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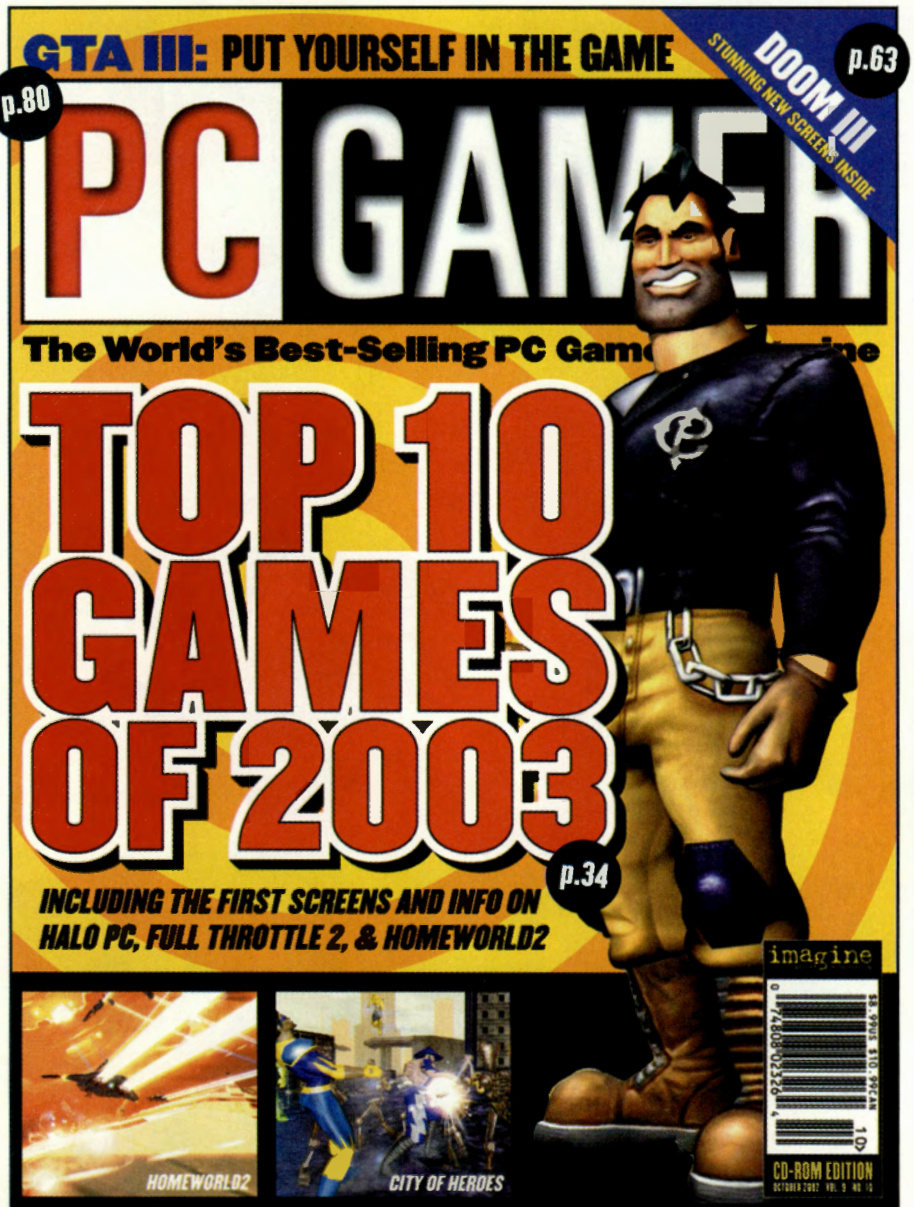

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ON THIS MONTH'S PCG CD Great balls of fire, our disc is *packed*! We've got demos of *Hitman 2, Duke Nukem: Manhattan Project, Magic: The Gathering Online,* and *Syberia,* and the *full* client version of sensational *Half-Life* mod *Day of Defeat.*

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

"They say you think morals are pictures on walls and scruples is money in Russia."

Realistically, we couldn't expect the renaissance to last. These last six months have delivered some of the finest gaming moments ever...and with this October issue, our reviewers have turned up some absolute bottom-scrapers.

Thankfully, *Icewind Dale II* gave us hope. Without it we'd have been left with a reviews section sporting only such drivel as *Britney's Dance Beat* (we *so,* like, *totally* hoped we'd like it) and the behind-the-curve *Delta Force: Task Force Dagger.* Sadly, there are more examples — so if you like reading slam reviews, this issue's a doozie.

At least our reviewers are able to coax their scarred souls back to normalcy with ever-entrancing gameplay from *Freedom Force, Neverwinter Nights, Dungeon Siege,* and the *Battlefield 1942* beta. We'll be playing these games well into 2003, when some of the industry's biggest guns are nearing release.

And just look at what's on the periscope. We've got the return of Ben in *Full Throttle 2.* Larry Holland re-enters the World War II combat arena in his detailed-here-for-the-first-time new game. We also have the first early details on *Halo* coming to its rightful home, and with more in-depth coverage on games we've already announced, 2003 looks to be as strong as this year.

Since *Battlefield 1942, Star Wars: Galaxies,* and *Age of Mythology* are all due to ship in 2002, we've still got plenty to look forward to in the next few months. Of the games listed in our feature (starting on pg. 34), which are you most excited about? What names make you sit up and devour every last morsel of information? And why? Drop me a note at *ednote@pcgamer.com* and let me know.

...I now interrupt this editorial for the following announcement: Fans of *Magic Online,* do not play, trade, or communicate with RRDemise and Wazoot! Both these lamers dropped from friendly games when, nearing the end of battles they couldn't win, they suddenly "lost connection." In any multiplayer game, that's the lowest of the low. Take the loss, play with some humility...and when you're big enough, come back and I'll toast yer asses again...

We now resume normal service. Congrats to Will Hughes for spotting last month's quote from the movie *Network.* Identify the film quote above and send your entry to *ednote@pcgamer.com*; I'll send some random junk from my desk to the oh-so-lucky randomly selected winner.

Rob

Rob Smith
Editor-in-Chief

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Read These Letters!

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.***

"Blorggg! I am the muscular blue guy who welcomes you to *Asheron's Call*! Welcome."

EVER-FAVORITISM?

QUITE FRANKLY, I THINK YOU GUYS are a great magazine. I love reading your reviews, and on more than one occasion, they alone have talked me into purchasing a game I otherwise wouldn't have. But when it comes to MMORPGs, you guys make me sick. It's always "*EverQuest* is god; everyone else is out milking cows." This simply isn't true. I'm inclined to believe you guys have never actually played half of the RPGs you review! I want you to change your damn *EQ*-only perspective! I have played *Asheron's Call* for over three years now, played different types of characters, and still come back for more. *EQ*, I left after three weeks of playing.

— Drew "Be'zai" Smith

As anyone who thinks we're a great magazine should know, Anarchy Online *won our 2001 Massively Multiplayer Game of the Year award. It won because we spent hours and hours with it. We've played all the massively multiplayer games, talked to all our writers about the games they're playing, and continue to do so.* EverQuest *happens to be the biggest of the bunch and thus the obvious point of reference, but we're no* EQ*-drones.*

VEDE INQUIRIES

AFTER READING YOUR AUGUST 2002 issue, I was shocked by an amazing similarity between the angle of protrusion of Yoda's ears and the angle of protrusion of Greg Vederman's ears. Is this just an improbable coincidence, or a physiological side-effect of Greg stuffing too much chicken into his mouth? The latter, I say. *PCG* owes us, the gaming public, a thorough investigation into this anomaly.

Seriously, though, you run a great magazine. The lower the score, the funnier the read. When you label a game a "must-play," I take your word as gospel, and have yet to be disappointed.

— Kirk Meckem

The ear resemblance is uncanny, Kirk. Greg responds, "I'd have gotten away with it, too, if it wasn't for you meddling kids."

DOES VEDERMAN ACTUALLY work there? I mean, is he legally employed? Because he sends out a message of being the clueless neighborhood kid that you guys took in, fed, and washed, and even thought it'd be cute to let him write some rambles for his "column." Beware: he sounds quite demented, and may be violent.

— Ilya Y. Rostovtsev

We've been asking this same question for three years now, but Human Resources keeps hedging.

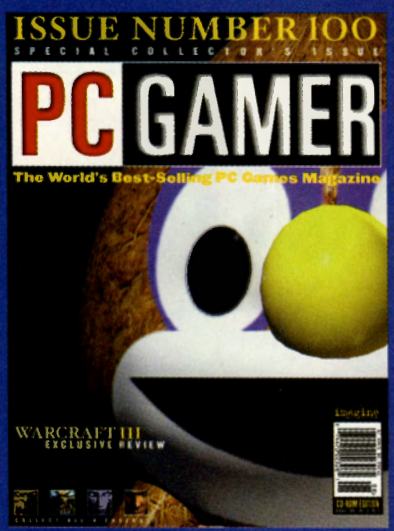
OH, THAT KIND OF GAME

I LIKE FIRST-PERSON GAMES like *Soldier of Fortune*, and I'm looking for a game that's adventurous but with some hardcore XXX parts. I've seen some of the graphics for comic-like stuff, and I have to say, they've come a long way. Has a game of this type been made, or is one in the making?

— Oral Foreplay

We're not aware of any such game. But if one should appear, we expect Vederman to be all over it.

100TH CONGRATS



I GOT THE NEW, 100th *PC Gamer* today, and I'm not sure whether to break down crying and whimpering (à la TheVede) or run around laughing maniacally.

It's been, what, seven years? My first issue was the one with *The Dig* on the cover [July 1995]; when I got it, I was all of 12 years old. I've tried other magazines in the past, but have always come back to yours with a yummy warm feeling in my stomach.

I just want to express how f***ing awesome you guys/gals are. Except for *Diablo II*, I've *never* bought a game until I've seen its review printed in *PCG*. Result? I've *never* bought a bad game. I've spent *far* too long squealing in laughter reading your articles, and I look forward to time spent in a similar fashion.

I wish everything was as sweet as *PCG*.

— Andy George

We salute your devotion to the mag, Andy. As a sign of our appreciation, here's a first-ever look at an alternate cover (above) for our August 2002 issue. What do you think?

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR 100th issue! In honor of this occasion, and seeing as I've been a subscriber since before the first issue, I think it's high time you gave me Stevie Case's email address.

— Dave Hartl

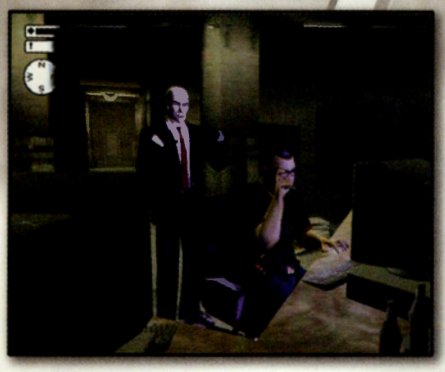
Thanks for your loyal readership, Dave. We called up Stevie and asked her if it was cool for us to print her email address for the benefit of our loyal stalkers/readers, but she declined. Sorry, pal. But you're still OUR best friend.

OH GOD. OF ALL THE ISSUES to spill pizza sauce on, I had to do it to your 100th collector's edition. May god have mercy on my soul.

— A Distressed Reader

This event is truly cause for great mourning. (Sniff.) Let us take a moment of silence.

Death is my business
and business is good.



HITMAN 2
SILENT ASSASSIN

September 2002

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood
Strong Sexual Content
Violence

XBOX

PC CD

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hitman2.com

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WHEN PCG READERS ATTACK!

Leave it to the aberrant geniuses who subscribe to our magazine...We receive a large amount of reader art, and some of it is just too perfect not to share. At far left, please feast your eyes upon the simian splendor of Darth Coco. The Force is strong with this monkey; in fact, he was able to use its power to grow himself a pair of useable hands. But upon his corruption to the Dark Side, he has become a smiling angel of doom. In the screen beside him, a hardy band of adventurers pays final tribute to an owned comrade.

ARSENAL OF GAME-OCRACY

WHAT IS ROB'S PROBLEM with Germans?

— NickZilla

You see, Nick, back in 1914, Germany invaded Western Europe, drawing Rob's native England into a world war that cost it hundreds of thousands of lives. Then, in 1939, Germany did the same damn thing again, only this time it sent waves of bombers across to England and inflicted horrific death and destruction on the English mainland. This, in a nutshell, is Rob's problem with the Germans.

MY WORLD HISTORY CLASS is just getting to World War II. It's a real boring class (sorry, Mrs. Cooper from Deep Creek High in Virginia), so as I was sitting there, I — like all other PC gamers, of course — started thinking about games like *Medal of Honor, WWII: Desert Rats, Deadly Dozen,* and other wargames where the U.S. helped win or won. Not to jinx us, but what if we'd lost? What would the games be like then?

— Glen Jackson

Glen, not even in our wildest imaginations can we conceive of America losing WWII. Our doughboys got it done in fine style against Hitler and his Hun-hordes, and far be it from us to ponder any kind of alternate-present ruled by the goose-steppers. And it's a good thing, too, 'cause we're not sure we could handle having to play games like Iron Cross: Axis Assault *or* Great Battles I: Standing Firm at Normandy, *or watching movies like* Saving Grenadier Schultz.

KARMA

I WAS DISTRAUGHT TO SEE your great magazine shedding light on a plague like Justin Wills in past issues: this "pro gamer's" comments were sickening, and his conceitedness shone as an attempt to compensate for a life spent as a nobody. But looking at my watch, I notice his 15 minutes of fame are up. And what better way to end it than a photo that shows who he truly is: a spoiled little boy who can dish it out, but can't take it when it comes back to him. He won't be missed.

— Clay Estep

HEY, I WANT TO KNOW more about that Justin Wills punk! You put a picture of him in your August 2002 issue and showed an arrest report! What happened there? When you did that writeup about him a few months back, I felt like smackin' him senseless! Hopefully he's learned his lesson.

— Joseph Sayler

I HEARD SNICKERS WAS PULLING all the Justin Wills ads because of his new arrest. Is this true?

— Mike Pesch

We profiled Justin Wills because, for better or worse, he represents the new breed of elite young professional gamers. But as you point out, Wills has suffered a recent reversal of fortune: after his shocking arrest for shoplifting, Snickers pulled its sponsorship. Wills then suffered a devastating 20–19 loss in a Quake III *championship, and has since lost his No. 1 ranking and moved back in with his parents.*

"YER IN" FOR A LAUGH

HAVING JUST READ THE PLAYLIST Bests in your 100th-anniversary issue [August 2002], I see that the silent tragedy stalking the gaming community has afflicted even two *PCG* staff members. I refer, of course, to the epidemic of incontinence. Gamers regularly testify on message boards that the mere mention of a highly anticipated title causes them to soil themselves. Actual purchases lead to embarrassing disasters. It's time the industry stepped up to its responsibility with funding for research to prevent Game-Related Incontinence (GRI). Just think how much cheaper games would be if our local stores and software boutiques weren't required to maintain large stocks of cleaning supplies. It's time for the gaming industry to do what's right. They could at least include a free diaper in every box.

— Gabriel Syme

...LIKE THE WRATH OF A GEEK SCORNED

IN YOUR JULY 2002 LETTERS section, a biatch (Andrew Briggs) insulted Chuck about his "error" in reviewing *Star Trek: Bridge Commander.* Chuck was actually right: although the *Sovereign* was made several years before the *Enterprise,* it included many improvements that the *Enterprise-E* did not, including an enhanced warp core and deflector dish. I hope this made you feel better, Chuck, so screw Andrew and let Chuck review any games he wants.

— Brandon Dickens

Chuck replies: "Brandon, thanks for your support. Now go outside and get some sun."

LOVE LETTER TO CHIAKI

CHIAKI, WHAT IS IT LIKE to have all of these 50-year-old fat do0ds writing in to you asking for pictures? Nay, come with me! I can almost drive, and I will take you on a world tour of coolness, while at the same time owning fools in *Counter-Strike.*

— The do0dmar

Chiaki responds: "That is so tempting. Let me think about that."

ALL THIS AND BRAINS, TOO

I ENJOYED EVERY PART of your August 2002 issue until I got to the last page, which had an explicit picture of a lady in an exposed T-shirt. The shirt is tight around her chest and she has nothing underneath it. I demand you put this letter in your magazine to tell all the guys out there that there's more to a woman than just her looks.

— Julie Baker

Along with her looks, our 200th-issue cover subject, Stevie Case, is a MENSA member and the current COO of Monkeystone Games. There, you happy?

FALCON STILL FLYING?

IN SEPTEMBER 2001'S SIM COLUMN, Andy Mahood said that *Falcon V* would be released sometime in 2002. I know we're only halfway through the year, but I've heard nothing new about it. Is *Falcon V* still a reality, or have the developers given up?

— Dave Shartzer

The rights to the Falcon *series were acquired by G2 Interactive, and it's currently developing* Falcon V. *The game doesn't have a firm release date yet, but we now expect it to hit stores in 2003. We're eager to play it, too, Dave!*

Enterprise clone or no, the *Sovereign* dominates.

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STILL THINKING ABOUT SPRING BREAK?

Cabanas, clubs and casinos.
If you build it, they will come.

Feverish flings to sloshed scuffles.
Watch your guests indulge in an epic party.

Toss in wet t-shirt and dirty dancing contests.
The more fun they have, the more fun you have.

It's spring break year-round when you take control of a tropical playground packed with beaches, bars and bathing beauties. So grab the game, and give yourself something else to drool over.

Virtual Resort SPRING BREAK

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Mild Violence
Use of Alcohol

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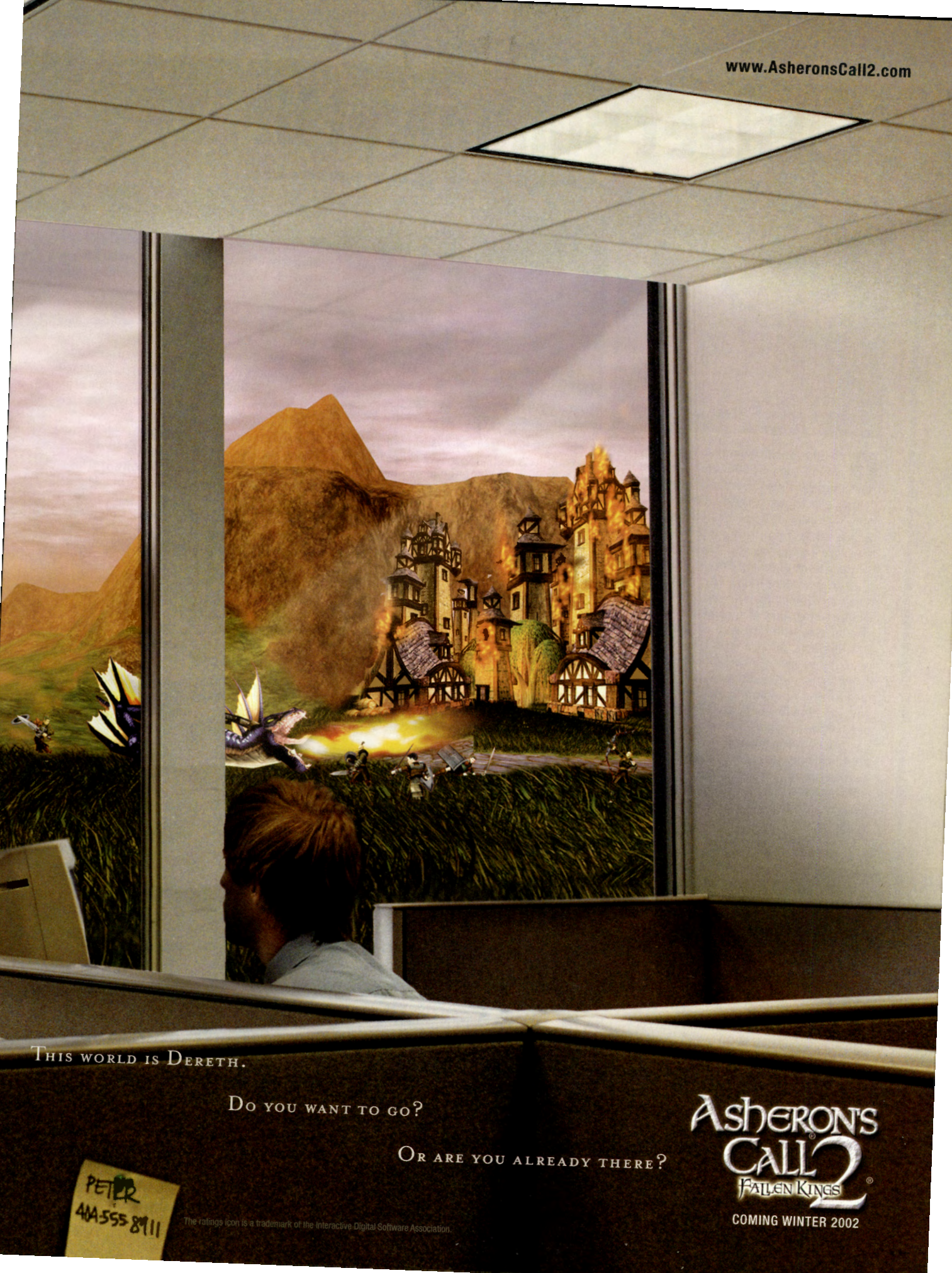
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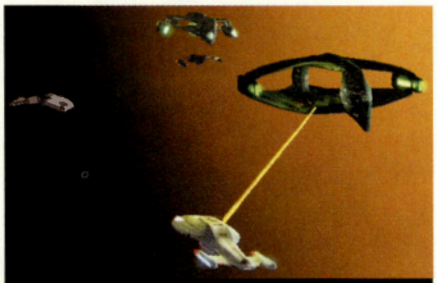
Starfleet Command III

IN A NUTSHELL The *Next Generation* of strategy battles in the *Trek* universe

In one Klingon mission, you and some allies must assault a well-defended alien base.



All in-mission messages are now voice-acted. To add star power, Patrick Stewart will voice Picard.

Around the time *Star Trek: Nemesis* hits theaters (Dec. 13), Taldren will release a downloadable *SFC III* mission featuring the colossal Romulan/Reman ship that the *Enterprise* fights in the movie.

Our E3 tour of this upcoming *Star Trek* game (August 2002 issue) suggested that *Starfleet Command III* would deliver exactly what series diehards have been waiting for: more heated starship battles, a less-intimidating interface, another hardcore *Trek* story, and the same incredibly deep control that previous *SFC*s offered.

A more recent look at the game reinforced our impressions. *SFC III*'s changes start on the surface, with the visuals. According to Associate Producer Dan Hagerty, the graphics now support resolutions up to 1600x1200, and look sweet: ships will feature engine glow and location-based damage textures, planets will swirl in vibrant texture detail, and the explosions are more amazing than ever.

In a shift for the series, the developers are distancing themselves from the Starfleet Battles boardgame and the Classic *Trek* universe in favor of the *Next Generation* license. Because of this change, *SFC III*'s single-player campaign (around 45 missions — 12 to 15 each as the Federation, Klingons, and Romulans) takes place just before the forthcoming *Star Trek: Nemesis* movie. In the setup, the Klingon/Federation alliance has built a space station to monitor the Neutral Zone — a scenario that you'll try to undermine as the Romulans and protect as the Klingons and Feds. A new NPC race that's attacking the station will figure prominently in the solo campaign, says Hagerty, and you'll encounter the Cardassians, the Ferengi, and some non-Orion pirates as well.

The jump to the *Next Gen* universe means you'll command plenty of new ships, such as Federation Intrepid- and Defiant-class vessels — which, like other ships in the game, will now have in-system warp. Warping will consume lots of power, so you won't be able to use shields or phasers in mid-warp, but you *will* be able to fire torpedoes, letting you stage lightning-fast hit-and-run attacks. Also, all ships are now fully customizable, so you can add weapons and transporters if you want to buff yourself out.

The most welcome change, though, could be *SFC III*'s streamlined interface, designed to ease newbies into the game while still providing the depth that series vets demand. Power management is simpler, the number of sub-menus has shrunk a bit, and variables like number of shields have been reduced so you have fewer details to track.

As for the game's officer-building component (revived from the original *SFC*), Hagerty tells us that this time you'll have tactical, navigational, security, science, engineering, and medical officers, all of which will level up — thereby becoming more proficient — as you beat missions. Officers may gain new skills upon reaching Legendary status, such as launching torpedo spreads, and officers can die if your ship is damaged.

In addition to offering multiplayer skirmishes (via GameSpy), *SFC III* will also feature the latest iteration of the Dynaverse, where up to 128 players vie for control of a huge galactic map in groups of six as Klingons, Romulans, Feds, or Borg. This time, players will be able to form fleets and engage AI-controlled fleets in battle. *SFC III* will also boast a single-player Conquest mode that emulates Dynaverse play, presenting numerous non-story missions as you fight for control of the quadrant.

SFC III definitely seems as deep and challenging as earlier *SFC*s, only without the off-putting interface. If the story and the combat live up to those games, strategy fans should get an intense, intricate, and *accessible* new *Trek* title. — *Corey Cohen*

Fight the Borg or play *as* the Borg in multiplayer skirmishes and Dynaverse bouts. Awesome!

F.Y.I.

CATEGORY: Real-time strategy
DEVELOPER: Taldren
PUBLISHER: Activision
WWW: gaming.startrek.com/games/sfc3
PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 70%
RELEASE DATE: November 2002

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL?: The streamlined interface will please newbies while the challenging ship battles will titillate series vets. New features, new races, and the move to the *TNG* timeline all augur intense action.

DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD: Founded by ex-Interplay staff in '97, Taldren's produced *SFC*, *SFC II*, and *SFC: Orion Pirates*. The *SFC*s have gotten better-looking, fuller-featured, and less buggy with each iteration.

James Bond 007: NightFire

IN A NUTSHELL Another diabolical fool wants to conquer the world, and only one man can stop him...

The terrorist scum you'll face don't take too kindly to you snooping around their secret hiding places.

James Bond hasn't had the best luck on the PC. Everyone's favorite super-agent adorned the cover of our September 2000 issue, which proudly proclaimed that *James Bond: The World Is Not Enough* was coming to the PC and was going to kick all kinds of ass. Well, we all know how that one turned out — the game was released to great acclaim on consoles but *our* version was canned.

All will be made right with the world, though, when *James Bond 007: NightFire* is released for the PC later this year. Under development at the currently hot Gearbox, *NightFire* will feature a story completely independent of the films. It seems that a certain Rafael Drake, a wealthy "green" industrialist, has been hired to dismantle nuclear warheads and get rid of the nuclear waste. Instead, he creates a private arsenal and plans to take over the U.S. Space Weapons Platform and hold the world hostage.

The game will sport more than 20 locations (counting both single- and multiplay), and though the story is original, Michael Condrey, producer of the PC version, promises that many of the environments will be familiar to fans of the movies.

"You'll move stealthily through a snow-covered Austrian castle, infiltrate a Tokyo highrise, blast through a fortified jungle base, maneuver through a low-gravity space station, and more, all in attempts to save the world from the most diabolical Bond villain yet!" he describes.

Bringing all of those locales to life is an impressive-looking graphics engine, using a heavily modified version of Valve's *Half-Life* technology. Don't be put-off by that: *NightFire* is looking fantastic. The models and locations are packed with detail, to the point that Pierce Brosnan's likeness is used in the game and it *actually* looks like him.

As you'd expect, Bond will have a full arsenal at his disposal — more than 20 weapons and gadgets total — including a multi-purpose wristwatch and Q-Vision enhancement glasses, which will give you light amplification along with X-ray vision. The latter mode looks particularly exciting, as when spying through rice-paper walls you'll be able to see enemies in another room and then shoot them through the wall.

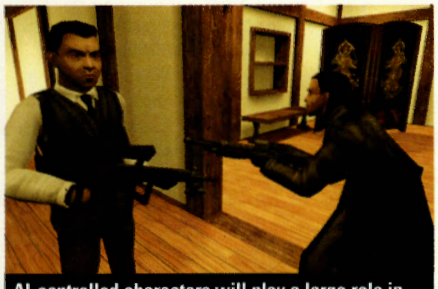
Other weapons will include sniper rifles, fully automatic assault rifles, high-damage rocket and grenade launchers, and specially disguised ambush weapons such as the Sentry Suitcase Turret. The SST looks like a standard suitcase, but when it's deployed it unfolds into a turret gun that lights up anyone who crosses its path.

Although *NightFire* will be a multi-platform release, Condrey assures us that the PC version will be packed with lots of PC-only goodies: "There are levels in both single-play and multiplay that will not be found on any consoles." The online multi-player component is also PC-specific. Additionally, the PC will have level-specific layouts and gameplay design that make the first-person-shooter experience using the keyboard and mouse exciting and different from that using any console control pad."

Multiplay will include all of the traditional gameplay modes, such as death-match and capture the flag, but all of them will be played in Bond-themed levels. The current plan is for multiplay to support up to 32 players at once, and you'll be able to play via LAN or over the Internet.

From what we've seen of *NightFire*, the long wait for a Bond game on the PC will have been well worth it. — *William Harms*

The deathmatch levels will be set in a variety of locations, such as this Japanese-style abode.



AI-controlled characters will play a large role in the game, and will often fight by your side.

Madonna will be making a cameo in Bond's 20th movie, *Die Another Day*, as well as writing and performing the title song.

F.Y.I.

CATEGORY: Action
DEVELOPER: Gearbox Software
PUBLISHER: EA
WWW: ea.com/eagames/main/
PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 70%
RELEASE DATE: November 2002

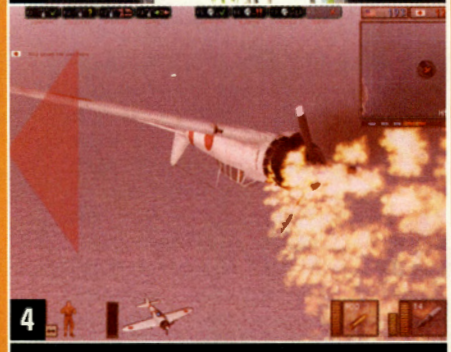
WHAT'S SO SPECIAL?: It's James Bond, sucker! Seriously, though, the mere fact that 007 is *finally* coming to the PC is reason enough to take notice. This is one action title that everyone should be watching.

DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD: Best known for its work on the *Half-Life* add-ons (*Opposing Force*, *Blue Shift*) and the upcoming *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero*, Gearbox is quickly becoming an A-list studio.

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.

Some planes feature a rear-gunner position, where a second person can man the gun and lay down some serious firepower.



Battlefield 1942

DEVELOPER **Digital Illusions** PUBLISHER **EA** CURRENT RELEASE DATE **September 2002**

TO GET A TRUE SENSE of *Battlefield 1942*, imagine the superb *Half-Life* multiplayer mod *Day of Defeat* married with controllable vehicles and large, perfectly designed maps. Indeed, if *1942*'s beta is any indication, the finished game should be one of the most visceral and engaging shooters ever.

Though the final version will have three modes of play (Team Deathmatch, Capture the Flag, and Conquest), only the latter was enabled in our beta. In Conquest, Axis and Allies vie for control of flags scattered around the map. Flags provide score points, but more importantly, they determine respawn locations and vehicle control for the surrounding area.

Two maps were available in our build (the final version will have 16, covering the entire theater of World War II). In the first map, the North African battleground of Tobruk, the British fend off a German tank assault. The second map, Wake, perfectly demonstrates *1942*'s potential as the Americans defend the island against a Japanese invasion force.

Situated offshore, the Japanese have an aircraft carrier and a destroyer. Every vehicle is controllable, which means you can fly the planes that spawn on the carrier's deck; take control of the destroyer and sail it around the map; load up landing craft with troops and head for shore; or even control the destroyer's cannons and shell the island.

The Americans have planes of their own (with which they can sink the carrier and destroyer), as well as anti-aircraft guns, tanks, half-tracks, and jeeps. As you can guess, all of these vehicles and options make for some truly gut-wrenching battles when the combined arms of both sides clash: AA guns desperately try to clear the sky of enemy planes, which, in turn, bomb armor on the ground — a struggle that paves the way for troops to seize an enemy flag. Trust us: it's truly exhilarating stuff.

Best of all, controlling all the vehicles is extremely easy — simply use the same keyboard controls that you use when you're a grunt running around on the ground. (The exception to this setup are the planes, whose controls are a bit more complicated.) You can also toggle to a third-person mode, which comes in handy when flying or negotiating a tank through tight spaces.

Our primary concern about the game — and it's a *huge* one — is whether *1942* will be able to handle the bandwidth load. The developers promise that some of the battles will feature 64 players, but we experienced slideshow-inducing lag on servers with only 28 players, and we're playing on a lightning-fast T3 line. We just hope the optimizations in the final weeks before release allow *1942* to nail its momentous potential. — *William Harms*

(1) Not only can you control the tank and man the top-mounted machinegun, but your squadmates can hop on and ride along as well. (2) The flags in the map are what you're fighting over. Control them, and you win the game. (3) Visually, *1942* won't challenge *Quake III*, but it gets the job done. (4) You can bail out of flaming planes and parachute to the ground. Not me, though: I prefer to ride it until the bitter end.

At times, I forgot that I wasn't playing *Diablo II*. BELOW LEFT: The interface may look intimidating at first, but after a while it's easy to navigate. BELOW RIGHT: When your character levels up, add points to his primary stats and chosen skills.

Divine Divinity

DEVELOPER Larian Studios **PUBLISHER** CDV **CURRENT RELEASE DATE** September 2002

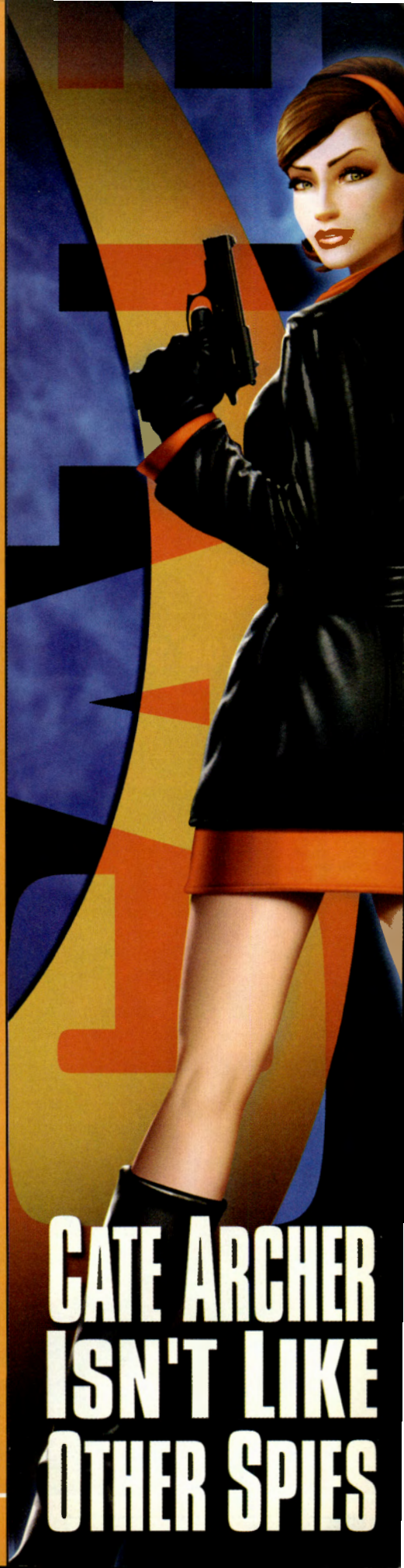
CONGRATULATIONS ON reading beyond the name of this hands-on. Pretty goofy title, huh? I seriously worry that *Divine Divinity*'s name may stop people from picking it up, thinking it's some hastily thrown-together piece of European shovelware crappola. *DD* is European all right, but if the first 20 hours are any indication, it's far from deserving of any scatological comparison.

DD's developers have gone out of their way to say that their game is no *Diablo II* clone, but it clearly is — and as far as I'm concerned, that's just fine. The story is more than a little clichéd, but it's compelling. You play as one of three character types — Warrior, Survivor, or Mage (male or female) — having awakened in a town of healers after being knocked unconscious by a strange magical force. Your job is to find out who you are, cure a strange plague that's been infecting the land, whoop up on orcs/imps/skeletons/other beasties, and buy and find a ton of cool weapons, armor, and magical items along the way.

In my explorations thus far, the game is filled to the brim with all manner of interesting quests that help progress the story, and thus make the adventuring portion of the experience feel more like *Neverwinter Nights* than *Diablo II*. Still, gameplay is very much a left-mouse-click funfest: See enemies. Click on them until dead. Repeat. Is all this hacking a bad thing? Personally, I'm digging it.

DD's world is sprite-based and sports an isometric perspective. I'm not too fond of some of the monster designs, but the overall look of the game is *very* sharp (especially at 1024x768) and has a high-budget feel. Despite *DD*'s 2D nature, many of its seemingly insignificant items — water jugs, food on tables, bales of hay on the ground, and so on — can be repositioned in the world. Sometimes jostling reveals nothing; other times you'll find hidden switches or doors — and in the hay example, you can even fashion a makeshift bed for quick resting and healing when health potions are low. Whatever you discover, this level of interaction helps make the world come alive.

Expect *DD* to ship without multiplayer support. While this omission may scare a few hardcore RPGers, Larian is promising up to 200-plus hours of really fun and engaging single-player adventuring, so I'm not that concerned. — *Greg Vederman*



Dragon's Lair 3D

DEVELOPER Dragonstone Software
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft
CURRENT RELEASE DATE November 2002

FROM THESE SCREENSHOTS, you may think you're looking at cels of a new *Dragon's Lair* cartoon. If so, that's totally by design. Judging from my playtime with the beta of *Dragon's Lair 3D: Return to the Lair*, Dragonstone has succeeded marvelously at re-creating the classic arcade game's animated look while transporting it to a fully interactive 3D world.

More than just a mere remake of the original's 11-minute story, *DL3D* is a radical expansion in which you, as Dirk the Daring, save your beloved Princess Daphne from the clutches of Singe the dragon (and another deadlier menace, perhaps?).

Your introduction to *DL3D* is an all-new animated sequence created by legendary animator Don Bluth. As the game begins, you're immediately faced with a challenge straight from the original game: a cyclops worm blocking your way across the castle drawbridge. Hack and slash with your sword, and he's toast.

Nostalgic nods to *Dragon's Lair* abound: I encountered the electrical Chessboard Knight, leaped through fiery collapsing hallways, and swung on dangling ropes. Daphne stays in voice contact via a magical amulet (that shrill squeak of hers *does* get irritating, though), giving you hints for every new puzzle. And when you die, you're treated to the familiar "skeleton disintegration" and rebirth sequences.

Control-wise, it's a whole new game. You can jump, crouch, and attack at any time, and you have three movement speeds: run, walk, and creep. Right now, the default walk is a little too plodding, but I'm hopeful that it'll be sped up before *DL3D* ships. — *Chuck Osborn*

Billy finishes the Grand Canal while his people rejoice. Not shown is Greg, weeping like a sissy.

Emperor: Rise of the Middle Kingdom

DEVELOPER Impressions/Breakaway Games **PUBLISHER** Sierra Studios **CURRENT RELEASE DATE** Fall 2002

THE STRATEGY GAMES produced by Impressions — *Pharaoh*, *Caesar III*, and *Zeus* — are some of the best around, brilliantly blending highly addictive city-building elements with combat, trade, and other random components. The one feature they've always lacked, though, is a multiplayer suite. With *Emperor: Rise of the Middle Kingdom*, that situation is finally addressed. *Emperor* will feature two types of multiplayer games. In collaborative mode, you'll manage different cities in the same world but work toward a common goal; in competitive mode, you'll wage war on up to eight real opponents. TheVede and I spent several hours with the latest build of the game, and came away pretty impressed.

We played a collaborative game, with the ultimate goal of completing a grand canal. Because of our respective locations on the map, certain resources were available to only one of us, which meant that Vede had to import stone from me to finish his section of the canal, while I had to buy rice from him. You set resource prices however you see fit (the stone I sold Greg was the most expensive in history), and you can also decide how many units you're willing to sell.

As you'd expect, this setup led to some interesting situations as Greg and I yelled at each other about prices, who was buying what, and so on. It also created a delicious bit of strategic depth as we both raced to complete our section of the canal first, which meant balancing our economic need for trade with limiting just how much of a particular resource we were willing to trade.

This game's already packed with potential — the thought of marrying addictive Impressions-style gameplay with real human opponents sets my shorts a-jumping. It'll be interesting to see how the gameplay pans out in the competitive mode, but from our playtest, we think *Emperor* is exploring some compelling new strategy angles. — *William Harms*

Farms are essential when it comes to feeding your people, but the real road to success lies with managing your warehouses, which determine proper and even distribution of food throughout your city.

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DEFENDING GAMES

Who's Standing Up for Us?

When politicians attack, IDSA President Doug Lowenstein bites back. Politely.

Try explaining *this* to a conservative senator! No one said the IDSA has an easy job — especially when games like *Soldier of Fortune II* are pushing gore boundaries.

Gamers are well aware that their passion is routinely brought under fire by opportunistic legislators and simple-minded public-interest groups. We all cringe when a senator unveils proposals to censor games and restrict our access to them. And we all shake our heads as yet another TV pundit laments the content of new games.

But few gamers are aware that a dedicated lobbying organization exists to fight on Capitol Hill and around the country on behalf of the gaming industry.

The Interactive Digital Software Association was formed in 1994 as a trade association to defend the interests of game publishers. Its president is Doug Lowenstein, who has been in the trenches for IDSA since its inception. Along that road, he's seen gaming grow from novelty to mass medium, and has fought many of the battles faced by the gaming industry as it's suffered through cultural growing pains.

"The first time I met a congressional staffer who actually played games was a cause for celebration," says Lowenstein. "But there were 1,000 people at our last annual Congressional Entertainment Software Day. So it's really come a long way in terms of overall awareness."

When Senator Joe Lieberman proposed government regulation restricting the content of games, it was the IDSA that challenged him on constitutional grounds. When retired colonel David Grossman traipsed the news networks decrying first-person shooters as "murder simulators," it was the IDSA that challenged him to produce any compelling study to back up his outrageous claims. (Which, of course, Grossman was unable to do.)

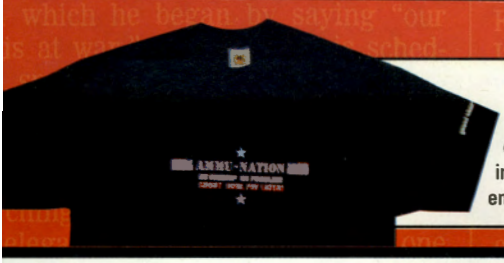
"Our day-to-day business is to meet with various [political] decision-makers and educate them about games," explains Lowenstein. "We're working against a lot of assumptions and a lot of misinformation, so it's really just a constant process of educating people."

As with any other Washington lobbyist, the nuts and bolts of Lowenstein's job involves a lot of lunches and dinner parties spent hob-nobbing with government legislators (made more palatable by an annual salary that, according to industry sources, is over $500,000). At the Congressional Entertainment Software Day, IDSA invites lawmakers to a banquet that includes demonstrations of new games and explanations of the game ratings system. In short, it's a daily grind of evangelizing the gaming industry for the nation's most influential people.

While the IDSA deals with a wide spectrum of issues ranging from piracy to maintenance of the Electronic Software Ratings Board (ESRB), the organization's most significant contribution is to represent gaming among Washington lawmakers and on the national media circuit.

OUR SHERIFF IN WASHINGTON

THAT ROLE MEANS DEFENDING games when they're singled out for attention by lawmakers. A recent St. Louis county ordinance criminalized the sale of M-rated games to minors. (The law was specifically tailored to games, and made no mention



WIN A GRAND THEFT AUTO III T-SHIRT

This month we're dressing 10 lucky winners in a super-swank *GTA III* T-shirt. To be eligible for our random drawing, just send an email to *eyewitness@pcgamer.com* with "Dress Me Up" in the subject heading, and include your name and address in the body of the message. Only one entry per person allowed. Contest ends Oct. 31, 2002. See additional rules on page 135.

of sales of R-rated movies or explicit music.) The judge in the case ruled that games don't enjoy the same protective First Amendment consideration as other forms of expression.

Needless to say, the IDSA was quick to file a brief in the federal appeal of the St. Louis case. The law was upheld at the federal circuit level, and could conceivably be decided in the U.S. Supreme Court.

When California congressman Joe Baca introduced the mightily named "Protect Children From Video Game Sex and Violence Act" for consideration as federal legislation earlier this year, the IDSA found itself in yet another political struggle. Baca was specifically revolted by descriptions of *Grand Theft Auto III*.

a tireless effort at championing the artistic and entertainment value of games.

"Most people just hear from someone that *GTA III* has some extreme violence," says Lowenstein. "They have no idea that the game is rated M for Mature, or that there is even a ratings system voluntarily in place for games. Our challenge is to make the ESRB ratings as widely known and well understood as movie ratings. And to show people that our ratings are actually far more specific and useful as content guidelines."

Rockstar Games' VP of marketing, Terry Donovan, says that there were concrete benefits to IDSA membership when *GTA III* came under political fire.

"As a member of IDSA, we had access to the statements, testimony, research, and other materials

> **"It's hardly surprising that political attacks typically come from a generation of people 45 and older..."**
>
> — Doug Lowenstein, IDSA President

"When kids play video games, they assume the identity of the characters in the game, and some of these characters are murderers, thieves, rapists, drug addicts, and prostitutes," Baca announced in a May press release. "Do you really want your kids assuming the role of a mass murderer or carjacker while you are away at work?"

Baca's bill would make it a crime for retailers to sell or rent to a minor any game that depicts "violent felonies." (Baca apparently doesn't object to *Hamlet*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, or the Bible.)

Lowenstein's strategy for attacking such legislation is centered on three main drives. The first is arguing the unconstitutionality of legislation such as that proposed by Lieberman and Baca. The second is to promote the ESRB ratings and educate the public about their use. And the third is simply to carry on that IDSA has put together on the industry, its demographics, the rating system, and the larger issue of violence in video games," he told *PC Gamer*. "These materials, plus the ability to benefit from IDSA's perspectives and experience in dealing with general concerns about violent media, were invaluable to us."

Despite occasional setbacks, Lowenstein is convinced that mainstream acceptance of video games/PC games is inevitable.

"It's hardly surprising that political attacks typically come from a generation of people 45 and older who grew up with more traditional forms of entertainment," Lowenstein continues. "But the demographics are on our side. Twenty years from now, the people in power in this country will have been and still be gamers; they'll have grown up with this stuff."

PC GAMER RELEASE METER

Release dates used with permission from Gone Gold (*www.gonegold.com*). Games farthest out are most likely to change dates. Send release info to *dates@gonegold.com*.

→ September

TITLE	PUBLISHER	DATE
Arx Fatalis	Fishtank	09/03/02
Farscape	Simon/Schuster	09/03/02
Battlefield 1942	EA	09/04/02
Chessmaster 9000	Ubi Soft	09/05/02
Season Ticket Basketball 2003	Infogrames	09/10/02
Stronghold: Crusader	G.O.D.	09/10/02
Real War: Rogue States	Simon/Schuster	09/10/02
Conflict: Desert Storm	Take-Two	09/10/02
Syberia	DreamCatcher	09/10/02
Starsky and Hutch	Empire Int.	09/11/02
IGI 2: Covert Strike	Codemasters	09/11/02
Emperor: Rise of Middle Kingdom	Sierra	09/11/02
Sniper	Xicat	09/18/02
Worms Blast	Ubi Soft	09/18/02
NHL 2003	EA Sports	09/18/02
Tank Commander: WWII	Eidos	09/18/02
The Sims: Unleashed	Maxis	09/18/02
SWAT: Urban Justice	Sierra	09/18/02
Links 2003	Microsoft	09/18/02
Dirt Track Racing 2	Infogrames	09/25/02
Master of Orion 3	MicroProse	09/25/02
Prisoner of War	Codemasters	09/25/02
NASCAR Thunder 2003	EA Sports	09/25/02
Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2	EA	09/25/02
HOMM IV add-on	3DO	09/25/02
Unreal Tournament 2003	Infogrames	09/25/02
Pro Race Driver	Codemasters	09/27/02

→ October

TITLE	PUBLISHER	DATE
Highland Warriors	Data Becker	10/03/02
Empire Earth: The Art of Conquest	Sierra	10/03/02
No One Lives Forever 2	Vivendi Universal	10/03/02
FIFA 2003	EA Sports	10/03/02
Hitman 2	Eidos	10/09/02
RollerCoaster Tycoon 2	Infogrames	10/09/02
Deadly Dozen: Pacific	Infogrames	10/10/02
Age of Mythology	Microsoft	10/11/02
Counter-Strike: Condition Zero	Sierra	10/15/02
The Sims Online	Maxis	10/16/02
Lionheart	Interplay	10/16/02
Combat Flight Simulator 3	Microsoft	10/18/02
Grand Prix 4	Infogrames	10/22/02
EverQuest: Planes of Power	Sony Online Ent.	10/22/02
Jurassic Park: Evolution	Sierra	10/23/02
Crusader Kings	Strategy First	10/25/02
RalliSport Challenge	Microsoft	10/25/02
Iron Storm	DreamCatcher	10/29/02
Civilization III: Play the World	Infogrames	10/30/02
NBA Live 2003	EA Sports	10/30/02
Shadowbane	Ubi Soft	10/30/02
Lord of the Rings	Universal	10/30/02

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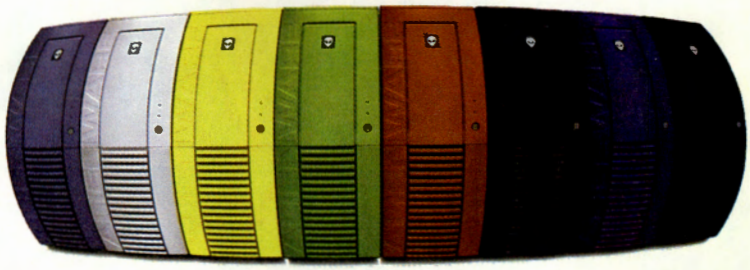

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Enter

PC GAMER PLAYLIST

ROB *Magic Online* has sucked up most of my game time this month. I hadn't played in about seven years, and having a ready pool of players eager to kick my ass has resurrected my fascination with the game. I use the cunning disguise of pcg_rob, so challenge me if you see me online. Beyond that, I'm playing through *Neverwinter Nights* again.

COREY Chuck's got me super-hooked on all the new *Freedom Force* mods at *www.freedommods.com*. I've been torching Skrulls in *Fantastic Force*, beating up half-demons in the *Buffy* mod, and laughing out loud at Wolverine's lines in *The Great Hunt*. I can't stop diving into *Halo* co-op play, either. We need that way-better PC version *now*!

DAN *Battlefield 1942* is pretty much everything I've ever dreamed about in an action game, even at beta stage. Anti-aircraft fire, dive-bombing, even firing a destroyer's main guns at an enemy-held coastline — that's what I call gaming. On the other hand, I had to review *Delta Force: Task Force Dagger*, which made me wish I was playing *1942*.

CHUCK This is my sob story. I got hooked on *Neverwinter Nights*. Played it every night and every weekend — even got laid in the brothel. Then, in the middle of Chapter 2, my save game became corrupted and won't load anymore. Now I'm sad. At least there's the *Great Hunt* mod for *Freedom Force*. Best...mod...ever!

BILLY The beta of *Battlefield 1942* has consumed my every waking moment: I absolutely cannot get enough. I love flying low in a plane and bombing the hell out of my own boys...wait, that's not right. Uh...did I mention I'm also replaying *Warcraft III*'s supremely excellent single-player campaign? Yes indeed.

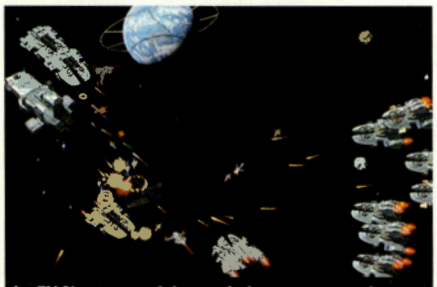
JOE Why can't I get laid in *Neverwinter Nights*? I was a man-stud in *Arcanum*, got it done in *Planescape: Torment*, did my business in *Baldur's Gate*, *BGII*, AND *Throne of Bhaal*... so what do the women in *NWN* have against me? I can't even get laid in a brothel with a fistful of gold coins and a magical longsword! Any suggestions? Email *joe@pcgamer.com*.

CHIAKI "To become the New Flesh, you first have to kill the old flesh." Welcome to *Videodrome*. I am ready. I was born ready. Sittin' here staring at my unopened *Warcraft III Collector's Edition* box. It slowly starts to breathe. Whoa, what was that? Holy crap — I think it's actually trying to crawl toward me! It's all over now — give my love to the kids.

GREG *Divine Divinity*, the doctor said, so that is what I played...and played...and played some more. Damn, what a goofy name. The game itself is actually good fun, though. *A lot* like *Diablo II*, but with a bit more meat on its bones. The beta I've got has some issues, but I'm confident they'll be worked out by launch time. Oh, and I also beat *Neverwinter Nights*!

Escape Velocity — Ported at Last

Acclaimed Mac-only game is *finally* coming to the PC



In *EV Nova*, one of the goals is to conquer planets, but they won't always go down without a fight.

Never let it be said that we're not equal-opportunity gamers — if there's a great game out there, we'll find it and play it. Case in point: *Escape Velocity Nova*, the third installment in the acclaimed space-strategy series that (until now) has been available only for the Mac. That's about to change, however, as Contraband Entertainment is porting Ambrosia's classic to the PC.

EV Nova begins with you controlling a simple ship that you use to complete money-making assignments, such as delivering cargo, so you can buy new weapons, upgrades, and better and larger ships. Along the way you battle pirates and rivals, but if you survive, you can eventually conquer entire planets. And naturally, the action is set against a compelling story that you impact with your actions.

Why is *EV Nova*'s transition to the PC so noteworthy? For the longest time, publisher Ambrosia steadfastly *refused* to port the game, even going so far as to post on their site that they'd *never* make a PC port. So why the change of heart? "People were going to great lengths to run *EV Nova* on their PCs, trying all manner of emulators and such," explains Andrew Welch, president of Ambrosia. "We just decided that they'd have a much better experience if *EV Nova* was ported to Windows, rather than their trying to run it emulated [with mixed results]."

One of the reasons for *EV Nova*'s success is the game's large and vibrant mod-making community. You can find *Star Wars*– and *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*–themed mods online, and, according to Welch, all of the mods for *EV Nova* — even those developed for the Mac version of the game — will work with the PC version.

It's no secret that Mac and PC users are ferociously protective of their respective gaming platforms, and PC gamers usually view the Mac as a second-tier gaming system (rightfully so). Welch doesn't think this stereotyping will hurt *EV Nova*'s potential success. "If they like the game, I think they'll appreciate it," he says.

The release date for *EV Nova* is currently undecided, but Welch tells us that the game should be entering beta phase within the next month. We'll snag a copy when it's available and give you a full hands-on report.

FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

WHO'S SAYING WHAT AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING

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—Cover blurb for Awesome Game Creations, No Programming Required, Second Edition

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— Box blurb for Hero X *(the grammatical errors are the publisher's)*

JUST WAIT UNTIL YOU SEE THE SWARMS OF SNAKES AND BATS

"Oh shit, they're rushing with giant rats and fire beetles...we're all going to die!"

— GrimWULFE on the announcement that an EverQuest *real-time strategy game is being considered, from* www.voodooextreme.com

The tortures of Zelenhgorm

UH...HUH?

"In the first episode of *Zelenhgorm* — "The Great Ship" — we initially make contact with the strange world of Zelenhgorm in the shape of Arrikk Vaheirr. Arrikk is a young inventor from among the fisher folk of the Deyrec, who populate the island group of Senava, in the northeast corner of Zelenhgorm."

—Plot synopsis included with a beta build of Zelenhgorm, *the "first truly interactive movie"*

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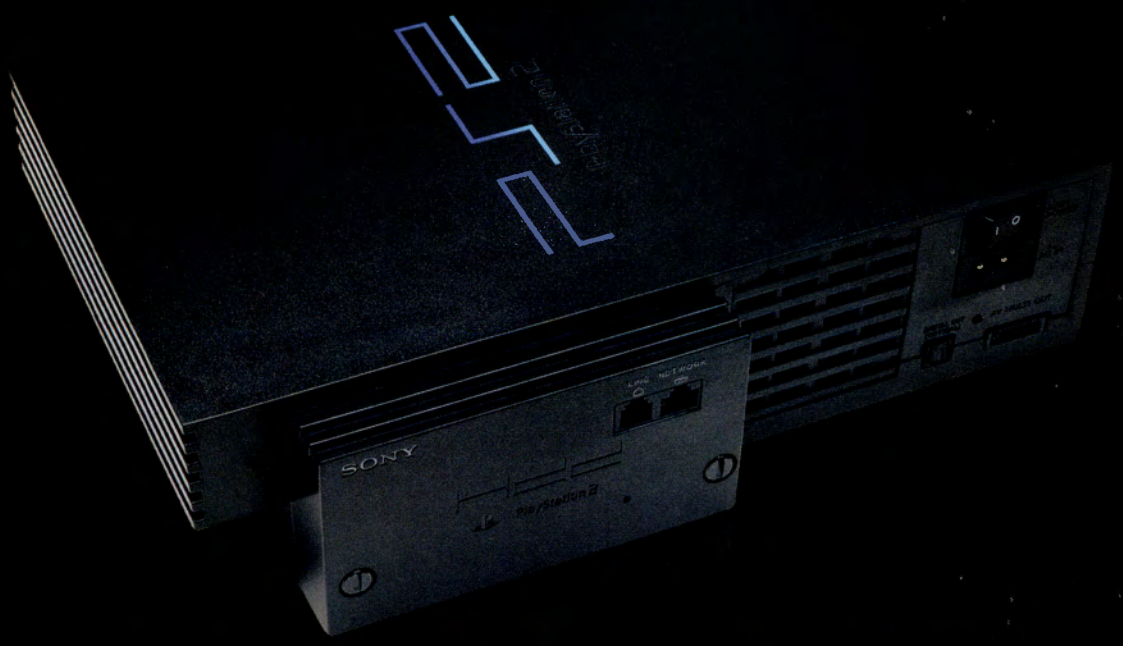

Or cross-check, smash, tackle, leg-sweep or ollie over them – even if they're in another time zone. With the Network Adaptor (Ethernet/modem) (for PlayStation 2), just about anything is possible. Like downloading new rosters, stadiums and characters. Trash-talking opponents you've never met. Or, better yet, starting your very own East Coast-West Coast sports rivalry. All against live competition, so no two games are ever alike. The Network Adaptor for PlayStation 2 is here. Get your game online.

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- PlayStation 2 (duh)
- Network Adaptor (obviously)
- Memory card (8MB for PlayStation 2) with at least 137K of space (that ain't much)
- Dial-up or broadband Internet connection (in English: such as cable modem, DSL, T1 or just a plain ol' phone line)
- Network Adaptor Start-Up Disc to create ISP settings (don't worry, it's easy)

OTHER STUFF:

- The Network Adaptor works with just about any ISP subscriber, including AOL, AT&T Worldnet, EarthLink, Prodigy/SBC and Sympatico. Check with your ISP for details.

These are just a few of the games with online features available this year:

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ATV Offroad Fury™ 2

Madden NFL™ 2003

Tony Hawk Pro Skater™ 4

SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs

Frequency™

Twisted Metal:Black™ ONLINE

NFL GameDay™ 2003

Tribes™ Aerial Assault

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-Maxim Magazine

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-Gamespot

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PCG NEWS TICKER

Warcraft III reigns! Blizzard sold 1 million copies of *WC III* worldwide in less than three weeks. Per NPD, it debuted as the No. 1 and No. 2 best-selling games in its first week of release in the U.S. (regular version and Collector's Edition, respectively).

NCsoft has launched the 11th episode of its online RPG *Lineage. Episode XI: Oren* opens up an icy new snow region and adds new spells to the game's magic system. To download the episode, visit *www.lineage.com.*

Castle Wolfenstein: The Movie? Columbia Pictures has snatched up the rights to bring *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* to the big screen sometime in the indeterminate future. Sounds like a vehicle for The Rock to us…

DarkSpace enters retail space: Got Game announced that it will publish *DarkSpace*, Palestar's struggling spaceship MMORPG. The retail edition will be available this November.

She shoots, she scores: A visibly embarrassed London Symphony Orchestra was shocked and dismayed this July when tight-topped Lara Croft model Jill de Jong took to the podium (below) to conduct them in scoring the soundtrack to *Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness*, due for release this November. "Oh, why didn't I join the Philharmonic instead?" pondered mortified cellist Danielle Skeevy.

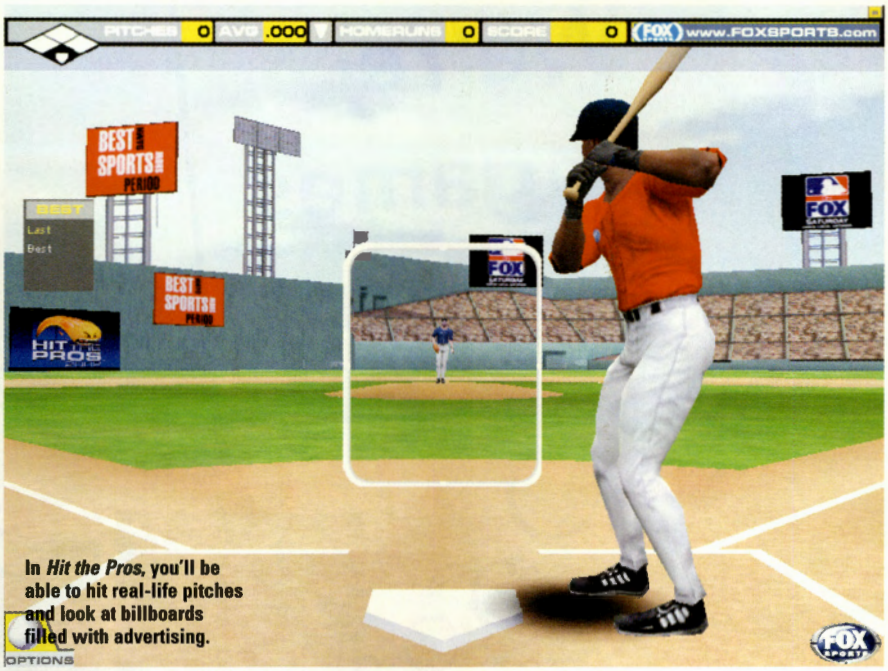
In more NCsoft news, the publisher has picked up the rights to Realm Interactive's *Trade Wars: Dark Millennium*, an action-oriented space/fantasy MMORPG set in both outer space and planetary environments. Release date is TBA.

Mythic (*Dark Age of Camelot*) is developing *Imperator*, an alternate-earth MMORPG set in a star-spanning future in which Ancient Rome never fell. You'll quest far and wide for the perfect "space cannoli."

Who let the dogz out? Maxis will release yet another expansion for *The Sims* in September, this one titled *The Sims: Unleashed.* It'll introduce new professions, objects, and Sim-pets like cats, dogs, and turtles. As if the game *needs* more spontaneous urination…

UO's house party: Origin and EA will release the expansion *Ultima Online: Age of Shadows* in spring 2003. It'll add two new professions (paladin and necromancer) and allow you to design and build your own houses.

Gnoll train rush! In an effort to diversify its brand, SOE has partnered with developer Rapid Eye Entertainment to create an RTS based on *EverQuest.* Hmm…wonder if that would work for *World of Warcraft*…?!



In *Hit the Pros*, you'll be able to hit real-life pitches and look at billboards filled with advertising.

Games as Marketing Tools

The next big thing for online games might be interactive ads

Games based on licensed properties have been around forever, but the rise of the Internet has created an entirely new phenomenon: web-based games licensed from big commercial properties and developed specifically as marketing tools. Unlike the "average" licensed game, which is a game publisher's way of cashing in on a hot movie or television property, this new wave of games is designed to build brand recognition for specific products, shows, or events. And to play them, you need little more than your web browser.

Fully embracing this concept is Fox Sports. The TV network recently teamed with WildTangent (the company helmed by DirectX architect Alex St. John) to create *Hit the Pros*, a browser-based baseball game in which you try to hit real-life pitches. Cameras in baseball stadiums capture telemetry data from each pitch and this data is uploaded to the game, where players can try their luck at hitting pitches from MLB's best.

WANNA PLAY?

→ To try out a demo version of *Hit the Pros*, check out *www.hitthepros.com.*

"We view this game and our overall interactive baseball product as a pure extension of what we do on TV," explains Adam Bain, VP of production and development at Fox Sports. "This game is the most aggressive convergent brand extension of MLB we've ever undertaken, and we believe we'll reach a unique demographic to continue to broaden the sphere of interest in baseball.

"We're hoping to create a community of fans that are pushed to watch TV to see the real pitches that were thrown," continues Bain. "And from TV we're hoping to push an audience back to the online game to extend the experience they just had on TV. If we do our jobs right, we've supported and extended the TV experience by pushing people to watch more TV and converting fans into gamers."

In addition to *Hit the Pros*, WildTangent has also developed marketing-related games for Toyota, Nike, and even TNT series *Witchblade*. St. John is particularly bullish when it comes to the future of games as marketing devices.

"Games are especially good at reaching certain audiences," he says, "particularly younger audiences. Some segments of the market spend more time playing games than consuming any other media. People will also spend hours at a time playing a branded game, which is a phenomenon no other media can duplicate."

In St. John's eyes, games also add value to branding and media campaigns. For example, he believes it makes perfect sense for an advertiser who's paying for a 30-second ad during *Witchblade* to pay a little more and sponsor the online game, which will generate even more attention from each player.

Beyond using games simply as marketing devices, St. John envisions a future in which games become the predominant form of entertainment, unseating TV from the top of the entertainment food chain.

"Our parents were raised on passive entertainment mediums like radio and TV; we've been raised on interactivity — that's what the computer, gaming, and Internet revolutions have been about. The next generation of consumers will expect interactivity from all of their media." Just as long as there aren't any bugs, that is.

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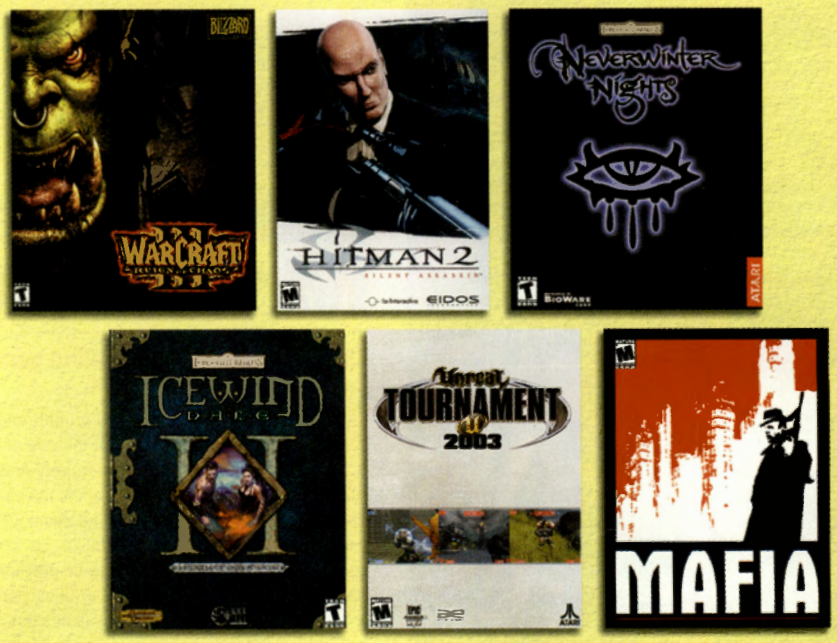

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What's Going On With...

We get updates on five of the hottest games currently in development

We've profiled many big-name games, and along the way some of them vanish into a development haze. What happened, what's the story, and where are they now? Your questions for five of the biggest games, now answered.

TEAM FORTRESS 2

ORIGINALLY PLANNED AS A FREE *Half-Life* add-on, *TF2* has been delayed for nearly four years now after making our list of the Top 10 games of 1999! So what's going on at Valve? Are they even working on *TF2*?

"*TF2* is in development on Valve's next-generation tech," says the studio's director of marketing, Doug Lombardi. "We'll be releasing more information on the project soon." Unfortunately, Lombardi wouldn't reveal any other details, but it's nice to know that the hotly anticipated online shooter is still going forward, contrary to what the Internet jackals would lead you to believe.

LORDS OF THE REALM III

LAST YEAR WE NAMED LORDS OF THE REALM III one of the Top 10 games to be released in 2002; unfortunately, the third installment in the acclaimed *Realms* series isn't going to ship this year. We caught up with the game's product manager, Alex Rodberg, to see how things are coming along.

"We're currently in full production," Rodberg explains. "Designers are still hammering out important game systems and sub-systems and the programmers are [working toward] maximum playability with minimum hardware requirements."

As you'd expect, a large potion of this extended development time is being spent tweaking the gameplay and deciding which features will (or won't) make the final cut. "As the design becomes more refined, we're able to examine each element and see if that part is really fun or not," says Rodberg. "We routinely examine everything from field combat to the amount of management involved to make sure gamers get a highly polished, fun game that's never a me-too product."

And what is the current release date for *Lords III*? "Right now we're targeting 2003," Rodberg tells us.

SOVEREIGN

ORIGINALLY DESIGNED TO BE VERANT'S follow-up to *EverQuest*, *Sovereign* was going to be the first massively multiplayer real-time strategy game. Initially not shown at E3 2001, Sony brought it onto the show floor for the last day on the back of positive vibes from those who had seen it behind closed doors (including us). We haven't seen it since.

So what's going on? Unfortunately, Sony is being very tight-lipped about where *Sovereign* now stands, though they've confirmed that it's still in development — albeit in a different format from its last showing.

DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

WE HARASS THE FOLKS AT 3D REALMS on a monthly basis about what's going on with *DNF*, and every month the answer is the same: "Not yet." But we'll keep asking. We still believe — we really do.

REPUBLIC

ANOTHER ONE OF THE GAMES WE CALLED out in our Top 10 Games of 2002 feature was *Republic*, a real-time strategy game in which you'll try to manipulate power in a former republic of the Soviet Union. We asked if any changes had been made to the game.

"In development. No significant changes have been made, still pursuing the course," says Demis Hassabis, CEO of developer Elixir. It's hard to argue with that kind of unbridled enthusiasm!

As for *Republic*'s release date, it's on track to ship at the end of this year.

Someone giving you lip in *Republic*? No worries: these boys will take care of the problem.

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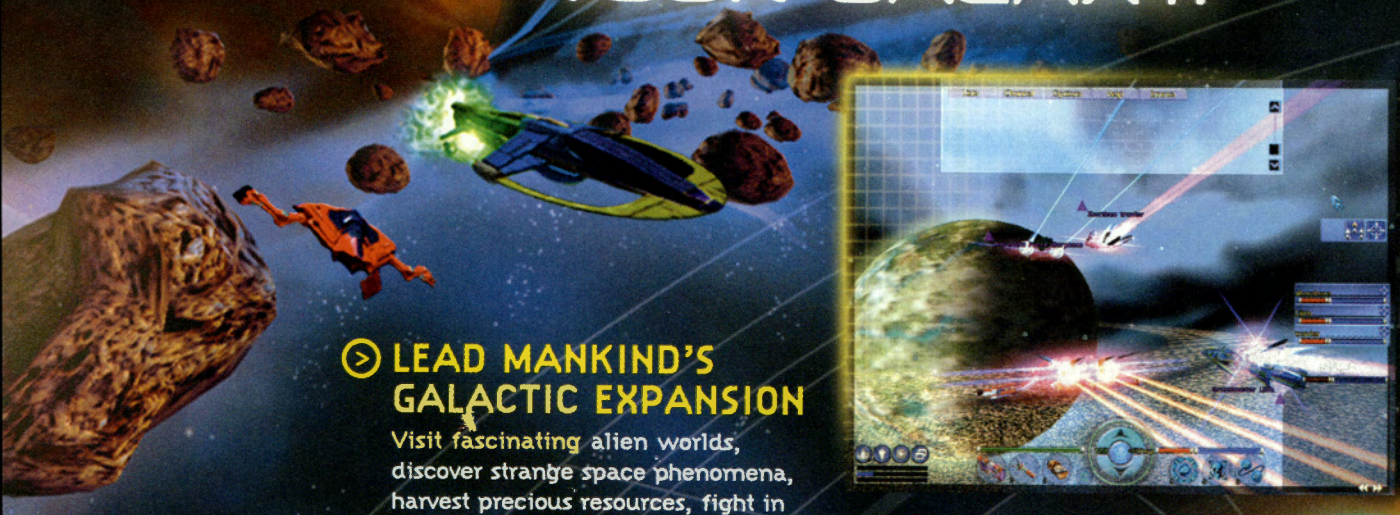

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>>>YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE

THINK 2002 HAS BEEN A BANNER YEAR for gaming goodness? It has! But it's got nothing on the cavalcade of riches coming your way in 2003. We've got the exclusive first look at Alex Garden's hush-hush space RTS sequel *Homeworld2*, along with a never-before-seen peek at LucasArts' revamp of its classic *Full Throttle*. And just because we like you, we're throwing in the first news *anywhere* on *TIE Fighter* guru Larry Holland's return after 12 years to the World War II flight-sim genre. Plus, we've got tons of new info and screens for all 10 games, more *Doom III* shots, an overview of the best games of 2002 that you'll still be playing in 2003, and much, much more.

OP TEN
S

TO NEXT YEAR'S HOTTEST NEW GAMES

■ CITY OF HEROES DEVELOPER CRYPTIC STUDIOS PUBLISHER NCSOFT RELEASE DATE Q1/Q2 2003

The game's powerful character-creation system will allow you to design a multitude of diverse superheroes. (The lady heroes are off washing the invisible jet.)

CITY OF HEROES

HOLDING OUT FOR A HERO? NEXT YEAR, YOU'LL HAVE BILLIONS TO CHOOSE FROM.

We'll be the first to admit—there are so many new MMORPGs coming out that an online implosion seems a forgone conclusion. To succeed in this brave new broadband battlefield, you're going to have to (1) be backed by a killer franchise (*Star Wars, Warcraft*) or (2) give gamers a sensational hook that "the other guys" can't match. The massively multiplayer superhero game *City of Heroes* belongs firmly in the second category.

Based on fan feedback (and our own geeky queries), we put comic purists' most-asked questions about *COH* to Lead Designer Rick Dakan.

PC GAMER: So, has Cryptic Studios changed its collective mind about not allowing us to play as supervillains in the game?

RICK DAKAN: Allowing people to play the role of a villain is certainly something that Cryptic continues to examine. We're very interested in possibly bringing that aspect into the game, but currently don't have any details we can discuss beyond that.

PC GAMER: You've spotlighted the "organized" villain groups in Paragon City. What other types of super-baddies will we face?

RICK DAKAN: *City of Heroes* will have two classes of supervillains. Up until now, we've talked only about massive, terrifying villainous cabals like the Fifth Column. But sometimes just a lone madman and his cadre of devoted followers can present a threat. These villain groups won't play as big a part in ongoing story elements, but they will pop up around the city at various times and cause mayhem. For example, there's Vahzilok, the self-proclaimed zombie lord who steals cadavers and uses his insane science to reanimate them. He's even created a kind of zombie exo-skeleton that he wears in battle. Another example is the Clockwork King, a junkyard technical wizard who creates an army of small but deadly automatons from spare parts. We have a number of such "lesser" villains planned for the game.

PC GAMER: MMORPGs tend to have lots of cool "stuff" to collect. Since most superheroes don't need weapons and armor, what can players expect to find?

■ Powers in *City of Heroes* will be drawn from mutant genetics, magic, gadgets, and chemical or cybernetic alterations.

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■ **The more prestige you accumulate by finishing missions, the more you'll be adored by the grateful citizens of Paragon City.**

■ **The evil Franken-creations of the mad zombie lord Vahzilok will make you do-gooders pay. Bwa-ha-ha-ha-ha!**

RICK DAKAN: *COH* will definitely have its share of items, although they won't be the focus of character development. Some hero types, like gadgeteers, will tend to use items much more than others. Many of the items will be things like costume enhancements, charms, and other small, limited-use items that meld into the character's costume. There'll also be a variety of weapons that characters with the right skills can use if they want to make a character who specializes in firearms or melee weapons or the bow and arrow, for example.

PC GAMER: Naysayers are worried that Paragon City will be saturated with superheroes. What about that?

RICK DAKAN: Right now we're planning on having about 2,000 active players per server (or "continuity," as we call them). It's very unlikely that you'll see heroes outnumbering civilians. Furthermore, an important part of *COH* is accepting and completing special missions. Teams of heroes go off to special locations where only they (and, of course, the villains) have access. This setup definitely tends to cut down on crowding.

PC GAMER: We can't wait to don the spandex. So when's the public beta?

RICK DAKAN: It's currently slated for Q1 2003.

FIVE GAMES YOU'LL STILL BE PLAYING IN 2003

One year just isn't enough to contain this year's offerings. Here are the leggy games of 2002 that'll have you playing well into next year.

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

With *NWN*'s built-in module-creating editor, there'll be oodles of new levels to download for this epic game. (Go to *www.nwnguide.com* for official *and* unofficial mods.)

MOH: ALLIED ASSAULT

The add-on shipping later this year will give you one more reason to relive *MOHAA*'s multiplayer mayhem. Click on *www.planetmedalofhonor.com* for all your Nazi-bashing needs.

FREEDOM FORCE

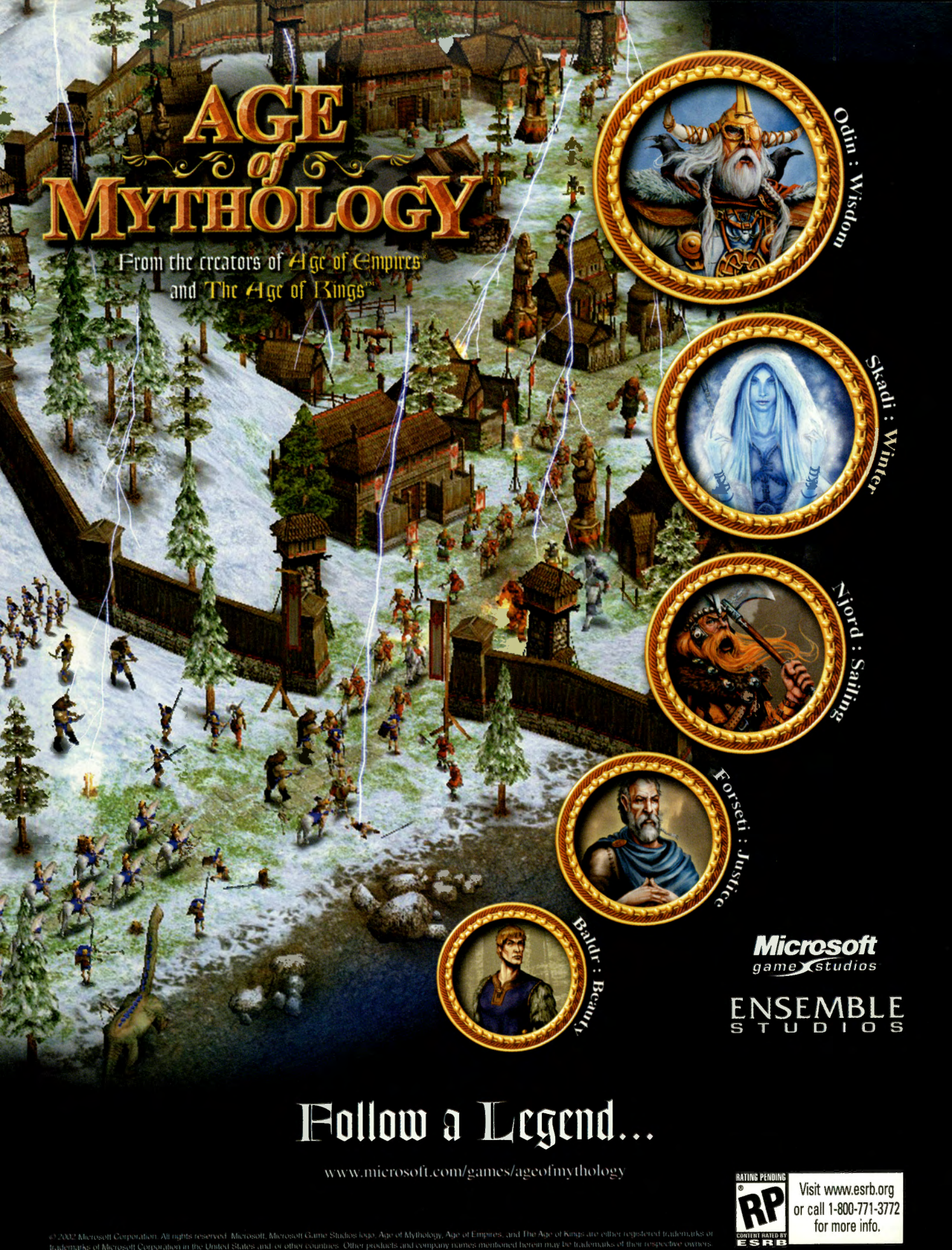
The thriving *FF* mod community has been making tons of new skins, mods, meshes, and powers. For an all-in-one database of new mods, see Freedom Mods at *www.gamers-universe.com.*

WARCRAFT III

StarCraft is still a big seller, so *WC III*'s multiplayer addictiveness may just make it a game that you'll be playing well into 2006. For *Warcraft* mods and maps, go to *www.warcraft3files.com.*

GRAND THEFT AUTO III

GTA III's open-ended design renders it one of the most replayable game experiences of the year. Compound the fun with the cool mods and skins lurking at *www.gta3files.com.*



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DX2: INVISIBLE WAR

THE REAWAKENING OF SUBLIME MASTERPIECE DEUS EX SPINS A CONSPIRACY THRILLER WORTHY OF THE "CLONE RANGER"

"No, honey, that's not my nudie calendar! Hey, what's that behind your back?"

It just may be the best game you never played. The genre-defying *Deus Ex* never quite achieved the commercial success worthy of a Game of the Year winner (as *PC Gamer* deemed it for 2000). But all that should change for 2003's follow-up, *DX2: Invisible War* — it's got the pedigree, the masterful direction of a reinvigorated Ion Storm, and the buzz necessary to win over critics and gamers alike.

In case you've missed our last few issues, here's a brief catch-up: *DX2* is set 15 years after the conclusion of the original game (though from which of its three endings has yet to be revealed). You play as a male or female clone of *Deus Ex*'s anti-terrorist agent J.C. Denton, and you're intent on finding the whereabouts of the missing original. Throughout your *Unreal Warfare*–powered adventure, you'll journey to such diverse locations as Seattle, Cairo, Germany, and Antarctica.

Up until now, Ion Storm's development think tank hasn't talked much about how NPCs can impact your mission structures in *DX2*. But after a fervent arm-wrestling match with Project Director Harvey Smith, he cried "Uncle!" and told us exactly what we wanted to know, fresh from the writer's keyboard.

"We have a pilot-choice dynamic for mission entry points," Smith told us, explaining how your choice of helpers can alter the course of a mission. For example, he notes that when you start the game "in old Seattle, pilots are scarce. A few smugglers and mercenaries hang out at the Gravel Pit [one of *DX2*'s seedier hangouts] down by the docks. One pilot might agree to take a dangerous job — for the right price."

Not everyone you encounter will attempt to bleed you dry, but getting the job done right will play a big factor in who you want to hire along with you on missions. Just like in *Neverwinter Nights*, there are trade-offs in terms of what a henchman can bring to the party.

"Another pilot works for cheap but insists on using a safe drop-point," says Smith, describing how using inexpensive (and cautious) pilots can result in a little more stealthy legwork on the ground since they won't place you as close to your target as a hotdog flyboy could. "You choose the best approach for each new assignment," he explains.

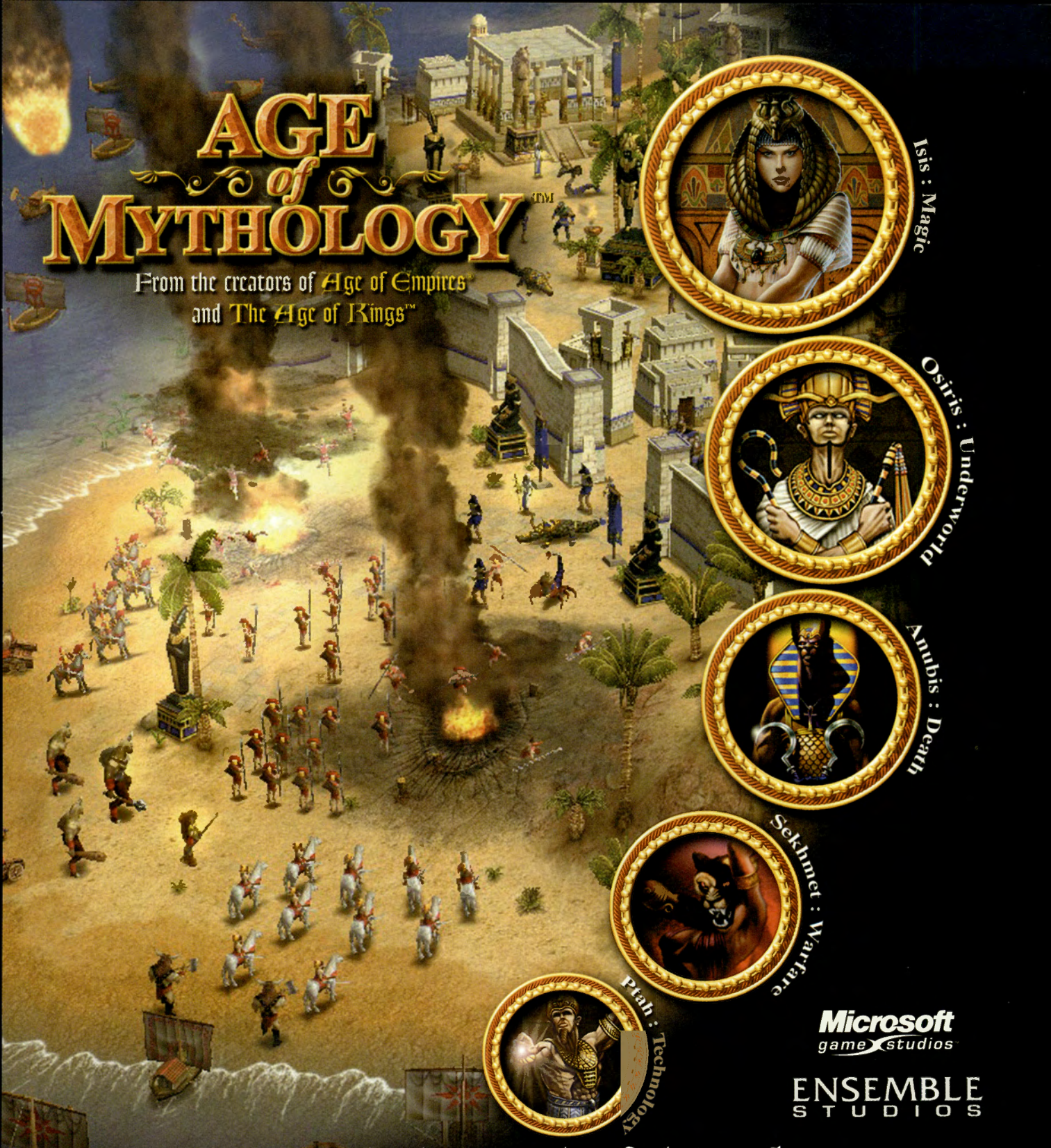
Just so you know who to look out for when you saunter into the Gravel Pit, ask for Sid Black and Ava Johnson, and tell 'em that *PC Gamer* sent you. Expect to meet more of *DX2*'s supporting cast in the coming months as we bring you continuing coverage of one of next year's most anticipated titles.

■ Smugglers and mercenaries will hang out in *DX2*'s low-life watering holes, waiting for you to make them an offer.

■ Various NPCs will interact with one another using a complex series of AI "audio barks" that spontaneously trigger conversations.

■ Because *DX2* will also be appearing on the Xbox and PlayStation 2, its interface will be much simpler than *Deus Ex*'s.

■ Ion Storm is cramming the *Unreal Warfare* engine with detail: real-time shadow effects, intricate character models, and ornate level design.



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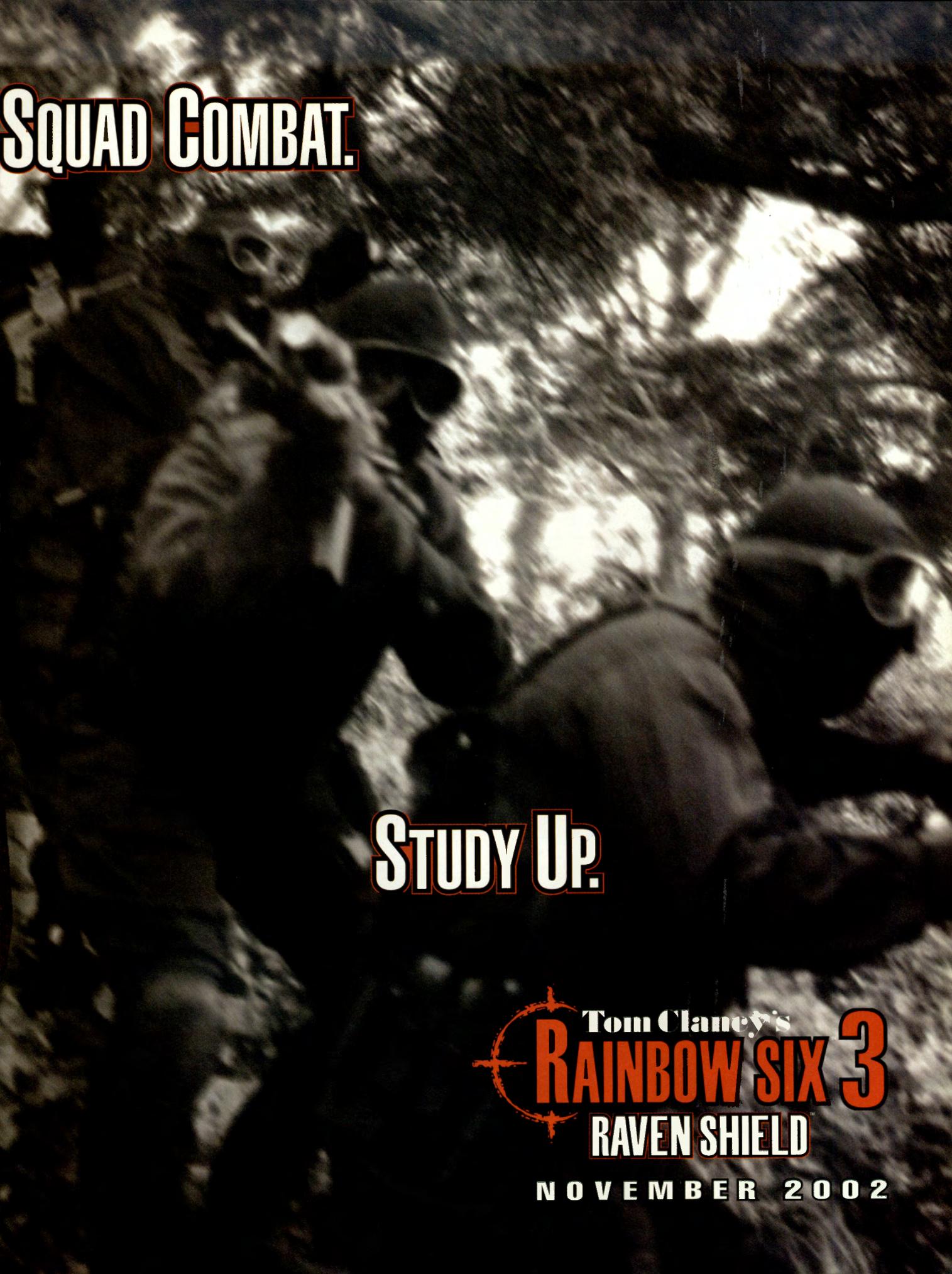
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■ EVERQUEST II DEVELOPER SONY ONLINE PUBLISHER SONY ONLINE RELEASE DATE Q3 2003

EVERQUEST II

A WHOLE NEW WORLD WILL OPEN UP IN THE SECOND COMING

Regular *EverQuest* players know every last inch of Norrath. They know all the nooks and crannies, cities and zones strewn across the original world, and those encompassed in the expansions. That level of knowledge creates a comfort zone for gamers — knowing where to go, how to get there, and what you'll find when you arrive is part of the payoff for investing most of your waking hours online. For the sequel, SOE is very carefully balancing the number of familiar areas with new zones. Of course, even the old zones will have the high-res makeover inspired by the fresh story background and powered by the game's new graphics engine.

In our ongoing behind-the-scenes coverage of this shoe-in to be a top-selling game in 2003, we got the skinny on some of the new locations:

OBELISK OF LOST SOULS

Another Underfoot area (below the surface of Norrath), the Obelisk is located in Stormhold, under the continent of Faydwer. The towering stone spire is an actual instrument of arcane powers and purpose, or so we're told, removed from its home and rebuilt here. With planar connections to distant planets, the tunnels are filled with creatures from other worlds.

FALLEN GATE

Once called the Foreign Quarter, First Gate of Neriak, Fallen Gate still exists in Norrath, but its structure and look have changed due to the cataclysmic events that have passed in the timeline from *EverQuest* to *EverQuest II*. The only access to this area is via a natural fissure located in Subtunaria (under the continent of Antonica), a part of the Underfoot.

CASTLE NEKTROPOS

A formerly noble castle, this location is secreted in a previously unknown area of Nektulos Forest. Apparently an unknown creature works in secrecy in the bowels of the castle "in hopes of striking back at those who transformed this fortress of nobility into a place of eternal torment." Sounds like a lovely place to hang out with buddies.

BUSHELDOWN

Located in a currently uncharted island in Erud's Crossing, Busheldown will be home to the scum and villainy of Norrath. According to *EverQuest II*'s writer, Anthony Garcia, this new location was "constructed by the will of a ruler hoping to marshal new forces from the dregs of lawful society." It'll be home to shadow knights, necromancers, and nefarious rogues.

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PERHAPS THEY'RE USING THE WRONG STRATEGY.

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■ FULL THROTTLE 2 DEVELOPER LUCASARTS PUBLISHER LUCASARTS RELEASE DATE FALL 2003

FULL THROTTLE 2

ADVENTURE GAMING EVOLVES WITH THE RESURRECTION OF AN OLD CLASSIC

He's back! Before there was Duke, there was Ben — everybody's favorite muscled bastion of machismo. Now he rides again!

Few games inspire more nostalgic recollections than *Full Throttle*, the beloved SCUMM-engine adventure from LucasArts. Now, eight long years after the game's release, Ben is making a bold return into a genre that has limped into what many feel is its grave. Can the sequel's designers resurrect Ben in fine form? And can *Full Throttle 2* both honor and transcend the fond memories of its classic forebear? We got the first scoop on the developers' plans from *FT2* director Sean Clark.

PC GAMER: How similar will *Full Throttle 2* be to the look and feel of the SCUMM engine?

SEAN CLARK: Isn't that like asking how the new Ford Thunderbird compares to the 1956 version? Although there are many similarities, they really aren't the same. Just like you can recognize the 2001 reissue model as a T-Bird, you'll find aspects of *FT2* familiar if you've played SCUMM games. Some design elements never really go out of style, but implementations change, technologies change, and new ideas continue to present themselves. In the end, it's really about how well we can tie those things together into a great experience.

PC GAMER: Same voices?

SEAN CLARK: Unfortunately, Roy Conrad, who played the voice of Ben, passed away last January. He was a great actor and a very nice guy, and it feels sacrilegious to recast Ben. For the rest of the returning roles, we'll try to use the same talent as in the first game, but there are several new characters that we'll need to cast from scratch.

PC GAMER: What's the basic story for the sequel?

SEAN CLARK: Ben, the leader of a biker gang, gets himself entangled in a greedy plan to destroy a town and, more importantly to Ben, all the roads. In the process of preserving this dingy corner of the world, he meets, greets, and beats up a menagerie of tough and gritty characters, and goes toe-to-toe with a variety of other gangs. Oh yeah, and he gets to blow up a lot of stuff, too.

PC GAMER: What are the major differences between *FT* and *FT2*, design and otherwise?

SEAN CLARK: None — I stole everything from the first game. Well, okay, there are some differences. The first thing you'll notice is that it's 3D, although the visual design is very similar to the previous game's. The other major difference is the action. *Full Throttle* broke new ground in the adventure genre by adding some action-based activities, like the bike fighting. We're taking that aspect further by adding fist-fighting, brawling, and a new take on bike-to-bike combat. There's a new story, new locations, and plenty of new characters as well. But not so much that it isn't recognizable. Many characters from the first game return, and Ben is still a badass in a big, bad world.

PC GAMER: We've read elsewhere that the "adventure genre" was dead. Is *FT2* a pure/classic adventure game, or some newer genre hybrid?

PC GAMER: Who keeps saying that? [The genre] isn't dead — it's evolving. *FT2* adds compelling elements of action to the story and adventure themes. Being a tough biker guy and being relegated to experiencing only things like "use itching powder with muskrat pelt" doesn't seem all that satisfying. *FT2* is an adventure game at its core, but we're using action elements as a means to create more immersion. We want the player doing things that the character would do. The first game tried to address this desire, but was limited by the technology available at the time. If that leads people to call the newer game a hybrid, or bemoan that it isn't a "pure adventure," so be it. Regardless of how you classify it, *FT2* will be fun and unique.

■ **Yeah, it's an adventure game. But what would a *Full Throttle* game be without some old-fashioned ass-whomping? And with a big grin, too.**

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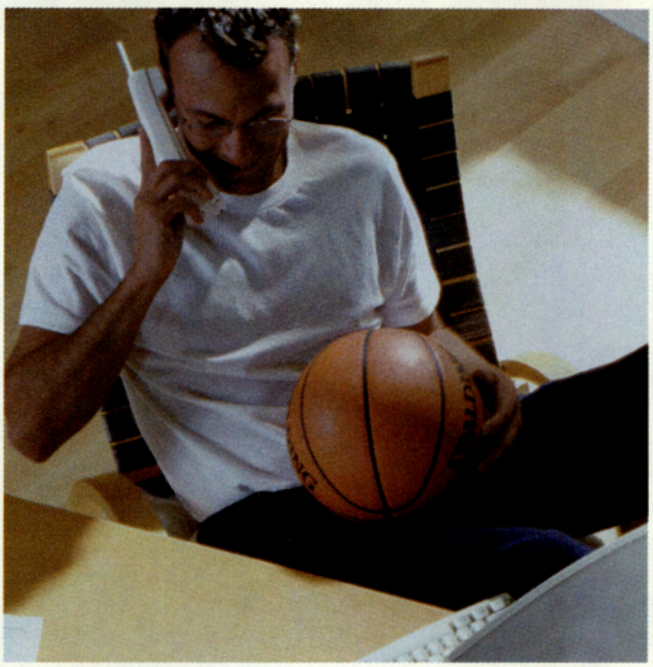

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■ HALO DEVELOPER GEARBOX STUDIOS PUBLISHER MICROSOFT RELEASE DATE Q3 2003

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HALO

REMEMBER, "PORT" ISN'T A DIRTY WORD WHEN IT'S A PORT OF A GREAT GAME!

Taking a leaf from *Grand Theft Auto III*'s spectacular translation from the PS2 to PC, Microsoft finally announced that it has a developer lined up to bring Xbox smash *Halo* to your high-res, mouse-and-keyboard–controlled power machine. With the ink still wet on the contract, we bended arms and ears to get the skinny on this hot hit–in-the-making.

For starters, *Halo* PC will essentially be a port of the Xbox version. But as we've said before, ports should be embraced, not feared (if you still don't believe us, just play *GTA III*). *Halo* is already a great game, scooping all manner of accolades from the games industry, as well as standing head and shoulders above the generally disappointing initial releases on Microsoft's console. So of course it's going to be a great game on the PC. The only real question is, What's going to be done to make the PC version even greater? Multiplay is the key area for enhancement, as the core technology to allow matchmaking and competing across the Internet needs to be implemented. According to Hamilton Chu, the lead program manager at Bungie Studios (the developer of Xbox *Halo*), the maps chosen for Internet play will also need tweaking: "Our map selection in the Xbox game is really tailored to the console experience [i.e., the maps are designed for split-screen play, and for two to four players], rather than to larger numbers of players, which would be possible with Internet matchmaking. So we know that we need to have a selection of maps that's appropriate for PC play."

The Xbox version of *Halo* has been honored for the way it controls (after some practice), but obviously it can't achieve the fidelity of the mouse-keyboard format. To help, Xbox *Halo* has six different subtle targeting aids that allowed the levels to be designed with vertical options such as targeting an enemy high in a tower through a sniper scope. (Other console FPS titles have had to "flatten" the environments to make them gamepad-friendly.) On the PC, looking around with the mouse-keyboard combo is as instinctive as it is intuitive, and so most of those aids will be removed. "When we do this, it also impacts the balance of the game [e.g., head shots], and we have to compensate for these effects in the damage model," says Chu.

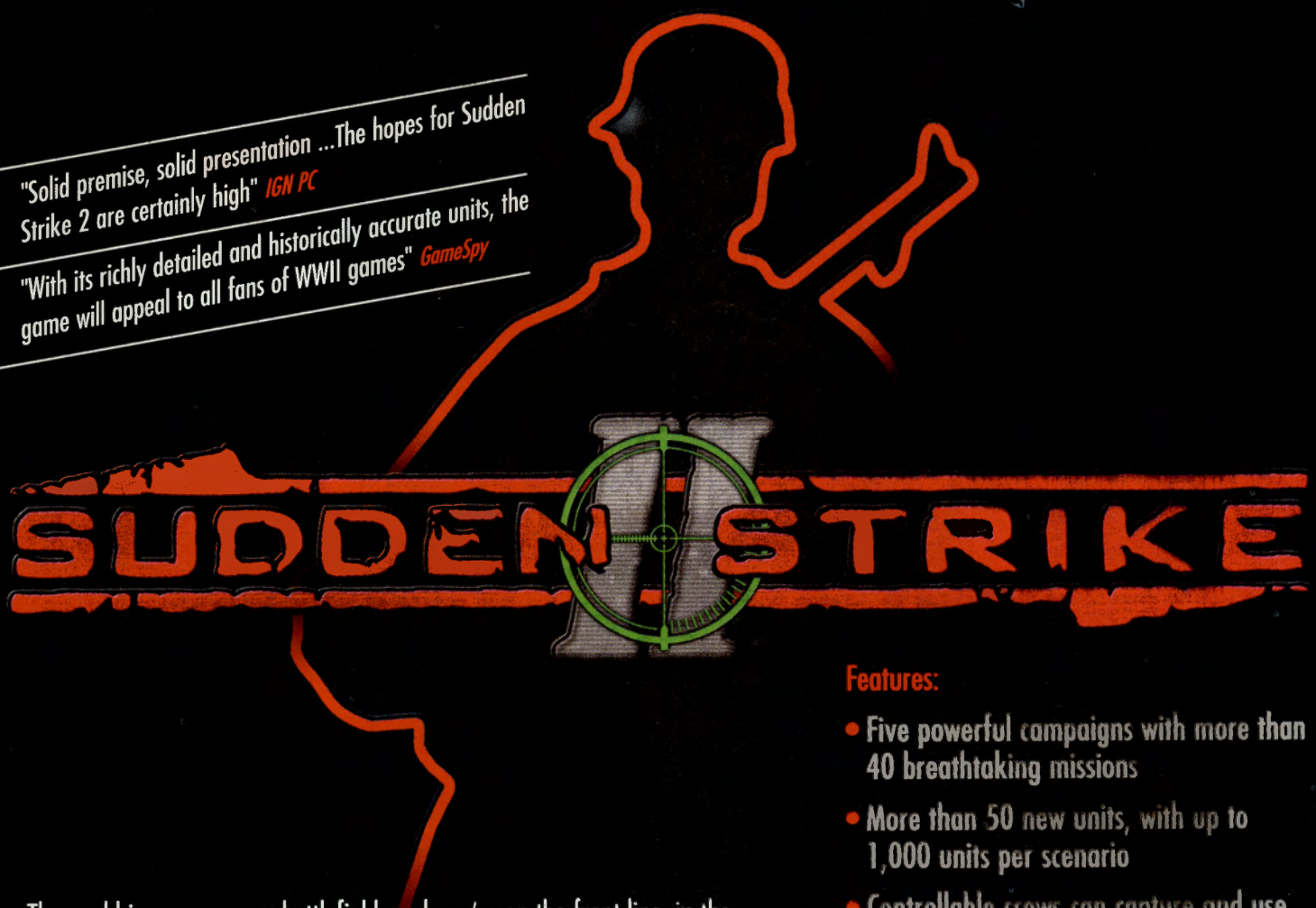
So expect the same compelling single-player sci-fi experience, all the vehicular combat, and an enhanced suite of multiplayer options when Gearbox escorts *Halo* to its rightful home on the PC in Q3 2003.

■ **Details on new multiplayer modes are still to be decided at Gearbox, but the maps should be designed to accommodate at least 16 players.**

The war is far from over!

"Solid premise, solid presentation ...The hopes for Sudden Strike 2 are certainly high" *IGN PC*

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



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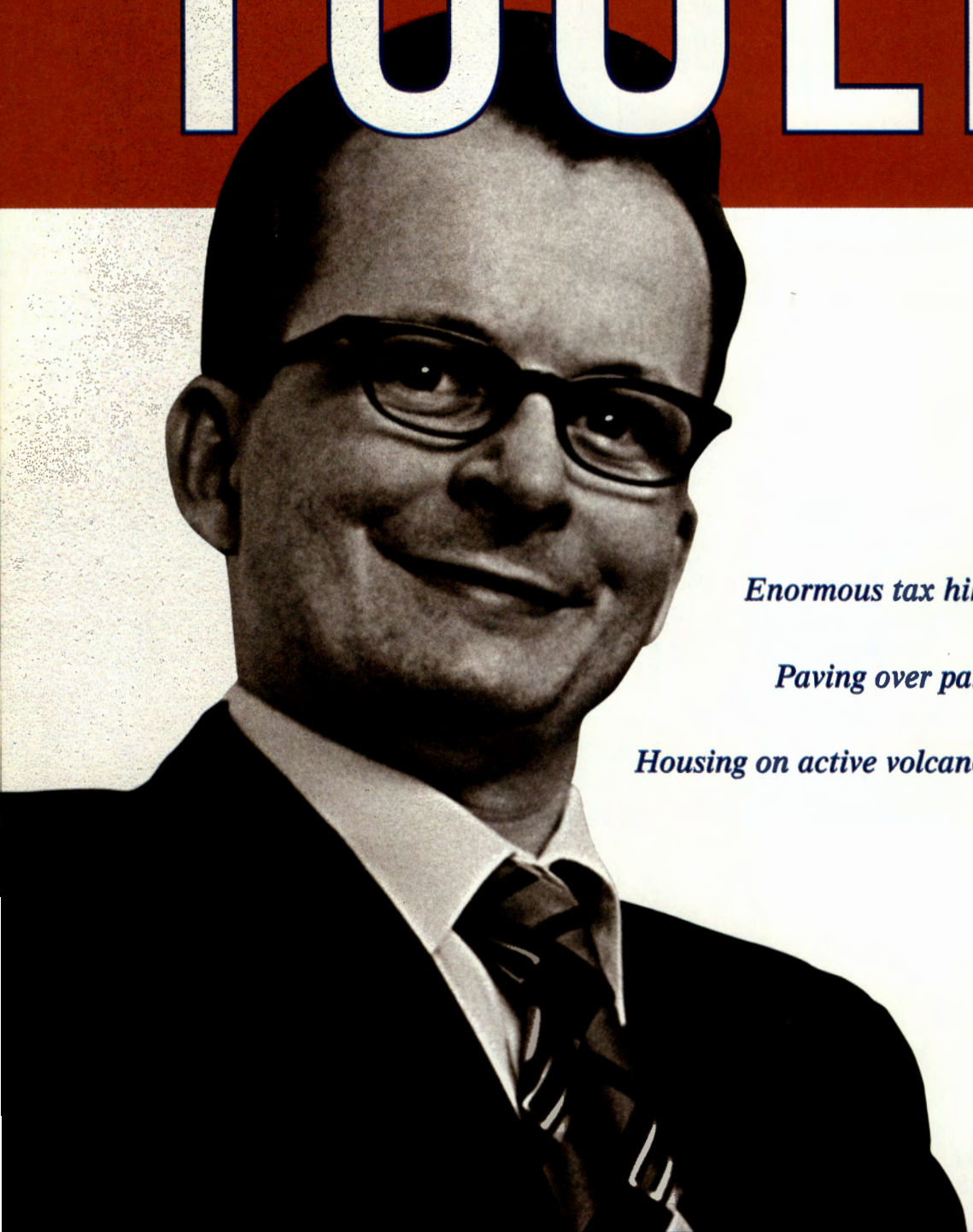

Enormous tax hikes. *Yes* ☑

Paving over parks. *Yes* ☑

Housing on active volcanoes. *Yes* ☑

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■ HOMEWORLD2 DEVELOPER RELIC ENTERTAINMENT PUBLISHER SIERRA RELEASE DATE SOMETIME 2003

HOMEWORLD2

ALEX GARDEN BLASTS BACK INTO SPACE WITH AN UPDATE TO 1999'S BEST GAME

PC Gamer's 1999 Game of the Year was *Homeworld*, a dizzyingly original RTS that featured balletic three-dimensional outer-space battles. Blessed with sizzling graphics, clever design, and a surprisingly involving single-player storyline, Alex Garden's space opera had us riveted for months.

Relic Entertainment and Sierra are reuniting after a long and messy series of delays, ready to unveil the first glimpse into the development of next year's sequel. *Homeworld2* builds on the original's strengths, incorporating a host of new ideas (many suggested by the hardcore gamer faithful).

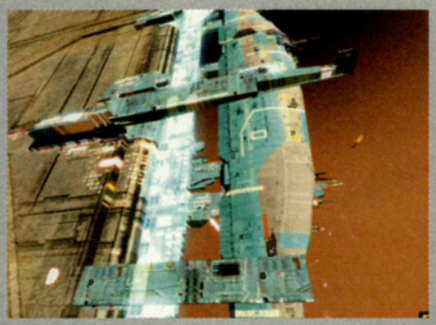
We pinned down Relic CEO Garden to get an exclusive insight into the second installment of the interplanetary opus...

PC GAMER: Tell us about the new improvements to the old system.

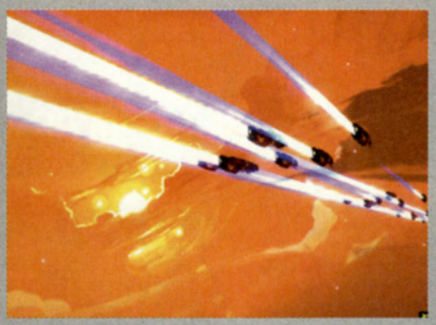
ALEX GARDEN: Some of [the enhancements] are designed to address concerns we had with *Homeworld*'s interface, and some of them are

Strike craft execute a strafing run on a capital ship. As you can see, these aren't *Homeworld*'s "void" environments.

Pieces of this ship are blasted into space. Relic is obviously paying a lot of attention to damage effects.

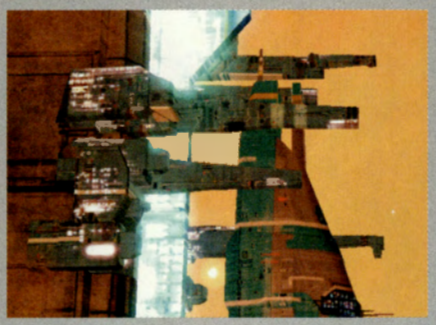


■ A mothership at dock under construction. The single-player campaign will feature more of *Homeworld*'s epic sweep.



■ Even a squadron of lowly corvettes looks like a mob of ass-kicking greatness when it's flying in tight formation.

■ An ion cannon cuts through a ship's hull. At last, we've achieved the fabled "blow-through" effect seen in sci-fi shows like *Babylon 5*.



■ Dramatic mothership angles provide some grandiose set-pieces for the action. When attacked, expect Death Star–type battle scenes.

designed to let us create new gameplay features that weren't possible [before]. One example of the latter is a streamlined movement mechanism that includes the ability to click on objects in the world to move directly to them.

PC GAMER: Same engine? Improved engine?

ALEX GARDEN: *Homeworld2* will feature a brand-new 3D engine that has been designed to bring out the best features of all the new 3D cards. It's going to once again totally redefine the 3D space-combat RTS genre's graphical expectations.

PC GAMER: The multiplayer goodness:

ALEX GARDEN: You can expect a lot better! The soundtrack is being done by the same team that did *Homeworld*'s, and they have a ton of ideas that they're going to use to take music and sound to the next level in the spirit of a true sequel. *[But we're saddened to learn that aging rockers Yes will not be contributing their talents to the new project! — Ed.]*

PC GAMER: Tools for the game's long-suffering mod community:

ALEX GARDEN: *Homeworld* had one of the most active mod communities in the RTS world, if not *the* most active, and, as you all know, we

"WITH ITS BRAND-NEW, BUILT-FROM-SCRATCH 3D ENGINE, HOMEWORLD2 WILL ONCE AGAIN TOTALLY REDEFINE THE 3D SPACE-COMBAT RTS GENRE'S GRAPHICAL EXPECTATIONS." — RELIC'S ALEX GARDEN

ALEX GARDEN: Multiplay will be online six-player. We are going to be significantly extending the multiplayer experience in the core game, and since we're making the game so mod-able, you're going to be able to extend it even further this time. The maps in *Homeworld2* are a huge leap forward from the "void maps" of *Homeworld*. I can't give too much away just yet, but I can say that you're no longer working exclusively in the void.

PC GAMER: The music and sound design that earned *Homeworld* a Special Achievement in Music award from *PC Gamer*.

didn't do a great job of providing tools and support to enable it. Relic Developers' Network is a new initiative that we are really excited about... RDN is an initiative that we started to provide tools and support for the community in an effort to let you extend the game engine in all the ways that you've dreamed of. Hopefully, it'll be a new way to encourage modmakers. You'll have access to all the same tools that we do. You'll have documentation. In some cases, you'll even have developer support. And we are totally committed through RDN to give you the tools that you need to make world-class mods.

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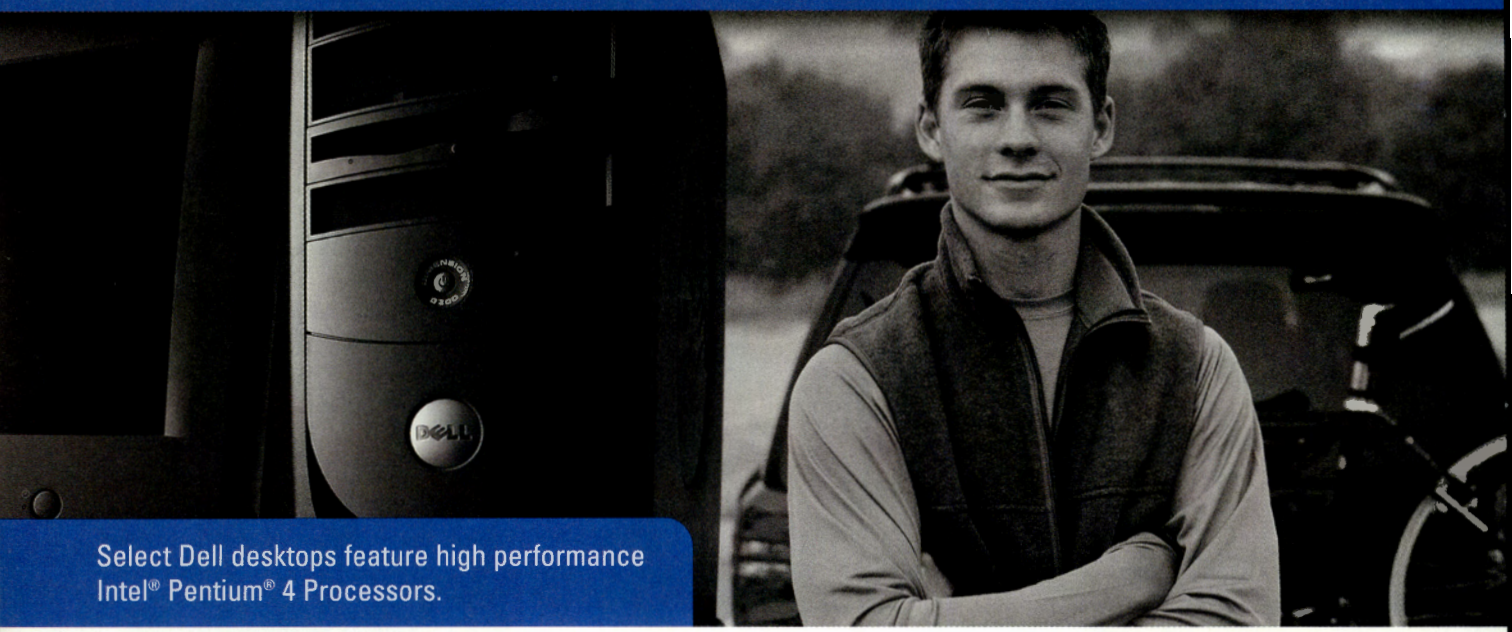

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LARRY HOLLAND'S UNTITLED WWII PROJECT

IF WE TOLD YOU ITS NAME, WE'D HAVE TO SEND YOU PLUMMETING TO YOUR DOOM

We're pleased to break the story on a game so far under wraps that it doesn't even have a *name* yet. But it most definitely has a pedigree: Larry Holland's Totally Games is the workshop behind cockpit classics *TIE Fighter* (1994) and *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe* (1991). And now, after finishing up this year's *Bridge Commander*, Holland's returning to the action/sim-lite genre that he helped perfect.

The setting will be World War II once again. Engines will roar and bullets will sing as the Allies take their airborne arsenal of democracy up against the Axis for control of the skies...

PC GAMER: First off, what are some ideas for the name of the project? Will it be an obvious namesake to *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe*?

LARRY HOLLAND: At this point we have only a secret codename for the project, a name that can

Help bring down some of the secret weapons of the Luftwaffe.

be whispered only in the dark corner of the bottom floor of an abandoned parking garage. (Hey, we're paranoid — you never know who's listening.) In terms of a product name, we usually wait until after the first few levels are playable and a good portion of the game story is solid before honing in on one specific name. After that the legal beagles go to work to make sure it's available for copyright, and then you reserve the web address and then go public. As far as any relation to *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe* — or *SWOTL*, as we affectionately refer to it — we've considered the pros and cons but really haven't decided.

PC GAMER: Will the focus be action-based or more toward a realistic sim experience?

LARRY HOLLAND: The hallmark of Totally Games' earlier air-combat games was their emphasis on action and accessibility rather than being a detailed simulation of particular aircraft. While not highly technical, those games totally involved the player in great events and epic air battles, creating a strong sense of authenticity. This [gameplay] is the tradition and legacy from which we're building this new series of games. I'd describe the last decade of flight sims as generally more clinical and exacting — they didn't have broad appeal, particularly to action gamers. This title will be an action game through and through.

PC GAMER: Will you be flying from both sides of the conflict?

LARRY HOLLAND: No, you'll fly from just one side of the battle. We're holding details of the story secret until we can be assured that they've all been properly declassified. What I am at liberty to say is that you'll be a part of an elite squadron seeing action in several regions of the world.

PC GAMER: One of the things everyone loved so much about *TIE Fighter* was its story-driven single-player campaign. Every mission added plot and character development. Will we see the same kind of single-player campaign in your World War II game?

LARRY HOLLAND: Yes, the game will definitely have a compelling story-driven single-player experience. There will definitely be some twists and curves thrown in, with many exciting secret events only recently uncovered from World War II archives. Other modes of play will be included, but we'll be able to disclose that information only at a later time.

PC GAMER: Can you list some of the major aircraft that will be available in the game?

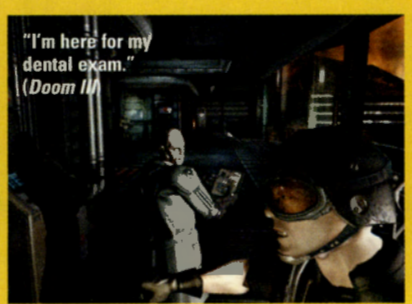
LARRY HOLLAND: You'll get a solid mix of the classic WWII fighters, including the Spitfire, the P-38, the P-51, the Zeke, and the Fw190. Additionally, there'll be a number of exotic fighters, including the famed ME262, the ME163, the lesser-known XP-56, and other experimental aircraft. A few bombers will be featured as well.

It'll be a while before we get to take on the new id epic *Doom III*. But when it arrives, you can be sure this fella will be there to welcome us.

THE GAMES WE KNOW ARE COMING

(BUT THE DEVELOPERS AREN'T TALKING)

There are some games we just *know* (or is that *believe*, or even unadulterated *hope*?) are coming out in 2003, but the pesky game makers are keeping their lips sealed up tight on the who, what, where, and how. Here are some of the biggest that no one's talking about right now:



THE MATRIX

WHAT WE KNOW: Infogrames paid Interplay some $47 million for developer Shiny. Despite Shiny's lack of success with its last few products, David Perry's group snagged the rights to the *Matrix* license, and that was enough to justify the price tag. With two movies due out next year, *The Matrix* will be everywhere.
REASON THEY WON'T TALK: We're promised stunning technology and games that push further the movie's ground-breaking effects. And apparently that'll take a while!

DOOM III

WHAT WE KNOW: id's bloody head-ripping ode to space marines everywhere made a *huge* impression on us at this year's E3. Unfortunately, these two amazing new screens are all we could pry out of 'em (for now, anyway).
REASON THEY WON'T TALK: It takes at least two months to translate John Carmack's explanations of the 3D rendering technology into a language normal humans can understand.

MAX PAYNE 2

WHAT WE KNOW: Though new publisher Take-Two Interactive publicly announced in May that Rockstar and Remedy had begun working on a sequel to our Action Game of 2001, *Max Payne 2* hasn't been seen nor heard from since.
REASON THEY WON'T TALK: Still too early in development to talk about. Plus, Max has "gone Hollywood" since his movie was green-lit.

HALF-LIFE 2

WHAT WE KNOW: Valve apparently hasn't been doing much work on *Team Fortress 2*, so they must be doing something, right? Rumors are flying like headcrabs that the developer is readying the return of Gordon Freeman for sometime next year.
REASON THEY WON'T TALK: The Men in the Suits at Sierra.

QUAKE IV

WHAT WE KNOW: Raven's sequel to the best-known FPS franchise on the planet will use the *Doom III* engine...and that's about all we know (though a strong single-player game is promised).
REASON THEY WON'T TALK: Don't expect to hear much about *Quake IV* until *Doom III* has its day. Raven can't spill the beans on the engine before id does.

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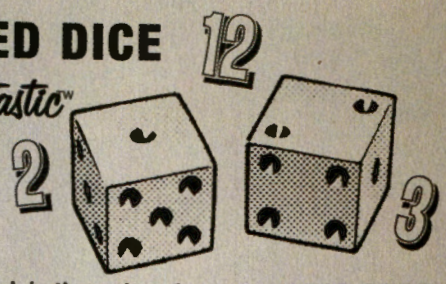

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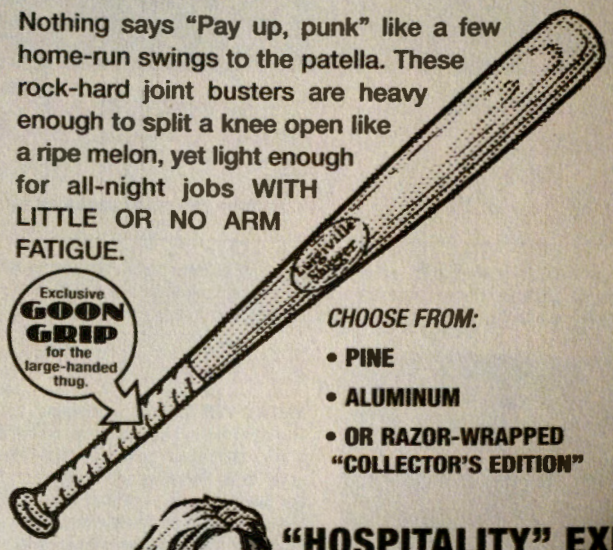

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Nothing says "Lick the sole of my shoe" like a good old-fashioned nuke.

5 NATION VS. NATION

Movable national borders ring your territory and will expand as you build new cities and conquer enemy territory. Expanding your territorial reach will give you control of additional resources, including valuable bonus riches (like diamonds) that are scattered across the map.

Borders will also impact how combat plays out. To prevent players from betraying each other by stationing troops in a friendly nation in preparation for an offensive, your troops will suffer hit-point loss through attrition if they enter a friendly territory. In other words, if you want to attack, you must openly declare war; under-handed tricks won't work to your advantage.

4 CONQUERING THE ENEMY

Instead of simply razing enemy cities, you can seize control of them and incorporate them into your territory. You do so by attacking the city center: once it's taken a certain amount of damage, the city is essentially up for grabs, and whoever has the most military units in the area takes control. The city then goes through an assimilation period, where it's relatively easy for the ousted player to retake the town. Once this period is over, you control all of the city's assets and resources, and you need to develop enough forces to maintain the conquered city after your initial attack. This requirement will likely deter aggressive nations from expanding before they're truly capable.

3 MANAGING RESOURCES

RoN has all the standard resource management, such as chopping wood, growing food, and mining metal. Unlike other RTS games, though, you build trade caravans that will automatically go from city to city within your borders, simulating the buying and selling of materials. This process creates a commerce rating, which impacts how much gold enters your treasury.

In addition, idle workers will automatically determine where they are needed and head off to work. And all of the resources are infinite, meaning that once you have a logging camp set up, it'll always produce lumber.

2 SEA TRAVEL

Moving troops across a body of water is extremely simple: select your units, click on the water, and they'll turn into transport ships. Once the ships reach their destination, the transports turn back into land troops.

1 CONQUER THE WORLD

In addition to the standard single-player campaign and full multiplayer suite, *RoN* will also include a complex single-player mode called Conquer the World, which is exactly what it sounds like: There's a map of the world, you control a small segment of it, and you must crush any and all rival nations beneath your boot heel. We've been waiting an eternity for a Risk-inspired gameplay mode like CTW in a RTS, and we're confident we won't be disappointed.

Spells punishing: 26,875

Tournaments underway: 882

Creatures attacking: 49,438

Prizes on the line: 5,000

Deadly strategies: Unlimited

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game of the year

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood
Violence

PC CD

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UNREAL II

LEGEND CO-PROJECT DIRECTOR/PRINCIPAL DESIGNER MIKE VERDU SPOUTS OFF ON WHY UNREAL II WILL ROCK YOUR WORLD

■ Everyone loves a tasty flamethrower! Besides this new weapon, you'll be able to deploy turrets and shield walls, which will come in handy when you're trying to keep the enemy off your back. And you'll need all the help you can get, since the advanced enemy AI is extremely eager to kick your ass.

■ The updated *Unreal* engine looks fantastic and promises all kinds of razzle-dazzle. According to Verdu, this new tech will sport an insane amount of polygons, an amazing particle system, and lots of technical features that will make the characters more lifelike and the outdoor levels more realistic.

PC GAMER: You have 100 words to tell me why I should buy *Unreal II*. Go.

MIKE VERDU: Playing *Unreal II* feels like living through an epic science-fiction movie. There's a feeling of adventure and a growing anticipation for finding out "What happens next?" and "Where will they take me next?" *Unreal II* has a pace and style, a "feel" that's unique — lots of very high-intensity combat combined with richly realized worlds, complex characters, and an unfolding story.

PC GAMER: What kind of updates and/or changes have been made to the *Unreal* engine? What are some of the new tricks it can pull off?

MIKE VERDU: You only realize the scope of the underlying engine improvements when you see subtle touches like realistic smoke lit from a nearby fire or being blown about in an explosion; fields of grass moving slowly in the wind; an incendiary grenade going off in multiple fiery explosions that set nearby enemies ablaze; or the lifelike pulsing movement of the skin on a creature the size of a building.

PC GAMER: The beginning of *Unreal* introduced a few cool scripted events, but those tapered off as the game progressed. Will *Unreal II* feature consistent use of scripted events throughout the game?

MIKE VERDU: We look at the current generation of games as our departure point for in-game storytelling, rather than going all the way back to *Unreal*. Yes, we're packing in lots of in-game scripted sequences that not only add color and excitement to the game, but are also instrumental in moving the story along. One example is an encounter between a group of unfortunate colonists and a Skaarj raiding party that takes place in front of you. Another is the destruction of an atmosphere processing station as the planet surface buckles and collapses around you.

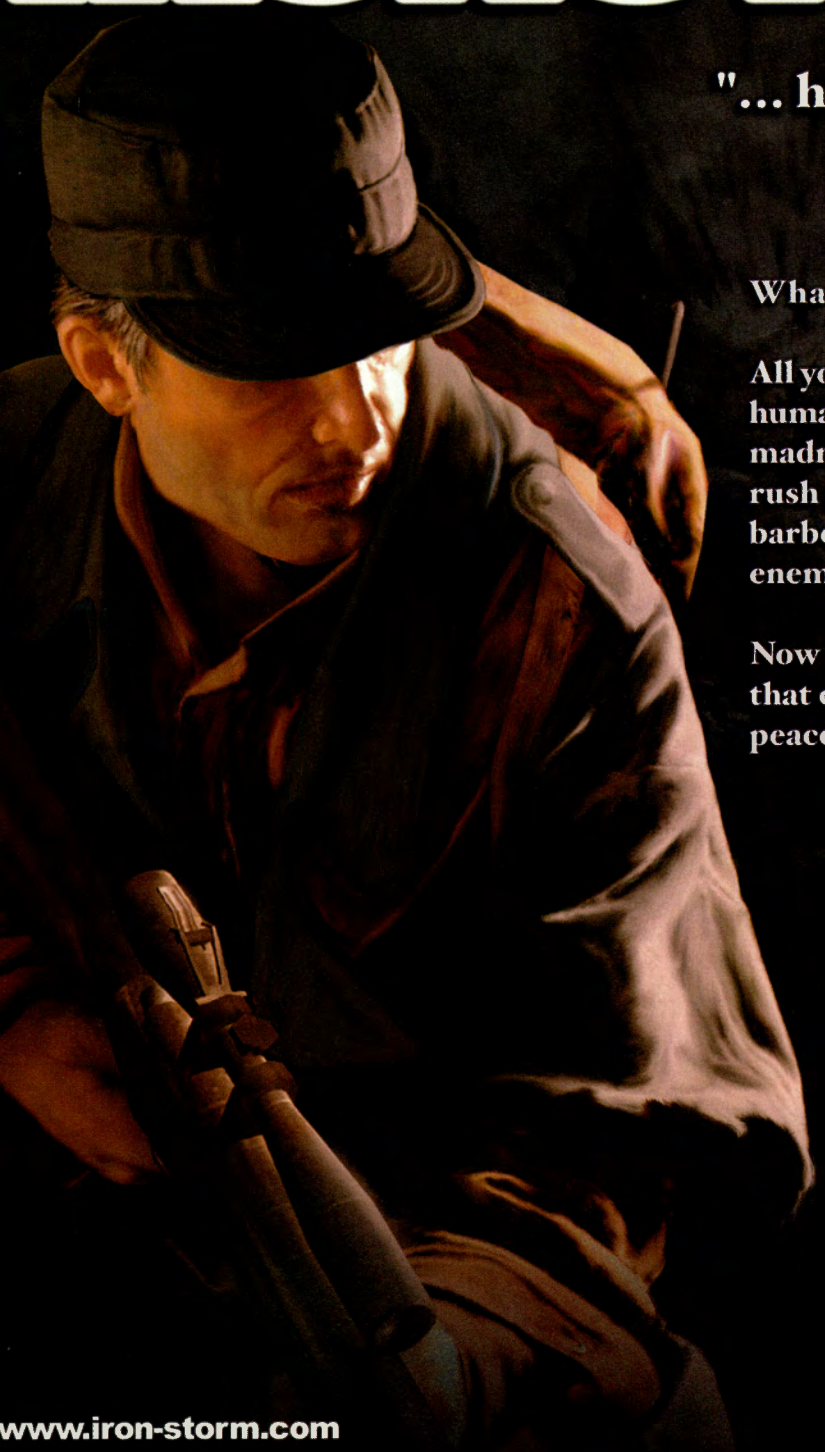
PC GAMER: Are there any features that you wanted to include in *Unreal II* but were unable to?

MIKE VERDU: We really wanted to have robust multiplay, but we realized that we were biting off more than we could chew. Building a compelling, best-of-breed single-player game is challenge enough.

PC GAMER: What are some cool *Unreal II* features that we might not have heard about?

MIKE VERDU: We're adding a bit of strategy to the FPS action by allowing the player to set up turrets and shield walls in single-player missions. For example, you can position these units as perimeter defenses for an area or even deploy a turret to help you in a firefight. Enemy NPCs can also use these placeable units, so the player will come up against turrets and shield walls during missions. The end result is a subset of missions that have very dynamic gameplay.

IRONSTORM™



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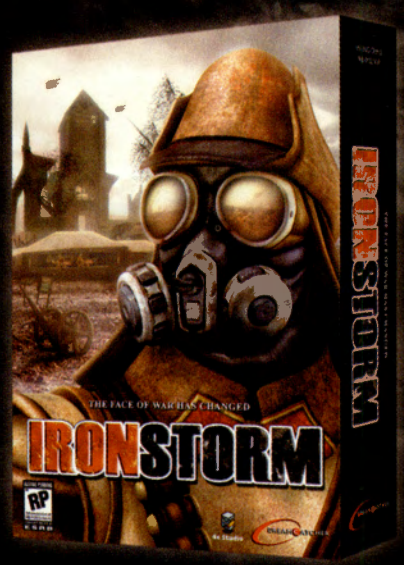

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The Face Of War Changes
October 2002

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PlayStation.2

PC CD ROM

4x Studio

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■ WORLD OF WARCRAFT DEVELOPER BLIZZARD PUBLISHER BLIZZARD RELEASE DATE SECOND HALF 2003

WORLD OF WARCRAFT

TEN WAYS IT'LL VANQUISH EVERY OTHER MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER GAME

10 CINEMATICS!
You're used to Blizzard's unrivaled story cinematics advancing the plot of single-player campaigns, but you'll be awestruck when these gorgeous CG sequences pop up on an ongoing basis to advance *WoW*'s evolving story.

9 BLIZZARD-STYLE CLANS/PARTIES
From fiercely proud Orc tribes to regal Human dynasties protecting the "nobler" race, you can etch your place in the intricate histories of these clans, as well as party with a cross-section of fellow adventurers in racial sub-clans.

8 WATER-BASED INTERACTIVITY
The bodies of water in the earlier games haven't been forgotten. *WoW* will feature full interactivity with oceans, lakes, and rivers, including swimming excursions into underwater tunnels and hidden areas.

7 TOP TRANSPORTATION
Everyone can use a lift getting from place to place. Board a galleon to cross an ocean channel, hop aboard a zeppelin for an aerial ride across the continent, or use other transports from the series.

6 NUMEROUS WEATHER CHANGES
Snow. Fog. Rain. You'll see it all in *WoW*, and you'll also see how it affects gameplay. Day/night cycles and weather effects will impact game physics as well as graphics, upping the level of immersion.

5 TRADE SKILLS
With a full spectrum of classes and trade skills, you can participate in an ongoing economy and maybe earn some coin moonlighting on the side of your adventuring job.

4 IT'S THE GRAPHICS, STUPID
There's just no comparison between the vibrant animation-style visuals of *WoW* and those of any other MMORPG in development. The world looks lush, rich, and lived-in, with dense foliage and detailed structures — and those intricate character models!

3 A NEW PLAYABLE RACE
Fans of the series' evolving story will enjoy the new dimension added by playing the Tauren, nomadic, "bull"-figured hunters who just want to live in peace.

2 CASUAL PLAY ALLOWED
You won't have to sink your *real* life for maximum enjoyment of *WoW*. With quests that can be solved in a short amount of time (but which provide plenty of XP and cool loot), you can advance in the game without devoting five hours a night to it.

1 LANDS OF LEGEND
You'll explore the familiar but fabled stomping grounds of Azeroth, Lordaeron, and Khaz Modan from the close perspective of a single character. And the lands are littered with tributes to the *Warcraft* series, such as statues of fallen heroes.

■ The gallery of monsters includes some of the most hideous beasts ever to befoul an RPG. Your party will tangle with all of the creatures found randomly in the previous *Warcraft* games, plus some new nefariousness like this four-legged armored beastie.

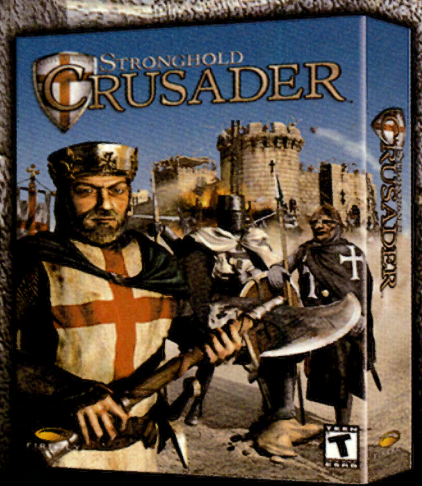
■ Orcs aren't always bad guys. As an Orc character, you'll have to get used to the occasional racist Human lunging from the woods.

■ Take shelter from the inclement weather. Snow, fog, and rain will hinder your travels, so a nice fire and a tent roof are a big help.

■ You might try to convince one head of this two-headed nasty to turn on its brother. Or, more efficiently, you can just stick a sword in 'em.

■ No MMORPG boasts a more detailed, lush graphical environment. The flora and fauna are rendered with dazzling clarity.

Master desert tactics, before they master YOU !



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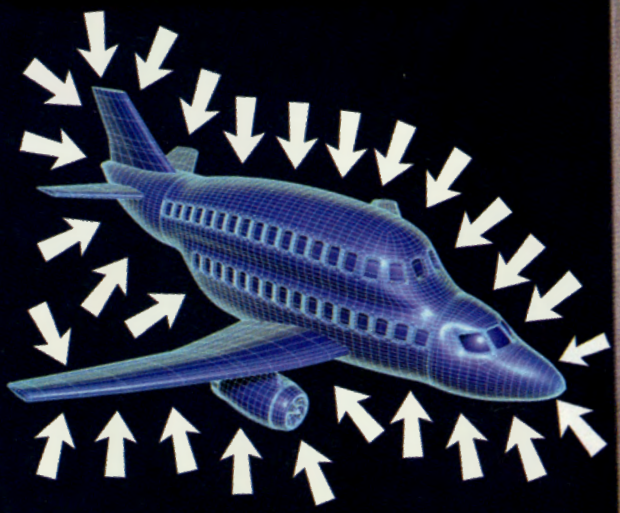

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Control an office full of steamy, passionate love affairs, hateful rivalries and intense jealousy in *The Partners*, a life simulation game that puts you in a fast-moving law office where the daily ups and downs are anything but mundane.

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- Campaign mode features three campaigns each with seven different missions to complete.
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The partners

Strategy First

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TEEN
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Mature Sexual Themes

Use of Alcohol

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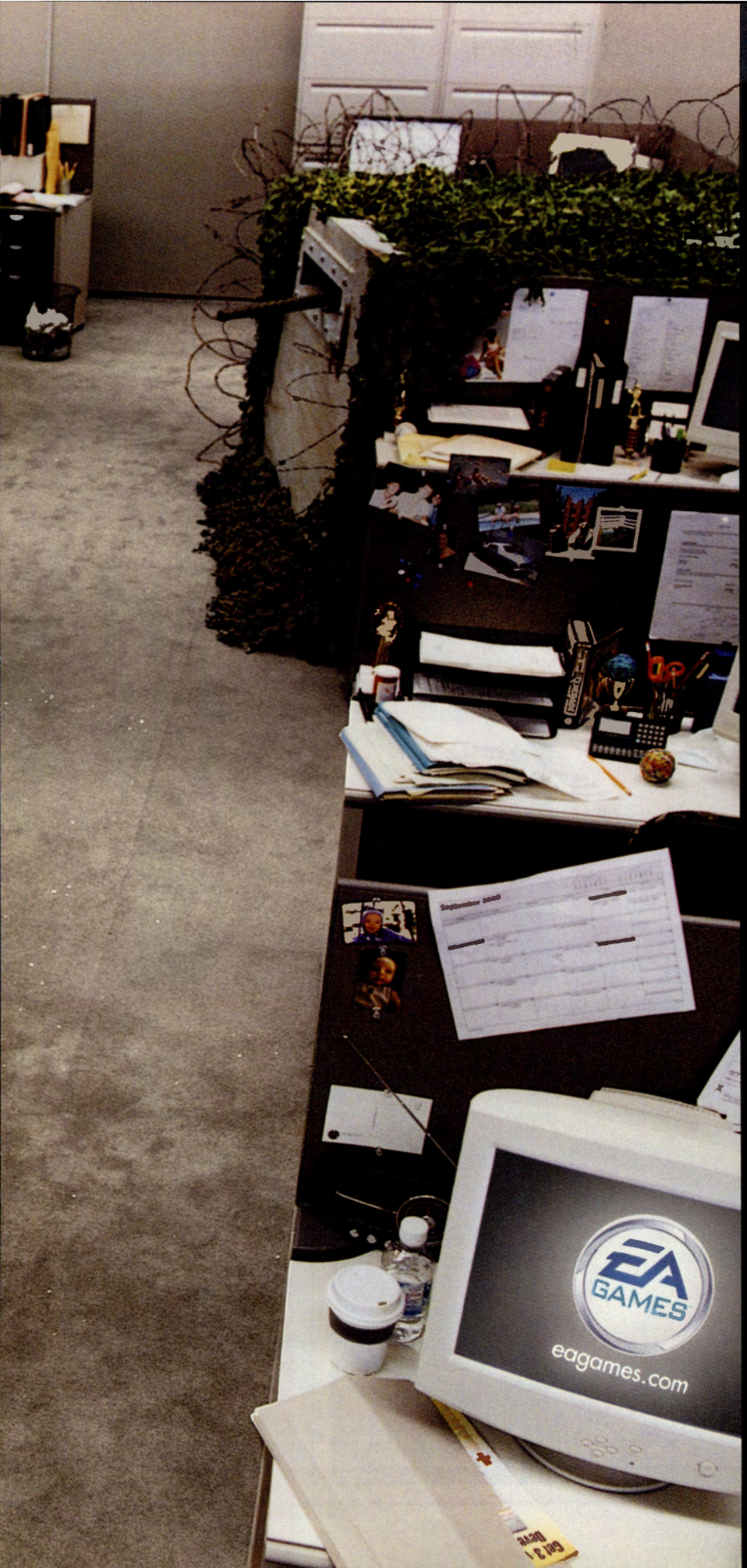
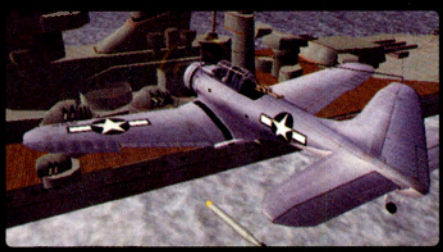
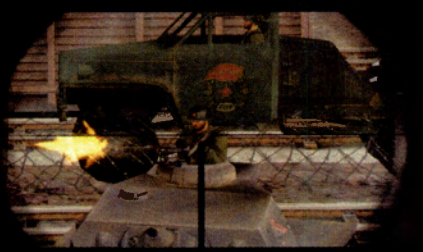


64 fearless players.



35 hell-raising vehicles.



20 deadly weapons.

4 treacherous campaigns.

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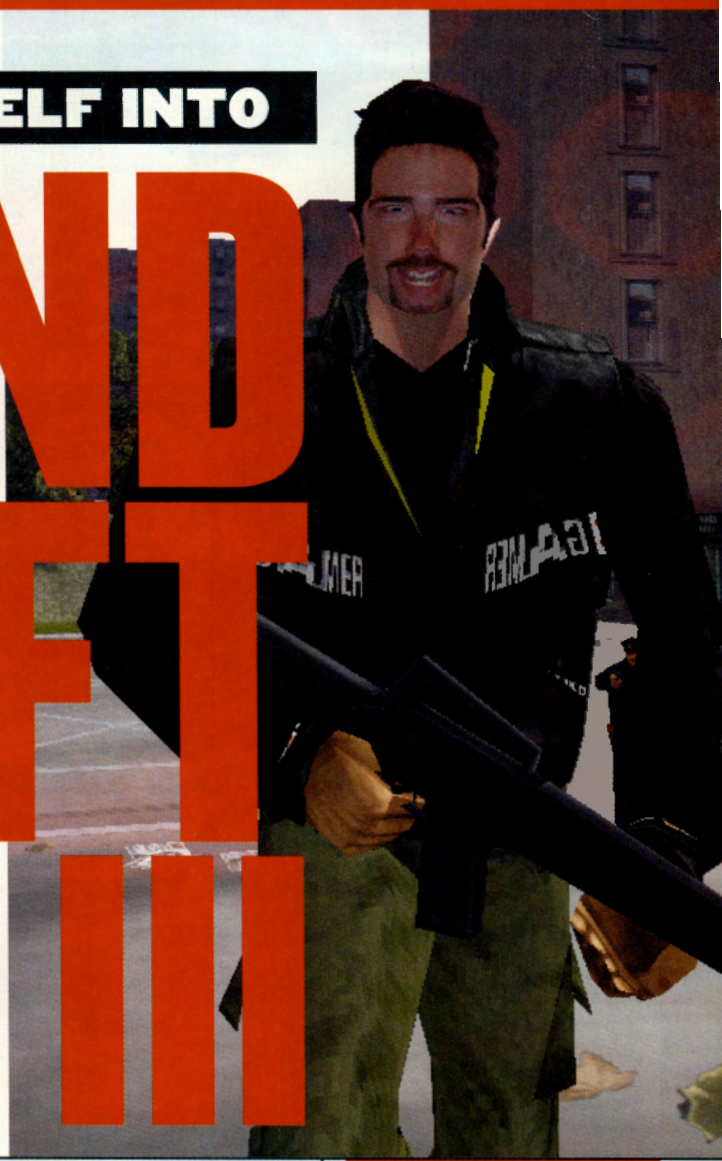
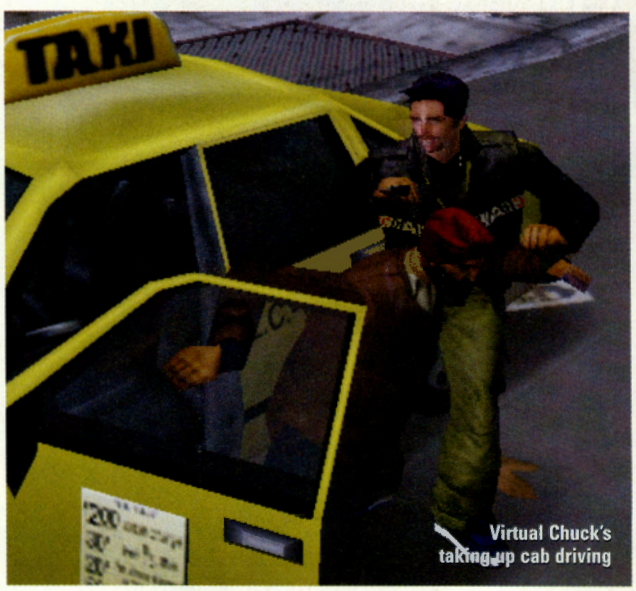
HOW TO PUT YOURSELF INTO

GRAND THEFT AUTO III



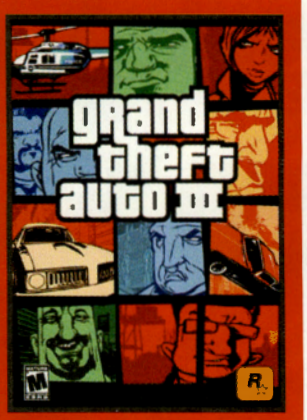
Instructions so easy to understand that even *you* can do it

It's the dream of every *GTA III* owner — replace main character Joe Anonymous with your very own strikingly handsome mug. Unfortunately, the manual's sketchy instructions don't give you the full story on how to create a skin of yourself. Don't worry — even if you've never so much as skinned your knee, just follow these easy steps and you'll soon be busting heads in Liberty City...as *you*!



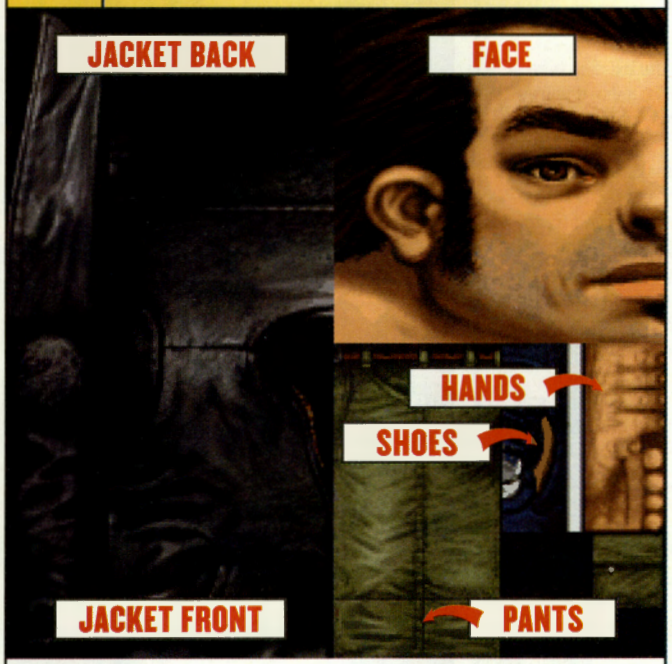
Virtual Chuck's taking up cab driving

WHAT YOU'LL NEED



- One copy of *Grand Theft Auto III*
- A digital camera or scanner
- An image editor (Microsoft Paint will do in a pinch)
- Your face
- A lot of patience

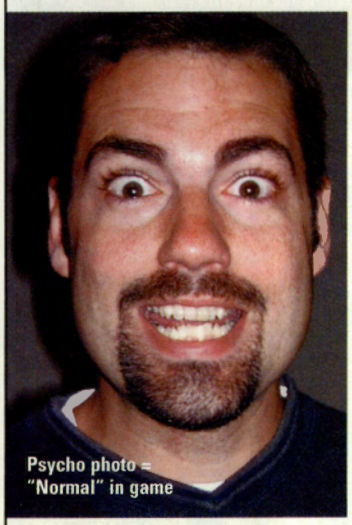
1 MEET YOUR SKIN



Go to wherever you installed *Grand Theft Auto III* on your computer (the default directory is C:\Program Files\Rockstar Games\GTAIII\) and open the Skins folder. You'll see two bitmap files here — player and playa2. These are the default player skins used in the game, and are the templates for Mini-You.

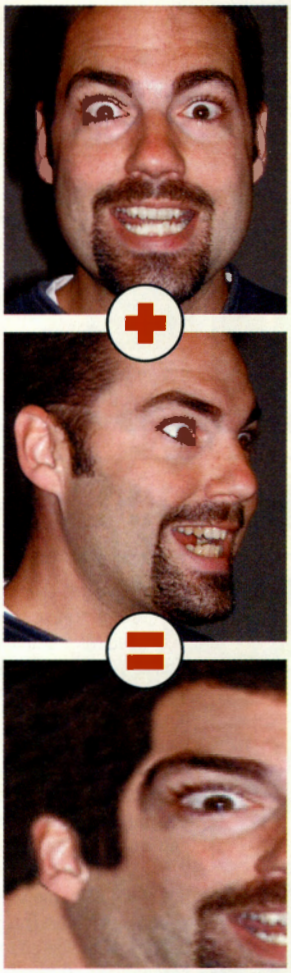
Open both skins in Microsoft Paint and choose the one with clothing that suits you best. Notice how the skin is broken up into pieces. You'll also notice that he's literally half a man: there's half a jacket, half a face, one shoe, and one pants leg. This split is important to remember because any changes you make to the skin (including your face) will need to be perfectly symmetrical. Also, you may notice that *GTA III* doesn't have any female models — so ladies, if you're intent on making a skin of yourself, prepare for a sex change.

2 TAKE YOUR PHOTO


Psycho photo = "Normal" in game

Now that you've seen an example of where and how your face should be positioned in the skin, take your picture! Using a digital camera (or a regular camera if you have a good scanner), shoot two pics of your face: one straight-on and one of your right side. (Don't cock your head to the side. Remember: Your face needs to be symmetrical.) For best results, take both shots in front of the same background (a plain monocolored wall should do nicely), use the same expression, and exaggerate your features, especially your eyes. (Your skin may look "squinty" otherwise.) Then save both shots as .bmp files.

3 FACIAL MANIPULATION



This next step depends largely on what kind of image-editing software you have and how well you know how to use it. We *strongly* recommend that you use a professional program like Paint Shop Pro (*www.jasc.com*) or Adobe Photoshop (*www.adobe.com*) because they offer more flexibility. Free evaluation copies of both programs are readily available from their respective websites.

That said, you can still make a skin of yourself using old Microsoft Paint, which comes free with Windows. Just don't expect perfection.

If you have PSP or Photoshop, you'll want to blend the two photographs of yourself into one. Mesh the photo of your right side with your face as shown here. Flatten the image and then use a cloning tool to fill in any missing flesh or hair and to blend the line dividing the right/left sides. When you're done, the completed pic should have a "wrap-around" effect similar to the face in the original skin. Be sure to even out differences in skin tone and hair color. (Sorry, you're stuck with the character's hairstyle.)

Just have MS Paint? Use the Select and Free-Form Select tabs to draw a cut-out of the right side of your face like we have below. Try to make the cut right down the center of the nose. (You won't need your profile shot if you go this route.)

In MS Paint, use "Select" to make a perfect cutout of the right side of your face, then use "Free-Form" to cut the remaining part out of the background.

4 CREATE THE NEW YOU

Now that you've skinned your face, resize it to the same size as the existing face in the Player skin (64 x 64 pixels). If you've created a blended face, simply copy and paste it over Mr. Anonymous.

However, if you had to make a "mask" of your face in MS Paint, copy and paste it to the Player skin and try to center it the best you can. Unless you're very tan, the skin colors won't match. (We *told* you to use Photoshop!) Experiment until you get a good fit, but be warned that the finished skin may still make you look like Leatherface from *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

5 ACCESSORIZE YOURSELF

You've got your skin — now it's time to customize your outfit. We've accessorized Mini-Chuck here with these totally bitchin' *PC Gamer* logos. (Using the same resize/copy/paste technique that we used for the face.) Just remember that any logo or markings you add to your skin's right side will also show up on his left. (So, no, you can't write "TheVede Rocks!" across the back of your jacket.)

You can even change the color of your pants or create a whole new outfit for yourself. When you're satisfied, save your final skin under a new name as a 24-bit .bmp file into your Skins folder. This skin will be selectable the next time you go to the player select screen under Options. Choose yourself, grab a trusty wooden bat, and get back to work!

A tale of two faces: The face we created in MS Paint is more scrunched and less realistic than its Photoshop-ed brethren. The moral? The more work you put into it, the better it'll look.

Pit Supes against the Hulk with *FF* skins.

OTHER GAMES OTHER SKINS

EVEN IF YOU'RE TOO LAZY to make a skin from scratch, plenty of talented peeps have done the work for you and posted their creations on the web. Here are the best places to hit for free downloadable skins.

Freedom Force

Freedom Force Center: Get over 2,000 *FF* skins, ranging from Batman to Fonzie. If you can't find what you need here, it doesn't exist.
(www.freedomforcecenter.com)

Grand Theft Auto III

GTA3skins.net: Okay, so it's not an "other game," but even so...This site is the premier destination for all things *GTA III*– and skin-related. You'll find not only player skins, but new car skins to boot.
(www.gta3skins.net)

The Sims

Maxis-made skins: Looking for skins of legendary *Civilization* designer Sid Meier or popular MTV stars? Look no further.
(http://thesims.ea.com/us/index.html)
The Sims Resource: Anything and everything you'd ever need for your Sim-family.
(www.thesimsresource.com)

Bri-Skin

Kuraby Soft has built this utility for making no-muss, no-fuss skins for *GTA III*. Unfortunately, the program was still buggy at press time, but it may be fixed by the time you read this.
(http://cablemodem.fibertel.com.ar/kurabysoft/GTA3_projects/english/gta3_english.htm)

Etc.

The Comic Skin Network: Formerly known as The Skindex, CSN has links to dozens of comic book–themed skins for *The Sims, Freedom Force*, and even *Unreal Tournament*.
(www.skindex.net)

Spideys for *The Sims*

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- Close to a hundred skills to learn through a new character development system
- An exciting background plot with many strands and sub-quests
- More than 100 monsters and creatures with ingenious AI
- More than 150 NPCs with different intelligent patterns of behavior
- A huge world consisting of more than 20,000 screens
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WARRIOR, WIZARD OR SURVIVOR?

Which fate is yours? It's your decision, one that will influence the gameplay of Divine Divinity as an action-based RPG or a classic RPG! According to prophecy, you are the chosen one, and only you will be able to save the legendary land of Rivellon from submission under the Lord of Chaos. But before you take on the fight against Evil, you must be discovered and blessed as the Divine Savior. You must remember one thing: Caution is vital! The apostate magicians must not get hold of you - whatever happens! Choose your fate: Warrior, Wizard or Survivor?

PC Gamer **"A heavyweight RPG contender"**

www.gamespy.com **"an epic story"**

RATING PENDING

RP

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

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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www.divinedivinity.com

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reviews

YOUR ULTIMATE GUIDE TO NEW GAME RELEASES

THIS IS THE SPACE THINKER'S FINAL WARNING!

The herald of the cosmic rulers demands that games shape up fast

Hear ye, Earthlings — I am the Space Thinker! Hovering in my asteroid fortress just outside the Earth's atmosphere, I have monitored human development through the aeons. And on behalf of the Galactic Overlords, I am here to announce that the continued sorry state of your "budget gaming" industry threatens your very existence!

Ack! Renders are not sexy!

Over one year ago, I issued a grave warning: shape up your PC games, or face the wrath of galactic powers you can barely comprehend. But instead of heeding my advice, you continue to recklessly publish budget shovelware and shoddy ports. Your pathetic Hooters racing games and firefighting "sims" are a new low.

Accordingly, I am issuing this Final Warning to all the associated peoples of planet Earth: Change your wicked ways, or I shall, with great sadness, be forced to unleash the Cosmic Jackals. They will swoop down upon your planet like a pestilence, bringing great woe and destruction.

Now, no one likes woe and destruction. Least of all the Galactic Overlords. We like to think of ourselves as evolved, supra-intelligent overbeings who swore off violence long ago. But when I see the titles thrust out by Head Games, Gonzo Games, ValuSoft, and the various other charnel factories of the PC gaming business, even a master intellect such as the Space Thinker can hardly contain a continent-shattering rage.

I wish to impress upon you the exact and extreme nature of Cosmic Jackalization. When we let loose the Cosmic Jackals, you can expect them to devour every city, drink every ocean, and defecate mightily throughout the lands. In short, it will not be a pretty sight. We hate to do it, but the dozen or so human survivors of this calamity will thank us in the end, because at least it will bring a stop to the *Backyard Sports* series.

Do not fail in this test, humans. And mark my warning well, for I am...the Space Thinker!

PC GAMER RECOMMENDS

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

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

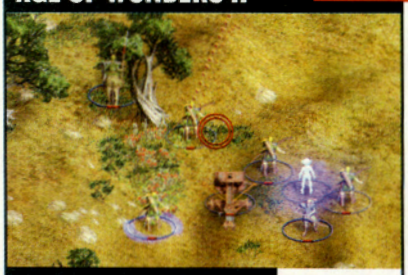
SEPT. 2002

The ultimate adventure for fans of tabletop roleplaying games. BioWare delivers a stunning AD&D epic, with unprecedented multiplayer options.

95%

AGE OF WONDERS II

SEPT. 2002



The follow-up to our RTS of the Year for 1999, this overlooked strategy masterpiece lets you vie for domination of a magical realm.

90%

DUKE NUKEM: MP

JULY 2002

No need to wait "forever" for the next *Duke* game. It may not be a AAA title, but *Manhattan Project* is a fun ride for diehard Duke aficionados.

75%

HOW WE RATE THE 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!

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Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos image courtesy of Blizzard Entertainment

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CREATIVE

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~ GameSpot ~

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Icewind Dale II

In a year of powerhouse RPGs, an old warrior rises to the challenge

Surrounded by lava, you're about to go eye-to-eye with one very over-caffeinated beholder. Yikes!

The special effects for the game's 300-plus spells look as sharp as any in the series.

The overworld map: stark, chilly, and pretty. You'd better be sure your hero brings along a jacket.

VITAL STATS

CATEGORY Roleplaying
ESRB RATING T
DEVELOPER Black Isle Studios
PUBLISHER Interplay/Vivendi
REQUIRED PII 350 or AMD K6-III 450, 64MB RAM, 700MB HD
WE RECOMMEND PIII 500 or AMD Duron/Athlon, 128MB RAM, 1.05GB HD
MAXIMUM PLAYERS 6

How many years have we been playing Infinity Engine games? The answer is four — *Baldur's Gate* hit the pavement hot and sizzling in November 1998. That makes *Icewind Dale II* Black Isle's last tango with yesterday's golden-child technology.

But everything you may be thinking about this game is probably wrong. Like an aging veteran who somehow crafts one last no-hitter, *Icewind Dale II* defies the odds, demonstrating that gripping gameplay and design finesse can rise for a fitting conclusion.

With some nifty tweaks to the engine, A-class writing, and a dazzling implementation of the D&D 3rd Edition rules, *Icewind Dale II* is like hauling out yesterday's burrito casserole and realizing that it tastes even better reheated.

HIT ME, BLACK ISLE, ONE MORE TIME

The tale picks up 10 years after the events of *Icewind Dale II*, in the region of the Forgotten Realms known as The Spine of the World. If you ever wondered where you'd live on the volatile continent of Faerûn, here's a little tip: avoid this place. These folks get more trouble than that luckless bunch in the Lemony Snicket novels.

Things get rolling in the port town of Targos, where the lord of the city has issued a call for heroes to help beat back an uppity goblin army that's somehow managed to breach the town's wooden defense perimeter. Your peppy band answers the challenge and sets sail for Targos to convert another raging horde of bloodthirsty fiends into fertilizer.

Unlike the more story-driven *Baldur's Gate* titles, the *Icewind Dale* series is definitely in the "combat-oriented" category. *ID II* manages to snaz up the formula a bit, however. For one, the writing features some of the richest and most enjoyable dialogue since *Planescape Torment*. I kept clicking through the dialogue trees half-expecting the conversations to devolve into the mundane, but they maintained a quality of charm and purpose. Sub-area descriptions (accessed by clicking on specific locations, objects, or devices) are plentiful, rivaling *Baldur's Gate* for depth and frequency, and in a nod to the *Ultima* series, characters will carry on their own (often quite amusing) chit-chat, which changes based on your actions.

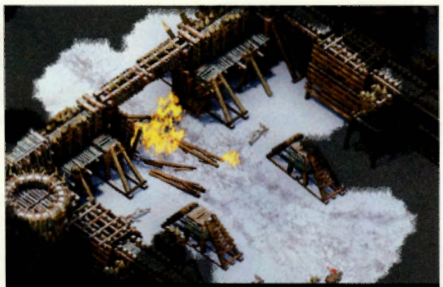
But combat is most definitely the main aim. You're flung into the thick of battle just minutes after disembarking at Targos port. From there, it's a wild ride through glacial cityscapes, and from spooky dungeon crawls to uber-arctic battles. Through the game's six chapters you'll lay your vengeance upon the hordes of evil and travel for miles from the Dragon's Eye to the Underdark and beyond. It's still fairly linear stuff, but honed to such a high-gloss sheen that the rails are hardly noticeable as you're rallied along by the epic sweep of the story.

FEATURING MORE FEATURES!

What else is new in *Icewind Dale II*? For starters, you get a nearly complete integration of the D&D 3rd Edition rules.

LEFT: *Icewind Dale II*'s new and improved character-stats interface. RIGHT: Play as a Moon Elf, Wild Elf, or the auspicious Drow. At last, Salvatore fans can play as a kinsman of their favorite anti-hero, Drizzt.

The locale art is some of the series' best — the advantage of going with 2D backgrounds.


There's devastation at the gates of Targos as the goblin army prepares to invade.

The tweaked engine allows much larger battles, so know your parties' strengths/weaknesses.

Lovely atmospheric descriptions abound in this underground torture room. Read up on your fate!

Hate leads to pain, and pain leads to suffering, so allow me to speed up the process for you!

The chili served at the inns in The Spine of the World is quite potent. Just ask this guy.

Taking strides beyond even *Neverwinter Nights*, the developers have included the ability to play as Human Aasimar or Tieflings; Shield, Gold, or Gray Dwarves; various subtypes of Gnomes and Halflings; and (perhaps most importantly to R.A. Salvatore fans) the foreboding Drow — all with accurate ruleset stats.

Barbarian, monk, and sorcerer classes are here, including subsets like "Monk of the Old Order" or the cleric-derived "Morninglord of Lathander." Black Isle gave the interface a complete overhaul to accommodate the fresh ruleset, adding details like four melee weapon and shield quick-configuration slots for streamlined combat, as well as slick, elegant screens for feats, abilities, and skills.

The engine's been tinkered with, too, allowing for some enormous battles with dozens of malevolent abominations determined to snack on your party's quivering carcasses. Like never before, group-combat tactics will play a critical role in bringing you through still smelling like a daisy.

The only glaring omission occurs in the journal screen, which has been reduced to one view per chapter. What happened to the trusty old "quests outstanding" and "quests completed" views? Hunting through this stacked accumulation of text can be a bit of a kludge, given that your entries can exceed 100 for the prologue alone!

The world of *Icewind Dale II* is packed with opportunities, with the developers claiming the game is over twice as long as the original. Expect to get at least 60 to 80 hours of play out of this one before it gives up the ghost. Then there's the "Heart of Fury" mode, which, if you find the game too easy, hops up all the monsters on steroids (thus increasing their experience value) and unlocks dozens of high-level items. Add in diverging mini-quests, over 300 spells, a bevy of new beasties, the ability for your characters to reach level 30, and several unique ways to solve each crisis (based on character class and ability ratings), and *ID II*'s got the Energizer Bunny by the throat.

So it's a good game, to be sure, but papa's not-so-brand-new bag pops out only so many new tricks. The animations are rough around the edges. Characters and creatures cycle in an endless jerking loop when standing still. And the fog-of-war effect seems just plain dated once you've experienced the smooth transitions in *Dungeon Siege* or the more realistic approach used in *Neverwinter Nights* (where only the map was obscured during exploration).

Still, *Diablo II* didn't lose any devotees with its ho-hum graphics, so refined was the gameplay. For the same reasons, *Icewind Dale II* is a game that no fan of this time-honored engine — or an intense RPG — can afford to miss. Besides, where else are you going to get your D&D 3rd Edition party-play fix? — *Matthew Peckham*

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Impressive storyline; great use of a sturdy engine; strong use of 3rd Edition rules.

LOWS: Some of the seams are showing in the engine; tiresome journal system.

BOTTOM LINE: A surprisingly riveting last hurrah for a beloved RPG engine.

PC GAMER **87%** EXCELLENT

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MISSIONS +490% VIOLENCE +430.5%

+320% GREED +150% ENEMIES -95%

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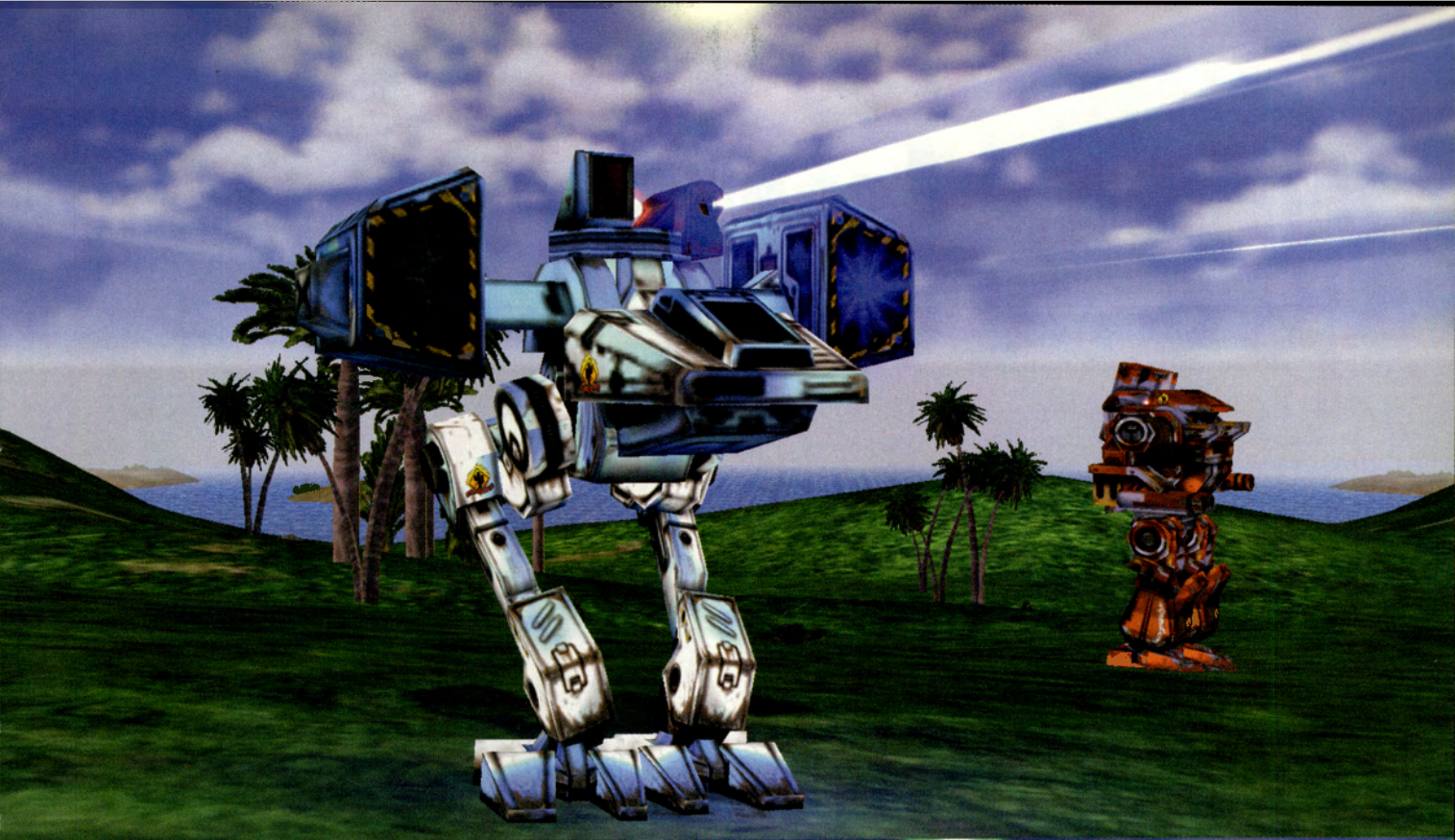

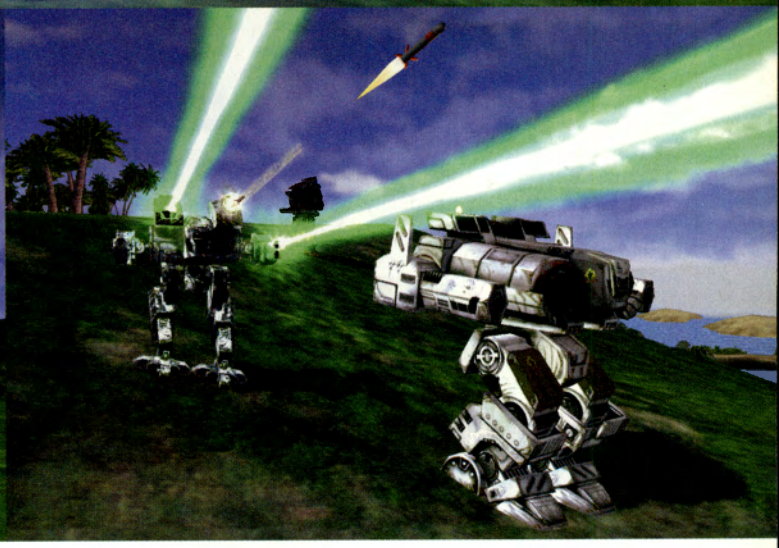

DEATHS +150% FAME +95.2% EGO +8

DESTRUCTION +320% WEAPONS +200%

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Airborne Assault

A Bridge Too Far becomes a game too good to miss

The Arnhem campaign is a tasty paradox. It was, by far, the boldest strategic gamble the Allies ever made — and it was the brainchild of the stodgiest, most cautious of generals, Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery.

It unfolded in two stages. First, a massive airborne drop near Arnhem, Holland, followed by the swift seizure of at least one major bridge across the Rhine. Stage Two was riskier: the elite but lightly armed paras would have to hold their gains until Montgomery could push an enormous armored column north to relieve them.

VITAL STATS

- **CATEGORY** Strategy
- **ESRB RATING** T
- **DEVELOPER** Panther Games
- **PUBLISHER** Battlefront.com
- **REQUIRED** PII 450, 64MB RAM, 200MB HD
- **WE RECOMMEND** 128MB RAM, 600MB HD
- **MAXIMUM PLAYERS** 2

A successful Allied Rhine crossing at that time (1944) would have outflanked all of Hitler's fortifications, leaving the critical Ruhr industrial region vulnerable to quick capture — and the Germans unable to wage war any longer. The war would have been over five months sooner and untold thousands of lives spared.

But Montgomery, having devised a scheme of breathtaking audacity, flinched from executing it with all the might and momentum at his disposal. In the most excellent *Airborne Assault: The Red Devils at Arnhem*, you can explore what *might* have happened if someone like, say, Patton (or you) had been running the operation.

The Arnhem campaign's been gamed before, of course, but Panther Games has trumped every other effort here. Grognards will slaver at the ocean of realistic detail that churns beneath the game's elegant interface.

Command-and-control coherence is critical to managing an operation this vast and complex. I like the designers' approach: basically, you highlight a "super unit" (usually a brigade or division HQ), assign an overriding objective (move, attack, seize a bridge, and so on), and let the superb AI come up with a sound operational plan. *Then*, to whatever extent gets you off, you can fine-tune the tactics by tweaking the sub-units' orders for movement (fastest, safest, shortest routes), level of aggression, acceptable losses, rate-of-fire for artillery, even frontage, depth, and facing.

Urban warfare is a bloody affair, as you'll quickly glean from the casualty counts in the cities. Welcome to the meatgrinder.

The Germans go all-out to recapture the Arnhem bridge. Where did all those SS units come from?

The SS defends a crucial road bridge against a swarm of Allied attackers. Can Hitler's elite hold out?

The information displays are as good as you'll ever see in a hardcore wargame.

With brilliant use of symbols and color-coding, each unit icon is jam-packed with information. Secondary tabs yield deeper info about cohesion, morale, equipment, and general attitude infused by individual leaders. (I liked to use "fanatical" outfits led by "pig-headed" officers for the real wet work.)

Red Devils does a lot of things differently, so even experienced wargamers will encounter a pretty steep learning curve at first. But it miraculously comes with an honest-to-goodness 241-page *printed* manual! It's well-written, clear, and organized with admirable logic, making the game very learnable.

I have to deduct a few points for the game's clumsy waypoint system (which often results in your ordering a unit to a spot 20 kilometers from where you *thought* you were sending it). And unless you're running *Devils* on a real screamer of a system, expect *huge* lapses in input/response time during the big, climactic battles.

But I can live with a few little pissers when the overall game is so exciting, exquisitely designed, and meticulous in its historical accuracy. I think I've played every "Market Garden" game since 1986, and this one is quite simply the best. An extra salute, too, for a manual that puts most others to shame. Good show, lads! — *William R. Trotter*

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Superb interface; exciting what-if campaigns; a gloriously good manual.

LOWS: Slower rigs will experience maddening slowdowns during the bigger battles.

BOTTOM LINE: *Red Devils* is a magisterial simulation and a blast to play.

PC GAMER 87%
EXCELLENT

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ESRB TEEN T

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Outsmart your captors to gather vital information and discover flaws in camp security.

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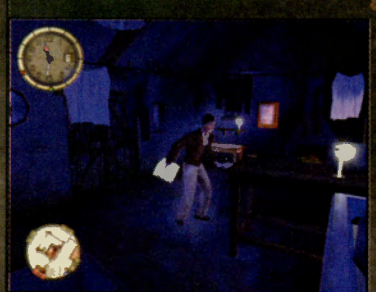

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APRIL 18, 1944: 1945 HOURS

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APRIL 20, 1944: 1227 HOURS

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APRIL 20, 1944: 1607 HOURS

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

WORLD WAR II

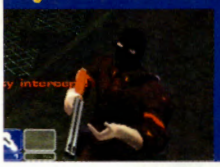
PRISONER OF WAR™

Escape is all in your mind.

Mobile Forces

An online-focused shooter that strongly suggests "riding shotgun"

EQUAL-OPPORTUNITY VICTIMS



The AI bots that you face in offline play are usually too brain-dead to step out of the way of your five-ton truck. So the carnage can be equal parts vehicular manslaughter and assault with a deadly weapon.

What's better than a tactical shooter? How about a tactical team-based vehicular multiplayer first-person shooter? Like *Halo*, perhaps? Not just yet!

Mobile Forces lets you sharpen not only your run-and-gun weapons skills, but also your driving expertise from behind the wheel of four military-issue vehicles. This *Grand Theft Auto III*–style vehicular combat component certainly adds a distinct twist to the genre, but unfortunately, not quite enough to rescue *Mobile Forces* from being a lifeless single-player game and a decidedly bumpy online experience.

VITAL STATS

- **CATEGORY** Action
- **ESRB RATING** M
- **DEVELOPER** Real Time Worlds
- **PUBLISHER** Rage/Majesco
- **REQUIRED** PII 450, 128MB RAM, 600MB HD, 32MB 3D card
- **WE RECOMMEND** PIII 700, 256MB RAM, 64MB 3D card
- **MAXIMUM PLAYERS** 32

With LAN and Internet multiplayer action as its primary focus, *Mobile Forces* offers very little in the way of offline play. Although you can drive or shoot your way through any of the eight multiplayer gaming modes with AI bots enabled, the absence of any linear story turns the entire exercise into a glorified practice arena. Factor in some moronically predictable AI enemies (who don't seem to know how to jump out of the way of a moving truck), and there's precious little reason to play offline.

Things do improve when you hook up with human opponents through the built-in matchmaking utility, largely due to the game's unique driving component. You can hop into a Dune Buggy, Humvee, Troop Truck, or APC, and haul through *Mobile*'s 11 maps as either a roadkill-facilitating wheelman or a teammate's gun-toting passenger. Each vehicle type drives quite differently, with the varied environments (ranging from a Rail Yard to a Polar Research Facility) dictating your choice of transport. You can even shoot out the tires and witness an immediate degradation in a vehicle's mobility.

Your equipment loadout is limited by the relative weight of each of the nine weapon types (the heavier stuff will actually slow down your foot speed), but unfortunately, the game's designers have made some of these guns completely ineffectual. For instance, the sniper rifle and heavy machine gun both exhibit horrible recoil effects and generally have about as much stopping power as a .22 target rifle. For the sake of the task at hand — namely, ventilating bad guys and blowing up trucks — there's really not much point in packing anything but the M-16 or rocket launcher.

Most of the weapons do boast an alternate-fire mode that can be handy with items like the satchel charge, which you can set to operate as either a proximity explosive or a laser-triggered trip bomb. Standard knife, pistol, shotgun, and grenade selections round out the available weaponry slots.

Mobile Forces makes effective use of Epic's *Unreal* engine to produce several attractive-looking battle scenes and some impressive pyrotechnics. But the ridiculously jerky character animations destroy any proper suspension of disbelief: think "mannequins on trampolines," and you'll appreciate just how clunky these dodges and turns can get.

Without an attempt at any kind of plot, and with only passable action gameplay, *Mobile Forces* probably won't appeal to most discerning shooter fans. — *Andy Mahood*

Big vehicles call for big guns. The rocket launcher is the most effective anti-truck weapon in the game.

Mobile's single-player game is little more than a glorified practice arena. Pshaw!

The vehicular combat feature, where you can either drive or ride shotgun, is *MF*'s chief selling point.

Due to its heavy recoil and lack of stopping power, the sniper rifle is mostly window dressing, which may be a gaming first.

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Unique vehicular combat; attractive level designs; team-based gameplay.

LOWS: Thin single-player options; spastic character animations; flawed weaponry; no plot of any kind.

BOTTOM LINE: *Quake III* meets *Carmageddon*, with mediocre results. Makes us want *Halo* even more.

PC GAMER 61%

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PC GAMER

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USAR Hooters ProCup Racing

CATEGORY Racing **ESRB** E **DEVELOPER** Hoplite Research **PUBLISHER** Infogrames **REQUIRED** PII 550, 64MB RAM, 16MB 3D card **WE RECOMMEND** PIII 866, 128MB RAM, 32MB 3D card **MAX. PLAYERS** 16

The runaway success of Papyrus' *NASCAR* series has generated such a heightened level of interest in PC stock-car racing that variations on the oval-track theme were only a matter of time. Enter *USAR Hooters ProCup Racing*, a new short-track racing title that hopes to cash in on the unique American pastime of flooring the gas pedal and turning left.

USAR is based on the same-named semi-pro series for high-horsepower stock cars that runs on small asphalt ovals throughout the eastern U.S and Canada. Featuring 22 individually rendered tracks from St. Augustine, Florida, to Cayuga, Ontario, *USAR ProCup* delivers a large collection of half-mile bullrings on which to test your circular driving skills.

Modest graphics, even at maximum res. (1024x768).

Supplementing its impressive selection of licensed tracks, *USAR ProCup* also offers one of the most expansive car setup menus I've seen in a game of this type. Unfortunately, the physics modeling is so unsophisticated that tinkering with things is a colossal waste of time. (Simply maxing out the tire pressures and lengthening the gearing will allow you to sprint away from the AI drivers on every track.) The absence of any usable baseline setups and the inability to save any of your settings adds further to the mechanical frustration.

A plus: a proper cockpit view with working gauges and rearview mirror.

USAR ProCup is also hobbled by dated-looking graphics, tinny audio effects, wonky AI, and persistent hardware lock-ups. Turning off caution flags does improve the AI issue somewhat (mostly by parking the crack-smoking pace-car driver), but the absence of any significant challenge from the computer-controlled drivers seriously devalues any long-term replay value. A perfunctory LAN and TCP/IP multiplayer option has also been tossed in, but finding someone online to race against is a hit-and-miss proposition at best.

USAR ProCup does deliver a passable hot-lapping exercise for gamers who simply wish to enjoy the quintessential American experience of short-track oval racing. But serious PC racers will certainly find much better offerings elsewhere. — *Andy Mahood*

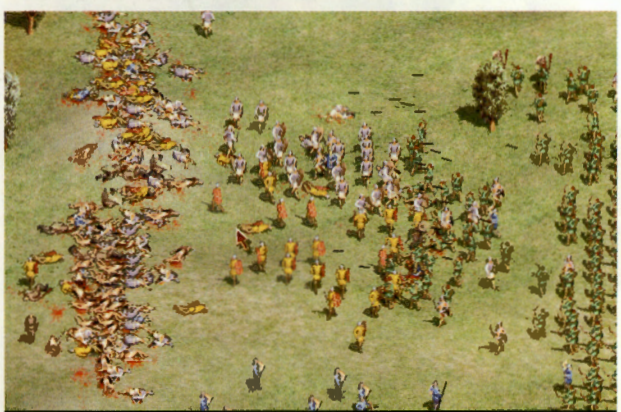
PC GAMER 50%
MERELY OKAY

Legion

CATEGORY Strategy **ESRB** T **DEVELOPER** Slitherine/Paradox Ent. **PUBLISHER** Strategy First **REQUIRED** P233, 64MB RAM, 2MB video card **WE RECOMMEND** PII 400, 128MB RAM **MAX. PLAYERS** 1

Take *Shogun* and nix its awesome AI, its ultra-addictive turn-based and real-time elements, and everything else that made it a strategy classic, and you've got *Legion*.

The game offers four campaigns — set in Britain, Gaul, Italy, and Norway during the days of the Roman Empire — with the ultimate goal of unifying all of the territories by diplomacy or brute force. Oddly enough, every nation pretty much declares war on you immediately, so diplomacy is a waste of time.



When you lose a battle, you also lose all of your surviving troops. Brilliant!

Like *Shogun*, *Legion* is broken into two primary gameplay modes: a turn-based section where you build new units, manage cities, and collect resources, and a real-time combat mode. Unlike *Shogun*, however, you don't have any direct control over the combat — you simply issue extremely basic movement and formation commands, then sit back and watch the battle unfold.

Once the fighting starts, you have zero control over your forces. The manual says this limitation is meant to "simulate" the chaos of Roman-era combat, and indeed, the battles are pretty damn chaotic. They're also devoid of fun, have little rhyme or reason, and often leave you with no idea why you won or lost.

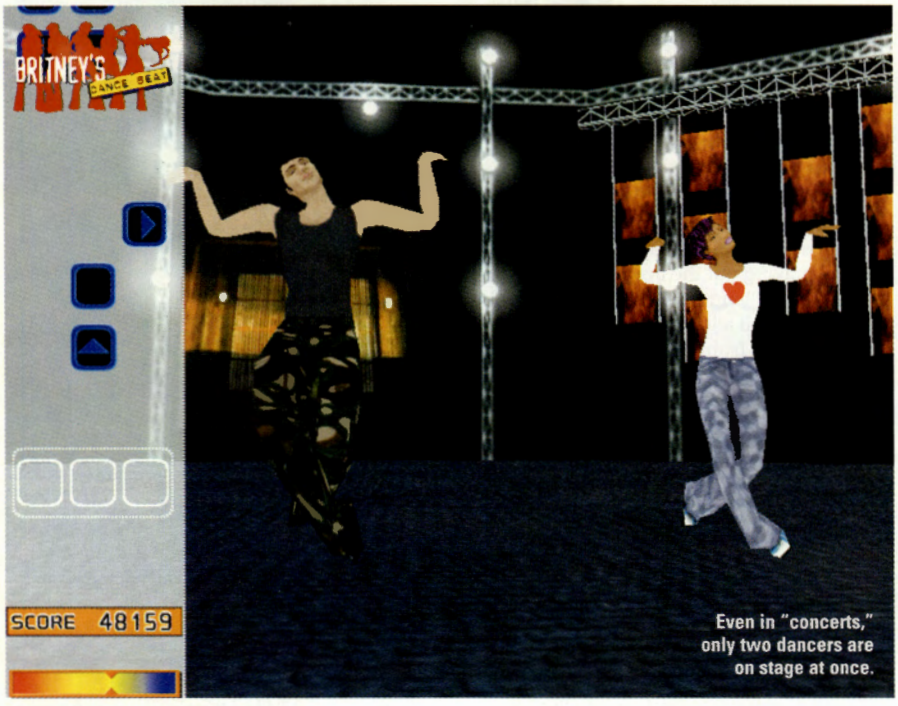
Legion's turn-based element is equally worthless. Turns are divided between the seasons, with all the new construction and unit creation occurring in the spring. Because of this setup, the other three seasons are useful only if you're waging war; otherwise, you'll find yourself simply clicking "next turn" to get to the spring. A system wherein each new building or unit took a specific number of turns would've been much more useful. (Not to mention fun.)

Ultimately, *Legion* just made me impatient for the release of *Shogun* sequel *Medieval: Total War*. Avoid. — *William Harms*

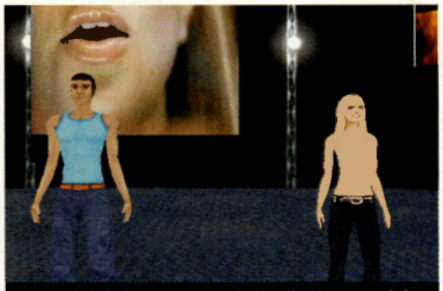
PC GAMER 29%
DON'T BOTHER

Britney's Dance Beat

Instead of putting you in Britney's pants (and who doesn't want to go there?), this game is simply...pants



Even in "concerts," only two dancers are on stage at once.


Britney's brief appearance in the final stage of the game is lackluster at best.

Sorry, guys — this game has to be played with *both* hands. (That's probably a good thing.)

"What U See Is What U Get" with the pop superstar's version of *Dance Dance Revolution*. Like the immensely popular arcade game, *Britney's Dance Beat* is played by synchronizing your shoddy avatar's dance-combo moves with simple directions. But while *DDR* and even last year's *Cyber Groove* (April 2001 *PCG*; 77% rating) gave you a decent workout jumping around dance pads, all the action here is done on your keyboard's four arrow keys and spacebar. You'll get no sense of "Satisfaction" here, aural or otherwise.

VITAL STATS

CATEGORY	Rhythm Action
ESRB RATING	E
DEVELOPER	Hyperspace Cowgirls
PUBLISHER	THQ
REQUIRED	PII 350, 64MB RAM, 140MB HD, 8MB video card
WE RECOMMEND	PIII 500, 128MB RAM
MAXIMUM PLAYERS	1

In gameplay, keystrokes scroll down a left sidebar rather than down the middle of the screen, making it tough to focus on both what to press and how your flailing dancer responds at the same time. Each set of key combos does in fact correspond to a dance move; these can all be explored in the free-dance mode, where you can tap keys to your heart's content while "The Beat Goes On."

You'll easily finish each of the game's seven levels (three auditions and four concerts), letting you unlock behind-the-scenes footage of real Britney Spears concerts. But the video clips show more of stagehands and directors, with barely a second of exposed midriff from the diva herself.

Those "Anticipating" an interactive music video with Britney will be sorely disappointed. A virtual dancing Britney doesn't even show up for some "Bombastic Love" until the secret last level; even then, her polygonal model doesn't gyrate with any fluidity. All told, *BDB* took less than 30 minutes to beat, and there's no point in playing it again.

Fanatic tweeners may enjoy the trivia mini-game, which quizzes your Britney knowledge with a few dozen questions like "What's Britney's middle name?" Truthfully, it just made me feel "Lonely" and pathetic to know the answer is Jean.

Don't even expect the game to be worth your time as a compilation of Britney's songs: only five actual Britney songs are featured in *BDB*, in addition to a single remix of each. The songs are almost a distraction, and prolonged sessions may even drive you "Crazy." Clips from music videos accompany each song during gameplay, but the swinging camera cuts all view of Britney to a bare minimum. A rendered version of Britney plays in cut scenes, but uses a voice actress that sounds like Laura Bush; she's more scary than striking.

Sure, buy the game for the included "limited-edition poster" of rendered Britney. But "Don't Go Knockin' On My Door" for your 30 bucks back. — *Norman Chan*

WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE BRITNEY

Want to put this game to some *real* use? Study the dance steps in the Free Play mode and mimic those motion-captured moves to wow your friends at your next party. Authentic Britney Spears choreography is sure to impress. Who said gaming couldn't win you popularity?

Norm emulates a move aptly titled "Slave."

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Motion-captured dancers and Britney photos are fun to look at. Kind of.

LOWS: Tedious; almost no "real" Britney; very short; absolutely no replay value.

BOTTOM LINE: Keep away and get yourself a nice subscription to *Maxim* instead.

PC GAMER 18%
DON'T BOTHER

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Delta Force: Task Force Dagger

We'll spare you the too-obvious "*Delta Farce*" gag...oops, guess we didn't

With missions set in such CNN-validated locales as Kandahar Airport, Mazar-e-Sharif, and other Afghan battlegrounds of the Enduring Freedom campaign, *Delta Force: Task Force Dagger* is definitely timely. Unfortunately, its technology most definitely isn't.

Built with the same base code that drove *Delta Force: Land Warrior* (2000), this "new" game is more of a glorified mission pack for *Land Warrior* (a fact NovaLogic developers seem ready to concede in online chat transcripts). And along with the same 3D-augmented voxel-graphics engine comes the same terrible artificial intelligence — enemy AI so bad, it makes the game's challenges pointless.

VITAL STATS

- **CATEGORY** First-person shooter
- **ESRB RATING** T
- **DEVELOPER** NovaLogic
- **PUBLISHER** NovaLogic
- **REQUIRED** PII 400, 64MB RAM, 200MB HD, 8MB 3D card
- **WE RECOMMEND** PIII 800, 128MB RAM, 32MB 3D card
- **MAXIMUM PLAYERS** 16

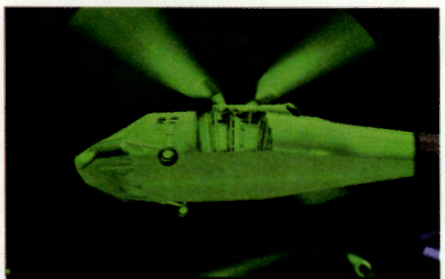
Shrewdly marketed, *Task Force Dagger* cloaks its mediocrity in a veneer of topicality and "hardware accuracy." It's chockfull of all the right acronyms, featuring 10 different Special Forces character types and a plethora of heavy-duty weaponry. In the early set-up, you're so giddy selecting your SFOD-Delta operator and his M4 SOPMOD with HK MP5SD6 secondary weapon that you can't *help* but be pumped full of adrenaline for your first mission. Alas, before your boots even touch voxelized ground in the opening parachute jump, you'll feel like an utter tool for having bought this game.

Why? Because behind the Clancy-riffic window dressing, *Task Force Dagger* is a limping, brainless echo of an 18-month-old game that was behind the curve when it first appeared. The technology is good for one thing, and that's spacious landscapes, of which I'm a big fan. But the Afghan landscapes are, as you might guess, empty and desolate. Enemies, on the other hand (they're almost exclusively "towel-headed" Afghans — literally towel-headed, as if leaping straight from Pat Buchanan's nightmares), are hideously rendered and animated.

This brand of American justice measures a cold 9mm wide. It's one of several HK variants available for use.

Beneath the Afghan sands, enemy tunnel networks teem with idiotic AI opposition.

TFD's five sniper rifles should meet all your distance-shooting needs. Recognize this interface?



Some missions begin with a night-time insertion via helicopter, necessitating night-vision goggles.

But the AI is the real cake-taker. Your foes do one of three things: stand around, crouch around, or roam around as if gliding on an air cushion across the sands. You can run down a long hallway right up behind a pair of crouched enemies, and not have to worry about them turning around. I'll go that one better — at a few different locations, an enemy would be running right at me, then run right past me, then continue running away from me. I'd shoot him in the back with an incredulous look on my face. Then he'd fall halfway through the wall, victim of "clipping-corpse" syndrome.

Dagger's multiplay is a bit more interesting, with a surprisingly healthy number of folks participating in battle on NovaWorld's servers. (For whatever reason, co-op mission play is no longer an option — a decision that bites ass.) The "search and destroy" mode, which requires each team to take out specific objectives, is almost as much fun as Flagball, a cool flag-snatching game popular in paintball.

But I just don't understand how you can plop down the money for *Task Force Dagger* when there are so many better games in this niche of the genre. It's a testament to the dullness of this game that its 25 missions feature a wide variety of mission types, yet all of them feel like the same monotonous hunts for brain-dead adversaries. Yes, you can view video footage from unmanned aerial drones. But the view is, shall we say, uninspiring. — *Daniel Morris*

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Huge environments; heaps of cool military gear; some fun multiplayer modes.

LOWS: AI so weak it's functionally non-existent; seriously dated graphics; major clipping problems.

BOTTOM LINE: A tired old engine showing both its age and its declining higher-brain functions.

PC GAMER **38%**

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At one point in the game, Hero X is invited to the mayor's mansion for a private party in his honor. Can you spot the supervillain? (Hint: He looks a lot like Lex Luthor.)

Hero X

CATEGORY Action/adventure **ESRB** E **DEVELOPER** Amazing Games **PUBLISHER** Infogrames **REQUIRED** PII 400, 64MB RAM, 850MB HD **WE RECOMMEND** PIII 600, 128MB RAM **MAXIMUM PLAYERS** 1

For every trendsetter, there's always at least one abysmal copycat trying to leech from its success. The folks at Irrational Games should feel flattered: *Hero X* is *Freedom Force*'s very first coat-tail-rider, and yep, it's pretty darn awful.

In this action/adventure budget title, you play *Hero X* (or an original persona created by you), a former sidekick who's graduated to solo superhero-hood. The American Super Heroes Association has assigned you to protect the aptly named Smalltown from the types of evildoers that generally terrorize small towns. Judging from the first two missions, that means bikers and frat dudes. The developers must be saving the rampaging hordes of soccer moms for the sequel.

Starting out, you'll select three superpowers from a beginning menu of 16, which includes Super-Speed, Super-Strength, X-ray Vision, and so on. Certain powers, like Fireballs, are fairly useful, but others — most notably ESP, which shows you enemies' utterly random, completely useless thoughts — aren't very super. As the game progresses, new powers are added to your arsenal via the Powermaker, a contraption built by your pal The Professor.

Uhh...I didn't do it! (But I wish I was a victim...)

Homegrown hero Major Ass saves the day.

Supervillains *do* show up to test your skills eventually. Unfortunately, the *Fallout*-style graphics and Rock 'Em–Sock 'Em Robot fight animations don't exactly convey a clash of the titans. With barely five hours of gameplay, no voiceovers, non-existent AI, and amateurish chapter-ending cartoons, *Hero X* can't even rightly be called a decent bargain-bin pick.

The plot does have one bona fide twist — precisely one more than I was expecting. The writers obviously knew just how atrocious this game was going to be, and kept themselves amused with the self-servingly silly dialogue. And a couple of the puzzles showed me that the designers *did* try, however little.

But all things considered, the only true villainy here is if you were to pass up the far superior *Freedom Force* to buy this game instead. Just like kryptonite, *Hero X* should be locked in a lead box and shot into the sun. — *Chuck Osborn*

PC GAMER 33% DON'T BOTHER

Jazz and Faust

CATEGORY Adventure **ESRB** T **DEVELOPER** Saturn-Plus **PUBLISHER** 1C **REQUIRED** PII 300, 32MB RAM, 800MB HD, 4MB 3D card **WE RECOMMEND** PII 400, 64MB RAM, 16MB 3D card **MAXIMUM PLAYERS** 1

Unbearable drek like *Jazz and Faust* is the reason some people keep saying that the adventure genre is dead and buried. It's one of those games moved along not by "story" or "events," but by the objects you have to search out and collect. If it weren't for the decapitated heads, the slavery, and the fact that you help other characters smoke opium not once but *twice*, I would've assumed it was a kids game.

There are really two adventures in *Jazz and Faust*: one played as the smart-alecky rogue Jazz, and the second as the straight-laced ship captain Faust. Both take place in the same Aladdin-esque Middle Eastern world, which allows their stories to overlap on occasion.

Jazz somehow finds himself solving a murder-mystery with a wrap-up so absurd it'd make Scooby Doo blush, while Faust...well, near as I can tell he just tails a girl he met once because she's hot. (In the real world, we call this *stalking*.)

Jazz and Faust is a game about picking things up and sticking them on every object in the environment, hoping something will happen. What's especially annoying here is that some items will magically appear in previously visited locations, forcing you to revisit old territory every time you get stuck. Knowing what you can pick up requires an exhilarating pixel-by-pixel search of the screen with your mouse cursor, as you wait with bated breath for a hotspot that'll turn your cursor into a "grabby hand." Woo-hoo — that's exactly how we *don't like* our adventures!

"Do I look like a man who pees in his pants?"

"Well, all's fish that comes to the net."

Initially I thought that the Russian heritage of *Jazz and Faust*'s development accounted for some of the game's oddball dialogue. ("Ringed with wings clipped! Bad fortune" is one such Confucian rejoinder.) That is, until I realized that the obviously bored English-speaking voiceover artists recorded this nonsense, but didn't tell anyone the lines were gibberish. (Two of the clunkers are captions above.) If the guys *making* the game don't care, why should you? — *Chuck Osborn*

PC GAMER 20% DON'T BOTHER

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TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

EL DIABLO OF VEDERMANIA

I'M GETTING TIRED of waiting. When is someone going to make my favorite game of all time? I'm certainly not going to do it. For one, I'm too lazy, and (b) I'm an idiot who can't even tell the difference between numbers and letters.

I'm not asking for much, though, and I think a company like Blizzard could help me out. Okay, guys, here's what I want: I want a game like *Diablo*, but in 3D — and not that *Warcraft III* pseudo-3D crap. I want *real* 3D. You know, like *DarkStone* had years ago? Yeah, like that, but prettier. I want my game to keep that same overhead isometric perspective I love, but I want it to be dark and creepy like *Doom III*. Lots of pixel- and vertex-shader effects — and so help me, I'd *better* be able to zoom in and out.

Okay, I also want random levels again, the kind you had in the original *Diablo*. (*Diablo II*'s designers got a little lazy and too many of the levels never changed.) I also want about, hmm, let's say 38 different character classes to choose from, like that old-school board game Talisman (2nd Edition 4-lif3) from Games Workshop. Each class should have tons of totally rad unique abilities just like in *Diablo II*. Oh, and I also want randomized quests — *loads* of 'em. Enough so that I'd be really surprised and totally pissed off at you if I ever ended up having to go on the same side quest *in my life*.

What else…Yes! I want the final end boss to be called "El Diablo of Vedermania" and he should be really super-over-the-top crazy-hard to kill, unless you've got TheVede's Rubber Gloves of +3 Lawn Gnome Spite — then he'd be waaaay easy.

Thanks in advance.

Greg Vederman, Senior Editor

PRODUCT TYPE

- [ ] ENTRY
- [ ] MID
- [x] DREAM

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	$51
MOTHERBOARD	
Asus A7V-133	$80
MEMORY	
256MB PC-133 SDRAM	$28
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	
3COM #2976 56K v.90 Hardware Modem	$45
MONITOR	
17-inch Optiquest Q71	$130
VIDEO CARD	
GeForce4 MX440 64MB DDR	$75
JOYSTICK	
Microsoft SideWinder Joystick	$25
GAMEPAD	
Logitech WingMan Rumblepad	$23
SPEAKERS	
Logitech WingMan Z-340 (2.1)	$39
KEYBOARD	
Addtronics	$15
MOUSE	
Logitech or Microsoft USB	$39
TOTAL	**$795**

MID-RANGE SYSTEM — ROUGHLY $1,250

CASE	
300-watt ATX form factor	$50
PROCESSOR	
AMD Thunderbird 1.4GHz 266MHz	$75
MOTHERBOARD	
Gigabyte GA-7DX (revision 4.3)	$60
MEMORY	
256MB PC-2100 DDR SDRAM	$32
CD-ROM/DVD-ROM DRIVE	
Pioneer 16x DVD-ROM	$60
FLOPPY DRIVE	
Samsung 3.5-inch 1.44MB	$8
HARD DRIVE	
80GB Maxtor 7,200rpm ATA-133	$120
SOUND CARD	
Creative Labs SB Live! Audigy MP3+	$85
MODEM	
3COM #2976 56K v.90 Hardware Modem	$49
MONITOR	
19-inch NEC FE950+	$292
VIDEO CARD	
NVIDIA GeForce4 Ti 4200	$149
JOYSTICK	
Microsoft SideWinder Precision 2	$45
GAMEPAD	
Logitech WingMan Rumblepad	$23
SPEAKERS	
Logitech Z-540 (4.1)	$60
KEYBOARD	
Addtronics	$15
MOUSE	
Logitech or Microsoft USB	$39
TOTAL	**$1,162**

DREAM SYSTEM — ROUGHLY $3,000 AND ABOVE

CASE	
400-watt ATX form factor	$100
PROCESSOR	
Intel 2.53GHz P4	$620
MOTHERBOARD	
Intel D850EMV2	$150
MEMORY	
Twin sticks of 256MB PC-1066 RDRAM	$290
CD-ROM/DVD-ROM DRIVE	
Pioneer 16x DVD-ROM	$60
BURNER	
Plextor 40x12x40 CD-RW	$115
FLOPPY DRIVE	
Samsung 3.5-inch 1.44MB	$8
HARD DRIVE	
160GB Maxtor ATA100/133	$230
SOUND CARD	
Creative Labs SB Live! Audigy Platinum 5.1	$160
MODEM	
3COM #2976 56K v.90 Hardware Modem	$40
MONITOR	
22-inch ViewSonic P220f	$647
VIDEO CARD	
NVIDIA GeForce4 Ti 4600	$300
JOYSTICK	
Thrustmaster HOTAS Cougar	$269
GAMEPAD	
Logitech WingMan Rumblepad	$23
SPEAKERS	
Klipsch ProMedia 5.1	$399
KEYBOARD	
Microsoft Natural Keyboard Pro	$40
MOUSE	
IntelliMouse Explorer 3.0	$50
TOTAL	**$3,501**

YOU'VE BEEN LEFT BEHIND...

The third installment in the Earth 2150 series, *Lost Souls* is a 3D RTS voyage that has you scrambling for resources as you swear revenge on those who left you behind in a world that is set to crumble and vanish. The challenge is to make it out on time. The goal is to make it out alive.

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AND TIME IS TICKING away.

EARTH 2150

LOST SOULS

Strategy First

INFINITE

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ENTRY
MID
✔ DREAM

Ridiculously Insane Intel Model 13200XP

SMOKIN' MACHINE, BUT THAT NAME'S JUST A *BIT* OVERKILL

It's 10 months since we reviewed a "Totally Awesome Computer" (December 2001), but reader email still trickles in telling us how annoying the company's founder and president, Dell Schanze, is. With 10 retail outlets in its home base of Utah, TAC reportedly sells over 2,000 systems per month (that's a *ton*). But the outfit runs what we're repeatedly told are the most silly, irritating TV commercials ever, featuring Dell himself as the guy who'll do anything to promote his company. According to TAC representatives, a yet-to-be-released spot features Dell and his dog. Kissing. With tongue. Oh my.

Creative marketing gets you only so far in this business. TAC seems to understand this, and its new Ridiculously Insane Intel Model 13200XP manages to live up to its lofty name.

TAC built this system with Intel's new 2.8GHz P4 CPU. The good news: this machine is *really* fast, and at resolutions of 640x480 and 800x600 in a lot of today's games you should expect to see frame rates as much as 25 frames per second faster than those on an identical system built with a P4 2.53GHz instead. The bad news? At 1024x768 the difference drops to about half, and at resolutions above that, there's really no difference at all. Why? Believe it or not, we're starting to reach the fill-rate ceiling of the venerable GeForce4 Ti 4600! At high resolutions, where a lot of your precious fill rate is spent, a super-fast CPU isn't enough to get faster frame rates with this card.

There are exceptions, like *Jedi Knight II*. Based on a heavily modified *Quake III* engine, it's a good example of a game that's CPU-limited rather than video card–limited at all but the highest resolutions. The super-fast 2.53GHz Alienware we reviewed back in August scored roughly 98 fps at all resolutions up to 1280x1024 in *JKII* without any anti-aliasing. At 1280x1024 with 2x AA it scored 93.9 fps, and with 4x AA it scored 58.7 fps. By comparison, the TAC scored roughly 110 fps at all resolutions up to 1280x1024 without AA, 97.3 fps with 2x AA, and 57.5 fps at 4x AA.

■ SYSTEM SPECS

■ System	
Processor	Intel P4 2.8GHz
Motherboard	Asus P4T533-C
Memory	512MB PC-1066 RDRAM
■ Storage	
Primary Hard Drive	80GB Western Digital 7,200rpm
Secondary Hard Drive	Yes (same)
RAID Controller	Promise FastTrak 100
DVD-ROM Drive	Toshiba 40x
CD-RW Drive	Plextor 40x12x40
■ Expansion	
5.25-inch bays	4 (1 free)
3.5-inch bays	3 (1 free)
AGP Slot	Yes
PCI Slots	5 (1 free)
RAM Slots	4 (2 free)
■ Audio	
Sound Card	Sound Blaster Audigy
■ Video	
Primary Display Adapter	GeForce4 Ti 4600
■ Other	
Mouse	Microsoft IntelliEye
Keyboard	Microsoft Internet
Network Card	Yes
Recovery CD	No
Full Version of Windows	Yes
Warranty	Three years

■ BENCHMARKS

■ 3DMark2001 SE
(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.)
3DMarks: 12,477
Game 1: Car Chase
High Detail: 74.2 fps
Game 2: Dragothic
High Detail: 112.1 fps
Game 3: Lobby
High Detail: 87.9 fps
Game 4: Nature: 53.6 fps
Fill Rate: 2,315.9 per second
Vertex Shader: 101.9 fps
Pixel Shader: 129.5 fps
Advanced Pixel Shader: 98.2 fps

■ QUAKE III
(Tests run in full 32-bit color with trilinear filtering, max.-res textures, compressed textures, and V-sync disabled. Second number is with 2x antialiasing; third number is with 4x AA.)
640x480: 302.1 fps
800x600: 294.6 fps
1024x768: 261.3 fps, 177.8 fps, 113.3 fps
1280x1024: 188.7 fps, 107.5 fps
1600x1200: 135.8 fps, 71.8 fps

■ MDK 2
(Tests run in 32-bit color with trilinear filtering, max.-res textures, T&L enabled, and V-synch disabled.)
640x480: 273.5 fps
800x600: 273.1 fps
1024x768: 267.7 fps
1280x1024: 208.3 fps
1600x1200: 151.3 fps

What do these numbers tell us? That without anti-aliasing enabled, some games will show performance increases when moving from a 2.53GHz to a 2.8GHz at low *and* high resolutions, but they're minor. Once AA *is* enabled, the fill-rate limitations of the video card suck those differences right out from under your feet...er, PC.

TAC'S WIRING IS DEFINITELY A CUT ABOVE AVERAGE. NOT QUITE WHAT WE'D WANT TO SEE THROUGH A WINDOW, BUT THEN, TACS DON'T COME WITH ONE, SO IT'S A-OK!

Want more frames per second out of the current generation of games on that new 2.8GHz CPU? You may have to wait until the next generation of video cards arrive, which is right around the corner. In the meantime, all but the most diehard PC enthusiasts may want to save some cash by going with a 2.53GHz P4 instead, if they can't wait for a card like ATI's super-powerful RADEON 9700 (which hopefully will ship by the time you read this).

Now that we've got that all squared away, we should tell you a bit more about this TAC. For starters, it's built very well, with brand-name parts. Unlike most of its competition, none of the parts are overclocked. Fewer case fans are required as a result, the ancillary benefit being relative silence. Despite its lack of overclocking, this TAC still proved faster in several tests than the overclocked 2.8GHz-based Elite PC reviewed on page 108.

TAC's also got a terrific warranty. The company gives you a minimum of three years parts-and-hardware coverage, along with 24-hour tech support (manned by actual TAC employees, not an answering service). And you get lifetime service (covering just about anything aside from physical damage) should things go wrong in the future. They'll even buy your old hardware back from you if you want to upgrade! Cool policy. Great computer.

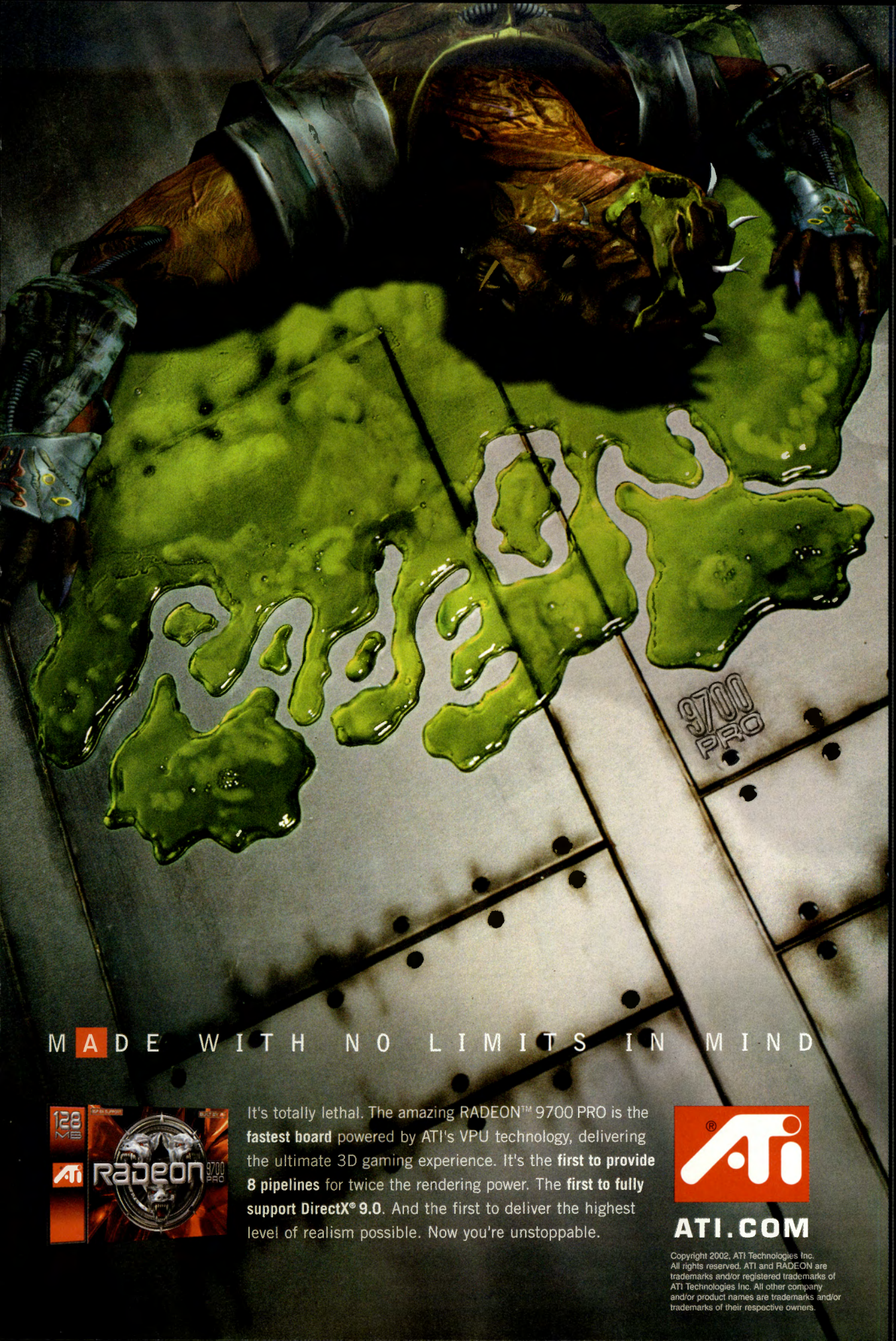
FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Newest, fastest hardware around; low price; great warranty and support.

LOWS: An Alienware 2.53GHz system still beats this TAC in some tests, especially with AA enabled.

BOTTOM LINE: TAC is two-for-two. No doubt about it, these guys build terrific gaming machines.

PC GAMER **89%**
EXCELLENT



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ENTRY
MID
✔ DREAM

Colossus 5

GOOD PRICE, LOOKS ELITE — BUT SOMETHING'S MISSING

Right out of the box, something didn't seem quite right about this 2.8GHz P4-based system from Elite PC. We heard a rattling noise coming from somewhere inside the computer when we picked it up. A quick look through the handsome window on the left side of the tower revealed that the extra drive rails that ship with the system — the ones that usually fasten firmly to the inside bottom of cases like the one Elite PC uses — had come loose during shipping. Not the end of the world, though it *was* our first impression.

Our next impression came as we were setting up the system for the first time. That handsome window we mentioned before looks right in at the heart of the computer — and while such things tend to be subjective, to us, said heart looked a bit garish. Wiring is neat and organized overall, roughly on par with that of the TAC reviewed on page 106, but it's not nearly as good as that in machines built by companies like Voodoo or Hypersonic — two builders that also install windows in their cases. The biggest problem here is color. Neon green cable ties with yellow, black, and blue cable wraps? It all looks good when the lights in your room are out, what with the system's internal neon-blue case light, and colorful case fans making it all seem like a Grateful Dead show. But when the lights come back on, the bad trip begins, and those colors clash, putting a quick end to your summer of love. Now, these wraps and ties can easily be changed out to a more aesthetically pleasing palette, so this setup isn't the end of the world, though it *was* our second impression.

■ SYSTEM SPECS

■ System	
Processor	Intel P4 2.8GHz
Motherboard	Intel 850EMV2L
Memory	512MB RDRAM
■ Storage	
Primary Hard Drive	120GB Western Digital
Secondary Hard Drive	Yes (same)
RAID Controller	Adaptec 2400ATA
DVD-ROM Drive	40x DVD
CD-RW Drive	40x CD-RW
■ Expansion	
5.25-inch bays	4 (2 free)
3.5-inch bays	6 (3 free)
AGP Slot	Yes
PCI Slots	5 (3 free)
RAM Slots	4 (2 free)
■ Audio	
Sound Card	Sound Blaster Audigy
■ Video	
Primary Display Adapter	GeForce4 Ti 4600
■ Other	
Mouse	Microsoft IntelliMouse Explorer
Keyboard	Microsoft Office
Network Card	Yes
Warranty	Three years

■ BENCHMARKS

■ 3DMark2001 SE
(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.)
3DMarks: 12,993
Game 1: Car Chase
High Detail: 74.7 fps
Game 2: Dragothic
High Detail: 119.2 fps
Game 3: Lobby
High Detail: 89.4 fps
Game 4: Nature: 57.9 fps
Fill Rate: 2,504 MegaTexels/sec.
Vertex Shader: 106.7 fps
Pixel Shader: 139.8 fps
Advanced Pixel Shader: 106.7 fps

■ QUAKE III
(Tests run in full 32-bit color with trilinear filtering, max.-res textures, compressed textures, and V-sync disabled. Second number is with 2x AA; third number is with 4x AA.)
640x480: 309.7 fps
800x600: 300.1 fps
1024x768: 252.4 fps, 179.6 fps, 115.7 fps
1280x1024: 168.9 fps, 107.9 fps
1600x1200: 117.1 fps, 69.7 fps

■ MDK 2
(Tests run in 32-bit color with trilinear filtering, max.-res textures, T&L enabled, and V-synch disabled.)
640x480: 278.0 fps
800x600: 277.3 fps
1024x768: 259.6 fps
1280x1024: 181.0 fps
1600x1200: 125.8 fps

Power-up time! 3DMark2001 SE spit out the fastest score we'd ever seen: at 12,990 points, the Elite PC beat the comparably equipped TAC by over 500 points. But then there's the part where Elite PC overclocked Colossus' video card to an unbelievably high 324MHz/770MHz (core and memory speeds, respectively — up from 300MHz/650MHz default). Amazingly, the system ran stable at this speed — it never locked once — probably due to the excellent cooling system. It did, however, produce terribly ugly artifacting in any and all games we tested — artifacting that should have been plainly obvious to Elite PC's techs. We had to lower the speed to 324MHz/729MHz to get the distortion to go away. After that, the system benchmarked faster (12,993)! Why? Because it turns out that faster clock speeds sometimes interfere with delicate memory timings and transfers, effectively negating your clock bump. Again, Elite PC should have known this result and not gone apeshit with GF4 Ti 4600's memory clock. Now, it's true that we do sometimes have to clock video cards back down to make them stable when testing review systems, so this situation isn't the end of the world, though it *was* our third impression.

ELITE PC DOES A GOOD JOB WITH WIRING. JUST MAKE SURE YOU SPECIFY WHICH COLORS YOU WANT THEM TO USE FOR YOUR CABLE WRAPS AND TIES, LEST YOU BE SURPRISED.

As for overall system performance, like we said before, the Colossus produced the fastest 3DMark2001 SE score we've seen in any shipping PC to date. And in games like *Quake III*, *MDK 2*, and *Jedi Knight II*, it produced very zippy benchmark scores — on average, about five frames per second faster than the TAC. That is, until the Colossus hit high resolutions of 1024x768 and above. Then, the TAC, with its standard-clocked GeForce4 Ti 4600, beat the Colossus by as much as 25 fps — which surprised even us, given the nearly identical system specs.

In *JKII*, there was almost no difference at all between the two systems, but then, *JKII* is CPU-limited rather than video card–limited — suggesting that the small bottleneck in Elite's system lies somewhere between the video card and the motherboard. But hey, these differences in performance were relatively small, and Elite PC sells this system for a good price, so this discrepancy isn't the end of the world, thought it *was* our fourth impression. And sadly, we didn't really need to hit the fifth to know that the Colossus 5, while decent, isn't quite up to the level of its peers.

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Good parts; good price; cool lighting scheme.

LOWS: Not all parts play nice together; a little sluggish at high resolutions.

BOTTOM LINE: We've seen better from Elite PC, so we know they can build good computers. This one, sadly, was a bit of a let-down.

PC GAMER 68%
ABOVE AVERAGE

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STRIKE FIGHTERS
PROJECT 1

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Violence

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ENTRY
MID
✓ DREAM

HOTAS Cougar

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

THE ALPHA AND OMEGA OF JET-SIM CONTROLLERS

Thrustmaster's long-awaited HOTAS Cougar is definitely *not* your father's flight-sim controller. It's nothing if not the most visually and mechanically impressive peripheral of any kind ever introduced for the PC. *[True, that. — Ed.]*

Weighing a tad over 16 pounds, this throttle-and-stick combo is a beast of a controller that's so impressive it'll wow your friends and maybe even your non-techie significant other, too! Why? 'Cause just like all the best toys when you were little, the Cougar is made almost entirely of die-cast metal. Bases, handles, and buttons — *all metal*! The darn thing looks and feels like it was ripped right out of an F-16, which was Thrustmaster's goal.

New from the ground up, the Cougar is the latest addition to TM's high-end line of flight-control systems like the F-22 Pro, F-16 TQS, and FLCS. All told, HOTAS Cougar's throttle and flight stick feature 28 programmable buttons; 7 axes; adjustable resistance for the throttle, afterburner, and idle detent; as well as five programmable hat switches and 16K of internal memory. In addition, a thumb-controlled micro stick makes its home in the throttle, handling mouse-control duties quite well. Upgraders take note: Cougar's flight-stick handle can be swapped out with other handles modeled after famous aircraft (such as the venerable F/A-18 — a stick TM plans to make available sometime down the road).

The Cougar hardware is an absolute breeze to set up, particularly when compared to previous TM sticks like the FLCS. Just install the drivers, plug the throttle into the flight stick, attach your analog rudder pedals if you've got 'em (they're not included in the package, but don't worry — the unit's built-in micro stick can be used to handle rudder duties if you're sans pedals), and you're almost home! Plug the unit into an available USB port and Windows XP instantly recognizes Cougar.

Here's where confusion is likely to set in. Cougar's software suite includes not one, not two, but *three* separate applications that can be used to program, test, calibrate, and download configurations to the hardware. Foxy Cougar Edition software is the stick's primary utility program, and longtime Thrustmaster users should find it familiar and fairly easy to use. Everyone else is likely to be a bit intimidated, however — at least at first. Still, the programming capabilities of the Cougar are virtually limitless, and the software and programming-language syntax are about as simple as they can be, given the level of precision on display here.

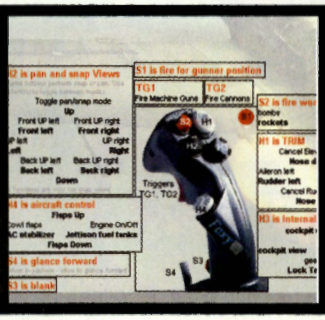
"LIKE ALL THE BEST TOYS WHEN YOU WERE LITTLE, IT'S 99% DIE-CAST METAL"

Thankfully, Cougar's documentation is excellent — though, strangely, no printed docs for Foxy are included (they're in digital form instead) — and you can use the Loader and/or Control Panel applications to bypass Foxy altogether, using any of the stick's factory-supplied control schemes — or any of the hundreds of user-created schemes available online. Because the list of games with ready-made schemes is flat-out enormous, including everything from *MechWarrior 4* and *Crimson Skies* to *Falcon 4.0*, *Flanker 2.0*, and *IL-2 Sturmovik*, you may actually be able to avoid using Foxy altogether, which will be a real plus for gamers who just want to jump into their favorite games without a lot of hassle.

Joystick jockeys used to very loose, arcade-type controllers may be shocked by the resistance of Cougar's flight stick. It's incredibly stiff, requiring quite a bit of muscle when a lot of throw is required. Luckily, the metal base is heavy enough that it stays in place through it all. Just as a real F-16 flight stick doesn't move, but rather reacts to the forces applied to it, Cougar's stiffness is very realistic and helpful in sims where super-precise movements are the order of the day. The downside is that, out of the box, Cougar isn't terribly fun or efficient with prop-based or arcade-style sims.

Then again, Cougar wasn't built to play arcade games. Nope. It's the controller that hardcore jet-simulation junkies have been demanding for years. A better-made, better-looking, more programmable throttle-and-flight-stick control system doesn't exist. Cougar is the very best high-end controller we've ever seen. If you're a hardcore flight simmer, this hardware can do no wrong. The software? Well, that's another story...

Say hello to the last joystick you'll ever own.



LEFT: The Cougar is best suited for use with jet sims, but with some adjustments, it may also work well for fans of prop-based sims such as *IL-2 Sturmovik*. RIGHT: Foxy can be used to generate graphical representations of your layouts, which is awesome. Unfortunately, the print function doesn't work. D'oh.

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Extremely well-made; durable; precise; powerful programming software and options.

LOWS: Expensive; steep learning curve; no printed Foxy docs; some annoying (minor) software bugs.

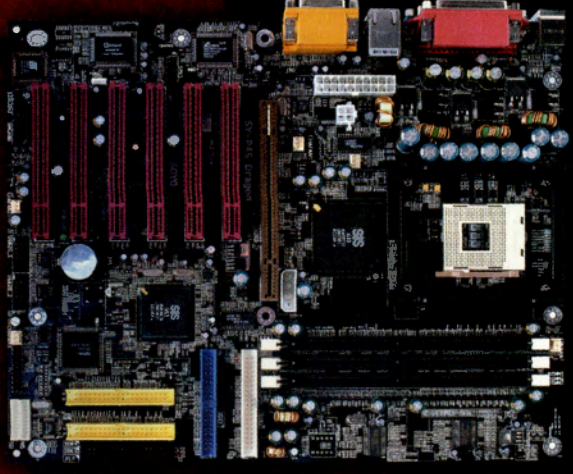
BOTTOM LINE: Sky-high flyers seeking the ultimate high-end control system will find it right here.

PC GAMER 90%
EDITORS' CHOICE

P4S-648DX DRAGON ULTRA

PLAY GAMES WITH 8X POWER!

DRAGON SOYO



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BONUS SPD/IF Audio Connector for crisp digital sound

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D: Ultra fast DDR400 SDRAM

R: ATA-133 IDE RAID (0,1,0+1) with on board SERIAL ATA support

A: 6-Channel hardware digital audio

G: Incredible 8X Graphics

O: Smart Overclocking options

N: 10/100 Mbps network

Ultra: High Speed USB 2.0 Support
IEEE 1394 Firewire on board

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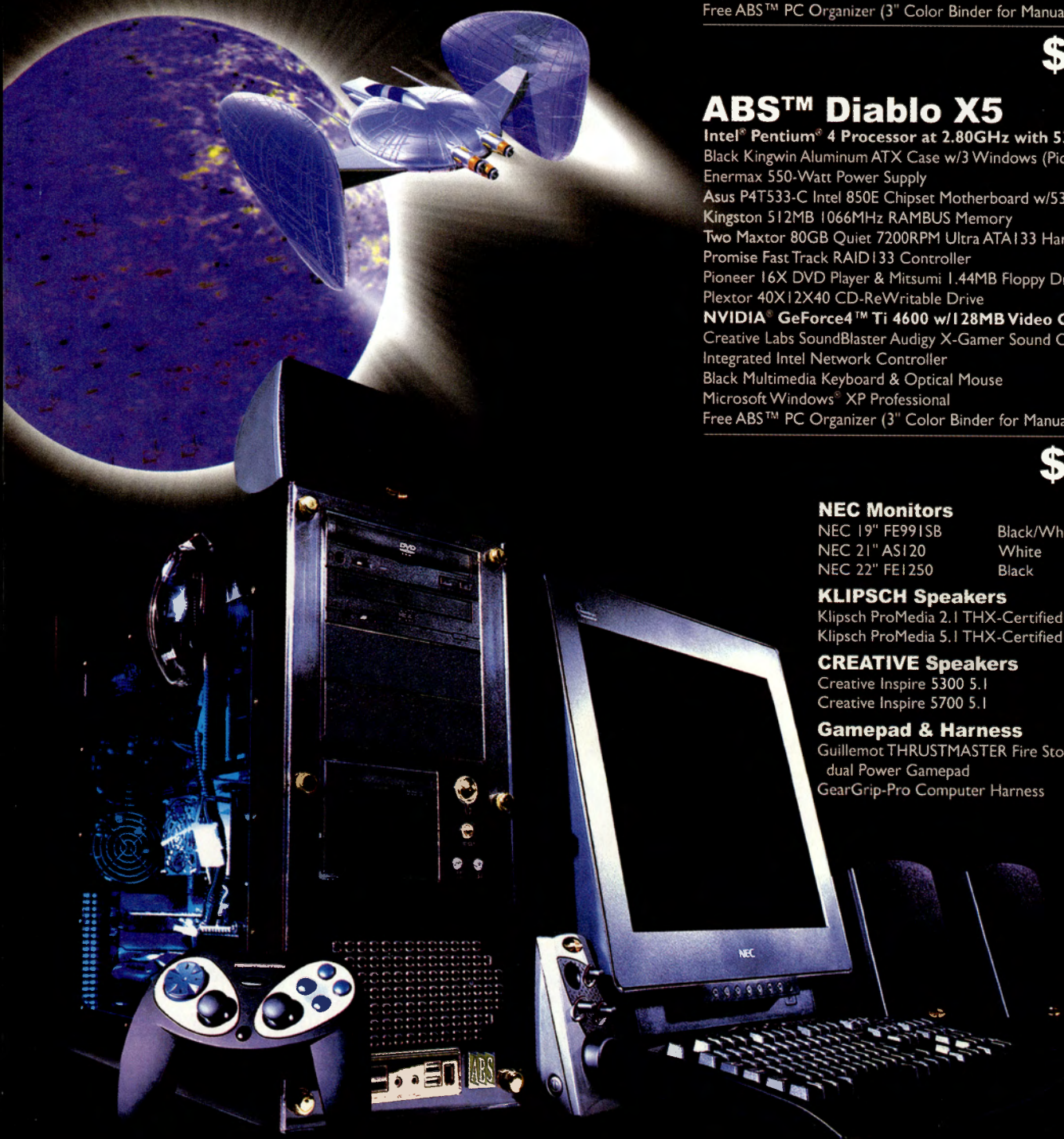

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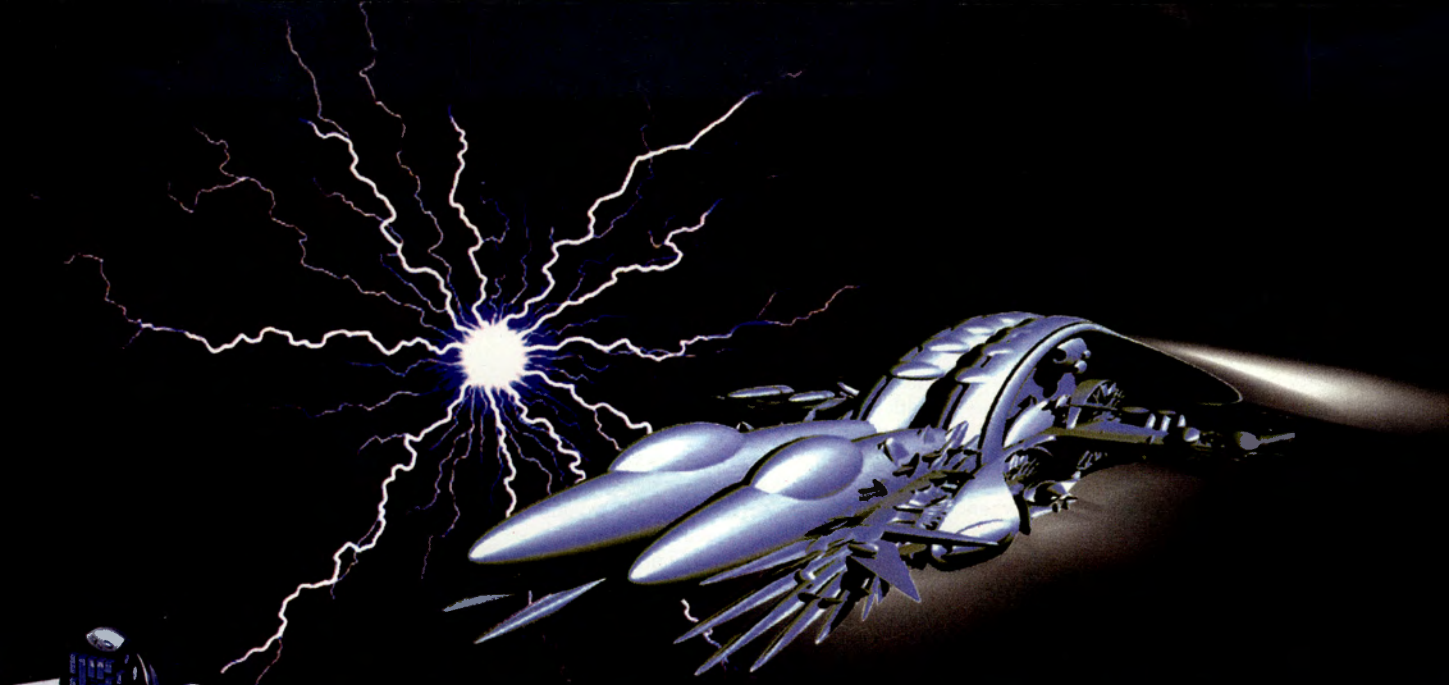

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sim column

Andy Mahood

Manuals Go "Outside the Box"

Scaled-down packaging means bye-bye bulky paper manuals. What's a simmer to do?

The environmentalist in me applauds the switch from Buick-sized PC game boxes to the dinky, more manageable 5x7 format we're seeing on retail shelves today. But I still have to dab away a tear or two when I think of the impact that this change has on long-suffering sim fans.

You see, unlike the FPS crowd — who can get all the documentation that they'll ever need from the back of a 9mm shell casing — military-sim stalwarts are an insanely regimented lot, and demand monolithic volumes of raw printed data. We want to clearly understand the inner workings of an F-16's AN/APG-68 radar, and the launch procedures for a CBU-89/B cluster bomb. We've been so spoiled by publishers like Jane's and MicroProse (whose 580-page, three-ring-binder *Falcon 4.0* manual still sets the standard for comprehensive "systems documentation") that we even started bitching when *European Air War*'s 256-page manual wasn't loosely bound enough to lay flat on a desk!

Well, let's face it, folks: big-ass boxes are pretty much history, and those huge manuscripts that we simmers have grown so used to just aren't gonna fit into one of those puny new Cracker Jack containers.

With the resulting proliferation of PDF-only manuals, it behooves all simheads to adapt to this new packaging with the same pluck and resourcefulness that we once used to defeat Manfred von Richtofen in *Red Baron 3D*. Recent releases like *Flanker 2.5* prove that digital documentation can be every bit as voluminous and informative as the hardcopy stuff, anyway. Electronic manuals are here to stay, and there's no point in yelling at Microsoft about it (though the bastards started the whole e-manual trend in the first place with *Flight Simulator 98*). Instead, we'll just have to figure out the least painful way of converting them into that tactile paper format that we so desperately crave.

Sim fans will have to "think outside the box" now if they hope to keep the genre's mega-manual tradition alive.

There are a couple of ways to do this. The no-brainer approach is simply to take the game CD down to Kinko's and tell the PlayStation-weaned clerk to print out the PDF file for you. (The kid probably won't understand why you're doing this, but don't let it get to you — he wouldn't know an AIM-9 Sidewinder if it fell on his collection of Eminem CDs.) An hour later, you'll walk out with a snappy-looking coil-bound primer for your newest sim. Apart from the $10 to $15 photocopying charge, nobody gets hurt.

The second solution was actually suggested to me by longtime sim producer Carl Norman of SSI fame, and I must say it certainly has merit. After all, why should some faceless Quick Copy chain get all of our hard-earned money when the people who publish these complex military sims for us in the first place are far more deserving of the revenue? (Carl is just a *bit* biased here, but let's cut him some slack for now.)

Under the Norman Plan, each new sim release would include a convenient mail-in card (or URL) that consumers could use to order a printed manual. Just pop the sucker in the mail with a nominal $10 fee, and a professionally bound hardcopy manual arrives at your door a few days later. Many hardcore sim fans have been quite vocal about their willingness to pay extra for a properly documented "gold version" of their favorite sim.

This simple procedure seems to offer a win-win scenario for everyone involved. Sim publishers can earn back much of the goodwill that was lost after the demise of the old Jane's-style printed manuals — without the hassle of trying to distill 300 pages of documentation into some absurdly thin jewelcase pamphlet. And all of those cheapskate gamers with after-hours access to an employer's photocopier can still print off their own manuals gratis from the CD's PDF file.

These new Lean Cuisine game boxes may be here to stay, but that doesn't mean that we all still can't get what we want out of our favorite hobby — information-starved simaholics included. But I'd like to attach a rider to Carl's plan: Seeing as how you developers will be saving so much money on the production end of games, how about giving us all a $10 reduction at the retail end?

— *simcolumn@pcgamer.com*

Falcon 4.0 shipped with the most complete documentation of any commercial flight sim. This kind of stuff would never fit into one of the skimpy new game boxes.

MY GAMES OF THE MONTH: 1. F1 2002, 2. STRIKE FIGHTERS: PROJECT 1 (BETA), 3. IL-2 STURMOVIK, 4. FALCON 4.0 SUPERPAK, 5. NASCAR RACING 2002 SEASON

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killing box

Chuck Osborn

Thievery's guards are more than happy to maim trespassing looters.

The Unlikeliest Mod Ever

"Hey, you got your *Thief* in my *Counter-Strike*..."

Deep down, I've always been a single-player kind of guy. The loose cannon. The rogue wolf. The teammate in *Team Fortress Classic* who balked at being the medic.

This probably explains why I die so often in team-based combat: since I'm so self-absorbed, nobody's covering my butt, either. Hence my love for Looking Glass' *Thief II*: of all the single-player "shooters," it's the most quintessentially solitary. As master thief Garrett, stealth and cunning are your stock in trade, the shadows are your only friends, and a quiver your sole backup. There *is* no multiplay. Ever.

Until now. An amateur mod team has released *Thievery for Unreal Tournament* (*www.thieveryut.com*), a professional-quality *multiplayer-only* mod that lets you play a team-based *Thief*-style game online. Essentially, it's *Thief II.5* — the visuals, controls, weapons, and gameplay are all faithfully re-created, right down to the disposable bodies.

Here's how it works: Games are broken up into Thieves vs. Guards. A team of thieves breaks into a domicile and has to avoid (or kill, if they're feeling *really* lucky) a crew of guards while burgling a quota of treasure and/or evidence within a limited time. Thieves can purchase a loadout of arrows, potions, swords, and picks, while the guards purchase swords, maces, bolts, and traps. Not only does it work, but it's actually *fun*, too.

But wait...*Thief III* is in development at Ion Storm. How do they feel about the mod community mucking about with their cherished property?

"I'm sure there's some lawyer somewhere who sweats bullets over issues of copyright and trademark infringement," asserts Ion's grand poobah himself, Warren Spector. "But I don't think anyone involved in *Thief* development sees mods as anything other than a win for us and for players. The enthusiasm and feeling of the community validate our work in a way that even big sales can't."

The *Thief III* team has tried out *Thievery*, and seems duly impressed. "So far it's been great fun," says Ion Storm designer David Riegel. "It's a big power trip to be able to sneak around live opponents, and I'd say almost as fun to find someone hiding and hunt him or her down."

So the big question is, Has *Thievery* made Ion Storm reconsider adding multiplay to *Thief III*? Not quite.

"It's hard to overstate the amount of effort that would be required, as I'm sure the *Thievery* guys can tell you," explains Lead Designer Randy Smith. "Right now, we've got our hands full trying to make the best single-player *Thief* experience of all time, and we have to stay focused on that." Amen, brother.

— killingbox@pcgamer.com

MY GAMES OF THE MONTH: 1. FREEDOM FORCE, 2. NEVERWINTER NIGHTS, 3. GRAND THEFT AUTO III, 4. SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II, 5. ANARCHY ONLINE

Double-barreled fun: *World Party*

extended play

Tiny Soldiers, Big Guns, and Lots of Laughs

Daniel Morris

AN ORGY OF MISSILE bombardment, exploding sheep, and napalm rain. The greatest strategy game in history isn't *Civilization* or *StarCraft*; it's the nutty nihilism of *Worms Armageddon* and its genocidal genus of infamous invertebrates.

I first discovered the joy of worming with *Worms 2*, way back in 1997. All productivity in my office ceased after 3 p.m., as huddles of people assembled around a single machine to engage in worm deathmatches. Few pleasures beat directing amoral worms through sprite-animated 2D slaughter.

But while this spirited series is a blockbuster franchise in Europe, it's more of a cult phenomenon in the States, having garnered limited sales. So for most of you, a mere $20 will score you an unholy trinity of hardcore greatness via the *Worms Triple Pack*.

The bundle includes *Worms 2*, *Worms Armageddon*, and *Worms World Party*. *Armageddon* and *Party* added online capability to the mayhem (via Team17's WormNet servers), but otherwise, the basics of play haven't changed since the original *Worms*. Two or more teams of annelids go at it in a last-worm-standing war. Battles occur in a wide variety of playful settings, with environmental factors such as caves, cliffs, and water to consider. During each "turn," you have limited time in which to give orders to the worm selected. You can steer the little guy over the map, placing him in ideal position to wax an enemy (or multiple enemies, once you're experienced), and then pull down a menu of hilarious weaponry to squeeze in some violence before your turn expires.

Worms is one of those games that's ultra-simple but demands a lifetime's investment to master. You'll develop such tactics as rope-swinging — in which your worm uses a grappling-hook gun to swing Spidey-style across the environment — and parachuting or bungee-jumping to lower ground. Once you're used to the surprisingly lifelike physics, you'll hone a sharp aim for ricocheting grenades off walls or judging the arc of a mortar round.

And, as always with this series, the carnage is accompanied by a never-ending stream of worm obscenities, curses, taunts, and death rattles. With *Armageddon* and *World Party*, added voice sets provide a wealth of audio, plus the ability to drop your own voice sets into the game. What makes the two older titles worthwhile is not only nostalgia value, but also their unique single-player missions.

These may be the most enjoyable head-to-head computer games in history. If you've never played them, here's a great opportunity to start.

— extendedplay@pcgamer.com

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desktop general

William Trotter

A Peek at *G.I. Combat*

Superb realism lets you plan like a general and fight like a soldier

Like all conscientious reviewers, I try to put in as much time as possible with a game before I cover it in print. But there's such a buzz of anticipation about *G.I. Combat* that I can't resist offering a few first impressions, despite the fact that I had only two days to play with the "E3 Press Demo" before my deadline.

Interest in this title is unusually keen because it is, after all, the "next level" vision of the design team that gave us the precedent-shattering *Close Combat* games (now flying under the logo "Freedom Games" and signed on with a new publisher, Strategy First). Despite my being able to play only one scenario of the demo (in which numerous features were non-functional, such as off-screen fire support and what looks to be a *dynamite* scenario editor), I saw enough to be mighty damned impressed.

Objectives are no longer on a map — this game gives you the feel of fighting for possession of real places and property.

G.I. Combat seems like a mix of the best elements from *Close Combat* wedded to some of the more pioneering features of *Combat Mission*. It incorporates a host of features that RTS addicts have long dreamed about, including an infinite freedom of view that gives you a god's-eye view of the battlefield when planning your tactics, then lets you follow the ensuing action from over the shoulder of any soldier, vehicle, or squad.

Aesthetically, the game's a 3D knockout. Animation of individual soldiers is so good that it marks a quantum jump in the quest for a totally engulfing, photo-realistic "personal war movie." Terrain and structures (unless you bump into them at certain angles) don't look pasted-on, but surround you as integral parts of the environment. And the sound in *G.I. Combat* is positively stunning — in directionality, realism, and in its contribution to the total gaming gestalt.

It's hard to judge the AI on such limited acquaintance, but the Germans I fought certainly acted in a historically plausible manner, throwing sharp local counterattacks and pulling off some very cunning and upsetting flanking maneuvers.

At its best, the game does an absolutely spooky job of re-creating the claustrophobic menace of hedgerow combat. I am *very* impressed — this could be a landmark wargame. My only worry is that Strategy First will throw it onto the market before its creators have had time to fine-tune the engine and give the whole game the polish it deserves. One would *hope* the company learned something from the appalling debacle of *World War II Online*'s premature release.

For a game with this much potential, we'll wait as long as it takes to get it right.

— desktopgeneral@pcgamer.com

This close-up of American infantrymen typifies the game's wondrous modeling and animation.

MY GAMES OF THE MONTH: 1. AGE OF WONDERS II, 2. KORSUN POCKET '44, 3. FULDA GAP '85, 4. WORLD WAR II ONLINE (V. 1.6.5), 5. G.I. COMBAT (BETA)

Boundless treasure: *Neverwinter Nights*

alternate lives

Confessions of an RPG Addict: Part II

JUST A FEW MONTHS AGO I was grousing about not having enough new single-player roleplaying games, and now I'm drowning in them: *Dungeon Siege, Morrowind, Neverwinter Nights, Geneforge, Might & Magic IX*, and soon, *Icewind Dale II* and *Arx Fatalis*.

A recent email from a loyal reader, "Lasalos Clearshot," got me thinking: How many of these games could I even hope to finish? Lasalos wrote pleading for help with the following problem: He had 15 to 20 RPGs, all of which he loved, but felt he hadn't the time to give any its due, let alone complete them all. He wanted *me* to provide the secret to getting the job done while also having a real life.

Well, Lasalos, I'm sorry to say that your letter has only served notice of just how dire my *own* situation is. Looking at my personal bookcase of games, I see at least a dozen major RPG releases in the last several years. Of these, I've honestly "finished" only *Baldur's Gate II, Pool of Radiance: Ruins of Myth Drannor, Diablo, Dungeon Siege*, and *Icewind Dale*; the rest I've devoted anywhere from 10 to 20 hours to and still not witnessed the finale. (And these are just the RPGs on the shelf, mind you — I have *many* more that I haven't dared unearth.)

Steve Klett

I'd still like to finish the *Fallout*s and *Wizardry 8*. Of the current crop of games, seeing the ending of *Neverwinter Nights* may be in doubt, since I've had to move on to other games that need reviewing, but beating *Dungeon Siege* is a safe bet, as it's relatively short (and easy) in comparison. The trouble with being a fan of this genre is that the depth of every game almost precludes any serious attempt at finishing them all. You end up facing a mountain of goodness that takes a pathological commitment to get over.

Forced time management is just the penalty we pay for being hardcore RPG players — for liking what are the deepest, and therefore most time-consuming, games available. But with all the editors and mods to play with, do we *really* want 100-plus hours of gameplay with *each* new RPG?

I'm starting to think Chris Taylor's design goal of "having as many players finish the game as possible" is the right way to go. I'd like to be able to spend 100 hours with a game, but is that practical? Is it possible to get just as "deep" and "rich" an experience from a 20- to 40-hour game?

I'm curious: how many RPGs do you own, and how many have *you* finished (without cheats, thank you)? Email me and let me know!

— alternatelives@pcgamer.com

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Neverwinter Nights

This amazing RPG's 100-plus hours of play may be a bit much for some. So here's the down-and-dirty direct route for each chapter — who to talk to, where to go, and what to retrieve on the game's critical path.

THE PROLOGUE

When you've completed your training meet Aribeth, the Paladin of Tyr. Fight off the invaders that appear in the room, and then get the scoop on what's going on.

Head through the double doors and fight off the few enemies in the corridors. Along with your henchman, Pavel, be sure to fight monsters one at a time wherever possible. Use the "stand your ground" command to leave Pavel safe, then draw out an enemy and run back to him. When a monster is close, change Pavel's command to "guard me" and beat it to death. Move carefully, never race into an unchecked room, and if faced with multiple enemies, use obstacles such as doorways to limit the number of creatures within striking distance.

CHAPTER 1

After discovering that the prickly Desther is Fenthick's mentor, and having your hopes of scoring with the hottie Aribeth dashed when she reveals that she and Fenthick are lovers, you need to collect the reagents from the four creatures scattered around Neverwinter.

Talk to Aribeth to get her take on the rumors that point to where the monsters might be among the four districts branching off from the Neverwinter City Core.

THE PENINSULA DISTRICT

Get the lowdown on the Head Gaoler, Alaefin, from Captain Kipp. Find Sedos Sabile in the Guard Headquarters located in the eastern portion of the map. She wants you to go to the prison and kick ass!

There are two routes. The first is to get the key to the front door from the Gang Leader: he's tough, and you'll have to fight his bigger buddy, too!

The second (and easier) path is through the Tanglewood Estates underground passage. Look under the mat at the front door for a key to the estate! You should be about level three before fighting the creatures guarding this route. Going down the passageway to the left of the front door, you'll come to a huge chessboard that's rigged with loads of traps, so tread carefully.

Go through the portcullis to get to the prison. Talk to the guard Emernik, who can point you to a room of supplies. Fight through the three levels (Prison Main level, Prison Containment Level, and the Prison Pits where the Head Gaoler awaits). Through the tunnels of the Pits, fight Kurdan until he surrenders, then get ready for a tough battle.

The Head Gaoler is under the control of an Intellect Devourer. You have to kill the guards it possesses until there are no

HENCHMEN THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

NAME: Tomi Undergallows
CLASS: Rogue
VERDICT: Great thief, good fighter (he's better at ranged attacks); his sneak attacks do heavy damage.

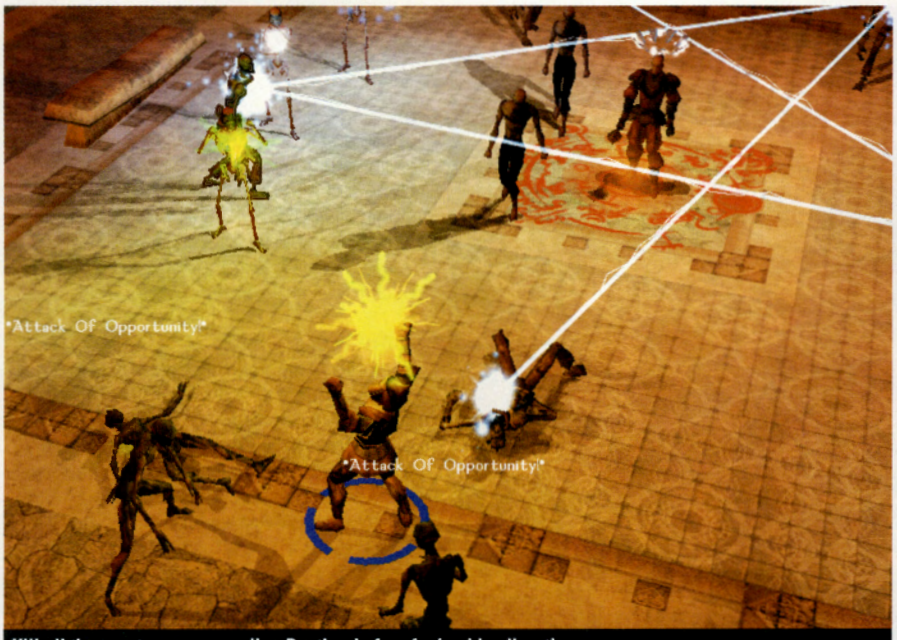
NAME: Grimgnaw
CLASS: Monk of the Long Death
VERDICT: Tough, great in a fight (especially at higher levels), and hardly ever dies. Lawful Evil.

NAME: Daelan Red Tiger
CLASS: Fighter
VERDICT: Member of the Red Tiger Uthgardt tribe. Very tough in combat, but that's about it.

NAME: Sharwyn
CLASS: Bard
VERDICT: Great with defensive spells in battle; can pick locks and sing songs (giving you higher attack rolls and such).

NAME: Linu La'neral
CLASS: Cleric
VERDICT: Casts heal and bless/aid spells, can turn undead, not very good in a fight. Take her early.

NAME: Boddyknock Glinckle
CLASS: Sorcerer
VERDICT: Better to take him at a higher level — but he's killed pretty easily in battle.



Kill all the creatures surrounding Desther before facing him directly.

Tomi's your henchman and he's dying in melee? Have him use ranged combat tactics: he's a mean shot.

The locked house in the Northeast Docks has tough enemies but good loot.

more and you fight it on its own. Take the brain to Aribeth, and also check in with Sedos Sabile for more reward.

THE BEGGAR'S NEST

Prepare to fight the zombie infestation in the streets and head toward the Shining Serpent, west of the city gate. Talk to Harben Ashensmith, who will talk about Krestal and Jemanie. Follow the Jemanie path (it's easier) and go to his house, where he'll tell you about his brother, Torin. Take the Ward Stone to gain access to the Snake Cult building just north of the house.

Fight through the cultists (be sure to have a henchmen here for help, like a cleric if you can't turn undead yourself), and after defeating the Cult Leader, take the north stairs into the Underground Crypt, where you're looking for Gulnan. This area has insects and Shadows and has a tough Dire Spider that protects the entrance to the Great Graveyard.

Now head into the sprawling Warrens of the Damned. As you face the Ghouls and other undead, be sure to pick up Torin's ring to return to Jemanie as proof that his brother is dead. You can also pick up the Ancient Key, which gives you access to Gulnan's lair. Gulnan is a 10th-level Yuan-Ti Cleric who can singe you in a heartbeat. When entering her central lair, head to the right and bash the altar to take the marauding zombies out of the equation. (You may have to clear other locations around the city to level up before coming back with the power to defeat this tough mutha.)

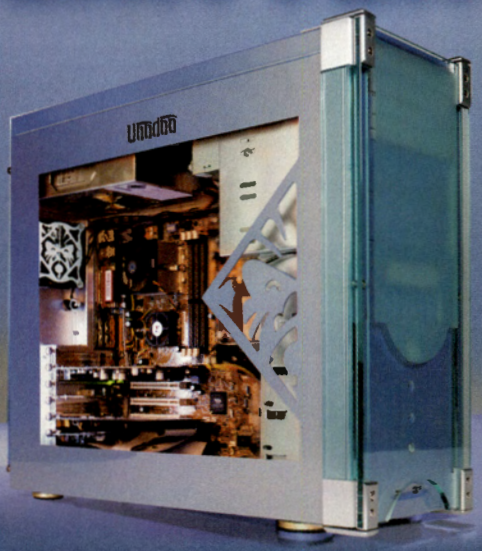
Collect her black, black heart. Now go back to Jemanie and Harben before taking the heart to Aribeth for a larger reward.

THE BLACKLAKE DISTRICT

You have to go through a No Man's Land to get to Blacklake. Here you'll learn about Meldanen hoarding food. At the front door to his estate use persuasion, bribery or threats so that Orrean lets you in.

Once inside, persuade Grommin to open the door (or take his key from his dead body). Go west to get to the next floor. There are quite a few traps throughout the house, so move carefully, fighting

DIVORCE LAWYER



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DRINKIN' AND WHORIN'

YOU'VE GOTTA LOVE ANY GAME that lets you drink 'til you fall over drunk, plus get it on with a cordial lady of the night. Of course, we don't condone any of this kind of behavior...no siree! Just so you know where to "avoid" on your long journey of righteous good-doing, note these locations:

DRINKIN'

Once inside the Seedy Tavern in the docks, talk to half-orc Jalek. Play his drinking game to earn respect, and get useful information on where to find Vengaul. Sure, you may pass out for a while, but those virtual hangovers don't hurt like the real ones. (Bonus points for your own drinking game: match your character and Jalek one-for-one...dare ya!)

WHORIN'

The Moonstone Mask in the City Core is regarded by some as a house of ill repute. Talk to the landlady, Ophala, and ask about the key you need to get upstairs. Then talk to Torgo the bartender to get a Pass Coin for 200gp. (He'll buy your unwanted junk, too.)

Head upstairs and find a well-adorned room with a lady (or gentleman) who takes your fancy. The girls are polite, so treat them with respect. Talk, ask questions, and sound interested (even if you aren't). After the small-talk is done, if you're finding it difficult to, er, seal the deal, unequip your armor and weapons and you should find you hit the right mood.

Remember, you and your henchman go through a lot together — even this.

ABOVE: Visiting the Androd Estate is one of three requirements for completing Ophala's quest. The matron of the Moonstone Mask tavern (and bordello) asks you to retrieve three "valuables." Enter the Estate and fight through the thugs to the central room. In one bedroom is the cowardly nobleman Androd, who will turn over a statuette with a little persuasion.

imps, mephits, and finally Meldanen's Apprentice.

In Meldanen's Inner Sanctum you must speak to the Dryad before Meldanen appears. He will surrender if he receives enough damage. Get the warehouse key from him and give it to Formosa for a side quest. (But take a look around the warehouse for loot for yourself first.)

Take the lock of hair from the Dryad back to Aribeth.

THE DOCKS DISTRICT

Your first goal is getting access to the Seedy Tavern, where an auction for a cure is to take place. Kill pirates and thugs and search crates for Smugglers Coins. (It takes five to bribe the guard on the door, but collect more to buy low-end magic items for great prices.) You can also wear a Bloodsailor uniform snagged from any of these pirates you've killed.

To find the missing Vengaul, pick the lock on the door in the tavern (or beat Jalec in a drinking contest...just keep drinking!). Bribing the guard on the door is the easiest method of entry.

Downstairs you'll encounter Dara'nei, who is Vengaul's lover; she'll give you a Locket. Now go to the Silver Sails and use the Locket to open a passage that leads to the boatman Charon (really). He'll take you to Vengaul's lair.

Kill Callik and his men (a *tough* fight). Confront Vengaul and he'll most likely send his guards to slay you while he attempts to escape, though you could talk your way out of it. Get the Cockatrice feather from the chest and return it to Aribeth.

HELM'S HOLD

At the ritual to create the cure, prepare for the "I didn't see that coming" twist. Now follow Aribeth's instructions and head into the portal.

If you're a cleric or paladin, take the front door, as the undead you'll face are easy when you can turn them. Alternatively, go west to the cave entrance.

In the Courtyard, be sure to pick up the Etched Gem, which can be found on the body by the front gate. Place the gem on the altar in the center of the Entranceway to prevent the Guardian Armors from attacking.

In the Prison Block, you can pass by the caged undead without disturbing them by wearing a Helm uniform. If you don't have a Helm uniform (from one of the guards), prepare to fight.

Get to the staircase leading up — it'll take you to the last encounter. To weaken Desther, destroy his minions first and then wail on him until he surrenders. Now for the trial and the executions!

→ CHAPTER 2

■ GETTING THE EVIDENCE

Numerous people demand your attention throughout this chapter. Talk to them all if you wish, but here's the lean and mean direct route:

Aribeth insists on seeing two pieces of evidence that suggest where the cult is located. Follow the signs to Charwood village and go to the inn. Keep talking until the sorcerer attacks, then take his journal as the first piece of evidence.

A second piece of evidence is retrieved through the Spirit of the Wood quest. In Neverwinter Wood speak to Aarwill the Archdruid. Now head back to the Deep wood. Find the Nymph's House (in the NE corner of the map) and fight her until she gives up a ceremonial dagger. If you do the quest involving the witch Setara, she'll also give you information on using the dagger, as well as on rescuing one of the three druids for another side quest.

With the dagger, go to the altar and plunge it into your chest (it only stings for a moment). Now fight Relmar and get his journal. Get the antidote from the rubble near where he attacks, and go to the center of the map, where the Spirit of the Wood attacks you but can then be cured. Search the altars for magical goodies. Now head back to Aribeth with the journals, speak to Aarin Gent, and head to Luskan or do other quests.

■ LUSKAN

Go to the Temple of Tyr (west edge of Luskan — use the Stone of Recall to get there without fighting all the wererats on the streets) and get the lowdown on the High Captains Baram and Kurth.

You're looking for the High Captain's seal to get into the Host Tower, and that requires hitting the sewer. It's filled with undead (so paladins and clerics have it easy); you can enter through the grate in the center of Luskan, entering in the NE corner of the sewer. Take the exit in the north area to Baram's sewer.

In Baram's sewer, work your way around to the entrance to Baram's Lair. If you're not a cleric or paladin, bring one along to bring short work of the bone spirit ritual. One turn undead destroys all the skeletons!

Fighting Baram himself is tough. Take out the priestess and minions first, then quaff potions before facing Baram. Get his seal from the chest, but also take his head if you want to pursue the side quest and give it to Kurth.

Now you can go to Aarin and get the documents needed to enter the Host Tower, or you can go after Kurth (or kill Kurth before Baram — either option works). In Kurth's lair, get both the token from Burke's body and the sphere, and follow the instructions in Burke's manual to close the portal, which removes the extra enemies from the fight with Kurth.

■ HOST TOWER

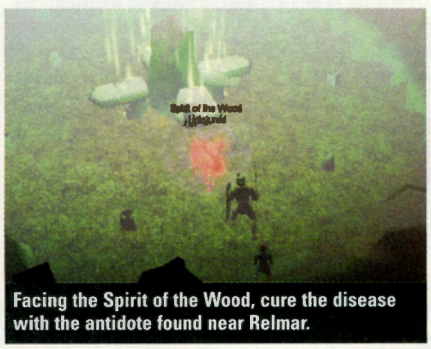
Once inside, go to Aribeth's former room on the west side to get the key to the Host Portal room. Now you're working up the tower. Search each floor for the runes to

INSIDE CASTLE JHAREG

Belial can buff you, give you a magic item, or help with the judgment by supplying a written oath.

At the finale, acquit both or Quint. Acquitting Karlet ensures a hot reception outside.

IF YOU FIND YOURSELF in Castle Jhareg, you can come out of the judgment quests with a cool phylactery (casts Sanctuary twice a day) if you play your cards right. In Karlet's quarters, in the room with the brazier, make sure you have his Protection Wand and Burning Hands Wand. Place a fire beetle belly on the brazier, cast Protection from Evil on yourself, then cast Burning Hands from the wand on the brazier. Now chat to Belial, who will give you a written oath that it was all him if you take the high road and tell him about judging. When you're back at the Guardian with the journals, say neither brother was guilty and then offer to keep the phylactery safe for yourself.



Facing the Spirit of the Wood, cure the disease with the antidote found near Relmar.

Turn undead is a powerful skill in these sewers. You'll be swarmed by undead, so be prepared.

In the Host Tower, chop up imps and quasits for some low experience points.

DRAGON SLAYER

SLAYING DRAGONS is one of the coolest and most dangerous tasks you can try. In Chapter 3 you have a tough decision to make — though there's really only one path for the righteous.

■ Go through the first Moonwood area to the second area (the entrance is in the northeastern-most corner of the map). Go to the center of the map. Behind the waterfall is the entrance to Akulatraxas' cave. You've got two choices: do the dragon's quests against the giants in the nearby caves, or slay the dragon and steal its egg. The latter task is tough but do-able.

■ The cheap option is to sneak with Tomi to the door leading to the eggs. Pick the lock, and then race in and grab the egg from the incubation chamber. The dragon will follow, but you can use the Stone of Recall to get the hell out (though you've got a long trek back...).

■ Now go to the Spine of the World and find the Mysterious Cave. Here you can do the quest for Gorgotha or fight. (You need only one egg to give to the red dragon Klauth later in the chapter, but don't worry if you don't get either egg — you can still fight Klauth head-on.)

Head north through the cave entrance to the Fire Giant Lair. Once you've been through the North Lair, head to the East Lair. Ignore the northernmost Deep Cave unless you want to fight Death Slaad for the experience. Enter the second cave — the Dragon Dungeon.

■ Kill the Yuan-Ti and then put the dumb blue dragon out of its misery. Now grab the Dragon Sphere from the fountain; grab the Ritual Book, too, and read the instructions if you haven't already. Place the Dragon Sphere on the pedestal (the Blue Dragon must be dead) and it'll be filled. Now it's time to face Klauth.

■ Either give Klauth an egg swiped from the other dragons, or chat him up, then cut him down. His breath weapon does around 140hp per burst, so be prepared. Klauth will try to power himself up, so make sure the dead-dragon sphere is on the pedestal: he'll imbibe its essence and do himself major damage.

Now grab the Word of Power, listen to Haedraline, and then enter the portal home.

Kill Akulatraxas and swipe the egg.

Gorgotha is wicked tough, so talk, don't fight.

With the blue dragon dead, get the sphere from the fountain.

Klauth is mean — slay him to get the third Word.

transport you up. For the direct route, get to floor six and find the Pinnacle rune that gives you access to the top.

Some floors have a puzzle of sorts that you need to solve. Here are some examples:

FLOOR THREE: Don't fight the quasits and imps — they reappear through the braziers. You'll need to place a quasit eye in one portal, and an imp eye in the other to stop the flow.

FLOOR FOUR: Get the golem control and replication rods and use them on the pod to get the Helmed Horror that opens the seal.

At the Pinnacle, talk to Arklem, then destroy the braziers and defeat the monsters. Now head to the *real* finale!

Here you'll listen to the movers and shakers in this other-worldly conspiracy discussing the next chapter — the Words of Power. Sup down potions of Bless or Aid (every little helps), Barkskin, and even Speed as you face a large number of powerful lizardmen.

Once defeated, head down to Maugrim's lair...and on to Chapter 3.

→ CHAPTER THREE

You'll start off Chapter 3 in Aarin Gend's lodge. Talk to Aarin Gend to get the update on Aribeth and Maugrim.

Once you have all the information, head toward the Drinking House, which is only a short walk away. Here, talk to Lillian, who has some information about the Words of Power. Agree to get her Snow Globe from Nax, and she'll offer you a Teleport Scroll.

Go on to Coldwood, as per Lillian's suggestion. Head east to enter the Wizard's Dungeon. Fight through the dungeon until you come upon a room with four gongs in it. Hit the gongs in the correct order: cat, dog, bear, dragon. Head to the room that contains the Snow Globe, kill the Huge Fire Elemental that guards it, then teleport to town once you've recovered the Snow Globe.

Talk to Lillian, then enter the Snow Globe, as she instructs. Talk to either Hodd or Arwyl to find out why the Dwarves and Dryads are fighting. Head into the cave between the groups, and approach the Dragon, Winter Fang. Find out as much as you can from him, and then grab Arwyl's Journal and Hodd's Journal, as well as the Amulet of the Ages. Take the amulet to Hodd, and then to Arwyl. Head back to Winter Fang and kill him. Grab the Word of Power out of one of the chests in his lair, then teleport back to town and talk to Aarin Gend.

■ CREATOR RUINS

Make your way out of Fort Ilkard, and head into the Creator Ruins. Don't try to kill the golems that are wandering around yet. Go to the garden and find Sapphira. Talk to her

Fighter classes should take the Cleave feat — vital for when you're surrounded.

and get the Time Crystal, which will allow you to go back in time to weaken the golems. Find the sundial in one of the rooms in the Creator Ruins, and use the Time Crystal's special ability; then click on the sundial in the northeast corner.

Kill the Old One Commander and grab the Translation Amulet he drops. Speak to Lokar, and get his ring (aptly named Lokar's Ring). Grab the On Temple Defenses note from the bookcase, then look around for some slaves in nearby rooms. Show them Lokar's Ring, and you will be able to decide which weaknesses they build into the golems. Go to the smoke room, where you'll find an alchemist's table. Grab the Blue Powder, Red Powder, and Yellow Powder, which you'll use to complete the Ritual of Smoke. In the sound room, pay attention to the sound of the gongs — you'll need to know it to complete the Ritual of Sound. Finally, head to the light room to find out how you'll complete the Ritual of Light.

Go back to the present, and complete the three rituals. Grab the Word of Power found in the vault — kill the Balor Lord.

Make your way through Moonwood until you finally enter the Spine of the World. Here, you'll head north to the entrance to the Fire Giant Lair. Once you've made your way down to Fire Giant Lair 3, speak to Klauth, the Ancient Red Dragon. He will trade you the Word of Power for Dragon Eggs, which you could have gotten from either Gorgotha or Akulatraxas. (Both dragons can be found earlier in the chapter: Akulatraxas in Moonwood Part II; Gorgotha in the Spine of the World.) It's best to do the quests for the other two dragons against the giants, then take on Klauth by killing the blue dragon and placing it in the orb so that Klauth consumes it and is seriously wounded. Defeating Klauth scores some kickin' red dragon armor. With the third Word of Power in hand, you're now ready to head on to Chapter 4.

→ CHAPTER 4

Talk to Lord Nasher, Aarin and then in the dungeons to Haedraline who'll inform you about the final Word of Power.

When you're back in time, get the creators to give the golems a vulnerability to your favorite attack.

By Chap. 4, every hit is vital. Try to have weapons or spells that stun enemies with cold or lightning.

BARUN'S CATALOG

AT THE SHINING KNIGHT in the City Core in Chapter 1, the shopkeeper will give you a key to a secret room, where a dwarf blacksmith will make magic items if you bring him the correct combinations of jewels and magic items. He also gives you a book called *Barun's Catalog of Weapon and Armor Modifications* that lists all the possible combinations. Here's the list so you can plan ahead before receiving the book (or in case you don't get it, and/or you don't find the dwarf in Beorunna's Well in Chapter 3). Each item uses a magic version of its namesake and the component listed:

- **CHROMATIC BREASTPLATE**
  Magic Breastplate AC6 + Diamond
- **SCALES OF TRUTH**
  Magic Scale Mail AC5 + Holy water
- **LEATHER WHITEBONE ARMOR**
  Magic Leather Armor AC3 + Gargoyle skull
- **SENTINEL BATTLEAXE**
  Magic Battle Axe + Adamantite
- **DOUBLE AXE OF THE TALL KIN**
  Magic Double Axe + Adamantite
- **STONEFIRE GREAT AXE**
  Magic Great Axe + Adamantite
- **ICE REAVER HANDAXE**
  Magic Handaxe + Dragon blood
- **GLADIATOR CLUB**
  Magic Club + Ironwood
- **IRONWOOD DIRE MACE**
  Magic Dire Mace + Ironwood
- **REAVER HEAVY FLAIL**
  Magic Flail + Dragon blood
- **STORM LIGHT HAMMER**
  Magic Light Hammer + Diamond
- **FOUNDATION LIGHT FLAIL**
  Magic Light Flail + Ironwood
- **MACE OF DISRUPTION**
  Magic Mace + Holy water
- **DRONE MORNING STAR**
  Magic Morning Star + Faerie dust
- **RUNE HAMMER**
  Magic Hammer + Adamantite
- **HARBINGER GREAT SWORD**
  Magic Great Sword + Adamantite
- **SWORD SAINT KATANA**
  Magic Katana + Adamantite
- **ASTRAL BLADE LONGSWORD**
  Magic Longsword + Diamond
- **NAMARRA RAPIER**
  Magic Rapier + Dragon blood
- **DESERT WIND SCIMITAR**
  Magic Scimitar + Adamantite
- **FEYDUSTER SHORTSWORD**
  Magic Shortsword + Faerie dust
- **UTHGARDT TWO-BLADED SWORD**
  Magic Two-Bladed Sword + Ironwood
- **RAVAGER HALBERD**
  Magic Halberd + Dragon blood
- **SEA REAVER SCYTHE**
  Magic Scythe + Adamantite
- **FEY SPEAR**
  Magic Spear + Faerie dust

Buff up on potions and spells and rest after each major encounter so you're as prepared as possible.

Be wary of the succubus summoned by the Balor Lord, but focus all your attacks on the Balor.

Maugrim's Word fits on this pedestal to open the entrance to the penultimate area.

The most direct way to Maugrim's lair is to go through the Luskan Guard House. (Watch for the invisible assassin.) Be prepared to fight a Balor to gain access to Maugrim's Sanctuary. Within the Sanctuary you will encounter tragic Lady Aribeth and have the option to slay her outright or convince her that it is not too late for her to return to the path of good. In either case, success means you will get a key that grants you access to Maugrim's lair. Maugrim has mucho magic as well as Servants of Flesh who don't much like you either. After his messy defeat, you'll gain the Word of Power. Return to Castle Never and report back to Aarin Gend.

Speak with Haedraline and she'll direct you to the caves past the dungeons beneath Castle Never. You'll find three stands that are lit with green lights and one unlit stand. Place the Word of Power upon the unlit stand to open the door in a brilliant flash.

You can now go inside the Source Stone Sanctuary. You'll encounter a great deal of Lizardmen hankerin' for freshly squeezed adventurer bits. You also have the option of rescuing Asheera, who may grant you an amulet to help in your final struggle.

In the next area you'll encounter two corrupt dragons. Beat them to obtain the key to the Inner Sanctum. Waiting there is a very high-level cleric and his warrior help. The cleric's defeat will grant you access to the final battle.

In the next (final) room, destroy the gargoyle statue to dispel the permanent blade barrier. Make sure you're as buffed as possible with spells and potions to give you every advantage as Morag and her henchmen will be lobbing spells at you the whole time.

Focus your attacks on the priest that refers to your biggest damage type. (So if you use a sword, slay the one protecting Morag from slashing weapons.) Conveniently, the priests are invulnerable to all damage themselves except the type of damage they are protecting Morag from. With Morag now vulnerable to your preferred attack type, go get medieval on her ancient flabby ass. Flex your sleek hero muscles after her defeat.

Finally, speak to Haedraline to finish the game. Woo-hoo! PCG

CHEATER'S CORNER

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

The following codes can be used in single-player games or by the dungeon-master in multiplayer games. To enable them, hit the ~ key to lower the console and then type **DebugMode 1** (it's case-sensitive). Now type any of the following codes in the console, and then hit Enter. (NOTE: To remove access to the cheats, type **DebugMode 0** in the console.)

- **dm_allspells 1** Lets you cast all spells from all classes. (Typing **dm_allspells 0** disables this ability.)
- **dm_giveXP X** Gives X amount of experience points to target you click on.
- **dm_givegold X** Gives X amount of gold to target you click on.
- **dm_givelevel X** Gives X amount of experience levels to target you click on.
- **dm_god** Makes you invincible.
- **dm_heal** Restores you to full hit points.
- **dm_levelup** Advances you by one level of experience.
- **dm_modifyCHA/CON/DEX/INT/STR/WIS X** Adjusts base Charisma/Constitution/Dexterity/Intelligence/Strength/Wisdom of target you click on by X amount. (For example, typing **dm_modifyCHA 2** gives target +2 Charisma, while typing **dm_modifyCON 2** gives target +2 Constitution, and so on.)
- **dm_modifyage X** Adjusts age of target you click on by X amount.
- **dm_modifyattackbase X** Adjusts base attack bonus of target you click on by X amount..
- **dm_modifysavefortitude X** Adjusts fortitude save value of target you click on by X amount.
- **dm_modifysavereflex X** Adjusts reflex save value of target you click on by X amount.
- **dm_modifysavewill X** Adjusts will save value of target you click on by X amount.
- **dm_modifyspellresistance X** Adjusts spell resistance of target you click on by X amount.
- **dm_mylittlepony** Increases movement speed, accompanied by appropriate horsey sounds.
- **dm_setCHA/CON/DEX/INT/STR/WIS X** Sets base Charisma/Constitution/Dexterity/Intelligence/Strength/Wisdom of the target you click on to X amount. (For example, typing **dm_setCHA 2** sets target's Charisma at 2, while typing **dm_setCON 2** sets target's Constitution at 2, and so on.)
- **dm_setCR X** Sets challenge rating of target you click on to X amount.
- **dm_setage X** Sets age of target you click on to X amount.
- **dm_setattackbase X** Sets base attack bonus of target you click on to X amount.
- **dm_setfaction X** Sets faction of target you click on to X faction.
- **dm_setfactiondefender** Sets faction of target you click on to be a defender.
- **dm_setfactionenemy** Sets faction of target you click on to be an enemy.
- **dm_setspellresistance X** Sets spell resistance of target you click on to X amount.
- **dm_showarea** Reveals all tiles in the current area by removing the fog of war.

Also, during a single-player game, typing **makesafe** in the console will move you to a safe location (i.e., a valid location in the area — not in walls or on other creatures).

buypower

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Use this combination of artillery and cavalry when attacking fortified cities. Break down gates and storm the interior.

WALKTHROUGH

FIRE SPHERE — INITIATION PHASE

Gather the free forces around you and move to a nearby city that's to the southeast. Yaka attacks you with a respectable force early in the game, so come up with a fast and strong defense. To prevent him from even recruiting his force, make haste to take the small Tigrans cities that lie further southwest: doing so will halt Yaka's production of shredders and dangerous mystics. To the west of your base is a teleportation device that leads to an Elvish city. Using a strong **anti-wall** force, you should be able to expand even further southeast and eventually to Yaka's domain. Attacking with three or more parties at the same time makes success more feasible.

FIRE SPHERE — MASTERY PHASE

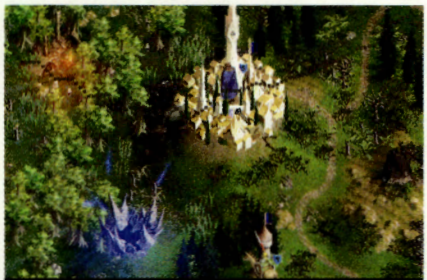
Follow the instructions and direct the pioneers to the west. One of the pioneers should establish a new outpost on the suggested hill as the other one continues further west. You'll find ruins that can make excellent new cities. Ally with Karissa and allow her to do most of the dirty work against Artica. Expand to the weak Frostling cities with a sturdy **artillery assault** and use the special fire attacks. Against Artica, use an **anti-wall** attack force with units enchanted with Fire Halo. Don't spend time researching the Phoenix summon spell unless you're looking forward to completing the special phase of the fire node.

WATER SPHERE — INITIATION PHASE

If you ally with Marinus, she'll keep Nimue busy, giving you time to research powerful water spells and build up your forces. The teleportation device near your spawning spot will take you to a larger continent where Nimue sets her domain. Slowly take over one city at a time until Nimue has nothing to protect her from a smashing **anti-wall** attack force.

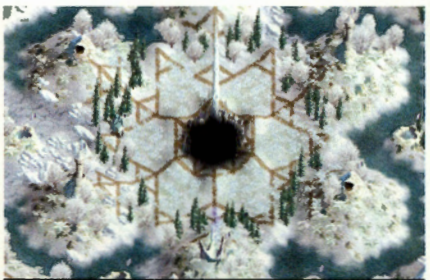
WATER SPHERE — MASTERY PHASE

Head slightly south to gain a free Halfling city and a hero. Further south of the city is a teleporting device that leads to a different location with each teleport. Once you have a fairly large catapult and **anti-wall** force, use the teleporting device until you arrive south of a church near Artica's domain. Surround Artica's city and attack with a combination of fire projectiles and cavalry to quickly win the battle. With control of the Frostlings, you can build Ice Drakes and assault Neckron in the eastern region. As long as you keep a strong defense plus mana and gold income, the opposing wizards will be easily beaten. Gaining control of the undergrounds can expand your power and give you access to most of the enemy wizards' domain. Take on one wizard at a time and ally with as many of them as possible.



Life 1: Use your pioneer's "rebuild structure" ability to quickly reconstruct ruined cities.

Life 2: Find your way through the tunnels of the second Life level to capture this powerful city.



Air 1: This secluded area in the upper-righthand corner of the map is where Artica hides herself.

Evermore: Your final attack on Julioch will take place here, after you defeat the traitors' circle.

Attacking Julioch is best done with flying creatures, such as phoenixes and bone dragons.

■ LIFE SPHERE — INITIATION PHASE

You start with a few weak outposts, so work quickly to supply them with houses. The pioneer can rebuild a city north of your outposts that can serve as your primary city early in the level. Neckron's forces are slightly higher north than where your new cities are settled, and can be taken down by an early artillery force. Gain control of the land around you, then the underground, and then progress over to the enemy wizards' domain.

■ LIFE SPHERE — MASTERY PHASE

The mystery of the relics can help your wizard and your heroes become formidable combatants. Send your parties toward the north, passing through any ruins if you wish. Find a small tunnel leading to a short underground passage. As you emerge to the surface again, you'll be able to access an Archon city with a Wizard's Tower II along with many advanced magical structures. Use this newfound city to build strong forces with which to wipe out Neckron and Serena.

■ AIR SPHERE — INITIATION PHASE

Capture the outpost up north. Use the air galley to attack the wolves for an automatic victory. You can also use galleys to take out other ground units without projectiles. Further north are more independent outposts. The main idea is to work your way through the underground tunnels and eventually end up in Artica's domain. Use the same strategy from your previous battles with Artica to beat her again.

■ AIR SPHERE — MASTERY PHASE

You start with very little to build with, but you don't have to worry about many enemy attacks in the early game. Flyers such as Ice Drakes are good for countering Tempest's dragons. Be sure to expand quickly, as there are many independent cities for you to either bribe or invade. Don't be so quick to attack Tempest, or you'll succumb to his strong defenses. Once you have numerous **anti-wall** forces, you can commence your assault. Be aware that you'll also be facing Serena in this map.

■ EARTH SPHERE — INITIATION PHASE

Travel along the tunnel labyrinth, recruiting as many dwarves as possible. Careful: countless black spiders roam these caves. A well-established city is in the far mid-western side of the map, along with Fangir, a willing ally. Once you have a decent artillery force, you can attack Mab's domain in the far upper-right corner. In the far upper-left corner are numerous piles of mana and gold for easy pickings. Remember that Mab, even when defeated in the underground tunnels, can be resurrected by her surface cities hosting Wizard's Towers.

■ EARTH SPHERE — MASTERY PHASE

Many independent cities lie within the border of Arachna's circular domain: prepare a cavalry force to recruit those cities, as they might not give up willingly. Also crawling around these caverns are Arachna's black spiders. Use strong melee units and priests to counter the black terrors and use an **anti-wall** assault against Arachna. When building city defenses, remember that black spiders can climb over walls.

■ DEATH SPHERE — INITIATION PHASE

First receive the free Animate Ruins spell and cast it to start a city. Don't overlook the death node on the west side of the ruins. Quickly expand by using Animate Ruins and capturing independent cities. Meandor will be in the exact same situation as you, so no one has any advantage. Concentrate not on how many units and cities you have, but on the *quality* of the cities and units. Attack Meandor's cities early, while they're still in development.

■ DEATH SPHERE — MASTERY PHASE

Quickly capture the independent city northwest of your starting city. Be sure to control all the mana nodes and begin building anything that can fly. Use flyers against Neckron and **anti-wall** attack forces against Tempest and Serena. Meandor is a powerful ally, so stand by him and aid his assaults whenever you can.

■ COSMOS — WIZARD'S THRONE

Each node will take you to a different area. Enter the water node first to start off with the basic city, and expand your power from there. Once you have a powerful defense and offense, enter the other nodes to the enemy wizard associated with each type (air node to Artica, fire node to Yaka, and so on). Once you've defeated each wizard from the traitors' circle and overtaken each domain, you're ready for a final assault against Julioch. PCG

GENERAL STRATEGIES

BUILDING

■ **PURE ARTILLERY:** Acquire a substantial gold income and start off with a Building Hall. Next, build a Siege Workshop and a Stone Wall. Build two catapults for early defense, as well as a Guard Tower. (Build a Wizard's Tower if you didn't already gain access to the Guard Tower.) If enough gold is available, go for a Temple Complex and a Shrine of War. If not, head on to a Master Guild and start mass-producing cannons. If and only if you're super-wealthy or the city already contains a Wizard's Tower II, build Enchanted Walls for added defense. Magic users such as druids, witches, or mystics can augment your defensive power greatly.

■ **WIZARD'S THRONE:** Use this technique to give your wizard powers a boost and expand your domain so you can strike your enemies from a safe distance. Start off with a Wizard's Tower if you don't already have one. Next, build a Temple Complex and a Shrine of Magic. Research both combat spells and offensive global spells and upgrade your wizard with skills like Casting Specialist and Chancellor. Construct a Wizard's Tower II and encase your wizard with a Stone Wall and Enchanted Wall. For further defense, an erected Guard Tower can inflict extra damage on incoming attackers. Once you build a Wizard's Tower II, create buildings that extend your casting abilities, such as Farcaster or Casting Chamber.

ATTACK

■ **ANTI-WALLS:** Use a combination of cavalry and monastery units (monks, high priests, black priests, and such). These units are excellent at breaking down walls without incurring many casualties. Monks can also heal your cavalry as they charge in and attack the enemy units inside the walls. Adding summoned creatures such as black spiders almost guarantees a successful siege.

■ **ARTILLERY ASSAULT:** Use this attack only if the defending city is without walls, as even veteran cannons have no chance of landing a hit on enemy units within any type of wall. Use a combination of catapults and cannons to bombard your enemies with powerful projectiles. Employ special fire attacks on any enemies that have a weakness to fire, or cast oil skin on an enemy to inflict a fire weakness. Cannons should be able to annihilate any close-combat opponents that manage to come within a dangerous range.

Use cannons and catapults in artillery assaults.

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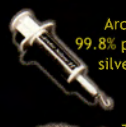

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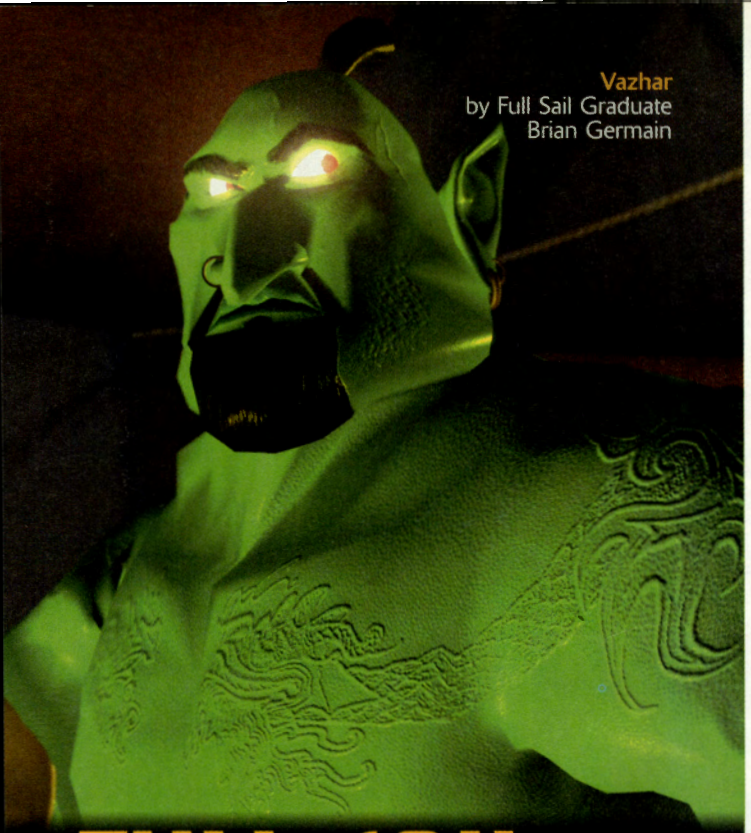

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Warcraft III

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 off/on your ability to lose a mission.
somebodysetupusthebomb Instant defeat. (Won't work when **strengthandhonor** is enabled.)
allyourbasearebelongtous Gives you 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 and 500 lumber.)
thereisnospoon Unlimited mana.
pointbreak Removes food limit.
whoisjohngalt 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.)

Age of Wonders II

During single-play, press Ctrl + Shift + C, type one of the following cheat codes, and then hit Enter.

Gold Gold +1,000.
Mana Mana + 1,000.
Explore Reveal entire map.
Fog Toggle fog of war.
Win Win mission.
Emergehero Spawns a hero.
Instantprod Toggle instant productions.
Spells Free spellcasting.
Research Research all spells.
Freemove Free movement.

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The PCG Crossword — Answers

ACROSS 2. Phobos, 7. Build, 9. *SimCoaster*, 10. LeChuck, 11. Caleb, 13. Warhammer, 15. Barn, 16. El Diablo, 19. *Summoner*, 20. Daventry, 24. Jet, 25. Mafia, 27. *Giants*, 28. *Shogun*, 29. *Vacation*, 33. Chiaki, 34. Laffer, 35. *Arx*, 36. Infocom, 38. *S.W.I.N.E.*, 39. *Panty*, 40. *PC Gamer* DOWN 1. *Cossacks*, 3. *Blade Runner*, 4. *Rune*, 5. *Dark*, 6. *Bejeweled*, 8. *Deus Ex*, 12. *AquaNox*, 14. Julius, 17. *Emperor*, 18. Rynn, 21. ATI, 22. Night Elf, 23. Zax, 26. *Arcanum*, 28. *Sigma*, 30. Barney, 31. Eidos, 32. *Prince*, 37. *Oni*

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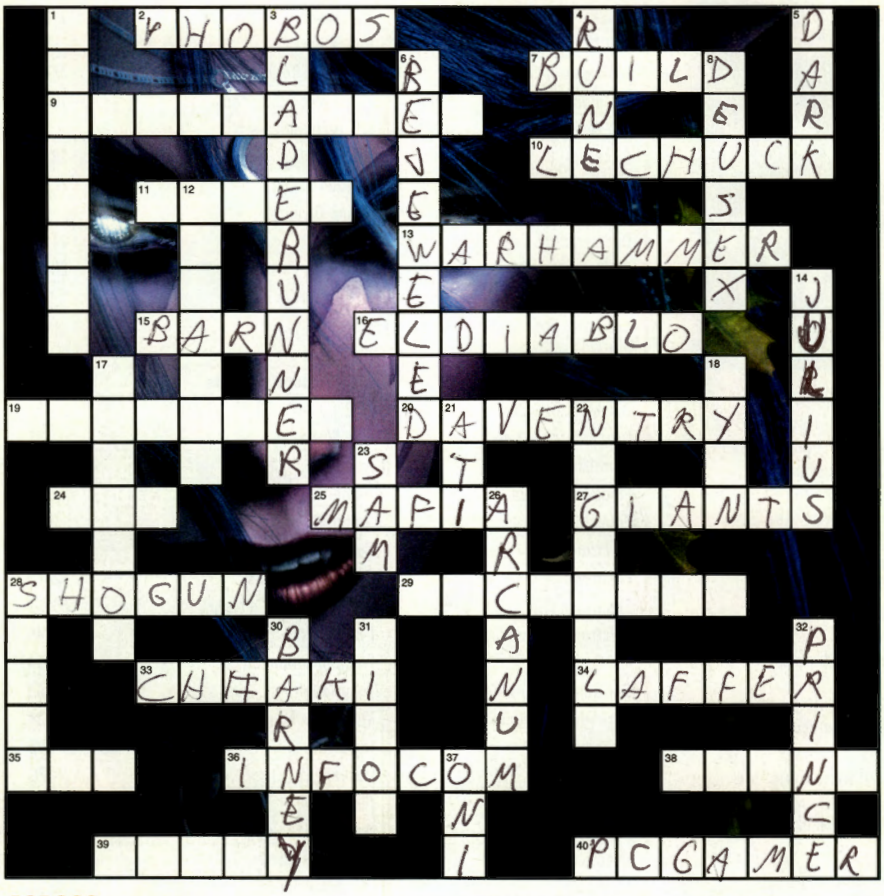
The PCG Crossword



ANSWERS ON PAGE 135

ACROSS

2. *Leather Goddesses of* _____
7. *Duke Nukem 3D*'s constructive graphics engine
9. Sequel to *Theme Park World*
10. *Monkey Island* villain
11. Protagonist in *Blood* series
13. *Space Hulk*'s gameworld
15. What Stormtroopers can't hit the broad side of
16. Fiery Latino hero in comic-book game *Freedom Force*
19. 2001 THQ action/RPG
20. Land of *King's Quest* series
24. Hero of *TRON 2.0*
25. Mob game that's livin' La Cosa Nostra
27. Interplay's ode to Citizen Kabuto
28. EA's medieval real-time strategy game set in Japan
29. Subtitle of fourth *Sims* add-on
33. Our assistant art director
34. Leisure Suit Larry's last name
35. _____ *Fatalis*
36. Developer of text adventure *Bureaucracy*
38. Piggy RTS developed by Stormregion
39. Simon & Schuster's _____ *Raider* (2000)
40. The world's best-selling PC games magazine

DOWN

1. _____: *The Art of War*
3. Philip K. Dick–inspired adventure
4. G.O.D. game starring Ragnar the Viking
5. *Alone in the* ____
6. Popcap Games puzzle game from 2000
8. *PC Gamer*'s 2000 Game of the Year
12. Underwater shooter from Fishtank Interactive
14. The "J" that went one-on-one with Larry Bird
17. EA's *Battle for Dune* RTS
18. *Drakan* heroine
21. Radeon maker
22. Race of character shown above
23. JoWooD's Alien Hunter
26. _____: *Of Steamworks and Magick Obscura*
28. Original name of Relic's *Impossible Creatures*
30. Security-officer star of *Half-Life: Blue Shift*
31. Publisher of *Gangsters* series
32. The "P" of Persia
37. Bungie's anime-style action/adventure game

NEXT MONTH NOVEMBER 2002

November issue? That time of the year when we live through All Hallow's Eve? It can mean only one thing: the Ten Scariest PC Games of All Time. But that's not all. Find out how to network your home in a variety of ways, covering every layout and every budget. Plus, we've got the inside skinny on one of the hugest franchises in the world. You have to be here to see it...

PC GAMER

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A cold sweat dripped from the cloaked spy's forehead. After years of investigation and countless broken fingers, he had finally infiltrated the Cult of the Monkey's secret lair. Turns out it *was* on *Guarida Secreta Del Mono* island. Peeking out from a large banana-shaped column, he could make out an army of dark shapes surrounding a towering figure. "They must be preparing their assault on gaming-kind," the spy thought. "The simian horde must be stopped." One of the dark shapes motioned the others to begin an incantation, obviously to bring their weapon of mass destruction to life. "We call upon the dominating traits of the cow, fox, and hound to summon our god. Deliver us the world!" "Great guzzling Llamas," the spy gasped. "It's time to make my move..."

JUGGERNAUT from "Unreal Tournament™ 2003" courtesy Digital Extremes, Inc.

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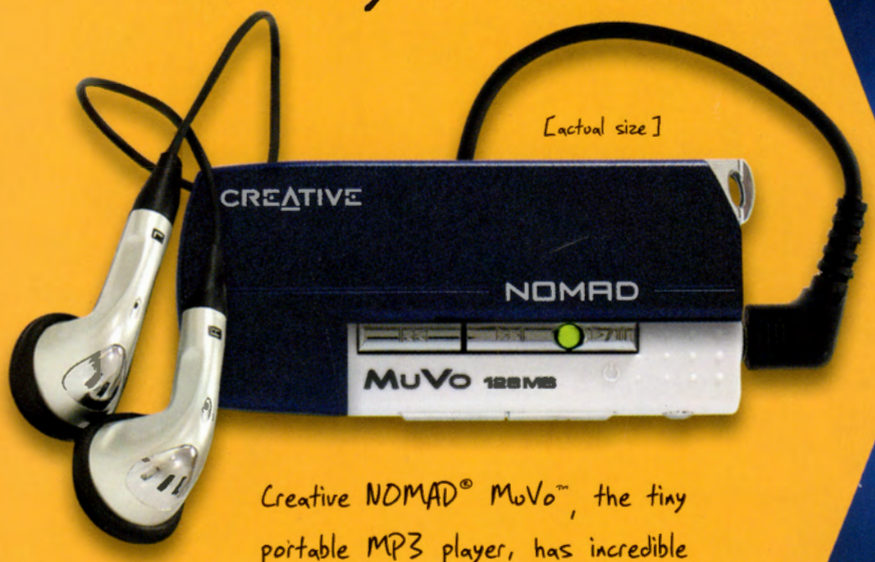

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