

Technology

Canada/UK partnership launches novel entertainment experience

A British company and two Canadian firms have combined their capabilities to offer visitors to Toronto's CN Tower a novel entertainment experience.

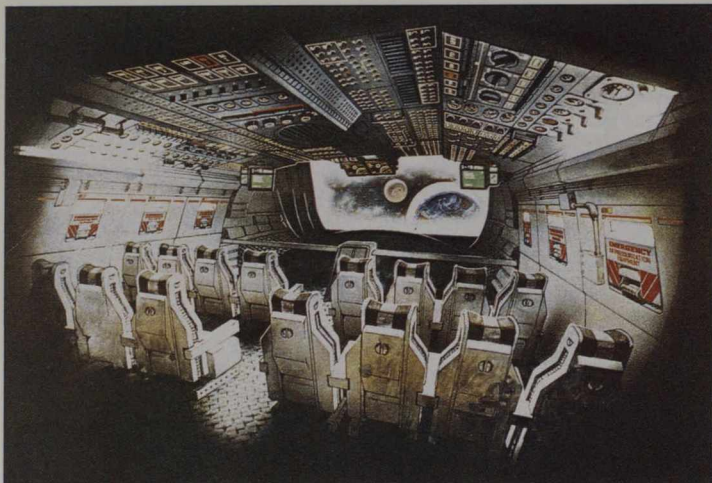


Illustration courtesy of Rediffusion Simulation Ltd

Rediffusion Simulation, a British company that builds aircraft flight simulators, and the Canadian firms of Maple Interactive and Helix Investments have joined forces to form Interactive Entertainments Inc. And together, they have developed and staged 'Tour of the Universe' – a show that is a computer-assisted marriage of flight-simulator motion and state-of-the-art pictures and sound.

'Tour of the Universe' is shown in a specially built 20,000-sq-ft multi-room theatre, which has been built beneath the CN Tower.

The set represents a spaceport in the year 2019, and people who go to the show are invited to imagine that they are boarding a return shuttle flight from Earth to Jupiter.

They are taken through an elaborate series of pre-departure procedures before they ride on one of the two British-built, 40-seat



Exterior of the simulator showing the hydraulic legs used to give the theatre its simulated motion.

flight simulators and view a \$2-million, seven-minute film.

The CN Tower simulator is the first of a growing number of simulators which Interactive Entertainments Inc expects to be installed over the next few years at 20 sites in major capital cities throughout the world.

Moses Znaimer, president and chief executive of City-TV, Toronto, heads up Interactive, a company that is bringing to reality his idea of using space simulators to create unique entertainment experiences.

Canadian company markets integration system

A Canadian company, Keyword Office Technologies Ltd, has developed (and is now marketing in the UK) a system that integrates previously incompatible word processors and also PC-operated word processing software.

Until now, document mobility within local and international business environments has been impeded by the lack of standards or common interfaces between word processing systems.

Now, the Keyword 7000 hardware/software system provides a solution to this mobility problem by facilitating integration of computer systems.

UK interest in the Keyword 7000 system is high and already the product is being used by Barclays Bank, British Aerospace, Jaguar Cars and British Petroleum.

Keyword's UK offices are located at Chesham House, 136 Regent Street, London W1R 5FA.

Optical discs developed for use on micro computers
Geac Computer Corporation

Limited of Markham, Ontario, has developed one of the first optical storage interfaces for micro-computers. It allows personal computers to store and retrieve data from optical discs that are capable of storing more information than a large mainframe computer.

Doug Brooks, manager of optical disc systems at Geac, says that 'because it is a low cost, simple system, it will also allow businesses to experiment with optical disc technology'.

Called the Gig-Attach, the device consists of a small circuit board that attaches to a single personal computer. It contains the special software needed for a personal computer to emulate a terminal with MS-DOS operating software to access the optical disc storage unit. A single optical disc linked to the network can store up to two gigabytes (two billion bytes) of data.

Only one unit needs to be installed because it acts as a gateway, allowing all personal computers on a business local area network to be hooked up to it. Each unit retails for about \$1 195.

Geac, a manufacturer of mainframe computers for multiple transactions that require large storage systems, plans to develop a family of Gig-Attach products to work on a variety of personal computers. The first one is compatible with the PC/XT manufactured by IBM. Geac is also developing an interface for Unix operating systems that will allow any user of the popular software to use optical disc storage.

For more information contact Geac Computers Ltd, Park Lorne, 111 Park Road, London NW8 7JJ.

Computer-run house gives glimpse of future

Tomorrow House Systems Inc of Richmond, British Columbia, is marketing what it calls a home security, monitoring and control system that is linked to a personal computer. The system will wake the residents up in the morning with a computerized voice, turn on appliances and run a complete home security network.

The basic package sells for about \$1 350, not including

installation and the cost of the computer itself. It is designed to perform a wide range of functions but still be affordable to the average homeowner, says company president James Finkleman.

After waking a person up in the morning, the system's synthesized voice can provide information ranging from time and temperature to reminders of appointments or special dates. It can then turn on bedroom lights to a low level, bringing them slowly up to normal to give the eyes time to adjust. By the time one enters the kitchen for breakfast, the coffee could be made and the bacon sizzling in a pan on top of the stove.

The Tomorrow House system can also automatically set the thermostat in the house at various levels to ensure the boiler or air conditioning will be on when required.

Hooked up to a burglar alarm, the system can sound an alarm, turn on all the lights in the house and record the time of any attempted break-ins. In addition, the system can be connected to a smoke alarm in order to light exit routes if a fire breaks out.

More elaborate systems are also available. The basic package can be customized to carry out almost any function the homeowner desires, Finkleman says 'There's no end to it. It depends entirely on your imagination.'

A few of the other possibilities include adding light sensors that will open and close curtains according to the amount of sunlight, and moisture gauges to turn the sprinklers on when the lawn is dry.

New car phone launched in UK market

A new range of cellular telephones, manufactured by the Canadian company, NovAtel, has been launched in the UK by the Carphone Group of Companies.

Designed and engineered at NovAtel's research and development laboratories in Calgary, Alberta, the new phone – NovAtel 2982 – offers several unique features, such as two-line, 16 character alpha-numeric liquid crystal display, patented hands free operation, and a variety of user