

Point of ORIGIN

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In Print

Talk about a blast from the past...The Readers' Choice Awards have been tallied at Multimedia World magazine. The winner for Best Arcade Game—Wing Commander II <<applause>>. As runner-up—Wing Commander <<gasp>>.

Moving on to Best Simulation, the winner is—Wing Commander <<thunderous applause>>. Runner-up—Wing Commander II <<shock>>. If you can keep all that straight (moreover, if you can believe it), then you won't be surprised to hear that Wing 2 was also a Finalist in the Best Multimedia CD-ROM Title category. It just goes to show you that a quality title can keep 'em coming back for more and more. Congrats to everyone involved in both games as well as everyone who's sold and supported them. The honors will be published in

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Re-org!

[In the new world order, (Czar?) Dallas Snell offers his insights and explanations as to what's been going on.]

Three months from now will mark my 8th year at ORIGIN. In October 1985, I started as ORIGIN's 2nd staff programmer, and was one of only 15 employees. Needless to say, there have been many changes at ORIGIN in the years since then.

There has been a common theme that has rung true during the many changes through all those years – ORIGIN's commitment to producing the highest quality entertainment software, second to none in the world. That commitment has been an easy one to maintain, simply because people at ORIGIN don't know how to do it any other way. That is the kind of people that have been attracted to ORIGIN, and that is the only kind of people that stay at ORIGIN.

I would like to paraphrase from another article I wrote for Point of ORIGIN (Vol. 1 No. 3, August 7, 1991) regarding the quality of ORIGIN personnel:

"Why are we the best? What makes us better, more capable, more skilled? It is my opinion that the number one reason is – BECAUSE WE LOVE WHAT WE DO. When we recruit people, our number one consideration is 'How much do they love their work?' We don't look for people that consider this a 9 to 5 job with two 15 minute breaks and an hour lunch. We don't look

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EC Members: (front left to right) Dee Starns, David Ladyman, Steve Muchow, Sean Murphy, Sharon Miller, Bart Hosier, Wendy White; (back row) Roswitha Shoemake, Mark Holley, Kathie Lambdin, Jennifer Davis, Andrea Brannan, Curtis Wood; (Not pictured) Wayne Baker, Alan Gardner, Melanie Green, Rebecca Heidt, Paul Isaac, Beth Loubet, Brian Martin, Donna Mehnert, Al Moreno, Kirsten Vaughan

"What's Next?"

When it comes to ORIGIN Entertainment, the question heard most from employees is, "What's next?" Sharon Miller, management sponsor of the ORIGIN Entertainment Committee, says, "This must mean we're doing something right." So far, the Entertainment Committee (EC) has had terrific success with many activities, including the recycling program, happy hours, bi-weekly cookouts, the most excellent company picnic, crunch packs, birthday banners and a road trip to Fiesta Texas. The EC has also helped to start up ORIGIN's own Softball, Soccer and even Flag-Football teams.

The EC began at the Wild Basin location and has had its ups and downs, but is now at a steady membership of about 20. Participation is completely voluntary, although management has recognized the EC for its efforts on several occasions. But the real reward, says member Suzanne Taylor, is the "satisfaction in seeing something that started as thoughts but turned into something the whole company could enjoy." The EC is definitely a happening part of ORIGIN Systems and of ORIGIN's original culture. (Does this mean there'll be an EC T-shirt?)

So what does the future hold, you ask? The EC has many things planned, beginning with more cookouts, more happy hours, the legendary Raft Race (tomorrow), a Mystery Theater presentation, a children's holiday party and finally, the unstoppable ORIGIN Systems adult holiday bash. They are also looking into getting a sports court for the back lot that will include a tennis, volleyball and basketball court. This, along with your EC sponsored Q-The Sport Club membership, should help everyone to get fit and trim.

Although it seems unlikely that you should feel like you're missing out, just check up on the Entertainment and Sports and Fitness Bulletin Boards and mark your calendars to fit right in.

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for people that hate getting up and going to work, and then count the minutes till lunch or quitting time. We look for people that are in this business because this is what they dearly love to be doing with their time at this point in their life. We look for people who can't stand the normal, boring drudgery of regular 9 to 5 jobs. We look for people who are excited about and want to be a part of this growing, changing, dynamic,

"When we recruit people, our number one consideration is 'How much do they love their work?'"

evolving, electric industry. We look for people whose major motivation is THE NATURE OF THE WORK ITSELF! Individuals with this as their primary motivation are always damned good at what they do!"

With these kinds of people, one of management's traditionally difficult tasks has been greatly simplified. That task was how to motivate people, how to get them excited and to have ownership in their work. This is not a problem at ORIGIN. If anything, we're occasionally a little overzealous. But that would not be my opinion. I don't think it's possible to have too much passion for what you do.

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some of my philosophy of management. It is my belief that management is a SERVICE to professionals, not a CONTROLLING mechanism. The people who work at ORIGIN are creative, intelligent, passionate, self-starting, self-thinking, independent individuals who are fundamentally incompatible with external control mechanisms. People do not excel because they are surrounded with rules, regulations, and Big-Brother monitoring tactics. People excel because they are passionately driven, FROM WITHIN THEMSELVES, to do what they do to the best of their ability. There are, of course, other factors such as recognition and financial

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incentives that are also strong personal motivators, but they rank far below that driving force that comes from within.

My approach to management is not to control, nor to dictate, but to guide, to develop, to teach, to assist; to help design structures and work techniques that are based on the people, and the work they are doing. To quote from Shoshanna Zuboff's book *In the Age of the Smart Machine*: "The 21st-century company has to promote and nurture the capacity to improve and to innovate. It means LEARNING becomes the axial principle of organizations. It replaces CONTROL as the fundamental job of management."

I do not want my intentions to be misinterpreted. I do not believe it is management's responsibility to DRIVE the learning process, or to drive an individual's career development. Management is to ASSIST in learning and development. It is imperative that the PRIMARY drive come from individuals. An example of

"I ask you to take nothing from ORIGIN's new management on faith, but to let actions speak for themselves - for that is how I judge performance."

this is outlined in the following quote from a *Business Week* article on Microsoft: "New recruits usually...[receive]...minimal training," says Pete Higgins, a vice-president. The training we do is on-the-job. Throw them in, and good luck. In return, recruits aren't saddled with a lot of rules and bureaucracy. Those who can't hack it are asked to find another job within the company, or they're gone within two years." Personally, I think this is a bit extreme, but it does illustrate the point.

I sincerely believe management's greatest contribution to the success of ORIGIN is to find and cultivate the best people they can, and then, with

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Dear Point Man,

How hard would it be to acquire a full set of Jane's reference books in the Library? Jane's is invaluable for facts and figures and as an art reference for every piece of military hardware in the world. We could really use a set.

*Signed,
Institute for
Strategic Studies*

Dear Institute,

Crack Librarian Smiles Lewis is on the trail. He tracked down the 92-93 Atlas of World Aircraft for about \$245 and also picked up some info on subscriptions to Jane's Defense Weekly (roughly \$150 a year). As soon as he can rope down a distributor and a purchase req, he hopes to get them in stock.

Dear Point Man,

Our new phone system will undoubtedly allow for a whole two hundred and FIFTY people, right? Please, tell me I'm wrong, and we're getting a system that will actually expand (cheaply?) to allow for an expansion of more than 10 people beyond our current number?

*Signed,
Voice of
VoiceMail Past*

Dear Voice,

In this instance, it wasn't a matter of not planning for expansion, but a matter of not expanding according to plan. The EA acquisition accelerated our timelines beyond

anybody's imagination, and the building purchase and buildout actually began before that deal ever went through. (Remember when we thought we might not even have to finish out the third floor for office space right away?)

In any case, take heart. Bids are now being taken for whatever our next phone system or upgrade will be. The plan is to get everybody back onto voice mail just as soon as feasible. The new system might even include some other bells and whistles such as intercom or paging abilities, but we won't know for sure until we accept a bid. We'll keep you posted.

Dear Point Man,

The only ice maker at this company is in a room that is either locked or has a meeting going on in it. In the cafeteria, where we are supposed to go for drinks and food, there is a grand total of five ice cube trays, two of which I bought myself. At this time, there are some 200+ people working here. Now that it's summer time, more of them are wanting iced drinks. I think you can see the complications here. Is there any possibility of getting an ice machine in the cafeteria, soon?

*Signed,
Ice Queen*

Dear Ice Queen,

An industrial-sized cube-churner has always been in the plans for this place (see the December 4, 1992 Point). Unfortunately, as everyone

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within nose-shot is aware, there was a considerable plumbing problem which cropped up in the cafeteria/MIS area. Now that it's been corrected, the Big Chill is on the way again. In fact, if you've been in the cafeteria recently, you may have noticed the pipes sticking out of the wall near the vending machines. That's where the ice machine will go.

Dear Point Man,

Lately when I smoke, I get more tar on my feet than I do in my lungs where it belongs. Let's correct this situation. Also, smokers humbly request something for their butts. Chairs would be nice, please.

Signed,
Josephine Camel

Dear Josephine,

Without breaking into a sermon on the evils of the Devil Nicotine, I don't know if there's much I can do for you. Hopefully, when the searing Texas sun takes a breather, the tar between the tiles on the balcony will set up again. In the meantime, please try to make sure none of it gets tracked in onto the carpet.

As for chairs: just about every one in the place right now already has a butt on it. Look at it this way...if you kick the habit, you'll live a long and healthier life until you work yourself to death.

Dear Point Man,

Why aren't we on Microsoft mail like EA?

Signed,
Lotus Flower

Dear Lotus,

You should be asking, Why isn't EA on cc:Mail like we are? Fact is, the powers that be in sunny CA aren't too thrilled with Microsoft Mail. It seems to have a nasty habit of misdirecting messages, such as confidential executive memos which have ended up in Shipping and Receiving. EACA-MIS is looking at our system and chances are that they'll make a switch before we do.

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Multimedia World's October issue.

Keep your fingers crossed for Underworld 2. It's nominated as Computer Gaming World's Role-Playing Game of the Year. Those results are also expected to be announced in October. We'll keep you posted if we hear anything before then.

If UW2 does get the nod, the timing will be perfect. CGW's cover that month will be Shadowcaster, done by our own Masterpiece Minute-man, **Denis Loubet**. Given the impossible deadline of one week, Denis cranked out a terrific piece that really does the game justice. (By the way...Thanks, Denis. Now get some sleep.)

On to the reviews. PC Games looks at both Strike and Serpent in the current issue. Bernie Yee, no stranger to ORIGIN products, correctly taps Strike as "part simulation, part action." He says that with months/years of hype behind Strike, "it was inevitable that ORIGIN wouldn't be able to live up to those sky-high expectations—but the company comes close." Overall, he likes the game, saying it offers a glimpse into the flight simulators to come and gives it a 9 out of 10.

A few pages later, Peter Olafson

dives into Serpent, saying "the change of scenery does the world of Ultima some good." He really likes the terrain, but slams the way Serpent "goes over the edge in its preachings to the player, hammering home points that would better be left understated." Our favorite line, though: "Serpent Isle is our first opportunity to see the Avatar naked as a jaybird...In case you wondered, he carries his sword to bed. Nice tan! And a nice game." Overall—8 out of 10.

Another Serpent review is floating in electronic limbo-land. The August issue of Strategy Plus mentions a Serpent article in a letter to the editor, but it's nowhere to be found. We finally tracked it down (by fax) and found it numbered Page 00. Richard Lawrence notes the increased speed, improved art and character interactions. But he apparently doesn't appreciate that "ORIGIN has taken the (copy protection) system to a new, brain-dead extreme." Hey, unlike your review, at least it made it in the manual.

Bernie Yee is at the keyboard in PC Entertainment. He calls Serpent "a marked refinement of the U7 engine and in many ways, the game that The Black Gate should have been." He says "ORIGIN's trademark realism shows in full force" and the game engine "is state-of-the-art, even

today."

In the same issue, Lee Buchanan gushes over Strike: "Take a first-rate air-combat simulation, wrap it in a rip-roaring adventure story, pack it full of stunning graphics and sounds, and you've got Strike Commander." He also drops the "push-the-envelope" phrase while admiring just about everything in the game, including the Speech Pack. He does note that the hardware requirements are high, but "it's a safe bet that PC games aren't going to demand less from your system in the future; could it be time for that upgrade already?"

The compliments are equally abundant in Germany's PC Games, where it's the Game of the Month. "We thought Strike Commander just can't have the same effect and thrill after all this hype," the editors write. "We were WRONG." Overall, they give Strike a whopping 96 out of 100 and say, "Strike Commander is exactly what we have been told it would be—the most technically advanced entertainment program for the PC."

Word of mouth is all-important these days, especially as we look to release a Serpent add-in (The Silver Seed) and Strike add-on (Tactical Operations). Stay tuned for follow-up reviews.

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minimal guidance, let them start applying their drive, enthusiasm and intelligence to help us figure out how to do what we do better. From that same *Business Week* article: "When asked what was the most important thing Bill Gates did last year [for Microsoft], he answered: 'I hired a lot of smart people.'"

A few months ago, there were several group meetings where I was on a soapbox preaching fundamental techniques that I believe are critical to achieving excellence. Those techniques are:

1. Arrive at a clear definition of goals.
2. Achieve individual, group and organizational commitment to those goals.
3. Emphasize responsibility, authority and accountability on the individual level.

"People excel because they are passionately driven, from within themselves, to do what they do to the best of their ability."

4. Implement a process to evaluate goal accomplishments on an individual, group and organizational level.

I have believed in these techniques for a long time. I have seen them in action, and I have seen them work. They are offered to you as an aid in channeling your passion toward consistently higher achievements. For self-directed management to spread, a company must lay goals, responsibilities, and measurements across all its people. Senior managers need to be able to say "empowerment" and "accountability" in the same sentence.

We have attempted to emphasize and to lay the ground structure for these operational techniques through our recent reorganization. Some of the fundamental elements of the re-org were:

1. Flatten the hierarchy by minimizing subdivision of processes.

2. Organize primarily around processes, not tasks.

3. Give senior leaders charge of processes and process performance.

4. Combine managerial and non-managerial activities as often as possible (let teams take on hiring, evaluating, budgeting and scheduling).

The few people left outside executives and the work teams spend their time trying to change and develop the organization, not to control it: they are reaching out to grab a new technology or to respond to new market conditions. Jobs, careers and knowledge shift constantly.

Another area that has always been of major concern to me (and after the recent Employee Opinion Survey it was apparent that it was important to the vast majority of ORIGIN employees as well) has to do with preserving the cultural style of ORIGIN. For the first time in ORIGIN's 10-year history, its President, General Manager and head of Product Development are one and the same person. This affords us the opportunity for uncontested integration of cultural style that we have never had before. And it couldn't have happened soon enough for me (and for most of you too, I'm sure).

Creating consumer software products is not a traditional business. It does not function by traditional methodologies, nor does it attract traditional employees. To try to force it into the mold of traditional corporate culture is a mistake. I was quite amused, and pleased, when I came across the following passage from that *Business Week* article on Microsoft: "Microsoft is clearly not for everybody. Veterans of large corporations often

experience culture shock. During his first week on the job, Richard I. Segal, a marketing manager, encountered a group of programmers in bathing suits discussing software bugs over a game of volleyball in the hallway...[Microsoft] is determined to avoid typical big-company pitfalls. Says Maples: 'We spend a lot of energy thinking about how to keep the place feeling small.'"

This has always been my style, and, I believe, the prevalent style at ORIGIN. Obviously, it has not interfered with Microsoft climbing to the top 10 of the Fortune 500 companies, and leading the entire consumer software market. Nor will it interfere with ORIGIN's continued success. In reality, this style will accelerate our success.

In summary, I would like to reemphasize my commitment to individual freedom, empowerment, responsibility, and accountability. I would like to stress that my style is heavily dependent upon TRUST — trust in fundamental human nature, and trust in each of you as individuals. And this trust must be mutual.

I cannot begin to express how excited I am about these changes and about our futures together. I have become invigorated with even higher levels of passion and energy than I have experienced before. I hope you share some of these feelings. I ask you to take nothing from ORIGIN's new management on faith, but to let actions speak for themselves — for that is how I judge performance. Each of you, as individuals, will help drive ORIGIN to new levels of success, and I, for one, am damned proud to be a part of it.

Hallas

Arrrg, Matie!

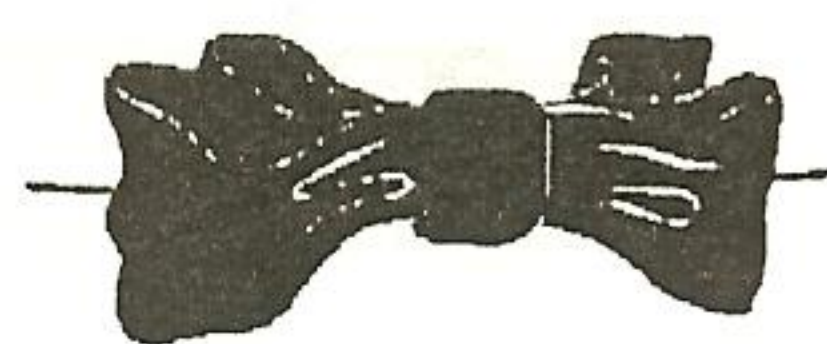
Support the barnacled crew of the HMS Britannia at the Raft Race Saturday, July 31st (tomorrow). Meet on the South First Street Bridge around 10:30-11:00 to cheer and jeer. Look for **Wayne Baker** on his mountain bike to give you the latest. The race begins under the Mo-Pac Bridge 9:30 and will end around 5:00 at IH-35.

The crew requested that special thanks go to **Terry Manderfield** for his creative contributions.





New Hires



Jostens Learning Company in Austin has decided to lay off some of its employees and through the valiant efforts of Al "Head-Hunter" Nelson, we have acquired them (or a couple anyway). **Darrin LeBlanc** (left) joins us as a Graphics Illustrator. He once won the National Scholastic Art Award, and his painting was showcased in the Corcoran Art Museum across the street from the White House. He enjoys sailing, painting and playing guitar. **Brian McLean** (right), was also acquired from Jostens as a Graphics Illustrator. Brian claims cable television and award-winning children's home video credits for his resumé and his heroes are The Amazing Randi, Penn & Teller and film director Howard Hanks. Welcome to ORIGIN!



On the temp front (not pictured), are **Kenneth Alan Perez**, artist, and **Forest Yule**, who joins our QA department. Alan has experience painting billboards and he likes reptiles. (Looks like a great match for our Art Department!) Forest comes to us from the Missouri Military Academy and claims to have won the gold medal for the shotput at the '92 Olympics. Upon further investigation, it appears that Forest lied on the New Employee Form and now he's being let go.

Pulse Check

Slowing Down and Gearing Up

by Dr. Mer (*Marie Williams*)

On the Customer Service front, it seems as though we've handled most of the Strike Commander and Serpent Isle hoopla. Our phones are slowing down a bit. Wednesday and Thursday are usually our slow days and sometimes we actually get 5 to 10 minute intervals between calls. It's a nice break that allows us to catch up on letters, faxes and Bulletin Boards. It also gives us time to get ready for the onslaught of calls that will come with the release of upcoming games. We recently moved **Dan Orzulak** and **Toby Shelton** to QA, and as you know **Dr. Donner** also went to QA as Supervisor. As a result, we are currently headhunting 1 CS Supervisor and 2 CS reps. Any takers?

Quality Assurance is hoppin'. Strike Commander Tactical Operations has moved into Beta. **Charles Angel** is the project leader for Tactical Ops. He and **Don Derouen** are flying high and bombing bugs.

Privateer also moved into Alpha. **Perry Stokes** is heading up this project. **Toby Shelton**, **Dan Orzulak**, **Dee Starns**, **Bill LaCoste**, **Todd Wacchaus** and **Jerrold**

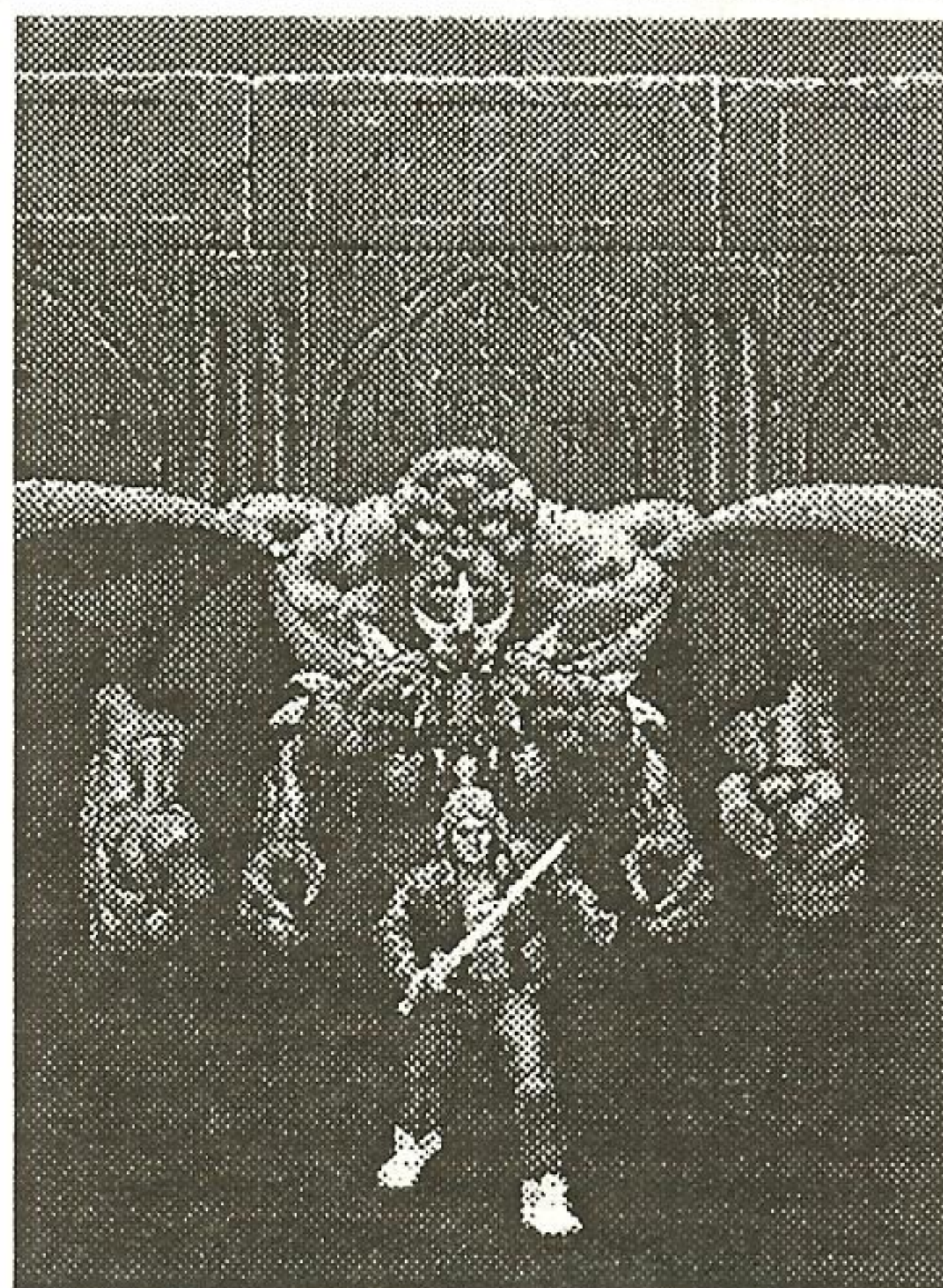
Harrington are the Aces on this one. So far they haven't been able to get a complete play through.

Shadowcaster is still in Beta with **Scott Shelton** as the project leader. **Rik Packham** and **Forest Yule** are also working on this project.

Beth Loubet is writing clue books for both Shadowcaster and Privateer. She has recently relocated to the QA area to play both of these. We think it is great to have her here. We hope that being so close to QA and CS will help give her more customer input and make these two clue books the best ORIGIN has put out to date. WAY TO GO, BETH!!

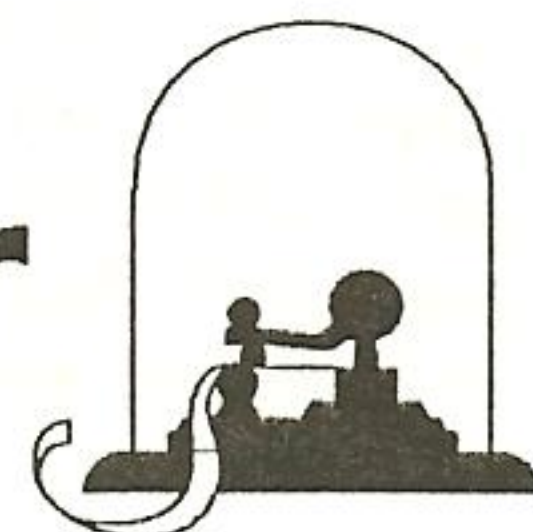
Jerrold Harrington, who is heading up the SNES Runes of Virtue QA Team, says he expects it to sign off any day. Ultima 7 SNES signed off and we shipped the Underworld I and II CD-ROM.

The Silver Seed and Wing Commander Academy have signed off. They are both expected to ship in August. Guess we'll be oilin' up the phones.



CGW's cover for October is Shadowcaster, created by our own Masterpiece Minuteman, Denis Loubet.

Ticker



Stock prices at press time (12:00pm)

BROD	34	-.500
ERTS	27.5	-.75
IBM	43.75	-.125
SIER	13.75	-.875
THDO	26.75	-.25