

blackjack, "Big Six" wheel, craps and video poker. Each gambling game is competently done (again with superb graphics), although it will take a few minutes to become acquainted with the plethora of options for each one. IBM (\$49.95). Circle Reader Service #3.

Disney Software

Burbank, CA

DICK TRACY CRIMESTOPPERS PRINT KIT: In the best *Print Shop* traditions, this print-kit-on-a-theme covers the hit Touchstone movie, *Dick Tracy*. Chock full of computer graphics of Warren Beatty et al, kids can make designs for police badges, wanted posters and masks to go along with the more standard fare of greeting cards and invitations. IBM (\$19.95). Circle Reader Service #4.

MICKEY & MINNIE'S FUNTIME PRINT KIT: Don't put those coloring pens away so fast! For ages five and up, parents might want to consider a print kit which will translate into hours of children's amusement (and reams of computer paper and dozens of printer ribbons used). Mickey and Minnie have got the graphics for all occasions (holidays, sports, school, etc.) with lots of clever border designs to go with them. Posters, place mats, invitations and greeting cards go along with six different typefaces to help kids "say it all." IBM (\$19.95). Circle Reader Service #5.

Free Spirit Software

PO Box 128
Kutztown, PA 19530

SEX OLYMPICS: Free Spirit has developed an entire line of satirical (or is that satirical) adventure games pandering to frustrated libidos. In the latest installment of Brad Stallion's adventures in the "Big Thruster," Dr. Dildo has penetrated the *Sex Olympics*. The player, as Stallion, must mount up the enthusiasm to out"score" his evil nemesis before the story reaches its climax (ahem). Unfortunately for those with a liking for the lascivious, the graphics leave a lot to be desired. Amiga (\$39.95). Circle Reader Service #6.

Graphics Software Labs

7906 Moonmist Circle
Huntington Beach, CA

BACKGAMMON BY GEORGE! Get out your *Windex* because this game runs under **Microsoft Windows**. Players can adjust opponent skill levels (although the computer opponents are not particularly sophisticated), use the doubling cube,



Theme Park Mystery



The Amazing Spider-Man



ZZT - The Object-Oriented Game

vary the board set up, choose between mouse or keyboard inputs or use manually rolled dice in lieu of computer rolled dice. IBM (\$39.95). Circle Reader Service #7.

Konami

Buffalo Grove, IL

THEME PARK MYSTERY: From Europe to the US, the type of fortune-telling machine which made Tom Hanks *Big*, is back to haunt computer gamers. Magic Canyon Theme Park has been deserted, but as one's inheritance, it must be explored. The player travels through four theme worlds (like a deadly Disneyland or sinister Six Flags where everything has gone terribly awry) in order to eliminate the gremlins which haunt the park. A blend of problem-solving and arcade action are required to succeed (and a bizarre perspective on life wouldn't hurt, either). IBM, Amiga (\$49.95). Circle Reader Service #8.



Xenocide



Troika



Space Quest IV

Micro Revelations, Inc.

Reno, NV

XENOCIDE: Four kinds of arcade action are strung together in a first-class package pitting the player against the xenomorphs which occupy the moons around the home world. The action is fantastic looking in 256-color VGA, and things move *fast!* Combine this with full sound support, and the player will be honing razor-sharp reflexes in no time. For all those who said that super cartridge-level gameplay couldn't happen on a PC, they'd better take a look at *Xenocide*. IBM (\$49.95). Circle Reader Service #9.

Paragon Software

Hunt Valley, MD

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN: An arcade game with more strategy than shoot 'em up (Spider-Man, after all, does not kill people), this little brainteaser is

(Continued on page 78)

Taking a Peek

(Continued from page 8)

a league with *Lemmings*. Oh, sure, there is climbing, web-spinning and all kinds of acrobatics like that, but with Spidey's wife Mary Jane kidnapped by Mysterio, it's more than a test of wills. IBM (\$34.95). Circle Reader Service #10.

TROIKA: This package contains three of those now-famous compulsive/addictive games from the culture that brought us *Tetris*. These three arcade/strategy games (with fine graphics and sound support) are remotely linked by a science fiction storyline of galactic exploration and conquest (yeah, sure) but retain the high standards set by both *Tetris* and *Welltris*. The three games include Ivan, Metal Hearts and Rebel, each of which is as hard to stop as Rasputin was. IBM (\$34.95). Circle Reader Service #11.

Potomac Computer Systems

10406 Holbrook Drive
Potomac, MD 20854

ZZT—THE OBJECT ORIENTED GAME: Billed as the first major computer game to use object-oriented programming, this pleasant piece of shareware is truly charming. A simple to learn quest game with a bit of arcade reflex required, strategy and puzzle solving are the real keys to the "keys" required for success. Playable in four or sixteen color (or monochrome), *ZZT* not only boasts an easy, yet challenging game, but also a construction set! IBM (\$14.95, including shipping). Circle Reader Service #12.

Sierra

Coarsegold, CA

SPACE QUEST IV: ROGER WILCO AND THE TIME RIPPERS: The status line reads "Space Quest XII," but Roger Wilco is definitely in the right time continuum in this sequel to his award-winning space romps. This latest epic is resplendent with over 100 hand-painted and digitized 256 color VGA screens. The sound board support is superb with over one megabyte of music and sounds. With surprising animations, unbridled humor, and an intense introduction sequence, *Space Quest IV* rivals anything that Sierra has produced thus far. After the introduction, Roger is thrown through time, into the world of Space Quest VII, with the Sequel Police on his heels bent on making this the last adventure for our hero. Will they succeed? IBM (\$59.95). Circle Reader Service #13. **CSW**

Abstracts From *The Journal of Computer Game Design*

(Continued from page 38)

Synthetic Creations

by Chris Crawford (*Balance of the Planet* and *The Global Dilemma: Guns & Butter*)

Crawford shared an idea for creating synthetic languages with seeming coherence. Observing that computer scientists had tried to create a synthetic Shakespeare by creating frequency tables based on how many times letters and letter combinations occurred in the entire Shakespearean corpus (i.e. "e" occurred x% of the time, "ef" occurred y%, etc.), Crawford hired a typist to input a huge index from a scholarly book about Central Asia. Then, he created a similar frequency table for Mongol and Turkish names from that index. He wrote a Pascal program of 150 lines to spew out names from the frequency table and generated *phony* (or perhaps, we should say "phoneme") names like: Kabinongot, Yushin, Kamangri, Bakirksh, Ogalymanus, Malda, etc. They may not be actual words/names, but they are all pronounceable and they have a coherency not always found in literature and game universes. Chris observed that the technique might even be protracted to include two-dimensional frequency tables for certain types of images (maps, for example). The article was remarkable for demonstrating an additional tool for world-building.

Chris Crawford's First Computer Game

by Chris Crawford

In one article, Crawford reminisced about his first computer game design. It was a tactical armored game, written in FORTRAN. He obviously didn't sell any copies, since there weren't too many IBM

1130 machines in the basements of wargamers. Nevertheless, the machine had 16K of RAM and Crawford input and received data on a *Selectric* teletypewriter.

Crawford took a set of maps from the **Avalon Hill** boardgame, *Panzer Leader* and some lead miniatures of tanks. He placed the maps and miniatures next to the computer. Then, the computer would print out coordinates of events and Crawford would move the tanks around the map to reflect the changes dictated by the computer referee.

The game featured a data structure in RAM so that the program could figure its way through a hexgrid map. The program used a primitive fog of war to figure line of sight and let players know what they could see or not see. There were no graphics or sounds, simply the algorithms for determining events and providing an artificial opponent.

Crawford readily admitted that the AI was not very good. He compensated (as, alas, many designers still do) by giving the computer opponent a 2:1 numerical superiority.

The game's programming was initiated in May 1976 and was actually running in September of the same year. In December of 1976, Crawford set up a wargame convention at the community college in Nebraska where he was teaching physics. He unveiled the game for thirty of the attendees during that convention and watched delightedly as his program, *Wargy I* defeated several of the experienced gamers.

Long-time gamers will recognize many of the elements in *Wargy I* that became *Tanktics*, a computer-assisted boardgame, from **Avalon Hill Microcomputer Games**. **CSW**

Conversions Received

Gunboat (Accolade) Amiga
Chuck Yeager's Advanced Flight Trainer 2.0 (Electronic Arts) Amiga
Bill Elliott's NASCAR Challenge (Konami) Nintendo
Awesome (Psygnosis) Atari ST

Lemmings (Psygnosis) Atari ST
King's Quest I (Sierra) Amiga
Mixed-Up Mother Goose (Sierra) MS-DOS CD ROM
Quest for Glory II (Sierra) Amiga
Space Quest III (Sierra) Macintosh
Stellar 7 (Sierra) Amiga