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GS+ Magazine



May
June
1991

Volume 2
Number 5

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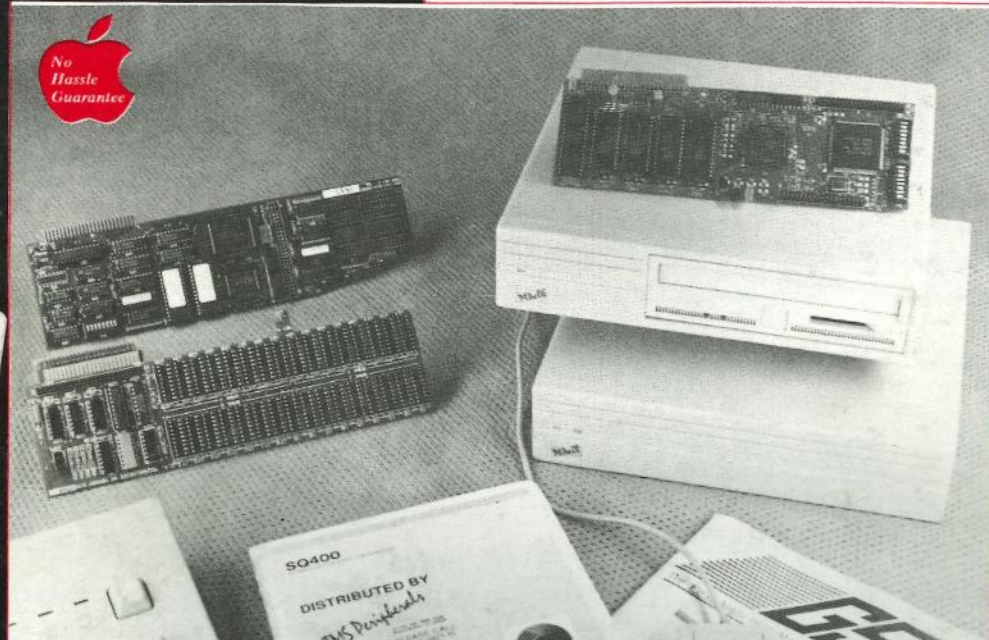
Reviews

TMS Pro R45 • RamFAST/SCSI • The HyperStuff Collection
McGee At The Fun Fair • Talking Classroom
Talking Multiplication & Division
Bouncing Bluster II • Space Shark • Transylvania III

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Volume 2, Number 5.

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Talking Multiplication And Division

Program by Richard E. Dye

Retail price: \$49 (\$59 with backup disk)
Typical mail-order price: \$38
Not copy protected
Requires 1 MB of RAM

Orange Cherry Software
Box 390 Westchester Ave.
Pound Ridge, New York 10576-0390
(800) 672-6002
(914) 764-4104

Reviewed by Greg Zimmerman

Introduction

Talking Multiplication and Division is one of the Talking Schoolhouse Series of Apple IIGS software published by Orange Cherry. It is intended to teach multiplication and division to a recommended age group of ages eight to eleven.

Details

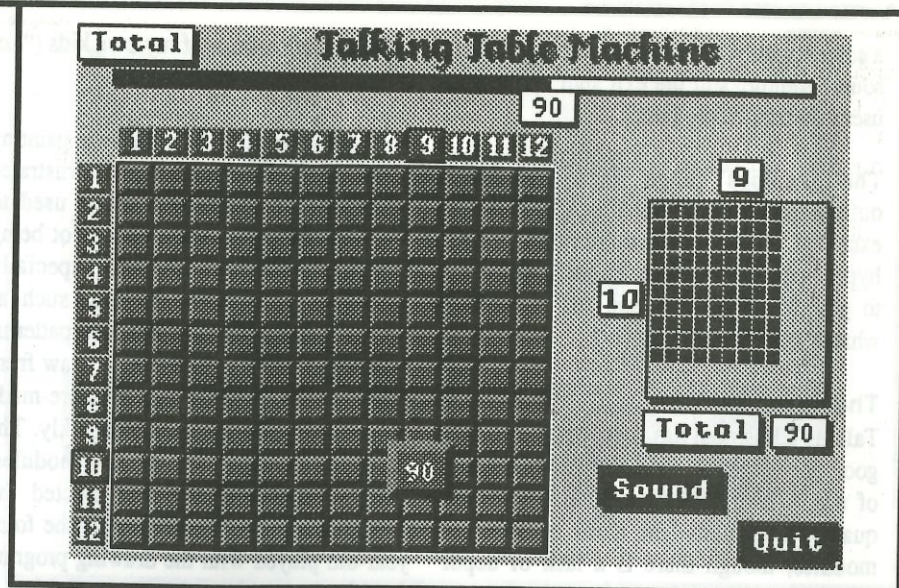
Talking Multiplication and Division comes on two 3.5-inch disks that are not copy protected. The program is hard drive installable and will run on either a ROM 01 or ROM 03 Apple IIGS. Talking Multiplication and Division is compatible with System Software v5.0.4, and is accompanied by a well-written manual which, both explains the program's features, and offers suggestions for other activities related to the program material.

The program disks are covered by Orange Cherry's lifetime replacement policy. Though the manual says different, the people at Orange Cherry say they will replace any disk that does not work if the user sends it back to the company.

Orange Cherry has supported the Apple IIGS market with more than 20 software offerings. They have a toll-free number for users to call for tech support and questions, and the people answering the phone are well-informed, polite, and helpful.

What It Does

Talking Multiplication and Division is a five-part program which teaches the basics



of multiplication and division of the numbers 1 through 12.

The user is greeted with a main menu screen listing the five selections as well as the option to quit the program.

Part One is the Talking Table Machine. In this module, the user is presented with a large graphic square which has the numbers 1 through 12 across the top, and down the left hand side. By clicking anywhere in the large square at the intersection of two of the numbers, those two numbers are multiplied by the program and the answer is exhibited at the point that was clicked by the user. The problem and the answer are also recited by a human voice. Two other graphic representations of the particular problem are also displayed in a good attempt to give the user a better understanding of the relative quantities involved in the particular multiplication problem.

Part Two is Facts and Factors. In this part, 10 jigsaw puzzle pieces are displayed, each containing a number against a white background. A multiplication problem is displayed at the bottom of the screen and at the same time is recited by a human voice. The user is to click on the puzzle piece that contains the correct answer to the problem. All the problems are missing factor problems such as "2 x ? = 4". As each correct answer is given, the white background of the puzzle piece transforms into a colored graphic that is part of the puzzle picture. When all ten

problems are correctly solved, the entire puzzle graphic is complete, and a short animation sequence is displayed.

Part Three of Talking Multiplication and Division is the Dividing Machine. In this segment a division problem is presented as part of an attractive animated screen graphic (the Machine). The problem is also spoken by the human voice. The user inputs the correct answer (with unlimited incorrect tries permitted) by clicking on the appropriate number on the Machine, the voice informs the user that the answer is correct, and the module moves on to the next question. After 10 problems are solved, a high-quality animated reward graphic is displayed, and the program returns to the main menu screen.

Part Four is Solving Word Problems, a module which presents both division and multiplication problems in word format. Each problem is accompanied by high-quality graphics. Prior to solving a problem, the user must first indicate whether division or multiplication is required, after which the answer is input by clicking on an on-screen calculator. After two unsuccessful tries at the answer, the correct answer is given, and a new problem appears. The module records both the number and percentage of correct answers.

Part Five, Banker's Run, is a maze (an underground vault) through which the user must move a would-be bank president by

clicking directional arrows on the screen. At many points in the maze, multiplication and division problems must be answered correctly to continue the journey. Those reaching the end of the maze find themselves in an animated graphic of the bank's money room. The user can choose from among several levels of difficulty, and as with the rest of the program, the quality of the graphics is very good.

All the modules let the user adjust the sound level on screen, and each module contains a clearly marked way to quit the current activity and return to the main menu.

Is It Any Good?

Yes, it's pretty good. The program operation is smooth and easy to follow. The program delivers the educational content it promises, and it does so in a way that makes it somewhat interesting.

The recommended age group of eight to eleven may be somewhat high, as my six-year-old (brag brag) had no problem using the program.

Bouncing Bluster II

Programmed by Jean Francois Doue and Jean Michel Valaat

Retail price: \$59.95
Not copy protected
Requires System Software v5.0.2 or later

Toolbox
6, Rue Henri Barbusse
9500 Argenteuil, France
FAX: 0 11 33 1 39 47 44 08

Reviewed by Dave Adams

Just When You Thought It Was Safe To Go Back To The Paddle . . .

Bouncing Bluster II is the latest evolution in the "Breakout" series of games. You know the type—you have a paddle at the bottom of the screen that slides to the left and right. You use that paddle to bounce a ball up into a row of colored squares/bricks and when the ball hits one, the brick disappears. New twists on the game involved catching capsules that give your paddle unique effects such as

Bad Points?

It takes one minute and 15 seconds to load on a stock ROM 01 IIGS with two 3.5-inch drives attached. However, with the 40 MB InnerDrive/InnerExpress/7 MHz TransWarp/System Software v5.0.4 configuration, loading time is only 17 seconds.

Also, while the program does have five different modules, it lacks the depth of other programs, such as Math Blaster Plus GS (see review in GS+ V1.N6), that are already available for the Apple IIGS market that have a similar purpose.

For example, there is no provision to change the problems (and therefore the difficulty level), no overall score-keeping, no fractions or addition or subtraction modules (well, if there were I guess they wouldn't call it Talking *Multiplication and Division*), and no way to print out any of the subject matter. All of these features can already be found in a product such as Math Blaster Plus GS that is already available for the Apple IIGS market. So while Talking Multiplication

catching the ball and holding it or arming you with lasers. Ho hum, here we go again . . .

Bouncing Bluster II is a sequel to Bouncing Bluster (a shareware game) and a cousin to Arkanoid. When I first got this game, I had to wonder, "Just how much can you improve on this type of game?" I am happy to report that Bouncing Bluster II has made some nifty improvements and put some more luster on Bouncing Bluster. (OK, OK, no more bad puns . . .)

Bouncing Bluster comes on two 3.5-inch disks and is *not* copy protected. The game also comes with a user's manual (in English) that clearly and succinctly explains every aspect of the game. You must use some sort of program launcher to run Bouncing Bluster II—the disks are not self-starting. The game easily installs on a hard drive and rarely crashes—unlike the shareware version. In fact it has *never* crashed on me. Bouncing Bluster II comes complete with a construction set that lets you edit every feature of the game. This

and Division does have some very good learning modules, it has a limited purpose, limited features, and it is neither expandable nor adjustable.

Should I Buy It?

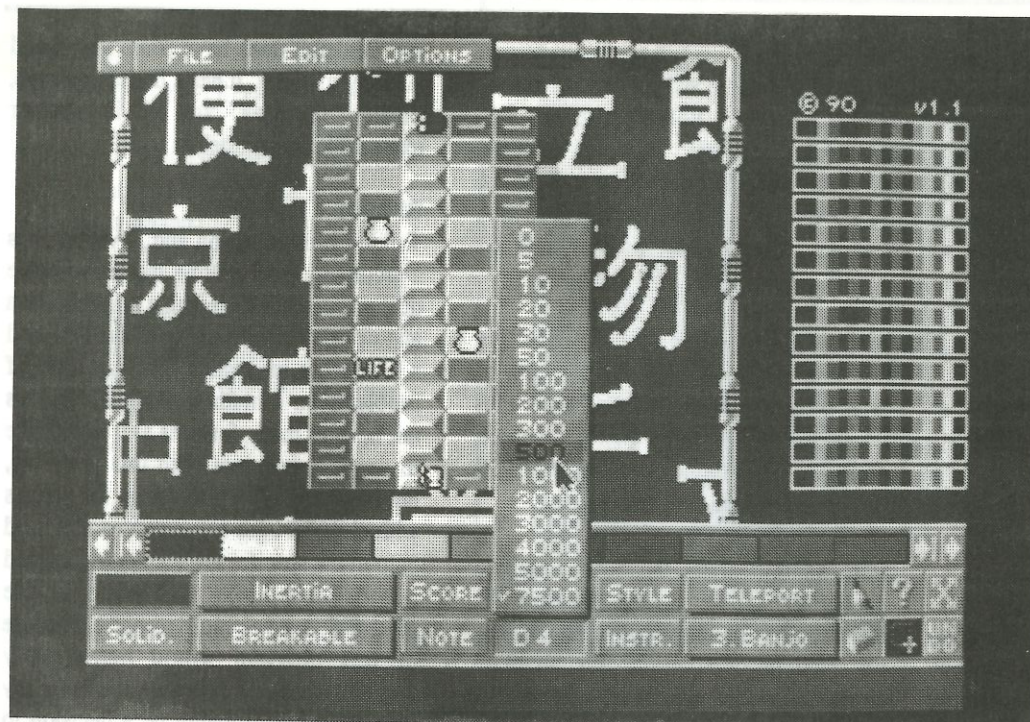
Talking Multiplication and Division does a credible job of making the unavoidable drill and practice of learning multiplication and division a little easier to swallow and a little more interesting than just a list of problems on a math worksheet. It does not have as many features as I would like to see in a program with this price tag, but is worthy of consideration for parents with children ages six to eleven that need help in the specific subject matter covered by the software. If I were in the aforementioned circumstance, the purchase of this program would be a really borderline call. But because it was for my kids, it would probably be a decision to buy.

What's contained in the software is good, intuitive, and easy to follow. I just wish there was more. **GS+**

is a godsend for uncoordinated persons like myself that have poor hand and eye motor skills.

The More Things Change . . .

. . . the more they stay the same. Bouncing Bluster II has the same look and feel of the original and uses many of the boards from Bouncing Bluster. While it doesn't have the garish and bright colors of Arkanoid, it does offer more intriguing and subtle backgrounds. Some screens are simply wonderful to look at. Many of the screens are designed to make following the ball more difficult. While some screens are familiar, there are plenty of new boards to keep you from getting jaded. However, the opening has changed a great deal. The introduction screen and SoundSmith soundtrack give it an entirely different atmosphere. SoundSmith instruments are also incorporated into the game. Each time you strike a block, it sounds off with one of 10 different instruments (from a banjo to a barking dog) and chimes a note from a scale of about 5 octaves. With some creative planning, you can create some interesting musical effects on your



boards. In short, Bouncing Bluster II has great graphics and great sounds. It is what a IIGS game should be—a feast for the eyes and ears.

If you've never played the original Bouncing Bluster and you've gotten tired of Arkanoid, then this game should be a real treat. Even if you have the original Bouncing Bluster, the newest version makes it look pale in comparison. If you are looking for a challenging arcade game, then look no more. Bouncing Bluster II is by far the most challenging game of this type. For many people, it may be a bit *too* challenging. I myself had to edit a few boards so I could continue playing the game without ripping my hair out. I haven't felt this way since I played Arkanoid and the original Bouncing Bluster. Bouncing Bluster II has far more features than either of those fine games. To best discuss this, we should refer to the Construction set.

I've Been Working On The First Board, All The Live Long Day . . .

If you've ever gotten so frustrated playing an arcade game that you've wanted to throw your IIGS out the window, then you will soon learn the ins and outs of the Bouncing Bluster Construction set. Mastering this program will allow you to

keep your temper under control and save on home repair bills. You can edit everything to your satisfaction. Having trouble getting through the first board? Load it up with extra lives so you can play with almost unlimited chances. Stuck on that one level? Fix it so that it clears more easily. Some people might call this cheating. I prefer to think of it as maintaining one's sanity. The Construction set is simple to use. You can change everything from the color and type of the bricks to the sound that they make when they are struck. You can load in backgrounds from any decent paint program to assist or hinder the player. You can change the order of the boards by altering the script (the game's method of displaying the boards in order). You have total control over the game.

Bricks can be of many types. They can break with anywhere from 1 to 14 hits or be unbreakable. They can reappear after a short delay. They can be one of many different colors or "invisible." They can have point values ranging from 0 to 7500.

There are even transporter bricks that will randomly teleport the ball to another transporter brick across the screen. Unlike Arkanoid, you can have any type of brick contain any type of capsule that you wish. Add in some sound effects,

choose the type of monster to ruin the player's day, and you're finished. If you get tired of playing the same boards over and over, edit them to make them more or less difficult. The Construction set is your key to happiness.

The capsules range from the ever popular extra lives to the dreaded time bomb. Some of the capsule types and their effects are:

3 or 5 balls - Pretty self-explanatory
Ghost - Five balls appear, only one of which is real (formerly called Stealth)
Iron ball - Goes through

anything

Leap Ball - Jumps over obstacles (and your paddle if you aren't careful)
Inertia - Amplifies paddle movements and is terribly difficult to control
Magnet - Allows you to hold onto the ball for a short time
Bomb - Gives you five seconds to grab another capsule or your paddle explodes
Small - Reduces paddle size
Large - Increases paddle size
X-Y axis - Allows you to move your paddle up and down the screen
Mystery - Randomly selects an effect
Extra Lives - Everybody's favorite
X-Reversal - Your paddle travels in the opposite direction of the way you move it
Slow - Slows down the ball
Bonus - Adds extra points to your score
Exit - Lets you to skip to the next level
Laser - Allows you to blast bricks with your paddle
Fans - Blows the ball to the opposite side of the screen
Random - Randomly selects an effect

Another innovation in the game is the ability to commit "Paddle suicide" if the ball gets stuck in a spot on the board. No more rebooting or eternal waiting for the ball to free itself. One of the best things about the game is that they got rid of the annoying synthesized speech! No more of that "Get ready player one" drone to distract you.

But What Of The Bad Stuff?

There really isn't that much to complain about with this game. The only feature that annoys me is that you don't have the total control over the path of the ball that you get when you play Arkanoid. In Bouncing Bluster II, the ball tends to drift a bit when it travels in a straight line over a distance. In Arkanoid, the ball goes where you want it to. You can pretty much line your paddle up and put the ball where you want it to go. In Bouncing Bluster II, the ball seems to have a mind of its own. You simply cannot always

determine whether the ball will get to the precise spot that you aim it towards. This can be pretty frustrating when you are after that one last brick in a tight spot.

The levels that come with the game range from simply easy to the four-letter-word-inciting difficult. There are some that are simply maddening. Fortunately, you can edit them. The game comes with two scripts. Personally, I felt that the "Easy.Script" was much harder than the "Hard.Script" that comes with the game. Of course, the editor let me combine them

into my own "Easy to play and not too hard to finish" script.

The Bottom Line . . .

If you like this type of arcade game, then you are going to love Bouncing Bluster II. If you have never liked this type of game because it is too difficult, then you still ought to give it Bouncing Bluster II a try. The Construction set was made for people that like to "fiddle" with the game. You have to love the wonderful graphics, sounds, and flexibility that Bouncing Bluster II offers. It's a great game. GS+

Space Shark

By Olivier Phillip, Pascal Watel

Retail price: \$59.00

Copy protected

Requires 768K RAM

Joystick recommended

ToolBox

6, Rue Henri Barbusse

95100 Argenteuil, France

FAX 0 11 33 1 39 47 44 08

Reviewed by Dave Adams

Space Shark is an arcade game that is similar to the old arcade game Defender. It is billed as the fastest arcade game ever produced for the IIGS. I, for one, will not dispute that claim. If you ever felt a "need for speed," then this game will definitely meet that need. Quite simply, *this game is fast!*

Space Shark comes on one 3.5-inch disk and is (unfortunately) copy protected. The game instructions are printed on two sheets of paper. Although this is a French product, the instructions are printed in English and are very succinct and complete. You can play with either the keyboard, joystick, or the mouse. Your best chances of survival lie in using a joystick. Like all good arcade games, it will run a demonstration if left unattended.

The Good Stuff

Space Shark is a game that makes you glad you bought a IIGS. The graphics are excellent and the SoundSmith sound track and the special effects sounds are

incredible. The action is fast and furious, and I have caught myself actually wincing when my Space Shark was hit and destroyed.

The premise behind Space Shark is simple: blast aliens . . . lots of aliens . . . lots of really fast aliens . . . lots of really fast aliens that have nothing better to do than to ram your ship and blast you out of existence. There are two types of Space Shark pilots: the Quick and the Dead. I, myself, am intimately familiar with the dead . . .

In Space Shark your official mission is to stop an alien invasion of the solar system. The aliens are from Iru Bom Maz, the only planet that has refused to sign the International Peace Treaty. (Yeah, I know that it should be *Interstellar* Peace Treaty, but that's what the game says . . .) They are headed for our solar system and are mad as all get out. Your job is to stop them. There are 15 different waves (levels) attacking—each one deadlier than the preceding wave. To make things worse, there are only six Space Shark fighters left to stop them. Each Space Shark has two Mega bombs and lasers. The lasers fire to the front of the Space Shark and will destroy any craft they hit. The Mega bomb destroys every enemy vessel on the screen. You must clear each sector of aliens and then proceed to the next level. You can do this by killing all of the aliens in the sector (very deadly) or by running out of space time. Space time is indicated by a bar along the bottom of the screen. Killing aliens earns points; running out of time doesn't. This is

important because you can get a new Space Shark every 20,000 points.

Each new level brings on a new and nastier type of alien. It is possible for you to begin playing at higher levels. You can begin on any level up to level twelve. Other than that there isn't that much to the game—except surviving.

The Bad Stuff

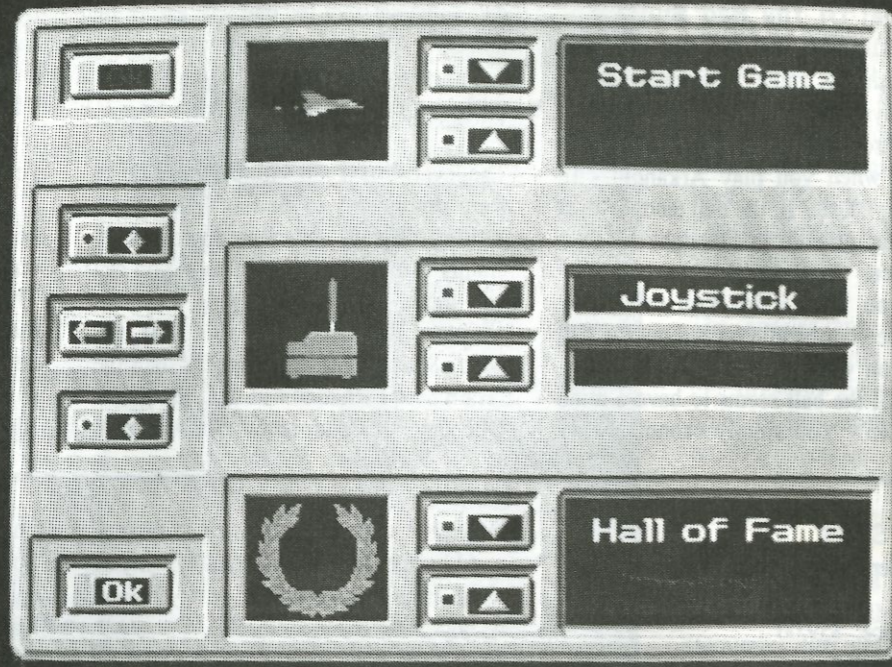
Overall there isn't that much to complain about. A lack of copy protection would be a vast improvement. As it now stands, the disk is not recognized by GS/OS and you cannot install it on a hard drive. When you are through playing the game, you must reboot your system. Using the standard Control-Command-Reset crashes the computer, forcing you to power down to restart the system. Space Shark is not exactly what I can call a GS/OS-friendly program.

The biggest overall problem in Space Shark is simply surviving. This game is not for those people that like easy wins and high scores. You will spend a lot of time getting frustrated before you get the hang of the game. It is quite difficult to win. I have not gotten past the 6th level. It is a fast and furious game and if you liked the arcade game "Defender" then you will probably like Space Shark. If you hated that game then you will probably hate Space Shark. If you like incredible speed in your games then try Space Shark. If you can't play regular arcade games very well you probably shouldn't buy this. Space Shark is for the dedicated arcade gamer looking for a good

challenge. It is not for the easily frustrated.

The Bottom Line

I think Space Shark is an excellent "Defender-style" game. However, the game is not for everybody. It carries a pretty steep price and there are very few mail-order houses that carry it. The best advice I can give is to go to the local arcade and see if they have the "Defender" game sitting in the corner. Plop a few quarters in it and see how you like it. If you don't like it, then don't buy Space Shark. If you are a Defender freak, then get your credit card ready and call somebody to order this game. The graphics and sound are superior to many games. The actual game play is fast and furious. Perhaps too fast for the average Joe. Of



course you could always turn your kids loose on it. I let my students at school have a go at it and they enjoyed it immensely. For me (Mr. Poor Motor

Skills and lame eye-hand-coordination), it got to be a frustrating experience. It is a very nicely done game—it's just not for everybody. **GS+**

TRANSYLVANIA III: VANQUISH THE NIGHT

Programmed by Antonio Antiochia and Veronika Slintak

Retail price: \$39.95
Typical mail-order price: \$15
Not copy protected
Requires 512K RAM

Merit Software
13635 Gamma Road
Dallas, TX 75244-9920
(800) 238-4277

Reviewed by Noreen Ribaric

Transylvania III: Vanquish the Night is a graphics adventure—or, more specifically, an interactive novel with graphics. You become the main character in a story and control what happens by typing in commands. Transylvania III: Vanquish the Night is the third in the Transylvania series from Polarware. It is the first of them, however, to have a IIGS-specific version released.

In the first game in the series, Transylvania, the Princess Sabrina (daughter of King John

the Good of Wallachia) mysteriously disappears. Your search for her leads you to the dark forests of Transylvania, and to the castle of a murderous Vampyr. In the second adventure in the series, Crimson Crown, the Vampyr steals the Crimson Crown—which possesses great magical powers—from King John the Good. You must journey back to Transylvania, accompanied by Princess Sabrina and Prince Erik (heir to the throne), and recover the Crown.

Now, in Transylvania III, you find yourself in a place called Slavaria, and learn from Prince Erik that the three of you had been overpowered by a tidal wave while returning the Crimson Crown to its rightful owner. You must search for Princess Sabrina once again, and also help to defeat the unjust King Boleslav of Slavaria who—along with the evil Vampyr, Lord Drakul—is wreaking havoc all over Slavaria in search of the Crimson Crown.

Your commands are interpreted by COMPREHEND, a parser that can recognize over 1,000 words. Your

commands can be as simple as one word, or as complex as a compound sentence. With the help of a program called The Graphics Magician, Transylvania III displays detailed illustrations for each scene in the story. The graphics are very nice, and although I have not played the Apple IIe/IIc versions of the first two games in the series, I have played them on another computer, and the graphics for the IIGS version of Transylvania III are much better. There is also a neat feature in Transylvania III (and the others) that allows you to turn off the graphics, if you wish. This can become handy if you find yourself backtracking a lot and do not want to wait while the graphics are drawn (which can sometimes be a little slow). In addition to the graphics, Transylvania III also has some nice sound effects—such as dragons breathing fire and Death arriving on a galloping horse.

As you travel throughout Slavaria, there will be many puzzles to solve and obstacles to get past. Some clues are presented along the way, and some in the extra materials provided with the game. Some of these "extras" include the journal

of a mad scientist (which provides some very useful information that he discovered during his experiments), and a Slavarian phrase book (of course they don't speak English in Slavaria) to help you get along with the locals. Some of these puzzles and obstacles are fairly simple to get past, and others require a bit of thinking (and maybe a little research if you didn't pay attention in your high school literature classes)! But never fear, if you can't solve all the puzzles or get past all the obstacles, you can send off for a hint book, *free of charge!* (Just send them a Self-Addressed-Stamped-Envelope.) The hint book is designed so that it doesn't give away everything—it has three levels of hints (which must be unscrambled) for each of the obstacles, so you can't accidentally read too much and spoil the game.

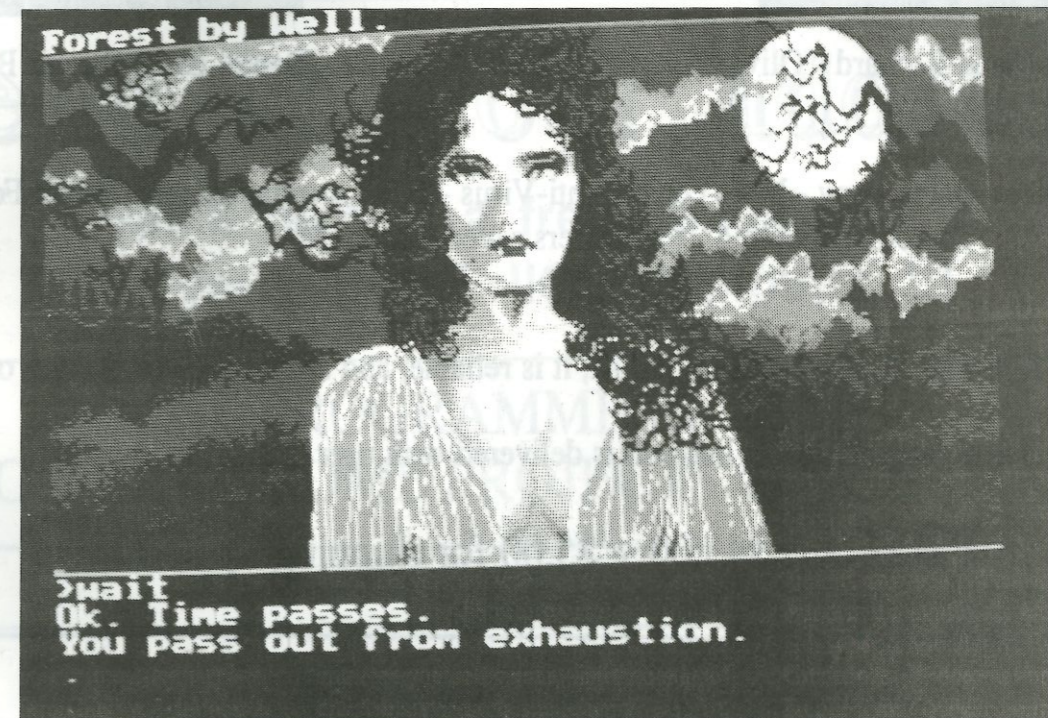
Some of the obstacles that you must get past take the form of evil beings that will kill you if you make one wrong move. Some of the not-so-nice creatures that will impede your progress are mummies, dragons, killer moths, and other assorted

monsters (including vampires, of course). But there are helpful creatures, too—be sure to check out the magic elk! In case you find yourself running into the not-so-nice creatures more often than you'd like, don't worry—you have the ability to save your game. You can only save three separate positions in the story, though, and you must save them on the Transylvania program disk labeled "disk 2" (although nothing is stopping you from making multiple copies of "disk 2" with a different set of saves on each one!)

There are a few annoyances, though. The first is that Transylvania III is not installable on a hard drive, even though it is not copy protected. This is probably because it runs under an old version of ProDOS 8, not GS/OS. You have to boot with the Transylvania III disk to run the game, and have to reboot your IIGS when you are finished. And booting the game is slow! It takes 30 seconds just to hear the introductory sounds, 60 seconds to get to the title screen, and a total of 2 minutes and 40 seconds before the game is finished loading—and this is with an

accelerator board running at 8 MHz! Another thing I did not like is that it does not support the Apple Human Interface Guidelines—it does not use the mouse or menus, and does not support desk accessories. The third thing is that the instructions included in the box were for the Apple IIe/IIc (the instructions on how to run the program referred to side 1 and side 2 of the disk).

Transylvania III is a good program. The story is interesting, and the graphics and sounds add to an already enjoyable game. It does have a few minor annoyances though—although they don't really interfere with the play of the game. But if these things were changed, Transylvania III would be an even better program! [Just before we went to press, we were informed that Merit Software is working on an update to Transylvania III that will allow it to be run from a hard drive under GS/OS.] If you like mystery, fantasy, adventure, and controlling your own destiny, you will enjoy Transylvania III. **GS+**



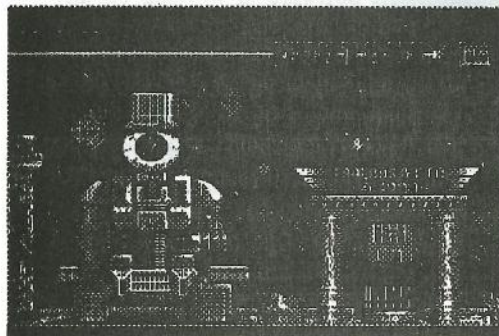
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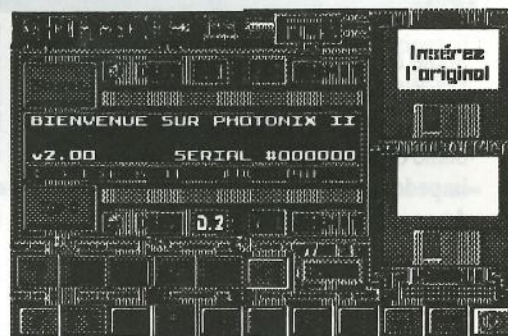


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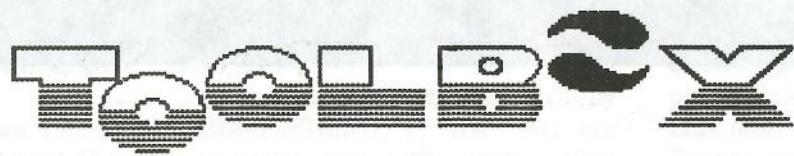
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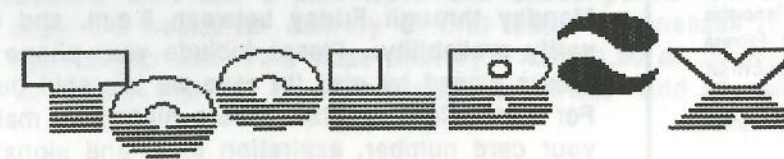
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