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Tis the time for getting your loved ones (including yourself) some great entertainment software. This year there's no reason why stockings everywhere won't be stuffed with plenty of games, peripherals, and yes, even computers. To start with, we'd like to go on record as saying that just because a game was omitted from this article it doesn't mean that it's not a great product. We are constrained by both space and time when making such a list, so our apologies to all the great games out there that we didn't get a chance to mention.

[Compute!](#)

The Performa 6400/200 is a surprisingly decent option for burgeoning Mac gamers. As an entry level machine it provides solid performance, such niceties as a built-in subwoofer, and even a great software collection that includes some of the year's biggest titles. Tests suggest that the 6400 at 200 MHz runs almost as fast as a 604/132. Even with the stiff competition from third party clone makers, the 6400/200 stands as a solid option.

[rain Games](#)

For all kinds of family fun it's hard to resist Berkeley System's You Don't Know Jack XXL pack. The 'You Don't Know Jack' series of games is by far the best 'game show' style game ever made. With hundreds of thousands of loyal followers, there will no doubt be many more Jacks to come, but for now, the Extra Extra Large pack is a fabulously fun deal.

Card gamers might want to take a look at Delta Tao's Eric's Ultimate Solitaire, or MacSoft's Absolute Solitaire, both are solid titles. For anyone with a hankering to lessen the chess learning curve, check out Chess Mates from MacPlay. This is a very friendly, easy way for folks of all ages to get acquainted with this legendary game. Gary Kasparov would be proud.

Action Games

What would Christmas be without a Marathon title? Not to worry, this year we have Marathon Infinity, complete with two editors that will keep us creating new and exciting Marathon levels forever. Although it doesn't offer any real breakthroughs, there is plenty of the solid Marathon fun we've come to expect. If two-dimensional action is your bag then be sure to get a copies of Blackthorne from MacPlay, and Shadow Wraith from Starplay Productions. Blackthorne is a side-scrolling shoot-'em-up with some strategy involved, and Wraith is a richly drawn top down shooter with some of the most incredible game music ever written.

Simulation Games

Surprisingly, some of the best simulation games this year were of the pinball variety. Pro Pinball from MacPlay, and the two 3D Ultra Pinball games from Sierra offer up some of the most tilt-worthy, realistic pinball action ever for the Mac. On the flight side of the coin, A-10 Cuba from Parsoft is an excellent choice, and of course if F/A-18 Hornet 3.0 hits the shelves before Kris Kringle day, it's also a fabulous flight sim. Helicopter nuts should take a look at Interactive Magic's Apache, the most advanced helicopter simulation ever made for the Mac.

Virtual Pool from MacPlay is fast developing a following amongst armchair pool players. If you think you could never enjoy a pool game on a computer, this game was designed to prove you wrong. It's guaranteed to improve your pool game, and believe me, it will. For racing fans, Nascar is second to none. The only stipulation about this Sierra title is that you'll need a fairly beefy Mac to make it sing.

Strategy

Blizzard's Warcraft BattleChest is a three-product compilation that includes Warcraft, Warcraft II, and the Warcraft II expansion pack. Warcraft is a strategy game that pits the human race against the evil Orkish empire in a fight to the death. Fair warning, this is an incredibly addictive title, so set an alarm clock when you start playing. This is an excellent way to see why Warcraft one several 'game of the year' awards.

WarCraft II

War buffs can rejoice in SSG's Total War. Although it contains old games from the now aged Battlefront series, it remains a solid value as a compilation pack. If you're looking for a more state of the art experience, look no further than Close Combat from Microsoft and Atomic Games. Close Combat is perhaps the best real-time war game ever created, and will have you grimacing every time you lose a soldier.

Peripherals

Driving fans will love the new Formula T2 Racing Wheel from Thrustmaster, Inc. Reviewed elsewhere in this issue, the T2 is the only wheel on the Market for the Mac, and its quality is superb. For those of you that don't want the wheel but would like pedals, CH Products has recently released the Pro Pedals for Mac. These can be used for whatever purpose you want, and find special significance in driving sims and flight simulators.

Adventure Abounds

For those gamers more intent on adventures, they should have a look at Changeling's new hit Amber. This game is making serious waves throughout the industry. Don't let our review

of Amber fool you, everyone that plays this game falls in love with it. For a creepy crawly time, pick up a copy of Pulse's Bad Mojo, the first and only Mac game where you, the protagonist, is a cockroach. Sounds weird? It is, but it's also loads of fun surrounded by breathtaking graphics.

mber

For a traditional swim in adventuring waters, Zork Nemesis from Activision is also an excellent choice. Nemesis incorporates some nice new features and a fresh storyline into the classic Zork equation.

[The Space Race](#)

Luke, don't forget the force! We can't forget to mention the two space giants of '96, wing Commander IV and X-Wing. X-Wing from LucasArts finally brought us the glory of the X-Wing fighter experience. Long a hit on the PC side, X-Wing Collector's CD is an excellent game and an excellent value. Wing Commander IV holds the distinction of being the most expensive computer game ever created. That aside, it currently reigns as the king of space operas, with stellar performances by Mark Hamill and Malcolm McDowell. Power Macs are advised if you want to fully enjoy both these games.

[Plenty to Choose From](#)

The above titles are just a fraction of the excellent games available this Christmas season. Never before has there been a year with so many quality titles, and as good as that sounds, it makes for some pretty difficult decisions come buying time. Be sure to get out your old copies of IMG to see just where everything stands.