

FABIEN SANGLARD - WEBSITE



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JURASSIC PARK COMPUTERS IN EXCRUCIATING DETAIL

After I mentioned a Jurassic Park anecdote [the other day](#), I watched the movie again. I must have seen it at least ten times now. This time, I researched every computer/software I spotted.

EDIT: Just when I was putting the final touches on this article, I read the sad news that [Sam Neill](#), who played paleontologist Alan Grant in JP, has passed away today. **R.I.P** Sam.

APPLE POWERBOOK 100

Surprisingly, the first computer visible is not on the island *Isla Nublar* but in Alan Grant and Ellie Sattler's mobile trailer. It is an [Apple Powerbook 100](#), visible in the image below on the left side.



Apple Powerbook 100

It had a Motorola 68000 processor at 16 MHz, 2–8 megabytes (MB) of RAM, a 9-inch (23 cm) monochrome backlit liquid-crystal display (LCD) with 640 × 400 pixel resolution, and the System 7.0.1 operating system.

— [Wikipedia](#)

Trivia: This machine specs reminds me of how awful '90s laptop screens, based on a passive matrix, were. Definitely something I don't miss from that era.

JURASSIC PARK CONTROL ROOM

All computers and software are located in the Control Room on the desks of two engineers, Dennis Nedry and Ray Arnold.

Dennis Nedry's desk is an indescribable mess with three machines (two macs, one SGI), three monitors, one PDA, and storage devices.



Dennis Nedry's chaotic desk

Ray Arnold's desk is much tidier. It features a CCTV screen, storage devices, two computers (a Mac and a SGI), and two monitors.



Ray Arnold's desk with supercomputers in the background

In the back of the Control Room, we can make out a giant screen and a supercomputer with tall panels and blinking red lights.

The book [The Making Of Jurassic Park](#) has interesting details about how they designed the Control Room.

Everything in the set was real. We couldn't fake any of it, because audiences are so sophisticated now in their knowledge of computers. All told, \$875,000 worth of computer hardware loaned by Silicon Graphics, \$350,000 worth from Apple and some \$500,000 in additional hardware and software went into equipping both the set and off-stage control room.

— [Cory Faucher \(Special Effects Coordinator\)](#)

This means, adjusted for inflation, Apple and SGI loaned roughly \$4,000,000 of 2026 dollars for the production of Jurassic Park.

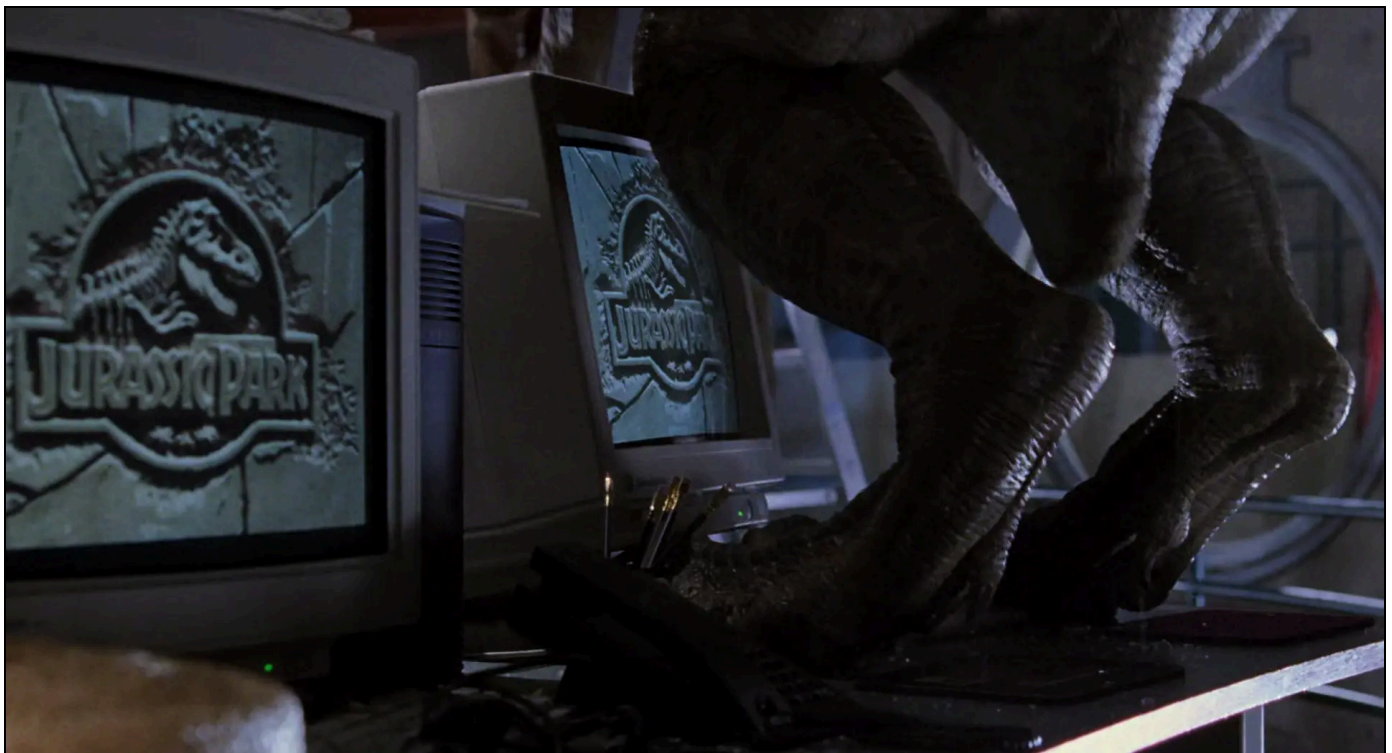
SGI R4000 INDIGO

Ray Arnold's workstation is a [SGI R4000 Indigo](#). It is barely visible in two shots. Blink and you will miss it at **54:48**.



SGI R4000 Indigo (Hardly visible)

We get a somewhat better view of it towards the end of the movie thanks to a Velociraptor that never skips leg-day.



SGI R4000 Indigo (Better view)

For the needs of the movie, that SGIs came in handy to run real-time 3D animation of the Hurricane. Or did they?



SGI R4000 Indigo running 3D hurricane animation

A dynamic and interactive method was employed to create the graphics, both on the big screen and on the computer monitors at each individual station. A makeshift room was built adjacent to the set, then equipped with a battery of Silicon Graphics and Apple Macintosh computer systems. Stored on computer disks were animations generated over a period of six months by a four-man computer graphics team headed by Michael Backes.

Responding to cues received via radio from the set, Backes and his team were able to feed their graphics directly to the appropriate monitors on stage, making it seem as though the actors involved were actually calling up the imagery.

— [The Making Of Jurassic Park](#)

SGI IRIS CRIMSON

Dennis Nedry's powerhouse workstation is an [SGI IRIS Crimson](#). It is such a beast that it won't fit on his desk. It is on the floor on the right of his desk (red box).



SGI Crimson (red box on the right)

Most of the time it is used to display a 3D chess game (monitor the right end of Dennis desk).



Chess, running on SGI IRIX Crimson (right screen)

The SGI Crimson is rarely visible on screen. It is briefly visible after Dennis's "white rabbit" lockdown brings Samuel Jackson into a depression.



Crimson (also red box on the right)

The SGI Crimson was a very powerful workstation released in 1992. Its main appeal was its panel of real-time 3D graphics cards. The CPU was also very powerful with hardware Floating-Point Unit, a luxury for 3D graphics.

- *One MIPS 100 MHz R4000 or 150 MHz R4400 processor*
- *Choice of seven high-performance 3D graphics subsystems (Entry, XS, XS24, Elan, Extreme, Reality Engine, VGXT)*
- *Up to 256 MB memory and internal disk capacity of up to 7.2 GB, expandable to more than 72 GB using additional enclosures*
- *I/O subsystem includes four VMEbus expansion slots, Ethernet and two SCSI channels with disk striping support*

— [Wikipedia](#)

PLI, MINI ARRAYS

Both Dennis and Ray use PLI Mini Arrays for their backup. Dennis has an impressive stack of five on the left-end of his desk.



A stack of five PLI Mini Arrays on Dennis's desk

There is a continuity error in the movie. See how the stack of PLI is facing left in this early shot.



Chaos and left-looking PLIs

Later in the movie, after Ray takes over Dennis's desk, we can see the PLIs have magically rotated to face the developer.



Continuity error.

On Ray's desk we also find a smaller stack of two PLIs.



A stack of two PLI Mini Arrays on the left of Ray Arnold's desk

There is a close-up shot when John Hammond follows the jeeps' progress on the CCTV.



A close up of the Mini Arrays on Ray Arnold's desk

Despite the attention to detail, it seems the PLIs were not connected since the LEDs are all blank. In [Macs Place of Spring 1993](#) we can find an ad on page 38 giving more details about the capacity.

PLI provides options for every storage need.



Don't forget to put on your seatbelt.

PLI's MiniArrays give you the ultimate in speed and capacity. Transfer rates start at 5MB per second – nearly three times that of a typical hard drive. They achieve fast performance by splitting data evenly across two drives. Reads and writes occur simultaneously to each drive resulting in high data throughput ideally suited for applications where large files must be moved quickly.

PLI ●

5047 PLI MiniArray 660MB	\$2,948.
5049 PLI MiniArray 1.04GB	\$3,598.

PLI, Mini Arrays ad (1993)

Since John Hammond "spared no expense", it is fair to say he picked 1GiB version at \$3,598 a piece. That would give them 7 GiB of storage for a 2026 equivalent of \$33,223.70. In 2026, 7 GiB of HDD would cost \$0.49.

Trivia: Seven GiB was a MASSIVE amount in 1993 when a high-end PC would come with 120 MiB HDD.

MOTOROLA ENVOY

The [Motorola Envoy](#) is a personal digital assistant used by Dennis. It is visible next to his right elbow in the image below.



Motorola Envoy (Closed)

It is an extremely impressive device for the early '90s. It is a foldable that features an antenna when deployed ([video](#)).

The hardware of the Motorola Envoy included a Motorola Dragon I/68349 microprocessor, 4 MB of read only memory (ROM), 1 MB of random access memory (RAM), and an LCD. Of particular interest were the wireless communications capabilities of the Envoy. Its built-in communication components included a radio modem capable of 4,800 bits per second communication, a fax and data modem, and an infrared transceiver capable of 38.4 kbit/s of data transfer.

— [Wikipedia](#)

Dennis must have used it since we see it moved and partially unfolded later in the movie.



Motorola Envoy (Opened)

Trivia: It is unclear how Jurassic Park crew got their hands on a Motorola Envoy. The movie was shot from August to November 1992. Motorola only finished the PDA in mid-1994 but delayed releasing it to February 1995^[1].

EDIT : Hackernews user kalleboo [solved](#) the mystery!

The head of frogdesign (Hartmut Esslinger) ended up running into Spielberg on a plane and showed it to him. The one in the movie is an original mockup ([source](#) and [discussion](#)).

— kalleboo

THINKING MACHINES CM-5

The supercomputer of the control room looks a lot like five [Thinking Machines CM-5](#) with their characteristic front panel with thousands of red blinking LEDs. With a pricetag of "only" \$46,000 per machine, it is very possible these were authentic.



Four Thinking Machines CM-5

The CM-5, "**C**onnection **M**achine", was released in 1991^[2]. In 1993 it was still considered the most powerful computer in the world^[3]. Each machine was called a "node", featuring a Sparc CPU, four vector units, and 32 MiB RAM. As many nodes as needed could be connected together to form a mesh. The National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) build a 32-node supercomputer with CM-5^[4].



A fifth CM-5 can be seen on the right.

Trivia: Does the red LED pattern in the front panel mean anything? Absolutely not, they were randomly generated^[5].

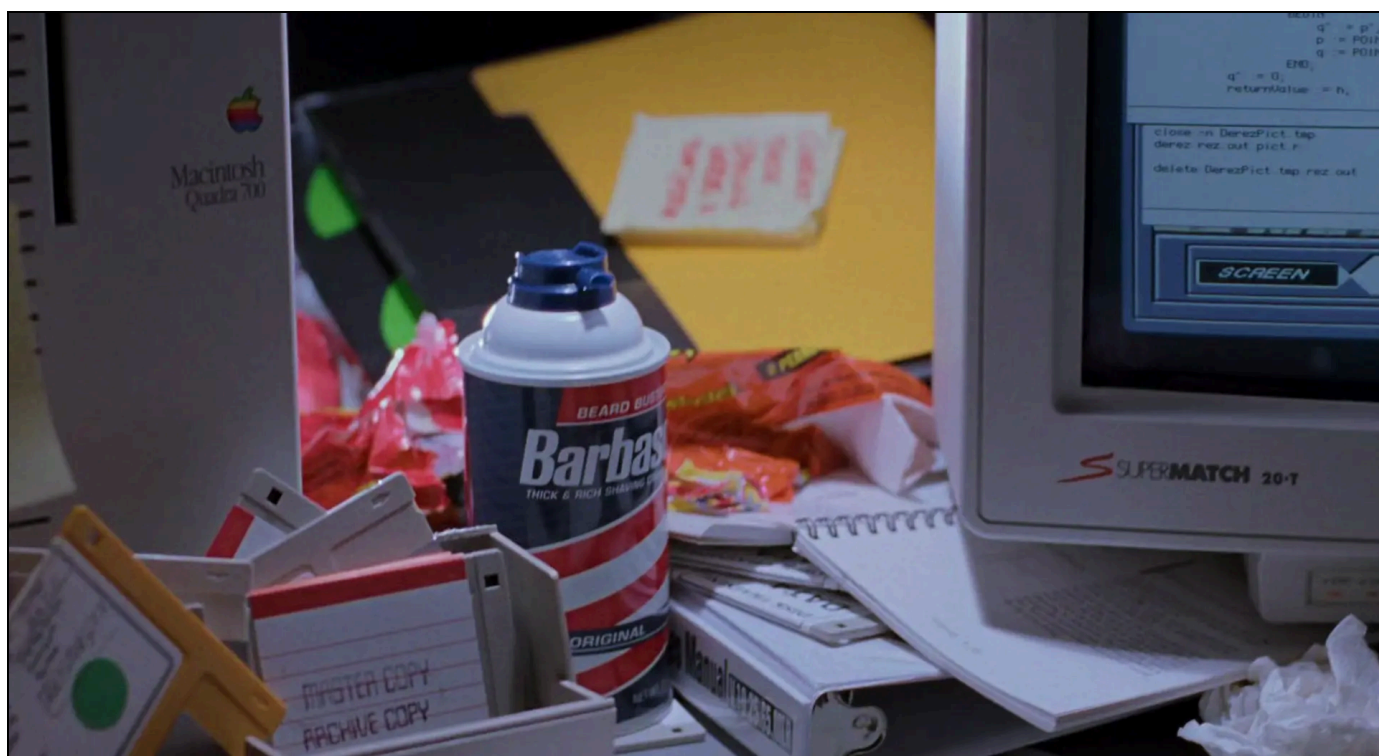
Trivia: If you listen carefully you can actually hear Dennis Nedry talk about the CM-5, "Connection Machine".

*I am totally unappreciated in my time. You can run this whole park from this room with minimal staff for up to 3 days. You think that kind of automation is easy? Or cheap? You know anybody who can network 8 **connection machines** and debug 2 million lines of code for what I bid for this job? Because if he can I'd like to see him try.*

— Dennis Nedry

MONITOR SUPERMATCH 20-T

One of the very best monitors money could buy in 1993 was the SuperMatch 20-T. The twenty means 20" and T meant Trinitron. The SuperMatch was featured on the cover of [MacUser in Feb 92](#). In [MacUser of Oct 94](#), page 180 (out of 252!!), we can see it cost \$2,589 (\$6,000 in 2026).



An amazing product placement for Apple and SuperMach.

20" monitors were considered absolutely massive in 1993 and only seen in professional workspaces. A typical PC would come with a 15" CRT. 21" is almost the maximum CRTs reached, their depth and weight made them very hard to move. They were replaced by LCD around 2005.

MONITOR SILICONGRAPHICS

The monitor features a particular "chin". The absolutely gorgeous [SGI Hardware Developer Handbook](#), on page 4-59, reveals this is a 19" Mitsubishi HL7965 Monitor which SGI rebranded. It likely cost as much as the SuperMatch 20-T.



Mitsubishi HL7965 Monitor

SGI GRANITE KEYBOARD (INDIGO STYLE)

On Ray Arnold's desk, we can notice a weird keyboard with a connector on the side. This is a [SGI Granite Keyboard \(Indigo Style\)](#)^[6]. It is a pretty cool keyboard with two [6 Pin Mini-DIN connectors](#)^[7] on each side. The keyboard can be connected to the workstation from either side and the mouse is to be daisy-chained into the other port.



SGI Granite Keyboard (Indigo Style) Keyboard

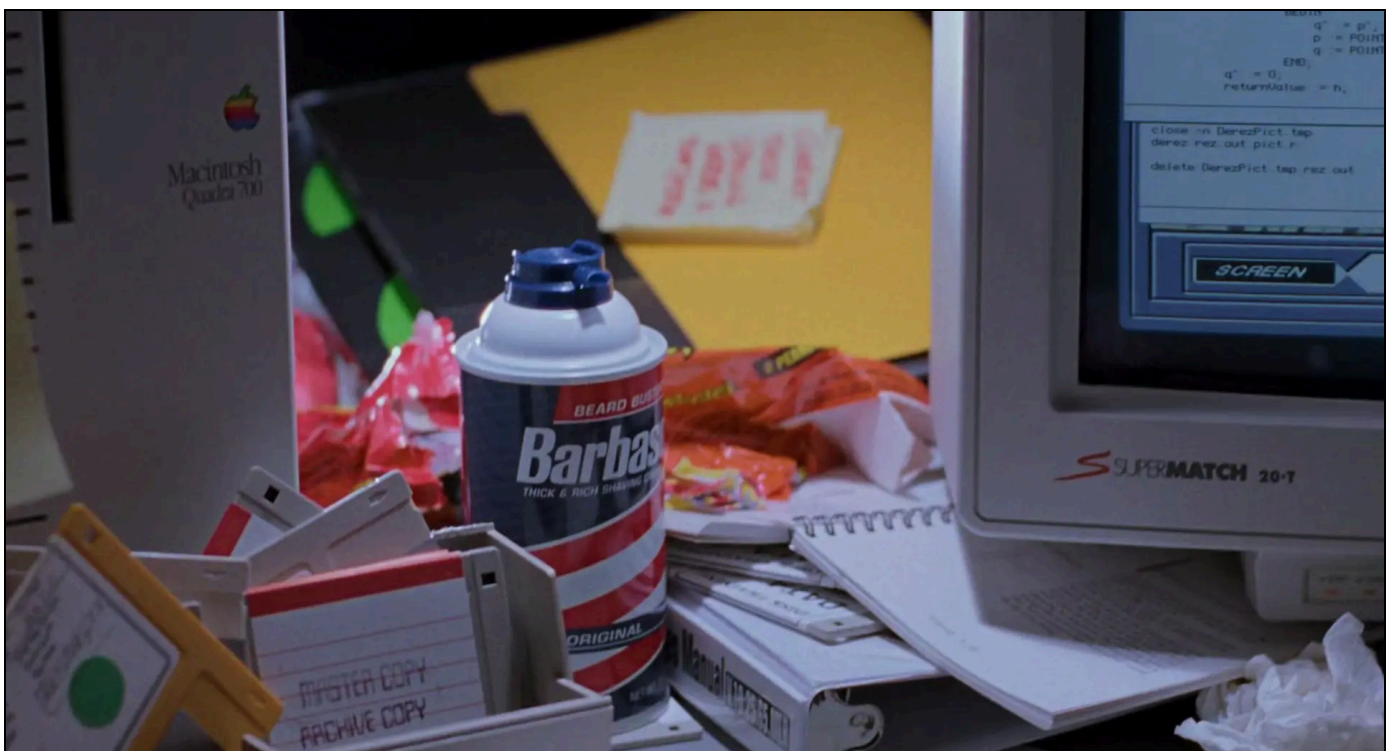
Ray is seen using the same keyboard later. If you look closely at the screen, it looks like **status network** was aliased to **ping** CLI.



Just a **ping** to look cool

MACINTOSH QUADRA 700

Dennis Nedry uses two [Macintosh Quadra 700](#). Apple must have been very happy with the product placement. Although they usually require their computers not to be used for nefarious activity which is not the case here.



Dennis's Macintosh Quadra 700

Released in 1991, The Quadra 700 ran on Motorola 68040 @ 25 MHz with 4 MB RAM, expandable to 68 MB. HDD sizes available were 80 and 160 MB. Ray also uses a [Macintosh Quadra 700](#) but he has only one on his desk.



Ray's Macintosh Quadra 700

QUICKTIME VIDEO PLAYER

Dennis negotiates with his co-conspirator located in the harbor to give him time to make it there. It happens via a VC on the Mac. Why not on a SGI? Because the whole thing was faked via Quicktime Video player running on System 7.

The cursor on the progress bar is clearly visible. This is 1-minute clip. Even the mouse cursor is still on the "play" button of the Quicktime window.



No webcam back then. The stream was faked with a Quicktime video

| **Trivia:** Notice the video folder, named **VIDnet**.

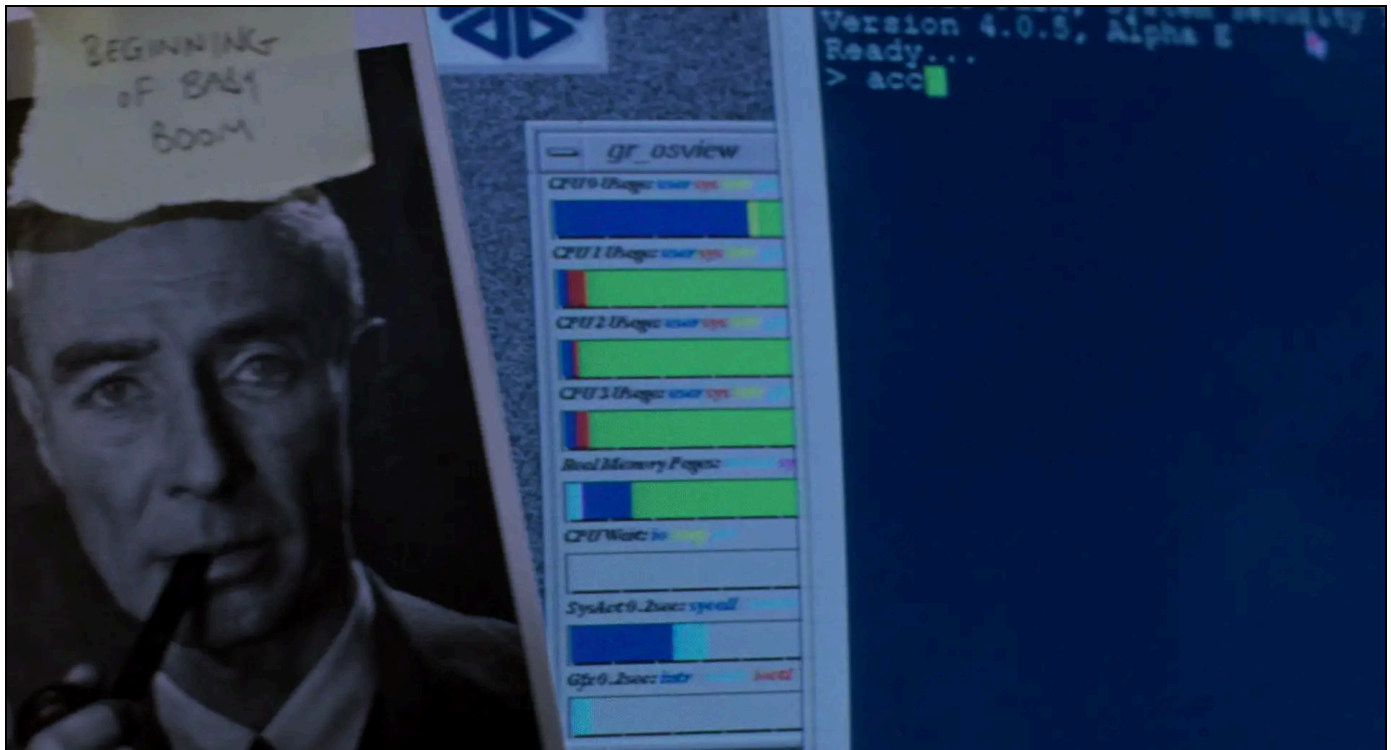
Quicktime is used earlier in the movie. When Dennis is revealed to be working at Jurassic Park, he had Jaws played on his left screen^[8].



Jaws playing on Dennis's left monitor

GR_OSVIEW

IRIX System Usage utility, named `gr_osview` can be seen a few times. It looks like a powerful tool, able to report not only user time, sys time, but also interrupt overhead and even gfx overhead according to [IRIX - Desktop User's Guide](#) on p182.



gr_osview

Despite reports that monitors screens were faked via remote operators, `gr_osview` seems to react appropriately to keystrokes in the sequence above. Maybe this one was actually live.

WHITE RABBIT (WHITE_RBT.OBJ)

When Ray accidentally locks down the whole system, Nedry's face superimposed onto an Elvis Presley jumpsuit shows up on his Macintosh. That is the UI of the "White Rabbit", which Ray Arnold mentions when he explains the lockdown to Ellie Sattler. The filename `white_rbt.obj` is not mentioned in the movie, only in the novel. Michael Crichton, the author of Jurassic Park was actually a highly capable programmer.



YOU DIDN'T SAY THE MAGIC WORD!

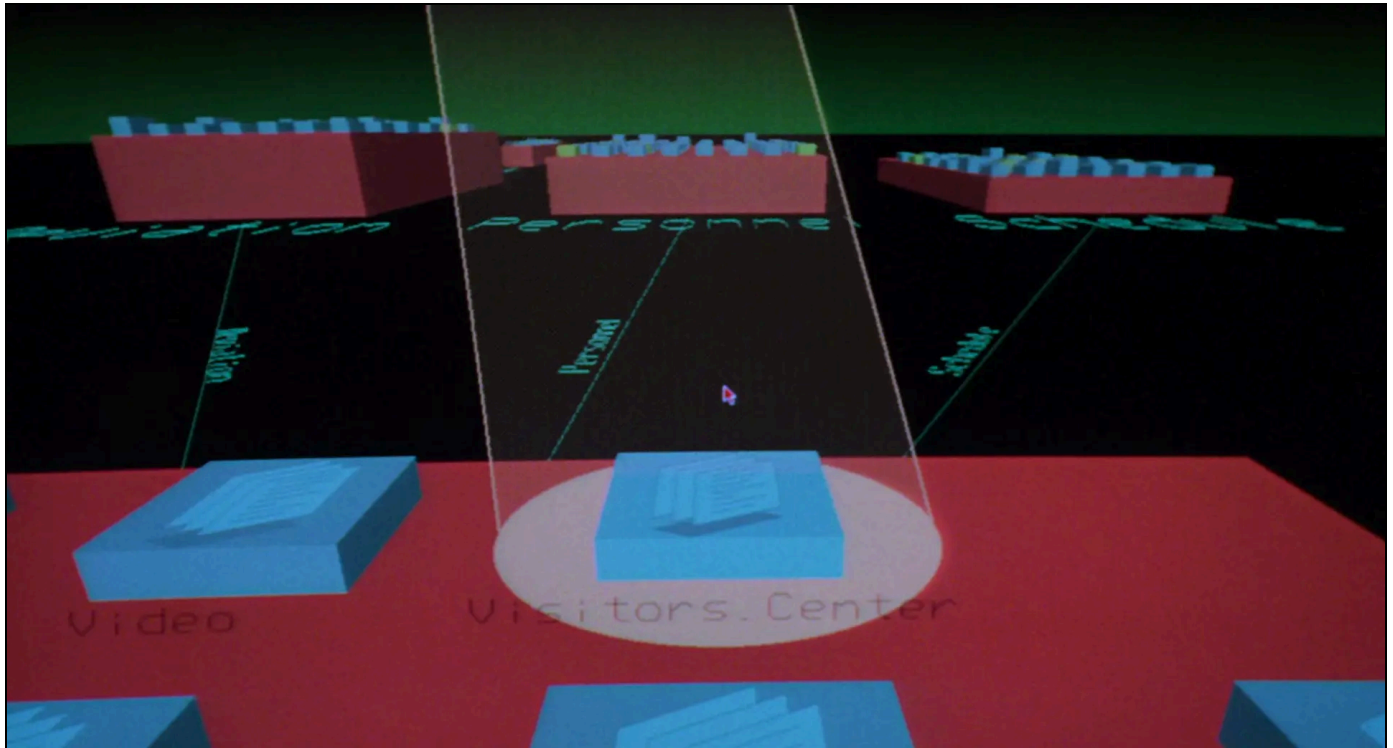
FSN FILE EXPLORER

The legendary "It's a Unix system. I know this" sequence was done using an experimental SGI file explorer application named **fsn**. Lex Murphy takes over Dennis's SGI Crimson and opens the **/usr** directory.



```
cd /usr
```


SGI was super happy to see this since they mentioned "YOU SAW IT IN JURASSIC PARK!" on their website[9].

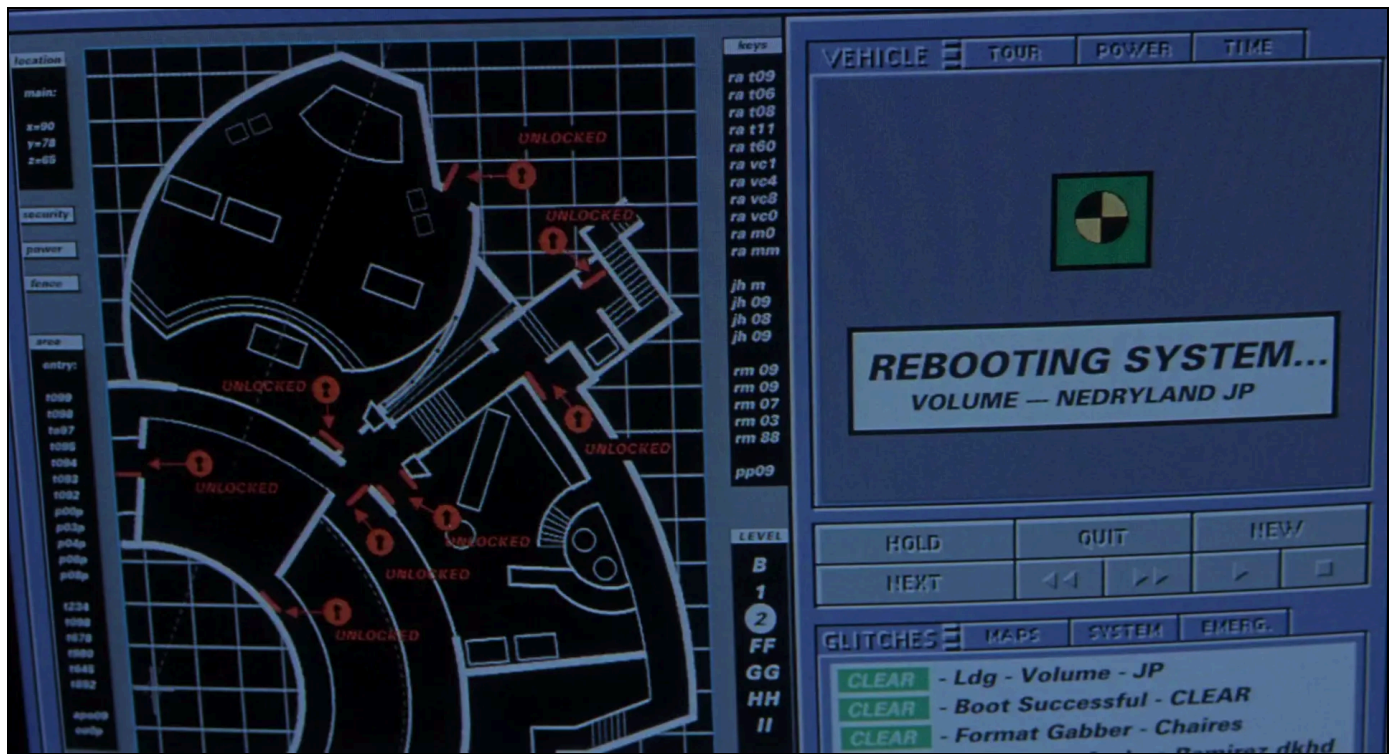


cd Visitor.Center

Trivia: IRIX supported spaces in file and directory names. I assume they put a dot between Visitors and Center for style.

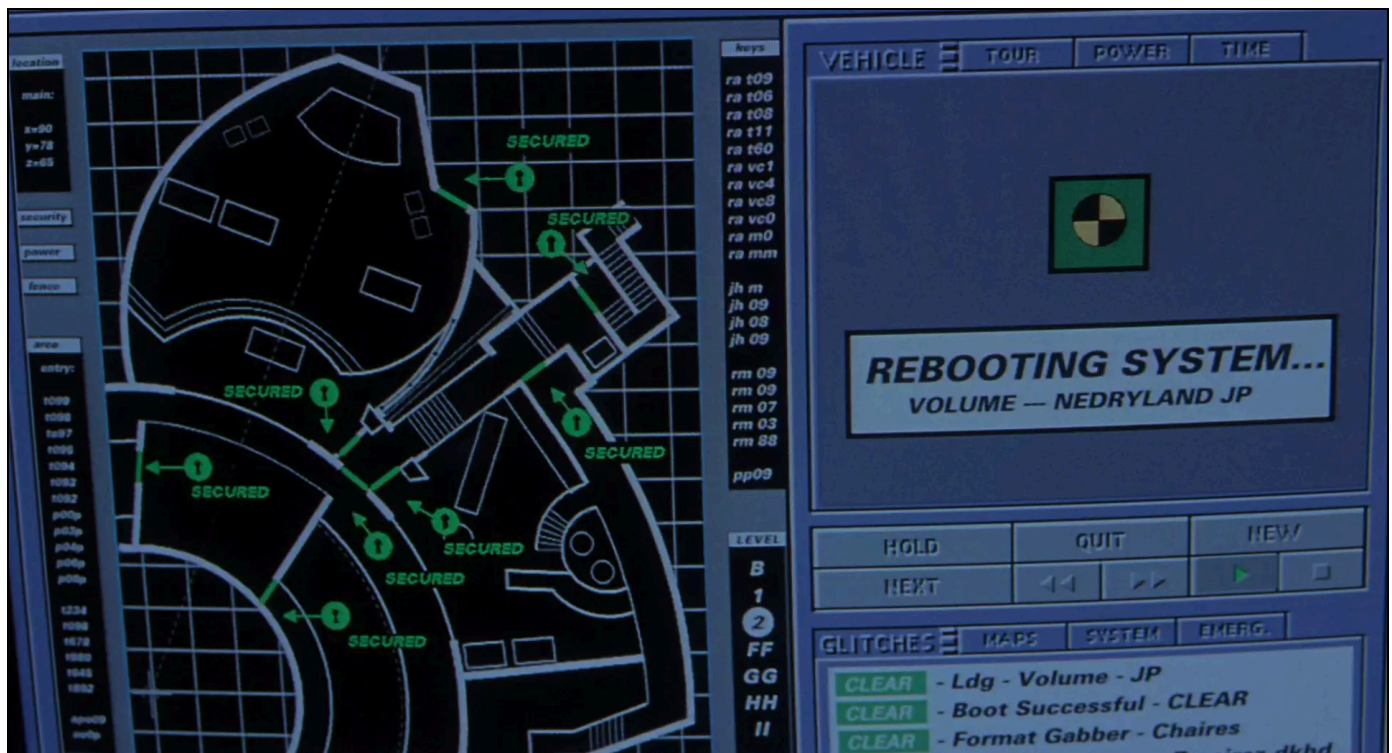
NEDRYLAND

Nedryland is the system modestly named by Dennis Nedry to control Jurassic Park. We can catch a few glimpses of the name on screen when the system successfully reboots.



Nedryland (BAD)

There is very little online about how these screens were created except that they were created by Michael Backes and his team.

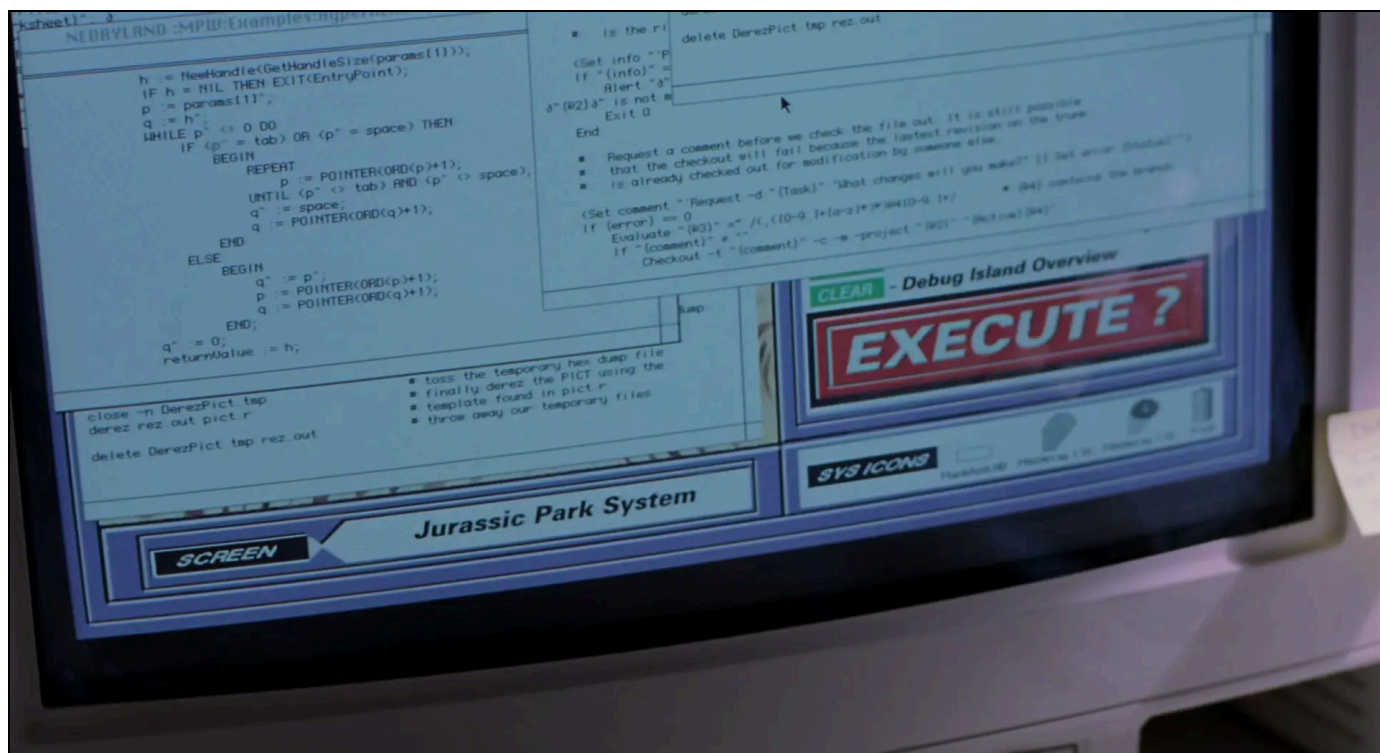


Nedryland (GOOD)

Trivia: Fans have recreated Nedryland. Checkout [JPOS NEDRYLAND YouTube channel](#) to see it in action.

NEDRYLAND SOURCE CODE

Some code associated with Nedryland is visible on screen. It looks like actual source code^[10] with Classic Mac OS API functions calls. **EDIT:** Several hackers news users [pointed out](#) this is Pascal from MPW (Macintosh Programmers Workshop).



Nedryland Code

Later during the faked video-conference, we can see more files belonging to a Nedryland directory.



Nedryland directory

BOOK ON SHELF

One last detail for the road. The book on the top of Dennis's shelf (upper-right) is [System 7 Revealed](#) by Anthony Meadow. Wow they really did pay attention to every detail!



Programming book, System 7 Revealed by Anthony Meadow

REFERENCES

- ^ [1] Motorola Envoy Release date
- ^ [2] Connection Machine Series
- ^ [3] The CM-5, Moore's Law, and the Future of Computational Performance
- ^ [4] NCAR's Connection Machine 5 - Littlebear
- ^ [5] CM-5 in Jurassic Park
- ^ [6] SGI hardware developer handbook p4-25
- ^ [7] Using the Indigo Keyboard with a Personal Iris
- ^ [8] In Jurassic Park, when Nedry is introduced, you can see he's watching Jaws on his computer.
- ^ [9] 3D File System Navigator for IRIX 4.0.1+
- ^ [10] Source code on Nedry's workstation: real programming language/s?

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