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Optigon To Debut New Online Service For Niche Market

After more than five years and over \$1 million in development costs, **Optigon Interactive**, a privately held start-up company, plans to unveil its online entertainment and information service this November. The service, Total Entertainment Network (TEN), targets 18-39 year-olds.

TEN will carry standard games, such as backgammon, Go! and chess; brand-name games, including WizWar; as well as additional titles Optigon plans to develop independently, according to president Daniel Goldman. At launch, TEN will offer access to approximately 10 games.

Other services available through TEN will include electronic mail and online chat forums, as well as access to news feeds from Associated Press and Newsbytes News Network. Limited Internet access to news groups and e-mail will be available.

By 1995, or possibly earlier, Goldman expects TEN to carry online shopping services and advertising from a variety of consumer products manufacturers and retail stores. However, unlike Prodigy, advertising on the service will be optional as the user demands, he said.

Ambitious Goals

Goldman expects to attract between 20,000-50,000 subscribers within the

first year of launch and reach 150,000-200,000 subscribers by the end of the second year. TEN is currently being tested by a small group of 25 users, which Goldman expects to expand to several hundred over the next few months.

TEN will be priced between \$10.95/month-\$12.95/month, which will include a set number of free hours plus an additional \$3/hour-\$4/hour thereafter. To access TEN, customers need a personal computers and 9600 bps modems. DOS and Macintosh versions will be available at launch and a Windows version will follow in 1995.

Optigon plans to leverage its technology to allow subscribers and third-party developers to create their own chat services or interactive games, Goldman said.

Basically, TEN is "a cross between America Online and The Imagination Network," Goldman said. However, AOL will probably be TEN's greatest competition, he added. TEN is also the second service announced in the last few months that targets a younger and hipper crowd. Reach Networks, which operates The Transom, launched July 1 (EIR, June 10).

Founded in 1989 by Daniel Goldman and Janice Linden-Reed, design director, Optigon Interactive has eight employees. The company expects to break even within two to three years of launch.

Comparison Shopping the On-Line Networks

The cyber world is finally coming into its own. It is hard to find a business card today that doesn't have an e-mail address, sometimes displayed more prominently than the snailmail address, and companies too small to have their own Internet node and area on one of the services are somehow suspect.

This is a far cry from just a few years ago. In the early '80s there was CompuServe, with a business-oriented price structure that caused some less-wealthy users to refer to the service as CompuServe. Very few people knew about some command line, brutally technical network called the Internet. Then, 300 baud was a valid modem speed and 1200 baud modems were "high speed." Ah, yes—the bad old days.

Now there are no less than seven national on-line networks (depending on your criteria for "national"), and more people are throwing their hat in the ring every day. The 3DO company is going to be starting a service soon, and smart providers are quaking in their boots at the idea that Microsoft is planning on bundling on-line software with every copy of their new Windows95 (Chicago) operating system. Ziff-Davis, the publishing giant, is expected to have their new on-line offering up and running soon after this issue hits the stands, and Paul Allen's Starwave (detailed in our Net column last month), a sports-oriented information provider, should be piggybacking on Ziff-Davis at inception.

Yes, the sprawling metropolis of the on-line

universe is getting downright crowded. And, just like trying to have a good entertaining time in any big, swinging city on a Saturday night, the question is less, "Is there anything to do?" than "How do we sort through all the things there are to do?"

There are as many different ways to rate the various on-line offerings as there are users. One person is going to be addicted to the "toons" and ease of conversation offered on the relatively small ImagiNation Network. Other users are going to rate the hustle-bustle growth of America OnLine as being the only decent electronic haunt. Some users feel positively naked without the full-bore, thousand-option environment of CompuServe.

This article isn't intended to rate the various services. Each of the major on-line providers in the U.S. provides a valuable service for a certain segment of the market. Instead, we'll provide a brief overview of the available offerings, and hit some of the most salient points for our readers: gaming, prices, and other issues important to the game-playing public.

The coolness factor is a very subjective rating on a scale of one to five, with five being the highest, of how trendy and exciting the service feels, as rated by our crack staff of killer net surfers. Oh, and in the games listing we aren't counting casino games—everyone and their step-sister has a casino area.

So, without any further ado, let's start our trip through the electronic ether, with, appropriately enough, the oldest established on-line service, CompuServe.

CompuServe Information Service

Speed: 1200-14.4k baud access
Cost: \$8.95 per month for unlimited Basic Services access
Premium Services \$4.80/hour at 2400 bd \$9.60/hour over 2400 bd

Main Game Titles: **BattleTech**

Sniper

Megawars III

Air Traffic Controller

British Legends

Internet Access: Newsgroups and mail

Users: 2.2 Million

Cool Rating: 2

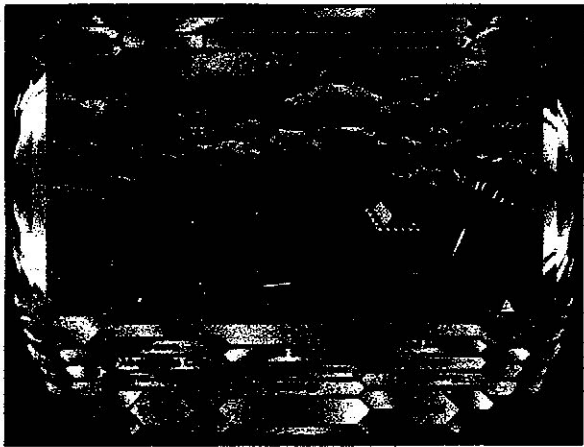
CompuServe is the biggest on-line service, and its offerings simply dwarf most of its younger competitors. If you are looking for anything that can be delivered through a modem, it is somewhere on this giant. Getting lost while surfing CompuServe is almost as easy as getting lost surfing the Net.

But the old and established nature of CompuServe comes across in actual use. Swinging isn't the nature of this beast. Instead, the subliminal hum of technological business is always in the background. This is definitely a corporate culture. The average user is over 40 and has a yearly income roughly equivalent to a small, third-world nation. This is where technologically hip boomers hang out for a good time. Not a youth-oriented, in-your-face, house-of-games kind of environment.

The gaming offerings are good. **BattleTech** is a great game and **Megawars III** is space empire at its finest, but you are going to pay

BUYING IDI





The ground has been broken on TEN's SimCity Online

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

NETWORK MTV (TOTAL ENTERTAINMENT NETWORK)

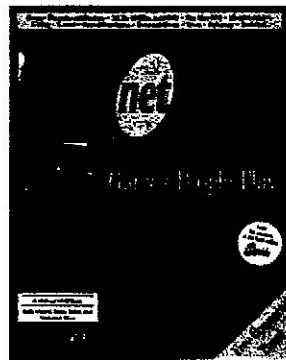
Style, flair, attitude—adjectives that are rarely used to describe on-line systems. Most deserve words like functional, flat, businesslike. While ImagiNation has managed a colorful motif for its system, it gives one the impression of skipping through a telecommunicated CandyLand. Hardly hip. Optigon Interactive's new **Total Entertainment Network (TEN)** is out to inject some attitude into the on-line world. The mission, in the words of founder Daniel Goldman,

"...to do for the on-line world what MTV and Fox have done for the TV world: cater to our audience's specific interests—and break the rules."

What rules do they plan to smash? Visual and interface rules, for a start. The graphic environment of TEN will be very customizable, with a half-dozen graphic templates that can be swapped like Swatch watches to fit your mood, and the system itself will change its graphic look regularly. You will also be able to create a graphic representation of your on-line persona much like in INN, but the tools will be more funky and flexible. They describe the interface as "gestural," which simply means that they've tried to avoid a menued interface in favor of

Further Reading Dept.

Cyberspace is big. Very big. Although this article has walked down the well-lit streets of Cyburbia, there are many other gaming hangouts and happenings tucked away in dark corners of the net. If you'd like to sniff out the more obscure gaming fare, we'd recommend *netgames*, a new book on on-line gaming from the author of the popular *netguide*. Cramped between its fluorescent covers you'll find a ton of info on gaming and network basics. Reach the MAGIC THE GATHERING archives on the Internet. Find out where SHADOWRUN role-players thrash to cyberpunk rock. Get involved in AXIS AND ALLIES play-by-email games. Just about anything and everything that matches the keywords "gaming" and "on-line" gets at least cursory mention in this handy reference. Random House, \$19.00.



a 2-D layout. Commands are placed around the periphery of the screen, making the options more accessible and easy to memorize. TEN will go live in November, and they hope to start slowly, beginning with a core group of users interested in helping them shape the environment. They also hope to provide their users with tools to do their own publishing on-line.

TEN will promote community through virtual hangouts that will function much like an Internet MUD, but will be more powerful. They hope to implement a meta-programming language that will enable people to create virtual objects, like chairs and motorcycles, that have interesting properties.

The biggest news, though, is that TEN will be the home of **SIMCITY ON-LINE**. Maxis' classic city simulator has been adapted to a multi-player environment resulting in what TEN describes as a mix between MONOPOLY and SIMCITY. Games of SIMCITY ONLINE will be played with several players involved with one city. As the game begins, players will bid for land which they can then develop as they please. As their plots of land grow, players will earn rental income and take a chunk of taxes. So, rather than playing a city mayor, players will be more like land owners and developers.

Like the system itself, all of the specifics for SIMCITY ON-LINE have yet to be worked out. TEN will let things evolve, relying heavily on user input to shape the final state of the game. They may eventually introduce politics to the game, either basing mayoral elections upon the sheer number of SimCitizens you "control" or weighting the votes based upon your constituents' opinion of you as a landlord.

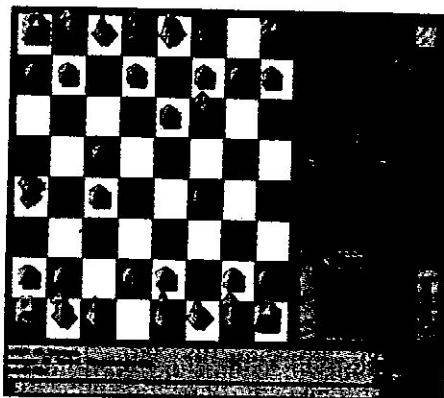
In addition to SIMCITY ONLINE, TEN will launch with several other games. WIZWAR is a computer version of a popular board game of wizards and mazes. The eight different wizard types quest to capture treasure using 75 different spells to aid them along. The system will also offer CHESS and BACKGAMMON, and Optigon is currently trying to license six other popular computer games for on-line use.

Aside from the games, TEN will feature the usual assortment of e-mail services, chat groups, message areas, and software libraries, in addition to limited Internet Usenet access. The Usenet area will be unique in that it will organize and filter the Internet information to make it more accessible and easy to use.

Access Fees: \$10.95 a month for 5 hours of access, plus \$3-4 for each subsequent hour. For more information, contact Optigon at (800) 867-8446. ☺

offer the service nationally.

TEN is targeting young adults who expect the very latest and best computer technology available. The company plans to offer virtual tools for creating individual 3D environments



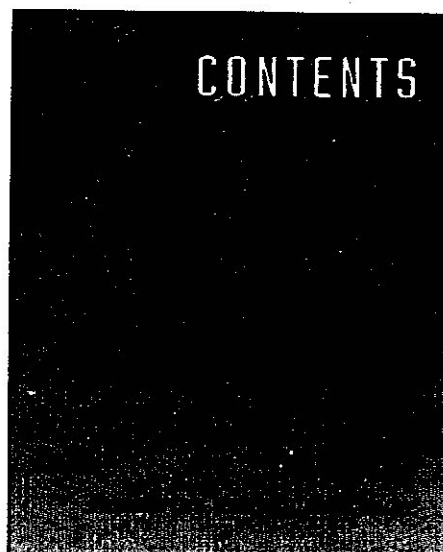
in which players can interact and script events.

Will this cyberspace cutting-edge online service be ahead of its time and will it sustain a strong market segment by leaving the 2400 baud rate users out of the picture? The company says yes, hinging its hopes on people upgrading their modems to get a faster, more interactive service.

Rates for TEN have not yet been disclosed, but sources indicate they should be comparable to rates charged by major online service providers. Optigon, 510/596-8700.

— Patrick McKenna, *Newsbytes*

See **INTERACTIVE**, page 36



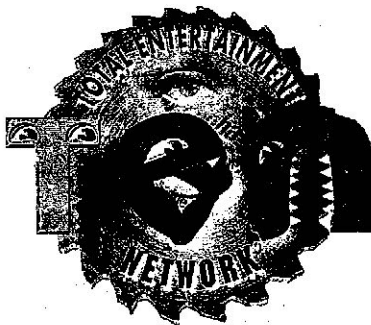
ONLINE MULTIMEDIA GAMES

TEN, the first online service devoted to real-time multi-player games, custom graphic environments, and user interactivity at 9600bps speeds is set to make its debut soon. The Bay Area's Total Entertainment Network (TEN) is currently in its late testing stages.

Launched by a former executive from Maxis, maker of SimCity, TEN should be accessible by year end. The company says it will offer a multi-player version of SimCity as one of its first games. The company also says that its service will not be a copy of or necessarily a competitor with the Imagination Network (previously known as Sierra Online).

According to the company, TEN is more than multi-player, real-time games. TEN says it will deliver Internet services and a better, more exciting interface than any online service available today. By not offering its service at lower baud rates, TEN says it can offer a cutting-edge service which concentrates on high-end graphics and multi-user interactivity.

TEN is still accepting beta testers, but those outside the Bay Area will have to pay long distance rates to access the service. Once the testing is complete, the company will have a Sprint connection established and



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The Total Entertainment Network

Facts and Features

Optigon Interactive introduces a new online service for PC and Macintosh systems. The "Total Entertainment Network" (TEN) is designed to satisfy the demands of a new generation of progressive computer users. TEN and its subscribers together will be creating a new form of interactive entertainment.

Features

- Full high resolution graphical user interface -- in fact, we've got a few to choose from.
- Online services such as local Internet and e-mail, newsgroups, chat areas, file libraries and news wires
- The best in multi-player gaming including SimCity, one of the most popular computer games of all time
- Customization features like custom paths and macros
- Enhanced subscriber identity with digitized portraits and profiles
- Managed information services such as Internet newsgroup managers
- User-created object-oriented graphical environments
- Tools for more effective (and fun) interaction such as graphical chat tools

The TEN Philosophy

The Total Entertainment Network is designed for a progressive audience who is tired of the bland, corporate systems that dominate the online scene. The high-resolution graphics are powerful, the features are extensive, and the speeds are high (no seat belts required)! All the services are designed to promote creativity, customization, interaction and play. TEN allows subscribers to extend their personalities into a virtual fun space.

Management Information and Customization

So many systems seem to treat the user like a baby dumped into a computer lab: millions of options, but they are still restricted in their ability to shape the system they are using. It's still the old TV paradigm of non-interactivity. The real publishing tools are still only the one-to-many publishers (such as traditional magazines), with only very underpowered

message boards available for subscribers. The Internet has provided proof that people want to and are very capable of publishing information for themselves and others. People now demand the next step: tools to help them sort through the universe of information, so they aren't just lost in space.

In addition to the featured participation of media celebrities, we will be providing easier ways for subscribers to become stars themselves in a virtual world which, as time goes by, will become an integral part of the real world around us. Subscribers aren't just along for the ride anymore. They are helping form the technology and institutions of this new frontier.

Why Entertainment?

People are working so hard these days and dealing with such informational overload that they are craving entertainment in all areas of their lives. We agree -- people should be able to have fun in whatever they do. Our focus on entertainment means that we cater to special interests and personal obsessions. "Total Entertainment" means that we believe in a broader definition of entertainment beyond just movies, books, games, etc. Ideally everything should be brought under this umbrella. Finding the information you want, sharing it with others, and playing with that information can be as entertaining as playing a game. *And yes, we also have games.*

What About Future Plans?

We are heading into new integrated virtual environments where people can build worlds for each other which, rather than isolating them from the real world, actually help give them more access to the real world and people. With simulated environments, there will be the equivalent of a city-full of stories going on -- sort of a live soap opera. People can just pick and follow some of the ones they find more interesting. In this way they can sometimes just sit back, watch and be entertained by the antics of the more "outgoing" subscribers.



Corporate Profile

Overview

Optigon Interactive was founded on the belief that the existing online computer services do not adequately fulfill the needs of our peers: today's young adult, computer-savvy generation. These services, originally developed by and for Baby Boomers, have become integral productivity and informational tools in the workplace. But the first generation of Americans to embrace computers at home, a group cynically termed "Generation X," learned about computers first as recreational and entertainment devices. To members of this generation, computers represent fun, excitement and a place to play and explore with friends. Optigon Interactive's vision is to fill the void this generation experiences in an industry geared towards Boomers.

TEN

The Total Entertainment Network fills this void. TEN is a new online system focused on cutting-edge entertainment services. Multi-player gaming and simulated environments, as well as extensive communication and information services, are enhanced by high speeds, sophisticated high resolution graphics and crisp sound. The easy interface, multi-tasking and efficient information access help make the Total Entertainment Network the future of progressive entertainment.

While creating TEN, Optigon has paid particular attention to the needs and desires of their target audience. For example, they recognize that one of the key reasons young people engage in various forms of entertainment is the opportunity it gives them to interact and socialize with one another. As a result, TEN has been designed with a rich array of features to enhance and facilitate communications between subscribers.

Inherent in the design of TEN are a distinctive personality, style and point-of-view. These are clearly conveyed through TEN's unique content and arresting graphic design, unlike the drab and predictable offerings and interfaces provided by other services. While initially attracting subscribers with compelling multi-player games and simulated environments, TEN expects to retain them by providing a service with a hip, irreverent attitude that fosters the growth of on-going electronic communities. This is truly the cutting edge of computer entertainment technology.

Founders

Daniel Goldman, President. Goldman was raised in Walnut Creek, California, where his interest in programming began at the age of eight when his father brought home programmable calculators and research computers. He began developing games and other applications on his own computer, managed his high school's computer system and worked for a local computer hardware company. Goldman wrote and operated a popular bulletin board, "The Inner Circle," starting in 1983.

He attended the University of California, Berkeley, majoring in computer science and physics. While there, he worked for Heuristic Software, developing computer chess machines. In 1986, Goldman started collaborating with Janice Linden-Reed, working on a sophisticated online environment/game. Given the state of online services, it soon became apparent that a new approach was required. They began design and research for a completely new online service.

In 1988, Goldman began a successful association with Maxis, creators of SimCity. Goldman managed his own company, Optigon Interactive, which implemented IBM, FM-TOWNS and NEC conversions of Maxis games and researched and developed technologies for an online computer system. Through SimLabs, Goldman did volunteer work for the EPA and World Health Organization.

In 1993, Goldman completed his obligations to Maxis and accelerated Optigon Interactive's development of TEN.

Janice Linden-Reed, design director and co-founder. Raised in Ceres, California, Linden-Reed attended Diablo Valley College and John F. Kennedy University. A life-long love of gaming led her to design computer games and online environments in 1986 in partnership with Daniel Goldman. Maxis recruited her to design a Gameboy cartridge game, published by Asmik in 1989. Linden-Reed also worked for Maxis as project manager and assisted Goldman with IBM conversions of Maxis simulations. To pursue her interests in pure design, Linden-Reed joined Visual Concepts, where she designed "Dominus" for IBM and worked on cartridge games such as "Harley's Humongous Adventure." In 1992, she began full time work with Goldman to devote her attention to the online system project. Her responsibilities include interface design, art direction, game design and management.



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Online Gets Hip: Optigon Provides a Sneak Peek at New "Total Entertainment Network"

Hot new online service to focus on cutting edge entertainment services

Chicago -- June 25, 1994 -- Optigon Interactive today introduced the "Total Entertainment Network"sm (TENsm), an online service designed to rattle the fledgling online industry with its sleek, sophisticated host of entertainment offerings. While the large online services provide limited opportunities for interaction and gaming, TEN paves the way for a dynamic range of multi-player games and simulated environments. The national operation will begin beta testing in 1995.

"TEN will appeal most to younger people interested in playing, exploring, interacting and creating," said Daniel Goldman, president and founder of Optigon Interactive. "It's for users who want to actively participate in building a community, not for those who are content to hide behind their computer screens."

Goldman noted that TEN revolves around a five-point core philosophy: emphasize entertainment; do it with a sophisticated style; demand

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involvement; cater the information services to the users' priorities; and guarantee the technology will keep up with the high performance needs of subscribers. "The future of TEN will be shaped by our community members' ideas and creations as much as our own," he added.

Optigon Interactive

Optigon Interactive, founded in 1987, created the Total Entertainment Network, an online system integrating the best features of games and entertainment, state-of-the-art graphics and audio, real-time performance and information services. By providing direct access to the most advanced and progressive games and information, TEN will promote and foster new forms of online interaction that are fun, engaging and informative. In addition, TEN will allow users the freedom to express their creativity and personalities while building unique electronic communities out of shared interests.

Optigon Interactive is based in Emeryville, California.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Total Entertainment Network To Feature Online Debut of Popular SimCityGame

***Maxis and Optigon Interactive's Agreement Puts Popular SimCity Game
On the New "Online Service With an Attitude"***

Emeryville, California -- August 10, 1994 -- Optigon Interactive today announced that it will produce SimCity™ from Maxis™ for the company's sleek new Total Entertainment Network_{sm} (TEN_{sm}) online service. TEN's version of SimCity -- one of the bestselling computer games of all time -- will allow multiple players to interactively cooperate, communicate, and compete in real-time within simulated cities online.

The agreement between the two companies gives Optigon Interactive the right to produce online versions and secure the sub-licensing rights of several Maxis games, allowing them to distribute multi-player versions of these simulations to other online services.

"We've had a lot of demand for putting SimCity online and Optigon is the best partner for us to accomplish this," said Will Wright, co-founder of Maxis. "Their philosophy of providing a platform that promotes virtual communities, player involvement and a sense of fun coincides so much with the intentions behind our games that it's a perfect fit."

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"We are incredibly excited to be able to offer the first online, multiple-player version of SimCity," said Daniel Goldman, president of Optigon Interactive. "The whole purpose of our service is to provide people with the opportunity to explore, interact, create and play within virtual online communities. Providing an online version of Maxis' SimCity is a giant leap in this direction."

Optigon Interactive

Optigon Interactive, founded in 1987, created the Total Entertainment Network, an online system integrating the best features of games and entertainment, state-of-the-art graphics and audio, real-time performance and information services. By providing direct access to the most advanced and progressive games and information, TEN will promote and foster new forms of online interaction that are fun, engaging and informative. In addition, TEN will allow users the freedom to express their creativity and personalities while building unique electronic communities out of shared interests.

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Delphi

Speed: 2400-14.4k Baud
Cost: 10/4 plan: \$10/4 hours, \$4/hour additional
20/20 plan: \$20 for 20 hours, \$1.80/hour additional
Internet Access Surcharge: \$3/Month
Games: **Air Warrior**
BattleTech
Island of Kesmi
Harpoon On-line

Internet Access: Complete Access
Users: Over 120,000
Cool Rating: 4

The first thing the experienced on-liner notices about Delphi is that the interface really blows. In this world of pretty graphics, who still uses a text interface? However, once the new kid gets past the interface, Delphi turns out to have a number of good offerings at very reasonable rates.

For instance, with its new acquisition of a number of multiplayer games, Delphi just became the cheapest place to play **BattleTech** or **Air Warrior**. There isn't a service out there that is going to beat \$1.80 an hour. Period.

Delphi is also cool with the under-30 crowd, mainly due to being owned by the mad Hun of media, Rupert Murdoch. Hence, you can find areas specifically for *X-Files* and other great Fox shows.

Most importantly, Delphi is the largest Internet provider out there.

GEnie

Speed: 2400-9600 Baud
Cost: \$8.95/Month for 4 hours, \$3.00/hour additional
Prime Time Access: \$12.50/Hour!
Games: **100 Years War**
Air Warrior
Cyberstrike
Federation
BattleTech (This game should just start its own service)

Internet Access: e-mail and FTP files on request
Users: Will Not Release Information
Cool Rating: 3

For wargamers GEnie has the only thing they need: Dunnigan. James Dunnigan, that is. His personal creation, **100 Years War**, is the most accurate war game available on-line.

Cyberstrike is also highly hip. However, the gaming be darned, this service has a downright clunky interface and sucks dough out of your account like nothing but CompuServe (and can even be *more* expensive if you log on at the wrong speed at the wrong time).

EWorld

Speed: 2400-9600
Cost: 8.95/Month for 2 hours, \$4.95 an hour additional
Primetime Surcharge of an extra \$2.95

an hour.

Games: Not Yet
Internet Access: e-mail
Users: >16,000

EWorld is the brand-new official Apple on-line service, and is probably the first beta version ever opened up as a working on-line service. The interface is spiffy, but nothing is there yet. They claim they came out of Beta a month ago, but with nothing there, this sure looks like a big beta test (much like the release of the Power PC before the architecture was really locked in, or software was available), to the EG on-line team.

EWorld claims they are going to have a text RPG area and Inside Mac Games on-line. Other than that, no plans for gaming at this stage.

To understand this service, just remember this is an official Apple organ, and is going to be packaged with every new Mac from here on out. It can be expected to be an on-line tech support and haven for Mac people. Since Apple doesn't seem too concerned about gaming issues, it is a good bet this on-line service isn't going to be a gaming mecca.

One thing is in their favor, however: the phone tech support for this service is the quickest and most polite of any in the history of on-line, not a small consideration for someone with a tech problem.

Multi-Player Game Network

Speed: 2400 Baud
Cost: \$4.00/Hour
Games: **Operation Market Garden**
Kingdom of Drakkar
Empire Builder

Internet Access: e-mail and Newsgroups
Users: 8,000
Cool Rating: 4

This service doesn't have a spunky front end or very many offerings. And not even that many people. So why is it cool? Well, it gets the cool rating on sheer spunk. This is a little-guy service doing exactly one thing: delivering multiplayer games. This service fits in the cracks. Also, they aren't just selling you the same old games every one else has; these games are original here, and are generally good in execution. EG loves the underdog, and MPG-net is definitely the underdog.

ImagNation Network

Speed: 1200-9600 Baud
Cost: \$9.95/Month for 5 hours, \$3.50 per additional hour
Gold Plan: \$49.95/Month for 25 hours
Platinum Plan: \$99.95/Month for 50 Hours
Games: **Red Baron**
NTN Trivia
3-D Golf
Shadow of Yserblus



Internet Access: None
Users: 40,000
Cool Rating: 4

ImagNation is a small network devoted only to gaming. The cool part about ImagNation is their interface, in which the user creates a cartoon for a picture of themselves. Everything in the service is accessed by the cartoon paradigm, and it makes this service, hands down, the easiest to use.

But, other than games and some chat, there is really very little here. If you are getting on ImagNation just for the games, great. But if you want a little more out of your on-line service, this isn't the place to be.

As far as the games go, ImagNation is expanding their game offerings by the end of the year with **Front Page Sports Football** and **Cyberplex**, an edutainment center.

Total Entertainment Network

Speed: 9600-14.4k Baud
Cost: \$10.95/ Month for 5 hours, \$3-\$4 per hour additional.
Games: **SimCity Multiplayer**
Wiz War
Chess
Backgammon

Internet Access: Mail and Managed Newsgroup Access
Users: Unknown
Cool Rating: 5 (tentative)

TEN, outlined a couple of months ago in an EG *Net* column, is a new service in beta out in the San Francisco Bay area. It should be going on-line by the time this issue goes to print.

TEN is the next generation of on-line interface, 640x480 graphics and sound up front. Instead of a simple user name or "toons," actual pictures will come up to identify users. The service also will make multimedia authoring tools available to users as soon as possible, allowing them to make their own on-line "environments" for others to tour or chat in.



This service is going specifically for the MTV, 13th Generation crowd, and is going to provide news, but more for entertainment value than investing or other such activities.

Like ImagNation, if you are into the on-line environment for a number of things, and entertainment is just a side bennie, you might prefer another service. Also, low-end equipment need not apply; 9600 is the minimum speed for the service; since most of the processing is handled on *your* end of the interface, the person with the bigger toys gets the better performance.