



BOOK REVIEWS

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Hosted by
Mark Donlan



CHESSTHEATRE

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From the Archives...

Since it came online many years ago, [ChessCafe.com](#) has presented literally thousands of articles, reviews, columns and the like for the enjoyment of its worldwide readership. The good news is that almost all of this high quality material remains available in the [Archives](#). The bad news is that this great collection of chess literature is now so large and extensive – and growing each week – that it is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate it effectively. We decided that the occasional selection from the archives posted publicly online might be a welcomed addition to the regular fare.

Watch for an item to be posted online periodically throughout each month. We will update the [ChessCafe.com](#) home page whenever there has been a “new” item posted here. We hope you enjoy *From the Archives*...

Piece Placement

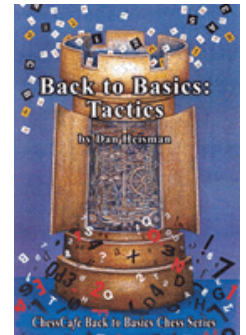
Detective Chess, by Gerry Quinn, Shareware

There are more than just a few chessplayers today who feel that computers will ultimately spell the demise of the royal game. The silicon monsters have already demonstrated that they can play on the same level as world class players. On the other hand, there are those that feel that the development and advance of computers will only make the game more popular and challenging. Certainly there can be no doubt that the computer has become a valuable addition in the arsenal of serious players, while at the same time providing more casual club players with endless hours of enjoyment and fun. And of course then there is the instructional value.

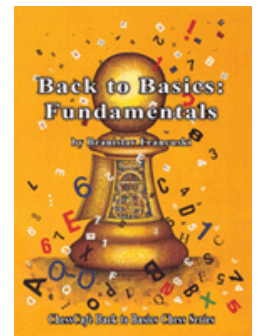
Occasionally something comes along that is both fun and instructional and at a very reasonable cost. Enter *Detective Chess*, a form of deductive chess puzzle created by Irish programmer Gerry Quinn for PCs running on at least Windows 3.1. (Windows 95, 98 and NT4 will also work with the program.) In this “game,” the computer places pieces (not pawns, which play no part) in random positions on a board, but does not actually show them as such. Instead, their squares are highlighted in blue, but you do not know which piece goes where. The object is to determine which pieces go on which marked squares on the chessboard. To help you do this, you are given clues in the form of numbers on some squares. Each number represents the number of pieces which “attack” that square – or to put it another way, could move there in one turn. The computer always generates exactly enough clues to solve the position.

There are only white pieces, but there is no limit on the number of each type of piece (even the king, if you wish). The pieces move the same ways as in standard chess, but apart from that there are no “rules.” And, as the creator of the game points out, “You do not have to be good at chess to play!” The corollary might be that players of virtually all strengths would not only enjoy but also benefit from this game. And, as will be discussed later, it seems to us that the program may have considerable instructional value for students, although the software’s

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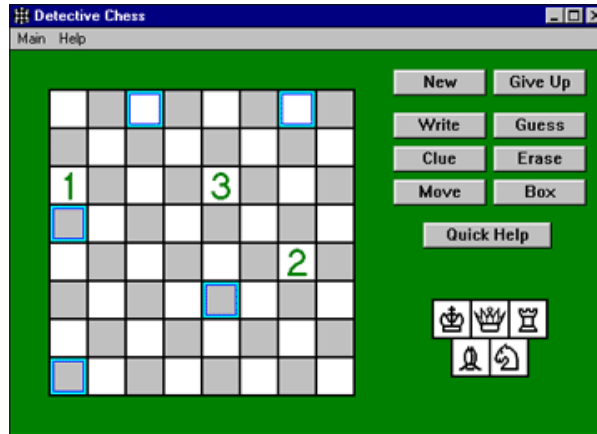
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creator may not have intended this originally.

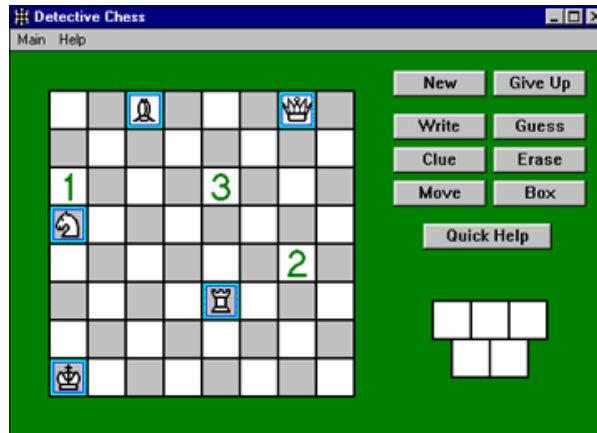
We ran a fully registered shareware version of *Detective Chess* on a 300mhz Pentium II machine with Windows 98. Using a 56k modem, it downloaded from Quinn's site quickly and installed without any problems. To illustrate the basics of the game, let us take a look at the following example:



There are five square highlighted in blue: a1, a5, c8, e3 and g8. In addition there are three squares that have numbers on them: "1" is on a6; "3" on e6 and "2" on g4. (Note: In this puzzle each piece is used, but only once.)

The task is thus established: place the five pieces on the board so that a6 is attacked once, e6 is attacked three times and g4 is attacked twice. And, those five pieces must be placed in the five designated squares.

Here is the solution:



The king on a1 and the knight on a5 do not control any of the highlighted squares, but of course we must account for them, since one of the premises was that we were to use each piece once. The rook on e3 controls e6 and the queen on g8 attacks both e6 and g4. It is the bishop on c8 that may have caused a bit of trouble. It not only hits a6 and e6, but of course also g4 ("shooting through" e6 – a concept we naturally take for granted during a real game, but something that might have thrown you off a bit in this puzzle).

In the fully registered version, there are additional features. Three additional pieces – from "fairy" or unorthodox chess – may be used, the grasshopper, nightrider and maharajah. We won't dwell on those here; if you are interested in giving yourself a real headache, you can add them to your own puzzles. You may also set the number of each kind of piece to appear in any given puzzle. Thus, for example, if you did not want a queen, but did want a second rook in the puzzle, that option can be set in

seconds. The size of the board may be modified – decreased to 5x5, or increased to 12x12. Again, we found the standard 8x8 board stimulating enough, but it is also nice to have these options. Finally, the program will generate an infinite number of these puzzles; no need to waste sleepless nights staring at the ceiling

Stronger players and instructors have long understood that one of the characteristics that make one player better than another is the ability to visualize positions and concepts on the board that have yet to occur. Call it calculation, call it seeing ahead, whatever. It should be clear that with proper supervision and presentation, *Detective Chess* could be used as a valuable teaching tool. Novices could be started with puzzles on the 5x5 board and as they develop, the difficulty could be increased. The possibilities are, as they say, endless.

This is a real gem of a program. Whether used for teaching or just plain fun, it will provide hours of entertainment and at a price that is very reasonable. And you don't simply have to take our word for it. Try the free version first – you can download it [here](#). Irish eyes are smiling about *Detective Chess*, and with good reason – it is terrific.

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