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ISSUE 163 JANUARY 2006



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NEW YEAR NO-BRAINER

ANOTHER YEAR IS nearly over, and before you drink copious amounts of booze, hold hands with a stranger and sing something about old acquaintances being forgot, you should start looking forward to 2006 and beyond. Why? *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars*. With the launch this Christmas of a new console - Microsoft's Xbox 360 - doom-mongers are again pronouncing that the PC is dead.

Well, they're wrong. The Xbox 360 is a powerful piece of kit, but I'm underwhelmed by the games available for it. Where's the killer app that will have you running to the nearest games shop, desperately bargaining mums with pushchairs and old people out of your way to secure one of the new consoles, still warm from the production line?

Now take a look at our exclusive *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars* screenshots beginning on page 48. If that was being released at the launch of a new games machine, wouldn't you be digging into your wallet? However, the fact is that the incredible *ET:QW* is being made for the PC and by Splash Damage, a burgeoning UK developer inspired by and brought up on the PC's games, modding and online community.

Also consider the fact (as our Letter of the Month does on page 10) that a decent games PC can now be as cheap as £300, and can download free games and mods, emulate every console and arcade machine, surf the Net, play movies, help you make music and write novels, and play amazing original PC-only games *now* such as *F.E.A.R.*, *Civ IV*, *Battlefield 2*, *X3: Reunion* and *The Movies*. It's a piss-easy decision to make - even if you do have a killer New Year hangover...

Jamie Sefton

Jamie Sefton, editor

COVER STORY

48

ENEMY TERRITORY: QUAKE WARS

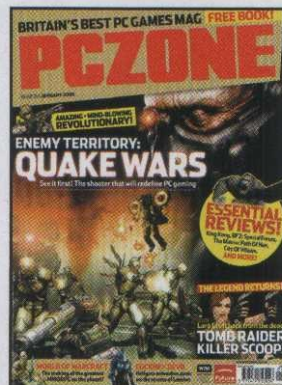
Exclusive! We bag a look at the brightest hope for PC gaming - id and Splash Damage's stunning new multiplayer shooter

DOMINIK DIAMOND 146

I fell to my knees and rammed my nose into the Alienware's plughole



WHAT'S ON THE COVER?



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- 138 **WORLD OF WARCRAFT**

Too busy? *PC ZONE* in 66 words...
 Balrogs (it's true I tell you). The axis of evil of fun!
 How that London went to hell. The lovely lady lumps of Lara. Hill takes on Trump. *Quake Wars* drops jaws, while *King Kong* breaks them. *Neo* stinks. Young Steve mixes zombies with Nazis. Prez sings for his supper. Charles Cecil talks money and Dominik's PC blows up. Sound good? The tills are over there...

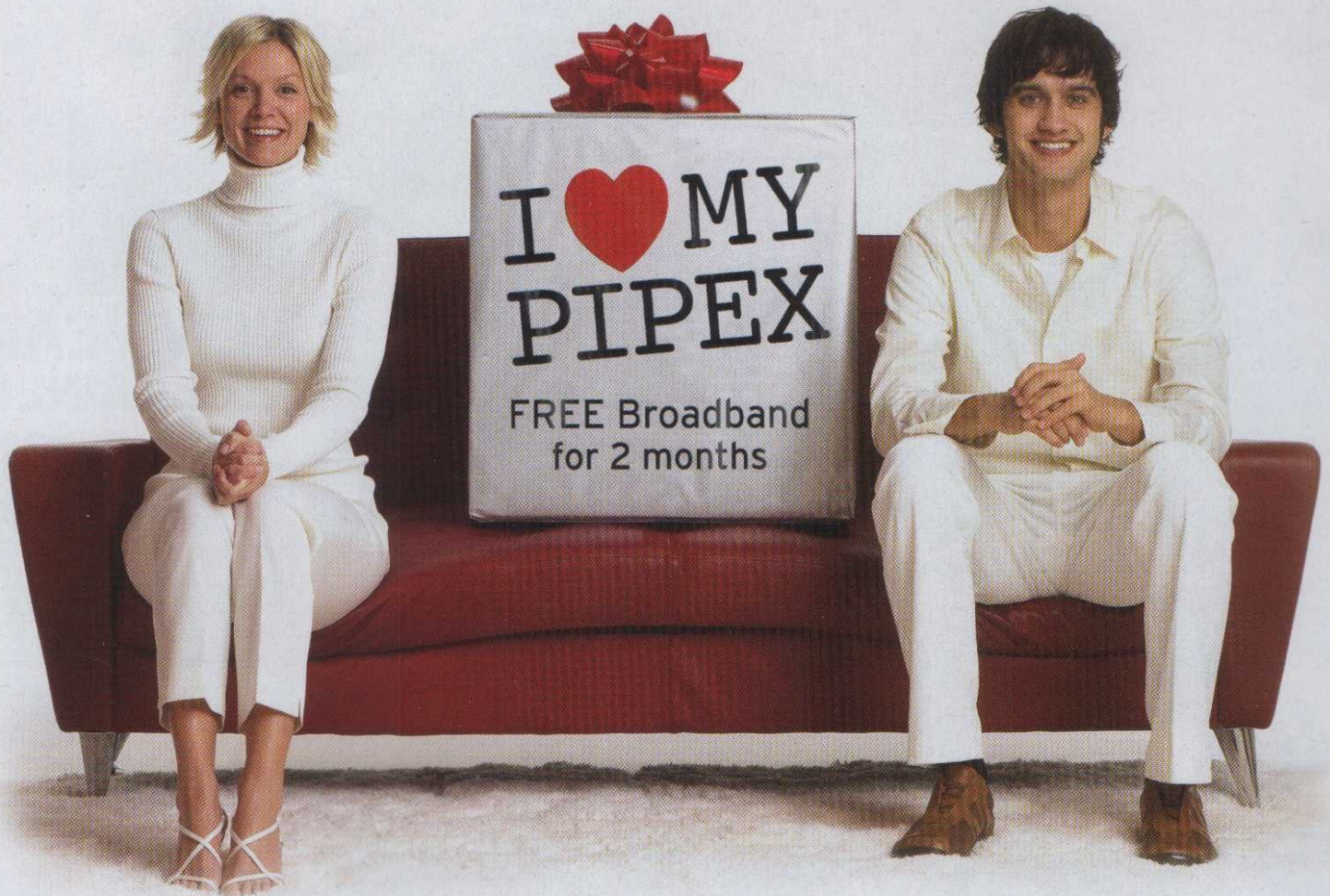


TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND

CHANGING TOMBS!
 THE FIRST LADY OF ACTION RETURNS!

28






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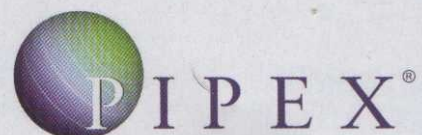
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KING KONG

Peter Jackson's furry friend proves a monster hit with **ZONE**



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To City Of Villains, where I rock the gay biker look

STEVE HILL'S NEVERQUEST 133



FREEPLAYHOWTO...

Think like the gods in BLACK & WHITE 2
 Steve Hopper explains the basics of playing god

Is it a bird?
 ...

Working wonders
 ...

Weight watchers
 ...

Pick me up
 ...

Baby boom
 ...

Do the logomation
 ...

Resistance
 ...

FREE GAMES!

109 **FREEPLAY**
 Getting more gaming goodness without putting a strain on the purse-strings - it's not all Flash games out there!

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RETURN TO THE DAYS OF THUNDER



"VINTAGE"

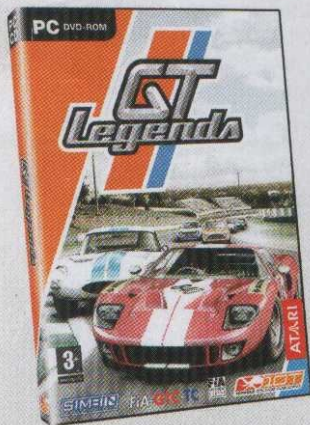


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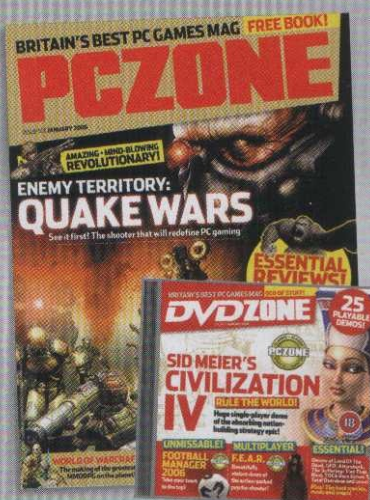
UPFRONT



MEET THE TEAM

A terrifying collection of wasted childhoods. And Yuna...

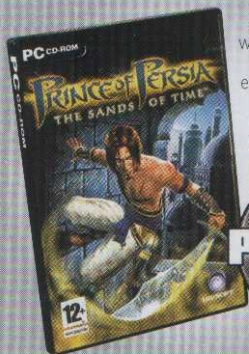
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This is a classic action-adventure game which we described as "a near-seamless gaming experience... Ubisoft has kissed a frog and it's turned into a prince". PC.ZONE verdict 84%



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SUZY WALLACE

DISC EDITOR

AGE 26

LIKES Swearing, crisps, cars

DISLIKES Deadlines, bosses

who stare inappropriately

FANCIES Johnny Depp

FAVE GAME *Final Fantasy VII*

PLAYING? *NFS: Most Wanted*

The pride of Kent, Wallace spends most of her time making car noises, swearing or shouting at Will because he keeps stealing from her big pile of magazines. Previously an annotator of complicated car parts on the sorts of car magazines that feature naked ladies holding exhaust pipes, her endless love of putting lots of things on DVDs eventually brought her to our door.

Now, Suzy is both moral guardian of PC consumer affairs and the UK's leading car-game correspondent. When she says 'farck', thousands follow. In addition, Wallace's boyfriend is afraid of tomatoes.



STEVE HOGARTY

Staff Writer

Young Steve keeps going to crazy teenage parties when his friends' parents are on holiday. The *ZONE* readership will be first to know if we discover he's been kissing girls as well.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?

Battlefield 2: Special Forces



DOMINIK DIAMOND

Sometime Celebrity Columnist

We received several panicked phone calls from computer retailers this month, each with an angry Scottish man in the background shouting about dust and builders. Hope we helped Dom.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?

Nothing. PC is bugged



JAMIE SEFTON

Editor

This month's *King Kong* review turned the normally passive Sefters into a ball of rage. "Ner f**kin' ammo!", "f**kin' dinosaurs!" and "Jesus Christ!" apparently being the main colprits.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?

King Kong and *Pro Evo 5*



MARTIN KORDA

Gentle Giant

Korda was summarily dispatched to see *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars*, something that left such an impression on him that he accidentally ate a salad the next day. He's still recovering.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?

FM2006 and *Rome: Total War*



WILL PORTER

News Editor

This month, Will slipped on a banana skin in Southampton. Having texted everyone he knew (and some he didn't) to tell them, he was dismayed to find that only he thought the event amazing.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?

Silly buggers and *Quake 4*



YUNA PRESLEY

PC ZONE mascot

Having recently moved onto solids (typically carrot), Yuna continues to do baby things like gurgling, smiling and crying. She also said the word 'oishii', which means 'yum yum' in Japanese.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?

The Movies

STUFF THAT'S HELPED US THIS MONTH... Postcards from old ladies, *Quake Wars* and catching two mice in one glue trap
STUFF THAT'S BEEN OF NO HELP WHATSOEVER... £8.50 fry-ups, a distinct lack of cash and Electronic Arts burning our electrics

STUFF WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...

- PLUMS** 10 Mins Both a fruit and a rude word
- WILL'S BANANA INCIDENT** 55 Mins Hilarious to none and all
- ROADS IN ET: QUAKE WARS** 23 Mins Highways that look even better than the explosions and burning tanks all around them
- THIS IS SPINAL TAP** 10 Mins Only half the team get 'Dooy' references
- LARA CROFT** 72 Mins Clothes should fall off when she takes damage, like in *Ghosts 'n' Goblins*
- MARC BOLAN** 15 Mins "You don't know who Marc Bolan is? Out! Get out!"
- IT DEPARTMENTS** 18 Mins Seemingly desperate to 'reimage' our games PCs. (Which is double-speak for 'destroy' or 'purge of goodness')
- CELEB SPOTTING** 89 Mins Paxman, bloke off *Drop The Dead Donkey*, Paul Morley, Kenzie, Ricky Gervais...
- GEOFFREY** 2 Mins Steve knows someone called Geoffrey
- MOVING OFFICE** 200 Mins There's a Starbucks actually on the premises

WIN! Tiny Compo. Give us the correct answer to the mini-question on the cover and you might win some fabbo prizes. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: Tiny Compo (163), PC.ZONE, Future, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6PP. The first correct entry vomited from the competition gullet wins. Closing date: January 4, 2006. The winner of Issue 161's Tiny Compo was Mr. Alex Williams of Upper Colwall, Wores, who knew that Peter Brackley and Trevor Brooking are the commentators in *Pro Evo 5*. Well done sir.

GENERAL COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS: 1. Only completed entries received before the closing date will be entered. 2. Winners will be notified by post. 3. No cash alternative. 4. Not necessarily as shown. 5. No correspondence will be entered into. 6. The editor's decision is final. Responsibility cannot be accepted for lost or undelivered entries. B. Competitions are not open to readers outside the UK or employees of Future or its affiliated companies, their families, agents or anyone professionally connected with the competition. Pheew!

Closing date: January 5, 2006

LETTERS

From love letters to hate mail, *Jamie Sefton* answers 'em all



UDDER ENVY

I know I spend a lot of time indoors, and have little understanding of the outside world – especially when it comes to farm animals and the like – but could you please tell me why my male cow in *Black & White 2* has udders? Alice Dodds

Well spotted Alice. I'm no expert on gender-bending farm animals, but I reckon it's either something to do with genetic mutation, or the fact that most people (including developers)



are ignorant in country ways. Resident PC ZONE bumpkin Will Porter is furious about this blatant bovine error and is planning a feature on how realistic animals are in PC games in the near future.

TOY STORY

A couple of days ago while sorting through my loft I stumbled upon a dusty box containing old Commodore 64 games. One of them especially brought back many fond memories – *Zoids*, based on the wind-up toys by Tomy. I then thought what a great RTS these toys would make! As I recall there was a great diversity in designs, and the chance to model unique machines would surely make for an interesting strategy title where players could create and build new *Zoids*, then send them out into the combat zone. I would jump at the chance to see these machines gracing a PC game – *Zoidzilla*, *Spiderzoid*, *Spineback* and my own favourite – the *Hellrunner!* Stuart Hardy

It's certainly an idea Stuart, but in today's gaming climate, it's doubtful any publisher would touch it. A *Zoids* RTS would almost definitely be aimed at kids, and therefore be very shit. If you do fancy a more "grown-up" robot-stomping RTS, try the underrated *Earth 2160* – a demo of which was on last month's DVD.

FAME ZONE

I've found Paul Presley in *Black & White 2!* After I killed him, his remains were eaten by my creature. Sorry for wasting your time if you knew this info already, but I'm bored and it's too late to go to the pub. Sean Peatfield

Thanks Sean – glad you had the energy to send us your email. Various

members of PC ZONE have sneaked into *Black & White 2* and also *The Movies*, so if you manage to maim/film us, drop us an email with a screenshot – you may win a prize...

VIOLENCE IS GOLDEN

Since the recent outbreak of anti-gaming vigilantes blaming all of societies problems on violent videogames, I can't help but wonder what these people are on. If we didn't have violent videogames, how else could we sneak up to a lagging n00b and own them with a shotgun to the head? I shiver at the thought of these "people" winning their battle, and forcing game companies to make titles with names like *Captain Puffy And The Pink Clouds Of Niceness*. Peter Wells

Hey, you can't dis Captain Puffy – he's a videogaming legend.

TWO'S COMPANY

I'm an ordinary apathetic teen from up north, brought up on a monthly diet of sicknotes and a great deal of carnage – *Carmageddon* was my favourite game for nigh on a year. However, I've just had a realisation regarding the future of PC gaming. There are movies based on games and vice versa, as well as games based on books – Tom Clancy springs to mind. Surely, next thing due – games based on games! You could have *Leisure Suit Larry Goes Postal* so we can beat the crap out of the little twat, or even *Carmageddon* meets *Pro Evo Soccer* – I have a little overdue revenge on the Portuguese to carry out... James O'Malley

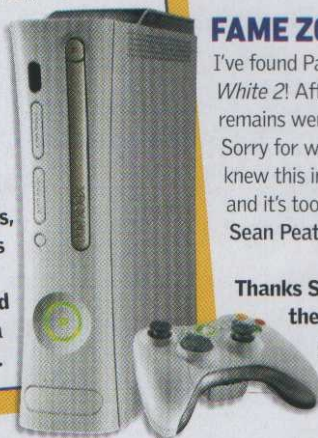
As an ex-ordinary apathetic teen from up north, I heartily agree with your idea of combining videogames to make new ones. I quite fancy splicing *The X Factor Sing!* and *Brothers In Arms: Earned In Blood* so I could flank Simon Cowell and the other panellists and take them out

Letter of the Month

360 My Arse

For years we've heard that next-generation consoles would spell the doom of the PC as a gaming platform, and yet the PC is still as strong today. However, I reckon it's time to swing this statement on its head. The new Xbox 360 console costs a whopping £280, yet a certain high-street PC manufacturer is currently selling a top-of-the-range desktop PC for £299. For the first time, the console market is no longer cheaper than the PC market. Think about it – wouldn't you rather spend an extra 20 quid and get a PC that allows the family to benefit from games as well as art, music, the Internet, programming, creativity, education, etc? Let the war begin! Paul

An excellent point Paul. You're also forgetting that with a PC you can use mods, run emulators, grab tons of free games and of course, read PC ZONE every month. And download porn! Have a graphics card m'laddo.



WIN!



ONE OF THESE!

You need a good graphics card. We need letters. (Good ones, mind, not rubbish ones like 'PC ZONE rulez, can I have a graphics card please?')

Well, serendipity now! The two needs have collided, right here, right now. Write us a letter today. If it wins Letter of the Month, we'll send you a prize tomorrow. Hurrah!

@ letters@pczone.co.uk

✉ letters, pc zone, future publishing, 99 baker st, london, wlu 6fp

I've found Paul Presley in *Black & White 2*! After I killed him, his remains were eaten by my creature

Sean Peatfield doesn't suffer fools gladly



with a sniper hit. Oh, also, as you're a *Carmageddon* fan, check out the story of the making of the game in our rather good *Games That Changed The World, Vol. 1* book that comes free with this issue.

TEA BOY

If Will is being so stubborn when it comes to his tea-making duties, I think it's only fair that you dock his wages until he actually does what he's paid for! And while he's at it, do you think he could

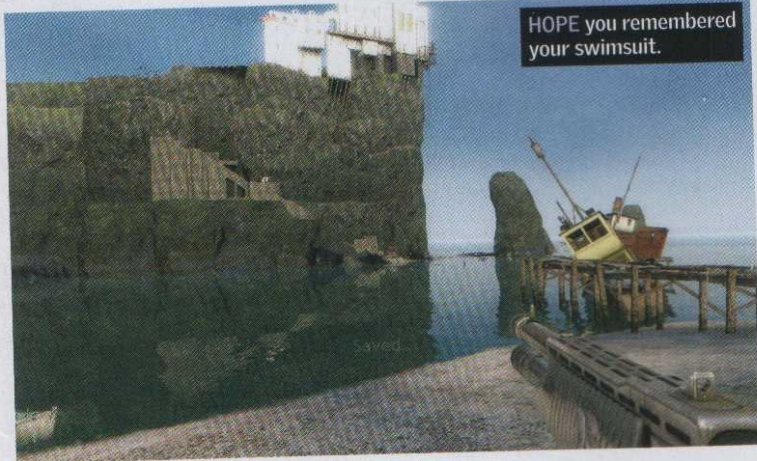
make me a nice cuppa and bring it round for me? I'm parched!
vince_vega

Sure - milk, two sugars?

STEAM-POWERED

Great mag and all that. Just a quick letter to say that I've made it across the bay to the village in *Half-Life 2: Lost Coast* - bet you can't do it. Took me ages. Want a clue? I used a boat. Proof is attached!
A Khan

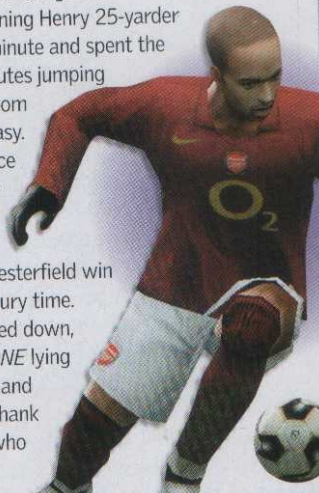
HOPE you remembered your swimsuit.



Well done sir. Now can you kill the old man at the beginning?

PES ROOLZ!

I'm a lifelong fan of lowly Chesterfield FC, so in recent years I've opted for *FIFA* instead of *Pro Evo* because I can play with my own team. However, this year I've changed sides - and oh, am I happy I did! I'm not going to talk about the single-player game, just the multiplayer - I was amazed how much a game means to you when you're online. Recently, playing as Arsenal against Man U, I scored a stunning Henry 25-yarder in the 90th minute and spent the next few minutes jumping around my room in sheer ecstasy. The experience reminded me of being on the terraces watching Chesterfield win a game in injury time. After I calmed down, I saw *PC ZONE* lying on the table and just had to thank the people who



A movie of *Postal*. Great. Just the thing to convince the general public that gamers aren't a bunch of immature retards after all.
-doomus

The bloodier the game the better. I like dirty nasty downright putrid games. If I don't feel like stabbing a granny to death after I've played a game, I take it back and demand a refund.
-Dionysus

I just bought *F.E.A.R.* after playing the demo in the dark last night. Christ, it made me jump. I never thought it was possible to be scared of a little girl.
-Pappy55

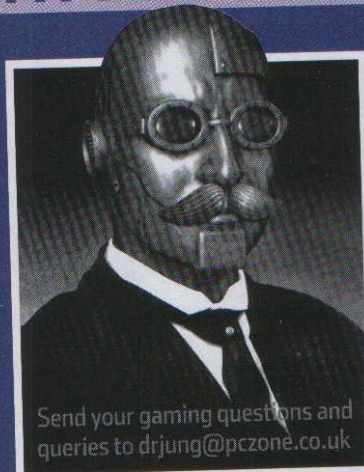
It's true - kids that age are just plain creepy, with their little short legs, and their relentless stares and all...
-buckid

I don't think I've ever come across a more annoying game character than Mapes. I wanted to blow his brains all over the walls.
-Corporate_sniper

Join in the forum fun at www.pczone.co.uk.

MY IRON JUNG

For three years *ZONE* staff members have worked to craft renowned creator of Analytical Psychology, Dr Carl Jung (1875-1961), out of metal. A fount of knowledge, fed with gaming data from past and present, he exists for your enlightenment...



Send your gaming questions and queries to drjung@pczone.co.uk

DEAR DR JUNG,

Q What are the guys who made *The Chronicles Of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay* up to these days? I would have thought we'd have heard something by now.
SebastapolRIot

A Starbreeze, the Swedish developer primarily behind the adventures of Mr. Vin Diesel as he <bzzt> stabbed his way through Butcher Bay, is working on a next-generation game based on the supernatural crime-thriller comic *The Darkness*. Currently only announced on consoles, the game will take in both a highly destructible New York and a place known as Otherworld - where evil abides. Whether it will ever appear on PC is up for question. Sad but true.

DEAR DR JUNG,

Q Why in the holy hell isn't *The Elder Scrolls: Oblivion* coming out before Christmas? I'm f**king pissed off. What's their f**king problem?
Bryan

A Well Angry Bryan, would you rather have an RPG masterpiece or an RPG masterpiece plagued by bugs? Have you forgotten what happened to *Vampire: The Masquerade - Bloodlines* so hastily? For shame young man - control your vitriol. Optimisation, testing and balancing is needed above all in free-roaming role-playing adventures, and there's more than enough games out there to keep you busy until *Oblivion's* release in early 2006. I myself am playing *Carol Vorderman's Sudoku*.

LETTERS



@ letters@pczone.co.uk

✉ letters, pc zone, future publishing, 99 baker st, london, w1u 6fp

persuaded me to make the switch.
Cheers guys!
Spirerite

Our pleasure Spirerite. After our world exclusive playable demo of PES5 last issue, we're currently organising a special PES League tourney in association with Konami - see page 38 for the latest. Oh, and I've just successfully defended my office PES trophy for the third time - I'll look forward to playing you very soon...

COMPUTER VIRUS

I've recently contracted bird flu from the ancient 1980s computer game *Chuckie Egg*. If you do not pay me £57 so that I may purchase medical supplies (or *Quake 4* and *The Movies*) I will be forced to tell the tabloids and then videogames will be banned for public health reasons! Mwahahahahaha!
Stewart Brough

That's fine Stewart - we're already infected with the T-Virus from

PCZONE Around the World

PCZONE on a tour of duty in the deserts of Afghanistan.

We want photos of you with PCZONE in the most exotic or inappropriate locations. Candid celeb shots count double. Every one printed wins a prize!

1 h4v3 l3rn3d 2 sp34k l33t s1nc3
145t i33ue.
th4nX0r
Robert Martin

th4nx d3wd ur t3h m4n, t4nx 4
r34d1n pC Z0n3 t3h b3st m4g ev4r it
r0xx0rz Our b0x0rz lolz!!!!11oneone!

SCORING SYSTEM

As a budding games journalist, I was just wondering how your review system works. As a long time reader I know how you stand with regards to quality over the publishers spending money, but I'd like to know how you arrive at each score. Is there a series of checklists out of ten or some such device? I've written several reviews myself but can never come up with a percentage I'm comfortable with.
Aidan

It's simple really Aidan. Companies pay £1000 for more than 60 per cent, £5000 for scores of 75 per cent plus, and if they want a 90 per cent Classic, they have to make me a diamond-encrusted crown and fork out for a luxury Caribbean holiday for the team. Bon voyage! **PCZ**

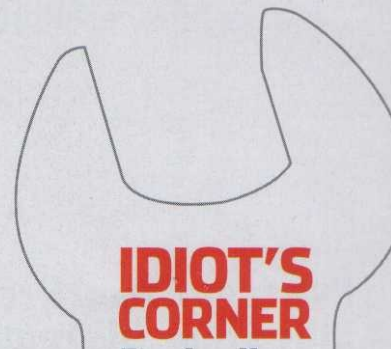
Resi Evil, wailing death from *Neverwinter Nights* and corrupted blood from *WOW*. *cough*

AMAZING GRACE

OK so this is my first letter, and it's completely pointless, but you seem to like that stuff, so here goes. Now, not that I've been trying for days on end without sleep, but how exactly do you get into Grace's knickers on the excellent freeware game *Facade*? (www.interactivestory.net). I would like to make it clear that I am only trying to do this to fully experience the multiple situations you can find yourself in.

Will

Unfortunately Will, we've tried everything and it's impossible to get off with Grace - sorry but you'll have to try real girls.



IDIOT'S CORNER

Real calls from real idiots...

Hello, PC ZONE?

IDIOT

Hello. I've just sent someone to get your new mag, and I've now got two of the same issue.

PCZONE

Ah, the new issue's not out till Thursday.

IDIOT

If I take it back, will the shop refund me?

PCZONE

Erm, that would be down to the shop.

IDIOT

So then somebody else could buy it.

PCZONE

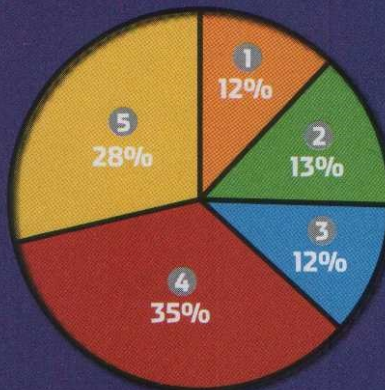
Right.

IDIOT

Goodbye. (Hangs up.)

The Big Question

As *The Lord Of The Rings* saga becomes more plundered than *Star Wars*, what are the least awaited tie-in games?



- 1 Super Gandalf Go-Kart Racing: 12%
- 2 Isengard Tycoon: 13%
- 3 Nazgul Flight Simulator: 12%
- 4 THE LORD OF THE R.I.N.G.S.: 35%
- 5 Anything else with Tom Bombadil: 28%



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Produced by
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COVER STORY ENEMY TERRITORY: QUAKE WARS

COVER STORY

ENEMY TERRITORY: QUAKE WARS

Big, beautiful, badass: id and Splash Damage are about to take you for a multiplayer ride that you'll never forget...



PRETTY ISN'T IT? Violent too. And, if your jaw is intelligent enough to deal with such matters, then it will duly drop when it discovers that it's 6GB worth of source textures that takes up only 8MB in video memory. It's the latest iteration in the undying conflict between humanity and the Strogg: an enemy so nefarious that they even use corpses as batteries and often shout "Hoomangh!" in threatening ways. Even more amazingly, this beautiful monster of a game is being made in Bromley, Kent. Can we hear three cheers for dear ol' Blighty?

PAGE

48



UPFRONT

Everything that matters in the world of PC gaming

NEWS EDITOR Will Porter

Calling Mrs Joan Taylor

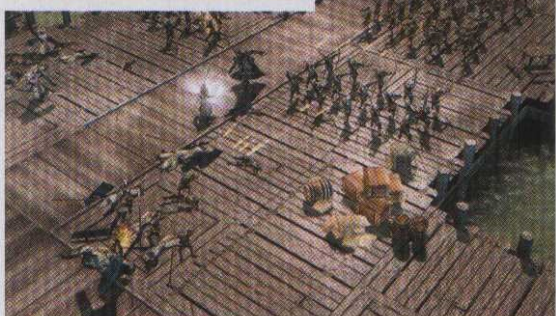
WHO WOULD YOU say is the model PC ZONE reader? I'd say: male, early twenties, plays games. Do you know what our competition entries say? Female, early sixties, mad as a box of frogs. I'm not taking the piss either - out of the colossal pile of hastily scribbled postcards we get each morning, more than half are from dotty women from the home counties. Just listen to these names: Ivy Chatsworth, Mrs Deirdre Adel, Enid Hall, Hilda Pugh...

Hilda Pugh! Regular PC ZONE reader Hilda bleedin' Pugh? As dear and lovely as all of these barmy old biddies may be, what in the name of little baby Jesus is going on? Why does Hilda Pugh want a PC ZONE goodie bag? How does she know answers to questions about *Quake 4*? How does her pension cover the ninja PC that she needs to run the copy of *FEAR* she so dearly wants to win? And finally why, when Hilda comes from the Midlands and Enid comes from Scotland, do their entries appear on the exact same 'The Alpha Course: A practical introduction to the Christian faith' postcards? It's a conspiracy of rabid techno-grans!

These bizarre entries, however, are easily identified, since they come with the PC ZONE address done in olde-worlde spider-writing, with the entrant's details on a ready-peel sticker and a vague smell of prunes. You see, I reckon dear old Hilda gets a newsletter containing every single national competition going - to which she devotes much of her considerable spare time. I don't think she checks what the prize is either, so if you see a compo for low-grade porn in a future issue don't be surprised. (Evil laugh.)



THE question of 'who is the best lord' may soon be answered...



THE BATTLE CONTINUES

The Battle For Middle-earth 2 unveils thrilling new modes, exciting new adventures, and... er, Tom Bombadil. Sorry

www.eagames.com/official/lordoftherings/bfme2/us | ETA: Early 2006



CUSTOMISABLE forts - whatever next?

ELVES, DWARVES, GOBLINS and epic battles of the north - now that EA has grabbed the rights to all written things Tolkien, it's got the creative freedom to do pretty much whatever it likes with *The Battle For Middle-earth II*, exploring aspects of Middle-earth ne'er before seen in the books or movies. And yes,

that means Tom Bombadil as a new hero, and his jolly singing and dancing bringing doom to all in his path.

Aside from Mister Bombadil, the RTS sequel is packed with an improbable number of new features - stuff like customisable forts, a distinct lack of building restrictions and the addition of the aforementioned elves, dwarves and goblins as playable races. But by far the most interesting addition is the shiny new Capture The Ring mode, which sets you and your foes the task of hunting down the ring-wielding Gollum, killing him and bringing the ring back to your fort before your enemies can stop you. With the ring in your power, you'll have the ability to summon an immensely powerful hero capable of destroying everything in his

unfortunate path (that'll be Sauron for the Mordor team, knocking people about with gay abandon), the twist being that if your demigod gets killed, he'll drop the ring right into the hands of the enemy. It's a Capture The Flag mode obviously, but it fits into the universe well and feels good and right.

Then there's the fact that EA is trying to cater to more hardcore RTS fans by broadening the strategic options, with features like defensive and offensive stances, real-time formation previews, three times the number of units on screen, massive potential for fort customisation and an entire *Risk*-style campaign spanning all of Middle-earth. Oh and of course, you can play as bearded dwarves this time around. Just don't let anybody toss you.

STOP PRESS!

Bio-Pandemic

BioWare (they of *KOTOR* fame) has joined forces with Pandemic (the guys who make *Full Spectrum Warrior*) to form some kind of development powerhouse.

Darwinian sublimation

Introversion Software's *Darwinia* is to be released on Steam, thereby exposing it to stupid Americans who would otherwise have ignored it. Hurrah!

Psycho-somatic

Psychonauts remains on shop shelves across the UK. If you haven't bought it yet, remember that we do actually know where a lot of our readers live...

22

Hellgate: London

A neat game, plus a load of jokes you won't get if you don't live in London.



28

Tomb Raider: Legend

New face! New chest! New style! Old tombs! Welcome home Lara...



48

Enemy Territory: Quake Wars

If you haven't had your gob smacked yet today, it's about to get broken in...



WOW like an Egyptian

www.worldofwarcraft.com

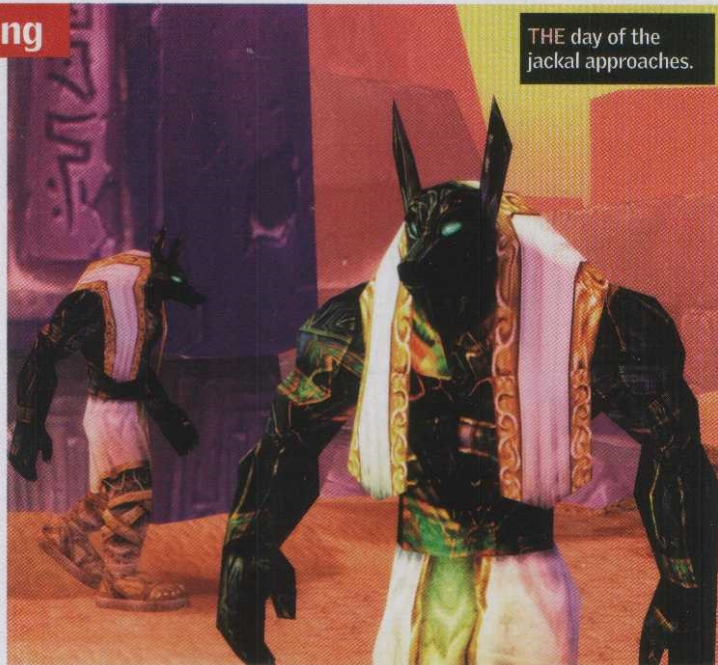
The borders of Azeroth just keep on growing

THOSE BRAVE WARRIORS who feared incessant thumb-twiddling until the opening of the Dark Portal for *The Burning Crusade* can rest easy, as *WOW* is catching a night boat to Cairo (or at least Silithus) for its 1.9 update. The main feature of the patch, y'see, will be a place called Ahn'Qiraj – a mysterious place unveiled to *ZONE* during our visit to Blizzard's Irvine offices. High-level players may have noticed a massive gate at the Scarab Wall in South Silithus, and the idea is that a one-time world event on each server (open to



participation by one and all) will open the colossal gates – which should look like that bit in *The Neverending Story*. Within these gates lie two new raid zones: The Ruins of Ahn'Qiraj (20 man) and The Temple of Ahn'Qiraj (40 man).

The stylings of both is dusty, arid and Egyptian. The bottle opener-fisted Qiraji have enslaved the Silithid bugs of the surrounding area and both races are lorded over by gigantic striding beasts known as Anubisath, that look more than a little like Egyptian gods. So those with high levels can rejoice: remember, life begins at 60.

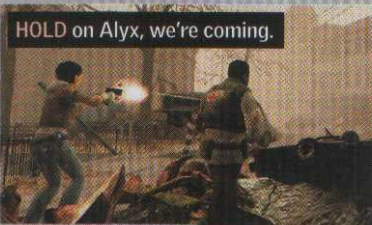


Aftermath, After New Year

Half-Life 2 expansion slips into 2006. None reported as surprised

www.steampowered.com

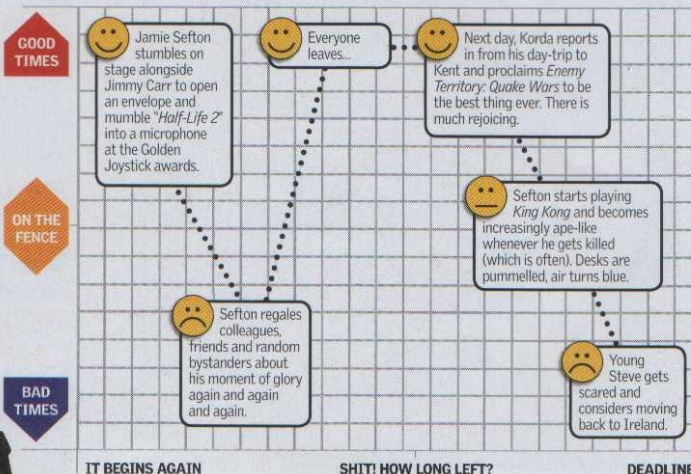
WAITING FOR HALF-LIFE 2 was a lonely experience. Who can forget the date September 30? (Apart from those who've blanked it out.) The pain, the suffering, the rough treatment by those who neither knew nor cared. Well, get ready to gnash those teeth all over again as *Aftermath* isn't going to hit Steam or store till February/March at the earliest. We're not flabbergasted to be honest, but it would have been nice, eh?



STUFF

Sensi is back! That's right – hero of gaming past Jon Hare has a new *Sensible Soccer* game in the works at Codemasters. Aiming to snuggle neatly beneath the footballing big-hitters in the affections of the masses, with a big heart and a mid-range price, the new *Sensi* should appear late spring next year. With the traditional top-down view, tiny men with big heads and physics-bending aftertouch remaining intact, our only concern is that we simply no longer have any joysticks to waggle.

LIFE IS A ROLLERCOASTER



PCZONE CHARTS

ChartTrack

- 1 **NEW** FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006
Issue 162 90%
- 2 **NEW** QUAKE 4
Issue 162 84%
- 3 **NEW** F.E.A.R.
Issue 161 90%
- 4 THE SIMS 2: NIGHTLIFE
Issue 161 58%
- 5 **NEW** PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5
Issue 161 93%
- 6 **NEW** X3: REUNION
Issue 162 92%
- 7 ROME: TOTAL WAR - BARBARIAN INVASION
Issue 160 88%
- 8 **NEW** CITY OF VILLAINS
Issue 163 81%
- 9 BLACK & WHITE 2
Issue 161 93%
- 10 ROME: TOTAL WAR
Issue 148 93%
- 11 THE SIMS 2
Issue 147 82%
- 12 **NEW** STARSHIP TROOPERS
Issue 163 59%
- 13 **NEW** STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II
Issue 163 61%
- 14 WARHAMMER 40K: DAWN OF WAR - WINTER ASSAULT
Issue 161 86%
- 15 WORLD OF WARCRAFT
Issue 152 95%
- 16 THE SIMS 2: UNIVERSITY
Issue 153 57%
- 17 BATTLEFIELD 2
Issue 157 94%
- 18 GUILD WARS
Issue 156 94%
- 19 FIFA MANAGER 06
Issue 161 70%
- 20 BROTHERS IN ARMS: EARNED IN BLOOD
Issue 161 85%



1 FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006
We haven't slept in days, the wife has moved out and the kids are hungry. It must mean FM2006 is a success. Well done Sports Interactive.



3 F.E.A.R.
For Every Artefact Rendered, Five Enemies Are Rubbed (out). Foxes Eat Avian Roosters, Firing Elongates Alternate Reality. F.E.A.R. is at three.



2 QUAKE 4
Not quite the impact of Quakes past but still a hefty commercial punch. Raven's efforts prove to be a Strogg 'n' on, not a Strogg 'n' off. Ahem.



5 PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5
Only thing we don't like about Pro Evo 5 is the rubbish music at the start. We love everything else like our own child. Really.



IT'LL probably end up having bullet-time.

A GREAT DISTURBANCE IN THE FORCE

Star Wars Galaxies gets a revamp, fans angered, deckchairs rearranged on the Titanic

starwarsgalaxies.station.sony.com

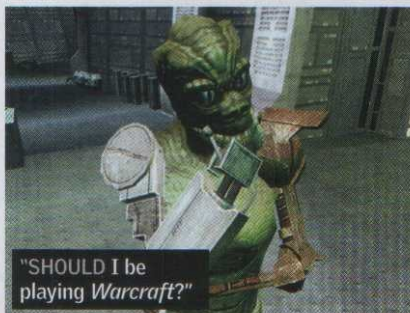
GOOD NEWS FIRST. *Star Wars Galaxies*, a game leaking players like womp-rats from a sinking sail-barge is getting a revamp to make it feel more like a true *Star Wars* experience, rather than the generic *EverQuest* in space affair it's become. More active combat, a lessened learning curve, clearer professional advancements and character development along with general stabs for mass appeal are the name of the game, and Sony Online wants to play the game with you.

Bad news next. Not only might the planned overhaul be guff (let's face it, the track record here isn't super-shiny when you look at the much-maligned combat upgrade six months ago), but the community is in uproar at the planned changes. Quite simply, having given hundreds upon hundreds of man-hours to the game, they're none too happy that it could all have been in vain and their tempers refuse to be quelled by the promise of in-game perks for longstanding players. Unfortunately, having signed the End Users License Agreement



(or at least scrolled down through a massive page of text and clicked 'Yes' at the end), there's very little that the assembled Nerf-Herders can do to stop the Sony Online juggernaut from regrouing and (in all likelihood) noobifying the good ship *Galaxies*.

What's adding to the grinding of gears, meanwhile, is that the announcement of the upside-down turning of the game comes mere days after its frustrated, yet loyal, fanbase snapped up expansion *Trials Of Obi-Wan*. A refund is now available, but these remain dark times...



"SHOULD I be playing Warcraft?"



A spider: not yet 'coolified'.

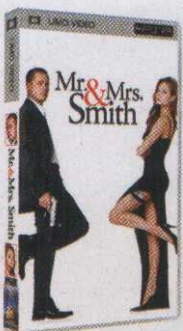
STALKER RELEASE-O-METER Current release date: Oct 2006
ON TIME 1,455 days and still no STALKER: Shadow Of Chernobyl

LOST CAUSE

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OUT 25th NOV



OUT 2nd DEC



OUT 5th DEC



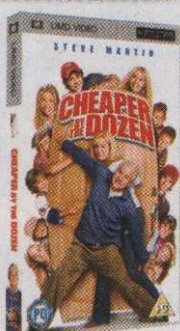
OUT 5th DEC



OUT 5th DEC



OUT 5th DEC



OUT 5th DEC



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GAMING IN THE AXIS OF EVIL

Evil regime? Dangerous nuclear wannabes? **PC ZONE** talks to the gamers of Iran...



Reporter
Pavel Barter

WHAT DO BAGPIPES, poodles and

Celine Dion have in common? They should all be banned, that's what, and in Iran they probably are. Iran – a much discussed nation between Iraq and a hard place (Afghanistan) – bans stuff at the drop of a hat. Movies, satellite dishes, mouthy Internet blogging: they're all on the hit-list. The Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance even prohibits Western rock music, describing it as 'the product of drug addicts' which, when you think about it, is pretty spot on when you consider Pete Doherty.

Yet much like Saddam Hussein-era Iraq (see Special Report, issue 139), games have stealthily crept under the censor's radar. Ali Seyedof, a game developer from Tehran (the country's capital) confirms this: "Most young people spend their time here playing computer games and the scene is dedicated to the PC. We're under technology sanctions, so PS2s and other high-end consoles can't be legally imported to our country."

CHEAP AS CHIPS

While consoles cost an arm and a leg on the Iranian black market, games can be bought for the price of a discarded bogey. "Most are shipped here by individuals or publishers, then re-mastered and pressed in quantities of 10,000 or more, depending on the game. So any game can be obtained for as little as 50p, or up to £1.70," explains Seyedof.

So Iran may be a political minefield, but it's also every gamer's dream. "I bought 20 titles yesterday including *Quake 4*, *F.E.A.R.* and *Age Of Empires III* for only 15 Euros," raves Puya Dadgar, another Iranian developer. He also urges

us, should we ever find ourselves in Tehran on a Saturday afternoon, to discover such bargains in the Reza Bazaar, Iran Computer Complex or Paytakht computer shopping centre, which contains over 30 gaming stores.

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Tehran LAN cafes, meanwhile, are located in the downtown and northern parts of the city. More popular than a Paris Hilton sleepover, Game Nets require advance bookings of up to a week and host favourite games like *Counter-Strike* and *Warcraft* – with *UT*, *Quake II* and *C&C: Generals* coming close in behind. These dens of interactive iniquity, however, aren't immune to a censor's slap upside the head.

In summer 2005, the Iranian government got shitty about *Counter-Strike* tournaments and outlawed them. "Some say it was because of the game's violence. Some say it had political reasons (maybe they thought the terror-team represents Arab or Middle Easterners), and some say it was affecting the behaviour of young players, making them aggressive. I don't know which is true," ponders developer Ila Soleimani.

The simple fact that *CS* was bringing large numbers of people together under

the banner of 'Western entertainment' was probably reason enough for Iran's ruling mullahs. But what happens to anyone caught disobeying the ruling? Detention, extradition... A kick up the arse? "No. The punishments will not be for those playing *CS*," says Schahryar Fekri, an IT specialist. "The punishments will be for the Game Nets that offer such banned games or host banned tournaments. I think the penalty would be to close the café for some time and pay a fine to government."

Yet games remain on the whole as free as a nudist's whatsits – even distinctly non-fundamental titles like boob-ridden *Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude* are attainable. Ali Seyedof reckons this is because Iran doesn't have any infrastructure to control and rate games. While the Organisation Of Islamic Culture and Guidance censors movies, and the Institute Of Children and Young Adults Development focuses on other cultural concerns, games are left in legal limbo.

Hossein Derakhshan, an Iranian journalist now living in Toronto, sees more sinister reasons behind the government's acceptance of PC games. "There are a lot of companies with great ties to the regime (and even its



IRAN: coming soon to a 24-hour news channel near you.

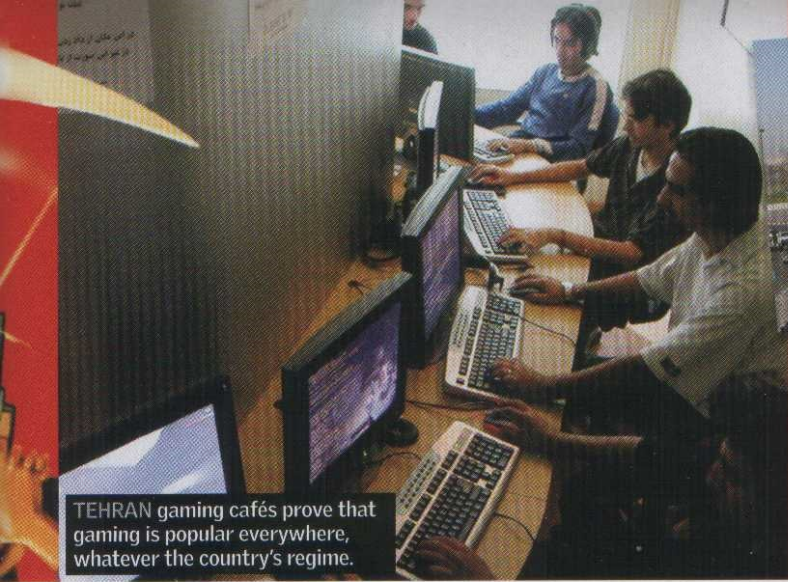
Is there anything you want Pavel Barter to investigate? (Warning: some jobs might be considered too big or too small...)

@ letters@pczone.co.uk
✉ pavel barter, pc zone,
99 baker st, london, w1u 6fp



SOME of the older Iranian games are none too subtle.

Photos: Schahryar Fekri

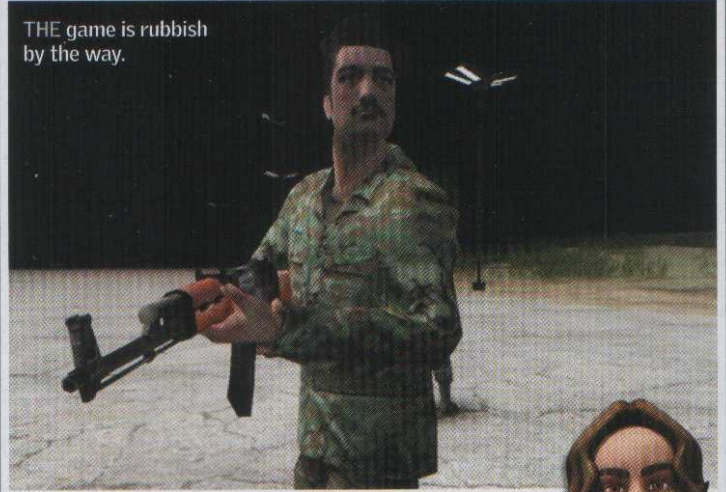


TEHRAN gaming cafés prove that gaming is popular everywhere, whatever the country's regime.



War Games

American developer Kuma Reality has just released *US Attacks Iran*, a game that does what it says on the tin. And opinion is unsurprisingly mixed...



THE game is rubbish by the way.

"I guess [*US Attacks Iran*] will be successful in Iran, since people are interested in playing games with scenes of our land. There's an opinion that no matter what the content is, if it's fun, just play it!"
Ali Seyedof, Iranian game developer



"Popular games are those in which Iraqi gamers get to play Iraqi police and Iraqi army units. So people like this."
Keith Halper, Kuma Reality Games



"We must make the Americans understand that Iran is different from Iraq and Afghanistan, where they just did what they wanted."
Anti 'Attack on Iran' Web petition



"Like Americans, Iranians are patriotic and detest the idea of a foreign power invading, but they're generally thoughtful about Iran's situation in the world."
Keith Halper, Kuma Reality Games



ALL action in *Quest Of Persia*.



There are so many well-connected and corrupt people involved that no-one's going to crack down on it

Hossein Derakhshan on the Iranian government's acceptance of PC games

paramilitary section called The Revolutionary Guards) that are involved in copying and distributing piracy games. They duplicate them in tens of thousands, create Persian covers and sell them."

Referring to the *Counter-Strike* ban, Derakhshan continues: "Once in a while there's pressure, but there's so much profit and so many well-connected and corrupt people involved that no-one could completely crack down on it."

Despite the conspiracy however, this remains good news for both gamers and also Tehran's development community. Ever since DOS game *Ali Baba* side-scrolled its way onto Iranian desktops, local titles are commonplace. The Iran-Iraq war between 1980-1988 (back when the US sided with Saddam Hussein) for example, was the inspiration behind retro games such as *Tank Hunter*, *Battle Of Khoramshahr* and *Unforgettable War*.

PERSIAN DELIGHTS?

The government has even been to known finance developers for "cultural and entertainment purposes". Ali Seyedof worked on a title called *Scorpion's Sting* for the Anti-Drugs Association; while Islamic religious titles, like *Noor*, are also produced.

But because PC games are bootlegged and sold dirt-cheap, game development in Iran is about as profitable as an industry that sells snow to eskimos – some companies end up working low-price for Western countries, others just emigrate. However, in 2005, a FPS/driving adventure called *Quest Of Persia: The End Of Innocence* proved that there is a market for homegrown software.

"We were selling *Quest Of Persia* in Tehran for around £1.35, but with the

same money you can buy titles like *Quake 4*," says Puya Dadgar, project lead, who envisaged the game while working as a NASA sub-contractor in Houston. "We thought to ourselves, who's going to buy *Quest Of Persia* at the same price? Amazingly, people bought it in big numbers because it's an Iranian game with an Iranian story."

Imagine *Quake II* dropped on its head in a desert: that's *Quest Of Persia* in a nutshell. Compared to the Porsche engines of modern titles, this game is powered by a Ford Pinto. But with a meagre budget and no publisher support, it's still a darn sight better than some of the other first-person shooters out there.

ALL FOR ONE

QOP's success has got other developers all fired up: *Forgotten City*, the first Iranian horror game, is currently under development; *Glory Of The Age*, an adventure game set round 2,500 years ago in the ancient city of Persepolis, has been moderately successful. Despite this, Ila Soleimani, character animator on *Quest Of Persia*, says: "Iran won't have a proper game industry until the copyright law problem is solved and domestic investors pay some attention to our industry's potential."

Before we bid farewell to the country George W Bush loves to hate, one more question. *Prince Of Persia*: is that what it's really like over there? Can you run up walls and turn back time and that? "Actually, no," frowns Ali Seyedof. "That game has nothing to do with Iran/Persia. The graphical elements, style, scenery and content are more Arabic than Persian." Never mind. **PCZ**



LONDON'S BURNING

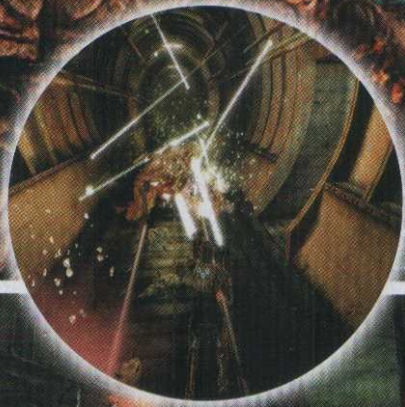
Will Porter talks to the men tasked with the artistic destruction of our capital for *Hellgate: London*

SOMETHING WICKED THIS way comes. A portal to hell is soon to open in the centre of old London town. Residents will be killed, the Knights Templar resistance will be forced underground, the mad Liverpoolian who stands at Oxford Circus asking everyone whether they're a 'sinner or a winner' will be proved to have had remarkable foresight. Put simply: we're up shit creek. Why us? Why us Flagship Studios? What have we done to anger you?


"London is perfect for the sort of game we sought to make," explains Max Schaefer, chief operating officer of London's imminent destruction. "There are centuries, aeons even, of history, beneath the streets of London. From druidic sites to plague pits to Victorian-era sewers, to WWII bomb shelters and factories, to the modern Underground system: there's a whole host of locations that make for great, creepy, spooky gameplay." So, in short, we're the quaintest of the quaint and the spookiest

of the spooked – in a nice fuzzy historical way. "But the single biggest factor would be the historical fame of the Underground," chimes in Dave Glenn, art director on the project. "Most major metropolises have subway systems, but none have the recognition or historical significance of the original one. The iconography, the mix of old and new, the varied historical uses, even the construction methods of the tube gives us a bottomless well of history from which to weave our own unique story."

The thing about your progress through *Hellgate*, however, is that it's all randomly generated – the idea being that every gamer will effectively travel the same journey through Underground Stations, Roman aqueducts and dilapidated subterranean mail trains,



EVEN demons from the nether regions of hell need a pint from time to time.



BUT where are the naked lady pictures Blu-Tacked in the phone box?

THEY say you're never more than ten feet away from a rabid hell-cow in London.

Your progress through *Hellgate* is randomly generated, so everyone will have different tales to tell

but each will have different tales to tell. As Bill Roper himself explained to us earlier in the year (for it is he of the likewise randomly generated *Diablo* heading up the project): "It's like players hanging around the water cooler, sharing their unique experiences even though they were all on the same basic path to the same destination."

JOHNNY RANDOM

This concept of random generation spreads to the very streets themselves, so anyone hoping to shoot at demons

while window shopping in Carnaby Street or even visit the sparkling *PC ZONE* towers (to their inevitable disappointment) could perhaps find themselves frustrated – although Flagship firmly believes that it won't matter. "Fortunately, London has a distinctive look that people will recognise," explains Schaefer. "The literal layout of London isn't necessary to capture this, and frankly most Londoners can't even keep track of the labyrinth of London's streets." Clearly he's heard that my regular excuse for being late for work is that I got lost on the way.

"Currently, the surface levels are very much just an interpretation of what the streets of London 'feel' like to us," adds Glenn. "Our aim is to include a few points of interest in each area to really give them a sense of location. But our priorities always lean towards gameplay over realism. If a level including, say, the British Museum is too big or small or confusing then we'll make adjustments until it feels right according to our gameplay goals in that area."

Let's face it, a few hands of 'Mornington Crescent' were never hurt by a bit of tube-stop randomisation

Oddbins: The Future

From research picture to in-game ruin in one easy step...

AN everyday off-licence.



That's right! Oddbins, beer and wine merchant to the stars, is about to become part of videogame history. Alongside Reed recruitment and a place called Scotch Steak Houses. If you work for either Victoria Wine or Threshers and want to up the competition a little then perhaps you should give Flagship a call...

AN everyday post-apocalyptic off-licence.



PC ZONE'S local after the gate opens. No change really...



(reverse-shunting withstanding), so perhaps the feel of the game is more important than being a direct port of the London A-Z (and remember too that the PS2 *Getaway* games were rubbish despite their street-map accuracy). "Our randomised layouts will contain reproductions of actual buildings, signs, and the familiar icons

that make London look like London," continues Glenn. "And what's more the major landmarks, like Big Ben and the Thames, are fixed in place. We've also tried to capture the traits of each area such as the width of streets, the style of buildings, the number of parks, and the density of buildings to make the



FACE tentacles are *the* must-have accessory in hell this season.

London falling

Just how did this happen to our green and pleasant land?



LONDON: miserable.

Over many centuries, humans like you and me became less and less convinced by the supernatural, believing in nonsense like science instead. Eventually, the realms of evil caught on and used this as a hook. Demons known as Harbingers were the first to break through, making their way to points of ancient power (like Battersea power station) and did complicated blood rituals that would allow – drum roll please – all hell to break loose.

Luckily, the plucky Knights Templar hadn't lost their belief in things that go bump in the night, and continued to beaver away at amassing wealth and technology with which to fight evil once the day of invasion came. They even had enough foresight to build the London Underground, although clearly not enough to stop it from smelling bad and attracting shit buskers. As London fell, 20 years from the present day, they were forced underground and now live somewhere on the Northern Line, A Northern Line where delays and signal failures are expected every single solitary day. Just imagine!



TWO weapons: still better than one.



THE 'FLAG' & 'Ship' – clever eh?



AT LEAST rush hour is better in the future...

We figured London's weather would give us a dark, spooky atmosphere

Max Schaefer, chief operating officer, *Hellgate: London*

neighbourhoods feel like they should, even if the street layouts aren't strictly accurate."

AIN'T IT QUIANT

Now, Londoners regimentally hate tourists, but perhaps the Pearly Kings and Queens of this world should swallow some of this bile – since sometimes tourists are actually game developers in disguise. "The most concentrated research we did consisted of Dave and I spending a week walking all over London taking thousands of photographs. We both have architectural backgrounds and we were like kids in a candy store walking the streets and alleys of London. One problem we hit was that our game is dark, brooding, and spooky, and we

figured that London's grey skies and wet weather would give us the atmosphere we needed in our source photographs. But from the moment we landed, the sun came out and we had the most beautiful, sunny, pleasant weather one could have wished for – in Hawaii! It sure wasn't the cold damp London we'd anticipated and even wished for, as it's harder to get usable source photos in bright sunlight."

Devastating summer weather aside, and with one or two more research trips planned, the game is really tripping along nicely – and is without a shadow of a doubt the role-playing game (that isn't *Oblivion*) to look out for next year.

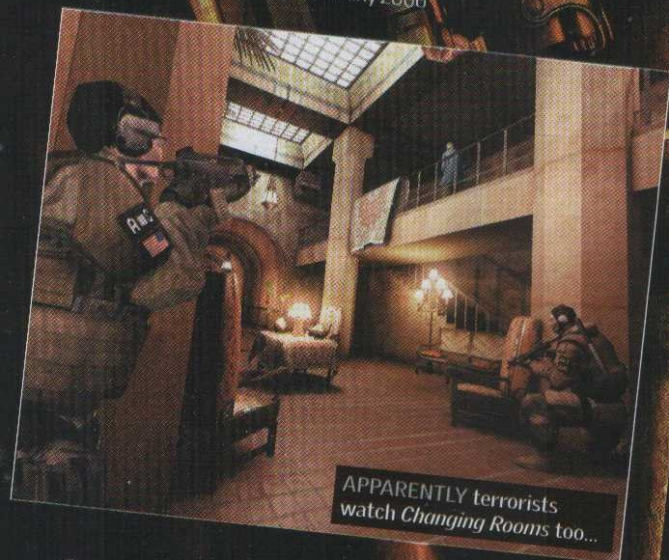
If the game starts slipping, however, or some of the textures start looking a little blurry, then we reckon we know why... "Yeah, we did extensive research into the pubs of London too," reveals Schaefer. "Once the daylight went, we couldn't take any more pictures, so this was our opportunity to find out exactly why British beer is so superior to the swill commonly served in our homeland. We left no stone unturned in this investigation, and concluded that we'll probably have to make another trip or two to really get to the bottom it."

"The most disappointing thing was the pubs shutting down so early," adds Glenn. "Though I've read news that that might be changing soon." True enough Dave Glenn, true enough. But when 24-hour drinking proves to be the catalyst for the anarchy, chaos and the eventual opening of the *Hellgate* then we, and the middle-class moral majority, will know who to blame. **PCZ**

UP ABOVE THE STREETS AND HOUSES

Rainbow Six: Lockdown not canned for PC after all. Tom Clancy rejoices, writes book

www.rainbowsixgame.com | ETA: Early 2006



APPARENTLY terrorists watch *Changing Rooms* too...

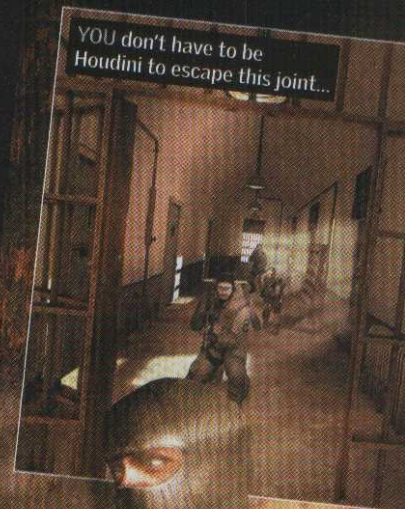
BLOODY TERRORISTS. IF they're not kidnapping a dignitary or contaminating a water supply, they're blowing things up or, in this case, harbouring a deadly virus that could wipe out lots of people. Someone should do something about them, and so thank the lord for Tom Clancy and his Secret Six.

Previously thought nixed on PC, *Rainbow Six: Lockdown* has resurfaced – tweaked and prodded in structure, AI and combat to appeal to a more dignified, and indeed more worthy, audience. Features such as sniping, room breaching and a neat motion tracker that zaps through walls and registers enemy heart-beats so you know how many bad men to expect turned a few heads upon the console release; but us lot are getting a veritable cascade of extras that the living-room gamer can only dream about.

Ding Chavez, he of big gun and silly name, and his cronies have now been gifted 20 new weapons, a bunch of associated weapon attachments and AI that makes them far less dim than on previous world-saving outings. Creeping through various worldwide locations with perennial cohorts Eddie Price, sniper Dieter Weber and the similarly rubbish-named Louis Loisselle, you'll be tasked with such familiar duties as terrorist hunting and hostage rescuing – both of which involve the deaths of many, many Bothans. Sorry, I mean evil men. My attention is wavering a bit.

Anyway. What else? Laser trip-mines, virus grenades and C4. Co-operative play and a raft of multiplayer stuff – classic maps returning, revamped rivalry mode in which a group of Rainbow bods wrangle with Mercenaries over various objectives and lots and lots of authentically military death. Quite what influence old Tom Clancy has on these games is a bit of a mystery (putting his cap on backwards, rubbing his face with money and giggling aside) but at least through him we have a far more extensive knowledge on how to kill people in Middle Eastern marketplaces than ever before.

YOU don't have to be Houdini to escape this joint...



The Empire Strikes Back

Expand your borders (again) with *Empire Earth II: The Art Of Supremacy*

www.empireearth2.com
ETA: February

Just when we thought we'd conquered everything, VU Games has announced an expansion pack for the acclaimed *Empire Earth II* – and the level of its expansion-ness is truly massive.

Three new campaigns will see you guiding the Egyptians back in

the times of BC, the Russians when they're getting harassed by a short rowdy Frenchman and the Maasai (part of the all-new African region) when they're squaring up against the threat of globalism and greedy corporations pinching their land. There's also tons of boring nips

and tucks, but there will be the opportunity to play a Turning Point battle as Michael Caine (or at least his commander) in *Zulu* – defending Blighty's foreign gains from an angry indigenous people. Hooray for Empire! Hooray for Earth! Hooray for RTS expansion packs!



NOW featuring Iceman and Goose.



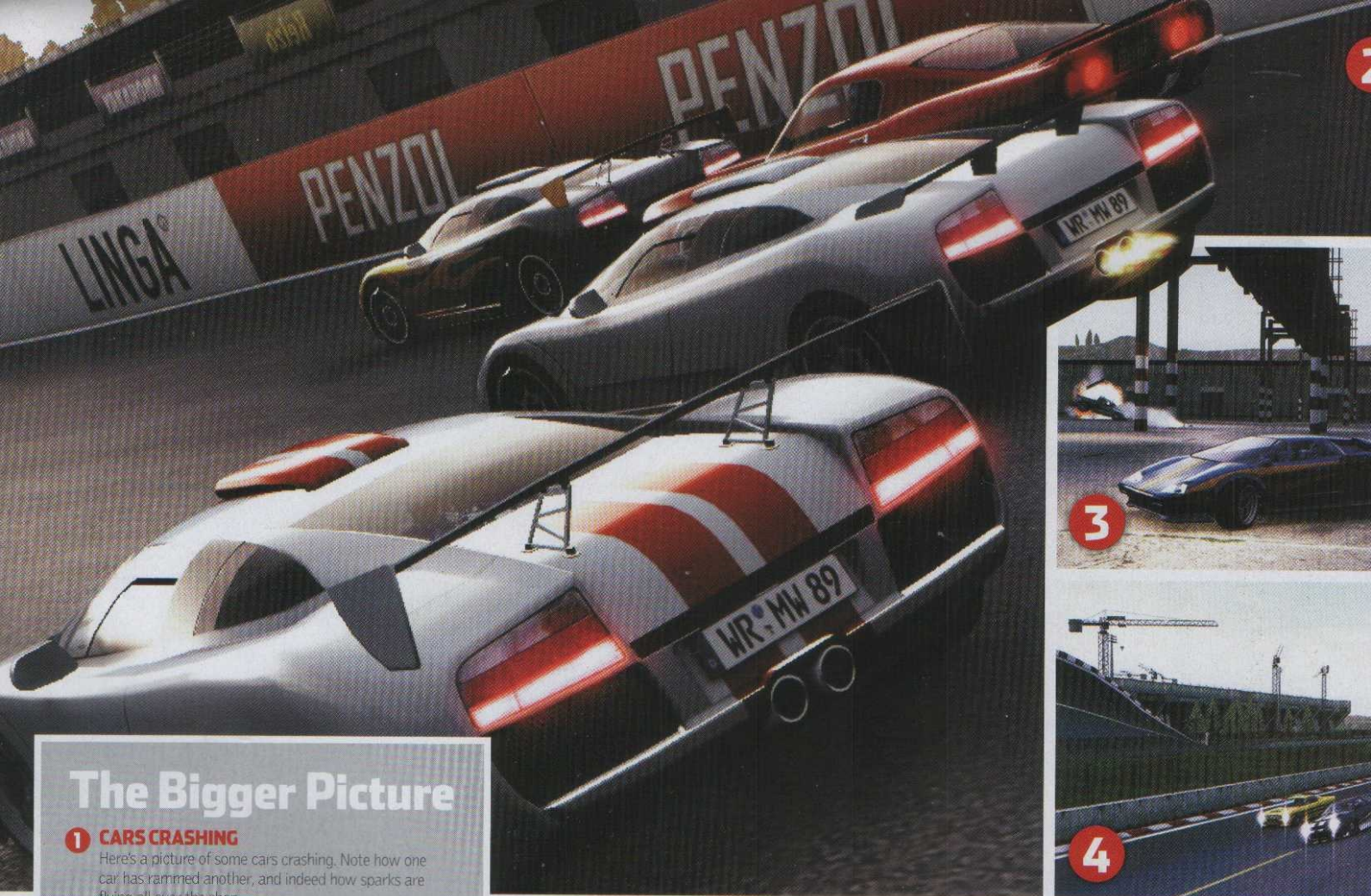


CRASHDAY

DEVELOPER Moon Byte Studios PUBLISHER Atari
WEBSITE www.moonbyte.de ETA March 2006

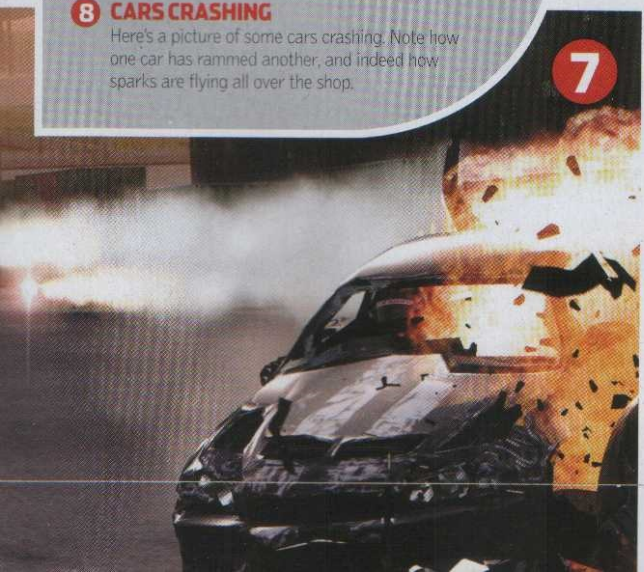
IF THERE'S EVER a game that does what it says it will, then does it repeatedly and then does it a bit more, it's *Crashday*. Blending every game in which vehicles crash and do loops, adding guns and an extremely snazzy replay feature (that results in the surrounding graphical goodness), the title is set to fill a *TrackMania*-sized gap in the earlier bits of next year. So anyway: guns, wheels, ramps, loops, track design, deathmatch... That's about it really. Fun, though – and pretty to boot.






The Bigger Picture

- 1 CARS CRASHING**
Here's a picture of some cars crashing. Note how one car has rammed another, and indeed how sparks are flying all over the shop.
- 2 CARS RACING**
Here's a picture of some cars racing. Note how pretty the game looks, and how they have headlights and everything. Very soon, they may crash.
- 3 VERY HARD TO WRITE ABOUT CARS**
Man, who knew it would be this hard to think about witty stuff to write about a game with big guns and ridiculously high speeds?
- 4 GENESIS VERSES 1-2**
In the beginning, god created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of god moved upon the face of the waters.
- 5 GENESIS VERSES 3-4**
And god said, let there be light, and there was light. And god saw the light, that it was good: and god divided the light from the darkness.
- 6 GENESIS VERSE 5**
And god called the light day, and the darkness he called night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.
- 7 GENESIS VERSE 6**
And god said, let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.
- 8 CARS CRASHING**
Here's a picture of some cars crashing. Note how one car has rammed another, and indeed how sparks are flying all over the shop.





IF we were a low-grade games mag, we'd probably comment on Lara's arse at this point...

GRAVE ROBBING...


TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND

DEVELOPER Crystal Dynamics PUBLISHER Eidos WEBSITE www.tombraider.com

Jamie Sefton treks to the jungle for an exclusive gawp at the game set to resurrect Lara Croft...



ETA
Spring
'06



WOW! If her face looks this good, imagine what her arse is like!



Pandemonium

Crystal Dynamics arrives on the PC scene with this bizarre pseudo-3D platformer.

1997



Gex 3D: Enter The Gecko

Crystal Dynamics presents yet another irritating character.

1997



Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver

Vampiric action and devious puzzler in one beautiful & gory package.

1999

Project: Snowblind

Crystal Dynamics' most recent work was a thoroughly enjoyable futuristic shooter.

2005



FACT: **LARA CROFT** is a cultural icon. Apparently, she's still recognised by over 90 per cent of the general public – yes, even the ones who hang about outside TK Maxx. Try asking those same people to pick out *Far Cry's* hero Jack Carver from a videogame character line-up though, and you'll probably just get the blank look that dogs give you when you fire questions at them.

Unfortunately for license-holders Eidos, developer Core Design made a pig's lug of *The Angel Of Darkness*, producing a buggy, sloppily-executed *Tomb Raider* title that nearly drowned our favourite pistol-wielding heroine.

her spiky pit of despair. Now, I'm never one to be too optimistic about how games will turn out months before completion, but after my recent exclusive presentation of the new *Tomb Raider: Legend*, I can confidently say that fans of the posh bird with the dual-pistols can start getting excited again. Lara is coming home.

NOT CRAP

If you've been a semi-decomposing mummy in a crypt for the past year, here's a quick catch-up on the new game. Basically, everything crap from the last game has been thrown out: the terrible hyper-accurate platform-

Fans of the posh bird with the dual-pistols can start getting excited again. Lara is coming home

The result was that the job of developing the next *Tomb Raider* (and effectively saving the franchise) was given to the US-based Crystal Dynamics, a company with an excellent track record of good third-person action games in the *Soul Reaver/Legend Of Kain* titles, as well as most recently, decent *Deus Ex*-ey shooter *Project: Snowblind*.

Then one of the original creators of Lara, Toby Gard, fresh from his work on the great-but-late action-adventure *Galleon* on Xbox, was brought on board to oversee the rescuing of Lara from

jumping based on a tile movement system; the character attribute-updates; the piss-poor camera; the wandering about empty Paris streets; that second rubbish playable bloke; the dearth of tombs to actually raid.

In their place is a redesigned Lara who retains her curvy videogame features but with a less cartoon-like blow-up doll look, plus a stunning graphics engine, new traps, new intuitive moves, new gizmos, a decent targeting system, physics-based puzzles with multiple solutions, fully driveable vehicles and –



Gwapple me gwapenuts

Lara's must-have new accessory is the grapple hook



LARA'S new 'toppling-over' ability in action.

A new addition to the *Tomb Raider* franchise is the grapple hook, a gameplay device used in such varied titles as Nintendo's *Legend Of Zelda* games and most recently, the *Battlefield 2* expansion *Special Forces* (see page 70). The magnetic hook attaches to certain metallic surfaces allowing Lara to swing across open chasms, snatch weapons out of enemies' hands as well as pull objects and drag them around the environments. In the Queen's Tomb at the end of the Flashback level, the grappling hook is used to grab hold of a pillar that's then toppled over by Lara, to drop a stone ball essential to solving a physics-based puzzle. She's a clever lass our Lara...

THOSE ancient civilisations sure knew how to make a rope that would last...

Crystal Dynamics wants to bring back the awe and wonder from previous *Tomb Raider* adventures

Tune Raider

A virtual orchestra is employed in *Tomb Raider: Legend*



Scored by Danish composer Troels Folmann, *Legend's* music may sound like it's being played by a full orchestra, but in fact the entire thing is completely digitally-created. Folmann uses dedicated PCs for each section of the orchestra – such as woodwind or strings – packed with thousands of his own samples of the instruments in different combinations. The human choir you can hear is digitised too, and using speech synthesis, can chant anything you type into the computer as pseudo Latin chanting (no, really). The result is a soundtrack with different layered sounds that can dynamically react to the on-screen tomb-raiding action in real-time.

yes – bloody big toms. In a nutshell, *Tomb Raider: Legend* looks fun.

ROLL OUT THE BARREL

The level we had exclusive access to was called Flashback, when Lara travels to Peru to visit a place where 'something very bad happened' when she was younger. In a dusty, deserted shanty town, she meets up with her childhood friend Anaya, after receiving directions from an unnamed male associate's voice on her headset.

Suddenly, a truck full of goons skids into view and we're given a full guns-blazing demo of the new combat system.

LARA'S body language hints at what moves are possible.

Targeting is auto-lock-on (although this can hopefully be toggled on or off for the PC version), and you can switch targets easily, allowing Lara to back-flip, forward roll and jump around, while simultaneously shooting bullets into various militia men's faces and jump-sliding them off their feet. So-called 'flair moves' allow Ms Croft to perform silky bullet-time kills, as well as, for example, double-jumping off an enemy's shoulders and blasting them from behind.

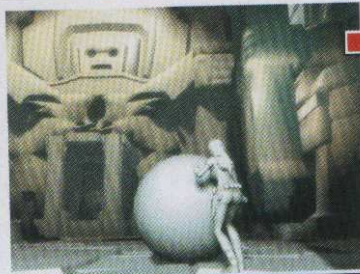
In addition, the levels use full physics, so barrels will roll when shot and ragdoll bodies will crumple to the floor, plus 'objects of opportunity' present you with

precariously placed explosives for seeing off foes with fiery chain-reactions. Lara's default weapons are the dual-pistols, but you can also pick up an extra firearm such as a shotgun or grenade launcher, and use grenades strapped to Lara's belt – a visible inventory that shows what items are available (there'll be no more pulling out a rocket launcher from an ever-expanding rucksack). An over-the-shoulder fire mode for more accurate shooting finishes off the rest of the bad guys, and Lara is finally free to traipse further into the Peruvian jungle.

ON YER BIKE

The Flashback level progresses next via a vehicle section, that was unfortunately not quite ready to show off, but features a frantic motorbike chase. Lara will have complete control of the vehicle while being able to fire her weapons, and simultaneously has to avoid obstacles

Nice Polygons Legend on PC will be the best-looking Tomb Raider ever



TOMB Raider: Legend is genuinely being enhanced for PCs, with Crystal Dynamics, in its own words, "doing a complete art pass".



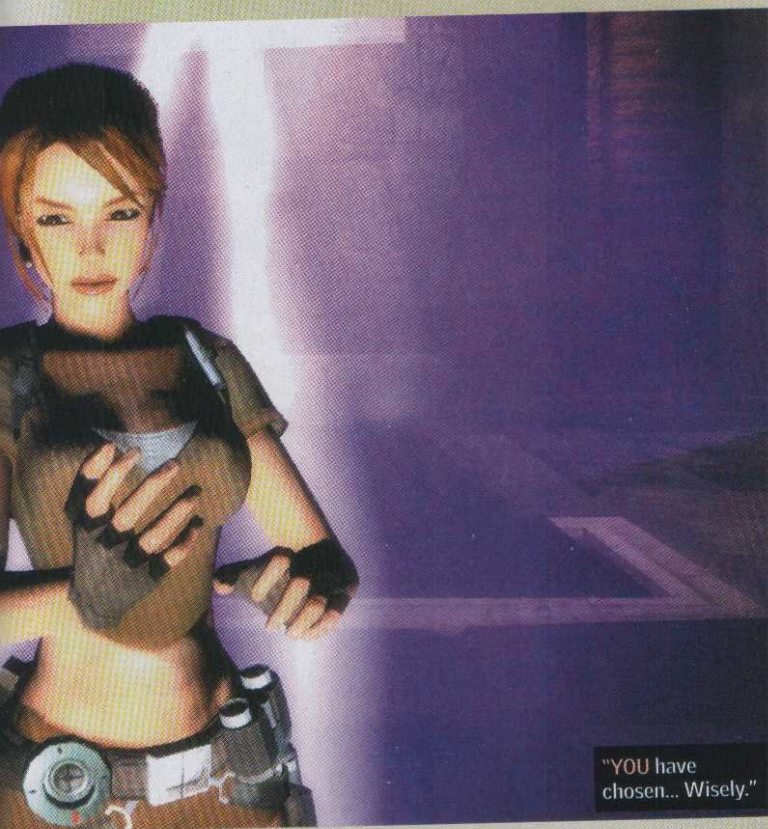
THE game will include higher res models for all the characters in the game (especially Lara), and there'll be a real-time per-pixel lighting system.



TO take advantage of the lighting, Legend will also include normal and specular mapping for detailed characters, objects and environments.



A close-up of the new Lara shows the light catching her soft brown hair, dappled skin and luscious lips. Erm, excuse me while I take a cold shower...



"YOU have chosen... Wisely."

and use jump ramps to catch Anaya's kidnappers. Eventually, she arrives at an abandoned excavation site flooded with water, where we get our first glimpse of Lara's enhanced swimming abilities.

Unlike other underwater sections in games, the control system isn't fully 3D (to avoid players getting confused) – default movement has Lara swimming at the same depth, while you can use the direction keys to move her up and down. You also always have two speeds of movement for Lara, as many of the game's puzzles are time-based – underwater this means you have short breast-strokes for a medium pace and long breast-strokes for zippier moves.

In the first of the new underwater puzzles, Lara has to operate four crystal switches which lower the water level and reveal a clue to the mystery of the tragic event from her history. You're then into the first area of the

Queen's Tomb, where Lara's 'personal light source' (a torch to you and me), illuminates the dark caverns in real-time. You're soon traversing ledges and fluidly leaping from wall-to-wall, with the animation of Lara giving physical feedback to you about what moves are possible, such as her head turning and looking at a reachable area. A shiny object on the ceiling of the cavern indicates a metal area that Lara can attach her metal grappling hook to and use realistic momentum to swing on the rope across a pitch-black chasm (see 'Gwapple Me Gwapenuts' p29).

ALL ACTION

Suddenly, the haunting atmospheric music (see 'Tune Raider', left) moves up several gears and the removal of the health bar and HUD shows that we're into one of *Tomb Raider: Legend's* new action sequences, used to catch you

by surprise and up the tempo at unexpected points. Rather like the interactive cut-scenes in *Fahrenheit* (or *Dragon's Lair* for older coin-op fans), they force you to make critical control inputs at specific times. In the Flashback level, the scene is a series of collapsing platforms that Lara has to leap across, triggered by you pressing the key shown on-screen – do something wrong and she'll plunge into the depths below.

BY ROYAL CONSENT

If you manage to complete the sequence successfully, Lara enters the main chamber of the Queen's Tomb, a breathtaking wide-open area with ornately carved stonework, pock-marked walls and cobwebbed corners dimly lit by slivers of light streaming in through distant cracks. Crystal Dynamics wants to bring back the awe and wonder from previous *Tomb Raider* adventures, presenting you with a massive area to explore at your leisure, until you figure out what the hell you're supposed to do.

In this case, walking over a pressure plate triggers the slight opening of an ancient door – yep, it's a physics puzzle where you have to find and move heavy stone balls

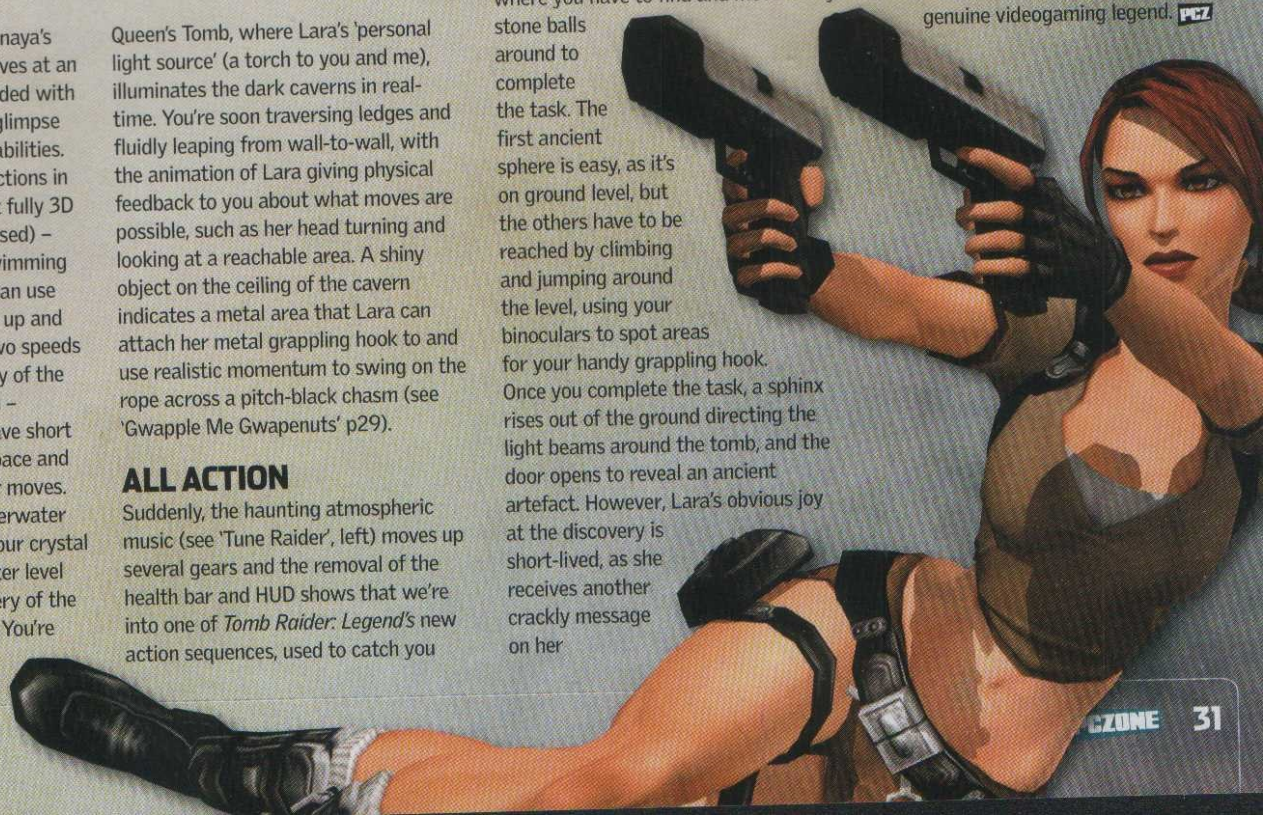
around to complete the task. The first ancient sphere is easy, as it's on ground level, but the others have to be reached by climbing and jumping around the level, using your binoculars to spot areas for your handy grappling hook. Once you complete the task, a sphinx rises out of the ground directing the light beams around the tomb, and the door opens to reveal an ancient artefact. However, Lara's obvious joy at the discovery is short-lived, as she receives another crackly message on her

headset that the militia-men have discovered her whereabouts...

In short, Crystal Dynamics seems to be doing a sterling job with *Tomb Raider: Legend*. The team has gone back to what made the original games so addictive and immersing – the *Indiana Jones*-style mix of tomb exploration, conspiracy, puzzle-solving and edge-of-your-seat combat – and added an intuitive control system and interactive cut-scenes. Finally, the whole package is being wrapped up in a stunning graphics engine that's being fully enhanced for high-end PCs – as you can see from these first true hi-res screenshots (see 'Nice Polygons', above).

CROFT ORIGINAL

We've yet to see the game optimised for mouse/keyboard, but we're promised that the finished product will have fully customisable controls. There are no plans for multiplayer as yet, but Crystal Dynamics hinted that there might be online elements into the next game. However, that's a few years away – we're just looking forward to next spring, when we'll hopefully be able to play a new *Tomb Raider* title deserving of a genuine videogaming legend. **PCZ**





THE PROFESSIONALS

Uncovering the lies and slander perpetuated by PC gaming

GAMES LIE TO us, they lie all the time. They're bastards. Aliens don't really exist, there are fewer government conspiracies than you'd think and no man can actually carry nine heavy metal guns through 15 hours of space-station corridors without a long rest. And so, to truly test the

developers of your favourite games, from now on we'll be harnessing the power of our worryingly anal readers to read and slate issues of extreme pedantry - from crate design to the explosive-ness of barrels. Issues that may not concern the man on the street, but truly *matter* in PC gaming...

THIS MONTH: VENTILATION SYSTEMS

Expert: Chris Jones
Job: Mechanical engineer in the field of ventilation, heating and plumbing
Company: Hoare Lea Consulting Engineers
Specialised Pedantry: Misleading air circulation systems in the FPS




F.E.A.R.

"This isn't actually a ventilation duct at all, it's a steam pipe service crawl space, which is required to service any leaks in pipes or ductwork. They may be good for sneaking around in games, but in reality

tend not to lead anywhere. As you can see however, this picture of a real maintenance crawl-way looks pretty similar to Monolith's efforts, so well done to the team."

PCZONE
 ★★★★★
 Monolith knows its onions



HALF-LIFE 2

"With a mighty fan like this, you'd have to be ventilating something enormous - and it'd also make the Health and Safety inspectors explode with rage. It's doubtful you would ever see this sort of thing built - it's more of a wind tunnel than a serious attempt at ventilation. If it was used, it would definitely be used for something like a hanger extract, or somewhere that no-one's really that bothered about whether it actually works or not."

PCZONE
 ★★☆☆☆☆
 Standards are slipping



DOOM 3

"The most detailed and accurate example here, even though this is a maintenance area rather than a duct. This looks to be the top of a vent riser, a shaft which allows ductwork to descend the building. Even the light fitting is accurate. Health and Safety has again gone to the dogs, but then you're in a research facility on Mars which doesn't mind opening a gateway to hell, so that probably doesn't matter. It's not far different from the real set-up of this steam pipework installation, although this is a horizontal tunnel rather than a riser."

PCZONE
 ★★★★★
 id impresses



HALF-LIFE

"This is a good example - the duct looks like it's made from galvanised steel panels and has a realistic geometric aspect ratio (good practice is 4:1 length and width). *Half-Life's* also got a good sound effect when

moving through these too. The branch is a nice touch, however you might encounter a volume control damper round here. This duct is also rather large for the office bit of *Half-Life*, but you might get them this big round the labs. The final run-outs to the grilles would be a hell of a lot smaller in real life though."

PCZONE
 ★★★★★
 Valve by name...



PARIAH

"This is a sloppy effort; it looks like it's from the first level of *Unreal*, and at least that had steam in it to hide the flaws. Why on earth would you have non-slip tread in a vent duct? This is purely a utilitarian attempt to get you from one place to another, and its only resemblance to an actual duct is that it's a rectangular metal tube. In reality, space allowances normally wouldn't let you have a square duct of this size, and there might even be a set of turning vanes on the bend. This is a rather dull application and wouldn't win any realism prizes."

PCZONE
 ★★☆☆☆☆
 A rubbish duct

WINNER: Doom 3 Congratulations must go to id Software for its detailed ventilation research. The first realism accolade the company's probably ever received.

WE WANT YOU! YES, YOU!

We want you! Yes, you! If you're currently employed, or have been employed, in any of the below fields, then you could help us in our new, beautiful, The Professionals page. Please contact us on theprofessionals@pczone.co.uk and we will make magic happen!

We want people accustomed with:

- Handling or treatment of toxic waste
 - Manufacture or design of crates
 - Manufacture or design of barrels
 - Study of biochemical or biological terror risks
 - Manufacture/design of assault courses
 - Manufacture/design of toilets
 - Spaceships
- Could it be you?



DOOM MOVIE: OUR VERDICT

The gates of hell have opened and spewed forth a monster

United International Pictures I ETA: Out Now

IT SEEMS WE'VE got some apologising to do. Somehow, in stark defiance of our better judgement, we suggested in a previous issue that the *Doom* movie wasn't going to suck. We were wrong. It does (big time). By way of recompense, if you actually paid for it based on our (tentative) recommendation, you can send in your *Doom* ticket stub and, provided it's dated before December 8, we will almost certainly redeem it for a *PC ZONE* goodie bag. (And to be honest, even if you only get a damp tea bag and a soiled copy of *Railway Sim 2006*, it's going to be better than *Doom*.)

So what's so bad about it? Well, not everything. In its defence, the film does feel like the games. It's unmistakably *Doom*-ish, from the weapons to the monsters and the lack of proper dialogue. Unlike every other game film ever made, it understands – and more importantly respects – the source

material, and for this reason alone is a small step in the right direction for Hollywood.

But having said that, it's still a very, very bad film. The dialogue and acting are stunningly shit in places, even from people we know can act like Rosamund Pike, who looks thoroughly out of place and embarrassed throughout. Worse still, the monsters are completely wasted, appearing so infrequently they may as well have stayed home.

As for horror elements, forget about it. They promised us an

R-plus, but they've delivered a kid-friendly action film that makes *Tremors* look like *Cannibal Holocaust*. It's a bland, plodding and by-the-numbers film whose badness only deepens as it proceeds, and the 'goodness will prevail' plot twist is frankly offensive. Game over man, game over.



THE MAN WHO KNOWS



Moving **male genitalia** has invaded the alternate techno-world of *Second Life* – a place usually reserved for the studious and bizarre rather than the outright **pornographic** and **morally ambiguous**. Spreading as a virus, sort of, this virtual malady rose its **angry purple head** in 2004, and was thought stamped out. Now, however, if you buy a pair of **red angel wings** and plant them on your *Second Life* lot, you're greeted by none other than a **giant naked man rubbing his penis** in an overtly excited fashion – free for one and all to see. Claiming to have been made in an act of revenge, and (**post cock-show**) imploring users to "pass it on – you shouldn't piss off someone who has nude pics of you", it's widely thought that said masturbator had angered a significant other – or at least someone with a camera with whom they were sexually involved. Thereby providing further proof that the **Internet** is nothing more than a **group of perverts holding hands** and staring at each other's **nether regions**.

In other news, **Barry Hatter**, a new and wholly original tale of a **young boy wizard**, is due for release on PC. "We just can't believe absolutely nobody has had this idea before..." breathed *Barry's* press department evilly, while grooming their magical adventure so that the maximum number of **batty old women** buying Christmas presents would buy their inferior product in a state of **befuddled confusion**. Hatter, boy wizard, broomstick owner and thwarter of ill-defined evil, was yesterday unavailable for comment. **Barry Hatter: The Sorcerers Broomstick** will be available in all good bargain bins soon.

Finally, the **wacky Wachowski brothers** have created a new ending for their turgid *Matrix* series, tacked onto the end of not-very-good chopsocky adventure *The Matrix: Path Of Neo*. Seeing as killing yourself – and the hopes of the audience – would have been rubbish, **two pixelated forms** representing the brothers appear at the game's close to explain their new videogame version. In which Agent Smith becomes a **giant mecha-Agent Smith** and many things explode. Banal anthem *We Are The Champions* by popular '80s songstrels Queen then plays over the **salvation of Zion**. No, we don't get it either.

"Thereby providing more proof that the Internet is nothing more than a group of perverts holding hands and staring at each other's nether regions"

More real girls! Some of them in the nip!

NICE motor.



IN ORDER TO celebrate the authenticity, handling, graphical excellence and amazing sound of *GT Legends*, the cunning men at Atari have revealed that, as suspected, fast cars make sexy girls take their clothes off. So once more we're able to celebrate the musky scent of testosterone that covers PC gaming by putting Steve Hill's face on the twin peaks of a harlot wearing inadvisable footwear. Hoorah for games! Muffled indignation for the *GT Legends* calendar! Now available!



FERRET!

WHAT'S YOUR GAME?

Will Porter demands answers from Ferret Baudoin on *Neverwinter Nights 2*. Yes, that is his real name

Who are ya?



NAME Ferret Baudoin
DEVELOPER Obsidian

Entertainment

POSITION Lead designer on *NWN2*

AGE No longer a young buck

GAMES WORKED ON *KOTOR2*,
Mechwarrior 4 and several sadly
defunct Black Isle RPGS

FAVOURITE GAMES *Ultima IV* or
Planescape: Torment

Q So what's the relationship like between BioWare and Obsidian? Why is it that they entrust their babies to other companies? It seems quite strange...

A I suppose that if you just look at Obsidian like a new company, and don't think about the people who are in it, then yes, it would seem very odd. But what makes it make sense is when you realise that the principle people of Obsidian are all from Black Isle - people who've been working for BioWare for years and years. I'm not even sure how many years it is, but they worked with them on *Baldur's Gate* and tons of other stuff.

The roleplay development community seems really small in that respect...

You're right. There's not many companies who make roleplaying games, so there's at most two degrees of separation between everybody that does them.

What have you worked on before?

I worked on *KOTOR2* and *MechWarrior 4* expansions, plus two projects that were cancelled at Black Isle - sadly.

Were you working on *Fallout 3*? The 'Van Buren' project?

Yes, and 'Jefferson' as well. (*Nerd Ed: 'Jefferson' being an unannounced D&D roleplayer widely expected to be Baldur's Gate III: The Black Hound.*)

Can you say anything about them?

Well, it was just very sad. There was a lot of love and great ideas there...

You see, *Fallout 2* was one of my favourite games...

I can totally relate to that. I was ecstatic when I got onto the *Fallout 3* team, and extremely sad that it never saw the light of day.

But we're not here to talk about that. So: *Neverwinter Nights 2*...

Yeah!

What's the main reason to be excited about *NWN2*?

In a nutshell, it's everything about the first game - but more so in almost every direction. One of the major things we've focused on (having started with the Aurora toolset and the Aurora engine), is that we have this whole new graphics engine which we call Electron - it's fantastic and truly next-generation. We've also been able to start on the story from

absolutely the first day, which has meant we've really been able to deliver a top-notch single-player experience, as well as a fantastic toolset and multiplayer experience.

Having seen the game, there seems to be a lot of *KOTOR* in *NWN2* - what with the third-person camera and delivery style of the dialogue...

The thing that was nice about *KOTOR*, and the thing that we ought to emulate is that it's very cinematic. You could frame shots like a film director and you could really convey emotion with the camera angles and the looks on people's faces; since RPGs are all about the story, it's a great, great tool. We're also trying to make very deep characters - we want to make a story with nuances and not a clear-cut, black-and-white story.

And is the story completely original, or does it tap into existing *Forgotten Realms* myths?

It's completely fresh. Although obviously, our game is set in the *Forgotten Realms*, so if you're familiar with the literature then you'll be able to say: "Wow, I know that guy." However, some of the locations are brand new, in keeping with *D&D* because as a DM, you're supposed to create your own areas and such.

We're trying to make deep characters - we don't want a clear-cut, black-and-white story

The toolset for *NWN2* looks ace. What would you say is more important: the community building their own RPGs, or just playing the one that you've created?

They work hand in hand, and that's the lovely thing. In development, we use the self-same tools that the community is going to use, and we use them every day. So we want the same additions, improvements and tweaks that the community does.

Are the team all completely hardcore roleplayers?

In terms of designers, then almost all of them have been into *D&D* for a long time. As for me, I've been playing since I was about ten and never really stopped, so for me it comes as easy as breathing air.

So now you can tell your parents: "Y'see, I wasn't wasting my time..."

I've actually had to tell my mother that on several occasions. I think she's still slightly irked, but she now says: "You're right. All those times I used to tell you to go outside and play, perhaps you were doing better things indoors."

Here here. **PCZ**



NOPE, still not winter...



NOT night yet either...



MORE of an autumnal evening really.



WHAT would fantasy be without a fireplace?

FERRET BAUDOIN

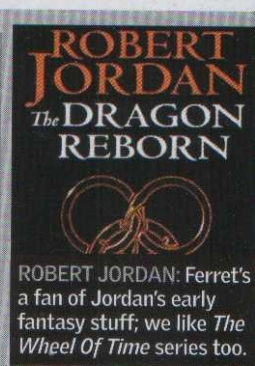
Where he turns for inspiration...



TRAVEL: "The less places are like the US, the better: you can see things from different perspectives."



TOLKIEN: JRR looms large in Ferret's subconscious. Goes with the job really.



ROBERT JORDAN: Ferret's a fan of Jordan's early fantasy stuff; we like *The Wheel Of Time* series too.



THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK: The ex-*KOTOR* man labels Lucas as the catalyst for his geekdom.

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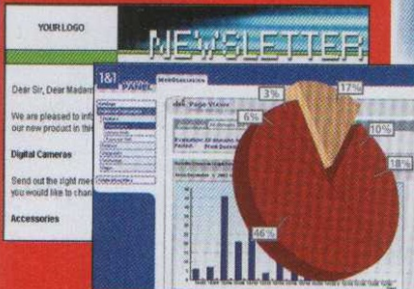
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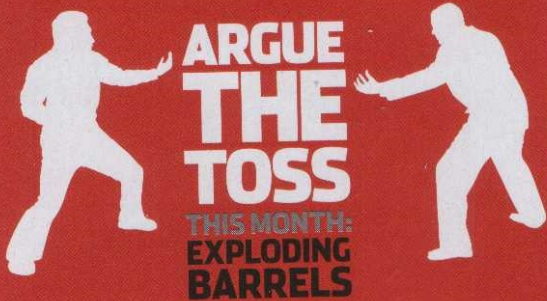
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Dear Steve,
 One of my first gaming joys was the exploding barrels in *Doom*. Just nailing a green tin with my shotgun and watching a hapless foe burst into guts was a magical moment. Since then, my joy has never diminished. Whether it's a special 'tinkly' *Half-Life* barrel, a can of discarded gasoline in *Max Payne 2* or a misplaced gib-giver in a hi-tech *F.E.A.R.* skyscraper. What could you possibly have against them?
 Will Porter

Dear Will,
 Exploding barrels are the biggest gaming cliché ever and it gives a terrible impression of what barrels are truly like. Barrels of gasoline or radioactive goop rarely explode when shot – that's a myth perpetuated by games like *Doom* and *Half-Life*. It was all well and good back in 1995, but this is the future and I demand realism from my games. Have you ever even seen a barrel? And if so, did you hit it with a crowbar? And if so, did it spontaneously explode?
 Steve Hogarty

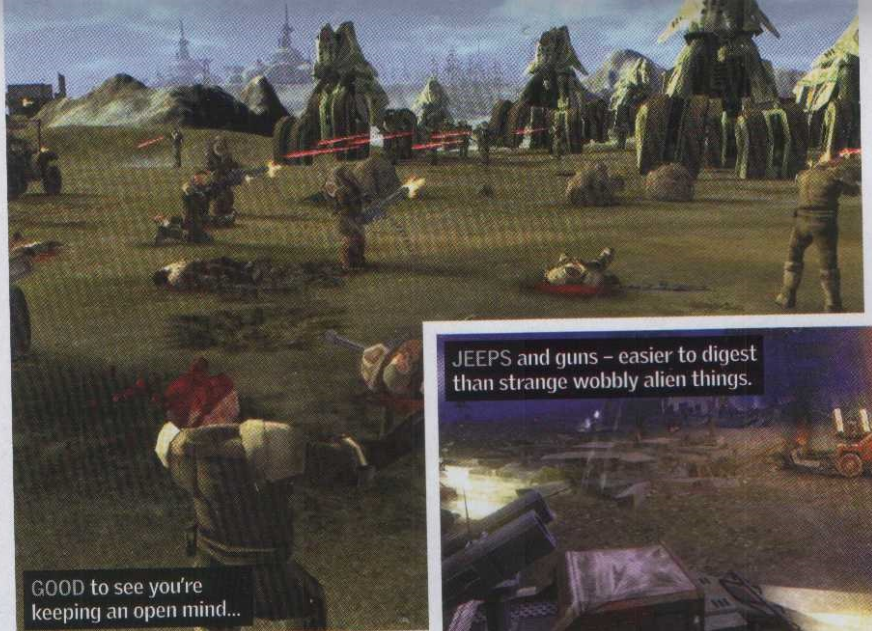
Dear Steve,
 Suspension of disbelief is as vital to gaming as it is in films. In my life I've come across many barrels: some containing beer, some containing oil, some containing pop-up pirates and I'll admit that none have exploded. Or at least they haven't exploded to my knowledge. In a game however, what better way to provoke a stunning ragdoll than a conveniently placed tub of TNT? What would you suggest they use instead? WP

Dear Will,
 How about a game in which you assassinate a ballet dancer in a wind tunnel mid-pirouette in space? There are so many ways of producing fantastic ragdoll effects without resorting to exploding barrels – exploding crates for example. I'm all for explosions, but why restrict yourself to barrels? And why do enemies insist on crowding around them? SH

Dear Steve,
 An exploding barrel is EXACTLY the same as an exploding crate. And barrel technology is progressing all the time: we now have non-explosive barrels, barrels that leak poisonous gas, barrels that leak explosive gas, barrels that roll, barrels that blast themselves across the room, barrels you can store stuff in... the list is endless. The fact that you can criticise barrels in such an era of barrel-advancement absolutely beggars belief. WP

Dear Will,
 Why don't you just marry a barrel? SH

Dear Steve,
 Well maybe I will, but I won't invite you to the wedding as you're a colossal dickhead. WP



GOOD to see you're keeping an open mind...

JEEPS and guns – easier to digest than strange wobbly alien things.

EYE OF THE STORM



Creators of *Perimeter* RTS reveal *Maelstrom*, promise less wackiness

www.codemasters.com | ETA: Q3 2006

PERIMETER WAS ACE, but no bugger bought it. This was for two reasons: a) because mainstream gamers are divots who only seem to be attracted by World War II and neat one-touch systems, and b) it was a bit weird. The energy balancing, the terraforming, the slightly off-kilter sci-fi setting and the nano-technological morphing just didn't help it shift units – despite the game's inherent goodness.

So now Codemasters has cut down developer KDV's drug rations, and sternly directed it towards a less trippy venture. Dubbed *Maelstrom*, the new game features ecological disaster, threat of alien invasion, resource management and Hitler. With a less mind-bending setting (we were lying about Hitler) the hope is that the reworked formula, still with transforming units, and the battle between low-tech human resistance, robotic imperials and dastardly aliens will expose this style of RTS gaming to the masses. Even though the masses don't really deserve it.

Continued evolution

PC ZONE love affair with *Pro Evo 5* gets deeper and more intricate

www.proevorankings.com

IF YOU ARE of sound mind then you too believe that *Pro Evolution Soccer* is as good as, if not better than, doing the business with a lady – or whatever your choice may be. So what better way to celebrate your celibacy with than the all new *Pro Evo* Rankings League! Because we say *PES* is magnificent so often, and so loudly, we've been given our own abode on www.proevorankings.com

[proevorankings.com](http://www.proevorankings.com) – a player ranking system that's user-friendly as hell and doesn't demand that you play all day, every day. The site launches at Christmas, and we'll have our own leagues and tournaments, so now you too can be abused by our esteemed editor.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

The reason **PC ZONE** misses deadlines

SEABASS YAKATSUKA - The man behind *Pro Evolution Soccer*

Named after a big fish, yet still one of the coolest cats in games development, Shingo 'Seabass' Yakatsuka is the mastermind behind the *Pro Evolution Soccer* series. So attached to his game that he's rumoured to sleep underneath his desk, he's an official **PC ZONE** hero.

Q There are a lot more physical challenges in *PES5* - is this a direction in which you want to continue in *PES6*?

A Probably not in our next game. We obviously won't stop pursuing that realism, capturing a true simulation of football, but in terms of control we'd like to find the perfect balance of arcade and simulation - we don't want to pursue it as a simple simulation too much.

Will the new *Pro Evolution Soccer* management game come out on the PC?

At the moment it's a PS2 exclusive, because it's the leading platform and because we want to bring the game out in Europe first; but if we're successful and if PC gamers request it, then we'll look into it.

You've said the next-gen *PES* will concentrate on AI rather than graphics. What are you working on for it?

The graphics side of things is quite simple to upgrade, but AI is really,

really difficult - and for next-gen even more so. To give you a hint of what we're planning, we want the AI smart but not in a way that the players will always pinpoint where the ball will come. We want to represent human error - what players will actually do when they make a mistake.

Is the online dream still 11 vs 11 players?

Our goal hasn't changed - we could probably do it for the next *PES*, but it's very difficult, as we'd have to change the system completely in order to do it. So we'll probably bring you 5 vs 5 online, and have a kind of halfway version. If we actually gave you the chance to play 11 vs 11, we'd definitely see a lot of that human error!

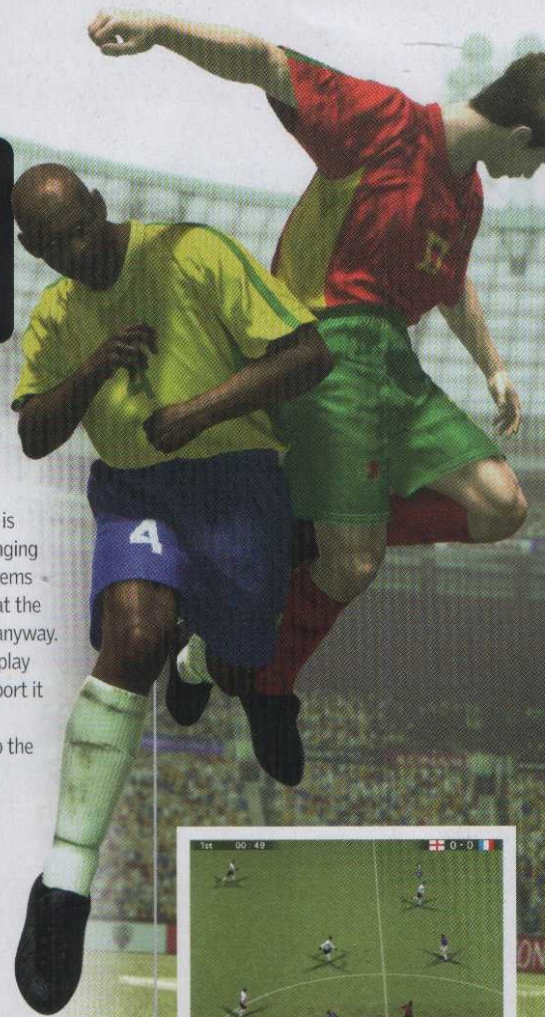
***PES* is all about those human mistakes and the way the ball moves - while other games concentrate on making the perfect game or the perfect overhead kick. Is this random element a real philosophy behind your game?**



Yes that is actually one of our philosophies - it's kind of a Japanese thing actually! We think that the most fun you have with *PES* is with your friends. We're plunging into the creation of new systems - and AI - but we also feel that the AI shouldn't really be there anyway. We want to make the users play and not necessarily just support it with AI - that's our basic thinking. We do want to help the player control fluidly in the game, but the AI shouldn't control the users.

Do you have any plans to enhance the Master League in the next version of *PES*?

Every year we make changes - in *PES5* we've made the training more simple, cut the boring stuff and strengthened the management side. For the next one we want to do an online Master league, so that many players can play it at once. There is a problem in that the strongest players will always buy up all the best players, so we're working out a way to handle money allocation. But I promise that we will have an online Master League in the next *PES*.



LIVING IN A MATERIAL WORLD

Celebrating the fact that the Internet was built for the re-distribution of crap

Ladies and Gentlemen. Boys and girls. Children of the electronic age. We're moving office next week and as such the tat-pile has become gargantuan. All we hear from our superiors is 'fire risk' this, 'this T-shirt smells' that. It's like living in some fascist regime. Only the continued siphoning of bollocks via eBay can possibly save us, and seeing as it's for charity then we may all go to heaven for it as well. We're on eBay with the tag PCZoners whenever a new issue hits the street. We may be there right now, so come buy our crap.

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All proceeds go to charity, mate...
www.entertainmentsoftwarecharity.org



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**COMING
SOON...**

SO that's two hammers each, plus two in the truck.

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR: TEN HAMMERS

If *Will Porter* had even one hammer, then he'd only hammer in the morning...

DEVELOPER Pandemic PUBLISHER THQ WEBSITE www.fullspectrumwarrior.com PREVIOUSLY IN... N/A

THE LOWDOWN

- Same nerve-jangling, tactical action
- More squads to control, more missions, slightly tartier graphics
- Vehicles that you can kill people with
- Bloody silly name

IN THE COSTCUTTERS near to my house, they sell an almost mystical cider called Three Hammers, the audience for which is almost exclusively tramps. The logo of said beverage simply consists of three hastily scanned pictures of crap pound-shop hammers. It's the worst name and the worst design you could think of but it still works, since it conveys the sense of cheapness, of getting hammered and of getting hammered by a multiple of three. And so we inextricably come to *Ten Hammers*, a sequel with a name akin to an extra-strength white cider designed to keep tramps in the gutter and without any hope of salvation.

Apparently though, the developer was thinking that the Tien Hamir bridge (fictional) that serves as the focal point of the third-person squad mischief, lying within the city of Khardiman (fictional,

sounds like a curry spice) and the nation of Zekistan (also fictional) sounded a bit like the phrase 'Ten Hammers' – thus the name. And despite my criticism of the title, the game itself is looking to build heavily on the original and exciting dynamics provided by its progenitor – a strategic think-fest of pushing forward, organising covering-fire, heightening tension and watching your poor men dying in a variety of bullet-torn and slow-motion ways.

ATEN-SHUN!

You can now control up to four squads (Alpha, Bravo, Charlie and Delta), and no longer have to skip between them when giving orders, so you can bark commands on-the-fly. This adds to the complexity of the whole farrago tenfold, with the four separate squads obviously bringing a multitude of extra bodies to the fray that need to cover and be covered. This is

further complicated by the fact you'll be able to break up a squad and send a few lucky souls up front to have a bit of a scout – something bound to result in a few *Full Metal Jacket* "Doc Jay and Eightball are wasted!" moments of jollity.

There'll be vehicles to order about as well, plus buildings within which you'll battle and set up sniper positions over the surrounding streets – everything an armchair general could wish for. As mentioned earlier, the storyline revolves around a key bridge that lies over a river that separates two warring factions, one in the north and the other in the south, and playing as US and Coalition (ie plucky Brits) who aren't popular with either party. So once more you're in 360-degrees of danger, but you can bank on *Ten Hammers* bringing the formula forward a few paces – while at no stage walking into a wide open market square and being shot in the head. **PC7**

ETA
Feb
'06

WHY YOU SHOULD BE EXCITED...

PLAYBUS

Hmmm. This wrecked bus appears to provide decent cover, but can any residents of Durka-Durka-stan (or whatever, *Team America* fans) get a snipe on it? That's the eternal question...

HARD PLACE

We're not in an Iraq-type area, we're in a fictitious land that borders Afghanistan – thus the mountains, the architecture and presence of Americans.

SQUAD-U-LIKE

Not all, but some, of the 12 missions will have you in control of four fully-fledged squads – but as before, you're there in an order-giving, advisory capacity rather than that of trigger-pulling and screaming.

WINDOW LICKER

Full Spectrum Warrior's devastating realism is now furthered by the ability to shoot out of windows. As this chap amply demonstrates.

RANDOM BUILDINGS

There are still plenty of buildings with no discernible real world usage other than being something big to hide behind. Then again, perhaps they use this one to store grain. Or perhaps to sit inside while plotting evil.



IF only all wars could be settled through the death of imaginary people. *PC ZONE's* thought for the day...



As before you're in 360-degrees of danger, but *Ten Hammers* brings the formula forward a few paces





MORE street parade shenanigans.

IT'S UP TO YOU...

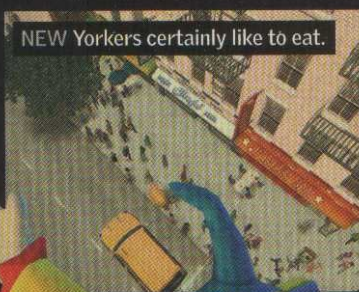
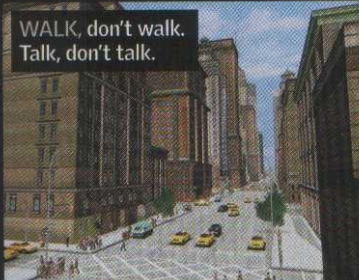
TYCOON CITY: NEW YORK

Steve Hill went to Milton Keynes to see the Big Apple, and was sickened to the core to be forced to work...

DEVELOPER Deep Red PUBLISHER Atari WEBSITE www.atari.com/tycooncity PREVIOUSLY IN... 162

THE LOWDOWN

- Another city sim from the makers of million-selling *Monopoly Tycoon* ✓
- Enables you to build New York city from the ground up ✓
- Features most of the iconic landmarks associated with the city ✓
- The city is home to thousands of individual citizens ✓
- Probably not going to appeal to the most hardcore of gamers ✗



AS A RULE of thumb, games with the word 'Tycoon' in them are about as welcome as gout around here. *Airport Tycoon*, *Zoo Tycoon*, *Tycoon Tycoon*... All summarily dismissed with a weary shrug and tossed into the landfill site that is the shit games pile.

However, when said game comes from a developer with the calibre of genre-specialist Deep Red, we're prepared to listen. We're even prepared to get on a train and travel to the company's rural home on the outskirts of Milton Keynes. And in a staggering break with tradition, we even offered to put in an hour's work helping out with the development of the game. For free. And when I say we, I of course mean me. Thanks a lot everybody.

First things first though, what's it all about? Have another look at the title and see if you can hazard a guess. Well done, have a peanut. Yes, it's a *Tycoon* game set in the city of New York. That alone would be an interesting enough concept, but there's a lot more to *TC: NY* than selling amphetamine-strength coffee and foot-high pastrami-on-rye sandwiches.

Beginning in Greenwich Village, the idea is to start from scratch and build New York from the ground up. When we say New York, we mean Manhattan Island. When we say Manhattan Island, we mean a simplified 'computer game' version of it – this isn't Google Earth by any means. There's plenty to be getting on with though with over 100 types of business to build and 12 distinct districts. Plus, if you're ever in doubt as to what city you're in, you can knock up over 50 landmarks, including such instantly recognisable icons as the Statue Of Liberty and the Empire State Building.

BUILDING PERMISSION

So why aren't the surrounding pages littered with dramatic screenshots of such famous landmarks? Because we're not allowed to show them to you. That's right. In what may rank as one of the most cock-and-arse situations we've ever encountered, it's been explained to us that the city of New York will not allow representations of its buildings to be used to promote or market a product, namely this game. Which is of course an absolute absurdity. What about the countless films that are set in New York? Have they never featured a building on the promotional poster? Of course they have. What about *Planet Of The Apes*, with the shattered Statue Of Liberty jutting plaintively from

ETA
Feb
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Founding father
Founded by Clive Robert, the company sets up a studio in Milton Keynes.

1998

Risky business
Makes a solid debut with *Risk II*, to the delight of bedroom generals everywhere.

2000



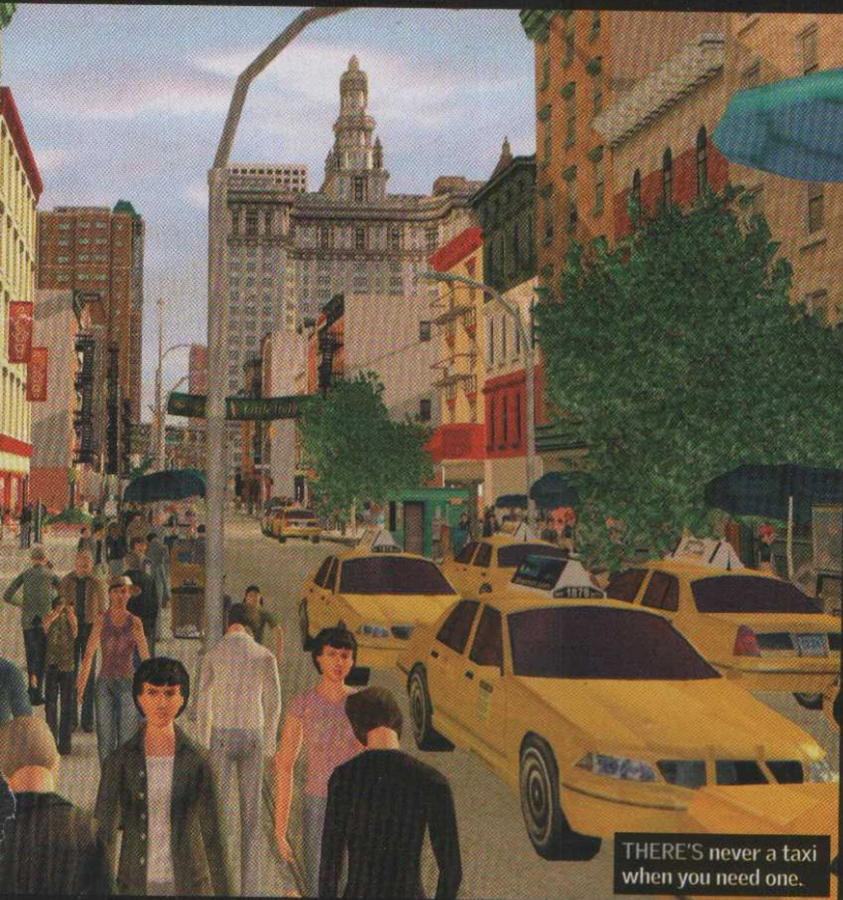
Pass Go
Monopoly Tycoon does the business, eventually passing the million-seller mark.

2001



Life's a beach
Ineffectively controversial *Club 18-30* 'em-up *Beach Life* sells nine copies...

2002



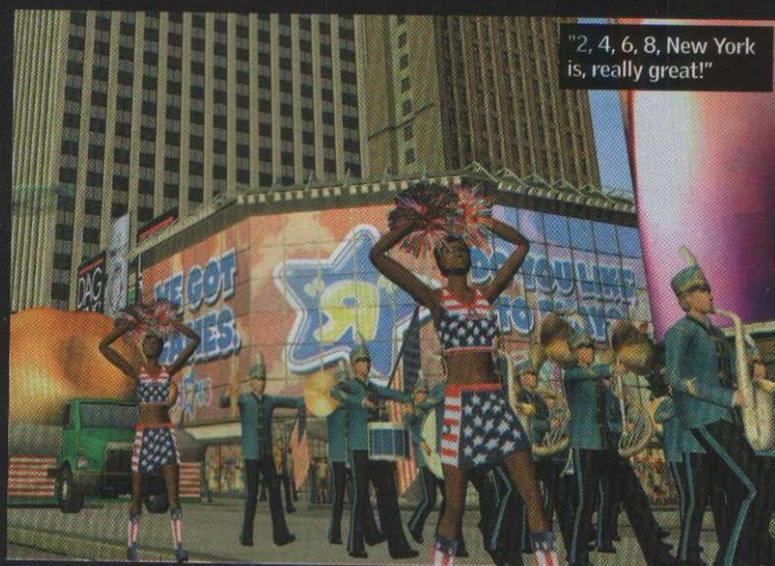
THERE'S never a taxi when you need one.

the sand? That's seemingly OK, yet a computer-rendered image of an intact statue is effectively censored.

I was actually at the Statue Of Liberty a couple of months ago and took some photos. What if I were to print one of those photos in this magazine with the caption 'This looks just like *Tycoon City: New York*? Would I be arrested? Or what if, while playing the game at Deep Red, I'd accidentally leant on the PrintScreen key and in the confusion emailed a screenshot to PC ZONE. No judge in the land would even waste their time with it. And of course, as soon as we get our hands on early code we'll be taking shots of every landmark you can think of. With the exception of the Trump Tower, that is, as the elaborately-coiffed Donald Trump apparently wanted in the region of a billion dollars just for it to appear in the game.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Anyway, to get back to the original point, the game is chock-full of New York stuff, a mildly impressive feat given that it's being developed in a converted stables off a roundabout near Milton Keynes. As Deep Red development director, Paul Howarth explains: "That's one of the issues we had. We were building Milton Keynes, in terms of some of the architecture. This is where we live."



"2, 4, 6, 8, New York is, really great!"

There's a lot more to TC:NY than amphetamine-strength coffee and foot-high pastrami-on-rye sandwiches

In order to prevent such an abomination, the artists were packed off to New York (twice), with a pocket full of bollocks and a wallet full of cash, and presumably a couple of digital cameras. As such, the Deep Red studio is plastered with photographs of the city, not just of the obvious stuff, but also close-ups of

brickwork and so forth, much of which has permeated into the game.

As such, the various districts should look markedly different from each other. So Greenwich Village will be a bit bohemian, Harlem will have a more urban feel, and the Upper West Side – which is probably where those sloshpots



Give a little respect Ground Zero handled in sensitive fashion



IN memoriam.

When developing a game that recreates the major structures of New York in detail, the question of what to do with the gaping hole where the Twin Towers once stood is obviously a pertinent one. In reality, Ground Zero is a bleak fenced-off scar in the heart of the financial district, inhabited by a teeming mass of hawkers and gawpers.

What to do with the area in *Tycoon City: New York* was obviously discussed in some depth at Deep Red. At one point, there was even a consideration of being able to rebuild the original towers in all their former glory. A further idea was to construct the beams of light that were discussed in the aftermath of the tragedy. Ultimately though, Deep Red decided not to make a song and dance of it, and the Landmark Building that you can build in the area is a simple memorial garden.

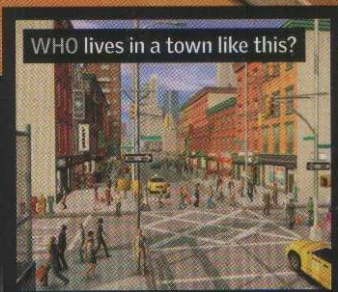


TIMES Square is generally a bit busier than this.



WHO lives in a town like this?

NOTE Empire State Building in background.



It's not a hard game. It's about having fun, building a world and playing with it

Paul Howarth development director, *Deep Red*

from *Sex And The City* live – will be a little more upmarket, with brownstone buildings galore. In addition to the numerous generic business outlets, the game is also set to feature some actual shops, including the NBA store, the Virgin Megastore and the Toys R Us on Times Square. Adding to the authenticity, this is arguably a rare example of third-party branding enhancing the realism rather than detracting from it.

A huge part of the New York experience is the people, a babbling mass of hurried humanity wolfing down pizzas and barking tersely at anyone who gets in their way. This has been replicated in the game to an extent, with an estimated 56,000 citizens wandering the streets in search if somewhere to spend their money. With a functioning subway system, they'll appear and disappear into the ground, or of course jump into one of the city's many yellow cabs.

Each citizen can be targeted individually, and in traditional fashion you

can read their various needs and desires and even follow them around as they go about their daily business.

JUST LIKE HACKNEY

We've done exactly that in the course of playing out the opening part of the game. Beginning, as promised, in Greenwich Village, it's a fairly bleak area, populated largely by drug addicts, the infirm and students. A cut-scene confirms the latter, with a pair of brats on a street corner bemoaning the lack of facilities, such as a cheap bar, an Internet café and somewhere for art students to buy materials.

Clicking on an area of scrubland, a list of buildings is offered, and once you've decided what you want, it springs up within seconds. This is where it gets interesting though, as you're then offered a selection of upgrades, which allow you to personalise your building, and also to increase its all-important Sphere Of Influence.

Say, for example, you've built a hairdressers, but you're scarcely doing enough trade to pay for the old Doris in the

corner to sweep up the hair clippings. Try sticking a massive neon sign outside and you'll be the next Trevor Sorbie.

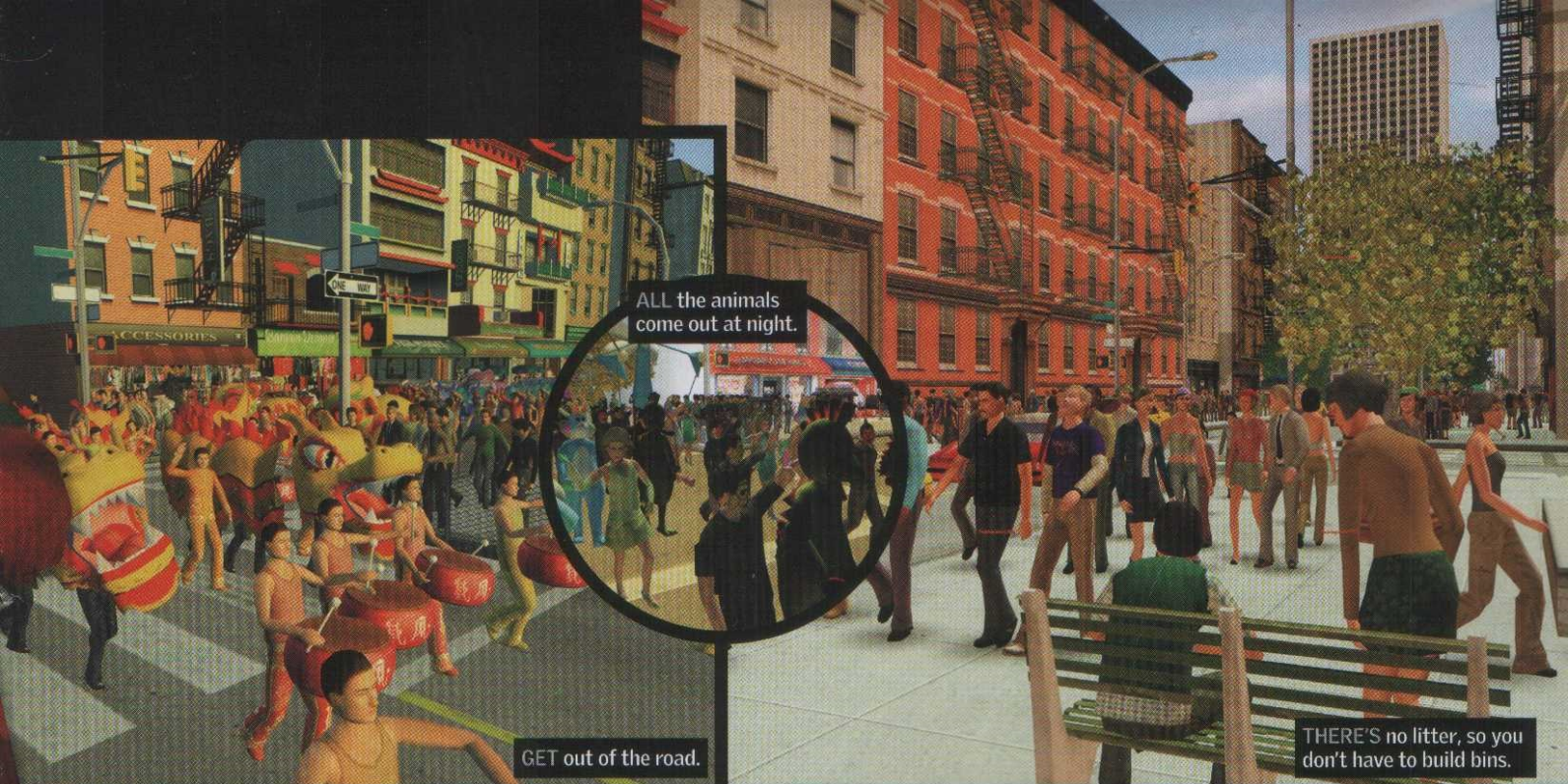
Likewise, if your mobile phone shop is struggling, why not pay a couple of goons to dress up as man-size cell phones and perform a jig on the sidewalk – the punters will be flooding in. It's this kind of fun aspect that looks like elevating *TC: NY* away from the micro-management-obsessed titles that blight the genre, as ultimately the game mainly revolves around simply dicking about with the city.

FUN FUN FUN

Sure, there are missions in the form of 'Opportunities,' such as building some statues in a particular park. Or you could try to get to the top of the 'Rich List' if that appeals, but it's all fairly low-adrenalin stuff. And of course, the sandbox mode is completely freeform.

As Paul Howarth claims: "It's not a hard game. It's about having fun, building a world, playing with it. It's not about making things tough for the player, it's just about letting you build New York at your speed."

Much of the reward of playing the game seems to come in the form of graphical discovery, which can take many forms. The landmarks themselves are an obvious one, as they can only be built once you've earned enough Landmark Bonds. But there are also other minor treats, such as bespoke street parades. So, Chinatown will play



ALL the animals come out at night.

GET out of the road.

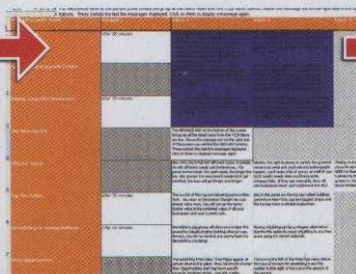
THERE'S no litter, so you don't have to build bins.

Will work for Coke (diet)

Steve Hill thought he was here to look at the game, not help to write it for free. Sucker...



LOOK, here's me re-writing the Hints & Tips into something approaching recognisable English. Or American-English, as it's New York.



POSSIBLY even more boring than it sounds, it involves tampering with a spreadsheet for almost an hour. I can't take it.



THROUGH the magic of computer wizardry, here are my words in the game. It gives me a sense of enormous well-being.



A high-level meeting with Deep Red managing director, Clive Robert. "I want 10 per cent and my name on the box..."

host to those nutters in dragon suits and Greenwich Village will have a ticker tape parade. Once all 12 districts have been opened up, the game eventually finishes with the traditional Times Square New Year celebrations. That should take about 30-40 hours, but Deep Red reckons a large number of punters will be content to simply dabble with the sandbox mode.

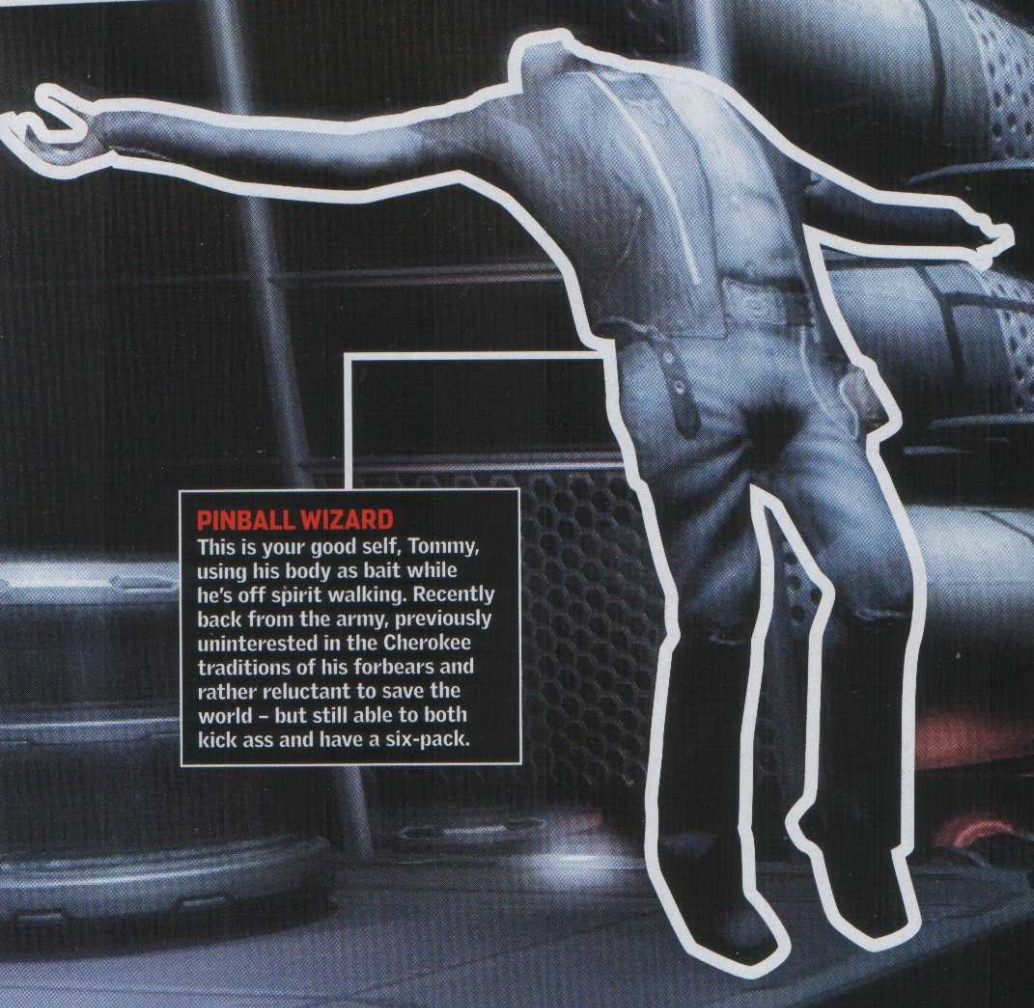
RICKEEEEEY!

Happy to admit that the game occupies a similar space to *The Sims*, Howarth says: "I think we forget that there's not that many hardcore gamers in the world. We're trying to build a game that appeals to the average person. I want the person who watches *EastEnders* to play it. There was a phrase we had early on: 'I don't play games, but I'd play that!'"

Well, we play games but we don't watch *EastEnders*. *Hollyoaks* at a push. But from what we've seen, we'd still have a dabble with *TC: NY*. Particularly the excellent Hints & Tips section, which were expertly crafted by yours truly (see 'Will Work For Coke (Diet)', above). Not a deal breaker. **PC7**



A New York state of mind.



PINBALL WIZARD

This is your good self, Tommy, using his body as bait while he's off spirit walking. Recently back from the army, previously uninterested in the Cherokee traditions of his forbears and rather reluctant to save the world - but still able to both kick ass and have a six-pack.

NOT A HOOVER

The alien mother ship is something called a living Dyson sphere, something that travels through the galaxy feeding from what's in its path - whether it be living tissue or hard metal. This section is a link between two different zones, making it a lot like the 'in-between' bits of the *The Crystal Maze* when they'd go on a rope bridge or something.

PRETTY BIRDIE

Young Tommy is the luckiest Cherokee in all of the sacred Tahlequah reservation, because he has a beautiful, magical falcon called Talon (not pictured). Talon will, however, be able to scout ahead, translate alien etchings, distract monsters and peck at things that are of interest.



PREY

DEVELOPER Human Head Studios **PUBLISHER** 2K Games
WEBSITE www.prey.com **ETA** Late 2006

NO, **THE PC ZONE** printers haven't balled up (again) - this is a super-exclusive screen taken from *Prey's* intriguing Spirit Walk mode. The hero of 3DRealms' upcoming Doom 3 engine blaster y'see, having been beamed up into the belly of an invading alien flotilla, is in the process of rediscovering his sacred Cherokee heritage. Tommy has discovered that he has the ability to leave his own body, enter the spirit world and wander round as an ethereal entity - allowing you to use your own body as bait, while your spirit creeps up on aliens with Spirit Bow at the ready. Huge exclusive next month!





CANNON FODDER

These nasty turtle chaps are known simply as 'fodder', so you can probably safely assume that they'll fulfil the same role as the screaming grunts in *Halo* - without being quite as camp. The red eyes are a nice touch.

SPIRIT BOW IN THE SKY

A handy tool for stealth kills, the spirit bow will also allow you to kill spectral beings known as wraiths - nasty pieces of work who have been known to possess small children and make them throw their friends into spikes. That isn't just games journalist hyperbole by the way, it actually happens in the game. *Prey* is violent as hell.

GENERATION NEXT...

ENEMY TERRITORY: QUAKE WARS

Martin Korda discovers a glorious future for online gaming. And he finds it in deepest, darkest Kent...

DEVELOPER Splash Damage/id Software PUBLISHER Activision WEBSITE PREVIOUSLY IN... Issue 157

**COVER
FEATURE**

THE LOWDOWN

Visuals so good they'll make your teeth drop out one by one ✓

Two totally unique, hugely imaginative sides to play as ✓

Finally, a team-based shooter that genuinely encourages and rewards teamwork ✓

A brand new online shooter set in the *Quake* universe ✓

Maps are being designed with only 24-32 players in mind ✗

ETA
TBA

GRAPHICS don't currently get much more realistic than this.

THE STORY SO FAR...

SPLASH DAMAGE



Over here!
Formed from a bunch of *Quake III* mod-makers, this fledgling team soon impresses id Software.

2001



Nasty Nazis
Splash Damage releases the popular *Wolfenstein* multiplayer add-on, *Enemy Territory*.

2003



It's amazing!
Splash Damage reveals info about its first standalone game, *ET: Quake Wars*.

2005

COULD this game look any more amazing if it tried? I don't think so.



Making a splash

The rise and rise of Splash Damage



ID'S Kevin Cloud (left) and Splash Damage's Paul Wedgwood.

IT'S THE MOST unlikely partnership in videogame history. A small-time bunch of Kent-based mod-makers have joined forces with one of the most renowned and successful developers in the world. What's more, with their power combined, they're creating what could just be the most visually impressive, intuitive, ground-breaking and imaginative team-based shooter the world has ever seen. The developers? Splash Damage and id Software. The game? *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars*. A shiny future for online PC gaming? Assured.

Having been subjected to an incessant barrage of PR eulogising about how *Quake Wars* was going to revolutionise the team-based shooter, boss-man Sefton dispatches me on a daring, fearsomely dangerous reconnaissance mission to Splash Damage's Bromley offices. OK, it's not actually all that daring. Or dangerous. And we are kind of

invited to the offices. But my mission is to find out if this is the real deal or the usual barrage of hype that accompanies such major announcements. Turns out it's the real deal.

To say that I'm blown away would be an understatement akin to saying that an atom bomb goes off with a bit of a fizz. This standalone successor to the *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* spin-off *Enemy Territory*

technology that so many lambasted as being an indoor-only, shadow simulator that handled outdoor environments with the aplomb of an agoraphobic.

MEGA-IMPRESSED

Arriving in a flustered, sweating state, Paul Wedgwood (managing director of Splash Damage) sits me down, pours me a drink

To say that I'm blown away would be the understatement of the year

is looking so luscious, it makes the current crop of multiplayer shooters look like they've been coded on a BBC Micro Model B. What's more, given its predominantly outdoor locations, it's somewhat ironic to note that, when development started, *Quake Wars* utilised the same core technology as *Doom 3*, the very same core

and fires up a level. While we wait, *Quake Wars'* executive producer Kevin Cloud (from id) reveals the secret of the game's stunning visuals. "We're using a brand new technology called the MegaTexture," (for more on this, see 'It's Mega', p50). "It was first devised by John Carmack at id and

So just how did this unlikely partnership between id and Splash Damage first begin? "I used to run a bulletin system that distributed id games," reminisces Paul Wedgwood, Splash Damage's founder. "When *Quake* came out, I joined a *Team Fortress* clan and started to get obsessed with online gaming. It was then I realised I should be in game development.

"Later, I became the project manager of a *Team Fortress*-like mod for *Quake III*. We had some pretty ambitious plans to make a total conversion, so we started communicating with Robert Duffy at id, who'd written mods himself. He really helped us out.

Wedgwood continues: "A year later, we were invited to QuakeCon, which is when I started Splash Damage - and within a year we'd built a class-based multiplayer game. After showing it to Activision, we were contracted to make multiplayer maps for *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*, which is how *Enemy Territory* started." The rest, as they say, is history. And a fair amount of the future to boot.



It's mega Unreal Engine 3 finally has a rival

GIANT sky cranes will deliver vehicles to the battlefield.



Even as I type these words, I still can't quite believe it: *Quake Wars* is set to run on the same spec machine as *Doom 3*. I shit you not. That's what the men say. And that of course means that we'll all be able to enjoy its ace-ness without shelling out for a quad-processor supercomputer. But how is this possible? Well, it all comes down to a new technological breakthrough called the MegaTexture, which allows Splash Damage to create a unique texture that covers the entire landscape with no tiling or repetition, meaning that levels can be drawn all the way to the horizon with no fogging.

Even more impressive is that the developer can create a 6GB (yes, we're still shitting you not, you read that correctly: 6GB) source texture that only uses 8MB in video memory, without any loss of resolution. But wait, there's still more. The MegaTextures can also derive the properties of everything on the map, be it the sound a vehicle makes on a certain surface or the amount of traction it has on pebbles or tarmac. Now that's what I call impressive. My head is still reeling, and every inch of my body is telling me that it can't be possible, but they assure me it is. And I'm inclined to believe them.



IS that a quad-bike up there? Could be, could be...





for the past two years, Splash Damage has been working on the engine." As Cloud's voice trails off, the giant wall-mounted monitor before me lights up, transforming into the most radiant, realistic and awe-inspiring outdoor virtual world I've ever seen. Any long-standing journalistic cynicism drains away from me in seconds. Clearly, I'm in for something special...

"Quake Wars is set around 50-60 years in the future, when the Strogg first invade Earth. It's actually a prequel to *Quake II*

and *Quake 4*," explains Paul Wedgwood as I stare dumbfounded at the screen. "There's a conventional human military force called the Global Defence Force (GDF), which has machine guns and tanks, fighting against the hi-tech Strogg alien technology."

Any long-standing journalistic cynicism drains away from me in seconds. Clearly, I'm in for something special

Barely hearing the Splash Damage man's words, I gaze at the monitor where the landscape spills out into the horizon with perfect clarity. Clouds make their cumbersome paths across the sky, painting

shadows on the ground below, where every blade of grass sags against the wind and every tree sways in unison.

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE
"Quake Wars uses the same character class-based format that worked so well in *Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory*. We're looking at 24-32 players as an optimum number for each map," continues Wedgwood, as I continue to stare. "You have two bases - GDF and Strogg. In each

escarpment, it looks... Amazing. I can't believe I'm gazing at moss. But it's just so real, I can almost reach out and touch it...

VIRTUAL REALITY

I snap back into the real world to find Wedgwood and Cloud looking at me in thinly veiled amusement. "We began development with the Doom 3 Engine. But


after all the work that's been put into it, I don't really think you can call it the same technology. There's a whole new rendering technology and a huge amount of work has been put into restructuring the networking to support the gameplay," explains Cloud. "This means that if you want to hide in shadows, you really are hiding in shadows. If you're hiding




One careful Strogg driver

A sneak peek at the Top Trumps cards of the future

GDF



NAME: BADGER TRUCK
ROLE: RECONNAISSANCE AND LIGHT RAIDER
Special abilities: Lightly armed and unarmoured, but quite nippy.
Named after: Over-hyped black-and-white creature that lives in a hole called a 'set'.



NAME: TROJAN APC
ROLE: TROOP TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKHORSE
Special abilities: Climbs big rocks, goes through water.
Named after: A big wooden horse and a small electronic virus.



NAME: TITAN TANK
ROLE: BLOWING THINGS UP WITH A MASSIVE BIG GUN
Special abilities: Has a massive big gun.
Named after: Some giants who had a tiff with the gods and ended up under a volcano or something.



NAME: ANANSI GYROCOPTER
ROLE: FLYING AROUND AND BLOWING THINGS UP
Special abilities: Rockets, missiles, chin-mounted MG and side-mounted reversible jets.
Named after: The French for 'pineapple'.

STROGG



NAME: HOG TRUCK
ROLE: SCOUTING, SNEAKING AND CAUSING MISCHIEF
Special abilities: A pretty mean ram charge attack.
Named after: The popular chain of Hogs Head high street public houses.



NAME: DESECRATOR HOVERTANK
ROLE: FULL-ON WAR MACHINE
Special abilities: Anti-grav lets it cross water and turn on a penny.
Named after: The people who say old churches can be turned into nightclubs.

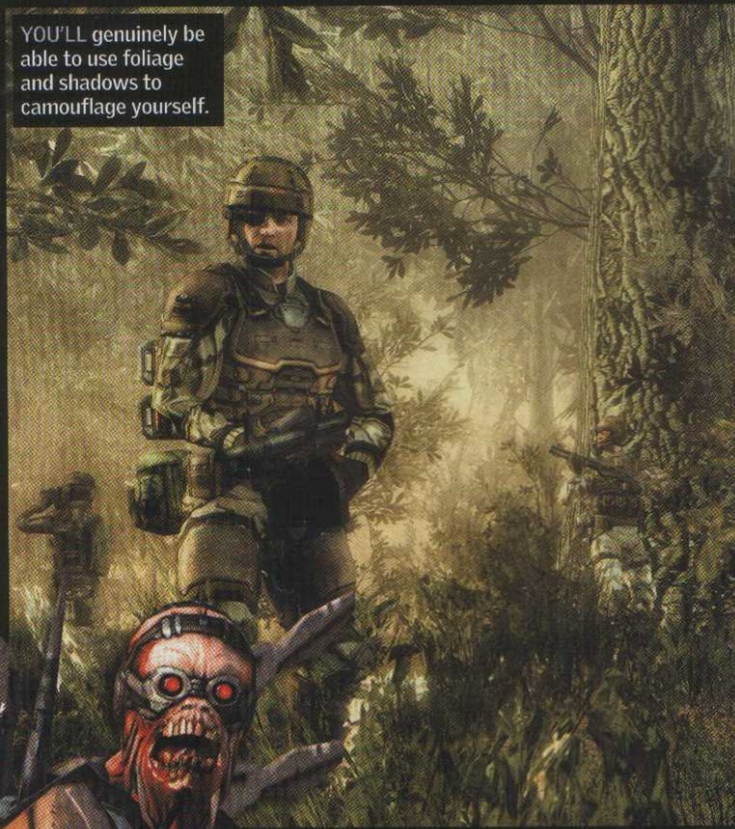


NAME: GOLIATH HEAVY WALKER
ROLE: INTIMIDATION, STRIDING
Special abilities: Looks amazingly cool, has very big guns.
Named after: Middle-Eastern man killed by a small boy at the whim of god.



NAME: HORNET FLYER MACHINE
ROLE: FLYING DEATH MACHINE
Special abilities: Is heavily armed and highly manoeuvrable due to four anti-grav repulsors.
Named after: A truly terrifying variety of insect.

YOU'LL genuinely be able to use foliage and shadows to camouflage yourself.




Beginners should be able to pilot vehicles easily, and the more experienced will also find a ton of things to do with them

Paul Wedgwood, MD, Splash Damage

THE GDF team will be equipped with conventional weaponry.





ALL Strogg enjoy a relaxing countryside walk of a Sunday.

...ls, the abilities of each character
...nd the military objectives that you're
...ng as focused as possible. This in turn
...ow the team to get that satisfaction
...aying together by overcoming the
...as a team."

I' IN TEAM

...rder? Perhaps, but Splash Damage
...ing this task with fervour as it
...ours to make *Quake Wars* truly
...ionary. "Say a Ranger from your
...as collected intelligence on an
...base and located something that
...soldier, can destroy," explains Paul
...wood. "The server then gives you a
...n and tells you exactly where to go,
...get there and what your reward will
...u complete the objective. Even if
...new to the game and you don't
...you're supposed to be playing as
...a team, you soon realise you are."
...highlight his point, Wedgwood loads
...ucky, undulating level called Canyon,
...ch deep and winding ravines through
...concrete roads meander invitingly,
...rude, less obvious paths streak
...the grass-matted highlands,

...providing shortcuts to the savvy
...player. Playing as the GDF,
...Wedgwood embarks on a
...mission to destroy an
...underground Strogg base. First, he's tasked
...with reinforcing a bridge that will provide
...a route for a Mobile Command Post to travel
...over, with the intent of capturing the
...centre of the map. Once he's done this, he
...quickly sets about building a pair of titanic
...turrets, pointing them at the towering
...doors of the Strogg base and proceeds to
...send them flying like leaves in a hurricane.

...Easy for a veteran like Wedgwood, but
...how will a wet-nosed newbie cope with
...deciphering these objectives? Cloud's
...answer is simple. "A Command Map shows
...you the territories that you and the enemy
...currently own. As you complete certain
...objectives, the territory becomes yours."
...You can see where all of the main
...objectives are and where the fighting is
...happening, but also as an individual
...character, you're given solo missions.
...The Command Map tells you where you
...have to go and what you have to do
...when you get there." That clears
...that up, then.



QUAKE Wars is set around 50-60 years in the future, when the Strogg first invade Earth.



After a quick break to compose myself and ram a chicken sandwich down my throat - I'm not hungry but I have to kill time somehow (*Who are you? And what have you done with Korda? - Ed*), it's time to roll out each team's character classes and hardware line-ups.

"We want to have a selection of classes so that people can take on specific roles, be it on the frontline or holding back as support classes," adds

general purpose machine-gun that spits out bullets faster than a gummy bucktoothed motormouth spits out saliva. The Ranger, meanwhile, acts as an infiltrator, who marauds across the map gathering Intel, which is then relayed back to the rest of the team as the aforementioned objectives for each character class to accomplish. He also has the ability to disable enemy defence systems. The Engineer, meanwhile, is a dab-hand at repairing structures and vehicles, and the Field Ops guy can call in artillery strikes and deploy radar relays, turrets and AA guns.

nail-gun, and, just like the GDF's Engineer, can repair buildings and vehicles. Finally, there's the Meditek, who makes up for his lack of combat punch by gathering and distributing delicious, fleshy Stroyent to needy team-mates (check out 'Stroy Sauce', page 55).

GUN PERMIT

And, obviously, there are vehicles. Tons of them. But before the man from Splash Damage conjures up the armoured hardware on his magic screen, he explains an innovative new feature called Driver

The general purpose machine-gun spits out bullets faster than a gummy bucktoothed motormouth spits out saliva

Wedgwood. "We've tried to take the four or five combat roles from *Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory* and expand on their abilities. The big difference from *Wolf: ET* is that the two teams aren't just re-skinned versions of each other. There's a lot of asymmetry between them."

Each team, y'see, will have unique infiltration, offence, defence and support classes. The mainstay of the GDF team is the heavily-armed soldier, who carries a

The Strogg contingent is equally impressive. The Tank is a heavy weapons specialist who carries a devastating weapon called the Obliterator. The Infiltrator class soldier is fast and stealthy and can gather intelligence. What's more, by stunning a member of the GDF, he can transfer his mindset into their brain, wander about in their body and use it to jauntily infiltrate the enemy base. The Constructor class comes armed with a

Consent. "If you're driving a vehicle, you can always use all of its weapons, but they'll be constrained by your line of sight. However, another player is able to fire it the full 360-degrees. We didn't want a situation where you're having fun controlling a vehicle, then suddenly another player jumps in and takes over one of the weapons, so we have a consent system whereby you can choose whether you want to work with another player." Inspired.



Stroy sauce Forget fruit and veg, all you need is Stroyent



THE Strogg use Stroyent to power both themselves and their weapons.

As I stumble out of the Splash Damage office, idiotically slapping Wedgwood and Cloud on the back like a drunk tumbling out at closing time and spewing out an endless stream of superlatives, I realise I'm really rather excited.

Not only is *Quake Wars* looking like an excellent team-based shooter, it has the potential to take the genre to the next level, one where players are genuinely encouraged to work as a team and are rewarded when they do. Add to this an engine that simply oozes quality from every pixel, and it's easy to see that this, the most unlikely of partnerships, could yet prove to be one of the most successful and inspired collaborations in game development history. The future's bright. **PCZ**

So, onto the machinery. For the GDF, there's the Anansi Gyrocopter – a rotor-free helicopter with forward and rear thrusting jets that makes it handle like a fighter plane. There's also the Trojan, a heavily-armoured APC that can transport five troops into enemy hotspots and doubles up as an amphibious vehicle; and the Titan, a three-person battle tank. But the GDF don't get all the fun. The Strogg arsenal includes the Desecrator hover tank, the agile Hornet fighter and best of all, the Goliath, a slow but awesomely powerful heavy walker and stationary turret (see 'One Careful Strogg Driver', p52).

Each vehicle's physics are stunningly lifelike, with individual wheels buckling as they pass over uneven ground. Wedgwood even demonstrates how vehicles can be neatly disabled, by shooting off their wheels or ammo packs.

WAIT, COME BACK!

And then, suddenly, swiftly and brutally, it's all over. The screen goes blank and I'm left with a grin that still hasn't faded, and the phrase, 'Where do they get those wonderful toys?' echoing around my head.

Unlike the GDF, which uses conventional non-evil med packs to heal its troops and ammo to rearm, the Strogg are reliant on Stroyent, a nutrient base that powers everything they do. And unsurprisingly, Stroyent is essentially the watery bits of human innards. It's a system that throws up some superb tactical possibilities, with the Strogg able to divert resources depending on their needs. If they run low on ammo, they can give up some of their health to compensate and vice versa. Better still, the Meditek class of Strogg can stun humans and extract Stroyent from their still twitching bodies. The filthy beasts.



Rollercoaster Tycoon 3 Wild!

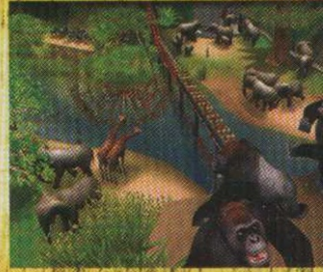
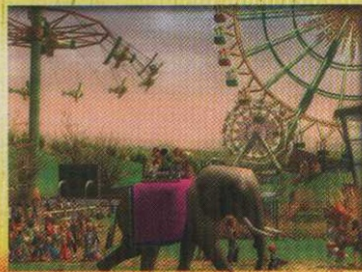
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PCZONE

REVIEWS

Behind the wheel of PC gaming

SECTION EDITOR Paul Presley

Calm Down

WELL THAT WAS quite a month, wasn't it? Five Classic awards and six Recommendeds, and that was just for *The Movies* (ha hah!). Only trouble is, we've used up our annually allocated award budget, and turning to the stock cupboard this month I see the shelves are as bare as Jodie Marsh at the sound of a camera lens.

So it's Dump awards all round! Only kidding, although two absolute stinkers have snuck under the radar, one practically unheard of, one a big-name franchise that's already riding high in the charts – read the issue and guess which is which. Then weep for the children as you realise they'll buy any old shit as long as it's got a decent marketing budget.

Actually, we're not that dry. It would seem that I took over the reigns here during something of a golden period for PC gaming (either that or I've been overdoing the happy pills), but you know what? I don't care. I'd much rather be positive about games, much rather relish the fun that games can provide than wallow in a snide, nit-pickingly tiresome negativity all the time. Unless we're talking about *The Matrix*. That's just shite.



GAME OF THE MONTH

80

NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED

Get that motor running

The PC ZONE Awards



CLASSIC (90%+)

The best games ever. If you're lucky enough to see one, stop and buy it.



RECOMMENDED (75-89%)

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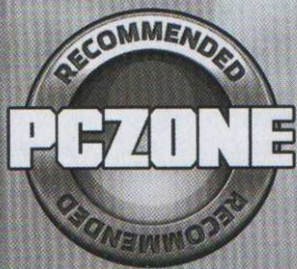
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DEVELOPER Ubisoft
PUBLISHER Ubisoft
WEBSITE
www.kingkonggame.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99



AT A GLANCE...

The king of the Kongs is, along with *The Chronicles Of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay*, an example of how to do a great movie-licensed game.

System requirements 3

HOW IT STACKS

RIDDICK	84%
KING KONG	83%
REPUBLIC COMMANDO	80%

THE LAST TIME I was planning major monkey coverage in *PC ZONE*, I was phoning a zoo asking if we could dress up one of their simian inmates in gangster clothing and pose alongside them with a copy of the magazine. Interestingly, the clothing wasn't an issue for the lady monkey-wrangler. It was more the fact that apparently, chimps can be unpredictably violent, with a tendency to bite your face off – obviously a disadvantage if you're the editor of Britain's best PC games rag.

Which brings us to *King Kong* – another aggressive ape, that again I imagine would be difficult to get into a sharp suit and force to smoke a cigar. Ubisoft's game is a film tie-in featuring Peter Jackson's latest spectacular and stars one of Hollywood's most famous monster icons.

A videogame based on a movie is usually something to be extremely wary of, but this is no ordinary title, being a genuine creative collaboration between Michel Ancel (*Beyond*

Good & Evil), Peter Jackson and his talented special FX crew Weta. The result is a short but extremely polished rollercoaster-ride of a game packed with genuine awe-inspiring moments of fear and wonder. And a f***-off big monkey.

MONKEY BUSINESS

Set in the 1930s, *King Kong* tells the story of film-maker Carl Denham (played by Jack Black – all of the movie's actors voice characters in the game), searching for the mythical Skull Island to make the epic that will save his career. In the game, he's accompanied by the Venture ship's Captain Hayes, struggling actress Ann Darrow, young sailor Jimmy and New York screenwriter Jack Driscoll, who you play in first-person.

Right from the opening sequence, when you're being lowered in a rickety rowing boat onto an angry ocean, *King Kong* plunges you into the action – the intensity of the seasickness-inducing dash for the shore

is actually reminiscent of the Omaha Beach landing in WWII games such as *Medal Of Honor*.

Your AI-controlled compadres join you at certain points in the adventure and really contribute to the atmosphere and immersion of the game, even helping out in scraps with the local prehistoric wildlife, shooting enemies with spears and firearms and dragging injured parties to safety.

Each of the four characters has a distinct personality, ranging from Carl Denham's heartless wisecracks ("We desperately need to find the others – they'll have three cans of film with them!"), to Hayes' doom-mongering ("Had your fill of real-life yet?"). They also bicker between each other, shout and scream when they're in trouble and give you hints of how to solve puzzles and progress in the game. As always though, keep an eye out for their welfare, as a death results in a restart from the last save point.

Gameplay is straightforward and linear, guiding you through the dense jungle as you



THIS'LL take more than a gun.



"OH I'm the king of the swingers..."



NOT only a helping hand, but you can see up her top too!

progress by finding wooden levers to insert into vertical wooden poles, then turned by you and a team-mate to open gates.

HEAR THEM ROAR

Fire is a major element (ahem) too, and is used to clear harsh, spiky foliage from your path, as well as scare off or burn to death any carnivorous predators – of which there are a fair few lurking in the bushes and long grass of the island. These include bitey insects, bitey giant bats and bitey dinosaurs, which are without doubt, the most impressive in-game prehistoric lizards yet seen in a videogame – they make *Turok's* look like household pets. The T-Rex has to be seen to be believed – a hulking meat-eating killer, wonderfully animated with saliva-dripping from its jaws and a terrifying roar that physically distorts everything in its vicinity.

Fortunately, Jack has access to various meaty weapons (carried one at a time) such as shotguns, rifles



THERE'S never a giant ape around when you need one. Oh...

Wot no HUD?

King Kong immerses you in the action without on-screen fuff



You won't find any HUD (heads-up display) in *King Kong* – the game's producer Michel Ancel has deliberately eschewed any on-screen info in favour of clever visual and aural devices.

The first thing you'll notice is that the default setting for the Driscoll FPS sequences has no aiming reticule. The second thing missing is a health indicator – instead, if either Driscoll or Kong is injured, the action is seen through a red filter and you start to hear an angelic chorus of voices. If you don't give yourself time to recover and you're attacked again, the screen goes blood red and you die.

Third, ammo numbers are given by Driscoll's voice, so you'll hear him say phrases such as "two shells as back-up", calmly, if you have plenty of firepower left, or "only one bullet left as back-up" in a desperate voice if you're dangerously close to running out. These and other devices work to immerse you in the *King Kong* universe, without jumping you out of the reality with clumsy gameplay information.

Museum Piece

Unlock an exhibition of exclusive Weta artwork

DIDN'T they try this in *Jurassic Park*?



As you proceed in *King Kong* (which happens rather rapidly), you begin to unlock extras such as a 1930s sepia-tinted movie filter. However, the coolest secret is a virtual museum of Weta concept art that you can wander around at your leisure -- obviously before quickly getting bored, sloping off with your friends and missing the bus back to school.

You're soon leaping from branch to branch and jumping chasms like a hairy Prince of Persia



and Tommy Guns that can be fired by holding down the spacebar and pressing the left mouse-button. (Default left mouse-button only is for melee attacks, and for other stuff such as smashing through debris-blocked passageways.) Extra weapons and ammo can be gathered from parcels dropped by Captain Englehorn, a character who pilots a sea-plane and flies into the action from time-to-time.

If you run out of bullets, you can rely on organic weapons such as spears and sharpened bones, which can be picked up and jabbed or hurled at foes. These could've

so easily turned out to be a poor choice for the man-made armoury, but improvised projectiles provide in satisfying kills, sticking into the back and causing them to reel back in pain. You can even opt for an eco-friendly way of completing levels, by stabbing snakes and flies and then using the wrigglers to distract bigger animals in the forest.

The result of all this clever game design is that while playing as Driscoll, you get a palpable feeling of having to survive in an extremely hostile environment, where everything is either attempting to kill you or a light snack or offer you up as a



THE park ranger's gonna be pissed.



BLAZIN' S... still packin...

Beauty and the Beast

Woman and monkey working together in perfect harmony



KONG carefully sets down Ann and fends off giant bats to protect her virtue. The softie.



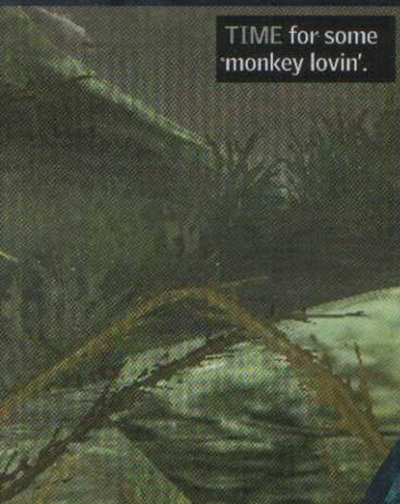
ANN dashes to gather fire from the nearest source, while dinosaurs nip around her nightie.



ANN sets fire to the brush and sharp jungle vines that are blocking Kong's path.



KONG sees off the last enemies, climbs up the wall and catches Ann just in time. It must be love.



TIME for some monkey lovin'.



YOU wait flippin' ages for a brontosaurus...



KONG'S poledancing classes were paying off.

sacrifice to Kong. Witness some stunning heart-racing set-pieces, including a memorable river-rafting sequence, where you and your chums have to fend off two T-Rexes (you can't kill these immense sharp-toothed behemoths) while tearing down deadly rapids at breakneck speed.

ENTER THE MONKEY

Obviously, however, the main attraction in *King Kong* is the 25ft giant ape himself, who you control in third-person and view with a fixed cinematic-style camera. Kong is a massive lumbering animal, and you really feel his huge weight and power when you're controlling him in the game, but the silky controls mean you're soon deftly leaping from branch to branch, clambering up walls and jumping chasms like a hairy Prince of Persia.

The Kong sections of the game involve the growing relationship between the big fella and Ann, as he protects her from nasty natives, dinosaurs and other enemies by battering them about the head and neck with his fists. You can use a combination of left and right mouse button presses to punch, grab and use tree trunks and other objects to hurl at distant foes, while the

mouse wheel can be used to charge up Kong for rage attacks. Yep, combat is brutal – fur flies, limbs collide, claws rip into skin and bats' heads are bitten off, in what could be a subtle tribute to Ozzy Osbourne. The finishing moves are particularly excellent too – you can force open a dino's jaws until they snap, for example, before Kong roars loudly with approval. Despite their button-mashing simplicity, the battles are always spectacular events that will stop anyone passing your PC monitor in their tracks with a wince-inducing display of animalistic violence.

However, there's beauty in the beast – the way that Kong can gently pick up Ann with his right hand and place her down safely away from trouble is very touching and reminiscent of



I loved *Children Of The Revolution!*





RUMOURS that Martin Korda was the fight consultant are unfounded.



"AND cue the singing leprechauns..."



"BUT... But... I'm a creationist, you can't exist!"



"IT'LL never work. I'm a Pisces and you're a Taurus."

You're pulling my leg

Watch your step in the jungle or you'll be crawling home



In another very neat touch from Mr Ancel, the larger jungle creatures such as the Raptors can physically bite onto your legs and drag you away into the jungle to be consumed at their leisure. To escape, you have to tap the mouse buttons to kick out and hopefully break free of the monster's jaws. If you succeed, you'd better give yourself time to recover from the trauma, or the next attack from a hungry predator will finish you off.

the non-verbal relationship between the boy and girl in classic PlayStation 2 adventure *Ico*. Ann also learns through the adventure in the jungle into the urban sprawl of NY to care about Kong's welfare, and will throw spears at his enemies and clear obstacles in his path (see 'Beauty and the Beast', p63).

GREAT APE?

It's obvious that I like this game – it has a big monkey in it for goodness sake – but is *King Kong* worth your Christmas cash?

In cold analysis, you can criticise the fact that the shooter parts are somewhat unsophisticated compared to a dedicated FPS such as *F.E.A.R.*, not possessing jump or lean keys, for example. Plus, the fixed camera in the Kong sections sometimes manoeuvres into an awkward position. There are moments of dumb AI with dinosaurs running on the spot too, and you can die from simply walking into sharp jungle shrubbery if you're not careful.

Most importantly, *King Kong* is a game you can rattle through in no time – there's nothing here to challenge you if you found *Far Cry* "a bit easy". This is a console game at heart, and one to play sat on the couch in

front of the TV in the afternoon, rather than hunched over a keyboard and monitor at 4am.

However, even though we're yet to see Peter Jackson's *King Kong* movie (and can't say whether the game closely follows the film or not), Ubisoft has already delivered a cracking action-adventure packed with jaw-dropping (and jaw-breaking) set pieces, such as a truly frightening T-Rex attack on a rope-bridge and a brontosaurus stampede. Even though some of the textures aren't great – up close they can look rather blocky – there are still some beautiful jungle and city scenes with atmospheric lighting, cool particle effects and superb character and creature animation, as you'd expect from a development team with unfettered access to the might of Weta's special effects and art direction departments.

Kong is the ultimate anti-hero, and now you can play as him, you'll empathise with his tragic predicament even more. Yep, *King Kong* is one very slick package and certainly the best movie tie-in game since *The Chronicles Of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay*. If only they'd thought to slap a wig and roller-skates on the big monkey fella, we could've been looking at a classic... **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics: Excellent animation and art direction, slightly let down by low-res textures
 Sound: Great soundtrack and voice-acting mixed with meaty monster sound effects
 Multiplayer: None

- ✓ Incredible action sequences
- ✓ Innovative jungle weapons
- ✓ Fantastic music, fx and voice-acting
- ✓ Play as Kong
- ✗ Short
- ✗ Can be too simplistic
- ✗ Very console-y

83

Top banana

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Sound
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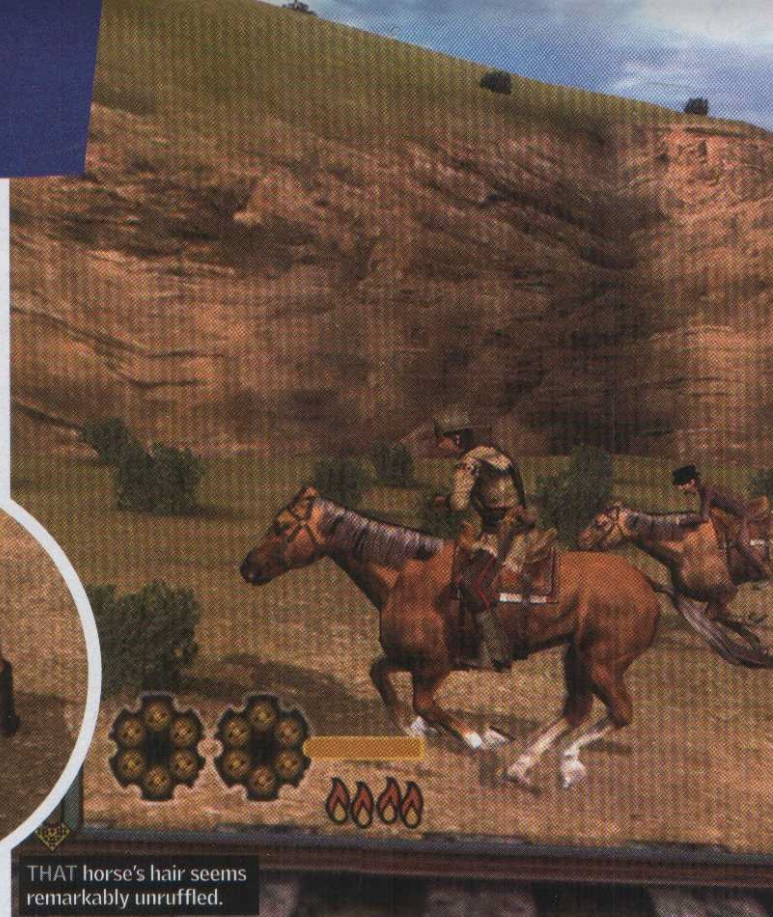
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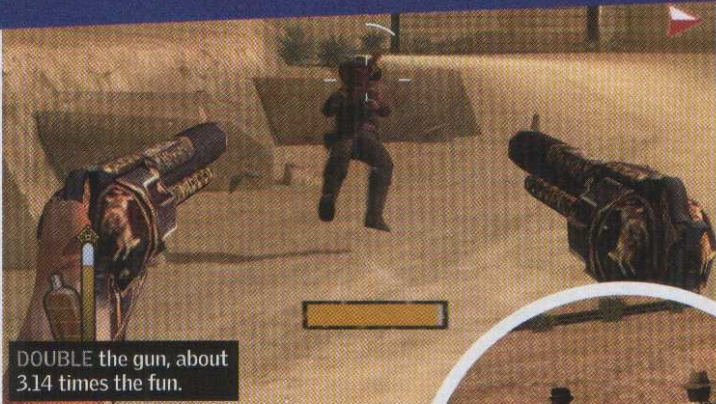


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THAT horse's hair seems remarkably unruffled.



DOUBLE the gun, about 3.14 times the fun.



GUN

Steve Hogarty's gunna paint that wagon...

DEVELOPER Neversoft
 PUBLISHER Activision
 WEBSITE www.activision.com
 ETA Out now
 PRICE £39.99

AT A GLANCE...

Grab your Stetson and a pair of sixes and jump into a free-roaming cowboy adventure in the Wild Wild West.

System requirements 3

HOW IT STACKS



THERE'S A SCENE in *GUN* where a particularly nasty man with a moustache rips out another man's tooth with an adjustable wrench. It's a fantastically gruesome scene, but I think you'll find that the adjustable wrench was actually invented in 1892 by a Swedish man called Johan Petter Johansson, a whole 12 years after the game is set. Johan wasn't a cowboy (we can assume) – all he had was his love of wrenches and his passionate desire to adjust them – but show me a person whose favourite bit in Disneyland isn't the 'wicka-wicka' Wild Wild West and I'll show you a person who's dead inside, or at least comatose.

You really would be hard-pressed to find somebody who doesn't think cowboys are great. Just look at Clint Eastwood, John Wayne and Jackie Chan – all cowboys, and all inherently cool. It's this premise that makes *GUN* (it's all in capitals, so shout) so appealing – if you've ever pointed your fingers at somebody and gone "Pow!" (or to a lesser extent "Bang!", which while

not as onomatopoeic is still acceptable), before blowing the imaginary smoke off your index finger, then you know what I'm talking about. So just to reiterate, cowboys are cool and you wish you could be one.

GET OFF YOUR HORSE...

And now you can! Sort of... *GUN* does make some attempt at being the first proper cowboy-sim, and while it's not entirely accurate to describe it as *GTA* on horseback, it does take its cues from the freeform mission-based genre. It has an environment which, while not being as massive as *GTA*'s world, does give plenty of room to run about.

The world of *GUN* is comprised of a few towns, a main city (which is quite small) and a settlement or two, but the in-between bits of featureless countryside are often quite

linear, falling somewhere between *GTA* and *Fable* on the freedom scale.

As for the gunfighting itself, it's here that it becomes apparent that *GUN* is a console game first and foremost. No amount of configuring results in a button layout that feels natural, and manual aiming also feels clumsy. The developer has also managed to fit bullet-time in here too, calling it 'quickdraw' (which vaguely fits into the context of the cowboy rationale). Shootouts are still fun though, especially once you get your hands on the beefier weapons. My personal favourite are the dual pistols, which truly make you feel like a proper cowboy.

Rounding off the *GTA* analogy is the mission system, which offers you a single storyline thread with an array of side-missions ranging from Pony Express



THAT horse needs a new exhaust.





Poker face

Play your cards right, or cheat



duties and playing poker at the saloon, to answering the various 'Wanted' posters dotted about the land (some of which give you some freedom in the 'dead or alive' department, allowing you to subdue opponents instead of killing them).

WHAT A GUN WANTS

Looking over my review notes, however, (ignoring the drawing of a horse I did while

walk through while looking moody; real working prostitutes you use to regain health; unscripted barfights and brawls with table-smashing; the phrase "dems fightin' wurd's", and most important of all, a proper horse.

The horses in *GUN* work just like the cars in *GTA* – they're an expendable means of getting from place to place, but what I really would've liked to have seen was real horse ownership in the game. Buying a

propelled *GUN* into the *PCZ*' recommended' bracket. Instead, the world of horses feels bleak and unsubstantial, like a string of one-night stands... With horses.

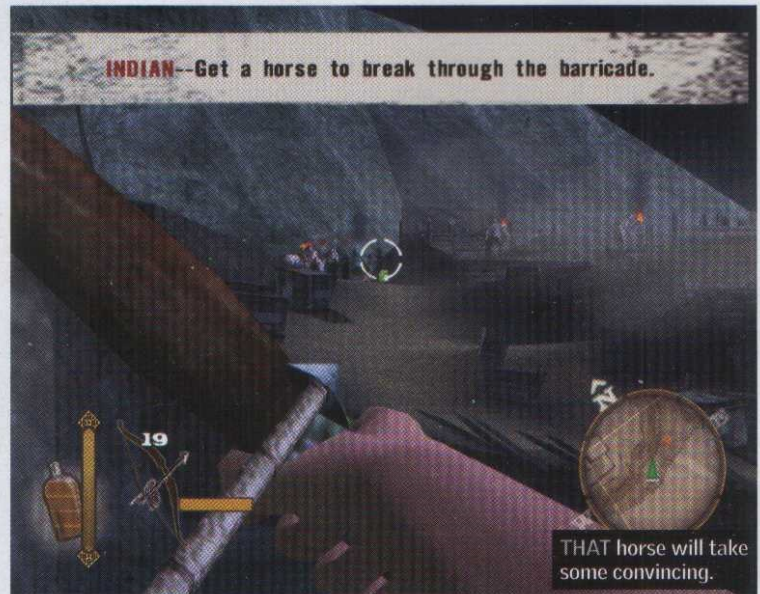
It's there that *GUN*'s shortcomings lie: while galloping about on your steed shooting bandits and whatnot is great fun, ultimately the Wild West feels a bit unwelcoming, and not in a good, authentic way. Areas which should be a hive of busting outlaws, cowboys, sheriffs and whores just look dreary, and there's very little interaction with the townsfolk, who only really act as a stage for the story missions.

Regardless of its faults though, *GUN* does have some great moments that will have you digging out your old cap gun and running down to M&S to buy those leather chaps you always wanted. Yee-haw etc. **PCZ**

Where are the pistols at dawn, saloon doors that swing and proper horses?

waiting for the game to load), I notice my list of things *GUN* is lacking; things I believe a cowboy game should have. Pistols at dawn, for example; swinging saloon doors to

horse, becoming emotionally attached to it as the game went on, seeing it get killed as a predictable yet heartbreaking twist in the storyline: something like that would have



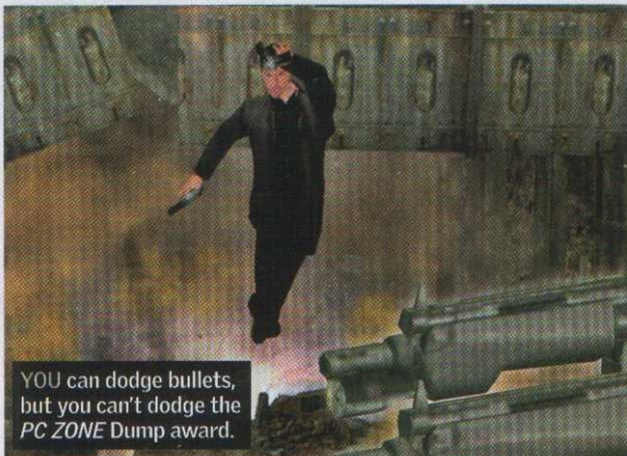
PCZONE

Graphics Xbox standard
Sound Nice bullet zingy noises
Multiplayer Not a sausage

- ✓ Definite cowboy goodness
- ✓ Horses handle nicely
- ✓ Bloody and gory
- ✓ Great voice-acting
- ✗ Very short
- ✗ World feels vacant

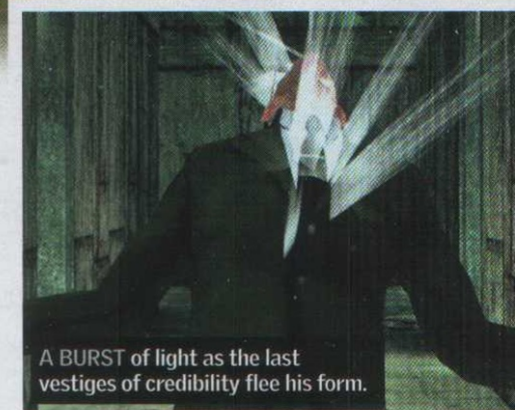
72

Not the fastest gun in the West



YOU can dodge bullets, but you can't dodge the PC ZONE Dump award.

DON'T remember this bit, but then I did sleep through the third film...



A BURST of light as the last vestiges of credibility flee his form.

THE MATRIX: PATH OF NEO

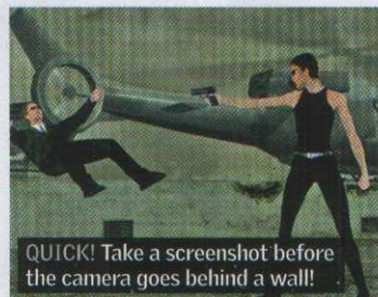
Even more sullied than *Star Wars*! Declares *Paul Presley*

DEVELOPER Shiny Entertainment
PUBLISHER Atari
WEBSITE www.thematrixpathofneo.com
ETA Out Now
PRICE £29.99



I T'S NOT THAT *The Matrix: Path Of Neo* is bad. It's that it's sooooo bad. Really, really awful. There are amateur *Matrix*-themed game mods out there that are better. Supposedly taking you through all three films, but mostly just taking you through the fights, the game follows Neo as he slowly becomes The One and learns how to hit people in slow motion.

And it's appalling. Truly appalling. Yes the fights can be action-packed, but the



QUICK! Take a screenshot before the camera goes behind a wall!



"LOOK, I'm contractually obliged to be here, OK?"

effect is totally destroyed when the camera swings around behind a wall and obscures your view whichever way you swing it, or you have to fight through a tiresomely protracted and boring level just because the save checkpoints are stupidly placed, or as soon as you see the shocking, shocking graphics for god's sake... And don't get me started on the all-new ending. In fact, save yourself the effort and download the movies online. Yes it's real and yes, it's that, that bad.

The whole package screams 'rushed' at you, although for what reason I can only guess. It's a bad console port that feels as though it's been chucked out the door with no thought, care or consideration. Why do I have to choose my language and reset my key configurations every time I load up (we have hard drives that let games remember that sort of thing)? Why do I have to mess with an .INI file in the installation folder to change the video resolution?

HERO TO ZERO

What I find funniest/most heart-breaking about this whole scenario is that I've been reading reviews elsewhere and everyone seems to be going out of their way to be as generous as possible while still listing all of the above problems. Mid-table scores, occasional seven out of tens (and even a reprehensibly misleading 9.5/10

from one website – once again proving that game reviews should be left to the professionals) – it's like people just can't bring themselves to accept the truth here: *The Matrix: Path Of Neo* is an irredeemable abortion of a game that Atari, Shiny, the Wachowski brothers and anyone even remotely associated with it should be ashamed for ever thinking about releasing in this form. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Appalling characters and textures
 Sound Loud, brash, fairly faithful to the source
 Multiplayer None (but still better than *The Matrix Online*)

- ✓ Fighting is fairly thrilling and action-packed
- ✗ Visually shite
- ✗ Editing is shite
- ✗ Camera is shite
- ✗ Controls are shite
- ✗ New ending is shite

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Shitatrix: Path of shite-o

AT A GLANCE...

Shit, shit, shit, shit, shit, shit, shit... I could go on...

System requirements 3

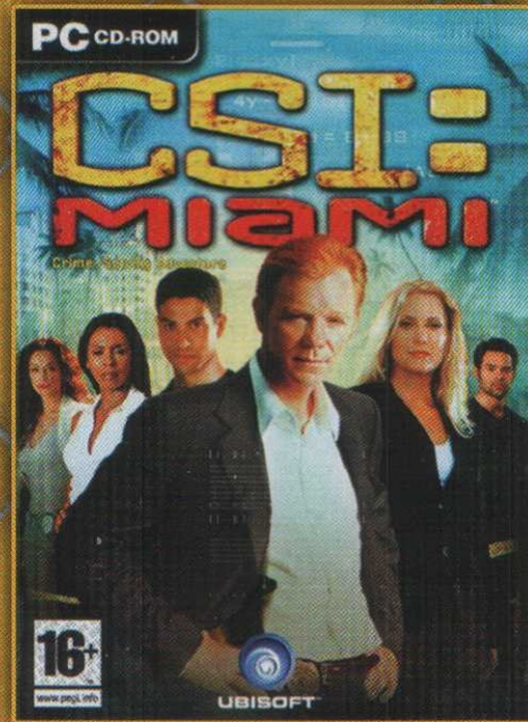
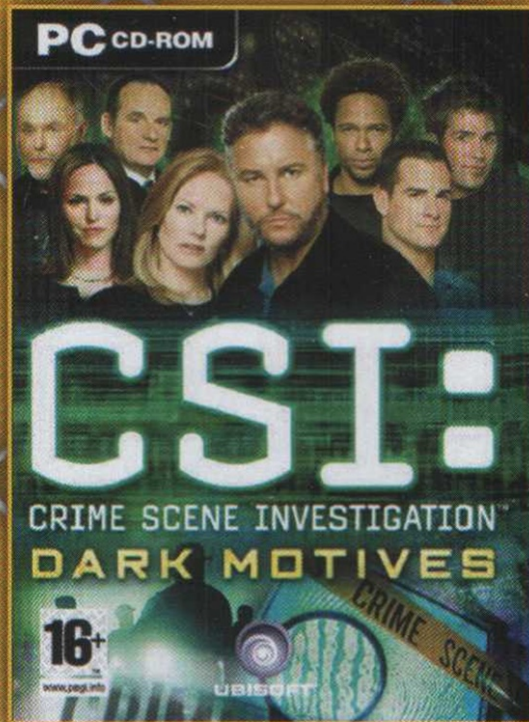
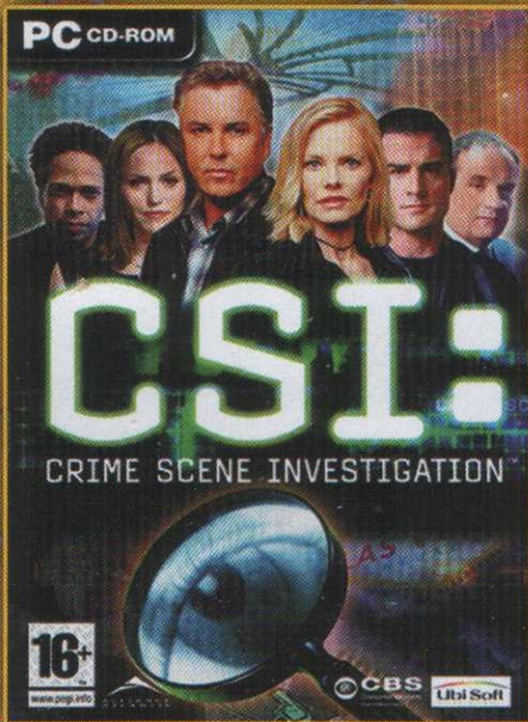
HOW IT STACKS

ENTER THE MATRIX 72%

THE MATRIX ONLINE 70%

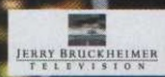
THE MATRIX: PATH OF NEO 19%

CSI:

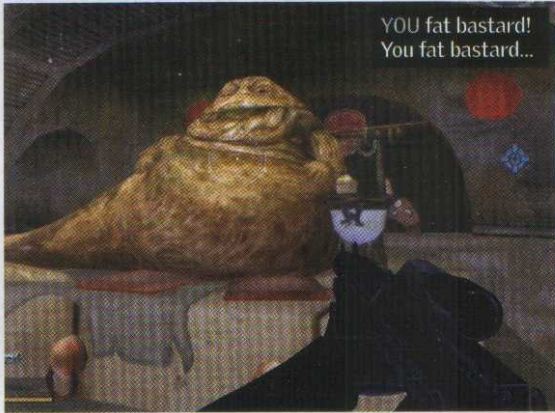


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YOU fat bastard!
You fat bastard...



SO much for Vader's
big entrance.

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II

Paul Presley struggles in a game that even the younglings don't deserve

DEVELOPER Pandemic Studios
PUBLISHER Activision
WEBSITE
www.swbattlefront2.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99

BEST-SELLING *STAR WARS* game ever. That's *Battlefront*. Actually, that's the power of marketing, hype and a licence that guarantees cash rewards for anyone lucky enough to wield it. Honestly. If we were somehow able to wrangle a deal that let us call ourselves the *Official Star Wars PC ZONE* magazine, overnight we'd start selling at least 100,000 extra copies per month, with no extra outlay of effort. People buy *Star Wars* toothbrushes for god's sake. It's a veritable goldmine.

Which wouldn't be so bad if the games were actually deserving of their successes. But they're not. None of them. *KOTOR* aside, and maybe *Republic Commando*, there hasn't been a good *Star Wars* game since *Dark Forces*. Even those that look quite good at first very rapidly outstay their welcome once the novelty wears off. *Battlefront* included. And this sequel is no less unremarkable. Bland, devoid of character, asinine gameplay mechanics, clumsy implementation and, at the time of writing, number one in the charts with a bullet. Justice? Not a factor in the games business, matey.

BIG NAME STARS

Battlefront II is pretty much everything we saw first time round, but with *Episode III* levels and some space bits. Oh, and controllable heroes. As in Luke, Vader, Yoda, Leia, Boba Fett, Ewan McGregor and that

blue bird with the long head tentacles. Kia-Ora or Um-Bongo or something. Basically, it's all well and good until you get a situation that has Darth Vader being 'killed' by a lowly rebel trooper with a pistol and then it ruins the whole thing.

The basics otherwise remain the same. Take a pinch of *Battlefield 2*, dress it up with lightsabers and stormtroopers and then shoot your way through 20 minutes or so of vague interpretations of events in the movie.

Developer Pandemic has made an attempt to boost the criminally pointless single-player, offline game from the first *Battlefront*. This time you get a campaign 'story' mode played from the perspective of a clone trooper, interspersed with clips from the film and FMV from modified in-game footage. It charts the path of the Republic's manipulation at the hands of Captain Craggyface (or the Emperor as he prefers to be called), the slaughter of the Jedi – actually quite a fun level that one, storming the Jedi temple

LEIA'S hair-perming device warms up.



AT A GLANCE...

The epic battles of *Star Wars* (mostly from *Episode III*) rendered in a sub-*Battlefield 2*-style engine. Will sell millions, probably.

System requirements **4**

HOW IT STACKS





Get a haircut

The greatest head fashion disaster of all time lives on



The hero characters provide you with a break from playing anonymous clones and robots, being unlocked after amassing a set amount of points and then providing either the most deserving player (or one at random depending on the server) with the chance to be Luke running around the Death Star, Boba Fett blasting through Jabba's palace or, er, Leia, Princess Leia. Complete with Danishes.

Why on earth would anyone want to be Leia? I could understand if it was the *Return Of The Jedi* slave costume-Leia perhaps. Then you'd just park yourself in front of the nearest reflective surface and enjoy for ten minutes or so. Or maybe 'commando Barbie' Leia from *Empire*. But this is the flowing white robe, silly hairdo, girly-girly Leia. Except with an invulnerability shield for some reason. George Lucas would be turning in his grave. You know, if he was dead.



on Coruscant and shooting anyone with a glo-stick in the face – and the rise of the Empire.

FURRY FURY

The Galactic Conquest mode returns, slightly revamped, offering a simplistic, turn-based strategy overgame, broken up by actual shooty-blast missions. Or you can just wade into any map at will, with a garrison of bots by your side and blow the living crap out of everything that opposes your choice of flag colour.

All these single-player modes provide some basic fun at first, but it quickly pales when you realise the bots are as thick as a blast door and there's no real ability to issue meaningful orders to anyone. Making every level an atmosphere-breaking mess of random gunfire, laughably bad bot action



Battlefield series busy imploding under its own weight of misplaced optimism and shoddy customer support over at EA. Unfortunately, *Battlefront II* is no more fun online than it is off.

at a time, you have to wait ages for new ones to respawn and can't go anywhere in the meantime.

Things aren't much better on the ground either. Vehicles are so lacking in impact that they might as well not be there. True, you can find servers with some impressive player numbers and most of the maps are well designed and remain faithful to the *Star Wars* origins (at least the interior maps do – the Death Star and Leia's starting ship from *Episode IV*, the *Tantive IV* – some of the exterior maps are just confusing and lacking in excitement), but the overall experience is less '*Star Wars* combat online' and more like a fairly decent mod for *Battlefield*. Personally, I'd stick with the toothbrushes for now, as this use of the *Star Wars* licence just leaves a bitter taste in the mouth. **PCZ**

The 'Hunt The Ewok' game is an oasis of pleasure in this dull gaming desert

and incongruous implementation of *Star Wars* themes and characters. It does score bonus points for including a 'Hunt The Ewok' game though. How that slipped past LucasCensors, we don't know. But it's a small oasis of pleasure in an otherwise dull gaming desert.

Of course, mostly the *Battlefront* series has been conceived as an online game, a *Star Wars*-y rival to the

The new space sections should have been a scream, but instead completely fail to conjure any of the scale, thrills or drama of the films. Battles take place in limited arenas, with capital ships frighteningly underwhelming for all their supposed power. Dogfights are confusing and lacking direction, and the age-old problem of the fastest-loading players nicking all the ships is only acerbated here as you only get four

PCZONE

Graphics A mixture of crisp locations and bland textures
Sound Familiar *Star Wars* music and noises
Multiplayer Large in scale, but soulless

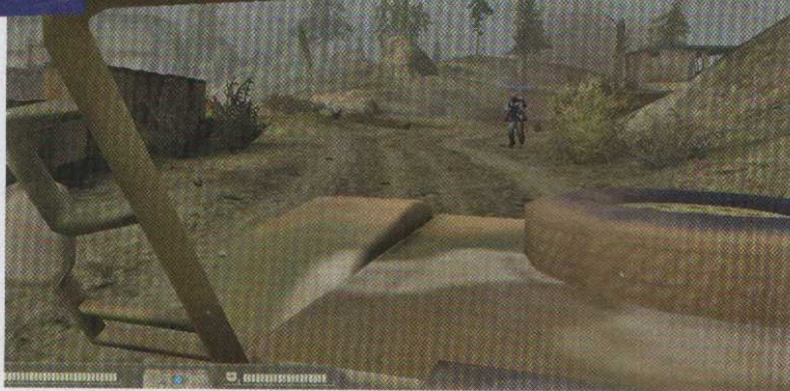
- ✓ Play as the heroes
- ✓ Good selection of environments
- ✓ An attempt at providing solo gameplay...
- ✗ ...Just not a very good one
- ✗ Terrible bot AI
- ✗ Online play lacks coordination

61

Bland it is, sell it will, sigh we do



SKEWERING people with the zip-line is sadly not an option.



BATTLEFIELD 2: SPECIAL FORCES



Steve Hogarty finds out what it really means to be 'special'

DEVELOPER DICE
PUBLISHER EA
WEBSITE
www.eagames.com/official/battlefield/specialforces/us
ETA Out Now
PRICE £19.99



AT A GLANCE...

Expand your *BF2* experience with more maps, more forces, more vehicles and more explosions. Annoying SAS accents included.

System requirements

HOW IT STACKS

BATTLEFIELD 2 94%

BATTLEFIELD 1942: THE ROAD TO ROME 85%

BATTLEFIELD 2: SPECIAL FORCES 80%

I T WAS QUITE a surprise that after playing *Special Forces* for just a few hours, I'd already had a gaming experience to rival my infamous "flying through the chimneys" tale from the original game. This time yet more aerobatics were involved as I navigated my trusty Mi-24 Hind helicopter around to the blindside of the USS Essex aircraft carrier, before swiftly and surgically piloting the massive aircraft into the relatively small below-deck hangar and unloading a barrage of rockets at friend and foe alike. It was always going to be a suicide mission, and like a small dog who runs down a rabbit hole only to realise he can't turn around, I had no choice but to flip upside-down and explode, killing anybody who'd survived my initial onslaught.

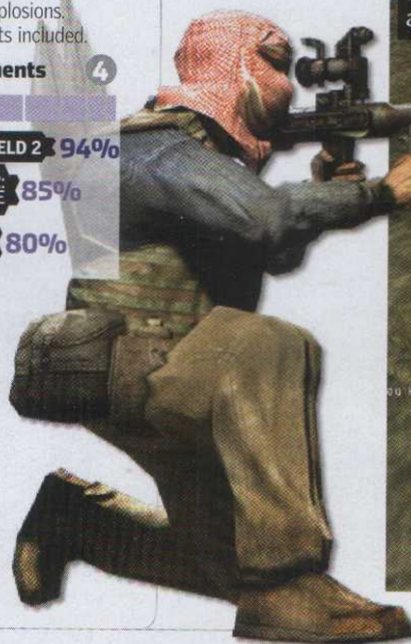
Let it be known that I'm a big *Battlefield* fan, and I'm by no means disappointed with

Battlefield 2, insofar as the gameplay is far and away the most fun and intense online shooting-people-in-the-head experience you could hope to have. The subtle blend of teamplay and strategy, the thrill of having a premeditated scheme come together perfectly, the balanced scoring system that makes typically 'boring' classes like medics and engineers far more rewarding, the vehicles, the weighty and substantial feel to the weapons – it all hangs together perfectly. The problem I and possibly every single person who's played the game has is with the interface, the inexcusably long loading times and the bugs – when *Battlefield 2* doesn't work, it doesn't work with style, crashing to your Jennifer Lopez desktop, reducing your Alienware to a stuttering, quivering wreck and generally cocking up in weird and wonderful ways.

Special Forces does nothing to remedy this, and if you were hoping EA would treat the expansion pack as a mega fix-all patcheroo you will be sorely disappointed. You'll still have a front-end that's as ugly as it is awkward and loading times ample enough to allow you to write a short novel while you wait – it feels like EA is building a new conservatory before finishing the house and then making the fans foot the bill.

BATTLEFIELD OF DREAMS

Cast those problems to the back of your mind for a moment though, because as with the original, once you get yourself into a game and everything's firing on all cylinders (without exploding or performing illegal operations) you're in for a treat. *Special Forces* supplies you with eight new maps,



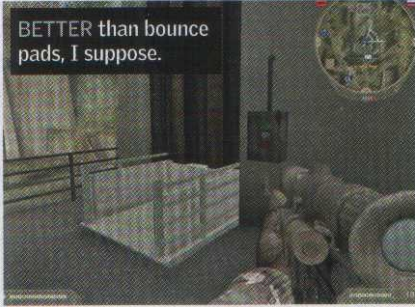
PINK and purple T-shirts: a camouflage no-no.



Elevation

Switches? In *Battlefield 2*? Ker-razy!

BETTER than bounce pads, I suppose.



Switches and levers and buttons – you'd think they'd have no place in a game like *Battlefield 2*, but you'd be wrong. A couple of maps have real working elevators which, er, move you to higher levels. A good use of the new lifts can be found on the USS Essex, in the guise of a big platform for transporting troops from the deck to the hangar and back. Not so much a 'wow' feature rather than an 'ooh' feature, elevators add another level (zing!) to the *Battlefield* gameplay.

some of which are shrouded in a sort of mysterious darkness and require you to use the all-new (and sadly graphically underwhelming) night-vision goggles to see what you're doing. Other maps include The Iron Gator, a fantastic environment featuring the aforementioned USS Essex getting overrun by MEC Special Forces and defended by a skeleton crew of Navy SEALs. Far more comprehensive than the carrier in the original game and boasting no less than

into the perfect positions. Grappling hooks can hook onto almost any ledge and allow for a lot of freedom, though, as we noted in our earlier hands-on with the game, it's still not possible to pick up a grappling hook once used and go on a ninja wall-climbing rampage.

Zip-lines are great fun too, making you feel like a special agent every time you use them to escape danger and making for a much more dynamic, unpredictable game.

If you were hoping for a mega fix-all patcheroo you'll be sorely disappointed

six control points, the USS Essex is the crux of the map, balanced in such a way that it's nearly always being defended and causing the two forces to fight in tight, indoor environments. It's definitely the highlight of the expansion, and feels quite removed from anything seen in the original.

NIGHT MOVES

Other additions include the already highly anticipated zip-lines and grappling hooks, both of which are hugely versatile and quite useful, especially for snipers looking to get

To round things out, ten new vehicles have been included as well, from hovering doom-bringer Apache helicopters to dinky jet skis, along with new weapons such as tear gas and flashbangs.

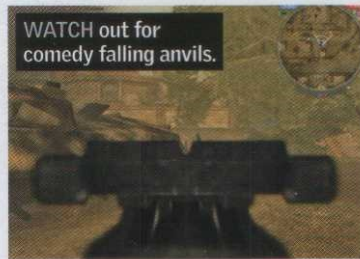
FORCING THE POINT HOME

In essence, *Special Forces* does for *Battlefield 2* what *Road To Rome* did for *Battlefield 1942*, adding new content (more so than *RTR* in fact) and simply offering more scope for enjoyment, with tighter,

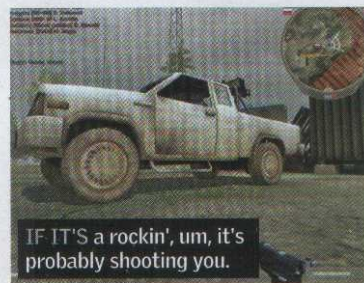
IT'S ALL gone a bit GoldenEye.



WATCH out for comedy falling anvils.



more focused maps. Mercifully, the parts of the game that worked just fine the first time around, such as the commander and ranking systems, have been left untouched, meaning all your finely-honed skills and strategies can be carried over. The fact that *Special Forces* doesn't fix the problems of the original game is forgivable, as they're just that, problems with the original game – as far as expansions go, *Special Forces* doesn't disappoint. **PCZ**



IF IT'S a rockin', um, it's probably shooting you.



VAST levels are again the order of the day.



THE night-vision effect is a bit *Delta Force: Land Warrior* for our liking.

PCZONE

Graphics *BF2* plus some lacklustre night-vision effects
 Sound No improvement over *BF2*, so still good
 Multiplayer Exclusively, unless you want to play with brain-dead bots

- ✓ Fantastic new maps
- ✓ Apache helicopters at last
- ✓ Zip-lines and grappling hooks aren't gimmicks
- ✗ It will probably crash

80

Special, in a good way



ALL that gold must be heavy.



EQUAL rights for henchmen? Not round here.



PIRATE Ninja Chick - doing what comes naturally.

CITY OF VILLAINS

Cross-dressing criminals ahoy as Paul Presley unleashes his darker side

DEVELOPER Cryptic Studios
PUBLISHER NCsoft
WEBSITE
 eu.cityofvillains.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99



AT A GLANCE...

Like *City Of Heroes* but with an evil goatee and a secret lair. In other words, online evil-doing in a persistent world.

System requirements 3

HOW IT STACKS

- CULT WARS** 94%
- CITY OF HEROES** 86%
- CITY OF VILLAINS** 81%

WE'LL SKIP STRAIGHT past any sort of dubious justification for why I've spent almost 90 per cent of my time in *City Of Villains* running around as a mini-skirt and suspender belt-wearing young lady with a gravity-defying décolletage and a preponderance for performing high kicks at any given opportunity. Suffice to say that's one more item to cross off my Things To Do Before I Die list.

Instead, we'll move straight on to a brief explanation of what *City Of Villains* is: *City Of Heroes*. A-hah-hah-ha ha ha ha aaaaah... No, but seriously folks.

HERE WE GO AGAIN

The first impression when starting life in the Rogue Isles is that this feels like little more than an expansion pack for the game's long-serving hero-based brother. Same character-creation system, same controls, same game mechanics. A couple of hours later, with your first character already nudging the lower end of levels seven or eight and a linear, plotted series of missions under your belt, and the differences between the two games finally start to reveal themselves.

For one, *COV* seems a much more structured affair than its free-flowing heroic brother. This is both good and bad.



Good in that you're given much more guidance on what to do with your virtual life of crime, with clearly signposted milestones along the way. Bad in that there's almost no variety on offer for players, with everyone's experience being the same every time you play.

FREE FOR ALL

The brief is that you're fresh out of chokey, a villain with powers, shipped off to a series of crime-filled islands ruled by the all-powerful Lord Recluse. Through a steady series of trials and missions you build your powers, up your levels, explore one new setting after another and gradually earn enough prestige points to form your own supergroup and build a base filled with traps, trinkets and teleporters.

These bases are really the major difference between this and *COH*, although the prior game will be getting them too before long. But mainly it's the bases and their entrance into the cross-gaming world of PvP Hero vs Villain combat that provide most of the interest here.

Conceptually it's a fine idea: fill your base with items of power, open it up to raids from other players and the fun begins. In practice,

it's pretty standard PvP fare, familiar if you've tried out the Arena stuff in *COH*'s last major update. There are also several high-level PvP zones which make for some interesting playing, although they tend to be plagued with grievers at the time of writing. Good teams should clear that up though.

All this can't really disguise the fact that you are really just playing *City Of Heroes*' evil twin brother. Which puts your reviewer in something of a dilemma, as there are about



A marriage made in hell.



DOES it get more evil than this?

three different scenarios that could dictate how we score this game. Scenario one sees you something of a *COH* veteran, or at least a tried, bored and left player, looking for a fresh take on things. In which case, *COV* can do the job, has some nice long-term options in terms of base-building and that, but ultimately is still as shallow as its forebear.

Scenario two sees you coming to *COV* a fresh-faced MMO recruit, no experience of heroic cities, the craft of war or questing forever, in which case this might be a great start to your online education. Well structured opening, steady sense of progression, friendly community (perversely, given the subject matter). Away you go.

Scenario three is that you are an avid *COH* player, interest piqued by the hype and publicity and the thought of 'going rogue', in which case once the novelty wears off, you're in for much the same game. However, as you're not paying any extra in subscription fees (one fee covers both games – a masterstroke by NCsoft, as charging players twice would probably have



MORE heroic-looking than evil, really.

condemned both games to also-rans, you're not really losing out.

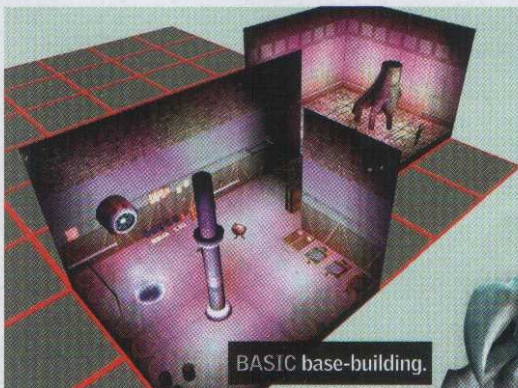
MINOR VILLAIN

So how do I score this thing? Well, rigorous scientific principles have been applied and the bottom line is that *City Of Villains* has had a much stronger start than *City Of Heroes*, and the long-term prospects, base-building, PvP game and even the setting have all grown on me following initial

reservations. I still think the early game could do with some work – individual character class paths would help immensely – but at least the lessons of *COH* appear to have been learned and improved upon.

It might not be the super-villain game of our dreams (that was probably *Evil Genius*), but given the nature of MMOs, it's probably the best we're going to get until someone decides to really push the online genre to its very limits. **PCZ**

I've mostly played as a mini-skirt and suspender belt-wearing young lady



BASIC base-building.



INDIANA Jones would love this.

Join the gang

Continued on page 133...



If you're a regular reader, you'll have noticed that our own online champion, Steve Hill, has pretty much run his *Guild Wars* life into the ground. Well, as of this issue we're kicking him off on another extended tour of duty, this time in *City Of Villains*. You can read his first tentative steps into the world of evil later in the mag, but we'd like your help to give him that extra push.

Keep a look out for Evil 'Steve Hill' on the Defiant server and if you see him around, say hello, give him a leg up and maybe bring him along on a mission or two. Your reward? Inclusion in the monthly tour de force that is NeverQuest. What could be better?

PCZONE

Graphics *COH* and a half
Sound Generic evil anthems and effects
Multiplayer Naturally

- ✓ More structured than *City Of Heroes*
- ✓ Bases provide good long-term appeal
- ✓ Good community
- ✓ PvP mostly works OK
- ✗ Not really 'evil' enough
- ✗ Much the same as *COH*

81

Villainous fun



THE case of the mysterious glowing hexagon.



THE damage to Legoland was irreversible.

SHATTERED UNION

Steve Hogarty takes a trip to war-torn Washington



LOOK at that union shatter!

DEVELOPER PopTop Software
PUBLISHER 2K Games
WEBSITE www.2kgames.com/shatteredunion
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

THE YEAR IS 2013 and the US of A has succumbed to terrorist attacks, corrupt veterinarians and videogame-inspired violence (or something, I wasn't really paying attention). All of which has resulted in a second civil war splitting the former US into six separate countries and, funnily enough, the EU staking claim to a small chunk of the east coast. Of course, in the midst of the fracas, those wily Russians have taken back Alaska, and Hawaii is just ignored, which conveniently makes *Shattered Union's* strategy map a little easier to comprehend.

As seems to be the tradition in the future, battles are turn-based and take place on an implicit hexagonal grid. Your army consists of units, each of which takes up a single hexagon on the battlefield and is capable of moving a

certain distance determined by the unit type, the landscape and so on – it's quite basic stuff.

If you've ever played *Advance Wars* (and you really should have), you'll know how it works: certain unit types have advantages over other types, and it's up to you to decide when to use the right units against the enemy. It's essentially rock, paper, scissors with EU peacekeepers and tanks. Plus, with a basic strategy map dictating which province you attack next, or which province you're defending, *Shattered Union* has all the hallmarks of a well-rounded strategy game.

DEEP END

The problems arise when you've been playing for a few hours and realise exactly how simple the game mechanics are. For example, an infantry unit with a single

point of health left is just as effective as an unscathed infantry unit. Y'see, whereas *Advance Wars* took you for a gentle guided tour of every aspect of the game using amazing tutorials which steered you and tenderly prompted you to evolve your techniques, *Shattered Union* pretty much dumps you in the middle of the war and shows all its cards from the beginning.

This is the shallow end of the strategy game pool, where you can splash about in your inflatable armbands and blow bubbles – quite fun, but you come out smelling a bit like wee... **PCZ**



AT A GLANCE...

America has turned on itself – unite the country once again under your rule as you lead a faction to glorious victory.

System requirements **2**

HOW IT STACKS

ACT OF WAR	84%
UFO: AFTERSHOCK	75%
SHATTERED UNION	60%



MORE effective than a scarecrow...



FLORIDA: unlucky, eh?

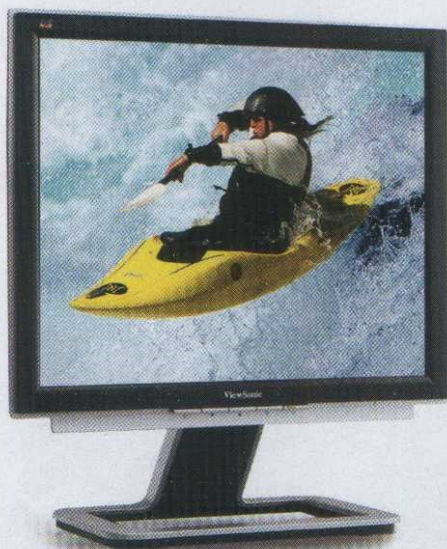
PCZONE

Graphics Nothing special
 Sound Nice helicopter noises
 Multiplayer Online skirmishes

- ✓ Addictive
- ✓ Lots of tactical freedom
- ✓ It's like *Advance Wars*
- ✓ Interesting story
- ✗ Unbalanced at times
- ✗ Overly simplistic

60
 America, fudge yeah

3 MILLISECONDS.
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PC ADVISOR
GOLD

VX924, PC Advisor
September 2005

PC PRO
A LIST

VX924, PC Pro
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CUSTOM
APPROVED

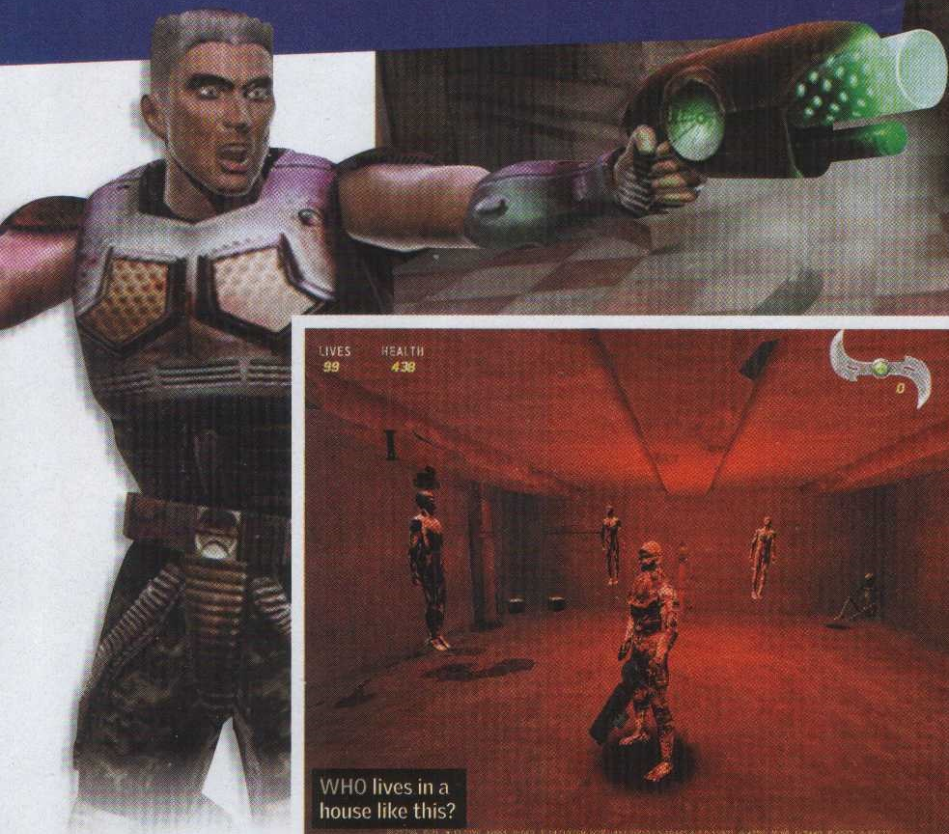
VX924, Custom PC
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CUSTOM
PREMIUM
GRADE
APPROVED

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the choice of professionals



WHO lives in a house like this?



SIDE-STEPPING: an invaluable skill for any Nazi.

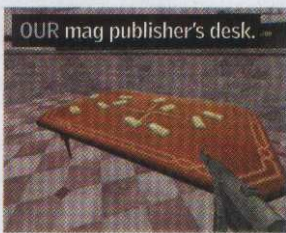


WHAT are you supposed to be then?

FPS CREATOR

Steve Hogarty doesn't believe in creationism: zombies on the other hand...

DEVELOPER The Game Creators
PUBLISHER The Game Creators
WEBSITE www.fpscreator.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99



BESIDES A FEW rocky outcrops of amazing FPS titles, I think you'll agree that the majority of first-person shooters are pretty stale (see *Starship Troopers*, p84). You know what you're getting when you play these games: zombies in the future, Nazis in the past, Nazi-zombies on Fridays. Well now, with *FPS Creator*, you too can make your own bog-standard blaster!

As the name clearly states, the package allows you to create your own FPS games with absolutely zero coding skills and even fewer 3D modelling skills. What's more, whereas previous make-your-own-game software merely allowed you to choose a hero, an enemy and a type of pie before presenting you with a crappy identikit shooter, *FPS Creator* actually gives you an impressive amount of freedom, while still retaining that falling-off-a-log difficulty level.

GREASE ME UP

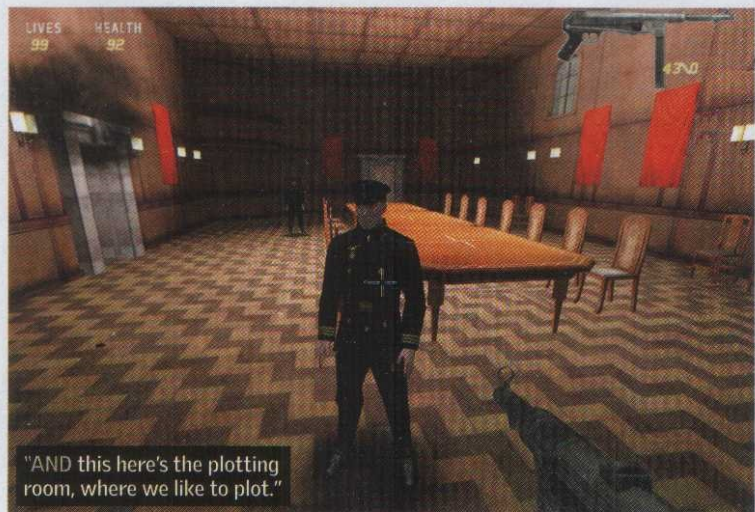
With tile-based level design, drag-and-drop entities and a raft of prefab rooms and structures, you can literally create your own FPS in a matter of minutes. The thing is, without coding or modelling skills, you're restricted to Nazi games and zombie games, and terrible ones at that. If your coding skills amount to completing the beginner's Sudoku

in *The Guardian*, *FPS Creator* is nothing more than a means of creating awful, featureless shooters. Then again, if you're one of those long-haired, greasy people who could actually create something decent with this software, you'll be the sort to briefly mock it before returning to creating your own graphics engines, sub-routines and whatnot.

That said, I had great fun developing my game, *Space Zombies (In Space)* – see it on the DVD – but only because I never took it

seriously. Start taking *FPS Creator* seriously, and it quickly becomes apparent how under-equipped it leaves you to create anything decent. The games you create are your own intellectual property too, a privilege afforded by the fact that nobody in their right mind will buy the tripe you develop.

Don't get me wrong though, even though the end product is useless, creating your own game is fantastic fun – just don't expect to become the next Carmack. If you want to do that, start learning binary now. **PCZ**



"AND this here's the plotting room, where we like to plot."

AT A GLANCE...

We're all idiots who can't make games, now we're idiots who can. Terrible FPS games to be precise.

System requirements **3**

HOW IT STACKS



THE MAKING OF: SPACE ZOMBIES (IN SPACE)



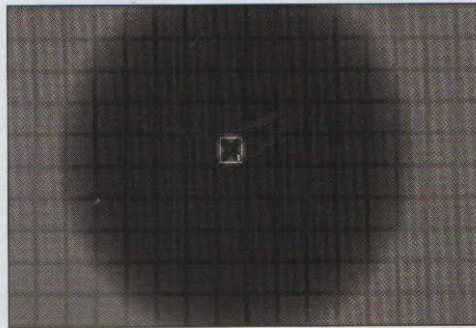
03 SEE THE LIGHT First off, we need a Space Room for our hero to start off in. Quite why our hero is in this arbitrary room is unknown, but there's a green light in there, and it's an established fact that all Space Rooms have green lights.



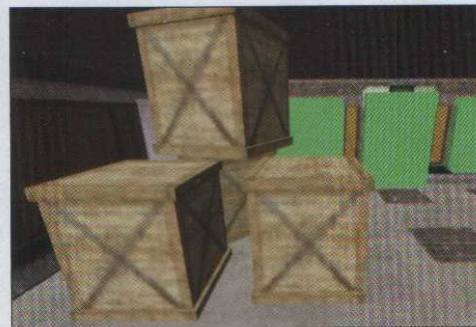
06 ARE THEY ON DRUGS? This is more like it. I add real living Space Zombies to this corridor here. I lower their speed, hoping it will make them move like zombies, but instead they move about in slow-motion. I like the effect though, so I keep it – they're Space Zombies, after all.



08 SOME CHIANTI? Realising the player is safe from this entrapped Space Zombie, I decide to make him scary in a different way. I furnish his Space Cell with a Space Bed and a skeleton (and a dresser and a Space Telephone). It's all gone very *Silence Of The Lambs*.



01 ON YOUR MARKS... Ahh, a blank canvas. The world is my oyster, it's up to me to create something original and superbly innovative. Molyneux will bow down before me, people will see me in the streets and call my name, pronouncing me the saviour of the FPS genre.



04 GREAT CRATES Crates add an air of authenticity to any FPS, and I want my *Space Zombies (In Space)* game to be as true to life as possible. With this in mind, I stack four crates in the corner of the Space Room – they've even got physics, so shoot them please.



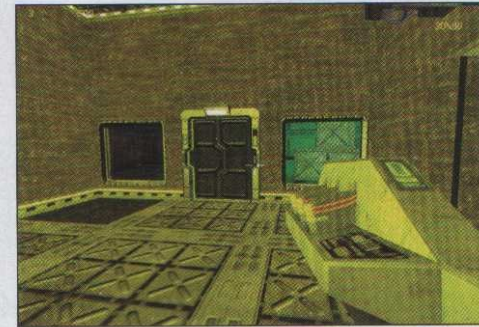
07 STEP ASIDE, VALVE Right, time for a plot twist. With a few clicks, I create a Space Lab and furnish it with generic, futuristic apparatus. In the Space Cell, I place a Space Zombie and a red light. Red light means evil.



09 CURTAIN DOWN Time for the thrilling finale – I won't ruin it for you, but after a few minutes in Paint Shop Pro, my story comes to an exhilarating climax. Forget what you think you know about *Space Zombies (In Space)* – the rabbit hole goes so much deeper.



02 THAT SPECIAL MOMENT Aha! *Space Zombies (In Space)*! If I was in a bath I'd leap out and shout "Eureka!" This is going to be something special. Already I've begun to act snide towards journalists, giving Sefton ominous stares.



05 WE HEART GUNS My *Space Zombies* will have guns, so, to even the odds slightly, I place a second room next to the Space Room, containing a weapon. I call this the Gun Room: it has a yellow light, so as not to be confused with the Space Room.



PCZONE
 Graphics A horrible shiny mess
 Sound Awful clanking noises
 Multiplayer You can create online games, surprisingly

- ✓ Great fun to develop with
- ✓ A chance to get creative
- ✓ Zombies and Nazis can't be faulted
- ✗ Terrible engine
- ✗ You won't make anything good

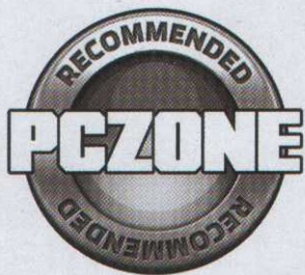
53
 DIY FPS LOL



UFO: AFTERSHOCK

Paul Presley takes his turn (ho ho) at battling aliens

DEVELOPER ALTAR Interactive
PUBLISHER Cenega Publishing
WEBSITE www.ufo-aftershock.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

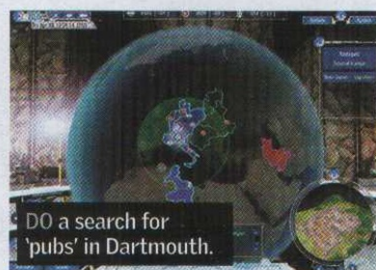


IMAGINE IF GOOGLE Earth had a game attached. That's the first thought that goes through your head when playing *UFO: Aftershock*, sequel to the minor 2003 strategiser *UFO: Aftermath*. *Aftermath* wasn't exactly a bad game, very beloved by the hardcore crowd and that. But in a world of ever-increasing progress, sticking all your eggs into one big turn-based, olde worlde basket was never going to be the strongest of moves.

So does this sequel learn from the past, being interestingly set following the 'bad' ending of the previous game: Earth = one giant petri dish for alien experimentation, orbiting human survivors trying to reclaim their home? Has the developer taken a look at the likes of *Black & White 2*, *Civ IV* and any other game that looks like it was made in the 21st century and tried to compete on even terms? Don't be daft.

MADE-UP WORDS

I really hate to criticise *Aftershock* for something like this, as beneath its very dated exterior lies a charmingly addictive



mix of squad-based tacticalations, god's-eye stratagisery and statistical RPGness. And it begins (once past the basic tutorial) with the Google Earth-type spiny globe that actually looks really snazzy and makes you think you're playing a modern game. But then you try a squad mission, or browse through some resource management screens or watch the story animations and your heart sinks.

BOBFOC

Not, you understand, that I'm saying this is a bad game. Far from it. It's actually a very, very good game. Full of options, bags of long-term appeal, liberally garnished with that old 'just one more go' factor. Mostly though, *UFO* is a victim of circumstance. By which I mean you look around at all the modern-looking strategy games and you just wish that the publisher would splash a bit of cash on fancy graphics and interface design.

It's a great, great game hidden behind a years-old design template. Plus, it has an almost wilful disregard for modern game construction technology. It's all well and good pandering to your existing fanbase, but there comes a point when you have to stick your head above the parapets, take note of how times, interface design and hairstyles have moved on and adjust yourself accordingly.

Anyway, *UFO: Aftershock*. You'll really like her. She's got a smashing personality. **PC7**

PCZONE

Graphics It's like the last three years never happened
Sound Repetitive music and troop voices
Multiplayer None. For shame...

- ✓ Addictive mix of strategy and RPG
- ✓ Nice concept
- ✓ Plenty of depth and long-term appeal
- ✗ It's hardly the most stunning looking thing in the world
- ✗ Not the most intelligent AI ever seen
- ✗ Probably only for existing fans

75

Less *Aftershock*, more real ale

AT A GLANCE...

Turn-based, real-time, strategy-RPG hybrid (oh, and some resource management) as aliens invade Earth and you fight to take it back. Old school to the max.

System requirements 3

HOW IT STACKS

CIVILIZATION IV	92%
UFO: AFTERSHOCK	75%
SHATTERED UNION	60%



BATTALION ★ WARS



The greatness of the Advance Wars series comes to the big screen with a twist! Jump into the trenches and lead your troops through real-time, 3-D combat. Set the strategy or pull the trigger yourself. Either way, it's world war, and you get to decide the outcome.

Cube Magazine: 9.0 out of 10 - Star Game *NGC Magazine: 90%*

OUT 9TH DECEMBER



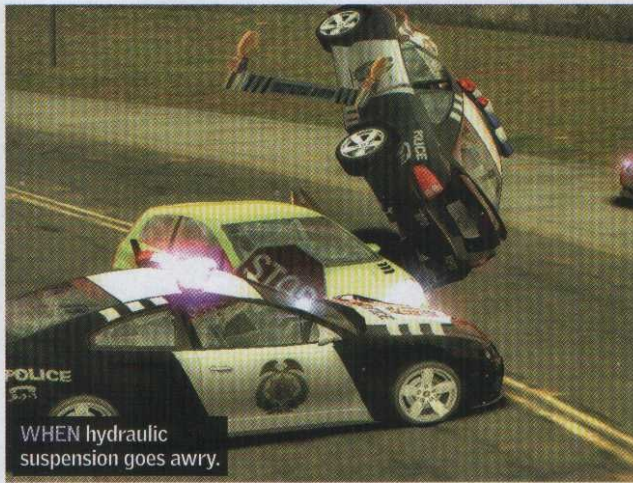
NINTENDO
GAMECUBE
www.nintendo.co.uk



THEY'VE saved you a parking space...



COLLAPSING objects cue some classic slapstick.



WHEN hydraulic suspension goes awry.



STICK to scooters, pizza boy.



ALL the fun of the fair.

NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED



Suzy Wallace gets on the wrong side of the law with EA's latest racer

DEVELOPER EA Canada
 PUBLISHER EA
 WEBSITE www.eagames.com
 ETA Out Now
 PRICE £34.99

AT A GLANCE...

Cars, cops and carnage combine to provide the ultimate car chase in this latest instalment of EA's racer

System requirements **3**

HOW IT STACKS

TOCA RACE DRIVER 2 **89%**

NFS: MOST WANTED **88%**

NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND 2 **84%**

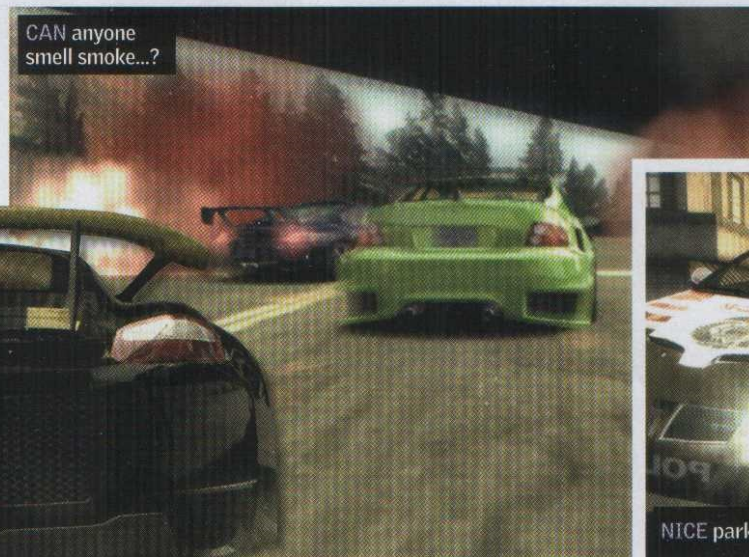
THE DUKES OF HAZZARD, *The Cannonball Run*, *Smokey And The Bandit* – admit it, hapless law enforcers getting royally shafted in car chases (mostly by Burt Reynolds it would seem) make you laugh. In recent times the *Need For Speed* franchise has been off exploring the *Fast Car* market with *Underground 1 & 2*, but *Most Wanted* signals a return to more familiar territory. A spiritual successor to the *Hot Pursuit* titles, it taps straight back into that comic relationship between cop and fugitive.

While many elements have been carried over from *Underground*, including the main

game modes and the free-roaming cities, there are some changes. Some new modes adorn the hood and events are no longer strictly limited to night-time, but it's the reputation aspect that's got us excited. Basically, your ride gets pinched at the beginning of the game and the only way to get it back is to work your way up the list of the 15 most respected racers around: the Blacklist. You can only challenge the next on the list once you've built up enough of a reputation, accomplished by winning races and building up your 'Bounty'.

Bounty is all about police attention, thus providing a massive incentive to replace

Driving Miss Daisy with driving like crazy, and the act of gaining it is by far the most enjoyable part of the game. You feel like the hero in a Hollywood chase scene as you lead the police in endless pursuits, shunting your way through road blocks, laughing as they pile into walls (while shouting over the police radio that they've got you pinned in) and destroying them by smashing your way through the conveniently placed pursuit



CAN anyone smell smoke...?



WOMEN! Know your limits.



NICE parking.



WHEN one exhaust just isn't enough.

Gaining a following

Reckon two cars chasing you are a bit of a handful? Think again...



Now we don't normally get excited by statistics and menus (unless we're talking *Football Manager*), but the rankings section in *Most Wanted* throws up some interesting possibilities. If you browse through, you'll find some pretty impressive figures for you to beat. By far the most outrageous is the maximum number of police cars involved in a chase... 150! A modern-day recreation of *The Blues Brothers* finale is waiting to happen...

breakers (destructible objects designed to collapse on or otherwise thwart your pursuers).

It's got to be the most fun I've had at the wheel since *Carmageddon*. And while *Bounty* now plays a massive role, teenagers with a penchant for Pioneer stickers will be happy to know that the modifying aspect is still present, allowing you to carefully mould your four-wheeled masterpiece from an impressive selection of officially licensed cars and products.

SCENIC ROUTE

On the road the game looks quite beautiful, having sacrificed the crisp detail of *NFS: Underground 2* for a more late-night Channel Five soft-focus look, although the game can prove a bit of a system hog. All manner of lighting effects have been utilised too, although you can't help but feel that some of them have been added more for the console owners than the PC crowd. Drive like a white van man and your car will show the results with windows cracking and panels getting dented and scratched, although EA unfortunately still hasn't seen fit to extend the damage model beyond mere cosmetics.

The cities look gorgeous too, and with the scenery varying from industrial ports to upmarket golf clubs, they provide plenty of variety to go with the mass of back alleys, side roads and short cuts waiting to be discovered. Sadly, the sense of speed seems to have been toned down, with the sensation

being a touch more Robin Reliant than Ferrari Enzo this time around.

Mostly though it's the over-the-top chases - which in the most extreme cases can feature over 100 pursuing police cars - that make *Most Wanted* what it is. Heavy on the destruction and often extremely funny, it's one of the most exhilarating rides around, regardless of the speed issues. The legacy of Burt Reynolds lives on. **PWZ**

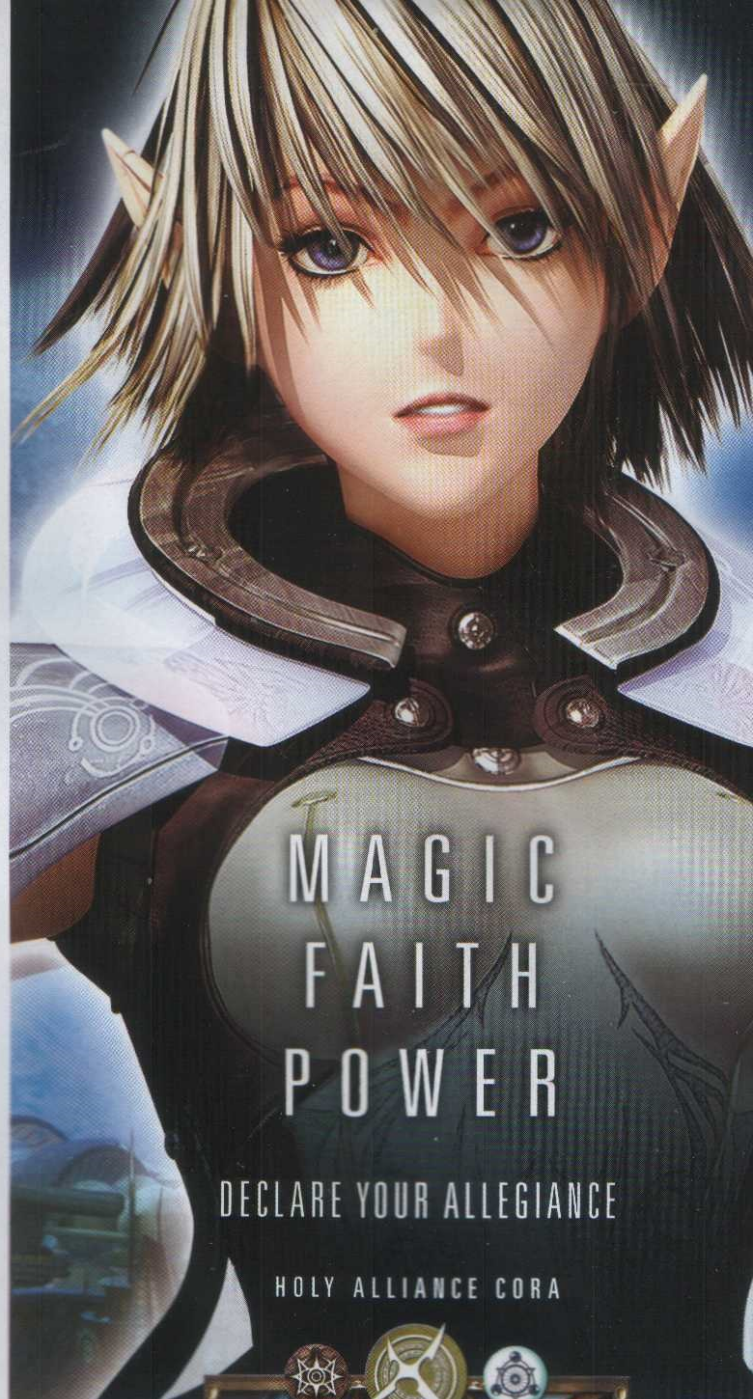
PCZONE

Graphics: Sublime soft-focus
Sound: Thumping soundtrack over raucous cars noises
Multiplayer: Race online or over a LAN

- ✓ Hilarious police pursuits
- ✓ Well-crafted cities
- ✓ Glorious graphics
- ✓ Dreamy FMVs
- ✗ Has lost some of the sense of speed
- ✗ Damage is only cosmetic

88

Top of the cops



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PUT your wands in the air if you just don't care.



POTTER: either scared or constipated.

HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE

Will Porter writes his annual love letter to JK Rowling. Still no reply...

DEVELOPER EA
PUBLISHER EA
WEBSITE
www.harrypotter.ea.com/hpgof
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

AT A GLANCE...

Annual movie tie-in for the kids, and still way better than all the other crap peddled for the young 'uns.

System requirements 2

HOW IT STACKS

READING THE BOOK **90%**

HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE **73%**

HP AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN **68%**



THE day Pinocchio turned bad.



HAVOKA physicka leviosa!

RIGHT THEN, IF YOU don't like Potter you can bog off. You're not wanted reading this review. Got it? OK. *Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire* is a significant gear change from previous boy-wizard titles, which were already competent kids' games, albeit obsessed with collecting jellybeans, unending platform-jumping and turning Hermione into a bunny rabbit.

Obviously the beans factor hasn't changed ("Wow! Beans!" or "Look! Beans! Over there!" remains Ron's perpetual catchphrase), but in response to the ever-darkening complexities of the *Potter* books and films, the game has just (wait for it...) dumbed down.

Essentially, *HPATGOF* has been pulled tighter to the franchise, while the focus has been kept on what the Americans would call 'family gaming'. Stephen Fry has been summoned in to deliver nuggets of story in his droll, knowing way, the action quota has been ramped up, spell-casting has become

context-sensitive and the fabled jump-key of platform lore has vanished.

Because of this, the Potter-mobile has become smoother, sleeker and devoid of the filler material. EA, normally so aware of the demands of 'da kidz', seems to have finally realised that the inherent girliness of previous titles just won't cut it now the target audience are starting to get a taste for the bling and destruction that they'll find in the rest of the company catalogue.

Put simply, this remains a top-notch kiddie action offering – one with real weight to its spells (especially with the physics that allow you to levitate enemies and hurl them about the place, or simply drop boulders on young Weasley's head), and a thoroughly thrilling broomstick ride. It's out with the cute rabbit spells, and in with the massive great dragons.

If you, like me, are a *Potter* maniac of increasing years, then I'll have to reaffirm that this isn't for you. However, if you've spawned younglings, then you won't go far wrong with this as a perfunctory

Christmas present. Even though they'll probably moan that they'd rather have had a game in which you shoot someone in the face. Kids of today, eh? **PC7**

PCZONE

Graphics Artistically quite nice
Sound Whoosh, bang, crackle
Multiplayer Fun co-op

- ✓ A far slicker *Potter* experience
- ✓ Stephen Fry is a legend
- ✓ Great physics spells
- ✓ Far less filler than before
- ✗ Inherently console-biased, quite short
- ✗ Not for adults

73
Mischief managed





TITLE BOUT CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING

Float like a piece of shit, sting like a urethral infection

DEVELOPER Alpha Omega Games
PUBLISHER Fusion Software
WEBSITE www.titlebout.co.uk
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99

System requirements 1

Boxing, the visceral and primal sport, a battle of endurance, stamina and strength between two finely-tuned fighting machines, a clash of veritable titans. Every jaw-shattering punch, every deft duck and weave and every bloodied and shattered face echoes traditions of an ancient sport.

Whereas Excel spreadsheets, boring grids teeming with pointless numbers, statistics and variables, along with confusing arrays of digits and long words, bafflingly intricate options and almost non-existent graphics echo traditions of... Well, being bored out of your tree.

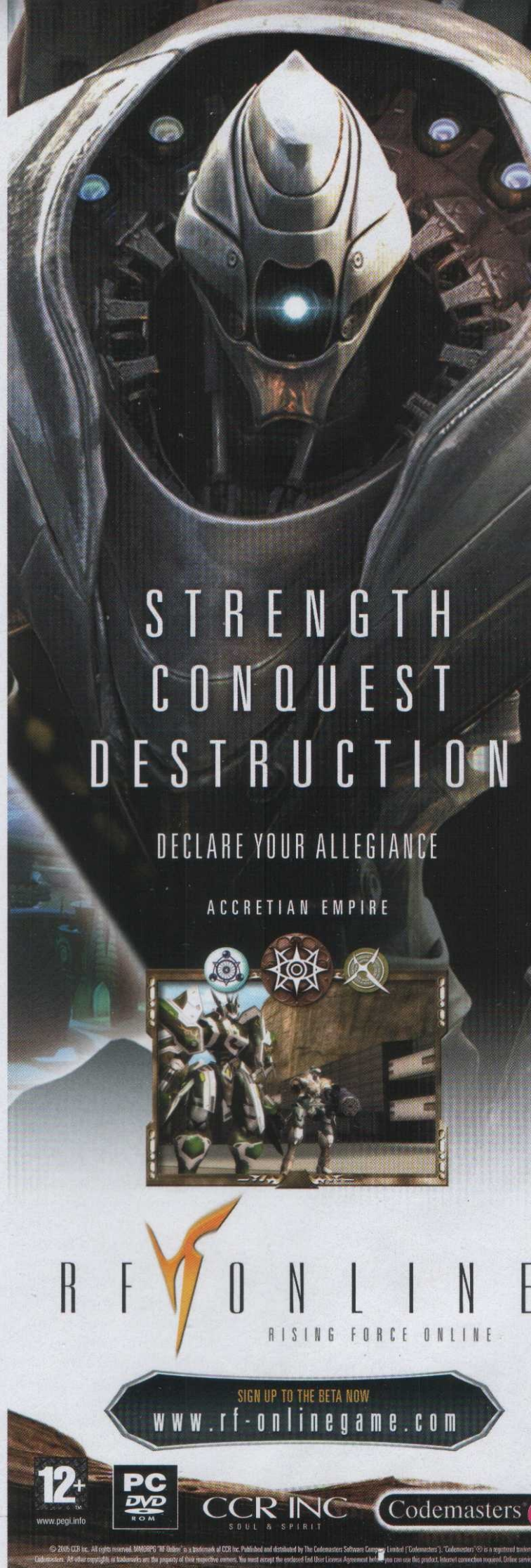
Combine the two and you get *TitleBout Championship Boxing*, a piece of software (it definitely doesn't fall under the definition of 'game') which allows you to take two of over 4,000 fighters and make them fight one another. What you get is a screen full of numbers and meters, and a little 2D image of your sluggers in a ring, occasionally moving, or if you're lucky, knocking one another to the mat in a single frame of animation.

There's not even a semblance of gameplay here: there are no management options, you



can't start training a young fighter from bar fights to international tournaments, you can't do anything remotely fun. This is literally a glorified spreadsheet, and not in that joking way that people call *Football Manager* a glorified spreadsheet: this is actually Excel with a boxing-themed interface. It's a simulation in the dullest sense of the word.

Steve Hogarty



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PC DVD ROM

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THE phrase 'fish in a barrel' comes to mind.



ELECTRO-FENCES prove inherently unreliable.



IT'S easy to bluff when you all have the same face.



STARSHIP TROOPERS

Will Porter lost his heart to a Starship Trooper. He blames the NHS...



BEHOLD the best thing in the game: friendly grenades.

DEVELOPER Strangelite
PUBLISHER Empire Interactive
WEBSITE www.starshiptroopersgame.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99

AT A GLANCE...

Five years after the film, exactly the same sorts of battles are panning out on a planet called Hesperus. And you're there too, with big guns.

System requirements 4

HOW IT STACKS

HALF-LIFE 2 **97%**

PICKING YOUR NOSE **78%**

STARSHIP TROOPERS **58%**

STARSHIP TROOPERS IS a game that I really feel I should like. It's made by a plucky British outfit, it's based on a film that's not only brilliantly satirical but also full of nasty violence and wazzo pairs of jugs, and it involves shooting lots and lots of gooey aliens.

So let's start off nice. First, *Starship Troopers* manages to get an impressive amount of bugs and blokes on-screen at any one time – the hustle, bustle and background banter of the first training/spaceship level is really quite atmospheric, and later insect assaults certainly provide a sense of attacks that come from every which way but loose. Second, the game begins with the intimation that you've just had some pretty powerful sex with your pilot (female). Third, some of the enemies

are really, really big and make the screen go blue when you kill them.

You may have noticed that I'm struggling for good points, and this is because they're well and truly outnumbered by the inconsistency of the game proper – which at its best is average and at its worst as much fun as eating a packet of wire-wool. The graphics for example, for use of an easy target, may be able to create a lot

of fuzzy, jagged-looking bugs, but certainly don't go as far as having allies who look like they're in a game from any point within the last three years.

REACH FOR THE RAID

What's more, developer Strangelite may have fixed the balancing issues so glaringly obvious in the demo level, but the game forever teeters on a precipice between deadening ease and an endless, unfair parade of quickloads brought on by fuzzy objectives and AI that I simply fail to understand. As a human being, I'm probably not expected to understand the motivation of an alien insect commanded by a psychic bag of goo – but the motions of the enemy are so haphazard that they quickly stop being fun, and get even less fun as you trudge through similar arrays of claws and spikes level after level. What's more, the handling of your character is sluggish, the guns patchy and the jump so redundantly useless that your spacebar will weep.

When the game uses its source material well (the opening, the excellent smiley grenades that sweetly count down the seconds left until their destruction, a few of the bigger boss creatures), then this is a passable game, and one that people who were stupid enough to buy the film's rubbish DVD spin-off sequels might be interested to play. There are

redeeming features, a few nice touches of scripting here and a cool boss there, but generally the fabled shitty-stick of non-touching is going to have to make another one of his increasingly common appearances. If you buy this game, then I'm sorry to say you'll be disappointed. Do you want to know more? **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Lots of ugly men, lots of ugly bugs
Sound Grunty voice-acting, mediocre gunshots
Multiplayer Yup. Not great though

- ✓ Lots of enemies and allies on-screen
- ✓ Cute smiley grenades
- ✓ Nostalgia for film helps
- ✗ Doesn't get the point of *Starship Troopers*
- ✗ Ugly as sin, very repetitive
- ✗ Frequently irritating

58
Starship Titanic





TAITO LEGENDS

Kiwis, dragons and bad guys in turbans, it could only be *Taito*



DEVELOPER Taito
PUBLISHER Xplosiv
WEBSITE www.taitolegends.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99

System requirements 1

20 of the 29 games in *Taito Legends* are older than me. I counted. While Spectrum and Amiga fanboys were arguing over which version of *Bubble Bobble* was superior, I was gurgling and choking on small objects in a maternity ward. That's not to say that I don't know what I'm talking about here though. I cut my teeth on an Atari ST, so *Bubble Bobble*, *The New Zealand Story*, *Operation Wolf*, *Rainbow Islands*, these are just some of the reasons I started playing games, and they're just some of the fantastic games featured in this compilation pack.

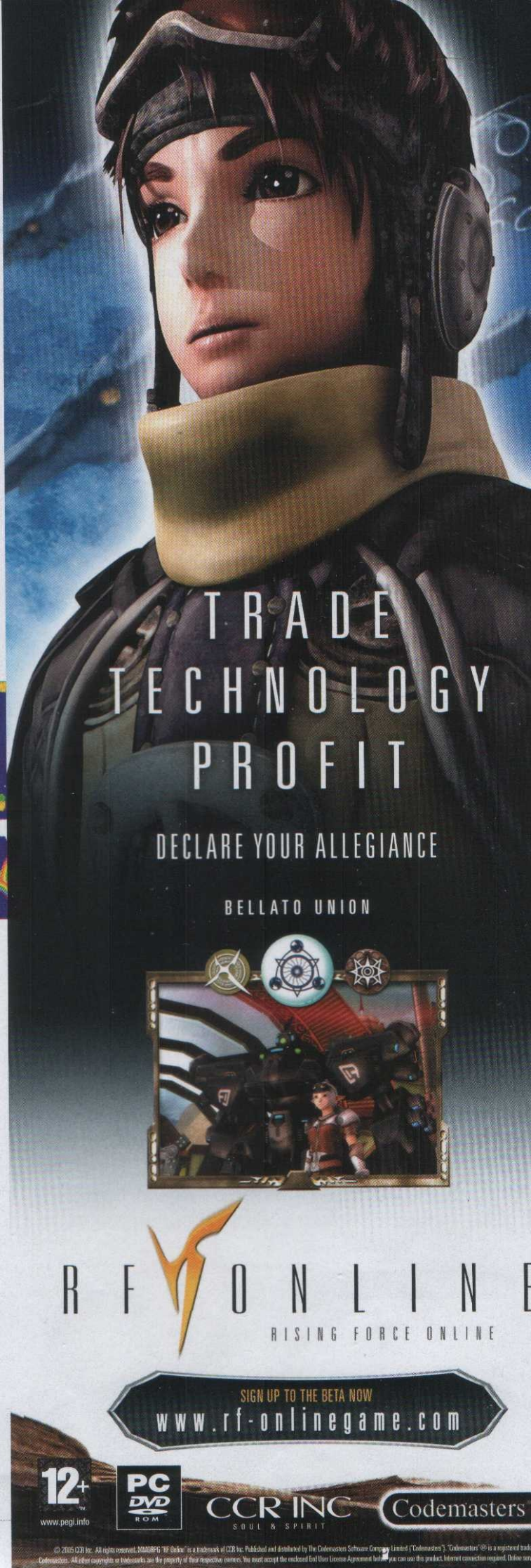
Yes, it's a case of cashing in on old successes, yes there's quite a bit of filler, and yes the publisher has left out *Darius*, *Chase H.Q.* and *Arkanoid* just so it can put something decent on its next compilation. Plus, looking past the nostalgia, you realise a lot of



the games are a bit wank by today's standards, but *Taito Legends* scrapes being worth it for the first games listed alone.

They're hardly lazy conversions either, with mouse support in the gun games and 'hi-low' gear indicators in the racing games, two developer interviews, all of the original sales flyers and 3D models of the arcade cabinets. It also comes with an art card you can stick on the side of your PC to look at with a smug sense of moral superiority having chosen not to download these games on MAME.

Steve Hogarty



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 TECHNOLOGY
 PROFIT

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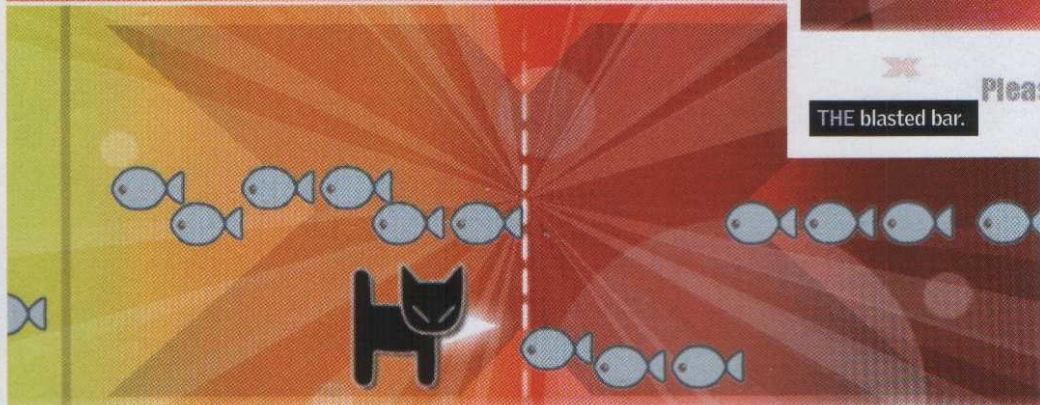
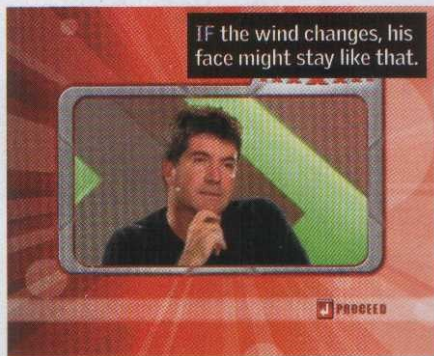
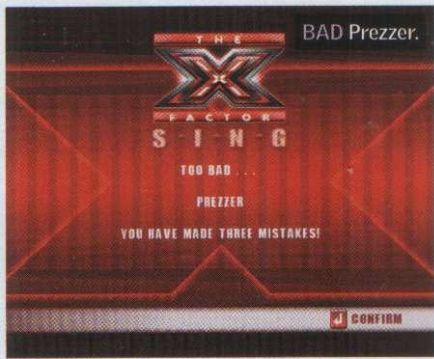
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PC
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I'm in the mood for chan- cing
I feel like dan- cing

SING well and the cat gets fed. We're sure it made sense at the time.

THE X FACTOR SING

Despite the surname, *Paul Presley* isn't the most tuneful of souls. For that we need *ZONE's* very own karaoke correspondent...

DEVELOPER Milestone
PUBLISHER Black Bean Games
WEBSITE
www.xfactoring.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99 (inc free PC microphone)

FOR SOME REASON, party games and the PC just don't seem to get along. It's like cheese and ice cream. Wenger and Mourinho. Purfleet and class. Many's the time we get sent a strange piece of kit here at the *ZONE* office – a plastic floor-sheet full of arcane arrows, a webcam that tracks your hand movement, a microphone – only to have it met with baffled stares and contemptuous shrugs. We wouldn't know a dance mat from a placemat around here.

We share office space with various console magazines, and often's the time we'll see a group gather around a screen, watch some Hoxton twat wave his arms around in front of an EyeToy as he pretends to be a mouse running up a rollercoaster, or fly a spaceship through hoops or some such, sneering, tut-tutting, but secretly envious of the fun they appear to be having.

Seeing as how none of the *ZONE* editorial boys could hold a tune if it was

superglued to their hand, the only way to give *The X Factor Sing* a fair crack is to turn things over to our resident karaoke queen of the mic, production ed, Clare 'How's that copy coming along?' Lydon. First question... What's with this song list?

"It's not very good is it? It's very short, especially compared to *Karaoke Stage* or *SingStar* on the PS2. Very odd choices as well. I mean, the Lighthouse Family? Who wants to sing anything by them?" The

AT A GLANCE...

An attempt to bring the 'fun' of karaoke to the PC. While being insulted by Simon Cowell.

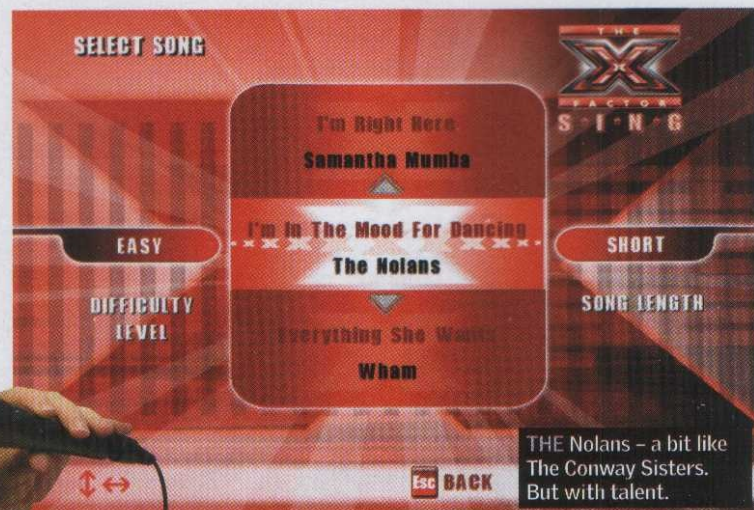
System requirements

HOW IT STACKS

WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE 59%

FAMILY FORTUNES 57%

THE X FACTOR SING 46%



THE Nolans – a bit like The Conway Sisters. But with talent.

to say
e tell me now



Little voice

Sing for your (cat's) supper



One bright spot for *The X Factor Sing* (other than the free microphone that you can use to record dialogue for *The Movies*, say) are the mini-games. Most are insipid nonsense, but Clare thought that two did stand out – A Cappella mode and Blindfold.

The former gives you the first note of each bar, then lets you go it alone – a test to be sure, and not seen in the PS2 games. But the latter is the real star as it "switches off the bloody bar which stops cheating and really should be a general option for the main game in all these things," fumes Clare. You go, girl.

infirm? There are actually 20 songs in *X Factor*, although the range seems very limited in scope. Not many real 'karaoke' classics either. "There are some decent tracks," Clare admits. "Wham, Take That, Sheena Easton – they're all good for karaoke. But there's not enough – and Mel C's *Next Best Superstar*? It was hardly a huge hit in the first place..."

ALL BAR NONE

What struck me most was that it doesn't really have much to do with *The X Factor* itself, bar the occasionally still photo of Simon Cowell or Louis Walsh telling you you're as tone deaf as a brick ("Louis said I was a breath of fresh air," boasts Clare).

It's cheap. It pertains to be *The X Factor* with the logos and theme music, but it's very tacked on. "It's just a very boring interface," remonstrates Karaoke Clare, "no videos like *SingStar*, no customisable avatars like *Karaoke Stage* and... It has the one thing that is the scourge of karaoke games the world over – the pitch bar!"

SING WHEN YOU'RE WINNING

This is one of those Most Important Matters in the world of karaoke games, apparently. "The bar lets you cheat!" cries Clare, warming to her subject. "You can hum, tap the microphone or just make silly noises and still perform well – you just have to make sure you keep the arrow on the pitch bar. Once you know that, even when you're drunk you can sing out of tune or not at all and

still get a high mark." Karaoke gets very competitive round Clare's house, it seems. "It matters!" she affirms.

Which is perhaps the main point. The PC isn't suited to this type of thing at all. It's too fiddly, too cumbersome and can't be played around the telly with a crate of beer. Even the target demographic (kids and singing families – the von Trapps?) would be plumping for the console version, as it causes less headaches all round. And if you're going to do that, then you're better off getting one of the decent versions – *SingStar* or *Karaoke Stage* – instead. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Rudimentary
Sound Terrible musical choices, but the quality is up to you
Multiplayer Party modes ahoj

- ✓ Free microphone
- ✓ It's not *Fame Academy*
- ✓ Short song choice
- ✗ Basic presentation
- ✗ Doesn't suit the PC
- ✗ The bloody bar

46

Z-list



DOING its bit for European harmony. Kinda.

DIPLOMACY

The one that isn't Risk

DEVELOPER Paradox Interactive
PUBLISHER Mindscape
WEBSITE www.diplomacy-pcgame.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

System requirements 2

CHANCES ARE YOU might not have heard of *Diplomacy*. A popular strategic boardgame invented in the '50s, despite a loyal audience among the cognoscenti, it's never really gained the kind of widespread appeal of your Risks, your Monopolys or your Hungry Hungry Hippos.

Diplomacy is one of those games that, due to its niche appeal, is likely to leave potential fans with limited access to fellow real-world players. Hence a computerised version would actually be a boon rather than a crippling waste of human endeavour.

For the most part, Paradox has done a bang-up job of getting this complicated arena of WWI-era European realpolitik onto your screen. The board is nicely presented in swish 3D, the visuals are crisp and well defined and the game's principle setup remains intact.

What doesn't quite work so well is the interface. Cumbersome, sometimes



MINE, all mine.

RIPE for the plucking.



MR Benn optional.



unnecessarily so, especially in the all-important diplomacy sections. Which is a pisser, given the game's fundamental reason for existing. It's not that it's bad, it's just that you can't help thinking there must have been a better way to present it.

Never mind though. The online options are comprehensive enough to let you match up with players across the world (although mostly Europe – which adds a certain spice when you know the German forces encroaching your borders really are controlled by a German), which is really the main point about this version existing at all.

Paul Presley

PCZONE

69

Jeux sans frontières

You won't find any of these indie games in the shops, but you can download them or get trial versions on our DVD.

IndieZone



Take *Martin Korda's* hand as he leads you through the indie gaming garden, this month featuring some morning glory and a spot of tennis...



ONE of the best indie games we've seen in ages.

MORNING'S WRATH

DEVELOPER *Ethereal Darkness Interactive* WEBSITE www.morningswrath.com
 PRICE Boxed version: \$2995 (£16.83); Download: \$1995 (£11.21)

EVERY SO OFTEN we come across an indie game that shines out like a beacon of light from the rest of the scene's offerings. *Morning's Wrath* is just such a game. From the well written, excellently presented intro to the hours of compelling isometric RPG gameplay that lead you on a quest to save your land from destruction, *Morning's Wrath* sparkles with quality.

You play as Princess Morning, who's ripped away from her comfortable lifestyle when her parents are murdered and her lands invaded. With your nation's future hanging in the balance, you must set off on a series of adventures, during which you'll battle evil enemies in distant lands, learn some great new spells and uncover



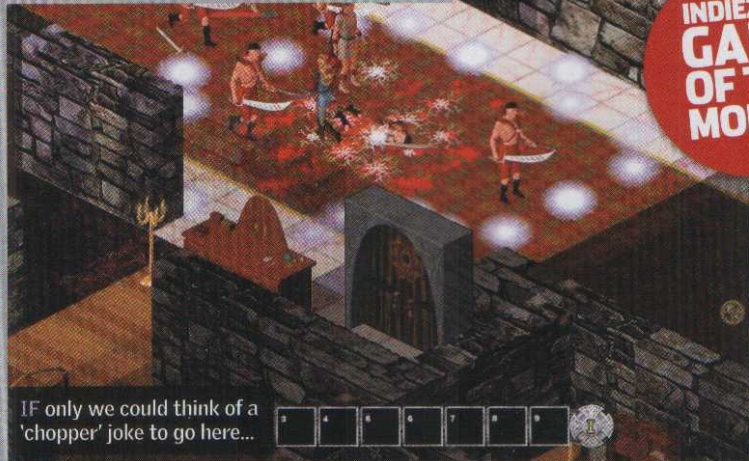
SOME bastard mowed a path in the grass, that's what.

the sinister mysteries of the past.

There are scores of NPCs to chat to and while the story is fairly predictable, it's still a decent yarn. Special mention must go to the highly accomplished soundtrack, which brims with atmospheric tunes.

Morning's Wrath is a showcase for what indie gaming is capable of, and a game that other budding developers could learn a lot from.

INDIEZONE
 GAME
 OF THE
 MONTH



IF only we could think of a 'chopper' joke to go here...

PCZONE
 75



TRASH: happily, it doesn't live up to its name.

TRASH

DEVELOPER *Inhuman Games* WEBSITE www.inhumangames.com
 PRICE \$1995 (£11.21)

TRASH GENERATED A fair amount of online excitement prior to its release, and while it's hardly ground-breaking, it does possess just about enough innovation to warrant praise.

Set in a post-apocalyptic future where humans battle mutants for control of Earth, *Trash* is an RTS that places a heavy emphasis on teamwork and cooperation. While its single-player skirmish games lack any real substance or immersion, it's online that *Trash* comes into its own, with battles featuring up to 24 players.

The two warring factions are well conceived, and the premise of humans having to create new

weapons from the rubble left behind by a nuclear war in order to combat the mutants (who have superhuman powers) is a novel twist on the RTS resource-management template.

Sadly, *Trash* comes up short in several key departments. For starters, there's no campaign whatsoever. There's also a complete lack of guidance for the newcomer, and the ugly interface is infuriatingly clunky. However, if you're hankering for some large C&C-style online battles, you'll definitely find some fun here.

PCZONE
 60

TENNIS ELBOW

DEVELOPER Mana Games **WEB** managames.com/tennis
PRICE Boxed copy: \$19.95 (£11.21)

TAKE ONE LOOK at *Tennis Elbow* and you'd be forgiven for thinking it's as painful to play as its name suggests. But you'd be wrong. Very wrong.

Despite the lack of visual appeal, this is a surprisingly competent tennis simulation, one that offers an impressive line-up of features, including the ability to play on six different surfaces, all of which require a subtly different playing style.

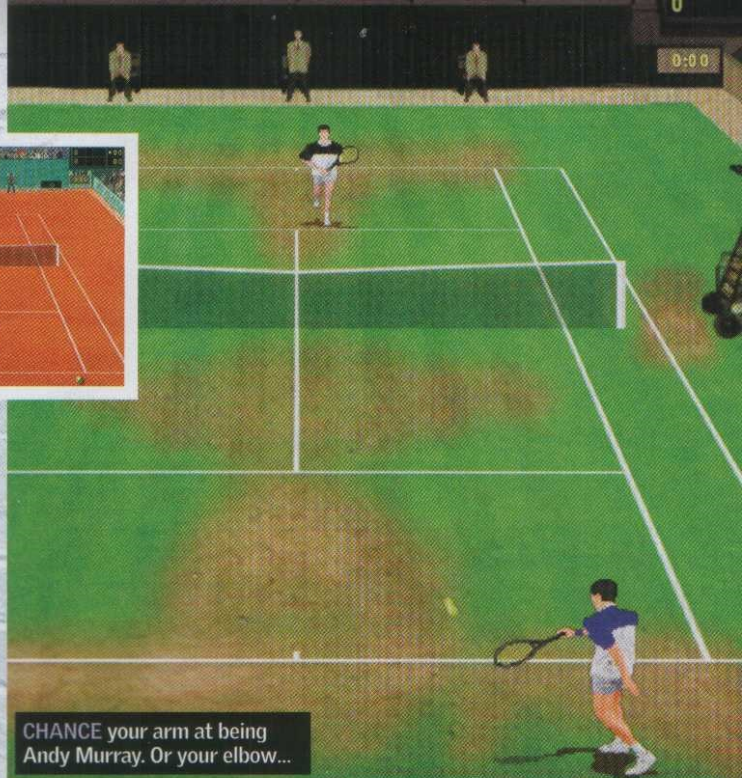
You can choose to play either singles or doubles matches, or take part in one of the 125 tournaments on offer. There's also

a ranking ladder and 300 AI-controlled opponents, who vary in ability and often return your shots with surprising intelligence. Unlike Tim Henman at present.

Despite the fact that some net rallies can degenerate into fly-swattingly farcical proportions, *Tennis Elbow's* attention to detail, atmospheric sound effects and simple control system (that's actually fairly tough to master) make it well worth the meagre outlay.



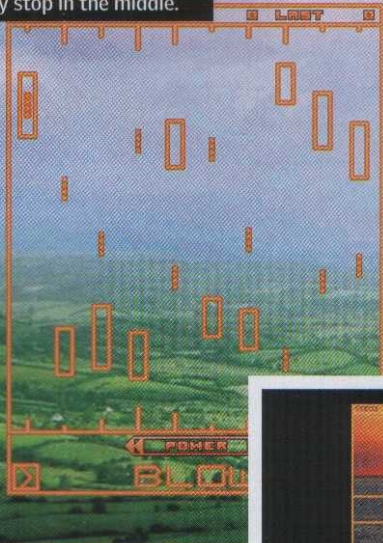
EACH surface plays slightly differently.



CHANCE your arm at being Andy Murray. Or your elbow...

PCZONE
65

REBOUND the letters off the top so that they stop in the middle.



WIBBLE

DEVELOPER Red Games
WEB www.redgames.net
PRICE \$19.95 (£11.21)

ELEVEN QUID? FOR a slightly skewed version of Shuffleboard? You're having a laugh.

I don't know about you, but pushing a collection of letters against a wall with just the right amount of force to ensure they stop in a designated area isn't my idea of a fun night in.

However, here's my advice if you simply can't live without this most ground-breaking of gaming ideas. Roll up five small paper balls and scatter them about a foot away from a wall. Take a sheet of paper and place it behind the spheres. Now, flick the balls against the wall so that they rebound by just the right amount to stop on



REBOUND those letters again. And, erm, that's it.

the sheet of paper. Da-dah! You've just made a real-life version of *Wibble* for no more than the cost of two pieces of that printer paper you swiped from the office last week when your boss wasn't looking. Oh, and you've saved yourself 11 quid and a couple of megas of hard disk space into the bargain. Result.

PCZONE
15

Developer Q&A



DAVID ROSEN
PROJECT LEADER

COMPANY Wolfire Software

WEBSITE www.wolfire.com

GAMES *Lugaru: The Rabbit's Foot*, *Lightning's Shadow*, *Black Shades*, *GLFighters*, *FirePong 2* and *Sword*



PCZ Tell us about your company...

DAVID I decided to start Wolfire Software when I began working on *Lugaru* (issue 162, 71%), so that my games could be organised in one place. At first I was working alone, but now I'm leading 12 talented team members on *Lugaru 2*.

PCZ What's your ethos towards making indie games?

DAVID I only design games that I want to play. I try to find the weaknesses of other games and focus on making them strong in mine. In *Lugaru*, I focused on areas like visible damage to characters, fluid multiple-opponent combat and intuitive fighting controls.

PCZ What advice would you give budding indie games developers?

DAVID Focus on areas that huge commercial developers miss. With no managers or publishers, you can be creative and take risks that big developers are too afraid to take.

PCZ Where do you hope developing indie games will lead?

DAVID I hope we can push the game development community outwards in new directions and help the field mature and become respectable.



RABBIT rabbit, yip yap rabbit...



BUDGET

Poor? Console yourself with these cheap games rated by *Paul Presley*



YOU'RE nicked, sunshine.

THIEF I & II PACK

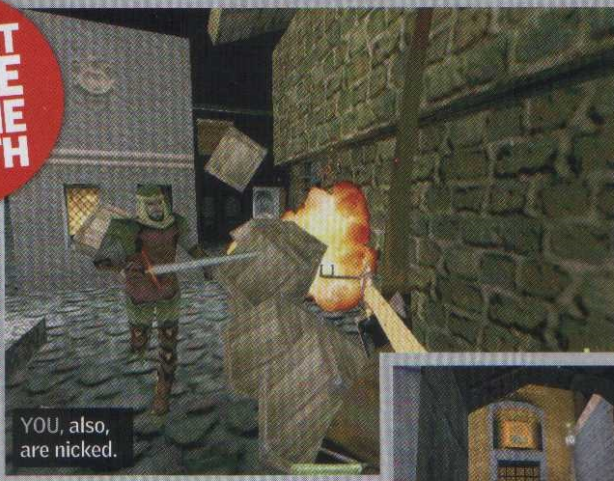
PUBLISHER Sold Out WEBSITE www.sold-out.co.uk PRICE £4.99

THE FIRST OF this month's special double-packs features the age-old classics, *Thief: The Dark Project* and *Thief II: The Metal Age*. Both products of the now defunct Looking Glass Studios (home of an early Warren Spector), the *Thief* series redefined excellence in terms of game design, atmosphere, lighting technology and ways to make wearing cloaks fashionable again.

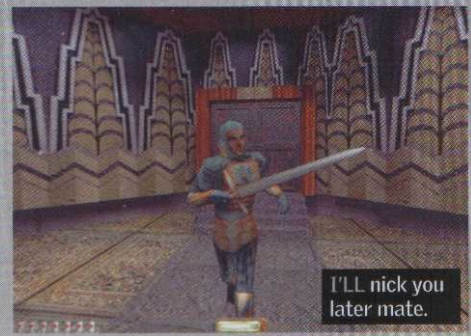
The medieval steampunk setting is still one of the most detailed game-worlds to have been created, mostly thanks to Spector's background as a designer on the ultra-detailed *Ultima* series of RPGs.

It may well be the case that *Thief: Deadly Shadows* provides a better experience by today's standards, but to deny yourself the pleasure of playing the first two chapters, especially for a fiver,

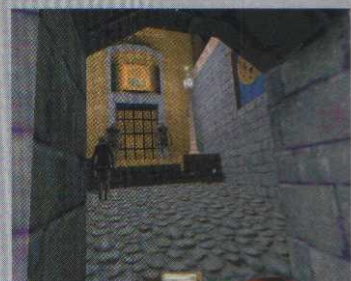
BUDGET GAME OF THE MONTH



YOU, also, are nicked.



I'LL nick you later mate.



would be like denying yourself a diamond cake just because you had a sausage roll two hours ago.

PCZONE 88

THIS MONTH PCZONE SAVED MONEY BY...

Steve coming out on top in a retailer short-changing encounter:
Saving: 2p

Production ed Clare spotting multi-pant packs at M&S:
Saving: £13

Prezzer's bus pass coming through as he reaches a ripe old age:
Saving: £1,500 a year

CARMAGEDDON 2 & TDR 2000 PACK

PUBLISHER Sold Out WEBSITE www.sold-out.co.uk PRICE £4.99

SOMETIMES A GAME comes along that gleefully baits the right-thinking moral majority, revels in its controversy and ultimately sells like milk. What? No, that's not supposed to be an amusing simile or anything. Milk just sells well, that's all. Go ask a supermarket if you

want. I'm being serious.

Er, anyway, *Carmageddon* did exactly that back in the day and the sequel – part of this double pack with the less-than-spectacular *TDR* expansion – became the first game to match its predecessor's 95 per cent score



in *PC ZONE* – *Half-Life* and the sequel being the only other.

Manic car carnage that would have Clarkson running for cover, this is loosely inspired by *Death Race 2000*, and pretty much the sickest (and therefore funniest) game ever made. At least it was until the censors forced the makers to replace blood splatters with green zombie stuff.

PCZONE 74



SPLAT!



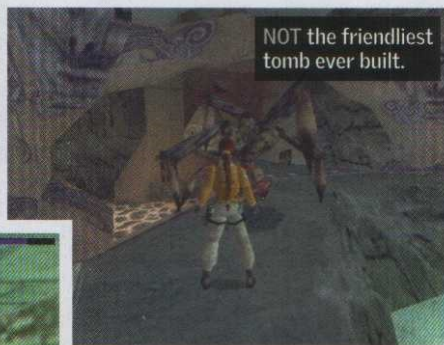
SPLAT! again.



SPLAT! x3.

TOMB RAIDER III & TOMB RAIDER: THE LAST REVELATION PACK

PUBLISHER Sold Out WEBSITE www.sold-out.co.uk PRICE £4.99



NOT the friendliest tomb ever built.



THERE goes the feminist movement.

NEVER MESS WITH a woman. Especially if she's a pathological animal-hater, adept at gymnastics and carrying guns. Honestly, in the real world Lara



Croft would probably have been sectioned under the Mental Health Act by now. Or making a career posing for *Nuts*. Possibly both. "Mad tits inside! Luscious Lara's Lovelies - 16-page spread!" That sort of thing.

Anyway, back in videogame land, these two earlier outings for the pony-tailed grave-robbler both did respectable business, even if they were the heralding the start of a rapid decline in fortunes.

Still, a fiver's not bad value and should act as a decent primer for the lady's return in *Tomb Raider: Legend* next year.

PCZONE
66

GRAND THEFT AUTO & GTA: LONDON 1969 PACK

PUBLISHER Sold Out WEBSITE www.sold-out.co.uk PRICE £4.99

DON'T BE TEMPTED. Yes, this is a classic of all gaming, yes the *GTA* series is so ridiculously popular Real Madrid are thinking of signing it as a centre-forward next season, and yes it's only a fiver for this and the less brilliant *London add-on pack* - BUT!

You're now able to download the original *GTA* (and its sequel) for free from www.rockstargames.com/classics. Which instantly renders this retail version null and void. Therefore, treat the remainder of this review

as a pointer for that version instead.

Again, classic vehicular carnage gaming that spawned a controversial phenomenon, except this time the franchise managed to survive into today's modern world. The kind of game that Jack Thompson wishes had never been thought of.



PURE evil.

PCZONE
80

And the rest...

Old games + cheap prices = budget heaven (or hell)



RED FACTION II
£4.99, FOCUS

Environment-destroying shooter sequel that's way too short. One of the least deserving games ever when it comes to getting the re-issue treatment and of absolutely no interest to anyone ever. Stars Lance Henriksen though.

PCZONE
23



WARHAMMER 40,000: FIRE WARRIOR
£9.99, FOCUS

Low-spec shooter based on the popular tabletop wargame. Which is as ill-fitting as it sounds. Terrible AI, dull as shite, overshadowed by *Halo*. Not the best use of the licence.

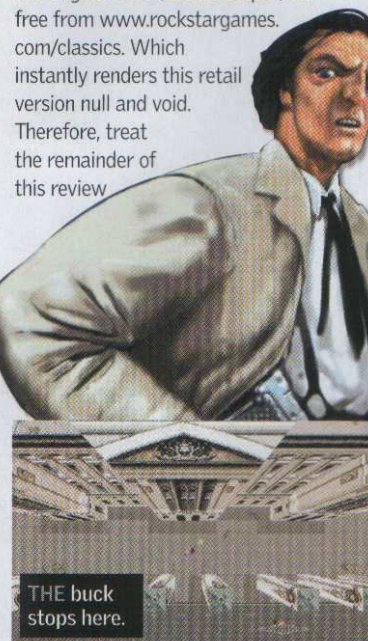
PCZONE
44



EVIL DEAD: HAIL TO THE KING
£4.99, FOCUS

Completely wasted attempt to bring the horror classic to gaming life. Neither scary nor playable, even the voice talents of Bruce Campbell fail to resurrect any interest. Not groovy, baby.

PCZONE
10



THE buck stops here.

PCZONE TOP 5 BUDGET BUYS



1
FAR CRY

£9.99, Mastertronic
Better than *Half-Life 2*? So some say. The best non-physics gun shooter of recent years anyway. An island paradise with extra explosions. Available from January



2

X2: THE THREAT
£9.99, White Label

Begone *Freelancer*! The real space sim starts here. On budget anyway (X3 is better yet but costs more). Freedom among the stars. Could life be better?



3

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
£9.99, Focus Multimedia

Glorious storytelling, engaging gameplay and the greenest lips in all of gaming-dom make the ever-overlooked *B&E* a must-buy. Deep, imaginative, brilliant.



4

SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WWII
£12.99, Codemasters

One of the finest strategy titles of recent years. *Soldiers* is a near-perfect blend of tactical thought, balls-out action and historical accuracy.



5

BLACK & WHITE
£4.99, Sold Out

Molyneux's opus split opinion on release, but at this price you can't fault its ambition and gameplay. Monkey slapping has never been so cheap.



YOUR SHOUT!

Speak your brains on the latest releases...



DUNGEON SIEGE II

OUR SCORE: 80%

What can I say about *DSII*? To start, the graphics are so beautiful they distract you from the gameplay. Plus, I love the idea that pets can be trained and not just carry loot. In fact, they can consume loot to improve their skills, a unique feature. It's a challenging gaming experience requiring both hands and all your wits. Plus, the demo gives no indication of just how good it is. *Spellforce* it is not, but it has content and style that puts it well above its predecessor. And get this – *DSII* is so difficult, I'm stuck. Try it and see if you can get past the first dragon...

Jane Mutter: **90%**



FAHRENHEIT

OUR SCORE: 90%

Fahrenheit is one of those games that, once installed, you don't want to play for fear that you'll finish it and have to go back to more unoriginal games.

It's fast-paced action all the way, and you'll feel a sense of achievement when the cut-scenes kick in. The opposite can be said when you realise you've wasted an opportunity to ask the right questions, as you can't undo any mistakes you make.

Plus, it has a real cinema feel to it and the story works incredibly well. My only negative is that it's too short.

Mark Saunders: **91%**

Review of the Month



BLACK & WHITE 2

OUR SCORE: 93%

Before I start, *B&W2* rocks my socks off. It's a solid step away from the original, but... Was it the right step to make? I ask, because the core of the game is centred on your people – appeasing them or expanding your empire – so you sometimes feel more of a Prime Minister than a god. (Not that I'm suggesting Tony Blair has a giant upright cow that does his bidding...) I feel Lionhead could have improved the game no end if it had made it more freeform and focused on you, the god, rather than your insignificant minions.

Jack Wilson: **90%**

F.E.A.R.

OUR SCORE: 90%

The only scary thing about *F.E.A.R.* is the way it chews up and spits out what you thought was a top-notch gaming rig without so much as a thank you in the looks department. *Doom 3*, *Far Cry* or *Half-Life 2* it ain't.

As for gameplay itself, sure it's fun going into slo-mo and blasting people in the boat-race until their heads drop off, but it's the boring bits in between the carnage that grate. There's far too much running around samey corridors or crawling through ventilation ducts... It's also a very short game (by FPS standards), and is padded out by searching for health/reflex boosters or by answering machines/laptops in order to further the plot.

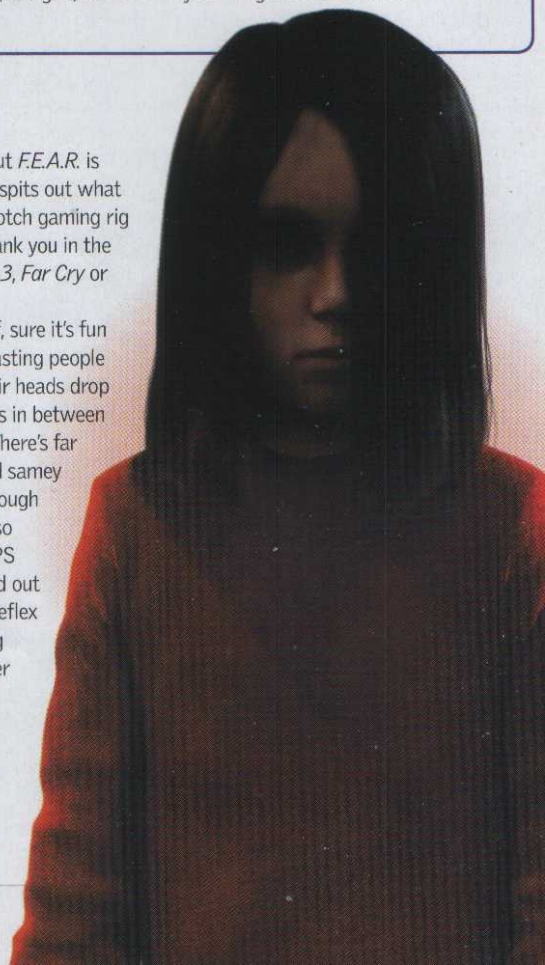
Still, the DVD extras were a nice touch. Especially the live-action prequel movie.

Brutal Deluxe: **74%**

YOU DO THE REVIEWS!

Agree? Disagree? Well, the world wouldn't be the wonderful place it is if we all thought the same way. If you fancy sharing your own thoughts with your fellow readers then jot them down (we find the recent advancements in parchment and ink technology to be handy), trim the amount of words to a MAXIMUM of 100, add a score out of 100 then send them to the address below. If we think they're worthy of sharing, we'll print them here. Better yet, each month we'll award our coveted Review Of The Month award and shower the writee with a gift of some description. It could be you!

Send your reviews to: yourshout@pczone.co.uk, or stick them in an envelope and post them to: PC ZONE, Your Shout, Future, 99 Baker Street, London, W1U 6FP.



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NINTENDO
GAMECUBE

XBOX

PlayStation 2

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DVD
ROM

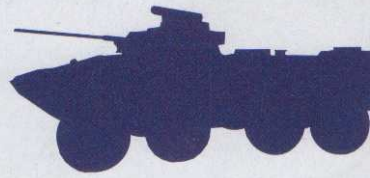
MOBILE
VERSION
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UBISOFT

BUYER'S GUIDE

The best of the best, categorised for your viewing pleasure



PCZONE TOP 5 GAMES WITH STARS IN

- 1 SPLINTER CELL**
MICHAEL IRONSIDE
- 2 THE DEADALUS ENCOUNTER**
TIA CARRERE
- 3 POSTAL 2**
GARY COLEMAN
- 4 EVERQUEST II**
CHRISTOPHER LEE
- 5 PIPPA FUNNELL: THE STUD FARM INHERITANCE**
PIPPA FUNNELL



PCZONE TOP 5 GAMES - SUZY WALLACE

- 1 DUNGEON MASTER**
PCZ ISSUE: N/A
- 2 DUNGEON KEEPER 2**
PCZ ISSUE: 79
- 3 FINAL FANTASY VII**
PCZ ISSUE: 66
- 4 GT LEGENDS**
PCZ ISSUE: 161
- 5 FAHRENHEIT**
PCZ ISSUE: 159

PCZONE TOP 5 GAME VILLAINS

- 1 SHODAN**
SYSTEM SHOCK 2
- 2 HITLER**
VARIOUS
- 3 DARTH MALAK**
KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC
- 4 DR WALLACE BREEN**
HALF-LIFE 2
- 5 DR KILLJOY**
THE SUFFERING: TIES THAT BIND



Shooters

Must buy!



HALF-LIFE 2
PCZ Issue: 148 - 97%

Everyone knew this would be good, but no-one quite expected the tour de force that Valve managed to pull off. Easily a contender for the best game of all time, *Half-Life 2* is just one stunning set-piece after another, and is guaranteed to leave you dribbling with awe. Be warned though, a (fast) online connection is needed for Valve's mandatory Steam delivery service.



BATTLEFIELD 2
PCZ Issue: 157 - 94%

If it's online action you want, look no further. *BF2* sets the gold standard for team-based shooting, with huge 64-player maps, squad and commander modes and the best graphics ever. Just make sure you have a ninja PC.

BUDGET



FAR CRY
PCZ Issue: 140 - 93%

In many eyes, Crytek's shooter outweighs even the mighty *Half-Life 2* in its tension, tactics and expansive level design. It's a mighty achievement with seemingly freeform action and the best sniping money can buy.



CALL OF DUTY 2
PCZ Issue: 162 - 91%

Brutal, relentless and totally gripping, the WWII shooter sequel packs more action into a single level than most pack into an entire game. Epic scale battles and intense drama. World War II at its unforgiving best.



UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004
PCZ Issue: 138 - 91%

UT2004 packs so much punch, you'd be hard pushed to find a flaw. Team games, deathmatches, tactical thinking in the Onslaught mode - everything the sci-fi shoot 'em up fan could want.



F.E.A.R.
PCZ Issue: 160 - 90%

With more shocks and scares than an episode of *Rentaghost* (and a much higher body count), *F.E.A.R.* pushes the shooter part of FPS to the limit. It might not be the scariest game ever, but it will make you jump.



SWAT 4
PCZ Issue: 154 - 86%

SWAT 4 is a tactical squad shooter that sings. Dark in places, brutal in others, it's the only shooter that allows you to tazer old ladies and drown them in pepper spray. Probably the best co-op experience around to boot.

Strategy

Must buy!



ROME: TOTAL WAR
PCZ Issue: 148 - 93%

Once upon a time, all strategy games were visual abortions and strictly for the hardcore (OK, a bit of a sweeping statement). But *Rome: Total War* changed all that, mixing breathtaking 3D with troop numbers reminiscent of a Hollywood epic, as well as staggering historical accuracy. The result is a masterpiece and a game just about anyone can enjoy. Hell, how many other titles are made into TV shows?



THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH
PCZ Issue: 149 - 91%

Although the *LOTR* RTS doesn't hold a candle to the *Total War* franchise, there's nothing quite like ordering a Balrog around for guaranteed strategy fun.

BUDGET



SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WORLD WAR II
PCZ Issue: 144 - 90%

The strategy of *Commandos* meets the fun of *Canon Fodder* in this top-down game of tactics. Being the underdog has never been so much fun, and the rumble of tanks never so worrying.



RISE OF NATIONS
PCZ Issue: 129 - 90%

One of the best of the last generation of Empire builders, *Rise of Nations* - coupled with exemplary expansion pack *Thrones And Patriots* - is a uniquely satisfying and addictive treatment of the *Civ* genre.



SID MEIER'S PIRATES!
PCZ Issue: 149 - 88%

If you've got some downtime at the close of the day, then *Pirates!* is the most relaxing (and swashbuckling) game around. Drifting around the Caribbean with a flotilla of ships and mischief on your mind is escapism at its finest.



GROUND CONTROL II: OPERATION EXODUS
PCZ Issue 143 - 84%

Despite a few AI glitches, *GCI2* is a great game if you prefer tactics to boring old resource management. A superb sci-fi effort with some intense freeform missions. Strat-fans should check it out.



AGE OF EMPIRES III
PCZ Issue: 162 - 84%

A sprinkling of innovation and a barrelful of lushness lets us give this a hearty endorsement, even though it doesn't stray far from the established formula. Still the best 'new world' game, and the best RTS cannons ever.

Action/Adventure

Must buy!



MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE
PCZ Issue: 136 - 93%

The chosen poison for certain PCZ staffers after a long hard day, Payne's second outing is perhaps the most pixel-perfect example of joy-through-excessive-destruction on the market. Slicker than slick, breathtaking and quite beautiful, *Max Payne 2* provides the greatest gaming kicks that money can buy. It's extremely short, but so tense, well designed and replayable that you just won't care.



GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
PCZ Issue: 155 - 92%

To think that the simple top-down car game has turned into this - a work of creative genius. Violent, brutal, smutty, freeform and hilarious - *San Andreas* is the summit of gaming achievement.



SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY
PCZ Issue 154 - 91%

A tour de force from Ubisoft, *Chaos Theory* takes the *Splinter Cell* format and runs with it in solo, co-op and the now well-established spies vs mercenaries multiplayer. Smooth, lithe and good with a knife.



FAHRENHEIT
PCZ Issue: 159 - 90%

Murder most foul, with you as the killer. This twisting, turning, brilliantly-told plot features multiple character control, split-screen tension, branching scenes and several endings. From the brains behind *The Nomad Soul*.



PSYCHONAUTS
PCZ Issue: 156 - 90%

Clever, witty, impeccably detailed and absolutely off its rocker - *Psychonauts* is proof that the anarchic edge of LucasArts hasn't completely left us. A slightly flawed game in some respects, but still a dazzling feat.



BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
PCZ Issue: 138 - 89%

We heap praise on this game on a monthly basis, but it's for a reason. Michel Ancel's superb journey through the strange land of Hillis is nothing short of storytelling magic. It's cheap now, so go out and buy it.



THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS
PCZ Issue: 144 - 85%

Deadly Shadows not only brings *Thief's* sneak-and-steal mantra bang up-to-date, but also has some of the best level design in living memory. Play through *The Cradle* and you'll know true fear.

MMOs



Must buy!

EVERQUEST II
PCZ Issue: 150 - 95%
A *Star Trek* to *WOW's Star Wars*, *EQII* gives the original a much needed lick of paint, a whole new world to play in and a greater sense of depth and immersion. A time-sink in the true, classic sense.



WORLD OF WARCRAFT
PCZ Issue: 152 - 95%
Blizzard's recreation of the classic strategy world in MMO form doesn't disappoint. Beautiful to look at, absorbing to play and with more content than you can shake a magic stick at.



GUILD WARS
PCZ Issue: 156 - 94%
How to make a gaming genre accessible to the masses. It shines with polish, thought and lack of monthly subscription fees. Newbies can feel at home too, thanks to a totally skills-based set-up.



EVE ONLINE
PCZ Issue: 130 - 88%
Elite online has been a long-held fantasy and this space sim is the closest yet to making it a reality. Its slow pace belies the options on offer, from mining or trading to piracy - it's up to you.



CITY OF HEROES
PCZ Issue: 155 - 86%
Nothing beats the feeling of spandex and fire-beams shooting from your eyes. This super-powered MMO lets you live all those heroic dreams to the full. Nietzsche would have a field day.

Simulation



Must buy!

NEW ENTRY!

X3: REUNION
PCZ Issue: 162 - 92%
Finally, a space sim to better *X2: The Threat*, and it just happens to be the sequel. Possibly the best-looking game ever to appear on a PC. Plus, it plays well too.



IL-2 STURMOVIK: FORGOTTEN BATTLES
PCZ Issue: 128 - 92%
While flight sims are becoming rarer and rarer, at least the quality remains high. None more so than this ultra-classy WWII combat sim. Chocks away, comrade!



MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2004: A CENTURY OF FLIGHT
PCZ Issue: 133 - 89%
No, you don't shoot things, no there's no mission structure, yes there's the best non-combat flight experience to date. History can be fun.



BUDGET

FREELANCER
PCZ Issue: 128 - 84%
If *X2* is too slow for you, *Freelancer* should fit the bill. Plenty of trading, bounty-hunting and space piracy, but with the emphasis on action rather than realism. Space has never been this much fun.



FALCON 4.0
PCZ Issue: 158 - 82%
An example of fanbase enthusiasm saving a once-dead series, *Falcon 4.0* lives on thanks to the dedication of its hard-working players. The best modern-day fighter sim on the market.

Driving/Racing



Must buy!

GT LEGENDS
PCZ Issue: 161 - 92%
While *GTR* takes care of modern-day racing, *GT Legends* does the business for historical driving. A natural successor to *Grand Prix Legends*, it's like the swinging '60s never ended.



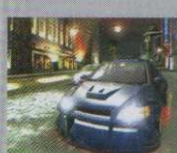
GTR
PCZ Issue: 153 - 90%
As real as it gets. Probably. The complete driving solution on a PC, with all the drifting, churning and racing you need. Invest in a decent force-feedback steering-wheel and pedals set-up though.



LIVE FOR SPEED
PCZ Issue: 158 - 90%
Online racing at its best. Realistic handling, hilarious crashes and a racing community second to none. On the right servers that is. A remarkable achievement by such a small team.



TOCA RACE DRIVER 2
PCZ Issue: 142 - 89%
The most comprehensive driving game on the PC, *TOCA 2* is a must-have if you're into motors. 15 different motorsports to master, 52 tracks and rival drivers with top AI smarts.



NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND 2
PCZ Issue: 150 - 84%
Both bling and wicked, *NFSU2* builds on the first outing's might with a superb free-roam mode, astounding graphics and even more pimping of your ride. Whack.

God games



Must buy!

NEW ENTRY!

THE MOVIES
PCZ Issue: 162 - 95%
Life as a movie mogul, games don't get better than this. Not only a good management game par excellence, but also a complete home movie-making kit. Brilliant.



BLACK & WHITE 2
PCZ Issue: 161 - 93%
The original split opinion, and this sequel does the same. We love it though, and think it's erased all the problems as well as adding plenty of new options to boot. It's gorgeous too.



NEW ENTRY!

CIVILIZATION IV
PCZ Issue: 162 - 92%
A Buyer's Guide without a *Civ* game would be a sorry, sorry place, and luckily the latest version does the business with aplomb. Violent Buddhist Romans take over the world.



EVIL GENIUS
PCZ Issue: 147 - 84%
Ever wanted to say "No Mr Bond, I expect you to die", or create giant evil lairs inside hollow volcanoes? Well now you can with this great megalomaniac sim. It's always fun being bad.



VEGAS: MAKE IT BIG
PCZ Issue: 135 - 84%
An in-depth tycoon game with all the 3D graphical glitz and glamour of *Vegas* itself. Provide hotels, casinos and over-priced magic shows that suck the money out of the punters.

Sport



Must buy!

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5
PCZ Issue: 161 - 93%
Football, football, football. Morning, noon and night. The beautiful game in a beautiful game. Not only the best version of *Pro Evo* ever, also the best footy game ever.



NEW ENTRY!

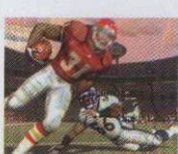
FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006
PCZ Issue: 162 - 90%
One year on and the best footy management game is even better. Quick Tactics, half-time team talks, physio reports - changes are small but add up to a terrific whole.



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2006
PCZ Issue: 161 - 85%
Travel through time playing Tiger Woods throughout history. Only in an EA Sports game. *Tiger 06* is the best PC golf game yet, mainly thanks to the two career modes.



NHL 06
PCZ Issue: 160 - 84%
Ice hockey may not be the UK's number one sporting pastime, but that doesn't make EA Sports' incarnation of it any less fun. Exciting, breathless and violent ball-out fun for the whole family.



MADDEN 2005
PCZ Issue: 152 - 84%
Although the 2006 version is now upon us, this is actually the better option (at least until 2007 arrives). In truth, there's little to differ between the versions, but this one just feels more fluid.

RPGs



Must buy!

KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC
PCZ Issue: 137 - 94%
KOTOR is the best *Star Wars* game of recent years. Moving, dramatic and fairly adult in tone, it also has a hefty dose of lightsabers to keep you happy.



BUDGET

THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND
PCZ Issue: 116 - 94%
Possibly the most intimidating, yet wonderful game we've played - the breadth and depth of *Morrowind* remains a remarkable achievement.



BUDGET

DEUS EX
PCZ Issue: 93 - 94%
This remains the benchmark in FPS RPGs. Twisting sci-fi plots, exciting freeform levels and some moments of pure exhilaration and drama help retain *Deus Ex* as the alpha male of the gaming world.



NEVERWINTER NIGHTS
PCZ Issue: 118 - 91%
It may not have the depth of *Fallout*, but the customisation options in this are so extensive that it's been granted a very long life. Still a wonderfully immersive game.



PLANESCAPE: TORMENT
PCZ Issue: 86 - 87%
Compelling storylines, great characterisation and a heart of pure darkness - *Planescape* is the best thing Interplay's Black Isle Studios ever gave us.

INCOMING!

All approximate monthly dates are correct at the time of going to press

January

BATTLESTATIONS: MIDWAY
PANZER ELITE ACTION
SPELLFORCE II

SCI
JOWOOD
JOWOOD

February

AUTO ASSAULT
CRASHDAY
EMPIRE EARTH II: THE ART OF SUPREMACY
GHOST RECON ADVANCED WARFIGHTER
GUILD WARS CHAPTER 2
HEART OF EMPIRE: ROME
HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY
LULA 3D
PARAWORLD
RISE & FALL: CIVILIZATIONS AT WAR
STAR WARS: EMPIRE AT WAR
STUBBS THE ZOMBIE
TOCA RACE DRIVER 3

NCSOFT
ATARI
VU GAMES
UBISOFT
NCSOFT
DEEP SILVER
EIDOS
CDV
JOWOOD
MIDWAY
LUCASARTS
ASPYR
CODEMASTERS

March

COMPANY OF HEROES
D.I.R.T.
EL MATADOR
FACES OF WAR
GOTHIC 3
HAMMER & SICKLE
HELLGATE: LONDON
HEROES OF ANNIHILATED EMPIRES
HEROES OF NIGHT AND MAGIC V
HOTEL GIANT 2
LMA MANAGER 2006
NEVERWINTER NIGHTS 2
PHANTASY STAR UNIVERSE
RF ONLINE
RISE OF NATIONS: RISE OF LEGENDS
SWAT 4 - THE STETCHKOV SYNDICATE
TABULA RASA
TITAN QUEST

THQ
DEEP SILVER
ASCARON
UBISOFT
JOWOOD
CDV
NAMCO
DEEP SILVER
UBISOFT
JOWOOD
CODEMASTERS
ATARI
SEGA
CODEMASTERS
MICROSOFT
VU GAMES
NCSOFT
THQ

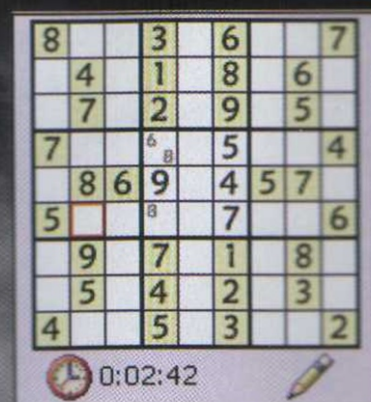
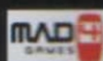
for your mobile phone!

You Play We Pay!

We tested dozens of games and picked out three of the most enjoyable titles...

SUDOKU MASTER!

Mad 4 Games' version of this classic puzzle includes twenty boards plus an update option, multiple difficulty levels, unique hint mode, save game facility and a 'pencil' facility for when you're not quite sure! Use just one thumb to puzzle away the hours of tedium on your daily commute... and laugh at everyone else wrestling with pencil and paper in the crush!



Options Swap To Pen

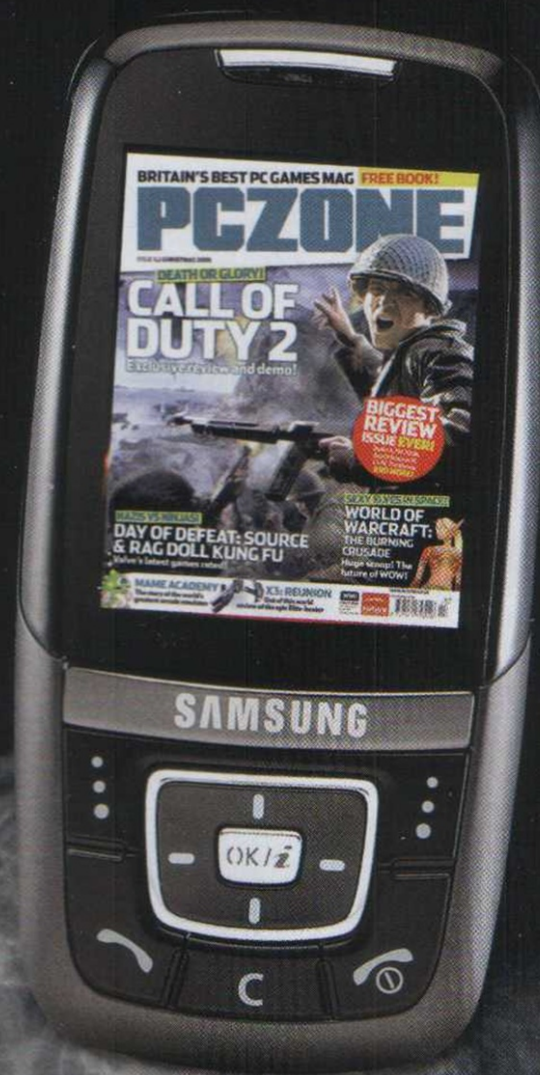
MAYHEM'S MAGIC DUST

Those clever guys at Infinite Lives have produced one of the best arcade titles on mobile. Game aficionados will relish the challenge of guiding Mayhem through level after level of dragon-bashing, bird-hopping, score-seeking fun. This game would be great on a console: on a mobile, it's extraordinary.



SENSIBLE SOCCER

This mobile version of the legendary footy game, developed by Tower Studios and published by Kuju Wireless, features 11 game modes, accurate player performances and, on higher spec handsets, even action replays and bonus animations. The Sensible Soccer series already has 15 million users worldwide. Whether you're a serious or casual fan, this is your chance to join them.



Just choose one of the 3 titles listed then text **PCZONE** to **62344**. Check out the 'how it works' panel for more information. It's easy!

How it works:

Just follow these simple steps to your FREE* mobile game!



Just text PCZONE to 62344. We'll send you a FREE message containing the link you need to download the PC Zone service.



Say 'Yes' if prompted to download the service. Problems? Text HELP to 62344. Add your mob type if known e.g. HELP K750i.



Use the service to check compatibility, choose your free game, and get access to hot content, compos and news whenever you want.

No Subscriptions! No Worries!

No need to worry about sneaky subscriptions; there aren't any! And our unique system checks automatically to make sure you can only get a game that works on your phone.

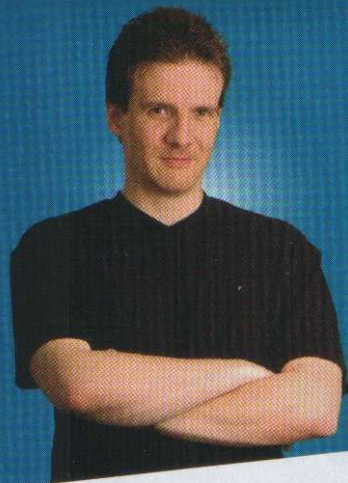
TERMS AND CONDITIONS: Usage of the PCZone browser service is subject to GPRS coverage, handset capability and network availability. At peak times, SMS traffic may be subject to network delay. Your phone must be WAP enabled and able to run Java games. Once connected, the service will check product compatibility with your phone. If you need assistance on connection or other issues, text HELP to 62344. We do NOT charge you for the service, but usage requires a short WAP and/or data connection for which your operator may charge at your normal rate. Sensible Soccer (c) 2004 The Codemasters Software Company Limited ("Codemasters"). "Sensible Soccer" is a registered trademark of Sensible Limited. Used under license by Codemasters. By using the service, you agree to abide by the terms and conditions published therein and at www.mad4g.com.



HARDWARE

Better gaming through technology

HARDWARE EDITOR Phil Ward



Added value?

MY BROADBAND PROVIDER has been writing to me yet again, only this time the letter had the Yahoo! logo printed on the bottom. Instantly I was suspicious that I'd been swapped over to a 'more exciting!' package as a result of 'customer feedback!', where I'd get free email addresses I didn't need, a terabyte of Web space I'd never use, plus '£2999 value!' third-party software which would attempt to at least two install search companion toolbars, pervert my homepage into something other than Google and add an icon to the system tray with the sole purpose of doing nothing but sitting there aggravating me.

I never signed up to BT Yahoo! because I didn't want all the sort of crap that came with that sort of package. I don't need wet-nursing; fewer and fewer people do. I want a wires-only broadband. No free modems, routers, Ferrero Rocher or Nectar points please.

I'm already fed up with the way BT has confused its customers by messing about with its Fair Usage Policy, and now that I've been corralled into some daft Yahoo! scheme, I'm off somewhere else. It's not that I have to pay extra or do anything different, it's just a small matter of principle that became the final straw. My DSL has been noticeably slower than six months ago, but rather than improve network performance, the company is trying to distract everyone with pointless gimmicks like free email and personalised Web pages. I'll let you know which provider I jump to next month.

68 GUNS FOR RADEON

NVIDIA releases high-flying card for middle money to fight off X800 GTO and X1600

IF YOU'VE JUST treated yourself to a new 6800 GT, look away now. Because in a move reminiscent of ATI last year, NVIDIA has repackaged its high-end technology and is now selling killer cards for around £150.

Just as the Radeon 9800 Pro became the star buy of 2004, so the GeForce 6800 GS is sure to become this year's most popular upgrade. With a small number of models already on sale for not much more than the old 6600 GT, the GS has managed to land squarely in X800 GTO territory, yet with benchmark scores which rival that of the 6800 GT.

Based on the NV42 chip from the vanilla 6800, the GS has fewer pipelines than the NV45 GT but has GDDR3 memory and a higher core clock speed. The end result is a star performer, offering more value for money than any GTO.

That said, the GS makes little sense in SLI configuration – you can buy the stonking 7800 GTX model for not much more. And although it trounces its rival Radeon, the new GeForce is almost £50 more expensive – unlike the GTO there's no way of opening up its 12 pipelines with a simple software mod. But that shouldn't deter you.

GEFORCE 6800 GS: best buy ever?



NEWS ROUND-UP

The folks at AMD are sure to be celebrating: 49.8 per cent of desktops and laptops sold in US stores last October were Athlons, compared with 48.5 per cent for Pentiums. Given that Intel has only recently agreed to stop pressuring PC makers to limit the production of systems based around AMD chips, that's a seriously impressive figure. Once Dell offers customers an alternative to Intel, things will really heat up.

Only a month after this page mocked Sapphire for announcing a raft of products it has yet to put on sale, the company has announced it won't be building its Blizzard card because the maker of the liquid metal technology which cools it, nanoCoolers Inc., has withdrawn the product. nanoCoolers has announced it will be concentrating on its thin-film thermoelectric products instead.

With a talk time of four hours, Accton Technology's new SkyFone is a mobile phone and Skype device which supports wireless networks, thus enabling users to make free calls over the Internet without the need for a PC. Don't ditch your contract just yet, though, as similar devices are unlikely to hit UK shores for some time yet.

AMBIVALENCE

Philips introduces amBX, claiming it'll take gaming into the real world

Due for release next summer, amBX is a system of colour-controlled lights, active furniture, fans and heaters which interact with gamers depending on what they're doing at the time. Ocean settings send the room blue, jungles crank up the heat while bathing you in green and visiting the Apple website

turns everything pink and makes the seat cushion pound up and down.

The amBX technology – not that far removed from



MAKE your neighbours think you're gay.

the Ambilight televisions launched a couple of years ago – incorporates a language to allow developers to support it. Let's hope it's not as cheesy as it sounds.

WARNING:
THIS MONTH'S
HARD WORDS

BY STEVE HOGARTY

FIREWALL: Classic Halloween prank which involves finding an old couple and beseeching them by dousing their wall in petrol and setting it alight. **VANILLA 6800:** A very expensive type of ice-cream made from homogenised pigeon milk, served exclusively in posh restaurants. **AMBIX TECHNOLOGY:** Pronounced 'ambix', this made-up term exists purely to confuse anybody who isn't Wandy. **GEFORCE:** Not as good as a BeForce, but quite a bit better than a TeForce. **HDR RENDERING:** Hugely Doubtful Realism rendering; turning this on makes games look shiny and bright like you have a retinal infection. **THERMOELECTRIC:** Characteristic of, resulting from, or using electrical phenomena occurring in conjunction with a flow of heat. Obviously.

PICK A CARD...

You pay your money...

Like the GeForce, the late arrival Radeon is a Shader Model 3.0 product with HDR rendering and a tempting dual-card upgrade path. Unlike NVIDIA SLI, which allows you to enhance your PC with any SLI-branded cards, ATI CrossFire is an arcane arrangement of masters and slaves. I don't care what anyone says, it's too confusing for an already disoriented market.

The Radeon does add adaptive anti-aliasing which appears to do its job well, but it does bring the occasional random lumpiness to complex scenes, and to dogfights in *Battlefield 2*. Although the effects are relatively minor, feeling 'the lurch' is an instant turn-off if you've got a frame-rate obsession - pausing is the one thing you're most desperate to avoid.

RADEON X1800 XL

VS

PRICE £275 MANUFACTURER Connect3D WEBSITE www.connect3d.com

GEFORCE 7800 GT

PRICE £265 MANUFACTURER GIGABYTE WEBSITE uk.giga-byte.com

RADEON X1800 XL SPECIFICATION

Hardware: 256MB DDR3 ATI Radeon X1800 XL
Ancillaries: VGA to DVI converter x 2, power splitter, multimedia cable whips
List of undesirable software: Nothing

GEFORCE 7800 GT SPECIFICATION

Hardware: 256MB DDR3 NVIDIA GeForce 7800 GT
Ancillaries: VGA to DVI converter x 2, power splitter, multimedia junction box
List of undesirable software: *Xpand Rally*, *SpellForce*

BY THE TIME the Radeon X1800 XT steps into the ring, the GeForce 7800 GTX will have been racking up sales for almost half a year. And where the XT is predicted to cost between £399-£450, any number of GTX models can be yours for just £350, with second-hand examples already cropping up on eBay for much less.

Poor ATI. A tiny design flaw threw a spanner into the works, and now that delayed XT has become the most anticipated video card in the history of anticipating video cards, to the point that people are joking it doesn't even exist, there's a big danger that its eventual release will be a non-event. A tiny bottom burp in the proverbial bubble bath of hardware.

To stoke your enthusiasm, I've tracked down the XT's 'mini-me', the X1800 XL, which you'll be relieved to hear is in stock now at your favourite retailer. I reckon the Connect3D you see on this page is the most desirable variant, in that it has everything you need and nothing you don't. I've bought dozens of video cards over the years and have never once installed the junk that comes bundled with them. Games like *Xpand Rally* and *Alien Penetration 4D* (I made that one up) are great for drinks

coasters and firework displays in the microwave, but are buggers all use for anything else. With nothing but the card and its cables, the Connect3D undercuts most rivals - and with the average price of an identically-performing 7800 GT heading towards £250, it's the only obvious reason to choose ATI over NVIDIA.

The GIGABYTE GeForce is the younger brother of the stunning 7800 GTX reviewed last month. It uses the same G70 engine, has the same features and SLI capabilities, but due to its cut-down configuration is between 15-20 per cent slower - not that you'd really notice - for around 30 per cent less money. As with its 6800 GT predecessor, it's the model that makes most sense to most people, and unlike the Radeon has been in plentiful supply since it was launched.

At 1280x1024, the two cards are inseparable in real-world game tests, with only minor variations presenting themselves in scored benchmarks. They're also priced within ten pounds of one another, meaning there's no hard numerical evidence to recommend one card over the other, nor is there anything to suggest one manufacturer is offering a superior image quality. My advice? Buy either.

RADEON X1800 XL

PCZONE

VALUE PERFORMANCE

90

GEFORCE 7800 GT

PCZONE

VALUE PERFORMANCE

90

ASPIRE 9504WLMi

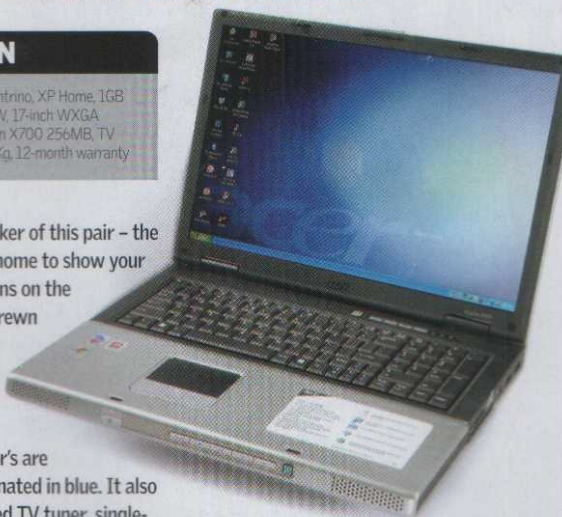
PRICE £1,432 MANUFACTURER Acer WEBSITE www.acer.co.uk

SPECIFICATION

Hardware: Pentium M760 (2.0GHz) Centrino, XP Home, 1GB DDR2, 100GB HDD, DVD-RW, 17-inch WXGA (1440x900), Mobility Radeon X700 256MB, TV tuner, 5-in-1 card reader, 3.8Kg, 12-month warranty

THE ASPIRE IS the looker of this pair – the one you'd want to take home to show your mates. Where the buttons on the rockdirect (right) are strewn across the front lip and labelled in capitals like the dashboard switches of a 1992 Nissan Maxima, the Acer's are nicely convex and illuminated in blue. It also comes with an integrated TV tuner, single-slot DVD, stereo mike and subwoofer.

Despite all this, and despite it being the quieter of the pair, it's not the one you'd want to take home to your games collection. While it produces benchmark scores to be proud of, they look stunted



alongside those of the rockdirect. And although the Aspire's 17-inch CrystalBrite screen is vibrant and free from annoying reflections, it also offers fewer pixels.

It's a hugely desirable laptop, but not the winner of this test.

XTREME CT/XCT-2.0

PRICE £1,409 MANUFACTURER rockdirect WEBSITE www.rockdirect.com

SPECIFICATION

Hardware: Pentium M760 (2.0GHz) Centrino, XP Home, 1GB DDR2, 60GB HDD, DVD-RW, 17-inch WSXGA+ (1680x1050), Mobility Radeon X800 XT PE 256MB, 4-in-1 card reader, integrated webcam, additional battery, 3.8Kg, 36-month warranty

THE ROCKDIRECT'S PENTIUM M 760 2.0GHz – identical to the Acer – was designed to be gentle on batteries. That'll wrinkle the nose of desktop snobs, but it's as potent as any Pentium 540

3.2GHz, and generally speaking is a lot faster than you actually need. With the same 1GB DDR2 as the Aspire, the XTREME proved as rapid as a 3.6GHz Dell XPS.

It also dominates the benchmarks. To give you a flavour, it produced a Source score of 109.69 against 72.2 from the Acer. With the Go7800 GTX, the Aspire would eat more dust, and with the supplied extra battery, it's

capable of lasting three hours – though you'd be daft not to leave it plugged in.

Consider the warranty and it could be a dream. The only letdown is its awful speakers, so you'll need headphones or an external set.



PCZONE



84

PCZONE



90

RADEON X800 GTO

PRICE £115 MANUFACTURER GECUBE WEBSITE www.gecube.com

SPECIFICATION

Hardware: 256MB DDR3 ATI Radeon X800 GTO
Hardware: VGA to DVI converter, HDTV cable, S-Video/Comp cable
List of undesirable software: PowerDVD 6

LAST MONTH SAW the X800 GT seeing off our teacher's pet 6600 GT, and saw me declaring that it was not possible to go faster for cheaper. In a deliberate attempt to spite me, ATI released another R4xx-based card which does just that. The GTO is a more athletic GT with 12 rather than eight pipelines and a cannonball speed hike. The end result is a card which can outrun the 6800 GT at higher detail levels.

The only real issue is where to spend your money. The GT remains a corker, with



several retailers offering them for £99. The GECUBE GTO incorporates a heat-pipe (billed as 'X-Silent' but actually producing 20dB), and for £15 more is plainly faster. It's also easy to turn the wick up and clock it into the ranks above. Definitely the mainstream card of the moment.

EXTREME N7800GT DUAL

PRICE £610 MANUFACTURER ASUSTek WEBSITE uk.asus.com

SPECIFICATION

Hardware: 512MB DDR3 Dual NVIDIA GeForce 7800 GT
Ancillaries: VGA to DVI converter x 2, multimedia junction box, PSU
List of undesirable software: Call of Duty 2, Project: Snowblind, XPand Rally, PowerDirector 3DE

THIS MONSTER WEIGHS almost a kilo, is compatible with fewer than ten motherboards, comes supplied with its own PSU and costs £600. It's capable of driving four screens, sounds like my neighbour's mower and looks like his dog. And it's as glorious as it is absurd.

ASUS sent me an A8N32-SLI DELUXE motherboard with which to test the Extreme N7800GT DUAL, and although I'd have liked to devote an entire page to the pair, at a total cost of £750 and with the card limited to just 2,000 units (mine was

0046), I'm only allowed to wax lyrical in this small space.

So here goes: awe-inspiringly rapid not that noisy beats 7800 GTX great bundle 3DMark05 12000 liquid smooth any game full detail *Far Cry* 1600x1200 made me damp resistant to overclocking 7800 GT SLI more sensible lend me a fiver?



PCZONE



91

PCZONE



80

HOW TO... MAKE FREE PHONE CALLS OVER THE INTERNET

Phil Wand asks if you enjoy spending money for no reason...

Need:

Broadband, friends, vocal cords

Time

15 minutes

Difficulty level



Phil Wand

HAL 9000

← Medium Doofus

Big Brother contestant

Jamie Sefton

WANT FREE PHONE calls? You need something to transmit your voice over the Internet, a technology commonly known as VOIP. Forget its unappealing name and forget the memories you have of dubious quality chat in online games: VOIP has grown up. Telecoms giants

have been hoping that people wouldn't notice, but now the cat's out of the bag nobody's going to try and put it back – at least, not without stout leather gloves and a mallet.

The problem for BT and its ilk is that VOIP doesn't cost anything. If you and your friend both have broadband and

both have the right software, all you do is select his or her name from your address book, click a button to connect and that's it – you're chatting. To talk, you can either use a dedicated handset that looks like a phone, or use the microphone and speakers that came with your PC.

01 How it all works

A VOIP network is there to help callers find one another. After two computers have connected, they communicate directly, compressing what you say and sending it over the Internet, just like email and porn. Neither party has to pay for the privilege of

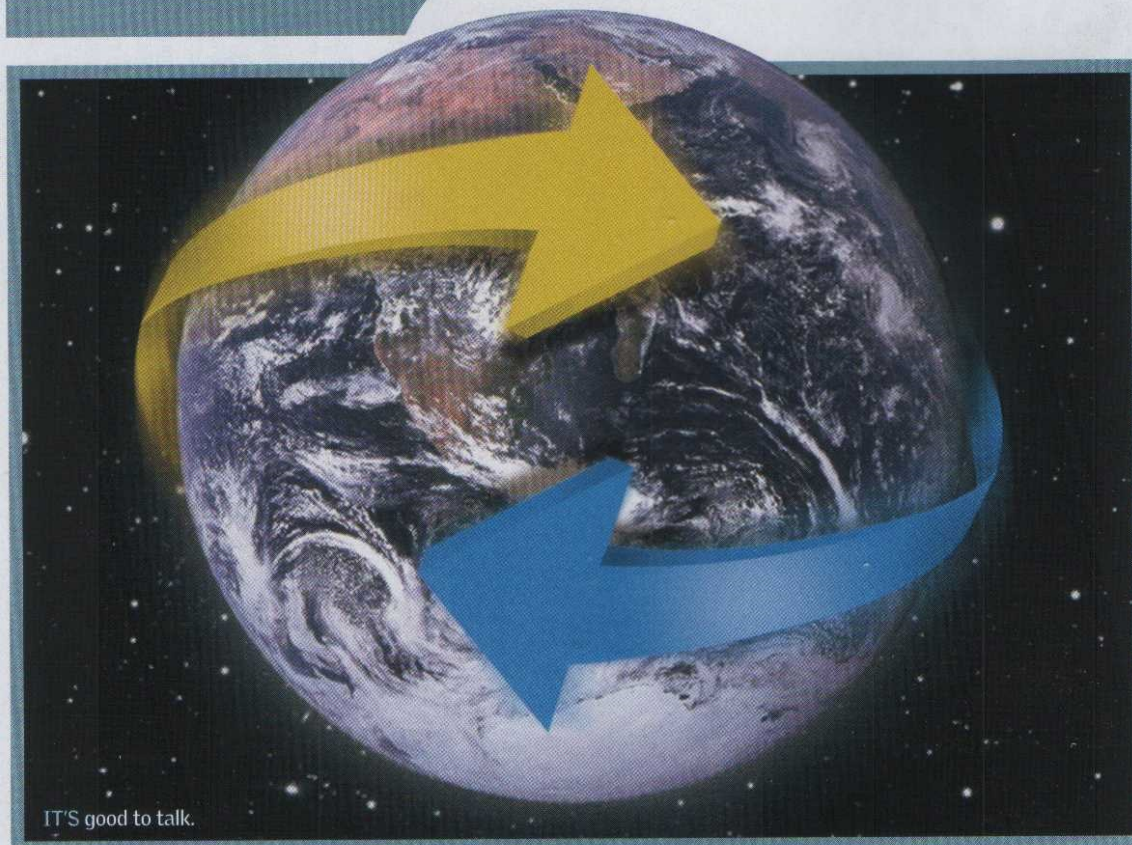
making the conversation, and since it's all done in software, fancy features such as conference calling come free, as do things you expect from your mobile, like full-feature address books and a list of missed calls.



Can I ditch my ordinary phone and just use VOIP?

Some companies charge a monthly fee and provide you with a handset that plugs into your network without needing a PC. They're cheaper than landlines, especially if you make international calls, but don't throw out your old phone: VOIP can't provide the rock-solid reliability you want when it comes to dialling 999.

Do I need a handset? Simple handsets plug into your PC and are under £40. They bring you that authentic 'phone' experience and improved sound quality, but are not essential. Often, they come bundled with their own software but remain compatible with most networks and programs, so stick with Skype and steer clear of what's on its CD. More expensive IP phones don't need a computer – they plug into your network and you might get one of these with a monthly VOIP service.



IT'S good to talk.

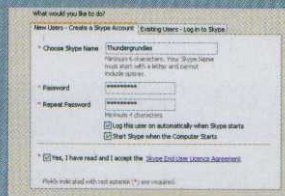
WARNING:
DON'T TURN OFF
YOUR FIREWALL

Impressively, most VOIP software works even for computers behind a firewall router. How it does it is a matter of baffling voodoo, and unless your router is exceedingly restrictive it shouldn't be a problem. If, however, you find that you can't get Skype or other VOIP applications to work, and you suspect your firewall router is at fault, whatever you do don't go disabling it. Check the FAQs for your software and firewall and drop into www.dearwandy.com. With nearly 200 million downloads, Skype is incredibly popular, so there's certain to be a solution to your problem.

02 Choosing your network

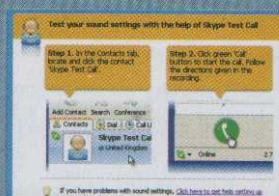
There are a number of VOIP networks and various VOIP applications to choose from, but let's look at the most popular, Skype, and see how far it's come in taking the hassle out of getting connected.

1 Go to www.skype.com and click the Download Skype link.



CREATING an account couldn't be easier.

2 Run Skype and create a new account.



HAVE Skype call you as a test.

3 Step through Skype's internal test procedure.



SEARCH for people by their name or email address.

4 Select Search for Skype Users from the Tools menu and add your mates to your contact list.

If the above steps prove too challenging, there are some very helpful animated guides at www.skype.com/help/guides.



03 Choosing the hardware

If you think you're likely to use Skype on an occasional basis, chatting with friends to arrange games or to insult them at odd hours of the night, you won't need anything more than the microphone and speakers that came with your PC. And if you've lost them, you can buy a Skype Starter Pack for £4.99 from the Skype website at www.skype.com.

If you plan on using Skype regularly or as a replacement for your landline, you should consider buying a dedicated handset. These are available from a number of different sources, including the Skype website. My favourite is British company VoIPvoice. Its flagship Cyberphone products are solid, reliable and handsome USB handsets, with prices starting at £35.

There are a good number of cordless phones available from the Skype store and elsewhere, although at £70 or more it's something of a commitment – you should use VOIP for a month or two before buying them. When choosing a product, ensure it integrates its own sound device and has an external ringer.



THE VoIPvoice Cyberphone makes an ideal Skype telephone.

04 Taking it further

Skype and other VOIP networks provide an additional service where, for a fee, their network acts as a bridge to connect your software to the real, old-fashioned telephone system. In essence, you can use your copy of Skype to dial regular numbers, such as your local Dominos pizza or masseuse. You're even assigned your own phone number – often an 0845 – on which people can call you back.

And if all along you were wondering how Skype expects to be profitable, with its free software and free Internet calls, this is how. The company hopes you'll decide that Skype is such a good product that it's worth a little bit extra to call ordinary landlines, using its product called SkypeOut. At a unified rate of just 1.2p a minute to anywhere at any time, SkypeOut costs significantly less than a traditional phone, especially if you make a lot of calls internationally.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Have things gone all pear-shaped? Make a cup of tea and see if we can help...

- The sound is choppy...**
- Are you downloading something in the background? What about other computers in your house – is somebody playing a game? The sound quality of VOIP is usually very good and it can cope with a bit of browsing, but you should always pause big downloads.
- There's this horrible howling noise...**
- Feedback. Your microphone is picking up what's coming out of your speakers, resulting in a vicious cycle. Turn down your speakers or consider getting a handset. If you own a dog, it might be that you're standing on its tail.
- Can I talk to my friends who use a different VOIP network?**
- This is Skype's biggest bugbear. Most VOIP networks use standard protocols and can connect to each other, but Skype – still the largest and easiest to use at the moment – is a law unto itself and does not play well with others.

Visit the Dear Wandy forums at www.dearwandy.com



DEAR WANDY

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. If it ain't working, don't panic...



Problems?

We've all got them you know... Up to your neck in debt? Partner sleeping around? A propensity to wake up on Saturday morning not knowing what the hell happened? We can't help with any of those (but if you know the answers, let us know), but we can solve all of your hardware hassles. Wandy knows everything and is willing to help if you email him at wandy@dearwandy.com, including as much information as necessary and system specs where applicable.

Intel(R) PRO/100 VE Network Connection #2 Properties

General Advanced Driver Resources Power Management

The following properties are available for this network adapter. Click the property you want to change on the left, and then select its value on the right.

Property: Wake on Settings

Value: Wake on Magic & Directed

Wake on Magic & Directed

Disabled

OS Controlled

Wake on directed packet

Wake on Magic & Directed

Wake on Magic Packet

OK Cancel

settings – look for entries such as 'Wake on LAN' or 'Wake on PME'. Save your changes and boot Windows, right-click on the My Network Places icon and choose Properties, then right-click on your LAN connection and choose Properties again. Click the Configure button at the top.

The tabs you see in the configuration dialog will vary depending on your hardware, so you need to flick through them all. Look in the Advanced tab for any WoL specific properties in the Advanced tab, and ensure the adaptor is permitted to wake Windows in the Power Management tab.

You now need to visit www.depicus.com/wake-on-lan and download the Magic Packet tool. Go to the PC you wish to wake up, open a DOS window by clicking Start, then Run and typing cmd. Type ipconfig/all at the prompt, and note down the MAC and IP addresses. Return to the other machine and run Magic Packet, entering the addresses and the subnet mask of 255.255.255.255. Use a port number of 7, make sure you've selected to send to the Local Subnet and hit Wake Me Up.

Intel(R) PRO/100 VE Network Connection #2 Properties

General Advanced Driver Resources Power Management

Intel(R) PRO/100 VE Network Connection #2

Allow the computer to turn off this device to save power.

Allow this device to bring the computer out of standby.

Only allow management stations to bring the computer out of standby.

Warning: Allowing this device to bring the computer out of standby may cause this computer to periodically wakeup to refresh its network state. If you travel with this computer or run it on a battery, you should not turn on this feature as the machine may awaken at inopportune times or consume the battery.

OK Cancel

Wake On Lan - Magic Packet

Help

Mac Address 00-04-E9-C5-B6-C7

Internet Address 192.168.100.14

Subnet Mask 255.255.255.255

Send Options Local Subnet

Remote Port Number 7

Wake Me Up

Magic Packet Sent To 255.255.255.255

UPDATE your BIOS, configure your card, send the Magic Packet.

A One of the PCs on my network is based around an old Intel D845GEBV2 motherboard which has a 'Wake on LAN from S5' entry in the BIOS. It's one of those options which everybody knows is there, but which nobody knows what it does. So I'll tell you.

With this option enabled, you can send the machine what is known as a 'Magic Packet' to bring the machine round from a slumber. The machine will wake up, allowing you to add documents to the printer queue or whatever, and as long as you've set up an appropriate profile in the Power Options control panel, it'll slip back to sleep some while later. Simple as that.

The tricky bit is getting the configuration right. First off, you're going to need Windows 2000 or XP, because anything else won't work. Second, you need to look through your BIOS for the right

Lee

YOUR PICTURES

Q Recently, I've been getting this annoying error message when installing any games or game-related stuff such as mods. The error is, 'Error 1324. The path My Pictures contains invalid character'. I've managed to get around it for new game installs by using a new Windows login, but I can't solve it for games I've already installed without uninstalling the whole thing and moving it to the new user. What to do?

Mark Masterson

A Sounds like the Registry key which determines where your My Pictures folder is located on the disk has become corrupted. It's actually quite a common problem, but I confess I have no idea as to how the corruption occurs. It's unlikely to be something seriously wrong with your machine – more likely a bug in an application or application installer.

You need to open the Registry Editor by clicking Start, then Run and typing regedit at the prompt. Open the HKEY_CURRENT_USER hierarchy and drill down through Software, Microsoft, Windows, CurrentVersion, Explorer to User Shell

FLASH BASTARD

Q I subscribe to PC ZONE and have a problem to solve. I have two PCs, which I'll call A and B. Both are linked by a network cable, and I share files and folders – all is working just fine. Machine A gets used the most; machine B doesn't get used nearly as much and so is almost always on standby. However, machine B has a printer attached to it, meaning that if it's switched off, I can't print. What I want to do is use machine A to bring machine B out of standby, process the print queue and then turn off again. Hope you can help.

DRIVER WATCH

Keep your PC happy

GRAPHICS

MANUFACTURER	DESC	RELEASED
ATI	CATALYST 5.30	12-OCT-05
NVIDIA	FORCEWARE 81.85	20-OCT-05

SOUND

MANUFACTURER	DESC	RELEASED
Creative	SB X-FI 2070003	22-AUG-05
Creative	AUDIGY 2 VALUE	
	2.08.0002 BETA	21-SEP-05

@ wandy@dearwandy.com

✉ dearwandy, pc zone, future publishing, 99 baker st, london, w1u 6fp

You could get a faster processor, but like dropping a V8 in an Austin Maxi, buying a better car is best

Wandy advises Martyn Saxton to save up for the future



Folders. On the right-hand side of the screen you should see My Pictures as one of the entries. Double-click it to edit it, and make sure its value is set to %USERPROFILE%\My Documents\My Pictures.

Click OK to save it and then quit the Registry Editor. You won't need to restart for the change to have an affect.

HA HA

Q Someone told me that if I defrag my computer, I will essentially be undoing all of the kills that I've racked up playing first-person shooter games. Is there any way to stop this happening?

Brick McCrackup

A Unfortunately, no. The very first defrag utility was written by L. Hubert Clarke, a Cambridge graduate and all-round decent fellow who wasn't very good at videogames. He wrote a hack for Quake 3 in SQL to decrease his opponents' scores whenever they were zoomed in with the railgun (ie when they were least likely to check the scoreboard). When quitting the game, he discovered his hack had inadvertently arranged the files on his hard drive into contiguous data chunks, and decided to sell the idea to Microsoft. No, honest.

RETAIL THERAPY

Q By the time Christmas comes, I'll have £1,500 to spend on a new PC, mainly for games. The only requirement is that it must include a 19-inch screen and TV tuner. I've always wanted an Alienware, but looking at other systems, there seems to be better machines for less money – the Mesh Matrix Titan and Carrera Octan Ultimate are two examples.

Basically, there are too many to choose from and I need guidance. I've upgraded my old PC twice with help from your Buyer's Guide and have never been disappointed.

Paul Brown

A I'm not going to advise you to choose one manufacturer over another unless there's a very good reason – usually that I've bought a machine from the company myself and have been pleased with it, or that I've had a trouble-free system on long-term test. However, because it's been a total pain dealing with Dell recently, and because I've used neither a Mesh Matrix nor a Carrera Octan, all I'm going to do is tell you to go looking for an AMD-based rig with at least 1GB RAM and a three-year warranty. Looking at the Mesh site, I can't find a Titan within your price bracket – the one that best fits is the Matrix2 Premier with TV Tuner upgrade option.

Before I wrap up, I should say that I was extremely pleased with the Demonite XENO 64 (issue 144, 90%), but that particular model has now been discontinued. You may know that Demonite is a brand of Carrera, so perhaps that's the recommendation you need?

LICENSE TO UPGRADE

Q I'm looking to upgrade my PC, but really need your help as I'm a novice when it comes to computers. My system currently has an MSI P4M266-8233 motherboard with a 2.4 Pentium 4 and 1GB RAM. The graphics card is an NVIDIA GeForce FX 5200LE. I want to upgrade this card to a GV-NX66TI28VP Turbo Force and replace the processor with an Athlon64 3000+. Are these upgrades feasible with my system, and could I easily do them myself? If not, what alternatives do you recommend, bearing in mind that I mainly play FPS games? Any suggestions that you have would be gratefully received.

Martyn Saxton

50 UTILITIES YOU HAVE TO USE BEFORE YOU DIE

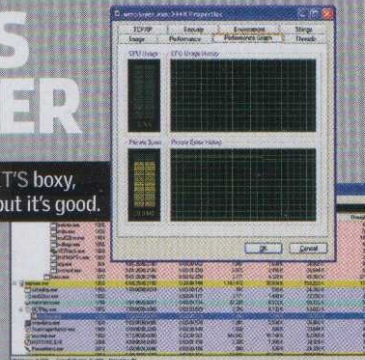
5 PROCESS EXPLORER

EXPECT TO PAY Free
www.sysinternals.com

If you still wriggle when you recall the pleasure of first using Task Manager after years of struggling with its retarded, pig-stroking cousin from Windows 98, then you're going to need a visit to the dry cleaners after seeing Process Explorer.

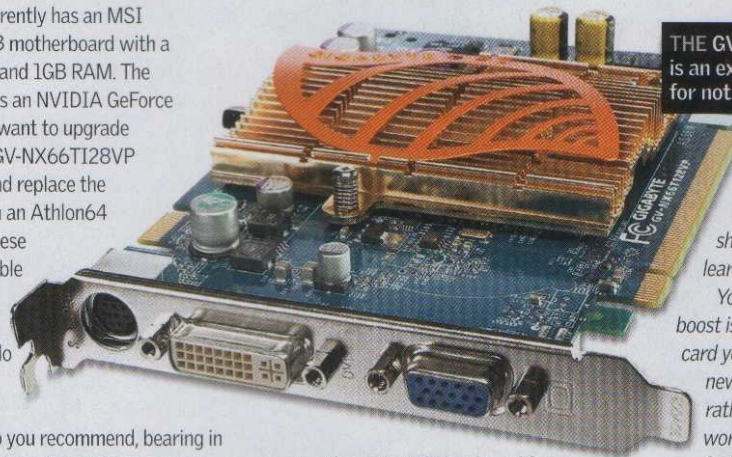
A direct replacement for the tool that comes with XP, Process Explorer does everything that Task Manager did, but with enthusiasm. It also adds a whole bunch of features that you'll probably never use, and a few features that everyone will find invaluable. For example, the tray icon now shows the history of CPU usage rather than its current state – hover over it and it shows not only how hard the processor is being worked, but which process is making it sweat the most. In addition, the CPU graph is integrated into the toolbar at the top of the main window, meaning you no longer have to click another tab to watch it. The really

IT'S boxy, but it's good.



clever bit is that you can point your mouse at one of the peaks and find out which process was responsible for it.

Other useful enhancements include colour-coding of all processes, enabling you to easily distinguish between processes started by you and processes started by the system – double-clicking an entry in the list gives you highly detailed information on that particular process. There's even a drag-target allowing you to relate applications you can see on your desktop with the processes in the list. Oh, and did I mention that Process Explorer is free?



THE GV-NX66TI28VP Turbo Force is an extremely capable AGP card for not much more than £100.

no job for a novice. Nobody is born with the knowledge you need, but that doesn't mean you should jump in at the deep end and learn by your mistakes.

Your best bet for an instant speed boost is to buy the GIGABYTE AGP card you're after and then save up for a new system. Your motherboard is rather long in the tooth and won't work with a lot of the newest, fastest hardware. You could look for a slightly faster processor, but like dropping a V8 in an Austin Maxi, you're better off buying a better car. **PCZ**

A Alas, your MSI is a board for Pentium processors. To go with AMD rather than with Intel, you need to change it to an Athlon board – and that's

WARNING: DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME!

My workstation was acting up a few weeks ago, with normally stable applications such as Eudora quitting out with exceptions, and Windows throwing blue screens at random intervals. It usually happened when I was in the middle of something, meaning I spent my time trying to recover what I'd lost rather than investigating the problem. The last time it happened, I decided I'd test the memory with MemTest from hcdesign.com/memtest – lo and behold, one of the two 512MB SIMMs was bad. Peering at it, I realised I'd bought a 'value' brand. So, do as I say, not as I do, OK?



WATCHDOG

Rotten companies need sorting – and good ones need praising...

Here to help!

Companies pissing you off? Don't feel your voice is strong enough to shout down the suits? Email Suzy at watchdog@pczone.co.uk with the subject heading 'Watchdog', or write to her at the address above. Pleased remember to include your name, address and contact number, and all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers.

I've tried to call the company, but the number doesn't work and it might be about to fleece me again

DELL HELL

When reader Ashley Etchell ordered a PC from Dell, he added a Kodak digital camera to the order for good measure. When the order hadn't arrived after ten days, he phoned the sales team, who informed him that the camera was no longer available and that someone should have contacted him. An alternative was offered but as the specs were lower, Ashley decided to cancel the camera part of his order.

30 days after the order was placed, a package arrived at Ashley's door, complete

as Ashley points out, he "informed Dell before the order was even delivered!"

Watchdog swiftly got in contact with Dell, who confirmed it had spoken to Ashley. The company told us: "We've arranged collection of the camera and a refund, and have arranged for a goodwill gesture too. Mr Etchell is happy with this resolution. We're constantly looking for ways to improve our standards of service and support, and any feedback we receive which helps us achieve this is most welcome."

When we spoke to Ashley, he confirmed that Dell had finally picked the camera up, refunded him the cash and had even thrown in £25 costs to cover his phone calls. A good response from Dell, and hopefully the company can sort out future customer complaints with the same efficiency.



THE guy on the left wins.

£70 for his 40-slot server (the normal price is £30), and when he complained via IRC, he received no response. Steve concludes: "I've tried to contact 4K by phone, but the number doesn't work and it looks like it might be about to fleece me again as the Ventrilo server is still running."

with the unwanted camera. Dell initially requested that the entire order be returned, PC and all. However, unhappy with this, Ashley negotiated until the camera could be returned on its own.

However, no courier arrived and after leaving several messages and emails, Dell finally informed him that the camera could no longer be returned as it had been in his possession for more than seven days. But

THE CLAN MAN

Reader Steve Bird runs a clan called Gor Lan Gamers, who've been hiring a Ventrilo server from www.4k-gaming.net for over a year. Steve told us: "The service wasn't bad, but when we came to get our BF2 server from Multiplay.co.uk, we found that we were given a Ventrilo server for free to accompany our new ranked EA server, so we decided to switch to the free server."

So Steve issued a ticket on Sept 5, informing 4K of the cancellation. However, with the ticket still showing an open status and no response from 4K itself, Steve submitted another three tickets with the same result. Soon afterwards though, he was billed

Several days after contacting 4K-gaming.net, we were contacted by its MD. He stated: "With regards to Mr Bird, a refund of £70 has been put through. We send invoices out seven to ten days before the next payment date, but in this case we were not given enough time to stop the payment."

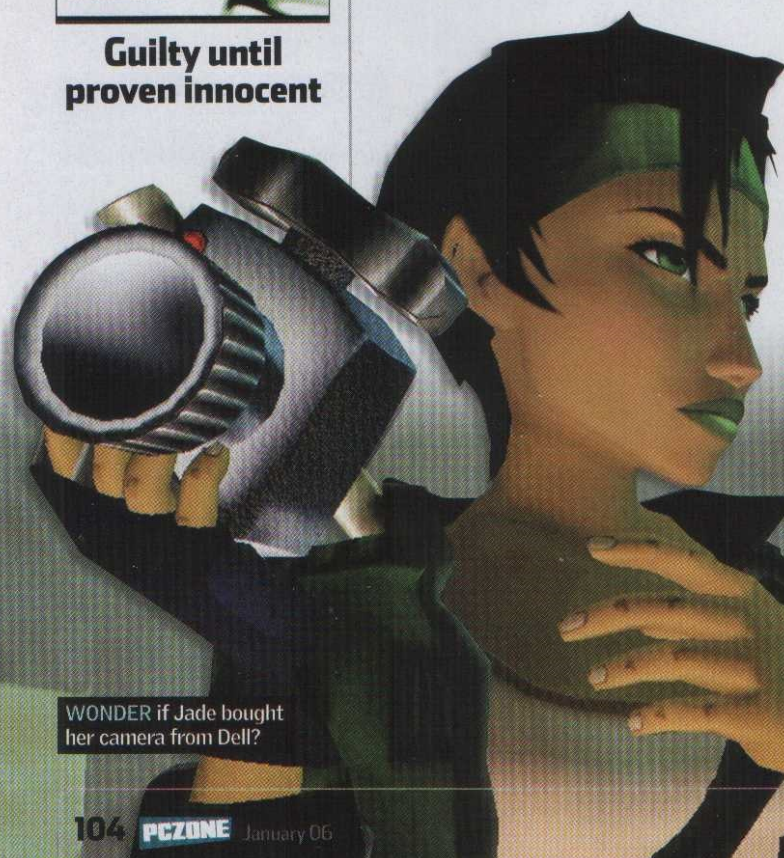
*"I understand the level of service Stephen has received is not acceptable, but we are a very small company with just myself handling new sign-ups and cancellations. At our last count we were hosting over 6,000 Ventrilo slots spread over nearly 500 customers." With his server issues now resolved, Steve's hopefully laying claymores even as we speak. **PCZ***

THE ACCUSED

DELL™

4K-GAMING.NET

Guilty until proven innocent



WONDER if Jade bought her camera from Dell?



SAINTS NOT SINNERS

ABIT
Your Reliable Partner

Reader Keith Billinge and his ABIT motherboard have been happy partners in the world of computing – until recently. "One day, I used the supplied application to update the BIOS and some sort of problem fried the BIOS chip." Keith got straight on the phone to

ABIT's technical support line in Holland (who speak almost perfect English), and emailed the company the serial number of the motherboard from a friend's machine. The good old chaps at ABIT then duly sent Keith "a new BIOS chip in priority postage (with the latest BIOS recorded on it), free of charge".

Keith emailed again late on Monday afternoon and with ABIT's help, he was up and running again in just a few days. Keith's verdict? "This service deserves praise, as ABIT didn't even ask about warranties or proof of purchase, it just got on and helped me with the problem." We have to say that we agree. ABIT = 'a bit' fantastic.



GOLDEN JOYSTICK AWARDS 2005

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THE Carphone Warehouse

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GOLDEN JOYSTICK AWARDS WINNERS ANNOUNCED!

YOUR VOTES HAVE BEEN COUNTED FOR THE BIGGEST GAMES AWARDS OF THE YEAR...

THE CARPHONE WAREHOUSE HANDHELD GAME OF THE YEAR

SUPER MARIO 64 DS
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO

- RUNNERS UP:
- Burnout Legends (Electronic Arts)
 - Advance Wars: Dual Strike (Nintendo)

THE SUN ONLINE — ONLINE GAME OF THE YEAR

WORLD OF WARCRAFT
PUBLISHER: VIVENDI

- RUNNERS UP:
- Battlefield (Electronic Arts)
 - EVE Online: Exodus (CCP)

PC GAME OF THE YEAR

HALF-LIFE 2
PUBLISHER: VIVENDI

- RUNNERS UP:
- Football Manager 2005 (Sega)
 - Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War - Winter Assault (THQ)

GAMECUBE GAME OF THE YEAR

RESIDENT EVIL 4
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM

- RUNNERS UP:
- Call of Duty: Finest Hour (Activision)
 - The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Adventures (Nintendo)

XBOX GAME OF THE YEAR

HALO 2
PUBLISHER: MICROSOFT

- RUNNERS UP:
- Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas (Rockstar)
 - Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic II: The Sith Lords (LucasArts)

PLAYSTATION 2 GAME OF THE YEAR

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR

- RUNNERS UP:
- Pro Evolution Soccer 4 (Konami)
 - Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater (Konami)

BEST FILM-BASED GAME OF 2005

RESIDENT EVIL 4
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM

- RUNNERS UP:
- Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic II: The Sith Lords (LucasArts)
 - Spider-Man 2 (Activision)

THE GIRLS' CHOICE OF 2005

THE SIMS 2
PUBLISHER: ELECTRONIC ARTS

- RUNNERS UP:
- Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas (Rockstar)
 - Resident Evil 4 (Capcom)

IN STOCK RETAILER OF THE YEAR

PLAY.COM

- RUNNERS UP:
- Gameplay
 - GAME

HERO OF 2005

CJ FROM GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

- RUNNERS UP:
- Gordon Freeman (from Half-Life 2)
 - Master Chief (from Halo 2)

VILLAIN OF 2005

OFFICER TENPENNY FROM GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

- RUNNERS UP:
- Saddler (from Resident Evil 4)
 - Dr Breen (from Half-Life 2)

RADIO 1'S BEST GAME SOUNDTRACK OF 2005

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR

- RUNNERS UP:
- Halo 2 (Microsoft)
 - Need for Speed Underground 2 (EA)

GAME ONE — INNOVATION OF THE YEAR

SONY PSP

- RUNNERS UP:
- Nintendo DS
 - Valve Steam

THE SUN ONE TO WATCH FOR 2006

RESIDENT EVIL 5
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM

- RUNNERS UP:
- Final Fantasy XII (Square Enix)
 - Age of Empires III (Microsoft)

EDITORS' UNSUNG HERO OF THE YEAR

FAHRENHEIT
PUBLISHER: ATARI

- NOMINATED:
- God of War (Sony)
 - Psychonauts (THQ)

THE ONE TO WATCH FOR XMAS 2005

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO

- RUNNERS UP:
- Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories (Rockstar)
 - Call of Duty 2 (Activision)

SONOPRESS — PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR

NINTENDO

- RUNNERS UP:
- Rockstar Games
 - THQ

EDITORS' GAME OF THE YEAR

RESIDENT EVIL 4
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM

- RUNNERS UP:
- Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas (Rockstar)
 - Pro Evolution Soccer 4 (Konami)

NUTS MAGAZINE ULTIMATE GAME OF THE YEAR

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR

- RUNNERS UP:
- EVE Online: Exodus (CCP)
 - Resident Evil 4 (Capcom)

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REMEMBER:
YOU ALSO NEED
MONEY FOR FOOD
AND CLOTHING

We are legally required to remind readers that money splashed on hardware may be better spent on families, wives and girlfriends. PC ZONE isn't liable for any estrangement that may ensue.

HARDWARE DIVIDE

The right piece of kit for you, however much money you haven't got...

LOADED?

GRAPHICS

GV-NX78X256V-B

EXPECT TO PAY £350

MANUFACTURER GIGABYTE

WEBSITE uk.giga-byte.com

Emphatically the fastest card we've tested. Unlike our favourite 6600 GT, GIGABYTE's 7800 GTX is built to reference specifications with a 430MHz processor and 256MB of 1.2GHz DDR3. Hunt around and you can buy an even faster variant or just overclock the crap out of this one. It seems to enjoy it.



PROCESSOR

ATHLON 64 FX-57

EXPECT TO PAY

£700

MANUFACTURER

AMD

WEBSITE www.amd.co.uk

For extreme performance, the flagship Athlon is the only processor to buy – even if it makes the same dent in your bank account as last month's mortgage payment. With AMD's new memory controller, unlocked multiplier and highest ever clock speed, the latest FX is the fastest thing inside any PC.

MOTHERBOARD

FATALITY AN8 SLI

EXPECT TO PAY

£130

MANUFACTURER

ABIT

WEBSITE www.abit.com.tw

Designed specifically for gaming, the nForce4 SLI-based Fatal1ty AN8 supports all 939-pin AMD processors. As well as SLI support it features ABIT's Guru Panel, a front-mounted display unit for overclockers. The board also uses a bevy of ABIT features, including QTES cooling and AudioMAX 7.1 onboard audio.

HDD

RAPTOR 74GB

EXPECT TO PAY

£118

MANUFACTURER

Western Digital

WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com

Travelling at 10,000rpm and with a 4.5ms seek time, the Raptor is billed as the world's fastest SATA drive. And although it's not especially large, it's big enough for a dedicated gaming rig. Two of them in RAID 0 configuration will give you almost 150GB and really make *Battlefield 2* fly.

SCREEN

MULTISYNC LCD1970GX

EXPECT TO PAY

£360

MANUFACTURER

NEC Mitsubishi

WEBSITE

www.nec-display-solutions.co.uk

The LCD1970GX is a 19in LCD screen, with an 8ms response time and an inky black glass screen that saturates all the colours and darkens the shadows. It includes a joystick controller for the on-screen display, and a four-port USB hub.

SOUND CARD

SOUND BLASTER X-FI FATALITY FPS

EXPECT TO PAY

£179

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

Slightly bonkers soundcard for audiophiles with deep pockets. Supports EAX 5.0, with 64MB X-RAM for top quality sound effects. CMSS-3D works magic on a stereo signal and makes headphone gaming crystal. Sounds nicer than an Audigy, but still painfully pricey.

SPEAKERS

Z-5500

EXPECT TO PAY

£220

MANUFACTURER

Logitech

WEBSITE www.logitech.co.uk

They'll cost you over £200, but they're also the best speakers we've ever tested at PC ZONE. They make both games and movies ravish your ears, and you'll soon find yourself blowing the dust from your old CDs and DVDs just so you can sit in the middle of the sound and revel in it.

SKINT?

GRAPHICS

X800 GTO

EXPECT TO PAY £115

MANUFACTURER GECUBE

WEBSITE gecube.com.tw

You could save yourself a tenner and go for the 6-pipeline GT, but you'd be missing out. The GTO is without doubt the mainstream card to go for; an overclocking dream, it can trump the 6800 GT on maximum detail and this GECUBE comes with a heat-pipe and sensible bundle.



PROCESSOR

ATHLON 64 3000+

EXPECT TO PAY

£95

MANUFACTURER

AMD

WEBSITE www.amd.co.uk

If you don't mind getting your hands dirty in the BIOS, Athlon 64s can be highly rewarding – particularly so on an nForce4 motherboard. Famous for overclocking and top performance in games, there's really no alternative. This AMD chip is the one to have if you're building to a budget.

MOTHERBOARD

A8N-E NFORCE4 ULTRA

EXPECT TO PAY £80

MANUFACTURER

ASUSTek

WEBSITE uk.asus.com

The A8N-E supports the full range of Athlon 64 FX, dual-core Athlon 64 X2 and Athlon 64 chips, plus PCI Express and 7.1 channel audio. The nForce4 Ultra chipset has more features than a circus has clowns, and ASUS includes a raft of its own, as well as some serious overclocking tools.

HDD

1200JD SATA

EXPECT TO PAY

£55

MANUFACTURER

Western Digital

WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com

It's not like a 120GB hard drive is unfeasibly huge any more, but it's more than enough for the casual gamer to do a spot of casual gaming. A few good titles, a couple of hundred music files and the odd porn flick will still leave plenty of room for Windows to manoeuvre.

SCREEN

VE710S

EXPECT TO PAY

£152

MANUFACTURER

ViewSonic

WEBSITE www.viewsonic.co.uk

Not a lot of dosh buys you an awful lot of screen. The VE710s is a budget-priced 17in flat panel featuring an 8ms response time and 1,280x1,024 resolution and producing bright, crisp images worthy of the ViewSonic name. The company's UltraBrite technology gives rich and vivid colours in games.

SOUND CARD

SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY 2 VALUE

EXPECT TO PAY

£34

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

If you're a casual gamer, there's little point throwing half a mortgage payment at your soundcard because you'll not be able to tell the difference. The cheap Audigy features EAX 4.0 and Dolby Digital EX support, and makes an awful lot of sense.

SPEAKERS

INSPIRE P5800

EXPECT TO PAY

£40

MANUFACTURER

Creative

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

You can go cheaper, but to meet the quality of the P5800 you'll need spend a lot more, as there's no better set in this price range. The subwoofer is deep and creamy, the satellites crisp and clean. A wired remote, line-in and headphone jack complete a very decent little package.

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XBOX 360
THE OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE

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COMPO
& TIPS

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The best race style...

- Does road rage rule?
- Will polite pay off?
- Find out inside!

ON SALE NOW!

Order your copy of Xbox 360: The Official Xbox Magazine today by calling the order hotline **0870 837 4722** (lines open weekdays 8am-9.30pm, Saturday 8am-4pm) or by visiting www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk. Each copy costs £5.99, but please add postage: UK £1; Europe £2; rest of the world £3.



PCZONE

FREEPLAY

Got no money? No worries...

DISC EDITOR Suzy Wallace

WHAT'S FREE THIS MONTH

FREE GAMES!

Bah humbug

O H BLOODY HELL, how did it get to Christmas again? My bank account's only just recovered from the last one and despite it only being November (at the time of writing), I'm already being bombarded with bloody festive adverts! In fact, they're so keen to force it down your throats that I'm willing to bet money that Santa's now more forceful than your average drug pusher. And some twisted head of marketing obviously thought it would be amusing to release all the best games now, when you've not got any spare money left to spend on them. It's a conspiracy I tell you.

So what do you do if you've splashed your cash on presents for your loved ones? As long as you kept the receipt, you could try becoming the most unpopular person of all time by taking them all back. However, a better option would be to stick your most-wanted games down on your presents list and sit back with the huge selection of demos, mods, maps and free games in the Freeplay section until Christmas rolls around. That way, you might even have enough cash left to poison Santa's mince pies. Humbug.

Try this!

Spot Korda in the special credits for *The Movies*



Once you've reached the end of the game, you'll be able to access a special movie-like set of credits through the main menu. Make sure you keep an eye out for ZONE freelancer Martin Korda.



PEDAL to the metal.

110 Demo Pages

Your first port of call for free games!



GET in!

112 Buzz

News and culture from a world of free PC gaming



LIKE, cosmic, man.

116 Freeware

The best darn free games on t'Internet



NICE day for it.

118 Play!

Essential reviews of the latest mods, maps and add-ons



COOL dude.

126 Make the most of Black & White 2

Your chance to play god!



IT could catch on...

130 Abandonware

The regeneration game



PCZONE FREE-O-METER



0 HOURS



235.4 HOURS*

*Approximate total hours of free games available in this issue



FREEPLAYDEMOS

Demos

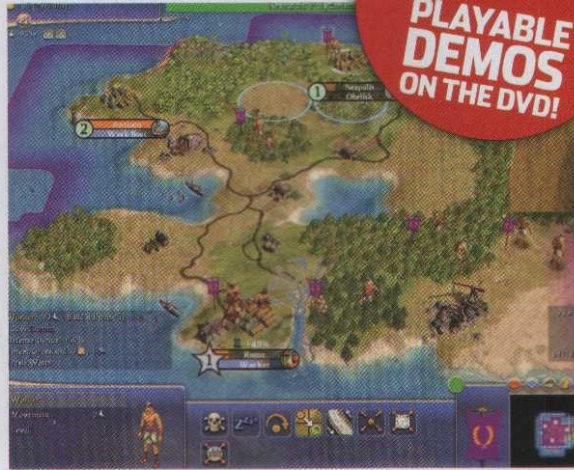
On the DVD – free games galore!

25
PLAYABLE
DEMOS
ON THE DVD!



DISC TROUBLES?

Having problems getting something on our DVD to work? Phone our helpline on **01225 442244** and ask for cover-disc support. Alternatively, email support@futurenet.co.uk, including as much information as possible about your system and the nature of your problem.



CIVILIZATION IV

Get tactical with this taster of Sid Meier's latest epic

www.2kgames.com/civ4 | ETA: Out now



SID MEIER'S CLASSIC title should need no introduction but if you've never dabbled in *Civ* before (for shame!), then you should at least be aware that it's one of the ultimate strategy series of all time. Featuring a tutorial to get you started and one mission (limited to 100 turns), this demo starts you off building up your civilization from 4000 BC. The

path you take is up to you – will you study the arts and religion, spreading the word via monasteries and missionaries, fight your way to the top with your vast armies or become a master of diplomacy, forging friendships and trade agreements with other rulers? It's almost like one of those crappy Internet personality tests...



ALEXANDER
Famous for conquering the known world and inspiring a really bad film, Alexander of the Greeks begins with fishing and hunting techs. His empire is both aggressive and philosophical and his unique unit is the Praetorian Spearman.



GHANDI
Well-known as the world's blindest peaceful protester, Ghandi begins *Civ* with mysticism and mining technologies. As expected, his empire is both spiritual and industrious and forsakes a specialist military unit for the Fast Worker.

FOLLOW THE LEADER Choose carefully from the rulers on offer to match your style of play



JULIUS CAESAR
Perhaps the only famous ruler to give his name to a type of salad, Rome's Julius Caesar starts off with fishing and mining technologies. The Praetorian Swordsman is his unique unit while his empire is both expansive and organised.



HUAYNA CAPAC
Huayna Capac might be the least known of the bunch, but as head of the Incan Empire he sets off with mysticism and agriculture technologies. His empire is both aggressive and financial and the Quecha Warrior is his unique unit.



FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006

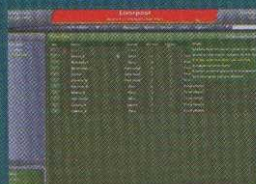
Say goodbye to time with Sega's all-conquering footie sim

www.sigames.com | ETA: Out now

HERE'S YOUR OPPORTUNITY to sample half a season of the latest iteration of the greatest footie management sim on the planet. With a whopping 16 leagues at your disposal, this comprehensive demo lets you experience all the new features in Sports Interactive's latest masterpiece. Rally your men (individuals or the whole team) with rousing team talks, cry despairingly as you cast your eye over the overhauled injury reports and take even more control over team tactics as you bellow your instructions at your hapless players from the touchline. It's all here and much, much more, so get ready to lead your favourite team to glory... or ignominious defeat.

Team Talk

Rally your men with the new half-time Team Talk



ROUSING WORDS

Trailing 6-2 at half-time to a mob of angry Scots, down to ten men and with my left back in goal, it's time to give the lads a rousing speech. "We can definitely still win this," I lie. That should do the trick.



OR MAYBE NOT...

Oooooooh, so close. Well, at the least our little chat with the lads stopped us leaking any more goals, and had our strikers not been so shit, and missed every chance, we could have won it. Honest.

TOCA RACE DRIVER 3

Smash up a Honda Civic in Codies' latest...

www.codemasters.co.uk | ETA: February

CODEMASTERS HAS SENT through this early demo of the latest instalment of the *TOCA* series, in which you can take a 2006 Honda Civic out for a spin on the Donington Park GP circuit. Created in conjunction with Honda as part of some shameless marketing deal that

undoubtedly involved words like 'synergy' and 'co-branding', the demo features a very early build of the game, but at least offers the chance to sample a full race (complete with qualifying) and some of that fantastic damage model. Get out there and make like a Paris rioter.

IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

Winning tips for *TOCA Race Driver 3*



1 Passing. Finding a decent route past opponents can be tricky at the best of times. The best moments to pass are definitely corners; position yourself to gently nudge your opponent and you'll be perfectly placed for the exit.

2 Track. One of the best UK tracks around, Donington Park GP is chock full of high-speed bends interspersed with tricky tight corners. There's plenty of grass too so try to stay on the tarmac!

3 Walls. Normally something to be avoided in driving games, *TOCA*'s damage model makes shunting into these a pleasure. Go on, give it a try.

Cornered!

We show how to tackle Donington Park's two trickiest corners



Melbourne Hairpin

Stay wide left on the approach, cut your speed, turn into and clip the apex and then use the rest of the track to allow you to power out of the corner. Easy as that.



Fogarty's Esses

Make sure you scrub off plenty of speed on the right-hand side of the road, clip the apex of the first corner, then the second and use the track to power out of the corner.

THE BEST OF THE REST



THE SUFFERING: TIES THAT BIND

There are some seriously disturbing thrills to be had in this horror sequel, as well as plenty of firepower and the ability to metamorphose into a rather nasty chappy when things get tough. www.sufferingtiesthatbind.com



TOTAL OVERDOSE

Take a bunch of gringos, add some flashy moves and mix it all up with some spicy Mexican flavour and you get *Total Overdose*. Playing as ex-convict Ramiro, you'll need to take out the 'herb' growing farm complete with its cadre of trigger-happy guards. www.totaloverdose.com



UFO: AFTERSHOCK

Damn aliens. When they're not probing rectums they're taking over the world and enslaving humanity. This time it's the latter, and it's up to you and your chums to fight them off in a demo set over three levels of turn-based strategy in London, Paris and Stuttgart. www.ufo-aftershock.com



TRACKMANIA EXTREME

Yet more bonkers racing can be yours with the help of this crazy demo of the free *Extreme* expansion from Nadeo. It features two races, two platforms, two puzzles and two stunt challenges with which you can get a taste of the slicing and somersaulting on offer in the full expansion. www.trackmania.com



NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED

www.fileshack.com/file,x?fid=7978



Break the law in this demo of EA's latest *Need for Speed* outing, with three cars, three Challenge tracks and two Quick Race tracks. Crazy police chases are the order of the day, as is making buildings collapse on their heads - always a good thing.

STARSHIP TROOPERS DEMO

www.nzone.com/object/nzone_starshiptroopers_downloads.html



We've given *Starship Troopers* (p84) a bit of a kicking this issue, but if you fancy trying out one of its better levels (a search for a giant plasma bug to shoot repeatedly in its bum) then this might be worth a stretch of your broadband.

SNIPPETS



VIRTUAL INSANITY

Immerse yourself fully into your gaming worlds with this nifty site that provides 360° panoramic shots from *GTR*, *GT Legends*, *Quake 4*, *Battlefield 2* and *Half-Life 2*. Super spangly Quicktime VR technology is used to grab some amazing screenshots that completely surround you, before letting you loose with the controls. vrway.com/vr_q4



A LITTLE CONCERNED

Take *Half-Life 2*, remove the world's most heroic physicist and replace with clueless idiot Frohman and you pretty much have the mildly amusing *HL2* comic *Concerned*. Following the timeline of the game, it's already up to Black Mesa East, so if you haven't checked it out already, what are you waiting for? www.hicomic.com

LETTING OFF STEAM

www.vapour-online.com

New online content delivery for mods steals PC ZONE 'joke'

IF YOU REMEMBER the back page of issue 151 that spoofed Steam, you may be forgiven for thinking that the creator of Vapour is taking the piss. Contrary to appearances however, it's very much for real. Vapour is an online content delivery system modelled on Valve's own love-it-or-hate-it system, but for community-created content such as mods and maps. Support will initially be for *Doom 3*, *Half-Life 2*, *Unreal Tournament 2004* and *Quake III*, although other titles will soon follow.

After a small download, the system allows you to download content at a very fast rate, easily update your mod files, chat to other users and browse available mods by game, thereby taking much of the pain out of the modding experience. That is, unless you think Steam's the bastard son of Satan, in which case you may want to steer clear.

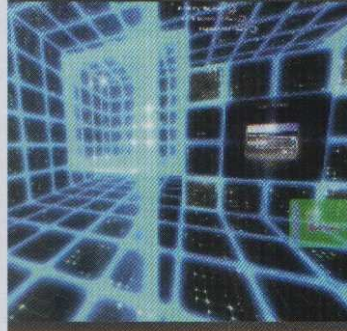
Mod Information



COULD well be the way of the future.



LIKE Steam, but for mods. Genius.



XP FOR FREE

mywebpages.comcast.net/SupportCD/XPGames.html

Website lists freeware titles for XP

WINDOWS XP may be the only real choice for PC gaming fans, but as you're probably aware not every title is supported (especially some older ones). In the name of spreading free gaming love to XP users, this website has been set up to record the finest selection of titles available for the platform for now. Everything from small, independently produced games such as *Little Fighters 2* to publisher-released titles such as *Grand Theft Auto 2* are present and the selection is arranged by genre for easy browsing. All the titles have been tested and found to work on the platform without the need for emulators or front-ends, so when you've exhausted our own excellent freeware pages (if such a thing is possible) head here for more good stuff.



Microsoft

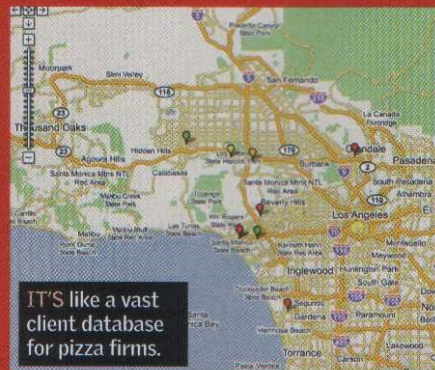
Windows xp

Putting Gaming on the Map

www.gcdb.org

Locate your favourite (American) developers at the click of a button

WHETHER IT'S OBSESSIVELY trying to point out your house on the map or attempting to stalk celebs via satellite images (we've tried – it doesn't work), you should be pretty familiar with the genius of Google Earth by now. However, its less-hyped brother Google Maps has recently been put to good use by the Game Company Database. Now, you can simply log on to the site, type in a city or post code and see details of every major game company operating in the area. Currently, only the US is catered for, although this will hopefully change at a later date. As well as giving you the company name, address and exact location on the map, a brief listing of relevant games is also provided – so whether you want to send them fan mail or shout curses from their doorstep, all the information you need is here.



IT'S like a vast client database for pizza firms.

CONDUCTING THE ORCHESTRA

PC ZONE talks to Alan Wilson, VP of Tripwire Interactive, the studio behind award-winning *UT2004* mod *Red Orchestra*

www.redorchestra.clanservers.com

PCZ: What was the inspiration for *RO*?

AW: There are quite a few really. Obviously the spate of World War II movies and TV series in the last few years has rekindled an interest for many. We chose the Eastern Front for a few reasons, including the fact that it's such a vast conflict yet so few people actually know anything about it. There was also a growing interest in "realism" and the Eastern Front actually gave us an arena with wonderfully balanced combat that's also highly realism-based.

PCZ: Did you have any inkling that *RO* would become as popular as it is?

AW: We had a feeling from early on that we were onto something. We had a lot of interest from the early, pre-release days. This meant that we started strongly – but of course, also had a lot to live up to! As we ploughed through the releases, the player-base grew steadily.

PCZ: What was it like to win best mod in the Make Something Unreal contest?

AW: Unsurprisingly, it was wonderful. The whole team had put in a huge effort over a long period



MODDING is now a proven way of breaking into the business.



A NEW, stand-alone version of *RO* is afoot.



FLUSH with the Unreal contest money, the *RO* boys are going pro.

of time, so it was gratifying to win. We have to point out that it was also good to win against such strong opposition – there were some stunning mods in the mix (*Damnation* being my favourite!).

PCZ: There are plenty of war-based mods out there. What do you think makes *RO* so popular?

AW: We wanted it to look and feel really authentic, rather than "Hollywood-style", which has been rather done to death. Ultimately, we also wanted it to provide entertainment for people on more than just a run-and-gun level, to aim for deeply absorbing multiplayer gaming. That's why the large loyal following: you may know the maps, the weapons, and the vehicles – but there's always variety too and that's what keeps everyone coming back.

PCZ: Do you have any idea how many downloads *RO* has had?

AW: We don't know the exact number, but our best estimate is somewhere between 300,000 and 500,000. Csports.net ranks us with about 100,000 players on the current release.

PCZ: Are you approaching a final version or is there still plenty to add?

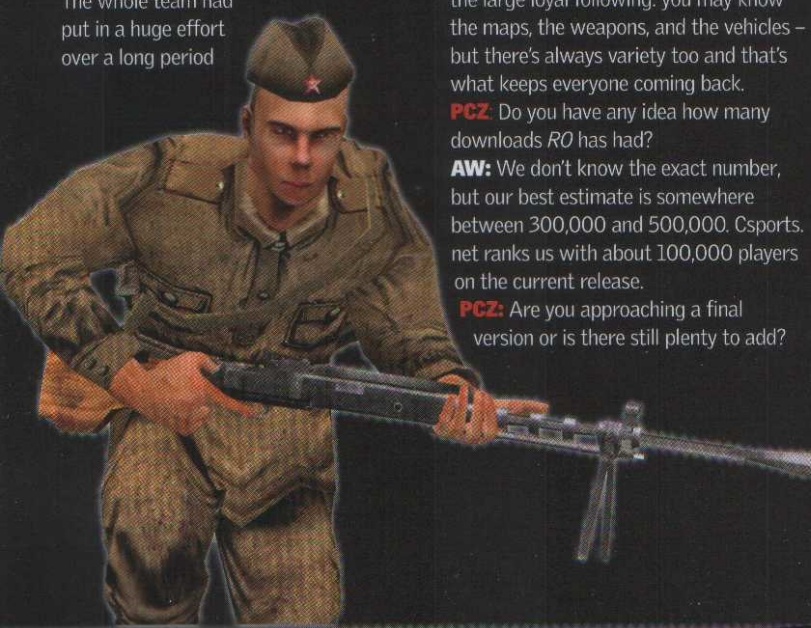
AW: We've never actually formally announced it, so I guess this might be the moment: Release 3.3 was the last ever version of the mod.

PCZ: Are there plans to develop *RO* as a stand-alone title?

AW: Well, as this article goes out, everyone should be aware that the answer is a resounding "yes". The development is well on its way, with *Red Orchestra: Ostfront 41-45* due in early 2006, based on Epic's Unreal 2.5 engine.

PCZ: What's your five-year plan then?

AW: Well, with *Ostfront* on its way to completion, we're thinking about what comes next. Of course we'll be looking to expand on the existing *Ostfront*, with regular content updates and encouraging the mod community. Beyond that, we have choices. Everyone expects a version of *RO* on Unreal Engine 3, which would be stunning, when you see what can be done with it. On top of that, we've got three or four projects which are still at the early concept stage. But everyone will have to wait a while to see about those!



SNIPPETS



COMIC BOOK HERO

Apostasy creator BrashFiink's been busy helping out the chaps at Ubisoft. Together they've developed a *Prince Of Persia* comic book template which allows you to add your own text and create your own adventure. The best five comics at the end win prizes, so get writing. www.princeofpersiagame.com/us/community/machinima.php



SOUNDS GOOD

Giving away soundtracks from games is all the rage at the moment. The *Stronghold 2* music is available at stronghold2.heavengames.com, both the *Conan* and *Chaser* soundtracks can be found at www.cauldron.sk, and the backing tracks from *Bone* can be found here: www.telltalegames.com/bone_the_game?action=bone_soundtrack

Bug-Fix of the Month

THIS MONTH: CITY OF VILLAINS/HERO



Nov 9: "Objects that erroneously exploded when destroyed no longer do so. Desks and statues are much safer now!"

Movie of the Month CONDEMNED

With *F.E.A.R.* out of the door, Monolith can concentrate on its darker, more sinister cousin. It's a psychological thriller that features more than its fair share of neck-snapping, pipe-smacking and crime-investigating, and the trailer's got 'em all.



CRIME FIGHTING: Look, it's just like an episode of *CSI: Miami*! But without the ginger guy!



LIFE OF GRIME: Environments are dirty, dark and ominous. Just like the Thames after a storm.



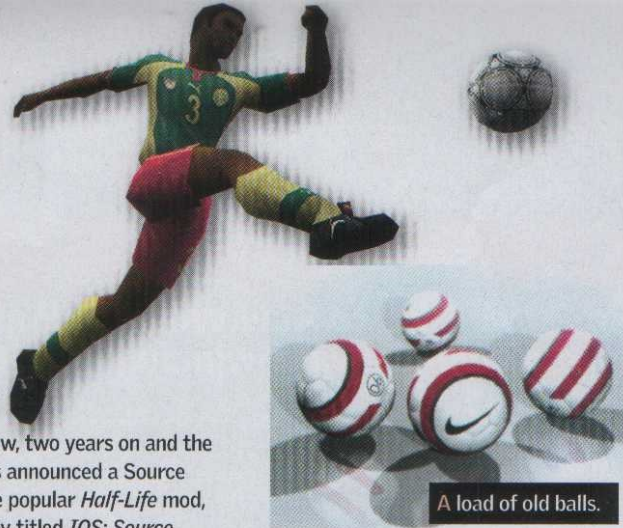
BAD BOYS: The locals don't seem too friendly. Must be something in the water.



KILLING MACHINE: B people with pipes, sna necks and more. Hurra

SOURCE SOCCER

A game of two half-lives www.planethalflife.com/ios



BEST not to have his teeth in the picture.

IT WAS JUXTAPOSITION at its finest, seeing a football mod come from an FPS in which you essentially played the role of a ginger nerd with a PhD and a crowbar, but *International Online Soccer* was well received all the same, garnering a huge fanbase almost

overnight. Now, two years on and the *IOS* team has announced a Source version of the popular *Half-Life* mod, cunningly titled *IOS: Source*.

Not a whole lot has been said about the new mod, but first impressions hint that it will be a straight port for the time being, with the same player models, slightly upgraded textures and a whole heap of stadiums (or stadia, take your pick) and teams to choose from. Great news for the fans then, who up until now have been relegated to the *Half-Life* engine. No doubt that as work continues on the mod, we'll see some vast improvements both graphically and in terms of ball physics, but for now, head over to the website to see a movie of the upcoming mod in action.



A load of old balls.



ROUND of applause for the groundsman.



ITALY scoring four? That's just made up.



SNOWING in Argentina?

2005 Machinima Film Festival

festival.machinima.org

And the winner is...

WE'VE EXPLAINED WHAT machinima is before, we've even given you the exact pronunciation of the word to avoid any confusion, but here it is again – machinima is a film genre consisting of movies made entirely in game engines, a perfect example of which is the popular *Red Vs. Blue* series made with the *Halo* engine. No surprise then that it's been nominated for no less than six of the 12 categories in the 2005 Machinima Film Festival, along with Rooster

Teeth's other *F.E.A.R.*-based comedy opus, *P.A.N.I.C.S.*

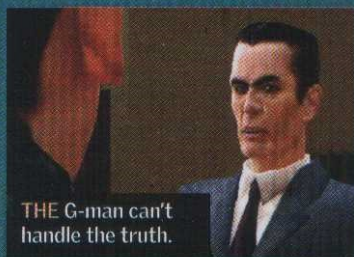
Check out the website for a full list of the nominees, and by the time this magazine hits the shelves, a list of winners too. We'd be willing to put money on one or both of Rooster Teeth's works driving into the sunset, cackling evilly and clutching bulging sacks full of awards, but with stiff competition like *Borg Wars*, *This Spartan Life* and *The Awakening*, it's far from certain what the outcome will be

(not like actual film festivals then).

It'll probably be a while before we see Jonathan Ross presenting the awards, or Will Ferrell in a madcap *Half-Life* comedy adventure, but with machinima getting more and more popular (and especially with *Halo* being widely known among the general TV-watching public), we think machinima will eventually supersede 'real' movies and dance on their corpses. Probably.



OH, a proper poster and everything.



THE G-man can't handle the truth.



DON'T P.A.N.I.C.S., F.E.A.R. is here.



STAR Trek's budget has been slashed.

MAP TO THE FUTURE

Dystopia mod expands with four new maps www.dystopia-game.com



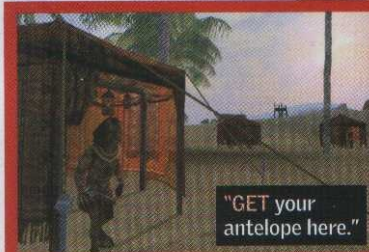
DYSTOPIA ONLY RECENTLY wowed us with its combination of implants and cyberspace, but even with the website recently logging its millionth unique visitor, it's not slowed the pace. Four new maps are in the works and if the screenshots are anything to go by, they could improve the gameplay even further.



Abandon will see you crawling down back-alleys and using height to your advantage on the roof-tops of city buildings, while Connection provides a neat contrast between the ghetto-style punk hideouts and the stark corporate buildings. Silo,



meanwhile, is reminiscent of an evil mastermind's lair (complete with rockface entrance and huge subterranean spaces), and promises some great gameplay with the punks attempting to take over the launch controls of the missiles. Rounding out the package is UrbanRisk, a futuristic urban landscape created by a fella taken on after the team saw screenshots of his work. Cyberpunks can sample the new maps in a future demo release.



Back to the dark ages

Mythic lavishes its users with a free expansion download

www.trialsatatlantis.com/downloads

APART FROM PROVIDING Steve Hill with limitless material for *NeverQuest*, subscription-free *Guild Wars* has also made a massive impact in the MMO world. After Funcom decided to make *Anarchy Online* free until 2007 just two issues ago, *Dark Age Of Camelot* developer Mythic Entertainment recently announced the *Trials Of Atlantis* expansion will also be gratis to current players. The expansion can be downloaded from the website and retired players can even re-activate their account and access their old characters to take advantage of Mythic's generosity.

Don't fret if you've already bought the *TOA* expansion though – you can get a free upgrade to the new graphics engine via a free download too.



ON THE BALL

Making *Pro Evo 5* more official

www.pesfan.com/bulletin/showthread.php?t=92065

WE MAY RECKON it's the best footy title ever, but if there's just one downside to *Pro Evolution Soccer 5*, it's the lack of an official Premiership licence for it.

The good news is you can now fix this with an Option file created by the *PES* obsessives over at pesfan.com. There are three flavours available of the version 2 file that, in addition to providing proper player/team names, shirts and sponsors, offers you the chance to unlock the shop and have thousands of *PES* points.



SO, YOU WANT TO BE A... Games Script Writer



NAME Andrew S Walsh
WORKING ON
X3: Reunion,
Glory In Death
AGE 32
EXPERIENCE
 Theatre, radio,
 animation, TV,
 film, games

PCZ How did you get started?
AW I started writing for theatre, then I was a storyliner on TV soaps. Before I worked on my first game I'd worked on several hundred hours of broadcast TV and written 12 plays.

PCZ What's the pay like?
AW It all depends on who's paying and what level of experience you've got. I think they should pay writers more please, or at least stop poking us when we're asleep in our cages.

PCZ What does your job involve?
AW Designing characters, writing storylines, writing dialogue, some games design, vocal directing, editing, localisation, marketing, consultancy and plenty of beer.

PCZ How rewarding is your job?
AW I love writing. I wake up thinking about stories. I also love games. Put the two together (with the odd dash of Guinness) and you have one happy scribe.

PCZ What's the most annoying part of the job?
SK 'You write for games? Wow, is that like Kapow! Splat!?' A lot of people don't understand what writers do, that it takes a long time to learn how to do it properly and that games writers are equal to film/TV writers. That and the lack of office parties.

WE SAY... DIY

Know your games, look at their scripts, think about what could be improved. Plus, write regularly to ensure your writing skills are top-notch and be persistent – if at first you don't succeed...

NEXT MONTH
 SYWTBA... Games tester

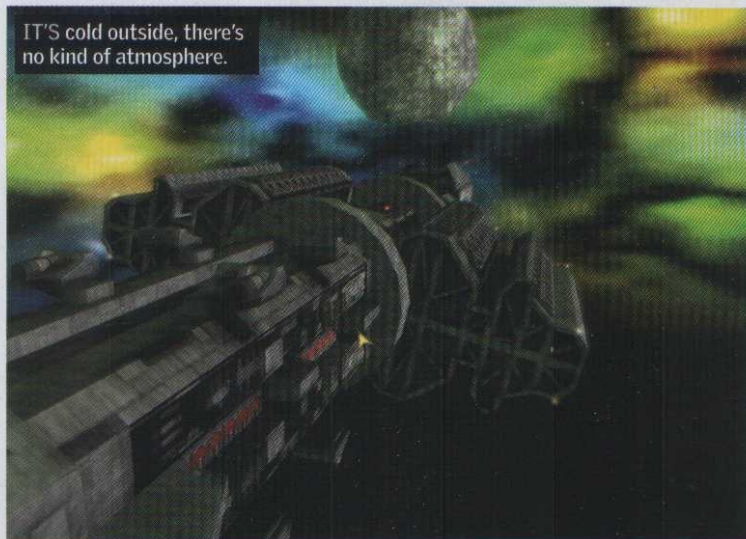


Freeware

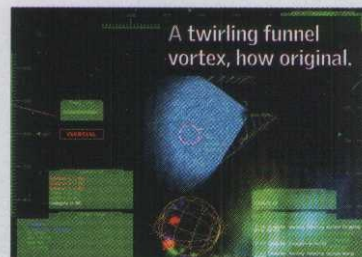


Steve Hogarty values his freedom. But he prefers free games...

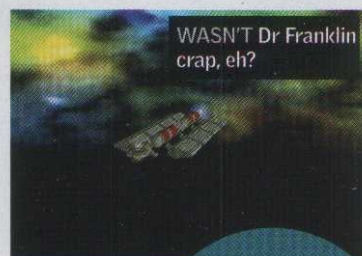
Freeware is dedicated to bringing you the best free games content the Net has to offer, be it freeware, homebrews, remakes, webgames or emulation – you'll never have to buy another game again. This month, you can visit the final frontier, become an undertaker, piss on otters & get trippy with *Mono*...



IT'S cold outside, there's no kind of atmosphere.



A twirling funnel vortex, how original.



WASN'T Dr Franklin crap, eh?



BABYLON 5: I'VE FOUND HER

Emerging from the Shadows

Developer: Space Dream Factory | ifh.firststones.com

I MUST ADMIT I'm not a huge fan of *Babylon 5*. It's not that I dislike it for any particular reason, it's just that at the tender age of eight, I think I was just outside the show's key demographic. It's the sort of sci-fi establishment that demands your undying loyalty, but unfortunately I was far more interested in something a bit more pedestrian, something I could dip in and out of

at my own leisure, like *Captain Planet* or *Bananas In Pyjamas*.

Luckily, there are many people who aren't me, people who love *Babylon 5* so much they're inspired to create an entire *Babylon 5* space combat sim in their spare time and release it free of charge. *Babylon 5: I've Found Her* (apparently the odd title is some reference to something) is made by such people, and is mainly set five years before the TV series kicks off – that's 2254 if you're keeping count.

What's surprising is the fact that it's quite good, exceptionally good as far as freeware releases go. It's so good that it puts me in the mindset of reviewing an average, yet full-priced space sim, let down by wild variations in voice-acting quality and sub-standard graphics. Then I remind myself that *Babylon 5: IFH* is completely free, and that more than excuses its faults. In fact, after the now ancient cancellation of Sierra's

Babylon 5 game, *Into The Fire*, fans (still frolicking with even a mention of their "big pile of shit" reference in *Spaced*) deserve all they're given.

Freeware doesn't get much more professional. Even I enjoyed it, and I don't know what a Minbari is.



YOU usually have to pay for explosions like this.



NICE parking job.

PUFFBOMB

Cute 'ickle animals and explosives? Count us in...

Developer: Mike Kasprzak
www.puffbomb.com

Trial and error: it's how dogs learn to roll over and how monkeys evolved into man. "What's this giant black slab I'm standing next to?" "If I hit this nut with a rock, what happens?" You try something and hope it works, which is exactly what's required in *PuffBOMB*. Your task is to propel a small creature into a yellow zone using carefully-placed bombs and perfectly synchronised timers. You get as many attempts as you need – the real challenge is getting every bomb to go off at the right time. It's a bit like dominoes, except instead of dominoes, you've got bombs.

MONO

Go mano e mano with loco *Mono*

Developer: Binaryzoo.com | www.binaryzoo.com/games/mono

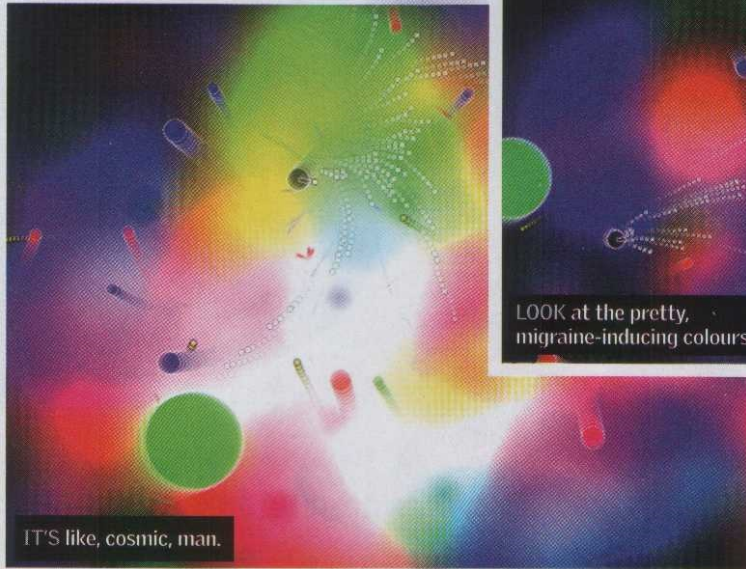
INFECTIOUS MONONUCLEOSIS, ALSO known as the kissing disease, has nothing to do with this game. Any hopes I had of linking the two subjects to form an interesting and humorous introduction have been destroyed, along with the part of my brain I use to formulate logical statements. For you see, I've been playing *Mono* and I'm a bit fried.

Imagine *Asteroids* mixed with *Lumines* mixed with *Rez* mixed with an eye infection and you'll begin to understand what this is all about. You're a floating turret on an empty black (or white) plane, à la classic blaster *Asteroids*, and you must destroy coloured blobs as they creep across the screen. Destroying the blobs causes them to break into smaller blobs, à la classic blaster *Asteroids*, and each blob leaves behind a psychedelic residue, à la a drug-inspired haze.

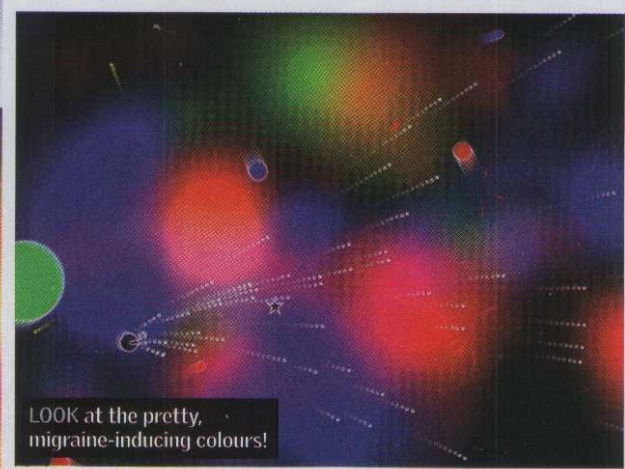
I mention *Lumines* and *Rez* because of the trance-like state the game inflicts upon you – where onlookers see bizarre colours and dots flying everywhere, you see bizarre colours, dots flying everywhere and the meaning of life (or something). *Mono* is one of those games that sucks you in with its simple controls, bold primary colours and primitive

gameplay, and keeps you in its grasp with some great trance music and an array of classic power-ups.

Of course, it's nothing more than a pointless timewaster, like bowling or watching *Jimmy Carr's Top 100 Embarrassingly Shaped Clouds* – but pointless timewasting is one of life's simple pleasures, so enjoy it.



IT'S like, cosmic, man.



LOOK at the pretty, migraine-inducing colours!

FUNERAL QUEST

Grab a coffin and get to work

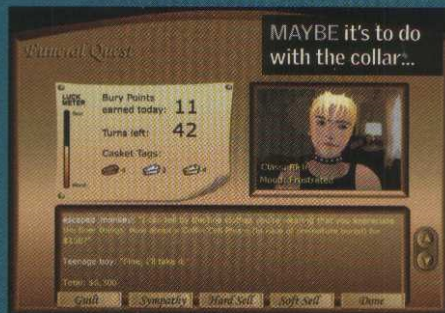
Developer: Robinson Technologies
www.rtsoft.com/fq

IF YOU'VE EVER watched *Six Feet Under* and thought, "Wow, I'd love to be a funeral director, only not so gay and pretentious", then you'll be glad to hear that your morbid obsession with burying corpses can be expressed in an altogether more healthy and legal way through *Funeral Quest*, a multiplayer Web game which puts you at the happier end of an embalming tube.

Mourners flock to your parlour, each of them with a certain budget, mood and resistance to your undertaker charms. Your job is to break their resistance through

either guilt or sympathy, then take advantage of their emotional situation by selling them expensive funeral add-ons ranging from gold caskets to plots next to Elvis. Push them too hard and they take their business elsewhere; don't push hard enough and your business withers and dies like bodies in an under-financed morgue.

Funeral Quest is pumped full of dark humour, and with the ability to attack other players' funeral homes and upgrade your skills, it's also highly addictive. Worth checking out before you die.



MAYBE it's to do with the collar...



MAKES you want to move there doesn't it?

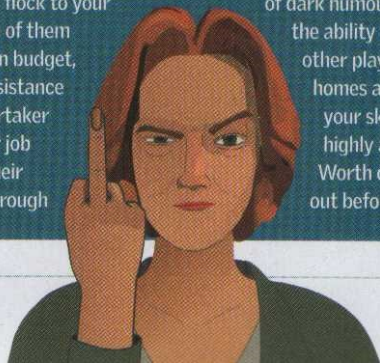
WEBGAME OF THE MONTH

Masterpiss

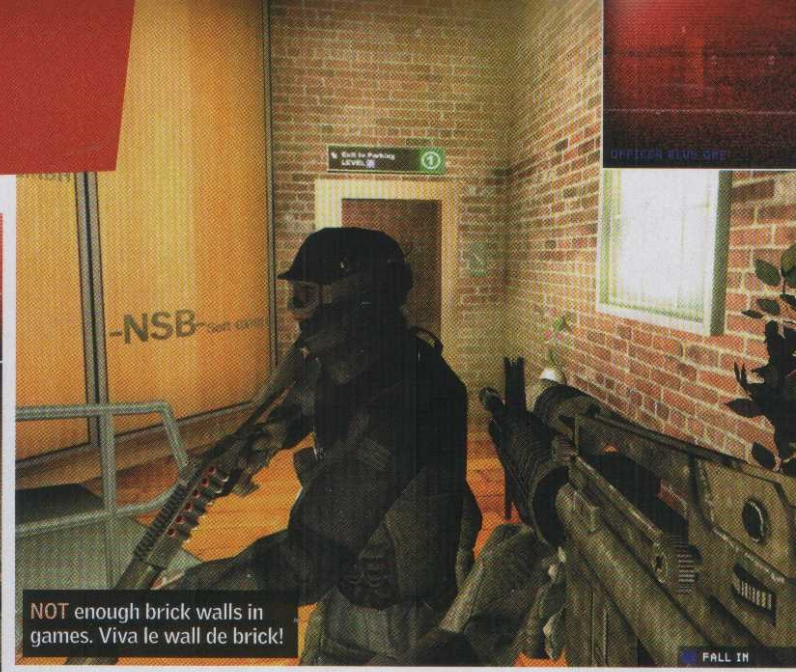
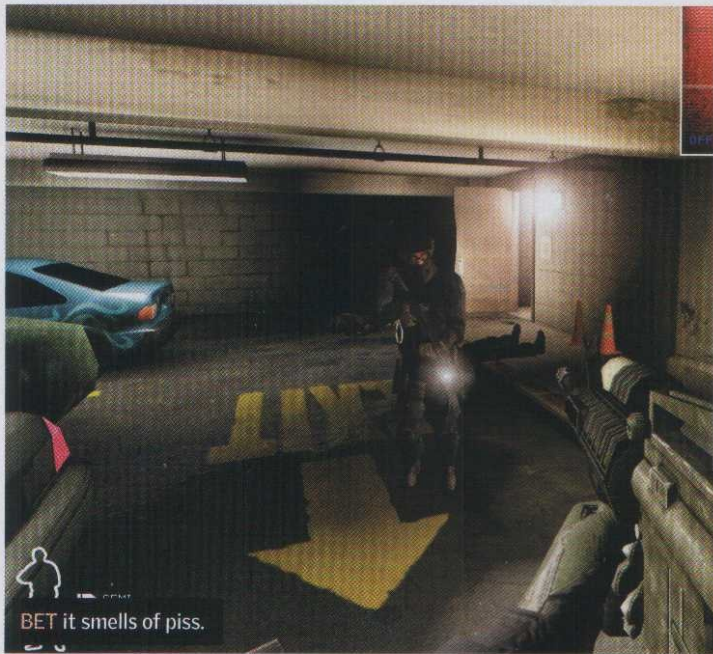


Developer: CrazyMum
www.crazymum.com/otter.htm

Magnus Magnusson hates otters. He hates them so much, they've driven him to drink bleach until his mind was taken over by a mechanical onion. He spends every weekend drinking himself senseless and pissing on otters at the local pond. The only person who can protect these aquatic rodents is Terry Nutkins, who steals Magnus's mind onion when not repelled by the sound of his pissing. Help Magnus piss on as many otters as possible before his bleach runs out. Avoid the electric Eskimos who share the same pond. Also, watch out for wasps who can become enraged when soaked in urine. We don't think we can describe this Web game any better than the guys at CrazyMum did: all we know is that pissing on those otters' pretentious little faces is damn addictive.



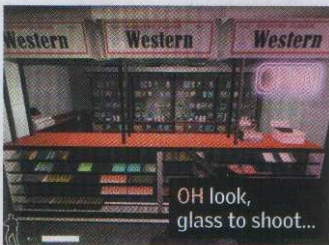
FREEPLAYPLAY!



SWAT 4 MAP PACK

swat4maps.com/~swat4/download.php?view.168

Steve Hogarty gets down and puts his hands behind his head



THERE AREN'T MANY jobs that don't eventually descend into a monotonous day-by-day trawl of repetition and boredom. Veteran wrestlers for example, are jaded and bitter people who no longer get their thrills by grappling their fellow greasy man, instead having to turn to topiary for their kicks. Being on a SWAT team is no different, with the defenders of justice constantly pining for something a bit different, if only to break up the tedium of tear-gassing, flash-banging and pistol-whipping.

Well, their prayers (the SWAT guys, not the wrestlers) have been answered in the form of eight entirely new arenas for the crime-whacking sim, *SWAT 4*. From the devious mind of NightShade-Berlin comes six single-player maps and six multiplayer maps (some overlap, obviously), set in various locales ranging from familiar cityscape surroundings to subway platforms and even the Middle East (although the bad guys' Manhattan drawl sounds a bit out of place in the desert). The map standards are high and the price is low: actually, it's non-existent.

That's right, you're getting 12 maps for the price of none. That's approximately 172 per cent more shotgun beanbags in the gut, and a whopping 289 per cent more accidental electrocution (at a conservative estimate).

VILLAGE PEOPLE

Mister Berlin is a talented chap too, with the majority of maps feeling well-balanced in both single- and multiplayer combat. The Desert Ops Village map (that's the Middle-Eastern one) feels particularly unique in the way that death can come from almost any angle with lots of alleyways, lots of windows and lots of rude men with incongruous accents, big guns and a penchant for terror looking to ruin your day.

A few of the single-player maps see you going solo against the enemy, which ramps up the difficulty somewhat (and isn't as much fun as being able to order other people to their deaths), while others place you in charge of a squad as per usual.

However, as far as map packs go, this does exactly what it says underneath the download button: it's a pack of maps to extend your *SWAT* experience by giving you new and exciting places to deliver swift and painful justice. Oh, and there are innocent civilians to shoot in the face, should you wish to express your inner torment.



SOURCE FORTS



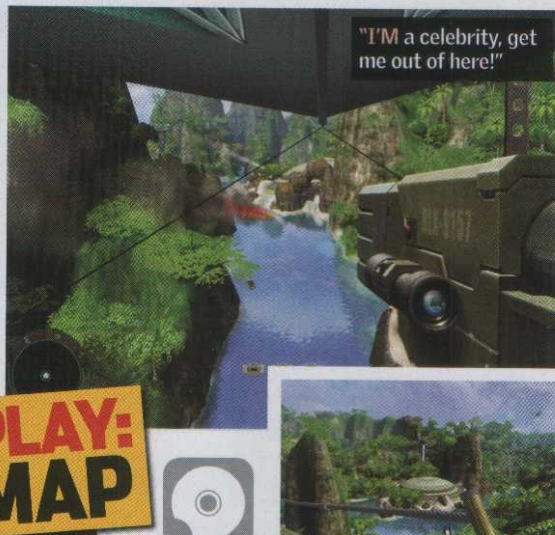
Suzy Wallace is holding the fort www.sourcefortsmod.com

SOURCE FORTS IS quite simply a work of genius. While *Half-Life 2* deathmatch might have kept you occupied for perhaps half a day (and only so that you can say you've killed someone with a toilet), *Source Forts* has enough gaming sustenance to keep you going for days.

The idea's about as simple as they come: break a capture the flag mode into two alternating phases. First is the 'build phase', in which each team puts the gravity gun to good use by cobbling together a variety of blocks and tiles in an impression of an impregnable fortress. The idea is to make it as hard as possible for the opposition to get near your flag, while still needing to leave yourself an easy route into enemy territory. Once building time runs out, the game then switches to the combat phase, which is pretty standard CTF fare.

The concept may be simple, but making it into enemy territory, past tiles you previously

thought were impassable is hugely satisfying. CTF lovers will feel instantly at home here, and there's also plenty to keep any self-respecting *HL2* player entertained. Different classes throw in a welcome tactical twist, maps are well-designed and the servers are practically swarming with matches, so you'll be able to dive in straight away.



FAR CRY SP MAP PACK

Suzy Wallace kicks back on the beaches of Micronesia

A BEAUTIFUL WHITE sandy beach stretches into the distance, palm trees sway gently in the breeze and birds fly through the azure sky above. Meanwhile, a bunch of mercenaries spot me taking in the view and promptly shoot me in the head. Ah yes, welcome back to *Far Cry*.

Despite being more than a year-and-a-half old now, it's still a stunner – and if it's

been collecting dust on your shelf since you completed it (or were beaten into submission by the AI), now's the time to dig it out because this map pack features a whopping 27 single-player maps. Yep, that's an entire seven levels more than the game!

There's plenty of variety too: if you fancy yourself a bit of a *Far Cry* pro, the swarms of mercs in Pigs will provide a decent

challenge, Aecanyon offers some beautiful vistas for you to sample, and Stuntmap provides more light-hearted entertainment, with practically the whole island teeming with tracks and things to destroy. However, the pack's highlight is definitely the gargantuan Matto maps; they even manage to squeeze in some humour to enjoy before getting your face blown off.



www.farcrygame.com

PCZONE TOP 5 MAX PAYNE 2 MODS



- M-I - NEW DAWN.**
Magnificent set pieces and flashy 'Gunkata' moves make this *Mission Impossible*-themed mod a sure-fire winner.
- CINEMA**
Gives *Max Payne 2* a movie-like feel with better weapons, detailed skins, cinematic scenes and the ability to disarm.
- BATTLE TACTICS 2**
Winner of Rockstar's mod contest, *Battle Tactics* exercises that grey matter by turning the title into a turn-based strategy.
- KUNG FU MOD**
Adds a host of kung fu moves to the game, enabling you to kick and punch your way through the standard levels.
- MAX PAYNE CHRONICLES**
A massive mod that adds three storyline and 14 bonus levels to fill in the gap between the original *Max Payne* and the second.

DOOM CHRONICLES



Steve Hogarty makes sure Mars is still there. It is

www.doomchronicles.com



NO place to wear stilettos.

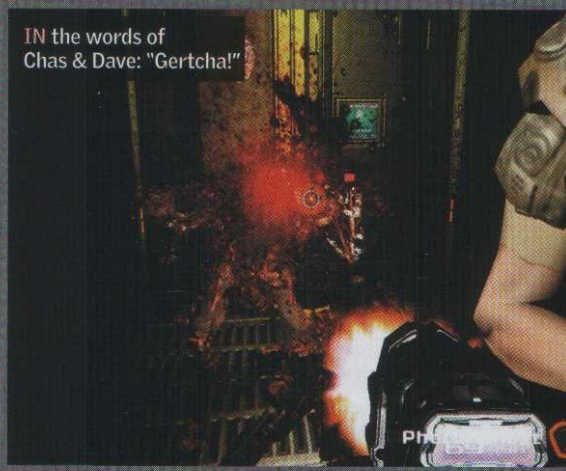
THERE ARE TWO different kinds of fear: there's the kind you experience witnessing the water in a toilet bowl steadily rising and knowing there's nothing you can do to stop it, and there's the fear of being destroyed by rampaging bulls. *Doom 3* mixed these two types of fear to create some middling shade of terror, and now *Doom Chronicles*, a single-player mod for the game, has taken that shade of terror and added a

lot more of the rampaging bulls. What I'm saying is that this mod is *Doom 3* on industrial steroids – even on the easiest difficulty setting, you'll be instantly molested by demons and zombies left, right and any other direction possible.

The mod is the first chapter in a four-part

series and adds squads, new (well, modified) weapons, new (well, invisible versions of the previous) enemies, flares and a bunch of new damage effects. The squad AI is awful though, consisting of a few guys running in circles shouting "fire, fire" (and occasionally "what the hell!"), while rarely doing anything useful.

What's more, and this is not a complaint that I readily make, the mod is just too fucking difficult. Challenges are all well and good, but this verges on the ridiculous. That said, the visceral blasting action of *Doom 3* is still here in spades and the music is quite nice, so it's definitely worth a gander.



IN the words of Chas & Dave: "Gertcha!"



THEY HUNGER

You can't keep a good zombie down

www.planethalflife.com/manke/theyhunger.htm

A SERIES OF venerable *Half-Life* total conversions, *They Hunger* was a truly superb example of superior mod-play. Essentially, it was the first-person tale of an author with writer's block, re-dipping his quill through his near-mutilation by the waking dead. Truly frightening in places, the excellently designed towns, prisons and hospitals of each of the three episodes (two and three being called *Rest In Pieces* and *Rude Awakening*) really meant that *They Hunger* still remains today the most distinguished slice of free zombie-mashing ever conceived. You'd be wise to watch out for *They Hunger: Lost Souls*, the commercial Source release that creator Black Widow Games is currently beavering away on. You'd also be wise to take the original out for a spin.

THE SOULKEEPER

Mounting dragons is all in a day's work for Suzy Wallace

thesoulkeeper.com



LIKE ROSS KEMP getting hitched to the Queen (might have been less painful), a swords-and-sorcery mod for *Unreal Tournament* is a real marriage of opposites. But whereas the first marriage probably wouldn't work in the long run

(unless Liz is a big fan of *EastEnders*), the armoured foes, magic and melee combat fleshing out the world of *The Soulkeeper* feel right at home in the normally futuristic sci-fi *UT* engine.

Five classes are available, which fall into melee, ranged and magic: the first played from third-person view, the other two being first-person. As you'd expect, melee is about getting your hands dirty, but with only one attack, it can often feel like a button-masher. Of more interest are the other two classes, as the first-person view feels far more natural in combat, and mages have to first trace a *Black & White*-style magical symbol before being granted a cache of magic. There are some neat touches too, with mounts on offer including horses and dragons.

Perhaps the major problem though is the lack of servers running the mod. This is a shame, because with some balancing and a bit of polish, it could provide the perfect contrast to the cyber world of *UT*.



A hangover can seriously impair your bow-stringing abilities.

DON'T forget to treat that decking come winter...



PLAY: MOD

BF2 STUNTS



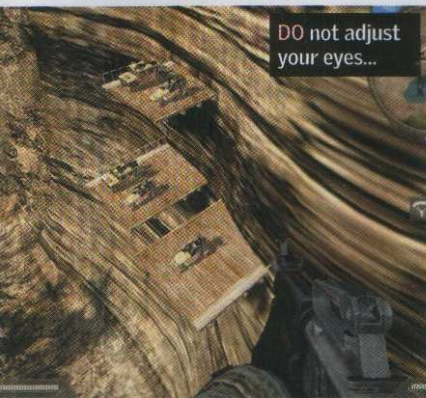
NOT the time to breathe in.



LEE Majors, eat your heart out.

Suzy Wallace tries out some cunning stunts

stunts.aaw.net.nz



DO not adjust your eyes...

BACK IN THE heady days of my youth, there was one game that I particularly loved: *Stunt Track Racer*. If you're old enough to remember it, you'll recall the excitement of jumping drawbridges and lining up your first loop-the-loop on the elevated racetrack. Since then, stunts in games have come a long way and you've probably seen stunt videos for *Battlefield 2* floating about. If you fancy joining this heady craze, first up you'll need a decent stunt mod.

Enter *Stunts*, stage right. And what's more, unlike some other stunt mods, this one offers a wide variety of ways to spice up your play. First off, all vehicles are fitted with nitrous, so hitting shift while driving gives an extra boost which sends you hurtling skywards off any ramps.

The stuntman's essential equipment, C4, has also received a bevy of trigger-happy improvements. Forget the standard *Battlefield* limit – now you can possess up to 200 packs of the blasting stuff. The damage it does has been reduced to zero while the blast radius has been upped, making it perfect for *Quake* rocket launcher-style take-offs. Supply crates also give almost unlimited health/ammo/vehicle repairs, and

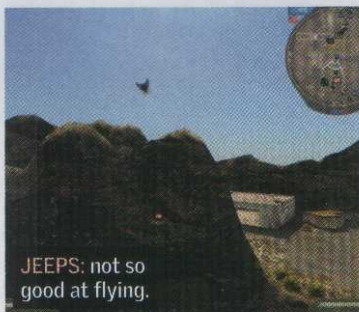
just to round things off, your character can jump twice as high as normal.

JUMPING FOR JOY

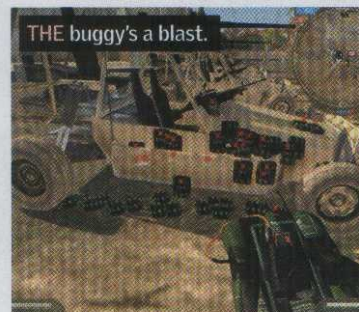
The Tour De Mountain map is the perfect companion to *Stunts*, providing many nooks and crannies designed exactly for playing silly-buggers. Vehicles litter the map around the spawn points, so you'll never have to wait for a ride; and what's more, racetracks are set into the mountainside, although if you're brave enough to attempt these on nitrous, you'll soon discover the peril of potholes when travelling at near warp-speed. Jumps are neatly positioned to catapult you over ships, buildings and anything else that looks remotely impressive. In addition, the drop-

zone spawn point spawns you 300 metres above ground, allowing for a bit of impromptu skydiving. Plus, if you're skilled at manoeuvring around in your parachute, you can drop onto the protruding ledges on the cliff face that teem with yet more vehicles.

While we can't promise that an hour's worth of play will make you a stunt genius, the map and mod combined instantly provide much light-hearted relief from the snipers and server issues of vanilla *BF2*. Who knows, with some practice, you could even become the next digital Evel Knievel.



JEEPS: not so good at flying.

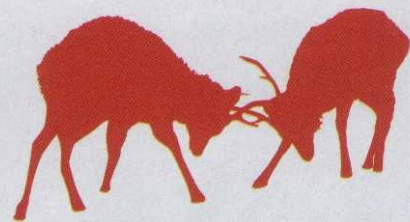


THE buggy's a blast.



HELICOPTER pilots beware.

Fight Club



First rule of Fight Club: you will almost certainly beat us

COME AND TAKE ON THE ZONE STAFF IN OUR REGULAR ONLINE GAMING FREE-FOR-ALL!



NAILED him!



SUPERNOVI shows his leet skills.

PREZZER ROCKS teh shotgun! Prezzer rocks teh shotgun! La la la la. La la la la... And other such proclamations of game-playing greatness. Yes, on a scale of empty to resounding, the *F.E.A.R.* Fight Club scored a respectable moderately full. A decent night's SlowMo shooting saw Prezzer, Will and Steve bringing it to the max. Prezzer nixed an early lacklustre effort with some room-clearing shotgun skills, Steve upped our average skill level and Will was generally excellent (he says).

Among the participants, particular standouts were Riddla, PawsofEvil, Chubbsie, FRAGHead, Mr Miyagi and SuperNovi, all showing superb Penetrator

skills and making good use of the SlowMo feature. Thanks also to SuperNovi for providing the screens on this page. If you want to submit your own shots in future, send the top five to fightclub@pczone.co.uk and we'll use the best here.

We're going to be taking a month's break now but we'll be back in the New Year, so send your suggestions for future events, as well as your comments on each month's action. Send emails to fightclub@pczone.co.uk and we'll start printing the best comments each month come January.

All the latest schedules can be found at www.zonegames.co.uk, along with notice of each new event on our forums at www.pczone.co.uk. Enjoy your turkey!



WILL meets one of several grisly ends.



ZONE CHAT

Your chance to chat with your gaming heroes. That's us, by the way...



READ THE FULL TRANSCRIPT AT
WWW.ZONEGAMES.CO.UK!

A FIRST FOR ZONE Chat, as we were joined last month by the one and only Steve 'I'm bored and waiting for *City Of Villains* to update' Hill, leaving an assembled crowd of close to a hundred ZONERS stunned into silence. Which is not ideal for a text-based chat medium, but there you go.

The other highlight of the night was a new take on our regular competition, in which Stuart Reid was the first to track down Will's phone number in the mag and call a tense, waiting office with the magic phrase: "Make us a cup of tea, Porter." For his efforts he wins a copy of *City Of Villains*.

As with Fight Club, we're taking a break for Christmas, but the #pcz chat channel will remain open and full of the regulars 24/7. See you next year!

How to join in!



We may be gone for a while, stuffing our faces with pud and cranberry sauce, but you can still jump into the #pcz chat channel and chew the fat with the locals. All you need is an IRC program and a Net connection. We recommend mIRC and you can find it on side two of our DVD. Just install the program, set the options, devise an online identity that will make you stand out from the crowd, connect to a Quakenet server nearest you, type /join #pcz into the command line and you're there! Chatting with the friendliest bunch of online readers you could hope to find. Remember, play nice and don't be rude.



STUART Reid wins a copy of *City of Villains* for his telephonic skills.

FREEPLAY FIGHT CLUB

PCZONE

Readers' Challenge

Hosted by Joit Online Gaming

That's your lot! The PC ZONE Readers' Challenge is finally at an end. Here are the last round's winners...

QUAKE 4 - FREE FOR ALL

1ST - Guillaume 'aAa-Appleseed' Portier - 70 frags

2ND Jay 'dignits-TooGood' Harding - 68 frags

3RD Sven 'LKFF-vCz' Spruijt - 53 frags

4TH gunk-impulse - 51 frags

5TH ^X^Weird - 50 frags

6TH Levi^r2k - 42 frags

7TH rB'Slu - 41 frags

8TH CreamyGoodness - 40 frags

WINNER Guillaume 'aAa-Appleseed' Portier

QUAKE 4 - 1v1 SEMI-FINALS

KuuLa 41-17 Weird
Appleseed 1-0 dlablo

FINAL

KuuLa 17-1 Appleseed

WINNER

Dan 'KuuLa' Marshall

Readers' Challenge is proudly sponsored by the following companies



The V9950 series from leading graphics card manufacturer Asus takes GeForce FX performance to a new level.



The XMS product line is Corsair's premium desktop product family and are the world's most highly awarded memory chips.



Creative's Sound Blaster Audigy 2 ZS soundboards and the Inspire T7700 speakers produce superior audio for gamers.



Logitech raises the bar in gaming precision and performance with the MX 510 mouse and Internet Navigator SE Keyboard.



The Western Digital Raptor is a new class of hard drive that matches SCSI reliability and performance.



A world leader in the motherboard industry, MSI's K7N2 supports the latest AthlonXP and Duron processors.



Plantronics USB headset with DSP digital signal processing, with maximum bass response for enhanced gaming.



The home of online gaming, Joit provides services from basic Quake clan ports to managed corporate game server solutions.

Fight Club Withdrawal?

Christmas time means no Fight Club, but we have the following public servers running 24/7, so drop in any time you feel like taking on a fellow PCZ reader. You may even catch the ZONE staff in there. As always, you can find up-to-the-minute server information at www.zonegames.co.uk!

WHO'S WHO

Jamie Sefton PCZ_NorthernScum
Paul Presley PCZ_Prezzer
Will Porter PCZ_Batsphinx
Suzy Wallace PCZ_Uzibat
Jamie Malcolm PCZ_Jimlad
Phil Wand PCZ_People's Front Of Judea
Steve Hogarty PCZ_escaped_monkey

1 SWAT 4
swat4.zonegames.co.uk

2 COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE
cs1.zonegames.co.uk:27015
cs2.zonegames.co.uk:27025
cs3.zonegames.co.uk:27015

3 HALF-LIFE 2: DEATHMATCH
hl2.zonegames.co.uk:27065

4 DAY OF DEFEAT: SOURCE
dod.zonegames.co.uk:27085

5 BATTLEFIELD 1942 DC MODDED
dc.zonegames.co.uk:14567

6 TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC
tfc.zonegames.co.uk:27045

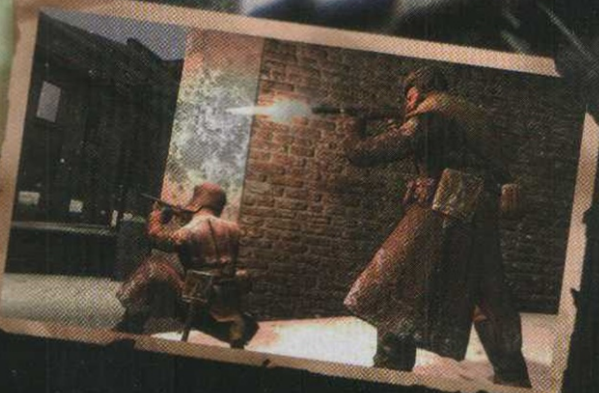
7 WOLFENSTIEN: ENEMY TERRITORY
et.zonegames.co.uk:27960

8 UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004
ut1.zonegames.co.uk:7777
ut2.zonegames.co.uk:8888

9 CALL OF DUTY
cod.zonegames.co.uk:28960

10 JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING
Listed on NovaWorld

AS YOU'D EVER
WANT TO GET." - Official Xbox Magazine





SEQUEL TO THE GAME OF THE YEAR

CALL OF DUTY 2

Infinity Ward returns with more cinematic intensity and chaos than ever before, in World War II's most climactic battles. Join your squad and choose your single-player missions, or go online for intense multiplayer action.

www.CALLOFDUTY.COM



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XBOX
LIVE
ONLINE ENABLED

Mobile version
also available on



Infinity
ward

ACTIVISION

Think like the gods in **BLACK & WHITE 2**

**Steve Hogarty explains
the basics of playing god**

NOBODY EVER SAID being a god was easy, and if *Black & White 2* is anything to go by, it would seem that our god has abandoned us. I mean, when was the last time our divine leader helped us build that new multi-storey car park? How about a disembodied hand hurling fireballs at our enemies? Or have you ever somehow ended up next to a woman with no memory of how you got there and decided that god wanted you to devote your life to breeding? Well, maybe that last one still happens, but if god really wants to impress us, he should probably try reading this guide...

Need:

- A copy of *Black & White 2*
- A disembodied hand
- A pendant for good/evil

What you'll get:

- Army-producing orgies ✓
- Healthy crops ✓
- Ultimate and eternal omnipotence ✗
- A monkey with an eating disorder ✗



01 Pick me up

There's an unlockable feature in the tribute menu called Multi Pickup, and you should buy it as soon as you can - it's an almost indispensable advantage when doing pretty much anything in the game. Use it to pick up loads of villagers at once and make an orgy of disciple breeders to boost your population, or use it to pick up entire forests and dump them in your storehouse. You'll need it for a lot of these tips too.

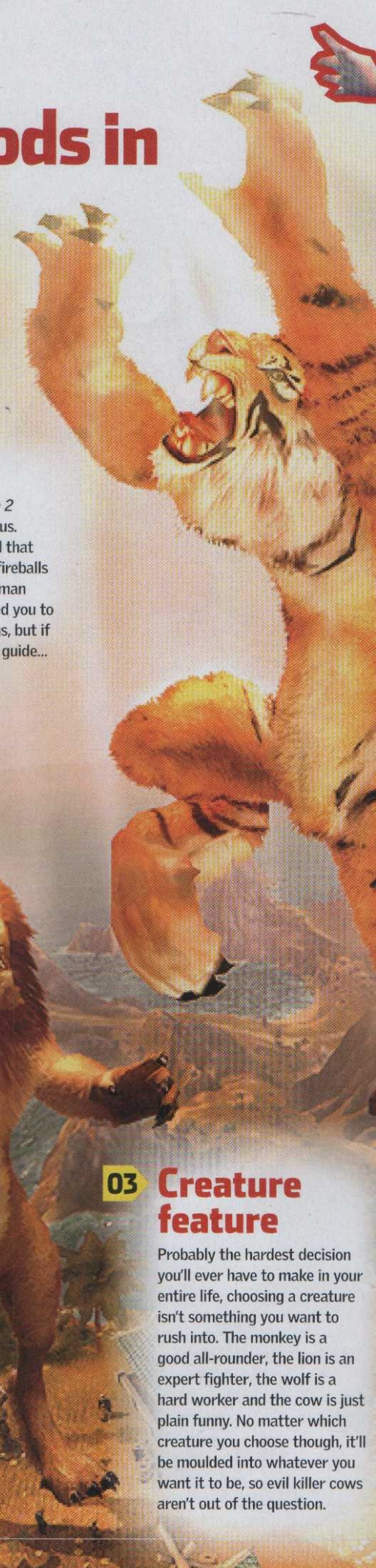
02 Baby boom

If you want a big army you need a big population, and if you want a big population you need to make your city the most debauched and immoral pit of sex and indecency this side of Amsterdam. Build blocks of flats nice and high, stick fertility statues on every corner and make as many disciple breeders as you can. It won't be pretty, but you'll soon have a fearsome and probably inbred army. Much like Basildon.



03 Creature feature

Probably the hardest decision you'll ever have to make in your entire life, choosing a creature isn't something you want to rush into. The monkey is a good all-rounder, the lion is an expert fighter, the wolf is a hard worker and the cow is just plain funny. No matter which creature you choose though, it'll be moulded into whatever you want it to be, so evil killer cows aren't out of the question.





04 Is it a bird?

On the fourth island, the first time you face off against the Norse there's a path near your village leading to a cave, where you'll find that annoying indestructible man from the first game. Throw him as far as you can to earn tribute, or if his smugness irritates you, just chuck him in the torture pits for eternity. Try sticking him on the plume of steam coming from the mountain to really send him flying.

05 Working wonders

The trick to charging your epic miracle doesn't lie in the number of unfortunate worshippers you have – it's actually all about productivity, and the easiest way to boost productivity is to show your people what happens to those who aren't productive. Place lots and lots of punishment spikes around your epic wonder, assign at least 50 worshippers to it and watch those miracles charge like there's no tomorrow.



06

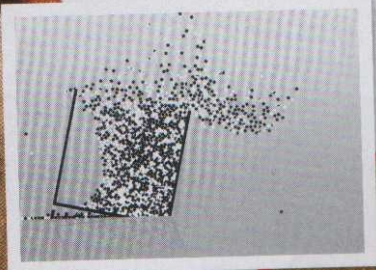
Weight watchers

There's a reason the obese are horribly ridiculed at a young age – if you don't destroy their self-confidence early enough, they'll take over the world unopposed. Fat creatures can deal and take a lot more damage than your average creature, but at the same time they sacrifice their speed and probably have increased chance of heart failure later on in life. Force-feed creatures to bulk them up.

07 Do the logomotion

OK, it's neither the most impressive nor concealed easter egg we've ever seen, but you'd be surprised how overlooked this is.

During the intro when the falling blocks create the Lionhead logo, hold the left mouse button and drag around to move the box and generally make a bit of a physics-based mess. Fun!



08 Resistance is fertile

You've just destroyed an entire army, the corpses of the fallen lay strewn across the land. What a waste eh? Best put those corpses to good use: pick them all up (see how useful Multi Pickup is?) and dump them in your fields. Nothing makes crops grow faster than the vital nutrients provided by decomposing bodies. Efficiency at its most morbid.



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Future

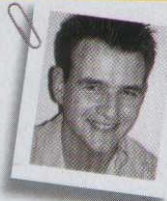
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HOW TO... Make a game

Dan Marshall is wired for sound...

PART FIVE



SOUND IN VIDEOGAMES is one of those things that's noticeable only by its absence. Try playing *Half-Life 2* with the sound off and you'll soon see what I mean – it's like everything's wrapped in cotton wool, giving it an ethereal, other-worldly feel.

Pump up the volume, however, and every footstep gives the world a real feeling of weight, every object has a genuine presence. Adding sound effects to my home-made *Gibbage* platform-shooter has done the same: I now have a new-found respect for the guys that dabble in the audible realm.

It's been a bizarre month: every footstep you hear in my game, every dink of metal on metal, every splash of blood on concrete has been made by me, in my flat, using various household objects. Taking my cue from the Foley artists that feature in every DVD special feature ever (see last issue's special report), I've been squishing oranges, breaking glasses, jumping, ripping, stamping – absolutely anything that involves using domestic items to recreate the sound of a hectic battlefield. However, not having access to an AK-47, the gunshots had to be public domain effects.

It's an odd thing, but when you answer your front door to the downstairs neighbour in a pair of marigolds wielding a big stick (because you were trying to imitate the sound of twisting flesh, I hasten to add), it's easier to deal with his noise complaint by letting him think you're a pervert than to explain what you're really doing...

THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC

The only part of *Gibbage* I'm not capable of doing myself is the music. Not being rhythmically-minded (as anyone who has seen me 'dancing' in a club will attest), I've scoured the Internet looking for someone to help me out. And by jove have I found him. Having put up an advert online and trawled through no end of dire submissions, I finally heard from Mike Watts (encoremusic.dmusic.com), who offered to score me

Hold it right there!

Stop right now, thank you very much

So there you are, unloading your weapon into some poor hooker's face (in *San Andreas*, obviously), when all of a sudden you need a wee. Or a cup of tea. Or to entertain your girlfriend so she doesn't get bored and leave you. What do you do? Pause the game, of course. But have you considered the amount of time and effort it took some coder to make this function? It took me an entire day to work out how to stop all the on-screen action when you press 'p'...

some music for the price of a pint. He immediately understood what *Gibbage* was about, and I'm now playing along to some kick-ass music – everything's starting to click.

But it's not all been audible this month, I've also tickled a second sense – vision. I've finally started work on making the backgrounds to *Gibbage* something other than big blocky blue tiles on a plain black background. Having mastered the art of successful level design, something I'd picked up making maps for *Unreal Tournament*, I started adding detail to make a stark cartoon world. *Gibbage* is all coming together

rather nicely, and the best thing is that it's outrageously good fun. What have you been playing lately? *FE.A.R.*? *Black & White 2*? *Chuckie Egg*? I haven't – *Gibbage* is the only game that gets a look in at my place, surely testament to its sheer brilliance of gameplay. Hell, even my girlfriend loves it...

The only problem thus far is that *Gibbage* is strictly two-player only. So off I pop to read up on AI so that geeks, loners and weirdos can enjoy the exclusive demo I'll be handing over to *PC ZONE* next month, too. Simulated intelligence – how hard can it be, eh? **PCZ**

Need:

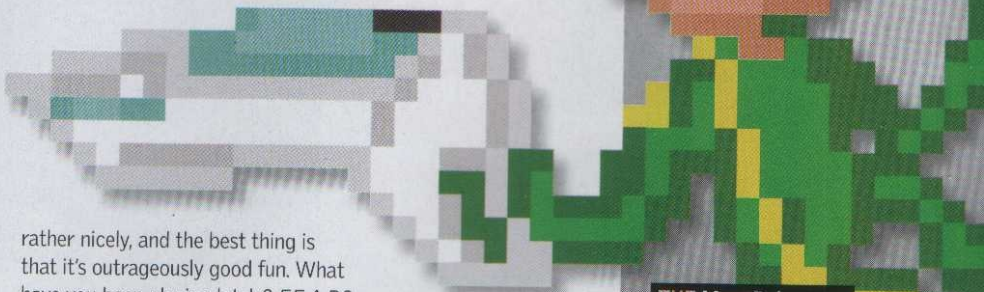
Household objects
Sound recording equipment
Boundless energy
A friend to playtest with

Time:

Six months

What you'll get:

Noise complaints ✓
Weird looks from your neighbours ✓
Single-player thrills ✗



THE MoonRaker:
Gibbage's equivalent
of the Sniper Rifle.

If you want more...

www.gamasutra.com

This isn't programming-based as such, but has tons of articles on game design and concepting.

www.indiegamer.com

A place where the elite of the indie market come together to discuss the market, and offer guidance on 3-in-a-row colour-matching titles.

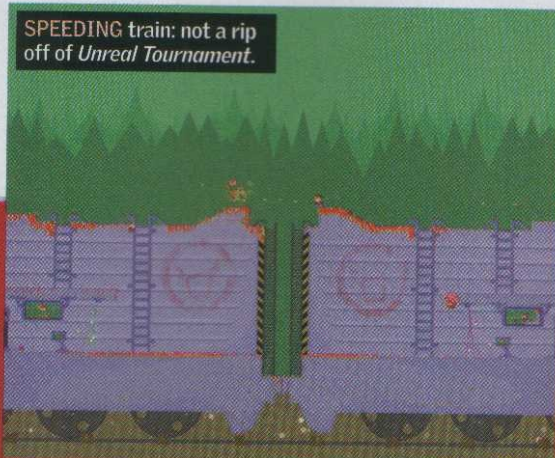
www.gamedev.net

A great place to get advice. Don't stray out of the 'beginner' forum, though, as everyone else is writing really confusing code that'll just depress you...

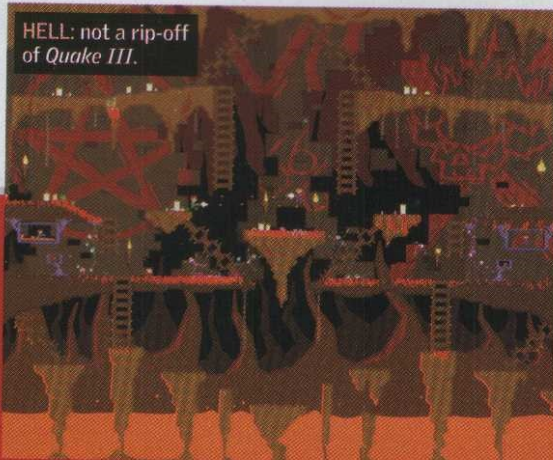
encoremusic.dmusic.com

My composer's portfolio – he's written some excellent stuff, so check out his website to hear some sounds.

SPEEDING train: not a rip off of *Unreal Tournament*.



HELL: not a rip-off of *Quake III*.



abandonware



Kosta Krauth's monthly focus on abandonware games and utilities

What is abandonware?

Abandonware is computer software that's no longer being sold or supported by its copyright holder, such as the classic sci-fi RPG shooter *System Shock 2*. However, game copyright is protected by law for 70 years, so even though you can't buy these games, downloading them is technically illegal. *PC ZONE* doesn't condone filthy criminals. Or even ones that have had a good scrub.

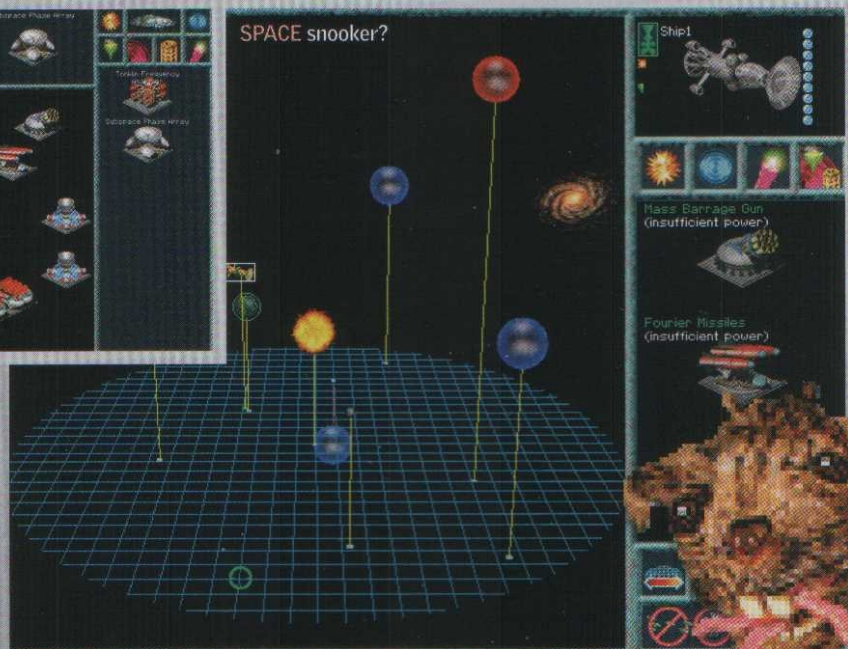
MANY PEOPLE FIND DOSBox unintuitive because it requires constant configuration tweaks depending on game-specific requirements. You can easily overcome this though, and create an organised database of configuration settings by using

one of the two front-ends – D-Fend (members.home.nl/mabus/dfend.htm) or DOSBoxer (www.jaeger.tech.com/dosboxer). Both of these have wizards that mean you can quickly create profiles that can precisely instruct DOSBox on how to run games. You can also export them and share

with others. DOSBoxer came out just recently and offers similar features, plus it's cross-platform to boot.



SPACE snooker?



**ABANDONWARE
GAME
OF THE
MONTH**

Ascendancy

DEVELOPER The Logic Factory **YEAR OF RELEASE** 1995



Blasting out of hyperspace from the space-time continuum (or something), *Ascendancy* is an award-winning strategy game that spent almost two years in development. When it was launched it destroyed the competition, with only the first *Master Of Orion* challenging it.

Unfortunately, the space-strategy genre, while fascinating for some, is painfully boring for others (*Check out Star Wars: Rebellion* – Ed). As a result, the target audience was a tad narrow. Many experienced gamers who bought it were disappointed by *Ascendancy's* inability to offer worthwhile opposition, but

thankfully, a patch was released that turned its timid AI into a raging monster.

In all other areas, *Ascendancy* lived up to its true potential – the 21 alien species, for example, were beautifully designed and included everything from robots to single-cell organisms, each possessing special abilities and a unique set of attributes. It was a case of choose your race, build your empire, design ships, decide on layouts of colonies, take care of diplomatic relations and wage war.

Even though *Ascendancy* stumbled with its first release, rest assured that, with the antagonist AI patch available on the Logic Factory website, the game will push your organisational skills to the limit while offering hours of interplanetary exploration.



The Logic Factory is a Texas-based company that was founded in 1993. During the past 12 years it's only published two games (*Ascendancy* and *The Tone Rebellion*), but The Logic Factory places its independence and quality of productions above everything else – even if it means averaging one game every six years. *Ascendancy* (1995) was its first release, followed by *The Tone Rebellion* in 1997. Since then, the company has focused its efforts on two upcoming releases – *Ascendancy II* and *Seeker* – the latter of which is currently in public beta testing phase. Head over to www.logicfactory.com and apply for a games tester position now!

You can check out Kosta's abandonware website at www.abandonia.com



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STEVE HILL'S NeverQuest



Evil Steve Hill enters the City Of Villains. Eventually...

W **LEASED TO MEET** you!
I am Evil Steve Hill, a
level 2 Mutation Brute."

At least I am now, although I did inadvertently register for *City Of Heroes* and spend an hour running errands for the police. Not particularly villainous.

So, to the *City Of Villains*, where I'm rocking the gay biker look, replete with comb-over and aviator shades, offset by a pioneering use of leather and a pair of bright yellow kecks. There's a jailbreak going on and I want a piece of it. Breaking out of the joint involves little more than talking to a few faces, and within minutes, I'm back on the streets.

There's not much in the way of chat. A sullen-looking dominatrix by the name of Vulca perversa rejects my attempt at small talk – "Is this your house?" – so I simply circle behind her and cop a look at her pert arse. Similarly, I ask mucky-looking ginger, Captain Bess, "Are you a hooker?" but she neither confirms nor denies it.

I soon land my first job, planting a bomb, a task that I carry out with the minimum of fuss, slaughtering a few guards with my flaming sword for good measure.

MEAT PUPPET

Between further chores, I bump into a glorified Transformer calling himself The Vexan T4. "What are you?" I casually ask.

Looking me up and down, he snootily replies, "I'm a capable Vexan T4 unit, what is it to you?"

Given that this is as close as I've come to a conversation in over an hour, I venture, "Are you human?" He retorts, "Eh... No, not likely... And I do not like being referred to as a meatbag." "You look like a right ponce," I proffer, but he's already gone.

Finding my way back to the sultry Kalinda – effectively the foreman – she next sends me down a snake hole to take out Sapphus. What? An interesting mix of metaphors there. Shall I pick up some Kentucky Freud Chicken on the way back?

SUPER TROUPER

Following a successful serpenticide, back on ground level The Fearsome Demond Lord invites me to join a Supergroup. What can he mean? Abba? In for a penny, I agree and am duly informed that I'm a member of The Evil Overlords.

"What are the benefits? Do I get a membership pack?" I ask, but he's laughing, explaining, "That grin is funny." This from a man dressed like a WWE reject.

Apparently he's got a secret base though, and offers to take me there. I'm not sure how far it is, but it turns out we're flying, and not from Luton airport. Putting some kind of spell on me, I suddenly begin

to hover. With a bit of practice, I'm actually flying, surging skyward and swooping like a balding Superman, replete with shit-eating grin. It's not as easy as it looks though, and attempting a tricky manoeuvre I smack into the ground and shatter my legs, requiring a long rest to recuperate.

Carefully following The Demond Overlord, we finally get to his base, where without so much as a by-your-leave, he summons up four of the undead. It's an impressive trick, but I'd have been happy with a cup of tea. Demond seems very pleased with himself, but now that we're here, there doesn't actually seem to be much to do.

In an attempt to dispel the awkwardness, I pull out my boom box and start casually jiving to a bit of progressive gay house. Amazingly, the zombies join in, performing a fully choreographed arms-in-the-air dance, screaming in unison, "ROCK ON DUDE."

DANCE DANCE DANCE

Not to be outdone, Dem pulls out his box and puts on a different tune, sparking an unlikely dance-off. The zombies don't seem so keen, and simultaneously announce, "BYE BYE OFF I GO", before disappearing in a puff of smoke. I tell Dem, "You look good on the dancefloor", but soon follow, leaving him dancing alone in his secret

base, like the kid with all the toys but none of the friends.

Heading back to the real world, I pick up a job eliminating the Infected on Mercy Island, stopping only to set fire to a tramp on the way. The place is riddled with shift sorts, and is no place for a bald guy in yellow trousers, with abuse hurled at me from all angles. With no sign of the so-called Infected, I clamber up a fire escape to get a better vantage point. Nearing the top, my patent leather cowboy boots slip on the metal grill and I plummet to the ground. I'm seriously injured, and frantically search for somewhere safe to recuperate. A single shot rings out, and I slump to the ground, dead. Shot in the back on Mercy Island. And that blood's going to ruin my trousers... **PCZ**



The Fearsome Demond Lord invites me to join a Supergroup. What can he mean? Abba?

let's go baby

The Fearsome Demond Lord Disrupter



A war, between guilds. We're not saying when.

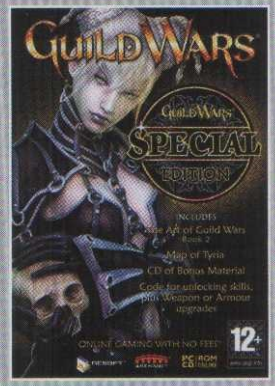
SPECIAL EDITION GUILD WARS SPECIAL EDITION

When is an MMO not an MMO? When NCsoft says so, OK?

DEVELOPER ArenaNet
PUBLISHER NCsoft
WEBSITE www.guildwars.com
PRICE £34.99

IN THE BOX

- Guild Wars
- The Art Of Guild Wars Book 2
- Map of Tyria
- Bonus Music CD
- Download codes for in-game weapon or armour upgrades, bonus skills and extra music packs



IF THERE'S ONE company out there who knows how to do special edition box-sets of its games, it's NCsoft. In the short time that this Korean/American/Brightonian purveyor of massively multiplayer gaming goodness has been with us, every one its titles, from *Lineage* to *City Of Villains*, has come in vanilla, deluxe, special, collector's, whizzo, boffo and spunktacular editions, each boasting exclusive content and all making life hell for shop retailers trying to line their games up neatly on the shelves.

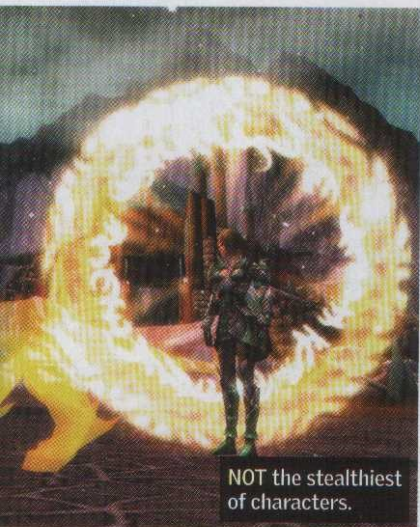
Easily the biggest online game to slide down the NCsoft fireman's pole and into the raging three-alarm fire of our gaming hearts is *Guild Wars*. (At least in the West. Those Koreans are just nutty for the *Lineage*.) With well over a million players – at the last count, getting them all to keep still for a minute was a bugger – it easily surpasses the big-name likes of *EverQuest II* and takes a fair nibble at the heel of the four million-plus player-base of *World Of Warcraft*. The reason for this success? No monthly subscription fees. And a pretty damn fine game too. That also helps. But mostly, the no fee thing.

As we said, NCsoft knows special editions, and this *Guild Wars* pack is the second it's released since the game was launched. The first – the *Collector's Edition* – was released at the same time as the vanilla game and came with the client, an *Art Of Guild Wars* book, a soundtrack CD, an in-game 'aura' item and, best of all, a Logitech gaming headset and three-month subscription to a Teamspeak server for your guild to make use of. It also came in a box the size of Belgium and looked cool as hell.

COMPACT AND BIJOU

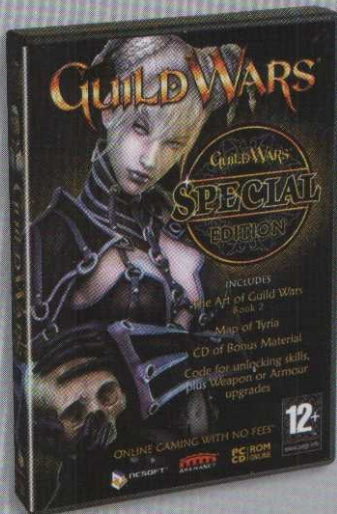
Conversely, this *Special Edition* special edition is more conventional in size – like a double DVD boxset – and has been compiled to celebrate the recent passing of the million-player mark. Despite its more compact stature, it's no less packed to the gills. The second chapter of the *Art Of Guild Wars* book is less impressive than the first, being reduced in size to fit the case and lacking the descriptive text giving a nice insight into the construction of the world and inhabitants of Tyria. That said, there are still some stunning sketches and oil paintings to behold, giving a nice





NOT the stealthiest of characters.

WIN!!! Five copies of the *Guild Wars Special Edition* up for grabs



You've read all about it below, now how do you fancy being one of five lucky readers to have their very own copy of the *Guild Wars Special Edition* package? Of course you do. You wouldn't be reading this if you didn't. We've got five copies to give away and all you have to do is shower us with bribes... I mean, read the question below and send the answer on a postcard addressed to: *Guild Wars Special Edition* Competition, PC.ZONE, Future, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6FP.

Q. What is the name of *Guild Wars*' fictional world?

a. Tyria b. Synria c. Abyssinia
Send your entries to us before Wednesday, January 4 and the first five names picked out of the hat after that win.



DAMN cowboy builders.



BRIGHT eyes, burning like fire.



LET'S all move to Swanage.

glimpse at the work that went into the game's latest update, *Sorrow's Furnace*.

The bonus music CD is the same as the one included with the *Collector's Edition*, but does come with a bonus order code to let you download exclusive music content for *Guild Wars* from DirectSong, for use in the game. It's an interesting idea and yet another example of how developer ArenaNet is experimenting with what Internet technology can do for your gaming experiences. At present,

the teleporting nature of *Guild Wars*' travel system makes getting lost somewhat tricky anyway. Still, it's a nice extra, although real fans would no doubt have preferred a 'cloth' map – once the staple in-box extra for any RPG worth its salt.

Of most interest to players is probably the included access code for unlocking bonus skills and weapon upgrades. Seven normal skills, one 'Elite' skill and two weapon/armour upgrades are provided,

This is easily the biggest online game to slide down the NCsoft fireman's pole

DirectSong provides a series of music expansions for *Guild Wars* and should it prove popular (and for dedicated 'hardcore' fans it almost certainly will), you can expect to see more titles providing 'alternative' ways of expanding its games than mere expansion packs.

SKILL CATCH

Also in the *Special Edition* box is a map of the game world, although the usefulness of this is debatable, since the in-game map is pretty comprehensive as it is, and

accessed by talking to a Priest of Balthazar. There is a catch though, which slightly rankles – the unlocked skills will only be accessible by a PvP-only character on your account, not your standard role-playing character. Which is a bit of a pain and you can't help but feel a touch cheated.

GOING STRONG

That small point aside, the *Guild Wars Special Edition* is a decent pack, if slightly overshadowed by the mammoth



BIG, but they've got glass jaws (ho ho).

Collector's Edition box-cum-doorstop-cum-giant monolith (although you might have to hunt around to find that still on sale anywhere).

The game itself is still as strong as it was on release, and the vast quantity of players on a single, global server means that you'll be hard pushed to find any real 'down time'. As with any online title, there's quite an infusion of the hardcore 'uber-133t' running around pretending they're better than everybody else, but the extremely co-operative nature of the game means that most players are still friendly enough and helpful to newcomers.

Given how most online worlds tend to deteriorate into unfriendly, insular fanboy pits after a few months (we're looking at you *Star Wars Galaxies*), to have a game that still delights at every turn is no mean feat. Now, where's the *Guild Wars Snaazy Edition*? **PCZ**

THE RAVAGES OF TIME

WORLD OF WARCRAFT 1st

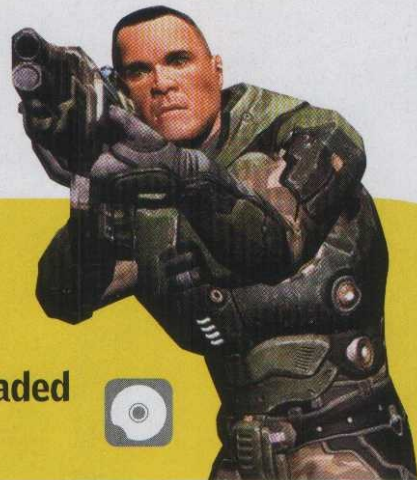
GUILD WARS 2nd

EVERQUEST II 3rd

In truth, there's very little between these. All are popular and filled with content, but only *Guild Wars* continues to eschew monthly fees.

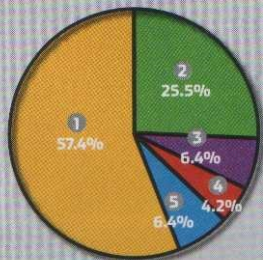
SUPERTEST ID SOFTWARE

The undisputed king of the shooters? Or has the light faded from id Software's shining torch of gaming greatness?



YOUR VIEW

Last month's subject: first-person shooters. Here's what you all thought...



HALF-LIFE 2 **1**

FAR CRY **2**

F.E.A.R. **3**

SWAT **4**

CALL OF DUTY 2 **5**

PawsofEvil: "My vote is for *Call Of Duty 2*. It's based on things that did happen, rather than jumped-up Hollywood scripts of possibilities."

Liquid_Virus: "My vote is for *Far Cry*, purely because it came out of nowhere and practically beat the big boys at their own game."

Reverend_Joseph: "*Quake 4*'s become quite popular since it's been on the shelves. It certainly pummels the bland, monotonous puss out of *F.E.A.R.* - why isn't that on the list?"

Madameye: "I enjoyed *Half-Life 2* - I always liked to follow that Judith bird around. I followed her into a room once when I wasn't supposed to. There was this embarrassing silence... You can't really put a price on programming like that. Utter genius."

Cal40k: "The real question here is about *SWAT* and *F.E.A.R.*. They're both acronyms, so why does one have dots and not the other, eh? Complain to your M.P. - or MP."

WILL'S still amazed at the free coffee. And biscuits.



TALK about posing for an album cover.



DON'T fancy yours much.

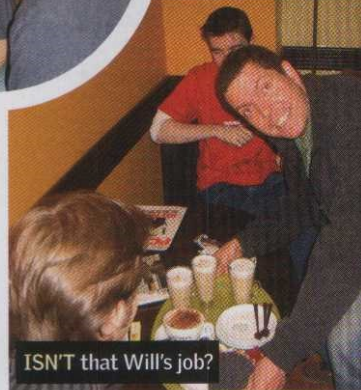


AFTER MOOCHING AROUND various parts of the mighty Future empire (kitchen, publisher's office, broom cupboard), it was felt by one and all that for this month's debate on Which Game Is Best, we should up sticks and finally get this caravan on the road. Across the road and into the basement of a popular high street coffee

retailer to be precise. With the lattes flowing freely (we used to go down the pub y'know - that's Blair's modern Britain for you), we sat down to discuss the merits of id Software. With *Quake 4* and *Doom 3* riding high, what better time to look back over the career of one of PC gaming's brightest?

The five games we chose to focus on were *Quake 4*, *Doom 3*, *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*, *Quake III: Arena* and *Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory*. Worth every cent invested in them or glorified tech demos?

Find out what we think by grabbing the audio file from our cover-disc,



ISN'T that Will's job?

of our opinions and the five games in question by pointing your Internet-browsing tool of choice towards our 'chat' 'forums' at www.pczone.co.uk and 'hitting'

Settle back to enjoy 20 minutes or so of high-camp humour and banter

inserting it into the very latest of mobile sound-playing gadgets (or Windows Media on your desktop) and settling back to enjoy 20 or so minutes of high-camp humour and good-natured banter. It's like *Newsnight Review* for idiots.

But what do we know (whaddya mean, "Nothing.")? Tell us what you think

the 'Interact' 'button'. Look for the 'Supertest' thread 'in' the 'PC ZONE' room and 'leave' your vote and 'a' comment (sorry, I've forgotten to switch off the irony filter in Word). We'll print the most incisive, thoughtful and debate-forming opinions next month. Or the ones that make us laugh. Yeah, probably those. **PCZ**



THE HOTTEST NEWS ON THE PLANET...

**COMPUTER AND
VIDEO GAMES .COM**

CVG



FROM EUROPE'S NO.1 GAMING WEBSITE

DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY



WORLD OF WARCRAFT

We visit Irvine, California to quiz Blizzard on one of the greatest success stories of all time...



LEVEL 60 here we come!



WITH A LARGE orc statue to his left, Blizzard producer Shane Dabiri in front of him and lead game designer Jeffrey Kaplan to his right, Will Porter discovers the true story behind *World Of Warcraft*. Now, in the wake of the announcement of the *Burning Crusade* expansion, he lets the men in the know do the talking. Shane's got the goatie since you ask...

A home away from home.



01 ORIGINS

Dabiri: "The original idea came about six years ago: a lot of us were playing MMOs, so we just thought, why not make one? The debate at the time was over what kind of MMO it would be and what world we would put it in. We have all these great universes that we based our RTS games around, and *Diablo* (which was already an RPG), so we decided to just tap into what we already had. People had already experienced the RTS side, they'd fought these battles - but they hadn't actually been able to explore these worlds."



HERE be dragons, and here be phat loot.

02 WHY NOT STARCRAFT OR DIABLO?

Dabiri: "At the time, we were all very much into fantasy-type MMOs and we'd only just finished doing *StarCraft: Brood War* - so we had this real excitement about the *Warcraft* universe because we hadn't touched it in a while. There's so much history behind it, there've been books about it, we've even done paper-and-pencil role-playing games - it's a universe that really has a dear place in our hearts and that's why it was the route that we decided to take."



NOSTALGIA for *The NeverEnding Story* kicks in around here.

03 BUILDING THE WORLD

Kaplan: "Most of the concepts in the creation of Azeroth came from our creative director Chris Metzen – he's the keeper of lore around Blizzard and he started designing maps based on previous maps and lands. We started figuring out the landmass, figuring out the different areas and asked ourselves questions about the places, the races and the story. Then we moved onto concept art and getting everybody excited about it. We looked at it as if we were building a real, existing place – but it really all started with just one simple idea."



OGRIMMAR bank: not yet turned into a trendy wine bar.

04 THE LORE

Dabiri: "If you look at the different RTS games we've made then you can see we did a ton of lore in those, but there are things that we never touched on – like women in the game, for example. There were a few women characters in the game, but we really didn't have a lot about them, and we didn't have religions in the game or the origins of the races either. So we replicated a lot of what you saw in the RTS game, although there was a whole world that wasn't there – it was up to our imaginations to come up with new things to do for say, the Titans or Ogrimmar – a lot of this stuff had been talked about, but we'd never worked out exactly what they looked like and where they came from."

Kaplan: "It's definitely a set universe, but it's a universe that we've created so if we need to bend it, we don't have to go and ask permission from a license holder. We can do whatever we want with it, as long as we keep true to the spirit of the world. If we need to change things around, we'll do it."

We can do whatever we want, as long as we keep true to the spirit of the world

Jeffrey Kaplan, lead game designer



THE game that drags *Knightmare* out of the 1980s.



FOR a while, you had to avoid Zul'Gurub like the plague. Ho ho.

05 THE UNEXPECTED

Dabiri: "There's a recent example of the unexpected: the plague. We'd implemented a new dungeon which included a spell effect called 'Corrupted Blood'. It was a spell that did damage to you, and if you came near other players, the spell effect passed on to them. The idea was that this spell existed only in this dungeon, but there was a bug and it got out. Players went back into towns and were spreading it to other players. We quickly resolved the issue, but what surprised us was that on the game's forums, players were like: "Wow, what a fantastic

world event! The day the plague wiped out Ironforge!" We got calls from the CDC – the Centre for Disease Control – saying: "Hey, what's all this about the disease in your game? We want to look at the simulation data – it might help us in a real-world situation." We kept saying: "No, no, no, it's just a bug! We fixed it, it's just a game!"

Kaplan: "It showed us that players have a tendency to live in this world and see things that happen as part of it. We had some angry customers calling us saying they just died, but it did give us some ideas for some possible real future events."



SEA giants:
humorously flatulent.

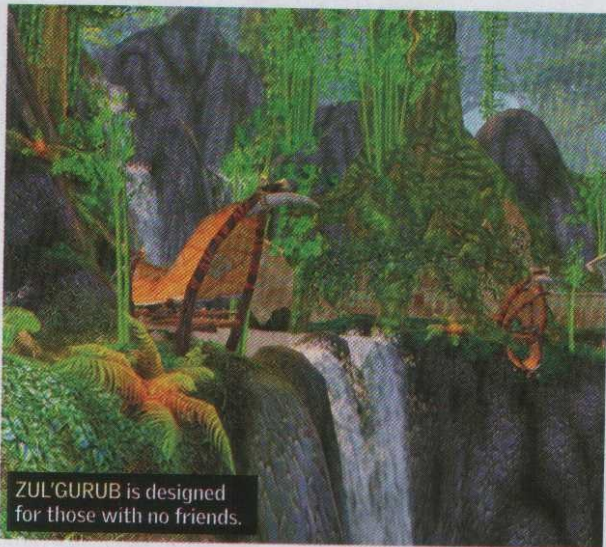


06 EASTER EGGS WHEN IT ISN'T EASTER

Dabiri: "One of our designers wanted to do some secret content, so there's a lot of stuff in our game that players have to discover – and when they find it, they think it's awesome. Like the first time you see the sea giants and they bend over and fart and the bubbles come out. Plus, a lot of the emotes for players were thought of because when you're fighting a monster, you don't want it to just stand there. So, every now and then it'll do something crazy, like a skeleton will take his head off and toss it in the air. It's so that players have a few things to discover above and beyond the regular levelling up."

Psychologists have asked us how many people are playing as which class

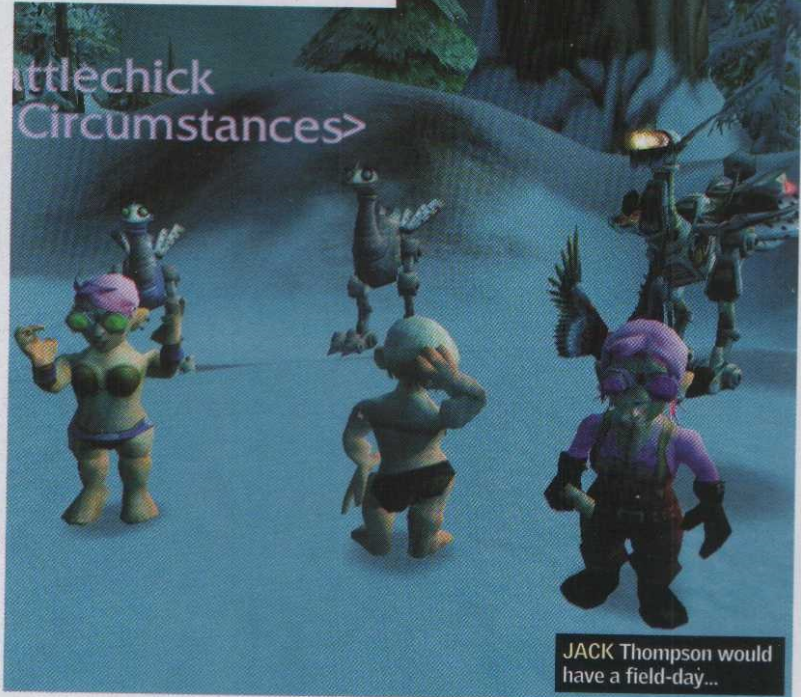
Shane Dabiri, *WOW* producer



ZUL'GURUB is designed for those with no friends.

07 CUSTOMERS ARE ALWAYS RIGHT

Dabiri: "Right now, *World Of Warcraft* is exactly what we wanted it to be when we shipped, and even to this day we're just evolving it even more. We always listen to the customer feedback though, so a lot of the systems that are in place now are based on player demand – like the necessity for more PvP in the game, which is why we added *Battlegrounds* and the honour system. With the latest dungeon that we released, Zul'Gurub, we had a lot of players who said they didn't have time to go into a 40-man raid and spend hours playing. With Zul'Gurub, we wanted to bridge the gap between doing a 40-man raid and doing a five-man dungeon. There's this idea of casual level 60s, somebody who only has an hour or two to play, so we wanted to give something to this type of player so they could progress within the game. A lot of the reputation-based quests in the game are based on feedback from players who wanted content they could do themselves."



JACK Thompson would have a field-day...

08 FAVOURED RACES AND PROFESSIONS

Kaplan: "I love my gnome, my gnome is awesome. And I love my undead character as well. I play all of the races, but the one I've most recently played tends to be my favourite."

Dabiri: "I play a priest. It's interesting – we've had psychologists call and ask us to tell them how many people play as these different classes, and to ask those players if there's a certain personality they tend towards as a hunter or a warrior. So I thought, yeah, I sort of have the personality traits a priest would have – I like to help people, I want to be the guy that makes sure everybody stays alive, and as a producer on the team that's sort of what I do anyway – I help people out. It was interesting to make that parallel."

BOSSES are untrustworthy whatever world you occupy.



IF you go down to the woods today...

ALL this, and he also likes chicken.

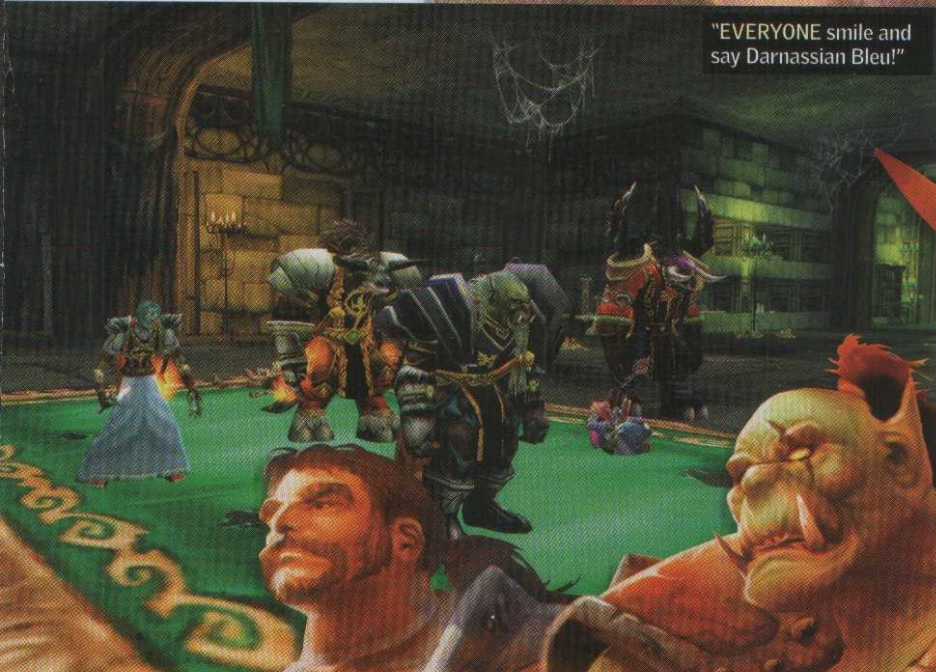


09 LEEROY

Dabiri: "Leeroy was awesome! After we'd seen the movie, all you could hear that day from office to office was: "LEEROOOOY!" At one point, we even considered putting the ghost of Leeroy Jenkins in Blackrock Spire. That's the sort of stuff that's just endlessly entertaining, we just love it."



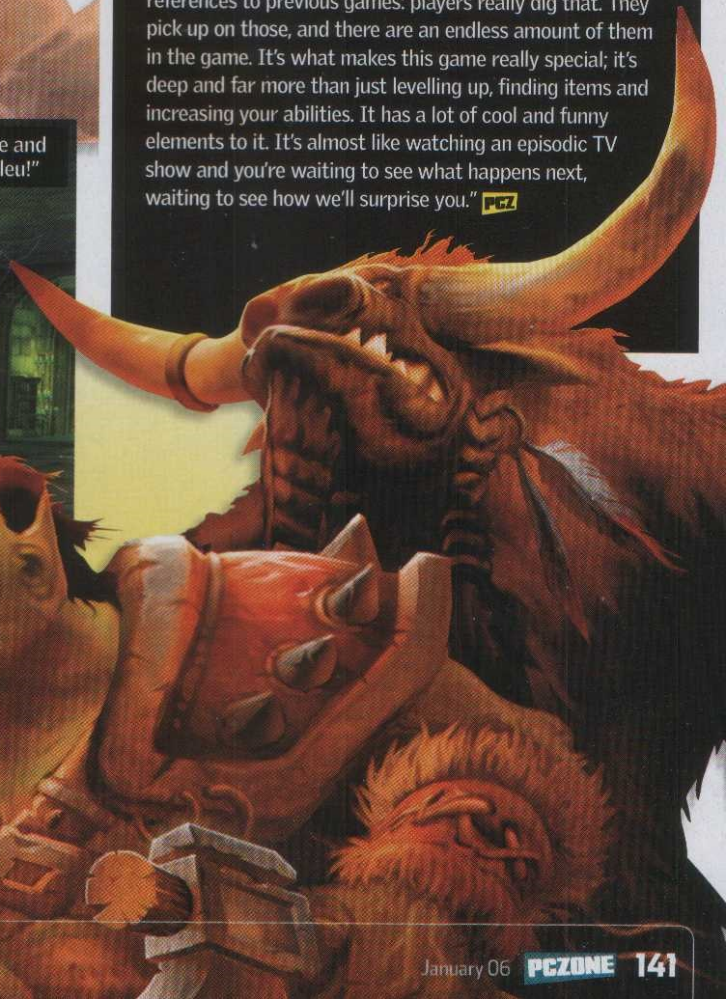
"EVERYONE smile and say Darnassian Bleu!"



10 FAVOURITE MOMENTS

Dabiri: "There's this quest that you do right at the entrance to Dun Morogh with these Dwarven riflemen at a shooting range. They start shooting at the targets and shooting at each other, and one of them shouts out, "Now I got my boomstick!" or something like that. I hadn't realised the sound team had put that in yet, and when I was doing the quest I heard that and thought it was hilarious. It just shows that there are so many little areas in the game with so many intricate details.

"We spent the last five years building this stuff in, and that's one thing I think is lacking in many games: the attention to detail. You can tell that every zone was tenderly painted, every rock and tree individually placed, you go into a building and see books, and pots and pans – somebody visualised and placed all of these things. The quests follow the same route too – you may have noticed the little parodies we include like peoples' names and references to previous games: players really dig that. They pick up on those, and there are an endless amount of them in the game. It's what makes this game really special; it's deep and far more than just levelling up, finding items and increasing your abilities. It has a lot of cool and funny elements to it. It's almost like watching an episodic TV show and you're waiting to see what happens next, waiting to see how we'll surprise you." **PGZ**





CHARLES CECIL

Jamie Sefton unravels the *Broken Sword* conspiracy with the game's creator, Charles Cecil



Why Do We Care?

Charles Cecil is the smart chap behind Revolution Software, a developer responsible for such point-and-click adventure game classics as *Lure Of The Temptress* and *Undereath A Steel Sky*. However, Charles is most famous for creating the *Broken Sword* series of adventure games, which began with *The Shadow Of The Templars* in 1996. Revolution's most recent release was *Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon* in 2002, which saw the series move away from point-and-click into full 3D.

What's He Doing Now?

Charles is currently working on a fourth *Broken Sword* game in association with Sumo Digital, and is a consultant on the licensed game of *The Da Vinci Code* movie out next year. He also works closely with Game Republic, a trade alliance formed to further excellence in videogames development within the Yorkshire and Humber regions.



Remember These? **REVOLUTION SOFTWARE**



LURE OF THE TEMPTRESS: Revolution's first adventure game in 1992 was built on Virtual Theatre technology. Full game on the DVD!



BENEATH A STEEL SKY: Skip to '94, this game was a sci-fi adventure set in a dark, dystopian world. Full game on the DVD!



BS: THE SHADOW OF THE TEMPLARS: The first BS game was a huge smash, introducing gamers to the conspiracy-laden adventures.



BS: THE SMOKING MIRROR: A year later, the sequel re-unites George and Nico in the jungles of South America.

Q What was the idea behind Revolution Software?

A In the late 1980s, publisher Sierra had a huge market-share with pretty ropey adventure games – *King's Quest* titles had a King Graham of Daventry, for example. I felt we could do much better, and I loved the idea of an adventure where you felt you were in a world that was reacting to you, rather than being triggered by you – that you were immersed. I set up the company with a £10,000 loan from my mum – bless her.

So *Lure Of The Temptress* was your first point-and-click adventure with Revolution?

Yep – it was all about this idea called the Virtual Theatre. You could give commands to people and string those commands together, then they'd go off and do things. It was a fun game and very successful. Interestingly, it only cost £20,000 to make, while *Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon* cost £2 million!

The early '90s were a golden era for point-and-click adventures.

What do you think of the LucasArts titles of the time?

In the category of jokey adventures, they were unbeatable. But we were never in that area – we were all about writing serious games with a humorous touch, so we were never directly competing. In fact now, the market has moved away from LucasArts' kind of slapstick gaming – would you pay £30 for a humorous game anymore? As the market has become more mass-market, you want a game that grips you – which is why I still believe in the potential of games like

Broken Sword, which have historical backgrounds and tell stories that will hopefully really excite players.

Can you tell us about the creation of *Broken Sword*?

We were talking about making a more gritty type of adventure and looking for anti-heroes – not that George Broussard is an anti-hero! I was given *Foucault's Pendulum* by Umberto Eco as a suggestion for subject matter on the Knights Templar, and it seemed perfect. Certain subjects work in an adventure and conspiracy is one of them. Also, at that time (before the Internet), not much was known about the Knights Templar. We were digging into the unknown, so it was incredibly exciting.

You bring a lot of your interests such as history into your games...

If you don't know your world, that's going to come across. Also, one of the things that an adventure can do is interweave puzzles with narrative. Unfortunately, you hear people say "it's only a videogame", which leads to poor narrative in videogames. In fact, it's bloody difficult to come up

with a story that works well in an interactive environment. I'm lucky enough to have stumbled across an area of history that still resonates today, and was the first to put it into a videogame.

Any stand-out moments from making the BS games?

There was no great excitement until about two months before the first release: then we added music, tightened the script, added the voice actors and so on. With an adventure it never looks any good until right before the end – the tragedy is if you don't get enough polishing time. But it was wonderful when we realised we'd made something great.

Were you happy with *Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon's* move into 3D?

Yes and no. On *BS3* I got swamped trying to run the company, manage people, come up with ideas – it was just too much. Broadly, it was a big success. OK, there were too many box puzzles, but I'm proud of the end results, even though I wouldn't say it was by any means perfect.

Do you still think that "point-and-click adventures are dead"?

Point-and-click works when the world is static – you find things that you want to interact with and the static world reacts to you clicking, which is not what I wanted with *BS3* or the new game. I still stand by the idea of point-and-click being dead. However, I'm not in any way saying that the use of a mouse or indirect control is wrong – and we are moving back to this way of playing adventure games in the upcoming *Broken Sword 4*. **PCZ**



Charles Cecil likes...



VICTORIAN engineering – "I love iron bridges and steam engines."



SPORT – Charles enjoys rowing, playing football and boxing.



FINE WINES – "It has to be a claret!" says Charles.

Lure Of The Temptress cost £20,000 to make, while Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon cost £2 million!

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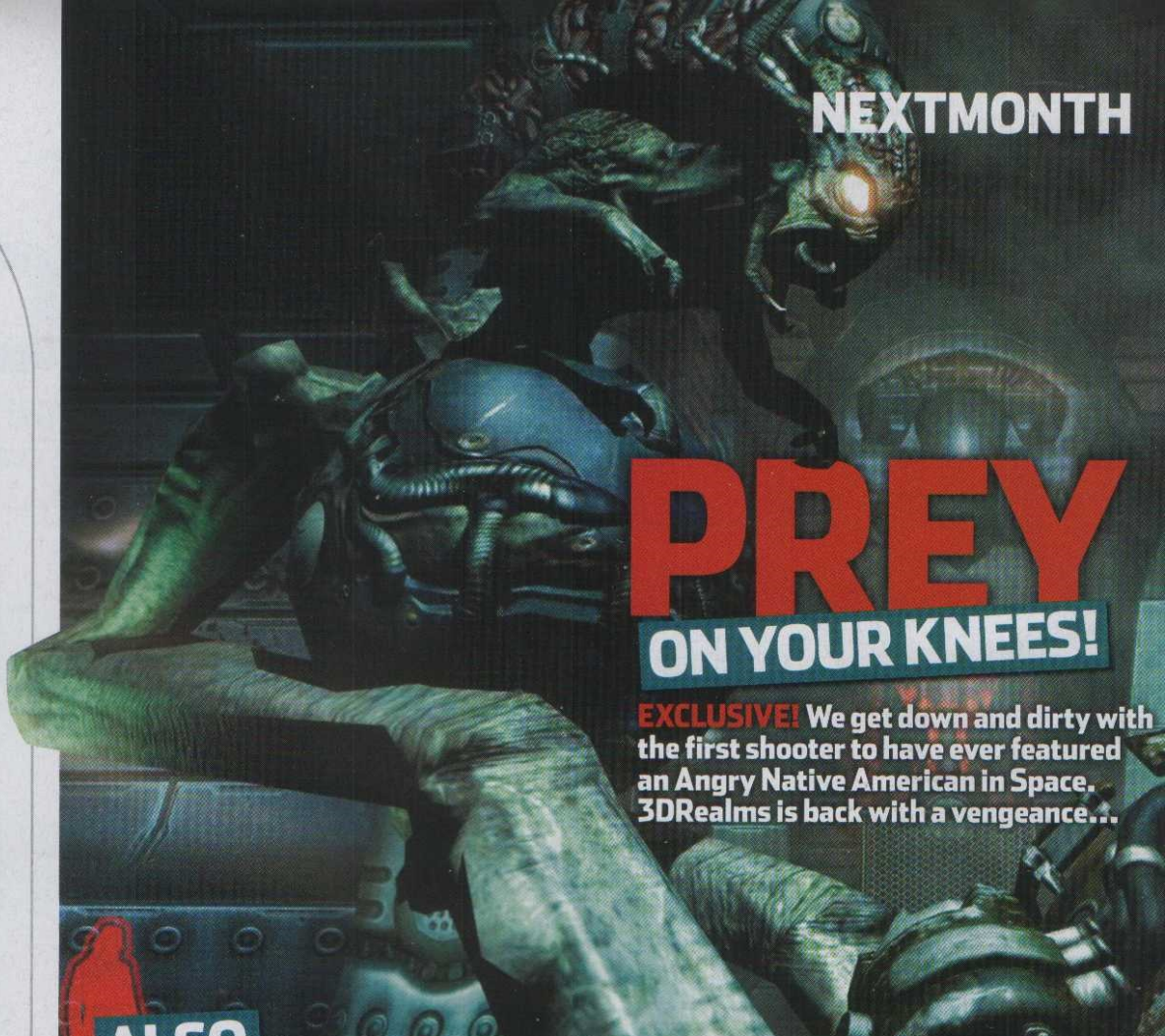
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ON SALE THURSDAY! JANUARY

DOMINIK DIAMOND

Dust and computers, eh? Go together like crack cocaine and kindergarten teaching. As I learned to my cost this month. The first one obviously. Not the crack cocaine bit...

This was no PC suicide. It was murder. The poor Alienware never even saw it coming



MY PC DIED this month. One minute it was on. The next minute it was off. I don't

remember what it was like when my grandad died because I was only six, but I can't believe it was as shocking as this.

Before the Alienware lawyers spill their lattes in their rush to the phone, can I point out it's not the computer's fault. This was no PC suicide. It was murder. The poor Alienware never even saw it coming.

If you're a regular reader, you'll know that I've been making this show called *At*

Home With The Diamonds for the Discovery Channel, in which my house is ripped apart and put together again in what has now become three months of the kind of hell I thought would be unimaginable outside of a small crowded prison cell.

Well, the builders were knocking some walls down directly underneath my office. The noise was distracting enough: like *The Prodigy*, only with slightly more melody. But then came what will, as long as Diamonds walk the earth, be referred to in hushed tones and with sideways glances as... *The Dust*.

NO WAY OUT

It came up through the floorboards, it came in through the window... It was like one of those evil wisps of cigarette smoke you see in the adverts: it would have strangled a baby if one was near. I went downstairs to tell the builders that my office resembled a scene from *The Bible*. They cleverly told me there was nothing they could do. I say 'cleverly', because they managed to convey this complex sentiment using nothing but hand movements and the word 'f****'.

When I came back into my office, I immediately realised something was wrong. I wasn't sure what it was, so I sat down at my PC to search for an answer on Google – and then I realised it was dead. Then I was hit by the smell. A kind of burnt plastic smell that haunts me from my childhood. It's the smell that happened when I used the adaptor from my neighbour's Acorn Electron in my ZX Spectrum and blew the shit out of it.

I fell to my knees and rammed my nose into the plughole of the Alienware, thinking briefly that the law of averages

states there must be at least one PC ZONE reader who does this as part of a complex masturbatory ritual, and I knew immediately that something had fried in there.

I tried to phone ZONE's own Philip Wand, but he was on some secret mission for SMERSH somewhere. I opened the panels and dust was piled up all over the... Er... Those little electronically things that are all over the place.

In desperation, I turned to the *Yellow Pages*. (Note to younger readers: *Yellow Pages* is like a book version of the Internet. Without the porn.) I found a place round the corner that claimed it could fix any PC within half an hour or they'd give you a gun (or something – I was hallucinating with panic by now), so I scooted round.

VERY NICE MAN

The shop was one of these incredible Aladdin's Caves run by Asian blokes who genuinely turn their hand to everything. These magical shops where you can get a sim card unlocked, buy a socket set and a cardboard chess game for £1.99.

"You know there's a lot of dust in this computer?" the bloke said helpfully. I realised bludgeoning him to death was not in my interest, so I just smiled wanly, realising that at least it would give me a chance to use the word 'wanly' in my column.

Within seconds, he'd deduced that the power pack had been dust-frazzled and very kindly let me keep the one he was using for the knockdown price of £25. The problem is that it's the size of a shoebox and won't fit into the Alienware design, modelled as it appears to be on the internal dimensions of Kate Moss's cludgie.

So my PC sits today, panels off, with its guts spewn out like an extra from the beach scene in *Saving Private Ryan*. Just waiting for *The Dust* to strike again... **PCZ**



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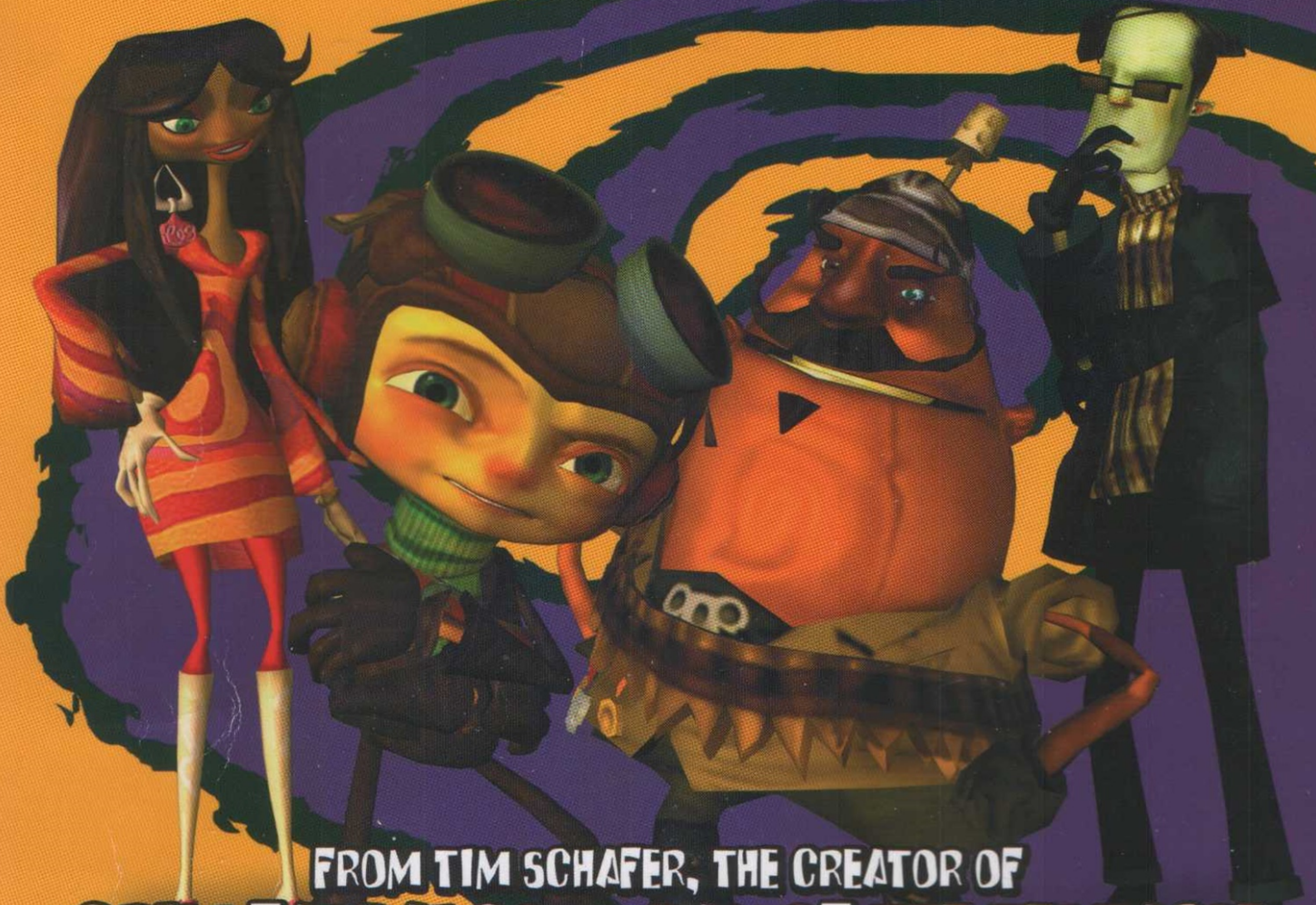


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