

Point of ORIGIN

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Austin, TX

Strike: In the Air

SC is certainly making an impression in the marketplace. Actually, it's making four: one group says it's the best game ever produced for the PC, another group says it falls short as a flight sim (when compared, say, to Falcon), still another group is frustrated by the speed of the game (386 owners, for the most part), and there's yet another group which hasn't really expressed its opinion—it's still in a state of shock from SC's hardware requirements.

The long and short of it is: SC is still finding its footing in the channel. After two years of hype, advertising, rumors, speculation and waiting, everybody had different expectations as to what the game would be...only a few of those expectations bear any resemblance to reality. The first group above is made up of players who made it through the install and joystick calibration snags to actually get into the storyline. The second group was ready for a cockpit that had every gauge, altimeter, dial and soft-drink holder in its proper place. This is basically the group which wouldn't be happy unless you needed the \$35-million worth of training the Air Force provides just to get the thing off the ground.

The third group is especially problematic. Although the SKU label reads "386 minimum," the cold, hard truth is that 386s need the 8 MB of memory to make it fun. These players are the most vocal—and the most mobile in taking the game back to



Stricken Commander...

Erin Roberts makes a rough landing at the SC ship party.

stores. The final group is stunned just by the SKU label itself and its recommended optimal machine; they haven't bought Strike yet, instead favoring to spend their limited cash on extra memory, a second hard drive, or simply a whole new 486/50!

As word of what SC really is makes its way around, more and more people will (hopefully) come around. Military pilots who've come to ORIGIN and played the game say it's incredibly close to real F-16 flight dynamics. Still, anonymous aces online claim it's not as good as Falcon. But, in truth, SC is not meant to be a true, in-depth flight sim; it's designed as a good interactive storyline with great flight simulation built in. One happy CompuServe camper probably put it best: "Falcon is the classroom—Strike Commander is the playground."

Sell-through at the Big Four—Babbage's, Electronics Boutique, Egghead and Software Etc.—has

been good but slower than expected. The Sales Team is keeping an eye on mass merchants like Costco and the new generation of "superstores" like CompUSA. "These other outlets may be doing a little better than we expected," says National Sales Czar Karl Kabler. Meanwhile, ORIGIN

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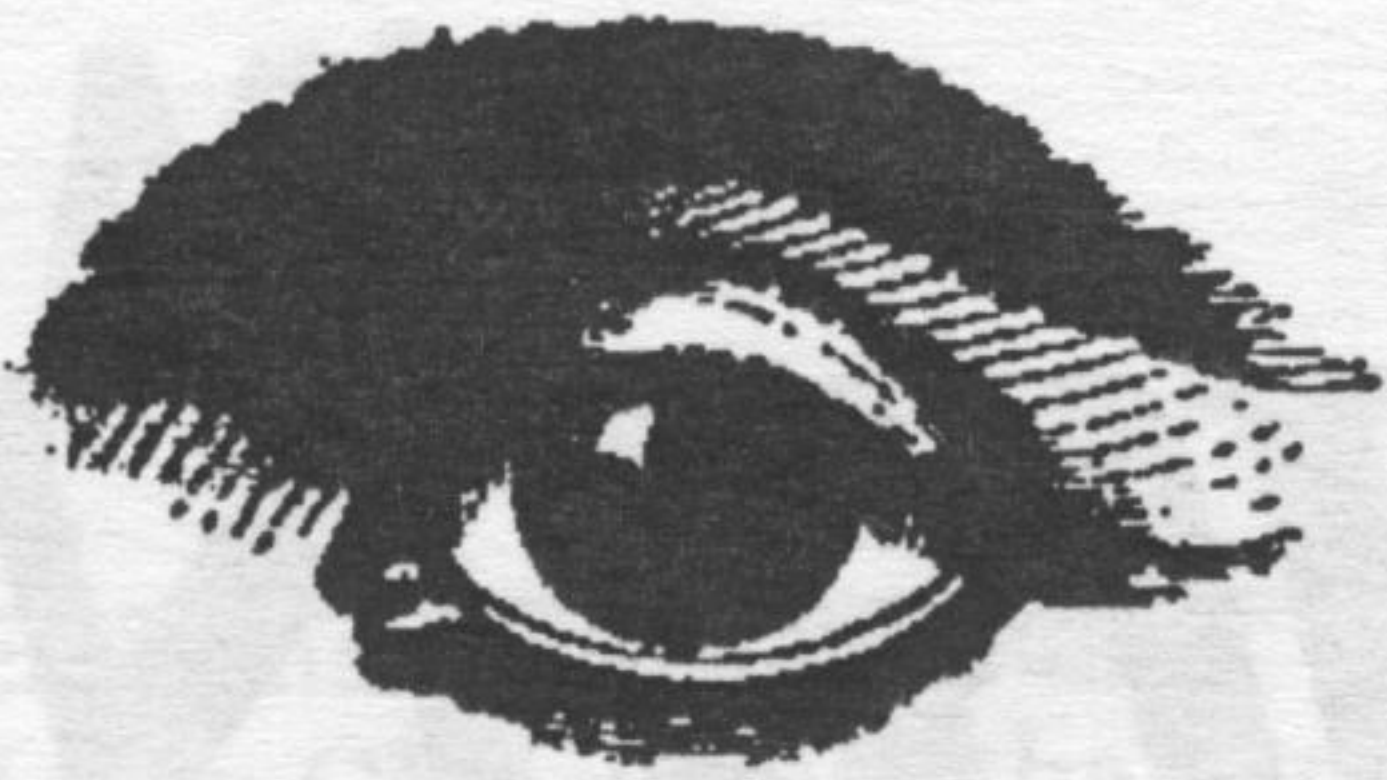
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The Public Eye

We are happy to report that the Today Show piece did, indeed, finally air. It turned out to be an extraordinarily flattering (read: "commercial") story that took more than six minutes of network time and featured ORIGIN alone. Special congrats to all who appeared in the piece—**LB, Warren Spector, Beth Loubet and Eric Brown**—for incredible grace under pressure and a good showing. If you were part of the 98% of ORIGIN employees who weren't awake at 7:45 a.m. to see it live (the other 2% are in Publishing), you can check out a VCR copy of it in the ORIGIN Library.

On to the print media. It looks like Strike and Serpent will pack the one-two punch in a lot of gaming magazines. VG&CE as well as Computer Game Review both say they are planning dual reviews for the issues they take to CES in June. Some of the European mags are already showing their quick turn-around ability. In the May issue of France's Joystick, Strike gets a rating of 90%. The editors write: "Technically, Strike Commander constitutes a decisive step forward in the history of gaming. If

you expect more than the usual routine from a flight simulator, Strike Commander should fulfill all your hopes." In the same issue, Serpent gets a rating of 85% and the reviewer says it still ran slow on a 486 (we're getting back to him on that one).

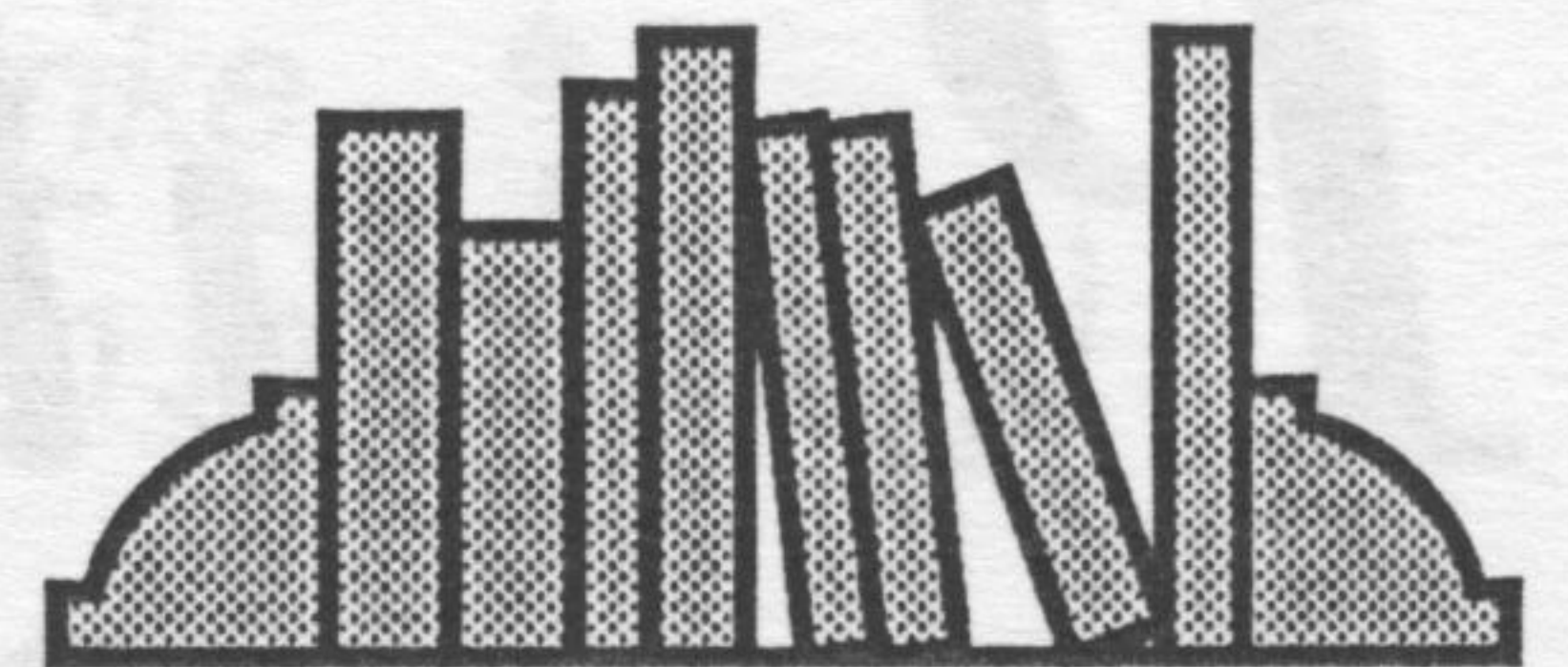
Still in France, Gen 4 magazine devotes ten pages to Strike, which it refers to on the cover as "the game of the year." With a rating of 96%, the editors write: "Far from a complicated flight simulator...ORIGIN and Chris Roberts have pioneered a new form of leisure—the interactive movie." They go on to say that hardware requirements are stiff, but SC reigns as "the uncontested king of flight simulators. It was worth the wait."

The Age is Melbourne, Australia's most widely read newspaper. It says Strike "has 3D graphics surpassing anything else yet available on a PC." When EA/Australia sent over a transcript of the review, we hoped that one quote was just a typo. It says to enjoy Strike, you need a powerful 386 or 486, VGA graphics, 4 MB of RAM and a "sandblaster."

OMNI has a more intentional tongue in cheek. Greg Keizer lists the top ten reasons that 1993 is good for games; #10. Strike Commander shipped. He even refers to it as "the high priest of flight simulators."

Familiar faces are showing up in unusual places these days. Former-ORIGIN-employee-and-now-EA-writer **Ellen Guon** is featured in an article in Writing magazine. She talks about writing for computer games and we even manage to get a Wing 2 screen shot in

...continued on page 4



From the Library

by "Smiles" Lewis

Materials Needed

In an on-going effort to make the Origin General Library more research oriented, I am asking for your help in tracking down any and all "Research Materials" you may have received via Product Development Purchase Requisition orders. Please help me in tracking these myriad items down so that they may be catalogued and placed in the Library where everyone may use them. In this way they can better serve the ENTIRE company through a centralized location instead of lying unused on someone's office shelf, in desk drawers, or at home.

Thanks for your cooperation.

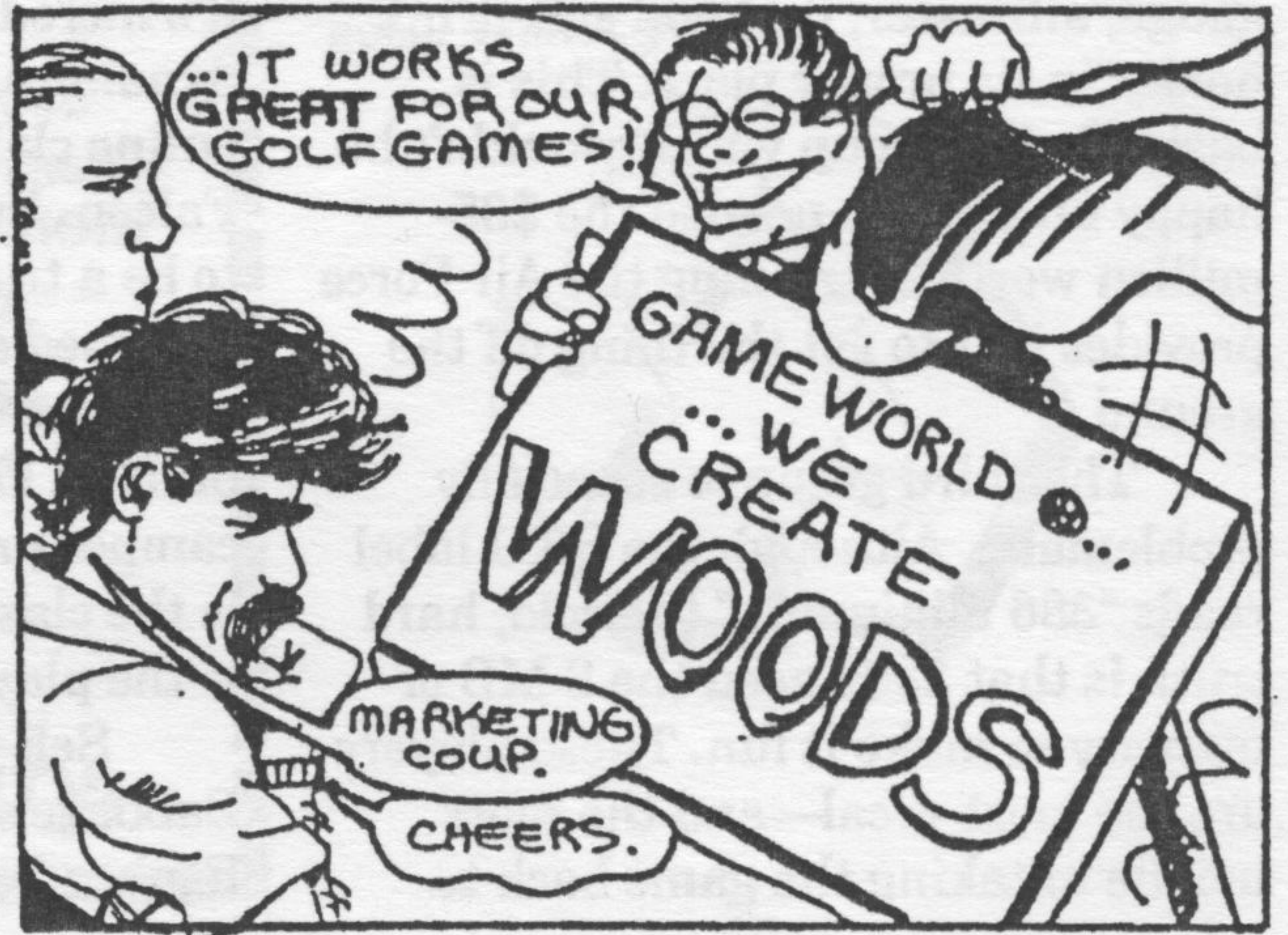
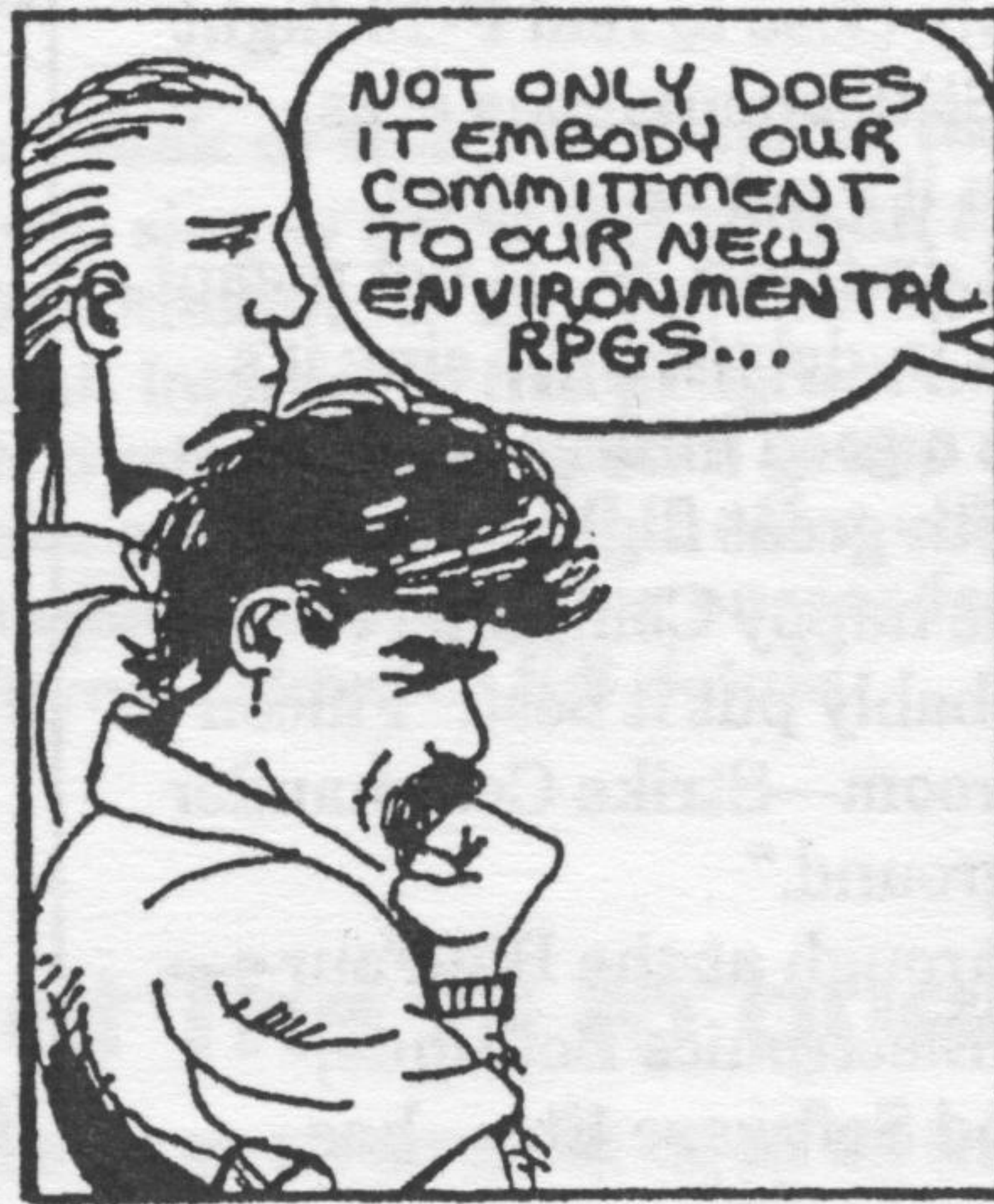
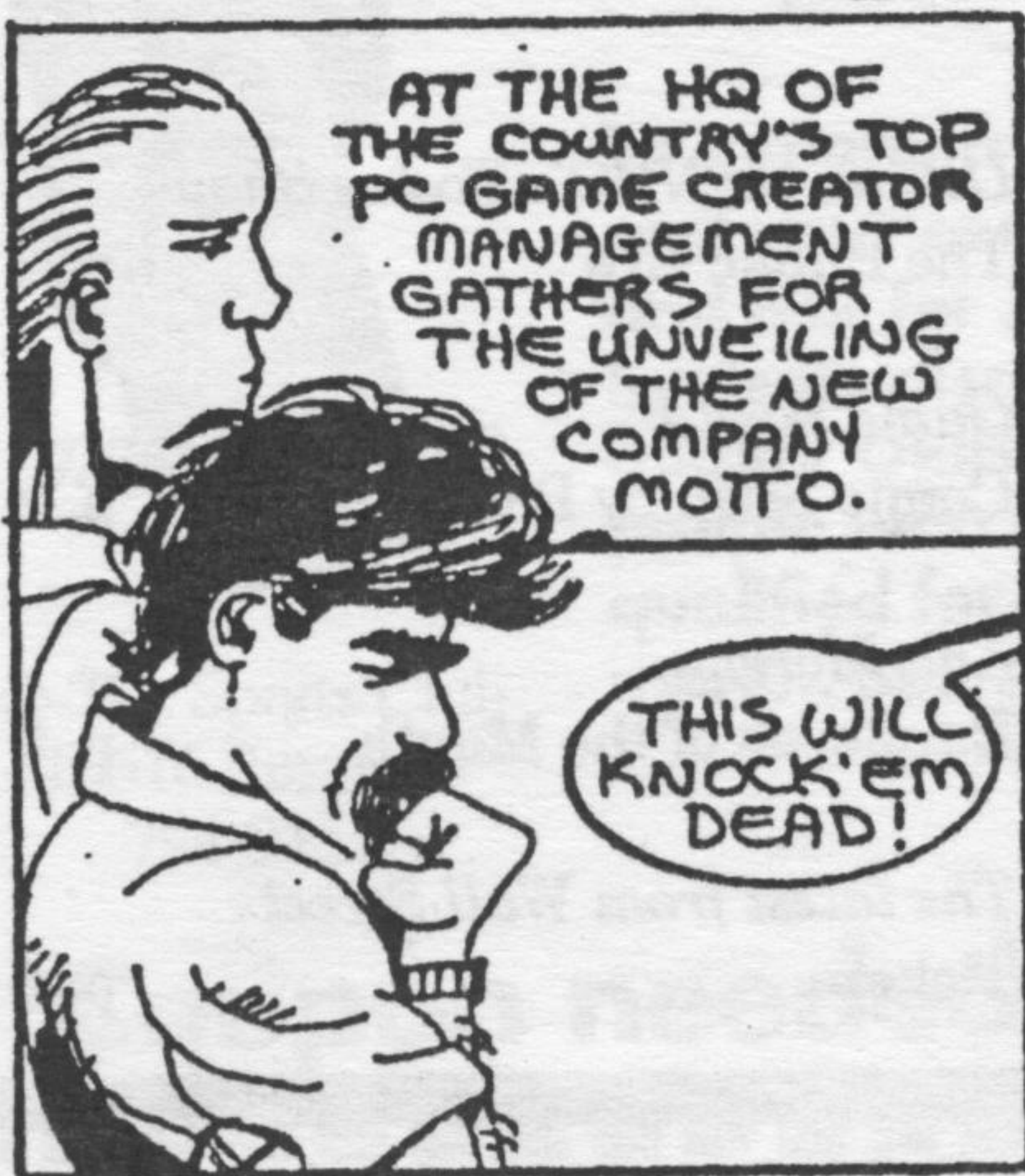
SMiles

(ext:642)

[Please return these items since double purchasing only costs you more money.]

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GAME WORLD



by Paul Steed

Pulse Check

by Dr. Donner

Strike Commander Flies

Ahhh, those crazy kids on CompuServe, GEnie and America On-Line. They are so vociferous, so excitable, so fickle. Strike Commander has definitely made the phone company happy with all the modems in the country buzzing away!

Initial reaction to Strike Commander from the On-Line services was "touchy" at best, but we'd like to report that things have settled down and tunes have changed. "Hey, this game kinda grows on ya", "I really like this game", "How do I take out those ground targets and win this damn mission?" are now starting to be the more common reactions to Strike, and needless to say we are pleased to know that customers aren't wanting to drop bombs on our offices anymore... Once customers get off the BBS and start playing the game, they find that they really do enjoy it. Are we surprised? No...why should we be???

One poor soul on the BBS thought he would reprimand us on our "funeral scene" saying we should have a warning on the box so as to warn any children about disturbing scenes they may see in the game. Before we had a chance to respond, the other on-line "guests" ripped the poor guy to shreds about whose responsibility it is to raise kids, ORIGIN's or his, and that Strike is a game about "blowing people to bits." Hey now...

Top 5 Customer Service Calls for Strike Commander (4/26-5/3):

Boot Disk	146
Joystick Calibrations	105
Thrustmaster Specific Calibrations	91
"19XX error"	69
(AMD chip, out of HD space)	
Disk compression	62

...continued on page 4



Our May employee of the month, **Ana Moreno**, considers this award to be a great honor and an even better opportunity to make some money; bids for her reserved parking space are now being taken. Why, you ask? She actually walks to work from the apartments next door. She also says that if she wanted to use the space herself, she'd need to have her car towed over here.

When Ana originally applied at ORIGIN, she was one of the many applicants who was unconditionally refused. She was working through Western Employment Services, though, and four months later she was given another chance to join the ORIGIN team. "I knew about Wing Commander from my brothers and

thought that this might be a fascinating place to work. I was right." Her brother, **Al**, incidentally, concurs, since he is here, too.

Ana's award came as a great surprise to her. "I have my hands in a little bit of everything," she explains. "I deal with the producers and managers on a daily basis," (which can definitely be a long-winded task). Ana

has worked with practically every project that has had the ORIGIN logo emblazoned on it since her arrival. She even spent 12 months with projects that had no producers. Overall, though, Ana views "this award as quite an honor. I try to do a good job because I enjoy what I do."

Employee of the Month

Don't Forget: Mother's Day is this Sunday, May 9th



3DO: Birth of a Notion

(Note: This is the fourth installment of the "New SKU Review" series. It is intended for employees' use only and should not be discussed outside the company.)

Where do you go when you've already developed for a 486/66 and you can't get your hands on a Pentium yet? Obviously: 3DO.

ORIGIN is on the overloaded and runaway bandwagon for the platform that: a) doesn't even exist in the marketplace; b) has no real revenue attached to it yet; c) is selling stock to the public, and; d) will cost \$700 for the console alone. What'll you get in 3DO that you won't get in a PC? "Speed and lots of colors," according to pioneer producer **Eric Hyman**. He's heading up our first title, *Super Wing Commander*, due for release this fall. "The 3DO version of the game will have an entirely new look and feel," Eric says. "We should get WC to run at 30 frames per second, even with vastly improved detail. A lot of the C code transfers right over. Rotation and scaling are usually the tough part, but 3DO does that right through the hardware. Our challenge is to fill a 620 MB compact disc and fill it right."

Eric says one of the machine's few drawbacks is its game controller—sort of a merge between Sega and Nintendo units. "It dramatically limits the amount of input you can



3DO Producer Eric Hyman

give." But Eric has to think hard to find much else wrong: "The 3DO organization is really good about keeping us informed on what's going on." In fact, 3DO has even started its own developer newsletter and set up a BBS for trading tips and tools.

ORIGIN will be producing more titles for 3DO. **Chris Roberts** and **Paul Isaac** are in the beginning stages of product design, and Richard "LB" himself is slated for another project this fall. Eric admits all the hype and hoopla coupled with the public stock offering has brought a little more pressure on his project. "The only thing that will judge the success of 3DO is whether there are some kick-ass products to show it off. It'd be nice if *Super Wing Commander* becomes one of the reasons people go out and buy the hardware. We'll have to wait and see."

...Pulse Check (from page 3)

(possible DOS 6.0 cause)

Serpent Isle Still Rocks

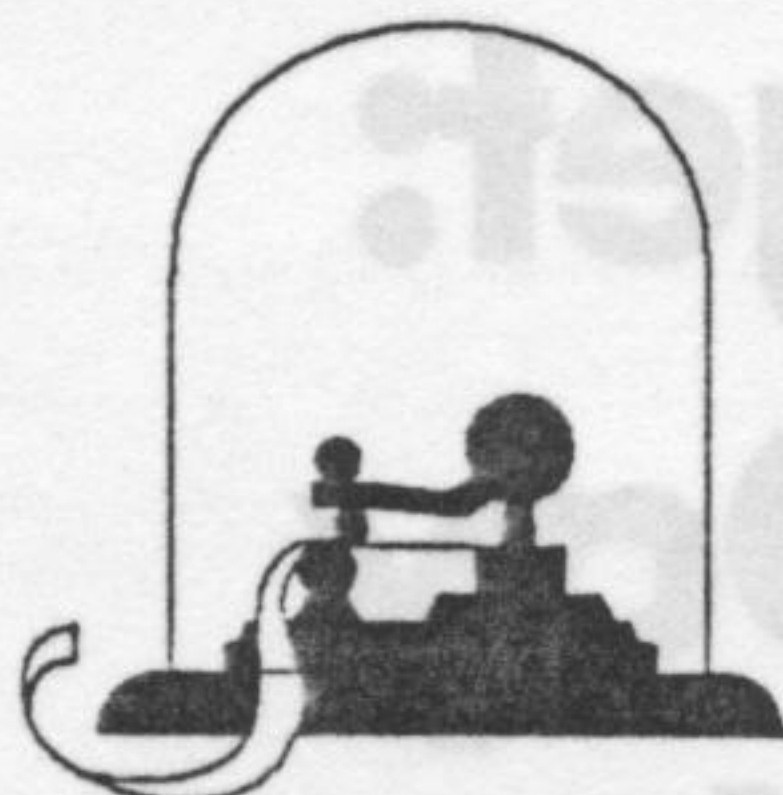
Customers still want/need/plead to know how to kill the invisible pikeman, how to get the key from Selina, why Cantra is out of her mind, and why is it that when you double click on a "black altar," that a chicken egg appears. We found out that was a boo-boo left in, but the customer just ate the eggs and kept going...I don't think I'd eat an egg that mysteriously appeared on an altar, but then we know our customers are a bit on the edge of reality... We had a female customer who told us how much she loved the "dance of passion" scene with the Ice Mage, Frigidazzi (who has no qualms about disrobing you and herself and doing you right there in her bedroom, regardless whether you are a male or female Avatar). She told us she was going to show it to her husband when he got home from work... Yeah, but you are talking about showing him the game scene, aren't you?

Uh, I don't think we want to know...

Top 5 Customer Service Calls for Serpent Isle (3/25-4/30)

Hints	2412
Boot Disk	301
DOS 6.0	99
(memory / driver misunderstanding)	
Run link "Terra Morph"	89
Install Problems	75

Ticker



Stock prices at press time (2:45pm)

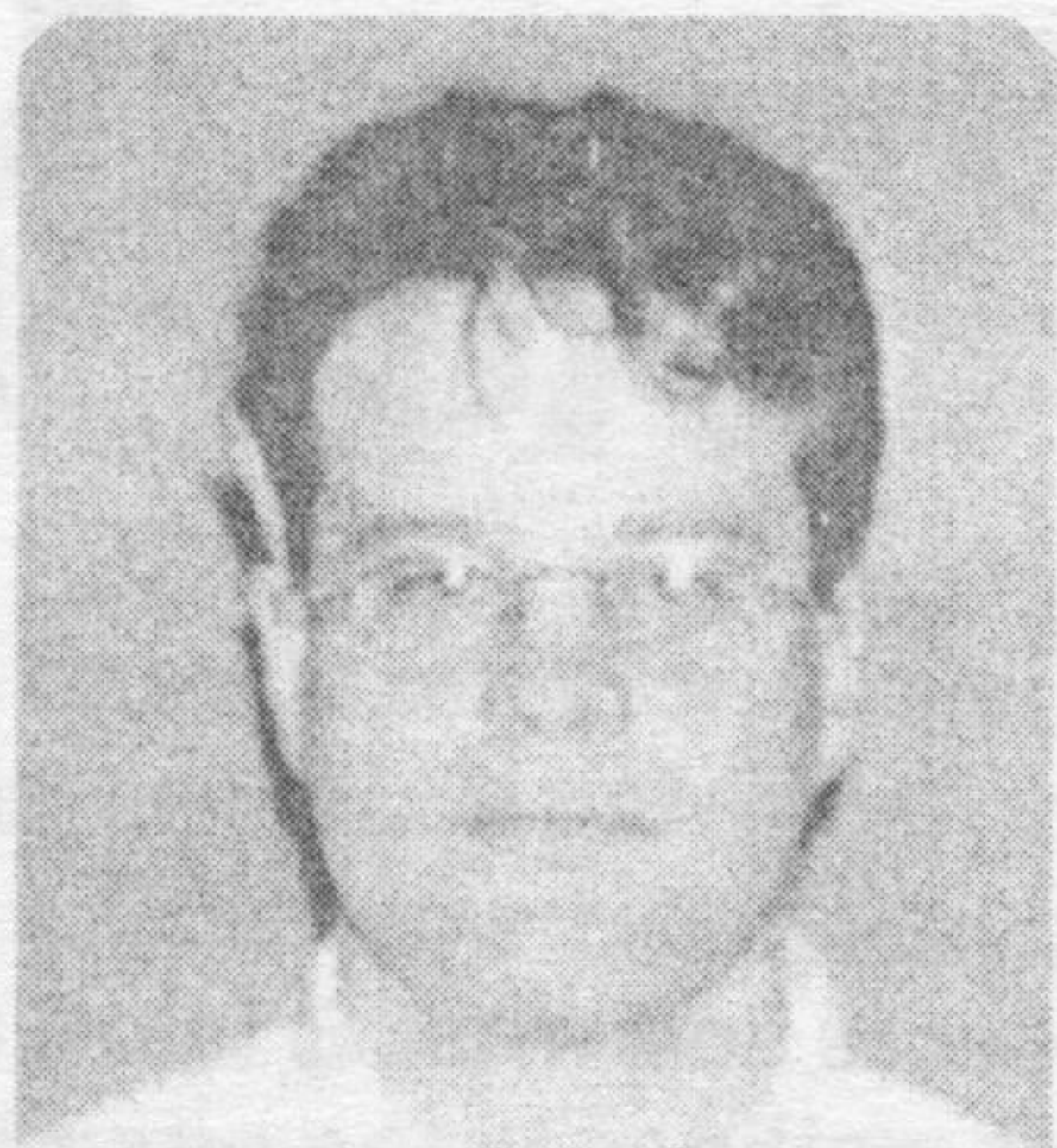
ERTS	31.75	+5
BROD	36	-2.25
MPRS	6.75	+25
SIER	11	+5
THDO	23.75	+1.375

...The Public Eye (from page 2)

there. You take 'em where you can get 'em. And our own lovely **Marie Williams** graces the pages of the current *Computer Gaming World* in an article on Customer Service. CGW readers split evenly in their opinions about ORIGIN, but we garnered the third-highest number of responses (behind MicroProse and Sierra). That

poll, of course, was taken before the tried-and-true test of *Strike Commander*'s launch. Anyone who doesn't think we have one of the best CS departments in the world right now definitely hasn't paid a visit in CS or online.

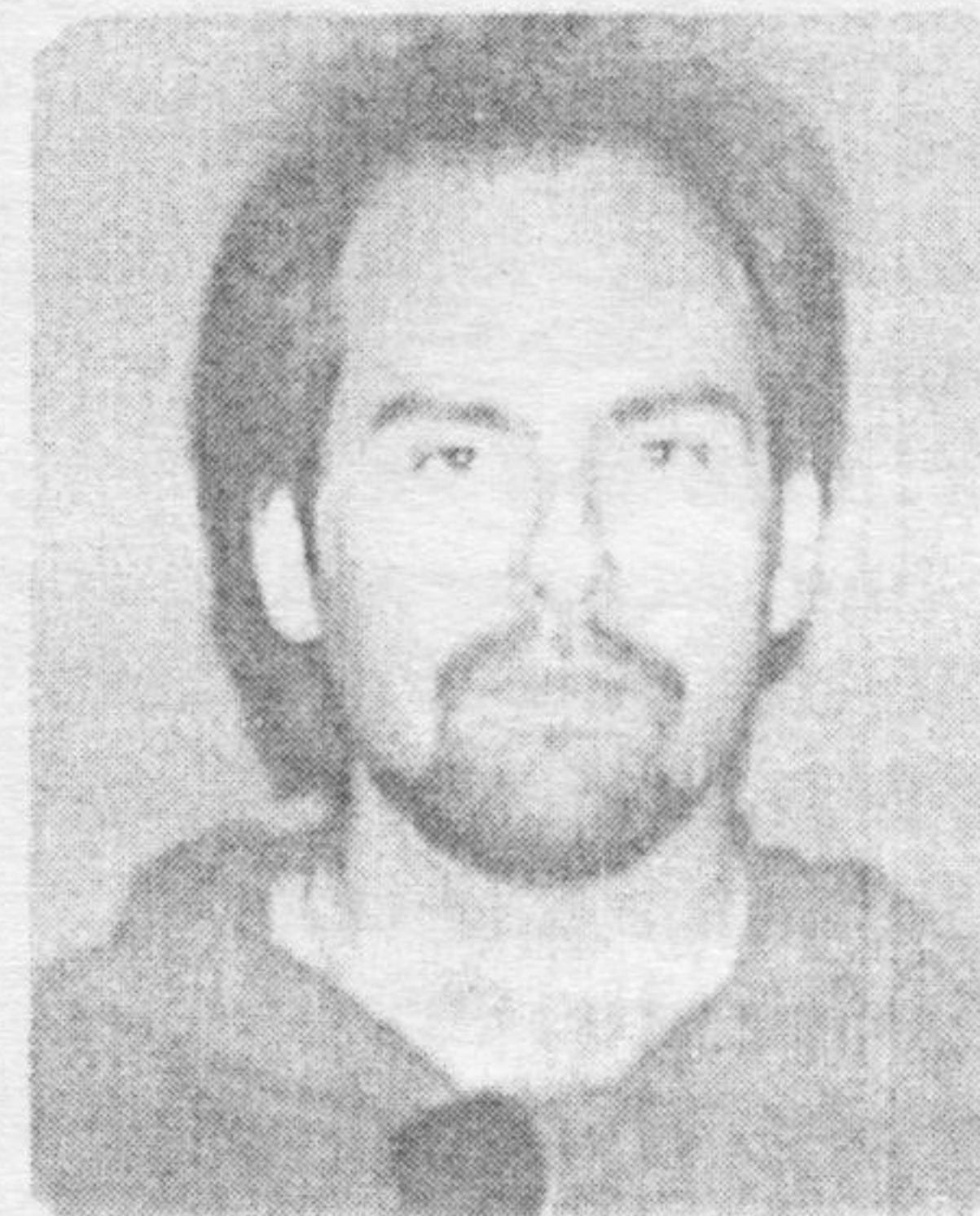
Immigration: The Huddled Masses



J. Brent Poer has been added to our rapidly growing Art Department as a 3D character animator for Ultima VIII. His interests include the usual except that he is also into "clueless home improvements." Someone should introduce Brent to **David Ladyman**, ORIGIN clue book editor.



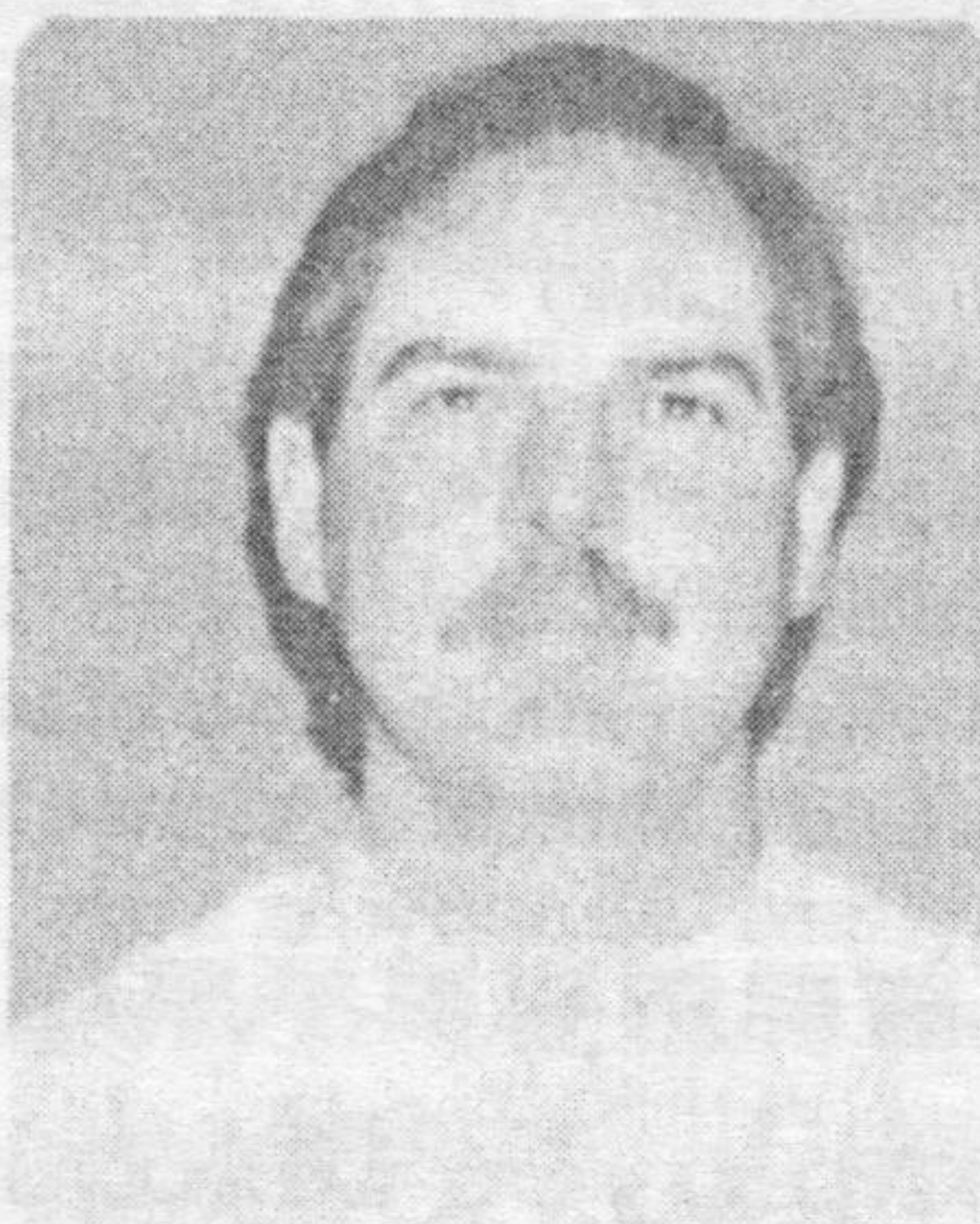
Programmer **John Talley** comes to us from McDonnell Douglas. When asked on a new-hire form what chain of events led him to apply at ORIGIN, his response was "this is what I want to do."



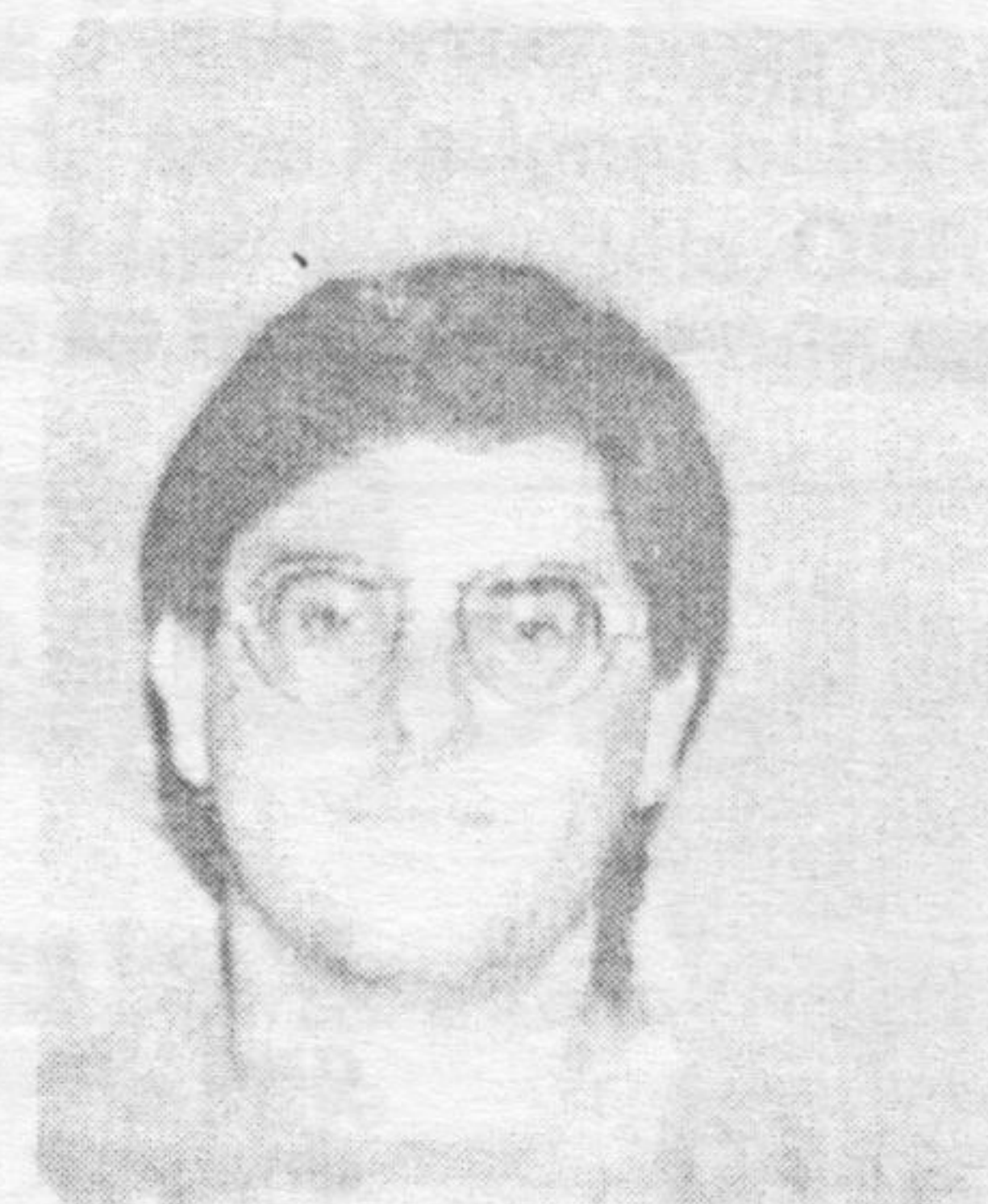
Another for Al "This is my land" Nelson's Art Department, **Kraig Count** finds his way to ORIGIN from "blind wandering in Chaos and the Defense Industry." He is also interested in the Japanese language. Konnichiwa!



Laura Curry knows her sounds. She was a teacher for eight years and is now a brand new ORIGIN Sound Designer. She is the first person to ever list "divorce" as a reason to come to ORIGIN.



Climbing on the charts, **Paul Baker** is a composer who got his Masters of Music at the University of Southern California. He was most recently a freelance composer and arranger in Los Angeles and Dallas.



Rob Cunning joins us as the new Customer Service Returns Coordinator. After hearing "glowing reports from other employees how wonderful it is to work here," Rob just knew that he had to apply. With a love for heavy metal thrash music and bloody amusement parks, Rob is sure to fit in. Any plans for Fiesta Texas, Rob?



Preeeesenting...

Misc...

If cities have the "Welcome Wagon," then ORIGIN has the "On-Board Bucket." During orientation, new employees are given their very own, brand-new trash cans. They're filled with other niceties like a floppy disk holder, stapler and staple remover, tape dispenser, wall or desk calendar, Rolodex, clipboard, scissors, keyboard wrist-rest, nameplate (at least a banner along with a request slip), pencil sharpener and a drawer tray. Kinda makes you want to quit and re-hire, no?

Erin Roberts is making a jump to the Shadowcaster team. He'll be the ORIGIN point of contact for the project, freeing up Scott Russo to devote full time and talents to the much-anticipated Privateer.

Newly coronated Point editor **Wayne Baker** has been beating the bushes to put some new twists in this old rag. You'll notice a couple of them in this very issue. First, there's the addition of an ORIGIN-based and ORIGIN-created comic strip, Game World, borne of the fertile mind of Paul Steed. Wayne's also hitting area merchants and restaurants, cutting special deals for ORIGIN employees. He's off to a healthy start with an offer from Q Fitness (see the coupon in this Point). More great deals to follow.

...From the Library New Items

Computer Games

Eye of the Beholder 3
AD&D Unlimited Adventures
Tony La Russa Baseball 2
TLR Baseball 2 Stadium disk

Paper Game Books

Vampire : The Masquerade (Original Hardcover Rulebook)
Who's Who Among Vampires:Children of the Inquisition
A World of Darkness:First World Sourcebook
A World of Darkness:Mummy
The Players Guide to the Sabbat
The Succubus Club
The Anarch Cookbook:A Friendly Guide to Vampire Politics
Clanbook:Brujah
Clanbook:Gangrel
Werewolf : The Apocalypse (Ranch! Just Kidding)(Orig Rulebook)
Rite of Passage (Introductory Story/Sourcebook)
Rage Across New York
Book of the Wyrms
Ways of the Wolf
Ars Magica - The Art of Magic (Rulesbook)
Mythic Europe (Definitive European Sourcebook)
A Midsummer Night's Dream
The Maleficium (Sourcebook of the Infernal)
The Hidden Paths : Shamans
Pax Dei (Sourcebook of the Dominion)

...Strike (from front page)

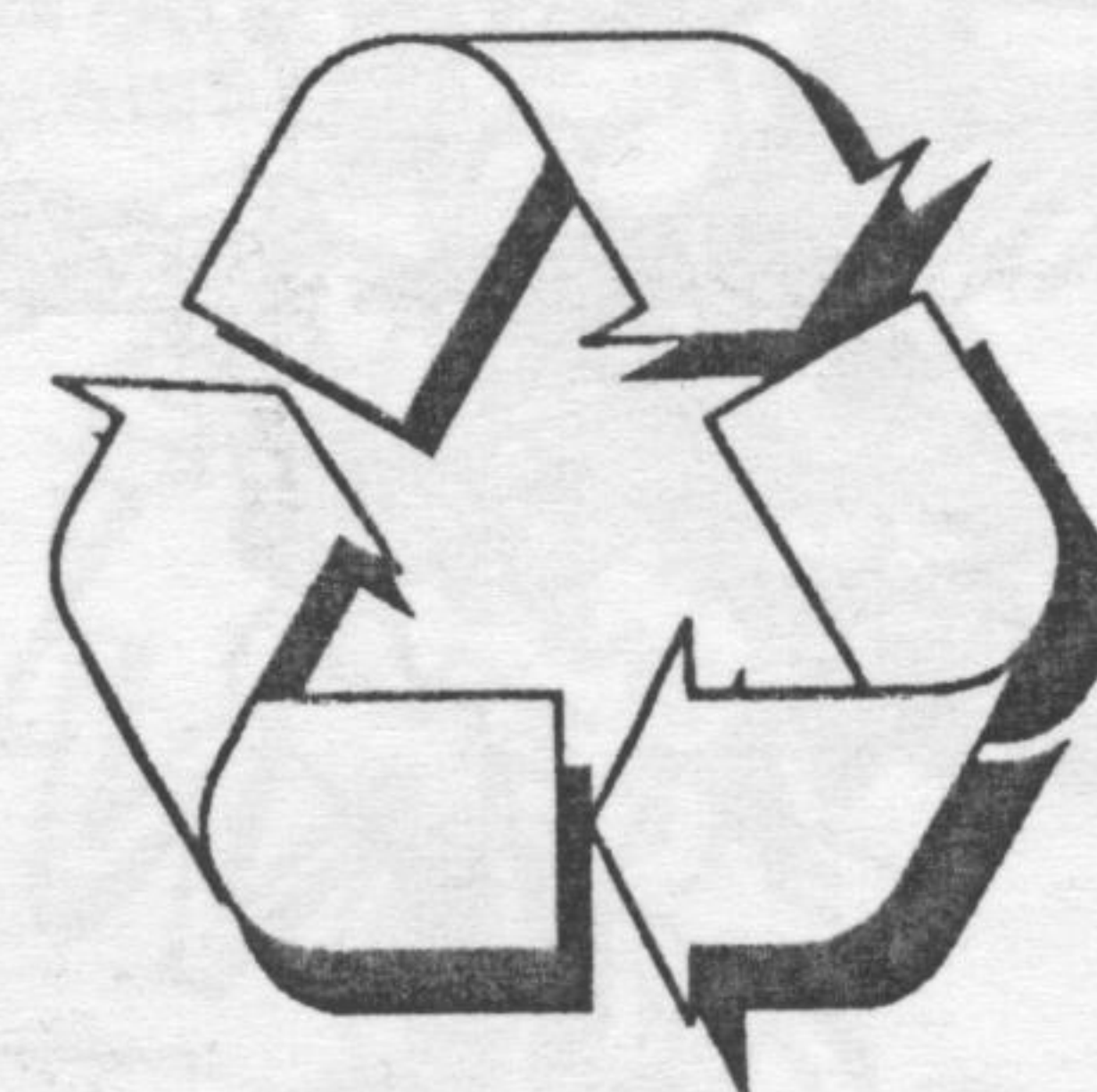
isn't just waiting for word to spread. We're launching an informational campaign about what Strike Commander is and what it takes to run it. Direct mailings to the retail level will also include workarounds to some of the most common problems players are experiencing, like the joystick calibration and creating a DOS 6 boot disk.

Now, the challenge is to keep fanning the flames (something we didn't expect to have to do but it's great job security for those of us in sales, marketing, PR and Customer Service!) Our mission is to make sure we define Strike's correct position in the marketplace. If we're successful at doing that—and if the computer market continues to evolve at a decent technical clip—there's no reason that Strike's shelf life can't outlive it's 2-1/2 year development life.



The Point of ORIGIN Staff participates in safe recycling programs and wants you to do likewise. Please deposit all aluminum cans and recyclable paper in their proper places.

If you've finished reading the Point and don't know what to do with it, give it back. We know where it goes. Thank you.



Special ORIGIN Employee Discount (Through the month of May)

To get one free week of club membership for you and your spouse, simply bring this coupon to The Q and ask for Julie Alexander and the special ORIGIN Systems discount. Interest in this program may qualify ORIGIN Systems for a special group rate. All people who take advantage of this offer will be qualified for a special drawing for passes for a free month. See Wayne Baker for full details.



Q-The Sports Club
10616 Research
794-9151

Coupon needed at The Q to qualify.