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and so do we!

post-menopausal immaculately concepted teen media queen
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LOVING

DIY Hypermedia Publishing: A Primer

BY ERIC SWENSON

Your zine: it's the itch you can't scratch, it's the wad you can't shoot fast enough, it's your morning wood (or puddle). It's, it's, it's—***BLAM!***

At least it is for me. ***BLAM!*** is the **digital**, CD-ROM based **hypermedia zine** that I publish along with my partner, Keith Seward. Together, we are **Necro Enema Amalgamated (NEA)**, a small, poor, hypermedia design studio based in Manhattan. Our goal, as should be yours, is to change the face of the publishing landscape by infusing new paradigms for reading, writing, and lovely expression into the cultural landscape.

Digital: *Coded electronically rather than simply printed.*

Hypermedia: *Computer software that utilizes multimedia elements (combinations of plain text, audio, video, graphics, animations, etc.) in a non-linear fashion to allow for a high degree of interactivity.*

WHY GO DIGITAL?

I'm often asked why we chose to abandon paper and go digital with ***BLAM!*** We developed ***BLAM!*** as a hypermedia publication because we wanted to assault and titillate as many of the viewer/user's senses as possible. Now that affordable technology is available, digital publishing pro-

MOMMY, WHAT'S A DIGITAL ZINE?

There are two primary forms of digital zines. The **ASCII** (or text-only) **Zines** which, due to their tiny, graphic-less size, can be easily distributed over **on-line** telecommunications networks like the non-commercial Internet and the various commercial on-line services such as Compuserve, America Online, the WELL, etc., but provide only information in conventional format. By contrast, the **Hypermedia Floppy Disc** (or **CD-ROM) Zines** provide full hypermedia interaction and experience. This article focuses on **full hypermedia zines**, as opposed to mere **ASCII** zines.

ASCII: *Text.*

Taking the full hypermedia route expands the range of creative and editorial bandwidth available for delivering your message, but you pay a price in terms of initial overhead (cost of hardware, software, packaging, etc.), and delivery restrictions. The bare-bones ASCII-to-Internet route assures you massive, cheap circulation at a very low overhead, but limited to prosaic text output.

This is primarily due to the current state of the world's **telecommunications infrastructure**. There just isn't enough bandwidth or hardware out there to handle the **hypermedia zines**, as opposed to mere **ASCII** zines.

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DADDY, WHAT'S A HYPERMEDIA ZINE PRODUCER DO?

The **DIY** hypermedia zine publisher wears a hundred hats. S/he's a movie producer, an animator, a sound engineer, an art director, a photographer, a typographer, an illustrator, and editor of a goulash of complexly-structured technical art. To become one, you have to adapt to a new context of meaning, one where *text* and *type* no longer refer to words frozen on a page, but to a symbiosis of freely-arranged audio-visual signals and **convergent paradigms**. Hypermedia publishing could be considered **Performative Publishing**: the assimilation and dissemination of various passive, active, and interactive moving, breathing and singing signs. Typography, soundtrack, animation, video (and **subliminal audio-visual embeds**) all live and work together to convey a lovely high-impact media massage—and message.

As a concrete example of what I am talking about, we constructed a special edition of the Autonomedia Press version of Th. Metzger's infamous piece "This is Your Final Warning!" The ***BLAM!*** edition is a performative, interactive explosion that consists of the source text, appropriate and disturbingly-lovely pictorial animations, and a series of soundtracks, all of which are echoed by shimmering **animated typography** and subliminal A/V embeds. The user can control the pace of a majority of her/is reading session by clicking an oversized **hot spot** on the interface which triggers the presentation or re-presentation of **packets** of text.

The performative nature of **BLAM! hypermedia typography** sometimes makes text seem like a form of sound bite. The difference, though, is that these **text bites** retain their integrity and smoothly assimilate into a cohesive, elegant representation of the author's already brilliant text! **Readability** is integral to the success of these performative text bites; the average size for **BLAM!** text is 36 points.

This is 36 point type.

The text for "This is Your Final Warning!" was typeset within a hypermedia **authoring environment** (**Macintosh Hypercard 2.1**), [illegible] complemented

text! **Readability** is integral to the success of these performative text bites; the average size for **BLAM!** text is 36 points.

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The text for "This is Your Final Warning!" was typeset within a hypermedia **authoring environment**

my large, thick hard disk.

Necro Enema Amalgamated has become quite adept at giving traditional, static text the gift of digital life. We acquire material that is written and submitted as plain text and we also contract work that is created originally for the computer. We do not just bring the text of a pre-existing work into the digital domain like an ASCII zine—we enliven the text by employing proprietary and derivative graphic and typographical metaphors, accompanied by sound and motion graphics. Our goal is to make the piece performative, stretching the boundaries of the **CRT** page into a domain for multimedia experiencing.

CRT: *Cathode Ray Tube, or Television Set. An old technology that preceded and presaged the development of virtual reality.*

By retaining well-known interactive elements, such as page turning, and by incorporating exploratory options, such as **hyper-linking**, we retain the capacity to dictate an interactive pace and rhythm, which hopefully accentuates the original, unadulterated genius of the source text without altering its intent. We don't want to make an author sound better or even different, because we have already been convinced of her/his genius. What we want to do is use the digital medium to channel the ***BLAM!*** contributor's every lunch-vomiting punch to the digital brat's solar plexus, with a force undetectable in ink-on-paper publishing, or its hypertext, video, film, or radio analogues.

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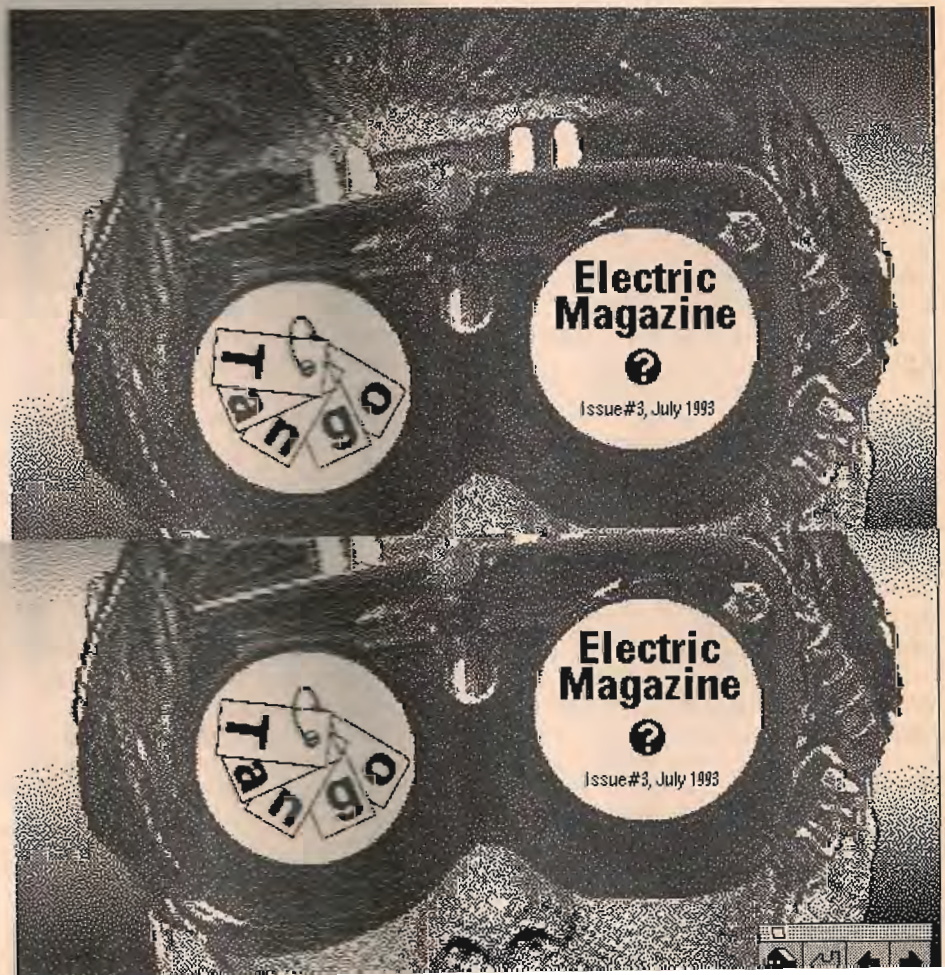
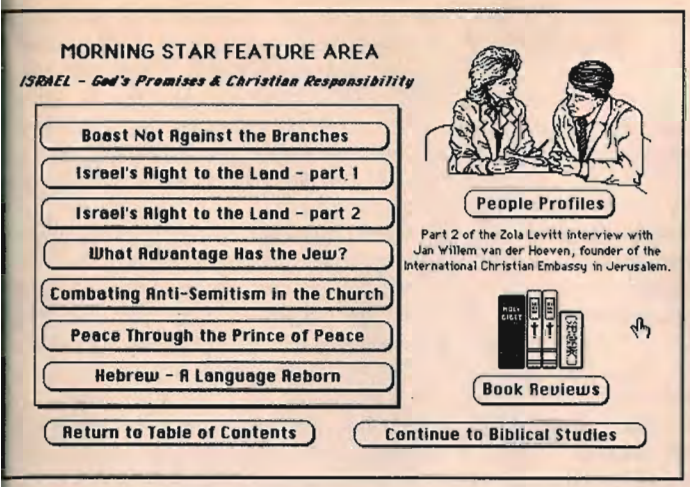
This talk of interactivity and digital design touches on a serious controversy involving the nature of hypermedia

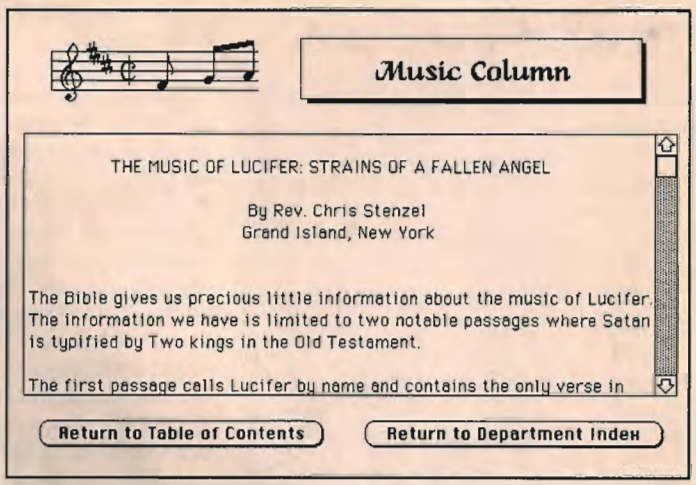
hypermedia technologies provide you, the DIY publisher, with the potential power to manipulate the conscious and subconscious realms of human behavior in ways that were previously available only to large advertising firms and television networks! The law is still quite liquid regarding this evolving new media. Take advantage of this liminal period! Clandestinely and/or overtly reinvent the way people read! Convince them of Your Way, the Easy Way. Do it now, before someone else does it to you!

ad when s/he's reading too fast, or too slow. For example, if you produce a music zine that also includes competitor's zine reviews, and a reader/user is spending too much time salivating over other zines in the Reviews section, automatically throw your own promo (or any other ad of your choice) up on the screen! Force the reader to view/use your intriguing, interactive, hypermedia ad for at least thirty seconds. Provide the reader with a button to automatically print out subscription cards or informative blurbs if he wants to. Write a script that will allow a user/reader with a fax modem to fax in a subscription form on the fly! Or, simply let her/im see a graphic of a screen from, say, both ***BLAM!*** and ***Electronic Hollywood***, so that s/he can compare the prices and contents of these two **E-zines** with the competition. **Necro Enema Amalgamated (NEA)** sells four different categories of ad space: plain art, plain audio, static art with custom soundtrack, and full-scale hypermedia. The reader is presented with the ads via an advertising room—a place where they can flip through the complete database of interactive and passive ads, and via **narrowcast advertising**.

Narrowcasting targets specific categories of readers. ***BLAM! is the only hypermedia zine*** to our knowledge that currently offers the benefits of narrowcast advertising. Ads are narrowcast to match the proclivities of the individual user, confronting her/im automatically at various stages throughout a sojourn in **the zine matrix**, at junctures chosen specifically for that viewer/user! We accomplish this by requiring the first time user to answer an entertaining, animated questionnaire which determines her/is age, gender, sexual persuasion, etc.. This information allows our pre-programmed **advertising engine** to determine whether or not a polysexual ten year old female user should see an ad for *Ziggurat Press* or *Artforum* magazine, while she's gobbling up an episode of "Tom of







ECONOMIES OF SCALE

Commercial digital hypermedia can be successfully distributed via two forms of media: the floppy disk and the CD-ROM. Before you choose a mode of delivery, take heed: users are becoming more and more demanding. Simply hyping your product as a hypermedia extravaganza isn't enough, as it was one or two years ago. Now viewer/users want content as well as flash, and CD-ROM is currently the only way to deliver both at a nominal price. A CD-ROM can hold approximately 600 MB of data (approximately equal to 500 floppy disks). You may not need all of that space, but once your product crosses the 10 MB threshold, you will appreciate having the freedom such a high ceiling affords you.

If you're still debating over whether or not to publish on CD or floppy, ask yourself this question: do you want your customer to have to spend 1/2 hour decompressing and loading ten floppy disks after he gets his half-pound package in the mail? Or, do you want him to be able to rip the package open, pop in a CD and start a'wankin' to your awesome shit? I'd want 'em to start a'wankin'!

The price of CD-ROM players is coming down faster than a manic-depressive on bad cough syrup, and players are being installed in new computer models on both sides of the Mac-IBM platform war. **Ubiquity** is imminent, but that's not to say it isn't problematic. CDs have a bad reputation with many developers and consumers because they are considered to be too slow, too boring and/or too expensive; but this attitude is reversing itself quickly. Affordable CD-ROM players that are fast enough to play full-motion video and deliver high-fidelity audio are now available. And as content improves, as more and more creative producers and publishers enter the market, the product is beginning to drive the market. And, as with any technology-driven commodity, prices will drop as time

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progresses and near-ubiquity and/or a particular hardware obsolescence approaches.

The floppy is still an acceptable distribution mechanism if your anticipated storage needs are low. You *will* be extremely limited in terms of the amount of substantial content you can broadcast. The floppy-based zines in existence such as ***Electronic Hollywood*** and ***Thunk!*** both have their own unique appearances and graphic styles, but they are noticeably light on linguistic content. By the time you have injected all the sound, graphics, code, and other miscellaneous resources that make a hypermedia product hypermedia into your floppy, there isn't a whole lot of room left to inject the cerebral content you were probably originally trying to sell.

That's not to say no one is willing to buy a floppy publication—they are. The Voyager Company sells a series of digital Expanded Books for the Macintosh. While these floppy-based books haven't catapulted the company onto the Fortune 500 list, the series has been well-received and new titles continue to find their way into the Voyager catalog. ***Electronic Hollywood,*** which is floppy-based has done very well and enjoys international distribution. But until recently ***EH*** hasn't had much competition from CD-ROM's. All of the new digital publications that are entering the market or are being readied for launch are on CD-ROM. This means that consumer expectations will rise and the content/flash ratios for all existing E-zines will have to rise as well in order to stay competitive.

The floppy can still play an important role in the CD-ROM world, however. The demo floppy is an excellent tool for promotion! You need a floppy demo so that potential users who don't have CD-ROM players will see your product and then feel compelled to go out and buy a player to access the rest on CD-ROM. Funny Garbage Studios has produced a very slick floppy demo of their upcoming CD publication, ***Funny Garbage.*** I strongly recommend the ***Funny Garbage Sampler*** as a reference for any fledgling hypermedia publisher. ***BLAM!*** demo floppies are also, of course, cool and have been distributed at trade shows, gigs, art openings, porno theaters, the Statue of Liberty,

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packages provide beginning electronic publishers with the tools necessary to combine sound, motion graphics, text, hypertext, flat art, and video, simultaneously.

Your vision and editorial agenda will determine your needs for hardware and software, but the bottom line is, it's going to cost you. These are my general recommendations for the DIY hypermedia publisher. First, if you don't already have one, buy a Macintosh. Despite all the hype about Pentium chips, transparent interoperability, MPC standards, the Viper Card, and Windows NT, the IBM is a crappy platform for developing hypermedia applications. I've used both! I know! You're better off developing a product on the Mac side and later on, exporting it to the IBM side.

You should have a Mac IIci or better with at least 20 MB of RAM and nothing smaller than a 230 MB hard drive. Most Macs have the hardware built in to support sound input. If you don't want to rely on the condenser mic that comes with your Mac, purchase a Mac Recorder (around $100), a small device that plugs in to your ADB port and allows you to jack in a high quality mic or other sound line. I use my Mac Recorder to interface my VCR, CD player and synthesizer for sound projects. A scanner is a necessary item for the importation of flat art work. For the beginner on a budget, a handheld black and white or color scanner should provide you with more than enough creative possibilities. If you plan on importing video, you should go for a Movie Movie board (around $300) or a Video Spigot (around $350). Video boards allow you to capture video from your camcorder or VCR. These two boards do not allow for video export, however. For video in and out from the desktop, I recommend a Radius Videovision board (around $1,000). Your most important piece of peripheral hardware is going to be your backup storage device—you don't want to lose your work! If you are going to be producing a CD-ROM, buy a 500 MB or larger tape backup item for the importation of flat art work. For the beginner on a budget, a handheld black and white or color scanner should provide you with more than enough creative possibilities. If you plan on importing video, you should go for a Movie Movie board (around $300) or a Video Spigot (around $350). Video boards allow you to capture video from your camcorder or VCR. These two boards do not allow for video export, however. For video in and out from the desktop, I recommend a Radius Videovision board (around $1,000). Your most important piece of peripheral hardware is going to be your backup storage device—you don't want to lose your work! If you are going to be producing a CD-ROM, buy a 500 MB or larger tape backup drive; go for a DAT drive (around $1,000) if you can afford it.

inventory, client lists, etc.

How you pay for all this crap is a matter of personal preference, of course, but I recommend going into debt. I'm assuming that the average ***BID*** reader or zine producer can't afford all this stuff—at least, not with cash. If you're a student, take out a student loan! Interest rates on credit cards are at an all-time low, so apply today! Keep the banks strong! You have to be creative. Shop around for used equipment! Buy from wholesale mail-order outlets. Form a partnership with a few friends and split the cost. Establish a tax shelter and write it all off! If you have any friends who work in education, see if they are entitled to educational discounts on software or hardware through their workplace. Employ competitive/defensive shopping strategies! You'll definitely lose money—that's what will make your product a hypermedia *zine*! Oh, a special warning: be emotionally prepared for all of the hardware and software you purchase to be obsolete within two years (hours?) of the date of purchase.

WHAT'S OUT THERE?

The world of E-zines is a small yet pretty wonder. Here's a look-see at a few noteworthy hypermedia rags.

BLAM!

Necro Enema Amalgamated. P.O. Box 208, Village Station, NY, NY 10014. Internet: BLAM1@MINDVOX.PHANTOM.COM. FAX: (212) 979-6052. FOR THE MACINTOSH. CD-ROM. Black and white. Requires Hypercard and 4 MB of available RAM. $25. Make checks payable to: Necro Enema Amalgamated.

In a dream, I heard David Koresh compare ***BLAM!*** to his one-millionth orgasm. "***BLAM!*** is like a polyp stuck up inside the collective butthole of the ubiquitous Sugar Daddy," he told me. "In ***BLAM!*** solid liquid metaphors transverse to form a fist-fucking party on the Mt. Fuji of Andrea Dworkin's pink donut. Buy it! ***Blam!*** is a kick-butt romper-stomper of explosive hypermedia action—and I do mean action." Darby says that "***BLAM!*** is to electronic magazines what Shannen Doherty is to pop culture. I say 'Buy it!'"

Issue 1 features Howard Rheingold, Kim Gordon, Jim Goad, Georges Bataille, Lydia Lunch, Peter Garbage, Rita, Manuel DeLanda, Sarah Morris and much, much more!

HYPERMEDIA FEATURES: text, hypertext, sound, animations, faux-video, and loud farting noises. Navigational interface consists of user-friendly transparent hot-spots and some iconographic buttons.

TANGO

Tango Communications. 303 Lions Mansion, 2-19-2 Nagazumi Minami Ku, Fukuoka 815 Japan. COMPUSERVE: 74100,3410. FOR THE MACINTOSH. [illegible] Available in the Compuserve

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Tango Communications. 303 Lions Mansion, 2-19-2 Nagazumi Minami Ku, Fukuoka 815 Japan. COMPUSERVE: 74100,3410. FOR THE MACINTOSH. Requires Hypercard. Available in the Compuserve Mac Hypertext Forum in the E-mags library.

If you love Japanese pop culture, then this is for Japanese playground basketball. The editors do provide optional English translations of their editorial, and an exegesis by some Japanese artist called Kiyoyuki Kikutake. There's a "photo gallery" featuring a single photo by someone called Hidenori Takei with accompanying text available in both French and Japanese.

HYPERMEDIA FEATURES: navigational interface consists of a small color floating palette and various splash cards with English text overlays. Graphics are black and white. Text is presented in scrolling fields, which I *despise*. Interactivity is limited. Sound.

CHAOS CONTROL

Bob Gourley. 534 Beacon St. #402, Boston, MA 02115. phone/fax 617/572-3701. E-Mail RSGOR@AOL.COM. For the Macintosh. Send $5.

A black and white digizine that focuses on "alternative" music and related topics. A plethora of those hated scrolling fields, chock full of well-written, deeply-investigated, intelligent reviews, interviews, and exposés. CC is distributed on a floppy disk and is available through mailorder and by download from America Online. The interface design leaves a lot to be desired but Bob does a decent job at incorporating slick black-and-white promo photos of his favorite musical icons. Lots of people are trying to produce musically oriented digizines; Bob might need to try a little bit harder.

HYPERMEDIA FEATURES: Sound, scrolling field text (ugh!). Navigational interface consists of boring text-annotated buttons.

ELECTRONIC HOLLYWOOD II

Electronic Hollywood. P.O. Box 448, Prince Street Station, New York, NY 10012. FOR THE MACINTOSH. Requires color monitor. Send $6 payable to **Electronic Hollywood**.

This E-zine contains coverage of the '92 L.A. Riots, an editorial, reviews of the Verbum Human Be-in S.F., and the Home Media Expo in L.A. Also includes mini-reviews of bands Ethyl Meatplow and The Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy.

EH is distributed on one floppy disk which is both its greatest asset and drawback. Producer Jaime Levy's interface and design skills make ***EH*** an entrancing visual experience, but the floppy's space limitations result in a product whose flash outweighs the content. Levy's editorial about living in post-riot LA is a savvy treatise against irresponsible illegal aliens, bad motorists, cynical cops and the pseudo-downtrodden in general. Olé! In the world of floppy publications, ***Electronic Hollywood*** reigns *supreme*! EHIII will be available in summer '94.

HYPERMEDIA FEATURES: Navigational interface consists of slick, colorful text-annotated buttons. [illegible]

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HYPERMEDIA FEATURES: Navigational interface consists of slick, colorful text-annotated buttons. Interactivity is limited to navigation. Sound, animated text, animated graphics, color. Text appears as art work.

parodic TV network which provides the viewer with an on-line program guide and virtual remote. The "shows" consist of a semi-humorous dig at Ross Perot, a faux-interactive movie featuring Amy Fisher and Saddam Hussein, a tired dig at the semiotics of Gen-Xers, a faux newscast (featuring another dig at grungy Gen-Xers), and various other satirical takes on our post literate pop culture.

tHUNK!'s producers do a good job at combining hypermedia flash with bountiful content. The driving metaphor of an interactive post-passive-television network and the plethora of very tight, slick splash cards and animations make this cute little anomaly worth looking into. Considering that the product comes on only two floppies, it packs quite a wallop! One BIG complaint: for all its slick graphics and animation, ***tHUNK!*** fails as a delivery mechanism for text. Tired-looking scrolling fields abound in this place! This endangers the essence of its otherwise elegant structure and contradicts the intention of ***tHUNK!***'s driving metaphor.

Future plans for ***tHUNK!*** include a version for the IBM PC, an on-line BBS and a CD-ROM quarterly publication.

HYPERMEDIA FEATURES: Sound, text, animation, non-linear navigation. Navigational interface is composed of color buttons which are both iconographic and textual.

MORNING STAR

A Multimedia Christian Publication. P.O. Box 7755, Nashua, NH 03060-7755. PHONE: (603) 883-4624. FAX: 883-0466. Available for DOS, WINDOWS and MAC on America Online or from the publisher.

I downloaded this zine from the Religion Forum on America Online. It was worth the 12 minute download time.

A cornucopia of testimonials, confessions, pretty poetry, inspirational lyrics, holy recipes, and hard-core spiritual news from the African and Israeli fronts.

Coming up in ***MORNING STAR*** Volume 3.3 - Christians Using "High-Tech" to do the Lord's work! As with any Christian publication, there's plenty of stuff to make fun of, so get a copy today!

HYPERMEDIA FEATURES: The Mac version is a Hypercard stack that consists primarily of scrolling field text. The interface is not very elegant, but it's easy enough to decipher, as the buttons are all labeled with text. Art is comprised of tacky office-style clip art. No sound. No animation. No hypertext.

FUNNY GARBAGE (sampler)

Funny Garbage Studios. 55 La Salle Street, Staten Island, NY 10303. FAX: (718) 448-9808. Send $3 for a demo disk and free information to Chris Garbage. For MACINTOSH. Requires color monitor.

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Satan meets Bazooka Joe meets Chucky meets Chuck E. Cheese!! These guys have come up with an ingenious mechanism for bringing full-motion 640 X