WING COMMANDER™

PROPHECY

ORIGIN

DOLBY SURROUND

3Dfx

TEEN
AGES 13+
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

The Ultimate Sci-Fi Combat Simulation

killerapp

Wing Commander: Prophecy

Final Status and Clip Report

killerapp

March 6, 1998

TO: David Swofford
Origin

FR: KillerApp Communications

RE: *Wing Commander: Prophecy* Status

CC: T. Potts
R. McCallister, J. Gladders, A. Andreano

I. Analysis

The following report is an overview of all public relations activities executed by KillerApp Communications on behalf of Origin Systems' release of *Wing Commander: Prophecy*.

Overall, the press response to *Wing Commander: Prophecy* was extremely positive, although some editors noted the lack of a multi-player option. *Wing Commander: Prophecy* proved that it could be a "fresh start" for the series while remaining true to its roots. Editors applauded the changes to the game as being exciting and unanimously deemed them "a space combat breakthrough." Highlighted coverage includes: **TV.COM**, **Weekend Today Show**, **Newsday**, **PC Magazine** and **Computer Gaming World**.

Noted throughout the status report is feedback from editors who promised coverage during the months of January, February and March. Please be advised to look for clips via your clipping service.

II. Enclosed please find *Wing Commander: Prophecy* clips received to date:

The Adrenaline Vault Online	November 3, 1997	Playable test demo - staff
Newsday Daily/ circ. 491,807 Impressions 1,229,517	November 5, 1997	Inclusion in article about upcoming titles - Joe Gelmis

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Game Worlds Online	November 14, 1997	Review of "test demo" - Knight
Sun-Sentinel Fort Lauderdale, FL Daily/ circ: 272,258 Impressions: 680,645	November 27, 1997	Inclusion in holiday round-up - Sherri Winston
Computer Gaming World Monthly/ circ. 90,700 Impressions: 226,750	December 1997	Number one in the "Monster Buyer's Guide: The 1997 Holiday Hot 100" - staff
PC Games Monthly/ circ. 110,000 Impressions: 275,000	December 1997	Inclusion in reviews of simulator games - staff
GameCenter Online	December 3, 1997	Feature article - staff
The Adrenaline Vault Online	December 3, 1997	Inclusion in News regarding ship date - Rex Mendoza
TV Guide Online Online	December 4, 1997	Inclusion in News regarding Mark Hamill's role in the game - John Walsh
Santa Barbarba News Daily/ circ: 49,000 Impressions: 122,500	December 6, 1997	Inclusion in holiday gift guide article - staff
The Adrenaline Vault Online	December 11, 1997	Feature story, interview with David Downing and review - staff
GameSpot Online	December 12, 1997	Feature story - staff
Game Power News Online	December 12, 1997	Inclusion in news regarding ship date - staff

GamePen Online	December 15, 1997	Playable demo - staff
Spectrum Online Newsletter	December 16, 1997 I	Inclusion in Headlines regarding ship date - David Duberman
PC Magazine Bi-weekly/ circ. 1,039,720 Impressions 2,599,300	December 16, 1997	Review - staff
GameWeek Online	December 16, 1997	Inclusion in News regarding ship date - Claire Duffy
Los Angeles Times Daily/ circ. 1,104,651 Impressions 2,761,628	December 22, 1997	Feature mention - P.J. Huffstutter
Carlisle Sentinel	December 28, 1997	Feature Mention - Tracy Stellino
GameCenter Online	December 29, 1997	Full review - staff
Newsday Daily/ circ. 491,807 Impressions: 1,229,517	December 31, 1997	Mention in article about technology used in CD-ROM games - Joe Gelmis
Computer Gaming World Monthly/ circ. 90,700 Impressions: 226,750	January 1998	Inclusion in holiday gift guide - staff
Providence Journal Bulletin Weekend/ circ: 254,012 Impressions: 635,030	January 4, 1998	Review - Gene Emery
Gamesmania Online	January 5, 1998	Full review - staff
Newsday Daily/ circ. 491,807 Impressions 1,229,517	January 5, 1998	Story on Mark Hamill - Joe Gelmis

Louisville Courier-Journal Daily/ circ: 236,864 Impressions: 592,160	January 10, 1998	Full review - Ric Manning
Zero Gravity Online	January 14, 1998	Full review - staff
GamePlayer Online	January 14, 1998	Full review - Bobby Lee
GamePen Online	January 15, 1998	Full review - Ken Liang
Chicago Tribune Daily/ circ: 664,586 Impressions: 1,161,465	January 15, 1998	Full review - Peter Bartholow
Washington Post Daily/ circ: 789,198 Impressions: 1,972,995	January 16, 1998	Full review - Rob Pegoraro
Atlanta Journal Constitution Daily/ circ: 317,273 Impressions: 793,182	January 18, 1997	Mention - Malcolm X Abram
Atlanta Journal Constitution Daily/ circ: 317,273 Impressions: 793,182	January 18, 1997	Review, "Wing Commander franchise still flying" - Malcolm X Abram
Atlanta Journal Constitution Daily/ circ: 317,273 Impressions: 793,182	January 25, 1997	Inclusion in article about "serious gamers" - Malcolm X Abram
GamesDomain Online	January 29, 1998	Full review - Jeff Kang
GamesDomain Online	January 29, 1998	Second opinion review - Rajan Ragupathy
GameCenter Online	January 30, 1998	Nominee for Sci-Fi Sim 97 Awards - staff
Staten Island Advance Daily/ circ: 97,000 Impressions: 242,500	February 1, 1998	Review - Richard Ryan

Denver Post Daily/ circ: 353,786 Impressions: 884,465	February 6, 1998	Full review - David Thomas
L.A. Times MetaHollywood Online	February 6, 1998	Inclusion about actors in CD-ROM games - Marshal Rosenthal
Houston Chronicle Daily/ circ: 549,856 Impressions: 1,374,640	February 7, 1998	Review - staff
The Tampa Tribune Daily/ circ: 269,349 Impressions: 673,372	February 20, 1998	Review - Jim Reed
Inside Games Online	February 27, 1998	Full review and 5 star rating - Andy Stein
PC Games Monthly/ circ: 110,000 Impressions: 275,000	March 1998	Full review - Steve Klett
Ultra GamePlayers Monthly/ circ: 300,000 Impressions: 750,000	March 1998	Full review and 8.7 rating - Dan Egger
Boot Monthly/ circ: 140,000 Impressions: 350,000	March 1998	Full review and 9 rating - Andrew Sanchez

Total circulations: 8,631,647
Total Impressions: 21,579,117

III. Product Press Outreach

AKRON BEACON JOURNAL
Glenn Gambolla is not planning on running a review of the product. The paper has recently scaled back its coverage of CD-ROM and console games.

ARIZONA DAILY STAR
Mitch Glitman decided to pass on a review as his editor frowns on sequels.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Left messages for Larry Blasko.

ATLANTA CONSTITUTION
Spoke with Malcolm X Abram, the main game reviewer for the paper. He requested product on January 8. A review ran on January 18.

AUSTIN-AMERICAN STATESMAN
Gregory Kallenberg will review the product toward the middle of February. The paper is adding a new online supplement to his game reviews which has him backlogged until February.

BOSTON GLOBE
Left message for Michael Saunders.

BUSINESS WEEK
Ed Baig was left several messages and sent e-mail.
Larry Armstrong was left messages.
Kathy Rebello was left messages.

CHICAGO SUN TIMES
Don Crabb was left several messages.

CHIGAGO TRIBUNE
Dennis Lynch was left a message. Peter Bartholow ran a review of the title on January 15.

CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER
Chuck Melvin assigned the review to one of his editors. Review ran in January and received 9 out of 10 stars. Origin to obtain article via clipping service.

COMPUTER SHOPPER
Steve Schwartz will review the title for the May issue.

DALLAS MORNING NEWS
Bob Bresano ran a review on January 10.

DETROIT NEWS
Nancy Malitz is working on a feature story on war, space and flight sims and will feature *Wing Commander: Prophecy*.

DENVER POST
David Thomas reviewed the title on February 6. Screens were sent to accompany the review per his request.

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY
Gary Eng Walk plans to review the game in a February column.

FLORIDA SUN-SENTINEL
Sheri Winston featured the CD-ROM in her November 27 round up of hot titles for the holiday season.

FORT WORTH STAR TELEGRAM
Spoke with Andy Greiser on January 8. Greiser will look at the title and try and schedule a review for the end of February.

GAMECENTER
Tom Chick posted a review of the title on December 23.

GAMESMANIA
The zine posted an in-depth feature on the title on January 5.

HARTFORD COURANT
Spoke to Chris Morrill on December 30. He said he has received the game, but has not assigned it to anyone yet. Usually a complicated game takes about a month to assign and review. KA to follow-up in a few weeks to find out who will be reviewing it for the paper.

HOUSTON CHRONICLE
Spoke with Dwight Silverman. He is not a big fan of space combat sims but because of the title's popularity promised to take a look at the product. Review ran on February 7.

LOS ANGELES TIMES
Left messages for David Colker.
Left messages for Aaron Curtis.

LA TIMES SYNDICATE
Steve Kent has not had a chance to review the title yet. He is going to try and review it in early February.

LA TIMES ONLINE
Feature story and interview with Mark Hamill on actors in digital entertainment to run early/mid February.

LOUISVILLE COURIER JOURNAL
Ric Manning reviewed the game in his January 10 column.

McCLATHCHY NEWS SERVICE
Milt Petty will run a review toward the end of January.

MIAMI HERALD
Roy Bassave will review the title in February.

NEW YORK POST
Katherine Cavanaugh is no longer reviewing games for the paper as the publication is scaling back its CD-ROM coverage. Karen Jones interviewed Mark Hamill for both the NY Post and Computer Game Entertainment. Date of article TBD.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
Left messages for George Mannes.

NEW YORK TIMES
Stephen Manes was left a message.

NEWHOUSE NEWS SERVICE
Rich Ryan ran a review of the title on February 1. His column originates in the Staten Island Advance (circ: 97,000) and is syndicated nationally to over 75 papers.

NEWSDAY
Joe Gelmis' feature story on Mark Hamill and the *Wing Commander* series ran on January 5.

NEWSWEEK
Arlyn Gajilian said he will feature the title in an upcoming issue.

ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER
Left messages for Leslie Gornstein. Leslie is not interested in space adventure titles. She is focusing more on graphic adventures and home office software. The paper has yet to assign an editor to cover "arcade-oriented" software.

PC WORLD ONLINE
The zine posted an item on the games' availability on December 22.

PEOPLE
Left messages for Stanley Young and Samantha Miller. Offered Mark Hamill interviews to supplement the product review.

PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS
Left messages for Jonathan Takiff.

PHILADELPHIA POST
Norman Tarantino will run a review toward the end of February.

PLAYBOY
Brad Marlowe is currently looking at the title and will try and include it in the June issue as he is already working on the May issue.

PROVIDENCE JOURNAL/ REUTERS
Gene Emery received the product but is currently backlogged. He intends to review the title but does not have a timeframe in mind. He'll try and notify us to when the review will run.

SAN FRANCISCO BAY GUARDIAN
David Israels is assigning the review to another staff member and hopes to have it in print mid-February.

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE
Laura Evenson is interested in the title in reference to a bigger story about the series or the property going to the big screen. Origin to follow-up.

SAN DIEGO UNION TRIBUNE
Left message for Bob Hawkins who is out of office until mid-January. Bob was not interested in running a review.

SANTA BARBARA NEWS PRESS
Wing Commander: Prophecy was included in the December 6 issue of the paper focusing on hot games for the holidays.

SCHOOL TO WORK NEWS
Mary Beaumont was sent final product per her request. A review will run in the March issue.

SPECTRUM
David Duberman posted a news item on the announcement of the game's shipping on December 15 and another on the game's availability on December 23.

TAMPA TRIBUNE
Dirk Lammers ran a review of February 20.

TRIBUNE MEDIA SERVICES
Chip Carter is going to be working on a full review within the next two weeks. KA is also going to try and set up a phone interview for Mark to supplement the review.

TV.COM
Executive producer Jeff Yarbourgouh reconfirmed interest in a *Wing Commander* segment. We have conducted an interview in Los Angles with Mark Hamill on January 19 to discuss his role in *Prophecy*. The segment aired on February 28.

USA TODAY
Left messages for Mike Snider.

WALL STREET JOURNAL
Sent e-mail to Walt Mossberg.

WASHINGTON POST
Rob Pegoraro ran a review on January 16.

IV. Mark Hamill Press Outreach

A. Print Interviews

KillerApp arranged a series of in-person and telephone interviews for Mark Hamill while in New York regarding his involvement in *Wing Commander: Prophecy*.

COMPUTER GAME ENTERTAINMENT/NEW YORK POST
Karen Jones interviewed Mark via telephone regarding *Wing Commander: Prophecy* for her celebrity-oriented column which will appear in the February issue of *Computer Game Entertainment*. Karen will also run the interview in her New York Post column at a date TBD.

NY NEWSDAY
Joe Gelmis interviewed Mark in-person regarding *Wing Commander: Prophecy* for an upcoming Cyber Scene column. Joe took several photographs of Mark during the interview and ran the article on January 5.

B. Broadcast Interviews

Following are broadcast interviews Mark Hamill conducted on behalf of *Wing Commander: Prophecy*:

WESTWOOD ONE
Mark participated in a live satellite radio tour on November 24. Dia Stein sent an air check of the two hour live tour.

SW NETWORKS
Mark participated in a live satellite radio tour on November 24. Lauren Saft sent an air check of the two hour live tour.

F/X BACK CHAT
Laura Fisher said the taped interview with Mark was terrific. The taped interview ran Sunday, December 14.

TV GUIDE ONLINE
John Walsh's interview with Mark was posted December 3 on TV Guide Online (www.tvguide.com).

WEEKEND TODAY SHOW NY
Mark taped an interview with the show on Friday, November 28. The show aired January 4.

SCI-FI CHANNEL'S ANTI-GRAVITY ROOM
Mark participated in two taped interview segments. One segment specifically focused on *Wing Commander* while the other was a highlight of the best comic books. The segments ran in January.

THE DAILY SHOW
Mark conducted a taped interview with Comedy Central's highest rated show. The segment ran December 16.

C. Regional Radio Interviews

- KillerApp secured telephone interviews for Mark Hamill to discuss his involvement in *Wing Commander: Prophecy* with the following media:

  WAXQ -- New York
  KPPR -- El Paso
  WABB -- Alabama
  KECO -- Oklahoma
  WXXX -- Vermont
  Groove 103.1 – Los Angeles
  KBGH, The Bridge – Los Angeles

V. Unit Publicity

Press interest in *Wing Commander Prophecy* unit publicity was very positive. Over the two week shooting period several print outlets including **NY Times**, **Entertainment@Home**, **Timeout NY** and **Los Angeles Daily News** visited the set for coverage of the game. E! **Entertainment Television** conducted interviews from the set and ran segments on both 'World Of Tomorrow' and 'The Gossip Show.' Most electronic outlets including Entertainment Tonight, CNN: Showbiz Today and Turner Entertainment Report declined on-set visits but expressed interest in receiving an EPK.

Noted throughout the status report is feedback from media who could not commit to coverage at the time without receipt of an EPK. EPK was not provided during this phase as it was still in development by Origin.

A. Press Outreach

ACCESS HOLLYWOOD
Dan Gomez was not interested in covering *Wing Commander Prophecy.*

AOL
Hugh Sterbakov visited the set on 5/9 and included *Wing Commander Prophecy* in his 'Critics Choice' column sometime early summer.

CINEFANTASTIQUE
Dr. Craig Reid completed an interview with producers Mark Day and David Downing, director Adam Foshko, art director Mark Vearrier and actors Steven Petrarca and Ginger Lynn Alan for a feature.

CNN: SHOWBIZ TODAY
Upon receipt of an EPK, Rick Damigella will run a segment on *Wing Commander Prophecy* closer to release date.

DETAILS
There was no interest in *Wing Commander Prophecy.*

DETOUR
There was no interest in *Wing Commander Prophecy.*

DIGITAL DINER
Unable to conduct an interview due to internal conflicts at the publication.

E! ENTERTAINMENT TELEVISION
On-air personality Art Mann conducted an interview with Mark Hamill and Tom Wilson for the 'World Of Tomorrow' show.
On-air personality Rod Dovlin will conduct a telephone interview with Mark Hamill and use b-roll accumulated by Art Mann for a 'follow-up' piece on Mark Hamill and *Wing Commander Prophecy* to run on 'The Gossip Show.' Video clips forwarded to Origin.

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY
Since the publication has done extensive coverage on the series in the past, Kipp Cheng has passed on running a story.

ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT
Upon receipt of an EPK, Rob Scheiffel will run a segment on *Wing Commander Prophecy* closer to release date.

ENTERTAINMENT@HOME/FAMILY PC
Marianne Cotter interviewed Mark Hamill and producer Mark Day for a feature.

LOS ANGELES DAILY NEWS
P.J Huffsteder completed an interview with executive producer Rod Nakamoto, Mark Hamill and Mark Day for a cover page feature which ran on May 26.

LOS ANGELES TIMES
According to Lisa Fung, there has been some restructuring done to the 'Cutting-Edge' section and they no longer cover games. Pitched the live-action angle to entertainment editor, but no interest at this time.

NEW YORK TIMES
Cybertime writer Ashley Dunn completed an interview with producer David Downing and Tom Wilson for a possible item to run in his weekly column.

PEOPLE
Samantha Miller said the publication generally does not cover sequels and will not commit to doing any coverage at this time.

PLAYBOY
Due to scheduling conflicts, Brad Marlowe was unable to visit the set of *Wing Commander Prophecy* but would like to continue to receive information for future coverage.

SCI-FI BUZZ
Upon receipt of an EPK, David Desaro will run a segment on *Wing Commander Prophecy* closer to release date.

SCI-FI UNIVERSE
Unable to coordinate set visit due to conflict in their schedule.

STAR 98.7
Would only be able to do live remote coverage. Since the title is embargoed until the end of the shoot, KA was unable to coordinate the set visit.

TIME-OUT NY
Pitched Hugh Sterbakov's feature on *Wing Commander Prophecy* to editor Tom Similijan who may be interested in running the story in conjunction with the release date.

TURNER ENTERTAINMENT REPORT
Upon receipt of an EPK, Mark Marino will run a segment on *Wing Commander Prophecy* closer to release date.

USA TODAY
Bruce Haring was not interested a set visit.

VI. Holiday Gift Guide Outreach

KillerApp disseminated a *Wing Commander: Prophecy* information packet including a product brief and a pitch letter. KA initiated follow-up with these publications to determine holiday gift guide coverage.

The following publications were contacted and actively pitched to *include Wing Commander: Prophecy* products in their gift guide columns.

AMERICAN WOMAN
Bridgette Kelly said the holiday gift guide will not include technology products.

AXCESS
Left messages for Mark East.

BIKINI
Left messages for Paul Semel.

BOY'S LIFE
Rachel Buchholtz said she didn't think *Wing Commander* was appropriate for their target audience of 14 and under.

CHILDREN'S SOFTWARE REVUE
Ann Orr needed product by early September to consider for gift guide. She will consider all final product for later reviews.

COMPUTER LIFE
Left messages for Jessica Shattuck.

COMPUTER GAME ENTERTAINMENT
Allen Raush isn't sure if they are doing the gift guide.

DISNEY ADVENTURES
Gina Pera said only titles that were final packaged product by 9/1 were included in the gift guide.

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY
KA sent all available Wing Commander information to Kipp Cheng for consideration for the October 10 multimedia issue.

DIGITAL HOME ENTERTAINMENT
Marianne Cotter said they are not doing a gift guide this year.

FAMILY FUN
Left message for Greg Lauzon.

FAMILY LIFE
Left message for Rebecca Zakin.

FAMILY PC
Left messages for Kurt Carlson.

G.Q.
Left message for Don Steinberg.

HOME PC
Left messages for Julie Cohen-Strasberg.

NEW YORK MAGAZINE
Left messages for Corky Pollan.

NEWSWEEK
All available information was sent to N'gai Croal per his late August deadline. Exact date of issue of guide to be determined.

NICKELODEON MAGAZINE
Left message for Laura Galen.

OPPENHEIMER TOY PORTFOLIO
Left message for James Oppenheim.

PARADE
Steve Kent needed to receive playable product by September 1 to consider product for inclusion in gift guide.

PARENTING
Bonnie Monte said their gift guide closed in early July and was interested in final product only.

PARENT'S DIGEST
Left message for Katherine Barrett.

PC MAGAZINE
Mike Ryan is still determining which products will be included in the guide.

PC COMPUTING
Sent all available information to Ron White for possible inclusion in the gift guide.

PENTHOUSE
Gerald Vandleun is featuring only one CD-ROM in his holiday round-up, it will be Riven. Their holiday roundup includes many hi-tech gadgets/products but only one slot for games.

PEOPLE
Left message for Samantha Miller.

ROLLING STONE
Steve Morgenstern would like playable product by early October for possible inclusion.

TIME
Left message for Josh Quittner.

U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT
Susan Gregory Thomas would like reviewable product by early October for possible inclusion.

USA WEEKEND
Currently, there is no holiday gift guide scheduled.

WIRED
Left message for Jake Ward.

Short Lead Publications

KA conducted short lead holiday gift guide outreach to determine which outlets were preparing holiday gift guides and which were interested in covering *Wing Commander: Prophecy*.

A. The following publications were contacted and actively pitched to include *Wing Commander: Prophecy* in their gift guide.

DAYTONA BEACH NEWS JOURNAL
Dave Hunter received all information and product for inclusion. His gift columns ran every week after Thanksgiving until Christmas.

DENVER POST
Cynthia Pasquale received all product information. Historically, they include a "Gift Idea Per Day" throughout November and December.

FORT LAUDERDALE SUN SENTINEL
Gretchen Day-Bryant would received all product information. She will begin compiling information in November.

FRESNO BEE
Bonnie Hearn received detailed information, product and artwork for possible inclusion.

HOUSTON CHRONICLE
Jane Marshall received all product information for the gift guide. The issue will go out around Thanksgiving.

JOURNAL NEWSPAPERS (Fairfax, VA)
Linda Schubert received all product information for inclusion in the November guide.

KNOXVILLE NEWS-SENTINEL
Wade Saye requested screen shots and product for inclusion in the gift guide.

LEXINGTON HERALD-LEADER
Sheila Reed requested that all materials be submitted by early November. They do not have a structured idea of what will be included, they are simply reviewing whatever products the staff likes.

LONG BEACH PRESS TELEGRAM
Janet Taylor received information on all products available. She said first preference always goes to advertisers and the she tries to choose the products are most unique and appealing to her readers.

LOS ANGELES DAILY NEWS
Barbara DeWitt wasn't sure who was handling the gift guide this year, but to send all product information to her for consideration.

LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL
Arlene Jacobson said the feature section does gift ideas through the end of December. Jacobson said that if we sent her product information and artwork for review, she would find a place for them.

MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL
Joanne Demsky said they were collecting information for their gift guide and to send materials as soon as possible.

NEW YORK NEWSDAY
Joe Gelmis is planning a holiday gift guide with tentative dates set for last week of October or first week of November. Gelmis requested all available final product and screen shots.

NEWS TRIBUNE (Tacoma, WA)
Ted Pearson said they have two holiday gift guides coming out, on November 24 and December 14. Pearson requested all available product.

RIVERSIDE PRESS ENTERPRISE
Laurie Lucas received detailed information, product and art for gift guide consideration.

SAN-ANTONIO EXPRESS NEWS
Beverly Guerra is interested in receiving information on all products.

SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS
Mary Gottschalk is putting together a series of articles about gifts under $15 and doesn't feel *Wing Commander: Prophecy* is appropriate. She said to send all information to technology writer Dan Gillmor.

SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE
Steve LaRue is working on the holiday gift roundup and needed to receive all product by the end of November. He prefers to receive final product and will be looking at the gaming/adult educational reference titles in particular.

SEATTLE TIMES
John Merrill said they will be doing a gift guide and would like to receive all product information.

ST. LOUIS DISPATCH
Lisa Adams said that products appear in the gift guide have to also buy ad space in the paper. Adams said she will hold all materials for possible inclusion in upcoming pieces.

TAMPA TRIBUNE
Donna Strickland said it was too early to be thinking about the guide, but requested all product information.

TULSA WORLD
Debbie Jackson received color art and all materials.

WILMINGTON JOURNAL
Mary Thatch said they are doing a gift guide and she would love to receive information on all products.

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL
Jill Fredel requested that all product be sent to technology editor Bill Hayden. They will be doing a series of gift articles throughout November and December, but haven't decided on the focus or the editor.

B. Each of the following publications have been left messages or declined receipt of *Wing Commander: Prophecy* products because they did not produce gift guides.

ALBANY TIMES UNION, Karen Potter
ALBERQUERQUE JOURNAL, Rene Kimball
ARIZONA DAILY STAR, Judith Whipple
ARIZONA REPUBLIC, Betty Beard
ASBURY PARK PRESS, Patti Martin
ASHEVILLE CITIZEN TIMES, Lydia Carrington
AUSTIN AMERICAN-STATESMAN, Jane Greg
BALTIMORE SUN, Catherine Cook
BIRMINGHAM POST-HERALD, Tabitha Sparkes.
BOSTON HERALD, Sonia Turek
BUFFALO NEWS, Joyce Ware
CHICAGO SUN-TIMES, Casey Ladowski
CINCINNATI ENQUIRER, Sara Pearce
CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER, Michael Bennett
COLORADO SPRINGS GAZETTE, Julie Andrews
COLUMBUS DISPATCH, Becky Kover
COMMERCIAL APPEAL, Charlotte Durham
DAILY OKLAHOMAN, Linda Miller
DAILY PRESS (Newport News, VA), Neil Burns
DALLAS MORNING NEWS, Jean Nash Johnson
DAYTON DAILY NEWS, Meredith Moss
DES MOINES REGISTER, Jennifer Phelps
DETROIT NEWS, Kelly Kolhagen
DETROIT FREE PRESS, Dale Parry
FORT MYERS NEWS-PRESS, Genetta Adams
FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM, Bob Hamilton
GREENVILLE NEWS, Wanda Lloyd
HACKENSACK RECORD, Lois DiTommaso
HONOLULU ADVISOR, Wanda Adams
INDIANAPOLIS STAR, Kimberly Parker
KANSAS CITY STAR, Ellen Foley
LAS VEGAS REVIEW JOURNAL, Frank Fertado
MIAMI HERALD, Lynn Medford
MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE, Randy Miranda.
MORNING CALL (Allentown, PA), Nadine Hasenecz

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, Paul Shultz
NEW YORK TIMES, Robin Stone
NEW YORK POST, Kathy Bishop
NEW HAVEN REGISTER, Rich Sandella
NEWARK STAR LEDGER, Dean Rowland
0MAHA WORLD HERALD, Howard Marcus
0RANGE COUNTY REGISTER, Sandy Abair
0REGONIAN, Gayle Karol
PALM BEACH POST, Melissa Segrest
PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER, Linda Harris
PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE, Georgia Sauer
POST AND COURIER, Elizabeth Cantler
PROVIDENCE JOURNAL BULLETIN, Gail Ciampa
RALEIGH NEWS & OBSERVER, Felicia Gressette.
RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH, Cindy Creasy
ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS, Mary Winter
SACRAMENTO BEE, Scott Lebar
SALT LAKE TRIBUNE, Judy Collins
SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, Liz Lufkin
SARASOTA HERALD TRIBUNE, Bill Steiden
SEATTLE POST INTELLIGENCER, John Engstrom
SPOKANE SPOKESMAN REVIEW, Kathleen Gilligan
SPRINGFIELD UNION-NEWS, Mary Kimbal
TOLEDO BLADE, Tom Gearhart
USA TODAY, Katy Kelly
VIRGINIAN PILOT, Eric Sundquist
WARCESTER TELEGRAM & GAZETTE, David Mawson
WASHINGTON POST, Jura Koncius
WASHINGTON TIMES, Robert Devaney
WICHITA EAGLE, Tom Schaeffer

IF QUAKE IS THE NEEDLE...



Home Page GO!

simulations: [flight | racing]

Wing Commander: Prophecy

Playable Test Demo

DEVELOPER
Origin
PUBLISHER
Origin

SIZE
13.7 MB

ADDED
11/1/97

MIN. REQUIREMENTS
P166, 32MB, Win95, DirectX 5, 3Dfx card

Wing Commander -- one of the best selling games of all time -- isredefined with Wing Commander: Prophecy.

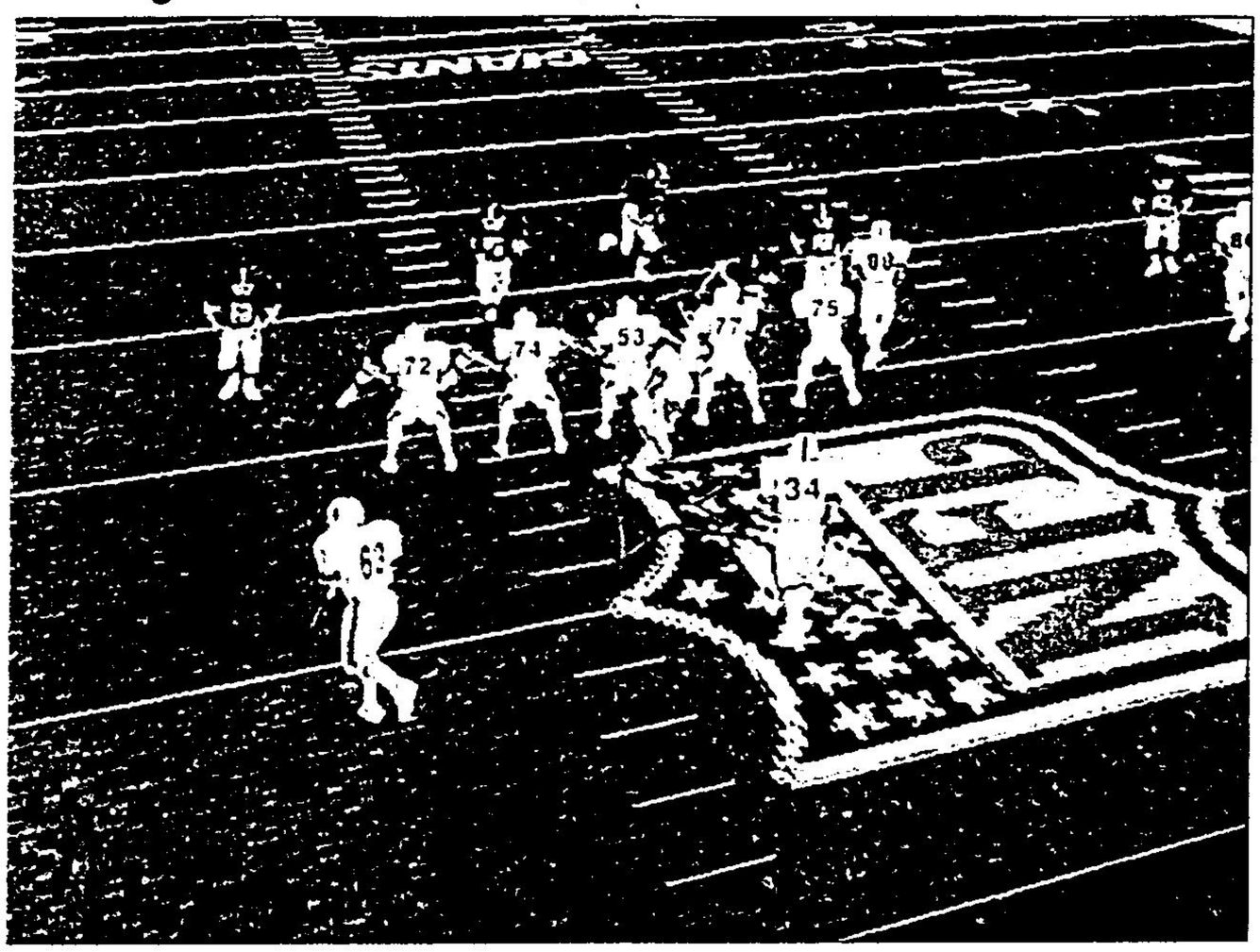
A new space combat engine for unequaled visual excitement andtactical realism. A new and terrifying alien menace, conceptualizedby renowned artist Syd Mead. A new story that begins the next chapterin the series. New graphics and a hard-edged soundtrack that makeProphecy look and sound like no other Wing Commander.

FTP: WCPTEST.EXE - From *ftp.avault.com*
FTP: WCPTEST.EXE - From *ftp.ea.com*

Home Page

28.8K: **91** Min. | 56K: **57** Min. | 64K: **53** Min. | 128K: **26** Min. | T1: **1** Min.

You Ready for Some Football?



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The designers haven't
ged the game over pre-
s versions, but they have improved it. Visually, the cartoon player "sprites" are larger, their actions more fluid, and, while some play action may be hard to see from the standard camera angle, "ABC's MNF '98" offers 10 camera-angle options at the touch of a keypad button: from behind the defense or offense; from the end zone; eight feet up from field level, looking down the line of scrimmage. There's the obligatory Goodyear blimp shot, too.

Mastering the game is easily done through a nifty point-and-click device named the Play Caller. With apologies to John Madden, the Play Caller is a series of arrows and lines (on both offense and defense) that dictates the flow of the play to come. On offense you can choose running, passing, trick or special plays, and fine-tune variations on each. The color-coded play diagrams are difficult to read at first — this is football, after all, and everything about football is difficult to learn, at first. To choose from the playbook, simply click on the diagram. After the players set up on the line, click again on the field to snap the ball.

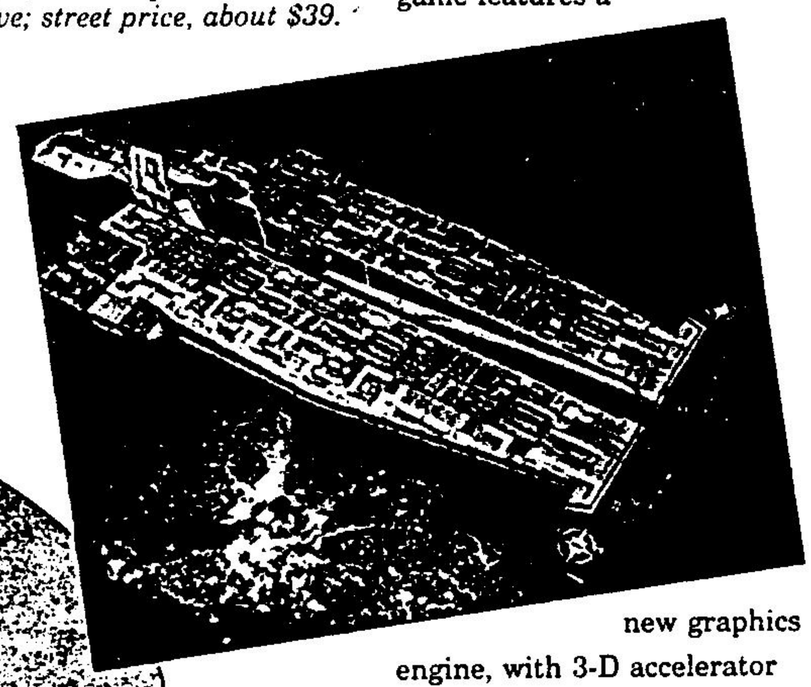
Once the fundamentals are in hand, the game allows plenty of tweaks. One of the most satisfying is to design your own plays using the powerful editing functions of the program — try a flea flicker or an audible at the line, on defense use a monster alignment or gamble on a show blitz. On my 166MHz Pentium machine, most of the program elements worked smoothly, although there were some audio glitches when I gave in and turned off the mute to listen to Al and Frank's play-by-plays.

A built-in goodie that will please Webbies is the Internet-working capabilities of the program: Included with the conventional CD-ROM is a second "Mplayer" CD that facilitates multiplayer matchups online, assuming you have an Internet service provider. Virtual players can also subscribe to statistical services to automatically update teams' and players' stats.

ABC's Monday Night Football '98. From ABC Interactive, for IBM and compatibles; minimum requirements are a 100MHz Pentium processor, 16 mgs RAM, double speed CD-ROM drive; street price, about $39.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

MOVIE-MAD gamemaker Chris Roberts took the third and fourth editions of his "Wing Commander" series deep into cinematic territory. Last year's "Wing Commander IV," the most expensive game ever made (at $10 million plus), alienated many fans by emphasizing long filmed scenes with actors over first-person space combat. Unwilling to cut back on film segments, Roberts bailed out of the series and got funding from Microsoft for start-up interactive moviemaking company Digital Anvil, co-founded with his film director buddy Robert Rodriguez. Meanwhile, series developer Origin Systems has returned to basics with the fifth installment, **Wing Commander: Prophecy**, a sci-fi combat simulation enhanced by brief filmed episodes designed not to slow down the action. Due after Thanksgiving from Electronic Arts, for Pentium PCs running Windows 95, the game features a



new graphics engine, with 3-D accelerator support for greater realism, and stars series veteran Mark Hamill battling a new alien menace. It can be played against the computer, head-to-head via modem or multiplayer on a local area network or the Internet.

— Gelmis

Celebs In Cyberspace

You can talk online with these big names:



AP Photo
Rosie O'Donnell

Thinking About Getting A 3Dfx Board?



By Knight

If you've been waiting for a reason to buy a 3Dfx accelerator, now's the time! **Origin** has released a 'test' of their new game *Wing Commander: Prophecy*. This is the fifth game in their popular *Wing Commander* series and the first with a brand new storyline, facing a new menace. The test requires a Voodoo based board with the latest drivers for Glide and Direct X. So if you have a 3Dfx accelerator hurry over to our downloads section and get this test. You won't be sorry. If you don't have a 3Dfx board, buy, borrow or..., well get one. I borrowed a friend's Monster 3D board (his computer is down) and installed everything. It went smoothly. Then I loaded the test. It is awesome!

In other words, according to Webster,"inspiring of emotion in which dread, veneration, and wonder are variously mingled." You've got to try this game. The sense of size is much larger than games like it before. The action is fast, and furious, the sights are almost distracting. I keep finding myself watching the explosions instead of lining up my next target. This 'test' is not even a mission from the game. It's a simulator sample that looks, sounds and feels great. In this timed simulation, the Kilrathi again come to life to test your flying skills. As Casey, a rookie, you and two wingmen have a whole pride of cats to skin, and very little time to do it. As I write this the current high score is 24 with some gamers reporting scores in the upper teens and many more just hoping to make it that high. If this is a taste of the real game then **Origin** has kept their promise of emphasis on game play! If you still don't want to get a 3Dfx card just yet, **Origin** assures us a non-3Dfx demo will be out soon. *Wing Commander: Prophecy* should be ready just in time for stuffing in stockings next month.

The full game will be playable both **with** and **without** 3Dfx enabled. It's just the current 'test' that requires the 3Dfx board. Here's a chance to make sure the latest game in an all time classic series runs on your computer. My system did not quite meet the minimum requirements so there were some jerky spots. It was still very playable, not nearly as bad as when I first tried playing *Wing Commander 3* on my old 486. **Origin** wanted to test different systems and boards to make sure the game would be ready. (See the note below for an explanation from **Origin**.) Download and try it. One look and I think you'll agree that it is.

The following is excerpted from the **Origin** Readme file that accompanies the test download:

"NOTE: This test is designed to check compatibility between *Wing Commander: Prophecy*, 3Dfx cards, and the thousands of possible hardware combinations therein. This test is not representative of the final product. Art, AI, input device support, frame rate, minimum requirements, and load times are unfinished. We encourage everyone to check out the full *Wing Commander: Prophecy* demo when it becomes available for a more accurate indicator of the final product. Thanks for your understanding.

[2.0] Minimum Requirements

The minimum requirements for the 3Dfx test are as follows:

- ▢ Pentium 166 MHz
- ▢ 32 Megabytes of RAM
- ▢ 2 Megabyte PCI or AGP video card supporting 16-bit color depth
- ▢ 40 Megabytes free hard drive space
- ▢ Windows 95 with DirectX 5.0 installed
- ▢ 3Dfx card with Glide version 2.43 installed
- ▢ Sound Card supported by DirectX 5.0
- ▢ Joystick

Please note that the described requirements are not indicative of the final game requirements. Please check the *Wing Commander: Prophecy* box for final requirements, or check the *Wing Commander: Prophecy* web site. Please note, the game should run acceptably on machines slower than a Pentium 166, and overall performance can be affected drastically by the amount of RAM in your machine. Please feel free to drop us a line, and let us know how the game runs for you."

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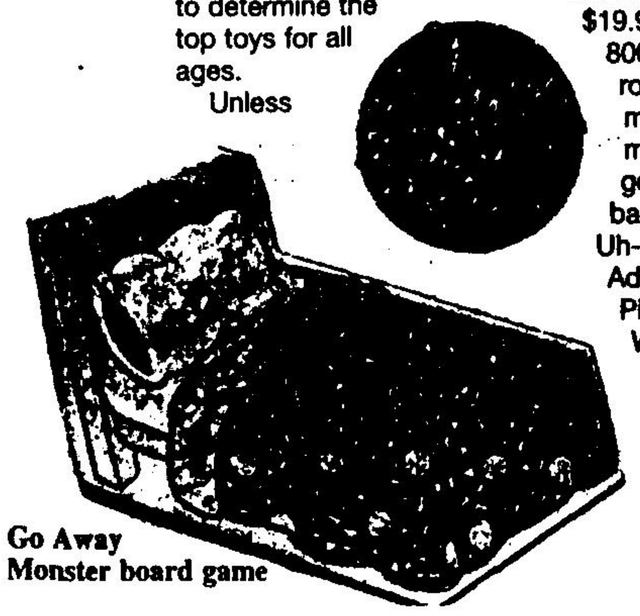
Pass go: Check out some of best

Toys listed include some of the newest game titles available, as well as top sellers from recent years.

Games highlighted with an * represent selections from *The Best Toys, Books, Videos & Software for Kids 1998*, an annual guide from the Oppenheim Group, a not-for-profit organization that conducts national tests to determine the top toys for all ages.

Unless otherwise noted, games are available at most Target, Kay-Bee Toys, Wal-Mart and Toys "R" Us stores, or other major toy retail outlets. Software is available at major computer retail outlets.



Go Away Monster board game

Board Games

■ ***The Busytown Board Game.** Ages 3 to 6. $19.99 (Ravensburger). 800-631-1272. Players roll a color die and move ahead to the matching color. Roll a gold bug and get sent back to the beginning. Uh-oh! (Available at Early Adventures in Pembroke Pines, Gifted Child in Weston, Lizzie's Looking Glass in Boca Raton, Learning Express in Coral Square Mall, Dolls and Toys to Treasure in Boca Raton.)

■ **Go Away Monster.** Preschool. $18 (Gamewright). 800-638-7568. Now preschoolers can conquer nighttime fears by getting rid of the monsters for good. Reach into the bag and pull out puzzle pieces that fit bedroom board game. If players pull out a monster they throw him out of the room, showing the scary guy who's boss.

■ ***I Spy Memory Game.** Ages 4 to 8. $19.95 (Briarpatch). 800-232-7427. Based on the popular book series, players match the cards that show pairs of objects — often from another angle. Can be

PLEASE SEE **LIST** / 8E

games

games

A little friendly competition can help families stay together by improving communication.

By SHERRI WINSTON
Staff Writer

Building better communication through spirited competition is the name of the game, so say experts in the field of organized play.

Everyone can benefit from games — whether an old-fashioned Monopoly set or a new-fangled computer version of dominoes,

If families have been frustrated about the lack of quality time spent together during the year, perhaps the holiday season is the perfect time to invest in a friendly game.

Monty and Ann Stambler, a husband and wife team of child specialists, create a variety of award-winning toys for Gamewright. Speaking practically in unison, they say, "Playing games together is a great way to grow together. If you wanted to impart to your children your viewpoint of life, how you interact with people, nothing could give you a richer substrate than games."

The Stamblers believe that "all the behavior involved in game playing is communication."

And it's interaction in the traditional sense of the word.

"If you ask 99 out of 100 people what interactive means, they would think computers. I think that's a misnomer," says Tim Walsh, co-creator of several board games, including TriBond and Blurt.

Walsh says board games generate a distinct camaraderie and bond among

PLEASE SEE **GAMES** / 8E

games games games

FROM **PAGE 1E**

GAMES: Name of game is more interaction and communication

players. "People take turns and look at one another and they laugh with one another and they use all the social skills it takes to interact with a group," he says.

Tom Dusenberry, president of Hasbro Interactive, believes game players need not choose one or the other — computer vs. board. Why not try both?

"I think computer games are an alternative to a classic parlor game," he says. Since 1995, Hasbro Interactive has taken the library of classic games such as Yahtzee, Trivial Pursuit and Battleship and translated them for computer play.

"It's a completely different experience," Dusenberry says. "Computer games that we develop are made to be played one-on-one against computer or with other partners at the computer or with partners over the Internet."

To choose games that excite the entire family, experts offer some tips:

■ Joanne Oppenheim, president of the Oppenheim Toy Portfolio, a not-for-profit organization that ranks toys annually, says young children benefit from games that allow them to "make something happen. It reinforces their independence and their sense of can-do."

■ The Stamblers encourage adults to be honest about their own temperaments and style of play. "Pick a game that matches your child's level of frustration and tolerance."

■ Don't be afraid to change the rules, say the Stamblers. "It's all right to let kids win or have an advantage. Some parents might think that doing that will make their children weak. It won't. In fact, giving them an advantage increases their self-esteem."

■ Rhea Zakich, creator of the Ungame, says a game "gets the family to sit down together. Ground rules, no matter what they are, bring people together. Look for games that unify, make you laugh. I believe the family that laughs together, stays together."

■ Be careful of age recommendations on the boxes. Oppenheim says, "The boxes are often a little misleading. We find with a lot of games, the age labels are stretched a little far. There's nothing wrong with your 6-year-old if he can't play a game, because the age on the box may be stretched. You have to be a good advocate for your child. Bring home things that are going to support learning."



It's a Wonderful Life board game

exit. Helps children develop visual perception and strategy techniques.

■ **Block by Block.** All ages. $6 (Binary Arts). 888-789-9538. Block by Block helps develop spatial thinking in puzzlers for all ages. Combine the seven pieces to match the puzzle shapes shown on each card — 60 different cards.

■ **Top Spin.** All ages. $6 (Binary Arts). 888-789-9538. The object is simple — just put the bright yellow numbered pegs in order. Slide the 20 tokens along the plastic track and flip the turnstile to rearrange them. Just wait 'til you get to the last number!

Computer Software

■ ***ActiMates Early Learning PC Pack System.** Ages 2 to 5. $109.95 for Barney; $64.95 for PC transmitter box and CD-ROM or VHS tape. (Microsoft). 800-426-9400. With PC Pack, use Windows '95. Includes 16-inch, plush Barney whose head and arm moves. Sit him beside child and with help of radio transmitter and receiver, he interacts with VCR videotape or PC.

■ **Richard Scarry's Best Math Program Ever.** Ages 4 to 7. $39.95 (Simon & Schuster Interactive) 800-983-5333. CD-ROM for Windows '95 or Mac. Teaches basic math skills — adding, subtraction, shapes and more. Based on the popular Nickelodeon series *The Busy World of Richard Scarry*.

■ ***Scholastic's The Magic School Bus Explores the Rainforest.** Ages 6 to 10. $34.95 (Microsoft). CD-ROM for Windows '95. Children can explore the wonder of the rainforest through games, learning about climate, insects, birds and habitats.

■ **CROC: Legend of Gobbos.** Ages 8 to adult. $49.95 (Fox Interactive). No phone available. Sony PlayStation. Players attempt to keep the peace on Gobbo Island while in the scaly shoes of Croc. The evil musician, Baron, is always an eerie threat.

■ **Tonka Search and Rescue.** Ages 4 and up. $29.95 (Hasbro Interactive). 800-400-1352. CD-ROM for Windows '95. Players can maneuver 22 different three-dimensional vehicles through land, air and sea rescue missions.

■ **Goosebumps: Attack of the Mutant.** Ages 8 to 14. $34.95 (Dreamworks Interactive). Windows '95. 800-426-9400. A first person, 3-D action game based on the R.L. Stine series. Featuring celebrity voices, including original *Batman*, Adam West, players must fight to save the world from diabolical plots and crazy capers.

■ **Math Invaders.** Ages 9 and up. $29.95 (Simon & Schuster). 800-983-5333. CD-ROM for Windows '95 or Mac. Kids can flex their mathematical problem-solving muscles using the shoot-'em-up game. Use animation and non-lethal weaponry to outwit opponents in geometry, division, multiplication and early algebra.

▼ **Pictionary.** All ages. $29.95 (Hasbro Interactive). 800-400-1352. CD-ROM for Windows '95. Players assemble at trendy Soho Art Gallery soiree and encounter six new ways to play an old favorite.



■ **Nile: An Ancient Egyptian Quest.** Ages 10 and up. $39.95 (Simon & Schuster). 800-983-5333. CD-ROM for Windows '95. Explore the splendor of ancient Egypt while on a quest to restore the ka (life force) of three long-dead pharaohs, setting them on a path to the afterlife.

■ **Let's Talk About Me Some More.** Ages 12 and up. $29.95 (Simon & Schuster). 800-983-5333. CD-ROM for Windows '95, Windows 3.0 and Mac. Features an interactive diary and offers tips on fashion, personal development and health. Also provides a mentor program, which features a career test. Based on test results, players matched with famous person in similar field. On second CD, players can scan in photos and have fun changing and rearranging their hairstyles.

■ **The Lost World: Jurassic Park.** Ages 12 and up. $49.95 (Dreamworks Interactive). 800-426-9400. Sony PlayStation. Allows players to be both the hunter and the hunted in 3-D action/adventure that pits man against dinosaur.

■ **Wing Commander Prophecy.** Ages 14 to adult. $39.95 (Origin). 800-245-4525. CD-ROM for Windows '95. Space combat game provides a new chapter in ongoing series. Appearances by Mark Hamill, Tom Wilson and Ginger Allen.

■ **Monopoly Star Wars.** All ages. $49.95 (Hasbro Interactive). 800-400-1352. CD-ROM for Windows '95. Remains true to classic game, but includes three-dimensional renderings of Luke Skywalker, Darth Vader, Princess Leia and others as game tokens. Also includes footage from *Star Wars* movie trilogy.



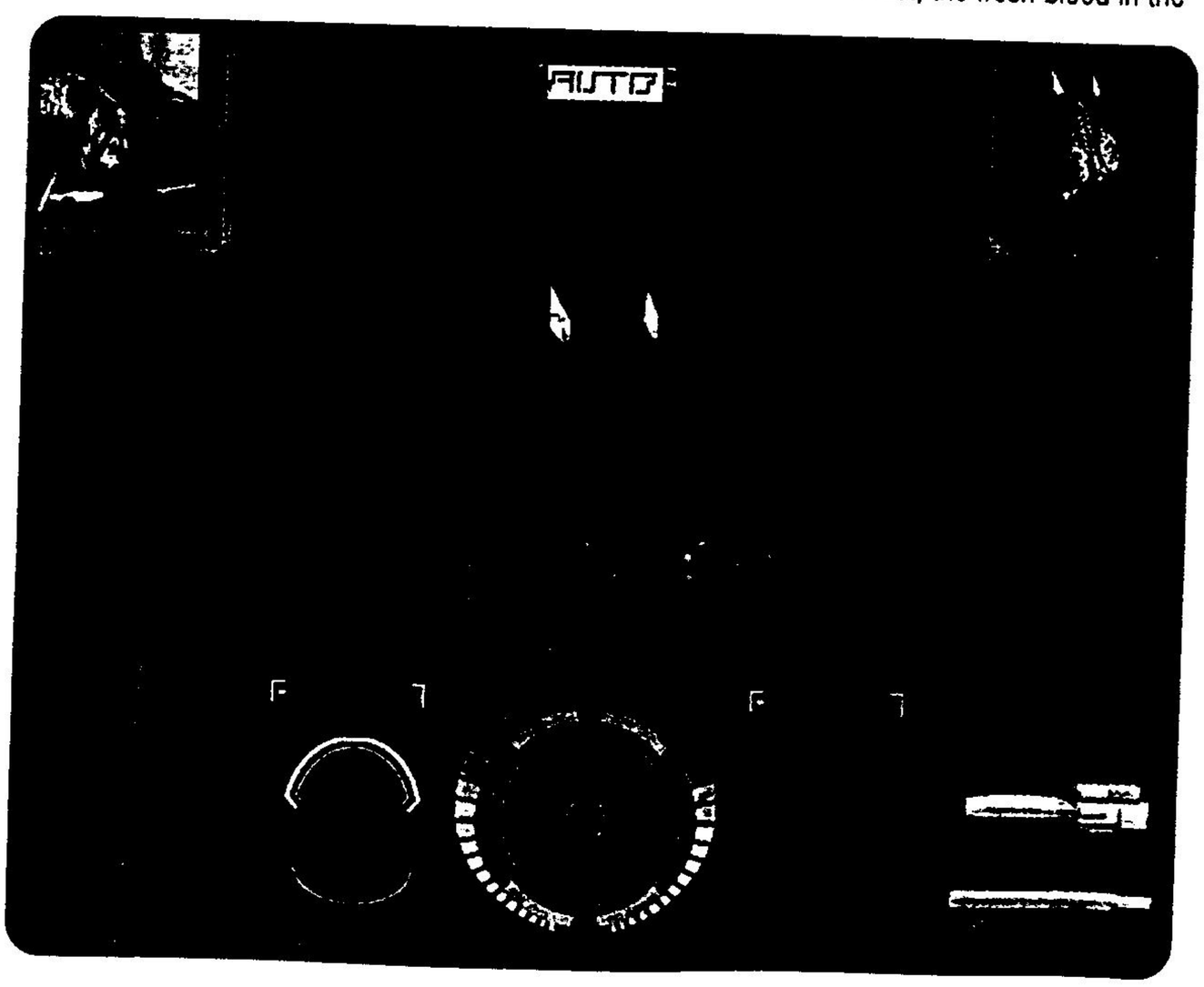


space sims

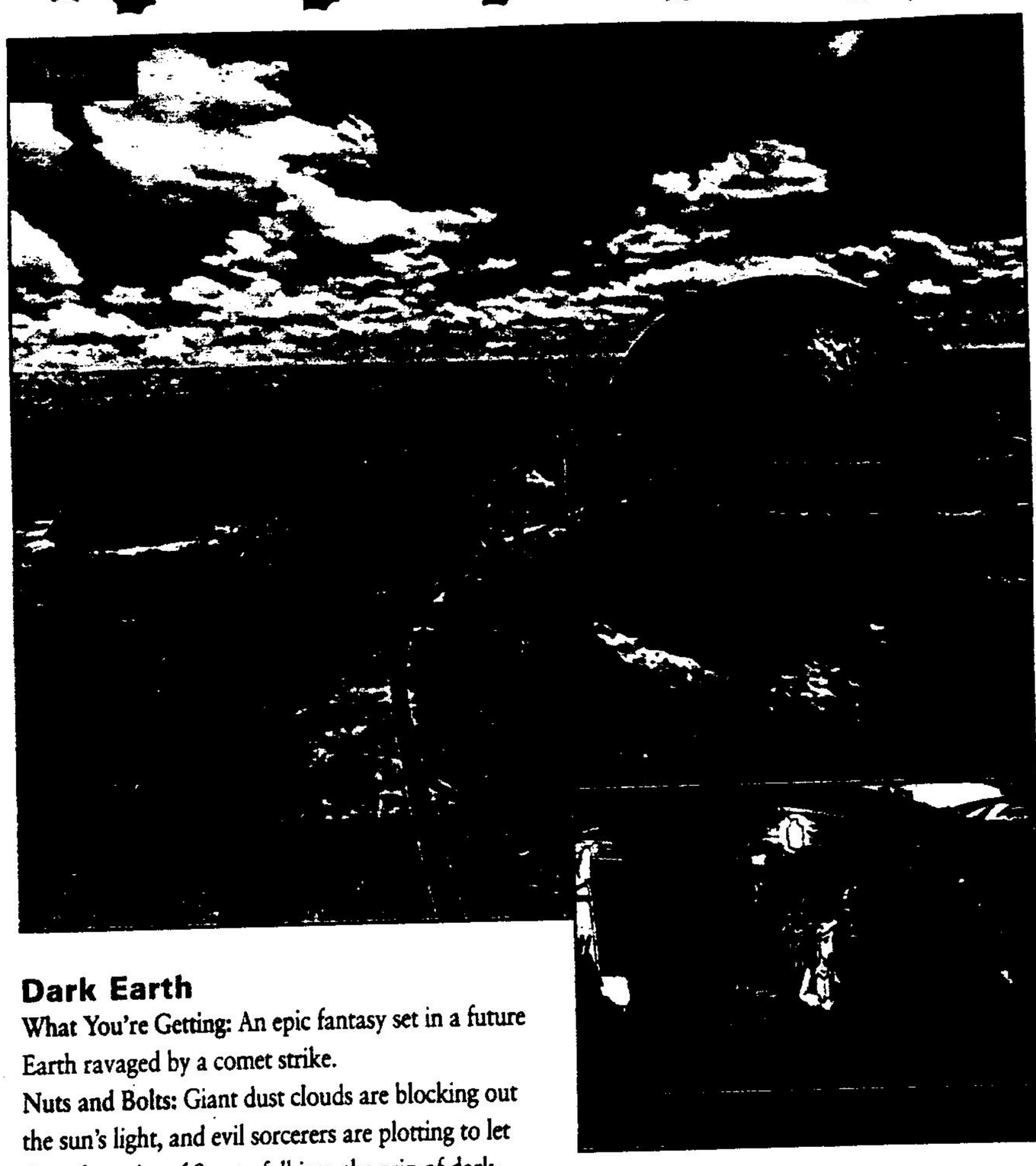
1. Wing Commander: Prophecy

Windows 95 CD-ROM, $59.95
Origin Systems Inc., (800) 245-4525
www.origin.ea.com

It's a new dawn for the WING COMMANDER series. With the departure of series creator Chris Roberts from Origin, the team faced the task of proving that the game wouldn't suffer. Once gamers unwrap WING COMMANDER: PROPHECY, there will be no doubt that the series is alive and well. In fact, the fresh blood in the development team has paid off, as PROPHECY is poised to deliver the richest gameplay experience since WING COMMANDER II.



Although you play a new character—a rookie named Casey—old favorites Mark Hamill, Tom "Maniac" Wilson, and Ginger Lynn Allen are back for the cinematic sequences. Prophecy delivers some of the best-looking cinematics yet, but the emphasis here is on the action, not the movies. An all-new 3D space-combat engine delivers beautifully rendered, fast action—with or without the aid of a 3D card. The look is greatly improved, with dynamic lighting effects and better explosions, as well as nebulae and other effects. Ship combat now features fighter craft with radically different capabilities. The capital ships you face are of unprecedented scale, and aren't likely to be taken out in one mission. The look is very *Babylon 5*-esque, down to the organic appearance of the ships flown by PROPHECY's new, malevolent enemy race. For once we'll see a space-action sim in which battles can have differing outcomes—they aren't always win/lose situations. Also here is multiplayer capability for the first time since the premature WING COMMANDER: ARMADA.



SIM

These are the games that put you in the driver's seat, whether on land, sea, air, or in space. Sims vary in scope and sophistication, but they all appeal to gamers who enjoy having their hands on a hot piece of hardware.

Wing Commander: Prophecy

What You're Getting: Installment number five in the Origin space-combat series.

Nuts and Bolts: A new alien menace threatens space, and you're the young starpilot thrown onto the front line of humanity's defense. With Mark Hamill and Malcolm McDowell's roles as fleet commanders helping to steer the FMV plot-development sequences, Wing Commander: Prophecy promises as much story as star-warring.

Why Pick This One?: Space sims come with no finer pedigree than this epic's. The Wing Commander series has set high marks in both gameplay and production values.

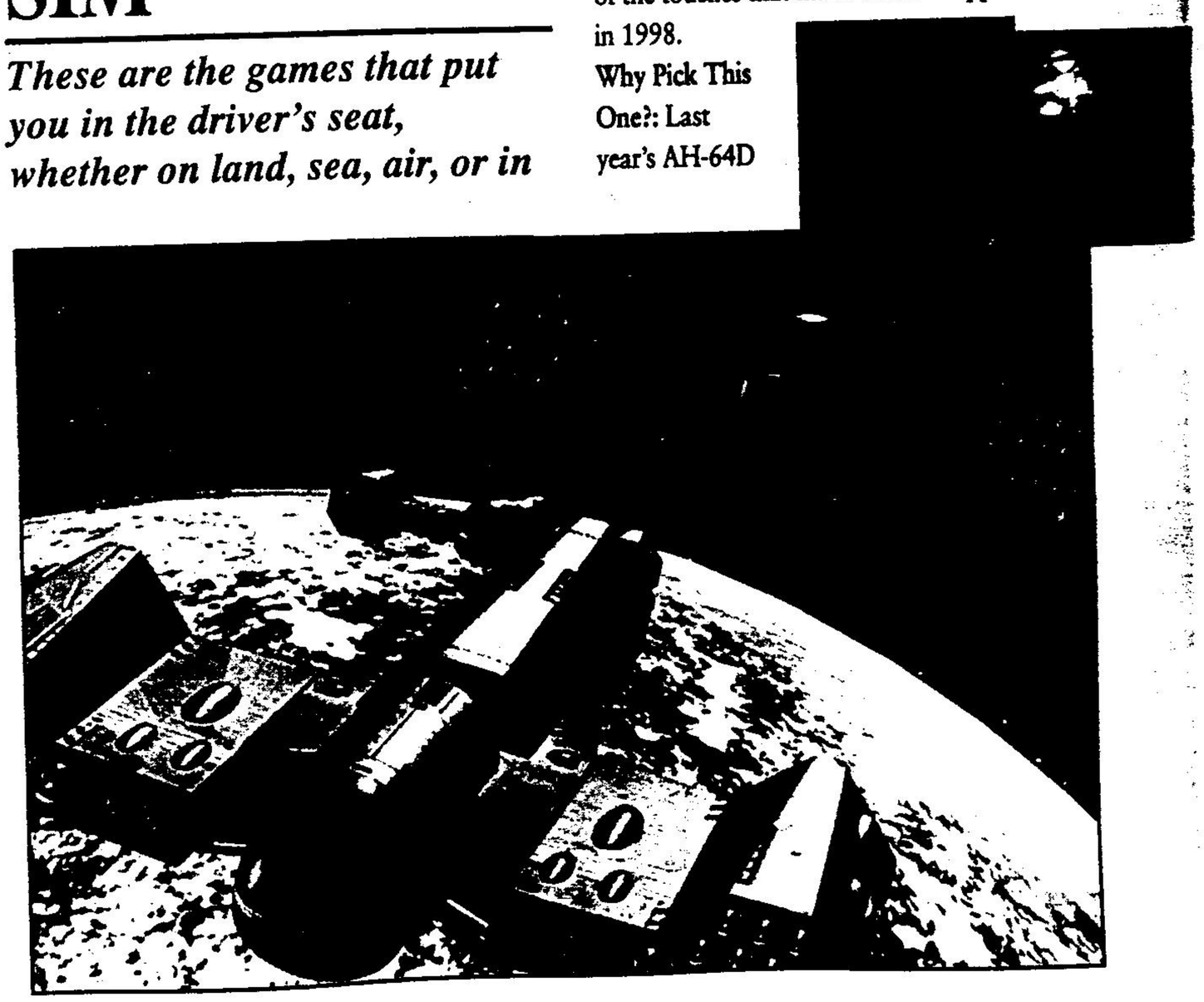
Publisher: Origin; 800-245-4525; www.origin.com

Longbow 2

What You're Getting: A highly detailed helicopter sim from Jane's Combat Simulations, a leading developer of accurate military-vehicle re-creations.

Nuts and Bolts: Picking up on the success of its predecessor, Longbow 2 adds massive multiplay options with huge, sprawling battles coordinated by flight leaders. The night-fighting effects and ability to ride along as a side gunner are just two examples of the touches that make its the chopper sim to beat in 1998.

Why Pick This One?: Last year's AH-64D



Dark Earth

What You're Getting: An epic fantasy set in a future Earth ravaged by a comet strike.

Nuts and Bolts: Giant dust clouds are blocking out the sun's light, and evil sorcerers are plotting to let the refuge city of Sparta fall into the grip of darkness. As Arkhan, a young guard in Sparta, you must save the city—and yourself—before a magical virus claims you.

Why Pick This One?: Designer Kalisto Entertainment has developed an amazingly deep and rich game environment in which to tell a grandly operatic story. Gamers who appreciate an involving plot will be well-rewarded by this one.

Publisher: MicroProse; 800-879-7529; www.darkearth.com

The Curse of Monkey Island

What You're Getting: A conversation-driven, graphically rich adventure from George Lucas' interactive storytellers.

Nuts and Bolts: You're a laid-back pirate in search of a way to rescue your old flame from a malicious phantom buccaneer. Snappy, smart conversations and intriguing puzzles will get you closer to the goal, and with first-rate scripting, voice actors, and animation, the ride promises to be a fantastic one.

Why Pick This One?: It's a high-tech and humorous follow-up to one of the oldest and most revered Lucas titles, The Secret of Monkey Island. 'Nuff said.

Publisher: LucasArts; 800-985-8227; www.lucasarts.com

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Now, what do I want this Christmas season...hmm...now let's see...Well, it would be nice to get a muzzle for GamerX during staff meetings...a couple days off would be a treat...

As for games, I'm hoping I get an action fix from Saint Nick this year. I've had enough eyestrain from Red Alert, Age of Empires, and Dark Reign. Basically, I'm expecting no less than id's Quake II for the 3D shooter in me. Now that Origin's Wing Commander: Prophecy is more gameplay than gimmick, I'll add that to my list, too. Activision's Battlezone, MicroProse's Dark Earth, and EA Sports' FIFA: Road to the World Cup are also must-haves. And, not to



push it or anything, Nickie, but STB's Velocity 128 accelerator, powered by nVidia's RIVA 128, and ThrustMaster's high-end stick, the F-16 FLCS, are nice stocking stuffers. They're all on my list. I'm worth it.

Sure, it always looks good to be on the cutting edge when it comes to holiday gift giving, but some of us mutts just can't foot the bill. For those of you who don't rub elbows with the Rockefellers and Carnegies of the world but still want to give the gift of 3D this holiday season, here are a few tips.

- GamerX
  A Real Wish List
- Bobbie Brown
  Hardware Honcho
- Lee Roderick
  Strategy/Wargame
- George Jones
  Sports Nut
- Dave Salvator
  Simulation
- Jeff Green
  Console Crazy
- Bill Harper
  Action Maniac
- Eric Smith
  RPG/Adventure Addict

That's right--the price of a good standalone 3D card or 2D/3D combo that runs all the hot games Bobby can't stop raving about, including Quake, Jedi Knight, and Tomb Raider II, doesn't have to leave you embittered and ornery. If you're looking for a combo 2D/3D solution, Diamond's new Stealth II S220 is the ticket. This beauty, powered by Rendition's V2100 chip, costs only $120. The clincher is that the V2100 shares the same basic architecture with the vaunted V2200. The V2100 has a slower DAC, and in Diamond's implementation there is no video-in or video-out.

If all you need is 3D at a discount, try VideoLogic's Apocalypse 3DX or Matrox's M3D, both powered by NEC and VideoLogic's PowerVR chip. PowerVR Extreme games, such as Nightmare Creatures, Tomb Raider, and Unreal, as well as games based on the GLQuake engine (Quake, Quake II, Hexen II, Half-Life, Daikatana, and SiN), will scream on these cards. And your little terror will love that.

Click to See How
The Hottest Upgrades Create the Coolest PC
SPEAKERS



There's some incredible stuff coming out for all the console systems this winter; consider yourself lucky if you have a Nintendo 64, PlayStation, or Saturn. Consider yourself doubly lucky if you're on my list for the holidays--I'm feeling mighty generous this year. Remember, folks, let's be good to one another.

Sony PlayStation

The PlayStick from Z Products is on the top of my list. This ingenious little device straps onto Sony's standard PlayStation controller and transforms it from a thumb-blistering experience into sheer joy. Strap on the PlayStick and the controller's four separate directional buttons (a perfect example of poor ergonomic design) are magically melded into one sweet little joystick with four--count 'em, four--detachable knobs that you can change on a whim. At about five bucks retail price this makes an excellent stocking stuffer for all PlayStation owners.



For the special person in my life, I've got my eye on Act Labs' new EagleMax analog joystick. This stick is simply a dream, and at $39 it's a better buy than a dedicated steering wheel. It's fully programmable, has switchable digital, analog, and steering wheel emulation modes, and even has a throttle. Of course, the old standby PsychoPad K.O. from Act Labs is still my main controller. It's programmable, has a macro function for programming combos, and features excellent button feel. I wouldn't mind picking up another for myself, but there's no way I'm giving one to a friend...it provides too much of an advantage.

On the software side, I'm picking up a copy of G Police from Psygnosis. This sci-fi flight sim has a great mission and story line integration, and features the signature Psygnosis graphic touches. I'm also getting one of my "needy" friends (who shall remain nameless) a copy of Tomb Raider II from Eidos. That buxom babe Lara Croft is back and ready to rumble. Our heroine jiggles her way through levels that blow away the original Tomb Raider. Sexist? Yes. Fun? Hell yes. Other stocking stuffers for friends on my list include Sony's Bushido Blade and GT Interactive's Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee to satisfy my adventure jones. For console action/adventure I can't decide between Fox Interactive's Croc or Gex II from Crystal Dynamics, so I'm asking for both.

How to Get It

- The PlayStick, Z Products, around $5
- EagleMax analog joystick, Act Labs, $39

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Reported by: Rex Mendoza

Wednesday, December 3, 1997 - 23:22 CST

Wing Commander: Prophecy Ship Date

Origin's Wing Commander: Prophecy has gone gold and is being duplicated as you read this. Origin says it should begin shipping on Thursday, December 11th. A full-featured demo is on its way.

LATEST NEWS

FF VII comes to PC
Close Combat 2 patch
Bethesda ships Battlespire
Westwood acquires Panoptic
DWANGO and The Zone
WC: Prophecy Ship Date

MORE

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By John Walsh



HAMILL'S BACK

Mark Hamill may be a sci-fi hero to millions of moviegoers, but he's just plain Dad to some people. The star of Origin's Wing Commander CD-ROM series says his son had only one problem with the game. "He disappeared upstairs with it for hours," Hamill recalls. "When I asked him how he liked it, he said, 'It was great! Except you were in it.' " Dad understands, though: "The poor kid; he's flying through space, having this fantastic adventure, when all of a sudden his father shows up on the screen. He probably thought I was going to tell him to get a haircut and clean his room." Wing Commander: Prophecy, the latest in the series, is in stores now.



MAKEUP RIGORS ARE NO *CONFLICT* FOR PARKER

As the Companion Da'an on *Gene Roddenberry's Earth: Final Conflict*, **Leni Parker** is a cool, placid presence. The reality of working in such elaborate FX makeup, however, is radically different: "I can do it for a maximum of six hours," the actress says, "but then I get overheated, and they have to rip me open and slap a cold pack on my back." Parker's sensitive skin also took a beating at first, until the makeup department found the right materials to apply and remove Da'an's alien features. But, Parker insists, "the costume helps me stay in character. And this part is just the best thing that's ever happened to me."

More

Photo credits: Mark Hamill by Kobal Collection, Leni Parker by Michael Grecco/Tribune

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Pass go: Check out the best

3844B

Toys listed include some of the newest game titles available, as well as top sellers from recent years.

*** Games highlighted with an asterisk represent selections from "The Best Toys, Books, Videos & Software for Kids 1998," an annual guide from the Oppenheim Group, a not-for-profit organization that conducts national tests to determine the top toys for all ages.**

Board games

* The Busytown Board Game. Ages 3 to 6. $19.99 (Ravensburger). 800-631-1272. Players roll a color die and move ahead to the matching color. Roll a gold bug and get sent back to the beginning. Uh-oh!

Go Away Monster. Preschool. $18 (Gamewright). 800-638-7568. Now preschoolers can conquer nighttime fears by getting rid of the monsters for good. Reach into the bag and pull out puzzle pieces that fit bedroom board game. If players pull out a monster they throw him out of the room, showing the scary guy who's boss.

* I Spy Memory Game. Ages 4 to 8. $19.95 (Briarpatch). 800-232-7427. Based on the popular book series, players match the cards that show pairs of objects — often from another angle. Can be played one-on-one, solo or as a group.

Dog Dice. Ages 5 and up. $15.95 (Gamewright). 800-638-7568. A bingo game for two to four players. Toss doggie dice to determine moves — first to fill the game board wins.

The Dinosaur's Journey to High Self-Esteem. Ages 5 to 12. $39.95 (Childswork). 800-962-1141. Through catalog only. Children travel through the Valley of Values, the Cave of Acceptance and the Land of Courage.

The Angry Monster Machine. Ages 5 to 10. $42.95 (Childswork). 800-962-1141. Through catalog only. Players use trucks to pick up Play Doh monsters and cart them back to the Transforming Machine, where players must say something that makes them angry. Can be used alone or with Angry Monster Workbook, $16.95.

Tamagochi. Above, ages 7 and up. $12.99 (Cardinal). 718-784-3000. A spinoff of the popular cyber pet toy, this game allows players to compete to see who will be the first to raise their "pet."

The Anger Solution Game. Ages 7 to 12. $46.95 (Childswork). 800-962-1141. Through catalog only. Players make their way around board, facing series of decisions and learning to choose the success route over the victim cycle.

The Secret World of Alex Mack. Ages 7 to adult. $12.99 (Cardinal). 718-784-3000. Based on the Nickelodeon series, allows players to travel the weird world of once "normal" 13-year-old Alex Mack.

Ad Mania. Below, ages 8 and up.

opper's guide to best of lot

Page D1

ans and memorable the 1950s through

e Game. Ages 9 and nesource). 800-344- cubes, each of which rent word on each of Once the cubes are scramble to create as as possible using the ble.

to adult. $25 (Patch). When the word is just tip of your tongue, the it out. Junior version

Me Laugh. Ages 12 to (Lolo). 800-760-9930. ime, impersonations, innovative strategy, from a deck of 300 and act out funny sce-

Ages 12 to adult. $25 524-4263. What do a layground and a micro- common? The player "slides" is right. Two or wits in a race to uncov- bond among chosen

erful Life. Above right, dult. $10 (Pressman). 800- ers relive the life of film's , George Bailey, encoun- ds and family as they apture the $8,000 need- the bank.

Pursuit. Adults $29.99. thers). 508-927-7600 or **pursuit.com**. The gen- dge game celebrates its rsary with the Genus IV e its inception, the game versions and draws from of 82,000 questions.

mes

r Me. Ages 4 and up. $9 0-524-4263. Children search to find three pictures with bond or link. After spot- ample, three things that are yer says, "Three for me!" lt Up. Right, ages 4 and up. mewright). 800-638-7568. A nd matching game with a t theme. Players turn over and match them to guest First one to complete a guest ns a tip.

Below, ages 6 and up. $10 right). 800-638-7568. Sequenc- that is a bit like War. Play- get rid of all their sequenc- in order from caps to shoes. ich. Ages 6 and up. $9.95 right). 800-638-7568. It takes eye and quick hands to win, ts beware! An action-packed me that relies on memory, nd an appetite for competi-

Juice. Ages 8 and up. $9.95 right). 800-638-7568. A pinch gy and a dash of math make iting concoction. Requires ounting skills and keen tim- dvanced players will learn probability.

Shape by Shape. Ages 8 and up. $12 (Binary Arts). 888-789-9538. A pure mathematical puzzle, led by Puzzlemaster Nob, who gives a few hints on each challenge card. Players should prepare to boost creative thinking and spatial skills.

Visual Brainstorms. Ages 11 and up. $6 (Binary Arts). 888-789-9538. Using oversized cards, players face brain teasers ranging from cream puff to killer. Solutions are on the back of each card; cards are color-coded for difficulty level.

Malarky. Ages 10 to adult. $30 (Patch). 800-524-4263. Why are pistachios dyed red? Do penguins have knees? In Malarky, players don't need to know the answers to questions like these, they just need to make people believe that they do.

Electronics

Last Out. Right, ages 5 and up. $19.99 (Tiger). 847-913-8100. Puzzle game in which opponents try to force one another to be the last to shut out the light.

Kiddie Keyboard. Ages 1-1/2 and up. $49.95 (E-Tech). Mail order through Edutainment Catalog or 717-845-7668. Made of large, easy-to-operate keys, it is accompanied by fully animated CD-ROM software. Helps develop hand-eye coordination as child learns direction concepts such as "up" and "down." Features colorful animation and sound effects. Available in English, Spanish, French and German and can be translated into any language.

Light Wars. Ages 5 and up. $24.99 (Tiger). 847-913-8100. Action-packed tabletop game. It requires lightning reflexes of two to four players who protect their stations as lights chase around the board.

Lazer Tag. Ages 8 and up. $39.99 (Tiger). 847-913-8100. Strap Lazer Tag to wrist or arm. It serves as the target and shooter. A reprise of the popular '80s tag game, but no vest necessary. Uses special built-in receiver to connect with target. Also keeps score.

Laser Challenge Pro Series Clash Pak. Ages 8 and up. $120 (Toymax). 800-222-9060. Comes with two vests and two blasters. Firing range up to 300 feet. Players register "hits" on the front of or back of vest and on blaster itself. Certain codes allow for specific types of play that includes rapid-fire play or a 30-second protective shield.

Game.com. Ages 8 and up. $69.95 (Tiger). 888-844-7767. Portable gaming and communication system that offers touch-screen technology. Built-in organizer functions such as calculator, calendar and phone directory. Contact Web site (**www.tigertoys.com**).

The Odyssey Atlasphere. Right, ages 8 and up. $399 (Odyssey). 888-456-2343. Available at Brookstone, The Sharper Image, Barnes & Noble, The Nature Company. The talking has taken a giant, interactive leap. Allows globetrotters to play GeoZone and Metropolis — fast-paced strategy games designed for single or multiple players.

Stackable/coordination

Tilt 'N Tumble. Ages 7 to adult. $17.99 (Pressman). 800-800-0298. Two or more players try to tilt the odds in their favor without causing the "big spill."

* Rush Hour. Ages 8 and up. $15 (Binary Arts). 888-789-9538. Use one of 40 cards to place cars in gridlock patterns. Now the trick is to slide them so you can get your car off the exit. Helps children develop visual perception and strategy techniques.

Block by Block. All ages. $6 (Binary Arts). 888-789-9538. Block by Block helps develop spatial thinking in puzzlers for all ages. Combine the seven pieces to match the puzzle shapes shown on each card — 60 different cards.

Top Spin. All ages. $6 (Binary Arts). 888-789-9538. The object is simple — just put the bright yellow numbered pegs in order. Slide the 20 tokens along the plastic track and flip the turnstile to rearrange them. Just wait 'til you get to the last number!

Computer software

* ActiMates Early Learning PC Pack System. Ages 2 to 5. $109.95 for Barney; $64.95 for PC transmitter box and CD-ROM or VHS tape. (Microsoft). 800-426-9400. With PC Pack, use Windows '95. Includes 16-inch, plush Barney whose head and arm moves. Sit him beside child and with help of radio transmitter and receiver, he interacts with VCR videotape or PC.

Richard Scarry's Best Math Program Ever. Ages 4 to 7. $39.95 (Simon & Schuster Interactive) 800-983-5333. CD-ROM for Windows '95 or Mac. Teaches basic math skills — adding, subtraction, shapes and more. Based on the popular Nickelodeon series "The Busy World of Richard Scarry."

* Scholastic's The Magic School Bus Explores the Rainforest. Ages 6 to 10. $34.95 (Microsoft). CD-ROM for Windows '95. Children can explore the wonder of the rainforest through games, learning about climate, insects, birds and habitats.

CROC: Legend of Gobbos. Ages 8 to adult. $49.95 (Fox Interactive). No phone available. Sony PlayStation. Players attempt to keep the peace on Gobbo Island while in the scaly shoes of Croc. The evil musician, Baron, is always an eerie threat.

Tonka Search and Rescue. Ages 4 and up. $29.95 (Hasbro Interactive). 800-400-1352. CD-ROM for Windows '95. Players can maneuver 22 different three-dimensional vehicles through land, air and sea rescue missions.

Goosebumps: Attack of the Mutant. Ages 8 to 14. $34.95 (Dreamworks Interactive). Windows '95. 800-426-9400. A first person, 3-D action game based on the R.L. Stine series. Featuring celebrity voices, including original Batman, Adam West, players must fight to save the world from diabolical plots and crazy capers.

Monopoly Star Wars. All ages. $49.95 (Hasbro Interactive). 800-400-1352. CD-ROM for Windows '95. Remains true to classic game, but includes three-dimensional renderings of Luke Skywalker, Darth Vader, Princess Leia and others as game tokens. Also includes footage from "Star Wars" movie trilogy.

* Wing Commander Prophecy. Ages 14 to adult. $39.95 (Origin). 800-245-4525. CD-ROM for Windows '95. Space combat game provides a new chapter in ongoing series. Appearances by Mark Hamill, Tom Wilson and Ginger Allen.

Math Invaders. Ages 9 and up. $29.95 (Simon & Schuster). 800-983-5333. CD-ROM for Windows '95 or Mac. Kids can flex their mathematical problem-solving muscles using the shoot-'em-up game. Use animation and non-lethal weaponry to outwit opponents in geometry, division, multiplication and early algebra.

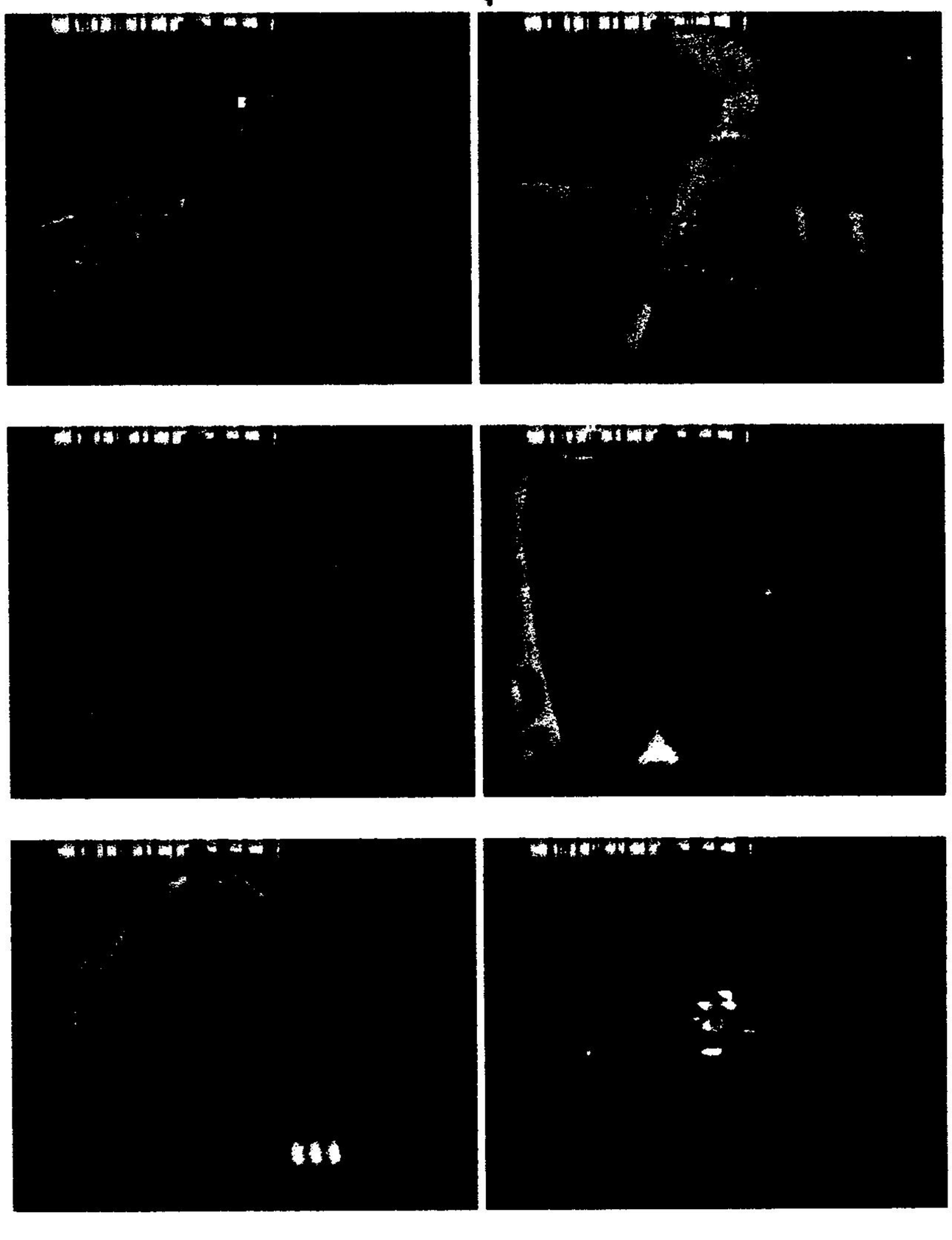
Nile: An Ancient Egyptian Quest. Ages 10 and up. $39.95 (Simon & Schuster). 800-983-5333. CD-ROM for Windows '95. Explore the splendor of ancient Egypt while on a quest to restore the ka (life force) of three long-dead pharaohs, setting them on a path to the afterlife.

Let's Talk About Me Some More. Ages 12 and up. $29.95 (Simon & Schuster). 800-983-5333. CD-ROM for Windows '95, Windows 3.0 and Mac. Features an interactive diary and offers tips on fashion, personal development and health. Also provides a mentor program, which features a career test. Based on test results, players matched with famous person in similar field. On second CD, players can scan in photos and have fun changing and rearranging their hairstyles.

PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT!

SCREENSHOTS

SCREENSHOTS



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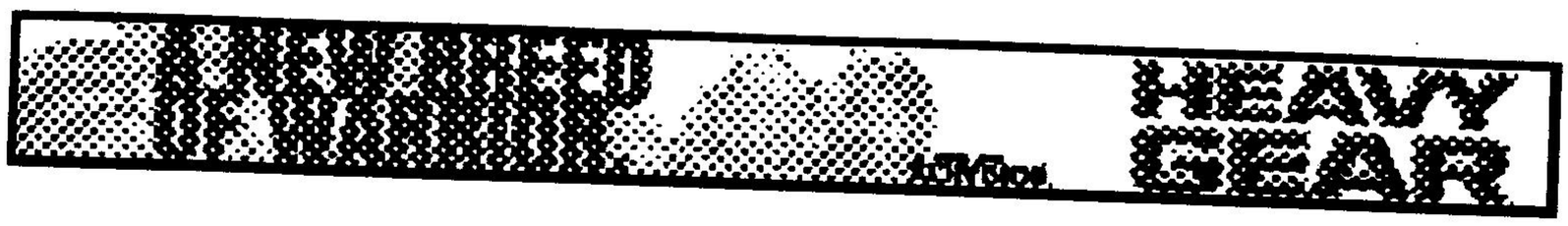

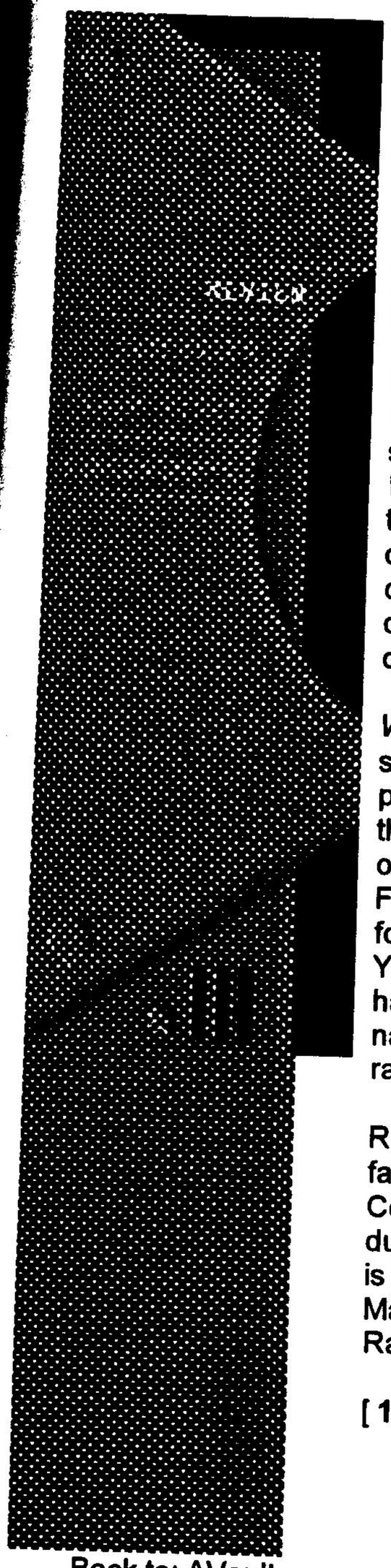



It was many years ago that Major Michael "Iceman" Casey was killed in action. His death came after serving nine years and racking up 367 confirmed Kilrathi kills during the Terran/Kilrathi wars. Well, the war is over, and a new age has begun: the age of *Wing Commander: Prophecy*.

I can remember the first time I watched the opening sequence of the original *Wing Commander*. It was from that day on, for many months, that I used that sequence to show off the capabilities of computers to my friends. The original *Wing Commander* marked the beginning of taking computer technology to the limits. It marked the day that games moved into a new direction, a direction that still is found in many titles today. The name Kilrathi and the characters that appeared throughout the sequels are part of the history of computer gaming, and *Wing Commander: Prophecy* is about to start a new chapter in that history.

Wing Commander: Prophecy marks the return of the *Wing Commander* series, and in many ways a departure from that series. No longer are you playing a character of the past. In *Wing Commander: Prophecy*, you take on the role of a rookie, someone who has to earn the respect of the other pilots on the ship, not by how you act, but by how you fly. You play Lt. Lance Casey. Following the theme of the movie "Top Gun," you find yourself having to follow in the shadow of your father, in this case Michael "Iceman" Casey. Your father was killed two months before you were born. Even though you have never seen the man, you have lived your life having to live up to his name. You are joined by a fellow classmate, Lt. Maxwell Garrett. Both of you racked up numerous individual team records while at the academy.

Returning from the previous *Wing Commander* games are some familiar faces. Mark Hamill continues in the series in a role as a Senior Operational Consultant. Blair plays different roles throughout the game, and appears during certain points to bring out different elements of the plot. Also returning is Maniac, the wiseguy with the intolerable attitude. You get your first taste of Maniac very early on in the game, and he plays a significant role throughout. Rachel also makes a return.

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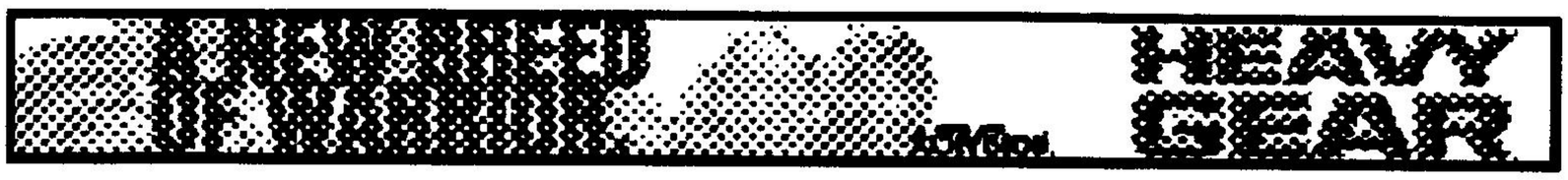

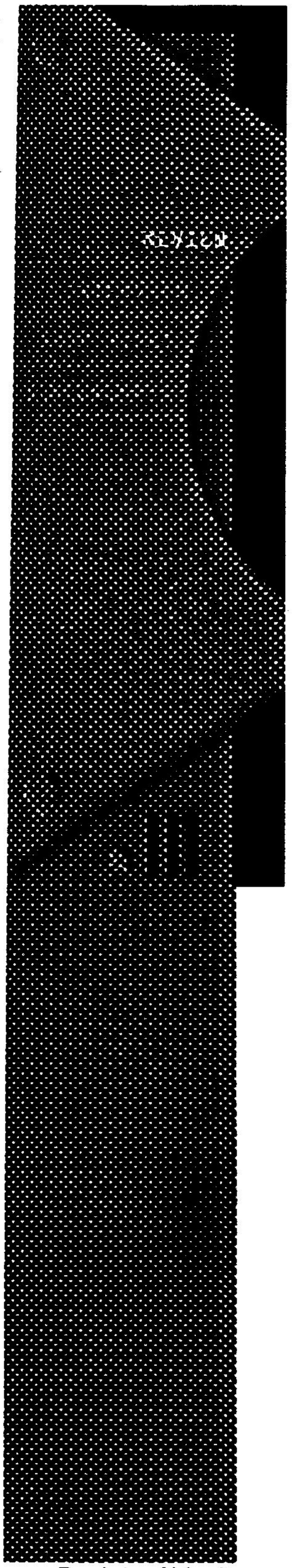

REVIEW

When the game begins, you are assigned to the Diamondback squadron. There are different squadrons in *Wing Commander: Prophecy* and, as the game progresses, you will be promoted to those of higher levels – that is, if you can earn the promotions. Some of the other squadrons include the Black Widows and the Wolfpack. Each squadron marks a new level in the game, and offers a different challenge. Missions are designed around each squadron, and the higher level rank you achieve the more difficult the missions become.

After getting assigned to the Midway, you are soon introduced to the plot that makes up the new chapter in the *Wing Commander* story. It seems as if something has gone drastically wrong in the area of Kilrah. It has been discovered that everything in the Kilrah system has been systematically destroyed. Every living being is either dead or has been taken prisoner by this unknown enemy. The story begins here. Over the course of playing through this lengthy 3-compact disc game, you will take on this new foe until the very end. At the beginning, you know nothing about the new alien race, except that they seem to be very powerful and evil. I won't talk any more about the story in the game, because that would spoil the excitement of finding everything out for yourselves.

The first notable difference in *Wing Commander: Prophecy* is the graphics. The graphics engine has been redesigned to offer more realism and depth to the game. The engine used in *Wing Commander: Prophecy* represents some of the best technology ever seen in a PC space combat simulator. With support for native 3Dfx cards and D3D, the game has some beautifully enhanced special effects. In the 3Dfx version, the graphics are simply stunning. The graphics engine is able to dynamically cast colored light and shadows over everything in the game. As you are flying the different missions, you will see different things that have you going back to catch a second look. The detail in every model is amazing. Everything right down to the little colored logos can be seen on other ships.

With the help of famed artist Syd Mead, *Wing Commander: Prophecy* brings a whole new alien race to the table. Although there is no name for the race and none are able to be seen until you actually get into the game, they are known to be very evil. Every one of the enemy ships is highly detailed and colored, and there are a number of unique spacecraft that you face throughout the game. Some of the ships have the ability to combine with other ships to create one devastatingly lethal ship. You can actually see them connect together and join as one. When you kill one of these joined ships, they often break apart into the original vessels! The other ships that you face all have their own strengths and weaknesses and offer a great level of challenge in fighting them.

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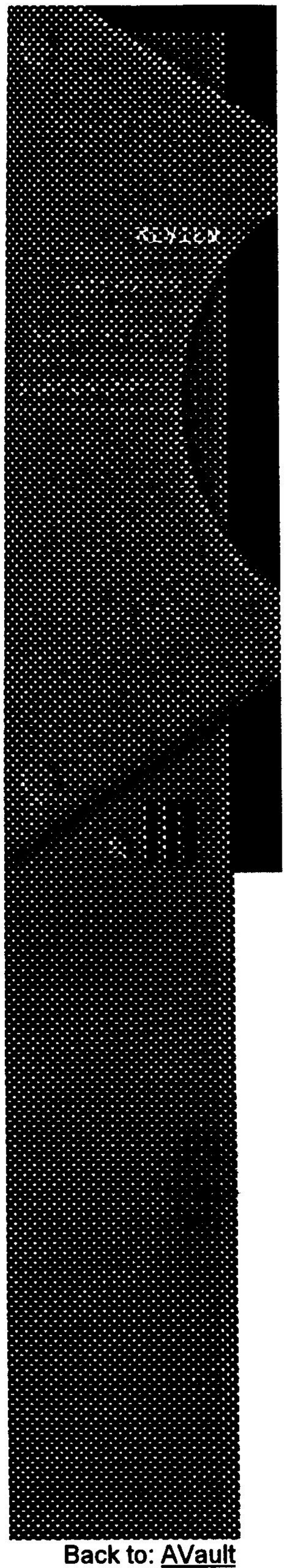

PREVIEW

Throughout the game, you will fly many different types of ships. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses. As you tackle the different missions, you become accustomed to the handling of each ship, because every one handles differently. Some of the ships maneuver well, while others have a tendency to be a bit more difficult to fly. A good example of this is in some of the later missions where you use a more heavy fighter that turns almost in a slow motion feel. This makes it hard to target enemy ships that are moving very fast, because you simply cannot turn as quickly. Having this problem is very different than if you were flying a more maneuverable fighter that turns on a dime. All the ships in *Wing Commander: Prophecy* have a great feel to them. Every one of them is highly detailed and offers a new challenge.

Wing Commander: Prophecy plays a lot like the other *Wing Commander* games when it comes to what you do in between missions. There are really three different areas on board the Midway that you have access to. The first area, and the one you spend most of your time in, is the Briefing Room. It is in the Briefing Room where you find out about every mission that you are going to fly. The Midway has an advanced onboard Integrated Combat Information System, or ITIS, which gives you the layout of every mission. It is also in the Briefing Room that some of the story unfolds. Here, Commander Patricia Drake, the leader of the Air Group, will fill you in on what is going on tactically with the new alien race.

Apart from the briefing room, you spend the rest of your time in the Rec Room and the Ready Room. It is in the Rec Room where you hold most of your conversations with the other pilots and characters on board the Midway. The Rec Room is also the home of the Simulator, where you can practice your flying skills. When you enter the simulator, you have the chance to fly in a number of different missions using the different ships on board the Midway. It is safe to say that if you can conquer all the simulated missions, then you have a good chance at making it through most of the real game missions. After a number of missions are completed, different scenarios will appear in the simulator allowing you to practice more advanced flying. One thing that you quickly notice when in the Rec Room is that there is a serious amount of drinking going on. It seems as if the inhabitants of the Midway have a slight drinking problem! Also found in the Rec Room is the Tactical Database and the Killboard. The Tactical Database is a complete guide to all the ships aboard the Midway. It allows you to twist and turn them to get a better look at what you are flying. If you have a 3D accelerator, you can also cast different colored lights on the ships to check out the graphic effects. The killboard is merely a complete listing of all the pilots aboard the Midway and their kill totals. You can sort by squadron or kill total, and this is more used for you to gauge your performance against other pilots.

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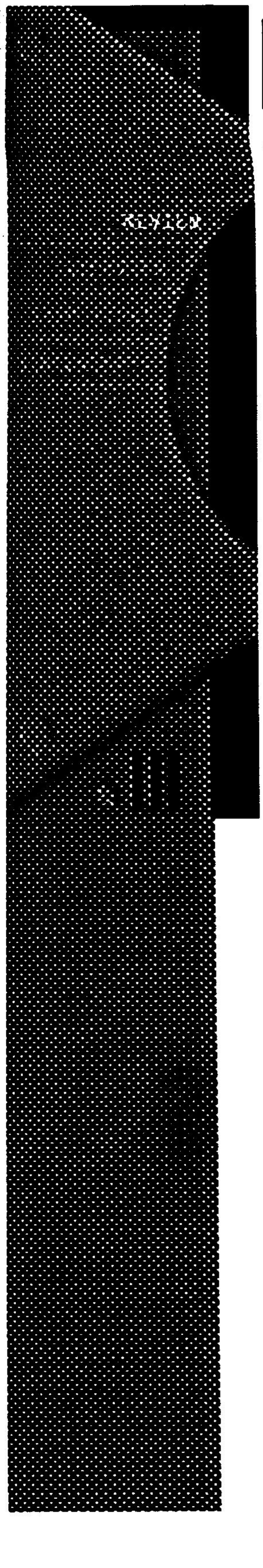
MULTIPLAYERS!



PREVIEW

The Ready Room is where you have access to the load and save stations. During the game, after every mission, your game is automatically saved. You can manually save games so you can later go back to a point to try a certain set of missions over. You also have access to the History Station. The history station shows a complete rundown of every mission that you have flown and the score that you received on that particular mission. At the bottom of the screen, you can see your overall performance for all the missions you have flown.

In between missions you appear in the Rec Room, where you can use the simulator or look at your stats. If there is a character to talk to, an icon will appear when you move your mouse over them. It is a good idea to talk to everyone possible, since this is how you get good information about everyone on the ship.

Most of the game centers around completing sorties. When in the Briefing Room, you are given missions via your ICIS system. This ICIS runs through the mission by showing you a 3D view of what your key objectives are. Once you are done with the briefings, you are launched into space. Every mission builds upon the previous one, keeping the game focused on telling a story. In the more recent *Wing Commander* games, a technique of branching was introduced to bring the story into different directions during the game. In *Wing Commander: Prophecy*, this branching is changed to work in a different way. Things happen in the game based on how well you fly. This changes things a little and keeps the main story intact.

After every mission, you are greeted with a short movie sequence by CPO Rachel Coriolis. She lets you have it if you get her shipped banged up a bit, and rewards you if you didn't. After listening to her, you are given your overall rating for that mission and can see how well you performed on the different objectives. For each mission, there is at least one primary objective and sometimes two other objectives. An example of a primary objective may be to take out a main ship, while a secondary objective would be to protect your bombers. It is sometimes very difficult to complete all the objectives and, as long as you complete the main objective, you are fine.

Every mission in *Wing Commander: Prophecy* offers different challenges. Although many of them center around the same object, there are differences between each one. Some missions require you to scan certain nav points, something that should be familiar to anyone who has played a *Wing Commander* game. Others require you to lead the way for the marines to dock onto different enemy ships to perform tactical operations, or go on bombing runs against enemy carriers. As the story unfolds, there are a couple of runs that require you to succeed, because if you do not, the game will end. This is a little different in the beginning, since failing on some of the missions simply just keeps you from making any friends!

$9.95 Monthly NOW!



REVIEW

Once in the cockpit of one of the confederate ships, you have different items at your disposal. Many things have changed and enhanced in *Wing Commander: Prophecy* to make flying a more enjoyable task. There are a few keys to winning at the game, and they all lie in the use of your power systems and your shields. If you use a flight stick that has a hat and multiple buttons, it will be easier to fly each ship. The hat changes your view, so you can switch between front, back, and your sides on the fly. One of the buttons allows you to change you speed. If you hold the button down and move it forward, your throttle will increase. The main trigger fires your primary weapons and the others fire missiles and torpedoes. Everything else is controlled by the keyboard. To control your shield energy distribution, you hold the "s" key down and move your joystick forward and back to put energy in the front or back of your ship. This is critical at times when you are getting heavy fire from something coming straight at you and you need 100% shields on the front. Without moving them there, you are likely to become mince meat. Your Power System Display allows you to allocate your ship's power to either your shields, engines, or weapons. When you take off, everything is getting equal amounts of power. There are times when you might need to move the power to your shields or to your weapons. More power to an area will help it recover more quickly. For example, if your weapons drain too much energy each time you fire them, you could put more power to the weapons so they recharge faster. *X-Wing* or *TIE Fighter* veterans should feel right at home!

Every ship has the same basic control systems to it. The primary difference between each ship is its firepower and maneuverability during flight. There are other cockpit controls that are vital to winning the game. There is a radar screen that shows everything in your vicinity. The targeting system is very intuitive. When you lock onto an enemy, there is a "best guess" green triangle that lights up when the ship is in range, representing the area you should aim to hit the ship. It calculates the speed and trajectory of the ship to give you a target.

Unfortunately there is no multiplayer support for *Wing Commander: Prophecy*. This most likely will not come in the form of a patch for *Wing Commander: Prophecy*, but in the form of a complete stand alone title to be released at some later date.

Wing Commander: Prophecy breathes new life into the *Wing Commander* series by setting a new direction. The suspense and gameplay help this title to reach out into uncharted territory. With the new enemies, new look, new characters, and new graphics engine all carefully molded together, *Wing Commander: Prophecy* brings you some of the best non-stop action you can find.

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GET NOT AND REGRET...

INTERVIEW

BY DAVID EDWARDS, GENTRICKS67

Exclusive Interview with the Producer of *Wing Commander: Prophecy*

The Adrenaline Vault was able to get an interview with David Downing, the producer of one of the most anticipated titles to be released in 1998. David took some time off from putting the final touches on *Wing Commander: Prophecy* (right before it went gold) to answer a few questions for us. In the interview, we were able to gain some insight into how the project ventured off the original storyline path of the famous *Wing Commander* series. He also mentions some things about technology and 3D acceleration, and offers a glimpse of what we should expect in the future in the continuation of this long-running series!

AV-Shawn: *David, could you tell me a little about yourself... how you came to work on this project and a little bit about your past experience?*

David: My name is David Downing, I am the producer for *Wing Commander: Prophecy*. I started my gaming career at Origin as Chris Roberts' assistant. Officially I was his executive administrator; generally I just did whatever needed to be done. I joined Chris and Origin just prior to the *Wing Commander III* shoot. That was a wild and crazy time; we were re-inventing the way computer games were made. *Wing Commander III* was a great learning experience for all of us. On *Wing Commander IV*, I was the associate producer, and after Chris left, I became the producer for *Wing Commander: Prophecy*.

AV-Shawn: *How did Syd Mead come into the picture?*

David: Syd Mead is someone I've always wanted to work with, even when I was practicing architecture. Once we made the decision to hire a well-known designer for our new aliens, my co-producer, Mark Day, and associate producer / movie director, Adam Foshko, worked out the arrangements.

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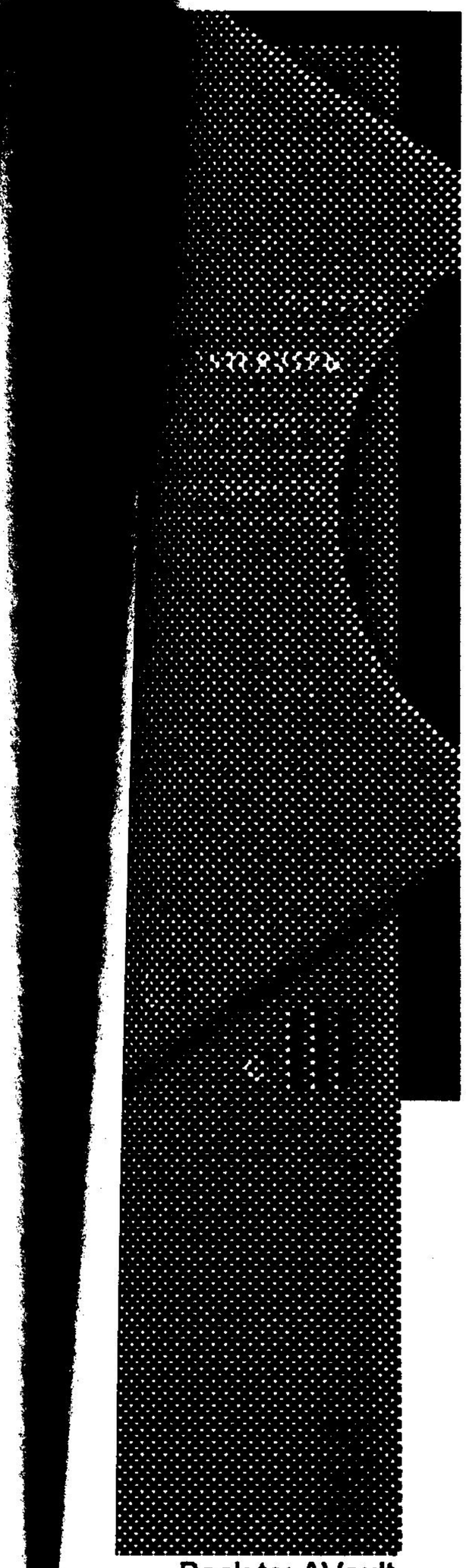

INTERVIEW

WITH DAVID WARD, PROJECT

AV-Shawn: *What were the driving factors to want to change the Wing Commander series and branch off into a new direction?*

David: The driving factor behind *Prophecy* was the team itself. The *Prophecy* team is largely made up of veterans of *Wing III & IV*, and this was our chance to create the *Wing Commander* we always wanted to make. We took the opportunity to mold a new *Wing Commander* in a direction we were much happier with.

AV-Shawn: *Was it difficult to get out of the footsteps of Chris, or did you just go about making a new game?*

David: There was a lot of internal turmoil in the team both before and after Chris' departure. Some of our friends and comrades left to work with Chris, and some of us stayed to create *Prophecy* and a new *Wing Commander*. It took a little while to get our new working arrangements figured out, but in the end, we've created something we're very proud of.

AV-Shawn: *Even though the game is taking a new direction, do you feel it is important to still give a Wing Commander feel to it?*

David: Absolutely. We have tried to use *Prophecy* as the joinery between the past *Wing Commander* and the new *Wing Commander* that we want to create. We strived to keep one foot in the past and one foot placed firmly in the future.

AV-Shawn: *Over the past few releases the game seems to have veered off from what made it such an awesome title when it originally came out. There seemed to be a drift from the core action that made the first experience one gamers have never forgot. Are you trying to bring that back ?*

David: Absolutely, that is **exactly** what we are trying to do -- to return to the roots of great gameplay.

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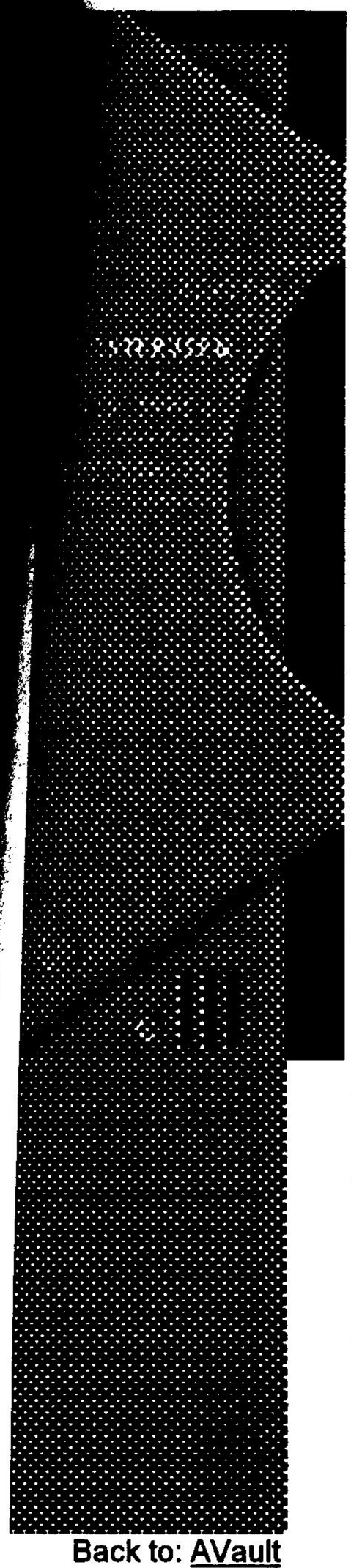

INTERVIEW

DAVID GOWMAN, DESIGNER

AV-Shawn: *The mission-branching aspect of the previous Wing Commander release worked well, are you building on that experience with Wing Commander: Prophecy?*

David: We are building on that, but not in the way that you would think. Sometimes, as your experience with a tool grows, you discover that you can have a greater impact with it by using it less. Now the branching is really dictated by how you act in the cockpit and fly in the game, and not by how you react to someone's conversation.

AV-Shawn: *How long has this been in development?*

David: We started on *Prophecy* right after *Wing Commander IV*, so it's been in the works for about 15 months.

AV-Shawn: *What do you think has been the most difficult task in making this title?*

David: Having to work insane hours to complete the game in the time frame that we had.

AV-Shawn: *Do you think that the tide of technology is changing so fast it's having an effect on being able to release a game that is current in technological capabilities?*

David: That is always our challenge. You have to be very smart about how you maintain your technology so that it will stay current.

AV-Shawn: *The screenshots and previews we saw at E3 were breathtaking with the 3Dfx card. Has that been built upon and should people run out and buy one of those cards now?*

David: They should run very fast – 3D acceleration is simply awesome! By the way, we made fantastic advances in the look of the game since E3....

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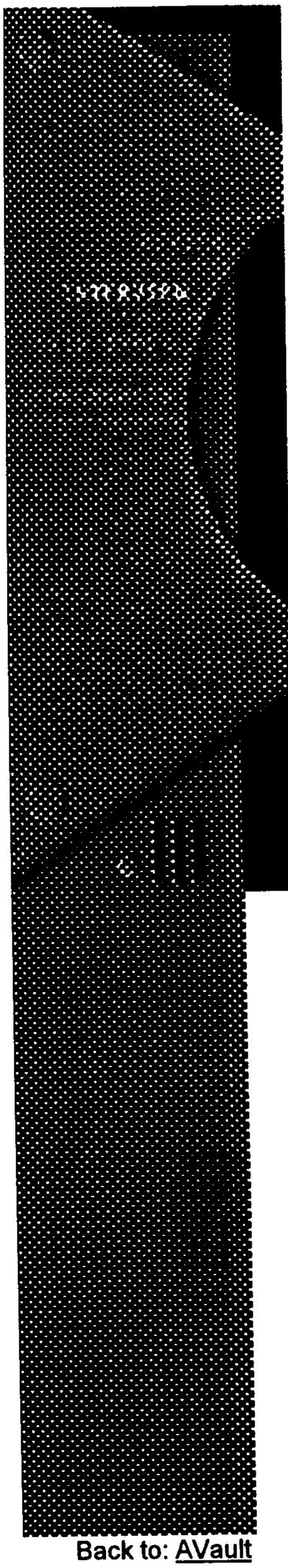

INTERVIEW

DAVID GOWANSON, DEVELOPER

AV-Shawn: *Many people have criticized the use of FMV in computer games, but the Wing Commander series has become very reliant on this technology. Why? Are the cinematics as important as the gameplay?*

David: *Wing Commander* has always been more than just a bunch of space fighting missions strung together. It's a rich and evolving story that brings you into the fiction and into the game more than any other medium. I think the gameplay is ultimately the most important; after all, this is a game. If you want to see a movie, the theater is far superior to a 17" monitor. However, I do believe that a good story, presented well and handled delicately, adds tremendously to the overall experience.

AV-Shawn: *Is there any information on the new alien race, or is that classified?*

David: We haven't released their name yet, but they are really **bad**.

AV-Shawn: *What will become of the Kilrathi now that there is a new race of bad guys in the galaxy? Will they ever make a comeback?*

David: Well, anything can happen. In my mind the *Kilrathi* are a vital part of *Wing Commander* lore, but not a vital part of the *Wing Commander* future.

AV-Shawn: *The interface used in the Wing Commander games has stayed intact over the past few releases. Are there any plans to change it, or is it perfect the way it is?*

David: The *Wing Commander* interface is always being examined and refined, and we made some big refinements with *Prophecy*. We hope you find them improvements.

AV-Shawn: *How is the development process of a game like Wing Commander: Prophecy different from that of other games? How concerned do the game developers have to be with the FMV aspects?*

David: What sets *Wing Commander* apart from other games is the major component of live-action storytelling. That means that the game will cost more to produce, and take more time and people to create than other games. We are striving for a total integration of the three major parts of the product, the in-cockpit gameplay, the full-motion storytelling, and the game-flow (moving about the ship and the menus). You cannot totally integrate all of the elements without being very involved with each one.

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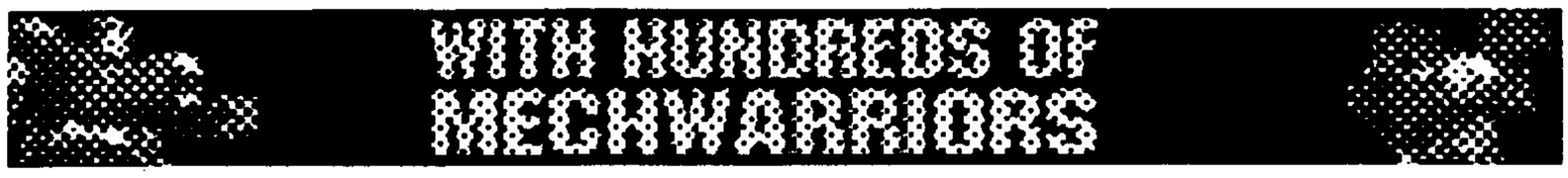



AV-Shawn: *What is it like working with actors like Mark Hamill? Does this offer any kinds of unique challenges?*

David: Actors are very interesting people and most interesting people create unique challenges on many levels. But then again, game developers are interesting people as well.

AV-Shawn: *There has been a lot of talk about multiplayer. What is currently the plan for multiplayer and why has it changed over the past few months?*

David: Basically, we could not complete both a high-caliber, single player-game (both software and 3D accelerated) and a multiplayer game and release it this quarter. We had to decide to either hold the game until the multiplayer component was up to our quality standards (and it still wouldn't have had Internet play), or focus on the single-player game. We are currently planning to produce a *Wing Commander: Multiplayer* product for release sometime this next year.

AV-Shawn: *How important is multiplayer to the Wing Commander experience?*

David: *Wing Commander* has traditionally been a single-player experience. It was designed to be so from the start. You play a central character in an evolving story and you personally fly the ships and fight the battles which save the world from ruin. *Wing Commander* could, however, offer some very interesting multiplayer experiences and a lot of opportunity for fun and shared experiences.

AV-Shawn: *Where do you see the Wing Commander series going in the future? Have you started on the next release yet?*

David: Well, let's see. We are already working on the *Wing Commander: Multiplayer* product, and it's going to **rock**. *Privateer 3* is scheduled for late '98. The next major *Wing Commander* project, part 2 of the *Prophecy* trilogy, is also already underway.

AV-Shawn: *David, thanks for taking the time to answer these questions. We all look forward to playing this awesome title and wish you all the best with your development efforts!*

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REVIEW

Graphics: ★★★★½ *Wing Commander: Prophecy* represents some of the best graphics that have ever graced the PC screen. There are so many little touches and effects in the 3Dfx version that anyone without a 3Dfx card is really missing out. The graphics can be broken down into two different parts. The first is the in-game movie sequences that tell the story surrounding the entire game. After watching the first part of the game, you really can tell that the designers understand how to blend real-time video into futuristic backdrops. Everything looks real, just as if the characters were actually in every one of those settings. During in-flight play, videos are shown on your comm screen. They may show either another pilot or someone from your home ship talking to you. When you kill an enemy, you will watch them go down in shame on your comm screen as well. These add a little atmosphere to the missions and sometimes relay critical information. The second area of the graphics is everything that is not a movie sequence. What really sets *Wing Commander: Prophecy* apart from any other game out there are the graphics that are present during every mission. The detail level of every ship looks awesome. For the first time in a space combat game you really feel as if the other ships have depth to them. When flying up to some of the larger enemy ships, it actually takes you some time to fly the length of them, all along the way avoiding gun turret fire and missiles whizzing by you. This makes the graphics really look awesome, but that is just the beginning. The color palette and lighting effects that are used throughout the game are brilliant. For all those 3D gamers out there, *Wing Commander: Prophecy* is to space what *Quake 2* is to earth. Every ship dynamically reflects every flash of light that is present around it. If you watch an explosion go off near another ship, it will light up anything close by. The colored lighting effect used for all the shields is one of the best effects in the entire game. As you hit an enemy ship, a strange glow forms around the area you hit and then slowly fades away. Even the non-accelerated version looks great. It does not have some of the cool lighting effects, but it runs very fast and everything still looks highly detailed. I cannot find any flaws in the graphics. The frame rate in the game never slowed down on me during gameplay, even when there where many different enemy ships on the screen at once. *Wing Commander: Prophecy* really raises the bar when it comes to how you use the advances in computer technology to create a beautiful game.

Interface: ★★★★½ With the past few releases in the *Wing Commander* series, the interface has not changed that much. In *Wing Commander: Prophecy*, it makes some changes but still sticks to an easy-to-use system. Since there are only a few places on the Midway that you can access while in the game, it is easy to get to any information that you need. You can control your pointer with either your mouse, joystick or keyboard. The screens that are used for everything in the game are well laid out. When accessing ship information or accessing flight history, the buttons and navigation controls are self-explanatory. Once off the Midway and in a ship, the interface gets a little more complicated. You are best off using some sort of flight stick for maneuvering your ship. The keyboard is the second best thing, along with your mouse. There are a number of keys that you use during each mission, allowing you to become familiar with where certain items are linked. I was always using the "t" and "r" keys to target enemy ships during flight, along with the "TAB" key, which controls your afterburners. There are a few other

keys that are very important during certain missions, such as the "m" key for changing missiles and the "l" key for locking onto targets. The game comes with a nice cardboard reference card that lays out all the necessary information for controlling the game while in flight. Once you get the hang of what everything does, winning missions becomes an easier task. It is important to review some of the documentation for the later missions, because, if you do not know how to use something, you may not even know it is there!

Gameplay: ★★★★ *Wing Commander: Prophecy* presents the gamer with various missions that center around completing a primary objective, and I found many of these to be very challenging. This does change when playing on higher levels, making it more and more difficult to win the game. Some of the missions become repetitive tasks, simply pulling the story along. To make this less a factor in the game, *Wing Commander: Prophecy* throws different challenges at you during these missions. You may be simply patrolling or scanning different sectors, but the enemies and the tactics that these enemies use are different. Where this game really shines through is in the game engine. The feeling of being in space is right on. Depending on the mission and the objective, there may be different fire-fights happening in different parts. You can watch these from a distance. If one of your fellow pilots is getting pelted, you can actually see it happening as you approach. One thing that many people will ask is whether or not you can land your ship when returning to the Midway after missions. The answer is no! You can either auto-pilot in or direct your ship towards an open bay and the computer will take over and land you. This did not particularly bother me since the rest of the in-flight part of the game was awesome.

Sound FX: ★★★★★ The sound in *Wing Commander: Prophecy* is excellent. Everything that is heard during the game sounds very good, and there are different sounds for just about everything. As with the graphics, you could break the sound category into two parts. The first set of sounds are the ambient sounds that are heard throughout the entire game. These are different depending on what area of the game you are in. If you are hanging out in the Rec room or the Ready Room, you will hear different announcements over the intercom. These may be directed at you or at others on the ship. The other set of sounds are those that are caused by your actions or the actions of others. These are your ship's sounds, the sounds of enemy fire, and just about every other sound in the game. The sounds that are made when you fire missiles are great. *Wing Commander: Prophecy* is one of those few games that really blends the acoustics with the visuals on the screen well. As your shots are lighting up an enemy ship's shields, you here sizzling, but when you make a direct hit on a ship, you can tell the difference. This makes the game a lot easier to play because you can use not only the direct feedback from visually seeing what happened, but you can hear the sounds of what is going on around you.

Musical Score: ★★★★★ In *Wing Commander: Prophecy*, the music perfectly adds to the overall theme of the game. It really made my emotions change during the game, especially when I was playing for long periods of time. The soundtrack is very professional, and depending on what part of the game you are in you will hear different music. As with the sound there are simple ambient tracks that play and then there are more pounding and alien sounding tracks that you will hear on various missions. It is very obvious from the first bit of music that you hear that *Wing Commander: Prophecy* is like a choreographed production. Music in a game can only lend to the overall play experience to a certain point, and the music in this title does that very well. It almost got kind of scary when I was playing it for so long; the music had an effect on how I was playing. When this happens, either the music is perfect, or you have been playing a game for too long!

Intelligence & Difficulty: ★★★★½ There are a number of levels of difficulty that you can choose from when playing the game. When setting this level, it will give the enemies either more or less intelligence. I played everything at the default setting, which was the medium level. Afterwards, I went back and played a couple of the missions over again at the highest level of difficulty. *Wing Commander: Prophecy* is a very challenging game and causes players not only to be able to fly their ships well, but to be able to manage every resource they have. The difficulty in *Wing Commander: Prophecy* really comes in some of the later missions where you are constantly going up against swarms of alien fighters with a limited supply of missiles. Since there are different goals for every mission in *Wing Commander: Prophecy*, you are required to quickly execute each of these goals in order to accomplish them all. If you spend too much time concentrating on taking out one ship, you will not be able to protect something or take out another ship. On the higher levels, the enemies are relentless when it comes to kicking your butt. I found it much more difficult to win the game at the higher levels and was not able to finish some of the missions until the third or fourth try. Once you learn how to move your shields to protect the front and back of your ship, and manage the power distribution to the three different areas, you will win the missions with greater ease.

Overall: ★★★★½ It was the *Wing Commander* series that really made my eyes open years back and *Wing Commander: Prophecy* has brought back a needed flame into the series. I thought that the story was well thought out and really pulls the player into the game. Even if you were not familiar with the previous games, the plot along the way feeds you the necessary information to pull everything together. At times, I got a little tired of seeing the different movies played over and over again after missions, but there was enough solid gameplay to keep my mind on the overall theme of the game. After having finished the entire game over a weekend (during a marathon gaming session!), I sat back and took a look at what it was all about. I really think that there are two forces at work in *Wing Commander: Prophecy*. The first is the story that unfolds as you are playing the game. This story has a tendency to pull the player in and want more from it. There were different times that I wanted to get more information or wanted the story to break in another way, but it had already in many ways been determined for me. This did not bother me too much because I thought that the new direction of the *Wing Commander* series is a good one. It was almost like reading a book you did not want to put down. The second force at work in *Wing Commander: Prophecy* is the action part of the game, which is really its center and focus. This is where *Wing Commander: Prophecy* really stands out. The graphics and gameplay are excellent. The missions offered varying levels of difficulty and sometimes were extremely difficult to win. At the later stages of the game, when you are able to choose which ship you want to man, I found it even more exciting. I was able to choose what I felt I was best at for accomplishing the mission. The truth is, when you are playing a game like this, there are only so many different missions that you can design to keep the gamer happy. Everything centers around space combat. I preferred the escort and attack missions more than the bombing runs. This might have been because of my ability to fly better against the enemy pilots than against the larger ships. *Wing Commander: Prophecy* is a great title that takes a new direction in the *Wing Commander* story line. I really like the direction that it's taking.

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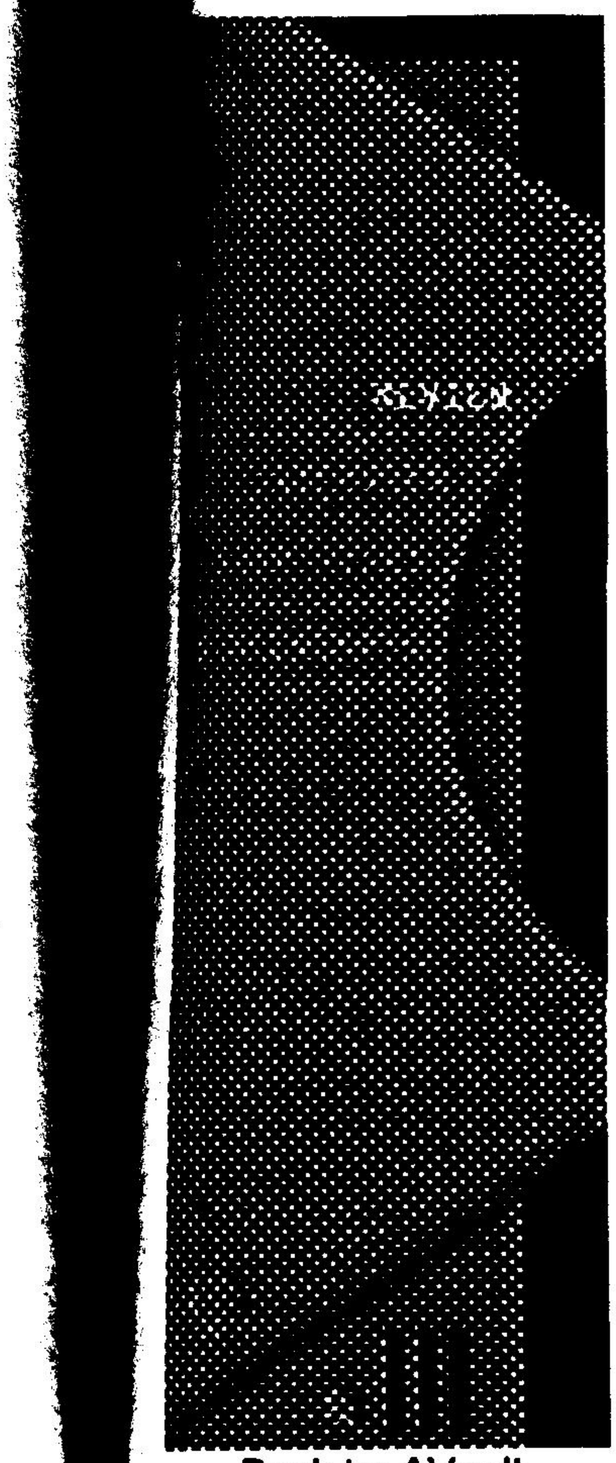

PREVIEW

Wing Commander: Prophecy

By: Origin
Home Page: http://www.wingcommanderprophecy.com/

System Requirements:
Pentium 166 (P133 with 3Dfx), 32 Megabytes of RAM, Windows 95, 200 Megabytes of hard drive space

Similar to:
Wing Commander IV / X-Wing vs. Tie Fighter

Download: 3Dfx Test Mission

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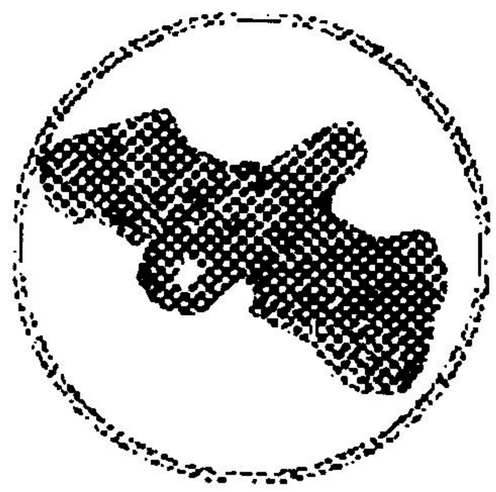
PLAY YOUR OWN MISSIONS

SHIP TYPES

F-110a Wasp
Interceptor
Squadrons: Diamondbacks, Black Widows, (Proposed Third Squadron)
Mission/Role: FORCAP, sometimes BARCAP

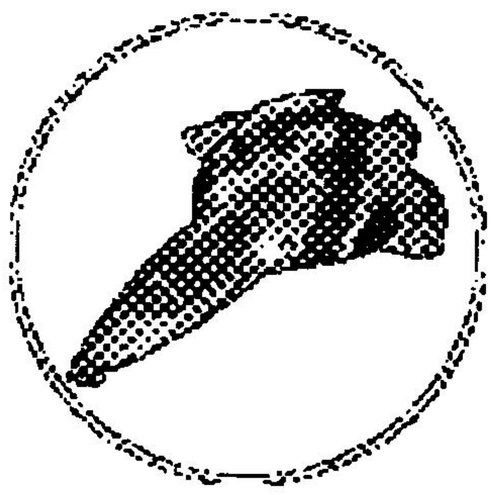


The Wasp is a small point-defense fighter that serves as the inner tier of a carrier group's defense. Lacking the range and endurance for prolonged CAP-style patrols, it is usually launched only when enemy bombers have breached the outer BARCAP and are closing on the carrier itself (in a scramble situation).

It is tailored to destroy enemy torpedo bombers, at which it is devastating, but it is also effective against most fighter-class targets. In addition to its traditional missile armament, it carries multiple cluster-rocket packs (swarmers).

If longer-range capacity is needed, this ship can make use of a detachable booster rocket that gets it to its destination more quickly without using afterburner capacity, at a faster rate than afterburner velocity. Once expended, the booster is automatically jettisoned, resulting in markedly-improved acceleration and maneuverability for that portion of the fighter which remains. Its thin shields recharge quickly.

F-108a Panther
Space Superiority Fighter (Class B)
Squadron: Black Widows
Mission/Role: BARCAP, TARCAP, offensive counter-air, escort, some FORCAP, some recon, wild weasel



Usually assigned to light escort carriers, the Panther is a smaller answer to the Vampire. Though it falls short of its bigger brother in terms of long-range combat capability, its exceptional acceleration and maneuverability make it preferred by some pilots, who consider it a superior dogfighter. Its shields are lighter than the Vampire's, but exhibit similar excellent recharge characteristics.

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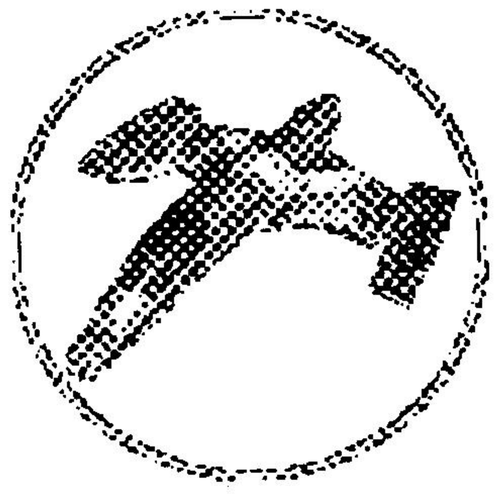
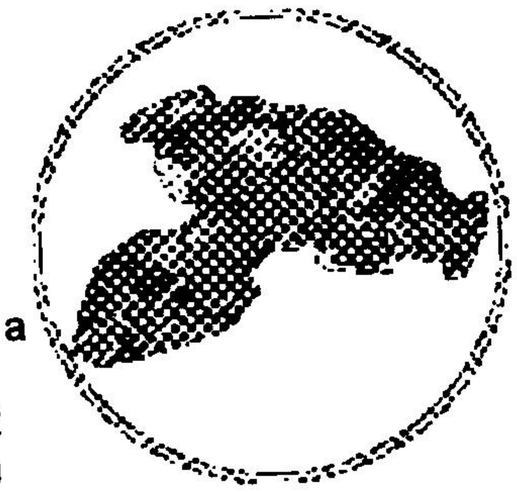


F-109a Vampire
Space Superiority Fighter (Class A)
Squadron: (Proposed Third Squadron)
Mission/Role: BARCAP, TARCAP, offensive counter-air, escort, some FORCAP, some recon, wild weasel

Usually assigned to heavy fleet carriers, the Vampire is customized to destroy other fighters. The Vampire can engage in long-range missile duels, with good chances of survival. Its shields are of medium strength, but exhibit an excellent recharge rate.



Shrike
Torpedo Bomber (Class B)
Squadron: Black Widows
Mission/Role: strike, anti-ship, anti-hangar, sometimes recon

Usually stationed on escort carriers, the Shrike is a lightened answer to the much larger Devastator. While it is not as powerful an anti-ship platform, it is noticeably faster and more maneuverable than the TB-80, and therefore somewhat less vulnerable in the event of a fighter encounter. It enjoys the same computer targeting system as the Devastator, but not its massive plasma cannon. Rather, the Shrike carries a more conventional armament.

Due to its limited torpedo load, the Shrike is most effective against naval targets of light cruiser-size and downward, but in larger groups can be employed effectively against larger targets. The Shrike has top, bottom and tail turrets, but lacks the Devastator's side mounts, depending instead on overlap from the top and bottom positions to cover its flanks.

TB-80a Devastator
Torpedo Bomber (Class A)
Squadron: (Proposed Third Squadron)
Mission role: strike, anti-ship, anti-hangar, sometimes recon

Usually stationed on fleet carriers, the Devastator has a simple mission: survive long enough to destroy a big target. Its main anti-ship armament is the torpedo.

The Devastator's massive plasma cannon is essentially a smaller version of the same weapon carried by capital ships. Virtually useless against fighters (due to its very slow firing rate, this extremely powerful weapon can cause significant damage to starships, and is by far the platform of choice when it comes to striking heavily defended and armored targets like battleships and heavy cruisers.

Additionally, to facilitate its survival in a fighter-rich environment it carries anti-fighter turrets on its top, bottom, rear and sides.

anti-fighter turrets on its top, bottom, rear and sides.

Its shields are extremely thick, but exhibit only average recharge characteristics.

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PREVIEW



By Trent C. Ward

VideoGameSpot

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Sponsored Sites
professional gamers' league (PGL)

Developer:
Origin

Publisher:
Electronic Arts

Release Date:
Winter 1997

Blair is history. Well, not exactly history - he's powerful, experienced, and altogether a sophisticated and grown-up commander. And this time around he's not you. Or you're not him.

You're a new hotshot straight out of training and wet behind the ears. You've got a lot to learn, especially because this time around you get assigned a ship and wingman instead of getting to pick them. Privileges like that, after all, are not for the new and inexperienced.

The idea behind these changes is simple: Wing Commander: Prophecy is returning to its origins.



The designers are huge fans of the entire series, but with this version they decided to resurrect some of the old-fashioned gameplay excitement. Hence the assignment of ship and wingman - being able to choose the best ship and wingman every time detracted from the suspense and adventure, the designers argued. And to further heighten the excitement, Origin is introducing a new alien race with unfamiliar battle tactics to combat (though the Kilrathi are still around). So this time around there are fewer movies and FMV sequences, numerous missions, and a very young pilot for you to control.

We went down to Origin's Austin office and chatted with the crew. Now we've got the details on the weapons, ships, and personnel hanging out in Prophecy (rest assured - just because you've got a new character doesn't mean that lots of the old favorites won't show up at various stages). We've been sworn to silence (on pain of death) about exact storyline details, but we have some terrific mission info in its stead.

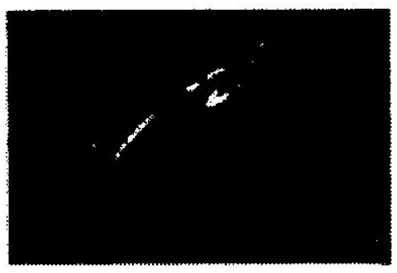
Wing Commander: Prophecy purports to have the best of what made past Wing Commanders hits: technological innovations and pre-FMV gameplay. Read on to get an idea of just how close Origin will come when the game is released December 15.

Enter to win the HEAT.NET
of contest!



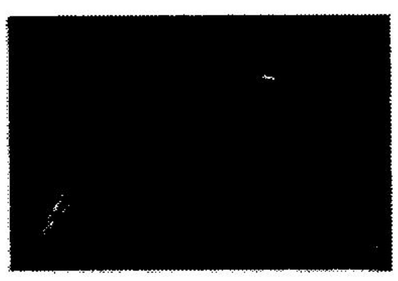
The Ships **Page 2**

As you'd expect, there are a lot of different craft that you can take control of during your tour of duty, each with its own special advantages and disadvantages, and each with its own special feel. At the beginning of each mission, your commanding officer will let you know which craft he or she has selected for the upcoming mission. Since you don't get to pick the ship yourself, it's important to be familiar with all of them so you'll be prepared in any situation. Here's a rundown of the basic fighters and their primary functions in the Confed navy.



F-106A Piranha
Scout Fighter
Mission Role: Forward Combat Air Patrol (FORCAP), escort, and recon

Every war has its craft that has sacrificed protection and firepower in lieu of speed, acceleration, and maneuverability. For the Confederation that craft is the Piranha. Designed almost solely for short-range dogfighting, this often-maligned ship is deadly in the hands of a capable pilot. On the Midway, these ships are most often used for scouting and light escort duty.



F/A-105A Tigershark
Multi-Role Fighter
Mission Role: Targeted Combat Air Patrol (TARCAP), FORCAP, blockade, escort, recon, light strike and light anti-ship, and air defense suppression (wild weasel).

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As you can tell from the mission role slot above, the Tigershark can do it all. Boasting a medium-strength shield and solid recharging capabilities, this fighter is capable of holding its own on just about any mission. Even so, like most jacks-of-all-trades, the Tigershark is often not as capable in some situations as a more specialized craft. On board the Midway, you'll most often see this ship filling out a wing of craft that is particularly suited to the task at hand.



F-110A Wasp Interceptor
Mission Role: FORCAP, sometimes blockade

The Wasp is the craft that you don't ever want to be in the situation to need. Designed primarily to destroy torpedo craft that have gotten through a capital ship's fighter defenses, the Wasp is the ship most often assigned in "scramble" scenarios. Fortunately, it is well suited for its unlikable task. Wasps carry both traditional missile arrays as well as several cluster-rocket packs that make it very capable of dealing out serious damage to large groups of approaching unfriendlies. The Wasp also boasts one other special feature - it can be fitted with a detachable booster rocket that allows it to travel at greater-than-afterburner speed without using up its fuel. This enables the interceptor to get to its target very quickly and then detach its booster in order to improve maneuverability and acceleration.

Create the

Strike Fighter Demo

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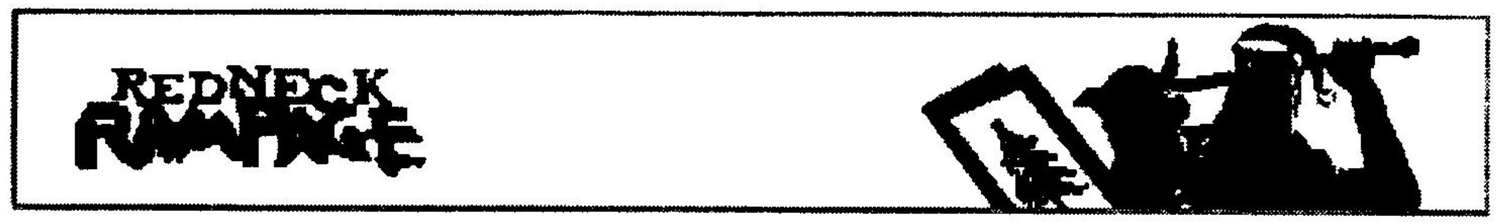
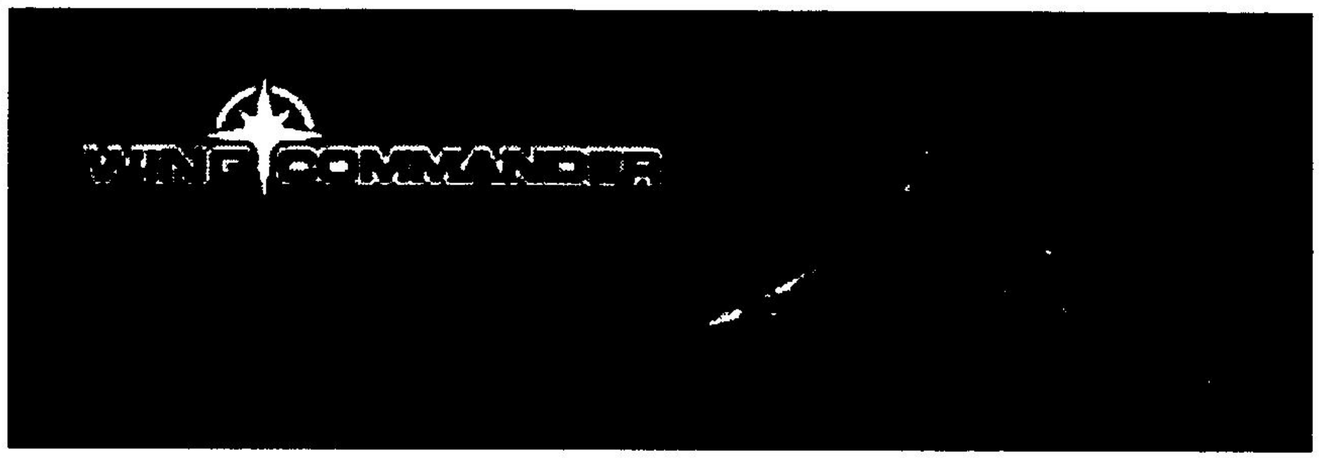


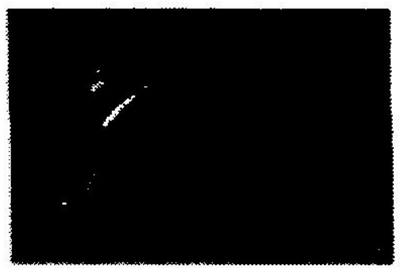


The Ships - cont. **Page 3**



F-108A Panther
Space Superiority Fighter (Class B)
Mission Role: blockade, TARCAP, offensive counter-space, escort, some FORCAP, some recon, and wild weasel

Medium to light shields, excellent recharge, and exceptional acceleration and maneuverability make the Panther the craft of choice for many pilots. Designed to be a smaller answer to its big brother the Vampire (listed next) the Panther is used primarily for light escort and for chasing down pesky unfriendlies. An excellent all-around fighter.



F-109A Vampire
Space Superiority Fighter (Class A)
Mission Role: blockade, TARCAP, offensive counter-space, escort, some FORCAP, some recon, wild weasel

Put simply, the Vampire was designed to destroy other enemy ships. Normally assigned to heavy fleet carriers, this long-range fighter has the firepower and shields to take on an enemy in a distant missile duel and come out a winner. Although it may not be as quick or as maneuverable as the Panther, if you know that you're going to be taking some heat from the enemy, this is the ship you want to be sitting in. Badass all the way.

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TB-81A Shrike
Torpedo Bomber (Class B)
Mission Role: strike, anti-ship, anti-hanger, sometimes recon

Let's say you've got a small unfriendly capital ship in the vicinity. You know it's protected by fighters, but you want it to go away - permanently. Then it's time to bring in the Shrike. A light (relatively) bomber armed with a top-of-the-line targeting system and a whole bunch of torpedoes, the Shrike remains maneuverable enough to get out of the way when the plasma starts flying. Although it's not powerful enough to take out the bigger ships alone, its speed and flexibility make it the perfect weapon against most targets. Oh, and if you're an enemy, you might want to watch out for the top, bottom, and tail turret guns that are most likely going to deliver a lot of firepower into your windshield.



TB-80A Devastator
Torpedo Bomber (Class A)
Mission Role: strike, anti-ship, anti-hangar, sometimes recon

The Devastator is armed with a plasma cannon. "Big deal," you say, "so are a lot of ships." Not like this one. The Devastator's giant plasma cannon, while ineffectual against fighters due to its slow rate of fire, can punch big holes through any capital ship that is unlucky enough to be nearby. Obviously carrying all of that firepower around slows the ship down, and so the Devastator is also protected by anti-fighter turrets on its top, bottom, and rear, as well as on both sides - a veritable porcupine of death. The ship to use when it absolutely, positively has to be reduced to ash.

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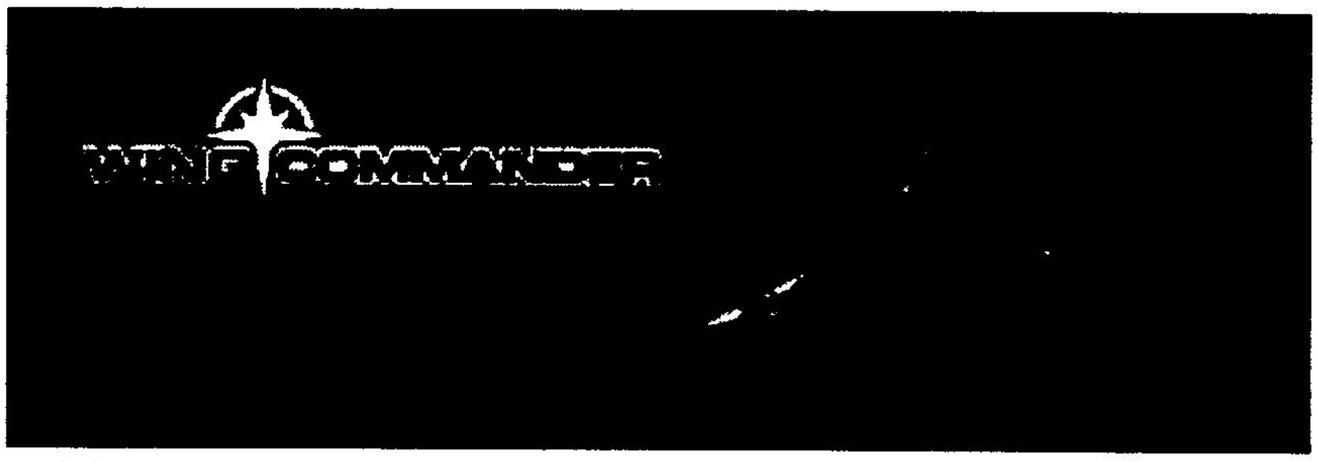

Weapons **Page 4**

OK, so now you know what you'll be flying, but you still need the info on what to expect when you pull that trigger for the first time. Here is a very abbreviated description of most of the Confederation's main armaments currently in use.

Guns

These are the main weapons you'll be using against the enemy. If you rely too much on missiles, you'll find yourself in a lot of trouble once they're all used up. Rely on your guns, and use the missiles when things get hairy.

Laser Cannon - It's cheap to make and it can hit targets that are really far away. Still, the laser cannon's poor damage-dealing ability makes it effective only against relatively weak opponents.

Ion Cannon - Another long-range weapon, the ion cannon fires a bolt of highly charged particles at a target. Its rapid-fire rate, combined with its ability to inflict a moderate amount of damage, makes it an excellent weapon of choice when you don't want to get too close.

Mass Driver - This long-range weapon takes a large hunk of metal and propels it at a target with a lot of velocity. Since it's not actually using energy for anything but acceleration, this weapon uses very little energy with each shot and has a relatively fast recharge rate.

Adjustable Mass Driver - Kind of like the mass driver, only you can decide exactly how much juice you want to put into each shot. Hit the trigger quickly and you'll fire a quick shot that doesn't use up a lot of energy but doesn't really do that much damage. Hold the trigger down for a few moments and you'll be able to treat the enemy to a really large punch that will leave your ship recharging for a spell.

Tachyon Gun - A lot more powerful than what you remember from earlier games because the Confed brains have been staying up all night trying to figure out how to blow things up as quickly

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as possible. Sadly, they've used a lot of power to do it. Don't expect to set this one on rapid fire.

Heavy Plasma Cannon - This powerhouse has a low recharge rate and is designed to be used against starships. Still, if an enemy fighter is stupid enough to get in front of it, it's toast.

Mk2 "Stormfire" Cannon - A Gatling gun designed by the Benelli Corporation that has a limited number of explosive rounds that really tear into a ship's hull. Unlike its predecessor, the Mk1, this unit requires a fair amount of recharge time between shots.

Particle Cannon - One of the most entertaining weapons to see in action, the particle cannon fires excited atomic particles at its targets that then cause small nuclear explosions. Its damage-dealing ability falls somewhere in between the mass driver and the tachyon cannon.




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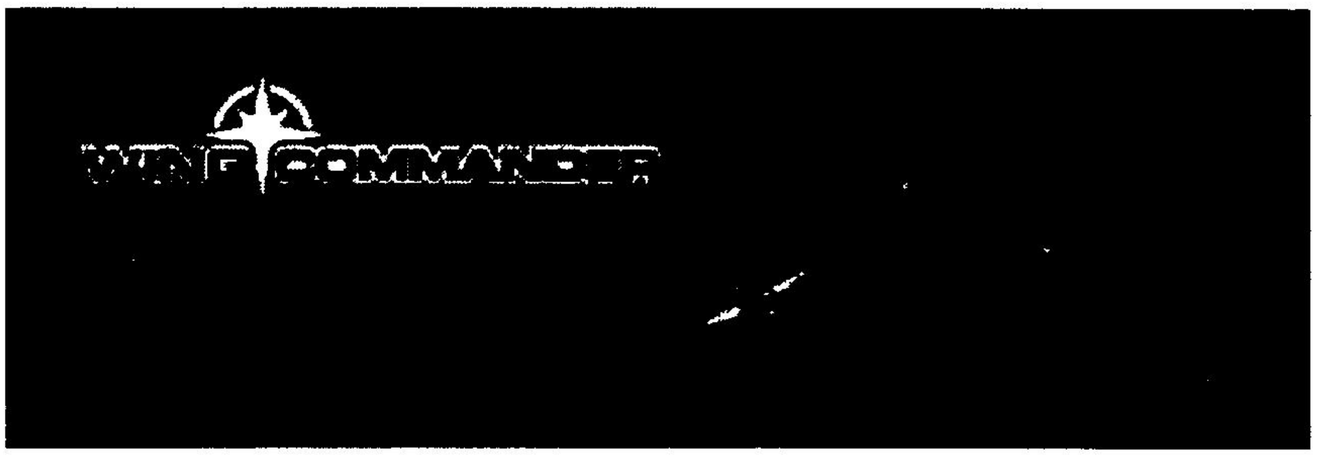
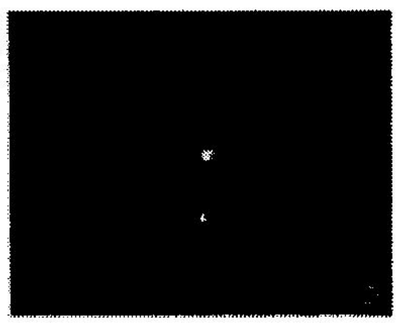


Missiles

You've got 'em, but remember to use 'em wisely. You won't get a chance to reload in combat. Since each missile has different targeting needs, get to know what ordnance you're carrying before you take off. Missing with a missile is a lot bigger waste than missing with a mass driver.



Mines - A little surprise for those who follow too closely. Mines are fired out of the back of your ship and blow up when someone gets too close.

Dumbfire Rocket - Forget fancy targeting systems, this baby just flies and fries. Best used against slow targets that have no chance of getting away, like transports and destroyers.

Friend-or-Foe Missile - As simple to use as they come. This no-lock rocket will fly at the nearest unfriendly target and detonate. The ultimate fire-and-forget.

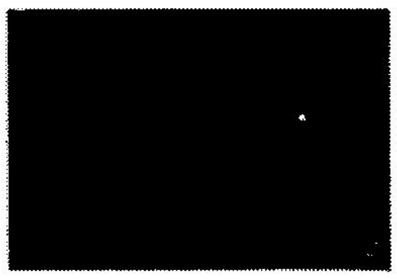


Image-Recognition Missile - One of the most basic Confed missile types, the IR missile still does its job frighteningly well. Once you've locked your target's image into the missile's memory, this missile will try to hit it until it runs out of fuel.

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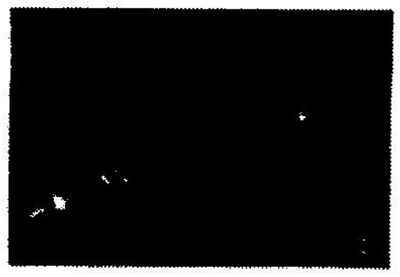
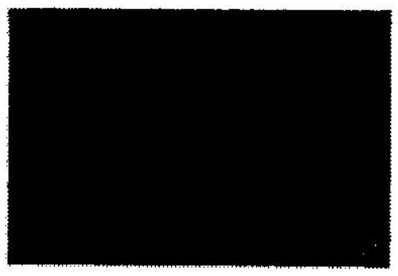
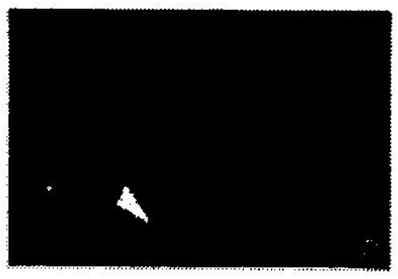


Heat Seeker Missile - A very simple missile that has a bigger explosive payload than either the IR or friend-or-foe missiles, the heat seeker locks onto an intense source of heat and explodes on contact. Remember though, if this weapon loses its lock, it will not make another pass at the target. Best used when directly behind an enemy.

HARM Missile - Locks onto and utterly destroys a turret. The perfect gift for that enemy who just can't seem to quit shooting you.

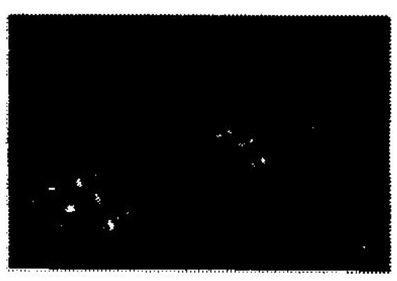


Torpedo (Light) - Slide your ship to within range, line up the shot, and let her go. Although impressively destructive, the light torpedo just doesn't have enough firepower to destroy a large starship except in great numbers. Bring some friends.



Torpedo (Heavy) - OK, fine. Let's say you don't have any friends.... This is the only fighter-based weapon that can seriously damage a major warship. When you care enough to send the very best...

Tracker "Smart" Missile - This one's really cool.



The tracker is a giant booster rocket that jets out to long range and then opens up to reveal several friend-or-foe missiles. Designed for any type of anti-fighter duty, this little surprise is best sprung on craven foes fleeing a battle.

Rocket Pods - Collected pods of small unguided missiles. Although they don't do as much damage individually as a dumbfire, the pod's high rate of fire means that you can sink a bunch of them into a slow-moving target before it can get out of the way.

Swarmers - Like a rocket pod, but guided. Swarmers all launch from the pod at the same time and fire at a target in the line of sight. Here's the tricky bit - line of sight must be maintained until impact. Swarmers are not affected by decoys and do a load of damage to a target.

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The Cast **Page 6**

So far, we've told you what you're going to be flying in and what kinds of weapons you'll have at your disposal, but there's still one more important thing you'll need to know about before you go into battle: your wingmen. Just as you'll need to know and trust your ship to fly you to battle and to know and trust your weapons to destroy your opponents, you'll need to know and trust your companions to watch your back and work with you to help you make it through overwhelming odds. If you think you're going to take on this new alien challenge all by yourself, think again. Trying to fly Prophecy's missions on your own is a one-way ticket to failure. Here's the team.... (Special thanks to Prima books for access to info from its upcoming strategy guide.)



Christopher "Maverick" Blair - If you've played any of the Wing Commander series recently, you're more than familiar with this character. He is the most decorated fighter pilot in Confed history and is considered by most to be the "Savior of the Confederation." Having helped to put together the first ever mega-carrier, the TCS Midway, Blair wants to see it off and running and then plans to begin his well-deserved dirtside life of research and teaching.

Second Lieutenant Lance Casey - This is you. So far your career has been under the somewhat watchful eye of your father's former commander, Senator James Taggart. He's helped you get rotated off diplomatic duty and assigned to the Midway. Now it's up to you to make the most of it.



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Major Todd "Maniac" Marshall - He's irritating, he's a braggart, and he's also a really good fighter pilot. Major Marshall has annoyed the strongest pilots of the confederation since the beginning and he's not letting up on you. Expect him to be a "major" (get it? get it? never mind.) thorn in your side.

Chief Petty Officer Rachel Coriolis - Without a doubt the best engineer in the fleet. Coriolis was one of the last to join the Midway development project and did so on the promise that she would take over the flight deck when she launched. She'll keep your craft running smoothly and will probably give you more info than you'd like to know about how to keep them in working order.

Commander Patricia Drake - The boss. Period. Commander Drake is the ranking Space Force officer on board and is in charge of the entire air group. She's all business and is definitely not a person to joke around with. Let's move on before someone gets in trouble.



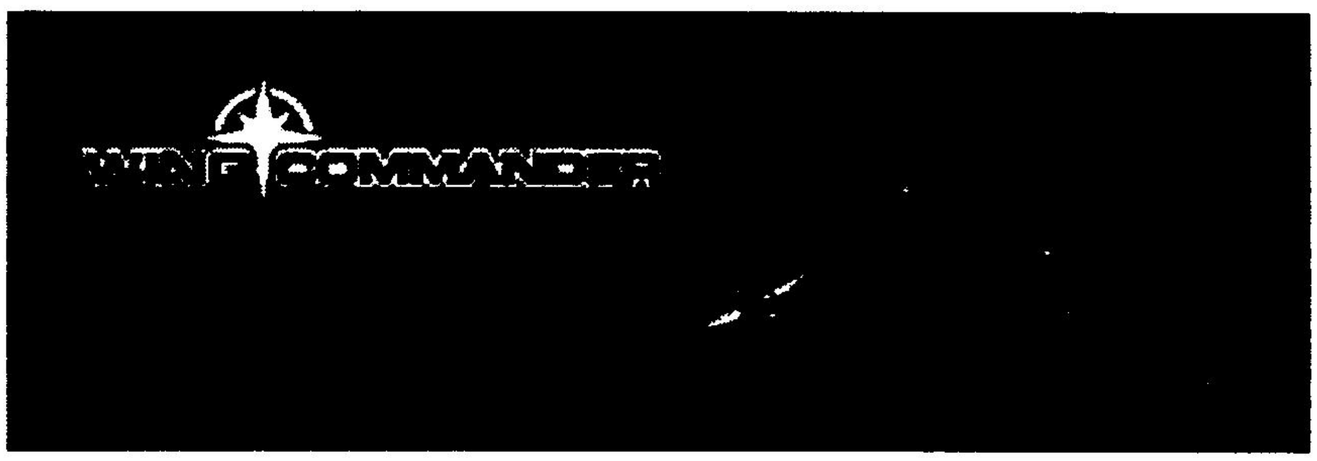
Colonel Jacob "Hawk" Manley - The commander of the Black Widows, the Midway's senior combat squadron. He's been through it all and is an amazing combat pilot. If you've launched with Hawk nearby, you can feel just a little bit safer.

1st Lieutenant (acting) Jean "Stiletto" Talvert - A top-notch up-and-comer, Stiletto has been given command (for the time being at least) of the Midway's junior combat squadron the Daimondbacks. She's extremely focused and a very, very capable pilot.



2nd Lieutenant Max "Maestro" Garrett - Your best buddy and frequent partner in crime. After pulling some strings to land the two of you a cushy diplomatic assignment, Garrett has been moved to the Midway along with you. He may be a bit of a scoundrel, but he's loyal and the closest thing to family you have right now.





The Missions **Page 7**



Since most of Wing Commander: Prophecy's actual storyline needs to remain a secret (we're not out to ruin the game here...) we're going to let you know what to expect by telling you a little bit about the first couple of missions instead. As a new cadet, you haven't really been assigned to a serious squadron yet, and you'll be flying the F-106A Piranha and the F/A-105A Tigershark. Don't think that these missions are just a warm-up - you'll be flying against an unfamiliar enemy in hostile space and any crew that you lose now won't be able to back you up in future battles.

Mission 1 - H'Rekkah - Kilrathi Distress Call



You're young, you're talented, and you don't know when to keep your big mouth shut. Your first few hours on board your new home - the TCS Midway - aren't very pleasant. Shortly after getting yourself in trouble with just about every senior officer in earshot, you are called in to fly your first real mission. During the briefing it's revealed that a Kilrathi freighter has been damaged and is requesting assistance. Your team (you'll be flying the rather tiny Piranha) is being sent out to protect a rescue vessel full of marines from any threat. Once you arrive on the scene, your team encounters a small group of a never-before-seen craft. They attack; you put 'em away. Welcome to the Confederation.

Mission 2 - H'Rekkah - Black Widows Rescue

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A group of fighters on patrol has gotten into trouble with this unknown threat, and your team has been called in to give them some assistance. Unfortunately, that group is the Black Widows, the senior squadron on the Midway, and you're not sure you want to tangle with something that could get so elite a squadron worried. Oh well, at least you'll get a chance to learn a little something about this mysterious enemy that's popping up - maybe more than you want to know. You'll also be a little bit better protected than last time around as you'll be flying the sturdier (but less nimble) Tigershark. Remember, those Black Widows are important to the well-being of the Midway. Let a bunch of 'em die, and you're going to have it hard in the weeks to come.

If you manage to survive, you'll be on board the Midway as it tries to work its way back to Confed space in order to report on the nature of the mysterious foe. Rest assured that this won't be a cakewalk, and that you'll be in the thick of the fighting. But hey, who wants to live forever?













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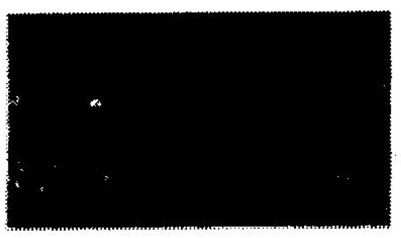
Conclusion



So what's the bottom line? To be perfectly honest, after playing Wing Commander: Prophecy, we were more excited about the WC series than we had been in a very long time. The team has really gotten back to the game's roots, designing a product that is more engrossing, playable, and suspenseful than any offering the series has made in quite a while. The real emphasis has been on creating a better game, from the storyline that puts you back in the shoes of a low-rank pilot, to the unbelievable in-flight weapon effects, to the smooth animation that makes your time behind the controls the centerpiece of the game rather than centralizing on FMV cutscenes.



That's not to say that the production values aren't there though. The Prophecy team has spent a lot of time ensuring that the movie clips in the new title are just as compelling as their predecessors - they've just shortened them up a good bit. You'll still get a chance to wander through the living areas of your home ship, you'll still get to swap tales with the crew, and if your lucky, you'll still be treated to fantastic reward animations, but this time around they are to be mixed with the gameplay rather than overshadowing it.



There aren't a lot of licenses that have made it as far as Wing Commander has, and one of the questions that always occurs when one does is, "Is there really cause for a new game, or is this just another excuse for a sequel?" Boasting a fresh design team that is dedicated to gameplay above all else, and in-flight effects and frame speeds that are far superior to anything that could have been done even two years ago, Wing Commander: Prophecy has been given a fresh new lease on life, one that could take the venerable series well into the next millennium.

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Friday, Dec. 12, 1997

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Wing ... Wing ... Hello? --
You a Wing Commander? Been through all four installments and can't wait for the fifth? Well, you'll have to -- but not much longer. Wing Commander: Prophecy is slated to be on sale Dec. 15. You can take a peek at what gameplay will look like now though if you scurry on over to the GamePower Multiplex. The projector's ready to roll.



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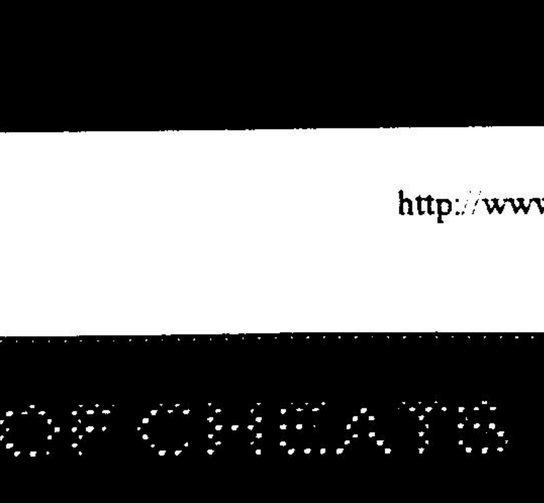
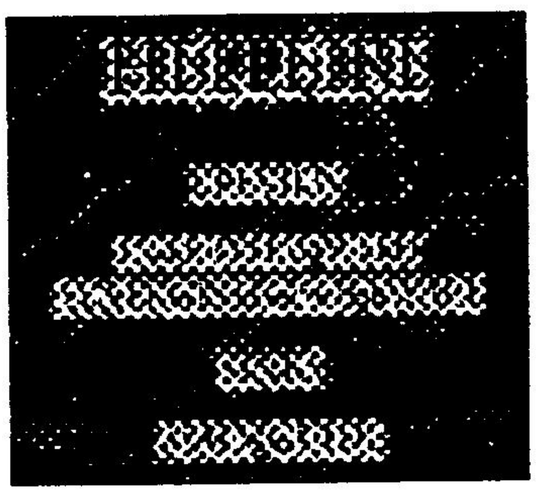
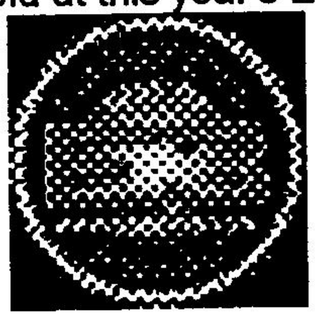
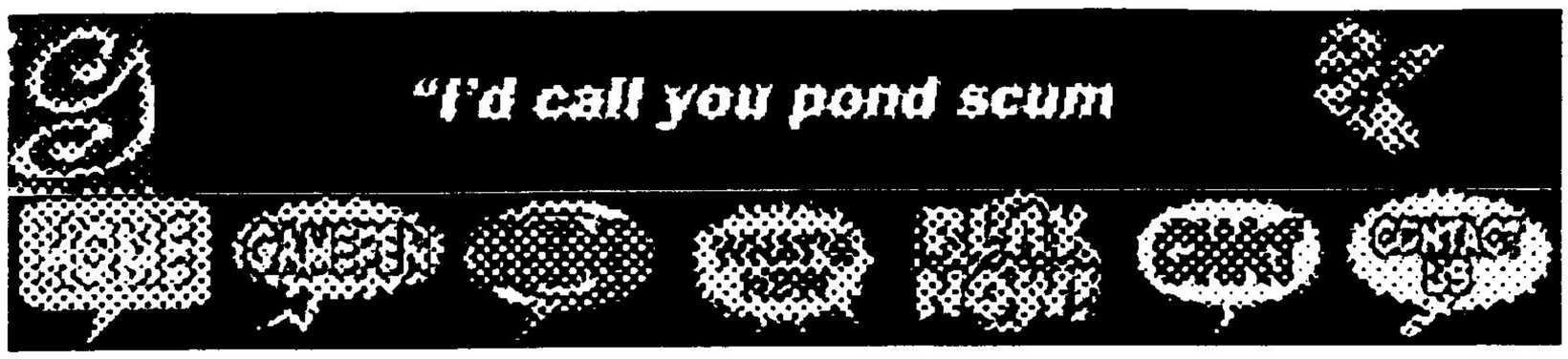






Find out who took home the gold at this year's E3.





GamePen News

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Monday's Missives:

- ***Two brands become "Just One FOX!"*** **FOX Sports** and **FOX Interactive** have joined forces to form Voltron and create **FOX Sports Interactive**, which will launch a line of products in 1998 including **FOX Sports Hockey**, **FOX Sports Golf**, **FOX Sports Tennis** and **FOX Sports Soccer**. Let's hope the two brands don't mix far enough to bring us **FOX Sports World's Funniest Videos**.

- ***Hot Dog!: The Game.*** **Sega of America** is set to ship **Steep Slope Sliders** to Saturn owners tomorrow, the 16th of December. "Like the sport of snowboarding itself, `Steep Slope Sliders' takes gamers on an extreme ride that is cool, different and filled with intensity," said **Brad Hogan** product manager, Sega Sports. Next up on the Sega Sports "intense" lineup, **Out-of-Control Rollercoaster Riders.**

Last Week's Big Stories:

- ***SpaceCamp opens Friday, December 19th.*** **Blizzard Entertainment** has announced plans for an external **StarCraft** beta test, choosing 1,000 testers from users that register at the Blizzard site. This is a multiplayer beta only, no single player game is included nor is a lifesize replica of **Darth Vader** as was previously reported.

- ***The King is Dead, Long Live the King!*** **Mike Wilson** has resigned from **Ion Storm** to pursue a new interactive game publishing venture, leaving self-described industry legend **John Romero** to assume the title of CEO. From the release: *"The new game publishing company, named g.o.d. (Gathering of Developers), is an alliance of several top-tier developers committed to a single vision - the formation of a cooperative game publishing company where the partners share in the development process and the profit."*

  Excuse me, but what does g.o.d. need with a game publishing company? ***ZAP!!!***

- ***The Kilrathi are coming... the Kilrathi are coming!*** **Origin Systems, Inc.** has shipped **Wing Commander: Prophecy,** the fifth chapter in the spaceflight series. "*With Wing Commander: Prophecy, we've emphasized the one thing that our customers keep requesting over and over,*" says Producer **David Downing**. "*It's a formula that made the original Wing Commander games so popular-gameplay, gameplay and more*

the original Wing Commander games so popular-gameplay, gameplay and more gameplay." Ain't it silly in this day and age that customers buying a ***GAME*** have to request ***GAMEPLAY***?

Last Week's News

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The GamePen News is meant as a humorous source of information on the gaming industry.

pectrum: Interactive Media & Online Developer News
3 December 1997
eported, written and edited by David Duberman
r editorial/ subscription inquiries, send mailto:duberman@dnai.com
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oday's Headlines (details below)

AMES PEOPLE PLAY
ORIGIN Ships Wing Commander: Prophecy
TEN Viewer Turns Gaming into Spectator Sport
Activision Announces Dark Reign Mission, Map Building Contest
PlayStation Sells Over Million Units in November

AMES PEOPLE PLAY

RIGIN Ships Wing Commander: Prophecy

RIGIN Systems, a subsidiary of Electronic Arts, is shipping Wing ommander: Prophecy, the latest chapter in the popular space combat anchise. The new graphics engine, which supports 3Dfx graphics ccelerator cards and Direct 3D, adds real-time, multi-colored lighting ambient, directional, point-source and lens flare effects), vapor trails nd particle effects.

here are more than 50 missions in Wing Commander: Prophecy. Players will nd seven new Confederation ships, each with individual sets of weapon oadouts and maneuverability features. Many of the new ships have

rticulated engine pod sections allowing for quicker horizontal and vertical movements. Also, there are more than 10 new alien ships to fly against, each one with new tactics and maneuvers.

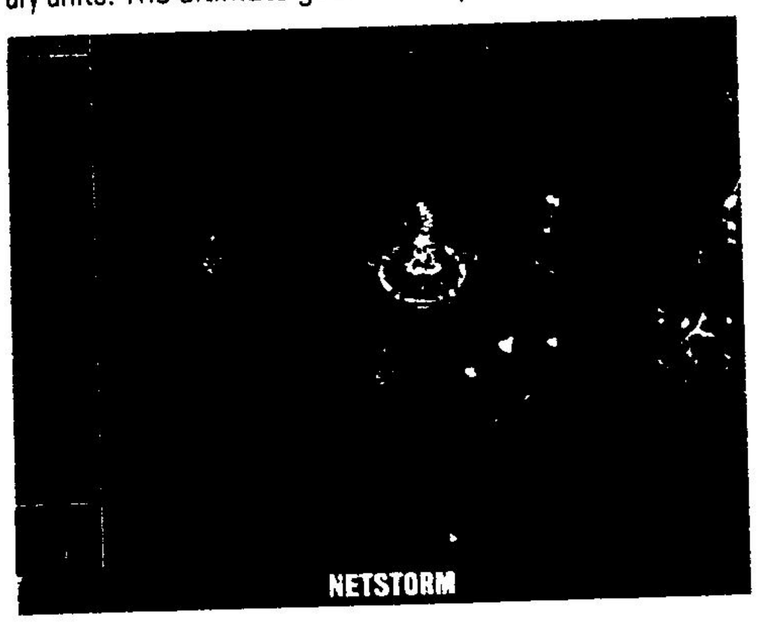
An interactive demo is available at http://www.wingcommanderprophecy.com
---

After Hours

game of world domination set in a fictional 19th-century world, Imperialism is a highly impressive title with addictive game play. The game is basically similar to Sid Meier's Civilization but with a tighter period focus and more diplomacy options. In fact, Imperialism's complex and versatile systems for diplomacy, economics, and combat let you take on the world in any way you see fit. Uniquely styled graphics and interface screens enhance the game and lend tremendous atmosphere.

*

NetStorm ($49.95 list; Activision, 310-255-2000, *www.activision.com*). One of the most original games we've ever seen, this real-time strategy title is among the first to be designed specifically for Internet play. As high priest or priestess of an island fortress floating in the atmosphere, you must defeat other players by building bridges through the air and carefully placing a series of stationary units. The ultimate goal is to capture and sacrifice the enemy high priest to your Fury (neat!). The chesslike game play is greatly enhanced by superb graphics and a meditative, New Age sound track.


NETSTORM

*

Panzer General II ($50 street; Strategic Simulations Inc., 408-737-6800, *www.ssionline.com*). Sequel to one of the greatest war games of all time, Panzer General II features the same "easy to learn, difficult to master" game play found in all previous General titles. This time around, however, the graphics have been completely revamped to include 30 hand-painted battle maps and incredibly detailed unit art (taken from photographs of tabletop gaming miniatures). The game play is greatly enhanced as well, with such new features as technology research, unit commanders, and an editor for unit and scenario data. Panzer General II includes five campaigns and lets you command American, British, German, and Russian forces.

*

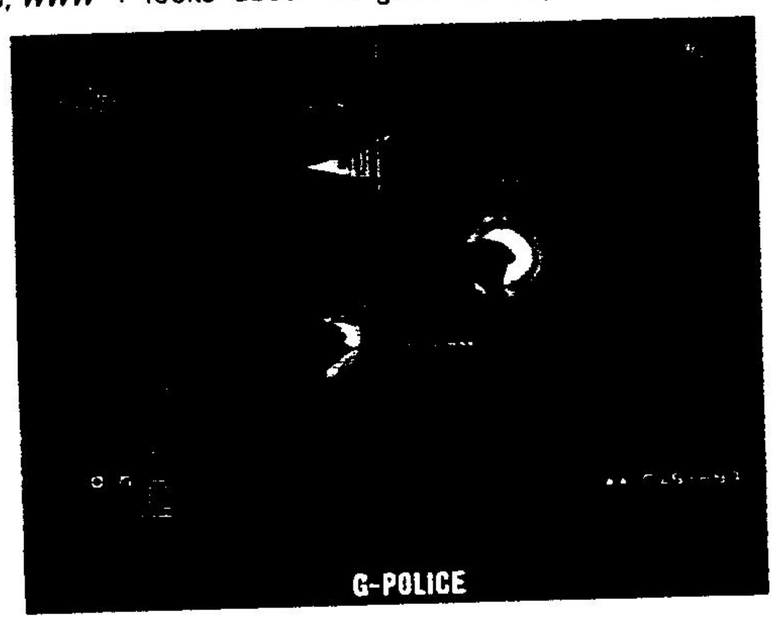
Sid Meier's Gettysburg ($55 street; Origin Systems, 800-245-4525, *www.origin.ea.com*). One of the most impressive games we've ever seen, Sid Meier's Gettysburg is a monumental war game based on the pivotal Civil War battle. Fantastic graphics and well-implemented real-time combat help enhance the realism of this complex title. You can command either side of the epic conflict in a single scenario or a full-battle campaign (which typically takes seven scenarios to run its course). Because the game includes both historical and hypothetical engagements, each campaign you fight can be different. Commanders ride back and forth to urge troops forward, trumpets blare, and rebel yells come ringing through the smoke. There has never yet been another game like Gettysburg, and serious fans of strategy and war games will love it.

*

Total Annihilation ($49.95 list; GT Interactive, 800-469-5961, *www.gtinteractive.com*). This game helps breathe new life into an increasingly tired genre. Boasting modest system requirements, an excellent variety of units to command, and the best graphics in the action-oriented, real-time strategy crowd of games, Total Annihilation has all the makings of a hit. The game also offers a wide variety of unit commands and the availability of new unit types on the developer's Web site (*www.cavedog.com*). When all is said and done, this program looks like the new king of the mainstream real-time–strategy crowd.

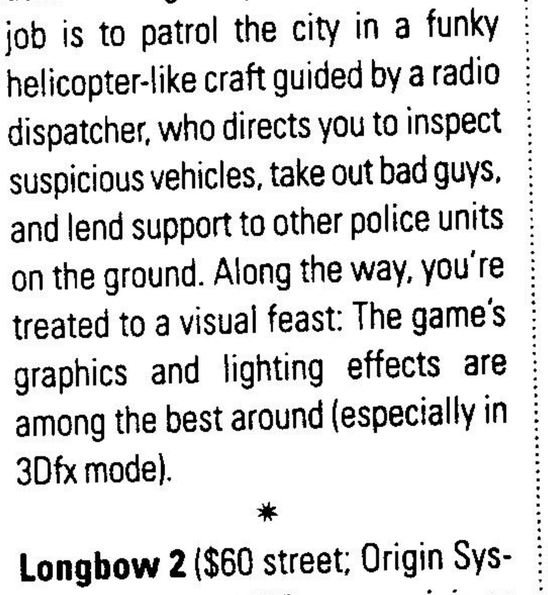
SIMULATIONS & SCI-FI

G-Police ($50 street; Psygnosis, 800-438-7794, *www.gpolice.com*). This sci-fi action game plays a little like MechWarrior 2 in a hover car and looks about as good as any 3-D–accelerated game you'll ever see. Your job is to patrol the city in a funky helicopter-like craft guided by a radio dispatcher, who directs you to inspect suspicious vehicles, take out bad guys, and lend support to other police units on the ground. Along the way, you're treated to a visual feast: The game's graphics and lighting effects are among the best around (especially in 3Dfx mode).


G-POLICE

*

Longbow 2 ($60 street; Origin Systems, 800-245-4525, *www.origin.ea.com*). The original Longbow was one of the best-looking and most realistic flight simulations ever released. The sequel is vastly better in both respects. Sporting an amazing, 3Dfx-enhanced graphics engine, Longbow 2 is a joy to behold. The game is also a lot of fun to play: It features a dynamic campaign generator, a variety of difficulty settings, and complex mission structures. If you've ever even thought about playing a helicopter simulation, this is the title to get.


LONGBOW 2

*

Red Baron II ($55 street; Sierra On-Line, 800-757-7707, *www.sierra.com*). Red Baron II is possibly the most detailed and realistic World War I flight simulation yet released. The game lets you play through a career, fly single missions, or engage in multiplayer dogfights. The graphics are excellent, and the artificial intelligence provides for some tough dogfight opponents. You can fly more than 22 different planes and even customize the insignia and paint scheme on your own aircraft.

*

Wing Commander Prophecy ($55 street; Origin Systems, 800-245-4525, *www.origin.ea.com*). After a brief hiatus and the departure of the series' originator, Wing Commander is back. The latest installment of the classic sci-fi series pits you against a new, unknown race of alien bad guys in weird-looking ships. Players once again enact the part of a hotshot rookie pilot trying to make a name for himself. The movie-style cinematic sequences are still a part of the game, but this time the action plays a more important role. With a completely revamped graphics engine (with 3Dfx support), a greater variety and number of mission types, and new multiplayer support, Wing Commander Prophecy looks like a sure bet to be a best-seller this holiday season.


RED BARON II

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GameWEEK

Wing Commander: Prophecy Ships

By Claire Duffy

ORIGIN Systems has announced that it is shipping "Wing Commander: Prophecy. The title showcases a space combat graphics engine that supports 3Dfx graphics accelerator cards and Direct 3D.

The space combat engine adds real-time, multi-colored lighting, vapor trails and particle effects. "Wing Commander: Prophecy" features incredibly detailed self-illuminated textures, a high frame rate, multiple camera views and the ability to render massive capital ships in photorealistic detail.

Producer David Downing commented, "with 'Wing Commander: Prophecy,' we've emphasized the one thing that our customers keep requesting over and over. It's a formula that made the original 'Wing Commander' games so popular - gameplay, gameplay and more gameplay. The gameplay mechanics are the best ever for a 'Wing Commander' game. Combined with the brand-new cutting-edge space flight engine this game is the most visually stunning and incredibly addictive space combat game out there."

Wing Commander: Prophecy is now available at software stores everywhere at an expected retail price of $50-$60.00.

Showdown in Cyberland

Crowded field battles for piece of high-stakes game market

By P.J. Huffstutter

It's Christmas 1996. Dozens of U.S. computer game makers, bogged down by soaring production costs, failed to finish their hottest titles before the holidays.

A few products sold big. Yet most of retail's precious shelf space was crowded with hundreds of ho-hum products that generated a lukewarm buzz among shoppers.

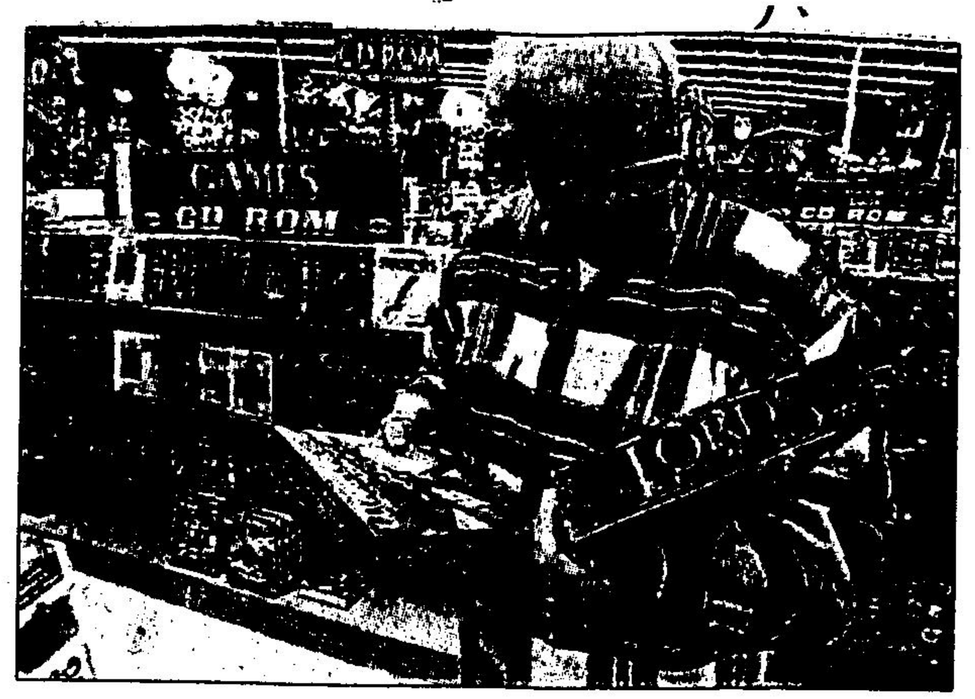
A year later, things look great. Fans are overwhelmed by a bounty of selections. Game makers excitedly release a stream of eagerly anticipated sequels. Early indicators show that 1997 could be the field's best year ever for retail sales.

And yet, game insiders warn that even the warmest glow of holiday sales will not be enough to erase fundamental problems that plague the industry. At most, analysts say, a good month in the stores will provide a temporary respite.

"There are too many people trying to make a go of this business," said Dan Lavin, a multimedia analyst with technology research firm Dataquest. "This industry has some serious problems, and a lot of companies really need this Christmas to save them."

At the top of the hype list this holiday season is Riven, the hotly anticipated sequel to the best-selling computer game of

See **Showdown** page 3



Los Angeles Times

Oliver Hadlock shops for a Christmas present for his 50-year-old son, a game enthusiast, at Tower Records in Long Beach, Calif.

all time, Myst.

Myst sold a remarkable 3.5 million copies by appealing to an audience far broader than the teenage males who buy most games. Rand Miller, co-founder and president of Cyan Inc., the Spokane, Wash., company that created Myst and Riven, hopes the new title can do the same.

Riven, released in late October, has already broken the 500,000 mark. But many analysts are skeptical that it will achieve the crossover appeal of its predecessor.

The other contenders for blockbuster status this year are firmly within traditional gaming genres. The likely No. 2 is Id Software's Quake 2, the follow-up to its wildly successful — and gleefully gruesome — shoot-'em-up game.

Others include Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II by LucasArts Entertainment; Wing Commander: Prophecy by Origin Systems Inc.; Tomb Raider II with its busty heroine, Lara Croft, by Eidos Interactive; and Starfleet Academy, the Star Trek-themed sequel by Interplay Productions.

The holidays routinely account for about 50 percent of the industry's annual sales, and so far 1997 looks like a good year.

For the first nine months of 1997, PC game sales in the United States were about $725 million, up 18 percent over the same period last year, according to PC Data.

The demand is being driven by rising PC hardware sales, which grew 19 percent worldwide — 16.6 percent in the U.S. market —in the last year, according to Dataquest. PC and peripheral vendors help prime the game market by persuading consumers that they need to buy the latest monitor or the fastest video card to enjoy these games.

"The PC market grows every year, and so does the public's expectations," said David Perry, president of Shiny Entertainment, a successful game publisher based in Laguna Beach, Calif. "(Personal computers) are getting so fast and so powerful that companies like Intel and Microsoft realize ... they need the game world to convince consumers they need to buy the latest, greatest technology."

But producing games with the video and graphics and other bells and whistles that the new hardware makes possible is an expensive proposition. It costs nearly $1.5 million to develop a game — not including marketing fees — compared with $500,000 just two years ago.

Despite the rising costs, though, the industry continues to swamp consumers with a flood of new game titles. The number of new PC games in the United States rose nearly 11 percent from January through November 1997, compared with last year's offerings, according PC Data Inc., a Reston, Va., market research firm.

The high costs and glut of products makes it tough for any but the largest firms to play, and a shake-up in the business is under way.

This year, Seattle-based CUC International acquired Berkeley Systems and Sierra Online, fattening up its already powerful stable of game developers. Bay Area powerhouse Electronic Arts added Accolade Inc., known for its sports titles, and Maxis Corp., makers of the SimCity line.

In November, industry leader GT Interactive Software Corp. was set to buy MicroProse Inc., which has long struggled to find consistent profitability.

When the deal fell through earlier this month, MicroProse announced that the merger cancellation delayed its production schedule at least a quarter, which triggered a net loss of as much as $10 million on revenues of $17 million to $20 million for the third fiscal quarter ending Dec. 28.

Wall Street reacted violently, as MicroProse shares plunged 51 percent on the Nasdaq Stock Market, dropping $2.36 a share to close at $2.31 a share on Dec. 8. "Right now, the industry is fragmenting into the haves and the have-nots," said Bobby Kotick, chairman and chief executive of Activision Inc. "The ones that are thoughtful about what products they make and the ones with enough revenues to sustain their momentum will survive."

To compensate for high development and marketing costs, several large game firms quietly revamped their corporate approach and refocused their product catalog this year.

Only hit titles mattered, insisted these developers. Everything else became disposable fluff.

Faced with having to boost internal costs to keep up with the fast-moving video game market, Disney Interactive decided to fire a quarter of its staff and massively scale back its in-house game effort.

The Glendale, Calif.-based unit of the Walt Disney Co. will produce titles only through its license agreements with other developers.

Virgin Interactive in Irvine, Calif., released only about 25 games this year — half of what it shipped last year. These days, only games that look like sure hits get approval. To date, about 40 percent of all the proposed titles get killed at the development phase.

Interplay Productions, also of Irvine, wrote off about 20 percent of the games slated to be released this year, said company President Brian Fargo.

Still, the battle for retail shelf space remains fierce. And without creative breakthroughs that can expand the market, many game companies face a difficult future.

"There are just too many good titles," Fargo said. "The consumer only has so much money. We're all fighting over those dollars and someone is going to lose out."

Los Angeles Times

LUCE PRESS CLIPPINGS | 12/28/97

Popular computer, video games sequels to originals

By Tracy Stellino
Sentinel Reporter

This seems to be the year of the sequels in popular computer software.

Among those selling well in Cumberland County this holiday season are: "Quake II," Tomb Raider II," "Riven," and "NASCAR '98"

But luckily for shoppers, most retailers report little problem getting multiple copies of these games.

Salespersons at Circuit City in Hampden Township and Electronics Boutique in the Capital City Mall report "Quake II" is a hot seller.

Released in early December, this highly anticipated overhaul of the popular first-person 3-D shooting game uses a lighter, more colorful graphics palette, enhanced 3-D modeling techniques and improved action programming.

The game is packed with booby traps, camouflaged ambush sites and secret rooms. Not to mention the bad guys, an army of mechanized mutant cyborgs called the Strogg. They're faster and smarter and better armed than the first game's villains.

To level the playing field somewhat, there are some enhanced weapons, power-ups, medkits, armor and shields for intrepid human heroes.





Lara Croft, above, is the protagonist of the Tomb Raider series of computer games. At right, one of the many lush vistas offered in "Riven," the sequel to the popular "Myst."

And instead of just standing there, or plodding straight ahead like most of the killer creeps in "Quake," the next generation in "Quake II" stalks you in packs, lies in wait, runs zigzag patterns to dodge bullets and can actually duck under incoming fire aimed too high.

"Tomb Raider II," another adventure game, this one by Eidos Interactive, has Lara Croft searching for The Dagger of Xiani, an artifact hidden in an ancient emperor's palace within the Great Wall of China. Whoever drives the dagger through their heart acquires the power of the dragon. It has been selling well at KMart on Walnut Bottom Road and Electronics Boutique

"Riven," the sequel to "Myst," is another action game and popular at Circuit City and Kmart.

"It was out the door," said Todd Cearer, a sales associate at Kmart, referring to when the game first arrived. "We just got a few more."

Cearer also reports "Myst" has again been selling well since "Riven" was released.

"NASCAR '98," another sequel, has been moving off the shelves at Circuit City, Kmart and Wal-Mart. It's the latest in auto racing games, modeled after the popular professional competition.

Also popular at Wal-Mart off the Carlisle Pike, says one of the salespeople in electronics, are "Deer Hunter," "Barbie" and "Trophy Bass."

"Deer Hunter" allows all those who didn't bag their doe or buck this season to get one in another way.

The "Barbie" game takes the time-honored young girls' dress-up game to the computer. Girls can create clothes for their Barbie dolls. The game comes with printer-compatible fabric and decorating supplies.

And "Trophy Bass" allows fishermen to gear up for fishing season, which is only a few months away.

At Circuit City, "Frogger" is also popular. This game is modeled after the popular arcade game of the 1980s but "the frog is on steroids," says a salesperson. Which is another way of saying the game benefits from the improved computer graphics and processing power of today's computers.

"Flight Simulator," which allows participants to fight in eight different jets, has also been popular at Circuit City.

And popular education games at the store are "anything by Disney" and "Reader Rabbit," which teaches reading, says the salesperson

At Electronics Boutique, there are a lot of popular computer games this season with no one game capturing all the attention, says one of the sales associates.

"Wing Commander Prophecy," a space-flight game that is the fifth in a series, has captured attention at the store.

Others making that store's list are "Frogger"; "Lego Island," a Lego adventure game for children; "American Girls," a play creation game based on the popular girls' book series; and "I Spy," a mystery game.

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HAT'S NEW AT GAMECENTER.COM THIS WEEK

A winter's feast downloader's guide: 50+ free games
RPG roundup: 5 titles worth looking out for
Reviews: Wing Commander: Prophecy, MiB, and more
What's going down in the GC Underground
The Dispatch-Direct Downloads
Behind the Scenes (for GC Dispatch readers only)

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REVIEWS: WING COMMANDER: PROPHECY, MiB, AND MORE

eviews editor Doug Lombardi is on the home stretch, making sure the Reviews ection is stocked with every title you can find on the holiday shelves. If you don't get e games you wanted this year, or if you find yourself unsure of how to spend your oliday checks (aside from signing them over to me!), be sure to drop into Doug's Reviews section and see which games have won a coveted GameWorthy 5-X award, nd get the lowdown on the latest games.

wo choices this week: Wing Commander: Prophecy and Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee. And see why Men in Black: The Game bombed on the desktop.

The complete Reviews page, along with hundreds of new reviews, is waiting to welcome you at:
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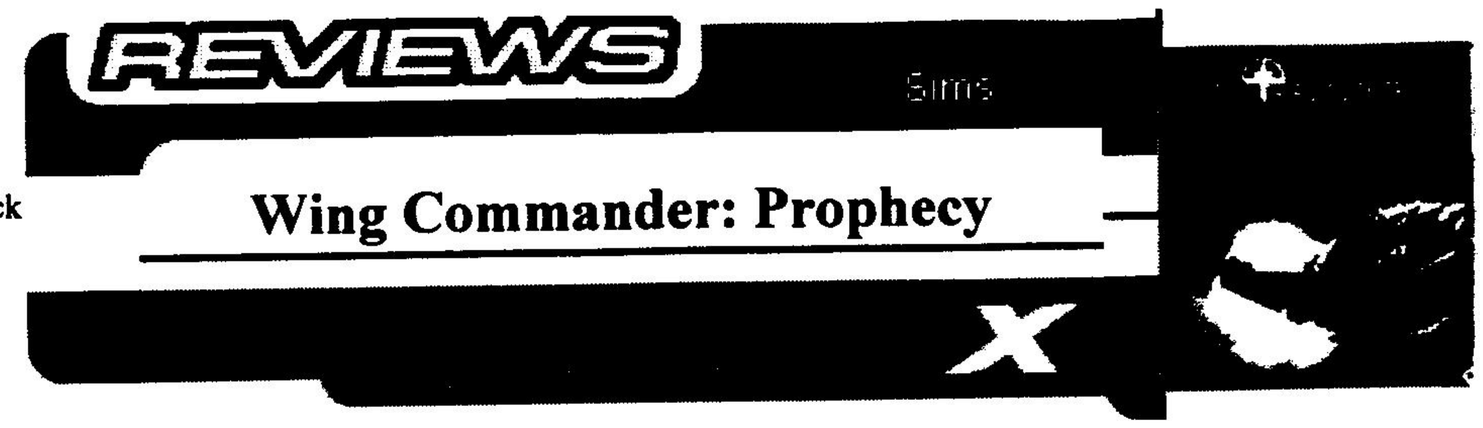
by Tom Chick
(12/23/97)



Game at a Glance
Recap: A big comeback
Ups: Dreamlike precision; luminous graphics
Downs: Maps are nearly useless; same cheesy movies
Multiplayer: NA
Single player: Very good
Demo: Available
Patch: NA

It was painful watching the Wing Commander series fade into mediocrity. The first installment (which was the reason I traded in my Apple II for a 386) was a new and exciting way to step into an action movie *cum* computer game, combining storytelling and interactivity. But since then, the series has been like *Seinfeld,* James Bond movies, and milk--it gets worse the longer you keep it around. However, there's an obvious change of heart behind Prophecy, which should be enjoyed by long-time fans and newcomers alike.

First, let us acknowledge what's probably obvious to most sci-fi simthusiasts by now: Prophecy arrived without the much-advertised multiplayer component--making it more of an alternative to X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter than the head-to-head competitor many of us thought it would be. That said, let's continue the analysis of this single-player game...

—Pass the Popcorn

Like any Wing Commander game, Prophecy contains its fair share of movies and dubious performances. Although the movies in this game have been trimmed down in scope and running time, they're still as cheesy as a daytime soap opera. The characters are shallow, the plot points are quick and simple, and the dialogue is cornier than the fields of Nebraska. Adam Foshko, who took over the directing duties after Chris Roberts bailed, can be a little heavy-handed (watch for the slow zoom and swelling music to telegraph heartfelt speeches). A lot of his footage is cut up into repeating snippets that quickly get tedious. Now we see the pilots walking into the briefing room again, now we see the shot of Maniac picking his nose again, now we see the good-looking redhead emote her concern again, now ex-porn star Ginger Lynn again tells us our father would be proud. Repeat ad nauseam. Never before has the Esc key been so handy.

There are a few good actors laboring mightily to make things more bearable. As Maniac, the underrated Tom Wilson continues to lend humanity to a thankless part.



Chris Mulkey returns as the steely-eyed Hawk; he manages to actually make his character-motivation speech sound convincing. Playing the commander, Lauren Sinclair does a good job of combining maternal concern with military stoicism. Our protagonist, the son of a longtime Wing Commander character, is played by Dana Carvey look-alike Steven Petrarca. He has the boyish charm but not the grim determination we expect from our Wing Commanders. His transformation from rookie to battle-hardened commander calls for quite a suspension of disbelief.

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REVIEWS Sims

Wing Commander: Prophecy

Another Bug Hunt

In the role of the heavies, the Kilrathi cats are replaced by bugs (sci-fi's evil aliens *du jour*). The story portrays the aliens as ominous and formidable; Mark Hamill's character remarks, "What we're up against right now makes the Kilrathi look like house cats." But the game doesn't bear this out. The eerie early encounters quickly lose their mystique and the bugs may as well be Kilrathi in exoskeletons, complete with gravelly-voiced comments about "dying with honor" and "entering the void." Designer Syd Mead has fashioned some lovely ships, all spectacularly modeled. Not since the Star Control series have alien ship designs been so distinct and so true to the game's fiction.



—Underneath all the movies, lies the heart of Prophecy: the new space combat engine, which is almost a work of art (in fact, the rendered cinematics look like cartoons next to the game engine). It's beautiful, it's fast, it's detailed, and it shimmers with an almost magical playability. More than any other game, the unknowable quality of space combat is vividly created with dreamlike precision and freedom. Once you start to learn the nuances of flying these ships, the game of feints and dashes as you trail an enemy ship is a rare treat. X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter flirted with physics to make space combat more interesting. But Prophecy reinvents space combat as an immersive three-dimensional experience, a glorious dance of drift and thrust.

Lighting effects and impressive backdrops make space a luminous and colorful place, unlike the plain star-dotted palettes behind most space combat sims. Effects like nebulae and beautifully drawn planets (with the exception of the shattered remains of Kilrah, which look like a corporate logo) are a fitting stage for Prophecy's elegant ships. Explosions will not only shake your cockpit and create brief double-images, but they'll emit blinding flashes of light and even multiple shock waves on different planes. The capital ships are an impressive combination of size and detail, but they aren't anything we haven't seen in the X-Wing engine all along. And the destruction of these capital ships is disappointing: transparent explosion effects are simply superimposed over the artwork.

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REVIEWS

Sims

Wing Commander: Prophecy

Flying Blind

The series' trademark radar system is used, which does a poor job of showing the player what's behind him and how far away the targets are. It worked well enough with only a handful of enemy ships, but the crowded skies of Prophecy quickly reduce it to an incomprehensible jumble of blips. It looks as if the designers tried to make up for this with a rear-view window and a 3D map that pauses the game. But the map is nearly useless. It doesn't keep selected ships targeted when you move back to the cockpit and without a tighter zoom option you can't make anything out once the fray is joined. Also, there's no way to bookmark important ships, making already difficult escort missions nearly impossible. Meanwhile, the power management from the last installment is now even more elegant than X-Wing's system, with quick shield and power adjustments made easy with a flick of the joystick. Unfortunately, the joystick and keyboard commands can't be remapped, which is quite an oversight for a Windows 95-based game.



But these glitches don't ruin the experience--fixing them would have simply made a really good game that much better. Yes, the Wing Commander series has redeemed itself from the sin of mediocrity and Prophecy should prove to be one of the season's most popular titles. Now if only they can do something about those cheesy movies.

Tips

-Set your power to halfway between shields and weapons; then use your afterburner for bursts of speed.
-Don't neglect the training missions. Many of them have excellent replay value and they're great practice.
-When turning, practice rolling the Panther and Vampire to take advantage of their superior yaw and pitch rates.
-After a head-on pass, use the sideslip to pivot your nose toward an enemy and kick in the afterburners to get on his tail.

If you like this game, you might want to check out Darklight Conflict or X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter.

Tom Chick's gaming experience began in junior high with a Space Invaders machine in an Arkansas Wal-Mart. He has since expanded his horizons to include console games, war games, flight sims, collectable card games, and anything else conducive to wasting large amounts of time. Agree or disagree with the review? Let us know.

facts

Wing Commander: Prophecy
Origin, 512/434-4263
Price: $55.00

Pentium-133 (with 3D card) or Pentium-166 (without 3D card), 32MB RAM, 150MB disk space, SVGA, 4X CD-ROM drive, Windows 95; Sound Blaster or compatible sound card

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CYBERSCENE

Active Year For Interactive

New technology takes gamers into the mainstream in '97



Scenes from the popular "Final Fantasy VII," which has grossed more than $200 million

INTERACTIVE entertainment on PCs and TVs went mainstream in 1997, attracting new players with dazzling games and technological innovations.

The biggest crowd-pleasers were arcade-quality video games. "Final Fantasy VII," at $35 million the most expensive game ever made, has already grossed more than $200 million at retail.

Produced exclusively for the Sony PlayStation, "Final Fantasy VII" is a gorgeous animated adventure starring a virtual puppet controlled by the player.



Joseph Szimhardt

"Final Fantasy VII" developer Square Soft and publisher Sony gambled on the unprecedented budget for three reasons: There was vocal demand by fans for a high-tech installment of the immensely successful role-playing series; new elements were added to broaden the game's appeal to include older users, and, most important, the worldwide installed base of the PlayStation had expanded to 20 million.

The payoff was a $50 game that, purchased by one in five PlayStation owners, was a bigger hit than most of the year's "blockbuster" movies. "Final Fantasy VII" has sold 4 million units so far, 3 million in Japan and more than 1 million (before the holidays) in the United States. European sales also are expected to be substantial.

As the number of arcade-quality video game machines plugged into TVs continues to grow in 1998, the potential jackpot gets bigger, and developers will have a greater incentive to create new technological wonders and immersive experiences. Bigger budgets will also enable gamemakers to hire Hollywood superstars and transform them — as Activision is doing with Bruce Willis, in "Apocalypse," for the PlayStation — into animated characters who move freely through three-dimensional space, the equivalent of movie sets.

At this time last year, interactive gaming's most highly evolved virtual puppet was Lara Croft, swashbuckling heroine of "Tomb Raider." That game sold 2.5 million copies, primarily in the PlayStation version but also to a lesser degree in a CD-ROM version for IBM-compatible PCs. Eidos Interactive predicts that its technically improved sequel, "Tomb Raider II," released this month, will do even better because the PlayStation universe doubled in 1997.

Arcade-quality video game consoles are specialized mini-computers that work with the biggest television screen and best sound system in the home. Introduced during the past two years, the PlayStation, Saturn and Nintendo 64 finally became mass-market products over the summer, when their price was cut to $150. The front-runner among gamers and gamemakers is the PlayStation, which offers 300 games. Nintendo 64 games, very expensive to produce, are scarce. Only three dozen are available.

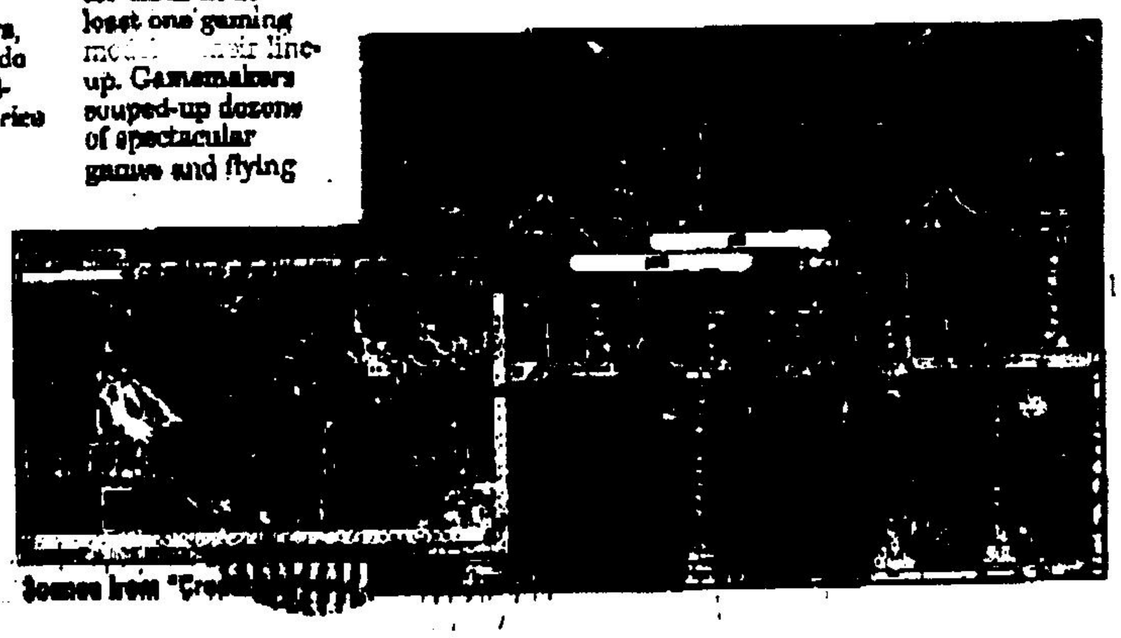
Sales of Sega's Saturn have stalled, making it a distant third to Sony and Nintendo. But in '97, Sega has continued to produce a handful of good games for its constituency, while reportedly preparing a next-generation game machine named Dural for the fall of '98 in a desperate effort to get a technological jump on its rivals. The PlayStation and Nintendo 64 are doing too well to think about upgrades before 1999.

Paradoxically, while video game systems were becoming the favorite interactive entertainment medium in 1997, PCs were developing into a desktop arcade machine. The 3-D animation in today's games requires fast image-processors. Until this year, multipurpose PCs couldn't compete with the arcade-quality 3-D graphics of the PlayStation, with its dedicated graphics processor.

This year, every major manufacturer incorporated 3-D graphics accelerator cards in at least one gaming model in their line-up. Gamemakers souped-up dozens of spectacular games and flying and racing sims for PCs with 3-D graphics cards. And millions of gamers with older PCs paid $150 in '97 for add-on 3-D graphics cards.

In pursuit of realism, the inevitable follow-up to a 3-D graphics accelerator was a 3-D enhancer. Diamond's Monster Sound add-in card creates the illusion of surround sound with two stereo speakers, and of true 360-degree sound with multiple speakers or a headset. High-performance PCs in late '98 will come with 3-D sound installed.

Besides making games look and sound better in '97, innovations added the sense of touch. Two PC "force-feedback" joysticks, from CH Prod-



Scenes from "Cro[illegible]"

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...d Microsoft, transmit to the player's hand the ...lires on pavement in a racing simulation, the ...f gravity during aerial combat, the recoil of ...s weapon and the shudder of taking a hit. An ...l "Rumble Pak" adds rudimentary force-feed- ...fects to some Nintendo 64 games. Due in '98 ...ce-feedback steering wheels and pedals.

...line gaming was a component of the coolest ...mes, which could be played solo, against the ...ter, head-to-head by modem or on the Inter- ...l couple of dozen dedicated services and Web ...fer gaming for free or a monthly fee. And ...t-only games, such as "Ultima OnLine," a ...ace theme park, for thousands of partici-



...ure," the most sophisticated of the "life sims," was a mind- ...fication of genetic science in a creative play CD-ROM.

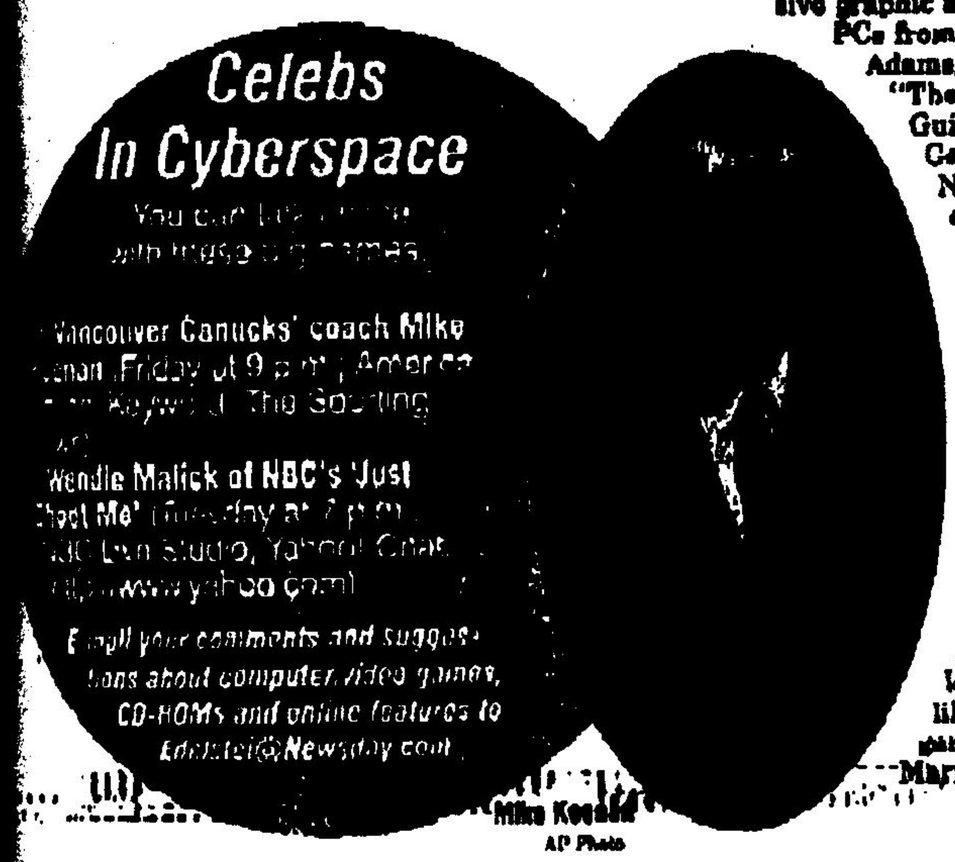
...s are the next big thing.

...C gaming has drawbacks, of course. A computer is ...ntially more expensive than a video game ma- ... Cutting-edge software pushes even a year-old ...— and, often, beyond — its limits.

...e under-$1,000 PCs that have become big sellers ...pack a lot of processing power, memory and stor- ...for general multimedia applications. But, at that ..., they necessarily lack performance options you'll ...in a higher-end PC. To do justice to a state-of-the- ...mputer game such as "Quake II," "Wing Com- ...r: Prophecy," "Blade Runner" or "Jedi Knight" ...a, at least, a Pentium 200 PC with 32 MB RAM, ...GB HD (for 80 to 400 MB of data storage) and a 3- ...phics card (preferably using a 3Dfx chip).

...mong the more curious innovations of '97 was the ...gin," or virtual pet. The most popular was the ...gotchi from Bandai, but the most sophisticated of ...s was "Creatures," a landmark application of ge- ...science to a creative play CD-ROM. The user ...ds and nurtures whimsical little creatures called ...ms in a charming cartoonish 3-D world that har- ...perils they must be taught to overcome.

...ens of thousands of people all over the world con- ...ed their own genetic experiments swapping their ...Norn DNA over the Internet with other breeders. ...tures" was, arguably, 1997's most original use of ...computer as an entertainment and educational ap- ...ce.



Mike Keesle
AP Photo

COMING ATTRACTIONS

A DIGITAL BRUCE Willis was among the missing this year when **APOCALYPSE**, a PlayStation game featuring a lifelike 3-D puppet and the voice of Willis, didn't make it home for the holidays as promised. It was one of a record number of blockbuster games that had their '97 debut postponed to March or April of 1998.

Some delays were due to dissatisfaction with the way the game turned out. Willis, for instance, controls the use of his image in "Apocalypse," which is undergoing unspecified revisions. The player and Willis are partners in a future where a madman unleashes the Four Horses of the Apocalypse. Activision gave Willis a piece of the company, as well as a generous fee, for becoming the first Hollywood action hero to be digitally scanned into a computer as a virtual puppet capable of moving in any direction in a 3-D world — rather than being just a filmed character.

Most delays were attributed to unforeseen technical



problems that took more time to solve than anticipated. "Quake II" arrived at the last minute, but two games using variations on its advanced PC game "engine" were no-shows: **DAIKATANA**, a time-travel action adventure from John Romero, co-designer of "Doom" and the original "Quake" and **HALF-LIFE**, featuring formidable aliens powered by souped-up Artificial Intelligence.

Months of digital construction remain for **STARSHIP TITANIC**, a massive graphic adventure for PCs from Douglas S. Adams, the author of "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy." And, for Nintendo 64 owners, who have only three dozen games to choose from compared with 900 for the PlayStation, the year's major disappointment was the delay of **BANJO-KAZOOIE**, a gorgeous action comedy for kids that looks and plays like the N64's best game, "Super Mario 64."

—Gelmis

A Glossary To Help Decipher 'Compubabble'

I SPOTTED A CURIOUS sight the other day while waiting at a traffic light — a gum-chewing, 20-something mom skating behind a baby stroller. She used quick, fluid movements to maneuver the stroller off the curb, and shot across the street just seconds before the light switched to "Don't Walk." This was a woman who knew where she was going and intended to get there fast, baby or no baby.

That's how I felt when I purchased my first computer. Eager to learn it all in a short time, I wove in and out of glossaries and manuals, pausing only occasionally to read whatever piqued my interest. The rest I just ignored. I wanted to know how to change fonts and install new software, sure, but any mention of "executable files" or "configuration" sent me fleeing for cover.

If your household is brimming with enthusiasm for computing, but short on practical know-how, perhaps it's time to unravel the mysteries of some of the more common computer terms. "Compubabble" may sound like a foreign language, but it's easily understood once you decide it's worth knowing. Here are five terms to get you started.



Bonnie Bruno

1. Backup — A copy of programs or data that you create in case your original files get damaged. You can make a backup on a floppy 3.5-inch disk, or by using a tape device that sits next to your computer. Think of a backup as insurance against loss.

2. Clipboard — An efficient program that stays in the background while you run around gathering interesting tidbits of information. Say you find a fascinating fact on your encyclopedia CD-ROM that you'd like to use in a report. Highlight the information (check your computer's help files for full instructions), then click on Copy. Tell Clipboard where you'd like to place the information, by clicking on the exact spot in your word processing document. Finally, click on Paste and — *voila!* — Clipboard transfers the information there. It's a great help when writing term papers, copying recipes, or inserting clip art into homemade greeting cards, to name a few. (Note: Be sure to credit copyrighted work.)

3. File Transfer Protocol, or FTP — This is the procedure computers use to transfer data from one computer to another over the Internet. Every time you download a file containing a software program, text, graphics, video or sound, your computer goes through a series of steps to receive the material. It's like friends meeting on the corner and shaking hands.

4. Server — A computer on the Internet that dishes out whatever you request. Suppose your hungry teen is exploring a Web site called Pizza Heaven, and spots a pepperoni-mushroom-olive pizza graphic that he'd like to save. He slips a disk into the computer's floppy drive, and requests a download from Pizza Heaven. Within seconds, Pizza Heaven delivers the file, which your son can save for later viewing or printing.

5. Web master — The person responsible for taking care of a Web site. You'll usually find the Web master's e-mail address somewhere on the site, which you can use to send comments or questions.

So brush up on your compubabble and watch your level of confidence rise. Make a family pact to learn a couple of new terms each week, and hold each other to it. Besides, isn't this the time of year to flip over a few new leaves?

Bonnie Bruno is author of "Internet Family Fun — The Parent's Guide to Safe Surfing," a directory of nearly 200 fun and educational Web sites. She can be reached by e-mail at bonnieb@peak.org

NEWSDAY, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1997

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CGW Holiday Gift Guide

Last month, in our Monster Buyer's Guide, we gave you our top 100 picks for the games we *thought* would ship by Christmas. Well, for those of you still doing last minute shopping, or for those holding out to see if that long-awaited game makes it into Santa's sack, here's an updated checklist of the products that had shipped at press time. We've also included, in italics, a list of the games that had not yet shipped, but were still on schedule to hit store shelves before the big day. Lists are ranked in order of preference.

Action



Jedi Knight
Abe's Oddysee
Interstate '76
Hexen II
Shadows of the Empire
Quake II
Tomb Raider II
G Police
Croc
Nightmare Creatures

Adventure/RPGs



Fallout
Blade Runner
Zork Grand Inquisitor
Curse of Monkey Island
Twinsen's Odyssey
The Last Express
Dark Earth
Hellfire (expansion for Diablo)
Broken Sword: The Smoking Mirror

Classic/Puzzles

Smart Games Challenge #2
Lose Your Marbles
You Don't Know Jack 3
You Don't Know Jack TV
Pictionary
Monopoly: *Star Wars* Edition
Boggle
Microsoft
Entertainment Pack:
Puzzle Collection
Chessmaster 5500
Smart Games Word
Puzzles
Bookup



Sports



NBA Live 98
Baseball Mogul
Links LS 1998 Edition
Madden NFL 98
ABC Sports College Football:
Heroes of the Gridiron
NHL 98
Microsoft CART Precision Racing
Jack Nicklaus 4
Rally Championship: International
Off-Road Racing
NBA Action 98

Simulation

Longbow 2
Jane's 688(I) Hunter/Killer
Sabre Ace: Conflict Over Korea
Pro Pilot
Armored Fist 2
F/A-18: Korea
Flight Unlimited II
Flying Nightmares 2
Red Baron II
Jetfighter III:
Platinum Edition



Space Sims

Wing Commander: Prophecy
Heavy Gear
Starfleet Academy
Forced Alliance



Strategy

Total Annihilation
Age of Empires
Dungeon Keeper
Dark Reign
Red Alert Expansion Packs:
Aftermath and Counterstrike
Warlords III



Pax Imperia: Eminent Domain
Incubation
Netstorm
7th Legion
StarCraft
Myth
Magic the Gathering: Duels of the Planeswalkers

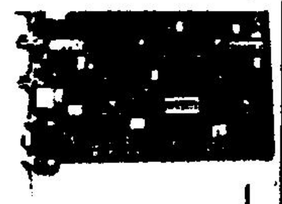
Wargames

Panzer General II
East Front
Achtung! Spitfire
Sid Meier's Gettysburg
Close Combat II
Aide de Camp 2.0
Great Battles of Hannibal
Tigers on the Prowl 2.0
Prelude to Waterloo
Civil War Generals



Hardware

Diamond Viper 330
Cambridge PC Works
Saitek X36 125
Microsoft SideWinder
Force Feedback Pro
Plextor 12/20PleX
Diamond Stealth II
3Com ImpactIQ External ISDN Modem
Canopus Pure 3D
Hitachi Superscan Elite 751
19-inch Monitor
ThrustMaster Rage 3D



Give old movies a new, personal sour 1 with 'Movioke!'

Movioke! is a novel idea. It lets you add new dialogue (or re-dub the existing dialogue) to scenes from a dozen old movies, ranging from the 1948 classic *DOA*, to the 1953 pseudo-documentary *Glen or Glenda*, one of the worst films ever made.



GENE EMERY

For your computer

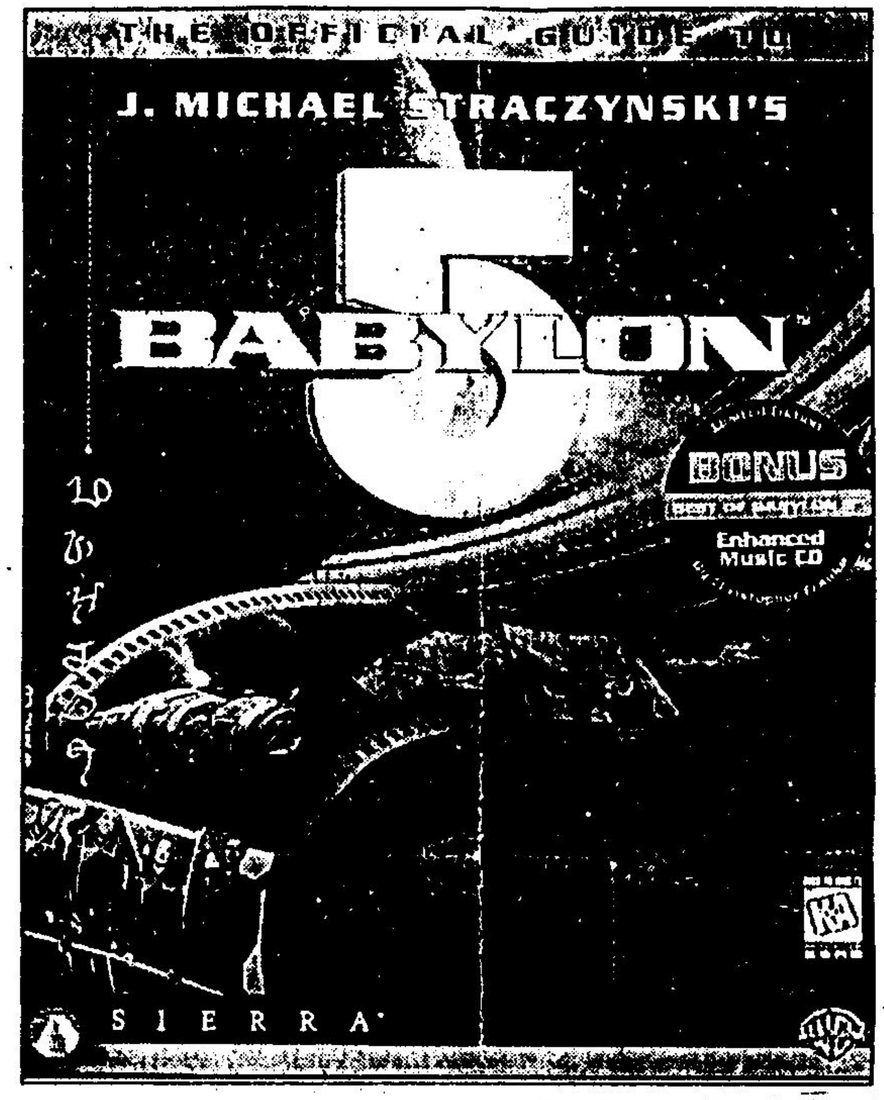
Dennis Miller hosts this CD/ROM, which will work best at parties with people who aren't afraid to be silly.

Unfortunately, the selected scenes aren't particularly exciting and the original music and sound effects are lost when you do a dub. Also, the tiny green light that comes on when you're supposed to start talking is easy to miss, so the result will probably resemble a badly dubbed Japanese horror flick. But that's part of the fun.

Before you buy, plug a microphone into the slot in the back of your PC and test the recording capability of your computer. With Windows 95, double click on the tiny speaker icon on the far right side of the task bar and make sure all the volume levels are in the mid- to upper-range. Then go to "Programs," "Accessories," "Multimedia," "Sound Recorder" and click on the round button to make a test recording.

If you can get crisp, clear sound, you may be ready for a little *Movioke!*

Bandai Digital Entertainment sells it for Windows and Macintosh for $30.



Incomplete 'Babylon 5'

As the science-fiction saga *Babylon 5* moves from syndication to the TNT cable network this weekend (a new *Babylon 5* movie, along with the re-edited series pilot, airs tonight), Sierra is releasing *The Official Guide to J. Michael Straczynsky's Babylon 5* (Windows 95/Macintosh, $30, 1-800-757-7707), a double CD/ROM package designed to be a reference to the B5 universe.

The series, which has already taken four years to tell and has one year remaining, is a science-fiction classic and winner of two Hugo awards.

But while the series soars, the CD/ROM sputters.

Parts of it are great. It offers about 70 video clips from the series and background information on the characters, weaponry and alien races that have made the Babylon 5 space station a gritty extraterrestrial United Nations.

In other ways it seems sloppy and incomplete.

The packaging says you need 256 colors, but the pictures look horrible at that setting. With some experimentation, I discovered that the

The "Personnel" section lists obscure characters like Dr. Lillian Hobbs, while overlooking Cmdr. Jeffrey Sinclair (played by Michael O'Hare), who ran the ship during the first season and became a pivotal character in the saga.

I would have expected "the official guide" to have a cross-referenced list of episodes, background on the cast, a timeline of key events and behind-the-scenes tidbits. None of those elements are here. (For that, the best source is still The Lurker's Guide to *Babylon 5* on the Internet at http://www.midwinter.com/lurk/lurker.html.)

The "Limited Edition Bonus" CD/ROM, with music from the series, interviews with cast and production team members, and information on Sierra's *Babylon 5* game, scheduled for release next Christmas, didn't work at all on my machine.

E.T. in the classroom

A question for the kids: do you know any grownups who are actually space aliens?

Have you noticed that they (a.) can solve arithmetic problems in their heads, (b.) are able to use a watch with "hands," or (c.) vehe-

Youngsters between the ages of 8 and 12 can practice spotting these space invaders by playing *My Teacher Is An Alien*, a cartoon CD/ROM game from Byron Preiss Multimedia (Windows 95, $35).

Based on the popular series of books by former gravedigger Bruce Coville, the game challenges players to discern which of three teachers are part of an alien-invasion force. It's not always easy because all three teachers make suspicious comments.

"Sometimes people seem like alien life forms — alien to me at any rate," says Mr. Daniels, the science teacher who is "dead sure" that extraterrestrial life exists and believes that if the aliens arrive "they will find us so offensive they'll just wipe us out."

The identity of the E.T. teacher changes each time you play.

Kids can assume the role of the class brain, the class bully, or the resourceful girl, switching roles in mid-game if one of the three get abducted or ends up in detention. The bully gets the action-game puzzles, the brain gets the mind puzzles, and the girl uses relationships to save the day. The nature of the ending depends on which role you assume.

My Teacher Is An Alien is easy to play. However, some of the animation has the distracting jaggy lines found in products designed to run on older machines or made with an eye toward cutting costs. It's annoying, but not ruinous for the game.

If you win, you'll save the planet. If you lose, and Earth is going to be conquered, just be thankful that they're not from the same species that gave us Dennis Rodman.

New products

Some new and notable software

American Heritage Talking Dictionary — This new version offers pronunciations for 90,000 of its 200,000 or so words. It also has a new thesaurus with over 1.5-million synonyms and antonyms. It's from The Learning Company (Windows, $30, 1-800-227-5609, http://www.learningco.com).

Command & Conquer: Sole Survivor Online is a special version of the popular *Command & Conquer* product line that lets you practice on your computer, then go on-line to challenge others. It's from Westwood Studios (Windows 95, $30, 1-800-874-4607, http://www.westwood.com).

eMedia Guitar Method 2 —



Flight Unlimited II lets flight-simulation enthusiasts pilot five different planes around the 11,00(square miles of satellite-mapped scenery of the San Francisco Bay area, or take off from 48 airports. also lets players experience water or aircraft carrier landings (Looking Glass, Windows 95, $50

Nightmare Creatures is an action-adventure game, originally released for Sony PlayStation, involving monsters that lurk in London's sewers and back alleys 1834. Activision makes it for age

and older (Windows 95, $50).

Sierra Pro Pilot — Another flight ulator, this one teaches ginners to fly and offers tips for ople learning about instrument l commercial certification. It tures five types of planes, full trumentation, and a detailed onstruction of 29 cities, including ston. It also boasts of having ile for mile, the most athtakingly realistic terrain ilable." It's from Sierra indows 95, $60, 1-800-757-7707, ://www.sierra.com/pilot).

spaceships on 50 missions against 10 types of alien ships. It's from Origin (Windows 95, $50, 1-800-245-4525). A demonstration version is available at http://www.wingcommanderprophecy.com. Prima Publishing's 256-page strategy book for the game sells for about $16.

C. Eugene Emery Jr. is a Journal-Bulletin writer. His address is: West Bay Bureau, Providence Journal.

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Games Reviews Previews News Articles Tech



TITLE: **Wing Commander: Prophecy**
PRODUCER: **Origin**
CATEGORY: **Simulation**

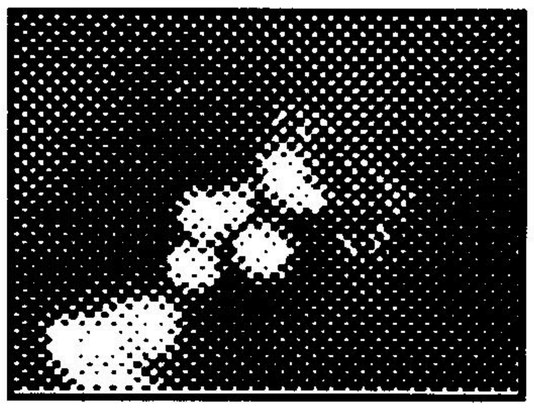
DB QUERY | DOWNLOAD DEMO (38.3 MB) | SUBMIT USER REVIEW | READ USER REVIEWS | BUY IT ONLINE

MOV/ VEO | STORYLINE | STRATEGY AND TIPS | PLAYABILITY | COMPARE TO | NICE/NOT SO NICE TOUCHES | MANUAL HINTBOOK | SYSTEM REQ.S | SUMMARY

Alien Resurrection

8/10 Review by Jason MacIsaac

No longer under the jurisdiction of creator Chris Roberts (who left to form **Digital Anvil**), I was somewhat dreading the next edition of *Wing Commander*. Since *Prophecy* is the start of a brand new trilogy, I was worried that Origin would scrub away all the remnants of Roberts' touch just for the sake of starting anew. I was especially worried by all this unofficial talk that Roberts "ruined" the series by concentrating too much on making a good movie rather than a good *Wing Commander*. That just isn't true. And happily, although the new bosses have made some changes to gameplay, *Prophecy* is a great fresh start for the series. It still manages to be faithful to the first four, and delivers the right balance of flight combat and story-driven scenarios we've come to know and love from the series.



You're no longer Blair, the big boss with his choice of wingmen or ships (well, the ship part comes later). You're First Lt. Casey, fresh out of the Academy. You've got to earn respect here, since the veterans will have nothing to do with you, and the young recruits are resentful because you're the son of "Iceman" from the first *Wing Commander* ("That was for Vega 9, you bastards"), and they think you've gotten this far on his name alone. Fortunately or unfortunately, you'll get a chance to prove yourself in combat.

A weird new alien species has entered the Kilrathi systems, engaging in a campaign of mass destruction. What they don't destroy they capture, and take away for cruel experiments. What are they? What do they want? Are they fulfilling an ancient Kilrathi prophecy regarding the end of the world? None of these questions are answered this time. Origin wanted a sense of mystery, and it's here. Your primary concern is to release

their grip on Kilrathi space, or they'll start eyeing Confed space before long. Who they are and what they want will have to wait, at least for now.

Some games are motivated by technology, others by story. Did anyone buy *Quake II* to find out what happens to Earth afterwards? Of course not. And technology, although they do a credible job with keeping up with the latest graphical and gameplay enhancements, is not the real focus of *Wing Commander*. The universe, the story, and the characters, have grown on us. That is hard for a movie series to do, never mind a game. It doesn't try to blow you out of your seat with the latest 3D or the last word in realism. It takes lots of little things and does them right for a cumulative effect. That effect is a game with the right mix of flying action and story. Upset just one of *WC*'s elements and you will ruin the game, a fact not lost on the designers of *Prophecy*.

So, the winning formula is refined a little in a manner that I don't think will outrage anyone, and the series continues with a great new start, and the promise of more to come.

Audio/Video:

Familiar sounds for the most part. A good soundtrack, though not my favorite. I must praise the wingmen cross-talk, because there's more of it than in any other game. Each pilot (and there are a lot of them), seems to has his or her own voice. During combat, radio chatter is almost constant. If you find it annoying, you can streamline it, or eliminate it all together. Also, you've got to love the alien communications before they translate our language.

Prophecy comes ready for 3D acceleration, and you will find that ships have more detail than ever. Also really cool is the ship movement. Now, I don't mean jut flying from A to B. Many ships, particularly the alien vessels, having moving parts. Limbs and struts fold as the ships fly. And those ships really do look alien. They went for an organic look, so some of the ships look like giant space octopus, ready to pull you in. Lots of nice, dark backgrounds of nebulae and planets really give space more atmosphere, if you'll pardon the pun.

Not a bad design on the aliens either, kind of a cross between the creatures in *Alien* and *Predator*. They are known only as "Roaches" or "Bugs." (I know what you're thinking, but *Prophecy* was already well in development before *Starship Troopers* was released.

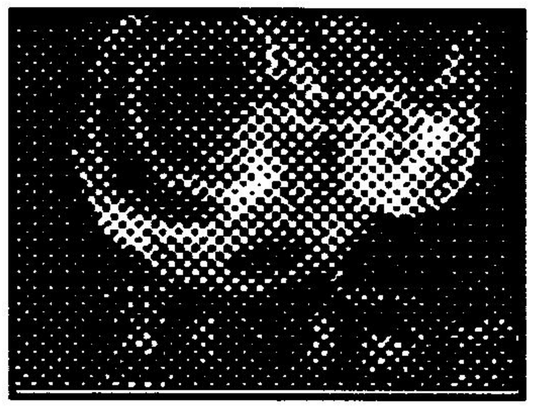
Storyline:

First rate everywhere you look. Established *Wing Commander* mythology is referred to, and expanded. Remember the Cult of Sivar? First introduced in Secret Missions Disk 1, they're the ones who hand down the title prophecy. There's a reference to the Firrekan, and plenty of reminders about the exploits of Blair, who is well portrayed by Mark Hamill as a weary Commodore, burdened by responsibility but envious of the young up-and-coming pilots. Also watch out for Maniac, again beautifully played by Tom Wilson. Interestingly, Maniac matures ever-so slightly in this game.

As before, campaigns and missions are assigned within the context of the story, each mission having significance. The story packs some cool (and eerie) surprises. Don't want to give those away, but having played through the game, let's say I'm eagerly awaiting the next installment. And one last note on the story--this universe is coming together more and more, and gives a better sense of depth with each installment. The *Star Wars* games (even though I love them to death), are lucky enough to have a trilogy of movies to base their mythology on (even though they do a good job of extending it). *Wing Commander* had to create its mythology from scratch.

Disappointingly, there isn't much in the way of winning/losing paths for this game. It's fairly linear, and failing a mission usually means game over. You do get some room to maneuver, but there is nowhere near the amount of diversity of the first four games.

Strategy and Tips:
Never blow all your missiles at the first Nav point. Always save them for when you've got to defend something and need the quick kill. On torpedo runs, try to use as few torpedoes as you can to get the job done. Sometimes other bombers run into trouble, and if you want something done right, you just have to do it yourself.



Sometimes the Auto light will appear before a mission is completed, so don't make the mistake of leaving until you're sure the work is done (this often happens when you've got a half-dead cap ship on your hands. Usually your wing leader will order you to form up when there's nothing left, and you'll hear a woman's voice say "Mission accomplished." If you miss it, hit CTRL+O for a list of objectives and their status.

Some alien ships perform operations that make them vulnerable for a moment. Watch out for these moments, and exploit them.

Playability:
Something old, something new, something changed. Role-playing decisions have been removed. You can still make decisions that will take the game along different paths, but you don't have that morale thing to worry about. Actually, this makes perfect sense. As a junior lieutenant, you are far less likely to be able altar ship's morale than if you were a top officer. The flip side of this is that you can't choose your wingmen, and except in very few situations, you can't choose your ships. This actually leads to a minor irritation--in some mission you can choose to fly either a fighter or a bomber, but must choose *before* the mission briefing. That's the kind of decision you want to make when you know what you're up against.

Bombing runs are back again--most of the alien capital ships require the engines and the bridge to be destroyed by torpedoes. Capital ships are huge, with many turrets. Some do serve purposes other than to be simply large floating targets, though they don't participate in combat nearly as much as the ones in *Balance of Power*, the ***XvT*** expansion disk.

You will find that your wingmen are much more intelligent (and plentiful) than before, and don't need to be baby-sat. Communications has been simplified. You don't need to tell them to break and attack. In fact, most of the time they'll be telling you (get used to being on the low rung of the ladder).

Combat has a few new thrills (Skip this paragraph if you want to find this out yourself). Some alien ships can break into smaller components, or form into larger ones, usually drastically increasing the damage they can do. It really makes you say "Cooool! Uh...I'm dead."

Something that was discussed and abandoned is multiplayer. It was not included in *Prophecy* after all. Personally, I'm not that disappointed, though I can see where some fans would be. I'm not really eager to see yet another flying deathmatch. For me the real thrill was the story-driven campaigns. But admittedly the game could use a co-op mode that would allow you to go through some of the missions together.

WC has never been about realism, so don't expect many of the physical laws of the universe to come into play. Unfortunately, the argument JP and I have going over smoke trails in space is too lengthy to be included here. But who needs realism here?

Compare To:
A mix of the first four games. Origin wanted an advancement system again, so you can start as a Lt. and work your way up. You can't advance as quickly as you did in ***WCI***, but you can also get promoted to better squadrons as well as better ranks.

The Kilrathi as we saw them in ***WC3*** (graphically, at least), make a return. And fans of bombing runs (introduced in ***WC2***) will be happy to know that these missions also make an appearance.

Nice Touches:
There are plenty of moments where you come back from a mission thinking, "Damn, I done good." You're meant to be the hero and the game certainly lets you feel like one at times. One mission allows you to give the aliens a taste of their own medicine, and it's one of the most satisfying feelings since dropping the Temblor bomb in the barrel on Kilrah.

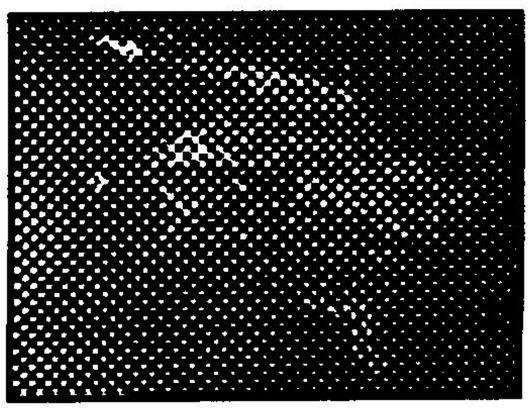
As far as set and ship design goes, this is the best-looking *Wing Commander* yet. Syd Mead, who has the world's most interesting job description (Visual Futurist), helped contribute to the look of *Prophecy*. Mead already has some impressive credits, including being part of the *Blade Runner* film staff, and he really bring some great new style into the mix.

Finally, there's a great fighting finish.

Not-So-Nice Touches:
Because plot is very important to the *WC* series, sometimes plot developments occur not only while a mission is in progress, but sometimes right *during* combat. This leads us to two Not-So-Nice Touches. First, you can have an enemy fighter lined up in your sites, when suddenly BANG, cut scene, completely disorienting you. There was one mission where we kept dying because the game stopped to show us that re-enforcements had arrived. Also, some missions have objectives that are unobtainable by design. I went crazy trying to destroy a Communication Station as per mission instructions. I replayed the mission many times before I finally figured out it couldn't be done. Problem is, this counts towards your pilot stats, and that's a little unfair. In *TIE Fighter*, when a goal became unobtainable, you were immediately given new, clear instructions. *Prophecy* rarely does.

Oh, and under the Some Things Will Never Change Department: Why are our transports so damn fragile? Why can we build something meant to carry cargo AND have guns out the wazoo? The enemy sure does.

Manual/Hint Book:
Remember the lackluster docs that came with *WCIV*? Well, the magazine's back, with pilot profiles, news, and some classified stuff too. Also, there's a gorgeous map that shows the *WC* universe. You'll recognize systems from the entire series, even *Privateer*. Gameplay and technical matters each have their own booklet.



System Requirements:
Pentium 166 (with no 3D card); Pentium 133 (with 3D card), 32 MB RAM
150 MB free disk space
2MB PCI SVGA video card supporting 16-bit colour
4X CD-ROM

Windows 95, DirectX 5.0
Supported 3D cards: 3Dfx (native), Direct3D through the ATI Rage Pro, Matrox Mystique, Permedia 2, Rendition 200, Riva 128.



Summary:

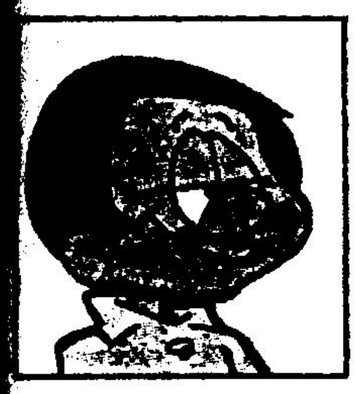
The Case For: Improved graphics and gameplay, cool new enemy, a sense of mystery returns to the plot.

The Case Against: Limited campaign structure, no multiplayer.

The Verdict: A good rebirth to the series, with the promise of more to come.

Main Games Reviews Previews News Articles Techie

TODAY IN Part 2



FUN & GAMES

Monday Madness: Like wacky comics? These are some of the oddest.
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Color Comics: With bridge, horoscope, the crossword and cryptoquote, too.
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FITNESS FILE

Follow two readers as they begin a 6-month program of fitness.
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RADIO WAVES

The new morning duo at WKTU / 103.5 FM and their drive for ratings.
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TELEVISION

Marvin Kitman checks out "Style & Substance," above, and "Ask Harriet."
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The Stealth Actor

Mark Hamill's dream soars beyond video games



Newsday Photo / Bruce Gilbert

Mark Hamill, of "Star Wars" fame, has an idea for a movie based on a comic book.

By Joseph Gelmis
STAFF WRITER

MARK HAMILL IS the sort of hard-luck person you'd want standing next to you if lightning struck. He'd take the hit. And he'd survive. He's like a rubber ball, resilient and shock-resistant.

Hamill has starred in two of the most successful franchises ever — moviedom's "Star Wars" trilogy and computerdom's "Wing Commander" series — without managing to parlay either into career advancement.

Both franchises are preparing space combat movies due in 1999. Hamill will be in neither.

Luke Skywalker will appear, if at all, as a twinkle in Darth Vader's eye in the new "Star Wars" trilogy, which is set earlier in time than the original films. And "Wing Commander" takes place when Col. Christopher Blair, the character 46-year-old Hamill plays in the game, was a 21-year-old rookie flyboy.

"I've gotta laugh," giggles Hamill, recalling an actor friend's sardonic assessment of his unenviable track record: "You can't find one franchise that works chronologically, you moron."

To be fair, Hamill was an indispensable part of each franchise's success. He bounced back from a near-fatal car crash after making the original "Star Wars," his face rebuilt by surgery, to play brave young warrior Luke Skywalker again in the sequel. When the trilogy ended, Hamill had neither the ambition nor the credentials — as costar Harrison Ford did— to play wisecracking action heroes. He did a handful of Broadway shows, some B movies and television.

In the 1990s, he began doing voice-overs in animated computer games, and then became an actor in videotaped and filmed interactive movies. The new entertainment medium was made possible by CD-ROMs that could store and blend live-action video, dialogue and animation.

"I don't think every actor would want to do this," Hamill acknowledges. "They'd say, 'I have too much integrity to let you program me like some puppet.' But I found it interesting."

In 1994, game designer and director Chris Roberts cast Hamill as the battle-weary veteran Col. Christopher Blair in "Wing Commander III." It

Please see **HAMILL** on Page B9

Want Strong Bones? *Bon Appétit*

FOR MOST OF my 60 years, I have gone to lunch with friends and never once did the subject of bones come up for discussion over our salads and coffee. Until this year.

This year my bones, the bones of all my friends, our mothers' bones, our daughters' bones and the bones of our great-aunts and grandmothers, which have long been interred in the ground, are of major interest.

The precipitator, of course, is osteoporosis, a condition about which none of us had ever given a second thought until capitalism intervened and the pharmaceutical companies realized there is a gold mine in selling estrogen and estrogen imitators to millions of women who live in fear of one day falling, breaking their hips, ending up in a nursing home, having to eat dinners at 5 p.m. and make lanyards in occupational therapy.

Those in crisis are 50 or thereabouts, a generation barely old enough to remember the first estrogen craze in the '60s, which promised eternal youth. It petered out, maybe because the promises fell short of reality and maybe because the high doses of estrogen created fatal blood clots a little too often. With this memory fading, estrogen, at lower doses, is back, and we've taken to reading pamphlets with romantic titles like "How Strong Are Your Bones?" and "The Older Person's Guide to Osteoporosis."

The bone of contention once again is whether to estrogen or not to estrogen. And studying the professional advice only serves to further confuse.

Estrogen, we are told in the press, will reduce bone loss. Good. Estrogen, we are told in one article, will protect our hearts. Better. But estrogen, we are told in another piece, might increase the chances of breast cancer. Bad. And uterine cancer, another story warns. Really bad.

One article recommends a cocktail of estrogen plus progestin. This cancels out the negative effect on the uterus. Promising. But the article does not say what the side effects of progestin might be.

A Women's Health Network brochure does. " . . . [T]he addition of progestin to estrogen for HRT [hormone replacement therapy] may raise the breast cancer risk even further. It may also cancel out estrogen's protections against heart disease — or it may even increase the risk."

I turn to The Journal of the American Medical Association. The Holy Grail. JAMA in April, 1997, reported: "Even for women who have one risk factor for coronary heart disease . . . and are also at high risk for breast cancer . . . there is still a significant reduction in mortality for women who are on ERT [estrogen replacement therapy]." Convincing.

Until I read the June issue of JAMA, which says that after taking estrogen for 10 years the protections against heart attack are severely diminished while the effects on breast cancer increase. In other words, you're taking estrogen for strong bones and heart, but by the time you're old enough to break your bones and have a heart attack, you've been taking the hormone so long its salubrious effects have diminished and the negative effects have increased.

50 AND UP



Marilyn Goldstein

Another article ridicules women because, in response to a survey by the National Council on Aging, most older women said they fear cancer — especially breast cancer — more than other diseas And a drug company press release notes: 46,000 women die of breast cancer every year and 500,00 die of heart disease.

Yeah, but at what age? A lot of those women ar 87 when they have their first heart attacks, or are when they die of heart problems. I know a lot of 50-year-olds and younger who died of breast canc but can't think of a single woman friend in her 50s or even 60s who has even had a heart attack.

And each week, there's another article on estrogen imitators to analyze and a whole new se side effects to take into consideration.

(Guys may think they're immune to this controversy, but the Endocrine Society publication noted in June that researchers from Australia reported that, when men with coronary artery disease were given estrogen before exercisi they were able to exercise longer and showed fewer abnormalities on an electrocardiogram. Of course, it has a drawback: It encourages the growth of breasts.)

What to do?

Tucked in some obscure study in my growing pile, I came across an observation that because some natural estrogen is produced in body fat, even after menopause, a few extra pounds might be a good way to increase one's estrogen naturally.

And that's the advice I'm accepting for now. The next tim we discuss bones over lunch, forget the salad. I'll be eating a plate of spaghetti to add some fat to feed my bones. ■

Marilyn Goldstein can be reached at Newsday, 235 Pinelawn Rd., Melville, N.Y. 11747-4250 or by e-mail at marigoldst@aol.com



Newsday Photo / Bruce Gilbert

...ill today, and with Carrie Fisher in ...Return of the Jedi"



20th Century Fox File Photo / Ralph Nelson Jr.

...amill Looks Ahead

...LL from Page B2

...s first live-action CD-ROM version of a ...hat had already been a huge hit as two ...nimated games on floppy disks.

..."Wing Commander III" helped popularize ...ter entertainment when it was released ...y '95, sold a million CD-ROMs and ...d about $60 million on a $3-million in...nt.

...ing the satisfying mix of "Star Wars"-...ced outer space drama and combat, the ...moved Hamill around a battle cruiser ...ting and clicking the computer mouse. ...interactions with a sizable cast, he'd ...into a star-fighter cockpit — at which ...the player would take his place at the ...ls to fly an arcade-style escort, recon...nce or combat mission against hostile ...

...year's installment, "Wing Commander ...as the most expensive game ever made ...til then — at $10 million ($8 million for ...ovie, filmed on a Hollywood sound stage, ...2 million for the arcade-style space ...r game). But it sold only 700,000 copies, ...blisher Electronic Arts decided to cut ...on film segments and re-emphasize the ...erson combat.

...latest installment, "Wing Commander: ...ecy," featuring state-of-the-art space ...t, Internet play, and starring a younger ... — with Hamill in a supporting role, as ...nior officer — reached stores Dec. 15.

... games, really, don't interest Hamill. ...kids play computer games. He acts in ...to pay the bills. What really, really inter...im — the thing that obsesses him, in fact ... a movie he's trying to get made from ... Black Pearl."

...mill wrote the graphic adventure about ...oset vigilante" who tries to solve real-...l problems with "a comic book mental-... It ran as five successive issues of a month-...mic and was published this year in book .... Holding aloft a copy recently during an ...rview in Manhattan, Hamill suddenly be... serious, excited, launched into a passion-...itch for why it would make a great movie, ...ffbeat little independent production.

The convergence of movies and computers is the biggest story in Hollywood in the '90s. And the reversal of fortunes of Chris Roberts and Mark Hamill — game-making career on the ascendant, acting career in free fall, each dreaming of making movies — constitutes a position report on the interface where the two entertainment forms intersect.

"Prophecy" is the first game in the series not directed by franchise creator Roberts. The 29-year-old wunderkind, who has been designing games since he was a teenager, had bailed out when his contract expired, to form his own game and movie studio, Digital Anvil.

Bankrolled by Microsoft, his shop is working on three games due in 1999. And, says Roberts, "I'm probably the first game designer to make the transition to moviemaker."

He bought back the movie rights to his franchise, made a deal with Fox, and is preparing for a February shoot of "Wing Commander," the feature film, in Europe with a cast to be announced in a couple of weeks.

Roberts expects to stretch a modest budget of under $40 million by filming in Luxembourg, where production costs are low, and using the computer expertise of Digital Anvil.

Loosely based on the first game, in which Blair and his sidekick Maniac come out of the Academy and go on their first tour of duty, "Wing Commander" will be structured, says Roberts, "to look like a character-driven World War II movie that's set 500 years in the future."

The earliest the film would be ready would be Christmas, 1998. More likely, it'll be in theaters by the spring of '99. "Our goal," says Roberts, "is to beat George Lucas' 900-pound gorilla to the screen, to come out before the first film of the new 'Star Wars' trilogy opens on Memorial Day, 1999."

"If you're the top of your field in games, you can make almost as much money and have almost as much notoriety as making movies," says Roberts. "Every 14-year-old kid in America knows your name. But making games is slow, like working on a Disney animated film, and working on a movie gives me an adrenaline high. So I want to make movies, too." ■

Special Effects From the Man Who Sunk Titanic

SSSSSSSST. I don't want to spoil the ending for anyone, but . . . *the boat sinks!* And if you want to find out how, come to the American Museum of the Moving Image Saturday.

Rob Legato, the visual-effects supervisor on James Cameron's "Titanic," will be the guest at the museum for "Making 'Titanic': An Afternoon With Rob Legato." The accomplished effects artist will give a presentation on the technical and artistic process behind the film. Legato was also the special-effects supervisor on "Interview With a Vampire" and "Apollo 13," for which he received an Oscar nomination. He has won Emmys for work on "Star Trek: The Next Generation" and "Deep Space Nine."

Tickets for the 2 p.m. event are $10 for museum members, $15 for nonmembers. Advance purchase is recommended. For more information, call 718-784-4520 Monday-Friday, 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. The museum is at 35th Avenue and 36th Street, Astoria.

L'Chaim

Like clockwork, the seventh annual Jewish Film Festival begins Saturday at the Walter Reade Theater (165 W. 65th St., Manhattan; 212-875-5600) and it's truly a pan-global affair — films from Russia, Belarus, France, Norway, the United States and Canada, plus three classics of the silent era, two of which are rarities from Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Also included is the U.S. premiere of Ron Havilio's "Fragments * Jerusalem," his six-hour movie monument to the 50th anniversary of the state of Israel, and Sophia Loren in "Soleil," as the matriarch of a French-Jewish family exiled to Algeria for the duration of World War II.

FILM FILE



John Anderson

Deep in the Heart of Darkness

Accept no substitutes: On Thursday, the Cinema Arts Centre's "Theater of the Wild" presents the original "Texas Chainsaw Massacre," a film whose name has now been taken in vain several times but remains a milestone of mayhem. Directed by Tobe Hooper, it's funny as well as frightening and, for fans of "Scream 2," it might provide a kind of primer on contemporary horror.

Also at the CAC (423 Park Ave, Huntington; 516-423-FILM) is "The Sweet Hereafter," and "The Mother and the Whore," one of the great French films of recent decades. Ah, if only the rest of the year could be this rich . . .

You Saw It Here First

Harlan Jacobson, film critic / journalist / authority and raconteur extraordinaire, resumes "Talk Cinema" — his series of sneak preview screenings and post-screening discussions — Sunday morning at Lincoln Center's Walter Reade Theater. Last session, Jacobson's audiences got to see "L.A. Confidential," "Fast, Cheap & Out of Control," "Mrs. Dalloway," "Gattaca," "The Sweet Hereafter," "Wag the Dog" and "Wings of the Dove" before they were released, and before the flood of either hype or criticism had a chance to influence their opinions. (It's an unusual thing: seeing a major film before you've developed any preconceived notions about it.)

In addition, Jacobson has guests who are knowledgeable about the film or film in general. Subscribers to the series in New York can attend Talk Cinema sessions in Philadelphia, Washington and Chicago. Doors open at 10 a.m. For more information, call 800-551-9221.

Cat's Entertainment

"The Leopard," Luchino Visconti's little-seen masterpiece about a Sicilian clan in decline, continues for a limited time at Cinema Village (12th Street near University Place, Manhattan). The film, recently screened at the Museum of Modern Art as part of the Visconti series, is one of the director's best, features one of Burt Lancaster's more celebrated roles, but remains unavailable on video or laserdisc.

Cinema Village makes a note: The print shown at MOMA, borrowed from Martin Scorsese's private collection, was listed at 205 minutes, the length "The Leopard" was when it premiered at the Cannes Film festival in 1963 — before being cut severely for U.S. release. When it was restored in 1983, the film clocked in at 186 minutes, and MOMA has since said that its version was actually just over three hours — probably identical, at least in length, to the CV print. ■

THE GIZMO PAGE

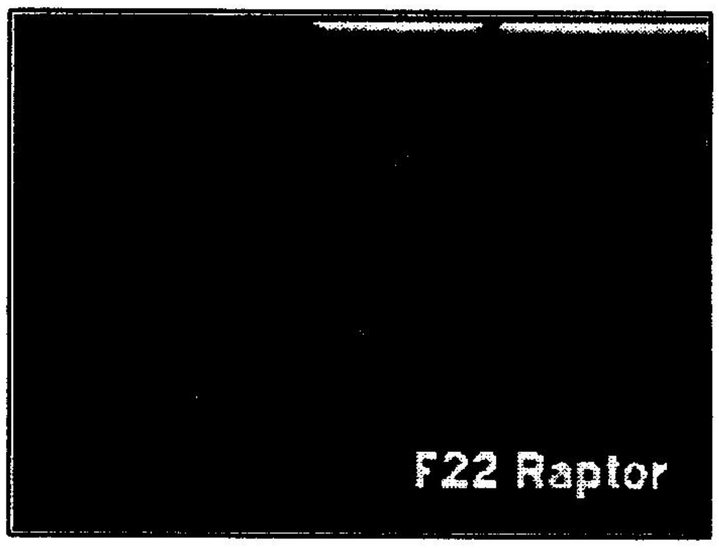
Action games help you conquer different universes



By Ric Manning © The Courier-Journal 1/10/98

Send your comments to ricman@courier-journal.com
Read your comments here

What's the cure for mid-winter cabin fever? How about a battalion of new computer action games?



The new releases are loaded with heavy weapons, nasty aliens, fiery explosions and more twisted metal than the Watterson Expressway in an ice storm.

To play in this league, you might have to equip your PC with some extra firepower. Most of these high-octane games require a fast Pentium processor and loads of hard-disk real estate. Many recommend 32 megs of RAM and a high-end 3-D video card.

If you've got the right stuff, lock and load and get ready to rumble.

Quake II, about $50 from Id Software -- We've come to expect groundbreaking animation and game play from Id, and Quake II doesn't disappoint.

Yes, it's another run-and-strafe game, just like Doom and the original Quake, with you against waves of bad guys. But this time there is a bit of a story line. Your character is part of an assault group battling a race of hideous aliens in a race to neutralize a supergun aimed at Earth.

The scenery is even more realistic than Quake's. You see aircraft in the sky and hear radio traffic on your speakers. A hand-held computer tells you when you've completed one task and delivers instructions for the next target. And when you blast an attacker, the result looks like something from a George Romero horror movie.

To really appreciate Quake II, you'll need to pop about $200 for a video card that supports Silicon Graphics' OpenGL. It's money well-spent.

Wing Commander: Prophecy, about $50 from Origin Systems -- "Star Trek" and "Star Wars" may be the only science-fiction series to have a larger following and a longer run than Wing Commander. Last year's release, Wing Commander IV, was the most expensive computer game ever made.

The new release features "Star Wars" veteran Mark Hamill in one of the live-action roles. But this time there's far less video footage and lots more style and action.

Artist Syd Mead, who worked on the sets for "Blade Runner," created the new alien menace, and Origin's programmers cooked up a new spaceflight engine. Special effects include spaceships that send out shock waves when they explode and ships with extraordinary detail.

F-22 Raptor, about $50 from NovaLogic -- For more conventional air combat, you can climb aboard a flight simulator that only emerged from the Lockheed Martin hangars a few months ago.

ing Commander Prophecy

here's any game that's always left mark, it's Wing Commander. The matic-quality storylines and the notch space simulation combat that all the others in the dust always left ners looking for more, throughout ch and every Wing Commander me released. We've seen the ilirathi come with the first two, and itness them go with the revolutionary ird installment. After the epic civil ar between Confed and the Border Worlds, you'd think that Origin wouldn't be able to do anything interesting with the Wing Commander universe. Judging from the gameplay and cinematic quality of Wing Commander Prophecy, the departure of Chris Roberts has no impact on the quality game design which gives WCP a great story, good missions, and the best damn graphics engine you've ever seen.





Wing Commander Prophecy brings back many old characters from the previous Wing Commanders, the most noticeable being Maniac and Colonel Blair. Blair is now a Commodore overseeing events taking place in the towering Midway - your new home, glowing with new technology never seen before. But Blair is no longer your alter-ego, *this time you play as a fresh* rookie known as Lance Casey, the son of the legendary "Iceman". Casey has a rough start on the Midway, he faithfully manages to piss off Blair, and *with Maniac and the rest of the crew being total hard-asses, he's got a lot* to deal with. This is only made worse by what he's going up against. This time it's not the Kilirathi or Pirates, but a strange and very powerful race (we'll call them Squids for now) who manage to wipe out a research fleet near the now decimated planet of Kilrah. No one knows to much about these strange looking folks, except that they like to perform bloody rituals, and that they're out to end the existence of *everything*.

The first thing you'll notice, and certainly the first thing that I noticed was the incredible new graphics engine. Running on a 3dfx card, both in Glide and D3D modes, my eyes were so glued to the monitor I couldn't quit. It looks *that* good. The cockpits have made their return, and they are now have a 3D virtual cockpit feel. They rumble, jitter, and pan as you make turns and witness explosions, and what explosions they are! Like Wing Commander 4, the explosions are dynamic in a sense, and *they have different colors, not to mention transparent effects.* And some ships will send out a circular shock wave which makes your *ship jitter,* while creating a wonderful graphical effect. *Nebulas and star systems* create an outstandingly atmospheric colored solar system, and your laser fire will reflect off asteroids and enemy ships when hit, thanks to the *dynamic colored lighting. Friendly and enemy ships look just as good,* especially the Capital ships. *The Midway, your home Cruiser, is* enormous in size, and zipping past it while locking on to an enemy target gave me an adrenaline rush I've only experienced in a few other computer games.

There were some differences between the Glide and D3D versions. Running on my Monster 3D in Glide mode, I got better explosions, texture filtering, transparencies, and colored lighting than I did when I ran it in Direct 3D. If you aren't blessed with a 3dfx card, then you can always run the game in Direct 3D, sacrificing only minor graphical enhancements. WCP needs a Pentium 133 with a supported accelerator,

Ratings:

Presentation: 9.5
Gameplay: 9.0
Innovation: 8.5
Overall: 9.0

In Brief:

☐ A new enemy, a new story, a new alter-ego, and an ohhhhh so beautiful new graphics engine makes Wing Commander Prophecy the best space combat game ever seen (especially when you see it with that 3D card!).

Best Feature:

☐ The graphics engine is revolutionary, to say the least.

Worst Feature:

☐ Multiplayer features were left out.

Also Try:

☐ Wing Commander 4

Images:

☐ Image #1
☐ Image #2
☐ Image #3
☐ Image #4
☐ Image #5
☐ Image #6
☐ Image #7

Type:

☐ Space combat Simulation

Developer:

☐ Origin

Publisher:

☐ Electronic Arts

Number of Players:

☐ 1 (for now)

Save/Password:

☐ Yes

Difficulty:

☐ Moderate

System Requirements:

☐ Windows *95, Pentium 166 MHz (without a supported 3D card), Pentium* 133 MHz (with a supported 3D card), *150 meg HD space, 32 MB RAM,* Direct X compatable video card, 2 MB PCI SVGA w/ 16 bit color depth, 4x *CD-ROM drive.*

We Recommend:

☐ *Pentium 200, 32 MB RAM, a 3dfx card, 12x CD-ROM drive.*

System Used:

☐ Pentium 200 MMX, 32 MB RAM, 16x CD-ROM drive, Sound Blaster 16 w/ Yamaha Daughterboard, Diamond Stealth 3D 2000 Pro, Diamond Monster 3D.

d a Pentium 166 without it, so if you're a space fan and you don't have t 3D card, this game is the reason to get one.

Back - PC Reviews

und is incredible too. All the taunts, lot remarks, and death screams are ck, except this time there are more of em. Even so, they are far less noying than they were in WC4. You on't hear as many taunts, but pilot ommunication is very abundant. You'll never feel isolated in WCP, you'll always know what's goin on with you and your wingmen. Best of all, all of your wingman have personalities! Throughout each mission you'll hear them blurt out remarks like "Did someone paint a big bulls-eye on my but?" "Guess I'll try out this ejection pod." "There isn't enough room here for the both of us." "What do ya know? It actually launched!".

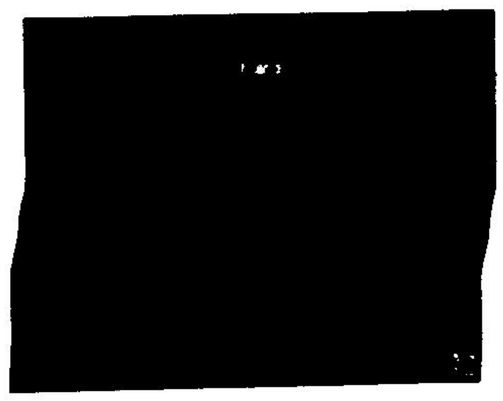


But enough about those rockin' graphics and sounds, what's the gameplay like? Most Wing Commander fans will be right at home, with the familiar interface, cockpit layout, and action. The new enemies you'll be flying against is the big change here, however. Some of the alien ships you encounter are…well…alien like. Unlike the Kilirathi, they have a very gritty feel, and their attack methods are really neat. Some of their teqniques are very unique to the Wing Commander universe, you'll see smaller ships attach themselves to each other to form one large ship, and when you destroy it they will detach themselves. Another spacecraft has much smaller ships orbiting around it, and when you destroy the ship they will be set free to harass you (they do go down in one hit, however) . "The Squid", a fast and agile spacecraft will retract its 3 tentacle-like wings to engage its afterburners and evade your attack. This is sometimes annoying, however, as you'll burn up most of your afterburner fuel trying to chase them down, and once you do destroy them you'll find that you are isolated from where the real battle is taking place, so you have to journey back to the battle, which can take quite a long time in certain situations.

You won't want to miss those battles either! WCP has lots epic-lite battles, many of which involve you vs. enemy ships and carriers. It's much like the previous Wing Commander games, but now it's pumped full of adrenaline. Some of these attacks can last a good number of minutes, especially when you are tasked with taking out the Carriers themselves. You'll even fly with the Kilirathi in some missions. In fact, they have a lot to do with how your character develops during the story and what he learns about his father, but I don't want to spoil anything for you.

Other mission types include escorting SWACS (AWACS in space), providing cover for troop insertion and extraction, lots of patrols and defense missions, and the mixed-bag missions where you have to do several things in one sortie. This is really one of the game's weakpoints, because some of the missions are too long or too tough, especially the SWACS escort missions. Sometimes I failed a mission and I didn't even know why, and in the earlier missions there are so many swarms of enemies that it sometimes seems hopeless. Luckily, there are five difficulty levels which impact the way the enemy behaves and how much damage they can take. On the toughest level I almost broke my keyboard because I was hitting the "E" key (the decoy key) so many times, because missiles were coming at me left and right. The opponent pilot's AI is generally good, like in the previous Wing Commander games. If they're close by, they will go after you, but once you get on their tail they won't try to retake the offensive. Instead they will make decent but highly predictable maneuvers in order to evade your attack.

A good space sim needs good
weapons, and WCP's got 'em. While



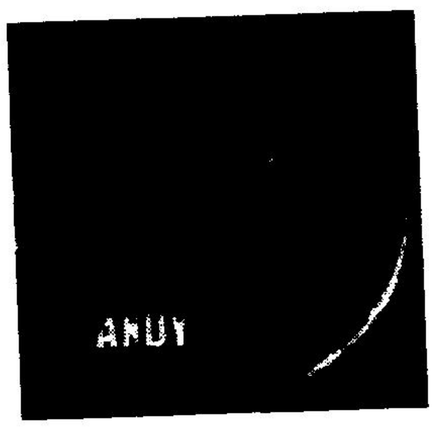
weapons, and WCP's got 'em. While the standard laser weapons are basically the same as they were in past Wing Commanders, the new missiles are sure to please everyone. The basic missile weapon is more like a rocket pad, and it contains about 36 projectiles that don't lock on to enemy spacecraft, but if you can predict where they will be then those missiles can do lots of damage. There are swarm missiles which actually fire 4 missiles at one ship, and the torpedoes, DF missiles, and land mines have returned from previous Wing Commanders. There are also special weapons that you'll use such as captured alien technology, and ship-markers which will be used to 'paint' a target for your capital ship to blast out of the sky.

One disappointing thing about WCP - the multiplayer features were left out. Origin decided to drop the multiplayer features for now because they couldn't get the Internet play running at a good speed, and they didn't want to miss the Christmas release date. We should see a multiplayer expansion pack soon, and knowing Origin, it should be good.

Multiplayer aside, WCP does have a few other disappointing aspects. Aside from the climatic battles, the game didn't have much of an epic feel as Wing Commander 4 did. This can be accredited to the fact that there wasn't as much cinema, the game takes up 3 CDs as opposed to WC4's 7 CDs. Whether or not this is a problem is up for you to decide, but I enjoyed WC4's storyline immensely. The quality of the cinema, however, is still there. The sets are real, the cameras move, and the acting is incredible.

There are a few other gameplay related problems as well. Gone is the ability to choose your weapons loadout, and you can only choose your ship in some important missions. Most of the default weapons loadouts were decent, but I wish I could have outfitted my spacecraft with rocket pads on every mission, those things do wonders on big ships.

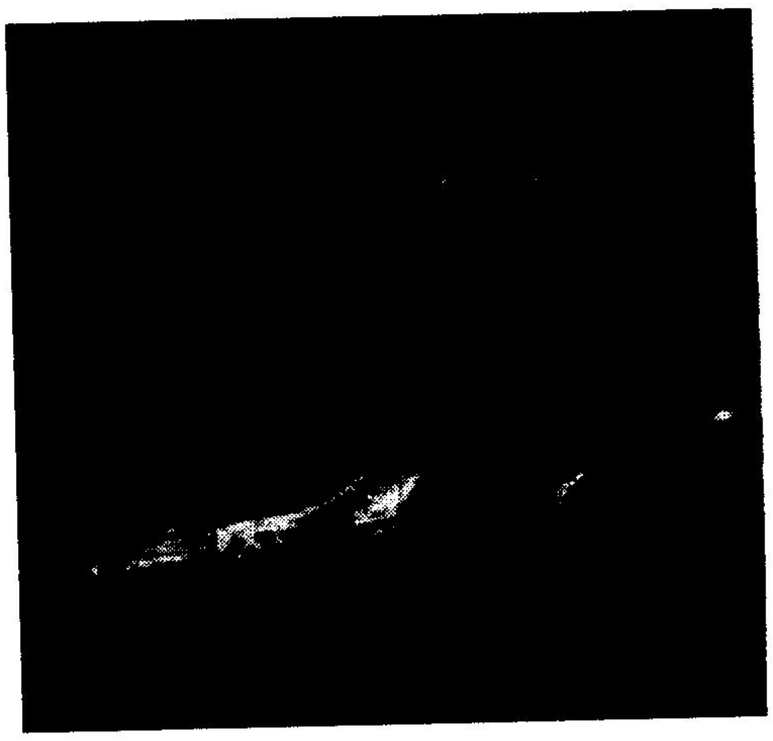
With all these minor problems, Wing Commander Prophecy is still an excellent game. The new graphics engine, new enemies, and new characters are sure to please most Wing Commander fans. This is the space combat game to get if you want to see what that new 3D card can do, and if you appreciate good action and drama, then Wing Commander Prophecy is definitely your thing.



Wing Commande Prophecy

-by Bobby Lee-

1) Pros: Awesome graphics and special effects, clear video, fun gameplay.
2)Cons: High system requirements, very difficult, no multiplayer.
3)Ratings: (1 to 10)
-Playability: 9
-Graphics: 10
-Sound: 9
-Documentation: 8
-Overall: 9.5
WC Prophecy has the best graphics and gameplay of any space flight simulation.



The Wing Commander series has finally evolved into an all around great space battle simulation. Prophecy is, by far, the best of the series and the best space flight simulation yet. The graphics and special effects are incredible. With 3D acceleration by Direct3D or 3Dfx, the game features very cool lighting and shading effects, on top of tons of other visual effects, and if you don't have a 3D accelerator, the game's graphics still stand out. The ship designs are awesome too. Wow! The bug-like enemy's ships have a very original organic look and the huge battle cruisers are truly menacing. Some enemy ships are even made up of smaller ships, breaking up into a bunch of ships when attacked. The Confed ships also look great and there are a bunch of them, each with individual flight characteristics weapons. Not only is the game beautiful, it's also fun to play and supported by a decent a game, the acting isn't so bad too. The movies don't feel as tacked on as other games, a missions are actually integrated into the story pretty well. The missions have you flying the different ships in very different situations. Some missions are short, and some are li torture. At times, it's just you and your wingman, and other times, you fly with a huge s other Confed ships. Although, one thing is the same for all of the missions, the intensit

the missions are very difficult. Even on the 'rookie,' easiest, level, some of the missions couple of tries to complete successfully.

Death by Bug.

The wars with the evil cat race, the Kilrathi, are over, but now there is a newer and muc threat. The nameless enemy are from a Kilrathi prophecy about the end of existence, K and you're faced with the task of eliminating these fierce bugs as a rookie, fresh out of f school. Many Kilrathi have been killed and an already weakened race is now on the run



missions, you even get to fly along sid Kilrathi pilots. As the story unfolds, y performance and decisions effect the o the story. A mission even gives you th of getting revenge for your father's dea Kilrathi and killing a bunch of weak K ships in the middle of an escort missio

The integration of movies, missions, a is done well; and the combat and fligh are extremely intense and smooth. Mo missions require you to kill as many e as possible, but in some, time is critica requiring you to go full force and kill as possible. There are also several inte escort, bombing, and recon missions important to the story. The targeting system is ver and easy to use, compensating for the poor radar system. The power management is ver but it leaves you vulnerable for a second while you adjust it. Each ship, friend and ene own flight characteristics and weapons, adding to the challenge. You'll need to know w weapons you're carrying and know how you're ship is going to handle in a tough situati accomplish your missions. Prophecy has all the control a great combat simulation woul and does it with some of the best graphics of any game out there.

-[Give me more]-

webmaster@gameplayer.com

Wing Commande Prophecy

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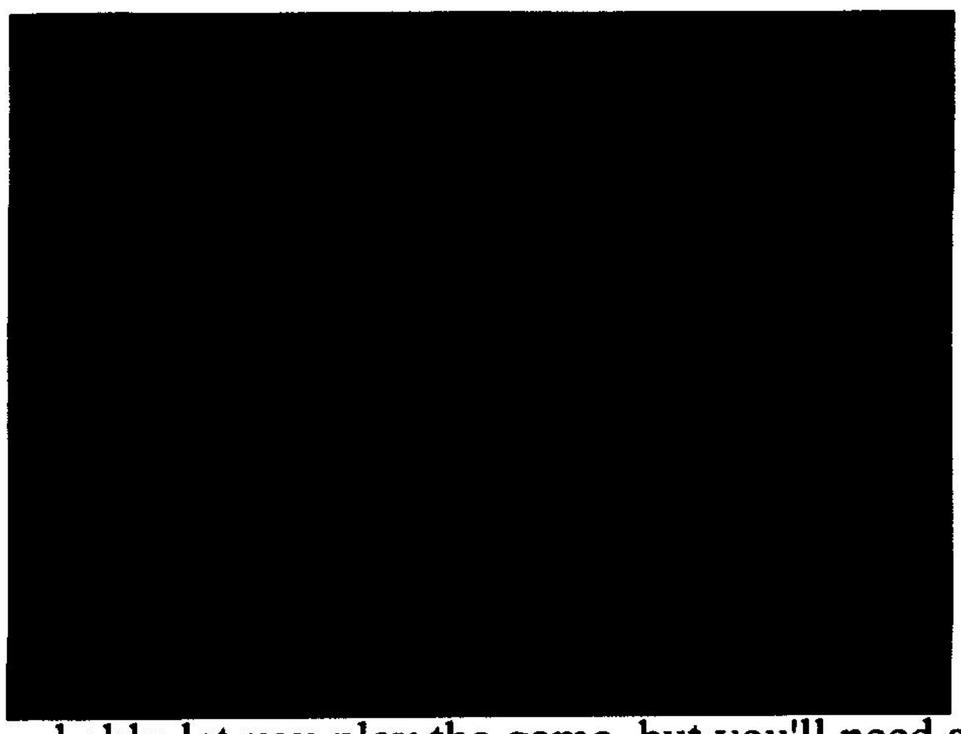
WC Prophecy, Mission Accomplished:



WC Prophecy is a space combat breakthrough. This game is the new standard for all single-player space combat simulations. The graphics are stunning and the gameplay is great. The game supports most 3D accelerators through Direct3D and 3Dfx support, delivering extraordinary graphics. The battleground in space has gaseous look to it and features some detailed planets and asteroids. Different color lights are reflected off the ships and off the 3D struts in your cockpit, and highlight effects make metal and glass surfaces look glossy and smooth. The movement of the cockpit struts makes the flying look and feel very realistic. Explosion beautiful too. Sparks fly off the ship parts and every explosion gives off a visible shock rattles your ship. The 3D models for the all of the ships are very original, especially the monster jellyfish look of the enemy ships. A couple of them feature moving parts, like t side to side movement of the Panther's engines.

The smooth flight control and individual characteristics of the ships make you believe t were modeled after real ships. With the attack fighters, you can fly right through the te huge enemy battle cruiser as you try to take out all of the gun turrets; and flying the bo you'll have to ease your way to the strike point, trying to avoid enemy fire. You'll need the different flight characteristics and the power of the different weapons to efficiently some missions. Every ship looks very individual, but they all use the same easy to read in each cockpit arranged differently. The targeting system is the best of all, enabling yo onto enemy ships and track them down, or place a quick lock on nearby enemies for qu These different targeting tools are very useful in different situations, like in an escort m when you need to target all surrounding enemies.



WC Prophecy, Mission Failed:

WC Prophecy is an all around great ga still has its imperfections. The biggest disappointment of all was the removal multiplayer support. The game was pl come out with multiplayer support, bu designers felt that WC Prophecy neede concentrate on single player. The gam good replay value though. Some of the are altered with the change in story.

A big problem for most people is prob system requirements. The minimum w probably let you play the game, but you'll need a bit more to get all the beautiful effects know if it was my system, which is a Pentium II 266 with 32 MB RAM, but I experien video skips and lock ups during flight whenever video message would come through. you'll have to deal with and practice on, is the difficulty of the game. There are five sett 'rookie' to 'nightmare,' but the 'rookie' level is still pretty darn hard to get through. On a note, parents of younger gamers might want to talk about drinking and driving before t play this game because between just about every mission, the pilots take down a couple

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Wing Commande Prophecy

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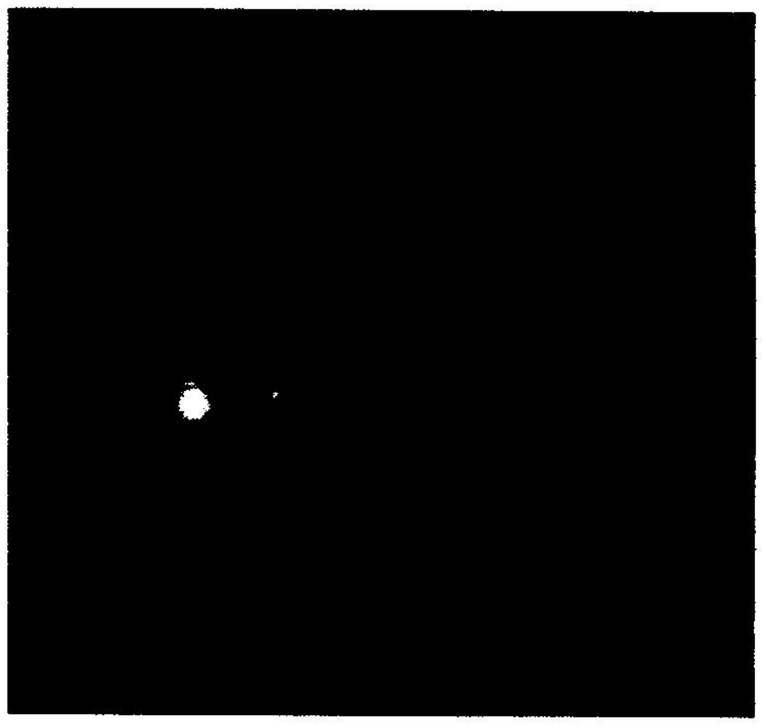
Conclusion:



WC Prophecy is going to be a classic. Beautiful and fun to play, Prophecy is a new level of space combat sim, but no multiplayer support.

Pilots Tips:

1. Save your games. Don't rely on the auto-save because you might want to replay a mission you've already gone through or failed. The game still continues after some failed missions.
2. Know which weapons do what so you can use them effectively.
3. Use your afterburners to catch up with speedy enemies or evade the ones on your tail

Requirements:

	Processor	Memory	HD Space	CD Speed	Other
Minimum	166MHz	32MB	150MB	4x CD-ROM	Win95, DirectX5.0, Di compatible 2MB PCI S 16-bit color support, Di compatible sound card
Recommended	200Mhz	32MB	450MB	12x CD-ROM	Supported 3D accelerat Joystick, Rudders peda Throttle, SCSI CD-RO hard drive

Other Reviews:

Gamecenter.com
GameSpot

Related Sites:

Origin's WC Prophecy Site

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-[Go to New G.P. Rev



Wing Commander: Prophecy

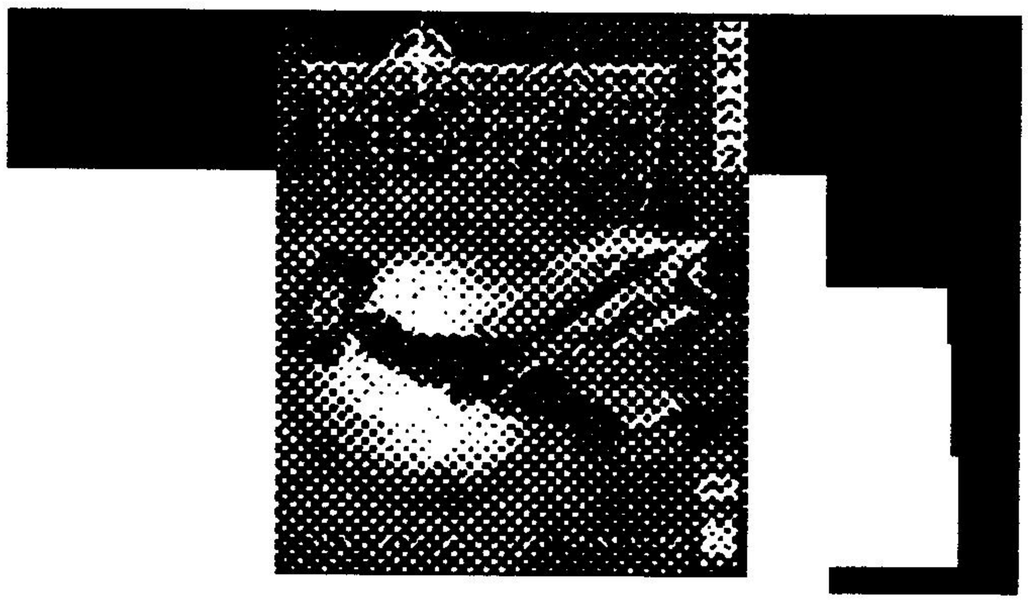
Published By: Origin
Reviewed By: Ken Liang

"Wing Commander: Prophecy is a sweet and tasty experience but ultimately leaves you a little empty inside and hungry for more."

-- Ken Liang, GamePen --

Summary:

Wing Commander: Prophecy provides some of the most stunning visuals yet seen in a PC game...if you have the right 3D video card. With a renewed emphasis on gameplay, cinematics take a back seat to the action. Unfortunately, so too does the story-line. Some fans will be disappointed that the "interactive" has been left out of the movie.



The Review:



In Wing Commander: Prophecy, the latest installment in Origin's classic series, everything old is new again. Your alter-ego is no longer Christopher Blair, hotshot pilot and saviour of the Terran Confederation many times over. Instead, the player is again a rookie pilot, this time 2nd Lieutenant Lance Casey, son of Major Michael "Iceman" Casey, whom many will remember from the original Wing Commander (WC). Fresh from the Academy, Lt. Casey is posted to Confed's newest flagship and first megacarrier, the TCS Midway. A mysterious new alien threat has appeared in the ravaged Kilrah system and the Midway is sent to investigate.

System Requirements:

Windows 95 with DirectX 5.0 installed
66 MHz (without supported 3D card) | Pentium 133 MHz (with supported 3D card)
150 MB free uncompressed hard drive space | 50 MB swapfile
M| DirectX 5.0 compatible 2 MB PCI SVGA video card supporting 16-bit color depth
% Windows 95 compatible 4x CD-ROM drive | Microsoft-compatible mouse
% DirectX 5.0 compatible sound card | 100% Windows 95 compatible joystick
Native Windows 95 drivers required

Supported 3D Cards:

3Dfx Voodoo chipset natively supported
Direct 3D supported chipsets (requires 4 MB video RAM):
ATI Rage Pro, Matrox Mystique, Permedia 2, Rendition 2200, Riva 128

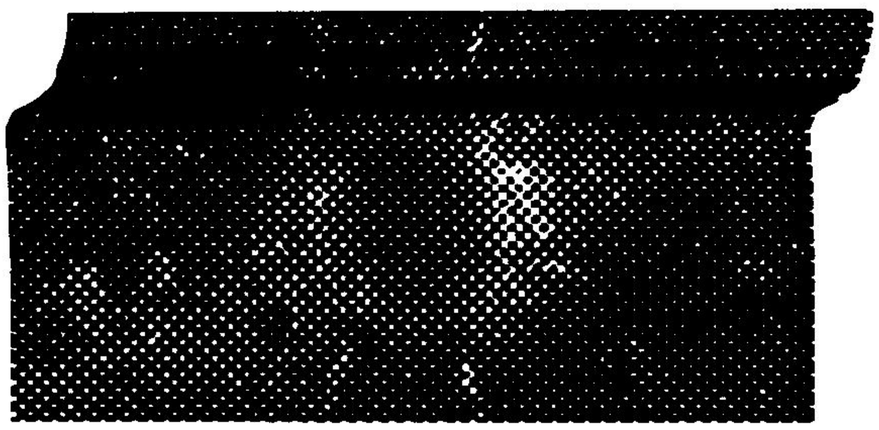
Recommended

Pentium 200+ MHz, 3Dfx Voodoo Graphics or Voodoo Rush chipset
450 MB free uncompressed hard drive space, 12X CD-ROM drive
Pro- or Thrustmaster-compatible joystick, Rudder Pedals and Throttle Control
SCSI CD-ROM and hard drive, Dolby Surround audio system



As in previous games, you'll fly a variety of missions including the ubiquitous nav point sweeps, recon, escort, capital ship assaults, and Midway defense. Your performance in a mission determines the next mission you get. Do poorly and your subsequent assignments will be more difficult. Between missions, video cutscenes advance the story-line toward its climactic conclusion. The "killboard" from the first game makes a reappearance; here you may compare your prowess against other pilots to see who owns the bragging rights. There are 7 new ships (5 fighters, 2 bombers) to fly but fans of cloaked ships will need to petition Origin for their return in WC6. Multiplayer options, mentioned in early ads, were pulled at the eleventh hour the game could ship on time. A stand-alone multiplayer game is scheduled for summer

Systems meeting the minimum requirements should have little difficulty running the game. There are three installations needing hard drive space of 150-400 MB. The extra space is allocated to speech and video sequences, allowing smoother playback on slower systems. Defragmentation of the hard drive beforehand is advised, otherwise installation is quite straight-forward. Like all previous games, you may play with keyboard only or mouse, though a joystick is highly recommended.



However, the allure of a Wing Commander game is rarely about meeting minimum system requirements. The defining essence of the series for numerous fans may be the hardware upgrades each installment influenced them to make. How many bought their first sound card for WC? How many upgraded to a then state-of-the-art 386 to enjoy the extra graphics and sounds of WC2? No doubt WC3

System Requirements:

Windows 95 with DirectX 5.0 installed
Pentium 166 MHz (without supported 3D card) | Pentium 133 MHz (with supported 3D card)
150 MB free uncompressed hard drive space | 50 MB swapfile
2 MB RAM| DirectX 5.0 compatible 2 MB PCI SVGA video card supporting 16-bit color depth
100% Windows 95 compatible 4x CD-ROM drive | Microsoft-compatible mouse
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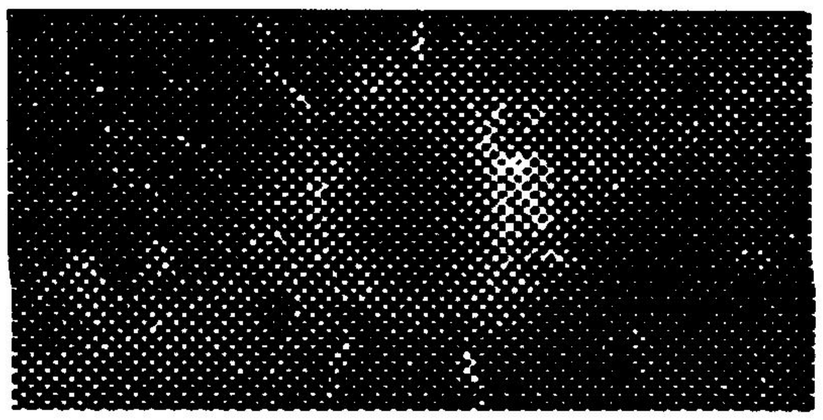

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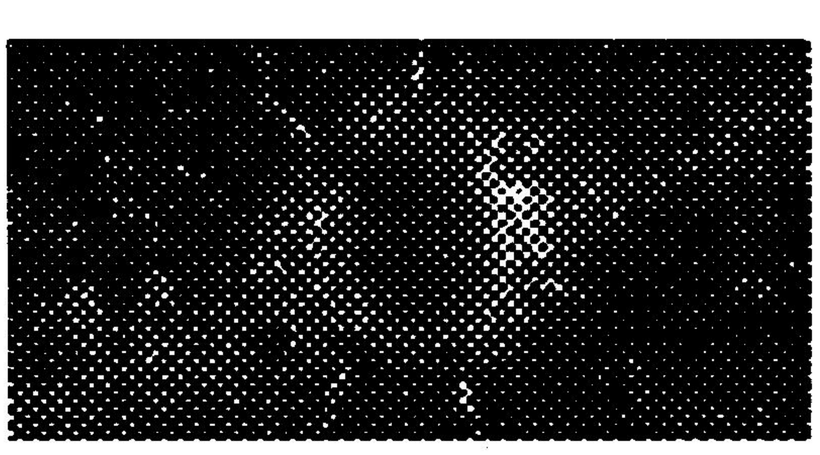

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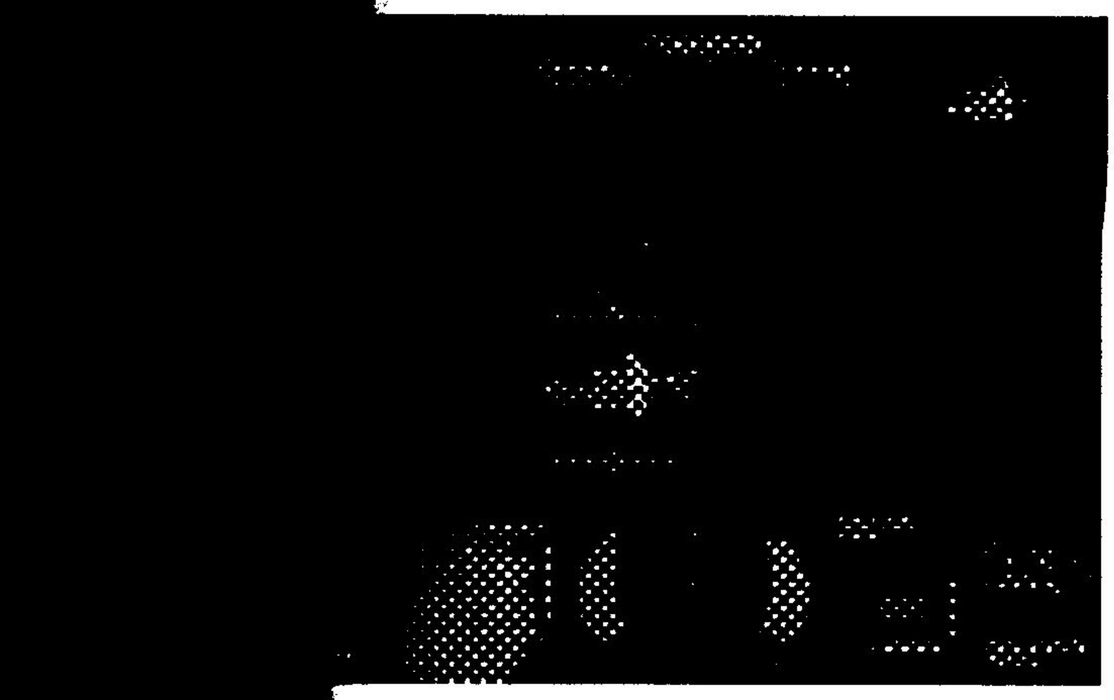
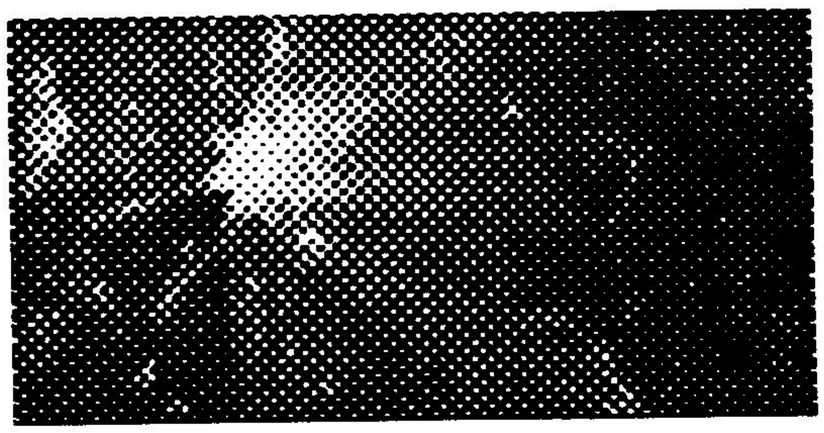
C4 convinced legions of fans to splurge for their first Pentiums and quad-speed cdroms. WCP on the Origin tradition of pushing the hardware limits. If there was ever a game to entice 3D card holdouts to finally take the plunge, this may be it. There is native support for the 3Dfx oo chipset; all other major 3D chipsets are supported through Direct 3D. The difference in ht graphic quality between software mode and 3D acceleration is like night and day. Textured , coloured light, translucency, lens flare, and fog all help create a rich graphic atmosphere. Even rd effects like missile trails and cockpit detailing are improved. Capital ships are true 3D moths; flying over and around them can be an awe-inspiring experience, especially when they break up into unsightly pixels up close. For the new organic alien ships, Origin called on ptual artist Syd Mead (Blade Runner, Tron, Timecop). The background music helps to set the d and those with the audio equipment can enjoy the richness of Dolby surround-sound. The install e, game manual, reference card, and background reference material are all top-notch and should e both novice and returning players well.



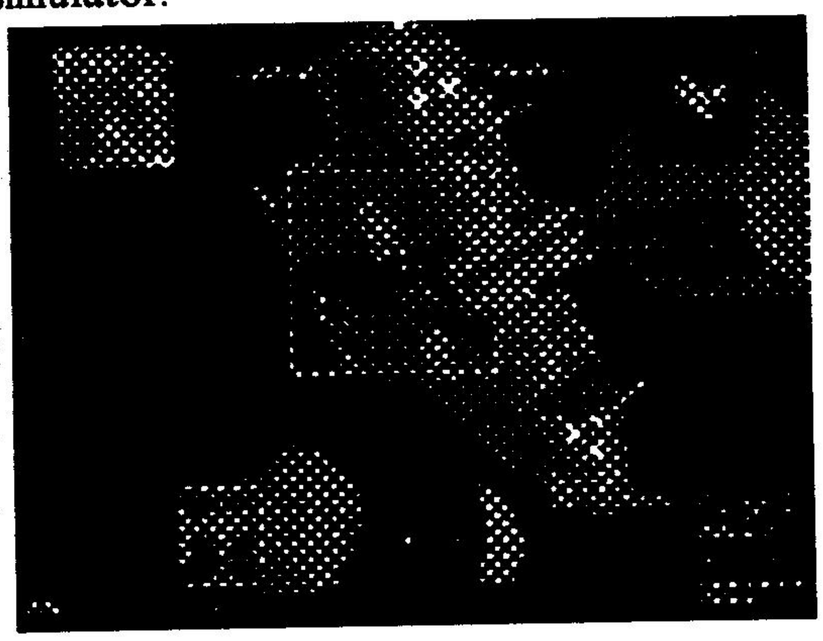
There are 5 difficulty levels (Rookie, Veteran, Ace, Hero, Nightmare) with Ace being the default setting. Even at the lower levels, enemies will jig-jag back and forth to evade *your fire (though after a while, their moves do become* predictable). At higher levels, enemies seem to take more hits, fire more missiles, and drop more decoys, but thankfully your wingmen's AI also appears to be improved. In general, enemies do a good job of zeroing in on the player as the "ace" and most dangerous threat of the Confed forces. That having been said, veteran space jockeys may still find even Nightmare level easier than in previous games. Capital ship assaults have likewise been enhanced; taking out capships necessitates coordinated efforts to minate defensive turrets, shield generators, fighter launch bays, engines, and bridges in turn, and y even require multiple missions.

o what's not to like? For starters, the amount of video footage has been severely curtailed compared to he previous two games. Detractors of full-motion video may rejoice but missing along with the inematics seems to be any sense of a complex plot. Granted, WCP is supposed to be the first chapter n a brand new saga but the simplicity of the story-line is a letdown after the intrigue of WC4. What ideo footage we see is decidedly inferior in quality and production values to that of WC4. Mark Hamill, Ginger Lynn Allen, and Tom Wilson all make return appearances as Blair, Rachel, and Maniac, along with several others from WC4 but one can't help feeling they're under-utilized. Blair pops up from time to time but his role in WCP might as well have been played by any number of extras. You cannot choose your weapons loadout in a given mission (nor even your ship except for a couple of late missions) so Rachel's role as chief tech is reduced to praising you after successful missions and tearing a strip off you after a failure. Annoyingly, she'll criticize you even if the mission was successful but the ship you bring back is all shot up. You also cannot choose your wingmen as the game designers wanted strict control over what little plot elements there are. Consequently, Maniac's most significant role seems to be that of your drinking buddy, and there sure is a LOT of drinking, particularly right before missions. No wonder the wingmen AI is mediocre!



While the Midway is twice the size of any previous Confederation carrier, you wouldn't know it from being aboard. The player is essentially confined to two areas: the Rec Room which contains the simulator, killboard, tactical database, and all the drunken pilots, and the Ready Room, which serves as the save/load game interface. Two other ship areas, the Briefing Room and Flight Deck, are only seen before and after missions and cannot be accessed otherwise. That's it. Almost 2 km in length and 200,000 tonnes, reduced to a two room apartment.

Mission variety has also dropped. While WC4 introduced infiltration and planetside objectives, in WCP mission goals all too often involve how many enemy fighters the player can destroy, even if the craft being used is a slow lumbering bomber. Comm chatter seems more varied but still extremely repetitive, especially the aliens. Your wingmen are only slightly less annoying but you don't get the luxury of blasting them to pieces; that's a sure way to lose the game. WCP is also shorter than the previous installment. Though the game box touts "over 50...missions", a winning path only requires playing through about 33 missions. To access the remaining ones, you'll have to lose certain missions. Since the basic story-line doesn't change, replayability hinges on how much you want to better your scores on individual missions, test your skills in higher difficulty settings, or run the gauntlets in the simulator.



A sequel is a foregone conclusion. Let's hope we see the return of plot complexity and maybe even some land-based missions. After all, there's no reason the player can't assume the roles of both a pilot AND a marine. Like cotton candy at the fair, Wing Commander: Prophecy is a sweet and tasty experience but ultimately leaves you a little empty inside and hungry for more.

[**Scoop's Note**: Or as Frank Drebin once said, *"It's like eating a spoonful of Drano, sure it'll clean you out, but it'll leave you hollow inside."*]

Tips:

Newcomers to Wing Commander should use the simulator in the Rec Room to practise maneuvers and dogfighting techniques. Initially, there are only simulated Kilrathi enemies; later, you will get the opportunity to face the new aliens.

On most occasions, full guns are recommended. Weapon refire rates generally vary inversely with the damage output so don't keep the trigger pressed down all the time. It's always better to fire fewer times but more accurately.

If the action appears choppy, hit ESC/Options and toggle off one or more special effects to try to achieve smoother gameplay (e.g. super detail levels, camera VDU, cockpit struts). You'll find aiming is easier and your gun accuracy should improve.

Use control-O to review mission objectives at start of every mission. Briefings only gives you overall mission objectives. Often secondary and bonus objectives are only shown in this list. For the best scores, you'll need to complete all objectives. During the mission, check this list to see your progress.

Comm chatter from wingmen is usually just for effect but occasionally they will ask for help. If you lose a wingman, you will likely fail the mission. Use control-N to access the nav map for an overview of battlefield and identify wingmen in trouble. Right-click with the mouse to select a wingman and identify all enemies attacking him/her. Right-click on one of these enemies to select as your new target and fly to the rescue.

In the mission to locate a communications jammer, while there are still a few enemies left, engage afterburners, toggle off smart targeting with control-T, and start scanning unknown objects. If Stiletto finds the jammer first, you'll fail the mission; however, she won't start looking till all enemies are gone.

During carrier defense missions, first take out clustered Skate Ts and Bs (separated, they're much less dangerous), red Mantas, clustered Stingrays, regular Mantas.

Learn to make regular use of the U key (target nearest enemy). That way, you can easily find your closest threat. However, leave the Rays with the circling satellite ships for last; destroying it releases the satellites (Remora) and multiplies the number of enemies.

Launch guided missiles only when the target is no more than 8000 clicks in front of you. This gives the enemy less time to drop decoys. Use non-guided dumbfire missiles on fighters only when your target is at point-blank range (less than 5000 clicks) moving away or towards you.

Watch out for missile lock; if it flashes, immediately drop several decoys (E key) and afterburn away (TAB key) in a sharply different direction.

It's advisable to create your own save games even though the game autosaves (at the History station) after each mission completed.

Learn to use Autoslide (hold Capslock), a maneuver which allows fighters to continue at the same vector and speed but change the direction of the nose of the ship - useful for strafing runs on turrets of capital ships.

Try to save most missiles for later in missions. It's always better to finish a mission with unused missiles than to run out with still a gauntlet of enemies to face.

If you find you keep dying and are unable to pass a particular mission, toggle down the difficulty setting a notch (ESC/Options). You can always restore the difficulty level on the next mission.

Easter Egg

In the simulator, type (without the quotes) "alswantsmoreships", hit control-Z, and you'll be able to fly several Kilrathi and alien ships. Their armament though seems to be limited to lasers and porcupine mines.

Tribune SEARCH

CHIVES
ARCHIVES HOME

SPACE SAGA RETURNS TO ITS ROOTS

By Peter Bartholow. Special to the Tribune.
Published: Thursday, January 15, 1998
Section: TEMPO
Page: 4

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Historically, the industry-staple Wing Commander series has evolved with technology--and this version is no exception.

Addressing criticism that episodes three and four were better movies than games, Wing Commander Prophecy (Windows 95, Origin Systems, $50) returns to the series' roots by emphasizing gameplay over cinematics. Having single-handedly ended the Human-Kilrathi War, exposed an evil admiral and gained considerable weight, the former Wing Commander lead Christopher Blair (Mark Hamill) now pilots a desk aboard the TCS Midway.

Players resume the saga in the flight suit of Lance Casey, the hot-shot son of a decorated veteran. Among the first to combat a mysterious alien race, Casey and Co. must defend the Confederation against these unwelcome visitors and discover their connection to an ancient Kilrathi prophecy.

While the story is an intriguing introduction to these deadly new foes, the writing and acting do not pack the punch that Wing Commander 4's did.

Prophecy's gameplay is more intense than that of its predecessors -- using seven new space fighters, players will battle swarms of fighters in pilot's-eye-view combat. And the game's story now is based on battle expertise. rather than the dialogue choices that drove the last two games.

Technologically and aesthetically, Prophecy is a step forward for the space simulation genre. Those with 3-D

accelerator cards will be treated to greatly improved graphics and speedier gameplay.

Those without will find all of the same features, only in fewer colors and with less alacrity. While the Dolby-enabled sound remains top-notch, Prophecy's new "harder-edged" musical style lacks the Star Wars-esque epic feel. Nonetheless, Prophecy is a solid addition to the series.

Wing Commander Prophecy (star) (star) (star) 1/2

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board rates games of each genre

By Malcolm X Abram
STAFF WRITER

The holiday season is here, and in the world of computer games that means hundreds of new titles will be released in a short period.

To help the shopper wade through the clones and junk to find the gems, the Interactive Digital Software Association has offered its first "Consumer Guide to Holiday Hits."

The games are organized by genre, and their Entertainment Software Rating Board rating is included (explanation at bottom).

Here are the top games in each genre and their platforms:

Activity, creativity titles

Barbie Magic Hair Styler (Mattel Media), K-A; PC

Clueless (Mattel Media), K-A; PC and Macintosh

PrintMaster Platinum (Mindscape), K-A; PC

Action

"StreetFighter EX Plus Alpha" (Capcom), T; PlayStation

"Resident Evil Director's Cut" (Capcom), M; Windows and PlayStation

"G Police" (Psygnosis), K-A; Windows and PlayStation

Adventure

"Riven" (Broderbund), K-A; PlayStation, Windows and Macintosh

"Tomb Raider II" (Eidos Interactive), T; PlayStation and PC

"Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee" (GT Interactive), T; PlayStation and PC

Strategy

"Deadlock 2" (Accolade), T; PC

"Age of Empires" (Microsoft), K-A; PC

"Wing Commander Prophecy" (Electronic Arts), T; PC

Jack Nicklaus 5 (Accolade), K-A; PC

"NBA Action '98" (Sega of America), K-A; Sega Saturn

"Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey '98" (Midway), K-A; PlayStation and Nintendo 64

Family entertainment

"Anastasia" (Fox Interactive), K-A; PC

"Monopoly Star Wars Edition" (Hasbro Interactive), K-A; PC

Fighting and shooting

"Star Wars: Masters of Teas Kasi" (LucasArts), T; PlayStation

"Mortal Kombat Mythologies: Sub Zero" (Midway), M; PlayStation and Nintendo 64

Role playing

"Battlespire" (Bethesday Softworks), M; PC

"Fallout" (Interplay), M; PC and Macintosh

"Final Fantasy VII" (Sony), T; PlayStation

Games for girls

"Rockett's New School" (Purple Moon), K-A; PC and Macintosh

"Rockett's Tricky Decision" (Purple Moon), K-A; PC and Macintosh

Simulation

"Joint Strike Fighter" (Eidos Interactive), unrated; PC

"Air Warrior" (Interactive Magic), unrated; PC

"Armored Fist 2" (Novalogic), T; PC

How the ESRB rating system works:

K-A — Kids to Adults, content suitable for ages six and older

T — Teen, content suitable for ages 13 and older

M — Mature, content suitable for ages 17 and older

SOFTWARE AND HARDWARE REVIEWS AND PREVIEWS

Micron's XKU computer targets the serious gamer

By Malcolm X Abram
STAFF WRITER

Now that computer games are big business, many computer companies are trying to get a piece of the action by offering rigs specifically designed for game playing. As with most items aimed at specific markets, some companies get it and some don't.

Micron Computers, a direct seller (http://micronpc.com), has come up with an impressive and expensive little hot rod. Its Micron XKU with "Fusion 3D" is a well-designed system that should make all but the most discerning gamer happy.

First, let's start with the blood and guts of the machine, a speedy Pentium II 266-megahertz processor with 64 megabytes of SDRAM (expandable to 384 MB) and a 512k L2 cache. The motherboard uses Intel's 440 LX chip set, and has one AGP slot (Accelerated Graphics Port, which Intel assures is the future of 3-D graphics games and applications), an ISA slot, three PCI slots with one ISA/PCI slot shared and two Universal Serial Bus Ports.

In that AGP slot is Diamond Multimedia's highly regarded 4-megabyte video card, the Viper 330 based on the Riva 128 chip. Getting to the machine's innards is as easy as turning one screw and sliding off the side panel of the mini tower.

The hard disk space is contained on dual 2-gigabyte drives, rather than a single 4-gigabyte drive. This makes for plenty of annoying file maneuvering as you try to keep track of which game or file is in what drive, and how much space is left in each drive.

The machine also has a standard 3.5-inch floppy drive and an internal Zip Drive. The forward-thinking Micronites have included a DVD drive. For sound, Micron chose Cambridge Soundworks, which includes a powerful 6.5-inch subwoofer. Topping it all off is a 17-inch (16-inch viewable) monitor.

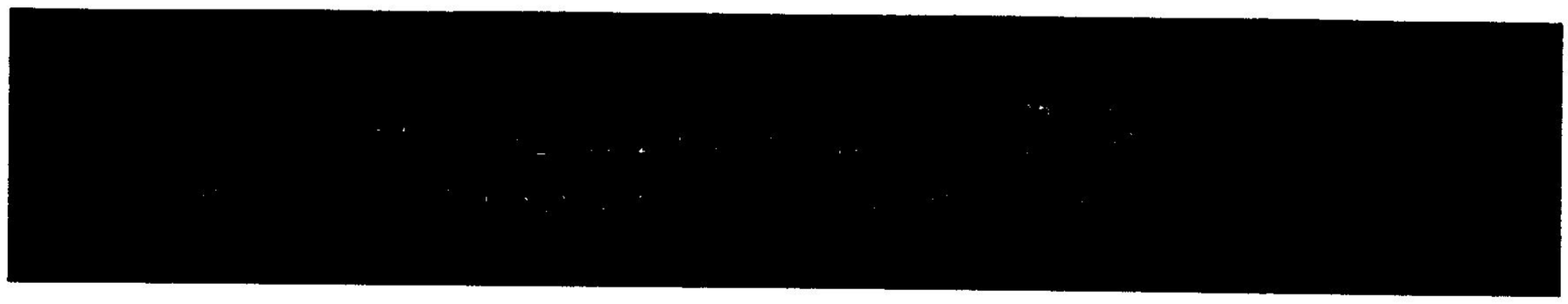
Setting up the XKU is a breeze with Micron's poster-sized "Computer Setup for Dummies"-styled instruction sheet. The the whole process takes 10 or 15 minutes.

But will my games burn up my monitor? Mostly, yes.

While "Fusion 3D" may be a typically overstated marketing term, the Viper 330 is a pretty good card. Though not widely supported, the DVD drive will become important.

Most Direct 3D enabled games run well, although we did have persistent system crash problems with the CPU-sucking "G-Police" and temporary game freezes during "Wing Commander: Prophecy." DOS games also run well, and "Shadow Warrior" moves at a smooth 35 frames in 640-by-480. Microsoft's slightly awkward Sidewinder 3D Pro is the only included controller, and the software bundle features old favorites such as "Command & Conquer," and a few 3-D showcases including the excellent chopper sim "Longbow Gold."

Priced around $2,700, the Micron Millenia is fine machine right out of the box, though hard-core gamers might want to add a dedicated 3-D accelerator.



Wing Commander: Prophecy

Electronic Arts

Reviewed by: *Jeff Kang*

Platform: Windows 95.
Category: Space Combat Simulation
Price: *Retail:* $ 45 US
Release: December, 1997

Version: Release
Author: Origin
Multiplayer: None.

Graphic modes: 640x480xHigh, 640x480x256
Controls: Keyboard, Mouse, Joystick
Sound devices: DirectX 5.0 compatible

	Computer	Memory	HD space	CD speed
Minimum	P133	32 M	150 M	x 4
Reviewed on	200MMX	32 M	400 M	x 16
Recommended	P166	32 M	400 M	x 8

Reviewer's Hardware: Sound Blaster 16, 4MB S3 ViRGE, 4MB Diamond Monster 3D

OFFICIAL PAGE **DEMO/DOWNLOAD**

The Legacy

When I think of ***Wing Commander***, the first image that springs to mind is not one of a scruffy, slightly-plump Mark Hamill parading around as Christopher Blair--far from it. I see myself strapped into a Hornet weaving through an asteroid field, dodging space rock left and right, engaged a deadly waltz with a wing of Dralthi. There always seemed to be a bogie on my six and my laser cannons never seemed to recharged fast enough for comfort--but it was a riot, and fond memories were in the making.

The ***Wing Commander*** series has come a long way since those glorious first battles I flew, and fans of the series have seen its transition to interactive movie status in the third installment bearing the ***Wing Commander*** name. Yet as the series took shape into the game that Chris Roberts wanted, I found that it became less of the game that I wanted. Oh sure, I was the first to greet the FMV with amicable naiveté, and to be honest, I still think that the Hollywood production elements have added to the game more than they have taken away. However, as was becoming increasingly clear--when the interactive movie is allowed to steal the spotlight from the space combat simulation, the gameplay suffers accordingly, and veterans of the game are alienated.

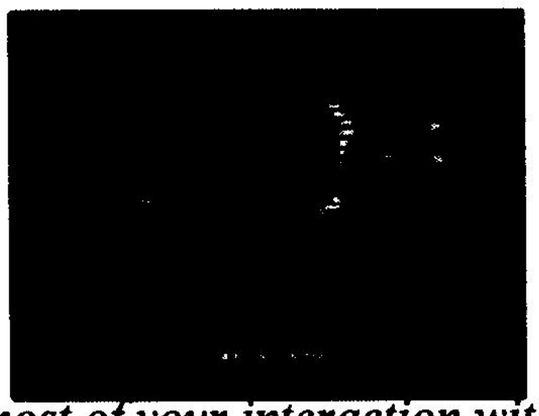
A Fresh Start, Footsteps to Follow

The game strikes a new beginning in the storyline of the ***Wing Commander*** universe. With Kilrath a fading memory, and Confed's border uprising under control, ***Prophecy*** gives Blair

(now a Commodore and administrative paper-pusher) the official heave-ho from the cockpit, and introduces a fresh face for the game's main character. Meet Lt. Lance Casey, a rookie pilot riding blaze of glory out of the academy, and, as you ***WC*** trivia nuts may have already guessed from the surname, the son of ***WC1***'s Iceman. You don the persona of Lt. Casey as he enters his first assignment, aboard Confed's newly commissioned mega-carrier, TCS Midway.

The game also introduces a new enemy--a vicious insectoid race from the nether regions of the galaxy that has come in force to fulfill an ancient Kilrathi prophecy of death and destruction. Ruthless and deadly, the aliens with their advanced technology and vast numbers, embody the essence of darkness. And through the use of gratuitous amounts of dramatic license, the writers have conjured up an epic story that places the Midway as humanity's only line of defense against the alien armada, into a situation where a handful of pilots can overcome seemingly insurmountable odds to dispense peace, freedom, and justice to the galaxy. Yes indeed, it's ***Wing Commander*** alright, no doubt about it.

While *Origin* indicated that the focus of ***Prophecy*** was to be on gameplay, FMV is still very much an integral part into the game. An important part of the ***Wing Commander*** experience is the story telling, and ***Prophecy*** tries very hard to satisfy in this department. The manual does a good job of setting the tone, and introducing the merry crew of the Midway. The movie-style introductory clip is also well done, doing its part to instill a sense of awe and interest, and setting a foundation from which the plot can unfold. As you proceed through the game, video clips reveal more information about the mysterious alien race, and some character development takes place. Relationships build, pilots die, desperation swells, the hero triumphs--you know how it goes. However, while I thought that the game started off with great momentum, the grandeur and immersiveness of the story was stretched thin towards the end. This was mainly due to the fact that after the midpoint of the game, the life was really sucked out of the game. The bar where you arrive at after every mission to mingle with shipmates is rendered deserted, and as impressive as the killboard became, it kept poor company. Many loose ends are left dangling, and only FMV sequences provided were those essential to the development of the plot. As it stands, after you play out the third, and final, CD, part of you is still looking for the fourth.



Pilot country. This is where most of your interaction with the other characters occur.

The acting in ***Prophecy*** is good, but not the greatest. It is about as good as you can reasonably expect from a computer game, and on par with that of the preceding two games. The actor that plays Lt. Casey does a very good job adding dimension to the character, and really performs well, despite a script that breaks down here and there. The portrayal of Maestro, your happy-go-lucky academy buddy, and fellow rookie pilot is also well done, providing humor when needed. Series veterans Blair, Maniac, and Rachel are once again back along for the ride, although only Maniac seems truly comfortable in his role. Some other characters are tossed into the spotlight at various stages of the game, including Stilleto, the fiery First Lieutenant who steps aside for Lt. Casey to serve as wing commander, and Lt. Finley, the brainy science officer who tries to act flirtatious and sophisticated between gulps of replicated drink. However, neither of the two characters are developed much beyond their pretty faces, and the potential for interesting character interaction is wasted.



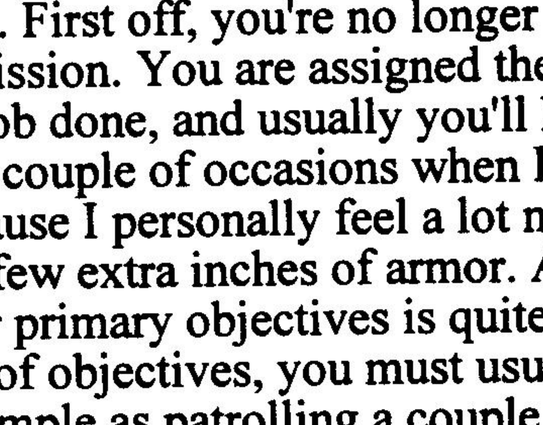
Life aboard the Midway. Spirits are high.

The new alien race is intriguing, but not much is revealed about them throughout the course of the game. For one thing, the game doesn't even offer a real reason for their brutal invasion of Confed and Kilrathi space. Most likely, *Origin* has greater plans for the aliens in future ***Wing Commander*** products. Appearance-wise the alien ships are dark and organic-looking--a sharp contrast to the sleek Confed designs. The aliens ships also introduce a new gimmick where several smaller ships join together to form a larger, more powerful vessel. For example, a trio of lighter fighters may physically join together to form a heavy attack ship armed with a devastating plasma gun. While simple concept, this trick it is very effective and I nearly did a double take when I saw it for the first time. It's amazing how fine details such as this help to give this game a lot of character.

In the Cockpit

The gameplay in ***Prophecy*** is ***Wing Commander*** at its best, and fans of the series will have little to complain about. However, having said that, don't expect any dramatic improvements either. One thing that I did notice though, is that the missions are now more closely scripted. While this provides for a smoother integration of the storytelling into the missions, it does feel somewhat restrictive at times. First off, you're no longer able to choose your own ship or weapon loadout before each mission. You are assigned the ship that has been deemed most appropriate for getting the job done, and usually you'll have nothing to complain about. Nevertheless, there were a couple of occasions when I would have given a left kidney for a different configuration, because I personally feel a lot more comfortable flying a craft with a bit of zip than a slug with few extra inches of armor. Also, within missions, the order in which you must complete your primary objectives is quite confined. For example, if you are given a mission with a series of objectives, you must usually complete them in the order given, even if it's something as simple as patrolling a couple of navpoints. Each mission also has a number of secondary objectives that you can try to pursue at your leisure. These mission objectives, and your kill count, is used at the end of each mission to calculate a percentile rating that gauges your performance for each flight. While I didn't find myself paying too much attention to the numbers, this scorecard does effectively appease vanity and debrief each mission in the same stroke.

More of the Same...



A computer gives out all your mission assignments during pilot briefings. Ah... the wonders of technology.

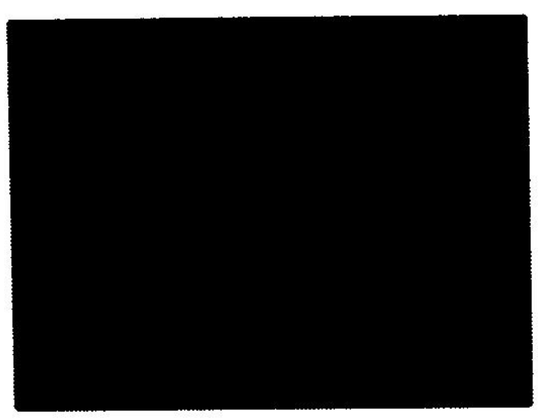
The missions themselves have changed very little, and the game cycles through the same standard set of mission types, including navpoint sweeps, escort, carrier defense, target strikes, etc. All in all, the mission selection is very much the same as what was first

established in ***WC1***, something when considered with a critical eye is not really the greatest of compliments. While *Origin* has worked hard to improved upon the audiovisuals at every step, little has been done to improve or enhance the game's mission structure or space-flight model. Nevertheless, one might argue that it is silly to tamper with perfection, and ***Prophecy*** does play extremely well. The whole theme of ***Wing Commander*** is about providing a immersive science-fiction environment to serve as the foundation for an arcade-oriented blast-em-up in space. There are few illusions of realism in terms of space-physics, and the sacrifices that are made, are for the sake of playability. With these objectives in mind, ***Prophecy*** delivers admirably. The combat is intense, and completely satisfying in bringing you the no-fuss, edge-of-the-seat combination of awe-inspiring audiovisuals and explosive action.

Living on the Edge

Combat is a livelier affair this time around with battles that are generally much larger. Instead of flying solo or with a lone wingman, the missions in ***Prophecy*** routinely teams you with an entire wing of Confed pilots. While it's still often a mere 6-10 ships against dozens of bogies, the odds are a bit more realistic, and the end result is a better portrayal a large-scale space battle, the likes of which you saw previously only in carrier-defense missions. However, despite improvement in friends-vs-foe ratio, it'll still usually be up to you to get the job done. This is especially true at the harder difficulty levels, where it's very much you versus the aliens, with your wingmen serving only a distractions to divert gunfire. But even, as showpieces, they are welcome company, and its often very amusing to listen to the jibes that they throw at each other, as well as the enemy ships during combat. Maestro and Maniac share some especially unforgettable exchanges, and add a lot of flavor to the missions.

Killing enemies is a very familiar affair, and if you've ever played a ***Wing Commander*** game, you'll feel right at home in the cockpit. The weapon selection is fairly unchanged, with a few exceptions, providing the standard assortment of guns and missiles. Some names have been changed here and there, but staples such as lasers and mass drivers are still around. The charging mass driver cannon adds a slightly different twist, and as the name implies, allows you to charge each shot with power dependent on the time you hold down the trigger. The Stormfire cannon also makes a reappearance, offering a gatling gun style fire output, at the expense of a limited number of rounds. The game also provides plasma weapons that have huge damage potentials, but extremely sluggish fire-rates. You need to be at extremely close range or be attacking a stationary target (i.e. capship turret) for the plasma cannon to be used effectively, but it only takes a couple of successful hits to terminate most enemy ships. The missile selection is also good, and you'll find the standard friend-or-foe, image recognition, heat seeking, and dumbfire flavors. Other familiar weapons include mines (which I still find difficult to use correctly), and torpedoes that are equipped on bombers as the only means of taking out capital ships. My favourite new weapon, though, is without a doubt the Swarmer missile. This weapon simultaneous fires out multiple projectiles which independently seek out and annihilate your target. They are visually impressive, and have the huge advantage of being unaffected by enemy decoys. My only complaint, but a loud one, is that they are only available in the Wasp fighter, which in turn is only launched in emergency scrambles to ward off enemy attacks on the Midway.



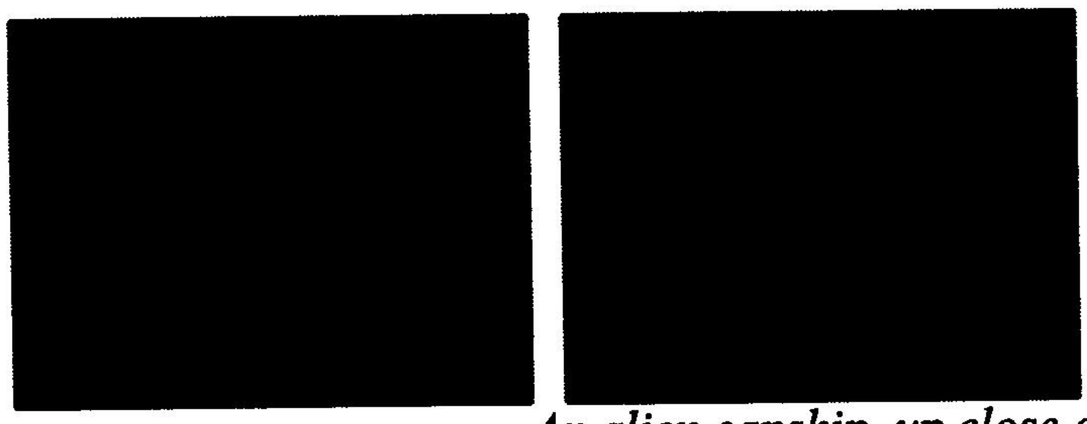


Swarmers in action.

Dogfighting tactics are relatively unchanged, and the surest way to send an enemy bogie into the void is still to chase its tail and send a missile or two up its tailpipe. The key to survival is to keep moving and liberally use your ship's afterburners, because a good enemy AI will be extend you the same favours that you give them. You'll need to learn the best way to shake an enemy clamped to your tail, and the best time to release a decoy. This is especially true at the higher difficulty settings where missiles fly left and right, and missions are routinely fatal. Once you get a feel for the basics, there are also pretty simple tricks to learn, such as flanking enemy ships, and using rolling strafe-runs. More advanced players will no doubt have their own favorite tactics and styles of fighting, but as an action game, as long as you can line up targets to your reticle and pull a trigger, you'll see plenty of fireworks.

Managing your gun selection is quite important because if you stick to lasers, your enemies shields will regenerate faster than you can snipe it away. However if you use nothing for full guns all of the time, you'll soon run out of energy to support your high consumption. The key is to time your shots and to shoot in front of moving targets. Missiles are also extremely useful, but the enemies will usually dispose of your homing projectiles at the expenditure of a few decoys. Often I found that a couple of well placed dumbfire missiles or rockets will solve a problem with a lot less fuss than whole salvo of image recognition or some equivalent.

Capital ships in ***Prophecy*** are suitably impressive. The Midway itself is designed to be many times the size of any previous Confed carrier, and it is truly a awesome sight to behold from the cockpit, both in terms of beauty and shear size. Of course, the alien capital ships are similar behemoths, and no less impressive. Bristling with turrets that are actually dangerous, rather than pesky, they are actually a serious threat now, especially for slow moving bombers. The largest capships will also send missiles your way as you try to acquire a torpedo lock, making things even more difficult. In capship assault missions, bombers are especially vulnerable to both turret fire as well as vessel's fighter escort, so it's the job of fighters to take out enough of the turrets and enemy ships for the bombers to work in relative safety. Then the task breaks down into the systematic destruction of the capship's key systems--shield generators, engine, and bridge--usually in that order. Once this is done, the real show begins, and after a series of spectacular explosions the ship is consumed in a glorious fireball, leaving nothing but a burnt husk. Makes the whole business worth the trouble.



An alien capship, up close and personal.

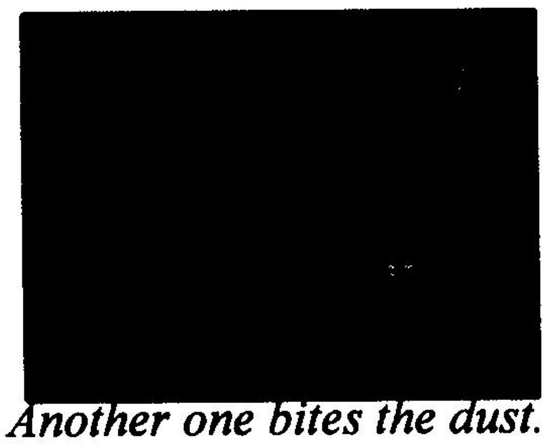
One feature that the game is missing, though, is the ability that allows you to fly inside the carriers. I really got a kick out of penetrating into an enemy carrier, turning on the autoslide, and blasting away entire squadrons of enemy ships before they even had a chance to launch. This is a surprising omission because the game's 3D engine obviously could have easily handled such an addition.

Casualties of War

One of the changes in ***Prophecy*** is the removal of a mission tree, giving the game a very linear feel. However, the tradeoff comes at the gain of one carefully sculptured mission path rather than a series of shorter diverging branches. While your performance in one mission will often have direct effect on the next, usually, as long as you (and your carrier) survive, you'll live to fight and win another day. Playing the game through the first time, I was desperately afraid that I had been thrown into a hopeless losing path after failing what I considered to be a key mission. However, this was not the case, as apparently, success in the subsequent missions quickly rectified my situation. While this helps maintain a constant pace of progress through the game, it also makes the game seem to be on the short side. I have heard many complaints that Prophecy is way too short, but the number of missions (around thirty) and average mission length is comparable to others in the series. But, whereas in previous games you might be stuck on a single mission for days at a time, Prophecy often allows you to chug along even if you fail a mission. This subtle difference has a drastic effect on the time it takes to play through the missions, and also on the overall longevity of the game.

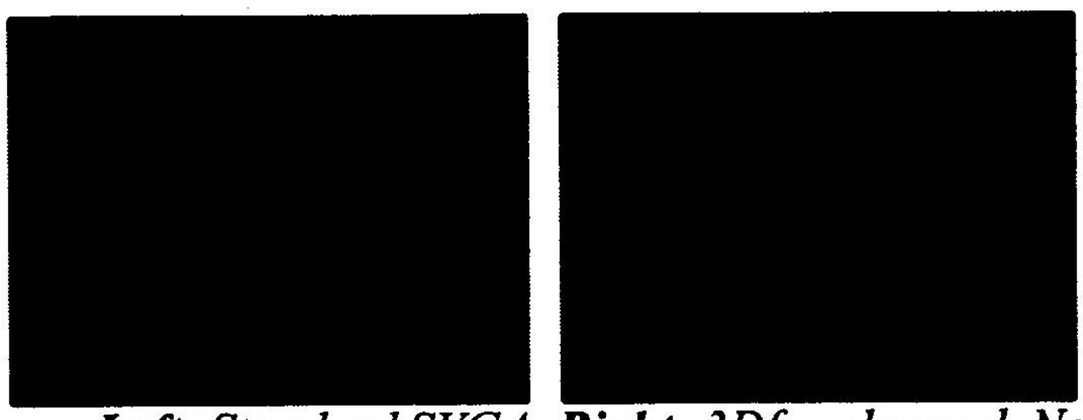
One feature that is painfully missing from the game is multiplay of any sort. Multiplayer support had been promised from start, but in the end was sacrificed to allow the game to retail in time for Christmas 1997. Presently, *Origin* appears to in the process of completing a multiplayer upgrade that will be sold as part of an add-on package later this year. I for one, find that the decision to sell a feature that was originally promised for the game as a separate product completely disagreeable. Origin should offer the multiplayer package as a free upgrade, or in the least, only charge a trivia shipping and handling fee. In any case, this omission will be a major disappointment to the majority of ***Wing Commander*** fans, and for time being, ***X-Wing vs. Tie Fighter*** will still fly unchallenged in the realm of network and Internet play.

Continuing the Tradition, Setting the Limits



Another one bites the dust.

The game's graphics are a joy to behold. If you thought that the SVGA graphics introduced by ***WC3*** were good then you'll be blown away by the game's 3Dfx enhanced graphics--I was. Few games released to date can compare with ***Prophecy's*** brilliant use of graphics effects, and only the likes of ***G-Police*** and ***Quake 2*** are even in the same league. Everything from the rendered space backdrops to the exquisite coloured light effects help to give the game an almost cinematic quality during space-flight. The ship models are excellently done, and plenty of contours are used to eliminate polygon blockiness. The texturing is very good, delivering every last sliver of detail to the ships. Those of you who like big explosions will be especially pleased by the game's beautiful pyrotechnics. In addition to the classic fireballs, are explosions that yield clouds of coloured plasma, and also some that come in the form of mini-novas that expand in impressive-looking shockwave rings. Other small touches such as an improved shield-shimmer, realistic smoke trails left by missiles, lens-flare from bright stellar light sources also add to the stunning visuals.



***Left**: Standard SVGA. **Right**: 3Dfx enhanced. Note the red lighting on the Midway.*

Of course, if you don't have 3Dfx video card, there is a Direct3D mode to take advantage of, that offers most of the graphical features, and also a software mode that offers SVGA graphics that are improved upon ***WC3/4*** . To fully enjoy Prophecy, however, you'll definitely need a good 3D accelerator. And if you aren't a owner of such a commodity, this game alone makes a strong case for you remedy that.

The ***Wing Commander*** series, and *Origin* games, in general has traditionally always excelled in the area of music and audio, and Prophecy does not break the trend. The mission music is excellent, and carries the mood very well. Special music tracks that were originally prepared for the multiplayer mode, and advertised in the official ***Prophecy*** audio CD soundtrack, are now tucked away in the training simulator. It almost seems wasted in the simulator, but would sound very out of place in the actual missions--no doubt we'll be hearing more of them once multiplay is enabled. The sound effects are of like-quality, and the game takes advantage of Dolby Surround Sound technology to provide true 3D sound support. However, you need to have a sound card that takes advantage of positional sound technology to fully enjoy the effect. I was unable to evaluate this feature with my no-frills Sound Blaster 16, but I guess as long as I don't know what I'm missing, I have nothing to miss.

The Verdict

The final impression of ***Prophecy*** that I wish to convey to you is a positive one. As ***Wing Commander 5***, the game does well to keep the flame of the series lit, and once again brings the series to the edge of technology. While I have picked on the story, I must say that it was still enjoyable. The very fact that I considered the plot and characters one of the main features and worthy of thorough analysis, in an action no less, should tell you something about the standard of quality that Origin has set for itself. The FMV doesn't dominate, and it was never intended to. It had its shortcomings but despite that, is still a skip and a hop ahead of everything else. The graphics, as I have stressed are gorgeous, and probably are biggest selling point of the game. I had originally flirted with the idea of a Silver Award for the game because I was so taken away by the flawless graphics and solid gameplay. However, in the end, the lack of multiplay, in addition to the other minors faults that I mentioned, left the game just a far enough away from perfection to lose its claim to an accolade. For sure ***Prophecy*** is a good game, and if you're any kind of ***Wing Commander*** fan, I'd recommend that you rush out and buy it today. However, it is neither a revolutionary step forward, and with the release of ***I-War***, nor the king of space combat simulation.

Pros:

- ☐ Stunning graphics.
- ☐ Great use of moving, coloured light sources.
- ☐ Good generation of atmosphere.
- ☐ Solid classic ***Wing Commander*** gameplay...

Cons:

- ☐ ...But you've seen most of it before.
- ☐ No Multiplay!
- ☐ Story would have benefited from a stronger ending.

FOOTNOTES

Appeal:	Any red-blooded ***Wing Commander fan***.
Originality:	It's the fifth instalment of a classic series--but the ship, crew, and enemy all are new.
Graphics:	Superb, among the best I've ever seen.
Audio:	Excellent soundtrack as expected.
Longevity:	Linear mission structure and fast mission progression provides for less gameplay hours that one might hope.
Interface & Usability:	Excellent.
Packaging & Docs:	Very good. The complementary star map is very cool.
Bugs & Problems:	No crashes experienced or bugs encountered.

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Games Domain Review
The independent online magazine written by gamers for gamers

Wing Commander: Prophecy - Second Opinion

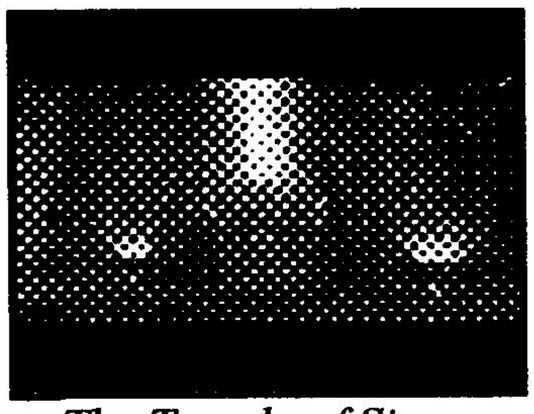
Original Review, by Jeff Kang

Origin Systems

Second Opinion by: *Rajan Ragupathy*

Long ago, the Prophets of Kilrah...

For the most part, I throughly agree with Jeff Kang's review of ***Wing Commander: Prophecy***. ***Prophecy*** is a very enjoyable space combat game with well-designed missions and challenging gameplay (unlike Jeff, I don't take the easy way out and give up on a mission before I've beaten it [grin, duck, run *very* fast]), excellent graphics, music and sound, with a few annoying flaws, such as the lack of multi-player capability. Personally though, I don't think that these flaws were not serious enough to detract from a silver award, as ***Prophecy*** certainly stands head and shoulders over the vast bulk of space combat titles on the market today (***I-War*** being a possible exception), or even the vast bulk of action titles. So, I'm going to spend most of this review disagreeing with our fearless action editor, and probably ensuring that I spend the rest of my time with the GDR reviewing ***BC3000*** bug patches.



The Temple of Sivar.

Glory to Sivar

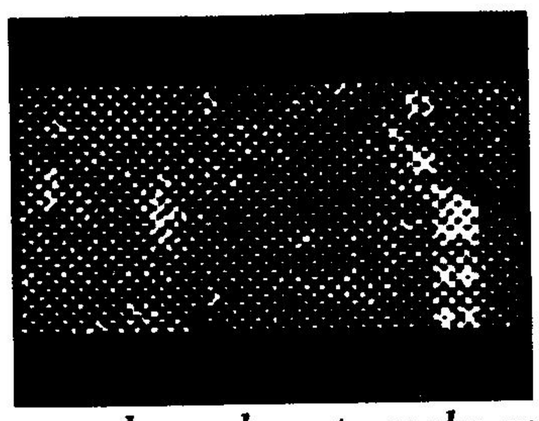
Okay, let's get one thing straight, I'm a big time gameplay fanatic, especially when it comes to action titles. It doesn't really matter how good the game's graphics are, how great the storyline is, or how user-friendly the the interface is, if the gameplay isn't up to standard, it's going to be gathering dust on a shelf. And as Jeff mentioned, classic ***Wing Commande*** gameplay, along with fast and furious action (er, there's a difference?), is exactly what ***Prophecy*** provides, and where it excells. If you enjoy charging head first into a swarm of enemy fighters and leaving a pile of twisted corpses in your wake, or desperately evading turret fire as you try for a torpedo lock on an enemy cruiser, then you won't be disappointed with this game. While

Prophecy retains all the gameplay of earlier games in the series, I disagree with Jeff when he says that the mission structure is just more of the same, with little variation in the types of missions. The missions in early ***WC*** games tended to consist mainly of simple patrol (read, search and destroy) missions, with a carrier escort or strike mission thrown in every now and then. ***Prophecy*** moves away from this format, as even routine patrols now have a twist to them, such as a mission where you have have to race both the clock and your wingman to locate an enemy jamming device, or one where you have to stop a group of enemy fighters before they can out-run you.

Prophecy introduces Wild Weasel, or SEAD (Suppression of Enemy Air Defense), missions for the first time in a ***WC*** game, where you have to shut down a capship's gun/missile turrets and shield emitters, clearing the way for a follow up strike by the bomber wings. The bomber missions themselves are much tougher than in previous games, where you simply had to run in on full afterburner, launch a couple of torps, and watch the fireworks. Capships now have several major components, such as fighter launchers, engines and bridge, which need to destroyed one by one (I'd recommend taking them out in that order). Each component may take up to three torpedoes to destroy, a very tough task when you're being swarmed by the defending fighters - which is why I recommend going for the launchers first. And speaking of bombers, ***Prophecy*** also features several bomber escort missions, which I only recall having seen once before, and that was way back in ***WC2***. Bomber escort is a whole other kettle of fish from Capship escort, as you have to treat virtually every enemy craft as a potential threat to the bombers, while also dealing with those that are attacking you. If a SEAD strike hasn't already been made on the capship (or if you simply fouled up on the SEAD), you also have the job of clearing out the turrets and shield emitters.

Last, but not least, ***Prophecy*** features several fleet defence, or 'scramble' scenarios, whereas you would have been lucky to see two of these in a previous game. Now, I agree that we have seen most of these mission types before, with the exception of SEAD, but the differance is in the number of these types of missions. As I said before, early ***WC*** games tended to consist mainly of patrol missions. You now get to fly strike, SEAD, and escort missions almost as often as you'd fly standard patrols, which makes the gameplay a lot more varied.

Jeff also mentioned that being unable to select your fighters and ordinance was somewhat annoying. Personally, I saw this as an integral part of the game and it added to the challenge rather than being a design flaw. Keep in mind that you play a lowly lieutenant in this game, not a full colonel like in ***WC3*** and ***WC4***. A rookie fresh out of the academy wouldn't get to choose what fighter he or she flew, just like Blair didn't get a choice till he'd proven himself in combat. As a rookie, the challenge for you is to accomplish your task with the fighter you're given. A nice bonus is that towards the end of the game, when you *have* proven yourself, you do get the opportunity to select your fighter for some of the missions. The other problem Jeff mentioned was the inability to salvo your missiles and torps like in previous games. This one I agree with 100 percent, there is simply no excuse for not including this feature in the game. It would certainly have made some of those torpedo runs a whole lot easier. About the only reason I can think of is that *Origin* omitted this feature simply for the sake of making ***Prophecy*** more like the very early ***WC*** games, which is not a very good reason at all, in my opinion.



The Aliens sure know how to make an entrance.

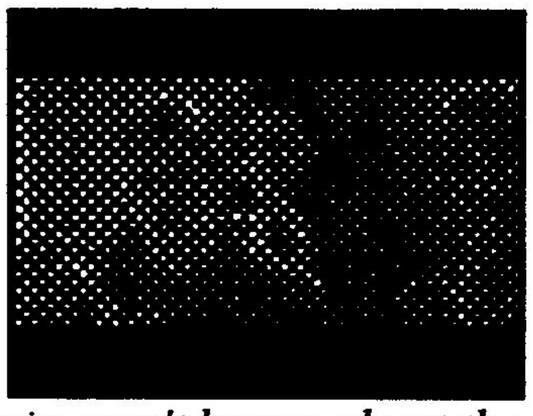
And the universe shall be consumed...

. As I said before, I consider storyline less important than gameplay, but it's still an important part of the game. Overall, I thought that the storyline was a cut above anything I've seen in most space combat games, and most certainly better than than the 'storyline' I've seen in the vast bulk of action games. ***Prophecy's*** opening sequence does a very good job of setting the tone for the game, and the later cutscenes keep the plot moving along nicely, as well as developing the characters. As Jeff mentioned, the game is based on an ancient Kilrathi prophecy that predicts the end of the universe. The gist of the prophecy is as follows:

> *Death itself shall pour forth, obscuring the stars in a veil of darkness. Theirs is the claw that rends flesh from bone, theirs is the poisoned fang. Their numbers shall rend the universe barren and crush the breath from our clans. We shall be bathed in our own blood and rotted flesh shall be our fare. With a deafening thunder shall the dark age begin...*

Yikes. And you thought human doomsday prophecies were bad. Personally, I found this premise absolutely fascinating. Just who are these aliens? Where did they come from and what do they want? How did the Kilrathi prophets know about them centuries ago, and why did the aliens wait till now? As the game progresses, you discover more about their intentions, though as Jeff said, you still don't know all that much about the aliens by the time you reach the end of the game. Personally, I found this fairly plausible, as this was our 'first contact' with their race, and we spent most of the time fighting, not talking (apart from the standard 'prepare to die' type remarks). As Jeff said, there is very little FMV on the third CD apart from the briefings, which causes the storyline to fade out as you get closer to the end of the game. However, the briefings themselves do contain a lot of information about how the war is progressing, as well as interactions between the characters (this actually happens on all the CDs, not just the third). These clips keep the storyline on the third CD from "dying," as Jeff puts it, but they're very easy to miss if you simply hit ESC during the briefings, assuming you're just going see a generic briefing. Also, while these clips are enough to keep the storyline alive, a little more FMV to flesh things out wouldn't have gone amiss.

Now, make no mistake ***Prophecy***'s storyline isn't up to the high standard *Origin* set in ***WC4***; in fact, not even close. In all fairness though, ***Prophecy*** is marketed as a space combat simulator, not an interactive movie like < B>*WC4*. With that caveat in mind, ***Prophecy***'s storyline certainly stacks up well against anything on the market today, and would probably put a lot of 'true' interactive movies to shame. All in all, the storyline provides a nice backdrop to the gameplay without detracting attention from it, which is which is what, I think, the storyline in a combat game (as opposed to an interactive movie) should do.



Hawk and Manic aren't happy about the CAG's orders.

Knat'thrak

I'm not going to spend much time going over graphics and sound, as Jeff and I pretty much agree here. If you've got a good 16-bit soundcard and especially a 3Dfx graphics card, you're in for a treat. If you don't, well, it sucks to be you. ;-) Seriously, I've tried running the game in software-only mode, and while it was a bit of a let-down after seeing the 3Dfx mode, the graphics still look good, though without special effects like fogging or lens flare. As for the sound, a special mention should go to the in-flight sound effects, which are excellent. For sheer terror, there's very little that beats the rapid fire whoom-whoom-whoom from the multiple ion cannons of a clustered Stingray that's sitting on your six. Unless, of course, you count the dreadfull thumps as your fighter's torn apart by the aforementioned ion cannon blasts from the aforementioned Stingray. Jeff mentioned that you can't listen to the techno music tracks while flying in-game missions. Actually, there is an undocumented easter egg that allows you to do this: all you have to do is type 'moretunes' (without the quotation marks) while in flight. Personally, I can't stand techno music, but the 'Cult of Sivar' and 'Prophecy' tracks are tolerable - barely.

My biggest gripe with the game would, without a doubt, be multiplayer, or the lack thereof, rather. *Origin*'s explanation for this was that the multiplayer simply wasn't up to the standards they expected, and that the public would get a much better experience from a seperate multiplayer product. Bull! My guess is that *Origin* couldn't resist the tempation to have the game on the shelves in time for the all important Christmas/New Year season. Multiplayer is almost mandatory for action/space-combat games nowadays, and this game would have been much improved by the addition of multiplayer capability.

This Tribunal Finds You

Reading over this review once again, it actually ends up being surprisingly similar to Jeff's original review. We like the same things about ***Prophecy***, and we both have very similar gripes. The main difference though, is in the way we view the game as a whole. I've primarily been reviewing this game as a space combat simulation, and as such it's an excellent game, with fast action, good mission design and storyline, as well as great graphics and sound.

Prophecy is the most enjoyable space combat game I've played in recent months, and one of most enjoyable games that I've played all year. The lack of multiplayer is the only major flaw, and would definitely keeps the game below the standard required for a Gold award, but not below the standard required for a Silver, in my humble opinion.

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GAMECENTER AWARDS '97

Sci-fi Sims

Introducing our newest GC Award: the sci-fi sim category. Born out of common sense (which often eludes us) and many a late-night "how can you compare MechWarrior to EF 2000?" argument, it's a logical progression.

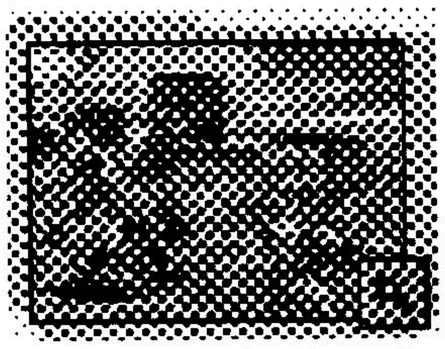
So let's be official here--for posterity's sake, if nothing else. What exactly *is* a sci-fi sim? (Drum roll please.) Try this on for size: a game with a science-fiction premise that simulates sophisticated, futuristic cockpit-oriented combat that does not yet exist. Sound good? Good, now on with the nominees.

Oh yeah, one more thing: There are only three nominees in this category. But we have a sneaking suspicion there will be plenty more next year...

Nominee

Heavy Gear (Activision)

Look ma, it's MechWarrior 2 without the license! Just kidding, Activision (and FASA, and MicroProse).



With Heavy Gear, Activision upped the ante of the mechanized combat subgenre. In a drastic departure from its MechWarrior series, the units in this game (referred to as Gears) were much smaller than their giant robot brethren. Thankfully, diminutive size meant demonstrative gameplay--Gears can perform all kinds of fancy maneuvers, such as crouching, sidestepping, or getting knocked down. Quite a breath of fresh air for a subgenre that heavily mimics itself.

A strong game in a weak genre, Heavy Gear definitely put MicroProse on notice: Activision can still compete in this category with or without the MechWarrior license. Let the battle begin!

Nominee

Wing Commander: Prophecy (Origin)



Not much changed in this fifth Wing Commander title. You were still a fledgling rookie pilot who had to work his way through a series of progressively harder missions in progressively more sophisticated ships. You still watched your character get drawn into a plot that was mysterious, intriguing, and amusing. And Luke Skywalker--we mean Mark Hamill--still got plenty of face time. And daggum, we liked it that way.

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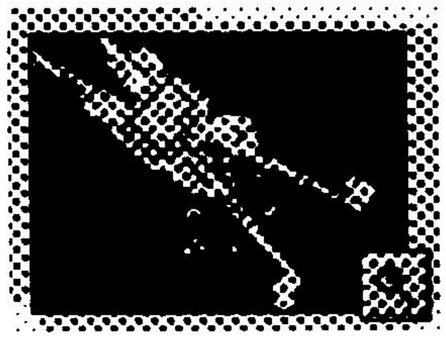
There's no reason to change a formula that works, and works well. Tweak and improve the graphics by adding 3D support, add in some more killer ships to fly, and make Mark Hamill's character, Blair, a high-ranking (and grumpy!) admiral. Frankly, that's all we needed.

Wing Commander: Prophecy was another excellent installment, with an interesting story, furballs that put most space-combat games to shame, and a highly evolutionary cockpit.

Give me the download!

Nominee

X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter (LucasArts)



The game everyone couldn't wait to get their hands on stirred up quite a brouhaha when it was released in mid-1997. While we find it hard to believe anyone could call X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter mediocre, some people did. Angrily, we might add. But let's take a rational look back. When LucasArts released the X-Wing and TIE Fighter titles, gamers clamored for one thing: a network play mode that allowed us to fly against other humans, with both Imperial and Rebel craft. Funny, but that's exactly what LucasArts delivered. How is that crappy?

Truly, X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter is a multiplayer game. And a fine one at that. With complex missions as well as dogfights that made us feel like we were back in the movies, this title transported the Gamecenter editors, en masse, back to 1979. Alice Hill, Gamecenter's head honcho, even came to work one day with her hair done up like Princess Leia! Pretty!

Hey, we played X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter till our fingers went numb. In our book, that's all we need to know. Chalk up another winner for the folks at LucasArts.

Give me the download!

And the winner is...

Back to top

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TECHNOLOGY

A new kind of stork delivery: Web makes adoption easier

■ The Internet has brought many people together and now it is doing the same for new families

By MATTHEW McALLESTER
LOS ANGELES TIMES NEWS SERVICE



LOS ANGELES TIMES

Kathy and Raymond Hugh first met online, and, after deciding to adopt, got advice from other adoptive parents on the Web.

Sleep wasn't coming easily to Katterina Keith on this cold December night. The gas fire roaring, she sat at her desk and looked out through the window at the skyscrapers and mountains of Vancouver, British Columbia. At a loss, she logged on to the Internet. Moments later, her restless mind was focused. Like a hunter with a deer in her sights, something had caught her eye. Someone, in fact.

"There was one photograph of a little girl who kind of just jumped out at me," said Keith, 27, a television and film production designer who had already decided she wanted to adopt a child and was searching for information about adoption. "I e-mailed the agency first of all, introducing myself and telling them why I was on the Net and that this little girl had caught my eye. They e-mailed me back and a week later sent me a video of this little girl."

It was love.

If all goes according to plan,

spective parent's ability to make rational decisions.

"We call it the home shopping network," said Thais Tepper, director of the Parent Network for

agency, a for-profit agency based in California that specializes in arranging adoptions of Russian children.

"To be honest, this is not what I

later and there's all this stuff?"

Sometimes, adoptive parents rely on old-fashioned agencies to locate available children but use the Internet as an inexhaustible



No. 155 ANOTHER GAMEBUSTERS **POWER PLAY!**

If you're looking for a little help when battling the monsters in "Nightmares Creatures," here are two suggestions. Try window shopping on the first level and on every level always go back before you go foward.

CLIP & SAVE CLIP & SAVE CLIP & SAVE CLIP & SAVE CLIP & SAVE

New installment available of "Wing Commander"

By RICHARD T. RYAN
ADVANCE FRIDAY EDITOR

"Wing Commander: Prophecy," the fifth installment in that series, is now available. Players must battle a new alien menace using the TCS Midway as the home base. This game represents the first of a new trilogy for the "WC" series, and while it features appearances by such old friends as Blair (Mark Hamill) and Maniac (Tom Wilson), this edition also introduces a new character, Casey (Steven Petruca). Smooth graphics and more than 50 missions earn this one a place on the "gotta try it" list. It's available for PC CD-ROM.

* * *

There are two new multipath movies available for youngsters. Based on the popular "Choose Your Own Nightmare" series of books, the two new PC titles — "Halloween Party" and "Night of the Werewolf" — allow youngsters to make decisions on how the

thrust or more slowly from several smaller wounds. It's a great game for those who appreciate the martial arts but not necessarily one for the very young players. (Available for the Sony PlayStation)

* * *

"Sega Touring Car Championship" — With games for the Saturn having slowed by comparison to the other platforms, it's great to see a couple of Sega titles hit the shelves. Unfortunately, this "racer" doesn't have a great deal to recommend it. While players can get behind the wheels of some pretty nice cars including an Alfa Romeo 155 V6T, an AMG Mercedes C-Class and a Toyota Supra, there are only three tracks available. Moreover the control is too loose and constant skidding is the result. Admittedly, this game plays better with a joystick but those without one are going to be kissing a lot of walls with their new cars. (Available for the Sega

cyberculture

Game sequels better than originals

By David Thomas
Cyberculture

Feb. 6 - In the world of movies, sequel is a dirty word. You can usually estimate how bad a movie will be based on the number following the title. The bigger the number, the worse the film.

In the mirror world of video games, however, sequels often beat out the original. Riven filled out the details missing in Myst, Resident Evil II guarantees more gore than the first and Super Mario was just that much more, well, super than the original Mario game.

With the arrival of Wing Commander: Prophecy, space combat fans know that as the fifth game in the series, not only does the new title have a lot of to live up to, but it probably will.

In Prophecy, you battle across three CD-ROMs as rookie fighter pilot Lt. Lance Casey. Full-screen, cinematic "cut-scenes" tell the story of a mysterious race of bloodthirsty aliens while the real action happens in the cockpits of various star fighters.

Twirling about in the vacuum of space, you have all of the controls one would expect from a respectable outer space combat vehicle. Rockets, cannons, lasers and a powerful afterburner fill the toolbox of destruction you use to blow away the bad guys.

Mark Hamill reprises his role as a thoughtful space captain who, not so coincidentally, resembles a more mature Luke Skywalker. During the early part of the game, Hamill's character acts as a sort of encouraging father figure; by the middle of the game his disappearance helps drive the story.

Walking back and forth between movie-quality cinematic sequences, where Lt. Casey slowly learns more of the backstory that frames the current events and the 3-D space battles, the game effectively tells a tale while providing plenty of finger-twitching, spacebug-blasting action.

Unlike many games on the market, Prophecy works hard to continue to build its story world, a place firmly established in the first four Wing Commander titles. Working from the same conceptual page George Lucas used to spin a single "Star Wars" film into an infinite "Star Wars" universe, Prophecy continually works to frame individual events in the story inside a much larger narrative.

Characters from the earlier Wing Commander games either appear in Prophecy or bear a mention. Events from the past titles affect the attitudes of the characters and influence the outcome of the game. Prophecy may be the fifth game in the series. But the creators make it obvious they have no intention of it being the last.

What drives a game like Prophecy to live up to its legacy over and over, even as it continues to build it, is a simple formula. The game designers listen to the people who play the games for ideas of what to do better next time. Each successive title or concept takes advantage of the next level of technological sophistication to churn out features that players make clear have been lacking.

Of course, increasing the complexity of the story and the game play creates a bit of learning curve for anyone just joining the series.

Learning the basic flight controls doesn't take too much effort. But as the battles turn more fierce and the alien opponents develop a certain distaste for being blown to bits, mastery of more sophisticated moves and controls turns out to be as important as remembering which key ejects you from your ship before it explodes.

As a result, patience turns into the newcomer's best tactic in battling the aliens. And if you can avoid frustration long enough to actually learn how to play the game, then you can start having some fun. Once your flying skills strengthen and the story starts to make sense, the reward of a more intricate game emerges.

As the Wing Commander franchise continues to grow, the game's developers will face a number of challenges. For one, building a plausible story universe requires a certain amount of detail, complexity and depth to bring it to life.

At times, the story line in Prophecy follows a path that would probably ring true only to a 14-year-old male, who seems the target of much of the game. At the same time, requiring too much knowledge and experience of the far corners of the imaginary world will keep newcomers on the sideline. As it stands, Prophecy comes with a box full of background and support material that you probably need some familiarity with to succeed.

Despite some of these shortcomings, Prophecy succeeds in turning a straightforward point-'n'-shoot space game into a full-on space opera. Engaging game play stuffed inside a growing fantasy world has spelled success for the Wing Commander series. And while movies continue to act as the attention-hogging Big Brother of the entertainment industry, solid series like WC show that the younger sibling might have something to teach on the topic of sequels.

For more information on Wing Commander: Prophecy, and to download a game demo, head to the company's World Wide Web site at: http://www.wingcommanderprophecy.com .

Space Can't Wait: If space flight simulation games don't quite curb your desire to jet through the cosmos, you should check into the Civilian Astronaut Corps. For an investment of only $3,500, the CAC figures it will be able to catapult you 70 miles above the surface of the planet, far enough to qualify as an outer-space adventure.

If their timetable holds, you can go for the ride sometime next year. And if humanity's destiny is truly in space, it's only a matter of time until someone figures out how to charge for the privilege.

You can head over to http://www.c-com.net/~advent/ to reserve your place in history.

Cyberculture

Art, music, leisure: Technology is popping up all over, 9/19
Cyber-psychos, beer lovers go online, 9/26
A new way to read, 10/3
Net access bumps middleman, 10/10
Video game czar looks to growth on Internet, 10/17

Skate rings
around the competition.

Friday, February 6, 1998

Lights! Camera! ... Render!

■ Digital acting is virtually here: a new era for Hollywood is fast approaching, when the stars of the silver screen may one day exist solely as bytes and pixels.

By MARSHAL M. ROSENTHAL, Special to The Times

CENTER STAGE ARCHIVES

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Technology is advancing into the entertainment business, carrying its customary double-edged sword. In its path it leaves the chance for new jobs -- remarkable opportunities for Hollywood actors to extend their craft into the world of gaming. At the same time, the blueprint is being built for a time when the actors may no longer be physically needed.

The field is digital acting, an area that adapts some aspect of a real actor with a digital counterpart. At its most basic, actors can be filmed in front of a "green screen" and their performances then digitally incorporated into a game or scene. In Captain's Chair (Simon & Schuster), Star Trek fans find a Quicktime video clip of George Takai (a.k.a. Sulu) on the bridge of the first Enterprise. The ship itself was rendered from scratch as the original no longer exists.

Takai sees the increasing possibilities for actors in digital media, but remembers thinking, after seeing the mechanical Abe Lincoln years ago at Disneyland, that here was a new technology that was going to take jobs away from actors.

"What can be created inside the computer is tantalizing, but also scary," he said. "Soon they'll be able to generate a digital 'George Takai' to use in a Star Trek project and I won't even need to be around."

Mark Hamill of Star Wars fame shares Takai's concern, the experience of working on the full-motion video scenes for the Wing Commmander: Prophecy game has made him think. Hamill believes that the film industry can benefit from the digital technologies being exploited by such game companies as Origin Systems.



Mark Hamill in Wing Commander
Courtesy of Origin Systems

"It's much less expensive to create a 1920s world inside the computer than with real sets," he said. The ability to digitally generate realistic backgrounds, he noted, has the potential to allow small productions to get past exorbitant set costs.

But game developers want to do more than just build "sets" in silicon.

12:41 PM 2/7/1998

BULLETIN BOARD

Software

Wing Commander: Prophecy -- $50, Origin.

The titles in the *Wing Commander* series from Austin-based Origin are among the most popular space combat simulators -- so popular, in fact, that a motion picture based on them is in the works. Not only are the games excellent space combat simulators, but they also tell compelling stories. The most recent titles have included cinematic sequences that rival motion pictures, featuring big-name stars such as Malcolm McDowell and Mark Hamill, with the goal of being as immersive as possible. In *Wing Commander: Prophecy*, the emphasis has been shifted. This is first and foremost a combat simulation game, with a somewhat weak story line wrapped around it. Powering the action is an incredible 3-D gaming engine with jaw-dropping graphics that gives players a realistic sensation of flying a space fighter. For those players with a video card with the 3Dfx chipset that supports the OpenGL graphics standard, it's a particularly stunning visual treat. For example, when you destroy an enemy ship, it doesn't just erupt in a ball of fire -- it breaks apart before your eyes, and then explodes in a concussive shock wave that ripples out to buffet your own vessel. Learning to fly the various ships in the game takes only a few minutes -- while realistic, they also aren't burdened with too much detail. The story, such as it is, involves a pair of rookies assigned to a new battle cruiser, the Midway. On its shakedown cruise the craft must face a mysterious and powerful enemy bent on -- you got it -- destroying the known universe. Because the female leader of your squadron has taken a liking to you, you're the one leading your troops into battle. The full-motion video sequences feature acting that's only a notch above the usual dreadful portrayals found in most computer games, and the presence of pros such as Hamill helps. But the video isn't the point here -- it's the excellent game play. Available for Windows 95.

C:\ More! -- $80, Citadel Technology.

Big hard drives are cheap these days, but even the roomiest disks have a tendency to fill up fast. And the bigger they are, the more they can hold, making it harder and harder to find just what you're looking for. *C:\ More!* is a disk-cataloging program that uses predetermined templates to organize what's on your drive. On its initial launch, *C:\ More!* scans your hard drive, then automatically adds the appropriate files to the template you've chosen, such as Internet files, graphics or financial files. You can also set up your own templates based on whatever criteria you like. The program sets up a browser bar on the side of your screen, similar to the one used by Microsoft *Office*. Getting to your cataloged files is as easy as clicking on the icon representing any template. This is excellent for people who have lots of text and graphics files, or for those who maintain Web sites on their hard drives.

Hardware

CD Armor -- $20, Digital Armor.

This new product literally places a protective shield on your CDs. CD Armor binds a clear, hard-plastic shell directly to the CD's surface, without use of glue or other chemicals. The armor covers both sides of the CD and is held in place by an interlocking clasp system around the edge of each sheet. The CD is sandwiched in between the plastic sheets. The armored CD can be played on any CD-ROM or CD music system. There is no data loss, reduction in sound quality or image degradation. It's easy and quick to remove the armor. The system includes the clamshell-like applicator, six sets of armor and a CD cleaning cloth. Refill packs come in sets of six, 15, 25 and 40, priced from $4.95 to $19.95.

Bug Alert

Microsoft -- In Windows NT 4.0, some tape drives may disable your floppy disk drive. These may include the HP Colorado T3000, HP Colorado T1000 and Wangtek QIC-3010 floppy. These all use the QIC117.SYS driver, and all run off the floppy drive controller. When this driver loads, it makes a

THE TAMPA TRIBUNE

Friday February 20, 1998

Rom runners

(BeginText)

Creatures: Like children? Thinking of maybe raising a few? This could be the game for you.

Creatures requires the player to raise a virtual toddler called a Norn, a small, sort of birdlike creature that hatches from an egg. The game manufacturers say these creatures have artificial life, an ability to think and learn.

After naming the Norn, it is the player's responsibility to begin its education. It isn't always easy, and it isn't always fun. You must repeat words to the Norn to get it to learn them. One mistake, and the Norn can learn the wrong names for certain items. You also have to encourage Norns to eat the right food, handle dangerous situations, breed and raise their own little Norn kids.

It's a fascinating game for those who find nurturing young lives interesting. But for those who want speed or action, steer clear.

Mindscape Entertainment (1-800-234-3088, http://www.mindscapegames.com/); $40; minimum requirements: Windows 3.1 or Windows 95, Pentium 60 or faster, 8 MB RAM, 60 MB free hard drive space, SVGA, mouse, 2X CD-ROM.AI: Kevin Walker

Wing Commander Prophecy: "Prophecy" is a departure from previous "Wing Commander" episodes, which used branching, movielike cut-scenes to determine the way the game played out.

This sequel returns to the roots of "Wing Commander" with great game play, fast action and stunning visuals. Familiar characters (Mark Hamill as Christopher Blair and Tom Wilson as Maniac) return, but you assume the role of a rookie pilot, Lance Casey. The game is now a straightforward "bug fight" against an invading insectlike alien race. Completing missions can be a challenge, so turning down the difficulty level is recommended. But the furious dog-fighting and compelling mission goals are great fun and quite rewarding.

Origin Systems (1-800-245-4525, http://www.origin.ea.com/); $50; minimum requirements for PC: Pentium 133 with 3-D accelerator or 166 without, Windows 95, 32 MB RAM, 150 MB hard disk space, 2 MB SVGA.

BY: Jim Reed

AI:

EH: CD-ROM REVIEW

MORE ▶



PRODUCT **Wing Commander Prophecy**
PUBLISHER Origin
PLATFORM(S) PC
RETAIL PRICE $49.99

★★★★★ RATING

BRIEFLY

With a brand new engine and an equally fresh enemy race to destroy, **Wing Commander Prophecy** (**WCP**) heads in an exciting direction. It shrugs off the series' concentration on Full Motion Video (FMV) and onto gameplay. Providing you have a 3Dfx accelerator (or other Direct 3D card), **WCP** has the best graphics yet for a space combat sim. Combat is much more intense than before, with tons of ships fighting for both sides, creating some huge space battles. For now at least, **WCP** is the very best we got.

Wing Commander Soars to New Heights

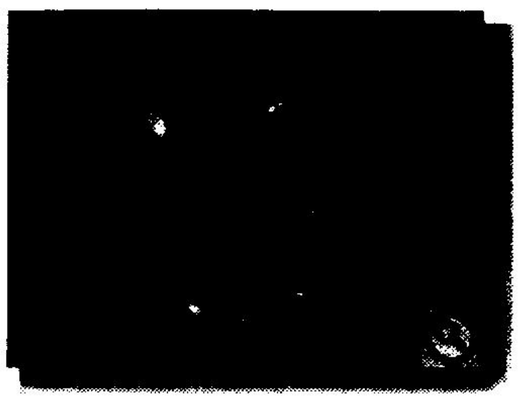


There are two ways to classify sequels: revolutionary and evolutionary. An evolutionary sequel offers little improvements in sound, graphics or other technical areas. The gameplay is usually cleaned up, but not changed radically. This type of sequel generally extends the storyline and attempts to exploit the popularity of the original.

Revolutionary sequels offer substantial technical improvements. More often than not, they also add to the gameplay. A revolutionary sequel usually introduces a new game-engine. The odd-numbered games (numbers 1, 3 and now 5) are the revolutionary sequels, the kind of cutting-edge stuff that causes system upgrades.

Each offered a new graphics engine. **Wing Commander** 2 and 4, the even numbers, have been the evolutionary sequels. Neither embodied new technology, but they continue the storyline. While 2 was a good continuation of the Wing Commander universe, 4's concentration on Full Motion Video made gamers wonder if producer Chris Roberts was going the wrong way.

WCP squashes that notion. Although Chris Roberts has left his baby behind to produce the Wing Commander Movie, the **WCP** team has put the franchise back on course.



WCP is definitely one of the most important games in the series. It not only marks the departure of creator Chris Roberts. Also out are the cat-like Kilrathi as the main enemy in favor of an even more menacing foe. Also cut from the story is Commodore Chris Blair, the main character ever since the original.

That's three serious subtractions in one game. Fortunately, **WCP** weathers these storms nicely.

With Blair (played by Mark Hamill) now heading *TCS Midway*, your new alter ego is 2nd Lieutenant Lance Casey. He's a pilot just out of the Academy, and as green as an Englishman's tooth. The new guy has pretty big shoes to fill, because his father is the late Major Michael "Iceman" Casey, perhaps an even bigger hero than Blair is.

In the first opening scenes, Casey (played reasonably well by Steven Petraca) manages to tick off most of the **Midway**'s officers before his first mission. The lieutenant has a lot to live up to, it seems.

The story takes place after the little skirmish the Confederation had with the Border World Colonies. Blair, a person of significant political power, manages to convince the Federation that one huge super-carrier is better than a bunch of smaller normal carriers. The *TCS Midway* is the result. If it proves successful, more of these huge carriers will be produced.



Trouble starts on the *Midway*'s trial run. A ship from an unknown race enters the Kirathi system and smashes what is left of their fleet. Worse, evidence is pointing that their path is headed right for Earth. The *Midway* happens to be between Earth and the aliens, so it's up to you to investigate and destroy these aliens before it is too late.

Luckily, the *Midway* is a one-ship armada. This sucker is HUGE, and during flight time, it will take a good minute or so to fly down its length.

Syd "Blade Runner" Mead designed the aliens, but they're somewhat of a disappointment. Instead of something cool and unusual, he falls back onto the evil insect cliché. Their ships are much better though. They have an organic look to them, and some classes will connect to make bigger ships to fight against.



The new engine gives **WCP** the best graphics yet in a space sim, period. The space backdrops are no longer drab, black, broken up with white dots of stars and the occasional planet or sun. Now you get beautiful hues of color from nebulae.

Of particular note are the weapons special effects, particularly the missiles' transparent smoke trails. The cockpit is fully polygonal

and light sourced, which adds tremendously to bringing you into the game. You won't get these graphical goodies without a 3D card, like the 3Dfx.

The ships look great. They're well designed, especially the enemy's ships, but the capital ships are the real jewels. It's just a delight to fly your puny fighter up and down their length. They are so huge that it now takes several flights of fighters to destroy one capital ship, as opposed to the three or four that used to do in previous Wing Commanders.

The FMV is not half bad, either. The acting ranges from mediocre to pretty good. Most, if not all of the acting, is done on sets as opposed to computer-generated art on a green screen. The props and uniforms are nicely designed, too. Tom "Biff" Wilson and Ginger Lynn Allen reprise their respective roles, Todd "Maniac" Marshall and Rachel. As mentioned, Mark Hamill returns, but does not appear in as many sequences as before.

The sound is equally well done. The ships' noises and weapons effects are impressive, and the music is unobtrusive. What stands out are the authentic-sounding radio transmissions from your wingmen. Although some of the lines from your squad mates are kind of cheesy, they sound authentic. Casey, in particular, sounds very good. Control, never a problem, remains good. Each ship has different handling characteristics.

The missions branch out in different directions depending on whether you win or loose, but not as much as in past games. In fact, there are a few missions where you MUST be victorious or the game is over.



The much-promised multi-player mode has been dropped in favor of shipping the game. Since Internet multi-player modes add tons of replayability, this is a serious. Multi-player support might be a future add-on.

Wing Commander Prophecy is a great game. It brought the series back to its roots, while downplaying the FMV that was the trend in the last two installments. The British designed **I-War** has generated tons of positive advance hype, but this is now the one to beat.
--Andy Stein

Wing Commander: Prophecy

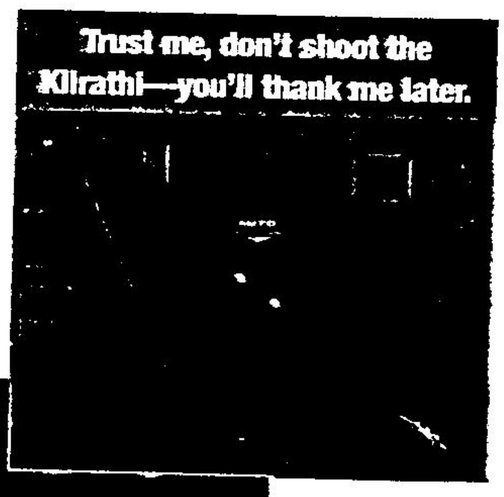
It's you against the universe, again

By Steve Klett



Even with the departure of Chris Roberts (creator of the Wing Commander series) from Origin, a sneak peek at Prophecy last spring inspired high hopes for this fifth installment. The 3Dfx-boosted visuals had everyone's mouths agape, and the Roberts-less design team seemed truly stoked with newfound gameplay-design freedom. Plus, there was to be multiplayer support—which, aside from Armada, has not been featured in any WC product to date.

Then, a few months ago, Origin quietly took away the multiplayer support. This was a bummer, but Origin seemed confident Prophecy's gameplay enhancements in the single-player game would tide us all over. (A multiplayer expansion pack à la X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter is planned for this summer.) Are those enhancements enough? Well, I don't know—you see, I'm still looking for them.


Trust me, don't shoot the Kilrathi—you'll thank me later.


Hamill's back...and so's Ginger Allen.

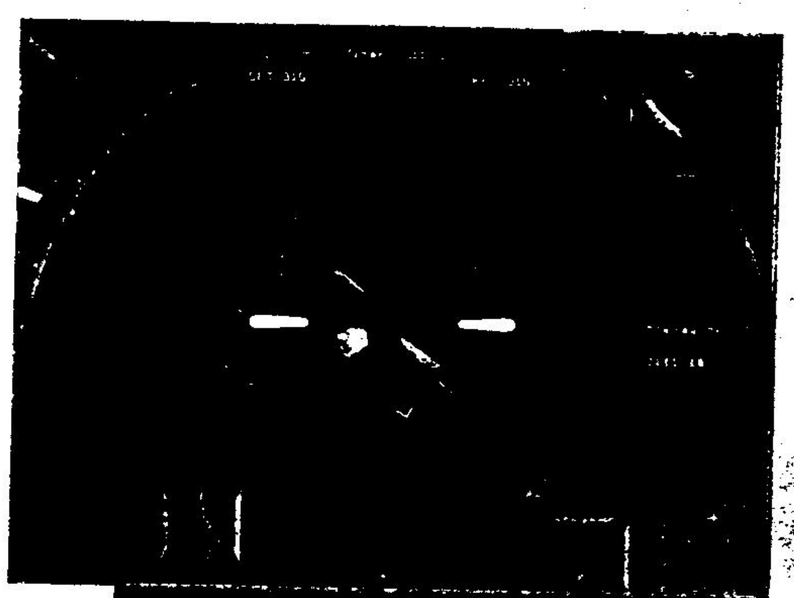
Sure, the 3D-accelerated graphics are absolutely stellar (3Dfx cards are supported natively): The exploding alien ship pyrotechnics are out of this world—sending shockwaves and debris all over the place. The ship designs—both the seven craft you can fly in the game and the 10 alien ships you fly against—are fantastic and utterly unique.

However, once you get past all the slick new visuals, you are essentially left with a derivative Wing Commander experience. The combat engine is largely unchanged: You can still only issue the same basic orders to wingmen, such as Break and Attack, Help Me Out, and so on. You still can't give wingmen specific targets to attack in succession—such as a series of gun turrets—or have them stay with you and clear your six as real wingmen would. That said, they are much more effective at dogfighting and taking out their share of baddies this time around. But you still can't count on them when it really matters: It's still pretty much you against the universe.

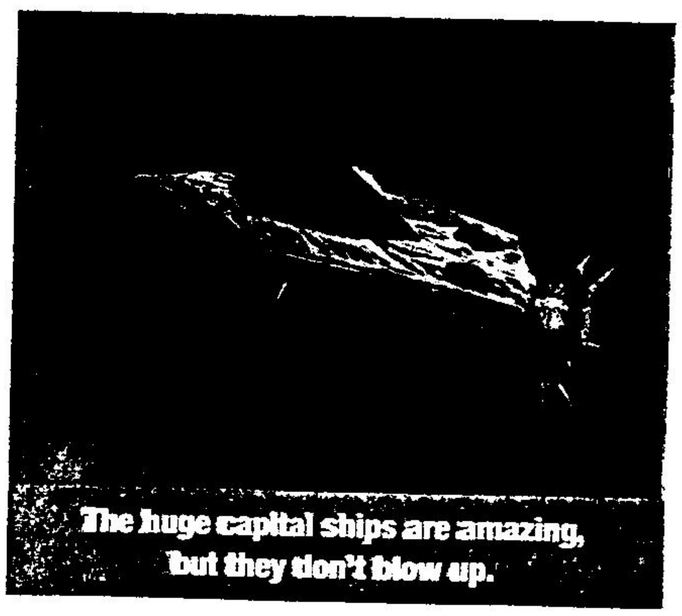
The gameplay mechanics are largely unchanged as well. Where's the target-new-ship option? Where's the ability to assign friendly and enemy targets to hot keys? You also lack the ability to tweak your ships' loadouts or choose the ship you want to fly in each mission.

But if a different experience isn't all that important to you, there's plenty to like. The combat is much faster and more furious than ever before—the size and breadth of the capital ships is astounding. The story is strong: An unknown alien race (hmmm...isn't this how WC IV started out?) has obliterated the Kilrathi fleet and plans to do the same to everything in its path, including Earth. As you'd guess, only the TCS *Midway* and you, a green Confed recruit, stand in its way. Through the course of the 50-plus branching missions, you learn more about the aliens and what must be done to stop them. Oh yeah, you also meet up with those kats the Kilrathi again.

Mark Hamill returns as Blair, as do Tom Wilson as Maniac (another strong performance) and Ginger Allen as the mechanic Rachael (good move, Origin). Overall, the acting performances are on par with any WC game to date, and the repetitive FMV sequences are kept to a minimum. The "interactive" FMV sequences, which I never cared for, are gone altogether—like when you choose to compliment Maniac or chastise him, for example.


The organic alien ship designs are almost too pretty to shoot...almost.

So if all you wanted was more WC gameplay and a new story, climb aboard Prophecy—you won't be disappointed. If you were looking for something different, you may want to pass.


The huge capital ships are amazing, but they don't blow up.

WING COMMANDER: PROPHECY

GAMEPLAY: B-
GETTING STARTED: B+
GRAPHICS: B-
3D ACCELERATED: A
SOUND CHECK: B+

B
OVERALL

MULTIPLAYER: N/A

Lots of cool new visuals, but little in the way of new gameplay.

DEVELOPER:	Origin Systems
PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts 800-245-4525
WEB:	www.ea.com
PLATFORM:	Win 95 CD
REQUIRES:	P133, 32MB RAM, 150MB HD, 2MB PCI graphics card, 4x CD-ROM drive
RECOMMENDED:	P166, 3Dfx card
STREET PRICE:	$50

TIPS ▼ Don't waste your missiles! Save them for the tougher fighters or heavy ships. Try to never use them early in a mission. ▼ Hold your fire until you're up close and personal—your aiming efficiency will improve, and you won't waste ammo and energy. ▼ Don't forget to tell your wingmen to break and attack upon entering a melee. ▼ Always, always, always take out turrets and missile towers before making a torpedo-run on a cap ship. ▼ Don't rely on your wingmen to save your butt—it's all up to you.

GENRE. SPACE COMBAT • PLAYERS. 1 • PUBLISHER. ORIGIN • DEVELOPER. ORIGIN • RATING. T • M.S.R.P. $49.95

REVIEW PC CD-ROM コンピューターゲーム

WING COMMANDER: PROPHECY

ORIGIN'S SPACE COMBAT SERIES IS BACK AND BETTER THAN EVER...

Fans of the *Wing Commander* series will find some startling changes in their favorite space shooter. The series has been one of the best selling videogame franchises for several years now, and Origin has managed to make major changes to the game without losing the core attributes that made it so popular in the first place.

Like other *Wing Commander* titles before it, *Prophecy* consists of sharply produced FMV sequences that frame a story made up of numerous flight missions. However, in this version, the previously villainous Kilrathi have become grudging allies with the humans in a battle against a far more dangerous foe. This new pairing is not without its conflicts, and players will find themselves facing difficult moral decisions involving long standing prejudices which affect the path the entire story takes.

While the plot is changed significantly, the graphics have been completely revamped. Each of the 3D accelerated ships are far more detailed than ever before and the *Babylon 5*-inspired enemy ships are simply awesome. Compared to the somewhat bland ships seen in *X-wing Vs. Tie Fighter*, the spacecraft in *Wing Commander Prophecy* look truly spectacular.

The gameplay is solid and the control, especially in the more advanced ships, is incredibly responsive. Each mission is clearly laid out and some are truly inspired, giving players tough choices that must be made in the heat of the moment. Most importantly, the game manages to maintain the excitement from start to finish.

The only downside to this title is that it just doesn't feel long enough, and the lack of multiplayer options is a downright shame. Other than that, fans of the space shooter genre and *Wing Commander* series have yet another excellent game to call their own.

● DAN EGGER



Ever notice how many videogame spaceships look like cellular phones nowadays?



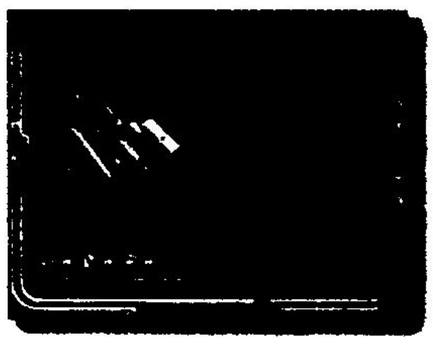
This Panther ship is as deadly as its name implies.



The bad guys in *Wing Commander: Prophecy* are sleeker than ever, and much more dangerous.

ALTERNATIVES

Colony Wars 9.5
X-Wing Vs. TIE Fighter 9.1
Wing Commander IV 6.0



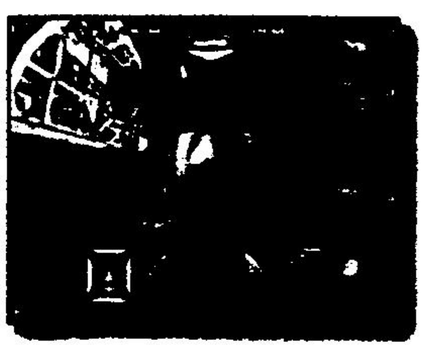
Wasp interceptors can use the most spectacular weapon in the game: Swarmer missiles.



Every weapon has unique effects, such as this realistic missile trail.



The newer, meaner bad guys are able to make mincemeat out of the Kilrathi.



Large ship defenses are weakest close in.

THE LINE

● AUDIO & VIDEO		● GAMEPLAY		● SPECIAL	
GRAPHICS	10	INTERACTION	9	EXTRAS	8
MUSIC	7	BALANCE	9	PRESENTATION	10
SOUND EFFECTS	9	DEPTH	8	INNOVATION	7

RATING



Wing **Commander** Prophecy

A solo saga

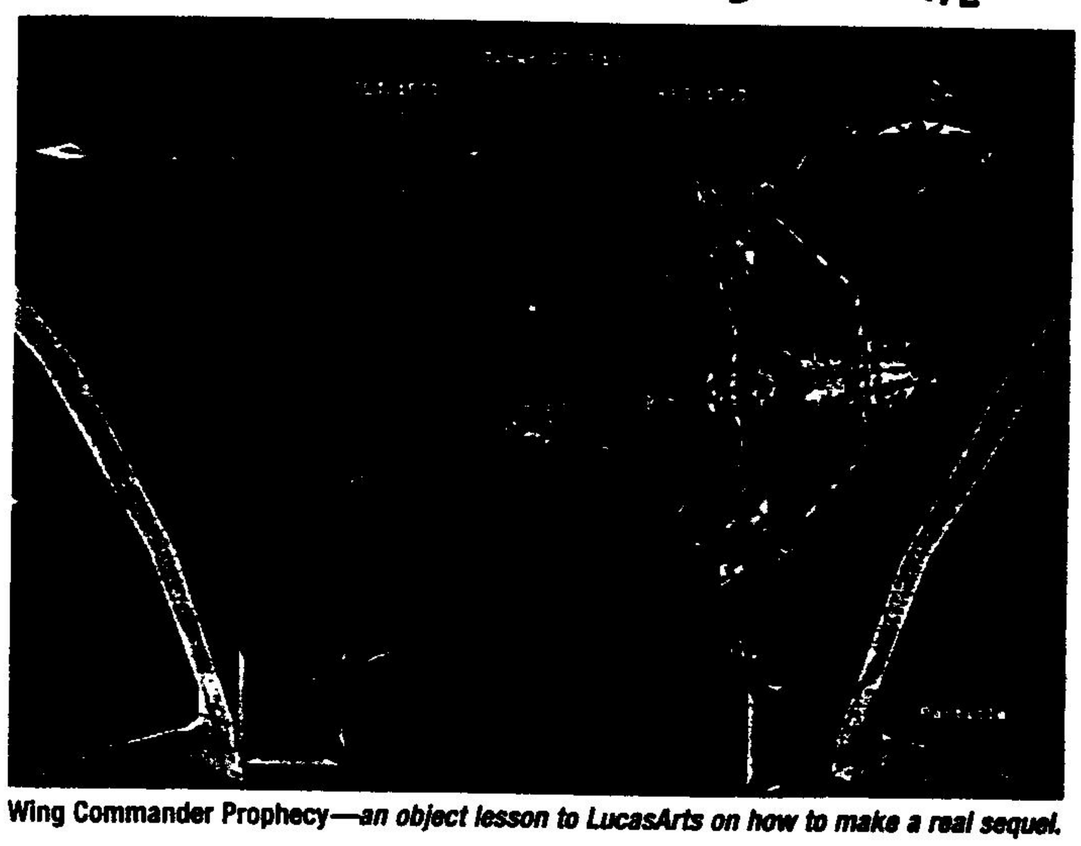
TRY IT ON THE DISC

boot PRODUCT

In *Wing Commander Prophecy*, you'll dish out that can of intergalactic whip-ass with authority, and you'll do it with the best graphics ever seen in a first-person space-combat simulator.

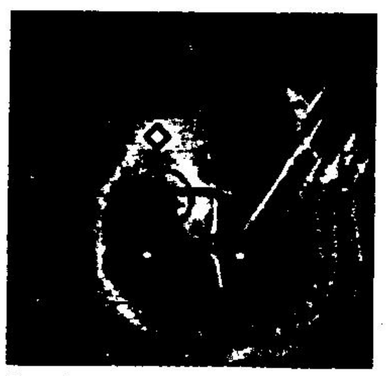
CHECKLIST

Wing Commander Prophecy Version: 1.0
Maximum Resolution/Color
640x480/16-bit
Win95 Native
3D Acceleration
Direct3D
Native 3D Hardware Support
3Dfx Glide



Wing Commander Prophecy—*an object lesson to LucasArts on how to make a real sequel.*

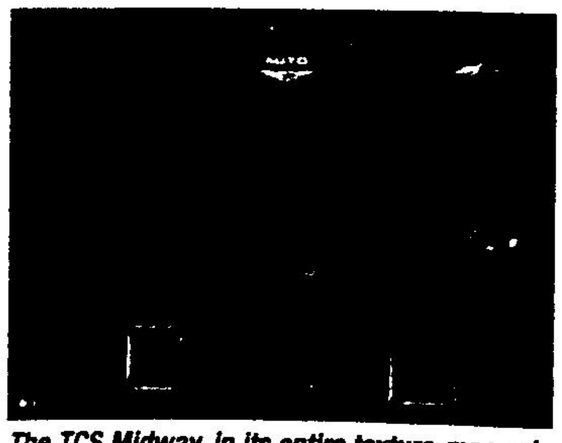
"Awesome" is too mild a word to describe *Prophecy*'s lush visuals. How does "supercalifragilistically spectacular" sound? Origin's aging RealSpace graphics engine (last seen powering many of Origin's flight sims) has finally been put in dry-dock. In its place stands the Vision engine—a 32-bit SVGA engine capable of rendering some of the most intense visuals ever seen in a space-combat sim. Texture-mapped, light-sourced polygons adorn the starscape, with alien ships turning and burning. While Origin tossed in a software renderer, it's only when you pipe *Prophecy* through Direct3D or Glide that it truly shines. Many of the special effects, such as the shock wave explosions, lens flares, colored lighting, and alpha-blended sprite glows and shield effects, scream for attention but the details make themselves known only after you've played a few missions. The polygon cockpit that shakes violently when hit, the Glide-specific nebulous starfields, and the color Communications video (a first for the series) are among the many cool nuances. The Vision engine is capable of on-the-fly detail-level adjustment, resulting in silky smooth 24fps on a 3Dfx-enhanced P200. Even with a massive capital ship and a couple of bogies in full view, the frame rate hardly wavers—the only time it chokes is when many visual effects are active at once.



Prophecy *uses the shockwave explosion to full effect—is it live, or is it Memorex?*



Line these aliens up and tear into them with a blast of hot plasma death.



The TCS Midway, in its entire texture-mapped polygon glory.

And those cap ships are huge—your own super carrier, the TCS Midway, is one massive starship, complete with animated polygon turrets. Everything looks like it was ripped from an episode of *Babylon 5* and made fully playable. While smaller fighters hurtle out of control to a fiery death, the capital ships unfortunately don't die as spectacularly as in *Wing Commander IV*. It's not as bad as *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*, but we've seen better.

Despite Origin's talk of getting back to sweat-inducing gameplay and moving away from a muy grande cinematic experience spanning five CDs, there is still a great deal of FMV in *Prophecy* (enough to fill three CDs). In fact, you spend almost as much time watching FMV antics as you do jockeying around in space lighting up alien starfighters. And unfortunately, the pixelated, lossy cinematics have taken a step back in visual quality—the FMV in *Wing Commander IV* looked a helluva lot cleaner and more colorful than this drab mess. Veteran Wing Commanders will notice the lack of binary Q&A throughout the FMV—decisions made on the battlefield will determine the FMV that follows. Also, the choice to interact (or not) with fellow pilots will also determine which cinematic plays.

While some may call bunk on *Prophecy* for not shipping with its promised multiplayer capabilities, we're not holding that against Origin. After all, the *Wing Commander* experience has always been an epic, Wagnerian saga starring you as the main character, and multiplayer in this game would have cheapened the experience. You want multiplayer *Wing Commander*? Demand a sequel to *Wing Commander Armada* using the Vision Engine and wait, 'cause you're not getting it here.



Syd Mead provided his artistic vision when it came time to conjure up new alien lifeforms to destroy. The capital ships look suitably organic.

Although the FMV looks grainy when compared to previous cinematic ventures, *Wing Commander Prophecy*'s killer combo of joystick-breaking dogfights, drop-dead gorgeous graphics, and compelling storytelling makes this prophecy worth fulfilling.

—Andrew Sanchez

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