

Point of ORIGIN

Volume IV, No. 54

March, 1994

Austin, TX



Show and tell...

Editors from *PC Gamer* (formerly *PC Entertainment*) get a look at the *Flock of Birds* from BioForge. They were reportedly so taken with all of the products that they are scheduling 20 pages in the premier issue to deal with ORIGIN and EA.

Butt-Clenchin' Time

Glass-eyed, dazed and exhausted, Don Derouen is about to sit down and play *Ultima VII*—again. "We have three people testing it at night, four people during the day, and I'm pretty much here all of the time," he says. It's Thursday evening, and Product Support has had one cheatless playthrough, but there are still a few "tweaky crashes" with the 4 MB version. "We're close," Don says, almost trance-like, "the next version could be it." Then he laughs, "But we've heard that before."

This is do-or-die time for Product Support, charged with taking, testing and turning around 5 SKUs in a matter of days to beat the end of the fiscal year (March 25). The combination of Customer Service and Quality Assurance is matching Product Development bug for bug and kill for kill. Testers are in every weekend. But the round-the-clock routine is taking its toll. "The U8 (testing) team is dying, slowly but surely," says Kay Gilmore. "Pacific seems to be hanging in there, but next week, they'll be in the same shape that U8 is in right now. And there are no more resources to pull from."

Fingernails are pretty short in Operations, where Mark Chandler and StarPack hope to pull off the biggest feat in ORIGIN history—shipping about

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Off to Market

ORIGIN products will be showing up in new places as part of a Marketing Department experiment. Wing Academy and ORIGIN FX will be our first forays into electronic distribution. That's where somebody gets a slew of titles on a single CD, tries a program for a limited time, and then calls an 800-number for the code to "unlock" the program and drop it to the hard drive.

The company we're using is CD Select. It's sending 200,000 CDs to customers who have purchased through electronic distribution before. Both FX and Academy will also be on a separate disc, primarily filled with business applications, that will go out to corporate customers (they need entertainment, too).

The Shadowcaster demo put together for Logitech has some new legs through a place called Software

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Butt-Clenchin'

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250,000 units within the next couple of weeks. "And the number keeps going up," Mark says. He's handling three different SKUs for U8 alone (floppy, CD-delivery in three languages and Speech Pack) as well as some EA titles (Seawolf, Populous II and Power Poker). And, as if the plot needed another twist, there's been a snag with Super Wing. "The joystick file didn't get encrypted at 3DO," he says. "We're getting a new version Friday. We hope to have it tested by Monday. It will go to duplication Monday, and I'm asking for a three-day minimum turnaround so we can ship it on Friday next week."

Watch for results of all the photo finishes in the next Point.

On The Clock

Thomas Lee is a new Advanced Graphics Specialist who used to work for ALIAS as an Application Engineer. His expertise is sure to come in handy. Thomas enjoys a variety of physical activities and filmmaking although his claims to fame are a couple of award winning short films: "Camerawork" and "Women of Avignon."

James Lee, Thomas' brother, also now works for us as an Advanced Graphics Specialist. James was pulled to ORIGIN by the job bulletin at William Patterson College. While he was trying to get hired, he also managed to recruit his brother. Who said nepotism isn't alive and well?

Michael Frances comes to us from the Office of the Attorney General. No, he's not prosecuting anyone, he's here as a Design Assistant. Michael's background is in military intelligence and he was awarded an Air Medal for meritorious service during Desert Storm. Appropriately enough, he'll be working for **Andy Hollis** on his hot military simulations.

As a new composer, **George Oldziey** will be working on the score for Wing Commander III. He's a faculty member at Southwestern University in Georgetown and has played trumpet in a few bands over the years. George's list of credits include a New York salsa

EOM

Whitney Ayres

Team support once again was the winning factor in choosing this month's Employee of the Month, **Whitney Ayres**. As the lead artist for Wings of Glory, Whitney had enough support to put him over the top. Way to go team!

Whitney has had a more than a decent two year history at ORIGIN as a lead artist on Wing Commander Academy (the only artist actually) and as an artist for Privateer and ORIGIN FX. He is Austin born and raised, and in high school, he won his first award; a national journalism editorial cartoon contest. After school, he joined up with our own **Al Nelson** and **Dicko** in a freelance design company. There, they performed "brute force animation" techniques for a number of different customers. All along, though, Whitney was publishing editorial cartoons in places like the Austin Comix News and working on deals for syndication when ORIGIN pulled him in.

Whitney's main interest is in the design and interface of our games. "I want to make the interface more a part of the game so as to make the experience more realistic," explains Whitney. "I want to give the game, whatever it is, a more authentic look." Whitney mentions that he would like to make more POV (Point of View, First Person) games that are located outside, "where the player can walk down a street and go into a house or elsewhere, unlike all the dungeon/maze games out there." Of course Whitney will take any assignment given to him, but this is where his interests are.

The best thing Whitney says about Wings of Glory (WoG) is the team itself. He says that team spirit is important and the fact that "everyone has a sense of what needs to be done" is what contributes to the success of this project to date. The team even has a name, "Vested Interest," after the garb habits of Producer **Warren Spector**.

Congratulations, Whitney, and to all the rest of you aspiring Employee of the Month wannabees, grease some palms and get that support!



band called *Ricardo Marrerro and the Group* which featured vocalist Angela Bolfil and jazz flutist David Valentin. This band also performed at Madison Square Garden in N.Y. George is currently playing with the Brazilian music band from Austin, Susanna Sharpe and Samba Police, which released a new CD in Dec. of '93.

Thorne C. Smith is our new Studio Information Manager. He's been self-employed for 9 years but he's also worked for MicroProse, like a few others here. He likes golf (just like another ex-MicroProser) and his hero is Lee Iaccoca. Thorne will be putting together our Information Management Department.

Self-taught artist **Morgan Osburn** joins ORIGIN as an Art Temp. He believes that "computers

and multi-media are the wave of the future [and he] wanted to be involved." Morgan is working under **Tony Bratton** on Bounty Hunter, which is our most futuristic product, so I guess he's in the right place. Morgan also enjoys semiotics (the study of signs and symbols in languages), psychology and perception theory.

At this time we must also bid farewell to HR rep. **Nancy Morrison**, who decided that ORIGIN simply wasn't her "cup of tea." **Melinda Bordelon** has decided to use her art talent elsewhere and **Betty Peltier** has once again left us for her "tour du Europe." (For those of you interested in writing Betty, to send her money, or at least a copy of Pagan after all her hard work, HR mogule **Norma Vargas** can give you the address.

Market...

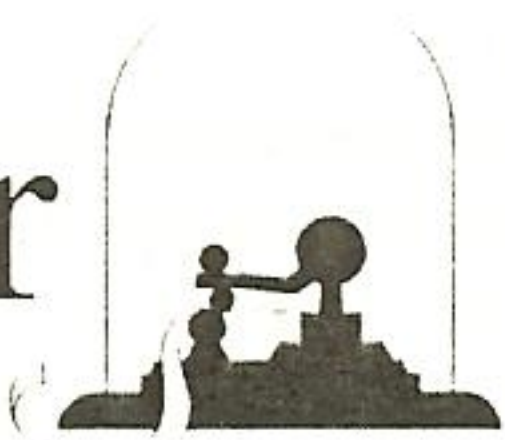
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Labs. Basically, Software Labs is one of the world's largest dealers/distributors of shareware. Since the demo is sort of a mini-game in itself, it's being offered free of charge through Software Labs' catalog, which goes out to 20-million people in the U.S. and Canada. Hopefully, it will pump up sales for the forthcoming CD version of the game.

The product posters we did with Intel for Winter CES came out so well, we're placing them in more than a thousand software stores around the country through distributors like American and Josha. We're starting with U8, Pacific and System Shock. If that experiment works, we'll follow up with BioForge and Wings of Glory. In an unrelated CES development, EA has decided not to attend the summer show in Chicago. EA has also decided that ORIGIN will not attend the summer show in Chicago, so we're looking at alternate ways to introduce our Christmas lineup. We'll keep you posted.

Since there's no real 3DO bandwagon yet, we're also finding unique ways to get out word about Super Wing. We started by making sure it was fully represented with info and screen shots in the 3DO press kit at CES. Now, we're supplying copies of the game to go out with loaner players which 3DO is supplying to major press like the New York Times and Wall Street Journal. Next: direct cross-marketing with Panasonic itself to see what can be done to establish Super Wing as the premier 3DO title. We'll also see what we can do with CH Products to cross market with their 3DO joystick coming out this June.

Ticker



The latest from Wall Street at noon.

ERTS	25.250	-0.500
THDO	24.000	+1.000
BROD	40.000	-0.375
SIER	27.250	-0.875
SGI	24.625	+0.375

Dear Point Man,

Dear Point Man,

I'm getting tired of getting messages on ccMail that extend beyond the sides of the window where you read the messages. It's a pain to always have to scroll to the right to read one or two words, then scroll back to the left to see the start of the next line. Please ask the ccMail Powers That Be to tell us where to and how to set our margins so that everyone can read without having to scroll to the sides.

Signed,

Mr. I Don't Care If You Do Call Me Lazy



Dear Lazy,

What time is your mom coming to pick you up? Oh well, if it's really that important. In e-mail, you should go to the drop-down menu under "Text" and select "Margins/Tabs." 5 and 70 are pretty good settings, unless you want to be mail deco with something unique.

Dear Point Man,

Why doesn't ORIGIN announce promotions like EA does? When people's responsibilities change, there's no easy way of knowing other than getting it through the rumor mill, and besides, it's nice to give recognition where recognition's due.

Signed,

Corporal Radar O'Reilly

Dear Radar,

"Good suggestion," according to Human Resources Manager Francine Gertz. "The only problem is: all we have here in HR is a listing of who gets promoted, not why." What would really work well is if the promoter—whether a department head, manager, or producer—would forward info about the promotee to Point of ORIGIN for inclusion in the next issue. We have been doing a better job of getting major announcements on the EA World BBS, even though it has to go through about four electronic mailboxes to get there. In fact, the announcement about Jennie Evans coming to ORIGIN is there right now.

Dear Point Man,

I want to tell you a story about when we moved Administration to the first floor. I was on the mental verge of auditioning for the movie 'Falling Down II', hoping to oust Michael Douglas (I know I would've gotten the part because I was for real!) My phone didn't work, nobody knew where I was going to move, I had packed, unpacked, packed, unpacked. I had family members with firetrucks and ambulances outside their house, carting them to the emergency room—I was so wired you could've REALLY had a piece of my mind (on a platter!).

I was finally going to move my stuff down but had to leave for yet another fiasco! (Please God, tell me this is Comedy Central or Code Blue and not my real life!) When I came back to work, all my office was moved! The dust bunnies I had grown so attached to were gone, the computer all set up and running, nerf balls, plants I am letting self-dry (actually, they are wilting) and a GREAT BIG note on my whiteboard that said "If you need any more help, let us know!"

These random acts of kindness are rare—and even harder to find time for if you do think about committing one. Steven and Dennis didn't have to move anything but my computer (and you know how much men hate to move furniture!) but they moved everything and it is just what the Dr. would have ordered. A GREAT BIG THANKS to Steve, Dennis, Mark and anyone else in NATS that were in on the conspiracy! Sincere thanks to these wonderful guys,

Signed,

Kai Stringer



In Print

If what we're reading from the press is any indication, gamers worldwide are anxiously waiting the arrival of ORIGIN's spring releases on store shelves. Most of the major game magazines are out with their reviews of what they saw and heard at Winter C.E.S.

Computer Gaming World is helping trumpet the coming of ORIGIN products. Alan Emrich, the wargame reviewer for CGW, likes what he sees of ORIGIN's two upcoming historical flight sims. "I had a great time at the ORIGIN booth," Emrich wrote. "While I appreciate deep flight sims, I enjoy easier ones. Along those lines, both Pacific Strike and Wings of Glory games cover their respective WWII and WWI aerial combat eras with grace and narrative story lines. Apparently, they've listened to a lot of player feedback, and have made playability their primary design objective."

In CGW's overall wrap of C.E.S., editors gave another pat on the back to the producers of Wings of Glory. "Rather than a straight sim like Red Baron, Glory includes the cinematic plot sequences we've come to expect from the folks in Texas."

However, not everything from the folks at CGW was upbeat. Editors lament what they call the decline in computer role-playing games. They wrote, "Even Ultima VIII: Pagan seems more like an action/adventure than a CRPG. The emphasis is on bigger on-screen characters with more realistic animation in a smaller game world. This seems to be part of a design philosophy which says that computer gamers don't want to play the big games any longer."

ORIGIN got the attention of other gaming magazines at Vegas. Referring to our spring releases in their C.E.S. post game report, the writers of PC Entertainment said,

"Big things are cookin' down in Austin." Though each company's write up was brief, ORIGIN garnered most of the column space and screen shots.

Al Giovetti reviews Shadowcaster in Electronic Entertainment. He writes, "These artists-turned-game-designers have outdone themselves, providing stunning backgrounds as well as spectacular morphing. The superior graphics and imaginative theme in this 3-D world take Shadowcaster close to the top." Big Al ranks Shadowcaster 9 out of a possible 10.

Or how about Rus DeMaria's quick preview of BioForge in the same publication? Rus obviously

"Apparently, they've listened to a lot of player feedback, and have made playability their primary design objective."

didn't have his blinders on at the ORIGIN booth. "The 3-D rendering used for the moon base and the characters is spectacular."

DeMaria continued the good karma with a nice write-up on Ultima VIII. "With Pagan, the eighth installment in this ever-growing saga, it just keeps getting better."

Toren Smith writes for Popcom, a Japanese gaming magazine. Mr. Smith's early report card on Ultima VIII isn't too shabby. "How does it look?" he asks. "There's no point in me describing it, a picture being worth a thousand words. Just look at the screen shots! And the sound...incredible four-channel digital MIDI music and effects, plus digital speech. Looks like ORIGIN has served up another winner."

In other news from around the globe, you might want to pick up the April edition of CD-ROM World when it hits the stands soon. You'll find a feature article on CD-ROM flight sims. A good portion of the report is devoted to ORIGIN's Wing Commander line. Christopher Forrest Grover calls Wing Commander, "...a runaway hit which includes plenty of

flight sim combat fighting and a compelling story line."

And speaking of the future, it looks like ORIGIN will be starring in the premiere issue of PC Gamer magazine, scheduled to hit the newstands in late April. Steve Poole and Matt Bielby, a couple of the editors for PC Gamer, formerly PC Entertainment, spent all day Monday here. They had a look at practically everything ORIGIN's planning to release this spring and summer. They uttered more oooooo's and aaahhhh's than a studio audience for The Price is Right. The plan is to feature BioForge, which will be on the cover. But there will be extensive coverage on other ORIGIN products and possibly a feature on the company itself. The juggernaut continues.

If you're looking for other news on ORIGIN, you need look no further than your own corner convenience store. Marc Savlov did a nice feature in the March 4th edition of the Austin Chronicle on some of the artistic talent at ORIGIN. Micael Priest, Dicko Mather, Paul Sessums, Glen Johnson, Denis Loubet, Stephen Pietzch, Danny Garrett and Sam Yeates were featured. Together, they looked quite the motley crew in a picture taken for the article.

Finally, what's a point article on media coverage without a mention of more honors and awards? Computer Gaming World continues to take a look at the members of its computer game Hall of Fame. In the March edition, Ultima IV and Ultima VI are inducted. You might recall that Ultima III, the other ORIGIN game in the Hall, was featured in CGW's February issue.

And two ORIGIN titles have been nominated in CGW's Game of the Year awards. Privateer and Shadowcaster are among five games nominated for Action Game of the Year. Others in the running: Doom, Prince of Persia II and Rebel Assault. Good luck!

**Remember: only
301 days until
the next CES!**