

COMPUTER GAMES

DRAGONQUEST (The Software Exchange; not to be confused with the SPI product); \$15.95 for 16K tape, or \$21.95 for 32K disk. Program by Charles Forsythe for the TRS-80. One player; playing time varies. Published 1980.

Calling all heroes! There's a dragon trying to create an international incident. Having been turned away at the embassy gates, scaly old Smaegor has snatched the king's daughter and made off for parts unknown. The reptilian captor has set a deadline of nightfall before he subjects the lovely princess to a trial by mastication. Here's a chance for fame and fortune, not to mention a nifty bit of adventuring.

DRAGONQUEST opens with a cute little routine that's nearly worth the price of admission by itself. From then on, all the *de rigueur* adventure stuff pops out at you from every direction: there's the water travel segment, the find-a-weapon routine, the Dr. Doolittle let's talk to the animals bit and much, much more.

There are also some design factors in **DRAGONQUEST** that are of interest. For one, you can pick up or drop a whole bunch of stuff at one blow, rather than singly, item by item. And there's the use of the shift key for entering the direction you wish to go: SHIFT E would help you move east, etc. Asking for help also produces some interesting results, but if I told you what they were, you'd miss out on the fun of finding out for yourself.

The adventure itself follows a fairly predictable logic. There are no glaring incongruities in it, nor is any esoteric knowledge needed. You are not out for treasure per se; you have a specific task to accomplish within a limited amount of time. If one were to seek out the weak points of **DRAGONQUEST**, one would have to look at the lack of red herrings, the lack of blind alleys and dead ends. **DRAGONQUEST** is very trim; there are not many twists and turns in it. But for many, this would be considered an advantage.

Pick up a copy and try to rescue the princess. She needs your help.

— Dave Albert

(Reprint courtesy of *SoftSide* magazine.)

MISSION ESCAPE! (CE Software); \$24.95. 48k disk by Jim Jacobson for the Apple II. 1 player; playing time 5-15 minutes. Cannot be saved. Published 1981.

This is very similar to a game called *Escape from the Death Planet*, released a couple of years ago for the Pet. It's loosely based on *Star Wars*; our hero is trying to fight his way through a series of rooms, each one infested with stormtroopers, drones, and missile-firing robots. The rooms get progressively deadlier; the player's missile supply goes down; his ablative armor begins to wear away from the troopers' laser fires... and then he stops a missile, and it's all over.

An entertaining little game. I've wasted hours on it, never getting beyond section 6 (of ten). Absolute requirements are typing dexterity and pattern-recognition skills. (The enemy can only fire along diagonals or orthogonal lines. If you misjudge a diagonal, you'll waste a shot and/or die.) The sound effects are entertaining but not abrasive, and the "suspend" command (to stop the game if you have to answer the phone, for instance) is a blessing.

I wish the graphics were better. They're fuzzy; sometimes you can have trouble distinguishing the units (which kills you quickly). In general, **MISSION ESCAPE!** is less complex,

much less attractive, harder to play, and harder to win than its Pet predecessor. Use of numbers to enter directions is a nice idea, but the Apple keyboard, with its numbers all in a line, is inconvenient for this. You need a calculator keypad.

But, on the whole, it's a great way to kill an evening. Recommended for Apple owners who like reflex-testing games.

— Steve Jackson

MAGAZINES

F.Y.E.O. — FOR YOUR EYES ONLY (SPI); edited by David James Ritchie. Bi-weekly except during January; \$50 per year. Four 8½" x 11" pages. First published 1980.

This is an expansion of the old FYEO column from *Strategy & Tactics* magazine. Like its predecessor, it covers military news: recent actions, possible upcoming developments, technology, etc. Sections include a chronology (mostly information you could get from a good daily paper), a "rumors" section, and feature articles on new hardware.

On the whole, nicely done. Though it's only four pages long, it packs a lot of information into that small space. Unlike SPI's similar *Berg's Review*, it features legible type and occasional photographs. The writing style is clear and concise.

The big bite is the cost. At \$50 per year, FYEO works out to a cool 50 cents per page! This will put it right out of the casual reader's reach.

Very few of us need this kind of data (or can afford to indulge a mere interest). For those who do, though, FYEO is probably worth the cost. Recommended for the professional game designer or well-off modern/future game buff.

— Steve Jackson

PEGASUS (Judges Guild; R. R. 8 Box 9, 1221 N. Sunnyvale Rd., Decatur, IL 62522); \$15 for 6 bimonthly issues. Edited by Mike Reagan. 8½" x 11", 92-page magazine. First published 1981.

You've heard of the game-in-every-issue magazines? Well, **PEGASUS** is the supplement-in-every-issue magazine, from the company that practically invented the supplement industry. Each issue contains a 32-page supplement (based on the Judges Guild *City State* Campaign), plus articles on AD&D variants, new magic and monsters, tips on GM'ing, fiction and reviews. There are a lot of illustrations, many of these in comic book color.

The pearl in this oyster is the supplement. In the premier issue, the adventure was to run around four rocky islands trying to reforge the Black Ring and repair the Sentinel. It was well thought out, reasonably complete, and entertaining — not a mere monster bash. As for the rest of the magazine, its charm lies in being *practical* — every article is geared to be put to immediate use. It is like buying a package of rules modules.

It is a wonder how Judges Guild gets so much fun into a 32-page supplement. On the other hand, it is a mystery how so little is in the rest of the magazine. None of the dungeon tips were memorable. The dungeon adventure was boring and lame-brained, though I suppose it would kill an afternoon. Magic items were nice, but the monsters were old hat. The interview with Dave Arneson rambled. The reviews were poorly done.

I can't recommend **PEGASUS** as a magazine. However, the installment supplement was nearly excellent. If you play AD&D and you think 6 supplements a year for \$15 (plus a magazine) is a good deal, then subscribe.

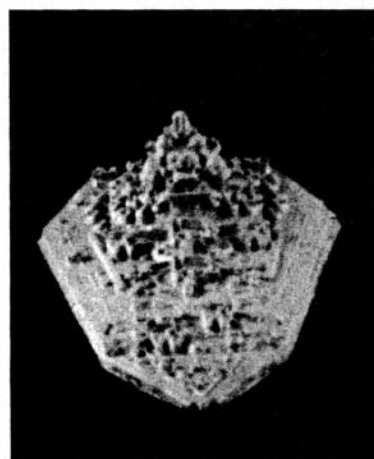
— W. G. Armintrout

PURSER'S MAGAZINE (Purser's Magazine, P. O. Box 466, El Dorado, CA 95623); cover price \$4.00. 96-page 8½" x 11" non-slick computer magazine. Editor Mary Ann Dobson.

Robert Elliott Purser starts out his magazine by telling the reader that he/she should consider only two computers for purchase: TRS-80 Model III and Apple II. That sets the tone for the rest of the magazine, which consists of a few introductory-level articles on computers and nearly 70 reviews of software... all aimed at those two machines. However, lest their scope seem to be too limited, the publishers this summer brought out a special supplement directed towards Atari computers.

The magazine is very well done for a homebrew publication (all the editing is done on microcomputers, and the magazine is typeset *directly* from a floppy disk). The articles and reviews are aimed at computer novices and, I think, hit their mark. And the quantity of reviews is very helpful since it allows the magazine to cover a lot of the currently popular programs.

I have two main complaints with this publication. The first is that the articles are too few and somewhat lacking in substance. I'm afraid that a computer novice would read through them easily, nodding his/her head, and then realize that he/she really hadn't learned much of anything. My second complaint is that the software reviews are a little too friendly and gentle.



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