

such goodies as animated bullets or interactive image maps to your WWW pages.

Plus the company has also launched a new version of their Shockwave browser plug-in. You'll no longer have to wait for an audio file to download--once you click the play button, you'll immediately hear full CD-quality sound streaming from your speakers. This new iteration of the plug-in can also be downloaded from the company's WWW site.

#### Nielsen: THE TELE'S TOP TEN

From the Nielsen Media Research for July 22-28 the following programs rated in the top ten:

1. Summer Olympics Tuesday, NBC, 27.2 percent, 26.1 million homes
2. Summer Olympics Thursday, NBC, 26.8 percent, 25.7 million homes
3. Summer Olympics Sunday, NBC, 23.4 percent, 22.4 million homes
4. Summer Olympics Monday, NBC, 22.9 percent, 22.0 million homes
5. Summer Olympics Wednesday, NBC, 22.4 percent, 21.5 million homes
6. Summer Olympics Saturday, NBC, 19.4 percent, 18.6 million homes
7. Summer Olympics Friday, NBC, 17.9 percent, 17.2 million homes
8. Home Improvement, ABC, 9.1 percent, 8.7 million homes
9. 60 Minutes, CBS, 9.0 percent, 8.6 million homes
10. ABC Monday Night Movie: The Tommyknockers, Pt. 2, 8.2 percent, 7.9 million homes
10. Coach, ABC, 8.2 percent, 7.9 million homes (tie with above program)

#### Prodigy: RACING INTO PRODIGY

Racing is one of the top sports enjoyed by Americans. In racing, NASCAR is definitely a contender as the leading racing car venue. Prodigy Inc. has now made available NASCAR Racing as a Prodigy-created Web site. You'll be able to read the latest racing news, engage in chats with NASCAR drivers each Tuesday morning, and chat with other fans online. To get to this location, you can JUMP:nascar, which is only available to Prodigy subscribers.

#### Sega of America: AN IDEAL ARRANGEMENT

Sega of America Inc. ( <http://www.sega.com>) and Ideal Entertainment Inc. are working jointly in the areas of motion picture, television, and merchandising rights to the Sega video game VectorMan. A computer-animated sci-fi/action film scheduled for theatrical release in late '97, this feature will be produced by Ideal Entertainment in association with Tribaltek. Tribaltek has received attention for producing the digital effects on Independence Day. Additionally, Tribaltek is overseeing the Toy Story-like 3-D rendering of characters and environments based on the popular Sega Genesis video game.

#### SEGASOFT IS JUMPING FOR JOY WITH TRAMPOLINE

SegaSoft, Inc. has joined forces with Media Station, Inc., to co-publish Puzzle Castle. SegaSoft is known as an interactive entertainment developer and Media Station is a developer of interactive family entertainment. Puzzle Castle will be published under SegaSoft's newly created Trampoline brand targeting children pre-school to age 12. Puzzle Castle is a unique interactive CD-ROM puzzle-adventure for children ages 4 and up that is based on the best-selling Young Puzzle Books from Osborne Publishing.

#### SegaSoft: HEY ROCKY, WATCH ME PULL A RABBIT OUT OF MY HAT!

A famous line from the cartoon Rocky & Bullwinkle will soon be featured in Fractured Fairy Tales: The Frog Prince. SegaSoft, Inc., and Media Station, will be publishing this title based on the classic Rocky and Bullwinkle & Friends cartoon series from Jay Ward Productions, Inc. Designed for children ages 4 and up, Fractured Fairy Tales: The Frog Prince will be SegaSoft's second title to be released under its new Trampoline brand.

#### TIME WARNER PLANS JAPANESE DISTRIBUTION

Time Warner will have Japanese toymaker Bandai Co. market Warner video entertainment software in Japan. Included in this contract will be music and sports software, videocassettes, laser discs and digital video discs. The two subsidiaries that concluded the agreement are Bandai Visual Co. Ltd and Warner Vision Japan, part of the software production arm of the Time Warner group.

#### Warner Brothers: LETTER CAMPAIGN RENEWS BABYLON

Warner Brothers asked folks on the Internet to campaign with letters to maintain its TV series, science-fiction thriller, Babylon 5. And the results were awesome--the Internet-led, letter-writing campaign to various TV stations was at least partially responsible for the show's return in November 1996 for a fourth season. Letter writers were instructed to be polite, be brief, and if your station was running B5 in a terrible time slot, ask them to move it.

#### Whirlpool: WEB SITE IS COOKIN'

The variety and depth of World Wide Web sites continues to expand. One of the latest is a new WWW site from Whirlpool Corporation's Whirlpool Homelife Network at <http://www.whirlpool.com>. Their new location also has section devoted specifically to those who have children in their home and this spot is called Kid Stuff. Children are taught cooking and kitchen basics and will find easy-to-make and tempting recipes they can make for themselves. There are international recipes from The Kids' Multicultural Cookbook, written by Deanna Cook. In fact, our younger citizens could host

an Around the World Ice Cream Party. Even the toppings are culturally appropriate, from African peanut brittle to sliced kiwi from New Zealand. Recipes in this area change each month. In the future, Chinese, Irish and Italian fare is planned. There's plenty of fare for adult digestion, as well.

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### Mudgeon's Magical Ministry #3

In this particular sermon, I cover Interplay's Editor's Day

#### Interplay Could Rule

Public Relations and Marketing Departments tend to be the goat for almost anyone these days, whether the originators of the derogatory remarks are the press, other in-house departments, or consumers. After all, the majority of blame for missed ship dates, product that allegedly fails to operate in the way such might have been advertised, and for original spam, PR and Marcom departments take the brunt of the criticism. In many cases, the heat directed at their kitchen is unjustified!

Verily, in a few cases, such antagonistic comments may well be valid. Poor planning and ineffective marketing/public relations execution tends to leave a bitter taste in many mouths. However, when done well, and when plans are executed as though everyone knows what the gameplan is, kudos must be extended. Especially when such programs bring to the light of editorial scrutiny the knowledge that an even better day is dawning for a specific company. After all, such is the reason why companies, such as Interplay, tend to host Editor's Day programs. Self-serving, aye! But only if the product's being so touted are, indeed, worth their weight in ink.

Should one be enamored with digital FUN, the kind of entertainment that leaves you gasping for more, and if that joviality and sense of belonging to the industry is imparted to you for several hours at such an affair, and there is a true enjoining of spirit at such a presentation, everyone becomes a winner. Especially so the consumer, for valuable feedback on all efforts is offered. The game product managers may learn from the editorial press what may be right, or wrong, with their titles. And, the editorial press learns the truth about a previously rumored title, seeing the concrete and the foundation poured simultaneously.

Interplay's Editor's Day last week, with the theme Christmas in July, was an event to which I was invited and that, I can honestly state, was one of enormous enjoyment. The event was complete with carolers, Christmas stockings and many titles, making the theme quite appropriate.

In fact, this event revealed to me that Interplay could easily become one

of the top three game publishers over the next eight months or so. Interplay could rule, for their title list is extremely strong. The demos and gameplay I witnessed certainly rival the offerings of any game developer and/or publisher currently making their mark in our industry. I only viewed a couple of "also-ran" titles, and both were in early development, making what I observed to be somewhat early to determine its ultimate viability.

With the commitment the Interplay product managers appear to be making to their titles, their pride of ownership, and the customer satisfaction goals that Interplay's Direct Marketing Department is driving, such good works deserve heartiest congratulations.

My delight at the upcoming Interplay product line may be construed as merely empty words. After all, the proof rests with the finished pudding, not simply the flavoring that has yet to be mixed with the other ingredients. Yet, please bear in mind I have been studying and writing about the computer industry since 1980--when I see a title that looks like a duck, speaks like a duck, swims and flies like a duck, I tend to believe such may find an orange sauce glaze as testimonial to its edible genre. That is, unless there are some extremely astute sfx at work to deceive such a perception. My Interplay observations lead me to believe the titles I mention next will be solid hits with the consumer and generous income generators for Interplay and its various divisions.

The company itself is comprised of several divisions. There's Interplay itself (PC-based digital entertainments), MacPlay (Macintosh titles), Console (Nintendo 64, Sony PlayStation and Sega Saturn video games), VR Sports (sports sims for PC and Console platforms), Brainstorm (the company's new children's software division) and a new division (final name not selected yet) for the company's TSR-licensed products and role-playing titles. The leader of this creative company is a rascal named Brian Fargo--he's been developing games for more than a decade. Recall The Bard's Tale? Aye, that be his! And Brian Fargo appears to be one who truly believes games must be more than but a mass of bytes blended together to quickly hack out another also-ran title.

Prithee, gather ye about, lads and lassies, and let us take a gander at the credibles coming from Interplay. Using the new Inside Games & Entertainment Update review table format, the titles are alphabetically listed.

My insights to these titles are, in most cases, based upon pre-alpha, alpha and beta versions of upcoming games and all comments should be tempered by such knowledge. In a few cases, the titles are close to their expected street date, and, therefore, my reaction is more critical of the nearly finished product. All-in-all, Interplay has much to gain, over the coming months, as their parade of product is most impressive!

Ahhh, two last items I must mention. First, and foremost, is the fact that much of Interplay's product is developed internally. Many might believe this company is like so many others, simply a publisher of other company's creative work--not so. Secondly, Interplay has made their announced street dates on their last seven titles. That, my friends, is most honorable!