

powermonger

ELECTRONIC ARTS £29.99



God games like *Supremacy*, *Millennium 2.2*, *UMS 2*, *Populous* and *Sim City* are hypnotically compulsive. None of them, though, had as much to live up to as *Powermonger*. It's the latest game from the Bullfrogs, the programmers who created *Populous*, which was deservedly one of the biggest-selling ST games of all time. But although this is a God game played on an isometric 3D landscape, that's where any similarity to *Populous* reaches an abrupt end.

Your ambition in *Powermonger* is to conquer a staggering 195 territories – but you handle each of them individually, so in any single game the objective is to win just one territory. You can then save your position to disk with the save-game option, coming back later to tackle more.

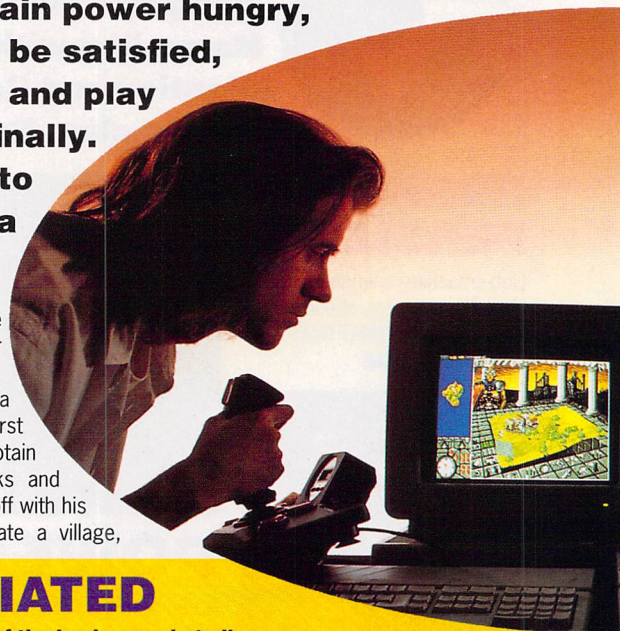
An overview map in the top left of the screen shows the entire terri-

If you're the sort who longs for a starring role in the Gulf War, or have a ghoulish fascination with dead bodies, or you're just plain power hungry, then your needs are about to be satisfied, sicko. Forget all the rumours and play *Powermonger* for yourself – finally. Mark Higham discovers how to subjugate villages and bring a nation under your command

tory you're playing on, while a detailed close-up map reveals a small section of it in impressive 3D. You can use this to zoom in on individual characters, settlements and battles. By clicking on four icons at the top of the screen you can spotlight settlements, people, roads and contours on the overview map to

help plan where to direct your campaign.

To initiate a move you first select a Captain from your ranks and then send him off with his men to subjugate a village,



WAR: A GUIDE FOR THE UNINITIATED

That expanse of space in the centre of the screen is devoted to displaying a detail of the landscape, but all your decisions are made by clicking on the icons round the map. When you make a move where a location must be specified (as in the case of Attack, Trade and Invent), you choose your destination by clicking on the small overview map

POSTURE Click on one, two or three swords to determine your aggression level. The "Posture" setting affects all sorts of things in the game. On a high aggression level you find it very hard to strike an alliance with someone but you are able to kill many more villagers in an attack. You can set Captains up so they each have different posture settings

DISK OPTIONS Besides loading and saving the game, this icon also gives you the opportunity to switch to multi-play

SPY This enables you to send out a spy to infiltrate your enemies' village and bring back useful information

ALLIANCE This icon gives you the chance to form an alliance with a village held by the opposition

TRADE Provided you haven't fought a village previously, you can offer to trade with it. You may pick up weapons or food, depending on the village's surplus stock

QUERY Click anywhere on the main map with this icon highlighted and you receive additional details. This is useful for discovering the strength of a village before you attack it

GO HOME If a battle gets too tough you can withdraw by clicking here. Your Captain returns to his home village with all his men

GET FOOD Instructs your army to visit a specified village and gather any food you find. The amount you come back with depends on your Captain's "Posture" setting

SUPPLY FOOD Click here to dispatch a Captain to drop food at a specified location

DE-RANK This icon disbands a Captain's men. The number disbanded depends on the Captain's posture setting

GET MEN Enables you to recruit men into your Captain's army

EQUIP INVENTION Once you've developed a weapon you can give it to your men, improving their fighting abilities

SEND CAPTAIN Move your Captain around the map with this icon and all his men follow

INVENT Provided you have a workshop in your villages, you can build or develop new weapons

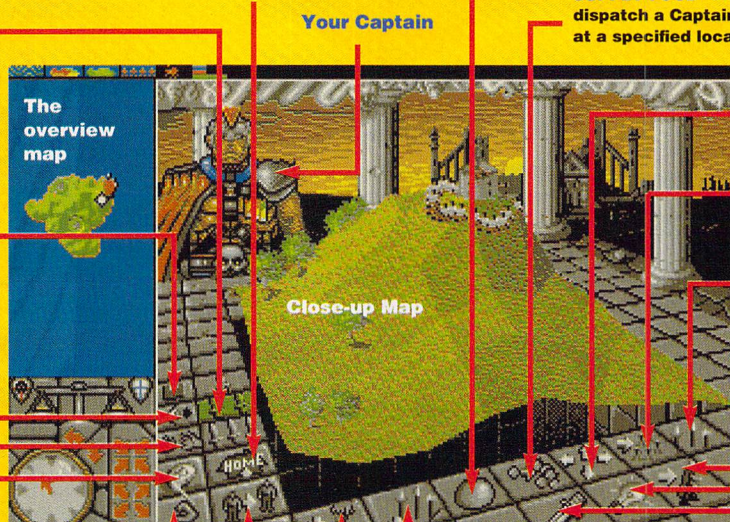
ATTACK Send your men out to take over a new village. Villages with a workshop are the best to attack, since you can then begin to develop your own weapons

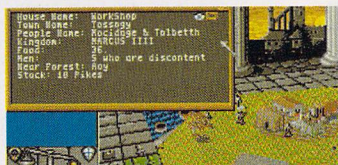
DROP INVENTION Enables you to leave an invention with another village

DROP FOOD Enables you to drop a cache of food so you can pick it up later. The amount of food you drop is determined by your Captain's aggression level

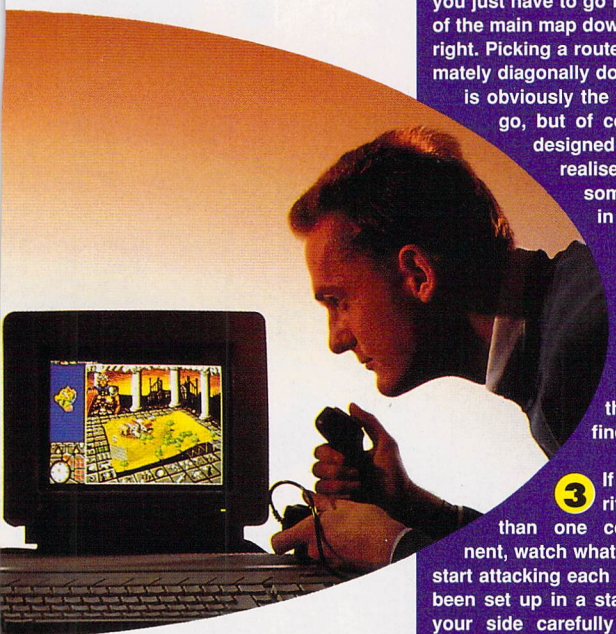
TRANSFER MEN In serious and lengthy games you can accumulate up to four Captains. This icon enables you to transfer men from one Captain to another. The number of men transferred also depends on your posture setting

Click on the different icons to highlight landmarks on the overview map (top left)





■ Using the Query icon, you can call up details about any area of the landscape. Here, you have clicked on a workshop and you're duly informed that the people are developing pikes



■ Use a datalink to connect two STs together and you can play *Powermonger* against a friend. Build up an effective arsenal of weapons and try to wipe him off the island before he turns on you. Don't get the wrong idea: this isn't war, it's just a game – a sweaty, bloody and enthralling game

trade or form an alliance. At the start of a game you have only one Captain but you can accumulate more as you press forward.

In the first territory all you have to do to win is race round the island and attack every settlement you can lay your sword to before your obedient serfs starve to death. To attack, you select the Attack icon and then highlight the settlement you want to target. Your men race off to it and begin to attack. If it's equipped with superior weapons you're likely to fail – and in this case small angels rise from the battlefield as your men are sliced to death. If you succeed in defeating the village, your men gather in a circle around your Captain until you decide what audacious move to make next.

Usually you wouldn't charge short-sightedly into battle. Instead you first check how far the village tribe have advanced and how many people live in the village. You may

STRAIGHT FROM THE PROGRAMMER'S MOUTH

To get you off on the right track, *FORMAT* went to programming team Bullfrog's head honcho, Peter Molyneux, to get you his Top Ten Tips for advancing through the early stages of the game.

Take it away, Peter...

1 You don't have to conquer all 195 territories to win the game: you just have to go from the top left of the main map down to the bottom right. Picking a route going approximately diagonally down the big map is obviously the shortest way to go, but of course when we designed the worlds we realised this and put some real toughies in your way.

2 If you do happen to meet a particularly tough land, consider going around this territory to find an easier one.

3 If you start a territory with more than one computer opponent, watch what they do. If they start attacking each other they have been set up in a state of war. Pick your side carefully and make an alliance with the better side (by clicking on the Hands icon on the left side and then selecting one of his villages). This enables you to use all of his resources, such as food and equipment. Be careful if you break the alliance, though, since he'll then tend to pick your villages to attack. Also, he has the capacity to break the alliance as well, so don't trust him too much.

4 When you first start into a territory, check how many men are under your command. Click on some of these troops to see if they are using any weapons.

5 Beware whenever you attack towns which have been inventing weapons. The people from these towns try to pick up the weapons from their workshop before engaging you in battle.

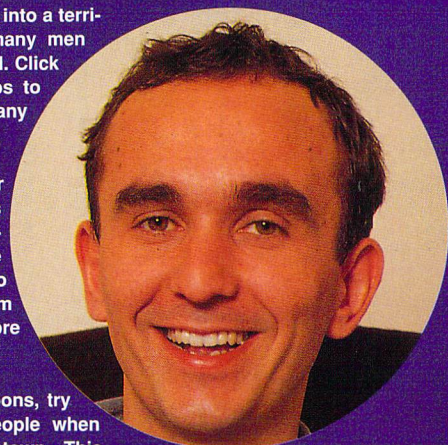
6 If a town has weapons, try to ambush the people when they are far from the town. This stops them picking up the weapons.

7 Sometimes it is worth inventing rather than attacking. Bear in mind that a person equipped with a pike can kill as many as two people holding nothing, and someone equipped with a sword can kill up to three people holding nothing. A bow means the person holding it can kill from a distance, and cannons or catapults are deadly.

8 If you have invented bows, it's a good idea to have an army equipped half with bows and half with other weapons.

9 Bear in mind that a character's strength in hand to hand combat depends on his age and how much he likes you. This also applies to the power of bowmen.

10 It takes a very long time to produce a cannon or catapult – but if the town that's in the process of making it is defeated, the stage that the cannon was at is saved, so



■ Bullfrog's main man, Peter Molyneux, gives his own advice for getting to grips with *Powermonger*

the victor has less time to wait for the finished weapon.

Thanks, Peter. A round of applause for Peter, ladies and gentle-

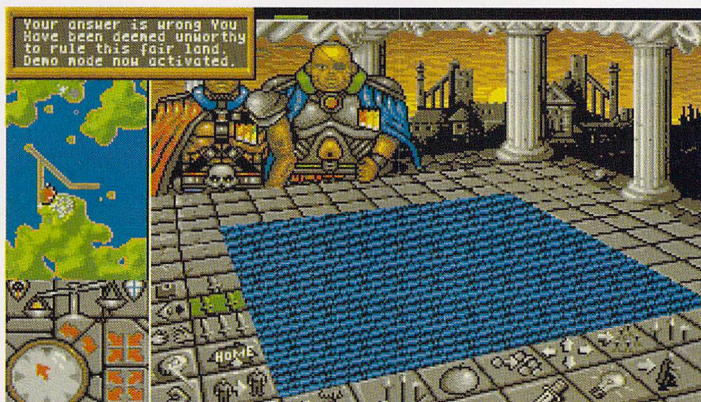
11 Don't be afraid to run away from a battle if things start looking bad for you.

12 Never let your king wander around with less than four men – he is often picked on and killed by unfriendly villages.

13 It's a good idea to try and get at least one town with a workshop early on in the game.

At this point we decided to switch on our tape-recorder and leave Peter sitting on a rock, staring into the sunset, reeling out tips to *Powermonger*. Watch for more in future issues of *ST FORMAT*!

*“This is one of the most absorbing games around, in the same league as *Supremacy* and *Millennium 2.2*”*



■ With two Captains, you can proceed much more quickly, ravaging the lands and subjugating the people twice as fast

a bow or cannon can fire on you from a great distance and pikes can easily kill two people with one blow.

Instead of attacking a village armed with this kind of technology, it's in your interests to form an alliance instead. By joining forces with another Captain you increase your attacking ability and proceed twice as quickly around the map. You can leave one Captain and his men to develop weapons and another to attack or recruit other villages.

It's wise to spend time inventing your own weapons. The more time you give villages to develop a weapon, the better the object they come up with. But you have to remember that all the time weapons are being developed in your villages, they're being invented in the villages belonging to your enemy as well.

A pair of scales at the bottom left of the screen indicate your progress. When the scales have tipped in your favour you can retire

TWICE THE THRILL

The Bullfrogs have always been fascinated by the idea of multi-player games – and who can blame them? The idea of playing against a friend rather than a computer opponent is enough to make your hands sweat in anticipation. In *Powermonger* there are two forms of multi-player mode available, and both demand that each player competes on a separate ST. You can connect the two machines using either a data or modem link. To connect the machines using a datalink, you need to buy yourself an RS232 lead (just £10.95 from Lightwave, ☎ 051 639 5050). This method demands that both STs be in the same room. The alternative, a modem link, requires both players to own their own modems. This is more costly but the connection between the STs is then made across the telephone line, enabling you to play either against your mate next door or your Swedish pen-friend.

When in multi-player mode both players choose their side from any of four tribes. The view shown on your ST is identical to that in a single-player game, but when you raid a village it belongs to your friend and not an invisible opponent. For more of a challenge, you can opt to switch on up to two computer opponents who also play on the same map. You then need to defeat his villages as well as those belonging to your mate if you want to win *Powermonger*.

from the fight. You're then informed that you've won the island and you're returned to the main map where you can select the next adjacent territory to attack.

In the more advanced games you can have as many as four computer opponents all competing for prime spots on the territory. They often develop weapons judiciously and then attack with prime accuracy. You don't win the game by being nasty but by caring for your people's needs. You must keep them supplied with food and be sure to attempt alliances and trade, not just whip out your sword and go on a bloodthirsty search for flesh.

Why is it, we wonder, that some magazines reviewed *Powermonger* three and even four months ago when this is the first finished copy?

EFFECTS

This is no simple re-hash of *Populous*. Although the isometric 3D playing area looks similar, the landscape has so much extra detail that it's radically different. Villages comprise taverns, workshops and barns, with smoke effectively pouring out of the occasional chimney. Every character in the game is represented by a small graphic and even has its own name. Using a Query icon you can click on each character and display

his name and profession. There are even sheep roaming the fields and birds flying through the trees.

Complicating your viewpoint and affecting your villages' ability to produce food are regular falls of rain and snow. When the snow falls on the landscape, everywhere pales gradually into white.

Sound effects are equally comprehensive, and for once they aren't limited to a handful of spot indeterminate grunts. Instead, you're treated to the sampled sounds of sheep baaing, birds singing and men going to work in villages. This adds a whole dimension to the gameplay: if you merely overhear the men in enemy villages working you may want to go there and put a stop to their ambitious designs.

VERDICT

Each year there are a tiny handful of games which look like something really special – the ultimate game? Although *Powermonger* is a technically better game than *Populous*, however, it doesn't have the same immediate appeal, and this is going to prove off-putting – particularly to people who've just bought their ST and are new to strategy-war games.

Sadly, what lets *Powermonger* down most is its 44-page manual. It adequately explains how each icon can be used and how to utilise the different options to your own advantage, but unlike comparable manuals such as *Supremacy's* and *Imperium's*, it lacks a walk-through of the first few minutes of play. Instead, you're tossed into the action and left mercilessly to your own devices to work out by trial and error the best way to win a campaign. Thus, the first time you pick up *Powermonger* you're not sure whether you should concentrate on inventing new weapons or just stick to your sword and dart round the island using it on every poor little homestead you can reach.

Nevertheless, once you've finally worked out how to proceed this is one of the most absorbing games around, in the same league as *Supremacy* and *Millennium 2.2*. With astonishing attention to detail and an engrossing range of options at your fingertips, you just can't stop conquering villages.

MARK HIGHAM

GRAPHICS	9
SOUNDTRACK	9
INTELLIGENCE	7
INSTANT APPEAL	7
LONG TERM INTEREST	9
OVERALL	93%

INTO THE POWERMONGER DOMAIN



1 The conquest is about to start. At the beginning of a game you have just one Captain. All your men gather round, waiting for the command to go into battle

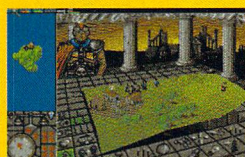


2 You examine the map and zoom in on a village. It might be worth attacking, but before you make a move check that the village has a workshop. You can invent weapons only in villages equipped with one

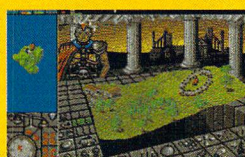
3 You've decided this village is yours, so send all your men off to battle



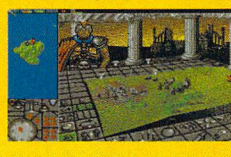
4 (below) They race through the countryside, rapidly reaching their destination. Note that the Captain doesn't venture into battle but stays behind and waits for the outcome



5 Time to get those swords moving and slice your opponents into pieces



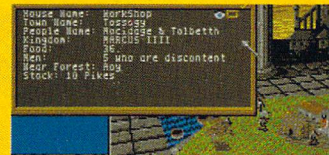
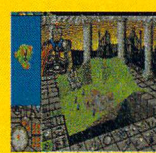
6 (right) The rising angels indicate casualties in your army. Though men have died, you've still been able to take over the village



7 After the fight your men circle round and wait for another command

8 (below) Send them out to develop weapons. Click on the workshop to see what's in progress

9 Now try and form an alliance with another village. This could be helpful to your campaign



10 The alliance is accepted. You now have access to that tribe's settlements and resources



12 (right) Afraid of their skill, you go to war in the middle of winter – then watch as your people die off. But fortunately there are enough survivors to win you the village

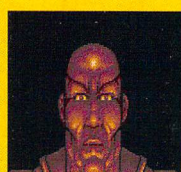


11 You find another village which looks like it might be a promising target, so you send out a spy to gather information. When he returns you have full details of the stage of advancement of the village. Here you can see they're developing pikes



14 The adjacent island. You look around to see if you find anything interesting

13 (right) Retire from the game, having won the first island. That was easy enough – but your opponents get more and more vicious from now on



16 (right) Build some weapons and prepare for a fight. Before you know it, your enemies sneak up behind you and attack



17 Dead already! These bad guys aren't stupid – you don't get much time to explore land and develop weapons

15 (left) You've discovered a workshop, so you take a look inside

