fine tradition of making sure everyone enjoys work and play at ORIGIN. The EC also wants to send a special thanks to the gal on the front line, **Andrea Brannon**, for already setting up this year's Company Dinner (known in politically incorrect circles as the Christmas Party). It's going to take place Saturday, December 11, at the Hyatt Regency on Town Lake. See...we don't always wait until November to start planning.

Another salute should go out to everybody who worked on the Strike Commander play manual, *Sudden Death*. It is, without a doubt, the best documentation we've ever put into a game, if not the best from *any* company. From the writing to the layout to the artwork to the printing, it's a first-class job all the way. Until the game ships, we've put a couple of copies in the ORIGIN Library for your perusal.

...Honors

an employee within the previous 90 days. When all the nominations are compiled, they're sent to **Fred Schmidt** for final decision.

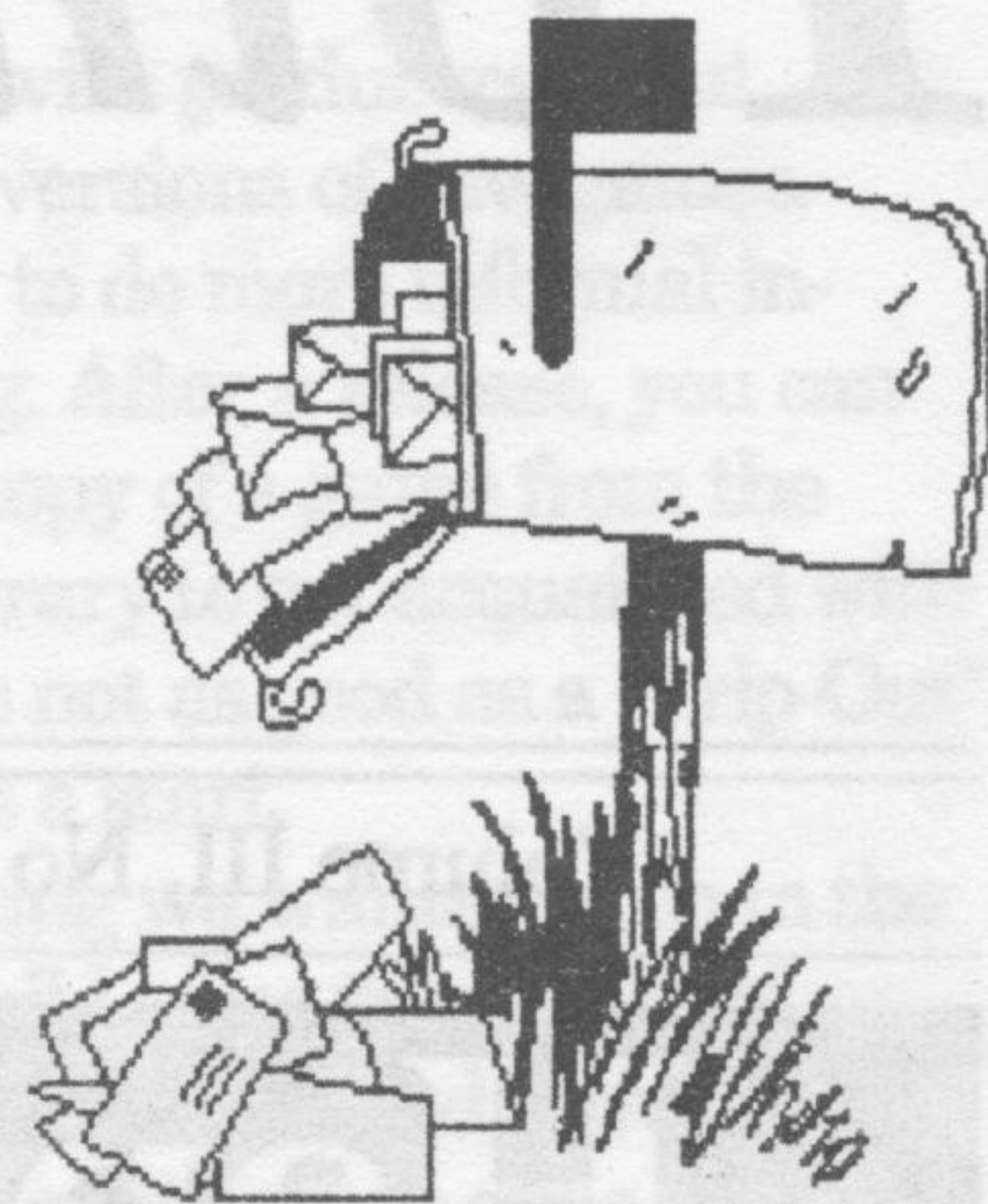
Don Pardo, what do we have for the winner? How about a name on the soon-to-be-famous EOM plaque in the lobby? But wait, there's more! How about your own plaque to proudly display at home or in your office? Not enough? We'll throw in 4 free points from the Company Store, not to mention a reserved parking space with access to the building through the much-coveted *front door* for a month. And finally, all the trappings of celebrity status, including a Bio in Point of ORIGIN.

Dear Point Man,

Dear Point Man,

Would ORIGIN entertain the idea of motor-cycle parking? Due to the many bike riders at ORIGIN, there are many parking spaces taken up by one bike per space, whereas one-half that space would be plenty. If you're interested, I even have some paint that would mark the area sufficiently.

Tanx,
DBD3



Dear DBD3,

Jeff "Halfspace" Hillhouse says: Thanks for the suggestion. We'll try to incorporate it when we go to reseal and restripe the parking area this Spring. We're also looking into getting a bike rack for the alcove in back. That way, the guard would be able to keep a good watch over them.

Dear Point Man,

Do you have a date for distribution of the next profit-share check? I also heard that the first check we got was larger than average. Does this mean that the next one will be smaller? I thought EA profits were rising all the time.

Signed,
Broke and Confused

Dear Broke,

RON "ALL CAPS" KERWIN guesses it will be near the end of April or the beginning of May: "The last check is probably the biggest one of the year because the third quarter is the biggest revenue quarter of the year, seeing that it includes Christmas and all." But the fourth quarter (Jan-Mar) is usually the second strongest, so this check could be pretty sweet, too.

Dear Point Man,

Are we going to be bringing back the Wednesday cookouts?

Signed,
Weenie Lover

Dear Weenie,

The Entertainment Committee's already been looking into that one. The biggest challenge is that the company's grown so large that shopping, cooking and cleanup may be unfeasible for us to handle ourselves. So the EC's looking at some possible alternatives, including having a regularly-catered cookout or a do-it-yourselfer. Just as soon as some kind of decision is made, we'll pass it along.

Dear Point Man,

Somewhere in the building, it would be nice to have a place to get acquainted with our games and products. Something like a "Trip-Out" room, with three or four low-end PCs or Macs to play ORIGIN games. It could increase our knowledge about the products and we could provide feedback on the games.

Signed,
Ready to Trip

Dear Ready,

Low-end PCs? You mean, like a 486/16 with only 4MB of RAM? Sadly enough, a truly low-end machine won't run our newest crop of products and a decent to high-end machine probably wouldn't stay in a room very long before it was snapped up by

(See "Point Man" on last page)



Press On

First things first. The much-ballyhooed, much-anticipated and long-awaited event is about to happen. The Today Show piece on the Ultima series will *probably* air next week. According to NBC reporter Jennifer Stearns, the story has made it through editing and will become available to the Today Show on Monday. They can use it any time after that, and hopefully, Jennifer will be able to pass along a 24-hour notice to us. Be forewarned, though, that the Crisis in the Kremlin could pre-empt it even if it is slated. On the positive side, Jennifer said the story is very visual. She just wishes she'd had more time on the air to go deeper into the game-production process.

Texas Monthly's April issue has a nice mention in the "Reporter" section about the fact that all the great rock poster artists are now at ORIGIN.

While only a few million people were looking, ORIGIN FX was featured on CNN's Future Bytes. Fortunately, one of the people was **Alan Gardner**, who slapped in a tape and even sacrificed part of his previously-recorded "Beauty on the Beach" contest from MTV. Now *that's* dedication! Future Bytes did a wrap-up of popular screen savers and showed FX modules three times, including **Dicko's** famous "third-eye" man. The show said screen savers have become entertaining high-tech time-wasters worthy of a look (plus, they mentioned ORIGIN FX by name).

France's Generation 4 magazine is chock full of ORIGIN coverage this month, most of it as a result of CES. The editors write of ORIGIN FX: "The Ultimate ScreenSaver. A must, even if it's just out of curiosity." Looking at Strike: "I played Strike Commander. SC keeps all of its promises and is still an amazing game, even after being a year late. Without a doubt, the best game of early '93." UW2: "You loved the first

Joint Resolution

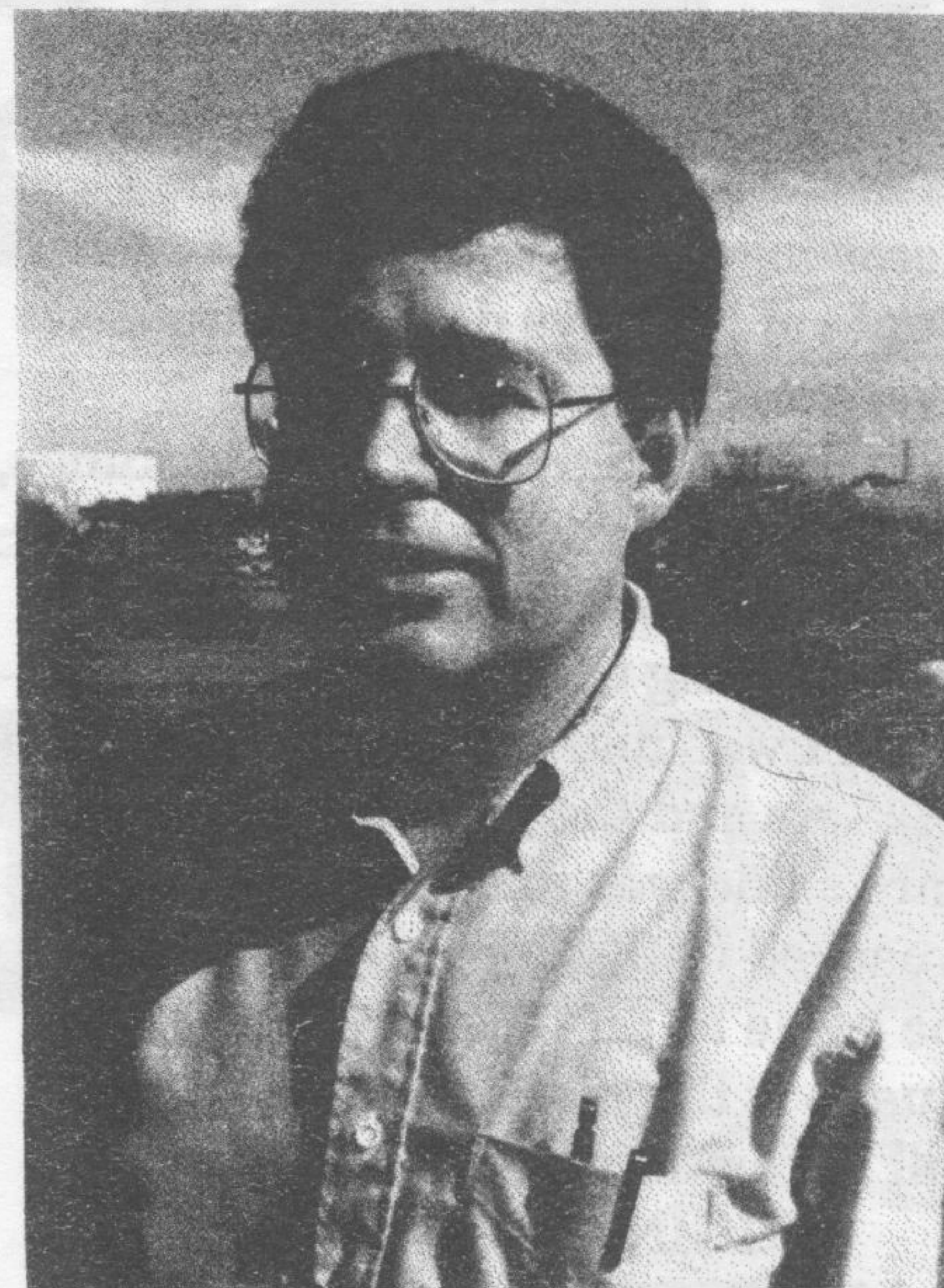
ORIGIN and EA team up for first product

(This is the first installment in a series of articles looking at new products we're planning for the fiscal year. They are intended for employee information only and should not be discussed outside the company.)

Ever since EA and ORIGIN got together last September, the two have been at an arm's length from a development standpoint. That's about to change with a product planned for release this Fall, tentatively titled Shadowcaster.

You may have heard about it already under the working names of "Shapeshifter" or "Metamorphosis." Shadowcaster actually comes from three companies: EA, ORIGIN and Raven Software, a small development house in Madison, Wisconsin. Raven has about five or six full-timers and a few more employees as temps or contract workers.

Raven licensed the Wolfenstein 3D engine from ID Software, which, by the way, is currently working on its own new product called Doom using an



**Shadowcaster producer
Victor Penman**

enhanced version of that same engine. The guys at Raven are predominantly artists and it shows in what they've put together; the scenery, terrain and creatures in Shadowcaster are outstanding. Add that to the already incredible frame-rate and the game looks like it could be a big winner.

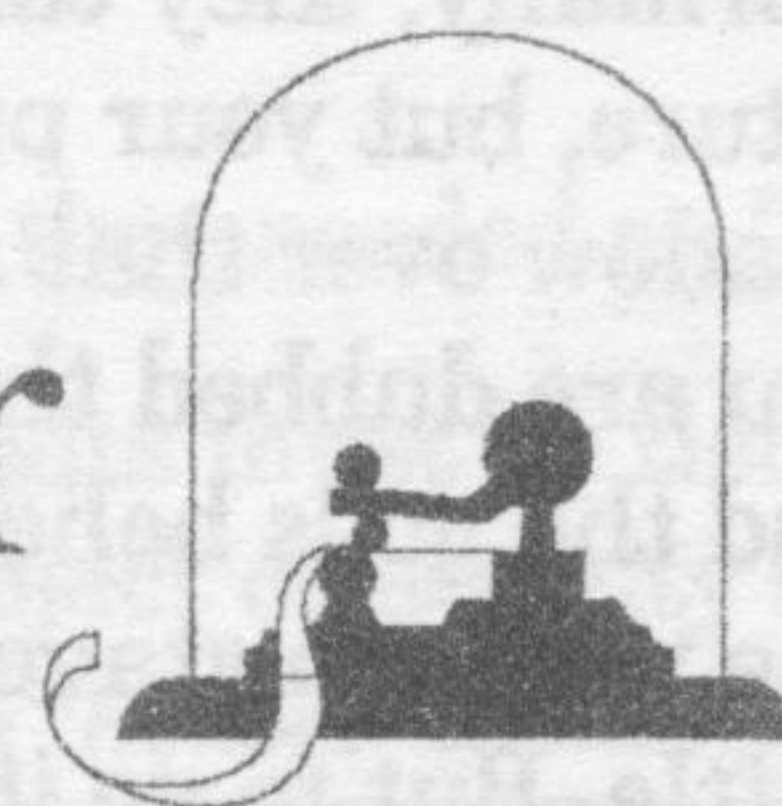
Enter EA, which signed on as

(See "Shadowcaster" on next page)

one, you'll adore the second one. UW2 is still, to this day, the must of interactive RPGs." And of Privateer: "Knowing how late ORIGIN is on this kind of product, let's not talk about it as a 1993 product." Ouch!

If you've seen the March issue of Video Games and Computer Entertainment (VG & CE), you've probably run across the big blowout article, "Behind the Scenes at Electronic Arts: The Making of the Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes for CD-ROM." It's a great two-and-a-half-page spread with nine pictures showing the actors, director, camera man, sound man, the set, etc. The only problem—EA has now cancelled the project, writing off about \$150K worth of Hollywood studio time.

Ticker



Stock prices at press time (noon)

ERTS	29.25	-.75
BROD	40.5	-.375
IBM	51.125	+.625
MPRS	7.5	+.25
SIER	10.25	

News notes: 3DO has announced that it will go public. Details of the offering will be made soon. (See "Point Man".)

Intel has announced an intended two-for-one split in its stock. The split will be voted on by shareholders in their May 5 meeting.

...Shadowcaster

producer of the project. The man in charge on that end is **Victor Penman**. He's the driving force on the schedule and bringing all of the pieces together. Victor also has a couple of EA guys doing the high-level and lead programming.

In the original scheme of things, EA was going to publish the game in the Bard's Tale line as Bard's Dungeon. During the same time, Underworld I was making a big splash with retailers and the press. When the Bard's line was nixed, Victor approached ORIGIN about publishing the game as an ORIGIN title. **Scott Russo** is the man from our end who will act as "local liaison."

ORIGIN's involvement doesn't end in name, though. We wanted to make sure that the game met some of our standards as to what should be in an ORIGIN product, so we will be handling sound, music, packaging (including cover art) and documentation. Along those lines, our product releases have become bona-fide "events," so it only made sense that we would handle the marketing and media for Shadowcaster as well.

In the story, you as the player are part of a civilization that used to be able to change shapes at will. The gods who rule this civilization are on the brink of their own civil war. Normally, they can see into the future, but your presence casts a shadow over that ability. Naturally, you are dubbed the Shadowcaster and the gods believe you are the only one who can stave off this upcoming battle. But to do it, you must travel to seven different locations to accomplish quests. Shapeshifting is your reward.

You'll start out with the ability to take on one shape, a sort of cat/lion character. As you succeed in each of your journeys, you will acquire other shapes: a small humanoid (great stealth and stealing abilities), a gaseous cloud (potent offensive powers), an aquatic frog-like creature (for swimming underwater and electric attacks), a flying, fire-breathing dragon (maneuverability and attack skills), and a humongous rock golem man (able to start earthquakes

with the stomp of a foot). Each shape also has distinct disadvantages and vulnerabilities, so you'll have to choose which one you attain wisely. The finale involves a battle with another shapeshifter, much like yourself, but who can take on some other forms you've never seen before.

Shadowcaster will not be positioned as another Underworld-type release. Instead, think of it more in the action/adventure category. This game is definitely combat-oriented; there is only a small bit of conversational interaction. Victor describes the way you deal with other characters this way: "If it's weak, you rescue it; if it's evil, you kill it."

You can catch a glimpse of Shadowcaster in Scott R's office. Watch this space in the next issue for a look behind the scenes of Wing Commander Academy.

On the Job

New faces in familiar places this time around:

Gary McElhaney joins the Art Department. He says "friends who work here, and curiosity of computer technology in the art field" led him to ORIGIN. Gary's also a sculptor who's into running and volleyball. (Are these things starting to sound like Playmate Bio's? "Turn-offs: world hunger and people who smoke.")

John Ward is aboard as Audio Manager. He's been in the music and recording industry for the last 15 years and even had his own commercial recording studio. Hobbies include "anything audio" (big surprise) and vintage vacuum tube technology. Talk about a conversation starter...

And proof that good things come to those who wait: **Matilde Martin** (better known as "Mattie") is finally joining us in Operations as a full-timer after more than a year as a temp. She will be our lone "production worker," replacing **Special Delivery Don Webb**, who's moved to the mailroom. Mattie was born in Mexico City and is currently hitting the books at ACC part-time. Meanwhile, her husband is going for his doctorate degree in Political Science at the University of Texas.

...Point Man

the _____ team (you can fill in the blank).

Check with producers about getting beta versions of new games. We're trying to do more informal in-house testing. After a release, you can check out a copy of a game from the ORIGIN Library to get acquainted with it. I agree it's not as good as a "Trip-Out" room, but it's a start.

One thing we wanted to do in the lobby is to build some type of stand-up cabinet to house a PC and have our latest games on it arcade-style. Right now, though, it's a vapor project until we can get some more pressing tasks out of the way.

Dear Point Man,

I read that 3DO is going public as a company. Are ORIGIN and EA employees going to be able to get in on the IPO (initial public offering) as "friends of the company?"

Signed,

Greedy Money-Hungry Son-of-a-Bitch

Dear Greedy,

I sent this one along to the always-helpful gang at EA, first to stock administrators **Flora Lee** and **Barb Wallace**. They kindly forwarded the question to EA's legal counsel, **Ruth Kennedy**, who promptly cc:Mailed me this response: "When and if information becomes available regarding any 'friends of the company' plans of 3DO, it will be announced to everyone at the same time. Sorry—no scoop here!"

Dear Point Man,

*I'm sure that these phones will do all kinds of s**t like call forwarding, call sidewaysing, etc... So how come nobody knows how? Why doesn't somebody with this information give it to us? I'm sure it would increase productivity.*

Signed,

Mr. Watson

Dear Mr. Watson,

Come drink at the font of information—Point of ORIGIN. I tracked down the holy grail of the AUDIX Voice Power system: the Quick Reference Card. It has been faithfully reproduced as an insert to this week's Point. (Actual calls may vary.)