



Maybe all you need to improve your game scores is a top-notch joystick. Above, Thrustmaster's Weapons Control System — a big stick with a fistful of buttons.

You can also move the stick forward and backward to control the throttle. A switch determines the functions the buttons control, and settings are provided for most simulators. (The company continually updates the ROM, so it works with Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe and virtually all the Christmas releases.)

Thrustmaster also makes Flight Control System, which is a high-test joystick. (At \$99 it's the priciest pure stick on the market.) Set into a flat black steel box, the grip has a rugged military look and feel. Unfortunately, you really have to lean on it to bank an airplane in a simulator.

Besides the trigger-style fire button, four more buttons are on board. You can even maneuver the cone-shaped button on top of the stick as if it were a tiny second joystick. Once the developers support this feature, its four positions might be used to control the rudder or to switch cockpit views.

Like those on the Weapons Control stick, the other three buttons' functions depend on the individual game. The Thrustmaster model was even more effective than the Flightstick, but the extra \$20 on its price tag may persuade you to wait until it's more widely supported by game developers.

(The latest Chuck Yeager Air Combat and the initial release of Falcon 3.0 will support the extra buttons, and support is expected in Dynamix and Velocity products, as well.)

### The Bottom Line

In a store that kept a dozen models on the shelf and out of the boxes, I spent an hour trying them all. I settled on the CH Flightstick, not because it looks like the stick in a real jet, or because it has tactile- and audio-feedback fire buttons, but simply because with it in my hand, I scored in A-10, Yeager Air Combat, and Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe. After all, isn't that the bottom line?

*CH Products, 970 Park Center Drive, Vista, CA 92083, (619) 598-2518; IBM PC, Tandy, or compatible; requires game port; \$79.95 Flightstick/IBM PC or compatible, \$74.95 Flightstick/Tandy, \$49.95 Mach III*

*Thrustmaster, 705 Southwest Ellis, Lake Oswego, OR 97034, (503) 697-3200; IBM PC, Tandy, or compatible (Weapons Control System/AT or higher); \$99.95 Weapons Control System; \$99.95 Flight Control System*

# LEISURE SUIT LARRY 5

By Bernie Yee

Les Manley's even tackier rival is back. That man about town, that testosterone nightmare — yes, Larry Laffer's back for more punishment, more puns, and more . . . wait, this is a family magazine, isn't it?

Promptly skipping over episode 4 (aptly referred to as "The Missing Floppy Disks"), Sierra plunges into Leisure Suit Larry 5: Passionate Patti Does a Little Undercover Work, a game that, in a fit of sexual egalitarianism, lets you encounter members of the opposite sex from male or female points of view. Progress is strange, isn't it?

Now that Sierra has gone headfirst into its 256-color VGA game system, with fully digitized sound and music support, you can wallow in all sorts of PG-13 adult situations, as well as less-subtle visual metaphors for your adventuring pleasure. Larry 5 certainly takes advantage of these developments.

### Try It On

Leisure Suit Larry 5 puts two storylines on a collision course. Larry Laffer, a computer-cultural icon if there ever was one, works for a porno-entertainment company in Hollywood, while Patti wastes her musical talents in sleazy nightclubs. Behind the porno company are some organized-crime types trying to subvert the moral fiber of America through sex, rock-'n'-roll, and rap.

The Hollywood moguls are running an "America's Sexiest Home Video" contest to uncover the most hormone-driven bombshell among three finalists. In one of the game's weakest plot devices, they decide to do this surreptitiously to ensure that their "affections" stem from their libidos, not

opportunism. And who else to test these hot women than the most unsexy guy in the world, the consummate geek, Larry Laffer? Larry picks up some videotapes and a pocket-protector camcorder, and heads off to find these three Jessica Rabbit-esque babes.

Meanwhile, the FBI approaches Patti to send her on some undercover work exposing organized-crime

tasteless and the characters are out of a soft-porn film, but the action is strictly PG-13.

Most computer game players are male — a good thing, considering that *Leisure Suit Larry 5* is written from a very male point of view. And if this game mirrors game-playing society (doubtful), it's an image straight out of late-night fantasies:

since its dark-day games like *Wizard* and the *Princess*, this icon format shoves graphics adventures even further away from puzzle solving. Sierra may be positioning itself for the Sega market, but it's doing so at the sophisticated adventurer's expense. (To which the proper response should be, "You want puzzles, buy *Legend*.")

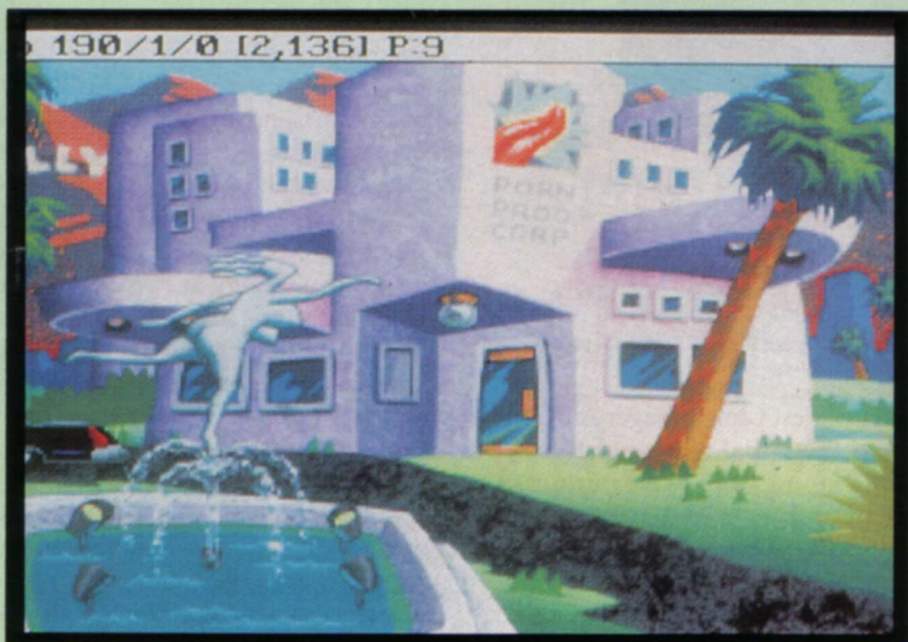
To *Larry 5*'s credit, it sports beautiful 256-color VGA illustrations, smooth animation, and a likable soundtrack. And it's certainly easy to play, even easier than the last round of *Space Quest*. The toughest puzzle is Larry's Atlantic City foray — everything else is solvable on the first or second time through. *Larry 5* is user friendly too. It'll suggest that you save the game at certain key moments and won't let you continue without accumulating the proper items. (A free tip: Write down all the numbers, phone and otherwise, that you find.)

Who would have guessed that someone would publish an adventure game that you can finish in a few days? Not that the trend is evil, for by simplifying a game you can compensate by making it a bigger universe. Sierra's setting itself up for that task with its long-term CD-ROM (and now MPC) efforts.

Adventures like *Leisure Suit Larry 5* really need CD-ROM to give the genre the size and substance it deserves. Until then, *Larry 5* is a threshold product — one that takes up lots of room on your hard drive and shows you a glimpse of what a VGA-equipped PC computer can do.

*Leisure Suit Larry 5: Passionate Patti Does a Little Undercover Work* is an entertaining diversion for Sierra gamers, but it may be disappointing to anyone wrapping up a game like *Timequest*. But then again, graphics and text adventurers were always strange bedfellows.

*Sierra On-Line*, P.O. Box 485, Coarsegold, CA 93614, (209) 683-4468; IBM PC, Tandy, or compatible (10MHz 286 or faster recommended); 640K RAM; EGA, VGA; supports AdLib, Roland, Sound Blaster sound boards; \$59.95



Larry Laffer's back with more adult-rated action in *Leisure Suit Larry 5*. Above, your limo's parked outside one of the many exotic locations you'll visit as Larry (or Patti!).

connections in the music business — notably, Des Rever Records (accused of putting backwards messages in records) and P.C. Hammer, the rap star who's churning out music that encourages kids to do all sorts of bad things. After a stroll through Al Lowe's (Larry's creator) version of a James Bondian Q lab, Patti gets a tasteless clean bill of health. As it turns out (surprise!), the man behind Larry's quest for babes and the sleaze-ball behind the music business are one and the same.

*Larry 5* lets you play from both Patti's and Larry's perspectives. As you start with Larry, you must find your way to the airport, then onto a plane headed toward Miami, New York City, or Atlantic City — and the three women. After Larry completes his segment, the story shifts to Patti, who plays out her part. The jokes are

Larry gets four hot women, assuming he reaches the software's successful climax, and Patti beds at least two men (one of whom just might be that geekmeister Larry). These two make an unlikely pair.

Who cares? *Larry 5* is funny — tasteless, but funny. Al Lowe can't resist many of the classic sight gags, and leaves in a shot at V.P. Quayle (though leaves out Pee-Wee Herman).

### Sierra's Interface

The Sierra point-and-click interface is standard operating procedure for the company's games. With all its icons and next-to-nothing typing, it's delightfully simple to play. Just use the pointer to manipulate objects, speak to characters, walk to a location, or do just about anything.

Still, having been a fan of Sierra