

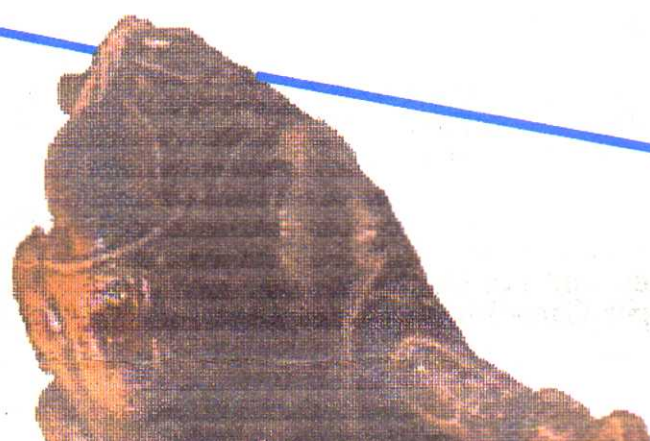
Wild Cat!



JAGUAR™

Ready for Battle™

The Jaguar is on the move once again, but so are his enemies. Now he must move quickly, attack bravely, and fight ferociously to become the victor. Else he will be beaten back, retreat, and fade away into obscurity. But if he wins the many battles ahead of him, a glorious future awaits the Atari Jaguar....



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Phil,

I am writing to you because I am sitting here in Edison, NJ in a state of limbo not knowing who to trust anymore. For all I know, right now, Atari may be preparing to announce the death of the Jag. On the other hand, they may be waiting patiently (like I should be) to release a flood of software to the public. I've spoken with employees at Software Boutique (one of the better Jag retailers in NJ) and they claim that Atari has pushed back all releases to November only to re-release the Jag at that time with a few new games. What happened to the more than 30 titles that are near completion for the summer CES show?!

I think rumors like these (true or false) are really hurting the Jag unnecessarily by scaring away millions of potential customers. Atari is in a very fortunate position in the technology race and they should take advantage of that. I mean there won't be anything that runs as well as the Jag until at least the Saturn. This is the time for Atari to strike and it appears that they are sitting on their hands. I don't want to get into software development discussions because I am lacking in knowledge of those procedures, but doesn't logic dictate that if some 30 games have been under development for months now that in some near future date we will see these games in stores eventually.

All I hear from sources is that the Jag has already or will go belly-up this year; CNBS reported on rumors in the stock market that Jag is a flop and sinking further. I have also read that Jag in Canada is no more. You wouldn't even know that Software Etc. and Toys R US carry the Jag unless you asked an informed employee.

That is why I write to you, Phil. Years ago, my father was a consultant for Warner Communications which owned Atari so I was in on all the secrets and pre-released software but not anymore. I am relying on you and your cool 'zine for information. I can't even read about the Jag in the big game mags anymore because they have been ignoring it (or maybe Atari has been ignoring it's public) for the past few months.

But as I said I am in limbo which means I can't make any predictions for the Jag yet. There is still a bit of hope in me that thinks Atari will pull it through. So right now I am seeking any and all information concerning Atari and it's Jaguar. UNTIL I know I will simply wait. After all, I'm not going to do something crazy like buy a 3Dzero.

P.S. I hear that Panasonic is developing an advanced 3DO system to screw over all their customers that forked out \$700 for the first piece of junk.

Waiting in limbo, Craig Schober

Dear Craig,

Where is this Limbo place? It sounds weird. No Jaguars in Canada? Atari announcing the death of the Jaguar? Jag belly-up?? This all sounds kinda strange to my ears, like an alternate dimension in which Jaguars float upside down.

Wait a second....New Jersey?? That's kind of scary. I hope you don't believe all that stuff! Computer-store employees are notoriously uninformed. I remember when I went to buy the Lynx. They said not to, because "The Super GameBoy is coming out in a few months anyway...". Well, the Super GameBoy finally did come out, about 5 years after they predicted, and I would really be a fool if I had bought that piece of junk.

Well, I can guarantee you one thing: Atari is **not** going to announce the death of the Jaguar (even if it does "die", which is a concept I don't quite understand anyway). And they're not sitting on their hands (or their butts). You can be sure they're furiously working, trying to finish, release, and advertise all the long-awaited games. And there are tons of them, and they are coming. And even if Atari went belly-up, as you put it, we would still get some new games from the hundreds of developers that Atari has working on Jaguar games.

But the truth is Atari is far from bankruptcy, and although there was that little stock-market manipulation by Dorfman on CNBC, Atari is in quite a nice position financially. They still have \$35 million or so set aside for Jag publicity this Fall. Have you seen the new AvP ad? It's cool, very slick. And it grabs you. I think Atari is really going to grab the public's attention and the Jag is going to be a huge seller at Xmas (Atari might not even have enough Jags to sell, causing a Cabbage Patch effect). Anyway, you can be assured that these weird rumors are just that. New games are showing up every week. Stop worrying and go have some fun! 'cya later - P.P.

Phil,

...my next questions has to do with the issue you sent me (volume 2, issue 4). When giving the Jaguar stats, you did not say how many polygons per-second the Jag could do. Is that stat even important? It would seem to me that MIPS would be more important.

No one I've spoken to is certain about the amount of polygons per second that the Jaguar can handle. It doesn't have any dedicated processors for handling 3-D objects, so the speed would therefore be determined by the programming of Tom & the object processor. Estimates vary from 10,000 per second to 100,000. It depends on whether you are doing it in true-color mode, high-resolution, etc. The stat is actually very important for 3-D games (or games that use 3-D objects). It determines how big & how fast the 3-D environment can be. Cybermorph is a good example, because you can see that they reduced the rendering area (you can see the "edge" of the game, where mountains sometimes "pop" into existence). With better programming techniques, we can expect better 3-D games. The Jag II supposedly improves upon the Jaguar with better 3-D processors, but this machine probably won't be released - more likely it will be limited to an add-on or a chipset used in 3-D game cartridges. By the way, you're absolutely right that MIPS is vastly more important - it determines how much the computer can do at one time and is not specifically limited to one type of thing (like 3-D rendering).

Next question, what is the Falcon? I've never heard of it. When you spoke about MPEG, you said it was not as high quality as Laser Disc. Does MPEG have better quality than VHS? On Page 5 you speak about getting a beta version of A vs. P. What is a beta version? How do you get one? I already asked about the Falcon, what's the ST & Portfolio?

Read and learn, Andy! The Falcon, ST, and Portfolio are Atari's computer systems. The Falcon is a nifty, 32-bit, musician's computer that has great graphics and incredible sound. The ST is their old 16-bit system that made history back in '85 as being a cheap, color, Macintosh-like computer. PCs didn't catch up to the graphic capability of the ST until 1990. The Portfolio is a tiny little PC-compatible "palmtop" computer that fits in your pocket. It has a bunch of built-in programs like a spreadsheet, word processor, calendar, etc. but can also load and run text-based PC software and other programs built specifically for it. It's very nifty.

MPEG is not as high quality as either a laser disc or VHS because it is a compressed video format used by computers. It eliminates "unneeded" pixels and color information to speed processing and save disk space (for games, this allows more, bigger, and faster video). I have an MPEG player for my Falcon, and it is pretty darn good quality for a computer! I guess in the future, when hard drives have infinite size and everyone has a gigabyte of memory we won't need compression schemes - the computers will be able to handle every pixel and still do 30 frames-per-second. But until that day, MPEG is king.

Software makers usually release 3 versions of a game or software: Alpha, Beta and Gamma. The alpha version is a 50% version to show off the concepts of the game. Beta versions are usually released to beta-testers or as demos on the Net. Betas are about 95% done and fully functional, but are usually buggy and have rough edges that the beta-testers are supposed to help identify and suggest alternatives to. The Gamma version is the final version, released to the public. On cartridge systems, the Gamma can have no bugs or when it goes into production all the cartridges are permanently errored (on disk-based software, they can usually release a "fix" that updates the game). AvP was held back 1 weekend longer than it should have because the Alien Queen's behavior routines were buggy. It turned out I wasn't able to get a beta from Atari (those cheapskates), but I got to play it at the Connecticut Atarifest anyway.

In Tidbits you mention that Blockbuster has old Jaguar games for sale for \$12. The only games that are available here in Omaha are Cybermorph, Trevor McFur, Dino Dudes, Raiden, T2000 and Wolf-3D. Are there more in your parts? Do all Blockbusters in your area carry Jag games? None in my town do. I'm going to check with one of them and see if they will order them for me. Lastly, before I go, I have something to add. My younger brother subscribes to Nintendo Power. I read their report on the Summer CES. While hyping Donkey Kong Country, they referred to Sega, 3DO, and Atari as cowardly. Sega? O.K. 3DO? Fine. Atari? No way. I proceeded to write them a nasty 4 page letter, and I informed them that Ultra 64 would never see the inside of my home. After reading your CES report, sounds like Atari put on a strong showing and was not "cowering in the shadows". Nuff said. - Andy Perry

Yeah, those are the games they have. They were getting rid of Trevor, Raiden, and Dino Dudes for \$12 each. Remember that the Jaguar has been out a year in my area (the San Francisco area). I think distribution will improve in the rest of the country gradually, with time. It is too bad that Atari has made so many enemies in the press - it may prove to be the Jaguar's downfall. All this negative press after time may dampen the public's acceptance of the Jag. Anyway, Nintendo Power is supposed to put down their opponents. And I'm supposed to put down Atari's opponents. So here I go: Why don't you burn that flaming Nazi peice of shot of a mag and tell Nintendo to go to bloody frickin' ell! How was that :-)? Cya later - P.P.

Tidbits: Truth and Nothing But

One stupid guy in a video game store actually said: "I'm gonna sell my Genesis so I can buy the 32X!"

The Jaguar is already being used in arcade games by Time Warner Interactive (a new combo of the companies that used to be Atari Games, Taito, etc.) The first game to showhouse the Jag's power is a silly (but cool) dinosaur fighting game called.....yep....*Primal Rage*. After it has out-lived its arcade life it will appear for the Jag home unit next year.

300,000 Jags have been produced this year. Will it satisfy the appetite of the world, or only whet its hunger? Buy a coupla' extra ones just in case of a shortage. \$-)

I figured "It's All Relative" software. You see, it's a family business. The dad does the marketing, the son does the programming, and the daughter does the sound effects. How cute.

Anybody else want a "Lynx Stynx" column? Nah, everything about the Lynx is cool. Except the fact that mine tend to blow up every 6 months or so. Yep - I'm going on my seventh Lynx now, after a fatal cigarette-lighter adapter problem on the way to Q-Zar.

Have ya' played Q-Zar? It's a very cool, psychedelic, laser-tag battle game in a weird neon arena with rave music right out of T2K blasting your eardrums and black lights, invisible gases, and nasty lasers blasting your eyeballs. You gotta play it to believe it.

Do you understand the symbolism of the Jaguar commercials? Why are the students adults? Is the teacher the same lady who did the voice for the Falcon talking clock? We may never know.

Well, I bought a triple-speed CD-ROM drive for \$380. Now there's a quadruple-speed one for the same price. So it goes.

That's it for tidbits this month. If you want to talk to me, I'm located in cyberspace in the hot-tub on Lambda-MOO (drinking A & Ws, of course). Or you could just email me at: sccoe@ucscb.ucsc.edu.

POWER TIPS

To get unlimited weapons in Cybermorph for the Jag, hold down: 1, 3, 5, 7, 8 and 9 on the options screen.

To get to the music test screen in Wolf-3D, press the # key while the ID/Atari ball is spinning. When you get to the menu, pick any song from the game!

If the music test doesn't thrill you, try God mode for Wolf-3D on Jag. Type 4668 on the keypad during the level to get invincibility. Other codes you can type in: 4786 - go to next level, 4996 - you get all weapons & 999 ammo, 4887 - Debug mode?? Weird....

Just one more trick for Wolf-3D. Type 1,3,7 and 9 on the game select screen to go to the hidden level (you can also get there via a secret elevator on level 6, I believe).

If there's nothing better to do, play Cybermorph! Kill the worms by backing up and dropping mines. Boom - boom -boom. Or get the pods out of the spikes by lining it up with front view, then switching to side-view to line up the other axis.

In Raiden, during a fight with a boss, push PAUSE. Hold down down 1,4,7,3,6, and option. Now use your tongue to un-pause. You now have unlimited lives!

Cool!

ALIEN VS. PREDATOR

Well, I finally played this hot game. After a year of hype, this game had my fingers shaking but that was nothing compared to the chills I got later on. This is one scary game; play it alone at night and you'll freak.

Unfortunately, I only got to play the human marine character, and it was only a beta version of AvP. Still, it was looking and feeling very polished. I can't wait to get my own copy (or maybe 2 or 3)!

There was cool, scary, atmospheric music with freaky sounds in the distance. The space station is really an incredible feat; everything is rendered with high-res, detailed graphics complete with lighting and shadows. But what actually impressed me the most were the large and realistic weapons (and your hands holding them) that moved so realistically as you walked around (with a neat sway). It looks very cool when you put away one weapon and wield another.

So the graphics are well done, but we've known that for a year. The actual game, though, was a surprise. It is so suspenseful, not just continuous action like in Doom. More importantly, it actually feels like you are moving around in the space station. You will definitely get the shivers when you wander into alien territory, where everything is slimed over, or when you take a trip through one of those claustrophobic air ducts. Hooh.

But when it came right down to the actual gameplay, it somehow seemed so easy. A coupla' blasts and the aliens bit it with a big splurt of greenish blood. The aliens looked cool and all, but were still kind of low-res when they get close.

JAGUAR ROCKS!

As to the Predator(s), well - I didn't see any - but that doesn't mean they weren't there! heh...

Supposedly, when you play the actual game from the start, the human actually starts off quite weak with only a few weapons. The Predator, on the other hand, starts loaded with all sorts of cool devices including infared viewer. And the Alien? Well, he doesn't get anything but his claws and teeth, but it's balanced out by his speed. Plus, since the aliens control (i.e. infest) the air ducts, those act like as a kind of "expressway" for the Alien character.

I don't know. I was thinking about this game in terms of arcade aspects and multiplayer connectivity. And then it turns out to be a solo-player adventure game instead! Yes, there is actually a plot and a goal for each character (for the human: destroy the Alien Queen and escape). I'm sure I could really get into this game, but once I win it with all three characters...then what?

If they had included extra multiplayer scenarios and used the JagNet (like...you & all your friends could be a huge Alien horde and go after a single human player, played by your best friend), it would have given the game lasting appeal. It could've been the game of the decade! But, we'll see - I guess I'm going to "be forced" to review this game again when it finally comes out (for a more complete look). Yep - I admit it...I'm hooked. AvP rules!

Wolfenstein-3D

Compared to AvP, this is Pong. But if you can't wait for AvP for the ultimate maze-shoot-em-up, get this one. It's darn good - way faster and more detailed than the PC version.

I played this game with the Catbox installed and headphones in my ears. It was amazingly immersive. The 3-D environment and the stereo sound really convince you that you're walking around in a German castle, with enemies around every corner and behind every door. You can hear doors open and close behind you, and you hear distant shouts and voices off to one side or the other.

But it's the same old game. A trifle less blocky than the PC version, with a few new levels and weapons like that wicked flame-thrower. If you never played the PC version, then by all means get this one. Otherwise, the only reason to get it is the cool stereo sound. That alone may be worth it (yes, it's that cool).

My main complaint about the Wolfenstein games (and this one in particular), is the general trend from stealth and strategy toward mindless violence and mayhem. In the original Wolfenstein games, you know back in the good ol' days: the 80's :-)> the Wolfenstein games were adventure games where you had to figure out the maze, get the keys, and outwit the

SPORTS

guards by avoiding them, wearing a Nazi uniform to get by them, or even holding them up with an empty gun in order to get their ammo. It was really fun - they even saluted you when you wore the SS uniform. And when the real SS did come after you, you were scared. You didn't just stand there and blast away at them.

There were bullet-proof vests, grenades, stairs, maps - all that good stuff. And the game was really tilted against you, not towards you - ammo was always in short supply and if you killed too many guards a huge patrol of SS would come and you were doomed. It was cool.

In this latest rendition of the game, there is no stealth whatsoever. You can never sneak up on a guard - the game doesn't let you. The guards always face you (did they do that to save memory?) so you can never stab them in the back. In fact, you can never even use your knife unless you're out of ammo.

So the 3-D element is cool. The graphics are really fast (way too fast in some people's opinion at 60 frames per second). Graphics are getting better as time passes, but it seems to me like the actual gameplay is getting worse.

Brutal Sports Football

I don't get this game. What were they trying to do? It is a British game, so maybe

they really meant soccer. But what this game really plays like is a strange mix of tournament cyberball and medieval rugby, complete with bearded vikings wearing cyber-suits. Oh yes.

This is supposedly the start of a series of games by Tele-games. They had better get their act together for the next ones. This game looks like a cheap SNES game, and plays like one too. And as if that weren't enough, it costs \$70!?!

It is pretty fun. The basic premise is that you are supposed to move whichever man you're controlling to either sack the guy who has the ball, or run toward the other team's goal and try to throw it in. But it soon becomes apparent that scoring goals isn't the real objective, killing the other team's players is! Really - killing 6 of the enemy players gives you an automatic win!

So it is really a free-for-all hackfest, and quite a bloody one too. The blood and violence contrast quite strongly with the "cutesy" graphics and the childish objects - like the turtles and rabbits which slow down or speed up your player, respectively. There are other items to increase the mayhem too, like swords and grenades (and wimpy shields).

This is a pretty complete game, with player customization (buff up their stats, etc.). It's pretty fun with two players. But wait until the price goes down to about \$30, don't waste your hard-earned cash.

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LYNX'ED OUT!!!!

Okay, here are those reviews (finally) that I promised you two issues ago. Yes, it's hard to believe, there are Lynx games I have not reviewed in the past 5 years....

Jimmy Connors' Tennis

Ignore that sign over there, this game does not stink - it rocks! Look, it's got great graphics, perfect digitized speech, and tons of options and play value. This is a rad game - the only question is if you can get by the awkward control scheme.

Tennis games are invariably hard to control. The easiest ones to play are fake and feel limited. The harder ones to play (this being among them) include strange boxes that appear and tell you where to stand, and include pushing strange buttons to do what you want your guy to do.

Those boxes sure are weird. I mean, supposedly they tell you what type of shot you can make from what position, but they flash and are very distracting. Luckily, you can turn them off. That's the cool thing about this game - it has a bunch o' options. You can play at whatever level you want, or try to battle your way up through the country club's roster. It's pretty fun and involving, with passwords to save your position and all. It's just a matter of whether you can get past the initial learning curve.

So give this game a shot. It is by far the most professionally-produced game ever made for the Lynx.. It's by the same people who made Awesome Golf (Hand-Made Software), but they replaced the chipmunk in this one with luvable-old Jimmy Connors. He welcomes you as you "arrive" at the club, and gives you tips afterward. An irritating lady calls out the score after each point. It's very cool, very slick, and very hard. A good game all-around.

Lynx Games Continued.....

Desert Strike

This game would've been a big hit if it had made it out during the Gulf War. But they missed the boat, and thus this great game is doomed to obscurity, like so many recent Lynx games.

This game is fun! It's like G.I. Joes with cooler explosions! But not only does it have senseless violence and big kablooes, it has that strategic element that will keep you coming back again and again.

**This game is fun!
It's like G.I. Joes with cooler
explosions!**

The graphics are cool, of course. Everything is on an "epic" scale, with little men and buildings and tanks all out to get ya'. The realism factor is actually quite amazing; your helicopter flies and turns gracefully and realistically. There is a map with radar and information screens that show you what you're supposed to blow up, what you might want to blow up if you have time, and what isn't a good idea to blow up. Consulting this thing often, like in Steel Talons, is essential to winning.

Come to think of it, this game is very much like Steel Talons. The only real difference is the viewpoint (third person perspective instead of first-person). Steel Talons is a wannabe flight simulator, while Desert Strike is a wannabe military simulator. The goal is the same: fly around on a map and destroy targets.

But I must say that Desert Strike is by far more fun. Perhaps it's the interface that is instantly recognizable and intuitive (instead of having to do keypad-button combos), or the clear and swift bitmapped graphics. Yes, but even more importantly, you are much more free in this game. You can fly around and explore, in fact you must, to discover which attack plan is the best. You can complete your objectives in any order, and there are secret and subtle bonuses to be found. Compare that to Steel Talons', which has beeping arrows pointing the direction you are

supposed to go and mission time limits of 2:00 and less. Insane! This game is more realistic than that, so I guess it is a better simulation after all.

It doesn't have as much variety as Steel Talons (in terms of night missions, canyon runs, etc.) but what the game tries to do, it does well. There are ocean segments, cities, desert barracks, mountains, and more.

This game is another example of excellent Lynx programming. We are finally seeing some mature Lynx games that fully take advantage of this cat's capabilities and effectively minimize it's weaknesses (the low resolution, for instance, is not noticeable at all in this game even though everything is tiny!)

This version is just as good, if not better, than the Genesis version. This game proves it can be done. Now all we need are more games of this caliber, and the Lynx will regain it's throne as rightful ruler of the portable gaming world.

Super Skweek

This is a slightly old but very entertaining game. If you don't want to worry about a plot or silly things like that but just want classic arcade action, try this one out.

You are Skweek. You paint tiles pink. Or blue (I can't seem to tell the difference anyway). You see, the king is sad and you must make him happy by turning the tiles to another color, or rescuing what look like captured princesses to my untrained eye.

Anyway, it's basically "Pac-Man with a gun". It's a very cute game with lots of fuzzy little creatures that come after you and has all the twists we come to expect in arcade games: monster generators, disappearing floors, teleporters, shops, triggers, weapon powerups and more.

It's an overhead game, with a map selection screen where you choose which island you want to start on. You "zoom in" on the island you want to

play (there are also some secret levels if you zoom in in certain areas). But this zooming part is really cheap because it is so low-res; i.e. zooming closer doesn't reveal any hidden details, just amplifies what is already there until it is undistinguishable pixels.

The actual levels are kinda large (they are larger than the screen and scroll around). The graphics are cartoony, but this makes it hard to tell "what is what" at first. One feature that surprised me was the inclusion of quasi-three-dimensionality to the map in sections that are higher up or lower down than others. There is actually a ton of variety to the levels: you will see weapons, special effects, and enemies that remind you of a dozen other arcade games, mostly classic 80's games.

There are cute cartoony sequences; a unique password system for a limited amount of "save games", and blaring, awful music.

This is a fun game. You can pick it up and just start playing, which is something that the majority of games nowadays seem to be lacking. It's good for kids because it's cute and rather non-violent, and it's good for the rest of us because it starts easy and gets challenging quickly. It is a good arcade game that builds on and combines facets from tried-and-true arcade classics.

Magic: The Gathering

Just a quick filler about this oh-so-cool card game. I've been playing it since it first came out last year, and it continues to amuse me. Don't be fooled by Newsweek's interpretation: you can make cool "cheap" decks that kick butt and don't cost much (another alternative is to make color copies of those rare and hard-to-find cards!).

Anyway, MAGIC is now a mainstream-thing. Try it out. Check out *rec.games.deckmaster*. Use a Tim to poke your opponent to death!

THE TEMPLE OF THE FALCON



Upgrading the Falcon

Raw computing power is what everyone wants, right? Well, the Falcon can be mighty powerful indeed, especially with the **Barracuda** power-up board. This board allows the addition of a 68040 CPU (the same one used in the Medusa) to double or quadruple your speed (your wallet's choice). But even more amazing is that the Barracuda also allows for an optional 386 board and/or a video capture board. This 3-in-1 setup will make your Falcon ultimate, and will probably only set you back a coupla grand or three. The catch is: to fit all these cool expando-gadgets in your Falcon, you have to buy a new case, and it's rather ugly. But then again, the normal grey Falcon is a rather grim sight already, isn't it?

Memory helps, too. I recently upgraded my Falcon to 16 megabytes (14, really, but I won't get into that). It's quite easy with the **RAM Gizmo**, but installing this ram board requires getting rid of the internal speaker. Rats - the sound quality from that thing was so crystal clear, too! Anyway, if you can find a good deal on SIMMs this will allow you to multitask & use tons of DA's and ram drives.

Application Software

Instead of spending thousands of dollars on speed, I would suggest that you buy thousands of dollars worth of software. It's much more entertaining, and although your computer will still be slow, that'll be okey - after all, you'll have all those software manuals to read!

Sure, the Falcon is naturally a powerful beast. But that is not what distinguishes it in

the work place. It is the quality of the software, brought to us by companies which have honed their interface to perfection after 9 years of experience in the ST field and combined with the raw power of the Falcon.

The fastest growing Atari product, CD-ROM, is becoming more mature daily. **Photo Show Pro** is rounding out slowly to become quite a versatile and powerful product. It will load and display pictures off of a Kodak CD-ROM drive, and will allow you to put these pictures together into a professional presentation including music, fades, mixing, sound effects, manual control (for slide-show presentations)...even animations.

It can also load pictures off of the hard drive and overlay SpeedoGDOS text over the image. With all this, it is a snap to quickly put together a slideshow: you just pick your pictures, sounds and musics from the proper directories in the order you want them to appear, and specify what effect (fade-in, roll-down, etc.) you want to use.

The product does have many rough edges, though. Example: to combine effects (black screen with a shutter fade-in, for instance) you have to add the "numbers" of the effect and type then in. And if you make a mistake in the order of the pictures, you have to go back later with a text editor (not included) and fiddle around with it. They need to work on their interface, basically. But the power to be a wannabe-yuppie is all there. And unlike yuppie programs for a SGI machine, this program is only \$40.

Next month, a look at drawing programs and photo manipulation...maybe even some desktop video stuff (if I have the \$\$\$). 'cya!

Conneticut Atarifest '94

Downtown Bridgeport is a charming example of the East-Coast city urban-decay phenomenon. It is like a huge ghost-town, with only a few young hoodlums and old drunks wandering the streets. Overall, a rather jolly nice place. And the Bridgeport Hilton, site of this year's Atarifest, was a rather lavish affair. Emerging from its doors were wild-haired people, all covered head-to-toe in clothes saying "Jaguar", "64-bit", "Interactive Multimedia" and other techie words. I knew I was in the right place. However, the hotel was quite large and it took me several minutes of wandering through the hallways before I found the huge ballroom where the conference was being held.

Advertised as the "Larget Atari Show in the Universe", it was slightly disappointing to find the number of people to be in the hundreds, not the hundreds of thousands. But then again, they had warned you to check your temporal dimension...Universes do vary, after all.

What amazed me was that there was a visible split through the Atari community. There were those along one end of the fest who were the "traditional" computer users. Along here were booths selling parts to repair your computer, upgrade boards, and tons of productive software like graphical programs from Lexicor and various music sequencers and MIDI stuff. It was very fascinating once you sat down and checked out their stuff, but it lacked a certain flair.

The flair was coming from the other side of the Atari community - the gaming side. There was a large Jaguar section, the obligatory TOAD booth, and the too-loud MajicSoft booth. And stores like Micro Computer Depot had tons of old & new, European & domestic ST games of all types. I picked up several during the last moments of the show (when the prices dropped from \$15 to \$5 then \$4 and \$3). I bought 4 old games at \$3 each and 3 of the 4 were good, and one (a French game called Psyborg) is just too cool. Anyway, for \$12 how can you lose? Well, you actually can because the price dropped down to \$2 a few moments later!

Besides rampant commercialism, I did manage to learn quite a bit. The various company representatives were very helpful and somewhat informed, and I caught two of the seminars (I missed the others due to an hmmh...important Jaguar competition). The most interesting seminar was given by Joe Mirando of STReport magazine. His basic point was that Atari doesn't even care about bringing out products or supporting their systems. Their goal is to make money, and the easiest way to do that is in the stock market. According to Joe, Atari just uses vaporware tactics to manipulate their own stock. His example: Last year Atari stock was down to less than 1. But after the announcement and release of the Jaguar, it shot up to about 12 in a few months. He calculated that the Tramiel family could easily have made 10 million dollars with this deal.

Well, after his chilling seminar, I went off to enjoy the show! I saw tons of products (some of which are reviewed in the Jaguar & Falcon sections) and met tons of new Atarians including Dave & Jennifer Troy (of Toad fame). Well, let me get on with it and tell ya' what I saw:

Catbox: Really cool! I love the little LED cat eyes that light up when it's on. This thing is powerful and will probably become THE add-on for the Jaguar. It has a jillion ports, but does stick out off the back of the Jag a bit farther than I thought it would. But it's worth it. This thing has two phone jacks (what for?), two headphone jacks, an RS232 port for a modem, and ports for any type of monitor you want to hook it up to. I played Wolf-3D on this thing using an Atari SC1224 monitor, and boy was it crisp and clear using RGB! Plus, with the stereo headphones on it was like a whole new experience (read my W3D review for info). Cool!

Star Battle: I'm still not sure about the name on this one. I played an EPROM version of this, and it was pretty pathetic but showed promise. You could look at the 30+ ships available (all goerring-shaded), and fly around in a static universe. Enemy ships just floated there, and the

controls were very sluggish. Nonetheless, it looked promising - they have all the ship statistics and navigation working in a three-dimensional environment, and provision for a ton of possible players at one time. This game will be great with the JagLink / JagNet / whatever.

TrueImage: This is an entry-level photo-manipulation program by the same people who brought us TruePaint. That means: A) Supports Falcon graphics - that's good, B) Is really slow and buggy - that's bad. It was kinda funny too, because they were running it on a developer's version of Falcon with TOS 4.02. To make up for it, they loaded in TOS 4.04 off of disk! This resulted in some very weird rainbow errors. Not a clever idea for the show, in any case. But the software looked very powerful (especially at the price ~\$70), and the "magic wand" masking function was truly awesome. You just "click" on an object, and if the colors are contrasted - there's your mask!

Ultra Vortex - This was a silly MK clone. The animation was truly jerky, the music was awful at this point. The backgrounds were totally cool, with incredible 3-D parallex effects. Unfortunately, this actually detracted from the characters because they blended in. They need to use light-and-dark contrast better. The voices were truly cool but the controls were truly messed. This one needs a lot of work. The Lynx version is probably better at this point!

Casumi Ninja: Compared to Ultra Vortex, this game seemed like a slick, completed project. There are these cool dungeon sequences where your character runs through a dungeon to get into the arena. When you defeat various warriors, you get keys that let you go farther. But the actual game? Well, it's a fighting game. That about says it all. Tons (gallons?) of blood fly everywhere and it forms pools on the ground that don't disappear during the battle. There was more variety in it than other fighting games I've seen - my favorite was the Native American and his village (each player has their own background).

Cubase: I don't know which version I saw (even Cubase Lite is way beyond my budget- \$250), but this thing was darn impressive. I see why Falcons are the ultimate music machine! This guy had about 16 midi tracks playing, then had a couple of vocal tracks playing on top of that, right off the hard drive. It was beyond impressive. It was beyond CD-quality. It was as if a complete band were right there.

Medusa: Yes, I saw and touched the Medusa. It was a nasty machine. It looks just like a PC, and acts just like a TT. It seems rather incompatible, though - GEMBENCH didn't work correctly! How can you get GEMBENCH not to work?!? Anyway, we did a rendering that would have taken a half an hour on my Falcon. The Medusa spit it out in 3 minutes.

VideoMaster Falcon: This seems kind of cheap. I know the Falcon can do better than greyscale, quarter-window FMV! I've seen full-screen, true-color MPEG video on the Falcon using the DSP. I would wait for a better solution, although this one seems like a complete movie studio because of its easy cut-and-paste features and the addition of soundtracks. \$160.

DA's Picture: This German program (of course) is so utterly powerful and slick. You can draw with all these cool effects right over pictures to do transparencies and add in objects, like the Death Star over Mt. Rushmore! This seems like a complete photo manipulation/art solution for \$200. Hey - they convinced me - I'm gonna get it.

Well, that's about it. I got wasted by some little kid in the Jaguar competition (I could've won another Jag too!), and talked to some people about upcoming Atari CDs. I also visited some local software stores to check out the Atari situation on the east coast. It's grim.

First of all, I called ahead to a nearby store that will remain nameless. They said they had no Jaguar stuff. I then ended up in that mall anyway and stopped by the shop. They did indeed have the Jaguar after all, but hidden in the back. And the salesman immediately tried to push the Sega CDX. He tried to dismiss the Jaguar with the "no new games" argument. I pointed out Wolf-3D and Brutal Sports Football and said, "But you just got these in last week, didn't you?" At that point he even admitted that Atari & EGM had had a huge Jaguar fair at that mall a few weeks ago, and had showed off AvP and all the hot new games. It seemed he didn't push the Jaguar because Atari didn't send him any "stuff". Hmmm. It's scary. How is anyone who even wants a Jaguar going to get through all that anti-salesmanship and buy one?

Holiday Season Preview

Hey! Break out the egg-nog, because it's gonna be one heck of a Christmas season. Compared to the dry, dry summer, we are going to have a wet blast of Jaguar games that'll knock you out. 25 games, maybe more if we're lucky, are destined to hit the shelves by the prime holiday shopping season. And that means AvP, Kasumi Ninja, Checkered Flag, and Iron Soldier will be ours to play at last! But how about the average consumer, Joe Schmoe? Atari desperately needs the Jaguar to catch on to the masses this season. They missed last season in most of the country, and they're pulling it tight again this year, delaying the games until the last moment. Yes, that's right - games like Alien vs. Predator (the big sellers) are just now going into production as I write (September 10th), which means they won't be ready until October. But the advertising barrage has already begun. On MTV, FOX, and other "hip" networks, the Jaguar commercials are hard to miss and harder to ignore with in-your-face pictures of aliens, Nazis and Indian warriors. This hype will hopefully make Jaguar a most-wanted on Christmas lists and get people to recognize that Atari is back. But, the official Atari stats state that only 300,000 Jags were made this year - is that enough? If there is demand but no supply what happens? Correct! You get the infamous **Cabbage Patch** syndrome, where parents duke it out to get the last copy for their kids. The equation is even more complicated, because thus far the Jaguar has been marketed as the only adult-oriented video game system, with the average player being twenty-something. We all know kids go goo-gah over "gross" stuff like blood & gore, but what about parent backlash? With games like Kasumi Ninja already receiving press as "more violent than MKII", will parents boycott the Jaguar? Probably not, and parent disapproval will only strengthen the appeal anyway! If Atari drops the price of the machine a bit, gets some good games out there for word-of-mouth advertising and has decent distribution I think they will do fairly well. They did fail in terms of getting the vid-mags on their side by blooming this late in the season instead of during the summer (it is now too late, due to lead-times, for the magazines to publish balanced articles on the Jaguar. Oh well. Those TV commercials are really good, even though they are the generic classroom thing, that metaphor works very well for kids, and it is the kids that Atari needs to expand their market with. If they accomplish that, it may be the rebirth of Atari. If they actually make some money, we may even see some Lynx support to go along with the Jaguar stuff. I mean, they already have games like Ultra Vortex, AvP, and BattleZone 2000 ready to release for Lynx. They just don't have the time, money, or energy to do it. But if the Jaguar is a success, we could see "baby" versions of our favorite Jaguar games (T2000 would be cool!) on the small screen....

Conclusion

It's going to be one heck of an interesting season, one way or the other. This is crunch time for Atari - it's make or break. It'll be the beginning of a new age, or the end for Atari. In any case, keep your eyes open and watch history in the making. It'll be glorious!

Game Trading

Here it is, due to popular request....yet another rendition of "The Ultimate Game Pub". This time around, I don't wanna get involved. So don't contact me, write to the guy who has the game. Suggest a trade or offer some loot.

Bruce Greenberg (at 1308 N.E. 134th St., Suite D, Vancouver Washington 98685) has the following Lynx games to trade: Checkered Flag, Blue Lightning, Pinball Jam, Pit Fighter, RoadBlasters, Rygar, Zarlol Mercenary, Hockey, Xenophobe, Baseball, Batman Returns, Gates of Zendocan, and 4 or 5 more lying around somewhere!

Jeff Logan (210 James Road, Bolivar TN 38008) has a DUO in great condition with 5 controllers and 12 games which he wants to sell for \$350. He has the Lynx games: Chess, Battlewheels, Hydra, Viking Child, Gauntlet and Baseball Heroes and am willing to sell or trade them. Respond ASAP!

Your name here: If you want your goods advertised for trading or selling, have a "want-ad" request, are trying to sell health insurance, or have a message for someone in Seattle, please send it to Phil at: 131 Dake Ave., Santa Cruz, CA 95062. It's free! It's cool! And it's free!



Until then, here are some screen shots of the upcoming hit Rayman. Yes, those are actual game screens. This game makes Donkey Kong Country look like Pong. Don't you love how Rayman's limbs just "float" there next to his body. Too cool.



I'm really sorry about the quality of the printing this month: it's really despicable. It's due to this low-quality paper I bought from Costco (a big mistake). Next month, I promise it'll be way better....

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Lingo

For all you non-techies out there, here is your guide to survival in computerland. Following are the computerese terms & abbreviations you need to know. Learn them well, my son....

SIMMs - These are the chips that provide memory storage for the computer.

RAM Drive - As RAM is faster than a hard drive or floppy, people with RAM to spare often create a fake "disk" out of it which functions on the desktop as a normal disk-drive or whatever (limited to the size of your extra memory) but is really fast.

Multitasking - Is a much sought-after feature in computer operating systems that allows them to handle multiple programs (tasks) at one time. Hence your computer could be downloading a file from the Net and rendering a 3-D image in the background....while you play Nethack. #-)

DAs - Desk Accessories, those little tiny programs that are accessible any time from the menu bar. This was the first form of multitasking on the Atari platform and is still the easiest. You can get games, calculators, even word processors and drawing progs that all run as accessories so they can be used anytime in any GEM program.

GEM - (This is going to go on forever). GEM stands for Graphical Environment Manager. This is the desktop program for Atari computers, similar to Windoze on the PCs but vastly superior.

PC - (ahem)....a Pretty Cruddy Pathetic Computer not to be brought up in Polite Conversation, if you want to be Politically Correct.

LED - Light Emitting Diodes. You know, those "little red lightbulb thingees" that are used to show if a computer is on or not.

MIDI - Musical Instrument Digital Interface, a standardized code so that computers & digital instruments can talk to each other.

Hope to be hearing from you!