# 9TH ANNUAL GAME OF THE YEAR AWARDS The World's Best-Selling Game **WORLD EXCLUSIVE!** THE Hollywood hotshots bring their stunning vision to your PC **Exclusive Review** SPLINTER CELL 50 BEST FREE GAMES PLUS **HOW TO GET A JOB** IN THE GAMES INDUSTRY HANDS-ON **NATIONS**





blic soldiers lay siege to in a New Conglomerate e squadmates begin the f capturing the facility.



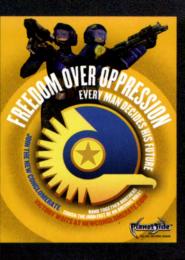
Strap it on and lock n' load as you fight for one of three empires, battling across 10 huge continents and numerous front lines.

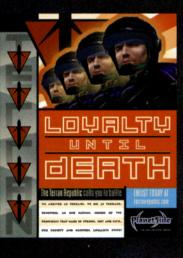


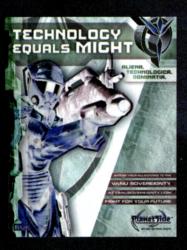
Swift Vanu Sovereignty flyers advance on a Terran Republic base, pounding enemy ground forces attempting to run for cover.



From dusk till dawn, the battles for planet Auraxis\* rage on, as strongholds, front lines and captured territories continually change hands.









Game Experience May Change During Online Play.





New Conglomerate forces overpower enemy defenses and begin their assault on the Vanu Sovereignty base.



A New Conglomerate squad of infantry and armor prepares to reinforce their empire on Searhus, where hundreds of friendlies and enemies are presently waging war.



Terran Repu the barracks facility, whi process of

### THOUSANDS WILL FIGHT.

THOUSANDS WILL DIE.

YOU MAY NEVER KILL THE SAME PERSON TWICE.



www.station.com/planetside

AND JOIN THE MOST INTENSE ONLINE WAR EVER.





#### **JACKHAMMER**

The Jackhammer is the New multi-barreled heavy assault shotgun. With solid ammunition capacity and rapid-fire capabilities, it's a devastating weapon for room-to-room



#### VANGUARD

Conglomerate Vanguard brings speed, solid armor and hefty firepower to battle. both a 150mm cannon and a 20mm machine gun, is capable of a 360-degree pivot, and can dispatch a deadly wave of liberation.





The Vanu Sovereignty and control the planet's alien technology, using a hybrid of human and alien against other empires. Adapt, evolve, ascend. Technology equals might!

#### LASHER

The Vanu Sovereignty Lasher fires concentrated energy orbs that lash nearby soldiers and vehicles at close range. Targets directly impacted by an orb receive maximum damage.



#### THRESHER

The Vanu Sovereignty Thresher is a heavy assault buggy built upon a gravitic drive system that replaces wheels with anti-grav pods that propel the vehicle. The deadly Flux Cannon serves as the primary weapon. The Thresher's hover can shifting Thresher's hover capabilities allow it to strafe left or right and easily cross water during battle.



Terran soldiers remain Republic while struggling to control and reunify the splintering empires. Their goal is to neutralize and regain supremacy over those who oppose the Terran Republic. Loyalty

#### CHAINGUN

The Terran Republic's machine gun designed to rapidly shell out rounds from a generous 9mm ammo base. The speed at which

#### PROWLER

battle tank, the Prowler is heavily armored with a 360-degree 100mm cannon. A secondary gunner can control a Dual 12mm Rotary Chaingun, which is stacked upon the primary turret. The Prowler can lay down more cover fire than an entire squad of infantry.

For more information on each empire's capabilities, armor, weapons and vehicles, visit www.station.com/planetside



FOR LAND. FOR POWER.

FOREVER.





Hollywood hotshots bring their ng vision to your PC

HANDS ON RISE OF NATIONS

COVER STORY

#### **Enter the Matrix**

The hottest movie of the year is just around the corner, and we've got the exclusive, inside look at what could be one of the year's hottest games, Enter the Matrix. Not only will this game let you perform all of the high-flying, kickass wire-fu that you saw in The Matrix, but it'll also feature a story written by the Wachowski brothers, include all-new video footage made specifically for the game (footage that will include all of the principal actors from the movies!), and some of the most thrilling combat ever to grace a PC.

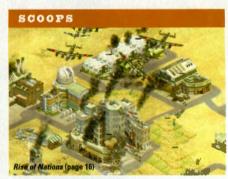


#### The Ninth Annual **PC** Gamer Awards

Choosing the best games of last year was a bruising affair, and left more than one editor curled up on the floor, weeping profusely. As we heal our ravaged egos and bodies, we proudly present the authoritative list of the best games of 2002.

#### Got (Free) Game?

Great games are available for free, via the web, that require little more than your internet browser. We name the 50 best web games that you can play on any PC, for free!



#### 12 Savage

This genre-defining game is both an FPS and an RTS. It may sound a little convoluted, but the final product could be revolutionary.

#### 14 Syberia II

We take an exclusive first look at the sequel to last year's most acclaimed adventure game. If you're a fan of the genre, this is one scoop you can't afford to miss!

#### Hands-On

Not only do we have an exclusive look at Rise of Nations' single-player game, but we also played the hell out of Postal 2, PlanetSide, Freelancer, and Praetorians. Read on for our full impressions.



ON THIS MONTH'S PCG CD We've got demos for the much-anticipated Splinter Cell and Praetorians, plus a buttload of mods for Ghost Recon, Falcon 4.0, Jane's FA/18, and UT 2003. We've even tossed in EA's sweet new Battlefield 1942 map, Coral Sea!

# REVIEWS

**Armored Task** Force

109 Anarchy Online: The Notum Wars

102 Search & Rescue 4: **Coastal Heroes** 

108 Dark Age of Camelot: **Shrouded Isles** 

Fighter Ace 3.5

94 The Gladiators

93 Hegemonia

86 **Impossible Creatures** 

103 Militarism

90 Neocron

**112** SimCity 4

The Sims Online 96

106 Snowboard Park Tycoon

84 Splinter Cell

91 **Street Legal** 

102 Vietnam Med Evac

106 Zapper

#### THE HARD STILF

El Vede gets jiggy with Maui's Cymouse headmounted controller, a superclocked OCSystem machine,



STRATEGY

#### 132 Impossible Creatures

When an RTS game boggles our game-hardened cerebrums, you know it's tough. We present walkthroughs for three of the most difficult missions.

#### 133 Cheater's Corner

Trusty tips and cheats for Dragon's Lair 3D, SimCity 4, and The Gladiators!

#### DEPARTMENTS

#### Letters

An "Egyptologist" questions our authority, Max Payne begs someone to bust him out of the slammer, and a reader in Germany wants good games.

#### **Eyewitness**

The second part of our "How to Get a Job in the Games Business" series includes information on how to secure a gig as a producer, a writer, or a sound technician. Plus, we investigate the goings-on at GarageGames.

#### 126 Alternate Lives

A MMORPG grouch explores the world of Asheron's Call 2. Will it change his thinking?

#### 128 Killing Box

Back by popular demand, it's the second annual Kill-ee awards! And this year Chuck isn't pulling any punches. No-sirree.

#### 128 Sim Column

Andy test-flies a build of IL-2 Sturmovik: The Forgotten Battles and gives his impressions of this great-looking product.

#### 130 Extended Play

Get all the info on Desert Combat, a hot new Battlefield 1942 mod that carries the game's deliciousness into the modern day.

#### 130 Desktop General

The Colonel examines artists who are creating alternative artwork for top wargames.

#### 136 Backspace

Just to make sure our readers know which of last year's games they should avoid forever, we hereby declare the worst games of 2002.

PC Gamer (ISSN-1080-4471) is published 13 times a year by Future Network USA, 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005. Periodicals Class postage paid at Brisbane, CA, and additional mailing offices. Newsstand distribution is handled by the Curtis Circulation Company. Subscriptions: One year basic rate [12 issues]: U.S. 252.95 Canada: \$49.95 Foreign: \$69.95. Canadian price includes postage and GST (IGST #12520668). Outside U.S. and Canada: Add \$2.00 per issue. For customer service, write PC Gamer Customer Service, P.O. 869.95. Canada: \$49.95 Foreign: \$69.95. Canada: \$49 Future Network USA, Products named in these pages are tradenames or trademarks of their respective companies. Future Network USA is not affiliated with the companies or products covered in PC Gamer. IPM# 0781118. Produced in U.S.A. Ride-along enclosure in the following edition(s): C1, D1, D2, D3, D4.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

#### "If knowledge is power, then a god am I."



As I said this time last year, picking the Game of the Year is one of the many great aspects of this job. Sitting around a table with the length and breadth of PC gaming's vearly output laid out before us. we had the usual lively debate, and I can happily recommend

every game you see duly awarded (starting on page 48) to any gamer. I hope to see many of our selections back in the sales charts soon.

On the subject of sales, I have a question: Are you buying as many games as you did, say, five years ago, or even three years ago? And if not, why not? Is it the cost? Have you become a MMORPG devotee and need just one game? Have the games you've purchased included so many added extras in either multiplay or from the mod community that you simply don't need to buy as many titles as before?

Conversely, have you been sufficiently wowed by a particular game in a certain genre that you were encouraged to try others? Many game publishers hoped that the mainstream adoption of games like The Sims would make many of those gamers realize that even more options lay waiting on store shelves, thereby introducing new fans to the market. While that doesn't appear to have happened, I'm curious to hear your thoughts on it.

I should also mention our cover topic, Enter The Matrix. Sure, we'll all be bombarded by massive movie marketing in the coming months, but the story behind the game's creation, and the developers' inside track with the films' visionary directors, presents a new standard for such tieins. Increasingly movie-makers are opening their arms to game makers, and in the process helping to craft beautifully blended re-creations of the cinematic experience on your small screen. Enter The Matrix could be the game that blows open the cross-promotion opportunities, and further realizes the long-term opinion that soon you'll barely be able to distinguish between where the movie begins and the game ends.

As always, send your thoughts and comments, along with your entry for the quote contest, to ednote@pcgamer.com. Be like Brendan C. Burghardt, Jon Miller, Eric Gonzalez, Michael Lobasz, and Greg Kennedy — the five randomly chosen winners who will each receive an Age of Mythology Collector's Edition for spotting last month's line from Clash of the Titans.







-Maximum PC Kick Ass Product Award



#### Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor at 3.06GHz

REA-51mm

533 FSB and 512KB Advanced Transfer Cache High-Performance Heatsink/Cooling with Arctic Silver III Intel® 845MP+ ICH3M Chipset Motherboard 512MB PC-2100 DDR SDRAM

Exclusive Metallic Cyborg Green Chassis 40GB 5400RPM Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive 15.0" UltraXGA TFT Active Matrix LCD ATI® Mobility RADEON™ 9000 PRO 64MB DDR with Dual-View Display Monitor and TV-out

with Dual-View Display Monitor and TV-out AlienAdrenaline: Video Performance Optimizer Removable 3.5" Floppy Drive 1.44MB Removable 24X/10X/24X CD-RW/8X DVD Combo Drive Sound Blaster® PRO Compatible with Wavetable 5.1 3D Surround Sound with S/PDIF Digital Output Front Panel Audio DJ CD Player Allows CD Play While System is On or Off One Type II PCMCIA Slot Four USB 2.0 Ports and One IEEE 1394 Port Infrared Wireless Fast IR Interface 10/100Mb Ethernet LAN and 56K Modem Dimensions: (H) x (W) x (D): 1.7" x 13" x 11.4" Weight: 7.6lbs. without battery

Weight: 7.6lbs. without battery
Exclusive 120-Watt A/C Adapter
Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
1-Year Toll-Free 24/7 Technical Support
AllenAutopsy: Automated Technical Support
Personalized Owner's Manual
FREE Exclusive Alienware® T-Shirt
FREE Custom Alienware® Mouse Pad

Optimized & Configured for High-Performance \$2,999.00

### THE ULTIMATE MOBILE GAMING MACHINE

#### Area-51<sup>m™</sup>: Mobile Gaming

The Area- $51^{m}$  represents the first fully capable mobile gaming solution. The performance requirements of today's most cutting edge games have been simply too demanding for a mobile system, until now. The Area- $51^{m}$  plays games at blistering speeds, handles quick motion with incredible accuracy, and performs phenomenally high in benchmarks. Perfect for LAN parties and for those who simply can not part from their desktop system's performance, the Area- $51^{m}$  is the ultimate mobile gaming machine.

### Desktop and Mobile Systems available in custom metallic colors!





#### Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor at 2.4GHz

533 FSB and 512KB Advanced Transfer Cache

High-Performance Heatsink/Cooling System Intel® 845PE Chipset Motherboard 512MB PC-2700 DDR SDRAM Black Floppy Drive 1.44MB 60GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive NVIDIA® GeForce4™ Ti 4200 64MB DDR AlienAdrenaline: Video Performance Optimizer Exclusive Koolmaxx™ Video Cooling System Sound Blaster® Audigy 2™ 6.1 Sound Card Black 16X/48X DVD-ROM Drive Black Dragon Full-Tower ATX Case 420-Watt PS Black Microsoft® Internet Keyboard Black Microsoft® Intellimouse Explorer 3.0 Intel® PRO/100 S Network Adapter Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition 1-Year Toll-Free 24/7 Technical Support with Aliencare On-Site Home Service **AlienAutopsy: Automated Technical Support** Personalized Owner's Manual



FREE Exclusive Alienware® T-Shirt



533 FSB and 512KB Advanced Transfer Cache High-Performance Heatsink/Cooling System Intel® 850E Chipset Motherboard 512MB PC-1066 RDRAM Black Floppy Drive 1.44MB 200GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive 8MB Cache ATI® RADEON™ 9700 PRO 128MB DDR AlienAdrenaline: Video Performance Optimizer Exclusive Koolmaxx™ Video Cooling System Sound Blaster® Audigy 2™ 6.1 Sound Card Black 16X/48X DVD-ROM Drive Black 52X/24X/52X CD-RW Drive Black Dragon Full-Tower ATX Case 420-Watt PS Black Microsoft® Internet Keyboard Black Microsoft® Intellimouse Explorer 3.0 10/100Mb Integrated Network Adapter Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition 1-Year Toll-Free 24/7 Technical Support with Aliencare On-Site Home Service AlienAutopsy: Automated Technical Support

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology 3.06GHz

FREE Custom Alienware® Mouse Pad \$2,699.00

Optimized & Configured for High-Performance

Personalized Owner's Manual FREE Exclusive Alienware® T-Shirt

#### "Alienware is the true price-vs.-performance champion."

-PC Gamer Editors' Choice Award



#### **Award-Winning Systems**

- · 10x listed on PC World Top 15 Home PCs Lists
- · 9 PC Gamer Editors' Choice Awards
- · 5 Computer Gaming World Editors' Choice Awards
- · 4 Maximum PC Kick Ass Product Awards
- · 2 CNET Editors' Choice Awards
- · 2 Computer Shopper/ZDNet Best Buy Awards



#### FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY!

MICROSOFT® INTELLIMOUSE® EXPLORER

\$59

Available In Many Custom Metallic Colors! Visit www.alienware.com/gearshop

#### NEC MONITORS

I ACC IAIC	21411	
19" NEC 95F	Flat CRT	\$229.00
19" NEC FE991SB	Flat CRT	\$279.00
22" NEC FE2111SB	Flat CRT	\$619.00
18" NEC 1880SX	LCD	\$1159.00
20" NEC 2010X	LCD	\$1539.00

#### KLIPSCH SPEAKERS

Klipsch ProMedia 2.1	200-Watt THX-Certified	\$179.00	
Klipsch ProMedia 4.1	400-Watt THX-Certified	\$249.00	
Klinsch ProMedia 5 1	500-Watt THX-Certified	\$399 00	

## ALIENWARE

Custom Build Your Dream Machine at www.ALIENWARE.COM For More Information Call Toll-Free: 1-800-ALIENWARE (800-254-3692)

Prices, configurations, and availability may change without notice. Taxes and shipping charges not shown. Monitor and speakers sold separately. Allenware can not be held responsible for errors in photography or typography. On-site service may be provided via contracted third party, service not available in all areas. Technician will be dispatched if deemed necessary following telephone-based troubleshooting, for complete information on warranty, support, and on-site service, visit waw.wallenware.com. For hard drives, GB means 1 billion bytes and accessible capacity may vary depending on configuration. For CD-ROM, DVD-ROM, DVD

### **Letters of Trust**

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 Ietters@pcgamer.com.



#### **EXECUTE:** GAMING WITH THE ENEMY?

I LOVE THE GAMES THE ARMY uses for training its soldiers or to give Americans a taste of the Army for recruitment purposes. Some examples are America's Army, of course, plus Real War and even Ghost Recon to an extent. I'm sure there are others. All of these games are high-quality (except for maybe Real War) and I love to play them, but I always have this one nagging thought:

PCGAVES WORLD EXOLUSIVE REVIEWS

Best-Selling PC Garries

WORLD EXOLUSIVE REVIEWS

WORLD EXOLUSIVE REVIEWS

STRANGE OF THE RINGS

WORLD EXOLUSIVE REVIEWS

STRANGE OF THE RINGS

WORLD EXOLUSIVE REVIEWS

STRANGE OF THE RINGS

WORLD EXOLUSIVE REVIEWS

WORLD EXOLUSIVE REVIEWS

STRANGE OF THE RINGS

WORLD EXOLUSIVE REVIEWS

STRANGE OF THE RINGS

WORLD EXOLUSIVE REVIEWS

STRANGE OF THE RINGS

WORLD EXOLUSIVE REVIEWS

By releasing their training systems to us, doesn't that mean our government is also releasing them to our enemies? Wouldn't it make sense to not let your enemies see and learn the tactics employed by our armed forces on the battlefield or experience our technology? I just wanted to get your take on the matter.

--- Eric Bolinder

We think it's the Army's way of actually daring our enemies to challenge us equipped only with their PC gaming experience. Come to think of it, we almost hope it happens — the results would be spectacularly funny, in a carnage-strewn sort of way. They'd soon learn the difference between "real" and "game."

#### **EX A "STONY" GAZE**

HEY, THAT'S A NICE-LOOKING lady on the cover of your Holiday 2002 issue.

Wait a second, that's MEDUSA!!! Oh...Crap...
Turning...Into...Ston...

— Bill N.

Nobody told us that Medusa's flesh-to-stone gaze was replicable on paper. Honest mistake. To the hundreds of thousands of you who were turned to stone by our cover, we are terribly sorry. It'll never happen again.

#### **EX UNABRIDGED ADORATION**

I REMABER THE FIRST time i lade eyes on your wonderful mag it was love @ first read since then ive bought ever mag and i love them ohh yha can u get some revuews on sh\*ty games. The worse the rateing the funnier.

— joe BOB

# RESPONSIBLE READERS



I WAS WONDERING WHO wrote "Censorship or Responsible Marketing?" (January 2003 issue, page 26). It's an amazing and well-organized article, which I didn't expect to find in your magazine (no offense — I love the humor, too). It was refreshing to read something that was pure information. While too many such stories would probably make PC Gamer boring, it's nice to see something like that once in a while. Yer mag rocks!

- Bryan Maier

Actually, Bryan, the author of the marketing article was none other than Max Payne, a special correspondent to PC Gamer since his incarceration on murder charges last year. He responds: "Bryan, while we'd never turn your favorite magazine into some kind of political rag, we thought our readers would benefit from a substantive examination of the issue. You can show your appreciation by kindly busting me out of jail."

#### AND ON THE SUBJECT OF JACKALS...

I'D LIKE TO TELL MR. JACK Thompson that I am an extremely skilled alien-killer, since I beat Half-Life. Also, I am a highly experienced and elite race-car driver, since I've played Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2, even though I've never gone faster than 70mph in real life. And yes, I'm also a highly trained super-elite sniper commando Special Forces soldier, since I've played America's Army, and as we all know, that's how the Army trains its elite soldiers - through videogames. That's also how we train our commercial airline pilots, with a keyboard and joystick, of course. Please, Mr. Thompson, I am now rolling my eyes from the sarcasm. Following his logic, perhaps Mr. Thompson learned about the legal system from playing Law & Order.

- Mike Hannon

You might be good, Mike, but if the U.S. government ever needed to form an elite 007-style super-spy group, they'd do no better than to enlist the humble staff of PC Gamer. After all, our collective experience in PC games has paid off handsomely in virtual training — every one of us is well-versed in all forms of hand-to-hand combat, small arms, heavy weapons, demolitions, precision driving, electronic surveillance, counter-surveillance, counter-surveillance, counter-measures, rappelling, sniping, laser-target designation, civilian and military aviation, and finessing drifting polygons into available slots before time runs out.

very

very,

0

joe BOB, we're glad we can count on you as a loval reader. Letters like this, from fans like you, make all the hard work worthwhile. And just to

> give a little something back, we're going to pay for your badly needed first-grade education.

#### **DASS THE SCREWDRIVER**

I'VE NOTICED THAT THE PAGES of PC Gamer are more frequently being populated with gratuitous ads for gaming machines. What's the deal? What happened to the joy of throwing together your own system, getting frustrated after two hours of trying to get the stupid motherboard to recognize your hard drives, and suddenly realizing that you had the jumpers set to slave on both of them the whole time with the IDE cable upside-down (which is quite a feat, since IDE cables

are made to go in only one way now)? - Michael Horniak

What happened to those days, indeed? Oh wait... can someone get us Alienware's number, please?

#### DON'T DO IT!

FOR MANY A YEAR I've sent numerous letters to PC Gamer to no avail. You never print any of them! Is there any love left in this cold, cold world? Every year when I get my 7,000th notice to renew. I do just that! Print this letter or I'm going to jump off a very high cliff. Like to see you get me to renew then!

— The Smiling Knight

Normally we don't intervene in such requests, but when there is a specific threat of lost business, we are forced to take an active role. Smiling Knight, please reflect on all the pleasures life has to offer, and prolong your existence so that you might continue to add to our coffers. Thank you.

#### **DO NOTE TO ID SOFTWARE**

MY FRIENDS, IF DOOM III doesn't have the bigass tomato that spits fireballs at you, I'm not going to buy the game. And nobody, but nobody, takes away chaingun-toting mechanical walking-brains and gets away with it. Keep up the good work, and no dissing of Battlefield 1942.

-- Cold in Canada



We were wondering, too, if the bigass fireball-spitting tomato would make a return in Doom III. Personally, though, we could live without the chaingun brain.

#### **THE GREAT MYSTERY...**

LAM CURIOUS TO KNOW if the various PC game publishers ever actively seek your opinions before releasing a game. I notice you suggest certain corrections to betas you try; do they get implemented? It seems like we can be spared crap such as the Empire Earth expansion and F.D.N.Y. Firefighter if game developers would listen to your opinions. It seems like Al problems are more common than they should be as well. Your testers/reviewers seem more in touch with gamers than many of the publishers are. Thanks.

--- Anonymous

Our opinions are sought constantly; the results of the consultations are anyone's guess. For every game that's released with no consideration of our oft-repeated suggestions, there's a case like that of Disney Coaster: our very own Chuck Osborn recommended to Disney's developers that they include trees in the game's outdoor environments and the feature was subsequently implemented. (Billy's suggestion - that Disney Coaster feature malicious flesh-eating zombies - was ignored.) Bottom line: we win some, we lose some.

#### **EXECUTE** SEND THE G.I. SOME GAMES

FIRST, I WANT TO SAY how much better your magazine is than Computer Gaming World. know



[EDITORS' NOTE: We run the following letter from a self-proclaimed "Egyptologist" complete and unedited.]

Okay, in your January 2003 issue you did a strategy guide on the game Age of Mythology. Let me point out one of many annoying little tidbits.

It's SETH, not Set. There happens to be an "h." And he has nothing to do with animals. He is the god of chaos, destruction, and infertility. NOT animals. I don't know wheather it is spelled that way in the game, but in EVERY reference to Seth it is spelled thus.

Your annoyed Egyptologist, See2000

P.S. Its spelled Re, not Ra. However, they do sound the same, so I'll let that one slide. (For more information about Egypt gods and myths, buy ANY BOOK out there about Egypt. Except the one Bruce Shelly used.)



We don't even know where to begin. It's one of our New Year's resolutions to be less confrontational, so we're not even going to respond to your piffle. But only an orangutan would put an "h" in Set - that would be "Seth," as in "Seth, the lunch-counter guy from downstairs." Nor does anyone west of the Nile call Ra "Re."

Your letter would have been obnoxious enough coming from a legitimate Egyptologist, but beming as it so obviously does from a halfeducated twit, it's downright dismaying. Be gone. Like we said, less confrontational...

you all might not have problems with getting games, having them delivered to your doorstep, but I do have problems getting games. I live overseas in Germany and am with the U.S. Army (not a kraut). It's really hard for me to get games because (1) the Army sends us crap like Bass Fishing Avenger and stuff we have no control over, and (2) any games that I order take three weeks to get here.

Why does the government think we like bass fishing? And how can a box take three weeks to fly over an ocean and get into my mailbox when the flight over takes about seven hours tops? If you know the answer to this mind-warping paradox, please give me your opinion.

- Anonymous

http://www.pcgamer.com

P.S. Plane tickets back would be nice: Germans claw at my door begging for Oreos (their favorite).

You chose your life of deprivation when you joined the Army. While we salute your service to our nation, we're honestly surprised you haven't checked out some German computer stores -PC gaming is even bigger in Germany than it is in the U.S., and you should find plenty of good stuff on the shelves there (more nudity, less blood). We also suggest you try to barter your Oreos with the Germans clawing at your door.



### A true fan

Knows the organist and the mascot's real identity.

Can spot a change-up a mile away.

Understands the infield fly rule.

Has never caught a ball, but always brings a mitt.

Would play for free.

Only plays HIGH HEAT





### SEQUEL TO THE TOP-RATED BASEBALL GAME BY OPM, GAMEPRO AND EGM.



Screenshot from PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system

"This is the only next-generation title that realistically re-creates every facet of the game."

- EGM [March 2002]



Screenshot from Xbox<sup>TH</sup> video game system

- New graphics include all new, motion-captured animations
- New Career and Franchise modes include full Minor Leagues system (AAA, AA, A) and unlimited seasons
- Two On Two Showdown™ mode for the ultimate quick game fun
- Improved award-winning controls, A.I., and baseball realism
- Curt Schilling consulted to create 27 individual pitch types





REAL. BASEBALL.





GAME BOY ADVANCE

PlaySta 12







© 2003 The 3D0 Company. All Rights Reserved. 3D0. High Heat. Two On Two Showdown, and their respective logos, are trademarks or registered trademarks of The 3D0 Company in the U.S. and other countries. © MLBPA Official Licensee - Major League Baseball Players Association. Visit the Players Choice on the web at www.bigleaguers.com. Major League Baseball trademarks and copyrights are used with permission of Major League Baseball Properties, Inc: Visit the official web site at MLB.com. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. TM. ©, Game Boy Advance and the Nintendo GameCube logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2001 Nintendo. Microsoft, Xbox, and the Xbox logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. All other trademarks belong to their respective owners.





Join the Resistance and bring down the **Grathius Corporation** 



Blast your enemies to shreds-Hollywood style!



Battle through stunning urban settings, war-torn streets and towering skylines

# MASTATION

RESISTANCE BREEDS REVOLUTION



**Coming Soon!** www.DevastationGame.com











#### WE ARE

#### FREEDOM'S ANSWER TO FEAR.

OUR DUTY BEGINS WHEN NEGOTIATIONS END FOR WE DO NOT BARGAIN WITH TERROR. WE STALK IT, CORNER IT, TAKE AIM,

AND KILL IT.

WE ARE TEAM RAINBOW



S Q U A D - B A S E D C O U N T E R - T.E R R O R The father of all tactical shooters returns, in an all-new game locked and loaded to change the face of action gaming. Adal Advance to a new level of gaming realism with new high-tech gear to hunt the Tangos and 57 weapons to take them down. Experience unmatched graphical realism and high velocity multiplayer action powered by next generation Unreal technology. We wrote the book on tactical squad-based combat. Now we're rewriting it. Study up.



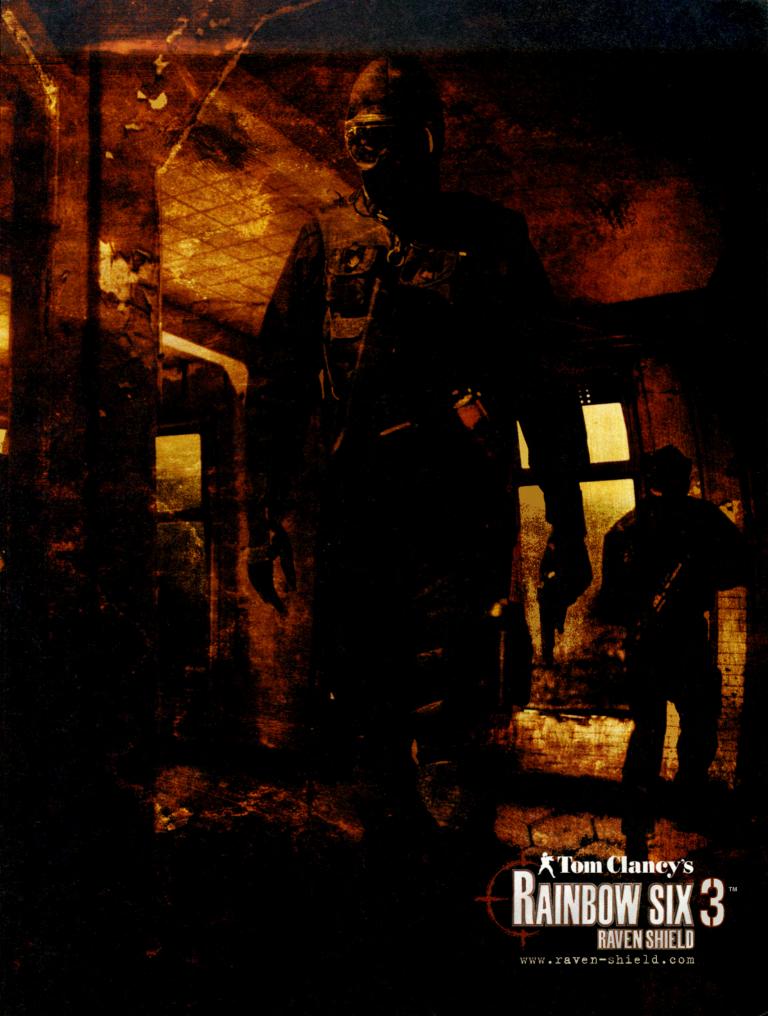
Blood Violence







ubi.com



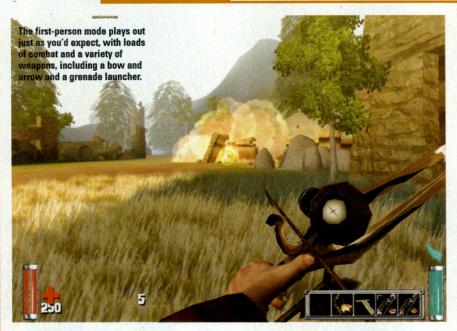
# Savage



The game will have two playable sides: humans and the Beast Horde, who want to keep humans from consuming all of the world's resources. Expect much death and violence.

IN A NUTSHELL

Take one part 3D, two parts RTS, and three parts FPS, and voilà!, a new genre is invented



mbition is not a quality lacking in the developers of Savage. This multiplayer-only game is dressed up in a beautiful 3D engine and can be played as either an RTS or a shooter. Yep, you read that right. One giant battlefield, tons of people running around, battling for every scrap of real estate, and two very different game dynamics. As complicated as it sounds, the execution of this idea is fairly simple.

"Both teams have one player that they designate as the commander," explains Jesse Hayes, the director of fledgling developer S2 Games. "This player sees the game from the top-down perspective of an RTS. The commander can create [NPC] worker units, build structures, and command the other players on his team." The commander plays the game like a regular RTS and takes care of resource management and research. In addition, all of the characters in the game, including humancontrolled players, show up on his screen.

Issuing commands to a human player is extremely simple. Once you select him, give him a waypoint, which will then appear on the player's screen; a voice will instruct him that's he's received orders,

and off he goes, to pillage and destroy. There's no mechanism to force players to follow the commander's orders, but since the commander can see the entire battlefield, it's in everyone's best interest to do as they're told. (And if the commander is a total idiot, players can vote to replace him during the course of a game.)

As mentioned before, resource management is primarily the responsibility of

the commander, but the other players in the game can aid in construction, and they'll also be able to add to the team's coffers by killing NPC animals and other creatures in the gameworld (similar to how the NPC combat in Warcraft III multiplayer games works). Two resources - gold and stone — are used and collected by the players fighting on the ground. Those players then use the gold they've gathered to

upgrade items and buy extra goodies. And if certain players are running a bit low on funds, the commander will be able to transfer gold to them.

The game will ship with 15 to 20 maps, all of which will vary in strategy and size. "You'll see everything from lush deep forests to snowscapes," says Hayes. "Savage will accept up to 64 players per game. That's two commanders and up to 62 action-mode players."

Because Savage is multiplayer-only, it'll require a minimum connection speed of 56K, but we assume that games with 64 players will realistically require a broadband connection. And though the game's exact system requirements haven't been finalized, Hayes tells us that a decent 3D card and CPU will also be required.

Of course, ambition means nothing if fans of RTS and action games aren't satisfied with the resulting experience. But S2 is confident that it'll be able to please both camps.

"We feel each side of the game is good enough to stand on its own as a separate product," says Sam McGrath, the game's lead programmer. "But what makes Savage really interesting is the marriage of these two things. RTS players and FPS players will both experience something very new and unique because of the interaction between the two types of gameplay." It's certainly an impressive undertaking. We just hope they can pull it off. - William Harms





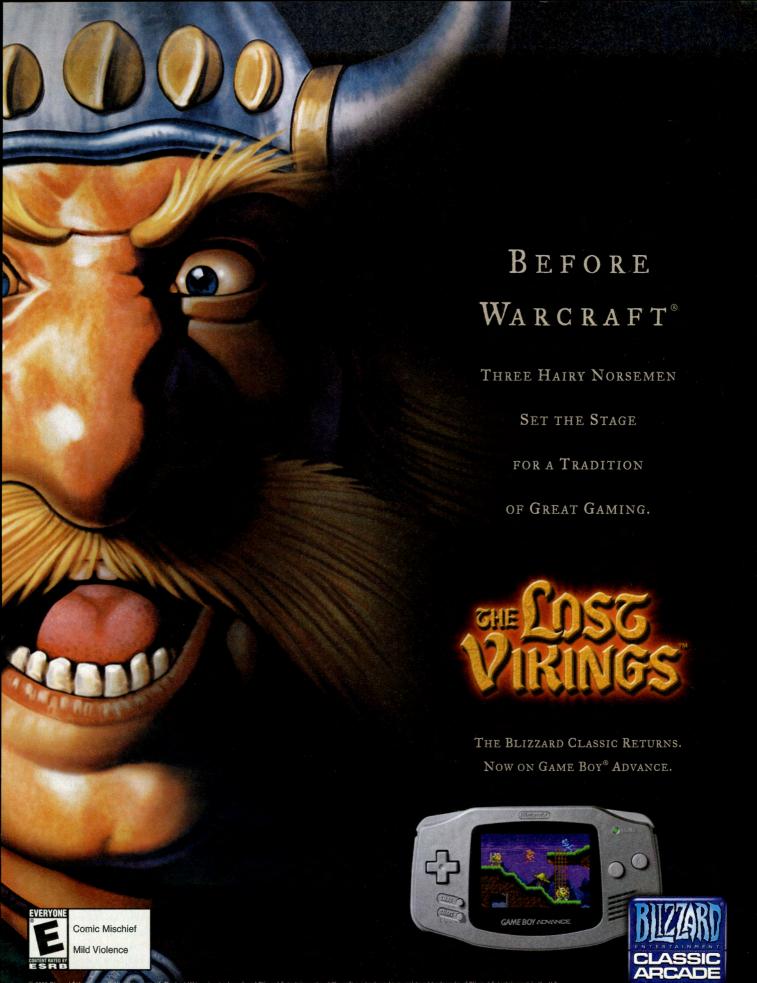
**CATEGORY: Real-time strategy shooter DEVELOPER: S2 Games PUBLISHER: iGames** WWW: s2games.com PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 80% **RELEASE DATE: May 2003** 

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL?: Savage's premise is extremely ambitious it's a multiplayer-only game that lets you play it as either a first-person shooter or a real-time strategy game. It could be spectacular.

Some of the employees at S2 have worked for other game companies, such as Atomic Games, but for most of them, Savage is their first

full-time development experience.

**DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD:** 



© 2003 Bitzard Enterth mineric. All inghis reserved. The Lost Yilangs is a trademark and Bitzzard Entertainment and Warcraft are trademarks or registered trademarks of Bitzzard Entertainment in the U.S. analyze of the Committee. License by Mittendo. The many analyze trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association. All other trademarks or trade names are the properties of their respective owners.

# Syberia II



Our fave metalhead's audition to be the new terminator in 73: "Why hello, John Connor, I'm afraid I must liquefy your skullcap into goo. But first, bring me a bicycle chain and a loganberry."

IN A NUTSHELL

An exclusive first look at the seguel to 2002's Adventure Game of the Year

y the end of Syberia, last year's acclaimed adventure game from Canadian developer Microids, mousy heroine Kate Walker had quit her high-paying career as a New York lawyer, parted ways from a philandering fiancé, and was last seen refusing a ticket back home to chase after further adventure. Syberia II picks up right where its predecessor left off.

Once again, you play as Kate, who's evolved from an unassuming amateur detective into a tenacious explorer. She's joined up with Hans Voralberg, the enigmatic animatronics genius at the heart of her earlier search, and is making a trek through Russia and four mysterious worlds to investigate mythical Syberia, land of the forgotten mammoths.

Yes, mammoths. In case you're just joining the party, Hans is obsessed with extinct furry elephants. This quest definitely answers the pressing question of "Why?" - artistic director Benoît Sokal promises that Syberia II will be the last game in the series. (Though, he adds coyly, that doesn't mean Kate Walker won't return for another game.)

The lovably humorous (and decidedly un-killer robot-like) automaton Oscar returns as Kate and Hans' private train conductor. Though he won't say who, Sokal hints that other familiar faces from Syberia may pop in as well.

Syberia was roundly recognized as one of the most visually resplendent adventure games ever made, and now Syberia II aims to up the ante. Though the graphics engine is roughly the same as before, it's been tweaked to allow for dynamic lighting details like glass reflections, ice textures, and shadows; real-time snowfall and footstep effects; animated fog; and enhanced in-game animation.

"We're working on making sure that, overall, Syberia II is a better game than Syberia," says Sokal. In addition to a graphical upgrade, Microids is intent on improving every aspect of the first game, such as creating an evolutionary dialogue system to convey conversations more naturally, and increasing interactivity with all of the game's characters. Even the cutscenes, pathfinding, and game length are being retooled to enhance the journey for adventure diehards as well as neophytes.



TOP: Kate rolls into Romansburg just in time to see the "cirkos." Can we go? BOTTOM: Traipsing around a snow-laden monastery should show off Syberia II's new snowfall and footprint graphical effects.

"We've received a lot of comments on Syberia's puzzles. Some thought they were adequate, while others found them too easy," admits Sokal. "The designers are currently working on building new puzzles that will be fully integrated into the storyline and offer a decent challenge to adventure gamers used to facing puzzles."

But what of Kate's cell phone, the everpresent link to the outside world that, while occasionally useful, seemed to mostly bring bad news? (Such as when Kate interrupted her mother during some between-thesheets hanky panky with a new suitor.

Yuck.) Well, it's baa-aaack - though Sokal did tell us that your cell-phone gabbing will be downplayed this time around.

Despite the association with Syberia, Microids is intent on ensuring that you won't need to have played that game to enjoy the sequel: It's being designed as a self-contained adventure that won't depend on your knowing the series' epic history to solve it.

As Sokal tells us, like the reborn adventuress Kate Walker herself, you'll have "no safety net. No past to rely on. Just the discovery of a forgotten universe." Sounds - Chuck Osborn



**CATEGORY: Adventure DEVELOPER: Microids** PUBLISHER: TBD WWW: microids.com PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 35% **RELEASE DATE: October 2003** 

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL?: "Pure" adventure games are increasingly rare, so the positive buzz and success of Syberia (our Best Adventure Game of 2002) are refreshing. Also fairly unique: its strong female role model. **DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD:** Microids' creations include Syberia, so-so adventure Road to India, and sports smash Tennis Masters Series. It's a publisher, too, though Dream-Catcher published Syberia in the U.S.

I ALONE HAVE THE FIFTH FREEDOM.

THE RIGHT TO SPY, STEAL, DESTROY AND ASSASSINATE,
TO ENSURE THAT AMERICAN FREEDOMS ARE PROTECTED.

I AM SAM FISHER.

L'AM A SPLINTER CELL.

"Best Score Ever! 9.6"

Official Xbox Magazine - Editor's Choice Award

"Splinter Cell will change the way people look at video games."

Electronic Gaming Monthly



Experience the ultimate in Xbox™ graphics.



Force enemies to cooperate or use them as human shields.

Tom Clancy's

SPLINTER

CELL

www.splintercell.com

STEALTH ACTION REDEFINED















# **MANDSON**

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



# RISEOFNATIONS

#### Billy heads to Maryland for an exclusive inside look at one of 2003's top games

t's been a long time coming, but Rise of Nations, the first game from the Brian Reynolds-helmed Big Huge Games, is finally entering the home stretch. Our expectations for this game are sky-high, especially since the Reynolds-designed Alpha Centauri is the highestrated game in PCG history (98%, April 1999). After getting an exclusive look at RoN, complete with hours of hands-on time, we'd say that everything about it points to it being one of the best strategy games of the year.

My time with RoN was divided into two sections - multiplay and Conquer the World, the

much-vaunted (but until now) top-secret singleplayer campaign. Here are my impressions of both.

#### CONQUER THE WORLD

Although RoN will offer skirmish modes, the heart of the single-player game is Conquer the World, which includes both a turn-based and a real-time mode. You choose your nation from the 18 available and then play out the turn-based portion on a strategic map of those nations.

It's from this strategic overview map that you launch attacks, make diplomatic maneuvers (such as forging alliances), and buy bonus cards, which you can use in the real-time section of the game. (As you'd expect, bonus cards give you an advantage in a certain area, like a bonus to mining certain resources.)

This section really isn't packed with strategic depth - definitely nothing of the scope found in Medieval: Total War -- but it is possible to set up situations where you can conquer a neighboring territory without actually fighting a battle. This scenario is called an over-run; it occurs when you have multiple armies in surrounding territories or an allied nation has an army nearby. Basically, the enemy nation looks at the size of

MARCH 2003 PC GAMER http://www.pcgamer.com



# FREE STUFF

Send me the next 12 issues and 12 CD-ROMs of PC GAMER for just \$29.95 — that's a savings of 69% off the newsstand rate! With my paid order, I'll also receive The Ultimate Strategy Guide vol. 4, The Complete Reviews Index vol. 3, PLUS The Extended

Offer good in the U.S. only. Canada: U.S. \$49.95 (includes GST); Foreign: U.S. \$69.95. Prepaid in U.S. funds. Newsstand price per issue with disc is \$7.99. Please allow 6–8 weeks for mailing of first issue.

Play Collection vol. 5 — ALL 3 FOR FREE!

# **PC** GAMER

Address Apt.#

☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me later



JG33SD1AY

### FREE STUFF

Send me the next 12 issues and 12 CD-ROMs of PC GAMER for just \$29.95 — that's a savings of 69% off the newsstand rate! With my paid order, I'll also receive The Ultimate Strategy Guide vol. 4, The Complete Reviews Index vol. 3, PLUS The Extended

Offer good in the U.S. only. Canada: U.S. \$49.95 (includes GST); Foreign: U.S. \$69.95. Prepaid in U.S. funds. Newsstand price per issue with disc is \$7.99. Please allow 6-8 weeks for mailing of first issue.

Play Collection vol. 5 — ALL 3 FOR FREE!

**PC** GAMER

Address Apt.#

City State Zip

☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me later



JG33SD1AY

### FREE STUFF

issues and 12 CD-ROMs of PC GAMER for just \$29.95 — that's a savings of 69% off the newsstand rate! With my paid order, I'll also receive The Ultimate Strategy Guide vol. 4, The Complete

Send me the next 12

Reviews Index vol. 3, PLUS The Extended Play Collection vol. 5 — ALL 3 FOR FREE!

Offer good in the U.S. only. Canada: U.S. \$49.95 (includes GST); Foreign: U.S. \$69.95 Prepaid in U.S. funds. Newsstand price per issue with disc is \$7.99. Please allow 6-8 weeks for mailing of first issue.

**PC** GAMER

Name
Address Apt.#

City State

☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me later



JG33SD1AY

Zip



#### **BUSINESS REPLY MAIL**

FIRST-CLASS MAIL

PERMIT NO. 218

HARLAN IA

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY THE ADDRESSEE



P O BOX 5158 HARLAN IA 51593-2658

Idda adda da adda da Idda da Idda da Idda Idda Idda I

NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES



#### **BUSINESS REPLY MAIL**

FIRST-CLASS MAIL

PERMIT NO. 218

HARLAN IA

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY THE ADDRESSEE



P O BOX 5158 HARLAN IA 51593-2658

Idda adlabilation Harbidi Indidicibili

NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES



#### **BUSINESS REPLY MAIL**

FIRST-CLASS MAIL

PERMIT NO. 218

HARLAN I

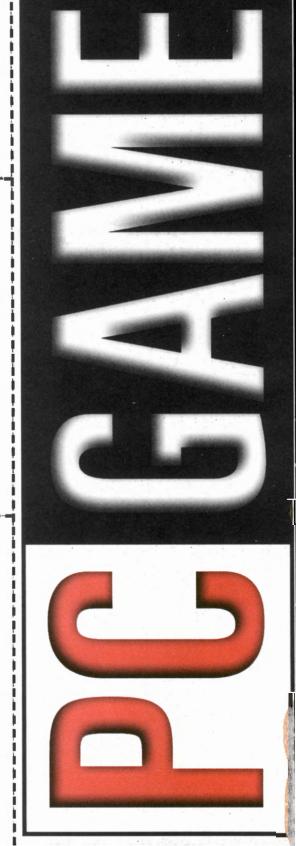
POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY THE ADDRESSEE



P O BOX 5158 HARLAN IA 51593-2658

Idda add dalah barila dalah da

NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES





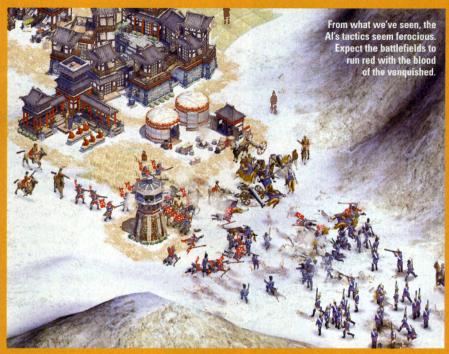








From top to bottom: (1) The strategic map view in Conquer the World. Arrows indicate where you're attacking and highlight any over-run opportunities. (2) Age advances will give you a vital strategic edge, provided you have access to the resources that those advancements unlock. (3) Remember, peace doesn't pay. Kill 'em all! (4) Massive naval battles will also play a role. (5) Each nation will feature distinct building and unit art.



your force and decides to vamoose without taking it to the battlefield.

Age advancements — which unlock new technologies — happen automatically during the turn-based mode. As a result, when it comes time for the real-time battles, you can advance ahead only one age. This limit ensures that all nations stay fairly consistent in their age advances.

Once it's time to get down and dirty and fight a battle, you'll face one of 10 possible scenarios. These include melee battle, where you fight against several barbarian nations who are also at war with each other; rally defense, where you must hold off the enemy for 15 minutes; and standard conquest, where you must capture and hold the enemy's capital city. I really liked the inclusion of multiple scenarios — it should keep the game from getting repetitive.

I was extremely impressed with RoN's AI.
During one battle, when I was trying to conquer an enemy's capital city (which would earn me all of their territories), the AI put up a ferocious fight.
Scouting parties probed my defensive lines, and if they encountered superior forces, they'd pull back and try another way. And instead of attacking me piecemeal, the AI attacked on multiple fronts. The result was an exhilarating experience.

And though I wasn't able to witness it, Reynolds promised that in the final version your Al-controlled allies will join you in battles, and you'll be able to give them basic orders for how they use their armies.

#### MANO-A-MANO-A-MANO

At its core, a typical multiplayer game of *Rise of Nations* is quite similar to any other RTS multiplayer game: you pick your nation, choose teams, and start off collecting resources and building up your army. Within that framework, many subtle features enrich the *RoN* experience and make it more unique.

The most important aspect is the use of national borders. These are movable lines that

define the boundaries of your nation; any resources inside the border are open to your exploitation, while anything outside is off-limits.

A variety of factors influence the size and shape of borders, such as the proximity of your cities and the location of certain structures such as temples. And because so much emphasis is placed on controlling resources, a good strategy is to use borders to cut off an opponent's access to key raw materials.

For example, in the three-on-three game I played, someone on the other team used his borders to completely surround one of the people on my team. Not only did this move cut off my team-



DEVELOPER Big Huge Games

PUBLISHE! Microsoft

April 2003

mate's access to resources, but it also made it very difficult for us to send him reinforcements. Our forces now had to cross through enemy territory, which subjected them to attack and loss through attrition.

The economy you develop between allies also plays a large part in the experience. Caravans can set up trade routes between all allied cities, but if an enemy is able to cut off one of these routes — like in the example above — he can inflict economic damage not only upon the "trapped" person, but also on his allies because their trade caravans will be wiped out as they cross enemy territory.

To say I'm excited about Rise of Nations is an understatement: right now it's at the top of my must-have RTS list. Watch for my review in a couple months to see if Reynolds and company pull it all together; my playthrough suggests they will, and brilliantly.

— William Harms



**Tournament Sponsored By** 

### GUARANA

One Day Regional Tournament taking place at the following IGames centers on February 2nd, 2003

NetLAN Arena netlanarena.com Norcross, GA **NetHeads** 

netheads.com Indianapolis, IN

NVGL nvgl.com

Olathe, KS

NetFX Gaming Center netfxgaming.com Lake Mary, FL Game Clucks

gameclucks.com Lynnwood, WA

**Badlanz** 

badlanzlounge.com Hollywood, CA

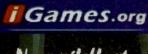
King's Games

kingsgames.com Brooklyn, NY

**Velocity Games** velocitygamesonline.com

Houston, TX

Be sure not to miss all the fun!



Now available at

©2003 Hobarama LLC All Rights Reserved.

# HANDSON

# PLANETSIDE

#### The makers of EverQuest pit you against thousands in a futuristic war

hat PlanetSide is being hailed as the world's first massively multiplayer firstperson shooter by its developers could seem like semantic posturing. Surely World War II Online and Tribes 2 already broached this territory to varying degrees. But while those games let you participate in sprawling battles, drive vehicles. and shoot it out with numerous pals, PlanetSide will offer fast-paced Quake-style gameplay in a persistent world accommodating thousands of players (3,500 to 5,000 per world, to be exact).

I recently dived into a beta of PlanetSide along with dozens of other recruits. Each of us



DEVELOPER Sony Online Ent.

Sony Online Ent.

March 2003

was given a level-20 character, which the developers say will take the average player about three to four months to reach (maybe a month for the hardcore). The higher your level, the more you can specialize in weapons, armor, and vehicles.

Once you've selected your character's sex. name, allegiance (the Terran Republic, New Conglomerate, or Vanu Sovereignty), and basic appearance, you start out in a training area. While there, you can play around with any of the weapon or armor types available.

After that, it's time to suit up and ship out. You're warped to Sanctuary, a PvP-free area resembling an Air Force base. Hangars dot the landscape, and inside each you'll prepare for battle by selecting specializations such as medic, hacker, engineer, and so on. (These skills can then be mixed and matched to create a very specific type of character.) Sanctuary is also where you'll purchase weapons and armor, and install implants that'll provide particular "buffs" in the field, such as running faster or the ability to see invisible stealth-armored enemies.

Once in the warzone, the gameplay reminded me of Tribes 2 but on a much larger scale and with no side ever truly winning. The Terrans, Vanu, and Conglomerate wage war for control of bases and research facilities littered over 10 continents. The emphasis is on skills over levels, so even newbies can provide value to an established team. For example, if you're not up for run-and-gun assaults, you can pilot transport ships (from among the 16 different vehicles) or man and defend your team's Advanced Mobile Station, a portable bind station that serves as a resurrection point.

My tour of duty was fun - there's splashdamage, large-scale weapons effects, and enough squad-based teamwork to keep Counter-Strike players happy - but I'm curious how SOE will entice customers to pay a monthly fee for PlanetSide when similar, non-persistent games can be played for free? That's a question I bet SOE is asking, too. - Chuck Osborn



High Caffeine Guarana Beverage

**February LANs Sponsored by BAWLS** 

#### 02/01

Dayton LAN (OH)

kevinmcarter.dynamic-nameserver.com

PONG (WI)

pong. wstout.edu

HsvGL (AL)

hsval.com

Maryland LAN Gamers(MD)

marylandlangamers.net

Dungeon Inc.(IL)

dungeoninc.com

Tucson Gaming (AZ)

tuscongaming.com

02/02

WPALAN (PA)

wpalan.com

02/07

LAN Lords (FL)

lanlords.org

02/08

Indugamers (IN)

indygamers.com

OrCommonnect (CA)

orcomconnect.com

HOT LANS (OH

hotlans.com

02/09

**Ground Zero Armageddon** 

gzarmageddon.com

Local Area Gaming -- LAG (OK)

lag-hq.com

02/13

SCOGD (DA)

scogp.com

02/14

Landojo (WA)

landojo.com

North West Gaming Org. (WA)

nwio.org

The Partu (AL)

theparty.topcities.com

02/15

RTF Gaming Assoc. (MA)

rtfgaming.us.tt

Edmand LAN Group (OK)

edlangroup.com

Ohio GeekFest (OH)

ohiogeekfest.com

Netwerked LAN (WA)

netwerkedlan.com

BattleShack (MN)

battleshack.net

02/21

KaiLan (WI)

kailan.org

ILAN (AL)

ladder.iglnet.com/lan/lennews.asp

02/22

Badlans (RI)

thebadlans.net

VX3LAN (NC)

vx3lan.com

02/28

Hopeless Valley LAN (NJ)

gamerlan.freeservers.com

Plain Games.com (PA)

plaingames.com

Grab your BAWLS 12-pack at a participating COMP

GOMPIE

For further updates and information on BAWLS sponsorship and LAN events please visit www.bawlsgaming.com



FROM THE CREATORS OF COMMANDOS



Feed your insatiable hunger to rule the empire with this combatheavy epic adventure



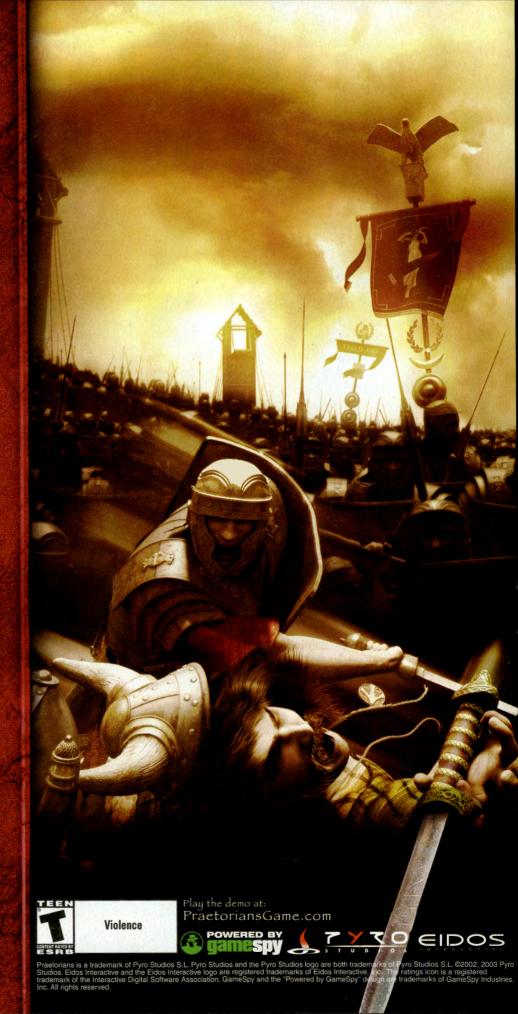
Ambush your enemy using a variety of units, massive fortress sieges, devastating war machines and more

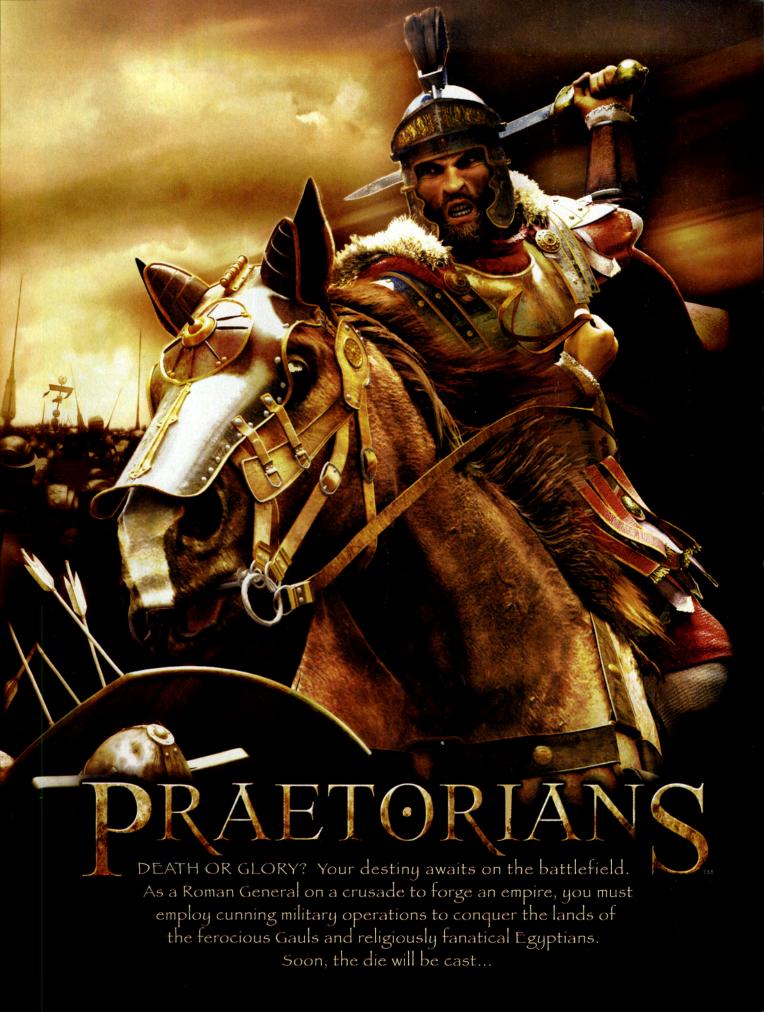


Master the art of war in 24 single-player missions



Battle for supremacy online in ruthless 8-player matches













# POSTAL 2 Random violence, angry mobs, and Gary Coleman mark this twisted sequel

s a regular Joe living in Paradise, Arizona, you're just trying to get through a typical week. But damn, wouldn't you know it everyone and everything is conspiring against you, pushing and pushing until you blow your stack and embark on an orgy of wanton destruction and mayhem. That, in a nutshell, is the setup of Postal 2. And based on the build that I played, we'd better get ready to catch hell from Washington.



DEVELOPER Running With Scissors

Running With Scissors

ELEASE DATE 01 2003

Postal 2 is about testing your patience. This first-person action game tries everything to drive you crazy, and is pretty smart about it. The mission tasks are routine - pick up and cash your paycheck, confess sins at the local church, and even collect Gary Coleman's autograph at the mall. Trouble brews in realizing how frustrating these simple assignments really are.

Everywhere you go, lines and annoyances await. To buy milk at the local convenience store, you'll have to wait in line for Suzie May to buy her daily dose of crack first (yes, crack). And just as you're collecting your paycheck from Running with Scissors, a mob of angry protestors storms in to punish the smug game developers. Even Mother Theresa couldn't handle all this aggravation.

Additionally, plenty of scripted events are prepared to catch you off guard, forcing you to blast away with whatever weapon's handy. Some of the sequences are a lot of fun, but in the parts I played some sections were dull, especially if you don't go ballistic. (Based on our limited testing, it does appear that you'll be able to play the game peacefully if you want, although it'll be extremely hard to do so.)

When you do go, um, postal, the twisted arsenal available is, well, creative. Pour and light gas from a can of gasoline, stuff a cat on the end of a rifle to silence your shots, or even toss around a decapitated cow's head to induce vomiting in victims. Of course, these acts will alert the police; there's even a Grand Theft Auto III-style police meter that shows your wanted level. If caught you'll get thrown in jail, where you'll be stripped of your weapons and have to escape.

But even prison is a pretty place, 'cause the whole thing is powered by the Unreal engine. With tons of interactive objects and plenty of maimable NPCs roaming around, the city of Paradise will see some serious action. Lock 'n' load. - Norman Chan





From top to bottom: (1) Well, I was always more of an orchestra fan, anyway. (2) Cops will take you down[town], but you can run and hide to lower your wanted meter. (3) Guest star Gary Coleman will sign his book for you, as long as you don't sell it on eBay. (4) Pull a Bruce Willis on the hicks who knocked you out and put you in a gimp suit. (5) Many weapons have secondary modes. When thrown, the scissors can ricochet off walls.



# The best RPG... just got better.







### Neverwinter Nights... a world without limits!

Neverwinter Nights: Shadows of Undrentide, the first official full length Expansion to BioWare's award winning Neverwinter Nights featuring 40 hours of all new single player gameplay.

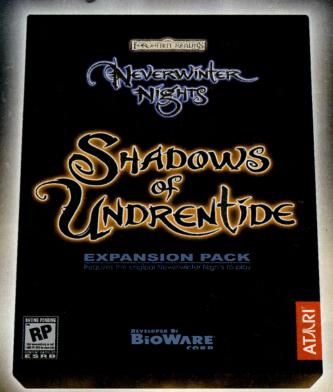
Build more compelling adventures with the enhanced Neverwinter Aurora Toolset. Three new tile sets, new monsters, weapons, feats, skills, and spells.











Powerful new and deadly devices are available to adventure designers through scripting - including projectile traps. The recently released Plot Wizard makes adventure creation easier than ever!



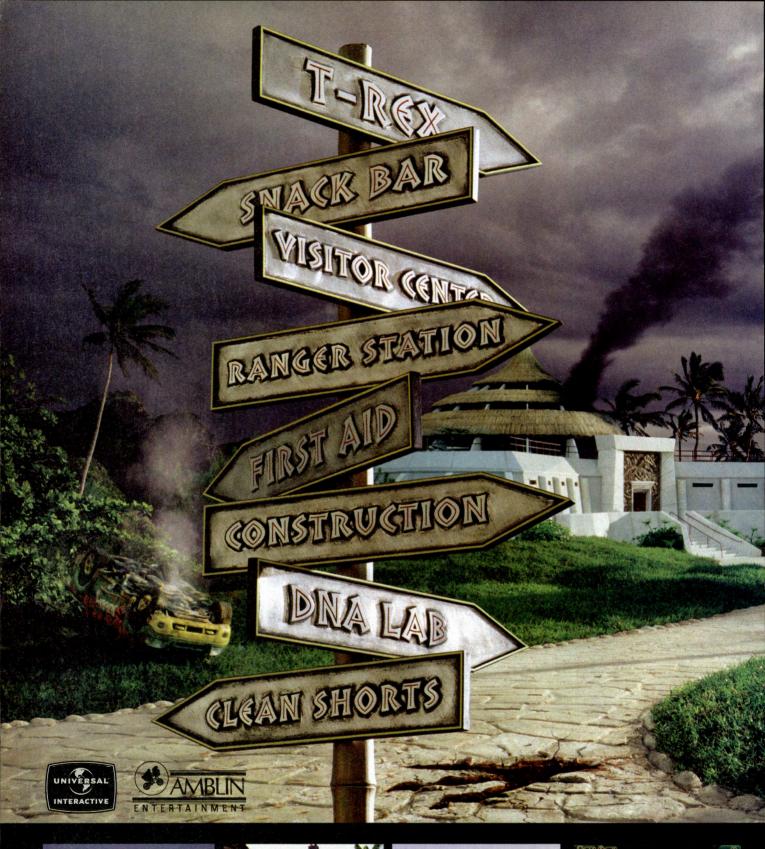








NEVERWINTER NIGHTS © 2002 Infogrames Entertainment, S.A. All Rights Reserved, Manufactured and marketed by Infogrames, Inc., New York, NY. Portions © 2002 Bioware Corp. All Rights Reserved. Neverwinter Nights, Forgotten Realms, the Forgotten Realms logo, Dungeons & Dragons logo, Dungeon Master, D&D, and the Wizards of the Coast logo are trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. and are used by Infogrames Entertainment, S.A. under license, All Rights Reserved. Windows 9159/2000 are registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation. All Rights Reserved. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.





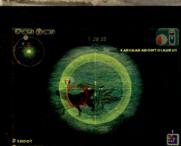
The first ever 3-D



Create the ultimate



Try to manage over 25 ferocious dinosaurs



12 adrenaline pumped



"Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis" interactive game © 2002 Universal Interactive, Inc. Jurassic Park is a trademark and copyright of Universal Studios and Amblin Entertainment, Inc. Licensed by Universal Studios Licensing LLLP, Published and distributed by Universal Interactive, Inc. and Konan Company and The Your License Transition of the

# FREELANCER

#### Can a former Best of E3 winner deliver on its promise four years later?

fter Freelancer's much-hyped introduction at E3 1999, it disappeared into business and developmental darkness. And its recent reappearance has generated mixed reactions: For starters, the striking visuals no longer dazzle as spectacularly as they once did



DEVELOPER Digital Anvil

PUBLISHER Microsoft

RELEASE DATE March 2003

(though space is still very colorful), and the whole space-flight combat genre has pretty much vanished into a black hole of gamer apathy.

Still, old-school gamers who recall classic open-ended space-faring epics like Elite and Privateer will be intrigued by Freelancer. I played Elite for months on a BBC Micro in 1984, and I have to give credit to Freelancer - after just a couple of hours of playtime I was filled with the same feelings of potential and trepidation that I felt while playing Elite.

From your humble beginning as a survivor of a planetary disaster to your eventual path as a potential savior, you'll ingratiate yourself with NPCs offering rumors and jobs through noninteractive in-engine cut-scenes. These exchanges, unfortunately, are incredibly stilted. Bar patrons gladly offer nuggets of information about the current political state of the galaxy and the commodities most valued in certain sectors, and they even offer you important missions scant seconds after getting your name.

Once you're out in the depths of space, it's immediately apparent that this universe is populated by people with their own agendas. Leaving the safety of Planet Manhattan, you're as likely to



Repair your shields instantly with health potions (aka shield batteries), but be wary of having your wings and turrets blown clean off.



You'll need help from buddies to take down massive cruisers and other capital ships.





be scanned for illicit cargo as you are wailed on by a random outcast pirate incursion (the local police will usually help out). Further into the scripted parts of the main story arc these random occurrences appear less frequently, forcing you to go looking for trouble during the downtime between universesaving missions.

Finagling the in-space controls of my rust bucket of a starter ship took more time than expected, but that's because Digital Anvil changed some of the game's key controls to give you much more involvement and decrease the "fighting on a rail" feeling. Thankfully, after a couple of hours and several early deaths - the missions are still being balanced for difficulty — the default control scheme of mouse and keyboard worked like a

charm. Of course, hardcore space-combat fans might balk at the lack of joystick support here.

I'm several hours into the beta (it handily tracks your playing time, number of bases visited, and kill log), and I'm still intrigued about where my life as a Freelancer is going. So far, following the main story keeps you pretty busy, so you have to take advantage of every opportunity to earn cash to upgrade your ship: you'll need the extra firepower to survive some explosive, exhilarating battles. Destroyed enemies often drop bits of cargo and even weapons that you can snag with a painless click on your tractor beam.

Right now Freelancer has me completely hooked, and I'm very much looking forward to delving into its exotic setting when the game hits store shelves in March. - Rob Smith

My forces were slaughtered at a terrifying rate by the bandits hiding out in dense woods.

### RAETORIANS

PRAETORIANS PLAYS out as a blend of Medieval's RTS elements and Age of Empires' classical age themes, as you control the Roman legions of Julius Caesar on a rampage across Europe around 59 BCE.

This resource-lite RTS game gets you battling quickly. In the early missions, you follow narrow paths that are edged by dense forests, and as you pass through, nefarious tribes leap out and strike without warning. This setup forces you to place an emphasis on scouting ahead and on carefully moving your units to their destination, lest they be slowly whittled away.



DEVELOPER Pyro Studios

Eidos

RELEASE DATE

Following the tradition of the Warcraft games, Praetorians' single-player story introduces new tribes and individual characters as friends and foes. Acquiring new units takes something of a unique spin, though, in that you gather reinforcements by capturing towns and garrisoning your forces inside key buildings. Nothing creates a new army faster than forced conscription!

Combat itself places an emphasis on tactics as you move archer units into protected positions and balance your force of infantry, spearman, and cavalry. Praetorians also features "named characters," such as your scout or company commander, and protecting them is critical: Not only do they provide healing or battle bonuses to all other units that fall within their spheres of influence, but losing one of them results in the mission failing as well.

In Praetorians' near-complete state, I was up and running through the story very quickly, with new tactical functions added steadily from mission to mission. From what I've seen thus far, the game does have a slight "been there, done that" feeling, but I'll withhold final judgment until I get my hands on the finished product. - Rob Smith

#### **BEYOND FREELANCER**

WHEN FREELANCER WAS FIRST announced, designer Chris Roberts asserted that the culmination of his dream was a massively multiplayer game of roving pirates, brigands, police, bounty hunters, and traders. Westwood's Earth & Beyond has supplied many of those facets, but Freelancer will still ship with multiplay in which you can team up with friends to tackle missions cooperatively, or fight in deathmatch duels.

In addition, once the single-player story arc is concluded, the galaxy still goes on, with new missions available in the deadliest parts of space, letting you play ad infinitum. My only concern with this appealing additional value is that the later missions (which I tested using a developer-supplied savegame) appear structurally identical to those you'll have been doing during the campaign. Between assassinating roque warlords - defended by weapons platforms and wellequipped bandits - and tracking down nefarious criminals in the many asteroid and debris fields, the mission job board developed a worrying sameness.

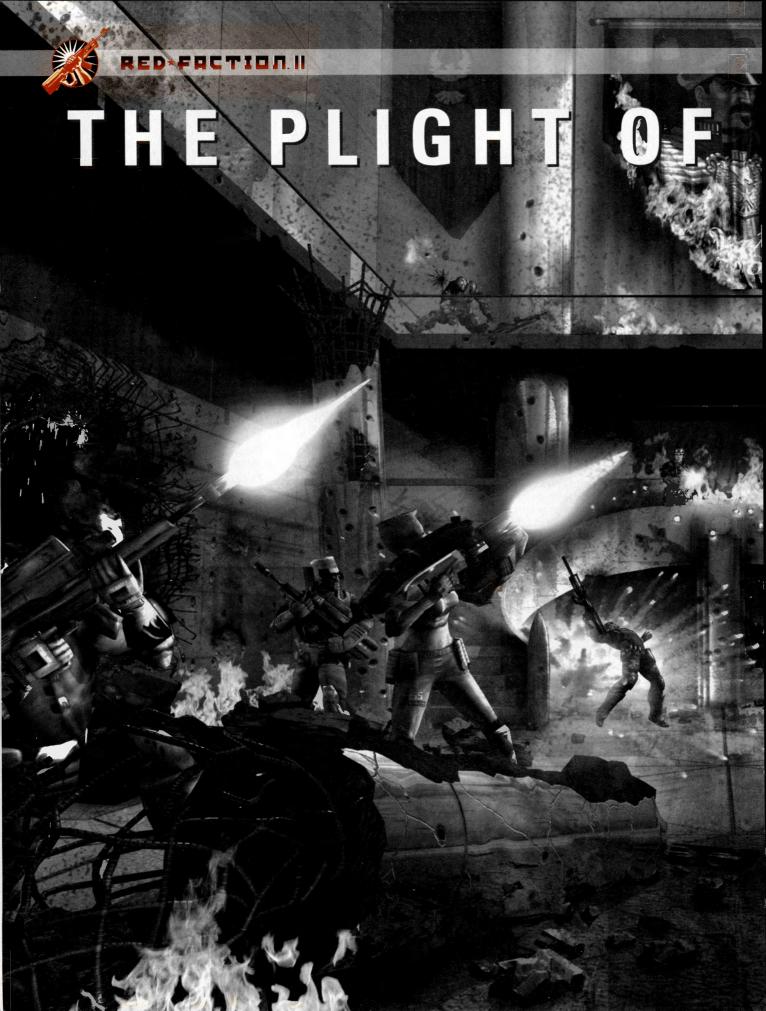
Hopefully there will be enough creativity in the singleplayer mission styles, as well as the dynamically created random options, to add the true longevity that an open-ended Freelancer universe should promise.



Most characters live humdrum lives of rumors and trading.



Easily access all the important locations from one planetary screen.



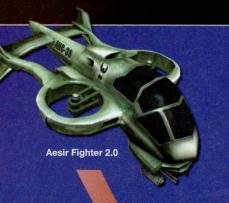
# THE REDEASTION

#### SOPOT'S LAST STAND

Commonwealth soldiers attempt to fend off Red Faction rebels in a last ditch effort to save Dictator Sopot from certain demise. From the beginning, the Red Faction's heavy artillery was underestimated by the Commonwealth Army, who are now paying the price.

# COMMONWEALTH COUP

The Red Faction is using their entire arsenal in the latest attempt to



#### FROM THE AIR

The Red Faction customized Aesir is a maneuverable air assault vehicle equipped with optical zoom which allows for precise hits on enemy targets



**Drop Point** 5:37am

Troops assemble at the Sopot Harbor.

SOPOT CITY



After Sopot's forces withdrew from the main city, several Red Faction rebels raided Harbor Island and desecrated the symbolic statue of the dictator.





Blood and Gore Violence



overthrow the Dictator Sopot.



Public Information
Building 6:05am
Commonwealth Elite
Guards attempt to
fend off the attacking
Faction soldiers.





Battle Armored Personal Combat System

THE WEAPONRY

These are only a few of the many weapons at the disposal of the Red Faction army.



#### CMRD-32 MAGNETIC RAIL DRIVER

Fires metal slugs that go through just about any barrier without losing velocity. The targeting scope makes this weapon extremely accurate.



#### N.I.C.W. - NANOTECH INDIVIDUAL COMBAT WEAPON

Capable of delivering automatic armor-piercing rounds as well as launching grenades.



#### CAR-72 MILITARY ASSAULT RIFLE

A fully-automatic, high-powered rifle in a light-weight compact frame.



The Slums 6:22am Rebel soldiers continue to fight despite rumors of growing animosity between Faction leaders.







INDUSTRY INSIGHT

# W TO GET A. THE GAMES

**More Ways to Work in Our Favorite Industry** 



s anyone already working in the games industry will tell you, the best part about the job is being able to go back to your parents and say, "See, all those hours spent playing games weren't a complete waste of time!" Okay, maybe that's the second best part; the first is that you actually get to use your passion for games as a way to earn a living.

In our November 2002 issue we told you how you could break into the games business as a level designer, programmer, or artist. If you were discouraged because you thought you didn't have the talent or skills for any of those positions, or none of them interested you, take heart: we've got the scoop on a few more areas that might be more your speed. We spoke with a variety of industry veterans from major game publishers and developers to find out what these jobs entail and how you can secure one of them.

#### **PRODUCER**

THE PRODUCER POSITION IS ONE of the most coveted in the industry, but if it's a role that appeals to you, be warned that the job can be extremely demanding and will present a host of problematic situations. Of course, the position can also be extremely rewarding.

Typically, a producer is charged with ensuring that a game's development stays on schedule and that the developer meets all of the publisher's milestones (deadlines by which certain features or functions of the game have to be complete). In addition, producers often help with a game's design (including script writing), scheduling and tracking of tasks, dealing with budgets, working with licensing partners (in the case of sports leagues or movie studios), scheduling QA (quality assurance), and even helping with the marketing of the product.

'One aspect of the job is being Chief Firefighter," explains Sam Player, a senior producer at EA. "Sometimes new tasks or problems arise, and often the producer is charged with figuring out a quick and effective solution. A different challenge could come every day, and that's part of the reason why the job is so much fun. Rarely are two days the same."

When asked what a day in the life of a producer is like, Chris Taylor, founder of Gas Powered Games, told us: "It's all about talking, talking, and more talking. It's kind of like a hostage negotiation."

Traditionally, working as a play-tester was a great start on the road to becoming a producer. While this path is still viable, education has become increasingly important.

"I used to not care about education," says Mike Kulas, president of Volition Software, "but I've changed my mind a bit. I think completing a four-year degree shows the ability to do things you don't like or that are particularly hard for you. There's a lot of tedious grunt work in [both] getting a degree and shipping a game, and I think the ability to complete a degree is at least a little bit of a predictor of success in the workplace."

Once your foot's in the door, though, it's all about your accomplishments. "We like to see 'shipping' experience," explains Bill Van Buren, a producer with Valve Software. "It's a great learning experience to have gone through the process of planning, producing, and releasing a product." Of course, the irony of this statement coming from a company that hasn't shipped a new game in four years was not lost on us!

While a producer's starting salary isn't very high - probably about \$30,000/year for an entry-level position — the money can be pretty good once you've made a name for yourself.

"The producer role is big, so the money is high. Almost all of the responsibility for a title's success sits with the producer. It's probably a six-figure salary at most companies," says Taylor.

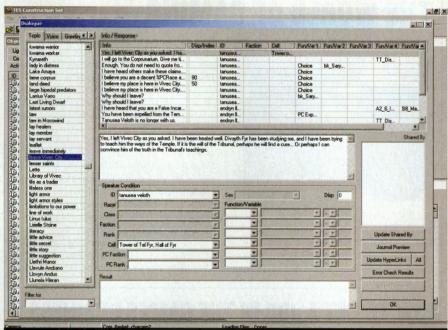
#### WRITER

MOST GAMES CONTAIN LOTS of background information about the gameworld and protagonists, not to mention reams of character dialogue. Someone



#### **WIN YOUR VERY OWN COPY OF SPLINTER CELL!**

This month 10 lucky winners will receive a copy of the stealth-action masterpiece *Splinter Cell*. To be eligible for our random drawing, just send an email to *eyewitness@pcgamer.com* with "Fisher Kicks Ass!" in the subject heading, and include your name and address in the body of the message. Only one entry per person allowed. Contest ends April 30, 2003. See additional rules on page 135.



Morrowind's writers used tools like the editor shown here to script scene-specific character dialogue.

needs to develop and write all of that text, which creates an ideal employment opportunity for all of the storytellers out there who want to find their place in the game-making process.

Often, this task falls on the producer, creative director or game designer. At Bethesda, for example, the job of writer is actually considered a design position that also requires some programming skills in order to use the company's scripting language.



"You may start just editing text or editing other types of data," executive producer Todd Howard tells us. "From there you go to designer and then senior designer. Eventually you end up as lead designer, where you oversee the other designers on a project, and then [you might become] a project leader if that's what you want to do."

Starting salary? Around \$30,000/year. Potential salary? "The sky's the limit, depending on if you get royalties and such," says Howard. Sometimes a company will hire outside writing help on a contract basis. In all cases, prior experience is heavily favored when it comes to choosing a script and dialogue writer, and factors such as the commercial and critical success of previous products are much more important than any educational qualifications.

Education is still important, however, and an English Literature or Creative Writing background

certainly won't hurt your chances. But if this career path is your calling, you'll need to try to find a small company (translation: a place that can't afford to pay very much) that'll take a chance on you so that you can get the opportunity to build your portfolio.

#### SOUND

THE OLD SAYING "IT'S NOT what you know but who you know" is in full force when it comes to getting work in the audio field of games production, says Don Veca, audio director for EA's Lord of the Rings. Full-time positions are pretty rare, so even if you have the connections, you'd better be prepared to

work on a contract basis. On the positive side, though, jobs do exist in various areas: mixing, sound-effects design, speech recording and editing, composing of scores, technician, and programming the sounds and music so that they work smoothly within a game.

With most companies, it's almost a necessity to be referred by someone else in order to have a chance at getting a job in the audio department. Once you get that far, your skills will carry you the rest of the way. Education isn't that big of a consider-

#### PC GAMER RELEASE METER



Release dates are as accurate as possible given that game developers and publishers can and will change them at a moment's notice. Please send release-date info to norman@pcgamer.com.

#### **MARCH 2003**

TITLE	PUBLISHER	DATE
TRON 2.0	Disney Int.	3/01/03
AquaNox 2: Revelation	JoWooD	3/01/03
Ghost Master	Empire Interactive	3/01/03
Ghost Recon Gold	Ubi Soft	3/04/03
Rayman 3	Ubi Soft	3/04/03
One Must Fall: Battlegrounds	Diversions	3/04/03
1503 A.D.: The New World	EA	3/04/03
Line of Sight: Vietnam	Infogrames	3/04/03
EVE Online	Simon & Schuster	3/04/03
Freelancer	Microsoft	3/06/03
Enclave	Conspiracy	3/10/03
Jurassic Park:		
Operation Genesis	Universal Int.	3/11/03
BloodRayne	Majesco	3/14/03
PlanetSide	Sony Online Ent.	3/14/03
C.S.I.	Ubi Soft	3/18/03
Red Faction II	THQ	3/20/03
Empire Earth Gold	Sierra	3/25/03
Neverwinter Nights:	100mm	
Shadows of Undrentide	Infogrames	3/25/03



#### **APRIL 2003**

TITLE	PUBLISHER	DATE
Etherlords II	Strategy First	4/08/03
Republic: The Revolution	Eidos	4/14/03
Star Wars: Galaxies	LucasArts	4/15/03
Frogger Beyond	Konami	4/15/03
Rise of Nations	Microsoft	4/15/03
Lionheart	Vivendi	4/15/03
Gothic II	JoWooD	4/17/03
Tropico 2: Pirate Cove	G.O.D.	4/18/03

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34

#### GAMER PLAYLIST



ROB It's New Years' Eve as I write this, and I'll be serving Robtini's™ at Casa Smith in a few hours. So I've been playing the cocktail-waiter game, and in between that saving the galaxy in the Freelancer beta. Meanwhile, my High Heat 2001...2002... 2003 season came to an end with a loss to the Rockies in Game 7 of the NLCS. The pain...



COREY Starfleet Command III continues to draw me in — I'm playing a Federation Conquest game, hopping around the galaxy with my macked-out Sovereign-class vessel. Mafia's dazzling graphics and Sopranosesque story have proven equally mesmerizing, as has Grand Theft Auto: Vice City (PS2), which is just unbelievably fun.



DAN SimCity 4 and Splinter Cell arrived at the same time, forcing me to make a Sophie's Choice of gaming. Now I'm happy to report that the lovely town of Little Hope is flourishing, after some early growing pains that included unemployment and toxic sludge. As for Sam Fisher, let me just say, the boy is gettin' it done.



CHUCK Here's an actual email I just got from our Reviews Lord, Dan: "Can I get a status update on the Neocron and Anarchy Online: Notum Wars reviews? They're needed in the next week." So guess what I've been playing? MMORPGs are a harsh mistress, but that Mr. Morris is an even harsher, um, mister.



BILLY I created a virtual replication of Berkeley, Calif., in SimCity 4 and immediately introduced an ordinance that would outlaw the sale of non-organically grown Pepsi in all public buildings; it passed with flying colors. I've also been playing the Road to Rome beta, and for our awards feature I fired up some Warcraft III solo play.



JOE I've been getting the usual dose of Battlefield 1942 — the new Coral Sea map rules, and I can't wait to get my mitts [wha?...Ed.] on Road to Rome. Plus, for a little modern-age combat, I've been playing the expansion packs to Ghost Recon Island Thunder and Desert Siege. I'm just an Army of One [-inch, haha - Ed.] this month.



CHIAKI Shhhhhh...be very, very quiet. Grab the unsuspecting guard from behind and whack 'em on the back of the head. Must be stealthy if you're gonna win at this game. Name's Sam Fisher, and the objective is to complete the mission at all costs. Hehe...can you tell I'm totally immersed in the world of Splinter Cell? Oooooh yeah!



GREG I've been giving Morrowind plenty of playtime after installing its Tribunal expansion on a whim two weeks ago. I didn't get very far into the game when it was new, but now I find myself completely enthralled. Its stunning visuals and vast open-ended story keep bringing me back for more!

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

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



GREAT, IT'LL SHARPEN OUR MINDS - BUT WILL IT ADD 3-4 INCHES TO OUR "JOYSTICKS"?

"MindFX is the first to offer a line of mental performance enhancement supplements to athletes, professional gamers, and computer gamers. Learn how easy, effective, and safe it is to boost your game to a new level of excellence by taking advantage of the MindFX product line."

- From the MindFX.com web site, describing the herbal supplements designed with gamers' needs in mind

#### AND WE WONDER WHY PEOPLE THINK **GAMERS ARE SOCIOPATHS**

"Pimp Tycoon. They would license the Mafia engine, and you would drive around town in your Caddy (pink, of course) collecting money from your ho's. Occasionally you would need to slap them around (à la Dungeon Keeper) to get them to cough up the dead presidents."

> — Gameoverman describing a game he'd like to see developed, from the www.gonegold.com forums

#### **HOW TO GET A JOB IN THE GAMES BUSINESS II**

ation, but several colleges now offer a major in audio production, and any instruction that increases your knowledge and abilities will obviously be useful. Keeping current with all the latest software, hardware, and techniques will also help make you



is heavily depend-

previous accom-

plishments, and will

ent on your

The pay scale



rewards will eventually follow.

vary on a job-to-job basis. The size of the company you are working for will also play a role in how much they can afford to pay. Bottom line: if you're serious about doing this job for a living, don't worry about the pay at first. Take what work you can find, do your absolute best, and if you're good, the monetary advice? "Spend more of your free time preparing for a job than playing games. The thousandth hour you put into EverQuest is of limited value in getting a job. Spending half those hours improving your skills will help you land a job."

'Be prepared to work really hard," warns Chris Taylor. "Hardly anyone I know in this business was successful by working 9 to 5."

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, complete a project that showcases your work. If you aspire to be a producer, form a team and lead them. If you're interested in writing or sound work, join a team and contribute.

"The best thing to do is produce something," says Robin Walker, the design manager at Valve. "There's very little barrier to entry into the mod scene. Get together with a friend or two and make a mod to showcase your talents. Being able to show something finished and playable is much more powerful than only being able to talk about yourself."

#### **WORK HARD AND BE ENTHUSIASTIC**

YOU PROBABLY ALREADY KNOW this, and may have heard it a million times, but it bears repeating passion and enthusiasm will take you places that experience and technical adeptness won't or can't.

"A candidate who comes in and displays huge enthusiasm toward the company and toward making games - especially in the form of doing excellent research, giving in-depth and knowledgeable answers to questions, and [coming up with] creative ideas - is someone that everyone here will pay attention to," says Jane Brind, a talent recruiter for EA.

Effort is another huge intangible that goes a long way, even when it involves simply searching for a job before you land that dream position. Mike Kulas'

#### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

The internet has plenty of great sources that will help you land your dream job. One of the best places to start is GameJobs (www. gamejobs.com), where you'll find a plethora of resources, including articles that will give you tips to help you in your quest, as well as a huge database of available positions. Also, most game companies will post available jobs on their web sites, so it pays to check these sites frequently if you're actively looking for a position. Other Internet sites of interest include Gamasutra (www.gamasutra.com), Get in the Game! (www.gignews.com), and GameDev.net (www.gamedev.net).

MARCH 2003 PC GAMER

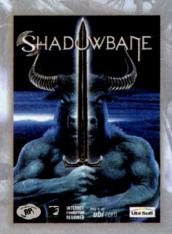
# electronics boutiques

Pre-order now! In store or at www.ebgames.com

\$39.99

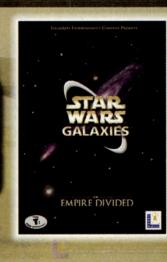
# Shadowbane

Pre-order now to get one-time-use promotional code to unlock three Shadowbane Restricted Races: Minotaur, Aracroix, and Centaur



#### The Limited Edition Collectors Edition includes:

- The Star Wars Galaxies game with a one month free subscription
- Exclusive in-game wearables:
   Special items only your avatar
   in the game can wear!
- EXCLUSIVE Star Wars Galaxies character figurine from Radcliffe.
- · Art concept book.
- Star Wars Galaxies Game logo patch
- Special edition game manual signed by key members of the development team.



Collectors Edition: \$79.99 Standard Edition: \$49.99





#### Receive a \$10 EB gift voucher

when you purchase Delta Force
Black Hawk Down with this coupon

Name

Address

City

State

Zip

Mail the completed form along with the original Electronics Boutique store sales receipt to EB Rebate Center, 770 Pilot Road, Seito F, Las Vegas, NV 89119

It incomplete forms will be discarded. One voucher per person per address. No dealers please. \$10.00 outher will be sent in the form of an EB Gift floucher. Electronics Boutique is not responsible for lost or stolen mail and/or gift vouchers. Gift Vouchers are good for future purchases. No cash will be given. Expires 2/15/03.

#### **PCGNEWSTICKER**



Star Wars: Galaxies - An Empire Delayed: LucasArts and Sony Online MMORPG set during the original Star Wars trilogy has been pushed back until April 15. Rabid fans have already begun lining up in front of their PCs in anticipation of the blockbuster opening.

Enter the Dragon: Dragon's Lair LLC and MV Creations have signed a four-year license to create a comic-book series based on Dragon's Lair. For those unfamiliar with reading a comic book, you use your action thumb on the right page and pull left.

C-to-the-S, Yo: Los Angeles city council member Dennis Zine has called for an investigation into the city's Internet cafés following a Counter-Strike tournament that turned violent when rival gang members took the online brawl to the streets. A teenager was shot in the leg outside the NetStreet café at the time of the incident. Repercussions could include mandatory age restrictions and greater security presence.

Troika Goes to Greyhawk: Great news for **7** D&D fans — particularly of the old-school 1st Edition modules — is that Troika, the acclaimed developer of *Arcanum*, is a year into making *Greyhawk*: The Temple of Elemental Evil. Troika is converting the classic module to the 3rd Edition rule set, and using a proprietary 3D isometric engine. The game will be published by Infogrames, potentially by this June.

Michigan Cracks Down on Violent Games: Michigan's House of Representatives has voted 98-to-2 for a bill that penalizes retailers who sell M- and AO-rated games to anyone under age 17. The crime, a misdemeanor, could result in a 90-day prison sentence, a \$1,000 fine, or both. The bill still has to be approved by the Michigan Senate before it can become law.

Trip Bails Out 3DO: Trip Hawkins, the evidentalls out 300. The hawkins, the evidence of 3DO, has dipped into his own pockets to provide up to \$10 million worth of financial support to the floundering game company. 3DO is probably best known by PC gamers for its High Heat and Heroes of Might and Magic franchises.

Return to OZ: We haven't seen the game, but the action figures sure are cool American McGee's OZ figures have landed on store shelves, depicting the characters of the Straw Golem, Munchkin Worker (shown left), and Flying Monkey. Do flying monkeys in the game fling flying poop? Only time will tell.

#### **Make Your Own Games** With a \$100 Engine

Out of the flames of Dynamix rises a new publishing model



Games like Robot Battle (above) will garner a hardcore following, making it ideal for this distribution model. Mainstream-friendly games, like Marble Blast, have greater potential to be financial successes

hen Dynamix, most recently the developer of the Tribes games, shuttered its doors for good, a few of its principals set up shop on their own. GarageGames was formed with an open-source attitude toward game development, tapping into the vogue championed by the Linux development community. At the core of this new business is the Torque

exchange for the \$100 licensing fee, you get the right to produce any kind of game that will then be published via a download-only model through GarageGames' web site.

At press time four games were available for download, each priced at \$14.95 (a price set by the developer, advised by GG). GarageGames pays a royalty of 65 percent to the development team

for exclusive publishing rights, but makes no claims to the intellectual property, or to retail (boxed copy) channel distribution. "We

are working hard to make a publishing entity that we would want to work with if we were a developer," says Tunnell.

Orbz, a multiplayer arena-based family-friendly action game), Tunnell expects each game to have plenty of virtual shelf life, and to sell steadily for a couple of years.

Marble Blast is an impressive title, full of color and classic Atari coin-op-style gameplay. Tunnell attributes some of its early popularity to Torque Engine developers looking at it to see the engine's capabilities, as well as a loyal band of Tribes followers since it's "the first product created substantially by the guys that created Tribes, and people want to see what we're doing lately."

Seems like GarageGames is keeping busy. The Torque Game Engine appears to have a slew of features that will allow committed development teams to put their creativity to work for a very reasonable outlay. For its part, GG will continue to add content to the engine and foster a spirit of open community that will support teams showing the enthusiasm to see a product through to conclusion. Toward that end, Tunnell expects to see another 20 or 30 games completed through the coming year. Perhaps this is the place from which the "next Game Gods" will appear.

#### WANNA BUILD A GAME?

If you're interested in getting more information about licensing the Torque engine, go to www.garagegames.com and click the Make Games menu option for all the details.

Game Engine, which provided the graphical muscle for Tribes 2it's being packaged as a complete engine and made available to developers for a mere \$100.

Though GG founder Jeff Tunnell was reluctant to divulge the total number of engine licenses currently sold ("Not enough to make us rich, but not a bad number either," he told us). the online development community of map-makers, artists, and designers tops 15,000 people. In

Currently, Marble Blast - a high-quality Marble Madness-like game - is the biggest success, having sold "hundreds of copies" after three weeks on sale, reports Tunnell. Given the broad scope of the current games (which also include Chain Reaction, a mechanical puzzle game; Robot Battle, which is basically BattleBots; and

In the modern world,

GREAT LEADERS

RESOLVE CONFLICT

# Using diplomacy to achieve the

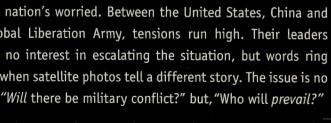
Using diplomacy to achieve the peaceful settlement of international disputes has often met with only limited success. In times of global crisis, government representatives do their utmost to prevent armed, military conflict. All too often, however, it is not enough.



# XORDS LIKE: 'CARPET BOMBING," "SCUD LAUNCHERS"



ecent military aggressions around the globe have many the Global Liberation Army, tensions run high. Their leaders profess no interest in escalating the situation, but words ring hollow when satellite photos tell a different story. The issue is no longer "Will there be military conflict?" but, "Who will prevail?"





No longer just a red-communist step-child, China's modern army is well-financed with a strong nationalistic bent. Parading technology like Dragon Tanks and Nuclear Missiles, China's military goes beyond large troop numbers. But Yangmingshan National Park. So while their new military is formidable, so is the task ahead.







Roused by GLA bio-terrorism attacks, the U.S. must now act decisively. America's military leader faces the unenviable task of rooting out an elusive foe. The world's most advanced military—armed with Daisy-Cutter bombs and Comanche Gunships — will make the job easier. But eradicating the cell-based GLA will also take courage, conviction and the will to see a prolonged campaign through to the end.



#### TECHNOLÓGICAL ADVANTAGE:

Despite the difference in resources, all three forces achieve an eerie kind of parity. The GLA's low-tech approach is no less effective than either China's superior forces or America's advanced technologies.

GET BRIEFED AT GENERALS.EA.COM

#### THE WILD CARD:

- Despite inferior military resources,
- the GLA still poses a very credible
- threat to worldwide security.

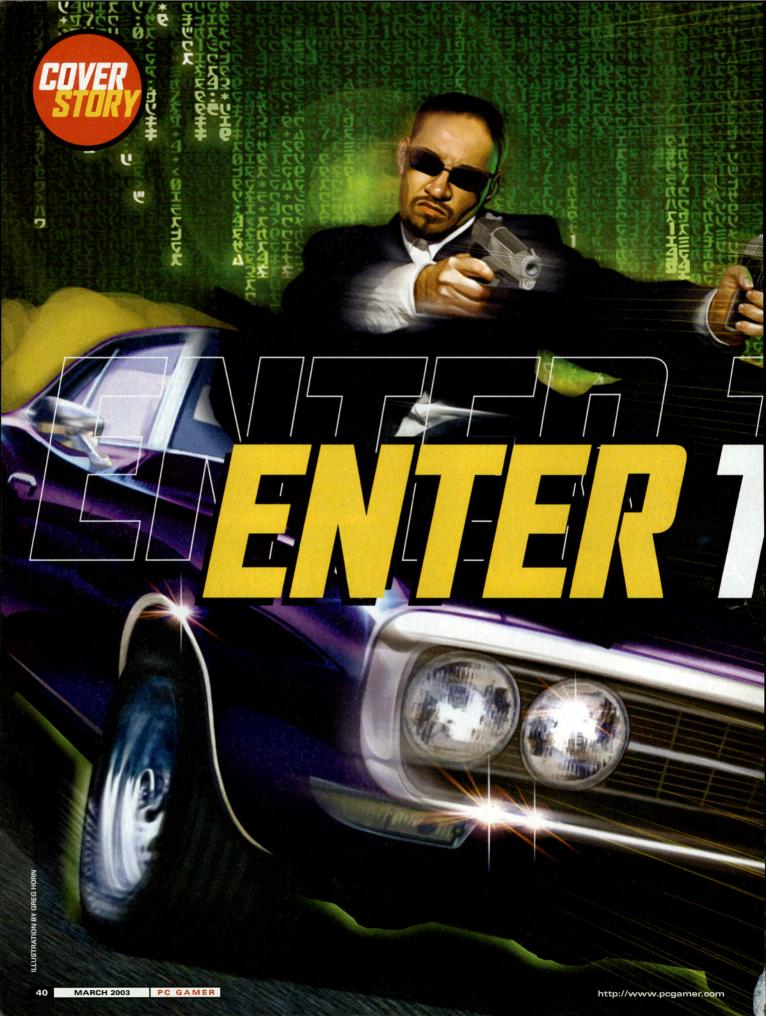


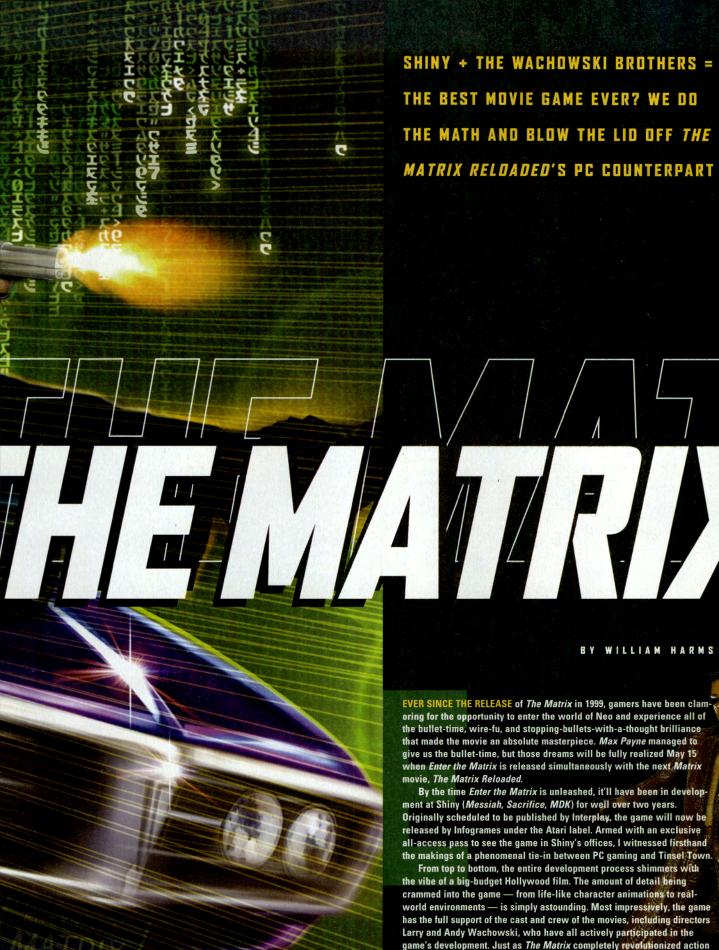
Facing superior firepower, the GLA embraces bio-terrorism, sabotage and suicide bombings to further its political agenda. But leading a chaotic group of "freedom" fighters against two global super-powers will take some doing.

#### AND "TOMAHAWK MISSILES."



allenge Everuthing





http://www.pcgamer.com

movies, Enter the Matrix could revolutionize the way games are made.





Fending off multiple attackers isn't a problem when you can run up walls and move like lightning. (Shiny insisted on keeping the debug info in this screenshot so you'd know that the game isn't finished yet, and that the visuals should improve.)

"THE GAME ISN'T A LUNCHBOX," emphasizes Stuart Roch, Enter the Matrix's executive producer. "It's on the same level as the movie, and no part is more important than the other parts. It's all The Matrix."

That attitude is precisely what should set Enter the Matrix apart from all other licensed movie games. Instead of a quick knock-off designed to sucker fistfuls of cash from Matrix lovers everywhere, the game was created from the ground up by the movies' wunderkind auteurs, the Wachowski brothers, to be an integral and important part of the Matrix universe.

To that end, Enter the Matrix doesn't offer a straight carbon copy of The Matrix Reloaded's story. Instead, it wields a parallel story that runs concurrently with the events of the sequel, and the two plots will intersect at various points. As a result, your actions can have a positive or negative impact on the overall story, and explain some of the movie's crucial backstory that

The storyline for Enter the Matrix remains a closely guarded secret, but we do know that Reloaded has Neo and his merry band of hackers hunting for a figure known as the Keymaker, a being who can access any door in the Matrix. Because the machines have discovered the location of the secret human city of Zion, finding the Keymaker is vital to humanity's survival.

you won't see on the big screen.

But while details about the game's plot are secret, its creation is not. The Wachowskis not only wrote the story for Enter the Matrix, but they also filmed exclusive footage specifically for the game.

"The brothers really wanted to help make the game," says Dave Perry, Shiny's president and Enter the Matrix's lead designer. "They wrote a 60page script and shot all-new footage with all of the actors from the movie." On top of the new liveaction footage, the game will also include an hour

of new in-game cinematics powered by Enter the Matrix's proprietary engine.

In addition to their work on the new movie footage, the Wachowski brothers also gave Perry and the folks at Shiny access to every aspect of the movie process that might be useful for the game. This exposure included trusting Shiny with a copy of the film's script and giving them full, unrestricted access to the sets, locations, actors, and other support personnel.

For research, Roch haunted Warner Brothers' studios in Alameda, Calif., and spent an exhaustive 25 weeks on location at the sets in Australia, where The Matrix Reloaded was filmed. This time was

featuring the game's playable characters -Niobe, portrayed by Jada Pinkett Smith, and Ghost, played by Anthony Wong — were filmed in front of a green screen. Smith and Wong acted out entire scenes and delivered their lines with the same gusto and enthusiasm that one would find on any movie set.

The only difference: costuming. Smith and Wong had to wear high-tech marker-ball suits so that their every movement would be captured and transferred into the game.

At the start of Enter the Matrix you get to choose whether you'll play as Niobe or Ghost. All of the primary characters from the movies - Neo,

#### "THE DECISION TO NOT LET YOU PLAY AS NEO WAS PART OF THE WACHOWSKIS' VISION FOR THE GAME. NEO IS SIMPLY TOO POWERFUL: HE CAN CONTROL REALITY. PLUS, HE'S TIED UP WITH THE EVENTS IN THE MOVIE."

- DAVE PERRY, SHINY PRESIDENT AND LEAD DESIGNER OF ENTER THE MATRIX

used to take reference photos and handle the game's motion-capturing.

"The Wachowskis insisted that we use the actual actors during the motion-capturing sessions," Roch says, "and during breaks in the filming we'd take reference photos." Because of their access to the sets and locations, Roch and his team were able to take over 25,000 reference photos and had full access to set designs and blueprints.

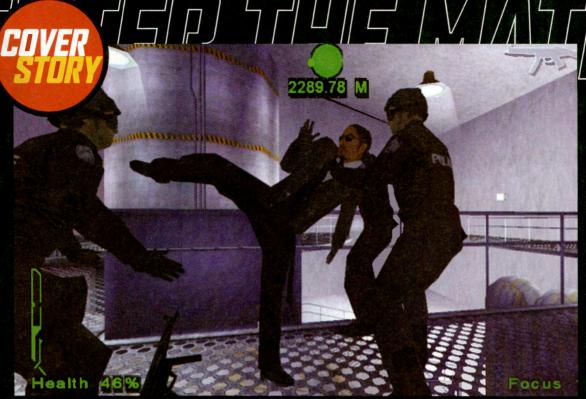
The motion-capturing process encompassed over 4,000 shots, thousands of script lines, and several weeks of filming time, including two weeks spent with Master Yuen Wo Ping and other kung-fu masters, who bludgeoned each other for the stunning fight sequences (see "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Matrix" for more details).

The attention to detail during this process was so great that the in-game cinematic sequences

Morpheus, and Trinity — will appear in the game, but none of them will be playable.

"The decision to not let you play as Neo was part of the Wachowskis' vision for the game," explains Perry. "Neo is simply too powerful: he can fly, control reality, and so on. Besides, he's tied up with what he's doing in the movie."

The single-player-only Enter the Matrix will have 60 levels, including four driving levels and four hovercraft levels, with the latter being set in the "real world" outside of the illusionary environment created by the Matrix. It's the driving and flying sections of the game where the differences between Niobe's and Ghost's campaigns are most obvious.



The onscreen interface shows your Focus and health, as well as your weapon and ammo situation.

#### CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN MATRIX

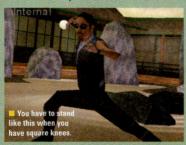


TO ENSURE THAT THE COMBAT SEQUENCES in Enter the Matrix were as authentic as possible, Shiny enlisted the brilliance of Master Yuen Wo

Ping to choreograph all of the fight moves. (Master Ping developed the fight choreography for all three *Matrix* movies, and for the movie *Crouching Tiger*, *Hidden Dragon*.)

Four martial artists acted out all of the kicks, punches, and other moves that will appear in the game: Hu Chen acted out all of Niobe's combat moves; Huen Chiu Ku handled Ghost; Chi Wah Ling portrayed the SWAT officers and other characters; and Collin Chou, who plays Seraph in the movies, did the moves for his character and other miscellaneous characters.

The martial artists were all dressed in marker-ball suits and every move they made was motion-captured. But the coolest part is the results: how a specific set of moves performed in real time, such as a leg sweep followed by a Focus-fueled chest punch, unfolds in the game looking exactly as it was executed by the real-life martial artists.



For example, Niobe is skilled at driving, so during the driving and hovercraft-piloting portions of the game you'll be steering the car or controlling the hovercraft while the Al-controlled Ghost (who's an ass-kicking gunslinger) automatically fires at enemies. Conversely, when you play the game as Ghost, you'll be blasting away while an artificially intelligent Niobe steers.

As you'd anticipate from a *Matrix* game, combat will take center stage. All of the high-flying, running-along-walls, slow-mo punches that made cinematic history in the first film will be present, and anything that you saw in the movie, you'll be able to replicate in the game.

promises that the bad guy Agents in the game will have the same abilities as you (dodging bullets, anyone?). And, I presume, they'll be able to carry out the kind of high-speed punches that we saw Agent Smith use to lay the smack down on Neo in *The Matrix*.

Though Enter the Matrix is being simultaneously released on all platforms, the PC version won't just be a quick and dirty port. The game will make full use of the latest and greatest video-card technology, and will support resolutions up to 1600x1200 and require at least a GeForce2 video card.

You'll likely also benefit from a meaty PC, as it powers a physics engine that allows your bullets (and other actions) to knock over tables, blow out

# "STEALTH (IN THE GAME) ACHIEVES NOTHING. WE WANT THE PLAYER TO BE ABLE TO FIRE THOUSANDS OF BULLETS AND HAVE ALL THOSE LUMPS OF METAL FLYING THROUGH THE AIR."

- DAVE PERRY, SHINY PRESIDENT AND LEAD DESIGNER OF ENTER THE MATRIX

"Stealth [in the game] achieves nothing," says Perry. "We want the player to be able to fire thousands of bullets and have all these lumps of metal flying through the air."

Of course, it wouldn't make sense for you to perform insane combat stunts through every second of the game, so Shiny has introduced a concept called Focus — a power akin to Max Payne's bullet-time that depletes as you use it and then slowly recharges when you're in normal mode. When you activate Focus, the entire world slows to a crawl and you can pull off crazy wire-fu combat moves, run along a wall with guns a-blazing, or waste some fool with a devastating combination of kicks and punches.

More than two dozen weapons will be at your disposal, including armaments taken off the bodies of dispatched enemies. And just as you can use your Focus to pull off amazing combat moves, Perry

ceiling tiles, and otherwise trash every square inch of the fighting space. I saw this aspect of the game in action, and it was truly stunning, perfectly capturing the chaos and destruction of the movies' monumental action sequences.

Another nod to the PC gamer will be a savegame system that'll let you save your game whenever and as often as you want. And though the console version has been optimized for gamepads, my playtime of a section of the game proved that the keyboard-and-mouse experience will be just as fluid.

From my day spent with Enter the Matrix, it's clear to me that Shiny is determined to craft a game that's every bit as vital and engaging as its cinematic sisters. And since the Midas touch of the Wachowski brothers is guiding the game's every step, we're hoping for a classic, and a potentially defining moment for the movie/game crossover.





The original raider returns - Indiana Jones. Legendary adventurer. Daring rogue. And the most butt-kicking archeologist the world has ever seen. Punch, whip and kick your way through Nazis, assassins, mystical warriors and the Asian underworld, and see if you have what it takes to unearth the Heart of the Dragon.



www.emperorstomb.com



VIOLENCE







PlayStation<sub>®</sub>2



#### CLASSIFIEDS - HELP WANTED

#### BOUNTY HUNTER

Recent reforms have made this position very valuable and very lucrative. Extremely dangerous. Only the strong will be considered. When you find us, you will have passed the first test. \*\*Black Star\*\*

#### JOIN CAMBRIDGE'S FINEST

LIBERTY POLICE OFFICERS

The Cardamine problem is making crime more than just a statistical blip. We need someone familiar with Hunter missiles and Mark IV läsers. Must be an expert flier, we only accept the best.
1-2245.A79

#### RED HESSIAN

Liberty Systems.
This exciting career field is what you've been looking for! Learn the skills needed to start working right new! With our 12-stap training system, you'll be ready to begin

#### EXPERIENCED LANE HACKER NEEDED

Work in the dangerous Straits of Magellan, We don't flinch, and nothing gets by us. We're looking for a single addition to our staff, someone who can hold up to pressure and isn't afraid to take what isn't his. 1-2245.C241

#### YOUR OWN BOSSI

Liberty Systems.
There's an untapped
load of boron
around Pittsburgh.
Or so we've heard.
We're looking for
someone to smuggle
it through the
debris field. Be in
the right place at
the right time.

#### LIBERTY NAVY OFFICER

we're looking for men swd women to bust pirate rings awd protect the trade Lanes. If you have an eye for justice, we want you.

#### SEEKING EXPERT

FLIERS

LIBERTY NAVY

New York System.
Command a fleet of
heavy fighters and
sweep the Badlands
of Rogues. Must be
an expert flier and
a skilled fighter
who doesn't blink
under pressure.

#### COWARDS NEED NOT APPLY

GECOME A BOUNTY HUNTER

New Berlin System.

A beleaguered police force and rapidly multiplying crime sectors have made Bounty Hunters some of the highest paid people in the solar system. It is a job of extreme danger; your abilities must be superior.

### POLICE OFFICER

Manhattan.
Justice is the only
path toward
enlighterment, If

#### INDEPENDENT MERCHANTS

New Tokyo System.
Everybody wants
something, and you
can be the guy they
get it from. There
is big profit in
crossing enemy
lines. We will
contact you.

#### LANE HACKER

New London System.

If it's
independence you're
Looking for, we
offer you the
chance to disrupt
the flow of cargo,
bust shipments and
take what you want.
1-4156.K63

#### MOTIVATED SELF-STARTERS WANTED

BECOME AN DEPENDENT MEXCHANT FIND OUT HOW!

Work for yourself and make big profits! Smuggle pharmaceuticals and other commodities across enemy lines, and make your own rules. If you're interested, there are ways you can get initiated.









:





Microsoft game studios

#### THE UNIVERSE, APPLY WITHIN.

Experience a vast, open-ended universe filled with an infinite number of adventures. You are the freelancer Edison Trent, an intergalactic jack-of-all-trades. Your mission: whatever you want.









Become a smuggler or a ruthless space thug, a naval hero or a trader. Dodge through asteroid fields while piloting elite fighters. The action is endless as you make your way through 48 known star systems. Greed, morality, compassion, anger... whatever motivates you, the dynamic universe will respond. Take the first step. The universe is waiting.



#### FREELANCER

The universe of possibility.

http://www.microsoft.com/games/freelancer

# The second second

**MARCH 2003** 

Eight opinionated PCG staffers agree to disagree to agree on the highest achievements in gaming over the past 12 months. We recognize and reward ambition, innovation, and achievement in game design, and present the definitive choices on the best of the best. It all comes down to this...









Simple vehicle controls make BF 1942 ultra-accessible.





As online combatants got better, new ways of waging war emerged — all of them exhilarating.

# 2002 GAME OF THE YEAR BATTLEFIELD 1942

■ DEVELOPER DIGITAL ILLUSIONS ■ PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS

HIT THE BEACH. Mow down the beach-hitters. Vie for the skies. Parachute into enemy territory. Shell from the seas. Dive-bomb warships. Hammer a strongpoint with a tank. Snipe the tank gunner.

And that's all on just one beautifully chaotic map.

Battlefield 1942 is the realization of our "dream PC game" — multiplayer battles in which every interesting element of combat is playable by human teammates and opponents. And it's all happening at once, on a coordinated, three-dimensional battlefield where the fight is literally raging around and above you at all times.

There's never been more to do in a single action game, and there's never been a more satisfying feeling of shared accomplishment than when a well-oiled team earns that all-important "Major Victory." Whether you're the guy who drops a key plane-delivered bomb or the grunt whose sniper shot paves the way to a breakthrough, you're all in it together.

We'll be playing this one for years, and reminiscing about it when we're old.

Whatever your gaming persuasion, *BF 1942* is a must-own title.

#### THE DIDTH ADDUAL PC GAMER AWARDS REQUEST (PCS)Norman: not behind -ID201-Vamp killed a teammate -]D2D[-Kellfire is no more -)D2D[-Bauge [killed] brrrian -)D2D[-Bauge is no more -)D2D[-Vomp is no more breerlen: sbis How can you resist? Writing all these captions just makes us want to load the game and play!

#### **BATTLEFIELD 1942**

It's a challenge to describe the endless thrills of *Battlefield 1942* without resorting to an exhausting list of individual moments — because as indicative as these scenarios might be, they could never be more than a superficial survey of all the goodness on tap in this 64-player masterwork.

The sheer ambition of the game is impressive, but even *more* impressive is the fact that each of the developers' ambitions is fully realized in gameplay. As far as we're concerned, Digital Illusions basically embarrassed every other developer of first-person multiplayer games in 2002 — not only is *BF 1942*'s feature list about 10 times as long as the competition's, it's also around 10 times as much fun.

There's practically no end to what you can do. Run out your infantry legs and you can turn to a career as a tank commander — a very easy transition to make, since the tanks are simple to fight in and drive. If you'd rather wreak havoc from the rear, climb into a self-propelled howitzer or man an anti-aircraft gun to defend your lines, or fling hard-hitting artillery rounds at the enemy's positions. For the somewhat more dexterous, there's the exhilarating life of a fighter pilot or strategic bomber, taking the battle to the enemy's bases. Or, for the truly industrious, jump into and out of these different vehicles as the unfolding battle demands.

Better yet, form up with like-minded comrades online and put it all together in an orchestrated concert of tactically sound warfighting. No PC gaming experience to date has quite captured the drama of a great round of Battlefield 1942 — the kind of round in which the Japanese have secured all but the last flag on Wake Island, and only a massed amphibious assault (covered by crucial carrier-launched eir support) has a hope of holding off defeat.

Each map offers its own unique strategies and battle environment: the wide desert expanse of El Alamein compels a cataclysmic armor duel, punctuated by strategic bombing raids; the claustrophobic, rubble-strewn alleys of Stalingrad are an infantryman's hand-to-hand struggle (and a sniper's paradise); the

island-hopping Midway map forces your side to smartly coordinate beach landings, dogfights, and artillery to seize victory.

#### THE OTHER NOMINEES

- Grand Theft Auto III
- Neverwinter Nights
- Freedom Force

Play this game. Within an hour, you'll be hooked on the most perfect expression of the PC's multiplayer possibilities. When the hours stretch into the dozens, and then into the hundreds, you'll see why Battlefield 1942 is our Game of the Year.

— The Editors of PC Gamer



#### 2002 BEST MULTIPLAYER GAME

IT STANDS TO REASON that our Game of the Year, being multiplayer-focused, would probably be our Best Multiplayer Game winner as well. And so it should be no great surprise that Battlefield 1942 gets this medal added to its breast, along with our top honor. It's yet another richly deserved salute. Plenty of games are fun to play with a bunch of other people, but they're generally just examples of "the more the merrier." This one provides dozens of uniquely satisfying roles for all those players.











PlayStation 2







#### WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/MIDNIGHTCLUB2





Univeal® 8 - The Avvakening © 2002 Epic Cames Inc. Raleigh, N.C. USA Univeal and the Univeal logo are registered trademarks of Epic Cames, Inc. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED, Univeal 8 - The Avvakening was created by Legend Entertainment, an infogrames studio and was manufactured and marketed by Infogrames, Inc. New York, NY, under license from Epic Cames, Inc. The Atari trademark and logo are the property of Infogrames. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.



# THE AVVANCE







#### **2002 BEST ACTION GAME**

#### **MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT**

■ DEVELOPER 2015 ■ PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS



■ You may have seen this scene from MOHAA a lot, but that's because it stands out as one of the most stunningly memorable moments in PC gaming history.

EVER WONDER HOW YOU MIGHT have performed under the withering fire that greeted American soldiers on Omaha Beach? Medal of Honor put me as close as I ever want to be to finding out - and provided the single best action sequence I've ever played on my PC.

The beach-landing level alone, with its artillery explosions and cowering wounded comrades, would've put Medal of Honor in the running for Action Game of the Year. But this wasn't a one-trick pony: with Tiger tanks, sniper duels, and yet more still to come, developer 2015 treated me to a rip-roaring World War II fantasy.

#### THE OTHER NOMINEES

- Grand Theft Auto III
- No One Lives Forever 2
- Freedom Force

Using absorbing battle environments, terrific scripted events, and intense firstperson action gameplay, MOHAA fulfills the wishes of anyone who ever wanted to be his own one-man band of brothers.

I was also pleasantly impressed with the game's story --- its movie-style intros and out-

ros, and its compelling scripted sequences. Most first-person shooters can't be bothered to set up their missions in any way more interesting than "Um, we have to get some documents out of this, uh, terrorist base...yeah." Medal of Honor structures its missions within the wider scope of WWII's different theaters of action, from North Africa to Normandy and then deep into Nazi-held Europe, and at every step I was well-motivated by the sense of participating in the larger struggle.

Spare me the mindless deathmatching and the snooze-inducing alien shipscapes; give me environments that grab and multiplayer encounters that draw me into a battle, rather than a match of mouse-skills.

#### **2002 BEST ROLEPLAYING GAME**

#### *NEVERWINTER NIGHTS*

■ DEVELOPER BIOWARE ■ PUBLISHER INFOGRAMES



■ Your henchman's dead and your health's diminishing, but you've a glowing sword in your hand, and while it swirls, the world has hope!

A CLOSE CONTENDER FOR OVERALL Game of the Year, NWN stands out in what was a fantastic year for RPG fans. BioWare shot for the stars with a hugely ambitious project that hoped to combine an epic single-player experience; a unique, innovative multiplayer option; and a comprehensive editing suite sure to give the game incredible staying power.

To its huge credit, it hit all marks. The single-player game doesn't revolutionize the RPG genre, but it doesn't have to. It's entertaining, fairly freeform,

#### THE OTHER NOMINEES

- Morrowind
- **Divine Divinity**
- Dungeon Siege
- Icewind Dale II ■ Freedom Force

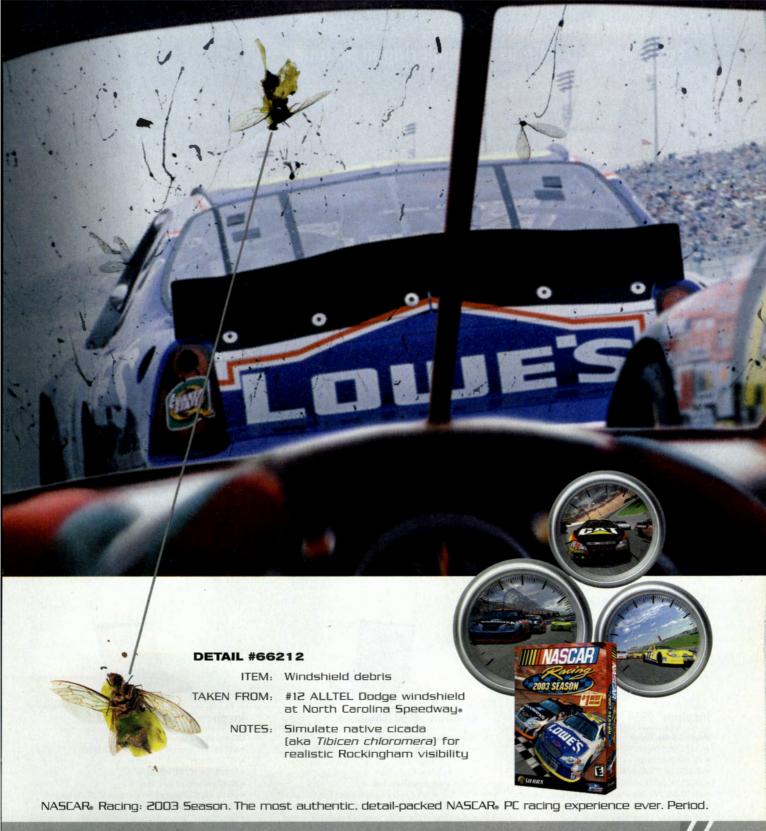
and - most importantly for my tastes - has my single character be the hero of the entire show (with bit-part help from a chosen NPC).

NWN's online component is a huge step forward for interactive multiplayer gaming. While the fun and accessibility factor are judged more by the individual qualities of fellow gamers taking on the dungeonmaster's role, the tools available to command

unique adventures covered every conceivable base. It's as close to table-top roleplaying as any fan will ever get on the PC.

And finally, the editor has proved to be incredibly powerful, amazingly flexible, and surprisingly accessible. Longtime D&D fans have re-created every popular module ever printed, and the community is burgeoning as users become better acquainted with the system's foibles.

This complete package of features is what made NWN the Best RPG of 2002, in what was one of the greatest years ever for PC RPGs.



#### LEGENDARY AUTHENTICITY. UNPARALLELED RACING.



















sierra.com/games/nascar2003

©2003 Sierra Entertainment, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Sierra and the Sierra logo are trademarks of Sierra Entertainment, Inc. Vivendi Universal Games and the Vivendi Universal Games logo are trademarks of Vivendi Universal Games, Inc. Papyrus and the Papyrus logo are trademarks of Papyrus Design Group, Inc. NASCAR® is a registered trademark of the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing, Inc. General Motors Trademarks used under license to Papyrus Racing Games. Dodge is a trademark of DainlerChrysler Corporation. Dodge Intrepid and its trade dress are used under license by Sierra Entertainment, Inc. ©DaimlerChrysler Corporation 2003. ©2003 Ford Motor Company, Ford Taurus\* trademarks used under license from Ford Motor Company, North Carolina Speedway® used under license from International Speedway Corporation. All other names, likenesses and trademarks are the properties of their respective owners and are used under permission to Papyrus Racing Games.

#### Great power. Blazing speed. You'll have 3D villains surrendering in no time.



Click or call for our latest pricing and promotions.

Excellent for conquering strange new worlds or just escaping from this one. Dell offers a wide variety of desktops and notebooks that come fully equipped with the power, speed and high performance to take your PC experience to new levels. When you order from Dell, you'll get exactly what you want and need to make a PC that's uniquely yours. Since Dell

uses high-quality, reliable technology, like Intel® Pentium® 4 Processors with awesome performance for gaming, music, digital photos, and beyond, you know you're getting a high-quality, reliable PC. And, as always, it comes backed by award-winning service and support available 24/7, 365 days a year. Best of all, when you order direct, you get the right PC at the right price. So go online or call today. We'll show you how easy it is to score a great PC.

#### **Dell** Home Notebooks



#### Inspiron™ 2650 Notebook

#### **Mobile Gaming Starter**

- . Mobile Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor-M at 1.80GHz
- 15" XGA TFT Display
- 384MB DDR PC2100 SDRAM
- 30GB\* Ultra ATA Hard Drive
- 24x CD-RW/DVD Combo Drive with Roxio's Easy CD Creator®
- . 16MB DDR NVIDIA® GeForce2 Go™ 100 AGP 4x Graphics
- Sound Blaster® Compatible
- . 59WHr Li-Ion Battery (8 cell)
- · Internal Modem and NIC Included
- . Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- · WordPerfect\* Productivity Pack with Quicken\* New User Edition

or as low as \$45/mo. E-VALUE Code: 16468-D80214m

#### Make this your perfect PC:

- 512MB DDR PC2100 SDRAM, add \$100
- . 40GB\* Performance Hard Drive, add \$90
- 32MB DDR NVIDIA® GeForce2 Go 200 AGP 4x Graphics, add \$99
- . Custom Leather Case, add \$99



#### Inspiron™ 4150 Notebook

#### Thin and Light Gamer's Dream

- . Mobile Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor-M at 1.90GHz
- 14.1" XGA TFT Display
- 512MB DDR PC2100 SDRAM
- 40GB\* Performance Hard Drive
- 24x CD-RW/DVD Combo Drive with Roxio's Easy CD Creator®
- . 32MB DDR ATI® MOBILITY™ RADEON™ 7500 AGP 4x Graphics
- · Sound Blaster® Compatible Sound with Wavetable
- 66WHr Li-Ion Battery with ExpressCharge™ Technology (8 cell)
- · Internal Modem and NIC Included
- Dolby® Headphone Solution
- . Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition, Microsoft® Works Suite

or as low as \$57/mo. E-VALUE Code: 16468-D80218n

#### Make this your perfect PC:

- Mobile Intel<sup>®</sup> Pentium<sup>®</sup> 4 Processor-M at 2GHz, add \$50
- Windows® XP Professional add \$79
- . Burlwood Colored Display Back and Palm Rest Inserts, add \$29
- · Notebook Backpack, add \$79



#### Inspiron™ 8200 Notebook

#### **Ultimate Mobile Gaming Machine**

- . Mobile Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor-M at 2.40GHz
- 15" UltraSharp" UXGA TFT Display
- 512MB DDR PC2100 SDRAM
- 60GB\* Performance Hard Drive
- 24x CD-RW/DVD Combo Drive with Roxio's Easy CD Creator®
- ATI® MOBILITY™ RADEON™ 9000 64MB DDR 4x AGP Graphics
- Sound Blaster® Compatible Sound with Wavetable
- 66WHr Li-Ion Battery with ExpressCharge™ Technology (8 cell)
- · Internal Modern and NIC Included
- · Microsoft Windows XP Professional, Microsoft Works Suite

or as low as \$84/mo\* E-VALUE Code: 16468-D80227m

- . Microsoft® Office XP Small Business, add \$114
- . 64MB USB Memory Key, add \$59
- External Harman Kardon HK-395 Speakers with Subwoofer, add \$59
- . Kenneth Cole Leather Case by Dell, add \$249

#### **Dell** Home Desktops



#### Dimension™ 4550 Desktop

#### Superior Performance, Smart Value

- Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor at 2.66GHz with 533MHz Front Side Bus and 512K L2 Cache
- 512MB DDR SDRAM at 266MHz
- NEW 60GB\* Ultra ATA/100 Hard Drive (7200 RPM)
- 19" (18.0" v.i.s., .24dp) M992 Monitor
- NEW 128MB DDR ATI® RADEON® 9700 TX Graphics Card with TV-Out and DVI
- 16x DVD-ROM Drive
- Sound Blaster Live! 5.1 Digital Sound Card
- Altec Lansing® ADA745 4.1 Surround Sound Speakers with Subwoofer
- . 56K\* PCI Telephony Modem
- Integrated Intel® PRO 10/100 Ethernet
- . Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- · WordPerfect® Productivity Pack with Quicken® New User Edition

or as low as \$47/mo." E-VALUE Code: 16468-D50215m

#### Make this your perfect PC:

- NEW 128MB DDR ATI® RADEON™ 9700 Pro Graphics Card with TV-Out and DVI, add \$180
- 21" (19.9" v.i.s., .24AG) P1130 FD Trinitron® Monitor, add \$390
- 1GB DDR SDRAM at 266MHz, add \$200

**Standard Features** 

standard features, including

Keyboard and Mouse

Each DELL system shown has a number of

• Dell Jukebox Powered by MUSICMATCH®

. Dimension Desktops shown here include

· Inspiron Notebooks shown here include

• Dell Picture Studio Image Expert Standard Edition

. 6 Months of MSN® Powered by Dell™ Internet Access Included\*

1-Year Limited Warranty\*, 1-Year At-Home Service Offering\*,

1-Year Limited Warranty, 1-Year Mail-In Service Offering

NEW 120GB\* Ultra ATA/100 Hard Drive (7200 RPM), add \$110



#### Dimension™ 8250 Desktop

#### **Cutting Edge Technology**

- Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor at 2.66GHz with 533MHz Front Side Bus and 512K L2 Cache
- 512MR PC1066 RDRAM
- . NEW 60GB\* Ultra ATA/100 Hard Drive (7200 RPM)
- 19" (18.0" v.i.s., .24dp) M992 Monitor
- . NEW 128MB DDR ATI® RADEON™ 9700 TX Graphics Card with TV-Out and DVI
- 16x DVD-ROM Drive
- 40x/10x/40x CD-RW Drive with Roxio's Easy CD Creator® (2<sup>nd</sup> bay)
- . Sound Blaster Live! 5.1 Digital Sound Card
- Altec Lansing® ADA745 4.1 Surround Sound Speakers with Subwoofer
- 56K\* PCI Telephony Modem
- Integrated Intel® PRO 10/100 Ethernet
- . Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
  - · WordPerfect® Productivity Pack with Quicken® New User Edition

or as low as \$60/mo." E-VALUE Code: 16468-D50219m

#### Make this your perfect PC:

- 1GB PC1066 RDRAM, add \$420
- NEW 120GB\* Ultra ATA/100 Hard Drive (7200 RPM), add \$110
- . NEW 128MB DDR ATI® RADEON™ 9700 Pro Graphics Card with TV-Out and DVI add \$180

#### **Software & Peripherals**

- · Canon MultiPASS F80 Multifunction (Prints, Scans, Copies, and Faxes), \$399
- Kodak EasyShare™ LS443 Digital Camera with Dock, \$499
- . Belkin® Home Office 350 VA UPS Surge, \$49
- · Detto Intellimover V3.0 Migration Software and Parallel Cable, \$50
- Extreme Gaming Bundle, \$90
- Roller Coaster Tycoon 2 Game, \$30
- · Logitech® Wingman Extreme Digital 3D Joystick, \$30
- · Gravis Gamepad Pro, \$15

#### Dimension™ 8250 Desktop

#### **Extreme Gaming Machine**

- Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor at 3.06GHz with HT Technology
- 512MB PC1066 RDRAM
- . NEW 200GB\* Ultra ATA/100 Hard Drive (7200 RPM) with DataRurst™ Cache
- 19" (18.0" v.i.s., .24dp) M992 Monitor
- . NEW 128MB DDR ATI® RADEON™ 9700 Pro Graphics Card with TV-Out and DVI
- 16x DVD-ROM Drive
- NEW 48x/24x/48x CD-RW Drive with Roxio's Easy CD Creator® (2<sup>nd</sup> bay)
- . Sound Blaster Live! 5.1 Digital Sound Card
- Altec Lansing® ADA745 4.1 Surround Sound Speakers with Subwoofer
- 56K\* PCI Telephony Modem
- Integrated Intel® PRO 10/100 Ethernet
- . Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- WordPerfect® Productivity Pack with Quicken® New User Edition

2899 or as low as \$87/mo.\* E-VALUE Code: 16468-D50228m or as low as \$87/mo.

#### Make this your perfect PC:

- NEW 4x DVD+RW/+R\* Drive with CD-RW including Roxio's Easy CD Creator® and Sonic™ MyDVD™ (2™ bay), add \$140
- 1GB PC1066 RDRAM, add \$420
- 21" (19.9" v.i.s., .24AG) P1130 FD Trinitron® Monitor, add \$390
- Altec Lansing® THX Certified ADA995 Surround Sound 5.1 Speaker System with Dell™ Enhanced Multimedia Keyboard, add \$170

#### Service & Support

#### Upgrade from Standard Warranty and Service Offering to:

3-Year Limited Warranty\*, 3-Year At-Home Service Offering\*.

- Dimension 4550, 8250, \$159
- Inspiron 2650, \$179
- Inspiron 4150, 8200, \$299

#### Accidents Happen!

Protect yourself with CompleteCare™Accidental Damage Protection\*:

- Dimension 1-Year, \$39
  - Inspiron 1-Year, \$79
- Dimension 3-Year, \$99
- Inspiron 3-Year, \$149



The Perfect PC at the perfect price. Easy as



#### Click www.dell4me.com/pcgamer Call 1-800-925-0188

#### Dell recommends Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional for Mobile Computing

\*MSN Powered by Dell; Telephone access (call your phone co. for details) and other surcharges for access may apply. Must register within 30 days of invoice and accept MSN powered by Dell Terms of Service. You agree to be billed monthly fees after the initial service period. You may cancel service at any time. Offer valid for new customers only in U.S. households and must be over 18 years old with major credit card. Limited time offer.

Pricing/Availability: Prices, specifications, availability and terms of offers may change without notice. Taxes and shipping charges are extra, and vary. Cannot be combined with other offers or discounts. Valid for U.S. Dell Home Systems Co. Pricing/Availability: Prices, specifications, availability and terms of offers may change without notice. Taxes and shipping charges are extra, and vary. Cannot be combined with other offer provided in the process only. Dell cannot be responsible for errors in typography or photography. Limited Warranty: You can get a copy of our limited warranties and guarantees by writing Dell USA. P.A. Attn. Warranties, One Dell Way, Round Rock, TX 78682. To purchase warranty only or for information on other service options please call 1-800-915-3355 or visit dell-free.com/termsand conditions. Service: At-Home service provided via third-party contract with customer. Fechnician will be dispatched, if necessary, following phone-based troubleshooting. Availability varies. Other conditions apply, Hard Drives: For hard drives, EGR means 1 billion by thes; accessible capacity varies with operating environment. 56K Modem: Download speeds are less (about 30Kbps). Speeds can vary by line condition and modern manufacturer. Analog phone line and service required. DVD-RW Drives: Discs burned with this drive may not be compability with approved credit. Taxes and shipping charges are extra and vary. Completed Care: CompleteCare service excludes their, loss, and damage due to fire or intentional damage. CompleteCare is currently not available in all states. Not available for Dell Home Sales customers in CA, FL, or NY. Not available for Employee Purchase Program customers service. Service. Contracts.htm. Trademark/Copyright Notices: Intel, Intel Inside, Pentium and Celeron are trademarks or registered trademarks of Intel Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries. Microsoft, MSN and Windows are registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation. @2002-2003 Dell Computer Corporation. All rights reserved.



#### **2002 BEST REAL-TIME STRATEGY GAME**

#### **WARCRAFT III: REIGN OF CHAOS**

■ DEVELOPER BLIZZARD ■ PUBLISHER BLIZZARD

THE GENIUS OF WARCRAFT III lies in the brilliant execution of its story and the fully developed characters. For possibly the first time in an RTS game, the story doesn't play second- or third-fiddle to base-building, unit creation, or any other RTS malarkey. Instead, the engaging saga of the battle

#### THE OTHER NOMINEES

Age of Mythology Freedom Force

for Azeroth unfolds brilliantly from the very first mission: you actually care about what

happens to the game's characters.

Take, for example, the end of the human campaign, where Arthas edges a little too closely to the dark side and succumbs to its foul trappings and temptations. The moment where Arthas slays his father was a stroke of genius, and left me absolutely floored. My hero was now the villain? I absolutely had to see how all of this craziness would play out.

On top of its towering story, Warcraft III features some dazzling visuals, with highly detailed and



■ Take your time to immerse yourself in the story, and Warcraft III rewards you like no other RTS game.

nicely animated characters, and controls that are the essence of simplicity. With all of the leveling up and spell effects, the game's controls could've become a muddled mess, but the processes were handled with seamless elegance. Warcraft III is not just the RTS game of 2002, it's a new high-water - William Harms mark for the entire genre.

# HONORABLE **MENTIONS**

During the year, certain aspects of a game's design may stand out as a bright, shining part of a less glistening whole. Here are the games of 2002 that deserve Honorable Mention for some stellar work in a specific area of game craft.



#### **DUNGEON SIEGE**

**THOUGH DUNGEON SIEGE'S simplified party**based gameplay underwhelmed us in its singleplay, the game's graphical fidelity created a stunningly real world of adventure that overshadowed its flaws. Every new area bombarded our eyes with visual treats — a staggering achievement considering that DS is essentially an isometrically viewed RPG. Even more impressive was the believable level design that had even the most spectacular fantasy setting make perfect intuitive sense.



#### MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR

IS MEDIEVAL A TURN-BASED game dolled up with a real-time game, a real-time strategy game gussied up with turn-based goodness, or a true hybrid of both? In the end, semantics about its genre mean nothing because Medieval is simply fantastic. The turn-based segment's depth rivals any other turn-based game on the market, and the number of playable factions and different scenarios provides endless replayability. And the real-time battles are massive and deliciously gruesome.

#### **2002 BEST TURN-BASED STRATEGY GAME**

#### **COMBAT MISSION:** BARBAROSSA TO BERLIN

■ DEVELOPER BATTLEFRONT.COM ■ PUBLISHER BATTLEFRONT.COM

IN CASE YOU HADN'T HEARD, turn-based wargaming finally caught up with modern society. While a hardcore few still cling to the X's and O's of tabletopstyle hex boardgaming, the Combat Mission series (the first of which earned our Best Turn-Based Strategy Game of 2000 award) has hit the genre with

#### THE OTHER NOMINEES

- Medieval: Total War

■ Age of Wonders II ■ Freedom Force

the evolutionary zeal of its own personal Darwin. The hattles

play out in beautifully detailed full-3D environ-

ments. You issue orders to your forces at one-minute "pause-time" intervals — and once you've given your orders, you have to watch the next minute of violence play out with absolutely no way to intervene until the clock is up again and you get another chance to change or add orders.

Not only is this game an engaging (and realistic) simulation of the experience of tactical command, but it's also just plain viscerally awesome. When



■ The rich 3D world of CMBB should lay waste to any complaint about how "stuffy" wargaming is.

mortar rounds fall and bazooka teams ambush your tanks, you're there with the moveable camera to see and hear every bit of the brutality.

Barbarossa to Berlin is as invigorating a wargame as any to have graced the PC in 2002. Give it a try, and you may yet find yourself becoming a desktop general. - Dan Morris

# AMERICAN ON Three Centuries of War -----

- Epic real-time strategy with historical background
- Recreate the battles of history with up to 16,000 units
- 8 campaigns with 42 missions
- 12 playable nations and tribes
- Multiplayer mode for up to 7 players

RELEASE: February 2003 In the year 1492, travel to America as Christopher Columbus and light the spark that will kindle 300 years of heated battles for land, riches and freedom.

> Utilize new technologies, unique weaponry, improved fighting units and the dangerous world of diplomacy.

PLAY WITH FIRE! CONQUER AMERICA!

PLAY IN AMERICAN CONQUEST'S WAR OF INDEPENDENCE TOURNAMENT!

www.war-of-independence.com









Violence





#### **2002 BEST RACING GAME**

#### **NASCAR RACING: 2002 SEASON**

■ DEVELOPER PAPYRUS ■ PUBLISHER SIERRA

THE LATEST CHAPTER IN PAPYRUS' long-running NASCAR Racing franchise snuck up in everyone's blind spot when it hit the market prior to NASCAR's season-opening Daytona 500 last year. On the surface, NASCAR Racing: 2002 Season didn't appear to be much more than a seasonal upgrade to NASCAR

THE OTHER NOMINEES

- F1 2002
- Rally Trophy
- RalliSport Challenge
- Freedom Force

4, PCG's runaway choice for Best Racing Game of 2001 and one of the most significant racing-sim releases of the past decade.

What could the Papy crew do for an encore?

Plenty, it seems, because it took me only a few warm-up laps to discover that this new sim had turned the overused "evolutionary rather than revolutionary" phrase on its ear and evolutionized the living crap out of the genre. NASCAR 2002 was much more than just a driver and track update; it was a completely revitalized game that boasted marvelously well-



With a precision physics model at work, you quickly find out how tough these cars are to drive.

honed physics, booming new audio effects, and an innovative graphics engine that completely redefined the term "photorealistic." Factor in its improved Al, enhanced replay functionality, and some new driver aids and tutorials, and it's easy to see why this "mere patch" left every other racing game choking on its high-octane exhaust fumes in 2002. - Andy Mahood

# HONORABLE



#### FREEDOM FORCE

FOR SMASHING the "superhero games suck" curse once and for all, Freedom Force easily earns a prominent spot on the list. While it didn't capture any major awards (though it was nominated for, well, absolutely every category since Chuck was so insistent that it be honored for something), FF's genre-defying blend of strategy/ RPG comic-book action undoubtedly gave hope to a market segment that's been all but totally neglected on the PC. Congratulations to Irrational Games, proving that its success with System Shock 2 was no fluke, for delivering a unique gameplay format — and for supplying the tools with which the mod community of comics fans could create fresh content ad infinitum. We all hope there's room for a sequel.



#### GRAND THEFT AUTO III

IN THE WORDS OF the legendary Blue Oyster Cult. Don't Fear the Port. Though PC gamers had to wait longer than we would have liked, Grand Theft Auto III perfectly illustrates the mantra that a good game is a good game is a good game, regardless of its platform. Truthfully, while Rockstar cleaned up GTA III's looks, it didn't add much to the core PS2 experience. But let's face it: what was there to enhance? We got the ability to import our own music, and we got the mouse-and-keyboard control scheme. And those high-resolution graphics really did make a difference — try going back to the PS2 version after playing on the PC, and your eyes will bleed...guaranteed. In our office, GTA III gets an Honorable Mention virtually every day, as it remains a permanent fixture on our hard drives.

#### **2002 BEST SIMULATION**

#### **FLANKER 2.5**

■ DEVELOPER SSI ■ PUBLISHER SSI

WHEN A \$10 UPGRADE PACKAGE (for a three-yearold combat flight sim, no less!) takes our 2002 Flight Sim of the Year honors, it's a remarkably sad commentary on the state of the genre over the past 12 months. Despite its aging pedigree and value-priced packaging, SSI's Flanker 2.5 managed to do exactly that in a year where all of the big flight-sim releases — Combat Flight Simulator 3 and Strike Fighters:

#### THE OTHER NOMINEE

Freedom Force

Project 1 among the most notable - corkscrewed themselves into the hard deck

because of unquashed bugs and premature release schedules. In attempting to attract the traditionally picky hardcore audience, that kind of business decision makes absolutely no sense.

But those calls have given this upgrade a spotlight that it absolutely deserves. Sliding you behind the controls of three Russian military aircraft — the Sukhoi Su-27 air superiority fighter (NATO codename Flanker), the carrier-based Su-33 Flanker, and a navalized MiG-29K Fulcrum - Flanker 2.5 is an aerial-combat simulation for the diehard fighter jock. Boasting authentic avionics, silky-smooth

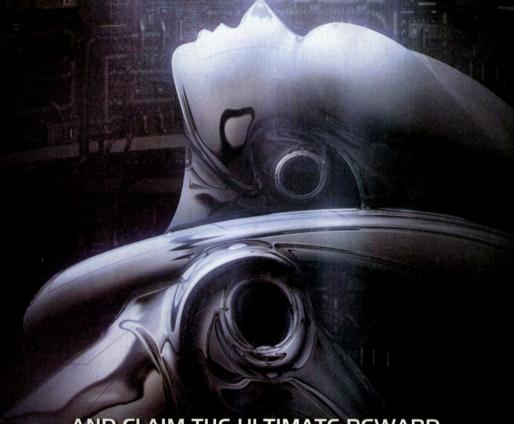


■ This upgrade's value and quality are testimony to SSI's commitment to the Flanker franchise.

flight modeling, lag-free Internet play, and a comprehensive mission-editor utility, Flanker 2.5 scored a well-deserved 82% rating from us when it landed on retail shelves last year - ultimately placing it rudder-and-ailerons above all other contenders.

It proves, if ever there was a question, that a finished and well-honed product will win out over grandiose yet "not ready for primetime" projects every time. In anticipation of next year's awards, publishers please take note. - Andy Mahood ANARCHY RULES ON THE GIANT SLAVE SHIP HARBINGER AS VARIOUS FACTIONS FIGHT FOR CONTROL.

THROUGH THE CHAOS, RESOLVE YOUR DESTINY...



...AND CLAIM THE ULTIMATE REWARD. YOUR FREEDOM.

### HERBINGER

#### THE REVOLUTION LIES WITHIN











PS ROM

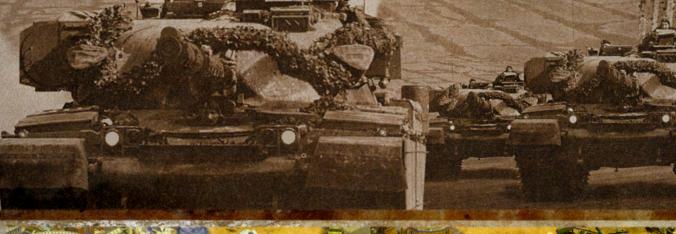
- INTENSE ACTION RPG IMMENSE GAME ASSETS UNIQUE SCI-FI STORYLINE
  - WWW.HARBINGERGAME.COM







# WHERE WERE YOU ROMAN MISS







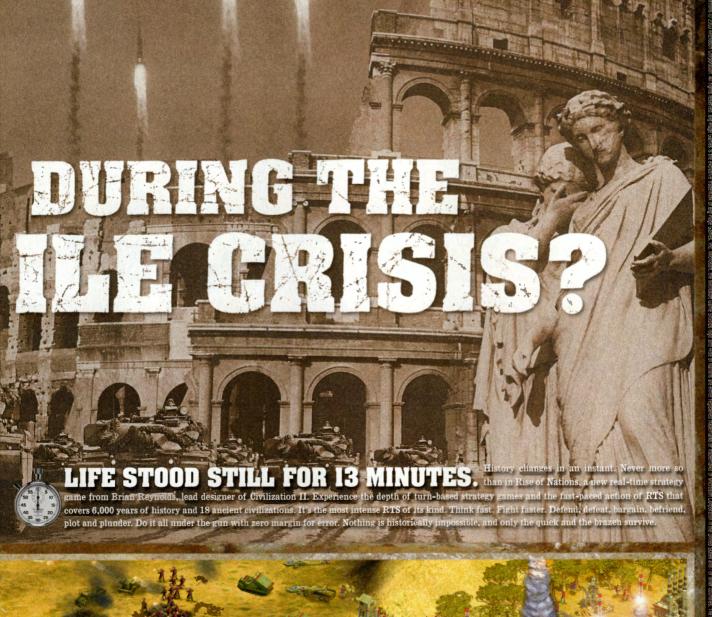
Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772 for more info.



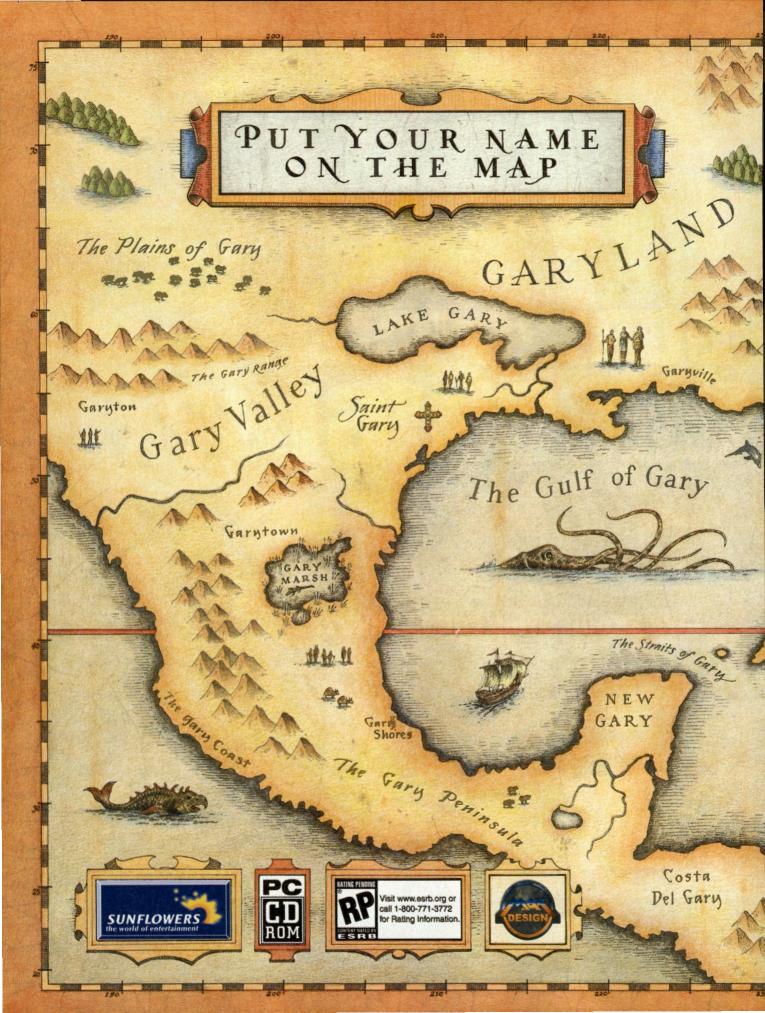
Microsoft

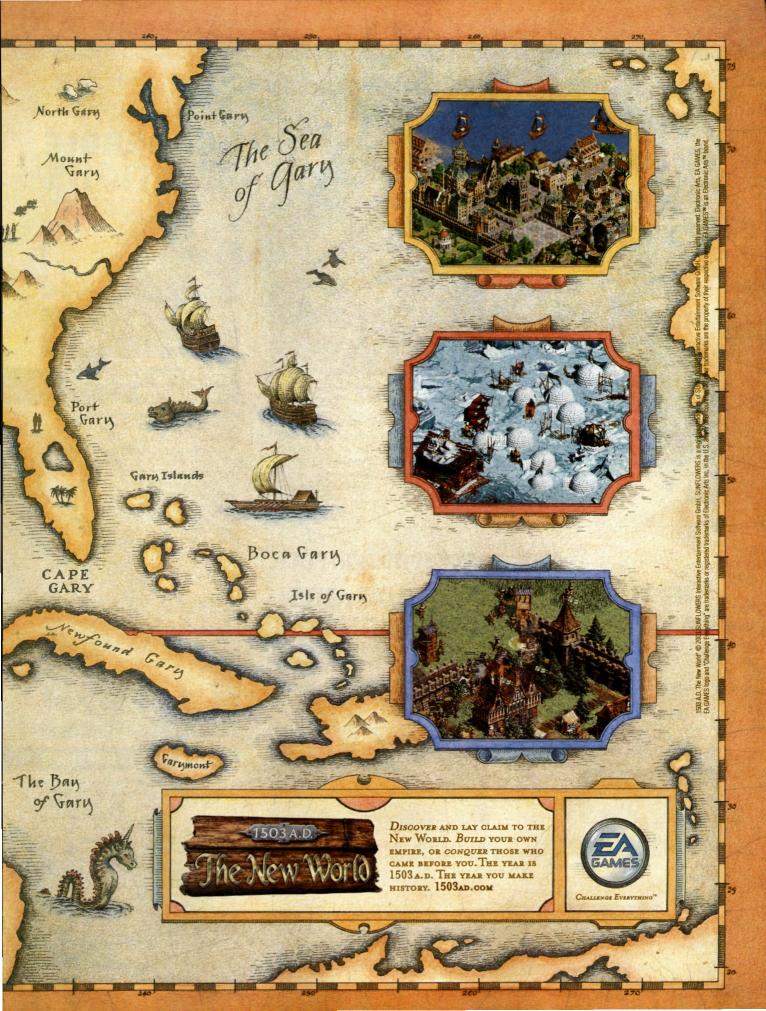


www.miorocoft.com/gamas/risasfrations









#### 2002 BEST MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER GAME

#### **ASHERON'S CALL 2: FALLEN KINGS**

■ DEVELOPER TURBINE ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE ■ PUBLISHER MICROSOFT

WHILE 2002'S MMORPG OFFERINGS were sparser than we would've liked. Turbine took up the other guys' slack by putting out the prettiest, simplest, and most intuitive massively multiplayer game yet.

What's more, as the sequel to a MMORPG that lingered in the long fantasy shadow of EverQuest,

#### THE OTHER NOMINEES

Earth & Beyond Freedom Force

AC 2 had a disadvantage from the start. "If we didn't play the first one, why should we care about the

second?" "Isn't it just more fantasy hack-andslash?" Yet, from our first glimpse of its cutting-edge visuals, we knew AC 2 would offer something special.

That "something special" turned out to be the phenomenal ease-of-entry with which you can begin your adventures, a much-needed feature that has eluded much of its online competition. (Though we also appreciated that same aspect about AC 2's chief rival for this award, Earth & Beyond.) The game is deceptively deep - seemingly simple when accept-



■ Don't let the looks of the original Asheron's Call scare you away from the sequel — it's a beauty!

ing linear dungeon-based story quests, but garnished with a rich crafting and economic system that can captivate for days (months, years, ad infinitum).

And, of course, don't forget those pretty pictures. If you've avoided the massively multiplayer craze because you're a graphics whore, Asheron's Call 2's one to check out.

# HONORABLE **MENTIONS**



#### THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

BETHESDA'S RETURN to the Elder Scrolls is highly deserving of special recognition. This vast RPG opened up a wonderfully freeform and fantastic-looking world, and backed it up with a mod plug-in format that we hope will become a model for fan-supported development. The world looks phenomenal, and you can always find something to do and somewhere to go. Packed with sharp, pithy storywriting and background material, plus a slew of great ideas right from the get-go (such as your naming your ingame avatar and picking your race via a clever Q&A sequence), Morrowind highlights some of the smart open-ended game design we expect to see more of in the future.



#### **NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2**

TO THIS DAY, ARTIFICIAL intelligence is a hit-and-miss affair in PC games. But NOLF 2's system of purpose for each NPC — friend or foe genuinely convinces you that they have their own lives. The subtle blend of scripted dialogue with object-activated interactions allows what seem like very simple AI characters to take on real individual personas. And when you use their supposed intelligence against them mugging a curious guard, for example - its effect on gameplay is all the sweeter. Also supremely deserving of recognition is Monolith's decision to include five maps dedicated to cooperative play, each one a blast to undertake with a buddy. Their inclusion was a welcome nod to what we expect to be an expanding feature of first-person action gaming.

#### **2002 BEST EXPANSION PACK**

#### (TIE) THE GHOST RECON ADD-ONS: **DESERT SIEGE & ISLAND THUNDER**

■ DEVELOPER RED STORM ■ PUBLISHER UBI SOFT

SPEAKING OF GAMES OF THE YEAR, our Game of the Year 2001 keeps getting better and better. In 2002, Ghost Recon expanded with two fantastic add-ons. The first, Desert Siege, brought the smallunit tactical shooter to the featureless steppes of Ethiopia. Then Island Thunder followed the Ghosts

#### THE OTHER NOMINEE

EverQuest: Planes of Power

through an altogether different campaign in the rain-swept jungles of Cuba, culminating in

a deadly street fight in urban Havana.

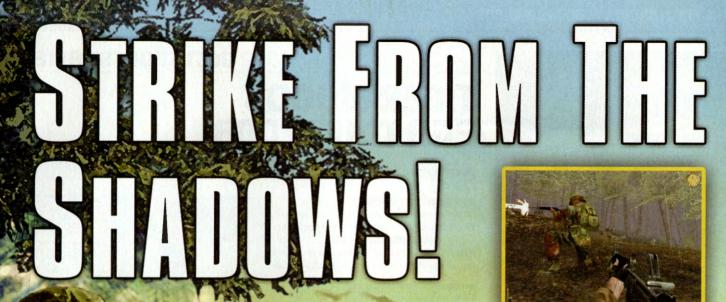
In fact, Island Thunder offered what were easily the two best multiplayer co-op missions of the year. The villa raid - where you hit the beach, seize a luxury villa, and then defend it against an Alamo-style assault of enemy troops - is splendid fun. Also in the "Defend" mode, the polling center mission leaves your heart in your throat as you (and a trusty buddy - in my case, Billy "Creamy Smooth" Harms) guard opposite doorways against waves of armed thugs determined to crush the



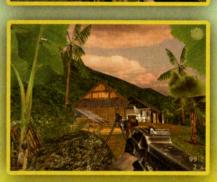
■ Your Cuban enemies may be irregulars, but they're well-armed, experienced jungle fighters.

hopes of Cuban democracy. The resulting street fight is vintage Ghost handiwork.

I'm dying to see Ghost Recon 2. If the old engine can be used to produce such consistently great new material, it's mind-boggling to imagine what Red Storm will be able to muster with all-new muscle. In the meantime, these two add-ons are still getting workouts on our PCs. — Dan Morris







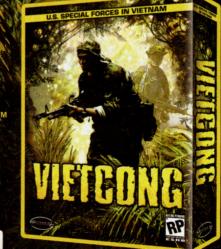


**U.S. SPECIAL FORCES IN VIETNAM** 









GET THE DEMO AT WWW.vietcong-game.com



■ The Army needs a tech-savvy soldier for the wars of tomorrow — and you could be it.

# **2002 BEST VALUE**

# **AMERICA'S** ARMY

**■ DEVELOPER U.S. ARMY GAME PROJECT** PUBLISHER U.S. ARMY

AS A FEW BLUSTERY EMAILS to us pointed out in exaggerated detail, the U.S. Army's first game developed for the American public's consumption isn't totally free. If you're a tax payer, you've helped fund it. With an estimated budget of \$7 million split among a population of 288.4 million, your share was about 2.4 cents. Get over it.

So what does 2.4 cents get you these days? An engaging Unreal engine-powered

## THE OTHER NOMINEES

- Jeopardy 2003
- Shadow Force
- Freedom Force

tactical firstperson shooter that has become

the new

model for realism in military-themed games, and a welcome model in its cost to consumers. You start out as a raw recruit learning the basic training of remedial warfare: how to fire and aim authentic weapons, maneuver through obstacle courses, communicate as a team, and even parachute from a plane and survive intact. (That last one was my undoing on more than one occasion.) Successfully completing each task earns you the gongs necessary to move up the ladder.

Of course, the U.S. Army isn't providing this online multiplayer experience to you out of the goodness of its collective camouflagegreen heart. The game is intended as a recruitment tool, and as yet, we have no idea if it'll be effective. But one thing's for sure: Not since bearded old Uncle Sam commanded "I want you!" have American youth been so inspired to action by out-and-out propaganda. And all for (nearly) free. - Chuck Osborn

# **2002 BEST SPORTS GAME**

# **TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2003**

### **■ DEVELOPER EA SPORTS** ■ PUBLISHER EA SPORTS

### NO SURPRISE, BIG SURPRISE.

THE OTHER NOMINEES

■ Links 2003

Virtua Tennis

Freedom Force

No surprise: EA Sports wins a sports-game award. Big, big surprise: it's for its golf franchise!

Tiger Woods 2003 outdrives Microsoft's Links 2003 this year, in no small part because of the great leap forward for EA's franchise - which has tradi-

tionally lagged behind Links.

This year's edition, however, shows off an overhaul on the

scale of the

Marshall Plan. The full-3D environments are sprawling and lusciously rendered, with magnificent texture work. The mouse-swing offers an incredible spectrum of finesse techniques — the chipping, in particular, is almost unbelievably lifelike in its simulation of the "light touch."

To be fair, Links 2003 is a terrific game, and a golf fan will be well-served by either one of them. For me, though, the career progression and TV-style presen-



A nervous twitch on the putting green can cost you shots — just like in real golf!

tation of Tiger put it ahead. The 3D camera, the firstrate commentary, and the sheer "We're in a PGA event!" delight of multiplay make Tiger my choice.

In a year in which most PC sports franchises (including EA's) continued to slide backward in terms of quality and innovation, this one soared to an impressive new height. Bravo! - Dan Morris

# **2002 BEST ADVENTURE GAME**

# **SYBERIA**

### ■ DEVELOPER MICROIDS ■ PUBLISHER DREAMCATCHER

## THOUGH IT'S REPORTEDLY BEEN "DYING" since

the late '90s, the adventure genre has continued to hang in there, most notably through the efforts of European developers. Unfortunately, the Myst-ification of pure adventure gaming has resulted in an unbalanced emphasis on ambient intrigue at the expense of good old-fashioned storytelling - the bread and butter of classics from the likes of Sierra.

LucasArts, and Infocom

That's why Syberia, from French-Canadian developer

Prisoner of War Freedom Force

THE OTHER NOMINEES

Microids, is our hands-down pick for the Best Adventure Game of 2002. Sure, it raised the bar for graphics excellence in the genre - witness the opening funeral procession or the elaborate mammoth-themed university settings, for example — but it was Syberia's epic story that stirred my soul.

Let's be honest, folks: the reason this genre has taken a financial dip in the U.S. is because, without a proper context, old-school object-gathering mixed with obscure puzzle-solving has become a bore. Our fleeting attention spans, courtesy of the hectic pace



Adventure gamers get few decent offerings each year, and should snap up Syberia post-haste.

of the Internet Age, can't deal with a plodding plotline. Action games get away with it because there's, well, action. But unless an adventure has a great story, you might as well be picking up the developer's laundry.

As Kate Walker, not only are you searching for the missing heir to an automaton factory in France, but you're also embarking on a feminist journey of self-discovery. Speaking as a guy, that's one adventure I won't have in real life. - Chuck Osborn



# THE BEST

# **GAMING MOMENTS OF 2002**

Being all you can be in a daring nighttime parachute assault in America's Army.

Getting laid in Neverwinter Nights (and being so, ahem, enthusiastic that your courtesan passes out from exhaustion!).

Sending bad guvs flving skyhigh with Alchemiss' Aloft spell in Freedom Force.

Paratrooping down into enemy territory from a B-17 wing, alongside a dozen other Allied soldiers, in Battlefield 1942.



Lightsaber-battling side-by-side with Luke Skywalker in Jedi Knight II (shown above).

Experiencing the swirling chaos of the Normandy invasion in Medal of Honor: Allied Assault.

The tornado sequence in No One Lives Forever 2.

Running for minutes through a seemingly abandoned tunnel in Grand Theft Auto III, only to stumble upon some bums huddled around a fire - and realizing how detailed this world really is.

Decapitating sniveling goblins with a single sword swipe in Ary Fatalis

The shocking evilization of

Arthas in Warcraft III.

Assassinating "Chunky" Lee Chong in Grand Theft Auto III... by whatever means you choose.

Taking a walk on the wild side through the seamy red-light district of Neocron.

Being caught in an abrupt sandstorm in Morrowind.

Slipping on our own banana in No One Lives Forever 2 while running away from Indian policemen.

Being shocked at the realization that our Uzi was shooting chunks off an enemy's skull in Soldier of Fortune II.

Dominating in a round of Battlefield 1942's Wake Island map, with an end score of over 150 points.

Seeing the opening text to Half-Life mod Heart of Evil extolling that it's "the only Half-Life mod to be officially endorsed by Satan's c\*\*k." (And it didn't read "cook.")

# PCG STAFF MEMBERS' & DISAPPOINTMEN



FAVORITE GAME: Magic Online "Perfect for 30-minute game-breaks...and I can keep it minimized in the background to avoid 007: Nightfire "A Bond game with Metal Gear's stylish moments, GTA III's openendedness, and hot Bond girls in bikinis... with guns. *That's* what we want. Not this."



FAVORITE GAME: Freedom Force "It's the savior of superhero games, with missions and mods that'll give any fanboy a Stan Lee grin." BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT: Starfleet Command III "I love this series, so I'll play SFC III no matter what. But I'm super-annoyed by all the glitches in its single-player missions. Weren't the bugs in SFC/SFC II bad enough?"



FAVORITE GAME: Battlefield 1942 "It's every-thing we ever hoped to do in a multiplayer combat game. It's a major accomplishment, and an endless amount of fun." BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT: Freedom Force "I'm a comics fan and a strategy fan. If I was bored after 20 minutes, you know it missed the mark by a mile."



FAVORITE GAME: Freedom Force "It's the game I've been waiting for my entire life. Probably the most fun I had all last year...and probably this year, too! RollerCoaster Tycoon 2 "Maybe if we all chip in and send Chris Sawyer a 3D video card, he'll learn how to program for one.



FAVORITE GAME: Medieval: Total War "Any game that lets me marry off my daughters to yame that tets many only daughters when two-bit kings and assassinate my political rivals will top my list any year." BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT: Madden 2003 "It sure would be nice if EA made a real football game for the PC, instead of shackling us with a PS2 port year after year."



FAVORITE GAME: Neverwinter Nights "It's still on my hard drive. I've been playing it nearly every night since it was released. So many mods, so little time." B INTMENT: Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast, No One Lives Forever 2, Soldier of Fortune II, Unreal Tournament 2003, NHL 2003 "Go ahead, pick a sequel..."



FAVORITE GAME: Dungeon Siege "I was just about to crack some skulls waiting for my next Diablo fix when DS burst into my life and gave me salvation. Ahhh..." DINTMENT: Warcraft III "I know, I know, I'm supposed to be this HUGE Warcraft fan...and I still am. It's just that WC III didn't rock my world like I thought it would."



FAVORITE GAME: Divine Divinity "You could take two random pieces of hay from the world and fashion them into a make-shift bed to rest on. How cool is that?" BIG NT: Divine Divinity "Sometimes taking any two random pieces of hay and fashioning them into a bed caused the game to crash to your desktop.

# THE WORST

# **GAMING MOMENTS OF 2002**

Slogging through Jedi Knight II's first few missions - lots of puzzles, no Force powers, no fun.

Watching Aliens spawn out of nowhere, get trapped on objects, and prove utterly unscary in Aliens vs. Predator 2: Primal Hunt's outdoor Marine levels.

The ho-hum hijinks on Circe's Island in Age of Mythology.

Having a bloodtest tell you your teammate was human in The Thing, only to see him transform into a monster seconds later.

Getting the Bond theme blared at you for flipping an innocuous, ordinary-looking switch in 007: Nightfire ... and not getting it during the game's (few) cool parts.

Beating Britney's Dance Beat in two hours, while everybody in the office pointed and laughed.

> - Norman Chan, PC Gamer intern extraordinaire

Not hearing a peep out of the development teams responsible for Half-Life 2, Team Fortress 2, and Duke Nukem Forever.

Quitters! Any time during an online head-to-head duel when an opponent quit rather than lose a game. (It happened to Rob in Magic Online and FIFA 2003, and he wins rarely enough to need those victories!)

Not getting laid in Neverwinter Nights. Joe spent months trying unsuccessfully to get some action. Guess those girls have taste.

Having to buy copies of Hero X, Legion, War Commander, and more when their publishers didn't send us copies of this junk.



# SATAGE



Command Your Warriors



Or Engage in Battle

Real Time

Strategy Shooter



C O M I N G 2 0 0 3

W W W . S 2 G A M E S . C O M

002 S2 Games, LLC. Savage is a trademark of S2 Games, LLC. iGames is a trademark of iGames Publishing, LLC.

















Games Extreme

"ONE OF THE MOST COMPLETE SHOOTERS EVER"

"BUY NOW PLAY OFTEN"

**Game Informer** 













Blood Violence

PC CD The million selling #1 bestseller

3.3002 Belternia (hteracture Busto and The Codemansters Software Company Limited ("Codemasters"). All hights reserved. "Codemasters") as a registerer trademark of Codemasters, "CENIUS AT PLAN". "FADE." "Operation Fissingom" and "Operation Fissingom, Resistance" are trademarks of Codemasters. Developed by Belternia Interective Studie Published by Godemasters, all other copyrights or trademarks on the property of their respective.

# **GAME OF THE YEAR**

ONE MILLION RECRUITS
AND COUNTING...



# OPERATION FLASHPOINT GAME OF THE YEAR EDITION

For the first time all 3 campaigns of the Cold War's darkest chapter are brought together in one box, in the most complete combat simulation ever.

- · 3 deep compelling storylines.
- More than 100 incredible missions through campaigns and single player sorties.
- 26 addictive LAN & Internet multiplay missions.
- Command squads of crack troops.
- Drive & fly over 50 authentic vehicles and aircraft.
- Battle across 4 sprawling
   100km² islands.



WON NIOL...

For more info, game demos and downloads visit www.codemasters.com/flashpoint







www.unrealtournament2003.com



# THE YEAR'S MOST ACCLAIMED SHOOTER.

"...beyond anything you've seen before...it's the new face of futuristic combat"

- PC Gamer

"This is unquestionably the most graphically stunning shooter to date."

- GameSpy

"Unreal Tournament 2003 raises the bar for first-person PC action games."

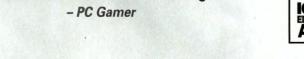
- Philadelphia Inquirer

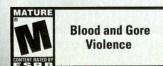
"Everyone's favorite shooter just got better"

- FHM

"... UT2003 looks effin' amazing."















Unreal ® Tournament 2003 © 2003 Epic Games, Inc. Raleigh, N.C. U.S.A. Unreal and the Unreal logo are registered trademarks of Epic Games, Inc. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. All other trademarks and trade names are the property of their respective owners. Unreal Tournament 2003 was created by Digital Extremes. Manufactured and marketed by Infogrames, Inc., New York, New York, a subsidiary of Infogrames Entertainment, S.A., under license from Epic Games, Inc.



>>> BY SCOTT HUMPHRIES <<<

¶ The weekend's over. You're back in your cubicle (or your classroom) attending to the mind-numbing business of drudgery/"learning"/manning the NORAD missile-tracking system that occupies your waking hours. ¶ The accountant denies your request for a GeForce4 Ti 4600, the IT guy deletes all the PC games from the network, and your boss thinks a LAN party should take place in the kitchen, with enough cake and ice cream for the whole office. Where are you going to go to burn your dose of the Mondays?! ¶ Go online! Look in the right places, and you'll find tons of fun and fast Internet games that anyone with a reliable connection and a halfway decent PC can play. No money? No hardware? No problem! These games require minimal download time and little or no hard-drive space, and you can close 'em with a mouse-click. They're quick, low-maintenance, and best of all — they're FREE!

http://www.pcgamer.com PC GAMER MARCH 2003 75













BOTTOM OF THE SEA (42)

# **PUZZLERS**

**DIAMOND MINE** Part Bust-A-Move, part Tetris. Click on jewels to swap them and create rows of like colors. One of the most popular and addictive puzzle games on the net. >>> www.popcap.com

BLIX When you need a pick-meup and don't feel like walking to the Mr. Coffee, groove to this excellent techno-infused pong game by GameLabs.

>>> www.shockwave.com

**ALCHEMY** Picture a Minesweeper interface where your task is to match symbols' shapes and colors to turn lead into gold. Tough but addictive. >>> www.popcap.com

# **GAMES THAT A-MAZE**

**MUMMY MAZE** Calculate your moves carefully to outsmart the mummy and escape the Pharaoh's Tomb. >>> www.popcap.com

**DANCE FLOOR DOMINATOR** Don't worry: it's not a buttonmashing Dance Dance Revolutionstyle game. Navigate an 8-bit dancer around traps to clear futuristic mazes. >>> www.coffeebreakarcade.com

Use elbow tubes, bumpers, and walls to avoid traps and bounce Bump through the maze to collect coins.

>>> www.pogo.com

# **WORD TO YO MOTHERBOARD**

**PSYCHOBABBLE** It's magnetic poetry gone terribly awry. Compete against up to 11 players online to create the most popular phrases. >>> www.popcap.com

SCRABBLE BLITZ Quick four-minute bouts of Scrabble against online opponents. Guaranteed to increase your vocabulary - or drive you nuts. >>> www.games.com

**BOOKWORM** Feed the worm by spelling words in a crossword-style board, with bonuses for stringing together lots of letters. Don't let the burning tiles get to the bottom of the library, or "the roof, the roof, the roof is on fire."

>>> www.popcap.com

# ITCHIN' FOR SOME **3D ACTION**

**SPACECOWBOY** No 3D card, buckaroo? Race by yourself or against online challengers in this Wipeout-style futuristic shooter that has absolutely nothing to do with cowboys of any kind.

>>> www.eyeone.com

ALIEN X Can't sneak Half-Life onto your office rig? This simple FPS should tide you over 'til you get home. Hunt vicious aliens aboard a space station, using various weapons and maximum force. >>> www.3dgroove.com

# OLD-SCHOOL ARCADE

RAMPAGE You remember: Wreak havoc on an unsuspecting city as an Ape, Wolf, or Sea Creature. The first of the monstercombat sims is still considered the best. Go to www.midway.com for web versions of this and other classics like Defender, Joust, Spy Hunter, and Tapper.

PAC-MAN The original king of arcade gaming is still a blast to play after all these years. Pass the slow hours with a web version at www.neave.com, where you'll also find Space Invaders and Tetris.

A.I. PENGO Control an ice cubekicking penguin through 36 levels in this throwback to the classic '80s coin-op.

>>> www.dtek.chalmers.se/~d3rebas/ creative/martinsoft/aipengo/index.html

# **GOING BACK TO THE BOARD GAMES**

COSMIC **ENCOUNTER** ONLINE

Before Magic: The Gathering there was Cosmic Encounter - the classic game that "breaks its own rules." In beta now, it could be online by the time you read this. Head over to www.cosmicencounter.com to get your free two-week trial membership, and let the joy begin.

**BATTLESHIP: GENERAL QUARTERS** An online version of the

classic Battleship. Take on computer opponents at http://home.iae.nl/ users/franklin/.

MONOPOLY Got hours of downtime? Join the other freeloaders on www.games.com to play this Java-based Monopoly game and other board-game favorites.

# ADVENTURE REDUX

**MERLIN'S QUEST** A point-and-click adventure game with action/puzzle elements. Save Camelot from Arthur's evil halfbrother, Mordred.

>>> www.shockwave.com

GRAAL A huge Java adventure game with an overhead view similar to The Legend of Zelda. Head here to play the free version online: www.cyberjoueur.com/ English/graal/graal.html

LENNY LOOSEJOCKS There are currently three graphic adventures featuring this Aussie cartoon character on www.ezone.com. A throwback to the old LucasArts and Sierra graphic adventures of the '80s and '90s, Lenny should keep you busy long enough to warrant some overtime.

# SICK & TWISTED

**5 FINGER FILLET** As the name suggests, this one's bloodier than an office envelope opener

























mishap. Try to hit the gaps between your fingers with a knife. (Warning: Not for wussies!) Hey, at least

>>> www.gamespyarcade.com/ software/webgames/sicktwisted/ fivefinger/fivefinger\_index.htm

you've got two hands...

INCRIMINATI Hide all the shady stuff in your bedroom before your parents get home. Part memory game, part hide-and-seek, and all perverted.

>>> www.seethru.co.uk/games/ incriminati/index.htm

MICRO SCOOTER Sick of that obnoxious co-worker riding down the hall on his mini scooter? Now you can live out your fantasy of pummeling him with heavy objects, to the beat of an oddly addicting theme song. Head to www.scooterdeath.com and start chucking.

# CLASSIC SPORTS

**GUTTERBALL** All the fun of bowling without the cheesy shoes and beer bellies. Customize your ball, then head to the lane by yourself or with that hot secretary next door.

>>> www.shockwave.com

**CUEBALL ALLEY** 3D POOL Though the mouse movements take some getting used to, once you get the hang of it, this sim is the next best thing to having a snooker table in the office.

>>> www.shockwave.com

# NOTHIN' BUT

How about a timehonored game of horse, with your choice of players and courts? Though technically demanding, NBN beats the boring click-fest of most basketball web games. Cruise over to www.3dgroove.com for this game and other sporting diversions.

# EXTREME SPORTS

SSX SNOW-DREAMS This one does require some 3D hardware and a small download. But if you've got the machine, take to the slopes and enjoy what console gamers have been raving about in this fine snowboarding web game.

>>> www.pogo.com.

SKATEPARK SESSION Don't let the name

fool you: it's essentially Tony Hawk: The Web Game, with plenty of ollies and big air. If you can deal with the long load times and Walkman signage, you'll be in for some great skateboarding action.

>>> www.arcadevault.com/tony hawk skater.html

MINI-PUTT Okay, so miniature golf isn't exactly an "extreme" sport, but this webgame - complete with pipes, hills, windmills, and other trademarks of the vintage rec sport — is still incredibly addictive. Watch the vectors and go for a hole-in-one.

>>> http://web.mit.edu/wnellie/ www/miniputt.swf

# **FAST AND FURIOUS**

SKYRACER: **IMPULSE** More of a racer than SpaceCowboy, Skyracer lets you test your mettle against realistic physics and rocket-fast computercontrolled vehicles.

>>> www.3dgroove.com

BURNING **METAL 2D** Better than its 3D brother, Burning Metal 2D plays in an overhead view like the arcade game Off Road. Collect power-ups to beat the competition.

>>> www.eyeone.com

car web game.

NASCAR WEB RACING Like EA's other hefty webgame, SSX Snowdream, this one requires a small download. (A broadband connection is recommended.) Head over to www.pogo.com if you've got the salt to play this stock-

# **GAME-SHOW GAMES**

**FAMILY FEUD** ONLINE Survey says...This is a great version of the famous TV show. Best of all, no kissing. >>> www.uproar.com

JEOPARDY! Play Jeopardy! Classic or themed versions like Sports, Showbiz, and Techno-file in this excellent online version of the popular TV quiz show.

>>> www.station.sony.com

# **TOOLS OF** THE TRADE

Most of these games require the use of the following web applications. You may already have them installed in your browser; if not, get each here:

- FLASH (www.flash.com)
- SHOCKWAVE (www.shock waye.com)
- JAVA (java.sun.com)

# **WHO WANTS** TO BE A MILLIONAIRE

Regis has left the building, but that doesn't mean you can't continue to enjoy this big-bucks trivia contest. Head over to www.abc.com to take a turn in the hot seat.

# STRATEGY/ LEPLAYING FUN

LUNATIX Like old-school games Spellcasting 101 and Eric the Unready, Lunatix is a point-and-click comedy RPG. Fight fuzz bunnies and lunch ladies to gain experience and escape from the asylum.

>>> www.lunatix-online.com

TERRA FIRMA This MUD is only for the hardcore (read "old") PC gamers who enjoyed playing text-based RPGs like Zork in the days of yore. TF has tons of quests















**DELIRIUM (41)** LENNY LOOSEJOCKS (20)









PSYCHOBABBLE (7)

**BDJ FU: WAX ATTACK (43)** 

**GUTTERBALL (24)** 

to keep you busy, and the best part is it looks like a word processor to your boss, so no panic button necessary! >>> http://terrafirma.terra.mud.org

**NEOPETS** It may not be Black & White, but this "pet simulator" can be quite addicting. Feed, groom, and equip a Pokémoninspired creature to raise its experience and beat other pets in hairraising online battles. >>> www.neopets.com

# **2D ACTION** OR NOT 2D?

**REAL SPACE 2** It's basically Asteroids with a twist. Destroy waves of enemy starships to accomplish each mission-specific goal. >>> www.arcadetown.com

# MV-017 METAL ARMOR

Control a hopping robot in a side-scrolling shooter à la Moon Patrol. One of the many excellent Flash games at www.ferryhalim. com/orisinal.

**DELIRIUM** Defend your gun turret against encroaching alien invaders in this highly frenetic shoot-'em-up.

>>> www.shockwave.com/sw/ content/delirium

# PLATFORM MADNESS

Get vour underwater

diver to the ocean floor by controlling his trajectory and jump strength. The music, the art direction, and the graphics are all subtle but hypnotic. >>> www.orisinal.ws/games/ sea.htm

**BDJ FU: WAX** ATTACK (1 & 2) Find missing vinyl to mix fat beats, increase your vibe, and take-out "playa hatas" in this unique side-scrolling platformer with an attitude.

>>> www.shockwave.com

**VAMPIRE BOY** Help a vertically challenged blood-sucker collect candy in a haunted castle even access hard-to-reach areas by turning into a bat. Click over to www.robotduck.com for this and some other unique games.

# TRULY UNIQUE

SISSY FIGHT 2000 An addictive turnbased strategy hybrid. Create your own personalized schoolyard dawg in the Sims-esque character generator, then it's out to the black top for some swishy trash-talking. >>> www.sissyfight.com

THE TRUTH IS **UP THERE** Use a virtual camcorder to zoom-in and record UFOs as they soar by. The longer and steadier your video is, the more money you'll get for your evidence. You can even see the recordings made by the 10 highest scorers.

>>> www.orisinal.org/games/truth.htm

# **12 SITES TO REMEMBER**

Go ahead, send out the memo: These are the sites that will save your sanity. Or is that destroy your seniority? Between all these sites, there are at least 100 ways to get fired. Don't say we never did anything for you...

- www.shockwave.com A huge selection of everything Shockwave.
- www.popcap.com The undisputed puzzle king of the internet.
- www.coffeebreakarcade.com The name says it all.
- www.eyeone.com Some original arcade action to be found here.
- www.3dgroove.com Grooves' 3D web games rule. Besides some of our Top 50, you'll find advergames for Powerpuff Girls, Hey Arnold!, and more.
- www.happypuppy.com The classic site for free online games.
- www.pogo.com EA's sponsored site has some great games.
- www.midway.com Nothin' like the classics.
- www.games.com Games up the wazoo.
- games.yahoo.com When you're bored at your job, get a Yahoo I.D., head into the game rooms, and play your friends who are bored at their jobs.
- www.ferryhalim.com/orisinal Games so simple yet brilliant.
- www.gamespyarcade.com Familiar to most as the home of online PC games, GameSpy Arcade also offers some fun, unique webgames.

SOAP BUBBLE Tired of co-workers invading your bubble? Now you can take an active role in keeping it from bursting. With graphics reminiscent of Out of This World, Soap Bubble is a treat to play. >>> http://hem.passagen.se/ struma/Soapbubble.swf

# SHOOTING GALLERIES

COMBAT **INSTINCT 2** You've crash landed on a harsh alien landscape and lost contact with the fleet - what are you going to do? Grab a shotgun and take out some alien uglies with extreme prejudice, of course. Arquably the best shooting gallerystyle web game out there.

>>> www.arcadetown.com/combati2

THE DOLLHOUSE Take out cranky, guntoting toys with an uzi, pistol or shotgun and try to make it to the attic for the final battle.

>>> www.gamespyarcade.com

Pick your game, select a difficulty level, and then get ready for some classic bottle-breaking action in 3D. >>> www.3dgroove.com













Where Gamers Go...

Play More, Pay Less

Visit us @ www.gogamer.com or call us @ 888-948-9661



# IN THIS ARENA, WARRIORS ARE CREATED, BATTLES ARE FORGED, SMACK IS TALKED.



The Xbox *Live*<sup>™</sup> service is the world's first no-holds-barred, ultimate online arena dedicated to high-speed gaming. Jump from game to game and play thousands of other players using one GamerTag. You can't do that anywhere else.

# YOU AIN'T GONNA RULE THE ULTIMATE ARENA WITH A NAME LIKE BUNNY23

Use your unique GamerTag to build your rep across all games. After all, you'll need it to grow your legend in this arena.

# THOSE VOICES IN YOUR HEAD ARE VOICES IN YOUR HEADSET

With the hands-free Xbox Communicator, you can talk trash, call plays, disguise your voice, and even mute the sucker that won't shut up.

# IT'S LIKE 50,000 OF YOUR CLOSEST FRIENDS. ONLY THEY ALL WANT TO SCHOOL YOU

Play your old friends and make some new ones.

Just remember to show them who's boss.

# USE THE OPTIMATCH™ SYSTEM AND QUICKMATCH TO FIND THE PERFECT OPPONENT

Quickly find the perfect game, with the arena and rules you choose, so you won't waste your time with rookies or get destroyed by grizzled veterans.

# DOWNLOAD NEW CONTENT, SO THE GAME NEVER ENDS

Get different weapons, new characters, additional levels, and more with downloadable content that will extend your game like never before.





























# GET YOUR STARTER KIT FOR JUST \$49.99\* AND ARM YOURSELF FOR ENTRY.

\$4999\*

\$49.99\* INCLUDES:

1 YEAR OF XBOX *LIVE* SERVICE

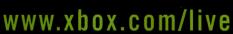
XBOX COMMUNICATOR HEADSET

WHACKED!™ AND MotoGP ONLINE DEMO GAMES†

FOR THE ULTIMATE ONLINE ARENA, THERE'S NO POWER GREATER THAN X.









RELEASES ULTIMATE UIDE NE AWE



\* An artist's depiction of zombies feeding in McDonald's' new PreyGround Amusement Center...That, or a screenshot from Resident Evil 2.

# **ZOMBIE CONSULTANT ADVISES MCDONALD'S**

# Fast-food giant to consider taking menu in dramatic new direction

story close to the hearts (and bellies) of PC Gamer's fast food-riddled editors concerns McDonald's, the once beloved utopia of all things fried and salted. Greatly saddened by the chain's plunge into the depths of mediocrity, famed zombie-food consultant E.B. Eattington has been hired to examine McDonald's' position within the marketplace and develop a strategy to reinvigorate the beleaguered fast-food chain.

"There must be a radical shift in thinking," reads the opening of Eattington's final proposal, Reaching the Zombie Demographic: What McDonald's Needs to Know. "The 'normal' human populace has expressed their disgust with McDonald's' bland offerings of tasteless, unhealthy meats, and they've moved on to tastier venues. The norms ain't coming back. It's time for McDonald's to embrace the zombie market."

The first step in Eattington's five-part plan is to replace all of the chain's playgrounds with PreyGround amusement centers. "It's true that some of the older and more frail zombies will appreciate the

cookie-cutter nature of McDonald's' service," the report says, "but most of the younger and more nubile dead will welcome the thrill of the hunt. That's what the PrevGround will offer - the opportunity to safely hunt and devour live, screaming prey."

In addition, the menu will be expanded to offer a wide selection of the most savory meats and organs, all of which will be served fresh off the body. One possibly contentious recommendation is that the zombies be allowed to see the meat being cut from live prey as a way of stimulating appetite and the digestive tract.

"We're dead," Eattington explains, "so things move a tad slower for us. We need all the help we can get."

There has so far been no response from McDonald's' headquarters in Oak Brook, Illinois. And even if the company ultimately decides to ignore Eattington's zombie-centric recommendations, he did offer one other bit of advice.

"They could always concede defeat and turn all of their restaurants into Jack in the Boxes."

# RECOMMENDS

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

# **HEARTS OF IRON**

Grand strategy has never been grander. This sweeping epic re-creates the European theater of conflict from 1936–1948, militarily and economically



Dirk the Daring undertakes yet another assault on the dragon's lair of our fondly remembered youth. Only this time, the graphics are even nicer.



racing sport gets a full-blown PC sim treatment in this "everything but the wrench" driving game

# HOW WE RATE GAMES: THE BREAKDOWN

100%-90% 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. and is likely a great example of its genre

79%-70% GOOD

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.

59%-50% 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.

39%-0% 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 youl

# VALUE PRICE PERFORMA



Mr. David English



- New DDR400 Motherboard
- 533/400MHz FSB and UDMA-133 Support
- DDR PC3200, 8X AGP and USB 2.0 Support
  256MB PC3200 (400MHz) DDR RAM
- 40 GB UDMA-133 7200 RPM Hard Drive
- 40X12X40 CDRW Drive
   Black Medium Tower Case 350 Watt
- SIS Xabre 200 64MB DDR 8X AGP
- Realtek 10/100 Ethernet NIC
   Black KDS 17\* Monitor
- Premium 5.1 Channel Sound
- Altec Lansing AVS200 Stereo Speakers
   Matching Keyboard and Mouse
   IEEE 1394 Firewire Ports
- Microsoft Windows XP Home Edition



### Intel Pentium IV Processor

1.8 GHz 2.0 GHz

2.4 GHz (533MHz FSB)

2.53 GHz (533MHz FSB)

2.6 GHz (533MHz FSB)

2.8 GHz (533MHz FSB)

3.0 GHz (533MHz FSB)

# 79982301 819s2302 849s2303 879s2304

929<sub>82305</sub>

.01982306

\$1,31952307

\$

# .336

Athon XP 2200+



**New Intel Celeron Processor** 

1.7 GHz \$ 379 \$1301 389 s1302 1.8 GHz \$ 439 \$1303 2.0 GHz

Intel Pentium IV Processor

\$ 459 s1304 1.8 GHz 2.0 GHz 479 S1305 \$ 499 \$1306 2.4 GHz

- New Intel i845GL DDR Motherboard • 400MHz FSB and UDMA-100 Support
- DDR 2100, 4X AGP and USB 2.0 Support
   256MB PC2100 (266MHz) DDR RAM
- 40 GB UDMA-100 7200 RPM Hard Drive
- 56X CD-ROM
- Intel Extreme Graphics

- Intel 10/100 Ethernet NIC
   PCI 3D Wavetable Stereo Sound
   Atlas 440W 2.1 Speakers w/Subwoofer
- Deluxe Windows 98 Keyboard & Wheeled Mouse
- Microsoft Windows XP Home Edition +\$89



### AMD Athlon XP Processor with QuantiSpeed

\$ 359 xm1301 Athon XP 1800+ Athon XP 2000+ \$ 369 xm1302 Athon XP 2100+ \$ 379 XM1303

\$ 389 XM1304

# AMD Athlon XP Processor

- 200/266MHz FSB and UDMA-100 Support
- VIA KLE133 PC-133 and 4X AGP Support
- 256MB PC-133 SDRAM
- 40 GB UDMA-100 7200 RPM Hard Drive
- 56X CD-ROM
- Trident Blade 3D Shared AGP
- Realtek 10/100 Ethernet NIC
- PCI 3D Wavetable Stereo Sound
- Atlas 440W 2.1 Speakers w/Subwoofer Deluxe Windows Keyboard & Wheeled Mouse
- Microsoft Windows XP Home Edition +\$89
- · Sun Micro StarOffice
- AMD Certified Power Supply



### Intel Pentium IV Processor

- 2.0 GHz
- 2.4 GHz (533MHz FSB)
- 2.53 GHz (533MHz FSB)
- 2.6 GHz (533MHz FSB) 2.8 GHz (533MHz FSB) 3.0 GHz (533MHz FSB)
- \$1,289s3301 \$1,299s3302 \$1,329s3303 \$1,369s3304 \$1,419s3305 \$1,499s3306 \$1,799s3307

### SOYO Dragon Ultra Platinum DDR400 Motherboard • 533/400MHz FSB and U133 RAID Support

- DDR PC3200, 8X AGP and USB 2.0 Support
- 512MB PC3200 (400MHz) DDR RAM
- Dual 60 GB U133 7200 RPM RAID0 Hard Drive
- 16X DVD-ROM
- 48X12X48 CDRW Drive
- Server Case w/"See Thru" Case Mod and Voice Activated Neon 350 Watt
- ATI Radeon 9500 PRO 8X AGP 128MB DDR
- 10/100 Fast Ethernet NIC
   SoundBlaster Audigy 2 6.1 Sound w/SB1394 Firewire port Creative Labs Inspire 6.1 6600 Speakers w/Subwoofer
- Matching Keyboard and Mouse
- . Microsoft Windows XP Home Edition



# M2301

AMD Athlon XP Process	or with QuantiSpeed	
Athon XP 1800+	\$ 639.00 xm2301	
Athon XP 2000+	\$ 649.00 xm2302	
Athon XP 2100+	\$ 659.00 xm2303	
Athon XP 2200+	\$ 669.00 xm2304	
Athon XP 2400+	\$ 739.00 xm2305	
Athon XP 2600+	\$ 769.00 xm2306	
Athon XP 2700+	\$ 879.00 xm2307	
When VD 2000	\$ 919 00	



- New VIA KT400 Enhanced DDR400 Chipset 200/266/333MHz FSB and UDMA-133 Support
- DDR PC3200, 8X AGP and USB 2.0 Support
  256MB PC3200 (400MHz) DDR RAM
- 60 GB UDMA-133 7200 RPM Hard Drive
- Black 16X DVD-ROM
- Black AMD Tower Case 350 Watt
- New Nvidia GEFORCE 4 MX 440 BX AGP DVD 64MB DDR
- Matching Black 17" 0.27DP Monitor +\$129
   Realtek 10/100 Ethernet NIC
- Matching Keyboard and Mouse
   Premium 5.1 6 Channel Sound
- Premium 5.1 Speakers w/Subwoofer AMD Certified Power Supply
- Microsoft Windows XP Home Edition



### Intel Pentium IV Processor

- 1.8 GHz
- 2.0 GHz
- 2.4 GHz (533MHz FSB) 2.53 GHz (533MHz FSB)
- 2.6 GHz (533MHz FSB) 2.8 GHz (533MHz FSB) 3.0 GHz (533MHz FSB)
- - \$1,119s4301 \$1,139s4302 \$1,169s4303 \$1,199s4304 \$1,249s4305 \$1,339s4306

.639s4307

- New Intel i850E Rambus Motherboard 533/400MHz FSB and UDMA-100 Support
- Rambus PC1066, 4X AGP and USB 2.0 Support
- 256MB PC1066 (1066MHz) Rambus RD RAM • 80GB Ultra DMA 133 7200 RPM Hard Drive
- · 16X DVD-ROM ATI Radeon 9000 3D DVD 128MB DDR
- NEC AS 90 19" 0.25DP OSD Monitor
- 10/100 Ethernet NIC

· Microsoft Windows XP Home Edition

- · Black NEC AS90 19" Monitor · Black/Silver Case w/"See Thru" Case Mod w/ Voice
- Activated Neon 350 Watt SoundBlaster Audigy 5.1 Sound w/SB1394 Firewire port
- Creative Labs Inspire 5.1 5200 Speakers w/Subwoofer Matching Keyboard and Mouse



### AMD Athlon XP Processor with QuantiSp

- Athon XP 1800+ Athon XP 2000+ Athon XP 2100+ Athon XP 2200+
- Athon XP 2700+
- \$1,179xm3201 \$1,189xm3202 \$1,199xm3203 \$1,209xm3204 \$1,269xm3205 \$1,299xm3206 \$1,409xm3207 \$1,459xm3208 Athon XP 2400+ Athon XP 2600+ Athon XP 2800+







 200/266/333MHz FSB and UDMA-133 Support
 DDR PC3200, 8X AGP and USB 2.0 Support 512MB PC3200 (400MHz) DDR RAM
 80GB Ultra DMA 133 7200 RPM Hard Drive

• 16X DVD-ROM ATI Radeon 9700 PRO 8X AGP 128MB DDR

10/100 Ethernet NIC
 Black Case w/"See Thru" Case Mod and Voice Activated Neon 350 Watt

• Dolby Digital 5.1 Channel Sound & 1394 Fireware ports

Creative Labs Inspire 5.1 5200 Speakers

w/Subwoofer

• Black NEC AS90 19" Monitor

Sun Micro StarOffice

Matching Keyboard and Mouse
 Microsoft Windows XP Home Edition













# ATLAS MICRO LOGISTIC INC.

16720 E. Chestnut St., Unit D, City of Industry, CA 91748 • Tel: 626-336-6899 • Fax: 626-336-6569 Business Hour: Mon-Fri 8:30AM-5:30PM Pacific Time • Toll Free Technical Support: 877-336-6898

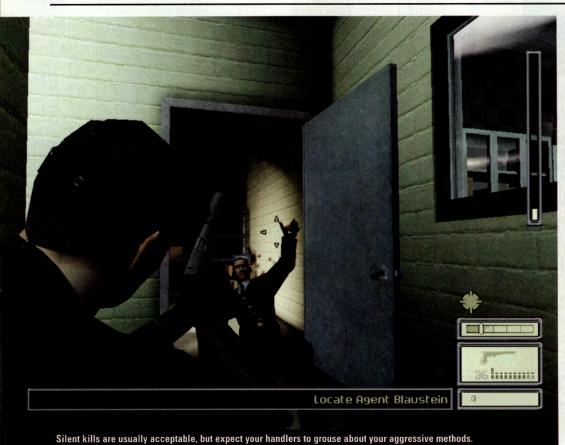
buv-atlas.com

# Splinter Cell



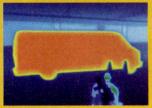
News broadcasts provide the global context for the unfolding storyline. (And you'll get some good laughs from the bottom-of-the-screen headline ticker.) These programs even beat CNN.

e colors don't run — they hide, sneak, eavesdrop, and then bust caps in your ass



ELECTRONIC EYES





**HE MAY NOT YET BE "more** machine than man," but Sam Fisher can count on an array of electronic aides to extend his sense of sight. His trusty goggles provide night vision (in snazzy black-and-white, a step forward from the monochrome green) and thermal vision (a great tool for spotting enemies through walls). Even more advanced gear includes cameras that can be stuck with putty to high walls, providing you with a remote-controlled camera to see around far corners.

hen Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered his "Four Freedoms"

speech in 1941, he gave the world a crystal-clear summary of the principles for which America would stand beginning with World War II - free-

dom of speech and worship, and freedom

from want and fear.

Splinter Cell opens with a shivery admonition: there is a fifth freedom - to kill in defense of the first four.

It's a hard-hitting preamble to a hard-hitting game - an adventure that buzzes with the geopolitical charge

and edgy grit of the Tom Clancy "universe." And by the time you've skulked, sniped, and sabotaged your way through SC, you'll feel like you've absorbed all the drama of one of Clancy's 700-page technothriller epics.

### **SOLID SAM**

VITAL STATS

VELOPER Ubi Soft

**BLISHER** Ubi Soft

56MB RAM, 32MB 3D card

AXIMUM PLAYERS 1

IGB HD, 16MB 3D card

RY Action/adventure

RED PIII 500, 128MB RAM.

THE YEAR IS 2004. THE NATIONAL SECURITY Agency (NSA) is expanding its charter. The secretive organization, tasked with intercepting and decrypting enemy communications, has determined that the age of Information Warfare demands a new human element: no longer can it rely exclusively on electronic eavesdropping. So out of retirement comes Sam Fisher, a veteran of the days when espionage required close contact and wetwork.

After one of the more memorable introduction sequences in recent years, you report to the NSA's offices for the privilege of running the training course. Sam may grumble at the inconvenience, but this inventive tutorial does an excellent job of teaching you the game's fairly involved mechanics.

It's not that there's anything terribly complicated to do - if anything, the design's dependence on the Xbox controller (for which SC was concurrently developed) means that the interface is actually very simple and streamlined. The challenge is in managing the vast menu of options available.

And Sam is definitely thrown in at the deep end — a bloodless coup in the former Russian republic of Georgia installs tyrannical business mogul Kombayn Nikoladze as president, and he has a nefarious scheme in store for America. When a massive "information strike" paralyzes the

United States, your new NSA cell is assigned to unravel the attack and "exercise the fifth freedom" on the plotters.

Gameplay is modeled closely on Metal Gear Solid, the stealth-and-fast-strike sneaker celebrated by PlayStation aficionados. SC adds a lot of details to the winning formula - à taut and plausible story, for one, but also a wealth of dazzling techno-toys, considerably more expansive and interactive environments, and, of course, incomparably better graphics.

# **SPIES STICK TO SHADOWS**

THESE ENVIRONMENTS WILL MAKE YOUR EYES crawl out of your head, drooling their socketjuices as they seek the glory on your monitor. Few games can even try to claim a greater level of detail and atmosphere in their levels, and the accomplishment is all the greater in SC because many of the levels are huge. The sheer artistic effort is humbling, and the technical effects (rustling curtains, shattering glass, and particularly the elegant dynamic lighting) are cause for applause.

But we've seen great-looking games before; what sets SC on a new pedestal is the way the environments matter. The basis of Sam's effectiveness is stealth: he's ill-





equipped to prevail in a shootout with wellarmed or numerous enemies. He's like a painter, and his medium is darkness.

Thus, your most important piece of equipment is your stealth meter, which indicates your level of detectability at any time. If you're crouched silently in a pitch-dark alley, the level is flat zero and you won't be discovered (unless a sentry happens to blunder right into you, which does happen if you're not paying attention). You have to use your eyes and ears at every moment, making quick judgments about what's safe, what speed of motion is too fast, and how best to time a necessary exposure to light.



Before long, you're soundlessly sneaking your way past every manner of threat - crawling over chain-link fences, climbing drainpipes, rappelling down buildings, and generally creeping around like the world's most high-line cat burglar.

Yet despite the fact that 80 percent of SC is just sneaking around the game's nine levels, I never once got bored with what I was doing. Nerve-wracking decisions - can I stay put, or am I going to have to risk taking out this guard from behind? - haunt every step. And that's before the attack dogs show up.

That's right - it's not all stealth. Ubi Soft's Montreal studio did a terrific job sprinkling the missions with spasms of frenetic action and tech-savvy stunts. The very first mission, for instance, demands a sweat-inducing dive into a burning warehouse to get information from an informant trapped inside.

Gunplay does play a part — though the actual amount of violence depends somewhat on your style of play. While the missions and the story unfold in a linear way, a few different approaches will usually steer you successfully to each new narrative node. Stealth is always the cleanest way to go - and even when a situation seems impossible to sneak through, employing some lateral thinking will usually produce a result and solve a problem without detection (or battle).

One great example is the wide lobby where two well-spaced security guards seem to offer an impossible conundrum. My first instinct is always to dive in and smoke some fools, but doing so kept getting me killed here (thank goodness for PC saves). Imagine my surprise when I realized that I could grab one of the guards from a shadow, knock him out, and then deal with his comrade without having to worry about getting double-teamed in a gun battle. (Even more patient types have solved that room without the need to raise any pulses at all.)

### **BOTTOMLESS BAG OF TRICKS**

SAM'S TECHNICAL GEAR IS ALWAYS GOOD FOR AN awed chuckle when it comes into play. The moment when you laser-mic two plotters from a distance, feeding their conversation in real time back to Washington, is a thrill. So are the cunning ambushes you learn to lay once you get hold of the non-lethal projectile known as the "sticky shocker." The most useful of all your gadgets is the fiberoptic camera, which lets you scope out what's behind a closed door.

There's one major bog in this gamer's paradise: The going can get hard, and I mean hard. You'll move quickly through the first few levels, but the fifth stage (a breakin at CIA Headquarters, in which you're not allowed to kill anyone) is a mountain of a mission that almost broke my will to go on. Even when I did succeed, the subsequent levels were no cakewalks. Brace yourself for some groaning frustration. (And that's on "Normal" difficulty -- I double-dare you to play this game on "Hard.")

But do press on. Splinter Cell will put a smile on any PC gamer's face. — Dan Morris



HIGHS: Ambitious and multi-faceted design; raw tension; rewards different approaches.

LOWS: Stretches of flat-out demoralizing difficulty; annoying animation bug on stairways

BOTTOM LINE: A "stealth game" for everyone,





preferred control scheme is mouseand-keyboard. It actually confers some advantages over a gamepad it's just as easy to switch between movements, and it's much faster to mouse-aim a gun.

The PC version's



# **Impossible Creatures**

# Beneath the inventive unit system are the tried-and-true gears of a thoroughly entertaining RTS

cientists have been merrily using recombinant DNA technology for years, but unless you're in the "organic-only" vegetable crowd, it's not very exciting stuff so far. What they really need to look into is mixing and matching animals - not animal traits, mind

ITAL STATS ISHER Microsoft D PIII 500, 128MB RAM ND P4 1GHz. 56MB RAM, 32MB 3D card

AXIMUM PLAYERS 6

you, but whole body parts. You know, like those freaky beasts in Greek mythology: a hippocampus (fishtailed horse), a griffin (part eagle, part lion), a manticore (part man, part lion with wings!)... you get the idea.

If all this stuff makes perfect sense, then you've got a pretty good grasp on the premise of Impossible Creatures, a new RTS from Alex Garden and Relic Entertainment. Choosing from over 50 different animals (over 60 if you count the "bonus" animals), you select any two and then mix-and-match their body parts to get such bizarre sights as a polar bear with lobster claws, an eagle with a hippo's head, a rhinoceros with a cheetah's body - and myriad other possibilities.

Along with the physical attributes of the creatures come the physiological characteristics, blending traits like Pack Hunter (they do more damage in groups), Herding (better defensive numbers when grouped together), Immunity, Regeneration, and so on.

So why all the animal jumble? Simply, to fight battles. As Rex Chance, 1930s-era adventurer, you start the game heading for the last known whereabouts of your longlost dad. He's nowhere to be found when you arrive, but according to his sultry assistant Lucy Willing, he's been working on a genetic technology called Sigma for megalomaniac industrialist Upton Julius -

Here's Whitey Hooten, lapdog to arch-fiend Upton Julius. He failed his audition as a Quake enemy

a Moreau-style madman seeking to create a mutant army for world domination.

Getting a grip on all the different animals and their abilities takes a while, but before long you'll start viewing them in terms of combat capabilities rather than their genus. Each animal belongs in one of three attack categories - melee, ranged, and artillery - and the combos you design require varying amounts of research (as well as resources of coal and electricity).

The creature-design interface - the Combiner — is a brilliantly streamlined affair, allowing you to whip out new monstrosities in a matter of seconds, but the down-



Most missions end with your forces lashing out en masse to obliterate an enemy structure.

# FOUR LEGS GOOD, TWO LEGS BAD!

**RECAUSE YOU HAVE** so many animals to work with and can tweak each creation in several body areas, you can easily lose yourself in the Combiner, fiddling to come up with the perfect design — only to realize there isn't one. Besides defensive and offensive capabilities, you must also balance costs and special abilities to suit your foes. Here are five creature combos that we like to keep in mind during most missions.

### WOLOYOTE

On some missions it's crucial that you immediately crank out creatures. That means Level I Tech, and for that it's hard to beat the Wolovote. It's got a good bite, nice speed, and high endurance, and it's a pack hunter.

### DRAGONOTAMUS

Not the speediest flyer around. but with 35 melee damage points, this beast embodies the slogan "Death from Above. Plus he's got immunity and extra defensive points for herding!

### **CROCERFISH**

He's not that useful in later missions, but you can exploit the Crocerfish's high artillery rating until about the ninth campaign mission. He's super-fast in the water, and though his melee rating is only 12, he can attack two foes at once when surrounded.

### ELECTRIPHANT

His melee damage is pathetic, but if you can keep the Electriphant to the rear while the big boys fight up front, his incredibly high Lightning Attack makes him the perfect escort. He can swim, too!

# LOBSTOCEROS

High melee damage and health points and super-strong defense make him a great melee unit, particularly if you're attacking structures those pincers pulverize metal! He can also swim and regenerate.







henchmen normally can't reach.

Enemy beasts will eventually break down bramble walls, but the result is usually a "corridor of death."

side is that you aren't allowed to save armies (which can be up to nine creatures) in the single-player game. That's too bad, because such a feature would let you save groups designed not only for specific circumstances, but also for each research level you reach.

Looking past the animals, Impossible Creatures plays pretty much like many other RTS titles - any good ones, that is. The AI and pathfinding routines are generally guite acceptable — creatures with ranged attacks initially try to avoid melee action, for instance and the waypoint system in conjunction with commands like Guard, Patrol, and Pursue gives you tight control over your units.

Though lots of missions wind up with huge, sprawling battles, you can't simply order everyone to fire on the enemy because artillery projectiles do splash damage to both friendly and enemy animals. Victory tastes sweet, particularly in the second half of the campaign, but stay on your toes in the endgames: unless you're careful, the mission can end without Rex collecting new specimens that he might need in later outings.

Impossible Creatures really shines in its multiplayer mode. Though the enemies in the campaign don't always use the same tactics

or animal combos, you still get a notion of what they'll be throwing at you - a luxury you won't have when squaring off against humans who've thought of combinations you probably haven't dreamed of. Besides standard IPX and TCP/IP support, Relic has added a built-in matching service called IC Online (part of Microsoft's Zone.com) that also tracks each player's stats.

The game's limited resources and rather short tech tree make it easy to grasp, but it still has a few tactical nuances that take time to discover. Thankfully, there's plenty of monster-mashing to enjoy along the way. - Stephen Poole

# FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Great mix-and-match unit design; smooth camera control; good graphics; very strong multiplay. LOWS: No way to save armies in single-player mode; mission endgames can be a challenge BOTTOM LINE: The single-player campaign is fun,



The mysterious new land of Malas beckons with custom housing and powerful new skills. Build a unique house, take on the role of Paladin or Necromancer, and expand your quest in the Internet's deepest role-playing experience.

Ultima Online<sup>TM</sup>: Age of Shadows<sup>TM</sup>... Lead the life you were born to live!

Ultima Online is a live game you play via the Internet allowing you to play with thousands of other users. AN INTERNET CONNECTION IS REQUIRED TO PLAY, Internet service providers usually charge a monthly tee to provide this access. ELECTRONIC ARTS CHARGES A MONTHLY SUBSCRIPTION FEE FOR THIS ONLINE PRODUCT, separate from your internet access charges. YOU MUST BE 13 TO REGISTER FOR THIS GAME. Online gameplay subject to the Ultima Online License Agreement.

© 2002 Electronic Arts Inc. Ultima, Ultima Unline, Age of Shadows, the U0 logo, Origin, the Origin logo, EA GAMES and the EA GAMES logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. All rights reserved. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. EA GAMES™ and Origin™ are Electronic Arts™ brands.



VITAL STATS

**RATING M** 

LISHER CDV

**ELOPER Reakktor.com** 

HD, 8MB 3D card, Internet connection

128MB RAM, 32MB 3D card, broad-

NUM PLAYERS

sively multiplayer

ED PH 400, 64MB RAM, 1GB

MEND PIII 600

# Neocron



Ladies of the night (like the shapely Terra Cook here) sell their ample wares in the seedier alleyways of Neocron. Sadly, dialogue threads never seem to lead back to your bedroom.

# The gritty massively multiplayer world of tomorrow is still under construction

laying Neocron, CDV's adult-oriented massively multiplayer cyberpunk RPG, is like visiting Disneyland during the off-season: crowds are few, there's not much pampering of customers, and many attractions are closed or under renovation. In time, it could rise to become a player in the online-only games market, but even two months after public

release, it's still mired in the "beta blues."

That's frustrating, because I'd like to be able to recommend Neocron wholeheartedly. It offers a completely different experience from any other MMORPG currently available: a dark, grungy sci-fi future best pitched as "Blade

Runner kicks EverQuest in the balls." It's an FPS, it's an RPG, it's raunchy, it's hard-boiled; you can make a career out of PK'ing, or you can make a quiet living constructing weapons and "poking" (Neocron jargon for installing cybernetic implants in other players).

Unfortunately, the game's not finished. In-game terminals say that "due to a temporary database malfunction," only a few single-player mission types are available and that group missions are totally offline. NPC-run job centers still refer you to use the terminals, and Neocron's many Venture Warp transporter booths probably won't become accessible until the first expansion pack. Plot-oriented missions are supposed to start by the time you read this, but isn't that what the beta was for?

The action takes place during the 28th century in the city of Neocron, the largest city of humanity's colonized foster world. Each citizen (humanoids only) is one of four character classes - Private Eye, Spy, GenTank, or PSI Monk - and all are aligned with one of 13 factions that run the gamut from lawful to sleazy.

(My Private Eye, for example, is a proud member of the Tsunami Syndicate, the group that operates Neocron's gaming and brothel industry. It's run by high-class madame Veronique Duchamps, owner of Neocron's premier red-light-district strip joint, The Pussy Club.)

Besides rampant crime and corruption, Neocron also faces a major pest problem. As a "runner," you'll be asked to dive into the sewers to kill bats, rats, and mutants; deliver packages; whack rivals; recycle garbage into useful minerals; and perform similarly mundane tasks. Or you can just go hunting through the game's vacant





Take it off! What's with the strippers wearing more than they did in the beta? Mmm...fishnet stockings.

basements, warehouses, and outlands, or blast other players at a NeoFrag facility.

As in Ultima Online, character advancement is more skill- than level-based. You'll gain points in the areas of Intelligence, Strength, Constitution, Dexterity, and PSI Power by performing actions related to each. (For instance, hacking a lock increases Intelligence and Dexterity.)

The twitchy combat system lets you fight enemies in real time. And there's a lot to keep track of - rate of fire, weapon accuracy, even the encumbrance of your inventory. The system uses some behind-thescenes dice-rolling, but your action skills play an important part in your survival.

As flawed as the game is - including numerous fatal run-time errors and clipping bugs - I've had a blast beta-testing, err, playing Neocron. The storyline is practically nonexistent, yet the foreboding ambience sucks you in: graffiti covers filthy



Two elements mark a Neocron resident: a love of flashy weapon effects and a penchant for leather.

slum sections; loudspeakers sternly drone that cops "always have their eyes on you" or hawk a nearby pleasure palace; bums beg for change; foul-mouthed NPCs routinely smack-talk; and spontaneous firefights can engulf an entire city block.

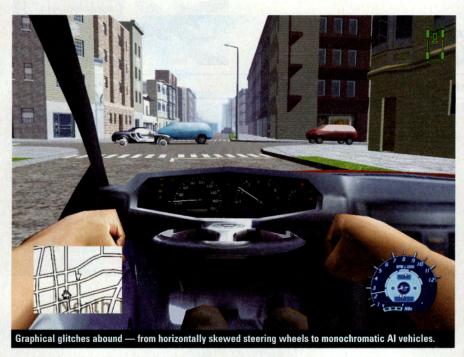
But can I recommend you pay \$9.95/ month to play a game that's obviously not finished? No. I can't. - Chuck Osborn

# FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Unapologetically adult tone; balances action and roleplaying; sci-fi cyberpunk ambience.

LOWS: Many bugs; a paper-thin story; non-working elements (two months after release).

**BOTTOM LINE:** A potentially brilliant MMORPG



# Street Legal

Out of the box, it's a mess. Patched, it's a very cool racer. On your marks...

ombining a Midtown Madness-style urban driving environment with a car-customization component of Motor City Online proportions, Activision's Street Legal has all the makings of a first-rate arcade racer. Alas, the "makings" are all they are — by the time the game

**ELOPER** Invictus

MB RAM, 64MB 3D card,

jamepad/joystick/steering wheel

ED PIII 600, 128MB RAM.

sputters across the finish line, you'll wonder where so much potential ran off to so quickly.

Those expecting a digital Fast and the Furious will be sorely disappointed: this dish was dumped on the market in a thoroughly underdone state. How incomplete is it? Well,

at press time, three sizable patches (totaling well over 100MB) have already been released, and at this rate the damned fixes will soon outsize the game itself!

Although Quick Race and multiplayer options are conspicuous by their absence, *SL* does deliver a surprisingly deep Career mode. Here, you purchase a modestly powered starter vehicle and then take to the game's traffic- and pedestrian-choked streets to challenge other "Club Members" for prestige and money in solo, point-to-point races. You can then use these earnings to upgrade to another of the 16 fictional cars, or to repair the inevitable breakages and wear-and-tear.

So far, so good. Problem is, SL's graphics engine is by far the buggiest and most



Winning cash in this game can be as straightforward as racing to the end of the block first.

poorly optimized that I've seen in years, with enough frame-rate bottlenecks, clipping, draw-through, and CD-access pauses to leave you gasping in your chair. Factor in some counterintuitive mouse routines (critical for garage navigation), insipid AI, numerous crash-to-desktop bugs, and the crappiest controller support I've ever witnessed — the game rejected all five of my joysticks — and you wind up with one of the sloppiest excuses for a PC driving title ever.

If you have the patience (and the bandwidth) to download and install all of the available patches, then you can probably bump that 42% score up by as much as 20% to 30%. Out of the box, however, Street Legal is a sorry mess.

— Andy Mahood

PC GAMER 42%



ssively multiplayer

# Fighter Ace 3.5

Among the various flight arenas are historical Britain, the Battle of Kursk, tional maps such as Snake Canyon and Deathhowl

A massively multiplayer World War II aerial combat sim for the rest of us

he online skies are beginning to get crowded. Fresh on the heels of iEN's newly refurbished WarBirds III, Jaleco has just rolled Fighter Ace 3.5 out of the hangar - and if you've been holding out for a seat sale, this upgraded multiplayer service may be just the ticket.

Once the darling of the "relaxed realism" flight-sim crowd when it flourished as

the Internet Gaming Zone's first "premium" game, Fighter Ace offered wanna-be prop jockeys an instant-R Jaleco Entertainment action alternative to RED PHI 500, 256MB RAM. the ultra-realistic and punishingly difficult WarBirds and Aces and, force-feedback joystick High experiences. Jaleco Entertainment (née VR-1) split from Microsoft in early 2002

to set up its own game servers, and even without the Zone's built-in customer base to prop it up, the subscription-based service continued to hold its own against the other World War II-themed MMOG titles. The latest 3.5 upgrade is so massive, however - the download tops out at over 350MB - that Jaleco was compelled to release a standalone CD version to entice new subscribers and ease the burden on its dial-up customers.



A handful of offline training missions let you bone up on your air-to-air and air-to-ground gunnery skills.

As with the recent WarBirds retail release, there isn't much depth to the game's offline component. Eleven interactive training missions and five practice missions will get you up to speed on the various aircraft controls, but the real test doesn't come until you face off with real flesh-and-blood human opponents online.

With a subscription fee of only \$9.95/month - affordably less than WarBirds III's \$24.95/month and Aces High's \$14.95/month rates - FA 3.5 is a bargain among online sims. Better yet, your modest \$20 outlay also buys you a gratis three-month subscription, which should make the stinglest of Internet flyboys sit up and take notice.

You get tons of features, too. FA 3.5 includes 96 flyable aircraft, ranging from



laid-out instruments and controls.

nimble Spitfire and Mustang fighters up to multi-station bombers and heavy transports. You can adjust the individual flight models from arcade-simple to fully realistic. and the varied arena options include turnand-burn dogfights and complex, resourcebased territorial-conquest scenarios.

Although multi-station bomber slots can't be shared with other players, you can still execute bombing raids and paratrooper drops with allied pilots, and ultimately "trigger" armored AI ground offensives that require a coordinated air-to-ground response.

Factor in the richest graphics currently offered in any online aerial combat simthe breaking surf at Pearl Harbor must be seen to be believed - and it's not uncommon to see upward of 500 players on the servers with you at any given time.

This number can be both a blessing and a curse, however, because while crowded skies certainly add to the overall gaming experience, serious lag and warping issues can result when some of the more popular arenas get too full. Thankfully, alternative arenas are available, and just as much action can be found in the arcade and intermediate sections as there is in the full-realism areas.

If the steep monthly price tag and even steeper learning curve of services like Aces High and WarBirds III have kept you and your joystick at home, it's time to get out of the house. Fighter Ace 3.5 has something to offer for anyone with a working trigger finger, a penchant for aerial destruction, and \$10/month to spare. - Andy Mahood



## FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Cheap monthly rate; gorgeous 3D graphics; comprehensive modes; nearly 100 flyable aircraft. LOWS: Servers laggy/warpy when busy; multi-

station bombers can't be shared with other players. BOTTOM LINE: For "regular" players, it's the



# Hegemonia

# You get brains and beauty in this real-time approach to epic space conquest

hough it sounds like a nasty medical condition, *Hegemonia* is actually an enjoyable interstellar romp, wrapping rich resource management and hypersonic combat around a gourmet 3D engine.

It's empire-building in the tradition of

VITAL STATS

CATEGORY Real-time strategy
ESRB RATING T

DEVELOPER Digital Reality
PUBLISHER DreamCatcher
REQUIRED PIII 600, 128MB RAM,
550MB HD, 16MB 3D card

WE RECOMMEND PIII 1GHz,
256MB RAM, 32MB 3D card

MAXIMUM PLAYERS 8

Master of Orion,
though probably only
half as complex.
Hegemonia even
solves certain problems with traditional
turn-based space
games by throwing
scale out the window
(Earth is roughly a 10second jaunt from

Mars) and dishing up wild, gratifying slug-a-thons to keep the pace fresh.

You spend most of the game researching technologies to improve your military vessels and planetary assets to conquer new systems, accessed through wormholes. You gather resources from asteroids, or through barter with merchant vessels. Upgrades include proton cannons and quantum missiles for your ships, or cultural doctrines that impact your planetary production.

Combat is completely dictated by tactics, technology level, and unit selection. Build limits prevent either side from creating massive armadas, so you can forget about slinging armfuls of ships at enemies; the better tactician will prevail—

especially those who wisely marshal their experienced veteran units.

The interface cleverly melds 2D and 3D views. The 2D mode is a convenient level playing field for deploying and managing units, while 3D mode is mostly for enjoying the fireworks. Transitioning between views occurs in real time, and you can zip around the full 360 degrees using the right mouse button in either view.

As good as it is, Hegemonia has a few distracting flaws. First, some of the story-based missions suffer from "What the hell do I do now?" syndrome. Scripted assignment points are often unclear, and leave you with more questions than you had before they popped in. You're told to "build military base type A" or "destroy pirate faction X" without being shown how or where - leaving you scouring the manual and the map for clues. Also, certain missions seem to flat-out break, refusing to present you with a promised enemy base or squadron and forcing you to replay the scenario to get past the hiccup.

On the whole, though, Hegemonia is a smart, fun game, and a great example of how to take turn-based depth and spruce it up with a real-time interface and wickedly good graphics.

— Matthew Peckham

PC GAMER 77%



# **The Gladiators**

# TERSTELLAR STUD



Eat your heart out, Sam Jones. Greg Callahan is just the sort of Kevin Costner meets-Vin Diesel softspoken badass that every girl dreads bringing home to her parents.

# Do good, fresh RTS games still exist? Apparently so!

o you remember when real-time strategy games were fresh? When you could bathe in their goodness without feeling like you were paying rote homage to an overcooked franchise? Well, crack a brew for the cause, because Arxel Tribe's The Gladiators trades in bumpkin-building for fast-paced and hilarious arena combat.



The story is deliberately kooky. In the late Seventies, ex-Marine Greg Callahan is yanked out of prison to play rocket monkey for government investigations into black holes. After being quickly shot down the throat of

one, Callahan pops out on the wrong side of the universe, smack dab in the middle of a galactic fight to crown a new emperor. Emperor of what? You're already asking too many questions. Just worry about the task at hand: beating the snot out of hordes of roaring aliens.

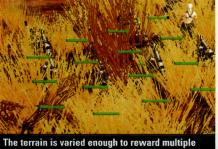
You do so by managing grunts with different specialties, from small arms and incendiary weapons to ground- and airbased vehicles. Your tactical options are limited to setting formations, moving, and attacking. But this turns out to be a fine system, since each board is an obstaclechoked gauntlet propelling you forward at breakneck speeds, all of which makes heavy thinking a no-no.

That's not to say you don't have deep tactical decisions to make. Height and terrain have never been more critical, or integrated so seamlessly into the functions you perform as strategic commander. Hiding in bushes or tall grass allows you to ambush or evade enemy units. Staffing watchtowers or ridge walls with missile weapons helps you withstand an offensive assault.

Each arena pits you against another enemy gladiator and his forces. The early matches run quickly (maybe 30 minutes to complete), while the later missions are much longer and broken into a series of offensive and defensive mini-games requiring you to either hold or take terrain from your opponent.

Along the way, you acquire special abilities and spend accumulated powerups to build replacement units on the fly. The matches culminate in bone-crunching blast-a-thons with the head honchos, who are exceptionally difficult to defeat. Little extras like the dynamic cheering (or booing) crowd, the real-time score-tallying,





tactical approaches, enhancing replayability.

and the appropriately annoying emcee add volumes to the zany atmosphere.

Tactics and use of terrain take precedence over unit diversity and brute force. Forget tank rushing: That won't work here, no matter how large your assault groups. The enemy AI is sharp — it'll bypass closer units in favor of tackling forces on more favorable terrain, and will even perform flanking moves when it's on the offensive.

It all looks splendid, from the rippling reflective water to the steamy jungle maps, and the audio effects are big and meaty. (The developers were careful to include a range of detail settings, but you'll need a beast of a rig to see the game in all its glory.)

Nitpickers will note the short campaigns. Fortunately, four multiplayer modes offer life after solo-play, and include deathmatch and capture the flag. Still, the voice-acting is sometimes just



tower as gunners hold the embattlement on the right.

plain bad (as opposed to hammy), and the AI has an annoying tendency to abandon fortified structures to attack enemy units.

Otherwise, The Gladiators is an eminently chewable bit of bubble-gum entertainment. RTS developers have been clinging timidly to formula for years, but this entry breaks the mold enough to warrant special commendation. — Matthew Peckham

# FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Refreshingly low-maintenance RTS; sweet graphics; demands solid tactics.

LOWS: Short campaigns; some regrettable voiceacting; Al tends to abandon fortified structures.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Offers something new and

# **Armored Task Force**

# The perfect balance between serious military sim and playable wargame

t was an interesting thing to learn and play Armored Task Force with war clouds hanging over the Persian Gulf. This in-depth simulation of modern combined-arms warfare was designed and overseen by Army officer Capt. Patrick Proctor, and it closely simulates

VITAL STATS

CATEGORY Real-time strategy
ESRB RATING Not rated

DEVELOPER ProSIM

PUBLISHER Shrapnel Games

REQUIRED PII 300, 32MB RAM,
350MB HD

WE RECOMMEND PIII 500,
64MB RAM

RAXIMUM PLAYERS 2

the real-time experience of a battalion commander in mechanized combat. Its down-to-the-vehicle scope encompasses the full spectrum of maneuver warfare in the early part of the 21st century.

The simulation is complex, to be sure, but it's far from a hexes-and-X's boardgame. Individual units and vehicles fight it out on a real-time clock. You can pause to issue detailed orders, but the realistic pace and scale provide ample time for you to issue full orders without feeling any more rushed than a real commander does.

Built on the fine foundation of ProSIM's earlier *Brigade Combat Team* line, this package features four-scenario campaigns in three theaters: Iraq, Germany, and the National Training Center in the California desert. All are built from genuine topographical maps of the areas. A pair of training scenarios intended to teach the basics of offense and defense round out the package.

You can play (at the simplest level) as the overall battalion commander, allowing the game's powerful AI routines to fight all the tactical battles as their training dictates. But as you learn the mechanics, you can select lower and lower echelons to command as well, right down to single tanks and infantry squads.

You get to engage in a wealth of operations: breach obstacles; fortify defensive positions against enemy assault; call in airpower; scatter artillery-delivered minefields; even participate in the nervewracking political exercise known as "coalition warfare."

After just a few scenarios, I was learning fast from my mistakes. Before too long, I was crafting victories using the game's harsh lessons about reconnaissance intelligence and the need for pre-sighted artillery zones. (Special props are due to the absorbing, highly educational manual—almost a portable military education.)

This game isn't for everyone, and more than one of my co-workers could be heard scoffing as he passed my computer because, let's face it: a wargame is a wargame. But Armored Task Force is as accessible and deep as a serious military simulation can get. If you want to taste command in modern war, this is your game. — Dan Morris







# **The Sims Online**

/HEN GAMING AND GREED COLLIDE



It was only a matter of time. You can purchase "Simoleons" for real cash on eBay, along with houses, cash hacks. guides, and other Simjunk. At press time, 350,000 Simoleons ent for \$100 in real money.

Is this really the way to bring *The Sims*' 8 million-plus game buyers online?





two skills: it's nearly impossible to keep up with them all. Also, take the time to read other Sims' bios, some of which are entertaining and quite brave.

assively multiplayer online games were really starting to grab attention right around the time The Sims first appeared. Popular as the game was (and is), if one game was meant for online application, The Sims had to be it, right?

VITAL STATS ELOPER Mavie PIII 500, 128MB RAM. PLAYERS Massively multiplayer

Well, maybe not. Now that it's finally here. The Sims Online is a bit of a headscratcher. It's full of tedious chores, it's based on dated technology that still manages to perform slowly, it has many missing or incomplete features, and it's not

any prettier than the original. In fact, most of the art, animations, and objects are taken directly from The Sims.

That said, The Sims Online is still going to be as addictive as "EverCrack" for hundreds of players, thanks to its inherent social aspects. Chief among these is the fact that there's really not much sophisticated stuff to do - in fact, there's much less to do than in the standalone game and its add-ons.

It takes an age to build up your Sim's skills, and then only via static exercises such as reading books and playing chess. Most of the game involves staring at your Sim for long periods of time. Therefore, to keep it interesting, most folks chat. And, depending on where you're at, you can find some lively conversations — and build some real "virtual" friendships - which is the hook for many players.

So at its core, The Sims Online feels like a glorified chat room.

If you're the sort who enjoys the chatroom life, you'll probably enjoy using the many humorous and witty emotes and interactions on other Sims. (Making friends and raising skills earns new ones, which keeps things fresh.) On the other hand, less patient (or more introverted) players will probably be bored beyond belief - even if they enjoyed The Sims.

You start out by choosing what your Sim will look like, picking from one of dozens of faces, outfits, and skin tones. The level of customization is very basic, though: you won't find height, weight, age, custom

tattoos, or jewelry. And you can't change your Sim's basic appearance once you've entered the game, which is a bummer. You can alter it with temporary changes of clothing, but that's it.

Next you select a server (your "city") to live in, though the differences between them are only cosmetic. You can create a total of three Sims, each one on a different server, which becomes its permanent home - so if you've got friends playing, find out where they live before creating your Sim!

You get 10,000 "Simoleons" with which to start out your new virtual life, but the money goes fast and is tough to replace. You can use it to buy a lot and start a home of your own, or look for a pad needing roommates. The latter choice is really the best way to go, especially if you're not going to be online often (read: 15 to 20 hours a week), as house leaders really need to be around as much as possible — any roommate can alter the design of the house while you're away, for instance, which should have been a feature the house owner could lock.

It can take a long time to build the online house of your dreams, so having someone mess with it can be very, very frustrating.







The hallmark of good design is keeping everything accessible, clean, and symmetrical if you can.

Initially cute and entertaining, the skill-based jobs for earning money soon grow tiresome.

not have Sims collaborate on something "real" for cash rewards, such as a commu-

nity newspaper?

Your Sim has the familiar needs that you must keep "greened up," such as hunger, hygiene, fun, and sleep. Thankfully, micro-managing needs isn't nearly as vital as it was in the offline game. In general, these needs all decrease much more slowly than in The Sims, so ideally you'd expect more time for socializing with other players.

Unfortunately, the game's economic system is so under-developed and basic that you'll usually find most Sims frantically reading books, playing chess, and making potions

to raise their skills and earn cash. The job objects are incredibly repetitive, almost to the point of being absurd, but they're the only way to build up your Sim's finances.

As a result, while most homes have different names and décor, they have incredibly similar functions. Most of the popular pads at press time were those that offered "all things to all Sims," meaning they had everything a Sim could want to keep its needs met, skills progressing, and cash rolling in.

Maxis has promised that bigger and better options are coming, particularly in regard to the economy, but as the game stands at launch, it feels woefully incomplete on many levels.

For instance, even the social aspects of the game aren't fully fleshed out. The emotes and Sim interactions are great, but the chat functions are far too basic. There's no option to store common sayings for reuse with a key press, for instance. And there should be symbols to tell other Sims when you're away from the keyboard — which many Sims are when they're building up skills. (And let me just say again: this process is way too dull. It can take six to eight hours to max out just one of your skills. Imagine sitting at your PC watching your Sim read a book for that amount of time! Maxis should have at least set up the game so that chatting during this time raised your social-need levels.) And the chat window lets you keep track of only a very brief portion of a given conversation - you can't scroll backward for an item you missed.

Also, while your Sim can propose to another Sim, marriages aren't official, and they bring no benefit to your Sim like they do offline. It would've been cool to see marriages offer financial and social benefits, and then need to be officially dissolved if they went sour.

Finally, each city consists solely of Sim residences - there are no dedicated shopping/recreation/dining/theater districts, or even neighborhoods (though those are coming, apparently). Maxis provides the technology and online real estate, but it's up to you to do the rest. Unfortunately, "the rest" includes finding ways to make an essentially motionless game interesting.

After the free 30-day subscription period runs out, we'll see how many Sims fans are willing to part with \$10/month for what's available out of the box. In its current form, The Sims Online may be chock full of potential, but it's woefully limited. - Steve Klett

In addition, the 10,000 Simoleons may seem fair, but it's barely enough to furnish a tiny apartment. So it's best to explore options before plunking down your cash.

'Exploring" The Sims Online consists of randomly selecting another Sim's lot to visit; popularity ratings provide a sense of what's hot and what's not. In these houses you'll find skill and job objects that your Sim can "use" alone or with others some, such as pizza-making machines, require several Sims to work together. The more Sims use an object, the faster its related skill will rise — or the more money your Sim will earn. Question, though: why





**LEFT: Someone** thinks awfully highly of their skills. Better go earn some cash! RIGHT: It's not every day you can play chess with a polar bear. Well, you can do it every day in this game.

# FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Socializing is a blast; theoretically a large sandbox for building virtual lots,

LOWS: Slow Internet performance; tedious economy/skill systems; not much depth.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Extremely social chatters will



# ABS™ Ultimate X3

Blue Kingwin Aluminum Case w/Acrylic Windows & Neon Light Asus P4T533-C Intel 850E Chipset Motherboard w/533FSB & USB 2.0 Kingston 512MB 1066MHz RAMBUS Memory 120GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive w/8MB Cache Pioneer 16X DVD Player & Mitsumi 1.44MB Floppy Drive Lite-On 52X24X52 SMART-BURN® CD-ReWritable Drive ATI Radeon 9700 Pro 128MB 8X AGP Video Card w/TV Out Add SONY 19" .25mm 1024x768 Monitor @\$319 Creative Labs SoundBlaster Audigy Sound Card w/IEEE 1394 3Com PCI 10/100 Network Card & USR V.90 PCI 56K Modem Logitech Access Keyboard & Optical Mouse Microsoft Windows® XP Home Edition

Free Games: Microsoft Age of Empires II and Dungeon Siege 1.0

Free 7/24 Tech Support and 1 Year Onsite Service

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with
HT Technology at 3.06GHz w/533MHz FSB \$2 | 99

# ABS™ Ultimate X7

Black Kingwin Aluminum Case w/Acrylic Windows & Neon Light Asus P4T533-C Intel 850E Chipset Motherboard w/533FSB & USB 2.0 Kingston 512MB 1066MHz RAMBUS Memory Two 80GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA 133 Hard Drives w/8MB Cache Lite-On 16X DVD Player & Mitsumi 1.44MB Floppy Drive Plextor 48X24X48 CD-ReWritable Drive ATI Radeon 9700 Pro 128MB 8X AGP Video Card w/TV Out ViewSonic 22" .25mm 1920x1440 Monitor Creative Labs SoundBlaster Audigy XGamer Sound Card w/IEEE 1394 Klipsch ProMedia 5.1 THX 6-Pieces Speaker System Logitech Cordless Freedom Optical Keyboard and Mouse Microsoft Windows® XP Home Edition Free Games: Microsoft Age of Empires II and Dungeon Siege 1.0

Free 7/24 Tech Support and 1 Year Onsite Service

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology at 3.06GHz w/533MHz FSB

\$3249



77.589.9979 Please use full URL to get latest prices and special promotions. www.abspc.com/pgo3

Sales Hours: Mon-Fri 8:30AM-5:30PM PST Technical Support: Mon-Fri 8:30AM-5:30PM PST Technical Support: 800-685-3471 General Office: 562-695-8823 9997 East Rose Hills Road, Whittier, CA 90601

Price, specification, and terms are subject to change without notice. Picture shown with upgraded options. ABS™ is not responsible for errors in typography and/or photography. 30 days money back guarant does not include opened software, parts, or special orders merchandise. Original shipping and handling fee along with return shipping charge are non-refundable. Products returned after 30 days or in a n cretural production and the product of the produc



Violence















military assault vehicles at last

joining the conflict, a

total

count.

join

the fight at: battlefield 1942.ea.com

1942

in of never-before-seen tanks and bombers throughout Italy. Reports continue to stream Italy, July 18- Fighting is still heavy on

fronts with word of

new battles raging

































BATTLEFIELD

DISTLEFIELD

13





# **Search & Rescue 4: Coastal Heroes/Vietnam Med Evac**

A pair of chopper sims that let you *save* lives rather than take them

elicopter simulations are few and far between these days, but thanks to Danish developer InterActive Vision, PC chopper-heads have two new chapters in the long-running Search &

VITAL STATS RATING E/T BLISHER Global Star Software/Take-Two Interactive DUIRED PIII 800, 64MB RAM. 1GB HD, 32MB 3D card 256MB RAM, 64MB 3D card, joystick XIMUM PLAYERS 1

Rescue series. Search & Rescue 4: Coastal Heroes is a direct sequel to last year's S&R 3 Coast Guard sim, while Vietnam Med Evac places you in command of a venerable Bell UH-1 "Huey" helicopter as it executes wartime rescue missions in the jungles of

'Nam. True, you don't get to blow anything up with Hellfire missiles here, but the warm and fuzzy feeling that you get deep down inside after you've saved your first dozen or so lives should more than compensate.

### **SEARCH & RESCUE 4: COASTAL HEROES**

Coastal Heroes showcases three of the U.S. Coast Guard's workhorse helicopters - the BK-117 C-1, HH-65A Dolphin, and Sikorsky SH-3 Sea King — operating out of 10 varied scenery locations. As with its predecessor, Heroes pitches you a whopping 100 prescripted missions, which can be played out independently or as part of a massive linear campaign. Along the way you're asked to deploy a variety of life-saving equipment and personnel - including hoists, litters, slings, and rescue divers - as you respond to myriad emergencies and distress calls.

The flight dynamics on each of the choppers are quite convincing (as long as the



Many of Coastal Heroes' rescue missions will take you to spots where landing is impossible.

realistic flight model is selected), and a deft touch is definitely required on the cyclic and collective controls to keep your whirlybird airborne. Advanced helicopter physics like asymmetric lift and retreating blade stall may daunt unwary pilots, while the sim's underlying mission goals - which often involve lengthy hovering maneuvers in high winds and inclement weather - will test your stick and rudder skills even further.

Some stilted character animations and less-than-cutting-edge 3D terrain are definite shortcomings, but you'll find more

than enough rotary-wing flying challenges in S&R 3 to secure it a lengthy hitch on your hard drive.

### VIETNAM MED EVAC

copy in many respects particularly in its control scheme, gameplay structure, and graphics engine - Vietnam Med Evac transplants the Search & Rescue premise from the U.S. mainland to the wartorn hillsides of Vietnam. The twist here is that while the recovery of

wounded or stranded soldiers with your chopper's rescue gear remains your primary goal, you're often compelled to do so while under hostile fire. For this reason your UH-1 Huey also has a 7.62mm machine gun (which can be either AI- or player-controlled) mounted by the rear cabin door for dealing with any "hot" LZs that you might encounter.

Don't expect any Comanche 4-quality battle scenes: the aforementioned mediumpoly graphics and marionette-like character animations ultimately compromise any real suspension of disbelief (though they earned the game a Teen rating). Still, VME's solid simulation of real-world helicopter dynamics and its full-to-overflowing set of scripted rescue missions make its gameplay every bit as deep as that of S&R 4. - Andy Mahood



# **HIGHS:** Great flight dynamics; loads of scripted missions; configurable to fit hardcore and casual pilots. LOWS: Mediocre graphics; stilted character animations; no multiplayer options. BOTTOM LINE: This challenging pair of rotary

FINAL VERDICT

VME's character animations are singularly rigid and puppet-like.

# **Militarism**

CATEGORY Real-time strategy ESRR M DEVELOPER SummitSoft PUBLISHER SummitSoft REQUIRED PII 300, 64MB RAM, 170MB RAM, WE RECOMMEND PIII 500, 128MB RAM, 3D card MAX, PLAYERS 8

he year's barely started, but we've already got a strong contender for Worst Game of 2003. *Militarism* is easily one of the weakest RTS games I've ever played.

Several flaws keep this far-future flasco from achieving even mediocrity. The first is a total lack of strategic elements. Leading troops into battle has never been more monotonous: all of my confrontations devolved into clickfests wherein sheer numbers dictated the victor. Different unit types serve only to add variety to the visuals, because new units don't add unique abilities to your force.

A bland single-player mode doesn't help, either. As one of two forces — humans or the alien Malkari — you trudge through an uninspiring campaign full of clichéd rescue and assault missions. The two sides have

independent advancement tracks and building styles, each reflecting stereotypical human and alien characteristics, but it's nothing we haven't seen since at least as far back as StarCraft. A tutorial is badly needed and not provided, so you have to figure out the technical aspects by yourself.

Militarism supplies several dozen maps to use in multiplayer skirmishes against other players or the computer, but I doubt you'll even



Upgrading will do little good, as a large enough swarm of enemy units can wipe out any defense.

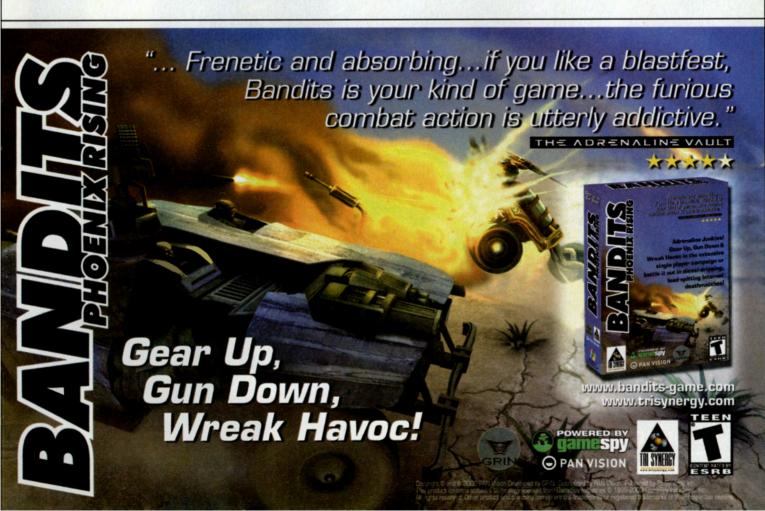
last that far. The game is pretty ugly-looking to boot — stuck at an unacceptable maximum resolution of 800x600, which doesn't accommodate the 3D engine at all.

With all of Militarism's problems, you'd think there'd be some redeeming value lurking about, but no such luck. Steer clear of this stinker.

— Norman Chan







SOME

AGENTS HAVE

A LICENSE

TO KILL.

OTHERS

ARE TOO BUSY

TO FILE THE

PAPERWORK.

CODEMASTERS.COM

Codemasters (h)

GENIUS AT PLAY



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

© 2002 The Codemasters Software Company Limited ("Codemasters"). All hights reserved "Codemasters" and the Codemasters logo are registered trademarks owned by Codemasters. "IGI2 Covert Strike" and "GENIUS AT PLAY" are trademarks of Codemasters. Published by Codemasters. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sorry Compagies Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Xbox, and the Xbox logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft in the U.S. and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. The ratings con is a registered trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association. All other copyrights or trademarks are the property of their respective owners.





Employ stealth and espionage or go in with all guns blazingexperience multiple styles of gameplay with high-tech equipment including a ZimoTech GPS Map Computer and night vision goggles.

Take on intense missions in a worldspanning storyline through three massive theatres of combat-Russia, China and the Middle East.



Choose from a huge armory of 27 authentically reproduced weaponsfrom basic combat knives and sniper rifles to portable rocket launchers and proximity mines.

Operate a stabilitysensitive weapons targeting system experience the hostile environment of a battlezone.





Join forces with up to 16 combatantsobjective-based online multiplayer gameplay allows for complex levels of team coordination.



# **Snowboard Park Tycoon**

CATEGORY Arcade ESRB E DEVELOPER Cat Daddy Games PUBLISHER Activision Value REQUIRED PII 256, 32MB RAM, 400MB HD WE RECOI IND PIII 450, 64MB RAM, 600MB HD MAXIMUM PLAYERS 1

ello, Reader Tycoon. Thanks for perusing this Review Tycoon. I hope it helps you decide whether or not to purchase Snowboard Park Tycoon Tycoon. If you haven't noticed, I've adopted the logic of Activision Tycoon, since I'm a Reviews-Writing Tycoon. Stick the Tycoon word on the end, and count the flood of incoming cash (Tycoon).

The weird thing is, this game has absolutely nothing to do with being a

tycoon. It's a marginally competent snowboarding game that also lets you build your own course. That's it - no economic (dare we say, tycoon) model, no option to build a park or attract paying customers, no management of anything whatsoever, short of controlling a snowboarder as he throws himself down a mountain slope.

Nevertheless, Snowboard Park Tycoon isn't a complete no-hoper. The career mode is actually pretty challenging, as

> you try to unlock new mountains to hurl yourself down. Some of the tasks include pegging other boarders with snowballs, straight-up racing, a photo contest, and my personal favorite, the Broken Bone Challenge, wherein you must break all 206 of your bones within 90 seconds. You'd think that with such shoddy controls you'd have no problem accomplishing this feat, but it's a lot harder than it seems!



Like all good snowboarding peaks, this one comes complete with flaming hoops to jump through!

For a budget title, this game isn't terrible - it's just very average. Pulling off anything more than simple tricks is incredibly hard; the graphics serve their superficial purpose and then stop impressing; and the course-creation tools are too clunky to make you commit to building slopes. Oh, and the tycoon factor is pure misnomer — all marketing hype and no game substance. - Bert Salkmoor



That's some gnarly grinding, dude, but for the love of god, put on some pants!

D PIII 450, 64MB RAM, 415MB HD WE RECOMMEND PIII 600, 128MB RAM, gamepad MAXIN

rom the makers of Frogger 2: Swampy's Revenge comes Cricketer! Okay, it's really called Zapper, but the insect reference would be more fitting considering how similar this game is to its amphibious predecessor.

You play as the eponymous cricket, off on a guest to save your little bro Zipper, who's been abducted by Maggie the malevolent magpie. (No, really.) As you search for Zipper, you'll also need to find and destroy the six eggs that Maggie has left within each of the 20 or so game levels.

While the mechanics of the gameplay are similar to those of the Frogger/Frogger 2 PC titles, the game does manage to feel like more than just a cashing-in on past successes. New powers include using your antennae to find the nearest egg on the level, which eliminates a lot of frustration when there's just one egg left. You can also zap objects (to uncover hidden power-ups) and creatures (killing some and only stunning others).

Using the familiar top-down perspective, the colorful graphics are simple and clear. Zapper's levels are fairly linear, with



Picketing beavers are just one of the many obstacles you'll face as you try to save little Zipper.

an array of leaping-on-logs puzzles and avoiding-the-pattern-running-snail scenarios. Much of the challenge is in dealing with the way Zapper moves: you need to plan your path ahead of time to compensate for the "one square at a time" control scheme. Twenty lives (and the convenient ability to continue even when you lose them all) means you'll have no problem completing the game, though.

Arcade fans may get a kick out of Zapper's nostalgic stylings, and it's cer-



Hang around too long on one of these carrots, and you'll be sleeping with the fishes!

tainly a harmless puzzle diversion for kids. It's also priced right at \$19.99 (unlike the console versions, which cost twice that much), and will keep tykes entertained for a few days. Its simple and forgiving dynamic, short span, and quirky characters hit its intended "family fun" mark. - Bert Salkmoor



### CG6000-GAMER ULTRA SE

- NVIDIA nForce-2 Chipset 8X APG 333 FSB Motherboard
- ☐ Kingston 1024MB PC3200 400Mhz DDR Memory
- □ Western Digital 80GB 7200RPM 8MB Cache Special Edition
- ☐ ATI RADEON 9700 Pro 8X AGP 128MB DDR w/ TV out & DVI
- Sony 16X DVD-ROM & Sony 48X16X48 CD-RW Drive
- Creative Labs Sound Blaster Audigy X-Gamer 5.1 w/ 1394 IEEE
- ☐ Creative Cambridge SoundWorks Desk Top Theater 6.1 Insprie 6600 Sound System
- ☐ Creative Labs 56K V.92 Fax Modern w/ Voice
- 4 USB 2.0, 1 Firewire 1394 IEEE Port
- □ 1.44MB Floppy Drive & PS2 internet Keyboard
- ☐ Microsoft® USB Optical IntelliMouse
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- One Year On Site Service w/ 24/7 Techsupport
- □ Aluminum TurboGamer SX635 Tower Case 420Watt

AMD Athlon™ XP 2700+	\$ 1559	XG3051
AMD Athlon™ XP 2600+	\$ 1449	XG3052
AMD Athlon™ XP 2400+	\$ 1415	XG3053
AMD Athlon™ XP 2200+	\$ 1355	XG3054
AMD Athlon™ XP 2000+	\$ 1339	XG3055
AMD Athlon™ XP 1800+	\$ 1335	XG3056



NVIDIA nForce-2 333Mhz FSB Motherboard

☐ Creative Lab Sound Blaster Live Audigy W/ FireWire 1394 IEEE Port

☐ Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition

AMD Athlon™ XP 2700+

AMD Athlon™ XP 2600+

AMD Athlon™ XP 2400+

AMD Athlon™ XP 2200+

AMD Athlon™ XP 2000+

AMD Athlon™ XP 1800+

☐ Kingston 512MB PC3200 400Mhz DDR Memory

Sony 16X DVD-ROM & Sony 48X16X48 CD-RW Drive

Altec Lansing 251 5.1 PC Gaming Desktop Theater Speakers System

□ 56K Modem, 1.44MB Floppy, Keyboard & Mouse

One Year On Site Service w/ 24/7 Techsupport -AHANIX Platnium XP Case w/ Digital Thermometer & 420 Watt Power Supply

☐ Western Digital 80GB 7200RPM 8MB Cache Special Edition

MSI NVIDIA Geforce-4 8x AGP TI4200 128MB DDR w/ TV Out & DVI

\$ 1209

\$ 1065

1095

999

982

972

XG3031

XG3032

XG3033

XG3034

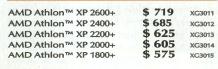
XG3035

XG3036



### MSI KT3 Ultra-2 VIA KT-333 W/ ATA 133 MB

- 512 MB PC2700 333Mhz DDR RAM Memory
- O 60GR 7200RPM Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive
- NVIDIA Geforc-2 MX440 64MB AGP Sony 52X CD-ROM, 3D Wavetable Sound
- 480-Watt Subwoofer Speakers System
- 56K Modern, 1.44MB Floppy, Keyboard & Mouse
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- One Year On Site Service w/ 24/7 Techsupport
- □ Black X-Gamer Medium Tower Case with See Through Window and Sound Activated Neon Light 350 Watt



### MSI 845PE-MAX Intel® 1845PE Chipset 533Mhz FSB MB

- □ 512MB PC2700 266Mhz DDR Memory

WWW.BUYXG.COM

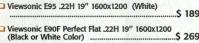
- □ 60GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive
- MSI NVIDIA Geforce-4 MX440 64MB DDR w/ TV-Out
- □ 16X DVD-ROM & 40X12X48 CD-RW Drive
- MSI 6 Channels 5.1 Surround Sound Card
- 480-Watt Subwoofer Speakers System
- 56K Modem, 1.44MB Floppy, Keyboard & Mouse
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- One Year On Site Service w/ 24/7 Techsupport
- □ Black X-Gamer Medium Tower Case with See Through Window and Sound Activated Neon Light 350 Watt

Intel Pentium 4	3.06Ghz	\$ 1215	XG3021
Intel Pentium 4	2.8Ghz	\$ 985	XG3022
Intel Pentium 4	2.53Ghz	\$ 789	XG3023
Intel® Pentium® 4	2.4Ghz	\$ 759	XG3024
Intel Pentium 4	2.0Ghz	\$ 745	XG3025
Intel' Pentium' 4	1.8Ghz	\$ 719	XG3026



### MONITOR UPGRADE

- AquaView 7GS.27 17" 1280x1024 \$ 129 (Black or White Color)
- AquaView 9GX .25 19" 1600x1200 (Black or White Color) ..... .\$ 189
- Viewsonic E70F Perfect Flat .23H 17" 1280x1024 \$ 179 (Black or White Color)











### GO-CAMER DIGITAL

- ☐ Intel® 1850E Chipset Petitum® 4 533 FSB Motherboard
- ☐ Kingston 512MB PC1066 Rambus Memory
- Western Digital 80GB 7200RPM 8MB Cache Special Edition
- □ NVIDIA Geforce-4 TI4600 128MB DDR w/ TV Out
- Sony 16X DVD-ROM & Sony 48X16X48CD-RW Drive
- ☐ Creative Labs Sound Blaster Audigy X-Gamer 5.1 w/ 1394 IEEE
- Creative Cambridge SoundWorks Desk Top Theater 5.1 INSPIRE 5200 Sound System

- Creative Labs 56K V.92 Fax Modem w/ Voice
- □ 10/100 Network Interface Card
- 1.44 MB Floppy Drive & PS2 internet Keyboard
- Microsoft<sup>®</sup> USB Optical IntelliMouse
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- One Year On Site Service w/ 24/7 Techsupport
- All Aluminum Kingwin KT436 Tower Case 420Watt
   w/ 3 See Through Windows & Sound Activated Neon Light

Intel Pentium 4 3.06Ghz 533FSB \$ 1825 xG3041 Intel Pentium 4 2.8Ghz 533FSB \$ 1595 xG3042 Intel Pentium 4 2.53Ghz 533FSB \$ 1399 xG3043 Intel Pentium 4 2.4Chz 533FSB \$ 1369 xG3044 Intel Pentium 4 2.0Ghz 512K 1355 XG3045

# Dark Age of Camelot: Shrouded Isles

The Inconnu are Albion's new inhabitants, and they make very good (and scarylooking) necromancers. They also craft giant back-scratchers.

An already excellent online RPG gets an all-new goodness infusion

rom a positive out-of-the-box release,
Dark Age of Camelot has progressed
a long way in just over a year, facing
down the ever-present MMORPG
bugbears of class balance and item balance.

That's not to the added prealm envy that pits the pits th

That's not to mention the added problem of realm envy in a game that pits three warring kingdoms of players against each other. ("Our frontier zones suck, you get more classes than us, your helmet graphics look so much better, it's not fair, I quiiitt!") Despite all this madness, Dark

Age of Camelot has cultivated a strong subscriber base, with an expanding number of servers offering slightly diverse experiences.

And with the Shrouded Isles expansion, developer Mythic is further bolstering its position. Three new continents have been added — one for each realm — replete with new towns, monsters, loot, quests, and intrigue. You also get three seriously highlevel dungeons on each isle for those maxed-out players wishing to find something to do outside of amassing realm points.

A pair of classes has also been added to each realm, along with a new race (for a total of six new classes and three races), giving experienced players fresh game mechanics to try out.

And these classes are genuinely interesting to play. How does a necromancer class grab you? This spellcaster is novel in that he turns into an ethereal shade when his undead pet is summoned, meaning he

Man Urtsall Gold Group Chall

The American Banderfel By Contract Chall

The American By Contract Chall

The Amer

can't be harmed at all (as long as his pet doesn't die).

Then there's the bonedancer, who summons multiple pet minions that can be fighters or casters; he's essentially his own D.I.Y. party. Or perhaps you prefer fighter types, such as the reaver and his lifetap spells, area-of-effect shouts, and the ability to specialize in flexible weapons so you can bypass your enemy's armor. A great deal of thought and a fair splash of innovation have gone into these additions.

DAOC's graphics have also been spruced

up with an improved engine. The environments are much more detailed, with more realistic brush cover and superb new water and reflection effects. Some of the new monsters are intricately detailed as well. As an added bonus, the frame rate is noticeably smoother in action-packed situations than it was in the original release.

instead of eight — and some relaxing ambient music has been bolted on to the sound side. It's also worth mentioning that the new lands offer plenty of enjoyable quests, with the customarily intriguing plots and entertaining scripted events that have come to characterize *Camelot's* online worlds.

There's a good wedge of new content and some polished visuals in the Shrouded Isles package, but what's missing is any sort of improvement to the game's Realm-vs.-Realm premise. That's the weak side of this expansion: it concentrates entirely on the PvE (Player-vs.-Enemy) game, which is somewhat disappointing given that the realm rivalries are the game's biggest selling point. But you'll certainly get your \$30 worth from Shrouded Isles. — Darren Allan



Minor tweaks have been made to the interface — you can now have 10 spells or abilities hotkeyed



MARCH 2003 PC GAMER

# **Anarchy Online:** The Notum Wars

CATEGORY Online RPG ESRB T DEVELOPER Funcom PUBLISHER Funcom REQUIRED PII 300, 128MB RAM, 3D card, Internet connection WE RECOMMEND PIII 450, 256MB RAM, MAX. PLAYERS Massively multiplayer



asual players of Anarchy Online should think of Notum Wars as Anarchy Online Gold, a re-release of the first game with some added content intended primarily for hardcore clanners. This is not, regrettably, the game's postponed first expansion pack, Shadowlands, and it shouldn't be confused for one.

As Funcom terms it, Notum Wars is a

"booster pack" — sort of a mini-expansion that, with an M.S.R.P. of \$19.95, has a slightly lower price than a full add-on.

In addition to the full game client, Notum Wars introduces you to the wonders of Notum mining, which is really just an excuse to give highlevel Omni-Tek and Rebel clan members a pretext to attack one another and vie for land rights. Notum ore is, needless to say, the most valuable substance on the planet of Rubi-Ka,

and is a vital ingredient in the world's economy. He who controls the Notum, controls the universe...or something.

New to this booster pack are "Tower" shops where you can purchase land-control towers, buffing service towers, turrets, and other defenses designed to keep competing clans out of your territory. Once it has control of a plot of land, a clan will gain both

personal and organizational enhancements in addition to monetary gain. Attacking rivals may result in land acquisition, but it'll open up your bases to attack as well.

The add-on's benefits for non-clanners are pretty minimal. Solo AO players can purchase stationary personal service towers that attack and buff for outdoor hunting, but the gizmos will mostly benefit character classes that don't have pets. A new line of vehicles and pre-recorded voice-emotes round out the package, but if you're waiting for new classes, weapons, or graphical upgrades, keep waiting.

Two groups of players should consider buying Notum Wars: High-level diehard clan members, and those who have never played Anarchy Online before but would like to try it. As a "booster pack," it offers limited value, but if you don't have the pipe to download AO's 660MB client for free, the combined package is a deal. — Chuck Osborn





# YOU'RE IN THE MIDST OF A PIRANHA TIGERS HAVE YOU





Bambito: It looks a little ridiculous, but pound for pound, the best aquatic fighter is definitely the Sharkantis...

That's right. Take a shark and breed it with a praying mantis.

Trust me. This thing will knock you out and bite your ear off.







Jack B. Quick: Shark Shark Shark.

If I hear another shark combo, I'll puke. When it comes to fighting in the water, the word "attrition" comes to mind. It's a numbers game.

I like to load up on piranhas and put them with a fast predatory feline. When you got an army of Piranha Tigers, you'll be King Neptune faster than you can say "Mermaid Sandwich." Get my drift??? ;-)









# MASSIVE SEA BATTLE, AND SURROUNDED. NOW WHAT?





Traceydoll: Ok sharks are good, but why mess with bugs when you can take something vicious and mix it with straight-up nastiness. Give me a hammerhead shark and a crocodile and I'll show you a mean machine.

In a 30 min. fight to the death, it's sink, swim or be devoured.

Looks like Jack B. Quick may be in for a nice and slow death. You hear me, Jack? You got nothing!



Tracey, 18 Wicked Bad Photographer, Boston





A DIFFERENT KIND OF ANIMAL

Welcome to Impossible Creatures, the next real-time strategy game from the makers of Homeworld". Get ready for a world where you create completely whacked-out mutant animals and then unleash them on your enemies. Fast-paced RTS action and dynamic 3D environments combined with over 40,000 possible animal creations equal combat like you've never seen. And with intense online multiplayer action, your opponents are as limitless as the creatures you create.

VITAL STATS

LISHER EA Games

D PIII 500, 128MB RAM,

IEND PIII 1GHz.

# SimCity 4



Recognizable landmarks are the fruit of successful city cultivation. For the patriotically inclined, there's Lady Liberty — though more pro-letarian-minded players can also erect statues to Lenin

### Now you've got no one but yourself to blame for everything that's wrong with your city

he city of Little Hope, my most indepth SimCity 4 creation, provides a microcosmic model of all that is inherently futile in the human condition. Traffic gums up along potholed, underfunded roadways; crime rots a tract when ne'er-do-wells sense gaps in police coverage; entire neighborhoods are abandoned to fester while city planners shovel investment

> money toward uptown yuppies and their upwardly mobile tastes.

> Any Maxis game is a race against entropy. The SimCity series has always provided a delightful "ant farm" perspective on the travails of urban congregation, and like real

cities, the in-game simulations tend toward disasters, large and small, sown by the player's inability to manage the inevitable burdens of his own ambition. It's Will Wright's black joke at the expense of organized humanity.

The series reached a new apex in 1999 with SimCity 3000, which boasted sharp



If money's tight, you can always sell your city's soul to toxic-waste dumps and Army missile ranges

artwork and tons of city-building tools. SimCity 4 adds an all-new level of spectacular art, functional features, and (most usefully) a new and super-accessible interface and graphical-data overlays.

But just as SimCity 4 offers all the glees of the earlier version, it also continues in the nasty tradition of SimCity 3000's graphical slowdowns - past a certain point of urban development (and processor muscle), the game speed can bog down significantly.

The first thing you'll notice about SimCity 4 is the sheer visual tastiness. However nice you remember SimCity 3000 looking, do not



A crossed-out briefcase signals an unemployed household. Time to build some new industrial plants.

try to go back and compare it to the new game. (Billy did; he wept and cried out, "My eyes!") The new graphics are more detailed than any Sim title could previously have aspired to be. The intricacy of each structure, block, and neighborhood creates a mosaiclike quality that you can stare at for hours.

Every detail and animation is precise and precious. I enjoy just letting my eyes rove over the car lots with their individual automobiles, the schoolhouse with kids filing in and out, the friendly-looking porches of the high-income residential houses. (Equally well-rendered, if less inviting, is the dilapi-

# Sims demand education, so invest in schooling early on. You can't build a high-income labor force without schools.

### EVE OF DESTRUCTION



**WOE TO THEE, o Little Hope!** When you've decided your Sims have broken a few too many of the Ten Commandments, or if you're just bored one evening, Maxis has thoughtfully included a menu of apocalyptic amusements for you to spring on your hapless citizens.

The standard fires are back, applied over houses with a very grisly "fire paintbrush," not to mention lightning strikes, tornados, and earthquakes.

And when you're ready for a truly mind-bending catastrophe, call in the horrific Attack By a Ten-Story Robot. This guy looks like the Iron Giant from that animated movie, and he's pissed about something - you ain't seen nuttin' 'til you've watched this mechanized monstrosity fling discs from his torso and lay waste to every structure in his path.

dated squalor of unemployed houses and the boarded windows of depressed factories.)

A large slate of utilities makes it easy for the Mayor to manage all this commotion. As with earlier editions, you build up your city by spending money from the mayoral war chest, hopefully refilling it with the expanding tax base. You zone new areas, selecting them for residential, industrial, or commercial development. Then you glue your newly developed zones together with roads, utility connections, and (preferably) the essentials of local government — like a fire department and a police presence.

These, of course, are only the tip of the usual Maxis iceberg. As your new burg slowly gets to its feet, you'll be building every manner of structure in your quest for big-dollar high-income residents, dense commercial zones, and prestigious showcase buildings that mark a big-league city. You'll also start grappling with the myriad problems that plague urban planning — from the major (fire hazards and water supply) to the mundane (making sure every new house has a proper driveway connection to a street).

EA's hope is to sell quadrillions of units of this game to the fabled mass market of casual gamers, which of course leads any designer to the ever-present problem of walking John Q. Citizen through the mechanics of deceptively complex gameplay.

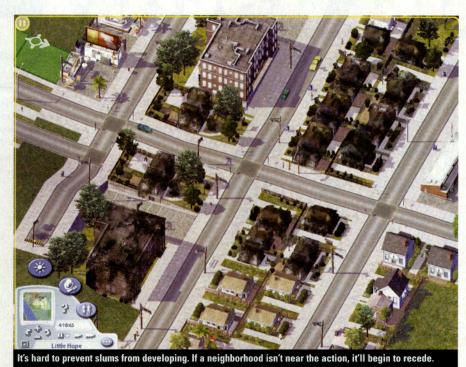
To this end, a very cool slate of advisors keeps you abreast of major areas of concern — with animated faces and colored backgrounds that increase in severity as that advisor's particular worries grow worse and worse. (Their advice is actually almost identical to the suggestions you got in SimCity 3000, but the at-a-glance recognition system makes it abundantly clear when they've got a beef with your management.)

Hanging over all of your deliberations is the economic burden of balancing tax rates and municipal expenditures with fluctuating revenues. It can become quite tough, and in a game with no difficulty settings, it'll take a lot of practice, so expect your first few cities to be dismal failures. Often, your smartest gameplan is the oldest SimCity gambit in the book — finagle a tiny profit margin and just sit back (make a drink, go to sleep) and let the game run, building you a fatter war chest without you having to do much of anything. It's a sometimes-necessary tactic that can lead to lengthy ho-hum stretches.

A feature more cool in principle than in practice is the ability to run multiple cities on a single geographical super-region — ideally, the cities have interlinking



Colored display overlays let you know at a glance which areas of your city are challenged by different urban problems.





A night-time fire ravages a suburban tract. Hope you've maintained the fire department's budget!

economies and will shift both people and goods. In practice, it's almost impossible to conceive of anyone investing the time and attention it would take to "seriously" manage more than one city — my only use for this feature was to set up a shantytown with super-high tax rates, so as to supply Little Hope with fresh higher-income immigrants.

Building and managing cities would be endless fun - if it weren't for the aggravating slowdowns. I played the game on a P4 with a GeForce III card — maybe not the fastest machine on Earth, but a pretty decent rig by anyone's standards, even the mainstream audience Maxis is targeting. I experienced significant slowdowns as my city expanded, and not even that deep into a game - I mean as soon as things got rolling. Scroll speeds chugged to a crawl, particularly when I wanted to get down to street-level to examine an individual Sim's concerns. (Another major eyebrow-raiser: at launch, the game was rejecting ATI's RADEON 9700 PRO 3D cards; the readme file said the problem was due to "hardware limitations.")

Much has been made of the ability to import four characters from your copy of *The Sims* and set them off on new lives in your



Weather and adjustable day/night cycles provide a bit more god-like power over your subjects.

new SimCity, but as cool as it is to hover over a resident and examine the details of her life, do *not* be expecting a game with anywhere near the immediate accessibility of *The Sims*.

Nevertheless, it's impossible not to recommend SimCity 4— it's an attractive, absorbing exercise, and truly a sim that anyone can easily grasp. Everything you've ever loved about the series has been given a gorgeous new visual treatment. If you've got the patience to handle the tough difficulty, it'll be a fun game. Just be sure your "mass-market family" has a tricked-out rig in the den, or you may come to tears while waiting to scroll around. — Dan Morris

### FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Lots of great new tools and pallets; muchimproved info displays; attractive artwork. LOWS: Stutters on anything less than a top rig; no difficulty setting, and it can get tough.

BOTTOM LINE: Classic gameplay, splendid art

PC GAMER 83%

THE ULTIMATE MONTHLY GUIDE TO GAMING GEAR



PC GAMES ARE GET-TING SHORTER and shorter, requiring as few as 12 - or in some cases, even eight hours to complete. Some of that has to do with the fact that making a game longer takes a

great deal more time and money, something our industry hasn't had in spades as of late. But I've also heard a lot of people talking about how they genuinely like shorter games - how they simply don't have the time to devote 40-plus hours to a title any more.

Maybe I'm alone in this position, but I like to get involved in the games I play, and I tend to prefer a strong single-player experience over multiplayer mayhem. There's just something about a compelling, connected storyline that I appreciate. That's why I, and many of the other editors here at PC Gamer, like RPGs so much, and it's one of the reasons why Neverwinter Nights was in such strong contention for our Game of the Year award.

Are there other gamers like us who are still content to spend days, weeks, even months going through a good single-player game? Write me at greg@pcgamer.com and share your thoughts. I'll dig out something big and hard to send to a lucky few for their efforts. I won't be sending that, you filthy slime!

Yes, it seems to me that our ever-shortening attention spans are getting the better of us, fellow gamers. I'm just so very glad it hasn't gotten the better of me. I seem to be immune to...Man, those bagels smell great! Today is bagel day at our office! Yay, bagel day! What were we talking about?



### PRODUCT TYPE



Every hardware review now includes a chart that lets you know if a product is meant to be used with an Entry-level, Midrange, or Dream-class computer, or if the product itself falls into one of these three categories.

### hstrinity

Building a new PC can be a thrilling experience, but picking the wrong parts by mistake can end the joyride in a hurry. Luckily, we're here to help you select the best parts for the job. The prices listed below (obtained almost entirely from www.pricewatch.com) are the lowest we could find as we went to press. (Note: Prices do not include shipping costs.)

ENTRY-LEVEL SYSTEM	ROUGHLY \$750
CASE	
300-watt ATX form factor	\$50
PROCESSOR	THE RESERVE
AMD Duron 1.3GHz	\$37
MOTHERBOARD	
Asus A7V-133	\$73
MEMORY	<b>国际</b> 公司
256MB PC-133 SDRAM	\$20
CD-ROM/DVD-ROM DRIVE	
Pioneer 16x DVD-ROM	\$60
FLOPPY DRIVE	
Samsung 3.5-inch 1.44MB	\$8
HARD DRIVE	William Colors
40GB Maxtor 7,200rpm	\$68
SOUND CARD	25 11 12 12 12
Creative Labs Audigy (white box)	\$59
MODEM	
v.92 Hardware Modem	\$15
MONITOR	
17-inch Optiquest Q71	\$130
VIDEO CARD	
GeForce4 MX 440 64MB DDR	\$50
JOYSTICK	
Microsoft SideWinder Joystick	\$25
GAMEPAD	
Logitech WingMan Rumblepad	\$23
SPEAKERS	Market Salah
Logitech Z-340 (2.1)	\$39
KEYBOARD	
Addtronics	\$15
USB MOUSE	
Logitech or Microsoft	\$39
TOTAL	\$711

MID-RANGE SYSTEM	ROUGHLY \$1,250
CASE	
300-watt ATX form factor	\$50
PROCESSOR	CAUTIMAN TO
AMD Athlon XP 2000+	\$73
MOTHERBOARD	
Asus A7V333 (Award 1007)	\$100
MEMORY	Shake the same of
512MB PC-2700 DDR SDRAM	\$105
CD-ROM/DVD-ROM DRIVE	
Pioneer 16x DVD-ROM	\$60
FLOPPY DRIVE	
Samsung 3.5-inch 1.44MB	\$8
HARD DRIVE	
80GB Maxtor 7,200rpm ATA-133	\$110
SOUND CARD	
Creative Labs SB Live! Audigy MP3+	\$85
MODEM	
v.92 Hardware Modem	\$15
MONITOR	
19-inch NEC FE991SB-BK	\$292
VIDEO CARD	
GeForce4 Ti 4200	\$115
JOYSTICK	
Microsoft SideWinder Precision 2	\$45
GAMEPAD	
Logitech WingMan Rumblepad	\$23
SPEAKERS	Walter Co.
Logitech Z-540 (4.1)	\$60
KEYBOARD	CHEST END
Addtronics	\$15
USB MOUSE	
Logitech or Microsoft	\$39
TOTAL	¢1 10E

### DREAM SYSTEM

### ROUGHLY \$3,000 AND ABOVE







CASE	0100
400-watt ATX form factor	\$100
PROCESSOR	Land !
Intel P4 3.06GHz	\$660
MOTHERBOARD	1994
Intel D850EMV2L	\$140
MEMORY	
Twin sticks of 256MB PC-1066 RDRAM	\$184
CD-ROM/DVD-ROM DRIVE	A Like
Pioneer 16x DVD-ROM	\$60
BURNER	
Plextor 48x24x48 CD-RW	\$100
FLOPPY DRIVE	Apple 1
Samsung 3.5-inch 1.44MB	\$8
HARD DRIVE	R. W. B
200GB Western Digital 7,200rpm	\$300
SOUND CARD	
Creative Labs SB Live! Audigy 2 Platinum	\$160

THE PARTY OF THE P	SCHOOL SECTION SECTION
MODEM	1
v.92 Hardware Modem	\$15
MONITOR	Control of the
22-inch ViewSonic P220f	\$647
VIDEO CARD	20 11/10
ALL-IN-WONDER RADEON 9700 PRO	\$387
JOYSTICK	
Thrustmaster HOTAS Cougar	\$269
GAMEPAD	
Logitech WingMan Rumblepad	\$23
SPEAKERS	Contract
Klipsch ProMedia 5.1	\$399
KEYBOARD	
Microsoft Natural Keyboard Pro	\$40
USB MOUSE	101111111111111111111111111111111111111
IntelliMouse Explorer 3.0	\$50
TOTAL	\$3,542





It's totally lethal. The amazing RADEON™ 9700 PRO is the fastest board powered by ATI's VPU technology, delivering the ultimate 3D gaming experience. It's the first to provide 8 pipelines for twice the rendering power. The first to fully support DirectX® 9.0. And the first to deliver the highest level of realism possible. Now you're unstoppable.



ATI.COM

Copyright 2002, ATI Technologies Inc. All rights reserved. ATI and RADEON are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of ATI Technologies Inc. All other company and/or product names are trademarks and/or trademarks of their respective owners.

SYSTEM SPECS

OCSYSTEM, WWW.OCSYSTEM.COM, 1-877-785-3285 PRICE \$3,206 (INCLUDES 5.1 SPEAKERS)



# **Mighty Warlock**

OCSYSTEM "MOSTLY" LAYS THE SMACK DOWN ON THE COMPETITION

efore I came to PC Gamer, and money was really tight, I was all about squeezing every last drop of performance out of my rig. The last system I overclocked was an old Celeron 300A. You could take that thing and bump it all the way from 300MHz up to 450MHz, and it still ran damn-near stable in most every situation the operative words here being "damn-near" and "most." But when cost is a concern, sometimes you're willing to live with words like that.

OCSystem builds professional-quality, overclocked computers that run even better than my old Celeron. But if the Mighty Warlock I was sent for review is any indication, "damn-near" and "most" are still the only way I can describe their stability.

The Alienware is stable. The Mighty Warlock's stability is largely dependent on which apps you use and how long the machine has been on. I got all the way through my benchmark tests without a lockup, but I did notice some image distortion in 3DMark2001 SE and JK II - a result of OCSystem clocking up the RADEON's core so high. I clocked it down to 360MHz temporarily, using the shareware version of PowerStrip (www.entechtaiwan. com/ps.htm), and the glitches vanished.

After I was done testing, I left the computer running and went on with my day. Two hours later, I came back to install some new games, and during a reboot (I hadn't installed anything yet) the screen corrupted horribly during post.

> ASCII characters popped up all over the screen, so I shut the system down. I

let the Warlock sit for a minute, and then powered it back on. It booted normally. On a whim, I ran 3DMark2001 SE again, and this time the PC hard-locked in the middle.

I then ran a few supplemental tests on the machine in the hopes that I could learn the full extent of the problem. First I did a memory test, which checks the stability of a system's RAM. It passed. Then I loaded up the latest version of Folding@home (http://folding.stanford.edu), a massively parallel computational program that helps scientists learn more about the behavior of proteins. Boring, yes, but a great way to test CPU stability. The Warlock locked up within an hour.

The good news is that I didn't experience any lockups while playing games. In addition to the titles I use for benchmarking, I tried at least a half-dozen others, including Serious Sam: Second Encounter and Earth 2150. Could I have played these games all day and night without a crash? I'm not so sure, but they did

y for a couple of hours. The fact he CPU in this system is "mostly" stable at 3.2GHz, but not entirely, and the RADEON's core is "damn-near" reliable at 405MHz, but not quite.

Are you willing to live with words like that? Here are two things to consider:

This system is more stable than a home-built machine overclocked by the typical end-user. The Warlock ships with top-of-the-line fans and heatsinks, and the wizards at OCSystem have even reprogrammed the RADEON'S BIOS themselves. Clearly, these guys know what they're doing.

Overclocking an Intel CPU and a RADEON card voids their respective warranties. On the

OS	Windows XP
PROCESSOR	P4 2.6GHz overclocked to 3.2GHz
MOTHERBOARD	Abit IT7 Max2 Ver2
MEMORY	512MB PC-3500 DDR433
RAM SLOTS	3 (2 free)
PCI	5 (2 free)
VIDEO	RADEON 9700 PRO
HARD DRIVE	Western Digital 120GB with 8MB cache
FIREWIRE	Yes (3 inputs)
USB 2.0	Yes (8 inputs)
AUDIO	Sound Blaster Audigy 2 Platinum
CD-RW	52x24x52x
DVD-ROM	Pioneer 16x slot drive
NETWORK CARD	Yes — 10/100
MOUSE/KEYBOARD	Logitech Cordless Elite Duo
5.25-INCH BAYS	3 (1 free)
3.5-INCH BAYS	6 (4 free)
RECOVERY CD	Yes
WARRANTY	1-year, parts and labor

BENCHMARKS		
3DMARK2001 SE	3D Marks	17,881
	Game 4: Nature	128 fps
QUAKE III*	1280 x 1024	174 fps
	1600 x 1200	121 fps
· IIMPEAL		AND THE RESIDENCE OF SPRINGERS
IINREAL	1024 x 768	235 fps, 82 fps
UNREAL TOURNAMENT	1024 x 768 1280 x 1024	235 fps, 82 fps 195 fps, 82 fps
THE RESIDENCE OF THE PARTY OF T		
TOURNAMENT	1280 x 1024	195 fps, 82 fps

Tests run at 1024x768 in true color with all settings maxed. ‡Tests run in true color with all settings maxed and 4x AA †Tests run at 1024x768 in true color (flyby followed by botmatch). ◆Tests run in true color with all settings maxed.

other hand, OCSystem guarantees its overclocked systems for one full year, and pays for parts and labor during that time.

Given these factors, I feel comfortable recommending the Mighty Warlock to any fan of overclocking, who under normal circumstances would be tinkering and voiding warranties left and right with his own home-built system. As for the rest of you, bite only if you're willing to place stability a close third behind cost and performance.

### FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Fastest PC we've tested: it's faster than current-production Intel CPUs; top-notch cooling. LOWS: System isn't entirely stable; its paint job is a bit rough in places.

**BOTTOM LINE:** It's worth considering by hardcore overclockers, but the rest of us may want to pass.

O SYSTEM	
Who who	
This extremely	okay remains, th

is nearly \$1,000 less expensive than the 3GHz Alienware we reviewed back in our January 2003 issue (not including any price drops Alienware has likely made since our review). The Warlock's P4 2.6GHz CPU has been overclocked all the way up to 3.2GHz, and its RADEON 9700 PRO has been bumped from 325/620MHz (core and memory, respectively) to 405/688MHz. The net result is that this computer beats even the most powerful Alienware — a comparably equipped 3GHz system in each and every benchmark test we could think to throw at it (aside from Jedi Knight II for some reason). But that's not the whole story.

well-equipped machine

MARCH 2003 PC GAMER



- ~ NEW!!! INTEL® Pentium® 4 Processor at 2.53GHz with 533MHz ESB
- ~ <SILVER> Aluminum 8-Boy Super Light Weight Tower Case w/ 420 Watt Power + See Through Window + Sound Activated Neon Light
- ~ INTEL\* 850E 533MHz FSB PC1066 4x AGP Main Board
- ~ 512MB PC1066 RAMBUS Memory
- ~ 80GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA-133 Hard Drive
- ~ <SILVER> 16x DVD-ROM Drive
- ~ <SILVER> 48x16x48 CD-RW Drive
- ~ <SILVER> 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- ~ NEW!!! 128MB ATI® Radeon™ 9700 Pro 8X AGP Video
- ~ Sound Blaster Audigy 5.1 Sound Card w/IEEE Fire Wire
- ~ 10/100 Network LAN
- ~ Klipsch ProMedia 4.1 THX 400-Watt Surround Sound Speakers
- ~ <BLACK> 19" ViewSonic Perfect Flat E90FB .21H MM Monitor
- ~ Microsoft® Optical IntelliMouse Explorer
- ~ <SILVER> Enhanced Multi-Media Keyboard
- ~ Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional Edition
- ~ FREE Norton AntiVirus 2003 CD
- ~ Free 1-Year 24/7 *i-Care* Deluxe Technical Support + On-Site Service



888. 462.3899

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 2.0 GHZ

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 2.40 GHZ

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 2.66 GHZ

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 2.80 GHZ

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 3.06 GHZ

\$ 1879

\$ 1889

\$ 1979

\$ 2129

\$ 2369

MMM.iBUYPOMER.COM

Copyright 2002, ATI Technologies Inc. ATI "and RADEON" 9700 PRO are registered trademarks of ATI Technologies Inc.

### GAMER PRO XP

- ~ AMD Athlon XP Processor 2000+ with QuantiSpeed Architecture outperforms competitive 2.0GHz processors
- ~ <BLACK> Aluminum i-TEC SOHO Server Tower Case w/420 Watt Power + See Through Window + Sound Activated Neon Light
- ~ VIA KT400 Chip DDR400 8x AGP Main Board w/ USB 2.0 Ports
- ~ 512MB DDR400 PC-3200 Memory
- ~ 80GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA-133 Hard Drive
- ~ New!!! <BLACK> 48x16x48 CD-RW Drive & 16x DVD-ROM Drive
- ~ <BLACK> 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- ~ NVIDIA GeForce-4 TI-4200 128MB DDR 8x AGP Video powered by eVGA
- ~ Sound Blaster Live 5.1 Sound Card
- ~ Creative Labs Inspire 5.1 5200 Surround Sound Speakers
- ~ 56K V.90 Fax/Modem w/Voice
- ~ NEW!!! USB 2.0 Port x2 + USB 1.1 Port x2
- ~ <BLACK> 19" ViewSonic Perfect Flat E90FB .21H mm Monitor
- ~ Microsoft\* Optical IntelliMouse Explorer
- ~ <BLACK> Enhanced Multi-Media Keyboard
- ~ Microsoft" Windows" XP Home Edition
- ~ FREE Norton AntiVirus 2003 CD
- ~ Free 1-Year 24/7 *i-Care*Deluxe Technical Support + On-Site Service













### NIGHT DREAMER XP

- ~ AMD Athlon XP Processor 2400+ with QuantiSpeed Architecture outperforms competitive 2.4GHz processors
- ~ <BLACK> Aluminum 8-Bay Super Light Weight Tower Case w/420 Watt Power + See Through Window + Sound Activated Neon Lightt
- ~ NVIDIA nFORCE-2 DDR400 8x AGP Main Board with USB 2.0
- ~ 512MB DDR400 PC-3200 Memory
- ~ 80GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA-133 Hard Drive
- ~ <BLACK> 16x DVD-ROM Drive
- ~<BLACK> 48x16x48 CD-RW Drive
- ~ <BLACK> 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- ~ NEW!!! NVIDIA GeForce-4 Ti-4600 128MB DDR 8x AGP Video powered by eVGA
- ~ NVIDIA SoundStorm Audio with Dolby Digital 5.1 Encoding
- ~ NVIDIA 10/100 Ethernet LAN
- ~ Creative Labs Inspire 5.1 5200 Surround Sound Speakers
- ~ <BLACK> 19" ViewSonic Perfect Flat E90FB .21H mm Monitor
- ~ Microsoft Optical IntelliMouse Explorer
- ~ <BLACK> Enhanced Multi-Media Keyboard
- ~ Microsoft Windows XP Professional Edition
- ~ Free Norton AntiVirus 2003 CD
- ~ Free 1-Year 24/7 *i-Care*Deluxe Technical Support + On-Site Service

\$ 1529



地北

**科特的基本** 

CONTROLS

AMD Athlon XP Processor 2000+ \$ 1449

AMD Athlon XP Processor 2200+ \$ 1499

AMD Athlon XP Processor 2600+ \$ 1559

AMD Athlon XP Processor 2700+ \$ 1679

AMD Athlon XP Processor 2800+ \$ 1759



### Gamer's PRO

- ~ AMD Athlon XP Processor 2000+ with QuantiSpeed Architecture outperforms 2.0GHz processors
- ~ <SILVER> i-TEC A268 Mid-Tower with See Through Window + Sound Actived Neon Light
- ~ NVIDIA nFORCE-2 DDR400 8x AGP Main Board with USB 2.0
- ~ 512MB DDR333 PC-2700 Memory
- ~ 60GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA-133 Hard Drive
- ~ 16x DVD-ROM Drive
- 48x16x48 CD-RW Drive
- ~ 56K V.90 Fax/Modem
- ~ 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- ~ NVIDIA GeForce-4 MX Core 64MB Video
- ~ Sound Blaster 5.1 Sound Card
- ~ Creative Labs Inspire 4.1 4400 Surround Sound Speakers
- ~ 19" ViewSonic E95 .21H mm Monitor
- ~ <SILVER> Scrolling Internet Mouse
- ~ <SILVER> Multi-Media Keyboard
- Microsoft Windows XP Home Edition
- ~ Free Norton AntiVirus 2003 CD
- ~ Free 1-Year 24/7 *i-Care*Deluxe Technical Support + On-Site Service

AMD Athlon XP Processor 2200+ \$ 1019

AMD Athlon XP Processor 2400+ \$ 1049

AMD Athlon XP Processor 2600+ AMD Athlon XP Processor 2700+

AMD Athlon XP Processor 2800+

\$ 1199 \$ 1279

\$ 1089









TOLL FREE 888. 462.3899

Price. Specification and terms are subject to change without notice. Picture may differ from actual products. We are not responsible for errors in typography and/or photography. 30-day maney back guarantee does not include opened software, parts, or special order merchandise. al shipping and handling lee along with return shipping charge are non-returned. Products returned after 30 days or in a non-returnable condition are subject to

...

Sales Hour: Mon-Fri 7:30AM-6:00PM, Sat 10AM-3PM PST 602 Monterey Pass Rd., Monterey Park CA 91754 Tel: (626) 281-8262 Fax: (626) 281-0767 All Prices effective on Feb. 25, 2003

■ COMPANY MAUI, WWW.CYMOUSE.COM, 714-968-7096 ■ PRICE \$99 (DIRECT)



# mouse

### IN THE FUTURE, YOU WILL WEAR YOUR MOUSE ON YOUR HEAD

t's the year 2749, and martial law has been declared in New San Francisco. The use of mice, iovsticks, and gamepads is now a crime punishable by the forced consumption of Clamato, a noxious mix of tomato and clam juice. Under a strict new law set in motion by our Supreme Ruler, Darth Lieberman, only the Cymouse is sanctioned for use as a PC controller, and then only in titles that feature fuzzy wuzzy (sic) wittle (sic) animals and childwen (sic) pwaying (sic) under

Fellow gamers, look at this product. You don't need me to tell you to avoid it like a tall glass of clam juice. It's not a good gaming peripheral. In fact, calling it a gaming peripheral is something of a misnomer: the Cymouse was originally designed to help disabled people use the

> PC. Maui's high-end version of the hardware. the aptly named

Miracle Mouse, is probably very good at what it does, but its little brother sucks at controlling games. Basically, the

Cymouse is a mouse you wear on your head. In theory and in practice, it's silly.

Let's say you're playing Quake III and you want to turn left around a corner. Okay, push the up arrow on your keyboard to move forward, then turn your head to the left and you'll go that way in the game. Of course, you'll no longer be looking directly at the screen. You don't

have to turn your head so far that your eyes actually leave the monitor, but you have to move it enough to be distracting. Worse still, as soon as you face forward again, your in-game character will turn back around to 12 o'clock, as there's no way (that I found) to disengage the Cymouse, so that "center" can be reset to be whichever way you're currently facing in the game. You can use your existing mouse to right yourself, but even after a lot of practice, doing so never became intuitive, nor could I get my kill ratio up to anything approaching what it is with a standard mouse.

Like a joystick or gamepad, the Cymouse can be programmed to do more than spin you around in 3D games: You can set your head turns to switch weapons, or queue up units in a real-time strategy game, for example. Even so, I found the device to be an uncomfortable contraption that made controlling my favorite games more difficult than need be - even the fuzzy wuzzy ones.



■ COMPANY CYBER ACOUSTICS, WWW.CYBERACOUSTICS.COM, 360-883-0333 ■ PRICE \$49 (M.S.R.P.)



a smiwing (sic) sun.

### PROOF THAT INEXPENSIVE SPEAKERS DON'T ALWAYS SOUND CHEAP

e're not all rich. In fact, some of us can't even afford to bathe ourselves on a daily basis because the cost of water is too high. What's that, you say? Water should be free in my apartment? Oh my, I'm not sure Niagara Falls could wash off all of the accumulated filth between my toes. I wish I'd heard this news sooner. Well, at least I'll have some money to spare on an inexpensive set of PC speakers!

If you're in the same filthy boat as me, \$50 is about all you're willing to spend on speakers. The good news is that there's a surprisingly wide selection of them in this price range. None of them sound amazing in a \$200 kind of way, but some, like Logitech's Z-340, sound quite good for the money, and even have a headphone jack useful if you're one of the three considerate latenight gamers in the world.

Cyber Acoustics' new CA-3550 2.1 speakers fall a little short of the high-water mark set by Logitech in this category for a couple of reasons, least of all their sound. Indeed, sonically, the 3550s aren't too shabby. The satellites sound a little thin and trebly, which is to be expected, but the subwoofer, with its own discreet volume knob on the back, produces plenty of thump at typical

listening levels. My only real complaint here is that subwoofer placement is a little more of an issue with this system than with others I've tested.

Why? Well, it's nearly impossible for the human ear to detect which direction low frequency bass is coming from, which is why with a traditional 2.1, 4.1, or 5.1 system, you can place the subwoofer anywhere in your room. The same pretty much holds true with the CA-3550, except that because the sub is also throwing out some mid-range to help make up for its small satellites, you can hear (more than you can with most subs) which side of your head the woofer is on.

It gets a little worse, too. This set includes no headphone jack, and it comes with pre-wired satellites with only a foot and a half of cord length between them, meaning that these speakers won't sit next to a large monitor very well, or on an odd-shaped desk.





FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 1273 SCRANTON, PA

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

EDUCATION DIRECT
925 OAK STREET
SCRANTON PA 18540-9888

NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES



### Make great money in one of the fastest-growing industries!

# Be a PC Repair Technician

	EE information on the program I ha	
only one of (in the following: 44 A+	C Repair Program ncludes A+® Certification Test Prep. material) Certification Test Preparation naterial only) Certificate Program	Career Diploma Programs  54 AutoCAD® 64 Auto Repair Technician 65 Bookkeeping 75 Bookkeeping 76 Bookkeeping
Other Computer Programs  ☐ 105 Computer Graphic Artist ☐ 53 Desktop Publishing & Design  Computer Programming ☐ 82 Java* ☐ 01 Programming in BASIC ☐ 37 Visual Basic* ☐ 36 Visual C++*	Associate in Specialized Business Degree Programs  61 Accounting Business Management  Associate in Specialized Technology Degree Programs  65 Electrical Engineering Mechanical Engineering	06 Electrician   79 Electronics Technician   19 Electronics Technician   07 High School   15 Home Inspector   08 Paralegal   58 Private Investigator   70 Small Business Management   387 Telecommunications Technician   87 TV/VCR Repair   88 Veterinary Assistant
EDUCATION DIRECT  Dept. PP7S33S  925 Oak Street Separton, PA 19515 0700	Name	Apt. #

Make great money in one of the fastest-growing industries!

Be a PC Repair Technician

### PC Problems? No Problem.

There's nothing worse than paying someone to do a job you could have done yourself. Computer repairs can cost hundreds of dollars and leave you without your PC for days, even weeks, at a time. Now you can learn PC Repair at home in your spare time, prepare for A+® Certification, and be ready to handle any problems that come your way. You can even start a new career and make great money as a PC Repair technician! Over 172,000 new jobs are projected to open for PC Repair specialists by 2010.\* One of these jobs can be yours...if you have the right skills.

### **Get the Best Training in the Business**

Nationally accredited Education Direct, the world's leader in distance education for over 110 years, can prepare you for a profitable, successful career as a PC Repair technician. You study when and where it's convenient for you. All your learning materials, including the latest software, in-depth textbooks, and specialized equipment, are sent right to your door and are yours to keep and use in your new career. If you need help, instructors and consultants are only a toll-free call or an e-mail away.

### You'll learn:

- Installing and upgrading software.
- Managing and troubleshooting Windows®.
- · Motherboard geography.
- Multimeter applications.
- Upgrading system memory.
- · Removing, repairing, and replacing disk drives.
- Advanced networking topics.
- Virus troubleshooting.
- · And much more.

Call or send for FREE information on how to solve your own PC problems, and even start a new career!

For Fastest Service, Call Toll Free:

1-800-572-1607 ext. 1520

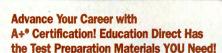
Call anytime, 24hours a day, 7 days a week.

Or visit www.EduDirect-usa.com

Online enter ID# PP7833S

Growth figures represent a ten-year period ending 2010. Source: National Industry-Occupation Employment Matrix, a publication of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.





A+

Certification is fast becoming the standard by which PC Repair Technicians are measured.

In fact, many computer manufacturers and servicing companies won't hire you without it! Education Direct provides a valuable A+

Certification Test Preparation Kit along with our complete PC Repair Program, as well as making it available as a separate program. We want to make sure you get the credentials that will get you the job!

A+° Certification Program is an industry-wide, vendorneutral program developed and sponsored by The Computing Technology Industry Association\*. The Computing Technology Industry Association and A+ are registered trademarks. All rights reserved.

Sponsor

nake sure you get the credentials that will proceed as missing, mail coupon to:		The Computing Technology Industry Association and A- are registered trademarks. All rights reserved.
THOMSON	Dept. PP7	
EDUCATION DIRECT	925 Oak Str	reet A 18515-0700
YES! Please send me FREE inform I understand I am under no o	ation on the PC	
Please check one of the following:		
☐ 27 PC Repair (includes A+* Certification	n Test Prep. m	aterial)
☐ 44 A+® Certification Tes (material only) Certificate Pr		n
Name		Age
Street	Ap	ot. #
City/State	<u></u>	_Zip
Phone ( )		
E-mail_		

# hsq&a

### THEVEDE SHOWS OFF HIS TECH EXPERTISE WHILE ANSWERING YOUR MOST PRESSING QUESTIONS

I recently bought a GeForce4 MX440 card with 64MB. It came with a heatsink instead of a fan/heatsink combo. The guy at the store told me that the MX chip doesn't generate all that much heat, but I'm getting pretty much the same frame-rates as I did with my old GeForce256 (which had a fan). How much of a speed increase should I expect to see if I buy my own fan/heatsink combo and install it on my new card?

— Evan

Not much. Not unless you plan to overclock your card a bit, which I wouldn't recommend. Better cooling doesn't, in and of itself, equal better performance — better-performing chips simply tend to require better cooling, which is why higher-end GeForce4 cards have it. If your MX440 seems to be performing no better than your GeForce256, it may be time for a CPU upgrade, as you should be seeing improved frame-rates.

"On my planet, people who

look like TheVede are

forced to

shave their

backward.

butts and walk

an Audi are basically the same thing, too, but at least they've each got unique exteriors. Why don't system builders design their own cases?

— Milligan Nash

That's a good question. Probably cost. Thankfully, that hasn't stopped Alienware. They've just designed a new custom case for their PCs (see photo, below left) that's

sure to turn heads. We haven't had a chance to play with one up-close yet, but they certainly look awesome!

The liquid cooler inside this PC's case is pre-installed and permanent.

that and stick with aircooled solutions. Sill, nothing beats liquid when you get the itch to overclock. My vote is a water-cooled case like the Vapochill **Professional Edition** (www.vapochill.com), shown left, or an enclosed do-it-yourself system like the TherMagic cooling system (www.thermagic. com), which comes completely assembled

and is easy to install. Both solutions should work well, and they minimize the chance of user error by nature of being closed systems.

I've got an older NVIDIA GeForce2 card that I don't believe supports dual monitors. I've done some research and picked up a GeForce4 Ti 4600 card that talks about dualdisplay capabilities. A couple of questions: Is dual-display, multi-display, multi-monitors, and two monitors all the same thing? Also, how do I hook up two monitors to this new card? It has one VGA out, one S/Video out, and one DVI out. I'm a bit confused, as most of the higher-end cards I've seen have only one VGA-out jack. I perform high-end Photoshop duties in addition to playing games, and I'm interested in the multiple monitors mostly for the former — but I still want great graphics for my gameplay.

- Jeffrey Rolinc

Yes, all those terms mean the same thing, and yes, you can connect and run two monitors at the same time via your new GeForce4 card by connecting one display to your VGA out and the other to your DVI out. If you don't have a digital flat-panel display to connect to your DVI out, and your card didn't come with an analog converter that allows you to run a standard CRT from your digital out, you should be able to find an analog converter for around \$10 at your local computer store. Ask for a DVI-to-VGA adapter. From there, follow your card's instructions on getting both monitors up and running (it involves one or two changes

If you have a hardware question or comment, or just want some...thing, write to Greg Vederman, Hard Stuff, PC Gamer, 150 North Hill Drive. Brisbane, CA 94005, or email gvederman@pogamer.com.

to your Display Properties).

I'm interested in buying a game controller for my PC. I mostly play first-person shooters, and I'm tired of screwing with my keyboard. I would like your opinion on which game controller (i.e., joystick) would be the best. Price is not a concern; response and user-friendly controls are my top priorities. I never play flight-simulation games or strategy games. I have done some limited research over the Internet and cannot determine which controller is best for my application.

- Jack

Wait, am I reading your letter correctly? You've been using nothing but your keyboard to play first-person shooters? My god, man! You must be new to PC gaming. You don't want a joystick - no gamepad or gizmo will do. For first-person shooters, you want a good mouse, my friend! It'll take a while to get used to, but first-person shooters are made to be played with your keyboard and mouse working in concert. Use your keyboard to move back and forth, left and right, and your mouse to control pitch and yaw. Give it a try. No other controller on the planet will afford you the same level of control.

I'm currently looking into watercooling my PC. Would you suggest buying a water-cooled case or installing a kit myself?

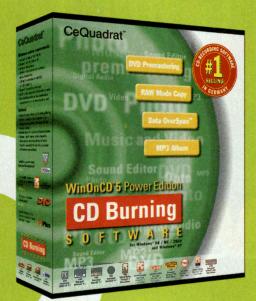
- Mike Sanders

Every time you review a new computer, you lament the fact that so many of them are nearly identical, inside and out. A VW and

You're a brave man, Mike. Water running through plastic tubes inside of an electronic component? Personally, I'll pass on



# Go for the **Ultimate Burn!**



"When it comes to CD-recording software, CeQuadrat's WinOnCD **Version 5.0 Power Edition has clearly** taken the lead and set the standard for all others to follow."

**Bob Starrett** eMedia Magazine, December 2002

Discover the ultimate German-engineered CD burning software, available for the first time in the U.S. WinOnCD5's high performance data burning and back-up join with powerful audio editing features for a winning combination that has become Germany's #1 selling CD burning software brand.

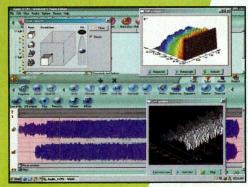
And there are more options with every mouse click - just explore the possibilities.

### **INCLUDES:**

- Data OverSpan™ for backing up your large data files and filesets over multiple discs
- Manced Sound Editor enables sub-channel editing, index marks, pause between tracks, cross fades and more
- Automatic conversion of WAV. CDA.WMA and MP3 files for burning
- ☑ VCD Music Album to organize and play up to 99 albums on one CD
- MP3 encoding and MP3 Music Album with HTML layout and a playlist editor
- ☑ Superior noise filters for restoring your analog records
- M DVD premastering



Video CD



Advanced Sound Editor







May 2002



March 2002





February 2002

WinOnCD 5 Power Edition is now available at software retailers, including









- Intel\* 1845PE Chipset 533Mhz FSB 8x AGP DDR333 MB
- 512MB PC2700 DDR DDR333 Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM ATA 100 Hard Drive
- ATI\* Radeon™ 9000 PRO 8X AGP 128MB DDR w/ TV Out & DVI
- 16X DVD-ROM & 48X16X48 CD-RW Drive
- Viewsonic 19" E95 .22MM SVGA Monitor
- AC97 3D Sound & 480Watt Subwoofer Speaker System
- 56K V.90 Fax Modem w/ Voice
- · Mitsumi 1.44 MB Floppy Drive
- Internet Multimedia Keyboard & Internet Mouse
- Turbo X-Gamer Case 350Watt with See Through Windows and Sound Activated Neon Light.
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- · Microsoft "Windows" XP Home Edition
- Corel Wordperfect Office 2002
- Free First Year On Site Service
- Upgrade to Viewsonic Office Keyboard and Optical Mouse +\$49

Intel Pentium 4 Processor 3.06Ghz \$ 1499 C3021 Intel Pentium 4 Processor 2.8Ghz \$ 1269 C3022 Intel\* Pentium\* 4 Processor 2.53Ghz \$ 1069 C3023 Intel Pentium 4 Processor 2.4Ghz \$ 1039 C3024 Intel\* Pentium\* 4 Processor 2.0Ghz \$ 1025 C3025 Intel Pentium 4 Processor 1.8 Ghz \$ 999 C3026



· VIA KT-400 400Mhz DDR 8X AGP MB

- 512MB PC3200 400Mhz DDR Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA 100 Hard Drive
- ATI\* Radeon™ 9500 Pro 8X AGP 128MB DDR w/ TV Out & DVI
- 16X DVD-ROM
- 48X16X48 CD-RW Drive
- 3D Wave Sound & 450 Watt Subwoofer System
- Viewsonic 19" E95 .22MM SVGA Monitor
- 56K Modem, Floppy Dr, Internet Keyboard & Mouse
- Aluminum SX1030 Soho Server Tower Case 425Watt w/ MOD "See Through Windows" & Neon Light
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- · Microsoft" Windows \* XP Home Edition
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2600+ \$1189 CXD301 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2400+ \$1159 CXD302 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2200+ \$ 1095 CXD303 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2100+ \$ 1079 CXD304 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2000+ \$ 1075 CXD305 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 1800+ \$1045 CXD306



• NVIDIA nForce-2 Motherboard with 8X AGP

- 1GB PC400 PC2700 DDR Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA 133 Hard Drive
- ATI\* Radeon™ 9700 Pro 8X AGP w/ 128MB DDR RAM • 16X DVD-ROM & 48X16X48 CD-RW Drive
- Creative Lab Sound Blaster Audigy X-Gamer 5.1 w/ IEEE
- Creative Cambridge Desk Top Theater 5.1 Inspire 5200 5.1 Surround Sound System
- · Viewsonic 19" E90FB .22MM SVGA Monitor
- 56K Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Silver PS2 Internet Keyboard
- · Microsoft\* Optical intelli Explorer Mouse
- Aluminum SX1030 SOHO Server Tower Case 425W w/ MOD "See Through Windows" & Neon Light
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- · Microsoft" Windows XP Home Edition
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2800+ \$ 1819 CD301 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2700+ \$ 1739 CD302 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2600+ \$ 1629 CD303 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2400+ \$ 1595 CD304 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2200+ \$ 1535 CD305 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2000+ \$ 1519 CD306 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 1800+ \$ 1485 CD307



- Intel\* 1850E Chipset 533Mhz FSB 4x AGP MB
- 512MB PC1066 Rambus Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA 100 Hard Drive
- NVIDIA Geforce-4 TI4800 SE 128MB w/ TV Out • 16X DVD-ROM & 48X16X48 CD-RW Drive
- · Creative Lab Sound Blaster Audigy 5.1 w/ IEEE
- Creative Cambridge SoundWorks Desk Top
- Theater 5.1 Inspire 5200 Sound System
- 19" Viewsonic E90+SB SB two tone Silver/Black .22MM 1800 x 1400 SVGA W/ Ultra Bright Technology
- 3COM US-Robotic 56K V.90 Fax Modem w/ Voice
- 1.44 MB Floppy Drive & PS2 internet Keyboard
- Microsoft" USB OPTICAL IntelliMouse
- CoolerMaster ATC-710 SOHO Sever Case w/ 420Watt Power
- Microsoft" Windows" XP Home Edition
- Corel Wordperfect Office 2002
- Norton Anti Virus 2002
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 3.06Ghz \$ 1989 co301 Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 2.8Ghz \$ 1759 co302 Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 2.53Ghz \$ 1559 co303 Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 2.4Ghz \$ 1529 CO304 Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 2.0Ghz \$ 1505 co305 Intel\* Pentium\* 4 Processor 1.8Ghz \$ 1485 co306



- NVIDIA nForce-2 Motherboard w/ 8X AGP
- 512MB PC3200 DDR 400Mhz Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM ATA133 Hard Drive
- NVIDIA Geforce-4 MX440 8X AGP Version 68MB DDR w/ TV Out
- 16X DVD-ROM & 48X16X48 CD-RW Drive
- Creative Lab Sound Blaster Live 5.1 Sound Card
- Creative Lab Inspire 4400 4.1 Subwoofer System
- Viewsonic 19" E95 .22MM SVGA Monitor
- 56K Modem, Floppy Dr, Internet Keyboard & Mouse
- Aluminum SX1030 SOHO Server Tower Case 425Watt w/ MOD "See Through Windows" & Neon Light
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support
- Upgrade to Viewsonic Office Keyboard and Optical Mouse +\$49

AMD Athlon™	ΧP	Processor	2800+	\$	1385	CXB301
AMD Athlon™	XP	Processor	2700+	\$	1309	CXB302
AMD Athlon™	XP	Processor	2600+	\$	1195	CXB303
AMD Athlon™	ΧP	Processor	2400+	\$	1165	CXB304
AMD Athlon™	ΧP	Processor	2200+	\$	1099	CXB305
AMD Athlon M	YD.	Processor	2000+	¢	1085	CABSUC

AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 1800+ \$ 1079 CXB307



- NVIDIA nForce-2 Motherboard w/ 8X AGP
- 512MB PC400 PC3200 DDR Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA133 Hard Drive
- NVIDIA Geforce-4 TI4600 8X AGP 128MB w/ TV Out & DVI
- 16X DVD-ROM & 48X16X48 CD-RW Drive
- Creative Lab Sound Blaster Live 5.1 w/ 1394 IEEE
- Creative Cambridge Desk Top Theater 5.1 Inspire 5200 5.1 Surround Sound System
- · Viewsonic 19" E95 .22MM SVGA Monitor
- 56K Modem, 1.44MB Floppy
- PS2 internet Keyboard
- · Microsoft\* Optical IntelliMouse
- Aluminum SX1030 SOHO Server Tower Case 425W w/ MOD "See Through Windows" & Neon Light
- . 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft\* Windows\* XP Home Edition
- Corel Wordperfect Office 2002
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2800+ \$ 1585 CXC301 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2700+ \$ 1506 CXC302 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2600+ \$ 1395 CXC303 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2400+ \$ 1365 CXC304 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2200+ \$ 1299 CXC305 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2000+ \$ 1279 CXC300 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 1800+ \$ 1249 CXC307













4802 Little John St. Baldwin Park, CA 91706 Tel: (626)813-7730 • Fax: (626)813-3810 Technical Support (877)876-4965 Hour:Mon-Fri 8:30A.M. ~ 6:00P.M. • Sat 9:30A.M. ~ 3:00P.M.



- NVIDIA nForce-2 Motherboard w/ 8X AGP
- 512MB PC400 PC3200 DDR Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA133 Hard Drive
- NVIDIA Geforce-4 TI4200 8X AGP 128MB DDR w/ TV out
- 16X DVD-ROM & 48X16X48 CD-RW Drive
- Creative Laib Sound Blaster Live 5.1 Surround Sound
- 800 Watt Stereo Subwoofer Speaker System w/ Matching Neon Light
  • Viewsonic 19" E95 .22MM SVGA Monitor
- 56K Modem, 1.44MB Floppy, Keyboard & Mouse
- Aluminum Medium Tower Case w/ MOD "See Through Windows" & Neon Light 350 Watt
- Microsoft\* Windows\* XP Home Edition
- Corel Wordperfect Office 2002
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2800+ \$ 1415 CL30 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2700+ \$ 1335 CL302 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2600+ \$ 1225 CL303 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2400+ \$ 1189 CL304 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2200+ \$ 1129 CL305 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2000+ \$ 1115 CL306 AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 1800+ \$ 1099

8 H 4

10

3

ň

Z

70

t

A

6

'n

Z

1

H

Z

0

200

A

H

4

8

Ü

Z

H

be

d

H

A

4

H

0

A

A

Z

4

A

出

D

H

X

ń

alternate lives

### Steve Klett

# MORPG SNFM

Wherein our columnist determines that this massively multiplayer online RPG is Still Not For Me



Oh boy — more rats to smite. Isn't this fun? Can anyone hear me? Bueller?

egular readers of this column should already be well aware of my bias against what are arguably the most popular games in the genre today, MMORPGs. I've been trying them out since Ultima Online debuted, and none has yet brought me back for more - though I continue to revisit standalone classics such as Baldur's Gate II.

Lately I've been throwing myself into MMORPGs with abandon, still thinking there's something I must really be missing out on. Earth & Beyond and the Shadowbane beta have both seen considerable playtime during the last few months. When Asheron's Call 2 made its way to my desk, I dove into it headfirst.

And after 30-plus hours running around in the game doing such enthralling things as killing insects and rats (okay, "Ratmen" in this case), occasionally with others in my party, my opinion of the genre remains unchanged.

AC 2 takes steps to alleviate some of the terribly boring and monotonous aspects of previous efforts - you don't need to run back to town to sell your loot, or find your corpse to get back loot, for instance - yet adds enough new ones, mostly through errors of omission, that the gains are negated.

Initially, I was blown over by the environment graphics - the fields of tall

grass, lush foliage, flowers and forests, incredible sunrises and sunsets, and brilliant water effects. I thought AC 2 might be the MMORPG to draw me in. The ambient sounds are equally fantastic, from the pounding of the surf to the chirping of birds. And the character and monster models are wonderfully detailed.

But the technical splendor soon faded as I traipsed from empty town to empty town, finding them devoid even of NPCs. Now, I realize the gameworld represents a fresh start to be built on, but the whole vibe lacked luster out of the box. Again, I know the game's higher-level areas offer some more interesting stuff, but why must the path to those events be so tedious? Find keys, craft items, stand around and chat and play music with



This bad boy's interesting, but I bet many players won't stick around long enough to meet him.

other players - that's roughly what the game boils down to.

And, though I like and appreciate the crafting element (it adds a dynamic aspect to the game as you see how players experiment with it and what the higherlevel "recipes" produce), it's not well-balanced. Initially easy, if a bit repetitive, the system bogs down when you need some pretty rare stuff to progress. You can acquire this stuff only through endless questing — or by paying another player through the nose. The game should have a normal marketplace setting in which players who aren't interested in (or don't have the patience for) crafting can purchase items/ingredients/weapons. But it doesn't.

Since monster loot is the only real way to accumulate wealth and ingredients for crafting, you're forced to be a fighter. Where are the more cerebral options for the pacifists among us that want to just be, say, a baker?

I also found the monster-respawning system particularly lame: kill a monster and hang around for a few minutes and he'll reappear in front of you, which you can repeat ad nauseum. Also, monsters don't drop "logical" loot - a pet peeve of mine. A wasp may drop coins or a shield, for instance, instead of something that makes sense, like a healing salve. What's a wasp doing with money, anyway?

In the end, AC 2 is certainly not a bad game; it's just pretty unremarkable. It's built on solid code, and it'll be particularly good for newbies who want to whet their swords in a friendly environment. (I found the player community to be extremely helpful and responsive.) It's just not for me in its present state.

For now, AC 2 and MMORPGs in general remain SNFM (Still Not For Me). Back to Neverwinter Nights I go. Happily. - alternatelives@pcgamer.com



There may not be a lot going on in it, but the gameworld is very beautiful at times.

MY GAMES OF THE MONTH: 1. ARX FATALIS, 2. THE SIMS ONLINE, 3. COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 3, 4. THE ELDER SCROLLS III; TRIBUNAL, 5. ICEWIND DALE II

### **EXTREME** PERFORMANCE

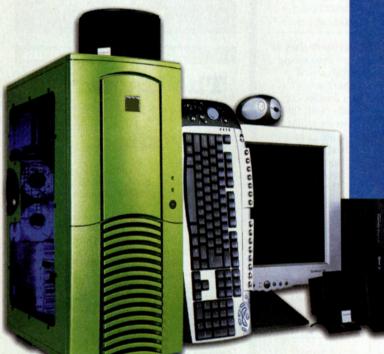


Boost software performance with QuantiSpeed™ architecture

Make gaming opponents wish they had an AMD Athlon™ XP processor

3DNow! Professional technology brings digital photos and video files to life with rich, vibrant colors and textures

Enjoy efficient multitasking when using multiple peripherals



# **Award Winning System**

### **Monitors**

ViewSonic 19" P95F+ White \$289.00 SONY 21" CPD-G520P White \$639.00 NEC 22" FE2111SB Black \$609.00

### Speakers

Creative Inspire 5.1 5200 Speaker System \$69.00 Creative MegaWorks 5.1 550 Speaker System Klipsch ProMedia 2.1 THX-Certified 200W \$179.00 Klipsch ProMedia 5.1 THX-Certified 500W \$349.00

### **Gamepad & Harness**

Guillemot THRUSTMASTER Fire Storm

dual Power Gamepad \$ 30.00 Gear Grip-Pro Computer Harness \$ 34.00









### ABS™ Ultimate M2

Chieftec Aluminum Case w/Acrylic Windows 400-Watt PS & Neon Light (Color Option: Green/Yellow/Blue/Silver/Black) NVIDIA® nForce™2 DDR400 8X AGP Motherboard w/Dual LAN Kingston 512MB Fast PC3200 400MHz DDR SDRAM Memory Two 60GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA Hard Drives Pioneer 16X DVD Player & Mitsumi 1.44MB Floppy Drive Plextor 48X12X48 BURN-Proof™ CD-ReWritable Drive NVIDIA® GeForce™4 Ti4600 w/128MB Video Card NEC 19" .22mm 1600X1200 Color Monitor Creative SoundBlaster Audigy XGamer Sound Card w/IEEE 1394 Creative Inspire 5.1 5200 Subwoofer/Speakers Integrated Network Controller & V.92 PCI 56K Modem Logitech Cordless Elite Duo Keyboard and Mouse Microsoft Windows® XP Home Edition

Free Games: Microsoft Age of Empires II and Dungeon Siege 1.0 Free 7/24 Tech Support and 1 Year Onsite Service Free ABS™ PC Organizer (3" Color Binder for Manual, Drivers, etc.)

AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2400+ with outperforms competitive 2.4GHz processors \$ 1749

### **ABS™ Ultimate M5**

Chieftec Aluminum Case w/Acrylic Windows 400-Watt PS & Neon Light (Color Option: Green/Yellow/Blue/Silver/Black) NVIDIA® nForce™2 DDR400 8X AGP Motherboard w/Dual LAN Kingston 512MB Fast PC3200 400MHz DDR SDRAM Memory Two 80GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA Hard Drives w/8MB Cache Pioneer 16X DVD Player & Mitsumi 1.44MB Floppy Drive Plextor 48X24X48 BURN-Proof™ CD-ReWritable Drive ATI Radeon 9700 Pro 128MB DDR 8X AGP Video Card ViewSonic 22" .25mm 2048X1536 Color Monitor Creative Labs SoundBlaster Audigy XGamer Sound Card w/IEEE 1394 Klipsch ProMedia Dolby 5.1 THX Subwoofer/Speakers PCI 10/100 Network Controller Logitech Cordless Elite Duo Keyboard & Mouse Microsoft Windows® XP Home Edition Free Games: Microsoft Age of Empires II and Dungeon Siege 1.0 Free 7/24 Tech Support and 1 Year Onsite Service

Free ABS™ PC Organizer (3" Color Binder for Manual, Drivers, etc.)

AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2800+ with QuantiSpeed™ architecture\* outperforms competitive 2.8GHz processors

\$2649

ABS™ PCs use genuine Microsoft® Windows® www.microsoft.com/piracy/howtotell

ABS™ recommends Microsoft® Windows® XP



www.abspc.com/pgo3

Sales Hours: Mon-Fri 8:30AM-5:30PM PST Technical Support: Mon-Fri 8:30AM-5:30PM PST Technical Support: 800-685-3471 General Office: 562-695-8823 9997 East Rose Hills Road, Whittier, CA 90601

efform may not accurately represent exact configurations priced. ABSI<sup>TM</sup> is not responsible for errors in typography and/or photography. 30-day money back guarantee does not include opened solipping charge are non-refundable. Products returned after 30 days or in a non-refundable condition are subject to a resocking fee. Onside service may be provided by contracted third party program of the provided by contracted and provided by contracted and provided by contracted third party provided by contracted and provided by contracted by contracted and provided by contracted by contracted and provid

0 H 4

200

A

Z

ń

K

H

202

×

4

4

0

t

4

M

H

0

H

4

...

H

4

h

A

200

A

0

H

102

n

벍

4

8

×

0

H

O

killing box

# **The 2nd Annual Kill-ees**

Chuck unveils his yearly load of non-awards for non-events

ast year, I honored industry players who made the gaming world an infinitely better place for what they didn't do in 2001 - by not releasing a Temptation Island game, for example. Needless to say, fans (my mom) and

months from the game's projected release.

I'd seen The Y-Project in numerous demos, and always left impressed. Because you'd fight giant alien bugs alongside either scientists or military personnel — each with their own diverging

a rumored Half-Life 2. The silence is deafening...will 2003 be different? (Prediction: Yes...)

The PC Diss Award goes to Blizzard for announcing its inaugural tactical action game Starcraft: Ghost as a console-only

> title. Now, this release might not be such a bad thing (as I'll get to in the next award), but one of the questions we're asked most often here at PCG is. "When is the next StarCraft coming out?" C'mon, Blizzard, will those console brats give you the love you deserve? Come back to the light...



my editor demanded a follow-up. [I did? - Ed.]

The 2002 Kill-ees aren't such a Hallmark moment. Some nonhappenings were (gasp!) actually bad. So, with a melancholy sigh, I humbly present this Very Special Episode of The Kill-ees.

The Y-Oh-Why Award goes to the cancellation of The Y-Project, a futuristic FPS/RPG powered by the Unreal II engine. Despite signing agreements with publishers and garnering widespread coverage, German developer Westka suddenly lost funding and closed its doors this summer, mere

agendas, weapons, and missions - the game promised tons of replayability. Now we're left to ask: Why couldn't it have been Gore?

The Whatever Happened To...? Award goes to Valve. Aside from an announcement about game-downloading app Steam at last year's GDC, Valve's been in seclusion. Last year, I gave them a Kill-ee for the same thing - resting on their laurels and quietly making new games without overdosing on hype. A full year later, exactly nothing has changed - no TF 2 updates and no news on

### The Lowest Common **Denominator Award** goes

to this year's PS2-ing of game development. Games that could've been spectacular if developed solely for the PC — The Thing, Nightfire — seem to have been significantly dumbeddown for cross-platform release. There are exceptions (GTA III), and some houses like ION Storm strive to develop for each platform's strength, but the overall trend toward weakest-link-in-the-chain design is troubling.

Anything else that should've gotten an "award"? Share the love.

- killingbox@pcgamer.com

### MOD OF THE MONTH

System Shock III may not be on the horizon (yet, anyway), but in the meantime try Spatial Fear, part one in a creepy singleplayer total conversion for Unreal Tournament 2003 designed by amateur mod team Liquid Element. You can download it from www.planetunreal.com/spatialfear/.

MY GAMES OF THE MONTH: 1. FREEDOM FORCE, 2. BATTLEFIELD 1942, 3. NEOCRON, 4. GRAND THEFT AUTO III, 5. MAFIA



sim column

### The Eastern Front Revisited

IL-2 STURMOVIK IS WITHOUT a doubt the finest World War II combat flight simulator to see action on the PC since MicroProse's European Air War in 1998. Not one to rest on his laurels, IL-2 creator Oleg Maddox has been busily applying the finishing touches to the second chapter in the franchise — IL-2 Sturmovik: The Forgotten Battles. Originally conceived as an add-on, Forgotten Battles ultimately grew to such massive proportions that its future as a stand-alone product became as inescapable as a snowy Moscow winter.

I was lucky enough to test-fly an early beta recently, and while it's a bit early to be picking "2003 Sim of the Year" candidates, I'm already prepared to wager that Forgotten Battles will be a strong contender for the honor.

The single biggest improvement is its new dynamic campaign generator. The sim now boasts a completely unscripted Pilot Andy Mahood Career mode

where your individual mission successes will directly affect the ebb and flow of the war. Toss in five new gameplay maps (including Romania and Finland) and a whopping 30 new flyable aircraft, and it's easy to see how this modest little "add-on" wound up spilling over onto two CDs.

Need more reasons to be excited? For all of its relative obscurity and emphasis on Soviet and Luftwaffe aircraft, Forgotten Battles carries on directly where its immediate predecessor left off by delivering the most visually stunning and fluid representation of aerial combat ever packaged up in a PC flight simulation. Hell, I haven't been this excited about a new air-combat sim since - well, since the original IL-2 shipped over a year ago.

Normally a product as significant as Forgotten Battles would have received the fullblown "Scoop!" preview treatment, but the game's last-minute change of status from an add-on to a stand-alone retail release kept it off our radar screens until it was too late. (And the sim's ship date is set for early March.) Not to worry, though, because the Sim Column exists to bring everyone up to speed on stuff like this!

Whether you're a dedicated IL-2 aficionado or simply a curious simmer who's late to the party, take my word for it — this game is the next big thing that you've been waiting for.

- simcolumn@pcgamer.com

# **Can your game PC** do 18500+3D mark out of box?

Introducing Gaming Power from Beyond the Future 3.6+ Gig. of Hyper Threading Hertz by

Overcolcked intel Pentium 4 Processor

3500MB/s Memory Bandwidth

Resulting from lightening fast Gell PC3500 DDR433 RAM Modules

Super Natural Video & Graphice Subsystem

Supercharged by OCS Enhanced Radeon 9700 Pro with 400MHz Core and 700MHz DDR RAM Speed

Personalized Chasis with High Tech Color

and Glossy Warped in exclusive OCS Liquid Diamond finish

and .... AIR COOLED! NO WATER NEEDED!!

**Over Clocked AMD Systems Available!** 





# overclocking System

### Genghis Khan 18500+30 Mark

- . Overclocked P4 3.68GHz 640MHz FSB Hyper Threadeing
- Swiftech MCX4000-T Thermal Electric CPU Cooler with Thermaltake Smart Fan II

  Intel 845PE Chipset Motherboard with RAID
- Gell 512MB PC3700 DDR466 Platinum
- OCS Liquid Diamond Custom Color gTower Aluminum Case
- Vantec Stealth 520w Triple Fan Aluminum Power Supply
- OCS Enhanced ATI 9700 Pro Level II 128MB DDR 400MHz Core / 700MHz Memory
- 180GB Serial ATA V HDD 8MB Cache
- Color Plextor 48x CBRW
- Color Pioneer A05 DVD-RW Drive
- Sound Blaster Audigy 2 Platinum Logitech Z680 THX 5.1 Speaker
- Intel Pro100s Network Adaptor
- Digital Doc5 Thermal Management System
- Logitech Elite Gaming Keyboard / MX300 Mouse
- Microsoft Windows XP Professional

### \$4099

### Mighty Warlock 17300+30 Mark' • Overclocked P4 3.20GHz 640MHz FSB

- Swiftech MCX4000 CPU Cooler with Thermaltake Smart Fan II
- Intel 845PE Chipset Motherboard
- Gell 512MB PC3500 DDR433 Platinum • OCS Diamond Warp OC Proved Tower Case
- Thermaltake 420w Dual Fan Power Supply
- OCS Enhanced Radeon 9700 Pro Level II
- 128MB DOR 400MHz Core / 700MHz Memory Western Digital 120GB Ultra IDE HDD 8MB Cache
- . Color 52x CDRW / 16x DVD Drive
- Sound Blaster Audigy 2
   Altec Lansing XA3051 5.1 Speaker System
   Intel Pro100s Network Adaptor
- Fan Control Thermal Management System
- Logitech Elite Gaming Keyboard / MX300 Mouse
- Microsoft Windows XP Home

### \$2399

### Mini Me Game Cube 13200+30 Mark

- Overclocked P4 2.85 GHz 600MHz FSB
- Shuttle SB51G Aluminum Cube (Silver or Black) (Custom Color Option Available)

  250w Power Supply

  Intel 845GE Chipset Motherboard

- Gell 512MB PC3200 DDR400
- OCS Enhanced Radeon 9500 Pro 128MB DDR 340MHz Core / 670MHz Memory
- Western Digital 80GB Ultra IDE HDD 8MB Cache
- Color 48x16x CDRW/DVD Drive
- Onboard 5.1 Sound
- Onboard 10/100 Network Adapter
- Microsoft Multimedita Keyboard
- Microsoft IntelliMouse Explorer 3.0
- Microsoft Windows XP Home

### **\$1499**

×

0

H

202 K Å Þ

×

0

O A

× 4

10

A 0 Ė.

10

A

H

0

H

4

Pe

100

A

A

4

M

Ü

Pe

Þ

W

O

202

A

0

A

4

×

Ť

O

10

to

×

0

A

extended play

### **An All-New Battlefield**

Modders turn their talents to our 2002 Game of the Year



An Apache helicopter makes a Hellfire attack on an Iraqi base.

s of this writing, EA Games doesn't yet officially support mod developers' efforts with Battlefield 1942. The publisher has yet to release the code, a software development kit, or even a map editor. But that hasn't stopped one mod team from producing an impressive alpha version of a total conversion — updating the battlefield to modern warfare in the Middle East.

Desert Combat is the name of an ambitious project being assembled by a mod team scattered across the U.S., Canada, and Britain. I talked with Tim Brophy, one of Desert's senior coders, about the splendid effort already on display at www.desertcombat.com.

"We're creating real-world scenarios from modern Middle East conflicts," says Brophy. "It's set over the last decade, starting with the Gulf War in 1990-1991."



A U.S. soldier brings his SMAW to bear while an Abrams tank watches with authority.

The total conversion, which is dropping jaws around the 1942 community even in its formative development stages, includes modern vehicles like the M1A1 Abrams tank, Humvee, and Russianmade T-72; modern aircraft like the A-10 Warthog "tank-killer"; and modern infantry weapons such as the SAW light machinegun and LAAWs. The developers create these new elements through a painstaking effort of trial and error.

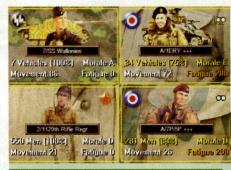
There's no documentation on any of this. We're building concepts that [EA] never considered at engine stage," explains Brophy, referring to the helicopters, Humvee-launched TOW missiles, and cluster bombs that his team has added to the game. "Unlike Half-Life and WorldCraft, there's not even a map editor...we're manually editing everything, building our own tools."

Play balance is as big a concern as new weapons and vehicles: "Iraq might have very little airpower, but that's offset by ground forces." Before DC is released in final form, Brophy hopes to have added Israel, Syria, India, Pakistan, and even more nations as playable combatant sides.

It's impressive enough when an amateur mod team can produce a great total conversion using proper editing tools. The fact that Brophy and crew are well on their way to such a success without any support is frankly astounding.

- extendedplay@pcgamer.com

MY GAMES OF THE MONTH: 1. SPLINTER CELL, 2. SIMCITY 4, 3. ARMORED TASK FORCE, 4. BATTLEFIELD 1942, 5. BLACK HAWK DOWN (BETA)



### desktop general

### The Art of War (for Panzer Campaigns)

HPS SIMS' PANZER CAMPAIGNS cycle, created by the prolific John Tiller, has earned a reputation for historical accuracy and consistently terrific playability. Novices have no trouble figuring out how to play on an elementary level; grognards appreciate its optional complexities.

I recently learned that some hardcore fans of the series, loosely spearheaded by "Volcano Man" (aka Ed Williams), have created new, highly original "art packets" that other Panzer Campaigns fans can download for free. Williams specializes in depicting infantry and armor units; colleague Stewart Atkinson has a passion for artillery and leaders' portraits; Thomas Wulfe most enjoys rendering backgrounds and terrain. As you can see from the examples above, these gentlemen are superb artists. Their sizable output is truly a labor of love.

Mind you, these alternative art mods reflect no disrespect for Tiller's long-time "house" artists Joe Amoral and Mark Adams. But Joe and Mark are workhorses who are spread very thin (my rough count credits them with doing all the artwork for 14 to 15 games in the last year!). Of

necessity, they William R. Trotter

"basic library" of images that can be plugged in from game to game, and customized quickly.

The "Volcano Group" has the luxury of taking all the time they want to polish their images. Their leader/soldier portraits, for example, convey a powerful sense of individual personalities. These guys do not tout their work as being superior to Amoral's, just "different."

As a longtime fan of Tiller's games, I am deeply impressed by the visual impact of these alternative images; their appropriateness; their depth of character and dramatic flair. Fans of the HPS series can decide for themselves, on a gameby-game basis, which set of graphics they prefer. For full details and downloads, go to http://members. shaw.ca/gcsaunders/welcomes.html.

And while you're there, check out the site's range of interesting departments (all rendered in a bold and zestful style - site founder Glenn Williams is a successful commercial artist, and it shows). There are archives of documents pertaining to recent (and far-from-recent) HPS games and the history that inspired them; designers' and artists' notes; links to discussion themes inspired by HPS titles; and a number of highly interesting historical chat-groups, including some that were new to me.

In sum: a first-class web site, offering some of the best customized artwork I've seen in the genre.

- desktopgeneral@pcgamer.com

# built for the gemer





http://www.eVGA.com/pcgamer

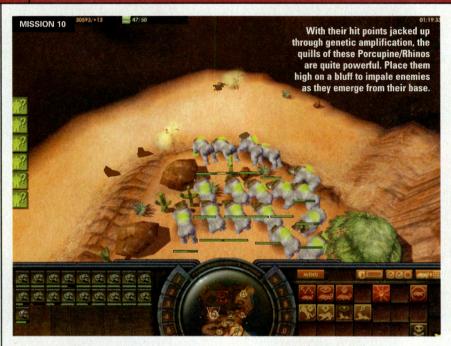


Promotional Code: PCG 301

© 2003 eVGA.com Corp., eVGA.com, ACS, ACS<sup>2</sup> and ACS<sup>3</sup> are the copyrighted property of eVGA.com Corp., NVIDIA, the NVIDIA logo, are the registered trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation.

# **Impossible Creatures**

With 15 multi-part missions, this game's single-player mode will keep RTS fans busy for ages. Here are a few pointers for some of the more difficult missions.



### THE WICKED SKY WITCH (M8)

- Get AA towers up pronto they'll automatically shoot down Velonika's scouts. Quickly advance north-northeast with henchmen to seize two valuable coal piles, and send a few more to the east to nab another pile, but be ready for savage attacks to destroy your new structures. A good tactic for protecting the easterly coal base is to build a double bramble wall and design creatures with ranged or artillery fire that can shoot from behind it in safety.
- A Crocodile/Archer Fish combo will let you cruise both in the river and around the island and attack structures from safety. They're especially useful in the river to the north when you attack Humphrey because they can bombard poisonous Komodo/Rhino creatures and others charging south to your base. Because Humphrey's forces attack most frequently, you should deal with him first.
- Those "Rhinagons" will attack all your bases in multiple waves unless you wipe out all of Humphrey's creature chambers - a tall order while two other enemies survive, but you can handle it in three ways: air units with immunity (Dragonfly/Hippo, but beware of AA towers), ground units with immunity (Hippo/Hammerhead), and bombardment from water. Water artillery will devastate most of Bugsy's base and will soften up Velonika's outpost for the final assault.

### THE INVASION (M10)

- You must wipe out the closest lab in a lightning attack with Level I or II units. We waited until Level II and used speed (Cheetah/Piranha). Be sure to tag the Bull and pair it with the Dragonfly (immunity) to face the charging Komodo combos. Destroy the lab in the valley with artillery from the cliffs (either Giraffe/Archer Fish or Chimp/Giraffes), followed immediately by ground attacks through the valley, but be aware that you'll probably have to try this several times before you succeed.
- Now build storehouses and creature chambers at all coal piles from your Lab to the east end of the valley. Create a few select Level V units - ranged, melee (with immunity), and a powerful air unit to swoop on

Eleph-Ants as they stampede through the valley in waves - and maximize their abilities with the genetic amplifier. Move fast to eliminate the other two labs, then form chokepoints to ambush animals from the factory. The endgame will probably be decided by resources: win it with the gyrocopter to reach the coal on the plateau. A very large Lobster-based combo is best for the final assault because of its barrier-destroy power.

### SOWN SEEDS (M15)

- The key to victory is expanding in the right places - and at the right time. Pause the game, queue five henchmen for coal mining, position Rex and the two Killillas just to the northwest of the Lab, and send all other units (henchmen, too) on a dash to the northeast plateau. Destroy the buildings there and build a storehouse and creature chamber; protect it from air and ground attacks with soundbeam and AA towers and from naval artillery with ChimpElephants. Expand your main base, too.
- Produce lower level (I–III) units only when absolutely necessary - you are outnumbered and must ensure each creature takes down two enemies with him. At Level V, produce powerful ranged and melee units (with amphibious skills so the melee units can tangle with the Hippopotterfish when it retreats into the canal). Now you should grab the closest coal pile to the west while sending naval artillery counterclockwise to destroy enemy storehouses in the northeast corner, followed by henchmen to exploit the coal found there. Back near Julius' base, battle westward up the hill to find another big coal deposit, easily protected because it can be approached only via a narrow path. (Can you say "kill zone"?)
- The choice of heavy units is yours; we used the Elepheel (lightning), Elephagon (Komodo with tusks - poison plus goring!), and a Rhino Lobster for smashing buildings. Pog-



A Crocodile/Archer Fish combo is ideal for reducing enemy structures to rubble from a safe distance.



### **CHEATER'S CORNER**



**Dragon's Lair 3D** 

Stuck on the road to Daphne? Use these tips to beat two of the game's hardest scenarios.

The Flame Path: In the Castle Sewers, after proceeding down a hallway originally blocked by brown barrels, you'll come to the Fire Arrows room, where you'll find a 3-by-4 square grid (shown above) surrounded by pipes that shoot fireballs when pressure is applied to the stone tiles. As you enter the room, flames move across the surface of the tiles, indicating the safe path across.

If you need to see the flames again, step on the hexagonal square on the floor to the right of

the entrance. When you're ready, hold down the run button and start jumping across the tiles in order. The pipes still shoot fireballs, but you stay ahead of the flames if you follow the tiles in the right sequence.

The Robot Knight: You've just entered the room with the Robot Knight (who you may remember from the *Dragon's Lair* coin-op). How do you beat him? First, carefully observe the waves emanating from his sword to figure out which checkerboard tiles have been

electrified. Now carefully jump from one safe patch of floor to the next until you reach the Robot Knight, and attack him with your sword. Reverse your path to attack the Knight when he teleports to the other side of the checkerboard. It takes three hits to bring down the Robot Knight, and the power of the electrical field increases each time you hit him. Fortunately, the pattern of non-electrified tiles doesn't change.

### SimCity 4

During gameplay, press Ctrl + X to bring up the chat window. Now type one of the following codes and hit Enter:

- fightthepower Removes power requirement from all buildings
- howdrylam Removes water requirement from all buildings
- **zoneria** Toggle Zones
- tastyzots Toggle Zots
- Dolly Ilama Enables Ilama-head advisors (shown below)

### **The Gladiators**

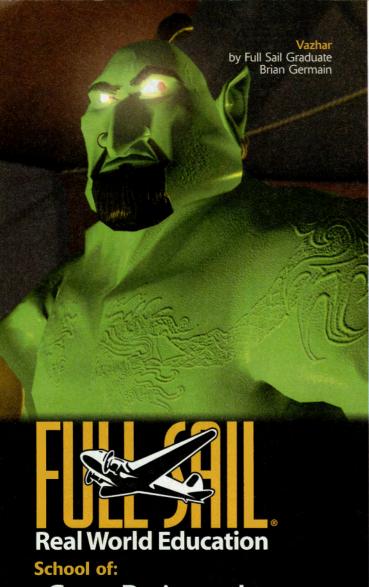
During gameplay, type any of the following cheats:

- VasyMusclor Selected units get godlike power
- JeSuisLaMort Enemy ignores selected units
- OnEstPoto Selected units become your friends
- BruleEnEnfer Summons one "flammer" unit
- QuoiDeNeufDoc Heals selected unit(s)
- CoteDeMailles ChainMail +2
- **BoumBoum** Gives your main gladiator a super-attack (à la the lightning-bolt power-up)
- GuyLeclair Activates turbo mode
- PleinLesFouilles Adds 500 joker points









- Game Design and **Development**
- Computer Animation
- Digital Media
- Film
- Audio
- Show Production

800.226.7625 www.fullsail.com

### 3300 University Boulevard • Winter Park, FL 32792

- · Financial aid available to those who qualify.
- Job placement assistance.
- Accredited college, ACCSCT.

© 2002 Full Sail, Inc. All rights reserved. The terms "Full Sail," "Full Sail Real World Education," and the Full Sail logo are either registered service marks or service marks of Full Sail, Inc.

Why do so many students choose ACCIS for their degree?

### FLEXIBILITY

- Study at your own pace
- No classes to attend
- Affordable for everyone
- Enroll anytime





American College of Computer & Information Sciences

> ACCREDITED MEMBER DETC BIRMINGHAM, AL

FREE CATALOGUE • 1-800-767-2427 • WWW.ACCIS.EDU

# **Check the Ratin**

The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) rating system can help you decide whether a computer or video game is right for your family. The ESF system provides both CONTENT DESCRIPTORS that indicate whether there are particular content elements which may be of interest or concern, and RATING Symbols that tell you what age the game is appropriate for.

### **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

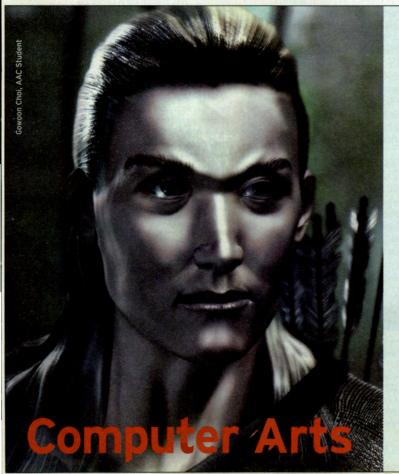




COMPANY	PRODUCT	PAGE #
The 3DO Company	High Heat	7
ABS PC	ABS Computers — Ult. Gaming	99
ABS PC	ABS Computers — Award-Winning	127
Academy of Art College	Academy of Art College	135
ACCIS	Education	134
Alienware	Alienware PC Systems	4-5
ARUSH Entertainment	Devastation	9
ATI Technologies	RADEON	115
Atlas Micro	Atlas Micro Computers	83
BAWLS Guarana	Beauty Sleep	18-19
CDV	American Conquest	59
Codemasters	IGI 2	104-105
Codemasters	Operation Flashpoint	72-73
Compu Experts	GoGamer	79
Creative Labs	Audigy	OBC
Cyberpower	Cyberpower Computer Systems	124-125
Dell Computer Corp.	Dell Computers	56-57
DreamCatcher Interactive	Harbinger	61
Eidos Interactive	Praetorians	20-21
Electronic Arts	1503 A.D.	64-65
Electronic Arts	Ultima Online Print	88-89
Electronic Arts	C&C: Generals	37-39
Electronic Arts	Battlefield 1942	100-101
Electronics Boutique	EB Catalog	35
Full Sail	Full Sail Education	134
Harcourt Learning Direct	Thomson Education Direct	121
ibuypower Computer	ibuypower Computer Systems	117-119
ibuypower Computer	eVGA.com	131
iGames	Savage	71
Infogrames	Unreal II: The Awakening	52-53
Infogrames	Neverwinter Nights: The Shadows	23

COMPANY	PRODUCT	PAGE#
Infogrames	Unreal Tournament 2003	74
LucasArts Entertainment Company	Indiana Jones	45
Microsoft	Xbox Live	8081
Microsoft	Impossible Creatures	110-111
Microsoft	Freelancer	46-47
Microsoft	Rise of Nations	62-63
NovaLogic	Black Hawk Down	IBC
OCSystem	OCSystem Hardware	129
Roxio	WinOnCD	123
Saitek	PC Hardware	133
Sony Online Entertainment	PlanetSide	IFC-1
Strategy First	The Gladiators	69
Take-Two Interactive	Midnight Club 2	51
Take-Two Interactive	Vietcong	67
THO	Red Faction 2	28-31
Tri Synergy, Inc.	BANDITS: Phoenix Rising!	103
Tri Synergy, Inc.	Port Royale	109
Ubi Soft	Splinter Cell	15
Ubi Soft	Rainbow Six: Raven Shield	10-11
Vicious PC	Vicious PC	97
Vivendi Publishing Group	Jurassic Park	24-25
Vivendi Publishing Group	NASCAR 2003	55
Vivendi Publishing Group	Lost Vikings GBA	13
Vivendi Publishing Group	Enclave	91, 93, 95
Xtreme Gear	Xtreme Gear Computer Systems	107

CONTEST RULES No purchase is necessary. Only one entry per house-hold, per month, will be counted. Anyone can enter, but only U.S. residents are eligible to win prizes, and the offer is void in FL, RI, Puerto Rico, and where prohibited by law. Your chances of winning depend on the number of entries we receive. Failure to follow the rules will result in instant disqualification. Canadian law prohibits those readers from entering.



2D & 3D Animation | 3D Modeling | Character Design
Computer Graphics | Digital Imaging | Filmmaking
Game Design | Visual Effects | Web Design | And more...

AA | BFA | MFA Degrees
Portfolio Development | Online Classes

Apply Now for Fall, Spring & Summer Semesters

High School Scholarships & Teacher Grants Available



# AcademyOfArtCollege 1.800.544.ARTS | www.academyart.edu

79 New Montgomery St., San Francisco, CA 94105 Nationally Accredited by ACICS, NASAD & FIDER Established in 1929

# **The Worst Game** of the Year Awards

Some games are so gut-wrenchingly abominable that they never win awards or get a chance to be re-released in a commemorative "Shiny Metal Edition." That's not fair. For dreadfulness above and beyond the call of doody. PC Gamer proudly recognizes the worst of 2002.

### **WORST ACTING IN A GAME** (TIE) JAZZ AND FAUST IN JAZZ AND FAUST

For reciting each and every line as if they were leaving an answering-machine message at 3 a.m. while stoned, this disturbing duo deserves the award equally. We laughed and we cried, but never at the appropriate moments.

### **WORST EXPLOITATION OF A TRAGEDY E.D.N.Y. FIREFIGHTER**

Sure, the game box promises that a "portion" of the proceeds will go to a New York Fire Safety Fund, but remember, zero is a portion, too.

### **WORST GERMAN EXPORT** DEMONWORLD

Those crazy Germans sure spew forth some crap games, but Demonworld is shit even by their standards. Note to Germans: Americans like fun games, with pretty graphics and units that actually do as they're told. Keep your bizarro "games" to yourselves. Thanks.

### **WORST GERMAN EXPORT. PART II** WAR COMMANDER

Seriously now, this just isn't funny anymore. We gave this unplayable hyperkinetic mess of an RTS a 15%. Reportedly, even viewing the box-cover art without special anti-crap eyewear can result in permanent corneal damage.

Isn't there, like, a giant wall we can build to keep this stuff from reaching the U.S.?

### **WORST USE OF A** HOTTIE **BRITNEY'S DANCE BEAT**

There's only one - okay, two - reasons a guy wants Britney Spears to dance fast, and they have nothing to do with her athletic ability. Luckily, our dirty primal urges have now been replaced by a queasy gagging reflex.



### **WORST USE OF DINOSAURS CARNIVORES: CITYSCAPE**

We love dinos, so it pains us to see them show up in foulness like Cityscape. When people see a dino on the box, they expect a certain amount of quality. not some lameass hunting game. For shame.

### **WORST CASE OF GAMING MALPRACTICE 911 PARAMEDIC**

Um, sorry...moving icons and viewing FMV of patients laying motionless on the ground is not fun. Especially when the victims are all people with the apparent ability to sleep with their eyes open. This game's treatment should've been assisted suicide.

### WORST RE-CREATION OF CLASSIC **MOVIE MOMENTS DIE HARD: NAKATOMI PLAZA**

Having anonymous voiceover artists repeat lines emoted by Bruce Willis and Alan Rickman in the movie was a truly horrendous idea. It's like watch-

ing your kid's first-grade class production of Glengarry Glen Ross. Aghh!

### **WORST ATTEMPT TO RIP** OFF THE X-MEN

"Roger, doesn't little Johnny like those X-People? Let's get him this Hero X. I'm sure it won't suck if Stan Lee had something to do with it." Kids, don't let this happen to vou. Educate your parents on the dangers of shameful budget games before it's too late.

Another casualty of Die Hard's awfulness..

### NEXT MONTH



Back in our July 1998 issue, PC Gamer thrust the Tom Clancy game brand into the spotlight as we unveiled the original Rainbo Next month we tell you how far the genre has progressed with the world's first review of Rainbow Six 3. PLUS: A preview bonanza as we catch the fastballs from four baseball games heading to the PC, along with exclusive info on Deus Ex 2 and Thief III. Don't miss it.

# **PC** GAME

### EDITORIAL STAFF

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Rob Smith MANAGING EDITOR Corey Cohen EXECUTIVE EDITOR Dan Morris SENIOR EDITOR Greg Vederman FEATURES EDITOR Chuck Oshorn SENIOR EDITOR William Harms SENIOR WRITER William B. Trotter EDITORIAL INTERN Norman Chan CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Joel Durham Jr., Steve Klett,

ART DIRECTOR Joe Mitch ASSISTANT ART DIRECTOR Chiaki Hachisu

Andy Mahood, Matthew Peckham, Stephen Poole

### ADVERTISING STAFF

**PUBLISHER** Andy Swanson

BAY AREA SALES MANAGER Michelle Torrey BAY AREA ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE Shawna Rogers EAST COAST/NW SALES MANAGER Dru Montgomery EAST COASTINIW ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE Holly Neal SOUTHWEST SALES MANAGER Stacy Bremmer SOUTHWEST ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE Note Hunt AD SERVICES MANAGER Carrie Michaelson

### PRODUCTION STAFF

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR Richard Lesovov PRODUCTION COORDINATOR Larry Briseno

### CIRCUITATION STAFF

**GROUP SUBSCRIPTION DIRECTOR** Kate Bailey NEWSSTAND MARKETING MANAGER Mimi Hall **FULFILLMENT MANAGER** Angi Martinez DIRECT MARKETING SPECIALIST Mary Nicklin

### Audit Bureau of Circulations



150 North Hill Dr. Brisbane, CA 94005 (415) 468-4684 www.futurenetworkusa.com

CHIEF EXECUTIVE/FUTURE Greg Ingham PRESIDENT Jonathan Simpson-Bint VP/EDITORIAL DIRECTOR Matt Firme VICE PRESIDENT/CFO Tom Valentino VP/CIRCULATION Holly Klingel GENERAL COUNSEL Charles Schun PUBLISHING DIRECTOR Simon Whitcombe

**MARKETING MANAGER** Katie Cole **DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL SERVICES** Nancy Durlester

The Future Network pic serves the information needs of groups of people who share a passion. We aim to satisfy their passion by creating magazines and websites that offer superb value for money, trustworthy information, multiple ways to save time and money, and are a pleasure to read or visit. This simple strategy has helped create one of the fastest-growing media companies in the world: we publish more than 100 magazines, 20 magazine websites, and a number of web networks from offices in five countries. The company also licenses 42 magazines in 30 countries. The Future Network is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FNET).

Tel +44 1225 442244 www.thefuturenetwork.plc.uk MEDIA WITH PASSION Bath, London, Milan, Munich, New York, Paris, San Francisco

So some Jackal was walking down the street one day, flipping lip to anyone who passed by him. "You're a stupid \$#@\*&, and your @#\$% stinks!" That kind of thing. Well, little did the Jackal know that a new here was stalking the streets, and he was in search of some ass to kick, preferably jackal ass. Anyway, this new hero takes one look at the Jackal and decides that it's go-time - time to kick ass, break limbs, and otherwise get it done. So he drops down and faces the Jackal head-on. The Jackal, who's seen all of this before, backhands the hero, knocks him to the ground, and then goes about dry-humping the hero in front of the entire city. Humiliated, the hero crawls away, tears of pain dribbling down his face. So what's the moral of the story? If you see a Jackal coming, clear a path, or you, too, could get dry-humped.

# DELTA FORCE

# K HAWK DOWN







**EXPERIENCE THE INTENSITY** OF MODERN WARFARE

> In Stores February 2003

Relentless Single & Multiplayer Combat

Execute Compelling Missions with Multiple Objectives

• Engage in Close Quarters Battle, Sniper and Air Attacks

- Fire Machine Guns from Black Hawks and Armored Vehicles
- New, Challenging Al System
   Nonstop Online Gaming

www.novalogic.com



Prima Strategy Guide Available!





Violence Blood

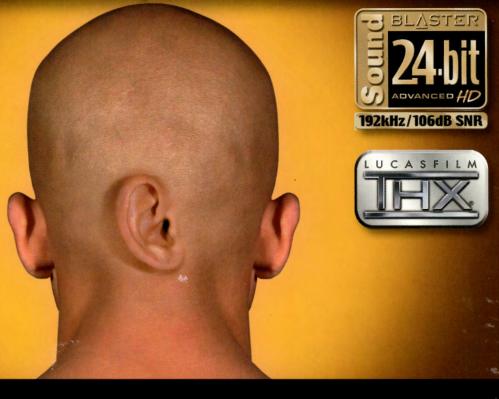
ALIENWARE

NOVALOGIC° 2003 NovaLogic, Inc., NovaLogic, the NovaLogic logo, NovaWorld and Delta Force are registered trademarks of NovaLogic, Inc. The Delta Force logo,

Black Hawk Down and the NovaWorld logo are trademarks of NovaLogic, Inc., All other trademarks and logos are property of their respective owners.

# Direct Your Ear to the Rear with





6.1

### Hear all the action in 6.1 surround with a discrete rear center speaker

CMSS® 3D up-mix technology and Dolby Digital® EX support provides 6.1 surround for CDs, MP3s, and DVD movies. Make 6.1 surround a reality by

Sound Blaster® Audigy™ 2 with THX® certification delivers 6.1 surround sound with Unreal® Tournament 2003, Hitman 2: Silent Assassin™, and over 400 existing EAX® ADVANCED HD™ and DirectSound® 3D games. Distinctly hear enemies approaching directly behind you and blow them away before you end up in their crosshairs. Experience 106dB SNR clarity and Advanced Resolution™ DVD-Audio from multi-channel 24-bit/192kHz DACs and 24-bit ADVANCED HD™.

combining Sound Blaster® Audigy™ 2 or

Sound Blaster® Audigy™ 2 Platinum including internal connectivity drive with Creative Inspire™ 6.1 6600 – the only PC speaker system with



rear center speaker and 120 watts system power.

For more information, check out www.soundblaster.com.









