

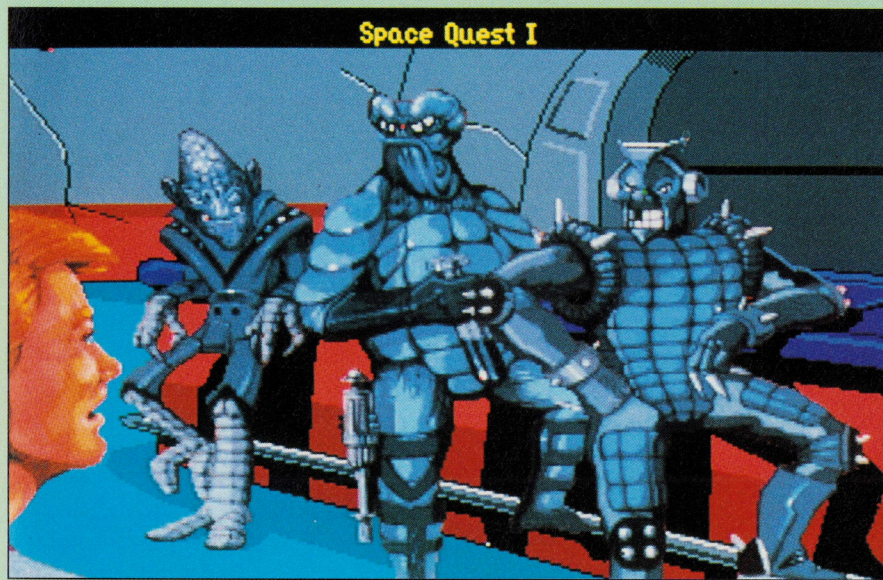
SPACE QUEST IV

By Bernie Yee

He's back! The galaxy's best-recognized sanitation engineer turns the clock ahead with Sierra's Space Quest IV: Roger Wilco and the Time Rippers. Space Quest IV (SQ4) picks up right where its predecessor, Space Quest III, ended, complete with a stunning little sequence in which the robotic Sequel Police drag our erstwhile hero to his untimely demise, authored by

ugly tower, and hijack a timepod from the Sequel Police. It's the same save-the-future-by-going-into-the-past story that's cashed in big at America's box offices, and, as Sierra hopes, at a hard drive near you.

As Roger Wilco, your first duty is to get into an imposing tower and hijack that timepod from the police. You'll need some ingenuity and a rope. Eventually, you'll crawl into the sewers of Xenon, where you find out what happened, and what you'll have to do to get to the happy *Field of Dreams*-like ending of Space Quest IV. Action sequences are in real time, so a wrong move gets you a



Pick up where Space Quest III ended with Space Quest IV: Roger Wilco and the Time Rippers.

Vorhaul, who's real miffed about Space Quest II. Roger is rescued by a pair of human gorillas (the Time Rippers). Hey, doesn't that Time Ripper bear just a little resemblance to Roger? If this inbred in joke sounds a bit like *The Terminator*, well, it is — kind of.

Rog ends up on the bombed-out planet Xenon. What happened? The game's status line at the top of the screen says Space Quest XII: Vorhaul's Revenge II. You're caught in a future where Vorhaul has finally become Supreme Being of All That Exists. Your job? For starters, catch the Eveready Bunny, get off the streets, find out what happened to Xenon, sneak into a big,

chestful of laser holes. The moral of this story is to save games, and save them often.

The timepod's data display is critical. You can even travel back to previous Space Quests, including episodes you never knew about. The timepods have a six-digit code for each time location. Copy down the code for each location, such as the first code you see for Space Quest XII, because you'll need to get back (ahead?) later. Travel all the way back to Space Quest I: The Sarien Encounter, and you'll find yourself in primitive CGA-like graphics (except for Roger and his timepod).

SQ4, along with King's Quest V,

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sports Sierra's new interface and graphics system, one that works best with a mouse. The VGA version of SQ4 features scrolling backgrounds made by digitizing hand-painted scenes: Sometimes when Roger walks off camera, the new screen scrolls smoothly into view in 256 glorious VGA colors. Sierra is one of the leaders in the move toward more animated-style electronic entertainment, and SQ4 demonstrates some of that trend.

SQ4 takes advantage of sound cards to play music that actually isn't annoying. Digitized sound effects add lots to the action sequences. The movement system is smart — Roger walks to the position you click on, navigating around obstacles without any help from you.

The interface is point-and-click to the max and takes all of a moment to master. If you move the pointer to the top of the screen, icons appear — *walk, grab, talk, smell, and taste*. And your cursor becomes any one of the icons, so if you click on the tongue icon, move it over to the creeping green slime, and click again, you can taste to your heart's content. Objects you find, like a jar or a rope, can be added to the icon list, too.

The writers we have to blame for SQ4, the Two Guys from Andromeda, have filled SQ4 with self-deprecating (and industry-deprecating) humor. When Roger ends up in Space Quest X: Latex Babes of Estros (and yes, they are babes), the software store in the Jetsons-like mall is filled with jabs at recognizable computer games. And don't forget to pick up the 800-page Space Quest IV hint book here!

Remember Wizard and the Princess, one of Sierra's first offerings? Well, SQ4 has about as much in common with Wizard as the early sci-fi film *A Trip to the Moon* does with *Return of the Jedi*. The evolution of Sierra's interface has distilled the system down to its simplest and most elegant form yet.

When it comes to adventure, good prose-heavy games are hard to top. Infocom text games were imaginative and innovative — in their day. SQ4 in VGA dazzles, though, by providing

enough visual detail to win over even an old text-adventuring veteran. One SQ4 image is truly worth a thousand words. And, most importantly, Space Quest IV is fun.

As for the Two Guys from Andromeda, well, as Tom Waits said, they both came from good families — they just developed some ways about them that just aren't right. Lucky for us.

Sierra On-Line, P.O. Box 485, Coarsegold, CA 93614, (209) 683-4468; IBM PC or compatible, 10 MHz 286 or faster recommended; 640K RAM, supports extended memory; EGA, VGA; supports AdLib, Roland, Sound Blaster sound boards; \$59.95

SOUND BLASTER PRO

By Barry Brenesal

The Marines may look for a few good men, but any PC game player will gladly settle for a single good sound card: one that plays both Sound Blaster and AdLib scores, one that

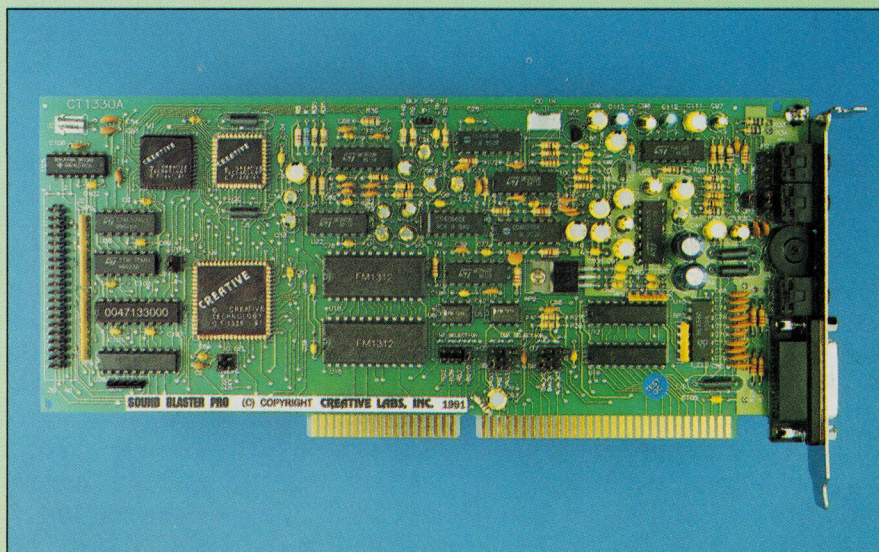
doesn't fry your other boards, one that never draws attention to itself, one that delivers all the sophisticated sound effects and music bundled into the latest batch of game software.

Look no further: Sound Blaster Pro does it all, and more. At \$299.95 it's not cheap, but neither are its features.

Testing: One, Two . . .

Installing Sound Blaster Pro is a snap. The 16-bit card slips easily into place. It comes with a test program that detects and points out any problems with hardware configuration, interrupt line, or DMA channel. And if trouble appears, alternate jumper settings in all three categories are briefly but clearly described in the documentation. The manual also includes an appendix that provides specific answers to common problems.

Trying out Sound Blaster Pro is a treat. It's got great frequency response — that's the difference between listening to a film score on a tinny, muffled AM radio and hearing it on a stereo movie-theater speaker system. The orchestral soundtrack to Origin's *Wing Commander* is a good example, because it changes mood and melody to match the success of your current battle. Add Sound Blaster Pro to a good VGA screen and a responsive joystick (which you can plug into Sound Blaster Pro's joystick port),



Quick to install and easy to use, Sound Blaster Pro is a winner.