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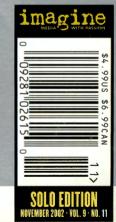
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shpoint: Resistance and Icewind Dale II



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Blood Violence

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Game of the Year

Computer Games Magazine - 2000

Action Game of the Year

CGW - 2000

Action Game of the Year

PC Gamer - 2000

Action Game of the Year

Gamespot - 2000

5 Stars out of 5

Computer Games Online - 2000

How to Get a Job in the Games Industry

The World's 0.92 t-Selling PC 0.64 nes Magazir 0.80 Black & White II



## Seven high-end systems



Step-by-step pictorial

(starring The Vede



- Create your own wireless gaming network-
- → Every burning hardware question answered

#### HANDS-ON BLOWOUT!















#### Hard Stuff XXL

Everything you've ever wanted to know about your gaming hardware is covered in this massive feature. Learn how to set up a wireless LAN in your home and how to build a faster-than-light gaming rig. Plus, we highlight the must-have peripherals and the best PCs money can buy. And did we mention there's a review of ATI's new screamer, the RADEON 9700, along with some of the best folio fillers this side of the Mississippi?



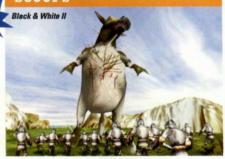


#### FEATURE

#### 102 The 10 Scariest PC **Games Ever**

Just in time for Halloween comes this spook-tacular revelation of the 10 freakiest computer games of all time. We highly recommend that before entering this dark chamber of horrors, you turn on all the lights, lock the doors, and peek under the bed.

#### SCOOPS



#### Black & White II

Exclusive! We've got the first look at this exciting seguel that'll combine the best elements of the original game with massive human armies, city defenses, and eye-blowing graphics.

#### Delta Force: Black Hawk Down

Based on the events of Operation Restore Hope, this shooter promises great Al and graphics, and some of the most intense tactical combat ever.

#### BloodRayne

Lots of Nazis to kill. Check. Hot half-vampire chick as the hero. Check, Over-the-top, ultra-gory combat, Check, Full report and all the details. Check.

#### 28 HANDS-ON

We've got 11 hands-on reports this month, including the latest word on RollerCoaster Tycoon 2. No One Lives Forever 2. Ghost Recon: Island Thunder, and Age of Mythology.





ON THIS MONTH'S PCG CD Damn, we rock. We scored the full version of America's Army, plus demos of Iron Storm, Batman: Vengeance, Aaron Hall's Dungeon Odyssey, and Soldiers of Anarchy!

# REVIEWS Aliens vs. Predator & Primal Hunt

- 146 AvP 2: Primal Hunt
- 126 Big Scale Racing
- 120 Celtic Kings
- 128 Emperor: Rise of the Middle Kingdom
- 122 Farscape
- 144 Hooligans
- 134 Hyperspace Delivery Boy!
- 134 The Italian Job
- 114 Madden NFL 2003
- 126 MoonBase Commander
- 110 Operation Flashpoint: Resistance
- 129 The Partners
- 140 Prince of Qin
- 116 Rock Manager
- 138 Strategic Command
- 129 Tsunami 2265
- 132 U.S. Open 2002

#### THE HARD STUFF

Vederman is so tired from all the work that he put into the massive hardware feature that he's currently sleeping under his desk. Don't worry, though: he has a surprise waiting for him when he wakes up.



#### STRATEGY

#### 158 Operation Flashpoint: Resistance

Fending off the encroachment of vicious Soviet forces isn't easy, so here's a complete walk-through to get you in and out without casualties.

#### 164 Icewind Dale II

With massive RPGs, a good strategy can mean the difference between success and hideous failure. Thankfully, we finagled a complete walkthrough out of the experts at Black Isle Studios.

#### DEPARTMENTS

#### 4 Letters

A soldier sounds off on America's Army, we get assaulted for making fun of Russia, and Johnny Mc regales us with a terrifying tale of woe. Yeesh!

#### 46 Evewitness

Everyone wants to get a job in the games industry, and this month we tell you how! We also have full coverage of QuakeCon, the results of a recent Playlist contest, and more!

#### 150 Sim Column

Strategy First and Wal-Mart team up and give the shaft to combat flight-sim fanatics everywhere.

Andy gets to the bottom of the mess.

#### 152 Extended Play

Dan hops in his Mech and checks out two new add-on packs for the excellent MechWarrior 4.

#### 152 Killing Box

Chuck chats with the boys behind the *Day of Defeat* mod and gets the inside scoop on their new relationship with Valve.

#### 154 Alternate Lives

Is solo play a new trend in RPGs, or is partybased gaming still the way to go? Steve dons his fedora and investigates.

#### 154 Desktop General

What do Trotter's three-year bank job and printable game manuals have in common? Behold.

#### 176 Backspace

Our mind-altering crossword will leave you breathless, brainless, and numb from the waist down.

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#### LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

#### "It reminds us of all that once was good, and could be again."



As a huge sports fan — Giants baseball, 49ers (and Raiders) football, Earthquakes U.S. soccer, my beloved Sheffield United UK soccer, golf, tennis, pool (and snooker), rugby, horse racing, and the king of all sports, cricket — the PC has given me plenty of

opportunities to live out on- and off-field glory in pursuit of trophies, championships, and legend.

Just recently the latest versions of Madden football, NHL hockey (not a fave, but the games are great), Links and Tiger Woods golf, and U.S. Open tennis have joined High Heat 2003 as permanent fixtures on my hard drive. With high hopes for the upcoming FIFA 2003, it's been a sports-tacular few weeks in a genre all-but-abandoned on the PC. That's good news, for sure, though here's the obvious but...

But while the graphics are about as good as I need them to be, and the animations are improving as steadily as I hoped they would, and the realism factor of stadiums and player/team licenses is as good as it'll get, there's a gaping hole that should be the No. 1 focus of any sports game in development: online multiplayer options.

Opponent AI has improved across the board, with High Heat's dynamics being the finest exponent of re-creating any on-field match-up on your PC. Yet while I've had a blast winning World Cups, league championships, pennants, and Grand Slams against the computer, I've never had more fun playing a sports game than when it was against another real person. With the exception of virtual golf tours, the online multiplayer components of these games have been horribly neglected.

Don't tell me that a PC's broadband connection can't deal with the packets that even the Dreamcast modem was able to chuck across phone lines with gay abandon. Sports-game developers, please remember: If you make it, they will come. Build lobbies, easy matchmaking, and deeper ongoing league options, and PC gamers will come to play — I guarantee it. Well, I'll be there anyway.

On another note, welcome to our first hardware-focused issue in quite some time. I'm convinced that our fantastic collection of stories will answer your every technical question, and that you'll be saving this issue as a reference for years to come.

Let me know what you think when you send your entries to the monthly quote contest, where you can be just like randomly chosen winner Duane Richards, who gets some assorted junk for spotting last month's line from the movie Sabrina!



Rob Smith Editor-in-Chief

# So Good, They Hurt

We want to hear from you! Write to us at PC Gamer Letters, Imagine Media, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005, or email us at letters@pcgamer.com.



#### **EXX TONED-DOWN DEMO?**

I JUST LOADED UP the Soldier of Fortune II demo from your September 2002 issue CD, and I'm wondering: Why do I have no option to turn on (full) violence? Why did you make this decision for me? It seems a little hypocritical given your magazine's negative stance toward government censorship of games. I'm a long-time subscriber to PC Gamer and will continue to be a loyal fan, but this really pissed me off in a very big way.

— Dugman

Whoa, easy on the "hypocritical" stuff there. It wasn't our call, and we didn't program the demo. Activision decided that its Soldier of Fortune II demo would feature minimal gore settings, not us! But while we're on the subject...

#### **MOMMA DON'T LIKE ALL THAT GORE**

I'VE BEEN GETTING your magazine for a few years now, and it's great. But I want to make a point to game makers that you will probably agree with. I understand that some parents don't like their

children playing violent and gory games. So I think Mature-rated games should have a code that comes with the game in a parents-only envelope. The code should unlock the M-rated version of the game. This seems like a fair compromise for adults who want to enjoy the game's gorier elements.

- Mike McDonough

A fair suggestion, Mike...and one that the industry is already acting on. Many new games come with a Gore Level setting in the options menu. In fact, some new demos feature only the minimized gore setting - much to our readers' chagrin!

#### \*\*NEW GAMES ON YOUR OLD PC"

I'VE NEVER WRITTEN into your magazine before, so forgive me if I seem a bit starstruck by your awesomeness. But I must say, the "How to Play

New Games on Your Old PC" article in your September 2002 issue was highly insightful, and the 500 Franklins section was pure genius: It made shopping for the right parts all that much easier. Keep up the good work. I'd rather not think about what would happen without my PC Gamer tucked safely beneath my bed among other magazines that, if found by my mother, could cause a whole lot of trouble.

- Roger Feltman

Roger, since you sent this letter from your mom's email account, we've got a feeling she knows already. [Dear readers: He really did email us from his mom's account. - Ed.1

#### **EXECUTE** LIKE PULLING TEETH

I WAS SITTING IN MY ROOM whining about my wisdom teeth (which had been pulled not two hours

#### **EX TWISTED MINDS**

I HAVE LOTS OF GOOD IDEAS for games, and I thought you could help me out by making them for me and then sending me the money. That way, I could move out on my own. So take your time. Anyway, here are my ideas (remember, they're my ideas):

(1) Happy Gnome: You're a silly little gnome wearing silly shoes that let you travel through time. The shoes' names are "shoe 1" and "shoe 4." Sometimes they argue and have to be separated. That's where the strategy aspect of the game comes into play. (2) Rainbow of Judgment: You're a rainbow, and you pass judgment.

(3) Racecar Man from Boise: There's this guy who drives the van here, and he's from Boise, and I told him that when I get rich and famous from being a computer guy, I'd make a game about him. He drives the van crazy-like sometimes, and yesterday I spilled my red Mountain Dew on the floor, and he made me clean it up.

(4) Wake Up Mr. Thomas: There's this really big guy named Mr. Thomas with really large glasses that works here. He cleans up the floor. He's always sleeping and you have to wake him up.

Thank you for listening to my ideas. I hope we can work together on them. If you have any ideas to add, please let me know, since I live here. Also, I told all my friends that I would be in your magazine, so could you print my letter so that I'm not a filthy liar? Thanks.

- Jason Buonomo

Damn your black heart, PC Gamer!!! I'm a frag junkie who has been waiting desperately for Unreal Tournament 2003 to come out like a golddigger waiting for her husband to die. It just can't happen soon enough! When your Release Meter said that it was coming out on Aug. 1, I had to start wearing Depends, I was so excited. Then the 1st came, and I have no UT2003 to satisfy me. Why would you toy with

Vederman, this is your fault somehow, I know it. None of you should leave the office anytime soon: I'm parked across the street with a burrito and a rifle.

— David Higgins

Put down that rifle, David! [Yeah, like, settle down, Beavis! - Ed.] It's not our fault. Remember, all dates on our Release Meter are given to us by the games' publishers, and are subject to change if games slip.

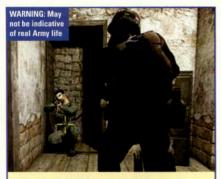
You Americans suck. You get all the best games way before us Australians do. For example, once we get a game here, if at all, you Americans are already over it and playing something else. God, I hate you. But your mag roxs!

- Disgruntled Australian

P.S. I hate you.







#### **ARMY PROPAGANDA!**

AS A MEMBER of the United States Army, I want to know if the America's Army game can simulate sweeping the motor pool or mowing the grass, and possibly picking up the garbage around post. How about trying to stay awake while you stare at the same screen for 12 hours? Call it "Guard Duty" simulation mode. These are things I've done week in and week out for two years. I want a game that pits my weed-whacking skills against other soldiers' online! If the Army could glamorize these facets of "Army Life," they'd have an honest recruiting tool.

- SPC Name Withheld

Actually, this soldier gave us his name along with his rank, but we're not going to run it because we'd like to spare him from two years of Kitchen Patrol if at all possible. Always looking out for our readers!

#### **SECOND SERVICE SAMES**



I'VE BEEN A READER of your great magazine for two years now, and something's been bugging me. I read your reviews of games like Extreme Rodeo. Hologram Time Traveler, Bass Avenger, and

Extreme PaintBrawl, and I gotta ask you, What the hell is wrong with these people? These games are worthless trash! Do the developers even test them before release? That's what I love about your mag: whenever I want to buy a computer game, I wait for your review. Please tell me why developers torture us with these garbage games! - Rich Rock

Rich, it's time you learned an important lesson about the world. You see, we are all beholden to the great god Money. And this god makes people do craven, despicable things. One proven way of satisfying it is to market contemptible budget-priced games to undemanding casual shoppers. That's why we here at PCG do our best to warn serious gamers away from the shovelware (and, in so doing, earn our humble, honest wage).

before), trying to read PCG, when I came upon your letters section. Some pretty fun stuff, and I did the worst thing possible: I laughed for about two seconds...then I was screaming. But, I think in the end, it was still worth reading. Keep up the good work and keep me in this terrible cycle of laughing and crying! - David Smith

Okayl Then without further ado...

#### **EXECUTE:** FROM RUSSIA WITH SPITE

PLEASE TELL CHUCK OSBORN, Dan Morris, and anyone else in your great magazine who makes fun of Russia that they are all dumb, burger-eating bastards. It's not polite, and you people lie about the subject too much. What are you trying to say when you say "the likes of Russia"? I know that your country tells you that we are cavemen who live in constant winter, but those are all lies! We don't make fun of you, so you should respect us!

- Konstantin

We're not even sure what you're referring to. Konstantin, but we concede that it's quite possible we made fun of Russia at some point. As for the "cavemen who live in constant winter" propaganda, we apologize for the exaggeration. We all know that Russia enjoys a whole month of sunlight each year.

#### **NICE SCORE**

ABOUT THREE MONTHS AGO my school had a "Go to work with someone's parents" day. I decided to go to work with my friend's dad, who works at Microsoft, It was a very boring day, but at the end of the day he let me pick one of any PC game they had! I chose Microsoft Flight Simulator 2002. I just thought that was pretty tight that they gave me a game.

- Element

That's pretty tight.

#### **₩ WHO NEEDS CEL-SHADING?**

IN YOUR AUGUST 2002 ISSUE you mentioned the cel-shaded spy action game XIII. While I don't want to stifle anyone's creativity, I have to say that if I wanted to see cel-shaded art, I'd buy a comic book. I don't think that many of us who spent lots of money on high-end video cards really want to see a cel-shaded look in a game. We want to see the best, highest detail and the most visually stimulating graphics available. That's why we bought that GeForce4, isn't it?

> - Doug Short Anchorage, AK

You might just change your mind when you see XIII in action, Doug. We spent some hands-on time with it at E3, and it's looking like a whole lot of fun with the unique visual style adding a lot to it, in our opinion. However, we definitely are nervous about the sudden vogue for cel-shading: I mean, once or twice is cool, but that's enough for our tastes.

#### **DO JOHN CARMACK ROCKET SCIENTIST?**

I RECEIVED A COPY of Air & Space magazine on the same day I got my copy of pure gaming goodness. I opened it and read that a John Carmack, founder of a company called Armadillo

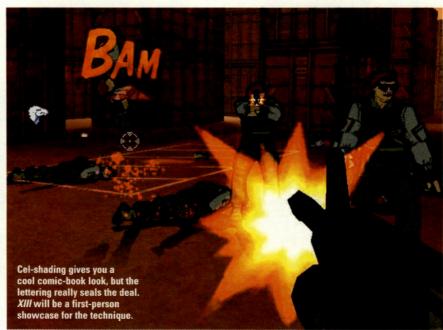
Aerospace, is trying to build an affordable passenger-carrying rocket to take passengers into space. Is this the same John Carmack who founded id Software and brought the world DOOM?

- Matt M.

Yep, it's the very same John Carmack (shown above). When he's not designing bleeding-edge rendering engines for PC games, Carmack is hard at work building the exotic space machines of the future. You can check on the progress of his venture at www.armadilloaerospace.com.

#### TIME FOR A WARNING LABEL?

YOU REALLY NEED TO PLACE a warning label inside your magazine! Every time my new PC Gamer





#### **EXECUTE** HOLY BADASS

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS HAS GIVEN us something that I've so hoped for in years of MMORPG playing: a cleric that whoops ass! I made one on a lark. I mean, EQ clerics suck, DAoC cleric types suck, and most other online clerics suck! Yeah, most have armor and good weapons, but they never fight: they just sit around and recover mana, power, or whatever.

My NWN cleric just stomps
ASS. An example: When I got the
Gate spell, I cast it. Sweet, I summoned a Balor! I forgot to use protection and it attacked me. Then I
put it down, and I got a shatload of
XP! I mean, I meleed the beast. Toe
to toe, mano a mano, took it to him.
First real online cleric I've ever had
that could fight anything major with
a chance to win. I summoned more.
You get XP for the Balor, so why not?

My point? Finally, a cleric that can whoop ass.

— RoboFury

#### **NOT NERDY ENOUGH**

I SINCERELY HOPE THAT DAN MORRIS is barred from reviewing anything to do with Star Wars in the future. In a previous issue, he referred to a Corellian Corvette as a "Rebel Cruiser." Hello? Corellian Corvettes are used by the Empire AND the Rebels. I believe he also referred to a Mon-Calamari Cruiser as a "Calamari Frigate." At least he got the race right that time. However, Mon-Cal ships are cruisers, not frigates. Please make sure he doesn't touch anything that has to do with Star Wars with a 100-foot pole.

- Nolan Bradley

Dan responds: "Nolan, sorry I neglected to do proper research on the proliferation of the Corellian Corvette. I think I cut it a bit short that night because I was looking forward to an evening of wild sex with a luscious Eastern European babe. [Dan, was that the one you "bought"? — Ed.] And by the way, the Mon-Calamari that you revere so much are named and modeled after a seafood hors d'oeuvre."



arrives, I rip the plastic off and head straight for the throne room. I usually get through about three-quarters of the mag when all of a sudden I realize I can no longer feel my legs. Luckily, I'm able to find the strength to lift long enough to wipe, but after that I end up falling to the floor and dragging myself to the couch in pain! How about a warning label in the middle of the mag for us guys who don't know when to quit?

- Johnny Mc

P.S. Someone please smack the Vede for me: his column gets more freaky every month.

#### **™ COMMANDOS FOR CANADA**

I TRIED COMMANDOS 2 the other day and I really liked it (it's hard!), but I'm told that the original is even better. I've looked and looked and can't find it anywhere. I was wondering if you guys might have a copy just laying around that you wouldn't mind sending to a fellow gamer up in Canada. (I don't think my king will mind.)

- Micah "Walther PPK" Boughan

We're torn on the whole issue of Eidos' Commandos. On the one hand, we all thought the first mission was brilliant. Then again, none of us ever solved the second mission because it was too flaming impossible. As far as you snaking a free copy, well, we looked. Can't find one. But at press time, the game was selling for \$9.99 at www.gamestop.com, and the site was also selling a bundle with Commandos and its Beyond the Call of Duty add-on for \$19.99.

#### **Y'ALL' BETTER GET IT RIGHT!**

YOUR REVIEW OF WARCRAFT III was right on the money. I got the game, played through the campaigns (each of them was *glorious*, and taken as a whole, they were *astounding*), and am now waging a one-man war against the depressingly skilled

Battle.net players. But I want more! Is there any word on a Warcraft III expansion? Perhaps with some old-school naval battles? I know it's a bit early, but if it were to come out in anything less than two years, Blizzard would have to have already started.

On another note, I'd like to point out the misuse of the term "y'all" in Andy Mahood's review of Hooter's Road Trip. "Y'all" is a shortening of "you all," and it's plural. It's used only in addressing more than one person, and in Mahood's review, the two characters refer to each other as "y'all." A minor mistake, really, but it irks me, and only non-Southerners ever make that goof. If Mahood is a Southerner, well, he should be ashamed of himself.

- Scott Douglas

To address both your concerns, Scott: (1) There's been no announcement about a Warcraft III addon, but let's just say that if we were betting folks, we might place a wager or two on it. (2) Andy Mahood hails from Vancouver, Canada. Therefore, by your criteria, there's no need for him to be ashamed of himself. We apologize for irking you. The South will rise again!

#### **EXECUTE** THE READER FROM IPANEMA

I LIVE IN BRAZIL AND I BUY the *PC Gamer* magazine every month when it comes out, although the price here is more expensive because it's an imported magazine. I'm sending this email to congratulate the staff for such a good magazine. The magazine is very well made and the funny comments within the game reviews are very good. Keep up the good work.

- Rafael Dornaus

"Tudo bem," Rafael!

knowledge disturbing.



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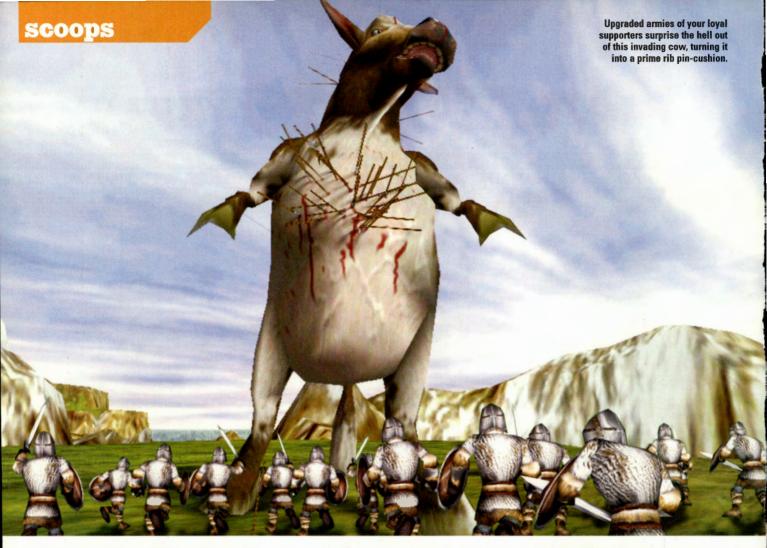
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## WHITE BLACK &

IN A NUTSHELL

This massive, ambitious sequel should far surpass its admirably flawed predecessor

lack & White didn't meet everyone's expectations. The story wasn't epic enough or well-written enough, and the gameplay mechanics weren't defined enough.

That might sound like heresy coming from a magazine that gave the game just 5% shy of a perfect score (January 2001 issue), but now go back and slap some quotation marks around those words, because they come from the mouth of B&W's own creator, Peter Molyneux.

You don't need to look hard to find critics among buyers of Lionhead's muchmarvelled god-game-cum-creature-sim-cum-RTS-cum-beat-'em-up. [In our office, two of us beat the game; the rest of us played with our monkeys for just a short while. -Ed.] For the sequel, Molyneux and Studio Head Jonty Barnes have much to ponder (which they continue to do, since many of the core features are still unspecified). And indeed, their re-imagining of the B&W experience starts right at the very beginning.

At its core, B&W II is refocusing on many of the ideals of the original game that got diluted or washed away in gameplay balances, stylistic designs, or just plain poor decisions. The main concept? "It's the idea that your land and everything you own are literally either dark and black and horrible as a consequence of you being evil, or [the opposite because] you decide to nurture, build, grow, and safeguard," Molyneux told us when we visited Lionhead Studios. "You can defend or you can go to war."



**CATEGORY: Strategy DEVELOPER: Lionhead Studios PUBLISHER: EA** WWW: lionhead.co.uk PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 30%

**RELEASE DATE: 2003** 

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL?: B&W II's aiming to be the game that B&W should've been. The concepts are being fleshed out and the awesome Al retained, and actual gameplay looks to be deep and satisfying.

#### **DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD:**

Before B&W, Molyneux worked on Dungeon Keeper (1997), another commercial/critical success. He's the epitome of a Game God, but he needs to show he still has the right stuff.





with more color and style in the townships.

# This green and peaceful land...five seconds before

a 50-foot-tall badass tiger lays the smack down.

#### THE MONSTER MASH

mportantly, it's not all down to your creature this time. Sure, he can be your main fighting unit, but this time the townspeople will be armed and dangerous and ready to do your bidding. With the introduction of a few more RTS-familiar functions like the blacksmithing building in which you outfit your voracious villagers with rocks, axes, spears, and arrows, you'll be controlling a formidable fighting force.

Epic battles between rival towns promise some seriously gruesome displays of large-scale carnage. To prove the point, Barnes sent a giant but defenseless cow into the firing line of thousands of antagonistic archers. As their arrows pierced the poor beast's hide, the plaintive face of the Friesian pin-cushion and the tiny trickles of blood that slowly weeped from its wounds left even this hard-hearted hack wincing.

It's this kind of colossal, earth-shattering scope that gets Molyneux's creative juices racing. "The spears are even worse than the arrows because they're a bit bigger and when your creature moves, they sort of wobble around," he describes.

While the creatures themselves might not be able to wield weapons, the team is planning to introduce wearable armor for

http://www.pcgamer.com

them. A system of currency may also be developed to pay for upgrades in the game world, but that's filed in the "TBD" pile.

You'll still teach your creature, but Lionhead is changing the methods of meting out punishment. Currently, a crude stick-and-nail combo is being used as a harsher hand slap, with other, more "creative" options emerging from the developers.

"I guess the biggest mistakes we made were with the introduction of the game and teaching people how to play. A huge mistake. We pissed off more people than we actually brought into the fold."

"I felt that the good-and-evil concept wasn't played out enough. There needed to be things that were far more polarized and the world should have changed far more."

"Some people didn't feel like the creatures had much use. You trained them up, but that was about it.

"And then the world --- [the players] didn't seem to care about it."

"The camera...this was another stupid thing. Absolutely stupid. You have all the flexibility of the original game in B&W II - but to get all of that flexibility, you now have to press Caps Lock. Otherwise, it's more of an overhead fixed view. Why the hell we didn't do that in the first game, I have no idea."

"[On alignment], we made one simple change that makes it so much better for you that it's ridiculous that we didn't do it [in the first game]. (Well, it's my fault it didn't go into the first game.) And that change is, when you punish or reward your creature, you are shown exactly what you are punishing or rewarding them for. It was ridiculous that we didn't have that in B&W, and I'm sure I argued till I was blue in the face not to have it, and I can't for the life of me remember why I did that. It was just a silly thing to leave out."

need some defensive turrets to repel attackers, so they've been included, too.

Molyneux's hope is that gamers will recognize the need to expand tiny towns into sprawling cities. "We found that people really wanted to build out and up, but there was no real reason to do it in the first game."

Due to the extra building and research necessary for both weapons and walls, a



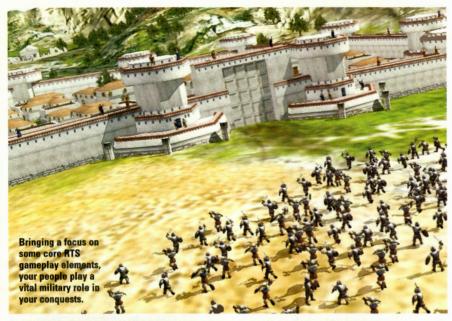
'We realized that we needed to make *Black & White II* more epic. So in the game, the first image is a flyover that gives the impression that the whole world and all of its - Peter Molyneux, Lionhead Studios people are at war."

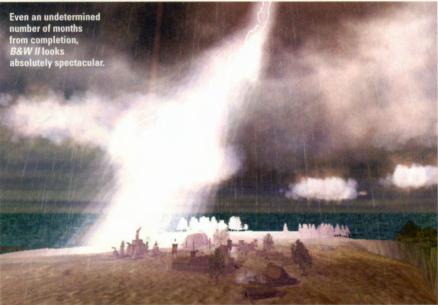
One certainty, however, is the need for city defenses. "I really love building up walls when I play RTSs," enthuses Molyneux. "We wanted them to be very flexible so you could just 'paint' them down - almost use gestures to 'describe' while transparent wall: graphics show where they're going to go.

"You can build very high, but all walls will [incorporate] physics, so they'll start wobbling the higher they get. We really want to give the impression that you're down in your village and under siege." Still, even the peace-seeking pacifist will

new resource is being added to the game: metal. And you'll need to ensure a constant supply of it, since a protective perimeter is imperative for keeping rival villagers and enemy creatures at bay.

When you do decide to take the fight to your enemy, you'll determine how to launch vour offensive. Disciple Leader units will conscript 10 villagers apiece, and by using a kind of "string" device, you can physically drag armies around by tying them together and literally pulling them into battle. Or you could attach them to





your creature and have it lead them into war. As Molyneux explains: "It's not like you're giving them tactics, but if you want to pull your armies around and say 'You hide in that valley' or 'You go in that misty area over there' or 'You stay on top of that hill and act as a decoy,' then you can."

#### CREATURE COMFORTS

feature of B&W that everyone could agree on was that it was simply spectacular to behold. From the creature detail to the terrain textures and spell effects, the graphics were mesmerizing. Now imagine visuals that are 16 times better, and you'll get an idea of the sumptuous new settings and effects. And the changes aren't merely cosmetic. Additions such as

the "mist of war" will let you hide units, while the alignment-driven violent storm clouds or fluffy cumulus blossom overhead.

Lionhead's also adding greater variety to the different continents' landscapes and indigenous wildlife. Japanese-style foliage and houses are instantly recognizable as different from Norse- or Mediterraneanthemed settings. The terrain will also be packed with rich flora and fauna, and the team wants to have so many incidental animations and details going on that we'll get distracted watching tiny events happen all over the visible land.

This diversity will be useful for more than just showing off your new 3D card. "A lot of the conflict arises through people coming into lands that they clearly don't belong in," Barnes explains, "and the new

terrain makes it immediately obvious when vou're somewhere vou shouldn't be."

Given B&W II's stunning new water technology, it's no surprise that Molyneux is keen to exploit the aquatic aesthetic further. "The ferocity of the water will show how evil you are," he says, "and we'll have missions during which your creature has to be transported by boat. We're using boats and having marine creatures in it as well. I won't spoil it for you too much, but dolphins do make an appearance."

Surely not as main creatures, though? "Well, a dolphin creature would be nice, but it'd be a bit dry and crispy on land, Molyneux clarifies. "It wouldn't be able to walk, or even move. It'd be useless."

Molvneux did confirm that B&W II will have fewer creatures than the original game, but he says that each creature will be packed with greater detail, such as real fur and even fat that will wobble.

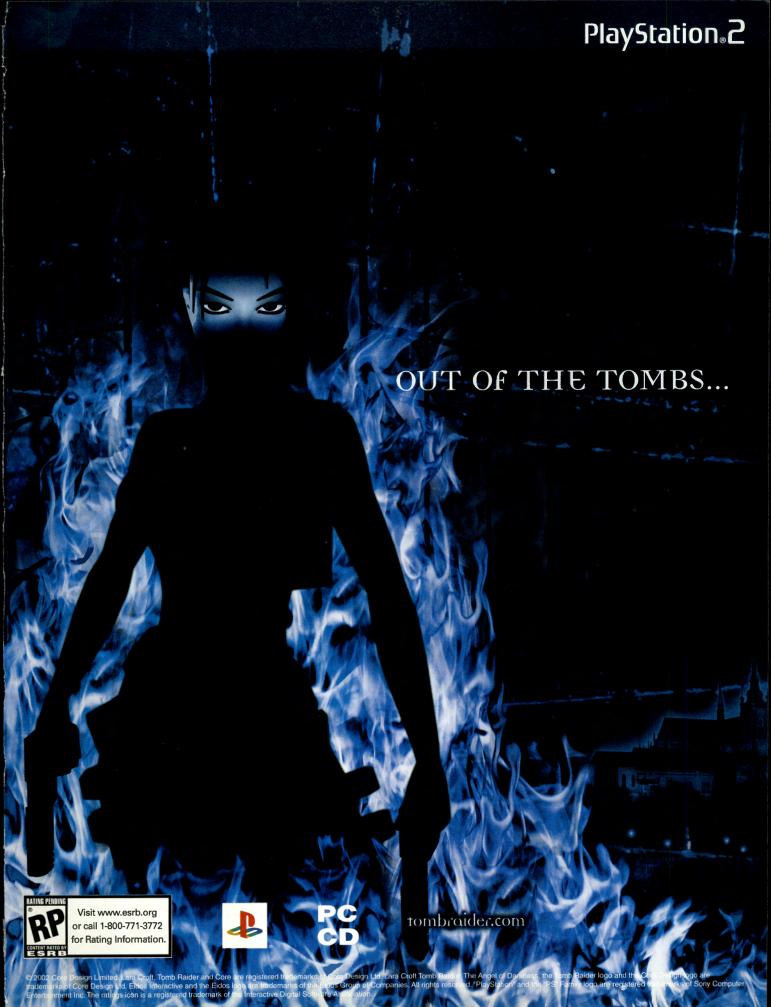
#### GIMME FEEDBACK

ow about that whole personality thing? Well, the Good and Evil advisors are likely to reprise their roles, and will be backed by instantly apparent graphical changes that illustrate your decisions. In addition, your creature will morph and change to illustrate the level breaks. "He'll go through a spasm of growth so you'll see all the muscles on his arms pop," reveals Barnes, "and all his veins come up. It's subtle, but we want you to feel like you've achieved something, and to know when something's happened."

"We haven't done this yet," says Molyneux, "but we're thinking about every footfall that your creature makes. If it's a good creature, then flowers will just spring up around them, and if it's evil, then the ground will just decay and go all black underfoot. So the world would literally be changing with every single footfall." [Funny thing is, I'm sure Molyneux promised this effect for the first game. - Ed.]

The atmosphere and music will also reflect your shifting morality. Sweet songbirds will be seamlessly replaced by crows and ravens the more you err, while around 45 songs, orchestral pieces, and general mood melodies are being written to give an audio styling to your changing world. Some of the music will gradually (but more obviously than in the first game) accompany your shift in alignment, and contextsensitive music will help build tension into the game. And yes, the boat-builders and their sea-shantying ways will return.

With many design considerations still to be aired, it's no surprise that the game's release date is treading the worn path of "when it's done." Add to that Molyneux's continued work on The Movies, his many other titles in development, and his recent struggle to give up cigarettes, and B&W II may not ship until late 2003. - Matt Pierce

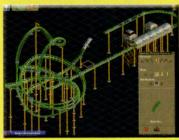


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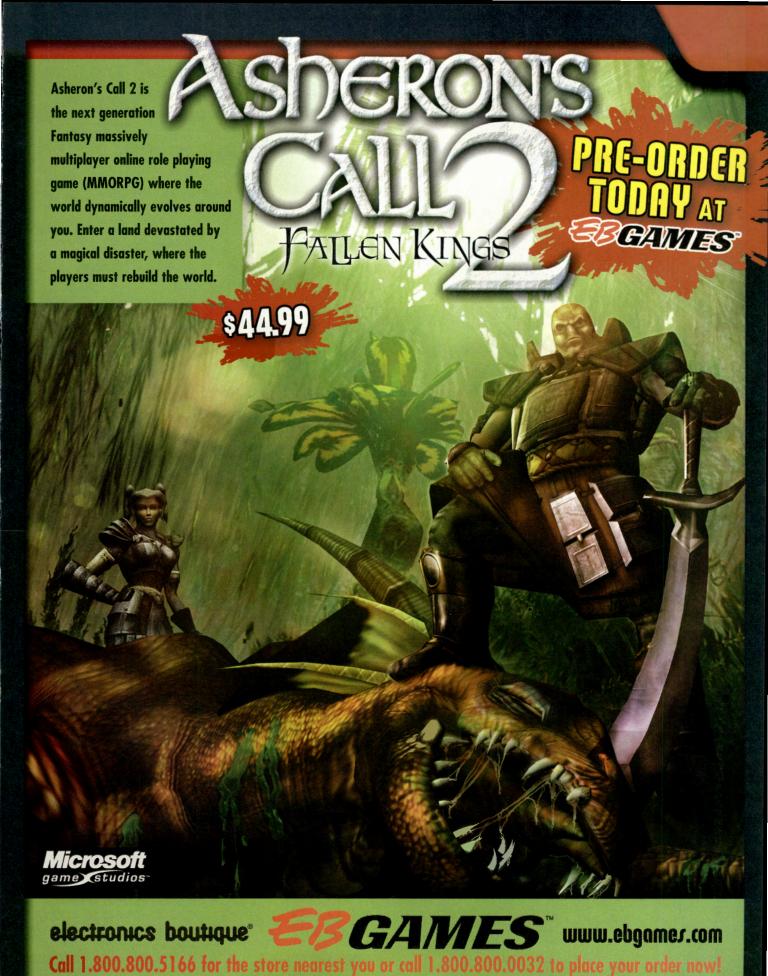




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# **BLACK HAWK DOWN**

**IN A NUTSHELL** 

Seen the film? Now play through one of the most infamous firefights in U.S. military history

hanks to Ridley Scott's recent movie. America is now intimately familiar with the drama that played out in 1993 on the streets of Mogadishu, Somalia, in the bloody climax of Operation Restore Hope. NovaLogic's upcoming Delta Force: Black Hawk Down presents missions set over the whole breadth of the humanitarian campaign. And it's all got the ring of authenticity, thanks to the input of technical advisors who served in the real operation.

According to NovaLogic, the most recent game in the Delta Force series, Task Force Dagger, is selling well despite the critical panning it received. The budget for Black Hawk Down is significantly larger than that of Task Force Dagger, says the publisher, reflecting a desire to invest in this shooter and bring it up to Ghost Recon standards.

From the day we spent seeing the game, it's obvious that Black Hawk Down is a big step forward compared to the past Delta Force catalog. Graphically, it's much improved. The series has always been known for gigantic outdoor levels, but the amount of detail and intricacy is at an alltime high in this one. The urban areas are grimy, shabby, and crowded-feeling, with dozens of civilians and combatants swarming through the narrow streets.

Single-player and co-op campaign modes offer a variety of environments and mission types: stealthy recon missions and assassinations, escorts, river



**CATEGORY: Action** DEVELOPER: NovaLogic PUBLISHER: NovaLogic WWW: novalogic.com PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 60% RELEASE DATE: Fall 2002

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL?: The Delta Force games have been solid efforts hampered by sub-par graphics and general lack of production values. But BHD seems to have the budget and commitment to elevate the series.

DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD Best known for its military-style games (DF and Comanche series,

F-22 Raptor), NovaLogic has consistently released decent titles that always seemed a bit rushed.

#### 'ECHNICAL" MANUAL





IN MILITARY LINGO, a "technical" refers to a commercial truck or SUV modified for use as a light fighting vehicle. Typically, a few sheets of steel siding are attached to the truck, providing a light armor exterior, and a machine gun or other heavy weapon is mounted on the back so that a gunner can fire it while a driver steers. In Third World environments like Somalia, technicals are a low-tech, low-cost source of mobile firepower.

To re-create the technicals in 1993 Somalia, the makers of Delta Force: Black Hawk Down didn't have to look far. In fact, they didn't have to look any farther than their own parking lot.

One of NovaLogic's staffers drives a bestial oversize truck with a two-tone paint scheme and a decidedly warlike look. It was a no-brainer for the art department to conscript the truck for service as the model for the game's technicals.

Taking digital photos of the truck from all angles (above left), the art staff created a 3D wireframe (below left) and then a fully textured game model. The end result is a dead-ringer for the truck sitting out in the company's parking lot.





Is that an alligator? Yep. Stray too near the river, and it'll attack you - and those teeth are sharp.

raids, and, of course, the set-piece "snatch-and-grab" that deteriorates into a brutal battle when a Black Hawk helicopter is knocked out of the sky over Mogadishu. (It should be noted that this game is not in any way licensed or endorsed by either the Army or the filmmakers/author of the popular movie and book. However, NovaLogic says that a portion of proceeds will be given to charity organizations benefiting the surviving dependents of Special Forces soldiers.)

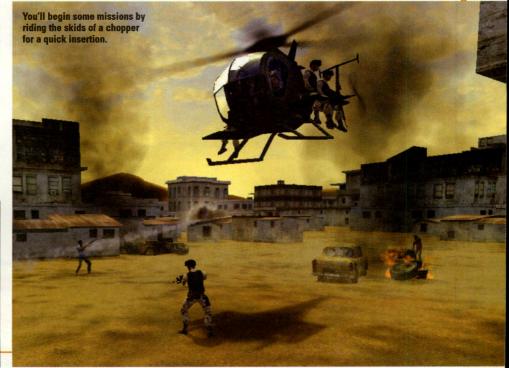
Multiplayer modes have long been a priority for this series, and the levels I looked at show lots of promise for largescale showdowns. The Mogadishu map includes a vast, mazelike city, as well as surrounding high ground from which snipers can rain down dismay. The Team Deathmatch mode on this map alone should be worth the price of the game.

One area of definite improvement is in the more cinematic storytelling style of the mission design. The Mogadishu mission, for example, begins back at the Army airbase, as you load up on a helicopter and take the ride into the city. As the phalanx of choppers sweeps low over Mogadishu, you take fire from the streets below and get a chance to do some inflight sniping from your hotseat peering down on the city below, before landing on the rooftop and deploying for the ground action. It's a stirring, sweeping beginning — one of the most absorbing "playable cinematic" mission intros we've ever played through.

In an effort to amend the shoddy AI that crippled Task Force Dagger, Black Hawk Down will see a major AI overhaul. The results are already visible at beta stage: enemies snake through the streets

in diverse patterns, closing in on the sound of your gunshots but hesitant to lurk too close. If the AI can be believably implemented, Black Hawk Down could be a dynamite shooter.

We're not ready to say that Ghost Recon has been dethroned quite yet we're still more than a bit dubious because of the tarnished Delta Force pedigree but NovaLogic seems sincere about wanting to ratchet up its game to the next level of accomplishment. They're definitely entering the fight. — Daniel Morris





# **BloodRayne**



Third-person backand-slash games like BloodRayne have never fared well on the PC, but we're hopeful that BR's frenzied combat will deliver on its promise.

IN A NUTSHELL

Slice-and-dice Nazis as a sexy half-vampire killing machine

t's an intriguing premise, that's for sure. Terminal Reality, the developer of Nocturne, has a new action hero for its latest third-person action/adventure. Agent BloodRayne is a high-powered hottie asskicker who also happens to be the hellish offspring of a union between a human woman and a male vampire. Toss some Nazis into the meat grinder, and you can only begin to imagine the carnage that will unfold.

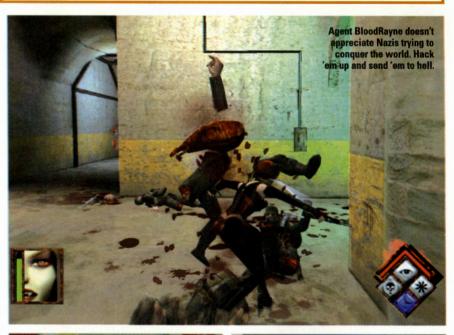
Despite the cool setup, the story powering this adventure is pretty standard (and slightly clichéd) stuff: Agent BloodRayne who works for The Brimstone Society, a top-secret fraternity dedicated to destroying supernatural threats — is trying to track down a fella by the name of Jurgen Wulf. It seems that Wulf has been scouring the planet in search of powerful artifacts that will enable Nazi Germany to conquer the world. Naturally, BloodRayne must eviscerate countless Nazis in her quest to put an end to Wulf's nefarious machinations.

Making up for this familiar plot is level design that looks to be more innovative and open-ended than we normally see in this genre. Instead of simple "Point A to Point B" rail-style gameplay, BloodRayne's 40 missions are designed to offer a good deal of freedom in how you approach tasks.

"In Louisiana, for example," explains David Elmekies, VP of game development at publisher Majesco, "the level is structured as a hub, so from one central area, players can complete the three given objectives in any order as long as they eventually finish them all. Many levels also have multiple ways to arrive at the same destination, so players aren't forced to complete a level via one predefined route."

What could really turn heads, though, isn't our agent heroine's lingerie-like outfit, but her combat moves, which are made for both close- and long-range battles. "The biggest difference in BloodRayne's combat is that she's a versatile killing machine," says Elmekies. "She isn't limited to just closerange or long-range attacks, and she has no obvious weakness in either category.

"For up-close fighting, she has giant silver blades hinged at her wrists and blades attached at her ankles. Her attacks work in a combo system that gets more acrobatic and deadly with each level. BloodRayne's





Like all good vampires, BloodRayne regains health by sucking on veins. So refreshing!

blades are obviously very sharp, so body parts will fly. She can [also] hold a gun in each hand, but more importantly, she can target two enemies at the same time."

Because of her vampire heritage. BloodRayne has a Bloodlust meter that increases after each attack. Once this meter is full, you can enter Blood Rage mode, which slows time (think Max Payne's Bullet Time) and opens up even more limbwhacking opportunities. You'll also be able to pick up and use any of the weapons you come across while playing the game.

Powering all this carnage is Terminal Reality's Infernal engine, which will take



Though this shot doesn't show the feature in action, you'll be able to target two enemies at once.

full advantage of the latest graphics cards and will support T&L. As a result, the game will be packed with realistic shadows and bump and specular mapping, which will add detailed textures and atmospheric lighting effects.

Because BloodRayne is slated as a simultaneous multi-platform release, we're a little concerned that we're going to end up with another console-style game that really fails to take advantage of the PC's prowess. But hopefully, our fears will be unwarranted, and we can spend our Halloween gleefully participating in our favorite activity: decapitating Nazi scum. - William Harms



**CATEGORY: Action/adventure DEVELOPER: Terminal Reality PUBLISHER: Majesco** WWW: bloodrayne.com PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 70% **RELEASE DATE: Halloween 2002**  WHAT'S SO SPECIAL?: Fast and particularly gruesome combat, the ability to target two enemies at once, and a hot heroine --- what more could you want? Well, it's got Nazi-killing, too. Excellent!

#### **DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD:**

Terminal developed Nocturne, which was long on potential and short on delivery, and the hideous Blair Witch game (Vol. 1). We're hoping they get it together this time around.

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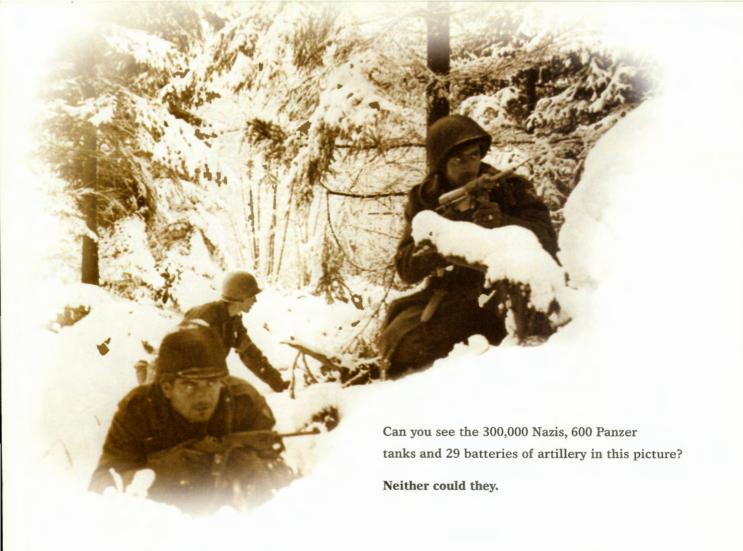








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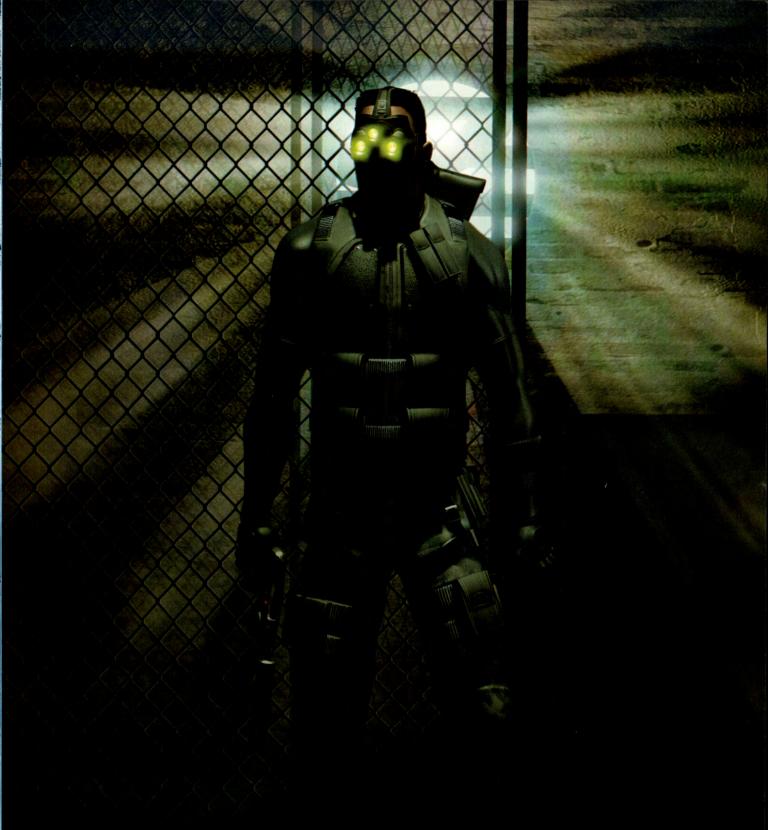
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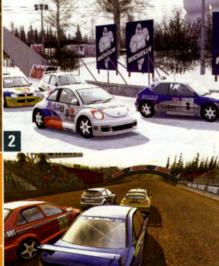
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# AMIS

As big-name games finally near release, playable late-beta builds land on our desks. Here's where we give hot-off-the-burner first impressions of how these titles are coming along.









(1) Off-course mistakes can lead to flip-overs, broken window glass, and damaged body panels. (2) The Ice Racing events offer intense closequarters racing as you duke it out with three Al machines over various snowbank-ringed circuits. (3) The PC game will support the T&L capabilities of current video cards. (4) A 981-horsepower Suzuki Grand Vitara prepares to launch itself through the initial stage of a Hillclimbing event.

# RalliSport Challenge

DEVELOPER Digital Illusions (DICE) PUBLISHER Microsoft CURRENT RELEASE DATE Late October 2002

ITS DYNAMIC MIX OF JAW-dropping graphics and thrilling off-road driving physics propelled RalliSport Challenge to the head of the console rallying pack earlier this year. Now Microsoft is porting its Xbox title over to the DirectX-box. But don't let the game's pedigree fool you -- RalliSport's being dolled up to take big-time advantage of your PC's capabilities.

This Digital Illusions-developed rally game features 29 licensed vehicles ranging from nimble WRCstyle rally machines all the way up to a pair of driveshaft-twisting 900-hp hill-climbing monsters. Slippery tarmac, gravel, sand, snow, and ice road surfaces will test your car-control skills while a host of diverse track configurations will challenge your adaptability to changing race venues.

In addition, the game blends versatility with velocity as you're called upon to master a quartet of



unique racing disciplines spread over four-dozen point-to-point stages and closed circuits (including Rallys, Hillclimbs, Ice Races, and Rallycrosses). Each event lasts no more than a few minutes and the setup options are cursory at best, so some real-world authenticity has been sacrificed to keep the racing fast and furious.

After plenty of testing, and having played the Xbox version to death, we can easily see where the PC's superior horsepower shines through. When cranked up to its full 1280x1024 resolution, the port's T&L-enhanced visuals look far superior to the Xbox's TV-tube limited graphics. On top of that, the four-person Internet multiplayer component

 though not yet functional on the build I was using — will add enormously to RalliSport's replayability. For a "mere" Xbox port, RalliSport Challenge adapts well to its new Windows environment. The ability to control your car with advanced USB force-feedback steering wheels and analog controllers completely transforms the virtual driving experience. After logging in countless hours over the last few days with my Act Labs Force RS wheel, I can say with absolute certainty that my Xbox copy will be collecting a lot of dust once this PC edition ships. Controlling a barely-on-the-edge-of-control rally machine with a proper wheel-and-pedals setup is the way nature intended it, and it was a distinct pleasure to retire my handheld - Andy Mahood Xbox controller and actually feel these cars beneath me for once.



# Civ III: Play the World

DEVELOPER Firaxis Games PUBLISHER Infogrames CURRENT RELEASE DATE Late October 2002

TURN-BASED GAMES and multiplay have always been an odd fit, particularly for casual consumers who don't have 15 hours to devote to a game. Firaxis hopes that *Play the World*, the upcoming *Civilization III* expansion, will make multiplay an essential part of any turn-based game, and based on my playtime, they're on the right track.

Play the World adds three new multiplayer modes — Turnless, Turn-based, and Simultaneous — and all are accessible via a LAN or the Internet. (You can also play the game via email.) I played the Simultaneous mode, in which players make their moves at the same time. Once you're done, you click the end-turn button; once all players have clicked the button, the game goes on to the next

turn. To prevent players from dragging their heels, a time limit forces the advance automatically.

I was pretty pleased with this system since, in the early stages of the game (where your turns consist of minimal choices), the action zips right along. Another nice touch is that you can set an overall game-time limit — say, 60 minutes — and whomever has the highest score when the time expires is declared the winner. This limit places the focus more on cultural improvements and less on military conquest, which is a nice touch.

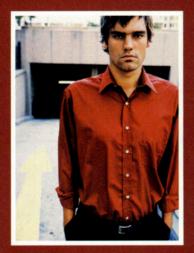
Besides implementing multiplay, PTW will also add eight new tribes, each with a unique unit; three new city improvements; and a new Wonder of the World, The Internet! — William Harms

#### **PLAY AGAINST THE MAKER**

want to put your civilization-building skills to the ultimate test? We'll give you a couple of months after *Civ III: PTW*'s late-October retail release to get in some serious practice, and then one lucky reader will be able to square off in a multiplayer showdown with none other than Sid Meier, the game's creator. We'll have a couple of other representatives from Firaxis, as well as *PC Gamet*'s own *Civ III* champion, ready for the ultimate battle for global domination.

To enter, just send an email to civcontest@pcgamer.com and get in some needed practice. We'll inform the randomly chosen winner of the official challenge date, which will be sometime in late January 2003, and in a future issue we'll report the winners and losers, plus who cried and who died. Good luck

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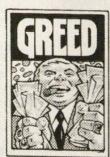
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# Your weapons lay



#### IRON STORM

DEVELOPER 4X Studio PUBLISHER DreamCate **DreamCatcher CURRENT RELEASE DATE Fall 2002** 

IRON STORM'S PREMISE of a 1964-era world in which World War I never ended affords a wealth of history-revampin' possibilities. I played through six levels of a pre-alpha build of this first- and third-person-perspective game, and found the setting quite promising — you blast your way through dilapidated trenches and makeshift bunkers, and have to infiltrate a train.

The core emphasis is on sneaking around the bombed-out towns and through the labyrinthlike trenches, but I found that sometimes the best tactic is simply to charge in with guns a-blazing: the balance of action and stealth elements could definitely benefit from further fine-tuning.

Weapons are a combination of World War Iage technology and semi-futuristic devastators for example, the rifle looks like an older Soviet-era weapon but has been modified so it's fully automatic. Your arsenal is realistically rendered and all of your guns can be seen strapped on your belt or slung across your back in the third-person view.

The War to End All Wars is also a visual feast, making the most out of gritty textures and intricate indoor environments. On the other hand, the level design has yet to find a balance between the advantages of an open-ended approach and the requirements of a defined focus: some levels still lack a bit of direction at this point.

Enemies are capable, but in some cases, too accurate with their shots, which makes some choke points impossible to pass. What's here puts Iron Storm on target as a par shooter; let's hope 4X can polish the game and maximize its gripping premise. - Norman Chan

# Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Island Thunder

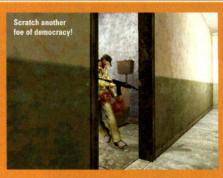
**DEVELOPER Red Storm PUBLISHER Ubi Soft CURRENT RELEASE DATE September 2002** 

THE YEAR IS 2010, CASTRO has been dead for four years, and the people of Cuba are finally getting the democratic reforms they so desperately deserve. Unfortunately, local paramilitary blowhards find the idea of democracy reprehensible, so they've made it their mission to screw things up for everyone. Naturally, this means that Uncle Sam needs to send in the Ghosts to ensure that Cuba's elections go off without a hitch.

The build of Island Thunder I played contained only two missions (the final version will feature eight), but if they're indicative of the full product, this expansion will only further enhance the greatness that is Ghost Recon. The first change is the inclusion of cut-scenes - instead of starting in the field of battle, you see your boys ride in on a chopper and deploy the second it touches down. It's a minor touch, but one that really helps lock in that sweet immersive flavor.

As for the two missions, both exhibit the same white-knuckled action that made Ghost Recon our Game of the Year for 2001. The first mission, "Watchful Yeoman," tasks you with recovering some supplies that are being kept at a plantation, and the firefight begins immediately - the days of gathering your wits and then moving out are long gone.

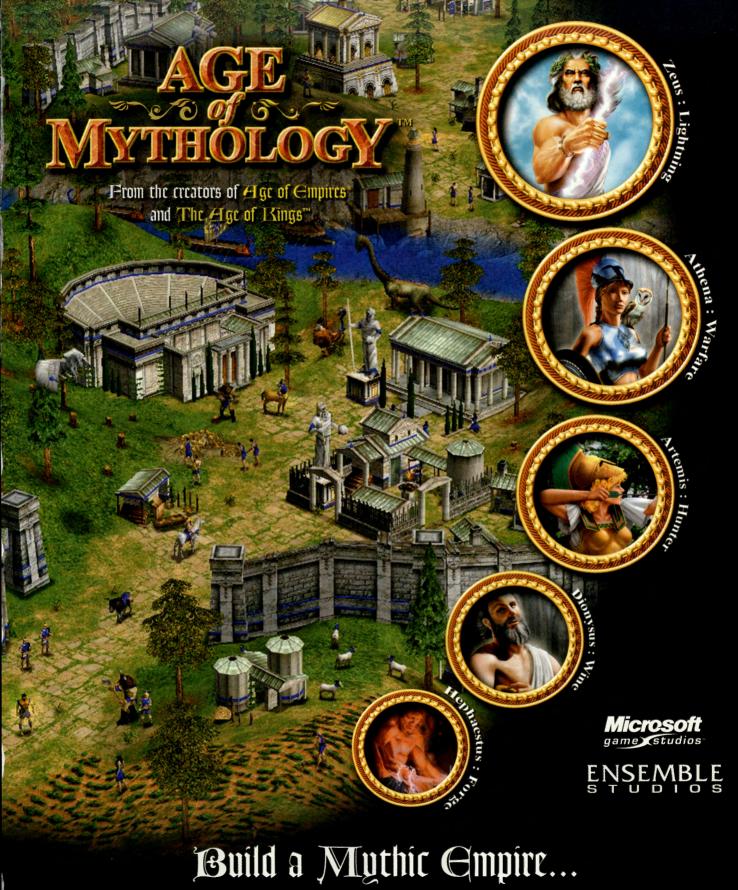
Red Storm's also made some great changes: when an enemy throws a grenade in your direc-



tion, your Al-controlled squadmates will now yell "Grenade!" - your cue to haul ass out of the danger zone. And shadow effects play a much larger tactical role this time around. In one section of "Watchful Yeoman," you must secure a large barn, and as you approach the structure, you can see the shadows of the enemy scum as they skulk around.

A host of other changes are promised in the final version of Island Thunder: more enemy vehicles; 12 new multiplayer weapons, including the M4 SOCOM rifle and the MM-1 automatic grenade launcher; five new dedicated multiplayer maps; and two new multiplayer modes. We predict brilliance - and we'll be waiting impatiently for this add-on to ship. - William Harms





www.microsoft.com/games/ageofmythology







## EMPIRE EARTH: THE ART OF CONQUEST

**DEVELOPER Mad Doc Software PUBLISHER Sierra CURRENT RELEASE DATE Winter 2002** 

THE MOST EXCITING addition to RTS Empire Earth in its upcoming add-on, The Art of Conquest, is the new Space Age Epoch. This six-mission Epoch is one of the expansion's three new campaigns — the other two are set during World War II and Ancient Rome and takes place immediately after the Nano Epoch from the original game.

This new Epoch starts off on Earth and then moves into outer space. I played through all six missions and found some good variety: you get some straight-up "destroy-theenemy" missions, along with some more sophisticated encounters, like sending supplies to a fledgling colony on Mars or protecting the Japanese while they construct a spacecraft.

The human workers have been scrapped in favor of robot workers, which is a great move - it was awfully hokey to see dudes pushing wheelbarrows around while ultra-modern tanks duked it out a short distance away. In the later Space Age missions you also get to build spaceships, but for some reason they can fly only through space, not over land. It's doubtful this aspect will be changed before the game ships, but I just don't buy the idea that spaceships can't fly wherever they want.

Other than that quibble, The Art of Conquest is looking pretty promising. The graphics have been upgraded a bit, and the combat is still as delicious as it was in the original game. - William Harms

## NHL 2003

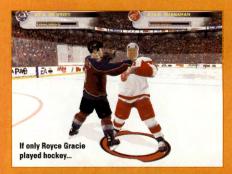
**DEVELOPER EA Sports PUBLISHER EA Sports CURRENT RELEASE DATE Fail 2002** 

I'VE BEEN PLAYING HOCKEY for 11 years, and playing EA's NHL series for nine of those. I know the game as it's played on ice, and this series as it's played on my monitor. And after a decade of unflagging support, my enthusiasm for this franchise is now officially on the wane. This coming from the guy who argued forcefully that the 2001 iteration should be crowned our Best Sports Game of that year.

After hands-on time with a preview version of NHL 2003, it's apparent that the series is content to continue its backslide into an increasingly unrealistic stupor. Regardless of the difficulty setting, it's just a procession of breakaways, with nary a defenseman on the screen. The game is a parade of celebration cinematics, slo-mo breakaway cams, and - in a horrid new development - the constant intrusion of MTV-style intros for the songs that EA's marketing department lined up for cross-promotion.

The gameplay itself is largely unchanged from the last version. It's fun, but only if you're expecting a wildly unrealistic arcade game. On the secondhardest difficulty setting, I was leading 10-0 at the halfway-point of the first period. That was in my first game. For those hoping for any semblance of hockey simulation, there seems to be no hope in store, and in the short period before this game hits retail, I don't hold out too much hope of these "features" being addressed.

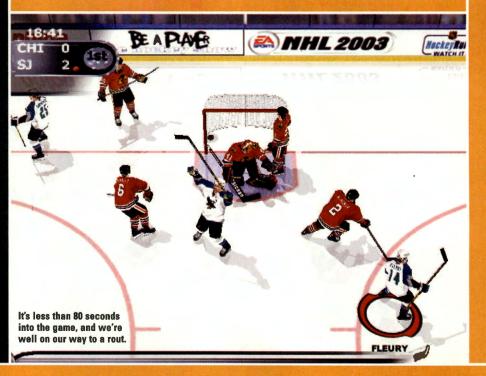
One addition to gameplay is the Game Breaker system, which expands on the EA Sports "timely boost" concept. Occasionally, in a big moment, you'll get a chance to deploy a Game Breaker to notch a big goal or a house-rattling check.

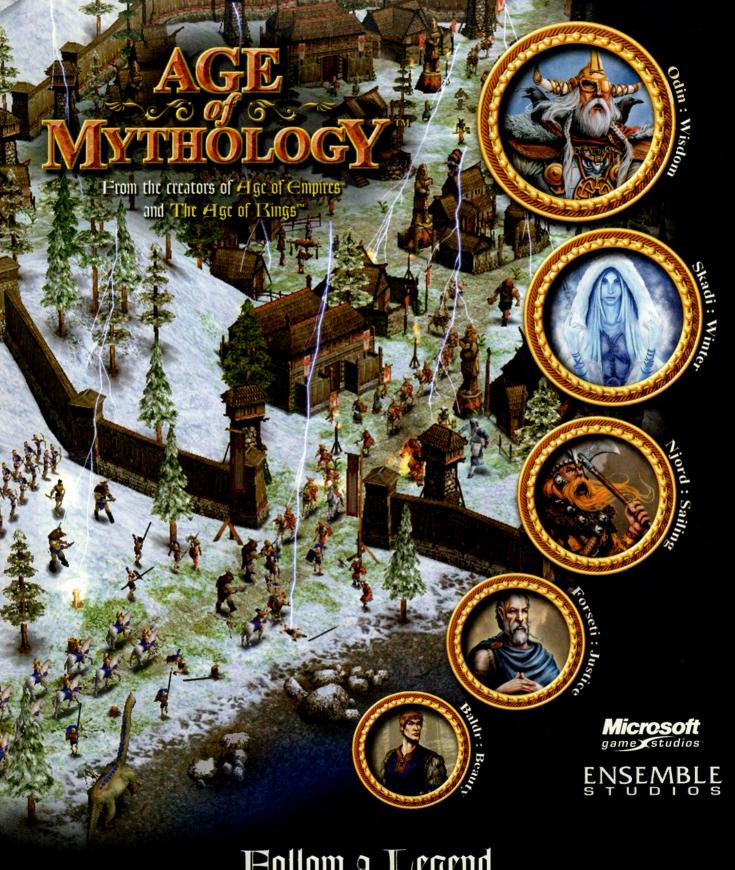




Most of the development energy seems to have been sunk into online play. There are minigames (like overtime and shootout) to play online now, and other bones thrown to the online masses.

Whether that warrants the \$50, we'll assess with the final build. But it does seem thus far like this series has abandoned hardcore hockey fans. - Dan Morris





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Top: RCT 2 can go higher-res and lets you zoom in/out farther. Bottom: Renaming a visitor "Chris Sawyer" still makes him snap pictures.

## RollerCoaster Tycoon 2

DEVELOPER Chris Sawyer PUBLISHER Infogrames CURRENT RELEASE DATE October 2002

#### NO, YOUR EYES AREN'T DECEIVING YOU

— these are screenshots from RollerCoaster Tycoon 2, the sequel to one of the best-selling PC games ever. We're just as surprised as you are: judging from the many quality hours we spent with a beta build of RCT 2, we'd say its 2D graphics and gameplay are virtually unchanged from those of its three-year-old parent.

According to Infogrames, that's an intentional decision by developer Chris Sawyer, who didn't want to deviate too far from a successful formula: the god-like building and managing of a theme park, right down to hand-designing rollercoasters.

If you haven't upgraded your PC lately, it's all good news — the minimum spec needed to play will be a mere PII 300 and 100MB of hard-drive space.

So what makes *RCT 2* a sequel and not another expansion pack? In short, more rides, coaster and scenario editors, and the Six Flags license. You now have access to reconstructed models of five Six Flags theme parks (out of the 18 branded parks worldwide), including the original Six Flags over Texas, SF Belgium, SF Great Adventure, SF Holland, and the crown jewel, SF Magic Mountain. You create your own unique parks on the land or manage the existing parks (or

most of them).

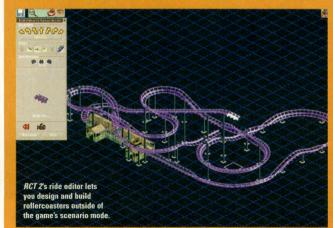
**Though Infogrames** has acquired the Six Flags license, it obviously didn't get the Warner Brothers license, Some of the parks' best-known rides - Batman: The Ride, Mr. Freeze, The Riddler - as well as any attraction remotely connected to a Warner Bros.-owned property (say, Yosemite Sam's Gold River Adventure), have been inexplicably excised from the in-game locations. (The notable

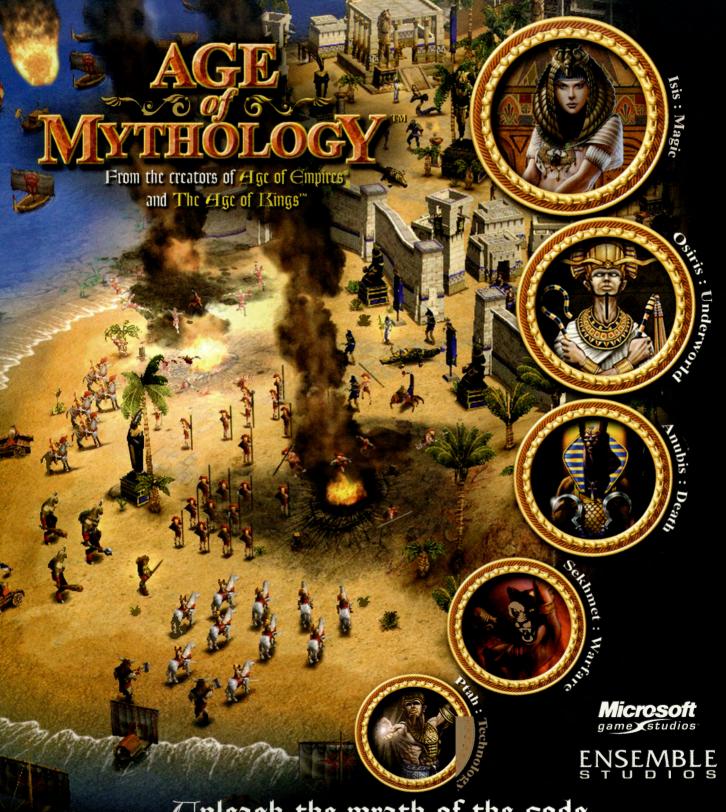
exception being Magic Mountain's Superman: The Escape, which has been renamed simply The Escape and stripped of its S-symbol theming.)

Strangely enough, some of the non-WB classics are also missing. As a dedicated investigative journalist, I revisited my favorite SF park, Six Flags over Texas, in preparation for this hands-on, and was irked to find that Runaway Mine Train (the world's first tubular steel coaster) and the very unique Texas Chute Out air drop ride, among others, have also been left out. (Admittedly, most casual coaster fans won't notice these deletions, but I found their absence irksome.) The game gives you the option of designing your own versions of the missing rides, but a few of these distinct coasters can't be reconstructed using the elements available.

But enough about what this build doesn't have. RCT 2 should give fans what they've been wanting since the first one came out — a scenario editor and a toolkit that let you design rides independent of the mission mode. The steps to building a coaster are exactly the same in either mission or editor mode (and identical to those in RCT), except the editor doesn't have scenery getting in the way.

Throw in tons more flat rides (a Huss Top Spin — yes!), new coaster types (such as flying coasters), and themes (barring Bugs Bunny, of course), and RollerCoaster Tycoon 2 should be money in the bank. — Chuck Osborn

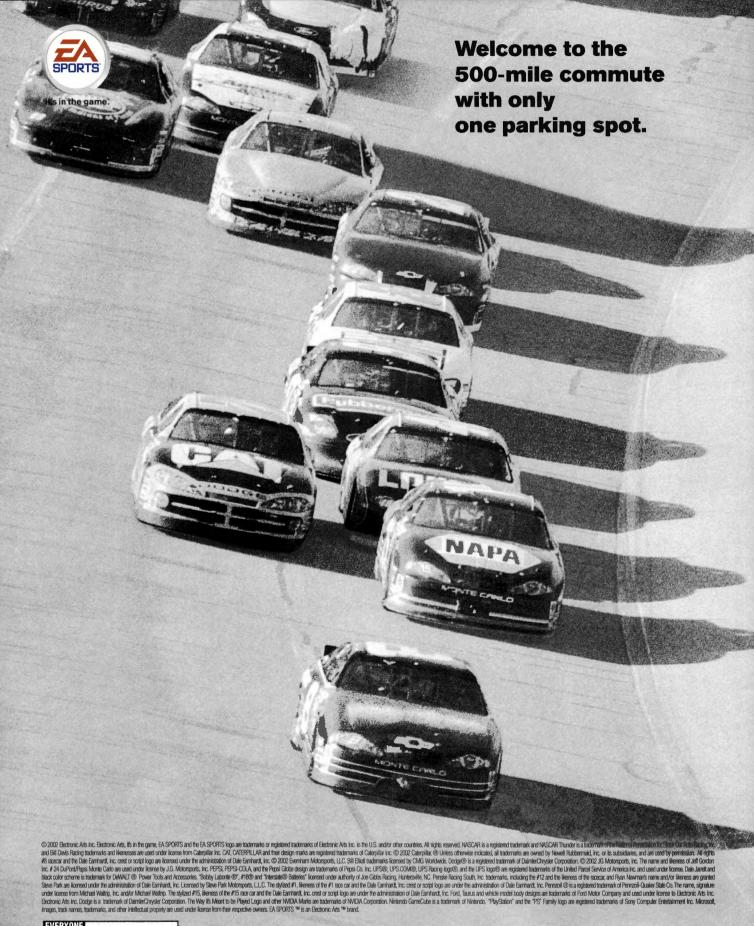




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## TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2003

PUBLISHER EA Sports
CURRENT RELEASE DATE October 2002

THIS YEAR'S GOING TO BE the one in which EA's Tiger Woods PGA Tour series gives longtime rival Links a scare. In their beta versions, the 2003 editions of both games are almost neck-and-neck in terms of fun.

Tiger's graphics are attractive, if less lifelike than the picture-perfect postcards of Links. The game's true-swing is already working perfectly at this stage of development, and it's a very intuitive one: chipping from off the green is a spectacular experience, succinctly re-creating the sweet touch needed for a brilliant bump-and-run.

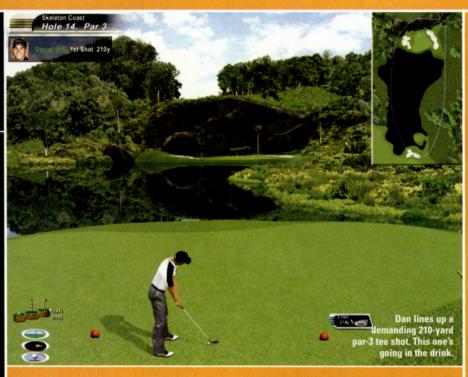
As is EA Sports' style, Tiger is much more focused on a TV-like presentation, with camera cuts and gallery reactions that immerse you deeply in the experience of watching a televised tournament. The cameras take full advantage of the full-3D environments, offering dazzling aerial views of the course.

The standout feature I'm most looking forward to is the career mode, which is much deeper than that in Links 2003. After creating your golfer and nurturing him through the qualifiers, you'll be able to improve on specific skills and even spend your prize money on newer, better equipment. With the PGA license in hand, the career mode will let you closely follow the tour as a single, developing golfer.

From my early looks at both Tiger and Links, it's hard to say which I prefer so far. Links is still more lifelike and visually appealing, but Tiger is playing a good game and promises an absorbing career mode. Could be a tight finish!







### **Links 2003**

**DEVELOPER Access Software PUBLISHER Microsoft CURRENT RELEASE DATE Q4 2002** 

IT'S TIME FOR A WHOLE new round of golf claps. After playing the hell out of a beta version of Links 2003, I'm as much in love with this golf sim as I was 10 years ago.

Last year, the makers of Links took a bit of a breather: instead of releasing a full-fledged 2002 edition, they bundled a "championship edition" of the 2001 game with new courses. This time around, there's been a major overhaul, and we're seeing the Great Leap Forward into a 3D golfer and a real-time mouse-swing.

Purists may squawk, but I really enjoy the mouse-swing. (The old three-click method is still available if you insist on using it.) Even in prerelease form, the mouse-swing feels intuitive and lifelike, with the biggest rewards going to the easiest, stable swings. As in real life, there's no faster way to land your ball in the woods than by swinging at it too hard.

Needless to say, the mouse-swing necessitated a switch to 3D-modeled golfers. While they move smoothly and blend in nicely with the traditional "postcard" graphics of the background environment, none of the 3D golfers look exactly human. Luckily, after a few seconds, you're too wrapped up in the golf to be distracted by this issue.

What haven't changed are the lush, you-arethere graphics of the postcard views, nor the exquisite ball physics that pitched this series to its No. 1 position. The seaside Cabo Del Sol course is so pretty, so finely detailed with palms and sandy beach outcroppings, that you just want to climb inside your monitor.





I was disappointed to find that there's still no career mode, the one area in which Links lags behind the competition. Don't get me wrong, the online tour should be fun, but nothing can replace a substantive single-player career mode. We'll be checking out all the details when the final game is - Dan Morris released in the coming weeks.



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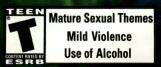
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#### **AGE OF MYTHOLOGY**

**DEVELOPER Ensemble Studios** PUBLISHER Microsoft **CURRENT RELEASE DATE November 2002** 

AFTER SPENDING AN ENTIRE weekend playing the multiplayer beta of Age of Mythology, I'm even more excited about the prospects of this upcoming real-time strategy game. The beta includes only two maps, but the three civilizations — Greek, Norse, and Egyptian --- are all in place.

During the course of the game, you level up (similar to the age advances in Age of Empires), and at these points you decide which minor deities you should worship. This choice, in turn, affects your tech tree and determines which god powers you'll receive. The ability to modify your tech tree on the fly is a great touch, and one I really enjoyed exploring.

Folks who played AoE will be instantly familiar with AoM, but the games have some key differences. First off, depending on your civilization, gathering food can be pretty tough early on, and you won't be able to build basic military units until your civilization has reached level two. This limitation makes the early game a little too tedious; hopefully, this feature will be balanced out over the course of the beta.

Once the combat begins, though, the game is a blast. The mythic units add a lot of flavor, as do the destructive god powers. And there's a definite rock-paper-scissors quality to the balance, since you have counter-moves to specific attacks. For example, as long as the Egyptians have temples to Isis, you can't use your god powers on them.

We'll be testing all these epoch balances in great detail when Age of Mythology goes gold - William Harms in November.

### No One Lives Forever 2

DEVELOPER Monolith PUBLISHER Sierra/Fox Interactive CURRENT RELEASE DATE Late 2002

SINCE NOLF WON OUR Best Action Game of the Year award for 2000, we have sky-high expectations for the return of Cate Archer. Thankfully, in just a few short hours with a preview build of NOLF 2: A Spy in H.A.R.M.'s Way, it's already showing the potential to be a fabulous gaming experience.

The standout feature even at this early stage is the amazing enemy Al. The first part of the game is set in Japan and has Cate squaring off against female ninjas. These warriors cartwheel to avoid your fire, leap across rooftops, and work in teams, attacking from multiple sides. And most impressively. they'll sound nearby alarms before engaging you.

Once the action moves to the snow-wasted landscape of Siberia, the Soviet troops you'll face also show some great behavioral patterns. They'll immediately go prone when taking fire, they'll become alert to changes in the environment (like a door you accidentally leave open), and if they see a comrade lying on the ground, they'll run over to him and investigate the situation.

Beyond the outstanding Al, NOLF 2 looks to be packed with the same sense of style and humor that gave the original such a fresh take on the FPS genre. You'll overhear a lot of brilliant (and hilarious) ambient conversations --- like one ninja telling another that her mother thinks the way ninjas are currently dressing is disrespectful.

These settings are brought to life with LithTech's powerhouse Jupiter engine - and the results are looking super-swank. The character models look fantastic and are brought to life with great touches like beer bellies and messed-up hair. And, as was





the case with NOLF, the voice-acting is absolutely top-notch and tongue-in-cheek at the same time.

But most importantly, NOLF 2 promises wall-towall action and excitement, complete with amusing gadgets like the mascara stun gun and the hairspray welder, which hint at cooler goodies later in the game. I can't wait to use them. - William Harms



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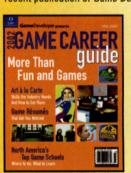
#### → PROGRAMMING

ACCORDING TO DAVE POTTINGER, technical director at Ensemble Studios, the most important trait a programmer can have is passion. "Passion is what drives you to stay until 4 a.m. fixing that minor bug that hardly anyone would ever notice. Passion is what fuels people around you to excel. Passion is where great games come from. If you don't live and breathe games, you shouldn't be in the games industry."

Beyond passion, Pottinger recommends that prospective programmers come armed with a four-year degree in either computer engineering or computer science. (Several years of relevant experience, possibly in the mod community, can substitute

#### RESOURCES

GETTING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION on game-related jobs and training can be a little difficult, especially for people who don't live near a hotbed of game development like Seattle, Austin, or San Francisco. With the recent publication of Game Developer's 2002



Game Career Guide, however, anvone will be able to acquire detailed information on a career within the games industry. Published by CMP Media, which also publishes the monthly industry magazine Game Developer, the Game Career

Guide will be available on newsstands until Nov. 12, 2002, and carries a cover price of \$5.95. (You can also purchase a PDF version of the guide by visiting www.gamasutra.com.)

According to Jennifer Olsen, editor-in-chief of Game Developer magazine, the purpose of this career guide is to put out reliable information so that the general public can get educated about game-development careers.

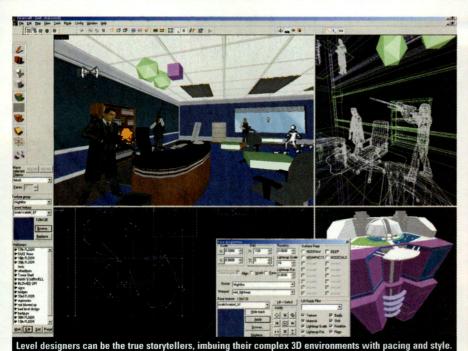
"There was a lot of misinformation and lack of understanding of the realities of the business — both the positive and negative aspects," Olsen explains. "It's not about playing games all day: it's incredibly challenging work, and often requires superhuman dedication. A lot of un-fun work goes into making a really fun game, but that's the challenge that most developers enjoy conquering. People who sell insurance never have to worry about how much fun one policy is versus another."

Also check out the Game Development Search Engine (www.gdse.com) for more information, plus Stanford University's computergames course at www.stanford.edu/class/sts145.



#### WIN A COPY OF ICEWIND DALE II

This month 10 lucky winners will receive a copy of the fantastic RPG Icewind Dale II. To be eligible for our random drawing, just send an email to eyewitness@pcgamer.com with "It's Cold" in the subject heading, and include your name and address in the body of the message. Only one entry per person allowed. Contest ends Nov. 30, 2002. See additional rules on page 175.



for the college requirement.) In addition, Ensemble requires some form of game experience, and you'll also need to provide a well-written résumé.

"We don't particularly care whether or not a demo is a mod or a totally home-brewed unique creation," Pottinger explains. "I'm often asked what sort of demo I want to see; my response is always 'Whatever you're most interested in programming.' The important thing is that we get a sense of how passionate and committed to making great games you are. Working on a mod or a demo that you're excited about is the best guarantee that you'll finish it and polish it up appropriately."

Obviously, Ensemble is known for its best-selling real-time strategy games Age of Empires, Age of Empires II, and the forthcoming Age of Mythology, but Pottinger doesn't believe that programming skills can pertain to only one specific genre or type of game. "Great programmers are generally great programmers no matter what genre their experience lies in," he says. "Ensemble would much prefer to hire someone who's an excellent FPS programmer instead of merely a good RTS programmer. Sure, RTS games have their own particular set of experience - particularly in the application of 3D - but the key is just being an outstanding programmer."

Future growth and career opportunities are largely dictated by the individual company, but Pottinger says that Ensemble offers two distinct career paths for programmers. The first is a management path where as lead programmer you're responsible for a team of coders and plan the requirements and responsibilities of a project, as well as contributing your own work. The second path is a technical-guru path where you're promoted and assume more responsibility, but aren't required to manage people.

#### → LEVEL DESIGN

MORE THAN ANY OTHER DISCIPLINE, level design offers possibly the fastest route to a gaming job. Since people first started hacking together DOOM levels and distributing them via bulletin-board systems, game developers have plucked up the best designers and put them to work professionally. And joining the ranks of paid level designers is fairly straightforward, assuming you have the cheps.

First of all, unlike with programming, a collegelevel education is less important for would-be level designers. According to Randy Pitchford, president of Gearbox Software, education is a good thing to have, but it takes a backseat to experience and demonstrable, quality work,

Working with mods is extremely important, both in terms of learning the critical path of game creation and in establishing a portfolio. "Quality work with a game or technology that Gearbex created or is using is much more interesting to us than work with other technology," Pitchford says. "We've hired several folks who honed their skills through modification development."

Putting together an impressive portfolio is the most important step when applying for a level-editing job, and Pitchford is very specific in what he wants to see from applicants. "First, get my attention quickly," he reveals. "If your best material is buried beneath less interesting or lower-quality material, I may never get to the quality stuff.

"Second, show me something that I'll feel will make my products better if I had it in them. If you're a level designer, show me something that's innovative, fun, and memorable. Don't show me a remake of something I've already seen unless you're improving it or innovating a bit. New moments, twists,

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 50** 

#### **RELEASE METER**



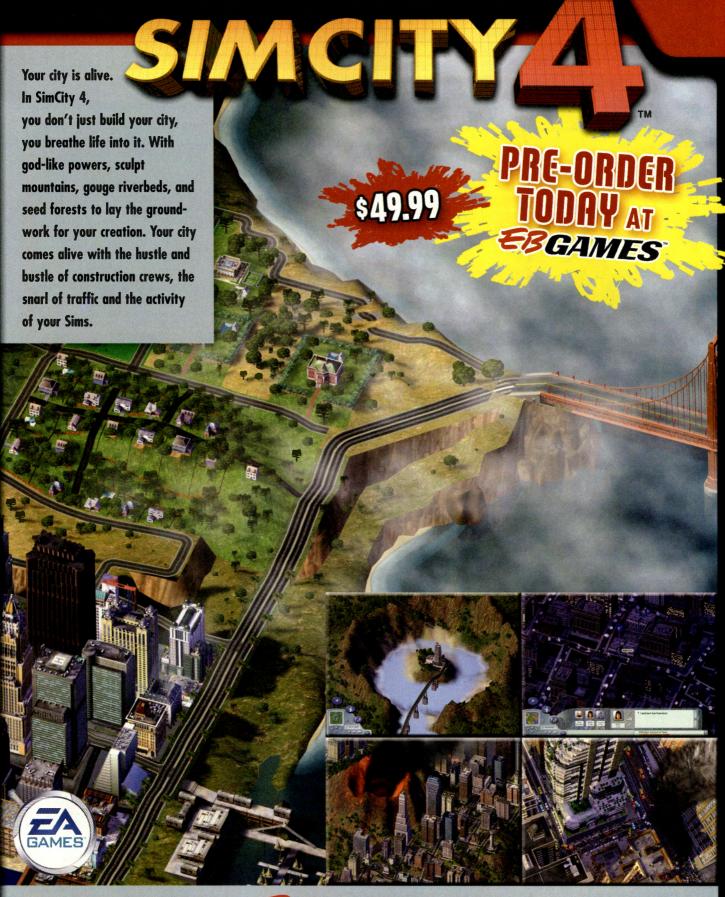
Release dates used with permission from Gone Gold negold.com). Games farthest out are most likely to ange dates. Send release info to dates@gonegold.com.

#### → October

Imperium Galactica III	TITLE	PUBLISHER	DATE
Conflict: Desert Storm	Imperium Galactica III	HIP Interactive	10/01/02
Pro Race Driver   Codemasters   10/02/02	Ghost Master	Empire	10/02/02
Neocron	Conflict: Desert Storm	Take-Two	10/02/02
Project Nomads	Pro Race Driver	Codemasters	10/02/02
Empire Earth: Art of Conquest   Sierra   10/03/02     No One Lives Forever 2   Sierra   10/03/02     Gladiators of Rome   Activision Value   10/03/02     Earth and Beyond   EA   10/09/02     Hitman 2   Eidos   10/09/02     Roller Coaster Tycoon 2   Infogrames   10/10/02     Roller Coaster Tycoon 2   Infogrames   10/10/02     WWE RAW   THO   10/16/02     Devastation   Arush   10/16/02     Gal. Combat   Strategy First   10/17/02     Zoo Tycoon: Marine Mania   Microsoft   10/18/02     EverQuest: Planes of Power   Sony Online Ent.   10/22/02     NASCAR Thunder 2003   EA Sports   10/22/02     Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2   EA   10/23/02     Combat Flight Simulator 3   Microsoft   10/25/02     Combat Flight Simulator 3   Microsoft   10/25/02     Civilization III: Play the World   Infogrames   10/30/02     NBA Live 2003   EA Sports   10/30/02     SWAT: Urban Justice   Sierra   10/30/02	Neocron	HIP Interactive	10/02/02
No One Lives Forever 2   Sierra   10/03/02	Project Nomads	HIP Interactive	10/03/02
Gladiators of Rome	Empire Earth: Art of Conquest	Sierra	10/03/02
Earth and Beyond         EA         10/09/02           Hitman 2         Eidos         10/09/02           RollerCoaster Tycoon 2         Infogrames         10/09/02           Deadly Dozen: Pacific         Infogrames         10/10/02           WWE RAW         THQ         10/16/02           Devastation         Arush         10/16/02           G.I. Combat         Strategy First         10/17/02           Zoo Tycoon: Marine Mania         Microsoft         10/18/02           EverQuest: Planes of Power         Sony Online Ent.         10/22/02           NASCAR Thunder 2003         EA Sports         10/22/02           The Sims Online         Maxis         10/23/02           Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2         EA         10/23/02           Civilization III: Play the World         Infogrames         10/30/02           FIFA 2003         EA Sports         10/30/02           SWAT: Urban Justice         Sierra         10/30/02	No One Lives Forever 2	Sierra	10/03/02
Hitman 2   Eidos   10/09/02	Gladiators of Rome	Activision Value	10/03/02
RollerCoaster Tycoon 2	Earth and Beyond	EA	10/09/02
Deadly Dozen: Pacific	Hitman 2	Eidos	10/09/02
WWE RAW         THQ         10/16/02           Devastation         Arush         10/16/02           G.I. Combat         Strategy First         10/17/02           Zoo Tycoon: Marine Mania         Microsoft         10/18/02           EverQuest: Planes of Power         Sony Online Ent.         10/22/02           NASCAR Thunder 2003         EA Sports         10/22/02           The Sims Online         Maxis         10/23/02           Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2         EA         10/23/02           Combat Flight Simulator 3         Microsoft         10/25/02           Civilization III: Play the World         Infogrames         10/30/02           FIFA 2003         EA Sports         10/30/02           SWAT: Urban Justice         Sierra         10/30/02	RollerCoaster Tycoon 2	Infogrames	10/09/02
Devastation	Deadly Dozen: Pacific	Infogrames	10/10/02
Combat   Strategy First   10/17/02	WWE RAW	THQ	10/16/02
Zoo Tycoon: Marine Mania         Microsoft         10/18/02           EverQuest: Planes of Power         Sony Online Ent.         10/22/02           NASCAR Thunder 2003         EA Sports         10/22/02           The Sims Online         Maxis         10/23/02           Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2         EA         10/23/02           Combat Flight Simulator 3         Microsoft         10/25/02           Civilization III: Play the World         Infogrames         10/30/02           FIFA 2003         EA Sports         10/30/02           SWAT: Urban Justice         Sierra         10/30/02	Devastation	Arush	10/16/02
EverQuest: Planes of Power         Sony Online Ent.         10/22/02           NASCAR Thunder 2003         EA Sports         10/22/02           The Sims Online         Maxis         10/23/02           Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2         EA         10/23/02           Combat Flight Simulator 3         Microsoft         10/25/02           Civilization III: Play the World         Infogrames         10/30/02           FIFA 2003         EA Sports         10/30/02           NBA Live 2003         EA Sports         10/30/02           SWAT: Urban Justice         Sierra         10/30/02	G.I. Combat	Strategy First	10/17/02
NASCAR Thunder 2003         EA Sports         10/22/02           The Sims Online         Maxis         10/23/02           Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2         EA         10/23/02           Combat Flight Simulator 3         Microsoft         10/25/02           Civilization III: Play the World         Infogrames         10/30/02           FIFA 2003         EA Sports         10/30/02           NBA Live 2003         EA Sports         10/30/02           SWAT: Urban Justice         Sierra         10/30/02	Zoo Tycoon: Marine Mania	Microsoft	10/18/02
The Sims Online	EverQuest: Planes of Power	Sony Online Ent.	10/22/02
Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2         EA         10/23/02           Combat Flight Simulator 3         Microsoft         10/25/02           Civilization III: Play the World         Infogrames         10/30/02           FIFA 2003         EA Sports         10/30/02           NBA Live 2003         EA Sports         10/30/02           SWAT: Urban Justice         Sierra         10/30/02	NASCAR Thunder 2003	EA Sports	10/22/02
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Civilization III: Play the World         Infogrames         10/30/02           FIFA 2003         EA Sports         10/30/02           NBA Live 2003         EA Sports         10/30/02           SWAT: Urban Justice         Sierra         10/30/02	Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2	EA	10/23/02
FIFA 2003         EA Sports         10/30/02           NBA Live 2003         EA Sports         10/30/02           SWAT: Urban Justice         Sierra         10/30/02	Combat Flight Simulator 3	Microsoft	10/25/02
NBA Live 2003         EA Sports         10/30/02           SWAT: Urban Justice         Sierra         10/30/02	Civilization III: Play the World	Infogrames	10/30/02
SWAT: Urban Justice Sierra 10/30/02	FIFA 2003	EA Sports	10/30/02
	NBA Live 2003	EA Sports	10/30/02
Lord of the Rings Universal 10/30/02	SWAT: Urban Justice	Sierra	10/30/02
	Lord of the Rings	Universal	10/30/02

#### → November

TITLE	PUBLISHER	DATE
Age of Mythology	Microsoft	11/01/02
Vietcong	G.O.D.	11/05/02
Silent Hill 2	Konami	11/06/02
Tiger Woods PGA 2003	EA Sports	11/06/02
DAoC: Shrouded Isles	Mythic	11/06/02
Shadowbane	Ubi Soft	11/07/02
Asheron's Call 2	Microsoft	11/08/02
Survivor Marquesas	Infogrames	11/13/02
Starfleet Command III	Interplay	11/13/02
Hegemonia	DreamCatcher	11/15/02
Harry Potter Chamber of Secrets	EA	11/15/02
Battle Realms: Winter Wolf	Ubi Soft	11/19/02
Lionheart	Interplay	11/19/02
Medal of Honor: Reload	EA	11/19/02
Rainbow Six: Raven Shield	Ubi Soft	11/19/02
James Bond 007: NightFire	EA	11/20/02
IGI 2: Covert Strike	Codemasters	11/20/02
SimCity 4	Maxis	11/20/02
Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness	Eidos	11/20/02
Dragon's Lair 3D	Ubi Soft	11/27/02
Praetorians	Eidos	11/27/02
Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft	11/28/02



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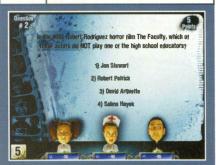


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#### **PCG NEWSTICKER**



Horror mag Fangoria has gotten into the game biz, co-developing Reel Scary Trivia (above) with TRIK:Media in time for Halloween. Hockey mask and red corn syrup not included

AMD has announced that it'll be launching two new processors on Sept. 16. The Athlon XP 2700+ (2.167GHz) and the 2800+ (2.25GHz, retailing for around \$300) will both run on a new 333MHz front side bus, which yields 28 percent greater throughput than previous Athlon XP platforms. Expect to see new motherboards with logic chips from NVIDIA, SiS, and VIA launch at or around the same time to support the new and improved CPUs.

Lack of vision? Leading NVIDIA chip-based 3D-card manufacturer VisionTek may soon close its doors. Only a skeleton staff remains and a trustee has been appointed to operate the cash-poor company as it searches for a buyer. There goes our idea for *Video Card Tycoon...* 

Sierra has cancelled Tribes 2: Fast Attack, a planned expansion to the online-only shooter that would've added a single-player component to the game. The good news: A final free patch should be available as you read this, updating the game with a multitude of new maps and technical fixes (read: it works now).

Zoo Tycoon is all wet this October. A new add-on, Marine Mania, will be hitting stores, offering new aquatic-themed attractions and species such as dolphin and great white sharks. Mmm...sushi.

Times are ruff-ruff: Take-Two Interactive has bought Barking Dog Studios (Global Operations, Homeworld: Cataclysm) and renamed it Rockstar Vancouver. It'll be the first rock star from Vancouver since, uh...we'll get back to you.

GURPS (excuse us, we're gassy) -Steve Jackson Games and Worlds Apart Productions have announced a partnership to launch online games based on the popular old-school tabletop game (which stands for Generic Universal RolePlaying System).

Fans of *Anarchy Online* may be bummed to learn that its first expansion, *Shadowlands*, has been delayed until next year, but here's news to cheer you up: A retail "booster pack" that will make updates to the game's guild system and graphics will be released later in 2002. Expect it to cost less than a full add-on.

Activision has signed with developer Team 17 to publish *Worms 3* in 2003 and one additional *Worms* game in the future.

#### **How to Get a Job in the Games Business**

methods of increasing tension, and correct challenge/reward balancing are paramount.

"Third, hide your weaknesses. If you're a great designer but a lousy texture artist, use the art from the original game you're modifying. We're less interested in people who know how to replace everything than in those who can improve parts of what already exists. Gearbox is all about teamwork and specialization."

When reviewing levels, the first thing Pitchford looks for is impact. He wants to be surprised and entertained, and obviously the level has to be fun. "Show me gameplay that's unique, memorable, plausible, interesting, rewarding, and fun, and you'll be offered a job at Gearbox," he says.

But most importantly, Pitchford looks for what he calls "The Knack." Says Pitchford: "The Knack refers to the innate ability great level designers use to understand what will work and what won't when it comes to end users following a critical path, understanding the challenges being presented to them, and being gratified by the success or failure of their attempt to overcome the challenges. Level designers who successfully wield The Knack will be able to, at any given moment, both gratify and entice players just enough so that they want to proceed to the next moment."

#### → ART

BEHIND EVERY GREAT programmer and level designer is an artist quietly creating character designs and the visual aesthetic of the environments. Much like programming, this discipline places an emphasis on education, and according to Steven Thompson, art director at Gas Powered Games, candidates should have a degree in Fine Arts. Animation. or Graphic Design. (Although experience can act as a substitute for education, he notes.)

As one would expect, Thompson places a lot of importance on an artist's portfolio, and says that a portfolio should contain life drawings, as well as renderings of low-polygon modeling, texturing, and lighting. People wishing to become employed as animators should include a VHS demo reel that demonstrates the principles of character animation.

"When reviewing art samples for concept artists," explains Thompson, "we focus on life drawing, color, lighting, and imagination. For modeler/texture artists, we look for efficient polygonal modeling, vertex weighting (particularly around the shoulder and hip areas), and precise control of UV mapping. When reviewing character-animation demo reels, we look for character balance, weight, anticipation, follow-through, and imagination."

Once an artist lands their dream job, though, they shouldn't be content to sit around doodling all day, especially if they wish to move up the career ladder. "Artists must continue to adapt and evolve with changing technology and increasing quality expectations," Thompson says. "Motivated artists can move up the career ladder quickly, however, and the type of work can be challenging and rewarding.

"The most important trait an artist in the games industry can have is ambition."

#### → GAMES EDITOR

IF YOU'RE THINKING OF pursuing a career as an editor for a gaming magazine, the first thing you need to realize is that there's a lot more to it than simply playing games all day long. You need to demonstrate the ability to write and edit, and you'll also have to be able to meet strict deadlines, especially if you want to work on a magazine.

There are generally no formal educational requirements - not everyone on the PCG staff has a college degree, for example - but you do need an absolute passion for all things gaming-related. And any writing experience you have, even if it isn't related to gaming, can help land you a job. Billy, for example, used his comic-book writing as samples when he first applied.

But the most important thing to remember is that being a games editor isn't all about flying around to junkets and having PR people buy you new underwear. For the staff of PCG, trips are short and brutal (since our company foots the bill for any travel to see games), and you have to be willing to work long nights and weekends. Of course, holding a completed issue in your hands at the end of the month makes it all worthwhile.

#### **SAMPLE SALARIES**

#### → PROGRAMMING

According to a Game Developer magazine survey from 2001, here are sample annual programmer salaries at game companies:

- Programmer: \$55,478 to \$69,128
- Lead Programmer: \$56,539 to \$88,358
- **Technical Director:** \$61,572 to \$83,889

According to a Game Developer magazine survey from 2001, here are sample annual artist salaries at game companies:

- Artist: \$57,073 to \$66,851
- Lead Artist: \$49,684 to \$68,727
- **Art Director:** \$52,000 to \$66,667

#### → LEVEL DESIGNERS

Nobody seems to want to talk about the salaries for starting and senior level designers. Our guess: starting annual salary of around \$30,000, with senior designers commanding six-figure salaries.

#### → TESTERS (QA DEPARTMENT)

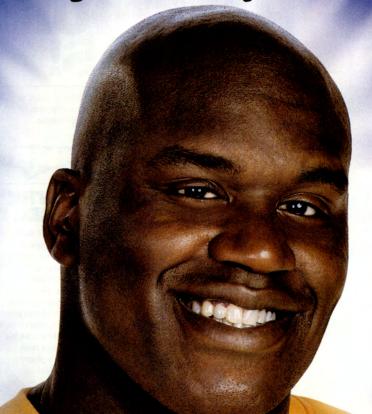
At the starting point of the spectrum are testers, who often pull in low-end hourly salaries.

#### → GAME-MAGAZINE EDITORS

Be clear: journalism in the games industry is not a way to get rich! Sample annual salaries:

- Assistant Editor: You pay us
- Editor: \$8,725 to \$9,225
- Editorial Director: \$385,000-plus

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#### PLAYLIST



ROB Playing games? Oh, right, being editor of a games magazine means I play games all day, right? Not quite. None lots of work involved bringing you all these lovely pages packed with Gaming Goodness. But in those quiet moments, when nobody's watching, I'm still fine-tuning my Magic Online prowess



**COREY** I thought Soldier of Fortune II might be an all-gore snoozer, but after a few levels, all that terrorist-stomping has me sucking down an adrenaline cocktail as I leave limbs and guts in my wake. Of course, just to balance the cosmic scales, I've been nursing my criminal talents in Grand Theft Auto III. How's the family now, Salvatore?



DAN It's sports madness on my PC this month, as I received three betas all in the same week, for Links 2003, EA's Tiger Woods PGA game, and NHL 2003. With all this athletic brilliance to be had, there's just no time for shooting anything up. And now Madden 2003 as well? Ecstasy. And to think I bought an Xbox for sports games.



CHUCK | love DC Comics mods for Freedom Force, especially those starring Superman, For some reason, FF modders all think that heat vision makes a shrill "EEEEEEEHN" noise. Now, I use heat vision a lot. Lex Luthor? EEEEEEEHN! Thug with bat? EEEEEEHN! Butterfly? EEEEEEHN! My co-workers say it has to stop. Haters.



BILLY I'm utterly addicted to Battlefield 1942. I play it all day long, and when I go home, I map out complicated algorithms that I translate into stunning 1942 strategies the next day. Even my dreams are now nothing more than a never-ending collage of bombed-out tanks, burning planes, and dead bodies sailing through the air. I love this job.



JOE My five favorite Neverwinter Nights modules: (1) Death Mountain (tried to beat it, but it was too hard); (2) Curse of the Azure Bonds (a remake of the old SSI game!); (3) An Errand for the Lady, (4) Dungeon of Doom, (5) Noratal Quests Episode 1. Download these and lots more from http://nwn.bioware. com if you're as obsessed with NWN as I am.



CHIAKI Hi, I'm a Sagittarius. I love loud rock-'n'-roll, late-night pizza, and Warcraft III. I hate long walks on the beach, meaningful talks, and any creature - be it Human, Night Elf. Undead or Orc — that stands in the way of my total domination. You be tall, green, and highly skilled with the Doomhammer. Interested? Email noscrubs@pcgamer.com.



GREG There I was, deep in a dimly lit derelict spacecraft, when suddenly, dozens of delightfully detailed undead denizens came out of nowhere, having devised a way to devour my delicious derriere oh-so-deviously! My doom was decidedly near, but then I awoke...it'd been a dream! I was free to look forward to DOOM III! Delightful!

# Presenting the winners of our recent Playlist contest

Back in our June 2002 issue, Joe issued a challenge: Draw, paint, or otherwise doodle a picture of your favorite PC Gamer staffer, and we'll publish the best pictures and award one aspiring Picasso three games of our choice. So, without further ado, here are the best pictures we received. Our, er,



thanks to all who entered!

ANTHONY X: This fantastic picture, which depicts a disheveled Greg wearing Safeway bags on his feet and sporting a sensational hair style, nearly took first place. In the end, though, the garish colors knocked it from contention.



COLIN SMITH: If Rob were a flying insect who was crossing a highway and then was hit by a passing semi, this is what he might look like. Though it's doubtful he'd have a big grin on his face after tasting windshield, but that's a minor aesthetic point.

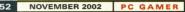


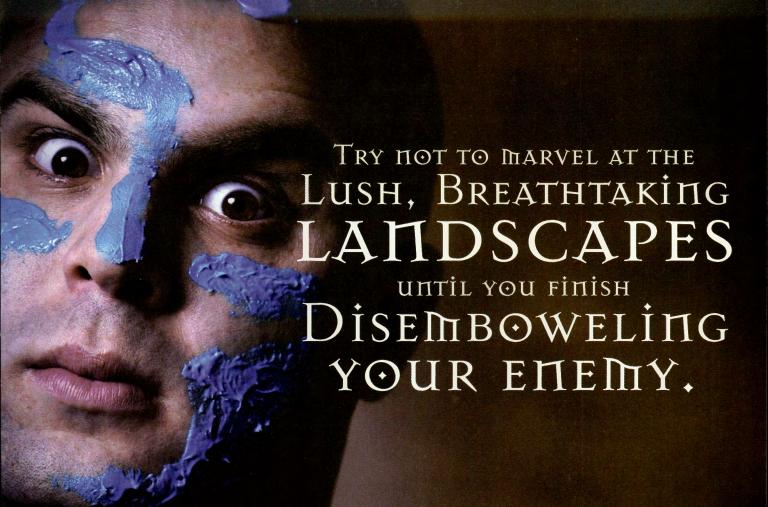


JOHN WAWRZAK: Who dares to challenge the formidable Chug Vederborn, the all-mighty Robtastic Mansmith, and the terrifying Chiaki Bunny-Killer? Not any of us, that's for damn sure. Clear a path!



**WALKER DUNNINGTON: Joe's handsome** visage is perfectly captured in this stunning crayon and magic-marker illustration. Notice the subtle use of color around the lips, the shading around the edges of the forehead, and the brilliant use of Joe's crazy right eye.





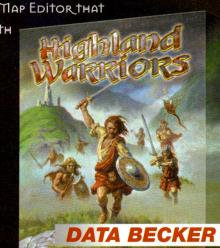
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### QUAKECON GOES LL TO HELL

#### Fanboys corner DOOM III's wily wunderkind John Carmack; drooling ensues



or the fourth straight year, the Mesquite Convention Center played host to QuakeCon on Aug. 15-18. Attendees of QuakeCon 2002 traveled to the sleepy south to compete in ATI's Quake III: Arena and Return to Castle Wolfenstein LAN championships for prizes worth up to \$25,000, but it was the three-hour presentation of DOOM III that had 'em standing in the aisles.

Beginning with an hourlong talk on technology in which the DOOM III engine's powerful physics, lighting and shadow effects, animation system, scripting, and toolset were demoed, id amazed the crowd by unveiling a big surprise: a polygonally reincarnated version of DOOM II's skull-chucking Revenant.

But it was DOOM III's legendary programmer, John Carmack, who kept the crowd at rapt attention for nearly two hours. During his keynote address, followed by a question-and-answer period (with microphone-toting id CEO Todd Hollenshead sidestepping

the press section and going straight to the fans), Carmack dropped bombshells galore.

"All the tools and technology are in place, and now [DOOM III's] in the designer's court," said Carmack on his role in the game's development, later speculating that DOOM III would be the paradigm for the graphics-engine industry for the next five years.

Questions from gamers ranged from the painfully fanboy-ish - "Will there be a BFG, and what's the model number? (Answer: Probably and most current) - to the hopelessly obscure — "Will character's pupils constrict when exposed to light?" (Answer: No) - but Carmack's response that generated the most buzz was his revelation that DOOM III multiplay would consist of mostly "four-player small stuff" and one-on-one deathmatches.

This year's QuakeCon turned out to be the biggest ever, attracting over 3,000 attendees and filling the event's Bring Your Own PC LAN party to capacity, And though Quake III and Return to Castle Wolfenstein were played nonstop, late-night matches of Warcraft III, Counter-Strike, and even Grand Theft Auto III could also be spotted.

The \$20,000 Quake III grand prize went to Russian challenger LeXer after a hard-fought battle with Daler during the finals. And in the Return to Castle Wolfenstein competition, clan Doctors earned a cool twenty-five grand for the team. (We had to cheer on Clan Amish, though, if only because its members were dressed in quaint beard-and-hat Mennonite threads for the entire show.)

Sadly, no news was bad news for Quake IV, so don't expect its release anytime before next year's flock of freaky fraggers descends upon Mesquite.



#### **FIRST-PERSON SHOUTERS**

#### WHO'S SAYING WHAT AROUND THE **WORLD OF GAMING**



#### WHO CARES WHAT LANGUAGE IT'S IN, AS LONG AS IT LOOKS COOL

"The next game engine I work on will be in a high-level shading language, and the cards will just have to deal with it.

> - John Carmack speaking at August's QuakeCon

#### **DUKE NUKEM...WHENEVER?**

"Anyway, who cares how long it takes? If the end product is worth paying for, then buy it. If the game sucks, nobody will force you to play or buy it. "Some of you ass\*\*\*\*s act like you already paid [3D Realms] for the game five years ago, and

they have yet to deliver." - ceridus on Duke Nukem Forever's delays. from www.voodooextreme.com

#### WE'RE GLAD TO HEAR THAT IT WAS A **GAMEPLAY DECISION**

"It just wouldn't be right to have someone zipping by all this work."

- John Carmack on why Doom III is slower in pace than the Quake games, speaking at August's QuakeCon

#### WHAT'S THAT SAYING ABOUT THE SUN AND A DOG'S BUTT?

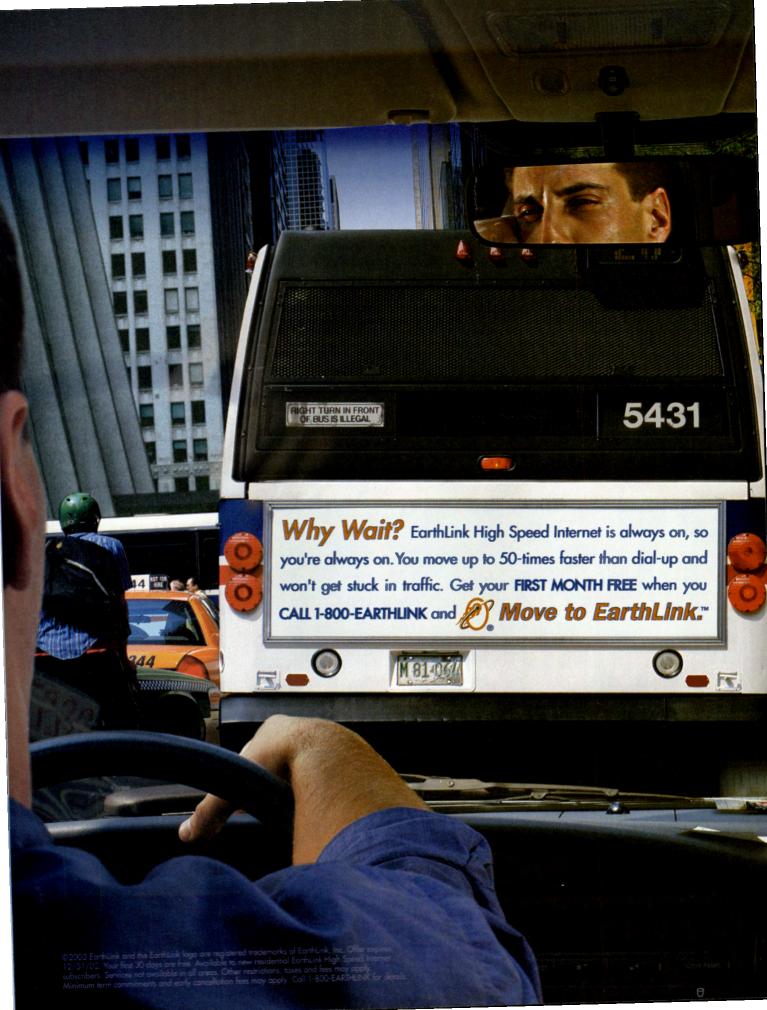
"I can't believe the people responsible for Codename: Eagle have created the multiplayer wargame I've been waiting for my whole life."

- Chet on Battlefield 1942, from www.quartertothree.com

#### WHY PC GAMES SELL..AND DON'T SELL

"The Sims has done something that very few, if any, developers have succeeded with before. [The games] have managed to succeed bigtime among people who usually don't play many computer games. That's the big secret, guys. We, the hardcore gamers, mostly [download] pirated versions and such of games. However, the customers who bought The Sims have probably never even heard of IRC or direct connect or whatever program you guys use."

- MrTA on www.voodooextreme.com, talking about The Sims' domination of PC game sales, and highlighting why better hardcore PC games aren't mainstays of the best-seller lists



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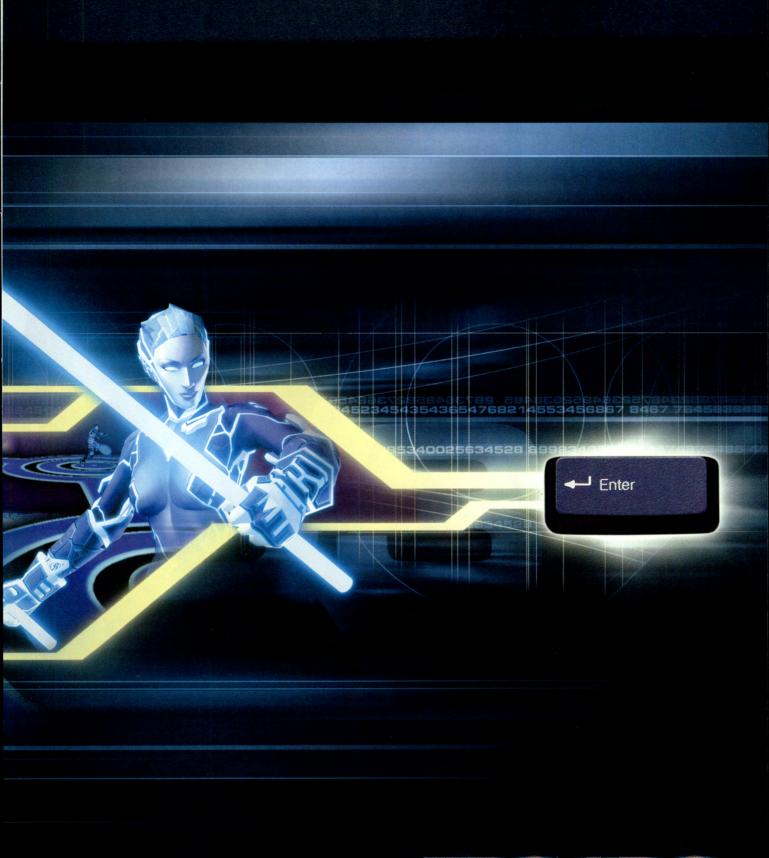












UPGRADE SPRING 2003

### PCGAMER'S ULTIM





DO NOT ADJUST YOUR MAGAZINE: HARD STUFF IS TAKING OVER:

My overthrow of the Smith regime is complete. Taken by force, Rob and his conniving "yes" man, Morris, are no longer at the controls of the starship Gamerprise. As the self-appointed Ruler for Life and Supreme Ladies Man of PC Gamer magazine, I've seen to it that the precious pages of this national treasure will be squandered no more on silly things like "games" and "news." Hence forth, I will be instituting my revolutionary "nothing but ardware stuff" plan, and this feature you're about to read is Just the tip...of the fruit...of my labor...iceberg.

I call it "Hard Stuff XXL." Chuck Osborn, PC Gamer's newly appointed Features God and Supremely Fittest and Ripped of PC Gamer, and I are unanimous in calling it a masterpiece. (Billy, who sat on the sidelines during Rob's ousting and is still a lowly Senior Editor because of my undying spite and jealousy, couldn't be bothered to comment.)

What is "Hard Stuff XXL," you ask? Well, it's just the best damn Hard Stuff section you've ever seen! Included in these hallowed pages are tips and tweaks, peripheral picks, a how-to guide for wireless home networking, a PC roundup, and a review of ATI's new GeForce4 Ti 4600 killer, the RADEON 97001

As Ruler for Life and Supreme Ladies Man of PC Gamer, I know what you're thinking: "Will TheVede be able to maintain his stranglehold on PCG forevermore?" Friends, these things are difficult to predict, but I give you my word that even if this is my last hurrah, I've gone down swinging. No other Hard Stuff has ever brought it this hard! Live it up, loyal readers!



# HOW TO YOUR OWN



STEP BY PAINSTAKING STEP, THEVEDE SHOWS YOU HOW TO BUILD YOUR GAMING RIG OF GOODNESS FROM SCRATCH



TRUTH IS, WE'RE ALL lazy SOBs who'd much rather pay someone like Alienware or Falcon to make our high-end gaming machines. But sometimes cash, pride, or a love of tiny screws gets in the way and then somebody's gotta make that new P4 2.53. In that case, here's how you do it.

#### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Case: Antec Plus1080AMG
- CPU: Intel Pentium 4 2.53GHz
- ► Motherboard: Intel D850EMV2
- Memory: 2x256MB Kingston PC-2100 RDRAM
- **─** Video Card: ATI RADEON 9700 PRO
- → DVD-ROM: Pioneer 16x
- HD: 60GB IBM Deskstar 7,200rpm
- Sound: Sound Blaster Audigy Gamer
- Floppy Drive: Generic
- Network Card: Generic 10/100

How do I get my

two basic chances work: (1) Create a choice of booting gives you the

much better luck with the old games

You'll have

under Win 98. (2)

you've already

installed the game, right-click on the

con or shortcut

Now click a chec Click on the then check the box to "Disable On

#### GROUND RULES

Before we get into the nuts and bolts of how to build your PC, here are some ground rules:

Always make sure you're grounded before working on any PC. Static electricity can severely damage delicate (and expensive) circuitry. Ground yourself by keeping one part of your body in contact with the metal case at all times.

If a part doesn't want to fit, don't force it. Stop and make sure you're putting it in correctly.

Don't overturn your screws! Snug, yes, but any tighter may strip the thread.

Keep your manuals! They'll come in handy later.



Our Antec case comes with everything we'll need to get our hardware installed. Pay special attention to the rail in that hairy guy's hands - you'll need it and more soon enough!



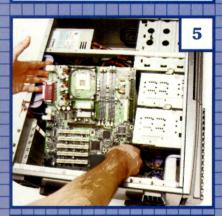
Install one mounting screw in your case for each one of your motherboard's screw holes. Line them up properly! Place one under the motherboard in the wrong place, and the system may not boot.



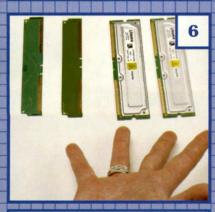
Your case comes with many screws. Make sure to use the right ones. In this instance, the small screw with fine threads is made to work with the gold-colored motherboard mounts.



Grab the I/O shield that fits your motherboard's inputs and outputs (it comes with your case or mobo) and attach it to the back of your system tower as shown. (Most will simply snap right into place).



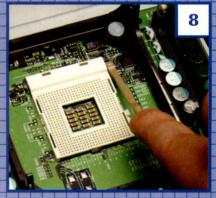
Once you've attached all the necessary mounting screws to your case, carefully place the motherboard into the case and screw it down. Did you make sure that each mount lines up with a hole?



Here's our memory and our C-RIMMs (required for 184-pin RDRAM). Notice that stylish ring on TheVede's right hand? Yeah, that's totally money. Chicks dig that sort of thing



Your RAM and C-RIMMs fit in only one way. The levers on each side of the RIMM slot should be in the "open" position. Push the sticks straight down into the motherboard until both levers snap up.



Let's drop our 2.53GHz P4 into our mobo. First, throw that lever to the right of the socket into the "up" position. Don't wrestle it! Move it out to the right a bit and then up, and it should move easily.

~vromas/vdmsound/ and see if it helps. (It shouldn't hurt.) Which motherboard Intel P4-based com one of the following D845WN, D845HVL or D845HV. (For based computer: Buy a motherboard should I purchase puter: Buy a moth com/products/bro nead to www.inte that uses VIA's KT266A or KT333 ist of AMD-recon se/motherbd.htm chipsets. (For a fu D850GB, 850MD 850MV, D845WN AMD Athlon XPdetails on each, coards, head to ммм.атд.сот. nended mother

Where do you find all the cheapest

retailers for com outer hardware? fou'll usually get the best prices

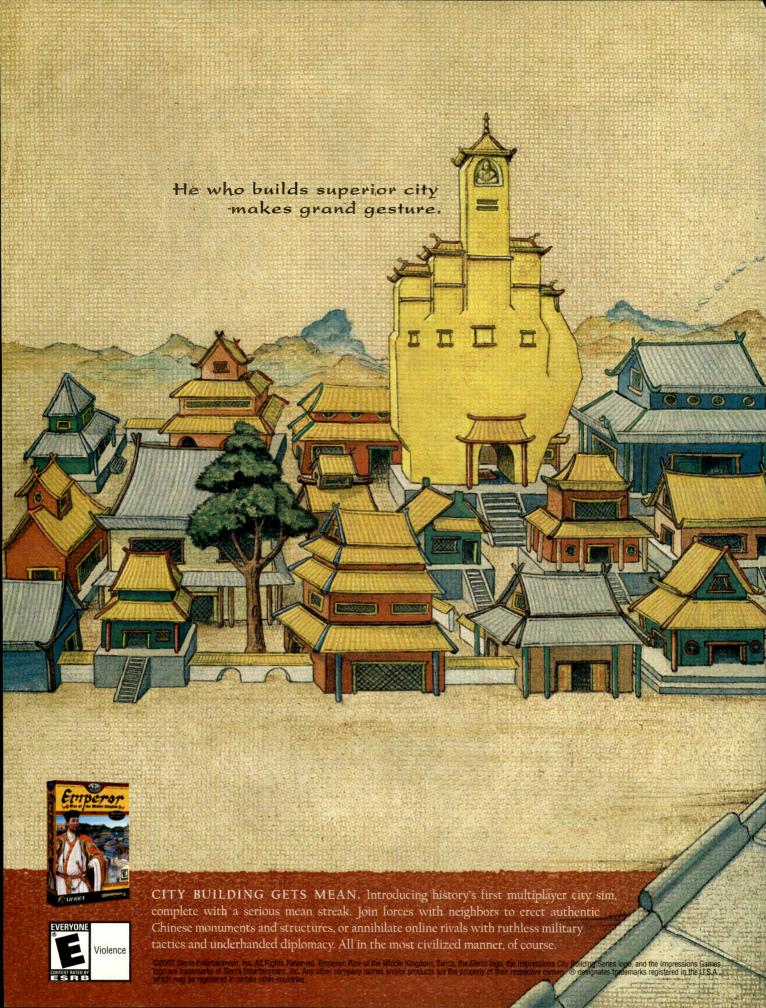
scale of the

a great place to ge piece of upgrade Pricewatch.com material you cou prices for every

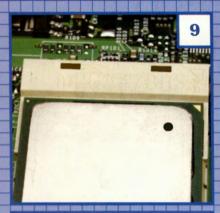
that few retailers

go wrong with you want. You can als ind amazing deal could ever match One point to note Should somethin

hardware, online headache. Chec sometimes be a returns or



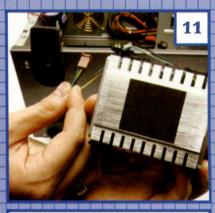




Situate the CPU with the socket so that the triangles line up. If the lever is in "up" position, the CPU should pop right in. DON'T FORCE IT. Lock the lever back down once the CPU is snug in its new home.



If you've purchased a boxed Intel CPU, it'll come with a heatsink/fan combo very similar to this one. Again, notice that ring on TheVede's right hand? That's gotten him at least two dates in 10 years.



On the reverse side of your official Intel heatsink is a thin slab of heat-conducting foil. DON'T REMOVE IT OR ADD THERMAL COMPOUND. (Use that stuff only if your heatsink instructions ask for it.)



Flip the heatsink's levers into the "open" position. Line up the four corners with the four posts coming up from your mobo. Make sure the heatsink's "teeth" latch on to each of these four corners.



Once the teeth have latched, throw the two levers on either side of your heatsink into the "locked" position and you'll be good to go. Doesn't TheVede have damn sexy thumbs?



Plug the fan's power cable into the little threepronged connector on the motherboard next to the CPU socket. Depending on the motherboard, it'll usually say "CPU FAN" right next to it.



It's darn pretty, but there's nobody home (not yet, anyway). For our purposes, we're going to need to remove two of these six plates. You may need to pull more if you have additional drives.



The plates come out from inside, so we're going to need to gain access. This Antec case makes things a cinch by allowing us to pull out its two 3.5-inch drive bays.



Once you've thrown that silver lever, just pull those bad boys right the fudge outta there! You know, speaking of "bad boys," TheVede is definitely not the type of boy you'd want to bring home to mom.

RAM do

Any system you're

ance upgrades you on should have at least 256MB RAM so low, this boost gaming enjoymen can make for you going up to current RAM pric vou're running ance-wise. With orice-to-perform Windows XP or remaining rough Windows 2000, 512MB RAM to smooth out any edges perform one of the best

when it's time to How do I know upgrade my t's time to upgrade ouddy tells you that onger happy with our system's pe ormance — not when you're no his computer is because your way faster."

GHz CPU if you've Jumping from a 1.4GHz CPU to a GeForce4 TI 4600 already got a

\$600 into a 333MF ment. Neither wi rideo card won' necessarily give popping a GF4 T cernible improv vou a really dis

new machine: AMI should I put in my Which processor or Intel?

your processor, first If you're upgrading make sure your

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Some cases have metal plates behind the slots that you'll need to remove before adding your floppy and CD-ROM drives. These plates are sharp, so be extra careful!



Let's get our hard and floppy drives installed in the two removable drive bays. Starting with the HD, simply slide in the drive so that its "rear end" is sticking out the back. Then just screw it in. Huh huh.



Set those jumpers! We want to set this drive as the Master on the primary IDE channel, so we've set it up appropriately as "Master" so that the computer knows where to look for it.



Once the jumpers are set, plop that drive bay right back into the tower. One time, a girl introduced TheVede to her mom, and the mom started crying and praying to god to save her family. True story.



Make sure your floppy drive is sticking out just far enough from the end of the drive bay so that it'll be flush with the outside of the case once it's back inside the tower.



Remember the rails? Mount them (one per side) to each of the 5.25-inch CD/DVD drives you're installing. Make sure your drive(s) stick out far enough to be flush with the front of your case.

How can I find out

expensive.

what hardware is

in my computer?

0

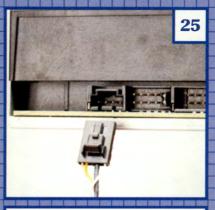
new chip selection will work in the motherboard of your choice.
Beyond that, both Intel and AMD processors are great! Utimately, in the current market, the fastest P4s are faster than the fastest AMD XPs, and in some applications, that improvement is as much as 10 percent. That said, the Intel chips are more

"Sandra" is a small utility program that gives you in-depth information about the overwhelming majority of parts in your PC. Download it for free at www.sisoftware.de mon.co.uk/sandra/.

Why doesn't my powerful machine match the bench-



Set those jumpers! Our DVD-ROM drive will be set as the Master on the secondary IDE channel, and so, just like we did with the hard drive, we've set it to "Master." (TheVede has never mastered much.)



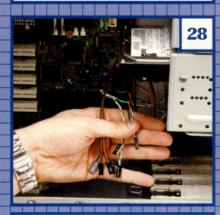
Your CD/DVD-ROM drive or your sound card should come with an audio cable that connects your drive to your card and lets you hear CD audio. Connect one end to your drive.



Most IDE cables come with a blue end and one or two black ends (one each for each of the two devices you can use per IDE channel). Plug one of the black connectors into the drive as-shown.



Now that the jumper is set and the cables are plugged in, feed those cables right through the front of the tower and snap the drive itself into place so that the drive face is flush with the case.



Your tower comes with many small cables that need to be plugged into your motherboard to get power and functionality from your motherboard to that fancy new tower of yours



Read your motherboard manual carefully to learn where each cable goes. If a button or light isn't working after the system is completed, try turning the offending cable around.

ounce of juice fron - even with online are also de icated enough to work out how to their machine, eve forms a little diffe and the fanboy very similar parts dedicated to post mage quality. So machine is playin every system per games at a pace focus on that, ar with the onlin their results and fluidity you' nappy with, just forget those few at the expense eke every last Jones in the ong as your stakes.

ime until your prot Don't rush! Make one change at a computer?

troubleshoot my

How can I best



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### **Standard Features**

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Keep your E-VALUE CODE handy! It's the easiest way to find and build your perfect PC when you decide to order.



The floppy drive ribbon works only one way, but it may fit in backward or reversed. If your drive doesn't work once you've powered up, turn the PC off and switch the ribbon around until the drive works.



Almost without exception, IDE cables fit in only one way. Make sure you've lined things up properly and plug one of the black connectors from your second IDE ribbon into your hard drive



Remember those blue tips we mentioned? You should see two of them: one coming out of your DVD-ROM drive and one at the end of the cable coming out of your hard drive.



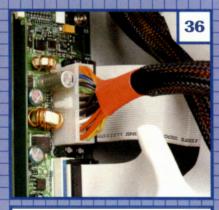
Plug the blue connector from the hard drive into the primary IDE slot and the blue connector from the DVD drive into the secondary slot on the mobo. Plug the ribbon from the floppy drive into its slot.



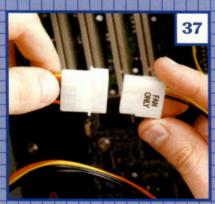
Now plug the system's power supply into the motherboard. P4-based motherboards use two different power cables. Both need to be plugged into the motherboard before you turn on the system.



The little guy snaps into a special socket, usually housed right next to the CPU. It fits in only one way. Sometimes TheVede likes to pour warm chocolate on himself and sing "My Way."



The big guy fits in only one way as well, and it snaps right into a special socket, usually housed near or around your IDE slots. TheVede would house himself in or around an IDE slot if he could



Now make sure everything else in your system has power. Some power supplies come with special "fan only" power cables. Plug any case fans you may have into these power lines.



Each drive in your system needs to be connected to a power cable. Hard drives and CD/DVD-ROM drives take the same type of power cable, shown here. They go in only one way - unlike The Vede.

cards, and RAI your CPU, AGP an ems and remove replace that, and for exam don't pull out Pick a part you suspect mig em is solved. If your system isn' be causing prob again. No luck? at the same the next part.

What do you think of force feedback

You like it...or you don't. Some peopl

experience. It's ce games with a force effect; others find potentially far mo disconcerting and detrimental to the udders from yo eedback wheel, entertaining. For currently bu eedback gamen mpact on your p very limited but t abs (www.act-la you have to deal course, it's also nay have broad ormance is like cool factor of fe tainly harder to winderl, and Ac appeal, as their ng the jolts and mpressive. You with the Al, the ove the tactile drive in racing mersive and ogitech (www oumps is still



Floppy drives power-cable t s use the smaller types you'll find y, and this cable don't force anything d coming e fits in or of the two included coming from your one way



e easily if you app our RADEON 9700 requires k! AGP and PCI cards should



Remember the a DVD-ROM drive "CD\_IN" port of you puke Now you're ready

complete moron. If he can so can you. Get to Final Product: a kickin' new P built in well under an hour by complete moron. If he can do

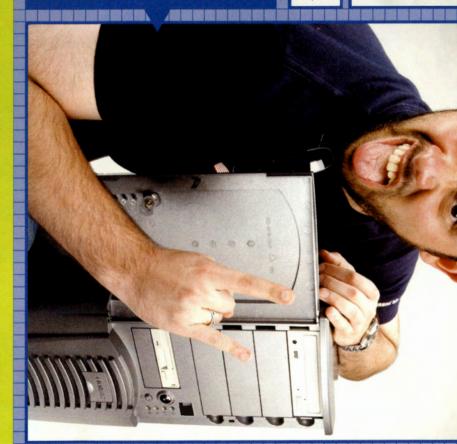


System is built. All parts are installed, cabled, and juiced. Yeah, it's damn ugly, but then, we're lazy. To ensure better airflow inside your case, conside wrapping up loose wires with cable wraps or ties

### П 0 CS PI S I MO

the console again to see your score.

How do I overclock my machine? A few years ago, when gamers were struggling just to keep their games running at 24 frames per second, overclocking made a lot of sense, and some of Intel's Celeron processors made it fairly easy to pay for a lowerend CPU and generate high-end power with only a few tweaks. These days, however, hardware nuts



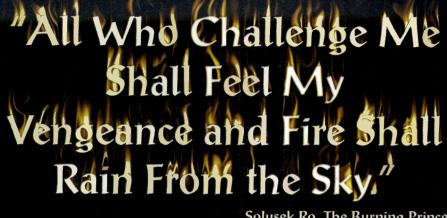
How can I benchmark my own system?

The most common tests used here at Hard Stuff are Quake III. 3DMark2001 SE. and MDK 2. You can download a free version of 3DMark2001 from www.madonion. com. We run the default test with one change - we enable triple buffer, which won't affect the score much on most systems. Benchmarking with MDK 2 is straightforward, but to get your frames-persecond in Quake III. you need to type timedemo1 from the console (hit the "~" key to bring up the window) before you start one of the game's prerecorded demos (we use demo1). Once the demo loop has completed, enter





SONY ONLINE



Solusek Ro, The Burning Prince

ehold the portals. Journey to the throne rooms of the Gods of Norrath and challenge them to battle. In the Planes of Power lost treasures, mighty challenges, and adventures unknown await the hearty and brave.

- Classic version of EverQuest included
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- ♦ Hundreds of new and powerful weapons, spells, armor, & jewelry
- Over 50 new creatures to combat including -Rallos Zek the God of War, Bertoxxulous the God of Disease, Saryrn Goddess of Torment, and more
- Dozens of enhanced quests for experienced and non-experienced players alike



Also look for the official EverQuest Atlas, a complete and detailed collection of all the maps of Norrath.

v.everquest.com









### **God's Hand**









Create a world imagined only by you.

**Build and run the** 

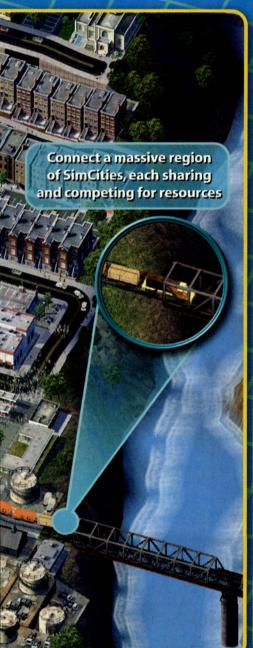


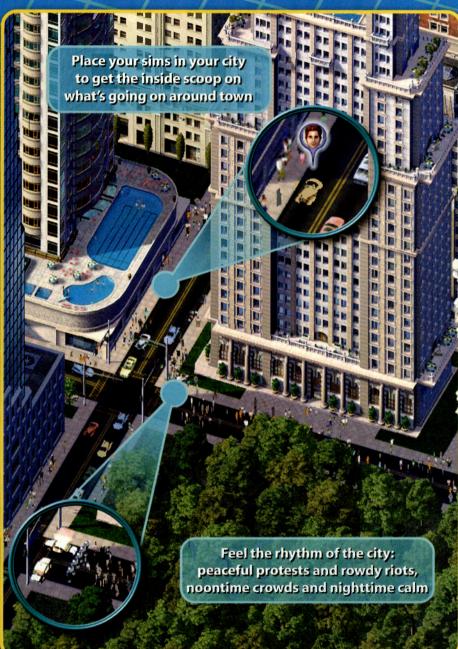


### or's Limo



### **Your Sims**





city of your dreams.

Immerse yourself in the lives of your Sims.





eagames.com

### PERIPHERAL POWER

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PERIPHERAL TO GAMING NEEDS DOESN'T

### GAMEPADS



### **SAITEK P120**

**COST: \$10** 

For the rock-bottom price, we were awfully impressed with the P120's comfort and responsive controls. It's the best budget gamepad on store shelves today.

WHO SHOULD BUY IT: Light action gamers who don't need fancy bells and whistles or more than six buttons for their gaming.

### **MICROSOFT** SIDEWINDER USB

**COST: \$24.95** 

This USB-edition of Microsoft's classic is the very best all-around gamepad you can buy. Solid construction with eight action buttons.

WHO SHOULD BUY IT: Action and sports gamers who require solid play over vibrating fingers.



### **LOGITECH WINGMAN** RUMBLEPAD

**COST: \$29.95** 

Looking for doo-dads? The RumblePad has two internal vibrating motors, dual analog ministicks, a D-pad, nine programmable buttons, and a slide throttle.

WHO SHOULD BUY IT: Fans of console-style rumble effects.

### JOYSTICKS



### **LOGITECH WINGMAN** EXTREME DIGITAL 3D

COST: \$39.95

The best no-frills joysticks on the market. Has solid weighty feel, wide footprint, twist handle, and responsive control.

WHO SHOULD BUY: The TIE Fighter crowd, or anybody looking for an entry-level flight stick.



### **MICROSOFT** SIDEWINDER FF 2

**COST: \$109** 

The premier force-feedback joystick, this baby has over 100 realistic force effects, precision control, and sturdy design.

WHO SHOULD BUY: Force-feedback fanatics who've got the cash to splurge on their hobby.



Flat-panel monitors

are sweet

### THRUSTMASTER **HOTAS COUGAR**

COST: \$299.99

The Rolls Royce of flight sticks, the HOTAS looks and feels like it belongs in the cockpit of a realworld aircraft.

WHO SHOULD BUY: Pilots, the wealthy, and anyone who demands total realism.

idea. You don't need ference to the core overclock anything frame or two in per the more you try to game experience. generate an extra hardly make a dif More importantly stable you're machine is likely new GeForce4 Ti 4600 or your new formance benchseem to want to Athlon XP 2100+ be, and nobody sure, you might marks, but it'll

ess, and look damn like. But they're not take up less space hose flat screens all slim and prettyilat-panel displays through them, ma Not so fast there, Why? Well, while reproducing stati mother when you do a great job of ideal for gaming. moving graphics mages and text, try to pump fast they blur like a ing them a lesson your desk, want one.

### CREATIVE SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY LINE

COST: \$59, \$99, \$249,99

No matter your budget, there should be an Audigy in your future. Creative's line will fit any need; the plain Advanced HD delivers 5.1 digital sound at a low price point; the MP3+ or Gamer add full software suites (of music software or game bundles, respectively); and the Platinum EX is a professional home studio complete with an external connector box for the ultimate audiophile.

WHO SHOULD BUY: Gamers with ears.

### FOR MORE INFO

MICROSOFT: www.microsoft.com/ hardware/sidewinder

LOGITECH: www.logitech.com

THRUSTMASTER: www.thrust master.com

SAITEK: www.saitekusa.com

BELKIN: www.belkin.com

THE CLAW: www.claw.com.au/

KLIPSCH: www.klipsch.com

NVIDIA: www.nvidia.com

CREATIVE: www.creative.com

### MICE

### LOGITECH OPTICAL MOUSE

COST: \$19.95

Boys, put your balls away. The Optical Mouse is a value-priced wheel mouse that uses an optical sensor to track movement instead of a grime-collecting mouse ball.

WHO SHOULD BUY: Gamers who use their mice for spreadsheets.



### **LOGITECH WHEEL** MOUSE SPECIAL **EDITION OPTICAL**

COST: \$29.95

Has twice the speed and tracking power of a plain Optical Mouse a major boon to your frag tallies.

WHO SHOULD BUY: Strategy/RPG/ light-FPS gamers, and lefties.



### **MS INTELLIMOUSE EXPLORER**

COST: \$54.95

Microsoft's IntelliEye sensors offer the smoothest, fastest tracking available. Attractive and stylish, the Explorer will fit your hand like a glowing red glove.

WHO SHOULD BUY: Quake stars and anyone who loves themselves.

### EERING WHEELS



### **WINGMAN FORMULA** GP

COST: \$39.95

For solid entry-level racing minus any special effects, the Formula GP can't be beat. Comes with weighted pedals, paddle shifters, and four programmable buttons.

WHO SHOULD BUY: Owners of Supercar Street Challenge.



### MICROSOFT SIDE-WINDER FF WHEEL

COST: \$99.95

A well-made force-feedback wheel with six buttons and two gear shifts. Quality control for racing aficionados on a budget.

WHO SHOULD BUY: Racing diehards who really want to feel the gravel in Need for Speed.



### **LOGITECH MOMO FORCE**

COST: \$199.95

A high-end force-feedback wheel padded with leather grips and accompanied by aluminum pedals. Designed exclusively for Logitech by automotive experts MOMO.

WHO SHOULD BUY: Peeps who sold their soul to NASCAR 4.

believe us? Head to your local compute ve're talking about super store and check out the flatpanel models they up so much save on display. /ou'll see what

don't have an AGF ideo card I can get slot in my machine

fairly visible in your future. But if that's 8dfx made a /oodoo5 5500 in PC eally not an option nd a card suitab or today's games ome searching ou'll have to do full machine

nay have difficults GeForce2 MX is available as a PCI rears ago, but you inding one, and X ind and buggy at lest. In the NVIDIA lavor a couple of

ard through man acturers like

card (at your own able to get a PCI with information ou should still 3eForce2 (the

play games on mul cool is it to monitors at time?

# Currently, the fastest AGP setting is 4x, but it'll hit 8x this year

### VIDEO CARDS



### GEFORCE4 TI 4200

COST: about \$199

Resist the urge to get the GeForce4 MX instead — for a similar price, it's not nearly as powerful.

WHO SHOULD BUY: Anyone who wants to play all the newest games out now for the best price.

### GEFORCE4 TI 4400 (128MB) RADEON 9700 PRO

With 128MB, the 4400 has double the RAM of its smaller sibling, the 4200. And it won't be obsolete next year.

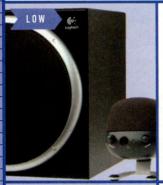
WHO SHOULD BUY: Hardcore gamers who can't break the bank to purchase a new video card.

COST: \$399

Stop, flip to page 96, read our kickass review of the hottest new tech around, and then return.

WHO SHOULD BUY: Early adopters who want the fastest, prettiest graphics money can buy.

### SPEAKERS



### LOGITECH Z-340 2.1

COST: \$49.99

A dual-speaker, one-subwoofer solution for your basic gaming needs. You won't hear Ghost Recon snipers sneaking up behind you in surround sound, but it gets the job done.

WHO SHOULD BUY: People living in dorm rooms or with non-gaming-friendly significant others.

### -sp**e**cific



### **BELKIN NOSTROMO N50 SPEEDPAD**

COST: \$34.99

Built exclusively for first-person shooters, the N50 Speedpad is an alternative to the clunky W-A-S-D keyboard setup. Chuck's Quake III frag count shot up when he used it.

WHO SHOULD BUY: FPS-ers who hate the bulk of a full keyboard.



### LOGITECH Z-540 4.1

**COST: \$79.99** 

The Z-540 has four speakers and one subwoofer for 40 watts of audio power. Grand Theft Auto III's soundtrack will scream when you're playing it through these fantastic-sounding mid-range boxes.

WHO SHOULD BUY: You like good sound but can live with sub-THX quality (and a sub-\$100 price).



### THE CLAW

**COST: \$55** 

A formfitting controller also made just for the FPS community, The Claw comfortably caresses your paw in its ergonomic grip. Great for extended sessions of Unreal Tournament 2003.

WHO SHOULD BUY: Folks with big hands and a dislike for tapping on keyboards while gaming.



### KLIPSCH PROMEDIA

COST: \$399.99

The deep end of the high-end sound pool, the Klipsch is our favorite 5.1 sound system. Fully THX-certified and 400 watts, these suckers can get loud.

WHO SHOULD BUY: Raving audiophiles with soundproof play areas.



### THRUSTMASTER **TACTICALBOARD**

**COST: \$69.99** 

What broadband

The ultimate controller for both strategy and FPS gamers, it has a whopping 42 buttons, a gelpacked wrist pad, and a built-in voice-communications center.

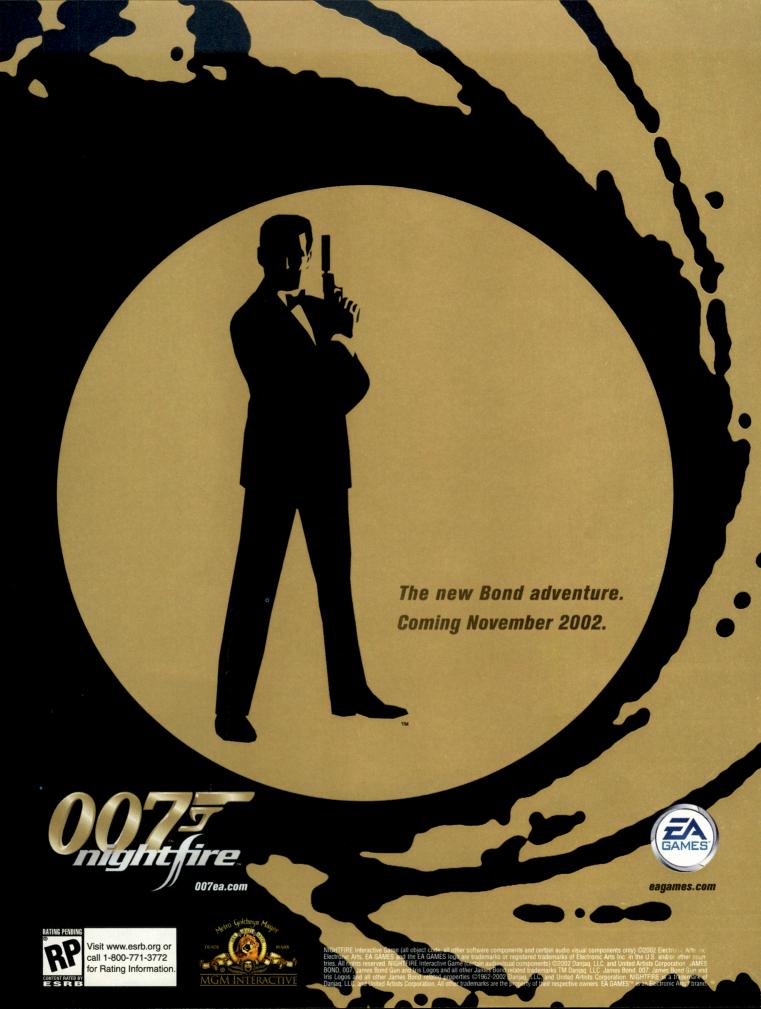
WHO SHOULD BUY: Well-rounded gamers with lots of desk space.

out Matrox's new Parhelia card. It supports up to three monitors at a time, around \$10,000 (and up to \$35,000)! super-dedicated before you pursuit this option. If that's sive; also, precious joing to want to be (-Plane before you promising to incorporate this techno games such as Unreal Tournamer Nars: Galaxies are 9X Media (www. 9xmedia.com) can support this featur more monitors for Microsoft Flight Simulator 2002, Quake III: Arena, ouy a new PC eye (night II, Serious Volfenstein, Jed Be sure you're a , Trainz, or Other upcoming ew games fully Return to Castle set you up with ogy, but you're 2003 and Star devotee of for sure.

provider should I Some parts of the sux," "I hate AOL Your choices are entirely regional with? All I hear online is "AOL and "AOL can my a\*\*."

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### What if there was only one god? And it was you?

What would the world be like if you created it? Peaceful? Filled with war? Welcome to Civilization III, the computer game created by Sid Meier, the Steven Spielberg of PC games. Named Computer Games Magazine "2001 Game of the Year," this special edition also features new scenarios and a strategy guide sampler.

Also visit Civ3.com to find out about Play The World,™ a multiplayer expansion pack that lets you go head to head, and play a game in about an hour. It's an all new way to play Civ.







# CREATE A WIRELESS HOME **GAMING LAN**

BURN YOUR CATS! STOMP YOUR HUB! SNAKE NESTS OF WIRES ARE A THING OF THE PAST IN PC NETWORKING! VIVA LE WIRELESS REVOLUTION!

THE AVERAGE AMERICAN HOME contains at least two television sets. More importantly, more and more homes, dorms, and

apartments have not one, but two or more computers. We even found a statistic through Google that says 32.5% of U.S. households owned more than one computer all

the way back

in 1999. And as we all know, statistics that you find through Google are always right! When you have more than one

computer under one roof, an almost instinctual urge to network them arises. Moreover, if

you get together for a gaming LAN party, networking is a must. Until recently, networking computers meant running cables from each PC to a hub somewhere in the house, which only added to the already sickening number of wires behind each desk - not to mention the network cables snaking their way into various rooms.

Imagine the implications for gaming: a friend can come over with a wireless adapter in his PC, plug in his computer and be ready for net gaming immediately. Networking has taken to the air, and it's ready to take you with it.

### THE WAYS OF THE WIRELESS

**OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, several methods** of wireless networking have come into the limelight and then faded away. Even some pseudo-

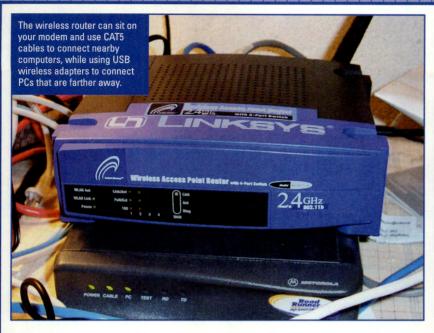
### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Two or more PCs and/or laptops
- A wireless router or access point
- Firewall software (may come with the router)
- Network Interface Card
- Network drop cable
- Wireless adapters (like this USB option) for each extra PC

now, so be sure to pick a provider tha with multiple user business this time over cable due to something DS advised: Telecom ou expect to be next year. As for 40L as a service for gamers, what correct: by and large, it isn't. still suffers from ou've heard is

as a fire other than Unrea Can I play online and a router that Tournament). also acts stop all

-ollow instruction the advanced fea iccess games on (es, you can play ou to know your through a router though there's a chance you need orwarding com to open certain documentation



wireless options like HomePNA, a system that uses phone lines, and HomePlug, a system that connects through power lines, have been introduced, though they've met with limited success. However, two options focusing on relatively long-range, Ethernet-style networking protocols have emerged as industry standards. They're HomeRF and WECA (the Wireless Ethernet Compatibility Alliance). The latter has emerged as the dominant force - its WiFi (Wireless Fidelity, à la HiFi) seal of approval is quickly becoming ubiquitous among wireless products. The WiFi seal basically means that wireless products will work seamlessly with each other, even if they're different brands. That means you could build a working network out of parts from 3COM, Linksys, Intel. Actiontec, Belkin, or any other part branded with the WiFi sticker.

For our tutorial, we're going to concentrate on high-frequency 802.11b WiFi-compliant equipment. It's the most readily available and least expensive wireless-networking stuff around. With a throughput rate of 11Mbps, it's more than fast enough for gaming, even with eight or nine computers involved.

So here's what you do:

### 1 CHOOSE YOUR CONNECTION

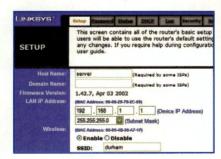
FIRST, DECIDE WHETHER or not you're going to share a broadband Internet connection. If not. you'll need a wireless access point. If you are, you'll need a router.

An access point functions like a hub in a wired network: all of the computers communicate through it to reach each other. The wireless routers we've worked with, from Linksys and

Actiontec, work not only as routers, but as access points as well. A wireless router will cost around \$150, with another \$150 or so for each USB adapter you need.

### 2 CONNECTING TO THE MAIN PC

NEXT, SET UP YOUR ROUTER or access point. You'll need one computer nearby with a standard Network Interface Card, and a network drop cable (CAT5), to network into the router or access point. Load the software that came with the router or access point, following the instructions for setting up the router (it differs from one brand to the next). You should be given an opportunity to change the SSID (Service Set Identifier) by entering a new one. (See "Wireless Security" sidebar for details.)



### **3 ACCESSING THE ROUTER**

Network into the router or access point however the instructions tell you to. For instance, with the Linksys router, you'll use your browser to navi-

### WIRELESS SECURITY

HERE'S THE THING about wireless networking: you can't control how far it goes. Some access points have a range of 1,600 feet or more. So let's say you live in a townhouse: you could easily cover the PC next door and the parking lot out front. Were someone to pop a wireless adapter in a laptop and get close enough, they could break into and surf your network.

We're telling you this so that you understand why it's important to protect your network. One simple way is to change the SSID, which stands for Service Set Identifier. Never leave it at the default. In many cases, unless someone else knows your SSID, they can't hijack your net. If there's an option to disable broadcasting the SSID in your access point, do it.

However, sometimes you can't turn off SSID broadcasting. That's why the 802.11x standard has something called WEP built into it.

WEP stands for Wired Equivalent Privacy. A 64- or 128-bit security protocol, WEP creates an encryption key that must be entered at each workstation for it to share the wireless network. All data that crosses the net is then encrypted and decrypted with that key. Ideally, this setup would keep all intruders out of your wireless network, but that's not the case: WEP isn't secure. Once WEP-armed WLANs (wireless local-area networks) were widely deployed, hackers fell over themselves to crack the WEP securityand succeeded. But at least enabling WEP will keep out casual users and weakminded hacker wannabes.

If you want to be truly secure, set up a VPN (virtual private network). This arrangement can get really tricky and expensive, however, and is usually overkill outside of an office environment.

Finally, most routers either have a firewall built-in or allow you to download and purchase one. Make sure you enable or buy a firewall, as casual hackers are getting more prominent and dangerous every day. Any 13-year-old nerd worth his or her pocket protector can download a script to scan blocks of IP addresses for security breaches. Linksys' Wireless Access Point Router allows you to download a free copy of ZoneAlarm Pro, the finest firewall software available (and as a dubious bonus, PC-Cillin, the most mediocre antivirus program on the planet). The Actiontec Wireless Cable/DSL Router has a built-in firewall. Use antivirus programs on your individual workstations, but keep the entire network secure with a firewall at the access point.

get for Ed. J your speakers are on the fast boat wire to address the ssue, they've likely check our Essential Peripherals guide on page 80. not, what good 2.1 so it "sounds like" [ho-ho-ho!!! is getting weaker, and sometimes I to kaputsville. Yes, ust get the bass. evive speakers? there any way to tweaked" much, nit the end of the we dare say that speaker options, wiggle the right unless you can oad. For great Unfortunately, speakers can't hey're dead, setup can I gunder \$100? eally be

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The utility you need nized, but switches is called Windows between them? XP. In our tests them all recog-

PC GAMER NOVEMBER 2002 87

should allow you to

play.

-orwarding option

gate to http://192.168.1.1, and enter the default password of "admin." Then you'll see the router/access point's interface. There should be a tab or screen to change the default password. There should also be an area to establish a WEP, or Wired Equivalent Privacy.



### 4 WEP IT GOOD

ESTABLISH A WEP key by selecting 128-bit encryption (don't bother with 64-bit) and then entering a word of your choosing. This word will be converted into a 52-digit alphanumeric key that'll help secure your network from digital trespassers.

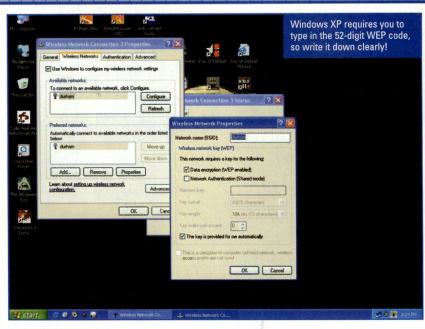


### 5 ENABLE A FIREWALL

IF YOU'RE USING A ROUTER and not an access point, navigate to its firewall configuration page and enable its firewall. You might have to download one, as in the case of the Linksys Wireless Access Point Router, or just enable the hardware firewall (as in the case of the Actiontek Wireless DSL/Cable Router).

### 6 CORD OR NOT TO CORD

IF YOU'RE ALREADY ON a corded network, now's the time to connect any nearby computers to the router with network cables. Our Linksys and Actiontec wireless routers also have network switches in them. If you have any computers near the router, and your router has a hub or switch, connect the nearby computers with 10/100 NICs and standard CAT5 cable.



### PLAN YOUR LAN

NEXT, INSTALL WIRELESS gear in your other PCs. We had a PC in a different part of the house, a PC near the router, and a laptop, all of which we wanted to connect to our wireless network.

We installed an Actiontec PCMCIA wireless adapter card in the laptop, which is running Windows Me, by installing the drivers and then sliding it into a PCMCIA port. Its drivers come with a configuration applet in which we had to enter our SSID and our WEP word before the computer could see the network.

We used a Linksys Wireless USB adapter in the far PC, which is running Windows 98. Again, we installed the software first, as per the manufacturer's instructions, and then connected the small adapter with the provided USB cable (making sure to raise the antenna for a good signal). Now change the SSID and WEP word through the configuration applet.

We tested both a Linksys and an Actiontec PCI card in the PC positioned close to the router. With the Linksys, we installed the software first and then installed the PCI card. It has an antenna that we had to screw onto the back. For the Actiontec card, we installed it and let it find the drivers on the enclosed CD.

This computer was running Windows XP, which works a little differently than Windows Me/98: Windows XP has its own configuration process for wireless networks. To use it, you must go to Control Pane\Network Connections and choose the wireless network connection. In the screen that pops up, click Properties. Then choose the Wireless Networks tab. Under Preferred Networks, click Add, and then enter the SSID. It should automatically find the network. Unfortunately, XP doesn't translate your WEP word into the 52-digit key: you'll have to enter the entire key manually. Enter the router configuration screen and write down the entire key, and then enter the WEP key under the Properties tab of the Preferred Networks area.

If you get confused, don't worry: instructions are included with each wireless adapter you purchase. Enjoy wireless gaming!

### SPEED DEMONS

JUST FOR FUN, we ran some performance numbers. Using a 295MB .pak file from Half-Life, we transferred it over a 100Mbps wired network, a 10Mbps wired network, our 11Mbps wireless network, and the Phonex Broadband that uses your home's AC power lines to transfer data. Here's the time it took to transfer the file from one PC to another:

Wired 100Mbps: 1:05

Wired 10Mbps: 15:34

Wireless 802.11b: 24:24

Phonex Broadband (Homeplug): 56:12

Even though our wireless connection was slower than both wired connections, that doesn't make it poor for gaming. It's important to remember that games are optimized for slow connections (e.g., 56K Internet connections), and send as little info over the network as possible. We played several games over our wireless network without any lag, including Return to Castle Wolf, Day of Defeat 3.1, AvP 2, and Neverwinter Nights.

games, you'll likely nave to select your preferred controlle Windows XP does ognized and func nameport, all rec seem to save the attached to the ional. In some rom all those attached, but aggravation.

processor in my two-year-old motherboard?

Can I put a new

don't recommend Probably, but we

support processors only up to a certain speed before new tech comes out Motherboards

CPUs on the marker ime, the fastest At press hat supplants them.

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Where do you find etailers for com all the cheapest op I much RAM this FAO

outer hardware?"

intel



### Don't hold your games back.

If you're not using an Intel® Pentium® 4 processor, it's game over. With performance to power the artificial intelligence and particle physics of your games, the Pentium 4 processor gives you the tools you'll need to make the competition disappear. Find out more at intel.com/go/games.





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ASK NOT WHICH is the better system ask which system is better for you! So many high-end PC builders, so many Editors' Choice awards. How's a fella (or gal) supposed to choose? We know how tough it can be when you're shopping for the latest rig to power the hottest games, and we're here to help. Take a gander at each of the seven systems we've picked apart and see which one fits your sense of power and style. If you're the impatient sort, don't forget to flip to page 94 for our comprehensive chart, which clearly illustrates the differences between each of the seven builders.

WARNING: If you're still confused after you've read this feature, you may be a closet Mac lover. Seek help from MacAddict, one of PC Gamer's lovely (read: full-on wussy) sister publications.



### HYPERSONIC PC

URL: www.hypersonic-pc.com PHONE: 800-520-0498

If any company on this list wants to follow in Alienware's footsteps, it's Hypersonic PC. Its site looks and feels eerily similar to Alienware's, and its product lineup seems somehow familiar, too. But then, you know what — who cares? These guys build great systems at a reasonable (premium) price, with good-quality paint and 24-hour toll-free tech support, to boot. Overall build quality and attention to wiring detail tend to be a little less than what Alienware provides, but then, Hypersonic's a bit cheaper, too.

### **VOODOO COMPUTERS**

URL: www.voodoocomputers.com PHONE: 888-708-6636

Voodoo's high-end F-Class computers, while usually not much faster (or slower) than Falcon's MACH V or Alienware's Area-51, offer one of the coolest - if not the coolest customized towers around. Top that off with race car-quality custom paint jobs, and you've got yourself one hell of a premium rig — albeit with a premium price tag. Of course, at the very highest high-end of the scale, money doesn't often mean a lot to those looking for the best. People like that (and yes, the rest of us hate you) should check out Falcon Northwest and Voodoo very carefully to see which one — Ferrari or Lamborghini — they like best. F-Class systems come with a three-year warranty standard; other Voodoos have a one-year.

URL: www.alienware.com PHONE: 800-494-3382

Come on — who doesn't know about Alienware? These guys are one of, if not the, biggest high-end gaming computer builders next to Dell. Alienware systems are reasonably priced relative to Falcon Northwest's and Voodoo Computers' machines because of the sheer volume of systems the company moves each month. But size hasn't hurt them much: Alienware still builds some of the fastest, most cutting-edge PCs around. That said, if you want a window in your case or a super-fancy paint job (they'll do glossy, but not the super-custom works of art that Falcon and Voodoo will conjure), you're going to have to look elsewhere. Note: Alienware now builds laptops as well.



### **IBUYPOWER**

URL: www.ibuypower.com PHONE: 888-462-3899

ibuypower builds a damn good machine at a damn good price. Its cases and case mods probably aren't for everybody, but the fact that just about anyone can afford them makes them quite appealing. ibuypower systems tend to be a bit slower on average than the other guys on this list, but then, you're also saving the most money by going with them. Be advised that ibuypower offers no RAM-BUS options with its P4 systems — only DDR is available, accounting for some of the slower benchmark numbers we've seen in the past. For the price, ibuy also does some very cool lights and windows.



### TOTALLY AWESOME COMPUTERS

URL: www.totallyawesomecomputers.com PHONE: 888-965-8844

TAC builds fast, reasonably priced computers with one of the best warranties in the business. If you can find a system for less, they'll build you one with the same parts for even less money than the other guy. While they may not be terribly sexy to look at (depending on your tastes) — or quite as fast as

an Alienware, Voodoo, or, Falcon — TAC systems are still plenty zippy, reliable, and easy to use. The company's 24-hour support staff is manned by inhouse techs who know the ins and outs of their PCs, rather than by hired guns that sometimes know

less about PCs than we

here at PC Gamer know about Macs. In our review of a TAC last month, we mistakenly said that they don't come with restore CDs; actually, they do...



### **FALCON NORTHWEST**

URL: www.falcon-nw.com PHONE: 888-325-2661

Content to be a boutique builder, Falcon makes systems that are assembled, tweaked, and painted to perfection by hand. Its high-end machines are pricey, but like a fine automobile or bottle of wine, you can't put a price on quality, especially if you're a true PC connoisseur. For the rest of us, Falcon also builds budget-minded PCs, and while they don't come with the world's fastest hardware or the race car-quality custom paint iobs available on the highest-end systems, they are affordable.

URL: www.dell.com PHONE: 800-999-3255

Not too sexy but not too shabby, Dell computers are almost always the least expensive high-quality systems around. You won't get a lot of bells and whistles, and you won't get AMD at all, but for the price, Dell is tough to beat. Be aware that as we went to press, PC-10666 RDRAM wasn't being offered, and that if you want a premium-quality sound card, you're going to be stuck with Turtle Beach's Santa Cruz not a bad card at all, but not our top choice. Furthermore, if you shop online, your systems will come with a modem and a set of speakers whether you want them or not! Our IT department buys Dells for us as work machines, and then we trick 'em out!





FOR YOUR EVALUATIVE PLEASURE, HERE'S A SIDE-BY-SIDE **COMPARISON OF THE** AFOREMENTIONED PCs

### **ALIENWARE**



### DELL



Notes: Only PC-800 RAM available at this time. Must purchase speakers and modem when ordering from website. No Sound Blaster Audigy cards offered: Turtle Beach Santa Cruz is Dell's premium sound card.

### **FALCON NORTHWEST**



AFOREMENTIONED PCS		Beach Santa Cruz is Dell's premium sound card.	
PRICE*	Area-51 — \$2,578	Dimension 8200 — \$1,908	MACH V \$2,938
LOW-PRICE GUARANTEE	No	No	No
COLOR OPTIONS	Yes	No	Yes
HIGH-GLOSS PAINT	Yes (new feature)	No	Yes (fully customized paint jobs available)
CASE OPTIONS	No (one case, standard)	No	· Yes
CASE MODS	Yes (KOOLMAXX fan installed on side of case)	No	No
AMD AND INTEL	Yes	No (Intel only)	Yes
COMPONENT OPTIONS	Good	Good	Very Good
WIRING JOB	Exceptional	Very Good	Exceptional
WARRANTY (TIME) (ON THESE SPECIFIC MODELS)	1-year parts, labor, and shipping (on-site service where available)	1-year parts, labor, and shipping (on-site service where available)	1-year parts, labor, and shipping (free overnight shipping back and forth from Falcon should a tough warranty issue arise)
EXTENDED-WARRANTY PLANS	Yes	Yes	No
24-HOUR TECH SUPPORT	Yes	Yes	No
INTERNAL COOLING	Exceptional	Good	Exceptional
RESTORE CD	Yes	Yes	Yes
FULL VERSION WINDOWS CD	Yes	Yes	Yes
OVERCLOCKING	Yes (if requested)	No	Yes, if requested
SHIP TIME (AVERAGE)	10–12 days (unless otherwise specified)	10 days	15 days
NEW TECH FIRST	Always	Sometimes	Always
GETS THE CHICKS?	Definitely. They'll be clawing at the door to your comic book-laden room of horror and dirty socks.	Not so much, but saves you enough money to take them out on dates (if they'll have you)	Definitely. Get them even hotter by having Falcon paint a naked woman on the side of your case.
OVERALL COOLNESS (1 TO 5, 5 = HIGH)	5	2.5	5

\* Prices are based on the following system: Windows XP-based, Pentium 4 2.53GHz, 512MB PC-1066 RAM, 340+ watt Power Supply, Motherboard, Sound Blaster Audigy Sound Card, GeForce4 Ti 4600

# HYPERSONIC PC

### **IBUYPOWER**



### TOTALLY AWESOME COMPUTERS



### **VOODOO COMPUTERS**



		A STATE OF THE STA	
Sonic Boom — \$2,213	Dream 2002 \$1,763	Ridiculously Insane Intel Model — \$1,999	EGAD — \$3,177
No	No	Yes (Find a cheaper comparable PC, and they'll build a similar one for less)	No
Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Yes	Yes	No	Yes (fully customized paint jobs available)
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes (windows and lights)	Yes (windows and lights)	No	Yes (big-time)
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Very Good	Good	Good	Good
Good	Average	Average	Exceptional
1-year parts, labor, and shipping	3-year labor, 1-year parts, shipping costs not included	3-year parts and lifetime service. Shipping back from TAC is always covered, but shipping to them is covered on a case-by-case basis.	1-year parts, labor, and shipping (on-site service where available)
Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Yes	No	Yes	No
Good	Good	Good	Exceptional
Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes (if requested)	No .	No	Yes (if requested)
14–18 days	5–10 days	14 days	30 days
Usually	Sometimes	Sometimes	Always
Yes, depending on options	It'll get 'em, but only if they like DDR memory. Currently, ibuypower doesn't offer RAMBUS!	Yes, but only the wholesome ones. TAC is run and operated like a family business.	OH MY GOD, YES (if you get an F-Class. Otherwise, they'll still dig ya, but may wonder why you're spending all that cash on an EGAD!)
4	3.5	3.5	5 (if you get an F-Class)

Video Card, 80GB Hard Drive, 40x12x40 CD-RW, 16x DVD-ROM drive, Floppy Drive, Keyboard and Mouse, Standard Warranty

ATI, WWW.ATI.COM, 905-882-2600 PRICE \$399 (M.S.R.P.)



### RADEON 9700 PRO

OUR GUESS IS THAT "PRO" STANDS FOR PERFORMANCE RUNETH OVER

TI hit one way out of the park with this, its latest and genuinely greatest RADEON card and holy crap, is it fast. Built using the company's new R300 core, and designed by the same engineers that crafted the graphics system for Nintendo's GameCube, this 3D card blazes past everything else on the market - up to and including NVIDIA's mighty GeForce4 Ti 4600. Not convinced? Read on.

When you've been reviewing video cards for as long as we have here at Hard Stuff, you learn to take marketing pitches with a grain of salt. Statements like "Expect to see up to 110 percent more performance out of our new [insert catchy brand name herel when it becomes available in three months" often just mean that if you're on Pluto, and it's 5,000 degrees below zero on a Tuesday during a leap year, then perhaps, if your mother's maiden name is "Robot," you'll see that 110-percent jump.

Well, call us some chilly-ass Plutonians named "Robot," because the 9700 PRO is one card that lives up to the hype. The core of the new GPU runs at 325MHz - 25MHz faster than the Ti 4600 - and its 128MB of DDR memory runs at 620MHz - 30MHz slower than the Ti 4600. But those numbers don't tell the whole story. With its 256-bit memory interface, even with slightly slower-than-Ti 4600 memory, the 9700 is able to run many of today's games in true color at 1600x1200 with 4x anti-aliasing enabled at playable framerates - a feat NVIDIA's card

can't often do. Just look at our benchmarks to see what we mean. In Quake III, the RADEON is literally twice as fast as the Ti when 4x AA is enabled. And even when anti-aliasing isn't turned on, the 9700 is as much as 30 percent faster than the Ti. Or in the case of Game 4 in 3DMark2001 SE, a test that represents the high level of graphics we'll all be experiencing in the games of next year, a full 49 percent faster.

And what about those games of next year? The new RADEON is a DirectX 9 part (though it runs just fine on DX8.1), meaning that it supports both of DX9's most compelling new features: Pixel Shader 2.0 and Vertex Shader 2.0. That makes it consid-

erably more pow-

erful and easier-to-program than any RADEON or GeForce before it. As proof of its "future" power, the 9700 has already become something of the "unofficial" card of DOOM III. When id Software showed the game at E3 back in May, and more recently at QuakeCon in August, it ran the beast on a 9700 PRO rather than on an overclocked, liquid nitrogen-cooled GeForce4 Ti 4600 that NVIDIA had offered.

Still, here's the one caveat, and it's worth considering: NVIDIA will launch a new-generation DX9 card as early as late December. On paper, it's very powerful. Faster than the 9700 PRO? We don't know -- no one has seen NV30 yet, not even NVIDIA, because as we go to press, company representatives tell us that they haven't yet "taped out" (a fancy way of saying that they haven't yet received a final chip back from manufacturing to test). One thing is certain: they'll need to get silicon back within the next several days to make a 2002 ship date.

But listen, there's always a faster card looming over the horizon. Is now the time to buy? Yes, absolutely, if you want the fastest card on the planet today. With all its power, and with ATI's drivers finally up to par and compatible with every game we tested, the Ti 4600 is coming out of our primary test system and a 9700 PRO is going in. The king is dead. Long live the king.

Otherwise, expect to see NV30 in early 2003.

■ BENCHMARKS					
		GEFORCE4 TI 4600	RADEON 9700 PRO		
3DMARK 2001 SE	3DMarks	11,070	13,117		
	Game 4: Nature	50 fps	98 fps		
QUAKE III'	1280×1024	62.9 fps	129 fps		
	1600x1200	41.7 fps	89 fps		
JEDI KNIGHT II:	1024x768	90 fps, 89 fps, 87 fps	89 fps, 89 fps, 88 fps		
	1280×1024	90 fps, 87 fps, 58 fps	89 fps, 89 fps, 88 fps		
	1600x1200	82 fps, 58 fps, 39 fps	88 fps, 88 fps, 86 fps		
DUNGEON SIEGE	1024x768	59 fps, 51 fps, 41 fps	70 fps, 68 fps, 69 fps		
	1280x1024	54 fps, 42 fps, 29 fps	68 fps, 67 fps, 66 fps		
	1600x1200	49 fps, 33 fps, 21 fps	67 fps, 66 fps, 58 fps		

Tests run at 1024x768 in true color with all settings maxed Tests run in true color with all settings maxed and with 4x anti-aliasing ad ‡Tests run in true color with all settings maxed. First score: No AA. Second score: 2x AA. Third score: 4x AA

nchmarks run on P4 2.4GHz test bed with 512MB PC-800 RDRAM and Windows XP Home Edition)

### FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: DX9 part; AGP 4x/8x; blisteringly fast.

LOWS: Has no memory heatsinks, which could lead to limited overclockability down the road.

BOTTOM LINE: ATI'S NEW RADEON 9700 PRO is exactly the sort of video card we gaming nerds sit up at night dreaming about

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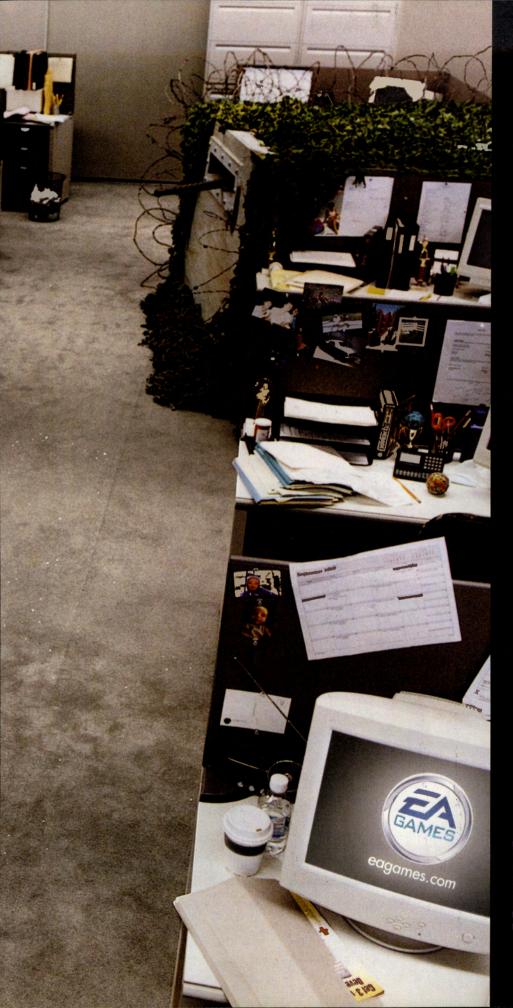
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### THE LURKING HORROR

Naysayers may snort that a graphics-free thriller told only through the printed word can't possibly be that scary. Stephen King and Clive Barker may beg to differ. Lurking Horror was a text-based Lovecraftian horror-adventure game released

feels oddly cold. ones (acolytes?) survive will meet mey will live, yet die brever will be (is?) nothin

interactive-fiction giant Infocom's lifespan. Trapped on a college campus... at night...during a raging blizzard... you begin to realize

that you're not quite...alone. What lurks in the bowels of G.U.E. Tech? TLH was written by Zork co-author Dave Lebling and was the first Infocom game with sound effects (like distant moans and creaking doors). It's now out of print, but rumor has it that a "free" copy or two is downloadable online. (D: Infocom; P: Infocom; Released: 1987)

REALMS OF THE HAUNTING

Realms sets up the action thusly: playing as the

son of a dead pastor sent to investigate a

haunted house, you learn that spooks and

demons aren't all there is to worry about. The

numerous FMV sequences, Realms offers up

puzzles. It's also an unusually long game: you

seems to be padded with mazes meant to keep you busy. Still, it's creepy nonetheless. (D: Gremlin

plenty of chills and thrills mixed with combat and

may spend weeks exploring it. Too bad some of it

Interactive; P: Interplay; Reviewed: April '97, 86%)

dwelling is built on top of a satanic temple and,

to make matters

worse, an evil sor-

cerer intends to use

it to bring about the

end of the world.

person adventure-

game shooter with

Sort of a first-

### I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST SCREAM

If the name alone doesn't freak you out, then its premise will. Based on a classic 1966 collection of short stories by Harlan Ellison, IHNMAIMS presents a world taken over by military super-



computers, with the human race exterminated save for five prisoners. Now alone and driven mad with boredom, the Allied Mastercomputer (voiced by

Ellison himself) has sadistically tortured the five lone survivors for over 100 years. Now it's your job to guide each toward moral redemption. A grim, disturbing adventure, IHNMAIMS strains the boundaries of what can realistically be considered "entertaining." (D: The Dreamer's Guild; P: Acclaim; Reviewed: Jan. '96, 87%)

### ALONE IN THE DARK

This game pioneered the "survival horror" genre, spawning the Resident Evil series and just about any game where a lone character wanders static environments shooting monsters. The owner of an eerie Victorian mansion has committed suicide;



as detective Edward Carnby or the owner's niece, Emily, you must seek out the truth behind his death. Loosely based on the stories of H.P. Lovecraft,

AITD was one of the first games to make players literally jump out of their seats. The early polygonal graphics are dated now, but the fiendish puzzles, tense combat, and startling frights by glass-shattering demon dogs and lumbering zombies induced much pants-soiling in their day. (D: Infogrames; P: Interplay; Released: 1992)

### THEY HUNGER MOD FOR HALF-LIFE

Okay, we're not ones to brag (excessively), but our exclusive three-part PC Gamer mod for Half-Life is damn scary. Created by the equally scary Neil Manke and his "hungry helpers," TH puts



you in the role of a writer en route to a secluded country estate. Suddenly, the car radio warns you of strange atmospheric phenomena in the area.

Before long, your sleepy rural retreat is awash in blood-splattering zombie mayhem. Being writers ourselves, we can testify that this sort of thing occurs surprisingly often. Find out for yourself on our past CDs (Feb. 2000, Sept. 2000, June 2001, June 2002) or at www.planethalflife.com/manke/. (D: Neil Manke; P: PC Gamer; Released: Feb. 2000)

### RESIDENT EVIL

What Alone in the Dark began, Resident Evil refined to razor-sharp precision. Forget that it's a port of a PlayStation game, and disregard the groan-inducing vocal "acting" (a term we use loosely); the gameplay is terrifying. From the first



moment you happen upon a ravenous zombie munching on the mutilated corpse of one of your buddies, the shocks and gore don't let up.

Daringly cinematic, RE is one of those few games that fulfills the promise of the interactive movie. It re-creates the chilling suspense of a creature feature while invoking the body count of Friday the 13th. The rest of the series had its ups and downs, but the original is a true classic. (D: Capcom; P: Virgin; Reviewed: Nov. '97, 87%)

### SOME GAMES THAT TRIED TO BE SCARY...

Cue the spooky music and dry ice! It takes more than shadows and gore to make a scary game, folks. Here's a few of the scarily unscariest.

### **BLAIR WITCH VOL. 1, 2, AND 3**

(2000)



Based very loosely on the first movie and using the Nocturne engine, this trio is low on frights and high on murky visuals.

### THE EVIL DEAD: HAIL TO THE KING

(2001)



Semi-scary. Quasiscary. The margarine of scary. The Diet Coke of scary - just one calorie, not scary enough.

### **NIGHT TRAP**

(1993)



FMV. Bad makeup Dana Plato's acting. Need we go on? Bimbos fighting off bloodsuckers = kitschy campfest.

### **HARVESTER**

(1996)



Really, really wants to be scary. Look, an eyeball — scared vet? Yawn. Hey, isn't this a scene from Donkey Kong?

### RIPPER

(1996)



Any pretense of dread vanishes once Christopher Walken and Jimmie "J.J." Walker start chewing the scenery.

### ...AND ONES THAT DIDN'T TRY. BUT WERE

TRESPASSER (1998): Sure, there were a couple of good moments, but all we could ask ourselves was, "What's wrong with my arm?"

JOHN ROMERO'S DAIKATANA (2000): The scariest career immolation we've seen since Shelly Long left Cheers.

A FORK IN THE TALE (1997): FMV madness starring Rob Schneider. No, we wouldn't pay to see him in The Animal; why did they think we'd pay more to watch him at home?

SPEC OPS; RANGER LEADS THE WAY (1998): Possibly the only game in history in which you can get team-killed by the computer Al.

PC GAMER NOVEMBER 2002 http://www.pcgamer.com

### **FUTURE SHOCK**

And the shocks keep coming with a bloodstream of upcoming titles aiming to scare the living bejeebus out of you. Suck it down!



DOOM III: id's gone back to its roots and is developing a single-player game that can only be considered "mindless" action if the undead denizens of hell eat your mind first. From the jaw-dropping demos we've seen, expect plenty of stunning flourishes, gore, and the best-looking graphics engine yet to leak from John Carmack's brain pan. (Out: 2003)



SILENT HILL 2: This PS2 port from Konami has been scaring the pants off console players since late last year. As James Sunderland, you receive a mysterious

letter from your deceased wife asking you to meet her in spooky Silent Hill. It's a survival-horror game, so you can bet she's not there for the casino gambling. (Out: November 2002)



CALL OF CTHULHU: **DARK CORNERS: Based** on the table-top board game (which in turn was inspired by the works of H.P. Lovecraft), Call of

Cthulhu is horror action/adventure at its slimiest. You're a private investigator working a missingpersons case in a mysterious village holding dark secrets. If the lost soul's a scaly fish monster, case closed. (Out: Q2 2003)



PRIEST: Korean developer/publisher JC **Entertainment bills this** one as a "hard-gore action/horror MMORPG" based on a popular Korean comic

book. Set in the dusty Old West, Priest will focus on PvP gunplay in a grim, persistentworld environment. (Out: 2003)

### CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING

Scarier than the game itself is how this moody, graphically intense FPS was virtually ignored by consumers. Born from an idea by best-selling horror novelist Clive Barker (the Hellraiser guy), Undying is set in musty old 1920s Ireland, where



world-weary supernatural researcher Patrick Galloway is summoned to a friend's estate to investigate a family curse. The Unreal Tournament-pow-

ered ambiance oozes fear: ghostly visages materialize behind you in mirrors, creaks and moans greet you as flowing curtains flutter in the breeze. and menacing specters demand your exit...permanently. If not for the lame end-boss, Undying might've been the king of monster-mashers. (D: DreamWorks Int.; P: EA; Reviewed: May '01, 85%)

The Marine campaign in AvP 2 is chilling proof that what you don't see is often scarier than what you do see. For the first level, you never even glimpse Aliens; you see only the results of their handiwork. Bloody remains, trashed envi-



ronments, screams in the distance...all while you expect a facehugger or spiny queen bitch to leap on you at any second. But they don't. They're sneaky like that. As the old

saying goes, AvP 2 is not a game for the faint of heart. Don't play it alone at night with the lights out. And definitely don't play it when your sadistic roommate can sneak up and grab you as you're edging down a dark, deserted hallway. Like...NOW! Ha --- gotcha. (D: Monolith; P: Sierra; Reviewed: Holiday '01, 86%)

### DOOM

DOOM is...terror. In the wake of the first-personshooter craze, it's easy to forget just how frightening the first DOOM's single-player game could be. Sick, violent, and grotesque, DOOM is a crashcourse in survival. Luckily, DOOM's 10-year anniversary will be celebrated next year with the release of DOOM III. And from what we saw of it at E3 and QuakeCon, DOOM's queasy legacy is continuing in appropriately gut-wrenching fashion. (D: id Software; P: id Software; Released: 1993)





### SYSTEM SHOCK

Hands down, SS2 is the scariest game ever released. Alone on a spaceship, the crew mostly murdered, it's man against hideously malformed mutant freak...and the freaks have the upper hand. Soaked in pure atmospheric dread, SS2 is aided by some of the most spine-tingling sound effects ever heard in a PC game. Crewmates' bodies swing from the rafters in ghastly post-suicide repose, the ship's computer taunts you to lay down and die, apparitions haunt the stark corridors in despair...why do you go on? A modern masterwork, and well worth playing (or replaying) if you've decided to hide indoors this All Hallow's Eve. (D: Looking Glass; P: Electronic Arts; Reviewed: Oct. '99, 95%)

# THE BALL IS IN YOUR COURT.

A simulation game that brings all the quiet excitement of the court to your PC! US Open 2002 has the official US Open license, innovative game modes that let you create your own players and follow their high scoring careers, and faithfully recreated courts from around the world. Take your best shot.

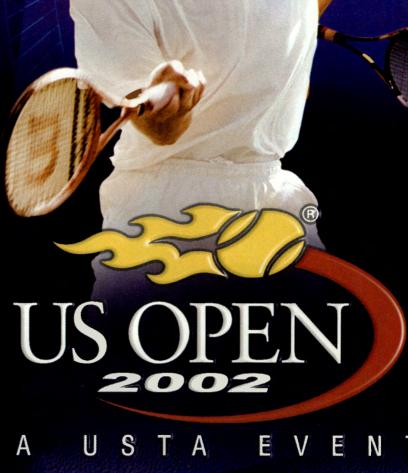
 Ten professional players (including four women) with playing styles modelled on their temperament and faithfully recreated physical appearances.

 Four main types of shot available (lob, top spin, normal, slice) as well as side spin.

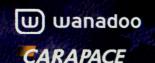
 Men and women can compete with and against each other in singles or doubles matches.

 Artificial Intelligence developed with the co-operation of a tennis pro.









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CODEMASTERS.COM



GENIUS AT PLAY







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#### HERE, IT WILL GET YOU OUT.

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Impersonate a prison guard to access off-limits areas of camp and communicate with Allies.



#### APRIL 20, 1944: 1227 HO

Achieve liberty in many ways—sabotage equipment, barter with inmates, conduct espionage and more.



#### APRIL 20, 1944: 1607 HOURS

Escape to freedom to continue y mission, but beware—failure coul change the outcome of the war.



WORLD WAR II

# RISONER OF WAR

Escape is all in your mind.

GUIDE ULTIMATE GA WE NE RELEASES

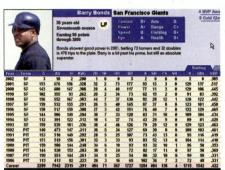
# **The Boys of Bummer**

**Executive Editor Dan Morris tells a tale of true despair** 

wo years ago, I started playing Baseball Mogul 2001 on a crappy Pentium laptop that I bought secondhand. Being stat-based, Baseball Mogul is one of the few games my laptop can run. But being a baseball-stat freak, it's the only game I've ever needed in portable fashion.

In those two years, I've managed to complete 10 seasons of a simulated Major League Baseball dynasty career. I began with the MLB's 2002 opening-season rosters, and took on the general-manager duties of my beloved San Francisco Giants. The first thing I did was trade away Rich Aurilia, because he's had to go for a long time now, and invested heavily in a farm system designed to nurture strong rookie pitching prospects.

The results were immediate, and impressive. Within a season, my boys had finished in second place in the NL West, only a game away from the wildcard spot. The fans were digging the new direction of the club - attendance increased despite my ticket-price hike.



Barry's stats hint at a dynasty of championship greatness. But we can't get to the Big Dance.

The second season ended even more positively: after an excellent year, my boys again finished in second place, but this time the result was good enough to secure the wildcard spot. We lost that first postseason match-up, but with a Rookie of the Year in the starting rotation, the future looked bright.

Cut to eight seasons later.

My Giants have made the playoffs in eight of the 10 seasons I've managed. Eight. Want to know how many World Series we've been to?

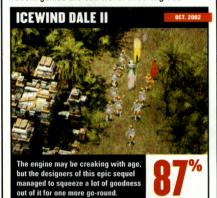
NONE! THAT'S RIGHT: EIGHT POSTSEASONS, NO WORLD SERIES!

I've been to five National League Championship Series, including a current streak (as of the 2012 season) of three consecutive NLCS appearances, and my Giants are simply unable to get it done. One year, it even came down to an extra-inning loss in Game Seven. (NOTE: Billy loaded up the game and won the World Series in just his second season as Oakland. causing me great consternation.)

What will it take for my team to win the big one? I have no idea. But at least my boys never went on strike.

#### RECOMMENDS

Bust out your wallet, free up some time; these recent games are still worth checking out.





You don't know the meaning of speed until vou've sat two feet off the ground in an F1 racer on the straight away. This game is the F1 king.



HOW WE RATE THE GAMES: THE BREAKDOWN

EDITORS' CHOICE

It's not easy to get here, and games in this range come with our unqualified recommendation.

89%-80% EXCELLENT

These are excellent games. Anything that scores in this range is well worth your purchase, example of its genre

These are pretty good games that we'd recommend to fans of the particular genre, though it's a safe bet you can find better options.

69%-60% ABOVE AVERAGE

Reasonable aboveaverage games. They might be worth buying, but they probably have a few significant flaws that limit their appeal.

MERELY OKAY

Very ordinary games They're not completely worthless, but you can definitely find numerous better places to spend your gaming dollar.

TOLERABLE

Poor quality Only a few slightly redeeming features keep these games from descending into the utter abyss of the next category.

DON'T BOTHER

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

# THE FACE OF WAR HAS CHANGED



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"...HIGH ON MY LIST OF GAMES TO PLAY." - GAMESPY

Western Germany, March 1964 - The last Great War continues to rage on. All you have ever known is the madness of the front lines and of men butchering each other. As Lieutenant James Anderson, your mission will take you deep behind enemy lines where you must infiltrate and destroy key enemy positions. If successful, your mission could finally put a stop to the carnage and restore what everybody has long since forgotten about: peace.



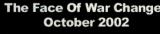






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The Face Of War Changes









PlayStation 2 CD







# Operation Flashpoint: Resistance

Resistance isn't futile as Operation Flashpoint meets Red Dawn

ere's a tough call to make. On the one hand, Resistance is a terrific add-on. Then again, the game that it's built on, Operation Flashpoint (November 2001; PCG rating: 70%), is a tactical action game with significant flaws. How do you score that?

All the problems that caused OF to drop under the bar set by Ghost Recon are still

VITAL STATS **ELOPER** Bohemia Interactive HER Codemasters PIII 500, 128MB RAM, **IUM PLAYERS 16** 

here. You still have only one save per mission, the controls are still clunky, the graphics are still lackluster, the sound is still weak, and the AI is still inconsistent.

But despite all those flaws. Resistance's branch-

ing, 20-mission campaign dishes out some of the best gameplay scenarios yet seen in the genre. That's due mostly to a setting and storyline that strive for innovation beyond the usual tactical-shooter fare.

You play as Victor Troska, a retired operative for an undisclosed special forces unit. Victor has decided that he's had enough of war and chosen to live out the rest of his life on a quiet little island called Nogovo.

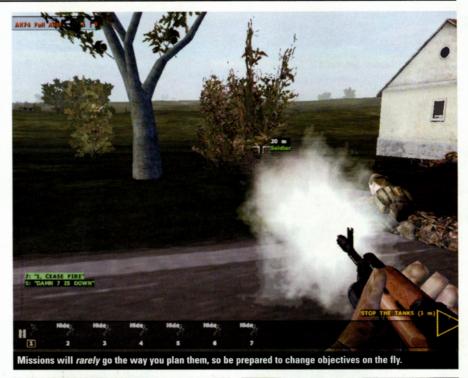
Of course, his plans go right down the crapper when the Soviet Army shows up and ousts the current government. As you'd expect from a people invaded by Commies, the Nogovoans start up a resistance movement. The masses turn to Victor, as the local military expert, to lead them to arms.

What the developers really hit right on the nose is the feeling that you're part of a real plucky resistance movement. You'll have to scrounge for munitions, setting up ambushes of weapons and supply trucks to keep your boys in the fight. You'll steal tanks, perform quick raids on enemy installations, and eventually start taking back entire cities. Basically, this add-on is the closest you'll ever come to playing a Red Dawn game.

The storyline takes twists and turns as you deal with overwhelming odds, dissension in your ranks, and all the other stresses that come from leading a ragtag bunch of freedom fighters. As you become more of a nuisance to the Russians, they'll start to take



Some missions require you to hold a position against an intense attack. In these scenarios, it helps to have heavy weapons.





Capturing supply convoys is a vital tactic for arming your forces. Snatch the enemies' goodies!

you more seriously, sending tanks and eventually helicopter gunships after you. Thankfully, a certain third party will eventually show up to provide you with special operatives to "advise" you and supply you with arms, including some much-needed SAMs.

As an added treat, Resistance also comes with five standalone single-player missions. These include a large-scale urban battle, a night mission where you must paint a bridge with a laser designator for an air strike, and even a mission where you get to fly the new V-80 attack chopper. They're tough, but a welcome diversion from the main campaign.

Flashpoint's graphical look has improved a bit, in the form of higher-resolution textures and other minor touches. And you get a few new weapons, such as the FN FAL assault rifle and Beretta 92FS sidearm. A handful of new cooperative multiplayer missions have

been added, too, but be warned: the soundtrack has some horrendous guitar riffs.

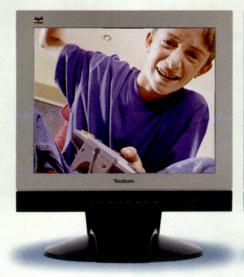
Resistance is a smartly conceived expansion pack, but it's hindered by the fact that it's built on Operation Flashpoint. Still, if you're willing to deal with the flaws, you'll be treated to some great moments. - Fei Hong

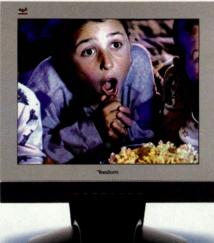


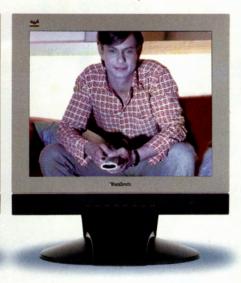
**HIGHS:** Great storyline and mission scenarios; inventive gameplay elements.

LOWS: Doesn't address any of Operation Flashpoint's problems; missions are very, very hard. **BOTTOM LINE:** A clever expansion pack that's

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- IE Magazine, Dec. '01, on the VB50HRTV first generation Video Processor from ViewSonic.

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TO KILL.

) OTHERS

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GENIUS AT PLAY



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Join forces with up to 15 combatants objective-based online multiplayer gameplay allows for complex levels of team coordination.



# **Madden NFL 2003**

#### No play editor, no online franchise mode, but still some fun to be found

ast year's Madden was a real dog. The passing game was completely, utterly unbalanced, online play was a joke, the commentary was napinducing, and the entire product lacked polish. Thankfully, this year's version addresses a lot of those problems - but it still feels like PC gamers are getting shortchanged, especially since the multiplayer

game is still so weak.

VITAL STATS LOPER EA Tiburon LISHER EA Sports ED PII 400, 64MB RAM PIII 1.2 GHz. AXIMUM PLAYERS 4

First, the good news. The franchise, create-a-player, and create-a-team features all work to perfection. Most importantly, the gameplay is rock-solid and the passing game is much more balanced. It's now possible to

stop the computer's passing attack, and lategame heroics - where the AI skewers your defense for 200 passing yards in the final minutes - are mostly a thing of the past.

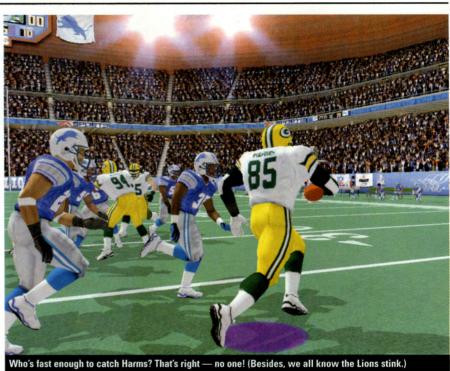
In terms of play-calling, the computer mixes its decisions up well both offensively and defensively, and will stick with the running game, especially if it's successful. You have a million audibles, and can change your defensive coverage, call line shifts, and set hot routes for your receivers with a quick button-press.

The running game still needs work, especially when you're running between the tackles - far too often the running back will get caught up on an offensive lineman or get trapped in a pocket, unable to move. On the plus side, if you catch the defense in the correct formation, you can plow through the line and break a long run, especially if you're using an A-list back like Ahman Green.

Madden 2003 looks great, too - the models are highly detailed, the animations are realistic and varied, and the stadiums are beautiful. The game is a system hog, however. On the slowest of the three systems I tested it on (a 966MHz with a GeForce3 card), it experienced a lot of unacceptable stuttering and slowdown. What's truly astonishing about this lag is that the game was ported from the PlayStation 2, a system whose processor speed is dwarfed by that of even the most rudimentary PC.

And now for the really bad news: The online play seems like it was slapped together over a long lunch hour.

The online franchise mode was cut this year because EA felt that consumers weren't interested in it. (Note to EA: We didn't use that option because it sucked, not because we weren't interested.) So what we're left with are three primary online modes: Quick





The stadiums all look great, especially Tampa Bay's Raymond James Stadium

Games, Quick Tournament, and Ranked Match-ups, the latter being the only mode in which you play an actual game against another player. (You can also direct-link with someone if you know their IP address.)

Unfortunately, none of Madden 2002's lag issues have been satisfactorily resolved. I played over a broadband connection, and the lag was often so bad that precision moves such as jukes, spins, and field-goal kicks were next to impossible to pull off. And worst of all, after 60 days you'll have to fork over \$5.99/month if you want to keep playing online. So very poor.

Beyond the shoddy online performance, there's no play editor. And the commentary (despite the fact that Madden and new play-by-play man Al Michaels recorded new dialogue) is as dry and lifeless as ever - especially when compared with the out-



No shoe-string tackle is going to save the Rams this time. Better luck next year, fellas.

standing commentary in EA Sports' own NCAA Football 2003 for Xbox.

If you'll be happy with a solid and fun single-player experience, you should definitely upgrade to Madden 2003. But if you're hoping to take your game online, you'll still - William Harms be disappointed.

#### FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Gameplay's much better; good graphics; tons of customization options.

LOWS: \$5.99 fee adds insult to the crappy multiplay; no play editor; tepid, boring commentary.

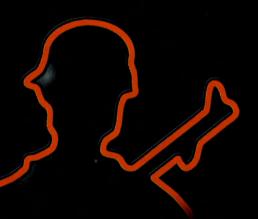
BOTTOM LINE: It outshines last year's debacle,

# The war is far from over!

"Solid premise, solid presentation ...The hopes for Sudden

Strike 2 are certainly high" IGN PC

"With its richly detailed and historically accurate units, the game will appeal to all fans of WWII games"



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# **Rock Manager**

#### 'AN AMERICAN IDOL? HARDLY!'



As in the real world, signing your band takes some work. This executive at North Star Records, for example, really likes your band's sound and style, but doesn't think your song has enough hit potential

It's an entrepreneur's dream: sell crappy music to stupid teenagers!

es, Rock Manager is yet another one of those value-priced business sims flooding the PC gaming market. But it's a surprisingly refreshing one that substitutes depth with attitude and fun.

I mean, when's the last time you played a game where some lout yells "Fack off!" with a British accent before demanding more booze?

As the title suggests, you become a

CATEGORY Simulation
ESRB RATING M
DEVELOPER DreamCatcher
PUBLISHER DreamCatcher
REQUIRED P233, 32MB RAM,
50MB HD
WE RECOMMEND PIII 1GHZ,
64MB RAM, 150MB HD
MAXIMUM PLAYERS 1

"rock manager" and must tackle nine challenging scenarios to complete the game. The goal of most of them is to manage, produce, and promote an up-and-coming rock band. As you can imagine, this is no easy task. Try dealing with a

club that thinks your band's sound is "too anarchistic and loud," or coping with a TV network that won't give you the time of day.

At the start of the game, you "audition" potential band members, pick a name, and spend cash to license some music before hitting the recording studio. Once there, the songs can be recorded and tweaked using the mixing board, and then saved for future reference. This feature is a welcome bonus: you'll undoubtedly enjoy playing around with the separate tracks to create your own masterpiece. Speaking of which, the music in the game — which includes about 20 original pop, rock, punk, and metal tracks — is actually pretty good.

With contract in hand, it's time to create an album cover and support the CD by schmoozing with radio stations, playing gigs, and even sending gifts to music magazines. "Man, that's like a bribe, innit?" asks one insulted editor. Fancy that — a \$1,200 dinner won't sway a publication into a good review. (Note: *PC Gamer* will settle for a \$1.99 Happy Meal.)

Eventually, your band should hit the big time and play larger cities and better venues than the "Rock Pit." But a Top 10 hit won't stop lawsuits and jealous rival bands from smearing your good name.

One of the game's hardest missions involves helping the aging band "Firewolf" plan a comeback tour before retiring (for good



Rock on, brother! You can create your own album covers, band names, and logos using the game's marketing tools.





this time, really); problem is, these middleaged burnouts like their drink too much. Another scenario is to help two brothers put aside their differences to record the song "Supermarket Love" and make it a hit. (Hmm...the resemblance to Oasis' Liam and Noel Gallagher are just too hard to ignore.)

Don't be fooled by *Rock Manager*'s cute characters: they've got some foul mouths. In fact, the game was rated "M" simply for its "Strong Language." But hey, this *is* rock 'n' roll, after all.

Though it's a refreshing twist on the bizsim genre, *Rock Manager* does have a few minor problems that could've easily been fixed. Technically speaking, while the game doesn't require much hard-drive space, all the audio clips must be loaded off the CD — meaning an inevitable delay every time someone says something (even with the maximum install). On the gameplay front, some accuracy is thrown out the window when an independ-



Hire grungy session players to use at the recording studio. Play with the knobs to make your song.

ent band charges \$120 per person at their first gig — and gets an audience! Or when a band that wants to retire and live off the proceeds needs to sell only 25,000 records.

Still, Rock Manager is a clever valuepriced game that's perfectly suited to both business buffs and music lovers. Most importantly, it's something many of these sims aren't: fun. — Marc Saltzman

#### FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Good premise; lots of personality; music editing is fun; attractive price.

**LOWS:** Short; lacks depth; has some mildly annoying gameplay and technical niggles.

BOTTOM LINE: It's not the deepest or longest

PC GAMER 74<sup>%</sup>



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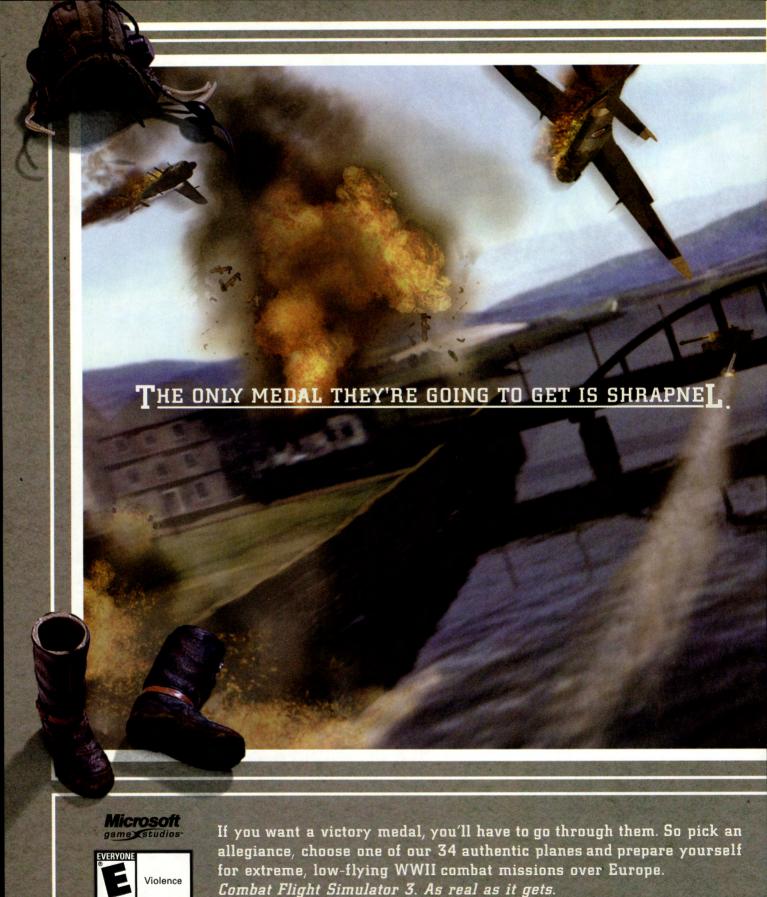


















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AXIMUM PLAYERS 8

# Celtic Kings: Rage of War

One of the best RTS, err...strategy, err...adventure games you've probably never heard of

ere's a game that claims to successfully blend not two, but three distinct genres - RPG, adventure, and strategy - which is usually a triedand-true recipe for unmitigated disaster. Not this time

Celtic Kings: Rage of War manages to pull off the trifecta in an enjoyable game

infused with more than a few truly clever gameplay devices. It VITAL STATS plays like a blend of Real-time strategy Heroes of Might and Magic, Lords of the **ELOPER Haemimont Games** Realm, and [insert any BLISHER Strategy First traditional RTS herel. QUIRED PII 400, 64MB RAM.

Not only is it three genres in one, but it's also really two games in one. The singleplayer game

("Adventure" mode) tosses aside most of the dull micromanagement tasks associated with an RTS game, and instead lets you focus on hack-and-slash and role-playing elements like exploration and characterbuilding. The multiplayer mode is more of a standard RTS game.

Celtic Kings is set during the time of the Roman invasion of Gaul. You play Larax, a peaceful Gallic tribesman who turns to savage revenge when raiders destroy his village and slay his sweetheart. Your path to justice takes you across a lengthy main quest, with side trips for sub-quests. One mission may have you leading a vast army of warriors against a rival, while the next may have you direct a much smaller party in search of a particular item or NPC.

You gain experience points and level up, though you have no say in how the experience points are spent. But even so, the Adventure mode is engrossing and delightfully open-ended. It's actually a cool innovation to play single-play without the tedious chores of needing to harvest



resources and manually build up your army with each new map - typically, resources are provided for you and the strategy is how you spend them.

In the multiplayer Strategic mode, you can play as either Romans or Gauls against a field of up to seven human or computer opponents, the latter of which can be given different playing "personalities" ranging from hermitically defensive to chaotically aggressive. Now you've got to tackle typical RTS duties such as raising and training units, hiring and developing heroes (very similar to Heroes of Might and Magic IV), finding powerful artifacts to aid your cause (Age of Empires, any-

one?), and conquering strongholds and villages to add their resources to your growing empire.

Celtic's isometric 2D graphics aren't going to bowl anyone over, but the units themselves are wonderfully detailed. The rest of the game's technical merits are pretty lackluster, particularly the sounds of battle and the dreadful voiceovers (which are on par with English translations of Bruce Lee movies). I encountered an occasional audio glitch that could be fixed only with a reboot. The "new age" Celtic-themed music also wears thin in a hurry. And the animation is crude when compared to the likes of Warcraft III.

A bigger problem is the units' lack of variety: The unit roster is shallow and simply doesn't measure up to current RTS standards.

What Celtic Kings can do, however, is throw a ton of units on a map — up to 5,000, claims the developer. I never neared that number, but I did have hundreds of units engaged in melee combat with no slowdown whatsoever. The trouble becomes seeing what the heck is going on in the jumble of hacking limbs and flying arrows.

Celtic Kings is ambitious, but at every level adheres strongly to the Keep It Simple, Stupid principle. By doing so, it manages to meld these different genres where others have failed. - Steve Klett



#### FINAL VERDICT HIGHS: Succeeds in mixing distinct genres and play styles and still feeling like one game. LOWS: Audio glitches; sub-par graphics and voiceovers; choppy animations BOTTOM LINE: One of the best of the RTS/RPG



# MOM ALWAYS SAID YOU WERE SPECIAL PROVE IT...

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- \* 3 Opposing teams, each with a separate mission-USSF, Russian Spednatz, and Terrorist Independents.
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# **Farscape: The Game**

A jock, a sultry blue alien, and a muppet save the universe. Film at 11.

or those of you who are too cheap to subscribe to cable TV, Farscape is an Australian space-opera import shown on the SCI FI Channel and produced by The Jim Henson Company. The show follows the adventures of a lost square-jawed American astronaut, John Crichton, who teams up with a rebel band of escaped alien prisoners running from

VITAL STATS RY Team-based ction/strategy **ELOPER** Red Lemon BLISHER Simon & Schuster Int PIII 450, 64MB RAM. 450MB HD, 16MB 3D card NENID PIII 700. 256MB RAM, T&L-compatible 3D card

the evil Peacekeepers in a living spaceship called Mova, Captain, I sense...geekiness.

(I feel this explanation should be given upfront because, based on an informal office poll, non-"cult TV fans" know only that the show comes on

sometime between reruns of Star Trek and Crossing Over with John Edward, and that at least one character is a muppet.)

And now we have Farscape: The Game, a team-based action/strategy title that plays much like Dungeon Siege but without the RPG elements — or amazing graphics. The plot is set up like an average episode of the TV series: Moya is attacked by the Peacekeepers, the crew is split up, and then they bicker amongst themselves, kick some ass, and take back the ship.

At the beginning of the game, Crichton and the show's slinky blue thief, Chiana, have escaped Moya in a commandeered



Yeah, yeah...the mission is to go someplace, blast ugly monsters, then return and talk again, right?"

ship, only to crash-land on an uncharted planet. Much of the game is spent controlling these two characters; however, as the story proceeds, other crewmembers are "found" and join your ranks (up to three at a time). You can switch between the characters at any time and the computer AI handles party members not under your direct control. The story is tightly linear, though, so you can't select which characters you use.

As in an RPG like Diablo, your party chats up the townsfolk, takes on missions, kills monsters, and collects hides and furs to trade. The difference is that since vou're playing as established characters, your skills don't improve over time. You can buy better weapons, and each character has unique specialties - Chiana's stealthy and plantbased priestess Zhaan is a healer - but the emphasis is on action rather than roleplaying.



The crew can carry pulse rifles, clubs, handcannons, and even a flamethrower.

However, when you take the hardcore level-chasing and crazy-mad character customization out of the gameplay, you're left with combat and story to carry the game. And I'll be honest with you: the combat is just as repetitive and dull as it is in most hack-and-slash games. Alien hordes stomp. stagger, and scurry around, you shoot and strafe, and then you start the whole process over again while hurrying on to the next objective (like activating a generator or opening a locked door).

A handy mini-map points you in the direction of mission objectives. I only wish the camera could zoom out a little farther: it's fine for close combat but inadequate for gaining a lay of the land, or even a room.

Farscape's 3D graphics are also mediocre and drab, unfortunately. This isn't like the TV show, where you have a limited budget for set design, people - live it up! More work definitely could've gone into sprucing up the sparse environments.

One aspect that I did appreciate is the writing and characterizations. The cast behaves just like they do on the show: they squabble, show contempt for one another. and in the case of dethroned ruler Rygel, flee in cowardice at the first hint of combat.

For that reason, and that reason alone, Farscape: The Game is a must-have for hardcore fans of the show (both of them). But for anyone else, it'll just be a very boring extra-long episode of that somethingor-other show that comes on between Star Trek and John Edward. - Chuck Osborn



FINAL VERDICT

camera control; simple enemy Al.

HIGHS: Authentic interactions between Farscape's colorful characters; good voiceovers by the cast. LOWS: Dull combat and environments; limited

**BOTTOM LINE:** Will appeal to anyone who buys



TSUNAMI (tsoo-nä'me) n. killer wave.

TSUNAMI 2265 n. killer game.



"Paying homage to the elements that draw anime fans in the first place, Tsunami 2265 is a solid action game with plenty to like."

GameZone

"The game's future world and richly-themed plot are many cuts above the typical undead space—Nazis of PC action gaming, and more similar to good Japanese console RPGs..."

Electric Playground

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# **MoonBase Commander**

CATEGORY Strategy ESRB E DEVELOPER Humongous PUBLISHER Infogrames REQUIRED PII 233, 32MB RAM (64MB with Windows XP), 690MB HD WE RECOMMEND PIII 450, 128MB RAM MAX. PLAYERS 4



uch like crack cocaine, MoonBase Commander is inexpensive, initially abhorrent, and highly addictive. Its graphics may be bland and its sound effects cheesy, but I can't stop playing the damn thing.

From the minds behind Putt Putt, Pajama Sam, and Freddi Fish comes this turn-based strategy game that's a hodgepodge of resource-gathering, top-down missile command, and classic puzzle-sleuthing. Humanity has finally sucked the planet dry, so we've devised an interplanetary resource-mining tool, the MoonBase probe. Toss in a few splinter megalomaniacs hell-bent on galactic domination, and bingo — instant plot!

The object is to eliminate your opponent's main hub while protecting your own. You accomplish this with a base pool of energy, giv-

ing you access to everything from bombs and bridges (level one) to crawlers and shield generators (level three). You increase your energy by landing collectors on energy pools. That's right: you actually launch your units. Sound funky? It is, but it's also a hell of a lot of fun. The launch interface is a direct lift of the Links clickand-release swing-meter. Most units have a "cord" that secures them to their hub.

Here's where things get hairy. No two cords can overlap, friendly or otherwise (as we learned in *Ghostbusters*, don't cross the streams). Winning the game has as much to do with choreographing your cords as it does with bombing the tar out of your opponents.

You can play in skirmish or challenge modes. Challenge mode runs you through the faction gauntlet at four missions each, starting with touchy-feely NiceCo and ending with the wizards behind the probe, Team Alpha. The AI's a cakewalk on the lower levels but a grandmaster challenge at the top. Standard multiplayer LAN or Internet options round out the options. Novice or pro, this one has plenty of pluck.

Yeah, it's not the cutest kid on the block (it's almost inexcusable that you can play only at 640x480), but after you get the hang of its control quirks, you'll curse the clock and damn the sunrise, because MoonBase is pure budgetware dope.

— Matthew Peckham



# **Big Scale Racing**

CATEGORY Racing ESRB E DEVELOPER BumbleBeast PUBLISHER Summitsoft REQUIRED PII 233, 64MB RAM, 6MB 3D card WE RECOMMEND PIII 700, 128MB RAM, 32MB 3D card, joystick/wheel MAX. PLAYERS to the same part of the same

leasant surprises are pretty rare in the racing genre these days, but Summitsoft's value-priced Big Scale Racing definitely qualifies as one. A Re-Voltstyle RC racing simulator, this nifty Dutch import does a tremendous job of reproducing the excitement and wheel-to-wheel action of radio-controlled race-car competition.

Unlike Re-Volt, though, BSR is all about proper 1/5th-scale RC cars competing on authentic miniature tracks, with nary a power-up or arcade-style indoor course in sight.

The simulation aspect is both the game's chief draw and its chief drawback. While serious RC racing afficionados will delight in the challenge and skill demanded of them, the console-gaming crowd will almost certainly be overwhelmed by the steep learning curve required to keep these squirrelly little buggers on the black stuff.

BSR features 10 car classes, ranging from the slow and heavy 4WD Junior STD machines to the quick and fidgety RWD Pro HOP class. You can practice with any of them on a half-dozen closed outdoor circuits, or enter an "unlock-as-you-go" series of multi-race Championship Cups. Quick



Al cars are almost human-like in their aggression.

Race, eight-player LAN, and two-player split-screen options are also available.

Spectacular graphics — featuring realistic weather, real-time lighting, and advanced particle effects — are mixed with convincing "little car" vehicle dynamics. A selection of chase views offer an arcadefriendly alternative to the proper third-person race-tower view. The AI cars become progressively quicker and more aggressive the farther you advance in class, which is both a good thing and a bad thing. (Bad because you'll inevitably be forced to run an obscene number of "do-overs" after being



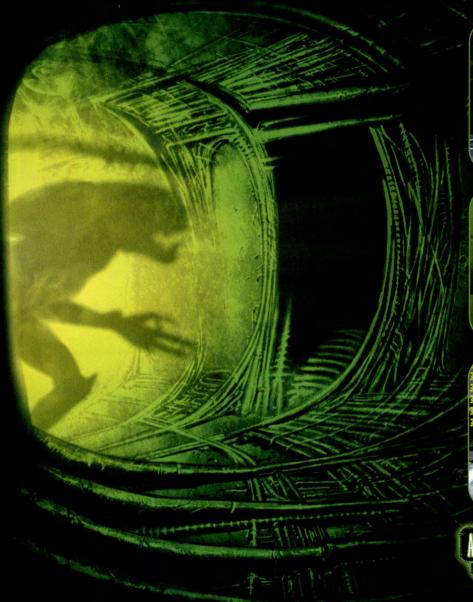
The one fantasy track: the "Velocity" velodrome oval.

knocked out of contention for the umpteenth time by an overzealous competitor.) The absence of a replay feature (so you can study what went wrong), or any save-as-yougo options, are significant omissions here.

If you can't afford a proper 1/5th-scale RC racer of your own, then Big Scale Racing is about as close as you'll ever come to enjoying this unique sport. — Andy Mahood



# LONG BEFORE THE HORROR BEGAN, FEAR STEPPED OUT OF THE SHADOWS.











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Expansion Pack requires Aliens versus Predator™2 to play

# **Emperor**: Rise of the Middle Kingdom

Like its predecessors, it'll ensure a profit margin for Sierra on very little investment



or anyone who's played Zeus, Pharaoh, or other city-building simulations from Impressions and Sierra, Emperor: Rise of the Middle Kingdom will feel as comfortable as a new pair of shoes. Well-traveled veterans of the genre can delve immediately into yet another ancient culture, with only an occa-

VITAL STATS RY City-building simulatio VELOPER Breakaway Games UBLISHER Sierra RED PII 400, 64MB RAM. 128MB RAM (256MB with Win XP), XIMUM PLAYERS 8

sional need to glance at the manual: the downside of this familiarity is that several questionable aspects of the series' general design remain

There's no denying that ROTMK is ambitious in scope. The seven campaigns -

each correlating to a dynasty - span over 3,000 years (from 2100 BCE to the invasion of Genghis Khan's hordes in the early 13th century), and consist of over 40 missions. If you include different farms and crop types, there are nearly 80 structures to be erected, covering every function from entertainment and religion to commercial and military uses.

For newcomers, this depth means a learning curve as steep as a very steep hill. And it doesn't help that both the manual and the online tutorials are overly wordy.

Though ROTMK is stuffed with more crops and goods than earlier city-builders and features feng shui tactics - buildings must be placed harmoniously, for example - it works in essentially the same fashion as its forebears: throw up some houses and watch the unwashed masses arrive and wait for you to guide them.

Then again, perhaps "guide" isn't the right word, because these citizens of ancient China - apparently just like those in ancient Greece, Egypt, and Rome won't stir out of their houses even if they're starving or dying of thirst. Heck, they won't even walk to an ancestral shrine (required to improve housing) that's within a stone's throw of their hut!

The problem can be traced to the distribution system used in all of Impressions' city-building games. Instead of people going to a market to buy food or hoofing it to a well to draw drinking water, they sit in their houses and wait for everything to be brought to them. I guess it's a Domino Theory of food distribution or, to be more precise, Domino's, except these delivery people never get to a house in 30 minutes. We can only be thankful that the citizens at least handle their bathroom duties themselves.

And that points us to what's most troubling about all these city-building games: instead of AI, you get an automated spreadsheet. The scripted-in-stone scenarios are one tip-off; another is the out-andout silly "roadblock" system you must employ to guide water-bearers, city inspec-





tors, and others so they don't wander all over a huge city as they make their rounds. How hard would it be to have a peddler, inspector, or water-bearer have responsibility over a fixed number of tiles around him and visit only that area?

To its credit, the multiplayer mode has both co-op and competitive gameplay, and lets you save games and return to them later. That last feature is pretty much a necessity, because even a "quick" game of ROTMK can last an hour or more. Another nice inclusion is a Campaign Creator for those who rip through the dozens (or even hundreds) of hours provided by the original missions.

Rise of the Middle Kingdom will probably be another moneymaker for Sierra, and more power to 'em. But I think it might be time to move the series to a new level of design instead of just a different period in history. - Stephen Poole





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# **The Partners**

D PIII 500, 128MB RAM MAXIMU



n amalgam of Ally McBeal and The Sims set at a scandalous law firm, The Partners is the PC's first dramedy. And it almost survives cross-examination.

You control an office of outrageous lawyers with requisite personal problems, guiding them through the trials of running a high-profile law practice. Each of the three firms has a unique background story and distinguishing traits - from the coupleowned "Gordon & Gordon" to the off-thewall "Adios & Goodnight" and you can play a separate seven-mission campaign for each.

Key to the game are the social interactions between the lawyers and the people they meet. As in The Sims, you can specify actions for each person, though the options are a bit more risqué: it's much easier to seduce colleagues, for example. Character desires and feelings are displayed as icons and meter bars in a familiar interface.

Surprisingly for a law-firm game, you never see the courtroom! Cases are presented with varied and interesting backstories, complete with eccentric clientele. Victory odds accompany each case and supply the cash, but unlike The Sims, leaving your characters to their own agenda leads to disaster, so they require constant supervision. Besides earning money, you also have side objec-

tives like keeping a promiscuous attorney from landing himself in divorce court.

Your penthouse office, its neighboring surroundings, and all the characters are modeled in full 3D; getting a close peek at two bickering lovers requires only a single click. Décor and furniture are arranged to your choosing in the buy mode, but while the available objects match the theme of the game (you can fill the office with pornography), how it's laid out has little influence on the actual gameplay. A freeplay selection lets you explore the building options, though it's not nearly as involving as the game's campaigns.

If you're looking for a more pointed and occasionally spirited experience than The Sims, The Partners will keep you entertained for a little while. The writing and story sound like a compilation of rejected sitcom scripts, but the goings-on will keep you interested. Just don't expect anything too deep or innovative. - Norman Chan



# **Tsunami 2265**

D PII 300, 128MB RAM, 3D card WE RI PIII 600, 256MB RAM MAXI

'm convinced that the designers and storywriters of Tsunami 2265 have never met. If they had, then perhaps the animated cut-scenes - which unfold a sweeping, epic tale of samurai warriors, a ravaged earth, and vengeful ronin - might have some remote connection to the gameplay. Sadly, that's not the case. The game the writers envisioned is likely far superior to the one the programmers crafted.

Set in the futuristic (yet still feudal) Japan of the year 2265, Tsunami is an anime-style third-person action/adventure that desperately wants to be the Akira of PC mech shooters — but hovers only above Digimon in quality.

You switch off between two characters: Naoko, a purple-coifed female samurai, and Neon, the aforementioned ronin whose master has been killed. I'll let you in on a little secret - this backstory is meaningless. The characters are interchangeable: they control the same, maneuver mechs the same, fire the same puny pistol, and even run with the same awkward herky-jerky gait that led me to believe that Naoko and Neon have long metal rods stuck up their posteriors.



The gameplay is broken up between mech arcade levels and indoor action/ adventure missions (minus the mech suits). You're outfitted with a compass that shows you the heading and distance to your next goal point. A few puzzles need solving (blow up forcefield generators, extinguish flames), but mostly Tsunami 2265 is about hunting for access keycards and repetitive shooting.

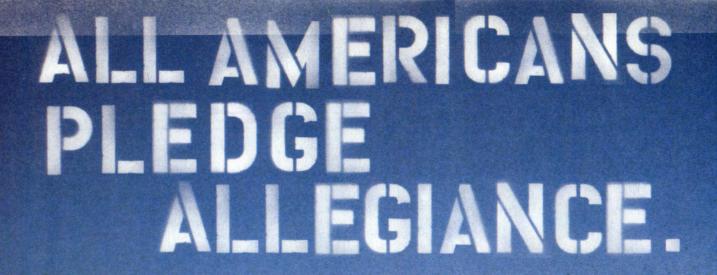
Enemy AI (in the form of other mechs or guards) is staggeringly basic: its moves are limited to stand, walk forward, fire, and sidestep. Character control is likewise



glitchy - your massless frame glides forward and backward quickly, but is slow and clumsy when strafing. Worst of all, there are no in-mission saves (only five "lives"), and each of the game's 13 missions can take up to an hour to complete.

Only diehard anime fans should bother. But be warned: you'll have to play the game to see the impressive movies. - Chuck Osborn





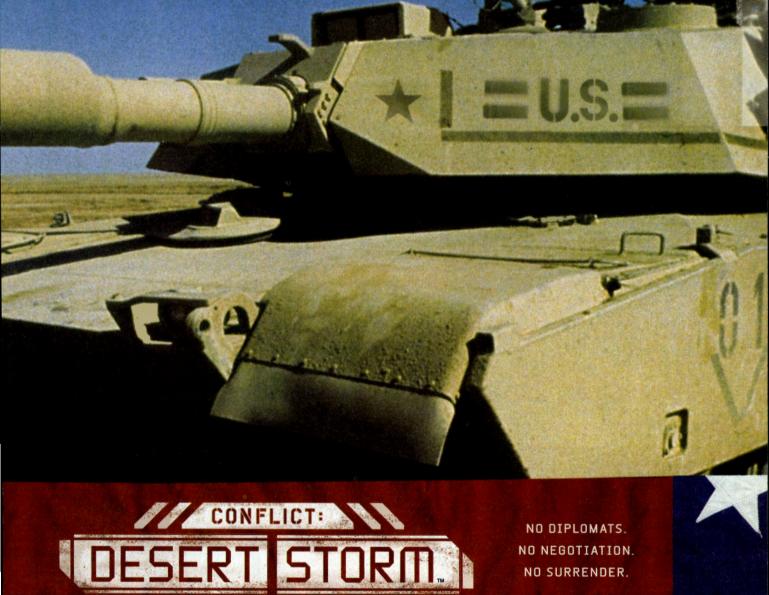




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PlayStation<sub>2</sub>





Blood **Violence** 









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# **U.S. Open 2002**



They tried to copy the Dreamcast Virtua Tennis exactly. They almost got it right.

bought a Dreamcast just to play Virtua Tennis, so blown away was I by the high-fidelity action and sheer fun of the game. [Me too. - Ed.] It had been vears since I'd been impressed by a tennis game on any platform. Sadly, though, the recent PC port of Virtua Tennis (released only in Europe) just didn't do it for me.

Strategy First has dabbled in the sports



world before: I still fondly remember its low-budget/highenergy hockey game Solid Ice. With the PC shelves still clear due to Sega and European publisher Empire's decision to keep the disappointing Virtua Tennis port out of the

U.S., Strategy First stepped in to do the next best thing - grace us with a semidecent, unabashed knock-off.

U.S. Open 2002 closely mimics the look, feel, and play of the Sega game. From the camera angles to the color schemes, let's just say the game is very reminiscent of the Dreamcast hit (and its sequel).

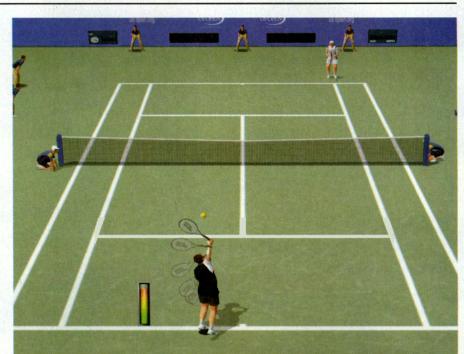
It does sport some neat features, including a Career Mode and a Practice Mode. In Career Mode, you can custom-design a player of either sex and advance through the four major tennis tournaments. (Strategy First has licensed the U.S. Open and Roland Garros trademarks, while fudging the other majors with generic names.) The Practice Mode lets you hit against a wall or take on a ball machine.

The graphics are generally decent, though the animations sometimes leave a bit to be desired - they're often very stiff, and force the players to move in unrealistic stutters. On court, the player models themselves look good, but I could have lived without the blurring and comet-trail effects on well-struck balls.

My big complaint is with the controls. Where Sega's game was fluid and remarkably instinctive, U.S. Open 2002 has some serious clunk issues. Players are either on the run or they're at a total stop, which makes it very difficult to time and hit quality shots while on the move. I also found it



Practice your groundstrokes the way we used to back in the day, by hitting balls against a friendly neighborhood wall.



I hit this serve so hard, my racket's blurred! Too bad they all go straight down the center.



The ladies take the court for a doubles match. Lob one over the net player, or face an overhand smash.

impossible to place my serves - I'd pull hard to the left or right, but was never able to do anything more than send a serve up the middle of the court.

Also, while it's cool to see second-tier players like Kuerten and Martin in the game, a genuine star or two would've been welcome.

The game does get some props for its multiplayer options. You can play head-tohead on a LAN, or up to four players can play a match using a daisy-chain multi-tap on one PC. Singles and doubles matches are both included, though that'll just double or quadruple the grumblings about the control problems.

When it comes to PC sports games, we're increasingly being asked to take what we can get. Microids' Tennis Masters was the last serious stab at a tennis game on our platform, and while it had its share of

fans, I wasn't among them. Now, with U.S. Open 2002, it looks as if I'll have to settle for Not Quite Virtua Tennis. It's not a bad game by any means, but it lacks the precise controls and slick gameplay of the Dreamcast classic. It should have been subtitled "Me Too." - Dan Morris

#### FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Good graphics; serviceable action; not a bad knock-off of the Sega tennis game. LOWS: Some clunky control issues; serves are

hard to steer; not much animation variety. **BOTTOM LINE:** Tennis nuts will like it, but I'm



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# The Italian Job

#### 'Ow about a caper to 'alf-inch some bullion?

ased on the classic 1969 Michael Caine heist movie (a cult classic in the UK) and the recent PlayStation game of the same name, The Italian Job represents both the best and worst of PC gaming. The best because it delivers a

VITAL STATS ER SCI IEE Global Star Software ISMR 3D card 128MB RAM, 32MB 3D card, joystick r steering wheel UM PLAYERS 8

raucously entertaining set of driving challenges for the bargain price of \$19.99. The worst because it's little more than a rudimentary console port replete with dated graphics and sub-par vehicle physics.

The core of the game is an "unlock-as-you-go" 16-mission campaign set in London, Turin, and the Italian Alps (closely following the plot of the movie). Charlie Croker has just been released from an English prison and plans to steal \$4 million in gold bullion from under the noses of the Mafia and the Turin Police. In a style reminiscent of Driver and Midtown Madness, you must pass a series of diverse missions ranging from driving an explosives-laden bus from one London location to another, to a free-for-all scamp through the streets of Turin in a trio of nimble Mini Coopers.

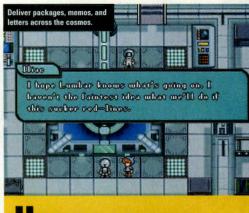
The action here can vary from riotously enjoyable - the re-creation of the film's signature Mini Cooper chase is almost worth the price of admission by itself - to intensely frustrating (driving a bus with only two degrees of steering lock through

the twisty Italian Alps will have you cursing 'til a capillary bursts).

Despite its healthy sprinkling of fun missions, however, the entire Italian Job experience is ultimately much too fleeting. It took me only a single afternoon to whip through the entire set of missions, and once they're beaten, the only gameplay options left are a series of time-based single-player challenges in a variety of vehicles culled from the movie. (The lone multiplayer option is a turn-based "Party Play" mode.)

There's some short-term (emphasis on the short) entertainment value to be mined here, but serious Caine fans might want to save their \$20 for the special DVD movie release later this year. — Andy Mahood





# Hyperspace Delivery Boy!

D P200, 32MB RAM, 68MB HD W END PIII 1GHz. 64MB RAM MAXIMUM PLAYI

he name is Carrington. Guy Carrington. Intergalactic courier at your service.

That's the premise behind John Romero and Tom Hall's latest project, Hyperspace Delivery Boy!, a retro PC (and Pocket PC) game that pays homage to the simpler days of gaming's yesteryear.

In this top-down adventure - which more or less resembles the state of PC games in the late '80s Carrington delivers varied parcels, mail, and memos throughout the galaxy, on behalf of a wacky gallery of space denizens.

Much of the gameplay involves throwing switches, pushing crates, collecting gems, and steering clear of baddies and electromagnetic charges. In the optional Action game mode (as opposed to the main Puzzle mode), enemies can be attacked instead of just avoided.

Playing HDB! is like taking a trip back to the game mechanics of Legend of Zelda. One of the first tough puzzles involves pushing nine crates into a teleportation machine, but with the need to strategize as far as what order in which to approach the crates, what path to take, and how best to avoid obstacles in the process. One wrong move and Carrington is S.O.L. — thankfully, you can save and load games virtually anywhere, limiting the frustration of the old "platform" style.

What seriously detracts from the otherwise fun retro setup is the sophomoric dialogue and embarrassingly cheesy voice-acting. The game is supposed to be campy, but the juvenile voices sound like they were recorded by a few teenagers trying to imitate Sol from the Jerky Boys. (I actually suspect the culprits are Hall and Romero themselves.)

While HDBI's a fun diversion with a few challenging puzzles, the action grows repetitive after a short while, giving you little incentive to finish the game. Veteran PC gamers may find some nostalgic solace here, but take it for what it is - an inexpensive and silly throwback. - Marc Saltzman



By The Developers of the Award-Winning Imperium Galactica and Imperium Galactica II

# HEGENS OF SIRON



IN 2104, MANKIND IS ENGAGED IN A FRATRICIDAL WAR BETWEEN EARTH AND MARS POPULATIONS. AFTER WEEKS OF FIERCE SPACE BATTLES AND HEAVY LOSSES, BOTH SIDES HAVE TO JOIN TOGETHER AND FORM THE LEGIONS OF IRON TO FIGHT A NEW ALIEN ENEMY FORCE.

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# **Strategic Command**



#### Introducing a deep wargame with appeal to the casual, Colonel-curious gamer

ne reason I got sucked into Strategic Command: European Theater so quickly was that I'd just finished 10 weeks of maniacally playing Uncommon Valor on its most anal-retentive level of micro-management. Slipping into this simple yet surprisingly sophisticated game was like guzzling an ice-cold quart of King Cobra on a sweltering August day.

VITAL STATS D P166, 32MB RAM. END A P166 will do

It's been so long since I played SSI's 1993 classic (and very similar) Clash of Steel that I can't honestly tell you whether or not Strategic Command does anything better than its predecessor, or simply refines and expands on the same

things with better art and a slicker and much more transparent interface. But it surely is just as fast-paced, even more intensely addictive, and the best damn hotseat/PBEM game I've played in ages.

You get six huge campaigns based on major turning points in World War II: the Poland invasion, the opening days of Barbarossa, Kursk, D-Day, and so on. Thanks to the ease with which you can experiment with weapons research and diplomatic flip-flops, it's a snap to set up drastically skewed, even whimsically bizarre variations on the real historical campaigns.



Germany launches its Operation Barbarossa against Russian lines, with armor and fighters striking deep.

SC's campaign editor makes it sweatsimple to play out all the alternate-history variables you can imagine. (Hell, this utility's so simple, a well-trained rhesus monkey could pick up the basics in about an hour.) The time scale varies from one week/turns to one month/turns, depending on the season. Units are corps-sized (cheapest) to army group-sized (fairly expensive), with options for strategic bombers, air fleets, and (most costly of all) strategic rocket batteries. Each time a technology reaches a new level, its procurement-cost balloons painfully; I suggest early investment in basic industrial development, especially if you're playing the Axis. In the long run, it'll help you pay for those Level 4 and 5 "super weapons" that can turn the tide dramatically, just as they could have for Hitler, if his R&D programs hadn't been so wasteful, scatterbrained, and schizophrenic.



points to development in different areas.

Example: What if Hitler had been rational enough to put Germany's economy on a "total war" basis and waited two more years before invading Poland? From that single premise (and your wise allocation of military production), it's a whole different ballgame! He could have deployed jet aircraft three years earlier, built up a strategic bomber fleet equal to Britain's, and hammered the crap out of London, Liverpool, and Scapa Flow with "V-3" missiles. The Italians, given the same premise, could have modernized their industrial base and built a fleet strong enough to throw the Brits out of the Mediterranean. Goodbye to Malta, Alexandria, the Suez Canal, and — with a modest German assist - probably the USSR's vital oil fields in the Caucasian region...

At which point, Turkey and Spain will probably join the Axis. The democracies' only hope is for a massive American invasion in early 1943 - a real cliff-hanger, that one, however it plays out!

In short, although Strategic Command is about as clean and elegant and easy-tolearn as a wargame can be, it's got so many fiendishly creative wild cards lurking just outof-sight that its replay value is endless. Even my 16-year-old, who normally couldn't care less about Dad's wargames, has gotten hooked into a cut-throat series of hot-seat games with me, and that alone should give you some idea of how much fun and drama is packed into this product. Be you newbie or crusty grognard, you'll probably be drawn in as intensely as we were. - William R. Trotter



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# FEATURES

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# **Prince of Qin**

# OLD THE ANCIENT WONDERS



locales, including the Tomb of the First Emperor and a section of the Great Wall of China. The texture work and attention to historical detail are impressive.

It's pronounced "Sheen," and the voice-acting is as bad as Charlie's

an a roleplaying game be an educational experience and fun at the same time? Not if Prince of Qin is any indication.

Drawing upon the history of the Qin Empire in China (221 B.C. to 206 B.C.), the game has you playing Prince Fu Su, son of the dynasty's First Emperor. When your pappy dies, a political brouhaha

VITAL STATS D PII 266, 128MB RAM. AXIMUM PLAYERS 20

erupts, with the country's Chief Eunuch and Prime Minister conspiring to forge an imperial edict ordering the prince to commit suicide (which historically he did. paving the way for a puppet regime).

Here, the premise

is that Fu Su rejects the decree, and escapes to the countryside to plot his return to power. Your mission is to embark on a vengeance quest, reclaim the throne, and maybe learn a little Ancient Chinese History for Dummies along the way.

Though you start with just Fu Su, you have the opportunity to acquire up to four additional traveling companions. There are five professions: Wizards, Musclemen, Assassins, Witches, and Paladins (Fu Su is the latter). Stats are of the garden variety, and level advancement is the usual matter of killing this and delivering that, with an unexceptional storyline sandwiched between much gratuitous hacking, slashing, and running all over creation.

One place the game shines is in combat, which is heavily influenced by moviewacky kung fu. As you gain new skills (unique to each character class), you can perform outlandish stunts such as summoning fire dragons or leaping dozens of feet in the air to head-stomp your opponents. Which is pretty frickin' awesome. But it's not enough to rescue the game from some serious flaws.

For one thing, there's the translation the awful, unacceptable translation. Recommendation to developer: hire a writer to eliminate such gems as "you'd better not invite death" or "worried as a distressed dog who has lost its shelter." They're accepted (for some reason) in eccentric games like the Final Fantasy series, but too much dramatic poise is lost here, and a game that clearly wants to be taken seriously ends up coming off like an unfunny episode of Mystery Science Theater 3000. The voice-acting is especially onerous: from a cast of dozens, you get maybe three or four repeat performers doing a hammy job with weird faux-British





Each profession's skill set is unique. You'll have to master the five elements to use them effectively.

Your puny powers are no match for my leaping kung fu! Combat is the game's most fun element.

accents meant to approximate a Chinese person speaking English.

Then there's the manual. The game lacks a tutorial, and the manual - packed though it may be with jumbled historical details — is unfortunately missing basic descriptions of how several game functions work, which is none too helpful.

Other issues include a buggy automap (when you enter buildings, it often returns most of the map to "unexplored"); a quest log that occasionally neglects to notate key information; event-trigger bugs that muck up chronology; and a quest system that's ridiculously unbalanced (you might get 500 fame for executing a local thug, but 1,000 fame just for picking the right path through a dialogue tree).

Don't be fooled by the game's billing as a "historical Diablo." It's not a Diablo of any shape or form, lacking both that title's polish and compulsivity. Instead, what you get with Prince of Qin is a mediocre romp through a muddled story, with acceptable breaks for engaging combat. It's not a terrible game, but it should have been so much better. - Matthew Peckham

# FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Wacky kung-fu fights; unique setting packed with historical detail

LOWS: Rife with terrible translations; painful ice work; buggy automap; unbalanced quests **BOTTOM LINE:** Compelling source material is

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VITAL STATS

**ELOPER** DarkXbre

128MR RAM 600MR HD

LISHER Hip Interactive

D PH 300, 64MB RAM

# **Hooligans**: Storm Across Europe

Somebody, somewhere, thought this was a good idea. Not us.

he word "hooliganism" is inextricably bound up with soccer. Namely, it refers to the unfortunate tradition of soccer "fans" indulging in drunken rampages. Two things to note: (1) This Hooligans game actually models, and even exaggerates, the behavior of soccer's lowest reprobates, and (2) It's made by a Dutch development team. Oh, and here's a third:

this RTS is utter, utter shite. Don't buy it. Even as a joke.

Released in Europe to overwhelming condemnation, Hooligans swirls equal parts Postal-like rampages, Gangsters-like strategy, and once again, utter, utter shite. The

result is unbearably stinky.

Where Postal was over-the-top with its cartoon violence, Hooligans tries for a "realistic" angle that's tough to swallow. Where Gangsters' mob-boss gameplay was often tongue-in-cheek, Hooligans brazenly gives political correctness the bird.

Starting in Holland - where soccer-fan violence is a more serious domestic issue than in any other European country - you direct a gang of thugs wanting to get to the match. Moving through the isometric (and admittedly well-detailed) cityscape, you loot stores for cash, guard piles of bricks to use as missiles, chant boorish songs to attract



English police just beat you to a pulp with batons.

NPC "supporters," and then throw down against the opposing side's mob.

Above all else, Hooligans as a game is littered with problems. The units are so tiny that it's almost impossible to select any one of them for a specific task. That's a major issue as the game progresses through France, England, Italy, and other European soccer hotspots, and you arm your louts with chains, pipes, and even guns. The interface doesn't allow any kind of easy control. Nor does it lay out clear mission objectives in the 10 single-player scenarios.

When not fighting the in-game controls and naïve handling of mission objectives, you'll have to tackle the bugs. Going above and beyond the call of duty, I tried this trite abomination on two different systems and had random crashes on both. I saved one game on level three, unable to budge a cargo container that was imprisoning a



group of my boys. Nowhere did the game mention that only the "Bulch" unit (a fat-ass in a wife-beater) could do this task. I didn't have a Bulch in my starting "firm," so I had to recruit one. It would have helped if the game had mentioned this.

Once you finish a level, your reward is a grainy video-shoot backstory that sets up the next installment in pan-European ultraviolence. Starring a motley collection of "lads" with names like Bricks and Smudger, these "movies" plummet the aspirational anglings of this turd even further down the sewer. While Hooligans also tracks points for the amount of cash raised through robbery, members of your firm arrested, dope smoked, and brothels visited (I kid you not), none of these "successes" parlays into advantages in subsequent missions.

It's possible to work out successful strategies, but when your hotkeyed units miraculously switch to another of your groups or disappear entirely, you're asked to do too much work for too little reward.

Credit where it's due, though: the loading-screen chants are great. Of course, praising the soccer-style chantings of "You are waiting, the game is loading" to the tune of "We Are the Champions" means that I'm stretching to find any point worthy of positive comment.

Oh, Hooligans has four-player multiplay, but there wasn't a chance of me finding even one other person to join in this drivel. It's just crass, and Hip Interactive should be ashamed and embarrassed. - Rob Smith



Armed with "fireworks," you can blow opposing fans to pieces with farty explosions while protecting you team's bus as it rides to the hotel. The real crime is the poor control and unintelligible Al.

FINAL VERDICT HIGHS: Amusing chanting on loading screen; occasionally chucklesome "English" one-liners. LOWS: The premise; the gameplay; the interface. BOTTOM LINE: Don't buy it! Your \$20 can get you a far better game. Try Serious Sam: SE...or



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# Aliens vs. Predator 2: Primal Hunt

How do you enhance the quality of a terrifying shooter? Not this way...

Isewhere in this issue, we deem Aliens vs. Predator 2 (Holiday 2001; PCG rating: 86%) one of the scariest games ever made. And it deserves that distinction — the human campaign provides some of the most fright-tastic gaming we've ever seen. Unfortunately, the add-on for AvP 2, Primal Hunt, fails to build on the creative gameplay, instead offering unfocused and

convoluted missions.

VITAL STATS UBLISHER Sierra/Fox Interactive RED PIII 450, 128MB RAM, 600MB HD. 16MB 3D card 56MB RAM, 64MB 3D card AXIMUM PLAYERS 16

Once again broken into three campaigns - Corporate (which replaces the Marines), the Predator, and Predalien (a hybrid race standing in for the Aliens) — the story behind Primal Hunt involves an ancient and

powerful relic being pursued by all three factions. You can play the campaigns in any order, but the plot makes the most sense if you play them in the order listed above.

The Corporate campaign is the strongest of the three, and features some compelling moments, especially early on when you're fighting with AI-controlled squadmates. Later, the switch to outdoor sections really fails to capture the key magic of the original game. Aliens just aren't all that scary when you can see them coming from a mile away, and you'll miss



The dual pistols are plenty handy when it comes to smoking Aliens. Beware their acid blood!

the dark, claustrophobic environments that scared you senseless.

Set 500 years before the Corporate campaign, the Predator sequence ends with a hokey cut-scene that explains the time difference. The Predator missions are mildly interesting, but since most of the locales are the same as those you traverse in the Corporate battles, there's a dismal sense of redundancy.

The worst campaign, though, is the Predalien's, which devolves from mildly interesting to a liability. Starting off as a wee little facehugger, you must skitter around in search of a suitable host. This setup may have been a good idea on a design doc somewhere, but in reality it's sheer boredom. If I'm an Alien, I want to munch folks and tear them limb from limb, not crawl around semi-helplessly. And when you're finally



Though it sucks up the juice, the Predator's new flechette weapon gets it done nicely.

allowed to eat people, your first taste of human flesh comes as a chestburster. By the time I was controlling the massive Predalien, my interest level in this campaign was zero.

Hampering all three campaigns is disappointing AI and pathfinding. The new Predator-planet creatures have one attack methodology: the blind rush. There could be moments of coolness, like when several enemies of various species are chasing you, but instead of fighting among themselves, they always focus on you. I was really expecting to see them whoop up on each other, but it never happened, and the experience suffers because of it. Another common problem is creatures getting trapped in environmental textures or just running around in circles.

These complaints aside, the expansion does add a few cool features for diehards. The Corporate mercenary has access to dual M-4A4 pistols, along with a deployable remote sentry gun and a controllable turret gun. And the Predator gets a snazzy energy flechette weapon that lays down rapid-fire laser beams - a great way to slice and dice those pesky Aliens.

These additions add welcome depth to the multiplayer experience, too. The Predator's ability to self-destruct is particularly entertaining, as the resulting explosion decimates anyone who's caught in the blast.

But by game's end, Primal Hunt fails to uphold the brilliance of AvP 2. The story's perplexing, the AI is unimaginative, and the Predator and Predalien missions just aren't that interesting. - William Harms



# FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Corporate campaign provides some frights; good graphics; cool new weapons. LOWS: Weak story; Al and pathfinding aren't so hot; Alien campaign is yawn-inducing.

**BOTTOM LINE:** A mildly entertaining diversion

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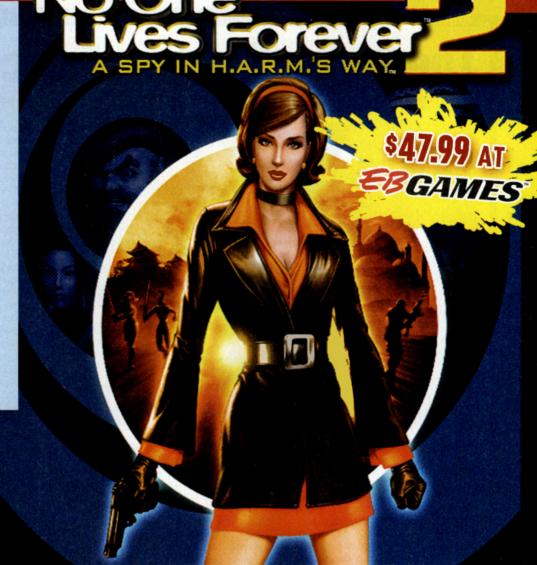


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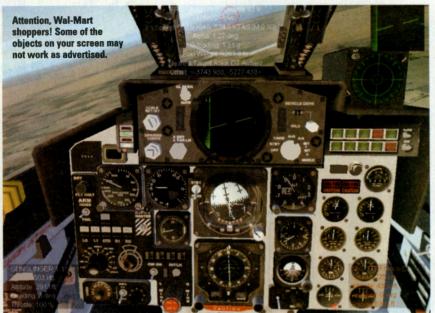
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sim column

Andy Mahood

# The Strike Fighters Fiasco

In a business where buggy products ship, a publisher lowers the bar - and gets caught on it



o quote a popular Chris Isaak tune, Strategy First "did a bad, bad thing." According to a knowledgeable source, retail giant Wal-Mart demanded that the game publisher slap the finishing touches on one of its in-development titles and ship it post-haste, or forever lose any shot at taking up shelf space in Wal-Mart's stores. The result? Strategy First complied with this ultimatum, and grabbed the early build of Third Wire's Strike Fighters: Project 1 combat jet sim, firing it straight off for duplication.

Now, we're not talking about a nearly complete beta with just a few unquashed bugs. This Wal-Mart version that Strategy First steadfastly (and quite absurdly) refers to as a "limited commercial release" or "basic version" isn't even worthy of the beta label — the Strike Fighters release that hit Wal-Mart shelves in late July was barely out of the alpha stagel And the game box made no mention of this "special" status.

Placeholder sound effects, un-optimized frame rates, unfinished physics, and buggy as all get-out — the damned thing was miles away from being finished. Hell, I'm currently playing a build that's three steps removed from the one Wal-Mart customers were being asked to pony up \$40 for, and even that version is nowhere near ready yet.

Understandably upset about the whole situation, developer Tsuyoshi Kawahito is reticent about discussing the affair, due to the bad blood that such conversations would create with his business partners at Strategy First. (The publisher's participation, after all, still determines whether or not Kawahito ever sees any return on his considerable personal investment.) He did post an apology on the SimHQ.com message boards, however, confirming that Strategy First did ship an early beta.

When I contacted the retailer, I received the following statement from company rep Karen Burk: "At Wal-Mart, we conduct major resets of our computer software area four to five times per year. [Strike Fighters] was just recently added to our assortment. We have been in contact with our partners at Infogrames, distributor of this title, regarding your concerns."

Yeah, I know. That Infogrames reference is a tad confusing, but it's just one of those complex layered partnership deals that publishers use to get their products on the right shelves.

After reading Karen's next statement however, you could've knocked me over with a feather. "After further research into the design of this title, Infogrames and Strategy First have decided to approve a full recall of this product, which will begin immediately in all Wal-Mart stores. In order to further satisfy the customer, Strategy First will be posting a direct offer for either a full refund or a free version of Strike Fighters when it releases on the newly announced date of 9/17/02. They will also be offering a free Strategy First game along with the free copy of Strike Fighters to any customer who purchased the product [in its current form] and was not satisfied with the quality of the gameplay. In addition, if any customer purchased this product at Wal-Mart and is unhappy with it, they may return it to the store for a full refund."

Well, kudos, Wal-Mart! It's pretty tough to tar you with the same brush as Strategy First when you step up to the



# What makes it especially tragic is that many unsuspecting Wal-Mart customers will never even realize that they've purchased a half-baked game.

Now, I don't pretend to be an expert in retail macroeconomics. But bloody hell, surely any idiot knows that cobbling together a half-finished PC game and foisting it on an unsuspecting buying public is a guaranteed lose-lose situation for everyone involved. What makes it especially tragic in this case is that many of those unsuspecting Wal-Mart customers will never even realize that they've purchased a half-baked game. (Those who bought the game at Wal-Mart can check the readme file for references to "Press Preview Copy" to confirm the sorry state of the build.)

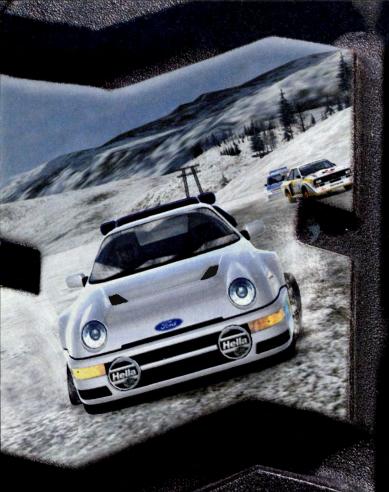
plate with offers like that (no doubt pulling a squealing publisher along with you in a well-deserved chokehold). With any luck, all of those unsuspecting customers who purchased the half-baked Wal-Mart Special version of *Strike Fighters* before this recall was authorized will get word of this offer.

Coming from a company like Strategy First, which has put out some quality games, this whole sordid mess is especially baffling. On behalf of dedicated flight simmers everywhere, I suggest that everyone at the company roll up this magazine right now and give themselves a good slap.

- simcolumn@pcgamer.com

NY GAMES OF THE MONTH: 1. STRIKE FIGHTERS: PROJECT 1 (BETA), 2. F1 2002, 3. NASCAR RACING 2002 SEASON, 4. FALCON 4.0 SUPERPAK, 5. IL-2 STURMOVIK

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# Chuck Osborn

# **DoD Shoots for the Pros**

Amid much love, the Day of Defeat team moves in with Valve

he news was short but sweet. On July 3, amid a news tidbit about the upcoming release of the Day of Defeat 3.0 "beta" (when does it stop being a beta - version 10.0?), the DoD website (www.dayofdefeatmod. com) announced "an official partnership" between Valve and the DoD team "for continued development of the wildly popular WWII-based Half-Life mod."

Here's what it didn't say: In true A Star Is Born fashion, the core DoD team has been whisked away to Valve's offices in Kirkland, Wash. And while a Valve spokesman couldn't verify whether or not the DoD team members are now on Valve's payroll, he did confirm that "they are being compensated for their time." All for a free mod created by amateurs?

"I have to pinch myself every day I drive to the office to make sure I'm not dreaming," enthuses 22-year-old player animator John (PickItUp) Morello II, who says he's wanted to work in gaming "ever since my first Quake frag."

"I don't think any of us thought it'd go this far. We all hoped it would, and worked as hard as we could to make the opportunity happen," says Morello, who was living in Tempe, Ariz., before the move. "But when you're working on the project in your dorm room at 3 a.m., living on chips and soda, the goal of doing it professionally is a high plateau to climb."

At press time, DoD's long-term future is being cagily guarded by the powers that be. But if it's anything like that of

# **MOD OF THE MONTH**

Stop playing with yourself! If you've got MechWarrior 4 and the Black Knight expansion, download the Mech4 Co-op mod at www.mech4co-op.com and play 19 co-op missions with your buds.

Counter-Strike and Team Fortress, you can bet that the DoD boys have been shuffled up to Washington for one thing: an eventual Day of Defeat retail release.

For now, though, they're honing their design skills under the watchful eye of Valve's pros, all while adding content to the free beta.

"[Valve has] really come through in crunch time, no matter how late or early in the morning it may be," Morello continues. "They've helped us establish an entirely new process for testing, gathering feedback, and so on. They're giving us resources that let us add features much more quickly than ever before."

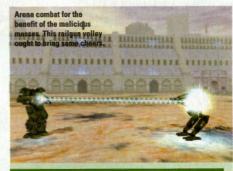
Could you be similarly "discovered"? Here's Morello's advice for getting noticed: "Stay true to your vision. Don't stray from your design because of something another game or group is or isn't doing. You should listen to the players, but the deciding factor should be your own opinion. [If you're an amateur], there are no budgets or bosses to worry about, so break out and do something new."

That's good advice for just about anyone, modder or no.

killingbox@pcgamer.com



MY GAMES OF THE MONTH: 1. FREEDOM FORCE, 2. DAY OF DEFEAT 3.1, 3. GRAND THEFT AUTO III, 4. RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN, 5. ANARCHY ONLINE



extended play

# With Two New MW4 Add-Ons. You'll Mech War. **Not Peace**



IN TERMS OF SHEER **FANBOY** fervor, FASA's BattleTech/ MechWarrior universe trails only Star Wars and Star Trek. From the table top to the online realm, it's produced reams of official reference

publications, technical manuals, blueprints, art collections, and paperback novels. With two add-on packs for MechWarrior 4: Vengeance, Microsoft has now expanded that universe to include a few new killing machines for your PC.

On shelves now is an Inner Sphere pack and a Clan pack, each offering a new slate of Mechs to suit your particular political stripe.

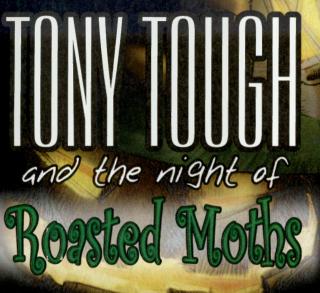
The Inner Sphere pack offers the classic Zeus, the giganormous Highlander, the classic shoulder-firing Hunchback, and House Kurita's standard Dragon. You'll also get the added delight of Dan Morris the Heavy Gauss

Rifle, which hits with a much more impressive wallop than its standard cousin, but also incurs a bigger tonnage penalty. Also included is the IFF Jammer sneaky tool for disrupting enemy communications. The cherry on top is the Coliseum multiplayer map, which presents Mech combat as a gladiatorial arena sport for the amusement of the masses. Sweet!

The Clan gets to upgrade with the missiletoting Arctic Wolf, the durable Cauldron-Born, the heavy Kodiak, and the downright freakylooking Masakari. You also get hold of the Streak medium-range missile, a homing variant that comes in handy against an evasive enemy. Clan warriors will benefit as well from Enhanced Optics, which provide a much wider view when you're zoomed-in on something. The new map is a Factory setting, a massive ruin that harkens back to the creepy final setting of Full Metal Jacket (except with Mechs, not Marines).

You might wonder why you should be asked to pay for these packs when each of them delivers only four Mechs, one weapon, one sensor, and one new map. Maybe because the price tag is a measly \$12.99. For that kind of scratch, the fanboys who buy those reams of technical manuals will be well-served by the new gear. It's a good variety of Mechs, and at least one slick new map.

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desktop general

William R. Trotter

# **Manual Labors**

What makes a wargame manual great? Heed the Colonel.



Airborne Assault's user-friendly manual clearly explains the game's unconventional design features.

y career as a banker (?!) was brief, but it did give me some insights into what it takes to create a first-rate manual.

In 1970, I did something foolish: I got married. Suddenly needing to Get a Job. I cut my waist-length hair, bought a new suit, and somehow bluffed my way into a low-level management position with First Union National Bank. I was appointed chief writer/editor for a set of policy and procedure manuals.

Yes, it was a surreal, Kafka-esque change from my jobless pursuit of hedonistic pleasure, and after three years, I resigned. But I'll say this for the Bank: it was perfect training in the arcane skill of manual design.

Like most of you, I loathe the print-ityourself .pdf monstrosities currently being forced upon us to cut down on publishers' overhead. The .pdf trend sure doesn't cut down on my "overhead": it forces me to blow \$70 on a new toner cartridge every five to six weeks!

But regardless of format, wargame manuals need to be first-rate. And the first thing drummed into me at those long-ago seminars was "The Six C's of Good Manual Design." Simplistic, yes, but they're still as valid as ever.

CLEAR Does the material exactly express the idea, concept, or process that it's intended to explain? Does it eliminate doubt, ambiguity, and possible misunderstandings?

**CONCISE** Is the language stripped down to its essentials, without jargon, hyperbole, or "cuteness"?

COMPLETE Does the section on, say, "Unit Information Displays" provide all essential information, anticipate reasonable questions, and cover all the points? Some things that are "obvious" to the designers may not be so clear to newbies.

**CORRECT** Is the information as accurate and timely as humanly possible?

COURTEOUS Is the overall tone friendly and cooperative? I've read some manuals that were actually antagonistic in attitude - as though the writer resented you for making him do his job.

**CONCRETE** Are the factual materials solid, digestible, and logically organized? Are the more abstract and theoretical concepts de-mystified by means of concrete examples and/or illustrations?

As a paradigm of great wargamemanual design, nothing I've seen recently can match the book that Panther Games created for Airborne Assault. At 241 pages, it's still compact, easy-to-use, and friendly on the eye. Real care went into the choice of typefaces, paper stock, and illustrations. It's so impressive-looking that it inspires confidence in the game.

Hell, Panther's set a new standard. — desktopgeneral@pcgamer.com

MY GAMES OF THE MONTH: 1. STRATEGIC COMMAND, 2. UNCOMMON VALOR, 3. SPACE HORSE, 4. AGE OF WONDERS II, 5.GRAND THEFT AUTO III



# alternate lives

# When the Party's Over. Should We Call It a Night?

IT'S FUNNY -- IT TOOK ME DOZENS of hours before I even really noticed the fact that I was alone in Morrowind. That I didn't have a wizard with healing powers, a sorcerer hurling fireballs, or a brave archer guarding my back. And when I finally did notice, I merely shrugged my shoulders and played on.

On the other hand, after about an hour spent inside the resplendent 3D dungeons of Neverwinter Nights, I found myself a bit, well, lonely. (Sniff!) I still played on, but I always felt like something vital was missing.

Two of the newest, and grandest, 3D RPGs ever made toss aside the venerable party-based system in favor of solo adventuring. Is this trend something to worry about?

I didn't notice my lack of pals in Morrowind probably because no role-playing game's ever been so beautiful and unique-looking, and its first-person perspective gives the experience more of an action feel, as well as a higher level of immersion.

Neverwinter Nights' pedigree probably has a lot to do with the fact that I so miss having a party system in its Steve Klett single-player campaign. NWN comes, of course, from

BioWare, maker of the legendary Baldur's Gate series, which gave us up to six characters at a time. Okay, I began to hate Minsc with a passion midway through Baldur's Gate II, and I never thought I'd miss him if he or a close cousin - weren't included in the next BioWare game. Yet, I do. NWN's "henchmen" just aren't good enough substitutes since you don't have the same level of control over them as you do over your own character. (And they're pretty stupid, as it turns out.)

The graphics perspective also works against the game a bit, as we're all accustomed to having a party of adventurers to order around in a third-person-perspective RPG.

Admittedly, playing "alone" can give you a greater sense of accomplishment - you can "be the hero," even if it's not usually plausible in a "save the world" plot. After all, it took a Fellowship to destroy the Ring, didn't it?

Icewind Dale II has hit shelves, and I'll be trying out its traditional party-based format shortly to see if its 2D sprites hold up. And I'll be asking if Arx Fatalis is good enough to make me forget its lack of a party-based system. What say you, fellow RPG fanatics: Do you want to party?

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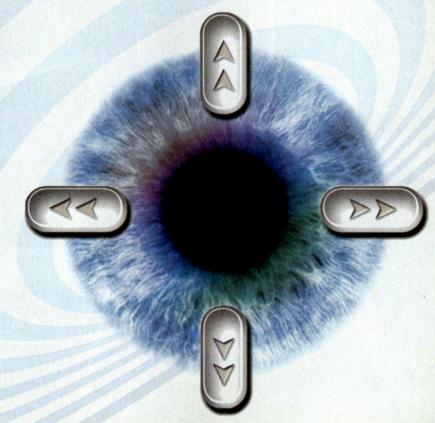
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# Operation Flashpoint: Resistance

So, you think you're pretty tough after mowing your way through Flashpoint? Well, these new missions are more grueling. Save face with these tips for the full tour, assembled with the help of the developers.



If you betray the partisan and join the occupation "Crossroad"), the game ends.



In "Second Service," grab the RPG from the ammo crates and lay waste to the assaulting tanks.

- → INVASION After you're dropped off, you have two options to get to the office: either wait by the bus stop for the bus, or cross the street into the yard, where you'll find your motorbike. Scout around the town to find a racecar that you can also use. Drive (using third-person mode) to the gas station up the road. Listen to the radio through the cutscene. When you reach the office, walk inside to initiate a long cinematic. Run outside and jump into the nearest car. Drive around the back of the building to avoid the soldiers and head for the checkpoint.
- → CROSSROAD If you give up the partisan, the mission will end, but you'll be shot for being a rat. Don't bother running in your house for the shotgun, either. Instead, run

into the shed, where you'll find that the rebel has died from bleeding. Take his AK47 and grenades and snipe off the three guys guarding the other rebels. Take their weapons and ammo and put it in the truck. Be sure to get the Bizon, as it proves useful in later missions. Drive the truck up the bumpy hill and scale the ridge of the mountain to avoid tanks. After you reach the checkpoint, turn left to find the resistance camp. Drive there to end the mission.

→ SECOND SERVICE After the cutscene, hold your position against troops that rush into the camp. You'll receive a radio message from the "Tasmanian Devil." Run to the checkpoint, where you'll find a machine gun behind sand bags and

ammo crates. Pick up the RPG Nh75 and four rockets. Shoot the incoming tanks and order your troops to defend the camp position from any enemy soldiers. After the tanks are destroyed, load the truck with weapons and drive through the woods to the extraction point with your troops mounted in the back. Be sure to do this quickly to avoid an approaching attack chopper.

- → AMMO LOW Grab the RPG Nh75 and ammo near the starting point. Put your AK mags and troops in the back of the truck. Drive to a road left of the dense forest. Pass a fork in the road, hit the checkpoint, and then continue until you reach a second fork. Unload the troops and ammo and hide everyone on the left side of the road, behind the trees. Wait for the convoy to come down the path on the right. in the middle of tanks. Shoot them down with two rockets each, while letting your company take care of the soldiers that deploy from the trucks. Get more rocket ammo from the convoy, and hide while two tank reinforcements come down the other path. Knock them out and drive the convoy truck to the exit checkpoint.
- → SCRAP You have two options in approaching this mission. Choose option A and run around to the back of the base where the tanks are. Avoid the men celebrating by the campfire in the castle on the hill. Shoot the guy guarding the tanks and call in reinforcements to take care of the rest. As enemy troops descend from the hill, snipe them off. Take command of the tanks and trucks, and retreat before the reinforcements come (though they're easily dispatched by your new T-80).
- → FIELD EXERCISES Put two squad members in each tank: one as a driver, one as a



158 NOVEMBER 2002 PC GAMER

gunner. Take command of the T-80 yourself, with a gunner as support. Move along the road while leading your tanks in a column formation. When you reach the first camp, take care of enemy tanks using SABOTs and switch to HEATs against infantry. Continue on to the outpost, and take care of the enemy tank drivers wearing black. After you finish, head to Bludov in the south. When approaching Modrava, wipe out enemy tanks first, then call on your grenadiers to bombard the town. Rush in to finish off the rest of the infantry.

- → FIRST STRIKE The Soviets outnumber you two-to-one, but this mission is pretty easy if you position your tanks correctly. First, load up the BMP with all the mines you can fit, then drive to the road by the forest in the south and plant them. Arm yourself with an RPG and a Dragunov. Order two tanks to this road, placing one on either side as a semi-barracade. As the Soviet armada comes into view, take out the oncoming tanks with the RPG and troops with the Dragunov. Jump into a tank and launch SABOTs at incoming gunships. After all the enemy tanks are dust, send in the rest of your tanks to wipe out the infantry.
- → HOSTAGES Don't run into this mission with guns blazing! Have your troops hold fire and sneak down to the village where the hostages are being held, sticking to the bushes along the right. Have each of your men target a guard, and when they're not looking, rush into the center and quickly take them all out. Free the hostages and put everyone in a truck. Drive to the enemy base in the south. Crawl and sneak in through the west, again having everyone target separate enemies. Wipe them out in a hurry and prepare an ambush for enemy armor. After the camp is neutralized, gather available weapons and equipment and head back to your base.
- → INFORMATION Start out by heading toward the complex from the left of where you're positioned. Run alongside the hill for cover until you're near the west end of the building. Go prone and observe patrol movements. When both patrol groups have their back to you, run to the wall and crawl through the cracked opening near some crates. Hide behind the woodpiles near the officers and watch the cinematic. After that, get back through the crack, wait for patrols to pass, and then run like mad all the way to the evac point.
- → OCCUPATION Equip your team with Dragunovs and RPGs. Lead everyone to



You'll want to load up this BMP with mines in "Field Exercises."



Your success in "First Strike" will depend largely on how well you set up your forces.

the ridge on the southwest overlooking the enemy base. Position everyone along the ridge but have them hold their fire until they all have a clear shot. Call your tank support into the town, and kill enemy troops as they storm out. Use the RPGs to take out enemy armor support, then lead your men down to the base, behind your tanks. The remaining squads can be decimated by your tanks so you can move on to the next mission.

→ COUNTER ATTACK Grab mines from the ammo crates for you and another soldier. Run to the forest in the south and place the mines on the road where the enemy tanks will rumble through, between two large tree groupings. (Space out the mines for maximum damage.) Take your troops and arm them with machine guns, RPGs, and a BMP. Hide in the forest, where you're able to watch your mines and use RPGs to eliminate any tanks that get through. When the choppers come, waste them with your machine guns. Salvage any equipment and load the BMP to get out of there.



short work of your armor. ("Counter Attack")

- → CONTRABAND Drive down to the beach and fire the flare. When the SpecialOps come, wait for them to unload their cargo. Head to the truck to pick up the anti-aircraft weapon. Wait for the helicopter to fly over you, then shoot it down. Get into the truck and drive north, turning east along the edge of the forest. Head for your camp.
- → RECKONING Make sure you and your team are well-equipped with the AAs or RPGs you secured in the last mission and try to pick a silenced primary weapon like the HK if you have one. From your start point, head to the airport, using the mountains to the left as cover. Order your men to hold fire and try to conceal them from any patrolling tanks or BMPs. Keeping your distance from the airport, crawl out across the top of the runway and over the ridge by the coastline. You should now be able to move up along the beach toward the airport using the ridge to hide your men. Take out some of the guards with your weapon while trying to keep your position secret. As the pilots scramble to the choppers, order your men weapons-



As tempting as it may be, don't open fire on the UAZ that comes before the convoy. ("The Pass")

free and get them to take out the choppers. Once all the choppers are destroyed, run back along the coastline all the way to your truck. Get your men inside and drive to the village to complete the mission.

- → FIREWORKS Move around to the hillock indicated in the briefing, avoiding the enemy-held village of Neveklov. Approach the bridge along the river bank, keeping low to avoid being spotted. As you start to engage the enemy troops, signal the hidden snipers to provide a distraction. Watch out for the BMP that comes over the bridge. Then signal the tanks for additional cover support. Once the enemy is weakened, signal the tanks to move and secure the area. If you don't have any satchel charges, you can collect some from the ammo crates near the building closest to the enemies' field tents. (Additional crates are on the other side of the bridge.) You need to set at least three satchel charges in the center of the bridge to take it out. (Try to make sure you've got some left over, as they'll be useful for the next mission.) Once you've destroyed the bridge, move your men back to the secure forest position to complete the mission.
- → THE PASS Equip yourself with satchel charges and mines from the crates, and, down in the valley, plant them in a wedge formation. Try to get as many scattered around the track and surrounding area as possible before the convoy arrives. (You'll have to make several trips.) Remain concealed when the convoy arrives, detonating the satchel charges when you think they'll do maximum damage to the tanks and BMPs. If any vehicles are left, take them out with an RPG, which you should also be able to find in the ammo crates. Once the job's done, return to the safehouse.
- → HUNTING Move around to the left and approach the outpost from the elevated position using bushes for cover, marked "Snipers" on the map. Take out the machine-gun nests before dealing with the troops. Quickly move across to a machine-gun nest and get in one, using it to pulverize any remaining enemies. When you hear



that reinforcements have arrived, call in the tanks and special-ops team. More enemy troops will move up out of the city: use the additional firepower of the machine-gun nest to take out as many as possible before you start your assault. Move in to the town, keeping low and watching for snipers. Hunt down and eliminate any remaining troops to complete the mission.

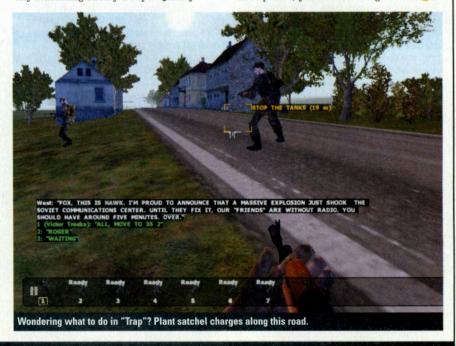
> TRAP Grab some satchel charges and RPGs before starting the mission. If you don't have any, some should be in the ammo crates by the UAZ. Plant them on the road for the tank and BMP. Make sure you hide your troops and yourself or you'll end up in a firefight with the tanks instead of nailing them on the road with the charges. Once that objective is complete, wait for your tanks to arrive, then start moving toward the town, approaching from the left. When you're about halfway there, signal the tanks to start rolling. As the tanks approach the town, signal the Tiger division to move in also. Hold back from the village while the tanks do their job, and then move in to clear out any remaining enemy troops. Quickly



In "Fire Fight," you can also use satchel charges to blow up the jets on the runway.

grab some satchel charges and RPGs from the ammo crates near the machine-gun nests. Plant the charges on the main road and conceal yourself. Another group of enemy tanks will arrive: use the charges and RPGs to take them out and finish the mission. Try to make sure you've got about three RPGs left over, as they'll be extremely useful for the last mission.

→ FIRE FIGHT Quickly eliminate the four troops who arrive at the house. If you don't have any RPGs, take at least three satchel charges from them. Then jump in the UAZG and drive straight toward the airport up the mountain. When you reach the top, jump out and survey the airport. This mission has a time limit, so you need to act as fast as possible. Keeping low, sneak down the mountain, across the runway, and down the ridge by the coastline. Then, as in the "Reckoning" mission, proceed along the coastline to the airport. Either use the RPGs to take out the planes, ducking behind the ridge to reload each time, or crawl out and plant the charges next to each one. Once you've destroyed all three planes, you've won the game!





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# **Icewind Dale II**

**→** 

Like all the Infinity Engine RPGs, *ID II* doesn't disappoint with its depth and variety of quests and options. We tapped the developers for some expert help in pointing your intrepid characters in the right direction.



# **TARGOS DOCKS**

The Docks are under attack by goblin raiders and your first mission is to clear the area of unwanted visitors.

Guthewulfe can get your gang set up with some starting goods.

#### **QUEST-RELATED:**

- Be sure to check in all the buildings and to search the area completely.
- Strangers who carry around dead animals are sure to raise some eyebrows.
- It takes a man with a strong constitution to take down exotic kinds of drinks.
- Potions aren't the only way to heal: spells can be just as nice.

# **TARGOS PROPER**

The main town of Targos is up the hill from the Docks. Here's where you can rest, buy equipment, get healed, and sell any spoils of war obtained. Lord Ulbrec Dinnsmore resides in the town hall, in the east part of the map. Be sure to speak to

him, as he can get you up to speed on what's been happening around town and in nearby surrounding areas.

## **OUEST-RELATED:**

- Lady Elytharra and Cahl-Hyred offer some unique quests.
- Be warned: not all is what it seems in the temple tent...
- Talk to the varied folk you see wandering the town.

# **TARGOS PALISADE**

The palisade wall is your base of operations. Here you'll receive assignments from Shawford Crale, who can be found in the guard post. Get to know the groups manning the walls. Also, make use of Swift Thomas: no one knows the town like he does.

## **OUEST-RELATED:**

- To fix the crane, go back and visit the Docks and Targos Proper.
- Arrows can be purchased at the

Gallaway Trade Coster in Targos.

- Search the houses in Targos to find Koluhm Bonecutter.
- The Iron Collar mercenary band can be found in the Docks. A skilled talker can help with this encounter.
- Nolan, who's in Shawford's hut, can provide healing.

# **SHAENGARNE RIVER**

The Shaengarne River has been overrun by orcs and is being used as a field base to destroy Targos. Find the source of the threat and eliminate it, while preventing the enemy from destroying the bridge from which reinforcements are due to arrive.

# GENERAL TIPS AND HINTS:

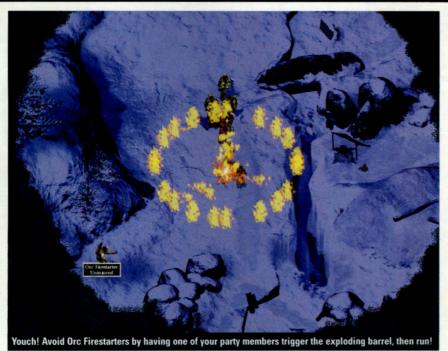
- Firestarter/Runner pairings can decimate a party, so pay them special attention.
- Shamans left unchecked can summon allies, buff their friends, and damage the party, so target them first.
- Malarites are offensive powerhouses, so concentrate the whole party's attacks on one to dispatch them in less time.
- Animals run faster than most characters, so once one targets a party member, it's no use trying to run away.
- Use the shape of the environment to bottleneck enemies and overwhelm them.

#### **OUEST-RELATED:**

- Enlist Dereth so he can heal your party. His wife, Sabrina, is also useful for any wizards in the party.
- Emma will champion the cause of good if she runs into a party worthy of such. But they must prove it first.
- Evil parties get an unexpected surprise in a later area if they act out their dark side.
- Bridges can take only so much damage before they collapse.

# **HORDE FORTRESS**

The horde fortress is the orcs' base of operations near Targos. There, you'll start







Visit Koluhm Bonecutter's house (upper-NW corner of town) for info on the Weeping Widow Inn.



Use Swift Thomas often: you'll be doing plenty of backtracking to pass all the quests in Targos.



to learn who's responsible for the attack on the Ten-Towns, and also meet a couple of direct underlings.

#### **GENERAL TIPS AND HINTS:**

- No random encounters if you rest by asking Ennelia to watch over you.
- The war drums will summon worg riders. Destroy the drums (or creatures manning them) as soon as possible.
- Pay attention to what element some monsters are made of and use attacks in the opposite elemental sphere.
- Archers on the towers will snipe characters to death if they have a low armor class. Try to draw the archers' attention with a character that has a high armor class, to lessen the total damage taken.
- Enemies behind cells are easy pickings for ranged attacks.

#### **OUEST-RELATED:**

- Trugnuk's Call Lightning spell is very powerful, so try to disrupt him or prevent him from casting it.
- Sneaky parties can get something extra around the warrens.
- Would you trust a goblin that eats poisonous spiders for breakfast?
- Not all goblins are evil; some may even be willing to settle things without a fight.
- The way in which the party deals with Yquog will affect later events.

# WESTERN PASS

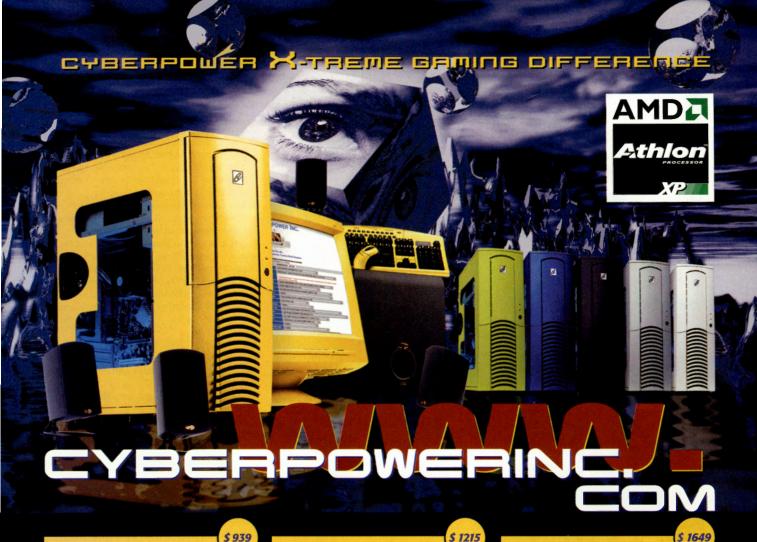
The western pass is where a local following of Auril has joined forces with whoever is responsible for the attack on the Ten-Towns.

# **GENERAL TIPS AND HINTS:**

- Lost? Check the journal for hints about where to go next.
- Keep an eye on what time it is. Certain events happen at different times.
- Flame weapons are great for killing trolls, and let you save spells.
- Small people can fit in small holes.
- Illusionary walls can be passed through for easy access to other areas.
- The dial will unlock various parts of the temple, once the correct combinations are found.
- The painting will accept different word combinations: be sure to visit it often.
- Plan your moves for Battle Squares carefully. You never know what's going to happen when selecting squares.
- The prism can help weaken enemies before engaging them.

#### **OUEST-RELATED:**

- Fighting isn't the only way to go through Andora.
- Something that can eat a deer would probably also be able to eat a spider.



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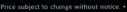


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After waking Nickademus, watch what you say: What you do can impact events later in the game.

- The more information gathered, the better it is for the person that asked for it.
- Don't be shy about using magic: you never know if a spell will affect something.
- Truly, a chain is only as strong as its weakest link.
- Crazed abishai cannot crave blood that they cannot see.
- Time is of the essence: some events happen every time a cycle is due.
- Nathaniel can help heal the party once the magic field is turned off.
- Someone who builds a structure probably has all sorts of interesting things to tell about it.
- Some doors need an electrical jolt to open.
- They say breaking a mirror gives seven years of bad luck...
- Old caskets fall apart easily.
- Getting oneself hurt is the only way to open some areas.
- Enemies in an ethereal state can't be hit by anyone that isn't in that state as well.
- The way in which the party deals with Nickademus can affect later events.

# WANDERING VILLAGE

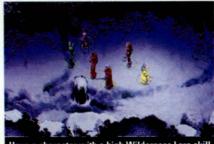
You'll find further quests and locations from information in the Wandering Village. Solve the mystery of the Fell Wood before continuing on your journey. The attention of whoever is responsible for the attacks will also start to shift toward the party at this point.

### **GENERAL TIPS AND HINTS:**

- Nym can't run away if he has nowhere to run to.
- Wolves hit fast and hard, so don't allow them to gang up.
- Barbarians hit hard but aren't bright. Keep this in mind when you choose which spells to cast.
- Large monsters should be hit by all party members at once to maximize the damage inflicted.

# QUEST-RELATED:

Pairi has something about her that seems different from others in her village.



Have a character with a high Wilderness Lore skill rating divine a quick path through the Fell Wood.

- A druid can probably make the mysteries a bit easier to solve.
- The Fell Wood contains many mysteries that need to be solved before the path opens.
- One in tune with nature, or a divine power, would be able to shed some light about the missing children.
- A tormented soul might be appeased with something other than that which it seeks.
- Spirits might know something about others of their kind.
- Help could be a tree away, for characters that are smooth.
- An item obtained from Battle Squares can be very useful in one of the Fell Wood focal-point fights.
- Wild plants usually grow in inconspicuous areas.
- Pay special attention to your surroundings when solving the Gate of Stones puzzle.

# **RIVER CAVES**

The river caves are the underground path you need to take to reach the monastery, and the passage to the Underdark. The duergar that have inhabited this area will offer some interesting choices to those who wish to pass through.

#### **GENERAL TIPS AND HINTS:**

- Duergar aren't really known for being the greatest talkers. Skillful con artists would surely be able to get some extra stuff from someone.
- Ochre jellies are more easily killed by fire damage.
- Haste spells can help the party quickly overwhelm enemies — spellcasters in particular.

#### **QUEST-RELATED:**

- Be sure to search all nooks and crannies for hook horrors.
- Any character can figure out the machine that's causing Dragu's dilemma if they have at least 15 INT. To help him make a weapon, gnomes need at least 10 INT, dwarves need 16, and others need 17.
- Tormented undead are not all about destruction: some are just confused...



Watch out for swarming hook horrors in the river caves, and do a thorough job hunting them down.

■ The way in which the party deals with Barud can affect later events.

# **BLACK RAVEN MONASTERY**

The entrance to the Underdark is located in the Black Raven Monastery. Once inside, choose between the factions to be granted access to the entrance, and possibly have to face the dreaded "Eight Chambers."

#### **GENERAL TIPS AND HINTS:**

- Bered has a one-of-a-kind item that cannot be found anywhere else in the game: take advantage of it.
- Locks will start to get harder to bash from this point on, so use a strong character with a powerful strength enhancement.
- The monastery's storage room might hide a surprise.
- Certain monsters have a high damage resistance, so keep track of your weapon's enchantments.

## **QUEST-RELATED:**

- Your faction type determines your entrance to Underdark.
- Only a highly logical and accomplished diplomat can change Svalid's mind.
- The thief in the storage room has the ring that Nonin lost. He will give the ring only to characters that have a wisdom of 15 or more.
- Dolon's room is locked, as is the chest inside that contains the evidence that he was sent to seduce Aruma. To banish them both, unlock the door and chest and present either Dolon or Aruma with the evidence.
- As an alternative to the hint above, you could also betray Salisam by telling Aruma that he is planning a coup.
- The monk is extremely useful when going through the Eight Chambers.
- Some characters will have an easier time clearing some chambers, but a harder time with others, so choose them wisely.
- Pay attention to your surroundings in the Chamber of Stone.
- Pay attention to the paths and where the monks get spawned in the Chamber of Shadow.

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Agree to enter Malavon's camp and gain valuable information. Refuse, and fight through it for XP.

- Pay attention to the panels in the Chamber of Sorcery.
- Pay attention to your surroundings when the clockwork monks start their countdown in the Chamber of Clockwork.
- In the Chamber of Sand, a mid-level rogue could walk around the room and, while evading the dangers, activate the switches and lead the sand monks into the scorchers.
- Inside the Chamber of Silk, one false step and characters will be reminded of how it feels when a bee swarm stings them.
- The panels hold the secret to the Chamber of Battle.
- Be sure to keep an eye on the flame gouts that erupt when you're in the Chamber of Immolation. They should be of primary concern unless your character can ignore the effects of fire or spells.

# UNDERDARK

The Underdark leads to the clearing where the party is to meet Oswald and continue their journey. They will run into drow, driders, and other Underdark denizens, as well as two underlings and their army sent to stop them.

#### **GENERAL TIPS AND HINTS:**

- Underdark merchants aren't part of any law. Someone who's logical and impressive can impose their will on them.
- Mind flayers are cowardly and will flee with no regard for their comrades if heavily injured.
- A certain specialist wizard can make great things with an alchemy lab.
- Mirror image is your friend.
- Some golems do not attack until provoked: use that behavior to your party's advantage.

### **OUEST-RELATED:**

- The way that the party deals with Ginafae determines what kind of treasure they will receive.
- Weapons can also be used to give electrical jolts.
- Cloudkill is very useful against those who have no control over their actions.
- Since mind flayers are cowardly, the



Decode the "writing" in the Chamber of Stone for the solution to this lever-based puzzle.

entity that they report to is probably cowardly as well.

# **KULDAHAR**

Kuldahar is under siege when your band arrives — the yuan-ti and the undead are in the process of destroying the town. You can stop and help the town or continue and take care of more pressing matters. Now you'll learn more details about those responsible for the attacks, as well as their motivation — attracting their full attention in the process.

## **GENERAL TIPS AND HINTS:**

- Negative Energy Protection will prevent the dreaded energy drain.
- The amount of undead a cleric can turn or destroy depends on their charisma score

# **QUEST-RELATED:**

- Hiepherus will give myriad reactions, which vary according to your party.
- Clerics and Paladins of Ilmater can cleanse the graveyard.
- The goal is to defend, not attack.

# THE JUNGLES OF CHULT

Now you must travel to Chult and prevent the yuan-ti from joining with whoever is responsible for the attacks, one way or another. Failing to do so will create an alliance that would be unstoppable. (Nooooooo!)

# **GENERAL TIPS AND HINTS:**

- Swimming while exploring a yuan-ti lair is bound to bring consequences.
- Pay attention to what the initiates are discussing at the entrance to the Serpent's Lair: it could save a lot of headaches.
- Heartless dead, as the name implies, are looking for their heart.

#### **OUEST-RELATED:**

- There is more than one way to stop the yuan-ti from joining the aforementioned alliance.
- In the room behind Inhatri, your party can trick the Coiled Cabal into revealing



Avoid this yuan-ti ambush by luring the melee guys away, then picking them off at your leisure.

some important information. (They'll need INT of 16 or more to do so.)

- Even hardened criminals have compassion for some things, so everyone probably has a soft spot.
- Monsters can concentrate on only one thing at a time: use that to your advantage when facing enemies who do massive amounts of damage.
- Blink and blur spells will make the enemy miss altogether. This tactic is great for monsters that have a BAB so high that they almost never miss.

# **DRAGON'S EYE**

An entrance leading to the base of operations for whoever is behind the attacks is located in the bottom of Dragon's Eye. Locate this entrance and take a path to the final base of operations.

## **GENERAL TIPS AND HINTS:**

- Paying attention to your surroundings can lead to an easy way of disabling a row of traps.
- Certain enemies will call for reinforcements. Don't let your quard down.
- The "Nathaniel" in the second level of the Dragon's Eye is a Rakshasha in disguise. Paladins and Illusionists can tell right off the bat; others need INT of 17 or more to realize this.
- Make a backup of the sabotaged histachii brew so you don't have to go back to Nheero later on. Anyone with a 16 or higher Alchemy skill can make a backup.

#### **OUEST-RELATED:**

- Items that don't decay like the rest must do so for a reason.
- Click the torture-rack switch to open the door that leads to Nheero.
- Open the way to the stairs by throwing the fire agates into the five torches at the snake-altar room.
- As an ancient sage, Nheero is wise. Be sure to return and ask him about things periodically.
- A spirit will usually hang out near the location of its death.
- Scientists aren't known for their courage. Convincing one to "help"

# VELOCITY

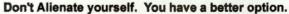
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40GB	5400RPM	ATA 133	2F040J1	\$83
40GB	7200rpm	ATA 133	6L040J2	<b>\$</b> 83
60GB	5400rpm	ATA 100	4D060H3	\$93
60GB	7200rpm	ATA 133	6L060J3	\$101
80GB	5400rpm	ATA 100	4D080H4	\$109
80GB	7200rpm	ATA 133	6L080J4	\$101 \$109 \$118
0000		EAGATE		Ψ
20GB	5400rpm	ST3204	10A	\$65
20GB	7200rpm	ST3200	11A	\$77
40GB	5400rpm	ST3408	10A	\$70
40GB	7200rpm	ST3400		\$82
60GB	7200rpm	ST3600	21A	\$82 <b>*</b> \$95
80GB	7200rpm	ST3800	21A	\$113
		I B M		
40GB	7200rpm	07N84		\$82
60GB	7200rpm	07N92		\$99
80GB	7200rpm	07N92		\$115
120GB	7200rpm	07N92	19	<b>★</b> \$146
20GB	5400rpm	AMSUN SV200		\$69
40GB	5400rpm	SV400		\$77
40GB	7200rpm	SV400		\$72 \$76
60GB	5400rpm	SV600		รัสร
80GB	5400rpm	SV800		\$83 \$96
80GB	7200rpm	SP800		\$105
	West	tern Di		
20GB	7200rpm	WD200		\$69
40GB	7200rpm	WD400	)BB	\$77
60GB	7200rpm	WD600	)BB	\$97
80GB	7200rpm	WD800		\$102
80GB	7200rpm	WD800		\$115 \$152
100GB	7200rpm	WD100		\$152
100GB	7200rpm	WD100		\$175
120GB	7200rpm	WD120		\$170
120GB	7200rpm	WD120		<b>★</b> \$180
	2.5" II		aptops	
10GB IBA			07N7162	\$78
	jitsu 9.5mn	n 4200rpm	MHR2010A	T \$103 \$100 \$122
	shiba 9.5mn		HDD2168	\$100
20GB IBA		n 5400rpm	07N9481	\$122
	tachi 9.5mn		DK23DA20I	F 🌟 598
	shiba 9.5mn		HDD2159	\$124 \$145 F \$139
30GB IBA	9.5mn	n 4200rpm	07N8326	\$145
30GB Hit	tachi 9.5mn		DK23DA30I	

# **Controller Cards**

Sales Street	THE RESERVE		STATE OF THE PERSON NAMED IN	Section 1	AND RESIDENCE
Pacific	Digita	l			
			orise AT	A Controller	
Supports	Comm	and Qi	ieing, f	reeing up CF	PU for
other tas					\$120
	S	CSI C	ontr	ollers	
Adaptec	RAID 2	0005	\$225	19160 Kit	\$219
Adaptec	RAID 2	0055	\$224	29160 Kit	\$295
Adaptec	RAID 3	210S	\$654	29160N Kit	\$279
				39160 Kit	\$340
Adaptec					
Adaptec					\$6278
Adaptec	DuraSt	tor 722	OSS Bu	ndle Kit	\$7710
		DE C	ontro	ollers	
Adaptec	ATA	RAID 1	200A K	it	\$65
Adaptec	ATA	RAID 2	400A K	it	\$320
Promise	ATA'	133 Ca	rd ULTF	RA133TX2	\$49
Promise				FASTTRAK100T	
Promise				FASTTRAKTX20	00 \$100
	Fire	ewire	Con	trollers	
Adaptec		1394/F	irewire	CardBus Kit	\$79
Orange A	Aicro	Firewi	re 3 Por	t PCI Card	\$48
	U	ISB C	ontr	ollers	
Adaptec				t CardBus Ki	t \$65

# **SCSI Hard Drives**

MAXTOR
36.7GB 10K rpm
36.7GB 10K Ultra320 KU036L4 ★ 8mb \$26 73.4GB 10K ultra320 KW073L8 ★ 8mb \$56 73.4GB 10K ultra320 KU073L8 ★ 8mb \$56 8
73.4GB 10K vpm KW073L8 ★ 8mb \$55 73.4GB 10K Ultra320 KU073L8 ★ 8mb \$56  SEAGATE  18.4GB 7,200rpm ST318418N Zmb \$15 18.4GB 7,200rpm ST318498LW ★ 2mb \$14 18.4GB 10,000rpm ST318406LW 4mb \$16 18.4GB 15,000rpm ST318452LW 8mb \$22 36.7GB 10,000rpm ST336752LW \$2mb \$20 36.7GB 10,000rpm ST336752LW \$4mb \$24 36.7GB 10,000rpm ST336752LW \$4mb \$24 36.7GB 15,000rpm ST318452LW \$4mb \$53 18.3GB 10,000rpm ST336752LW \$4mb \$24 36.7GB 15,000rpm 07N6350 4mb \$129 18.4GB 15,000rpm 07N6340 \$4mb \$23 36.7GB 15,000rpm 07N6340 \$4mb \$33
73.4GB 10K Ultra320 KU073L8 ★ 8mb \$56  18.4GB 7,200rpm ST318418N 2mb \$15  18.4GB 7,200rpm ST318418LW ★ 2mb \$14  18.4GB 7,200rpm ST318438LW ★ 2mb \$14  18.4GB 10,000rpm ST318406LW ★ mb \$16  18.4GB 15,000rpm ST318406LW ★ mb \$22  36.7GB 10,000rpm ST336706LW ★ mb \$26  73.4GB 10,000rpm ST336706LW ★ 4mb \$56  73.4GB 10,000rpm ST336752LW ★ 4mb \$536  73.4GB 10,000rpm ST336752LW ★ 4mb \$536  73.4GB 10,000rpm ST336752LW ★ 4mb \$536  18.4GB 7,200rpm ST336752LW ★ 4mb \$536  18.4GB 15,000rpm O7N6350 4mb \$129  18.4GB 15,000rpm O7N6350 4mb \$233  36.7GB 15,000rpm O7N6801 4mb \$233  36.7GB 15,000rpm O7N6801 4mb \$336
SEAGATE
18.4GB 7,200rpm ST318418N 2mb \$15 36.9GB 7,200rpm ST336918LW 2mb \$21 18.4GB 7,200rpm ST318438LW ★ 2mb \$14 18.4GB 10,000rpm ST318438LW ★ 2mb \$14 18.4GB 15,000rpm ST318452LW 8mb \$22 36.9GB 7,200rpm ST336938LW 2mb \$20 36.7GB 10,000rpm ST336706LW 4mb \$23 36.7GB 15,000rpm ST336752LW 8mb \$36 73.4GB 10,000rpm ST336752LW 8mb \$36 73.4GB 10,000rpm ST336752LW \$4mb \$53 18.4GB 7,200rpm ST1181677LWV 16mb \$129 18.3GB 10,000rpm 07N6350 4mb \$23 36.7GB 15,000rpm 07N6801 4mb \$23 36.7GB 15,000rpm 07N6801 4mb \$32
36.9GB 7,200rpm 18.4GB 7,200rpm 18.4GB 10,000rpm 36.7GB 10,000rpm 36.7GB 15,000rpm 36.7GB 15,000rpm 181GB 7,200rpm 18.4GB 10,000rpm 181GB 7,200rpm 18.4GB 15,000rpm 18.4GB 10,000rpm 18.4GB 10,000rpm 18.4GB 10,000rpm 18.4GB 15,000rpm 17.6GB 15,000rpm 18.4GB 15,000rpm
18.4GB 7,200rpm 18.4GB 10,000rpm 18.4GB 15,000rpm 18.4GB 15,000rpm 36.7GB 10,000rpm 36.7GB 10,000rpm 373.4GB 10,000rpm 18.1GB 7,200rpm 18.3GB 10,000rpm 18.3GB 10,000rpm 18.4GB 15,000rpm 17N6350 18 15 10,000rpm 18.4GB 15,000rpm
18.4GB 10,000rpm ST318406LW 4mb \$16 18.4GB 15,000rpm ST318452LW 8mb \$22 36.9GB 7,200rpm ST336938LW 2mb \$22 36.7GB 10,000rpm ST336706LW 4mb \$24 36.7GB 15,000rpm ST336752LW 8mb \$36 73.4GB 10,000rpm ST336752LW \$mb \$36 181GB 7,200rpm ST181677LWV 16mb \$129 18 M 18.3GB 10,000rpm 07N6350 4mb \$12 18.4GB 15,000rpm 07N6800 4mb \$23 36.7GB 15,000rpm 07N6801 4mb \$23 36.7GB 15,000rpm 07N6801
18.4GB 15,000rpm ST318452LW 8mb \$22 36.9GB 7,200rpm ST336938LW 2mb \$20 36.7GB 10,000rpm ST336706LW 4mb \$24 36.7GB 15,000rpm ST336752LW 8mb \$36 73.4GB 10,000rpm ST336752LW ★4mb \$53 18.1GB 7,200rpm ST1181677LWV 16mb \$129  ■ ■ ●  18.3GB 10,000rpm 07N6350 4mb \$129 18.4GB 15,000rpm 07N6800 4mb \$23 36.7GB 15,000rpm 07N6801 4mb \$23 36.7GB 15,000rpm 07N6801 4mb \$37
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36.7GB 10,000rpm 07N6340 ★4mb \$23 36.7GB 15,000rpm 07N6801 4mb \$37
18.4GB 10,000rpm DK32DJ-18MW 4mb \$16
36.9GB 10,000rpm DK32DJ-36MW 4mb \$24
73.9GB 10,000rpm DK32DJ-72MW 4mb \$52
Ultra320 Drives require Adaptec's Ultra320 Controlle
to achieve full performance - A39320D \$259
to define ve rate performance - A373200 \$239

# Firewire Drives

		Fire	wire H	lard	Drives	
l	Buslink	60GB	7200rpm	FW	6072E	\$190
	Buslink	80GB	7200rpm	FW	8072E	\$237
	Buslink	100GB	7200rpm	FW	10072W	\$285
	Buslink	120GB	7200rpm	FW	12072W	\$313
۱	Maxtor	80GB 🖟	5400rpm	XO.	1FWRA080	\$211
ı	Maxtor	160GB	5400rpm	X0.	1FWRA160	\$347
ı	QPS	60GB	7200rpm	QP	M3HD72F60L	\$195
ı	QPS	80GB	7200rpm	QP	M3HD72F80L	\$224
ı	QPS	100GB	7200rpm	<b>M</b> 3	HD72F100L	\$338
l		Fire	wire Cl	DRV	<b>V</b> Drives	
ı	Buslink	48x1	2x48	RW-4	1848FE	\$172
ı	QPS	40x1	2x48	CRW	401240FL	\$180
ı	Iomega	40x1	2x48	3235	9	\$211
ı	Yamaha	44x2	4x44	CRW	-F1ZDX	\$262
ı		Fire	ewire E	VD	Drives	
١	Addonic	s 8X DV	D/24X		DVD8X24FW	\$293
	LaCie	DVD-I	R/RW & CI	DRW	300164	\$468

# **Black Components**

			МОІ	NITORS	)
ķ	Viewsonic	17"	E70FB2	1280 x 102421	\$163
	Viewsonic	17"	G70FMB	1280 x 102423	\$203
ı	Viewsonic	19"	E90FB	1600 x 120021	\$247
ı	Viewsonic	19"	G90MB	1600 x 120022	\$340
ı	Viewsonic	15"	VG150B	1024 x 768 LCD Flat	\$406
	Viewsonic	17"	VE170B	1280 x 1024 LCD Flat	\$676
		R	emova	able Drives	
į	Mitsumi 1.	44mb	Floppy		\$17

Mitsumi 1.44mb Floppy	\$1
Teac or Sony 1.44mb Floppy	\$2
Iomega 100/250MB Zip IDE	\$79/\$10
CDEAKEDO	

Slim500, 3 Piece Satellite	29W	\$68			
INSPIRE2600, 2.1 Slim Series	19W	\$48			
INSPIRE5300, 6 Piece Desk Theatre 5.1	48W	\$83			
INSPIRE5700, 6 Piece Digital 5.1	79W	\$242			
Sonigistix Monsoon Flat Panel Speakers					
MH505, 3 Piece	51W	\$142			
MM1000, 3 Piece	50W	\$147			
MM2000, 5 Piece	340W	\$220			
HardDrive.com is the LARGEST source for					

Components! harddrive.com/silver

# CDRW/DVD Drives

1	CDR	w D	rives		Color
ı	16x10x40	IDE	Pacific Digital U-30105		\$75
١	24x10x40	IDE	Plextor PXW2410TA/SW	\$120	\$135
١	24x10x40	IDE	Yamaha CRW3200EZ	\$104	\$129
١	32x10x40	IDE	Goldstar GCE8320BI	\$57 \$61	\$82 \$86
۱	32x10x40	IDE	BenQ 3210A	\$61	\$86
ı	32x12x40	IDE	Lite-On LTR32123	\$62	S87
١	32x12x48	IDE	Pacific Digital U-30117	\$70	\$95 \$97
ı	40x12x48	IDE	Lite-On LTR40125S	\$72	\$97
1	40x12x48	IDE	Goldstar GCE8400BI	\$89	\$114
ı	40x12x40	IDE	Plextor PXW4012TA/SW	\$129	\$144 \$115
ı	40x12x48	IDE	Teac CDW540E/KIT	\$90	\$115
١	40x12x48	IDE	BenQ 4012P	\$90 \$70	\$95
ı	40x16x48	IDE	Pacific Digital U-30133	\$75	\$100
١	44x24x44	IDE	Yamaha CRW-F1ZE	\$179	\$189
١	48x12x48	IDE	Sony CRX210A1	\$90	\$115
١	48x12x48	IDE	Pacific Digital U-30127	\$90	\$115
	48x12x48	IDE	Lite-On LTR48125S	\$88 \$90 \$101	\$113 \$115 \$141
١	48x16x48	IDE	BenQ 4816P	\$90	\$115
١	48x16x48	IDE	BenQ 4816P TDK AI-481648	\$101	\$141
١	12x10x32	SCSI	Plextor PXW1210TS/SW	\$215	\$240
1	24x10x40		Yamaha CRW3200SZ	\$233	\$258
١	DV		rives		
ı	16x/48x	IDE	Toshiba SDM1612TA		\$90
l	16x/40x	IDE	Pacific Digital U-30115	\$59	\$84
١	16x/40x		Pioneer DVD Slot DVD10 BenQ DVD1648A	6 \$69	\$94
۱	16x/40x	IDE	BenQ DVD1648A Pioneer DVD305S	\$80	\$105
	10x/40x	SCSI	Pioneer DVD305S	\$104	\$129
			M Drives	4.5.5	*
	52x IDE		te-On LTN525	\$35	\$60
	52x IDE	Cr	eative Labs BLASTER52X		\$60
	52x IDE	So	ny CDU5211	\$40	\$65
١	56x IDE	ВТ	C G621D	\$34 \$89	\$59
١	40x SCS	I Pl	extor PX40TSI	\$89	\$114
1	ALLED	VCD.	RW/DVD Drives are av	railable	

# **USB** Drives

	USB	Hard Di	rives	1	
QPS	40GB	5400rpm	USB2.0	\$156	
QPS	60GB	5400rpm	USB2.0	\$205	
Buslink	40GB	7200rpm	USB2.0	\$172	
Buslink	60GB	7200rpm	USB2.0	\$190	
Buslink	80GB	7200rpm	USB2.0	\$238	
Buslink	100GB	7200rpm	USB2.0	\$285	
USB Removable Drives					
lomega	100MB Z	ip Ext USB Di	rive 31197	\$88	
lomega	250MB 7	in Ext LISE Di	rive 31310	\$129	

Peerless USB Drive w/10GB 31772 S200 lomega

USB CDRW Drives
PXW2410TU 24x10x40 USB 2.0 CD-RW Kit lomega Predator 32214 24x10x40 USB 2.0 CD-RW Kit \$181 Yamaha CRW3200UXZ 24x10x40 2.0 CD-RW Kit \$194 Pacific Digital U-30110 24x10x40 USB 2.0 CD-RW Kit \$129 \$139 Pacific Digital U-30125 32x12x48 USB 2.0 CD-RW Kit

USB DVD Recorders
USB 2.0 DVD-R QPDVRPN1U2 \$432 USB 2.0 DVD-R CD-RW QPDVRPR1U2 \$483

\$190

USB DVD/CDRW Combe USB 2.0 20x8x24/8x CRX85UA2

Plextor PXW4012TUSW 40x12x40 USB 2.0 CD-RW Kit

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# Klipsch ProMedia



Hitachi 9.5mm 4200rpm

9.5mm 4200rpm 07N8327 9.5mm 5400rpm 07N9482 40GB IBM 40GB IBM 40GB Toshiba 9.5mm 4200rpm HDD2166

IBM 12.5mm 5400rpm 07N8328 2.5" to 3.5" Adapter Kit & Bracket \$15

Orange Micro USB 2.0 4 Port PCI Card



# FI8 HORNET GAMING SYSTEM

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor at 2.8GHz Asus P4T533-C 533MHz

Asus Nvidia GeForce4 Ti4600 128MB w/Tv-Out 512MB PC1066 DRDRAM Non ECC

Sony 16X/40X DVD-ROM Creative Labs Audigy Platinum Windows XP Professional

Pacific Digital 48x12x48 CD-RW WD 120GB 8mb Special Edition Cold Cathode & Matching Driver Logitech Cordless Freedom Pro Enermax EG465P-VE 420W PS

Monitor & Klipsch Promedia 5.1 Sold Separately



P4 P4 P4 P4

# **Processors**

		11	7					
ŀ	1.8GHz 400fsb	\$182	P4	2.26GHz	533fsb	\$268		
ŀ	2.0GHz 400fsb	\$215	P4	2.4GHz	533fsb	\$439		
ļ	2.2GHz 400fsb	\$265	P4	2.53GHz	533fsb	\$685		
ŀ	2.4GHz 400fsb	\$439	P4	2.66GHz	533fsb	\$440		
ŀ	2.5GHz 400fsb	\$692	P4	2.8GHz	533fsb	\$555		
	All Intel Processors Listed Feature 512k cache							

#### \$141 \$169 \$232 .2GHz Duron Athlon XP2000+ 3GHz Duron Athlon XP2100+ Athlon MP2100+ Athlon XP2200+

# **Motherboards**

Asus ATV266WPA \$138 ATV266VM \$84 A7V333AUZ \$125 ATV333ARUZF \$147 Abit KX7-333 \$95 AT7 \$165 KX7-333R \$109 KR7A133 \$84 KR7A133R \$94 Gigabyte GA7ZXE \$61 GA7VRX \$88 GA7VXRP \$107 GA7VKML \$75 MSI KT3ULTRA2 \$88 KT3ULTRA2BR \$130 M56380E010 \$84 M56380E020 \$120 Iwill XP333 \$77 XP333R \$95 SOCKET 370 (Flip Chip/Celeron) Asus TUSL2C-SWA \$97 TUV4X \$83 Intel D815EGEWU \$94 D815EGEWLU \$104 SOCKET 423/478 (Pentium 4) Asus P4B 478 \$112 P4TE 478 \$158 P4TMWAL 478 \$109 P4S333 478 \$113 Abit IT7 478 \$165 BD7II 478 \$109 KR7A133R478 \$89 BD7II-R 478 \$125 Iwill P4D 478 \$85 P4R533N 478 \$140 mP4G 478 \$115 Intel D850MVSE 478 \$152 D850MDL 478 \$157 D850MV 478 \$152 D850MDL 478 \$155							
A7V333AU2 \$125 A7V333ARU2F \$147 Abit KX7-333 \$95 AT7 \$165 KX7-333R \$109 KR7A133 \$84 KR7A133R \$94 Gigabyte GA7ZXE \$61 GA7VRX \$88 GA7VXRP \$107 GA7VKML \$75 MSI KT3ULTRA2 \$88 KT3ULTRA2BR \$130 M\$6380E010 \$84 M\$6380E020 \$120 Iwill XP333 \$77 XP333R \$95 SOCKET 370 (Flip Chip/Celeron) Asus TUSL2C-SWA \$97 TUV4X \$83 Intel D815EGEWU \$94 D815EGEWLU \$104 SOCKET 423/478 (Pentium 4) Asus P4B 478 \$112 P4TE 478 \$158 P4TMWAL 478 \$109 P45333 478 \$113 Abit IT7 478 \$165 BD7II 478 \$109 KR7A133R478 \$89 BD7II-R 478 \$125 Iwill P4D 478 \$85 P4R533N 478 \$140 mP4G 478 \$115 Intel D850MVSE 478 \$152 D850MDL 478 \$157	1	SOCK	ET A Call for	a great	deals on a p	rocess	ors!!
Abit KX7-333 \$95 AT7 \$165 KX7-333R \$109 KR7A133 \$84 KR7A133R \$94  Gigabyte GA7ZXE \$61 GA7VRX \$88 GA7VXRP \$107 GA7VKML \$75  MSI KT3ULTRA2 \$88 KT3ULTRA2BR \$130 MS6380E010 \$84 MS6380E020 \$120 Iwill XP333 \$77 XP333R \$95  SOCKET 370 (Flip Chip/Celeron) Asus TUSL2C-SWA \$97 TUV4X \$83 Intel D815EGEWU \$94 D815EGEWU \$104  SOCKET 423/478 (Pentium 4)  Asus P4B 478 \$112 P4TE 478 \$158 P4TMWAL 478 \$109 P45333 478 \$113  Abit IT7 478 \$165 BD7II 478 \$109 KR7A133R478 \$89 BD7II-R 478 \$125 Iwill P4D 478 \$85 BD7II-R 478 \$125 Iwill P4D 478 \$85 BD7II-R 478 \$140 mP4G 478 \$115 Intel D850MVSE 478 \$152 D850MDL 478 \$157	ı	Asus	A7N266WPA	\$138	A7N266VI	M	\$84
KX7-333R   \$109   KR7A133   \$84	ı		A7V333AU2	\$125	A7V333AF	RU2F	\$147
Gigabyte	ı	Abit	KX7-333	\$95	AT7		\$165
Gigabyte GA7ZXE \$61 GA7VRX \$88 GA7VXRP \$107 GA7VKML \$75  MSI KT3ULTRA2 \$88 KT3ULTRA2BR \$130  MS6380E010 \$84 MS6380E020 \$120  Iwill XP333 \$77 XP333R \$95  SOCKET 370 (Flip Chip/Celeron)  Asus TUSL2C-SWA \$97 TUV4X \$83  Intel D815EGEWU \$94 D815EGEWLU \$104  SOCKET 423/478 (Pentium 4)  Asus P4B 478 \$112 P4TE 478 \$158  P4TMWAL 478 \$109 P4S333 478 \$113  Abit IT7 478 \$165 BD7II 478 \$109  KR7A133R478 \$89 BD7II-R 478 \$125  Iwill P4D 478 \$85 P4R533N 478 \$140  mP4G 478 \$155  Intel D850MVSE 478 \$152 D850MDL 478 \$157	ı		KX7-333R	\$109	KR7A133		\$84
GA7VXRP   \$107   GA7VKML   \$75	ı		KR7A133R	\$94			
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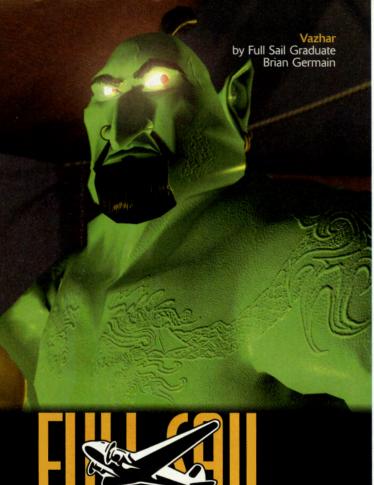
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# RATING SYMBOLS (found on the front of the game box):



Content may be suitable for persons ages 3 and older.



Content may be suitable for persons ages 17 and older.



Content may be suitable for persons ages 6 and older.



Content suitable only for adults.



Content may be suitable for persons ages 13 and older.



**Product is awaiting** final rating.

CONTENT DESCRIPTORS
(found on the back of the game box):
The content descriptors tell you whether the game includes elements such as:

- Mild language
- Strong language Mild animated violence
- Mild realistic violence
- Comic mischief Animated violence
- Realistic violence
- Animated blood and gore
- Realistic blood and gore
- Animated blood
- Realistic blood
- Suggestive themes
- Mature sexual themes
- Strong sexual content Use of tobacco or alcohol
- Use of drugs
- Gaming
- Edutainment informational content
- Some assistance may be needed





# **ICEWIND DALE II**

shouldn't be too hard for someone with the right skills.

- It's unlikely someone remembers detailed processes in their mind: they usually make notes of them at some point or another.
- The Eve of Sseth keeps a lookout for the yuan-ti and the histachii.
- Someone who summons lots of snakes probably would feel comfortable in a nest full of them.
- Think of "spiking the punch."
- When the Archon gives the option to "go to the exit." you may advance to the next day.
- Venomin is the shaker and maker in the level; he's usually where the storm is strongest.
- The plot can advance in day 3 only by talking to the flame elementals and watching their play.
- When time is of the essence. mass haste can be a life saver.
- Instant death spells, insect swarm, holy word, symbol of hopelessness, and symbol of stunning are all good ways to beat Izbelah.

# FIELDS OF SLAUGHTER

A horrid mire of undead creatures, as well as a confrontation with a commanding character from the past, must be dealt with before you reach the final destination.

#### **GENERAL TIPS AND HINTS:**

- Fallen bladesingers are extremely fast. Barbarians or monks are the only ones that have a chance to outrun them; the rest would have a better time standing their ground and fighting.
- A scouting party can help with battles, so if you're on Kratuuk's quest, you might want to recruit Gorg and his cohorts.
- Dread elves are almost as fast as the bladesingers. If they are allowed to keep fighting for an extended period of time, it'll be a costly battle.

## **OUEST-RELATED:**

- Blagh'mah and Kratuuk aren't the brightest bulbs in the bunch. A skilled talker can make things much easier when dealing with them.
- Spellcasters are much harder to deal with once they've cast their protection spells.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 170

# THE SEVERED HAND

The Severed Hand is the final destination and the ultimate showdown

#### GENERAL TIPS AND HINTS:

- In the Severed Hand (the towers mostly), you don't have to kill the monsters. Balance out the drain in your resources against the possible reward of the odd cool item.
- Riki knows a lot of what's going on around the towers. Make sure to return regularly and keep up with the news.

#### OUEST-RELATED:

- A wizard's apprentice would probably be able to help with scrolls and such.
- There's usually a reason why something will not die.
- Diplomats would probably not be happy to learn of the wicked things their hosts are performing.
- Cedrin filled Zaem's diary in the library as well. Pick it up and confront him about it.
- Ilmater is the God of Suffering, and people who suffer should be familiar with weeping.
- A former cleric of Ilmater's private room is on the third floor.
- Someone who is disgruntled about the way things are being run could give interesting bits of information.
- Perform the Sanctification Ritual so that hurting the Orb is much, much easier.
- Pay attention to your surroundings when trying to go up the tower with the portals.
- Deciding which god to help? Taking the good path (Sanctification for Ilmater and pissing off Xvim) makes the first fight hard but the second easy. Taking the evil path (joining Xvim) does the opposite.
- The way the party deals with Ormis will affect later events.
- Stubnok, who's guarding the landing pad, will trigger Captain Pudu appearing in the tower Bisbe was cleaning.
- Gloating is a good thing sometimes.
- Getting overwhelmed is a bad thing: try to eliminate the cause of all the monsters as soon as possible.
- For worst-case scenarios: Buffup spells do wear off.

ADVERTISER INDEX		
COMPANY	PRODUCT	PAGE#
ABS PC	Hardware	156–157
ACCIS	Education	174
Activision	Medieval: Total War	54-55
Activision	Starfleet Command III	43
Alienware ATI Technologies	Alienware PC Systems Hardware	8–9 70–71
Bethesda Softworks	Tribunal	IBC
CDV	Divine Divinity	139
CDV	Sudden Strike II	115
Codemasters	Project IGI 2	112-113
Codemasters CompuExperts	P.O.W. Gogamer	106-107
Creative Labs	24-BIT	155 OBC
Cyberpower	Hardware	166–167
Data Becker	Highland Warriors	53
Dell Computer Corp.	Dell Computer Systems	72-73
Disney Interactive	TRON 2.0	60-61
DreamCatcher Interactive DreamCatcher Interactive	Iron Storm Hegemonia	109 165
EarthLink	Page Promo	57
Eidos Interactive	Lara Croft Tomb Raider	15
Eidos Interactive	Spring Break	41
Eidos Interactive	Hitman 2	133
Electronic Arts	Battlefield 1942	100-101
Electronic Arts Electronic Arts	Earth and Beyond SimCity 4	124–125 78–79
Electronic Arts	NASCAR	38–39
Electronic Arts	James Bond 007: NightFire	83
Electronic Arts	Medal of Honor: Reloaded	24-25
Electronics Boutique	EB Games	58-59
Electronics Boutique Full Sail	EB Catalog Full Sail Education	16-17, 48-49, 148-149
Got Game Entertainment	Tony Tough	174 153
Got Game Entertainment	Tsunami 2265	123
Hypersonic PC Systems	Hypersonic PC Systems	169
ibuypower Computer	ibuypower Computer Systems	161–163
Infogrames	Civilization III	84-85
Infogrames Intel	RollerCoaster Tycoon 2	145 89
Microsoft	Age of Mythology	33, 35, 37
Microsoft	MechWarrior 4	90-91
Microsoft	Asheron's Call	136-137
Microsoft	Combat Flight Simulator 3	118-119
Microsoft Nestle Food Company	RalliSport Challenge Crunch Bar	151 51
NovaLogic	Black Hawk Down	69
Simon & Schuster Interactive	Real War: Rogue States	97
Simon & Schuster Interactive	Soldiers of Anarchy	117
Sony Online Entertainment	Planes of Power	76–77
Soyo Strategy First	TBD U.S. Open 2002	147 105
Take-Two Interactive	Stronghold	5
Take-Two Interactive	Desert Storm	130-131
Thortek (Harddrive.com)	harddrive.com	172-173
<u>Ubi Soft</u>	Shadowbane	142-143
Ubi Soft Ubi Soft	Raven Shield Splinter Cell	44–45 26–27
Univ. Advancing Computer Tech	Rock the Tech World	29
Velocity Micro	Velocity Micro	171
ViewSonic Corp.	Video Processor	111
Vivendi Publishing Group	Casino Empire	30–31
Vivendi Publishing Group	The Thing No One Lives Forever 2	98-99 IEC
Vivendi Publishing Group Vivendi Publishing Group	No One Lives Forever 2 Empire Earth	IFC 10–11
Vivendi Publishing Group	Emperor	66-67
Vivendi Publishing Group	Lord of the Rings	18–19
Vivendi Publishing Group	Aliens vs. Predator 2	127
Vivendi Publishing Group	NASCAR Team Factor	23
Xicat Xtreme Gear	Xtreme Gear	121 141
Au olile deal	Au onio Godi	141

# The PCG Crossword — Answers

ACROSS 1. Virtua Tennis, 7. Skara Brae, 9. Werewolf, 11. Alex, 12. Sly, 16. Shattered Steel, 19. Hoth, 21. Politika, 23. Microids, 24. Mystery, 26. Tribeca, 27. Skye, 28. Scud DOYNN 2. Treasure Quest, 3. Street, 4. Theme Park, 5. High Stakes, 6. Mullins, 7. SideWinder, 8. Spider-Man, 10. Atlantis, 13. Bullfrog, 14. Scotland, 15. Stupid, 17. Aribeth, 18. PC Gamer, 19. Havoc, 20. Ghosts, 22. Floyd, 25. Rock

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# The PCG Crossword



**ACROSS** 

1. Dreamcast "smash" whose PC version didn't get a U.S. release 7. The land you explore in the classic RPG Bard's Tale 9. Hairy-monster game that never was

11. Max Payne's brutally murdered DEA partner 12. Hero of Ion Storm RPG

Anachronox

16. BioWare's first published PC title (Hint: It wasn't a roleplaying game)

19. Scene of first battle in N64ported Star Wars game

involving political strategy

23. Developer of atmospheric adventure game Syberia 24. The "M" of the Druids

21. Early Tom Clancy Java game

26. Robert De Niro's production company that published 9 27. Skittles-based action/adventure Darkened 28. Comic-book character appear-

ing in namesake SegaSoft game

2. Terry Farrell game that offered players a real-life \$1 million prize 3. Supercar Challenge 4. First game that Elixir Studios' Demis Hassabis worked on (with Peter Molyneux)

5. Subtitle of fourth Need for Speed game

6. Soldier of Fortune's mercenary

7. Brand of Microsoft peripherals 8. Owner of the black eye shown in this picture

10. The fate of this city lay in the hands of Indiana Jones

13. Ex-employees of this company founded Mucky Foot

14. Home of Grand Theft Auto III developer DMA Design and Braveheart developer Red Lemon

15. The intelligence of the invaders in this 2001 Ubi Soft adventure

17. The Paladin of Tyr in Neverwinter Nights

18. The World's Best-Selling PC Games Magazine

19. Your codename in shooter C&C: Renegade

20. Name of the team you lead in Ghost Recon

22. Name of your robotic companion in Planetfall

25. Who Shot Johnny



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A man stands in a windowless, doorless room. His only clothing is a pair of tattered and faded pants and his feet are bare. How did he get there? He doesn't know. Why do his tears taste like cherry cough syrup? He doesn't know. But he does know that he must escape from this room. Suddenly, Frank Sinatra music fills the room and a golden globe of golden light spins down from the ceiling. The man looks around and finds himself in a disco, circa 1976. A lovely young blonde woman walks over to him and asks him to dance. The man looks down at his chest and sees that he is now wearing a tight disco-style suit like the one Travolta wore. This makes the man smile. He starts to dance with the woman and feels happy, and yet troubled, because he still doesn't know why his tears taste like cough syrup.

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