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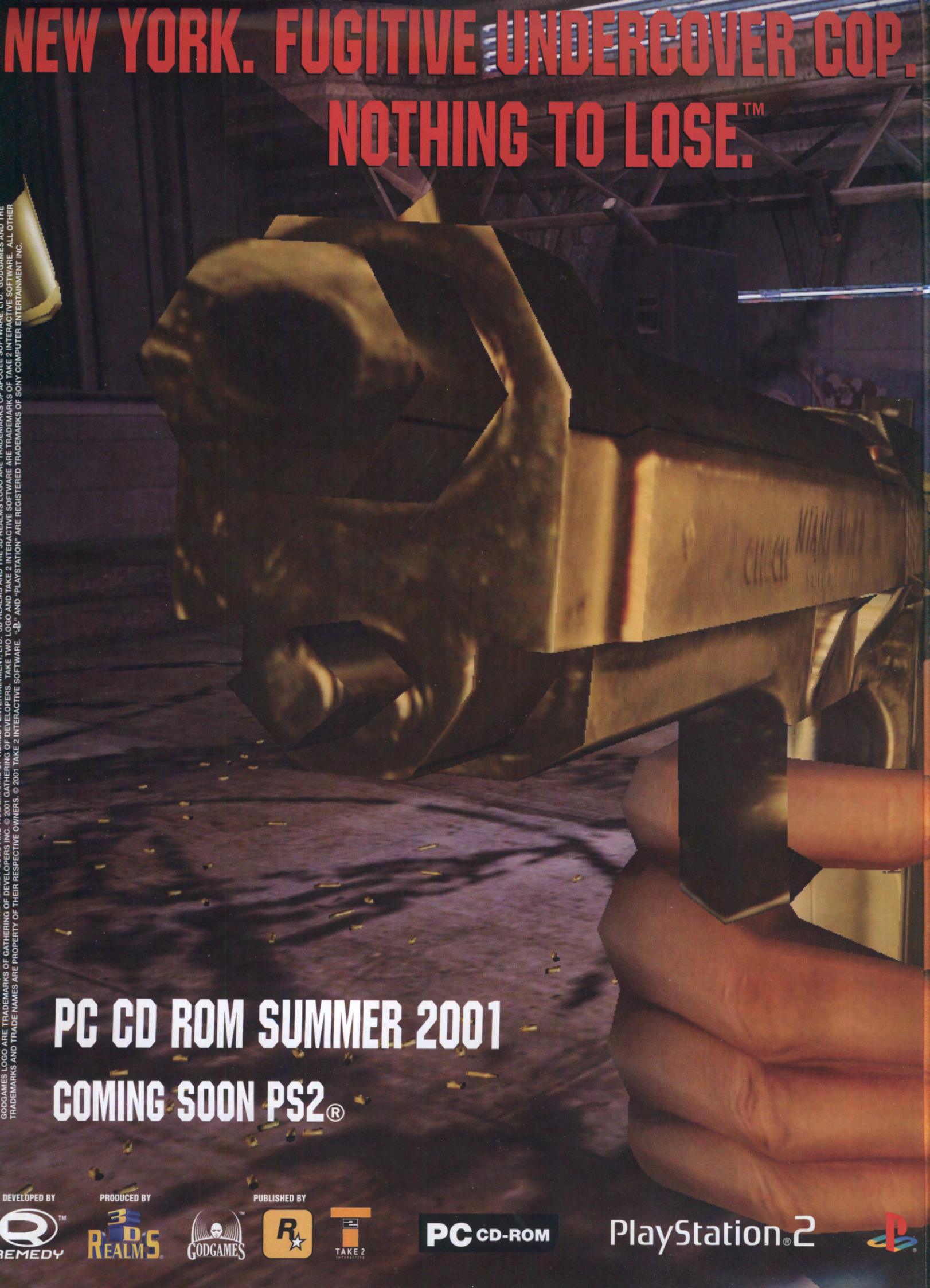

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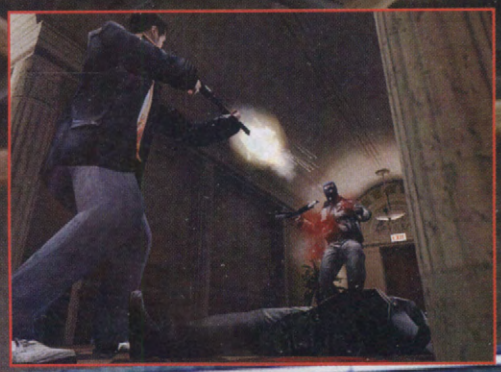

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WIN! THE COMPO NO-ONE FINDS Correctly answer this month's cover question and you could win some PC goodies. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: The Compo No One Finds (105), *PC ZONE*, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF. The first entry with the correct answer plucked out of the hat wins a mystery prize. The editor's decision is final. Closing date: Wednesday July 25 2001. The winner of our June (issue 103) cover compo was John Stanley from Cambridge, who wins a lovely little something from the *ZONE* prize cupboard.

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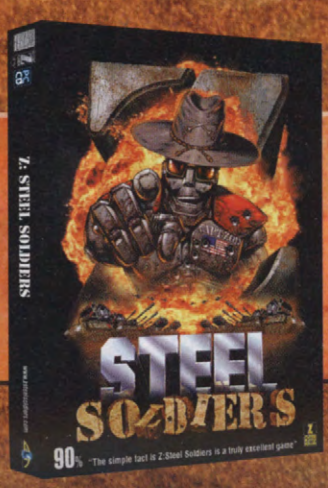

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THE NEW SOPHISTICATE

Sophistication is not a quality you're born with. Like your favourite meal, or colour, it's something you have to search for over a period of time. And that's just one reason why consoles are never going to better or even equal the mighty PC. We've had to put up with some rocky times in the past, and we've had to endure the taunts of teenagers who are adamant that consoles are the only way forward, but ultimately justice is served, and this year's E3 was payback time.

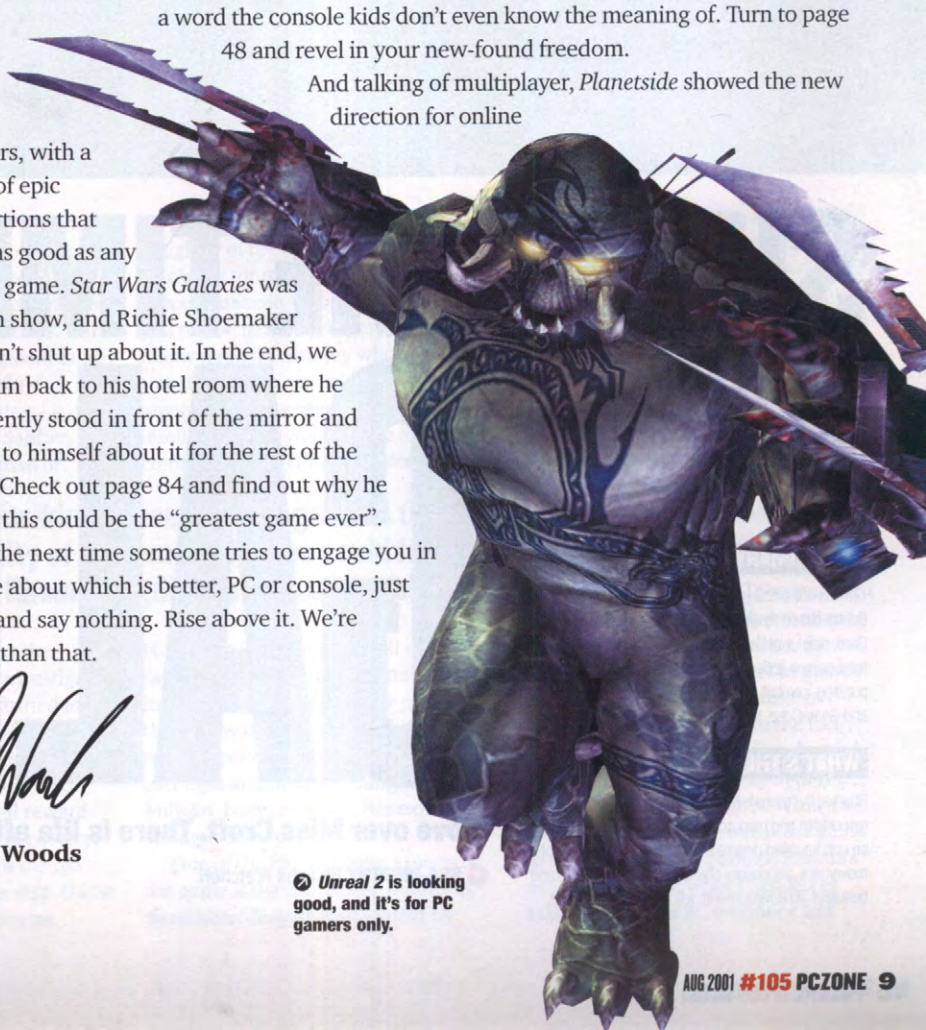
E3 is always good fun because we get to jet over to LA for a week in the sun, snacking in seafood eateries by night and poring over new games by day, but this year's show was different – the PC kicked arse. This isn't just self-serving rhetoric from the world's best PC games mag. Uh, uh. Pretty much everyone we spoke to, from developers to PR, were gobsmacked by the quality and depth of titles on show. In fact, we were so over-excited by this that we secretly tape-recorded their views and collected them to print in the magazine. See what they had to say on page 24.

"The next time someone tries to engage you in debate about which is better, PC or console, just smile and say nothing..."

So what games blew me away? Are you sitting comfortably? *Medal Of Honour*: *Allied Assault* and *Unreal 2* joined *Duke Nukem Forever*, *Max Payne* and *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* on top of my wish list. *Neverwinter Nights* proved *Baldur's Gate* was merely a taster for things to come with a game that combines multiplayer and single-player campaigns to devastating effect, and provides you with the tools to make the game last as long as you want. Empowerment? That's a word the console kids don't even know the meaning of. Turn to page 48 and revel in your new-found freedom.

And talking of multiplayer, *Planetside* showed the new direction for online shooters, with a game of epic proportions that looks as good as any offline game. *Star Wars Galaxies* was also on show, and Richie Shoemaker wouldn't shut up about it. In the end, we sent him back to his hotel room where he apparently stood in front of the mirror and talked to himself about it for the rest of the night. Check out page 84 and find out why he thinks this could be the "greatest game ever".

So the next time someone tries to engage you in debate about which is better, PC or console, just smile and say nothing. Rise above it. We're better than that.



Dave Woods
Editor

Unreal 2 **is looking good, and it's for PC gamers only.**

TOP STORY

Unlike Lara, Rhama's key assets will not be udders like a cow with glandular trouble.

SHIVER ME TIMBERS

GALLEON

Move over Miss Croft. There is life after Lara

SEA-WORTHY Rhianna Pratchett

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Confounding Factor
PUBLISHER Interplay
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Spring 2002
WEBSITE www.confounding-factor.com/galleon/index.htm

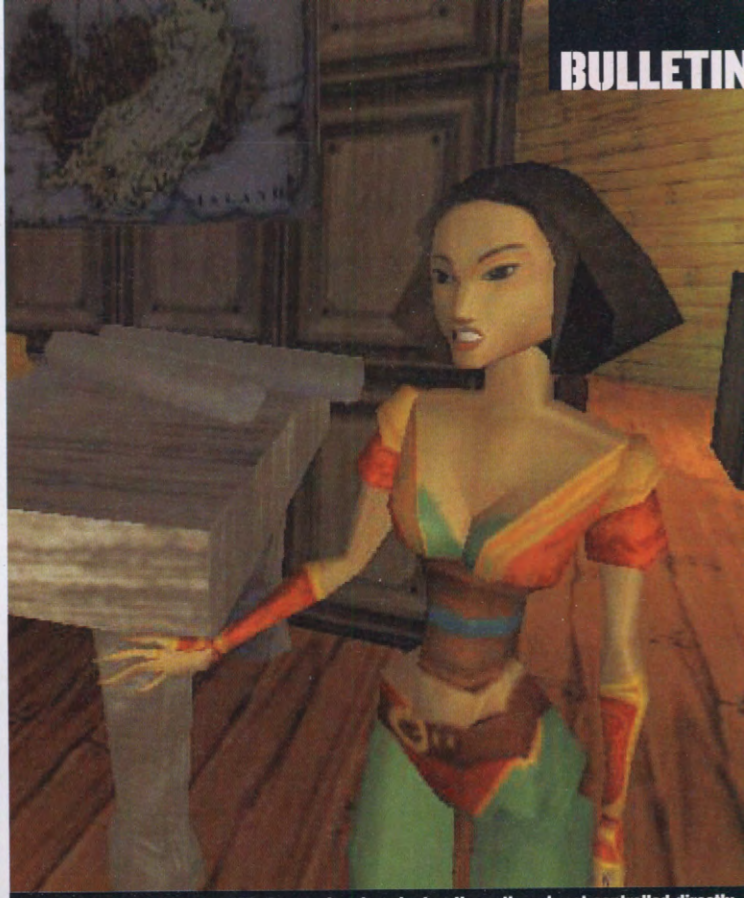
IN SUMMARY

Galleon is the first game from Confounding Factor, the Bristol-based development company founded by Toby Gard, creator of Lara Croft. Like *Tomb Raider*, it's a third-person action adventure with a combination of puzzling, combat and exploration. Set to lead on Xbox and GameCube, the PC version will follow soon after.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Rhama, the game's hero, could just be the most agile, responsive and resourceful game character ever, with an unsurpassed degree of fluidity and dynamism of movement. Secondary characters to order about and beautiful 3D environments will also figure heavily.

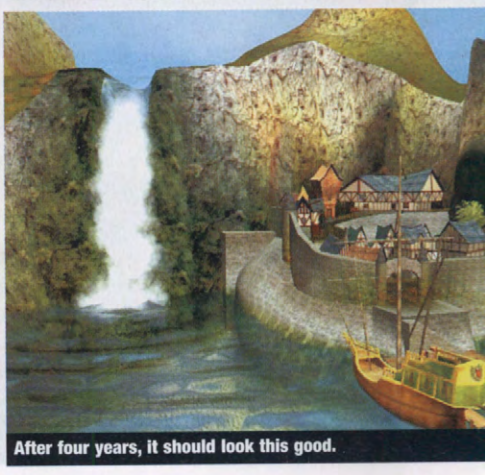
The script for the game was, promisingly, constructed around the puzzles.



Secondary characters like Mihoko can be given instructions, though not controlled directly.

Rhama's agility is simply astonishing.

Hand-to-hand combat and swordplay aplenty.



After four years, it should look this good.

Never have so many pixels had so much coverage as those of the incomparable Miss Lara Croft. But while she has settled happily in her place as a cultural icon, the man behind the temple-plundering heroine, Toby Gard, has spent the past four years on a far greater challenge. It doesn't have a plait and it probably won't be the focus of millions of young boys' frenzied pubescent obsessions, but it may just make equivalent waves in gameplay terms. It, or rather he, is Rhama, and the game is *Galleon*.

Like *Tomb Raider*, *Galleon* is a 3D, third-person action/adventure with a mix of exploration and puzzle-solving, a splash of combat and an emphasis on narrative. In fact, Gard has been quoted as saying that *Galleon* is what he would have liked *Tomb Raider* to have been, had he not been constrained by hardware limitations. Luckily, his dream game has been delayed so many times (it was due out last year), that processing power has caught up with his vision, and the world now waits to see what his team at Confounding Factor can pull out of their hats. All the signs so far are that this will be no sad bunch of flowers either, but something that pushes what *Tomb Raider* achieved beyond all imagining.

You are Captain Rhama Sabrier, a sword-wielding, seafaring man of action, who is summoned by the obligatory wise old man to investigate a mysterious ship that has drifted into the port of one of the six islands to be explored. Unsurprisingly, the ship isn't what it seems, but a vessel of secrets waiting to be discovered and reward the finder with great magical powers. Enter the bad guy, who caps the old man and makes off with the ship. Guess it's all down to you from then on.

To accompany you are Faith, the daughter of the murdered old man who's out for revenge, Mihoko, a shapely assassin who joins you after you rescue her from slavery, and a fellow named Calverley who somehow transforms into a monkey. "The secondary characters have their own intelligence but you are able to issue commands," explains level designer Hayden Duvall. "So they will do their own thing until you either move location or have a particular problem that you want help with. Faith has magical powers – she's able to heal, cast light and melt ice, things like that. Mihoko, being a fighter, has extra strength and agility."

"One of the most striking aspects of the game is the characters' fluidity of movement. No one could fail to be impressed by Rhama's agility as he scales walls"

One of the most striking aspects of the game is the characters' fluidity of movement. No one could fail to be impressed by Rhama's agility as he scales walls, swings across rooftops and leaps and tumbles through the *Galleon* world. "Rhama," Hayden says, "is able to react to every piece of geometry and every kind of surface depending on the texture and the different friction values and speed. It's all combined into the control system." The upshot is, Rhama actually moves intelligently, negotiating his way through his environment, jumping up those little ledges and elevations that would normally require assistance from the player. This has allowed Toby and co to introduce an exceptionally intuitive and minimal control interface, the intention being to increase the game's accessibility as much as possible.

This ultimately points to the fact that *Galleon* has been designed with a console audience primarily in mind, with a PC version to follow. While this won't do anything to endear the game to the PC fraternity, perhaps Rhama's athleticism is just what's needed to scale the walls of PC snobbery. PZ

TOP STORY

MYTHING IN ACTION
AGE OF MYTHOLOGY

The next benchmark in RTS games? Make us into believers

GOD BOTHERER Rhianna Pratchett

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Ensemble Studios
PUBLISHER Microsoft
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Spring 2002
WEBSITE www.ensemblestudios.com

IN SUMMARY

Age Of Empires gets mythical and goes 3D in this latest title. The familiar elements of the vastly popular series have been rigged to a new 3D engine to create a graphically lush and richly detailed affair, sure to satisfy the most aesthetically demanding God complex.

WHATS THE BIG DEAL?

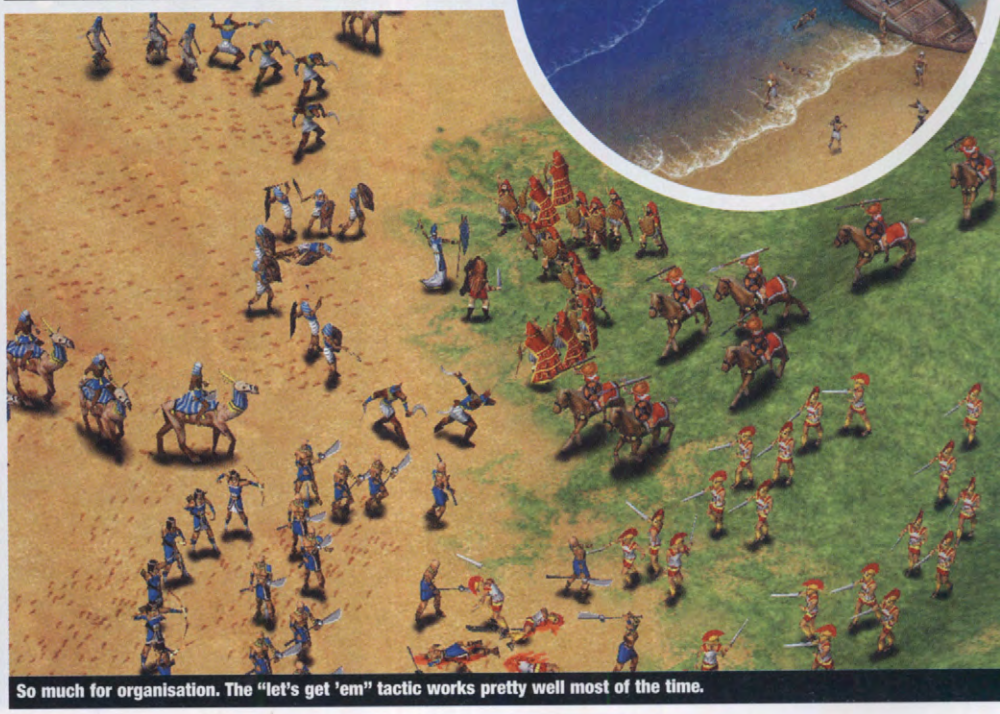
Any RTS player will tell you that playing an *Age Of Empires* game is an unavoidable rite of passage, like getting drunk on Malibu. You never forget your first elephant. Killing one that is, and it was from these beginnings that *Age Of Empires* blossomed into a franchise that's sold over 8.5 million copies worldwide.

Oxford refuted allegations of steroid use at the annual boat race.

The Norse woods – watch out for anyone humming *Waterloo*.

The day and night cycle is particularly impressive.

A Greek villa, you can practically smell the taramasalata.



So much for organisation. The "let's get 'em" tactic works pretty well most of the time.

It was only a matter of time before Ensemble Studios' baby, the *Age Of* franchise, unscrewed its 2D stabilising wheels and pedalled into the big, bad world of 3D. This time they'd like to take you back, way back, to a time of myths and legends, when a Neptune special was more than just a pizza and Mercury wasn't just a man with bad taste in shoes.

Age Of Mythology uses the same civilisation-based gameplay as its predecessors, *Age Of Empires* and *Age Of Kings*, but takes the action back to the ancient Greek, Norse and Egyptian cultures, divided here into nine detailed empires. Many of the features for *Mythology*, such as the economic structure, the creation of military units and the enhanced AI as demonstrated in *The Conquerors*, is of the same ilk as the two previous *Age Of* games and so fans of the series should feel at home.

Ensemble is really touting the 'mythology' element, which seems to be a crossover between *Zeus* and the long departed *Seven Kingdoms*. You'll be asked to choose which God you'd like to worship and will be granted a corresponding set of powers and specialist units. You'll be able to boost your armies with creatures like minotaurs, griffons and giants, and persuade heroes like Odysseus, Hercules and Beowulf to engage in some freelance fighting. Provided you can keep in with your bosses, you'll also receive the occasional blessing bestowed from on high. Bruce Shelley, co-founder and senior game designer for Ensemble Studios, says: "Our game puts players in ancient civilisations where praying for luck in battle, fighting Cyclops or petitioning Zeus to call down lightning bolts on the enemy are real occurrences."

Apart from the superb visuals, *Age Of Mythology* is also set to distinguish itself with more story-based campaigns, which promise to be more heavily character driven and cinematic than in the previous games. Campaigns will include quests to seek out hidden goodies such as the Golden Fleece and the Hades' Helm of Invisibility, taking you from vast deserts to deep in the belly of the underworld. The game also boasts more than 20 advanced AI opponents, 15 map types, 13 game variants and five starting conditions in the multiplayer mode, which will undoubtedly allow it to follow in the footsteps of its older siblings with a strong online following.

"Ensemble's new 3D engine looks like it's been put to good use with realistic tornados, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions being promised"

Ensemble's new 3D engine looks like it's been put to good use as well, with realistic tornadoes, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions promised. And of course there will be hundreds of beautifully detailed units, executing many more attacking and defensive manoeuvres than the popular 'sword poke' of previous games. "*Age Of Mythology*'s 3D engine delivers an experience beyond anything we've been able to create previously," claims Shelley.

The *Age Of* series has become something of a multi-headed hydra over the past few years. Even though it's only one franchise it has always felt like more, because as soon as you've recovered from your addiction to one game, another pops up in its place to suck your life away again. This latest venture looks like the acid test for Ensemble Studios – they've wallowed a bit too long in cutesy sheep-herding warfare while others have pushed the genre forward, and now have more to prove than ever. May the luck of the gods be with them. PZ

Your team-mates won't abuse you and they won't back out of firefights in a cowardly fashion.

GO, GO, GO... COUNTER-STRIKE: CONDITION ZERO

Just when I thought I was out, they pull me back in...

SUFFERING FOR HIS ART Dave Woods

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Valve
PUBLISHER Vivendi
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Winter 2001
WEBSITE www.valvesoftware.com

IN SUMMARY

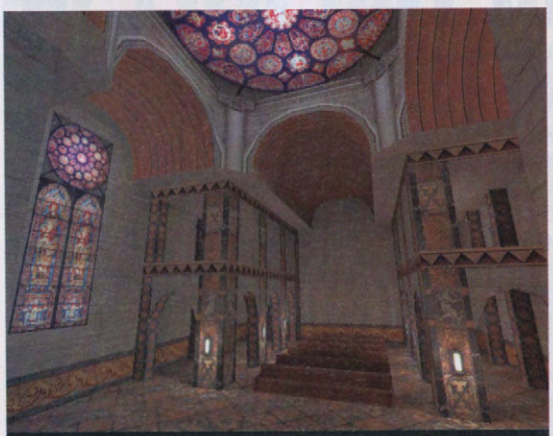
You know *Counter-Strike*? Well the classic multiplayer game is set to be released as a single-player title with new multiplayer features. That means you don't have to rely on a fast Internet connection to play your favourite game and you don't have to put up with abuse from other players if you're no good.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

That's a stupid question. *Counter-Strike* is the biggest online game, and it's argued that it could be the most important PC game of the last few years. *Condition Zero* isn't a full-blown sequel, but it does give those of you without access to a modem the chance to sample the delights of a game that's been described as being 'more addictive than crack'. (By me.)

These early maps are the work of former developer Rogue...

...A bust-up has resulted in Valve pulling the project back.



We pray in the holy cathedral of *Counter-Strike*.

It looks like *Counter-Strike*, but this is in fact a new shot from *Condition Zero*.

You'll never catch the *ZONE* boys co-operating like this. Must be the new AI at work.

My working hours are ten in the morning until six in the evening. If I stay until after seven I have to sign to get out of the building. Why am I starting a Top Story with meaningless drivel like this? Simple. For the past nine months I've had to sign out almost every night, and the blame lies on the doorstep of one single game: *Counter-Strike*.

I've tried to fight the addiction, and since I've been back from E3 I've been pretty successful, even going as far as emerging blinking into bright sunlight on a couple of occasions. Then I heard about *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero* and like a cured smack addict confronted with a new bag, I can feel myself slipping again.

Now before you get too excited, I should point out that *Condition Zero* is not the full-blown sequel to *Counter-Strike* (the real *Counter-Strike 2* is currently in furious development and will hopefully see the light of day next year). It is a collection of brand new single-player maps (that can also be taken online) using an ever-so-slightly tweaked *Half-Life* engine. This means the unlucky few, the ones without modems, will finally be able to sample the delights of *CS*.

Valve is still fairly tight-lipped about the project, but we did manage to confirm that there will be new weapons (eight at last count) in *Condition Zero*. There'll also be 16 new maps (making 32 missions in total if you count playing them as terrorists and counter-terrorists), new skins and a new player class, the Russian Spetsnaz.

In play, *Condition Zero* is going to be identical to its multiplayer originator. You control one character, and your team-mates and opponents will be supervised by the all-new AI. Valve is looking pretty smug about this side of the game, claiming it will go way beyond dumb hostage routines and that it will even surpass the hackneyed clamberings of the *ZONE* team.

"I heard about *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero* and like a cured smack addict confronted with a new bag, I can feel myself slipping again"

One thing we're not sure about is what happens when you die. Assuming you're rubbish at the game and get killed after five or six seconds on every map, you could be faced with the prospect of watching 10-12 AI team-mates and opponents getting it on and enjoying themselves without you. Dem's de breaks though.

There's still loads to iron out and Valve is staying tight-lipped at the moment. We'll have more next month, and even though we're yet to be totally convinced by the concept, we're also sure that if anyone can do it, Valve can. In any case, the thought of mixing it up in *Counter-Strike* battles with the Special Ops troops from *Half-Life* is one that's enough to push all thoughts of the outdated engine out of the window. PZ

BASTARDS

NEWS EDITOR Anthony Holden

Bloody developers. They spend months working in secrecy, knocking their latest interactive wonder into shape, achieving such miracles in the lead up to E3 that even their producers and publishers stop bugging them, if briefly. Then comes three days of total mayhem, where the games world (minus the people who really count, like you and me) converges briefly, explodes in confusion and the survivors frag off home.

Then what? After the LA Convention Center has been cleared ready for the 2001 Alliance of Filipino Catholics Renewal Assembly (I kid you not), after the booth babes have returned to their day jobs as *Baywatch* extras, after the stomachs have been pumped, the Pacman suits packed away (till next year), the Dreamcast stands incinerated... then what? I'll tell you what. Then the real work starts for us, your hard-working games journos. One month on and still the biggest news in the industry is E3. It's an indication of how important the event is generally, but more than that, of the unbelievable quality and quantity (more than 250 PC games) of product shown in LA.

Flip through these pages and you'll find some (though not all) of the games that impressed us. Seeing as the really important, life-changing games have been covered in our E3 specials (RPGs last issue, FPSs right here between your clammy fingers, RTSs next month), the bulletin has taken a slightly different focus. Apart from our regular bits and pieces, you'll find a special look at some of the lesser-known titles that impressed us from LA, starting on page 18. These are the ones to watch that won't be rammed down your throats with big budget marketing campaigns and obscene amounts of hype leading up to their release. Elsewhere, starting on page 24, we rave about just how good the games really were at E3, how the PC is taking over the games world, and how proud we are to be part of the whole thing. Hmm... maybe we got a little carried away there. Just to make sure, we asked a few top industry bods to give us their take on the whole thing, and luckily they seemed to be on the same page as us.

THE DARK HORSES OF E3

Five potential crackers emerge from the shadows

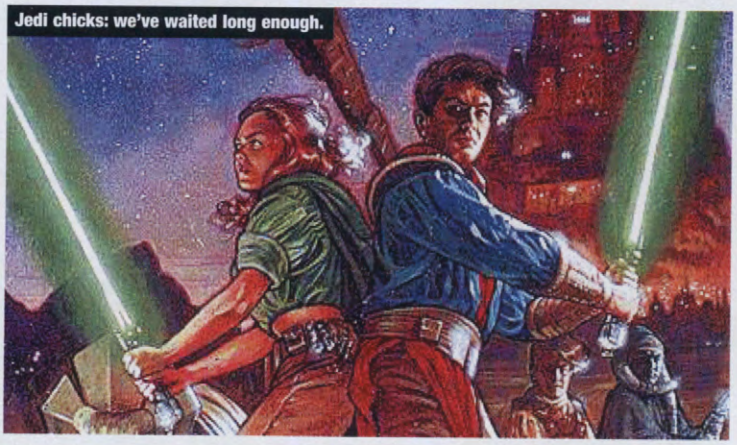
P.18

THE PCZONE CHARTS

Top of the Pops

P.22

ChartTrack



Jedi chicks: we've waited long enough.

A JEDI YOU WILL BE

LucasArts • ETA late 2002 • www.bioware.com

In the first *Star Wars* RPG, *Knights Of The Old Republic*

It's hard to know what's more surprising – that there's never been a *Star Wars* RPG before, or that the first one isn't going to be set in the familiar *Star Wars* timeline at all, but 4,000 years before the films took place, in the time of the old republic.

Shown for the first time at this year's E3, *Knights Of The Old Republic* is not only the first RPG to come out of everyone's favourite sci-fi universe, but the first game to mine this rich era of *Star Wars* history, already well documented in countless spin-off comics and novels. While the historical setting means no Empire or Rebel Alliance, no Death Star and no Admiral Ackbar, it doesn't take long to realise that this could be a very good thing. Apart from the freedom it gives developer Bioware to create new storylines and scenarios without compromising the central *Star Wars* narrative, it also means, very importantly: Jedi. Lots of 'em. Armies of Jedi fighting hordes of evil Sith, light sabers humming and Force Powers throwing R2 units all over the shop. If that didn't have us excited enough, just think what happened to Richie, shameless *Wars*-buff, when he saw the game running at E3, looking absolutely stunning and already showing off some very nice real-time saber combat.

Of course, as a hardcore single-player RPG from the makers of *Baldur's Gate* and *Neverwinter Nights*, there's going to be a lot more to this game than just rumbling. *Knights Of The Old Republic* is based around an ancient struggle between Jedi and Sith – warriors of the dark side – returned from apparent extinction to destroy the republic. This struggle will be mirrored in your own character, as you fight to preserve peace and eventually undergo training to be a Jedi Knight. Your actions will decide whether you follow the light or dark side of the force, and one of the coolest parts of the game could be not knowing until too late that you've been seduced by the dark path.

Bioware's new 3D engine is already looking hugely impressive, with a versatile camera system allowing plenty of manipulation of the isometric third-person viewpoint. The level of detail and depth of field is also staggering, with things like facial animation and windblown clothing/hair/grass effects looking superb.

Even at this early stage of development there are six player classes to choose from, including Jedi Guardian, Scoundrel (read: Han Solo archetype) and Bounty Hunter. Eight worlds are promised for exploration, and you'll have your own space freighter to travel between them, with mini-games already set to include space combat and speeder racing. Your travelling party will be restricted to three, with advanced scripting routines purporting to allow unrivalled interaction with your team-mates. Throw in over 100 different skills and more than 50 Force Powers and it's starting to look like a massive undertaking and classic in the making.

Sitting alongside *Star Wars Galaxies* (see Online Zone) and *Jedi Outcast* (see page 43), *Knights Of The Old Republic* was part of an incredible line-up that threatened to steal the show at E3. Any doubts about LucasArts' ability to maintain its unrivalled reputation for quality and diversity has been shattered, and for *Star Wars* fans, there has never been a better time to be alive... Jar-Jar notwithstanding.

TECHHEAD

All the latest techie-type stuff for hardware geeks

P.28

MAN WHO KNOWS

It's all too easy in this sordid industry

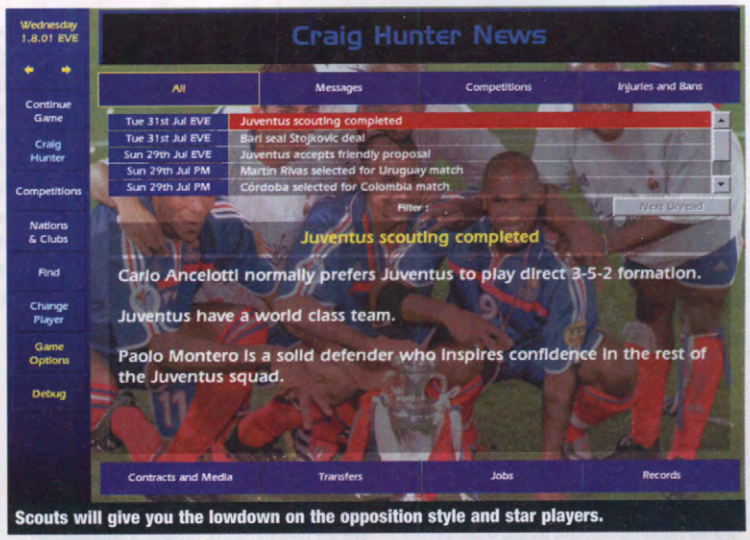
P.31

HOTSHOTS

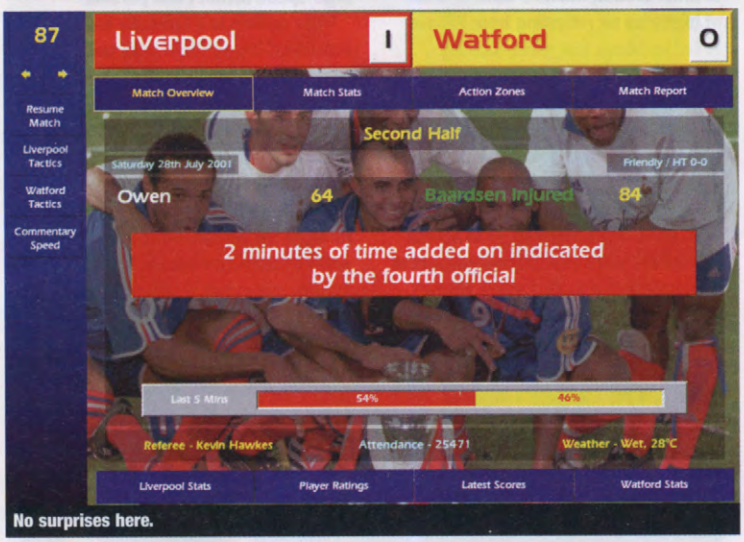
Don't go against the family – check out these all-new *Mafia* pics

P.32

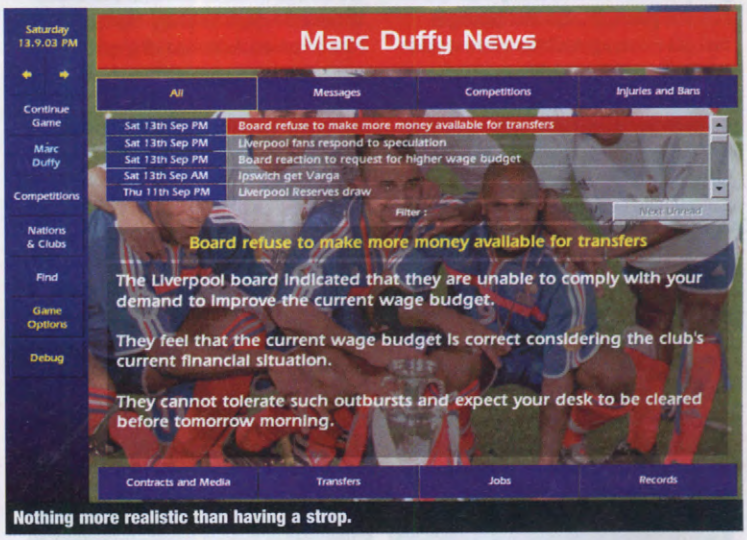
Stats for players you've never heard of will only be partially available.



Scouts will give you the lowdown on the opposition style and star players.



No surprises here.



Nothing more realistic than having a strop.

THE CHAMP IS BACK

Sports Interactive • ETA October • www.sigames.com

Sports Interactive celebrates a decade of success with a timely *Champ Man* update

Whether you pull your face with scorn or tremble with uncontained excitement at the prospect, there's no denying that a new version of *Championship Manager* is almost as important to the football calendar as the start of a new season. The yearly updates always seem to sport differences so slight that you could be forgiven for thinking of Sports Interactive as Chump Managers. But we never tire of saying how big an improvement even the smallest changes can make.

And with the new *CM 01/02*, coinciding with the tenth anniversary of the game, things will be no different. It will keep the basic structure of 26 concurrent leagues, undergo the traditional data shake-up with all the latest transfers and player stat updates, and feature greater involvement with the media. The match engine is also undergoing another overhaul and opposition managers are being made more intelligent. Other features being added include a new scouting option to gain more information on other teams' tactics, weaknesses and danger players and the possibility of making things more realistic by hiding some of the stats of lesser-known players until they have been scouted. Those who enjoyed complaining about referees and demanding more transfer money will be glad to know you can now appeal against player bans and issue ultimatums to your board. On top of that, players who have recurring injuries can now be sent to undergo major surgery.

However, the main change in this version is the introduction of a new transfer system. It means there will only be one main transfer window per season and smaller clubs will receive compensation to reward the "training effort" of younger players. In addition, contract breaches will be punished unless both the player and the team agree to the break.

We are happy to say that although Dave Woods tried to bribe SI into overlooking one small statistical update, Coventry City will still be playing in the First Division.

Meanwhile, the developers are continuing work on the proper sequel to the game, *CM4*, which is due out next year. This is the one that will finally lets everyone play their favourite game online and will also include a new 2D top-down match option and player agents. Proving that the Xbox is going to bridge the gap between consoles and PCs, the Collyers have announced that *CM4* will also appear on Microsoft's machine. Sony owners will have to wait until the PS2 gets a hard disk before seeing it on their platform.

DARK HORSES OF E3

Away from the hype of the big name titles, five promising games are waiting to take you by surprise...

Every year at E3 there are a handful of top quality titles that gobsmack the gaming world into a rhapsody of barely contained elation, filling the emptiness of our lives with the curious pleasure of anticipation. This year you had your *Max Payne*, your *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault*, your *Star Wars Galaxies* – too many in fact for most attendees to take in. But away from the main floor, away from the big boys with their fancy rolling demos and attractive PR ladies, deep in the bowels of the LA Convention Centre, you could find some of the less prominent developers hawking their wares. Here you might expect to be greeted not by a sexy model posing seductively as a popular game character, but a cheap hooker in a five dollar bikini, her stretch marks all too apparent under a splotchy fake tan, her smile wearing thin after repeated innuendo from fat, drooling Americans asking for a special 'behind closed doors' presentation. However, once inside the Portaloo that was serving as the corporate display booth, a forlorn developer might rouse himself briefly from an exhausted coma to demo a game of true charm and promise.

They may not have the budgets, the big licences or the booth babes, but in this industry of safe bets and stifled creativity there's nothing more refreshing than sheer desperation. Or at least fresh ideas, raw talent and the willingness to put it all on the line for a shot at the big time. So, champions of the underdog that we are, we went ahead and picked five lesser-known games shown at E3 that we think have enormous potential, for whatever reason, and here they are.

AQUANOX

Due September • Fishtank Interactive • www.aquanox.de

Too often seen as the poor cousin of the space shooter, the deep-sea action game hasn't seen too many triumphs over the years, though one example that did swim against the current was *Archimedean Dynasty*. Emerging from small German codeshop Massive Development in 1996, it was reviewed by Paul Presley at the time for a titanic 92 per cent. (of course, *Leisure Suit Larry 7* was awarded a questionable 79 per cent in the same issue...)

***Aquanox* is the sub-oceanic sequel to this submerged classic, and what's more it's looking rather spectacular. The richness of the colour palette has created an extremely atmospheric setting for the action, which centres around combat between small attack subs. You play the role of Emerald 'Deadeye' Flint, hero and mercenary, in a post-apocalyptic future where we all live in cities beneath the sea. When a botched military experiment rouses an ancient race of gigantic and somewhat unsociable sea creatures, it falls upon you and your four wingmen to save the day.**

Designed as a blend of space-shooting and FPS-style gameplay, the stripped-down controls adopt FPS strafing and shooting principles, with absolutely no sim-type nit-picking to dilute the action. Eight distinct submarine vessels will become available during the game, with all manner of guns, torpedoes, electro-disruptors etc, available for purchase along the way. We expect to have this one in for review quite soon.

Arcade action and spine-chilling suspense in the deep blue sea.

YAGER

Due late 2001 • THQ • www.yager.de

When he finally stopped gibbering about *Star Wars Galaxies* long enough to draw breath, Richie's second order of business on returning from E3 was to tell us about this great-looking futuristic flight sim. Going by the working title *Yager*, details on gameplay are still a bit scarce, but we do know that the game puts you in the cockpit of a bunch of science fictional fighter craft and sends you on missions varying from escorting supply ships to all-out dogfighting. The most appealing part of the game is the design of the aircraft, which in motion looks very cool, as does the arsenal of futuristic weaponry. The team at Yager Development in Berlin has put together a capable engine, as the level of detail in both the aircraft and environments is rather impressive, as are the frame-rates and draw distances shown during the high-speed combat and pursuit.

The setting is a typically bleak industrial future filled with toxic waste and wrecked installations, populated by aggressive and unpredictable robots left over from a forgotten military conflict. The single-player campaign will be strongly narrative-driven, interweaving a complex story through the mission-based structure, while multiplayer modes include deathmatch-style dogfighting as well as various tactical team-based modes. *Yager* doesn't appear to be breaking into any daring new territory, but the pure level of fun and exhilaration involved look set to make it an extremely tantalising title.

***Rogue Squadron* meets *Terminal Velocity*.**

X-ISLE: DINOSAUR ISLAND

Due Q3 2002 • Ubi Soft • www.crytek.de

While really only a technical demo at E3, this first-person shooter already has the goods to impress. In development by German team Crytek, the game features a cutting-edge 3D engine capable of rendering vast landscapes with unrivalled line of sight, indoor and outdoor areas at never-achieved frame-rates and absolutely astounding poly counts with a full range of effects. The story too is intriguing, merging a couple of well-worn sci-fi plot devices and hopefully putting a distinctive twist on them. You find yourself as part of a squad of navy seals sent to investigate paranormal activities on a series of small islands. The presence of aliens is soon revealed, and it turns out they came to Earth to do a *Jurassic Park* job on the locals, creating a race of superwarriors based on dinosaur DNA. So you have to defeat both the aliens and their saurian chums, which are likely to be endowed with more intelligence than your average lizard.

The gameplay will also be an amalgam of various influences, with distance combat, close combat, stealth and vehicular aspects all playing a part. The vehicles will include land-based jeeps as well as seagoing vessels. The advanced physics engine will offer tactical opportunities such as rolling objects downhill, catapulting them into the air and floating them down rivers.

With core gameplay not yet in place, *Dinosaur Island* is at present only an impressive engine, but as it already seems well ahead of the pack on this basis alone, we have high hopes for the end product.

A phenomenal engine that will hopefully spawn a game to match.

BREED

Due Q3 2002 • CDV • www.brat-designs.com

If its ambitions are realised, *Breed* will put you into orbit.

Another sci-fi action game, another debut from a promising young codeshop with an impressive in-house engine. Combining foot-based and vehicular combat, the most immediately exciting thing about *Breed* is the scale on which it takes place. The game is set both in Earth orbit and on the surface, and while not a new concept, you'll actually get to fly freely between the two, with battles occurring concurrently in and between each environment. Playable in either first- or third-person perspective, the game centres around the invasion of Earth by an aggressive biomechanical race looking for a new home. From an orbiting space attack cruiser, the tattered remains of Earth's space forces are fighting a losing battle against the aliens, who have taken control of the surface. Launching single fighters or heavily armed dropships, you'll take control of an endless number of test-tube grunts in missions involving anything from piloting spaceships, manning turrets or introducing ET to the business end of an assault rifle. Judging by the early demos, *Breed* is going to look the business too, though it's unlikely to be the most visually stunning game in the genre. What it does promise to be is a fun arcade blast 'em up on an epic scale, with a huge variety of single-player missions and multiplayer options.

While it's still too early to make any judgements on the actual gameplay (it's not expected until autumn 2002), we'll be following *Breed* closely, so rest assured we'll keep you informed.

NOMADS

Due Q2 2002 • CDV • www.radonlabs.de

Impressive more for being different than anything else, *Nomads* combines real-time strategy, role-playing and 3D action elements, along with an insane playing environment made up of countless small floating islands. Voracious burrowing aliens have hollowed into a science-fictional planet and caused it to crumble apart – you are a flying wizard/engineer whose job it is to use your skills and magic to turn the remaining crumbs into cities and fortresses before the aliens can finish them off. This bizarre concept alone shows more invention than a hundred other games at E3, and the gameplay is shaping up to be just as replete with ideas.

Strategic planning, resource management and action will all play a part, as you fly from island to island, exploring the fragments in the clouds, constructing buildings and machines, and pillaging other islands for magical artefacts and rare resources. A variety of vehicles and aircraft can be controlled directly, including biplanes, zeppelins and other unusual creations. Weather also plays a significant part in the game, disrupting travel between islands, and a day/night cycle provides additional variety. Team-based co-operative modes and competitive multiplayer modes are also intriguing possibilities.

Nomads promises to be at once complex, intuitive and above all quite strange. It might even stop us yapping on about the lack of novelty in the industry for a few days. Then again...

Extraordinary in every sense of the word.

Life in the topsy-turvy world of gothic rock.

Another *EverQuest* convention gets underway.

A WOLF AMONG US

Take 2 Interactive • ETA December • www.mythwolfage.com

Myth III: The Wolf Age could herald a new age for the 3D RTS

In the more hardcore reaches of the RTS landscape, the *Myth* series stands as one of the most respected and devoutly followed franchises – no mean feat in a genre known for the fanaticism of its enthusiastically addicted disciples. (Just try telling Rhianna that *Age Of Kings* is a bunch of poo and you'll probably find yourself dancing to a little of her chin music.) The third instalment, subtitled *The Wolf Age*, has been in development since last November, and we're just starting to get a glimpse of the shape it's likely to take when completed. And to the great relief of legions of worried fans, all the signs point to another cracking foray into the world of Myth.

Fans of the fantasy RTS weren't without some cause for concern either. Not only has the business of developing the series changed hands, but the game is undergoing the historically troubled transition to full 3D. A new development company, Mumbo Jumbo, was established to make *Myth III* (after the rights were ceded to Take 2 in Microsoft's buy-out of Bungie), and as genuine fans of the series themselves they're determined not to tinker too much with the hugely addictive gameplay. Set 1,000 years before the original *Myth: The Fallen Lords*, *Myth III* will retain the mission-based structure and focus on small-scale battles, with set objectives for each battle and a strong narrative holding it all together. There are 25 levels planned, as well as five unique netplay maps. There'll also be all the usual support for map/mission editing and the online community, some "innovative" new online modes, a bunch of new unit types and no doubt a few surprises.

But the main changes appear to be taking place on the graphical front, where Mumbo Jumbo may just be creating a graphical landmark for the genre. True 3D characters and environments are one thing, but the new engine also boasts deformable terrain, procedurally generated foliage that will sway in the wind or deform in the blast from explosions, and advanced 3D unit models that will react to their surroundings – moving their heads to track an oncoming foe or leaning into a hill as they climb it.

However, unless Mumbo Jumbo is being coy with us and holding back on the in-game footage, the game appears to be a long way from completion, with the Christmas release date looking about as likely as *PC ZONE* going 18-rated. Oh hang on, we just did that...

MOO3: THE FIFTH 'X'

Infogrames • ETA spring 2002 • moo3.quicksilver.com

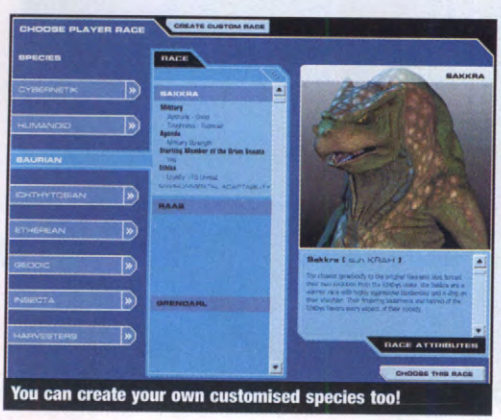
Master of Orion III adds eXperience to the space strategy equation

All the kids are playing their fancy new RTSs these days, and, for better or worse, the turn-based strategy is about as healthy as Dave's liver after a six-hour 'editorial meeting' at the pub. However, there are still a few fondly remembered classics of the genre with a sufficiently insistent fan base to warrant a gleaming new 3D accelerated sequel... well, there's one anyway, but it does rank amongst the most fondly remembered of all the old-skool titles, *Master of Orion*. The third episode in this space conquest game is well into development, with the first batch of screenshots emerging not long ago from US codeshop Quicksilver.

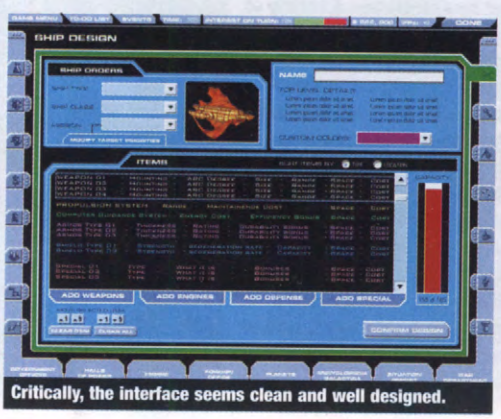
The screenshots may not look like much, but it only takes a cursory glance at the ambitious design brief to realise the epic nature of *Master of Orion III*. Not content with offering you control of the odd solar system here and there, *MOO3* puts you in the role of Galactic Despot, with an entire galactic civilisation of up to 256 stars to control, each capable of supporting eight planets, these in turn able to possess up to five moons. The gameplay is set to involve political and military domination of the entire galaxy, though most of the micro-management will be handled by regional governors that you'll hand-pick. Much of the strategy will centre around maintaining the loyalty of these administrators, while at once using them as puppets to control the destiny of the known universe. Muahahaha!

While still turn-based in nature, *MOO3* will be fully 3D and graphically rich, though space combat has been reduced to a single plane to avoid utter confusion. The game universe will also be host to eight distinct races, each with up to three sub-species, making for a total of 16 playable races. Each has different demands for planetary conditions that must be managed as you spread your influence across the galaxy.

Quicksilver are attempting to bring an unprecedented sense of scale and strategic depth to their new game, in an effort to capture some of the grandeur of epic space operas of books and film. Where the previous Orion games were described by their creators as '4-X' games, being strategy games in which you eXplore, eXpand, eXploit and eXterminate, they now hope to add to this an elusive "Fifth X": eXperience. This will supposedly arise from the unsurpassed depth of character and narrative in the game, creating a much richer and more immersive game eXperience. What may be a greater challenge is Quicksilver's apparent ambition to make the game 'easy-playing' and accessible to a wider audience than just hardcore strategy buffs. Now there's a test.



You can create your own customised species too!



Critically, the interface seems clean and well designed.

I think that's the Big Dipper.

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AND THESE UNLIKELY HEROES ARE THE ONLY ONES THAT CAN STOP IT...

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CHARTS

Everything you need to know about which games are selling by the shedload. Plus the buzz on the streets – where you tell us what's hot and what's not

***Black & White*: the biggest and most controversial game of the year.**

THE Virgin megastores TOP10

JUNE	JULY	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
NE	1	**TROPICO**	POPTOP SOFTWARE	TAKE 2	59%
RE	2	SERIOUS SAM	CROTEAM	TAKE 2	81%
1	3	BLACK & WHITE	LIONHEAD	EA	95%
NE	4	STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE MISSION PACK	RAVEN	ACTIVISION	N/A
RE	5	SWAT 3: ELITE EDITION	SIERRA	SIERRA	84%
RE	6	SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR	CREATIVE ASSEMBLY	EA	90%
RE	7	SIMCITY 3000 UK EDITION	MAXIS	EA	83%
2	8	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 00/01	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	93%
RE	9	BATTLE OF BRITAIN	ROWAN	EMPIRE	89%
3	10	COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS	GSC	CDV	89%

THE ChartTrack TOP10 ELSPA

JUN	JUL	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
1	1	BLACK & WHITE	LIONHEAD	EA	95%
2	2	THE SIMS: HOUSE PARTY	MAXIS	EA	50%
3	3	COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS	GSC	CDV	89%
5	4	THE SIMS	MAXIS	EA	86%
4	5	HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS	VALVE	VIVENDI	95%
6	6	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 00/01	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	93%
10	7	THE SIMS: LIVIN' IT UP	MAXIS	EA	63%
8	8	TROPICO	POPTOP SOFTWARE	TAKE 2	59%
NE	9	GANGSTERS 2	HOTHOUSE	EIDOS	57%
NE	10	THE SIMS/THE SIMS: LIVIN' IT UP	MAXIS	EA	N/A

Compiled by Chart Track © ELSPA

COMPETITION

WIN THE ENTIRE VIRGIN TOP 10!

Once again, *PC ZONE* and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Top 10. All you have to do to enter the draw is answer the simple question:

QUESTION: PopTop Software, developer of *Tropico*, shot to fame in 1999 with the success of which game?

Just answer the above question and send it on a postcard, along with *all* the information requested, to the address below.

- Please include your name, address, daytime phone number, email address, job title and company name (and age if under 18).
- Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.
- Are you a current subscriber to *PC ZONE*?

Answers on a postcard to: *PC ZONE* Chart Compo (CPCZ08A), Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford BD1 5RZ. Closing date: July 26, 2001

- Terms and conditions: winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.

THE BUZZ ON THE STREETS

What the hell is wrong with you people?! *The Sims* takes up four places in the Top 10! You know real life is a lot more fun, and you don't need to buy a 20 quid upgrade pack every couple of days. At least *B&W* is still there, as for the rest, I'd rather watch my fingernails grow.

Splog

I'd rather watch paint dry than play any of the games in the charts. OK, *Black & White* is great but I wouldn't call it a classic, and *Half-Life* is still there – thank god the charts have some dignity left. As for *The Sims* taking up four slots… It shows there are more new PC players all the time!

99COOPER

I have one thing to say: 2, 4, 7, 10, AAARRRGGGHHHHH!! And well done *B&W*.

Andrew1012

Chart? Where? How? Oh, you mean *The Sims*… I getcha! *Black & White*? What's that? A computer game, you say? My, my, I'll give it a look some time, when I finish feeding Sim-Freddy.

JakobG

This is stupid. Has someone made a cloning device to clone everyone who loves *The Sims*? Man, why don't they ban it from the charts? And *House Party*? What's the point? But *Half-Life* is there, which is good, and so is *B&W*, so I suppose that cancels it out. Four places…

EvilKefka

No *Erotica Island*? What's up with you people? That game's genius.

Monkey

CHART COMMENT

BASED ON CHART TRACK TOP 10

Once again the charts look much like they did last month, the only good news for serious gamers being the slippage of *WWTBAM* out of the Top 10. Strangely enough, this coincided with a timely announcement from Eidos that it was to release *WWTBAM* junior edition… we can look forward to that haunting our charts for the next year or so. *Tropico* hangs on despite *ZONE*'s vote of no confidence, and *Gangsters 2* manages to slip in unexpectedly as well. A quick look at page 64 should tell you what we think of that. Off the main charts, we're disappointed to see no sign of *Mr Driller* in the budget charts… Get thee to a budget bin – it's less than a tenner!

Anthony Holden

RETRO CHARTS

1 YEAR AGO

1. **The Sims** *(EA)*
2. **Champ Man 99/00** *(Eidos)*
3. **Soldier Of Fortune** *(Activision)*
4. **AOEII: The Age Of Kings** *(Microsoft)*
5. **Tachyon: The Fringe** *(Novalogic)*

2 YEARS AGO

1. **SW: The Phantom Menace** *(Activision)*
2. **ST: Birth Of The Federation** *(Hasbro)*
3. **Champ Man 3** *(Eidos)*
4. **RollerCoaster Tycoon** *(Hasbro)*
5. **SW: Episode One – Racer** *(Activision)*

5 YEARS AGO

1. **Settlers II** *(Blue Byte)*
2. **Duke Nukem 3D** *(US Gold)*
3. **Euro '96** *(Gremlin)*
4. **Civilization II** *(MicroProse)*
5. **Champ Man 2** *(Domark)*

MYSTERY OF THE DRUIDS

CDV • ETA August • www.mysteryofthedruids.com

There's no mystery – Stonehenge was built by aliens

With LucasArts busy creating their new fleet of big budget *Star Wars* games, it's seemingly being left to obscure continental codeshops to pick up the point-and-click bundle and run with it. Last issue some wacky Swedes did no favours for the beleaguered adventure genre with *Gilbert Goodmate*, but we're expecting a lot more from *Mystery Of The Druids*, the debut offering from German unit House Of Tales. Released a few months ago in Germany, the game has now been picked up by CDV for an English language release in August.

German it may be, but this grisly whodunnit actually takes place in modern-day England, with a bunch of typically English characters and all sorts of real-life UK locations. The story centres around a bunch of dirty baby-killing druids getting up to their usual tricks in the woods, sacrificing virgins and whatnot in an effort to summon the awesome power of Greyskull, or something like that. You enter the picture as a Scotland Yard greenhorn sent to nip their occult evil-doings in the bud, accompanied by the nubile anthropologist Dr Melanie, whom we expect will be fleshed out with a subtle mix of school ma'am-ish authority and a barely contained, dangerous sexual energy. At a guess.

The two will be thrown together across a variety of hi-res, pre-rendered locations, eventually penetrating the fabric of time and space to journey together to ancient Stonehenge, where they will need all their courage to face the almighty Skeletor. Probably. Detailed 3D characters and over five hours of accurately lip-synched voice-overs will help keep things interesting, and the puzzles are promised to be complex yet logical, offering a "non-linear gameplay" experience. Whether that means multiple solutions to problems and branching storylines, or simply a lot of running around in circles, will reveal itself in time. We'll bring down the *PC ZONE* hammer of judgement on this one next issue.

Looks like a puzzle if ever we've seen one.

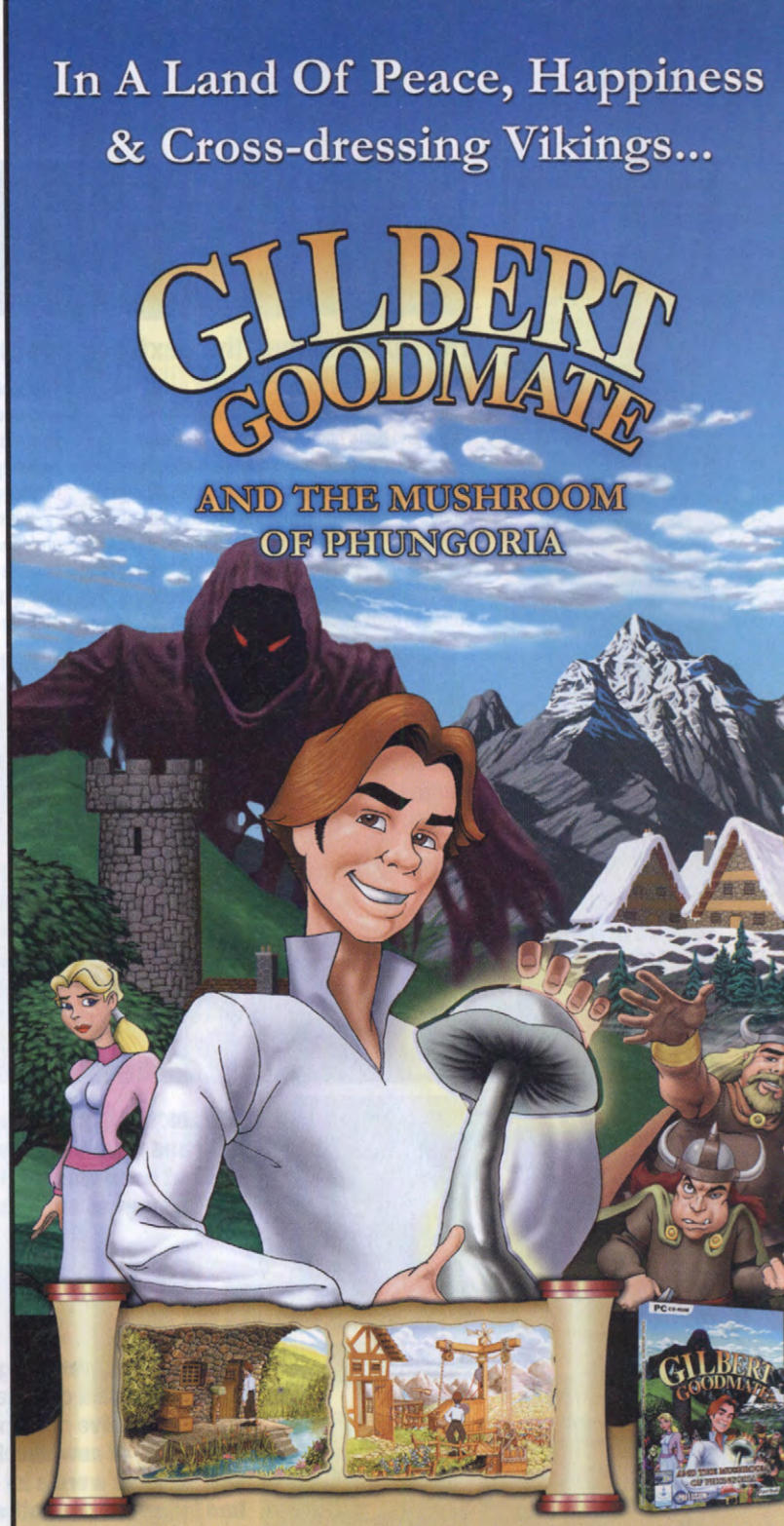
Chris Anderson's annual Feast of the Oak nosh-up proves a hit.

"Seen any druids round these parts, guv?"

In A Land Of Peace, Happiness & Cross-dressing Vikings...

GILBERT GOODMATE

AND THE MUSHROOM OF PHUNGORIA



SRP: £29.99

YOU ARE Gilbert Goodmate - adventurous, tall, skinny and witty, with an urge to be extremely inquisitive. Now the Sacred Mushroom Of Phungoria has been stolen, and your poor grandpa awaits execution. It's up to you - catch the thief, recover the mushroom and save Grandp... all by the end of the week!

Gilbert Goodmate might just be the best adventure game you play this year, so what are you waiting for? Oh, and do try to keep your hands off the Princess!

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SHORTS

VALVE UNDER PRESSURE

The long-awaited *Half-Life Team Fortress 2*, notable by its absence at E3, is still a long way off according to the people at Valve Software. They claim they are pulling out all the stops to create something truly innovative that will dramatically change the genre. In the words of Valve head honcho Gabe Newell: "If *TF2* is just a bigger, better version of *TFC* or *Counter-Strike* or any of the many cool mods already out there, then nobody's going to give a rat's ass about it." Can't argue with that. *Counter-Strike 2* is being developed side-by-side with *TF2* and will use the same engine. *C-S* creator Minh Le told *PC ZONE* that he expects to have something worth showing us by the end of summer. Hmm... These revelations only leave the status of the inevitable *Half-Life 2* up in the air, which is rumoured to be well into production, though officially it doesn't exist. You'll know as soon as we do.

SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE

While we firmly believe that print media is the only way forward for games coverage, the latest games-related TV show is OK by us, because it ditches the terrible reviews format of other shows for a story-led game show approach. To be screened on cable channel Bravo in August, *Mercenaries* pits squads of hardcore gamers against each other in a "multi-discipline virtual war zone". That means they play games like *Counter-Strike* and *Eurofighter Typhoon* for big prizes. The first chunk of filming happened last month at the show's top secret bunker setting (aka The Playing Fields), and the show is still looking for teams to take part in filming in July. See our website for details.

CROUCHING CASH-IN

Ubi Soft has announced that it will be developing and publishing games based on the *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* licence, which it recently acquired from Sony. Games based on the epic martial arts film will start to appear on PC and every console under the sun from spring 2002. Forgive us if we're not blown away with anticipation.

BRIGHT FUTURE

The PC outshines the next-gen posturing of the 'Big Three' with an outstanding E3 line-up

The dust has settled, the votes are in, the developers have packed up their wares and gone home to start the real work of getting the damn games made. The greatest games show on Earth is but a distant memory disappearing into the mists of time, or some such nonsense. And what became of it all? What is the one thing the industry has taken away from E3 apart from a pocket full of business cards and a throbbing hangover?

This year's Electronic Entertainment Expo was undoubtedly a success – all agreed it was a damn sight better than last year, but the real surprise of the show was the amazing display put on by the PC.

With two new consoles vying for attention, and the battle heating up between the big three console manufacturers, the PC was expected to take a back seat at this year's Expo. To make matters worse, the usual voices of doom were starting to heat up again, claiming that the PC was dead as a gaming platform, with the same hollow arguments being trotted out that we've been hearing for half a decade. It couldn't have been more timely then, that the Wintel wonder struck back with an amazing selection of cutting-edge software to silence the most blinkered console buff. Almost without exception, all of the big buzz games of the show were hosted by the PC: *Star Wars Galaxies*, *Medal Of Honor*,

E3: INDUSTRY IMPRESSIONS

Having reached our own conclusions about E3, we approached a handful of top figures from the industry to gage their thoughts. What were their overall after-impressions of E3, how strongly did the PC stand in relation to the next-generation consoles, and what were their personal highlights of the show...

"The console companies are *too* quick to declare the PC's doom. As long as the PC technology push continues, it will not be long before *all* the console owners are gazing back at the latest PC tech demos longingly. I can assure you that NVIDIA has no plans to drop PC gamers by the side of the road any time soon. I came away from the show after the future hardware demos I had seen feeling very comfortable with where the PC is today."

DAVID PERRY

SHINY ENTERTAINMENT • CURRENTLY WORKING ON: *THE MATRIX*

"I think the game of the show for me was *Max Payne*. It's been in development for so long and from the video clip I saw at E3, it's nice to see that all that development time has not been wasted. I was actually quite impressed with a lot of the games at the GoD booth – games such as *Duke Nukem Forever* and *Mafia* really had me excited."

MINH LE, AKA GOOSEMAN

VALVE SOFTWARE • CURRENTLY WORKING ON: *COUNTER-STRIKE 2*

"For certain genres of games (FPSs, strategy, online and so on), I believe the PC will continue to be a commercially strong platform for a long while. And, at least for this current iterative cycle of hardware improvement, I think the PC will remain as the platform where lots of new developments emerge first. I thought this year's E3 was better than last year's. There were a lot of interesting games around and the visual quality of everything had improved dramatically."

DEMIS HASSABIS

ELIXIR STUDIOS • CURRENTLY WORKING ON: *REPUBLIC: THE REVOLUTION*

"From the moment I walked through the doors on the first day and saw the huge number of people queuing I realised it would be an amazing show – the PC had a very strong showing with titles such as *Star Wars Galaxies*, *Republic: The Revolution* and *Medal Of Honour: Allied Assault*, which all demonstrate that the PC is still the home of some of the most innovative games in the world. I can confirm that Lionhead will continue to support the PC in the future."

PETER MOLYNEUX

LIONHEAD STUDIOS • CURRENTLY WORKING ON: EXPANDING/IMPROVING *BLACK & WHITE*

"The PC is always going to be the most versatile, most powerful platform for gaming. Right now most of the industry's effort is aimed at figuring out how to exploit the potential of the new consoles but that'll turn around eventually, I suspect. I think PC developers are going to have to get a lot more creative and less imitative before that happens, though. I really loved *Republic*. If Demis Hassabis can achieve half of his goals, it ought to be a world beater."

WARREN SPECTOR

ION STORM • CURRENTLY WORKING ON: *DEUS EX 2*

FOR PC GAMES

Max Payne, *Duke Nukem Forever*, *Unreal 2*, *Wolfenstein*, *Planetside*, the list goes on. Obviously we're a tad biased, but the incredible range of triple-A PC titles really did look better than anything else on show (thanks in no small part to NVIDIA branded hardware), as well as pioneering more truly exciting innovations than entire catalogues of console software.

It became clear at E3 as never before that the only thing next-gen consoles have over the PC is an environment of ruthless competition, and while this is effectively keeping prices down, it's also causing a glut of second-rate games, rushed to the shelves before completion, their development times slashed by the cash-in mentality. While we certainly wouldn't object to a price war between 3D card manufacturers, being part of a crowded, over-competitive console market is clearly not a good thing. Plus, the idea that games must be dumbed down for a console audience plainly still prevails, with most of the console games on display aiming to reach a younger or more casual gaming audience. Coming away from LA, it was all too apparent that the PC is still the most powerful and versatile gaming platform and the only choice for serious gamers. As if we needed E3 to remind us of that.

"The incredible range of triple-A PC titles really did look better than anything else on show"

***Wolfenstein* looks great, doesn't it?**

Dave Woods Forever.

GeForce 3 was the power behind some of the best offerings.

The plan to move the expo to Vegas next year has been abandoned.

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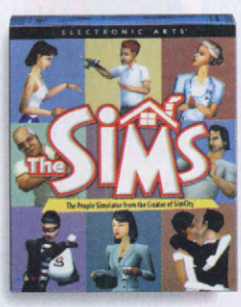

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SHORTS

X-COM ALLIANCE DEAD?

We hate it when games get canned, especially ones we've been looking forward to for ages, such as *X-COM Alliance*. The *Unreal*-powered chapter of the infamous series has been due for the past 25 years, but the latest news is that the project might be officially dead. Jayson Hill, PR for the US division of Infogrames states: "There has been no decision on whether or not the title is going forward", but development has been put on hold and we reckon it's unlikely to be resurrected.

DON'T PANIC!

Douglas Adams may have sadly departed, but his legacy lives on, at least in part, with Pan Interactive's forthcoming *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*, a towel-toting 3D adventure. This is not the first time that *The Hitch* has been given its gaming legs, in fact it stretched them way back in 1984 with a text-based adventure that was apparently vaguely playable. We don't have huge hopes for this license, but you never know, do you?

DELTA FORCED OUT

Novalogic has announced it is developing a new in-house, proprietary engine for *Necrocide*, rather than using the *Delta Force: Land Warrior* engine as originally planned. The engine will apparently support an all new character animation system, allowing for seamless organic characters with natural, fluid movements. The game will also include a dynamic 3D audio system and support for the latest 3D cards, taking advantage of the latest hardware T&L, environment mapping and light mapping capabilities.

QUAD DAMAGE

3DO • ETA September 2001 • www.3do.com/whitemagic

Goblin alert! *Heroes Of Might & Magic IV* is shambling our way

The popular turn-based strategy *Heroes Of Might & Magic* is about to get a much needed injection of life with its fourth incarnation this autumn. This time the story takes place after the land of Erathia has been torn apart by a giant cataclysm and the forces of good and evil are fighting for a slice of the pie. Creators of the *Might &Magic* universe New World Computing have made the decision to retain the 2D style of the previous titles, though a new graphics engine will apparently allow for some very detailed high-res environments.

Beyond this decision, however, the plan is to dismantle the great *Heroes* machine, polish every part and put it together again, though we are assured that the essential elements that have made the series so popular will remain.

In particular, the make-up of the individual heroes has been enhanced, and we're told that you'll be given much more control over your heroes than in previous games. In a more traditional RPG vein, your warriors will hail from one of 11 different character classes including necromancer, shaman and barbarian, with alternative classes gained as you progress. These will govern the proficiencies of your character and the skills they are able to acquire with experience. You'll also be able to bring your characters into the heat of the battle rather than having them hiding at the back, casting magic missiles and trying not to get their hands dirty, which will hopefully add some much needed variety to the formula.

It's getting a complete overhaul...

...without actually changing anything too much.

ANOTHER YEAR, ANOTHER FIFA

EA Sports • ETA autumn 2001 • www.easports.com

Well, you didn't think EA would allow a year with a '2' in it pass by did you?

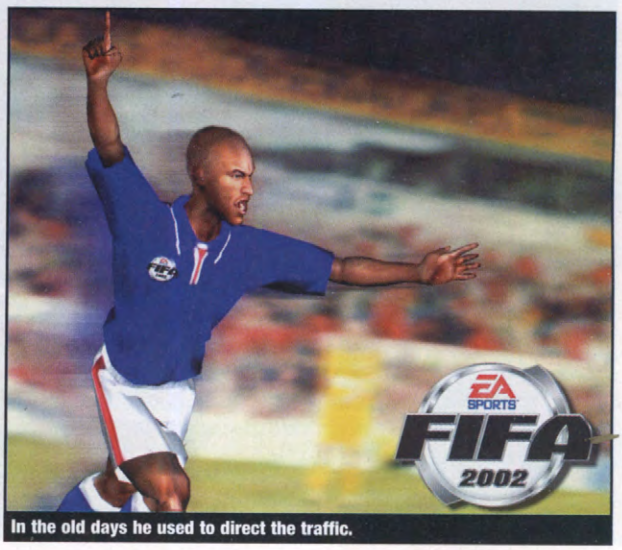
In the same way that you just *know* the Premiership is going to start again every summer (it's the only thing that keeps a lot of us going), or that the sun is going to rise every morning, we didn't think we'd be able to get through E3 without being pulled into a darkened room and beaten about the head with EA's latest annual *FIFA* update.

This time, however, (heavy irony) they're promising a complete overhaul, although before the developers would enlarge on that they insisted on quickly shouting about the fact that there will be more licensed leagues, teams and competitions than "any other game in the industry". Of course there will.

The overhaul consists of key new features including a new passing system, which hopes to emulate the Beckham syndrome through an open-ended approach that leaves you free to play long through-balls, pass the ball into space or dink a few one-twos. Tackling has also been tightened up, with more emphasis on timing – get it right and you'll take the ball; make a mistake and the referee will take your name.

And just in case you don't rate Sven's chances of beating Germany in Munich, *FIFA 2002* will give you the chance to take an International team of your choice to the World Cup Finals in Korea/Japan next summer. Injuries and fatigue statistics are going to be used, which means you'll have to use almost as much insight as Kevin Keegan can muster to get past the qualifiers.

New cinematic cut-scenes are set to take the presentation to new heights.



In the old days he used to direct the traffic.

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PC gameplay GOLD

PC CD-ROM

Mucky Foot Productions

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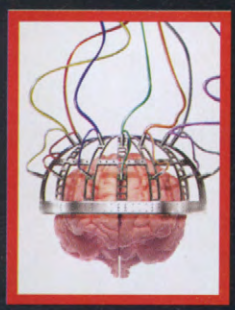

TECHHEAD

AMD's fourth Athlon core, the latest anti-MP3 tactic, and all the other tech news...

BOFFIN Carlos Ruiz

SILICON RUCK

AMD goes head-to-head with Intel once again with the launch of the Athlon4

The next round in the AMD/Intel grudge match is underway, with AMD releasing its latest Pentium-beater just as Intel seemed set to regain market control. Intel's Pentium 4 chip has been around for some months now, and while AMD has been holding its ground with the Athlon 'Thunderbird' chip, it was clear that the P4 would eventually win out. While the P4 had initially disappointed when running current software, it was quite clear that its superior architecture would only truly show its strength when tackling future applications. So, against a processor that will only get better with time (up to a point), the Thunderbird Athlons were going to get found out sooner or later.

Thankfully though, a good few months after they were originally expected, AMD has decided that the time is right to unleash its new generation of 'Palomino' Athlon chips. The slow uptake of Pentium 4 units has meant AMD can now enter the arena late in the day with a great processor, competitive prices and a shrewd marketing ploy.

You see, Intel has spent millions promoting the Pentium 4, hailing it as groundbreaking, and creating renewed brand recognition in the face of the Pentium III upset. So what does AMD do? Name its own competing processor the Athlon 4. It's not a complete rip-off move, as the Palomino is the fourth Athlon core AMD has devised, but it's a cheeky tactic not used since its K6-III (coinciding with the first release of the Pentium III, of course).

The first desktop Athlon 4 processor is likely to be a 1.5GHz variant (mobile Athlon 4s were released first) in 0.18micron, Socket-A format. There is still 256K of full-speed, on-die cache, although the two extra 64K level 1 data caches allows AMD to claim a total cache size of 384K. These are for 'pre-fetch' operations that retrieve information from the main memory more efficiently.

Lastly, AMD suggests a performance increase of up to 15 per cent on the Thunderbird equivalents.

The next step will be 'Thoroughbred' (someone at AMD likes the ponies, apparently) which will be manufactured in a brand new 0.13micron process, followed by 'Barton', which will incorporate SOI (silicon on insulator) to reduce power usage and increase clock speeds as a result. Neither of these will be seen until next year.

If this war is to be won on logos, AMD is in on the ropes.

STOP THE RIP

New technology aims to eliminate MP3 circulation at the source

As anyone in the know will testify, it's not too hard to convert regular CD audio track to .mp3. All you need is the audio CD, a computer and any one of a number of applications that can perform the task. But there are now some new technologies emerging that, when applied to future discs, could potentially stop any such software 'ripping' tracks at the user's request.

'Ripping' audio CDs is common practice among MP3 enthusiasts.

A handful of companies are developing these technologies, which can be assumed to work around the same premise, exploiting the subtle differences that exist between audio and data CDs. The trick is to add errors to the table of contents and individual tracks, which will be ignored and skipped by CD players but misread by CD-ROMs, forcing them to stop or loop around the erroneous data.

Unfortunately though, this will probably be a pointless exercise, infuriating legitimate users and doing little to stop MP3 enthusiasts. Protected discs would not only refuse to play on computers or car stereos, but a small percentage of actual CD players would even have problems with them.

Besides, clued up 'pirates' will no doubt find software that enables their drives to read audio CDs in the style of an audio CD player, or similar software that will easily sidestep the problem. Then, as soon as one person has encoded a new song into MP3 format, it will be shared among thousands of people within a week via the Internet.

FACTCANNON

The minimum hardware requirements of Windows XP will be a 300MHz processor and 128Mb, which is around double that of Windows 2000. Testers even say that 500MHz is a more 'usable' minimum, with the increased use of graphics in the OS being the probable culprit. The release date is October 25, with similar prices to previous versions, and massive demand expected.

In a shock announcement, American trade group The Business Software Alliance has reported that 37 per cent of software programs used by businesses worldwide are illegal pirated copies. "Is that all?" was the astonished response from *ZONE* writers. This is the first time in more than five years that piracy figures have increased, reversing a steady downward trend over that time. In Vietnam, the worst offending country, only three per cent of business software is legitimate. This compares favourably with figures for worldwide computer game software legitimacy. Probably.

How does the thought of ripping a 74-minute CD in three minutes strike you? Yamaha's (www.yamaha.co.uk) CRW2200 CD-rewriter drives can do just that with a reading/ripping speed of 40x, as well as 20x recording and 10x rewriting. The range comes in every flavour possible (IDE, SCSI, USB 2.0 – you name it) and includes not only a massive 8Mb buffer, but also Yamaha's Safe-Burn technology to drastically reduce the possibility of errors occurring.

Production house Monolith has formed a subsidiary exclusively for developing and licensing its LithTech 3D engine and associated LithTech middleware. LithTech Inc is one of the first of its kind, and illustrates not only the importance of first-class 3D acceleration in new games but also a changing approach to game development.

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This discount slip entitles one person to play for one hour free of charge on one occasion between June 28 and July 25, 2001, at The Playing Fields, 143 Whitfield Street, London W1, UK. You must be 14 years of age or older in order to participate in this offer. The slip must be filled in correctly and must be the original from a copy of *PC ZONE*, otherwise it will not be valid. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer. Only one slip per reader per issue.

There's a bar to retire to when you get tired of fragging.

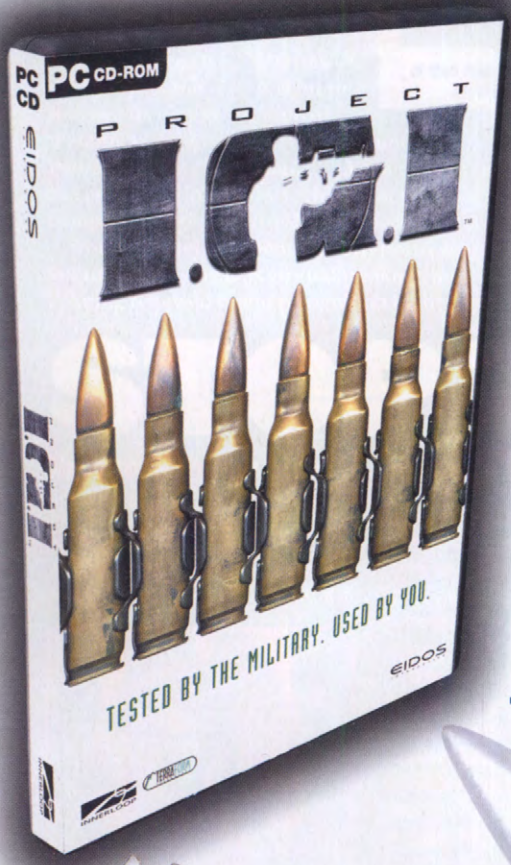
A gamer's paradise, The Playing Fields is a computer games bar where you can relax and play games the way they are meant to be played – with someone else. Just a 30-second walk away from Warren Street Tube station (Northern and Victoria lines), you can find it at 143 Whitfield Street, London W1.

Once there, you can jump on one of the 23 state-of-the-art machines on offer, and either play via a network or over the Net on games such as *Counter-Strike*, *Unreal Tournament*, *Giants*, *Delta Force: Land Warrior*, *Sacrifice*, *Rune* and many others. Each machine boasts an AMD 1.1GHz processor, 128Mb SDRAM, a 17in monitor and a NVIDIA Geforce 2 GTS graphics card – no less.

You have to be aged at least 14 to play and ID may be required. The Playing Fields is open seven days a week from noon to 11pm (10pm on Sundays). For prices and more information, check out www.theplayingfields.co.uk.

And for a free hour of play, simply fill in the slip (left) and take it along with you to The Playing Fields.

Turn to page 98 for details of the *PC ZONE* Readers' Challenge



Winner of the PC Zone Best First Person Shooter award 2001.

"IGI is a work of brilliance the likes of which we feel proud t spend time with..."
PC Gamer - 87%

"...pushing the tension factor of the FPS genre beyond anything that has gone before..."
Edge

"Stunning - the PC's answer to GoldenEye.
PC Zone - 85%

"This is the closest the PC's come to the magnificence of the N64 legend Goldeneye."
Games Master - 90%

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www.project-i-g-i.com

EIDOS INTERACTIVE
eidos.com

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Plenty of liberties have been taken with the oriental theme.

Not the most visually arresting RTS, but full of ideas.

BATTLE REALMS

Ubi Soft • ETA autumn 2001 • www.battlerealms.com

The yin and yang of real-time strategy

There's always been something of a curse attached to RTS games, even some of the strongest titles, which means that too frequently the gameplay disintegrates into either an exercise in resource management in a race to climb the tech tree, or just a excuse for a great big brawl. Ubi Soft's forthcoming 3D RTS *Battle Realms*, which was generally thought to be among the most promising RTS games shown at E3, is attempting to put the 'strategy' back into strategy gaming.

Battle Realms revolves around the story of Kenji, returned to his homeland to reunite four warring clans: the animalistic Wolf Clan, the corrupt Lotus Clan, the battle-hungry Serpent Clan and the spiritual Dragon Clan. In the single-player game you'll only be able to play as either the Dragon or the Serpent Clan, but the multiplayer version will let you play as any of the four. While not as graphically stunning as something like *Praetorians*, the look of the game is nonetheless striking, the stylised oriental theme infused with traditional fantasy elements to remarkable effect. The unique units for each side are particularly strong, with ninja and samurai types as well as more obscure deviations such as undead units that toss decaying organs onto the battlefield and animal masters that control packs of hungry beasts.

The game revolves around the idea that every action you take has a subsequent reaction, so if you use water to put out a fire, you'll have less to nourish your crops; if you train a peasant to become an archer it means you'll have less farmers, and so on. You'll be forced you to weigh up the pros and cons of every decision you make – in short it forces you to think strategically and it's about bloody time.

Real snow and some great 2D tree effects as well.

The original single-player *Counter-Strike*. Sort of.

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX ROGUE SPEAR BLACK THORN

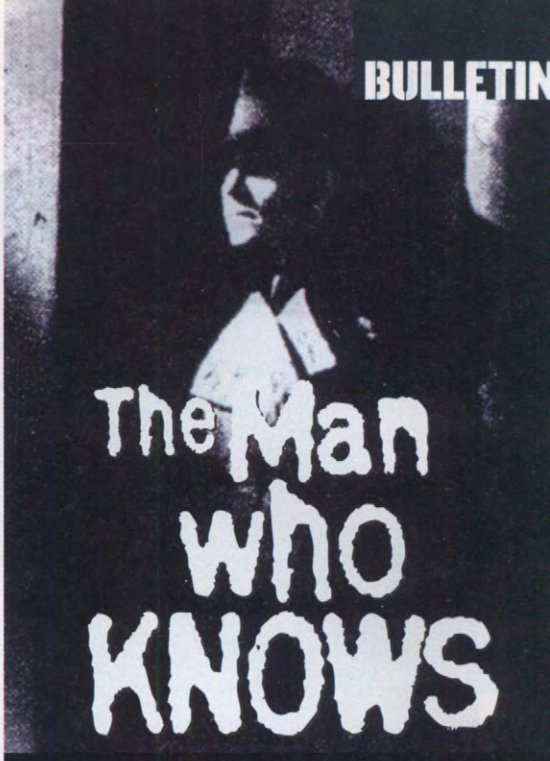
Ubi Soft • ETA October • www.redstorm.com

The competition is hotting up for the stupidest name ever...

Red Storm and Tom Clancy have had their ups and downs over the past year, but with a *Rogue Spear* add-on you know you're in safe, if ageing, hands. *Black Thorn* (no we're not going to pander to Tom by naming the whole thing ever again) is the latest stand-alone mission pack to the popular terrorist 'em up, and it plays around the concept of a copycat terrorist group recreating the most atrocious terrorist acts of the past.

It sounds promising, not least because the developers (the Montreal arm of Ubi Soft) seem to have realised the mistakes of the past (*Covert Operations Essentials*) and are sticking to action this time round, with no training and no multimedia shenanigans to divert your attention. Expect to see 16 maps in place come October when the game is set to be released (ten single-player and six multiplayer), along with 14 new weapons including the M60 machine-gun and the obligatory sniper rifle, this time in the shape of the Sig SSG3000.

And, in addition to the single-player campaign, *Black Thorn* is going to introduce another multiplayer game, *Lone Wolf*. As the name suggests, this pits one person with a full complement of weapons against a team of up to eight, armed with just pistols. Perfect if you need to prove that you really are the best in the whole world. Or at least in your pitifully small circle of friends.



JOLIE: I WANT YOUR SEX

Tomb Raider actress **Angelina Jolie** has confessed that she spends virtually every waking hour thinking about penetrative sexual intercourse and other lewd acts. She also admitted that she enjoys receiving lascivious looks from total strangers who are having dark thoughts about her naked body, saying that she doesn't mind being considered a sex symbol. In an in-depth interview with highbrow German magazine ***Fit For Fun***, the 25-year-old star, who plays the upper-crust adventuress **Lara Croft** in the forthcoming film, beamed: "I love sex and I think about it a lot. I can imagine that lots of people find me sexy." Lara fans will be able to decide for themselves when the film opens on July 9.

In other tenuously related celebrity news, **'NSync** are the latest pop stars to feature in a computer game. Scheduled for release by **Stunt Pony Entertainment** in September, **The 'NSync Hotline Fantasy Phone** is aimed at eight to 12-year-olds. Players have to acquire a virtual backstage pass by winning five short games, including a bowling tournament, a memory test, and a trivia challenge. As usual, expectp plenty of copies to be available.

Championship Manager has again impinged upon the world of football, with a first division player launching a scathing attack on the game. Having bought himself in the latest version, **West Bromwich Albion** striker **Jason Roberts** fumed: "The programmers obviously don't rate me. I've only scored five goals in a full season. If we get to the Premiership, I'm going to tell them to make a few adjustments." Suffice to say he didn't need to bother them.

Still on the subject of everybody's favourite football management game, *Championship Manager* fans were stunned to open ***The Guardian*** of a Saturday morning and find a three-page feature on the *Champ Man* phenomenon. A reasonably researched tale, it charted the domestic misadventures of a number of addicts, including a man who shattered two bones in his foot after missing out on promotion. **Aston Villa**'s **Lee Hendrie** and **Milan**'s **Dimitri Albertini** were revealed as fans, along with **Poland** manager **Jerzy Engel** who claims: "To all those who would like to become managers, one can learn a lot from it." The article also quoted *PC ZONE*'s **Mark Hill**, mysteriously promoting him to editor. Meanwhile, *Championship Manager* evangelist **Steve Hill** (no relation) is believed to be absolutely spewing, and spat: "Why talk to the monkey when they could go to the organ-grinder?"

And finally, quality high street electronics retailer **Dixons** has conducted a survey purporting to prove that **Britain**'s first-time voters are more aware of the names of game characters than they are of the country's leading politicians. A thousand customers between the ages of 18 and 22 were asked to list as many of each as possible, with politicians losing out.

HOTSHOTS

MAFIA

"You talking to me? You talking to me?" Oh sorry, wrong genre...

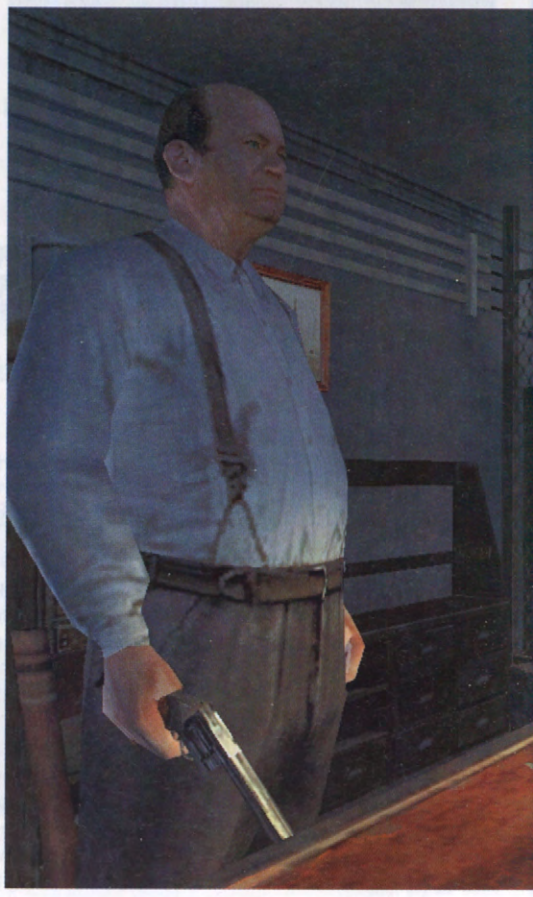
Take 2 Interactive • ETA end 2001

Sharing a sweaty trailer at E3 with two moronic American journalists isn't generally our idea of an idyllic afternoon, but when the other components include a top-of-the-range PC and the latest playable code of *Mafia: The City Of Lost Heaven*, we're willing to make an exception.

Still quite a way off, the only gangster game we're interested in is now looking absolutely fantastic, thanks to the LS3D engine (the same that's being used in the equally sumptuous *Hidden & Dangerous 2*).

There weren't any complete missions to play, but the cars are handling well, and the city is starting to populate. After much heckling from the Americans, producer Andrew Morley proved that it is indeed possible to run over innocent pedestrians and smash old women round the head with a baseball bat. There was also talk of a knuckleduster, but Andrew wasn't keen to elaborate, muttering that it was probably going to be viewed as "too violent for the final release".

One item that's already been snipped is the naked lady that you might have seen hiding behind the shrubbery in earlier screenshots. We can confirm that she's been taken out to avoid further controversy, although there's still going to be plenty in there to earn the title a big fat red 18 certificate. Watch this space, or possibly the tabloids, for the latest information.



MAILBOX

Got something to say to us? Nice, nasty or otherwise, get it off your chest and if it's interesting enough we'll print it

ANSWERED BY Dave Woods

CONTACT INFO

Write to us, and if your letter is selected as Letter Of The Month we'll send you a prize.

WRITE TO Mailbox, ***PC ZONE***, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk

CHAT FORUM If you've got something pressing to say, check out the 'lively' chat forum on our website. Point your browser at **www.pczone.co.uk** for further info.

SUPER PRIZES TO BE WON

***PC ZONE* is giving away not one, but two of these wonderful GameVoice contraptions from Microsoft to the writer of the Star Letter. If we don't consider any of the letters to be worthy we'll just keep them for ourselves. Using the GameVoice, you can communicate with other players online and give yourself a massive advantage over the Luddites who have to stop and type instructions. They're priced at £49.99 each and are worth every single penny.**

UN-BANNED

I always think it's a great shame when somebody writes a confused and ill-informed article about the games industry, and it's even more of a shame when somebody in the industry is behind it. Dave Woods' comments (in his editorial on demo certification) seems to fail to understand what certification means or how it affects publishers and the public.

Firstly, there are two separate systems in use on games. An ELSPA rating and, on some games a BBFC rating. The ELSPA rating is advisory and voluntary. The BBFC is legally binding. It's simple, OK? Now to correct Mr Woods. *Undying* is not BBFC-rated and is therefore legal to distribute to any age. Perhaps not ideal, according to ELSPA who gave it a restricted rating, but not against the rules.

As for games that do carry a BBFC rating, these can be, and are, regularly covermounted. *Quake*, *GTA*, *Res Evil*, and *NOLF* all spring to mind. If they are legally marked, ie carry the correct BBFC rating, they too are legal. The shop of course has now to ensure that the magazine is not sold to minors. This does not make it become top-shelf material. Why he thinks that anybody would class *PC ZONE* as a porno mag is beyond me. Right beside the current issue on the shelf, I found a DVD mag with the usual trailer disc giveaway with a big red BBFC certificate on open sale. *PC ZONE* has itself carried age-restricted demos in the past without problems.

Mr Woods may of course argue that it would make sense to observe the ELSPA ratings. Perhaps, but I'd point out that *Delta Force*, *Giants*, *Thief II*, *AvP*, *Sacrifice*, *Shogun* and *Deus Ex* all carry caution ratings. What demos do you plan on leaving us Mr Woods?

John C Flett

All of them, thankfully. After the last issue we've decided to bring you all the demos we can and carry an ELSPA 18-rating, which means you're free to sample the scary delights of *Undying*. As you rightly point out, ELSPA ratings are not legally binding, but retail outlets use discretion on whether to sell rated products to everyone or to stick to the advisory ratings. Obviously this could harm sales of a magazine if shops decide to get over-zealous. The top-shelf comment was just a little joke. Sorry you took it to heart. And out of all the games you mentioned, only *Deus Ex* is actually an ELSPA 18. Sorry to be pedantic.

Try out the demo of *Undying* in all its g(l)ory.

"In future you should say if the game might not live up to its hype, due to the time-frame they have set or whatever"

AARON PASCOVITCH WANTS US TO BE CLAIRVOYANT

THE MAN WHO DOESN'T KNOW

I'd like to take The Man Who Knows to task. In his final comment in last month's issue (#104) he mentions that no character in the *Doom* world has a name, and therefore *Doom* has nothing to do with a crazy American naming his shotgun Arlene. However, this is not entirely true, as the main character in *Doom* is called Corporal Flynn 'Fly' Taggart, who is very close to a soldier-lady called Arlene Sanders. So now you know.

Chris B

We knew it all along. We were just testing.

PRE-REVIEW

Having read this magazine for the past three years, I have found the reviews and previews very useful and informative, as well as spot on in all the games that I have gone out and bought. What I do find annoying though, is when *Emperor: Battle For Dune*, (of which I am a fan of the entire series – games and books) was announced, your preview said that it looked brilliant and could be the best one in the series

***Battle For Dune*: Not as good as we hoped it was going to be, but we weren't to know.**

ever. Then in issue 103 you proceeded to give it a score that, while not bad, did not reflect the greatness that you had predicted.

This made me have a good look back over past previews and, comparing them to the reviews, in many cases the disparity is quite startling. In future you should say if the game might not live up to its hype, due to the time-frame they have set themselves, or whatever.

Aaron Pascovitch

We try hard to be as critical as possible with previews, but ultimately we can't judge a game until we get code in for review. We were obviously excited by the overdue move to 3D from Westwood but unfortunately the game wasn't a classic.

"Although online gaming does have a lot of potential, at the moment there simply isn't enough there to keep you online"

STEVE CHICKEN PONDERS THE FUTURE OF ONLINE GAMING

OFFLINE

Hey there hip cats, I'm writing to say that I'm concerned about the direction gaming is headed. By this I mean the big one: online gaming. Now, I must admit, I have dabbled in online gaming a bit, and enjoy the occasional game of *TFC* and *Counter-Strike*, but I'm still a bit worried. Why, you ask? Well, I'll tell you (aren't I nice?).

Firstly: connection speeds. Don't forget that many people still have inferior Internet connections. With games requiring increasingly high pings, that could cause a problem. However, with cable, ADSL, and T-3 poking their heads around the smutty door of online gaming, this won't be a problem for much longer.

Secondly: cost. With Napster closing down, and Barrysworld's near-collapse, it is surely only a matter of months before we see pay-per-play introduced. In fact, online RPGs have already started this, and it surely isn't long before all online games follow suit. Remember that some game players are still only students, and if games do reach monthly charges, these gamers will be forced to choose just a handful of games to play, rather than the choice of literally hundreds of games and mods available under the present system.

Thirdly: involvement. Let's cut to the chase on this one: online gaming does not offer enough scope to keep gamers playing for hours on end. When offered a choice of *CS* or *Baldur's Gate*, I'll pick *BG* every time. Why? Because of the story. How many online games have you played that fully immerse you, and keep you going along to find the next piece of the puzzle? Only *Vampire: TMR* has come even close to achieving this. This is one aspect of online gaming that really does have the potential to go far, and yet it has not yet been explored. The only one I have seen with this idea is *Neverwinter Nights*. This is the one I imagine will cause the revolution, although at the moment the future looks bleak.

OK, I'm done now. My conclusion? Although online gaming does have a lot of potential, at the moment there simply isn't enough there to keep you online. I believe that advancing single-player games is the way forward.

Steve Chicken

id Software obviously agrees with you, as its next release is going to concentrate on single-player action. Obviously there's room for both types of game, but while I'll give you your point today, the new breed of massively multiplayer games offer a story that you can shape. Oh and you're right about *Neverwinter Nights*. Check out our huge scoop preview for the full story.

***Neverwinter Nights* was the game of E3 for a lot of people, turn to page 48 to find out why.**

LETTER OF THE MONTH

GOODIES WINNER!

BOSS HOGG

I've just read Steve Hill's Comment section in issue 104. He makes a great argument against the knee-jerk, scapegoating, refusal-to-accept-personal-liability, litigious situation in the USA where they are attempting to blame *Doom* for people shooting up schools. He points out that it's "like blaming *The Dukes Of Hazzard* for car crashes". Brilliant! couldn't agree more! Except then, he points the finger of blame at the firearms used (not, I must add, the first time a *PC ZONE* representative has done this).

Erm, isn't that like, let me see, blaming *The Dukes Of Hazzard* for car crashes?

What if the parents actually took some responsibility for their kids' lives, and schooled them on safe, proper, sporting use of firearms? And indeed, kept an eye on them in the way parents should – making sure they are OK, happy... you know, talking to them, not just leaving them with the TV! But that would be admitting personal liability for their kids' failings, and that's not the American way. Or, it seems, the English way. We are so damn scared of firearms we blame them instantly for any shooting incident, rather than the human factor pulling the trigger.

OK, I admit, I own firearms, shoot them for sport, and respect them. What I don't do is think I'm God because of it, or get a hard-on around them, or think about shooting up a schoolyard. Neither does anyone else who I know that partakes in this sport. Before I rant about banning handguns in the UK just to win votes, I'll sign off saying: apply your arguments about not blaming computer games to not blaming the inert lumps of metal that are used to shoot people. You'll find the argument defends the guns quite readily. It's that annoying thing called people that cause all the problems...

Ian Chisholm

Just those good old boys. Just a-meanin' no harm.

A fair point, almost. But cars are designed for driving not crashing, whereas guns are designed for shooting things. I agree it's the people that cause the problem, but with problem people and readily available firearms there is always going to be a tragedy waiting to happen.

More violence please, we're British...

SHOOTERS

The ten best and most violent games from E3 exposed in all their gory glory

E3 SPECIAL

When people ask if the PC is dead all you have to do is point to a list of first-person shooters and give them a slap for spouting stupid questions. The console has never ever been able to emulate the likes of *Half-Life* and *Unreal Tournament* because of a combination of controller and online problems, and the news that *Half-Life* has finally been cancelled on the Dreamcast caused a good few chuckles in the *ZONE* office.

That's the good news. The bad news is that we haven't had a top-rate single-player shooter for more than two and a half years, although the current crop at E3 is set to propel us into the next generation. *Wolfenstein*, *Medal Of Honour* and *Max Payne* (yes we know it's not a first-person shooter, so don't write in) look stunning, and promise action that could enable us to consign the words 'but it's not as good as *Half-Life*' to the mists of time.

The other huge AAA title is *Halo*, but at the present time this is still an Xbox exclusive. Nothing is being said about the PC release (when or if at all) and all the screenshots that are circling about are taken from the game running on Xbox hardware. Hopefully we'll have some positive news on Bungie's epic in the coming months. Until then, feast your eyes over the ten best shooters at the show.

"What excited us most of all was the dynamic universe. Not only are all the backdrops more eye-popping than a fork in the eyeball, they're full of alien life"

UNREAL 2

***Martin Korda* tries to keep it real**

THE DETAILS

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE First quarter 2002
PUBLISHER Infogrames
DEVELOPER Legend
WEBSITE www.unreal2.com

Out of all the games that we saw at E3, this was without a doubt the best looking, which is no small feat considering the opposition. Fortunately that wasn't the only thing which impressed us about this stunning shooter. From what we were shown, *Unreal 2* is looking like a genuine contender to *Half-Life*'s rather large crown.

However, before we delve into details about its superb gameplay, let's get all the blurb about how great it looks out of the way first. The screenshots that you see on the opposite page are all in-game. Yes, you read it right the first time, they're in-game, and having seen it up and running first hand, we can assure you they look even more impressive on screen, as the animation of each character is nothing short of breathtaking. OK, that's enough about such shallow aesthetic pleasures. After all, gameplay's the most important thing right? Right? Stop gawping will you. And for goodness sake wipe that foam away from your mouth. That's better. Right, on to the gameplay then.

You play a Terran Colonial Authority Frontier Marshal, which as well as being a real mouthful to say, is also a position of great authority in the 24th century. Having travelled to distant parts of

There'll be five races for you to battle against.

Sparks will fly in *Unreal 2*, in a very literal sense.

space, humankind has set up colonies, and you're the sheriff of one of them. Backing you up are three crew members, including the shapely Aida, who gives you guidance during your missions, which include rescuing hostages and assaulting enemy bases.

The story revolves around a feud between five alien races, which are fighting it out for possession of a bunch of ancient artefacts. Caught in the middle of this ruck, it's up to you to defend your charges and make sure that these artefacts don't fall into the wrong hands. Although we didn't see any during the presentation, we were promised that plenty of FMVs would help move the plot along, as well as in-game cut-scenes, and best of all interaction with NPCs, where you'll be able to choose your response. What excited us most of all though, was the dynamic universe that we were shown. Not only are all the backdrops more eye-popping than a fork in the eyeball, they're full of alien life which adapts to your actions. We were eagerly shown how you can stumble across alien skirmishes in which you can intervene, even going as far as choosing which side you want to help out. As for the battles, they're not only frantic, but also full of highly intelligent opponents who use evasive manoeuvres not too dissimilar to the bots from *Unreal Tournament*. On top of this we were shown some of the 15 weapons that will be available to you. They're not only spectacular (check out the flame-thrower), but some of them are hugely original, such as the Leech Gun, which slows down your enemies and slowly drains them of health.

Even at this early stage of development, it's obvious that *Unreal 2* is going to be something special. If it builds on this early promise and stays on schedule for release early next year, then *Half-Life*'s reign at the top could be seriously threatened. We'll keep you posted.

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE 2

Martin Korda tried his luck with Raven's sequel, and managed to hang on to all his limbs

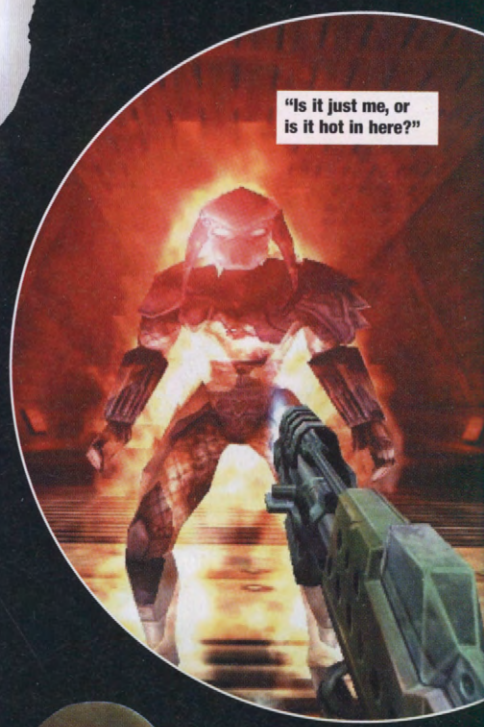
THE DETAILS

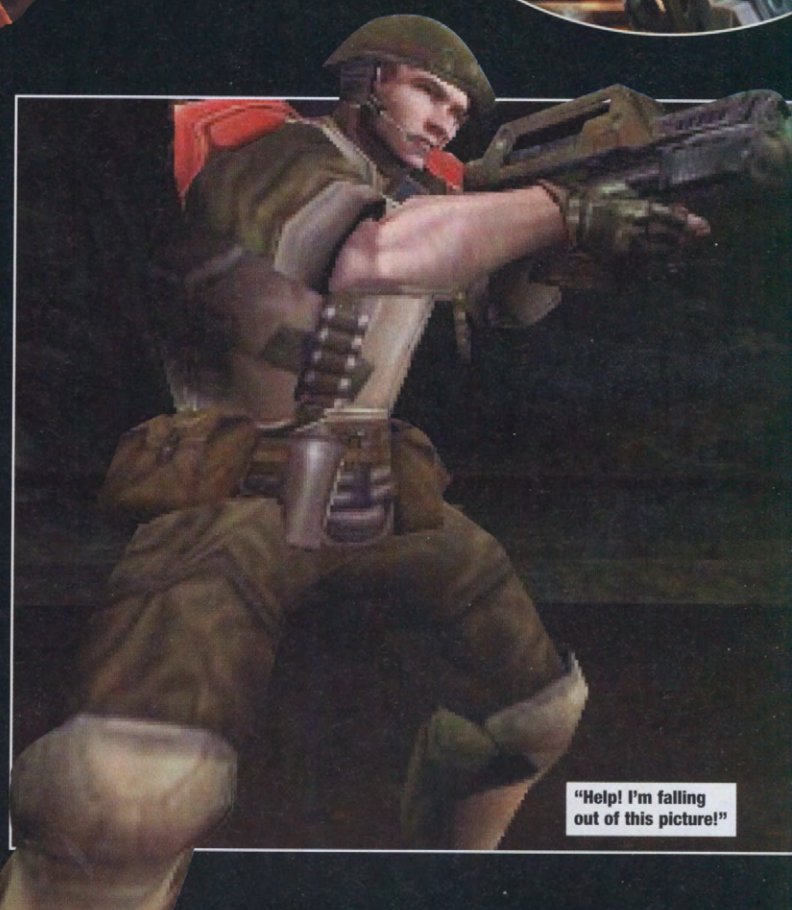
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Winter 2001
PUBLISHER Activision
DEVELOPER Raven
WEBSITE www.ravensoft.com

One of the more shocking revelations of the show came during the demonstration of *Soldier Of Fortune 2*. The developers were keen to point out that there'll be considerably less gore this time round, which is either a blessing or a curse depending on your mental stability.

The good news is that the *Quake III Team Arena* engine was throwing out some lush-looking graphics. We were taken through some of the vehicles that you'll be able to pilot, including tanks and helicopters, the latter of which will give you the chance to man the gun turret and leadhole some bad guys. Needless to say, we were more than a little eager to have a go.

The story is once again based around John Mullins, the hero of the first game. You'll have to lead him through a series of missions, including search-and-destroy runs and intelligence gathering. Ultimately it'll be your goal to stop a deadly virus from being released onto an unsuspecting public. While the developers were keen to demonstrate the inclusion of a random map generator, they were somewhat cagey about multiplayer options, even going so far as to hint that there won't be any. Which is a huge shame, especially as the engine is literally crying out for multiplayer fragging action. However, the single-player game is looking fantastic, so let's just console ourselves with that and save any complaints about the potential lack of multiplayer options until we see the finished product.





ALIENS VS PREDATOR 2

THE DETAILS

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE October
PUBLISHER Vivendi
DEVELOPER Monolith Productions
WEBSITE www.lith.com

Three times the fun for the price of one *Dave Woods* reports from behind the sofa

The first *AvP*, coded by UK-based Rebellion was one of the scariest games ever to surface on the PC. Having finally got a chance to play around with the sequel at E3, I'm happy to be able to report that it's going to stay pretty close to the ethos of the original, but with the stunning LithTech 2.5 engine adding to the visual splendour.

As before, there'll be a campaign for each of the three sides – alien, predator and marine – with seven missions in each, but the focus this time round is narrative. Set shortly after the events in *Aliens*, the action revolves around the planet LV-1201, where a 10,000 year old Alien hive has been discovered. An extremely smart scientist called Eisenberg sets up a research unit, which promptly gets dismembered by the Aliens. This is where you come in, as a group of marines are sent in to sort the mess out and find out what happened to Eisenberg. The Predators? Well they've obviously heard there's a rumble going down and soon arrive to join in the mayhem.

Aside from the emphasis on story, changes from the original include increased firepower for all three sides. Predators get blades, shoulder cannons, net guns and spears to play around with; marines get to choose from the combat knife, up through the standard-issue pistol, pulse rifle, shotgun, to the more satisfying flame-thrower, smart gun, railgun (with scope), the new Spider Minebots (mobile explosives) and EMP grenades.

Marines also get to play around with gadgets (think *No One Lives Forever*) like the Motion Tracker, a shoulder lamp, electronic picklock, portable hand-welder (for accessing new areas as well as sealing Aliens in) and phosphorus flares.

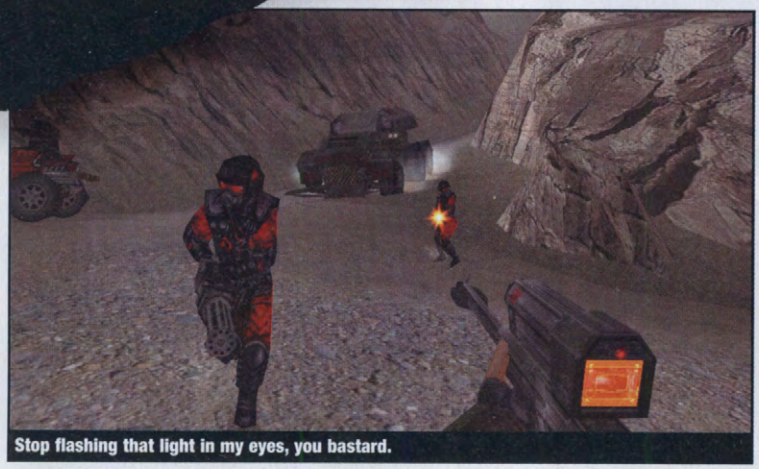
Information regarding the Aliens is sketchy at the moment, but as well as the claw-and-tail attack, you'll be able to utilise the fatal jaw attack, but you won't be able to spit acid. To compensate, news is coming through that the game is going to feature a full complement of Alien life forms, including the Facehuggers (which will hatch from eggs), Chestbursters, Runners, Drones, Warriors, PredAliens and even a rumoured appearance from royalty.

The original *AvP* was critically acclaimed and sold well, but it never made it into the realms of the big three: *Unreal*, *Quake* and *Half-Life*. Monolith is hoping it can make the breakthrough this time, with 12 special multiplayer maps shipping in the box and level editing tools to enable you to create your own levels and mods. There's no doubting the fan base is there – if the game delivers then Monolith should be onto a winner. It's heading for a release in October. Watch this space.

Marines get a full complement of gadgets and some brand new weapons.

All the *Alien* life forms are going to be included.

Forget about animal rights.



Stop flashing that light in my eyes, you bastard.

Drop the gun and fight me like a man.

COMMAND & CONQUER RENEGADE

THE DETAILS

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Autumn 2001
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER Westwood Studios
WEBSITE www.westwood.ea.com/games/ccuniverse/renegade/index.html

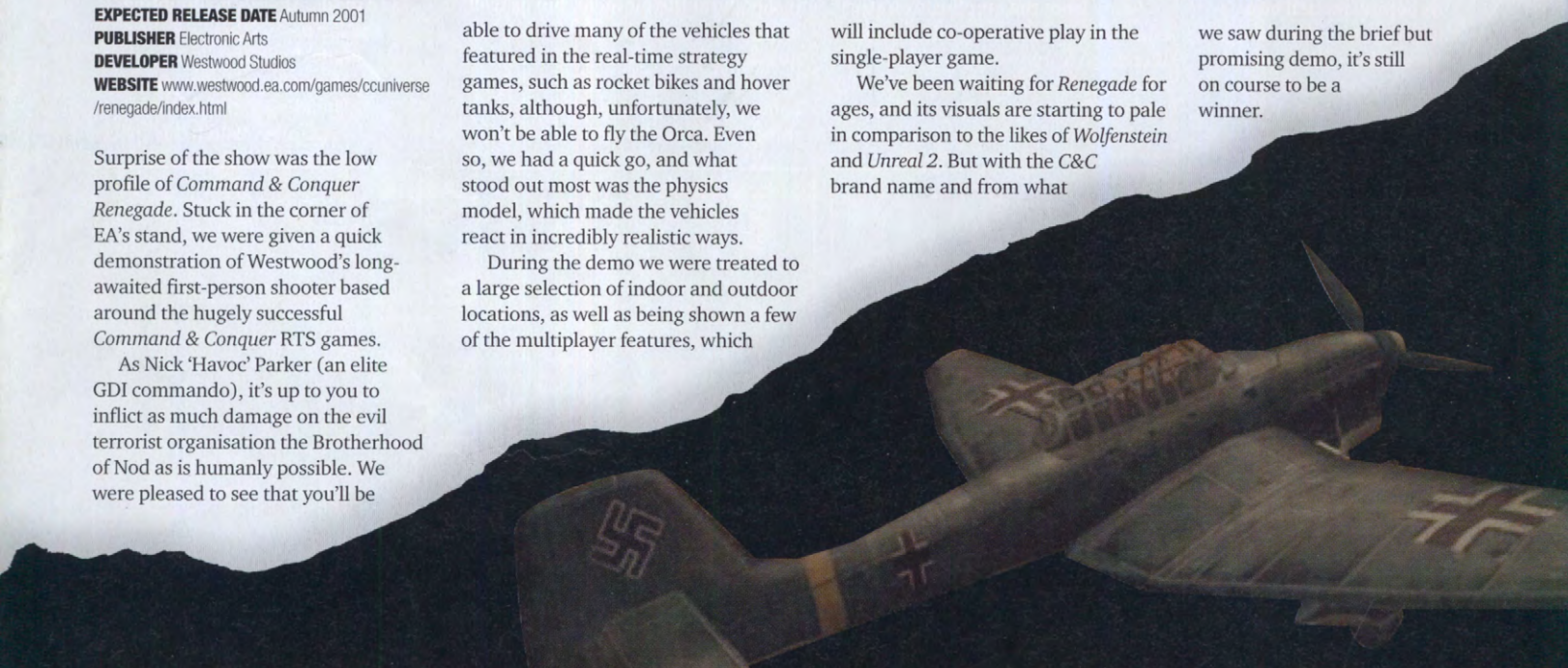
A *C&C* game with no strategy? *Martin Korda* had to see it to believe it

Surprise of the show was the low profile of *Command & Conquer Renegade*. Stuck in the corner of EA's stand, we were given a quick demonstration of Westwood's long-awaited first-person shooter based around the hugely successful *Command & Conquer* RTS games.

As Nick 'Havoc' Parker (an elite GDI commando), it's up to you to inflict as much damage on the evil terrorist organisation the Brotherhood of Nod as is humanly possible. We were pleased to see that you'll be able to drive many of the vehicles that featured in the real-time strategy games, such as rocket bikes and hover tanks, although, unfortunately, we won't be able to fly the Orca. Even so, we had a quick go, and what stood out most was the physics model, which made the vehicles react in incredibly realistic ways.

During the demo we were treated to a large selection of indoor and outdoor locations, as well as being shown a few of the multiplayer features, which will include co-operative play in the single-player game.

We've been waiting for *Renegade* for ages, and its visuals are starting to pale in comparison to the likes of *Wolfenstein* and *Unreal 2*. But with the *C&C* brand name and from what we saw during the brief but promising demo, it's still on course to be a winner.



MEDAL OF HONOR:

THE DETAILS

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Autumn
PUBLISHER EA
Developer Dreamworks
Web Site http://mhaa.ea.com

Most promising shooter of the year, and not *Wolfenstein*? *Dave Woods* explains...

I've been hyping *Wolfenstein* for the past year now, and it still looks like it's going to rock when and if it finally hits the shelves – but I saw something at E3 that made me revise my opinion about it being the hottest-looking shooter waiting in the wings. Using my press credentials to full effect, I was whisked to the front of a huge queue of Joe Publics to witness a massively impressive in-game demo of EA's *Medal Of Honour: Allied Assault*. My jaw proceeded to drop, along with (nearly) the contents of my stomach (beer and seafood).

Is that the sort of reaction you want from a game? Well, it's the same one I had watching *Saving Private Ryan* with a hangover, and for a game that owes more than a passing nod to Hank's finest hour, I reckon the developers would have been proud.

After launching out of the landing craft I spent the first couple of minutes ducking fizzing bullets and dodging the mass of corpses littering the beach. A quick sprint through the tank traps, and I was in front of a bunker, ready to dump a grenade and clear the way for some up-close-and-personal action. It was pretty intense stuff and if not as horrific as the film, still pretty grisly for a WWII-based shooter.

Like *Wolfenstein*, *Medal Of Honour* also utilises the *Quake III* engine to provide jaw-droppingly lifelike visuals. Where the games differ is that *Medal* looks that much more realistic. Running through villages with planes spiralling down to the ground, and using the sniper rifle to pick through individual leaves on the trees in order to get a clear shot on a target while tanks rumble in the background, made me feel I was inside the Spielberg epic. In comparison *Wolfenstein* looks more polished, more *Quake*-like and less gritty.

The most impressive game at E3?

He should have joined the AA.

"Easy, Tiger."

ALLIED ASSAULT

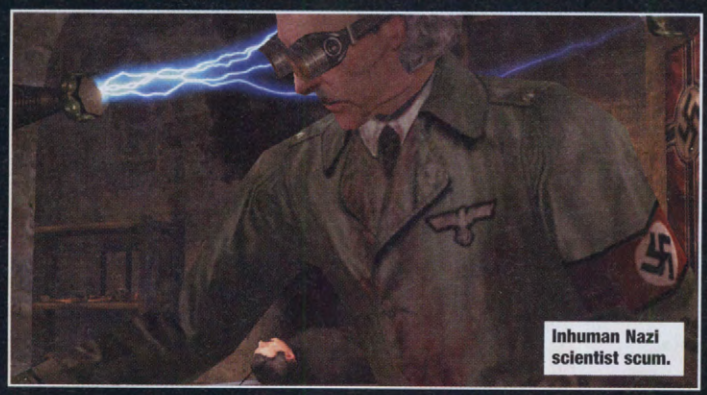
Allied Assault is set between 1942 and 1945, and takes place over 20 single-player missions with solo and squad-based play. These include the aforementioned Normandy landings, the assault at Arzew, a rendezvous with the Resistance outside the village of St. Lo, a brief sojourn to the deserts of North Africa and a push through Nazi-infested lines towards the bridge of Remagen. Each mission culminates in an objective similar to the Assault levels of *Unreal Tournament*, so you might be charged with silencing gun batteries, or sabotaging U-boats, providing you can survive the initial charge up Omaha Beach of course.

EA is working with the Congressional Medal Of Honour Society (CMOHS) to ensure real-life accuracy (Spielberg luvvie, typecast movie general and military expert Captain Dye is also heavily involved). So, you can expect real-life weapons (21 in total, including Thompson sub-machine guns, Mark II Frag Grenades, flame-throwers and our favourite, the 'sticky bomb'). You'll also find vehicles you can interact with (ie shoot at) like Sherman tanks and M3 Half Trucks, day/night and weather effects and the ability to call for artillery strikes if you're too much of a wuss to deal with things on the ground.

"I spent the first couple of minutes ducking fizzing bullets and dodging the mass of corpses on the beach"

I came away from the demo reeling, and that had nothing to do with events in The Viper Room the night before. I reckon this has the potential to out-Wolfenstein *Wolfenstein*, and although the hype surrounding it isn't going to be as fierce, I suggest you keep an eye out for the huge preview we've got pencilled in for the future. Of course, I could be completely wrong. There's a lot of work between now and the finished product, although EA is aiming for a release later this year, and somewhere along the way it could all fall to pieces. Somehow though, I don't think it will.

"Look over there, it's the Führer."


Inhuman Nazi scientist scum.

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

Shooting Nazis? *Dave Woods* is the man for the job

THE DETAILS

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE When it's ready
PUBLISHER Activision
DEVELOPER Gray Matter
WEBSITE www.activision.com/games/wolfenstein/

Why are we waiting? Because Gray Matter is insistent that it's not going to rush the update and ruin what could be the best first-person shooter known to man. So says Jeremy Lupyies, the Activision producer who was busy demonstrating the latest build at E3.

We've seen running code, and even played around with it a few times over the past 12 months and we know it looks good. You know it looks good because you've seen the screenshots, although you haven't been privy to the photo-realistic textures the flame-thrower spits out, and the animation of the characters which is, quite simply, superb. What you want to know is why it's taking so long, and if the AI's going to be any cop. Right?

Well, from what we've seen it's looking damn good. Enemy soldiers, or Nazis, as we like to call them 'hunt' in packs and react intelligently to situations. So, when they run out of ammo they'll duck down to reload before popping back up to spray you with another round of bullets. If they come across a dead body they won't just walk past but will instantly move up to full alert and try to seek you out. They'll also use the interactive scenery as cover. To prove the point, Jeremy moved into a room, where a Nazi kicked a table over and ducked behind it.

The aim is to create a believable level of AI. Of course, no one wants a game that's criminally hard to play, and no one wants to mow down wave after wave of predictable polygons. Instead, and like *Half-Life*, *Wolfenstein* is aiming for human responses and we're convinced that Gray Matter has actually got it working properly. Having said that, with running code available for a year, something is obviously keeping the wolf from the door.

"The photo-realistic textures the flame-thrower spits out and the animation of the characters is superb"

RED FACTION

Martin Korda feels the earth move, but only a little

THE DETAILS

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE September 2001
PUBLISHER THQ
DEVELOPER Volition
WEBSITE www.redfaction.com

Red Faction was easily the most complete FPS that we saw. The big thing about it is the accurate deformable terrain – somewhat of a first in this genre. We had loads of fun burrowing under doors and through walls, but when it came to the actual combat, we weren't quite so convinced.

Although solid, the AI failed to sober us up in the same way as *Unreal 2* or *AvP2*. However, the effects are incredible, and the weapons included some really heavy duty equipment, which will satisfy just about anyone with a love for mindless destruction.

As with several other FPSs on show, *Red Faction* will give you the opportunity to pilot a variety of vehicles. We tried out the assault helicopter, which was very easy to manoeuvre with the mouse and keyboard controls. This was by far the most amount of fun we had during the presentation, and while we left impressed, we were hardly blown away by the whole experience.

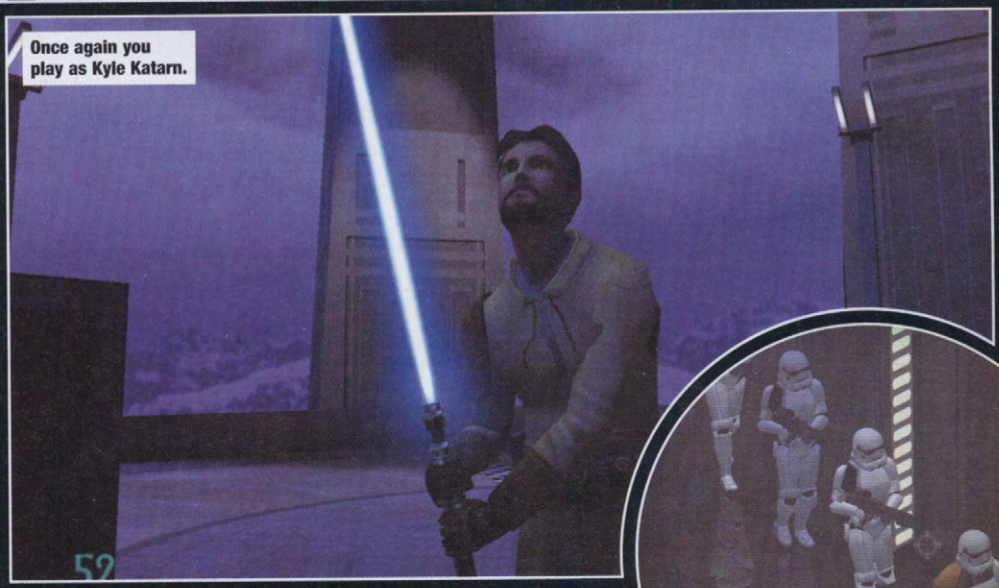
"Deform this, suckers."

Don't just stand there you fools, kill something.

"Come get some trooper, boy."

"You need to start using some deoderant, mate."

"Your powers are weak, young man."


Once again you play as Kyle Katarn.

Daah da d'daah da d'daah da d'daah.

STAR WARS: JEDI OUTCAST – JEDI KNIGHT II

THE DETAILS

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Spring 2001
PUBLISHER Activision
DEVELOPER Raven/LucasArts
WEBSITE www.lucasarts.com

Richie Shoemaker discovers a New Hope

After cancelling *Obi-Wan* late last year, the chances of a sequel to *Jedi Knight* seemed thin. However, while at E3, we found *Obi-Wan* alive and well and happily living on Xbox. Meanwhile, on PC we saw *Jedi Knight*'s true sequel for the first time, *Jedi Outcast*. So, rather than Ben Kenobi, we again get to control Kyle Katarn.

Powered by the *Quake III Arena* engine, *Jedi Outcast* is being co-developed by Raven software, maker of *Soldier Of Fortune* and *Elite Force Voyager*, and although having only been in development since February, from what we saw at E3, the game looks set to eclipse its four-year-old predecessor.

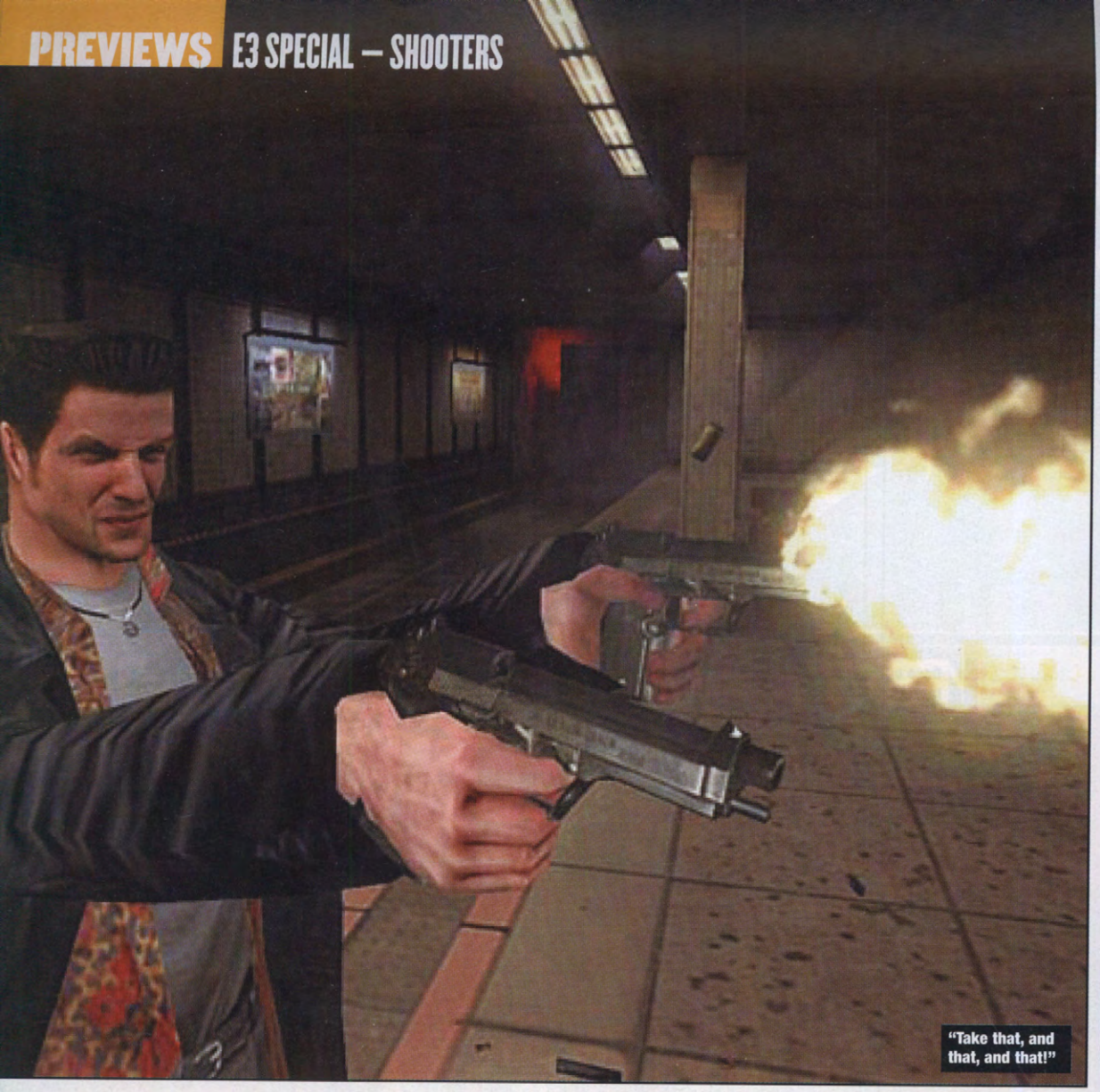
"At the moment it's still too early to go into too much detail," admits LucasArts associate producer Dan Pettit. "But we should have a few new weapons, as well as some old favourites from the original game, plus new and old force powers like the ability to wrench weapons from Stormtroopers' hands."

One new force effect on show was the Force Throw, where our hero can hurl his light saber at his enemies safe in the knowledge that it will come back, boomerang-style. Dan also demonstrated a sniper rifle weapon, zooming into a crowd of Stormtroopers and showing off amazing detail.

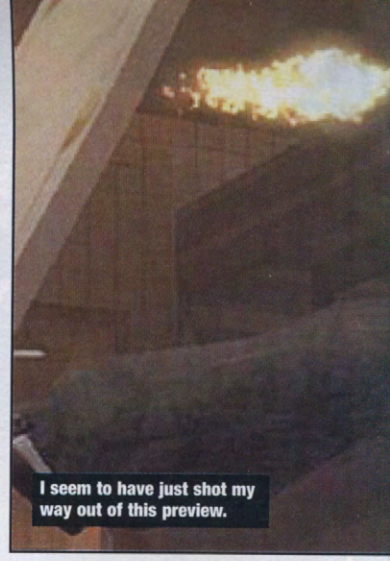
As was the case with Raven's *Elite Force Voyager*, the plan is to introduce intelligent allies who will fight alongside you against the Empire. Asked about the possibility of driveable vehicles Dan remained tight-lipped. "It's still too early to rule anything out," he said.

Of course, with the latest *Quake III Team Arena* code powering the game, we can expect a wealth of bot and multiplayer options, from straight and team Deathmatch, to Capture The Flag. We asked that considering the popularity of *Counter-Strike*, whether there might be a Rebels vs. Stormtroopers equivalent, perhaps where one side must rescue or capture druids.

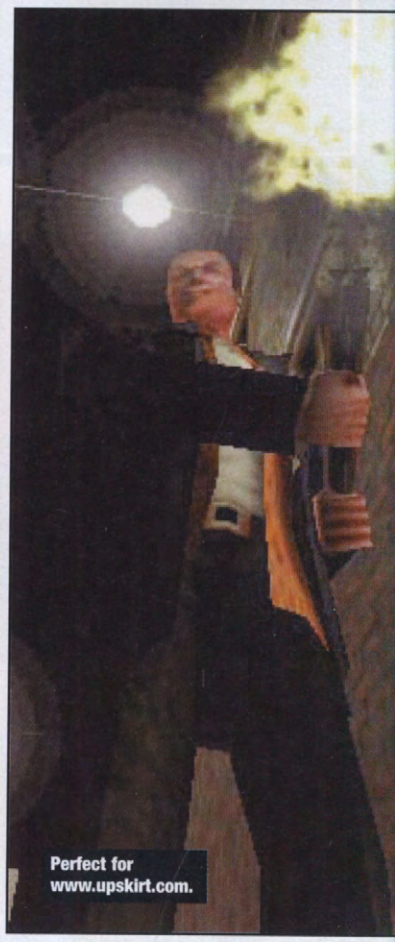
"I can't comment on that," Dan says with a smile, one that we hope reads: great idea, I'll tell George...



"Take that, and that, and that!"



I seem to have just shot my way out of this preview.



Perfect for www.upskirt.com.

MAX PAYNE

THE DETAILS

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE August 2001
PUBLISHER Take 2
DEVELOPER Remedy
WEBSITE www.maxpayne.com

It's nearly ready, apparently. *Dave Woods* is way off

Have you seen *The Matrix*? Of course you have, and this is the gaming equivalent of that film, complete with slow-motion John Woo-style shoot-outs and a narrative to match that of the great Wachowski brothers. As I pointed out last month, this is the game that we never thought we'd see, but at E3 I was privy to a demonstration that put all thoughts of the game being canned to rest.

"Life was good," says Max in the game's intro sequence. "Sun setting on a sweet summer's day. Smell of freshly mowed lawns. Sounds of children playing. A house across the river on the Jersey side. The American Dream come true. But dreams have a nasty habit of going bad when you're not looking." And dreams don't get much worse than coming home from a day on the beat to find your wife and kids slaughtered, before signing up for an undercover Mafia job, getting framed for a murder and having everyone on your tail. Nothing to lose indeed.

The proprietary MAX-FX engine is looking as good as it should after four years of development, and everything you see is there for you to destroy. Shoot a window out, and the glass explodes, leaving a few shards which you can then take out at your leisure. Realism is the key. "All the decals are different depending on what material you are shooting at. We've got metallic sparks off the metal surfaces, smoke puffs off the brick walls, we're even getting wood splinters out of the wooden surfaces" says project lead, Petri Järvilehto.

The game plays in third person, but developer Remedy is hoping to bypass any of the usual problems by utilising a feature it calls Bullet Time. Using this you can slow down the action to dodge bullets and perform acrobatic gun-blazing somersaults that Keanu and co need wires for. It also boasts self-adjusting skill levels (forget about choosing to play as easy, medium or hard) that can monitor whether you're a hardcore gamer or a no-hoping lamer. All of which brings us to the only slight reservation we've got with the game.

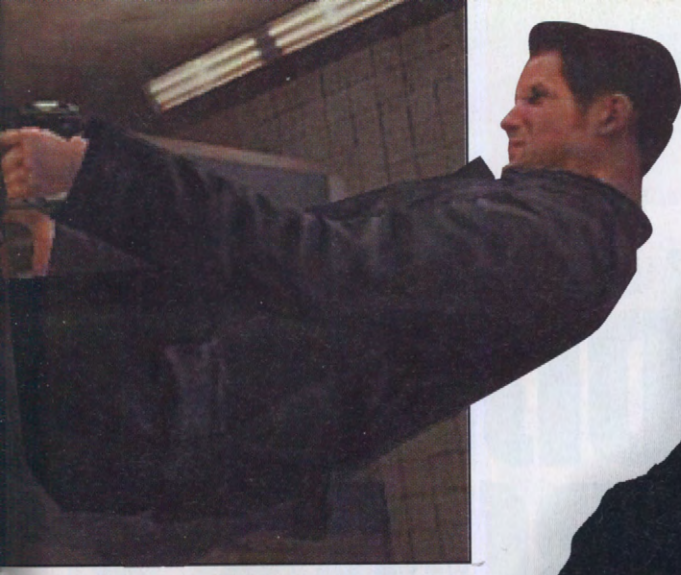
"You can slow down the action to dodge bullets and perform acrobatic gun-blazing somersaults"

Asked how many hours of gameplay Max has to offer, Petri (without a PR person lurking to gag him) was pretty straightforward: "About ten hours for a hardcore *Quake* player." Taking hardcore as hardcore, this means that the average gamer can probably expect to get about 15 hours of pure cinematic action, with some of the best visuals we've seen on the PC, and a narrative-driven approach to a game that we haven't seen the likes of before.

Is that enough? It's your money, but we should have our verdict pretty soon. I've just spoken to the developers and at this precise moment (about three weeks ago when you're reading this), they were pulling out all the stops to finish the game and wipe out all the remaining bugs. In fact, we're all hoping that we're going to get finished review code in time for next issue, but then my glass is always half-full.

DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

***Dave Woods* realises the wait is far from over**



THE DETAILS

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE When it's done (yawn)
PUBLISHER Take 2
DEVELOPER 3D Realms
WEBSITE www.3drealms.com

Don't believe the hype? It seems that some people are willing to believe it, as *Duke Nukem Forever* gained votes for Game of the Show at E3 despite the fact that it failed to make an appearance. Actually that's not strictly true. There was a short video released which shows off the in-game action to stunning effect. Considering that as far as the world knows this game is running the *Unreal Tournament* engine, the cityscapes and characters look as good as anything we've seen.

We've got the video on our cover CD, so if you haven't checked it out yet, load it up. Look out for the obvious *Half-Life* influences, the different vehicles that are included and the totally gratuitous ending that you'll miss if you don't leave the blank screen running for about five seconds at the end.

Aside from what you can see on the video there's not a lot else to be said. Saying 'it will be done when it's done' is all getting a bit tired now. Unlike some of the Americans we met, we want playable code and we want it now. Thankfully, from the little we have seen we can honestly say that when it gets released it's not going to be another *Daikatana*.

"We will fight them on the

The *Half-Life* influence is clear.

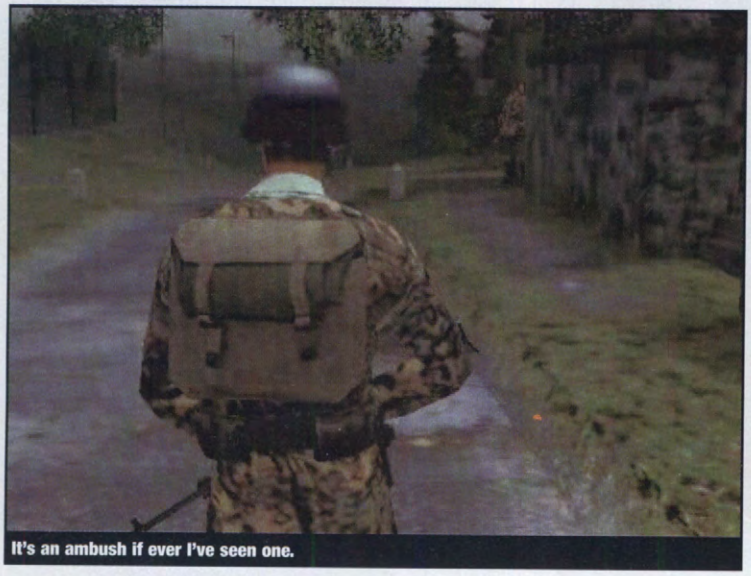
Well, it is *Duke Nukem.*

Yes, yes, but when is it going to be ready?

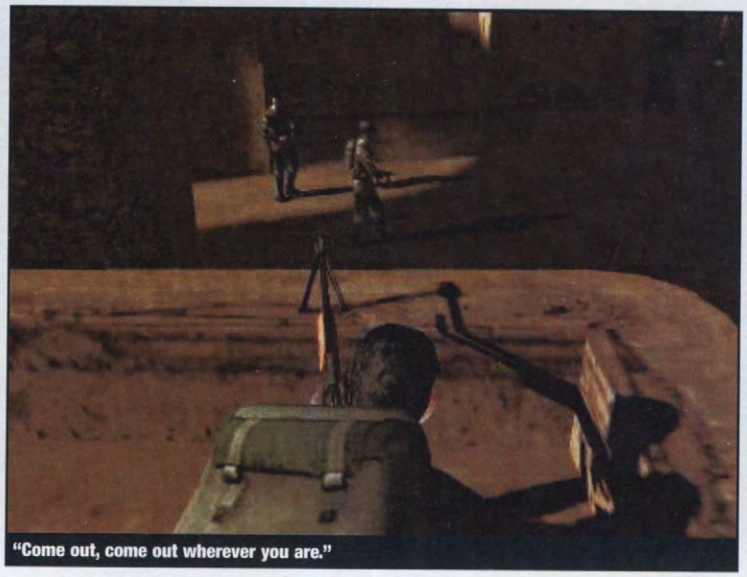
UPDATE

Ooh, what a lovely pair HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2

***Richie Shoemaker* fought Germans on a beach once. He was on holiday in Spain**



It's an ambush if ever I've seen one.



"Come out, come out wherever you are."

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Illusion Softworks
PUBLISHER Take 2
WEBSITE www.illusionsoftworks.com
OUT Q2, 2002

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's better than the first one
- The first one was pretty good
- And it should be fairly bug-free
- Unlike the first one

What the bloody hell kind of a name for a modern gaming hero is Gordon Freeman? Undoubtedly a very good scientist, (and as it transpires, handy with a wide variety of weapons), the bespectacled Mr Freeman is hardly a match for the likes of Maximillian Payne, let alone Duke Nukem. No, if you want to get anywhere in the fickle world of action games, you need a name to match. I'm sure Valve is kicking itself that, had it called *Half-Life*'s hero something like Rock Stoneballs, the game would've been a lot more successful. The fools.

By the same token, it looks like Illusion Softworks is also setting itself up for a fall with the sequel to its WWII action/strategy classic *Hidden & Dangerous*, by calling the central figure... get this... Gary Bristol. I mean, guys, come on... *Gary*? They may as well have called him Brian, Colin, Kevin or Dave. Now I'm no WWII veteran, but I've never met anyone over the age of 70 called Gary anyway, so in terms of realism this isn't what you'd call a great start.

And they were so close as well. By making Gary a Major in the British Army, the creators of *Hidden & Dangerous 2* were almost there – if only they'd left the first name to the imagination and put an 's' on the end of the surname. Tee-hee. Or what about calling him Major Lee Hugh-Jubblies. Ha ha ha...

MAJOR KNOCKERS

Still, as they say in Hollywood, it's not the actors that matter, only the acting. In the case of *Hidden & Dangerous 2*, if it were a film, it would probably be rubbish. Thankfully, like its two-year-old predecessor, *H&D2* is a computer game, and as such looks set to not only look better, but play better too. Not only that, but in the guise of Major Melons, they have a central character that will (the developers hope) turn what were once a series of sequential missions into a drama-fuelled action game played against a backdrop of war. Well, that's the plan. The point is that in the first game, all of Germany was the enemy, its soldiers a merciless bunch of sausage-sucking evildoers. But in *Hidden & Dangerous 2*, it's one particular SS officer that is the ultimate target of our band of warriors – the others are only, of course, following zehr orders.

"The system is *kind of* the same," says *H&D2*'s lead designer Tomáš Pluhařik. "You control up to four soldiers – all at once, or all directly by switching between them – who go on missions behind enemy lines. The difference is now there's a main character, who you can't allow to die."

Hidden & Dangerous 2 is, however, much more than the same game with a new cast. Veterans may remember that although you could switch to a cumbersome 3D map and plot way-points for your troops, in reality it was much better to control each soldier directly and treat the others as if they were extra lives. In the sequel we can expect *true* squad tactics, where you control one character and your computer-controlled apes do what you tell them to do – quickly. No fiddly 3D map, no confusing interface.

CV

ILLUSION SOFTWORKS

After the massive success of *Hidden & Dangerous*, Illusion Softworks hasn't been resting on its laurels

1997 Illusion Softworks is born and work on *Hidden & Dangerous* begins.

1999 As if from nowhere, *Hidden & Dangerous* becomes one of the biggest games of the year.

2000 As the new millennium dawns, so too does *Fight For Freedom – H&D*'s first and only add-on. Sequel announced at E3.

2001 *Hidden & Dangerous 2* and *Mafia* prove popular at E3 2001. Two secret new games under way.

Mind the gap when exiting the plane.

"The main difference now is that you can issue orders from the tactical map which are processed in real time," says Tomáš. "If something goes wrong, you can change things very quickly and easily."

HAUPTMANN HOOTERS

Thankfully, it isn't just the interface and AI of the Allies that has been improved. The enemy too should react realistically, which in part is why the game will take probably another year to complete.

"Soldiers will react to gunfire, to sounds and on sight," says Tomáš. "But at the moment there is still a lot to do because what we want to create is true co-operative AI, where not only do units react to what they see and hear, but they also work together. What we want to create isn't so much artificial intelligence as artificial life."

Big words there, and if this were just two men in a room with a microphone, such a comment could be waved away as hot air. As it is, a top-of-the-range PC was also in attendance and by way of example Tomáš loaded up a level, set within a picturesque farm near a gently flowing river... and bloomin' Germans everywhere.

"Here, for example, we have an officer giving orders to his men, to find two other German soldiers and investigate a crashed car. You'll see that if a German officer is in sight of his soldiers, they will follow their orders more quickly. If they are out of the line of sight of their commander, they will patrol slowly as there is no need to run."

Sure enough, while the German commander looked on, the soldiers ran to find their comrades, while Tomáš, in control of a British commando, watched from over the hill. As soon as the soldiers rounded the corner they slowed down. Of course, such a demonstration could have been a cheap trick, but as an example of what Illusion Softworks is trying to achieve, *Hidden & Dangerous 2* promises to be more than just your average sequel.

Trying to avoid German patrols, Tomáš continued on his mission. Over the next few minutes we saw more impressive examples of this 'co-operative AI', new driveable vehicles – and yes, even tanks. Most impressive of all, we watched Tomáš take aim at a German and shoot his helmet off, leaving the private confused and visibly shell-shocked. Then, as if straight from the beaches of *Saving Private Ryan*, the stunned German fell to the ground, a telling circle of red between his eyes. Not so much gory as faintly unnerving. Impressive, though. "Your helmet can save your life," smiled Tomáš.

"You control one character and your computer-controlled apes do what you tell them to do – quickly"

ARSE BUM FANNY

Firing up a mission set across the North African desert, we finally managed to gauge just how impressive the new 3D engine really was. On a clear day – and there may be a few that aren't – you can see far into the distance. With one level promised to be 5Km long, I could envisage seeing far beyond, should there be a beyond to look into, the curves of the sand infinitely more impressive than *Delta Force: Land Warrior*'s crude polygons.

"Just this sand has about 80,000 polygons; some have up to 150,000 polygons," said Tomáš. It looked more like 78,000 but I wasn't about to argue.

"We now have a ballistics system that will map the points of trajectory of every bullet that is fired," said Tomáš as he seemed to blindly fire computer-generated bullets into the dirt. "We can also check the speed of the bullet. For instance, a sub-machine-gun has a comparatively low muzzle velocity, and we check this speed against the material each bullet hits. If it hits a wooden wall and gets through, then it will lose energy as it passes through, perhaps stopping when it hits another wooden wall."

It's at points like these that one just nods politely. Impressed by the lengths developers take to make a game as realistic as possible, such features would probably go unnoticed had they not been mentioned. Talk of fixed machine-guns, flame-throwers and smoke grenades, however, piqued my interest, only for me to discover that to see them in action I would have to wait a couple more months.

Q&A TOMAS PLUHARIK

Hiding from danger among the other members of the Illusion team, lead designer Tomáš Pluhařik.

PCZ What's your favourite thing in *Hidden & Dangerous 2*?
TOMAS My favourite vehicle has to be the German eight-wheeled armoured car. 10 tons, 50mm cannon...

PCZ When do you think the game will be finished?
TOMAS We could probably have the game done for Christmas, but it will take another four months to complete.

PCZ And what multiplayer options will there be?
TOMAS We'll certainly have co-operative missions, as in the first game, but we definitely want to have greater multiplayer support built in from the start.

But, as was the case with the first instalment of *Hidden & Dangerous*, it wasn't so much the talk that impressed, as the walk through the game when it finally arrived. First-person action coupled with squad-based strategy is always a winning combination and when you place it slap-bang in the middle of WWII, you're always going to pick up a few votes. The simple fact is that *Hidden & Dangerous 2* looks every bit as impressive as when we saw *Hidden & Dangerous*. More multiplayer options, better graphics and big swinging jugs – plus of course Gary Bristol, gaming's latest hard man. Coming to a computer screen near you in 2002.

Hidden & Dangerous 2 looks like it's going to blow us all away.

Shedding light on those...

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

From the creators of *Baldur's Gate I* and *II*, there cometh a brand new RPG. *Chris Anderson* makes his way to Edmonton, Canada, to investigate a potential legend in the making

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Bioware
PUBLISHER Interplay
WEBSITE www.neverwinternight.com
OUT Winter 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's from the creators of *Baldur's Gate* and *Baldur's Gate II*. If that doesn't get you going, you're not an RPG fan.
- It has the most sophisticated dungeon design kit ever released for public use. The level of detail you can go into with this thing is scary.
- Fully-fledged single-player game to complement the multiplayer side of things, and it will be up to the standards previously set by the *Baldur's Gate* series.
- The single-player and online worlds join together seamlessly. You can take your character from one to the other as you see fit.

If you are reading this, it is reasonably safe to make a few assumptions. Firstly, you are interested in the pursuit of playing what are known as role-playing games on your personal computer. Secondly, assuming we are correct in assumption numero uno, it is fairly safe to assume you have heard of *Baldur's Gate I* and *II*. Given that both of these titles represent the very best in RPG entertainment on your PC, it is fairly safe to make our last assumption, that you are obviously interested in hearing about the latest title in development by the creators of the aforementioned classics. You are not alone. It's no exaggeration to say that *Neverwinter Nights* is very, very high on the *PC ZONE* wish-list for this year, and it's difficult to see how Bioware can possibly fail with this one. We *know* the single-player game will be deep, complex, rich in storyline, and immensely absorbing. We know this, because they've already shown us what they can do. With the addition of an online multiplayer environment which has the potential to spawn a massive community online, *Neverwinter Nights* could well be the RPG that literally has everything. Of course, we believe nothing until we see it with our own eyes. We travelled to Bioware to take a look at one of the most ambitious RPGs ever made. This is what we saw.

CV BIOWARE CORP

BIOWARE

Bioware is the the undisputed king of RPGs. And here's why...

1996 *Shattered Steel* – A big robot game which, it is alleged, featured many big robots and had deformable terrain.

1998 *Baldur's Gate* – The game that made Bioware a household name. It came out of nowhere and set a new benchmark for RPGs across the board.

2000 *MDK2* – Third-person action adventure which continued the *MDK* tradition of minor puzzle-solving married with hectic arcade action.

2001 *Baldur's Gate II: Shadows Of Amn* – Excellent sequel to one of the best RPGs on PC, which further underlined Bioware's position as one of the leaders in the genre.

You have a huge selection of nasties with which to terrorise your dungeon's victims.

Trent Oster is producer of *Neverwinter Nights*. He has every right to be quietly smug.

Q&A

ROB BARTEL

We tracked down Rob Bartel, co-lead designer on Neverwinter Nights, *and asked him some wholly ridiculous and entirely pointless questions, along with some vaguely intelligent ones.*

PCZ What's the best game you've ever played and why?

ROB *Myth II: Soulblighter.* It built a wonderfully engaging game out of a relatively simple set of gameplay components. Your basic units were mêlée fighters, archers, demolitionists and healers, each with a very limited set of actions they could perform. Yet those components could be combined in such a wide variety of exciting fashions that it kept the game fresh throughout the campaign. The improved camera handling and interface made the sequel much more playable than the original.

PCZ What's the worst game you've ever played and why?

ROB War, the card game. It's all mathematically preordained from the moment you're dealt your cards and, aside from blatant cheating, you have no means of actually influencing the course of the game. I can't believe how much of my life I burnt into that game as a kid before finally clueing in.

PCZ In the future, all games will be online only. True or false?

PCZ False. Many good games will be online only but single-player games will still have their place. While social interaction is great, everyone needs some quality 'me' time and single-player games will always be there to offer that. That said, online games certainly maximise a lot of the elements that make the computer game a unique medium and we'll be seeing increasingly sophisticated online games as the genre matures.

PCZ Have you played any of the MMORPGs and if so, which did you like best and why?

ROB I've dabbled in all of the big three, as well as a few of the lesser-known titles such as *Meridian 59* and *Underlight.* To be honest, though, it seems my heart is always tuned to the future. After talking to some of the Wolfpack Studios guys at E3, I'm literally drooling over the design and gameplay of their upcoming title *Shadowbane.* Atriarch's focus on player-designed buildings and a beautiful alien world makes it another intriguing title that I'm eager to get my hands on.

PCZ Do you think MMORPG is the stupidest acronym of all time?

ROB Who knows, but the Cyborger at **www.brunching.com/toys/toy-cyborger.html>** claims that it stands for 'Mechanical Machine Optimised for Repair and Potential Gratification'. Go figure…

PCZ What's the last game you paid money for?

ROB Gosh, I honestly can't even remember. The wonderful thing about working for a place like Bioware is that playing computer games is considered legitimate research. Most of my computer games and pen-and-paper RPG materials get reimbursed. Handy, huh?

PCZ Do you believe in goblins?

ROB No, but I believe in bugs. Some tell me it's only a matter of interpretation…)

PCZ Have you ever been in a fight, and if so, who won?

ROB Truth be told, I'm actually a pacifist. When I was a kid though, I clobbered a bully named Bob Hope (I'm not joking, I swear) with an umbrella and all the guts of an old lady. I came out unscathed but poor Bobby and the umbrella both got a little bent out of shape. Was it worth it? Probably not but I learned a few things that day…

Greg Zeschuk is one half of the Bioware joint CEO set-up…

…and Ray Muzyka unsuprisingly, is the other.

Create your own world and invite your friends to come on over and completely muck it up.

You can trigger conversation from NPCs to add atmosphere.

All the spells in the single-player game can be used with the Toolset.

LIGHTS, CAMERAS, ACTION

The scene is set. A huge projector screen covers the wall at the back of the Bioware boardroom. We are seated at the front, not so far from the two Bioware bods who are manning the twin PCs which are poised to present *Neverwinter Nights* on the big screen. Meanwhile Trent Oster, producer of *Neverwinter Nights*, explains how the game came into existence in the first place.

"We wanted a story-based, multiplayer role-playing game in which you could play through the game either by yourself or with a group, but always with a purpose. You've always got the story driving you along. Another part of the concept was the idea of the Toolset. The Toolset grew out of parallels between pen-and-paper D&D and *Neverwinter* as we planned it out".

For those of you who are not familiar with pen-and-paper D&D, don't worry, we're not going to get all beardy on you and explain it. Instead, we will explain how it applies to *Neverwinter Nights*, which is a lot easier to understand. Imagine a dungeon created by a player from the ground up. Imagine a team of 'real' players entering the dungeon and playing through the adventure while the dungeon's creator (the dungeon master) follows their every move, changing things within the game world according to what the players do in the game environment. Imagine the enormous potential to totally screw them up at every turn (if you're that way inclined) or to help them along if they get stuck in a certain part of the dungeon. You may think creating a detailed environment with a realistic landscape, puzzles and challenging monsters would take an absolute age and a degree in programming. Not so. We watch the Bioware team put a perfectly playable and detailed dungeon together before our very eyes in approximately ten minutes. It quickly becomes apparent that this Toolset is way more than a simple tool for making a landscape and plonking lots of goblins on it. As Trent explains: "We wanted people to be able to make a *Baldur's Gate II*-quality story using this Toolset, so it had to be very powerful. We also wanted it to be very easy to use, so we could ship it with the game and people could start using it straight away and make interesting little adventures."

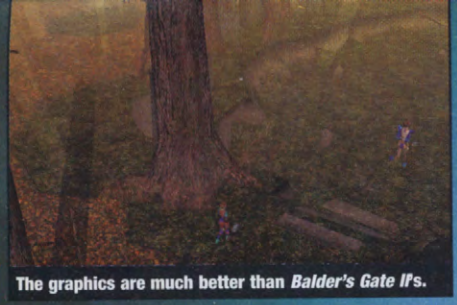
While he talks, we watch the team as they lay down terrain and drop fire beetles and giant spiders onto the map. With the help of the 3D engine, they are zooming around the map and up close on the creatures so we can get a better look at them, before finally placing a transition point on the map to another area (also known in beardy-speak as a portal). We watch them plant a huge horde of goblins in one room, and an end-of-level beastie in another, with higher stats and better weapons. The 'guardian' monster is a Balor, he's 15th level and comes equipped with a Lightning Sword.

SOLITARY REFINEMENT

Prefer playing on your own?

You may have noticed this preview deals mainly with the multiplayer side of *Neverwinter Nights*. That does not mean there is no single-player game. There is a *very* strong single-player game on the way which should match or exceed *Baldur's Gate II* for highly addictive gameplay. Bioware has stressed that the single-player game is just as important as the multiplayer game, and all the modules have been designed to work in both modes. They accept the fact that many players will never even see the game online and, because of this, the designers are going out of their way to make a single-player experience that stands up in its own right. The single-player game will not give you the ability to recruit NPCs into your party, so in this respect you will basically be playing a sort of single-player equivalent of *Baldur's Gate II*. But the NPCs you meet in cities and villages who converse with you and develop the storyline will all remain present and correct. We will be revisiting *Neverwinter Nights* in a forthcoming issue and taking a much closer look at the single-player side of the game.

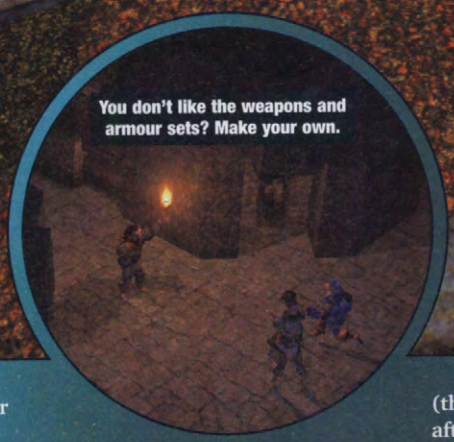
People with no friends can always play the single-player game.



The graphics are much better than *Balder's Gate II*'s.

Neverwinter Nights: a new online RPG kid on the block.

The Rural tile set has farmers. Look, here's some we made earlier.



You don't like the weapons and armour sets? Make your own.

Dazzling graphics and gripping gameplay. Nice.

We watch as the Bioware team bring up a script which dictates how the Balor attacks people when they enter the room. With one single line of scripting, the Balor can find out who's attacking him, where they are, plot a path to them, go to where they are, and then begin attacking them with his most powerful set of attacks. We begin to wonder if they can create something like this in ten minutes, what would they come up with in ten hours?

BALANCING ACT

It all sounds too good to be true: a hugely powerful Toolset with which you can create fantastic environments and dungeons for other players to adventure in. Up to 60 players can play on any one server, and once they are inside your game, they play by your rules. You decide whether or not they can attack other players, whether or not they can attack players outside their group but not inside (this option is sort of similar to *Counter-Strike*) and even what happens to players when they die. Do they lose experience points? Do you kick them out of the game? Or even – in worst case scenarios – do you want to ban them from your server upon death? With so many different ways to play, and given that each adventure will have its own unique storyline, it's easy to see how playing one player's pre-set adventure could turn out to be wildly different from playing another's. There are, however, a number of things that occurred to us with this approach to online multiplay. If, for example, your adventure has a moderate amount of enemies and is suited to say, a group of six players, what happens if you end up with 40 people all trying to kill the same enemies at once, thus making your adventure a cinch to get through? We put this question to Trent.

"This is the problem with trying to balance any multiplayer game. How do you balance it for one sixth-level character, as opposed to ten sixth-level characters? To combat this, what we came up with was the idea of the encounter system. Instead of placing a set amount of monsters in one area, you place a single encounter. The encounter has an activation radius, and when you hit that radius, it scans the nearby area to see how many hostile characters there are in your party. Let's say there are four. The encounter spawns in sufficient creatures to challenge those four players."

This sounds great in theory, but what if the player party is comprised of high-level *and* low-level characters? Surely the lower levels will be wiped out by the monsters spawned to deal with the higher levels? Bioware has thought of this too: "The encounter will evaluate for all the people there, and spawn enemies that will amount to a moderate encounter for the higher levels, and a really hard encounter for the lower levels. For this reason we want to encourage people to stick together with players close to their level in order to get the most out of their adventures. Otherwise, low-level characters will get slaughtered fairly quickly if they are playing with higher level characters."

CHEAT ALERT

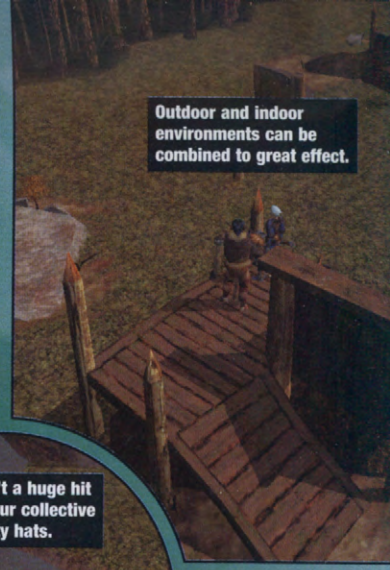
One of the biggest problems with online gaming has been the influx of the Net community's many cheaters. *Ultima Online* banned cheating, but players still found ways around it and wrote programs which changed their characters' stats and gave them unfair advantages in battle. *Diablo* (the online version) suffered a similar fate with many people leaving the game because of online cheaters. With *Neverwinter Nights*, apart from the hackers changing character stats, there is an additional danger which, somewhat ironically, is built into the game itself. Characters from the single-player version of the game can be taken into another player's adventure. Of course, while your character is 'aboard', he/she will gain experience points and levels, meaning that when you bring your character back to the single-player game they will be higher level, thus creating an imbalance which makes the single-player game a lot easier. While this is not exactly cheating (this is the way the game is designed after all), it certainly gives an opportunity for players to power-level their characters outside the main game if they want to make life easy for themselves. We put this poser to Trent, who had this to say: "We built the modules [chapters in the game] for specific level ranges, so all the modules in the first environment for example would be for first to seventh level. If you leave the single-player at level seven, and come back to it at level 11, you couldn't resume the game at the point that you left off, but you could continue it at a later point in a module that's more suited to your new level. If you wanted to cheat, you could build a dungeon of your own, take your level-one character into it, and walk him onto a trigger that gives him 10,000 experience points. There wouldn't be much point in doing that, but that's the basic flaw with this kind of game".

"You could cheat. There wouldn't be much point, but that's the basic flaw with this kind of game"

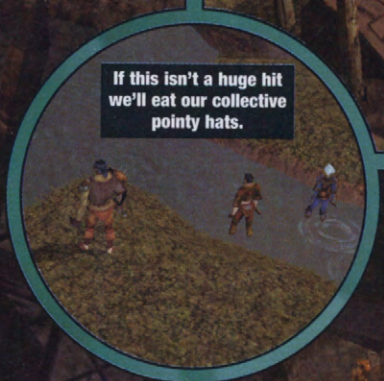
TRENT OSTER, PRODUCER OF *NEVERWINTER NIGHTS*

It seemed to us at that point that it would make more sense to perhaps make a rule that you had to create a separate character for multiplayer, and could only bring your character from the single-player game into other player's modules once you had completed the single-player game. Trent disagrees: "We talked about this, but

With *Baldur's Gate I* and *II* under their belts, we don't see how they can fail.



Outdoor and indoor environments can be combined to great effect.



If this isn't a huge hit we'll eat our collective pointy hats.

"Where the hell did the DM hide the loot? Eh? Eh?"

YOUR WORLD, YOUR RULES

A game that lasts forever...

The *Neverwinter Nights* Toolset is a wondrous toy indeed. So sophisticated is this Toolset that you can create a world that is limited only by your own imagination. You want to create your own version of *Baldur's Gate* with your own storyline? You can do it. Or how about an entire dungeon dedicated to player-versus-player combat, where you drop two opposing sides in at opposite ends and watch them go at it. Of course, you don't just have to watch. As a dungeon master you can enter the action at anytime and possess a creature to interact with unwary players. The possibilities for creativity with this thing are literally endless, and you can be sure we'll be creating our own personal nightmare when the game comes in for review this winter.

Dungeon masters can take complete control over any aspect of their dungeon at any time.

I was always against the idea of a single-player game and a multiplayer game being two separate things. I really like the idea of building a character and playing through the first part of the story, and then going out to play with my group, my friend who I've played D&D with for a long time, and playing the next part of the story through with them. If they play a session without me, I can just go in and play on my own and catch up. I really like the idea of having the flow in and out of the single- and multiplayer games."

Despite this, in the interest of balance (and keeping the single-player alive for players who level too high outside the main game), Bioware is working on a system that adapts automatically to higher level players re-entering the single-player game at a point that is too low for them. If Bioware can pull it off (and it's confident it can), a level-20 player rejoining the game in a chapter meant for level sevens will be greeted with monsters that spawn around his level. This is a great compromise, though it would mean key NPCs will keep the same stats. In this way, battles with a named NPC that would normally be the greatest challenge in a particular chapter will now be a walkover for the level 20, who is now effectively fighting a level-seven NPC, but regular battles will still be a challenge. It's a good trade-off for those of you who want to wander in and out of single and multiplayer, but for us, we'll be playing the whole game in single-player mode before taking our characters into the outside world for some player-versus-player action. We intend to play the game how it was designed to be played, since classic games don't come along too often and when they do, they should be savoured.

> **"We wanted it to be very easy to use so we could ship it with the game and people could start using it straight away"**
>
> TRENT OSTER CHATS ABOUT THE TOOLSET

We'll be following *Neverwinter Nights* all the way through its development cycle as well as keeping an eye on how people take to the multiplayer side of the game after release. While nothing in life is guaranteed, we can *almost* guarantee that this game will be absolutely huge when it's released at the beginning of next year. We can't wait. No, honestly. PCZ

...and a tooth for a tooth.

Might and Magic...now online, now on LAN. Released June 1.

'The Legend continues...fifteen years in the making, the latest chapter has arrived. Travel to distant worlds of epic, fantasy-filled dungeons and bloodstained battlefields.

Battle hundreds of creatures and recover unknown treasures as you strive to be crowned champion. Only those of strong heart, limitless courage and a thirst for adventure will succeed and become true Legends in the Might and Magic Universe. Legends uses the state-of-the-art LithTech™ 2.0 engine to provide an adrenalin pumping first-person multiplayer gaming experience. Each player controls a single character in a team based adventure taking place via the Internet or LAN.'

The Legend continues.
Play your part.

PC CD ROM

Download the new 2 level demo free at www.3DOEurope.com

3DO

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PCZONE REVIEWS

Don't spend a single penny until you've checked out the *ZONE* reviews first – we'll tell you which games you've just got to buy and which to avoid

MISSION STATEMENT

We're on this planet to serve you. You need to know which games are worth buying, which ones are worth considering for a rainy day, and which ones you should point and laugh at on the shelves. For that reason, *PC ZONE* works a little differently to any other magazine in the UK.

- Our reviewers are the most experienced and talented in the business. We're all massive gamers and we don't mince our words. If there are problems in a game, then we'll tell you about them, even if it means falling foul of certain big names in the industry.
- What's more, we will only review finished games, which means that any bugs we see within the game will be reported back to you. On occasions we are forced to review from gold masters, but this still means that what we see is what you get in the final boxed product.
- Occasionally, this means we can't review the multiplayer side of the game at the same time as the single-player review, as the servers aren't up and running. When this happens, we won't fudge the issue and claim that "multiplayer works well", we'll wait until the servers have been running successfully for a month before running a full second review in our Online section.
- We also make sure that we test out the games we review across a variety of different machines and graphics cards. In the office we have access to a whole range of different gaming PCs, from a lowly P233 up to the latest 1GHz behemoth. If we spot differences between the minimum specifications and real-life testing then we'll let you know in the review.
- Our scoring system is the most honest in the industry. If a game is average, then we'll give it 50 per cent. If it's not worth knowing then we'll give it the burial it deserves. On the flipside, you won't find many games getting 90 per cent or above, the pre-requisite for our Classic award. Since issue 85 (and the introduction of the new scoring system), we've only given out eight Classics and this proves that a game has to be pretty special to get the award.
- We also make sure that every game is reviewed by an expert in the field, which means that each of our reviews can be placed in context with other games of that genre. You won't see a first-person shooter being reviewed by an RTS fan, and you can be sure that the person reviewing a game has played all the important titles in that particular field.
- Every now and again you might disagree with the treatment we've given a game. That's where our Feedback section comes in. This is where you get to have your say in *PC ZONE*, and where your rumblings are answered by the person who wrote the original review in the magazine.

ALL THE LATEST GAMES REVIEWED & RATED

WHERE TO CALL

Having trouble finding any of the games listed in the reviews section of the magazine'? Here are the numbers you need to call:

Acclaim 020 7344 5000 • **Activision** 01895 456700 • **Anco** 01322 292513 • **Blue Byte** (Germany) 49 0 208 450880 • **Codemasters** 01926 814132 • **Cryo** 01926 315552 • **Eidos Interactive** 020 8636 3000 • **Electronic Arts** 01932 450000 • **Empire Interactive** 020 8343 7337 • **Europress** 01625 855000 • **Gremlin Interactive** 0114 263 9900 • **GT Interactive** 020 8222 9700 • **Hasbro Interactive** 020 8569 1234 • **Infogrames** 0161 827 8000 • **Interplay** 020 7551 4222 • **Microids** (France) 00 33 146 01 54 01 • **Microsoft** 0345 002 000 • **Mattel** 01444 246333 • **NovaLogic** 020 7324 8900 • **Rage Software** 0151 237 2200 • **Take 2 Interactive** 01753 854 444 • **THQ** 01483 767656 • **Ubi Soft** 020 8944 9000 • **Zablac** 01626 332233

WHAT DO OUR SCORES MEAN?

90-100% If a game scores 90 or above, it probably means it's quite good. Classics are games that transcend their parts with the sheer quality of the finished product, creating an experience that will leave an indelible mark on your gaming memory. So, not bad then.

PC ZONE CLASSIC

80-89% In this category you'll find great games that just fall short of being truly exceptional. From slightly-flawed genius to a perfectly-executed traditional concept, these might not be true Classics – but they're still worth having.

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

70-79% These scores are not necessarily a condemnation to gaming hell – in fact, we consider any game that falls into this category as worth checking out. Not Classic or excellent, just very good.

50-69% In this range you'll find games that go from the just-above-average to the alright-really-honest. They're usually good fun but have a limited long-term appeal. Read the review and find out if it's really what you're after before you decide to part with your cash.

20-49% These games just manage to keep their heads above the excrement, although a title scoring in the 20s is probably pretty poor. You can find a game that plays reasonably in this category, but you've been warned.

0-19% Some games are born pants and some have pantness thrust upon them. These games shouldn't have been released. Avoid at all costs.

PC ZONE PANTS

MEET THE TEAM

All *PC ZONE*'s reviewers are experts in their field. We like to give every game that comes in for review the best chance, which is why we give it to a fan of the genre

What game impressed you most at E3, and why?

DAVE WOODS
GENRE FPS, RPG, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Undying* and *Quake III*

Medal Of Honour and *Unreal 2* are taking the FPS into new territory.

RICHIE SHOEMAKER
GENRE RTS, space combat
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Champ Man 00/01*

Star Wars Galaxies. It's the best game I've seen in my life.

MARTIN KORDA
GENRE Strategy, space combat
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Shogun: The Mongol Invasion*

Unreal 2 and *Freelancer* are both taking their genres to new heights.

ANTHONY HOLDEN
GENRE FPS, action/adventure, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Quake III* and *Spheres Of Chaos*

Duke Nukem Forever. Damn, it's looking good.

A BIT OF ROUGH

REVIEWS EDITOR Martin Korda

This month we kick things off with Eidos' sci-fi RPG *Anachronox* (p56), which Mark Hill has been feverishly playing for the past two weeks, having completed *Half-Life: Blue Shift* (p72) in less than a day. *Anachronox* has turned out to be somewhat of a surprise package, as many people expected it to fall down the same hole as another Ion Storm game (and I use the term 'game' in the loosest possible sense) *Daikatana*. However, despite the lack of visual thrills, it's turned out to be a real gem.

While Mark has been sitting at home playing these in his undercrackers and eating take-away pizza by the lorry load, I've been stuck in the office rediscovering the joys of *Shogun*, with the superb expansion pack, *The Mongol Invasion* (p60). Steve Hill has also been busy, taking time off as virtual Chester manager to play through *X-Com: Enforcer* (p62), which, just like *Blue Shift*, proved to be somewhat of a short-lived experience. Strangely, Keith Pullin has mysteriously disappeared and his house has been blown up, after giving *Gangsters 2* (p64) a less than complimentary review, but we're sure that's just a coincidence.

As if this wasn't enough, we've also got somewhat of a masterclass on 'How Not To Make A Game'. The first contender for worst game of the month is a patronising board game loosely based on the recent election, whose imaginative title (*General Election*), must have taken about as long to think up as the game took to program. The other candidates include two pathetic FPSs, which turned out to be less fun than being castrated without an anaesthetic (*Paintball Heroes* and *World War II: Normandy*) and the dire *Scooter Pro*, in which you can race a scooter around a supermarket (yes it really is that exciting). As in all parts of life though, you just have to take the rough with the smooth, and this month we've got about an equal amount of both.

A CLASS ACT

Certain games deserve to be elevated above and beyond the mass of titles on the shelves. For that reason we've made it hard for a game to receive our coveted Classic award and a score of 90 per cent and above. Each one will have to show originality, take their respective genres to new heights and represent a major step forward in PC gaming. Given this criteria, it would make us look a bit stupid if we awarded two or three every issue, and over the past 16 months since the introduction of our new scoring system we've only given out eight Classics.

This doesn't mean that all games scoring less should be ignored. Rather, the Classic tag points to the games that we can call true masterpieces and benchmark titles. The ones that are going to influence the direction of PC gaming in the near future. And it doesn't stop there. All review scores in our Top 100 are changed over time, to show their standing as and when new titles are released. So, a game that received 90 per cent a year ago, may not still be considered a Classic today. This means that on any given month you can find out exactly what we consider to be the best games in each genre.

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79 GIANT KILLERS 2

80 BUDGET ZONE

Check out the cheaper end of the market.

100 FEEDBACK

Go on, have your say on the games you love or hate the most.

RHIANNA PRATCHETT
GENRE RPG, RTS, adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Mr Driller* and *EverQuest*

Neverwinter Nights. It's *Baldur's Gate* for the next generation.

MARK HILL
GENRE Adventure, RPG, FPS
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Mr Driller* and *Anachronox*

Jedi Knight 2, because it's got Jedis and stuff.

CHRIS ANDERSON
GENRE RPG, adventure, strategy
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Anarchy Online*

Neverwinter Nights, because it's got beards and everything.

DANIEL EMERY
GENRE Strategy, action/adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING *EverQuest* and *World War 2 Online*

Medal Of Honour. It's *Saving Private Ryan* in all but name.

STEVE HILL
GENRE Sport, racing
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Championship Manager 00/01*

There wasn't a *Champ Manager 4*, so nothing.

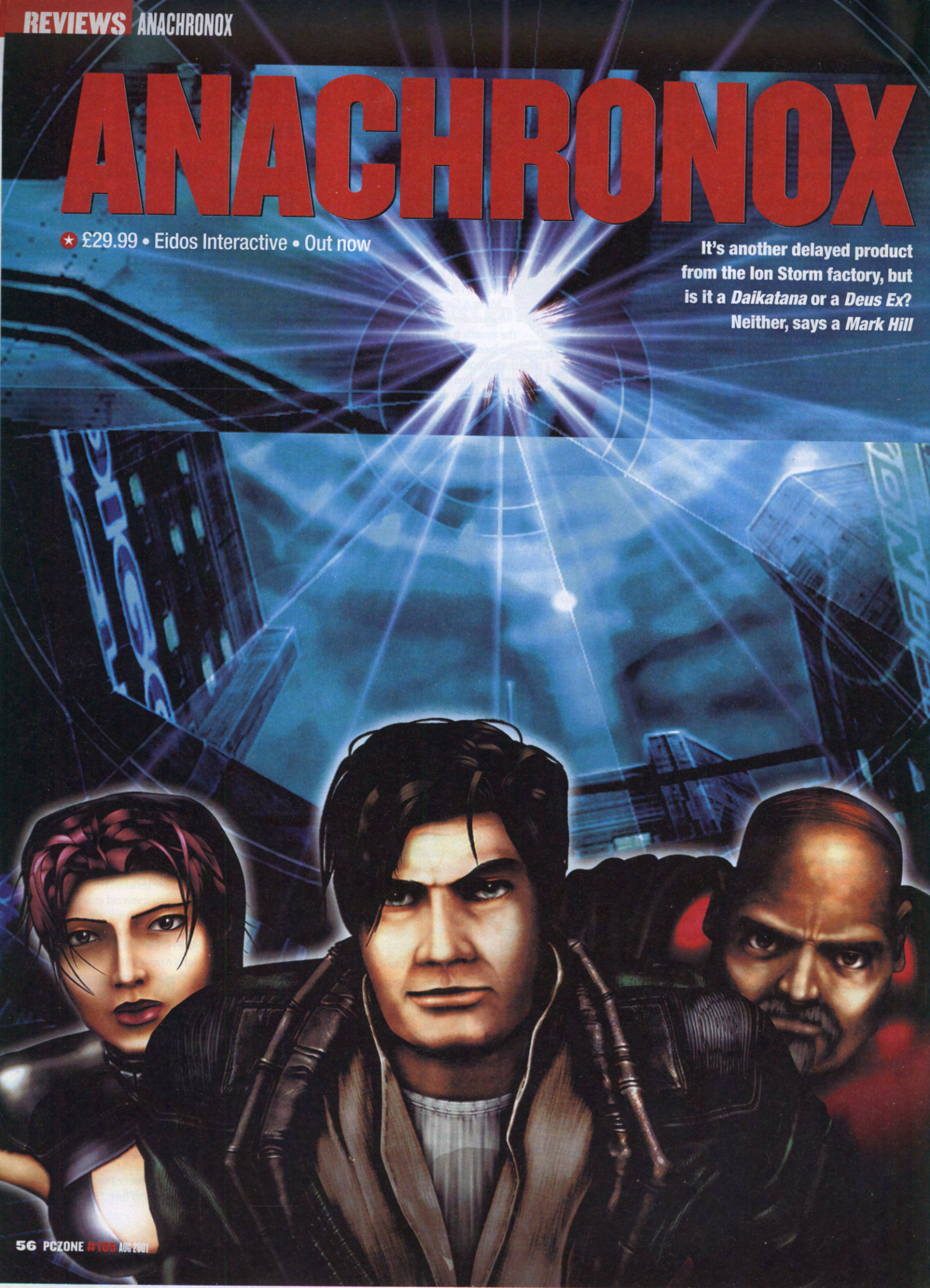
KEITH PULLIN
GENRE Adventure/RTS
CURRENTLY PLAYING *PGA Championship Golf 2000*

Praetorians. Pyro is really starting to prove itself.

ANACHRONOX

★ £29.99 • Eidos Interactive • Out now

It's another delayed product from the Ion Storm factory, but is it a *Daikatana* or a *Deus Ex*? Neither, says a *Mark Hill*



PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Tom Hall, the main man behind *Anachronox*, more famous for his involvement in *Doom* and *Wolfenstein 3D*, explains the title of the game as the compounding of the words 'anachronism' and 'noxious'. Of course, he's referring to the poisonous past of the city in the game and the characters that inhabit it, but considering the game has been in development for three years and uses the *Quake II* engine, its meaning seems altogether more significant.

There's no denying that *Anachronox* looks like an old game. From the chunkiness of the polygons to the low-res textures, no amount of tweaking can hide the fact that the *Quake II* engine has had its day. While that will undoubtedly put many of you technology fascists right off, developer Ion Storm has managed to turn this to its advantage, to the point where I've even grown fond of its antediluvian looks. Anyone who enjoyed *Final Fantasy VII* knows that graphics can become secondary if the game has enough charm, and if there's one thing *Anachronox* has got, it's charm.

"In one quest you have to find a mangled worker and give his pus-soaked sock to another character to chew on"

MELTING POT

The mention of *FFVII* is not redundant, since the developer has never tried to hide the influence of the SquareSoft classic and of console RPGs in general. And I'm not talking just about the blocky characters. *Anachronox*'s combat system is a turn-based affair with lots of flashing lights, special effects and celebratory jumps and there are tons of sub-games to play. Quest structures also remind you of old Megadrive and SNES titles rather than *Baldur's Gate* or even *Deus Ex*.

But its influences are much wider. The humour and sheer quality of the writing are reminiscent of the great *Planescape: Torment* and anyone who's played *The Nomad Soul* will feel right at home wandering the streets of the city, exploring the shops and buildings and meeting its swarming population.

While we're on the subject of sources of inspiration, how about films such as *Bladerunner* (a fairly obvious one) or *Total Recall* (especially the Mars colony where Arnie finds the three-breasted whore, as well as its excavations, diseased people and religious groups). But is this melting pot of a game any damn good, I hear you ask? (Well, not actually hear you, that would be too disturbing for words.) And what the hell is it about?

Let's start with the second of those questions, since you've already made your mind up about the first one having looked at the score, like the lazy sods you are. The game creates a fully realised sci-fi universe with its own races, political groups and social problems and begins in the dark and eponymous city of Anachronox. Here you take control of the typical post-film noir character: a washed-up, hard-drinking and debt-owing detective by the name of Sylvester 'Sly' Boots. Unlike most RPGs you don't immediately set out on an epic quest. Sly is a cynical bum, but he's also broke, and your primary goal is to find yourself a job. Obviously this eventually leads to an epic journey round the galaxy with various allies you pick up along the way (you control up to three characters from the seven you come across), saving the universe and investigating the strange material known as MysTech.

IT'S A FUNNY OLD GAME

Perhaps the most surprising thing about *Anachronox* is its humour. We're not talking about the odd joke here or there either. At times it's like a full-blown comedy. Not a riotous laugh-a-minute that bends reality too far to make things believable (like point-and-click adventures tend to do), but a comedy nonetheless. It's in cut-scenes, conversations, posters hanging on walls and even certain quest objectives. Like the one where you have to find a mangled worker and give his pus-soaked sock to another character to chew on while he thinks, or the presence of megalocephalic dolls in the shops. Alright, so it might sound odd out of context, but on the whole the humour works well and is almost never overplayed.

The brainy look doesn't quite suit Sly.

"Who's the Daddy now?"

If I just keep walking, maybe they won't notice me.

Combat is fairly standard. But at least there are no random encounters to annoy you.

Run. Run for your life.

The style of the station and some of the aliens are like *Startopia's*.

And for those of you worried about the fact that *Anachronox* uses an archaic engine, Ion Storm has introduced a new facial expression technology that makes characters come alive like never before, with some very amusing results. They can look disgusted, bemused, surprised or embarrassed. I can see this having a profound effect on future games that might try to engage us emotionally instead of making us laugh.

Humour isn't the only thing that connects *Anachronox* with adventure games, however. The point-and-click system lies at the core of much of the game, as does puzzle-solving and the conversations with hundreds of NPCs. While you move your selected character using mouse and keyboard, as soon as you stop a cursor appears on screen which you can use to click on people and objects. Although it's a quest-driven game right from the start, you also have the freedom to wander round the city gathering extra information, picking up cash and experience by performing side-quests as well as seeing what other people have to say.

The city, as well as most other locations, is densely populated and you can talk to virtually everyone. It's a fully realised world. If you want to travel to another planet you need to get enough money to buy a ticket for a shuttle to the space station and from there find tickets for the ship to your destination. What really prevents any of it from becoming boring is that *Anachronox*, like *Nomad Soul*, really does have a sense of a living environment (despite the fact that, this being the *Quake II* engine, the city is completely enclosed rather than an open urbanisation of *Nomad Soul*). People go about their daily business; drunks clutch bottles of Jack Daniels and sprawl in dark corners, men and women fall in love, seethe with hatred or are out to sell their bodies to finance a drug habit. This is why the humour never gets in the way of a realistic world full of real people. The way the cinematics work is also reminiscent of *Nomad Soul*. The camera pans around your surroundings when entering new areas, zooming right out. But the cut-scenes are not just used to give you a better look at the backdrops, they're superbly used for laughs or to create a real sense of dramatic tension. Like when you're picking the lock into someone's apartment and the camera switches constantly between you and the security guard coming round the corner.

TURN TURN TURN

But this being an RPG it's not all exploring, talking and puzzle-solving. There's some fighting to be done too. This is perhaps the area where the *Final Fantasy* influence can be most heavily felt, as *Anachronox* uses the same sort of turn-based system, with the same sort of options and the same sort of presentation. Each of your characters has a bar that fills up over time and you can only attack when it's at its limit. This means that there is a certain amount of tension and quick reflex action, and you can't just walk off, make a cup of tea and ponder which move you're going to make next. You can use a weapon, move closer or further away from your foe, use an object or even something in the

TURN OFF THE F****** SWEARING

You've got to be f**** kidding**

Although *Anachronox* is by no means a f**** offensive game aimed solely at f****** adults, it gives concerned parents the chance to turn off any bad language when they install it. It seems a bit excessive, as the worst we heard was a couple of "b****rds" and one "b*tch". But rather than bleeping the occasional word out, *Anachronox* does things much more gracefully, simply replacing the offending dialogue with something much more kid-friendly. You may think that Ion Storm are a bunch of 'soft people who like to have intercourse with their mothers' and that the idea is totally 'poo', but if you're going to make a game playable for children this is the best way to do it. Shame the makers of *Kingpin* didn't think of it.**

WALKTHROUGH

GET A JOB YOU USELESS BUM

Sly is your typical anti-hero: a worthless loudmouth you can't help feeling for. Here's how you start out

1 Get thrown out of the window of your own office. You pathetic scumbag.

2 Have a drink at the local and get some needless advice from the barman.

3 Fatima demands that you get a job and gives you some hints as to what to do next.

4 Develop your lock-picking skills and get some money from the room beyond.

Sly wears a Babel Fish-like translator, Douglas Adams-style.

Do you want to come and see some puppies?

A girl with large breasts in a computer game? Uncanny.

SUPERSUBS

There are dozens of sub-games to play

Anachronox likes to keep things different by incorporating a few sub-games to play. Some, like the careful following of a suspect who can lead you to your target or the timed escape from a planet, are part of the main game and simply change the pace and style. Others, though, are completely separate entities. There is a strange noughts-and-crosses style of game that is played on a big board, of which there are a few scattered around wherever you travel. However, this seems more of a joke by the developers rather than a real game since it's almost impossible to win and is ultimately pointless. The real sub-games have you controlling a boat on some rapids covered with floating explosives, and flying a 2D spaceship through a scrolling landscape where other ships threaten to crash into you and large boulders fall from above. The games get progressively harder and can get a tad frustrating, but they do increase the scope of _Anachronox_ and provide some welcome variety.

This is the simple and pointless board game you get to play.

Swerving past those floating explosives isn't too difficult.

Using your mouse you have to avoid falling debris and other ships.

environment. There is hardly any combat at all during the first few hours of play, but there is good reason for this. It's not until your characters become more advanced, get better weapons and learn how to use MysTech that things get really interesting.

MysTech is the material whose properties allow you to cast spells and bring lots of bright colours to the battles. Its name seems to derive from Hall's love of puns, since it's a compound of 'mysterious' and 'technology', but it's also very close to 'mistake' because its power can have disastrous consequences. The combat isn't one of the game's strongest points, but it does have the advantage over *FF* in that there are no random encounters or battles every few steps. You can always see your enemies ahead and choose the moment of confrontation.

Anachronox makes things even more interesting by giving each character a special skill. There are battle skills (which give the combat another tactical twist) and, more importantly, world skills. You can use these to solve puzzles and get past areas you otherwise wouldn't be able to. They range from standard RPG abilities such as Sly's lock-picking to the computer hacking of PAL-18 (your small robot companion who, for some reason, has been given an annoying, not to mention racist, squeaky plantation slave voice). Old man Grumpos' skill is whingeing and complaining until the other person gives up. Sly also gets to perform some real detective work, at one point having to follow a suspect without getting too close to be noticed or too far to lose him. Another time he takes pictures of unsavoury characters with the camera and sells them to the police.

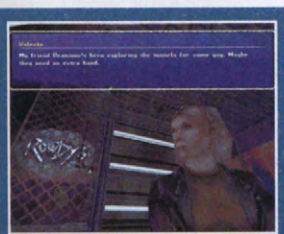
But *Anachronox* is not without its problems. I've already mentioned the graphics, and they do occasionally get in the way of the game. If you go off exploring tunnels, for example, you find no end of square brown corridors, and the visual style is often more reminiscent of *SiN* than any recent game. More annoying, however, is the way you're made to go from one area to another and then back again, like some miserable errand boy. This is especially true of the first part of the game and less so later, but it does become aggravating. A contributing factor is the amount of loading between areas which, if you're taking the quickest route from one point to another, can often mean loading one area, walking a few metres and loading up another one. You often wish you had some sort of map where you could just point at a location and be transported to it.

LOVE OR HATE

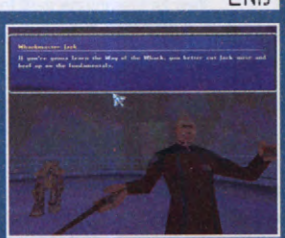
Thankfully, the game does get the save system right. You can choose to save anywhere you want or use the console-like save points, represented by cute insects – if that isn't an oxymoron – that you can pet to save your game. These are strategically positioned often enough to make them useful, but they seem more of a nod to future console conversions since PC gamers believe their right to save where and when they want is sacrosanct. And, thanks to Fatima (the secretary Sly turned into a holographic PA when she died), you're never left in any doubt as to what to do next (so often a problem in massive RPGs). For some reason though, only your main goals are registered and not your side-quests.

I wouldn't be at all surprised if many people cast *Anachronox* on the *Daikatana* bonfire, blinkered by its obvious console roots and its dated graphics. Others may decide that it's one of the best and funniest RPGs ever made. Both conclusions would be wrong. But for all its flaws, this is still a great game that deserves to be given a chance. PCZ

END



5 A woman at the bar can give you a lead on where to get a job. She should work for the DSS.



6 First you need to beef up your fighting skills though with the Whackmaster.

IN PERSPECTIVE

The Nomad Soul might not be an RPG but the atmosphere and setting are quite similar to *Anachronox*. *Final Fantasy VII* is still better than *VIII*, but if you want the ultimate role-player go to *Deus Ex* and *Planescape: Torment*.

TECH SPECS

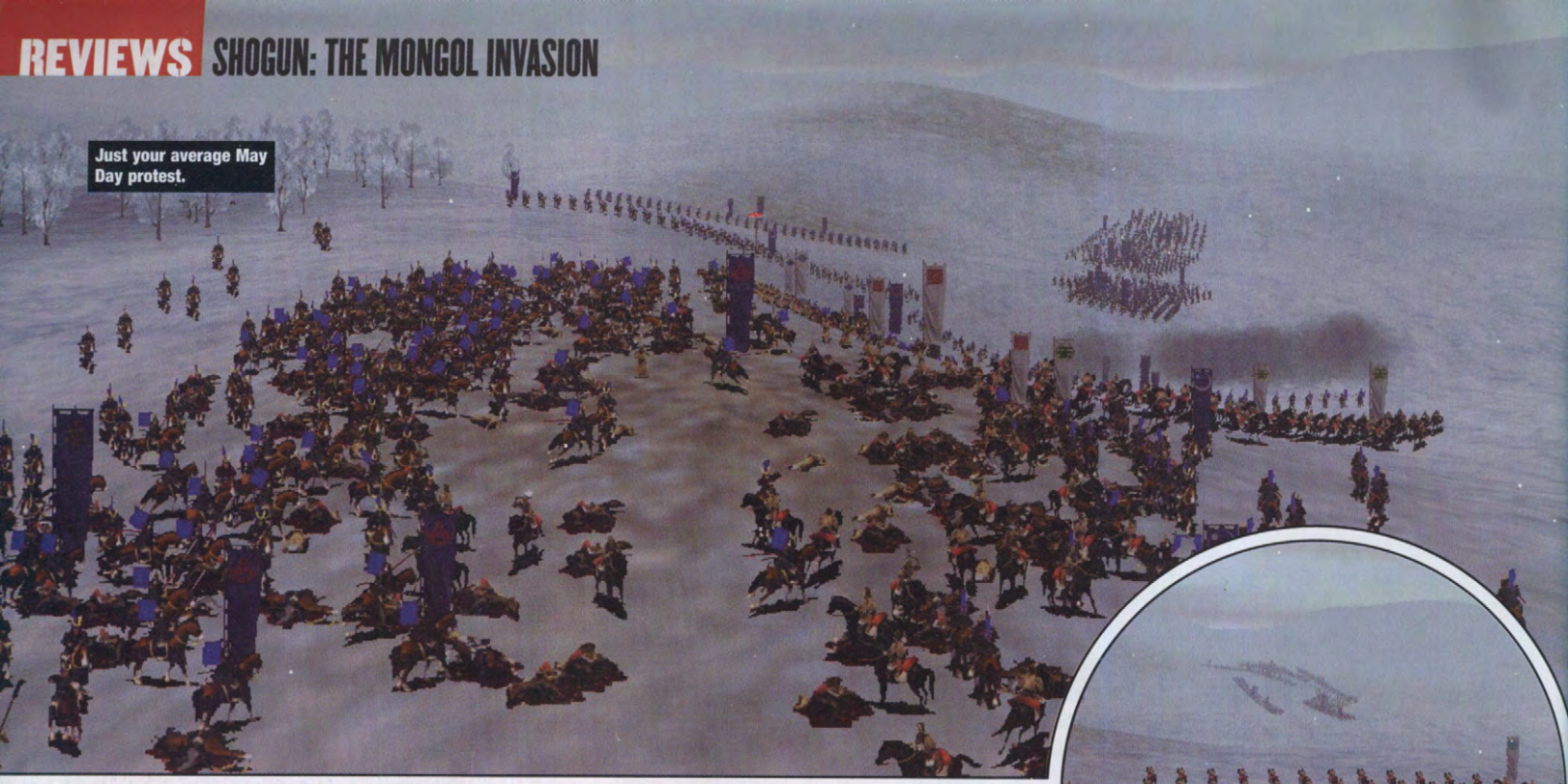
MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P266 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 12Mb 3D card **WE SAY** A P350 with 128Mb RAM may sound steep for the *Quake II* engine, but it'll make it run a whole lot smoother

PCZ VERDICT

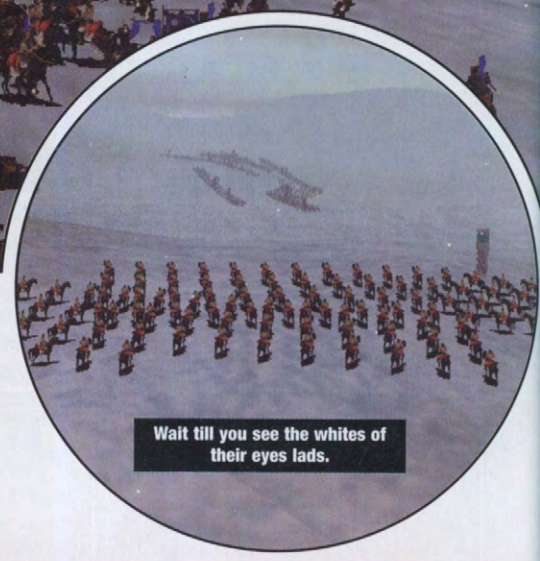
UPPERS Sprawling epic • Good writing • Funny • Some original ideas

DOWNERS Ancient engine • Poor graphics • Too much moving from one location and back again

83 A geriatric beauty



Just your average May Day protest.



Wait till you see the whites of their eyes lads.

SHOGUN: THE MONGOL INVASION

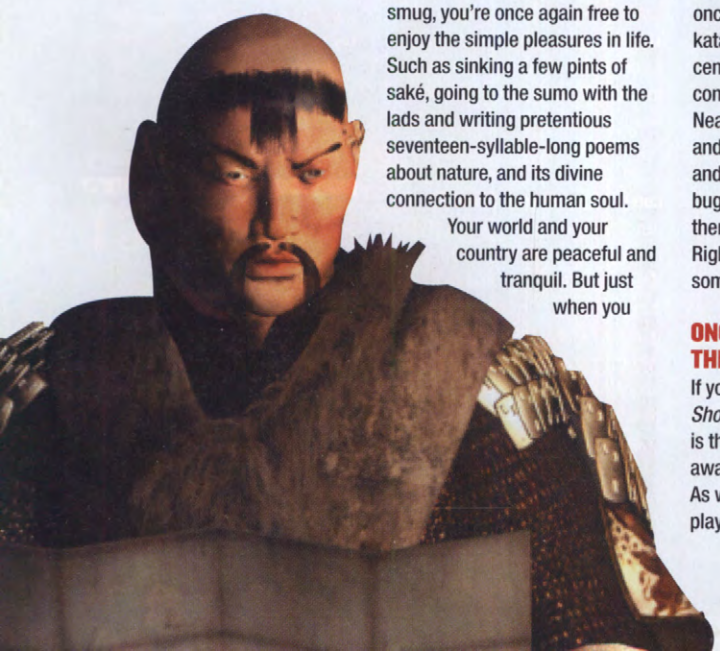
£14.99 • Electronic Arts • Out July 6

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

***Martin Korda* fancies himself as an invincible Mongol warrior. We just think he's a git with a daft haircut**

So there you are, Shogun of all Japan. After years of feuding with other clans, you've managed to unite the whole country under your rulership, and as well as feeling incredibly smug, you're once again free to enjoy the simple pleasures in life. Such as sinking a few pints of saké, going to the sumo with the lads and writing pretentious seventeen-syllable-long poems about nature, and its divine connection to the human soul.

Your world and your country are peaceful and tranquil. But just when you think your fighting days are behind you, it all goes horribly wrong – the Mongols invade, faaaaahsands of 'em. Which kind of puts your plans for a life of slothful self-indulgence on the backburner for a bit, as you must once again pull out your trusty katana and go to war. These 13th-century Mongols may be an all-conquering race of blood-loving Neanderthals who know no fear and live only to kill, rape, pillage and eat raw pigs, but you're buggered if you're going to let them push you around. Right? Right. Prepare yourself then, for some more total war.



ONCE MORE UNTO THE BREACH

If you hadn't already guessed, *Shogun: The Mongol Invasion* is the expansion to last year's award-winning *Shogun: Total War*. As well as offering the chance to play as or against said invaders, the pack also allows you to try your hand at several other campaigns, revolving around the power struggle in 16th-century feudal Japan. Both time periods provide you with different tactical possibilities, as they each have a slight variation of units. However, rather than merely offering you straightforward campaigns in the mould of the original, you can also try your hand at four mission-based scenarios. This allows you to do away with resource management, and lets you concentrate purely on battlefield tactics. A typical mission objective may include driving the enemy off the field while making sure that a certain percentage of your troops survive.

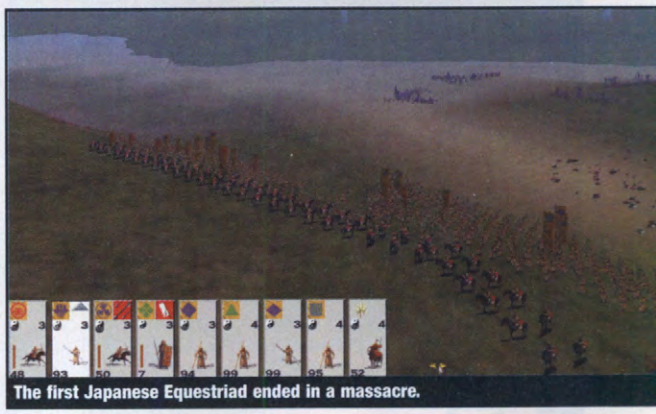
So if you can't be bothered with all that improving of farmlands and building of teahouses malarky that was unavoidable in *Shogun: Total War*, you can completely do away with it here.

"Their arrows have about as much range as spat mucus in a headwind and they reload slower than an impotent pensioner"

SUPERMEN AND SUPERTWATS

As you'd expect from any RTS expansion pack, there are plenty of new units. Unfortunately, it seems like the team at Creative Assembly were feeling somewhat uninspired when they came up with them. Apart from the Battlefield Ninjas, who are perfect for assassinating opposition commanders during a ruck, there's a pretty poor selection. In fact, the choices that you do get,

If your name's not Kenji, you're not coming in.



The first Japanese Equestriad ended in a massacre.

are lamer than a one-legged horse. The Japanese crossbowmen are quite possibly the most inept group of idiots ever to curse a strategy game. Not only can they not aim, their arrows have about as much range as spat mucus in a headwind and they reload slower than an impotent pensioner. Couple this with the fact that they usually end up killing more of your men than the opposition because they're incapable of shooting straight, and I think you start to get the idea. The Naginata cavalry aren't too bad, but the idea is hardly born of genius.

However, the worst of the lot is the Kensai warrior. Get this. For more than the price of 100 psychotic warrior monks, you can buy one of these guys. The Kensai warrior simply ploughs his way through the enemy taking out entire squads of the opposition's troops. While it's a nice idea, it simply doesn't work, especially in a game as realistic as this. You can't help but feel that he should be wearing his underpants on top of a pair of blue tights and have a big S stitched onto his chest, and wonder whether he lives a strange double life, in which he pretends to be a bungling, bespectacled, clumsy simpleton, who hides his superhero alter ego away from the rest of the world. I digress, but basically, the Kensai's ridiculously unrealistic and has no place in an add-on pack of this quality.

MONGOL WARRIORS AND WARRIOR MONGS

Of course you don't have to play as the Japanese in Warlords. If you decide to take on the role of the Kublai Khan – the all-conquering Mongol leader with the most ridiculous haircut in history – then you're presented with a selection of six highly versatile Mongol units. It's a shame that there aren't more of these, but this shortcoming is rectified somewhat by their versatility. Take the light cavalry for example, who are more lethal than a bout of Ebola. Not only are they the fastest unit in the game, they can fire arrows and put up a respectable fight when it gets up close and personal. Other units include heavy cavalry, Korean skirmishers, spearmen, guardsmen and thunder bombers, who fire explosive porcelain bombs at the enemy, and tend to be every bit as incompetent as the Japanese crossbowmen.

LOOKS GOOD, SOUNDS GOOD, TASTES LIKE WAR

Another major improvement in this pack is the ability to change the weapon and armour quality of your troops in the Custom Battle mode. Whereas before you could only allocate 'Honour' points, you can now customise the quality of their equipment as well.

There are nine new well-thought-out historical battles for you to try out, and you'll need to have learnt Sun Tzu's *The Art Of War* to anally retentive proportions if you're going to defeat the improved computer AI, which on the hardest skill setting has become worryingly intelligent, adapting to your every move and out-thinking you like a grand champion chess master would a class idiot. And if you get bored of these maps, you can now make your own with the level editor provided.

Graphically, things have been made crisper and more detailed, meaning huge melees are far easier to watch, and no longer look like a mass of coloured blobs bobbing around while shouting incoherent battle cries at one another. But that's not all, because the all-new soundtrack adds further to the game's incredible atmosphere, with a unique score for each side swelling the mood to blood-curdling proportions. It's a shame then that the Mongol commentator sounds like he's been suffering from chronic constipation for the best part of a month, but I suppose if you've been on the warpath for as long as the Mongols were, you're bound to exhaust your supply of All-Bran eventually.

NEW CONVERTS AND OLD HACKS UNITE

With a whole load of new multiplayer options to boot, such as King Of The Hill and Assassinate The Enemy General, *Shogun* lovers everywhere will find endless hours of enjoyment to be had, despite the disappointing selection of new units. What's more, now that you can do away with resource management and set your own victory conditions, this pack will make *Shogun* far more accessible to a wider range of strategy fans, and with a game as incredible as this, that can only be a good thing. PZ

IN PERSPECTIVE

There are no alternatives to *Shogun* add-on packs as this is the only one. If you don't already own the original then you'll be able to buy this pack bundled with the original, under the name *Shogun: Warlords* come September. If you prefer a more futuristic 3D real-time strategy experience, then either *Z: Steel Soldiers* or *Ground Control* are your best bets.

Shogun: Total War

Z: Steel Soldiers

Ground Control

Shogun: The Mongol Invasion

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P200 **Memory** 32Mb **WE SAY** PII 400, 64Mb RAM, 16Mb graphics card

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS New campaigns including mission-based scenarios • Play as Mongols or Japanese • Improved graphics • Superior AI • Great new soundtracks • Some excellent new multiplayer game types • Units are more customisable than before • Level editor

DOWNERS Poor selection of new Japanese units • Not enough Mongol units • Voice acting often lacking • Some campaigns too similar to the original

83 An honourable add-on

POETRY IN MOTION

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan...

Many people have tried to put into words the sheer horror of the Mongol hordes, but it was one-time spoof rock band, Bad News, who best captured the essence of the warring nation, with their sensitively titled song, *Warriors Of Ghengis Khan*. Panned by one (spoof) critic as doing nothing more than indulging, "the macho male ego's preoccupying and overriding obsession with dominating women and orgiastic blood-letting for the sake of it" (which sounds about right), you could also look at it as a vivid set of sensitively put together phrases which capture the horror and stark reality of a warrior race intent on conquering the world, but of course you'd have to be insane to actually wholeheartedly believe that. In fact, it's all a load of bollocks as the song was just a piss-take, but no doubt the great Khans would have approved of the lyrics (below). If you're not a fan of Japanese Haiku, then how's this for poetry?

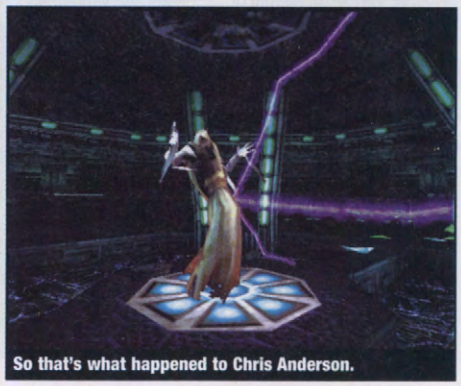
Warriors Of Ghengis Khan by Bad News

Burning, looting, raping, shooting (repeat)
I'm burning raping, looting and a shooting
All this I do, I'd kill for you.
Come on pretty baby won't you take my hand
I want to be a singer in a rock and roll band
Baby, baby, baby, baby, baby.
I wanna spill your blood all over the land
'Cos I'm a warrior, of Ghengis Khan
I'm a warrior, the blood won't wash away
I'm a warrior, I'll kill myself one day.

Vegetarian Mongols were somewhat of a rarity.

Not the best use off the *Unreal* engine, but not bad.

The Enforcer gets busy with a lightning gun.


So that's what happened to Chris Anderson.

X-COM: ENFORCER

Price TBC • Infogrames • Out October

Steve Hill only has 14 hours to save the Earth, and manages it comfortably

A world away from the pensive strategy of the original *X-Com* concept, *Enforcer* (we picked up a boxed copy in the US, as it's not out here until later this year) is a frantic third-person shooter that does for the genre what *Serious Sam* did for the FPS. That is, ignores ten years of progress, brushes over a storyline, and dispatches with any attempt at artificial intelligence. And like *Serious Sam*, it requires you to spend virtually the entire game (what there is of it) with your finger on the trigger as it throws a ludicrous amount of enemies directly into your path.

When we say there's no storyline, we're talking in terms of progressive plot and consistent narrative. There is of course the time-honoured filler, and it revolves around the Roswell incident. Some 50 years after the alleged alien landing, they're back, and there are absolutely thousands of them. Enemies come in many shapes and sizes, from the familiar 'greys' of *X-Files* lore, through dinosaur-like creatures, with even a couple of robotic behemoths thrown in for good measure. Something of a mixed bag then, although one thing they do have in common is a total disregard for their own welfare, simply making a beeline for you until stopped in their tracks by your hi-tech weaponry.

"Anyone else wanna get in my way?"

ET GO HOME

You, if you hadn't worked it out, are the titular X-Com Enforcer, X-Com of course being short for extraterrestrial combat. Billed as the "ultimate robotic super soldier, endowed with specially enhanced and modified *X-Com* armament and equipment" you are essentially a big robot. In fact, not even that big, probably about the size of a normal man. As for the armament, specially enhanced it may be, but you can only carry one weapon at a time. Said weapons appear in the form of power-ups, liberally strewn all over the ground of whatever level you are attempting to clear of alien infesters. As such, this can lead to the perverse situation of attempting to dodge a power-up if you are happy with the tool that you are wielding.

"Requires you to spend virtually the entire game with your finger on the trigger"

Not that you often will be, as despite the ability to upgrade them (see panel), the weapons are largely unsatisfying, and the damage caused by the various bits of hardware is scarcely discernible from one weapon to the next. The default cannon is puny, the shotgun is probably the least convincing yet seen, the freeze gun is extremely annoying in that within seconds you can't move for frozen aliens, and the spinning blade thing is largely unimpressive. The flame-thrower and grenade launcher are both passable, the fusion rifle has a bit of purchase, and the so-called mass driver is useful for picking off targets at a distance, one of the few times you will actually use the aiming function. Generally you will wheel around, shooting constantly, often overwhelmed by the sheer weight of numbers, having to carve your way through them, at which point the VibroBlade becomes useful, if you've got it.

Spread over some 30 missions, the action takes place in a variety of locales, from a trailer park to a shopping mall and even in an aeroplane. The goal is usually to destroy the transporters that are homing the aliens in, or rescue some hapless humans (by walking up to them). And in a unique twist, some levels require you to both destroy transporters

Not sure what that is.

Freeze! No, really.

Destroy the transporters to save the Earth.

Bonus rounds enable you to collect data points.

"I really shouldn't have had that curry..."

and rescue humans. Throw in the occasional boss level, and you can see where the game is coming from: unashamed, relentless arcade action.

KICKIN' IT OLD SKOOL

It's a defiantly old-skool approach, and *Enforcer* is little more than a 3D version of ancient arcade games such as *Robotron* or *Gauntlet*. You can't even look up and down, although to be honest, you wouldn't have time to. The levels tend to merge into one another and are fairly simplistic affairs, with further areas opening up once sections are cleared. And if you do get confused, a great big arrow appears at the top of the screen showing you where to go next. This is accompanied by the voice of the scientist that created you, who essentially commentates on the action, albeit with possibly one of the campest voices yet heard in a game. Ally this to the robot's own comments – monotone quips such as "Die Alien Scum" – and the whole thing is pretty damn stupid.

But that's the point. It's a mindless romp through a series of gaming and cultural clichés that requires only basic motor neurone functions. There are no mid-level saves, but even so, on the easy or normal setting at least, the whole thing can be comfortably completed within the space of a weekend. Depending on your outlook, this is either a damning indictment of the game's brevity, or a glowing endorsement of its playability.

Admittedly, it's all too easy to spend several hours tearing through the missions, simply because there's no natural place to stop. It may be one-paced, but it's a pace that will keep you on your toes, and during the end sequence it can even bring you out in a sweat. However, once finished, it's unlikely to see the light of day again. PCZ

IN PERSPECTIVE

Initially comparable to *MDK 2*, it soon becomes apparent that they are different ends of the same stick. It's similar to *Expendable* in terms of explosive action, and *Serious Sam* is simply a first-person equivalent. If you prefer porn actresses to robots, try *Heavy Metal: FAKK 2*. Or a porn film.

X-Com Enforcer

MDK 2

Heavy Metal: FAKK 2

Serious Sam

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** Twaddle. You'll need a P500, 128Mb of RAM and a recent graphics card

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS *Unreal* engine looks OK • Easy to get into • Surprisingly playable • Makes you sweat • Plenty of upgrades • Relentless arcade action

DOWNERS Can't select weapons • Very weak storyline • Limited AI • Camp commentator

68 Something for the weekend

POINTS MAKE PRIZES

Who said data entry was boring?

Throughout each mission, data points can be collected, which are then used for research. Between missions, points can be allocated to certain areas, such as armour, jumping ability and health. They can also be used to upgrade weapons and research new ones if the relevant icon has been found. It sounds a reasonable idea, but essentially the best bet is to spread the points evenly over the weapons to prevent you being caught in a corner with a glorified peashooter. It might have been more useful to allow you to actually select weapons in the game.

Spreading points evenly prevents you being stuck in a corner.

GANGSTERS 2

£29.99 • Eidos • Out now

Keith Pullin receives his punishment...

Gangsters 2 is in the shops as this is being written and that's instantly suspicious. Publishers are renowned for not releasing review code of poor games to magazines in order to get a few sales under their belt before the full gory truth is revealed. So, the fact that this particular game has already gone straight to number one in Electronic Boutique's chart is hugely misleading and totally unmerited.

The reality is that *Gangsters 2* is a massive disappointment and even more so when you realise that developer Hothouse Creations seems to have learnt nothing in the two and a half years since it released the awful *Gangsters: Organised Crime*.

In fact, we could stop the review right here and you'd be better off for it, as would Hothouse Creations, but alas, we're duty-bound to warn you, so here goes...

GANGING UP

Unsurprisingly and unimaginatively, the onus in *Gangsters 2* is again on creating and maintaining a massive crime empire, except this time there's much more of a real-time feel to the game. All the action is viewed either in isometric 3D or using an overhead map; assassinations, bribes, bank jobs, setting up counterfeit operations, machine-gun battles in the street and more are all performed with a click of the mouse. On the surface it sounds great and as an RTS concept it's brilliant. *Gangsters 2* could've been a classic – trouble is it just doesn't work.

The background story is predictable stuff. Assuming the role of ex-soldier Joey Bane, you must avenge your father's death by killing those responsible for his murder while nurturing a large-scale 'business' operation in which you move from city to city creating an untouchable web of corruption and illegal dealings.

Ultimately your empire should span the entire fictional state of New Temperance, however don't expect any complex interaction or trading between cities. Each city is basically a stand-alone level and once you've conquered it, it's on to the next. Gameplay resembles an over-complicated hybrid of Risk and Monopoly where you gain territory by taking over businesses, until you rule the town entirely or you assassinate one or more rival mob bosses. Occasionally there's the odd sub-plot thrown in to spice things up, but overall you're looking at the same formula level after level. Of course there's light relief to be had by gunning down innocent civilians with Tommy guns, but in *Gangsters 2* nearly everyone's corrupt so they probably deserve it anyway.

It's a shame really because you can't help thinking the whole gangster concept deserves something much more enterprising. What's the point of setting up gambling dens, bars, breweries and other interesting sidelines when you can't actually do anything useful with them? OK, so the cash goes towards new weapons, vehicles, 'muscle' and of course new businesses – but there should be more to it than that.

A bit of gun running from one town to another, or selling alcohol to neighbouring cities, or any kind of trading for that matter would have added much-needed depth and scope to the game. As it is, the shallow level-by-level structure quickly leaves you feeling bored and cheated, and feeling that this was a wasted opportunity.

> **"The dull, grey badlands of Milton Keynes or Basingstoke look positively exotic compared to these grizzly cityscapes"**

ANOTHER FINE MESS

Graphically, *Gangsters 2* resembles a kind of melted Legoland. The dull, grey badlands of Milton Keynes or Basingstoke look positively exotic compared to these grizzly cityscapes. Luckily we don't get to see too much of it, because like the original, *Gangsters 2* features a bizarre clipping system that chops off the roofs and walls of buildings to let you see your characters more

IN PERSPECTIVE

Visually it's easy to compare *Gangsters 2* to *Desperados*, *Commandos* or the *Fallout* series, yet the gameplay has more in common with real-time strategy games like *Shogun* or *Europa Universalis*. Sadly, whichever way you look at it, *Gangsters 2* is not a patch on any of the above and should consider itself lucky to be mentioned in the same breath.

SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR

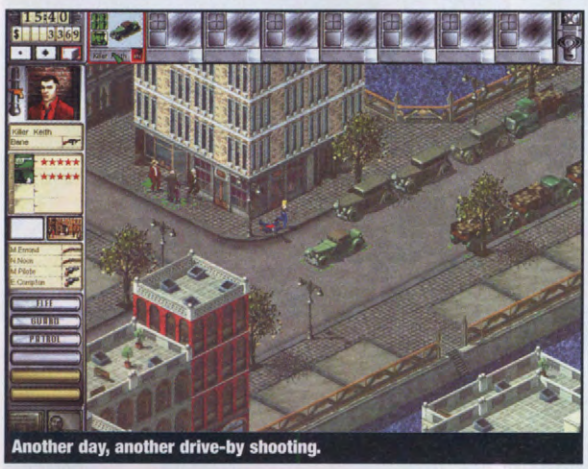
DESPERADOS

COMMANDOS

GANGSTERS 2

GANGSTERS: ORGANISED CRIME

Being chased by a gang of pimps can be tough on your eyesight.



Another day, another drive-by shooting.

Behold, the relatively unspectacular effects of a bomb.

The entire game can be played and completed using this view.

Killer Keith admires his handiwork...

Stay in one place too long and the Feds will soon catch up with you.

Expect no Christmas cheer in this game.

Choose your gangster at the start of each level.

clearly. This wouldn't be so bad if it worked, but as it stands, most of your time in the 3D isometric view is spent trying to locate your wayward wise guys. Things get even worse at night, and when you add a bit of rain… Well, you can imagine.

Animation too is dire. Let's take your average bouncer on duty outside a brothel or 'speakeasy'; there is no movement whatsoever from them – they're just frozen in time. It's as if someone has simply forgotten to animate them, or worse still – it's as if someone couldn't be bothered to animate them. You only need to look at the splendid incidental animation in *Desperados* or *Commandos* to know that the odd turning head or arse-scratching moment is not too much to ask.

One possible explanation for this sterile graphical showing is the fact that you don't actually need the isometric view at all and so therefore no effort has been put into it. The real action, such as hiring new gangsters, bribing officials and ordering hits can be done on the overhead map view of the city. What's more, it's actually easier to play the game this way because at least you can see every part of the city at once. In fact, we'll let you into a little secret: the only reason the isometric view was even used for this review was to take screenshots.

STREET CRED

Yet these gripes are nothing compared to the game's most criminal problem – AI. Top of our list in the AI gross negligence department is the way your vehicles can't even change direction until they reach a junction. While this is irritating at the best of times, it becomes unbearable when you need to perform a drive-by assassination. If you don't kill your target straight away you have to drive to the nearest junction (which can sometimes be miles away), turn around and then head back to where your target was last seen and hope they're still there – which obviously they never are.

The irony is amazing: here we have some of the world's most notorious gangsters who kill without remorse, run illegal gambling operations, bribe everyone they see (including police and judges) and yet they won't do a U-turn for fear of incurring the wrath of the local traffic cop.

On top of this, *Gangsters 2* boasts some of the worst

GANGSTER HALL OF FAME

Here are our top five gangsters of all time…

THE KRAYS

Ex-boxers Reggie and Ronnie were sentenced to life imprisonment for the murders of gangsters George Cornell and Jack 'The Hat' McVitie. Though recently departed, the East End's most loveable headcases are still our number one gangsters.

AL CAPONE

For six years between 1925 and 1931, Capone controlled Chicago's speakeasies, bookie joints, gambling houses, brothels, horse and racetracks, nightclubs, distilleries and breweries with a reported income of US$100,000,000 a year.

JOHN GOTTI

Dubbed the 'Teflon Don' or 'Dapper Don', Gotti was the most charismatic Mafia Boss in modern history. In 1992 he was jailed for 100 years and has been in solitary confinement for the last nine years – even though he has throat cancer.

FRANK COSTELLO

Known as the 'Prime Minister of the Underworld' because of his rare ability to get things done without resorting to force, Costello was one of the most intelligent Mafioso ever. He was shot in the head in the mid-'50s, yet somehow walked away.

PHIL 'APEMAN' MITCHELL

Despite interference from his mother and a string of highly irritating girlfriends, the East End's latest hard man keeps trying to be bad. He'll end up being knocked off by a man who advertises coffee, or worse still, crushed to death by an obese barmaid.

pathfinding you are ever likely to experience. For some reason your motley crew of half-arsed hooligans choose the most ridiculous routes across the city regardless of whether they're travelling by car or foot. This kind of behaviour is understandable if they're trying to avoid rival gangs or the FBI, but these guys aren't that smart. It's perfectly normal for your 'most wanted' gang members to stroll straight past the cop shop and subsequently straight into jail.

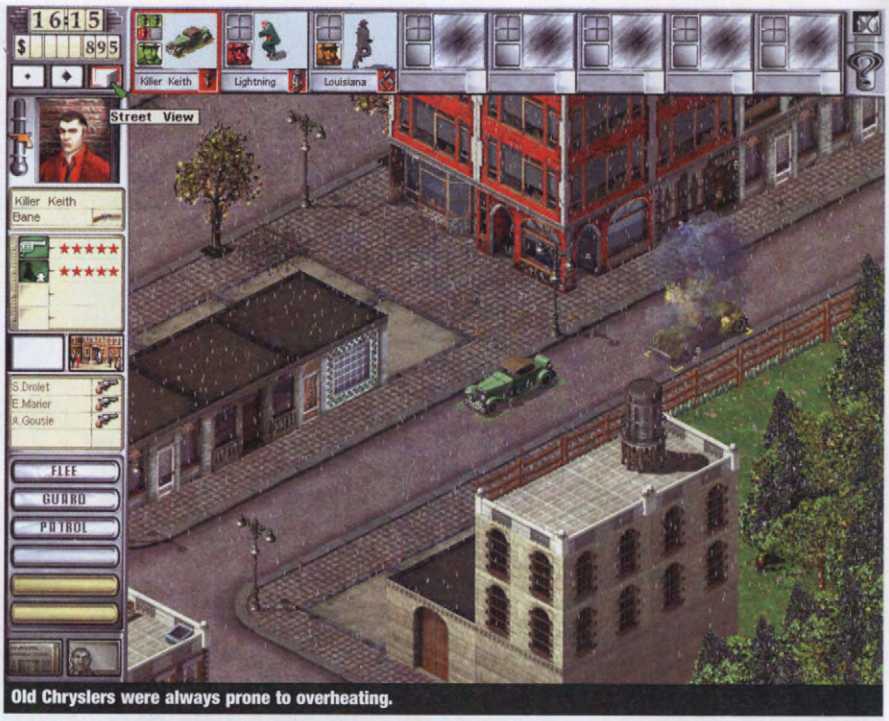
The above examples are just a couple of the AI problems your characters are lumbered with. There are plenty of other failings that could be listed here including blind bouncers, Forrest Gump henchmen (they just can't stop running away) and getaway drivers who can't drive. We could go on, but there's no point; the sad truth is the AI is so frustrating it reduces you to tears.

"There are plenty of other failings including blind bouncers and Forrest Gump henchmen (they just can't stop running away)"

MOB JUSTICE

Amid the mire of mistakes and poor programming there is one good point: once you've taken over a city you are given skill points to improve your gangsters' abilities. This means it is worth protecting your best guys. You are also given the option to select which gangsters and business specialists you want to use on the next level. It's worth thinking carefully about too, because once you start a level you're generally stuck with those gangsters until the stage is complete, or until they die horribly in a wall of gunfire. If the latter happens you can hire another mobster by checking out the job vacancy section in the local newspaper...

Yes, it goes from the sublime to the ridiculous. Hitmen, arsonists, explosive experts, pimps and more can all be found in the local rag. Oh, and if you're interested you can also check out the obituaries just to see who's snuffed it recently. Sadly, meaningful or relevant news stories will not be found; despite being printed twice daily, headlines remain the same for days.



Old Chryslers were always prone to overheating.

Details on your businesses can be fully examined.

Obituaries took up a lot of space back in the 1920s.

GUNNED DOWN

Is that a gun in your pocket wise guy? Deck your mob out with the following firepower...

Explosives
Throwing a bomb into a bar or bookies as you drive past is highly effective.

Rifle
A great weapon for gangsters with a good weapons rating. Has good range too.

Tommy Gun
The most potent gun in the game comes in handy for those St Valentine's Day-type massacres.

Pistol
The basic weapon of all gangsters – it's cheap, but not always deadly.

Shotgun
Perfect in close-up situations, but useless at long range.

Silenced Pistol
The weapon of choice for highly trained hitmen. Usually kills with one shot.

If you gotta go, go in a blaze of glory.

GET THE PLIERS RON

And that's pretty much the size of it. Art Deco fans might possibly relate to the excellent period poster art in the newspaper advertisements section as well as some great sounding oboe in the musical score. And to be fair, a reasonable amount of effort has been put into creating an authentic atmosphere. Although it has to be said that a *Scarface*-inspired cocaine-fuelled paranoia would have gone down quite nicely too, as would a few pliers- or electrode-related cut-scenes.

Unfortunately, no amount of atmosphere can hide the fact that *Gangsters 2* has more holes than an Israeli tower block. The gameplay is repetitive, the AI is almost non-existent and the 3D isometric view is a waste of time both visually and logistically.

Gangsters was bad, *Gangsters 2* is worse. Let's just hope we never have to go through this again because the logical, frightening outcome doesn't bear thinking about. PCZ

The police and a couple of gangs eye each other suspiciously.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 266 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 650Mb HD space **WE SAY** PIII 600 with 128Mb RAM makes things smoother

PCZ VERDICT

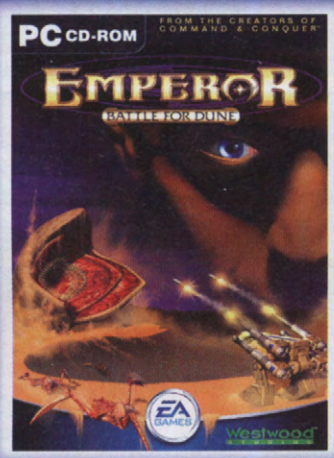
UPPERS Good period music and atmosphere • Gangsters earn skill points

DOWNERS Diabolical graphics and animation • Atrocious pathfinding and character/vehicle AI • Pointless newspaper headlines • Redundant isometric view • Missed opportunity on trading

55 Put on your concrete slippers

HMV

seriouslyaddictive...

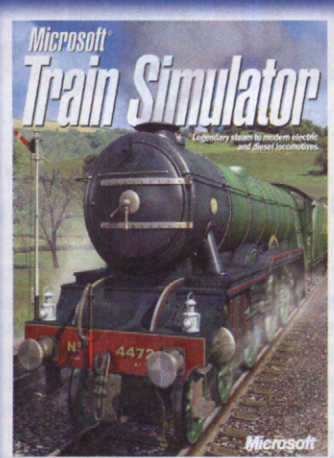


EMPEROR: BATTLE FOR DUNE™

Emperor: Battle For Dune is not only graphically beautiful, but delivers new depths of strategy. Create a customised army, tailored to specific tactics and strategies, by choosing one of the three unique sides available: the Noble House Atreides, the Evil Harkonnen or the Insidious Ordos, each with vast armies and exotic weapons. Once you have chosen your main alliance, the battle for universal supremacy will begin.

JET PACK

Novalogic presents the most intense collection of flight simulations ever, *F-16 Multirole Fighter*, *F-22 Raptor* and *MIG-29 Fulcrum*. Compete in large-scale internet battles with other players from all three titles through Novaworld's® integrated battle space. Each game offers quick flights, over 40 single player missions and your own tools to create and edit your own missions.



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COMMANDOS 2

Commandos 2 features the most realistic and detailed gaming environments ever seen. Take command of the elite platoon, utilising each of their unique abilities to complete missions deep in enemy territory. Featuring more action, faster paced gameplay, four camera views, three new characters and a variety of new vehicles and weapons, including jeeps, tanks, trucks, bazookas and flame-throwers.

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CREATIVE

"Fancy helping me with a spot of gardening?"

"Gizza hug mate."

I think we've got a live one here.

You'll have to keep an eye out for these three.

HOUSE OF THE DEAD 2

★ £29.99 or £40-50 (TBC) with a light-gun • Empire Interactive • Out now (or in September with light-gun)

Daniel Emery sees lots of dead people. Then he does his best to shoot them in the head

Back in the 1970s when sideburns were in vogue, the Queen was still quite hip (hard to believe we know) and Slade had only re-released *Merry Christmas* three times, there was a car known as the Triumph Stag. It was a stunning car, a veritable totty-magnet if you will, and the public loved it. Loved it, that is, until a slight oversight in the design caused the engine to explode within a few thousand miles. A few fires, many returns and a lot of dented egos later, the Stag was consigned to the drawing board and only a few hundred of them survive today; the pride and joy of some bearded bloke in Essex. Had someone at Triumph taken the Stag for a serious test drive before it was launched all this could have been avoided. Enter Sega, stage left…

IN PERSPECTIVE

Not exactly a raft to choose from, but here goes (assuming you have a light-gun, of course).

House Of The Dead 2

Virtua Cop

House Of The Dead 1

FORGET THE MOUSE

You see, while *House Of The Dead 2* is almost a carbon copy of the coin-op and the console version, somebody somewhere didn't play the game the way most PC players will. And that's with a bloody mouse. Games that require a light-gun are rare as rocking-horse shit, and *HOTD 2* would have been the perfect light-gun/game bundle for PC players. This is coming in September, but until then we get the coin-op with all the frustration of using a mouse.

The game itself is the usual 'scary-scary-horror-brooding' affair, although the green-blooded zombies are none too impressive with little in the way of gore. If you added some stale smoke, a load of screaming school kids and some dodgy neon lights, it would feel like you were in a seaside arcade.

"If you added some stale smoke, a load of kids and some dodgy neon lights, it would feel just like you were in a seaside arcade"

The game is true to its heritage, and has the same dubious plot involving a guy called G who you have to rescue/avenge (things get a little hard to follow), although there is sadly no mention of finding the G-Spot. Cue the obvious 'finding the button' jokes.

GET YOUR GUN

If you can wait until September when the light-gun/game bundle is out, *HOTD 2* will be a delight to play. If you have a good surround sound system and can get some mates round for a game, then a Saturday night will never be the same (you're liable to be single in no time). The boss monsters become weirder, and the onslaught becomes almost apocalyptic. It's kind of like running through a shopping centre on acid. Apparently.

It's a cop-out, but we've given two scores to *HOTD 2*. One when playing with a light-gun, and one without. While we all understand the pressure on companies to release games as soon as they're ready, it is a foolish move to release it before the light-gun is available. In fairness, the light-gun is being developed by a third party, so Empire has little control over it. But discretion is the better part of valour. Something Triumph learnt to its cost – no doubt Empire will too. PCZ

TECH SPECS

TECH SPECS Processor P450 **Memory** 64Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 16Mb 3D Card, **WE SAY** Get a light-gun! Get a light-gun!

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Scary • Fast-paced • Atmospheric • Lots of fun

DOWNERS Crap with a mouse • Cheesy plot • Too short

74 With light-gun

37 Without light-gun

And you may see some rain in the South West.

Yes, the excitment is never ending.

You sure this isn't upside down?

What passes for a battle in a fort.

Let the battle commence.

WATERLOO: NAPOLEON'S LAST BATTLE

Price: US$44.99 • Strategy First • Out now from http://www.strategyfirst.com/

Egotistic, demented and only slightly taller than a dwarf – *Daniel Emery* is our reviewer with a Napoleon complex

In Ancient times mariners warned of the Albatross. A big lofty thing, the Albatross usually heralded doom, disaster and death at sea if it was ever harmed by the crew. There was even a poem written back in 1798 by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in-between various hallucinogenic bouts of ether. But he also wrote *Kubla Khan*, so he was obviously mad. By the same token the word 'Napoleon' usually heralds trouble when it's found on a computer game, and sadly *Waterloo: Napoleon's Last Battle* is no exception to this time-honoured tradition.

The game is a lacklustre affair using the same tired old script that inspired war gamers in the mid '90s. While other RTS war games such as *Panzer General* have embraced new technology by creating fully rotatable 3D landscapes, and modelling units to a very high degree, *Waterloo: Napoleon's Last Battle* is an isometric affair with eight viewpoints. The maps are all very green, and judging by the screenshots, are made entirely of Astro-Turf.

But what of the gameplay? Have the designers thought laterally to create some cutting edge ideas where hand-to-hand combat is recreated in gritty detail? Do cannon explosions shower the troops with dirt and smoke? Er... no, not a hope. Explosions (what there are of them) look like brown blobs of water, and the troop graphics are either too small to see, or in such detail as to kill any global scale of battle. And when you do give into temptation and zoom into some hand-to-hand combat, there is virtually nothing to see. A few pre-set movements but nothing that gives you the feeling of a battle.

While *Waterloo* is no Samuel Taylor Coleridge, neither is it a load of Jackson Pollocks. The various battles, both historical and hypothetical, are recreated to the best of the straining engine's abilities and some of the sound effects are excellent.

Another major gripe is that the AI's behaviour verges between erratic and downright suicidal. Although intelligent in one of the pre-assembled scenarios, creating one of your own will have the enemy scurrying away from the battle and huddling in the top corner of the map.

The game also lacks any multiplayer options. The fact that you are confined to only playing against the PC's suspect AI, is surely down to lazy programming and cost watching. At least you might have actually got some fun out of the game going head-to-head with someone. As it is, it's just dull.

Waterloo: Napoleon's Last Battle is pitched straight at the hardcore strategy enthusiast. And when we say hardcore, we're talking re-enactment societies, paintings on the wall and all the trimmings. The controls aren't intuitive, the graphics are flawed, the sound effects sub standard and the gameplay dull. Funnily enough, you can only buy this game on the Internet, as a UK publisher has yet to be found. And after playing this, we can see why. If you want to play a good historical RTS then try *Close Combat*, *Panzer General* or *Sid Meier's Antietam*. Unless you're a 5ft Sinclair C5 owner, give this game a very wide berth. PCZ

"The AI's behaviour verges between erractic and downright suicidal"

IN PERSPECTIVE

Waterloo: Napoleon's Last Battle has to be our least favourite out of this lot.

Close Combat III

Close Combat V

Panzer General 3D

Sid Meier's Antietam!

Waterloo: Napoleon's Last Battle

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P450+ Memory 64Mb RAM **WE SAY** Sounds about right to us

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Beats being stuck in a traffic jam – just

DOWNERS Dull • Tedious • Non-intuitive • Dodgy AI

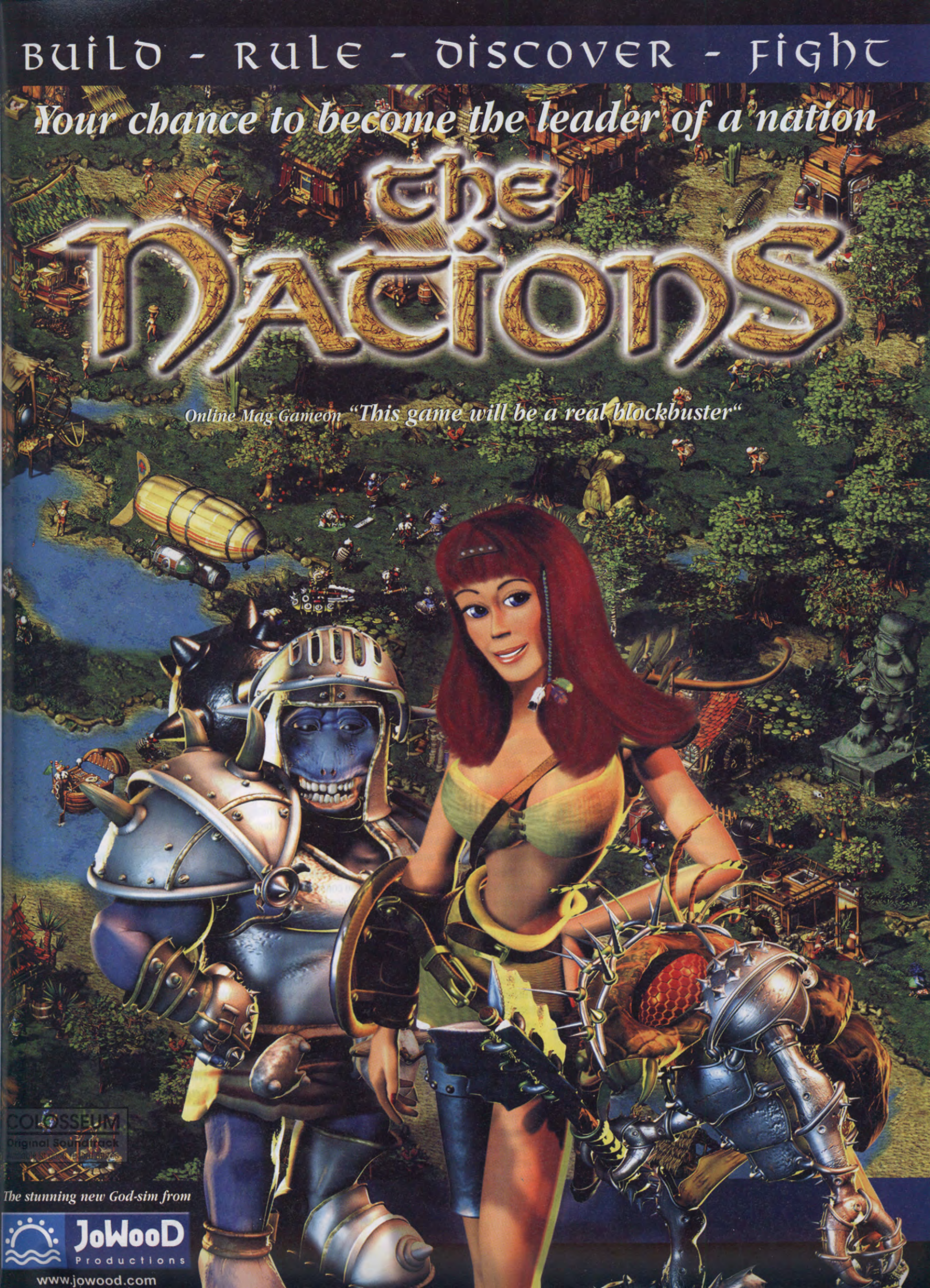
35 Consigned to the great dustbin of life

BUILD - RULE - DISCOVER - FIGHT

Your chance to become the leader of a nation

The NATIONS

Online Mag Gameon "This game will be a real blockbuster"



COLOSSEUM
Original Soundtrack

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A well placed magnum shot turns these electrical beasts into dead meat.

I think they've seen you.

The new assault rifle in action.

"Ahhhrrrrrrggg, doughnuts..." This must be the drooling range.

HALF-LIFE: BLUE SHIFT

£14.99 • Vivendi • Out now

The best game ever is brought back to life again. *Mark Hill* digs out the doughnuts

Last month Francis Ford Coppola released a new version of *Apocalypse Now* under the title of *Apocalypse Now Redux* and including many scenes previously edited out. As ever, this prompted critics to question whether immortal classics should be tampered with. *Blue Shift* isn't really a *Half-Life Redux* – except that 'redux' literally means 'brought back' – but there is the same sense of a true classic being messed around with. And there's also a sense that we are finally getting the complete picture.

Half-Life is the *Star Wars* of the gaming world, inspiring religious devotion and veneration among those bright enough to move about with a mouse and keyboard. And, just as big franchises like *Star Wars* are exploited in comic books and novels, *Half-Life* is producing spin-offs all over the place. There are various mods that pick up the game's storyline, but they are little more than fan-art when compared to the real thing. Now, after developing the highly impressive *Opposing Force*, Gearbox has produced its second add-on.

You can't help but associate the word 'add-on' with 'cash-in'. After all, they're even worse than sequels at milking a successful idea for all it's worth. And when you consider that *Blue Shift* was originally conceived as an extra for the Dreamcast version of the game, that feeling is reinforced.

The doe-eyed, trusting reaction is that the publishers decided it was unfair to PC gamers to deprive them of a new episode in their favourite game, just to give it to philistine console players, and so made it available to us too. The cynical view is that they realised they had spent a lot of time and money on a project for a half dead platform and told Gearbox to knock out a quick conversion for the PC. After all, nothing with the official *Half-Life* sticker is going to fail to sell shedloads of copies.

INSECURITY

In *Half-Life* you played the central character in a glorious tale. In *Opposing Force* you played a soldier who doesn't really get involved in the original's main events. Here you play a second-rate security guard called Barney Calhoun. Imagine watching *Star Wars* exclusively from the point of view of the barman in the Mos Eisley Cantina, cleaning tables and stopping droids from entering, while Luke and friends save the galaxy, or watching *The Sopranos* every week from the point of view of Tony's sullen mother. On the one

"You'll immediately notice how much more detail they've managed to fit in this time"

MULTIPLAYER FORCE

So what about online play?

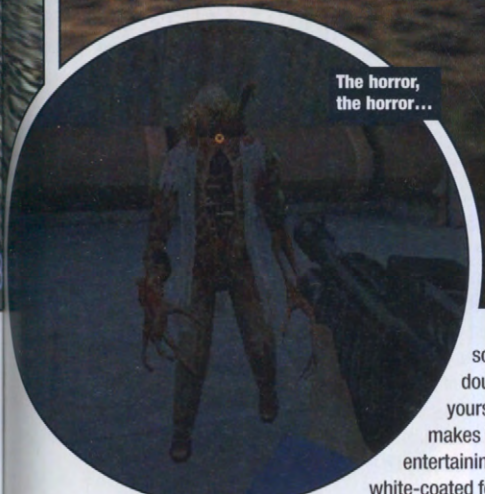
Although *Counter-Strike* practically monopolises online shooting, there is still a healthy number of people who prefer a good game of *H-L* deathmatch above all else. Included in this pack – and going by the name of *Opposing Force Online* – is an All Star deathmatch collection, created by top map designers and a new Capture The Flag mode, which pitches the Black Mesa civilians against the soldiers.

At least you don't have to mess around with that stupid rope-climbing feature from *Opposing Force*.

"Damn Windows crashed again."

It seems these scientists have been to Xen.

Aren't these the stairs from the Back Alley CS map?



The horror, the horror...

hand, *Blue Shift* – taken as part of the whole – is an interesting experiment in multi-perspective narrative. On the other, you only play a bit role in a series of events you've already experienced from more exciting points of view.

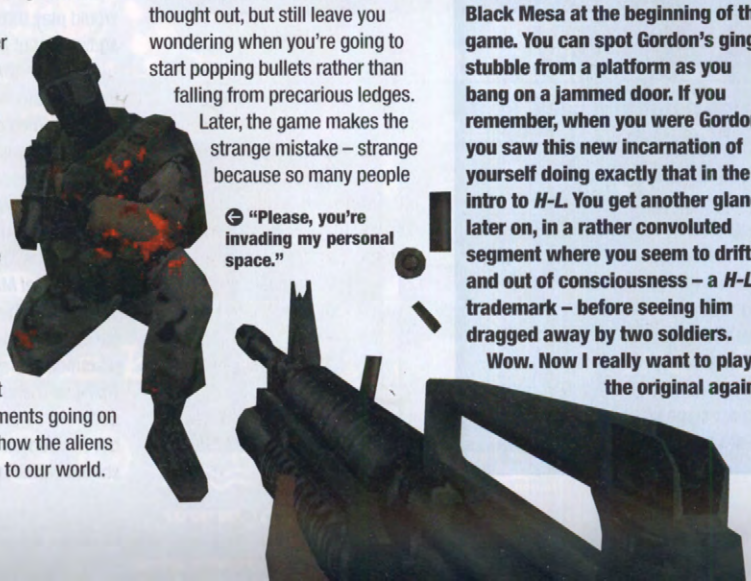
Things kick off in familiar fashion as you make your way to work on the Black Mesa's sophisticated monorail system. You'll immediately notice how much more detail they've managed to fit in this time, as a whole world goes on around you, with people eating at a canteen and scientists doing their laundry. The complex is more alive than ever before. On your way to the dressing room you encounter all sorts of characters experiencing technical difficulties, each one of them individually defined. In fact, most of them are downright rude, suggesting that you "go and guard some coffee and doughnuts" or "make yourself useful". It makes it all the more entertaining to see the white-coated fools getting torn to pieces by aliens. The whole game focuses on a greater interaction with scientists as proper people rather than the two or three models that were cloned throughout the facility who kept repeating the same phrases. This is perhaps *Blue Shift*'s greatest achievement, and undoubtedly a taster of things to come in *Half-Life 2*.

While *Opposing Force* threw you in the middle of a warzone, here you get to experience the calm before the storm and be there when all hell breaks loose. Not only that, you even find out more about the types of experiments going on in Black Mesa and how the aliens have come through to our world.

FIRE IN THE HOLE

So how does it compare to its predecessors? Well, let's just say that, for the most part, it doesn't deserve to be mentioned in the same breath as *Opposing Force*, never mind *Half-Life*. The first part of the game – and much of the last part – is spent solving environmental puzzles that are tailor-made for a console, like "how do I get up there using these boxes, that fork-lift truck and a box of matches". They're well thought out, but still leave you wondering when you're going to start popping bullets rather than falling from precarious ledges.

Later, the game makes the strange mistake – strange because so many people



"Please, you're invading my personal space."

FLASH OF GORDON

Mmm, I'm sure I've been this guy before...

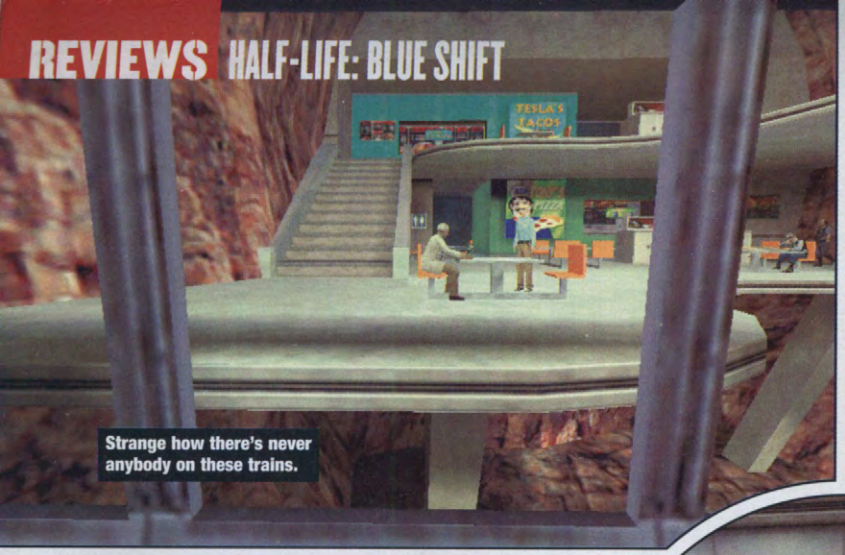
One of the most original things about both add-on packs is the way they overlap the original story. In *OF* you only caught a glimpse of Gordon Freedman as he ran into the teleporting hole leading to Xen. In *Blue Shift* you see him a lot earlier, riding on the monorail as he enters Black Mesa at the beginning of the game. You can spot Gordon's ginger stubble from a platform as you bang on a jammed door. If you remember, when you were Gordon you saw this new incarnation of yourself doing exactly that in the intro to *H-L*. You get another glance later on, in a rather convoluted segment where you seem to drift in and out of consciousness – a *H-L* trademark – before seeing him dragged away by two soldiers.

Wow. Now I really want to play the original again.

From the Freedman intro.

From the bit where Gordon is captured.

And this is how Gordon saw Barney in the original.



Strange how there's never anybody on these trains.

Plenty of alien butt to kick on Xen.

"I love the smell of napalm in the morning."

It must have taken two tanks to make that armour.

Instead of topping your suit with energy you have to pick armour from other fallen guards.

have spoken out against it – of spending a large period of time in the Xen universe. To be fair, Gearbox has been careful to make it as easy as possible and there is hardly any virtuoso zero-gravity platform jumping required. And the section *is* quite integral to the *Blue Shift* story. Nevertheless, it goes on for far too long and gets quite boring, Which only makes you wish they had concentrated more on the second part.

However, the battles against the human soldiers do deserve to be mentioned in the same breath as *H-L* and *OF*. There isn't as much variety in enemies, though. The battles consist of a staple diet of face-huggers, teleporting cyclops and those faceless, mostly harmless, alien poodles, with the occasional acid-spitting lizard thrown in for good measure. But all that becomes unimportant when the soldiers come along. There's nothing to compare to the extremely difficult black op ninjas from *OF*, but these guys are still every bit as intelligent as you could hope an AI enemy to be. They hide, co-ordinate attacks and hobble to a retreat when injured. Run into open space and you'll be a human colander within seconds. Try to hide and you'll see a grenade growing ever larger in the centre of your screen before spotting shards of your own bones bouncing off the walls. At times it's like playing a game of *Counter-Strike* on your own. Getting through an area covered with soldiers all waiting to take a pop at you is like being the last terrorist left with the bomb still to be planted. You keep reaching for a flashbang out of pure instinct. The all-new assault rifle is the best weapon on offer here, but there are times when you wish you could pick up a sniper rifle too. Even though you don't get to use alien weapons, you don't really miss them.

"Run into open space and you'll be a human colander within seconds"

It's disappointing that Gearbox didn't give you a few other guards to fight alongside you in some of the big battles, as it would have given it a whole other dimension. They did it in *OF* when you got engineers and medics by your side, so why not here? It would also have been cool if Gordon Freedman had come up to you at some stage and asked for help getting through a certain section, which would allow you to fight together for a while. Perhaps that's asking a bit too much though.

QUARTER-LIFE

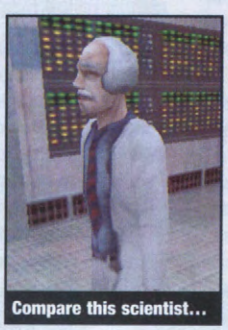
I've never been one to knock games for being too short (quality is preferable to quantity), but *Blue Shift*'s brevity almost takes the piss. As a Dreamcast extra it works perfectly, but as a stand-alone PC title there's not nearly enough to it. Because it is stand-alone there is a separate Hazard Course for beginners but, unlike the brilliant *Full Metal Jacket* Boot Camp from *OF*, it's a stilted, functional affair. *Blue Shift* has no black op ninjas, no set pieces with enormous creatures that have to be dealt with imaginatively and it doesn't even have an end of game boss. I completed it in one sitting – just over five hours – and while I would play through the soldier bits again, a lot of it was forgettable.

We hope this will be the end of the expansions before the proper sequel comes out, although we wouldn't be surprised to hear about the impending release of *Half-Life: Now And Xen*, where you get to play from the point of view of the aliens. Or perhaps *Half-Life: Biochemical Mathematics*, where you take on the role of a hapless old scientist waiting to be rescued. As a stopgap before *Half-Life 2*, *Blue Shift* doesn't quite live up to expectations, but *H-L* addicts with cash to burn should certainly give it a go. PCZ

I CAN SEE CLEARLY NOW

Blue Shift comes with a high definition pack. Really

Perhaps the single most important reason you should get this add-on is that it contains an enhancement pack you can incorporate into the original *Half-Life* and *Opposing Force*. This includes higher character and environment definition as well as new creatures and weapons. Existing weapons have been given a gloss over and those of you with high-end machines will notice higher detail all round. Personally, this is just the excuse I've been looking for to play through *Half-Life* and *OF* for the third time.


Compare this scientist...

...with this one.

IN PERSPECTIVE

It doesn't live up to *Half-Life* and the first add-on pack, but there are still moments of pure quality. Pick up the *Generations* pack if you're foolish enough not to own a copy already, or try the excellent *Undying* for something a bit different.

Blue Shift

Half-Life

Opposing Force

Counter-Strike

Undying

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Proccessor** P233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** If you've got at least a PII 400 and a good graphics card, you'll really be able to appreciate the improved graphics

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Another side to the Black Mesa story • Brilliant human enemies • NPCs now have defined personalities • Nice environmental puzzles • Enhanced graphics

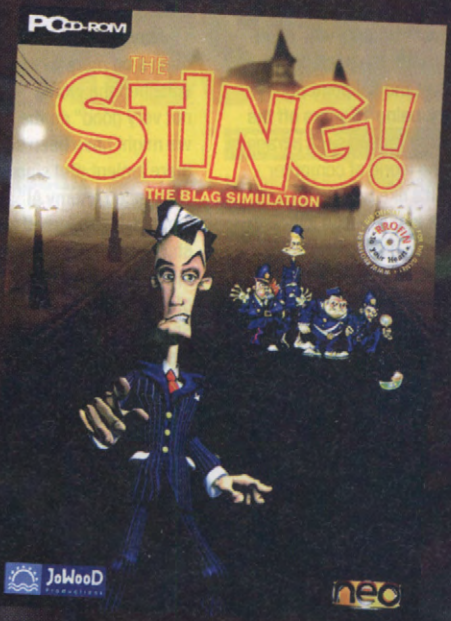
DOWNERS Way too short • No huge enemies • No black ops • Ending poor and abrupt • Too much Xen world

78 Blue in the face

The Blag Simulation

THE STING!

I Pull The Strings Around Here



The 3D real-time burglary adventure. Out now

PC CD

JoWooD Productions

neo www.neo.at

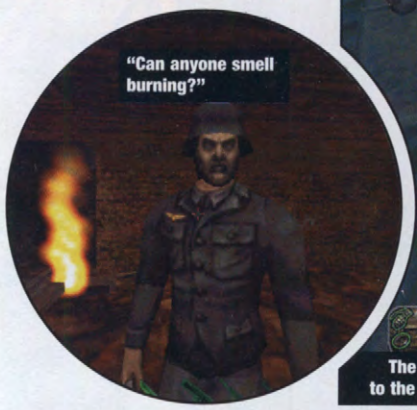
www.jowood.com

www.thesting-thegame.com

WWII: NORMANDY

Valusoft • £14 • Out now from www.valusoft.com

Anthony Holden's deputy editor went to E3 and all he got was this lousy shooter



The German swimming team's secret weapon never even made it to the qualifiers.

PCZONE PANTS When you're working with the fastest moving peacetime technology ever created, there are bound to be a few stragglers who can't keep up with the pack. If this were, say, the ballpoint pen industry, being 15 years off the pace might not be such a tragedy, but in the world of computer games it's like turning up to work clad in a leopard-skin loincloth, caked from head to toe in your own filth, and proceeding to dry-hump the work experience girl before cleaving her skull with a rough-hewn adze. Such is the nature of *WWII: Normandy*, an absolute corker of an FPS that Richie was kind enough to bring us back from the US.

Listing all the crimes of this catastrophic WWII shooter is beyond the scope of this publication, but needless to say, if ever compiled they would run to several weighty volumes. Towards the top of the list, however, would have to be the wretched visuals, the laughably trite game mechanics and the unforgivable graphical glitches.

Maybe if the developers had been a bit more forthcoming, and splashed the words "it's really not very good" on the packaging, we might have been slightly more lenient. But since the words "advanced enemy AI" appear instead, we're forced to take a stand. The enemies are in fact the most intellectually bereft cast of goons this side of a Britney Spears chatroom, though with a lemming-like intuition, the game does have sufficient self-awareness to crash frequently, saving anyone from further misery had they wandered into it thinking it was a retro re-release of *3D Monster Maze*.

Richie has already bought one copy of this rubbish; don't set a dangerous precedent for the industry by doing the same.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** PII 266 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **WE SAY** A hammer and chisel should do the trick

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS It's over in a few hours • Crashes frequently to remind you to stop playing it

DOWNERS You name it

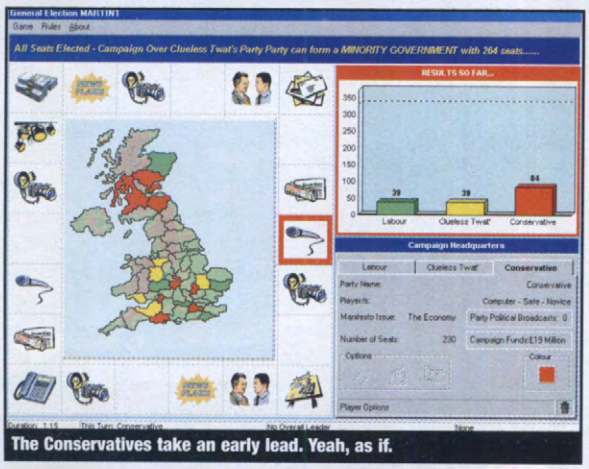
14 **Let's just pretend it never happened**

America's devastating 'burrowing plane' technology met with only partial success.

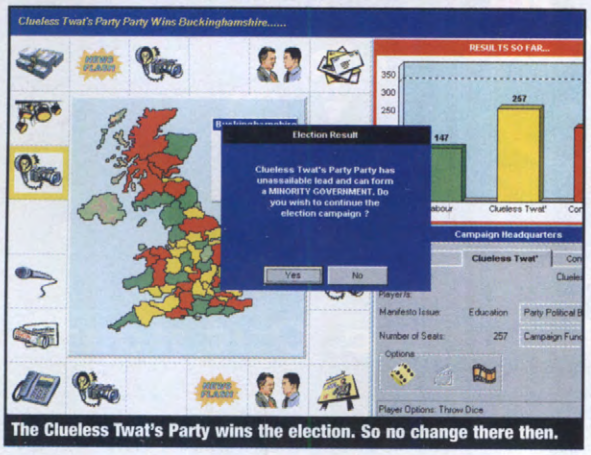
GENERAL ELECTION

£19.99 • Infogrames • Out now

Martin Korda would rather watch a two-hour party political broadcast than have to play this game again



The Conservatives take an early lead. Yeah, as if.



The Clueless Twat's Party wins the election. So no change there then.

PCZONE PANTS And there you were thinking the election was all over. No more suit-wearing, sweaty, balding, bearded fat weirdos (and that's just the female MPs) spewing endless amounts of crap at you. That is unless you're prepared to waste your time with this shamelessly thrown together piece of tat, in which you must take the helm of a party and win power by answering a set of disinteresting political questions.

In essence, this is no more than a second-rate board game, which taxes the mind about as much as a session of tiddlywinks. You can win seats by correctly answering questions, or by strategically broadcasting your limited supply of party political snorecasts. Needless to say, realism was never at the forefront of the developer's minds. Once you have a majority, no matter how small, you're given the chance to end the game, which is easily its strongest feature as it allows you to stop playing this muck. Even pretentious snotty-nosed gatherings of inbred freaks, with an unhealthy love of political discussion, will only be mildly distracted by it.

The box proudly claims that *General Election* "recreates the atmosphere of an election night as the ballots are counted and the results come in", which isn't too far from the truth. Playing *General Election* is every bit as coma inducing as watching the results trickle through on TV, where bored, walrus-looking reporters in stupid khaki raincoats desperately try to think of something vaguely interesting to say. Well done, best work so far, have an extra 0 per cent for boring me so much. You'd get better value for your money (and feel considerably less patronised) if someone dropped a turd in a DVD box and charged you for it.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** PII 300 **Memory** 48Mb RAM **WE SAY** Incredibly this basic piece of tat needs a PII 400 and 64Mb of RAM to run at a decent pace

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Easy to un-install

DOWNERS No gameplay • No fun • No real point to its existence whatsoever really

6 **It's a scandal**

It's not all this exciting, believe me.

The emphasis on sniping sometimes manages to disguise the inadequate AI.

Bigfoot mode earned the game five points. Almost.

CIA OPERATIVE SOLO MISSIONS

$19.99 (£14) • ValuSoft • Out now from www.valusoft.com

***Anthony Holden* has nothing against naked ladies, but this really takes the biscuit**

Like a great painter reduced to the indignity of hawking obscene pornographic sketches to fund a greater artistic endeavour, leading developers 2015, the cutting-edge codeshop behind the amazing-looking *Medal Of Honor* (see feature, page 36), have been reduced to this. Churning out sub-standard 'budget' titles that shallowly plough a familiar generic rut, and look enough like one or two well-known hit games to draw in a few unsuspecting punters. And like so much other obscene material that makes its way into the *PC ZONE* office, we couldn't help but have a look. We're only human after all. Especially Richie, who could be considered almost superhuman in this regard.

To be fair, it's not actually 2015 who are responsible for this piece of FPS opportunism, but Trainwreck Studios, a budget division of 2015 established to take advantage of a supposed demand for smaller, more affordable titles. Such as their first effort, *Laser Arena*, another slapped-together FPS aimed at the undiscerning gamer. *CIA Operative Solo Missions* puts you in the role of a covert agent on a one-man mission to halt terrorism and organised crime, with enough pointers to games like *Delta Force: Land Warrior*, *GoldenEye* and *Counter-Strike* to place it in a context that is thoroughly undeserved. It's clear a lot of work has gone into tweaking the ancient *Quake* engine and designing some surprisingly pretty levels; unfortunately these efforts are completely wasted, with every other aspect of the game falling a long way short of current expectations. Not to mention the fact that we completed it in a couple of hours.

With quality first-person action games like *Thief 2* and *Unreal Tournament* available on budget, it's unclear how these kinds of straight-to-budget FPSs can possibly hope to compete. For unlike cheap porn, cheap games are simply no substitute.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P300 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 8Mb video card **WE SAY** A PII would be better, if you must

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Cheap • Reasonable level design • Low-spec requirements

DOWNERS • Unchallenging • Outdated • Below average in every way

40 Better than *WWII: Normandy*

Silicons just want to go home.

Not remotely nicked from *The Abyss*!

SUBMARINE TITANS

£29.99 • Strategy First • Out now

***Rhianna Pratchett* gets that sinking feeling**

Considering the design challenges of an aquatic environment, not to mention the physics, it's surprising that the idea of an RTS set underwater has never been wholeheartedly embraced until *Submarine Titans*.

In accordance with the secret RTS bible that says unless your name is Microsoft you're only allowed to have three sides to choose from, *Submarine Titans* offers you a choice between the White Sharks, the Black Octopi and the Silicons. Each side has its own ideology, history and, in theory, their own style of battle. Unfortunately, in reality they lack proper definition and the Sharks and Octopi are far too similar, both in unit style and gameplay.

It's left to the Silicons, an alien race marooned on earth, to bring in some much-needed variation with a highly technologically evolved side, that just wants to go home, bless 'em.

Although it makes an obvious bid for the *Starcraft* devotees, *Submarine Titans* introduces some nice little touches of its own. These include levels of variable depths and computer assistants that are surprisingly useful, rather than being a gimmicky hindrance.

Ellipse Studios has had some fun devising the tech tree for the game, which includes quantum paralysers, vacuum bombs and the cute but deadly 'don't call me Flipper' cyber dolphins, which carry a powerful charge that can destroy submarines. This may make for a steep learning curve if you want to get an adequate understanding of each faction, but with toys like Polarized Plasma Pulsars, it's worth the effort.

Submarine Titans is for the most part a solid, cod 'n' chips, 2D game, with a few fun features. Unfortunately it's easy to feel slightly cheated because it would have looked drop dead gorgeous in 3D. It's emerged (or should that be submerged) a couple of years too late and sadly it doesn't forward a genre that is badly in need of enlivening.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 8 x CD ROM **WE SAY** PIII with 128Mb RAM

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Innovative AI • Detailed environment • Unusual array of weaponry

DOWNERS Not enough faction definition • Steep learning curve • No great advances

70 Just bobbing along

PAINTBALL HEROES

£19.99 • Brightstar Entertainment • Out now

Industry shake-up feared as *Anthony Holden* calls for cut in bad games. Or so he reckons...

PCZONE PANTS And so we come to part three in our 'Crap First-Person Shooters That Didn't Make It To E3' special review feature. Or at least it could have been, had we done one, and we certainly had the material. It makes you wonder why all these atrocious FPSs are being produced at the moment, and whether any of them are actually being played by anyone other than exasperated game journos. Why, when you're a small developer making a minor-league budget game, choose probably the most technologically sophisticated and fiercely competitive genre in PC gaming? Make a puzzle game for goodness sake. The only possible answer lies in the old adage, 'there's a sucker born every minute', because games like *Paintball Heroes* really are just cynical cash-ins riding on the success of others. And frankly we don't like it.

What is also infuriating is that the shortcomings of these games tend to be the same every time, as any area of the development process requiring more than a smattering of talent, original thought or time is inevitably ditched in the rush to get them on the shelves. So it shouldn't come as a surprise to hear that *Paintball Heroes* is a tad deficient in the AI department, that the graphics are somewhat less than dazzling, the level design not exactly inspired and the whole package erring on the side of utterly abysmal. In this case a special mention is reserved for the controls, which don't exactly make great strides towards the dream of the invisible interface. Apart from being sluggish and awkward, there is a massive oversight in the lack of a reverse mouse option, making the game unplayable for a good proportion of gamers. And it seems unfair not to mention that it crashed four of our machines before we got it running.

Now, as for what the game's actually about... oops, out of space. Oh well, figure it out from the title if you're still interested.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 4Mb 3D graphics card **WE SAY** Crashes a lot even when the specs are satisfied

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS It's paintball! • It has guns, sort of • Up to four (count 'em, four) players on a LAN

DOWNERS Crashes most machines • Appalling AI and controls • Pathetic in every way

8 Hell on a plastic disc. Why do they bother?

We suspect this is paintball slang for "stop playing this crap game and get a life".

Oh look, a forest. Let's hide in here.

SCOOTER PRO

£19.99 • Neechez • Out now

***Steve Hill* is too big to ride a kid's toy**

If you don't live in London, you may not be aware of the supposed micro-scooter phenomenon. Thankfully, it seems to have peaked, but time was you couldn't pop out for a ciabatta and latté without a grown man in urban skatewear whizzing past on a miniscule aluminium vehicle. We've even seen one in the office, although suffice to say that the *ZONE* team didn't get involved, maintaining a dignified distance. Call us old-fashioned, but nobody in possession of a developed set of genitals should use a children's toy as a mode of transport.

Nor should they purchase this game, which takes the 'fun craze' and transfers it into a series of American locations. Selecting from 12 different riders and five different-coloured scooters, the idea is to mince around a shopping mall or something vaguely resembling one, collecting tokens while trying to beat the clock. Should you succeed, some different-coloured tokens will become available, eventually followed by a new level.

As fun goes, it's up there with attempting to plait snot. A wholly unresponsive scooter with the turning circle of a battleship is not ideally suited to tight areas, and it rapidly becomes a frustrating process, involving a great deal of reversing and no small amount of swearing. Clearly the idea was to model this on *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2*, but it's simply far too leaden. And besides, scooters are for twats.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P266 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** D3D compatible accelerator card **WE SAY** Pah

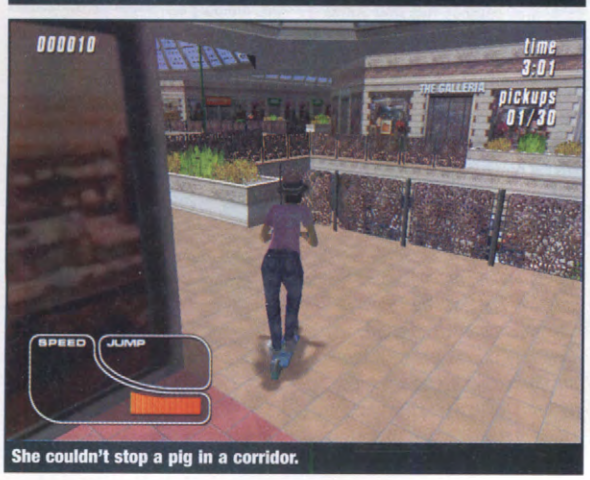
PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Nobody will see you • You can turn the music off

DOWNERS Unresponsive controls • Unwieldy scooter

22 Muck

Look at that plank.



She couldn't stop a pig in a corridor.

You can't park there, love.

THE OUTFORCE

£29.99 • PAN Interactive • Out now

Daniel Emery gets forceful

In 1944, when the Germans were facing the wrath of the Allied bombing campaign, many attempts to divert attention from the real targets were made. One such decoy was built in occupied Holland. The German 'airfield' was constructed with meticulous care and was made almost entirely of wood. There were wooden hangars, oil tanks, gun emplacements, trucks, and aircraft. The day finally came when the decoy was finished, down to the last wooden plank. And early the following morning, a lone RAF plane crossed the Channel, came in low, circled the field once, and dropped a large wooden bomb.

Outforce too could be described as a copy of a true RTS with a bit of a wooden feel to it. While the background graphics are utterly splendid, and there is flare, smoke and every other type of 3D effect known to man, it still doesn't quite pass itself off as the real thing. Sure, there are some heavy *Homeworld* influences in the graphics, and as with most RTS games, there's resource gathering and construction. But it just doesn't feel solid. The lack of a proper 3D view might have something to do with it. Also, there's the fact that it relies too much on force and not enough on tactics, so that the side with the biggest ships and most firepower will always win the day.

However, *The Outforce* isn't a Westwood or Ubi Soft production. By all accounts this is the first attempt at a game from a bunch of guys somewhere in Eastern Europe. And a valiant effort they have made too, although the £29.99 price tag is taking the piss somewhat. If the game was pitched at under £20 it would definitely be worth a punt. Instead it's more of a wooden wonder.

Attack of the killer orbs.

Very pretty, very shallow.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 233 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 4Mb 3D graphics card **WE SAY** PII 300, 64Mb RAM and an 8Mb 3D card

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Smart graphics • Good effects • Huge ships

DOWNERS Too expensive • Not enough tactical possibilities • Feels a bit wooden

55 Could do with a bit of a polish

GIANT KILLERS 2

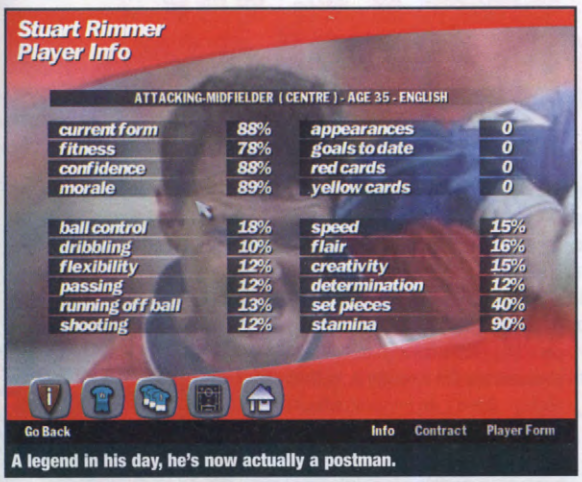
£14.99 • AAA Game Plc • Out now

Picking the team: *Steve Hill*

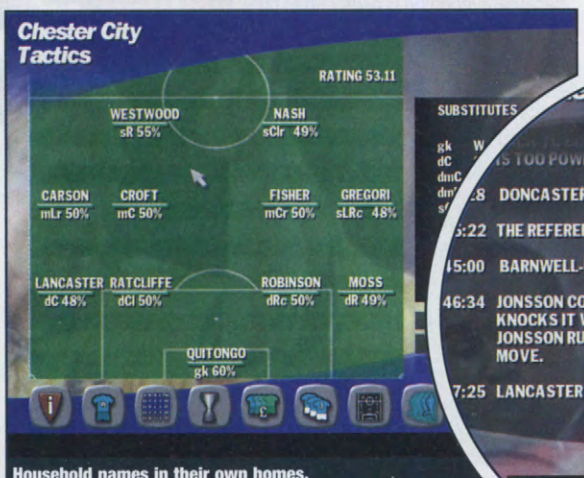
Despite being called *Giant Killers 2*, this game's name is mysteriously abbreviated to *GK2* on the box, perhaps to throw people off the stench of the original. And a putrid whiff it was, the game receiving a deserved kicking within these pages, where we take our football management seriously. The general consensus was that *Giant Killers* was an overtly simplified example of the genre, suitable only for children. And what do you know? *GK2* is a pretty basic attempt at football management, with an ELSPA rating of three years and over.

Apart from the dreadful music, the first thing you notice are the surreal background effects, with the opening menu featuring Teddy Sheringham, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and Dwight Yorke melding into a fairly unflattering picture of Paul Merson. This continues throughout the game, with various footballers fading and rotating in front of your eyes until you switch the option off (after about five minutes). It's a travesty that this must be what requires the 3D card, as the rest of the game is text-based.

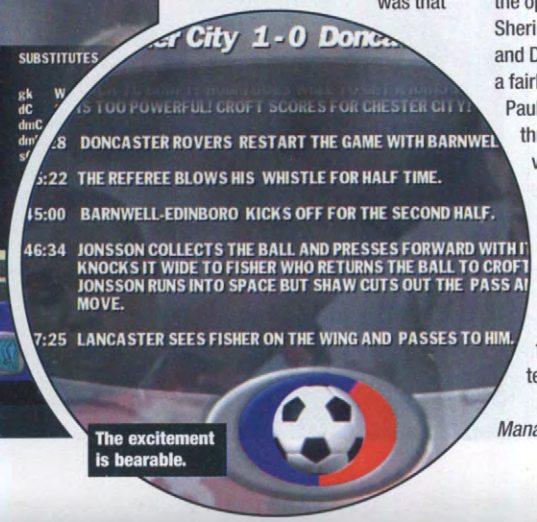
To call it *Championship Manager*-lite is far too complimentary, but it is vaguely playable, if you are prepared to accept that it has only a nodding acquaintance with the real world of football. The player data is a combination of actual, woefully outdated, and purely fictional, but the game chugs along at a steady pace. Ultimately though, it does little more than remind you why *Champ Man* is king.



A legend in his day, he's now actually a postman.



Household names in their own homes.



The excitement is bearable.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 16Mb D3D-compatible accelerator card **WE SAY** Yeeeeeeeeeesss

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Correct fixtures • Reasonable text commentary

DOWNERS Bizarre player data • Unsettling backgrounds

35 Sunday League

BUDGET ZONE

Feeling the pinch? We're here to lighten the load

RAIDING THE PIGGY BANK Rhianna Pratchett, Anthony Holden

PLANESCAPE TORMENT

BEST BUY

White Label • £9.99 • Out now

Right, who's for a game of footie with the skull?

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

This is a game that appeared almost out of nowhere to become one of the most engrossing RPGs to date. And its climb to greatness came from word of mouth as much as it did from good reviews.

With its immortal hero, the game promised from the outset to be darker and more absorbing than previous RPGs. It felt like Black Isle had truly captured the spirit of the decayed and fragile Forgotten Realms world.

It's a must for anyone with an interest in RPGs, in fact, at this price, no one with access to a PC should miss it. *Planescape Torment* characterises the solid gameplay and intelligent character development we've come to expect from Black Isle. But most important of all it's nice to experience *PT*'s sheer depth of narrative, which creates a storyline that's as weird as it is wonderful.

Korda finally gets a haircut.

PCZVERDICT 86%

Damn, it's raining fireballs again.

BALDUR'S GATE II: DVD EDITION

Interplay • £29.99 • Out now

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

The sequel to one of the most definitive RPGs ever, the great *Baldur's Gate*, this is in many ways simply a better-looking version. Nevertheless, RPG fans had waited so long for something juicy to sink their teeth into that they fell upon *Baldur's Gate II: Shadows Of Amn* like piranhas.

With up to 250 hours of gameplay, it's certainly worth taking some time off from your normal life to enjoy it. With the DVD version there's no messing about with CD swapping and finding that one has slipped down the back of the heater, because everything is neatly fitted onto the one DVD.

The DVD also contains *Heart Of Winter*, the expansion pack for *Icewind Dale*. RPG fanatics will probably never see the light of day again… don't say we didn't warn you.

The Duracell light stick arrives.

PCZVERDICT 85%

Baldur's Gate II on just one disc. What a relief.

HOT CHIX 'N' GEAR STIX

Midas • £9.99 • Out now

You can imagine the sweat-soaked atmosphere in the design meeting for *Hot Chix 'N' Gear Stix*. One too many Happy Meals and the conversation turns to "What do we love? Chicks. What else do we love? American cars. Hey guys, lets create a game where… now get this… hot chicks race American cars. Let's spell everything with an x and give it a '70s feel. Then, lets put in some reference to sticks to tie in with the chicks." Cue Beavis and Butthead-style laughter.

It's shameful that anything that claims to be a racing game, has just three tracks. Even though there's the option to race them backwards, you're more likely to crash through falling asleep due to the sheer boredom of it all. The vehicles have the grace and style of shopping trolleys, the AI is so bad that the cars actually stop to let you catch up at certain points. Sorry to disappoint on the hot chix front too, because they're all basically the same girl with a different wig on. A real stinker.

PCZVERDICT **19%**

Big, greying granny pants.

It's all too beautiful.

EVOLVA

White Label • £9.99 • Out now

There's definitely some interesting ideas in *Evolva*, in fact it could easily be the plot of the next Schwarzenegger film. Four genetically mutated Genohunters are called in to rescue a distant planet from a nasty, tentacled alien-type killer about to threaten all life as we know it… blah, blah, blah. This third-person squad-based shooter sees you hacking and slashing your way across the planet, genetically mutating your geohunters from the bodies of the aliens you kill, which admittedly is an original concept.

Although the AI is of variable quality – excellent for the geohunters and fairly dodgy for your enemies – it's the graphics in particular that stand out in *Evolva*. Computer Artworks has gone to great lengths to create an impressively organic, alien look to the game's backdrops, but it's a shame it didn't implement more additions to the gameplay. If they had, then we'd have an excellent game on our hands, rather than a slightly above average one.

PCZVERDICT **66%**

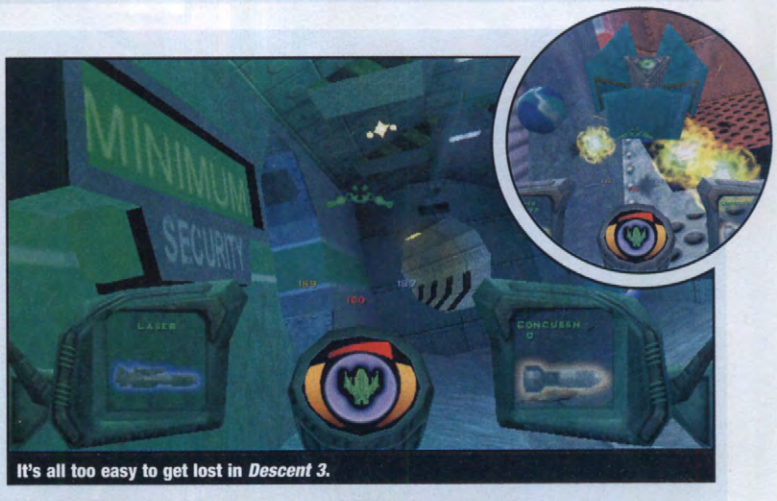
MORTAL KOMBAT 4

Sold Out • £4.99 • Out now

When it comes to beat 'em ups, *Mortal Kombat* was always lowest common denominator stuff. The original impressed marginally with its rather pretty motion capture (for the time anyway), but relied mostly on blood and gore to grab attention from its many worthier contemporaries. Three sequels, a couple of rubbish films and a million playground injuries later, the best that can be said of the series is that it gave us the shamefully satisfying concept of the "fatality". Of course, the novelty of the series ended right there, and this instalment really had no business being made, let alone making an appearance on the PC. The series has drifted a long way from the cutting edge since its debut, and is now in the bargain bin where it belongs. Even there it's probably best overlooked.

PCZVERDICT **45%**

Ah, the old strawberry jelly in the face trick!



It's all too easy to get lost in *Descent 3*.

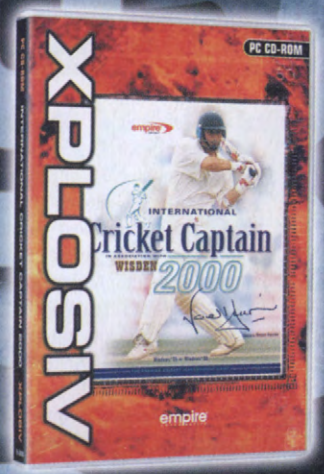
DESCENT 3

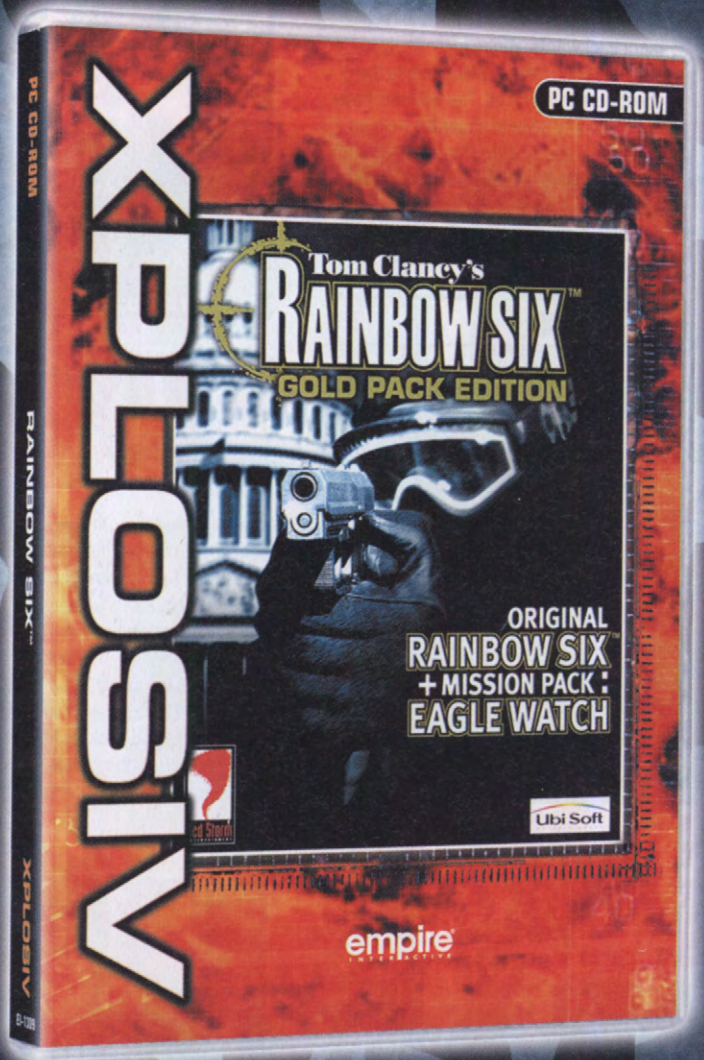
White Label • £9.99 • Out now

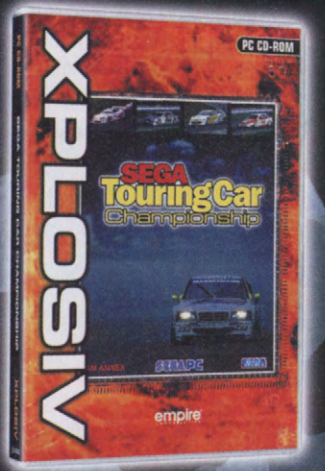
Long time *Descent* fans will find enough in this third instalment to renew their enthusiasm, after the somewhat under par *Descent 2*, which was hugely inferior to the likes of *Forsaken*. It's more cinematic and a lot more polished, while newcomers will find it an interesting enough challenge. The game has also taken the plunge and gone above ground this time, with different sections of the game involving skimming over the surface of various planets. While it's no *Half Life* or *Quake III: Arena*, it is a sprawling epic that sucks you in, drains your life and leaves you a shadow of your former self. Well, possibly. Those with no sense of direction be warned though, as navigating is far from easy and it's all too easy to get completely lost.

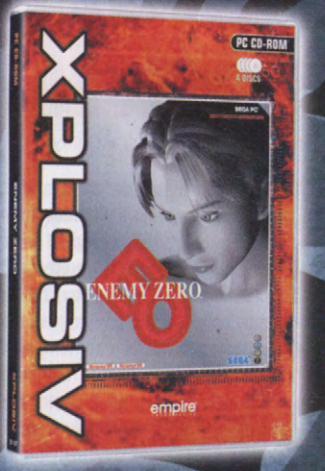
PCZVERDICT **75%**

AS BARGAINS GO









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ONLINEZONE

PC GAMING FOR THE MASSES www.pczone.co.uk #5 AUG 2001

UNVEILED AT LAST

STAR WARS GALAXIES

It is you, it is you!

FULL PREVEIW

PLANETSIDE

The makers of EverQuest are about to start the first worldwide war

TEST DRIVE

MOTOR CITY ONLINE

Your modem feels the need for speed

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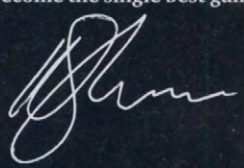
GALAXY QUEST

E3 has come and gone and while this year was a particularly strong one for PC games in general, it was nothing short of phenomenal for online games. The three closest to release – *WWII Online*, *Jumpgate* and *Anarchy Online* – all had a great showing. Westwood was there with *Earth & Beyond*, EA was lording it up with *Majestic*, *Sims Online* and *Motor City*, and promising new announcements included Microsoft's *Asheron's Call 2* and FunCom's *Midgard*. Pretty darn good.

But it was Verant who stole the show. An unhealthy number congregated around *Shadows Of Luclin*, the third *EverQuest* add-on. Verant's online RTS *Sovereign* was in attendance, but it was their stunning massively multiplayer FPS *Planetside* and *Star Wars Galaxies* that finished me off – both of which you can read about over the next few pages. From what I've seen, *Planetside* is one of the few games that could signal the beginning of the end of *Counter-Strike*, and in *Star Wars Galaxies* I envisage the game having as much an impact on our adult lives as the films did on our childhood.

To be fair, that demonstration was running on the best GeForce 3-powered PC money could buy, shown on a huge screen with familiar strains of *Star Wars* pumped through the speakers. Without fear of getting carried away however, it was clear to me that *Star Wars Galaxies* is no ordinary online adventure. Being able to build your own druids, buildings, fly though space – even get involved in local politics – it's sure to be the biggest online game to date. It may well become the best *Star Wars* game ever. Hell, why stop there – it just might become the single best game any computer has ever seen.



Richie Shoemaker
Online Editor

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HOW WE SCORE ONLINE GAMES

You'll notice our Online scores are out of five. This is partly to avoid confusion with scores in the main *PC ZONE* reviews section and partly so we don't have to decide between giving a mod 63 or 64 per cent, plus it looks nice. Five stars means great, and one doesn't. It's pretty simple really.

PCZVERDICT
- ★★★★★ Excellent
- ★★★★☆ Very good
- ★★★☆☆ Decent
- ★★☆☆☆ Not bad
- ★☆☆☆☆ Bad

STAR

Consume it you will

Having been underwhelmed with virtually every *Star Wars* game released over the last two years, it was with some trepidation that we filed into our meeting with LucasArts at E3, for what was the first ever showing of what is one of the most eagerly awaited online games there is.

In one of four collaborative efforts with established game developers, *Star Wars Galaxies* has for the past year been under heavy development at Verant Studios, the creators of the phenomenally successful online role-player *EverQuest*. Understandable then, is why LucasArts decided that if ever there was a team big enough to do justice to the *Star Wars* name, Verant was the only choice.

Somewhat less hardcore than *EverQuest*, *Star Wars Galaxies* is set between *A New Hope* and *The Empire Strikes Back*, the period in the *Star Wars* saga most fans agree is the richest, and the point in the Galactic Civil War when the war between light and dark was at its most tense.

"One of our core goals is to decrease the amount of time you need to play to feel like you have achieved something," says Haden Blackman, producer of the game at LucasArts. "We want people to log on, spend maybe an hour or so playing the game and have a rewarding experience."

One example of where *Galaxies* will offer an easier time of it comes by way of strict player classes, in that they have effectively been done away with. A player's class or profession isn't something a player chooses when they start out in the world; it's something they acquire through the skills they choose to learn, of which we are promised hundreds.

"You can train your character in a particular way," says Raph Koster, creative director at Verant. "You could be a smuggler, and when you get bored, you can give up those skills and try something else."

Basing character profession on skills means that players can literally be whatever they want: bounty hunter, smuggler, mechanic, craftsman, even oyster

"Meeting the likes of young Skywalker will be rare, as will the opportunity to become a Jedi Knight"

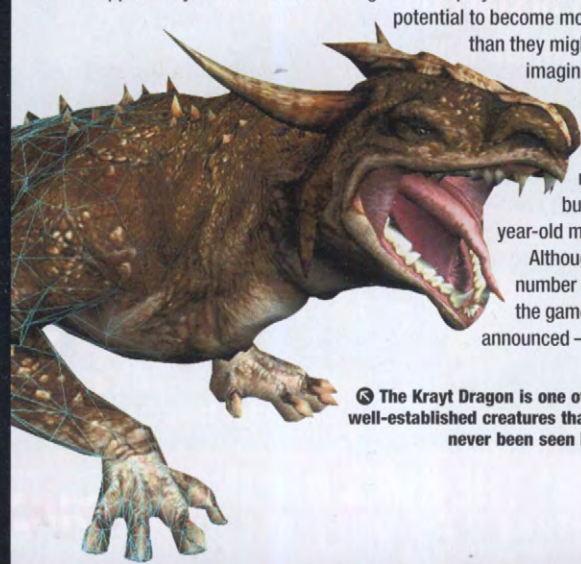
farmer, writer, musician, bartender or hairdresser. And, unlike traditional RPGs, race will have no restrictions on what skills you choose to pursue.

Depending on your loyalties, players will have ample opportunity to collaborate with either side, or indeed any number of player-created factions thanks to a dynamic set of quests. "Every mission is different and is given to you based on your abilities," says Raph. "Players can also give missions to one another. There will also be missions generated by the game. Darth Vader himself might give you a mission."

"We want players to be able to interact with familiar characters from the films," continues Haden. "You can expect to see Han Solo, Jabba The Hut, Leia, Boba Fett and many others. You won't run into them everywhere you go, it'll be more like a special treat to make it more exciting when you do meet them."

Though meeting the likes of young Skywalker will be rare, rarer still will be the opportunity to become a Jedi Knight. Those players who do have the potential to become more powerful than they might possibly imagine will find the training hard-going – unless of course they manage to bump into a 900-year-old muppet.

Although the exact number of planets in the game has yet to be announced – due to the fact



The Krayt Dragon is one of many well-established creatures that have never been seen before.

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WARS GALAXIES

Players can build buildings, along with defences, gun turrets, fences, minefields, shops – even form a town, elect a mayor and set the local laws.

You can build your own droids, program them and they will follow, or you can send them to guard things.

Ooh ooh ooh, AT-ATs!

Grass, leaves and branches all sway realistically whenever the wind blows.

Details on player-vs-player combat has yet to be decided, but it will be consensual.

that a couple will feature in next summer's *Episode II* movie, we were lucky enough to see two – Naboo and Tatooine.

"You can see about a kilometre into the distance," says Raph. "A 4km^2 stretch of terrain will take up about 20K on the hard drive. Thanks to our terrain technology we can stream down some pretty large environments, and it is deformable terrain. We can blow craters in it, players can even flatten the ground in it to start construction."

We were then shown the wildlife of Naboo, which without exception, all not only look fantastic, but move with such fluidity that they would probably convince David Attenborough they were real. The larger beasts, like the Dewbacks and gargantuan Krayt Dragon we saw pounding the dust of Tatooine, were so lifelike that what we saw on-screen could easily have stepped off the set of *Jurassic Park* or *Walking With Dinosaurs*.

"The Dewbacks you can ride, and they are one of many mounts in the game," says Raph. "You can catch one, tame him and train him. In the case of some creatures you can even breed them."

"We're creating over a hundred different creatures," says Raph. "On top of that we are doing different textures and colours that will indicate variations within the species. They will all behave in different ways too; some creatures within a species might be naturally wary of you, while others will be inquisitive."

Impressive though the many creatures were, it was the weathered textures of the Jawa Sandcrawler, the smooth curves of Luke Skywalker's Landspeeder and the utterly captivating movement and size of a trio of Imperial AT-ATs that amazed us most. Watching one in *Star Wars Galaxies* was, we imagine, as close we are ever going to get to the real thing, as impressive as that in the movies themselves.

"We are building everything to scale." Says Haden. "The AT-ATs are huge. We are also paying really close attention to detail, so you will see moving knee joints. All the vehicles in the game we want to look very realistic, but also people will be able to modify them, soup them up, own them and travel around. We want people to feel completely immersed in the movies. The heart of the game is about people interacting within the *Star Wars* environment."

Due for release next autumn, you can find out more about *Star Wars Galaxies* at **http://starwarsgalaxies.station.sony.com**. And if you don't know what a Jawa is, who the Mon Calamari are or what AT-AT stands for, you can either crawl back under the rock you've been living under for 25 years, or visit **www.starwars.com**.

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EXPANDING GALAXIES

How *Star Wars Galaxies* will become more powerful than you can possibly imagine

Travelling through hyperspace, it ain't like dusting crops, apparently. Just as well, for while dusting crops may be a career some might like to pursue in the first release of *Star Wars Galaxies*, the proposed add-on, tentatively titled *Space Expansion*, will allow players to fly their own spacecraft between the planets on which *Galaxies* is set.

"About six months after we release *Star Wars Galaxies*, we'll release the space component," says LucasArts producer Haden Blackman. "Within that, players will be able to own starships and be able to travel between planets on their own, without having to use public shuttles."

Releasing the add-on six months later is a nice move. By then, players will have hopefully progressed to the point where their online alter ego can not only afford their own spaceship, but also has the required skills to be able to pilot one.

Graphically the add-on, though perhaps two years from release (hence no screenshots), already looks rather special. If you've ever played *X-Wing Alliance* and you imagine the graphics brought bang up to date – then you can pretty much guess what it will look like. If you haven't played any of the *X-Wing* games, just believe us when we say the spacecraft – from TIE Fighters, Star Destroyers, X-Wings plus a few we've never seen – all look phenomenal, especially against the backdrop of planets and star systems set to feature in the game.

Building on the innovation of Microsoft's *Freelancer*, control of the spacecraft is primarily through the mouse, though there will of course be keyboard and joystick options. As creative director Raph Koster explains: "We are trying to make this as accessible as possible. The emphasis on allowing anybody to pick up and play the game runs through the entire design. We don't want to close anybody out."

As in the main game, role-playing will again be central to the space action part of the game

"More than just a dogfighting add-on, players will be able to own, fly and control ships"

should planet-bound players wish to invest. The idea is to offer a seamless experience between surface and space, though if you're a space sim fan you probably won't be spending much time exploring jungles anyway.

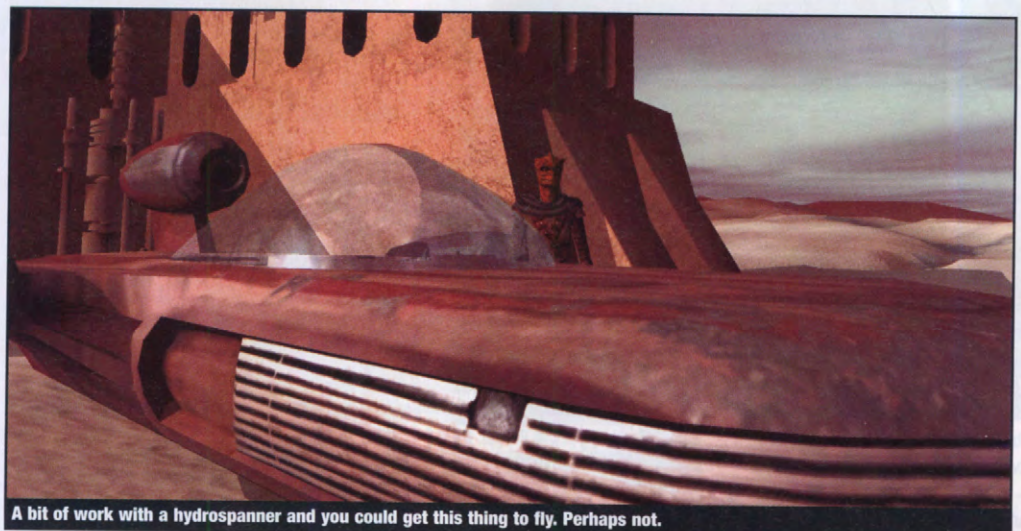
As Haden explains: "You can take your character that you've developed in the ground portion of the game and you can keep that character going. You can put him into an X-Wing, fly through space, land on another planet and take a look around."

More than just a dogfighting add-on, *Space Expansion* will also allow players to own, fly and co-operatively control capital ships from the *Star Wars* universe. Quite how many people you would need to run a Star Destroyer however is another question.

When asked whether we'll be able to trade goods in *Space Expansion*, Raph disclosed that the add-on would be far more than *Elite* in *Star Wars* clothing. "If you've ever played *Privateer* or *Elite*, you'll already know a bit about trading goods based on when the computer says that a planet needs something," he said. "Once the space environment is in *Star Wars Galaxies*, those planets between which you trade will be real planets with real people needing real things. In this way, all of your space adventures will be driven by real needs in the game, so the answer is – absolutely you'll be trading, and you'll be trading other people's goods.

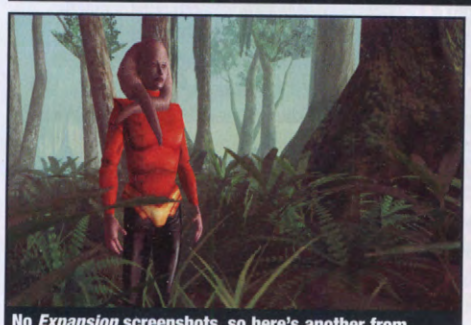
"We are trying to leave the economy up to the players as much as possible. We found that the more we meddle, the more likely we are to cause economic breakdowns. We will give players the tools needed to trade, build economies, advertise, craft items, mine resources and so on."

It was interesting to hear that many of those at work on the *Galaxies Space Expansion* were veterans of the doomed *Privateer Online* project. For them, one thing is certain; things are sure to turn out alright in the end.



A bit of work with a hydrospanner and you could get this thing to fly. Perhaps not.

Mighty fine set of whiskers you got there.



No *Expansion* screenshots, so here's another from *Galaxies* instead.

X-Wing Alliance – great game, but starting to look a bit old next to the new *Space Expansion*.

What sort of building do you call that with a pair of wide-apart buttocks on the roof?

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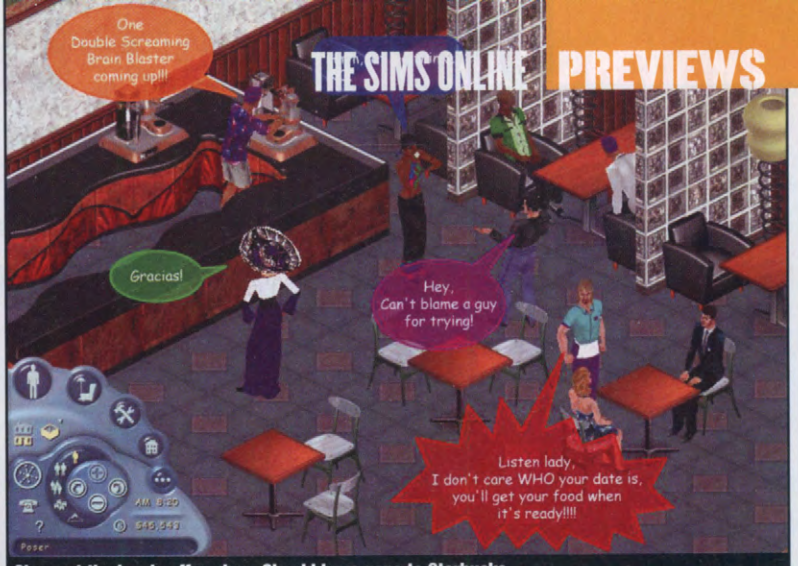
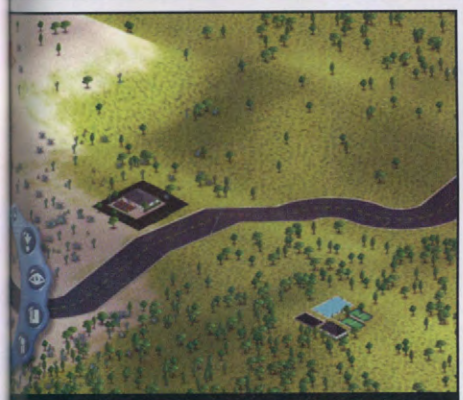
Open a casino and fleece fellow Sims of their hard-earned corn.



Chaos at the local coffee shop. Should have gone to Starbucks.



Hack down trees and set yourself up in business.

Go on, get out there and shake your booty.

A world of Sims awaits.

THE SIMS ONLINE

The world's favourite people simulator is coming to the Net. *Steve Hill* braces himself

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Maxis
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
WEBSITE www.thesimsonline.com
OUT Early 2002

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's The Sims
- It's online
- Open-ended environment
- Players entertain each other

Since its release, *The Sims* has been nestling in the charts with the tenacity of Meatloaf's *Bat Out Of Hell* album. During its tenure, the game has garnered something of a 'love it or hate it' reputation, and I'd like to throw my weighty opinion into the debate. However, having played it for a couple of weeks, I foolishly lent my copy to a PR person, who, having failed to return it, has been feeding me a tissue of lies ever since. From what I saw, it seemed a reasonable game, and I hope whoever has it is enjoying it. You dirty, thieving mongrel.

Anyway, despite my copy being passed around the games industry like a venereal disease, *The Sims* is still showing no signs of departing the top ten, its long stay bolstered by frequent add-on packs and a vast online community. The number of user add-ons created by fans since the game's release is quite bewildering, including such useful accoutrements as plaid skirts and moose paintings.

> **"The Sims is still showing no signs of departing the top ten, its long stay bolstered by frequent add-on packs and a vast online community"**

The move into an online version is a natural one then, opening up a whole world of possibilities, not to mention potential pitfalls. Thus far, *The Sims* has been a defiantly single-player experience, and the advent of a massively multiplayer universe will require a certain shift of perspective. No longer will you preside over a collection of Sims, rather you will actually 'become' one (or more), stepping out into a wonderful and frightening world with little more than a pocket full of bollocks.

That's not strictly true, as each Sim will be allotted a piece of la nd. Resisting the temptation to simply buy a can of Special Brew and sit on your plot hurling abuse at your neighbours, the idea is to actually make something of your virtual life. *Sim Capitalism*, if you like, as your land can house a business, such as a coffee shop, a museum, a discotheque, a casino, or even a brothel. Power, wealth, reputation and social standing can all be improved, and the idea is to build up a network of friends and all work together in some kind of twisted utopian ideal.

Of course it won't happen like that, as most people are selfish greedy bastards who wouldn't piss on you if you were on fire. This can be reflected in the game, and as the Maxis press release alliteratively states, you can "be a peacemaker or pest, a recluse or rabble-rouser". It also says: "in this open-ended, online world, you choose your role, your attitude and your destiny," which is possibly laying it on a bit thick, but you get the idea.

With cities housing up to 100,000 Sims, the possibilities are there for a vast game in every sense. Clearly it will have to be regulated to guard against such deviant behaviour as foul and abusive language, or decorating your bedroom walls with hardcore pornography. According to designer Will Wright, the hope is that players will strive to entertain each other, with a reward system in place for achieving popularity. It's an intriguing concept, and we will be following *The Sims Online* closely. Whatever happens, it has to be better than selling tunics to goblins. PZ

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It's all kicking off...

PLANETSIDE

It was one of the best games on show at E3 and it will be online only. *Richie Shoemaker* reports in from the front line

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Verant
PUBLISHER Sony Online Entertainment/Ubi Soft
WEBSITE www.station.sony.com/planetside/
RELEASE DATE 2002

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- It's from the creators of *EverQuest*
- First-person action with hundreds of people playing on the same map
- Fly and drive various vehicles, across deserts, plains, jungles and arctic regions
- Learn specialist skills as you progress through the ranks

Over the last few years multiplayer gaming has indeed become massive, hence the over-used term: massively multiplayer. Up until now however, massively multiplayer games have been head to toe in facial hair – role-playing games like *EverQuest*, *Ultima Online* or *Asheron's Call*, were in their thousands, people dress up in cloaks and armour and brandish spells, swords and arcane language in order that they may one day own the most garish robes, swing the mightiest of swords or utter impossible phrases known only to the most powerful of wizards.

In contrast, although it's massively popular, online gaming's other big thing, first-person action games such as *Counter-Strike*, are hardly what you might call massively-multiplayer friendly. In the case of *CS*, neither should it be, for if you've ever been caught up in any of the 32-player battles, you'll know that *Counter-Strike* is at it's best with just half that number. No, if it's wide open battles between men and machines you are after, the only game worth considering is *Tribes 2*, offering as it does fast-paced action indoors and out, 32 players on each side, flying through the skies and running around the open, all of whom take great delight in opening cans of what is generally known as whoop-ass®. Or something.

In what is a first for online gaming however, Verant, the creator of *EverQuest*, aims to take the term massively multiplayer and fuse it to that of first-person shooter, creating the world's first MMFPS (work it out) – *Planetside*. Due for release next year, it will allow thousands of players to fight across huge maps simultaneously. Like *Tribes 2* there will be vehicles to drive and pilot. Like *Counter-Strike* it will offer both fast-paced action and a degree of stealth and, like *Quake III*, it looks absolutely bloody gorgeous.

As you can see, there's no rocket launcher on this guy.

BEING SERVED

Surprisingly chirpy for a man who might normally be close to the edge at having to demo the game for the 30th time that day, Steve George, associate producer on *Planetside*, seemed more than happy to explain what *Planetside* was all about, as I asked dozens of similar questions which were probably already answered during the first day of E3,

CV VERANT

VERANT INTERACTIVE

Probably the world's best online game developer

1999 New outfit Verant announces its partnership with Sony Online, *EverQuest* is coming. *Tanarus* is bought by Verant and released to the Net for free.

2000 *EverQuest*, the first 3D online RPG, takes over from *Ultima Online* as the world's favourite online goblin game, helped by a couple of expansion packs. *Sovereign*, *Planetside* and *Star Wars Online* are formally announced.

2001 *Infantry Online* goes live. Another *EverQuest* add-on is on the way, but it's *Planetside* and *Star Wars Galaxies* that everyone is waiting for.

2002 *Planetside* and *Star Wars Galaxies* are released. Online gaming transforms the PC into the most popular gaming platform ever.

No classes, but you get to choose your own role in the game.

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The level of detail is stunning.

"Did you realise that your left rear indicator isn't working, sir?"

which was once again at the LA Conference Center. Unlike most of those who had been drafted in on other stands to sit for three solid days extolling the virtues of their games to anyone who might be in the vicinity, Steve knew his spuds.

"Each server can hold 3,500 players, set across 13 continents, with each continent averaging 8km square. This map we have here is about 2km square and we can include within one map wide variations in terrain elevation, forestation and..." He trailed off as another games journalist homed in on the screen.

Happy enough to allow whoever might have been rude enough to interrupt our little *tête-à-tête*, I watched in awe as the game kicked in and from a ground covered in waving grass and gently fluttering trees, Steve took the camera into the sky, showing off without the need for vocal explanation that the new game engine that Verant had created could easily render an entire island; trees, valleys, rivers and buildings – all without breaking into a sweat and coating the land in a grey rendered mist.

I had in fact been watching the game in action for quite some before I introduced myself, and it wasn't only the great outdoors that impressed. Inside the massive buildings there is as much attention to detail poured into the graphics on the handrails running down the stairs as there is on a blade of grass out in the open. Players will be able to sneak their way through dozens of rooms in a single building, clearing out the enemy and moving on to the next, while outside your forces circle the town. Even more impressive I found out when I reached Blighty, was that Verant had within days of E3 ending, created a map and like a rich kid with too much Lego, built over 250 buildings across it.

"We can stream real-time video to those by the way..." Offered Steve as he pointed at the in-game monitors. "...Relay mission objectives to players, hints and tips or even advertising messages if we want to."

A nice little earner.

CLASS WAR

The aim in *Planetside* is simple: There are three empires, all of which want to control the world on which *Planetside* is set. You pick one and you fight side-by-side with hundreds of other gamers, across continents or islands until the day is ultimately won. However, rather than the battle being fought across one map, then another, and so on, battles in *Planetside* are fought simultaneously. While 200 are fighting across one island, hundreds of others will be exchanging fire across many dozens of others, some on a much smaller scale, while hundreds more prepare their assault on a map that might minutes before have been secured by another faction. And it won't be just about huge frontline battles either. Small teams or even lone soldiers will be able to sneak around

"There are three empires, all of which want to control the world, you pick one and you fight side-by-side with hundreds of other gamers"

Mind Your Language

UNIVERSAL TRANSLATOR

Sony wants us speaking in our native tongues

Online games let you play with gamers from across the world. The problem is that's a lot of people, most of whom speak different langues, which is good when you want to try out some colourful language without any comeback, but useless when you genuinely want to get through to a colleague whose only two English words are 'feesh' and 'ships'. By way of an example...

Rory Beefdripping: Hello? Can you help me? I appear to be under attack!

Johnny Foreigner: English?

RB: Yes I am... Can you give me a hand. Old Chap.

JF: Feesh and chaps. I like.

RB: Now look here... are you taking the piss?

JF: Piss and ships??

RB: Right...where are you, you little oik? I'm going to give you a damn crack about the chops....

JF: Piss chops, piss chops, piss chops. I like! HA! HA! HA!

RB: If it wasn't for us you'd still be painting on cave walls, do you understand!

...Which is why Verant has announced that debuting in the *EverQuest* add-on *Shadows Of Luclin* is a localised translation program that should be able to handle in-game text-based chat between English, French, German, Japanese and Korean gamers. The software will also be included in *Planetside*, although by that time real-time voice communication may well be more popular. Another issue is how the software will be able to translate bad spelling. It's no secret that the worst at spelling English are the English. Anyone for piss and chops?

"Let's just have a nice cup of tea. And a slice of lemon medeira."

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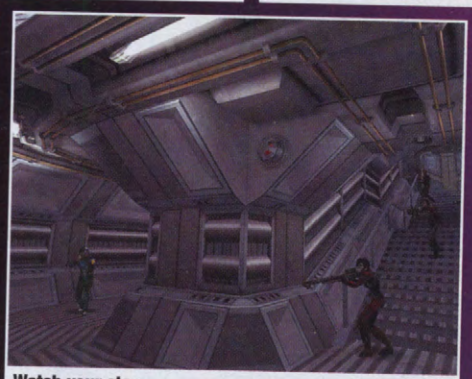
G108XPCD

Four ready to go, only 3,496 more and we got ourselves a game.

Check out the vegetation. Cool, huh?

Like *EverQuest*, *Planetside* will be a pay-to-play game, probably around US$10 a month.



Watch your step.

There are currently 70 abilities your character can acquire.

behind enemy lines, creating diversions and generally causing havoc by taking important buildings or stealing enemy vehicles. As Steve says: "You could throw on a Stealth Suit, infiltrate a base, do some hacking, or just get into the enemy buildings and have a look around."

Buildings won't just be there for show or for hiding in either: "If you own a radar station then you'll be able to locate enemies who may be in the vicinity," comments Steve. "If your side owns a certain combination of buildings then you'll be able to construct different vehicles and different items, so the whole game is really one big territorial conquest where you get advantages from being in control of certain buildings."

As well as being the first 'total war' FPS, *Planetside* will also be the first to introduce a degree of persistence. Where it's the case that in all first-person games played online, when you die, you respawn fit and healthy, in *Planetside* death has a cost and success has its rewards apart from short-term victory.

As you complete missions your character may pick up new skills or just become more accurate at firing by taking out more of the enemy.

"Your rank will go up," says Steve. "You have skillsets that you can advance in and implants you can put into your character. As your soldier goes up in rank he'll gain certain abilities. If I was playing and a colleague dies, if my medical skills are high enough then I could revive them in the field without them having to respawn somewhere else."

Though there are no player classes, unlike those you would recognise from something like Team Fortress, the idea in *Planetside* – as with *Tribes 2* – is to create your own role within the game, using the same single character you created when you started playing. "I could jump in the game one day and be a gunship pilot," emphasises Steve. "Then play the role of medic the next day, or make my role one of defending the base – all using the same character."

GETTING ANIMATED

Though not as immediately stunning as *Halo*, *Planetside* has a similar look and feel and certainly far greater appeal as a multiplayer game. The design of the vehicles, uniforms, weapons and buildings are all contemporary, very *Starship Troopers* – unlike the shoulder pads and sleek '90s designs of *Tribes* and *Quake*.

"I've got an itch. Can somebody help? Hello?"

"Our character animations are really interesting," says Steve as the camera moves to circle his on-screen characters. "As well as seeing soldiers running or crawling, you'll be able to see characters reloading their weapons. Most importantly you'll be able to tell at a glance what equipment and weapons people are carrying across their backs, as well as what they have in their hands..."

Duly demonstrated, Steve continues "...so if you are driving a tank, you'll be able to tell if any enemy troops ahead are carrying any anti-armour weapons just by looking at their characters. Unlike *Quake* where a guy can pull a bazooka out of his pocket, in *Planetside* you'll know if he's got something like that on him by looking either at what's in his hand or slung across his back."

By this point a small gang of *Planetside* fans have congregated behind us, pointing up to the screen far above, which shows Steve's actions to a greater audience. Baseball caps pointed arsewards, T-shirts with backprints and the obligatory Xbox sack stuffed with free keyrings, biros and press releases tell me they are American, but in our appraisal of what is on

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show we are for once on the same planet. Rudely butting in and narrowly avoiding loosing a fine set of fluorescent white Californian teeth, the one who smelt of onions asked about the weapons in the game.

"We got mini-rocket guns, plasma cannons, smoke grenades – pretty much standard first-person shooter weapons," answers Steve. "We decided to take the best of everything from our favourite games and make them distinct to *Planetside*. Right now there are about 30 plus weapons in the game, which will come down to about 15 when we finally ship. It's really easy to add new weapons to the game, so you might see a new weapon come into the game every month, or a new vehicle..."

DRIVE ME CRAZY

Unfortunately – and wouldn't you just know it – only one vehicle was evident in the build on show in the cavernous main hall, that being the jeep, where once a driver is in place, another player can shoot his load from the passenger seat while another may want to sit in the back and operate the vehicle-mounted heavy weapon – all of which were demonstrated superbly by Steve as his Verant chums sat across the way playing across the same server.

"When we first started developing the game it was just soldiers and guns," says Steve, during a lull in the action. "But when we added the vehicles it totally changed. I like the way you can just go in the game and do whatever you want. You can create whatever role you want for yourself and play it through; climb inside a gunship, fly it about and give some support to the guys running around below. It's the teamplay aspect that is best thing about the game, especially when you can have so many people playing across the same map."

Hopefully when we next see the game, perhaps at ECTS in September, Steve or one of his colleagues will be able to show off more of the vehicles we are promised; tanks, bikes, buggys, gunships and dropships – the latter able to accommodate 12 armed passengers. However, it's not the vehicles, weapons, or the animations that concern us. Already the game looks stunning, as good, if not better than any first-person game we've seen this year. All that concerns us is how on Earth hundreds of troops, vehicles and buildings, plus the odd tree, will all make it into one single map?

"There's always congestion whatever you do online, we can't avoid it completely," admits Steve. "We found, however, that from our other games, such as *EverQuest*, people tend to spread themselves out as long as you give them enough room to play in. We have a portal system for the buildings that can accommodate 100 guys in the same building no problem. If they're all in the same room there could be some issues, but by then we'll have a system, an aggressive level of detail model in place that will take care of that."

And so, perplexed and with essence of onion infusing my clothes, I wander off towards my next meeting. Through the loud music I hear Steve begin again, I guess for the 32nd time that day, "...each server can hold 3,500 people...".

And there's still two days of E3 to go. Whadda guy... PCZ

You'll be able to see which weapons your opponents are carrying.

Feeling lazy? Hitch a ride.

Natural born posers.

Planet surfing

SEARCH ENGINE

Click here to find out more on *Planetside*...

www.verant.com
Oh look, it's the website of developer Verant, makers of *Planetside* and all things *EverQuest*. Find out about what they are up to right here.

www.station.sony.com/planetside/
Essentially Verant and Sony Online Entertainment are one and the same, which means that as well as having the odd finger in the console market, Sony has both pinkys into online PC games. This site is where you'll find the latest on *Planetside*, if not via the news, then from the Team Comments section. Keep an eye on the FAQ as well, which is updated regularly.

www.ps-online.com
At the time of writing, content here was a bit thin on the ground, but the news is updated on a regular basis and the streamlined design works well. Give it a couple of months and this could turn into one of the best *Planetside* fan sites around.

www.3dactionplanet.com/planetside
If it's part of the 3D Action Planet Network then you know it's going to be a half-decent site, and with timely news well-written, you can bet that this site will be first to report on any developments.

www.planetside.cc
Along with the official site, The Planetside Command Center is probably the best site for in-depth information, with plenty of material on vehicles, implants and weapons – even if a lot of what is there is speculation. Also good are the links to the handful of clans that are springing up across the Internet.

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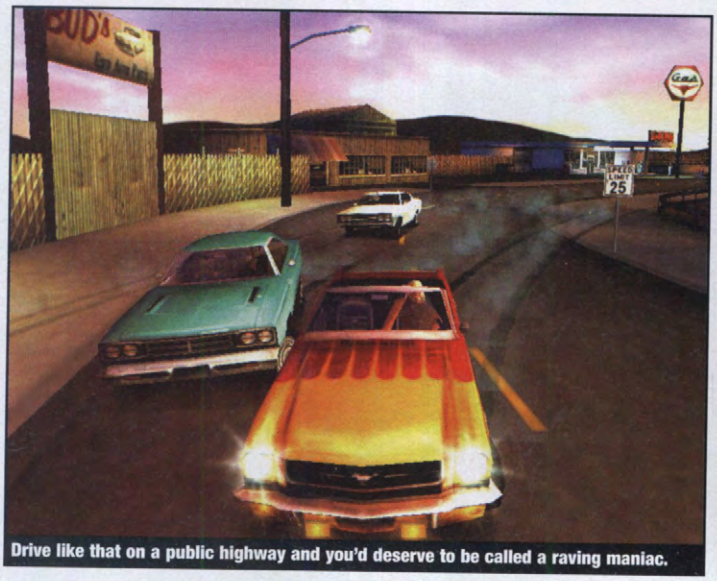
Start the car...

MOTOR CITY ONLINE

***Steve Hill* heads out on the highway, looking for adventure and whatever comes his way**



Drive like that on a public highway and you'd deserve to be called a raving maniac.

Judging by the number plate, this car is owned by a dog.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Electronic Arts Seattle
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
WEBSITE www.motorcityonline.com
OUT September 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Persistent online community
- More than 50 licensed cars from the 1930s to the 1970s
- Dynamic economy with online auctions
- Bets can be placed on races

WEBSITES

SEARCH ENGINE

Get your motors running...

It's still fairly early days as far as websites go, although expect fansites to spring up once the game is released. Until then check out the official site at http://www.motorcityonline.com. It's a rather polished affair, outlining the features of the game with an array of screenshots and downloadable movies. Also includes details of the beta test.

Thus far, online racing games have generally cut to the chase. Whereas goblin fanciers can live out their virtual lives in a constantly evolving fantasy world, those who prefer to drive pretend cars have usually been limited to the occasional one-off outing against largely anonymous opponents. Wouldn't it be great if there was a persistent online world where you could exist as a permanent fixture, buy and sell cars, customise them, and compete against other like-minded individuals? Hey, you could even place bets on the outcome of races.

Motor City Online is of course such a game, and it's a highly ambitious project. Whereas online options have often been included in racing games as little more than an afterthought, this is the real deal, as the name would suggest. Allied to the fact that this preview is nestling in the online section of the magazine, we can be fairly certain of the game's online credentials. So what do you get for your phone bill? What you get is the chance to immerse yourself in the world of the classic American car. Licensed by the supposed big three manufacturers of the time – Ford, GM and Chrysler – *Motor City* is packed to the gills with more than 50 classic, muscle and stock cars from the 1930s to the early 1970s, allegedly the golden age of the American hot rod.

So whether it's a Buick Century or a Ford Thunderbird that floats your boat, the opportunity will be there to get behind the wheel and drive in a wholly irresponsible fashion. For those impatiently gnashing at the bit, an arcade option puts you on so-called EZ Street with a series of beginner-focused tracks. Having learnt the basics, you can then make your way to one of the 24-hour hot-rod hangouts, chew gum, and throw down challenges to other drivers, which take place over some 15 streets, pro and drag racing tracks. There's even a stunt mode, where drivers can jump gaps or launch themselves through flaming hoops.

"Having learnt the basics you can then make your way to one of the 24-hour hot-rod hangouts"

SIM MOTOR CITY

Eventually you'll want to make the step up to the fully-fledged Sim World, which is where the real value of the game is to be found. Having created a unique identity, you can buy a car, and then set about customising it. All manner of accoutrements will be available for download, with major post release support promised. There is also talk of a dynamic economy, where car and part prices change in line with real-world supply and demand. That seems a trifle unnecessary, and somewhat impractical given that none of the cars in the game have been manufactured for 30 years, but who are we to argue?

Further financial shenanigans will take place via online auctions, as players trade parts or sell them to the highest bidder. Imagine the scene. Someone is looking to offload a gleaming camshaft to the highest bidder, players from all over the world gather around their PCs, sweat gleaming on their brows as they tentatively offer a fee. Just as the transaction is about to take place, another seller comes in with a camshaft of comparable quality at only half the price. The drama.

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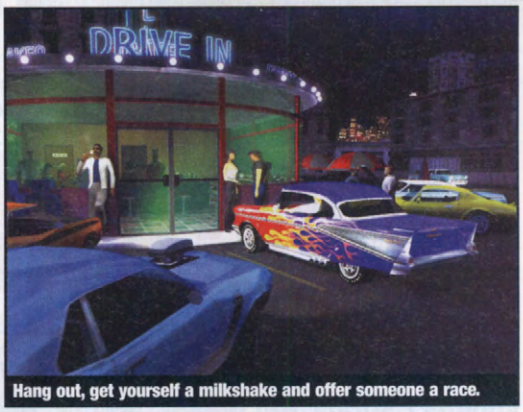
Enough with the *Batman* camera angles already.

American Graffiti anyone? George Lucas' only decent film.

Where races are organised, with a chat room and all that bollocks.



Hang out, get yourself a milkshake and offer someone a race.

Money will play a key role in the game, and will exist in the form of Motor City dollars, thus avoiding any confusion with actual currency. Income can potentially be increased by joining a club, membership of which will entitle you to a weekly salary, determined by winning races, selling services or by the overall success of the club. Such clubs can be exclusive, for instance, limited to Chrysler owners only. The benefits of membership are myriad though, and enable you to get involved in club vs club contests. These can take the form of turf wars, with control of particular tracks going to the winners. Opposing clubs can attempt to gain control of individual tracks by mounting challenges, with supremacy displayed by which club rules the most.

THAT'S THE GAMBLE

If you're simply looking to make some easy money, bets can be placed on the outcome of races. Details of this have yet to be announced, and the developers will have to ensure that it isn't open to abuse. It wouldn't be the world's greatest sting for someone to have a pre-arranged accident, having lumped a fortune on his opponent, so we can only assume players will be limited to betting on themselves. If done correctly, it will add another aspect to the racing, with tension increased by the possibility of losing everything you've worked for.

So that's essentially the crux of *Motor City Online* then. Of course, the complex infrastructure will have been a complete waste of time and effort if the actual racing side of the game isn't up to scratch. Nobody will bother building up an online character, trading parts, joining clubs and placing bets if driving the actual cars is about as much fun as guiding an errant shopping trolley around your local Asda.

Fortunately, a playable version was on view at E3. Unfortunately, I wasn't there to play it. Therefore it would be grossly irresponsible of me to claim that it's going to be any good. If one of the world's largest companies can't fork out for a paltry airfare to Los Angeles and a two-bit hotel, then I am going to have to err on the side of caution. It might promise "breathtaking graphics and true four-point car physics for road-hugging realism" but for all I know it could be utter muck. Doubtful though, seeing as Richie saw it running at E3 and thought it looked suitably impressive.

We're hoping that it does work, and with a nod towards the *Need For Speed* series, chances are it will. It's a great idea and a concept that could provide an antidote to the goblin-ridden rubbish that deters 'normal' people from online gaming. So hopefully, *Motor City Online* will be a step in the right direction for getting people to play on the Internet. PZ

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Your must remember this?

"Er... I'll get my coat."

It's all coming back to me now.

WARCRAFT II: BATTLE.NET EDITION

£9.99 • Vivendi Universal • www.blizzard.com/war2bne/

Rhianna Pratchett gets back in touch with her orcish roots

Playing *Warcraft II* after so many years (we're talking 1995 here, which in gaming terms means it's pushing 40) is like being given your own personal RTS time machine. As you stare at the top-down chubby figures, with their simplistic AI, you can't help thinking, is this what it was really like? It was, and we never had things so good.

Let's face facts. You're not getting anything particularly new with this Battle.Net Edition, although for the price it's a princely package as it contains the original *Warcraft II: Tides Of Darkness*, the expansion pack *Beyond The Dark Portal* and support for Internet play through Blizzard's Battle.Net. Overall, gameplay changes have been kept to a minimum, with some tidying up of old bugs and improvements to attack/move commands.

The real tweaks have been made on the multiplayer aspect of *Warcraft II*, and there's hundreds of maps to choose from, including both pre-set and random, plus multitudes of downloadable ones. Battle.Net also incorporates a rather nice feature that automatically downloads maps to players who haven't got them. There's also a whole host of other features, including automatic record-keeping and ranking, in and out game whispering and a top vs bottom option. It's easy to get a game, even though the numbers playing are still quite small compared to those playing *Starcraft*. The best time to get the widest choice of games on the West Coast US and European servers, which tend to be the most popular, is early evening.

This is a great package if you feel the need to reminisce on the beautiful simplicity of the *Warcraft* world or if you need something to fill in the gap until *Warcraft III*. By today's standards though, it does look incredibly dated. It's easy to forget that what now seem like retro peculiarities influenced a new generation of RTS games, especially the *Age Of Empires* series, and it's no surprise that *Warcraft II* still retains something of an impressive cult following. PCZ

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Easy to get a game • Bugs tidied up • Retains essential *Warcraft* feel • Lots of gaming options

DOWNERS Looks very dated • Relatively small (but strong) community • Infuriating AI

★★★★☆

Still a great game after all these years

RUNE: HALLS OF VALHALLA

£TBC • Take 2 Interactive • Out now in the US, UK TBC

A new multiplayer add-on for a mediocre shooter? Surely, _Bill Dobson_ argues, they can't _rune_ that. (_Watch it – Ed_)

We reviewed the single-player version of *Rune* back in issue 97. Now the *Halls Of Valhalla* is here (in the US at least) and it adds multiplayer support for the third-person action adventure, albeit in standalone form (ie you don't need the original to play it). Good? The masses obviously don't think so. At 10.30am on June 6, there were 30,747 people playing Internet *Counter-Strike* around the world. At the same time, there were only 62 people playing *Halls Of Valhalla*.

For a game that's been out for more than a month in the US, this sets alarm bells ringing. And after playing it you can see why. It's not very good.

While the fluid and gob-smacking visuals are still in place, this is about the only noteworthy aspect of the game and the melee combat is curiously unsatisfying.

Add to this, the list of missed opportunities, which reads like a 'what not to do when releasing an add-on'. There are no new single-player levels (in fact, no single-player at all). No bots. No new weapons. No new rune powers. Nothing to give the game a well-deserved makeover. What it does have is 34 new multiplayer maps (along with the original) and 15 new character skins. If you're a *Rune* fanatic with some spare time, it may be for you. Everyone else is best to avoid it. PCZ

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Finally adds multiplayer to the Rune universe • 34 new multiplayer maps

DOWNERS Single-player game not included • No new weapons • No bots to enable you to play offline • No new rune powers

★★☆☆☆

Only for _Rune_ fanatics

Two blokes fighting, yesterday.

Two blokes fighting and one bloke watching, earlier this morning.

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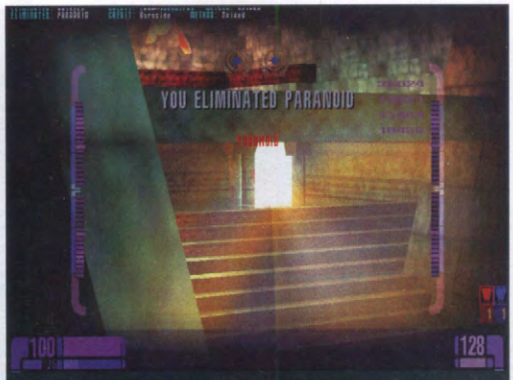
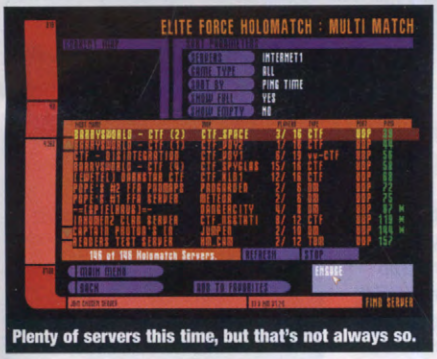
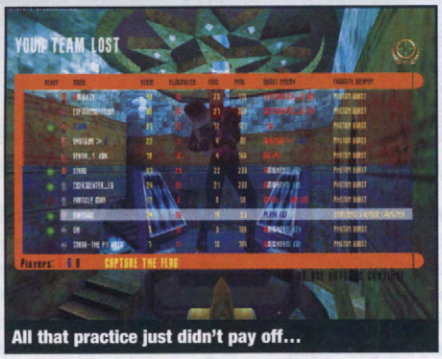
You show that wall who's boss.



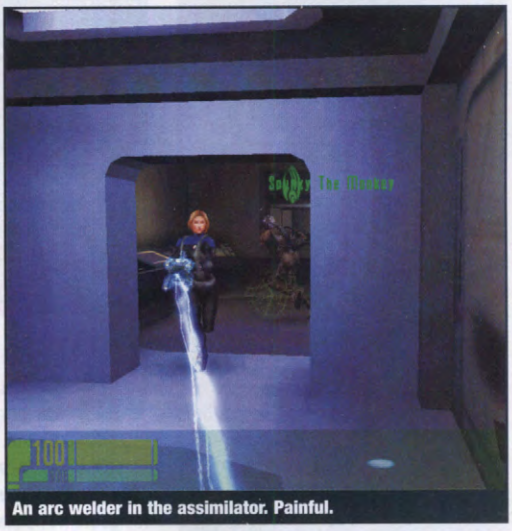
It's far too easy to pick off the inexperienced online gamers.



Plenty of servers this time, but that's not always so.



All that practice just didn't pay off...



An arc welder in the assimilator. Painful.

STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE EXPANSION PACK

£19.99 • Activision • Out now • www.ravensoft.com

The best *Star Trek* licence ever has just got bigger. We sent *Matt Cheshire* to boldly go wh... [snip]

We looked at this expansion pack in the last issue, and decided that there wasn't enough single-player action to warrant a purchase (unless you're a Trekkie who wants to spend every waking hour walking round an authentic recreation of the Voyager). We don't, although the multiplayer add-ons promised a little bit more, and now that Trekkies are flocking online to indulge themselves we thought it was time to utilise our new ADSL-equipped machines to see if this side of the add-on lived up to our expectations.

Altogether there are 21 new multiplayer maps (well designed but pretty similar to the originals, with too many corridors and a claustrophobic feel). Again, these are ideal for *Voyager* fans but not for *UT* or *Team Arena* converts. There are 12 new player models, along with the new game modes including Disintegration (similar to Instagib for *Unreal Tournament*) and Elimination (which plays like the popular Last Man Standing). Neither of these can be said to be particularly innovative concepts by anyone's standards, but they still work well enough.

LAST ACTION HERO

Rather better is the new Action Hero game, where a single player is provided with a full range of weapons, more health than anyone else, the ability to replenish his energy, and a price of five frags on his head. This plays well, and fosters a superb atmosphere for thriving paranoiacs. It's also a challenge if you're a decent player, but way too intimidating if you're a hardcore Trekkie/softcore Quaker.

> **"We had big problems finding any servers willing to deviate from the standard CTF and Deathmatch modes"**

Another excellent addition is Assimilation, which gives you classic *Trek* action with The Federation pitted against The Borg in a team-based combat environment. One team plays as Borg, the other as the Federation. The aim if you're the cold-hearted ones is to assimilate all in your path. The Federation has to destroy the Borg Queen to win.

This is only half the story though. The new multiplayer game modes work well, but we had big problems finding any servers willing to deviate from the standard CTF and deathmatch modes. This isn't a problem that's peculiar to this add-on, but a fact that most servers tend to stick with what they know. We did find a couple playing Disintegration, but that was about it and unless you're privy to a LAN, the best bits of this add-on are going to go pretty much unnoticed.

And that's about the size of it. There's enough here to provide fans of the original with more of the same, but nothing to make you want to shell out if you bought the original as a single-player game (which most people did). PMZ

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Loads of new maps and new game modes

DOWNERS No one playing the new modes • Online side of the game was never *Voyager*'s strongest suit

★★★☆☆

Fun for the fans

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COMING SOON

SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY UPDATE

It's one of the oldest of the *Half-Life* mods and it's still going strong. *Science And Industry*, in which you have to capture the opposing team's scientists and get them to develop new weapons for you, while simultaneously protecting your own boffins from a similar fate, is now up to version 0.97 and a release is imminent. Grab it from www.planethalflife.com/si/ and enjoy.

POKE 646 FOR HALF-LIFE

Fans of single-player *Half-Life* will want to keep an eye open for upcoming mod *Poke646*, which is aiming for a release sometime around the end of June. You'll inevitably revisit Xen, but other locations around Nation City include the slums, the sewers and the subway – all the nicest places obviously. The team is aiming for lots of high-res goodies, new skins, new weapons and more interaction with the environment. More details can be found at www.poke646.com.

NEW PURESPEED QIII MAPS OUT

If for any reason you think that standard *Quake III* simply isn't fast enough for you, then you might want to check out the *Purespeed* mod. This makes everyone move like greased lightning, allows bouncing rockets and even lets you hide behind a cloak of invisibility (so long as you have enough health). Have a look at www.quake3stuff.com/relix to find out more.

MODWATCH

***Tony Lamb* grazes on the latest juicy mods**

Where's Buffy?

They mostly come at night. Mostly.

VAMPIRE SLAYER 1.1

Requires full version of *Half-Life* • www.planethalflife.com/vampire

ON THE CD

Call 'em what you like, whether it's Nosferatu, the undead, or just plain old bloodsuckers, these chaps get around. They get everywhere – Transylvania is full of them apparently. *Vampire Slayer*, however, is our chance to get a few frags in for the good guys, and fun it is too.

When you fire up *VS*, you get to choose whether to be a vampire or a slayer, after which you have to set about wiping out the opposing team. At the moment, the only option is pure deathmatch, but the developers are hoping to introduce objective scenarios in the future.

Vampires have the advantage of agility, stealth and an extremely potent short-range attack. They can creep up on enemies before leaping from the shadows to deliver a devastating coup de grace. Slayers on the other hand are human and hence slower moving, less agile and a step down the food chain, but what they lack in speed they gain in firepower. Slayers can take out the vampires at a distance with crossbows, shotguns or machine guns before finishing off our pointy-toothed friends with the customary wooden stake.

It's early days, so the maps need some work, but there's no doubting the human fears that this mod capitalises on. The concept is a good one, the sound effects are corny but realistic and the two sides are fairly evenly matched. Give *Vampire Slayer* some better maps and skins, and it could be a real chiller.

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Original idea • Good atmosphere

DOWNERS Iffy map quality • Limited online support

★★★☆☆

For fans of the darkside

BOUNCY BETA 1

Requires full version of *Quake III* • www.planetquake.com/bouncyq3a/

ON THE CD

Bouncy works by tweaking all of the *QIII* weapons to make them non-lethal, but increases their impact effects dramatically. That's not as irresponsible as it sounds, because the players are now surrounded by lethal objects – the walls, bottomless drops, lava and the like. All the rest of the combatants have to do is punt them into one of these killers with sufficient force to do the trick – simple. Or maybe not.

While those maps with platforms set in space work quite well – Q3DM16 or Q3DM17 for example – the indoor maps are simply too difficult and it takes forever to inflict enough damage to kill people by bouncing them off the walls. So, the solution with *QIII Bouncy* is to be careful what map you choose. Indoor arenas are dull, but the mod comes alive where safe footholds are few and far between – which means the space platform maps. Here *QIII Bouncy* proves good fun and quite a challenge, but it might not be enough to keep the hardcore Quaker happy.

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Original • Good for target practice

DOWNERS Frustrating • Too hard • Map choice limited

★★☆☆☆

One to bounce around

Boing.

The perfect map for Bouncy.

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TODESANGST

Requires full version of *Half-Life* • www.planethalflife.com/todesangst/

ON THE CD While most *Half-Life* mods have jumped onto the multiplayer bandwagon, a few have resisted the urge to do so and concentrated on the solo gaming addict. Such is *Todesangst*, a single-player add-on that makes a pretty convincing additional episode. Here the problem solving is in context with the game rather than being a dressed-up platform puzzler prancing about in *Half-Life* pyjamas.

Back at the Black Mesa research facility, Doctor Jack Newell (a nasty piece of work if ever there was one) is continuing his R&D work and wants you eliminated. To this end he sets a number of human soldiers and Xen nasties on your case and it's then up to you to fight your way through to a successful conclusion. The mod looks good and enjoys some neat attention to detail. There are some useable heavy weapons and in true *HL* fashion your enemies appear at all the worst moments. The ending is weak, but overall *Todesangst* is a worthy single-player *HL* episode.

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Enjoyable *HL* gameplay • Well designed and executed

DOWNERS Weak ending • Not enough enemy variety

★★★★☆

A pretty decent single-player add-on

Plenty more where he came from.

There's no getting escaping tube strikes.

No, not FUBAR, FEBA.

Decent bot support as well.

FEBA 1.68

Requires full version of *Unreal Tournament* • www.planetunreal.com/feba

ON THE CD *FEBA* (Forward Edge Battle Area) is a team-based mod that melds elements of FPS action and gore with some RPG-style spell-casting wizardry. The background theme is a battle between the United Earth Task Force (UETF) and Havian Rebel Forces, you choose your team and class and each has unique weaponry and abilities. UETF troops have a more familiar set of conventional firearms, while the Havians lean more on the supernatural side. When you kill an enemy you earn experience points, which increases your fighting effectiveness.

FEBA works with any *UT* map and supports both CTF and Objective-based gameplay. Bot support is good, although the AI still needs some work. And the game interface is top quality.

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Team-based formula • Experience points system

DOWNERS Limited online support • Few specialised maps

★★★★☆

Great mod, shame about the name

CHAOS DEATHMATCH

Requires full version of *Quake II* • www.planetquake.com/chaotic

ON THE CD *Chaos Deathmatch* is a mod for *Quake II* that every fan should have in his arsenal, as it combines great maps and great weapons with some distinctly humorous elements too.

Some weapons in *Chaos* are standard *QII* fodder, but you'll also find a sword, crossbow (poison or explosive), chainsaw, sawblade shooter, sentry turrets and more. Other useful items include a grappling hook, jetpack and a personal teleporter.

And what else makes *Chaos QII* different? How's about being able to fake your death, commit a kamikaze attack and blow up enemies, enjoy the benefits of the Chaos camera, kick things and people... or vomit at will. Lovely.

Chaos QII has many features that we've seen in other FPS games, but here they're all in one place. Impressive stuff.

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Good maps, weapons and website• Online support • Bot included

DOWNERS Dated game • Multiplayer setup tricky

★★★☆☆

Not just your run-of-the-mill deathmatch

The *Quake II* scene is still alive and kicking.

COMING SOON

HPB BOT VERSION 1.4 OUT NOW

Dedicated not only to *Half-Life* but also to kicking your sorry butt on mods such as *TFC*, *Counter-Strike*, *Front Line Force* and *Holy Wars*, this latest version of one of the best Bots around is now up to version 1.4 and ready to do battle. Download, install and die – it's that easy. Check out www.planethalflife.com/botman/hpb_bot.shtml for the full monty.

CHEAT NO MORE

If you've got an Asus video card but haven't taken advantage of the "see-through" facilities some of its drivers offer then you've missed your chance. Sorry. After a number of complaints, the company is now taking action not only to remove the feature from current and future driver issues, but also to work with server admins to detect players using the cheat. Maybe you'll be able to avoid the pesky snipers now...

ID'S WOLFENSTEIN GETS THE WHISTLES AT E3

Older FPS and mod fans will be glistening with excitement over id Software's upcoming *Quake III* powered *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*. Having impressed everyone at E3, the game is nearing completion and looking better by the day. And of course, with the *QIII* engine, it won't be long before the mods start rolling in.

HOW POPULAR?

This month's leading online game, according to GameSpy is still *Half-Life* with 11,681 servers. Second is *Quake III: Arena* with 2,745 servers, followed by *Unreal Tournament* with 2,701 servers, *Quake II* with 1,249 servers and new arrival *Tribes 2* with 1,083 servers.

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READERS' CHALLENGE

Want a chance to step on Shoemaker, hack down Woods or mow down Hill? *Martin Korda* tells you how

Once again, it all went horribly wrong. Taking on the mighty Clan CZR at a best-of-five *Counter-Strike* contest, we were determined to make amends for our first ever CS defeat, by Clan Evil, the previous month. Unfortunately, things didn't quite go according to plan. Having spent the week memorising tactics sheets and feeling confident of our chances, we were promptly humiliated 9-0 in Militia (*ZONE* as CTs), but hit back straight away with a 5-1 victory of our own, when we played the map again as Ts. It proved to be something of a false dawn though, and we ended up losing the next three maps.

SCORES

Teams		Frags	Deaths
SPECTATOR (1 player)	WINS = 0		
PunkCam	DEAD	0	0
TERRORIST (6 players)	WINS = 1		
pcz_kid_unknown	DEAD	8	11
PCZ - Nameless One		6	10
[PCZ] Zapatero	DEAD	5	10
pcz_shokupan	DEAD	5	10
PCZ Ammaka		4	9
Leatherface	DEAD	4	10
CT (6 players)	WINS = 9		
[CzR]De l0n1	DEAD	20	7
[CZR]Bob		9	4
[CZR]Sun-Tzu	DEAD	8	4
[CzR] chilling	DEAD	8	8
[CZR]Sy	DEAD	6	4
[CZR]Shanx-GSI-	DEAD	6	8

Yup, we got whipped again.

Excuses this month include star player David 'Maqua' McCandless not being able to make it to the challenge, Colin 'Ammaka' Mackleworth not being tanked-up enough to shoot straight, Phil 'Shit Kicker' Clark not being able to shoot straight generally – especially without his contact lenses in – while Dave, Richie and myself all had bad backs. Otherwise, we would have whipped 'em. Honest. Still there's always next month, when we'll be doing the first ever challenge on our new, in-office ADSL-powered PCs. So just watch it, alright?

The scores for the challenge follow. Militia (*ZONE* as CTs): won by CZR 9-0. Militia (Zone as Ts): won by Zone 5-1. Dust (*ZONE* as Ts): won by CZR 11-4. Dust 2 (*ZONE* as Ts): won by CZR 10-4. Prodigy (*ZONE* as Ts): won by CZR 9-1. Well done to CZR who win some fantastic Razer mice.

THROW DOWN THE GAUNTLET

Pick one of the following games and send your challenge to us at **letters@pczone.co.uk** (with *PC ZONE* Readers' Challenge in the subject heading). *Counter-Strike*; *Quake III* (*Arena* or *Jailbreak*); *Unreal Tournament*; *Age Of Empires II*: *Age Of Kings* (four-a-side); *C&C Red Alert 2* (four-a-side).

FREE-FOR-ALL

The Playing Fields

16 July 2001

7:00 – 10:00pm

FREE-FOR-ALL

Unreal Tournament/Counter-Strike

We need your clan details (website, name), two daytime phone numbers and two email addresses, so we can contact you. Only send us a challenge if you're sure you'll be able to get a team together and keep to the date that we agree with you. Also, make sure you all have access to a machine that allows you to play the chosen game online. Many thanks to all of you who have sent in a challenge. We read them all, and everyone has an equal chance of getting a game.

TO THE VICTOR GO THE SPOILS

If you win – without a hint of cheating, of course – we will give your clan between four and six (depending on your team size) Razer Boomslang 2000 mice. They're worth £69.99 each and are probably the best gaming mouse around. It'll give you an edge no matter what game you're playing.

PC ZONE Free-For-All

GETTING CONNECTED

Get ready for some hot fragging action

Not in the main challenge? You can still get your arses whipped by joining the free-for-all. To join our *Unreal Tournament* server, click the 'Multiplayer' tab in the top-left menu and then select 'Open Location'. Type in '195.149.48.59:7777' in the box provided, hit enter and then when prompted for a password, type in *pczone*.

To join the *Counter-Strike* FFA, from the opening *Counter-Strike* menu click 'Play CS' then 'Internet Games' and 'Filter'. Check the box for 'Are In My Favourites List' and uncheck the other boxes.

Now click 'Filter' again, and click 'Add Server' then type: '195.149.48.59:27016'. You should now see a server called 'PC ZONE Challenge' listed on your screen. Double click on this server to join it. The password is *pczone*.

Servers will be available for practice from 12noon. Maps will cycle every 15 minutes to allow everyone a chance to play, so keep trying. If you have any problems connecting, telephone 020 7388 0004 on the day of the challenge.

HAVE A GO

PC ZONE GAME SERVERS

Provided by www.games-world.net

The *PC ZONE* game servers are now more popular than ever and to ensure only *PC ZONE* readers can play on them, we've decided to password them all. Don't worry though, every month we'll be printing the password you need to get fragging.

***Quake III: Arena* Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.24.27966**
***Quake III: Fortress* Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.24.27968**

***Counter-Strike* Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.49:27015**
***Counter-Strike* Public Server #2 – 194.93.134.49:27020**
***Counter-Strike* Public Server #3 – 194.93.134.51:27015**
***Counter-Strike* Public Server #4 (*PC ZONE* map pack) – 194.93.134.51:27020**

***Unreal Tournament* Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.52:7787**
***Unreal Tournament* Public Server #2 – 194.93.134.52:7777**

***Team Fortress Classic* Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.50:27015**
***Team Fortress Classic* Public Server #2 – 194.93.134.50:27020**

Password: googlybird

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FEEDBACK

"What Lionhead has done with *Black & White* is push the barriers back that little bit further"

KEV ADDS HIS OPINION TO THE B&W DEBATE

***Martin Korda* listens to more of your opinions on the latest games to hit the shelves**

IT'S YOUR SHOUT!

Feedback is here to offer you, the player, a platform to voice your opinions on any of the games reviewed in *PC ZONE* over the last three months. Whether you want to sing a game's praises or simply give it a verbal beating, we want to hear from you. Remember to keep your comments between 50 and 150 words and include your name, address and age.

WRITE TO Feedback, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL Or you can email them to us at **letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk** with **Feedback** in the subject line

BLACK & WHITE

REVIEWED *PCZ* #100, Mar 2001
SCORE 95%

What we said

"There really is nothing that approaches the ideas or standards that this game sets... *B&W* is as captivating as it is ingenious. Buy it right now or miss out on one of the most significant moments in PC gaming history."

What you thought

Upon reading your forum, and the forums of many other sites, I've noticed that many people seem to have a problem with *Black & White*, and can't possibly fathom why many esteemed publications, yours included, gave it such high review scores.

People tend to forget that reviews are, at the end of the day, just a matter of personal opinion. Keith did his job, he described the game in a professional manner, and gave it a score befitting of his love for it.

While I'm not saying this game isn't bugged, I am saying that I have only encountered one of them, which was easily solved. Due to the nature of this game, a quick fix patch isn't possible, many lines of code need to be analysed, and optimised to get the problems sorted out.

The only reason many people are complaining is because they had expectations that simply can't be fulfilled in this day and age with current technology. All games still have to adhere to a certain framework, as AI hasn't progressed sufficiently to allow otherwise.

What Lionhead has done, is push the barriers back that little bit further. The creature is a masterpiece of design, and here is a tip for people fed up with micro managing the villagers: don't pander to their every need, if you do, then why should they bother working?

Kev, aka Luvvly Jubbly

I'd just like to say how amazing *Black & White* is. When I read your review I thought "I don't know if I'm comfortable playing as a god". However, a 95 per cent score doesn't come around every month so I thought, "what the heck," and bought it. I started to play and was astonished at the amount of freedom you have around the lands of Eden. The AI is also a great credit to the game. When your creature eats a villager all you have to do is hit it and it learns its lesson. The outcomes and possibilities of the game are endless. Since last month I haven't stopped playing it. It's so good I've missed out on revision. Also the ways in which the music changes to determine what is happening is superb. To be honest, I can't find a single negative comment to make about it. I have the utmost respect for the Lionhead team and Peter Molyneux. Oh yeah, I can think of one criticism of your review. You didn't give it 100 per cent.

Alan Wright

I thought I would give my views on Lionhead's *Black & White*, because I feel the majority of the press has overlooked some issues with the game.

Black & White is a flawed masterpiece. There are significant bugs, and the balancing is terrible – evil is far easier to play than good, due to the intense villager micro management required for a good player. However, the main problem with the game is the length. There are only five levels, one of which is a tutorial. Your review claims that the game contains 400 quests, but I doubt if there are as many as 50. Subsequently, it's difficult to make the single-player game last longer than a weekend. This problem is compounded by the fact that the skirmish/multiplayer game is laughably underdeveloped. What's more, there are only three maps, and little variation between them. It's a crying shame, because it's an amazing programming achievement. However, it's an engine without a game, and unless Lionhead adds one quickly, it will soon be forgotten.

Chris Copperwheat

Comment

It's struck me as rather strange that with so many people voicing negative opinions on our forum (pczone.co.uk) regarding *B&W*, the majority of letters we've received have been extremely positive. Not all of them have been quite as gushing as yours Alan, but on the whole, there's a huge number of you who've found *Black & White* to be a truly amazing gaming experience. In fact, in Alan's case, he's even seen fit to jeopardize his future by missing out on revision. Just think, he could end up a down and out Special Brew swigging reprobate, who sits on street corners throwing incoherent insults at passers-by, after dropping out of school and losing touch with reality, all because he spent too much time playing *Black & White*. But with a game this good, it's a small price to pay.

Many of the points I wanted to make are already covered in Kev's letter, in which he makes many invaluable comments. Keith has come under fire for his review of *B&W* from some of you, but he was just giving his opinion on a game that breaks new ground and proves just how bright the future is for PC gaming. If the rest of the *ZONE* team had generally disagreed with his score it would have been lowered, and we're standing by both him and his review of the game.

We're not going to talk about *Black & White* in Feedback again, as there's little else left to say. Some of you are hugely disappointed, and admittedly a patch is needed to iron out some annoying bugs. However, many of you adore it. If you're still not sure about buying it, then check out our comments in this month's Supertest (page 100). Subject closed.

It's been a good argument. But now it's time to move on...

Hey there monkey boy.

DESPERADOS

REVIEWED *PCZ* #103, June 2001
SCORE 82%

What we said

"*Desperados* is the best western we've ever played on a PC – on top of that it's also a good strategy game – buy it or get out of town."

What you thought

✪ I saw the game in the shops before I read your review and instantly bought it, as I'd enjoyed *Commandos*. I fell in love with it instantly, and for the past three weeks it has taken my life away from me (I only just finished it today). Your review was very accurate. However, I found that it needed more levels. Almost a quarter of the levels are training ones and some of the features mentioned in the manual (eg rain) only occur on one or two levels. Otherwise, it's pretty much flawless. I can't wait for a mission pack. Oh, and it's also much easier than *Commandos*, and the AI is superb. Buy it now.

Shortypaul

✪ *Desperados* is a rip roaring ride of danger and excitement with amazing gameplay that blows you away. *Commandos* was good, but *Desperados* is better. Everyone should buy it or I'll send round a lynch mob to sort you out.

Dangerman

Comment

Desperados may look like a fairly standard RTS, but once you fire it up and get into it, it's surprising just how addictive it becomes. Having so many team members with unique skills and the fact that you're usually hugely outnumbered makes it a strategy game that requires true skill and thought. If you can't wait for _Commandos 2_, then take Shortypaul and Dangerman's advice and go and buy this game now. You won't regret it.

SERIOUS SAM

REVIEWED *PCZ* #102, May 2001
SCORE 81%

What we said

"Buy it, don't expect too much and you won't be disappointed."

What you thought

✪ Here's another reason why your magazine is the best. Most other mags said that this game was rubbish and monotonous, but you said it was great for 15 minute spells. I totally agree, if you sat and played it for hours your brain would shrivel up and die, but for a few minutes at a time it's great.

What's more, I've only got a Matrox G400Max and I was running it at 1152x864, with 30-40 enemies on screen at once without any sign of slow down. *Serious Sam* is a truly fantastic game that everyone should own.

Ian Addison

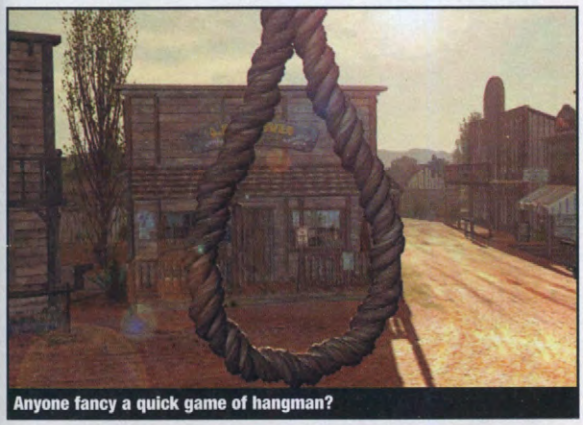
✪ How a certain other gaming magazine could give *Serious Sam* a score so much higher than yours is beyond me. *Serious Sam* is little more than a *Doom* clone for the 21st century. It's fun for a while, but after a couple of hours it just gets repetitive and boring. To make things worse I had to pay almost £30 for it, when you and everyone else had said that it was going to sell for £20. Why was every shop I went to selling it for £10 more than the price you printed? Did you get it wrong? Thanks for another honest and accurate review *PC ZONE* and keep up the good work.

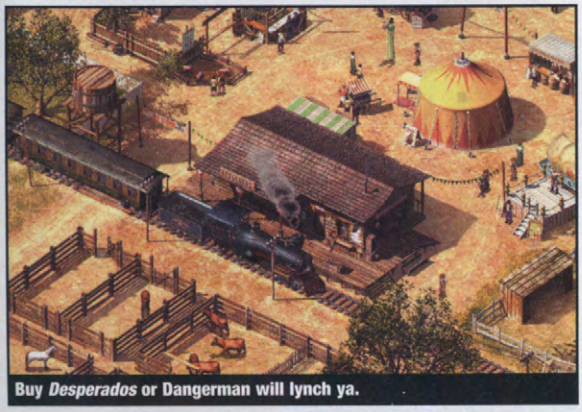
DuNk

Comment

Even though we dealt with the price question in our June issue, some of you may have missed it, so lets clear it up. The game was to ship at £19.99, but this was upped to £29.99 after we'd gone to press, and it was too late for us to amend it.

Serious Sam is an excellent game, but it's too short lived and little more than a _Doom_ clone with smarter graphics, which is why it didn't score above 81. If you can link up with some mates and play it co-operatively then it's worth it, even at this price, as playing in this mode is a hoot. But if you're just looking to play it on your own, we recommend you think long and hard before handing over your cash.


Anyone fancy a quick game of hangman?


Buy *Desperados* or Dangerman will lynch ya.

STAR WARS: BATTLE FOR NABOO

REVIEWED *PCZ* #103, June 2001
SCORE 62%

What we said

"LucasArts has sullied the _Star Wars_ name with a slew of inferior titles, and while this does little to redress the balance, perversely its lack of ambition is its saviour."

What you thought

✪ I read your review of *Star Wars: Battle For Naboo* and it got me thinking… You say the games you cover are reviewed by someone who specialises in that genre, eg FPS, RPG etc. So I was shocked to see that *Star Wars: BFN* was reviewed by Steve Hill and his genre is… football and racing. I don't think *Star Wars: BFN* looked good. It's probably crap, but I just thought you could help me with this question.

Will Kumar
(semiautomaticwalkietalkie)

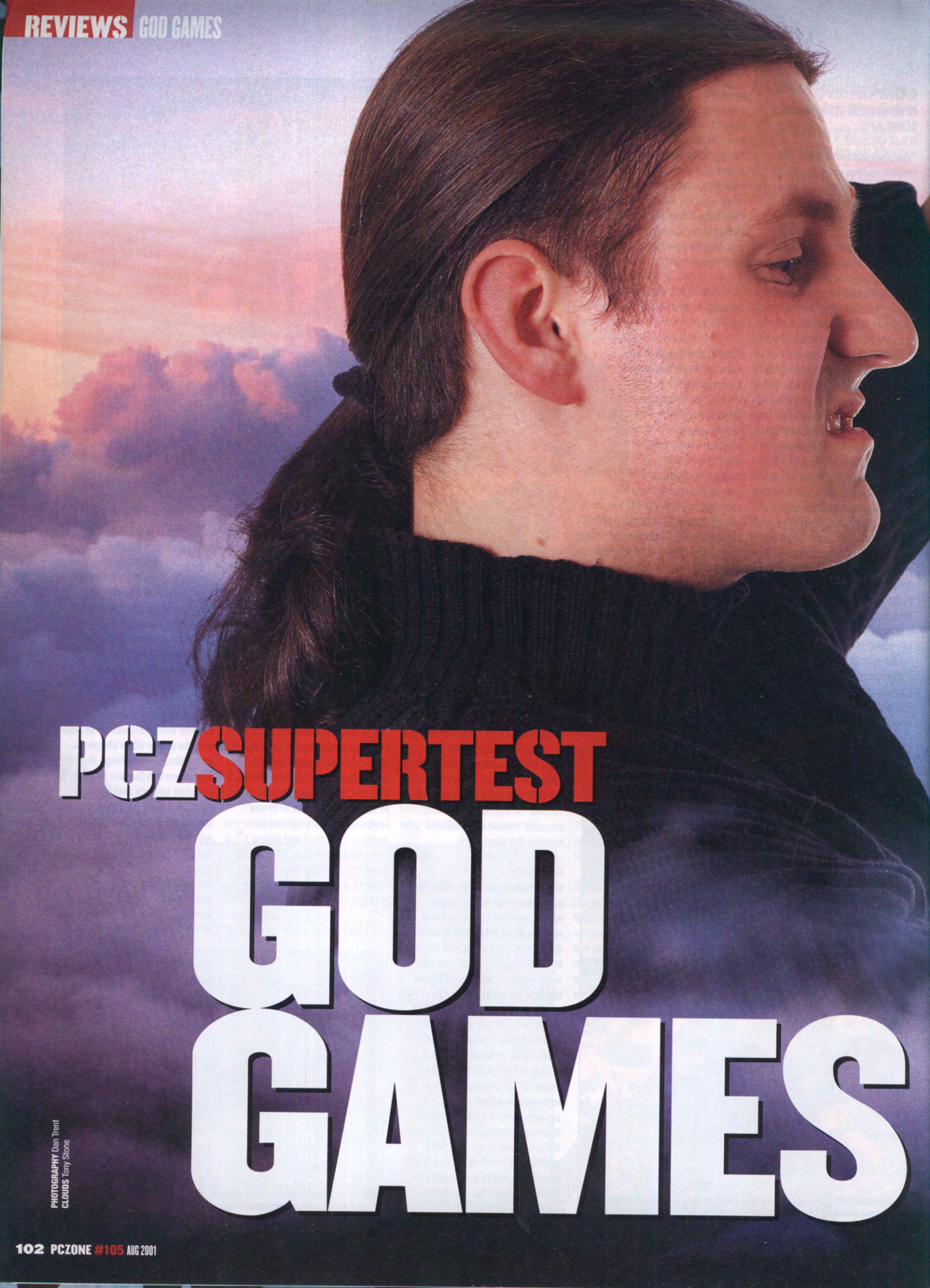
✪ *Star Wars: BFN* is a real disappointment. Steve Hill's review was spot on, as it's just another cash in, and old Muggins here fell for it. It's reasonably entertaining for a day or two, but after that it is repetitive. I made the mistake of buying the game before reading your review – I won't be doing that again.

T Dundee

Comment

Unfortunately we don't have anyone who specialises in sub-_standard Star Wars_ shooters, so as Steve was a huge _Rogue Squadron_ fan (before he rejected society and became obsessed with pretending to be the manager of Chester City), we thought he'd be the man for the job. Just because we specialise doesn't mean we're not qualified to review other genres, although we'd draw the line at letting Steve review an RPG, for obvious reasons.

Battle For Naboo is mindless, but fun (for a while anyway).



PCZSUPERTEST

GOD GAMES

PHOTOGRAPHY Dan Trent
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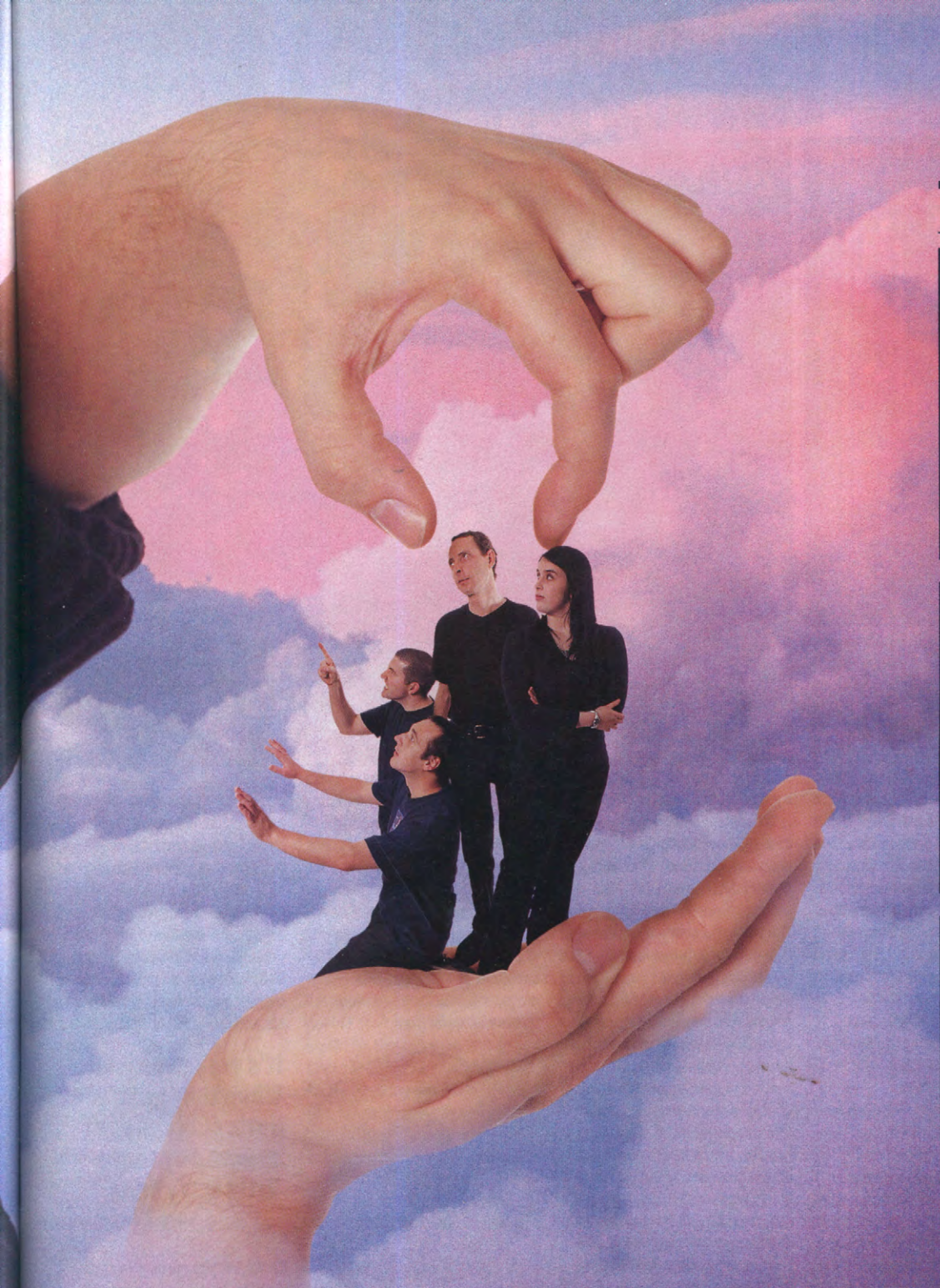


L to R: Martin Korda, Mark Hill, Keith Pullin, Chris Anderson and Rhianna Pratchett

When *SimCity* first appeared in 1989 it created a genre that has since spawned many classics. *PC ZONE* looks at the very best God sims available and chooses a winner

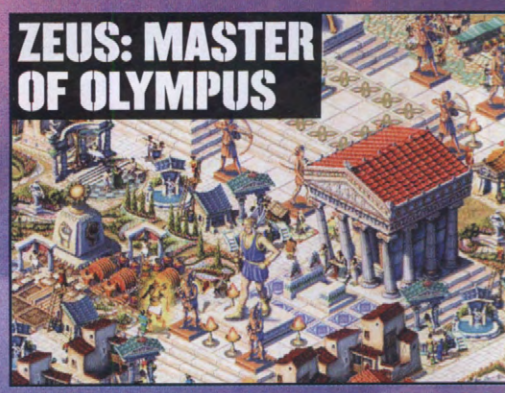
God sims, perhaps more than any other genre, appeal to different players for different reasons. There is no denying the pleasure to be had in guiding a host of 'little' people through a land of your own design. The obvious appeal of building a city or civilisation from scratch and eventually seeing the fruits of your efforts in the form of a thriving community (or a nation of no-hopers, depending on your skill/preferences) has fascinated PC game players the world over for the last 12 years. Despite (or because of) the anally retentive nature of these games, they are profoundly addictive, and any game worth its salt in this genre is almost guaranteed to have you burning the midnight oil while you ponder your next move in your digitally created universe.

Looking at the games lined up for this month's Supertest, it was always going to be difficult deciding on a winner. Many of these titles have been hugely influential on the genre, and pitting one hugely addictive and playable title against four others proved no easy task for the *PC ZONE* team. Regardless, we played through the lot. Many hours were spent investigating the seemingly endless depth of classic titles in a highly popular genre, and eventually, a winner was found after a very heated debate. To witness one of the most hotly debated Supertests in *PC ZONE* history, you need only turn the page.

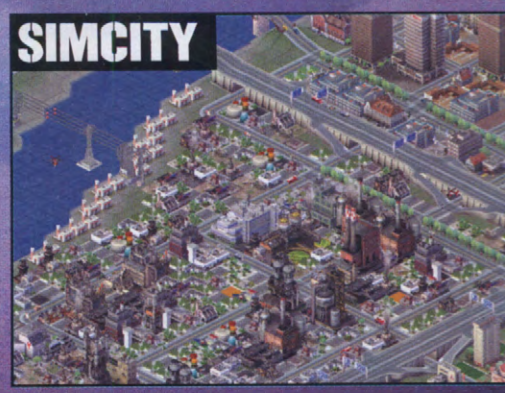
THE CONTENDERS

THE SIMS

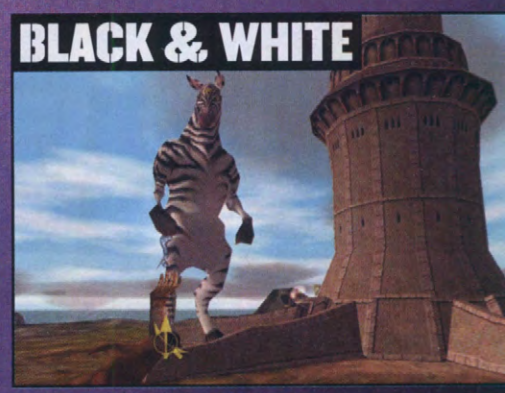
ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS



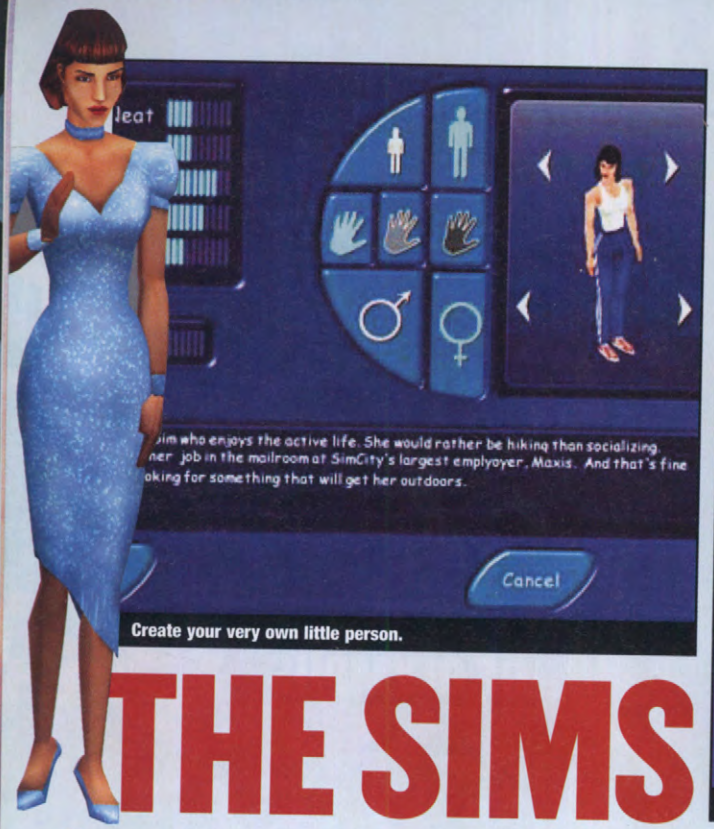
SIMCITY



BLACK & WHITE



CALL TO POWER II



Create your very own little person.

THE SIMS

Interact with other Sims or become a social outcast.

Chris: I have to admit I can't see the fascination in this game. Lots of people play it all the time and love it. I couldn't get anything out of it at all. It just seems really dull, a bit like *SimCity*.

Martin: *The Sims* has three add-on packs in the top ten, that's four of the top ten slots taken up by *The Sims*.

Chris: Can someone please tell me what I'm missing? What is so good about this game?

Keith: I simply don't understand why anyone would want to spend their time controlling the lives of a make-believe family in a world that's infinitely duller than their own.

Rhianna: I quite like *The Sims* actually. It's really just electronic dollies. Maybe that just appeals to something deep within me.

Mark: In the same way people had tea parties with teddy bears when they were kids, they will probably get something out of *The Sims*.

Martin: That's interesting Mark. When you originally reviewed it you gave it 86 per cent.

Mark: I loved it when I first played it. It was something completely new and different when it first came out. The first time I loaded it up on the PC in the office, everyone was crowded around it saying 'do this, do that'.

Keith: For the first hour it's hilarious, then once the gags have worn off, the game's worn off.

Martin: For the first couple of days you think you can actually make them do something, I mean really make them do something, and then you find that the consequences are really lame. Like trying to get into a fight with your next-door neighbour, or pull the girl across the street or get a job promotion. None of it seems to hit home in the way you thought it would. It doesn't seem deep enough in that respect.

Chris: I don't see the point in trying to emulate real life anyway. The whole point of playing games is to get away from it into something different.

Mark: Once I drove my Sim to suicide. You can actually turn them into a complete and utter wreck. It's quite good fun.

Keith: But then it just gets really annoying. You can't make any friends and you can't do well at work and the relentlessness of it all just goes on and on and on.

Mark: I think the people who are addicted to it just like the really dull nature of it. They think 'ooh I can afford this new cooker now'.

Martin: But people keep buying it. They buy every single add-on that comes out.

Mark: I think this has prompted the death of *SimCity* too. It's become such a money-making machine that this is all Maxis is going to do now, *Sim*-things in add-on packs.

Martin: I think some people see *The Sims* as a way of making their own little virtual soap opera, and they think it's fantastic if they get together with a girl or something. They try and live their lives through a computer game, so they can punch the next-door neighbour who's pissing them off or pull the girl across the street who they want to pork.

Mark: That's quite a depressing picture you're painting there.

Martin: I'm not talking about everyone who plays *The Sims*. I just mean a select few.

Keith: I think if you're going to make a game like this then make us do something that we don't do all the time in our real lives. Let us have a choice of actions – let us murder someone, or take loads of drugs, or just get really pissed up and not go to work.

Mark: Yes, but this is a very commercial PC kind of game.

Martin: It's very sanitised. Every time they go to the bathroom they get covered by those little wavy lines so you can't see what's going on. Basically, the game's entertaining for the first few days. You think it's incredible because it's something new and then after a while you realise there's not that much to it. It's a new concept but it needs a lot of work before it actually fulfils its true potential.

Mark: But people who like it obviously don't think that because they keep buying all these add-ons that Maxis keep churning out.

Martin: I think the reason the add-ons are so popular is because the original game is a bit shallow and they're hoping these add-on packs will make it what they thought it was originally going to be. At least it's something to build on. It has the potential to be really good.

Chris: No it hasn't, it's basically a really dull concept. What potential is there in that?

Martin: They might change it to make it more interesting and add some of the stuff we talked about.

> **"It's very sanitised. When they go to the bathroom they get covered by those little wavy lines"**
>
> MARTIN ON *THE SIMS*

Chris: They're never going to do that, it would mean changing it completely. It's a family game – that's why it's so popular. They're never going to change it.

Keith: It's supposed to be a game that's fun for all the family but when me and my girlfriend sat down to play it we just ended up arguing over what we should get and how to play it.

Rhianna: I have to say I don't think it's just women who are playing it because when I was a little girl and had a doll's house it was most popular with little boys.

Martin: What was it called your doll's house, Rhianna's House of Pain or something?

Chris: The general consensus seems to be that we don't like this much then.

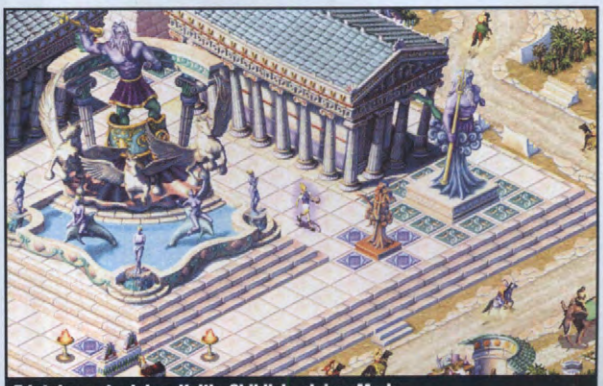
Mark: No we don't. It's Sea Monkeys for idiots.

THE SIMS

***The Sims*, in many ways, is a logical extension to *SimCity*. Having had a whole city to control, it makes sense that the next step would be to get inside the lives of the people in it and take control of them. It's an interesting concept, but the experience is a shallow one once the novelty of the game wears off.**

ORIGINAL SCORE	86%
DEVELOPER	Maxis
PUBLISHER	Electronic Arts
REVIEWED	*PCZ* #87

Colourful graphics, but the gameplay is by no means simplistic.



Edutainment, claims Keith. Childish, claims Mark.

ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS

Rhianna: It's just like *Caesar III*, only kind of cute.
Mark: They turned a really good game into a completely pointless one as far as I'm concerned. I played it for about an hour and I got really irritated by the 'cuteness' of it.
Martin: In many ways it's superior to *Caesar III*. There isn't nearly as much micro-management so you can concentrate on doing the interesting things like building up your army and economy. And your people aren't constantly whingeing at you to do things, they actually get up off their arses and do things of their own accord.
Mark: That's because it's aimed at a wider audience.
Martin: It borrows from the *SimCity* games quite heavily in that it's got certain types of disasters that can strike you, even from other gods, and you have to recruit heroes by building certain monuments. So in that respect it

borrows quite heavily from previous god games.
Keith: If *SimCity* was remade now it would be done along the same lines as *Zeus*. It takes aspects of *SimCity* and expands on them. It's a lot more interesting.
Rhianna: It has a more advanced economy and ministry structure than *Caesar III* did, but *Caesar III* just looks more stylish. Oh and before I forget, the illustrations in the manual are diabolical.
Mark: It just looks really childish. All the stuff in the game looks like it was drawn by a kid.
Keith: But the actual concept of the game itself is not childish. It's quite complex and involving.
Mark: It's just *Caesar III* with a Greek mythology theme and childish graphics.
Keith: The Greek mythology bit is actually true to what it's supposed to be.
Mark: No it's not, it doesn't exist.
Keith: This is edutainment for the 21st century.
Chris: Did you say 'edutainment'?
Keith: I did, yes.
Mark: Stop the tape while I kill Keith. I don't want any evidence.
Keith: It's the new edutainment.
Chris: Stop saying that word.
Keith: Edutainment edutainment.
Martin: People usually shit their pants at the thought of a god game, purely because it's so in-depth. I think what they've done is taken *Pharaoh* and *Caesar III* and tried to make it more accessible,

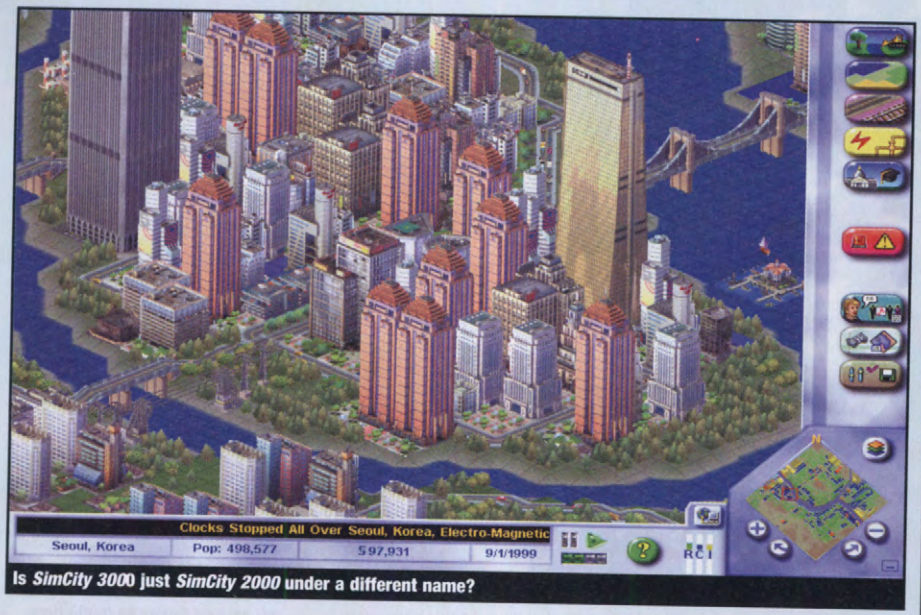
> **"It's just *Caesar III* with a Greek mythology theme and childish graphics"**
>
> **MARK ON *ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS***

and they've succeeded in doing that with *Zeus*.
Chris: I don't think that's a bad thing.
Martin: I think it's a very good thing. God games needed to be made more accessible because not many people were playing them. Even now, only a hardcore bunch of people usually play the majority of them.
Rhianna: I think that's really sad. It's a sad state of gaming if you have to make games twee to make them accessible.
Chris: It's not inherently twee. OK, some people here don't like the graphics but it still has plenty of depth. Nobody wants to play a no-brainer game, but if a game is presented in such a way that it's not as scary for casual gamers, I can't see what's wrong with that.
Mark: I'm being very harsh on it because I'm very annoyed it's not more like *Caesar III* because I really liked that game. When I came to this one I was disappointed.
Keith: It's essentially the same game. Doesn't it all depend on whether you're into Romans or Greeks?
Mark: I prefer the Greeks actually. It's just the way it's presented that did nothing for me.
Chris: The military side of things is a lot better than it was. You couldn't get into huge battles in the early ones and that's what put me off them. It seems a bit pointless building up a huge empire and then not being able to summon a huge army and go get into trouble with a rival nation. That's what puts me off *SimCity* too. Once you've built your city there's no incentive to keep playing. They've addressed all that with *Zeus* and that's why I prefer it over the *Caesar* games.
Keith: There's also a lot more variety in the scenarios. Some of them are training, some of them are battles, that adds a lot to it too.
Rhianna: It's got nice little effects like the shepherds going after the wolves to stop them going after the sheep, that kind of thing.
Keith: The attention to detail is brilliant, it's amazing. Even the sounds as you're walking round the city and you hear the grunting of the gymnasts in the gymnasium. Well I think that's what they're doing.
Martin: Ban this sick filth.
Mark: I thought this game was supposed to be for children.
Everyone: (*laughs*)
Keith: They've put a lot of effort into it sound-wise and graphics-wise, they've worked hard on it.
Mark: I haven't got far enough into *Zeus* to find this out, but I'm hoping it's not like *Caesar III* where once you get really far into the game, your buildings start crumbling or catch fire and you have to go and sort it out every time.
Martin: It depends what you want from a god game, whether you want to have the game do everything for you, or whether you want to manage every aspect of the game yourself.
Chris: I don't like games that force you to manage every tiny aspect of your city and what your people are doing. Let's face it, if you're supposed to be a god you wouldn't be doing all these things yourself anyway. You're going to be doing the exciting things, like hanging about on clouds with a harp, that sort of thing.
Rhianna: I think *Zeus* is more accessible to people who haven't played *Caesar III* and probably haven't got that kind of mentality. The graphics are just the kind of thing you love to hate. I didn't really get on with the graphics but having played *Caesar III* I found I could get into *Zeus* straight away without having to read the manual.
Martin: ... Or look at the pictures in the manual.
Keith: I liked this game a lot, it's my second favourite game here.
Chris: I liked it too. I had no problem with the graphics.
Martin: I much prefer this to *Call to Power II*. It doesn't have all the anal micro-management.
Mark: I don't like the graphics. I'm almost sure I haven't given it enough time just because the whole style of it has put me off.
Keith: Did the graphics really put you off that much?
Mark: Yes.
Keith: That's really weird.
Chris: You're a journalist. You're supposed to rise above all that.
Mark: I was in the middle of a city and I couldn't quit out of it, so I just took the CD out and sort of threw it across the room.
Chris: I don't think he likes it.
Martin: You think?

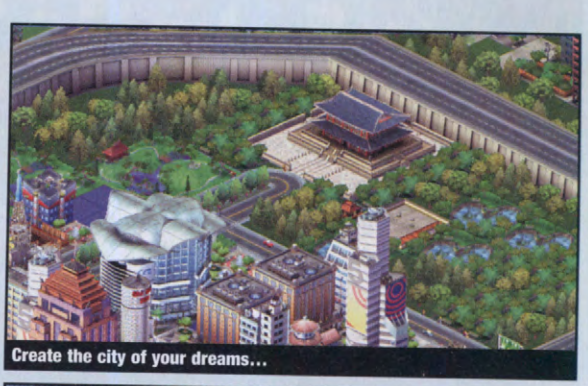
ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS

Yet another rehash of an established concept, *Zeus* improves upon its predecessors in the *Caesar* series with a more accessible interface and enhanced military options. While the graphics may be overly cute for some, there is no denying the inherent depth and complexity of what is a very addictive title, albeit one that we have played before in various guises.

ORIGINAL SCORE	83%
DEVELOPER	Impressions Games
PUBLISHER	Vivendi
REVIEWED	*PCZ* #97



Is *SimCity 3000* just *SimCity 2000* under a different name?


Create the city of your dreams...

...or nightmares.

SIMCITY 3000

Martin: *SimCity* laid down the blueprint for all god games. The fact that we're still talking about it shows how influential it's been.

Chris: I'm going to be honest. I think this is the most boring game in this Supertest by some considerable margin. I almost fell asleep about a hundred times when I was playing it. Some of the games here justify being updated, because they have concepts that are fairly good to start with, but this one should be laid to rest I think.

Mark: Well, it's the oldest game here. That might have something to do with it.

Chris: That has nothing to do with it. It's just boring. Build a city and... and nothing. It's pointless.

Mark: It's basically the same as the original.

Rhianna: It's like *Dune 2000* was to *Dune 2*: the same game just a bit nicer, but it's not even that much nicer in this case.

Martin: I don't think that's true, I think it's a lot better, it's more balanced. You have to build residential zones and industrial zones and connect the two up, but there's always someone who's not going to be happy. You're constantly battling to get the majority of people to be happy. It's always been like that and it sort of worked, but they've actually made it work properly now. They've honed it so you can strike a proper balance.

Rhianna: Who cares? If you've played *SimCity 2000* there's no point in playing *SimCity 3000* unless it was 3D and you could go inside your city like you can in *Dungeon Keeper 2*.

Chris: They tried to do that, but they couldn't hack it. They said in the build-up to the release of *SimCity 3000* that it was going to be all 3D but they later admitted that they couldn't do it, so instead they basically just released *SimCity 2000* again but changed the name. I can't remember what the problem was, I think it was slowdown or something. Either way, they fluffed it.

Rhianna: One of the really cool things about *Dungeon Keeper 2* is that you can go inside any of your creatures and view the world from their perspective. If they could do something like that with a *Sim* game that would be really interesting.

Chris: Except *SimCity* is basically full of sims who are really boring. Who wants to possess one of that lot and watch them reading the newspaper all day or something? Not me.

Mark: This is the game I got most addicted to when I played it this week.

Chris: It's Mark's most addictive game of the week. What was it last week?

Keith: I think compared to the other games here the actual gameplay is really quite simplistic. It's not very deep at all.

Mark: Well that's probably why I enjoyed it. I didn't have to think too hard.

Chris: Anyone who plays *SimCity* for the first time having played some of the other god games around will be very disappointed. There is no aim to it, it's inherently pointless and a complete waste of time. It's not like *Call To Power II* for example where you build up your civilisation and then go to war with the rest of the world. All you do is build up your city, mess about with tax rates, and spend your whole time trying to keep your citizens happy. Who can be bothered? If you could send the whiny little sods to war at some point, that would be a lot better.

Keith: It's missing so much that the other games have cottoned on to and have been doing for a long time.

Mark: The worst part of the game is constantly fixing things that are going wrong. You spend your whole time messing around with things like water pipes and messing around with Tube stations and really anal micro-management stuff that you just can't be bothered to do after a while.

Martin: The good thing about some of these god games is they started introducing advisors, so if you get completely swamped they will tell you what to do. That's one of the good things about *SimCity*.

Mark: What I liked about it is it's almost like building a city out of Lego. You get so little money to start with at the beginning that all you can do is build a few streets. Then you're scrimping and saving and raising taxes trying to get money to build your city up.

Chris: I just think it's completely pointless. I never felt like that when I played the original, but there was nothing else around then and it seemed like a good idea at the time.

Rhianna: It's had its day. It's got too much to compete against now.

Keith: With a game like this you really need to have certain rewards and goals along the way, and *SimCity 3000* doesn't have them.

Mark: They could probably update it, bearing all these criticisms in mind.

Chris: I don't think it would work unless they gave you some kind of ultimate goal, a reason to build your city up other than to just look at it.

Mark: They'll probably update it and do it in 3D.

Chris: There really is no point in doing that. That would make it technically better but you'd still have the same boring game underneath it. They need to do something with the game itself if they make another one.

Keith: I agree.

> **"Who wants to possess one of that lot and watch them reading the paper all day? Not me"**
>
> CHRIS ON *SIMCITY 3000*

SIMCITY 3000

It's safe to say that *SimCity* was solely responsible for kick-starting the empire-building genre on PC. The latest game in the series sports obvious graphical enhancements and minor tweaks to the gameplay. In truth, it's not hugely different to *SimCity 2000*, but for some people that in itself is no bad thing.

ORIGINAL SCORE	83%
DEVELOPER	Maxis
PUBLISHER	Maxis/Electronic Arts
REVIEWED	PCZ #74

Probably one of the most hyped games of recent times.

Raising your animal is one of *Black & White*'s strongest features.

BLACK & WHITE

Chris: I was deeply disappointed with this after all the hype. It just does not feel like the new Peter Molyneux game I was hoping for. It doesn't have the high playablity that his games normally have, in fact it feels quite shallow in places. I think maybe they're hoping it will come into its own when it's played online with other people, because the single-player game is good, but not exactly brilliant.

Martin: I think it's so free-form that I can see why people might think like that, but there's a huge amount of depth to it, so there are many things you can do. Because it's so free-form you get so many opportunities and it's just a case of putting in the time and going out there to find all the different ways you can do things. I think people are going into it believing all the hype that it's really accessible, and it's not at all. It's a strategy game and there's lots of micro-management and I don't think some people are prepared for that. They're expecting something else.

Chris: Are you saying I played it wrong?

Martin: I'm saying maybe you didn't get deeply enough into it.

Chris: I don't see how it's up to me to make myself like a game. If a game's good enough its appeal will be obvious without me having to spend forever trying to find the fun in it. If you play a game for a few hours and you're not drawn into it, as far as I'm concerned there's something very wrong.

Keith: *Black & White*, more than any other game I've ever played, takes an extraordinary amount of time to get into. It really is quite draining to actually physically get into it. But once you do… what a game.

Martin: So what did you really like about it?

Keith: Everything I wrote in the review.

Chris: So you've forgotten?

Keith: I like the way you can teach a creature – it's a really new concept. I've been playing the game constantly now for about the last two months.

Rhianna: I thought it was like a sort of giant tamagotchi. It takes leaps and bounds in certain areas, like AI.

Keith: Part of the beauty of that though is you can actually complete the game without using the creature, without even concentrating on the villages as well – you can take it whichever way you want.

> **"It really is quite draining to actually physically get into it. But once you do... what a game"**
>
> KEITH ON *BLACK & WHITE*

Martin: One of the strongest things in the game for me was the distinction between good and evil. Not many games have that distinction. In most of these games you're a god or a leader or a mayor or something like that and you have to build up a city and make it work. In this game, if you play as good you have to stay good, you have to perform good actions. You have to take an alignment and stick to it if you want to succeed as either good or evil, and that distinction gives it two very different ways of playing the game.

Chris: That's what originally attracted me to the game. I really liked the idea of playing as completely good or completely evil. I'll admit I only tried the evil alignment but the game never captured me enough to make me want to go back and try it the other way. All of Molyneux's games that I like are much easier to get into – like *Magic Carpet* or *Populous* – but I kept thinking this one had something missing from it that I just couldn't put my finger on. I still liked it, I just didn't like it as much as I thought I would.

Rhianna: *Dungeon Keeper* established how much fun it was to play evil. It's always more fun to play evil and I don't know why more games don't capitalise on that. *Dungeon Keeper* was great. You got to put fairies out on a rack and whirl them around by their wings.

Martin: Are you sure you're not just thinking of your dolly house again?

Mark: I just found it really hard to get involved in a game with a village with all these fat chubby people running around.

Chris: I sort of felt that too. I didn't feel any affinity with what was going on.

Keith: You didn't feel any affinity with your creature?

Chris: No, I didn't.

Martin: I think the creatures are fantastic. The actual nurturing of the creature was one of the best parts of it – seeing how your influence over the creature actually reflects in them, slowly moulding them into what you want them to be. You mould the game the way you want to play it, the game doesn't mould you to the way it wants you to play it. Because it's so free-form you can play it any way you want.

Chris: It's not a bad game, there are lots of really good things about it. I think the reason I didn't really take to it completely is after all the hype I was expecting something amazing, something that I just wouldn't be able to stop playing.

Mark: Same here.

Keith: It's a victim of its own hype, definitely, and a lot of people have been completely confused by the hype. Nobody really knew what kind of game it was and just didn't know what to expect when it came out, and I think for a lot of people it turned out to be something they didn't expect it to be. Also, although there are a lot of quests in the game, they have a small bearing on the outcome of your alignment and your creature's alignment. The alignment most of the time is worked out by the actions you do in your town or the spells that you cast, that sort of thing. I've played the game now three times as good, neutral and evil. Playing as evil is easy, you'll get through it no problem. Playing as neutral is just boring, there's no consistency in what you do and you can lose interest easily. Playing as good is a completely different story. It's extremely difficult, one of the most difficult games I've ever played. One of the arguments aimed at the game is it's too easy. Well, if you can complete the game with a completely good alignment where you're glowing and you've got a halo, then you're a better man than I am.

Mark: But it's like Chris was saying, it's too difficult to get into. It takes so long to achieve anything, and then when you do, you feel like you haven't really achieved anything much compared to the amount of time you've put into it.

Keith: It *is* really difficult to get into, I said that in my review. A lot of people won't have the time or patience for it and I don't blame them. But if you have got the time and patience for it, it's more than worth it.

Martin: I couldn't agree more.

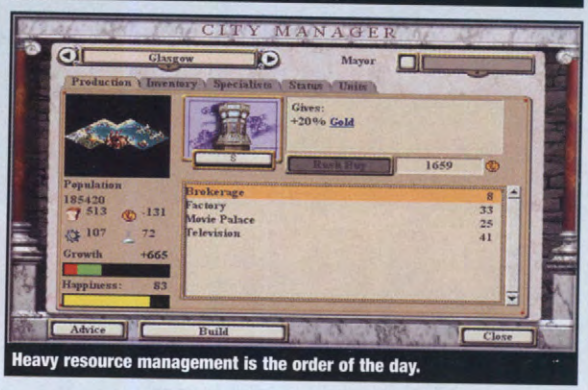
BLACK & WHITE

Hugely ambitious and refreshingly inventive, *Black & White* is an RTS/empire-building game with the added appeal of nurturing a creature and watching it develop. Despite having its critics, it's still one of the finest games ever created and one which you'll thoroughly enjoy if you're willing to invest the time.

ORIGINAL SCORE	95%
DEVELOPER	Lionhead
PUBLISHER	Electronic Arts
REVIEWED	PCZ #100

It's *Civilisation* by any other name.

Are these types of battles a little dated now? Probably...



Heavy resource management is the order of the day.

CALL TO POWER II

Mark: I really couldn't be bothered playing this for very long at all. I felt like I've already played exactly the same game before.

Chris: You're saying you've played the original game?

Mark: I've played *Civilisation*, I've played *Call To Power*, they're both the same basically.

Chris: So how long did you play the original for?

Mark: I played it for a few weeks, I played *Civilisation* for that long too.

Chris: You keep mentioning the two in the same breath as if they are the same game.

Martin: If you look at *Civilisation*, which came out ten years ago, you can see how ahead of its time it was. There are still the same elements of gameplay in all these games now, they've just improved upon it. But they haven't improved upon it so much that it's indistinguishable from the original.

Keith: They just improve on it every year or so. It's a good concept that they keep reworking. There's nothing wrong with that.

Chris: I think sometimes the improvements are so insignificant it's not worth putting these games out as fully-blown sequels. *Call To Power II* should have been a mission pack, or a patch even, for all the difference it makes to the original.

Keith: The last game like this I played was *Civilisation*, so for me it seemed like there were a lot of enhancements in *Call To Power II*, but I see what you mean. If you already have the others I suppose, yes, you should get this as a patch. If you haven't got the others then yes buy it, it's definitely worth it.

Martin: This is the argument you could use for any sequel to a game. Should it be a patch or should it be an add-on pack?

Chris: That's such a sweeping statement. Not all sequels are like this one.

Martin: What about *Command & Conquer*? Games like that...

Chris: *Red Alert* was sufficiently different to *Command & Conquer* to justify calling it a sequel. You can't say that about *Call To Power II*. I felt like I was playing *Call To Power 1.2*. I'm not saying it's a bad game, I'm just saying they should have done more with it.

Mark: The same thing happens every time with *Championship Manager*. People who don't play it much don't think the new ones are different and think it should have been a patch, but people who are really into it like the small improvements. After I played *Civ 2*, I decided I wouldn't go back to it because there were just tiny improvements.

Martin: But isn't that a tribute to how good the original was? You can't really improve on it because it's already so good.

Chris: I don't agree. There are really obvious things they could have done to *Call To Power II* to make it a lot better and they did. Like how about acting the battles out in real time and changing to a proper RTS screen? It would lend another dimension to the gameplay and put more emphasis on all the other things you do in the game.

Martin: But then it wouldn't be turn-based any more and that's what people like about it.

Chris: Of course it would. Time would still be stopped when you're not in battle and you would still have to take turns. All it would mean is the actual battles would be a lot more exciting. I think pure turn-based games have had their day to an extent.

Rhianna: This is the first turn-based game I've put any effort into playing and I found it boring. All the details seem very academic because you can't really see everything. I much prefer RTS to turn-based, it's just so tedious.

Mark: For me it's the other way round, I find real-time strategy tedious because they don't give you time to think properly.

Keith: I like the way you have to stop and think in turn-based games, real-time strategy is too fast and hectic. For that reason I liked *Call To Power II*, the way you have so much to think about before taking your turn.

Martin: The thing *Call To Power II* has over the other games here is its sheer timescale. It goes right from primitive times to futuristic.

Keith: The cool thing as well is you always know exactly where you are, whichever epoch you might be in, because the graphics change to depict that period – which is a really good thing and not many games do that.

Mark: Basically, this is the latest *Civ*-type game here and it should be compared as that against the other games in the test.

> **"I suppose if I put aside a few hours to read the manual it might be worth it, but I just can't be bothered"**
>
> RHIANNA ON *CALL TO POWER II*

Rhianna: We're talking about two different types of god games here. *The Sims* and *Black & White* give you much more control over the personality of your creatures whereas *Call To Power II*, *SimCity 3000* and *Zeus* are more about micro-management. It's the two different sides of god gaming.

Martin: I don't necessarily agree with that. I think there is in fact a lot of micro-management in *Black & White*.

Chris: I think it's interesting that this is the first turn-based god game that Rhianna's played and she doesn't like it. I suspected that only people who liked the original *Civ* games would like this, and she seems to have proved me right. I think turn-based games are on the way out.

Mark: Yes but you've been saying that for years.

Chris: Well I'm going to keep saying it until eventually they're all gone.

Mark: It's true though. There are no new turn-based games coming out, apart from the likes of *Civilisation* that just keep getting updated.

Chris: Despite all that, I still really liked it. I'm not sure if it's the best game here, but it's still a good game.

Martin: It keeps true to its original foundations. It gives the fans what they want and they're happy with it, but it hasn't done enough to compete with the other god games out there now.

Keith: I think apart from being a bit difficult to get into, it's a damned fine game.

Chris: Well it doesn't look like Rhianna will be going back to it.

Rhianna: I suppose if I put aside a few hours to read the manual it might be worth it, but I just don't think I can be bothered. I like to see the visual advancements of my city rather than just the academic clicking of boxes. I didn't think I would like this, and I was right.

Chris: So you were out to get it from the start?

Rhianna: Yes.

Chris: Excellent. Well done.

CALL TO POWER II

This is basically *Civilisation* with a different name. It unashamedly plagiarises just about every aspect of the popular game from 1991. It's the only turn-based game in this month's Supertest, but is no less addictive for it. It's still brilliant after all these years, just remember: Sid Meier did it first.

ORIGINAL SCORE	85%
DEVELOPER	Activision
PUBLISHER	Activision
REVIEWED	PCZ #98

LET THE BATTLE COMMENCE

The 'chat' is over. Time to find a winner

Chris: Well there's no obvious winner judging by the conversation we've just had. I guess the best way to do it is by a process of elimination. We can count *The Sims* out of contention I should imagine. For me it's down to *Call To Power II* and *Zeus*, and possibly *Black & White*.

Keith: For me it's got to be *Black & White*, it does the 'god' thing the best, and it's an excellent game.

Martin: Same for me. You can actually get involved with the scenery and pick things up and affect the environment, and for me that's what a god game should be – being able to manipulate just about everything if you want to. You can actually get physically involved in things – it's brilliant.

Mark: I wasn't completely blown away by any of these games to be honest. I had already played *Call To Power* when I played *Civ 2*, and I had already played *Zeus* when I played *Caesar III*, and the *Sim* games didn't do much for me. To a lesser extent, neither did *Black & White*.

Chris: Let's look at it this way then. You're on a desert island and you can only bring one of these games. Which one would it be?

Mark: *Call To Power II*.

Rhianna: Well it's between *Zeus* and *Black & White* for me. I guess I'm going to go for *Black & White*, because it's incredibly free-form.

Chris: I'm going to go for *Call To Power II* purely because I think it has more staying power than any of the games here. I didn't think I would be opting for this one at the start of the Supertest, but like Mark I'm not wild about any of the others. So *Call To Power II* gets my vote, but it's academic, because we all know what the winner is now.

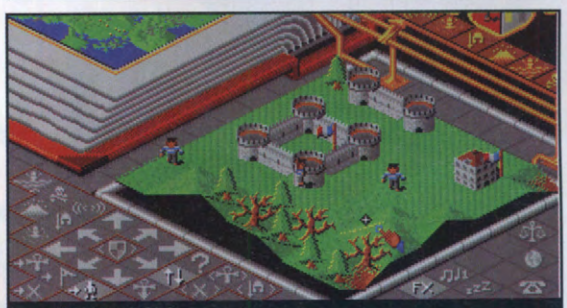
Hands up if you like *Black & White*.

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN...

Since when did you get to play god?

In 1989, Maxis introduced the world to a city management game called *SimCity*. It proved to be very popular very quickly, and paved the way for god games as we know them today. *Populous* arrived on the PC in the same year, but while it undoubtedly displayed some of the elements used in god games today (including *Black & White*) it did not have the heavy resource management of *SimCity* which basically laid down the ground rules for all subsequent god games. The huge popularity of *SimCity* prompted Maxis to try their hand at 'Simming' a lot of other things, with *SimAnt*, *SimEarth* and others proving to be interesting diversions though not as captivating as the original game. *SimCity 3000* is the latest in the series, and while it doesn't compare well to many of today's god games, the series still has the notable distinction of being there first. So there.

They don't make them like this anymore...



...or this, thank God.

SUPERTEST WINNER

Molyneux and Lionhead have done it again...

It's usually fairly obvious even before we start a Supertest which game is going to win. *Half-Life*, for example, is never going to lose to any game in its genre, and neither is *Deus Ex*. *Black & White* has emerged as winner of the god games Supertest, but it was by no means a unanimous decision. It's undoubtedly an excellent game, but it was a very close call between *Black & White* and *Call To Power II*. Overall (*Black & White* excluded), the contenders this month weren't as strong as the collection of games from many previous Supertests, showing that there's still a gap to be exploited in this genre by any publishers who care to come up with a top quality god game.

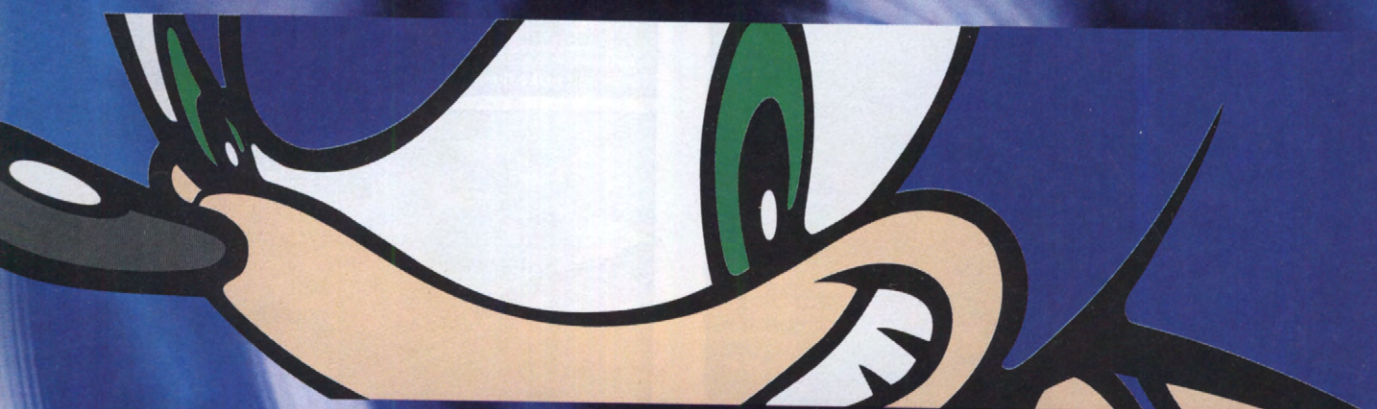
***SimCity 3000* may be the latest title in the series that kicked off the genre, but it's simply not good enough any more to hold its own against serious competition, and we suggest you avoid it. Surprisingly, *The Sims*, which is proving hugely popular as sales of its add-ons demonstrate, proved distinctly unpopular with most of the panel, who felt it was just ultimately too dull to prove enjoyable – approach this one with caution. We can recommend *Call To Power II* and *Zeus* without hesitation, though fans of *Civ 2* and *Caesar III* may find the updates a bit too familiar for their taste. *Black & White* is in a league of its own, and as such we consider it an essential buy if you're a fan of the genre.**

OVERALL WINNER

It's a god game, but with deep strategy elements.

Dreamcast.

THE DESTINY OF OUR CIVILISATION LIES IN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND. WILL YOU SAVE THE WORLD OR CONQUER IT?



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"SEGA WINNERS OF THE EDGE PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR AWARD 2001"

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COMPETITION

WIN A

Haven't got a decent enough PC to run *Operation Flashpoint*? Well here's your chance to win one, you lucky people

Last month we gave away only our eighth *PC ZONE* Classic award in 20 issues to the incredible tactical Cold War squad-based shooter, *Operation Flashpoint*. Of course, you need to have a monster of a machine if you're going to be able to enjoy it in all its glory. So we've teamed up with Codemasters to give you all a chance to win a state-of-the-art PC (similar to the one above), so that you can enjoy *Flashpoint* in the way the developers intended you to.

First prize is an incredible 1GHz AMD Athlon-driven machine, with 128Mb of RAM. The prize also includes a new 64Mb Hercules 3D Prophet III graphics card, courtesy of Guillemot, that will provide you with unbelievable frame-rates, as well as beautifully detailed visuals. With its DVD player, you'll be able to watch all your favourite movies on the excellent 17in Systemax monitor, and to round the package off perfectly, there's a 56K modem, which will allow you to you play all your favourite games online. There are also five copies of *Operation Flashpoint* up for grabs for five lucky runners-up.

All you have to do to enter is read the question below, work out the answer and then write it on a postcard, along with your name, address, email address and telephone number (you can track down clues if you check out the game's website at www.codemasters.com /flashpoint). Then send your answer in to us at *Operation Flashpoint* Compo, *PC ZONE*, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1P 5FF. The closing date is Wednesday 22 August.

QUESTION Which country are the developers of *Operation Flashpoint* based in?

A) Oman
B) Czech Republic
C) Scotland
D) USA

Terms and conditions: only entries with all the questions completed and received before the closing date will be entered into the prize draw. Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply. And all that. Phew!

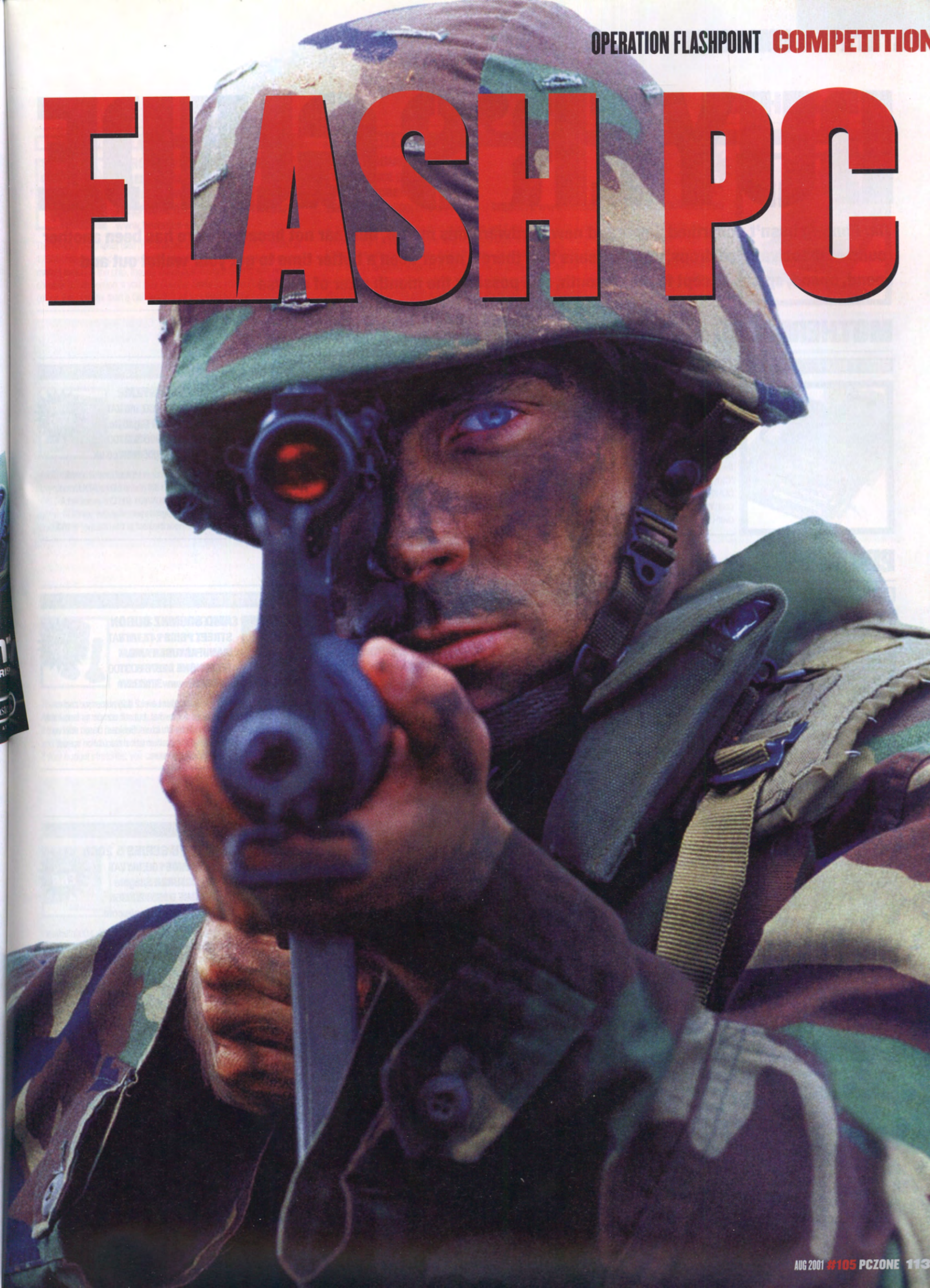
Codemasters®

3D PROPHET III

OPERATION FLASHPOINT™
COLD WAR CRISIS

WIN!

FLASH PC

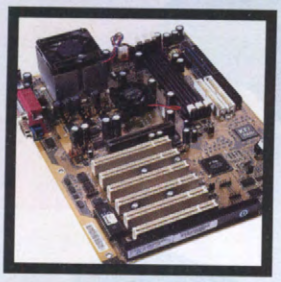


BUYER'S GUIDE

Tim Ponting **hasn't unearthed any brand new hardware this month, but fear not because there has been another round of massive price drops, which means that there's never been a better time to get your wallet out and spend, spend, spend. Except for next month, and possibly the month after of course**

MOTHERBOARD

BEST BUY



ABIT KT-7A RAID
STREET PRICE £130, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Abit
TELEPHONE 01438 741999 **WEBSITE** www.abit.nl/english

~~£147~~ £130

Back in our Christmas Upgrade feature, we recommended the KT-7 RAID from Abit. Since then, there's been an upgrade to the KT-7A RAID. This adds support for 266MHz Front Side Bus (FSB) 'C'-type Athlons. Why are we not recommending next-gen AMD or Intel-based systems with DDR/RAMBUS memory? Because currently, the speed benefits are tiny compared with the extra cost. We like the Abit motherboard for its ATA-100 support (faster hard drive performance) and over-clocking potential. The chipset also has its own fan.

BEST BUDGET

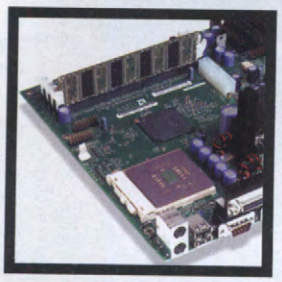
GIGABYTE GA-7ZM
STREET PRICE £60, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Gigabyte
TELEPHONE 01908 362700
WEBSITE www.gbt-tech.co.uk

~~£84~~ £60

This is basically a sawn-off equivalent of our preferred motherboard, utilising the older chipset version (VIA KT133) and in Micro-ATX format – one AGP and three PCI slots. It'll take both Athlon and Duron Socket A processors of varying speeds, so has upgrade potential. I've used GB motherboards for years and found them the best of the cheaper brands.

PROCESSOR

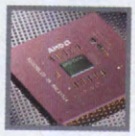
BEST BUY



AMD 1.33GHZ ATHLON
STREET PRICE £168
MANUFACTURER AMD
TELEPHONE 01276 803 100 **WEBSITE** www.amd.com

Just when you thought it was safe to buy a processor, AMD and the vendors selling its chips go totally bananas. You can now buy a 1.33GHz Socket A Athlon for the miserly sum of £168 from Dabs.com. Athlon is still clearly the processor of choice for the gamer, unless you're into spending a fortune on the latest Intel P4/expensive memory. As Athlons over 1GHz are only available only in Socket A configuration, make sure you've got the right motherboard. Bear in mind as well that you'll need to fit a hefty fan to keep the beast cool, and this may not fit too well in your case if the power supply sits over the processor. Why bother to over-clock?

BEST BUDGET



AMD 800MHZ DURON
STREET PRICE £47, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER AMD
TELEPHONE 01276 803100
WEBSITE www.amd.com

~~£53~~ £47

Durons are basically Athlons with smaller Level 2 (L2) processor caches. This reduces overall performance somewhat, but still compares favourably with Intel's ageing Celeron chip cache structure. Besides, Duron still has the blistering Floating Point Unit (FPU) mathematical calculation speed, making it the processor of choice for gamers.

HARD DRIVE

BEST BUY

IBM DESKSTAR 75GXP 30Gb
STREET PRICE £115, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER IBM
TELEPHONE 0800 169 1458 **WEBSITE** www.storage.ibm.com

~~£120~~ £115

I find it hard to believe that you can buy a 30Gb ATA-100 hard drive for less than £120 – particularly one as excellent as IBM's Deskstar 75GXP. Mine sits in the heart of a hard disk recording system for music, which needs fantastic performance and unquestionable reliability, both of which it delivers. It has a rotational speed of 7,200 RPM (faster than some but slower than others – a good compromise between price and performance) and an average seek time of less than 8.5ms. If 30Gb ain't big enough for you, the range extends to a whopping 75Gb, though you'll need around £310 to buy such a beast.

BEST BUDGET

SEAGATE U SERIES 5 20Gb
STREET PRICE £66, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Seagate
TELEPHONE 01628 890366
WEBSITE www.seagate.com

~~£70~~ £66

It's tough these days finding a drive that doesn't offer an ATA-100 interface – in fact, all the decent ATA-66 drives cost more than their ATA-100 equivalents! Seagate's fabulous ATA-100 U Series 5 drives redefine budget performance, featuring 5,400 RPM platters with a sub-9ms seek time. The 20Gb drive is a good compromise between price and capacity.

MONITOR

BEST BUY

IIYAMA VISION MASTER PRO 510 22in
STREET PRICE £720
MANUFACTURER iiyama
TELEPHONE 01438 745482 **WEBSITE** www.iiyama.co.uk

I've been a devotee of iiyama products for years – both my monitors at home are iiyamas, both are comparatively old, yet as good as new. The Vision Master Pro 510 has a stunning 22in screen (albeit with only around 20in of it visible). The tube is a Mitsubishi Diamondtron NF (Natural Flat), arguably the best-performing flat-screen CRT for the money currently available. Of all the large-screen monitors we've come across recently, it's the best all-rounder, with a tight focus right to the screen corners and fabulous colour purity. It also features iiyama's own Anti-Glare coating, and a maximum resolution of 2048x1536.

BEST BUDGET

HANSOL 710P 17in
STREET PRICE £160, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hansol
TELEPHONE 01252 360400
WEBSITE www.hansol-uk.com

For the budget-conscious gamer in need of a monitor, Hansol is a company well worth a look. There is nothing naff at all about the 710P – yet it still has a fabulously low price for the specification. It will handle 1024x768 with a vertical refresh rate of 85Hz, and 1600x1200 at a creditable 75Hz. For the money there's not a lot that'll touch this.

GRAPHICS CARD

BEST BUDGET

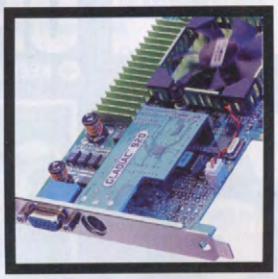
HERCULES 3D PROPHET 4500
STREET PRICE £110, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hercules
TELEPHONE 020 8686 5600 **WEBSITE** www.hercules-uk.com

The new Kyro II chipset (see p110) blows away its slower Kyro brethren at 175MHz clock speed as opposed to 115MHz. The 4500 is the first card to market featuring the chip, though VideoLogic is close behind with an even cheaper 32Mb version. If you play *Counter-Strike* at 1024x768 in 32-bit colour, this is faster than a GeForce3... at less than half the price...

BEST BUY

ELSA GLADIAC 920
~~£350~~ £286
STREET PRICE £286, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Elsa
TELEPHONE (0800) 056 3445 **WEBSITE** www.elsa.de/international/uk/index.htm

At last this card that's been Best Buy for the last three months is now available to buy. We've finally, finally, reviewed it (p110) and with the new NVIDIA drivers, it kicks ass. The 32-bit colour performance is cool, the FSAA (full scene anti-aliasing) is blinding, and it's got all the nifty DX8 features you could want. We love it, and its price has dropped a full 50 nicker from the proposed price. It's the first card to support the sexier features of DirectX 8.0. Elsa's Gladiac features an S-Video socket for output to TV – a hell of a lot more useful than you'd think and comes with a full, specially enhanced version of *Giants: Citizen Kabuto*.



SOUND CARD

BEST BUDGET

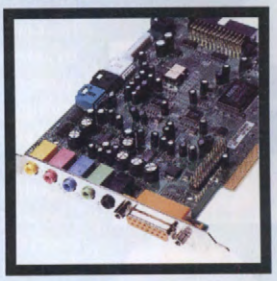
SOUNDBLASTER PCI512
STREET PRICE £45, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
TELEPHONE 01189 344322
WEBSITE www.soundblaster.com

As Creative's SoundBlaster Live! reaches the end of its shelf life, the company has released a cut-down version featuring the same chipset – the SoundBlaster PCI512. Providing all the bells and whistles required by gamers, this cheaper card represents superb value for money while still supporting DirectSound 3D acceleration and Environmental Audio (EAX).

BEST BUY

VIDEOLOGIC SONICFURY
STREET PRICE £60-75, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER VideoLogic
TELEPHONE 01923 277488 **WEBSITE** www.videologic.com

VideoLogic's SonicFury was the first sound card to utilise the super-efficient Crystal CS4630 chipset, and is still the best value for money. What's so special about it? The chipset, known as SoundFusion, is a multi-purpose Digital Signal Processor (DSP) that can be reprogrammed in software depending on the function it's being used to accelerate. As a result, it can give hardware support for up to 96 streams of DirectSound 3D audio, more than enough for today's crop of games. If you hunt around, you can also find an OEM version of the card on sale with no software bundle – a bargain at under £60.



SPEAKERS

BEST BUDGET

ALTEC LANSING ATP3
STREET PRICE £75
MANUFACTURER Altec Lansing
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.alteclansing.com

The only other multimedia speaker company we've ever had time for is Altec Lansing, whose decently priced products never fail to impress, even if they lack the hi-fi credentials of VideoLogic products. The ATP3 is a sub and two sat combination that delivers a typically meaty, crisp Altec sound. If your budget stretches, you can try the ATP5 for 4.1 gaming.

BEST BUY

VIDEOLOGIC SIROCCO CROSSFIRE
STREET PRICE £210, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER VideoLogic
TELEPHONE 01923 277488 **WEBSITE** www.videologic.com

Quite how many times this speaker set is going to appear in the *ZONE* halls of fame I'm not sure, but it shows no sign of being eclipsed in terms of quality for 4.1 gaming. By 4.1 we mean, front left and right and rear left and right satellite speakers, coupled with a big meaty subwoofer. The fact that this speaker set is rated at 100W RMS doesn't sound that impressive – but when you consider that you can crank the dial around 80 per cent of the way before they start to distort, you'll understand our fondness for these. And with 1000W Peak Mean Power Output on tap, the loud bits are, um, really flipping loud.

CDRW DRIVES

BEST BUDGET

TEAC CDW58EK 8X8X32
STREET PRICE £87, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Teac
TELEPHONE 01923 225 235 **WEBSITE** www.teac.co.uk

I've just had to buy a load of CD/RW drives and these Teac drives were dead cheap, easy to install and have worked without hitch. Bearing in mind my first CD-RW drive cost me well over £250 and was flaky and slow, these babies are a good deal. Make sure you shop around and you're laughing all the way to dubiously legal compilations...

BEST BUY

PLEXTOR 16/10/40A
STREET PRICE £149, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Plextor
TELEPHONE +32 2 725 5522 **WEBSITE** www.plextor.com

Another one of those hardware recommendations based on experience. We've been running Plextor CDs, DVDs and CD-Rs for years in our machines, both at home and at work, and they're a) bulletproof and b) fast as anything you'll get within a few quid of the asking price. This is a brand new drive that is dead fast, offers Sanyo Burnproof technology and is competitively priced alongside some good contenders from Yamaha and Mirai. It comes with WinOnCD (nowhere near as good as Nero but proven) and offers CD-R, CD-RW and fast CD-Read performance. I'd upgrade, but my ancient SCSI 6x Plextor CD-R still cuts the mustard – three years on...

MOUSE

BEST BUDGET

MICROSOFT USB INTELLIMOUSE
STREET PRICE £15, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100
WEBSITE www. microsoft.com/products/hardware/mouse/intellimouse.htm

The basic USB Intellimouse is one of the finest control devices ever produced – accurate, comfortable to use and, above all, cheap. In fact, all the fancy mice Microsoft has produced since then are deeply inferior for gaming in our opinion, mainly due to shape and button positioning.

BEST BUY

RAZER BOOMSLANG 2000
STREET PRICE £70, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Labtec
TELEPHONE 01256 386000 **WEBSITE** www.razerzone.com, www.labtec.com

These fabulous über-mice have been the instrument of death for the *Quake* elite for a couple of years now. During this time, the only way you could get your hands on one was to import it from the US and pay a premium, as you couldn't actually buy them in this country. But now all this has changed, thanks to Labtec picking up the hardware. OK, so it is rather expensive and it also takes quite a bit of getting used to, but if you're looking for a real lift to your gaming, then the Razer Boomslang 2000 is the only way to go.

TROUBLESHOOTER

NAUGHTY OR NICE?

KEEPING IT EVIL Rhianna Pratchett

Found out whether you're naughty or nice yet? If you're still having doubts, then our *Black & White* Strategy Guide – Part One (on page 119) will point you in whichever godly direction you like. But let's face it, *Dungeon Keeper* taught us back in 1997 that it was much more fun to be evil. You get the best lines, the best costumes and you never have to assume a heroic stance which makes your nipples look like they're trying to make a bid for freedom.

If you're bored playing with bovines, apes and hyperactive pussy cats then take a look at Extended Play on page 142, which gives you everything you could possibly wish for to add some colour to your *Black & White* world, including new maps, utilities and creatures. I'd also like to take the opportunity to hereby ban all 'spanking the monkey' jokes on the grounds that the hilarity of it all makes me lose consciousness.

IN TRUBS THIS MONTH...

116 CHEAT MASTER
Every cheat's best friend, Keith Pullin, does his best to help you get ahead.

117 DEAR KEITH
Uncle Keith comes up with the answers to all your gaming gripes.

119 BLACK & WHITE STRATEGY GUIDE
Find out whether you should play as good or evil in Part One of our *B&W* Strategy Guide. Next month we show you how to look after your creature.

122 DEAR WANDY
Need to find a solution to a niggling technical pain? Wandy is here to help.

124 WATCHDOG
Have you got a problem with a company? Let us know and we'll get Adam Phillips to sort 'em out for you.

YOUR HOSTS

Adam Phillips

Keith Pullin

Phil Wand

CHEATMAS

When you're down and out there's only one thing to do – cheat

HELPING THE LOST Keith Pullin

NEED HELP?

If your problems persist, you can solve them if you...

WRITE TO Dear Keith/Cheat Master, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with **Dear Keith** or **Cheat Master** in the subject line

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO
Interplay

In issue 100 we printed a few codes for this, and now here's the rest. During gameplay press the 'T' or 'Y' button and enter the following codes:

basegoveryfast	Builds up your base very quickly
Fr	Show frame-rate

We've also discovered that you can play as naked Sea Reapers. All you have to do is enter the 'bin' folder in the game directory and move the 'arpfix.gzp' file to another location. When you're done drooling, you can return the game to normal by moving the file back to its proper place. Easy huh?

He's really a big softie underneath.

SERIOUS SAM
Take 2 Interactive

Press F1 to bring up the console window. Type a code then press Enter followed by F1 to activate.

cht_bGod	God mode
cht_bGiveAll	All weapons
cht_bGhost	No clipping
cht_bFly	Flight mode
cht_bInvisible	Invisibility
cht_bRefresh	Full health

SUPERBIKE 2001
EA Sports

Here's a few throbbing codes to get your teeth into...

- **For a faster bike type 'EAPOWER' as your name.**
- **For extra grip and better cornering type 'GRIPPY' as your name.**
- **For extra braking power type 'STOPPY' as your name.**
- **For enormous body parts (that's head, hands etc) type 'LAGUNA' as your name.**

TROPICO
Gathering Of Developers

Hold 'Ctrl' while you type the following codes. To repeat cheat release 'Ctrl' and retype.

Pesos	Add $20,000
Contento	Increase Happiness by 10

STAR TREK: AWAY TEAM
Interplay

Type these codes during a mission:

Cheater	Activate cheat mode
Medic	Heal your team
Iwin	Win the mission

STAR WARS: BATTLE FOR NABOO
Activision

Go to Options/Passcodes and use these codes. If the code has been accepted you will hear a click.

LFZWKXAA	Infinite lives
JHGNRGAS	Access all levels
ABVUSEAY	Heat-seeking secondary fire
CXSJMIAA	One-shot kill
NIZWAGAO	Unlock all Naboo ships
ADJJCCAY	Wave pool effect for water levels
DIWMZIAR	Show credits
EOWXZGAS	Team photo
FMRYLDAD	Dark side level
FJJCUAAC	Cluster seeker missiles

STUPID COMPETITION

Where cheating and pointlessness are qualities to be admired

So you fancy yourself as a bit of a cheat master do you? Well, here's your chance to prove it by entering our Stupid Compo. All you have to do to enter is send us your most pointless cheats. If we think your cheat is stupid enough, we'll not only print it and your name, we'll also send you the most ridiculous prize we can find in the *PC ZONE* prize cupboard. What more incentive do you need?

Please send your cheats, with the title Stupid Compo, a brief description of what they (allegedly) do, along with your name and address, to letters@pczone.co.uk. **Make sure you include all your correct details, so if you win we know where to send your special prize. A big pat on the back to David Proctor of Holtby, who is this month's lucky winner. David's cheat makes your units sing to themselves in *Total Annihilation*. In order to activate your metallic divas, press 'Enter' to bring up the chat screen then type '+sing' and then hit 'Enter' again to activiate it. David, the lucky, lucky guy, wins a packet of *German Settler's IV* Pasta. In just 10 minutes, if our German translation is correct, he could be snacking on these little pasta piggies or alternatively they'd make a lovely necklace for a beloved relative.**

STER

FRBPTDAY	Sith infiltrator
HRDTOKIL	Advanced shields
JOBXXFAI	Art gallery
NASTYMDE	Difficulty setting
RECTVBAH	Concert hall
RQORACAQ	Access AAT
UYCZNCAX	Double secondary weapon
XFIIYBAY	Swamp speeder

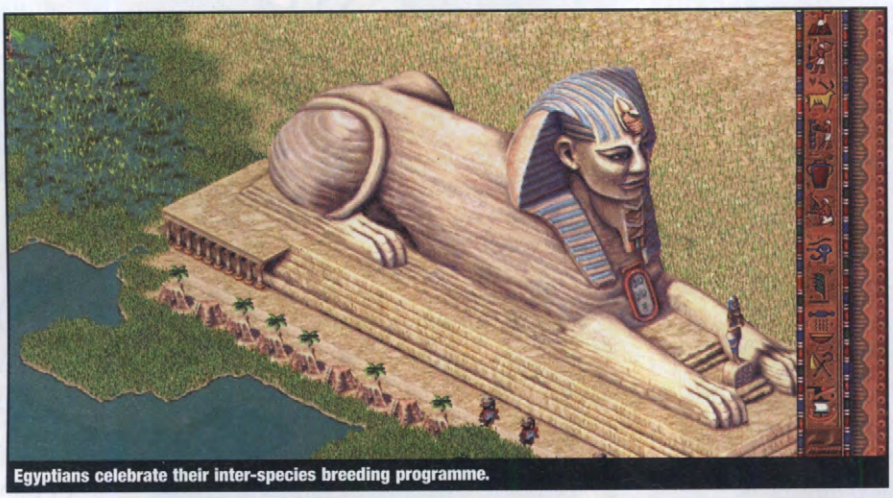
the *Pharoah* Expansion Pack cheats we covered last month. Simply press and hold 'Ctrl, Alt, Shift and C' during the game and type them in…

Noble Djed	Shipwrights, weavers, and jewellers fully stocked. Ptah must be worshipped
Pharoah Tomb	Automatically win current scenario
Fury of Seth	Destroy all military ships
mockattack1	Enemy army attacks your city by land
Bird of Prey	Trade partners trade less for a year. Ra must be worshipped
Kitty Litter	Plague strikes the city. Bast must be worshipped
Mummys Curse	Next inundation worse than expected. Osiris must be worshipped
Pharoah	The amount the city can export increases by 50 per cent a year. Ra must be worshipped
Supreme Craftsman	Fill a storage yard with excess capacity. Ptah must be worshipped
Typhonian Relief	Protect soldiers sent to distant lands. Seth must be worshipped
Cat Nip	Houses and bazaars full of goods. Bast must be worshipped
mockattack2	Enemy army attacks your city by sea
Seth Strikes	Destroy the city's best company and their fort. Seth must be worshipped
Side Show	Create hippos. Hippos must already be present on your map for this cheat to work
Life From Death	Farms on flood plain will harvest double after next flood. Osiris must be worshipped
Underworld	Farms on the flood plain destroyed by next flood. Osiris must be worshipped
Big Dave	Ptah destroys some industrial buildings. Ptah must be worshipped
Grenow	Ptah destroys one of your city's storage yards. Ptah must be worshipped
Spirit of Typhon	Seth strikes down some of the next invaders. Seth must be worshipped
Meow	Throw a party for all gods except Bast. Bast must be worshipped

PHAROAH
Sierra

Two cheats really for this one. First, using Windows Explorer find the Pharoah_Model_Normal.txt **file. Right click on the icon and select 'properties'. Uncheck the 'read only' box and then click 'OK'. Now, open the file using Notepad, read the instructions contained within and edit anything you like. Save the file, and finally reset it as 'read only' again before going back to the game.**

Next up we have these straightforward codes. These are entered in the same way as



Egyptians celebrate their inter-species breeding programme.

SUMMONER
THQ

To shorten spell-casting time go to the menu inventory screen after you have cast a spell. Then just return to the game and the spell will instantly take effect. PCZ

DEAR KEITH

***Keith Pullin* aims to put a stop to your gaming blues**

I AIN'T NO JOHN WAYNE

Q I keep getting caught at the end of the third level on *Desperados*. I really can't seem to rescue Doc without being seen. There are so many enemies wandering about near the gallows that it's just impossible to sneak past them. I really am desperate – could you give me a quick solution to this part please?

Dave Robson, Clapham

A **This is such a tricky part of the game. Sadly I can't tell you too much either because it's really a case of running around meticulously knocking off anyone who gets in the way. Split Sam and John up though – use one of them to kill the bandits on one side of town, and the other to cause havoc elsewhere. One thing's for sure: it's usually best to have Sam on the south side so he can blow up the wagon.**

MASTER AND SERVANT

Q Why is it that when I reach a population of 3,000 in *Zeus: Master Of Olympus* all my workers decide to piss off leaving my city in tatters? This has happened to me about ten times now and I just don't understand it. Please, please tell me what to do, it's driving me to tears.

Samantha Rose, email

A **Er, dunno really Sam – that sounds very odd indeed. All I can think of is the usual things: not enough food, tax too high, wages too low… *Zeus* is more about making sure your economy is sound rather than your buildings, so concentrate on that side of the game for a while and see what happens.**

JOHNNY CASH

Q I need loadsamoney for *Fallout Tactics: Brotherhood Of Steel*. I can't tell you what for because it's a secret. However, if you let me know the cheat I might tell you what my cunning plan is…

Jon Butler, email

A **OK, you ready? Go to the recruiter in a Brotherhood base. Recruit team members and then exit the recruit screen. Now take the armour off the new characters and give their stuff to your squad leader. Go back to the recruiter and remove the new recruits. Do it again for other new recruits and more armour. After you leave the recruiter the grunts you removed will reset – this means you can do it all over again. Repeat the whole process until you have as much stuff as you can carry then go see the quartermaster and sell it all for large sums of money.**

Duck and dive to avoid this chap.

ALICE IN CHAINS

Q I purchased a copy of *Alice* a few months back and I am nearly at the end of the game now. Unfortunately I'm on the first part of the last level named Royal Rage and I can't beat the big green metal bird thing. I have tried everything but his fire blasts are destroying me. Please help me out – I must be doing something wrong.

Rej Singh Rehal, London

A **All you have to do is get the timing right. If you watch the fireballs closely you will notice that they are shot out at set times; if you can work out the pattern, dodge and then get your shots in, you're pretty much there already.**

TRIBAL GATHERING

Q What is the best type of armour to go for in *Tribes 2* if I want to pilot vehicles and have pretty good firepower and protection when I'm on the ground?

George Forehouse, Lincoln

A **Assault armour is easily the best all-round protection and you can pilot pretty much anything while wearing it. It also allows you to move at medium speed and if you arm yourself with a Plasma rifle or machine gun, you shouldn't have too many problems.**

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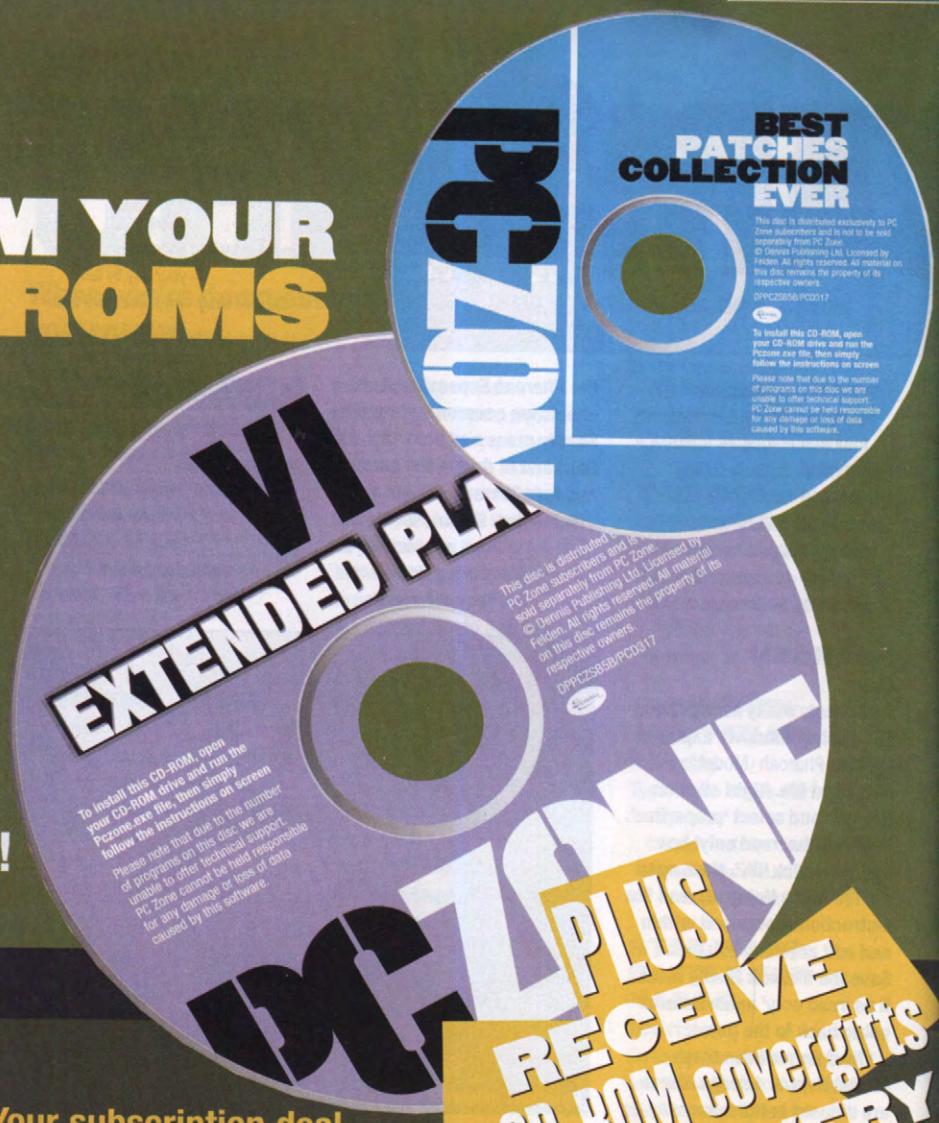

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BLACK & WHITE

STRATEGY GUIDE PART 1

Are you on the side of good or evil? *Keith Pullin* explains how to be both

THE MASTER Keith Pullen

Part one of our guide to *Black & White* explains the differences between being good and evil. Hopefully it will allow you to improve your alignment, for better or worse, and help you understand a bit more of the game. Here goes.

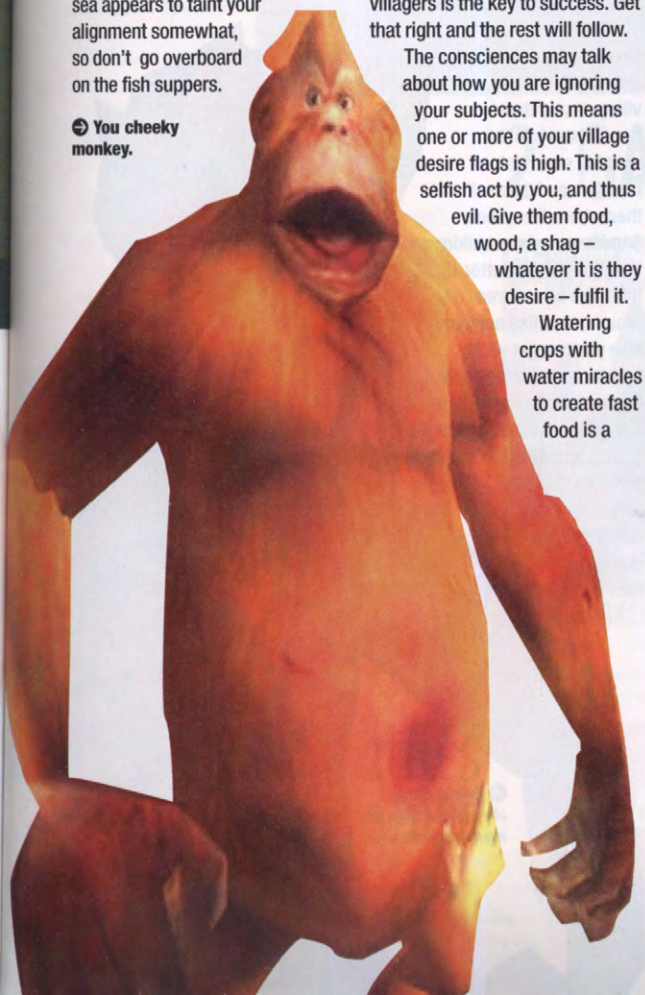
GOOD?

Teacher's pet, golden boy, butter wouldn't melt in your mouth. Let the goodness flow…

MAKE LOVE NOT WAR

Being good means being nice… to everything.

Don't kill any living being whether it's animal, vegetable or human. Knocking-off any of the other gods and their creatures is evil. Even enjoying the fruits of the sea appears to taint your alignment somewhat, so don't go overboard on the fish suppers.



You cheeky monkey.

Also don't destroy entire forests when expanding, leave a few trees so that the forest can replenish itself. Generally speaking *Black & White* looks favourably upon those who nurture and protect the land.

Water saplings to make them grow.

FLAGGING DOWN HELP

Understanding desire flags and villagers is the key to success. Get that right and the rest will follow.

The consciences may talk about how you are ignoring your subjects. This means one or more of your village desire flags is high. This is a selfish act by you, and thus evil. Give them food, wood, a shag – whatever it is they desire – fulfil it.

Watering crops with water miracles to create fast food is a simple and effective way to satisfy one requirement, and be a goody-two-shoes. But there is a downside. If excess food is produced the villagers start breeding more and then want more wood to expand, after which they want more food to feed everyone… and then more babies, and, well you get the idea.

Don't just think you can simply remove food from the store to level things up either. This is classed as an evil act, even if you give the food to another village.

The trick is to find the right balance. When you get that right you've mastered the art of micro-managing a large village.

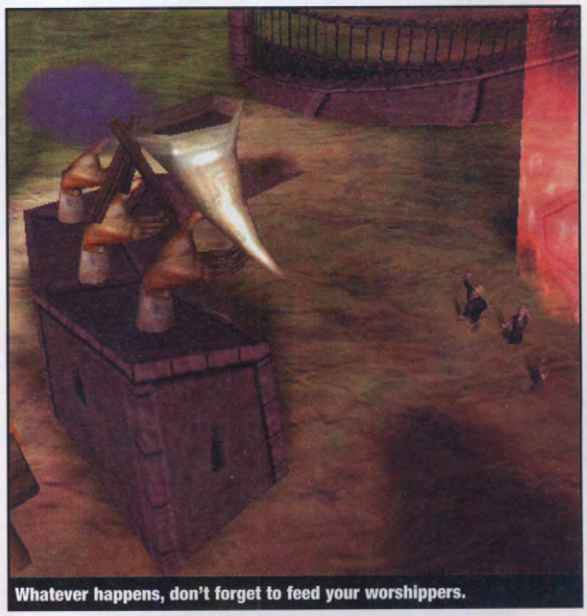
Keep your villagers happy.

Don't overbreed.

PEACEFUL IMPRESSIONS

You don't have to bully other villages – diplomacy works just as well.

Sending wood traders and missionaries to villages not directly under your control is a non-aggressive way to make friends and influence people. The missionaries are especially useful as they remain in neutral and enemy towns converting the locals with lies and cheap propaganda… but in a nice way, of course.



Whatever happens, don't forget to feed your worshippers.

And you can also be very nice when it comes to solving the silver scroll quests. Save loads of drowning children, help dying lepers and the rest of the less fortunate inhabitants of Eden. However, if a silver scroll quest appears to be evil regardless of the outcome don't even attempt it.

IT'S A MIRACLE!

Pleasant and helpful miracles only here, aggressive behaviour is simply not on.

Nature miracles, wood miracles, food miracles and flock of bird miracles impress people. Cast these instead of the more destructive forces on offer.

Use protection miracles if another creature or god attacks you. Spiritual and physical shields are impressive, completely non-aggressive and fend off attacks brilliantly. There's simply no need to retaliate with fireball, lightning, megablast or storm miracles. These are considered weapons of destruction and you guessed it, they are pure evil.

Spiritual and physical protection is always preferable to attack.

WORSHIP SITE

The worship site is the engine room of your domain, so keep it well oiled.

Never sacrifice animals or humans at the worship site. Let your worshippers increase your prayer power by dancing instead. If you are absolutely desperate for energy sacrifice a couple of trees, but not too many – sacrifice is basically evil.

Don't let villagers die of natural causes at the worship site either. Feed them and heal them regularly. If any are about to die from fatigue or old age then drop them into a house to recuperate.

Crush, kill, destroy, and even make them wash your socks if you want to be pure evil.

Dish out some fire for maximum evil impact.

Boom! Another one bites the dust.

EVIL?

So you think you're bad? Think again. This is bad…

GET LOST YOU FREAKS

Moan, moan, moan. That's all your villagers ever do.

Let your villagers' desires go unheeded. Don't feed them. Don't let them expand. Don't give them wood and definitely don't let them have sex. Villagers eventually learn how to fend for themselves in a very basic way so they'll be OK, and there are other things for you to worry about anyway, like making sure your creature passes his evil GCSEs.

Actually a good way to reduce the amount of food and keep your creature evil is to teach him to eat ripe village crops. If there are no crops available then teach him to eat the local livestock; and if there are no animals? Yep, humans make great snacks.

To really piss the little people off throw mushrooms or shit into the village store to mess their food up. This also works well on enemy villages, and it's also a great parting shot if you're about to be taken over.

Dinner round your place? No thanks.

TARGETED FOR TERMINATION

Being evil means killing and hurting things, so go to it my ferocious friends.

Kill, abuse and torture anything you see. Setting fire to people in crowded areas and throwing them across the landscape seems to go down particularly well. In fact, throwing rocks around is pure destructive joy and increases your evil alignment no end. This kind of activity is especially useful when it comes to taking over villages. Unfortunately, impressing villages this way means you've got a lot of cleaning up to do once the village has been conquered.

A hot new dance craze sweeps the nation.

GETTING WOOD

Wood is a valuable resource and easy to misuse.

Place trees straight into the village workshop when expanding. If possible try to use every single tree there is. This is a quick and effective way to complete deforestation. Setting fire to forests also works of course – and is even necessary when it's providing wood for another god.

Destroy forests so nobody else can use them.

HELLO BIG BOY

Here's how to retain your creature's antisocial behaviour.

Forget house training. Let him poo wherever he likes. In fact, try and get him to crap in the busiest place possible; the more people that are offended by the stench and mess the better.

Get your creature into as many battles as possible and use as many miracles as you can during the fight. If possible fight in and around towns to cause maximum destruction and devastation.

Creatures learn something new from every fight.

THE MIRACLE OF FIRE

Fire is powerful and evil, just what we need.

Impress other villages by using offensive spells like storm, lightning and fireball. Basically, throughout the entire game try to only use offensive spells. The only exception is when your towns or creature are being attacked. Under these circumstances you can use a physical and spiritual shield, or you can heal your creature, but don't do it too much or you might turn good.

LET YOUR IMAGINATION RUN WILD

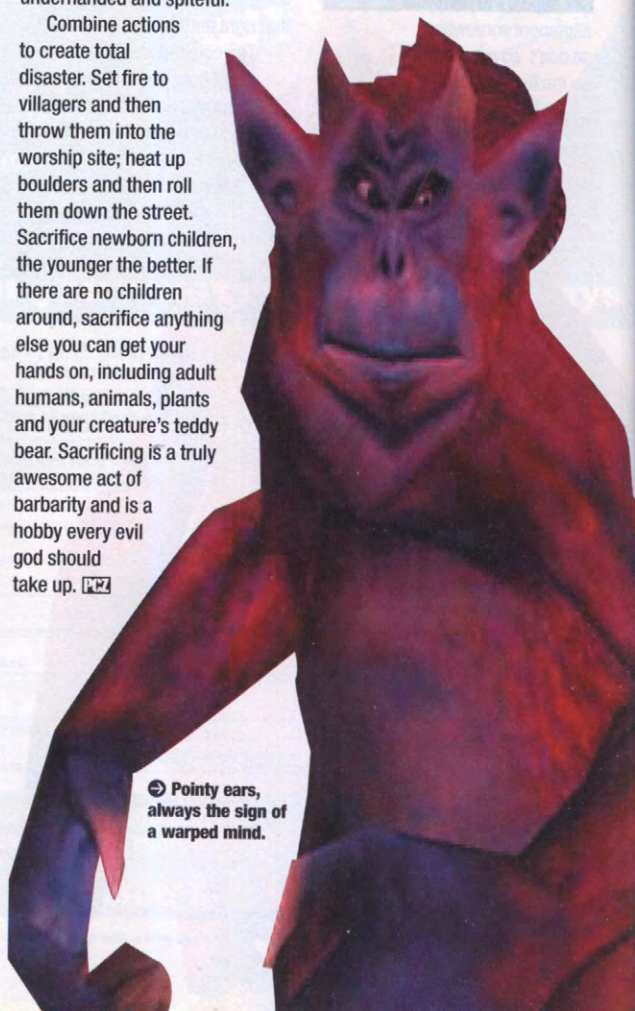
Don't be just bad. Be devious, underhanded and spiteful.

Combine actions to create total disaster. Set fire to villagers and then throw them into the worship site; heat up boulders and then roll them down the street. Sacrifice newborn children, the younger the better. If there are no children around, sacrifice anything else you can get your hands on, including adult humans, animals, plants and your creature's teddy bear. Sacrificing is a truly awesome act of barbarity and is a hobby every evil god should take up. PM

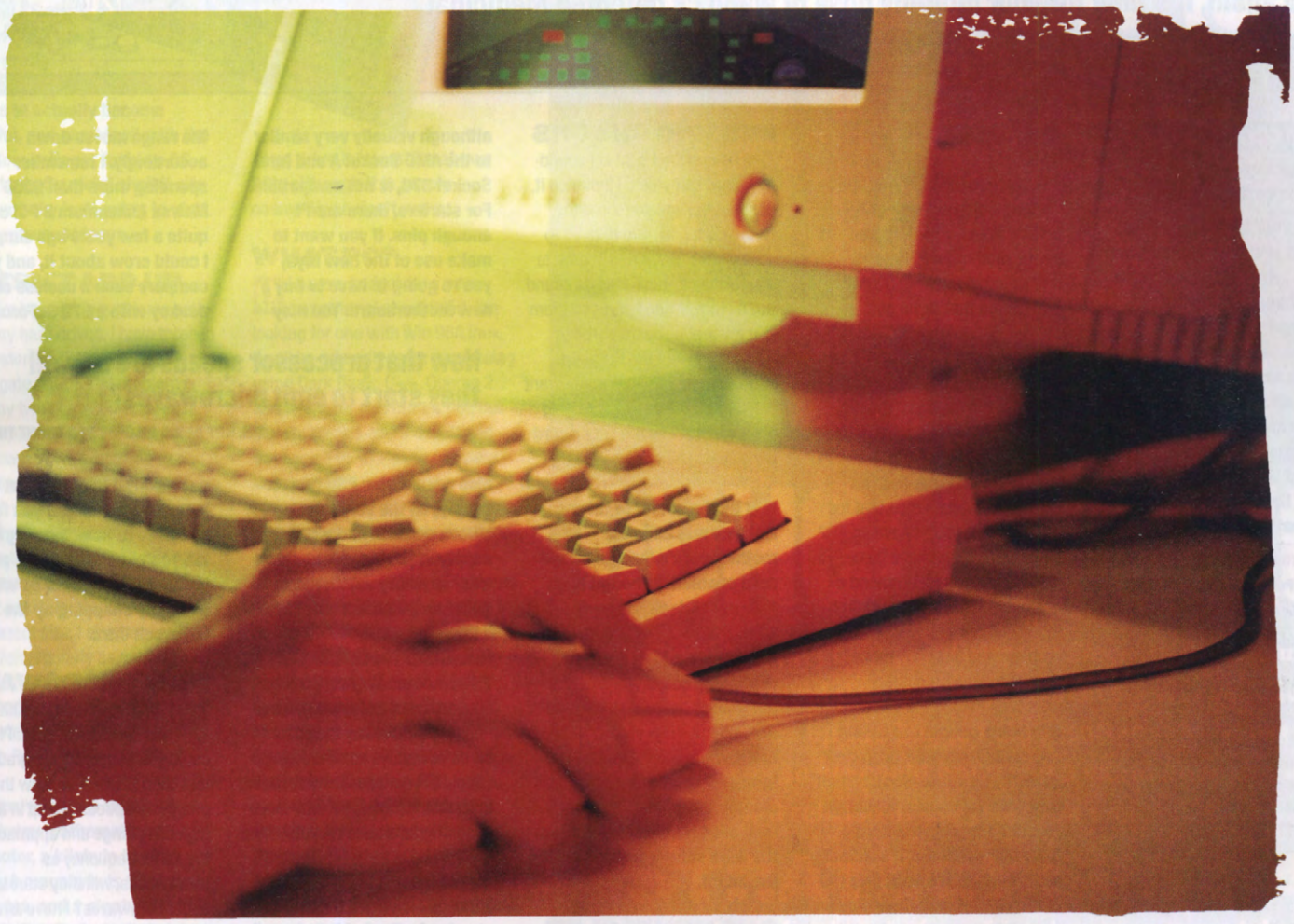
NEXT MONTH

So what's next?

Not having much luck with your ape? Is your cow playing up? Well fear not, as next month we'll show you how to house train your pet and turn them into the ultimate warrior. So make sure you don't miss it. OK?

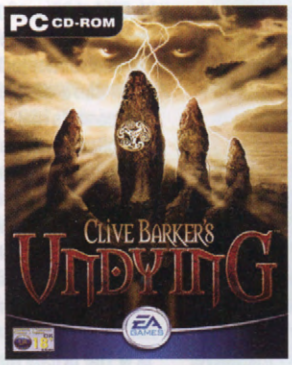

Pointy ears, always the sign of a warped mind.

SOME PEOPLE THINK THEY'RE JUST GAMES
WE THINK DIFFERENTLY



2 GAMES FOR £30

SHOGUN TOTAL WAR



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Please note: while we can assure you that we read every techie query sent to us, we are unable to offer personal replies. Also, please do not phone. Thanks.

PCI PLEASE

Q I own an ageing Hewlett Packard BRIO BA550 which came bundled with integrated Matrox MGA G200 8MB graphics on the motherboard. After upgrading the RAM to 300MB, I have found that some games – *Project IGI* for example – have triangles of missing textures all over the outdoor levels. I downloaded the latest drivers, which still did not work. Then, after purchasing a TNT2 AGP card and finding it doesn't fit, I've come to the conclusion that for some reason I don't have an AGP slot. I do however have three PCI slots. Could you recommend a cheap but decent PCI card that might solve this annoying problem and basically make everything run smoother?

Paul Whittemore

A Many people are falling foul of the 'AGP Graphics' label that is often plastered all over new machines. Although the machine might actually *have* AGP graphics, it's actually something that's built into the motherboard, and thus is not something you can actually use. This problem is often compounded by high street salesmen who don't understand the technology. You don't say how much you want to spend, but in the £100 bracket you could go for the 3dfx Voodoo 4 4500 PCI, the NVIDIA GeForce MX PCI or one of the 32Mb ATI RADEON cards.

The 32Mb ATI RADEON cards still support PCI.

MISSING CHOONS

Q I purchased a 32-bit sound card last week. I installed it, plugged the speakers into the sound card port, and relaxed to some tunes. But when I came to play *Quake III* there was no sound. Not a chirp. When I plugged them into my motherboard port it worked fine, but the CD audio simply would not play. So if I want to listen to music, I have to plug my speakers into the sound card port. Please help.

RJ Haworth

A By the sound of things, you still have the motherboard's built-in sound card enabled. Although it is fully possible to run multiple sound devices, it's often more trouble than it's worth – especially when you have to get games to use the correct one. Check with your motherboard manual for a jumper link, which should disable the built-in card. You may even be able to do it from the BIOS screen without taking the lid off.

ONE IN THE SLOT

Q I was recently browsing the Internet for CPU prices when I came across a very interesting piece of information. I found a Slot A converter, allowing Athlons and Durons to be placed on motherboards not designed to accept them. My current computer is an AMD K6-2 500 with 196MB RAM and we are looking to upgrade some time later this year. Do you know if the converter would work well?

Chris Brundell

A The Slot A converters are designed for people with Athlon Slot A motherboards to be able to use one of the newer Socket-based Durons or Thunderbird. Having said that, such converters are usually specific to a particular motherboard, and still require the board's BIOS to recognise and support the newer chip. So an adapter might not help. Unfortunately, the AMD K6-2 you have in your existing set-up is a Socket 7 chip, which although visually very similar to the AMD Socket A and Intel Socket 370, is not compatible. For starters, there aren't enough pins. If you want to make use of the new toys, you're going to have to buy a new motherboard. You may also need a new PSU (power supply) as the very latest silicon engines like a good supply of juice and I wouldn't trust anything smaller than 300W on an Athlon machine.

> **"Now that processor speeds are up, will they start to emit microwaves?"**
>
> **MG, NOT BEING AS DAFT YOU MIGHT THINK**

BLEEDING EDGE

Q Since reading the 3D card article in last month's issue, I'm a bit shocked by the cost of cards nowadays compared to a couple of years back. I'm referring to NVIDIA in particular, who since acquiring 3dfx have rocketed their prices. I have a Voodoo3 card in my PIII 450MHz machine, and although I have had it for a couple of years, it still does the job. I have been waiting for the jump in technology in cards, which NVIDIA provides with the nfiniteFX engine, but if they think that's justification for £400 then how come the Xbox, which supposedly contains better technology, will be less? Can a video card's components really be more complicated than a CPU and motherboard combined? I reckon not. I just hope ATI or any other major card manufacturer can provide stiff enough competition to provide the consumer with the right choice at the right price.

Afaq Elahi

A The prices may seem a bit steep, but they're not really climbing due to lack of competition. The video card market is quite like the processor market. The top of the range always comes in with a breathtakingly large price tag swinging from it, as both supply and demand are initially short. Soon after, though, every other card in the range moves down accordingly. I remember spending more than £200 on a Matrox Millennium II PCI card quite a few years ago simply so I could crow about it, and yet compare such a useless old donkey with a £79 GeForce card today. I think you get the idea. Quite frankly, if you feel you have to have the very latest kit, you're going to pay a price premium. The rest of us will be happy snapping up the GeForce2 Ultra.

1GHZ MICROWAVE

Q I have an AOpen PA3000 Plus Nvidia Riva TNT m64. Please could you suggest an upgrade for less than £200? Also, now that processor speeds are up in the gigahertz range and approaching the same frequency as microwaves, will they start to emit microwaves? I have an AMD Athlon 800MHz, 256MB RAM.

MG

A It's actually quite surprising how well the old cards hold up when they have a monster processor pushing things along – after all, the original idea of accelerated video was to reduce the load on the CPU. We have several machines here with moth-eaten 3dfx Voodoo3 cards, and even though these chaps are getting rather long in the tooth, when combined with an over-clocked Pentium IV they get a whole new lease of life. Anyone with £200 to spend and an AGP slot free would be best to go for an NVIDIA GeForce2 or ATI RADEON-based card.

On the subject of PC emissions, it's actually not quite as daft a question as some might think. Due to the square signals produced by digital equipment, fast machines produce a huge array of radio data (i.e. harmonics) above and beyond the

Could your computer cook you dinner? That would be nice.

frequency of the original PC clock. Microwaves need some pretty carefully designed wave guides to actually become harmful, and combined with the ultra low voltages inside a PC, plus the hefty metal shell it sits in, your baby isn't going to start cooking your kidneys.

DOESN'T ADD UP

Q I'm having big problems with my hard drives. I have three in my system (533Mb, IBM 4.2Gb, and a Seagate 40Gb). The problem is that my two biggest drives are not displaying their full size in Windows: the 4.2Gb says that it is a 3.92Gb, and the 40Gb is showing as 37.2Gb. I only put the 40Gb in two days ago and have not put anything on it yet. I've used FDISK and have formatted it and changed it over to FAT32 but it simply will not display the correct size. I also have to run Scandisk regularly as my 4.2Gb displays its free space incorrectly. I am running a Duron 700 on a Gigabyte GA-71EX4 board with 128Mb RAM. Can you help?

Lee Cole

A Lee, you are a victim of dodgy mathematics. To a computer, a kilobyte is 1024 bytes. A megabyte is 1024 kilobytes, and a gigabyte is 1024 megabytes. So 1 gigabyte is 1024x1024x1024 bytes, or 1073741824. Unfortunately, this isn't a very nice number, and as 1024 is pretty close to 1000, most manufacturers do the simple maths instead of the accurate maths. Of course, a side effect is that it makes their drives look bigger. Your 4.2Gb drive will store at least 4,200,000,000 bytes, but when the computer uses the accurate 1024-based maths, it looks smaller. You don't say which version of Windows you have, but I suspect it's either 95 or 98. Both of these have trouble displaying large drive information above 2Gb, although it is purely cosmetic, so don't worry.

WHAT PC?

Q I have a budget for a new computer of about £650. I'm looking for one with Win 98/Linux. It will be primarily for programming using Dark Basic, C++, Oberan 2 and whatever else comes out, but also for games and HTML. Could you recommend a good company to buy from?

Alex Howard

A Almost any modern machine is capable of running the languages and operating systems you mention. The trick is going to be the games. Now you don't say if you need an entire system, or just the processor box. A full system including monitor could be tricky, as you don't want to get caught with an all-in-one motherboard and no AGP, and a wacko chipset with no Linux support. If you already have a Windows CD, it may be cheaper to actually buy the bits and put it together yourself. Check out our Buyer's Guide for the best components to buy. If you can't afford all of our recommended hardware, then you could also try the following combination as a compromise. Case £60, AMD 1GHz £135, heat sink plus fan £25, Abit KT7A motherboard £110, 20GB hard drive £80, 256MB RAM £70, floppy £10, CD £25. This leaves you £135 for a sound and video card. If you're not fussed about Dolby surround and just want something simple for gaming, a Sound Blaster PCI 128 can be had for about £16, which leaves £119 for an entry level GeForce and an extremely nice screwdriver. PCZ

Get your spanners out and build your own if you want to save money.

PCZONE

COMING NEXT ISSUE

DUNGEON SIEGE

We've been banging on about *Dungeon Siege* for ages and when we got to E3 and found it was nearly finished we wet ourselves. After cleaning ourselves up, we begged Microsoft to take us out to see Gas Powered Games so we could bring you a world exclusive look at the hottest RPG release of the year. Don't miss it, next month.

STRATEGY SPECIAL

In the third and final part of our E3 extravaganza we take a look at the finest strategy games coming our way over the next year, from Sid Meier's third in the mighty *Civilization* series, to the surprise show-stopper of E3, *Battle Realms*. We'll have the latest on *Praetorians* – from the makers of *Commandos 2*, more on Elixir's Iron Curtain epic *Republic* plus more besides.

REVIEWS

Max Payne

Arcanum: Of Steamworks & Magick Obscura

Baldur's Gate II: Throne Of Bhaal

Star Trek DS9: Dominion Wars

Dragonriders

Diablo II: The Lords Of Destruction

ON SALE THURSDAY JULY 26

WATCHDOG

The software industry can be a closed shop when it comes to punters and their complaints. Let *PC ZONE* ramraid their premises and snatch some answers...

SORTED Adam Phillips

LIVING IN A WORLD O' HURT?

We're here to help. If you have a consumer issue that needs addressing then drop us a line.

WRITE TO Watchdog, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL Alternatively, email us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk **with the subject heading Watchdog**

TIME AFTER TIME

Q My tale of woe starts on March 8 when I saw an advertisement in the window of the Time shop in Crawley. The advert read "Pentium III 700MHz ex-demo computers with 13Gb hard drive, 17in monitor and 64Mb of RAM for the special price of £599. First come, first served". I entered the shop and purchased said computer and paid in full by cheque. I was told that delivery would be 10-14 days or sooner.

Time in the line of fire yet again...

After the two weeks had passed, I contacted the shop and was told that there was a problem with parts and that the delivery would be delayed. At this point, I queried the delay – surely an ex-demo computer does not require any parts – and I was given a number for the Time customer services department. Now my problems really started. Time customer services informed me that the computer that I had bought was not 'ex-demo' as stated but rather an end-of-line model. Further to this, I was told that the company was waiting for the 'case' to arrive and that delivery should be within seven days.

After seven days, I still had no computer despite repeated visits to the shop (about four) and two telephone conversations, so I contacted customer services again. I finally spoke to a manager who informed me that the delivery could take a further 21 days and that if I wasn't happy, I could cancel the order. On March 30, I cancelled the order with Time Computers and asked for a full refund of my money. I was told it would take seven to 14 days to get my money refunded. It is now April 23 and despite repeated visits and phone calls to the shop, I seem to be no closer to getting my £599 refunded – I have even threatened legal action.

If you have any ideas, I would be glad to hear them and maybe you could print this letter as a warning to anybody that is considering buying a computer from this company.

Paul Gibbs

A First off, by the time Watchdog contacted Time, it said you had already been refunded. We were still worried though about certain issues that your case highlighted. Why were you told that your machine was an ex-demo one when it wasn't? Why was there such a delay for the machine? Why did it take you so long to get a refund? And why did it take constant phone calls, visits and threats of legal action to seemingly get a proper response from Time?

Time offers the following explanation: "The basic problem was that the ex-demo systems were priced very low and oversold several times over. However, to avoid customer disappointment and to honour customer orders, Time decided to supply new systems. The problem was that to match the specification quoted, some components had to be purchased which were not readily available. Hence the delays."

OK, fair enough, but we're a bit concerned that no explanation was offered as to why you weren't properly informed and why it took so long for your refund to wind its way back to your bank account? You can draw your own conclusions...

BIG BROTHER

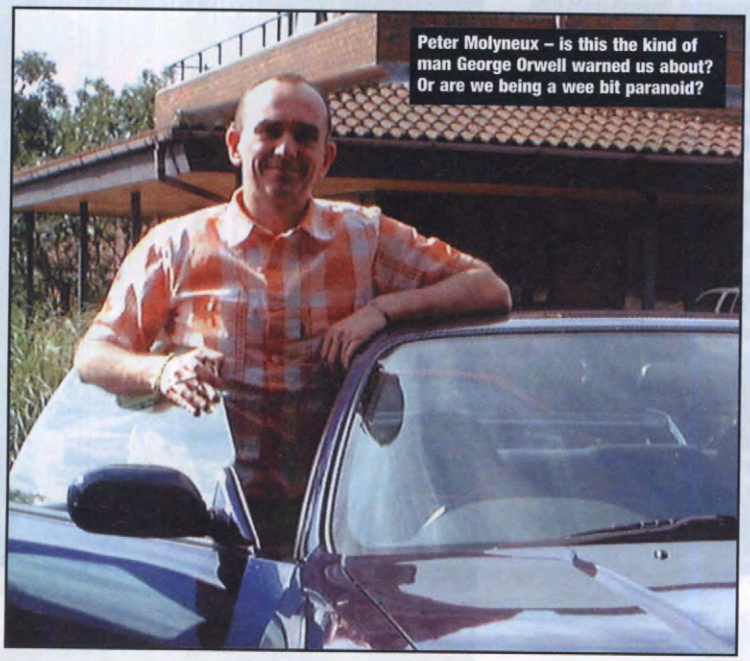
Have you been spying on me mister?

Q I bought *Black & White* last Saturday and although I must say it's one of the best games ever, I noticed something *very* disturbing when starting the game up. *Black & White* tries to send data through your (possibly) existing Internet connection every time you click on "Continue Game" in the start-up menu. I know this because Zone Alarm says that the game is trying to access the Net.

I don't know what kind of data is sent from my computer but I know that it's not very fair to pay £40 for a game that includes a Trojan. I would really like to know what they intended with this. Besides that, I don't think that spying on your customers is a legal action anyway.

Sven Clausen

A Can this be true? That game design guru Peter Molyneux, after spending three years creating a classic title, is now secretly monitoring us from his Guildford HQ, viewing our browsing habits and invading our files? Well, no actually... "*Black & White* is *not* spyware," states a spokeswoman at Lionhead. "This rumour has been started by concerned people as they came across Internet packets, which are also sent in the single-player game. These packets are so-called 'ping packets' which are sent to our ping/chat server. This is necessary to enable in-game chatting with other people not currently in your game – for example, if somebody sends you a message from a website or also at a later date over a mobile phone. Without this ping packet, our server would have no clue where to deliver the messages to."



Peter Molyneux – is this the kind of man George Orwell warned us about? Or are we being a wee bit paranoid?

She goes on to say that the size of the packet is eight bytes, "which is not even big enough to carry my full name and contains packet-header, packet-length and a special user ID so our message server can identify the messages specified for you."

She also points out that your web browser will send far more information to a website than *Black & White*, like your operating system details, the type of web browser you're using and language information, therefore "web browsers should be called spyware, but certainly not *Black & White*."

For more information, Lionhead's technical director Tim Rance has written a more detailed article about "this whole spyware nonsense" which you can read at www.theregister.co.uk/content/8/18315.html.

Bill Gates takes time out to dream up some more ideas to hack off consumers...

A RIGHT MESH

Q I decided to order a new PC in March, and after reading about the terrible customer service provided by Time and Tiny, I decided to pay a bit more and order from a firm who has won awards for customer service.

I accessed the Mesh website on March 5 and selected the system I required, a Mesh Matrix 850. I noted that Windows Millennium was listed as an included component of the system. As a precaution I called the Mesh sales line to enquire if Windows ME discs and manuals would be provided, or if it would merely be pre-loaded. I was advised I would receive a Windows ME disc and manuals.

Having cleared this up, I ordered the system and it was delivered some three weeks later. When I looked through the discs provided though, I found no *Windows ME* disc or manuals. Included however was a note from Mesh stating that the CD media was temporarily out of stock and would be dispatched when available.

I waited two weeks and no disc arrived. On Wednesday April 4, I called the Mesh sales line to chase the dispatch of the disc and manuals. I explained the problem to a man who put me on hold for some ten minutes. Eventually a switchboard operator picked up my call and asked which department I required. I explained that I was on hold and had already explained my query to their sales department. I was put through again to sales and spoke to another operator and had to explain again. I was advised this was a technical query and "technical" would call me back.

I received a call from technical about an hour later and had to explain again. I was advised that contrary to what I had originally been told, Mesh does not supply a copy of Windows ME, but would dispatch me a "recovery disc".

"Your finance company has a vested interest in your PC and can apply a lot of pressure on the computer seller to put things right"

JOHN JOHNSTON, USING THE MIDDLE MAN

I explained that I wanted to be able to re-install *Windows ME* myself if necessary or add/delete components as required. I was further advised that I could do all this from the recovery disc and so I agreed to await its delivery. I received the recovery disc on April 5, and it was stamped all over with the following: "Do not use this disc unless directed to do so by the Mesh technical support helpline".

I am now left with a pre-installed system and am at the mercy of Mesh to fix any problems for me, despite having the technical knowledge to fix them myself. I feel this is false advertising on the part of Mesh – had I been correctly informed in the first instance that Windows ME was only pre-loaded, I would not have ordered the system. All of my system specifications state 'Windows ME included' but none of them state 'pre-loaded only.'

CJ Westlake

A Sounds like you've been given the run-around here. Watchdog asked Mesh to offer an explanation for your problems: "When Mr Westlake placed his online order on March 5, Mesh was supplying the version of Windows Millennium that Mr Westlake describes," explains Simon Fitch, Mesh's direct sales manager. "This included the CD and the manual. Unfortunately between the time of ordering to the time of delivery, Mesh had to comply, as a PC manufacturer, with new policies and conditions put in place by Microsoft – namely, we became compelled to prevent a single-user licence version of Millennium being installed on a computer other than that with which it was purchased."

He continues: "Therefore the full pre-installed version of Millennium received by Mr Westlake is also supplied on the Mesh Recovery Disc. The only difference between the version Mr Westlake describes and the version on the Mesh Recovery CD is that on a recovery disc, you are unable to copy the software from machine to machine as it is bespoke to the system it is purchased with."

Fitch says that he appreciates your position but points out that Mesh endeavours to give "as much as possible to our customers as confirmed by the quality of our machines and the completeness of the drivers and documentation we supply. Unfortunately, in some instances, we are governed by the conditions imposed by manufacturers, who are, in turn only trying to protect their product."

A CANNY LAD...

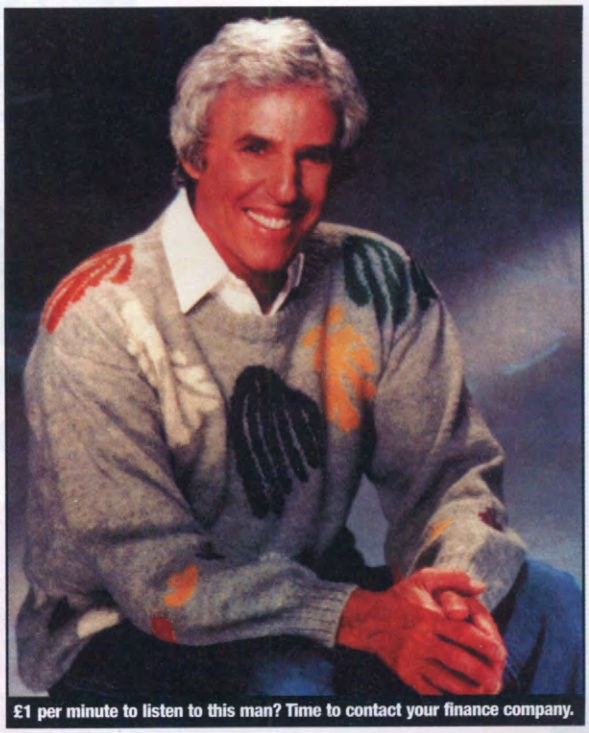
Watchdog received this top tip from a clued-up reader...

As a regular reader of the Watchdog section, it has become apparent that the big players in the high street are sidestepping, body swerving and otherwise trying to dodge out of giving any sort of meaningful after-sales care. They thrive on the fact that most customers are not 'computer-literate' or are not the head of an IT department at a massive multinational company. They will get you to part with £1 for every minute you want to listen to elevator music that is passed off as a customer services line while waiting for help with a technical problem.

I too had problems with a large PC retailer a couple of years ago who did not answer my faxes, emails or telephone questions about my faulty modem, motherboard and anything else. It became very frustrating. Then I had a brainwave – let the finance company's legal department, who the PC retailer had very kindly introduced to me, take up the battle for a working system. And do you know what? It took just one letter from the finance company's legal department to the PC retailer in question, and customer services were calling me to find out how they could help. My PC was repaired and I was a very happy person. And so was the finance company.

It paid, in that instance, to have taken out the buy now/pay later deal as the finance company owns the PC until you've paid for it. Therefore, if any of your readers are having difficulties with customer support, and they have made the purchase through a finance company, then enlist the help of said finance company as they have a vested interest in your PC and they can apply a lot of pressure on the computer seller to put things right.

John Johnston

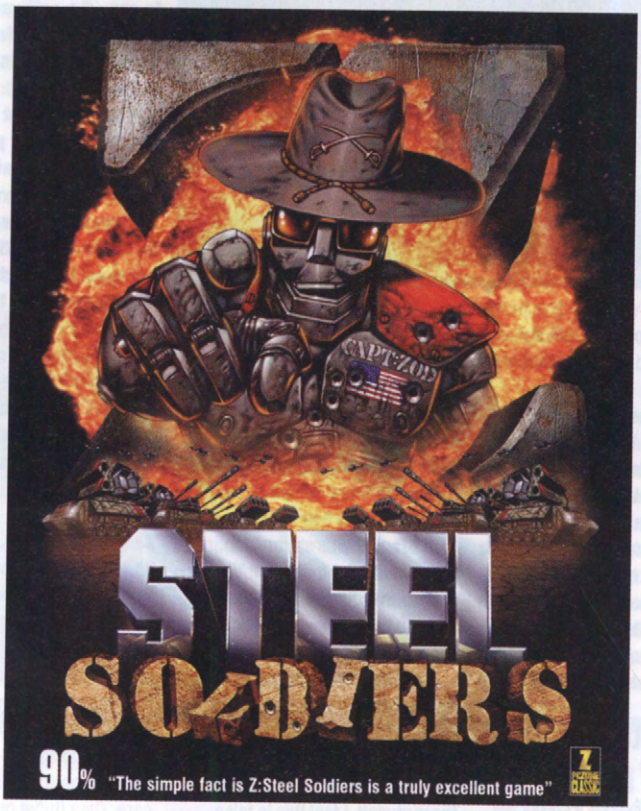


£1 per minute to listen to this man? Time to contact your finance company.

READ ME

If you are writing in to complain about a product, please supply us with your full name, address and contact number. With PCs, make sure that you also include all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers. It means we can resolve your problems much quicker.

IT'S A STEEL



Z STEEL SOLDIERS

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- 30 Distinct, lush levels
- State-of-the-art full 3D engine
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- 9 different robots
- Most advanced AI in an RTS

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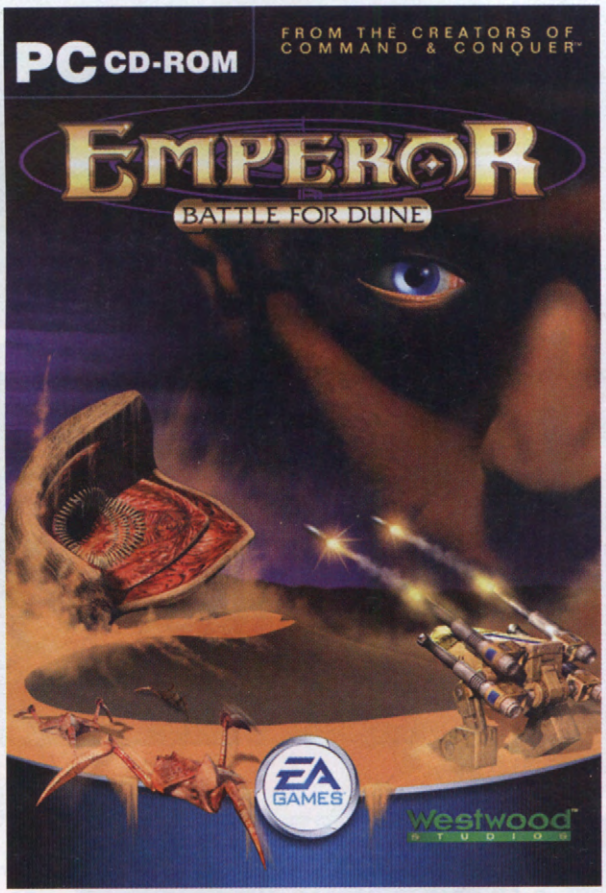
SPICE UP YOUR LIFE



EMPEROR: BATTLE FOR DUNE™

The all-powerful emperor of the universe is dead and the position is up for grabs. The side that wins Dune can control spice production and take the throne.

WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON | Virgin megastores

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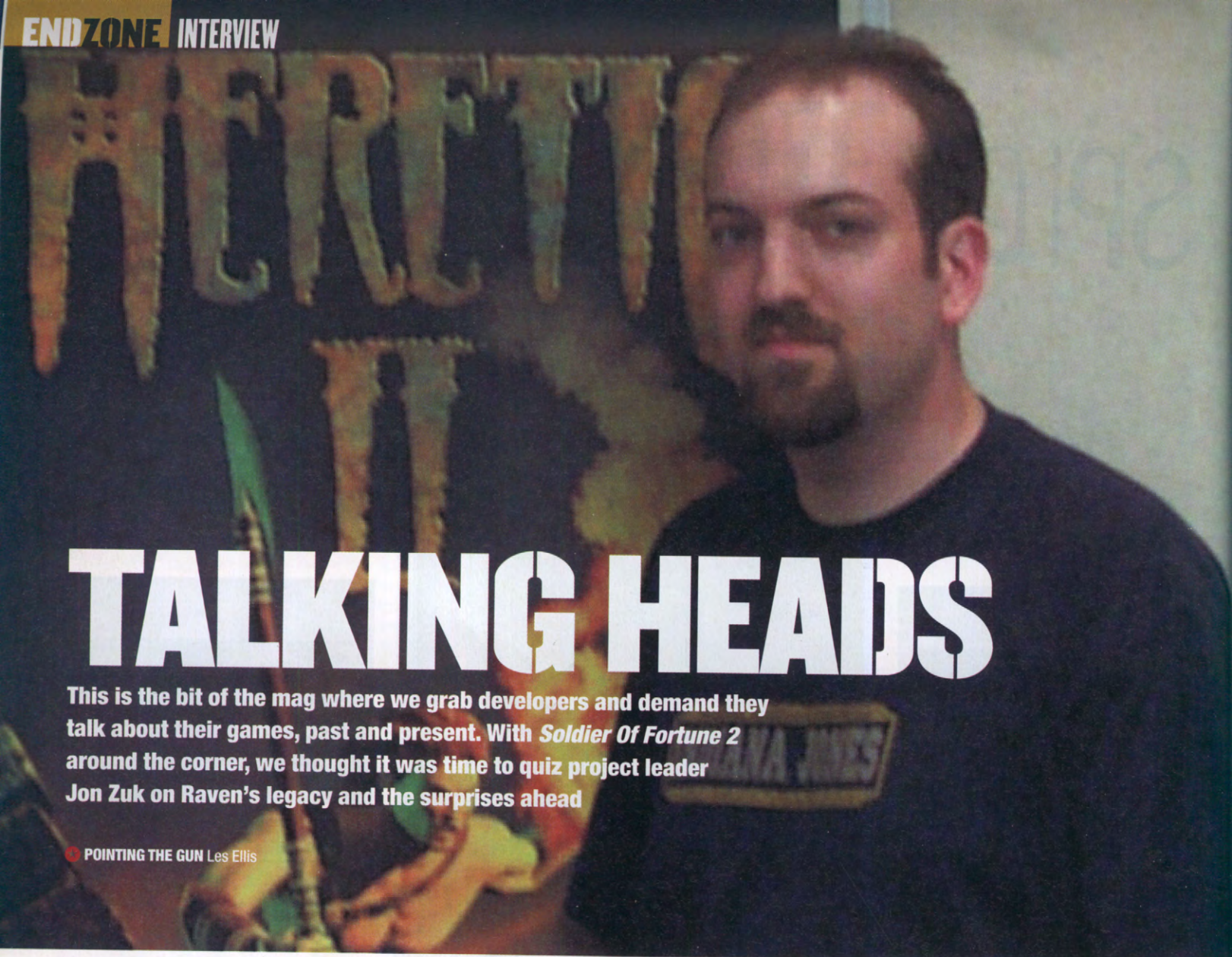


TALKING HEADS

This is the bit of the mag where we grab developers and demand they talk about their games, past and present. With *Soldier Of Fortune 2* around the corner, we thought it was time to quiz project leader Jon Zuk on Raven's legacy and the surprises ahead

POINTING THE GUN Les Ellis

If *Quake* developers id are known as the glory boys of the first-person shooter genre, then Raven Software are surely the unsung hero. Titles under their belt include *Heretic*, *Hexen*, *Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force* (plus the geeks-only Expansion pack), as well as the controversial *Soldier Of Fortune*, which is still selling thousands of copies all over the world. With several mouth-watering projects in the pipeline, we couldn't wait any longer to talk to Jon Zuk, project leader on *Soldier Of Fortune 2* about the past, the present and best of all, the future of all things FPS-related. And so quoth the Raven:

Do you think there is life left in the single-player FPS now that online gaming (in the shape of *Q3* and *UT*) has become more of a mainstream aspect in new games... Especially now that Europe is starting to join the US with free online access?
I think what we've seen in the last couple of years is a fragmentation of single-player and multiplayer into two sub-genres. Each is now working towards two different goals. The single-player FPS is working on making more engaging stories and really making the player feel like he or she is the persona in the game. Multiplayer is striving for having more people in the game at one time, and more engagement on a personal level with less emphasis on story. I truly think that as both types of games evolve, they will survive and further distance themselves from each other.

Generally, what can we expect from *Soldier Of Fortune 2*? More of the same gore 'n' guns action or do you have other treats in store for us?
The first game was well received, both in terms of sales and reviews. So of course we are going to bring back all the elements that people liked in the first game. We are expanding the terrain system (the train level from the first game), making the weapons more realistic as well as the characters. We do have some surprises in store; the random mission generator for one. We want to try something different and add to the longevity of the game.

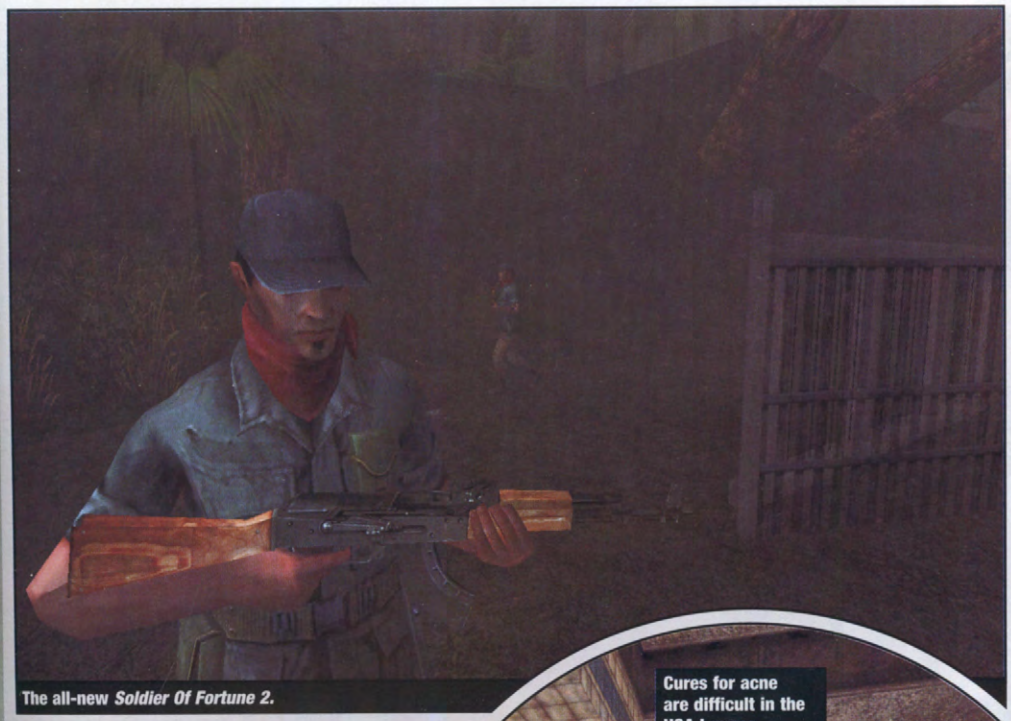
"There is still a lot of room for innovation in FPSs. Every couple of years there is a claim that 'x' genre is dead. It was RTS games for a while"

Are there any aspects or features from this game that have worked their way into any other projects you may be working on?
The programmers have what I call 'glory code wars' where someone makes a cool feature then the other guy tries to top him. The nice thing about us doing two *Quake III* engine games is that we can port the eye candy over fairly easily. Of course *Ghoul 2* has been implemented in both games as well.

***SoF* seems to be lagging behind the likes of *Q3* and *CS* in terms of an online deathmatch community. Does this mean that deathmatch is something you will be focusing on more in the sequel, or is the single-player experience still your main priority?**
The single-player experience is still our priority. We will evaluate multiplayer at a later date.

What are you most proud of with what you achieved with *SoF*?
I'm most proud of the fact that Raven pulled off a great modern-day 'realistic' game that people really enjoy. Previously, Raven concentrated on fantasy games such as *Heretic* and *Hexen*. To totally change direction like we have and still pull off a great game is a testament to all the talented people we have working here.

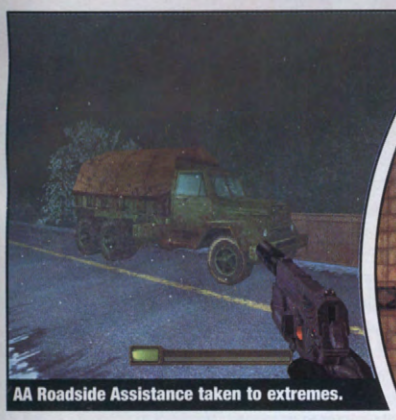
Westwood is trying to take *C&C* into different genres with the likes of *C&C Renegade*. Do you see any scope for this with future *SoF* games or is FPS the only way forward for the franchise?
There has been some talk as to another direction for later games, but right now it's just talk. One thing about success is that we have too many opportunities coming our way.



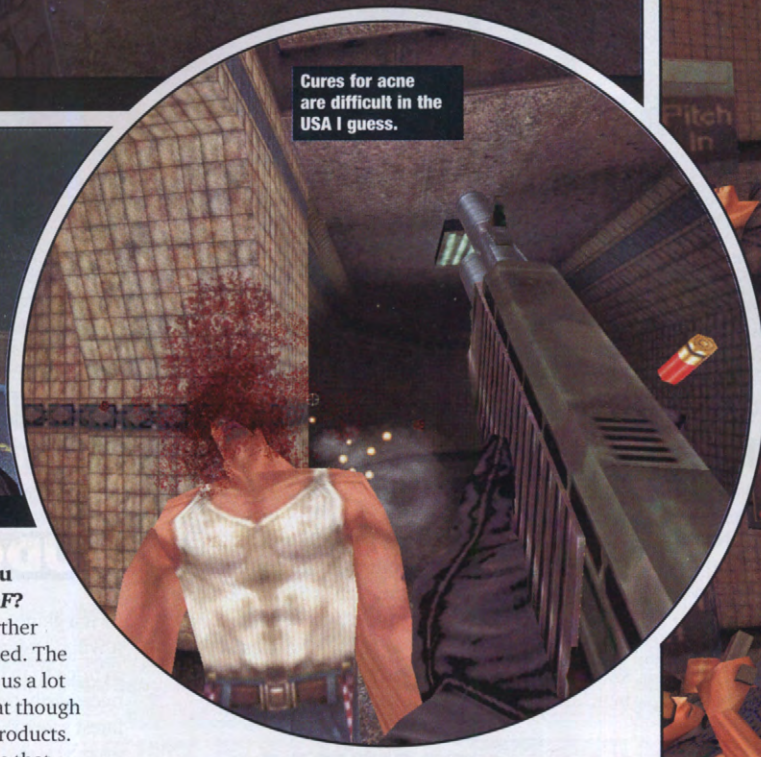
The all-new *Soldier Of Fortune 2*.

'Tis a mere flesh wound.

"I'll bite your legs off you yellow bastards."



AA Roadside Assistance taken to extremes.



Cures for acne are difficult in the USA I guess.

"Hmmm, now I'm in trouble."

OTT? *Soldier Of Fortune*? Never.

What were the main problems you faced in creating a project like *SoF*?
We pushed the *Quake II* engine a lot further than it probably should have been pushed. The Ghoul technology that we created gave us a lot of headaches. We learned a lot from that though and are able to apply it to our current products. There was also a loss of focus for a while that could've killed the game totally. Eric Biessman (project lead on *SoF*) and Rick Johnson did an excellent article on the subject.

Any chance of a more multiplayer-orientated *SoF* experience like *Quake III Arena*, *Team Arena*, *Counter-Strike* or *Unreal Tournament*?
There is always a possibility. We'll just have to see if we have the time and resources, if Activision wants us to do it, and if there is a desire for it.

Were there any restrictions with such a big-name licence?
Not at all. We're pretty much just paying for the use of the name and are allowed to do what we want. If the first game had been poorly received, they (the magazine) might have had some issues as to what we did in the second one.

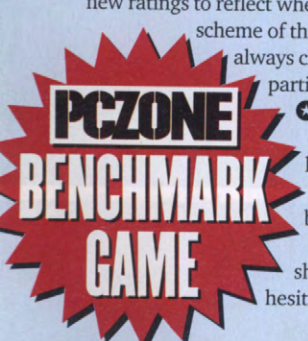
Has FPS been really done to death now, with game developers focusing more on the technical aspects rather than new twists, or is there still scope for originality and innovation in the genre?
There is still a lot of room for innovation in FPSs. Every couple of years there is a claim that 'x' genre is dead. It was real-time strategy games for a while. You don't see Blizzard or Ensemble stopping their games because their genre is 'dead'. If a company makes a good solid product that is fun to play and is marketed well, it will sell. However, as an industry we do need to keep innovating and pushing the envelope, rather than always sticking with what works.

So with gaming envelopes and design being pushed as well as new twists in FPS games, it looks as though the future is bright and more than safe in the hands of Raven (and no doubt you can throw gore into the equation as well). With *Soldier Of Fortune 2* well under way and plenty of new projects soon to be unleashed on the unsuspecting gaming public, the itchy trigger-finger brigade are going to get more than they can handle. Look out for *Soldier Of Fortune 2* making headlines in newspapers near you soon. PCZ

PCZONE TOP100

Welcome to the definitive buyer's guide for all discerning PC gamers. The games that grace these pages represent the best titles across all genres. Check here for regular updates

This is the *PC ZONE* Top 100. Within it you will find the best games you can currently buy for your PC. All the games here deserve a place in our illustrious Top 100 as we go to print, but that could all change next month when newer titles come in and older games receive new ratings to reflect where they stand in the great scheme of things. Shrewd buyers will always check here first before parting with their money.



✪ Benchmark titles are the games you simply must have if you are a fan of the genre. They are considered by the *PC ZONE* team to be absolute Classics and should be bought without hesitation. All new games are compared to their genre's benchmark title when they are reviewed. Bear this in mind before writing into Mailbox complaining that the latest 3D shooter didn't automatically get 90 per cent: check here first to see what it's up against! Additionally, all games in that genre will receive a new rating every time a new benchmark title comes along.

NEW ENTRY

✪ In the wonderful world of PC gaming, new titles come in every month, some of which are better than the games currently in the Top 100. When this happens, they will gain their rightful place in the Top 100 and lesser titles will drop out to make room for them.

BUDGET GAME

✪ If a game in the Top 100 is available on budget, it will be tagged accordingly. Games that are lower in price than other titles in their genre do not necessarily receive a new score to reflect this. The latest score the game received will still apply – it's up to you to decide whether or not the game is worth buying at its new price point.

WHEN WE SAY CLASSIC, WE MEAN IT

Under the *ZONE* scoring system, new games will have to be pretty spectacular to receive this award. They will have to take their genre to unprecedented new heights and represent a major step forward for PC gaming. There are only a few titles that can justifiably be described as *PC ZONE* Classics. This trend will continue across all genres. Generally speaking, all *ZONE* Classics are must-have titles – the benchmark title being the definitive game of the genre – but that does not mean you should discount games that score 80+ per cent. These games receive the *PC ZONE* Award For Excellence and are essential buys if you are a fan of the genre the game fits into. Classics, on the other hand, are games we think will appeal to everyone and will bring new fans to that particular genre. There will not be many of them, but when we say a game is a Classic, we mean it.

FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

HALF-LIFE

PCZ #71 • 95%

Taking the first-person shooter as its starting point, *Half-Life* redefines the genre with an engrossing story, cracking atmosphere and some of the best AI ever coded. *Half-Life* is probably still the best game you can install on your PC, and it's now available with the superb *Opposing Force* add-on in the *Generations* pack.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

PCZ #81 • 90%

Played over a network or the Internet, *Unreal Tournament* is more than a match for *Quake III*'s multiplayer, with a combination of well-designed maps and diverse gameplay. The single-player mode might be too short, but it' s still going to be more than a challenge for most.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8188

QUAKE III ARENA

PCZ #87 • 89%

The biggest brand name in PC gaming is back. The sheer speed, intensity and unrelenting action of *Quake III* make it an essential purchase for all shoot 'em up fans, but sadly the lack of variety prevents it from topping *Unreal Tournament*.

PUBLISHER Activision • 0990 143 525

CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING

PCZ #101 • 85%

This atmospheric game is one of the most unsettling FPSs we've seen. The graphics and superb sound will have you leaping out of your seat. Here's hoping Barker's contribution will help push the future of narrative and gameplay forward.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

GUNMAN CHRONICLES

PCZ #97 • 84%

While comparisons to *Half-Life* are inevitable, *Gunman* contains more than enough nuances to stand out on its own merits. With a superb array of weapons, intense battles and a gripping atmosphere it's a must have for any fan of the genre.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100

PROJECT IGI

PCZ #97 • 84%

Combining the action of *Soldier Of Fortune* with the stealth of *Metal Gear Solid*, *Project IGI* is the thinking man's FPS. It features vast, open landscapes, and its clever changes of pace and espionage oriented storyline will keep you engrossed throughout.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE

PCZ #94 • 84%

The first single-player game to use the *Quake III* engine, *Voyager* offers enough thrills to please even the hardest of Trekkie haters. A new scripting system and some clever CPU team mates give renewed credence to solo play in this increasingly multiplayer genre.

PUBLISHER Activision • 0990 143 525

SERIOUS SAM

PCZ #102 • 81%

Serious Sam is a game that's seriously good fun. You get more monsters than you could ever wish for – they come out of the walls, the floor, pretty much everywhere. A good old fashioned, arcade-style shooter, with a liberal dose of humour.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

MECHWARRIOR 4: VENGEANCE

PCZ #99 • 80%

This fourth offering in the popular combat series is a feast of superb graphics, challenging missions and er... realistic snow. The multiplayer option is great and features some excellent team-based modes, but like all big robot games, it's still only likely to sell in the US.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 5700 2000

THIEF II: THE METAL AGE

PCZ #88 • 80%

The original *Thief* set new standards in FPS titles with its move away from mindless action towards stealth and its excellent use of light and sound. This sequel delivers more of the same quality gameplay, minus the out-of-place zombie levels.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

STRATEGY

BLACK & WHITE

PCZ #100 • 95%

One of our joint top games of all time, *Black & White* is worth the hype and more. Hundreds of challenges through wondrous landscapes, packed full of spectacular AI enhanced creatures and some genuinely original ideas. Sell your friends and family if you have to, but get a copy of this game. Pure genius.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

Z: STEEL SOLDIERS

PCZ #101 • 90%

Z will re-ignite your passion for strategy games with its fast paced in-yer-face action that allows you to get down and dirty from the off. The AI is superb, and as it's entirely mouse driven, it's simple and easy to get into. What more could you ask for?

PUBLISHER EON • 0700 4366344

SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR

PCZ #89 • 90%

Command enormous armies in epic and bloody battles, send ninjas to assassinate generals and conquer your way through the map of feudal Japan. The 3D engine works beautifully and the in-game options don't get in the way of instant playability. *Shogun* will blow you away.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS

PCZ #101 • 89%

There are 8,000 troops at your disposal in this historically accurate RTS. Smooth unit movement and a 3D landscape with real physics modelling make it truly absorbing. With great graphics and sound effects to boot it's an essential purchase.

PUBLISHER CDV • 020 8880 4144

AOE: COLLECTORS' EDITION

PCZ #84 • 88%

It might not be radically different from the original, but sometimes evolution is just as good as revolution. In *AOEII*, the gameplay is honed to perfection with balanced units and strong single and multiplayer campaigns. Forget the hype of *Tiberian Sun* and try this classic RTS.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 5700 2000

GROUND CONTROL

PCZ #92 • 86%

RTSs are increasingly dropping resource management in order to concentrate on strategy. *Ground Control* pulls this off with flair, gorgeous looks and a brilliant camera. If you're after a 3D strategy title but don't fancy samurais, this is the answer.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100

CALL TO POWER II

PCZ #98 • 85%

Civilization II is one of the best games of all time, but that doesn't mean it doesn't need updating. It might not have the official *Civ* endorsement, but *Call To Power II* still retains the spirit of the game, while polishing almost every aspect of the gameplay.

PUBLISHER Activision • 0990 143525

SUDDEN STRIKE PCZ #96 • 85%

Sudden Strike mixes WWII action with a heavy dose of realism in order to create a compelling RTS. Its clever resource management, huge selection of units and separate campaigns make it a must for RTS fans looking for something a bit different.

PUBLISHER CDV • 020 8880 4144

HOMEWORLD: CATACLYSM

PCZ #96 • 85%

Relic's mission to improve the already superb 3D RTS Homeworld has proved to be a great success. The *Homeworld* universe has been expanded, providing a more elaborate storyline and greater scope for tactical options than its predecessor.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100

ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS

PCZ #97 • 83%

From the creators of *Pharaoh* and *Caesar III* comes this intricate yet hugely playable micro-management god game. It is hugely addictive, but suffers slightly from its lack of multiplayer options and a poor combat system.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

DEUS EX

PCZ #93 • 94%

Warren Spector takes the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief* and weaves an RPG of complex beauty that revolutionises computer games. A fascinating sci-fi plot and complete player freedom are just some of the reasons why *Deus Ex* is such a landmark wonder.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000

SYSTEM SHOCK 2 — PCZ #80 • 91%

Definitely one of the most compelling, original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it in the house on your own with the lights off to prove how hard you are.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE REDEMPTION — PCZ #92 • 89%

This amazing RPG is a treat to play. An epic storyline, tactical combat and great acting and music more than make up for the fact that it's a linear hack 'n' slash game at heart.

PUBLISHER Activision • 0990 143525

PLANESCAPE: TORMENT — PCZ #87 • 87%

An incredible game from Black Isle, creators of *Baldur's Gate*. It's a dark, adult scorcher of an RPG. Moreover, the character development is the best we've seen in any game of its kind and the story is compelling, with well-scripted dialogue.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

BALDUR'S GATE II — PCZ#96 • 85%

The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. Although this sequel is not vastly different, it is bigger, better and extremely addictive. *Baldur's Gate II* is a must for all RPG fans.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

FINAL FANTASY VII — PCZ #66 • 80%

Despite the recent release of *FFVIII*, we still rate this earlier episode in the series above it. The story is better, there are more subgames and the whole thing is more involving, especially if you like Japanese-style cartoony graphics. And it's now on budget release.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000

FALLOUT 2 — PCZ #71 • 79%

Twice as big as the original, but utilising the exact same engine. If you liked the first game, you'll love this – and if you don't already own the original, you can now pick up both of these life-sapping RPGs for less than a tenner.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

ICEWIND DALE — PCZ #93 • 75%

Despite the introduction of larger enemies, *Icewind Dale* is little more than an add-on pack for *Baldur's Gate*. It looks the same and it plays the same, which isn't surprising since it's made by the same people. Very good, but no competition to *Baldur's Gate II*.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 0207 5514266

DIABLO II — PCZ #93 • 72%

Blizzard might have repackaged the original *Diablo* and produced an even bigger version with the same graphics and gameplay, but its many fans aren't complaining. It's already one of the hottest and biggest-selling games ever.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100

ODIUM — PCZ #87 • 70%

Imagine an RPG in the style of *Final Fantasy* with battle sequences a la *X-COM* and you'll have a pretty good idea of what *Odium* is like. The story is set in a European city populated by UN soldiers and a variety of monsters. In short, it's curiously compelling and it will keep you hooked.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000

ACTION/ADVENTURE

GRIM FANDANGO

PCZ #71 • 88%

If you've followed the successes of LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must-buy. Sublime graphics and genuine humour ensure it's a classic of its genre. A word of warning: it's bloody hard and, if your mind doesn't work laterally, you'll be playing it until the day you die.

PUBLISHER LucasArts • 020 7368 2255

DISCWORLD NOIR — PCZ #79 • 87%

Although the point-and-click adventure genre is dying, *Discworld Noir* is still very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games and is all the better for it in our opinion, particularly if you're not a fan of Terry Pratchett's zany, off-the-wall humour. Don't miss it.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060

SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS — PCZ #98 • 87%

Anyone who doesn't mind being splattered with the kind of gore rarely seen outside of *Soldier Of Fortune* will find much to like in *Severance*. But it stands out from the usual hack 'n' slasher with its amazing engine and console-style combos.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

THE NOMAD SOUL — PCZ #83 • 86%

Distinctly odd, but original nonetheless, *The Nomad Soul* is a huge, intricate world populated by lap-dancers and David Bowie. At turns adventure, beat 'em up and platformer, it's insanely ambitious and almost manages to pull it off.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

HITMAN: CODENAME 47 — PCZ #98 • 85%

Bringing back memories of *Leon* and *Day Of The Jackal*, *Hitman* recreates the cool excitement of carrying out a contract. Snipe from rooftops, disguise yourself in your victims' uniforms and walk away from explosions with calm elegance.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

BLAIR WITCH VOL 1: RUSTIN PARR — PCZ #96 • 84%

As well as being a truly scary action/horror title, this is one of the finest action/adventure games we've played. The suspense is incredible, and a constant stream of jump-out-of-your-seat moments will leave you with a distinct lack of clean underwear.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE — PCZ #84 • 83%

LucasArts moves away from the point-and-click genre and into *Tomb Raider* territory for its latest Indy game, with the adventure elements still in place. Not bad, but not for traditionalists.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND — PCZ #98 • 82%

One of the hardest skills to master when developing a game is the ability to make your audience genuinely laugh with you rather than at you, and undoubtedly *Escape From Monkey Island* is one of the most genuinely funny games to come out for the last couple of years.

PUBLISHER Activision •0990 143525

DEEP SPACE NINE: THE FALLEN — PCZ #98 • 82%

It's not often that a game with little promise on paper surprises us so nicely. *DS9* is a third-person action/adventure that offers you the chance to control Sisko, Kira or Worf. Gameplay is different for each character, which provides longevity in spades.

PUBLISHER Infinite Loop/Koch • 01256 707767

METAL GEAR SOLID — PCZ #96 • 82%

Although it's been ported pretty much identically from the console version (with a few graphical improvements), *MGS*'s tense gameplay, well-designed levels and variety of challenging bosses makes it stand out from the majority of similar PC titles.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000

RACING GAMES

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0

PCZ #98 • 86%

With all the rally games available it was always going to be interesting to see how *2.0* would fare. Unsurprisingly, it blows away the competition. The graphics are superb, the detail all-encompassing and the car handles beautifully. If you have been waiting patiently for the definitive rally game, this is definitely it.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

MIDTOWN MADNESS 2 — PCZ #96 • 84%

Buckle up for some high-speed action, as you race around London and San Francisco in this sequel. You won't find a more entertaining arcade driving game. The original *MM* was a belter, but with more cars and races and improved controls, *MM2* is now the daddy.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000

F1 CHAMPIONSHIP: SEASON 2000 — PCZ #97 • 82%

While lacking the detailed realism of *GP3*, EA's latest F1 offering provides more fun and adrenalin pumping moments than any other PC F1 game. With its mixture of arcade action and realism it is both accurate and easy to pick up.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

LE MANS 24 HOURS — PCZ #87 • 81 %

Although not quite as challenging as the race it's based on, *Le Mans 24 Hours* is a driving game for skillful players who know their brakes from their elbows. You can even get involved in a rewarding career mode, culminating in the famous race itself.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060

GRAND PRIX 3 — PCZ #94 • 80%

This F1 title displays all the customary Crammond perfectionism. The detail is amazing, which makes it all the more puzzling as to why there is no team work. Don't expect much more than a 3D accelerated *GP2*, but if that's what you're after you'll love it.

PUBLISHER Infogrames•0161 8278060

INSANE — PCZ #97 • 78%

Primarily an online racing game, *Insane* allows you and your friends to indulge in some off-road racing mayhem in a range of different vehicles. Its wide selection of races will have you in hysterics, but the novelty does wear off pretty quickly.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

NEED FOR SPEED PORSCHE 2000 — PCZ #90 • 78%

Not as good as hooking up with your mates at the arcade, but still a damn good conversion of a damn fine game. Forget realism and concentrate on flinging your car around the track as fast as you can. Who needs depth when racing is this exciting?

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

RALLY MASTERS — PCZ #89 • 77%

Rally games tend to blend into one another quite seamlessly. After all, the cars look exactly the same and they go round the same tracks. *Rally Masters*, however, offers the all important feel of a great driving game together with loads of options and some tasty graphics.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060

TOCA 2 — PCZ #76 • 76%

Predictably, Codemasters has gone and done it again. More cars, more tracks and the same stunning attention to detail make *TOCA 2* an essential purchase for petrolheads. Graphically, it may not be a massive improvement, but gameplay-wise it definitely is.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP — PCZ #84 • 75%

Close, but no *McRae*. That was the verdict from the boy Hill on this new racer. It looks fantastic and the on-screen Ordnance Survey map is a nice touch, but it is let down by some poor camera angles and unnecessarily solid obstacles. Ouch.

PUBLISHER Actualise • 01625 855015

FLIGHT SIMS

BATTLE OF BRITAIN

PCZ #99 • 89%

Allow yourself to be immersed in one of the most exciting and realistic combat flight sims around. The action is non-stop, and even though the graphics and general gameplay may not be ground breaking, *Battle Of Britain* is one of the best examples of a game that transports you right into the cockpit. Tally ho!

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 020 8343 7337

FALCON 4 — PCZ #72 • 88%

We waited patiently for years for this title to arrive, and the good news is that, for once, we weren't disappointed. *Falcon 4* features incredible 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure that leaves the competition standing still.

PUBLISHER Infogrames •0161 8278060

B-17 FLYING FORTRESS: THE MIGHTY 8TH — PCZ #96 • 87%

B17 reproduces the experience of piloting a WWII bomber. Everything's covered, from planning missions to dropping bombs. A must for WWII and realism freaks.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060

COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2 — PCZ #97 • 87%

If WWII dog-fighting is your thing, then this is the game you have been waiting for. Its excellent user interface, engrossing campaigns, intense combat and superb graphics all come together to create a true sense of excitement and realism.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000

EUROFIGHTER TYPHOON — PCZ #103 • 85%

Finally a flight sim that values the 'flight' aspect over the 'sim' so you can just enjoy the gameplay. *Tycoon* marks the future of the genre where the campaign engine takes care of itself while you play at being Tom Cruise.

PUBLISHER Rage Software • 0151 237 2200

F-22 TOTAL AIR WAR — PCZ #68 • 85%

This updated version of DID's masterpiece may seem a bit superflous for anyone who already owns *F-22 ADF*, but those of you who are looking to buy one of the greatest combat sims of recent years should seriously consider this title, now available on budget.

PUBLISHER Ocean/DID • 0161 832 6633

F/A-18E SUPER HORNET — PCZ #83 • 84%

If you like your flight sims to be realistic with a great big capital 'R', look no further. In fact, this game is so life-like that the US navy has adopted it for promotional work and ground-based familiarity training. But make sure to watch out for friendly fire.

PUBLISHER Titus Software • 01926 335 5400

MIG ALLEY — PCZ #80 • 84%

MiG Alley gives hardcore flight simmers a run for their money, but don't let that put you off. If you're willing to put in the work, this title will repay you with a wealth of excellent in-flight graphics and a selection of brilliant mission-planning elements.

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 020 8343 7337

FLIGHT UNLIMITED III — PCZ #82 • 83%

For all those sim aficionados who enjoy the experience of flying for its own sake rather than as a lame excuse for blasting other flying things to bits, this (along with the *Flight Sim* series) is an object of worship and devotion. It certainly deserves high praise.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

CRIMSON SKIES — PCZ #96 • 82%

This game moves away from the detailed simulation mould of so many plane games, and concentrates more on all-out dogfighting. It's instantly gratifying, fast paced, entertaining and adds a much needed twist of humour to an otherwise serious genre.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000

SPORTS

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

PCZ #98 • 88%

✪ *Pro Skater 2* is an unbelievable experience. The sense of speed and balance is uncanny, and there is almost as much satisfaction to be had from pulling off an acrobatic new move as there is from watching your skater break every bone as he smashes his face against the concrete. Oh, and the music's fantastic too.

PUBLISHER Activision • 0990 143525

VIRTUAL POOL 3

PCZ #99 • 85%

✪ *VP3* has the perfect physics and graphics of its predecessors plus some cool new features, including multiplayer options, career mode and training videos by pool diva Jeanette Lee. It's the best pool sim you can buy, and it's almost as good as the real thing.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

FIFA 2001

PCZ #97 • 83%

✪ Once again the FIFA franchise gets its yearly makeover. There are only minor improvements over the last version, but it's still the best football game for the PC. The player animations and presentation are spot on, but we can't help feeling there's a better football game to come.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

SUPREME SNOWBOARDING

PCZ #85 • 83%

✪ Snowboarding is not a sport you'd expect to captivate a PC audience, but this game gives as exhilarating an experience as you could hope for without the risk of breaking a leg. Oh, and all the streetwise attitude you'd expect is there too, of course.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF 2000

PCZ #92 • 82%

✪ It's really not much different from last year's title, but this edition has enough subtle tweaks to make it a worthwhile purchase. It also has the best control system we've seen in what is definitely the best golf game available.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 920 9100

NBA LIVE 2000

PCZ #85 • 82%

✪ As slick as always, but what makes this special is the inclusion of teams from the '50s onwards, comedy haircuts and all. It's not quite as immediate as *Inside Drive*, but is a more complete simulation of the sport all round.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

OPEN TENNIS 2000

PCZ #92 • 81%

✪ Not since *Super Tennis* on the SNES have we had so much fun hitting a ball back and forth over a net. After some initial reluctance, the whole office stopped fragging and started lobbing. Incredibly playable and unsurpassed in multiplayer.

PUBLISHER Cryo • 0121 250 5070

JIMMY WHITE'S CUEBALL 2

PCZ #68 • 78%

✪ The finest snooker simulation on the PC. Chalk your cue and take on the PC or your mates and, when you're tired of the baize, you can move round and have a go on the fully featured darts board instead. Saves going down to the Working Men's Club.

PUBLISHER Virgin/Interplay • 020 7551 4266

ACTUA SOCCER 3

PCZ #72 • 72%

✪ If you can't get on with *FIFA* then *Actua* is the second port of call for footy fans. It plays a faster game and there's a good range of options and a huge number of teams to play against, which goes a long way to helping maintain its shelf life.

PUBLISHER Gremlin Interactive • 0114 273 8601

MILLENNIUM GAMES

PCZ #93 • 65%

✪ Everyone remembers the good old days of Daley Thompson's joystick-waggling *Decathlon*. Sergei Bubka might not have quite the same pedigree, but this athletics simulation is loads of fun nonetheless and should keep you entertained for a while.

PUBLISHER Midas • 01782 633500

MANAGEMENT

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: 00/01

PCZ #96 • 93%

✪ This update for the greatest management game ever sees the series improve yet again. New features include increased media involvement, greater backroom staff participation, a live league table and more player information. All this adds to the game's addictiveness, which will once again drain you of your free time and take over your life.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

THE SIMS

PCZ #87 • 85%

✪ This offers a staggering amount of possibilities. Essentially, you create your own person, or family, and guide them through the ups and downs of life. It's the definitive docu-soap and makes for compelling gameplay.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

CAESAR III

PCZ #70 • 84%

✪ Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens. So what? So it's utterly absorbing and probably the most addictive god sim in existence.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 920 9100

SIMCITY 3000

PCZ #74 • 83%

✪ Ten years on, *SimCity* remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings and an enhanced transport system, *SimCity 3000* is a must for old-timers and new addicts alike.

PUBLISHER Maxis/EA • 01753 549442

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON

PCZ #75 • 82%

✪ Pack out your own theme park with the most fiendish rides your imagination can conjure up. From rickety wooden dippers to Nemesis-style, white-knuckle gurners, *RollerCoaster Tycoon* is hugely addictive.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 827 8060

SPACE COMBAT

X - BEYOND THE FRONTIER

PCZ #82 • 87%

✪ The spirit of *Elite* lives on in this massive trading epic from Germany, in which you must buy and fight your way back home to Earth. The combat side of the gameplay may not be the best on offer, but with goods to trade and races to discover, it rewards patience with variety and months of play. This title is deeply hypnotic and beautiful, rather than tense and frenetic.

PUBLISHER THQ • 01483 767656

TERMINUS

PCZ #93 • 86%

✪ Who says the days of independent bedroom programming are over? *Terminus* proves you can make a great game on your own if you have the talent and the passion. It just edges out *FreeSpace 2*.

PUBLISHER Vicarious Visions • www.vvisions.com

FREESPACE 2

PCZ #84 • 85%

✪ Completely different from *X*, *FreeSpace 2* offers fast-paced dogfighting action all the way. It boasts a superb interface, epic story and amazing graphics, but it's a bit short-lived if you don't play online.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

EDGE OF CHAOS: INDEPENDENCE WAR 2 PCZ #104 • 83%

NEW ENTRY It's likely to appeal more to die hard space simmers, but *Edge Of Chaos* still takes steps to advancing the genre. Its graphics and absorbing freeform gaming are inspirational.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 827 8000

X-WING: ALLIANCE

PCZ #77 • 81%

✪ At last! Fly the Millennium Falcon in the final episode of the long-running *X-Wing* series. Certainly the best-looking *X-Wing* game to date, Alliance is slow at first, but boy does it pick up later on.

PUBLISHER Activision •0990 143525

3D ACTION/STRATEGY

OPERATION FLASHPOINT: COLD WAR CRISIS

PCZ #104 • 90%

NEWENTRY The most anticipated military game of the year was worth all the hype and more. This squad-based shooter can be played in both third and first-person and is the ultimate military simulation package, with a stunning atmosphere and superb mission structures. Turn off the phone and lock yourself away because this game deserves your full attention.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS — PCZ #79 • 88%

✪ You don't get a second chance in a real war, and *Hidden & Dangerous* is the game that comes closest to putting you in the middle of hell on earth. It grabs you by the balls from the first mission and doesn't let up.
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

HOSTILE WATERS — PCZ #101 • 87%

✪ A brilliant RTS/action game that you can play purely strategically. However, you can also leap into a unit and get involved in the action. It's just a shame there aren't any multiplayer options though.
PUBLISHER Rage • 01512 372200

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO — PCZ #95 • 85%

✪ This mammoth and origianl 3D action/strategy game includes third-person shooter, RTS, RPG and real-time combat elements. It also features a superbly balanced multiplayer option.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

SWAT 3: ELITE EDITION — PCZ #97 • 84%

✪ AI doesn't come much better. The spectacular graphics and command system come alive here. Although not as fun as *Counter-Strike*, it's more realistic, and features five new maps and countless weapon configurations.
PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 920 9100

ONLINE ONLY

COUNTER-STRIKE

PCZ #98 • 93%

✪ The most widely tested game ever finally comes out of its Beta stage. Most people had reservations about the new models, but you soon get used to their camp animations and begin to appreciate how much more detailed they are. You can expect to see the game improving, as the V1.1 tag suggests there will be plenty of updates in the future.
DOWNLOAD www.counter-strike.net

EVERQUEST: THE RUINS OF KUNARK — PCZ #92 • 90%

✪ The combat-oriented online RPG of choice just got a whole lot better. Chris Anderson has spent months casting spells with hundreds of others and never stops talking about it, so there must be something special going on.
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000

TRIBES 2 — PCZ#103 • 87%

✪ The best multiplayer team-based shooter in existance. *Tribes 2* is well worth persevering with. Superb graphics and a new 3D engine propel it to the frontline of PC gaming.
PUBLISHER Vivendi• 01189 209100

ALLEGIANCE — PCZ #91 • 82%

✪ The first true online-only space combat sim, *Allegiance* is a complex yet rewarding beast. Now you can fly around with hundreds of others, co-ordinating strategies and establishing chains of command.
PUBLISHER Microsoft 0845 7002000

ASHERON'S CALL — PCZ #88 • 76%

✪ The graphics and freedom to do almost anything make this title a commendable addition to the genre. But, as in life, it's seems a tragedy you can't kill other humans as most of the ones you meet deserve a good kicking.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000

PCZONE ALL-TIME CLASSICS

DOOM

✪ This is the game that needs no introduction. Without *Doom* we wouldn't have had *Quake*, *Unreal Tournament* or *Half-Life*. Every time you play a first-person shooter you should take five minutes to pay homage to the game that changed the world as we know it. *Doom*, we thank you.

ULTIMA VII

✪ Still the best of all the *Ultima* games, and probably the finest RPG ever seen on a PC. The graphics might be old-hat, but the gameplay certainly isn't. *Ultima VII* blends exploration and character interaction, and it's the last title in the *Ultima* series to give complete party control.

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD

✪ We reviewed this game back in the first issue of *PC ZONE*. It was a landmark RPG then and it's still a landmark RPG now, although the graphics obviously look a bit tired and dated. Do we think it's the best RPG ever? Almost, but not quite. Cast your eyes up the mag a couple of inches for the answer to that question.

DUNE II

✪ If you know your strategy, you'll know that *Dune II* is the game that's done more than any of its rivals to define the genre as we know it today. The 2000 update was disappointing, but only because it didn't add anything new. The fact that it still plays better than many new titles is testament to its staying power.

SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER

✪ EA's *FIFA* series might look the part, but we're convinced that *Sensible Soccer* was and is the ultimate example of gameplay over presentation. With its famous top-down view, *Sensible* offers fast frantic action that does more to replicate the real-life game than any of its predecessors.

UFO: ENEMY UNKNOWN

✪ This game came out of nowhere and took the world by storm. Compelling strategy, tense turn-based battles and a myriad of research options made this the most addictive game ever upon its arrival. Subsequent sequels were just as addictive, but this is the game that originally captured our hearts.

MAGIC CARPET

✪ Drawing gasps of amazement from everyone who saw it, Bullfrog's *Magic Carpet* was one of the most original and inventive games to be released in the early days of 3D. So original, in fact, that it never got the recognition it deserved. We still think the blend of action and strategy was spot-on.

WING COMMANDER

✪ The original space combat game spawned the first big-budget PC series. In fact, the Wing Commander series was so hugely successful that they went and made a film. Inevitably, this was absolute rubbish and the public stayed away in their millions. Will these people never learn?

TOMB RAIDER

✪ She might be getting a bit rusty round the gills, but when Lara first bounced onto the small screen, we fell in love with her instantly. 3D action adventure games haven't been the same since and at the time nothing could touch it. Do you remember your first encounter with the *T-Rex*?

CIVILISATION

✪ The original and some say the best turn-based strategy game. When *Civilization* first appeared, it was hailed correctly as the first game that changed and evolved depending on how you played it. Recent versions have presented more of the same, but in this case that is definitely no bad thing.

RETROZONE

NOVEMBER 1998

Can it really be two and a half years ago? Time flies when you're having fun...

TIMELESS Keith Pullin

HEADLINES

A 24-year-old Tokyo woman takes her own life using cyanide capsules acquired on the Internet • Microsoft admits there is a Y2K bug in Windows 98 • The 7th body is exhumed in Dr Harold Shipman murder case

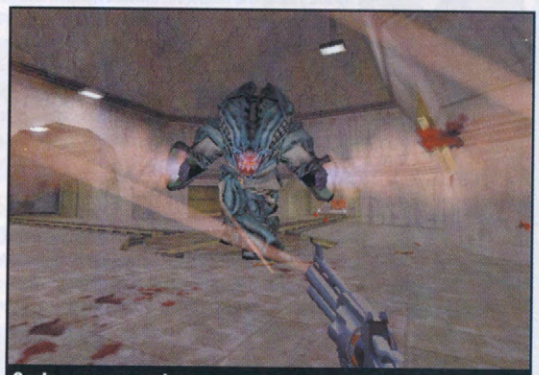
HALF-LIFE

When our lives became whole

Well, what can we say about *Half-Life*? When this *Quake* driven FPS first came out we were impressed to say the least. The amazing plot, brilliant gameplay and superb graphics changed our outlook on FPSs completely. The bolted on, poorly conceived plots of other shooters like *Quake II*, seemed positively amateurish compared to the twisting, immersive professionalism of *Half-Life*. Eventually we were so bowled over we had to give it 95 per cent – our joint highest score to date.

Now, two and a half years after it first hit our PCs, Valve Software's masterpiece is still doing the business thanks to a slew of mission packs, mods and add-ons. The interest in *Half-Life* is unwavering and with *Half-Life: Blue Shift* on the horizon we prepare ourselves once again to be gobsmacked.

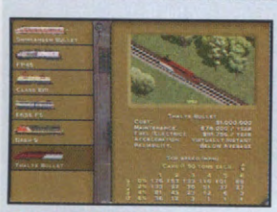
Oh, and then there's the *Counter-Strike* side of things; it's still unbelievable how addicted people get to this game. Personally I'd rather get out and play a nice round of golf. Then again...


Oooh – scary monster.

As usual there's a lot more going on than simply running and shooting.

That should teach him.

THE BEST OF THE REST



RAILROAD TYCOON 2
Take 2 Interactive

Railroad Tycoon **was something of a cult hit, but this follow up was surprisingly dour. Obviously, the subject matter doesn't help, but ultimately it was the flimsy gameplay that put us off. Yet, despite its overall meekness its popularity among enthusiasts ensures it's still being played.**

KING'S QUEST: MASK OF ETERNITY
Sierra

Sierra's last desperate attempt to save the *King's Quest* series from oblivion was met with failure. At the time *Mask Of Eternity* was supposed to herald a new dawn in adventuring. In hindsight releasing an average action/adventure was probably not the best way to further one's lineage.

GRIM FANDANGO
Activision

On the other hand there was *Grim Fandango*. For some this is the last great game LucasArts made. For others it signalled the end of a glorious era. One thing is certain though, if you want an example of what an adventure game is, *Grim Fandango* is the daddy. Make sure this game is in your collection.

FALLOUT 2
Interplay

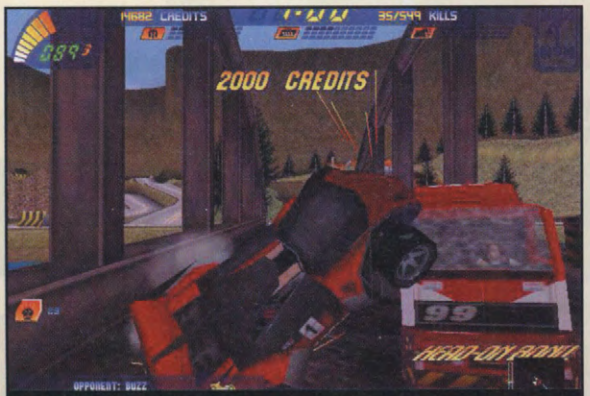
Fallout 2 **was pretty much like *Fallout* but bigger and bleaker. It also contained some of the filthiest language you've ever heard in your life. In fact, it was a marathon swearfest that made Joe Pesci sound like a Teletubby. Blue language aside, *Fallout 2* is still one of the best RPG's available.**

GANGSTERS: ORGANISED CRIME
Eidos

And talking of wise guys, it's worth mentioning *Gangsters: Organised Crime*. There was nothing foul and abusive about this game apart from the gameplay and interface. We tried to have fun but ended up poking our eyes out with pool cues. But it's looking like *Gangsters 2* will be far superior.

<< STOP PRESS >>

GAMING NEWS FOR NOVEMBER '98



Don't know what all the fuss was about really.

"If I had my moss arrows I'd show 'em."

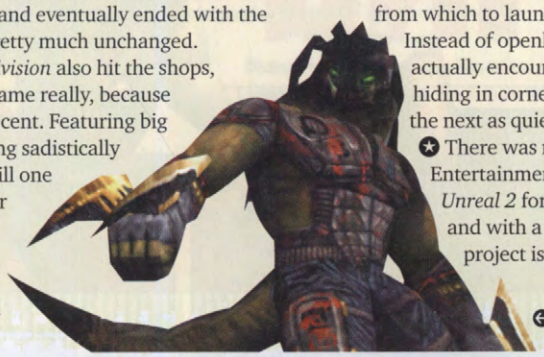
This was also a time that saw SCI and the BBFC constantly at each other's throats due to a bloodthirsty little game called *Carmageddon II*. Matters were not helped when the BBFC couldn't run an evaluation version of the nihilistic racer because it didn't have a 3D-accelerator card. Doh. The matter rolled on for a few months and eventually ended with the game remaining on sale, pretty much unchanged.

Shogo: Mobile Armour Division also hit the shops, but it didn't do too well. Shame really, because we gave it a score of 92 per cent. Featuring big robots and little people being sadistically crushed underfoot this is still one of the best robot games ever released on the PC – if you find it on budget, get it.

A lot of us were getting excited about a game called *Galleon*. But as you may know, we're still waiting for it. We're not so excited now, but it's interesting to note there are games that can approach *Black & White* when it comes to lateness.

There were no flies on *Thief: The Metal Age* though. Looking Glass's excellent Dark Engine proved to be the perfect platform from which to launch a new genre – the sneak 'em up. Instead of openly engaging in combat, players were actually encouraged to avoid combat entirely by hiding in corners and moving from one location to the next as quietly as possible.

There was much early Christmas rejoicing as Legend Entertainment announced it would be developing *Unreal 2* for Epic Megagames. A couple of years later, and with a different publisher at the helm, the project is still unreleased. Unreal indeed.


Unreal 2... we're still waiting.

Now that was satisfying.

Driving a tank has never been so easy.

WARGASM

The reality of war

DID's groundbreaking combat simulation did something we never thought possible, like we said in the review at the time: "It [*Wargasm*] does for military simulators what *Command & Conquer* did for wargames: makes them accessible, fast and fun." And we meant it.

Despite the fact that *Wargasm* had its fair share of tactical maps and strategies to master, it remained interesting and compulsive at all times. A lot of this was down to the arcade feel of the game, and while it was true that you needed to press about a hundred keys at once to play the thing properly, it was massively playable and enjoyable.

Wargasm was the closest you could get to *Saving Private Ryan* on your PC. You could pilot helicopters, drive all types of vehicles and play the game through the eyes of the soldier in the heart of the battle. The graphics were beautiful and the sound was even better – you could even hear the rain rattling on your tin helmet during a storm. What else could you want?

FORCEFED GAMES

PC gadgets started to make their mark as the 20th century ebbed away, and force feedback was all the rage. We had hours of fun trying out various different racing games with numerous different steering wheels and eventually concluded that the Ultim@te Race Pro and the Microsoft Sidewinder Force Feedback Wheel was the best combination. Sadly, with a combined price approaching £200, it wasn't the sort of thing you could convince your family to get you for Christmas.

When it came to PC graphics, things were looking good. The best value for money card was the Maxi Gamer Phoenix at just £99. Using 3dfx's new Banshee chipset its performance was only slightly inferior to the vastly overpriced Matrox Millennium G200.

Overall, prices on most new, boxed, hardware items, were not that different to what they are today.

Feel the force.

TOP 5 1998 PC GAMES

1	PREMIER LEAGUE FOOTBALL MANAGER 99
2	DUNE 2000
3	KLINGON: HONOUR GUARD
4	AGE OF EMPIRES
5	COMMANDOS: BEHIND ENEMY LINES

compiled by charttrack

ON THE CD

This month our cover discs are bursting with *PC ZONE* goodness, for your essential gaming vitamins

WORDS Rhianna Pratchett DISCS Cecil Ashitey and Lee Cocker

HELP!

CD trouble? Don't worry – phone our helpline and sort yourself out pronto.

CD ROM HELP PHONE INTERCHANGE on 0152 5711 482 any weekday between 9.30am and 5pm, and Saturday between 10am and 2pm, **or email pc_zone@interchange.co.uk** Please do NOT phone the *PC ZONE* office. Thanks.

BEFORE YOU DIAL... IF YOU ARE CALLING THE HELPLINE, PLEASE TAKE NOTE OF THE FOLLOWING POINTS If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call. If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – ie system type, soundcard, RAM and so on – plus the nature of the fault. Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call, so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

You need at least a Pentium 266 with 32Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROMs

Many of the programs on our cover CDs are designed to run under Windows 95/98 and, as a result, some of them may require a Pentium II 300 with 64Mb RAM to run satisfactorily. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card to run. Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are 3D accelerator only

DISCLAIMER

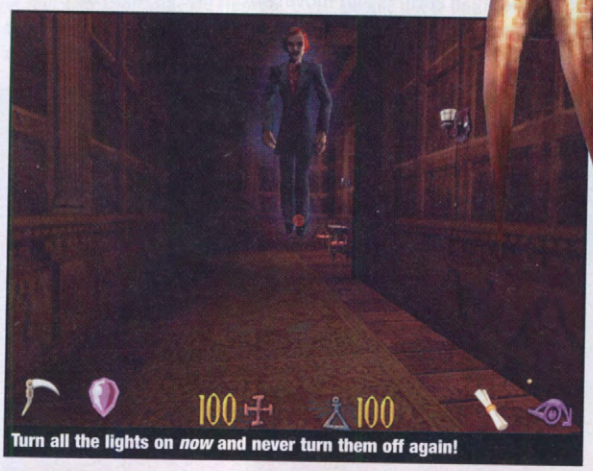
This disc has been thoroughly tested at all stages of its production. However, it is always wise to use a virus checker on any software before running it. Dennis Publishing Limited cannot accept any responsibility for any loss, disruption or damage to your data or your computer system (including hardware) that may occur while using either the disc or programs and data on it.

ON THE CD

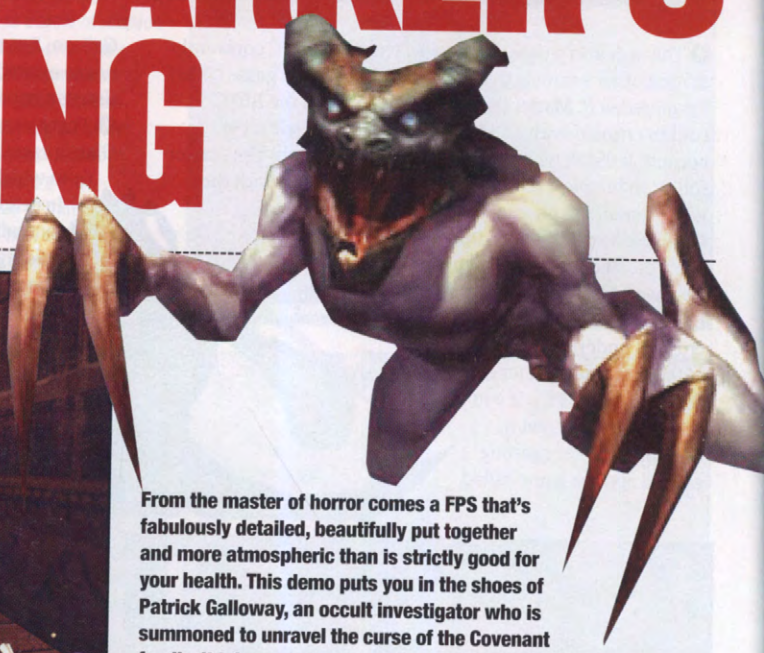
DEMOS

CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING

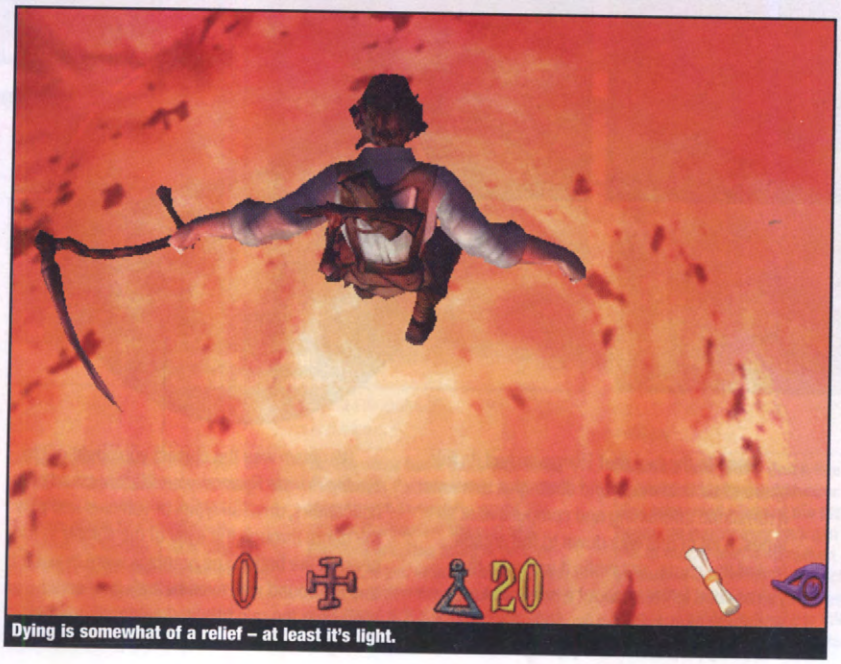
EA · Disc 1



Turn all the lights on *now* and never turn them off again!



From the master of horror comes a FPS that's fabulously detailed, beautifully put together and more atmospheric than is strictly good for your health. This demo puts you in the shoes of Patrick Galloway, an occult investigator who is summoned to unravel the curse of the Covenant family. It takes you through various areas of the game to give you a great insight into this truly scary game. Just keep repeating to yourself, 'it's just a demo, it's just a demo'.



Dying is somewhat of a relief – at least it's light.

CONTROLS

Weapon fire	Left mouse button or Insert
Weapon select	Delete or E
Spell fire	Right mouse button or Home
Spell select	End or R
Weapon action	Alt or Caps Lock
Move forward	Up arrow or W
Move backward	Down arrow or S
Sidestep left	Left arrow or A
Sidestep right	Right arrow or D
Duck	Shift or C
Jump	Ctrl or Space
Next inventory item	V or right bracket
Previous inventory	F or left bracket
Use inventory item	Enter or Q
Next weapon	2 or Mouse wheel down
Previous weapon	1 or Mouse wheel up
Next spell	4
Previous spell	3
QuickSave	F6
QuickLoad	F7
View journal	F3
Pause game	Pause/Break

E3 SPECIAL

We went, we saw, and we drank plenty of beer, but luckily we managed to post these trailers back before we got too blottoed. You can find the following by clicking the Hotshots 2 tab on Disc 2.

Duke Nukem Forever
Medal Of Honour
Warcraft III
Max Payne
Diablo II: Lord Of Destruction
Bacteria

And the rest, including our fantabulous cover game, *Neverwinter Nights*, by clicking the Online tab on Disc 1:

Planetside
Motor City Online
Neverwinter Nights
Freelancer

STARTOPIA

Eidos · Disc 1

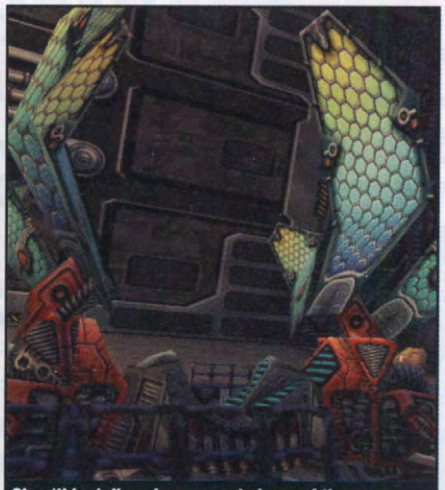
A cute but tough take on the god game/building sim genre that lets you try your hand at creating your own interstellar town. Learn the basics of constructing and running a small space station and interact with your alien visitors. A sure-fire winner for lovers of *The Sims* and devotees of everything from the Bullfrog stable.

CONTROLS

Open/close interfaces	Right mouse button
Interact with objects	Left mouse button
Scroll	Arrow keys
Change height	Mouse wheel/Insert and Delete
Looking around	Mouse button 3/ Right Ctrl + mouse

"Are we nearly there yet?"

Get out and meet your aliens.



Oh a 'thing'. I've always wanted one of those.

SAFARI BIATHLON RACER

Softwrap · Disc 2

This oddly titled futuristic arcade-style racer has nothing to do with shooting giraffes, which came as bit of a disappointment to Anthony. Secure the top spots in each race by shooting your opponents so you can win more prize money, buy better vehicles, and compete on the more challenging tracks.

CONTROLS

Forward	Forward arrow
Backwards	Back arrow
Left	Left arrow
Right	Right arrow
Fire	Space

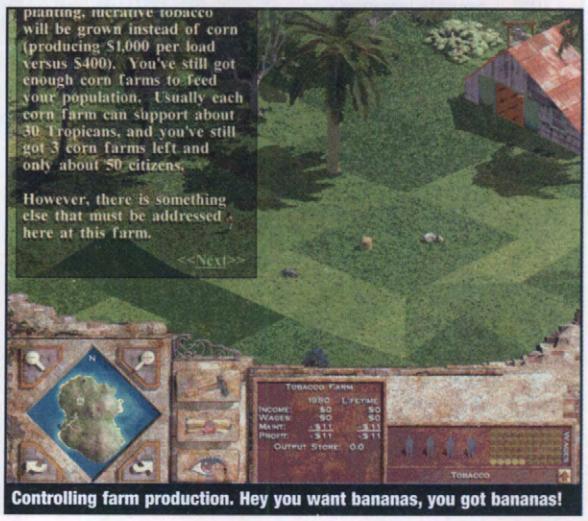
TROPICO

Take 2 Interactive · Disc 1

We didn't rate the 'be your own dictator' building sim *Tropico* particularly highly and now here's your chance to tell us where we should shove our cigars. Learn the basics of running your own tropical island in this tutorial and keep your virtual paradise ticking over for 50 years.

CONTROLS

Almanac window	A	**Increase game speed**	+
Toggle trees off	T	**Decrease game speed**	–
Toggle building transparency	B	**Zoom in NumPad**	8
Toggle grid on	G	**Zoom out NumPad**	2
Toggle weather graphics off	W	**Rotate left NumPad**	4
View last message	M	**Rotate right NumPad**	6
Quit	Q	**Settings window**	F2
Save game	S	**Toggle to 8-bit graphics**	F3
Load game	L	**Toggle full screen/window mode**	F4
Track selected unit	Shift + T	**Go down one resolution**	F6
Pause/unpause	Pause	**Go up one resolution**	F7



Controlling farm production. Hey you want bananas, you got bananas!

ECHELON

Buka Entertainment · Disc 2

Take a white-knuckle ride over alien planets and towering cities behind the flight stick of the crème de la crème of combat ships. You're a member of an elite flying force facing down a revolution on a colonial outpost. Take one of five ships for a spin through three combat missions for a taste of this game's spectacular 3D engine.

Taking in a bit of scenery.

Die, Die, Die!

CONTROLS

(See read me file for complete list)

Nose up	Down arrow
Nose down	Up arrow
Turn left	W
Turn right	R
Bank left	Left Arrow
Bank right	Right Arrow
Move forward	D
Move backward	Space
Move left	S
Move right	F
Move up	E
Move down	X
Set engine throttle to 0%	0
Decrease engine throttle 10%	–
Increase engine throttle 10%	=
Set engine throttle to 100%	Backspace
Fire	Mouse 1

A bit of wild boar goes down a treat.

ASTERIX MEGA MADNESS

Infogrames · Disc 2

If you've always wanted to engage in some Gaulish antics along the lines of catapult pulling and food shovelling, then this is the demo for you. All character areas have been covered: Obelix for the overweight, Mrs Geriatrix for the ladies and Cacofonix for those of uncertain sexuality.

CONTROLS

Navigate in menus	Arrow keys
Move bone cursor in the menus	Mouse
Confirm a menu choice	Left mouse button
Return to previous menu	Right mouse button
Return to previous menu	Esc
Accept a menu choice	Return
Throw rock over your shoulder	A
Load/Fire Catapult	Q
Pause	P
Eat	Arrow keys
Discard food	A
Steal opponent's food/Punch opponent	Q

MERCHANT PRINCE II

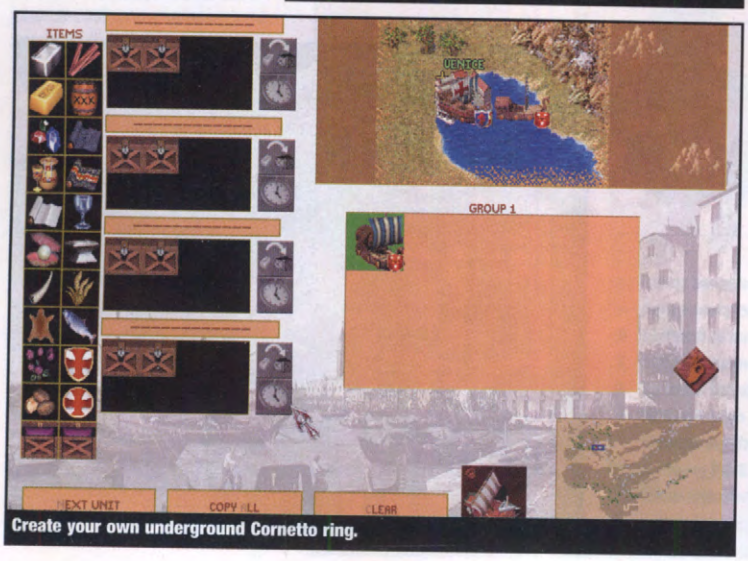
Take 2 · Disc 1

Venture deep into the heart of Renaissance Venice in this turn-based strategy game of economic, political and military conquest. This 15-turn version of the full game lets you join in the bribery, corruption and Cornetto-eating in your ascent to greatness.

CONTROLS

Den of Iniquities	F1
Popularity	F2
Buy units	F3
Hire mercenaries	F4
Saint Mark's Basilica	F5
The Doge	F6
Save dialogue	F7
Load dialogue	F8
QuickSave	F9
QuickLoad	F10

Be sneaky and underhand. You know you want to.



Create your own underground Cornetto ring.

ON THE CD PATCHES CD1

Flanker 2.5 Update for non-3dfx cards

Flanker 2.5 Update for Voodoo 4 & 5

Flanker 2.5 Update for Voodoo 1-3

ON THE CD PATCHES CD2

Age of Sail v1.51

B-17: The Mighty Eighth v2.0

Battle Isle: The Andosia War v2.08

Delta Force: Land Warrior Update

Diablo II v1.06b

Diablo v1.09

Eracer v117

Eurofighter Typhoon v1.1

Fly II Update 1

Fly II Update 2

High Heat Major League Baseball 2002 v1.1

Kohan: Immortal Sovereigns v1.0.9. from 1.0.2

Kohan: Immortal Sovereigns v1.0.9. from 1.0.7

Majesty: Northern Expansion Update 2

Mech Warrior 4 v 1.5

Myst 3 v1.1

Panzar Elite v1.08

Rune v1.07

Search And Rescue 2 v1.03

Serious Sam v1.00c

Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force

Starcraft 1.08b

Starcraft Brood War v1.08b

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2001 v1.2

Tribes 2 v22755

Tropico v1.02

Warcraft II Battle.Net Edition 2.02

X-Tension 1.1 to 2.1

X-Tension 1.4 to 2.1

X-Tension 1.5 to 2.1

X-Tension 2.0 to 2.1

ON THE CD MODWATCH CD2

Chaos Deathmatch for Quake II

Chaos CTF Add-on

Chaos Maps 1

Vampire Slayer v1.1 for Half-Life

Feba 1.68 for UT

CTF-FlaQ2

TodesAngst For Half-Life

Bouncy Q3A

ON THE CD EXTENDED PLAY CD2

Turn to page 142 where Tony Lamb brings you the best in *Delta Force: Land Warrior* and *Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2* maps.

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER SPECIAL

TD ZONE Volume One. Files and tactics, courtesy of www.thedugout.net

Fact #1: *Championship Manager* is the best footy management game

Fact #2: Follow the *TD ZONE* regularly and you can be the best manager in the world (possibly)

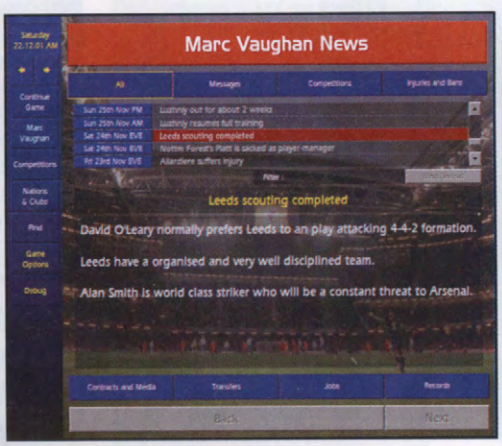
Is your sheepskin coat dragging along the floor? Do you need a bit of help pulling your band of strugglers out of the relegation zone? This month, leading up to the release of the brand new *01/02* update to *Championship Manager*, we're proud to bring you the first in a regular series of collaborations between *PC ZONE* and the biggest, most successful, and generally spiffing *CM* website, The Dugout. The aim is to make sure that you get the most out of the UK's biggest-selling game and that your managerial skills are honed to perfection before the start of the new season.

This month we've got a guide to the English League for *CM 00/01*, a collection of new menu bars to brighten up your otherwise dreary existence (and a simple tutorial that explains how to install them). There's also new utilities and updates, the latest patch and two secret tactics that will make your opponents quake in their moulded boots. And, just for good measure, we've included the latest news on the forthcoming update as well as the next full release, *Championship Manager 4*. Next month we'll be taking our summer holidays in the Spanish Primera division, and teaching you how to set up and play a network game with your mates.

> **"Get the most out of the UK's biggest-selling game, and make sure your managerial skills are honed to perfection before the start off the new season"**

All you need to do to use the guide is click on the *TD ZONE* tab on the CD interface, or you can drag the whole folder onto your hard disk and use it from there by double-clicking on the guide.html file.

Special thanks to David Challoner, Thomas Gill, Ross Lewsey and Mark Geneste for producing the content. If you want to know more about *Champ Man* then check out The Dugout's website (**www.thedugout.net**), which includes regular updates, in-depth tutorials and custom graphics. You know it makes sense.



EXTENDED PLAY

This month's Extended Play is a delicious mix of varying game styles that even telly cook Delia Smith would be proud to give a good stir. Strategy fanatics can bask in the glory that is *Black & White*, war game aficionados get to send their troops to horrible deaths in *Ground Control*, and shoot 'em up nuts can get their bloodthirsty kicks with the *Quake III*-based *Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force*

TRY IT YOURSELF

ON THE CD

For *Black & White*, the maps should be extracted from their zip files into your Black & White/Scripts/Playgrounds directory and selected from the skirmish game menu. The utilities are .exe files (so usual .exe caveats apply) and will either offer on-screen instructions as you go along or can just be extracted into their own directory and run from there. *Ground Control* maps should unzip into the Sierra/Gc.data/maps directory – with the exception of the Arrakis mod. Make sure you check out the readme file for that one as it has specific instructions that must be followed both before and after use. All other maps can be selected from the appropriate in-game menu. *Elite Force* maps should be extracted into the Raven/STVEF/BaseEF directory and can then be chosen from the multiplayer menu and configured to your heart's content.

BLACK & WHITE

After an age of speculation and ever more tantalising glimpses, Lionhead's outstandingly original take on the god game genre arrived at the *PC ZONE* offices and all that could be heard was the thud of dropping chins as the team gathered round for a peek. From its stunning opening sequence to every subtle nuance of the AI, dazzling imagination and standard-defining levels of interaction, *Black & White* proved to be a work of genius. It's now old enough for the first extras to start appearing, and we've got a few of them here...

MAYHEM 1.03

MAP OF THE MONTH MAYHEM 1.03

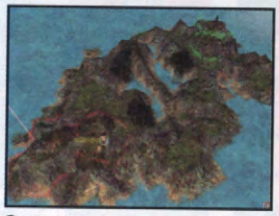
Filename: Mayhem.zip
Size: 18Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪
Author: Scorpio 518

Mayhem 1.03 is a four-player map in which you have to fight three other gods for control of the realm. Each of you starts with a settlement under your control, but there are also four more non-aligned villages and it is up to you to try to get control of these to gain the upper hand. All of the areas controlled by the gods are in close proximity, with some overlap in places, so fisticuffs won't take long to start.

Expect lots of opposition to your conquest of the Mayhem map.

✪ LAST HOPE (MAP)

Filename: last_hope.zip
Size: 13Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪
Author: Donald Thibert



Last Hope will need some work to win, but it's worth it.

The story behind this map is that a horrific plague has hit the people on whose worship all the god's strengths depend. You've managed to save a few of your people, but the island you take them to already has another god on it and you'll need to get your folks breeding fast to beat him. Keep them happy, keep them well fed with shelter over their heads and you just might win.

✪ LITTLE PLAYGROUND (MAP)

Filename: littleplayground.zip
Size: 16Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪
Author: Daniel Wicke

There are lots of miracles available in Little Playground.

Little Playground is a two-god battle. You both start off controlling roughly half of this figure-eight shaped island, so both of you have one major settlement and a couple of satellite villages. This means that conflict is bound to happen pretty quickly as you start to explore. You'll soon find out that your enemy makes good use of the many miracles dotted about on the island, so take care.

Last Hope will see plenty of scrapping action.

✪ TATTOO MANAGER AND TATTOO PACK (UTIL)

Filename: tattooman_v01.exe and [BWE]Tattoo_Pack_001.zip
Size: 629Kb and 280Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪
Author: DarkFame and BWEditor

Tattoo Manager makes it easy to view and change your creature's artwork.

If you want to check out the tattoos on your creature and either edit or remove them, then usually you'd have to do it from inside the game and that would, of course, involve a load of hassle. So here's a simpler way – use DarkFame's tattoo manager instead. It's simple to use, does most of the work for you (with your own greyscale 64x64 bitmaps for tattoos if you want) and it makes your tattoos available for multiplayer and Internet games. Also included is BWEditor's tattoo pack, which has loads of designs in it for you to rummage through. File instructions are in the zipped .txt file.

> **"Why anyone would choose a baboon as their godly persona is a mystery"**

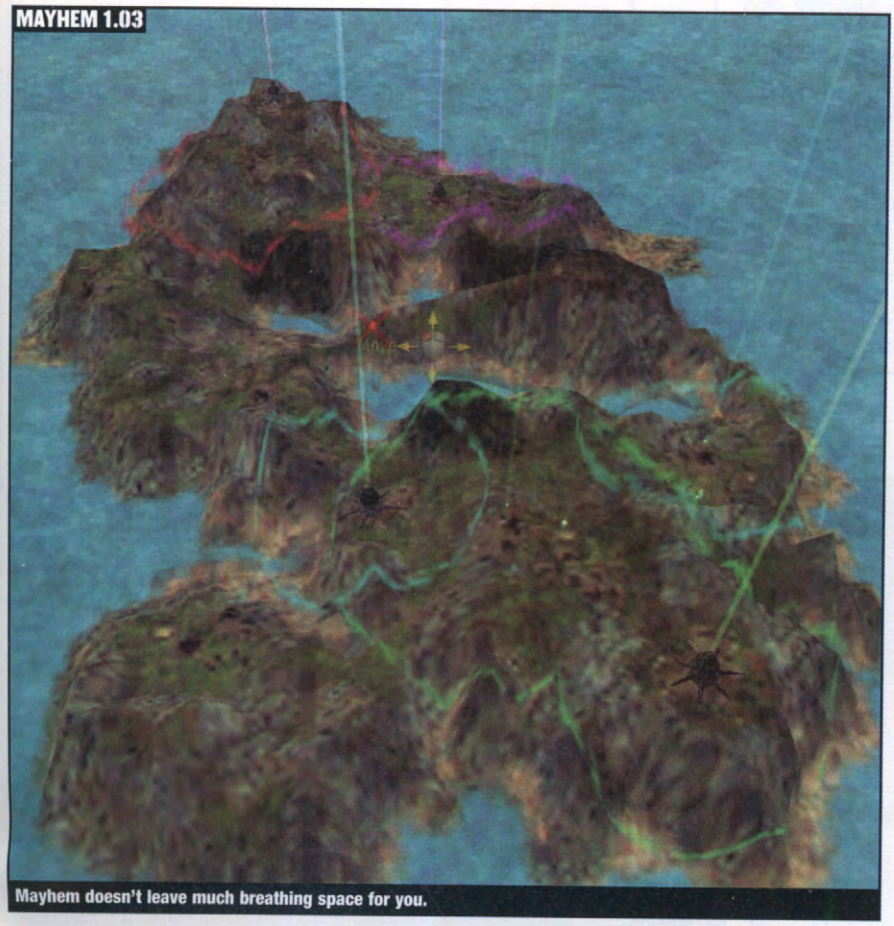
✪ EXTRA CREATURES – GORILLA, HORSE, LEOPARD AND MANDRILL

Filename: creaturecd_gorilla.exe, creaturecd_horse.exe, creaturecd_leopard.exe and creaturecd_mandrill.exe
Size: 268Kb each
Rating: ✪✪✪
Author: Lionhead

Lionhead's Gorilla add-on. Go on, give him a big hug.

If you decided to be a tiger but now wish you'd chosen a gorilla, horse, leopard or mandrill as your creature then these files from Lionhead will help you. They're straightforward installs, and the .exe files will put the

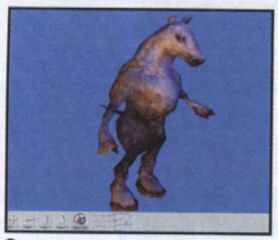
MAYHEM 1.03



Mayhem doesn't leave much breathing space for you.

creature data straight into the right directories (though why on earth anyone would really choose to have their godly persona in the shape of a baboon whose face looks like his behind really is a bit of a mystery). Since you normally start the game with only three choices, four more can't be bad. Check them out in conjunction with the creature-changer utility.

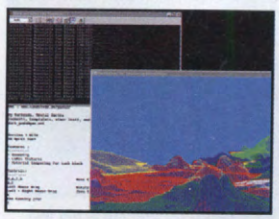
CREATURE CHANGER (UTIL)
Filename: change_creature_v1 .zip
Size: 283Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪
Author: Bruno Christiano



Lionhead's Horse add-on. Looks a bit aggressive as it happens. Bit scared.

Creature Changer is a utility that will allow you to change your creature without losing his personality or any of the nifty stuff he's already learnt. That means that if you chose a cow but decide you'd rather be represented by a chimp then you can do it quite easily… and vice versa. Look in the zipped readme.htm file for instructions.

LAND VIEWER BETA 1 (UTIL)
Filename: landviewer_1_beta.zip
Size: 111Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪
Author: Dark Yoda



Land Viewer gives a neat 3D wiremesh view of any .lnd file.

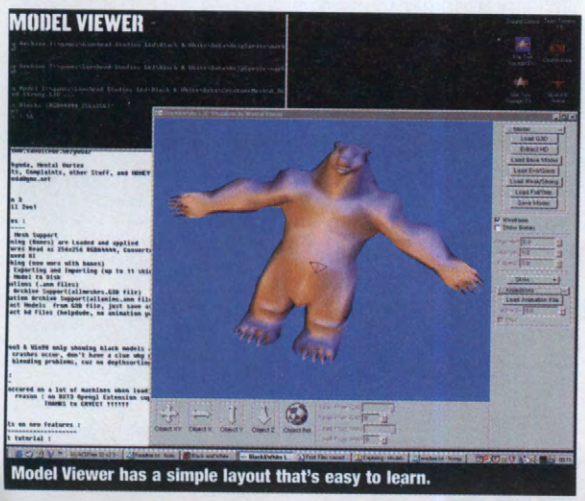
Land Viewer is a handy utility that will let you take a look at any of *Black & White*'s .lnd landscape files. This can be done either in solid or wiremesh form, with different colours of the mesh showing differences in the land beneath. The viewed land can be rotated or zoomed into, and while it can't be directly amended the utility is useful for seeing the way an overall layout works.

MODEL VIEWER V3B (UTIL)
Filename: modelviewer_3b.zip
Size: 170Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪
Author: Dark Yoda

Model Viewer has lots of features.

Model Viewer is version 3 of a great tool for editing items in *B&W*. It has an impressive list of features including skinning, morphing and animation (check out the readme.txt file for the full list as well as a brief tutorial) and will no doubt prove useful to anyone who wants to take their status as a god that one step forward. There are a couple of bugs hidden in there but Yoda is working on them.

MODEL VIEWER



Model Viewer has a simple layout that's easy to learn.

LITTLE PLAYGROUND

Your opponent in Little Playground won't give up without a fight.

Lionhead's Leopard add-on looks as if he needs a meal.

NET ADDRESSES BLACK & WHITE

Oh, strategy games don't have to be as complicated as all that you know. Check out the following sites and simplify your life

www.pczone.co.uk
The first place to look for every gaming desire your heart could possibly entertain.

www.lionhead.com
Lionhead is the company behind this amazing game and this is its homepage. Find out more right here.

www.bwgame.com
Lordy, it's Lionhead's own *Black & White* dedicated site. You'll need to register a name to play online so get there fast before someone else grabs yours.

www.planetblackandwhite.com
It comes as no surprise to see that there's now a 'planet' site for *B&W*. Check it out for news, hints, files and lots more.

www.edencentral.com
Lots of *Black & White* goodies for you to enjoy. Have a look to find news, clans, tools, utilities and links.

www.bwcenter.com
Enough downloads, news and other nifty bits and pieces to keep you happy for ages.

www.bweditors.bwcenter.com/mods/dynews
The place for information on Dark Yoda's *B&W* editing tools. Check it out for updates and other handy stuff.

http://bwtop50.qb45.com
If the sites here aren't enough for you then check this one out for size. It's a set of banners and links for the top 50 *B&W* websites. Cool eh?

CRAYVEN CORP: OPERATION ARRAKIS (CAMPAIGN MOD)

MAP OF THE MONTH CRAVEN CORP

Filename: Arrakis.zip
Size: 7.25Mb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪
Author: Niklas 'Alien' Larsson

If you're a fan of Frank Herbert's visionary *Dune* novels then this mod might be right up your street. Essentially a set of five maps that run consecutively to create the mod, Arrakis sees your forces fighting to execute a search-and-rescue mission to go and find a couple of trucks that are stranded in the deserts of Arrakis. Once you find them, you then have to get them back in one piece. One word of warning though, make sure you read the .txt file in the zip file for installation instructions and follow them carefully.

Arrakis is all action.

GROUND CONTROL

***Ground Control* is the RTS game that threw away the rulebook. Massive Entertainment decided that resource management and structure building was just too much aggravation, so that idea went in the bin and they turned their attention to the tactical battle element instead. It's one for the armchair general in all of us.**

✪ WC2K MAP-PACK

Filename: wc2kmappack.zip
Size: 946Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪
Author: Niklas 'Alien' Larsson

The Jungle map isn't one for heavy armour.

This map-pack contains three multiplayer maps and they're not too shabby at all, with one in a desert, one in a jungle and one in a winter environment. In fact, they're so good, that they've been used in *Ground Control* deathmatch competitions. Sadly, they won't work as single-player maps as they're designed for human vs human battles, but you can easily set them up on a LAN. These are top-flight maps for multiplayer action.

✪ OUTPOST (MAP)

Filename: Outpost.zip
Size: 542Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪
Author: Ninja Prime

Outpost needs tactical troop placement if you want to win.

In this single-player mission you take command of New Dawn forces to protect your base from the ravages of a Crayven Corp attack. If you succeed then you can look forward to some hefty reinforcements and challenging new objectives.

✪ 2TRIBES (MAP)

Filename: 2_tribes.zip
Size: 733Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪
Author: Ninja Prime

2Tribes has some nasty shocks in store.

This map sees you in command of Crayven Corp forces as you assault a desert base held by rebel Crayven troops. Your instructions are to capture the radar station intact, destroying the enemy command centre, research building and control tower. You must also leave the power complex unscathed. Beware, the landscape is unforgiving and there are some nasty surprises waiting for you.

NET ADDRESSES GROUND CONTROL

Everything you ever wanted to know about *Ground Control* but were afraid to ask...

www.pczone.co.uk
The first place to look for every gaming desire your heart could entertain.

www.massive.se/gcdownload
The team that brought you *Ground Control* has a website – and this is it. This link will take you to their download page where you'll find the latest patches and map packs.

www.sierrastudios.com/games/groundcontrol
The Sierra Studios' page for *Ground Control*.

STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE

Inspired by *Star Trek* and powered by *Quake III*, *Elite Force* showed that Id's fantastic graphics engine doesn't only work with dungeons and gruesome monsters. *Star Trek: Voyager – Elite Force* has full bot support and some great weapons – what more could you want?

✪ PADKITCHEN (MAP)

Filename: Efpadkitchen.zip
Size: 9.27Mb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪✪
Author: Padman

Beware of the cooker rings in Padkitchen – they get hot!

Converted from a *Quake III* predecessor, Padkitchen is staggeringly detailed and everything from the packets of cereal on the shelves to the magazines dotted about and the glowing cooker rings would make you think that Padman's invented a shrink-o-ray and been there himself. Padkitchen provides plenty of vantage points, power-ups and in-yer-face fragging action.

✪ PADGARDEN (MAP)

Filename: EF_Padgarden.zip
Size: 10.27Mb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪
Author: Padman

It might be a small area, but the Padgarden map packs a lot in.

It's another monster effort from Padman as he brings his garden to life in glorious technicolour. Nothing has escaped his attention from the birdbath to the garden pond and the selection of garden tools that are laying around for you to dodge. It's always a bright and sunny day in this garden and the combination of *Quake III* pace and Padman's slavish attention to detail makes for a map that's great fun.

NET ADDRESSES STAR TREK VOYAGER

The ship's docked and it's time for a little bit of relaxation baby. Check out these sites for some Padman-related frolics and more

www.pczone.co.uk
The first place to look for every gaming desire your heart could entertain.

www.ravensoft.com/eliteforce/
This is the official site with news, screens and FAQs brought to you by the team who gave you the game.

www.padman.de
The homepage for Padman and his outrageous STVEF and *Quake III* maps. If you want to see the most incredibly detailed maps about then this is the place to go.

PADCENTER

MAP OF THE MONTH PADCENTER

Filename: EF_padcenter.zip
Size: 9.55Mb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪✪
Author: Padman

This map is basically a shopping mall, and you get to use some valuable offship leave to run around the shops fragging the ass off your colleagues. Watch out for the trademark Padman attention to detail and bright colours, and enjoy. Look out for a certain games mag in a shopfront display too...

Padcenter is a large and wonderfully designed map.

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COMMENT

Games is games and films is films and never the twain should meet. Not unless you understand the difference between the two. *Paul Presley* explains...

CELLULOID MAN Paul Presley

Remember the day you heard George Lucas was going to make a new *Star Wars* film? Remember the giddy excitement you felt as you realised you were going to be present at the start of a new legacy? The ecstatic thrills that coursed through your body as you thought you'd get to see TIE Fighters again? The naked dancing in the streets that accompanied every made up Internet rumour, especially the ones about the planet of the Wookies and the army of Boba Fetts? Then, do you remember the crushing disappointment of actually seeing *The Phantom Menace* and realising that the entity known as 'Star Wars' had been forever ruined in your mind and that you would never be able to look at the original trilogy with the same level of reverence ever again?

If a single film can devastate an entire saga, imagine what damage a seemingly never-ending barrage of awful gaming tie-ins can do to destroy its soul. No one's arguing that the *Star Wars* legend wasn't built primarily on its merchandising, but at least the toys stuck faithfully to the background material (even if you used to have an army of Stormtroopers going up against Action Force for control of Castle Greyskull).

Time was you could get away with cheap and cheerful cash-ins. Back in the days of 8-bit giants such as the ZX Spectrum and the Commodore 64, just about every film licence was a side-on platform game, no matter what the original material. *Robocop*? Side-on platform jumper. *The Blues Brothers*? Side-on platform jumper. *Casablanca*? Side-on platform jumper.

But you could get away with it back then. Gaming was in its infancy, the audience was less sophisticated and far less mainstream. Nowadays we're apparently making more money than Hollywood and Ealing Studios combined, our gaming icons are more recognisable to the man in the street than any politician and **www.larasusedbras.com** is the second most browsed website on the net, next to that one featuring a man having sex with a yak. Consequently the audience demands a little more respect. You can't just throw any old crap at them and expect them to eat it with smiles on their faces.

"Think that you can just stick a recognisable head on any half-baked idea and you'll be inviting scorn and hatred"

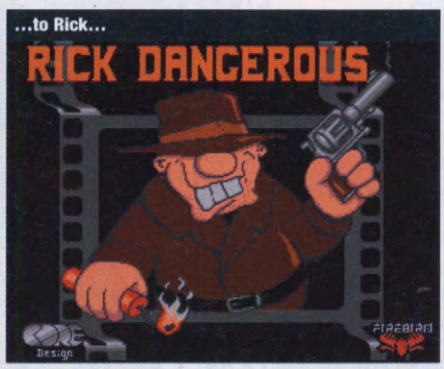
So what am I saying? Games and films shouldn't co-exist? Not exactly. My point is that unlike gaming fare based on original material, developers working from existing text have to be at pains to treat the source with the respect it deserves. Rare understood Bond, hence *GoldenEye* on the N64 was superb. EA seemed to only understand the words 'franchise' and 'marketing', when they came up with the dreadful *007 Racing*. The old LucasArts understood their material, hence the brilliant Indy adventures and the superb *X-Wing* series of games.

Now, of course, we've gone full circle. Indiana Jones beget Rick Dangerous beget Lara Croft beget Tomb Raider the movie. Previously films based on games have been, without exception, a more horrifying visual experience than having clear plastic tubes filled with worms glued to your eye sockets. But the advanced word on Angelina Jolie's breasts is that they're pretty good and they provide a rollicking good two hours of entertainment.

The film industry is starting to understand the gaming industry, but we don't seem to be responding in kind. At least not officially. The odd thing is that some of the best movie conversions of late have been those games that aren't actually based on films. *Hitman* was brilliant for anyone that wanted to capture the spirit of *Leon*. *Deus Ex* is perfect for all of those hungering after a *Matrix*-style thriller. *Project IGI* is the best Bond film never made and *Max Payne* might as well be called *Dirty Harry 2000*.

Basically, understand your source material. Take a look at what you've got. Realise there are themes and characters and relationships in any film that need to be respected and you'll probably do well. Think that you can just stick a recognisable head on any half-baked idea and you'll be inviting scorn and hatred. You can't just plonk Yoda in a go-kart and expect to get away with it.

From Indy...



...to Lara...

...to, er, Lara.

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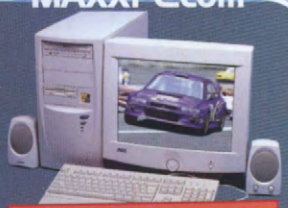

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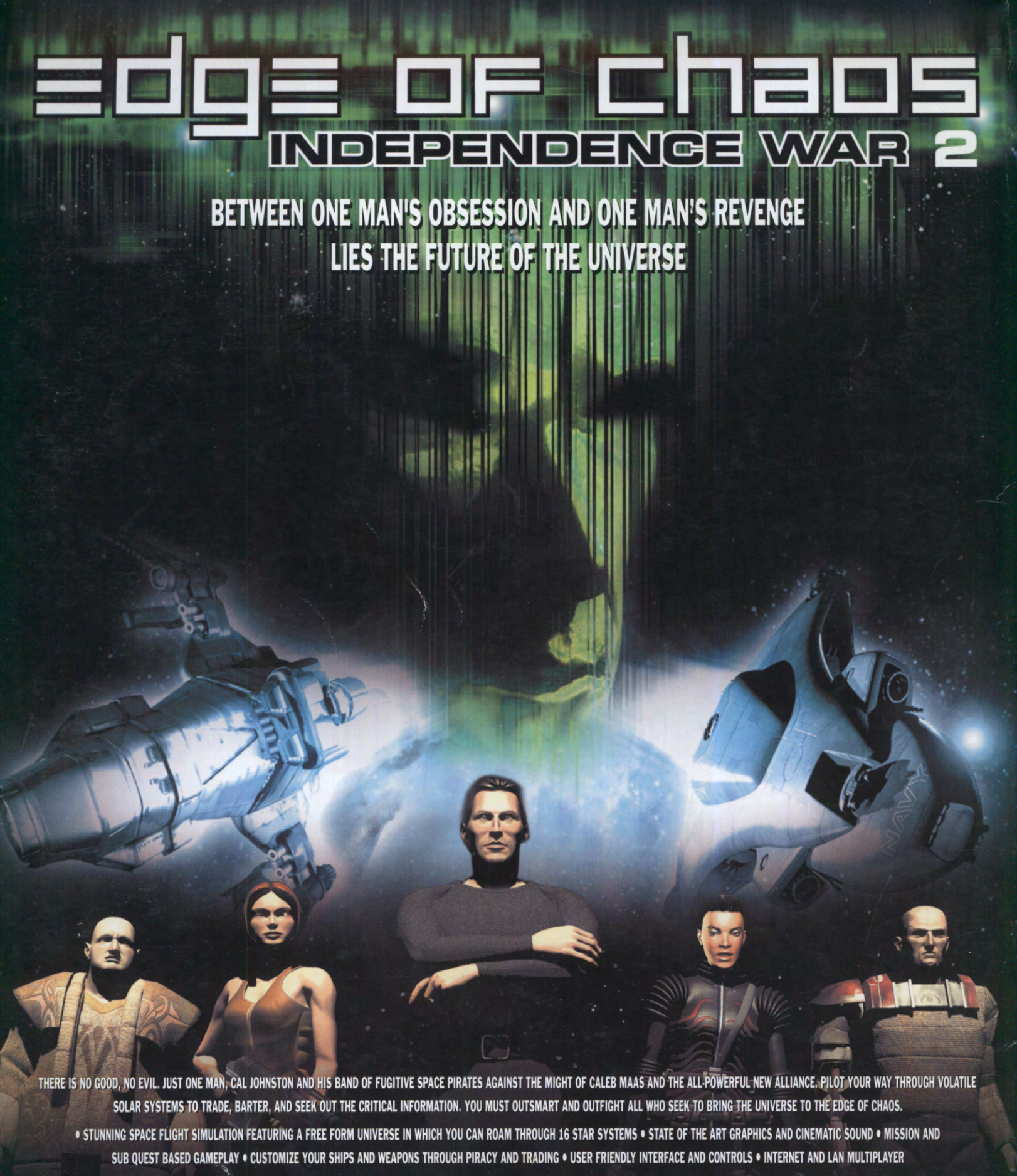

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