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- > X-COM ALLIANCE
- > DEUS EX
- > ALONE IN THE DARK 4
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- > 4X4 EVOLUTION
- > FREEDOM RIDGE
- > ULTIMA ONLINE 2
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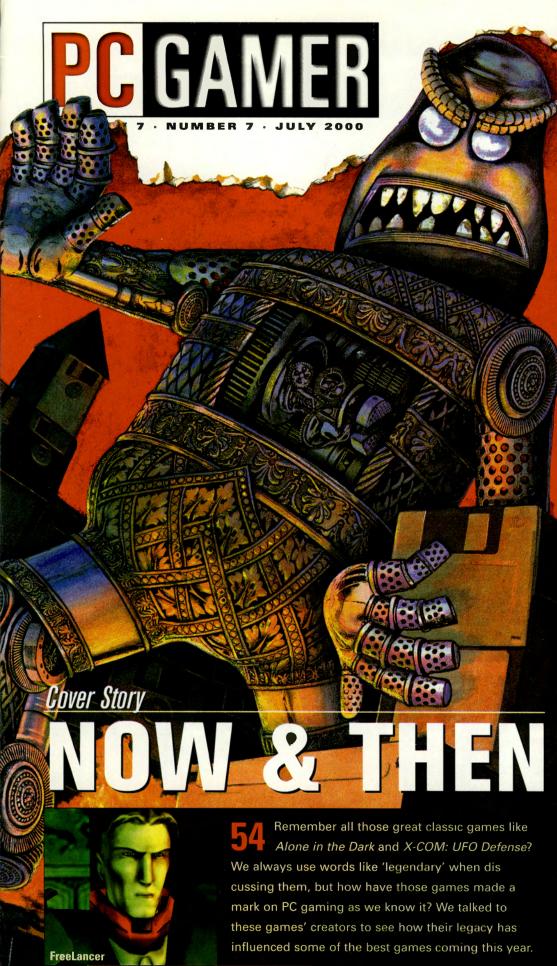


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Scoops

Those guys at Bethesda are at it again. Morrowind continues the epic Elder Scrolls storyline. No doubt it's gonna be huge, and we have the first in-depth look.



The Links series just keeps getting better and better. Smoke went on a fact-finding mission and brought back everything you could possibly want to know about this eagerly anticipated golf sim.



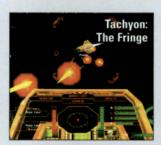
Take a trip through a dark and demented version of Wonderland. Alice is now in her early teens, and she's got some issues that need resolving. Of course, she'll have plenty of sharp and pointy weapons at hand.





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146 Thief 2: The Metal Age

While it is a fine game, Thief 2 is also one tough cookie. This month we have some key tips and guides to help you through some of the trickier parts of Eidos' smash hit. Guaranteed to help you fill your pockets with some hard-earned (stolen) gold.

The Hard Stuff

The Vede gets his hands on a GeForce2 GTS and Voodoo5 5500 — lovely. He also reviews the Hypersonic SONIC BOOM system, and manages to find time to advise some sorry sod on how to discipline the inlaw's unruly children.



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GREATEST CD EVER! Not merely a listing of the amazing games on the CD, but a feature-packed trip down memory lane. What were you doing when X-COM was released?

40 Eyewitness

C&C: Red Alert 2 is on the way; also, we interrogate Brad McQuaid about customer complaints in EverQuest. Find out what happened to PC Accelerator, and why Bruce Campbell is coming back on your PC (it ain't a Tachyon sequel). Plus, see what contest we have in store for you.



130 Extended Play

Find out why Tom isn't too thrilled about Roque Spear: Urban Operations or the Firestorm C&C add-on, or, well, PC games in general.

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Wolf finds himself drawn toward EverQuest once again - the game that Jeremy Williams says has a "strangely arousing" cover.

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Cliff Bleszinski, lead designer for Unreal Tournament, reveals his fluffier side in our filling and great-tasting questionnaire.

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LETTER FROM THE ED.



"We are men of action; lies do not become us."

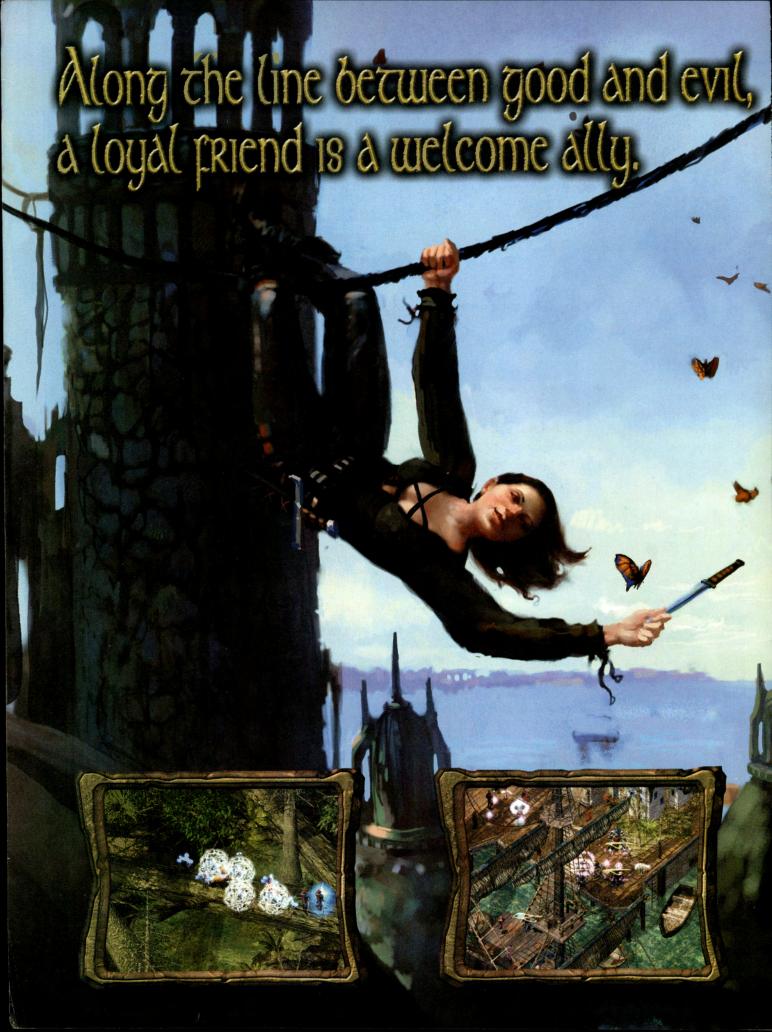
Eyebrows were raised last month as I penned the content on the 'Next Month' box. "The greatest issue in the history of PC Gamer," I proclaimed. Youthful exuberance? The new Chief's over-enthusiasm? Absolutely not: take a look at this issue and tell me it's not the best ever. Of course, the main reason for that is the content of the PC Gamer CD. From X-COM: UFO Defense to Duke Nukem 2, Secret of Monkey Island to Ultima Underworld, we crammed in 12 certifiable classics.

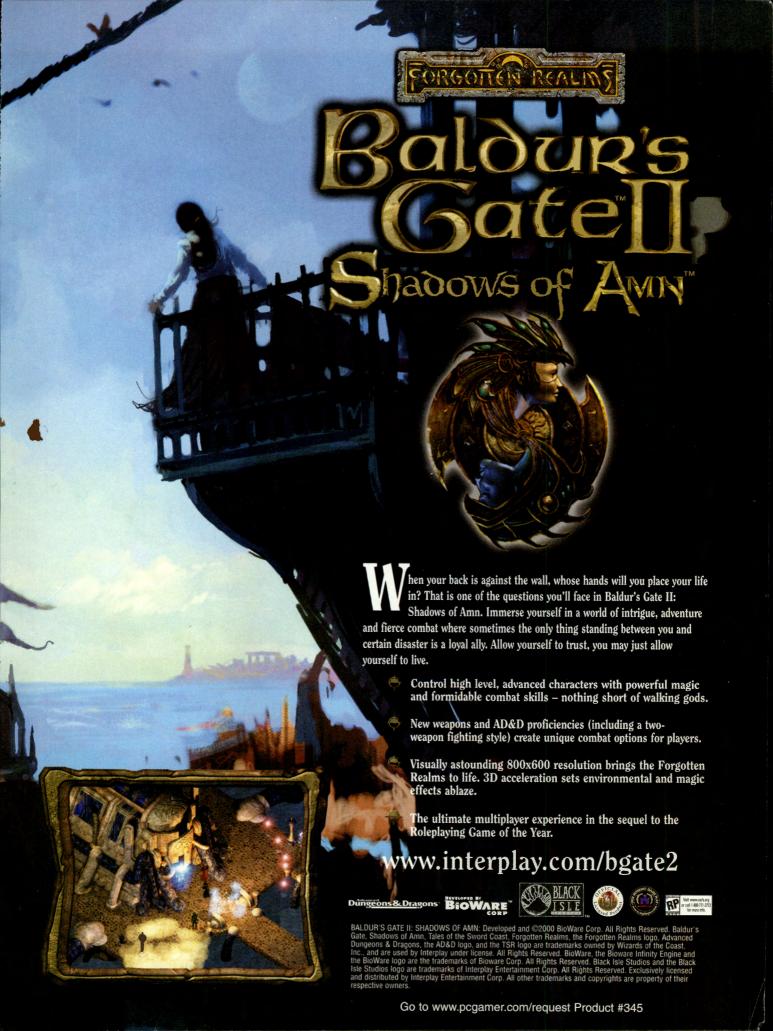
Should you not get the CD, fear not — you'll find a feature packed with info on some great games coming this year, created by talents who came to prominence by designing franchises that thrive today. It combines a trip down memory lane with a peer in to the crystal ball of tomorrow's gaming goodness.

And there's mixed emotion in this next part: welcome, PC Accelerator readers. Having been involved in PCXL since its launch, I'm going to miss it. This move means that you're now part of the swelling PC Gamer family, and I'm positive you'll like what you find.

So on to the movie quote contest. The quote above comes from a popular movie — you just have to tell me which one. Last month, Simon King spotted the line from The Full Monty (set in my home town of Sheffield up the Blades) and snags the prize. As always, send your musings, contest entries and comments to ednote@pcgamer.com.

Rob Smith, **Editor-in-Chief**







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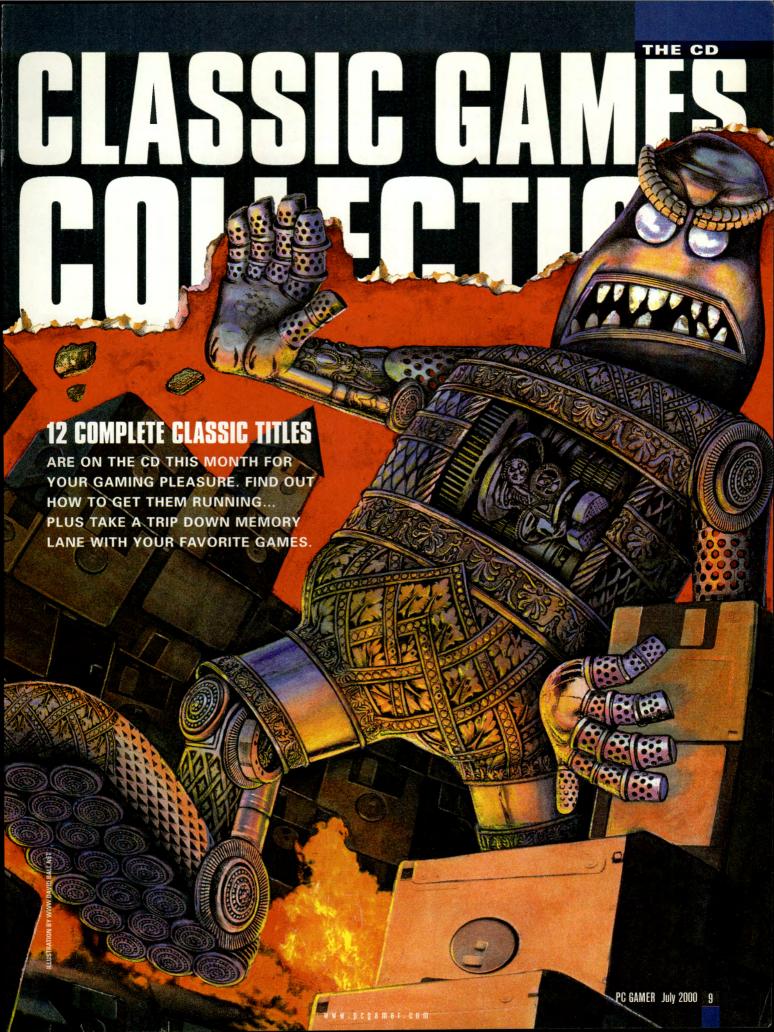








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Let's Do the Time

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE PRESENT THE BEST PC GAMER CD-ROM OF ALL TIME

he CD included with this issue is the culmination of seven solid months of E-mail, phone calls, contract drafting, and good old-fashioned diplomacy. The result, we hope you'll agree, is nothing short of astonishing. None of this would have been possible without the cooperation of every publisher and developer involved, all of whom deserve a gigantic thank you. A round of applause, please.

If you've already ripped open the polybag, inserted The CD, and tried playing every game, you've probably encountered at least one snag. Getting classic games to work on a modern PC is a game in itself. Most of the games are pre-configured to work properly, but there are a couple problems we still haven't solved, so bear with us. Follow the instructions in the following pages carefully. If this and all else fails to get a game running, visit our Classic Games Support Shelter at www.pcgamer.com. Another reader may have already solved your problem, and we'll do everything we can to help.

We have two people to thank for this month's disc pages. The first is your friendly neighborhood disc editor, Jeremy Williams, to whom you are encouraged to mail all forms of gratitude, monetary and literary alike. The second is a guest speaker by the name of Jim Leonard, the brains behind www.oldskool.org and www.mobygames .com, two outstanding sites directly related to classic games. So hold on as we guide you to a fertile, forgotten oasis in the desert of old software.

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Check out the Goodies folder on The CD. You'll find some shareware goodness from years past, and hints and walkthroughs for some of the games in this feature. If you look carefully, you'll even spot a few more full-version classics, compliments of Dynamix and Infocom.

ME SUPPORT SER



By the time this issues hits shelves, we will have erected the Classic Games Support Shelter at www.pcgamer.com. Both Jim and Jeremy will be on call, so stop by and have a drink. It's the place to visit in order to share problems and solutions with other readers. It will also give us a venue where we can address each problem in detail. If a workaround or fix exists, it will be posted there.

The Joys of Retro-Gaming

HOW TO TURN YOUR TURBO-CHARGED PC INTO A 286 CLUNKER

ld games aren't flexible enough to deal with newer environments, so a little tweaking of Windows 95/98 is sometimes necessary to match the environment they're expecting. The three most common adjustments that need to be made are enabling legacy sound card support, freeing up RAM, and using "pure" MS-DOS mode. Those last two birds can be killed with one stone, as we'll discuss below.

SOUND SUPPORT

Modern PCI sound cards vary wildly in the strength of their legacy SoundBlaster support; they either work perfectly or require extensive help from resident drivers to hear anything at all. If you have the latter and hear silence, stuttering sound, or your machine locks up on you, you're at the mercy of your sound card and must modify your configuration.

The first thing to do is to check driver settings in the System -> Devices -> Sound and Music Devices section of the Control Panel. Most PCI cards have either a SoundBlaster compatible driver or a compatibility section in other driver settings. Make sure whatever you have is not only enabled, but also set to the standard settings of Port 220, IRQ 5, and DMA 1 (Figure 1). Also, check that a line exists in your AUTOEXEC.BAT that reads "SET BLASTER=A220 I5 D1", because many older games look for this variable to drive the card correctly. If you don't have a compatibility section in your driver setup, feel free

ortex AU8830 Sound Blaster Pro Emulation Properties 🌃 🔀 General Driver Resources Vortex AU8830 Sound Blaster Pro Emulation t/Output Range 0220 - 0226 terrupt Request Direct Memory Access III -Setting based on: Basic configuration 0004 . Luse automatic settings Conflicting device list No conflicts A -

FIGURE 1 Check your legacy support settings, and make sure they're set to common defaults.

to contact your card's tech support because legacy game support might have been improved since you purchased your card.

If changing settings doesn't help, then try configuring the game to use Adlib (FM Synthesis) only, which most sound cards emulate. You won't hear digitized sound effects, but it's better than silence.

MEMORY LIMITS AND MS-DOS MODE

Remember the wonderful time you used to have tweaking memory usage, spending hours in front of CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT files? No, we didn't think so. Fortunately for this day and age, Windows 95/98 handles the 640K memory limitations of DOS quite well. If your CON-FIG.SYS file is empty, Windows defaults to loading the DOS kernel into upper RAM and emulating the XMS and EMS memory standards. This provides about 590K free DOS memory, and should cover most games run from within Windows.

A select few games might refuse to run properly while Windows is active. (This includes Terminal Velocity and Links: The Challenge of Golf.) Thankfully, Windows handles this gracefully with its MS-DOS mode support (Figure 2). To configure problematic games, right-click on the program's .EXE file, choose Properties, then the Program tab, and then Advanced. Check MS-DOS mode, then select Specify a new MS-DOS configuration. Click Configuration and make sure that Expanded

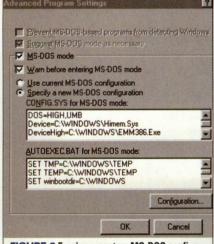


FIGURE 2 Forcing a custom MS-DOS configuration makes older games easier to deal with.

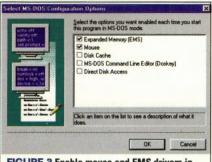


FIGURE 3 Enable mouse and EMS drivers in MS-DOS Settings, as Windows won't be around to emulate them.

Memory (EMS) is checked (and Mouse, if available) and then click OK three times to activate all the changes (Figure 3). The next time you run the program, Windows will reboot with your custom configuration, then reboot back to your old configuration when it's done. This gives the game unfettered access to your PC's hardware just like DOS used to.

If you encounter different problems than the common issues listed above, or want to read more on the subject, consult Oldskool's PC Guides section at http://www.oldskool.org/pc/help/.

MOBYGAMES.COM



ovie lovers have the Internet Movie Database to turn to for comprehensive details about movies, but what about gamers? MobyGames.com is filling that void. From the birth of the PC to the present, MobyGames attempts to document the history of the industry in loving detail. Each entry in the database has a description, trivia, links to related games, screenshots, retail box photos, advertising blurbs, and other information. The data is completely cross-referenced and searchable, so you can look up what Michael Abrash created a decade before working on Quake, view screenshots of some of the first PC games, or even browse every game that was a movie/book tie-in. You'd be surprised at what you can find.

MobyGames is supported by the gaming community, so anyone is free to contribute information to the database. Contributions can be from anywhere in the PC timeline, and the site is quite serious about that: What other website cheerfully accepts new reviews for 18-year-old games? It's worth checking out!

WING COMMANDER

- ◆ INSTALL: \Ksinit exe
- ◆ USEFUL FILES: \Goodies\Hints\wc_keys.txt
- ◆ CATEGORY: Action
- ◆ COMPANY: Origin Systems, 1990
- ♦ RUNS IN: Windows 95/98



To install the game, double-click on KSINIT.EXE on *The CD*. After the intro, click on Install Wing 1 (the other buttons will generate an error). Being an older Windows program, the installer will attempt to "update" DirectX to ver-

sion 2. Don't panic! The installer checks version numbers against your existing DLLs, and will copy only remaining (useless) files to your system directory. To play, launch the game from the Start menu, and you're on your way. If for some reason you encounter problems, click on the installer's View Help File button for additional troubleshooting information.

Refer to the chart below for common commands available when in battle, or refer to the included WC_KEYS.TXT file for a more detailed list. To dive right in, attend the mis-

QUICK COMMANDS

Turning/diving/climbi	ngarrow keys
Speed	plus/minus on keypad
Afterburners	TAB
Fire guns	ngarrow keysplus/minus on keypadTABSPACEENTERA
Fire missiles	ENTER
Autopilot	A
Gun select	G
Missle select	M



Bonjour, Lieutenant. You are called Trixter, no? I am called Angel.

Conversations and events between missions change based on how well you're doing.

sion briefing. Once your fighter is launched, press A to activate the autopilot to move to the next nav point. When you encounter fighters, communicate to your wingman to break and attack with the C key, then go after them yourself. Pay attention to the radar to see where the Kilrathi are, and hit your afterburners if a missile is on your tail.

Wing Commander set a new standard for movie-style presentation in computer games: the graphics and cutscenes between missions were well-drawn, and the story had an epic scope. It set a new standard for interactivity in action games as well: the music score changed based on the severity of the action, and the player could both issue orders to friendly pilots and verbally taunt the enemy. Amazingly, the story and subsequent mission

objectives are based the player's success or failure. The overall sense of production value left a permanent mark on the industry.



What could possibly be worse than navigating an asteroid field? How about a mine field?

Show this Dralthi-class fighter just what a Confed pilot is capable of!

DID YOU KNOW?

he version of Wing Commander provided on The CD is different from the one you played more than a decade ago. It is taken from The Kilrathi Saga, a rare edition of the series that was reprogrammed for Windows 95 that includes several notable additions, which make it worth playing all over again. All speed issues are gone; the game runs at the perfect speed every time. The music is recorded from the Roland MT-32 soundtrack, so it sounds better than you remember. But the best reason to play is that you can finally turn off the cockpit display - something burgeoning Confed pilots wished they could have done when they played it the first time! (Hit F1 twice to toggle.)

X-COM: UFO DEFENSE

- ◆ INSTALL: \xcom\Xcom.exe
- ◆ USEFUL FILES: \Goodies\Hints\xcom_strategies.txt
- ◆ CATEGORY: Turn-based Strategy
- ◆ COMPANY: MicroProse, 1994
- ◆ RUNS IN: Windows 95/98



he version of X-COM: UFO Defense we've included on The CD is native to Windows, so no sound or graphics configuration is necessary; just double-click on the program in the

extracted directory to run it. It runs a bit fast on anything quicker than 200MHz, however, so you may want to run the TURBO utility included in the "goodies\dosutil" folder on The CD to slow down Windows and make the game more enjoyable. Alternatively, you can hit the question mark icon to access the Options menu when investigating an alien crash landing to adjust the scroll and movement speeds.

GeForce owners will probably encounter a video problem that renders the game unplayable. Tune in to the Classic Games Support Shelter for help, especially if you find a workaround to share!

Everything you need to know about the ins and outs of X-COM is contained in the excellent UFODEF.PDF manual provided in the \manual folder where you extracted the game. Of particular interest are three helpful tutorials that put you on the fast track to learning X-COM, so be sure to go through them.

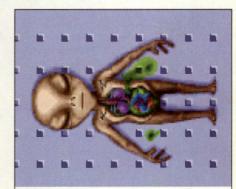
X-COM was a perfect blend of resource management and turn-based battle, and became the definitive example of tactical



Troops assemble outside the door of a fallen UFO, ready for battle. It's time to get it done!

turn-based squad combat. The novel idea of being forced to incorporate your enemy's technology into your own put a new spin on the genre, and the slick interface made the game endlessly playable.

It's hard to believe, but X-COM almost never saw the light of day. The whole project was nearly axed when MicroProse made some cutbacks due to financial difficulties. Everything proceeded reasonably smoothly for a while until Spectrum Holobyte acquired Bill Stealey's shares in the company - the producer was made redundant, and the game was nearly axed again. The company finally finished X-COM in March, 1994, three years after it had proposed the project.



Performing autopsies on alien corpses helps you learn how to build better weapons against them.

UFOPREDIA OPTIONS The Geoscape is where you oversee X-COM world operations.

f it seems like X-COM bears a striking resemblance to the game Laser Squad published more than five years earlier, that's because it was created by the same team. Designer Julian Gollop remembers when they approached MicroProse about a sequel: "They liked what we had done so far, but they explained that they wanted a 'big' game. I said 'What do you mean by big?', and they said 'Well, you know -BIG." They came up with the idea of adding a grand strategic element on to the game, very firmly set on Earth, in which the player managed an organization that defended the planet against UFO incursions. "I bought quite a few books on UFOs for research purposes, so that we could give the game an even more 'authentic' basis," says Gollop.



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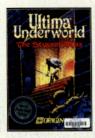
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UP TO I.5 GIGAPIXEL/SEC. BURN THROUGH SCENES.



ULTIMA UNDERWORLD: THE STYGIAN ABYSS

- ♦ INSTALL: \uw1\Uw1.exe
- ◆ USEFUL FILES: \Goodies\Hints\uu_walkthrough.txt
- ◆ CATEGORY: First-Person Roleplaying
- ◆ COMPANY: Origin Systems, 1992
- RUNS IN: DOS, Windows DOS Box



etting Ultima J Underworld working is either extremely easy or close to impossible. The members of the first group are the lucky ones. They get to play what some PC Gamer editors consider the best game of all time. The second

group is filled with sorrow.

Here's how you find out which group you're in. Right-click on UW.EXE in the extracted folder. Choose Properties and then the Memory tab. Look under Expanded (EMS) Memory. If you have a pull-down option that is set to "Auto" by default, you are a proud member of group one. If it reads "The computer is not configured for expanded memory in MS-DOS sessions," you're in trouble.

The ones with Expanded memory available can simply double-click on the program icon to start the game. It should run flawlessly, but you can always fiddle with the sound card settings by launching UINSTALL.EXE. Like The Secret of Monkey Island, choosing Roland MT-32 as your music card may yield better music quality. Watch the introduction. This was one of the first games to feature digitized speech. If you have any problems, just boot with a clean CONFIG.SYS file.

Now, as for the sorrowful ones, I pity you. In fact, I sympathize with you. Most of the machines here at PC Gamer aren't configured for EMS, and despite entire days devoted to



Opening doors with the mouse takes practice, but makes you feel like you're really interacting with the world.

fixing them, the problem persists. The first thing you should try is booting with a blank CONFIG.SYS file. Windows 95/98 should emulate EMS without loading a memory manager like EMM386. Unfortunately, it seems some system manufacturers mess with the default Windows settings without considering the necessity of running Ultima Underworld.

If you find a solution to this EMS anomaly, please write me at jeremy@pcgamer .com or visit our Classic Games Support Shelter at www.pcgamer.com. You will make many fellow gamers smile widely.

Ultima Underworld: The Stygian Abyss, produced by Warren Spector and directed by Richard Garriott, was technologically ahead of its time. Before id Software released Wolfenstein 3D, Ultima Underworld showcased real-time lighting cast from

1992 TIMELINE

The World Wide Web is started up for home use, forever changing the way we get our gaming news.

hand-held torches, slopes and stairs, streams of water, magic, and the ability to jump and fly. You can thank the geniuses at Looking Glass Technology for that.

The technology is married to a roleplaying game that sucks the player in with the force of a Tim Taylor-modified vacuum cleaner. There are more missions buried in this dungeon than in most modern outdoor adventure games. Refer to the included walkthrough file for spell and mantra information.

The control scheme is brilliant, Practically the whole game can be played using just a mouse. Use the left mouse button to move in the direction of the arrow and drag items from the ground into your inventory with the right button. To use items or open doors, right-click on them, drag the mouse away, and release the button. To jump, hit both buttons, Brilliant!

arren Spector wasn't involved with the game until it was deep into development. According to Doug Church of Looking Glass, "At one point, Paul [Neurath, designer] called Origin since we hadn't heard from them in a while, and we found out our producer had quit. Warren became involved around that time, something like a year into the project, which was a big win for everyone."



"A stunning accomplishment...
establishing the standard for
the next generation of games."

—Adrenaline Vault

STAR TREK



The Fallen utilizes a revolutionary multiple-character system — giving the player three unique and compelling single-player experiences — as either Sisko, Kira or Worf.

The race is on to find the three lost red orbs of the Pah-wraiths, in this Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* third-person action/adventure game. The Cardassians, the Dominion and the Bajorans — plus a mysterious race of terrifying aliens known only as the Grigari — are all vying for control of these orbs. The Federation believes that whoever controls all three may have the power to destroy the universe as we know it, so it's up to you — playing as either Captain Sisko, Major Kira or Lt. Commander Worf — to find them first. Fueled by a dazzlingly modified version of the award-winning Unreal Tournament game engine, and featuring the talented voices of the TV show's stars, The Fallen fleshes out the world of Star Trek* in ways you could only dream about, until now.

Coming September 2000

Available for Windows 95, 98 and 2000. Also available for Macintosh.

WWW.DS9THEFALLEN.COM

Energized by an enhanced version of the revolutionary Unreal Tournament engine. The Fallen places the player at the heart of an exhibitanting 3-D adventure.

A sophisticated camera system takes third-person perspective gaming to a higher plane, whether in close quarters or wide-open expanses.

A custom-designed inverse kinematics and bones animation system provides fluid character movements and ambulatory dexterity, while a revolutionary facial animation system enables real-time lip-syncing and heightened dramatic interaction between characters.

Officially sanctioned by Paramount, The Fallen's digital cast will be brought to life with the actual voices of Deep Space Nine's cast.



A Cardassian soldier as viewed through the Federation Type-3 Phaser Rifle's sniper mode.

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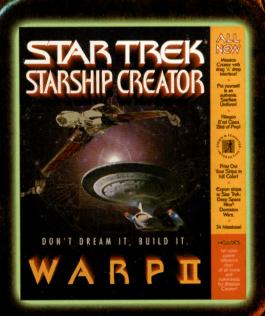
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ULTIMA I: THE FIRST AGE OF DARKNESS

- ♦ INSTALL: \ultima1\Ultima.exe
- ◆ USEFUL FILES: \Goodies\Hints\ultima_walkthrough.txt
- **♦ CATEGORY:** Roleplaying
- COMPANY: Origin Systems, 1987
- RUNS IN: DOS, Windows DOS Box



he start of the classic Ultima series has a suitably classic premise: Defeat the wizard to save the land. You are plucked out of time and space by Lord British to become a hero in Sosaria, a oncepeaceful land now ravaged by the evil wizard

Mondain. The Gem of Immortality protects Mondain, so you must complete various quests to discover a way to go back in time where he can be prevented from obtaining the gem in the first place and be defeated.

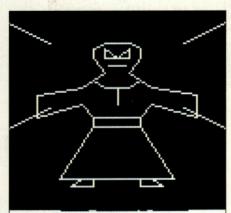
Installation of Ultima is straightforward; double-click on the ULTIMA.EXE installer in the \ULTIMA1 directory on The CD. Despite being the oldest game provided on our disc, Ultima is a well-behaved DOS program that requires no configuration. Simply double-click on the ULTIMA.EXE executable to run the game. While it runs without any issues, it has no provisions for exiting gracefully - you'll have to terminate the program manually if you want to stop playing. To do so, just hit ALT-ENTER to switch from full-screen mode to a window, then close the window like you would any other windowed program. (Just save your game with the Q key first!)



Iolo the Bard sings: Ho eyoh he hum!

You too can enjoy all the comforts of life — provided you have enough gold, of course.

The impact Ultima had on the industry is undeniable, Published when Richard Garriott was a freshman at the University of Texas in 1980, this little game with big aspirations spawned eight sequels and six spinoffs (Ultima Online, Ultima Online 2, Ultima Underworld I and II, Ultima: Savage Empires, and Ultima: Martian Dreams). This phenomenal series continued to win legions of fans for two decades of gaming. Sure, some of the games in the series weren't perfect, but most of them stand firmly as some of the definitive examples of the computer fantasy roleplaying genre.



You'll meet all sorts of dangerous and unfriendly stick-figures in these dungeons.

QUICK COMMANDS

The list of commands in Ultima is extensive. There are more than 20 keys to use during gameplay, so refer to the following chart when playing:

Attack with readied weapon (see Ready below)	
Board a form of transportation	В
Cast a spell	
Drop an item (permanent!)	D
Enter a town, castle, dungeon, or other landmark	E
Fire a weapon	F
Get adjacent items	G
Hyper Jump to other stellar sectors	Н
Reveal the names of places and things (including secret doors)	
Climb up or down ladders in dungeons	
Toggle sound on and off	N
Open the contents of a coffin in a dungeon	
Save your progress to disk (use prior to quitting the game)	α
Ready a weapon, armor, or magic spell (must be performed prior to using item)	R
Steal items (guards frown on this behavior)	S
Transact business with merchants or kings	T
Unlock cells in castles or chests in dungeons	U
Change view in future transport crafts	V
Leave behind or dismount your current transport and travel on foot	X
Displays your statistics, possessions, and spells	
(also used to stop the passage of time)	Z
Pass the time and consume food	

Itima was not released natively for the PC because the PC didn't exist way back in 1980. The PC version included on the PC Gamer disc is a rerelease originally published in 1987, which was rewritten from scratch and had remastered EGA graphics. The original Ultima was written in Applesoft BASIC.

t is interesting to note that, in a bizarre product tie-in, the aliens encountered in Ultima are revealed in a future game in the series to be the Kilrathi. The Kilrathi are the same species Earth is fighting against in the first three Wing Commander games.

KING'S QUEST

- ◆ INSTALL: \kg1\kg1\setup.exe
- USEFUL FILES: \Goodies\Hints\kq1_walkthrough.txt
- **◆ CATEGORY:** Adventure
- ◆ COMPANY: Sierra, 1984
- RUNS IN: DOS, Windows DOS Box



Right-on chaps, time to turn the clock back sixteen years.

This is one of the better-behaved programs in our roundup, and even comes bundled in its own Windows installer. Once

installed, just find it in your start menu and launch away. There wasn't any such thing as a SoundBlaster in 1984, so unless you have a PCjr or Tandy, you're stuck with the harmonious PC speaker. (The game was designed to show off the IBM PCjr technology, which included native three-voice music and 16color graphics.)

You can access the game menu by hitting ESC, where you can save and restore games, check your inventory, and check the key configuration. King's Quest runs fine as long as you don't boost the speed to FAST, though it is good for a quick laugh.

Set your mice aside. As veterans remember, you type simple sentences to interact



The graphics may not look like much now, but back in 1984, this was mind-boggling.

with this world, which will prove both immersive and frustrating at the same time. Both "open door" and "open the large wooden door" will have the same effect, so don't be too verbose. If you run into any snags, just refer to the included walkthrough. Do try to solve the puzzles on your own first, however; the payoff is much greater if you can get there on your own.

he developers used encryption to hide code from prving eyes. The encryption key was "Avis Durgan." However, nobody can remember why this key was chosen, or who "Avis Durgen" is - not even Ken Williams!

ALONE IN THE DARK

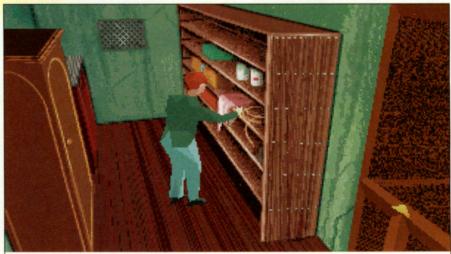
- USEFUL FILES: \Goodies\Hints\aitd_walkthrough.txt
- **◆ CATEGORY:** Adventure
- ◆ COMPANY: Infogrames, 1992
- RUNS IN: DOS, Windows DOS Box



Running Alone in the Dark successfully in Windows 95/98 hinges on an unlikely suspect: your sound card. If your sound card has perfect legacy support, the program runs fine; if it doesn't, you'll

have to reconfigure some settings. To configure and run Alone in the Dark, double-click on ALONE.COM, then choose Configuration. If you trust your sound card, choose the autodetected selections, then run the game. If it fails to work or you don't hear anything, rerun ALONE.COM and select Adlib for music and Buzzer for sound. If that fails, resort to restarting in MS-DOS mode and running it from there. For help, refer to the Joys of Retro-Gaming section you'll find on page 11.

Everything in Alone in the Dark is controlled through the arrow keys, Enter key, and the Spacebar. The arrows move your charac-



Pushing the wardrobe in front of the window will block a monster and buy you some time.

ter, and you can push forward twice in succession to run. To switch action modes or use inventory items, hit Enter, then select a choice from the menu that appears. Spacebar is the "use" key - hold it down to search in search mode, or hold it down while pressing the arrow keys to fight in fighting mode.

Alone in the Dark was groundbreaking both in terms of both technique and style. The clever technique of using pre-drawn backgrounds with animated 3D foreground models let it run on lowly 286s while still looking great. Before Alone in the Dark, there were no truly 3D full-screen adventures.

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND

- ◆ INSTALL: \monkey\monkey.exe
- ◆ USEFUL FILES: \Goodies\Hints\mi_walkthrough.txt
- **◆ CATEGORY:** Adventure
- ◆ COMPANY: LucasArts, 1990
- RUNS IN: DOS, Windows DOS Box



R un The Secret of Monkey Island by double-clicking on MON-KEY.EXE in the extracted folder. The game shouldn't require configuration, but it fails to run on some faster machines due to a timing bug. Run the batch

file MONKEYR.BAT, which bypasses sound card detection and forces Roland MT-32 music (and those of you with wavetable MIDI on your card should hear enhanced music).

Monkey Island uses LucasArts' SCUMM interface, which is mouse-driven. Just select an action from the on-screen menu, then select the object you want to perform that action on. Sometimes a default action will be presented in yellow; use the right mouse button to choose it. The SCUMM interpreter used to build the game stood for "Script Creation Utility for Maniac Mansion", the game it was built for. Ron Gilbert, the creator of Monkey Island, used SCUMM for other projects,



"A real pirate! I wonder if I can impress him with my mastery of conversation."

including the educational Putt-Putt series.

Regarded as the pinnacle of LucasArts SCUMM adventures, *Monkey Island* was a masterpiece of puzzles, graphics, and humor. Some of the dialogue is laugh-out-loud funny. Some standouts include the "swordfighting" (really a slew of verbal insults directed toward your opponent) and characters such as cannibals who are watching their fat intake.

DID YOU KNOW?

ust how did Guybrush get his unique name? In development, the DeluxePaint animated brush for the main guy had a filename of "guybrush.abm", so they used it in lieu of a better name.

DUKE NUKEM 2

- ◆ INSTALL: \duke2\Duke2.exe
- ◆ USEFUL FILES: \Goodies\Hints\kq1_walkthrough.txt
- ◆ CATEGORY: Arcade
- ◆ COMPANY: 3D Realms, 1993
- ◆ RUNS IN: DOS, Windows DOS Box



Before Duke was a bad-assed, 3D, trashtalking, gun-toting, alien ass-kicking babe magnet, he was a little itty-bitty sprite no more than two inches tall. Here's your chance to see him in all his two-dimensional glory.

Getting the game running is a piece of cake. Just double-click on NUKEM2.EXE in the extracted folder and witness history unfolding before your eyes. You can adjust the sound settings from the menu, but the SoundBlaster mode works fine on all tested systems.

Watch the gripping intro and then wait for the demos to kick in. They'll give you clues to how Duke moves about his world. He climbs ladders, rides elevators, shimmies along pipes, and even rocket-jumps with the appropriate gear. All of this is done with the arrow keys, ALT, and CTRL. Simple enough for you?



What's that can of Coca-Cola doing in there? Guess even Duke liked to have a Coke and a smile.

To learn more about this game, boot up the file called DN2HINT.EXE. You'll learn the hot keys (F2 saves, F3 restores), all about power-ups and bonus points, and discover that the rocket launcher is only good for 32 shots. There's also a massive section with gameplay tips and even "secret cheat keys".

TIMELINE

1993

A now-infamous white Bronco and police engage in a low-speed chase on national TV. It was the most-watched thing on the air and stole the audience from the David Hasselhoff singing special.

LINKS: THE CHALLENGE OF GOLF

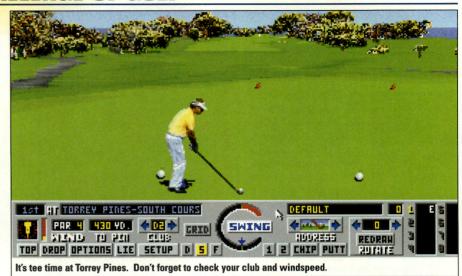
- ◆ INSTALL: \links\Links.exe
- USEFUL FILES: \Goodies\Hints\aitd_walkthrough.txt
- **◆ CATEGORY:** Sports
- ◆ COMPANY: Access Software, 1990
- RUNS IN: DOS



o install Links, double-click on the LINKS.EXE installer in the LINKS\ directory, Once extracted, you must alter Links' program settings to run in MS-DOS mode. To do this, right-click on the LINKS.BAT file, select

the Program tab, click Advanced, then make sure MS-DOS mode is checked. To further enable mouse support, select "Specify a new MS-DOS configuration" and then click Configuration. Then make sure Mouse is checked and click OK three times to confirm all your settings. You can then run Links by double-clicking LINKS.BAT.

Links is an easy program to learn, as the menu selections are self-explanatory. If you want to jump right in, click on Start, then click OK for the next three screens (use the DEFAULT player provided). Soon you'll find yourself ready to tee off. If you want to adjust your aim, hold the mouse button down on the



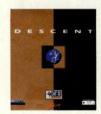
fairway. To swing, use the classic three-stage click: Click and hold the SWING button to start, let go when you reach the desired strength, then click when the meter hits the center mark at the bottom of the gauge.

Links was in a class by itself. Beautiful graphics aside, numerous features such as the accurate modeling of ball physics, digitized environmental sounds, and the customization functions (like the golfer's stance and swing plane) were unprecedented.

990 TIMELINE

Ken Griffey and Ken Griffey Jr. became the first father and son in history to play on the same professional baseball team (the Seattle Mariners).

- ◆ INSTALL: \descent\Descent.exe
- USEFUL FILES: \Goodies\Hints\aitd_walkthrough.txt
- **◆ CATEGORY:** Action
- ◆ COMPANY: Interplay, 1994
- ◆ RUNS IN: DOS, Windows DOS Box



while back, the most popular catchphrase wasn't "Hardware T&L." It was "six degrees of freedom"; exactly what Descent delivered to shooter fans.

Getting the game run-

ning shouldn't pose a problem. Just launch DESCENTR.EXE in the extracted directory. If that fails, you get no sound, or if you experience a jerky quality to the video, configure your sound card by running SETUP.EXE. Give autodetect a try, and set the music to General MIDI. As with games that support the Roland MT-32, this setting offers better sound through most wavetable sound cards in Windows.

If you still have problems, you should try running the game in MS-DOS mode. Simply follow the same method described in Links.

In the game, F1 brings up the hotkey list (ALT-F2 saves and ALT-F3 restores). Experi-



Secrets are often hidden around the dangerous lava. Hover carefully into the nooks and crannies.

ment with the plus/minus keys and F3 to turn off the cockpit and expand your view. When not using a joystick, it's best to control the craft using the numeric keypad on your keyboard, which allows easy access to roll buttons (7 and 9).

So who remembers the story driving the action in this classic game? It's all the fault of the Post-Terran Minerals Corporation. It seems they have lost contact and control with some of their mining operations. The machines used to bore out the precious materials have turned against the good people



The art of strafing has never proved handier than in Descent, Look out for those walls!

who built them, and are now being controlled by a mysterious force. It's up to you and one illegally modified spacecraft to get it done.

I ithin five minutes of playing the original shareware version of Descent upon its release back in 1994, our own Rob Smolka vomited from acute airsickness. Now that's what we would call immersion!

TERMINAL VELOCITY

- ◆ INSTALL: \tv\Tv.exe
- ◆ USEFUL FILES: \Goodies\Hints\aitd_walkthrough.txt
- **◆ CATEGORY:** Action
- ◆ COMPANY: 3D Realms, 1995
- **RUNS IN: DOS**



n an attempt to oneup the genius gameplay of Descent, the design wizards at Terminal Reality created this arcade shooter that allows players to fly above and below ground, with near-

seamless transitions between the two.

Unfortunately, it can be a bear to get started on a Windows 95/98 machine. You must run the game in pure MS-DOS mode. If you're comfortable in DOS, reboot and do your thing. If not, read the instructions applying to Links: The Challenge of Golf on page 20.

Before you can play the game, you must first configure your sound settings by running SETUP.EXE. It will offer to autodetect. If that fails, try selecting a Sound-Blaster Pro manually and experimenting with the IRQ address (a value of 5 typically works). You can perform this process in



The later episodes take place on all kinds of colorful, hostile alien environments.

Windows, as long as you don't choose the option to "Save and launch TV." Instead, hit the escape key and save your settings there.

If you have a SoundBlaster Livel card you will need to add the following lines to your CONFIG.SYS file in order to load your DOS sound drivers:

device=c:\windows\himem.svs device=c:\windows\emm386.exe

The graphics and sound in TV were spectacular. Not only did the game offer highresolution graphics (practically unheard of at the time), it used tracked music with a surround sound mode. Your radar in the upper left corner assigns the objectives of each mission. Simply fly in the direction it's pointing and destroy whatever targets stand in your way. If you see a tunnel, dive!

ROAD & TRACK PRESENTS: THE NEED FOR SPEED

- ◆ INSTALL: \nfs\Wfs.exe
- ◆ USEFUL FILES: \Goodies\Hints\aitd_walkthrough.txt
- ◆ CATEGORY: Racing
- ◆ COMPANY: Electronic Arts, 1995
- RUNS IN: DOS Box



o install Need for Speed, double-click on the NFS.EXE executable in the NFS\ directory on The CD. To run Need for Speed, doubleclick on the NFSSB.BAT batch file, which will run Need for Speed with

basic Sound Blaster sound support. (For stereo sound, edit NFSSB.BAT and replace the SB argument with SBPRO for Sound-Blaster Pro support, or SB16 for Sound Blaster 16 support.) Users with an older

TIMELINE

1995

A fertilizer car bomb explodes in Oklahoma City, OK, destroying the Federal Building and hundreds of lives in the worst act of terrorism ever to take place on U.S. soil.

QUICK COMMANDS

	up arrow
	down arrow
Steering	left and right arrow
	С
Handbrake	SPACEBAR
Horn	Н
Exit	ESCAPE

video card without VESA BIOS support may need to run NFSVESA.BAT instead, which loads a universal VESA driver before starting.

You're encouraged to customize Need For Speed's gameplay via the menus, but be aware that most of the animations were ripped out in order to provide a bit more precious room on The CD. Clicking on a car photo, for example, will hang the game click the left and right arrows to switch cars instead. This may be a bit of an inconvenience, but the alternative is worse, trust us.

To play, hit escape to get past the opening animation to the main menu, then jump right in and race by clicking DRIVE.

See the Quick Commands box for how to play. The handbrake performs as advertised; if you want to pull a 180-degree skid, vank it.



Peering over the dashboard of your RX-7. Gang way!

By the way, if you're interested to see how the NFS franchise is doing today, check out our review of NFS: Porsche Unleashed on page 82. We think you'll be pleasantly surprised at what you'll find!

DID YOU KNOW?

here is an entire website. http://www.nfscheats.com/, solely dedicated to cheats for the Need for Speed series of games.

DAIKATANA

- ◆ INSTALL: \daikatana\Dkdemo.exe
- ◆ TECH SUPPORT: www.daikatana.com
- **◆ CATEGORY: Action**
- ◆ COMPANY: Eidos Interactive
- ◆ REQUIRED: P200, 32MB RAM, DirectX 7.0, OpenGL accelerator

hat? A recent game, you ask? Yes, but all we could score you was the demo. Please forgive us. Daikatana is the game John Romero went to make after his departure from id Software more than four years ago. The idea was to recreate a multiplayer experience in a single-player game through the introduction of Al-controlled sidekicks.

Now, we'd be remiss in our roles as journalists if we didn't at least briefly mention the controversy (also known as hullabaloo) that has been surrounding this game for years. When this game first went into development, only one member of our current staff was on staff at the time. Yowsers! As far as the gaming community is concerned, Daikatana is a pretty big deal.

It's also a pretty big file. At just over 100MB, we knew you wouldn't want to download it from some web site over a modem, so we took it upon ourselves to be the exclusive print distributor (you're welcome). Give it a shot and see what you think. Though the demo's received a less than receptive response from assorted web sites, our own hardware boy Greg Vederman asserts that it has considerable merit.



The autocannons can't be destroyed, but perhaps if you find their power supply....



It's time to do battle with heartless evil frogs.

Before starting, enter the video menu and adjust the resolution to suit your system. The demo is pretty extensive, covering three of the game's four locales. There's also full deathmatch support and cooperative play. Check the README for technical support, information on controlling sidekicks, and console commands.

EarthLink

- ◆ INSTALL: \Elink\Setup.exe
- **◆ TECH SUPPORT: (800) 395-8410**
- ◆ CATEGORY: Online Service
- ◆ COMPANY: Earthlink
- ◆ REQUIRED: 486 or better, 8MB RAM, 14.4Kbps or faster modem

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Save gems allow you to...well, we don't want to spoil the surprise. But let's just say that without the save gems, you won't be able to perform a very important gameplay function.

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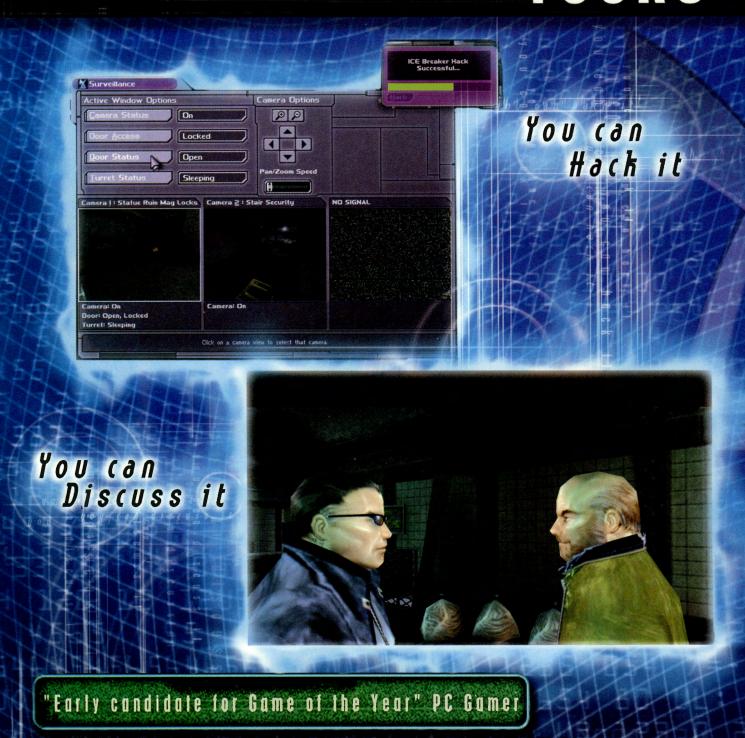






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Maxis" is an



Shake down

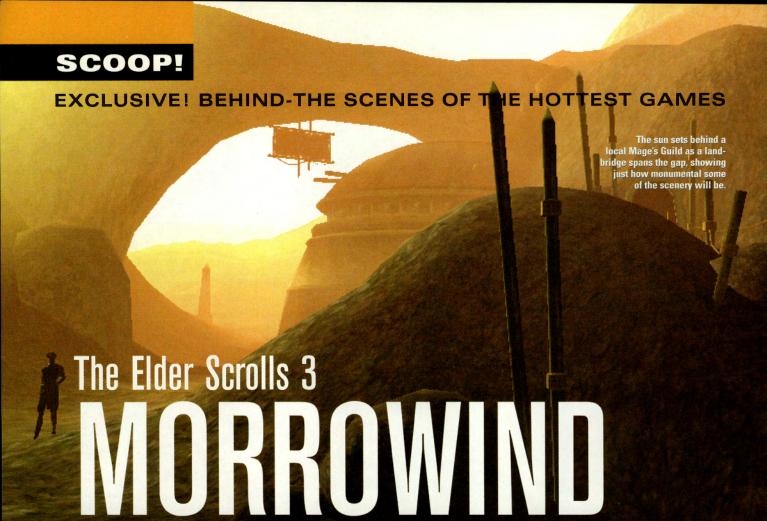




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www.simcity.com



Bethesda is gearing up to blow us away with its next installment in the Elder Scrolls series

ast month. Bethesda gave us a peek at its magnum opus, The Elder Scrolls 3: Morrowind. This month, they threw the door wide open to give us an exclusive look at a game that is sure to have roleplaying fans drooling. Those fans better have a big bucket to collect all that stray spittle; the drooling period will be long (anticipated release date is late next year) and damp (just look at these early screenshots).

Morrowind returns to familiar ground while at the same time expanding both the game world and the design. Since Arena and Daggerfall were both massive hits, a sequel must satisfy the existing fans while it lures in newcomers. This deep single-character RPG resonates with many of the themes from previous installments: the rise and fall of Imperial power, the mysterious disappearance of the Dwarves, the subtle and sinister powers of the Daedra Lords and their powerful artifacts, and the hidden society of ancient vampires. As lead designer Ken Rolston says, "Other themes are unique to the Morrowind setting, such as the bitter rivalries of the Dunmer Great Houses, the clash between civilized Great House Dunmer culture and barbarian nomadic Ashlander Dunmer culture, the obscure riddles of the Nerevarine prophecies, the looming threat of the Blight, and the shadowy menace of the Sixth House cult." It sure sounds like there will be plenty of subplots to keep things interesting.

Your character is a foreigner in a land rife with xenophobia. You start out cursed by a mysterious prophecy in a land crawling with secret enemies. And you're alone. Like previous Elder Scrolls games, this is a solo quest. NPCs may join you, but they will never be under your direct control. Some muscle is available for hire, and characters may be escorted or accompany you, but these situations are temporary.

It's a vast, hostile world that you'll face. Though not as endlessly huge as Daggerfall, Morrowind will be much more detailed. "The number one feedback we got from Daggerfall was that the character system is awesome, but the world around you was too repetitive and empty," says project leader Todd Howard, "This time we're placing everything by hand. The results are incredible. We still use 'building-blocks' because the world is just too huge to have every object be unique. With our Construction Set, we can build a great dungeon in a day, have it look unique and not seem arbitrary."

CATEGORY: Roleplaying game

DEVELOPER: Bethesda Softworks

PUBLISHER: Bethesda Softworks

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 30%

RELEASE DATE: Late 2001

IN A NUTSHELL: Morrowind is a sprawling, open-ended, single-person RPG with incredible graphics and deep gameplay. While nearly as expansive as its popular predecessor Daggerfall, the design will be much tighter with none of the cookie-cutter towns and dungeons that artificially bulked up the earlier game. The world editor will add to its replayability.

AT'S SO SPECIAL?: The hallmarks of the Elder Scrolls games are free form questing, vivid NPCs, and a world that is totally open and interactive. Bethesda's development strategy is solid, too: start with a small area, make sure everything works perfectly, and then build the rest of the world using the solid base already established. This should eliminate many of the bugs that plagued Daggerfall.





FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT

hile elements like the editor are progressive, other features are intended to make fans of the series feel right at home. Combat and magic are very similar to systems found in previous Elder Scrolls games. The basic structure of the magic system remains the same, but it's been refined. You can still create your own spells, potions, and enchanted items, but more advanced learning will be required. In Daggerfall, you were able to create any kind of spell once you were able to make spells. In Morrowind, you will need to learn individual elements and effects before you can create a particular spell.

As Howard says, "Very early on our goal was to create a roleplaying operating system, more than a particular type of game, and TES 3 Construction Set is the main result of that thought process. We need it to create this enormous world in a timely fashion, but we also wanted it for everyone else out there. It's all based on a plug-in architecture. This means that data created in one file can be plugged into another. Thus, you can create dungeons, quests, weapons, NPCs whatever - and they can be downloaded by someone and added directly into their current Morrowind game. So the game-world will actually grow and people and places can be added over time. There's very little you

can't do with it. It even comes with its own scripting/coding language so you can add extra functionality to objects that we hadn't planned on."

For the combat engine, the team is focusing their efforts on capturing the feel and mechanics of fighting with a variety of weapons. Their goal is to bring the kind of kinetic feel found in the gunfights of Quake to characters wearing heavy armor and fighting with swords. Using a dynamic mouse hold-

and-release method, you will be able to control the force and direction of individual hits. Weapons can be swung as fast and as hard, and with as much accuracy, as you can handle, not unlike similar interfaces found in golf sims.

Depending upon how they are used, different weapons can achieve different levels of damage. As Howard says, "A quick thrust with a warhammer will do almost no damage, while doing the same with a dagger will do very nice damage. In most RPGs, the bigger weapon is always better, so we wanted all the weapons to have advantages and ways they could be used. We have more than 200 weapons in the game, so we needed a good simulation to make them play differently. And fatigue plays a huge part; big guys in heavy armor with huge weapons will tire out faster if they're not up to wearing all that stuff. The



SCOOP!

Be careful while interacting with NPCs — they aren't too fond of strangers like you.

game system balances this for us, and rewards those who stay in character. We removed the idea that you can't do something. If you're a mage, you can wear any armor you want. You just suck at it. Your armor rating will get worse, you'll tire out, and ultimately get stuck like a pig."



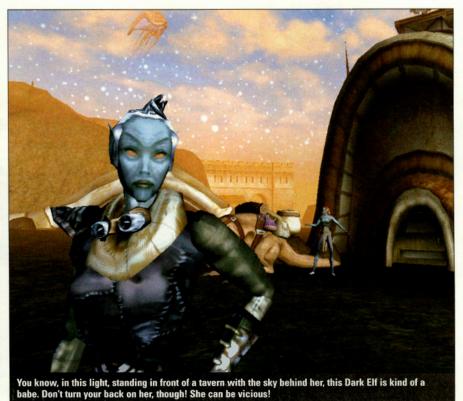
Strike, you can travel greater distances in the game at a quicker pace.

ROLE YOUR OWN



he Construction Set is already shaping up to be one of the most exciting things about Morrowind. Bethesda says it will ship with the game and provide all the functionality needed to craft custom game worlds. The same tool used by the team to make the game, The Elder Scrolls 3 Construction Set allows the user to create landscapes, towns, and dungeons; and to build characters, weapons, races, creatures, and items from scratch. It even allows you to write in-game dialog. Objects in the game can be manipulated and used as building blocks, with rooms, halls, or entire structures being taken apart and reassembled as the user sees fit. This makes world creation much easier than having to forge new 3D environments and models from scratch. Plus, it's all tied to a built-from-scratch 3D engine with high polygon counts, detailed textures, real-time shadows, and rendering out to the horizon. Characters are built around skeletal animations, with finely crafted faces featuring realistic lip and eyelid movement. The watchword is "dynamic." Every object can be moved, picked-up, sold, put on, and otherwise manipulated.





HEY BABY, IT'S A WIDE WORLD

ne of the strongest elements of Daggerfall and Arena was their wide-open structure. You could go anywhere and do anything, picking up whatever quests you liked and choosing to follow the story or not. Morrowind follows this pattern with the same mix of main quests tied to a story and experience-building side quests useful for pumping up your character's abilities. Both types of quests have grown more layered and even more free form. They are based around an event or desired result without a specific set of tasks.

A player may take on a quest to convince the Duke of Ebonheart to sign a treaty. He doesn't go through cave A and fetch item 29874B to accomplish this end. Instead, the player uses logic and the game tracks his progress. The feelings of each NPC toward you are continually gauged, and success in a given endeavor is often tied to how they feel about you. In the example of the Duke and the treaty, you would do things to make him like you more and more until he finally signs. This may entail doing a few little guests for him, talking to him in the right way, wearing the right clothes, or even giving him money. Attacking him or his vassals will lower his approval of you, thus requiring more effort to make him like you until he signs. The result is a game where objectives and drama should be more closely tied together.

Many quests are also tied to the Guilds. Which guilds you join and follow will

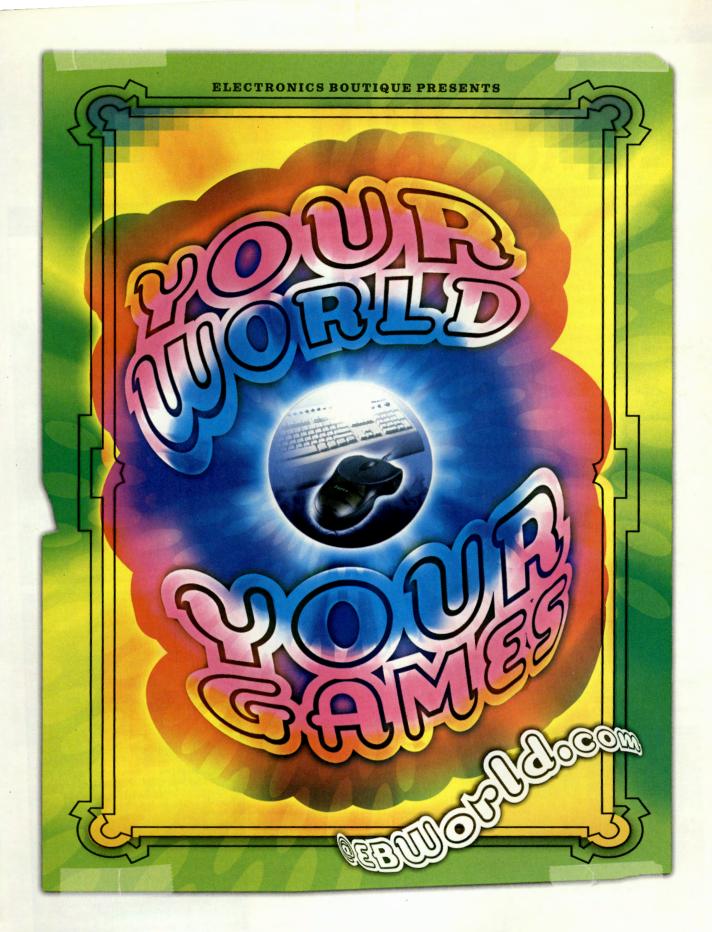


Soaring Imperial architecture gives the locations in *Morrowind* a sense of epic sweep and grandeur.

determine your path through the game, as well as other people's attitudes towards you. As Howard says: "Everyone loved to join the Guilds in Daggerfall, so we're making their role much deeper. You'll be able to join a Great House, and the rewards for rising in a guild are awesome. You can even get your own fort built. The Guilds also have artifacts that they allow you to use. The Morag Tong (Assassin's Guild) has some great guests. We've had a lot of fun with the evil ones. Which reminds me, everyone in the game is killable. Everyone. You can even kill the Duke. You may not be able to finish the main quest if you butcher certain people (the game gives you a message to this effect), but some players aren't going to care. They just want to be evil."

And there's nothing wrong with that.

— T. Liam McDonald



SPREAD THE WORD



AOL KEYWORD: EBWORLD

Links 2001

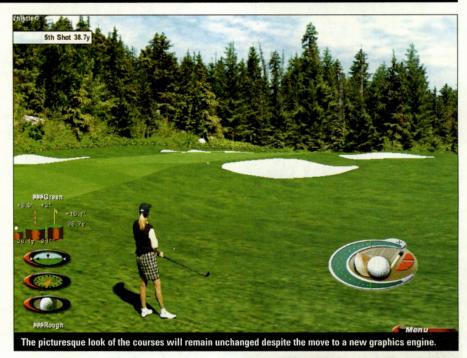
After one poor year, Access readies a rejuvenated Links experience

'll never forget the first time I loaded Links LS. It was kind of like the first time I put on glasses to correct my horrendously poor vision...I knew beforehand that things weren't as clear as they should be, but never imagined how big the improvement would be. Sure, I had played the earlier Links games, but I still preferred the homelier Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition for a couple of reasons: it played a more realistic game of golf, and it had a course editor. Once Links LS arrived on the scene, though, the bar had been raised too high, and even Jack's plethora of free courses couldn't make up the difference.

But the latest iterations of the Jack Nicklaus series, as well as Sierra's impressive PGA Championship games, showed a marked improvement in ball physics that approached those found in the Links LS series. The two games also sported 3D engines that produced some pretty impressive visuals. Factor in the added boost of a course editor, and Links' glacial progression started to feel like yesterday's news.

Welcome to the world of tomorrow. The development team (whom we all still refer to as Access Software) at Microsoft has felt the competition's teeth nipping at its heels, and they're set to unleash a product they think will firmly put their golf game back on its lofty perch. And from what I've seen of it so far, I'm hard-pressed to disagree.

There are two main features that go hand-in-hand to take Links to the next level:



the new graphics engine and the Arnold Palmer Course Architect. Product manager Darren Steele says, "It's a fully 3D engine, and when the hardware is able to move this photo-realistic scene in real time, the engine's there already." For now, objects like trees will remain 2D, but a combination of bilinear filtering and anti-aliasing make them look spectacular, even close up. They still react pretty much like real trees when you hit them, so it's hard to consider this too much

of a negative. The courses will feel a little more alive this year, too, with neat additions like falling leaves and flying birds.

The new engine also allows the courses to be built to a much more exacting level. In the past, a limited number of available building points (or vertices) required the people designing a course to cut corners, especially on and around the greens. Now there are an almost unlimited number of points to work with, and contours can be replicated



CATEGORY: Sports

DEVELOPER: Microsoft

PUBLISHER: Microsoft

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 60%

RELEASE DATE: Fall

IN A NUTSHELL: The former leader in golf simulations is back to reclaim its place. While the gameplay will be familiar, the guts of the game have been replaced with a beautiful new graphics engine, complete with one of the most powerful course architects available. Computer golfers with different personalities and faster online play round out the feature list.

VHAT'S SO SPECIAL?: Despite the huge advancements made by its competitors, Links still holds the edge out on the course; no other game portrays ball flight and roll (especially on the putting surface) quite as well. The long awaited architect feature should provide a virtually unlimited number of courses to play...which means trouble for those other games.



may even make fun of your poor playing.

to within two centimeters of their real world counterparts: the old engine was only capable of getting within two inches. Another advantage is gained by being able to vary the grass height, so that deep rough not only acts, but also looks, much different than the fairway or the first-cut. The course architect (see sidebar for more detail) is the other main feature, and it will give the end-users the tools to make whatever kind of course they can imagine.

Having played with an early version of the game, I was pleased to note that, despite the engine change, the familiar, award-winning play felt just as good as ever. The user interface was not finalized, but it was already a vast improvement over the last couple in the series, too.

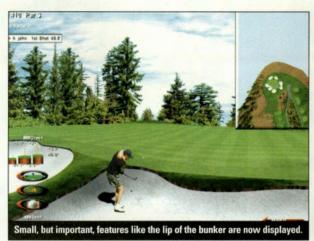
One of the few disappointing things about Links 2001 is the lack of a career mode (although you can still create your own offline tournaments). This feature is definitely in the works for future versions, but for now we can look forward to a slew of new golfers (a total of 14 are planned) to play as

and against. John Bervan, the group program manager, says, "When you pick different golfers, they'll have their own personalities and they'll say different things about their own shots and about your shots. So you'll get to know these golfers and start to identify with them." You'll also be able to create your own sound scripts for the golfers.

Other new features include asynchronous play (a working name) that will speed up online games by letting each player hit his next shot without waiting for the rest of the group to take their turns. The distance you hit each club can now be customized, and the green analyzer will offer a new way to read those tricky putts (this feature is still being designed, so even Microsoft is unsure how it will work exactly - expect some kind of 3D



Even when you're sitting in the middle of the salad, you won't see the pixels that make up the flora.





The putting game has always been a Links strong point, but the new engine should make it better than ever.

cross section view with color coding to make reading greens intuitive but not exacting).

A converter will be included so that your course library can be used in the new game, but you're probably not going to be thrilled when you compare them to courses designed specifically for the new engine. With that in mind. Microsoft will be releasing a ten-pack of courses (expected price is \$19.99), with some of the older ones brought up to date, as well as new designs. Courses that will ship with Links 2001 will include Aviara, Chateau Whistler. The Prince Course at Princeville Resort, Fred Couples' Westfield Course, and Red Rock. St. Andrews Old Course will also be given the upgrade treatment.

You'll also have to sacrifice the older versions of the Pro golfers you've been playing with, such as Davis Love and Fuzzy Zoeller. An updated Arnold Palmer, as well as Sergio Garcia, and an unnamed LPGA player will be your new foes. Expect to see the roster of golfers increase over time, though. As Steele says, "We want to present the world of golf as best we can. Over the next few years, you're going to see more international players and courses, players from different tours, and all kinds of demographics of golfers."

--- Rob Smolka

MAKING MAGIC



The new course architect makes laying down terrain elements like bunkers a snap.

fter what seemed an interminable wait, we're finally going to be able to design our own Links courses (or, more realistically, the design geniuses on the 'net will give us a constant flow of new courses). What took so long?

Ross Curtin, the program manager says, "We wanted to have an architect that was capable of producing the same beautiful golf courses that we did - not something that's less accurate, where the customer would never be able to reproduce what they see in their head. The architect is very powerful and it does work much more like an application than a game.

Amazingly, as powerful as it is, it felt much easier to use than the competition's offerings. I spent some time fooling with it, and liked the results I was getting after a very short time. I wasn't the only one who felt this way, either. "We called in some people who are real enthusiasts of other golf course architects," says Curtin. "We didn't provide them with any instruction, and within about an hour they were just cruising. They were able to do a lot more in a lot shorter time to make an impressive golf course.

The architect is plot-based, meaning you have a randomly generated tract of land to mold to your liking, and can place your hole layout to take advantage of the terrain features. Tunnels, cliff faces, bunker lips - basically any feature can be recreated using this tool. It also includes time-saving features like creating cart paths and rivers with a predetermined width; this way you only have to draw a line and the program will do the rest. The inflate/deflate feature lets you create first cuts and fringes with a click.

The only feature missing is being able to play your course without leaving the program. This is tempered by the fact that you can test things by launching a ball to see how it reacts. All in all, though, the architect is very impressive and will have a major impact in the world of golf sims.



If you can dream it, you can build it. This is the same tool the game developers are using



This sure ain't the Wonderland your parents read about!

hances are that you've either read or heard the classic Lewis Carroll fantasy about a young girl who follows a talking white rabbit down a rabbit hole and into a strange world known only as Wonderland. More than 135 years after Carroll's famous story was first published, the twisted souls at Roque Entertainment plan to take you back to that enchanted place - only things in Wonderland aren't quite like they were before...and neither is Alice.

In a gaming world teeming with copycat products, we're betting you haven't seen anything quite like this; American McGee's Alice (EA is hoping that gamers remember McGee from his days as a level designer at id Software, hence the Sid Meier-like treatment of the game name) will remind you that there are indeed original and creative games still being made. R. J. Berg, the producer for Alice, says, "Fans of Carroll's Alice will find much that is familiar, but this is a completely new adventure. If Alice in Wonderland is part one, and Through the Looking Glass, part two, you might call American McGee's Alice, part three." A very chilling part three, indeed.

Many things have changed since Alice's last two sugar-coated adventures. Something has offset the delicate balance of life in Wonderland, and it has become a much darker, more sinister place. Alice returns to find the cause of this transformation and to set things right - ultimately confronting the maniacally evil Queen of Hearts. American McGee's Alice will be a third-person action game powered by the always-impressive Quake III: Arena engine. In fact, this is more than just the Quake III engine — it's actually the modified engine concocted by Ritual Entertainment, the development team working on the Heavy Metal-licensed game F.A.K.K. 2. This means that new AI scripting. skeletal animation, and much more has been added to the strong rendering engine foundation. Berg says, "The Quake III engine was best suited for realizing American's vision of supplying players with thrilling, well-paced gameplay in stunningly detailed environments." That visual splendor was evident in our early peek, where surreal puzzles involve creative use of the environment, rather than static chess tricks or lock picking exercises.

Certainly, there are plenty of great-looking games available, but the thing that should make Alice stand out is its outlandish setting.

F.Y.I.

CATEGORY: Action

DEVELOPER: Rogue Entertainment

PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 15%

RELEASE DATE: Fall

IN A NUTSHELL: It's the world of the original Alice in Wonderland with a new dark veneer — this is not a game for the kiddies. The no-longer-sweet Alice wields a big knife, and Wonderland is a haunted hellhole. The Queen of Hearts is running amok and it's up to Alice to fix things. Think of it as a Tim Burtonstyle take on the classic fairy tale.

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL?: From what we saw, this game is unlike anything else on the horizon. Just the overall look of the game sets it apart from everything else. Of course, the modified Quake III engine helps. This should be a very fresh change from the hackneyed environments that action gamers have become accustomed to.

Imagine wandering through dilapidated schools filled with insane children or traversing a Caterpillar Garden after being shrunken down to the size of an ant, and you can see what we're getting at - no medieval space castles or gritty urban settings here. thank you. One of the highlights of the build we saw was when a room broke in half and floated away leaving behind a trail of debris. It was then up to Alice to use the path of debris to get to from one half of the room to the other. After marveling at the effect, the puzzle still required solving.

Of course, what good are stunning and exotic locations without equally stunning and exotic characters? As Berg says, "Wonderland is populated with skillfully crafted tales and memorable characters." All the classic Alice characters are back, but with some disturbing makeovers. You'll run into the Cheshire cat, who looks as thin as Calista Flockhart after a week-long fast. The Mad Hatter is also back, only now he has a penchant for trapping people in his basement and torturing them. Also, expect some hilariously disturbing encounters with the infamous Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

McGee has also seen to it that players will encounter their share of freaky bad guys, and the aforementioned Insane Children start the roster off. These are kids who have also ventured into Wonderland with hopes of saving it, only to find they were unable to and are

ALICE, OLD AND NEW

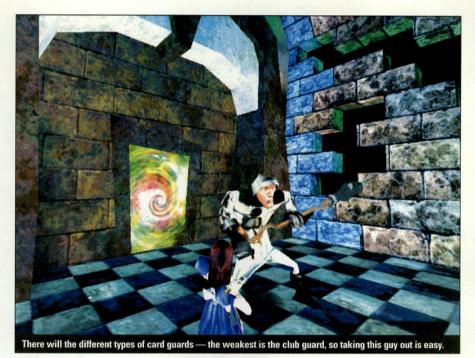
erhaps one of the most eye-catching things about American McGee's Alice is its character design. McGee had the distinct challenge of making the characters look new, and vet still retain the classic features that make them recognizable. Here's a look at some of the new designs along with the old designs commonly found in the Alice in Wonderland books.









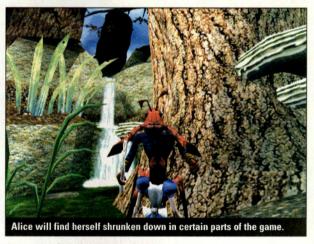


now trapped. You'll have to face the card guards and, of course, the wicked Queen of Hearts. Alice will also meet up with Boojums, the tortured souls of people who have been decapitated for standing up against the queen. And this is just the top of the list.

Since this is an action game, you'll have plenty of items at your disposal for defense. Still, since it's an odd game, expect to find some odd weapons. Alice will have access to knives. Jack in the Box Bombs,

playing cards (think Gambit from X-Men), an ice wand, and more. Our favorite tool of destruction is the Devil Dice. When these are rolled, a randomly sized demon appears that will rip apart anything it sees. Think of it as a living, walking BFG. But Alice had better be careful when using these; if there are no bad guys around, the demon will tear her apart. Another neat little gimmick is how the ice wand can be used to freeze water, giving Alice access to certain parts of levels.

As for Alice herself, Rogue Entertainment wants to make it clear that she will not be a sex symbol. The last thing they want is some big-breasted action hero. See? We told you the game had a lot of originality! Hold on to your hookahs for this next bit, too: the game will not ship with any multiplayer features. The team would rather concentrate its efforts on delivering a satisfying single-player experience than wasting valuable resources trying to claim a sliver of



the leftover pie consumed by Quake III: Arena and Unreal Tournament. A multiplayer add-on is a possibility in the future, though, if the game proves successful.

There are so many great ideas being tossed around for this game that it would take many more pages to cover them all. There will be more than 30 different characters to interact with, and 15 levels to explore. The developer is also currently in negotiations to get some big name celebrity talent to do the voice-overs for the game. Alice is far from finished, but it already looks terrific. As Berg says, "The Alice tradition challenges our imagination, our creativity, and our execution in storytelling, art, and engineering. We think we're up to it." We hope so. If things keep going in the right direction, Alice is poised to become one of the most unique action games to come out in a long, long time.

- Li C. Kuo















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"Dark Reign"2 looks set to take a commanding lead among the next wave of real-time strategy titles."

GAMESPOT



THE BATTLEFIELD OF THE FUTURE

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EYEWITNESS

NEWS PREVIEWS BEHIND-THE-SCENES REPORTS

Red Alert 2 is here!

More C&C is on the way from the folks at Westwood

estwood Studios has just announced that Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2 is coming our way sometime this fall.

Taking place a few years after the original Red Alert, this sequel to a prequel is basically running on the same engine as C&C 2: Tiberian Sun. While this blatant disregard for the existence of polygons may be surprising to some people, Westwood is more interested in drawing back the three million or so fans that made the original Red Alert game one of the most popular of all time.

The storyline goes like this: After suffering through a humiliating defeat at the end of *Red Alert*, the Russians have been playing nice with the rest of the world while secretly rebuilding their once-glorious military force. Of course, after this is achieved, they go right back to their old ways, and set out on conquering the Earth.

You can play as either the Russians or the Americans. As the Russkies, you'll spend most of your time beating Europe into submission. Our guess is that the first few levels will start you off easy with the French (the warfare equivalent of training wheels). If you play as the Americans, you'll have to defend your homeland against a Russian invasion force. Real-world locales will be included, giving you the chance to battle in New York City, Washington D.C., Paris, and more.

As is tradition with the C&C line of games, you'll be seeing a large variety of units ranging from the standard to the bizarre. The Reds will have the usual array of tanks and battleships, but their army is now augmented with psychic soldiers. These Yuri units can mind control enemies and even unleash a crushing, area-effect psychic attack. The Russians will also

have a unit called Crazy Ivan, who can pretty much blow up anything. He can even attach explosives to a cow in a herd, and make them head toward the direction of the enemy base. The ensuing chaos is compelling, to say the least.

Things get even weirder as you head underwater. It appears that through their psychic soldiers, the Commies can now control giant underwater squids. These squids can be used against battleships and other water-based units. The Americans have access to dolphins, which are capable of their own psychic attacks.

Another promising new feature is that troops can now garrison themselves. You can put a squad of soldiers in a building, and they'll get a

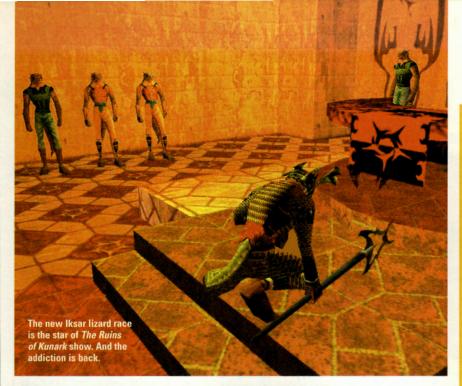


There's still no word on whether or not the torch on the Statue of Liberty can be rigged to shoot fireballs.

defensive edge. The American machine-gun infantry will now entrench themselves if they're left standing in one place long enough. Units can also be combined. For example, if you put a grenadier into a tank, the tank can fire rockets. Another neat little twist: the Russians can rig the Eiffel Tower into a gigantic Tesla coil. Mmm...french fries.

With all the new gimmicks and twists that Westwood is promising, Red Alert 2 sounds like more than just a ploy by Westwood to benefit from the Midas-touch-like C&C license — and the RTS genre is in dire need of some refreshing ideas. The familiar look may actually be a blessing in disguise. Expect a full-blown preview from us soon.





EverQuest Woes?

Success always comes with some strings attached

erant's online massively multiplayer roleplaying game, EverQuest, has recently come under criticism from a small, but very vocal, group of players. Some are alleging that customer service is lacking, while others are saying that little effort is being made to address various complaints that players have with the game. As our mailbox filled with these letters (most of them wellwritten and intelligently argued), we went to the accused to hear its side of the story. So, are these just gripes from a group of grumpy gamers (say that three times fast!) or is there something bigger going on? We managed to get a hold of Brad McQuaid, executive producer of EverQuest and vice president of Verant Interactive. Here's what he had to say in response to the charges leveled against his company and game.

PC Garner: Even though you and Gordon Wrinn (Verant's Internet relations manager) post and answer questions quite often to your web site, some EverQuest players are alleging that Verant is paying little or no attention to discussion boards that deal with complaints about EverQuest. Is this true?

Brad McQuaid: Definitely not true. We listen and make a huge effort to hear players' concerns and problems. In fact, the majority of changes made to EQ are a result of feedback. That said, with over 220,000 subscribers, we're definitely in a "can't please everyone all the time" situation. But we will continue to try.

PCG: Currently, what is the overall feeling of EverQuest subscribers? Are they satisfied? **Unhappy? Ecstatic?**

McQuaid: I think we can be fairly certain they are very satisfied. Up until recently there was very little, if any, marketing for EQ, yet the game has continued to sell very well over the last year. And with an absence of marketing, I can only assume this is due to word of mouth; players recommending the game to their friends, family, and co-workers. That, combined with an extremely low churnrate (less than 25 percent in over a year), tells us people are happy with the game. EQ, however, is certainly not perfect, and of course we don't want anyone to stop playing the game, so our players have a strong commitment from us to improve and continue working on the game, making it better.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42

NOW AND THEN

The Top-Selling Games Today...

Rank	Game and Publisher	PCG Rating
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	1	All B
		*
Force	Commander – Oops	
1	The Sims Electronic Arts	96%
2	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire Disney	78%
3	Roller Coaster Tycoon Hasbro Interactive	89%
4	Roller Coaster Tycoon Corkscrew Follies Hasbro Interactive	N/A
5	Rogue Spear: Urban Operations Red Storm	N/A
6	Age of Empires II: Age of Kings Microsoft	94%
7	Grand Slam Bridge III Electronic Arts	N/A
8	Frogger Hasbro Interactive	32%
9	Star Wars: Force Commander LucasArts	47%
10	Unreal Tournament GT Interactive	90%
A	This Time Five Veers Age	

And	This Time Five Years Ago	
Rank	Game and Publisher	PCG Rating
1	Myst Mattel Interactive	95%
2	Heretic Shareware GT Interactive	N/A
3	Star Wars: Dark Forces LucasArts	92%
4	Doom II GT Interactive	90%
5	Descent Interplay	96%
6	DIZone Collector's Edition GT Interactive	N/A
7	U.S. Navy Fighters Electronic Arts	82%
8	Doom Shareware id Software	N/A
9	SSN-21 Seawolf Electronic Arts	75%
10	Sim City 2000 Electronic Arts	95%
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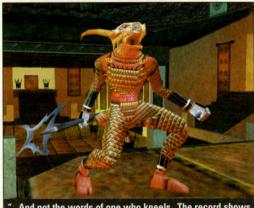
Electronic Arts has shipped more than one million copies of The Sims. This addictive game has topped the charts since it was released in February. So far, sales of The Sims show no signs of slowing down; some 80,000 people visit www. thesims.com everyday.

Blizzard has announced that WarCraft III will only have five races, as opposed to the origi-nally planned six. So far, there's no indication which of the two unannounced races got the chop. We're guessing that the one race left to be unveiled is the Elves. Time will tell.

Developers from the recently folded Pumpkin Studios (the designers of last year's RTS game Warzone 2100) have formed a new company called Pivotal Games. They are currently hard at work on a project called *Espionage*, with a new 3D engine.

A short story that takes place in the StarCraft universe will be in the Spring 2000 issue of Amazing Stories, a science fiction maga-zine. The story, written by Micky Neilson from Blizzard Entertainment, is titled "Hybrid" and is about the ordeals of a captured Terran Medic.

EVEROUEST WOES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 41



"...And not the words of one who kneels...The record shows I took the blows — and did it *my way.*"

PCG: Overcrowding is probably one of the biggest complaints we've heard about EverQuest. While The Ruins of Kunark add-on does give players more space, what will be done to prevent any future overcrowding, especially with the worldwide plans that Verant has for EverQuest? McQuaid: In the last six months or so we've been, in a sense, a victim of our own success. Given how quickly the game has grown, combined with the fact that so few players are leaving, we've had some overcrowding issues. Bottom line — servers (worlds) have more players in them during peak hours than we'd like. With the recent release of Kunark, which grows the size of the world by over thirty three-percent, and our launch of four new servers, the issue of overcrowding has been minimized to an extent. That said, peak usage is still not where we

WAITING IS THE HARDEST PART

hat an interesting month this has been. Not only was Diablo II severely trounced, but a little game called Shadowbane snuck onto the list. This month's prize goes to Luke Seward, who just can't wait for Baldur's Gate 2. If you want a prize too, then send in an E-mail to eyewitness@ pcgamer.com with "Waiting is the Hardest Part" in the subject heading, and let us know what upcoming game has you giddy with anticipation. We'll randomly pick one lucky winner to get a free game. All entries must be received by the 30th of each month. Winners will be notified by E-mail. See additional rules on page 43.

- 1. Tribes 2: 20%
- 2. Team Fortress 2: 17%
- 3. Diablo II: 12%
- 4. WarCraft 3: 11%
- 5. Halo: 8%
- 6. Baldur's Gate II: 6%
- 7. Black & White: 5%
- 8. Deus Ex: 3%
- 9: Duke Nukem Forever: 2%
- 10. Shadowbane: 2%

want it and we will continue to add more servers and also to revamp existing, less utilized areas of the world, hoping players will spread out more.

PCG: Some complaints have been leveled at the "Play Nice" rules. Have these rules been successful in fixing problems with the game? Are they only a temporary solution or will these rules be a permanent fixture in the EverQuest world?

McQuaid: I think this is another area where it's very difficult to make everyone happy. We feel, based on polls as well as general feedback, that the "Play Nice" rules are wanted by our player base. Are they perfect? Heck no, and rules in a game like this will continue to evolve and adapt. But the main point of these rules, of course, is to create a better playing environment for the majority of our players. As long as that's our intent, we can only improve.

PCG: We all know about the new policy against the online auctioning of characters and items, but there are still many transactions taking place on websites like eBay. Will anything be done to crack down on this?

McQuaid: Well, to be blunt, decisions to enforce our policies beyond the level we're at now are above my authority to make. It is my understanding that we will make additional efforts in the future to curb these auctions, but I really can't comment more specifically on the matter, sorry.

PCG: Some gamers feel that the bans are too harsh. Will there be other penalties for breaking rules, or will Verant stay with the tough, no-nonsense policy of banning non-compliant players? Also, how will you deal with people who feel that they have been wrongfully banned?

McQuaid: Actually, we rarely ban people. We usually warn or suspend, and only ban when the problem repeats or really gets out of hand. But, of course, when we do ban, people often hear about it. I'm sure we've banned less than 50 people due to outside-of-game sales — that's 50 or so out of 220,000 players. I think one of the recent bannings involved a couple of players who ran over 10 accounts in order to farm items effectively, and were also taking credit card orders via in-game "tells". Those are the types of blatant, large-scale operations we'll go after with a passion.

PCG: What do you expect the future to bring for EverQuest players?

McQuaid: More content and better refinement of rules and game mechanics. I'd love to see a second expansion, and I'd love to see a sequel one day. Verant's and Sony Online's vision for EQ goes pretty far into the future and we're definitely considering EQ as a franchise as opposed to a single game. And based on EQ's huge success thus far, I think the future's pretty bright.

PC GAMER

RECOMMENDS

Looking for a good time? Try these!

HOMEWORLD



If you haven't played our 1999 Game of the Year, you're missing out. It's fantastic.

SAMMY SOSA HIGH HEAT 2001



Best baseball game ever made? Nine out of ten Smokes agree!

THIFF II



Perhaps one of the most underappreciated series ever. (Plus, check out our strategy guide starting on page 146.)

SWAT 3



This is tactical combat action at its very best.

THE PCG NEWS TICKER

3DO announced an online Might and Magic RPG called Legends of Might and Magic. It is being advertised as the first Internet game to put an emphasis on cooperative play. There will be a random adventure generator for the game as well as a collection of preset adventures.

Valve announced that it will include version 1.0 of the Counter-Strike modification for Half-Life as a free upgrade. Most likely, it will be included with the latest patch for Half-Life. Counter-Strike is a team-based mod that pits terrorists against counter-terrorists with real world weapons.

Imeron Technologies, the people behind the Intensor chairs, has gone out of business. The Intensors were basically really uncomfortable chairs with low-quality speakers and a subwoofer built in. It wasn't successful (what a shock!), and at \$599, it was out of the price range of most gamers.

The 1980's band Motley Crue, will be producing a new single for the *Tribes 2* soundtrack. The song has yet to be titled. The band will also be providing some of the game's sound effects, as well. What those sounds may be, we hesitate to even speculate on.

PCG CONTESTS

A Covert Contest

Thanks to Red Storm, we've got five copies of *Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear* and *Rogue Spear: Urban Operations* to give away. All you have to do is send an E-mail to eyewitness@pcgamer.com with "Covert Contest" in the subject heading. Only one entry per household allowed. Contest ends on June 30, 2000.

Classic Games Giveaway

In keeping with our classic games theme this month, we'll be giving away the ultimate classic games package. One lucky gamer will win:

- King's Quest Collection
- Space Quest Collection
- Leisure Suit Larry Collection
- Red Baron/A-10 Tank Killer
- · Quest for Glory Collection
- The LucasArts Classic
- Adventures Collection
- · Roberta Williams Anthology

To win, send us a picture of yourself dressed as a classic PC game character. This could be anyone from Leisure Suit Larry to Guybrush Threepwood. The *PCG* editors will select the winner. Send your picture to eyewitness@pcgamer.com with "Classic Games Giveaway" in the subject heading. Or, you can send it to: Attn: PC Gamer Classic Games Giveaway, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA, 94005. Entries must be received by July 30, 2000.

Sim-tastic Winners!

These five lucky people are now the happy owners of both *The Sims* and *SimCity 3000*.

- Thomas Travis
- Charlie Faulk
- Ryan Diaz
- Cindy Fang
- Barbara Strell

CONTEST RULES

No purchase is necessary, and only one entry per household, per month, will be counted. Anyone can vote, but only U.S. residents are eligible to win prizes, and the offer is void in FL, RI, Puerto Rico, and where prohibited by law. Your chances of winning depend on the number of entries we receive.

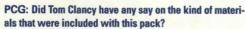
Tactical Magic

A chat with the creators of the latest addition to the Rainbow Six franchise

ed Storm is to release Rainbow Six:
Covert Operations Essentials, a comprehensive collection of history and data
about the world of covert ops. This stand-alone
package will include new levels, interviews,
and more. We interviewed Paul Schuytema,
president of Magic Lantern (and former lead
designer on 3D Realms' Prey) about his company and its upcoming project.

PC Garner: Who were the people that you interviewed to put together Covert Operations Essentials, and what were their backgrounds? Paul Schuytema: We've interviewed a host of fascinating people already, with another major run of interviews scheduled for late May. Our goal is to track down experts that can provide

insights not easily found from other sources. So far, we've interviewed a sniper expert, a veteran of an elite classified CT (counter-terrorism) unit, an expert on terrorist psychology, a competition marksman, a former FBI director, a gunsmith, and Mr. Clancy himself (just to name a few!).



Schuytema: Mr. Clancy has been involved from the start, reviewing the direction of our original content several times. We'll be certain to hear if we are straying from the proper path in our research! He's also been instrumental, in conversations with our lead researcher and writer and myself, in gently nudging us into the most interesting area of research, and in helping us to keep a very clear perspective on the primary players in the realm of CT operations.

PCG: Where was most of your information taken from? And was it difficult to obtain?

Schuytema: Having seasoned academics and professional writers on our team means that we're used to "in the trenches" research, and we're used to getting material from a myriad of sources. We've used the web, books, academic papers, primary sources, government publications, conferences, and phone interviews, as well as the old Missouri standby "You gotta show me!" to get our info. Sometimes info can be hard to track down and verify, especially when we enter into the realm of classified information. Just because something may be "common knowledge" doesn't mean that it's not still classified, so tracking down "primary" information can get dicey at times (it's also a load of fun!).



Go deeper into the world of Covert Operations then you've ever been.

PCG: Are you a gamer? If so, what games do you play?
Schuytema: Heck yes, I'm a gamer! I've been playing and making games since 1975, and Magic Lantern is a pure game development studio through and through. As for games we play around the Magic Lantern offices, we find ourselves fluctuating back and forth between Urban Ops and Quake III for our LAN breaks (depending on our mood), and we play a lot of Age of Kings and The Sims during late nights at the office.

PCG: How realistic do you think Rogue Spear is? And what does the world of Covert Operations think of it?

Schuytema: Rainbow Six and Rogue Spear are pure games and not simulations, and I think that was clearly the right move to make on Red Storm's part. It just so happens that the "reality quotient" of these games is very high, and they've solved those two nagging problems that exist in so many action games: your avatar's life is indeed valuable and the replay factor is there in spades. Not to mention, the games are downright addicting to play! You'd be surprised just how many folks "in the business" of CT work groove on these games (and Tom Clancy's fiction).

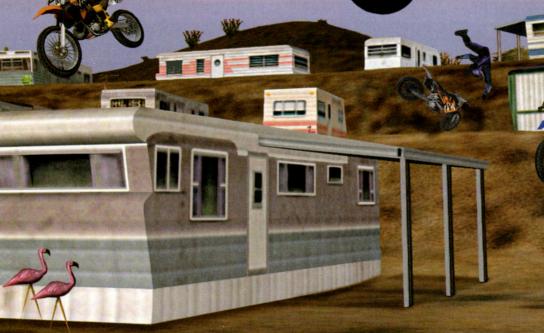
PCG: What's most exciting about Covert Ops Essentials?

Schuytema: Covert Ops provides a true context for the Rainbow/Rogue player. Let's face it...this game series creates addicts, and addicts want to know everything about what they're doing. Covert Ops provides that informational backbone. There's a lot we're proud of in this title. We're lucky to be spending our time crafting this resource.

- According to a new survey by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, three out of five Americans age six or older routinely play computer or video games. Out of that group, nearly half are female. The study also said that the average age of gamers is 28 years old.
- Brian Raffel, the designer behind the ultra-gruesome Soldier of Fortune, is currently gathering suggestions for a possible sequel. The majority of E-mail suggestions are clamoring for more violence and more realistic weapons. We'll refrain from making a comment, just to play it safe.
- Psygnosis will no longer be developing PC games in the United States due to disappointing returns on PC titles. Metal Fatigue will still make it to store shelves, while Rollcage II will only be available through OEM deals. The company will be concentrating its efforts on PlayStation 2 titles.
- The sequel to Independence War has been officially announced by Infogrames. Called Independence War 2: The Edge of Chaos, it will be published for both the PC and the Sega Dreamcast. The game will use a new graphics engine and give players the opportunity to explore 16 star systems.



FOCK ZNO BONC:



Satisfy your craving for dirt-bike action, head-numbing crashes and outrageous stunts on over 40 tracks in 6 events including Stunt Quarry, Nationals, Baja, Enduro, Supercross and Multi-player Tag, and get that blood of yours pumping. Download the free trial version of Motocross Madness 2 at www.microsoft.com/games/motocross2















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PC Accelerator Closes its Doors

Editor-in-Chief Mike Salmon Tells the Story

ur sister publication PC Accelerator has closed its doors. Known for its cutting-edge humor and brave new style of games journalism (and for losing multiplayer match-ups against us), PC Accelerator carved out its own very distinct niche in the games magazine market. Unfortunately,

due to a lagging PC games market and other unforeseeable circumstances, the powers that be have pulled the plug. While we've always poked fun at our brethren, we've also respected them as fellow gamers and journalists. We managed to get some parting words from Mike Salmon, the Editorin-Chief.



PC Gamer: What will happen to the PCXL staff?

Salmon: Most of them will return to "the streets" where we found 'em. Juggling, prostitution...that kind of thing. Okay, that last bit was a lie. Actually all of the staff have retained positions at Imagine Media (God only knows how) and will be scattered throughout the company where their efforts to desensitize today's youth will continue. Many of us have landed at DailyRadar.com where we will be launching a new and exciting channel. You'll know it's from the minds of PCXL as soon as you see it (whether that brings on happy thoughts or extreme pain depends on who you are and what you like).

PCG: Will there ever be a PCXL 2.0?

Salmon: If we build it, they will come...oh wait, we already tried that. It is certainly a possibility, but if I was a betting man (and I am) I'd bet against PCXL 2.0. However, the spirit of PCXL lives on in each and every one of the people we touched (and I swear she said she was 18).

PCG: Will you keep the PCXL legacy alive?

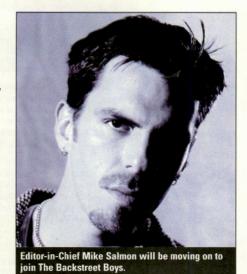
Salmon: Not sure if you can have a "legacy" after only two years in existence, but if you look around at all the other computer game magazines, you'll notice they've changed dramatically since PCXL launched. Perhaps we woke people up to the fact that you can make a computer games magazine that doesn't read like an instruction manual. Nobody else will ever dare to go as far as PCXL did, but we've pushed the boundaries so far that other magazines (like PC Gamer) have plenty of room to have some fun. We're also planning a reunion tour, where the decrepit editors will gather together and talk about "the good old days" while popping Viagra and hitting on teenage girls.

PCG: What do you have to say to all the loyal PCXL subscribers that will now be receiving PC Gamer instead of PCXL?

Salmon: Despite our constant digs at each other, I have always respected PC Gamer (couldn't bring myself to read it, but I did respect it). The editors

> are knowledgeable, talented, respected, and are actually pretty funny on the right day. Now that Rob Smith is at the helm, the once machine-like production of PC Gamer is bound to go out the window and will eventually lead to chaos...and chaos leads to last-second changes...which leads to writing while intoxicated...which, as any PCXL reader will tell you, leads to some pretty funny shit. With PCXL gone, PC Gamer is easily the best PC mag available anywhere on the planet. They get the big exclusives, have the best disc, and they have never interviewed aging rock stars who are playing "Who Wants To Be

a Millionaire." Other than that, all I can say is good luck and thanks for reading.



PCG: What is the one thing that you'd like PCXL to be remembered for?

Salmon: I'd like to think we made people laugh and gave their sad, miserable, geeky life a little joy. A magazine that didn't pull any punches, tried new things, and delivered an entertaining and informative pile of dead trees every single issue.

THE **PCG** RELEASE METER

Here's the latest release dates, served up hot-and-fresh for you viewing pleasure. Remember, though, these dates change almost daily! So check www.gonegold.com for the most up-to-date info. Thanks to Rich LaPorte of Gone Gold for compiling this list. Please send news of all releases to laporte@gonegold.com.

TITLE	PUBLISHER	DATE	PROGNOSIS	
Earthworm Jim 3D	Interplay	06/01/00	Yes	
Ground Control	Sierra	06/02/00	Would be nice	
Starfleet Command Gold	Interplay	06/02/00	Make it so	T. T.
Terminus	Vatical	06/02/00	Later this month	1 4 4 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
Vampire	Activision	06/07/00	Two fangs up	all and the second
Shogun: Total War	EA	06/07/00	Already gold	
Indy Racing League 2000	GT Games	06/07/00	Green flag	A STATE OF THE STA
Earth 2150	Mindscape	06/08/00	Should be good	Ground Control
Icewind Dale	Interplay	06/08/00	They're trying	
Star Trek: Conquest Online	Activision	06/08/00	So they say	The state of the s
Reach for the Stars II	Mindscape	06/13/00	Should reach target	The state of the s
Warlords Battle Cry	Mindscape	06/14/00	Fingers crossed	1/1
Star Trek: Klingon Academy	Interplay	06/14/00	Get ready to learn	" MIN
Suzuki 2000	UbiSoft	06/15/00	Possible	11111
Soulbringer	Interplay	06/22/00	Looks good	# # # 2
Insane	Codemasters	06/22/00	Should roll in	Shogun
Jane's Air Superiority	Jane's	06/22/00	About now	
Breakneck	South Peak	06/23/00	Later	
Pharaoh: Cleopatra	Sierra	06/30/00	Hopefully	All Control of
Deus Ex	Eidos	06/30/00	Looks promising	1
Voyager: Elite Force	Activision	07/01/00	Would be sweet	D.
Metal Fatigue	Psygnosis	07/01/00	Publisher problems	Flore Mark Yang C
Starship Troopers	MicroProse	07/26/00	Troops will be ready	
				Icewind Dale

THE **PCG** PLAYLIST

ell, we've finally found a new Assistant Art Director to replace the Jackal. She'll be making her debut next issue. Which means this is the last month that poor Joe has to design the entire magazine himself. It's a good thing, too — he's been acting kind of twitchy lately. Then again, it could just be because of all the hours he spends playing Soldier of Fortune.



ROB High Heat has been uninstalled because it cheats
— no matter what Smoke might say to the contrary.

Between the beta of Deus Ex, honors this month go to EverQuest. My life is not my own having given in to this awesome, addicting game once more. If you see Galgorian getting mauled on Lanys T'Vyl, give him a hand. Thanks.

LISA I'm feeling the need for speed this month — Need for Speed: Porsche Unleashed found its way on to my hard drive, and I'm loving every wind-blown minute of it. I've never been very good at racing games, but with the help of a force feedback wheel on loan from Vederman, I'm actually winning some races!





DAN When a new Wizard Works classic like Emergency Rescue Firefighters comes in the door, I'll be quite honest—everything stops. I rip the packaging right off that bad boy and install immediately. It is one of my greatest joys. But then, I am a demented masochist with a gluttonous lust for pain.

SMOKE It's amazing that Rob Smith has had the time to play anything, since it's obvious he's constantly pulling on that crack pipe of his. He thinks that *High Heat* cheats...did you ever think it might be *you* that sucks at the game, Brit Boy? As for me, I decided to give EA's new *Triple Play* game a go. See my review on page 110.





I've had more than my fair share of gaming goodness this month. I played through both campaigns in *Tachyon*, got some great deathmatch action done in both *Solider of Fortune* and *Rogue Spear: Urban Operations*, played through *Starlancer*, and discovered the joys of *Excessive Quake* on the Runfest DM map for *Quake III: Arena*.

JEREMY What else? It's been one long month of DOS-prompt goodness. I've sifted through piles of "divide by zero" errors just to find you diamonds of executable code, music, full-screen graphics, and delicious, soothing nostalgia. Seriously, enjoy this month's disc. It was an honor and a pleasure to assemble.





JOE Usually you'll see me playing Soldier of Fortune online, or Rogue Spear: Urban Operations. But lately I've been getting into Sid Meier's Antietam. I've also been watching Vederman play the same four levels of Diablo II over and over, and Rob Smith's Giants blow another game in the bottom of the ninth in High Heat 2001.

COCONUT MONKEY I've beaten the crew of PC Gamer at NFS: Porsche Unleashed. Young Jeremy thought he was hot stuff until I showed up. Of course, it is hard to steer around using just my head, and the force feedback wheel gives me a headache, but it's all worth it when I hear Li say, "But he's just a freakin' monkey!"





GREG Yes, I've been playing *Diablo II*, but I'm starting to sound like a broken record aren't I? What else have I been playing? Mostly I've been playing with the new GeForce 2 GTS and Voodoo5 5500. When not doing that, I've been making time to go back and play *Heretic 2*— a fantastic game that I never finished back in its day.

The Deadites are Coming!

Evil Dead creeps onto the PC

hen Duke Nukem was just a two-inch tall, pixilated mess, a tough-as-nails, trash-talking wise-ass named Ash was kicking some serious bony undead ass. Played by Bruce Campbell (who voices the lead character in Nova-Logic's Tachyon: The Fringe), Ash was the true originator of such lines as "Who wants some?" and "Hail to the king." For the



Evil Dead: Hail to the King should have the same mix of horror and humor as the movies.

un-enlightened, I'm talking about the hero from the Evil Dead series. These cult favorites were directed by Sam Raimi and told the story of how the Necronomicon, or, book of the dead, unleashed the wicked powers of the evil dead upon a bunch of sorry unsuspecting sods. Of course, Ash steps in, straps a chainsaw to his hand, grabs a Remington double-barreled shotgun, and gets it done.

Apparently, folks over at Heavy Iron Studios and THQ thought this would be a great premise for a game, and Evil Dead: Hail to the King was conceived. Taking place eight years after the last Evil Dead film (Army of Darkness), Ash returns to the cabin in the woods. It appears that the evil dead have once again crossed into our world, and it's up to our hero to chop them up into bite-size pieces with his trusty chainsaw. Of course, Bruce Campbell will be providing the voice-overs for Ash. Expect to see this hit the shelves this fall.

PC GAMER POLL

The results are in for our first *PC Gamer* poll. We asked you to tell us what highly anticipated game you are sick of hearing about. Well, the results were very interesting. Take a look for yourself:

- 1. Diablo II: 31%
- 2. Daikatana: 23%
- 3. Duke Nukem Forever: 13%
- 3. Black & White: 7%
- 4. Tribes 2: 5%
- 5. Halo: 4%
- 6. Team Fortress 2: 4%
- 7. Warcraft 3: 4%
- 8. Vampire: Masquerade: Redemption: 4%
- 9. Baldur's Gate 2: 3%
- 10. Deus Ex: 2%



Diablo II - get finished already

Our randomly picked winner is Justin Paszul; he'll be receiving a prize from us soon. For next month's poll, send an E-mail to eyewitness@pcgamer.com with "PCG Poll" in the subject heading and tell us who your favorite game god is. Once again, we'll randomly pick one lucky winner to get a free game and print the results in the magazine. The rules are the same as the "Waiting is the Hardest Part." Remember, only one entry per person. All entries must be received by July 30, 2000.

NEXT MONTH

DIABLO II EXCLUSIVE REVIEW AND STRATEGY*

That's right, kids. Hold on to your hats because it's finally finished*. The game destined to sell eight billion copies* (give or take a few) will dominate our lives as we lose sleep and all sense of time to write the definitive review, and most complete guide to one of the most anticipated games ever.

If that doesn't work out, we'll unveil details of the loads of hot new games ready to set your PC alight this coming year. Not only that, but we'll tell you exactly why the PC will continue to be the dominant platform for gaming in the coming years with the complete story of the State of the PC Union.

(*Okay, so it's more of a plea than a reality...but we're as eager and hopeful as you are.)

China H Red S the men an.

"ACTION-PACKED AND GORGEOUS: BRILLIANT BACKGROUND VISUALS AND EXPLOSIONS THAT NEED TO BE SEEN TO BE BELIEVED. "

- GAMING AGE

PATIAN

ssia contain China's expansion. ommander you will be placed at t vehicles. It is your duty to lead your

m's FORCE 2 san xamination into the Warfare. Like the U.S. Army same name, this real-time 30 wargame applies the technologi booming information Age with Pmilitary hardware. As a Chi platoon commander, you will split second decisions engagement for you plunged into

Red Storm advision, Four Star Jr. U.S. A

drove military hardware. In order to create virtually real experiences and viewpoints.

with which you began. Gamy is further complicated by ch or joining other players in the or cooperative multiplayer. player maps, FORCE 2a can be LAN lines or the Internet.



Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772

Never-before used rendering techniques and particles systems drench this game in special effects 1600*1200 (GE256) Resolution Supported for astounding realism An arsenal of weapons ranging from the basic Plasma Cannon to the devasting Titan's Hammer High-speed battles with five different alien races Eight-person multiplayer with IPX and TCP/IP WASTE OF SPACE

19 missions across a jaw-dropping, real time

3-D universe



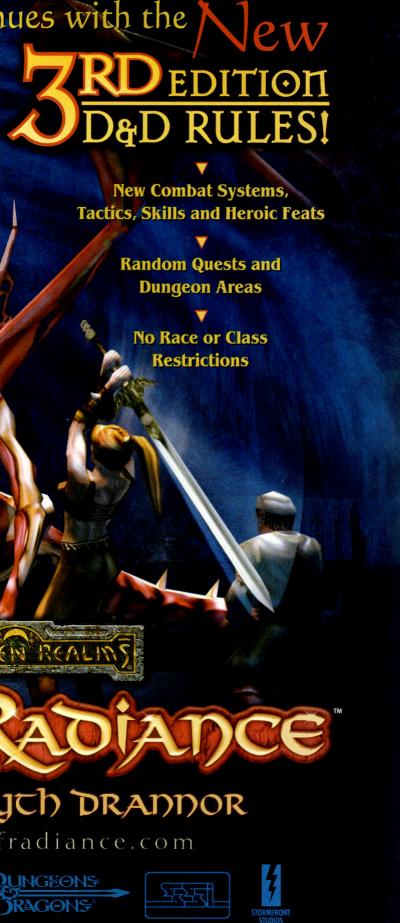




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One Month to Go

Thieves and superheroes dominated the entries this month as the competition heats up. There's just one last chance to get in the killer entry that will see you lording it in the plush offices of lon Storm. Best of luck.

THIS MONTH'S CELEBRITY JUDGE



William Stahl

Regardless of the commercial success, there's no doubting the critical acclaim lauded on Pandemic Studios' Battlezone games (which are some of PC Gamer's favorites of the past few years). William Stahl was lead designer on the two games in the action/strategy hybrid franchise, and he casts his expert eye on this month's Design Lab entries.

Cops & Robbers

Jason Brewer

In this game, you play a local cat burglar. Armed only with a little crowbar and a rusty Pinto, you have to drive around and scout out a victim. In first-person mode, you have to sneak around, quietly break into a house and get as much loot as you can. You'll have to be quick and only grab the most valuable items, in case someone saw you and called the cops.

You then drive back to your apartment, and decide what you want to pawn off, and what you want to keep in your home, which you can see on a Civ-esque throne room. With the money you made, you can go out and buy more cat burglar goods, such as lockpicks, bigger crowbars, black clothes, or a big van so you can haul more stuff, or maybe a gun in case you get in trouble with the authorities.

The game would get progressively harder as the police spend more resources trying to track you down and scared citizens buy burglar alarms.

Multiplayer game modes would include co-op mode, and a Cops & Robbers mode, where a team of robbers attempts to steal as much as they can in a set time limit without being caught by the opposing team of cops. This could be very interesting with a team of three or four robbers breaking into houses and then hopping into a van that would be driven by a getaway driver. The cops then pursue. Insert high-speed car chase here. You could follow it up with a good oldfashioned cops and robbers shoot-out.

WILLIAM SAYS: Before you start work on this, be sure to check out a couple of little, obscure games called Thief and Thief II! What you've basically got here is Thief in a more contemporary setting, which, actually, would be a natural progression for this type of game - I'll certainly buy it; Thief is one of my all-time favorites. Unfortunately, it is not very original.

What you need to do is set yourself apart, Jason. Introducing the car element can have interesting implications. You could invest in your car; buying more expensive cars could allow you to

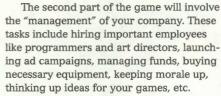
cruise more expensive neighborhoods. However, you'll be walking a fine line between creating a stealthy action game and a driving sim. I don't know about you, but a "stealth driving simulation" sounds awfully boring to me.

I would also establish a purpose for the main character - robbing for the sake of robbing is okay, but it doesn't really help much when you're trying to create a story and a motivation for the game's main character.

Sim Computer Game

Mike Berggren

The primary idea for this game is to simulate the development of a computer game company in an RTS environment. In the beginning, gamers "create" their company. This includes thinking up a name, designing an office building (in a simple user interface), deciding on a genre, and more.



Do well, and you'll be treated to some really nice cut scenes of your game. Maybe even a 3D walkthrough of the company you built! But beware: disgruntled workers, other competing companies, and bad reviews of your games may wreak havoc on vour success!

WILLIAM SAYS: Mike, I don't think it would be very fun to watch pasty-white, overweight, single guys tap code and drink Pepsi all day. I like empire-building games on a grander scale, in which I establish great wealth and control situations I could never dream of in real life. (Between you and me, if you want to control a gamemaking company, just go to one and "hang around" the office for a while. Before you know it, you'll be lead designer, and from there, the sky is the limit!)

But the ninth time the company shuts down because the coffee maker's dirty or another Star Wars trailer is released while you're locked in a pitch meeting with another distributor who wants a game with a sexy hero like "what's her name - she sells a lot", the player is going to rip out the CD and break it in half.

Jason Bissey

This is a first-person detective game. It begins with a small job. After completing this job, you find out your client has been murdered. In order to get paid, you're going to have to solve the crime. You'd have a number of places around the world you could

go to search for clues, and each time you play, the murderer would be different.

The clues would point to multiple suspects, with harder-to-find clues pointing to fewer suspects than easy-to-find ones would. Plus there could be a time limit, so you'd have to work efficiently.



When you finally determine the killer, you'd have to apprehend them. This would be the action finale. There'd be "gore zones", like in Soldier of Fortune, so a leg shot would slow them down, etc. You get more money for taking them alive, however.

WILLIAM SAYS: Jason, it sounds as though you're trying to meld several genres, and several different kinds of game players, into a single game. Take a tip from me (in my best Dana-Carvey-doing-George-Bush voice), "mixing genres is bad - very bad!"

The idea of being a detective seems fun, but when you break it down into actual game mechanics, it has the potential to become boring - especially from a first-person perspective (my assumption is based on your SoF reference). I would think about pulling the camera out and creating a more adventure-oriented game with rich puzzles and a detailed story. I would also not make the game timebased - gamers hate time-based games.

Phobia

James Lackey

In Phobia, you are what goes bump in the night. As a lowlevel Boogeyman, you are responsible for terrorizing one household. As your skill



increases, you will have to frighten more people. You can frighten people in their dreams, or take a risk and manifest in the real world.

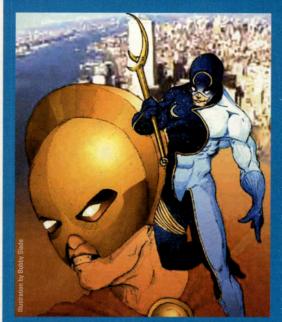
At your disposal is every fear known to man: spiders, snakes, heights, dentists, live burial, clowns, and the ever horrible "Peanut Butter Sticking to the Roof of Your Mouth", just to name a few. You must be careful not to scare people to death, as dead people aren't afraid of much. Your enemies will be paranormal investigators, priests, and even other spooks. Your stomping grounds will include the everpopular bedrooms and closets, but also include more difficult areas, such as schools, churches, and public parks.

WILLIAM SAYS: Many moons ago, there was a game released called Haunted for the Sega Genesis system (I believe) that was very much like this. You could possess objects in the house, like the toaster or refrigerator, and scare the human occupants. The reason why this game wasn't a breakout hit is because the game lost its appeal after the tenth time you scared dad by rattling the refrigerator.

I'm sure with today's technology, the refrigerator will be rendered in 3D with 6,000 polys and bumpmapped textures; however, you still haven't indicated exactly what you do in this game (or in dreams) to scare people. Whatever it is, you must make sure it is constantly rewarding and never monotonous.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAN FRAGA

THIS MONTH'S WINNER IS...



Metro City

I would create a persistent online RPG comic book superheroes. The venue would be a large urban city, complete with skyscrapers, red light districts, begin, you would decide between a good or bad persona. You would then develop a theme for your character by distributing an allotted amount of game points among your attributes that would ultimately decide if your character had energymenta-l, physical-, weapon-, or skill-based powers, or a combination of the above.

Those choosing to follow justice would bust up pool halls to flush out those choosing to thwart the law would be preying on simple pedestrians, shop

owners, armored cars, or banks. Rewards would consist of game points (applied toward attributes) and merit badges (bragging rights) for the law enforcers, and game points and reputation banners for the criminal types. Secondary skills might consist of gambling, weapon making, being a detective or informant. The capture of a kingpin, or a big bank robbery, and other notable current events would be displayed in form of a newspaper headline when you sign on into the game.

WILLIAM SAYS: I really like this idea Bobby! Who wouldn't want to create a superhero and fight evildoers. But it's been pitched before in the industry, so try to do something different. Why not add some sim elements and concentrate on making a really detailed and function-

ing city, complete with intricate NPC inhabitants -"The SuperHero Sims", anyone?

I like the idea of creating a theme for your character and deciding which attributes are "super" I think it is equally important to choose your hero's weaknesses as well. There could be some correlation — if your hero can control electricity, perhaps he's vulnerable to water? Be sure to throw in some real funky, off-the-wall abilities as well!

As the player progresses through the singleplayer game, fighting crimes, his character's abilities (and weaknesses) can grow. Perhaps this can be reflected in his costume? The computer can keep track of the player's accomplishments and gradually introduce more difficult adversaries who exploit the hero's weaknesses. Eventually an archenemy can be created.

Multiplayer could be something like Baldur's Gate's, in which a small group of players work together in the city. They can form their own "Justice League"! I'd play, as long as I'm not Anuamani Kudos

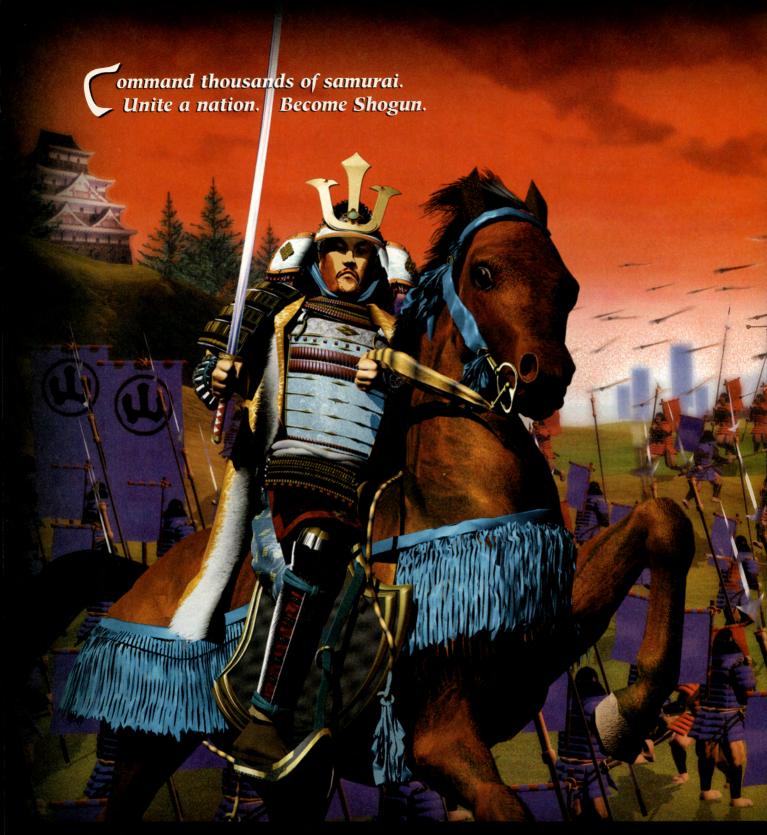
snail-mail, the address is PC GAMER DESIGN CONTEST, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005. We cannot return entries, so please do not send original art-work. Your entries will be edited for clarity

HOW TO WIN THAT JOB AT

ION Storm's offices, testing the company's latest games in development. Travel to and from Dallas and hotel accommodations there will be picked up by ION Storm, but the rest is up to you. So, what are you waiting for? Get designing! Next month is your last chance!

LEGAL STUFF — READ IT!

LEGAL STUFF — READ IT! By submitting your game design idea to PC Gamer, you acknowledge that your design will become public domain — which basically means anyone can read it, take inspiration from it and use it for their own purposes. You also acknowledge that neither PC Gamer nor any of the companies affiliated with this contest has or will have any liability for the use of ideas submitted and/or published.

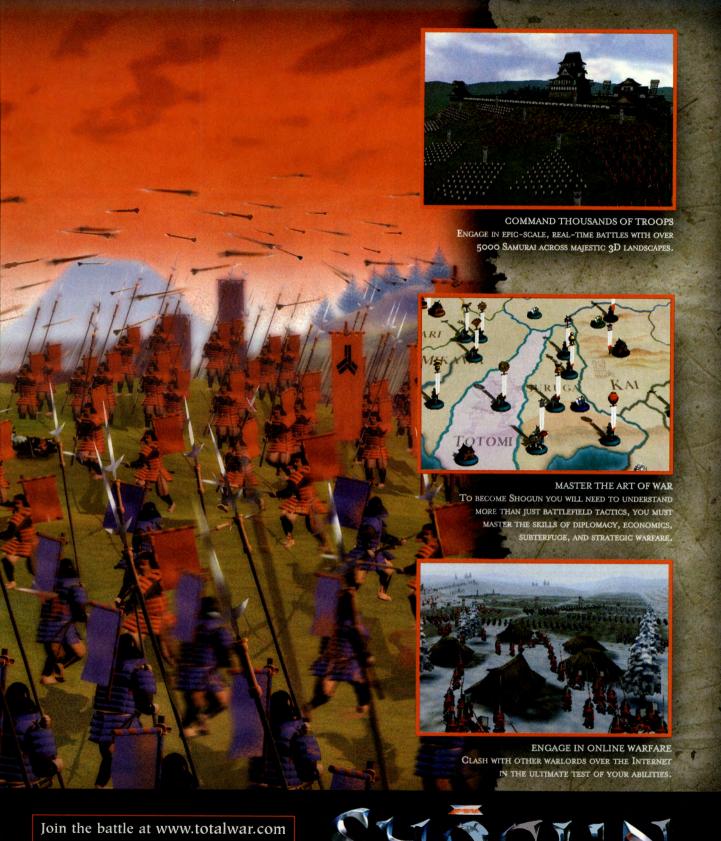


TAPAN, 1542. THE LAST SHOGUNATE HAS COLLAPSED LEAVING THE NATION DIVIDED.

You emerge from the chaos to lead your troops of loyal samurai in a brutal quest to unite the country. Do you have what it takes to master the Art of War and become supreme ruler of the land? Do you have what it takes to become Shogun? Engage enemy warlords in the largest real-time conflicts ever, as vast armies collide on the battlefields of feudal Japan. Deploy spies, emissaries, and the beautiful geisha to cunningly outwit your opponents while maintaining a web of diplomatic alliances. Manage your resources as you recruit, train and fund an army while maintaining your lands and researching new technologies.

This is strategy gaming at its most challenging. This is Total War!













NOW & THEN













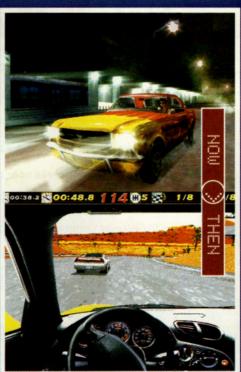


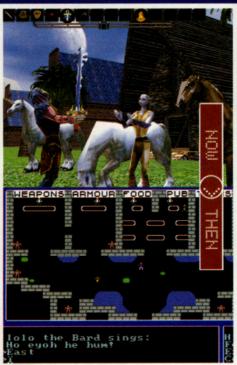


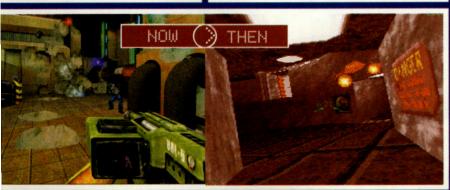












POP QUIZ

What do the Alone in the Dark, Monkey Island, and Duke Nukem franchises have in common?

ANSWER

They have all spawned three games in the classic series thus far, and have the fourth in development.

POP QUIZ

What do X-COM: Alliance and The Dreamland Chronicles: Freedom Ridge have in common?

ANSWER

Mythos Games, developer of the original X-COM game, and creator of that universe, is the development team behind Freedom Ridge.

Alliance is continuing the X-COM universe under the tutelage of the good folks at MicroProse.

POP QUIZ

What do Wing Commander and Freelancer have in common?

ANSWER

They are both creations of designer Chris Roberts.

ou see, the future of PC gaming is inextricably linked with the creators and heroes of its past.

This is a maturing industry. Aside from the technological advances, designers are constantly working on design innovations — decisions that change the way we interact and relate to characters and environments. So, in celebration of these upcoming games, we talked to the people who created them, to discover their thoughts and inspirations and

see how that experience influences the games you'll be playing later this year.

So, take a step back in time and relive some great gaming moments, and find out from the creators what's going to happen with some of the greatest franchises the PC gaming industry has ever known.

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up real tracks, capturing real races and shoves them down the Internet and directly into your computer. Then we bombard you with lap after lap of white-knuckle action at 200 MPH where your competition is professional racecar drivers in real events and not some computer junkle in Idaho. Who cares if you can beat a simulation? We're not impressed that you can outrace your friends.

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MOW

Any first-person game

>> Ultima Underworld's creators, WARREN SPECTOR and DOUG CHURCH (among others), latched on to something very special with this first-person RPG. Its legacy can be seen in nearly every first-person game in some form or other, and is certainly one of the most important games in the history of PC gaming.

When you and the team created Ultima Underworld, did you realize the impact that the first-person perspective would have on the future of PC gaming?

Doug Church: As a team, we could tell that there was a very powerful sense of player involvement, which the perspective really helped. I don't think we ever figured something like Doom II (or any first-person game) would ship a zillion units.

Warren Spector: I guess I always had a sense that Underworld was unlike anything anyone had ever seen before - and cooler! Not to contra-



"Have you heard the one about the priest, the minister, and the rabbi?"

dict Doug, but I really did think we were going to change the world, and thought we'd be the ones to sell a zillion units. Frankly, if we hadn't shipped within a month of Ultima VII and Wolfenstein, and if we'd gotten a bit more marketing and sales support, we might have done a lot better.

Compare the size of the team and the amount of work needed to build a game like UW with the resources required for Deus Ex.

DC: Back on UW, the core three people built levels, wrote conversations, and wrote code. We built the game and the editor, and then used the tool we wrote to build the levels.

WS: Nowadays, we have much larger teams and specialization is the order of the day. There are about 35 people on Deus Ex, and everyone does their bit on the assembly line. The need for passion and commitment hasn't changed.

How has technology helped (or hindered) the design process? Are developers getting lazy by giving us style over substance? WS: Any developer who gets lazy doesn't stay in business for long. The fundamentals of game design are fundamentally unchanged. I was

reminded of that not too long ago when I reread Chris Crawford's 1982 book The Art of Computer Game Design (long out of print but available online at: http://www.vancouver.wsu.edu/fac/ peabody/game-book/Coverpage.html or http://members.xoom.com/kalid/art/art.html). You know what? For all the dated game and technology references, there still isn't a better book on game design. DC: As the complexity of the games rises, the time required to even get the basics together is large. This gives us less time to play and iterate the designs we do come up with. Look at the huge leaps in the technology over the last 20 years, and then compare our design progress. It is pretty sad.

What ideas would you like incorporated in first-person games to advance the genre?

WS: What I'd like to see in gaming, in general, regardless of genre or platform, is more of a sense of player control and a greater effort to offer players real choices with significant consequences (that go beyond succeed/fail or live/die).

DC: As Warren says, I think our big problem is reliance on old approaches, and unwillingness to embrace real interactivity. As long as we are thinking of how clever our design is, or how sneaky some twist is, we are keeping our player from being the centerpiece. When the player stops thinking "What do I want to do?" and instead is asking "What does the designer want me to do?" we have stopped being an immersive interactive experience, and started being a puzzle game. There is nothing wrong with that, but I think our most powerful future games will be of the immersive type.



Ultima Underworld



It's a moving person. And he'll talk to you. This was revolutionary stuff.

REMEMBER THE BIT WHERE ...

You ran around dungeons and cities in first-person, seeing other characters and talking to them. The movement system worked superbly using the mouse, and the level of interaction with the game characters was unmatched. If there's any game on this month's classic CD to keep on your hard drive, make it Ultima Underworld.



Duke Nukem Forever



THEN

Duke Nukem II



an giving it to the anene deepite being 22

REMEMBER THE BIT WHERE ...

Duke Nukem was a side-scrolling action hero? Before making a huge impact with the wise-crackin', stogie-chompin', lady-lovin', alien-ass kickin' hero of the 3D (well, 2.5D if we're getting technical) version, the square-jawed action hero plied his trade in glorious parallax-scrolling 2D. Even then, Apogee's Scott Miller and Todd Replogle gave our hero the charismatic personality that we know and love to this day.

>> An owner/partner of Apogee, SCOTT MILLER has been involved in the creation of the Duke Nukem franchise since the early days. Here's what he had to say about everything Duke...

How much is the Duke Nukem that we know today the same one that you envisioned and created for the original game?

Quite a bit, but obviously Duke keeps getting better and more fleshed out as technology allows. The Duke in the coming game will be even better realized, but I cannot reveal how.

How many people were involved with the creation of the original Duke? And how many are on the DNF team, for comparison?

The original game had three primary people: Todd Replogle, Allen Blum, and myself. On Duke Nukem Forever, we have 17 people.

What was the biggest challenge in trying to imbue a side-scrolling 2D game character with real personality?

The problem in those days was the technical limitations of 16-color EGA graphics, and 320 by 200 resolution. This put a limit on the detail characters could have, so we had a one pixel line for teeth, gave Duke a square chin, and had him say things via popup text windows. Another thing we added to the

original game to enhance Duke's ego-driven personality was a very flamboyant summersault jump.

How many times had you seen Evil Dead 2 when Duke was created?

Probably several times — though Duke was never created to be anything like the ED2 character, Ash. Ash is kind of a wimpy hero who still manages to survive — Duke, on the other hand, is a politically incorrect combination of John Wayne and Clint Eastwood.

With Duke's character created, is the future of a game hero like him now just set in what the technology allows the developers to do with environments?

Without any doubt, greater interactivity and realism can, if done right, create a far more immersive, compelling and fun game. This will certainly be demonstrated in *DNF*. By allowing the player to do far more interesting things in the environment, a character with Duke Nukem's personality and traits can be brought forth in ways we haven't seen yet in current games.



EarthLink An Internet Partnership Sprint.

MOW

Escape from Monkey Island

>> MIKE STEMMLE and SEAN CLARK, project leaders on Escape, joined LucasArts in the final month of development of the original Secret of Monkey Island and also worked on the classic humor-driven Sam and Max games.

When Secret of Monkey Island came out, the graphic adventure game was still alive and kicking. Now it's not. How has the evolution of the games market over those years affected how you approach the new game?

The adventure game market isn't alive and kicking? When did this happen? Jeez, this industry turns on a dime. Next thing you'll be telling us that the game market is dominated by two or three sub-genres that appeal primarily to 13-year-old boys....

Seriously, we've kept a keen eye on the current realities of the gaming market while designing Escape from Monkey Island. Imagine, if you will, a game that combines elements of Tomb Raider, Half-Life, Thief II, and Diablo.

Do you see it? Good. Escape from Monkey Island isn't that game. It's a Monkey Island game. The only real concessions we're making to the current game market is that we'll be throwing a lot more "hip" buzzwords into our ad copy. Marketing will probably edit out that last sentence. (No I won't - LucasArts Marketing)

Even more seriously, games with good stories, humorous characters, and challenging puzzles still make sense to us. How we use those tools at our disposal is the real change. And our proprietary golden rule is (Cut this line - LucasArts Legal Department). Legal will probably edit that last line.

What were some of your favorite gags from Secret, and how have you evolved the style and humor for a game released ten years later? Mike Stemmle: For my money, "That's the second biggest monkey head I've ever seen!" is the quintessential Monkey Island gag. It's simultaneously enigmatic, silly, and dramatic...everything that Monkey Island aspires to be.

Sean Clark: I've always had a soft spot for the cow-tipping scene.

The writing style hasn't evolved much at all, thank god. If we've done our job right, the fourth Monkey Island game should read a lot like the first: Guybrush is still a goofball, LeChuck is still a single-minded jerk, and Stan still talks really fast.

What's the influence of Grim Fandango, technologically and stylistically, on Escape?

Grim Fandango's technology has certainly had some influence. We're using a good-sized chunk of Grim code (insert your favorite obvious joke here). In essence, we're piggy-backing on the way Grim defined what a 3D adventure game could be.

How many of the original characters will make an appearance, and how does the gap between the last game and this one affect how you approach the continuity?



The 3D basis of the Grim Fandango engine should allow for tons of variety.

Out of sixty or so speaking parts in Escape from Monkey Island, around ten of them are characters from previous Monkey games. Besides the usual recurring characters, we've got characters from Curse, a character last seen in Monkey 2, and a few characters who haven't been seen since the first game!

Continuity? Monkey? Cont-in-u-ity. Hmm... well, it's still got "Monkey Island" in the title. Actually, we're just continuing the storyline in a way we think makes sense given how the series has progressed through the first trilogy. Part of that is imagining what the characters would be up to.

How does the size and composition of the team differ from the one that did Secret?

The Escape team is about four times as large as the Secret team. We're more animator-heavy than the Secret team, and we're a lot more Canadian, Like the Secret crew, we're 80 percent water, but we have a lot more Selenium.

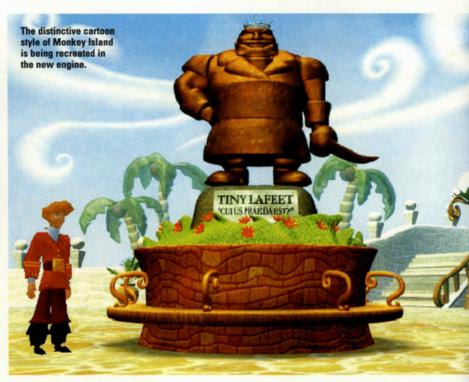
THEN

Secret of Monkey Island



REMEMBER THE BIT WHERE ...

You laughed --- a genuine hearty belly laugh — at the gags in a computer game? Better yet, remember ever actually playing a 2D graphic adventure? The antithesis to the drab, tedious but "multimedia" experience of Myst, the lush, colorful environment of Secret of Monkey Island was a breath of fresh air.



Now Links LS 2001

BRUCE CARVER started Access Software back in 1982 when life as a mechanical engineer lost its appeal. The first game from the studio was Leader Board Golf for the Commodore 64.

How has the development process changed over the years?

In the beginning, I was the designer, programmer, artist, test engineer, copywriter, and box designer. The code was small enough to be delivered to the user on three or four floppy disks. Today, we have several teams: the course acquisition and the course development teams combined have more than 20 members. The Links development team has about 16 members, and the Course Architect team consists of about ten members. The next version of Links will require four CDs.



Sure, it's realistic, but you still can't throw your clubs when you hit a bad shot!

How did you do such a great job at nailing the physics in the Links series?

I've a substantial physics background and am somewhat obsessed with accurate ball physics. Myself and another young engineer spent a great deal of time researching flight dynamics of a golf ball under various rates of spin and velocities. We then worked out the flight equations to model, as accurately as we could, the behavior of the golf ball during flight and as it impacted the ground on various surfaces. Our knowledge of the real game was invaluable in helping us know when we "had it right".

What is the future of golf games?

A. To continue to improve the realism of the experience. This means photo-realistic graphics, and as the hardware is capable, realtime 3D movement.

B. To provide the average user with the ability to play his local course(s) on the computer. C. To provide a tournament environment for our users so that those who wish to compete can experience a similar level of competition for real money and prizes as professional golfers.

THEN

Links: The Challenge of Golf

The course layouts gave a splash of color and detail previously unseen in golf games.

REMEMBER THE BIT WHEN ...

Links not only revolutionized golf games. but sports games in general by providing a graphic sumptuousness that looked and felt right. The physics engine was a mile ahead of any previous golf game. The ball bounced and rolled in stunning conformity to the terrain of the course, and suddenly the lie mattered, the wind mattered, and the swing meter perfectly captured the dynamic of the golf swing.

Hardware — Past and Present

Sometimes watching the growth of gaming quality distracts us from other equally important factors, like hardware. A glance backward makes today's hardware look like Star Trek technology, and a squinty peering into the future shows us the best is yet to come.

A 2400-BAUD MODEM

The fastest of the fast - in 1983. So blisteringly fast, you could read the text as it raced across your screen. Before these, there were "acoustic modems" that made you

CABLEMODEM/DSL

All-digital communications, which

can pump data more than 100 times

faster, will thankfully be putting the

venerable modem out to pasture.

Hello to voice-over-'net, instant



iam the phone receiver into a couple of foam cups...talk about Flintstones.

OLD A CGA GAME

Ahhh, the days when games were

in 320x200 and used four colors -

they were terrible. If that wasn't

bad enough, they were also the four ugliest colors you've ever laid

eyes on. Let's

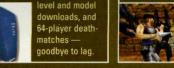
face it - the

cutting-edge

look didn't feel

even at the time!

VR Goggles be damned. We're going to be playing games in 1280x1024 at 32-bit color on our now cheap and high-quality 19and 21-inch monitors, leaving us



NEW HIGH RES SVGA



quibbling over little things like full-scene antialiasing and T&L acceleration.

ANALOG JOYSTICK OLD

For those flight-sims we were all playing. You know, the ones with the big blue blotch above the big brown blotch. The one big red button we got was the biggest thrill,



and we used to call it the "fire button". Hey, at least they were sturdy suckers!

NEW **PERIPHERALS**

Force-feedback, rudder and throttle controls are typical on joysticks, but newer offerings from Saitek and Microsoft will be ripping our other hand off the keyboard and slapping



it on to a dedi cated movement/weapons periphera WASD, indeed.

OLD 5 1/4" FLOPPY DISK

Yeah, I mean floppy disk. These sweethearts used to be foldable, for easy transportation in the back pocket of your cool Jordache jeans. Take that, ZIP disk! No, really, take



it. Remember when 3 1/2" disks seemed like progress? Strange, huh?

NEW **DVD DISTRIBUTION**

Swapping disks is so 1980s. It's obvious we'll never need more than 2.6 gigabytes of space on any media ever again — so get ready to pull a DVD-ROM out of that game



box. That is, until there's EDVD or Ultra DVD offering 1GB! We

DON'T SET THE PACE. DEMOLISHI

- Tweak every aspect of your car for racing perfection: suspension, tire pressure, gear ratio & more!
- Dominate in official Indy Racing® venues, plus 9 additional tracks for Sprinter/F2000 cars!
- · Keep in constant communication with your own. crew chief for optimal race performance!

The speed, skill and tradition of the world's most time-honored auto racing series are yours to experience with INDY RACING® 2000, INDY RACING® 2000 is the only official Indy Racing® game available, capturing all the excitement and high-speed



Race as 20 of Indy Racing's biggest



Not only a sim fan's dream! Turn down the physics for amazing



Go head to head in Multi-Player Mode with up to 16 players in both Indy and Sprinter/F2000 cars!













NOW FPS

>> MATT TOSCHLOG led the new development team, Outrage, as they spun out of original Descent developers, Parallax. With Descent 4 on hold due to poor Descent 3 sales (despite critical success), Outrage is keeping busy supporting the D3 community.

How has the Descent franchise evolved since its original incarnation, in terms of overall design, gameplay concepts, etc.?

The overall gameplay hasn't changed much. Descent 3 added outdoor areas and a more involved plot, but the core action of fighting robots in 3D was pretty much the same. The biggest changes have been in graphics. For Descent 3, we added lightmaps, colored lights, higher resolution, alpha-blended effects, and so on.



FPS, a game that will have deformable terrain.

How has the development process itself changed since that first iteration? The first Descent took 20 months, Descent II took

for setting up games and tracking stats.

about a year, and Descent 3 took about 30 months. The original Descent had a team of nine at its peak, and for much of the project we had five people. Descent 3's team grew to more than 20 people by the end of the project.

Descent 3 also featured native Internet sup-

port, including Parallax Online, our free service

What were the contributions of the Descent franchise to gaming as a whole?

In terms of multiplayer, we were the first game to work well over the Internet. Also, Kali was written for Descent, so I guess that was an indirect contribution! Descent was also the first game to allow players to leave and join a game in progress. In a broader sense, we were the first real six degreeof-freedom indoor game. And Descent was a pioneer in smooth dynamic lighting.

THEN

Descent



Keeping oriented was the first battle. Keeping your lunch down was second.

REMEMBER THE BIT WHERE ...

Your head first began to spin as you realized that 360 degrees of freedom means 360 degrees of positional vertigo. The first 3D action game to send you spinning on a totally free-look ride through any axis of movement, Descent required some adjusting to. Actually, it took some vomiting for a lot of gamers (including some PCG editors) unready for the new sensation of up-down, left-right, roll-around challenge.

MOW:

Adventure Gaming is Dead

>> With adventure games in their traditional point-and-click format all but forgotten in the PC gaming scene, we talked to JANE JENSEN, the creative vision behind the excellent Gabriel Knight series, to find out if there is any future for the genre.

Why do you think the adventure genre has fallen on such hard times, and do you see it rebounding any time soon?

I've been asked that so many times. I wish I had the answer. But the thing is: I'm a 37-year-old female, I am not the gaming audience. The problem with GK is that it's written, honestly, for people who are not the typical gamer, and those people aren't playing games! What's interesting is that there was a time when everyone thought the "mass market" would start playing games, but then the Internet came along and kidnapped everyone's spare time.

Eventually there will be some form of interactive storytelling that's mass-market. But it probably won't look all that much like adventure games, yet I think the essence of the adventure game becoming the main character - will be there.



What are your future plans as far as game design goes?

I don't have any plans for the moment. I'm currently working on a novel, and I feel I have a better chance of reaching the audience I want to reach in that market at the present time. I do love design and interactivity, though, so I would like to do something in the future, perhaps on the web.

How has the development process changed over the years?

In the "good old days", we had a fairly stable engine. When we sat down to do KQVI and GK1, we knew our engine well. GK2 was a full motion video game, so we had the advantage of learning from Phantasmagoria's mistakes. On GK3, the engine was developed from scratch, so lots of time was spent figuring out how to do the most basic things.

THEN



Adventure games like the King's Quest series were a staple of PC gaming's formative years.

REMEMBER THE BIT WHEN ...

You walked through the majestic halls of the king's castle, having been summoned for a strange mission. There was a palpable sense of grandeur as you were led to the imperial chamber... this despite the fact that the graphics were somewhat less than grand!

Now Alone in the Dark 4

>> French developer DarkWorks has been given the task of reviving this franchise under the tutelage of artistic supervisor GUILLAUME GOURAUD and managing director ANTOINE VILLETTE. Villette also wrote the story for Alone in the Dark 4: The New Nightmare.

How has the original Alone in the Dark game influenced the current game?

The episodes in the first series were a source of inspiration for us...among others (movies, novels, comics, etc.). We tried to maintain the spirit while modernizing it. Considering the advances in technology, the gameplay has necessarily changed. While we kept the pre-rendered set backgrounds

for reasons of atmosphere and drama — we still wanted to get the most out of the power available to us from new generation PCs. There will be a strong cinematographic dimension to our Alone. Although action as a dimension is present there, we preferred to go along with adventure and emotion.

What was your favorite thing about the original game? What was your least favorite thing about it?

With few exceptions, we are all fans of the first opus of the series, but technologies have progressed to such an extent since then. We kept the title, the hero Edward Carnby, and above all a certain special atmosphere filled with chills, anguish, and surprises. Our procedure was not to extract identifiable elements and reinject them. Only Alone in the Dark I fans will identify the several familiar aspects we hid in the game. It is more of a reinterpretation than a continuation.

Do you ever feel pressure to make this game live up to the original's standards?

AV: One of our wishes, in all events, is that Alone in the Dark: The New Nightmare will deserve the title "great classic of its genre".

GG: When you really look at it, Alone in the Dark's contribution to the game industry has been tremendous. Alone in the Dark was the first to introduce the 3D polygon, the first game to mix action gameplay with adventure gameplay, and the first title to dare a more adult game concept based on a movie-like atmosphere and making things scary to drive the adventure.

Now, the game industry is an industry that quite naturally absorbs all innovations, so it's not surprising that these basics are to be found in all action/ adventure titles today. The real challenge with The New Nightmare is to be innovative in a game structure that has become a classic in its own right.

Our first idea was to go the whole way --- to be really alone in the dark, something eerie we've all experienced at least once. Right at the first meeting, the idea that our hero could handle a flashlight seemed very "sexy" to us. And yet, loads of technical problems arose (real-time lighting on set backgrounds), but we felt that could open up a great deal of possibilities on the gameplay front.



whatever game you're playing.



From a technological standpoint, the flashlight is a real challenge. Now that the technology works, we're happy to see how managing the flashlight influenced and transformed all the game's compartments. The adventure aspect is transcended. The action won't tell you what's hiding in the dark or how close the danger is: surprise is total. As for the atmosphere - it gets completely wild!

THEN

Alone in the Dark

It's amazing the difference that texturing makes.

REMEMBER THE BIT WHERE ...

You jumped, with genuine shock, at something in the shadows. Before Resident Evil emerged as the horror adventure du jour. Alone in the Dark was concocting moody environments and numerous things going bump in the dark. And, of course, you were alone, faced with awkward control of the weapons, and threats behind every door.



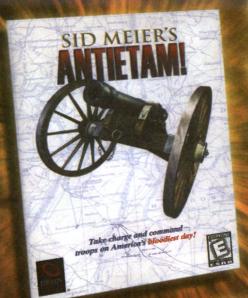
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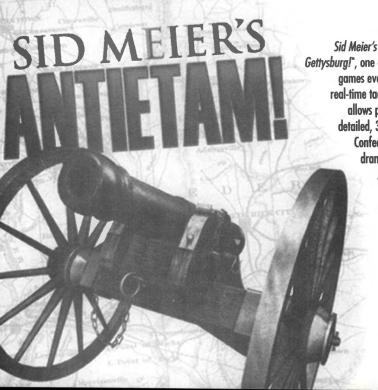
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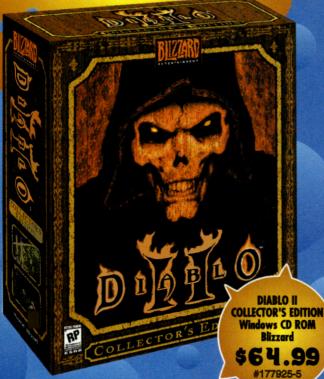
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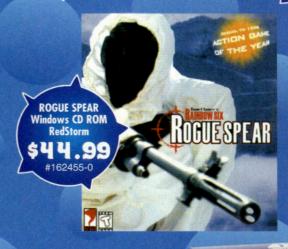


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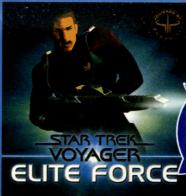


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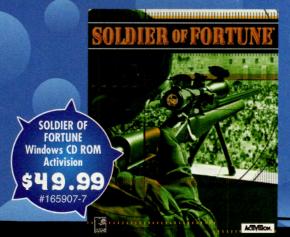
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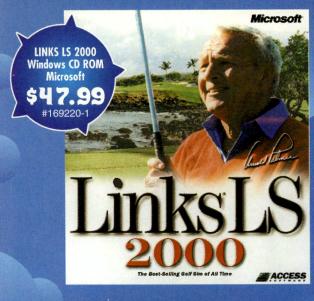


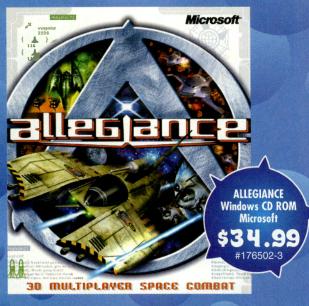
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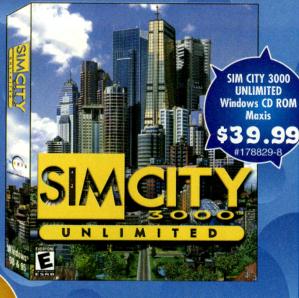








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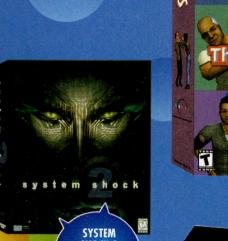


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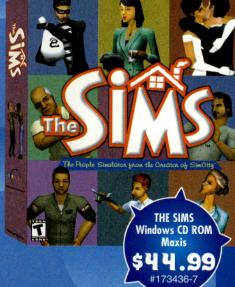


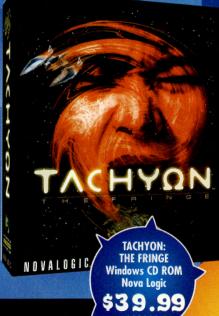
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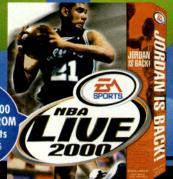




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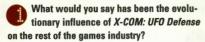
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Now Freedom Ridge



>> JULIAN GOLLOP, one of the three founders of Mythos Games, was creating classic titles for the Sinclair Spectrum system in the early 1980s. He was lead designer on UFO Defense.



It has certainly proved that turn-based games are not the preserve of dull-but-worthy wargames. Since X-COM, there have been a few impressive turn-based games with a tactical emphasis, such as the Jagged Alliance series. In practice, it has had little influence on the direction of the games industry, despite the fact that it was a commercially successful game with widespread appeal.

How has game design at Mythos Games evolved since UFO Defense? Is there still an emphasis on turn-based strategy, in light of current market conditions?

There is no doubt that the glut of real-time strategy games has changed the market dramatically. We have developed two titles with real-time strategy - X-COM: Apocalypse and more recently Magic & Mayhem. Our new game, The Dreamland Chronicles: Freedom Ridge, employs turn-based tactical combat in a very interactive



3D environment, which allows terrain destruction and full physics simulation. Just like X-COM: UFO Defense, it is set on earth in the near future, but this time a rapacious alien race have conguered the earth and you must lead the resist-

ance. It will be the ultimate turn-based tactical/ strategic game.

How does game design evolve now that the production scale is so much bigger?

When we developed the original X-COM, there were just two of us at Mythos Games, although we worked closely with a couple of artists at MicroProse. As far as Mythos is concerned, we regard ourselves as primarily game designers, so we have licensed the technology we need, such as NetImmerse (a 3D engine) and Havoc (a physics engine). This can cut the development time down, as well as ensuring that we have the very latest technology available to us. In practice, this means that we can spend more time on the game content, not less.

NOW

X-Com: Alliance



The first-person perspective will add even greater intensity to the alien battles.

How is this a progression of the franchise? We've talked with lots of X-COM fans, and most of them professed a fantasy of "being" an X-COM trooper. They wanted to see the look on a Muton's face as he blasts you, and this is what Alliance provides with its first-person perspective. Now when an Ethereal psionically blasts a trooper, it might be your brain he turns to jelly!

What are some of the aspects of the original that you want to have in Alliance?

Trooper development, research, psionics, squad tactics, suspense and terrifying combat - these are the cornerstones of X-COM.

THEN

X-Com: UFO Defense

One day, son, all this will be yours...

REMEMBER THE BIT WHERE ...

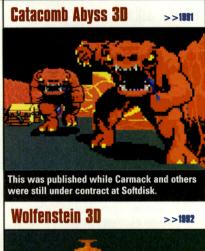
You took that first step out of the troopcarrier onto the unknown ground of an alien-held terror site. That first step through the door of a crashed UFO still brimming with hostile Sectoids. That first step onto the alien homeworld, where humanity finally took the fight to the strange home of its extraterrestrial enemy.

It was a thriller that put us in the frightened but determined boots of human soldiers faced with a mesmerizing and elusive alien enemy that could appear from the darkness at any time...classic.

NOW

The Mind of John Carmack

THEN





Ah yes, we were slaughtering Nazis with abandon. What could be better?

Doom

>>1993



Millions of downloads saw Doom crash countless fledgling office LANs.

>>1888



Early adopters of Rendition and Voodoo cards witnessed gaming in a new, non-pixellated light.

>> DEVELOPER: id SOFTWARE



>> No one doubts JOHN CARMACK's position as the premier rendering technology guru in the games business. Here's what he had to say about these games' legacy, and the potential for the future of first-person shooters.



How was the direction of your first FPS engine conceived?

The core idea has always been to take the same arcade gameplay that you had in a lot of overhead view games and make it more dramatic and intense by making it first-person. The technical directions have always been just me trying to make the best of my current state of knowledge and the available computing power.



What's been the greatest pleasure in creating these FPS engines?

I like writing good programs - ones that bring new capabilities to people and hit the engineering "sweet spots" as best they can. And after the release, I always get a few bonus kicks when I see users doing innovative things with it.

Was there a pivotal moment in the creation of any of the engines that you realized "this is it — the kids are gonna love this"? During playtesting for Catacomb [Abyss] 3D, when a player opened a door to reveal a troll right in his face, he actually screamed with shock. That was something new with firstperson games. You just can't shock someone like

During Doom's development, one time John Romero was testing something at his system when I noticed that our building janitor had been staring over his shoulder in rapt attention for quite some time. I think Doom was the first time people

that with an overhead game.

that weren't specifically into computer games could be impressed with the visual experience.

The first time I got networking functional in Doom was very significant. I spent several minutes with my hands on one keyboard and my head bent over toward another system just watching my guy run back and forth. That was definitely going to be big.

How does creating a single player game change the pressures and directions of the technology that you will develop in the future? Quake III Arena was a fairly difficult holding back of the high-end artistic use of the rendering engine. Because of the nature of the game, we had to make sure it was fast in all places, so there weren't really opportunities to set up truly thrilling environments. The next game will have more control over pacing, so we can balance



By Christmas 2001, what should gamers expect to see in the technology engines?

gameplay versus the environment.

Once games start focusing on the performance and feature set introduced with the GeForce as a baseline instead of the high end, things are going to change a lot, It all comes down to more detail, more flexibility, and better lighting models, but just saying it doesn't do justice to how much better things will look, and the change in the experience. I am more excited about this generation than I have been since Quake. Cool things are coming.

Need for Speed: Motor City

>> The Need for Speed franchise has produced some of the most consistently high-quality racing games on the PC. Product manager PETER ROYEA explained how this move to online racing will ance physics goes back to all the individual sysmaintain the flavor of the popular series.

What are the biggest design challenges of online games?

NFS has always been developed to best suit the technical capabilities of different platforms and appeal to the differences in gamer's tastes on those systems. Online is a completely different platform and one where community is inherently linked to the game experience. As a result, online has provided more opportunities than challenges. Ultimately, latency issues were factored into the design from the get go, and we really feel like we've been able to address them to the point of having a negligible effect on gameplay. The real fun has been blurring the



Here's the best way to turn heads on the street this side of some 34Ds!

lines between the racing component and all the other game mechanics.

What elements of Road & Track Presents: Need for Speed are a part of Motor City?

Really, the two key components are being passionate about what you drive and the sense of competition. Al protocols are great, but the breadth of personalities from real online competitors goes far beyond anything that's been achieved by a CPU and some code.

The bravado and competitive spirit that exists off the courses is key to what dials that up. In terms of passion for cars, there has never been any class of cars that has encouraged customization and community more than hot rods, which in part explains our move away from high priced exotics in the game.



How has the modeling of car physics changed over time?

The more games we make, the more we learn. Motor City has shifted to a four point physics model (real life) but has gone the next step by modeling the friction effects of all surfaces (rubber on asphalt, fenders on fenders, asphalt on roofs). What that means is not only do the cars

feel right, but they interact with everything around them as they should.

The other innovation is that the car's performtem parts. This is what makes the customization pay off. In real life, there are cumulative effects on performance rather than simply being additive. An engine performs very differently in one car over another. Similarly, the only way to get the most horsepower out of an engine is to do it by modifying lots of different components together (e.g. cams + headers + a blower + nitrous...).

In the transition from NFS with the Road & Track license to Motor City, what are the core ingredients?

NFS has always been built by car nuts. Because of that, it's always appealed to people who share that passion. On PC, we've always strived to create the most visually stunning racing experience on the system, and we'll continue to do that while still being able to run on a reasonable system spec. The open road experience has also been an integral part of the NFS series as these games all share some of the ultimate "what-if" fantasies.

Car nuts come in lots of different flavors, and we're excited about reaching out to a new group (hot rodders) as well as introducing a whole new market to the peak of American culture.

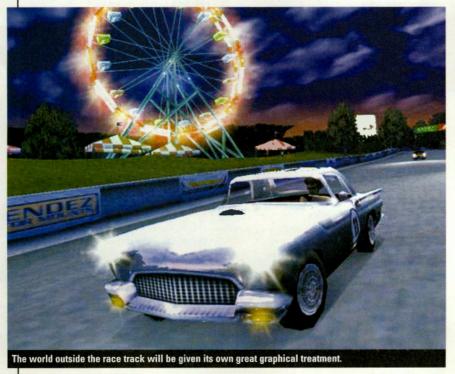
THEN

Road & Track Presents: The Need for Speed

Even in its first iteration, R&T: NFS offered a great visual driving experience.

REMEMBER THE BIT WHERE ...

You sat in the comfy driving seat of a well modeled, high performance speed machine, and had the open road ahead. It was the first time exotic cars looked and felt good. Road & Track Presents: The Need for Speed gave us a physics model that stressed power-sliding goodness over hardcore realism. We were enthralled. Many a joystick was pushed to the limits of its factory-tested durability by the endless races we put them through.



NOW

4x4 Evolution

>> MARK RANDEL has been the programming guru responsible for a variety of game engines that really started with Terminal Velocity. Since then, he's created the graphically stunning Nocturne engine and has evolved all of TRI's technology to allow cross-platform multiplayer gaming with 4x4 Evolution.





How did Terminal Velocity evolve into the racer 4x4 Evolution?

Other than having "terrain" style engines, there is not any direct code similarity from the 4x4 engine to the Terminal Velocity engine. Written in ANSI C, TV was our first attempt at a terrain engine. It used a height field of 256x256, and had a visibility of five to ten squares, max. Although we eventually produced a 3D accelerated version of TV for S3 Virge cards, the engine was optimized for software rendering using a software Z buffer. TV used shadow projections for flying objects to create the exact shadow on the ground and would run well on a 486DX2-66 with 4MB of RAM.

During development of TV, we started working on Monster Truck Madness, which used a slightly improved version of the terrain engine from TV. For Monster Truck Madness 2, we modified the engine to use true color textures, calling it "Photex2", since it was our second generation terrain engine and it used photographic textures. Monster Truck Madness 2 was our first engine that had really good 3D acceleration support and really good 256-color software support. It was partially written in C++, and would run well on a P133 with a Voodoo1 and 16MB of RAM and sports

scalable graphics, and can use more than 32MB of texture memory if you have it.

Written completely in C++, 4x4 still uses a 256x256 height field, but it uses each height point as a control point in continuous spline surface patches. This allows the terrain to become "round", and we can dynamically tessellate close up patches to give more detail when necessary. The 4x4 engine is tightly optimized for 3D acceleration, so it runs slowly under software rendering. Also, the 4x43D engine was created on Dreamcast to make sure we have great console performance, and then ported back to the PC. 4x4 has raytraced shadows of scenery objects, and projected shadows of vehicles.



How have game design ideas evolved from TV to 4x4?

In the days of Terminal Velocity, game design was pretty much a solo sport. I was the designer, producer, a level designer, and only programmer on the project. TV had five artists, another level designer, and a sound guy. We did have a multiplatform and Internet approach from the start. releasing it on both PC and Mac and having multiplayer capabilities.



As gamers have become much more sophisticated, and technology has greatly improved, game design on 4x4 is now a team sport. There is a producer, a development lead, and five other programmers. Five full time artists are on 4x4, as well as two level designers and two sound guys. And then there's a room full of beta testers who test the product as it is being designed to keep bugs to a minimum. Fans have been playing our racing games on the Internet for five years now, so we incorporate their feedback as well. For the first time, consoles have multiplayer capabilities over the Internet, so we're branching out of PC programming and hitting the console market too.

THEN

Terminal Velocity



REMEMBER THE BIT WHEN ...

You witnessed the staggering speed of flying around futuristic cityscapes at the controls of a nifty fighter. Not surprisingly, given the title, speed was the key, and the graphics engine supplied the framerates on fairly standard systems for the time. This is a legacy that continues to define Terminal Reality's games.



NOW Ultima Online 2





>> UO2's producer STARR LONG has been attached to the Ultima series for some time, working closely with the creator of the world, RICHARD GARRIOTT, on the original UO. Now he's leading the development not only of the Ultima series, but also of the red hot massively multiplayer roleplaying game genre.

How does what you're trying to achieve in UO2 relate stay true to the vision of the original Ultima world?

We have spent a lot of time incorporating the vision and fiction of the entire Ultima saga. Our staff writer has pulled in elements from every single Ultima and woven it into our fiction. You can find references to the Virtues, Gargoyles, Exodus, the companions, Mondain, and a host of others all through our fiction. Of course, the original vision was to create a world, and that is what creating an online game like this is all about.

How do you balance the stories of Britannia in the single-player games with the fiction in the player-dominated UO2?

Well, the stories in a single player Ultima are all about having the player be the central character in a story that has a traditional plot structure, including an ending. Obviously, a game like this does not end, so our goal is to use the stories to create background fiction that supports the game and gives context to the game systems and the choices the player makes. For instance, we have scattered across the map interesting areas for the player to explore (shrines, ruins,

forts, etc.). All of these have a story behind them that fits in with the overall story, and the NPCs in the game will talk about these stories.

How does the design process for UO2 differ from the earlier Ultima games?

One difference is the number of people involved. The first few Ultimas were done by Richard Garriott, all by himself. We have a lot more designers than that, of course. Another big difference is the single player narrative versus multiplayer environment. A multiplayer environment has a lot more variables to deal with, namely other people. Finally, we have spent a lot more time up front designing systems on paper and running simulations before actual implementation begins. In the old days we would just start making stuff and tweak as we went along.

Will the original Ultima mean anything five years from now, or will the evolution of the MMRPG have taken over completely? The fiction and vision of the original Ultimas will always have relevance in things like multiple paths of advancement and providing ethical context for players' decisions.

THEN

Ultima I: The Age of Darkness

You'll be amazed how compelling a game is when the focus is on the story, not pretty graphics.

REMEMBER THE BIT WHEN...

You talked to characters in bars, castles, and shops, and then went out in to the wilderness, dodging monsters and finding those dungeons. Sure, by "dungeons" we mean white lines on a black background, but who cares? It was fun!

Or how about meeting Lord British and not realizing that the name and the continent of Britannia would become a staple of the PC gaming scene for more than 20 years?

And incorporating moral decisions in to the player's character was a master stroke. There's no question that Ultima has been one of the most significant franchises in the history of gaming.

HOW

FreeLancer

>> With a back catalog of games that includes the Wing Commander series and the Privateers, CHRIS ROBERTS has great credentials; enough for Microsoft to trust heavily in FreeLancer, which won 1999's E3 "Best of Show" award.

When you sat down to create Wing Commander, what were you hoping to achieve as a gameplay experience, and how is that similar (or different) to what you're trying to create with FreeLancer?

I wanted to combine the visceral action of firstperson 3D — being in a fighter— with the context of a story with real characters. In other words, I wanted to make a game that made me feel like I was inside a film like Star Wars. FreeLancer also tries to ground your experience in a well-drawn fictional world and uses a lot of cinematic techniques to heighten you experience, but as a game experience, it is much more free form, allowing you to play many different roles: merchant, bounty hunter, explorer, mercenary, or pirate.

Is the evolution of a game series from WC to FreeLancer (in spirit rather than name) purely down to technological features, or has game design decisions and directions affected the games you'll create today?

Technology definitely factors in, but I would have to say game design and direction probably has the strongest influence on the games I'm trying to create today. I'm really focused on making the experience accessible to the widest range of players as possible. I think console games have been doing a

much better job of this than PC games, and it's is something that I think our industry needs to address if we want to capture a wider audience. My goal is to pull you into the world of FreeLancer in a way that no other game I've done before has. Trip Hawkins used to have a good phrase for this (in his early EA days): Simple, hot, yet deep.

Care to comment on the cost to produce WC against any ballpark numbers for FreeLancer?

Not sure Microsoft wants me to. Obviously a game as large and ambitious as FreeLancer isn't cheap to produce

Obviously WC became a huge franchise, with four games, tens of millions of production costs, and a movie. With the Internet and new ventures, what do you see as the possibilities for FreeLancer?

Hopefully FreeLancer can enjoy the same success as Wing Commander, and the fact that we're building an online persistent world that players can exist in beyond their single-player experience will certainly help.

What's the best "insider" story that you have about the Wing Commander series, or the creation of any of the games?



click to go to the docking bay, bar, etc.

Originally, I was trying to come up with a name for the aliens mankind was going to be fighting in my new space game, Squadron (which became Wing Commander). Finally, after a long night at work I gave up, putting a placeholder in. It was created because I saw these aliens as killing with wrath... Kill... Wrath... Kilrath... I tacked on a "i", wrote down Kilrathi and decided it would do until I came up with a real name.

WC's legacy is the cinematic story line, multiple endings, and the real feeling of being in a space fighter cockpit. Pretty impressive. What would you hope that FreeLancer's legacy will be five or ten years from now? An interface that finally broke down the "sim" barrier and opened the genre to new players. A rich and truly dynamic living universe that evolved, engaged, and reacted to players both online and not. A visual and audio attention to detail that put the hallowed "suspension of disbelief" one step closer in PC gaming.

THEN

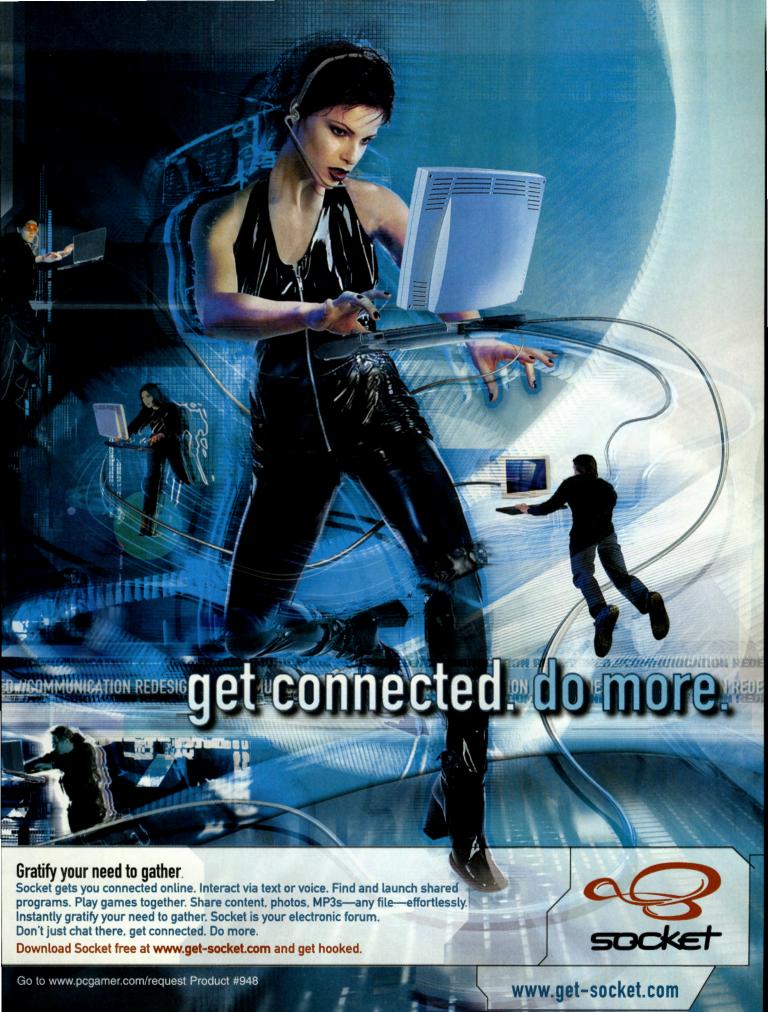
Wing Commander



much, but the graphic quality is night and day. REMEMBER THE BIT WHERE ...

You first sat in a Rapier and blew the hell out of a wing of Dralthi? Or how about the time when Christopher Blair gets wrongfully sentenced for the destruction of the Tiger's Claw? The WC series was one of the most engrossing games ever, and every space action game released today is still compared to this classic franchise.





\mathfrak{g} rant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change.

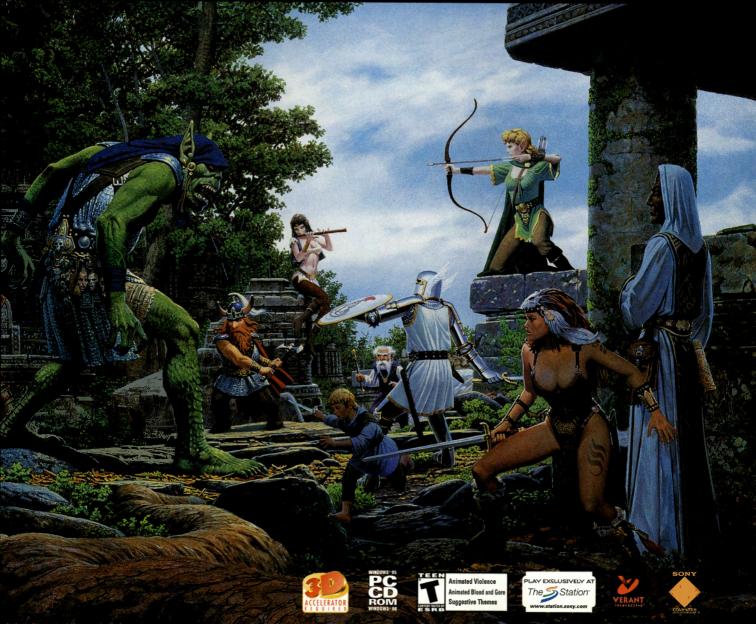
The courage to change the things I can. And the wisdom to know when to zone.



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REVIEWS

YOUR ULTIMATE GUIDE TO NEW GAME RELEASES

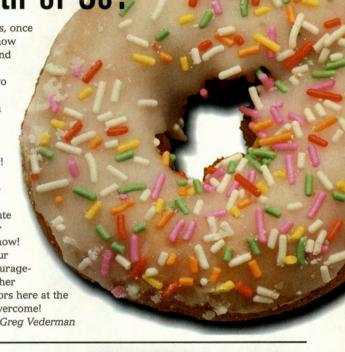
Will Fast Food be the Death of Us?

ears ago, when I was in my late teens, I heard a comedian on TV making jokes about how, as you approach the age of thirty, if you haven't really worked hard at staying in shape, your body starts to look like a perfect cylinder - no jutting jaw, no broad shoulders; just a pile of goop sitting in an office chair. At the time I heard it said, I laughed. "Ha! What a weenie! That guy just doesn't have my super-human metabolism!" See, what I didn't know then is that karma can, and often does, come back to bite you in the ass. Now that I'm going on 27 years of age, I've noticed that my man-boobs have started to take over. Yes, after years of eating crappy food and getting little exercise, I have begun to turn into that same pile of goop.

And I'm not the only one. As I look around the office, I see Rob Smolka, who, at 457 pounds, is about to keel over from an enlarged heart the size of a Thanks-

giving ham. I see Dan Morris, once 145 pounds of raw muscle, now 354 pounds of KFC lovin'. And what of Jeremy? Poor, poor Jeremy. He died just days ago and had to be buried in the only thing that would fit him a piano box (He didn't really die. We just said that for dramatic effect. -Ed.). The madness must stop now! No more KFC! No more McDonald's or Taco Bell! No more doughnuts! We're all doomed to suffer Jeremy's fate if we don't put an end to our flabby ways right here and now! Please, dear reader, send your E-mails of support and encouragement to me, and to all the other brassiere-wearing male editors here at the magazine, so that we may overcome!

- Greg Vederman



Hardware Requirements

With each PC Gamer review in this issue, you'll find two very important pieces of information: the game's minimum hardware requirements and the hardware configurations we recommend as the least you'll need to really enjoy the game. While a game will run on the minimum system the manufacturer specifies, it might not run all that well. Because of this, we test each game on several systems so we can bring you a more realistic assessment of what you'll really need.

NEW AND IMPROVED RATING SYSTEM

Only the greatest should be rewarded with our coveted Editors' Choice award, and this tweak to the rating system reflects that. Now, at a glance at the score box on each page, you can see where the game fits in to the great gaming scheme of quality.

100%-90% EDITORS' CHOICE

We're battening down the hatches and limiting our coveted Editors' Choice Award to games that score a 90 or higher. It's not easy to get here, and darn near impossible to get near 100. Games in this range come with our unqualified recommendation, an unreserved must-buy score.

89%-80% EXCELLENT

These are excellent games. Anything that scores in this range is well worth your purchase, and is likely a great example of its genre. This is also a scoring range where we might reward specialist/niche games that are real breakthroughs in their own way.

79%--70% GOOD

These are pretty good games, which we'd recommend to fans of the particular genre, although it's a safe bet there are probably better options out there.

69%-60% ABOVE AVERAGE

A reasonable, above-average game. It might be worth buying, but probably has a few significant flaws that limit its appeal.

59%-50% MERELY OKAY

Very ordinary games. Not completely worthless, but there are likely numerous better places to spend your gaming dollar.

49%-40% TOLERABLE

Poor quality. Only a few slightly redeeming features keep it from falling into the abyss of the next category.

39%-0% DON'T BOTHER

Just terrible. And the lower you go, the more worthless you get. Avoid these titles like the plague, and don't say we didn't warn you!

GAME OF THE MONTH

Each issue, when we find a game that deserves extra special attention, we give out the prestigious PC Gamer Game of the Month award. It's for games that deserve recognition above and beyond the normal call of the Editors' Choice award and is our unqualified seal of approval. And for this issue, the winner is...



WE RECOMMEND PII 300, 64MB RAM, 625MB hard-drive space, wheel

NFS: Porsche Unleashed



Accept no substitute — we guarantee that this latest racer in the Need for Speed series will rock your world.

wesome. The more that I delved into Electronic Arts' latest Need For Speed incarnation, NFS: Porsche Unleashed, the more that word just kept popping into my head. In one inspired stroke, EA has managed to transform its long-running driving game franchise into one of the deepest and most entertaining racing titles ever to land on a PC hard drive.

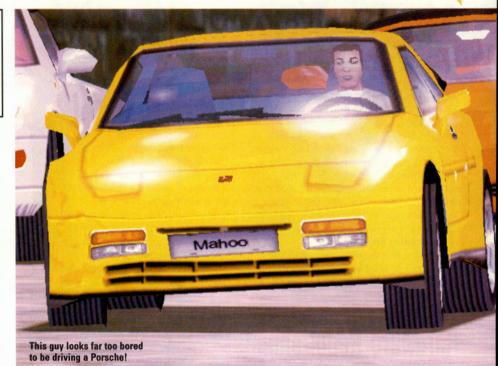
Absorbing gameplay, convincing vehicle physics, and scintillating graphics have been seamlessly dovetailed together with a degree of craftsmanship that rivals the very Porsche automobiles upon which the game is based.

Although previous chapters in the NFS series have always strived to present a wide cross-section of contemporary exoticars, the single marquee theme of NFS: Porsche Unleashed - which offers nothing but Porsches - breaks with this tradition in dramatic fashion. In fact, the game offers no fewer than 80 models from the famed German automaker, dating back to 1950. This sweeping homage to the legacy of Ferdinand Porsche may not find much favor with the Ferrari and Jaquar aficionados in the crowd but, for anyone who appreciates a superbly well-tuned driving game, Porsche Unleashed is about as good as it gets on the PC.

One of the most impressive things about the game is its seemingly endless depth. If Porsches ranging from the 1950 "Bathtub"



The game's Porsche Chronicle menu offers a full gallery of dream machines to salivate over.



356 to the latest 2000 Boxster and 911 Turbo machines, aren't enough to spin your crank, then Porsche Unleashed's highly entertaining new gameplay structure most assuredly will. In addition to its obligatory collection of single-player Quick Race and Knockout events, the game also features a pair of innovative new career modes that are guaranteed to keep card-carrying speed demons glued to their wheels for weeks.

The appropriately titled Evolution mode allows you

to re-live a half-century of Porsche history as you purchase and modify different models from the company's Classic, Golden, and Modern eras. By entering various races and tournaments, you can also earn prize money to finance new vehicle acquisitions and fund valuable parts upgrades. As new car choices become available, so too does the variety of performance items that you can lavish upon your chosen machine. With an inventory of more than 700 parts to choose from, including everything from



1. Keep hands in the 10-to-2 position. 2. Check mirror for cops. 3. Punt that yuppie scum in the 911 into the fence and move up one position.

racing slicks to high flow exhaust systems, even the most advanced of cyber-mechanics will find plenty to keep them busy.

EA has also included full-blown repair and paint shops to further enhance the customization and micro-management possibilities for each car in the game's enormous stable. As in real life, older models can appreciate quite significantly in value but, considering the relative ease with which prize money can be earned here, it's rarely necessary to sell off your classic machines.

That said, dedicated players will likely set their sights at owning every single vehicle available in the game.

Equally engaging is Porsche Unleashed's Factory Driver mode. More than 30 individual driving missions are thrown your way as you attempt to rise from the rank of lowly Junior Test Driver to the lofty position of Ace Porsche Factory Driver. Each mission comes with a challenging time limit and can range from basic tasks such as maneuvering between a pre-set pylon course to more advanced exercises like delivering a car to an impatient customer in the dead of the night. Although cops-andspeeders fans might bemoan the lack of any Hot Pursuit mode in Porsche Unleashed, there are nevertheless a number of Factory Driver missions that still demand a solid strategy for avoiding the men in blue.

Multiplayer fans will also find plenty of options to keep their phone lines humming. Apart from Porsche Unleashed's conventional modem, IPX and TCP/IP LAN support, there is also a free dedicated matchmaking service at EARacing.com where up to eight players can shake their German-built moneymakers for online bragging rights. Bonus cars can also be downloaded from EA's website to enlarge your stable beyond its current titanic proportions.

The Need For Speed series has traditionally cranked out some of the best graphics in the business and Porsche Unleashed is certainly no exception. Each

of the game's lovingly rendered vehicles feature highly detailed dashboard treatments and fully articulated suspension movements to compliment their flowing body lines (the rear spoiler on the later 911 models even deploys and retracts realistically with varying road speeds).

There are also fourteen new courses in the game - nine point-to-point European venues and five closed loop circuits - and each is punctuated with some of the most breathtaking scenery you will

ever encounter in a driving game. All of the tracks are wide enough to encourage twoor three-abreast racing, and many also feature branching paths and variable weather conditions. Some rich dynamic lighting and shading effects beautifully compliment the Direct3D-enhanced visuals.

Although some minor CD-access pauses can occur from time to time, they aren't serious enough to significantly impact gameplay. Damage modeling is also very well represented graphically, but the harmful effects of rough driving on your car's performance are surprisingly minimal.

The one area where Porsche Unleashed has left all of its predecessors in the dust,



Although damage modeling is well represented graphically, the performance loss is surprisingly minimal.

however, is with its remarkable new physics model. Previous chapters in the series have often failed miserably at communicating the feeling of rubber meeting road, but there is no such deficiency in Porsche Unleashed. Although it may never be confused with a high-fidelity racing title like Grand Prix Legends, the game's new four-point physics are still a quantum leap ahead of its arcade-like older siblings.

Understeer and oversteer effects are well modeled, but more importantly, an almost palpable sensation of mass and momentum has now been infused into each vehicle. Each machine exhibits its own unique driving physics, and the laborious struggle of an underpowered 356 negotiating an uphill bend on its skinny tires and spindly postwar suspension must be experienced to be believed. The high-performance ABS and traction-control equipped models of the modern era are equally well represented.

Despite having logged more time with NFS: Porsche Unleashed in one week than I care to admit, I still haven't even come close to exhausting my passion for this amazing new driving game. It'll probably be quite a while before I ever realize my longtime dream of owning a real Porsche 911 Turbo, but until then I can take comfort in the fact that I've been treated to one of the most satisfying test drives that I could ever have asked for.

- Andy Mahood

THE EVOLUTION OF THE PORSCHE

So many cars, so little time. With more than 80 different models to choose from in Need For Speed: Porsche Unleashed, it can often be difficult to keep track of what you have in your garage. To simplify things a little, here is a quick cross-section of some of the major Porsche models.



The 356 "Bathtub" Porsche. James Dean ended his short life behind the wheel of this '50s classic.



The basic 911 (circa 1965). This car has more tales to tell than a 911 emergency operator.



The inexpensive, boxy 914 was introduced in 1970 and has been called the "poor man's Porsche.



The classic (and classy) Boxster. Man, I want this car, I want it real bad.

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: More than 80 models; excellent physics; deep career modes; stunning new tracks

LOWS: Nothing for Ferrari or Lamborghini fans; no Hot Pursuit police chase mode; some CD-access pauses.

BOTTOM LINE: The best Need For Speed game ever to roll out of EA's garage.



REQUIRED PII 200, 32MB RAM, 300MB hard-drive space WE RECOMMEND PII 300, 64MB RAM, 3D accelerator card

Starlancer

The glitz, the glamour, the flashy graphics - Starlancer is pretty, it's oh so pretty, but not too bright.

s a big fan of the Wing Commander series, I was eager to see the famous Roberts brothers' (that's Chris and Erin) first Digital Anvil release. Having just finished my review of Tachyon: The Fringe (which is a fine game), it's obvious that these two are gunning head-to-head for your space-combat gaming dollar.

Starlancer basically lays the groundwork for DA's upcoming epic space-faring combat adventure, Freelancer. Think of this as a prequel. It's the 22nd century, and the old problems of our time are still present. The Russians (now known as the Coalition) are still screwing things up for everyone, this time by deciding to conquer the solar system. It's up to the good guys the Alliance of Americans, Germans, British, and Japanese — to stop them. The story is more or less a Cold War boiling over into a hot war in space. You play a new pilot for the 45th Volunteer squadron on the side of the Alliance.

First off, it's really easy for the graphical splendor evident in every element of Starlancer to win you over. If judged solely on flash, this game towers over NovaLogic's Tachyon. Capital ships are meticulously detailed, explosions leave behind debris that actually has momentum, and damaged fighters billow translucent smoke from their engines. The visual effect of cloaking your ship is one of the coolest I've ever seen the entire cockpit ripples wildly and everything

looks like it's made out of rubber.

Additionally, all the cut-scenes are first rate, as is now expected from the Roberts brothers. And to top it all off, all this fine detail clicks by at a very smooth framerate, even when the screen is filled with bogies. Basically, we haven't had a space shooter this pretty since Freespace 2.

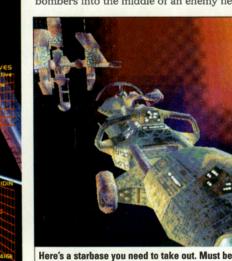
So for graphical glitz alone, Starlancer will get its audience, but the visceral impact will be muted on the realization that there are just three basic missions formats: escort, destroying turrets, and shooting down torpedoes. That pales in comparison



This game has one of the coolest interfaces we've ever seen. It's all rendered in real-time and has great motion effects.

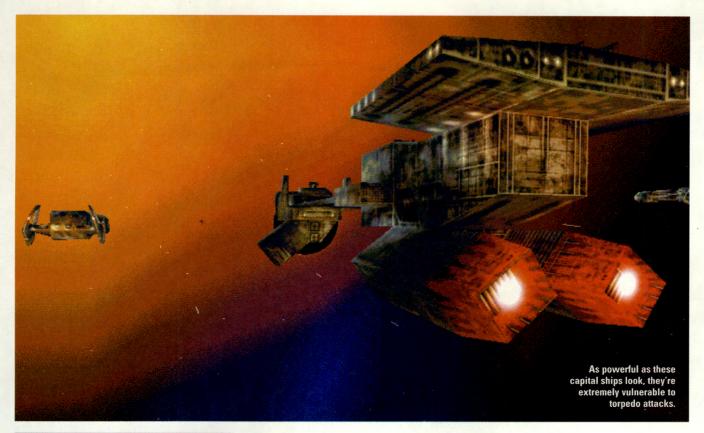
to some of the diversity evident in the less glamorous Tachyon. There are 25 missions in this game and all of them can be filed under one of those categories, or configurations of these three tasks. A typical latestage mission requires you to take out enemy capitol ships by blowing up all the turrets and then escorting torpedo bombers in for their run.

Sure, ship escort is expected; we did it in TIE Fighter, we did it in Wing Commander, and we did it in Freespace, but at least we had other stuff to do, too. The mission design in Starlancer doesn't even come close to the genius behind some of the greatest levels in Tachyon and Freespace 2. There are times when you can see an inkling of inspiration, such as a level where you have to fly stolen enemy bombers into the middle of an enemy fleet



time to shoot some more turrets.





DOWNTIME

A pilot can't always be out there blasting commies. One of the most creative parts of Starlancer happens between the missions. During downtime, you can watch the news, read up on mission debriefings, and even feed your fish. It's nice to have something to help you relax between all those tedious escort missions.



It's so hard to keep fish alive in deep space.



What space action game would be complete without a chance to look at all the pretty medals you've won?

and torpedo their flagship. And there's also a mission where you find yourself accidentally warped into the middle of a huge enemy fleet and have to find a way to get back before being blown to pieces. But there simply isn't enough of that ingenuity.

To compound the lack of originality, some of the missions are insanely difficult. One example is a sortie where you have to defend your carrier from torpedo attacks coming from every direction. The entire mission is spent zooming from one end of the ship to the other, blowing up incoming torps. The first time you attempt it, it's cool, but the by the fifth time, you're ready to throw your joystick out the window.

There was one mission that I played six times before I beat it. Maybe I had a bad day, maybe it was just bad luck, but for some reason, I kept failing, again and again. Now, I'm not new to this genre, and I'd like to think that I'm not a total putz, but there would be times when I'd fail missions and not even know what I did wrong. The difficulty could be forgiven if you were fighting opponents with challenging AI. Instead, it just attempts to overwhelm you with wing after wing after wing of bad guys, and just when you think you're done, another wing comes in.

Despite these frustrations, there are a lot of good things to be said about Starlancer. The production values are certainly top-notch, and the involving story does a good job of immersing you in the

game world. You'll cringe every time you lose a ship because the other pilots will chastise you, and you'll be proud every time you complete an especially challenging mission. Even the hundreds of lines of in-game dialogue will help you through, despite much of it capitulating to stereotypical accents.

The sensation of motion is also very convincing, and the combat is fast and intense. This all makes the lack of creativity in the mission design that much more irritating. Starlancer is a very well-polished game with a good engine and a promising storyline; all it needed to become great was some inspired level design. This could very easily have been an Editors' Choice winner, but the repetitive gameplay and lack of inspiration drag it down to a more mediocre level. When it comes right down to it, I had much more fun playing through Tachyon.

— Li C. Kuo

FINAL VERDICT

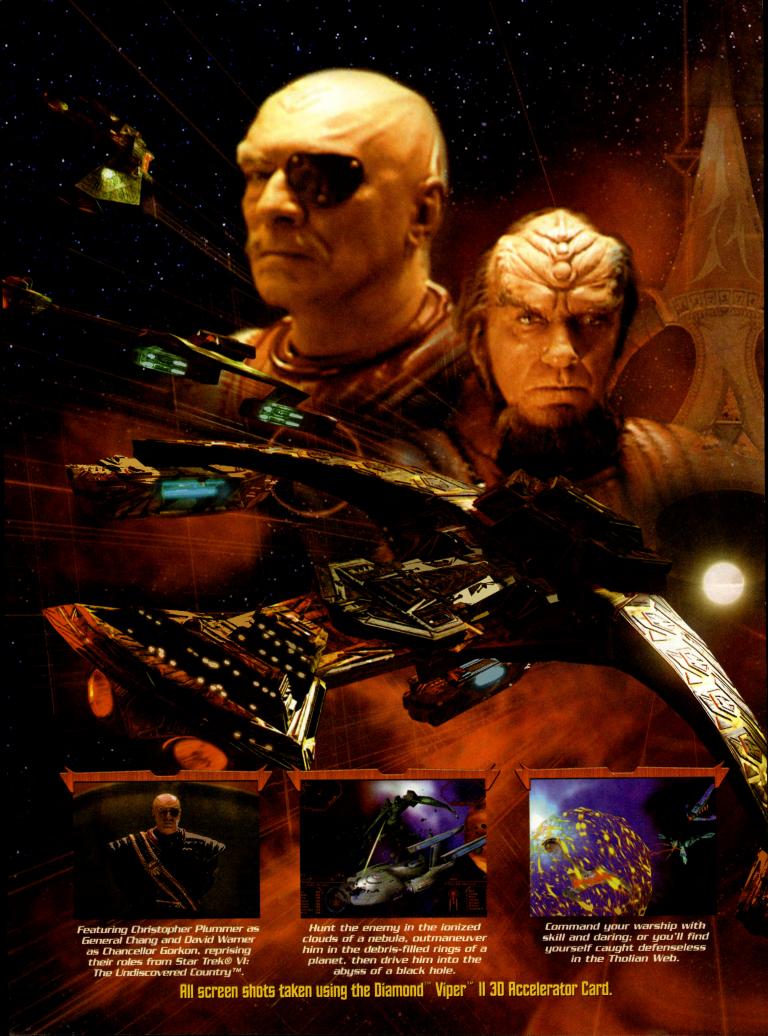
HIGHS: Great graphics; cool cut-scenes; high production value; some good missions.

LOWS: Uninspired design; repetitive gameplay; seems to be just laying the ground work for *Freelancer*.

BOTTOM LINE: Lots of flash, low substance. Try *Freespace* or *Tachyon* for a more fulfilling experience.

PC GAMER

75%



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Messiah

If you were expecting the second coming, you're going to be disappointed — but Messiah is still a fun ride.

t seems like gamers have been waiting for Interplay's Messiah for at least as long as the faithful of several major religions have been waiting for their saviors. After three years in development, you'd think Messiah would be either a total disaster or would usher in a new era in gaming.

Weirdly, Messiah turns out to be a pretty average game.

Set in the distant future, the world of Messiah is a prototypical totalitarian state, where technology is king and humans have become automatons content to slave away at menial tasks. Lording over this dreary world is Father Prime, a cyberpunk version of Big Brother whose word is law to all but the cannibalistic Chots, who live in the sewers and are engaged in a running war with the police. Oh, one other thing: scien-

tists have created a portal to Hell and tricked Satan into wandering through it, at which point they nabbed him and locked him up for study and interrogation. Yep, you read right - mankind has put handcuffs on Old Scratch himself!

That's enough to get anyone's attention, God

included, so the Almighty sends down an oh-so-cute cherub named Bob to take a gander at what Father Prime's minions are up to. Looking like he's just left an audition for a diaper commercial, Bob is completely mortal once he hits Earth - a few bullets or well-placed punches and he's dead, with no return ticket back to Heaven. But Bob has a couple of things going for him, namely a limited flight capability (thanks to those cute little wings on his back) and the power to possess any living creature he encounters. All he has to do is get a running start and literally dive inside a body. That's good, because the cops will fire at Bob on sight - and they'll also fire on anyone they see Bob possess.



You can watch Chot and cop alike do a fiery fandango with just a few sprays from the flame thrower, but don't get too close!

Though Messiah has other nice features going for it - wonderfully detailed scenery, a good array of weapons, and plenty of opportunities for battling against combat-savvy enemies - the ability to possess characters is the linchpin on which the entire game is built. The more you play, the more tricks you learn. By quickly switching bodies, for instance, you can have an entire squad of police wipe each other out, and mastering "host suicide" can ensure the body you just left won't open fire on you. (A good trick is to leap off of a bridge or something so that the host body gets its legs broken and can't pursue you, as you merrily fly away before the body hits the ground.)





The beauty of the Maser's green ribbons of electrosubtractive pulse are matched only by its firepower.



The rocket-propelled harpoon slams into its target and literally nails the victim to the nearest object.

POSSESSION IS 9/10 OF THE LAW



B ob's a pretty small tyke, but even he's not small enough to crawl through some of the vents and tunnels you must navigate to reach new areas of Faktur. Here's a tip: if you see rats running around, the odds are pretty good you should possess one, because it's either necessary to reach a new area (as in this section near the end of the game) or will allow you to travel unnoticed past all enemies.



nly radiation workers can carry radioactive batteries, so hop into one of these guys and pick one up to give those pesky cops a quick and lethal dose of radiation poisoning. It's more effective than walking in with a weapon because they won't suspect you in the least, and it also elicits a nice Easter Egg regarding Half-Life.



h, pressure plates — what action-adventure would be complete without them? The only thing heavy enough to activate several doors in the Military Zone are Armored Behemoths, and luckily Bob can glide right past the armor of these genetically engineered giants and take possession of the beast inside.



To get to the Military Zone, you have to possess a Commander in Club Kyd, but they're all busy. To get there, trade those diapers in for a thong and shake your moneymaker well enough to win the club's dance contest.

The bulk of the game's puzzles are built around possessing the right character at the right time: some have access to restricted areas you need to enter, while others can operate machinery that's just too complicated for poor ol' Bob.

And it does make for some good gaming - but with big inconsistencies. The manual says you must behave as your host would behave (there's a reference to following the other workers to lunch when the whistle blows), but all that really means is not acting in a threatening manner. In a particularly goofy bit of game design, enemy guns have unlimited ammo (all guns dropped by enemies are still loaded to the max when you grab them even though they were just fired), but when you use them, the ammo supply depletes normally.

Though there are some way-cool weapons here, in point of fact you'll wind up using only two or three about 90 percent of the time. In a couple of annoying instances, characters know Bob is inside a host even though they didn't see the possession take place (the Chot guarding the entrance to Old Town is a good example). And while it's a given that these folks are pretty much drones, you'll get sick of hearing each type of character muttering the same stuff as their counterparts over and over again.

You'll also have to endure some tedious platform-gaming sections. A little jumping and flying is fine, especially in the early stages, but there some sequences near the end that feel as if they were tacked on to make the game last longer. I'm sure that more than one player would have preferred that Shiny used the time spent on these



Leap off the edge of a drop-off, then hit the De-possess key as your "host" makes a swan dive of death.

hopping-and-bopping sequences to create an ending that's a little more clever and satisfying than the limp finale.

Messiah might not be the savior of computer gaming, and you could even say it's a one-trick pony — but at least it's a pony that's fun to ride for a while. And if you don't get a charge out of seeing a diaperclad baby defeating the Prince of Darkness, you might have reached the point where nothing's going to satisfy.

- Stephen Poole

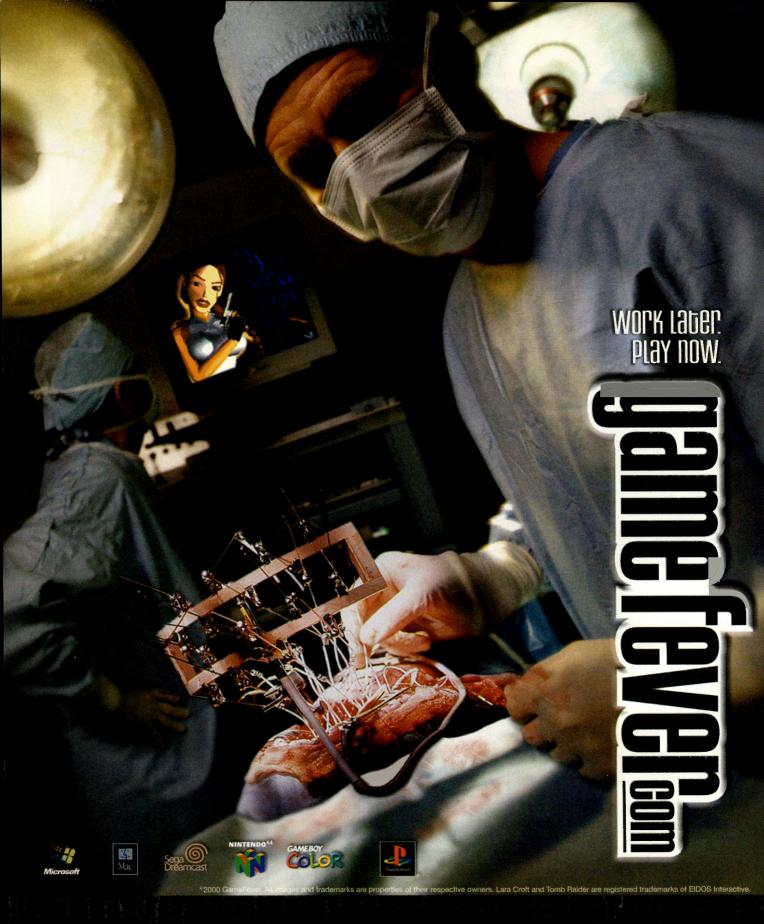
FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Outstanding graphics; possessing people is just plain cool and lots of fun.

LOWS: Slow-paced platform sequences; tedious Al characters; pretty lame ending.

BOTTOM LINE: You won't be as excited near the end as you were at the beginning, but it's a fun ride.







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NER GT Interactive

Imperium Galactica II

This follow-up to a not-sogood original plays more like Master of Orion II — and that's a good thing.

t's almost unfair to compare Imperium Galactica II with its badly received 1997 original. A better comparison would be to Master of Orion II, the classic turn-based space strategy game. Both titles provide roughly the same gameplay—explore the galaxy, consolidate power, research new technology, and pursue diplomacy and war with neighboring empires. IG II goes further, offering even more depth than MOO II, and thus making it a candidate for the new king of the space quest.

IG II lets you play three races in the standalone game: the research-oriented Solarians, the shifty, espionage-prone Shinari, and the combat-oriented Kra'hen. There are five more races with their own designs on the universe, but they only figure in the multiplayer mode or among the ten shorter standalone scenarios. It means less variety, but balance is figured very carefully in IG II.

The visuals are very good, too, with only a few reservations. It's odd that suns don't exist on the starmaps, while planets are stationary in relation to other stellar objects. You can, however, zoom and rotate the game along



Interstellar conflict can be played out in long campaigns or in smaller, stand-alone scenarios.



three axes on planet surfaces or in space, which provides a view of the emerging worlds from any angle you choose.

Sound appears only partially implemented. Some screens give you guttural speech from other races with a voiceover and/or written translation, but the diplomatic screen simply provides a written translation while your contact mouths unheard words.

At its core IG II just adds a bunch of nice tweaks to the usual conventions of space conquest sims. From the diplomacy screen, you can trade information for items, for instance, making knowledge a truly marketable commodity. Your spies increase their rank as they absorb experience, enabling them to accomplish more complex tasks. Spies can also become double agents if captured while lacking a sufficient loyalty rating — a nice touch. With trade, diplomacy, spying, combat, exploration and planetary development all occurring simultaneously in real-time, IG II very sensibly allows you to pause the game while issuing all commands.

3D space combat is definitely one of this game's strengths. The ships look good, and you can pause any time to give fleet-wide, group, or individual unit commands. You can also selectively disengage specific weapons systems, holding back your badass mezongun for a cozy close encounter. I miss ground troops on the planets, however, where all combat is conducted through tanks. Unfortunately, simulated battle is all you'll get from *IG II* in multiplayer mode (where you can't pause or slow down the game speed).

Of course, multiplayer *IG II* ranks right up there on my recommendations list alongside visiting the Lawrence Welk Homestead in North Dakota. But as a single-player strategy epic, *IG II* is well worth the admission price. In an arena lacking many choices, this one gets the job done sufficiently.

— Barry Brenesal

SOME THOUGHTS ON WAR



"I have seen enough of one war never to wish another." Thomas Jefferson 1794



"A great country can have no such thing as a little war." The Duke of Wellington 1815



"War is an act of violence whose object is to constrain the enemy to accomplish our will." von Clausewitz

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Good strategic Al; handy command interface; strong game balance.

LOWS: Simulated combat in multiplayer mode; inconsistent sound: limited variety.

BOTTOM LINE: A strong space strategy game in single-player mode, but has poor multiplayer combat.

PC GAMER

73%

Tachyon: The Fringe

In a sea of some high profile competition, this small star of a game shines brightly.

ith strong competitors such as Digital Anvil's Starlancer and Freespace 2 filling the space combat sim marketplace, NovaLogic's rookie entry will likely get recognition for Army of Darkness star Bruce Campbell's turn as the main character. But it deserves credit for more than just pitching the cult movie hero in the role of the smooth-talkin' freelance starship pilot, Jake Logan. When Jake gets framed for murder and banished to the Fringe (the outskirts of civilized space), the main plot focuses on you rebuilding your reputation and clearing your name.

Along the way, you'll get caught up in an intergalactic struggle between a group of colonists known as the Bora and a powerful corporation called Galspan. At first, you'll be able to fly missions for both groups, but eventually you'll have to choose sides. The two campaigns are drastically different and make for two almost totally different games.

As a member of Galspan, you'll have access to newer ships, more powerful weapons, and state-of-the-art technology. If you throw in with the Bora, you'll have to deal with older ships, and weaker weapons and components. The Bora's advantage is that they're better-armored and more industrious. While neither group is the "bad guy", after beating both campaigns, I felt that flying for the Bora was more fulfilling than flying for the corporate bigwigs at Galspan.

BRUCE IN SPACE

Bruce Campbell is known for having great oneliners, and in Tachyon, he comments when you cheat. Some memorable lines:



- · Oh, I see, it's time to cheat. No, no, don't let me stop you. Hello, you, excuse me sir,
- · Oh, Mr. Cheater, why don't you try to beat the game fair and square?
- · Well, I guess when you're not doing so well you have to cheat, don't you?



Similar to Privateer, you spend time inbetween missions checking job boards for work. However, Tachyon isn't nearly as open-ended as Origin's classic. This game is very linear, and there will never be any confusion about what you need to do. The missions vary from the usual escort/destroy variety to some very unorthodox sorties.

For one job, you must rendezvous with a spy and retrieve some information. But surprise! - when you get to the meet, three ships show up, all claiming to be the spy. To make matters worse, a group of mercenaries appears and says that they've been contracted to kill two of the spies. Now it's up to you to listen to each spy's argument about why he's the one you're looking for and then decide which one to believe, knowing that two people will die. Brilliant!

Multiplayer matches are very creative. In addition to the usual deathmatch setup, Tachyon has a fantastic teamplay mode called Basewars. Each team defends a starbase. The goal is to research new technologies and raise your tech level by harvesting resources. Then you can create a powerful weapon that can destroy the other team's base. The last team left standing wins. Again, brilliant!

Unfortunately, among the diamond moments are some chunks of coal. The biggest stain is the save-game system, or lack of one. Your progress is automatically recorded every time you enter a starbase, but if you want to make a backup of a game, you have to exit to the title screen. It's annoying!



If you have the money, you can hire a good wingman.

Even with its problems, Tachyon is a fine game with solid control and a good story: and Campbell brings real personality to the fray. Tachyon is like a good Saturday morning cartoon: it's a little typical and slightly cheesy, but you just can't help but enjoy it. Here's hoping it doesn't get overlooked.

-Li C. Kuo

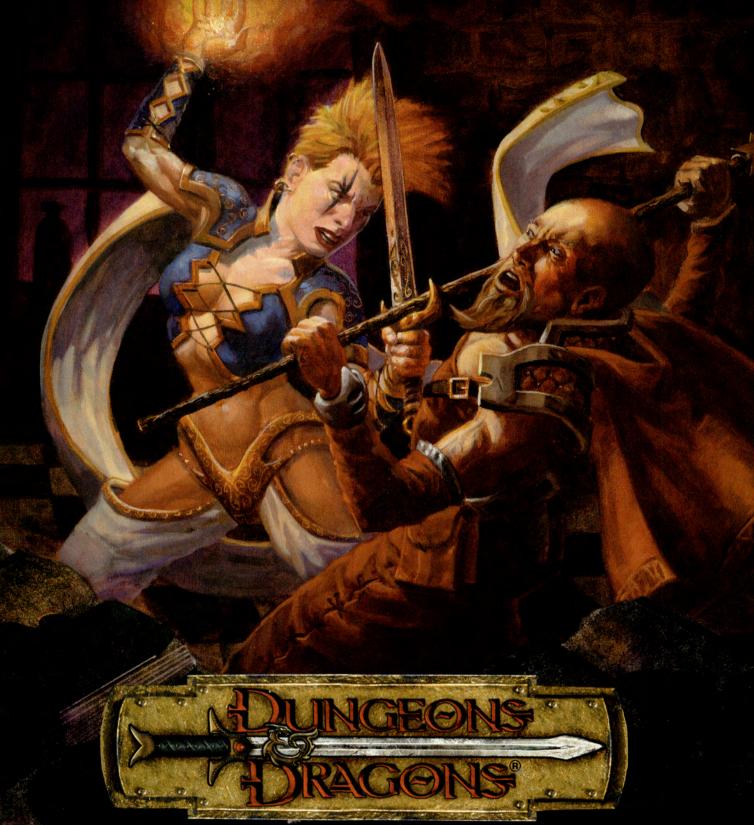
FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Terrific atmosphere; personality; engaging story elements; various original mission ideas.

LOWS: Bad save-game system and interface; a little too linear. Inter-stellar travel is tedious.

BOTTOM LINE: An enjoyable game that will hopefully get the recognition it deserves.

CHALLENGE YOUR PERCEPTIONS





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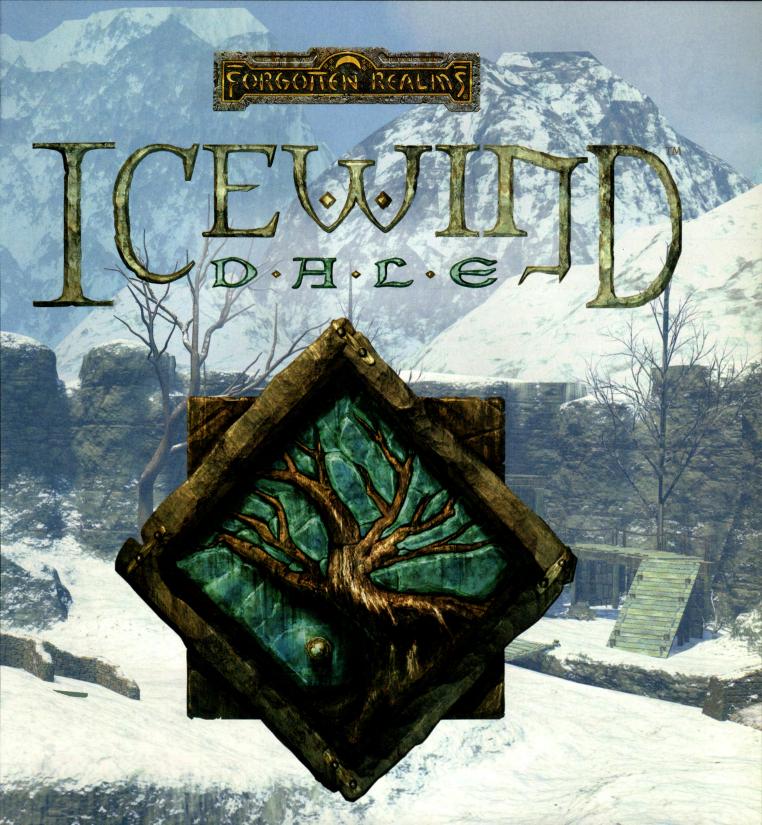
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CATEGORY	Strategy	REQUIRED P200 (266MHz in software mode), 32MB RAM, 600MB hard-drive space
DEVELOPER	Activision	WE RECOMMEND PII 400, 128MB RAM, 3dfx-based accelerator card
PUBLISHER	Activision	MAXIMUM PLAYERS 8

Star Trek Armada

We interrupt this issue for a brief convulsion of Star Trek fandom. We'll return to regular programming in a moment.

he Battle of Wolf 359" was when "Star Trek: The Next Generation" really came into its own. Both episodes in the "Best of Both Worlds" arc finally showcased the previously hinted-at Borg, dared to assimilate the lead character, and gave the phrase "Resistance is Futile" to our cultural lexicon. That battle redefined Star Trek combat for fans everywhere. It also paved the way for Star Trek: Armada, on one hand the most action-packed Trek game yet developed, but at its warp-core, a very generic real-time strategy game. (Did he just say "warp-core"? -Ed.) Its saving grace is that it manages to shoehorn an amazingly diverse amount of Trek concepts into this narrow genre.

Instead of gold or ore, you mine dilithium from small blue planetoids. Instead of mountains, there are impassible nebulae to confine your movements on the map. There are "starship rushes" instead of tank or Zerg rushes.

Armada scores points by offering a wide range of units, special race-unique powers and technologies, a diverse campaign, and endless replay via multiplayer and Instant Action mode. It also succumbs to the genre's most common failings - the computer AI is bad, the pathfinding is awful, and the mission flavor is pure vanilla.

There are five missions for each race and four races, making for a twenty-mission campaign. The Federation campaign is interesting, but only really serves as an intro-

duction. The campaign structure then drags through the chronically uninspired Klingon and Romulan missions. (But the Borg finale is just short of brilliant, and if you win, culminates in the assimilation of Earth itself.)

The developers are obviously Trek fans, and they've crammed four storylines into one game. The problem is we've all seen these stories. Expect time travel to figure; once again the house of Duras teams with Sela of the Romulans to topple the Klingon High Council; the sword of Kahless is a factor; and the Borg are led by a snooty figurehead.



Armada's graphics are first-rate - some of them look as if they were ripped straight from one of the Star Trek movies.

At least the design team managed to throw in everything from the Dominion to Species #9431 into the mix, and they made a lot of obscure Trek technologies available for gameplay. It's great fun to play around with the insidious Romulan Phase Cloak device from the "TNG" episode "The Pegasus" (we knew this guy was a geek -Ed.).

The sound and music are ripped straight from the various series. There's good voice acting from Patrick Stewart (Picard/Locutus), Michael Dorn (Worf), and whoever plays Sela. The graphics are firstrate, and the cinematic view option looks like something you'd see on the big screen.

Unfortunately, Activision should have left this one in spacedock longer. It crashes frequently, especially if you happen to be using a Direct3D-based video card (3dfx cards seem to fare much better). Multiplayer is fun, but lag and dropped connections plague the game to the point of frustration.

Ultimately, all you get is a standard RTS with good graphics and some clever license inclusions. It's for die-hard Trek fans only.

- Andrew S. Bub



FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Graphically rich Star Trek action using tried-and-true RTS design.

LOWS: Unstable and buggy gameplay; poor pathfinding; unoriginal storylines; bad Al.

BOTTOM LINE: Standard, if attractive, strategy game that will appeal only to hardcore Trekkers.

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NASCAR 2000

Sierra had better start watching its rear view mirror, as EA finally steps up with a stock car challenger.

espite monopolizing the sports gaming market for a decade, there is still one pro sport that Electronic Arts hasn't been able to steamroll into submission. Stock car racing on the PC remains the almost exclusive province of Sierra's well-pedigreed NASCAR Racing series. EA, best known for its console treatments of the sport, has never been much more than a speck in Sierra's mirrors.

And lest we forget, the folks at EA still owe racing fans an apology after dumping that unplayable mess called NASCAR Revolution onto retail shelves last year. With the release of NASCAR 2000, we may, perhaps, be about ready to forgive them.

Featuring 18 accurately rendered real-world tracks and more than 30 active NASCAR drivers, NASCAR 2000 certainly carries on the EA tradition of comprehensive game licensing. In addition to the title's official collection of 16 ovals and two road circuits, there are also a half-dozen fantasy courses and seven "Legends" drivers. Gameplay options include full weekend single events (with practice and qualifying sessions) as well as a Quick Race menu, a selection of full or abridged Championship calendars and a "Race Against the King" mode where you take on Richard Petty in ten three-lap events.

EA has also provided a first rate Internet matchmaking service that, although limited

to being able to drive only four cars, offers a silk-smooth online racing environment with no discernable lag or warping.

Optimized for both Direct3D and Glide, N2000 is a visual stunner that boasts some of the most impressive dynamic lighting and shading effects seen in a racing title. When combined with rich track textures and remarkably smooth frame rates, the sensation of pure speed is pretty real. Convincing motion-captured pit crew animations have also been used to great effect and, apart from some cheesy "broken glass" crash effects, the

audio effects are immersive.

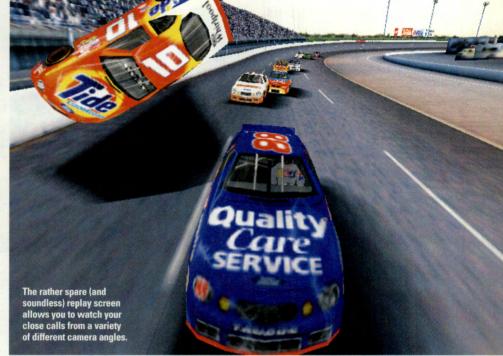
Once you get past its luscious visuals and rich sound however, N2000's sense of realism jumps into the back seat. Although the physics modeling represents a huge step up from Revolution, it really doesn't come close to capturing the proper dynamics of modern stock car racing. Understeer is reasonably wellmodeled, but it is almost impossible to generate an oversteering slide no matter how hard you slam your steering wheel around.

A comprehensive garage menu is included, but a goodly number of the offered adjustments are little more than nonfunctioning placeholders that have no effect whatsoever on the car's performance.

Damage implementation is equally ambiguous and, although the game employs some entertaining crash effects, the decision to employ what can best be described as "velcro" walls that reach out and pull your car to a screeching halt no matter how lightly you brush them was very poorly conceived. Ditto with N2000's highly dubious AI routines.

N2000 offers some fun wheel-to-wheel competition for anyone who appreciates an attractive, relaxed-realism racing game. The Need for Speed crowd will eat it up.

- Andy Mahood





The in-car view is clean and functional, as are the sponsorship decals.

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Cutting-edge graphics; conveys sense of speed; good selection of licensed tracks and drivers.

LOWS: Severely flawed AI routines; unrealistic physics and damage modeling; velcro walls.

BOTTOM LINE: A huge improvement on *Revolution*, but not in the same league as Sierra's NASCAR titles.



70%

REQUIRED P200, 32MB RAM, 545MB hard-drive space, 8MB D3D card WE RECOMMEND PII 450, 64MB RAM

Test Drive Le Mans

The Test Drive series spins out again - it makes us wonder why they keep making these games!

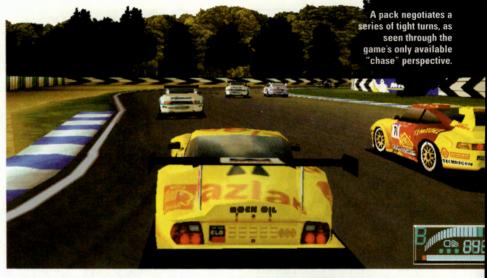
nfogrames' Test Drive series is truly one of life's great mysteries. A stomping ground for incessantly second-rate titles, it nevertheless continues to survive, year after year, and apparently makes a ton of money for the company. This time around, Infogrames has taken a promising but defective British-developed release originally known as Le Mans 24 Hours, renamed it Test Drive Le Mans, and furthered the inauspicious tradition.

Focusing on the legendary 24-hour endurance event that takes place annually in central France, Le Mans is unique in that it offers PC drivers an opportunity to race around the clock in real time. That's one full day, folks - an onerous proposition, complete with multiple pit stops and mechanical failures that most certainly will appeal only to the most dedicated and/or masochistic simmers. Alas, the game lacks the authentic physics, believable racing, and convincing



With no rear view mirrors and erratic Al drivers. you'll never know who's going to rear-end you next.





accouterments that such an undertaking demands, and will fail to hold your interest for an hour, never mind 24 of them.

There are lots of reasons why Le Mans never gets in gear. The physics model is a less than complex bit of programming that lets you take turns with such incredible grip that you'll swear you were on rails. It jitters nicely over bumpy pavement and hydroplanes realistically in wet weather, but otherwise is far too simplistic, fast, and "sticky" for anything but a temporary thrill.

Then there's the little matter of your AI competition. Capable of the same unearthly handling, they'll also smack you when you impede their progress, miraculously increase their speed once you've passed them, and turn in phenomenal qualifying times that guarantee you a last-place grid position. And don't think that a visit to the garage is the answer. Here you'll find oodles of cool telemetry, but few modification options.

At least British developer Eutechnyx had the good sense to offer numerous alternatives to the daylong grind of the Le Mans race. You can compress the big race to just a few minutes or hours, run quick sprints or longer endurance races at any of the game's seven fantasy tracks, or enter a full "Championship" round. Anyone who wants to win the main event will be forced to race here first. because the best cars are kept locked here until you win the right to use them. (Grr.)

Visually, the undeniably pretty environment is blessed with lots of authentic details. But incredibly, Eutechnyx neglected to incorporate rear view mirrors, true cockpit perspectives, or damage effects such as crumpled or broken body work.

TOO BIG A CHALLENGE

C Gamer staffers Jeremy Williams and Dan Morris are typically up for almost anything. And when Le Mans came in, they immediately launched enthusiastic plans to run the entire 24hour Le Mans race over a weekend. Jeremy was to be the driver, and Dan his hard-charging, Robert Duvall-style manager/chatter buddy. The boys proved to have little grit, however, as they gave up this plan shortly after installing the game.

Said Jeremy: "We severely over-estimated our abilities to withstand sub-par PC racing for lengthy endurance runs.

Said Dan: "Basically, we talked the talk and drove nowhere."

Test Drive Le Mans is quite possibly the best title ever to carry the ubiquitous Test Drive moniker, though that certainly doesn't make it a great game. The subject matter dictates a full-on simulation approach, and maybe Eutechnyx and Infogrames will go a bit further in that direction and tie up the many loose ends the second time around.

- Gordon Goble

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Attractive tracks and beautiful lighting effects; authentic subject details.

LOWS: Unrealistic physics; inconsistent, frustrating Al; no rear view mirrors or true cockpit perspectives.

BOTTOM LINE: Shows potential and features undeniable thrills, but has major botches.

REQUIRED P266, 32MB RAM, 150MB hard-drive space WE RECOMMEND PII 333, 64MB RAM, 250MB hard-drive space, invstick

Gunship!

Here's the final military sim from MicroProse — and if this is any indication of what lay ahead, it's just as well.

t was a sad day for combat-sim fans when Hasbro Interactive announced in late 1999 that it would be discontinuing development of military simulations. The flyboys will be even sadder when they hear that MicroProse capped off its legendary run of sim classics with Gunship! — a buggy, spiritless game that earns the distinction of disappointing both hardcore simmers and casual gamers.

The game's linear Campaign mode, which allows you to fly for the Americans, British, Germans, or Russians, conjures the ghost of earlier entries in the Gunship franchise. In the very near future, the Russian Bear awakens from its free-market hibernation and launches a surprise attack against Poland. This gives you the chance to fly one of four choppers: two types of Apaches (AH-64 for Uncle Sam, WAH-64D for the Brits), the Eurocopter Tiger (the German UHT-2 variant), and the Russian Mi-28N Havoc. There's an online tutorial to acquaint greenhorns to helicopter flight and weapons systems, and the

weapons loadout and crew assignment screens are clean and efficient.

Single battles and a "Fly Now" mode (random chopper and mission) are also available, as is a full suite of multiplayer game modes. And if you want more single-player action than the Single Battles and Campaign mode provide,

use the Battle Builder to custom-design your own post-millennium battleground.

Gunship! sports some first-rate scenery graphics. Translucent cockpit displays. authentic smoke trails, and fiery pyrotechnics will be appreciated by one and all. No matter what you fly for, you can choose to play as the pilot or as the copilot/gunner - a realistic touch, since the most important function of the modern helicopter is as a gun platform.

But the game's promise slumps beneath the weight of a lot of critical problems.

The manual is a blathering mess that confuses as often as it informs, and the waypoint system — a convoluted mess too hairy to detail here - is a nightmare that folks will remember for years to come.

Play as the copilot/gunner, and you'll wonder if Zippy the Pinhead is piloting; play as the pilot, and you'll struggle painfully with an insanely touchy collective and tail rotors that only temporarily change your heading.



Every building in the war zone must be packed with high explosives one hit to a silo or farmhouse results in detonations like this one.



A series of online tutorials covers all the basics of flight, target acquisition, and weapons effectiveness.

You swing back to your original heading the moment you release the rudder pedal.

Acquiring targets quickly is essential to survival in combat, but in Gunship! the gunner's view pans as if he's just polished off one too many bottles of cough syrup.

Add in keyboard commands that don't work (none of which can be re-assigned), rockets that sometimes don't launch, a control scheme that uses only four nonconfigurable joystick buttons (and which wastes one of those on panning the view, which is also handled by a hatswitch), and...well, you get the picture.

It's bad enough that MicroProse's reign as King of the Military Simulation had to end. All that's left to wonder now is why it had to end with a such a depressing whimper.

- Stephen Poole



FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Great graphics; good mission-creation system; ability to play as pilot or gunner.

LOWS: Poor pilot Al; keyboard commands don't always work; poor manual; hideous waypoint system.

BOTTOM LINE: A truly disappointing way for MicroProse to cap off its military sim line.

REQUIRED P200, 32MB RAM, 60MB hard-drive space ECOMMEND PII 300, 64MB RAM, 490MB hard-drive space

Ka-52 Team Alligator

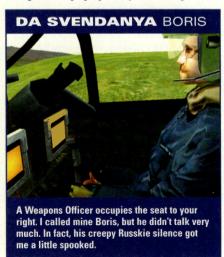
Even though this is the first helo sim out of the gate this year, this alligator doesn't have any teeth.

s one of the first of this season's helicopter-sim factories to get its bird out of the hangar, UK-based developer Simis is hoping to score an early victory with Ka-52 Team Alligator, the follow-up to 1999's Team Apache. Trading in the Apache AH-64 helos from last year's game for some formidable Ka-52 Hokum gunships, Team Alligator gives you the opportunity to fly Russia's most advanced all-weather combat helicopter.

In an effort to give both casual and veteran pilots an equal opportunity with this new machine, Simis has provided a fully scalable flight model for Team Alligator. Advanced simmers can enable options like ground effect, blade stall, and vortex ring state if desired, but even with these switched on, the Hokum is still ridiculously easy to fly.

The flight model feels like it's on rails most of the time and exhibits annoving defects such as an unrealistically stable hover mode, poor collision detection (you can often pass right through your wingman's aircraft), and a large joystick dead-zone. Ka-52's avionics and radar systems have been similarly dumbed down to appeal to a wider audience.

Team Alligator does manage to earn back some valuable style points, however, with its freshly upgraded Direct3D graphics engine. The game's topographically rich background



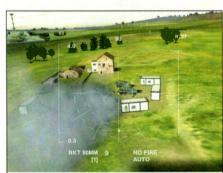


vistas are liberally dotted with lakes, trees, and structures that serve as a perfect environment for high-speed, low-level flight. The ground structure detailing is also quite impressive, but the aircraft themselves aren't quite so blessed. The poor weapons pyrotechnics won't impress veteran sim fans, either.

At its core, Team Alligator is a squadronbased combat helicopter sim that involves pilots in the day-to-day management of up to 16 gunships and their aircrews. You can discipline your troops, assign repair crews to damaged airframes, and issue detailed battlefield orders to your wingmen. Two semidynamic branching campaigns set in the former Soviet Republics of Belarus and Tajikistan are selectable, as are six Siberianbased training sorties, an Instant Action mode and 16 single missions. I was very surprised to discover just how tiny the campaigns were, however, as it only took me six missions to win my first outing in Tajikistan.

The micro-management options are certainly a nice touch, but with less than a week or two's worth of campaign action to look forward to, the game won't last long for most sim fans. Internet multiplayer options offer extra mileage, but with only 16 single co-op missions and four head-to-head scenarios to choose from, the additional play value isn't terribly significant. A mission builder would have been nice, but Simis didn't include one.

Once I was able to overcome its inherent dislike for my system hardware (the game crashed on me every ten minutes until I turned down the hardware acceleration of



A Belarussian truck park learns what it's like to be on the wrong end of a Ka-52 rocket attack.

my soundcard), I wound up getting about a week's worth of measurable entertainment value out of Team Alligator. In the end, this unfortunate shortage of replay ammo will very likely sabotage any real chance the sim has against the rapidly encroaching competition from Hasbro and Empire.

- Andy Mahood

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Superb terrain graphics; comprehensive squad-based micro-management.

LOWS: Short campaigns; simplistic flight model and avionics; poor pyrotechnics and aircraft modeling.

BOTTOM LINE: An attractive but simple sim with very limited depth. Wait for something better.



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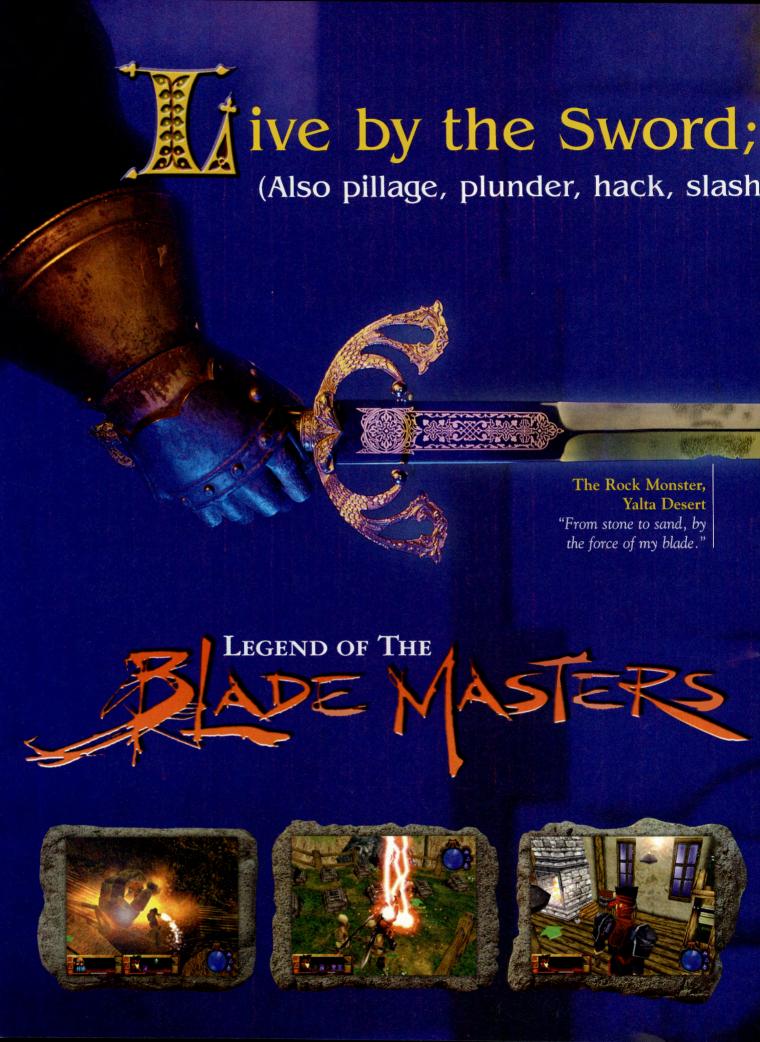
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Die by the Sword.

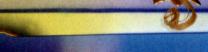
and conquer by the sword.)

Trial of the Worms, Wizard's Cave

"Green is for the precious life that I take from thee."

Date with Queen Arachnid, Elven Forest

"If only her exoskeleton was as tough as her will."



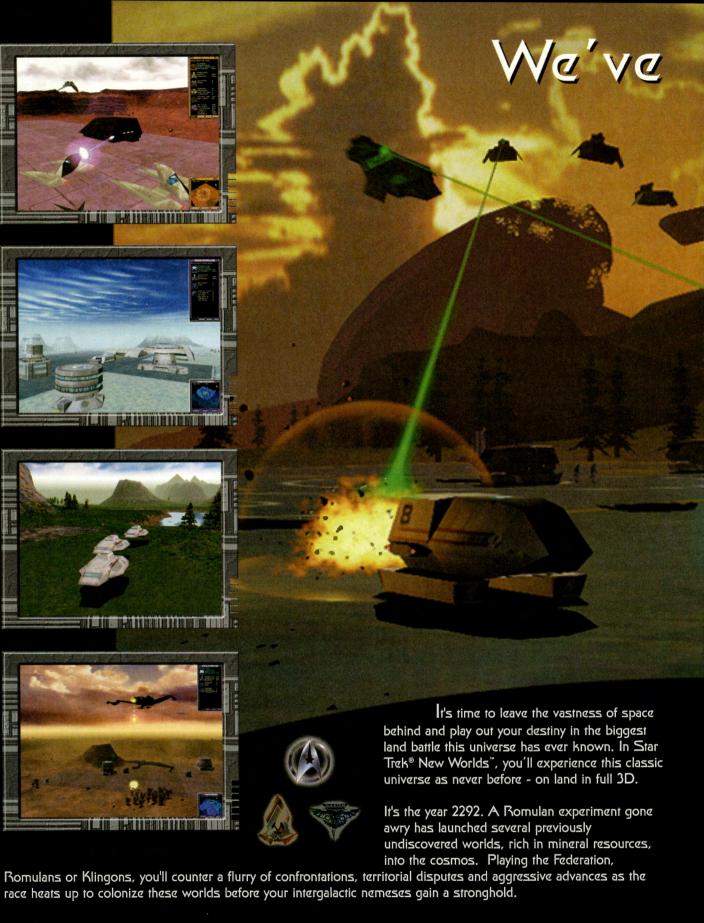
Otanka Onslaught, Kelta "Fire in their bellies hath my strike released."

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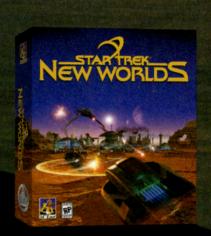




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10SIX

A steep learning curve doesn't ruin an intriguing new online-only persistentworld RTS at HEAT.NET.

n case you didn't know, 10SIX stands for 10 to the sixth power (that's one million) — the number of possible players in this new persistent-world RTS available only on HEAT.NET.

But the first time you load it up and start to play, you might start to come up with other meanings for the moniker — like that it takes a million clicks to get through the menu system, or a million clicks to piece together even the most half-assed base with a few measly units. Once you master the basics, though, you'll begin to appreciate the design elements in 10SIX that require the steep learning curve, and you'll have a blast.

Imagine the first reports of gold in Alaska hitting the papers in the continental U.S. over a century ago and the subsequent rush of fortune hunters to the region, and you've got a good idea of what 10SIX is all about. A planetoid enters our solar system, and it's just chock-full of a new energy source called Transium. Four corporations have switched their science outposts on the planetoid into mining colonies, and they're looking for a million folks to stake claims on the land and start the process that'll turn that precious metal into dollars in their bank vaults.

After choosing which corporation to work for, you select a plot of unclaimed land and begin building your first base. Because you're carrying all your stake material in a backpack — there are no "technology trees" in this game — 10SIX plays unlike any other



RTS I can think of. And to be honest, it initially seems confusing and unnecessary: to build "jitters" (units) such as an armored rover, for instance, you not only must build a rover factory (moving rover jitter from backpack into the Nerve Center), but also Armor and Weapons plants — and then make the rover go pick up those essential items.

While seeming needlessly complex, this design allows you to carry those jitters with you in your backpack, which means when you want to expand, you can carry the makings of an entire base on your back as you zip around the game world on a hoverboard. Your base is safe from attack until you enter an enemy corporation's camp, so you can build to your heart's content, selling Transium on the market and buying "jitter packs" in hopes of getting the one jitter you need.

Eventually, you'll have to think about raiding another player's camp, destroying a building, and claiming the jitters left behind. But doing so opens up your own camp to enemy attack. That's why one of your first

priorities should be to join a Mutual Defense League. When you're notified of a raid on your home base or one of your camps, you can call in some friends to help you beat off the assault.

But this is merely the tip of the iceberg when it comes to all the possible nuances of gameplay. A black market, UN "safe zones," multiple unit commands for rovers and other vehicles — the list goes on, and as the game progresses



This is the sort of welcome you can expect if you enter a fortified base before calling in some help!

and is upgraded, I'm sure things will become even more rich and involved. 10SIX doesn't yield its myriad charms immediately, but this is definitely one instance where patience is indeed a virtue. The subscription to this online-only game is \$9.95 a month, but that's a small price for RTS fans in search of a game world where the importance of social interaction is matched tit for tat by cutthroat competition and combat. This one's definitely worth the initial free trial run, and could become a sneak EverQuest-style success.

Stephen Poole



HIGHS: Comfortable game pace; friendly community; fresh, well-rounded game design.

LOWS: A better manual and a more streamlined user interface could help the rookies.

BOTTOM LINE: RTS fans now have their own persistent, massively multiplayer game to enjoy.





CATEGORY Action/Strategy REQUIRED P200; 40MB RAM; 120MB hard drive space

DEVELOPER Lupine Games WE RECOMMEND PII 200; 64MB RAM

PUBLISHER Wizard Works MULTIPLAYER OPTIONS None

Emergency Rescue Firefighters

You know something is wrong when the pretty art on the box is the best part of the game.

mergency Rescue Firefighters, from our "friends" at Wizard Works, has a really, really cool box. It shows a brave firefighter ready to tackle a blazing inferno of death. It's multilayered and embossed with a cutout of the firefighter up front and raging flames in the back, all outlined with shiny, silver foil. Mmm...shiny, silver foil.

The game, for what it's worth, is an isometric view action/strategy. And that means it's like a terrible real-time *X-COM* with sub-*Sims* graphics that tries to get you caught up in the heroism and bravery of the firefighter. It fails on every level other than the indisputable fact that it's real-time and has an isometric view.

It does have a good box, but since we've mentioned that, here comes all the reasons to point and laugh at this game if you see it on store shelves. First off is the most glaring problem of them all: the game is stupid.

How stupid? Take the AI path-finding (Please! —Ed.). The firefighters run into walls, get stuck on furniture, scamper back and forth down a hallway when you want them to go through a door, and generally make complete asses of themselves. I eventually got stuck on a mission simply because my firefighters were

unable to get from one side of a room to the other in order to rescue a trapped child. I sent in axe-men that could destroy obstacles, but there were no obstacles to be destroyed. After ten minutes of trying to get to the boy, I gave up and decided that my time would be better spent watching my fishtank. There are no fish in my fishtank.

Another problem is the interface. Putting out a fire is usually as simple as clicking on it with your cursor, but sometimes only a tiny part of the fire is clickable, and you have to find the one pixel to click on in the middle of a blazing inferno.

Between missions you can watch newscasts, which consist of the exact same line of audio commentary over and over again, accompanied by a picture of the level you just beat. Now, when I say the exact same line of



This is about as pretty as the graphics get in this game.

audio commentary, I mean it. Every time you see the newscast, you hear, "Earlier there was a fire today, here's footage of the fire earlier today." You can also check poorly written E-mails sent to you from your superiors or civilians who you've just rescued.

On the graphics side, the perspective is the same as *The Sims*, and all control is handled through the mouse. The fire effects are cheesy, and the water effects are unconvincing. Also, there would be times when my firefighters would be shooting their fire extinquishers through the walls.

So much more could've been done with Emergency Rescue Firefighters. I was hoping that you could watch over a city, research new fire-retardant materials and chemicals, hire and train new firefighters, and have access to an array of tools like the Jaws of Life. I wanted to see translucent water, and smoke, explosions from gas lines, and maybe even some heat distortion effects. Then again, I almost never get what I want. Simply put, this is a terrible game, and only the most fun-retardant casual gamer should even consider trying it.

— Li C. Kuo

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Cool box; teaches kids that fire is a bad thing. Did I mention that the box was cool?

LOWS: Bad pathfinding; bad Al; bad graphics; bad voice acting; bad control; bad interface; bad music.

BOTTOM LINE: Play *The Sims* and set your kitchen on fire — it'll be more fun.



24%



Beetle Buggin'

Unfortunately, it takes more than a cutesy title and nostalgic license to make a good racing game.

he People's Car gets its very own game. We're not exactly sure why, though. In any case, Infogrames has seen fit to license the Beetle, the Karmann Ghia, the Thing, and a bunch of other obscure Krautmobiles, and tossed 'em together for a vehicular rumble in the Volkswagen-tastic Beetle Buggin'. Farfvrugamin'!

With more than a dozen Beetle types present, the game's been broken up into multiple events in which you can burn rubber. The most traditional is Speed Mode, where you go up against other Beetles on a number of circuits. There's not much driving technique to be used here — just follow a straight racing line and remember to brake occasionally. And as long as you're not holding down the accelerator, the cars turn on a dime (a most non-Beetle Bug-like behavior).

Buggy Mode is a bit more strategic, as you jet over both sand and asphalt in the same track. Cross Mode is one of the more challenging events, featuring dirt tracks, a strong emphasis on power-slides, and AI that cheats like an utter bastard.

Sometimes you just can't believe how blatantly the AI is screwing you over. No lead is safe thanks to these nitro-powered POS

LAP TIME

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Great care has been paid to render authentic Volkswagen Beetle models.

comeback artists. It can be more than a bit frustrating to cope with.

We've also got the relatively shallow Jump Mode, involving high-speed leaps off ramps with the aid of a nitro booster. Even less enjoyable is the frustrating Monster Mode, where you drive a sluggish VW Bus through a timed obstacle course.

While the gameplay varies from decent to exasperating, the engine that developer Xpiral has put together displays everything in style, managing to look good and maintain playable frame rates in both hardware

and software. Track scenery is top-notch and makes for some very pretty drives. The 1960s-style art direction isn't too shabby, with good use of color and texture. Unfortunately, the "colorful" soundtrack was recorded in the depths of hell by Satan himself, combining cheesy surf guitar with even cheesier organ music. Mute button, please.

It's hard for me to recommend Beetle Buggin'. It's simply an average game, and there are plenty of above-average PC racers that are more deserving of your



The Challenge Mode sends you head-to-head with buddies in multiplay...if you can find any, that is.

buck, even if you're a complete Beetle freak. It takes a lot more than Beetle nostal-gia to drive a product off the shelves. Oh, and P.S., the game's French.

- Colin Williamson

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: A veritable encyclopedia of classic Beetle cars for enthusiasts of the brand; good graphics.

LOWS: No technique required; game Al cheats incessantly; terrible soundtrack.

BOTTOM LINE: A very average racer that never capitalizes on its license.





Back when I was a child, all I ever wanted was a VW dune buggy. Actually, that's a lie. I really wanted a Scotch Terrier named Ralph.

CATEGORY Real-time strategy REQUIRED P200, 32MB RAM, 215MB hard-drive space

DEVELOPER Haemimont WE RECOMMEND PII 350, 64MB RAM

PUBLISHER Talonsoft MAXIMUM PLAYERS 8

Tzar

This is a fresh break from the chain of real-time strategy clones, even if it doesn't look like a million bucks.

t's sometimes tough to tell real-time strategy games apart, and the arrival of a new historical RTS game is rarely cause for celebration. So I'm happy to report that *Tzar* is one of the most distinctive games to come out since the RTS craze began.

The essence will be familiar to any Age of Empires veteran, but with a fantasy bent. You send out peasants to gather resources, construct walls and siege towers, ships, and infantry. So far, it's all very standard.

Things get interesting when you join one of the four guilds, whose benefits give your fledgling society its future direction. The Merchant Guild, for instance, provides free resources, increases your population limit, and permits loans, gambling, and bribery. The Warriors' Guild enables you to hire well-trained heroes and mercenaries, and build siege structures, etc. Other Guilds emphasize religion and magic.

Tzar also provides three "civilizations" whose distinctions affect everything from the strength and cost of troops to the researchable technologies in buildings. Only the Asians can churn out Shao-Lin monks, which train other forces, improving their battle skills. Only the Arabians produce coveted



Mage Workshops that generate magical items. And only European mages can research the invisibility spell, or invoke the stone golem, *Tzar's* most powerful unit.

All this architecture, the varied units, costs and relationships, guilds, race, and technological distinctions create a strategic complexity that leaves most of the competition in the dust. It also cries out for a good manual — a cry that went unheeded in the case of *Tzar*.

You'll need to get up to speed quickly, because *Tzar*'s AI is among the best and most honest in the business. There is no

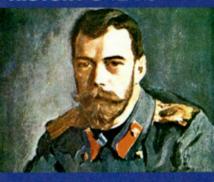
room for rookie mistakes here. I used a cheat to watch the enemy at various stages in several games, and was impressed by its lack of additional resources and the employment of an almost fiendishly human variety of good strategies.

The downside to *Tzar* is the graphics, which are nothing special and look pretty much like every other RTS game out there. A title with gameplay this good deserves better.

Still, *Tzar* is an entertaining, if not revolutionary, strategy game.

- Barry Brenesal





The actual tzars of historical Russia were not nice fellows. Take this guy, for instance — Tzar Nicholas. He was a louse. Everything was always "Me, me, me, me, me." Do you think he cared about the common Russian rabble? He couldn't be bothered. He was just a big meanie. That big old meanie-head.

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Strategically complex; interesting Guild structure; very smart Al.

LOWS: Graphics are bland and unoriginal; terrible manual will leave gamers guessing.

BOTTOM LINE: Despite its rough edges, a deep and entertaining real-time strategy game.

PC GAMER

78%



Upgrading your defensive towers to stone makes sense, especially when the enemy plans to arrive with dragons.

CATEGORY Sports	REQUIRED P166, 32MB RAM, 65MB hard-drive space
DEVELOPER Treyarch	WE RECOMMEND PII 300, 64MB RAM, 155MB hard-drive space
PUBLISHER EA Sports	MAXIMUM PLAYERS 2

Triple Play 2001

ne of the definitions for the word irony in Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary is: "incongruity between the actual result of a sequence of events and the normal or expected result." This description fits EA's latest baseball game, Triple Play 2001, perfectly — a title that claims to deliver the most exciting elements of baseball winds up being almost

Catcher B KIKING DEDOM PERO

Here's a shocking development — McGwire just hit one into the bleachers!

as dull as vice president Al Gore reading from the phone book...in Latin.

What EA Sports doesn't seem to understand is that the beauty of baseball lies more in its subtlety, not in watching fireworks go off after a fifth consecutive moon-shot over the center field wall. Sure, the home run is a great part of the game, but so is the strategy behind every pitch, the making of a great

defensive play, or the taking of the extra base because of an outfielder's slight mishandling of the ball. *Triple Play 2001* gives us only one very small slice of an enormous pie, thanks to a miserable pitcher-batter interface, unresponsive fielding controls, and a total lack of realism with regard to player size and speed in relation to the dimensions of the field.

These shortcomings ensure that the single-player game becomes a

complete bore rather quickly. Even the home run derby mode loses its thrill after 10 minutes. On the plus side, the individual batter and pitcher animations, combined with the players' real faces, do a pretty good job of making the game at least look authentic on occasion. Sadly, though, the fielding and running animations have not improved at all and still look completely ridiculous at times.

The saving grace of *Triple Play 2001* is its online play. Through EA Sports' meeting center (easily accessed when you start the game up), the games I played were very smooth, and playing against a human is infinitely more enjoyable than going up against the horrendous artificial intelligence supplied by the computer opponent. But even that doesn't redeem the disappointing irony.

- Rob Smolka



CATEGORY	Sports	REQUIRED 386 (really), 4MB RAM, 20MB hard-drive space
DEVELOPER	Markus Heinsohn	WE RECOMMEND 80MB hard-drive space
PUBLISHER	Markus Heinsohn	MAXIMUM PLAYERS 2

Out of the Park

arkus Heinsohn is a 22-year-old German kid who likes baseball and programming. Scratch that. He really likes baseball and programming.

Along with co-developer Steve Kaffrey, Heinsohn created this DOS program, Out of the Park, which may well be the most comprehensive statistical baseball sim ever made.

Being a DOS application that runs under Windows, you shouldn't expect great visuals. Actually, there's pretty much nothing on screen but names and numbers. However, the rabid fans of statistical sports sims don't need graphics. They need addictive managerial gameplay and an authentic stats package — and they'll get both from *Out of the Park*, which is available at www.ootp.net.

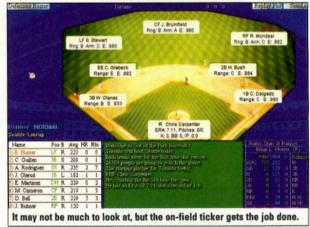
As an exhaustive statistical playground, OOTP is pretty much unrivaled. Competing games like Baseball Mogul and Diamond Mind Baseball offer convincing teammanagement games, but neither of them feature a depth of statistical possibility

quite like OOTP. Over the course of a season, you will have options to explore stats you didn't even know existed (such as percentage of doubles and triples from either side of the plate for switch hitters!).

There is such a wealth of detail, in fact, that you would never be able to examine them all on even a sim-weekly basis and still find time to play the ballgames.

The on-field action, which you observe through a running text ticker, feels right. What feels even better is the brilliant minor-league player development package. It became almost as addicting to manage the prospects in their bush leagues as it was to steer the destiny of the Big Club.

The big flaw: AI in the computer's trades. Sometimes, the trades just make no sense, and computer-controlled teams seem too eager to trade stars for shady



prospects. *OOTP* is also missing some of the entertaining financial and stadiummanagement features that give *Baseball Mogul* a little extra oomph.

As a stats package, though, *OOTP* is probably unbeatable. Hardcore baseball simmers will love this kid's handiwork.

- Daniel Morris



REQUIRED P200, 32MB RAM, 50MB hard-drive space WE RECOMMEND PII 266, 64MB RAM LOPER Boku Strategy Games MAXIMUM PLAYERS 2 (play by E-mail only)

Armies of Armageddon: WDK-2K

eware the post-apocalyptic setting: Armies of Armageddon is a strategy game pitting civilized terraforming corporations against hordes of well-armed indigenous savages collectively known as "Grunts" in a. ahem, post-apocalyptic setting. Like the under-rated Warhammer games, it's derived from a miniatures tabletop system that's been around for a long, long time.

It wears that heritage proudly. Gameplay is rock solid; all the rules-tweaking and refinements have been ironed out over its years in a different market, and the basic mechanics are deceptively easy to master. It's turn-based, of course, with factors like unit facing, arcs of fire, unit stance (offensive or defensive), lines-of-sight, ammo supply, and varying levels of skill and morale all lending

considerable subtlety.

This makes for a leisurely, thoughtful, chess-like atmosphere. If you're looking for fast action and tank rushes, this is not the game for you. If you're not in the right mood, the deliberate tempo, stolid conventions, and generally drab graphics might be a turn-off.

But if you are in the mood, you'll enjoy the extremely challenging 30game campaign, with scenarios ranging from

simplistic tutorial patrols to monstrously complex street-battles involving armored vehicles and Biker Marines. I'm no slouch at this sort of thing, but I was impressed by the AI and by the sheer cleverness of many scenario designs (translation: the Colonel got his butt kicked repeatedly).

Good as the packaged game is, though, the heart of the product is found in its Wargame Developers Kit. If you've always hankered to try your hand at scenario design, this kit makes it about as easy as it can be. Basically, everything can be changed: stats, map tiles, weapons, even sounds. Clear instructions are found in the manual.

So for a fantastic wargame and wargame development kit all in one, Armies of Armageddon is well worth your money.

- William R. Trotter



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Oon't let the simple	graphics fool you — this is one fun li	ttle game.

CATEGORY	Strategy	REQUIRED P166, 32MB RAM, 60MB hard-drive space
DEVELOPER	Deep Red	WE RECOMMEND PII 350, 64MB RAM, 200MB hard-drive space
PUBLISHER	Hasbro/MicroProse	MAXIMUM PLAYERS 8

Risk II

ho needs another board game that wasn't imaginatively recreated on the PC? The original Risk would seem to be an ideal candidate for computerized transformation. It minimizes luck and emphasizes both multiplayer interaction and the strategic placement of armies. The command set is so simple that even your local Channel Four Daybreak news anchor can grasp it.

In Risk II - which I suppose should be a PC-specific, better kind of Risk - the selection of AI-controlled opponents is good, with each possessing a unique combination of aggressiveness, unpredictability, and vindictiveness for treaty-breaking, etc. The game supports up to eight human players across a LAN, on the MSN Gaming Zone, or via hotseat play.

I guess that's all you need for a game. But what about the stuff that could have been done? How about a world builder to generate new, randomized but Risk-suitable

worlds? How about an opponent editor for the creation of new enemy profiles with in-depth AI options? At the very least, what about images for each AI opponent, preferably partnered with animations and voices,

taunting, offering and rejecting alliances?

Aside from not taking advantage of the multimedia medium, the sins are compounded with unresolved compatibility issues. It ran without incident on a P166 (well, plodded along is a more accurate description) that used an ancient S3 Vision 968 card, but refused to load on a PII 450 with either an updated Viper V550 or a 3D Monster II. Hasbro's tech folks spent two hours trying to resolve this problem for me, without success.

Risk II tries to cloak itself in roleplaying garb, but the fabric's thin. The game's



Unfortunately, the multimedia aspects of the game don't get much more exciting than this. The Risk legacy deserves much better.

inherent abstract nature - its generic units, unmodified die rolls, lack of animated personality for opponents - leeches it of visceral excitement. The AI is good, but that's not enough to bring this board game favorite to life for computer gamers.

- Barry Brenesal





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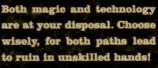
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AREA 51: AURORA

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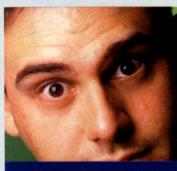






"The Vede"

HSCONTENTS



It Has Begun!

(fade-in techno soundtrack)

Just when you thought it was safe to go out and buy a 3D accelerator, things are getting confusing again. Both 3dfx and NVIDIA are launching new products, and ATI should be following suit a couple months from now with one of the most impressive pieces of hardware we've ever seen (on paper, at least). To give you a head start on your decision making, we've gotten our hands on two beta boards — NVIDIA's GeForce2 GTS and 3dfx's Voodoo5 5500 AGP. If you're going into this race with a predetermined favorite, you'd be doing yourself a disservice if you didn't read our preview and preliminary benchmark results before you choose, just so you know for sure what you're getting yourself into

As for other goings-on in the hardware world, Hypersonic PC sent us a dandy little 1GHz Athlon for review this month, and the thing really smokes! It's difficult to believe that six short months ago we were all playing on 33MHz 486s...well, I was playing on a 486 six months ago, so shut up! Okay, so maybe I messed with my timeline a bit for dramatic effect, but you get the idea; it wasn't that long ago when we were all using much slower computers. Yes, it's a brave new world out there folks, and PC Gamer and the Hard Stuff will be your guide through it all!



HSPREVIEWS

THE HARDWARE DATING GAME: WHICH CARD IS BEST? PAGE 120 NVIDIA and 3dfx battle it out once again, and we've got the inside scoop. Both companies have new 3D cards that will be on shelves as you read this. We test the beta boards and take a closer look.

HSREVIEWS

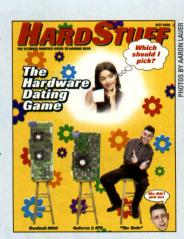
HYPERSONIC SONIC BOOM COMPUTER	PAGE 122
It's been more than a year since we tested our last Hypersonic sys	stem. Is the
new one se nord se the last?	

S3 MONSTER SOUND MX 400 Now that Aureal is making its own sound cards (or going out of business, depending on whom you talk to), S3/Diamond's latest sound card isn't using any Aureal chips. Will this be a hindrance?

HSTECHO&A

SHORT BUT SWEET

Ever wonder what happens when you mix one part genius with two parts moron? That's right, you get PC Gamer Technical Editor Greg Vederman. He'll answer your tech questions and your personal problems all on the same page! What a boob!



We Rate the Hard Stuff

You've been around long enough to know the greatest technology doesn't mean a thing unless it improves the games you love to play. Our reviews focus on real-world testing, but when a number is in order for comparis we use the benchmarking tools developed by our hardware-frenzied sister publication Maximum PC. Between our testing and the BenchMarks, you'll get the straight story

HSTRINITY

Welcome to a BRAVE NEW WORLD

So you want to build a new PC, huh? As you may know, it can be a tricky affair. Luckily, Hard Stuff editor Greg Vederman is here to help you select the best parts for the job. The prices listed below reflect the lowest prices we could find as we went to press (obtained almost entirely from www.pricewatch.com).

ENTRY-LEVEL SYSTEM

CASE: Addtronics 6890A\$100
PROCESSOR: Intel Celeron 533MHz PPGA\$103
MOTHERBOARD: A-Bit BE6\$102
MEMORY: 128MB PC-100 SDRAM\$83
PPGA (SOCKET 370) CONVERTER: AB-RS370\$15
CD-ROM/DVD-ROM: Hi-Vat 6X Pioneer DVD- ROM drive w/software DVD decoding \$115
FLOPPY DRIVE: Samsung 3.5" 1.44MB\$8
HARD DRIVE: 10.2GB Maxtor DiamondMax 6800\$97
SOUND CARD: Creative Labs SBLive! Value
MODEM: 3COM #5685 56K v. 90\$85
MONITOR: 17" Optiquest Q71\$170
VIDEO CARD: 3dfx Voodoo3 3000\$89
JOYSTICK: Logitech WingMan Digital\$17
GAMEPAD: Microsoft Sidewinder Gamepad\$23
SPEAKERS: Labtech LCS-2414\$35
KEYBOARD: Addtronics\$15
USB MOUSE: Logitech or Microsoft\$39

TOTAL\$1,132

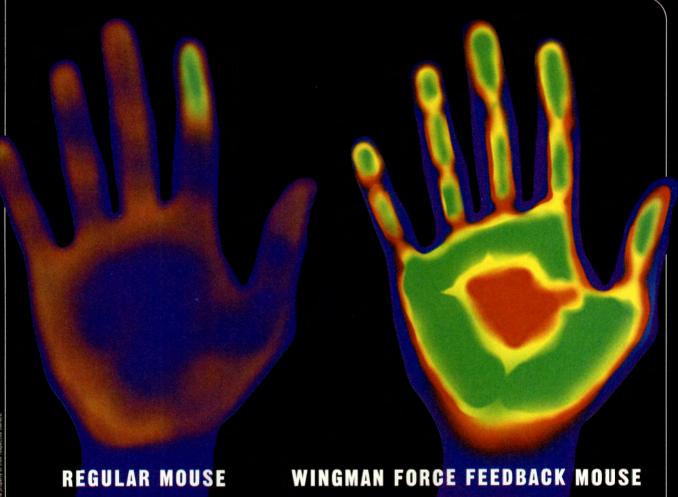
MID-RANGE SYSTEM

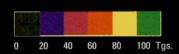
PRICE: ROUGHLY \$1,800
CASE: Addtronics 6890A\$100
PROCESSOR: Intel Pentium III 700MHz
\$338
MOTHERBOARD: Asus P3C-E\$166
MEMORY: 128MB PC-100 SDRAM \$83
CD-ROM/DVD-ROM: Creative Labs Encore 8X with Dxr3\$189
FLOPPY DRIVE: Samsung 3.5" 1.44MB\$8
HARD DRIVE: 16.8GB Maxtor DiamondMax\$131
SOUND CARD: Creative Labs SBLive! MP3+
MODEM: 3COM #5685 56K v. 90 \$85
MONITOR: 19" Optiquest Q95\$301
VIDEO CARD: Creative Labs 3D Blaster TNT2 Ultra\$148
JOYSTICK: Microsoft Sidewinder Precision Pro
GAMEPAD: Microsoft Sidewinder Gamepad\$23
SPEAKERS: Cambridge SoundWorks FPS 1000
KEYBOARD: Addtronics\$15
USB MOUSE: Logitech or Microsoft\$39
TOTAL\$1,818

HIGH-END SYSTEM

PRICE: \$3,000 AND ABOVE
ASE: Addtronics 6890A\$100
ROCESSOR: Intel Pentium 866MHz \$843
MOTHERBOARD: Asus P3C-E\$166
MEMORY: 256MB RDRAM\$1,105
D-ROM/DVD-ROM: Pioneer HDVD10AS- 00R1 10X DVD-ROM with MPG2 card\$259
LOPPY DRIVE: Samsung 3.5" 1.44MB\$8
IARD DRIVE: Maxtor 40GB Ultra 66 EIDE\$238
SOUND CARD: Creative Labs SBLive! MP3+
MODEM: 3COM #5685 56K v.90\$85
MONITOR: 19" Optiquest Q95\$301
VIDEO CARD: NVIDIA GeForce 256-based card with DDR RAM (e.g. Guillemot 3D Prophet DDR)\$211
OVSTICK: Saitek X36 Flight Control System (USB)
GAMEPAD: Microsoft Sidewinder Gamepad \$23
SPEAKERS: Klipsch ProMedia v.2-400\$249
(EYBOARD: Microsoft Natural Keyboard Pro\$75
JSB MOUSE: Original IntelliMouse with IntelliEye technology\$55
TOTAL\$3,883







Representation of super-ultrasensical nerve engagement in the localized metacarpal region (in tactograms).†

† This is gibberish, meant to illustrate the incredible features of the WingMan Force Feedback Mouse. Super-ultrasensical isn't a word. Metacarpal is. It means hand. And tactograms? Again, not a word. But it sounds cool.









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Introducing the WingMan Force Feedback Mouse. The first and only mouse that lets you feel what you're playing while you're playing it.





The Battle for 3D Supremacy **Begins Anew in 2000**

NVIDIA and 3dfx want to push games into new dimensions with their upcoming cards

he PC 3D accelerator market is in many ways similar to the world of gaming consoles. In both cases, two front runners are vying for the number one position (3dfx versus NVIDIA on the PC, and Sega versus Sony on the console front), and in both markets, power occasionally shifts from one company to the other, depending on the generation of hardware at hand. In the console wars, Sony, Sega, and Nintendo are constantly fighting, not just for the number one spot, but also for the number two position since, traditionally, gamers seem to only want a "two horse" race.

The battles fought for PC accelerator supremacy have become much less interesting in recent years. As much as both 3dfx and NVIDIA have both been fighting hard to reach the top, NVIDIA has beaten 3dfx to the summit so many times in recent history that we've begun to think of 3dfx — the company largely responsible for starting the 3D craze — as the underdog.

But with each new generation of hardware comes new hope from both camps, and new excitement for gamers. Both 3dfx and NVIDIA are launching new 3D accelerators that should be on shelves by the time you read these words. As we go to press, we weren't able to get final hardware or drivers for the Voodoo5 5500 AGP or the GeForce2 GTS, but we were able to test the beta products. So, if you're one of those impatient few who simply can't wait for our full reviews next month, this preview should give you a pretty good indication of what to expect from these two new 3D accelerators.

GeForce2 GTS reference board

PERFORMANCE

200MHz Core Clock Speed 32MB 166MHz DDR Memory (effectively 332MHz) 1.6 GigaTexel Fill Rate 25 Million+ Triangles Per Second

KEY FEATURES

Per-Pixel Shading **8 Texels Per Clock Cycle Hardware Anti-Aliasing Double Data Rate (DDR) Memory** AGP 4X (backward compatible with AGP 2X and 1X) 32-hit Color 32-bit Z-buffer/stencil Large Texture Support (up to 2,048 x 2,048) **DirectX Texture Compression** Complete DirectX and OpenGL Support



GEFORCE2 GTS: These two shots from QIII show FSAA turned off (top), and FSAA turned on (bottom). The effect is even more impressive when you see the game in action.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Ordinarily, each year NVIDIA brings a new 3D architecture (e.g. GeForce) to the market, and then six months later that core architecture is shrunk down in die size and sped up (e.g. the jump between TNT and TNT2). In the case of the GeForce, NVIDIA did more than just simply tweak and tune the architecture - it actually added some features, too. Whereas the original GeForce clocked in at 120MHz with 150MHz DDR/SDR memory, the GeForce2 GTS has picked up an additional 80MHz for its core and 16MHz for its memory. The guts of the GPU have been beefed up as well, to a new high of 25 million-plus triangles per second. In addition, the GeForce2 GTS card comes equipped with new pixel shaders that will allow the games of tomorrow to produce surfaces such as rock, wood, and water in a more visually accurate manner.

Feeling the heat of 3dfx's full-scene anti-aliasing, NVIDIA has also added its own hardware AA feature to the package, working in both D3D and OpenGL in just about every game under the sun.

Voodoo5 5500 AGP

PERFORMANCE

Two VSA-100 Processors 166MHz Core Clock Speed 64MB 166MHz SDRAM 667 MegaTexel Fill Rate 11 Million Triangles Per Second

KEY FEATURES

Full-Scene Hardware Anti-Aliasing

T-Buffer Motion Blur

T-Buffer Depth-of-Field Blur

T-Buffer Soft Shadows

T-Buffer Soft Reflections

AGP 4X (backward compatible with AGP 2X and 1X)

32-bit Color

32-bit Z-buffer/stencil

Large Texture Support (up to 2,048 x 2,048)

FXT1 and DirectX Texture Compression

Complete Glide, DirectX, and OpenGL support

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

NVIDIA and 3dfx have always marched to the beat of a different technological drum. While NVIDIA thinks the wave of the future is hardware T&L (transform and lighting), 3dfx believes that its T-Buffer, including such effects as hardware-enabled full-scene anti-aliasing, is more important. As such, there is no T&L engine to be found on any of the upcoming Voodoo4 and 5 cards - including the Voodoo5 5500 previewed here. Instead, every Voodoo5 packs the power of full-scene anti-aliasing, which goes a very long way in removing the "jaggies" you're accustomed to seeing in your 3D games. The beauty of this feature is that it works, right out of the box,

HSPREVIEWS

with just about all of your old and new games — that's right, games don't need specific code to take advantage of this feature. Pop in just about any old Glide-, D3D-, or OpenGL-based game, and the feature is there if you want it. Also — and this is a biggie — the new Voodoo line now supports not only true, 32-bit color, but large textures, too. So, for the first time in a long while, games look very good on Voodoo.

While we're looking only at the Voodoo5 5500 AGP in this preview, expect the Voodoo5 5000 PCI, Voodoo5 5500 PCI, and Voodoo5 6000 AGP to be available in the very near future. Similar in theory, but different in implementation, all of the Voodoo5s have at least two VSA-100 chips working together, much like the SLI-enabled Voodoo2s of yesteryear.





VOODOO5: Although the Voodoo5 5500 actually has two different FSAA settings (2x and 4x), the most dramatic way of showing off the feature is looking at a before and after shot — no FSAA (left) and 4x FSAA enabled (right).

Who cares			3D	QUAKE III ¥¥								
about features?		800	k 600			1,024	x 768					
Let's see those numbers!	3D MARK	GAME 1 [†] in frames per second	GAME 2 ^{T†} in frames per second	FILL RATE*	3D MARK	GAME 1 [†] in trames per second	GAME 2 ^{t†} in frames per second	FILL RATE*	640 x 480	800 × 600	1,024 x 768	1,600 × 1,200
GeForce2 GTS reference board	5,921	LOW DETAIL 125.9 MID DETAIL 90.2 HIGH DETAIL 43.5	LOW DETAIL 116.4 MID DETAIL 73.4 HIGH DETAIL 44.1	544.2	4,239	LOW DETAIL 83.7 MID DETAIL 60.0 HIGH DETAIL 28.4	61.5	491.5	AA OFF 110.5 AA ON 47.5	97.6 97.6 AA ON 26.0	AA OFF 68.3 AA ON 15.6	26.7 26.0 AA ON Failed
Voodoo5 5500 AGP beta board Anti-Aliasing OFF	3,771	LOW DETAIL 77.4 MID DETAIL 50.3 HIGH DETAIL 19.1	LOW DETAIL 90.0 MID DETAIL 49.5 HIGH DETAIL 28.0	382.9	3,250	LOW DETAIL 67.6 MID DETAIL 46.3 HIGH DETAIL 19.1	LOW DETAIL 63.5 MID DETAIL 46.2 HIGH DETAIL 28.1	418.3	AA OFF 81.3 AA ON 	AA OFF 79.3 AA ON	AA OFF 62.2 AA ON	AA OFF 24.3 AA ON
2x (medium quality) Anti-Aliasing ON	2,642	LOW DETAIL 51.6 MID DETAIL 37.2 HIGH DETAIL 16.6	LOW DETAIL 47.6 MID DETAIL 39.7 HIGH DETAIL 27.5	184.0	1,741	LOW DETAIL 32.1 MID DETAIL 23.6 HIGH DETAIL 11.6	28.7 MID DETAIL 26.6	181.0	AA OFF AA ON 69.5	AA OFF AA ON 36.9	AA OFF AA ON 30.9	AA OFF AA ON 10.2
4x (high quality) Anti-Aliasing ON	1,160	LOW DETAIL 21.3 MID DETAIL 15.8 HIGH DETAIL 7.7	LOW DETAIL 18.9 MID DETAIL 17.3 HIGH DETAIL 15.6	71.6	612	LOW DETAIL 11.8 MID DETAIL 8.8 HIGH DETAIL 4.4	9.7 MID DETAIL 8.6 HIGH DETAIL 7.8	63.7	AA OFF AA ON 37.2	AA OFF AA ON 20.3	AA OFF AA ON 10.9	AA OFF AA ON Failed
		2000: Tests run	in 32-bit color v	vith 24-bit	† Game 1 is	a flight sim der	no		* Fill rate nu	mbers are with	multitexturing	enabled,

^{¥ 3}D Mark 2000: Tests run in 32-bit color with 24-bit Z-buffer and triple buffering.

What do all of these numbers show?

While they don't show the performance of final, shipping products, they do serve as a good indication of what you should expect. For the Voodoo5, we have numbers showing performance when anti-aliasing is turned on and off, both in DirectX (3D Mark 2000) and OpenGL (Quake III), but we have only OpenGL numbers for the GeForce 2 GTS. The reasons for this are twofold: 1) While enabling AA in OpenGL requires a click in a check box, in D3D there's actually a slider with multiple levels of AA. As such, we'd have to run many, many

tests in order to show what performance is really like. That said, we did take screen shots with the slider set to the most aggressive setting so you could see what the effect looks like. 2) The D3D AA utility for the GeForce2 seems a bit flaky in this beta. Occasionally, AA in D3D would turn itself off in certain games, making benchmarking at this point nearly impossible to do.

At this early point, the Voodoo5 5500 seems more like competition for the original GeForce, rather than the GeForce2 GTS. The real competition

will likely show itself with the Voodoo5 6000 AGP. To see how the Voodoo5 5500 and GeForce2 GTS stacked up against an original GeForce with 64MB of DDR RAM, check our review of Hypersonic's 1GHz Athlon system on page 122. It was so stable we decided to use that system for our preview here, as well. Since we used the same system for all of our tests, you'll be able to get a very good idea of how these two upcoming cards fare against the current 3D champ.

[¥] Quake III: All tests run in 32-bit color with 32-bit textures and all graphic effects set to max.

[†] Game 1 is a flight sim demo †† Game 2 is an adventure game demo

^{*} Fill rate numbers are with multitexturing enabled, and are not terribly representative of true performance due to the newer architecture of these two cards.

HYPERSONIC

SONIC BOOM



You think they call it the SONIC BOOM for nothing? What are you, crazy?

COMPANY

Hypersonic PC Systems (800) 520-0498 www.hypersonic-pc.com

PRICE

\$3,630 (as configured)

SYSTEM SPECS

SYSTEM

Processor: AMD 1GHz K7 Athlon Motherboard: Asus Athlon KX133 with ultra66 AGP 4x and 133MHz FSP Memory: 128MB PC133 SDRAM

STORAGE

Hard Drive: IBM Deskstar 20.5GB **DVD-ROM** drive: Toshiba 8x DVD/40x CD

■ VIDEO

Asus V6800 64MB **GeForce DDR Monitor Options (costs** extra): 19" Viewsonic E790 for \$439, or 15" LCD Samsung 570P flatpanel for \$1,149

Sound Card: Creative Labs SoundBlaster Live! X-Gamer Gold Speakers: Midiland S4 8200 dolby digital

OTHER

Joystick: MS Side winder Precision Pro Mouse: MS IntelliMouse Keyboard: Black Keytronic w/palm rest

step back and think about it for a minute. The CPU in this computer is running at 1,000MHz. Isn't that insane? Many of us here fondly remember the first time we tried playing Doom on 60MHz Pentium Classic. Of course, it wasn't called "Classic" back then. No, to many of us, it was known by a slightly different name: "ass-kicker." Around the same time that the P60 was gaining popularity, PC magazines were writing about whether or not it was better to spend the extra cash and go for the gusto, or pick up a 100MHz DX4 486 instead, since they were both roughly the same speed. Ah, those were the days. But, back to present day, and if you're one of the few who can

hen you get right down to it, the 1GHz

Athlon processor that powers the

SONIC BOOM is a milestone. Really, take a

Last month in the Hard Stuff we gave an Editors' Choice award to a 900MHz system from a company called ibuypower. If you go back and look at its review - and its benchmarks - you'll notice that the SONIC BOOM trumps it in three key areas. First, this system is a full 100MHz faster than the ibuy. Then there's the difference in video cards; it's easy to miss if you're looking at the system specs for each system, since both pack the power of Asus' GeForce-powered 6800. But on closer inspection, you'll notice that the 6800 in the SONIC BOOM sports an extra 32MB of DDR memory. That's right - this GeForce is walking around with 64MB of DDR memory up its sleeves! What this means is that this card, when teamed up with a super fast processor like the 1GHz CPU found here, can pump out higher frame rates at high resolutions than its "paltry" 32MB brethren. In real world practice, the difference isn't really all that great in the games of today; for the most part, just about all the needed information can sit comfortably in the 32MB most of us already have. But if you're a forward-looking gamer, having the extra video memory is sure to come in handy in upcoming games.

The third reason for this system being so fast is its HS Innerworks Dual Video Cooling System. If you've ever seen an Alienware PC, you know that those computers have what's called the "Cool Max" system. This is a fancy name for a hole drilled into the side of the computer tower that contains a fan pointed directly at your AGP and PCI slots, thus keeping everything inside extra cool. Similarly, the SONIC BOOM Innerworks Dual Video Cooling system places two powerful fans aimed right at the AGP and PCI slots. With this system installed, Hypersonic is able to overclock the

Asus 6800 from its standard 120MHz core all the way up to 129MHz. And this rig was rock solid at this speed throughout all of our testing, never crashing or locking up a single time.

As you can see by looking at the systems specs, everything in this computer is brand name and at the top of its game. Hypersonic has made its computer very user friendly with a lot of its features. This includes a handsome binder with loads of information about your PC, including helpful tweaks and suggestions for the parts in your computer, and benchmark scores run at the factory so you can see how your new computer stacks up before you ever turn it on. In addition, Hypersonic ships a restore CD with a mirror image of your drive as it was the first time you powered up, meaning that if you ever go and do something really dumb, you can slip in this disc and have Windows and all of the pre-installed software back up on your computer in no time flat.

Is this computer pricey? Yeah, but it's worth every penny. Like Alienware and Falcon Northwest, the SONIC BOOM from Hypersonic, is a "hyper" premium gaming rig, tweaked to perfection and loaded with the best parts available, and its price is consistent with computers you'd get from either of these other two reputable builders.

BENCHMARKS

3DMARK 99 MAX

(all tests run in 16-bit color with 16-bit

Z and triple buffer) • 800x600:

3DMarks: 8,887

CPU 3DMarks: 15,009

Game 1 Race: 102.6fps

Game 2 First Person: 78.4fps

• 1600x1200:

3DMarks: 5,515 CPU 3DMarks: 14,679

Game 1 Race: 51.9fps

Game 2 First Person: 58.8fps

3DMARK 2000

(all tests run at 1024x768 in 32-bit color with 24-bit Z and triple buffer)

- 3DMarks: 3,792
- Game 1 Helicopter Low Detail: 74.6fps

Med Detail: 53.9fps High Detail: 38,4fps

afford a 1GHz system (damn you, we say!), the

SONIC BOOM is a surefire winner.

Game 2 Adventure

Low Detail: 66.6fps Med Detail: 56.4fps

High Detail: 38.4fps • Fill Rate w/ multitexturing: 430.2 million texels per second

OUAKE III

(all test run in 32-bit color with all graphic effects set to max) 640x480: 105,2fps 800x600: 82.1fps 1024x768: 51.9fps 1600x1200: 18.7fps

NORTON SI

441.5

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS 1GHz baby! — need we say more? Okay, we will: it's super fast, super stable, and is filled with top-name parts.

LOWS Pretty pricey, plus you'll still need to spring for a monitor.

BOTTOM LINE With the SONIC BOOM, Hypersonic stands tall as one of the best gaming PC builders under the sun.



S3, INC.

Diamond Monster Sound MX400

(800) 468-5846

PRICE

\$79.95 (M.S.R.P.)

OTHER **OPTIONS**

They cost a bit more, but if you're looking for the originał, you can't go wrong with any of the cards in the Sound Blaster Live! line. Check them out at Creative Lab's website at www.soundblaster.com

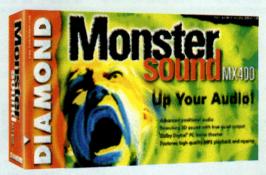
iamond Multimedia (now owned by S3) has a long history of making some fairly nifty sound cards using hardware and software technologies licensed from Aureal. But the new MX400 is the company's first card to use the ESS Canyon processor (instead of something like Aureal's Vortex 2 chip), so we weren't quite sure what to expect when we received the card.

Like a Sound Blaster Live!, the MX400 comes with full support for A3D 1.0, EAX 1.0 and 2.0, DirectSound, and DirectSound 3D. After testing several of our favorite games such as Half-Life and Unreal, we knew that we were dealing with a real powerhouse of a card. With four speakers, the MX400 sounds just about as good as a real SBLive!. On the other hand, with two speakers, the quality wasn't quite as good, but still well above average.

You've probably noticed that most sound card manufacturers seem to have a difficult time making the input and output markings on the back of their sound cards legible. It's not an unforgivable offense, but seeing as how it isn't always very easy to get behind your computer case and figure out which input is which, we were pleasantly surprised to see that the MX400 has a black face plate with white text telling you where everything goes. It's super easy to read, and it makes plugging in new peripherals all the less frustrating.

On the software end, the MX400 comes with your standard assortment of halfway interesting fluff - most of which you'll never touch. Sure, it comes with Liquid Player, Mixman Studio, and a couple of demos, but these are all programs you've seen a million times before in different packages.

All in all, the MX400 packs a lot of bang for the buck. The stunning EAX impressed the hell out of us, and the A3D 1.0 wasn't anything to sneeze at either. Coming in at 20 bucks less than a Creative



Labs Sound Blaster Live!, it's a good alternative if you're pinching pennies (or if you're an S3 shareholder).

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS Sweet four speaker EAX support; crisp sounds across the board.

LOWS Two speaker EAX could be a hair better; a bit more CPU dependent than a SoundBlaster Live!

BOTTOM LINE The MX400 really surprised us; S3 looks to have a bright future with the ESS Canyon processor.

leader in the industry. Get

them for only \$249 at: www.klipsch.com



(Klipsch takes no responsibility for cold feet)

ANANDTECH.COM, OCT, 1999

What things can you try if your 3D card is locking up on you?

&A is the place for tech help! A summary: don't rely on a Voodoo2 as your primary video card; adding more system RAM doesn't mean higher ping times; and throwing food at children can be good.

> I am looking for a new video card for my computer (Who isn't? - Ed.), but can only afford to spend \$100. Should I go with a 12MB Voodoo 2? Are Banshees any good? Am I better off with a TNT 1 or 2? My current computer setup is an AMD K6-2 with 32MB RAM and an 8MB ATI RAGE II.

- Jeff Vokes, via the Internet

Eeek! No, don't go for the Voodoo2 or Banshee. If money is tight, go for the TNT2. Also, upgrade your system RAM as soon as humanly possible - before you worry about your video card. With only 32MB of system memory, you could buy the fastest video card in the

world, and you'd still see stuttering in your games. At the very least, bump up to 64MB, though I'd recommend having 128MB or more.

I just bought and installed a 64MB stick of PC-100 SDRAM. Since the install.

I've been experiencing a lot more lag when playing Internet games. Could the new RAM be to blame? Before, my ping used to hover around 300ms or lower; it's now averaging 700ms or more. I have a 56kbps modem and am using Freei.net. Also, regardless of why I'm experiencing this lag, is there any type of software that can make my Internet connection faster. I have heard that such programs exist, but don't know their names.

Brian Heitz, via the Internet

I can't think of any reason why your new RAM would be creating higher pings for you. Freei.net is a free Internet service provider, and is therefore much less likely to be as reliable as a standard, \$20-per-month ISP. If you really want to test to make sure that it isn't your RAM, simply take out the new DIMM and see if your ping remains the same. As for optimizing your modem speed, a good all-around tweaking program is Winboost (www.magllass.com). You'll not only be able to boost your modem speed, but you'll be able to make your entire system run faster, too. Modem Booster (www.inklineglobal.net) is a good choice, as well.

NEED HELP?

If you have a hardware question or comment, or a personal problem, write to: Greg Vederman, Hard Stuff, PC Gamer, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005 or E-mail: gvederman@pcgamer.com

DEARGREG

Go for a TNT2 instead.

My problem is my brother, his wife, and their three children, ages six, five, and three. They live 1,000 miles away, but they have announced they are going to visit us this summer. We do not want them to come. Their children are not disci-



plined. They do anything they want to do. They have no respect for authority or property. They run wild, climb onto furniture with dirty shoes, get into everything, leave the table during mealtime, and chase each other all over the house. We have two children who are never a problem. I have a nice home that we have worked hard to furnish nicely, and I am afraid these kids will do real damage. I hate to be rude, but we do not want these people to come. What should we do?

Also, I have a 450MHz Pentium III with 128MB of SDRAM and an ATI Rage Fury (32MB). Ever since I built this computer, I've had problems with lock-ups in almost all 3D games. Oddly enough, all my 2D games work just fine. Is this a problem with my video card, or could it be something else going on with my system?

-Vincent "Zero Gear," via the Internet

It's immature, I know, but I've always found that mimicry is a great way of showing someone just how idiotic they're being. For example, I have a buddy in the industry who thrives on saying "That's what I'm screamin" whenever he agrees with what someone has just said. Sometimes he changes it up by throwing in a well placed "Dude" at the beginning, but for the most part, it's the same grating phrase over and over again. What I'm going to start doing is repeating it to him again and again until he realizes just how annoying he can be. "That's what I'm screamin'!" "Dude, that's what I'm screamin'!" My god! It's enough to drive someone to madness!

Applying this same tactic to your situation, what you should do when the little jerks (a.k.a. the misbehaving children) get to your house is start jumping all around, screaming while knocking their luggage out of their

hands. Heck, throw food at them and kick 'em in the shorts when the parents aren't looking if you think it'll help. Even if the kids don't pick up on why you're acting so strange, their parents certainly will, and will then either leave (a good thing), or finally tell their children to stop acting like little schizoid dorks (doubtful, but worth a shot anyway).

Your lock-up problems can likely be traced back to your video card. Whether it's a heat issue, or an incompatibility with your motherboard I can't rightly say, but the fact that your system seems fine when in 2D mode is a good indication that the rest of your system is functioning properly. Check your BIOS and make sure that your AGP aperture size is set to 64MB. If it is currently less, that could be the cause. Also, grab the newest BIOS upgrade for your motherboard since hardware incompatibilities are often ironed out over time.

WE UNDERSTAND...



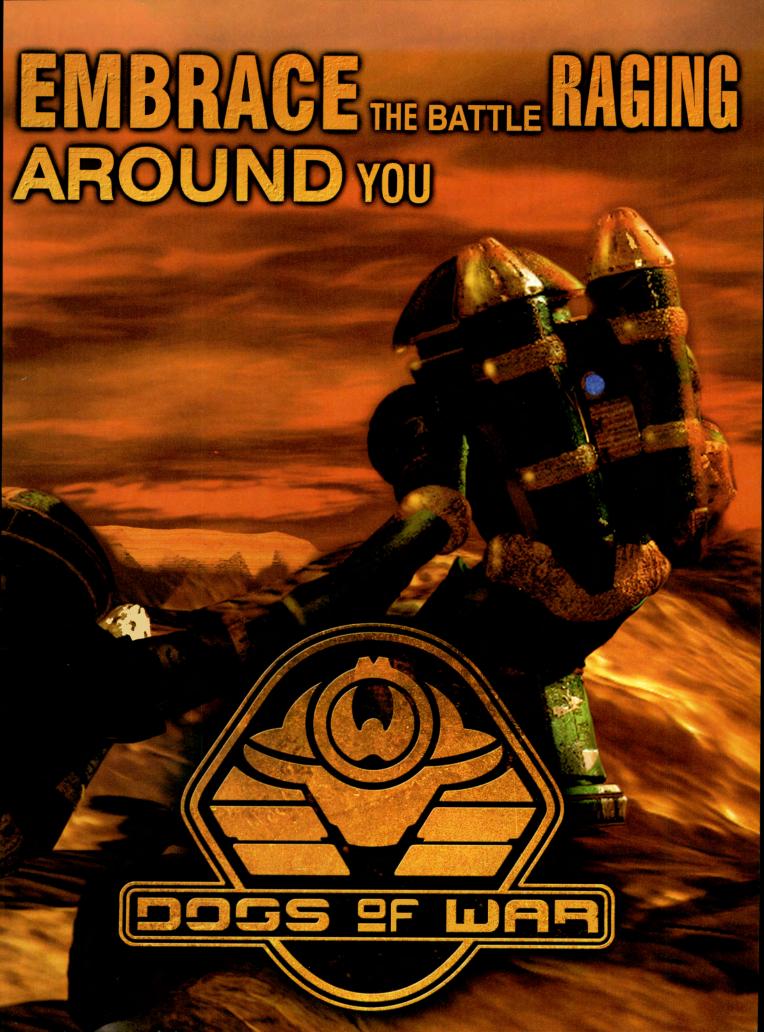
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- Cheats and Patches and...
- Game reviews by gamers like you!









MOTHERBOARD GEEK HEAVEN!

	Number	Set	L2 Cache (KB) Maximum Memory	oin DIMM Sockets n SIMM Sockets	BIOS	rated Audio	egrated Controller	Slots	Slot	anufacturer's arranty	otherboard Only	AMD-K6-2/500	AMD-K6-2/550	Intel® Pentium® MX" 233MHz								
Super7™	Part	Chip	Maxi	(MB) 168-pin I 72-pin S	Flash	Integ	<u><u> </u></u>	PCI	AGP	23	Moth	W/AN	w/Ah	w/inte						1	A	
EPOX EP-MVP3C2 EPOX EP-MVP3G5 FIC VA-503+ Shuttle HOT-591P Tyan S15905 Trinity 100AT Tyan S1598 Trinity ATX	MB5405 MB5211 MB5611 MB5006	VIA Apollo MVP3 VIA Apollo MVP3 VIA Apollo MVP3 VIA Apollo MVP3 VIA Apollo MVP3 VIA Apollo MVP3	1024 512 512 256 1024 384	4 3 2 2 4 6 2 2 4 3 2		Ult	traDMA/66	4 2 5 2 3 3 3 3 4 4 5 2	1 Baby A 1 ATX 1 Baby A 1 Baby A 1 Mini A 1 ATX	2 Yrs. T 1 Yr. T 1 Yr.	\$81 \$106 \$76 \$77 \$95 \$121	\$140 \$165 \$135 \$136 \$154 \$180	\$151 \$176 \$146 \$147 \$165 \$191	\$126 \$151 \$121 \$122 \$140 \$166								
Slot A	Part Number	Chip Set	Maximum Memory (MB) 168-pin DIMM Sockets	Flash BIOS	Bus Frequency	Internated Controller	PCI Slots	ISA Slots	Format	Marranty	Motherboard Only	W/AMD Amion 650MHz	w/AMD Athlon 700MHz	w/AMD Athlon 750MHz	w/AMD Athlon	w/AMD	w/AMD Athlon 900MHz	%/AMD Athlon 950MHz		•		O
AMI Megathon MB Asus K7M MB Asus K7V MB EPoX EP-7KXA MB FIC SD11 MB	17301 AMD- 17701 AMD- 17703 VIA 17850 VIA 17401 AMD-	751 / VIA 686A 751 / VIA 686A Apollo KX133 Apollo KX133	768 3 768 3 1536 3 768 3 768 3	Award Award Award Award Award Award	100 100/120/1 200/133 200/133 100 100	UltraD 33 UltraD UltraD UltraD	MA/66 5 MA/66 5 MA/66 5 MA/66 5 MA/66 5	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	ATX ATX ATX ATX ATX ATX	1 Yr. \$ 1 Yr. \$ 1 Yr. \$ 2 Yrs. \$ 1 Yr. \$	165 § 172 § 182 § 133 §	\$355 \$ \$362 \$ \$372 \$ \$323 \$ \$310 \$	365 \$ 372 \$ 382 \$ 333 \$ 320 \$	390 \$ 397 \$ 407 \$ 358 \$ 345 \$	\$455 \$ \$462 \$ \$472 \$ \$423 \$ \$410 \$	545 \$ 552 \$ 562 \$ 513 \$ 500 \$	675 \$ 682 \$ 692 \$ 643 \$ 630 \$	\$835 \$: \$842 \$: \$852 \$: \$803 \$: \$790 \$:	1115 1122 1132 1083 1070			
Shuttle Al61 MB	7901	AMD-750 Apollo KX133	768 B	Award Award	100	UltraD	MA/66 5	1 1	MicroATX	1 Yr. \$	123	\$313 \$	323 \$	348 \$	\$413 \$	503 \$	633 5	\$793 \$	1073			
Tyan 3238U Trinity K7 MB	Number Number	Apollo KX133	Memory (MB)	DIMM Sockets	BIOS ated Audio		o Aldeo		lot	acturer's Warranty	otherboard Only	Celeron" or 500/A MHz 66MHz FSB	Celeron 566 3D 66MHz FSB	Celeron 600 D 66MHz FSB	Celeron 633 OD 66MHz FSB	Intel Celeron 633 D 66MHz FSB	Pentlum® III 667 ID 133MHz FSB	Pentlum III 733 D 133MHz FSB	Pentlum III 750 D 100MHz FSB	/Intel Pentlum III 00/EB 256K OD 00/133MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III 866 256K OD 133MHz FSB	
Socket 370	art	Chip	Aaximum	68-pin	lash BIOS	V.	ntegr PCI SI	ISA Siots AGP Siot	VMR S	Aanul	Aothe	v/Intel® processe 28K OD	v/Intel	v/Intel 28K O	v/Intel	v/Dual	//Intel	w/Intel Po	//Intel	//Intel 00/EB 00/133	w/Intel 256K O	
ABIT BP6 (Dual)	MB6506	Intel 440B			ward		5	2 1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$149	\$234	\$259	\$284	\$319	\$489	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
ASUS CUC2000 EPoX EP-3VCA	MB6724 MB6854	VIA Apollo Pro		3 A	ward AC-	97	5	1 1	1 ATX 1 ATX	1 Yr. 2 Yrs.	\$169 \$105	\$254 \$190	\$279 \$215	\$304 \$240	\$339 \$275	N/A N/A	\$399 \$335	\$459 \$395	\$569 \$505	\$629 \$565	\$839 \$775	
Shuttle ME64 SuperMicro 370SCD	MB6310 MB6159	Intel 8108			ward Intel 8		810E 3	1	1 Micro AT 1 ATX	X 1 Yr. 1 Yr.	\$116 \$144	\$201 \$229	\$226 \$254	\$251 \$279	\$286 \$314	N/A N/A	\$346 \$374	\$406 \$434	\$516 \$544	\$576 \$604	\$786 \$814	
SuperMicro 370SEA SuperMicro 370DLE	MB6140 MB6154	Intel 8108 Reliance L	512		AMI Intel 8	10E Intel		1	1 ATX ATX	1 Yr. 1 Yr.	\$134 \$333	\$219 \$418	\$244 \$443	\$269 \$468	\$304 \$503	N/A \$673	\$364 \$563	\$424 \$623	\$534 \$733	\$594 \$793	\$804 \$1003	
SuperMicro 370DL3	MB6155	Reliance L	E 2048	8 2 /	AMI		6	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$536	\$621	\$646	\$671	\$706	\$876	\$766	\$826	\$936	\$996	\$1206	
Tyan S1857 Trinity 371 Tyan S1854 Trinity 400	MB6017 MB6018	VIA Apollo Pro			AMI ward	4		1 1	ATX	3 Yrs.	\$105 \$105	\$190 \$190	\$215 \$215	\$240 \$240	\$275 \$275	N/A N/A	N/A \$335	N/A \$395	N/A \$505	N/A \$565	N/A \$775	
Slot 1	Part Number	Chip Set	Maximum Memory (MB)	168-pin DIMM Sockets 168-pin RIMM Sockets	Flash BIOS	Integrated Audio	Integrated Controller		PCI Slots ISA Slots AGP Slot	Format	Manufacturer's Warranty	Motherboard Only	w/intel® Pentium III® 550 512K 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentlum III 650/667 256K OD 100/133MHz FSB	2 01	w/intel Pentlum III 733 256K OD 133MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III 750 256K OD 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentlum III 800/EB 256K OD 100/133MHz FSB	w/intel Pentlum III 850 256K OD 100MHz FSB	w/Dual Intel Pentlum 550 512K 100MHz FS	w/Dual Intel Pentlum III 750 256K OD 100MHz FSB	
ABIT BE6-II ABIT BF6	MB6508 MB6507	Intel 440BX	768 768	3	Award Award		UltraDMA	V66	5 1 1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$135 \$115	\$330 \$310	\$365 \$345	\$425 \$405	N/A N/A	\$535 \$515	\$595 \$575	N/A N/A	N/A N/A	N/A N/A	
ABIT VA6 ABIT VT6X4	MB6509 MB6510	VIA Apollo Pro VIA Apollo Pro		3	Award Award	AC-97 AC-97	UltraDMA UltraDMA		5 2 1 5 2 1	ATX	1 Yr. 1 Yr.	\$85 \$107	\$280 \$302	\$315 \$337	\$375 \$397	\$385 \$407	\$485 \$507	\$545 \$567	\$745 \$767	N/A N/A	N/A N/A	
Asus P2B-DS Asus P3B-F	MB6707 MB6720	Intel 440BX		4	Award Award				4 2 1 6 1 1	ATX	1 Yr. 1 Yr.	\$479 \$133	\$674 \$328	\$709 \$363	\$769 \$423	N/A N/A	\$879 \$533	\$939 \$593	N/A N/A	\$869 N/A	\$1279 N/A	
Asus P3C2000 Asus P3V4X	MB6722 MB6723	VIA Apollo Pro	1024	4	Award Award	AC-97	UltraDMA		5 1 1	ATX ATX	1 Yr. 1 Yr.	\$161 \$118	\$356 \$313	\$391 \$348	\$451 \$408	\$461 \$418	\$561 \$518	\$621 \$578	\$821 \$778	N/A N/A	N/A N/A	
EPOX EP-6VBA2 FIC KA11	MB6855 MB6411	VIA Apollo Pro VIA Apollo Pro	133A 768	3	Award Award	AC-97	UltraDMA	V66	4 2 1	ATX ATX	2 Yrs. 1 Yr.	\$109 \$96	\$304 \$291	\$339 \$326	\$399 \$386	\$409 \$396	\$509 \$496	\$569 \$556	\$769 \$756	N/A N/A	N/A N/A	
Intel L440GX+	MB6917	Intel 440G)	2048	4	Intel/Phoenix		Adaptec 2-C	-	6 1	ATX	3 Yrs.	\$539	\$734	\$769	\$829	N/A	\$939	\$999	N/A	\$929	\$1339	
Intel SE440BX-2 "Seattle" Shuttle AV64	MB6921 MB6309	VIA Apollo Pro		3	Intel/Phoenix Award	7	UltraDMA		4 2 1 5 2 1	ATX	3 Yrs. 1 Yr.	\$112 \$89	\$307 \$284	\$342 \$319	\$402 \$379	N/A \$389	\$512 \$489	\$572 \$549	N/A \$749	N/A N/A	N/A N/A	
SuperMicro PIIISCD SuperMicro PIIISED	MB6146 MB6142	Intel 820 Intel 810e	512 512	2	AMI AMI	AC-97 AC-97	UltraDMA UltraDMA		5 1	ATX	1 Yr. 1 Yr.	\$146 \$123	\$341 \$318	\$376 \$353	\$436 \$413	\$446 \$423	\$546 \$523	\$606 \$583	\$806 \$783	N/A N/A	N/A N/A	
SuperMicro PIIIDME SuperMicro PIIIDM3	MB6151 MB6153	Intel 840	4096 4096	4	AMI AMI	AC-97	Intel PRO/1	100+	6 1	ATX	1 Yr. 1 Yr.	\$359 \$579	\$554 \$774	\$589 \$809	\$649 \$869	\$659 \$879	\$759 \$979	\$819 \$1039	\$1019 \$1239	\$749 \$969	\$1159 \$1379	
SuperMicro P6DGH	MB6129	Intel 440GX	2048	4	AMI		Adaptec 2-C		9 2 1	Full AT	1 Yr.	\$809	\$1004	\$1039	\$1099	N/A	\$1209	\$1269	\$1469	\$1199	\$1609	
SuperMicro P6SBA SuperMicro P6SBU	MB6120 MB6128	Intel 440BX	1024		AMI AMI		Adaptec U		4 3 1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$98 \$329	\$293 \$524	\$328 \$559	\$388 \$619	N/A N/A	\$498 \$729	\$558 \$789	N/A N/A	N/A N/A	N/A N/A	
Tyan S1854 Trinlity 400 Slot 2 SuperMicro S2DM3	MB6018	Chip Set Chip Set Maximum Memory 400	(MB) 168-pin DIMM Sockets	Hash BIOS	Award Award Ac-97		UltraDMA UltraDMA Courtroller ptec Ultra3/1		6 1 1 Integrated Networking Intel PRO/100	PC.	3 Yrs.	Lorwat ATX	Manufacturer's Warranty	\$335 Wotherboard Only \$676	*3395 W/Intel® Pentlum III® Xeon" 550MHz 512K \$12.00 \$1.00 \$	> -	w/Intel Xeon	w/Dual Intel 550MHz 512		w/Intel Xeon 7/	W/Intel Xeon 700MHz W/Intel Xeon 700MHz SSB	w/intel Xeon 800MHz 1M 100MHz FSB
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EXTENDED PLAY

If the AI [in Urban

absurdly jacked up,

Ops | wasn't so

an experienced

player could blow

through the new

missions in a

few hours.



ADD-ONS · SCENARIO DISCS · UPGRADES · BUG PATCHES

Rainbow Six Takes the Ghetto

Gettin' it done street by street and house by house...so who cares if it's only five missions?

here are a few time-honored techniques for making a five mission addon disc feel like it's got ten. First, you jack up the AI so that every single armed enemy can shoot the ass off a gnat at five hundred paces. Then, you set incredibly restrictive success parameters so that bumping into a shrub on the way to your extraction point forces you to play the entire mission again. This has a remarkable effect on play time, but does little for my patience.

Civilians in this Turkish open-air market must be kept alive in order to successfully finish the level.

Red Storm has studied this playbook pretty thoroughly to produce Rogue Spear: Urban Operations. While standard shooters can't get away with less than a dozen levels in a mission pack, tactical FPS games have

been offering six or less and gamers have barely batted an eye. This is fair to a degree — tactical FPS levels are meticulously crafted, with multiple layers of gameplay and fairly expansive locations. And if ever there was an excusable five-mission pack, it's Urban Operations.

The five locations include an open-air market in Istanbul, a London subway

station, a Hong Kong hotel (which a bus has crashed into), the streets of Venice, and a ruined ghetto in Mexico. Though the engine is clearly aging, it does an admirable job of rising to the challenges posed by the new locations, and even manages to squeeze a few new tricks in — nice touches like water squirting from punctured hoses and foam bursts from fire extinguishers.

The location modeling is absolutely amazing, and doubly difficult to pull off because they all have real-world corollaries. Civilians have been added to the mix, but only in the first mission. The other missions should have used civvies as well, since the added tension of having to keep the plebes alive makes any mission more exciting. Goals are straightforward ("rescue hostages") but demanding, requiring com-

plete success and survival of all hostages and civilians.

In addition to the five new single missions, five "classic" Rainbow Six missions are included, upgraded for the new engine. Since the enhancements made from R6 to Rogue Spear were modest, this doesn't add much, but it's a nice gesture. On the multiplay side, eight very good multiplayer maps have

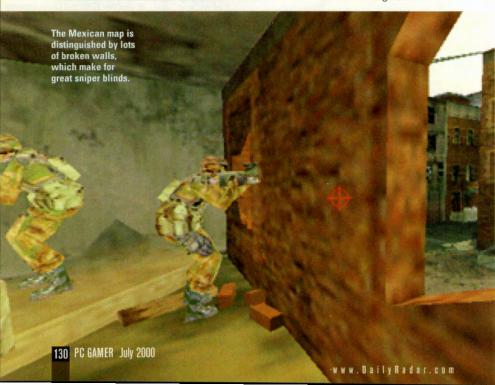
been added, including an "underwater habitat" level (no, you don't get SCUBA gear: it's a dry mission) and a bunker that's good for assaults. In addition, a new "defend" multiplay mission type sticks one poor sod on the defense of a button against overwhelming odds.

Though the four new guns are interesting, they add little to the overall tactical situation. Much more useful is an integrated utility for managing missions and mods. Once maps are unlocked (by winning or by using the F10/F12 combo) you can set up any type of mission on any map. You can also import and manage mod levels much more effectively. It's a remarkably useful tool.

All the levels are strong and challenging and the new features welcome, but sea-



A London tube station is the site of more terrorist fun: the treat here is a crawl down the narrow train.





soned *Rogue Spear* gamers may be forgiven for finding the offerings a little thin. If the AI wasn't so absurdly jacked up, an experienced player could blow through the new solo missions in a few hours.

C&C: Firestorm

was a little nervous when I filed my fairly negative review of Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun, since I thought I was alone in my disappointment with this muchballyhooed game. Turns out I wasn't. People were split pretty evenly between the "if it ain't broke don't fix it" camp, who were pleased as punch to have more of the same ol' C&C, and the "who says it weren't broke" camp who hoped for something like Blizzard's leap from WarCraft II to StarCraft. So it was with a little trepidation that I reinstalled Tiberian Sun to play the new add-on disc. Firestorm.

Firestorm's missions and additions have gone partway to muting some of my initial complaints about balance and mission structure. There are 18 missions spread between two campaigns. (Since you essentially fight the same battles from each side, some might only count this as nine missions with two possible starting points.)

The narrative picks up with a new faction, CABAL, emerging from the remnants of Nod. Map design is generally a little tighter than in the original, with fewer "puzzle" maps. The new tileset comes with new flora, but is a little drab and wears thin after a few missions. They're not the most interesting maps to come out of Westwood, but they play better than the original set.

This improvement in gameplay is helped by better victory conditions in several missions. Instead of being forced to hunt down and kill everything on the map, you can end a game by completing a primary objective. Tweaked unit specs and new units also add to the overall balance. Jump Jet Infantry have better sensors, the Deployable Sensor Array is more effective,

and the EMP Cannon has some new mineclearing capabilities. One interesting new unit is the Limpet Drone, which can attach to passing vehicles and drastically slow them down. GDI now has a Drop Pod Control Plug that can place units pretty much anywhere on the map, thus leading to some hairy surprise attacks. The Mobile War Factory and Mobile Fist of Nod bring unit-building to the front lines, to make reinforcement even faster. Along with a mobile artillery unit (the slow but powerful Juggernaut) and a mobile generator, these new units nudge the overall strategy toward fast and mobile hits.

A good map randomizer is probably the best inclusion in *Firestorm*. Westwood Online has also added a World Domination Tour to the multiplayer component. Similar to other persistent regional conflict games that are beginning to crop up (such as the new *Total Annihilation* games), this feature provides a large map divided into regions. You can choose a side and skirmish for control of a region. The side with the most regional wins gets the territory, which can change hands several times in the course of a day. It's not a huge addition to the game, but it helps ground online play in a larger community and give it some scope.

BUG PATCHES



ON THE CD!

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Thief II: The Metal Age v1.18 (thief2patch107-118.exe)

A 32MB patch! Expect assorted tweaks to Al code, fixed rats squeaking after they have been killed, ropes easier to climb, tweaked mines so that they interact with the world more realistically, several aesthetic improvements to the interface, increased maximum sound channel usage to 24 channels, improved effectiveness of using your sword to block blows from your enemies, and lots of level amendments.

■ Tachyon: The Fringe (ttfupd8b.exe)
The problem of not being able to scroll
through all the available wingman has
been fixed. There is now a "loading"
window that comes up after you hit

"Play Tachyon" from the Tachyon App. Cleaned up how the Tachyon App does its resolution checking when you select "Video Setup". A mouse sensitivity slider has been added when you click on "Options" from the multiplayer menu. Other mouse functions have been enhanced. Some slight tweaks have been made to the cost of wingman and some ships.

Star Trek: Armada v1.1 (armada11beta.exe)

Fixes many compatibility issues with a variety of cards including: GeForce, TNT2, and Intel 810. The Klingon Shockwave has received a new effect, Gravity Mines can now be fired while cloaked, and Special Weapons can no longer be targeted under the shroud.

Sammy Sosa High Heat Baseball 2001 v1.1 (hh2k1v1_1.exe)

Resolved problems with the F3 Replay key, double-switch now functions properly, resolved

The folks at NovaLogic have been kind enough to provide a

The folks at NovaLogic have been kind enough to provide a pretty extensive patch for *Tachyon*.

problems with CPU teams not receiving rookies after rookie draft, irrelevant data removed from Hall of Fame, and resolved issues with pause menu in 512x384 and 640x480 resolutions.

- Imperium Galactica 2 v1.04 (IG2-V104.zip) Fixes Kra'Hen message bug.
- MindRover v1.05 (MRV105setup.exe)
 This is for the PURCHASED version of MindRover V1.02. It fixes a memory leak, scripting for automating multiple scenario, and most "Extra" components are now free.

Need for Speed: High Stakes v4.44 (NFSHSpatch4_44.exe)

ProxyTool.exe added to the Network Play System\
Utility directory, enabling you to set your proxy IP
and Port if your ISP so requires, and hacking cars
is harder to do now so there should be less
cheating and crashing.

THE POINT AFTER

Of course,

writing "u suck

and so does ur

game!!!" does

little more than

make you look

like a jackass.



BASEBALL · BASKETBALL · FOOTBALL · HOCKEY · GOLF · SOCCER · ETC

Peace, Love, and Understanding

No one likes being disappointed, but Smoke wants you to think before you send off that hate mail to a developer.

f you've been reading my reviews and columns for a while, I hope that the one thing you've noticed is that I will always be honest about a game or subject, and back up any criticisms with sound reasoning. Whether you agree or disagree with me is not the issue...we all have different tastes and tolerances. This honest streak carries over to my meetings with developers.

Many are the times I've seen members of the press (no names will be mentioned to protect the guilty) nod politely while an obviously poor-quality game is endlessly demonstrated, accompanied by the monotone soundtrack supplied by a droning developer. I'll admit that in my early days in the industry, I too was guilty of this; who was I to pass judgment?

I soon realized, though, that it was hypocritical of me to give false hope that a game was on the right track, only to bash it come review time. A lot of pain could have been avoided with some constructive criticism during these early looks. As it turns out, most of the developers actually relished this feedback. As we all know, it's sometimes difficult to be objective when you've invested so much of your life into something, and a fresh set of eyes can ferret out a lot of problems that the designers never even knew existed.

This carries over to you, the gaming audience. A developer may not frequent the UseNet message boards, or directly respond to your E-mail, but believe me, they love getting feedback on their games, both posi-

tive and negative. Of course, writing "u suck and so does ur game!!!" does little more than make you look like a jackass. If there's something about the game you don't like, explain why you don't like it, and ideally, suggest a better way to do it. On the other hand, if you like a game, be sure to send a note to the team, congratulating them on their good work and

encouraging them to do even better the next time. I can assure you that we here at the magazine appreciate both of these kinds of correspondence about our monthly work.

Remember, though, that we all live in the real world. Your suggestion may be an incredible stroke of genius, but due to a host of factors such as time, money, licenses, available computer power of the average home system, etc., it may not be feasible at this time.

Most members of game development teams are just like you and me — they got into this business because they love games, and their goal is to make the best game they can. No one is more frustrated than they are that they can't include every great idea and feature that crops up during planning and brainstorming sessions. You would be amazed at the amount of arguing, politicking, and persuading that goes on among team members when deciding what and how much to tackle in each new version of a sports franchise. The funny thing is, whatever the final outcome, the

critics will be there to tell them where they went wrong.

Take the High Heat series, for example. When the first version came out, it was criticized for being "just an arcade game." Well, that's what the developers set out to make! That's like criticizing a dog because it's not a cat. When the 2000 version came out, it was one of the most ambitious leaps we've ever seen in a sports fran-

chise. With the short development time available, a few features didn't work as advertised right off the bat. The response? "Yeah, the game is great, but it doesn't work exactly as promised." "Why did they try to do so much?" Now we get to *High Heat 2001*, and you have to laugh at the predictability of the response.

The gameplay has been improved, the code is much tighter with nary a crash, and there are loads of small but game-enhancing features added. So, what do the designers have to listen to now? "It's just a bug patch for HH2000!" "The added features should have been part of last years game, and I'm not paying for this glorified add-on!" As you can see, it's a no-win situation.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that real people make these games — people that dedicate large chunks of their lives to creating the games we play. Yes, it's a business, but with the talent most of them possess, they can be making a lot more money working in another industry. With few exceptions, most of them are as passionate about gaming as you are, and would love nothing more than to make a game that's universally praised and played. Vicious personal attacks accomplish little.

If you really want to help make this industry thrive and get stronger, think twice before you lash out at someone. Instead, think of it as your chance to be a positive influence and let the designers rationally know your complaints and offer a few suggestions to help improve things. We'll all benefit in the end.





The last guy who asked "Are they real?" is dead.

Actually, every guy she's met is dead.



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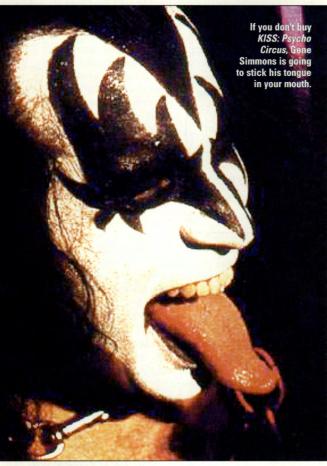
COLIN WILLIAMSON

THE KILLING BOX

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KISS of Death?

A FPS based on the "classic" 1970s rock band KISS? The idea is so hokey, Colin thinks it may just work...



fter living in Japan for a year, my mind has become numbed to the inexplicably bizarre. I frequently see signs advertising "Live Beer." I've run into a videogame version of Strip Rock-Paper-Scissors. Hell, I was nearly run over by a van that had the words "PIZZA OF DEATH" written on the side. However, my biggest shock of the past year is this: I am constantly amazed that someone is making a first-person shooter based on KISS, the "classic" 1970s rock group, commonly known to the youngsters as "the band with the guy with the tongue."

If you're down with the 3D shooter community, you're probably aware that the KISS game is, surprisingly, not a Quake mod done by a bunch of highschoolers. Third Law Entertainment is behind this game, with the everspunky Gathering of Developers at the publishing helm. Talent-wise, the team consists of a bunch of ex-ION Storm team members — then again, you have to remember that approximately 58 percent of the industry's level designers worked on Daikatana at some point. I don't know which is tougher — finishing Daikatana, or figuring out a halfway-passable excuse for KISS to blow up spiders with rocket launchers.

The only explanation I can offer is that one of the higher-ups at G.O.D. accidentally mixed up GWAR with KISS during a brainstorming session. The GWAR universe would be better suited for a 3D shooter, since the concerts already feature blood-pits filled with

I don't know which

finishing Daikatana,

a passable excuse

for KISS to blow

up spiders with

rocket launchers.

is tougher —

or figuring out

giant sandworms, into which lucky

audience members are thrown and messily devoured. There are so many creature suits at a GWAR concert, it's like watching "The Muppet Show" with decapitations. Obviously, this is infinitely more appealing than a bunch of geriatric guys in clown makeup singing "Love Gun".

Even the McFarlane art design of the Psycho Circus universe can't make up for the fact that, as the guy in Detroit Rock City says, "KISS sucks!"

The boys at Third Law seem to realize this, and have done a good job at disguising the dorkiness of KISS in a 3D shooter package that, surprisingly enough, doesn't look half-bad. The plot involves restoring the power of the four "elders" (read: the members of KISS) by assembling their "armor" (read: the eternally fruity KISS outfits). Only then can you face the "Nightmare Child," who apparently refuses to fight anyone who's not dressed like a total idiot. The whole storyline is beyond my mortal comprehension - I'll have to ask the guy in the Wonder Woman t-shirt at my local comic store to explain it to me, as I'm sure he's got his copy pre-ordered.

To be honest, I'm kinda disappointed that the KISS game isn't based on KISS Meets the Phantom of the Park, a movie that's only matched by Street Fighter: The Movie in terms of unintentional cinematic hilarity. Produced during the height of KISS's "popularity," Phantom involves amusement parks, mad scientists, flying monkeys, and magical KISS talismans. Okay, so maybe the storyline is as engrossing as picking Chee-tos out of your teeth without getting your fingernails all gunky - but this film is a true winner (believe it or not, Phantom was produced by Hanna-Barbera, the same creative powerhouse behind The Jetsons and Wacky Races - I'm sure they were in stiff competition with Sid and Marty Kroft for the rights to the project). I swear, if Third Law includes a level that recreates the climactic fight of KISS versus the movie's Evil Robot KISS, I may never need another game again.

Will retro-1970s nostalgia be capable of driving this game's sales? I dunno. Remember, that damn Play-Station Dukes of Hazzard game is at the top of the charts, and the concept for Activision's Wu-Tang fighting game is just as ridiculous as a first-person shooter based on KISS (not to mention Cinderella, or possibly RATT). Just imagine — if this game does well, maybe it'll inspire

G.O.D. to produce that "Knight Rider" game I've always wanted, or an "A-Team" game that's better than the Atari 2600 one with the disembodied Mr. T head. Nevertheless, I'll be picking up a copy of KISS: Psycho Circus...especially if it ships on vinyl. PCG

ALTERNATE LIVES

There's something

tails (of the Iksar

lizard racel that

want to go hand-

to-hand with most

makes players

creatures.

about flailing

ADVENTURE AND ROLEPLAYING GAMES · NEWS · TRENDS

Kunark or Bust

With a new expansion pack, the EverQuest monkey once again climbs solidly onto Wolf's back.

hen EverQuest launched in March of last year, social lives were ruined. Work halted. A sick new passion gripped the hearts of gamers young and old. And the rat and bat population of a little fantasy world known as Norrath was decimated. The game drained away more time from our lives than television could ever hope to do.

That addiction has returned. After finally kicking the habit several months ago, I was able to live my life EverOuest-free until Monday, April 24, when the new continent of Kunark went live on the EverQuest servers.

For those unfamiliar with The Ruins of Kunark, it's an expansion pack released by Verant that not only introduces a whole new continent, but also opens up a whole new race of playable characters - the Iksar, lizard beings who start off with excellent swimming abilities and regenerative powers, but who are hated by all other races.

The Iksar are an evil race formed of Warriors, Shamans, Necromancers, Shadow Knights, and Monks devoted to a

chaotic order. It's the only race in the game aside from Humans that can be Monks, something that has caused many players to dive headlong into the realm of lizard martial arts. There's something about flailing tails that makes players want to go hand-tohand with most creatures.

The game introduces many new zones, new monsters and NPCs, some intense

graphic improvements, and the ability for characters to break the level 50 barrier. Besides new lands, the most notable enhancements are in the graphics - Verant used larger textures and more polygons to add even more beauty to the world, with trees that sway in the wind and some breathtaking monsters. Unfortunately, these changes demand higher system requirements. Running through the countryside near Cabilis, the city of the Iksar, produces noticeably slower frame rates than an area like West Karana.

However, the hit on the system specs isn't horrible, and we've noticed some vast improvements in how the game works. Newbie areas are packed full of critters to hack, alleviating the need to run around in search of spawning pests. However, Kunark is most certainly a mid- to high-level environment - serpents, strongly related to dragons, roam the countryside in pairs, and an innocent-looking cactus can reach out and smite players for plenty of damage before they even know they're in trouble.

So how do players who are eternally attached to their current characters get to the new lands? Boats leave periodically from both Antonica (the mainland) and Favdwer (land of the dwarves, elves, and gnomes). However, if a player hasn't purchased the add-on, they won't be able to make it to the new lands.

Getting a hold of the game is quite simple. A box available in stores contains the full version of EverQuest along with The Ruins of Kunark, or you can download the huge patch online for a discounted rate. The expansion doesn't affect the current monthly rate of the game (\$9.89 a month). You simply need to install the expansion, enable the new continent by entering a product code, and away you go.

> Ultimately, starting an Iksar character in Kunark works just like starting another character anywhere else - scorpion, scarab, mosquito, swamp leech, and froglok hunting replaces the bats and snakes as starting fodder, and as you gain skill, you'll move to other areas to kill even larger critters. The Iksar race is particularly nasty, and you shouldn't

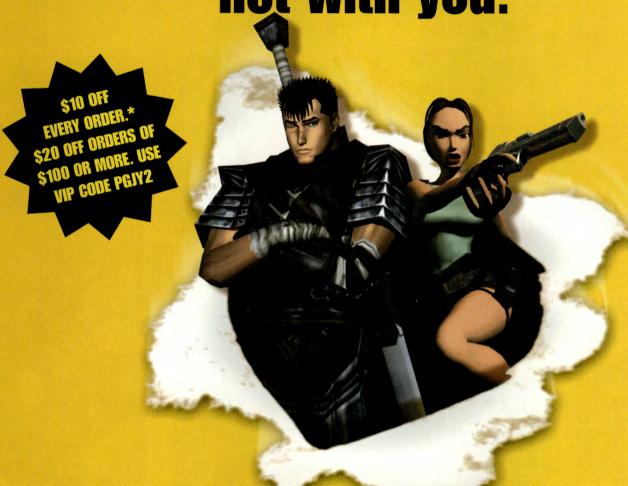
assume that their leaders will be kind (or wise, for that matter). In most cases quests are given grudgingly, and most NPCs in Cabilis are only barely civil. The terrible faction standing of the Iksar makes it difficult for the lizards to travel to the other continents easily, and they should avoid NPCs from other races at all costs until they improve their standing.

After spending plenty of time in the new continent, there was one thing that became increasingly apparent - the roleplaying sense of gamers in the online community hasn't changed much. In most cases, especially with the Iksar, players would show traits that didn't fit in too well with the environment. For example, in one case I was beset by a horde of enemies, all of which could travel faster than I could, so I had no choice but to stand my ground and fight while hoping for the best. A fellow Iksar who was a spell-casting necromancer arrived on the scene, and he proceeded to cast spells on my damaged form, healing me enough to deal with the threat. That generosity was appreciated, of course, but it certainly didn't fit in with the Iksar's self-centered ethos.

But there will hopefully be plenty of time to develop sound roleplaying on the new continent. First report: Kunark looks good, and well worth the meager cost of the expansion. The addiction is back, friends.



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Beyond Steel Panthers

Good news, wargamers: Matrix signs Gary Grigsby, revives Steel Panthers with World at War, and gives it away for free!

nometimes, the magic still happens: two days before deadline, I received the beta version of Steel Panthers: World at War and loaded it with the intention of surfing the contents, getting an impression of the graphics, and making a list of the scenarios and campaigns. It was four years since I'd last played the game and I didn't have time for more than a cursory scan. Or so I thought.

Five hours later, the dog was howling to be let out, my wife was threatening to leave me, my bladder was throbbing, and my eyeballs were glazed over. This pro bono freebie was not only every bit as addictive as the original Steel Panthers, it was better-looking, filled with refinements both obvious and subtle, and as stable as Stonehenge. This is war the way Mars intended it to be! (And it will be featured on the PC Gamer CD in all its complete glory next month -Ed.)

How did a tiny outfit like Matrix Games pull this off? And why are they giving it away free to anybody who wants it?

"Wargamers may squabble a lot among themselves," says David Heath, a co-founder of Matrix Games and long-time host of TheGamers.net, "but they really are a community. They've supported us passionately, so this is a good way of repaying their faith. It also works out as a good business decision, and any wargame developer who wants to survive this turbulent period of transition has to be a savvy businessman as well as a dedicated hobbyist. It's no longer enough to be one without also being the other."

Matrix is definitely a by-gamers-forgamers outfit. Their wish-list was filled with the names of classic SSI strategy hits, especially the legendary canon comprising Gary Grigsby's Greatest Hits (Pacific War,

"[The fans] have

passionately, so

of repaying their

works out as a

good business

-David Heath.

Matrix Games

faith. It also

decision..."

this is a good way

supported us

War in Russia, Carrier Strike, et al.). Some of those games stretched the limits of late-1980s PC technology, and all of them would benefit greatly from contemporary graphics and processing power.

"Finally," says Heath, "we just asked SSI if we could take a crack at it. Amazingly, they thought it was a great idea, and we worked out a deal for the source code of Steel Panthers and all the Grigsby titles Gary was interested in seeing revived. The whole concept was to upgrade and

polish those classics without altering the qualities that made them so playable."

The first fruit of this partnership was Steel Panthers: World War Two (produced in conjunction with another small company that has since left the picture). To everyone's surprise, that title generated more than 32,000 downloads, thus proving the viability of the project. During development for Steel Panthers: World at War (a far more ambitious title), toy-giant Mattel acquired SSI's parent corporation, The Learning Company. By the time World at War was nearing com-

> pletion, Mattel had lost a lot of money on the venture and was already in the process of divesting itself of The Learning Company as quickly as possible.

> "In essence, almost all of the people we'd made the deal with were suddenly gone," says Heath. "So we decided to just give it away - the whole game."

Aside from generating enormous goodwill, this strategy also makes excellent business sense. Steel

Panthers fans tend to be very passionate in their advocacy. By making World at War so easily available, Matrix hopes to demonstrate just how good their work is, and how faithful it is to the spirit of the original.

If you're a Steel Panthers veteran, you will immediately notice some of the improvements: weather effects, vastly improved AI, new types of terrain, editable waypoints and reinforcement zones, and a cool inventory of

> sound effects - if, for example, soldiers are marching through a swamp, you'll hear boot-sucking noises! All of the changes, both obvious and hidden, give off a wonderful sense of energy, a palpable zest, and a confidence that almost swaggers.

Not long after this year's E3 trade show, Matrix will unveil its first in-house game, an ambitious strategiclevel simulation of the Napoleonic Wars. By autumn, they plan to publish a really vast strategic-level Civil War

game. These, mind you, are in addition to the free Steel Panthers modules.

Best of all, on the very day the ol' Colonel was writing this column, came the extraordinary news that game god Gary Grigsby had signed a contract with Matrix for a massive Pacific Theater game tentatively entitled: War in the Pacific: Struggle Against Japan, 1941-1945. No, it will not be just a re-vamp of Grigsby's awesome SSI classic; it will be, instead, everything Grigsby dreamed about when he was coding the original PacWar, but could not fully realize with the PC technology of the time.

To readers who already know and love those games, this is the best news, so far, of the new millennium. To readers who have not yet discovered these classics, I can only say: "I envy you." And to Matrix games: well, "Thank you" doesn't seem adequate, but it'll have to do.

PCG

Check out the following web sites for free downloads and lots of other game goodies:

www.matrixgames.com www.thegamers.net www.wargamer.com



Game god Gary Grigsby is back in the action — he's working with Matrix Games on a completely new Pacific war game.



DRIVING · FLYING · FIGHTING · BUILDING · ETC.

Rotary-Wing Roundup

Looking for some down-and-dirty action in your helicopter sim? Andy takes three new titles out for a spin.



Modern-day helicopters like this AH-64 Longbow make for great wargaming on your PC.

Modern helo war-

fare is a trench war

- hell, even Quake

this sort of fighting.

fans can buy into

rom MicroProse's original Gunship in 1986 to the latest trio of rotary-wing simulations on the market, helicopter combat titles have been a mainstay on the PC sim front for almost a decade and a half. The incredible maneuverability and sheer firepower of these impressive war machines certainly contribute to their enduring popularity, but I personally believe that it's the down and dirty combat action that really sells these products.

You're not dropping smart bombs from way up in the clouds - modern helo warfare is a trench war of low-altitude, close-proximity tank-busting, where you can almost smell the burning diesel oil of your hapless victims as you rain

laser-quided missiles on them. Hell, even dedicated Quake fans can buy into this sort

Considering the healthy appeal of the genre, three major releases are earmarked for distribution this year and, if early indications are anything to go by, helo fans might have to weather some bumpy rides.

Ka-52 Team Alligator (GT Interactive/Simis)

The first major player to spool up its engines is Simis with Ka-52 Team Alligator. This sequel to 1998's Team Apache showcases the latest Russian-built Kamov Ka-52 Alligator gunship in a series of skirmishes set against an eastern European backdrop. The new title is very long on style but somewhat short on substance. Gaming aficionados will certainly

appreciate Ka-52's lovely Direct3D-enhanced terrain graphics and comprehensive team management options but the short-lived semi-dynamic campaigns and broken flight model won't find much favor with hardcore simmers.

Ka-52 (reviewed on p. 98) is probably the easiest of the three new sims for rookie pilots to jump into. A third-party flight model patch has already been distributed (available at http://ka52.sim-arena.com) and, if Simis comes up with a patch of its own to allow gamers to adjust the enemy AI difficulty and build custom missions, this Alligator might yet sprout some serious teeth.

Gunship! (Hasbro/MicroProse)

MicroProse's Gunship! comes with the most impressive pedigree of all the new releases. The original Sid Meier and Andy Hollisdesigned Gunship dates all the way back to Reagan's presidency, and its 1991 seguel Gunship 2000 went on to set the standard for almost every helicopter combat sim since. Unfortunately, this title seems to have shipped with a wonky gyro compass, because it flies off in a completely different direction than either of its revered parent games.

Gunship! offers three flyable aircraft the AH-64 Apache, Eurocopter Tiger, and Mi-28N Havoc - and an assortment of European-based theaters. Although blessed with juicy-looking graphics, almost everything else is poorly conceived. Gunship!'s hard-scripted campaigns force you to replay failed missions until you get them right, all of the missions begin with your helo in the air, and the waypoint navigation and wingmanmanagement systems are the most counterintuitive messes that I've ever seen. Enemy ground targets have also been equipped with an unlimited stock of SAM missiles, and the ridiculously lethal battlefield environment that results will probably send even the most experienced of sim pilots spiraling to their deaths ten minutes into each mission.

Enemy Engaged: Comanche Vs Hokum (Empire/Razorworks)

Following in the rotor wash of its wellreceived predecessor Apache/Havoc, Empire's Comanche Vs Hokum looks to be the breakout sim of this group. Offering detailed treatments of the U.S. Army's stealthy new RAH-66 Comanche and the Russian Ka-52 Hokum, three fully dynamic campaigns and an option to import helos and campaigns from the original Apache/Havoc into the game, CvH is an impressive product from top to bottom. Accurate flight modeling and sophisticated avionics have always been a hallmark of Razorworks sims, and the company's newest release certainly lives up to this credo. Despite the high level of authenticity in place here, newbie pilots will also have the option to scale back the sim's difficulty and flight model fidelity so it's more user-friendly.

Although CvH has been available in Europe for some time now, Empire isn't planning to release it in the U.S. until sometime in July. From what I've seen so far, it should be well worth the wait.

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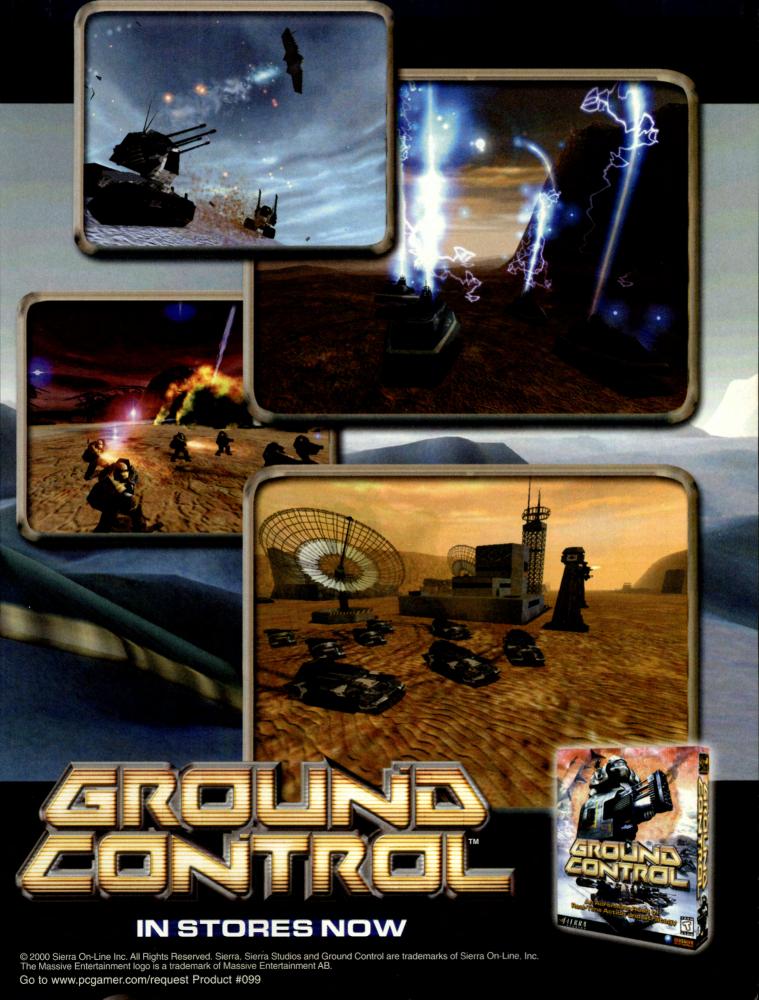
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Thief 2: The Metal Age

Some of the best moments in *Thief 2* play out like a classic Hollywood heist film. Joints are cased, maps are consulted, and the occasional skull is cracked. It's a thrilling game, but it's not easy. A detailed walk-through would take dozens of pages, so here are some strategies for each of the 15 stages at the normal difficulty level. With our help, you'll live long enough to be a member of the Guild of Retired Thieves.



LEVEL 1

Running Interference

- Naturally, the first level is the easiest.
 You shouldn't need more than a few water arrows.
- Once Basso is on the move, he can't be stopped, so douse every torch you come across just to be on the safe side.
- Remember, you can't kill anyone, so blackjack the first pair of guards quickly and then move on.
- There is a nice bonus in the wine rack in the kitchen.
- Also, take the dumb waiter up for some quick profit and a helpful key.
- Once you find Jenivere, you have to return to the starting point of the map or else Basso won't hear the whistle.
- The fireplace in the ballroom will help you earn a "bonus objective".

LEVEL 2

Shipping...and Receiving

- The docks are an easy place to hide a corpse. Bring some water and broadhead arrows.
- Near the beginning, there is a crate with some helpful tools inside.
- When you find the main office, be sure to check on top of the mailboxes for a quick deposit.
- One of the guards on the second floor of Building B has a key you need.
- And one of the guards on the first floor has Davidson's Key.
- Don't use fire arrows on the cameras unless absolutely necessary. The explosions make a terrible racket and you might be detected.
- Davidson's ship has three very special secrets for you to discover.

LEVEL 3

Framed

- You can't kill or K.O. anyone in the police department, so invest in a lot of water arrows.
- Head immediately toward the front desk. Open the main gate, turn off the security alarm, and grab the water arrows nearby.
- Go up the stairs first. Grab the handkerchief from Lt. Hagan's office, and the key and arrow from Mosley's office.
- Hit "M" to bring up your map, and scroll to the left. Use this handy "notes" page to write down the vault code you found in the Secured Records area.
- Use the "drop" function to plant the handkerchief anywhere in the vault.
- Don't forget to slip the strongbox into Hagan's office.
- The target range can be very rewarding to accurate archers.

LEVEL 4

Ambush

- This level is about staying alive, not killing others. Water arrows and a rope arrow come in handy.
- Remember, you can't kill anyone, so don't toss unconscious bodies into the canals. They'll drown.
- Early on, don't attempt to knock out the three guards by the gate. There is a door nearby. Use it to slip past them.
- Behind your apartment is a wooden fire escape — use the rope arrow.
- Keep off the streets whenever possible.
 There are many window ledges throughout the town. Use them.
- The building on the east side of the market has a ladder to get to the rooftops.
- There are two ways to get to the main gate: running or clubbing. Running is easier and quicker.
- Don't slow yourself down looking for secrets; there aren't any on this level.



In Level 5, use a moss arrow to cover the loud metal plates around the altar so you won't be heard.

LEVEL 5

Eavesdropping

- There is a lot to be done. Bring water and moss arrows, and either an invisibility potion or a rope arrow.
- When approaching the altar, lay down a moss arrow before grabbing everything, including the collection plate.
- It's safer to listen at the eastern door.
- The safety deposit box key is in a random location each time this map is played. Nonetheless, remember where you do find the key because you will have to return it there.
- Use the rope arrow in the west tower.
- Behind a locked door near the front gate is the level's only secret.

LEVEL 6

First City Bank and Trust

■ This is a heist in the true sense of the word. Bring water and moss arrows, a fire arrow, and an invisibility potion.



The bull's-eye you find in the weapons room in Level 7 is tempting, isn't it? Maybe you should hit it...

- Go east and open the front doors of the bank. Don't enter here because it's too well guarded, but opening these doors now allows for a quick exit.
- Remember, light switches can be activated with broadhead arrows.
- Look closely at the cameras: they have wires that lead to switchboxes. Follow these wires, and you'll find a way to turn off their power.
- Take to the stage for a special performance in the music room.
- Once in the vault, close the door and use a fire arrow on the camera. The vault is solid: don't worry about the noise you make.

LEVEL 7

Blackmail

- There are a lot of enemies to dispatch on this level, but luckily there are quite a few tools to be procured on-site. Just make sure you have enough water and moss arrows.
- Search all of the nearby houses when you start. Those servant's quarters make for easy pickin's.
- Don't go through the front door, it's too crowded. Head south and go through the hole in the wall concealed by bushes.
- Due south of the mansion is a hidden cemetery stocked with goodies.
- Enter Truart's mansion from the east. The guard with the steel gear patrols near the back foyer.
- There's something special about the weapons room.
- The silver key will be moist when you find it

CHEATER'S CORNER

>>> ROGUE SPEAR: URBAN OPS



Delivering a headshot won't be a problem with all of these Urban Ops cheats.

Hit your talk button (check your key configuration to find out what it is) and type in the codes

God Mode — avatargod Invisible Player — theshadowknows Replenish Inventory Items — 5fingerdiscount Team God — teamgod Turn Al Off — Nobrainer Turn Off Victory Conditions — explore

>>> TACHYON: THE FRINGE

Press 7 on your number pad when you're flying around in your ship and enter any of the following codes.

5000 Credits — ONE MILLION DOLLARS Activate Cheats — IM A CHEATER All Items Available — BOOM STICK An Items Available — BOOM STICK
Give All Ships — RAGTAG
Full Ammo — COME GET SOME
Full Energy — DILITHIUM
God Mode — QUICKENING
Instant Win by Returning to the Starbase —
THERE IS NO SPOON Upgrade Ship — KESSEL RUN

>>> MESSIAH

While in the game, press ESC and enter any of

Al Vision Off - icantsee

Al Vision On — icanseeu Al Off — braindead Al On — einstein

Armored Behemoth — mynightmare Barmon — bestfriend Bazooka — bigbang

Behemoth — onsteroids Bouncer — letmein

Buzzsaw — buzzbuzz Companion Bot — keepmecompany Character Wireframe Off — charwireoff

Character Wireframe On — charwireon

Chot 1 — smellyguy Chot 2 — nohygiene

Chot 3 — idontdance

Chot 4 — scumbucket Chot Behemoth — smellysteroids

CHEATER'S CORNER

>>> MESSIAH (continued)



With these Messiah cheats, you'll never have to pray for divine intervention.

Chot Dwarf — chotling DJ — mixalot Dancer 1 — bustamove Dancer 2 — cutarug Domina — incharge End Game — toohardforme Female Dweller 1 — janeplain Female Dweller 2 — jillplain Flamethrower — lightmeup Freeze Camera — freezecam Fungirl — fungirl God Mode (Bob only) - ucantkillme God Mode Off - fleshnblood Grenades — getsome Gun Commander — guncmndr Harpoon Gun — stickaround Heavy Cop — hcop Hung — specialguy Light Cop — Icop Machine Gun — rapidfire Maimer — slicendice Male Dweller 1 — averagejoe Male Dweller 2 — averagejack Male Dweller 3 — averagejohn Maser — coolfx Medic — heydoc Medium Cop — mcop Offensive Bot — addedfirepower Pak Gun - cooloff Pimp Daddy — tophat Polycount off — offpolycount Polycount on — onpolycount Prost 1 — workit Prost 2 — mansdream Pumpgun — boomstick Radiation Worker - glowstick Rat — varmint Riot Cop — rcop Scientist — egghead Sub Girl 1 — femfatale Sub Girl 2 - nastyone Thaw Camera — thawcam Waitress — bringmeadrink Weapon Ammo — illbeback Welder — cantseemyface Welding Torch — weldme Worker — workinman World Wireframe Off — worldwireoff World Wireframe On — worldwireon After you are done with Truart, head to the attic and grab the slowfall potion in the crate. Then simply slowfall from the roof and get back out to the streets.

LEVEL 8

Trace the Courier

- You're a spy in this level, not an assassin. You only need a few water arrows.
- Unlike most levels, running is a good idea here. Dart from shadow to shadow.
- When Lt. Mosley drops the letter, read it, but quickly put it back on the ground.
- Near the drop point for the letter is a door. Behind the door is an invisibility potion. Grab it.
- The pagan is more cautious than Mosley, so keep your distance.
- Use the invisibility potion by the bridge to slip past the guards.
- Just east of the cemetery are two unlit torches. One of them provides quick access to the crypts.

LEVEL 9

Trail of Blood

- This level is a continuation of the previous one, so you can't buy any provisions.
- One of the rubies is by a great mouth; the other is in a house.
- Check the pools of water by the eye plants.
- There are vine arrows located near the magic bridge.
- Gathering a certain amount of loot will earn you a bonus objective.
- There are no secrets on this level.

LEVEL 10

Life of the Party

- There is a lot of marble and iron in Angelwatch, so moss and water arrows will serve you best. An invisibility potion can also pull you out of a close call.
- There is one recording device on each of the six floors.
- Don't take the elevator for a quick ride to the top; it's noisy and obvious, but it does provide an excellent getaway.
- The statue on the fifth floor provides aid.
- There is some interesting Scriptural reading on the fifth floor.
- Don't waste all your weapons on the inside; there will be some company on the way back to the bell tower.
- The Necromancer's Spire is a special place.

LEVEL 11

Precious Cargo

 As usual, water arrows are a thief's best friend. Don't waste money on too many flash bombs since you will find some.



- There is a guard on top of the cold storage. Approach him by climbing up onto the roof to the east and put an arrow into him from a distance.
- Don't hesitate to use vine arrows; they can be plucked out from the ceilings and reused - if you don't mind falling from the ceiling.
- Do some special searching on the top floor of the old house.
- Traveling underwater is the best way to make an unseen entry. Most of the important rooms have an aquatic entrance.
- It's always a good idea to toss the corpses in the water — they'll never be found, and they won't stink up the place as much!
- The entrance to the pirate's cove is underwater and under a curse.
- Look for the New Scripture of the Master Builder to be rather soggy when you find it.
- Likewise, expect the key to Cargo Bay 5 to be rather rusty when you find it.

LEVEL 12 Kidnap

Since you are arriving at the lost city as a stowaway, there is no chance to buy weapons, but lay off the fire arrows and frogbeast eggs unless you want lots and lots of swordplay.



In Level 10, this statue on the fifth floor can help.

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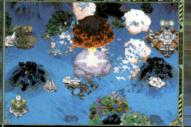
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Real-Time Strategy

CHEATER'S CORNER

DIE HARD TRILOGY 2 <<<



All these cheats, but not a single one that'll give you change for the soda machine.

Hit ESC during the game and type in any of the following codes:

Invincibility — painless Toggle Fog — fogging Move Camera - followme

SHOOTING STAGE CHEATS:

All Guns — weapons **Endless Ammo Supply** -Turn Auto-reload On and Off — autoreload Turn Auto-fire On and Off — autofire Slow Motion Enemies — slowmo Slow Motion Rockets — slowrocket

ACTION STAGE CHEATS: Enemies Are Frozen — freeze Turns Auto-targeting On and Off - targeting Turns Laser Sight On and Off — laser Turns Off Clipping — ghost Jump High — followterrain Turns on Skeleton Mode — mrbones Turns on Electric Mode — shocked Goes to First Person View - fps Turns on More Blood — fragyuck

Everyone Has Small Heads — pillowmode

Everyone Has Big Heads — bighead **DRIVING STAGE CHEATS:** Go Through Walls - ghost Unlimited Nitros — nitro Drive Faster — chantastic Toggle Timer — freeze Turns on Snow - snow

Tires Only - susonly

FREESPACE 2 <<<

To activate cheat codes, type "www.freespace2 .com" while in game and you'll get a "Cheats Activated" message. Then press and hold the tilde

(~) key and type in any of these codes.

Destroy Currently Targeted Subsystem -

Infinite Weapons For All Ships - Shift+W Infinite Weapons For Just Your Ship - W Invulnerability — I

Issue a Rearm Request For Target - R Kill Target — K

Mark All Bonus Goals Complete — Alt+G Mark All Primary Goals Complete — G Mark All Secondary Goals Complete -Shift+G

Toggle Descent-style Physics — 0 Toggle Availability of Countermeasures for All Ships - Shift+C

Toggle Invulnerability For Target - Shift+I

- Site 9 is the key to getting out alive here. Head directly to it and clear it out. In the northeast room there is a gas arrow in a trunk. Grab it.
- Don't venture too deeply into the caves unless you have plenty of time or are looking for a challenge. Instead, wait for Cavador to travel between Site 6 and Site 4: it is the closest to the exit at Site 9.
- There is some collectable excavation equipment at Site 6.
- There's some interesting reading at Site 5.
- When kidnapping Cavador, knock him out first, or else he will simply run away while you battle with the guards.

LEVEL 13

Casing the Joint

- You can't kill anyone while casing the joint; ignore deadly tools in favor of water and moss arrows, and an invisibility potion.
- When disabling the security system, only turn off the cameras by flipping the top switches to "off". Throwing the bottom switches turns on the deadly cannons.
- The mansion is full of secret passages, which link all of the rooms together.
- To get to the third floor, look for a toolbox on the balcony of the ballroom.
- Use what you find in the toolbox on the clock. Manipulate the clock to advance.
- Once you have completed the objectives, break the windows on the eastern part of the third floor. If you have enough health you can jump out of the window to the ledge below and then to the street, bypassing those pesky guards.

LEVEL 14

Masks

- This level takes place in the same locale as the previous one, but now you can kill with impunity. You start out with most everything you'll need, but bring some gas arrows and an invisibility potion.
- Once again, turn off the cameras but be careful not to turn on the cannons.

- There are several different ways to enter the mansion. In the northwestern part of the courtyard, it is possible to breakin through the windows.
- Remember, you can lean not only left and right, but forward as well. The masks you have to collect sit on booby-trapped floors. By edging close and leaning forward (default ALT+W) you can snag the masks without triggering the traps.
- Use the slowfall potion trick on the third floor to again float to safety. If the level doesn't immediately end, unlock the eastern doors and move in and out to trigger the game to end the level.

LEVEL 15

Sabotage at Soulforge

- This is easily the most complicated level in Thief II. Invest in at least one invisibility potion - mech-guards can see but they can barely hear - and at least two vine and two fire arrows.
- Vine arrows are the key to advancing. Look at the ceiling for rusted metal grates and use the vines to get up to areas you couldn't otherwise reach.
- Don't waste ammo on mech-guards. Position a wall or a door between you and their right arm; they will take damage from their own cannon shots.
- Clean out all the storage rooms. You won't use most of the stuff you find, but there is no inventory limit and carrying several items won't slow you down.
- In Bay D, you'll need to shoot the elevator switch with an arrow, and then use a vine arrow to climb up to activate the machines.
- Not all of the signal towers are shown on the map. When you bring the guiding beacon to the signal room in the northern apse, there is a signal tower beyond the door on the northern wall. Make it the first of the five towers you visit.
- Although the final objective warns you to get out before Karras seals the Cathedral, in practice you have plenty of time.
- That's it; you're done you win! Enjoy the fruits of your skulking.



In Level 14, lean forward to snatch the masks.



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ave something to say about the world of gaming? Got a great suggestion to help improve the magazine? Just want to rag on Dan Morris a little? No problem...here's the place to do it.

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Soldier of Fortune gets kudos for trying something different while also giving the gamer the choice of how to implement the save game feature.

The Complainer

There have been a few things that have been bugging me lately, and I just thought I'd mention them here and see if you have any thoughts:

- 1. The Sims I tried the demo, and it seemed pretty interesting so I bought the game. I was building a nice place, and pleased with the progress, when all of a sudden I began to realize that this game was sort of emulating my life; get up, go to work, come home, mouse around, go to bed, wake up, repeat. After a while, I realized that the game, if it even is a game, was incredibly tedious and boring. Why do in a game what you spend all day doing? I just don't get it.
- 2. Limited saves in games It's only cropped up once or twice, but limited saves is the lowest form of game design arrogance there is. It's not up to the designers to tell me how I should play a game. The company that built my car doesn't tell me how to drive it, and the cook at the restaurant that made my food doesn't tell me how to eat it games are no different.
- **3.** Game uninstalls Why don't uninstallers delete everything? Couldn't they at least ask if I want my save game directory deleted, instead of just assuming I don't?
- **4.** I downloaded a demo of a game that was a special level (i.e. it didn't appear in the game). What a good idea. I think game companies should consider creating levels

just for demo release so that the full game is a completely fresh experience.

5. Why do fruit roll-ups have directions? I think I can figure out that I have to unroll, then peel, then eat. Sheesh.

— Darren, via the Internet

Thanks for writing in Darren.
You make some very valid
points, and here's our response:

1. If you only play to succeed,
then yes, The Sims might eventually become a bit tedious. The
beauty of the game, however, is
its open-ended design that lets
you try all kinds of different and

sometimes devious ways to lead your Sim through his daily existence. Try starting up a new game without worrying about getting ahead in the rat race, and we think you'll find a whole new level of enjoyment.

2. Agreed. We say always give the gamer the ability to save whenever he wants. The developer can include a mode that forces the gamer to save a certain way, but it should be optional. See Soldier of Fortune for an excellent example of how it should be done.

3. And please, please, please, make sure the uninstall feature clears out any stray registry entries. If this were the case, we wouldn't have to reformat our hard drives every six months.

- 4. With the cost and time it takes to develop games these days, don't count on this becoming a common occurrence. It would be greatly appreciated by many gamers, however.
- **5.** There are directions? If only we'd have known ...we would have saved ourselves a lot of trouble picking the wax paper out of our teeth!

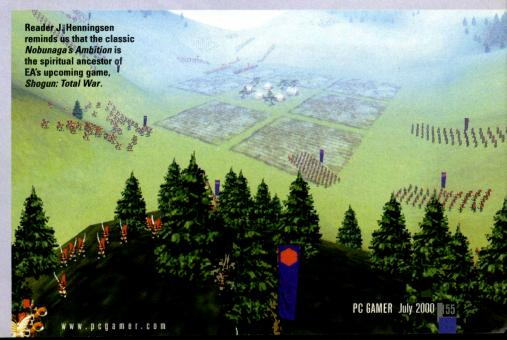
A Koei Correction

Please inform T. Liam McDonald that he incorrectly identified a series of games in his Scoop! on Shogun: Total War. The series is Romance of the Three Kingdoms...not Romance of the Seven Kingdoms. The series is based on the historical novel Three Kingdoms, which details the Han Dynasty of early China. Last time I checked, Three Kingdoms was also the number two top-selling book of all time behind the Bible, which is why I could not let this slip by unnoticed.

In addition to these great games, the folks over at Koei did indeed make games based on feudal Japan. The most notable, although a bit dated, is *Nobunaga's Ambition* (and sequel).

- J. Henningsen, via the Internet

Thanks for the heads-up, J. We fondly remember these Koei games, and apologize for the confusion. It will be nice to be able to visit this subject matter once again on our PCs when Shogun hits the store shelves later this year.



The Fairer Sex Speaks Out

I am a woman who loves playing computer games of all kinds. I want to send a big thank you for your review of Teen Digital Diva II in your May issue. I hope that this review helps steer parents away from buying this game (and, in my opinion, any other game from Girl Games). Thank you for letting game developers know that girls (and women, for that matter) want something with substance. We don't all care about hair and makeup. I would like to have the option to buy my teenaged daughter something that doesn't



Danielle Morris was once a popular and attractive high school student...but after her experience with Teen Digital Diva II, she no longer leaves her room.

measure her worth or her free time in terms of her looks or her relationships.

I think I am like many women gamers out there. It doesn't matter what the genre is, as long as it's an exciting game, with a good plot or device, I'll play it. A good plot device, however, doesn't mean halfnaked babes and a big gun. I realize that the gaming market is for cuvs 18

to 35, but that's changing, and developers need to realize this. More women are buying computers and want to relax at the end of the day with something other than a shot of a Ccup and mini-shorts (yes, Lara, I mean you).

So, thanks, PC Gamer for giving a review that should (although it probably won't) shake up some game developers. I hope that in the future we women can look forward to some games that contain elements that appeal to both sexes. Thanks for letting me vent.

- Debbie Muzarol, via the Internet

P.S. By the way, it's great to see Lisa Renninger so prominent on both your website and in your magazine!

We feel your pain Debbie (especially "Danielle" Morris who was forced to "play" Teen Digital Diva II for that review). In fairness, though, the original Teen Digital Diva must have done fairly well to warrant a sequel, so there is a customer base out there that does want this type of product. It's just a shame that the "game" itself is so shallow and condescending to its target audience. (P.S. Thanks, Debbie! Great letter! -- Lisa)

Bad Games Bonanza

I was a little disappointed with the May 2000 issue. First of all, it's the shortest PC Gamer I've ever seen. Second, what was with the

reviews? Were there not enough real games out there that you had to review Swamp Buggy Racing? That's almost as bad as Deer Avenger! C'mon, did it really need a review? And then there's Teen Digital Diva II. That's not even a game! Did you intend to review that disgrace to software everywhere, or was it some kinda sick joke? Stick to real games - not crap like that (and I didn't need to see Dan, Greg, and Jeremy's faces mutilated like that at the bottom of the page!). Was getting a new editor so traumatizing that the crew lost all focus on the PC Gamer tradition of quality and fell into a terrible depressive state for an entire month? Small mag, really odd "games" reviewed — what's going on?

- C. Pacelli, via the Internet

While it would be nice if every month we were filled to overflowing with Editors' Choice reviews, sometimes that's just not going to happen. It's a particularly slow time of the year for game releases, and unfortunately, the batch that came in for review were, shall we say, underwhelming. But we provided a much-needed service to our readers by warning them away from some of the crap that passes for games these days.

Thanks (hiccup),

Thank you so much for your "drunk driving" article on page 136 of your May issue (The Sim Column). Fantastic! Not only am I an avid gamer, but I am also a community consultant for the Governor's Commission For A Drug-Free Indiana. In my job, I help volunteer groups reduce substance abuse in their counties. Needless to say, drunk driving is a big issue throughout all of my communities, especially with prom and graduation season upon us. Many groups are holding "mock crashes" (a fatal drunk driving accident is



glad we warned you about it before you made the mistake of buying it? Bad reviews can be good.

staged) and having MADD speakers come to high schools and college campuses alike.

After sharing your article with my colleagues, we are thinking of hooking my Dreamcast up at our next youth event and putting Fatal Vision goggles on the kids to show them the impairment of a drunk driver. Fear not! Fatal Vision goggles simulate drunk driving only by altering your vision. No one actually gets drunk. We also think that some gaming companies might want to make drunk driving games that show just how lousy reflexes are while under the influence.

I applaud PC Gamer for your article and thank you. I also hope that Mr. Mahood, author of the article, has recovered from his hangover.

> - Margaret Lion Community Consultant. Governor's Commission For A Drug-Free Indiana www.spea.indiana.edu/commission

Andy is doing just fine Margaret...thanks for asking. We applaud your efforts to teach kids (and adults) the perils of drinking and driving, and we're glad we could help in our own little way.

"It sucked a mountain of ass the size of an Imperial Star Destroyer"

Dan Morris's comments in the May 2000 issue about Episode 1: The Phantom Menace (quoted above) met with quite a bit of disgust from many Star Wars fans who loved the movie. We thought we'd share...

The vile creature that is editor Dan Morris must die.

- An angry and betrayed reader, via the Internet

I am tired of all the Episode 1 bashing. - Paul Martin, via the Internet

You're a bunch of idiots! Just who the hell do you think you are, questioning the vision of the creator of the Star Wars universe, George Lucas? The Phantom Menace rules! If you can do better, why don't you quit your job at PC Gamer and start a movie production company? And

since when is PC Gamer a magazine that reviews movies? Stick to what you do at least reasonably well, which is review and report on PC games, and leave the movie reviews to the experts.

- Draven, via the Internet

... as for George Lucas, give the guy a break...Yeah, I know you're a big, bad-ass magazine journalist and everything, but George is still a true master...

- Eric Mecca, via the Internet

Morris, you're a moron!

- Rob Smith, from across the desk

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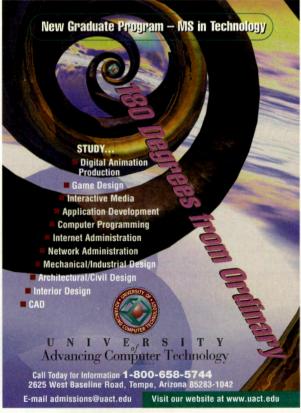




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BACKSPACE

Cliffy B (as he's known to his groupies) has been working the online community since the original *Unreal*. In between creating the "cat scan" web site (you had to see it to believe it), he found time to be lead designer on *Unreal Tournament*. He's...

Cliff Bleszinski

How the devil are you?

My hemorrhoids are flaring up something fierce from deathmatching all day long. Oh, wait, I'm super busy working on our Next Big Thing — don't print that first part.

What was the first game you ever played?

Space Invaders on the Atari 2600 at our neighbor's house. I must have been six or seven years old. They were one of those trashy families that spoiled their kids even though they couldn't afford it, and I used to bum games off of them. Later they wound up getting a pool, and that came in handy, too.

How did you get into the games industry?

I slept my way in. Hey, some people believe that our biz is getting closer to Hollywood, and I'm just working toward that goal.

What's the worst game you've been involved with?

I did this god-awful adventure game for Epic called *Dare to Dream* years ago. It was one big nonsensical digital acid trip, and I remain ashamed of it to this day.

What's the best game you've played recently?

Opposing Force for Half-Life rocks. That was a full game, right? It was priced as one!

And the Worst?

There are no bad games, only bad programmers.

What's the greatest moment in the history of gaming?

Seeing the "lactating breasts" level in FAKK2 while drunk in a trailer in the GOD parking lot at E3 last year. That was a magical, surreal moment.

Have you ever been arrested?

No, but I've been harassed by customs officials at the Canadian border. Those guys are mean after some Tim Horton's coffee.

What are you like when you're drunk?

I think I can dance. You'd better not have a hardwood dance floor, or I'll burn it up!

Violence in Gaming: Legitimate Concern or Just Media Hysteria?

Our games are made for adults and older teens. We only use violence when it serves the Almighty Gameplay, i.e. the "Headshots" in *Unreal Tournament* are there for strategy; blood is a visual indication of hitting your foe, etc...

Did playing Doom make you want to kill anybody?

When I was playing *Doom*, I was living at Mom's house. We lived in Southern California and my mother refused to run the air conditioning. My room happened to be upstairs, and I had two computers running in the room, and the temperature would become unbearable. There were days where I was very frustrated with teen angst and the 120-degree heat did not help. Playing *Doom* always made me feel better and probably prevented me from harming my beloved Mom.

Pick five words to describe yourself. Pretty fly for (a) white guy!

What are you likely to complain about in a hotel?

Thin walls. Hearing folks scream like banshees next door or hearing a party nearby so well that you can make out the words to "Superfreak" are high on my complaint list.

What do you have in your pockets right now? Gold chains, and lots of them.

What's your most unpleasant characteristic?

I'm not a gracious winner. I will rub my gaming victories in the faces of my foes relentlessly and enjoy every moment of it. I enjoy doing the pelvic thrust in *UT* while saying things like "Bow down!" and "You like that?"

What music do you want played at your funeral?

"Fantastic Voyage," by Coolio, as my soul will be on that most fantastic of voyages. Well, hopefully.

Online gaming: Overrated fad or inevitable future?

Never underestimate the power of a technology that allows people to meet and virtually molest each other. Technology is driven by either pornography or humor, and online gaming gives gamers another way to sexually harass each other, so it's bound to grow.

II I'm not a gracious winner. I enjoy doing the pelvic thrust in UT while saying 'Bow down' and 'You like that?'

What game do you wish somebody would make?

Sim-Prison. James at Digital Extremes mentioned this to me once and I think it would rock. You could have public floggings, riots, and the latest in Prison Technology!

Where are you off to now?

I'm going to play some Quake III deathmatch under the pseudonym "Jar Jar" and beat down people while saying "Yousa people gonna DIE!" Roleplaying is a beautiful thing.

PC GAMER

JULY 2000

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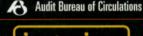
Production Director • Richard Lesovoy Production Coordinator • Larry Briseno

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Media with Passion

The months of effort were about to pay off. The staffers, with their lab coats and clipboards, loomed over the technical editor's desk as he made

final adjustments to the Subject.

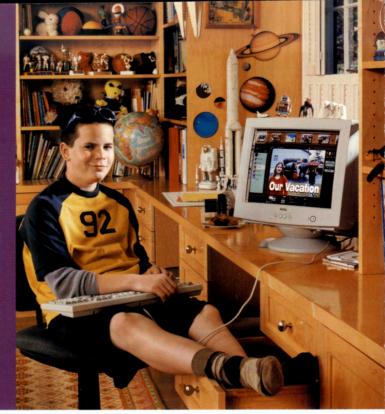
"The Six Million Dollar Hamster is about to pass from the clean slate of scientific theory into the unpredictable realm of the hard and real," he announced, with a tone of grave import.

announced, with a tone of grave import.

There was a chorus of gasps as he pulled back the sheet to reveal the Subject.

"Yes," the editor continued. "We can rebuild him. We have the technology." (Continued...)

17 hours of our trip to Mt. Rushmore edited down to 4 thrilling minutes.





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