Top: A medium sized settlement with bountiful fields looks ripe for pillaging. In each sector you must conquer over half the population in order to move onto adjacent lands. *Right*: The boxed artwork for the game.

POWERMONGER

Bullfrog scoop all the awards this month with a game destined for the 16-bit Hall of Fame. *Powermonger* has managed to live up to all expectations (and months of computer press hype), and is a marvelously entertaining and original product.

Washed ashore upon a foreign land, with only a handful of loyal followers, you crave ultimate wealth and power. As a former king, this land will be yours! You must win the support of those you encounter by the art of diplomacy or the thrust of a sword. Only by balancing force with restraint and present needs with those to come will you succeed in your quest for total supremacy.

The game commences with your men camped around a fire next to a small village. They're easily beaten, but is that the right tactic? Do you want to subjugate the population or have them join you of their own free will? Raising a village means deprieving yourself of willing hands who could tend the fields, join your army or invent bows and cannons for your troops. To achieve victory conditions you must carefully build up an army, form alliances with friendly villages and cultivate the land to

provide sustenance for your troops and supporters.

The task's made harder by rival Captains intent on achieving power. As you progress through the game building up resources and kicking ass, the other Captains will be recruiting troops and spreading their sphere of influence. You can expect a battle royal when you eventually meet up with them. Once a Captain has been defeated, he will join forces with you and lead an independent army on your behalf. He can also infiltrate enemy villages and provide useful information to help plan an attack. On longer campaigns it's necessary to look after supplies and make sure harvests are collected and stored for future needs. An army marches on its stomach and if you don't feed them, they'll be less effective in combat, desert or

even join the opposing forces. Likewise, if you keep an army on the move for too long and in poor weather they'll also go AWOL.

Be warned, the complex

Top: The vector graphics provide some stunning scenery. *Above*: You are on the attack, but you've got your tactics wrong. If you'd attacked from behind the hill you could have taken the enemy by surprise. Note the angels rising up to Heaven as soldiers die in battle.

gameplay in *Powermonger* won't suit the hack 'n' slash brigade or the shoot 'em up fanatic, but Bullfrog have endeavoured to make the game controls as simple as

possible. Two maps provide all the necessary information you'll need to start the game. The smaller map, in the upper left hand corner of the screen, shows the part of the world you're attempting to conquer. By clicking onto the four map icons, information can be gathered on the location of rival settlements and their stocks of food as well as the lie of the land, roads, men, forests and workshops.

The main map offers a digital close up view of one section of the land and can show entire villages in fine detail, lock, stock and courtyard. The vector graphics-based landscape provides a highly flexible viewing system capable of generating hills, rivers, waterfalls and valleys. The 3D representation allows you to zoom in, zoom out, and rotate the lands as you want. The buildings and people are bitmapped graphics that grow and shrink but which don't actually rotate with the landscape. By clicking the pointer arrow on the compass you can move about the main map fairly easily. To move faster, just click on the smaller map and instantaneously the larger map displays the area selected.

All actions are controlled by just 20 icons at the base of the large map. From here you can set aggression levels, ➤

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POWERMONGER

issue orders to attack a village, conscript troops, invent things, trade or bribe villagers, make alliances, spy on your enemies, search for food or equip your soldiers with weapons. As there is only one screen in the whole game everything is simplicity itself. A special query symbol (signified by a question mark) allows you to access information about any living or non-living object in the game by clicking onto them. For example, click on to a house and you'll get information windows on the people who live there, the type of building and settlement, to what Captain the settlement belongs, the nearest forest, how much food exists in the entire settlement, and what stocks the village has accumulated.

The invent icon is handy for obtaining weapons and farming equipment. This is useful for trading with other villages as food is the universal currency and if you're short on supplies you can always flog them some bows and arrows or a plough. A cannon or catapult is also useful when attempting to flatten a village, but will take a lot of manpower to move it. Things can only be invented in villages which have a workshop. The Captain's aggression level and the position of the settlement will determine what you'll produce. If your settlement is near a forest and you set your aggression to maximum, you'll probably end up with bows and pikes, but if your posture was passive you'd most likely get a plough. This complex interaction of game elements is an example of the far reaching gameplay involved in *Powermonger*. Obviously the 13 months taken to develop the game have been put to good use.

Posture levels also decide the outcome of battles. If a Captain's posture is aggressive his troops will kill more people in the course of a battle. If set at passive he'll only kill a few and put the majority of people to work for him. The more aggressive he is, the more food he'll take from a captured village and the better trading deals he

will set up.

The first few lands are easy to conquer but from then on they get progres-sively harder. With 195 lands to invade you're go-ing to be playing Power-monger for some time. As if this wasn't enough a special Random Land option is capable of gener-ating 4 to the power 59 worlds, enough to keep you occupied for a lifetime. The Amiga can be linked up to another Amiga or ST so up to 3 friends can join in and play against you and there will also be additional data disks released which will develop the world of *Powermonger* even further. These will keep the basic gameplay but change a number of the game's parameters. Nothing
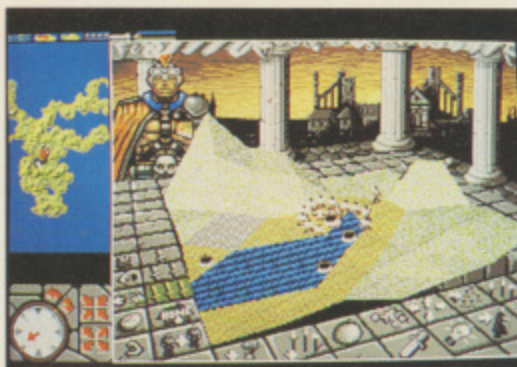
Your men sit round the campfire, eating a recently slaughtered sheep. Such animals are a good supply of food for an army on the march, but are found in limited supply.

Winter has come and it's snowing. This effect only lasts for a few seconds but it's annoying when you're poised to strike a town. Food is rather scarce during the winter months and it's not really a good time to launch an attack.

JOB[0]: GOING TO
JOB[2]: IN CAMP
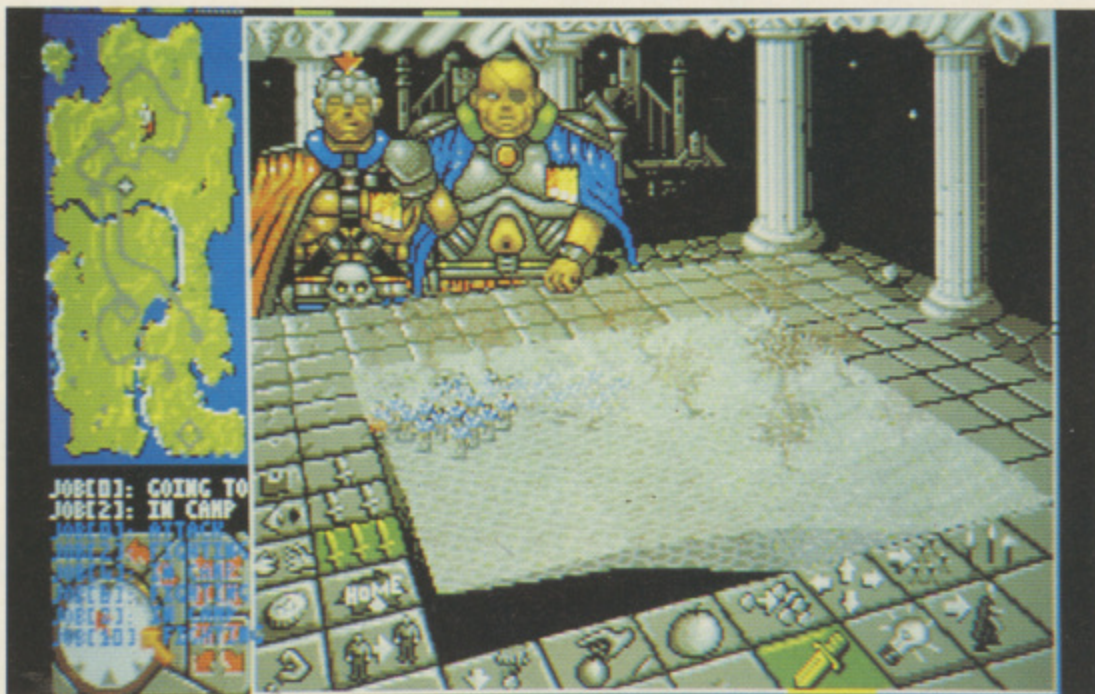
has been decided upon as yet, but it would be possible to update the game to include modern warfare or change the land-scape to that of an alien world.

Powermonger is the most com-plete game I've played and makes full use of the Amiga's capabilities. It's destined to be-come a classic of its type. Buy it and get the power.

Dan Slingsby

You've got the whole world at your feet! After beating a captain in battle, he'll join you in your quest. He also joins you at the battle table. With two armies on the go, you can plan more complicated strategies.

you have been defeated

Things aren't going to well.
Your Captain's been killed in battle.
Time to reload and try again.

ELECTRONIC ARTS £29.99

> Superb gameplay matched by top-notch graphics

GRAPHICS	92%
SOUND	82%
LASTABILITY	96%
PLAYABILITY	95%

OVERALL 95%