

LONDON'S TOP 10

- 1 (1) **WarGames** (UIP) Odeon Leicester Square £48,906
- 2 (2) **Octopussy** (UIP) Odeon 1 Kensington, Odeon 2 Swiss Cottage, Odeon 3 Westbourne Grove, Classic 1 Chelsea, Odeon Marble Arch, Empire 2 £40,914
- 3 (3) **Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence** (Palace) Classic 3 Haymarket, ABC 2 Shaftesbury Avenue, ABC 2 Bayswater, ABC 1 Fulham Road, Camden Plaza £39,814
- 4 (—) **Twilight Zone** (Col-EMI-War) Warner West End 2, Classic 2 Haymarket, Classic 1 Tottenham Court Road, ABC 1 Shaftesbury Avenue, ABC 1 Bayswater, ABC 1 Edgware Road, ABC 2 Fulham Road, Studio 2 £24,732
- 5 (5) **Return Of The Jedi** (20th Fox) Leicester Square Theatre, Odeon 3 Kensington, Classic 3 Chelsea, Studio 1 £21,465
- 6 (4) **Blue Thunder** (Col-EMI-War) Warner West End 3, Classic 1 Haymarket, Classic 1 Oxford Street, Classic 2 Chelsea, Odeon 2 Kensington, Odeon 1 Swiss Cottage, Odeon 1 Westbourne Grove £17,826
- 7 (6) **Monty Python's The Meaning Of Life** (UIP) Plaza 1, ABC 4 Fulham Road, ABC 2 Edgware Road £13,724
- 8 (7) **Superman III** (Col-EMI-War) Warner West End 4, ABC 4 Edgware Road, ABC 5 Fulham Road £13,131
- 9 (8) **Flashdance** (UIP) Empire 1 £12,770
- 10 (—) **Heat And Dust** (Curzon/Enterprise) Curzon £10,559

©Screen International
 ● Production arrangements mean that the London Box Office is brought forward to page 2 this week.

Davies for Waterloo

WATERLOO Films has started production on its first TV feature film, "Return To Waterloo", a musical drama featuring eight new songs written by Ray Davies of the Kinks.

Currently on location in Wimbledon and Surrey, "Return To Waterloo" is scheduled for a three week shoot.

Written and directed by Ray Davies, the film stars Kenneth Colley in the title role and is produced by Dennis Woolf.

UIP set 'Gate'

UIP UK are to release the full-length version of Michael Cimino's "Heaven's Gate".

This follows the highly-successful screening of the film in a sold-out season at the National Film Theatre recently. Running at three hours and 40 minutes, it will be shown in Dolby stereo at 70mm at the Plaza 2 in London, opening on Sept 15.

Deputy md UK Duncan Clark commented, "This engagement is inspired entirely by the good press notices and public reaction at the NFT. We all think it's a terrific piece of film-making and we're delighted to give it another opportunity."

\$120m action alleges Taurus blocked programming deal

MGM/UA SUES IN GERMAN TV ROW

IN AN EFFORT to protect its establishment of direct access to German network Channel 1 in the licensing of its film product, MGM/UA has filed a \$120-million antitrust lawsuit against Munich-based Taurus Films, Taurus chief executive Leo Kirsch and Milton (Mickey) Rudin, Taurus' US agent.

By BJ Franklin

The suit charges that the defendants used their muscle to block an almost-completed deal between the American major and the German Degeto Films, which buys programming for Channel 1.

The suit alleges that Taurus, Kirsch and Rudin are guilty of unreasonable restraint of trade; monopoly, control and fixing prices; interference with and disruption of an economic relationship (between MGM/UA and Degeto) and of threatening Degeto with various business injuries if Degeto did not enter into anti-competitive agreements with

Taurus and refuse to perform an agreement with the plaintiff.

MGM/UA said the aborted deal was worth more than the \$120 million it is asking in damages and, in addition, the company is asking for \$60 million in punitive damages from each of the three defendants. (Rudin is an entertainment lawyer well-known in the US as Frank Sinatra's attorney and friend.)

Although collecting US court-directed damages from a foreign

firm is difficult, in this case Taurus is said to have assets in the US which could be tied up if MGM/UA wins the case.

MGM/UA accuses Taurus of maintaining a virtual monopoly in representing US features, TV programmes and cartoons for licensing to German-language TV in Europe, and audio-visual usage. Taurus, the suit further states, has eliminated price competition and kept prices at below market value.

The 16-page complaint accuses the defendants of submitting

"noncompetitive, collusive and rigged bids", and of treating "the majority of major American film suppliers" in this manner.

Taurus has acted as the middle-man in licensing the product to German TV, and reportedly is near the end of a licensing agreement with MGM/UA which, of course, Taurus would like to continue. If MGM/UA had been successful in making the direct sale to Degeto, it would have been a breakthrough for the American studios toward dealing directly with German TV.

NEXT WEEK

London Multi-Media Market supplement

Altman 'Streamers' to UA Classics

FOR THE newcomer to Venice, the first 24 hours are disconcerting.

By Anne Head

There is little apparent organisation. Poster and hoardings are absent. All activity takes place in the lobby of the Excelsior Hotel. The new director, Gian Luigi Rondi, has won the first round of his battle with bureaucracy. This year screenings have, so far, taken place at the time and in the theatre indicated, not the case in previous years.

It takes time to become aware

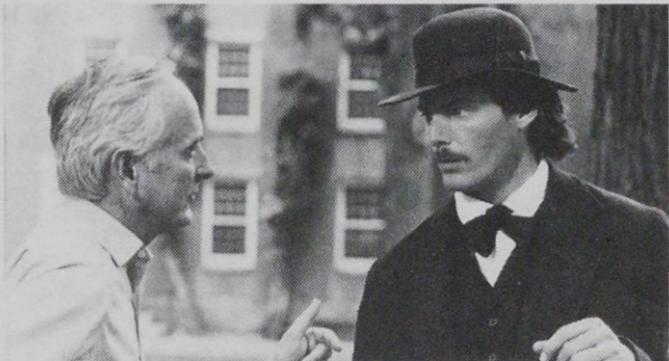
that the international industry is present. Meetings take place by the pools of the Excelsior or the Des Bains Hotels, or in the elegant beach huts that line the Adriatic shore.

Carole Myer, in charge of foreign sales for the BFI and here with "Ascendancy" (shown in a side-bar information section), says, "This festival gives a second go for territories that might have been missed. It is extremely important in terms of press and art film distributors."

The same refrain is heard all over. Douglas Amaya, in charge of

● Continued on page 2

New England shoot



JAMES IVORY (left) directs Christopher Reeve in the Merchant Ivory production of Henry James's "The Bostonians", which is currently shooting in New England. The film is written by regular collaborator Ruth Praver Jhabvala and also stars Vanessa Redgrave and newcomer Madeline Potter. Directed by James Ivory and produced by Ismail Merchant, "The Bostonians" marks the second time the team has tackled a Henry James story — the first being their successful adaptation of "The Europeans". MIP's most successful film to date, "Heat And Dust", opens in the US on Sept 14. (Production report on "The Bostonians" to follow shortly.)

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"BILL" — BILL INGRAM OF FILMBOND. SEE SUPPLEMENT STARTING PAGE 19.

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SPECIAL FEATURE

Filmbond provides an answer to industry service headaches

JUST AS a super-efficient film crew does not always get the merit it deserves for behind the scenes work, so the service aspects of the film industry are sometimes forgotten for the more glamorous aspects.

Yet as everyone working within the industry acknowledges, the importance of solid back-up is crucial to any successful enterprise.

Filmbond, along with its affiliates Fleetfilm and PBS Services, is in the back-up game with a vengeance and, according to the experienced management team that put the whole set-up together, they are fast becoming the answer to any producer or distributors complete set of service headaches.

Filmbond are now celebrating their second year of successful operation, expanding at a pace which amply backs the judgement of the men who launched the set-up, in the belief that a crucial service was not being performed for the industry.

The company is made up of 35 full-time staff, headed by the board of directors which include Arthur Abeles (formerly with Warner Pathé and CIC, who launched the marketing company Filmmarketers and who first had the idea of the company), Sam Shorr, who was with Universal, and group managing director Bill Ingram, whose career includes stints with Warner Pathé (where he met Abeles), Universal (where he was European service manager) and then on to CIC where he became international service manager. In a career that covers most crucial aspects of the servicing industry, Ingram then went on to Technicolor UK, where he was managing director before a brief stop over in Los Angeles as president of Introvision Programming. It was while he was in LA that the call came to return to home pastures for the launch of Filmbond.

"Arthur and Sam had been talking about the Filmbond idea for some time, and I had always wanted to be a part of it," he recalls. "When it all came together, I was delighted to come back."

The first thing that strikes the casual observer of the Filmbond set-up is the experience packed into the management team. And as they are all anxious to stress, it is experience in the right area.

"The whole point we try to emphasise is that the experience we have, which goes back over more years than I care to talk about," smiles Ingram, "is all solid film experience."

"Everybody here is a film man through and through. We think that is unique. Of course there are a number of other companies who offer all the services we do, but nobody does them with our background of experience or with our overall control."

"There is no aspect of servicing that we don't cover. And being film people we like to think we understand the needs of film people. One of the problems with outside freighting agents, no matter how good they might be, is they simply don't always understand a particular requirement. We do. That's our business; because we understand how film — and video — works we try to anticipate any problems that might arise."

"All our experience is in film."

Formidable

As Ingram says, it is a formidable line up of experience, with each of the directors achieving the highest positions in their fields before linking up — and each of them has known each other for many years.

Naturally they can all tell the industry a hundred reasons why film-makers should use Filmbond, but again and again the emphasis comes back to the completeness of the operation; the attraction, they feel, is getting all the jobs done, from storage, to arranging screenings, to lab negotiations, print rejuvenation, transport, airfreight and a hundred other jobs.

"For many of our clients we are taking on the whole job, although of course everyone is at liberty to pick and choose from our menu," considers Shorr.

"What we are really doing is

servicing done by a completely reliable outside agency, rather than employ full time staff in-house to do the same job."

"If you take on the full Filmbond service, the most you'll ever need is one person at your end, simply for liaison. We'll do the rest. We reckon that could be a saving of anything up to four or five salaries, and anyway we reckon we can do it better."

Dedicated

"So you are getting the best service we can offer, and a very economical way of doing it. There are many peaks and valleys in servicing and also a limited number of experts around to employ, whereas we maintain an organisation dedicated to service, and we take all the overheads and costs and so on; and of course with the calibre and strength of the customers we have that is added security and negotiating power."

In operation for only two years, Filmbond has expanded and changed to meet the growing demands of a business which is now almost unrecognisable to the one which they entered so recently. The advent of video and cable has added a new and, on their own admission, highly unexpected dimension to the Filmbond repertoire.

"We always liked to think we were flexible enough to meet changes," says Shorr, "but we never dreamt that we were going to have to be as flexible as we have been. Now video is a major part of our operation, as is preparing and mastering prints for The Starview cable operation. These are things that we had no idea about when we started. Obviously that is very surprising, not to say gladdening for us."

"We find that almost every day the film industry changes and even if the cinema film disappears completely — and we certainly don't think it will — there will still be a tremendous need for the kind of service we perform. We've gone in a lot of directions that we didn't expect and expanded in a way we didn't dare dream."

Summing up the Filmbond



philosophy, Ingram says: "The thing we really do place a lot of emphasis on is the total service we give to people, the fact that it is a one-stop operation. Frankly we do all the nonsense, all the painful stuff, everything that no creative

producer or distributor should really want on his hands. We think we offer a competitive and thorough service, the kind of thing that if it was kept in-house could become very expensive if it got away from you."

● Filmbond's bonded warehouse near Heathrow. It has become the cornerstone of the Filmbond empire, but exactly what is a bonded warehouse? See article on page 22.

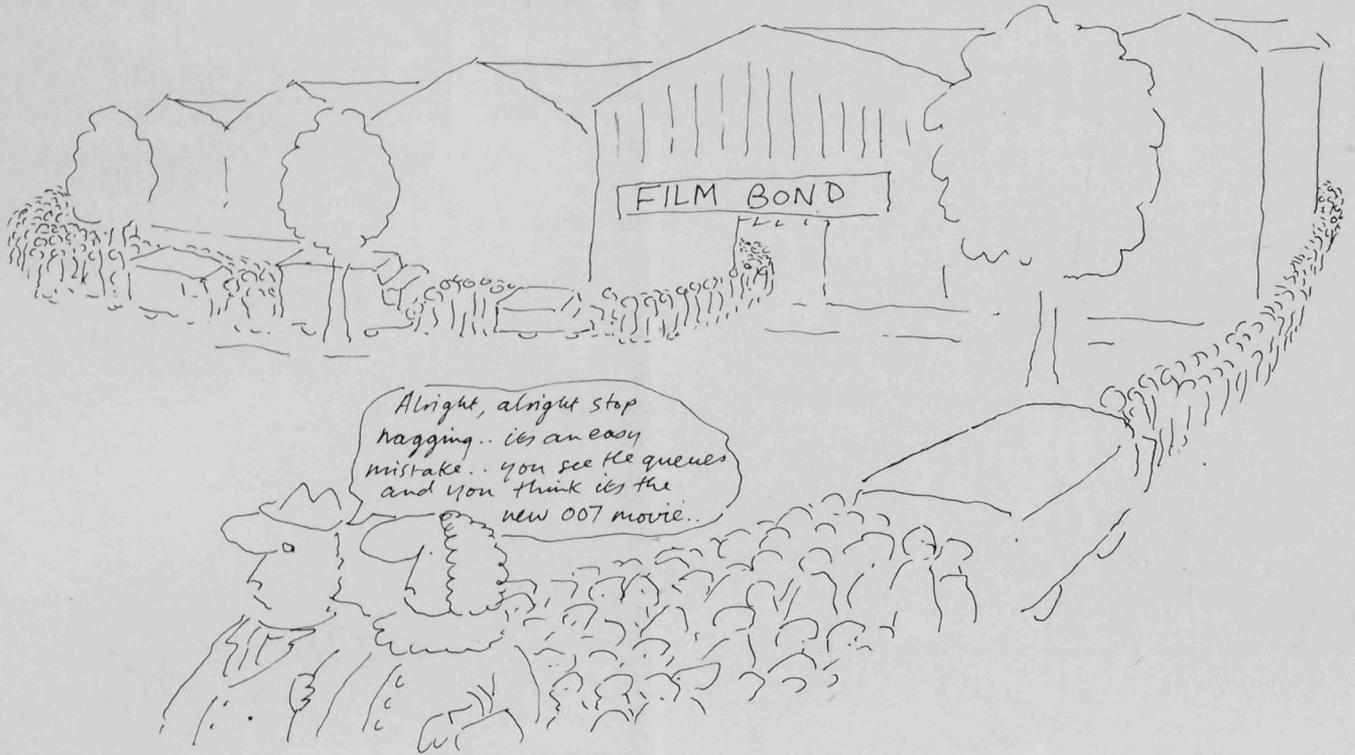
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Filmbond vaults film storage into twenty-first century

THE CORNERSTONE of the Filmbond empire is the bonded warehouse only a couple of miles from Heathrow airport.

On the face of it, "bonded warehouse" is not a phrase that summons up the image of an invaluable asset to the film industry all over the world, but that is what it has turned out to be — the solid evidence of this being that only 15 months into operation Filmbond were able to open up a second warehouse to complement their first. Now group md Bill Ingram is confidently predicting that it won't be long before they open a third.

So what is the bonded warehouse and what does it do?

In short the bond enables the storage of film and video prints within the UK from overseas or at home without the usual necessity of paying duty. So, the warehouse takes on a number of functions. For example, a major American distributor can bring in a number of prints for eventual UK theatrical distribution, which are stored at the warehouse. While there the Filmbond service department can check them thoroughly and reject or rejuvenate any print that does not reach the required standard. When the distributor eventually calls on the film, he will only pay duty on the prints he already knows are in the best possible condition. In the past duty would have had to have been paid without the benefit of any kind of inspection.

By the same token, British companies may store their prints in the warehouse more or less permanently, checking them out to various destinations around the world when needed and then bringing them back, in time, to the duty-free security of the bonded warehouse. The benefits of the scheme, even leaving aside the freedom from heavy duties and customs entanglement, include storage in the best possible conditions, maximum security (an increasingly important element in these piracy-conscious days) and the chance to keep the print in mint condition.

The bonded warehouse was a personal ambition of Arthur Abeles who had long regretted the fact that the only specialist film

bonded warehouse in Europe was in Rotterdam in the Netherlands, thus channeling much needed revenue towards continental Europe, rather than to the perhaps more natural haven of the UK.

"Getting the bond was a tough operation," remembers Abeles, "but on the whole the customs people were very responsive. They went into the whole thing with us very carefully and we found that they were very helpful and very aware of our needs."

"But they do keep a very tight grip on things," adds Ingram, "and they are always popping in and out and doing random checks. That's why the computer is so essential. Without the system we have we could find it very difficult to give the right information."

The IBM computer to which Ingram refers is the "brain" behind the racking, storage and bonding operation. It is clearly the pride and joy of the company, controlling all aspects of print storage and filing.

For Arthur Abeles, the storage system leaps into the 21st century.

"It's extraordinary to think of it but only a very few years ago people would store enormously valuable prints in the most unlikely places. The normal procedure was just to dump them anywhere you could find some space. I mean, the major companies were just dumping them underneath railway bridges, in barns, anywhere. Any place where they were out of the rain.

"The norm was to find a big old barn full of prints run by some old chap who'd been there for 40 years who could tell you where everything was because he could remember.

"I remember when CIC took over Metro in my day, and I went down to Rickmansworth to see where they stored their prints. I remember it well, it was very pretty, a lot of old barns by a stream and one old guy, nice fellow and very knowledgeable, but hell, when he died the secret died with him, as it were. I mean that's hardly appropriate in the day of the satellite and cable is it?"

Indeed not, and the Filmbond warehouse could hardly be a greater contrast, with racks specifically designed to



accommodate any film size, and instant selection of any print needed through the computer.

The bond does supply a certain amount of flexibility. A film can, for example, be taken out of the

warehouse and taken for screening for periods of up to 24 hours without breaking the terms of the bond.

Gradually more and more companies are moving their film

prints into the Filmbond set-up where they will remain until called out for screening — an ideal solution of course for any company with valuable print assets which is cramped for space.

● Filmbond group managing director Bill Ingram — "The thing we do place a lot of emphasis on is the total service we give to people, the fact that it is a one-stop operation."

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PDS and Fleetfilm — two elements of Filmbond group

PRODUCER Distributor Services (PDS) is the name given to the "service" element within the Filmbond group.

PDS undertake just about anything a producer or distributor could want, from repair of prints, trailers, censorship requirements, preparing and grading of trade show prints, mastering of videos and negotiation with labs.

As Bill Ingram puts it, with revealing honesty: "All the bits that nobody really wants to touch."

A client may take all or any of the services on offer, of which a sample might be getting the best deal from a lab. Ingram suggests just why it might be a good idea to do the negotiations through PDS:

"My background is in labs. I know the way they work, I know what they can do. When it comes to business we can get better deals and better treatment."

"The situation is that we cater for a lot of clients buying something like three million feet of film per year. Somebody on their own might need 10 prints a year from a lab, check the price list and pay the asking price accordingly. We have the collective strength to get the best deal for him.

"Of course nobody subsidises anyone else, but that kind of collective strength makes a difference."

PDS are particularly proud of their work in the print rejuvenation area, which has assured an increasingly important role.

"Money is scarce," says Ingram, "and striking new prints is an expensive business. In our labs we can make an awful lot of improvements, a job which could end up saving a lot of money. Many of the prints now on distribution in the UK come in from the States, and are worked on by us. Obviously we will throw out anything that is beyond repair, but at least then the distributor is saved the cost of paying duty on an unusual print."

Ingram is shortly hoping to announce some new developments in the area of print maintenance, an area which he feels has up to now been neglected.

PDS offer a wide range of services — as Ingram has put it in the past: "We'll even book your

holidays for you if you want!"

FLEETFILM, the freight/courier aspect of the Filmbond set-up, is devoted entirely to freighting to the film industry.

"We think it is a great strength of the company that we are handling only film or television and video jobs," says Bill Ingram. "An ordinary freight company just isn't going to give the same special attention to a producer or distributor's needs. We know exactly how important any item that needs to be freighted actually is. That makes a big difference to the client, who feels as though we're talking the same language."

Fraught area

Fleetfilm do a completely comprehensive job for the client, including in the traditionally fraught area of customs clearance.

"Freight is a very, very difficult business," says Ingram, "and it simply pays to have experts take care of it for you. Supposing you want to take a film into Turkey, and you get it all the way there and find you haven't got the right customs certificates. We can do all that. It takes the worry out of the whole business."

ONE ASPECT of the Filmbond operation which has come to the



fore is security.

Obviously the casual nature with which prints used sometimes to be stored was a situation that potential pirates welcomed, the theft of prints being one of the key areas for piracy.

The storage of prints in the Filmbond warehouse gives the added boost of so-far guaranteed security. All warehouse premises

are monitored closely at all times, and prints leaving the warehouse for screenings in town are closely guarded.

There has never been a break-in of any kind at the Filmbond warehouse.

With video now accounting for a significant amount of Filmbond's operation, clearly security is a key aspect of the operation.

● Filmbond's freight/courier arm Fleetfilm and PDS, the "service element."

"It's something that wasn't at the front of our minds when we started," says Ingram, "but we are delighted to find that it has come to the fore."

"We don't believe it would be reasonably possible to take better care of material than we do."

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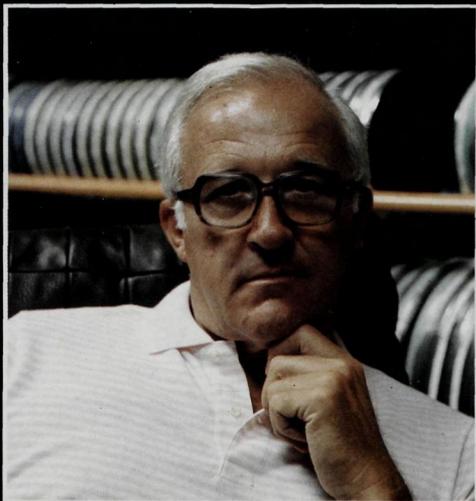
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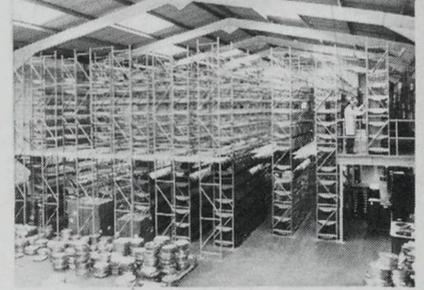
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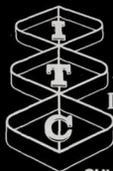
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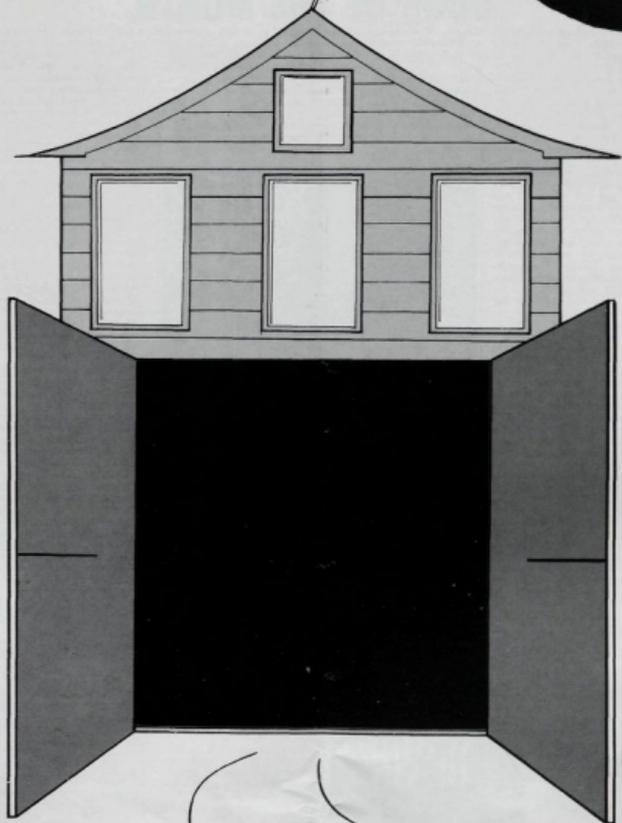
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