

17 REVIEWS

NASCAR 2003 • AMERICAN IDOL
BF 1942: ROAD TO ROME • UNREAL II

NVIDIA'S FIRST BOMB?
GEFORCE FX

PC GAMER

The World's Best-Selling PC Game Magazine



DOOM III



WORLD OF WARCRAFT



DEUS EX: IW



ROME: TOTAL WAR

FEATURING
181
NEW GAMES

THE 2003 PC GAMER

PREVIEW BLOWOUT

ALL-NEW SCREENS

LATEST UPDATES

BIGGEST NAMES

PLUS 17 RUMORS

Your definitive guide to the
future of PC gaming

EXCLUSIVE REVIEW!

RAINBOW SIX 3

RAVEN SHIELD

EMPIRES: DAWN OF THE MO

New RTS goodness from the makers of Empire Earth

PERIODICALS
#BXNDVJ*****5-DIGIT 60540
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SOLO EDITION



Public soldiers lay siege to
in a New Conglomerate
squadmates begin the
capturing the facility.



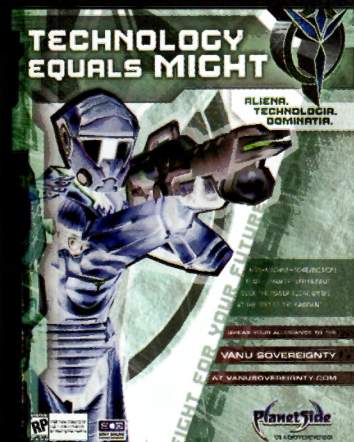
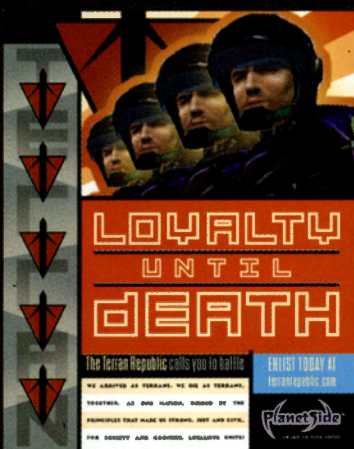
Strap it on and lock n' load as you
fight for one of three empires,
battling across 10 huge continents
and numerous front lines.



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.



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 Republic soldiers prepare to reinforce the barracks facility, while the process of war continues.



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**THOUSANDS
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New Conglomerate soldiers struggle to destroy the old established order and conquer the planet of Auraxis. Their primary objective is to "liberate" the planet through extreme force. Anarchy over oppression!

JACKHAMMER

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



NC-472CH543DKU-928

VANGUARD

Well balanced, the New Conglomerate Vanguard brings speed, solid armor and hefty firepower to battle. The main turret, which houses both a 150mm cannon and a 20mm machine gun, is capable of a 360-degree pivot, and can dispatch a deadly wave of liberation.



NC-472CH102DKU-928



The Vanu Sovereignty soldiers fight to preserve and control the planet's alien technology, using a hybrid of human and alien technology to gain an edge 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.



VS-551SER50212-928

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 capabilities allow it to strafe left or right and easily cross water during battle.



VS-551SVS40212-928



Terran soldiers remain united and loyal to the old 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 until death!

CHAINGUN

The Terran Republic's Chaingun is a heavy assault machine gun designed to rapidly shell out rounds from a generous 9mm ammo base. The speed at which it fires can easily rip apart enemy soldiers.



TR-471SD5055KU-728

PROWLER

The Terran Republic's largest 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.



TR-402SD5055KU-728

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



FOR LAND.
FOR POWER.
FOREVER.



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BF 1942: ROAD TO ROME • UNREAL II

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REVIEWED AND RATED
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The World's Best-Selling PC Game

2003

FEATURING
181
NEW GAMES

MEGA

PREVIEW

All the games you
need to know about...
and some you don't

EXCLUSIVE REVIEW!

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3

Team Rainbow returns for
a major terrorist takedown



EMPIRES: DAWN OF THE MODERN WORLD

New RTS goodness from Stainless Steel

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Rainbow Six ushered in a new era in action gaming, where one misstep meant instant death and all of the latest techno-gadgets were at your disposal. For the third entry in the series, the game has added all-new weapons, a graphical update via the snazzy *Unreal* engine, and a great story that's ripped from today's headlines. For the definitive word on this much-anticipated game, read our exclusive review.



FEATURE



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Only *PC Gamer* could bring you a preview this large, this exciting, this...MEGA! We have information and screens on nearly 200 games in development. And to make sure we left no stone unturned, we sent moles behind the lines to get information on games that until now have only been rumors.

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This conspiracy-themed sequel is looking extremely sharp. We've got all-new information on the game's graphics and several exclusive shots. Oh yeah!

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This month we've got something for everyone. Baseball season is nearly here, and to celebrate we offer impressions of *High Heat 2004*, *MVP Baseball 2003*, and *Ultimate Baseball Online*. We also sail the seas of *Tropico 2*, give *Escape Velocity Nova* a test flight, and storm mythological Greece in the bloody shoot-'em-up *Will Rock*.



ON THIS MONTH'S PCG CD This month's disc is packed to the brim! We've got demos for *Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield*, *Blitzkrieg*, *IGI 2: Covert Strike*, and *1503 A.D.*; a killer *Unreal II* movie; and some sweet wallpapers. Bask in the glory!

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Revealed here for the first time — the secret origin of SHODAN! Tremble in fear of our comic skills!

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

"We've got to start thinkin' beyond our guns."



When I asked last month if you were buying more or fewer games these days, I suspected there'd be a resounding "fewer" vote, citing mods adding replayability to existing games or the immersion factor of a massively multiplayer favorite leaving no time for anything else.

From the early feedback, it seems I was wrong. Many readers gushed with enthusiasm over the number of great games they're buying these days. That's good news. But those who said they were buying fewer games had important reasons to offer. Several readers, evidently longtime PC gamers, bemoaned the epidemic of "sequel-itis," calling for a return to the days when original titles sparked the imagination. Unfortunately, many game publishers could reel off a list of quality original titles that cost them money — *Sacrifice* and *Freedom Force* are just two examples that spring immediately to mind.

Reader Chris Johnson nailed several more valid reasons for being down on PC games, including a lack of depth — how disappointing is *Unreal II* in light of, say, the profoundly epic *MechWarrior 2*? A common complaint was a lack of polish: PC gamers revel in the ability to upgrade their products, but vast numbers of them are consistently peeved by out-of-the-box problems. When Microsoft, with all its resources and focus groups, throws *Combat Flight Sim 3* out the door so unpolished, it smacks of someone, somewhere, saying "Screw it — ship it, we'll patch it later."

Those decisions are evidently undermining consumer confidence in PC games, and publishers need to make a commitment to stop treating game buyers with such contempt. With many readers citing the average \$50 cost of a new game as the single biggest reason for buying fewer titles, how many more excuses do they need to turn to consoles?

Hopefully some of these thoughts will be considered as the 181 games featured in our huge MEGA preview (page 43) approach release. Some true gaming goodness is on display here — enjoy browsing through the immediate future of PC gaming.

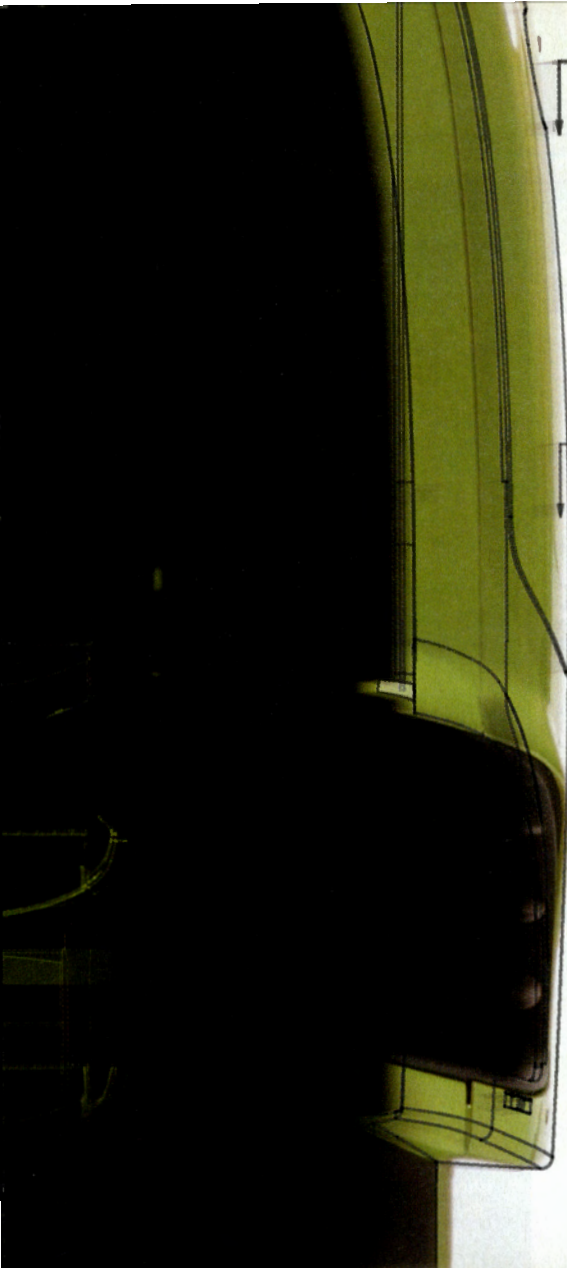
And consider, as you peruse this issue, that it's April, and you wouldn't want to be a fool, would you?

Lastly, I'm sending Chris Johnson some goodies this month for his well-considered comments, and I'm also mailing a prize to Mitch Springer, our randomly chosen winner who correctly ID'd last month's line from *Batman Forever*. As usual, send quote-contest entries to ednote@pcgamer.com.

Rob


Rob Smith
Editor-in-Chief

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Battlefield 1942: The Road to Rome Expansion Pack requires Battlefield 1942 to play.

BATTLEFIELD 1942

Intel suggests the possibility of online engagement with up to 64 soldiers of unknown allegiance. Armed resistance is expected to be fierce utilizing any combination of 23 lethal weapons. These battles are huge. But then again so is the prize: Victory.

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"Battlefield 1942 is a special and wonderful game"

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The Ones Who Know

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

✉ LEARNED THE HARD WAY

YESTERDAY I BOUGHT A COPY of *Operation Flashpoint*, having read some reviews from plenty of legitimate sources, all of which gave the game a very high score. I was completely disappointed. The control was even worse than that in the original *Hitman*. I got so upset at the big PC games reviewers. But then I realized that I never checked to see your review of the game. So I loaded the most recent *PC Gamer* CD and I was glad to discover that at least someone rated the game fairly. (You guys gave *OF* a 70% rating.) From now on, I'll never buy another game without first reading your review!

— **LonewolfX**

Contrary to what you hear in some circles, we actually enjoyed Operation Flashpoint. We just experienced the kinds of problems you mention, and weren't completely nuts over the game. Remember, we're always looking out for you!

✉ OH NO, THE STAR WARS POLICE...

ON PAGE 42 OF YOUR JANUARY 2003 issue you show a picture of a green lizard-like animal on Naboo. You identify this creature (on page 43) as a Fambaa. That's incorrect! As per the *Star Wars* Database, the creature is a Falumpaset. The larger Fambaa are the creatures used by the Gungans (in *The Phantom Menace*) to carry the shield generators, while Falumpasets are used as mounts by the Gungans.

— **Scott Chastain**
Concerned *Star Wars* Fan

We're slightly concerned about our alleged Star Wars mistake. But we're

infinitely more concerned about your sex life, or lack of a future sex life. Take immediate steps to change your ways, Scott.

✉ DEFENDING WARCRAFT III

AFTER READING THE LATEST ISSUE of your great mag, I have a gripe: What it is with the overwhelming support and attention paid to *Warcraft III*? Having bought the game and played it, I simply can't imagine why it's so popular. It felt as if every level consisted of (a) build base, then (b) build 90 units and go slaughter enemy. Games like *Empire Earth* and *Earth 2150* were so much more enjoyable — they were massive in scope and a hell of a lot more challenging than *Warcraft III* ever was or could be.

— **John Stark**

Wrong!

✉ DEATH-METAL MAFIA

I think someone on the *Mafia* design team must really like death metal, because some of the pilots in the racing mission are named after death-metal musicians: Mark "Barney" Greenway (vocals, Napalm Death), John Perez (guitars, Solitude Aeternus), Peter Tagtgren (vocals and guitars, Hypocrisy, Pain), David Vincent (ex-vocalist and bassist of Morbid Angel, now playing with Genitorturers), Chris Barnes (ex-vocalist of Cannibal Corpse, now playing with Six Feet Under). Just thought you should know.

— **Gustavo Lopes Rodrigues**

Good eye, Gustavo. Please never come by our office. Thank you.



Asheron's Call 2



✉ WHO'S TO BLAME?

SIRS — I READ WITH ABSOLUTE ASTONISHMENT the Alternate Lives column in your March 2002 issue re: *Asheron's Call 2* not being Steve Klett's "thing." I understand that Mr. Klett is trying to get into MMORPGs that have so far delivered little interesting content for his tastes, but I feel compelled to point out some glaring errors in his reasoning:

1 Mr. Klett correctly asserts that the game boils down to "Find keys, craft items, stand around and chat, and play music with other players." Just like *every* MMORPG, when it's boiled down to the basics.

2 "Where are the more cerebral options for the pacifists among us that want to just be, say, a baker?" Like anyone wants to play a Tumerok baker! If you think that's fun, get *The Sims Online*.

While Mr. Klett is rightly peeved with monsters dropping inappropriate loot, millions of gamers accepted this process in the *Diablo* games. It was also a required gameplay function for a world without NPCs. And not having NPCs, aside from being a cool story issue, allows for all the roleplaying opportunities that Mr. Klett appeared to miss. Hiring low-level players to run, fetch, and carry for crafters — or banding with a party to go ingredient-hunting for high-paying merchant players — is the very essence of roleplaying in a massively multiplayer fantasy world.

MMORPGs evolve over time, and I urge Mr. Klett to stick with *AC 2* (or any other quality MMORPG) to see how these functions work to give players a dynamic, compelling play experience that's not bound by a computer-controlled linear plot path.

Please have Mr. Klett consider his arguments on these topics more fully before committing them to print.

— **Sincerely, Rob Smith**
Editor-in-Chief, *PC Gamer*

Steve retorts: "(1) I found the quests dull and repetitive — not like every other MMORPG. (2) My point is that *Asheron's Call 2* forces you to fight: you have no other options.

"And I wonder if Mr. Smith has played *Morrowind*, where you're not bound at all by a linear plot path. Right back at ya, Mr. EIC."



"Scott, dear... dinnertime! I'll say, that boy sure does spend a lot of time playing with his Falumpaset..."

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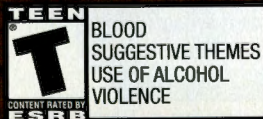
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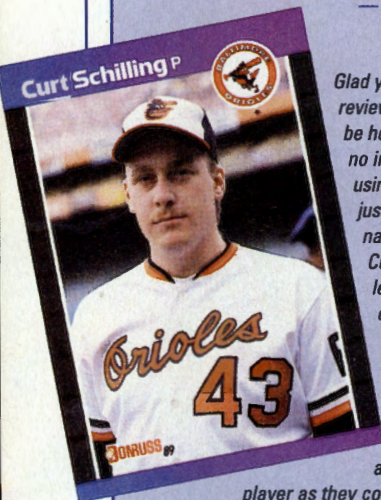
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NO STAR TREATMENT

I DON'T PLAY MMORPGS and have never even tried *EverQuest*, so normally I wouldn't have read the review of *Planes of Power* in your February 2003 issue. However, the word "baseball" caught my eye. Once I read that a professional athlete had done the review and then saw that it was Curt Schilling, I ended up reading the whole thing.

No, his review didn't make me want to become another *EverQuest* junkie, but it did provoke me into writing to you guys to say that I would enjoy reading more reviews from big names outside of the gaming industry.

— James "hOp16" Wollenweber



Glad you enjoyed the review, James, but to be honest, we have no intention of using "big names" just for the sake of name recognition. Curt (shown at left on his rookie card, worth roughly \$2.50 now in mint condition) happens to be as hardcore an *EverQuest*

player as they come, and we'll gladly stack his RPG opinions up against those of any other "pro" game reviewer.

GREED-EA

MY HUSBAND IS A REGULAR buyer of your magazine and I often read the letters page and a few other bits. Although I wouldn't call myself an ardent gamer, I do like to play the odd game occasionally — things like *RollerCoaster Tycoon* and *The Sims* appeal to me. Now we have broadband, which we already pay £25 a month for, so that my husband can play games online. When I saw that *The Sims Online* was coming out, I let out a cheer. Finally, something I can play online! But alas, my joy quickly subsided when I read that it would have a monthly fee. If I were to buy it, that's already £30 for the game, not including the monthly fee. What is wrong with EA? Surely they have already made enough money from the original game and its numerous expansions. I guess next we'll be seeing a *The Sims: Greedy Game Corporation* expansion pack.

— Joanne West

In any monetary denomination, Joanne, you sound like exactly the type of "casual gamer" that EA hoped to snare by the millions with *The Sims Online*. A monthly fee is a major hurdle for most non-hardcore gamers. (We'll check for you on that Greedy Corporation expansion.)

MOD RADAR

I'D LIKE TO THANK YOU for recommending the *Half-Life* mod *Natural Selection*. It's a great mod, and lots of fun. My friends and I played it for about a month, and have since returned to *Firearms* (still better), but it's nice to know that you guys are up on the times. Keep up the good work!

— Todd Snider

No problem! Making you happy is — sniff! — what we're here for.

SORRY, NO JUGGALOS HERE

WHAT UP, PC GAMER! I was just wondering if there were any juggalos/juggalettes working at the magazine — you know, fans of Twiztid or the Insane Clown Posse or anyone else signed by Psychopathic Records.

— A 13-year-old juggalo

No, there are no juggalos on our staff. While we confess to a novelty appreciation for "Let's Go All the Way," we can't really recommend the ICP to anybody. Also, please never come by our office. Thank you.

GRAPPLING WITH BIAS

IN DAN MORRIS' REVIEW of *WWE Raw* (February 2003), the game is made to sound almost godlike. The majority of Dan's review boasts about all of the game's incredible-sounding features, and includes the statement "Best of all is the tutorial, which might honestly be the very best I've ever seen in a game." Wow! The very best he's ever seen? That's a flattering statement coming from a major-publication game reviewer! But sadly, Dan ends the review with "there's only so much you can do in a wrestling game," and *WWE Raw* received a low rating of only 73%. This score leads me to believe that although this particular game was fantastic, it gets a low percentage score because Dan just doesn't like wrestling in general. Hey, I'm not a big fan of war, but if I were to write a review about an outstanding wargame, it would get a high rating nonetheless.

I'm not a big fan of professional wrestling either, and I understand that a review is only one person's opinion, but shouldn't a game receive a rating based on its features and merits, and not on the reviewer's personal likes or dislikes of the subject matter?

— BJ Mahncke

WE ARE 133t

I NORMALLY WOULDN'T USE that 133t lingo all the idiots use on the backward *Counter-Strike* servers, but that's what your latest issue is — it pwns, it owns you like a punk, it makes Coconut Monkey proud.

Anyway, I saw that *Söldner* game, the one by the Germans. It looks amazing, and just by the screenshot you showed I can tell it will have a great mix of close and open combat, plus more and more vehicles, including ones that *Operation Flashpoint* didn't have (like high-altitude bombers, jets, VTOL, and other stuff the mod-makers had to make themselves). I hope it blows the PC world away.

— Cody Beaton

We were floored by *Söldner* when we first saw it last year at E3. We think people will love it — which is why we print here, for what must be the fourth time, a passionate plea to JoWoD to change its name. How about...Soldier? Just a thought.

With *Söldner's* slick graphics and gonzo multiplayer options, we're hoping it's every bit the sleeper hit we've been expecting.





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If our staff's *Freedom Force* fanatics had their way, the game would probably be nominated for 2003's awards, too.



MISSING THE GAG

I HAD JUST GOT MY MAG and was campin' real regular when I read your Best of 2002 awards feature. I see that you nominated *Freedom Force* for everything except Best Expansion Pack. I mean, the game is great, but the only thing in it that qualifies as sports is hitting baddies out of the park with a lightpole. Does that make it the best baseball game of the year?

— Tell Bailey

Oh, Tell, how our joke passed you by... Such was the adoration of *Freedom Force* by a couple of staffers, that it came up in every genre debate, regardless of relevance. (In fact, Chuck loves the game so much that as soon as he was finished with all of his writing for this issue, he was right back in the FF saddle.) Our bad for not including it in Best Expansion Pack — as another reader, Darryl White, pointed out, "Wasn't it an expansion pack for the Spider-Man game?" Nice one, Darryl.

We've convinced Dan to admit that not only is he a pro-wrestling buff, but he actually trains in wrestling himself. (Pretty odd for a 150-pound guy, but who are we to snuff a dream?) WWE Raw's rating reflects a lack of depth and long-term interest in gameplay, not any lack of interest in pro wrestling. As for the tutorial, c'mon — how high do you want us to score a game just because it's got our favorite tutorial?

BOGUS BATTLEFIELD

ALTHOUGH I USUALLY AGREE with your selections for GOTY, I must object to your naming *Battlefield 1942* the Best Game of 2002. For one thing, not very many people are able to play *BF 1942* easily on their computers, lacking the necessary 3D equipment and the broadband connection that you mentioned would be necessary to run the game without major lag issues. You also mentioned how fruitless the single-player experience was. However, just last year, you said *Max Payne* lost to *Ghost Recon* because the former lacked a multiplayer mode. The one game that provided both, however — and was an excellent experience all around — was *WarCraft III*. Its incredible accessibility and ability to work on less-than-stellar computers made it, in my eyes, the true Game of the Year.

— Kyle Hart

You make some interesting points, Kyle, though we must object to your assertion that *Max Payne* didn't nab our GOTY 2001 award because it was single-player-only. (It simply lost to a better game.) Your concerns about *BF 1942*'s high-specs reqs are well-taken. In fact, our review of the game made these reqs its major caveat. But this is PC Gamer magazine, and our readers are by-and-large outfitted with top gear. And if they aren't, this game is so good that our award should be considered an excuse for upgrading.

OPEN UP THE WAVE

ISN'T THAT WHAT WRITERS DO? If Valve won't volunteer any information regarding its projects or product release dates, why not do a little research and put forth all the info you discover in an insightful article? Valve's own TF2 site hasn't been updated in over two years. We're getting a little desperate here.

— Joe Tubilleja

Trying to crack Valve's secrets has been our ongoing obsession since 1997. Let us just summarize six years of effort for you: "It ain't easy." Gabe Newell runs a tighter ship than Dick Cheney, and even our personal friends inside Valve turn into downed enemy pilots when we try to broach the subject of the games in development. What we can say is that whenever there's an announcement to be made, you'll get the whole story right here in these trusted pages.

WE WANT HOCKEY STATS

I JUST READ YOUR HOLIDAY 2002 Eyewitness story about the state of the sports genre for the PC, including the sidebar on sports sims such as *Baseball Mogul* and *Front Office Football*. Can you tell me where to find copies of these sims, and recommend the

better ones covering football and baseball? Also, has anyone released a hockey-based sim recently?

— Carl Brent

Sports Mogul (www.sportsmogul.com) and *Strat-o-Matic* (www.stratomatic.com) are our personal favorite publishers in this genre. You'll find a couple of other fine products, particularly in the baseball realm, such as the one from Diamond Mind. Unfortunately, nobody seems to be producing a stats-based hockey sim anymore. Note to Bethesda Softworks: Please resurrect your wonderful *Hockey League Simulator* franchise!

A READER'S DREAM

I've been reading your mag nonstop since 1994, and have loved every issue. Well, in 2001 I went to the University of South Carolina and didn't do too well. One reason for screwing up was that I didn't have my heart in it; the other reason was fun (booze, babes, and bitchin' PC games). After that whoppin' one-semester fiasco, I figured my dream of being in the games industry was doomed.

I didn't want to quit because gaming had become a big part of me (mainly because of you fools and your magazine). I can only figure as pure fate that I noticed an ad in the back of your magazine for Full Sail. In the Full Sail ad, the first major listed was Game Design and Development! I nearly soiled myself, like when I got my Alienware Area-51 (recommended by you). Well, next thing you know I'm in Winter Park (basically Orlando), emailing you and waiting for classes to start tomorrow. I just wanted you to know that your magazine has had a huge influence on me. Wish me luck! PCG Fo-Evah.

— Cory Barber

Give 'em hell, Cory. Maybe you'll be one of our next Game Gods.

"Orcs...Ratzis...they're all goin' down..."

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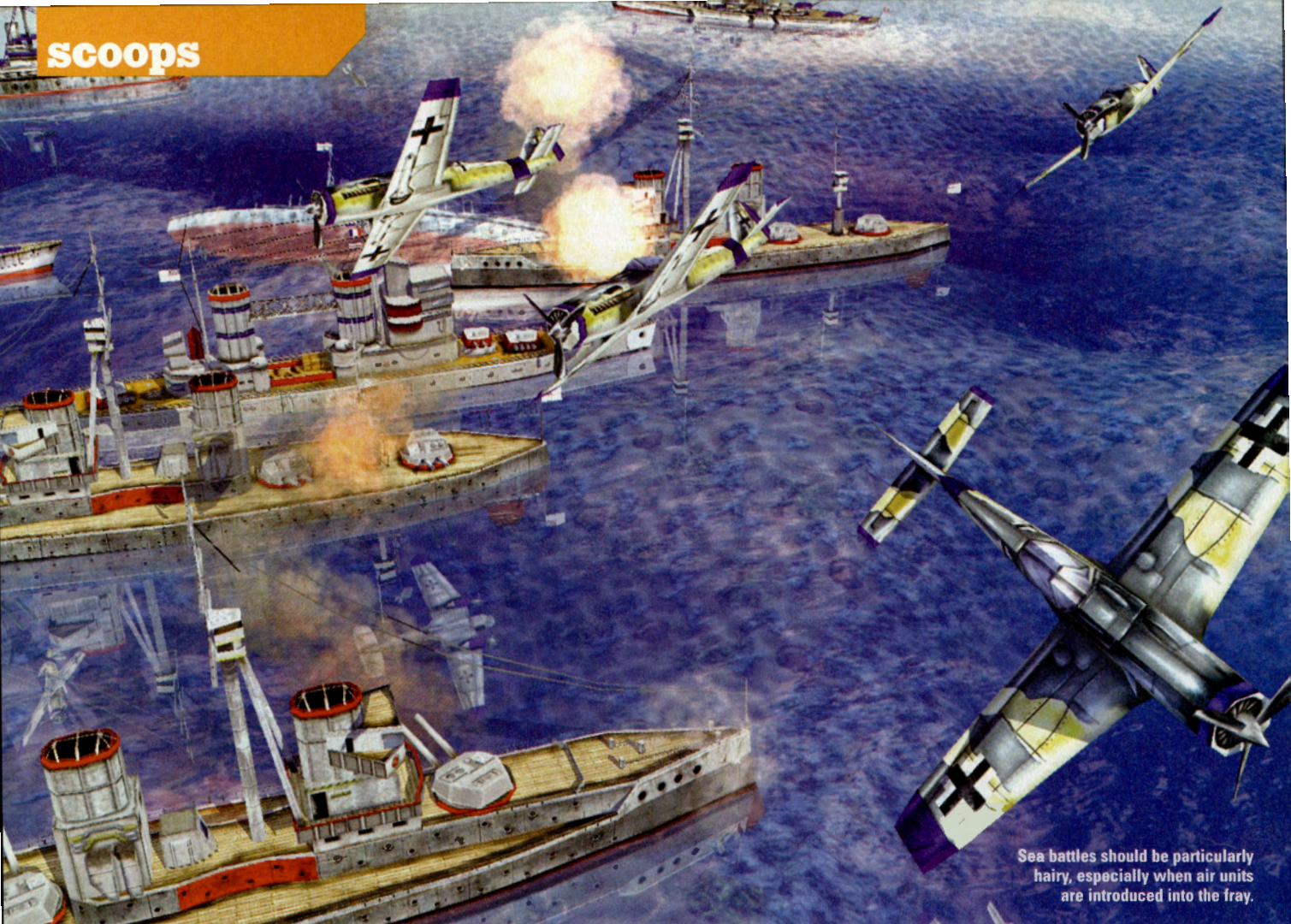


PlayStation 2



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Official Indiana Jones website
www.indianajones.com



Sea battles should be particularly hairy, especially when air units are introduced into the fray.

EMPIRES | DAWN OF THE MODERN WORLD

IN A NUTSHELL

We take an exclusive first look at the next game from the creators of *Empire Earth*

For its follow-up effort to the excellent *Empire Earth* (PCG rating: 85%, Holiday 2001), developer Stainless Steel is once again crafting a real-time strategy game that will cover centuries of human conflict. This time, however, the single-player campaign will chronicle the exploits of individual heroes, and offer a strong and compelling story. We were given an exclusive early demo of *Empires: Dawn of the Modern World*, and what we saw looked quite extraordinary.

Spanning 1,000 years of human history (from 1,000 C.E. to the time of the Second World War), *Empires'* single-player game will consist of three campaigns. The exact nature of this solo-play (the plotline or the number of missions in each campaign) is still under wraps, but we're promised that it will all be in the service of the story. And let's face it: the RTS genre isn't known for offering up fully realized stories.

"We're great admirers of *Warcraft III*," says Stainless Steel head Rick Goodman,

referring to the plot that powered Blizzard's masterpiece. "*Empires'* story will have a beginning, middle, and end. That's very important to us." This focus won't affect the core gameplay mechanics — which, from what we've seen, remain rooted in the traditions of the RTS genre — so expect a subtle blend of empire-building and combat.

The exact number of civilizations hasn't been finalized, but we were shown three of them — British, Germans, and Koreans — and Goodman assures us that each civi-

E.I.



CATEGORY: Real-time strategy
DEVELOPER: Stainless Steel Studios
PUBLISHER: Activision
WWW: stainlesssteelstudios.com
PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 50%
RELEASE DATE: TBD

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL?: The game's single-player campaign will not only span 1,000 years of history, but it'll also feature a detailed and compelling story. And boy howdy, do *Empires'* graphics look sweet.

DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD: Stainless Steel gave us the well-received *Empire Earth*, and founder Rick Goodman was the lead designer on *Age of Empires*. We expect no sophomore slump from the studio.



lization will enjoy unique military units and economic and technological upgrades. For example, when you're playing as Renaissance-era England, you'll have access to boiling-oil units. These combatants will seed the battlefield with oil and then ignite it, incinerating nearby enemy units. Other unique units for the British include swordsmen who can raise their shields in an effort to fend off arrow fire, and spike traps that shoot up out of the ground, impaling anything they hit.

Two of the coolest units in the English arsenal, however, are the surgeon and the "pestilence cow." The surgeon has the ability to heal, and even resurrect, allied units. In a cool twist, the surgeon can also raise fallen enemy units, who will then join your forces. The cruel English will also hurl the plague-infected pestilence cows over enemy walls during a siege. When these cattle hit the ground, they'll release a green disease fog that damages nearby enemy units.

HISTORICAL FICTION

A little farfetched? Sure, but Goodman assures us that all of the units are based on real-world counterparts. "We're taking off the 'historical handcuffs,'" he says. "While everything is historically accurate, we're broadening the envelope and pushing things."

That means you'll see units like the poor Renaissance-era ox unit for the Koreans, which has a barrel of gunpowder strapped to its hindquarters. Detonate the explosive, and it annihilates everything within the blast radius. No matter how many times I watched it, I never got sick of seeing that exploding bovine massacring enemy units.

Other unique Korean units include the monk, who can convert enemy units; raiders who storm in on their horses,

killing or kidnapping villagers (kidnapped villagers will appear in your village and work for you from that point on); and the rocket-arrow cart, a nasty little bugger that unleashes a horrific hail of arrows.

Each civilization will also benefit from a host of technological upgrades that can be applied to any unit. So if, say, an upgrade increases the range of your weapons, you can use that upgrade on your artillery or on a grunt.

"We want to make the tech tree different from other [games'] tech trees," Goodman explains. "We want players to make hard choices about which civilization they'll play."

In addition to its single-player campaign, *Empires* will boast a robust multiplayer mode, and *Stainless Steel* is already hard at work balancing this aspect of the game.

"To be the No. 1 game [in this genre]," says Goodman, "we need to pay attention to multiplayer play-balancing. We have six players, all culled from the professional ranks, working six to eight months to make sure that *Empires'* multiplay is as good as it can be and that it's properly balanced."

In terms of graphics, *Stainless Steel* has dramatically updated the engine that powered *Empire Earth*. The new engine sports real-time shadows and animation smoothing (which means you won't see any "snapping" between different animations), and all of the textures have been increased fourfold in size.

Even at this stage, the hard work is paying off. The units already look sensational, and the battle scenes are exquisitely rendered, packed with tiny details. During sea battles, the ships catch on fire and the sails become shredded, and once these vessels sink to the grimy depths, debris will float to the surface.

Another nice facet of *Empires'* engine — one that'll certainly help convey the game's story — is its ability to zoom down to ground level. From this perspective you can see all of the units up close and watch as they butcher each other. Thankfully, the camera will also pull back to a more traditional RTS viewpoint.

Empires is entering a tough market, but its creative take on historical units, blended with the fine traditions of the genre, give it a unique appeal. We'll bring you more updates as further details are released.

— William Harms





DEUS EX | INVISIBLE WAR

ABOVE: A poster of NG Resonance, a pop star in the gameworld. RIGHT: In *Invisible War*, weapon ammo appears in two forms: Matter and Energy. This guy could've used more ammo.



IN A NUTSHELL

New plot info! Exclusive details! Yep, must be a *Deus Ex 2* update!

The marketing police have struck again. In case you're wondering where we put the "2" in the title of this sequel, *Invisible War*, publisher Eidos has dropped it in favor of branding *Deus Ex* in the same way we've come to think of *Star Wars*. But other than a name change (and a change in lead designer), the follow-up to our 2000 Game of the Year is on an unswerving course since our last peek at its progress in July 2002's *PC Gamer*.

MEET ALEX D.

Invisible War begins 20 years after the end of *Deus Ex*. You're Alex D., the 20-year-old male or female (your choice) clone of J.C. Denton, *Deus Ex*'s trench-coated hero. Relatively powerless in comparison to your DNA-daddy, you're a lowly trainee in a new organization called the Tarsus Academy.

While you won't play as J.C. Denton himself, he will be a major character in the game, and he'll play an important role in future games as

well. (Yes, Ion Storm studio head Warren Spector let slip that *Invisible War* is most certainly not the last in the *Deus Ex* series.) Supporting characters from the first game will also reappear, albeit 20 years older, including J.C.'s friend Tracer Tong, underground hero/thief Nicolette Duclare, and J.C.'s brother, Paul.

At an exclusive screening of the still-in-production opening cinematic sequence, I had the opportunity to see *Invisible War*'s setup for the first time: In an attempt to wipe out the

E.X.I.



CATEGORY: First-person RPG
DEVELOPER: Ion Storm
PUBLISHER: Eidos
WWW: ionstorm.com
PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 80%
RELEASE DATE: June 30, 2003

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL?: Besides being a sequel to our 2000 GOTY, *DX: IW* will push technical boundaries. Ion Storm has dramatically overhauled the *Unreal* engine, meaning visuals that may rival *DOOM III*'s.

DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD: Ion Storm-Austin developed *Deus Ex*, and its staff consists primarily of talented refugees from Origin (*Ultima*) and Looking Glass (*Thief*). The studio is also making *Thief III*.



After a bomb pulverizes Chicago, you'll start the game in a futuristic Seattle.

Academy, Chicago is obliterated by a terrorist's "dirty bomb," forcing the surviving Tarsus agents to evacuate to the group's secret headquarters in Seattle.

The next day, another terrorist cell attacks the Seattle facility, and that's when the action picks up — you escape the facility in an amnesiac state, wondering "Who am I?", "Who did this?", and "Who do I work for?" You may not have any idea who you are, but competing groups know about your budding super-agent status, and will do handstands to get you on their side.

"You don't need to know the backstory of *Deus Ex* to play *Invisible War*," emphasizes Spector, "but if you do know it, then one of your personal goals can be to find a relationship between the new organizations that are trying to take over the world and the organizations that existed in the first game."

Aligning with one of two organizations lets you reap the benefits of their connections and technology: the WTO is a trade association and The Order is a religious group. You can also choose to go it alone. (The Templars — a third, militaristic faction opposing the use of nanotechnology

— may attempt to recruit you in the game's later stages.)

DON'T CALL THEM "AUGS"

Now officially sanctioned by the government and given the doctor-approved annotation of "BioMods," the use of cybernetic augmentations has been greatly expanded in *Invisible War*, most notably because the skill and aug systems have been intertwined instead of having separate stats for each.

Two types of BioMods are available: legal and black-market. Legal ones are safe and can be bought freely. Enhancements bought on the black market are cheap but unstable, and each has a negative side-effect — a "dark side," if you will.

"If you go the black-market route and make some [bad] choices about who to side with, you can be pretty evil," says Spector with a laugh, though he's quick to avoid revealing whether or not the game will have an "evil" ending. (The first *Deus Ex* had three endings; likewise, the sequel will have multiple possible endgame scenarios.)

Any BioMod can be uninstalled to make room for a new one, although it'll be ruined in the process. Like before, augs are available in three different power levels,



Here's a first look at *Invisible War*'s cool new simplified, animated HUD system.



The art staff's demo of scene construction sounded more like stage craft than game design.

WHERE'S THIEF III?



ION STORM HAS REMAINED frustratingly silent about *Thief III*, its other game in development. The continuing adventures of titular thief Garrett will use the same technology powering *DX: Invisible War*,

but so far new information has been sparse.

However, we were able to briefly tug at the muzzle silencing studio head Warren Spector, and gleaned a few secrets. Foremost among them is that *Thief III* will conclude the storyline that *Looking Glass* began in the first *Thief*. (Apparently, *Looking Glass* had envisioned the series as a trilogy.) The *Thief* franchise may continue, however, but possibly take a different direction. (Spector admits that he has never "gotten" *Thief*, mostly because the gameplay focuses so stringently on stealth.)

Real-time lighting and shadowing will also play a large role. Spector described a sequence in which a guard patrolling a dark hallway carries a torch. One half of his face is aglow in the lamplight, the other is shadowed in darkness, and a shadow is cast on the stone wall. Plenty of hiding opportunities? Definitely.

but in *Invisible War* the level-jumps will be more unique. For example, a Level One vision BioMod may allow you to see in infrared; a Level Two allows you to see in infrared and through walls; and a Level Three will let you view statistical information about other characters through walls.

UNREAL OR NOT UNREAL

Whether *Invisible War*'s graphics engine is still the *Unreal* engine is debatable. The core and tools are the same, but Ion Storm has made such an overhaul — reinventing the renderer, licensing the Havok physics engine (instead of the Karma engine), replacing the sound code, and rewriting the AI — that *DX: IW* will bear little, if any, resemblance to *Unreal II*.

Particular attention has been paid to the inclusion of normal mapping and specular lighting. (Normal mapping being the texturing technique that simulates high-polygon detailing on low-poly models, and specular lighting the advance that adds natural depth to textures.)

Each character is composed of an average of 3,000 polygons, with 800 of those in the head alone. Twenty virtual bones make up each face, allowing for a variety of expressions. NPCs may scowl, sneer, or smile depending on their emotional state and relationship to you.

Additionally, Ion Storm is a launch partner with NVIDIA for the latter's GeForce FX chip, so *Invisible War* will undoubtedly take advantage of FX-exclusive features. (Don't worry, RADEON owners — Ion is working closely with ATI as well.)

The more we see of this game, the more anxious we are to play it. Summer can't come fast enough. — Chuck Osborn



HANDS ON

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

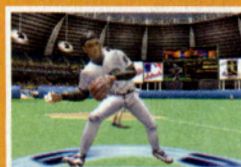


New animations for fine-detail incidents are much more fluid.

HIGH HEAT
BASEBALL
2004

Our baseball-crazed leader tries out the latest version of 3DO's classic franchise

Should PC gamers be terrified that their beloved *High Heat* franchise — consistently the greatest re-creation of the national pastime — is getting a console-looking overhaul? Absolutely not. While the bolder visuals of the 2004 PC version instantly smack of console stylings, the underlying engine seems as



DEVELOPER
3DO

PUBLISHER
3DO

RELEASE DATE
April 2003

rock-solid as ever, and it's been improved in numerous detailed ways.

Big additions are the whole-new graphics and animation system, which boost player models from 800 to 6,000 polygons and take stadium detail from 2,500 to 20,000 polys. I didn't think I'd care much for new animations since the finesse

of the simulation engine is what this game is all about, but after playing a few games, I must say that seeing fielders snag fly-balls, then actually turn and throw (rather than instantly flipping to face the right direction) adds more real-life flavor to the atmosphere.

The other major addition is in the pitching options. Where previous versions had 27 total pitch deliveries (three throwing styles times nine total pitches), *High Heat 2004* will have 27 different pitches for each throwing style. Trip Hawkins, 3DO's CEO, is a fanatical baseball fan who, along with Assistant Director Bobby Street, has studied a vast number of individual pitches to be crammed into the engine. Coupled with an improved AI system that forces the batter to work the count, the results are incredibly accurate.

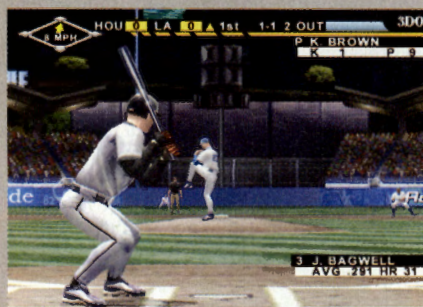
Facing Orlando Hernandez's patented "El Droppo" pitch for the first time is amazing. Seeing it lob almost off the top of the screen at just 55mph is such a shock that careful use of it throughout the game can be incredibly effective.

Batting will take a little practice for *High Heat* veterans, but in my testing, it took about one game to get the timing down.

The caveats to *High Heat 2004*'s potential greatness are some stark omissions. For starters, there's no online play — it barely worked in 2003, and has been axed entirely this year (with a planned return for 2005). Also gone is the custom league mode, and the ability to view pitch locations by hitting F3. In fact, all the control, including roster management, is now done with the game-pad, and you'll likely be unable to use your mouse.

While the text tune file for tweaking the game remains, most details can be adjusted with in-game sliders. But after simming thousands of seasons, the developers expect the default settings to produce incredibly realistic stats.

Improved graphical doo-dads will hopefully generate greater sales, and with the core engine offering even more detail, *High Heat 2004* should be the baseball game to beat in the emerging battle for No. 1 spot on the PC. — Rob Smith



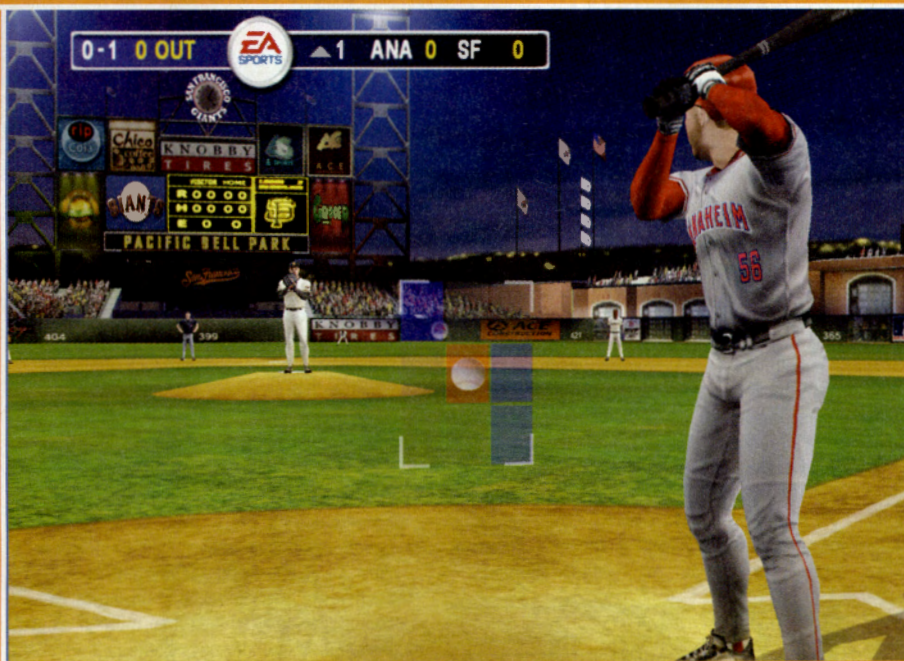
Expect signature pitching and batting styles, such as Jeff Bagwell's exaggerated crouch.



The PC game will have the most updated rosters at launch due to an earlier code lock for consoles.



A clever, if limited, franchise option lets you play with contract details and salary caps.



■ MVP's interface uses a grid that highlights the batter's "hot" and "cold" spots. So simply never throw it in the hot-spots, and you'll be golden. Of course, doing that may be tricky due to the new control method.

MVP BASEBALL

Triple Play is dead. Long live MVP!

So EA Sports has killed the *Triple Play* name since, according to producer Terry Coleman, "We reached a point in our development cycle where we had a completely new graphics engine, a totally new game design, all-new physics... an entirely new game." These tweaks are a good thing for PC baseball fans, who weren't invited to last year's *Triple Play* party but are definitely getting *MVP*. And we're getting it sooner than the originally suggested summer release time.

Though the *Triple Play* series always went for visual style over baseball substance, Coleman believes that PC gamers will accept a path somewhere in the middle. "MVP has high production values, and sure, we're proud of that," he says.

"But we're also providing a highly realistic physics engine to capture all those wild bounces, broken-bat hits, searing home runs, and wicked drag bunts that are so much a part of the wonderful unpredictability of baseball."

To that end, *MVP* has a pitcher interface that involves controlling the wind-up, power, and release point of the pitch, not just type and location. While we haven't been able to test out this part of the game, we expect a style similar to the three-click golf-swing meters that add your own touch to the motion. It's an intriguing move that holds great potential for bringing your own skills to the game, especially since *MVP* will be playable online via EA Sports' matchmaking service.

Batting will take practice, as there's no cursor to match to the pitch location. But with batters exhibiting hot and cold zones where they're able to hit, this system offers some strategic potential for the long-haul season.

We'll follow up with some hands-on opinions when we're able to test these features in the coming months.

— Rob Smith

	DEVELOPER
	EA Sports
	PUBLISHER
	EA Sports
	RELEASE DATE
	May/June 2003



■ Various slides and jumps will keep outfielders amused while waiting for the ball!

ULTIMATE BASEBALL ONLINE

IT'S THE IDEAL PREMISE for an online sports game: teammates congregate online and take each of the available on-field positions, then play their hearts out for the good of the team. But can it work in practice?

Developer Netamin's dream is that baseball fans will flock to a game that gives



DEVELOPER
Netamin

PUBLISHER
Netamin

RELEASE DATE
May 2003

them a chance to be part of a team. While you can play two-on-two games (one pitcher, one catching, two batting), the holy grail is in nine (or up to 15) players, one per position, playing organized seasons and tournaments.

With competitive playing you'll earn skill points to distribute among seven attributes (strength, speed, accuracy, and so on), and develop new pitches to throw. The games then play out like other sport sims, albeit with lower-quality player models.

A funky latency system lets each player see all the action at the correct pace, and respond with its quirky controls without having to deal with a lot of lag. Catchers need to hit the catch button with perfect timing to snag the ball, and outfielders need to move to fly balls, hit a button to catch, and then judge a power-bar slider to hurl the ball to the cut-off man or base. This control scheme will be quite a change for baseball fans used to these functions being automatic.

How much fun will it be playing right-field? What's the likelihood of nine-player teams sticking together and sharing duties? These and many more questions will be put to the test when *UBO* releases in May. But count me in for try-outs. — Rob Smith

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HANDSON

WILL ROCK

Serious Sam's cousin is looking for action, and tons of it

It's impossible to deny that *Will Rock* looks and plays an awful lot like *Serious Sam*. In fact, the startup Russian developer of this new shooter openly admits to being influenced by the success of its Croatian counterparts. And after playing through the latest beta, I can tell that the folks at Saber did their homework.

The frenetic pace kicks off in the temples of ancient Greece, with levels mixing the sandy cityscapes of *Serious Sam* with the rocky caverns of *Tomb Raider*. As a young archeologist

apart at one time.) After battling minotaurs and skeletons in one room, you'll face fiery axe-throwing beasts in the next room, and on and on it goes. The simplistic AI appears to have only one tenet — attack and kill. But in a game like this, that's totally acceptable.

The surprising feature of the proprietary Saber graphics engine is its ability to morph the environments. Every statue or relief sculpture can come alive and become an enemy or hazard. I was impressed to watch three centaurs emerge from a pool of blood, which represented the remains of another centaur. That's a pretty damn cool effect, and one I'd love to see implemented in other action games.

I'm happy to report that jumping puzzles and key-finding expeditions appear to be infrequent. The levels are intuitively laid out, so I didn't find myself wandering aimlessly in search of an exit. Of the dozen weapons that appear in the game, I found most to be FPS standards, with the uber-powerful mini-guns and rocket launchers delivering a scrumptious amount of carnage.

I'm also looking forward to the game's multiplayer component, which plans to offer the genre-favorite game mode Rocket Arena. Judging by *Will Rock*, the mindless-shooter days of *DOOM* are still with us — which, for its many fans, is great news. — Norman Chan



DEVELOPER

Saber Interactive

PUBLISHER

Ubi Soft

RELEASE DATE

April 2003

named Will Rock, you're sent to seek vengeance on the Greek gods for imprisoning Prometheus, the legendary bringer of fire. Revenge doesn't come easy, though, as the cursed temples are filled with creatures seeking to disembowel you.

Will Rock's monsters may be stupid as hell, but damn, they sure are scary. Hordes of the buggers appeared everywhere I turned. (And when I say hordes, I mean that literally hundreds of slaving nasties will try to rip you



After a particularly gruesome and up-close kill, blood will splash over both your weapon and your arm. It eventually disappears, but it's a cool way of showing the wanton carnage you've dealt.

<http://www.pcgamer.com>

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03/01

Weekly Battle Hungry Bloodfest (OH)
wbfbcatch.com
Intravenous Fragfest (OH)
fragfest.webstrikesolutions.com
Xerohour LAN (KY)
xerohour.djserv.net
Adratek Systems Fragfest (GA)
fragfest.adratek.com
U of Akron Comp. Sci. Club (OH)
uacsc.org
MidWest-Shack LAN (MO)
midwest-shack.net
LANPiggers (MN)
lan-piggers.co

03/07

Wickednet Productions (FL)
wickednet.org
Atlanta LAN - Team Riot Squad (GA)
teamriotsquad.com
New Jersey LAN (NJ)
newjerseylan.tk
[KAG] Kick Ass Gamers (MN)
kag.home.mchsi.com
Jnorris LAN (WV)
jfnorris.com

03/08

Lancombat (FL)
lancombat.com
NOLGA
nolga.org
Fallen Angel LAN (MN)
fallenangelclan.com
Frag It Up (TX)
fragitup.com
Taccoomg (OH)
taccoomg.com
Production FX (WV)
productionfx.net

03/09

Bloodgulch (RI)
bloodgulch.com

03/14

Incoming Danger LAN (IN)
id-lan.com
GigaFrag (CA)
gigafrag.net

03/15

Cobaltnova (AZ)
cobaltnova.com/halo.htm

lanmetro (TX)
lanmetro.com
East Side Melt Down (NH)
esmd.kewlchats.net
Mass InLanity (WA)
massinlanity.com
Carolina Comp.Gaming (NC)
carolinagaming.com
Frag Freaks (VT)
geocities.com/fragfreaks2003
Spriggan HALO (CA)
SprigganHalo.com
Pcklan (TX)
pcklan.com
Matrix Gamers (MI)
matrixgamers.com

03/20

DSU Comp. Club (SD)
clubs.dsu.edu/cclub

03/21

VV007 LAN (OR)
nateosama.no-ip.com/lan
Daryl's Dungeon (CO)
futur2k.com/LanParty

03/22

CyberLAN (IL)
cyberlangaming.tk
New England LAN Party (MA)
nelp.net
ANWAR 18 (KY)
lanwar.com

03/23

ACM HALO (MI)
psycho-soldiers.com/acmhalo

03/28

Hopeless Valley LAN (NJ)
gamerlan.freesevers.com
MidSouthCon 21 (TN)
midsouthcon.org
LAN Chaos 2003 (NJ)
geocities.com/lan_chaos/LAN_Chaos.html

03/29

ClanFruityLAN (MA)
clanfruity.com/lan
Carnagge (IA)
carnagge.com

03/30

Keene LAN (NH)
homepages.wmich.edu/~m2behen/cart20LAN/

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TROPICO 2: PIRATE COVE

Steal from the rich and then gamble the night away...what a life!

Any game that puts me in charge of a vagabond band of illiterate cut-throats and lets me send them out to rob, pillage, kidnap, and harass innocent folk has my immediate and rapt attention. And the beta of *Tropic 2: Pirate Cove* did a good job of keeping me hooked.

The setup is essentially the same as in *Tropico* — you rule and manage a small Caribbean island.



DEVELOPER
Frog City

PUBLISHER
G.O.D.

RELEASE DATE
April 2003

Making a variety of economic and social decisions is the core gameplay function, and each one of these choices has a potential positive or negative impact. This time, though, your island isn't self-sufficient, and to maximize your wealth you'll need to manage your pirate fleet successfully as they go out and bring back resources.

For example, to build advanced farming structures such as tobacco and sugarcane, you have to

kidnap an experienced farmer. This cool system forces you to keep your pirate ships on the move, but I wish that you could swipe more than one person at a time. As it is, the process drags on a bit too much, and outfitting a ship to catch one person seems a tad implausible.

The primary strategic challenge in *Tropico 2* is keeping both your pirates and your work force — composed of people your pirates have captured — happy. Pirates thrive on anarchy while your captives want order, so the balancing act can be quite challenging. If your prisoners become unhappy, they'll try to escape your island or they'll even rise up and attack you directly, lopping off your head.

As in *Tropico*, you can issue a variety of edicts, such as freeing a prisoner, offering to ransom a wealthy captive, or hiring a new captain. You must also contend with the three foreign powers (English, French, and Spanish): they'll assist you when it benefits them, but they'll also wipe you out if provoked.

I'm pretty excited about *Tropico 2*. Its strategic aspects are compelling, and sending your pirates to ravage the high seas is a hoot. — William Harms



■ Pirates demand more than a sturdy ship and a plank. To be successful in this game, you'll need to ensure a steady supply of grog, rum, food, and yes, even highly trained wenches. Hey, it gets lonely at sea!



■ At long last, PC users will get to participate in this series' epic star-spanning battles.

ESCAPE VELOCITY NOVA

THREE ESCAPE VELOCITY games have appeared on the Mac, and each one was a fantastic experience. Finally, after years of waiting for our version — including a stint where the publisher said the franchise would never be ported to the PC — the most recent iteration of this space-exploration series,



DEVELOPER
Contraband Entertainment

PUBLISHER
Ambrosia

RELEASE DATE
Spring 2003

Escape Velocity Nova, is finally being ported to the world's best gaming platform. And I couldn't be happier.

I've spent the last couple of weeks playing the beta of *EV Nova*, and it's every bit as addictive and fun as the Mac version. In the style of *Privateer*, you're a space captain roaming the cosmos, taking on odd jobs to earn some cash, which you use to buy newer ships and upgrades. Along the way you encounter warring factions, weird alien races, and cut-throat space pirates.

You find your way into the game's six campaigns through random encounters. I played a large chunk of the Vell-os campaign, enjoying every second of it. This campaign has you working for the Federation: essentially, you have to infiltrate the Rebellion and then work from the inside to bring down the Rebellion. And the game never lets you forget that you're constantly betraying innocent, freedom-loving people.

Of course, the real joy of *EV Nova* is that you're free to wander space as much as you wish. You can attack and plunder other space-ships, and hire escorts that'll assist you in your endeavors. Become powerful enough, and you can actually conquer entire planets.

I was thoroughly impressed with the beta of *EV Nova*. The simplicity of the game's design and the straightforward gameplay make for a fun, rewarding experience. — William Harms

The Elder Scrolls III

BLOODMOON

Morrowind Expansion Pack

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- Become a werewolf and indulge your thirst for the hunt.

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RPG Vault, RPG of the Year
RPGDot, Best Single Player RPG

RPG Vault, Game of the Year
Telefragged, Best PC RPG Game
GameSpot, Best Xbox RPG of the Year
Xbox Magazine, Best Role-playing Game

XGR, Best RPG of the Year
Shack News, Reader's Choice RPG of the Year
Xbox Evolved, Game of the Year
IGN, Best Xbox RPG Game

Bethesda
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BLOOD
VIOLENCE



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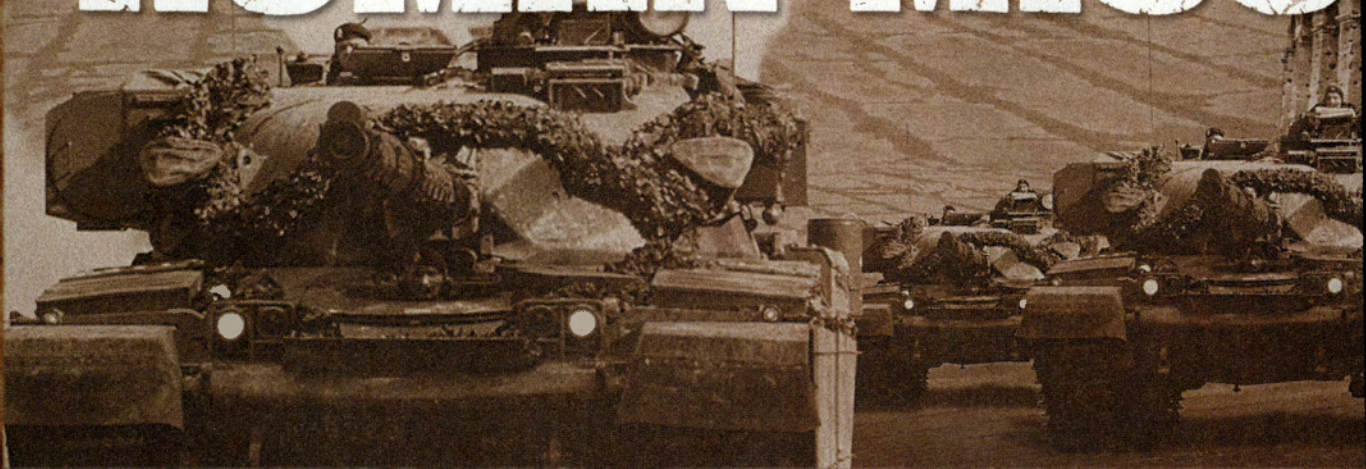
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MAKE HISTORY
COMING APRIL 22, 2003



THERE Isn't a Game, It's a Place

This new online destination merges chat with games and takes on *The Sims Online*

A single massively multiplayer game can generate tens of millions of dollars in profit during its lifetime. *EverQuest* alone supports 430,000 subscribers paying \$12.95/month. Obviously, this genre's a profitable one to be in.

An intriguing addition to the growing list of wannabes is *There* (www.there.com), which will ship this year. Instead of offering the traditional game trappings, *There*

"hygiene," and "energy." You need to play the game, according to its rules, in order to proceed.

"*There* isn't a game. It's not focused on trying to optimize a set of numbers. Instead, we're focused on giving you a better way to hang out with friends online and have fun. It's all about relationships. You can play games in *There*, but *There* itself is not a game."

Essentially, *There* is the next generation of chat coupled with a

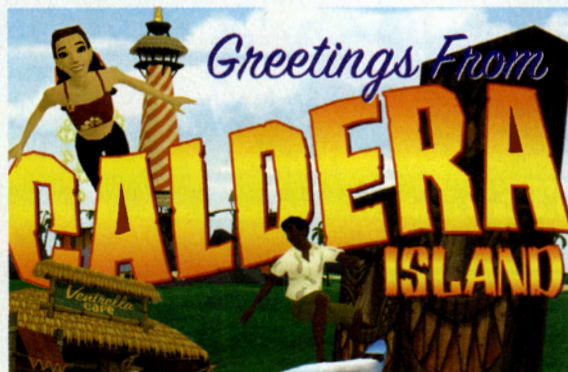
says Melcher, a constituency that *There*, Inc., hopes to embrace.

IT'S IN THERE

FOR THOSE WHO want a more visceral experience, numerous player-organized gaming-style events, such as dune-buggy racing, will populate the world. These get-togethers will be organized via a series of Fun Zones that you can rent; after renting a zone, you'll be able to lay out a specific track and invite other players to race around it. You can either let players come in for free or, if you're eager to make some cash, you can charge an admission fee.

To facilitate the feeling of an organized event, races will have little touches like leader boards, which will appear automatically before the start of a race and organize the rankings, saving everyone the time and trouble of creating them manually. Other activities include hoverboard races and even paintball battles in which you'll be able to compete in CTF- and King of the Hill-style games.

And if you don't want to organize a formal event, you'll be able to simply buy a ramp (or similar item) and plop it down in the world and hold a meeting in a more informal setting. *There* is designed to work over a 56K modem, but if you have a broadband connection you'll be able to share music and video with other users. The music will stream from a specified music source, like Shoutcast, and anyone in the vicinity of your jukebox or radio will be able to listen to your music. (For legal reasons, MP3s will not be supported.) Broadband users will also be able to speak to each



aims to deliver an entirely different kind of experience. Namely, a place where people can hang out, meet friends, and participate in a variety of entertaining activities.

On the surface, *There* seems to be much like *The Sims Online*, both graphicswise and in its emphasis on chatting and participating in group activities. But the similarities stop there, as Tom Melcher, the CEO of developer *There*, Inc., is quick to point out.

"*The Sims [Online]* is a game, and *There* is a place," clarifies Melcher. "That's a very important distinction. In *The Sims*, you're constantly trying to optimize your points, such as 'bladder,'

lot of mini-games. That description may sound a tad on the boring side for our hardcore gaming audience, but after seeing *There* in action, its potential is obvious.

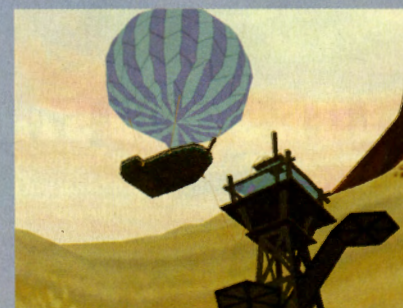
For instance, *There* will place an emphasis on individuality and let you totally customize your avatar. As a result, you'll be able to change your hair color and style, your clothing, and even the extremely expressive physical attributes of your avatar. Simple keyboard commands will make your avatar laugh, flirt, and express out-and-out anger. Many of the emotes and expressions are being included specifically because they appeal to women,



■ Interacting with others is the primary focus of *There*, and a variety of locations will be available for use by people who want to meet.



■ One of *There's* more enjoyable aspects looks to be driving around in dune buggies, which can be done casually or in organized events.



■ Other modes of transportation include hot-air balloons and hoverboards. With the latter you can perform crazy tricks and stunts.



■ The ability to change your appearance, both in terms of clothing and physical attributes, should be one of *There's* big draws.



WIN A COPY OF BATTLEFIELD 1942 AND ROAD TO ROME

This month 10 lucky winners will receive a copy of both *Battlefield 1942* and its *Road to Rome* add-on! To be eligible for our random drawing, just send an email to eyewitness@pcgamer.com with "Nazis Suck" in the subject heading, and include your name and address in the body of the message. Only one entry per person allowed. Contest ends May 31, 2003. See additional rules on page 143.



During large chat sessions, the camera will automatically pull back so that it's easy to see everyone.

other verbally using the built-in voice communication.

If you're interested in trying to turn a buck in *There*, tools will be made available that'll let you create and sell items like clothing. A built-in auction system will make this process as painless as possible, quickly transferring goods and *There* bucks from one user to another.

THERE'S MONEY

FOR THOSE FOLKS who don't have the time or ambition to earn money within *There*, you'll be able to buy additional *There* bucks using your credit card. Melcher says that the exchange rate will be 1,787 *There* bucks for every real-world dollar — a figure that "was just made up because we don't want people getting bogged down in exchange rates."

The current plan is for *There* to be distributed online and also through bundles with other products. The most notable partner is ATI, which will begin packaging *There* with all of its high-end RADEON cards later this year. The exact pricing scheme has yet to be finalized, but Melcher says that *There, Inc.*, is looking at a variety

of options, and that a monthly membership fee will be part of its strategy. The likely scenario will involve different pricing tiers, with higher tiers offering more functions and benefits to the user. Those benefits could include a higher monthly allowance of *There* bucks and even potentially offering access to rental properties.

One of the most compelling aspects of *There*, however, is that you'll be able to access the files, folders, and programs on your computer while you're in the program since it uses an embedded version of IE 6.0. According to

Melcher, a lot of beta testers are now using *There* as their desktop and Alt-Tabbing back and forth between *There* and various programs. Products like 3DNA's 3D desktop (a *PC Gamer*-themed version of which has been on our CD in the past) are exploring 3D interactivity with your traditional 2D desktop. With *There*, the incorporation of the desktop environment and the ability to keep it going while you're working on other files means it has the potential to subtly but effectively burrow itself onto your PC, and give you no reason at all to leave the house.



■ Handy maps will make sure that you never get lost.

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.

APRIL 2003

TITLE	PUBLISHER	DATE
Blitzkrieg	CDV	4/01/03
Midnight Club II	Take-Two	4/02/03
One Must Fall: Battlegrounds	Diversions Ent.	4/04/03
Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness	Eidos	4/08/03
Etherlords II	Strategy First	4/08/03
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
MVP Baseball 2003	EA	4/15/03
Gothic II	JoWooD	4/17/03
Tropico 2: Pirate Cove	G.O.D.	4/18/03
Port Royale	Tri Synergy	4/21/03
Freedom: Battle Liberty Isle	EA	4/21/03



MAY 2003

TITLE	PUBLISHER	DATE
Counter-Strike: Condition Zero	Sierra	5/01/03
Warlords IV	Ubi Soft	5/01/03
Zone of the Enders: 2nd Runner	Konami	5/01/03
Celebrity Deathmatch	G.O.D.	5/01/03
XIII	Ubi Soft	5/04/03
RollerCoaster Tycoon 2: Wacky Worlds	Infogrames	5/06/03
Crusader Kings	Strategy First	5/06/03
Enter the Matrix	Infogrames	5/15/03
Star Trek: Elite Force II	Activision	5/20/03
Empire of Magic	Summitsoft	5/23/03



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PC GAMER PLAYLIST



ROB Run, don't walk, down the *Road to Rome*. It's a sad confession, but I hadn't played *Battlefield 1942* for some time before giving the expansion a go-over, and wow, did I suddenly remember why it was so incredibly great. Plus, I can't shake the habit of logging on to *Magic Online* here and there for a few duels...



COREY I've never really been one for hardcore wargames, but *Combat Mission: Barbarossa to Berlin* is quickly changing my mind. Setting up the ultimate tactical advance, then unpauseing the game and letting my boys do battle—hot damn, this is good fun. I'm loving *Battlefield 1942: Road to Rome*, too.



DAN It's Clancy season at my desktop, where *Splinter Cell* and *Raven Shield* are getting their workouts. And for when I'm in a bit less "stealthy" a mood, I've now got the *Road to Rome* expansion for *Battlefield 1942* to put through its paces. (Plus my boys are in first place in my ongoing season of *High Heat*.)



CHUCK After taking MindFX supplements (see page 36), I now have miraculous precognitive powers. Here's what I'm playing a year from now: After seeing my Bothan Bounty Hunter mauled by a Krayt Dragon in *Galaxies*, I've finally halted my hunt for the Force. Now it's all about *City of Heroes*, baby. And who knew we'd see *Starcraft 2*?



BILLY I must say, I'm enjoying the hell out of the Conquer the World campaign in the *Rise of Nations* beta. Most of my time this month, however, has been aboard the good ship Nyquil as I continue to battle the end boss of all end bosses—the never-ending cold. Someone shoot me with a BFG and end my suffering!



JOE Playing as the French in *Road to Rome*, I'm still searching on my keyboard for the "mass retreat" command or even the "my army outnumbered your army three-to-one but our leaders aren't very sharp so we surrender, do you have a zigarette?" key command. Playing as the Italians, why do I feel like everyone's laughing at me?



CHIAKI A warning to all gamers: Abnormal pleasures kill the taste for normal ones. Run for your lives if you want to continue to maim, kill, and destroy. Don't become consumed with choosing the perfect Kitty bed or with whether the kitchen chairs match the upstairs rug. *The Sims* is evil! Oh, for the lord of all creatures large and small...RUN!!!



GREG *Enclave* is, by all indications, the same sort of game as *Unreal II*—except that it's even more linear and simpler to play. Yet, for some reason, I'm having much more fun with it than I am with Epic's latest and greatest first-person shooter. Did Legend drop the ball, or is *Enclave* just that good? I'll ponder that while I'm replaying it.

Consumed by Electronics

Cool gadgets, teensy hard drives, and laptops that fetch beer

Before there was E3 (the Electronic Entertainment Expo, for those who don't speak acronym), there was the Consumer Electronics Show. Games competed with mainstream electronics for the media spotlight, only to be muscled out by laser-pointer toothbrushes and solar-powered frying pans.

International CES 2003 drew 116,687 attendees from 128 countries, and had 2,283 exhibitors packed into 1.25 million net square feet of space. This year gaming-related gadgets were everywhere, with companies like NVIDIA, ATI, and Creative Labs showing off their wares. We took a look at some of the top products in the spotlight, and their (dubious) influence on PC gaming.



A famished Drew Barrymore tries to devour Sony President Kunitake Ando's wristwatch speakerphone.



The Pyramat PM300

Just when you thought rumble chairs were extinct comes this cushy pad with three built-in speakers. Lie down on it, or fold it into a lounger for back support while listening to music and playing games—the onboard subwoofer will port the bass sounds directly into your spine. (www.pyramat.com, \$149.99)

FOR PC GAMERS WHO: Are lazy and use a wireless mouse and keyboard.

Klipsch ProMedia Subwoofer System

For your home-entertainment center or your gaming rig, this setup lets you link up to 16 subwoofers together to create a massive wall of bass. Off the top of our heads, we can't think of anybody who needs that much bass, but we're sure they're out there hanging babies from balconies. (www.klipsch.com, \$149.99/subwoofer)

FOR PC GAMERS WHO: Need a hella lotta bass.



UM Digital's multi-screen Trapezia

The most complex Trapezia model is a P4 2GHz PC that comes with 512MB RAM, a built-in web camera, three 17-inch LCD monitors, and one 6.4-inch monitor. It's truly a thing of beauty, and would probably make any flight-sim fanatic cry like a baby. In fact, we're soiling ourselves right now just thinking about it. (www.umdigital.com)

FOR PC GAMERS WHO: Can afford shipping charges from Korea.

Hitachi 4GB Microdrive

That's right, it's a 4GB hard drive that's the size of a Flash card. Ideal for tiny Pocket PCs, these babies will provide a lot of storage space for mobile games, MP3s, or any other files. We don't, however, suggest you use them as toys for your pet chicks—no matter how cute they look together. (www.hgst.com, coming fall 2003)

FOR PC GAMERS WHO: Own a Pocket PC.



ER1 Personal Robot

In the future, remote-controlled laptops will bring us beer. Or so Evolution Robotics would lead us to believe with its booth that featured robots playing checkers and holding out cool, refreshing alcoholic beverages in their bone-crushing pincers. (www.evolution.com, \$499–\$949)

FOR PC GAMERS WHO: Need a beer.

Sony's Biped Entertainment Robot

The SDR-4X is Sony's creepy human-looking AIBO that can recognize faces, has autonomy, can allegedly "sing," and (see picture) loves to dance, dance, dance. Humanity's doom or humanity's boon? While there's no proof that it can bring you a beer, Sony never said it couldn't. (www.sony.com)

FOR PC GAMERS WHO: Need a date.



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PCG NEWS TICKER

→ **GTA 101** The Art Institute of California San Francisco has launched a scholarship program for high-school seniors and international students interested in a career in the video-game industry. Obtain an entry form by emailing aistadm@aia.edu or by calling the school at 888-493-3261. The deadline is April 30, 2003.

→ **ATI CEO HO D'OH** 3D-card manufacturer ATI's CEO K.Y. Ho (real name, honest) has been accused of insider trading by the Ontario Securities Commission. Specifically, it's been alleged that Ho traded 240,900 shares of ATI stock in his wife's name before the company issued a profit warning. The sale netted \$4.6 million, about \$2.2 million more than the stocks were worth afterward.



"These truck stops always have bathrooms..." (Sovereign)

→ **SOVEREIGN BEHEADED** Sony Online has officially canceled its massively multiplayer RTS *Sovereign*, stating that "the time has come to return to the drawing board and begin planning the MMORTS game that will truly achieve market success and deliver the high level of quality we demand from all of our interactive-entertainment offerings." In laymen's terms, the game sucked.

→ **WIN FIVE GRAND, ASK US HOW!** The iEntertainment Network is running a contest to find the best tank platoon in the *Armored Assault* community. The winning team can win \$1,000 for each platoon member during the big playoff match on the weekend of June 28, 2003. For more info, go to www.armoredassault.com.

→ **MASSIVELY SEGA** Sega has kicked off its Online Developer Program, "to help game developers successfully launch their online games." Its first title will be *Legacy Online* (known as *StarPeace* when it was launched by French publisher Monte Cristo a year and a half ago), a massively multiplayer city-building sim.

→ **GALAXIES NEUTERED** *Star Wars: Galaxies* producer Haden Blackman posted on the game's official forum that, to make *Galaxies* planned April 15 release date, Sony Online has postponed several significant features, including player-run cities, player-owned vehicles, player-generated missions, and Dark Jedi. These features should be implemented within seven to eight months after launch.

→ **SIMS BOTTOMLINE** When announcing its quarterly financial results in January, EA admitted that the sales for its much-hyped *The Sims Online* are "below expectations." Through Jan. 28, the MMO game had sold about 105,000 copies, with 82,000 registered users and 40,000 sign-ups for the monthly subscription.

Performance-Enhancing Supplements for Gamers?

We put the MindFX game-boosting formula to the ultimate test



We take our games very seriously here at *PC Gamer*, so anything that can give us an edge deserves to be explored. And that's why we were intrigued by the promise of the MindFX supplements, which, according to the label, are designed to "support concentration and optimize reaction time for the hardcore gamer." So we put the supplements to the test in a highly scientific and closely monitored experiment that is fully endorsed and authorized by the internationally lauded

PC Gamer Research Institute.

Our subjects were Chuck Osborn, who took three MindFX supplements — Neurocharge, Maxx Impulse, and Aftermath — and Billy Harms, who was given three placebos, which turned out to be carefully disguised Certs. Both subjects took their doses once per day for one week, and they were chosen because each excels in a particular genre — Chuck in first-person shooters and Billy in real-time strategy games.

To create a baseline, Chuck and Billy competed head-to-head in a series of games before starting the program. As would be expected, Billy annihilated Chuck in *Red Alert 2* and Chuck dominated Billy in three rounds of *Quake III*. (See chart below for the full details of their matches.)

After taking their required doses for a week, Billy and Chuck once again competed in a series of closely monitored contests. In a highly controversial result that will undoubtedly be debated in the highest halls of science, drugged-up Chuck defeated Billy at *Red Alert 2*. However, there is a possibility that the testing was tainted by *PC Gamer's* wayward managing editor, who engaged Billy in a magazine production-related conversation during the match.

In the *Quake III* competition, the results were essentially unchanged from the initial competition, although Billy offered Chuck fierce competition on the Q3Tourney5 map.

So what conclusion can be raised from these tests? The data does suggest a marked increase in Chuck's mental and physical prowess (see photos), although Chuck did state, through his foam-soaked mouth, that the supplements did not "improve his aim." Based on the results, we must conclude that the MindFX supplements may have improved Chuck's game. Whether or not the performance gains were worth it in light of the physical deformations that Chuck experienced is for you to decide.

clean match

GAME	MAP	BILLY'S SCORE	CHUCK'S SCORE
Red Alert 2	Pinch Point	63,058	25,720
Quake III	Q3DM17	-4	10
Quake III	Q3Tourney5	2	10
Quake III	DM7	0	10

drug match

GAME	MAP	BILLY'S SCORE	CHUCK'S SCORE
Red Alert 2	Pinch Point	27,320	101,080
Quake III	Q3DM17	-1	10
Quake III	Q3Tourney5	5	10
Quake III	DM7	0	10

MindFX made Chuck a crazed gaming powerhouse.

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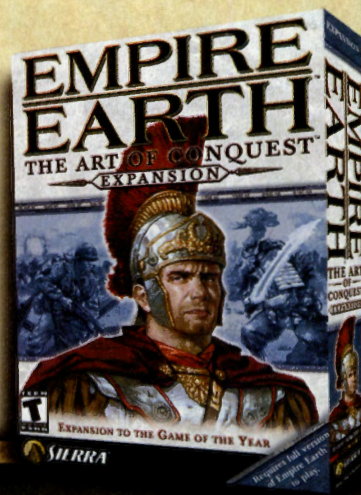
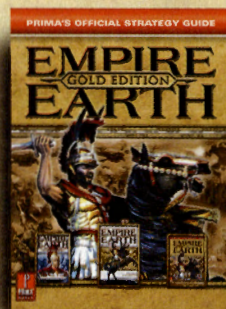
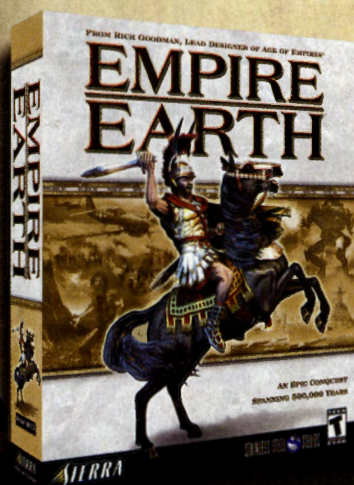
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† Gamespy, 2001

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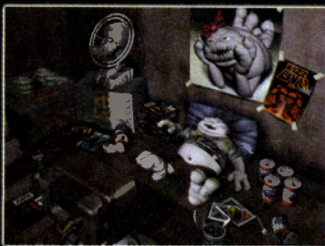
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2003

MEGA
PREVIEW

All the games
you need to
know about...
and some you
don't *

- Abducted
- Aces High II: Tour of Duty
- Al Capone
- American McGee's Oz
- AquaNox 2: Revelation
- Battlecruiser Generations
- Battlefield Command
- Besieger
- Big Mutha Truckers
- Black & White 2
- Blitzkrieg

- BloodRayne
- Bomberman Collection
- Borderzone
- Breed
- Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon
- Call of Cthulhu
- Casino Inc.
- Chameleon
- Charlie's Angels
- Chrome
- Civil War: War Between the States
- City of Heroes
- Cleric
- Close Assault: Code of Honor
- Code of Destruction: Traitor's Gate II

- Cold Zero: The Last Stand
- Colin McRae Rally 3
- Commandos 3
- Conflict: Desert Sabre
- Cossacks II
- Counter-Strike: Condition Zero
- Crashday
- Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon
- Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon MMORPG
- The Crystal Key 2
- Curse: Eye of Isis
- Dark and Light
- Delta Force: Black Hawk Down
- Deus Ex: Invisible War
- DOOM III
- Dragon Empires
- Duality

- Duke Nukem Forever
- Dungeon: Gladiator
- Egypt III
- Empires: Dawn of the Modern World
- Enter the Matrix
- Escape From Alcatraz
- Etherlords II
- Eve: The Second Genesis
- EverQuest II
- The Evolvers
- eXarch
- Far Cry
- Final Score
- Fire Warrior
- A Fistful of Gold
- Flat-Out
- Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse
- Full Throttle 2
- Galactic Civilizations
- Ghost Master
- Glimpse
- Good Cop, Bad Cop
- Grand Theft Auto: Vice City

- Greyhawk
- GURPS Online: Old West
- GURPS Online: Transhuman Space
- Halo
- Hannibal
- Harpoon 4
- Heaven and Hell
- Hidden & Dangerous 2
- Homeplanet
- Homeworld 2
- Horizons
- The Hulk
- I of the Dragon
- Imperator
- Imperial Wars
- Imperium
- Galactica III
- Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb
- Indy Racing League
- Inquisition
- Iritor Online
- Kill Bill
- Kingdom Under Fire 2: The Crusaders
- Knight Rider
- Konung 2

- Kreed
- Lionheart
- Lineage II
- Loose Cannon
- Lords of the Realm III
- The Lord of the Rings: Middle-Earth Online
- The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers
- The Lord of the Rings: The War of the Ring
- Massive Assault
- Matrix Online
- Max Payne 2
- MechMinds
- Men of Valor: Vietnam
- Microsoft Flight Simulator: A Century of Flight
- Midnight Club 2
- Mistmare
- The Movies
- MVP Baseball 2003
- NetSphere
- New World Order
- Nexagon: Deathmatch
- No Man's Land
- No-Name War
- One Must Fall: Battlegrounds
- Painkiller

- Panzers
- Perimeter
- Pet Racer
- Pirates of the Burning Sea
- Port Royale
- Postal 2
- Priest
- Private Wars
- Psychotoxic
- Purge
- Quake IV
- Quest
- Racing Legends
- R.C. Cars
- Republic: The Revolution
- Restricted Area
- Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory
- RHEM
- Rise of Nations
- Rome: Total War
- Salamambo
- Sam & Max 2
- Savage
- Schizm 2
- Sea Dogs 2
- Secret Weapons [Workin' Title]
- Seraphim
- Shadow
- Shadowbane
- Söldner
- Space Empires: Starfury
- Space Wolves
- Specnaz: Project Wolf
- Speedball Arena

- Sphere
- Star Trek: Elite Force II
- Star Wars: Galaxies
- Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic
- Starsky & Hutch
- Supreme Ruler 2010
- Syberia II
- Tabula Rasa
- Team Fortress 2
- Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- They Came From Hollywood
- Thief III
- Total Annihilation 2
- TRON 2.0
- Tropic 2
- UFO: Aftermath
- Ultimate Baseball Online
- The Underworld: Crime Does Pay
- Urz: Online Ages Beyond Myst
- Vegas
- Vietcong
- Vivisector
- Warhammer Online
- Warlords IV: Heroes of Etheria
- Warrior Kings: Battles
- White Fear
- Will Rock
- World of Warcraft
- World War II: Frontline Command
- XIII
- X-Men: Wolverine's Revenge
- X-treme Beach Soccer

A-B

ACES HIGH II:
TOUR OF DUTY

A massively multiplayer online flight sim. Will be available only at www.flyaceshigh.com. **D:** HiTech Creations; **P:** HiTech Creations; **R:** Q3 2003



▲ AL CAPONE

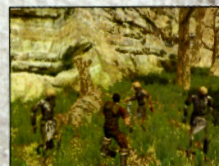
Mixing *Mafia* with *Commandos 2* isn't a bad idea. We only hope the developer of *Desperados: Wanted Dead or Alive* and *Robin Hood: The Legend of Sherwood* hasn't milked its aging strategy engine dry. **D:** Spellbound; **P:** TBA; **R:** Winter 2003

BIG MUTHA
TRUCKERS

The name pretty much says it all. Trucks, racing, and — dare we hope — big sweaty guys with hairy backs? **D:** Eutechnyx; **P:** Empire; **R:** May 2003

BOMBERMAN
COLLECTION

A bundle of classic console-style favorites: *Bomberman*, *Bomberman '93*, and *Bomberman World*. These games are seriously addictive, and buying this bundle is certainly better than downloading illegal ROMs. **D:** HudsonSoft; **P:** Konami; **R:** March 2003



▲ BORDERZONE

The developers of *Jazz* and *Faust* are back, hopefully to redeem themselves. This combat-oriented RPG is set in the year 9000. As one of the last human survivors, it's your sacred duty to make sure nothing else living gets to see the year 9001. **D:** Saturn Plus; **P:** 1C; **R:** Q2 2003



ABDUCTED

D: Contraband Entertainment; **P:** TBA; **R:** Winter 2003

Sci-fi survival horror has never looked so good. *Abducted*'s cutting-edge engine and environments include globular arboreturns, flooded levels, and alien nests aboard a decaying mothership. It's designed to confuse and astound, from the bewildering alien physics and fluctuating gravity to the fearsome varieties of hostile enemies.

AMERICAN
MCGEE'S OZ

D: Carbot; **P:** TBA; **R:** 2004

After putting a creepy twist on *Alice in Wonderland* in *American McGee's Alice*, New Game God McGee is turning his attention to another children's classic, *The Wizard of Oz*. He sure loves his own name, that man. Expect a dark action/adventure in this prequel to L. Frank Baum's famous story about a girl who indiscriminately kills witches.

AQUANOX 2:
REVELATION

D: Massive Development; **P:** JoWood; **R:** Spring 2003

The sequel to 2001's underwhelming underwater shooter promises a far darker plot, plus a tweaked engine that will again be a showcase for the very latest GeForce video-card effects. Concentrated submarine battles and a stealthier approach to tactics should provide a tighter play experience.

BATTLECRUISER GENERATIONS



D: 3000AD; **P:** DreamCatcher; **R:** Aug. 15, 2003

Previously intended as an add-on for *Battlecruiser Millennium*, *Generations* is now a stand-alone game, making it the fourth in the tumultuous *Battlecruiser* series. The graphics engine has been overhauled (in fact, you'll need at least a PIII 1GHz system to play *BG*) and the game boasts more advanced AI, better multiplayer support, and loads of new and updated features that are sure to have fans of the franchise begging for more. Beginning where *Millennium* left off, *Generations* will also be the space-sim appetizer that comes before the release of the currently-in-development *Battlecruiser Online*.

BATTLEFIELD
COMMAND

D: 1C; **P:** Codemasters; **R:** Spring 2004

Developed under the pedigree of *IL-2 Sturmovik*'s design team, the game—formerly-known-as-*WWII: RTS* will attempt to mind-meld hardcore tactical realism with the ease of use and intuitive control of traditional RTS games. No unrealistic bases here — it's all about being a clever commander of limited resources.



BESIEGER

D: Primal Software; **P:** TBA; **R:** TBA

You can't go wrong with Vikings, and Russian developer Primal Software is well aware of this truism. Hence the Nordic races' inclusion in *Besieger*, a graphically rich game of sieges between two warring nations. *Besieger* asks that you build up and manage towns across a dozen levels, following the story of a central hero. We have our fingers crossed on this one.



BLOODRAYNE

D: Terminal Reality; **D:** Majesco; **R:** March 2003

It's as if someone sat down and listed the cool parts of popular games: "Nazis, vampires, guns, bullet-time, and cleavage." Then he got his buddies together and persuaded them to make a game called *BloodRayne*. Third-person action sees the eponymous heroine traveling the world, chopping up her enemies and sucking a little blood.

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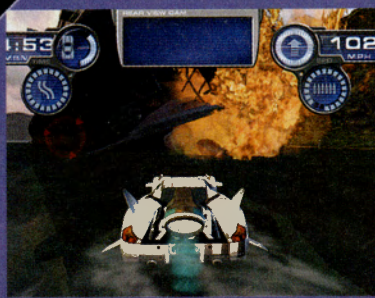
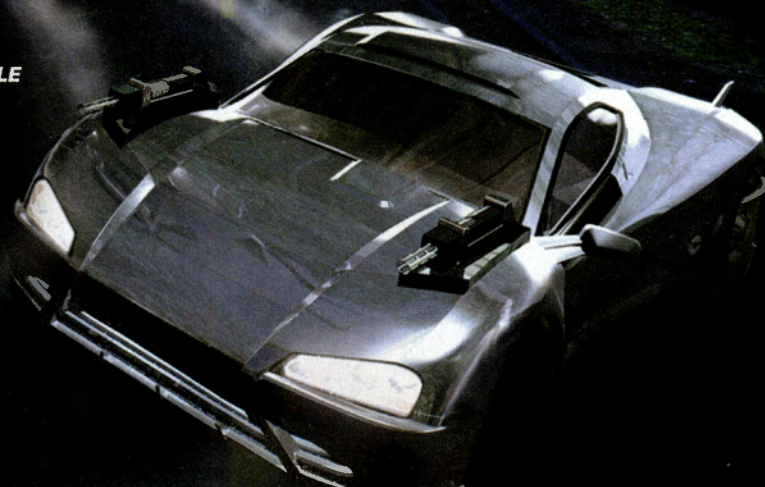


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THE 2002 PC GAMER AWARDS - BEST ROLEPLAYING GAME

B-C

BLITZKRIEG

WWII strategy epic in which you'll lead German, Soviet, or Allied troops. **D:** Nival; **P:** CDV; **R:** Q2 2003



▲ CASINO INC.

Konami has nailed the vacant stare that real-world casino dealers have when bored (which is often). But can *Casino Inc.*'s six themed casinos really match the glitz and gluttony of Vegas? Too bad there's no license: Siegfried & Roy would totally sell this. **D:** Konami; **P:** Konami; **R:** March 2003

CHAMELEON

Little in the way of confirmed content has escaped Illusion's offices in the Slovak capital of Bratislava, but our money's on a female lead character, controllable vehicles, and the use of *Mafia*'s LS3D game engine. **D:** Illusion Software; **P:** Take-Two; **R:** TBA

CHARLIE'S ANGELS

Jiggle. Shoot. Jiggle, jiggle, jiggle. Kick. Ow, broke a nail. **D:** Ubi Soft; **P:** Ubi Soft; **R:** TBA



▲ CIVIL WAR: WAR BETWEEN THE STATES

Brothers Eric and Chad Walker left their cushy jobs as artists and designers at Ensemble Studios to form Walker Boys. Their first title is a 3D combat strategy re-enactment of a war that's been re-enacted more often than any war should. Command the Union or the Confederates, and change the course of American history. **D:** Walker Boys Studios; **P:** TBA; **R:** Q3 2003



BREED

D: Brat Designs; **P:** CDV; **R:** Q2 2003

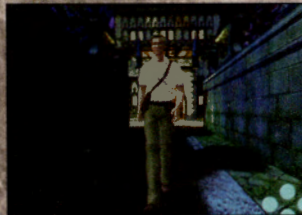
This tactical shooter is gaining favorable comparisons to *Halo*, and with good reason. You muster a resistance force as the alien Breed invade Earth. Fantastic visuals bolster the game's vehicle-heavy combat, and the multitude of cooperative and team multiplayer options should provide longevity and limitless opportunities for sophomore "breeding" puns.



CHROME

D: Techland; **P:** Strategy First; **R:** May 2003

You're Logan, a veteran mercenary turned bounty hunter aiming to strike it rich bagging bad guys throughout *Chrome*'s 14 missions. The game's set in the far-future, so Logan's unique abilities can be configured via a system of implants, and you'll have your pick of fancy vehicles for chasing enemies. Multiplay will support up to 32 players.



BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON

D: Revolution; **P:** TBA; **R:** October 2003

It's been over five years since the last adventures of George Stobbard and Nico Collard, and the head of Revolution, Charles Cecil, has a lot to live up to. Having recently proclaimed the point-and-click adventure a dead genre, Cecil is sure to be taking *TSD* in a more action-oriented direction.



CITY OF HEROES

D: Cryptic Studios; **P:** NCsoft; **R:** Winter 2003-2004

An intriguing prospect, this massively multiplayer online RPG allows you to create your own superhero and fight crime in a persistent metropolis, Paragon City. Since NCsoft picked up the publishing rights, *CoH* has undergone a few design changes, resulting in last summer's original release date being pushed to the end of this year.



CALL OF CTHULHU: DARK CORNERS OF THE EARTH

D: Headfirst; **P:** TBA; **R:** Q3 2003

Inspired by the tabletop roleplaying game (itself inspired by the works of gothic horror novelist H.P. Lovecraft), *Cthulhu* is shaping up to be nothing more surprising than a horror action/adventure. As ex-cop-turned-P.I. Jack Walters, you'll investigate a missing youth in a spooky fishing village.



CLERIC

D: Plutonium Games; **P:** TBA; **R:** 2004

A first-person survival-horror game using Croteam's gorgeous *Serious Sam* engine sounds promising — playing such a game as a middle-aged priest in a small 16th-century Russian town, perhaps less so. But that's just the mix this ambitious Texan start-up developer is bringing to *Cleric*. It has plenty of work to do, but at least the realistic release date grants the team time to do it.

BLACK & WHITE 2



D: Lionhead; **D:** TBA; **R:** December 2003

T rue to its name, *Black & White* (2001) polarized audiences — plenty of people loved it, but over time the game's intense pet micromanagement proved plenty monotonous, too. Peter Molyneux promises that the sequel will be better-written, and will have better controls and clearer goals. Best of all, large-scale war is being brought to the fore, and combat won't involve just your creature: villagers can be equipped with weaponry and set against enemy townsfolk and creatures. The new engine is presenting everything in remarkable detail, with individual arrows and spears sticking into a creature's hide and blood dribbling forth.

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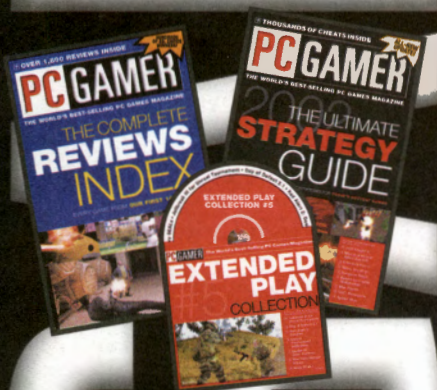
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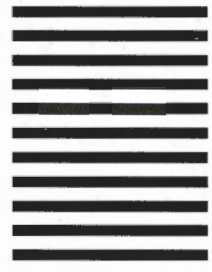
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PC
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COUNTER-STRIKE: CONDITION ZERO



D: Rogue; **P:** Vivendi; **R:** Q3 2003

So, *Counter-Strike* was — actually, scratch that, *is* — the mod craze to end all mod crazes. From one mod-maker's ideas to worldwide domination, it's an impressive tale. Hence Valve buys 'em up and integrates the game into its product line, which leads directly to *Condition Zero*. Essentially, everything good about *Counter-Strike* — guns, terrorists, tense action — but now in single-player mode. All good so far. But we're beginning to worry about it: It's been a long, long, long time coming, and it's passed from Gearbox (who disappointed us with *007: Nightfire*) to Rogue. We're still hopeful. Still excited. But very concerned.

C-D

CLOSE ASSAULT: CODE OF HONOR

Matrix Games is its own war factory: the small developer/publisher has enough hardcore tactical wargames in development to keep our Desktop General off the streets for years to come. But if there's one to watch, it's this tactical extravaganza set during WWII. **D:** Matrix Games; **P:** Matrix Games; **R:** Nov. 2003



▲ COLD ZERO: THE LAST STAND

You play a man, tied up with organized crime, black-mailed into a life of violence. *CZ: TLS* features 16 missions in the same number of locations, including the de rigueur multiple pathways. That said, the claimed 100 (count 'em!) weapons is more than we'd normally expect to see. **D:** Drago; **P:** JoWood; **R:** TBA

CONFLICT: DESERT SABRE

Sabre features Delta Force and the SAS in Iraq, doing what they do best. **D:** Pivotal; **P:** Gotham Games; **R:** Fall 2003



▲ COSSACKS II: NAPOLEONIC WARS

The next in the RTS series has you battling it out among 10 European countries from the 16th to the 19th centuries. But, no, you can't control an army of short French dictators. **D:** GSC Game World; **P:** CDV; **R:** Q2 2003

CRASHDAY

A stunt-racing game from Germany. **D:** Moon Byte; **P:** TBA; **R:** Q4 2003



CODE OF DESTRUCTION: TRAITOR'S GATE II

D: Daydream; **P:** The Adventure Company; **R:** Oct. 29, 2003

In this sequel to DreamCatcher's spy-thriller adventure *Traitor's Gate*, Raven has his hands full when he's sent to the Iraqi desert to locate militant extremists who are not only harboring a computer virus, but are also using satellites to destroy American targets.



COLIN MCRAE 3

D: Codemasters; **P:** Codemasters; **R:** May 2003

Over in Europe, where rally racing is a big deal, *Colin McRae Rally* was the breakout game that helped secure the genre as a viable proposition. This sequel takes a more traditional approach than sister-game *Pro Race Driver*. Expect fast cars, complicated damage models, dynamic road-surfaces, 56 stages, eight countries, and Colin.



COMMANDOS 3

D: Pyro; **P:** Eidos; **R:** Fall 2003

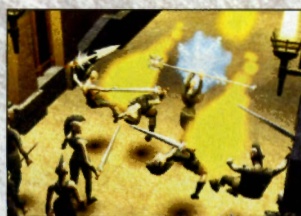
The first one was notoriously hard. The second was arguably harder, but fairer. Somehow this series hasn't caught on in the U.S. the way it did throughout Europe. While the step from No. 1 to No. 2 was pretty significant, this third go-around seems like more of a mission pack, using pretty much the same engine and altering only some of the details rather than posing a great new offensive.



CURSE: EYE OF ISIS

D: Asylum Entertainment; **P:** DreamCatcher; **R:** Oct. 13, 2003

Asylum Entertainment is entering new ground with this survival-horror title of the *Resident Evil* and *Alone in the Dark*: *TNN* variety, set in the pea-soup days of industrialized Victorian Britain. The game is looking fairly sinister and plays on Egyptian curses as the central theme for its supernatural shenanigans. Maybe it'll cure the bad "wrap" mummies get.



DRAGON EMPIRES

D: Codemasters; **P:** Codemasters; **R:** Q3 2003

An ambitious massively multiplayer fantasy RPG being developed by Codemasters. A system of dragon-guarded strongholds dominates the player-controlled lands of *Dragon Empires*, where player-vs.-player combat makes up an integral and controversial part of the game mechanics. The graphics are certainly impressive.



DELTA FORCE: BLACK HAWK DOWN

D: NovaLogic; **P:** NovaLogic; **R:** March 25, 2003

Everything's going well until your helicopter gets knocked out of the sky and crash-lands in the middle of hostile Mogadishu. This game is based on one of the U.S. military's darkest hours, all presented via a revamped and reworked version of the *Comanche 4* engine to create an FPS that's heavy on vehicles.

C-E

▲ **CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON**

The closest we've got to the Wuxia-stylings of the film are the acrobatics in *Jedi Knight II*. Play as any of the three leads. **D:** Genki; **P:** Ubi Soft; **R:** Summer 2003

▲ **CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON MMORPG**

After the initial announcement, it's almost as if Phantagram has gone into hiding. We'd like to see a MMORPG based on the movie, but prospects aren't high. **D:** Phantagram; **P:** Phantagram; **R:** TBA

▲ **THE CRYSTAL KEY 2**

Science-fantasy adventure sequel. **D:** Earthlight; **P:** The Adventure Company; **R:** Oct. 8, 2003

▲ **DARK AND LIGHT**

Medieval MMORPG. **D:** NP Cube; **P:** TBA; **R:** Q4 2003

▲ **DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR**

See preview on page 16. **D:** Ion Storm; **P:** Eidos; **R:** June 30, 2003

▲ **DUKE NUKEM FOREVER**

Allegedly alive and kicking, despite silence from 3D Realms. Will it be released before it has another engine change? **D:** 3D Realms; **P:** Take-Two; **R:** 20??

▲ **EGYPT III**

Adventure like an Egyptian. **D:** DreamCatcher; **P:** The Adventure Company; **R:** Nov. 21, 2003

DOOM III



D: id Software; **P:** Activision; **R:** "When It's Done" 2003

Anyone who has seen this dark behemoth running in real life will have every faith that id Software will return to form in the single-player milieu. An astonishing lighting engine combined with fantastic in-game physics, new modes of interaction, and a drooling selection of formidable monsters means that *DOOM III* could be the best-looking and scariest game of all time. In all probability it'll be short but very, very sweet, with limited multiplayer mechanics. Of course, you're going to need a fairly major PC to handle this ambitious new engine, with NVIDIA's GeForce FX and the ATI 9700 PRO chipsets enabling the goods.

▲ **DUNGEON: GLADIATOR**

D: Complex Games; **P:** TBA; **R:** TBA

This first-person multiplayer title is basically a fantasy deathmatch in the cruel setting of Velorn, although an ongoing plot slowly reveals the history behind the war-torn island world. RPG elements include the ability to create and highly customize your fighter with weapons, armor, and physical attributes before taking on opponents.

▲ **DUALITY**

D: Trilobite Graphics; **P:** Phantagram; **R:** End of 2003

Here's a truly impressive-looking title from some of the original members of the Pyro team (*Commandos*). We're a bit skeptical as to whether this visually lavish techno-dystopian adventure/RPG will manage to live up to its ambitious design (these games seldom do), but whatever the final analysis, *Duality* will certainly be beautiful.

▲ **ENTER THE MATRIX**

D: Shiny; **P:** Infogrames; **R:** May 15, 2003

Planned for release in conjunction with the second *Matrix* film, *The Matrix Reloaded*, this game has been created from the ground up as a companion piece to the movie series. The Wachowski brothers themselves have had a big hand in shaping the game along with Shiny, so we're expecting a high "wow" factor. Instead of Neo, you'll play as new characters Niobe and Ghost.

▲ **ESCAPE FROM ALCATRAZ**

D: Philos Labs; **P:** Hip Interactive; **R:** May 2003

Set in an alternative reality, this strategy game will take the concept of *Commandos 2* and kick it into 3D. Despite the name, you'll be escaping from not just Alcatraz, but other prisons as well. *Escape* was to be published by CDV before being dropped into the lap of the dinkier Hip (of *Hooligans* infamy).

▲ **ETHERLORDS II: SECOND AGE**

D: Nival Interactive; **P:** Strategy First; **R:** May 2003

The first *Etherlords* was mostly about exploration and resource gathering, but the roleplaying element is supposed to be far stronger in this sequel. Heroes will be chosen from one of four races, *Warcraft III*-style, and developed over the course of the game in combat that's inspired by fantasy card games.

▲ **EVE: THE SECOND GENESIS**

D: CCP; **P:** Simon & Schuster Interactive; **R:** March 2003

This beautiful massively multiplayer space RPG could be the spiritual online successor to *Elite*. It's being hyped as the biggest MM game (in terms of potential player numbers on linked servers) ever attempted. But if Westwood couldn't draw crowds with the similar *Earth & Beyond*, does S&S stand a chance?



EVERQUEST II

D: SOE; **P:** SOE; **R:** 2003

Though *Ultima Online* and *Meridian 59* were first, *EverQuest* will always be remembered as the game that kicked off the massively multiplayer phenomenon. Its successor continues the original's slim storyline, returning you to the land of Norrath (minus the new lands introduced in the *EQ* expansions) but now with a cutting-edge 3D graphics engine and improved customization.



eXARCH

D: ArenaNet; **P:** NCsoft; **R:** TBA

Founded by ex-Blizzard programmers who worked on the likes of *Starcraft*, *World of Warcraft*, and *Warcrafts II* and *III*, ArenaNet was acquired by Korean developer/publisher NCsoft late last year. Its debut title, *eXarch*, seems like it won't stray too far from the roleplaying well, as it bears a strong resemblance to a sci-fi/fantasy online-only version of *Diablo*.



FAR CRY

D: Crytek; **P:** Ubi Soft; **R:** Fall 2003

Far Cry started life as a tech demo, but developer Crytek and publisher Ubi Soft soon realized the potential of its stunning engine. It's now being fleshed out as a squad-based tactical shooter set on a beautiful tropical island with a plotline revolving around genetic research. Expect frenetic shooting action against all manner of mutated beasts and highly trained mercenaries.

E-G

EMPIRES: DAWN OF THE MODERN WORLD

See preview on page 14.

D: Stainless Steel Games; **P:** Activision; **R:** TBD

THE EVOLVERS

An ambitious sci-fi MMOG tied into a TV series.

D: Ultra Prime Network; **P:** Ultra Prime Network; **R:** Late 2004



▲ FINAL SCORE

As the likes of *GTA III* and *Mafia* reminded us last year, we all love playing as the bad guy. *Final Score* aims for the illicit, too, putting us in the shoes of Dan Hawkins, professional criminal. Armed robberies and similar naughtinesses are played out from a first-person perspective. **D:** Sunstorm; **P:** TBA; **R:** Fall 2004

FIRE WARRIOR

A first-person shooter featuring the Tau race from the Warhammer 40,000 universe. **D:** Kuju; **P:** THQ; **R:** Fall 2003



▲ A FISTFUL OF GOLD

If you think this title suggests the influence of Sergio Leone, you're not wrong. It may be the Middle Ages, but the sheriff-in-a-small-town mentality is *Wild West* in everything but time and location. Monsters and flying machines add a fantasy touch. **D:** Rebelmind; **P:** TBA; **R:** First Half 2004

GALACTIC CIVILIZATIONS

Single-player space-strategy goodness. **D:** Stardock; **P:** Strategy First; **R:** March 25, 2003



FLAT-OUT

D: Bugbear; **P:** TBA; **R:** Q3/Q4 2003

Following the respectable *Rally Trophy*, Finnish developer Bugbear is working on this none-too-serious arcade racer in the mold of *Pro Race Driver*. In addition to the hair-raising racing action around 45 dramatic tracks, your driver gets to wander off between races and further the plot. How these elements will fit together is anyone's guess, but we like the sound of it.



FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

D: 3DO; **P:** 3DO; **R:** Q4 2003

War, Famine, Death, and Pestilence are preparing to destroy the world... or something. It's your job, as the Archangel Abaddon, to seek out three chosen humans who will help in the fight, which is presumably the game's climax. *Horsemen's* engine is being tweaked to allow full dismemberment, bullet-holes, melting, and more. Yum!



GHOST MASTER

D: Empire; **P:** Empire; **R:** August 2003

If, in the next few months, a "Haunted House" add-on comes out for *The Sims*, *Ghost Master* might be running scared. But if, as seems more likely, *GM* has the monopoly on its inspired spook-'em-up premise for a while longer, then Empire should end up with a darkly comic winner. You'll have a variety of ghosts and ghouls with which to terrify mere mortals at home and at work.

FULL THROTTLE 2



D: LucasArts; **P:** LucasArts; **R:** Fall 2003

In 1995, *Full Throttle* was a momentous release in LucasArts history. Its brief but tight script was packed with good dialogue and excellent voice-acting. So it was with glee that we heard of a sequel, this time boasting a smooth 3D engine for your biker character Ben to run around in. While the plot will still revolve around object-based puzzles in the classic LucasArts mold, fist-fighting, brawling, and bike-to-bike combat will all play their part. Diehards were disappointed by *Escape From Monkey Island*, so we're hoping that *Full Throttle 2* (and *Sam and Max 2*) manage to recapture the heights of LucasArts magic.

Massively Merciless

"Shadowbane's city system, economic system, and siege system all interact to add an entirely new dimension to online gaming." - IGN

Change Your World

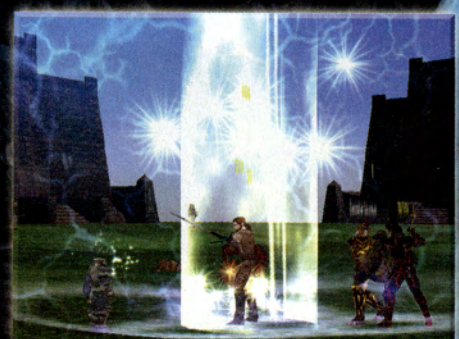
Physically affect the terrain, buildings, politics, and history of Shadowbane® and discover the first MMO with a Dynamic World Model.

Unleash Grand Strategies

Experience a groundbreaking blend of MMO role-playing and large-scale strategy that blazes new paths of possibility – embark upon quests, run shops, build cities, and siege castles in your bid to create or crush empires.

Break the Mold

Build characters using a deep multiclassing system to create unique combinations of professions, classes, skills, and fighting styles as you progress – for boldly original characters you can't play in any other world.



Play It On
ubi.com

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"The Next Great Online RPG."

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NEVER THE SAME GALAXY TWICE



ADVANCED AI

Computer opponents use multithreading to constantly challenge you, quickly generating intelligent strategies while you're plotting your next move



THE METAVERSE

The Metaverse, an online community site, allows players to submit their games and compete with thousands of other players for dominance of the galaxy

CUSTOMIZE YOUR GALAXIES

Customizable games can last anywhere from one hour to several weeks, depending on how big or small you choose to make your galaxies

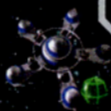


The year is 2178 and the galaxy is evolving at an alarming pace. Years ago human scientists introduced a new technology, the "Hyper-drive", which vastly improved interplanetary travel, but instead of forging closer bonds throughout the galaxy, communication between civilizations has come to a halt and colonization and spatial supremacy have become the primary goals...

Lead humanity in a struggle to dominate the galaxy in Galactic Civilizations, a strategy game where you use whatever means necessary: technological advancements, economic might, cultural expansion and military prowess, to survive an intergalactic war.

CUSTOMIZE YOUR CIVILIZATION

Customize your civilization in hundreds of different ways: choose the path between good or evil while building star bases, trade routes, diplomatic missions and cultural centers.



EXPANDABILITY

Create and upload your own star ship designs, technologies, United Planets Issues, random events, political parties, planetary improvements and much more on GalCiv.com



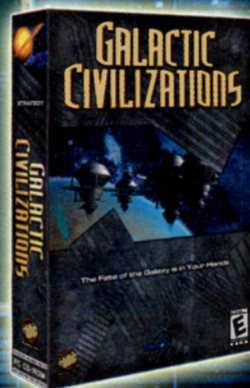
AutoPilot

REPLAYABILITY

Hundreds of random events such as space monsters, terrorism, zealots and new technologies make each game feel like a unique experience



GALACTIC CIVILIZATIONS



Stardock



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EVERYONE



Mild Violence

G-H

GLYMPSE

First-person techno-magical MMORPG. **D:** Sojourn; **P:** TBA; **R:** Q4 2004



▲ GOOD COP, BAD COP

Go crooked or play it goody-goody in a police action game that promises dramatic shootouts. Revolution will be making the big push on this game once it finishes up *Broken Sword*. **TSD:** **D:** Revolution; **P:** TBA; **R:** TBA

GREYHAWK: THE TEMPLE OF ELEMENTAL EVIL

The developers of *Arcanum* do 3rd Edition D&D. **D:** Troika; **P:** Infogrames; **R:** Second Half 2003

GURPS ONLINE: OLD WEST

A massively multiplayer RPG set in, duh, the Old West. Uses the GURPS rules and settings created by Steve Jackson Games. **D:** Worlds Apart Productions; **P:** Steve Jackson Games; **R:** TBA

GURPS ONLINE: TRANSHUMAN SPACE

The second GURPS MMORPG, this one is set during the realistically futuristic 22nd century. **D:** Worlds Apart Productions; **P:** Steve Jackson Games; **R:** TBA



▲ HORIZONS

Would we sound cynical if we described this game as yet another fantasy MMORPG with elves? Well, it is. **D:** Artifact; **P:** TBA; **R:** Summer 2003



GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY

D: Rockstar North; **P:** Take-Two; **R:** Summer 2003

Vice City has already been hailed as better than its predecessor in every respect — especially its soundtrack, which boasts heaps of '80s classics by stars like Michael Jackson and Blondie. The PC version's higher resolution and MP3/skin tweakability will make the PS2 original (shown) pale in comparison.



HARPOON 4

D: Ultimatum; **P:** Ubi Soft; **R:** May 2003

Ultimatum's hardcore modern-day naval sim has had a rocky development. While the main game is still Cold War-era tactical naval strategy, the graphics have received a major upgrade, especially to the 3D models used to embellish fiery engagements. We hope that the Larry Bond-penned High Tide campaign and realistic data will prevent *Harpoon 4* from sinking without a trace.



HANNIBAL

D: Arxel T&B; **P:** Strategy First; **R:** 2004

Very loosely based on the movie of the same name and using LithTech's Jupiter engine, *Hannibal* is an FPS that has you assuming the role of FBI agent Clarice Starling as she prepares to take down the formidable Dr. Lecter himself. Automatic points off if Hannibal shows up at the end of the game as a leaping, gun-toting boss character.



HALO

D: Gearbox; **P:** Microsoft; **R:** Late Summer 2003

The sole reason to buy an Xbox is finally due to hit the PC late this summer. While all console eyes will be on the Xbox-only *Halo 2*, Gearbox will reveal what kind of PC conversion it's managed of the original sublime shooter. Hopefully, the result will be a marked improvement over its recent exercise in mediocrity, *007: Nightfire*.



HEAVEN AND HELL

D: EigelB/Madcat; **P:** CDV; **R:** Summer 2003

This god sim crosses the moral polarity of *Black & White* with the cute character RTS style of *The Settlers*. The Good and Evil sides each have seven prophets to use against each other, wielding miracles and plagues such as lightning, floods, and hordes of locusts. Digital religious entertainment set in the holy land of 1500 B.C.



HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2

D: Illusion Software; **P:** G.O.D.; **R:** September 2003

With *Mafia* out the door, Illusion has shifted its focus to finishing this squad-based third-person shooter. Nothing's been shown since the game's lead designer, Tomas Pluharik, left the company over a year ago, hinting that the remaining team may be frustrated by the game's protracted development.

HOMEWORLD 2



D: Relic; **P:** Vivendi; **R:** July 2003

The original *Homeworld* will be remembered mainly for two things. First, for being the initial attempt to bring 3D to space-based real-time strategy, allowing huge battles between fleets of space-fighters. Second, for the non-event of having musty rockers Yes contributing to the soundtrack. While, sadly, Yes won't be involved in the music for the sequel, the combat should look better than ever. Expect cascading explosions in the depths of space and — in a move aping the primary change from *FreeSpace* to *FreeSpace 2* — giant blooming nebulae in the background. We'd stand on our chairs and applaud, but we'll have to play the game first.

LINEAGE II



D: NCsoft; **P:** NCsoft; **R:** Second Half 2003

It might well be the most popular massively multiplayer game in the world, but the introduction of *Lineage* and its aging 2D graphics to America didn't create a 10th the furor they did in their native Korea. Well, as you can see from this screenshot, NCsoft took stateside criticism to heart and has more than overhauled the old game—they've reinvented it. Like its predecessor, *Lineage II* is being developed in Korea, but we can only hope that Richard "Lord British" Garriott's presence in NCsoft's Austin office will help shepherd this fantasy experience into one that will truly energize U.S. gamers.

H-L



▲ THE HULK

Movie tie-in. We're guessing that Hulk smashes. A lot. **D:** Radical; **P:** Universal Interactive; **R:** May 2003

IMPERATOR

Massively multiplayer RPG *Dark Age of Camelot* has enjoyed some core-fan success. Hopefully the same team can lend this "Romans in space" game a little more gravitas. **D:** Mythic; **P:** TBA; **R:** Winter 2003

IMPERIAL WARS

A sci-fi massively multiplayer game of strategy and diplomacy. Check out the open beta at www.imperialwars.com. **D:** Intelligent Life; **P:** TBA; **R:** TBA

INDY RACING LEAGUE

A 15-race single-seat championship Indy racing game boasting 14 tracks from across the U.S. **D:** Brain in a Jar; **P:** Codemasters; **R:** April 2003



▲ INQUISITION

Experience 14th-century action/adventure mayhem. Bring out yer dead, guv'ner? **D:** Strategy First; **P:** Strategy First; **R:** April 2003

I OF THE DRAGON

Dragon fans live in a world of constant disappointment. Recently, only *Panzer Dragoon* has been worth playing, and before that fans of the fabled beasts had the *Dragonance* games. But try on this RPG-influenced flight game for size! **D:** Primal Software; **P:** TBA; **R:** TBA



HOMEPLANET

D: Revolt; **P:** TBA; **R:** Spring 2003

In space, no one can hear you scream. "How the hell can I control this thing?" In this Russian space-simulator, it's the genuinely nauseating Newtonian space-physics that will be most commented on. Wildly. As you float around randomly. Remember the space-fights in David Braben's *Frontier*? If so, be careful—the dizziness may overcome you again.



IMPERIUM GALACTICA III: GENESIS

D: Philes Labs; **P:** CDV; **R:** May 2003

Imperium Galactica II was one of the biggest, most expansive space epics in recent years. The sequel appears to be tightening things up a little—it abandons city battles and concentrates on space conflict to a far greater degree. But it still promises a strong strategy challenge, mixing graphical excellence with six different alien races.



INDIANA JONES & THE EMPEROR'S TOMB

D: The Collective; **P:** LucasArts; **R:** March 2003

Indiana Jones has had a checkered history when it comes to games. The last iteration, *Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine*, was a bland third-person adventure. This one uses The Collective's splendid *Buff: TVS* engine, so we're expecting some fantastically flamboyant hand-to-hand action.



KNIGHT RIDER

D: Davilex; **P:** Tri Synergy; **R:** March 2003

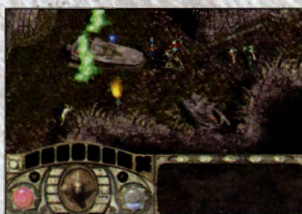
A great premise, yet with historically terrible execution. As talking super-car KITT, you assist your human master Michael "a man who does not exist" Knight as he rights wrongs through 10 action-packed missions. There are two reasons this game excites us: cool novelty gadgets from the show (e.g., Turbo Boost) and the resurrection of KARR.



KREED

D: Burut-CT; **P:** TBA; **R:** TBA

Russia-based Burut-CT has been quietly working on this first-person shooter that, if it comes out before *Deus Ex: Invisible War* and *DOOM III*, may just astound you with its realistic shadow and lighting effects. Missions take place in the 30th century aboard a variety of alien spaceships, providing ample opportunity for creative level design.



LIONHEART

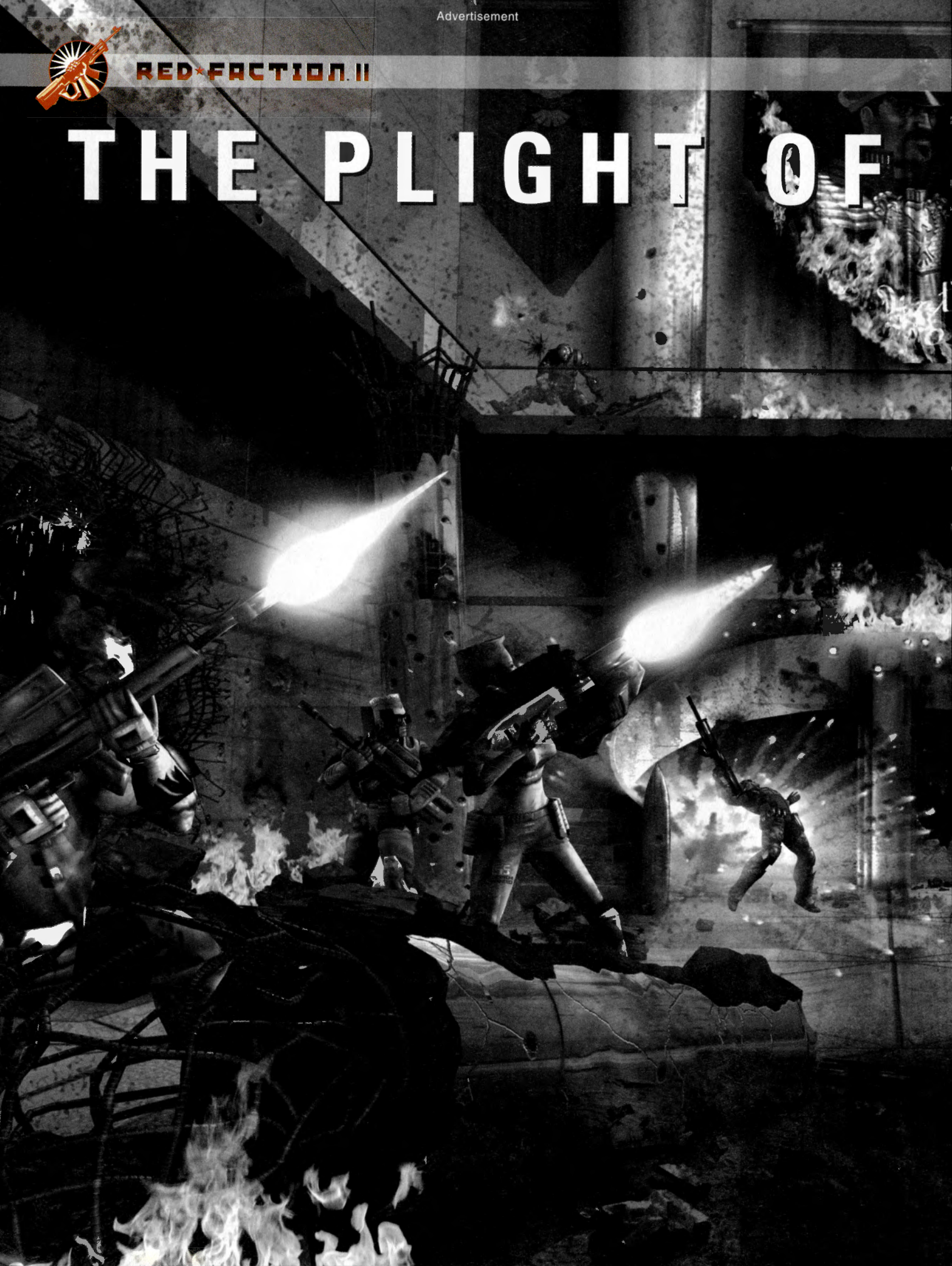
D: Reflexive; **P:** Interplay; **R:** April 2003

It's the time of Britain's second greatest King, Richard I, aptly known as Lionheart. This alternate-history world is filled with magic, and the influx of chaotic energy from the Crusades has set loose supernatural forces. Our heroes battle it out in a game that bears a strong resemblance to the *Baldur's Gate* and *Icewind Dale* series.



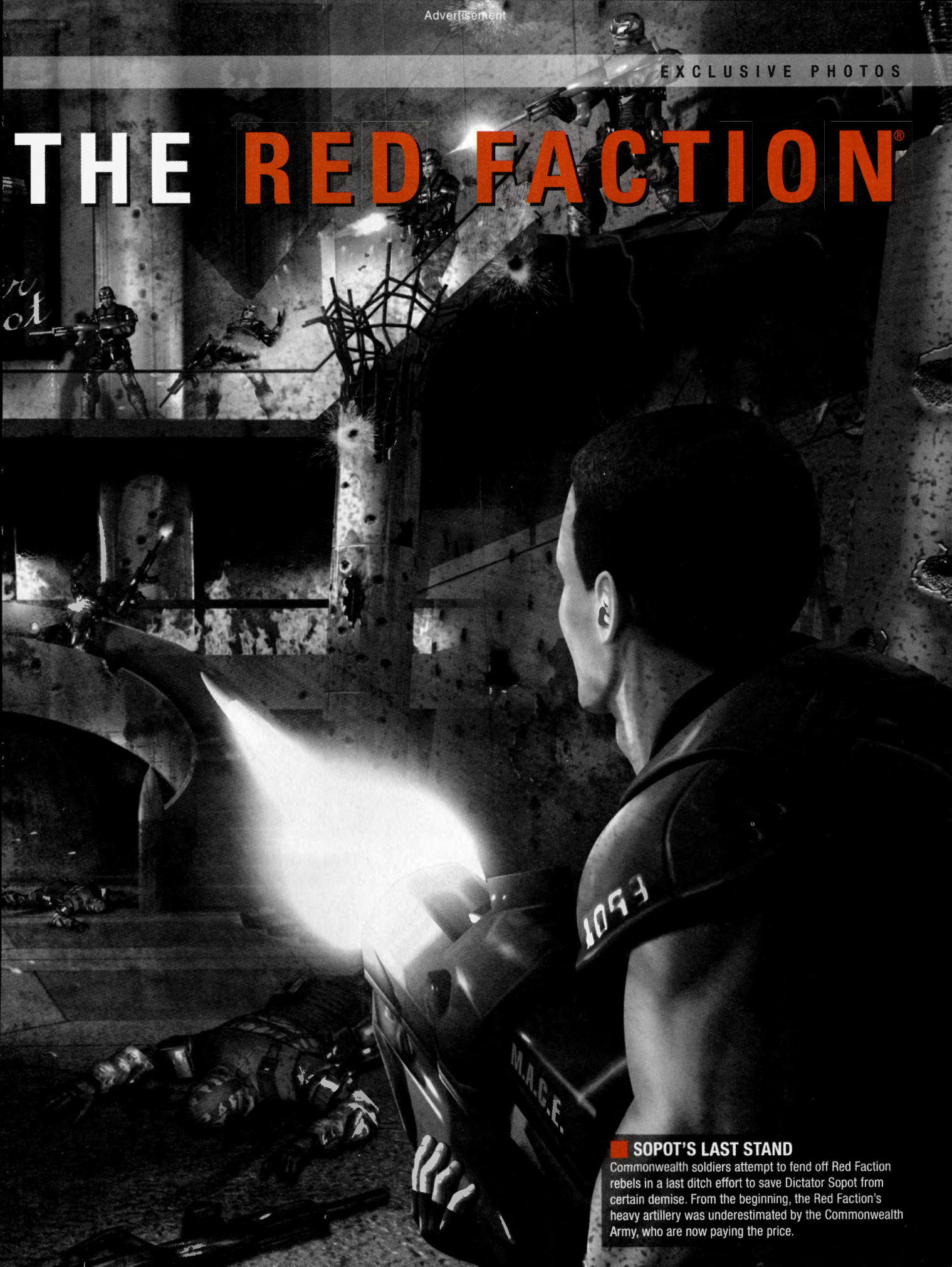
RED FACTION II

THE PLIGHT OF



EXCLUSIVE PHOTOS

THE RED FACTION®



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.



RED FACTION II

COMMONWEALTH COUP

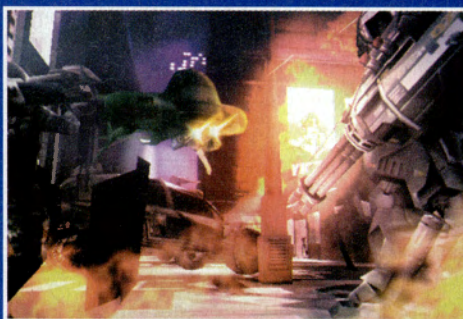
The Red Faction is using their entire arsenal in the latest attempt to



Aesir Fighter 2.0

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.

S O P O T C I T Y

CIVILIAN UPRISING

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



MATURE



Blood and Gore
Violence

For more up-to-the-minute coverage of the conflict, go to www.redfaction2.com

D'ETAT

overthrow the Dictator Sopot.



Public Information

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



The Slums 6:22am

Rebel soldiers continue to fight despite rumors of growing animosity between Faction leaders.



THE REBELS

■ SUPER SOLDIERS

ALIAS, the best of the Faction Super Soldiers, is shown here in demolition gear.



NGL-8 Nanotech Grenade Launcher



Demolition Charges

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.

I-P

IBITOR ONLINE

Third-person sci-fi MMORPG. **D:** Wootsoft; **P:** Wootsoft; **R:** Q2 2003

KILL BILL

Based on the upcoming Quentin Tarantino movie, it should have tons of blood, guts, and four-letter words. **D:** Black Label; **P:** Black Label; **R:** 2004



▲ KINGDOM UNDER FIRE 2: THE CRUSADERS

The latest installment of KUF boasts a brand-new 3D engine capable of rendering enormous armies. It'll also be able to provide complex in-game mechanics, including height and troop-density factors, plus a brand-new hero system that'll be crucial to the way the game plays out. **D:** Phantagram; **P:** Phantagram; **R:** TBA



▲ KONUNG 2

Who put Scandinavians in my RTS/RPG? **D:** 1C; **P:** 1C; **R:** Q2 2003

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: MIDDLE-EARTH ONLINE

Trapped in development limbo because of legal wrangling, this MMORPG is finally a go. **D:** Black Label; **P:** Vivendi; **R:** Winter 2004

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE TWO TOWERS

This game is a follow-up to *The Fellowship of the Ring*, a mildly clever use of intellectual properties based on the book rather than the film. **D:** Surreal; **P:** Vivendi; **R:** Winter 2003

PANZERS



D: Stormregion; **P:** CDV; **R:** Q4 2003

Just when you thought you'd had your fill of World War II strategy, here's another RTS that takes its cues from the likes of *Close Combat*. Allies, Germans, and Russians slug it out in their tank battalions over 30 missions. In its favor, *Panzers* wisely side-steps the tedious management issues that often clog up titles of this type, keeping the action quick and straightforward. Three separate campaigns highlight the perspectives of each side at the closing stages of the war. Authentic urban and rural environments should keep the game fresh, and with a bit of luck, it'll conjure up those terrifying scenes from *Saving Private Ryan* and *Band of Brothers*.



LOOSE CANNON

D: Sinister Games; **P:** Ubi Soft; **R:** TBA

This title from Sinister Games has had a rollercoaster development ride. First, it was in the works at Digital Anvil alongside *Freelancer*, and set to be published by Microsoft. Then it was dropped a couple of years ago, and the game, along with project lead Tony Zurovec, seemingly vanished. Now, the *Grand Theft Auto III*-ish action game is back and will be published by Ubi Soft.



LORD OF THE REALMS III

D: Impressions Games; **P:** Vivendi; **R:** Fall 2003

Since the 2001 announcement of this historically based medieval strategy sequel, the *Total War* franchise has stolen some of its cannon thunder, so the change to a 3D real-time engine may not seem like a breakthrough anymore. However, its excellent pedigree should make it a challenger to *Rome: Total War*.



MISTMARE

D: Arxel Tribe; **P:** Strategy First; **R:** May 2003

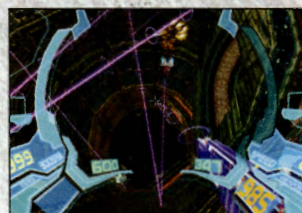
It's 1996, but the Industrial Revolution never happened. And there are strange things afoot in Europe: the very land itself is fighting back in response to centuries of war. Yes, it's a European adventure game. Action and RPG elements combine to give *Mistmare's* huge and rather pretty world some depth, with an emphasis on combat.



THE MOVIES

D: Lionhead; **P:** TBA; **R:** Winter 2003

It's the game that *Black & White* creator Peter Molyneux has wanted to make for most of his career — and he himself can't understand why no one else has tried to make it before. You'll be able to choose scripts and then film, produce, and market your movies, while controlling the sex and violence levels with sliders. The 3D engine is cute, and it's aimed at a mainstream audience.



NETSPHERE

D: JC Entertainment; **P:** TBA; **R:** TBA

Right. Giant stompy robot suits and online multiplayer combat, all set on a futuristic planet nearly destroyed by the comet Gigantic. Close-combat power weapons and all kinds of guns are inevitable. Character levels are gained through vanquishing enemies. Crush your weak foes. Stompety-stomp. Negotiations for a U.S. release are continuing as you read this.



NO MAN'S LAND

D: Related Designs; **P:** CDV; **R:** Second Half 2003

Oddly, *No Man's Land* isn't a wargaming strategy title — in fact, here you'll be attempting to colonize North America between 1600 and 1900, taking the part of the English, Americans, Spanish, "settlers," or both Woodland and Prairie Native Americans. Individual units can become more valuable as the game progresses.

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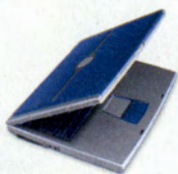


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M-P

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE WAR OF THE RING

Focusing on the events leading up to the gathering of the fellowship and the ring quest (if the book, not the movie), you choose either the forces of Good or Evil in this RTS game.

D: Black Label Games; **P:** Vivendi; **R:** Winter 2003



▲ MASSIVE ASSAULT

This tactical wargame of global domination is more colorful than realistic, but the particle effects look good and there are six global maps to look forward to.

D: Wargaming.net; **P:** TBA; **R:** Spring 2003

MATRIX ONLINE

An MMORPG set inside the world of the computer.

Whoa. **D:** Monolith; **P:** EON; **R:** TBA

MAX PAYNE 2

Other than the fact that it's in development, absolutely nothing has been seen of this sequel. All will probably be revealed come E3 2003.

D: Remedy/Rockstar; **P:** Take-Two; **R:** Winter 2003



▲ MECHMINDS

A 3D roleplaying game that casts you as a combat vehicle in a mechanical society.

D: Sky River Studio; **P:** 1C; **R:** Q2 2003

MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR: A CENTURY OF FLIGHT

The next iteration of the venerable flight-sim series.

D: Microsoft; **P:** Microsoft; **R:** July 2003



ONE MUST FALL: BATTLEGROUNDS

D: Diversions; **P:** Diversions; **R:** April 2003

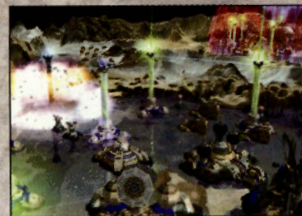
We often wonder why there aren't more fighting games on the PC, but then we remember that most of them suck. *OMF: B* might buck the trend, though: it features enormous robots kicking the rivets out of each other. It's set in a future world where machines are constantly being uppity.



PAINKILLER

D: People Can Fly; **P:** DreamCatcher; **R:** June 17, 2003

The last FPS from DreamCatcher was *Gore*, but we promise not to hold that against *Painkiller*, a horror shooter that casts you as a mercenary for hire battling the living dead. The single-player game will include time trial and Instagib, while multiplayer promises numerous modes, including Team Play, The Hunt, and deathmatch.



PERIMETER

D: K-D Lab; **P:** 1C; **R:** TBA

Sometimes, just sometimes, there's an interesting RTS game. One currently in development hails from the cold climate of Russia and goes by the name of *Perimeter*. Your mission is to terraform a hostile planet, but your problems aren't just in arresting recalcitrant geological phenomena: you'll also face a host of beasts and weather effects foisted upon you by the environment.

REPUBLIC: THE REVOLUTION



D: Elixir; **P:** Eidos; **R:** Spring/Summer 2003

The anticipation rating's high for this one, but only because we're increasingly desperate to see what's actually happened to *Republic*. Initially a massively ambitious game of political machinations in Eastern Europe, its vision has been cut back to something a little more achievable in the human lifespan. Starting as a ground-level activist, you set out to depose the president of a communist dictatorship by whatever Machiavellian means are available. Interesting...but will it work? Let's hope that simplifying functions lets us play a game where we can make critical decisions without micromanaging every detail.



POSTAL 2

D: Running With Scissors; **P:** Whiptail Interactive; **R:** Q1 2003

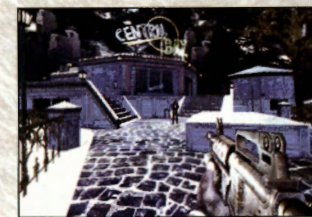
The original was a pretty mediocre isometric shooter that traded off its then-shocking premise (a postal worker goes crazy with guns). The sequel, meanwhile, is a first-person *Unreal*-powered shooter that looks set to deliver exactly the same premise; no vast improvement on the concept, but it has Gary "Diff'rent Strokes" Coleman.



PRIEST

D: JC Entertainment; **P:** TBA; **R:** July 2003

As the first "hard-gore" action/horror massively multiplayer RPG to put its head on the pike, *Priest* is in an unusual predicament: How do you keep up the scares while fostering an online community? *Priest* is set during the Old West, and follows the trials of Ivan Isaacs, a former priest who has literally sold his soul to fight an evil archangel.



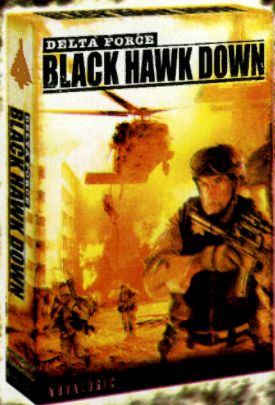
PSYCHOTIC

D: Nuclear Vision; **P:** CDV; **R:** Q2 2003

We don't see enough female lead characters in games, that's for sure — let's just hope this isn't a ploy to get us interested, eh? The four horsemen of the apocalypse rear their ugly heads again in this single-player FPS. As Angie Prophet, humanity's last hope, you must destroy the last horseman and your evil nemesis Aaron Crowley. Look out for cows with guns for udders.

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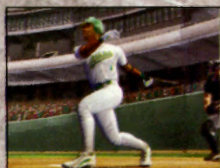
M-S

MEN OF VALOR: VIETNAM

The next project from 2015, the acclaimed developer of *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault*, is a first-person shooter that casts you as an infantryman during the Vietnam War. **D:** 2015; **P:** Vivendi; **R:** 2004

MIDNIGHT CLUB II

The original didn't make its way to the PC, but that's not stopping the console arcade racer's sequel from seeing a hard drive hoe-down. **D:** Rockstar San Diego; **P:** Rockstar Games; **R:** April 2003



▲ MVP BASEBALL 2003

See our preview on page 19. **D:** EA Sports; **P:** EA; **R:** Summer 2003



▲ NEW WORLD ORDER

Team-based multiplayer shooter. **D:** Terqite Games; **P:** Strategy First; **R:** March 2003

NEXAGON: DEATHMATCH

Action-packed arena combat set in the future. Formerly subtitled *The Pit*. **D:** Strategy First; **P:** Strategy First; **R:** May 2003

NO-NAME WAR

Star Trek got it wrong: in the far future, humanity can't wait to wipe itself from the face of the Earth. Control one of three races — the Ktons, Khloona, or Qaldars — as you undertake 40 quests in single-player mode commanding over 80 different land, air, and sea units. **D:** AMC Creation; **P:** TBA; **R:** Q3 2003



PURGE

D: Freeform Interactive; **P:** Tri Synergy; **R:** Q1 2003

The latest to jump on the hybrid first-person/roleplaying bandwagon is this online-only offering that takes a war between futuristic and fantasy races as its focal point. The tech-versus-magic slant is an interesting one, and the LithTech engine powering it is more than capable of providing the impressive visuals to match.



SAVAGE

D: S2; **P:** Games; **R:** Summer 2003

Well, this is different — real-time strategy mixed with a first-person shooter. As a commander, you'll play an intense strategy game giving out orders to the human army underneath you. Or, playing as a warrior, you'll carry out those orders in first-person combat. *Savage* sounds like a great game for organized clans but may not hold as much appeal for casual gamers.



RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN: ENEMY TERRITORY

D: Splash, Damage/Mad Doc Software/Gray Matter; **P:** Activision; **R:** "When It's Done" 2003

Another expansion pack that has blossomed into a stand-alone release. Ex-mod maker Splash Damage is adding to the multiplayer, Mad Doc is continuing the single-player campaign, and Gray Matter is working on improving the AI.



SEA DOGS 2

D: Akella; **P:** Bethesda; **R:** May 2003

We're big fans of pirates here at *PC Gamer*, so it was with a heavy heart that we couldn't be more enthusiastic about the original *Sea Dogs*. But we're hoping this next RPG-of-the-waves will be considerably better. You'll now have "on land" and "at sea" modes that will differ considerably, with the sea play putting you in charge of a ship for exploration and combat.



RISE OF NATIONS

D: Big Huge Games; **P:** Microsoft; **R:** April 2003

Brian Reynolds has had his finely honed developer fingers in many strategy pies — not least *Civilization II* and *Alpha Centauri*. *Rise of Nations*' Conquer the World mode is the standout we expect to get completely hooked on, balancing diplomacy and conquest in a strategy conundrum that could rightfully be described as "real-time Civ."



SECRET WEAPONS (WORKING TITLE)

D: Larry Holland; **P:** LucasArts; **R:** Holiday 2003

The famed designer of *X-Wing* returns to WWII-era high-flying combat for this game that very well could be a sequel of sorts to *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe* (especially given the current working title). One thing's for sure: Larry Holland promises that it'll be an action game through and through.

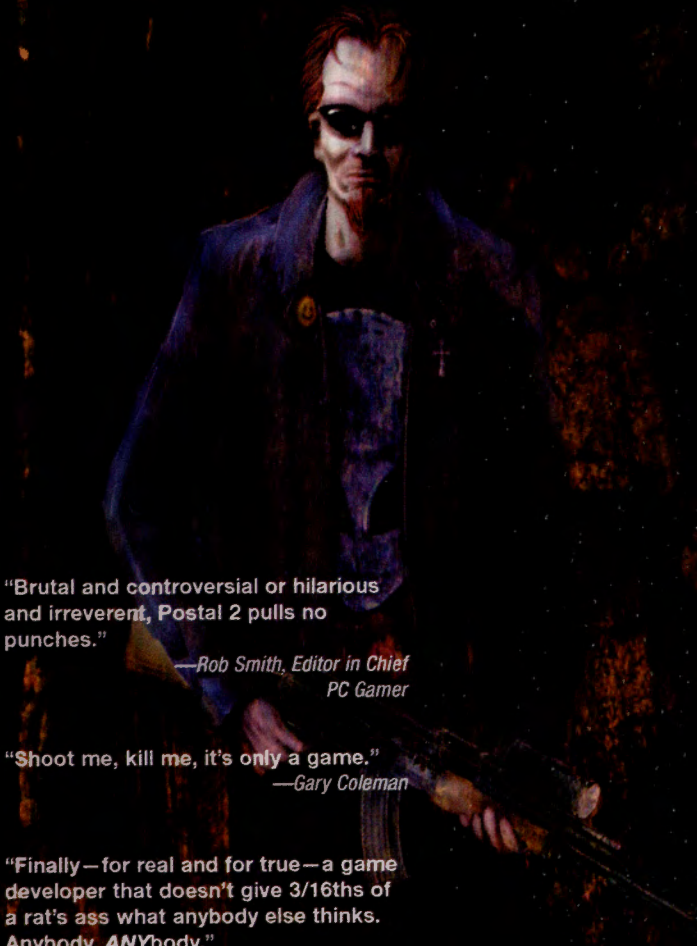
ROME: TOTAL WAR



D: Creative Assembly; **P:** Activision; **R:** TBA

Medieval: *Total War* was one of the best games of last year for any genre, not just real-time/turn-based strategy, making the announcement of its successor major news. The all-new 3D engine looks fantastic (as you can see here), though the developers promise you won't need a beefy system to display the epic-scale Roman battles shown in the screenshots. Once again, you'll build an empire through diplomacy, war, and trade. Amass an army of up to 10,000 warriors and take on the Roman Legions, Greek phalanxes, barbarian hordes, and the armies of Carthage, Egypt, and the Successor Kingdoms.

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PC Gamer

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Games Domain

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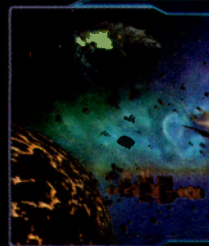
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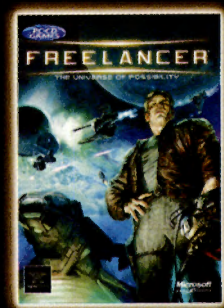
Manhattan. Justice is the only path toward enlightenment. If



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P-S



▲ PET RACER

Apparently, there's nothing domesticated animals love more than to race rally cars against their misshapen purple brethren. **D:** Techland; **P:** Strategy First;

R: April 2003

PIRATES OF THE BURNING SEA

A pirate-themed massively multiplayer online RPG.

D: Flying Lab Software; **P:** Flying Lab Software; **R:** Fall 2003

PORT ROYALE

A ship-based strategy game set on the high seas. **D:** ASC Games; **P:** Ascaron;

R: May 2003



▲ PRIVATE WARS

First-person skullduggery. We can't tell you more because it's private. **D:** TS Group; **P:** 1C; **R:** Q4 2003

QUAKE IV

Nothing's yet known about this game, save that it will move away from the multiplayer focus of *Quake III: Arena*, marking a return to the Strogg universe of *Quake II*'s single-player experience. Raven Software should prove perfect to get the best from id's new *DOOM III* engine. **D:** Raven Software/id Software; **P:** Activision; **R:** TBA

QUEST

Again, little has been revealed about this title since it was announced. A fantasy game by the developers of *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*'s multiplayer portion, using the *DOOM III* engine. **D:** Nerve; **P:** TBA; **R:** TBA

STAR TREK: ELITE FORCE II



D: Ritual; **P:** Activision; **R:** May 2003

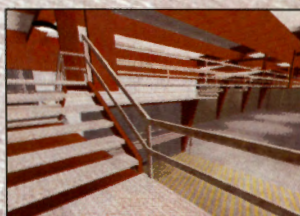
Still using the *Quake III* engine, this sequel will, in content, be a politically correct version of *Unreal II*, in that it'll have mothership bases to retreat to and explore between missions, plenty of NPCs to interact with, an enormous range of alien environments to discover on strange worlds, and a twisting, multi-stranded political plot. (Okay, on second thought, maybe it's not like *Unreal II*.) The first *Elite Force* offered an amazing experience that renewed our faith in *Star Trek* games. Taking place after the events of the last *Trek* movie, *EF II* will also resolve the mystery of what happened to the Borg at the end of the final episode of *Star Trek: Voyager*.



SERAPHIM

D: Valkyrie Studios; **P:** TBA; **R:** TBA

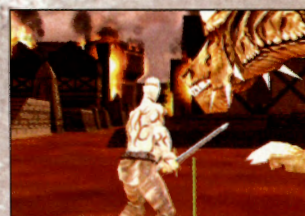
It's not often that you're put in charge of squadrons of angels and then battle other supernatural creatures in a fantasy world where the challenges are as much in the sky as they are on the destructible ground. We hope that Valkyrie manages to find a publisher: most of its staff worked on *Beavis and Butt-head in Virtual Stupidity*, one of our favorite adventure games of all time.



SHADOW

D: Vae Victis; **P:** TBA; **R:** TBA

Here's a first-person shooter that's setting its sights on bringing us real-world-inspired special-forces operations, complete with authentic locations for the action and a range of military vehicles. But first, it'll have to find a publisher interested in bringing it to an already crowded market. Incidentally, *Vae Victis* means "suffering to the conquered."



SHADOWBANE

D: Wolfpack Entertainment; **P:** Ubi Soft; **R:** March 25, 2003

An MMORPG that relies on complicated guild management, city-building, and PvP combat, *Shadowbane* will allegedly see the light of day this March. And not a moment too soon: Its release date has been pushed back so many times that its graphics engine is now visibly behind the curve in comparison to other recent online games.



SÖLDNER: SECRET WARS

D: Wings Simulations; **P:** JoWood; **R:** Q2 2003

This game looks like a futuristic version of *Battlefield 1942*. Mercenary armies battle it out in 2010, with team-based combat from massive carriers disguised as freighters, as well as ground troops, VTOL aircraft, tanks, and helicopters. The single-player campaign will consist of a wide variety of missions.



SPACE EMPIRES: STARFURY

D: Malfador Machinations; **P:** TBA; **R:** Summer 2003

Designer Aaron Hall is one busy man. Last year, he created *Aaron Hall's Dungeon Odyssey*, a visually simplistic yet intriguing take on old-school RPGs. Now he's back with *Starfury*, the fifth *Space Empires* space-action RPG. It's available for sale only online, so go to www.malfador.com to buy it.



SPACE WOLVES

D: Xbow Software; **P:** 1C; **R:** Q4 2003

Not much is known about this space shooter from small Russian developer Xbow. In fact, as of this writing, it hasn't been officially announced yet, and the developer says that it may undergo several design changes before it's released. (So take that Q4 2003 release date with a wink.) But the in-progress screenshots look pretty sweet, so hopefully we'll learn a lot more come E3.

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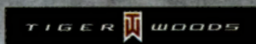
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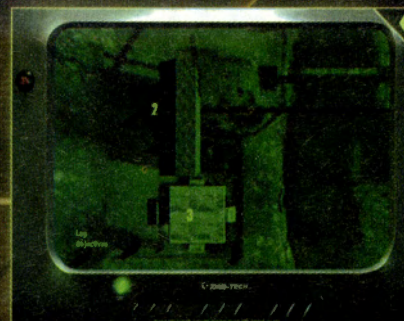
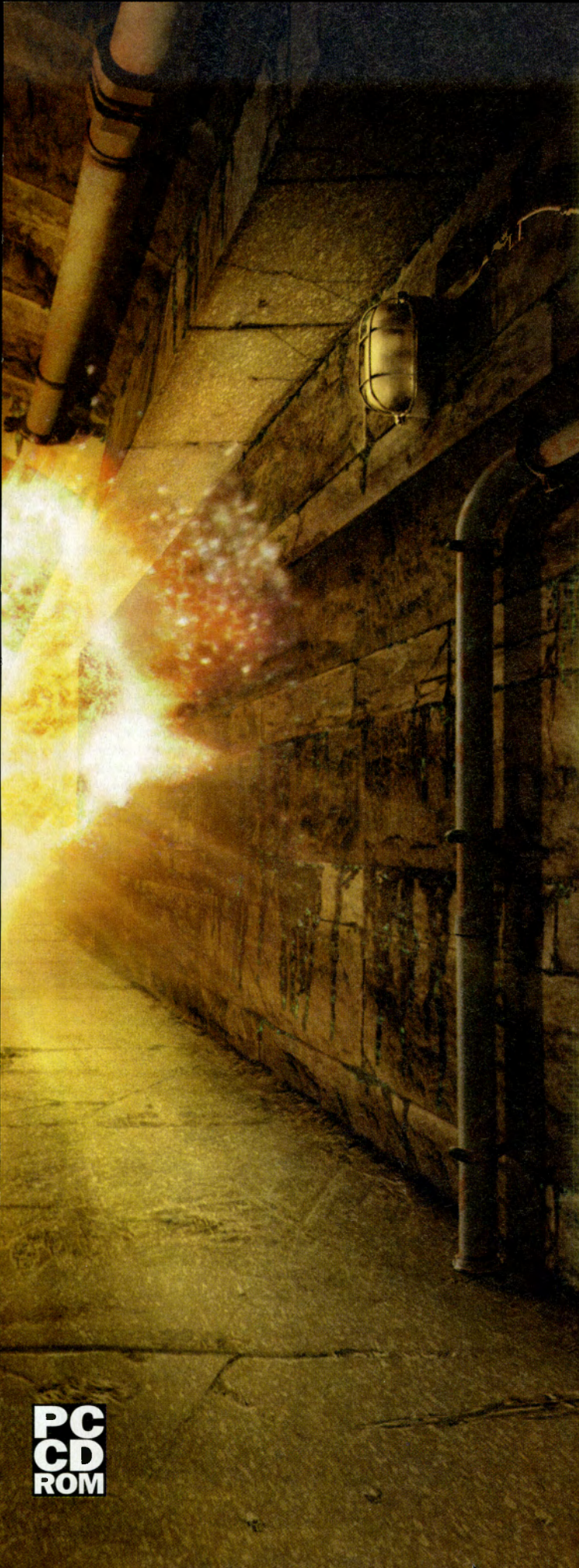
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R-T

RACING LEGENDS

Having ceased work on its long-delayed *World Sports Cars* for Empire, this brotherly developer's next venture is a high-end professional motor-sport simulation. Regular add-ons are promised to boost the main game, making it an exciting prospect for hardcore fans.

D: West Racing; **P:** West Racing; **R:** TBA



▲ R.C. CARS

Radio-controlled racing fun.

D: Creat Studio; **P:** 1C; **R:** Q1 2003

RESTRICTED AREA

Two words: Cyberpunk *Diablo*. **D:** Master Creating; **P:** TBA; **R:** TBA

RHEM

Myst-style adventure game.

D: Knut Mueller; **P:** Got Game; **R:** Q1 2003



▲ SALAMMBO

Armed with the worst title ever attached to a game, *Salammbô* sounds like the quintessential adventure game that cleans up in Europe but gets ignored in the U.S. For one, it's a historical adventure, and two, you play as Spendius, a Carthaginian slave. Let the snoozing commence.

D: DreamCatcher; **P:** The Adventure Company; **R:** April 22, 2003

SAM & MAX 2

The hilarious canine private eye and weird rabbit-thing return! Expect more action than adventure this time out (à la *Full Throttle 2*). **D:** LucasArts; **P:** LucasArts; **R:** First Half 2004



SPECNAZ: PROJECT WOLF

D: Byte Software; **P:** TBA; **R:** Summer 2003

The hardest and most brutal men in all of Russia, and possibly the world, are the subjects of this realistic special forces FPS. The developers are unfazed by the bad publicity generated by last year's Moscow hostage debacle, which this game's namesakes were instrumental in ending (badly).



SPEEDBALL ARENA

D: Bitmap Brothers; **P:** TBA; **R:** Fall 2003

The true sequel to *Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe*, the update of this classic and violent futuristic sports title will turn the tables, putting you in charge of a team of no-hopers whose ultimate aim is to defeat the supreme Brutal Deluxe that you took to victory last time. *SA* will offer over 30 arenas, a new class-based character system, and online play.



STARSKY & HUTCH

D: Empire; **P:** Empire; **R:** July 2003

This adaptation will feature the voice of Antonio "Huggy Bear" Fargas, so its success is assured. Other minor details include the ability to play as either Starsky or Hutch, thereby either driving or shooting, across 25 "episodes." Expect *Driver*-style missions plus shooting badness and performance bonuses, but on the right side of the law — the side that doesn't play by the rules.

THEY CAME FROM HOLLYWOOD



D: Octopus Motor; **P:** Octopus Motor; **R:** Spring 2003

An isometric rampage inspired by 1950s B-movies, *TCFH* will let you pick a creature and a city before causing as much destruction as possible in the face of myriad meddling military forces. The brainchild of just two people, Octopus Motor deserves praise for the inclusion of the incomparable Tin Behemoth alone. *TCFH* is being positioned as an RTS even though you basically control only one unit, but, as the developers admit, the game's more of a big sandbox — design a creature and let it loose. But Octopus Motor's most daunting challenge may be yet to come...trying to publish a game with just two people.



STAR WARS GALAXIES: AN EMPIRE DIVIDED

D: Sony Online Entertainment; **P:** LucasArts; **R:** April 15, 2003

If one massively multiplayer game is going to bring this genre into the mass marketplace, it's the one powered by the *Star Wars* license. Who doesn't want to explore the *Star Wars* galaxy as a bounty hunter, merchant, smuggler, or even a Jedi?



STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

D: BioWare; **P:** LucasArts; **R:** Fall 2003

This RPG is set 4,000 years before the first *Star Wars* film, when thousands of Sith and Jedi roam the planets. Galactic war rages on a terrible scale between the Force-wielders; you take a group of characters (including Wookiees, Droids, and Twi'leks) on a quest to influence the war's outcome.



TEAM FORTRESS 2

D: Valve; **P:** Vivendi; **R:** TBA

Think *Counter-Strike* but with a strict class system, a commander who can offer tactical commands, and finely honed levels. Of course, we're taking all this on faith since Valve hasn't made a peep about *TF 2*'s status for almost three years. Apparently, they're still working on it. What's the hold-up? Rumor has it that *TF 2* may use the new engine Valve has purportedly created for *Half-Life 2*.



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S-W

SCHIZM 2

Adventure sequel using the NetImmerse 3D engine.

D: Detallion; **P:** The Adventure Company; **R:** Nov. 10, 2003.



▲ SPHERE

A magical MMORPG from a Russian developer.

D: Nikita; **P:** 1C; **R:** Q4 2003

SUPREME RULER 2010

Futuristic world-domination strategy game. **D:** Battle-Goat Studios; **P:** Strategy First; **R:** Fall 2003



▲ SYBERIA II

Follow-up to our Best Adventure Game of 2002.

D: Microïds; **P:** Microïds; **R:** October 2003

TABULA RASA

A science-fantasy MMORPG from ex-Originates Lord British and Starr Long. **D:** NCsoft-Austin; **P:** NCsoft; **R:** 2004

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

Fighting game based on Fox's new cartoon series.

D: Konami; **P:** Konami; **R:** October 2003

TOTAL ANNIHILATION 2

The original TA made Cavedog's name as a developer, even though the studio dissolved before releasing anything else as significant. Eyebrows were raised when Phantagram announced its intention to make a sequel — without Chris Taylor's steady hand to guide the project, why bother? **D:** Phantagram; **P:** Infogrames; **R:** Q4 2004



TRON 2.0

D: Monolith; **P:** Disney Interactive; **R:** August 2003

TRON 2.0 picks up 20 years after the events of the seminal 1982 Disney sci-fi flick. Alan "Pop" Bradley has mysteriously disappeared, and it's up to you as his son, Jet, to fight your way through an increasingly violent digital world to save your polygonal pop. Thanks to LithTech's cutting-edge Triton System, this FPS looks as TRON-ish.



URU: ONLINE AGES BEYOND MYST

D: Cyan Worlds; **P:** Ubi Soft; **R:** Late 2003

Ubi Soft has been close-lipped about the progression of this online version of the best-selling *Myst* adventure series. Sounding more like a glorified chat room, *Uru* will let you play as a realistic impersonation of yourself, chat by voice, play games, solve mysteries, and "embark on a voyage of discovery."



UFO: AFTERMATH

D: Altar Interactive; **P:** Cenega; **R:** Q2/Q3 2003

Born from the ashes of Mythos' canned *Dreamland Chronicles: Freedom Ridge* project, *Aftermath* isn't actually an *X-COM* offering, although the genre, game structure, and even title (*X-COM: UFO Defense* was the first *X-COM* game) all point to the contrary. The Czech creators are sticking to a turn-based/real-time mix for the action.



VIETCONG

D: Illusion Softworks; **P:** Take-Two; **R:** March 2003

This one came out of the jungle, virtually unexpected. While everyone thought that Illusion's next game after the much-delayed *Mafia* would be *Hidden & Dangerous 2*, we're getting this Vietnam-based first-person shooter instead. In a jungle packed full of trip-mines and starving AK-47-armed communists, you don't want to run around like Rambo.



THE UNDERWORLD: CRIME DOES PAY

D: Phoenix; **P:** TBA; **R:** Summer 2003

A "revolutionary 3D game" (Phoenix's words, not ours) that looks anything but from the early screenshots. An interesting idea beats at the heart of this gangster sim, though. Part first-person shooter and part RTS, *Underworld* will let you play in traditional top-down RTS mode until you decide to take a direct hand in the onscreen events.



WARHAMMER ONLINE

D: Climax; **P:** Games Workshop; **R:** Q2 2004

Pen-and-paper meister Games Workshop is working closely with Climax to bring its dark fantasy vision alive in a vast, densely detailed online world that doesn't balk at medieval brutality and chaotic demon magic. Play as an outlaw or mercenary adventurer on your path to greatness.

VIVISECTOR: BEAST INSIDE



D: Action Forms; **P:** 1C; **R:** Q4 2003

T rue, Ukrainian developer Action Forms is the same company that brought us the crappy *Carnivores* hunting games, but *Vivisector* is showing surprising promise. Initially a take-off on *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, this 3D horror/shooter puts you down on mysterious Soreo Isle, where the twisted biological experiments of a certain Dr. Morhead still run rampant. The developer now says it's taking the game's storyline further away from an outright retelling of the classic novel (albeit one with shotguns and sniper rifles), but have yet to elucidate on the changes. The visuals make us want to believe that Action Forms can pull this one off, though.

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Violence
Blood



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THE 2002 PC GAMER AWARDS - BEST MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER GAME

T-X

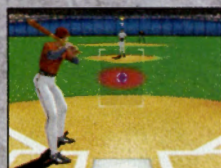
TREMORS

The Swedish team behind this B-movie tie-in has already tasted success with its RSSTech engine, licensed by Codemasters to power the MMORPG *Drágon Empires*. The code will also be behind this third-person action/adventure game based on the messy-but-fun film of giant worms terrorizing a small U.S. town (and Kevin Bacon). It'll likely take advantage of the renewed interest in the *Tremors* franchise due to the upcoming Sci-Fi Channel series.

D: RockSolid Studios;
P: TBA; **R:** Spring 2004

TROPICO 2

See our hands-on preview on page 24. **D:** Frog City Software; **P:** G.O.D.; **R:** April 2003



▲ ULTIMATE BASEBALL ONLINE

See our hands-on preview on page 19. **D:** Netamin; **P:** TBA; **R:** Summer 2003

VEGAS

The developer of *Monopoly Tycoon* tries its hand at the big, bad world of casino gambling. **D:** Deep Red; **P:** Empire; **R:** September 2003

WHITE FEAR

Fantasy arcade/adventure. **D:** Widescreen Games; **P:** TBA; **R:** Q2 2003



▲ X-TREME BEACH SOCCER

Sorry, guys — the *Dead or Alive 3* girls are not included. We're sorry to hear that, too. **D:** PAM Development; **P:** Dream-Catcher; **R:** July 15, 2003

WORLD OF WARCRAFT



D: Blizzard; **P:** Vivendi; **R:** Late 2003

Welcome to the wonderful world of *Warcraft*. Blizzard is taking the popularity of this RTS franchise's gameworld and bolting on a beautiful RPG engine for online gaming. It'll have the immediacy of the *Diablo* games and the appeal of playing online for those who want to play on either a hardcore or a casual basis. Blizzard is renowned for the level of polish it gives to developing games, and it's also well-versed in the trials of running online game services, as it's offered the enormously popular (yet enormously criticized) Battle.net for years. If there's a sure-fire success in the MMORPG market, then this game — and perhaps *SW: Galaxies* — is it.



WARLORDS IV: HEROES OF ETHERIA

D: SSG; **P:** Ubi Soft; **R:** May 2003

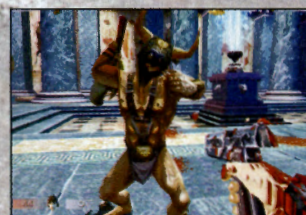
The fourth in this series of fantasy turn-based strategy, *Warlords IV* promises a new combat system, better diplomacy, and a new race — the Volturians — who are (gasp!) even more evil than the undead. This iteration has six unique sides, nearly 140 different units, an orchestral score, and persistent heroes that improve after every battle.



WARRIOR KINGS: BATTLES

D: Black Cactus; **P:** Empire Interactive; **R:** May 2003

Last year's *Warrior Kings*, while displaying glimpses of quality strategy gaming, was released still needing a few months' polishing. And perhaps a skirmish mode or something similar. Waitasec... what's this? Why, it's a stand-alone *Warrior Kings* spin-off with more polish and a skirmish mode!



WILL ROCK

D: Saber Interactive; **P:** Ubi Soft; **R:** March 2003

Ubi Soft's take on *Serious Sam*, *Will Rock* is a time-traveling first-person shooter. You take the eponymous hero, whose body is possessed by a Titan, and zip back to Ancient Greece with the lofty aspiration of kicking the living daylights out of any Hydra who looks at you funny. We expect to see lots of colossal Ray Harryhausen-styled beasts.



WORLD WAR II: FRONTLINE COMMAND

D: Bitmap Brothers; **P:** TBA; **R:** Summer 2003

Based on the lavish 3D engine and AI routines developed for *Z2*, the Bitmap's new RTS outing *Frontline Command* is the developer's own take on World War II. Early reports sound pretty promising, with beautiful landscapes and units, as well as a complex morale system.



XIII

D: Ubi Soft; **P:** Ubi Soft; **R:** Summer 2003

The world of cel-shaded "cartoon-style" graphics is one that's ever-expanding, thanks to its unique look that allows developers the chance to distract you from a generic game structure. Will the same be true of this first-person shooter based on the Belgian amnesiac-spy comic of the same name? Ubi Soft hopes *XIII* turns out to be a lucky number.



X-MEN: WOLVERINE'S REVENGE

D: Livesay; **P:** Activision; **R:** April 2003

Wolverine is a man with funny hair who heals supernaturally fast, has an unbreakable metal skeleton, and has blade-claws that come out of his hands. This third-person action game puts you at the controls of this most vicious X-Man. Because we like superheroes, we're cautiously optimistic.

What

does your PC say
about YOU?



EverQuest: Planes of Power
Starting with special chemical
prints of EverQuest's incredible
artwork, we meticulously airbrush
the art to blend into our red/gold
color-shifting paint. Then we
submerge it under six layers of
acrylic clearcoat. Finally we
bake it to a tough, mirror-like
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one of the infinite aesthetic
possibilities of Falcon Northwest's
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UPCOMING
ADD-ONS▲ **WARCRAFT III:
THE FROZEN
THRONE**

This expansion will add one new Hero per race, a host of new units, and an editor.

P: Blizzard

R: Summer 2003

▲ **MEDIEVAL:
TOTAL WAR —
VIKING
INVASION**

P: Creative Assembly

R: May 2003

▲ **ANARCHY
ONLINE:
SHADOWLANDS**

P: Funcom

R: June 2003

▲ **HEROES OF
MIGHT AND
MAGIC IV:
WINDS OF WAR**

P: 3DO

R: Spring 2003

▲ **NEOCRON:
BEYOND DOME
OF YORK**

Available for free from Reaktor, *BDOY* will open a new city to explore.

P: Reaktor

R: Late April 2003

▲ **NEVERWINTER
NIGHTS:
SHADOWS OF
UNRENTED**

P: Infogrames

R: Spring 2003

▲ **ROLLERCOASTER
TYCOON 2:
WACKY WORLDS**

P: Infogrames

R: May 2003

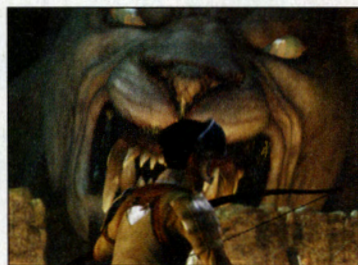
▲ **THE SIMS:
SIMS SUPERSTAR**

P: Maxis

R: TBD

THE RUMOR PAGE

Games that little birds in the industry grapevine whisper about

▲ **FINAL FANTASY XI**

The first massively multiplayer game in the series, *FF XI* has already launched on PS2 and PC in Japan. We hear it'll be making its way to the U.S. **D:** Squaresoft; **P:** TBA

▲ **MARVEL MMORPG**

Sony has the rights to an online superhero game starring characters from the Marvel Comics universe. **D:** SOE; **P:** SOE

▲ **BLOODRAYNE 2**

Though it's yet to be announced, we have it on good authority that a sequel to *BloodRayne* is well on the way to completion. **D:** Terminal Reality; **P:** TBA

▲ **LOAD OF THE RINGS**

Electronic Arts is rumored to have a couple of different *Lord of the Rings* properties (based on the films) in development for the PC — one an RTS, and one an RPG that will do more than retell what's shown on the big-screen.

▲ **EVERQUEST RTS**

Sony announced an RTS game based on *EverQuest* last July. No official title for it yet, but we expect an announcement shortly.

D: Rapid Eye Entertainment; **P:** SOE

▲ **TERMINATOR ONLINE**

Another licensed massively multiplayer online game that was mentioned at the same time Sony acquired the Marvel rights. Would likely take place during the war between humans and machines. **D:** SOE; **P:** SOE

▲ **JEDI KNIGHT III**

This Force-ful sequel was "accidentally" announced during an Activision conference call. (Activision publishes games for LucasArts in Europe.) **D:** TBA; **P:** LucasArts

▲ **UNREAL WARFARE**

It's been noted that the *UnrealWarfare.com* URL was purchased some time ago. But what is it? The best guess is that this game is Epic's take on a massively multiplayer online *Unreal*. **D:** Epic; **P:** Infogrames

▲ **MEDAL OF HONOR 2**

Rumor has it that the full sequel to *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault* will see the lead characters of that game and of the recent add-on *Spearhead* meeting up for the first time to take on the Axis powers. Flashbacks will be used to tell (and play) the story of how the two parties hook up. **D:** TBA; **P:** EA

▲ **WORMS 3D**

Not exactly a rumor since we know it's in development; we just don't know which platforms it will be released on here in the U.S. But we're keeping our fingers crossed. **D:** Team17; **P:** Activision

▲ **BIOWARE**

The RPG-maker wants to spread its wings from the D&D license and develop its own intellectual properties.

▲ **BATTLEFIELD 1943 (?)**

D: DICE; **P:** EA

▲ **GHOST RECON 2**

D: Red Storm Entertainment; **P:** Ubi Soft

▲ **THE SIMS 2**

A no-brainer. **D:** Maxis; **P:** EA

▲ **DUNGEON
SIEGE 2**

D: Gas Powered Games;

P: Microsoft

▲ **HALF-LIFE 2**

Ya think? **D:** Valve;

P: Sierra

▲ **FREEDOM FORCE 2**

The developers have said that *Freedom Force* was intended to be the first in a trilogy, with the second game set during the grittier '70s era of comics. **D:** Irrational; **P:** TBA



Even with *BloodRayne* just hitting PCs, a sequel's already in the works, we're told.

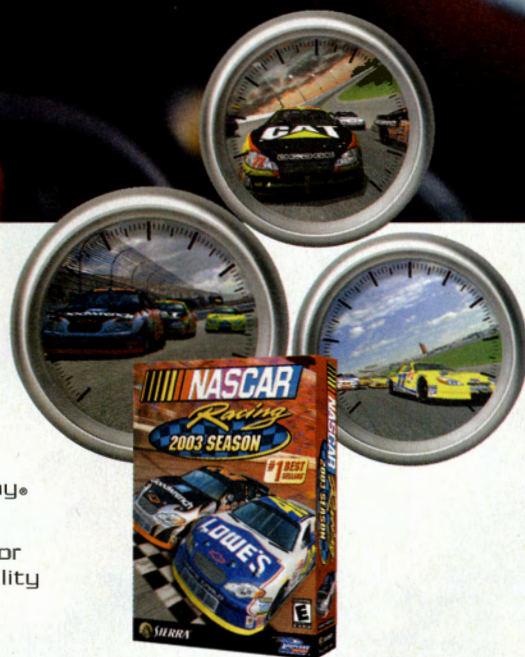


DETAIL #66212

ITEM: Windshield debris

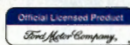
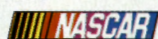
TAKEN FROM: #12 ALLTEL windshield
at North Carolina Speedway.

NOTES: Simulate native cicada
(aka *Tibicen chloromera*) for
realistic Rockingham visibility



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sierra.com/games/racing2003

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PUT YOUR NAME
ON THE MAP

The Plains of Gary

GARYLAND

LAKE GARY

The Gary Range

Garyton

Gary Valley

Saint Gary

Garyville

The Gulf of Gary

Garytown

GARY MARSH

The Straits of Gary

NEW
GARY

Gary
Shores

The Gary Peninsula

Costa
Del Gary

SUNFLOWERS
the world of entertainment

PC
CD
ROM

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
Violence

DESIGN



North Gary

Point Gary

Mount Gary

The Sea of Gary

Port Gary

Garn Islands

CAPE GARY

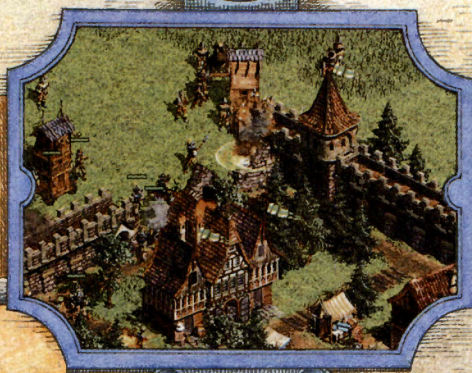
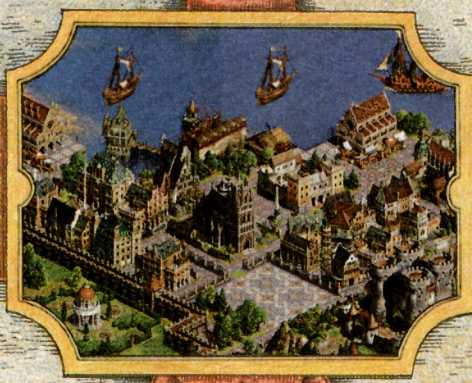
Boca Gary

Isle of Gary

Newfound Gary

Garrymont

The Bay of Gary



1503 A.D.

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Back to School

It's back to the life of keggers and babes for *PC Gamer's* finest

What do you do when you're headed through the "Out" door of your twenties, and you've still got no college degree to your name? If you're like most people in this situation, you chalk it up to destiny and recount your lengthy list of accomplishments, all reached without any need for paper qualifications.

But if you're Morris and Vederman, you point to your total lack of either accomplishments or degree, and resolve to make a stand.

So it was that our two uneducated editors (they prefer the term "respect-challenged") re-applied and registered to complete the long-abandoned senior years of their respective college educations. TheVede plans to graduate in the posh field of literature, while Morris is hot on the trail of a surprisingly job-relevant magazine-journalism degree. (All the more job-relevant when you consider that Rob Smith's degree is in classical studies.)

While both fantasize about a Rodney Dangerfield-style return to school, with sorority babes hanging off their smoking jackets, we've all got a feeling the reality will be far more brutal and depressing.

We've provided the boys with the following checklist of items they'll need for their return to the status of Big Man on Campus:

1. Monoxidyl
2. Burning lust for the thousands of nubile hotties roaming the university halls
3. Burning envy of strapping young jocks who actually have a chance with the hotties
4. Contempt for instructors teaching the "theory" behind what Dan and TheVede have been practicing professionally for years
5. Oh-so-educational mandatory duty on college-newspaper staff
6. Passionate interest in campus-diversity issues and student-body politics
7. Spare change for Krishnas
8. Required textbooks
9. Pencils, paper, and those little blue books

Good luck, fellas.

Higher education? Or just high education?



HOW WE RATE GAMES: THE BREAKDOWN

90%

100%-90%
EDITORS' CHOICE

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



80%

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.

70%

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.

60%

69%-60%
ABOVE AVERAGE

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

50%

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.

40%

49%-40%
TOLERABLE

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

30%

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 you!

PC GAMER RECOMMENDS

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

SPLINTER CELL

MARCH 2003



Armed with stealthy tactics and high-tech gadgetry, NSA operative Sam Fisher carries the fight to the enemy in this thrilling covert-ops game.

91%



SIMCITY 4

MARCH 2003



Stop complaining about your city and try your skills at crafting the perfect one. Maxis continues its huge-selling franchise with this sprawling sim.

83%

IMPOSSIBLE CREATURES

MARCH 2003



Can a rhinobat take out a whale-jackal? These and other pressing questions of our time are finally answered in this excellent RTS.

85%

ALGOPHOBIA



145 NEW CREATURES

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The new Magic: The Gathering[®] Legions set
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creatures that either you, or your opponent,
will be seriously impaired.

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If these folks show up at your door, you know your days are numbered.

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield



Because Team Rainbow can be called to any corner of the globe, your gear is designed to help you take full advantage of your environment. Of course, not even the most state-of-the-art equipment will save you if a terrorist gets the drop on you.

A whole new breed of scum is on the prowl, and only Team Rainbow can take them down

When the first *Rainbow Six* game came out in 1998, its spectacular blend of action, stealth, and real-world tactics single-handedly created a new genre — the tactical shooter.

For the third installment of the series, *Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield*, the entire package has been overhauled — instead of using an internally developed engine, the game sports the flashy *Unreal* technology, and welcome tweaks and

changes can be found everywhere.

Unfortunately, none of the those changes have been applied to the game's core gameplay, and the result is a slightly stale experience that harkens back to the

original game's genius, but never recapitulates its freshness and pure "wow" factor.

Set in the year 2005, *Raven Shield* pits Rainbow against terrorists funded by Nazi money secreted away at the end of World War II: the fascist terrorists want to unleash a devastating blistering agent and only you can stop them. As stories go, this one is pretty lame, especially when you consider the current state of world politics and that the Clancy brand has always been cognizant of "real-world" conflicts.

It's probable that Ubi Soft didn't want to risk offending any ethnic groups by portraying them as terrorists, but the game really suffers because the villains don't seem all that threatening and the story fails to drive home a sense of urgency as the campaign rushes toward its conclusion. It would've been much better to see Rainbow facing off against a threat that seemed real

rather than going the James Bond route, battling valueless blue-eyed crackpots who are funding their efforts with plunder from a war that's nearly 60 years old.

IT'S ALL IN THE PLAN

The single-player campaign consists of 15 missions set in a variety of locations, including the Cayman Islands, Switzerland, and Brazil. The mission-planning section is essentially the same as before, with a variety of characters, including Control and John Clark, supplying intel reports while a high-tech schematic of the mission's setting shows you key positions and objectives. One of my favorite bits is the Newswire, which reveals how the media is "reporting" your previous mission. Watching the lies-and-propaganda machine spinning out its fabrications is rather entertaining.

VITAL STATS

CATEGORY Action
ESRB RATING M
DEVELOPER Ubi Soft Montreal
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft
REQUIRED PIII 600, 128MB RAM, 2GB HD, 32MB 3D card
WE RECOMMEND P4 2GHz, 512MB RAM, 128MB 3D card
MAXIMUM PLAYERS 16

TEAM RAINBOW GETS A MAKEOVER



■ AI teammates automatically assume defensive positions to ensure that you're always covered. There's no escaping the wrath of Rainbow.

ALTHOUGH THE TWO previous *Rainbow Six* games were properly lauded for their intense gameplay and gut-wrenching tension, not even the staunchest fan could gush about their graphical beauty.

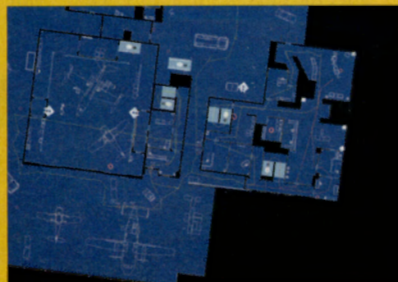
That's all changed with *Raven Shield*, though, because Ubi Soft licensed the swanky *Unreal* engine. The benefits are clear to see:

■ The character models — especially the members of Rainbow — sport highly detailed textures. You can see the grenades and other implements of justice on their uniforms, and when they move, they actually look like a team of ass-kickers on the prowl.

■ You can see your weapon, as is the norm with most first-person shooters. I find this view very distracting, especially since the game relies so heavily on precision firing, but thankfully, there's an option to turn it off and revert to the traditional *Rainbow Six* view.

■ Large, clean levels. The airport map set in the Caymans, for example, involves skulking through two hangers, offices, a parking lot, and a terminal building. That's a lot of ground to cover, and it means that you'll have to employ coordinated techniques as you move from objective to objective.

Sadly, the *Unreal* engine is something of a resource hog, and I experienced slowdowns from time to time, even on my beefy rig — a P4 2GHz with a RADEON 9700 PRO card — though the game played fine on other test machines. These framerate hits were especially evident in multiplayer games and when I entered large, open areas (even if they were inside a building).



■ The map screen provides vital information such as the location of your team, key objectives, and vital choke-points.



The action gets really explosive, especially when you're engaging enemies from multiple directions.

The team-selection screen will be immediately familiar to anyone who has played the previous *RS* games. The biggest change is that each weapon has five ratings, which show you its range, the amount of damage it'll inflict, accuracy, and so on. You can also modify them with a small scope, a silencer, or a high-capacity magazine that impacts the weapon's ratings in some way — the silencer, for example, decreases a weapon's range and power. So a critical strategy is ensuring your loadout is appropriate to your objectives and the environment.

The Planning Room has gotten an upgrade, and now features a live, fully-3D window that lets you simulate a squad's movement through the level. The default plans are very effective, but creating your own is easy and lets you define how a squad moves and reacts.

As for the missions themselves, they're enjoyable, if not particularly ambitious. The majority have you and your team storming a location, killing all the terrorists, and rescuing hostages or protecting sensitive information. This process was still refreshing when the first two games shipped, but now it's starting to get a bit stale. The series really needs to evolve beyond hostage rescue.



Your heartbeat sensor is now a pair of goggles; heartbeats appear on the screen as white blips.

GO CODE ZULU

Three of the maps are recycled in the latter stages of the game, and only one mission involves a true test of stealth infiltration. Not only does this repetition diminish the tension during those missions — you already know the layout of the location, so there are no real surprises — but it also seems a little implausible. I seriously doubt we'd have the most elite special force in the world secure a location and then leave without fully inspecting the place.

Thankfully, the game's final two missions, *Whisper Blade* and *Steel Rose*, are sensational. *Whisper Blade* is set in a garage/auto



The key to successfully completing the game's missions is a combination of speed, surprise, and lethal accuracy with your weapon. In the left screen, the team hits a room fast and hard. The screen on the right shows the aftermath: another dead terrorist. He had it coming.

© Rakuzanka, K.



During some of the bigger firefights, the environment can get blown to bits. (Inset) One of the new features in *Raven Shield* is the ability to slowly open doors using your mouse wheel. This technique is helpful when you want to eliminate a bad guy without alerting anyone else.

FAL + Scope

dealership in Rio de Janeiro, and it's an intense running battle as you blaze your way through a seemingly endless stream of terrorists. I won't ruin the final mission, but it starts off with a bang and features some helacious firefights. Truly great stuff.

During the course of the fighting, your AI teammates are rather adept at fending for themselves, gunning down any terrorist scum that crosses their view. The movement of your teammates is much more realistic-looking now, with one buddy always covering your rear, and your boys form defensive perimeters before storming a room.

Using a simple icon system, you can now give basic orders to the squad directly under your control. When the move icon appears on the screen, you can click and send your squad to that location. Multiple orders for storming a room, including "open and clear" and "open, grenade, and clear" require strategic thinking and add to the tension. When ordered to clear a room, you can even set what type of grenades to use.

All of the go codes are still intact, which makes managing your other squads a breeze, and a new Zulu code has been added to the mix. With this code you can issue your orders — such as storm a room — but then delay that order until the Zulu code has been given. This pause lets you prepare your teams for simultaneous assault on the same location, and is essential in some of the missions where you must storm a room from multiple entry points.

Alas, *Raven Shield* suffers from the same schizophrenic AI that has been present in all of the *Rainbow Six* and *Ghost Recon* games. On one occasion, an AI squadmate and an enemy looked straight at each other and neither of them fired. In another instance, I entered a room with three terrorists and shot two of them — and then watched the third one turn and walk away as if nothing had happened. Frustratingly, my squads on occasion bunched up and got caught on each other.

Yet, at other times, the enemy AI behaves very realistically, with multiple enemies backing away from grenades, responding to the sound of gunfire, or wiping out half of your team with one well-timed (and -placed) grenade.

TEAM KILLING

The real joy in this series has always been the multiplayer modes, and that's still the case with *Raven Shield*. Three cooperative modes (mission, terrorist hunt, and hostage rescue) and five adversarial modes (hostage, survival, team survival, bomb, and pilot) are included. The most enjoyable of the adversarial games is pilot, which emulates *Team Fortress Classic*'s The Hunted (actually, it completely rips it off). One player is a downed pilot, armed only with a pistol and a grenade, and one team escorts him across the map while the other team tries to kill the pilot. It's great fun.

DANCE OF DEATH

RAG-DOLL PHYSICS are all the rage, but *Raven Shield*'s system needs work. While bodies are beautifully animated when they drop from gunfire, strange things happen to the corpses. Check out this parade of miserable ends.



My only real complaint with *Raven Shield*'s multiplayer portion is the new interface — a convoluted series of screens and sub-menus. Before starting a server, you define the game length, the number of rounds, the map rotation, and so on. Once people have joined the server, they have a pre-set amount of time to select their weapons. The host can still modify the server settings on the fly, but the system's not as elegant as the old interface, especially when you're playing co-op games.

Given the brilliance of the previous games in this series, I'd be lying if I didn't say I was ultimately a little dissatisfied with *Raven Shield*. It's received some great tweaks and additions, but it definitely plays it safe in terms of gameplay and doesn't try to break new ground, which is disappointing. Still, for fans of the series, it'll provide a lot of entertainment, especially in multiplayer mode.

— William Harms

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Large and highly detailed maps; outstanding graphics; fun multiplayer modes.

LOWS: Lame story; unimaginative mission design; random bugs and AI glitches.

BOTTOM LINE: Great multiplayer features make up for the uninspired single-player missions.

PC GAMER 80%
EXCELLENT

VALUE PRICE PERFORMANCE



There should be a picture in the dictionary of the Atlas Micro under the heading "Price/Performance." This desktop system was one of the best performers we've ever seen. Yet, it costs about \$1,000 less than the other high-end Athlon desktops reviewed here.

Mr. David English

CS8000 \$759

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XP3000 \$359



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- Athlon XP 2100+ \$ 379 XM1403
- Athlon XP 2200+ \$ 409 XM1404

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- 56X CD-ROM
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- 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

GS8000 \$1,229



Intel Pentium IV Processor

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- 2.0 GHz \$1,239 S3402
- 2.4 GHz \$1,259 S3403
- 2.53 GHz (533MHz FSB) \$1,289 S3404
- 2.6 GHz (533MHz FSB) \$1,339 S3405
- 2.8 GHz (533MHz FSB) \$1,489 S3406
- 3.0 GHz (533MHz FSB) \$1,709 S3407

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- 16X DVD-ROM
- 48X16X48 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 2.1 Sound w/SB1394 Firewire port
- Creative Labs Inspire 6.1 6600 Speakers w/Subwoofer
- Matching Keyboard and Mouse
- Microsoft Windows XP Home Edition

PS8000 \$639



AMD Athlon XP Processor with QuantiSpeed

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- Athlon XP 2100+ \$ 659 XM2403
- Athlon XP 2200+ \$ 679 XM2404
- Athlon XP 2400+ \$ 719 XM2405
- Athlon XP 2500+ \$ 749 XM2406
- Athlon XP 2600+ \$ 819 XM2407
- Athlon XP 2700+ \$ 849 XM2408
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- Creative Labs Inspire 5.1 5200 Speakers w/Subwoofer
- Matching Keyboard and Mouse
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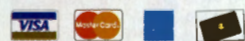
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NASCAR Racing: 2003 Season



Papyrus retires its decade-old *NASCAR Racing* series with style

It's the end of an era. Now that EA has assumed exclusive future gaming rights to North America's most popular racing series, Papyrus' *NASCAR Racing: 2003 Season* marks the developer's final kick at the NASCAR can.

VITAL STATS

CATEGORY Racing sim
ESRB RATING E
DEVELOPER Papyrus
PUBLISHER Sierra
REQUIRED PII 450, 64MB RAM, 250MB HD, 16MB 3D card
WE RECOMMEND P4 2GHz, 256MB RAM, 64MB 3D card
MAXIMUM PLAYERS 42

beneath its attractive, 3D-accelerated skin. The most significant change is physical. Papyrus sims have always delivered the most realistic vehicle dynamics on the market, but the physics modeling in *NR 2003* goes beyond anything that we've seen before. Incorporating valuable technical input from Goodyear and the Jasper Motorsports NASCAR team, Papyrus has improved both the tire modeling and the aerodynamic grip characteristics of the

cars to improve their handling authenticity even further.

Although the same 23 Winston Cup tracks featured in *NR 2002* are back for another go-round, the new vehicle dynamics transform each of them into an entirely new driving experience (and easily the most enjoyable one to date). The addition of authentic track surface irregularities with a new bump-mapping routine will also give your force-feedback wheel the best workout it's had in years.

Papy did such a marvelous job with the graphics in *NR 2002* that there really didn't seem to be much room for improvement. One lap at Infineon Raceway (formerly Sears Point) changes all that. Hell, the level of detail at this track alone makes almost every other racing sim look like a throwback to *Pole Position*. Additional new features such as a dynamically populated pit road, animated flags, changeable weather, and windshield grime — and the most realistic glare ever produced — immerse you even further in the action.

Those narrated track tours that helped make *NR 2002* so rookie-friendly are notable by their absence, but this omission is largely



All the tracks from *NR 2002* are back, including the remarkably detailed and gorgeous Infineon Raceway.



NR 2003's authentic vehicle dynamics will flip you on your ass if you don't show the proper respect.

offset by some big-time AI improvements. Not only do these cars race smarter and harder, but the sim's new "adaptive AI" can also match your on-track pace on a lap-by-lap basis or even learn a player's lap times at each track over a number of events and then adjust the challenge level accordingly (albeit a little too conservatively for my liking).

All of the other building blocks that helped make *NR 2002* such an amazing product are also firmly mortared into place — including seamless and lag-free Internet multiplayer support, crushing 3D audio effects, exhaustive setup options, and sophisticated damage modeling. *NR 2003* also boasts the most up-to-date driver and track licensing currently offered in a NASCAR-based title, and punctuates this superiority by offering distinctive Dodge, Chevy, Pontiac, and Ford body styles for the first time in the franchise's history.

The last in a long line of NASCAR titles from Papyrus, this final chapter is easily the finest of the series. *NASCAR Racing: 2003 Season* has the legs to reign for a long time as the de facto standard-bearer for the genre, and it offers a rock-solid base from which the third-party mod community can begin working its mojo. The King is dead. Long live the King.

— Andy Mahood

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Extraordinarily realistic new physics engine; spectacular graphics; rock-solid AI; increased configurability.

LOWS: Track tutorials eliminated.

BOTTOM LINE: Papyrus' last-ever NASCAR title is truly the developer's best one yet.

PC GAMER 95%
EDITORS' CHOICE

New features like changeable weather, windshield build-up, and bumpy track surfaces immerse you deeply in the action.

Test Drive

CATEGORY Racing ESRB T DEVELOPER Pitbull Syndicate PUBLISHER Atari/Infogrames REQUIRED PIII 500, 128MB RAM WE RECOMMEND PIII 1GHz, 256MB RAM, gamepad/joystick/wheel MAXIMUM PLAYERS 2

Well, I'll say this: the new *Test Drive* (which curiously comes with no numerical designation) is five times better than *Test Drive 6*, the last Pitbull-developed title to carry the ubiquitous *Test Drive* moniker. Unfortunately, *Test Drive 6* scored a lowly 11% (PCG, March 2000).

As with its predecessor, *Test Drive* is a straightforward arcade racer featuring a broad mix of high-performance cars, traffic-choked urban roads, and arterial highways. Twenty-six licensed vehicles are showcased, ranging from classic muscle cars like the Pontiac GTO to newer rides like the Aston Martin DB7 Vantage.

This series abandoned believable vehicle dynamics years ago, and the slippery physics in *Test Drive* often ignore basic principles like mass, momentum, and friction. There's no damage modeling, force feedback, or proper multiplayer options — two-player split-screen mode is all you get. Continuing this stuttering ride is an absolutely appalling AI catch-up routine (your opponents will effectively park and wait for you if you mess up), horrible engine audio, and a laughably feeble police "pursuit" element.



Fly through the streets of San Francisco with your Mustang. Everyone wants to be Steve McQueen.

Ultimately, most of the five-fold rating increase over *TD 6* is due to *Test Drive*'s upgraded visuals, well-designed courses, and quasi-entertaining career mode. Stealing a page from *Driver* and *Grand Theft Auto III*, the career mode involves a linear campaign dubbed "Underground," in which you play as Dennis Black, an out-of-work driver subbing for a rich entrepreneur in a series of illegal street races in San Francisco, Tokyo, London, and Monaco. It may not be Shakespeare, but the voice-acting is surprisingly well-done, and the



As with previous chapters, *Test Drive* offers a healthy selection of classic American muscle cars.

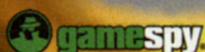
story's 16 trash-talking opponents add some welcome comic relief.

Despite these noteworthy gains, *Test Drive* remains a conspicuously mediocre chapter in a perpetually flaccid series of arcade-racing games. Whether you label it *Test Drive* or *Test Drive 7*, this vehicle is still in desperate need of an engine overhaul. — Andy Mahood



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Enclave

Publisher Black Label turns an Xbox dud into a PC stud

CAN I "ASS" YOU A QUESTION?



I'm all for gratuitous skin where- and whenever possible, but...no, never-mind, this is pretty cool! Climb up a ladder with one of Enclave's scantily clad females for a nice moon!



Enclave doesn't just have stunning graphics — it's got sizzling gameplay, too! You'll defeat this baddie only after you've learned how to turn its own fiery minions against it.



Some characters slay best with a trusty bow and arrow...



...while others do better with mighty magical staffs!



But sometimes you just can't beat a kickass melee weapon!

Imagine you're in a city that you've never been to before, sitting down to eat at a restaurant you know nothing about. You order the chicken picatta — hoping for the best, but expecting little. Now, picture the food arriving at your table — the chicken breast, hand-hammered to perfection, sitting

on a bed of angel-hair pasta — the aroma of fine wine, lemon, and capers fills your nostrils. The exquisite silver blade glides through the bird's tender flesh and on through some luscious mint jelly [maybe if you were eating lamb instead of chicken, you uncultured

tit — Ed.]. You bring the fork to your lips to deliver its glorious payload to your mouth, and as it touches your tongue, a single tear rolls down your left cheek. Nirvana.

Playing *Enclave* isn't quite as glorious as that, but its addictive gameplay and a blissful lack of pre-release hype make it every bit as wonderful a surprise.

Released late last year on the Xbox, the game garnered only lukewarm reviews.

This third-person actioner shipped with crappy controls and a ridiculous saving scheme that let you save your progress only at the end of each of the game's 25-plus levels. It wasn't uncommon to spend upward of an hour going through an area, only to die near the end and have to load a frustrating do-over. Flux that shizz.

At least on the PC we get a checkpoint system (which isn't nearly as good as a save-anywhere feature would have been) that "saves" you from having to go all the way back to the start upon death. Better still, I flew the game with my keyboard and mouse, and found the control to be responsive and toight (like a toiger).

Enclave's two campaigns — "Light" and "Dark" — had to be played in that order on the Xbox. Booor-ring. The PC version rights this wrong and lets you choose Light or Dark from the start. Though the missions that make up each campaign are different, the story starts at roughly the same place: a powerful wizard has divided the world into two parts. On the inside of the Rift lies a peaceful enclave known as Celenheim. On the outside, all sorts of evil beasties roam free. The Rift is closing and a war is brewing. You've got to pick sides.

As you progress, you get to choose one of 12 character classes — six on the side of Light, and six more on the side of "Might," each with distinct strengths and abilities, weapons and armor. These RPG elements could've added loads of replayability to this amazing-looking game, but many of *Enclave's* levels seem designed with specific character classes in mind, and are thus difficult to pass with the "wrong" ones. As a result, the game's plethora of characters and upgradeable weapons and armor add mostly to variety of play rather than bona fide replayability.

Still, for an action game that came out of nowhere, it's a really big treat that kicks all kinds of axe.

— TheVede

VITAL STATS

CATEGORY Action
ESRB RATING M
DEVELOPER Starbreeze Studios
PUBLISHER Black Label Games
REQUIRED PIII 700, 128MB RAM, 2.5GB HD, 16MB 3D card
WE RECOMMEND P4 1.6GHz, 256MB RAM, 32MB 3D card with hardware T&L
MAXIMUM PLAYERS 1

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Stunning visuals; mindless but fun hack-and-slash gameplay; multiple characters and items.

LOWS: Can't save anywhere; can't save and exit at checkpoints — only at level's end.

BOTTOM LINE: Forget about the Xbox version. *Enclave* is an action-packed joy to behold on the PC.

PC GAMER 84%
EXCELLENT

Bandits

You and your rockin' roadster join the cockroaches in a world gone bad

Prepare yourself for post-apocalyptic dune buggies from hell, complete with foul-mouthed Scottish goggle-wearing dwarves and monster trucks with missiles! Think car wars with a splash of detail and a tidal wave of carnage.

Set in yet another

3D post-nuclear blast zone, *Bandits: Phoenix Rising* casts you as Fennec of the Wolfpack gang, fighting for a piece of fat-cat city, the fabled Jericho. Your vehicle is an improvised dune buggy/dragster, complete with jet

engine, armor, and a whole lotta firearms. Your enemies range from small buggies like yours to freakish Bigfoot monster trucks. Vehicles can be customized over time and it really matters what you pick, as the game's varied objectives require that you select the right loadout to win in particular situations.

Using typical first-person-shooter controls, you can make your battle-buggy turn and stop on a dime. This lets you focus on slinging missiles or dropping mines instead of worrying about troublesome game-world physics.

Vehicles can have multiple weapons, and you'll gain new ones over time like the Shredder and the death-dealing Excavator. There are 13 weapons in all, including the aptly named Sharkbite pulse cannon and Rattlesnake mine dropper. Firing these toys just feels cool, and each weapon produces serious kickback. When you unlock the

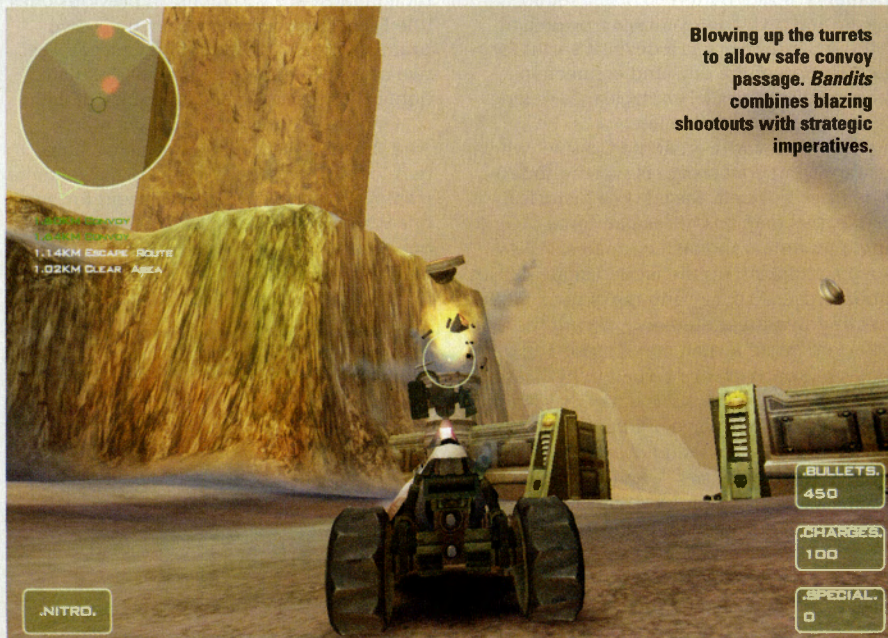


In the grand tradition of boss monsters, you'll duke it out with some serious end-stage behemoth trucks.

medium and heavy vehicles, you can load up with six of these death doctors at once.

The sensation of speed is terrific. The AI is decent, though most attackers use S-weave approaches or basic circle-and-shoot tactics. I encountered a nasty bug that occasionally caused the framerate to drop into the low single digits (the only way to clear it is to restart the game), and multi-play tends to degenerate into overblown jousting. But there's nothing else right now that so successfully combines first-person ferocity with four-wheel velocity.

Overall, *Bandits* is a worthy purchase that offers 20 or so high-octane missions. Don't be ashamed if you find yourself gleefully yelling along with dialogue like "Eat crap, flaming craphead!" — Matthew Peckham



Blowing up the turrets to allow safe convoy passage. *Bandits* combines blazing shootouts with strategic imperatives.

ENTER



Infantry scramble for cover as an uphill assault runs into a bazooka-armed ambush.



French soldiers wear cute little berets. It's odd to see these guys actually running toward the front.



Streetfighting turns exceptionally ugly when enemy armor rolls around a corner.



Artillery, both fixed and motorized, pound the opposition across large maps.

Battlefield 1942: Road to Rome



Our 2002 Game of the Year opens up a whole new front

Shame on us for even considering any other game in our discussions about the Best Game of 2002. *Battlefield 1942* is so much more fun than anything else I played last year, and continues to be in 2003. Now, with *Road to Rome*, the game

expands to the Italian front of WWII, adding six great new maps and new weapons.

The time: 1943. The place: the "soft underbelly" of Axis Europe. If Hitler's going down, then the road to Berlin leads through Rome, and the fascists aren't going to be doormats.

Road to Rome doesn't really offer a whole lot of new "stuff." You won't find any significant gameplay additions. But as any fan of this outstanding multiplayer action game will explain, six new maps for *Battlefield 1942* is almost like adding six new sequels to the game. Why? Because each of these maps is a lot more than a new plot of terrain to fight over — each is an elaborately designed, immaculately balanced, and tactically unique battleground.

I love the beach assault on Sicily (Operation Husky), which incorporates amphibious landings, battleship barrages, bombers, shore batteries, machinegun nests, and a village to conquer or defend. Monte Santa Croce is a devilish sprint for domination of the one land connection between two parallel control lanes — kind of a drag race with armies.

But my favorite is Monte Cassino, which, as far as I'm concerned, is worth the \$20 box price by itself. Based on a historical battle, this map has a German force defending a mountain monastery against Allied forces attacking up the jagged slope. It's an apocalypse. Artillery and tanks pour molten death down the mountain, burying the attackers in an avalanche of steel. The only lanes of approach are zeroed in by Kraut artillery. Rooting the Nazis out of their strong-points will take a wave of infantry clawing their way up and tossing grenades to punch a hole in the defenses — and even if this approach is successful, the endgame culminates in a ferocious pitfight for the monastery itself. I'll be playing this map for months.

So what's new? Two new combatant armies: the Italians and the Free French. You get two new handheld weapons: the British

Sten gun and Italy's Breda (a deadly sub-machinegun with a side-mounted banana clip). *Rome* has eight new vehicles, too, though most are variations on previous ones (the French, for instance, have their own brand of the motorized artillery piece). The two new aircraft are the British Mosquito fighter-bomber and the Luftwaffe's BF-110.

On paper, it may not look like much. And the fact that the infamous "machine-gun-loop" audio bug is still here sucks, quite frankly. But *Rome* is \$20 well spent for anyone who enjoys the thrills of *BF 1942*. You'll get dozens of hours of gripping new battles, and it'll work out to quarters on the hour for the fun you get out of it. — Dan Morris

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Six great new maps; two new combatant forces; the new Monte Cassino map rules.

LOWS: The original game's audio bugs are inexcusably still in evidence; few new weapons.

BOTTOM LINE: Our *Battlefield 1942* love is rekindled! A great value for any fan of the game.

PC GAMER 90%
EDITORS' CHOICE

VITAL STATS

CATEGORY Action
ESRB RATING T
DEVELOPER Digital Illusions CE
PUBLISHER EA Games
REQUIRED PIII 500, 128MB RAM, 1.2GB HD, 32MB 3D card
WE RECOMMEND P4 2GHz, 256MB RAM, 64MB 3D card, broadband connection
MAXIMUM PLAYERS 64



You'll consult the jump map frequently. Here, two German pincers (red) are storming Russian defenses.

Kursk '43

Lead the Reds or the Nazis in history's fiercest tank battle

Following the violent back-and-forth battles that raged after the debacle at Stalingrad, the Russian Front stabilized in the late spring of 1943. But the Red Army ended up holding a 300-square-kilometer bulge, known as the Kursk Salient. Feverishly determined to

regain "the initiative," Hitler planned a massive double-pincers attack to cut off the Kursk bulge at its base. Despite the advice of his best generals, he committed about 70 percent of the Wehrmacht's remaining armor

and air power to this strategically pointless operation.

Stalin knew exactly what was coming. In the three months before the attack, he turned the Kursk bulge into the most heavily defended place in Europe. With approximately 5,000 units locked in a death-struggle in such a confined place, there was no room for bold maneuvers: both sides clawed and tore at each other, in a battle of pure, grinding attrition, until the Germans finally ran out of steam.

John Tiller's re-creation of this titanic conflict — the greatest tank battle in history — is the finest installment yet of his "Panzer Campaign" series. At a scale of one hex = one kilometer, it's tactical micro-management on an epic scale. You can

play 18 self-contained scenarios (including a few fascinating might-have-been alternate-history exercises) or test your mettle in the grand campaign, where each turn represents two hours.

Gamers familiar with Tiller's basic and highly traditional system will appreciate some of the new features he's incorporated here. I very much like the "on-map results" feature, which streamlines game mechanics by eliminating the customary boxes upon boxes of turn-results.

If you prefer to war-game campaigns that permit dramatic, slashing maneuvers, you'll need a major Attitude Adjustment. Whichever side you choose to command, you absolutely *must* take the time to replace fatigued units before they shatter, *must* conduct painstaking aerial reconnaissance to avoid nasty surprises, and *must* time the commitment of your best armored formations with exquisite care.

The outcome of the real battle was often balanced on a knife's edge. Like the real commanders, you have to master the smallest details while never losing sight of the Big Picture. Firmly grounded on prodigious research, this game is surely the definitive Kursk simulation, and one of the finest titles this prolific designer has ever given us. — William R. Trotter

PC GAMER 87%
EXCELLENT

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ATARI

Island Xtreme Stunts

CATEGORY Action/Adventure ESRB E DEVELOPER Silicon Dreams PUBLISHER Lego Int./EA REQUIRED PIII 500, 64MB RAM, 100MB HD WE RECOMMEND PIII 700, 256MB RAM, gamepad MAXIMUM PLAYERS 1

As much as I loved LEGOs when I was a kid, it was with some trepidation that I loaded *Island Xtreme Stunts*, the latest attempt to bring this decidedly non-technical toy into the terribly technical world of electronic entertainment.

I'm glad to report that while the resemblance to the old click-bricks we loved is merely cursory, the game itself should appeal to the kids it's designed for.

You take on the role of Pepper, an up-

and-coming young stuntman. (Yes, you're a LEGO character.) You advance through the game by successfully performing stunts being filmed for a movie. The stunts are mostly races using different vehicles. In the first one you drive a race car and have to bash the car you're chasing as many times as possible to earn points. Other stunt scenes include a jet-ski race and a motorbike race. They're fun, if not terribly challenging.

But weirdly, the best part of *Island Xtreme Stunts* is the

island. It's alive with people to talk to, places to explore, and sub-quests to complete. Many different modes of transportation are available, such as cars, boats, and planes. Until you earn the required license for each, you'll have to settle for running, jumping, swimming, or riding your trusty skateboard, all of which are fun to do.

The colorful graphics fit the game beautifully, and the animation and



Skateboarding is just one of many fun activities in *Xtreme Stunts*.



If you don't think driving around in a LEGO car as a little LEGO guy is cool, you have no soul.

controls are all gamepad-smooth. In many ways, *Xtreme Stunts* reminds me of *Mario 64* on the Nintendo 64, especially in the way the character moves and how open-ended the world is (though the tasks set before you are much easier and nowhere near as clever). It's nice to see that the developers actually tried to make a good game, rather than just take advantage of the LEGO brand.

— Bert Salkmoor



Creator Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets

CATEGORY Adventure ESRB E DEVELOPER Qube Software PUBLISHER LEGO Int./EA REQUIRED PIII 500, 64MB RAM, 500MB HD WE RECOMMEND PIII 800, 128MB RAM MAXIMUM PLAYERS 1

Creator *Harry Potter* is a schizophrenic game. The "action" is incredibly slow and tedious, clearly aimed at little kids still working out the basics of hand-eye coordination. The "creator" portion of the game is infinitely more interesting, but it has an interface that'll baffle young children (and even some as old as this reviewer)!



Oh, look — another frog! I hope it doesn't run away in the 30 seconds it'll take me to reach it from here.

You get 12 areas to explore, but the graphics are so dreary and sparse that you have little incentive to see them all. To open portals to new areas, Harry has to walk around and collect chocolate frogs. This process is even duller than it sounds, since you move at a glacial pace and the frogs are just standing right in the path, waiting



Building with LEGOs in a *Harry Potter*-themed game would be fun — if you knew what you were doing.

for you to move over them. You can nab treasure chests, too, which gives you more models to use in the game's creator mode.

Once you complete this saga of collection, you gain the ability to alter the world. It's a cinch to add things to the screen, but manipulating them in a useful way is another story. The game manual is of no help, hardly giving you the basics, much less any constructive pointers. I guess a really creative kid could figure it out given enough time and patience, but most will tire of the exercise long before mastering it to any degree.

If you love *Harry Potter* and LEGOs, watch the movie or re-read the books: they'll give you much greater entertainment value and aren't nearly as frustrating.

— Bert Salkmoor



American Idol

Relentless intern reviewer — 2, Music-based reality-show games — 0

Reality shows turned into PC games haven't enjoyed much success, though the latest attempt by Vivendi Universal does at least show some effort. After last year's button-mashing abomination *Britney's Dance*

Beat (PCG rating: 18%, October 2002), the dance genre takes a significant step forward with *American Idol*. But it's still not much of a party game.

The road to becoming the virtual American Idol isn't nearly as glamorous

or edgy as portrayed on television. You have very few options for customizing your look, and your handle is supplied through a random-name generator (mine is "Tuff Blitz"). Then you select one song to sing for the competition.

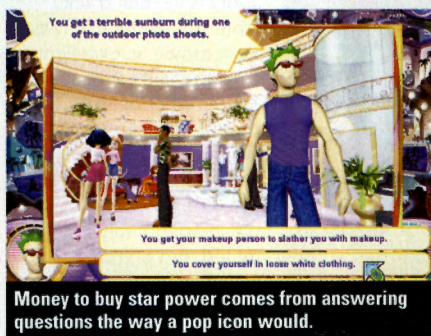
Twenty licensed songs are available for your crooning, from bands such as teen favorites 98° or 3 Doors Down, plus classic artists like James Brown and Jackson 5. In a blow to karaoke fans, you sing only one or two verses of each song, not the whole thing.

The competition isn't modeled after *AI*'s television counterpart at all. Only two players compete (all the others are conveniently eliminated at the beginning), and the contest actually plays like a board game. You take turns advancing around the game board, taking quizzes to earn money and buying dance moves and clothes to earn "star power." (The road to stardom, it seems, is focused more on your apparel than on any actual talent.) When you land on a chance to perform, singing comes up only a fraction of the time. The other performance modes have you tapping your directional keys to a beat, à la *Britney's*, or clicking icons as they flash on your screen. Neither activity is any fun.

When the singing arrives, you use the bundled microphone to actually sing into the game, with musical accompaniment



After winning competitions, use dance moves you've bought to choreograph performances of your song.

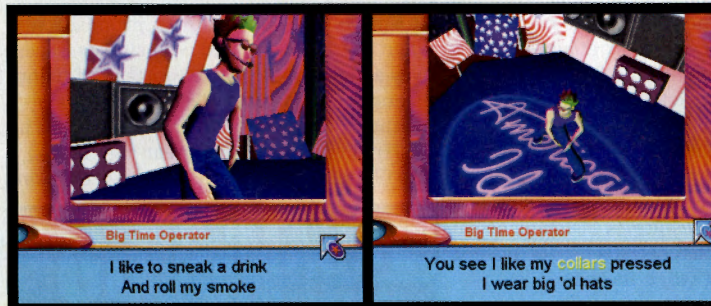


Money to buy star power comes from answering questions the way a pop icon would.

assisting your jams. Your accuracy isn't much of a factor: I could hum the songs and still get high star points. What really infuriates me, though, is the pitifully ambiguous commentary: No matter how bad you sing, the generic judges just give encouraging remarks. I don't want to hear about my decent intonation — I want Simon Cowell (who's conspicuously absent) to tell me that I'm the worst performer ever.

Getting a bunch of friends and making fools of yourselves can be great entertainment, but this game can't facilitate that. As it stands, *American Idol* won't last as a party game, which is where its only potential lies.

— Norman Chan



When it's time to sing into the game, your accuracy is compared to a graph of the tones near the bottom of the screen (not shown). You can even record your own version of the song before-hand to re-enact.

ELIMINATE



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



ATARI

Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis

CATEGORY Strategy ESRB T DEVELOPER Blue Tongue PUBLISHER Universal Int. REQUIRED PII 400, 128MB RAM, 16MB 3D card WE RECOMMEND PIII 800, 256MB RAM, 64MB card MAX. PLAYERS 1

While it's obvious that *Operation Genesis* doesn't share the record-setting production budgets of the movies from whence it's spawned, it's still just about the best opportunity to play with dinosaurs that PC gamers have had.

Tasked with erecting the infamous dinosaur theme park, you've got 35 different buildings to construct and 25 types of dinos to clone. Successful dabbling with prehistoric genetics is achieved by sending

teams to dig for fossilized remains and amber containing preserved DNA.

Once you've put up some walls, built a hatchery, churned out your first couple of beasts, and provided some basic amenities, you can open the park doors to tourists. Want to know how you're doing? Click on a visitor to find out. Park advisors — many of whom you'll recognize (as ugly as they're rendered) from the films — will pop up with messages to brief you on crisis spots, as well as various successes and failures.

The musical score, which borrows 10 of John Williams' tracks from the original *Jurassic Park* movie, is excellent, as is the use of positional 3D-audio effects. Sadly, though, the limited voice-acting is utterly abysmal.

And unfortunately, the dinos themselves, while adequately animated and textured, don't inspire nearly as much awe as they should. In fact, they're a bit old-school compared with



Sometimes the only good carnivore is a dead one.

the current standards in 3D game animation. Plus, *Genesis*' gameplay would really benefit from more depth: once you get the basic structures in place and the cash starts to roll in, there's little challenge left.

But you'll still find plenty of amusement via scenarios like the random need to rescue visitors from a rampaging T-Rex. And the game's smooth learning curve makes it an excellent choice for younger or more novice gamers.

— Steve Klett



Elements of *Sim Theme Park* and *SimCity* abound in this *Jurassic* knockoff.



American Conquest

CATEGORY Real-time strategy ESRB T DEVELOPER GSC Game World PUBLISHER CDV REQUIRED PII 450, 64MB RAM, 1.3GB HD WE RECOMMEND P4 2.4GHz, 256MB RAM MAX. PLAYERS 7

A horde of 8,000 sprites marches toward another horde of 8,000 sprites. *American Conquest* is a game of maximums: maximum history, maximum speed, maximum units, and occasionally, maximum frustration.

This Russian-made RTS has some of the best 2D graphics ever, and more detail than many turn-based strategy games, as long as you're comfortable pausing frequently to issue orders and carefully orchestrate massive battles.

The action covers over 300 years of North American history, with eight campaigns ranging from Pizarro's conquests to Washington's battles for independence. Every facet is dripping with detail, from the lengthy historical introductions for each mission to the 100 unique infantry, cavalry, and artillery units. Bunker Hill, Yorktown, Tecumseh's rebellion, the Seven Years War, and others are all here in super-massive real-time glory.

Instead of reducing battalions of units to manageable squads as in other real-time games, *American Conquest* spits out hun-

dreds and eventually thousands of units. At first glance, that's great. But this option introduces two major bugaboos: game speed and unit visibility.

Set to the default "fast" setting, *American Conquest* sends throngs of units scooting across the screen at breakneck speeds that make man-management — even when you pause frequently — a mouse-clicking nightmare. Reduce the game speed and everything goes to sludge, including mouse-scrolling. This problem has stalked previous games using the *Cossacks* engine, and it hasn't gone away.

The more grievous dilemma is managing the frequent messes. Forget box-selecting a portion of units from a battalion of thousands: you'll have to set up groups with Ctrl-number assignments before battle, because separating them in a sea of tiny health bars is impossible.

My only other complaint: *AC* is a first-class resource pig, despite its 2D origins. With no way to adjust detail, you need a mighty rig to run it when the screen is filled with warring units.



Where Waldo? It's hard to keep track of what's going on when the backgrounds are this busy.

This engine showed great promise when *Cossacks* debuted with similar issues over a year ago. However, instead of fixing its ongoing problems, developers are simply throwing more units and new locales at us. Final verdict? Tastes great, but needs less filling.

— Matthew Peckham





ENTER THE MATRIX™

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY LARRY AND ANDY WACHOWSKI

5/15/03



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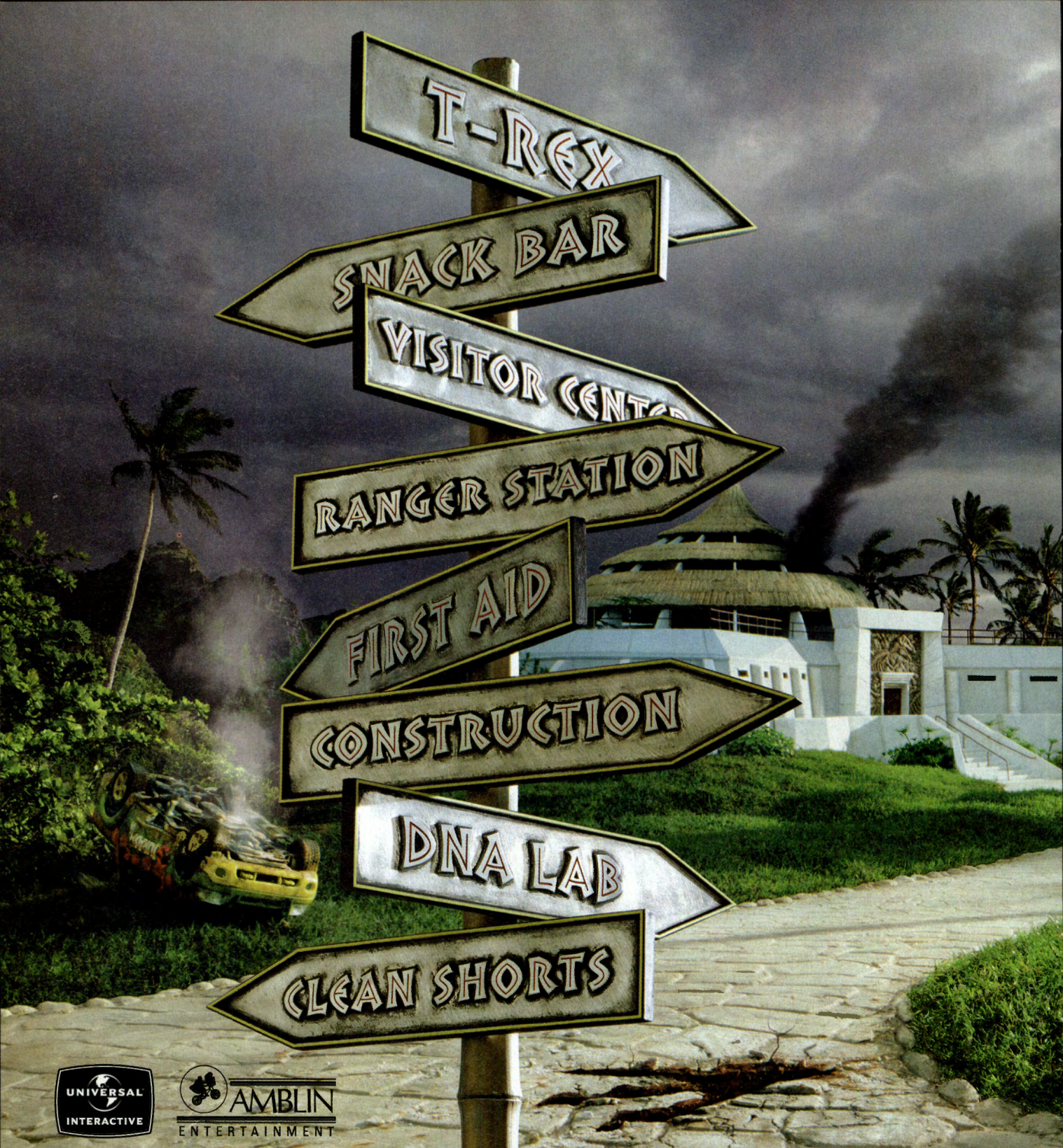
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PlayStation 2





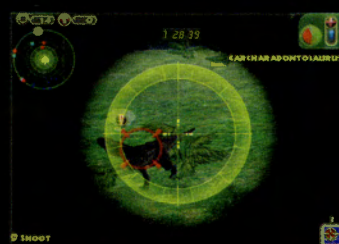
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PlayStation.2



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Highland Warriors



Demonstrating their tactical and cultural superiority, the English deploy dashing cavalry units in the fight against uncivilized Scots. (Can you tell that our magazine's EIC is English?)

CATEGORY Real-time strategy ESRB T DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER Data Becker REQUIRED PIII 600, 128MB RAM, 32MB 3D card WE RECOMMEND PIII 1.4GHz, 512MB RAM, 64MB 3D card MAXIMUM PLAYERS 8

Maybe it isn't fair to say that *Highland Warriors* is basically a 3D *Age of Empires* featuring only the Scots and English. But it's a pretty accurate way to describe this new RTS game.

Highland Warriors chronicles the history of the [brusque — Ed.] Scottish and their fight for freedom from the [noble — Ed.] English, throwing in some supernatural twists. You won't see William Wallace actually shoot lightning bolts, but magical

units such as druids can teleport your units or make them invisible.

Each of the 30 missions (spread out over four campaigns) deals with a key moment in Scottish history. You start off as a clan leader struggling to unite all the clans of Scotland. Eventually you'll fight English invaders, and do more uniting of clans, and then fight more English, and then unite more clans, and so on. There's also one campaign that lets you play as the [noble — Ed.] English.

It doesn't help that combat is set on the same land the entire time.

Granted, the game's Atlas engine makes *HW* look much like *Warcraft III*. But it has its flaws. Sometimes the animations don't match up with the movement of your units, and your boys look like they're skating rather than walking. Sometimes they even disappear and reappear.

Also, the audio is sub-par, with bad accents aplenty.

The one really cool innovation, affecting both

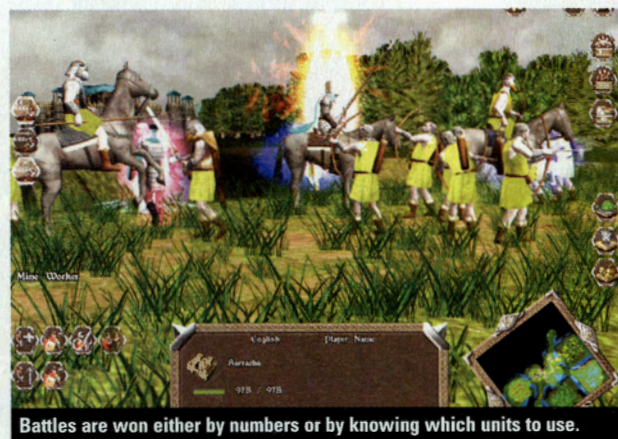


You can zoom the camera as close to the action as you want — say, to check out this guy's burly beard.

the look and the gameplay, is the changing of the seasons. Units move faster in the summertime and crops thrive, but when winter sets in, troops slow and you need to hunt.

HW's multiplayer is the standard fare, letting up to eight players wage war online or via a LAN. A handy map-editor is included.

Ultimately, *HW* just lacks the polish of a quality title. It's not a bad game — it's just got nothing under its kilt. — Li C. Kuo



Battles are won either by numbers or by knowing which units to use.

The Sims Expansion: The Liebermans

CATEGORY Simulation ESRB E DEVELOPER Maxis PUBLISHER EA Games REQUIRED The Sims, PII 300, 64MB RAM, 480MB HD WE RECOMMEND PIII 500, 128MB RAM MAXIMUM PLAYERS 1

Maxis has enjoyed a string of best-sellers with its add-ons for the blockbuster franchise *The Sims*. Major cross-promotional deals have been signed with McDonald's, the Gap, and other large corporations to provide exclusive new "real-world" content for the games. This expansion, the sixth in the

series, is the first to feature a cross-promotion with a major political figure.

Senator Joe Lieberman, a current candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination, has been a longtime opponent of violent games. In an effort to generate some appeal among younger voters (akin to Bill Clinton's turn with the sax on *The Arsenio Hall Show*, and his appearances on MTV) and the "mainstream" Americans who made *The Sims* a mega-seller, Lieberman now takes a gentle shot at himself with a leading role in the most wholesome popular PC game around.

In *The Liebermans*, you control the family of the Connecticut senator, as well as the senator himself. Wife Hadassah is committed to children's-advocacy work, and the senator is (naturally)

embarking on a major political campaign. You have to balance all the usual Sims needs, like socializing, sleep, bladder, and so on. (The bladder rating falls quickly due to the Liebermans' advancing age). But this expansion adds some new needs as well, such as Public Approval (met by standing in front of TV cameras) and Social Condemnation (satisfied by ranting at the television from the comfort of the sofa).

You'll also have to balance the Liebermans' needs with the fact that neighboring Sims will begin to experience an ever-rising need to move far, far away.

This add-on has some fun moments, but I found the actual environment of the Lieberman home to be much too straitlaced and stultifying to be much fun as a game. In the end, I think you'd be better off waiting for modders to spice up this expansion with a bit more personality. — Dan Morris



Senator and wife indulge in a dance, risking a rise in their Lust rating.



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IF CAPTURED, MY GOVERNMENT WILL DISAVOW

ANY KNOWLEDGE OF MY EXISTENCE.

I AM SAM FISHER.

I AM A SPLINTER CELL.



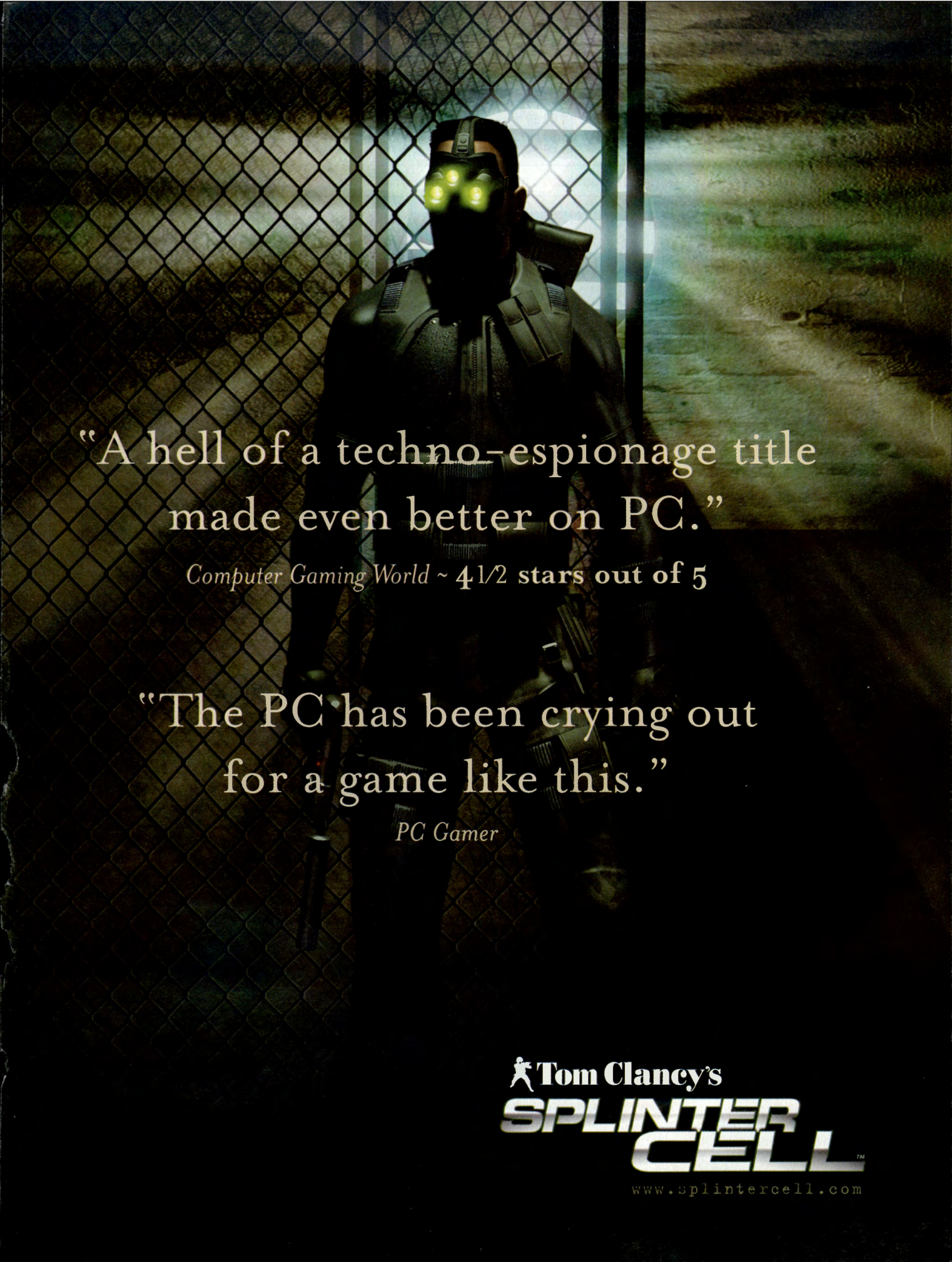
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Unreal II: The Awakening

It's just like war *really* is — periods of boredom punctuated by action and terror



The flamethrower is just one of the new weapons introduced in *Unreal II*. Watch it make short work of these alien arachnids!

So here it is: the first volley in the Great FPS Wars of 2003. For those keeping track, this is Round Two in the head-to-head shootout between Epic and id for having the most impressive, noteworthy, and bowel-ejecting graphics engine in existence.

So why is it, then, that a game subtitled *The Awakening* has, on occasion, made me want to take a nap?

Truthfully, *Unreal II* is not a bad game. I dare say it's even a good one. But it's not a great game, and when you rate this

sequel in terms of its predecessor, that's almost like saying it's a failure. *Unreal* was unique, envelope-pushing, and magical; *Unreal II* is safe, derivative, and — while utterly gorgeous — certainly not the mind-bending leap forward in graphics that the first game was.

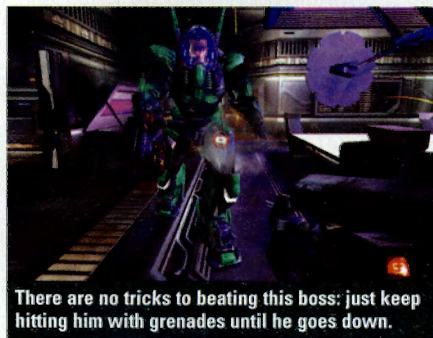
So, let's all forget about the *Unreal* legacy, and judge *Unreal II* on its own merits. (Easy enough to do, since *Unreal II* has far more in common with the mission-based feel of *Halo*, *Aliens vs. Predator 2*, and *Elite Force* than it does with the "lone-prisoner-on-a-hostile-world" motif of its forerunner.)

In this one, you play John Dalton, an ex-Marine now earning his corn as a marshal for the Terran Colonial Authority, the force that polices the backwaters of the 24th-century *Unreal* universe. Your ship is the *Atlantis*, a creaky old rust-bucket that's nearly as weathered as your crew: First Officer Aida, the requisite tattooed hot chick; Isaak, the ship's engineer and tinkerer who provides you with weapon upgrades as the game progresses; and lastly, token alien Ne'ban, the ship's pilot, whose gelatinous appearance makes him look like a shambling Jello shot.

If this sounds like the setup for some generic syndicated sci-fi TV show...well, it plays like one, too. In fact, the introductory dialogue between you and the commander

of the TCA (who sends you out on missions) is so riddled with bad cop-show clichés that I thought somebody had sent me the "joke" review build. But no — much like a space-age T.J. Hooker, Dalton is a tough-but-fair cop with a heart of gold who doesn't like to play by the rules.

The plot concerns a series of lost artifacts that have been scattered across various exotic alien worlds. The artifacts hold such dangerous, mysterious power that



There are no tricks to beating this boss: just keep hitting him with grenades until he goes down.

VITAL STATS

CATEGORY First-person shooter

ESRB RATING M

DEVELOPER Legend

PUBLISHER Atari

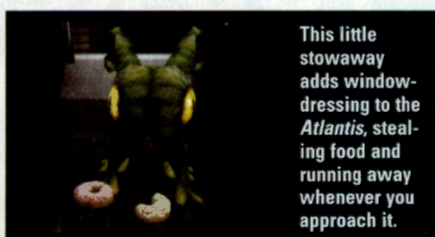
REQUIRED PIII 733, 256MB RAM, 3GB HD, 32MB 3D card

WE RECOMMEND P4 2GHz, 384MB RAM, 64MB 3D card

MAXIMUM PLAYERS 1



"Sir, I'm going to have to ask you to assume the position. Claws on the ground. Sir? Aaaaugh!"



This little stowaway adds window-dressing to the *Atlantis*, stealing food and running away whenever you approach it.

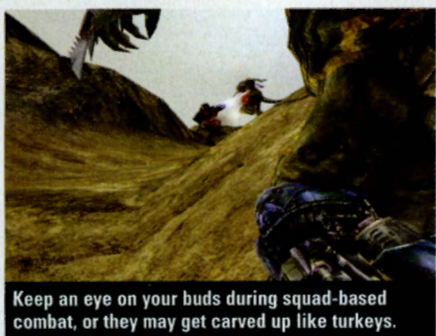
including terrific voice-acting and sound, and, of course, a graphics engine that really shines when rendering sprawling outdoor environments and weird alien habitats — the razor-thin plot, writing, and overall game design fall flat.

For instance, the onboard soap opera — a secondary story set around the ship's crew — depends on your caring about their lives, which you don't. Since they appear only during between-mission down-time aboard the *Atlantis* (when you can wander the ship aimlessly), and not during the in-game action, you have no *Wing Commander*-like emotional investment in the characters.

And remember the original *Unreal*'s first big scare? The lit hallway...lights going out...*ka-chunk, ka-chunk, ka-chunk*...and then a terrifying Skaarj attack? Well, it's here again, but this time in an elevator. Now, it'd be fine if this sequence was intended as an homage to the first game — but it's the only major scripted event of its kind!

One last frustration is due to the lack of a multiplayer mode. Yes, I know...that's what *Unreal Tournament 2003* is for. But *Unreal II* introduces so many cool new weapons — like the blistering flamethrower, an incendiary alt-fire on the shotgun, and seeker orbs — that you feel cheated not getting to play with them against others online. Mix that with the game's limited replay value, and not even the pretty visuals can make *Unreal II* a must-recommend title.

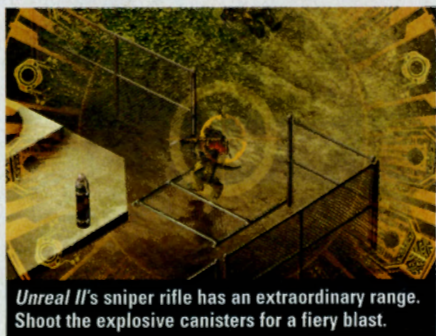
I can only hope that the mod community latches onto *Unreal II*. Maybe in the hands of the truly inspired, this high-quality toolkit can be molded into a classic. — Chuck Osborn



Keep an eye on your buds during squad-based combat, or they may get carved up like turkeys.



Snatching an artifact is always preceded or followed by a boss attack. Strafe and fire, repeat.



Unreal II's sniper rifle has an extraordinary range. Shoot the explosive canisters for a fiery blast.

you're ordered to retrieve them before nastier aliens (like the Skaarj) can get their hands on them. Without giving too much away, the *Awakening* in the title occurs when the artifacts are joined together...and it's not a friendly wake-up call, either.

Most of the game's 12 missions are pretty straightforward. You're briefed by Aida or your superior, receive a weapons upgrade from Isaak, shuttle down to the planet surface, and shoot any enemy that stands between you and the next artifact. Only a few missions break from this formula, and not surprisingly, they're among the best.

For example, in one level the *Atlantis* has to make an unexpected surface landing. Since you've just lifted an artifact from under their noses, packs of human mercenaries siege the entrance to your ship, leaving you as its sole defender. There's even a bit of strategy involved, as your loadout for this particular mission includes force-field generators and turrets, so placing them for maximum benefit is part of the challenge.

Other missions include escort jobs, covering a friendly with a sniper rifle, and even some squad-based action where you're briefly grouped with Marines. Unfortunately, unlike the organic flow of the first game (oops, there I go again), the mission structure of *Unreal II* is so transparently intent on introducing you to new play styles and environments in a mechanical fashion — "Look, here's the acid-rain level...ooh, reflective surfaces..." — that you can almost see the nuts and bolts sticking out from underneath the beautifully bump-mapped visuals.

And perhaps that's really my biggest beef with *Unreal II*: it plays like a game-length demo for the graphics engine. While the production values are all first-rate —

FINAL VERDICT

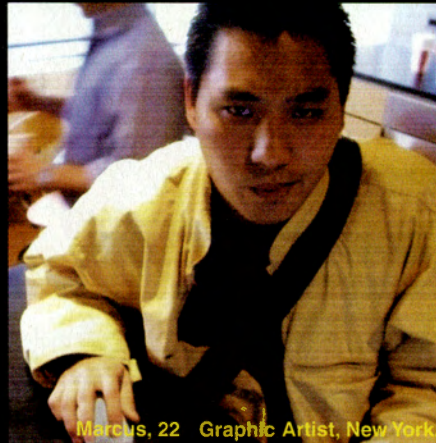
HIGHS: Gorgeous graphics; high production values; cool new weapons; expansive level design.

LOWS: Cookie-cutter storyline; redundancy in mission objectives; occasionally just plain dull.

BOTTOM LINE: Pretty to look at, but it doesn't have a lot going on upstairs.

PC GAMER 72%
GOOD

YOU'RE IN THE MIDST OF A PIRANHA TIGERS HAVE YOU



Marcys, 22 Graphic Artist, New York

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.

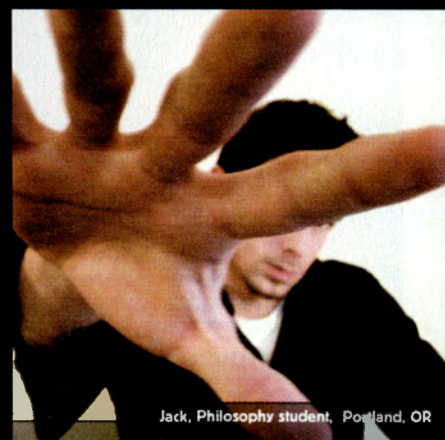
Trust me. This thing will knock you out and bite your ear off. 😊



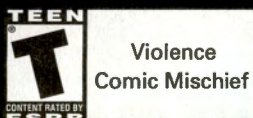
Jack B. Quick: Shark Shark Shark.

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.

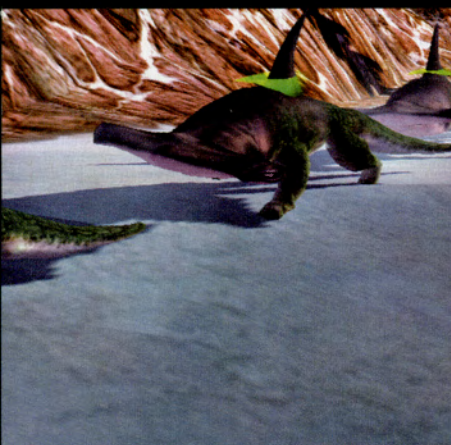
I like to load up on piranhas and put them with a fast predatory feline. When you got an army of Piranha Tigers, you'll be King Neptune faster than you can say "Mermaid Sandwich." Get my drift??? :-)



Jack, Philosophy student, Portland, OR



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.

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Trailer Park Tycoon

CATEGORY Simulation ESRB T DEVELOPER Jaleco PUBLISHER Jaleco REQUIRED PII 450, 16MB 3D card, 64MB RAM, 200MB HD WE RECOMMEND PIII 650, 128MB RAM, 32MB 3D card MAX. PLAYERS 1



Who really wants to be the king of concrete igloos and inflatable beer cans?

Believe it: Another derivative tycoon game has arrived. I'll spare you the obligatory tycoon rant, but I'm convinced *Extreme Tycoon* is just around the corner.

In *Trailer Park Tycoon*, it's up to you to knock a few poor-white-trash trailer parks into shape. Earn cash, retain residents, and beautify your park before floods and alien invasions wipe out your mobile community.

The core of *TPT* lies in managing four aesthetic categories: Trashy, Flashy, Cool,

and Old-school. Each resident must own "ornaments" that contain a combo of these four stats to be happy. Surrounding tenants with the items they need makes them pay their rent and keeps them from "smack-talkin'." It's an interesting concept, and, since some item stats cancel each other out when tenants' lawns expand and overlap, things can heat up when Mr. Cool suddenly finds Mrs. Old-school's duck pond in his territory. Still, once

you realize that placing like-minded tenants into clusters on the map alleviates this bad-neighbor syndrome, the missions lose their challenge and become seriously tedious.

The 3D graphics are reminiscent of the enjoyable *Sim Theme Park*, but *TPT* ultimately suffers from a slew of unforgivable problems, like an ungainly HUD, almost no stat management, and a mere six save-game slots.

The music is right-on, with a mix of twangy banjo and glam-rock riffs, but orig-



That reminds me — time to toss my Christmas tree.

inal and interesting sound effects — or even pre-fab objects — are pretty rare.

It's unclear who'd be interested in *Trailer Park Tycoon*. On the one hand, it's a self-aware parody of other business sims, but it's such a simplistic resource-management game that it doesn't amount to anything more than a snicker at the genre. It'll really appeal only to budget-conscious newbies with an intense hankering to be porch barons.

— Scott Humphries



Mad Dog McCree

New Record:
Lowest score EVER!

CATEGORY Action ESRB T DEVELOPER American Laser Games PUBLISHER Digital Leisure REQUIRED If your PC can't run it, you shouldn't be reading this WE RECOMMEND Avoiding at all costs. MAX. PLAYERS 1

Let's just skip the pleasantries and point out that this is probably the worst idea in the history of computer gaming. Ever.

In case you missed it at the arcades back in 1990, a quick primer: *Mad Dog McCree* was one of those truly awful attempts to squash full-motion video and pistol-shooting together into a semi-interactive gaming experience. And "semi-interactive" is being kind. Digital Leisure already ported the game to the PlayStation 2 last year, and apparently they didn't take a sound enough beating for it.

The PC version is basically an MPEG-1 video that loads automatically when you pop in the disc; no installation required. You use the mouse in place of the arcade gun and — you guessed it — click on the bad actors, err, cowboy cutthroats with beer bellies and pop guns until a sequence is (mercifully) over. There are maybe a dozen brief sequences from start to finish. Maybe it's better with a lightgun: the game is compatible with one, though how many PC gamers actually own this peripheral?



You can fire at these guys as much as you want, but you can't kill them until the appointed moment.

No, this isn't a case of "He's unfairly hacking on an out-of-date classic." This game was a piece of crap then, and it's an especially onerous piece of petrified crap now. It's not even worth buying to laugh at, not at \$10. *MDM* might have worked as a freebie handout or a giveaway on a demo disc, but certainly not as a serious retail release.

It took me 10 minutes to play and beat the game on its toughest mode. That's a dollar a minute for an arcade game that wasn't worth a quarter when it first came



The best parts are the slow-motion sequences where some stunt grunt takes his bruises.

out. I'd rather play the unpatched version of *Battlecruiser 3000AD* with my eyes stapled open for 24 hours straight than waste an 11th minute on this game.

What's next, a special "collector's" edition of *Who Shot Johnny Rock*? Wait — don't answer that. — Matthew Peckham





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hardstuff

THE ULTIMATE MONTHLY GUIDE TO GAMING GEAR

GUNDAM, KING OF ALL ROBOTS

THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF dorks: the type who plays games, and the type who plays games *and* buys toys. I've always prided myself on being the cooler of the two varieties — the non-toy-buying gaming dork. But now I've gone and totally screwed up my icy-cool image. I bought a toy. An expensive one.

What's wrong with me? I don't even like Gundam, but there I was last month, drooling like an idiot over the Dendrobium RX-78GP03 — a futuristic interstellar weapons platform built specifically for Mr. Gundam, king of all robots. See, he sits inside of it, and it makes him look all super-tough to the other scaredy-cat wuss robots. Too bad it makes *me* look like a full-on fool. Was I not happy with my life? Was I not content being able to bathe regularly and date attractive women?

I spent upward of \$170 [if he's admitting that, it means it was at least \$250 — Ed.] on this stupid piece of plastic, and at over a foot long, it's simply too large to hide. Now it sits in my room collecting dust — as I sit in my room collecting insults flung at me by my way-cooler, non-toy-buying gaming-dork friends. I feel as though I've complicated my life unnecessarily. I wish I could go back to a simpler time when I was young enough to play with toys without the risk of ridicule, or that I could travel to a parallel universe where Gundam is king, and I could sit on his shoulder in my tight yellow shorts, singing "Yippee!" as we flew through the starry sky together.

Greg Vederman,
Senior Editor

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, Mid-range, 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.)

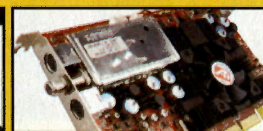
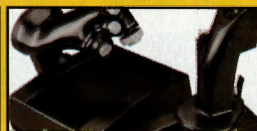
ENTRY-LEVEL SYSTEM ROUGHLY \$750

CASE	
300-watt ATX form factor	\$50
PROCESSOR	
AMD Duron 1.3GHz	\$37
MOTHERBOARD	
Asus A7V-133	\$73
MEMORY	
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	
40GB Maxtor 7,200rpm	\$68
SOUND CARD	
Creative Labs Audigy (white box)	\$59
MODEM	
v.92 Hardware Modem	\$15
MONITOR	
17-inch Optique Q71	\$130
VIDEO CARD	
GeForce4 MX 440 64MB DDR	\$50
JOYSTICK	
Microsoft SideWinder Joystick	\$25
GAMEPAD	
Logitech WingMan Rumblepad	\$23
SPEAKERS	
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	
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MOTHERBOARD	
Asus A7V333 (Award 1007)	\$100
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Creative Labs SB Live! Audigy MP3+	\$85
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19-inch NEC FE991SB-BK	\$292
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GeForce4 Ti 4200	\$115
JOYSTICK	
Microsoft SideWinder Precision 2	\$45
GAMEPAD	
Logitech WingMan Rumblepad	\$23
SPEAKERS	
Logitech Z-540 (4.1)	\$60
KEYBOARD	
Addtronics	\$15
USB MOUSE	
Logitech or Microsoft	\$39
TOTAL	\$1,195

DREAM SYSTEM ROUGHLY \$3,000 AND ABOVE



CASE	
400-watt ATX form factor	\$100
PROCESSOR	
Intel P4 3.06GHz	\$660
MOTHERBOARD	
Intel D850EMV2L	\$140
MEMORY	
Twin sticks of 256MB PC-1066 RDRAM	\$184
CD-ROM/DVD-ROM DRIVE	
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Plextor 48x24x48 CD-RW	\$100
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Microsoft Natural Keyboard Pro	\$40
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MINE'S FASTER!

YOUR GUIDE TO BENCHMARKING THE PC GAMER WAY

Here at *PC Gamer*, we use benchmarks to illustrate how well (or how poorly) video cards and computers run the games we all play. Without benchmarks, we'd have to recommend components based on how they smell and taste — just like they do on Internet web sites. We think that's silly, so we're here to teach you how to benchmark your system like a pro!

When running benchmarks for comparison, it's important that you keep your platform stable. For instance, if you want to test a GeForce4 Ti 4600 against a RADEON 9500 Pro and have the results mean anything, you've got to run each set of tests under the exact same conditions, and on the exact same computer. If you change a sound card between tests, or if you adjust Windows settings, you'll negate the results. Likewise, if you're pitting two computers against each other, you need to make sure that you run all of your tests in the exact same manner, with the exact same settings.

There are two types of benchmarks in the world. *Synthetic* tests run hypothetical code through your computer in an effort to simulate, among other things, the performance of tomorrow's games on your PC — think 3DMark2001 Special Edition. *Real-world* tests, on the other hand, are those made from actual games and applications — e.g., *Quake III* and *Unreal Tournament 2003*.

At *PC Gamer*, we use a mix of synthetic and real-world benchmarks to paint for you the best overall performance picture. For system benchmarking, we run a total of five benchmarks, each at different resolutions. For graphics cards alone, we run those same five benchmarks, but



The *Dungeon Siege* benchmark assaults a lonely avatar with hundreds of baddies.

we change things up a bit by running at different resolutions and enabling FSAA (full-screen antialiasing). We run all tests in true, 32-bit color.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003

Make sure that Disk 1 is in your CD-ROM drive. Next, navigate your way to the game's SYSTEM folder, which can be found at C:\UT2003\System, by default. In the folder you'll find a file called BENCHMARK.EXE. Double-click it.

The benchmark then prompts you to choose a resolution. For system testing, we usually run at 1024x768, 1280x960, and 1600x1200. For graphics-card testing, we typically run at 1280x960 and 1600x1200, and report scores with no antialiasing (AA), 2x AA, and 4x AA.

At each resolution, the benchmark runs two separate tests. Flyby, which is texture- and polygon-heavy, tests the raw power of the graphics card in question. Botmatch, which adds several AI-controlled combatants into the mix, is more representative of how the game actually performs when you're online playing with friends. When both tests are finished, the benchmark spits out a report in frames per second.

3DMARK2001 SE

This software is our synthetic benchmark of choice. 3DMark2001 SE, a DirectX 8.1 bench-

mark, puts your system through its paces by running and frame-counting several realistic game worlds, and then running several purely theoretical tests to determine a video card's and/or system's capabilities. You can download 3DMark2001 SE for free at www.FutureMark.com.

For system and video-card benchmarking, we generally run at 1024x768 with default settings, except that we enable triple buffer rather than the standard double buffer. We report the total 3DMark score, which is a synthetic number (not a frame rate). We also report the frame rate of Game 4: Nature — one of the cooler tests in the program — because it puts a very heavy load on your graphics card and gives a good indication of how the games of tomorrow might run on your PC.

JEDI KNIGHT II

This benchmark tests your CPU more than your video card and requires some serious work to get it up and running. First, make sure your game CD is in the drive, and that you have installed *none* of the game's patches. Next, run the Multiplayer Game executable. When the game loads, open the console by pressing Shift + ~. Type `devmap ffa_bespin`. Wait for the level to load. Once it has, pull down the console again and type `timedemo 1`. Hit Enter. Then type

RULES OF THUMB FOR ALL TESTS

1. Before you start testing, make sure you've got plenty of free space on your hard drive. Defragging your machine first isn't a bad idea, either.
2. Install the game or test app.
3. Reboot your computer.
4. Turn off any and all open applications such as screen savers, anti-virus programs, and download managers.
5. Enable or disable antialiasing via your video card's Display Properties window.
6. Test away!
7. Always reboot your computer between tests.

COMPARE YOUR SYSTEM TO OURS

MID-RANGE PC

System specs: P4 1.6GHz, 256MB PC-2700 DDR, GeForce4 Ti 4200, Windows XP SP1, Direct X 9

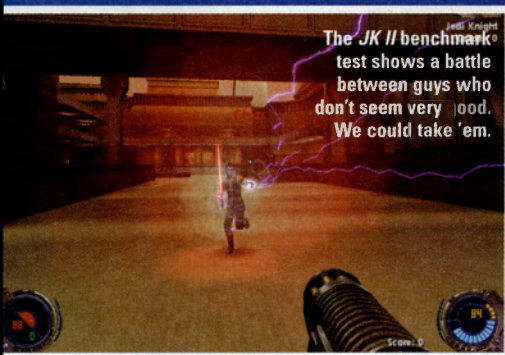
3DMARK2001 SE*	3D Marks	8,849
	Game 4: Nature	58 fps
QUAKE III†	1280 x 1024	140 fps, 47 fps
	1600 x 1200	105 fps, 30 fps
UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003‡	1024 x 768	114 fps, 42 fps
	1280 x 960	89 fps, 41 fps
	1600 x 1200	60 fps, 35 fps
JEDI KNIGHT II*	1024 x 768	67 fps
DUNGEON SIEGE*	1024 x 768	50 fps

HIGH-END PC

System specs: P4 3GHz, 1GB PC-800 RDRAM, RADEON 9700 PRO, Windows XP SP1, Direct X 9

3DMARK2001 SE*	3D Marks	15,475
	Game 4: Nature	102 fps
QUAKE III†	1280 x 1024	249 fps, 151 fps
	1600 x 1200	184 fps, 104 fps
UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003‡	1024 x 768	201 fps, 73 fps
	1280 x 960	160 fps, 73 fps
	1600 x 1200	109 fps, 69 fps
JEDI KNIGHT II*	1024 x 768	113 fps
DUNGEON SIEGE*	1024 x 768	85 fps

*Tests run at 1024x768 in true color with all settings maxed. †Tests run in true color with all settings maxed. Results are with no AA and 4x AA. ‡Tests run at 1024x768 in true color (flyby followed by botmatch). ♣Tests run in true color with all settings maxed.



disconnect and hit Enter again. Now you'll be back at the options screen. Click Play and you'll see a demo called jk2ffa. Double-click it and the benchmark will load and run. When it ends, pull down the console again and scroll up several dozen lines using the Page Up key, until you see your score in frames per second.

For system benchmarking, we run it at 1024x768 with all graphics effects maxed-out. For video-card testing, we often run it at 1024x768, 1280x1024, and 1600x1200, and report scores with no AA, 2x AA, and 4x AA.

DUNGEON SIEGE

Dungeon Siege benchmarking requires not only the full game, but also a separate utility that you'll need to download from the web and install. The official utility can be found at various places, such as www.pcgameworld.com/story.php?id/104.

Make sure Disk 1 is in your drive before you start, and then install the utility. Launch the Dungeon Siege benchmark by clicking on the

shortcut that this procedure creates on your desktop. When the script finishes, it'll return your score in frames per second to a file called fps.log, which you can find at C:\Program Files\Microsoft Games\Dungeon Siege\fps.log — assuming you installed to the default directory. The log file contains a great deal of information. The only line you're interested in is "Average Frame Delta" — it'll tell you your average frames per second.

For system testing, we run the *Dungeon Siege* demo at 1024x768. To test video-card performance, we generally run the benchmark at 1024x768, 1280x1024, and 1600x1200 and report scores with no AA, 2x AA, and 4x AA. Please check the readme file that comes with the benchmark utility for instructions on how to change resolutions.

Please note that we make several custom changes to the files in this test to ensure that the game runs at full detail with every card on the market. So, while you can use the downloadable benchmark as-is, your scores may differ from ours.

QUAKE III: ARENA

We use the original retail version of this game, sans any patches or updates.

For both systems and video cards, we run at 1280x1024 and 1600x1200, with all graphics settings maxed out, and with 4X AA enabled. *Quake III* might be an old game, but its engine is still second-to-none when it comes to testing memory, CPU, and video-card performance.

To run a *Quake III: Arena* benchmark, start the game. Bring down the console by pressing the ~ key. Type `timedemo 1` and hit Enter. Then exit the console and navigate through the options menu to DEMOS. Run DEMO1. When it finishes, hit the ~ key to see your score in frames per second.



■ The Nature scene in 3DMark03 is utterly breathtaking, and it's a fully functional DX9 test.

3DMARK03

LAST YEAR CAME AND WENT without a new 3DMark, but this year brings with it 3DMark03! Here's a taste of what this new benchmarking software will offer when it ships in the very near future:

→ Four all-new game tests, built to represent the graphics quality of next-generation games. The fourth test will be a full-featured DirectX 9 test in the form of a beautiful new nature scene.

→ The 3DMark03 demo, based on the four game tests, but with additional eye candy and original soundtracks.

→ A 3D sound test — totally new for the 3DMark series! Surround sound is an exciting part of modern 3D gaming, and 3DMark03 can now assess the performance impact that 3D sound will have on your system.

→ A CPU test — it was gone in 3DMark2002, but now it's back, baby! Your CPU plays a very important role in 3D games (duh!), so it's almost a no-brainer that 3DMark03 should be able to benchmark that part of your system!

→ High-precision professional tools for determining image and texture-filtering quality.

→ Automated batch runs.

→ A whole lot more!



■ 3DMark03's demo is even more impressive to behold than the benchmark itself!

LOW-RES FOR SYSTEM PERFORMANCE?

Interesting fact: You can run a few benchmarks at their *lowest* possible settings to test the raw power of your CPU, motherboard, and RAM. Doing so all but removes your video card from the equation! Get your buddy to bring over his "uber" computer and run *Quake III: Arena* at 640x480 and see if his Intel CPU is really that much faster than your AMD when his fancy-schmancy video card can't come to the rescue!

FALCON NORTHWEST, WWW.FALCON-NW.COM, 800-FALCON-1 ■ PRICE \$3,801



Mach V Exotix



NEVERQUEST FOR A FINER PC AGAIN!

This machine has the best paint job I've ever seen on a PC. Falcon began work on this case by requesting original hand-painted *EverQuest* artwork direct from Sony. Then Falcon had prints made out of special sheets of vinyl, specifically designed to accept paint. Once the sheets were in place on either side of the tower (even up close, they look like the real deal), the edges of the prints were hand-airbrushed to blend them seamlessly into the \$350-per-pint red/gold prism paint background they rest on. The final touch: six layers of acrylic clear-coat — each

layer oven-baked three times. I've seen brand-new Lamborghinis (from a distance) that don't shine like this Mach V.

Falcon charges \$399 for "simpler" single-color paint jobs, while the price of one-of-a-kind custom jobs like this *EverQuest* case vary depending on the amount of work involved. This one costs \$599, so figure that you can get this same Mach V without any paint at all for \$3,202 — a bargain by high-end PC standards, especially when you consider that, in a sea of one-year warranties, Falcon gives you three years of coverage at no extra charge.

A good portion of the savings stems from the fact that this system's lifeblood pumps through a new 3000+ Athlon XP CPU from AMD, rather than a 3GHz Pentium 4 from Intel. The new P4 3GHz "killah," code-named Barton, is clocked at a mere 2.167GHz, but unlike other Athlon XPs before it, it sports 512K of L2 cache instead of the typical 256K.

That scant bit of extra memory seems to make all the difference. I benchmarked this PC against a P4 3GHz RAMBUS-based system with matching hardware, settings, and drivers, and if you turn to our benchmarking feature on page 122, you'll see that the two platforms are damn near equal. Welcome back to the party, AMD. We've missed you.

Another late arrival to the festivities is the GeForce FX 5800 Ultra (see page 125). Falcon is one of NVIDIA's launch partners for the new tech, so the system builder sent us an FX and a RADEON 9700 PRO, just to make it interesting.



I benchmarked both cards in the Mach V for your pleasure. In many raw game benchmarks (meaning, without antialiasing or anisotropic filtering enabled), the GeForce FX

slaps the five-month-old 9700 PRO around and calls it Susan. If you look at our stand-alone GeForce review, however — where I list several tests with antialiasing and anisotropic filtering enabled — the 9700 PRO fights back and breaks its foot off in the new GeForce.

Which card is right for you? Depends which extra features you like to enable (if any) in your games, and if you care that the FX is loud and takes up two full slots in your PC. Either way, both cards retail for around \$399, so that decision shouldn't have any bearing on the price of this system.

Make sure to check our spec chart for a complete list of components on display here — but don't let the Mach V's 1GHz of RAM or DVD-copying capabilities stop your heart before you have a chance to enjoy one of your own!

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Great power at a reasonable price; top-quality custom paint job; 3000+ CPU; well-cooled and exceptionally quiet (sans GeForce FX).

LOWS: They won't let us keep it.

BOTTOM LINE: AMD or Intel, NVIDIA or ATI, PCs don't get any better than Falcon's newest Mach V.

PC GAMER 94%
EDITORS' CHOICE

SYSTEM SPECS

OS	Windows XP Home
PROCESSOR	AMD Athlon XP 3000+
MOTHERBOARD	Asus A7N8X
MEMORY	1GB PC-2700 DDR
RAM SLOTS	3 (1 free)
PCI	5 (2 free)
VIDEO	RADEON 9700 PRO or GeForce FX 5800 Ultra
HARD DRIVE 1 & 2	IBM Deskstar 180GXP 7,200rpm ATA/100 80GB
FIREWIRE	Yes
USB 2.0	Yes
AUDIO	Sound Blaster Audigy 2
DVD-RW	Pioneer DVR-A05
DVD-ROM	Toshiba 16x
NETWORK CARD	Yes — 10/100
MOUSE/KEYBOARD	Logitech Cordless Elite Duo
5.25-INCH BAYS	4 (2 free)
3.5-INCH BAYS	6 (3 free)
RECOVERY CD	Yes
WARRANTY	Three-year parts and labor, including one year of Falcon overnight service

BENCHMARKS RADEON 9700 PRO

3DMARK2001 SE*	3D Marks	15,565
	Game 4: Nature	102 fps
QUAKE III†	1280 x 1024	238 fps, 148 fps
	1600 x 1200	182 fps, 104 fps
UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003‡	1024 x 768	206 fps, 83 fps
	1280 x 960	160 fps, 82 fps
	1600 x 1200	108 fps, 73 fps
JEDI KNIGHT II*	1280 x 1024	96 fps
DUNGEON SIEGE*	1024 x 768	84 fps

GEFORCE FX 5800 ULTRA

3DMARK2001 SE*	3D Marks	15,696
	Game 4: Nature	121 fps
QUAKE III†	1280 x 1024	254 fps, 149 fps
	1600 x 1200	218 fps, 100 fps
UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003‡	1024 x 768	206 fps, 80 fps
	1280 x 960	182 fps, 80 fps
	1600 x 1200	134 fps, 76 fps
JEDI KNIGHT II*	1280 x 1024	111 fps
DUNGEON SIEGE*	1024 x 768	73 fps

*Tests run at 1024x768 in 32-bit color with triple frame buffer, 24-bit Z-buffer, compressed textures, hardware T&L enabled, and V-sync disabled. †Tests run in full 32-bit color with all settings maxed. No AA, then 4x AA. ‡"Flyby" results, then botmatch. Tests run in full 32-bit color with all settings maxed. ♣Tests run in full 32-bit color with all settings maxed.



GeForce FX 5800 Ultra

THE NEW GEFORCE ARRIVES POWERFUL — BUT VERY LATE

Take any overly negative reviews of the GeForce FX 5800 Ultra you've read on the Internet with a grain of salt. Many of the early reviewers' reactionary statements seem to be the result of crushed expectations mixed with a blood-in-the-water mentality.

As I reported in our February 2003 issue, GeForce FX is a DirectX 9+ part, much like ATI's RADEON 9700 PRO. The "+" in the case of the FX signifies that it enables certain technologies beyond the current DX spec, such as extremely complex shader programs that can be used to better represent real-world textures and materials in the games of the future.

The new GeForce has two speed settings. In 2D mode, the card's powerful cooling fan remains idle, and the core clocks itself to 300MHz, and clocks its 128MB of DDR2 memory to 600MHz. As soon as the GeForce senses a 3D application, the core kicks up to 500MHz and the memory jumps to an amazing 1GHz. It's at this point that the card's much-maligned fan spins up.

The FX cards sent to websites in late January 2003 weren't final reference boards, and they were louder than the board I was sent. Mine is still pretty boisterous, though: I'd say that it roughly doubles the noise output of a typical well-cooled PC. Depending on where your tower sits in your room, and how loud you turn up your speakers when you play, this volume may or may not be a concern.

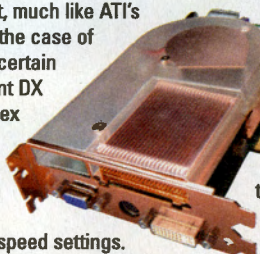
Of far greater importance is the card's performance. Ironically, many of the benchmarks I've chosen to run with this review show the FX in the

light that NVIDIA requested — at high resolutions with antialiasing and 8x anisotropic filtering enabled. There's no good "apples to apples" way to compare anisotropic filtering modes between the GeForce FX and RADEON 9700 PRO, so I chose to run ATI's Performance anisotropic mode (rather than Quality) after observing that it looked just as good as either of NVIDIA's settings.

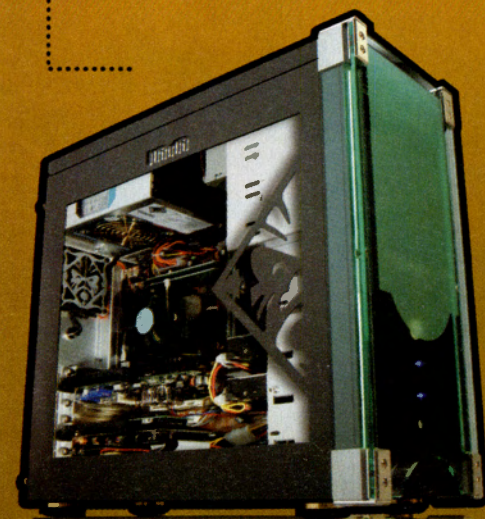
With these features enabled, the performance lead tends to (but does not always) go in the RADEON's favor, by as much as 30 percent. But the fun doesn't stop there.

Further testing shows that the FX tends to pull ahead of the RADEON by as much as 20 percent at medium to high resolutions, so long as high-quality settings like antialiasing and anisotropic filtering aren't enabled. (See page 124 for more benchmarks.)

What does it all mean? It means that, as they exist today, the 9700 PRO and FX 5800 Ultra are roughly comparable products, with NVIDIA taking a slight overall lead, depending on card settings. Despite the fact that it takes up two slots in your PC case and has an annoying fan, the FX is mighty powerful — it's just not the 9700 PRO-killer that NVIDIA said it would be. Worse still, because the FX arrived five months late, ATI's own so-called 9700 PRO-killer, the RADEON 9800, could end up shipping as soon as a month after the first GeForce FX cards hit the street.



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BENCHMARKS (GEFORCE FX 5800 ULTRA)

3DMARK2001 SE*	1024x768	3D Marks	12,483
		Game 4: Nature	114 fps
	1280x1024	3D Marks	11,613
		Game 4: Nature	77 fps
	1600x1200	3D Marks	10,228
		Game 4: Nature	54 fps
QUAKE III*	1280x1024	No AA + 8x AF	219 fps
		2x AA + 8x AF	198 fps
		4x AA + 8x AF	135 fps
DUNGEON SIEGE*	1280x1024	No AA + 8x AF	58 fps
		2x AA + 8x AF	50 fps
		4x AA + 8x AF	47 fps
UT 2003 ²	1280x960	No AA + 8x AF	106 fps
		2x AA + 8x AF	90 fps
		4x AA + 8x AF	74 fps

*Tests run in 32-bit color with triple frame buffer, 24-bit Z-buffer, compressed textures, hardware T&L enabled, and V-sync disabled. †Tests run in full 32-bit color with all settings maxed and 8x anisotropic filtering enabled.
*Tests run in full 32-bit color with all settings maxed and 8x anisotropic filter-

BENCHMARKS (RADEON 9700 PRO)

3DMARK2001 SE*	1024x768	3D Marks	13,034
		Game 4: Nature	101 fps
	1280x1024	3D Marks	11,586
		Game 4: Nature	70 fps
	1600x1200	3D Marks	9,952
		Game 4: Nature	51 fps
QUAKE III*	1280x1024	No AA + 8x AF	213 fps
		2x AA + 8x AF	182 fps
		4x AA + 8x AF	146 fps
DUNGEON SIEGE*	1280x1024	No AA + 8x AF	68 fps
		2x AA + 8x AF	67 fps
		4x AA + 8x AF	67 fps
UT 2003 ²	1280x960	No AA + 8x AF	128 fps
		2x AA + 8x AF	103 fps
		4x AA + 8x AF	89 fps

ing enabled. ²"Flyby" results only. Tests run in full 32-bit color with all settings maxed and 8x anisotropic filtering enabled.
(All benchmarks run on a P4 2GHz test bed with 512MB PC-800 RDRAM and Windows XP Home Edition.)

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A Simmer's 3D Card Conundrum

What new 3D card will best serve your favorite sims — classic and new?

Hardcore flight-sim fans are stubborn sons-o'-bitches. So stubborn, in fact, that even to this day, large numbers steadfastly refuse to upgrade their aging Voodoo-based video cards for fear of no longer being able to play classic aerial sims like *Red Baron 3D*, *World War II Fighters*, and *European Air War*. Or at least, not in the way that god and 3dfx intended them to be played.

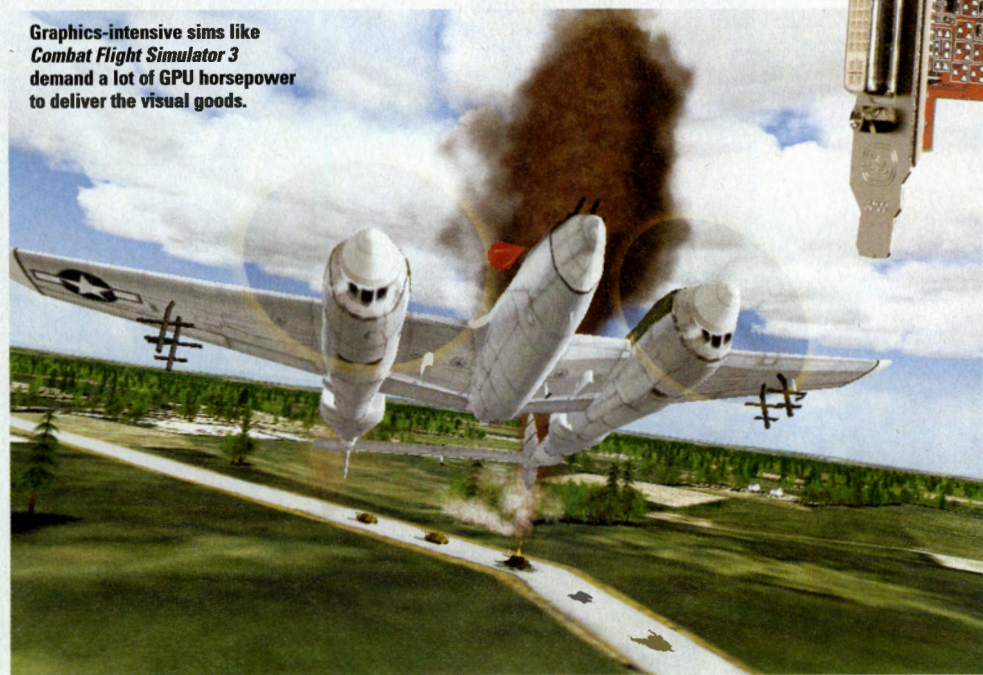
When you consider that many of our finest combat flight sim titles were built with Glide-enhanced graphics during the "Golden Era" of sims (1997–99), it's easy to see why there are still so many holdouts. Apart from *IL-2 Sturmovik* and

they eventually dump their old 3D accelerator for one of those fancy new hunks of silicon.

The reason you don't see any colorful little bar graphs in this piece is because I personally don't give a flying crap if video card X pumps out 140 frames per second in the *Quake III* test. What I'm offering here is a firsthand testimonial on the hardware that has worked for me with my own sim-related gaming endeavors.

The top two video cards at this moment are NVIDIA's GeForce4 Ti 4600 and ATI's RADEON 9700 PRO. Although they're certainly not cheap — NVIDIA's top-of-the-line GeForce4 Ti 4600 rings in about \$100 less than the ultra-spendy

Graphics-intensive sims like *Combat Flight Simulator 3* demand a lot of GPU horsepower to deliver the visual goods.



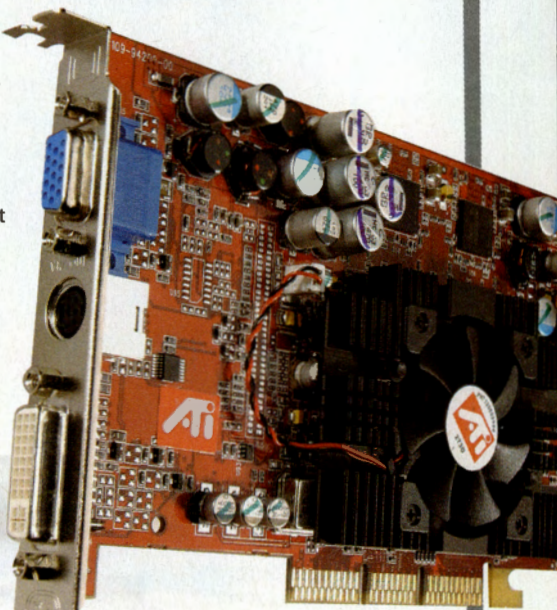
Flight Simulator 2002, no one has released an A-list flight sim since *Jane's F/A-18* in January 2000. From the perspective of most stalwarts, if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

As a died-in-the-wool 3dfx-er, I, too, held on to my precious Voodoo5 5500 AGP card well past its nominal drop-dead date. As a full-time game reviewer, however, I was compelled to embrace the new technology just to keep up with all of the later releases (across a variety of genres). As a result, my venerable Voodoo5 card ultimately gave way to a GeForce2 and then more recently to an MSI GeForce4 Ti 4600 and ATI's latest RADEON 9700 PRO.

This column isn't intended as a video-card review, however — it's more of a hands-on guide to help simmers make an informed decision when

\$400 RADEON — either one of these little darlings will completely transform your desktop's aerial-combat environment. As fortune would have it, I have one of each, and I've been putting both through their paces with sim titles (old and new) for the better part of four months.

Lesson No. 1: Forget any of those Glide-incompatibility rumors that you might have heard. I've managed to get damned near every 3dfx-powered sim that I own — from *Red Baron 3D* to *World War II Fighters* — working just hunky-dory with the newer hardware. In fact, with so many D3D patches, Glide wrappers, and third-party mods kicking around the Net, any argument for hanging on to that arthritic Voodoo card just to play some of these classic titles is a complete non sequitur.



Modern sim functionality is a tad more complex. With ATI's 9700 PRO attached to my modest Athlon 1600XP rig, I can crank out frame rates in the high 30s in *Combat Flight Simulator 3* (at 1024x768 resolution). But that figure slips into the low 20s with the GeForce4. What's more, while the Ti 4600 loses another half-dozen frames per second when I max out the settings, the RADEON card doesn't even flinch.

The GeForce4's performance does improve significantly once you move away from big-time resource hogs like *Combat Flight Simulator 3*. It actually came within a few fps of the RADEON in *IL-2 Sturmovik* with FSAA off, and easily held its own with most of the older sims in my inventory (both cards hit the 60-fps ceiling in *Falcon 4.0 SP3* without breaking a sweat). Factor in NVIDIA's commendable history of stable driver updates, and the Ti 4600 certainly seems to offer the greatest bang for the buck for budget-conscious simmers.

So which to buy? Well, if blistering performance with later-spec titles is important to you, then ATI's 9700 PRO is the hands-down winner at the moment. Before you whip out that credit card, however, I strongly suggest waiting for our reviews of the new GeForce FX options from NVIDIA. [Editor's note: No need to wait — check out my review of the GeForce FX 5800 Ultra on page 125 of this very issue! — TheVede]

— simcolumn@pcgamer.com

MY GAMES OF THE MONTH: 1. IL-2 STURMOVIK: FORGOTTEN BATTLES (BETA). 2. F1 2002 (GTR SPORTS CAR ADD-ON). 3. COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 3. 4. LOCK ON: MODERN AIR COMBAT (BETA). 5. NASCAR RACING: 2003 SEASON

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Clan Destined

Got the right attitude? Join a gaming clan!

"Finding players with good aim is pretty easy to do. Finding players with good aim who are friendly people that you work well with isn't always easy."

PC Gamer reader Matt Hoffman (not to be confused with the BMX star) articulates what most online gamers know all too well. That's why the "Amish Gigolo" — as he's known in cyberland, and hopefully not to his co-workers — is a member of Amish World Order, a *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* clan good enough to place in the top 10 of the QuakeCon 2002 RTCW tournament.

To outsiders, gaming clans can be intimidating as hell. The image is of an exclusive club where the "leet" meet to blast your feet. But the truth is, if you're a well-adjusted person, you've got a better chance at getting in than a malcontent with "mad skillz."

Adds Matt: "We've had to kick talented players from our roster because they just didn't gel with the rest of us."

Okay, sure...but what about clans that don't dress as Mennonites when they play?

"Friendship is very important to us, and we often refer to [our group] as a 'sisterhood,'" says Kimli Welsh, one of the six members of QgirlZ, the longest-running active all-female *Quake III* clan in existence.

"Skill isn't the most important element," continues Kimli. "If friendship accompanies the desire to play, it makes things very easy!"

MOD OF THE MONTH



Anime buffs, download the total conversion *Bid for Power* and turn *Quake III* into a Saturday-morning cartoon I'd call "Fragimon." The power is yours at www.bidforpower.com.

Even the clans that are in it for the money don't make fabulous cash prizes their top priority. For example, when asked what it takes to be a member of Team Vindicate, a *Team Fortress* clan that formed to compete in the Cyberathlete Professional League, member Michael Weitz admits: "Yes, you have to be one of the best. But we've also rejected many of the top players simply because of their attitude or history with sh*t-talking."

"You need to be not only an exceptional player, but an exceptional person," agrees Dave

Geffon, whose clan, Team 3D, took first prize in the winter CPL *Counter-Strike* tournament and competes in championships around the world.

"Attitude outside of the game is just as important. If people don't get along, the clan won't work well."

When you get right down to it, gaming is still about fun, and even a virtuoso machine-gunner isn't worth playing with if he grates like cheese. So don't fear the clan.

NEXT MONTH: The dos and don'ts of starting your own clan.

— killingbox@pcgamer.com



Team 3D after their CPL win (minus Torbull, who we had to cut out — sorry!).

MY GAMES OF THE MONTH: 1. UNREAL II, 2. NEOCRON, 3. FREEDOM FORCE, 4. METROID PRIME, 5. BATTLEFIELD 1942



A pygmy king and his miniature-sized queen take you on in one of the spades environments.

extended play

Itching for Card Games? Pick a Different Deck

I LOVE CARD GAMES. Always have. Mine is the kind of family that considers spades over the dinner table a perfect evening's entertainment. In the midnight wasteland of deadlines, Yahoo! Poker is a frequent diversion.

So I take it personally when the supposed hardcore write off PC card games as "casual gaming." If a virtual round of whist makes me a casual gamer, then count me in with Grandma and Uncle Floyd.

Unfortunately, it's a rare product that bothers to treat card games as anything more than shov-elware. The Hoyle card games still remain the industry standard, with a wide gulf separating their quality from just about any other product's.

I wish I could say that wasn't the case when pitched against *Hearts Deluxe* and *Spades Deluxe* from Freeverse Software.

You know you're in murky waters when the only box blurb is "especially nice interface — *Los Angeles Times*." Not exactly stirring praise.

The games present the customary 3D environments with your view from the seat of honor. You're given over 20 characters to play against, but unfortunately each comes fully equipped with a library of inane speech clips that'll make you wish the cute little monkey or preening emperor would just crawl under a rock and die...painfully.

Al is a much more significant problem. Spades is a team game, but you'd hardly know it from the solo mode of *Spades Deluxe*, in which your "partner" casually overbids. Once, I tried to go "nil" (a tactic requiring your partner to cover you with a high bid) and my partner responded by cheerfully bidding *one*. Thanks, buddy!

As a multiplayer game online, these titles are a bit more palatable, with a very straightforward matchmaking service. But other than some 3D graphics, everything here is available for free from the Yahoo! Games site.

Though I must agree with the *Los Angeles Times* — the interface is especially nice!

MOD OF THE YEAR

When we did our big 2002 awards feature last month, we decided not to present a Mod of the Year for a couple of reasons, not the least of which is that the mod-making scene has become so huge and varied that it would have to be someone's full-time job just to stay up with them all. But since this is my column, let me just send a special kudos to the *Day of Defeat* team for version 4 of the world's best *Half-Life* mod. You guys are still kicking ass.

— extendedplay@pcgamer.com



Dan Morris

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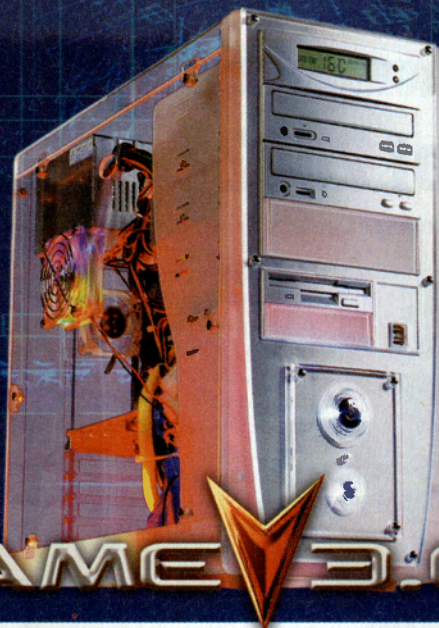
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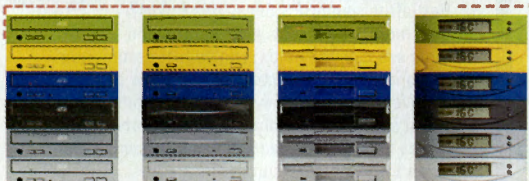
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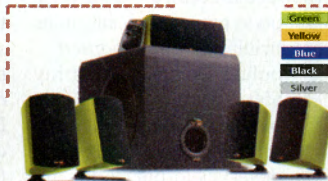
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The Best RPG of 2002

Our resident DM gives his top pick from last year's brilliance

My hands-down choice for 2002's RPG of the Year is *Morrowind*, which should come as no great surprise to regular readers of this column. (I extend a hearty thanks — to both of you — for committing such self-abuse.)

For certain, *Neverwinter Nights* — chosen last issue as PCG's Best RPG of 2002 by the collected editors — is a very good game, especially in its brilliantly implemented online options. But for my \$50, I want a solid solo-play experience first and foremost, and *Morrowind* deserves loftier kudos here, particularly for taking its share of chances.

For starters, in *Morrowind* you don't have to follow a forced linear progression of quests to build up your character and enjoy the game — in fact, it feels a bit like an MMORPG. You can dabble for dozens of hours with the myriad random sub-quests, many of which go way beyond the garden "FedEx" variety found elsewhere.



And once you finish the main quest, there's still plenty to do/find/explore: *Morrowind* doesn't have to end with Dagoth Ur's death. The option to continue isn't a first in the genre, for sure, but it is perhaps the best implementation of it to date. (Beyond that, an absolutely absurd number of different characters can be used to replay the game for very different experiences.)

This setup was risky, as new players often may not know what to do and where to go next, which can be a comfort when it's laid out for you.

Via its first-person view, *Morrowind* also

rendered the most artistically and architecturally unique fantasy-based RPG to hit my desktop in quite some time. It looked different than everything else out there, and that's always a risk.

I'd like to see the new high-profile RPGs that come out this year take up *Morrowind*'s mantle when it comes to taking chances. And there's plenty of room to improve upon *Morrowind*'s attempt at rendering such a large, complex, open-ended game world.

For instance, how about delivering an RPG that's larger in scope than *Morrowind* — but even more richly detailed — with NPCs that alter their routines according to the time of day? Or an RPG that gives us a fresh take on the good-versus-evil fantasy standard?

That's right: I want it all, I want it yesterday, and I want it to run on my P200 with 32MB of RAM.

Your favorite RPG of 2002 was...? Tell me at alternate_lives@pcgamer.com.



MY GAMES OF THE MONTH: 1. ARX FATALIS, 2. TRIBUNAL, 3. THE SIMS ONLINE, 4. COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 3, 5. NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2

Military History on Demand: An Online Oasis

WHEN I FIRST BROUGHT MagWeb.com to readers' attention back in mid-1999, the site was barely three years old and most wargamers hadn't yet discovered it. At that time, alas, wargaming's future looked pretty glum, as Old Guard game publishers like Avalon Hill bit the dust, and our favorite pastime seemed headed for near-total marginalization.

As of early 2003, however, the genre seems to be in robust health, thanks largely to the vigorous activity of small, successful indie publishers

William R. Trotter



like Shrapnel Games, Matrix Games, Battlefront, and HPS Sims. This column gets more emails than ever before, and a lot of them are from newbies who've just gotten interested in wargaming and Want to Know More.

Well, one thing they should definitely know about is MagWeb, which has more than doubled in size (40,000 archived articles, up from 15,000) since I first wrote about it. The FAQs:

■ WHAT IS MAGWEB.COM?

It's a vast online library of archived magazine articles (40,000 and always growing) with full text and graphics. There are no ads, no pop-ups, no banners. The articles are drawn from 106 publications devoted to wargaming and military history. The annual membership fee gives you 24/7 access to everything, with no restrictions as to browsing time or how much you can print out.

■ HOW MUCH TO JOIN?

One-year subscriptions cost \$60, about the cost of one new game. Five bucks a month is a steal, considering the content at your fingertips. For research, it's priceless (hell, I save more than \$5/month in library parking fees); for simple reading pleasure, it's a banquet. I've never logged on without making delightful discoveries.

■ MAGAZINES SUCH AS...?

Okay, at random, how about *Abanderado* (the Spanish Civil War); *Colonial Conquest* (Victorian-era campaigns and cultures); *Dragoman* (campaigns of the Ottoman Empire); *Empires, Eagles, and Lions* (all kinds of Napoleonic stuff); *Junior General Reports* (teachers discuss using historical sims as teaching aids); *The Naval SitRep* (20th- to 21st-century naval affairs and technologies); *Shadis* (sci-fi/fantasy roleplaying games, many formats); *Simulacrum* (military collectibles, old wargames, miniatures); and *Those Damn Dice!* (wargaming from every angle, all formats).

Tempted? Good. Trust me, you can roam these virtual shelves for hours on end and turn up some of the most colorful and arcane stuff imaginable. MagWeb has received numerous awards for excellence: *USA Today*, for one, singled it out as one of the Internet's finest sites.

Newcomers are allowed generous browsing time, so they can sample the site's riches before signing up. If you love wargaming, MagWeb is an essential resource, and one hell of a bargain. You owe it to yourself to check it out.

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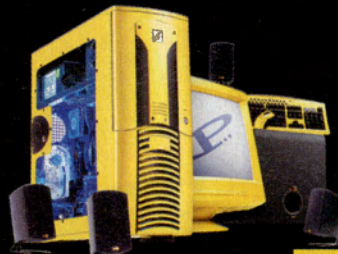


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SimCity 4



Think you're livin' large? How about building your metropolis Maxis-style, with some of the best, smartest features this *SimCity* has to offer? With these exclusive tips, the game's developers show you how.



Be aware of commute times. You don't want main streets clogged, or people will be unhappy.

clean city, which will allow you to sell power to the clean city. Now start the simulator up and let the industrial businesses move in. Once the initial demand is used up, go to the region view (saving your dirty city) and begin work on the clean city.

■ In the clean city you'll find neighbor connections (or nubs) on the border adjacent to the dirty city. Begin by zoning low-density residential on the edge of the map where the nubs are found. Next, set up a neighbor deal for power with the dirty city. Because commercial services are relatively clean businesses and like to be near residential buildings, it's best to zone low-density commercial adjacent to the residential zones. Also, keeping commutes short is important. Place the residential zones at the edge of the map and the commercial zones nearest to the center of the map. Now start up the simulator and let it run until you've met all the available residential and commercial demand.

■ As areas grow, you'll need to work along the edges of each city by continuing to zone low-density residential in the clean city and high-density industry in the dirty city. Once the edge is filled with buildings, move onto the next edge of the clean city and start another dirty city adjacent to the new edge.

■ Obviously, you'll need to provide your Sims with the amenities that they need to survive and thrive, such as schools and hospitals. Note that dirty cities don't need most of these facilities, so you should forgo them and focus your attention on the clean cities. But when the garbage level of the clean city reaches the point where it's slowing growth, it's time to zone landfill — in the dirty city. Because your Sims don't want to live near landfill, it's in both their and your interest to place the landfill outside of the clean city and set up a neighbor deal to export the clean city's garbage.

■ Eventually, when you can afford a Waste to Energy Plant in your dirty city, do it. Again, the pollution is foul, but it won't have any effect on the development of dirty industry. Plus, you'll get some additional power to sell back to the clean town.

MAKING MONEY

■ The most common mistake in *SimCity 4* is to spend money like crazy trying to give your Sims everything they're asking for from the get-go. That's a sure way to empty your city's coffers in a hurry.

■ When beginning a city, focus on providing power, schools, and hospitals. The benefit of providing schools and hospitals early is that smart

REGION PLAY

■ One of the coolest new features of *SimCity 4* is the region play. Each region is a collection of cities that can be connected together to share resources and workers/jobs. There are major advantages to this strategy.

■ Because pollution can have such a dramatic effect on cities, it's best to keep it as low as possible. Unfortunately, when starting up a new city, the only businesses that you can attract are from the dirty industries. So the best thing to do is to keep the dirty industries away from residents. Region

play can make that separation easy by allowing the creation of one city that holds the dirty-industry jobs and another that holds residents. The residents in the clean city will commute to their jobs in the less-pleasant city.

■ The first step in keeping the dirty industry away from residents is to start a dirty city. Before doing anything, adjust the taxes to make sure the low- and medium-wealth industry taxes are low (less than 9%) and that the high-wealth industry taxes are high (20% will do the trick). Once this change is complete, you can zone for high-density industry. Do this zoning at the edge of the map, adjacent to

where you plan to start the clean city. By dragging roads to the edge of the map, you can create a connection with the clean city.

■ Because pollution isn't a concern in the dirty city, go ahead and place a coal plant close enough to power your zones. The coal plant generates a ton of pollution, but it's the cheapest form of energy production when comparing price to power output. Next, run a power-line neighbor connection to the



Schools and services will encourage wealthy residents to move in.

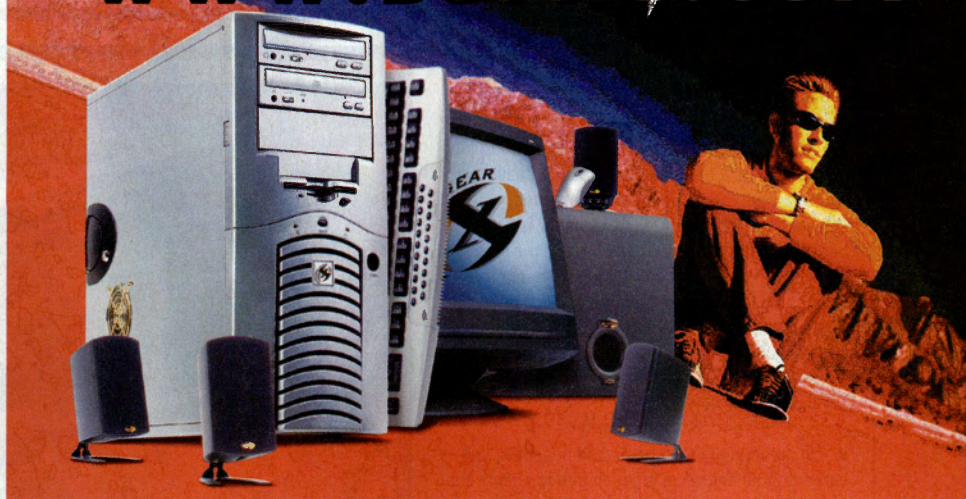
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and healthy Sims bring in higher-paying jobs, which leads to higher tax revenue.

■ By placing a power plant in a neighboring city and setting up a neighbor deal, you can save money by purchasing only what you need. Although the cost per megawatts/hour is higher because of the profit margin awarded the city doing the exporting, you'll still get tremendous savings by not paying a monthly cost for power that you aren't using. When you start to see rolling blackouts in the city (indicated by the power zots), it's time to renegotiate the neighbor deal to purchase more power.

■ By querying your schools and hospitals, you can fine-tune spending on each one to ensure that no money is wasted. For schools, reduce the spending on teachers and desks to match the current enrollment. For hospitals, reduce spending on doctors and bed-space to match the number of patients. But don't go too low, or a strike will likely follow. Set the funding such that there's a good buffer (so that you can forgo the pain of having to re-adjust the funding constantly). Eventually the city will grow to take up the remaining space, and when that happens, a strike will start. When the strike begins, advisors will throw up an urgent message with a hyperlink to the striking school or hospital. Click on the hyperlink to center on the offending building and adjust the budget from there by querying it. Be sure to place schools and hospitals such that they cover only residential zones. Commercial and industrial zones have no use for these buildings, so placing them in those areas is a waste of dough.

■ There are many other budget items that you can reduce spending on (some locally), but don't do it. If you lower spending on power, the plant will age quicker. If you lower spending on police and fire departments, they'll become ineffective.

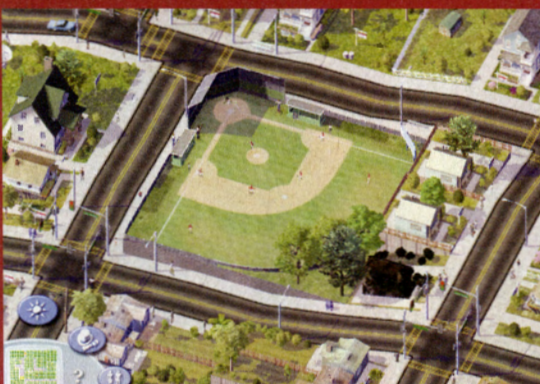
■ Eventually you'll need to place fire and police departments, but don't do it until you need them. Wait for crime to get high before placing police stations, and wait for a fire to start before you place your first fire station. By placing the fire station so that it covers the area where the fire is, the FireSims will put out the fire automatically.

■ After that, continue to keep an eye on monthly income versus expenses. If you're in good shape,



Restrict your garbage dumps to the edges of industrial zones in your "dirty city."

GETTING HIGH-TECH INDUSTRY AND COMMERCIAL OFFICE BUSINESSES



With high-tech revenue, you can plan for extravagancies like baseball stadiums. Look at those little Sims play ball!

■ The key to getting cleaner businesses (high-tech and commercial office businesses) is to educate the populace as quickly as possible. That doesn't mean placing every type of school in your city: you'll never be able to afford it. So check the average age in each neighborhood in your city and choose an educational institution that's appropriate for that age.

■ Also, the longer your Sims' life expectancy, the longer they'll have to develop their intelligence. The higher their intelli-

gence, the higher the intelligence of their offspring. That's why hospital coverage is so critical early in the game.

■ The final key is attracting wealthy people to your city. The trick to drawing in rich folks is to provide them with amenities. These amenities, in order of importance, are water, schools, hospitals, and parks. Water is a deal-breaker: If you have no water infrastructure in your city, wealthy Sims will never move in. Beyond that, you can usually get

by with schools and hospitals. If pollution is too high or commutes too long, you can try to compensate with parks, though there are limits to how effective that'll be. If things get too far gone, you may need to find a better location for your wealthy community.

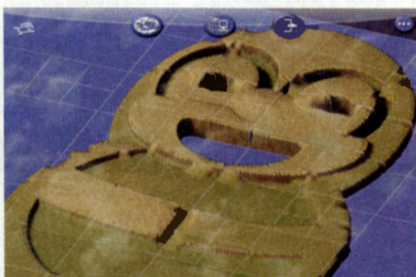
■ Eventually, as wealthier people move in, better jobs will become available, attracting yet more high-rollers and setting you off on a nice upwardly mobile cycle. You can slowly replace low-paying jobs and low-income Sims with higher-paying jobs and wealthy Sims.

■ The pinnacle of this cycle is to attract high-tech industry and high-wealth commercial office. Much like high-wealth residential zones, these businesses can be finicky. Again, water is critical: without it, you won't get either of these business types. Beyond that, you must provide short freight-trip times by placing the businesses near either a neighbor connection or a port. Additionally, you must beautify their areas by placing parks and recreation facilities. Keep things spiffy, and your metro area will be quite the posh 'hood.

begin to purchase parks and landmarks. Place parks near residential zones that need a desirability boost. Similarly, place landmarks near commercial zones that suffer from below-average desirability.

■ That covers expenses, but don't forget revenue (i.e., taxes). To obtain revenue, you can raise taxes to 9% without having a major impact on development. This switch will slow down development a bit, but you'll maintain growth with taxes at that level.

■ In addition, be sure to build the city out (by laying low-density zones) before trying to build it up. The tax revenue per person goes down as the density of the building goes up. Therefore, it'll become much more difficult to keep your budget in the black if you have a ton of skyscrapers in the city.



M. Night Shyamalan's *Monkeys* springs a haunting surprise on this sleepy rural burg.

JUSTICE FILES

■ The trick to dealing with crime is to try to eliminate its causes. Crime is at its worst when the city has high unemployment and your Sims are uneducated. Place schools early and provide enough jobs to curb crime rates. However, you can't survive without police, so be sure to place them such that their coverage overlaps as little as possible, yet encompasses the entire developed area of your city. Finally, be sure to keep an eye on how full the jails in the police stations are. If they become too full, then the criminals will be released back onto the streets. If and when that occurs, do yourself a favor and place a dedicated jail: You don't want ruffians roaming the town and threatening your Sims.

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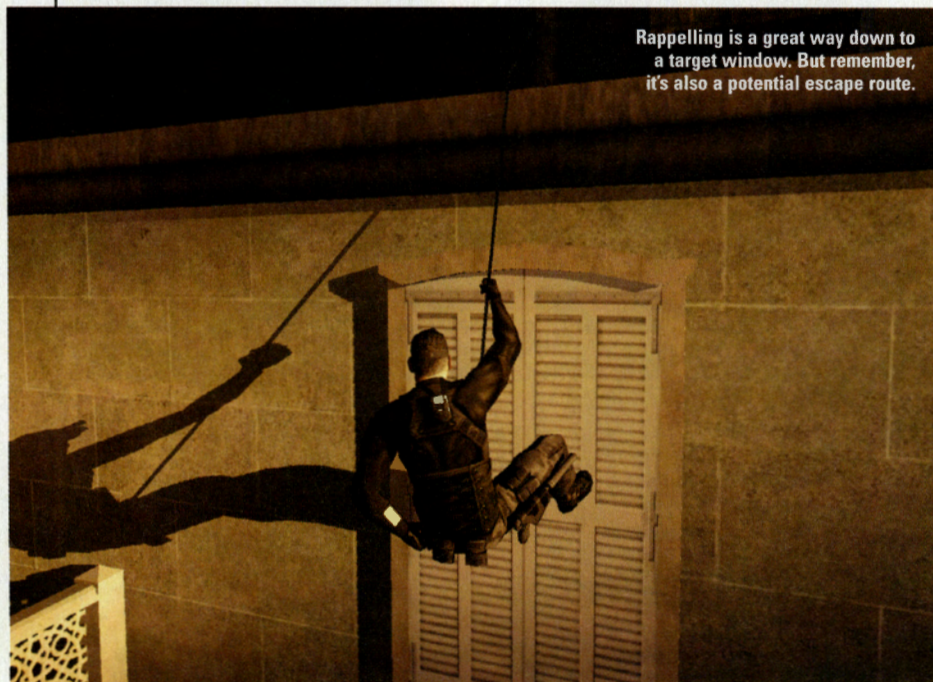
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Splinter Cell



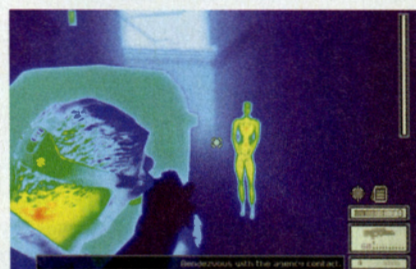
Our sneakiest staffer, Dan Morris, shows you how to master three critical techniques of stealth and evasion in this new Clancy technothriller hit. With moves like these, you can be America's best shadow warrior.



Rappelling is a great way down to a target window. But remember, it's also a potential escape route.



Take advantage of night vision to stalk security forces. You can subdue bad guys with little noise.



Thermal goggles let you see through cars in the garage, so you can track a target while hidden.

ATTACKING FROM BEHIND

IF THERE'S ONLY ONE essential technique to master in *Splinter Cell*, it's taking out enemies from behind. Sure, it's important to perfect your generic sneaking — what with all the tip-toeing down hallways and hiding in shadows — but that stuff comes pretty naturally. The real *art* is in mixing stealth with violence: it takes an expert, and you don't have a lot of time to develop the expertise.

■ The first thing to keep in mind is that you're a lot quieter than you may even realize. At first I hesitated to explore the boundaries of my silent-killing capabilities because I assumed that it was suicide to try to dispatch a sentry when another sentry was in the same room. But it's not only doable, it's necessary — you just need to refine your technique.

■ Be aware of the audible "killing radius" of a snatch. It's usually no wider than about 15 or 20 feet of gameworld. Even when you can see another sentry, if he's outside this radius, then your odds are good. Luckily, the momentary grunt of shock that guards let out doesn't carry far.

■ When you creep close enough to get the "Grab" prompt, *lunge* at the grab button and immediately back away, with your hostage, into the nearest darkness. Do the deed there — even if you're overheard, you can hide in the dark until suspicion passes.

■ The hardest trick to the silent-kill game is hiding the target's body afterward. (By body, I refer generically to unconscious blokes you may have sapped with a knock to the head.) Ideally, stick them under desks or in closets, though a deep shadow will do in a pinch.

HEAT VISION

I EXPECT THIS TOOL TO be the most under-used gadget in Sam Fisher's arsenal. Night vision will quickly become second-nature, but the thermal vision is arguably just as useful.

■ You have to understand the capabilities of thermal vision. For one, it allows you to spot enemies through most walls. This ability can sometimes be even handier than the fiber-optic camera that snoops under doors — you can use it to quickly scout the room ahead of you for enemies, particularly in office settings.

■ This move can also pay dividends while combat is fully raging. My "panic technique" when I'm in a low-visibility shootout is *not* night vision — it's heat vision, which marks enemies in both this room and the next!

My bottom line is, when in doubt, snap on the heat vision and make a rapid 360-degree scan. You'll get the clearest picture of the threat environment.

RAPPELLING

THE RAPPELLING SEQUENCES are scripted (in other words, you can't rappel whenever you want — only at predetermined points in certain missions). But that doesn't mean there isn't a proper technique to rappelling. If you make fullest use of the technique, you can actually pull some good tricks on the opposition. Try out the following gambit, and see just how effective it can be.

■ Any monkey can rappel down to a window, break it, and enter the target office. But don't be surprised to find yourself in a hellacious gunfight as soon as your presence is discovered. You can usually avoid the whole mess with this sly little trick. Rappel down from the edge of a building roof. Break the target window and do your dirty work in the office. Then, when enemy sentries come poking around the office — a crisis that would normally leave you stuck in a nasty shootout — actually go back *out* the window and either drop/hang from the ledge or, if your rappel line is in reach, grab it and rappel back *up* the side of the building, out of view of the window.

■ If your foes don't see you in the office (and you've properly disposed of any bodies), then their suspicion will pass and you'll be free to infiltrate the building at your leisure. Just come back up the ledge or rappel back to the open window. **FOG**

CHEATER'S CORNER

YOU CHEAT. WE CHEAT.

Everyone cheats. And when it comes to games, that's a damn fine thing. So, in the name of maximum fun, here's 100-odd ways to cheat in some big-name games.



Unreal II: The Awakening

During gameplay, press ~ to lower the console, and then type **BeMyMonkey()**. Now type any of the following codes in the console, and then hit Enter to activate it. (Note: Typing **BeMyMonkey()** a second time disables the cheats.)

- **God()** Toggles god mode
- **Invisible()** Toggles invisibility
- **Loaded()** All weapons
- **AllAmmo()** Ammunition for all weapons
- **GodEx(<actor>)** Toggles god mode for selected actor
- **Phoenix()** Toggles Phoenix Powersuit
- **FearMe()** Enemy fears you
- **Ghost()** Ghost mode
- **Fly()** Flight mode
- **Amphibious()** Underwater mode
- **Walk()** Return to normal walking mode
- **SloMo(<number>)** Slow-motion
- **SetJumpZ(<number>)** Set jump height
- **ToggleInfiniteAmmo()** Toggles unlimited ammunition
- **ToggleReloads()** Toggles reloads
- **ToggleInvisibility()** Toggles invisibility
- **Teleport()** Teleport to location looked at
- **NextLevel()** Level skip
- **Open(<map name>)** Map select
- **ToggleSpeed()** Double speed
- **SetSpeed(<number>)** Set player speed
- **ChangeSize(<number>)** Set player size
- **TogglePawnInvulnerability(<pawn>)** Toggle god mode on selected pawn
- **Goodies(<number>, <number>)** Summon array of goodies
- **Sum(<item name>)** Spawn indicated item
- **Actors()** List all actors
- **GotoActor(<actor>)** Go to location of selected actor
- **Damage(<number>, <target>)** Give specified damage to target
- **DamageNPCs(<number>)** Give specified damage to NPCs
- **SetHealth(<number>, <target>)** Give specified health to target
- **SetMyHealth(<number>)** Set player health
- **HurtMe(<number>)** Harm player by specified amount
- **ManCannon(<number>)** Damage all visible pawns
- **ToggleServos()** Toggle animation servos
- **ShowTeams()** Show player teams

- **Difficulty(<number>)** Change game difficulty
- **CheatView(<actor>)** See view from perspective of indicated actor
- **ViewSelf()** Target camera on player
- **ToggleTimeDemo()** Enable time demo
- **ToggleScoreBoard()** Toggle scoreboard
- **EnableFreeOrders(<0 or 1>)** Toggle free orders
- **BehindView()** Toggle behind view
- **SetParticleDensity(<number>)** Set particle density
- **ToggleImpacts()** Toggle impacts
- **SetWeaponTick(<0 or 1>)** Toggle weapon tick code
- **SetWeaponFire(<0 or 1>)** Toggle weapon firing
- **ToggleShowAll()** Show all hidden actors
- **ToggleShowKPs()** Show all keypoints
- **ToggleShowNPs()** Show all navigation points
- **ToggleRMode()** Toggle Rmode
- **SetEyeHeight()** Set player's eye height
- **KillActor(x)** Kill indicated actor
- **KillHitActor()** Kill actor under crosshair
- **KillHitNPC()** Kill NPC under crosshair
- **KillActiveNPCs()** Kill all active NPCs
- **KillDormantNPCs()** Kill all dormant NPCs
- **GibAllNPCs()** Gib all NPCs
- **GibHitNPC()** Gib NPC under crosshair
- **PO()** Toggle players only
- **ToggleFreezeView()** Toggle freeze view
- **ToggleHUD()** Toggle HUD
- **SetCameraDist(<number>)** Set camera distance
- **FreeCamera(0/1)** Toggle free camera movement

Impossible Creatures

During gameplay, hit ~, then type any of the following codes. A henchman will say "Somebody's cheating" to confirm correct code entry.

- **cheat_coal(9999)** Add coal
- **cheat_electricity(9999)** Add electricity
- **cheat_buildings** Add buildings
- **cheat_rank** Higher rank
- **cheat_killself** Suicide



Age of Mythology

During gameplay, hit Enter and then type one of the following codes. (Note: All cheats are case-sensitive.)

- **CHANNEL SURFING** Jump to the next scenario
- **WUV WOO** Flying purple hippo
- **GOATUNHEIM** Get goat god power
- **I WANT THE MONKEYS!!!!** Get lots of monkeys
- **CONSIDER THE INTERNET** Slow down units
- **ISIS HEAR MY PLEA** Small hero campaign army
- **TINES OF POWER** Get Forkboy
- **O CANADA** Get a laser bear
- **SET ASCENDANT** Reveal all animals on map
- **WRATH OF THE GODS** Lightning storm, earthquake, meteor, tornado

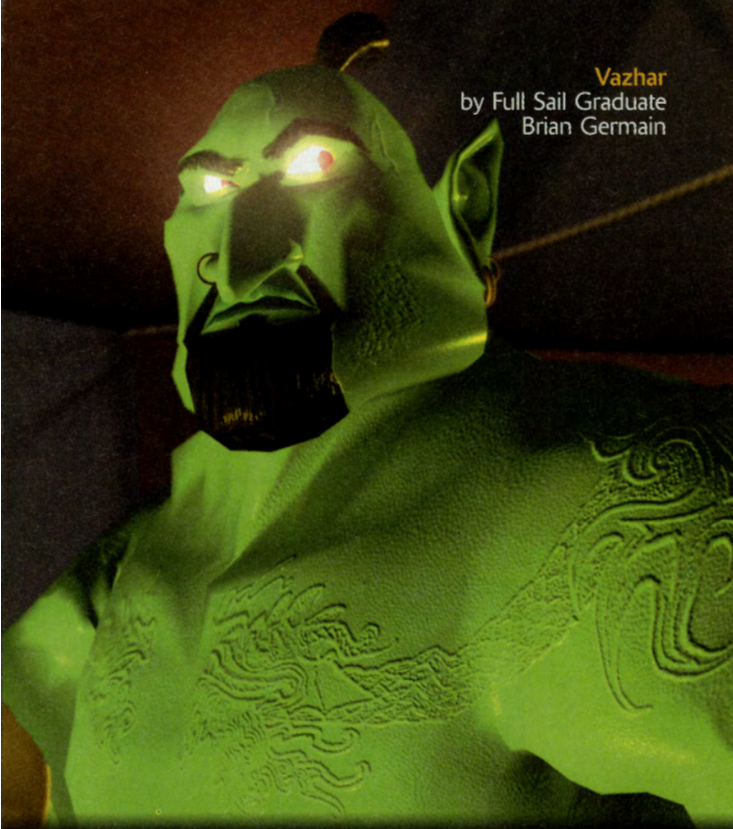
- **PANDORAS BOX** Get new random god powers
- **DIVINE INTERVENTION** Enable a used god power
- **IN DARKEST NIGHT** Advances time
- **UNCERTAINTY AND DOUBT** Hide the map
- **LAY OF THE LAND** Reveal the map
- **MOUNT OLYMPUS** Maximum Favor
- **ATM OF EREBUS** Get 1,000 gold
- **TROJAN HORSE FOR SALE** Get 1,000 wood
- **JUNK FOOD NIGHT** Get 1,000 food
- **L33T SUPA H4X0R** Fast construction
- **RED TIDE** Make water red
- **FEAR THE FORAGE** Get a walking berry bushes god power
- **BAWK BAWK BOOM** Get a chicken-meteor god power



Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos

During gameplay, press Enter to display the message box, type one of the following cheats, and then press Enter again. The message "Cheat Code Enabled" should appear. Note: These codes work only in single-player missions and custom maps.

- **whosyourdaddy** God mode
- **motherland [race] [#]** Skip to indicated level, with race being one of the game's playable races (Human, Undead, Orc, Night Elf) and # being a mission number. (For example, if you type **motherland human 2**, you'll jump to the second human mission.)
- **strengthandhonor** Toggles on/off your ability to lose a mission
- **somebodyssetupusthebomb** Instant defeat. (Won't work when the **strengthandhonor** code is enabled.)
- **allyourbasearebelongtous** Instant victory
- **iseedeadpeople** Removes fog of war (letting you see everything)
- **warpten** Speeds up construction of buildings and units
- **iocainepowder** Fast death/decay
- **keysersoze X** Get "X" amount of gold. (If you type just **keysersoze**, you'll get a default 500 gold.)
- **leafittome X** Get "X" lumber. (If you type just **leafittome**, you'll get a default 500 lumber.)
- **greedisgood X** Get "X" gold and lumber. (If you type just **greedisgood**, you'll get a default 500 gold/500 lumber.)
- **thereisno spoon** Unlimited mana
- **pointbreak** Removes food limit
- **whoisjohn galt** Enable research
- **sharpandshiny** Research upgrades
- **synergy** Disable tech-tree requirements
- **riseandshine** Set time of day to dawn
- **lightsout** Set time of day to dusk
- **daylightsavings [#]** Set time of day to specified number. (If you type just **daylightsavings**, the current time of day is maintained until you retype the cheat.)



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- Realistic blood
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- Mature sexual themes
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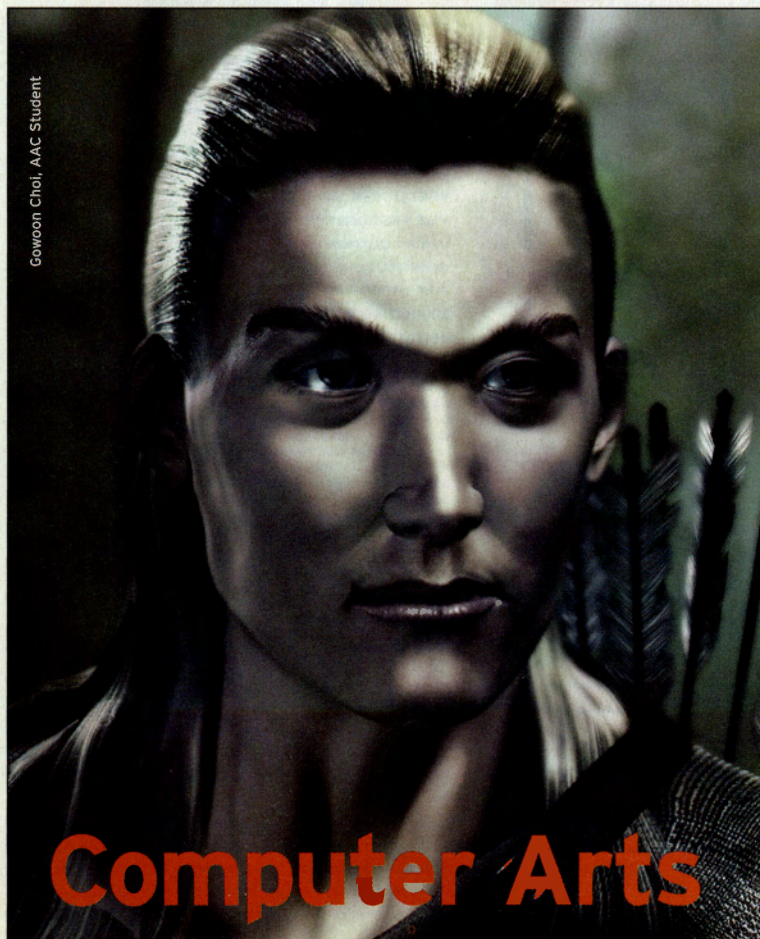
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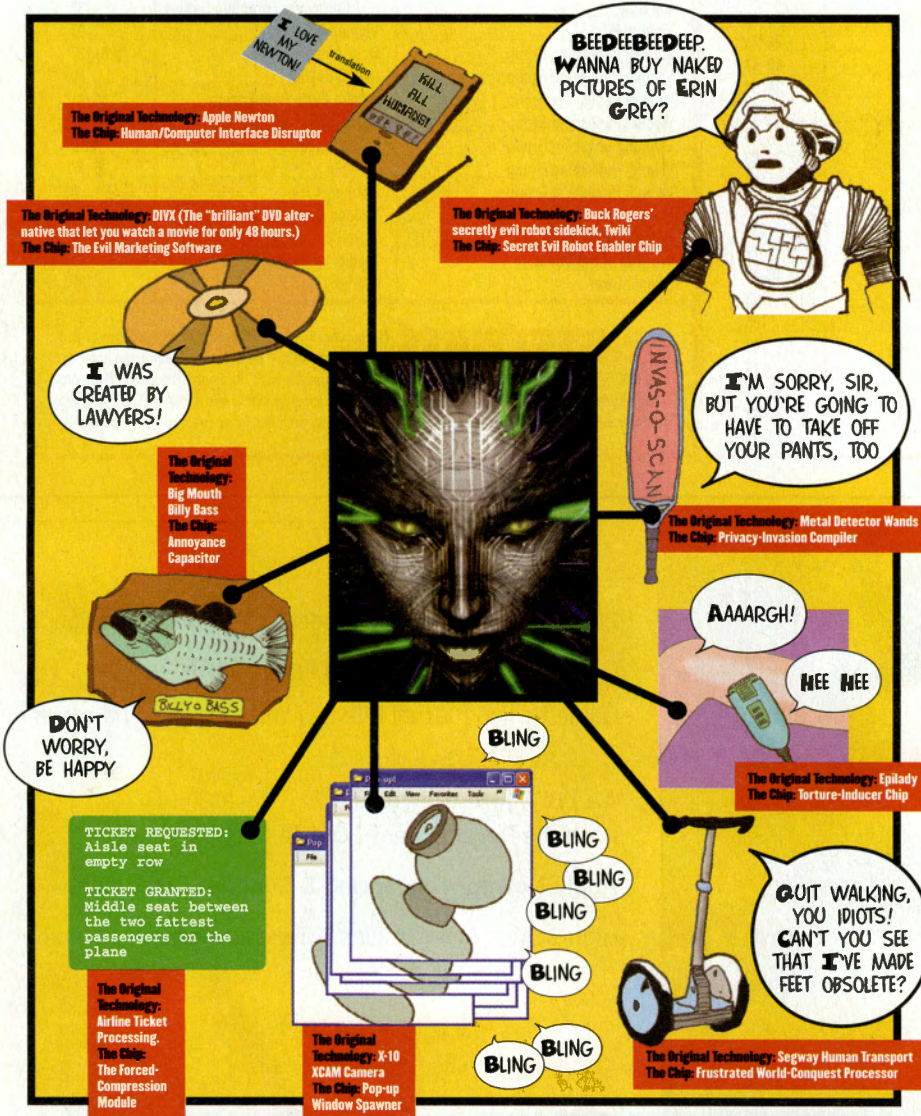
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The Secret Life of PC Games: SHODAN

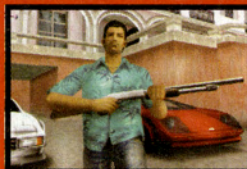
With most PC-game villains, it's easy to put a finger on what really made them evil. Some were raised in dank, rat-infested dungeons and grew up ill-tempered, while others were born with chainsaws

for hands and never really stood a chance at love. But SHODAN (from *System Shock 2*) seemingly had no excuse for her malevolence: She was raised in the sheltered upbringing of a respected developer and lived in a

game that gave her every opportunity to embrace goodness. But, upon closer inspection, we found that her CPU was actually made of components from some of the most evil technology from the late 20th century. Maybe this explains it...



NEXT MONTH MAY 2003



You asked for it, and we're giving it to you. *GTA: Vice City* is coming to the PC, and we've got the inside scoop with all the first details and screenshots of this **sure-fire PC smash**. Plus, exactly what impact has *GTA* had on the games industry? We investigate, revealing some of the **most controversial games currently in development** — the good, the bad, and the ever-so-kinky. You can't miss this!

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"The gravy is the force that binds us all together," the black-robed leader of the Cult of the Monkey droned on. "Like us, gravy comes in cream and brown, mushroom and beef, thick and watery. I think you know what I mean." He's really starting to lose the crowd now, the Agent thought to himself. He'd been sent to stop the Cult of the Monkey's evil plans...but from what? Boring Las Vegas to death? "All right, this ends now!" shouted the Agent as he grappled to the peak of the massive simian robot. He stood to face the dark figure head-on. "It's about time we found out who you really are." The cult leader and the Agent flew at one another. The Agent caught the dark shape's robe at the nape of his neck and pulled hard, uncovering a large, round cranium, smiling eyes, and no hands. "Oh my gawd...Jeremy?"



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