

PCZONE

PETER JACKSON'S

KING KONG

The first truly great movie game?

PLUS!

- Hitman: Blood Money
- Warcraft: Battlegrounds
- Serious Sam 2
- Pro Evolution Soccer 5
- Tomb Raider: Legend
- Earth 2160

FRIENDS REUNITED
 The co-op games you **HAVE** to play!

ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

Uncovering the hottest RPG of 2005!



YOUR COVERMOUNT IS MISSING PLEASE CONSULT YOUR NEWSAGENT

TINY COMPO: Who played the original Ann Darrow in the 1933 King Kong?



SEPTEMBER 2005 £5.99





A NEW LEVEL OF GAMING POWER



MESH X-Treme X2 4200

New AMD Athlon™ Dual Core CPU, ATI X800 Gaming PC



- AMD Athlon™ X2 Dual-Core CPU 4200+ with HyperTransport™
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- 512MB DDR 400 Memory (2x256MB)
- 200GB Serial ATA (150MBps) Ultra Fast Hard Drive
- 128MB ATI Radeon® X800 PCI Express - TV out and DVI
- 17" TFT Analogue Flat Panel Monitor
- Sony Multi-Format 16x Dual Layer DVD Writer**
- Creative Labs Sound Blaster Audigy 2 ZS
- Creative Labs Inspire 5.1 - P5800 Speakers + Subwoofer
- Logitech Formula Vibration Feedback Wheel
- Microsoft Works 8.0 +60 Day Microsoft Office Trial

- ASUS A8N-SLI Deluxe PCI Express 939 Mainboard • Logitech Cordless Desktop Keyboard and Optical Mouse
- X-treme Games Bundle - Nostromo SpeedPad & Joystick • Internet Ready V.92 56Kbps data/fax/voice modem
- Network Ready • Software: CyberLink PowerDVD, Power2Go, PowerProducer3, PowerDirector3, PowerBackup, MediaShowSE, PowerCinema4 • NEW Black & Silver Midi Tower Case & 550W PSU
- MESH Classic Warranty (12 month back-to-base, see terms)

£999 INC.VAT **£850.21** EX.VAT

BUY NOW
PAY JAN 2006†

The MESH X-treme X2 PCs feature...

"Improve system efficiency whilst running multiple applications"

...AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 Processor Dual-Core technology range of CPUs. For a smarter PC, that deals with multiple tasks simultaneously combining leading edge components with a leading award winning PC Manufacturer.

The X-treme PCs also feature the latest PCI Express graphics technology, giving you the latest

leading edge systems ideal for Gamers and Power Users alike. With a bus bandwidth 4 times higher than that of AGP 8X interface, PCI Express x16 bus performs much better in applications such as 3D gaming. PCI Express x1 also outperforms PCI interface with its exceptional high bandwidth up to 500MB/s.



Please Read: Interest is calculated from day of purchase. No deposit required. Credit supplied by GE Capital Bank Ltd, 6 Agar Street, London WC2N 4HR. Goods provided by MESH Computers, 1 Oxgate Centre, Oxgate Lane, London, NW2 7JA. Credit is subject to status and available only to UK residents aged 18 years or over. Sales subject to terms & conditions (copy available on request). Pictures shown for illustration purposes only - colours may vary. Operating System supplied is an OEM product - Full version. VM/Micro Case's purchased with internal Card Reader benefit from only 4 free USB 2.0 ports. **Sony Multi-burner R/W all standard formats Except DVD-RAM. MESH Standard Warranty (Classic) - All PCs carry a 12 Month Back-to-base, Parts & Labour Warranty as standard (MESH standard terms and conditions apply). Pick up & collection is available from MESH at £50 inc.VAT. Warranty upgrades & extensions are available and full terms are provided separately. Non-BT customers please check that the modem will work on your line before ordering. Prices quoted for calls to MESH are based on a BT headline - other carriers may charge you more. Our minimum standard delivery charge is £45.83 inc. (UK Mainland Only). Please call for a written quotation. ©2004 Advanced Micro Devices, Inc. All rights reserved AMD, the AMD Arrow logo, AMD Athlon, and combinations thereof, are trademarks of Advanced Micro Devices, Inc. Microsoft and Windows are registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and other countries. All trademarks are acknowledged. E&OE. Prices correct at time of going to press (17/6/05). Business hours Mon-Fri 9am-6pm; Sat 10am-5pm. Typical 29.8% APR (variable)



MESH X-Treme X2 4400

Multimedia Dual Core PC with X800XL Graphics

- AMD Athlon™ X2 Dual-Core CPU 4400+ with HyperTransport™
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- 1024MB DDR 400 Memory (Single Module)
- 300GB Serial ATA (150MBps) Ultra Fast Hard Drive
- 256MB ATI Radeon® X800XL PCI Express - TV out and DVI
- 19" TFT DVI Flat Panel Monitor
- Sony Multi-Format 16x Dual Layer DVD Writer**
- Creative Labs Sound Blaster Audigy 2 ZS
- Creative Labs Inspire 7.1 - T7900 Speakers + Subwoofer
- Logitech Formula Vibration Feedback Wheel
- Microsoft Works 8.0 +60 Day Microsoft Office Trial

£1299 INC.VAT £1105.53 EX.VAT

BUY NOW
PAY JAN 2006†

- ASUS A8N-SLI Deluxe PCI Express 939 Mainboard • Logitech Cordless Desktop Keyboard and Optical Mouse
- X-treme Games Bundle - Nostramo SpeedPad & Joystick • Internet Ready V.92 56Kbps data/fax/voice modem
- Network Ready • Software: CyberLink PowerDVD, Power2Go, PowerProducer3, PowerDirector3, PowerBackup, MediaShowSE, PowerCinema4 • NEW Black & Silver Midi Tower Case & 550W PSU
- **MESH Classic Warranty** (12 month back-to-base, see terms)



MESH X-Treme X2 4600 Pro

Power & Performance with the leading X800XT Graphics

- AMD Athlon™ 64 CPU 4600+ with HyperTransport® Technology
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- 2GB DDR 400 Memory (2x1GB)
- 300GB Serial ATA (150MBps) Ultra Fast Hard Drive
- 256MB ATI Radeon® X850XT PCI Express - TV out and DVI
- 19" IIYAMA TFT DVI Flat Panel Monitor
- Sony Multi-Format 16x Dual Layer DVD Writer**
- Creative Labs Sound Blaster Audigy 2 ZS
- Creative Labs Inspire 7.1 - T7900 Speakers + Subwoofer
- Logitech Formula Vibration Feedback Wheel
- Microsoft Works 8.0 +60 Day Microsoft Office Trial

£1999 INC.VAT £1701.28 EX.VAT

BUY NOW
PAY JAN 2006†

- ASUS A8N-SLI Deluxe PCI Express 939 Mainboard • Logitech Cordless Desktop Keyboard and Optical Mouse
- X-treme Games Bundle - Nostramo SpeedPad & Joystick • Internet Ready V.92 56Kbps data/fax/voice modem
- Network Ready • Software: CyberLink PowerDVD, Power2Go, PowerProducer3, PowerDirector3, PowerBackup, MediaShowSE, PowerCinema4 • NEW Black & Silver Midi Tower Case & 550W PSU
- **MESH Classic Warranty** (12 month back-to-base, see terms)

MESH X-treme PCs come with this Games bundle

- Logitech Vibration Feedback Wheel
- 3x Games Bundle
- Splinter Cell, Pandora Tomorrow
- Colin McRae Rally 04
- FarCry
- Logic3 Joystick
- Nostramo SpeedPad



MESH Extended Desktop Options

All Warranties subject to terms and conditions

Every PC is provided with the **MESH Classic Warranty**, which includes a 12 months back-to-base term, 24x7 on-line support, free parts and labour, system restore facility and national rate hardware support.

However you might prefer a more comprehensive support package for the life of your PC. MESH also offers Extended Service Plans covering everything from on-site service and software support, to PC health checks and priority replace and repair.

MESH Advantage Warranty

As Classic, but includes;

- 1 Yr On-site + 2 Yr Back-to-Base (UK mainland)
 - A single PC health check during the period of cover
- Cover cost: **£99 inc.Vat**

MESH Premiere Warranty

As Advantage, but includes;

- "Total Cover", unlimited parts & labour 3 Year On-site (UK mainland)
 - Priority Repair or Replace Policy
 - 3 Month National Rate Software Support
- Cover cost: **£199 inc.Vat**

Software included on all X-treme PCs

- 60 Day Trial Microsoft® Office
- MS Works 8
- eTrust Antivirus v.7 - 90 day Trial
- Plus Cyberlink Software (right)



BUY NOW, PAY JAN 2006 see terms†

08700 46 47 47 www.meshcomputers.com

showroom & sales • Mon-Fri 9-6pm, Sat 10-5pm • MESH House, Unit 1 Oxgate Centre, Oxgate Lane, London NW2 7JA

MESH
computers plc

GO PLAY GAMES+ GAMES SCREENINGS

@ EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE 10TH - 14TH AUGUST

SERIOUS ABOUT HAVING FUN?

Go play the latest and greatest games including the awesome The Legend of Zelda®: Twilight Princess on GameCube, win some cool prizes and get cash off vouchers from participating GAME stores!
10th - 14th August 2005

PLUS! GAMES SCREENINGS

MEET YOUR HEROES! Exclusive premieres from the people who make the games you play. Want to get into the games industry? Then visit the Insider's Guide at Game Screenings! Just some of this year's exclusive premieres: 24: The Game, The Chronicles of Narnia, EyeToy Kinetic, The Curse of The Were-Rabbit & The Movies.
10th - 14th August 2005

TAKE PART IN THE SCOTTISH QUALIFIER ROUND OF THE WORLD CYBER GAMES AND TEST YOUR ONLINE SKILLS WITH PRO GAMER, SUJOY ROY, IN THE ONLINE TOURNAMENT AREA!

INTERNATIONAL GAMES PREMIERE

TICKETS £3.00* EACH!



Nintendo PlayStation 2 FREEDOM XBOX BT N-GAGE NOKIA GAME EDGE McDonald's Scottish Council Edinburgh and Lothian Edinburgh International Conference Centre gaming

24-7 BOOKING @ WWW.TICKETWEB.CO.UK OR CALL 08700 600 100
VISIT WWW.EIEF.CO.UK FOR THE LATEST INFO!
10TH - 14TH AUGUST 2005
@ EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE



*ADVANCE TICKETS - ADD 10% OF FACE VALUE. NO EXTRA CHARGE FOR COLLECTION AT BOX OFFICE AT EICC OR CASH PURCHASES. ADD £1.50 PER TRANSACTION FOR POSTAL DELIVERY

THE FIRST AND BEST FOR PC GAMES

PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG



PC ZONE is changing...

August 18 2005 will be a momentous occasion for PC ZONE. I can now reveal to you that the reason you've been

denied editor Dave Woods' harsh black and white visage on this intro page for the past few months, is because he's been locked away in a small room. No, not as you may think because of a well-overdue ASBO, but because he's been busy redesigning your favourite PC games magazine. From top to bottom.

Nothing has been spared in Dave's unblinking, ruthless mission to bring you the ultimate games mag. Why? Well, as much as we love PC ZONE, we felt it was time to modernise, to improve the mag with a punchy new look and to add more attitude, more originality, more stupid humour and more of the stuff you want to read. In a nutshell, more PC ZONE.

You can look forward to all your favourite regulars including Steve Hill's NeverQuest and Phil Wand's hardware pages – as well as the most trustworthy, honest reviews section in the country – plus some incredibly exciting brand new features, big game previews and very special guests...

So whatever you're doing next month, drop it (unless you're piloting an aircraft or something) and pick up the next generation of PC ZONE. Over to you Mr Woods...

Jamie Sefton

Jamie Sefton
Acting Editor

The first truly great movie game?

P40

COVER DISCS P136 →

■ **PLAYABLE DEMOS!**

Get blasting with the beautiful *Battlefield 2* demo ("Pick that jaw off the floor, soldier!"), experience the explosive cartoon fun of *Worms 4: Mayhem* and drive yourself crazy with *Live For Speed*.

■ **DVD EXCLUSIVES**

Get tactical outside Tunis with *Codename: Panzers Phase Two* and blow open those government conspiracies in *Area 51*. Plus *Half-Life* and *Doom 3* co-op mods, a host of maps and much more!



BULLETIN

- 10 **PRO EVO 5**
MAKING US ALTERNATELY ANGRY AND JOYFUL SINCE 2002
- 12 **SUPREME COMMANDER**
LIKE THE *BEANO* CHARACTER WITH THE RADIO-CONTROLLED ARMY
- 14 **SPECIAL REPORT**
MASSIVE GAMING PROFITS BUT STILL MUCH BITCHING. WHY?
- 17 **BIT WITH THE DOG**
THE LAST APPEARANCE OF WILL'S DAD'S DOG, BELLE. SHAME...
- 18 **FREEPLAY**
AVAILABLE NEXT ISSUE IN EXTENDED FORM
- 20 **GTA NAUGHTINESS**
CJ GETS B.J. AND OTHER STORIES
- 24 **THE SUFFERING: TIES THAT BIND**
DELIGHTFUL DOGS WITH DELIGHTFUL HUMAN HEADS
- 28 **HOT SHOTS**
TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND SHOWS OFF THE NU-LARA

FEATURES

- 34 **THE Z-TEAM**
WE'RE MEN ON A MISSION TO UPROOT THE GREATEST CO-OP EXPERIENCES AVAILABLE
- 140 **GAMES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD**
BEFORE IT WAS A WORLD UNTO ITSELF. *WARCRAFT* WAS AN RTS GEM



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5 10



THE SUFFERING: TIES THAT BIND 24



AUTO ASSAULT 102

ONLINE ZONE

- 98 **ONLINE NEWS**
ALL CHANGE FOR *THE MATRIX ONLINE*. PLUS SUMMER IN THE *CITY OF HEROES*
- 102 **AUTO ASSAULT**
TAKE A TEST DRIVE IN THE POST-APOCALYPTIC CAR-PG
- 106 **FIGHT CLUB**
ALL THE ACTION FROM OUR SPECTACULAR *CITY OF HEROES* MEET-UP. PLUS ZONE CHAT
- 108 **E-SPORTS NEWS**
THIS MONTH'S WINNERS AND LOSERS IN THE WIDE, WIDE WORLD OF E-SPORTS
- 110 **WORLD OF WARCRAFT: BATTLEFIELDS**
HURRY UP AND WAIT AS THE MMO CLASSIC GETS UPDATED
- 113 **RAGE OF THE WOOKIEES**
THE FUR'S FLYING IN THIS *STAR WARS GALAXIES* EXPANSION
- 114 **REVIEWS**
LIVE FOR SPEED, *ASHERON'S CALL 2: LEGIONS* AND THE LATEST MODS RATED
- 118 **COMMUNITY CHEST**
GOING BEYOND THE CITADEL IN *HALF-LIFE 2*
- 119 **NEVERQUEST**
DARK DAYS IN *DARK AGE OF CAMELOT* FOR STEVE HILL

HARDWARE

- 120 **HARDWARE NEWS**
NVIDIA LAUNCHES EVEN FASTER CARDS TO KEEP YOUR PC SWEET
- 122 **REVIEWS**
PUTTING YOU IN THE DRIVING SEAT AS WE TEST STEERING WHEELS
- 124 **DEAR WANDY**
HE'S DEAD CLEVER AND THAT
- 126 **WATCHDOG**
DON'T MESS WITH SUZY
- 128 **BUYER'S GUIDE**

REAR VIEW

- 130 **MAILBOX**
WRITE ABOUT NOW
- 132 **THE A-LIST**
NO PC SHOULD BE WITHOUT THEM
- 136 **DISC PAGES**
DON'T JUST SIT THERE - FIRE UP THE *BATTLEFIELD 2* DEMO NOW!

PCZONE

FUTURE PUBLISHING
99 BAKER STREET
LONDON W1U 6PF

CHEEKY MONKEYS

Editor Dave 'Fondler' Woods 020 7317 2467
Acting Editor Jamie 'Wore a shirt' Setton 020 7317 2464
Production Editor Clae 'More champagne' Lydon 020 7317 2466
Art Editor Richard 'Ta-dial' Grace 020 7317 2445
Chief Engineer Jamie 'Scotty' Malcolm 020 7317 2488
Editor Without Portfolio Paul 'Shh' Presley 020 7317 2462
Space Cadet Will 'He's touching me' Porter 020 7317 2425
Disc Editor Suzy 'Grrrr' Wallace 020 7317 2460
Freelance Designers John 'aka Carunas Jonatis' Woolford and Helené Redmond
Illustration: China Mike
Work Experience Scum 'The lovely James Fryer'
Contributors Pavel 'Irish charmer' Barber, Michael Filby,

TEL: 020 7317 2600 EMAIL: mailbox@pczone.co.uk
FAX: 020 7317 2630 WEBSITE: www.pczone.co.uk

Steve Hill, Anthony Holden, Journobot, Sam Keldsen, Rosanna Negrotti, Rhiana Pratchett, Steve Rendall, Richie Shoemaker and Phil Wand
Dark Lord of the Sith Anakin Skywalker

PCZONE.CO.UK Editor John Houlahan 020 7317 2436
Hardware Photography In-house
Origination ColourFlow 020 7323 0022
Printed in the UK by Southern Print
Distribution Marketforce (UK)

GREAT APES

Publisher James Ashton-Tyler
Group Publishing Director Mia Roberts
Games Group Ad Manager Darren Gratton
Circulation Manager Paul Burden
Senior Production Co-ordinator Craig Broadbridge
Production Manager Rose Griffiths
Commercial Print Buyer Poul Kiely
Future Plus Buyer Colin Potts

Distributed by Marketforce (UK) Ltd, 5th Floor, Low Rise Building, Kings Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London, SE1 9LS. Tel 0207 633 3333

Printed in the UK by Wyndeham Heron Ltd, The Bentall Complex, Colchester Road, Heybridge, Malden, Essex, CM9 7NW

Future Publishing Ltd is part of Future plc. Future produces carefully targeted special-interest magazines for people who share a passion. We aim to satisfy that passion by creating titles offering value for money, reliable information, smart buying advice and which are a pleasure to read. Today we publish more than 100 magazines in the UK, US, France and Italy.



Over 100 international editions of our magazines are also published in 30 other countries across the world.

Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR)

Managing Director UK Robert Price
Non-Executive Chairman Roger Parry
Chief Executive Greg Ingham
Group Finance Director John Bowman
Tel +44 1225 442244

www.futureplc.com

PCZONE is Future Publishing Limited's registered trademark. All rights reserved.

©Future Publishing Ltd. 2005



PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG 40



THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION 48



HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY 54

PREVIEWS

- 40 **PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG**
BEYOND LOTR, BEYOND EXCITING, BEYOND BOTH GOOD & EVIL
- 46 **GT LEGENDS**
CLARKSON, WHERE ART THOU?
- 48 **THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION**
BETTER THAN LIFE?
- 52 **SERIOUS SAM 2**
ACTUALLY NOT PARTICULARLY SERIOUS AT ALL
- 54 **HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY**
BETTER, BALDER AND REDDER THAN BILE MONEY
- 58 **RISE & FALL: CIVILIZATIONS AT WAR**
THE SEQUEL TO REGINALD PERRIN
- 61 **TOTAL OVERDOSE**
- 62 **FAHRENHEIT**
- 66 **STARSHIP TROOPERS**
- 68 **BET ON SOLDIER**

contents

REVIEWS

- 72 **EARTH 2160**
QUITE WHAT WAS WRONG WITH 2159 WE HAVE NO CLUE
- 76 **CRICKET 2005**
STICKS, BAILS, GIANT ROBOTS FROM THE PLANET KRIKKIT
- 77 **BRIAN LARA'S INTERNATIONAL CRICKET 2005**
SAME AS ABOVE WITH NO ROBOTS
- 78 **WORMS 4: MAYHEM**
CAN HAVE SEX WITH THEMSELVES YOU KNOW
- 80 **FALCON 4.0**
COMING TO A SCREEN NEAR YOU: SPARROW HAWK 2.5
- 82 **7 SINS**
BIGGEST CROWD AROUND A MONITOR SINCE VIRTUALLY JENNA
- 84 **ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3: SOAKED!**
WET! DAMP! DRIPPING! MOIST! WET THROUGH! ALL OF THE ABOVE!
- 86 **CHAOS LEAGUE: SUDDEN DEATH**
NO JEAN-CLAUDE UNFORTUNATELY
- 88 **AURORA WATCHING**
- 89 **BIG MUTHA TRUCKERS 2: TRUCK ME HARDER**
- 90 **NHL EAST-SIDE HOCKEY MANAGER 2005**
- 90 **YETI SPORTS ARCTIC ADVENTURE**
- 92 **INDIE ZONE**
- 94 **REPLAY**
- 96 **FEEDBACK**
BOILING POINT: GENIUS OR MOUND OF DEFECTION?

SUBSCRIPTIONS HOTLINE:

0870 442 0957
or go to www.pczone.co.uk

BACK ISSUES:

0870 442 0957
or email customerservice@futurenet.co.uk

NEXT ISSUE: PCZ #159

On sale August 18. That's a Thursday.

WIN! **TINY COMPO:** Correctly answer this month's cover question and you could win some goodies. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: Tiny Compo (158), PC ZONE, Future Publishing, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6FP. The first correct entry drawn wins a mystery prize. Closing date: August 17 2005. The winner of our July Tiny Compo (156) was Mr J Shrimpton, a man with a wonderful surname who hails from Milton Keynes. He gets a copy of *Silent Hunter III* for knowing the UT2007 bloke is called Malcolm.

GENERAL COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS: 1. Only completed entries received before the closing date will be entered. 2. Winners will be notified by post. 3. No cash alternative. 4. Prizes not necessarily as shown. 5. No correspondence will be entered into. 6. The editor's decision is final. 7. Responsibility cannot be accepted for lost or undelivered entries. 8. Competitions are not open to readers outside the UK or employees of Future or its affiliated companies, their families, agents or anyone professionally connected with the competition. Phew!

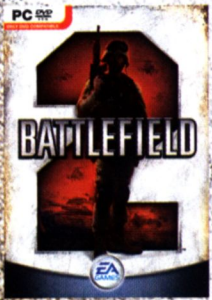
PC ZONE is licensed in the Benelux countries by Promotime Publications by
PC ZONE benelux TEL +31 (0) 23 540 00 08
 FAX +31 (0) 23 535 80 29



THE Z TEAM

THE 1-TEAM
PAGE 34
THE BEST CO-OP GAMES EVER!





**PERFECT FOR PICKING UP FRIENDS
AND TOSSING THEM 50 FEET AWAY.**



BATTLEFIELD 2™

ENGAGE NOW AT EAGAMES.CO.UK/BATTLEFIELD2

© 2005 Digital Illusions CE AB. All rights reserved. Battlefield 2 is a trademark of Digital Illusions CE AB. Electronic Arts, EA, EA GAMES, the EA GAMES logo and "Challenge Everything" are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. Gamespy and the "Powered by Gamespy" design are trademarks of Gamespy Industries, Inc. All rights reserved. © 2005 Creative Technology Ltd. © 2005 Logitech. All rights reserved. Logitech, the Logitech logo, and other Logitech marks are owned by Logitech and may be registered. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. NVIDIA, the NVIDIA logo, and the way it's meant to be played are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. EA GAMES™ is an Electronic Arts™ brand.



Challenge Everything™

FIRST
Look!PRO EVOLUTION
SOCCER 5

Exclusive! PC ZONE - the official PES mag - with the first details from Konami

TAPPING UP Jamie Sefton

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

PUBLISHER Konami
DEVELOPER Konami
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Q4 2005
WEBSITE www.konami.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- The best arcade football game returns
- Brand new moves and animations
- Integrated weather system
- Full online compatibility

"PES5 promises better blocking, quicker knock-ons and faster turns on the ball"

PES4 is so good, even Will Porter plays it. And he's a QPR fan. Yes, after years of resistance, Will has actually started joining in. I'm sure I even heard him say "bugger" the other day, when I scored against him for the seventh time with a beautifully-weighted lob.

The fact is - and I know I've said it countless times before - **PES** is the best arcade football game ever. I find that you can quickly dismiss any gamer's opinion if they say they prefer playing **FIFA** with a derisory snort and a rolling of the eyes, because they're so obviously wrong. The great news for us true football addicts in the know is that the latest incarnation is currently being coded in Tokyo - and **PC ZONE** has the exclusive first news and screenshots.

TERRY & THIERRY

Chelsea's cup-winning central defender and England International John Terry has already been signed up to be the face of **PES5**, but he'll now be joined by last year's cover star Arsenal's Thierry Henry - presumably in a rather cool face-to-face arrangement. As for the game, Konami promises that there'll also be additions to the official Italian, Dutch and Spanish league licences, although the company can't say (won't say) if that will include any from the English Premiership just yet.

However, we can confirm a host of new player moves, animations and game enhancements. The first is the weather conditions (now including snow - woohoo!) that will change during the match, and noticeably affect players' statistics - stamina, being the most obvious - and movement



Same old Argies, always cheating...

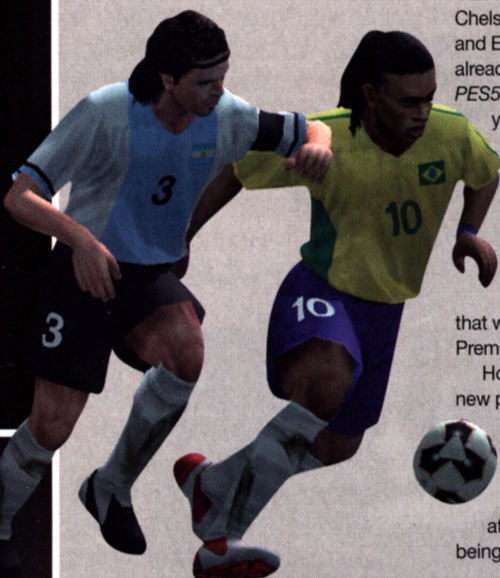
of the ball. You'll also have access to improved tactics and formations that will give you greater control over your team - such as, for example, the ability to set up a 'floating' player behind your two centre-forwards. Not literally, obviously.

However, the biggest changes come with the introduction of tighter close control for more intense one-on-ones. This means more aggressive foot-ins to steal the ball, better blocking and shielding, quicker knock-ons and faster turns on the ball. All of this will apparently offer you a faster, more intuitive experience, as you'll be able to read far better from the improved animations what the opposition is about to do, and react accordingly.

Other exciting innovations include more accurate heading, better through-

balls and more powerful net-bursting shots. Plus, as promised to **PC ZONE** last year by the producer Shingo 'Seabass' Takatsuka, the PC will have proper online implementation that will include the ability to set up leagues, world player rankings and international cup competitions.

As **PES5** is launching on last-gen consoles as well, we're not expecting state-of-the-art visuals, but you can be sure that they'll be a vast improvement on the clunky PS2 and Xbox 640x480 fuzz-o-vision, with sparkly resolutions taking advantage of top-spec cards and monitors. We're pretty moist at the thought of a new **PES**, and with it due to hit the shops around November, young Porter will have just enough time to polish up his skills. Look out world... **KW**



Wayne still looks fairly perplexed. Bless him.



Much closer ball control is promised. Fnar fnar.



Looks to me like the goalie might block that ball. And that it might hurt a bit too...

HEADING

Always a bit random in PES4, the new game includes the ability to direct headers on target more accurately.

SNOW JOKE

Changing weather, such as snow, will make the ball bouncier and harder to control, as well as affecting player stats.

ONE-ON-ONE

A glut of new player moves promise more intense individual player battles, as you both fight to get the ball under control.

GOAAAAAALLLLL!

Expect more absolute screamers, as the Konami TYO team is currently perfecting the ability to let fly with very powerful shots if you have the right player and connect with the ball at the right time.

HE'S GOT THE RUNS

Konami is always improving the player AI, and in PES5 is promising more intelligent runs from attackers and better cover from defenders.

GLOBAL GAME

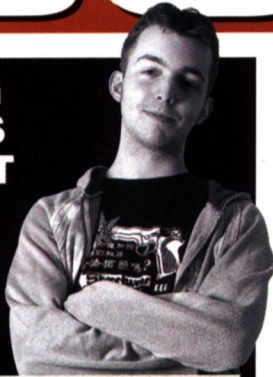
PES5 will improve the (frankly) crappy online PC modes with proper leagues, competitions and other goodies. No news on whether it'll offer more than two-player matches yet, though...





BULLETIN

LONG DAY'S NIGHT



NEWS EDITOR Will Porter

▲ You know it's wrong. Just when the little hand is pushing 2am, but you've just unlocked a new set of missions in *San Andreas*? You feel compelled to continue, but there's the ever-present ringing in your ears of what your mum would be saying right now. Stuff about "school night", "bad for your eyes", "wasting your life"... but what does she know when you're about to start working for the triad, or are in the process of arranging your team sheet for a vital FA cup clash?

Night gaming is as much part of the PC firmament as virus-checking and poorly hidden pornography in Windows directories – and while most gamers will have tales of all-nighters that they've spent on *Morrowind* or *Warcraft* (while notably not making love to beautiful women) it's the more encroaching, envelope-pushing extra couple of slumber-hours that games rob from me that's my problem.

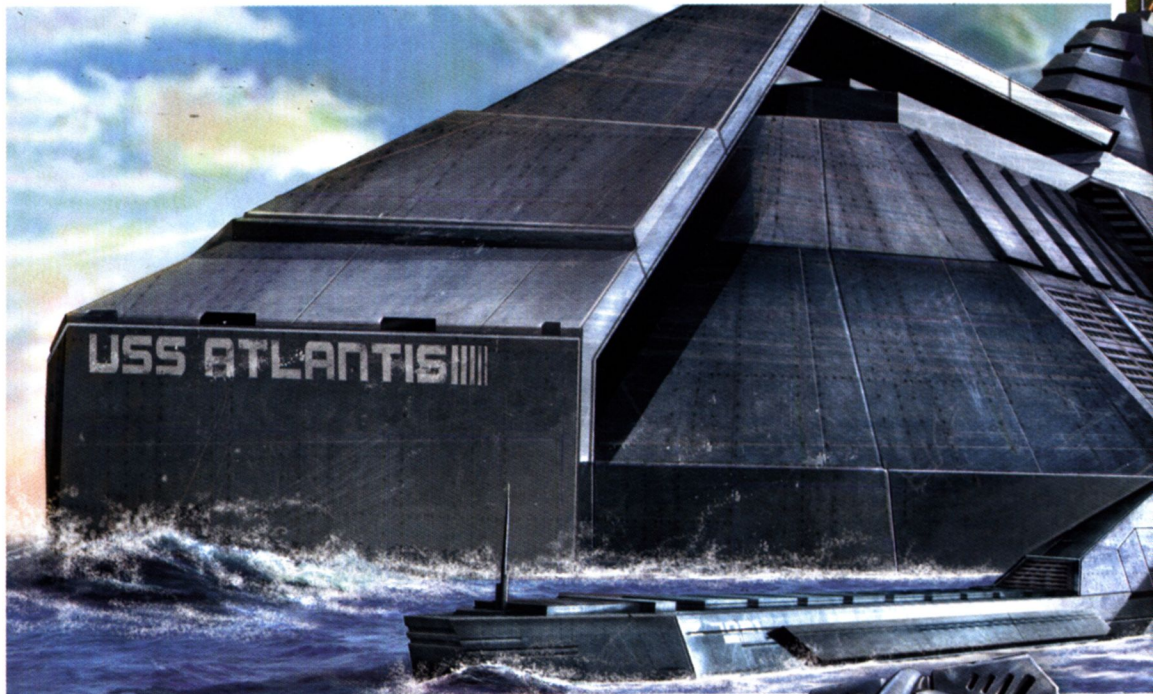
Y'see, this open-all-hours malarkey is fine and dandy when your day consists of pretending to be listening to teachers or sitting around in college wondering what you'll have for tea – but as soon as you hit the real world (and yes, I'm aware that I live in a fairly odd branch of the real world) and have work to go to and deadlines to meet then it all tumbles down. "Have you got those pages Will?" Well, no. Because last night I was up till three escaping from a hi-tech prison. "That was your excuse yesterday." No, yesterday I was very close to levelling up and got sidetracked into a spider-filled dungeon in Ogrimmar. "Oh. So that's why you turned up an hour late and were incapable of speech until midday?" Well, those giant spiders weren't going to slay themselves...

And so there I am: a game zombie with a caffeine addiction that's been over the border of the unhealthy ever since I started detecting a faint whiff of Kenco whenever at a urinal. Still perfectly happy though...



TOTAL PHWAR

CHRIS TAYLOR, GAMING GOD AND CREATOR OF *TOTAL ANNIHILATION*, SET TO MAKE A GLORIOUS RETURN TO RTS WITH *SUPREME COMMANDER*



Bringing real strategy, real tactics and explosions back to the world of RTS gaming.

TOTAL ANNIHILATION, if not the greatest RTS ever made then certainly the most excessive, is making a return to the PC nearly a decade since it first assaulted our monitors. It won't be called *Total Annihilation 2*, sadly – the brand name is Atari's (and the company has no intention of relinquishing it since it's always been threatening to unleash a TA2 of its own), but it will be called *Supreme Commander*, which is almost as good. Even better is that Mr TA, Chris Taylor, is in full charge of the project, and finished code could be with us within a year.

In many ways *Supreme Commander* picks up from where TA left off: a bewildering array of robot units are promised, as are locales on, above or below land and sea. Then there's the frantic race for resources and the resultant clash of armies that promise to engulf our screens in a maelstrom of destruction. This alone would be enough for most, but Taylor promises to take the game and the RTS genre much further, beyond, it appears, even the scope of the mighty *Total War* series.

The plan is to give commanders the ability to manage the conflict seamlessly, either perched just above the troops, as is

traditional in real-time strategy games, or from on ridiculously high as you direct vast armies and their resources to fight across an entire planet. Going from a planetwide meta-view to dragging a box around a troop of grunts will be as simple as zooming in the camera, which means no need for *Risk*-styled maps, no turn-based plotting and no having to wait for your PC as it strains to load in the level.

COMBAT EVOLVED

Whereas TA featured two not very different sides and a rather stark storyline, SC will offer three playable races; the Terrans, the Cybrans and the Aeons, embroiled in a war for survival, each side sporting machinery and weaponry that is distinct and diverse. The peace-loving Aeons, for example, prefer sleek, rounded vessels, devoid of visible weaponry. Rile them up, however, and panels will slide out to reveal a bristling array of ordinance.

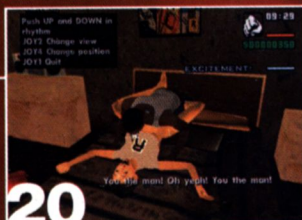
The Supreme Commander himself will be a central figure on the battlefield, as was the Commander unit from *Total Annihilation*. Able to warp to forward positions and erect firebases, the SCU will also sport a lethal set of shoulder



pads, each one a miniature airbase from which flights of interceptors can be launched. Another clever feature is that should you start feverishly twitching at the mouse button in a fit of panic, your troops will pick up on your urgency and act accordingly.

BOMBS AWAY

The graphics are equally revolutionary, for among the squads of armoured warriors and formations of tanks, some truly gargantuan robot walkers will stomp



20

GTA UNCUT

Lewdness and naughtiness



22

WARHAMMER 40K: WA

Frosty tabletop gaming



24

THE SUFFERING 2

Scares us witless



28

TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND

Pretty girl with guns



Crimson Tide's alternate ending.

high up above, icons representing whole armies will simply vanish from the screen as if they're wiped out one by one.

We're in no doubt that *Supreme Commander* will be a supreme experience, certainly worthy of the game with which Chris Taylor made his name. Of course we've yet to try out any playable code and until we do, we're guilty as charged of getting rather carried away, but of one thing we have no doubt; *Supreme Commander* is the most anticipated RTS on our scopes. Even above that *Star Wars* one. Maybe.

Will robots never learn?

merrily. The plan is to offer a scale that both feels realistic but also delivers a level of destruction that's suitably over the top. Nuclear weapons will feature, but they won't simply be the bigger-than-average bombs that we get in contemporary-set strategy games: here a nuke will wipe away whole armies. Watch it up close and you'll see battalions vapourise as a shockwave passes through them. From

- **Publisher:** THQ
- **Developer:** Gas Powered Games
- **ETA:** Autumn 2006
- **Website:** www.gaspowered.com



WIN!

BATTLE BEYOND

WIN TEN COPIES OF *BATTLEFIELD 2* AND ACCOMPANYING SNAZZY Z-BOARD!

If you haven't sampled the delights of *Battlefield 2* then more fool you. It's bloody marvellous, and to give it a whirl you need only sample the demo that's been neatly sellotaped onto this very magazine. Should you be strapped for cash though, we have ten full copies sitting under our desks for distribution to only the most deserving of our readers.

What's more, to accompany these particular slices of gaming brilliance, we've got ten *Battlefield 2* themed Z-boards. Z-boards are basically a new form of gaming keyboard, with all the keys put in convenient places to give you a distinctly unfair edge to your online battling. Should you feel the need to do something boring like work, however, you can simply unhook the keys, peel them off and stick on a more traditional QWERTY affair (like how you

used to 'solve' the Rubik's cube). Sure to make you the talk of the town/building/ LAN event, Ceratech, suppliers of the Z-board, have their own LAN team as well, and have delivered an open challenge to ZONE readers who think they can kick their Z-board arses. Check out www.teamzboard.com for more.

To win a copy of the game and a snazzy Z-board, all you have to do is answer the following question:

- Which of the following has never been a *Battlefield* expansion pack?**
- A: Secret Weapons Over Normandy**
 - B: The Road To Rome**
 - C: Secret Weapons Of WWII**

Send your entries on a postcard to: *Battlefield 2* Z-board compo, PC ZONE, Future Publishing, 99 Baker Street, London, W1U 6PP.

Entries should be appearing on our doormat up until August 17, after which we'll burn them.



SPECIAL REPORT



THE COLOUR OF MONEY

Ludicrous overtime and draconian schedules are all in a long day's work for game developers. But is the industry too hardcore for its own good? Pavel Barter investigates...

WHEN YOU meet developers it's a common story: the raging emotions and exhaustion that swamp them after a game's completion as they emerge like neanderthals, blinking and grunting in the sunlight. They always seem to sing the same song – studios becoming part-time homes filled with pizza-crusting sleeping bags, coffee-stained keyboards and the stale whiff of body odour. Whether it's the plastic cups of tobacco chew-spit and piles of human hair found in the Irrational office after the development of *System Shock 2* or the fact that *Pro Evolution Soccer* genius Seabass apparently sleeps

beneath his desk with frightening regularity to ensure the game's continuing glory, every single development team has a catalogue of deadline anecdotes to tell.

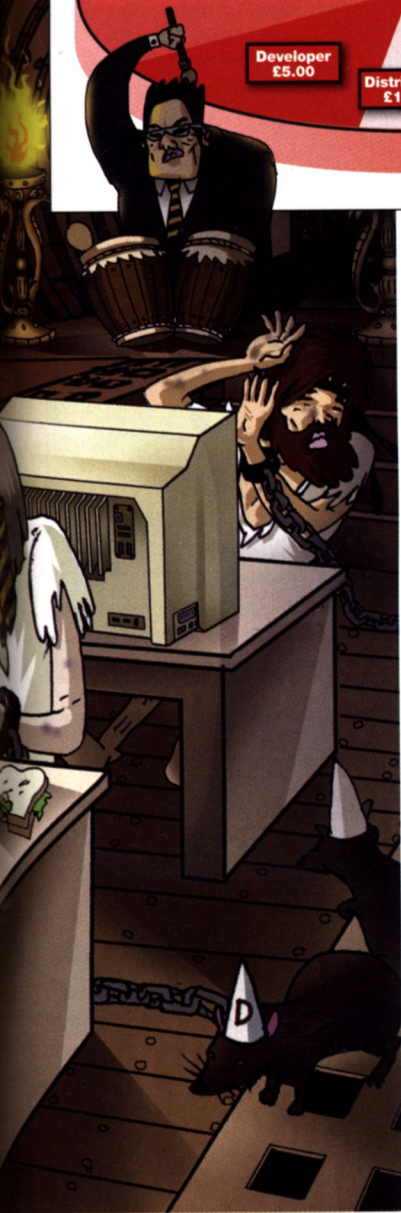
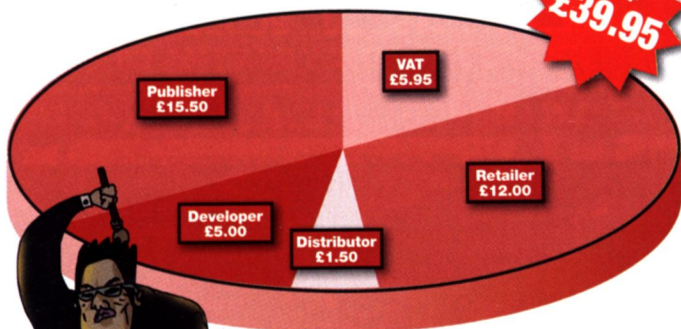
'Crunch time' is as commonplace in the games industry as ticks on a scabby dog, but only in recent times have developers crawled from beneath their desks to bitch about it. Jamie Kirschenbaum, a lead animator at EA's Redwood Studio in the US, has filed a lawsuit alleging that the software goliath worked him to the bone without any paid overtime on an unnamed James Bond game, *The Sims 2* and *The Lord Of The*

Rings: The Third Age. Neil Aitken, a former programmer for Vivendi Universal Games, is suing the *World Of Warcraft* publishers on similar grounds.

As costs rise, the temptation to cut corners and overtime pay are plentiful, but surely a £16.2bn industry can afford to cut its employees a bit of slack? EA alone announced a record-breaking £1.7 billion revenue for the last financial year, a windfall that could support Bangladesh and probably clothe its inhabitants in nice shiny Nikes. At the end of 2004, someone claiming to be an "EA spouse" stirred up further controversy by alleging on

WHO ATE ALL THE PIE?

WHERE DOES ALL YOUR HARD-EARNED LOLLY GO ON AN AVERAGE PC TITLE? PC ZONE REVEALS THE SLAVERING RECIPIENTS, ALL AFTER A SLICE OF YOUR WEDGE



livejournal.com that the company's corporate machine was treating her hubby like a battery hen.

Developers don't come high in the pecking order, admits Nicholas Lovell, a financial advisor to the games industry. "An average game, valued at \$15m, costs \$5m to develop, \$5m to market and \$5m for packaging. Include the retailer's portion and you can see that development is not the most important part."

Not that developers receive sweatshop wages – an experienced animator can earn around £40,000 – it's just that most don't have the talent or reputation to command showbiz pay cheques. "The reason why Hollywood directors and actors get big bucks is they can open a movie with the power of their name... not so with developers," says Lovell.

But must they suffer so? In 2004, an Independent Game Developers Association (IGDA) survey discovered that developers work on average 80 hours per week during crunch, and overtime is often uncompensated. Such techno torture destroys body and soul and is probably the cause of so many disappointing AAA titles. "We're faced with fading passion due to crunch, so we must find some way to protect and manage it," argues Michel Allard, the vice president of Continuous Improvement at Ubisoft Montreal.

The IGDA survey discovered that 34.3 per cent of developers expect to leave the industry within five years, and 51.2 per cent within ten years – statistics which freak out Rich Vogel, executive producer of Sony Online Entertainment. "We burn out people really fast in this industry. Not many make it to 15 years of service."

American thespians have even started kicking the games industry up the arse with their pedicured toes, arguing that they deserve residual fees – a percentage of sales – for voice acting and likenesses, just like they get from TV or radio work. Negotiations between the unions and game publishers came to a head recently when the unions pulled out on the brink of strike. They did, however, secure a 25 per cent increase in minimum wages from \$556 to \$695 for a four-hour session (up to three voices).

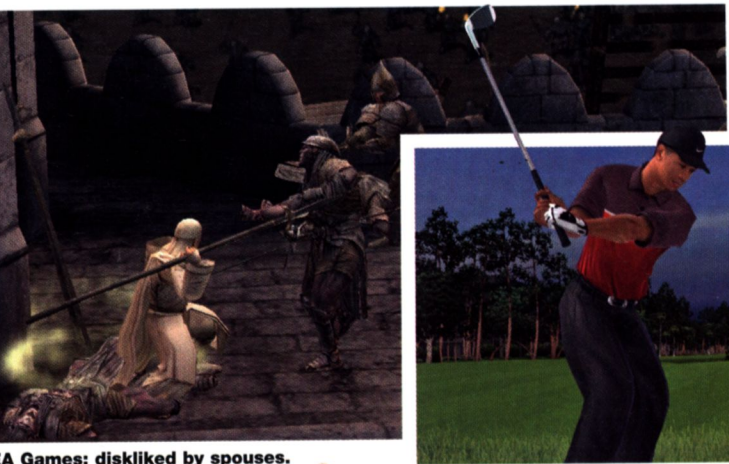
"We'll spend the next three-and-a-half years devoting resources to further organise this industry, and return to the bargaining table with renewed strength and vigour to establish a fair participation in the enormous profits generated by videogames," Screen

"Hollywood actors get big bucks because they can open a movie with the power of their name... Not so with developers"

NICHOLAS LOVELL FINANCIAL ADVISOR TO THE GAMES INDUSTRY

Actors Guild president Melissa Gilbert defiantly said in an official backdown – sorry – official statement.

But not all voice actors are waving placards. Lani Minella, who has lent her vocal squawks and screeches to dozens of PC titles – including *Call Of Cthulhu: Dark Corners Of The Earth*, *EverQuest*, *World Of Warcraft* and *Diablo II* – reckons



EA Games: disliked by spouses.

"As long as there are companies in every country fighting to get games to the shelves, poor recompense and work practices will persist"

DAVE PERRY PRESIDENT, SHINY ENTERTAINMENT

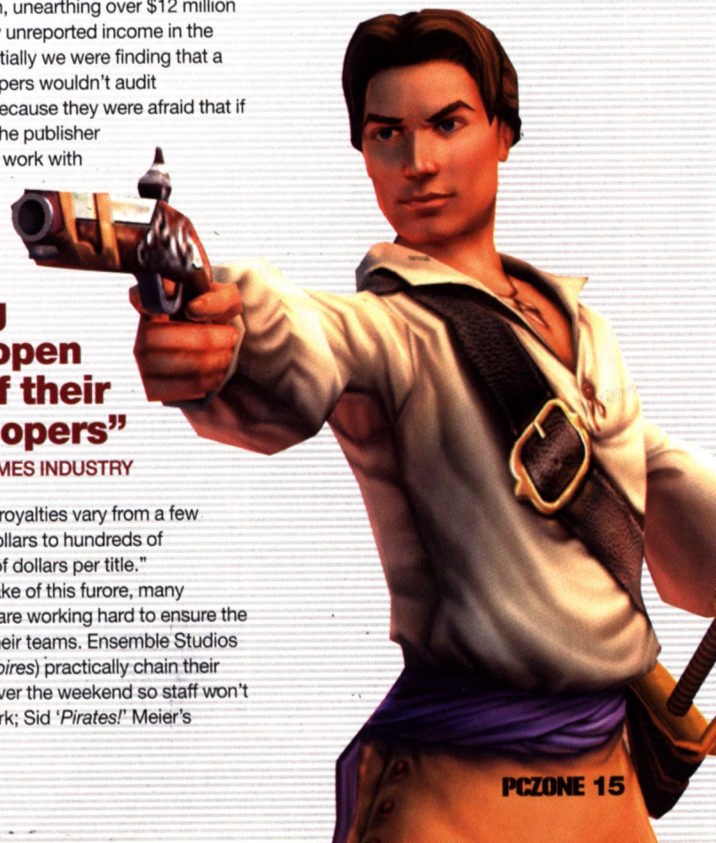
the real instigators behind the strike are "prima donna wussy actors who complain that doing the emotes and deaths and screams hurts their voices and thus makes it hard for them to work on regular commercials."

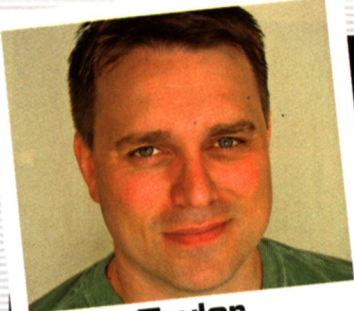
She adds: "Game developers do all the hard work, spending countless weekend and overtime hours getting deadlines met, not being able to have a social life or even a decent meal half the time. They're on site while the actors are independent contractors. We do our job and leave. Residuals in this case belong to the people who slaved countless hours producing the whole game."

However, if a title is a success, can developers grab their residual share of the pie? There's no reason why not, says Tim Christian of Media Forensics, a UK-based company that audits publishers for developers such as Rebellion, Bethesda and Criterion, unearthing over \$12 million of previously unreported income in the process. "Initially we were finding that a lot of developers wouldn't audit publishers because they were afraid that if they did so the publisher would never work with them again."

Finaxis Studios has a good reputation for its focus on quality of life, as does BioWare (*Baldur's Gate*, *KOTOR*); even EA has recently announced a change in the company's overtime policy.

Fact is, publishers demand games that are delivered on time and within budget and "it's not always the people who work themselves to death that can do this," according to Shiny Entertainment's boss Dave Perry. "But as long as there are companies in every country in the world fighting to get games to the shelves, that aren't that concerned about quality of life – poor recompense and work practices will persist," adds Perry. We reckon that the industry should now take a long hard look at the treatment of its troops – not to mention in the realm of print journalism, where suffering creative artistes can expect an absolute pittance for hours of toil and... (*Nice try, Pavel – Ed*). [v]





Chris Taylor
CEO and creative director
at Gas Powered Games -
creator of *Dungeon Siege II*
and *Supreme Commander*

DEVELOPERS' QUESTION TIME

What PC games are you playing at the moment?
Battlefield 2 and *Brothers In Arms*.

What was the last videogame you finished playing?
Honestly, I've been playing a lot of *Dungeon Siege II*, which isn't really a fair answer, but it's true!

What's your favourite game of all time?
I have quite a few, but the new champion is probably *Battlefield 2* - which has somehow edged out *BF1942*.

What are you most proud of in your career?
It's definitely *Total Annihilation*. I hate to pick favourites, but we did so much in such a short period of time... It was very intense, but it was also great fun.

Who do you most admire in the industry and why?
I admire Peter Molyneux and Will Wright for continuing to innovate and come up with truly original games, time and time again.

What has the PC contributed most to videogaming?
Multiplayer gaming is probably the biggest contribution that's had the biggest impact on how games are played.

What's your company's philosophy?
Our philosophy is pretty simple: health and family always come first.

What's the best thing about your job?
The best thing is working in an industry that I love with the very best people.

What's the worst thing about your job?
The worst part is dealing with the business stuff: the money and the reality that what we do is a business.

What are you working on at the moment?
Supreme Commander is taking up most of my time these days.

What's the Next Big Thing in PC gaming?
I think it's going to come from a combination of things. First of all, the graphics are going to be so good, they'll be hard to separate from reality (and I'm talking about people that look like real people). The next generation of consoles will get close, but the PC will continue to be where the leading edge is and where innovation in graphics will continue every six months. The next generation of AI will be mind-blowing in its realism, and the ability to interact in these worlds will be better than anything we could have expected when our industry started. The best is yet to come!

SIN CITYSCAPE...

RITUAL ENTERTAINMENT REVISITS THE WORLD OF *SIN* - DOWNLOADABLE THROUGH STEAM AND CREATED WITH THE NOW LEGENDARY SOURCE CODE



A welcome return for a game long since thought chained to the '90s.

IN 1998 AN epic battle of the FPS took place. A battle between *Half-Life* and the almost-forgotten gem (but certainly not in these quarters) known as *SIN*. Now, however, it seems that Gordon and the man known as John R Blade have kissed and made up... We know this because a series of six-hour chunks of action from the *SIN* universe are due to be released over Steam at \$20 a pop - and my don't they look fabby.

Still pursuing the over-breasted Elexis due to her habit of releasing mutagen in populated areas, John Blade (and improbably named sidekick Jessica Cannon) are out for justice in the quasi-*Fifth Element* confines of Freeport City. The famed interactivity of *SIN* (in the original you could fiddle endlessly with ATMs and the like) makes a welcome return - not least in the opening car chase, in which you can not only lumber about from window to window while shooting bad men, but also open the glove box and fiddle with the radio.

It also seems that Ritual, a company that's been looking for a way to have complete creative control of the *SIN* universe for a considerable number of years has taken the Source code and run with it. We're not sure how far it's run, but it's a distant enough speck to claim that squad AI will be much improved over *Half-Life 2* and that physics will have far more real-world uses rather than the (still brilliant) zombie slicing and radiator-crushing of Gordon's outings. We're talking stuff like having a greater level of control when overturning a physics object and using it as cover.

With hints and whispers on intertwining plots, player-defined choices that will reflect themselves in the next downloaded episodes through the magic of Steam and plot-twists aplenty, *SIN Episodes* is a mightily exciting prospect. Plus there's always the rumour of a proper boxed *SIN 2* release doing the rounds as well...



Just another car boot sale on a Salford estate...

■ Publisher: Valve/Steam
■ Developer: Ritual Entertainment
■ ETA: Winter
■ Website: www.ritual.com

ROUND-UP

HERDING CURIOUS NUGGETS OF GAMING INFO INTO AN EASILY DIGESTIBLE PEN

All the children are insane



STUCK IN THE MIDDLE

On the orc grapevine, certain sources are making noises about an RTS sequel to the *LOTR: The Battle For Middle-earth*. Promising a brand new storyline (you what?) and a release next year, we're a bit sceptical to be honest. Then again, it would be nice, wouldn't it?



EURO TRASH

Hooray! *Lula 3D* is out! Or at least, the German demo of *Lula 3D* is out! Not understanding any dialect south of Dartford, however, we didn't get very far through it. We can only report that it isn't quite as rude as you would have thought - taking at least 15 minutes of guesswork and rudimentary point-and-clickery before we found anything really, really smutty. More next month...



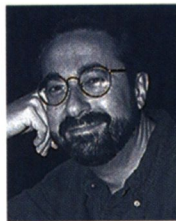
CROSS BONES

Bethesda is keeping a bit schtum on it, presumably waiting for the film marketing people to get their nautical ball rolling, but there's work afoot (and avast) on a game based on the forthcoming *Pirates Of The Caribbean* sequel. Free-roaming Jack Sparrow adventure? Please, please, please...



UP THE JUNCTION

A few clues have broken for cover on Warren 'Deus/Ultima/Thief' Spector's latest project at newly formed Junction Point Studios. A first-person roleplayer with large-scale creatures and action combat is on the cards, according to job adverts placed by the ingenious one. Scant details, but *Deus Ex* with big monsters? We live in hope.



Good Yop Bad Yop



GOOD YOP

The end being in sight for the long-awaited **ZONE** secret project. Despite Woods' predilection for sneaking out for Pimms.

The Future summer party providing us with lots of beverages and some bumper cars with which to damage our superiors.

A free dirty fry-up for Will and Prez after Dave finds a large African insect in his hot chocolate. Hooray for that!

BAD YOP

Sefton and Suzy being unable to eat for 24 hours after seeing a large African insect being fished out of Dave's hot chocolate. Boo!

Graphics cards and tempers reaching melting point as the sun takes its toll on **ZONE** towers.

Three separate incidents of bar staff assuming that Will and Dave are a gay couple. If they were, then Will could certainly do better.

Good Yop: **Smooth Strawberry**. Bad Yop: **Smooth Raspberry**. Since, even though both Yops are just as nice as each other, one needed to be judged better than the other by the rationale of this section of the magazine. The raspberry is actually pretty good, and certainly better than the anti-Yop brigade would have you believe.



THE SETTLERS HERITAGE OF KINGS™ — EXPANSION DISC —

The official add-on for The Settlers Heritage of Kings™

OUT NOW

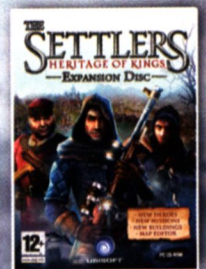
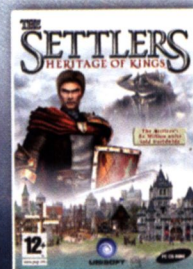
www.thesettlers.com



New buildings, units and characters.



Bridge building offers new strategic possibilities.



Full version of The Settlers Heritage of Kings™ required



www.pegi.info



PC CD-ROM



FREWARE | HOME-BREWS | WEBGAMES | ABANDONWARE | EMULATION

FREEPLAY

For one month only *Will Porter* is free, free as a bird...

HOLDEN may be away sunning himself on a beach and running towards the sea and then away again like *The Monkees* do, but Freeplay troops on come what may. This issue we unearth a thieving gem, Disney fun and golfing strangeness, among others...



THIEF2X: SHADOWS OF THE METAL AGE

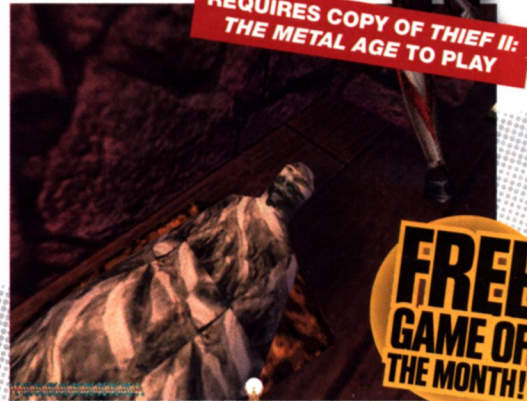
Developer: Dark Engineering Guild Website: www.thief2x.com



Levels are resolutely *Thief*-like.



Ignore the graphics, the gameplay is first class.



REQUIRES COPY OF THIEF II: THE METAL AGE TO PLAY

FREE GAME OF THE MONTH!

The old *Thief* dilemma - will it wake up?

Community efforts rarely come in forms as professional as this - the only massive clue to its bedroom origins being voice-acting that belongs in school plays rather than the dark streets of thieving taffers. An unofficial expansion project for *Thief II: The Metal Age* that's been in the making for five years, *T2X* (as it's also known) is 13 levels of *Thief* finery with 3,000 lines of new dialogue and gameplay

so replete with obscure fictitious quotations and intriguing level design that the shadow of Garrett is never far away. Then again, it's not actually Garrett whose stealthy footfall you're controlling this time - a full cast of Hammerites et al return, but everyone's favourite rogue has been replaced by a girl. Yes, a girl called Zaya. But her quest for revenge for her (irritating) cousin's murder is entirely

engaging, although if we're going to be truthful it does takes a fair amount of wandering around to get going and even longer to form some kind of challenge to the long-established *Thief* hack. Then again, beggars (and robbers) can't be choosers - you're not going to get another dose of *Thief* any time soon and the game is so faithful to its source material that it's scary - even if having a

level in a train station does push the envelope a little. Bound together strongly by narrative and setting, *Shadows Of The Metal Age* is far more than an abortive fan mission pack - we wouldn't mind parting with cash for this. Only problem now is digging out your old copy of *Thief II* - a title so deep into your pile of game CDs that it's probably undergoing fossilisation.

VIRTUAL MAGIC KINGDOM

Developer: Disney Website: vmk.disney.go.com/vmk/en_US/

Currently in beta and only open during American waking hours due to some fierce moderation, Disney's *Magic Kingdom* is available for some massively multiplayer shits and giggles. Only without the shits - since it's the victim of a swear-filter so fascist that you're not even allowed to use punctuation. Half the challenge comes through working out how to communicate with your dinky fellow park dwellers when words like "Hiya" and 95 per cent of nouns are forbidden - and the rest comes from struggling to concoct the vaguest of euphemisms. As an online curio, and resoundingly free, it's certainly worth five minutes of your time - if only so you can talk to genuine Americans genuinely

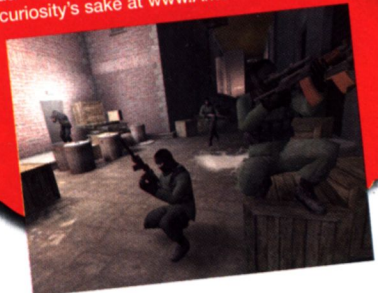


I'm the one waving.

thinking that they're playing something amazing. Which they really, really are not - even though the wealthy middle-class holiday-makers among us may slightly enjoy playing the shockwave games based on rides like the Jungle Cruise or Pirates of the Caribbean. For you and I though, the fun comes from trying to be subversive in such a strictly regimented atmosphere. The best I managed was the discovery that selecting the 'dance' function when sitting on a bench makes your arms and legs disappear - ergo meaning that by common Disney policy I should have been able to go on all the rides without queuing. Although that doesn't really count online, more's the pity...

GOLDEN OLDIE: AMERICA'S ARMY

Still a telling example of American imperialism, yet still born free is game-come-recruitment tool *America's Army*. Now burrowing even further into international consciousness via console, *America's Army* remains a terrifyingly popular free game. We'd be fools to suggest there's no appeal in it, whatever our leftie pinko worries about the underlying propaganda within. It's certainly worth checking out for curiosity's sake at www.AmericasArmy.com



TOP 5... ESSENTIAL FREE GAMING WEBSITES

- 1 GAMEHIPPO**
Everything free, everything new, most of it good.
www.gamehippo.com
- 2 ACID-PLAY**
Simple games for skint people.
www.acid-play.com
- 3 CAIMAN**
Archive of revamped oldies from Bomberman to Mario.
www.caiman.us/default.asp
- 4 TOOLSTER**
Very German, and similarly comprehensive.
www.toolster.de/news.php
- 5 TIGSOURCE**
Opinionated and trustworthy freeware commentary.
www.tigsource.com

SHOT ONLINE

Developer: OnNet Website: www.shot-online.com

Shot Online is a somewhat wacky Korean golfing MMOG that combines wide-eyed girls in school uniforms competing in tournaments with ever bigger and ever brighter outfits, clubs and golfing slacks. The golfing itself is quite tricky to get the hang of (being all down to power bars and snappy clicking), but it's a thoroughly enjoyable experience, above all when you get through the training and into competitive play.

Tiger Woods is obviously a laugh online these days, but should you want an experience in which you don't part with real-world cash then you really should try out *Shot Online*. It's true to say that the stuff in-between the golfing, when you're wandering about the club-houses and swapping bon-mots with the great, good and entirely strange of the *Shot Online* world looks pretty dated (in a very old-school Korean MMOG way), but there's plenty here to entertain. It's free too, did we mention that?



Typically, we initially chose to play as a schoolgirl.

SMALL ROCKETS

Developer: Small Rockets
Website: www.smallrockets.com

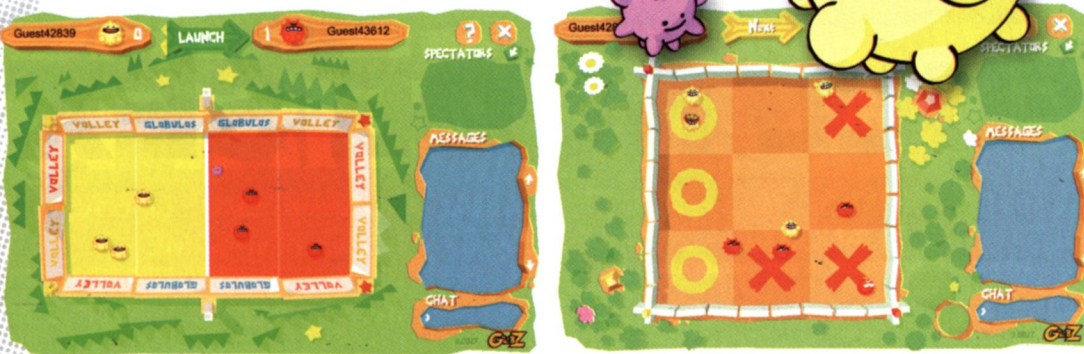
The games are a bit guff, but they're free. Free! Indie developer Small Rockets (creator of *ZONE* favourite *Art Is Dead*) has released the parts of its back catalogue that are incompatible with Windows XP as freeware. And so *Kayak Extreme*, *Jetboats Superchamps 2* and *Hot Chix 'n' Gear Stix* can be yours for nowt – the best of which being the kayaking game, since the chix in the latter aren't as hot as they'd have you believe and neither is the game. Still, if you've got a lower-spec machine and an older variation of Windows, you can easily eek a bit of fun out of them...



Kayaking is rarely so extreme.

GLOBULOS

Developer: Globz Website: www.globulos.com



Globulos is nothing short of a squishy online triumph.

Since the last time we covered it, *Globulos* seems to have been rejigged by capitalists, so the freeplay available is tied down to a mere 15 minutes and limited numbers of *Globz* games. However, it remains the premier Web browser game, and if you've never played it then you've never lived. In its purest, best form it should be enjoyed while playing the squishy, directional-prodding, jelly-pocketing football game – but

unfortunately this has now been placed behind the velvet rope in the VIP members area (which is admittedly only 1.5 euros for seven days of ownership). What remains free are *Globz Volleyball* (ace), *Tic-Tac-Glob* (passable) and back-to-basics *Arena* (pretty neat).

A two-player game, you and another faceless denizen of the Interweb assign directions and movement forcefulness to your hapless, bouncing smiley jelly-peeps,

and from here they bounce, slide, score goals, fall in pits and generally score points for your cause. With a thriving community and knife-edge competitive gameplay, it's the most basic game ever to have enamoured the entirety of *PCZ* staffers, and it's just a shame more of it isn't open without subscription. Best played with an MSN friend rather than a stranger, but still intensely lovable; try it and join the *Glob* revolution.

WEBGAME OF THE MONTH HAPLAND 2

Developer: Robin Allen
Website: www.foon.co.uk/farcade/hapland2

The work of an apparently twisted mind, *Hapland 2* is a Flash-based puzzle game with a strange view of cause and effect. In fact, it's not so much a game as just a puzzle, the pleasure of which lies in unravelling the unlikely logic of the thing. The aim, and it is random, is to get the stick men through the archways in order to open the portal of... Something or other. The point is, you need to clear a path for your little pals by setting off an elaborate chain reaction of events. This might mean blowing up landmines, firing catapults, moving platforms and any number of other things, but all in the right order and at the right time.

You'll just be clicking randomly at first, which means the little stickmen get splattered on the walls. Trial-and-error is the name of the game, and if you get stuck, keep clicking – or go back to *Hapland 1*, which is the same but easier.

One more tip: use the Tab key to cycle through all the interactive objects on the screen – and click on absolutely everything.



Stickmen must die.

Do you have a favourite free game you'd like to share with *PC ZONE*? Have you made a free game and want to shout about it? Send details to mailbox@pczone.co.uk with 'Freeplay' in the subject heading.



Saigon. Yep, we're still in Saigon.

BACK TO 'NAM

VIETCONG 2 TAKES SHAPE – THIS TIME IT'S PERSONAL

FANS OF STICKY jungle encounters and sweaty manholes will be thrilled to hear that FPS sequel *Vietcong 2* is well underway, and currently on target for a Christmas release date.

The sequel continues the Charlie-hunting antics of the first game, but shifts the action to the 1968 Tet Offensive, a bloody series of surprise attacks launched by the VC during the Lunar New Year ceasefire. Evidently, none of the characters from the first game are to be carried over (no great loss), and you'll take the role of an as yet unnamed US Captain stationed in Hue.

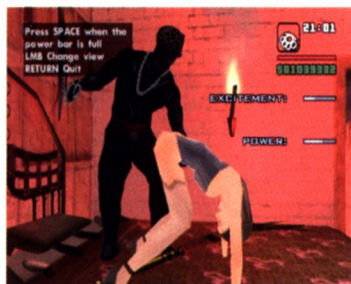
Rather than the squad dynamic of the first game, your main focus will now be on escorting a US war reporter, a device already explored to good effect in *Men Of Valor*.

Interestingly, you'll also get a chance to play the battle from the other side, with a full Vietcong campaign based around the Hue Uprising. To get around the tricky problem of killing US troops, it seems the focus will be on fighting the South Vietnamese Army, though this should still go some way to balancing the political overtones of the game. Multiplayer is also set to get the usual

overhaul, with drivable vehicles, new and updated character classes, and team battles for up to 64 players.

Unfortunately, the screenshots have that 'we've gone for too much realism and made everything look a bit shit' look about them that seems to afflict every Eastern European shooter, but we're nonetheless hopeful for some tense and sweaty jungle-based action.

- Publisher: 2K Games
- Developer: Pterodon
- ETA: Q4 2005
- Website: www.pterodon.com



Hey, we're just printing it, OK?



Wonder why it got cut?

FULL NUDE SEX

GTA: SAN ANDREAS PATCH EXPOSES GRIMY UNDERBELLY OF LIFE AS A WEST COAST GANGSTA. IN FORM OF SMUTTY, RUDE MINI-GAMES

WHAT'S THE WORLD coming to? As graphics in games become increasingly lifelike, so it seems the urge to make game characters shag each other becomes increasingly irresistible. Last month we brought news of online boff 'em up *3Feel*; this month, we've been getting our hands dirty in the mucky world of *GTA San Andreas*.

It seems there's a full sex mini-game in the latest Rockstar opus, which can be unlocked by means of a patch (called *Hot Coffee* and found at gtagarage.com). Rockstar had planned to include the option in the full game, but for some

reason got cold feet and locked it away out of sight. Although seeing as it wasn't buried particularly deeply (or indeed, erased altogether), perhaps the company wanted it seen, without compromising *GTA's* 'smutty yet not filthy' mentality.

Now, when you go back to your girlfriend's place for 'coffee', you're treated to a session of full pixxellated intercourse, wherein blocky placeholder nudes rub up against each other in a vague approximation of human lovemaking. You even have to waggle the joystick (or keyboard) in rhythm to the action to

achieve maximum excitement (something you should all be very familiar with).

There are two versions of the patch, one of which unlocks virtual rutting from the get-go, the other of which simply adds sex scenes to your normal game. Either way it's mildly amusing, though we can't help thinking there are better things we could be doing with our lives...

- Publisher: N/A
- Developer: Rockstar
- ETA: Out Now
- Website: www.gtagarage.com/mods/show.php?id=28



BAD MOJO

MEN'S GROOMING PRODUCT SPAWNS GAME: ONLINE FLIRT 'EM UP MOJO MASTER

IF YOU THOUGHT deodorant products and PC gaming were mutually exclusive phenomena, think again. In a move that could revolutionise hygiene standards across the Internet, men's grooming brand Axe (aka Lynx) has teamed up with casual game specialist WildTangent to give us '3D mating game' *Mojo Master*.

Aimed at frustrated males and would-be sex pests, *Mojo Master* is an online-only affair in which the aim is to pick up a series of "ridiculously hot girls" in bars, pool halls and other dens of vice. The gameplay, such as it is, takes a lead from collectible card games such as *Magic: The Gathering*, and sees you trading idiotic flirting moves with your prey in order to reduce the other's mojo to zero. Make the wrong move and you'll get the cold shoulder; make the right moves and you might just get her phone number... the wanton strumpet.

True to its 'brand-building' objectives, the game is riddled with advertisements for Axe products – they even operate as a power-up to boost your mojo when things are going a bit Bobby and Whitney.

If you can stomach this sort of blatant commercialism, not to mention the sickening appropriation of youth culture by one of the world's biggest corporations (Unilever), then *Mojo Master* may be worth a glance. It is, after all, free.

- **Publisher:** WildTangent
- **Developer:** WildTangent
- **ETA:** Out Now
- **Website:** www.mojomastergame.com



Snogless school discos will be a thing of the past.



Learn everything there is to know about seducing women.



Unlike GTA, any actual rutting is left to your imagination.



Osama's gonna pay...



Boom! Boom! Ratatatatata!

BATTLE SPIRIT

THE SPECTRE OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM REVEALED IN GHOST WARS

NOPE, THIS isn't a supernatural beat 'em up. (Come on developers, how about 'Ghostbust-Ups'? Eh? Oh forget it.) *Ghost Wars* is actually a new RTS concerning the fun and frolics of the war against international terrorism. You control the elite forces of the Government Special Operations Group, who have to storm into a conflict and, erm, "pacify" the situation.

The single-player campaign is composed of 20 missions, as well as over 10 missions specifically

designed for online battles. *Ghost Wars* is implementing a *Soldiers*-style Direct Control system, which allows you to jump into any of your units and switch to first-person view, or third-person for vehicles such as Humvees and helicopters.

Units can also exchange their equipment (that is "lootable"), gain experience and level up, developing skills that you can assign however you want. However, the most controversial part of *Ghost Wars* is the fact that



Just another day in the Baghdad suburbs.

the developer is considering implementing suicide bomber units, apparently to truly take into account the real-life tactics of terror organisations. Brutally realistic or cynically sensationalist? We'll make up our minds when we get hands-on code in a few months' time.

- **Publisher:** Hip Games
- **Developer:** Digital Reality
- **ETA:** Q1 2006
- **Website:** www.hipinteractive.com



Jump in and control individual units.

I WALKED THE DINOSAUR



IT WAS A NIGHT LIKE THIS 40 MILLION YEARS AGO WHEN SUNFLOWERS SHOWED OFF ITS NEW DINO STRATEGY GAME, *PARAWORLD*...

BOOM BOOM acka-lacka lacka boom. Boom boom acka-lacka boom boom.

One day two centuries ago, the creator of the computer, a Charles Babbage, during a rare planetary alignment discovered a parallel dimension filled with warring tribes and dinosaurs – true story. It was only a matter of time before three scientists and a few notable historical figures (Amelia Earhart for one) crossed the inter-dimensional divide and eked out a living RTS-style, reuniting the tribes and taming (and walking) the dinosaur.

So much, so far, far distant from Sunflowers' last effort *Knights Of Honor* – but you have to admit that in an age of incessant World War II games coming off the strategy conveyor belt, units

such as Brachiosaurus catapults and Battle Mammoths are



The Flintstones they didn't want you to see.

nothing but a good thing. When you start playing, the terrible lizards are present in the play area but need to be tamed, and if they're not tamed then they're a danger so you'll have to prevent your hapless foot soldiers from straying too near any seemingly abandoned T-Rex eggs.



"No, I don't think he did see us." "That's a relief."

All the normal resource gathering remains intact, while each of the three playable tribes have their own traits – whether nomadic and ambush-loving, or Northern and bearded. Meanwhile, the now common RTS asset of Hero units will also make its presence known. It's all

about the dinosaurs though, all 40 of 'em. Boom boom acka-lacka boom boom.

- Publisher: Deep Silver
- Developer: Sunflowers
- ETA: Q1 2006
- Website: www.sunflowers.de

WINTER OF OUR CONTENT

THE LONG NIGHTS DRAW IN WITH *WARHAMMER 40K: DOW* ADD-ON, *WINTER ASSAULT*



It'll all be over by Christmas.

FLU, DARKNESS, high mortality rates among the elderly and infirm – winter is so rubbish that it's not surprising that the battle rages in the 40K universe with added menace beyond the autumnal equinox. This first expansion pack covers a firm favourite in the vast *Warhammer* collection of heavily armoured snarly soldiers – the Imperial Elite – backbone of the forces of humanity.

With something that can be described as a real 'Eastern Front' vibe, the Elite's tactics are very much that of defence, heavy armour and



So where's our Subbuteo RTS?

slow, inevitable encroachment upon the enemy through the snowy winter wastes. This isn't to say that some of their units aren't a bit nippy (the AT-ST style-Sentinel walkers with their manifold arrays of weaponry make up in manoeuvrability what they lack in hulking presence), but *Winter Assault* is set to be far more a war of attrition than under its previous guise.

Once again, as is now expected from developer Relic, soldier and vehicle animation is nothing short of splendid – the Imperial BaneBlade tanks are truly a sight to behold. Fighting over the ruins of a massive Emperor Class Titan packed

with the power to assure dominance over entire worlds, the many fans of the original game would be fools not to add it to their mental wish-lists. With the added news that a traditional 'Warhammer' *Warhammer* game (with old-style orks, goblins and that) is also in production, it seems that the table-top revolution is far from over.

- Publisher: THQ
- Developer: Relic Entertainment
- ETA: September
- Website: www.dawnofwargame.com

I ALSO WALKED THE DINOSAUR

BLACK WALLPAPER, METAL STUDS AND A BACK CATALOGUE OF HIM ALBUMS ARE STRANGELY LACKING IN *GOthic 3*



GOthic GAMES, like lots of large men drinking beer in tents inexplicably not coming to blows, are inordinately popular in Germany. And while we're whipping up the mindless froth of hype all over Bethesda's *Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* we'd be arrogant fools not to vaguely point in the direction of the latest in the *Gothic* triptych. Mainly because it has dinosaurs in it, but also because it's headed towards similar, and really quite exciting, territory.

Your home island having been rescued (twice) in previous games, you're now on your way to the main land where wicked orcs have dragged humanity into slavery. Whether or not you join in the human

rebellion or tag along with their captors is up to you. The gameplay is touted as being as wide and freeform as they come, with the usual parade of side-quests that invariably involve beasts that need killing, necklaces that need finding or sisters/wives/brothers/sons/daughters that need rescuing/avenging (delete as appropriate).

If the clunksome combat of the last outing is improved (that still got a considerable 80 per cent score back in Issue 132) then this could be something of a gem. Especially because, as has been mentioned, there appears to be a heavy preponderance of dinosaurs. Everyone likes dinosaurs.



Secretly Jeff wanted to be an elephant.



Hovels: often fall down.

- Publisher: JoWooD
- Developer: Piranha Bytes/Pluto 13
- ETA: Q1 2006
- Website: www.gothic3.com

MUG OF THE FUTURE

COULD MURDER A CUP OF TEA? REALLY FANCY A STRONG HOT BREW BUT TOO BUSY KILLING PEOPLE ON THE INTERWEB? LOOK NO FURTHER... SOMETHING WARMING THIS WAY COMES

IT'S EVERY gamer's nightmare alongside getting Cheesy Wotsit dust on a keyboard. There you are, fragging away, when you realise that you've barely touched the cup of tea that you made 20 minutes ago. Oh, cruel cruel fate. What's worse than a fresh cup of tea gone slightly tepid? What calumny awaits that is greater than a slightly-less-hot-than-it-should-be cup of coffee? None. Absolutely none.

Which is why (hoorah and hip hip) some plucky genius has created this: the USB Cup Warmer plus Four-Port Hub. Now it's a bit rubbish if you have mugs that are slightly bigger than normal, and to be honest we've been spending more time pressing our fingers down onto the hot plate to see how long we can stand the pain than we have gently warming tea, but it's quite cool isn't it? It works

better with mugs with completely flat bases as well. In fact, actually, it's pretty useless. But still fun at the same time.

Let's face it, it gives you four extra USB ports – but at the same time, by its very nature it puts four USB peripherals in direct contact with a ceramic mug of hot, slightly sweetened sticky drink. Doesn't exactly take a genius to work out what happens next does it...

That said, this is exactly the sort of stupid shit we here at *PC ZONE* coo about, play with and then put on the shelf for anything up to four years. And for this, at least, we are glad. It costs £13.95 and can be bought from Special EFX at www.efx.co.uk or by mail order on 01789 451204. All you need then, is some sort of degenerate dogsbody to make the brew for you. We've got one, and can confirm they come quite cheap...



The magical tea-warmer works with the mugs of all second-rate football teams.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS

A RUSSIAN schoolboy has been killed by computer games, according to reports. The 12-year-old from the Urals city of Yekaterinburg fainted following a marathon session at a local computer club, and died eight days later. An employee of the club whispered: "When this boy came last time, he felt quite good and played for a long time, almost for 12 hours. Then suddenly he fell on the floor. We called an ambulance immediately, the doctors arrived fast and took him to a hospital." Suffering a loss of bearings and unable to recognise his parents, the boy was initially diagnosed with an epileptic seizure. A week later he remained reliant on an artificial respirator and died shortly afterwards, with a post-mortem citing the cause of death as a stroke. A senior doctor at the local children's hospital, Alexei Sulimov, who concluded that emotional tension resulted in a congestion of blood vessels in the brain, stated: "He was dying but could not tear himself away from the game." A special medical commission will decide if any of this is true.

Playing computer games turns you into a violent psychopath, researchers claim. Boffins from the University of Aachen, Germany, studied 13 men between the ages of 18 and 26, forcing them to play a game involving killing terrorists in order to rescue hostages. The eggheads concluded that during in-game violence, the brain reacts in the same way as throughout actual aggression. However, Jeffrey Fagan, a violence expert from Columbia University in New York, scoffed: "The frontal lobe functions associated with violence have more to do with restraint than the arousal to action." Meanwhile, Dr Guy Cumberbatch, head of the independent Communications Research Group in the UK, spat: "If the findings in this study were the same as when people responded to imaginary situations, why is it any different to seeing violence in films or at the theatre? The problem is, it's very much a witch-hunt in relation to videogames. The instinct to punch someone on the nose is pretty basic. I don't think it is influenced by playing these games."

"A doctor concluded that emotional tension resulted in a congestion of blood vessels to the brain: 'He was dying, but could not tear himself away from the game'"

SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN

ZONE KICKS ON THE DOOR OF RICHARD ROUSE, DESIGN DIRECTOR AND WRITER ON THE SUFFERING: TIES THAT BIND, AND DEMANDS THAT HE ANSWER OUR MANIFOLD QUESTIONS

PCZ: So where is *Ties That Bind* taking us? We take it that we've moved beyond mere incarceration...

RR: The first game worked really well in the prison setting, but we knew we didn't want this game to just be a retread of that. So naturally we wanted to take Torque to some new environments, it was simply a question of where... He didn't seem like someone who would fit in well in the bucolic countryside, and with the way the story was developing, it made sense for Torque to return to his home town of Baltimore.

While that's certainly different from the maximum security penitentiary of the first game, Baltimore can be something of a metaphorical prison for the people who live there, particularly for those without the means to get out of its poorest neighbourhoods. At the same time, we didn't want to get away from prisons entirely, so we're taking Torque to an urban prison in the form of Eastern Baltimore Correctional Facility. This is an urban prison, meaning it's much more tight and claustrophobic than what players saw in the first game. And for us, it just wouldn't be *The Suffering* without some form of prison in the game.

PCZ: So what else about *Ties That Bind* is new and improved since Torque's last outing?

RR: Sequels are great for games because they give development teams a chance to really refine the gameplay mechanics, and provide a much tighter and more compelling game. As well as tightening up weapon selection, inventories and controls, we've improved the variety of enemies and the tactics they use to attack you. Our creatures are still the distinct, horrific fiends players liked in the first game, but they're quite a bit more clever and deadly this time around.

PCZ: How about the insanity creature that you could turn into in the last game? Does he get a second outing?

RR: Yeah. Players loved that feature in the last game, but they didn't find it to be as effective as it was cool. In response to that, we've made the creature form quite a bit more powerful, and with our refined balancing, players are going to need to use it to make it through the game. But I feel confident saying that it's so cool, players are going to want to use it regardless.

PCZ: How do you intend to make the game darker?

RR: We're really focusing on more of Torque's history, and it's pretty dark. It turns out his life and the murder of his family is not quite as simple as it may have seemed in the first game. In particular, there's a dark and sinister figure known as Blackmore who has been manipulating Torque's life for years, and his depravity seems to have no limits...

Then there's our change of locale. The decaying city is an ideal location for exploring the darker side of humanity, and we have a number of denizens from the city's troubled past who will be showing up to provide some grizzly stories. So, yes, we're making it quite a bit darker.

PCZ: Is the game going to be a straight end-to-end affair, or will it have elements of free-roaming?

RR: With a horror game, and particularly one that tells the type of story we really wanted to do, we found a lot of advantages to actually keeping the gameflow fairly tight. One of the biggest areas for players to roam is actually in terms of how they experience that story. First off, we have the story start with three different beginnings based on how players finished the first game. (Players who didn't complete the first game will be able to play as well, though, so don't worry!)

Naturally it's the very beginning of the game that changes the most, but there are other ripple effects throughout the story based on what beginning the player started with. You'll also have the ability to determine your fate and how the story develops by using our

expanded morality system. Based on who you choose to help and who you kill, you'll get a significantly different story as you play through the game – in addition to a number of different endings.

PCZ: Who has designed the creatures in this game? What nasties can we look forward to?

RR: We have a very talented concept artist on the project named Ben Olson who designed all of the creatures for both the first *Suffering* game and for *Ties That Bind*. Ben is fantastic at taking vague suggestions and turning them into fantastic concepts of uniquely twisted creatures. A big part of what makes a creature a *Suffering* creature is that they appear to be suffering themselves. Sure, they may be trying to kill the player with incredible persistence, but these are still definitely tortured souls. And we've carried on that tradition this time around.

In the first game, the creatures were themed after different execution methods, which fit nicely with the prison theme. This time, since we've moved the game to Baltimore, the creatures are all themed after the harsh realities of the urban environment, whether it's drug addiction, gun violence, or disease and starvation.

PCZ: Any examples of this depravity?

RR: Well, one of the most disturbing of the new creatures is the Suppressor. He shows up about midway through the game, when the player enters a harsh urban prison. The Suppressor looks like he was once a corrections

**“We’ve been waiting
a long time to get a
human-headed dog
into a game”**

RICHARD ROUSE DESIGN DIRECTOR

Torque: unsubtle in his approach.

officer, but large parts of his body are missing and he pulls himself along the ground, leaving a bloody trail wherever he goes. Guns have sprouted out of his chest, and a flashlight has been rammed through his skull. He has lost most of his senses including his hearing, so he can only detect you when he manages to shine his flashlight on you.

Another cool new creature is the Mauler, who is actually a dog with a human head and a ferocious-looking blade attached to it. Ben’s been waiting a long time to get a human-headed dog into a game, and I’m glad we were finally able to make that dream a reality.

“I’m as mad as hell...”

“...and I’m not going to take this anymore!”

■ Publisher: Midway
■ Developer: Surreal Software
■ ETA: September 30
■ Website: <http://sufferingtiesthatbind.com>

CHARTS

This is the end, beautiful friend. This is the end, my only friend: the end. I'll never look at these chart pages... Again...

In association with **VIRGIN MEGASTORES**



TOP 10



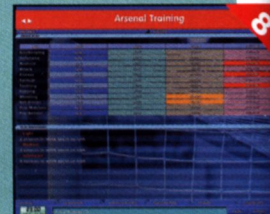
One word of advice: *Battlefield 2* is sooooo addictive, funny and exhilarating, don't play it just before you're going to bed. You'll end up having disturbing dreams about fighting in Baghdad all night long...



We've come into contact with real American students in the past few weeks and can confirm they're just as irritating, vacuous and squawking as *Sims 2: University* would have you believe. Still fun to imagine half of them naked though.



In the words of Mr Presley: "I'm a level 50 priest, I can kill planets like *that*, I'm in a gigantic cave and I'm about to take on a horde of evil like my race has never known. And I'm talking to a guy about how hot it is in Tenerife this year." Genius.



Northern people like to say "that's just champion", but *Championship Manager* isn't 'champion' any more is it? It's 'shit', 'rubbish' and 'bobbins'. For as long as these charts pages exist we'll rail against *Champ Man 5*, right to the very end.

	TITLE	PUBLISHER	SCORE
1	NEW BATTLEFIELD 2	EA	94%
2	NEW GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS	ROCKSTAR	92%
3	▼ GUILD WARS	NCSOFT	94%
4	NEW ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3: SOAKED!	ATARI	72%
5	▲ THE SIMS 2: UNIVERSITY	EA	57%
6	▼ WORLD OF WARCRAFT	VU GAMES	95%
7	– FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005	SEGA	90%
8	▼ CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 5	EIDOS	50%
9	▼ THE SIMS 2	EA	82%
10	▼ HALF-LIFE 2	VU GAMES	97%

YOUR SHOUT

Have your say at www.pczone.co.uk

I once ate a kitten's eyeballs. *GTA* was the cause. Kittens everywhere should fear for their eyes.
Moomooocow8

As a mother and a fireman, I'm greatly offended to see such an offensive game offending me at the top of these offensive charts. I shall be writing to god: we'll see what he has to say about this.
Escaped Monkey

Last charts comments ever? Could you put me in there then? I've never been in them.
(Liar - Ec)
G_Man_007



TOP 10

1.	BATTLEFIELD 2	EA
2.	GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS	ROCKSTAR
3.	ZOO TYCOON 2	MICROSOFT
4.	BOILING POINT: ROAD TO HELL	ATARI
5.	EMPIRE EARTH II	VU GAMES
6.	IMPERIAL GLORY	EIDOS
7.	COSSACKS II: NAPOLEONIC WARS	CDV
8.	THE MATRIX ONLINE	SEGA
9.	DOOM 3	ACTIVISION
10.	ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3: SOAKED!	ATARI

COMPETITION



Win £100 of Virgin vouchers!

PC ZONE and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win 100 shiny pounds-worth of goodies from your local Virgin Megastore. All you have to do to enter is answer the following:

QUESTION: In honour of *Battlefield 2*, which of these is not a famous battle?

- A The Battle of Agincourt
- B The Battle of the Bulge
- C The Battle of The Litten Tree pub on Bedford High Street every Friday at closing time

Send your answers on a postcard to: PC ZONE Chart Compo Issue 158, Future Publishing, 99 Baker Street, London, W1U 6FP. Closing date: August 17, 2005

- 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.
- Please indicate whether you are a current subscriber to PC ZONE.

For general competition terms and conditions, turn to page 7.

INCOMING!

PC ZONE'S RELEASE SCHEDULE FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. ALL APPROXIMATE MONTHLY DATES ARE CORRECT AT THE TIME OF GOING TO PRESS.

AUGUST

COMMANDOS: STRIKE FORCE	EIDOS
DUNGEON SIEGE II	MICROSOFT
EARTH 2160	DEEP SILVER
HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY	EIDOS

SEPTEMBER

BATTLESTATIONS: MIDWAY	SCI
BET ON SOLDIER	DIGITAL JESTERS
FAHRENHEIT	ATARI
F.E.A.R.	VU GAMES
MOTOGP 3: ULTIMATE RACING TECHNOLOGY	THQ
STARSHIP TROOPERS	EMPIRE
THE SUFFERING: TIES THAT BIND	MIDWAY
TOTAL OVERDOSE	SCI
X3: REUNION	DEEP SILVER
WARHAMMER 40K: WINTER ASSAULT	THQ

Q3 2005

BLACK & WHITE 2	EA
CONFLICT: GLOBAL TERROR	SCI
DREAMFALL: THE LONGEST JOURNEY	FUNCOM
HALF-LIFE 2: AFTERMATH	VALVE
ROME: TOTAL WAR - BARBARIAN INVASION	ACTIVISION
SERIOUS SAM 2	TAKE 2
STARGATE: SG1 - THE ALLIANCE	JOWOOD
STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT II	ACTIVISION
STUBBS THE ZOMBIE	ASPYR
THE MOVIES	ACTIVISION
TIMESHIFT	ATARI
TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND	EIDOS

Q4 2005

AGE OF EMPIRES III	MICROSOFT
BROTHERS IN ARMS: EARNED IN BLOOD	UBISOFT
CALL OF DUTY 2	ACTIVISION
CIVILIZATION IV	TAKE 2
ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION	TAKE 2
GHOST RECON: ADVANCED WARFIGHTER	UBISOFT
FABLE: THE LOST CHAPTERS	MICROSOFT
PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG	UBISOFT
PRINCE OF PERSIA 3	UBISOFT
QUAKE IV	ACTIVISION
RISE & FALL: CIVILIZATIONS AT WAR	MIDWAY
SPELLFORCE II: BLEND OF PERFECTION	JOWOOD
THE GODFATHER	EA
THE MATRIX: PATH OF NEO	ATARI
TOGA RACE DRIVER 3	CODEMASTERS

2005

ADVENT RISING	TBA
PSYCHONAUTS	TBA

2006

BIOSHOCK	TBA
CONDEMNED: CRIMINAL ORIGINS	SEGA
COMPANY OF HEROES	THQ
ENEMY TERRITORY: QUAKE WARS	ACTIVISION
JUST CAUSE	EIDOS
HELLGATE: LONDON	NAMCO
PREY	TAKE 2
RISE OF NATIONS: RISE OF LEGENDS	MICROSOFT
SPORE	EA
STALKER: SHADOW OF CHERNOBYL	THQ
SUPREME COMMANDER	THQ
STAR WARS: EMPIRE AT WAR	ACTIVISION
UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2007	MIDWAY

MISSING IN ACTION

The war's not over until the last game comes home...

CONDEMNED: CRIMINAL ORIGINS

Seeing as it'll be an Xbox 360 winter title, we doubt whether we'll see Monolith's serial-kill shocker this side of 2006. A shame, but at least we'll be sampling the cream of the developer's brutality in *F.E.A.R.* in coming months. So, boo and hurrah! Or boo-ray.

- Publisher: Sega
- Developer: Monolith
- ETA: Probably next year
- Website: www.lith.com



STALKER: SHADOW OF CHERNOBYL



This one seems to have drifted off the radar - if we were holding one of those radioactivity Geiger counter things then it would be making some pretty forlorn and monotonous clicking noises. Then again, let's just hope that THQ don't 'do a *Boiling Point*' and hurry its release too much.

- Publisher: THQ
- Developer: GSC GameWorld
- ETA: Unknown
- Website: www.stalkergame.com

DRAGONSHARD

The *D&D*-meets-RTS-meets-underground-bits title has hit the skids and won't be on the shelves till September, when originally Atari bods were muttering about a June release. Remember: its pronounced 'dragon-shard' and not the more obvious way...

- Publisher: Atari
- Developer: Liquid Entertainment
- ETA: September
- Website: www.atari.com/dragonshard



TOP 10 Things that piss us off about our PCs...

1. **SPYWARE AND ADWARE** - with pop-up windows that advertise anti-spyware and anti-adware software. Arrgggh!
2. **GAMESPY** - stop asking me if I want to install pigging gamespy!
3. **NO MULTI-TASKING** - the inability to open up simple directories when Windows is thinking a bit too hard about something else.
4. **NEW PATCHES** - the ones that come out when we've already patched pre-patched versions of our favourite games.
5. **PATCHES MKII** - the aforementioned new patch completely bugging up all our save games.
6. **VIRUS CHECKERS** - ones that crash your machine more than any virus has ever done before.
7. **MODS** - the ones that, with a nary a whisper of warning, proceed to invade every line of code of your favourite game.
8. **GAMES** - the ones in which changing the resolution means that you have to quit back to Windows. (*Doom 3* we're looking at you.)
9. **SAFE MODE** - just live a little won't you?
10. **BEING GRUMPY** - simply, and inexplicably just refusing to do anything at all and being a complete arse.

IS THERE A GAMING CHART YOU'D LIKE TO SEE HERE? SEND IT IN AND IF WE PRINT IT, YOU'LL GET A PC ZONE GOODIE BAG!



TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND

Lara Croft goes back to her grave-robbing roots...

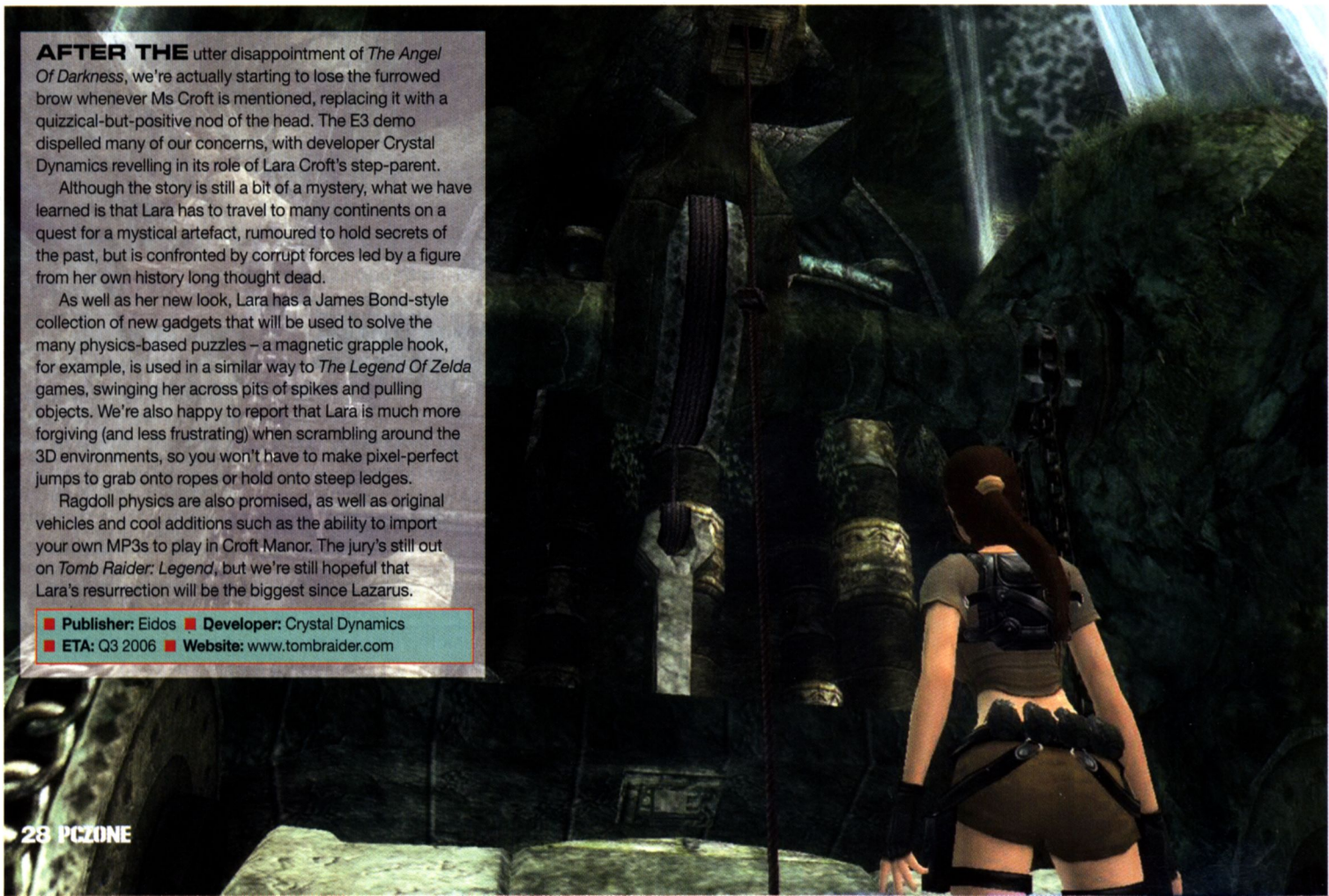
AFTER THE utter disappointment of *The Angel Of Darkness*, we're actually starting to lose the furrowed brow whenever Ms Croft is mentioned, replacing it with a quizzical-but-positive nod of the head. The E3 demo dispelled many of our concerns, with developer Crystal Dynamics revelling in its role of Lara Croft's step-parent.

Although the story is still a bit of a mystery, what we have learned is that Lara has to travel to many continents on a quest for a mystical artefact, rumoured to hold secrets of the past, but is confronted by corrupt forces led by a figure from her own history long thought dead.

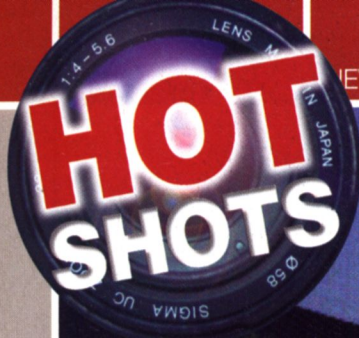
As well as her new look, Lara has a James Bond-style collection of new gadgets that will be used to solve the many physics-based puzzles – a magnetic grapple hook, for example, is used in a similar way to *The Legend Of Zelda* games, swinging her across pits of spikes and pulling objects. We're also happy to report that Lara is much more forgiving (and less frustrating) when scrambling around the 3D environments, so you won't have to make pixel-perfect jumps to grab onto ropes or hold onto steep ledges.

Ragdoll physics are also promised, as well as original vehicles and cool additions such as the ability to import your own MP3s to play in Croft Manor. The jury's still out on *Tomb Raider: Legend*, but we're still hopeful that Lara's resurrection will be the biggest since Lazarus.

■ Publisher: Eidos ■ Developer: Crystal Dynamics
■ ETA: Q3 2006 ■ Website: www.tombraider.com







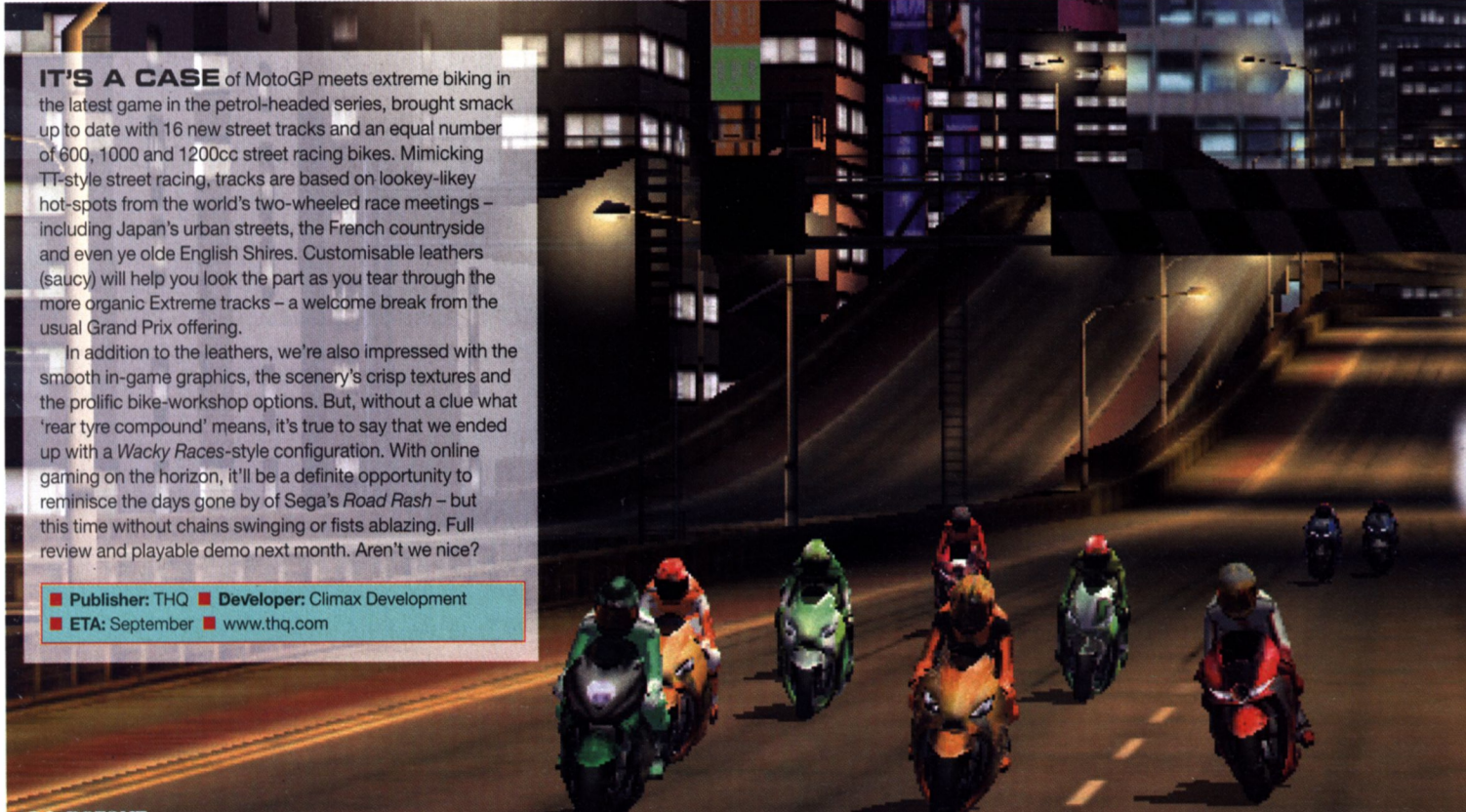
MOTO GP 3: ULTIMATE RACING TECHNOLOGY

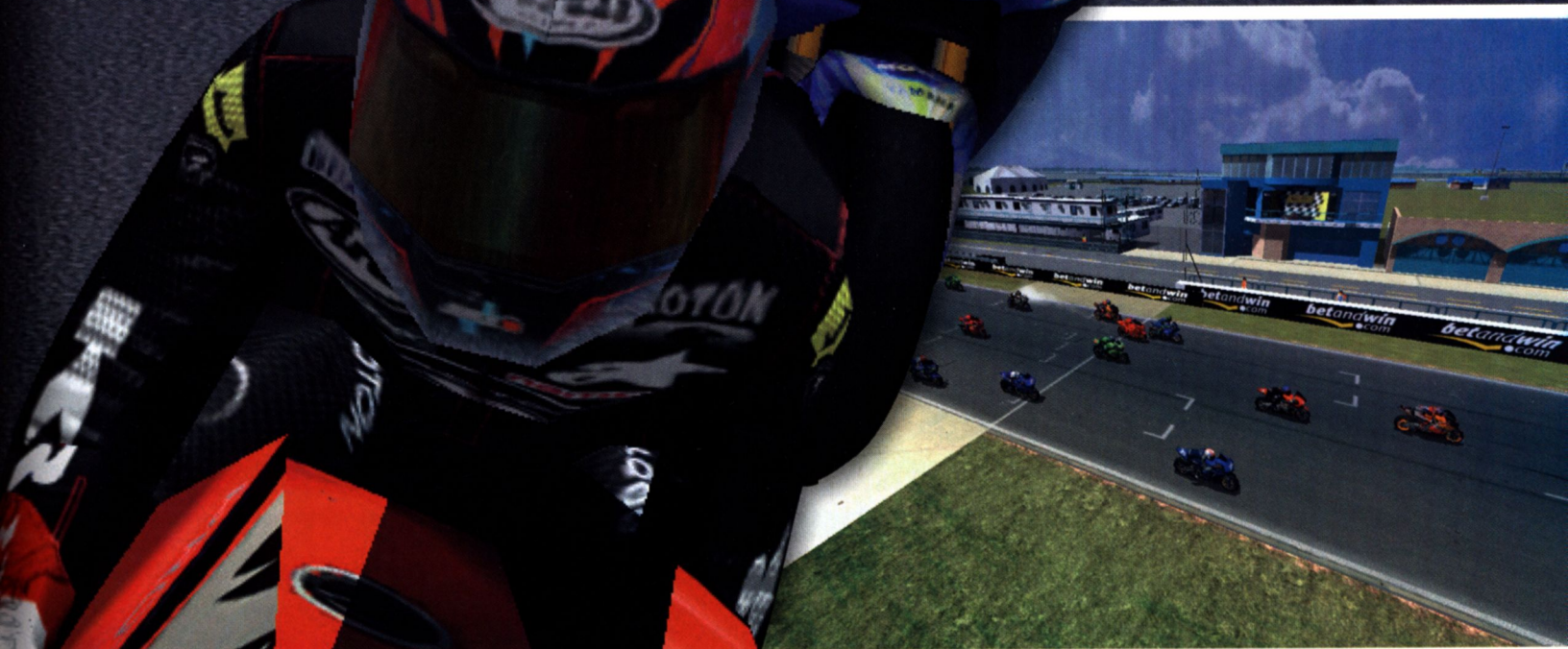
Leather and studs is where it's at as Climax Development's bike-fest rides into town...

IT'S A CASE of MotoGP meets extreme biking in the latest game in the petrol-headed series, brought smack up to date with 16 new street tracks and an equal number of 600, 1000 and 1200cc street racing bikes. Mimicking TT-style street racing, tracks are based on lookey-likey hot-spots from the world's two-wheeled race meetings – including Japan's urban streets, the French countryside and even ye olde English Shires. Customisable leathers (saucy) will help you look the part as you tear through the more organic Extreme tracks – a welcome break from the usual Grand Prix offering.

In addition to the leathers, we're also impressed with the smooth in-game graphics, the scenery's crisp textures and the prolific bike-workshop options. But, without a clue what 'rear tyre compound' means, it's true to say that we ended up with a *Wacky Races*-style configuration. With online gaming on the horizon, it'll be a definite opportunity to reminisce the days gone by of Sega's *Road Rash* – but this time without chains swinging or fists ablazing. Full review and playable demo next month. Aren't we nice?

■ Publisher: THQ ■ Developer: Climax Development
■ ETA: September ■ www.thq.com





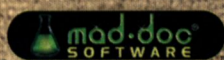
TAKE COMMAND.



Unequaled Scope
Command over 500 unique units and buildings in your 12,000 year conquest.

Unprecedented Control
Real-time Picture-in-Picture creates a whole new level of command.

Multiplayer Domination
Play online in 9 challenging modes with up to 10 players.



TAKE CONTROL.



EMPIRE EARTH

www.empireearth2.com



Sequel to GameSpy's PC Game of the Year

12+
www.pegi.info

© 2005 Sierra Entertainment, Inc. All rights reserved. Empire Earth, Sierra and the Sierra logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of Sierra Entertainment, Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. Mad Doc Software, Mad Doc®, the Mad Doc flask, and the Mad Doc logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Mad Doc Software, LLC. All rights reserved. Portions of this software are included under license. © 2005 Mad Doc Software, LLC. GameSpy and the "Powered by GameSpy" design are trademarks of GameSpy Industries, Inc. Microsoft and Windows are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. NVIDIA, the NVIDIA Logo, GeForce and "The Way It's Meant to be Played" Logo are registered trademarks and/or trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation in the United States and other countries. All other trademarks are property of their respective owners.

IN 1992 A CRACK GAMING UNIT WAS SENT TO PRISON BY A MILITARY COURT FOR A CRIME THEY DIDN'T COMMIT. THESE MEN (AND ONE WOMAN) PROMPTLY ESCAPED FROM A MAXIMUM SECURITY LAN PARTY TO THE GAMING UNDERGROUND. TODAY, STILL WANTED BY THE GOVERNMENT, THEY SURVIVE AS CO-OPERATIVE GAMERS OF FORTUNE. IF YOU HAVE A TEAM-BASED CO-OP MISSION, IF NO-ONE ELSE CAN HELP, AND IF YOU CAN FIND THEM, MAYBE YOU CAN HIRE...

THE Z-TEAM

EPISODE #73: THE CO-OPERATIVE AFFAIR



SWAT 4

MISSION: Many and varied, largely shooting ne'er-do-wells having asked them loudly and aggressively to get down before putting them down.

HOW: In-built set-ups make team fun a breeze.

TYPICAL MID-GAME CONVERSATION: "Where is he? Where is he?" "He's over there!" "I'm going to throw in some gas!" "Noooooo! Cough, splutter! You fat-handed twat!"

TESTIMONY

WILL: In my estimation this is the best co-op that money can buy. Admittedly we're rubbish at it and die all the time, and not a single one of us makes a decent leader, but what makes it so great is that when playing it we actually felt like a team. One balls-up means that you're all screwed – so there's a real on-edge feel to it all.

I also like the fact that when you're in a cleared area of the drug-den, garage or whatever, you're all pretty safe and there's time spare for comedy. There's absolutely nothing better than tazing Sefton at moments of high tension and laughing at his convulsing body or, indeed, accidentally-on-purpose misplacing a

hurled flashbang right in front of his stupid, northern, digital face.

PREZ: Obviously, Will has some unresolved issues with Sefton there, but skipping neatly over that potential minefield, I have to agree. He really does have a stupid, northern, digital face. Also, *SWAT 4* is probably the best co-op experience out there right now. The very nature of the game makes tight, controlled, strategic thinking and tactical awareness a pre-requisite for playing as a co-ordinated team. Such a pity that we're all a bunch of hapless morons with the situational awareness of lemon pudding then. Still, when the planets align and those rare moments of lucid

togetherness occur, then it's nothing short of a gaming epiphany.

PISSING ABOUT POTENTIAL: Sadism rules the roost here, as any game that enables you to spray mace into old ladies' faces, provide impromptu electro-shock therapy on panicking civilians and fire beanbags at carefully placed racks of beer bottles has great facilities for arsing around. The tazing of friends also leads to great hilarity, but best of all is the lack of a hierarchal command structure, meaning anyone can pretend to be in charge and order their mates into a room full of machine gun-packing psychotics while they, ahem, bring up the rear.

CO-OP RATING: 5/5



Tazering team-mates is essential SWAT training.





"I got the spokey-dokies from a packet of Frosties. Nice eh?"



Up yours, 007.



Car maintenance, Prez and Will style.

JOINT OPERATIONS: ESCALATION

MISSION: Shooting bad men from a distance. Then stealing their bikes.
HOW: Plenty of in-game co-op missions make setting things up a breeze.
TYPICAL MID-GAME CONVERSATION: "Will! Did you see that? I just parachuted down onto the back of your bike!" "Yes, yes." "But did you see it?" "No! Because I'm driving a pissing bike and getting shot at!"

TESTIMONY

PREZ: No, really. I jumped out of the hover-o-tron machine (*Helicopter - Ed*), parachuted down in the dark, shot a couple of guys on a roof as I descended, saw Will riding his bike, steered towards him and ACTUALLY LANDED ON THE BACK OF HIS BIKE! OMFG! I r0xx0r and that. Then Will drove us into a swarm of bad guys and we both died horribly. His fault, not mine.

JO is particularly good for co-ordinated gaming, with squad set-ups that let leaders write instructions on the maps, well laid out missions that encourage teamwork, clear objectives and more multi-user vehicles than you can shake a stick at. Co-op is actually the one aspect that *JO* still has over *Battlefield 2*.

WILL: The bots are stupid, of that there's no doubt. We're firmly in 'stand-and-shoot' or just 'shoot' territory, and this is certainly another co-op game with a few spawn-point issues - but when the spawn-point is in a helicopter you have to parachute out of, who gives a shit?

Escalation has far and away better co-op missions than the vanilla game, although the inevitable snipery that comes with it can become irritating

when you're trying to be all John Wayne and striding into a hail of gunfire. Overall though, one-and-a-half thumbs up. Over a LAN with four or so players mucking around in helicopters and tanks, as was the fashion with *ZONE* staff a year or so ago, and you very nearly get two thumbs.

PISSING ABOUT POTENTIAL: Telling your colleague that you can just jump out of a helicopter and refraining to mention the big locker of parachutes at the front, then watching the hapless idiot plummet to his death is a goodie. As is taking your buddies for a white-knuckle ride through the trees, swamps and jungles in a multi-user jeep, missing trees by mere inches and giving everyone motion sickness into the bargain.

RATING: 4/5

SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY

MISSION: Sneaking around, standing behind people watching TV, being told not to kill them and then killing them anyway.

HOW: Navigating Ubi.com is an exercise in frustration, so try to keep things LAN-based if at all possible. The multiplayer menus are comprehensive enough though.

TYPICAL MID-GAME CONVERSATION: "Help me climb this wall." "You do realise that this will involve my crotch rubbing against your face." "Yes. Yes I do."



"Are you sure there isn't a ladder?"



"Weeeee..." "Shhh!"



"No, I said fold to the left moron."

TESTIMONY:

WILL: With two players who know what they're doing and who know the pitfalls of Ubisoft's frustrating Internet play malarkey, *Splinter Cell* co-op can be wonderful. Hanging into a room with your good spy-friend clutching onto your trousers, hurling each other around the room and generously rubbing masculine thighs - it's all brilliant. Unsettling, but brilliant. We had a few moments of high-level tension when one of us (well, me) ineptly blundered into direct view of hoodlums and terrorists, but overall this is co-op of the gods. The main problem is simply that I want more maps.

PREZ: Agreed. *Splinter Cell* is one of the few games that's looked at the needs of co-op gaming and specifically designed itself around them. I was less worried about the unintentionally homoerotic overtones, but then I'm a grown-up and mature and that. That said, a close-up of Will's arse is never a good thing...

What did worry me was the frighteningly high level of expertise shown by some players when I briefly ventured off-message and online, making me all the more grateful to get back to the ham-fisted, amateur hour buffoonery displayed by Team *ZONE*.

PISSING ABOUT POTENTIAL: Pissing about often ends in alarms being slammed and Fisher getting angry. Best avoided really.

RATING: 5/5



SILENT HUNTER III

MISSION: Sink the Britischer sweinhunds and win the war at sea for the Third Reich.

HOW: A limited selection of in-game scenarios is balanced by an auto-mission generator and plenty of fan-made levels on the Net.

TYPICAL MID-GAME CONVERSATION: "Dive, dive, dive!" "OK, how? What button is that?" "Help, I'm sinking!" "You're in a submarine, idiot." "Which button fires the torpedoes?"



"Mind the paintwork."



17 key presses later...



No, really, I'm sinking.

TESTIMONY

PREZ: Ah, a life at sea! Surely every young boy's dream? The Wolfpack mode in *SHIII* is an odd duck, not quite sparse enough to indicate it was an afterthought by the developer, but not quite fluid enough to suggest too much time was spent on it. An option in the set-up screen toggles player communication options, but nowhere in the game could we find a way to talk to each other. Personally, I was hoping that the little morse code telegraph machine in the radio room would be interactive, but alas it was not to be.

Still, assuming you can talk to each other for real and keep each other informed, there's a lot to be said for *SHIII*. You've got to know your subs of course (or at least have the key reference card handy), and have a passing familiarity with how things work. There's also a tendency for everyone to lose track of each other and fire torpedoes wildly in all directions, screwing up notions of stealth and teamwork. However, it's a good diversion from pepper-spraying each other in *SWAT*...

WILL: This one went so far over my head that I was clearly sitting in the Mariana trench. I did manage to set a few ships on fire, but I was still bobbing around on the surface with the same subtlety and decorum as a giant metal turd. I know Prez likes it, but if you set up a LAN, then for god's sake make sure your buddies know a thing or two about the game or you're screwed.

PISSING ABOUT POTENTIAL: Deadly serious stuff this, and aside from playing submarine chicken with each other, there's not much silliness to be had. Watch those torpedoes though. Will insists he didn't shoot one at me on purpose, but I still ended up in a watery grave.

RATING: 3/5

DOOM 3

MISSION: Clearing out hellspawn from Mars, before going on a busman's holiday to hell itself and really confusing one of its gargantuan guardians.

HOW: Install the *Last Man Standing* mod, currently at beta stage, which enables you to host co-op games over a LAN.

TYPICAL MID-GAME CONVERSATION: "Now, I'm guessing that there's going to be something behind this door." "You think?" "Yup, there he is..." "Doesn't matter, I can't see a thing anyway."

TESTIMONY

WILL: This was quite fun for me, since I was the one hosting the game which meant I got exotic things like character animation in my co-op buddies and actually heard their gunfire. Unlike Prez and Jamie who did not, *Doom 3*'s narrow corridors aren't really made for three players either – but ammo and guns are at least limited by the mod to ensure it's not a complete pushover. Monsters disintegrating into thin air while still walking towards you instead of keeling over and dying is another bugbear as well – the whole thing really does feel like a fan-made beta release. Which it is.

However, the best moment came when fighting against the guardian in the hell levels. He got confused and instead of smiting our gallant team, just sat there looking grumpy and a lot like the depressed cat that needs baffling in Monty Python's 'Confuse-a-Cat' sketch. This obviously entailed lots of candid screenshot-taking of us getting up close with the miffed dark lord of hell. Better than the usual tourist snaps anyway.

PREZ: As Will mentioned, hosting *Last Man Standing* is infinitely preferable to merely joining a game. From the other

side of the fence, everyone appeared to be moving on roller skates and their guns inactive, despite the constant hell creature explosions. The lack of gunfire cues made it hard to determine where best to put your own limited ammo supplies, although everyone seemed to be very susceptible to a good torch battering – especially team-mates. Also, a bug meant that the character models for teleporting bad guys would all be visible long before they activated, ruining most of the game's shocks and scares.

There was also an odd side effect with the hell guardian. Aside from remaining motionless, there were two of them. Which you don't see every day. Ultimately, it's an exercise in frustration.

PISSING ABOUT POTENTIAL: Jumping out of the shadows to try and scare Prez was an amusing aside, especially as the game wasn't very good on that front. Mostly though, nothing beats a good healthy torch fight should you find yourself on a deserted Mars base. The discovery that crouching and shooting a team-mate with the shotgun catapults them across the room also led to much hilarity and impromptu dumping in lava.

RATING: 2/5



Even in the bowels of hell there's time for a Kodak moment.



"Thanks, but we did the garden yesterday." The British Museum's gone downhill...



VIETCONG

MISSION: Playing as barefoot VC, sweeping through a network of valleys and getting shot repeatedly by GIs.

HOW: By installing *Vietcong*, patching it, installing its mission pack *Fist Alpha*, patching that up to version 1.6 and then installing the free *Red Dawn* add-on pack. Then swearing a lot at the stupidity of modern PC game design and wishing we had Xboxes.

TYPICAL MID-GAME CONVERSATION: "Go home Gil!" "Me love you long time" "Five dollar" etc etc. We're not subtle round here.

TESTIMONY:

WILL: I was in the office until half nine after work patching and installing *Vietcong* and was it worth it? Well, the best bit about it was the fact that Prez's character had a funny hat. Badly placed spawn-points, little encouragement to play as a team and irritating insta-death – the fact that this has been released for free is clearly a good thing, but only *Vietcong* fans (all three of them) really need enlist.

PREZ: Before this feature I was maintaining that ANY game, no matter how bad traditionally, can be enjoyable in co-op. How wrong I was. Aside from the inherent flaws with the basic game as is, the co-op mode makes only the barest of concessions to the needs of team players (basic comms and navigation modes don't help very much), and the overall experience is one of despair. It's almost enough to make you want to play Russian Roulette in a cage somewhere south of Da Nang.

That said, a quick look on the Internet showed a surprising number of co-op servers in action, so someone must be playing it. Masochists.

PISSING ABOUT POTENTIAL: Any knowledge of any Vietnam movie will suffice in hilarious stereotyped mick-taking.

RATING: 1/5



The stupid hats don't help matters.



Boba was reminded of the Sarlacc incident.

The Punisher in Half-Life. Finally.

HALF-LIFE

MISSION: Attacking aliens who are attacking men, and attacking men who are also attacking aliens but are attacking Scientists also. Uhhh...

HOW: Using version 3.0 of the extremely handy *Sven Co-Op* mod.

TYPICAL MID-GAME CONVERSATION: "Oh this was a great bit." "Oh this was my favourite bit." "Oh I loved this bit."

TESTIMONY

WILL: *Sven Co-Op* was relatively tricky to get working (you need a .pak file from a non-Steam installation of *Half-Life* for a start), but it's a true workhorse of a mod and, even though it occasionally crashed on me,

demanding various character models and the like, it remains a decent blast. Extra, tougher monsters are all included – although to be honest it only really hits its heights when you start fighting marines.

The fact that Prez dressed himself up as The Punisher (in the game, not in real life – well, not today anyway) added to the surreal nature of it, as well as a few odd bugs that saw a giant fish monster flying and getting stuck in tunnels. It's well worth a try,

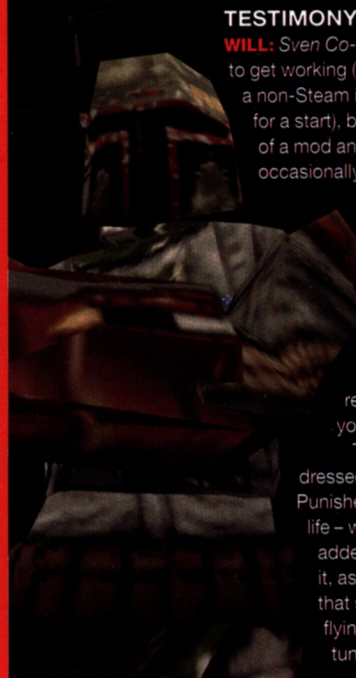
although seriously hampered by spawn-points that are several miles back into the level and the sobering fact that you probably know every texture of every square inch of every single solitary level anyway. Apart from Xen, obviously.

PREZ: Apart from those who never quite finished *Half-Life* first time round. Ahem. To that end, a lot of this was new and refreshing. Although it must be said that returning to *Half-Life* after playing on the Source engine is a bit of a shocker. Did games really look like this? I suppose so.

Anyway, it's a tough bugger, especially the enemy marines who not only wiped us all out, but then tracked us back to our spawn-points and started camping there to kill us the moment we rejoined the action. Blimey!

PISSING ABOUT POTENTIAL: "Will! Will! Will! Do I look like Boba Fett?" "Yes, Prez, yes you do." "Will! Will! Will! Do I look like The Punisher?" "Sigh. Yes Prez, yes you do." "Will! Will! Will! Do I look like..." "BANG!"

RATING: 3/5



OPERATION FLASHPOINT

MISSION: Kill those commies, soldiers. And rescue some hapless hostages. But mainly kill the commies.

HOW: A fiddly in-game menu, but at least it shows everyone what their assigned roles are in the game and provides detailed briefings.

TYPICAL MID-GAME CONVERSATION: "Pre-ez? Where are we going? Are we there yet?" "Almost, just another three clicks to go." "Pre-ez? What's a click?"

TESTIMONY

WILL: Everyone kept telling me this was an underrated classic of a game and I can sort of see why, although I'd still rather play something more modern (or wait for one of the two *OFP* sequels being made). Partly the maps are just too big, so the temptation to say sod it all and wander off exploring is too great. Plus, it's easy to get lost, but then I guess that's realistic. Firefights felt great though, especially when you had a team with varied loadouts working to back each other up.

PREZ: One of the best games ever this, and as with *Hidden & Dangerous 2*, as long as your team decides to take things seriously and work together, then co-op is one of the best

ways to play it. There's a desperate need for new maps, as the paltry handful included just belies the fact that multiplayer gaming of this type just wasn't a consideration back in 2001.

PISSING ABOUT POTENTIAL: All the fun a bunch of bored soldiers with big guns can muster. Aside from shooting each other, the best fun is had by ignoring the mission, jumping into any vehicle and haring off on impromptu racing sessions.

RATING: 3/5



Both Prezzer and Flashpoint are showing their age.

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2: SABRE SQUADRON

MISSION: Killing Germans and stealing some sort of secret thing from a big secret German base. In Germany. We think.

HOW: Once again it's all-praise the in-game server menus. Equipment screens are a touch confusing, but think like an RPG and you'll get the idea.

TYPICAL MID-GAME CONVERSATION: "Right, we've got to be quiet, try not to alert anyone." "CHAARRRGE! BADDAA-BADDAA BANG!"
"Is that the entire Third Reich coming over that hill?"

TESTIMONY

WILL: Well, it's probably the best simulation of four people standing in a muddy German field in the rain that I've ever played – and fundamentally for *H&D* buffs only I'd say. There's good stuff in here, but whereas in *SWAT 4* you feel like a team even when none of you know what's going on, *Sabre Squadron's* teamplay is something you really have to work on. It didn't help that we got stuck and were aimlessly wandering around in the drizzle for ages either. It's quite cruel as well – another mission had us working

our way through a network of trenches to a gun emplacement, at which point a tank appeared for imminent destruction. Unfortunately, however, it took us out in one of our many off-moments – and so we respawned. Respawned right next to the tank. Game over man, game over. Again and again.

PREZ: The clue's in the title – *Hidden & Dangerous*. For this to work in co-op, everyone really needs to firmly be in the stealth mode mentality. Unfortunately that's not the Z-Team way and so, despite my best attempts to bark out orders with

the in-game comms menu and co-ordinate everyone, too many loose cannons meant the war was over too quickly for us. Trigger-happy morons, I'm surrounded by them...

PISSING ABOUT POTENTIAL: Another earnest attempt to recreate man's favourite pastime, meaning that other than a few 'Allo 'Allo impressions, there's not much comedy to be had. Sneakily laying down mines around the spawn-point while the others were on the equipment screens, then watching the fireworks when they set off was good for a chuckle though.

RATING: 2/5



Look: a Hitler! – The Musical poster.



"Here's lookin' at you, kid."

CLOSE COMBAT: FIRST TO FIGHT

MISSION: Killing wave after wave of Middle Eastern stereotypes for fun and profit.

HOW: Yet another case of in-game server set-ups make life, if not fighting, a breeze.

TYPICAL MID-GAME CONVERSATION: "He's going east down Durka Durka street!" "Two more Durkas in that window." "America! F**k yeah!"



It's a man's life in the army.



Foreign police in action.

US finest. ZONE worst.

TESTIMONY

WILL: I really, really enjoyed this. It's bloody racist, like *Team America* the game, with every enemy wearing either a turban or a Saddam beret – but it's quite fun. With ten lives shared between all four of us, cowering behind walls, scouting for snipers and blowing away terrorist after terrorist, I really felt a bit of team-bonding in action. It's not so great if you've got a heavy-duty machine gun, but it's great for the sniper.

There's no point in anyone giving commands though, it just degenerates into madness far too quickly for that – although someone should always be looking behind as there are a few ugly moments of the old spawn behind. If real urban combat is anything like this, however, then I'm the uncle of a particularly ugly monkey.

PREZ: Honestly? I'm not quite as taken with this as Will seems to be. The vaguely stereotypical nonsense I can overlook – it is set in Beirut and you are the US military so there are certain

themes that will always be prevalent. After a bit of initial pissing about poking fun at locales (*Team America* still fresh in everyone's minds unfortunately), and blinding each other with smoke grenades, things did settle down and against all odds we became a well-drilled fighting unit. Although one suspects this was more down to the linearity and repetitive nature of the game removing the sense of challenge, rather than our own natural combat skills coming to the fore.

PISSING ABOUT POTENTIAL: We found a slide and Jamie and Prez slid down it on their bellies. That was fun. Plus smoke grenades = yuks aplenty. Still, most of the comedy came from shouting "Durka Durka" every time a bad guy showed his face, so we can't really credit the game with that one.

RATING: 4/5



What Prez saw looking at Will...



... What Will saw looking at Prez.

FAR CRY

MISSION: To work out what the bloody ruddy hell is going on.

HOW: There's a co-op mod called *Far Cry Co-Op v8.2* floating around on the Net.

Although if you get it working you're a better man/woman/other than any of us.

TYPICAL MID-GAME CONVERSATION: "Where are you?" "I'm right in front of you." "No you're not." "I am, I'm shooting at your face right now." "Are you?"

TESTIMONY

WILL: Prez would appear, disappear, jump in the water or do any manner of stuff... But all the time he'd claim to be standing in the same place. I was hugely excited about this – imagine one person sniping from a nearby hill while the other runs around in an enemy compound raising hell, but unfortunately it was not to be. If anyone manages to get it working then please, please tell us how...

PREZ: From my side it was almost like being the Predator. I could sneak around to within inches of

Will's face and he still wouldn't see me, then I could unleash all manner of high-velocity ammunition into him, watch him explode a thousand times over and he still wouldn't know what was going on. So you can imagine how impossible it was to do anything co-operatively. What a pity.

PISSING ABOUT POTENTIAL:

None, it's broke.

RATING: 0/5



WHEN A PLAN COMES TOGETHER

So what have we learnt? Mostly, co-op gaming can breathe new life into (almost) any game, so long as you team with a bunch of people who know what they're doing. Otherwise, the temptation to just piss about and 'break' the game is too strong. Mods are great for resurrecting interest in past games that existed prior to online gaming's present day omnipresence, and any current game that still doesn't include a co-op mode as standard really isn't trying. Especially bad are those console titles that mysteriously 'lose' their co-op modes in the transition to PC (cough, *Halo, Doom 3*, cough). Basically, while it'll always be fun to play alone, playing with each other is even better, so get stuck in. [E]



Better than the river-ride at Alton Towers anyway...

Show me the monkey...

PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG

Explosive! Will Porter gets deep down and dirty with the ape who fell to earth...

FROM FLOOR to ceiling, I'm surrounded by original artwork and designs direct from Peter Jackson and his WETA workshop in New Zealand. To my right is a map of Skull Island that details the movement of a certain simian through film and game. Nearby are sketches of the environments that'll showcase Kong's rampage through

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Ubisoft Montpellier
PUBLISHER Ubisoft
WEBSITE www.ubi.com/uk
ETA November

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- A movie tie-in that's actually really good
- Direct involvement from Peter Jackson
- From the creator of *Beyond Good & Evil*
- Intriguing take on the FPS
- You get to control a giant monkey

CV



UBISOFT MONTPELIER

Previously famed for creating that no-armed goon Rayman, Ubisoft's Montpellier studios struck gaming gold with 2003's *Beyond Good & Evil*. The general public, largely comprising of twats and idiots, generally ignored it. Now, 70 designers and programmers are crammed into an office that normally houses 30 people, feverishly completing work on the tales of a massive monkey.

New York. To my left is Michel Ancel, gaming luminary and creator of overlooked masterpiece *Beyond Good & Evil* (now available on budget at a reasonable price of £9.99). Ancel looks just like I always imagined him – extremely Gallic and wearing a distinctly un-ironed shirt with coloured stripes that very, very nearly border on wacky. In short, the only thing that could propel me any further into geek heaven would be if I were simultaneously holding hands with an Ewok.

IN THE WORDS OF WHAM!...

This story began last Christmas. While we were all sitting through the 19th ending of *The Return Of The King*, Peter Jackson was playing a certain game called *Beyond Good & Evil* (now available on budget at a reasonable price of £9.99) and was loving every minute of it. With *King Kong* and its particulars nascent in his genius-beard, a meeting was hastily arranged in the leafy environs of Beverly Hills. "It was our first meeting," Ancel later confides, "and I was really, really stressed. When he entered the room he just immediately told me that he'd played my game and finished it. It was a really great start."

With more special effects shots than all *The Lord Of The Rings* trilogy put together, *King Kong* is set to be the biggest event movie of the year. What's more, Jackson demanded a game that goes beyond a mere tie-in and he's hired

the best in the business of development and emotional storytelling to create it.

I've played it and confirm that it's the best movie tie-in since *GoldenEye* on the N64. And yes, I am aware that's a pretty obvious comment to make when we've been standing in a turgid river of celluloid-to-console-to-PC shite for the past five years. But, honestly, what *NightFire*, *Catwoman* and *The Incredibles* are to a stream of un-moving excrement, *King Kong* is to skipping in a garden with excited, nubile young women.

GREAT APES

If you've been absent from society since Kong's first foray in 1933, or indeed lobotomised yourself after the 1976 Jeff Bridges retelling, then a spot of recap is perhaps in order. A collection

and the movie's leading light Ann Darow (Naomi Watts).

Seeing as they've stumbled on a time zone where dinosaurs still rule the earth, unsurprisingly everything goes Pete Tong. Without much ado they're captured by natives and Ann is offered up for sacrifice while drums are beaten and the figure of a giant ape appears in the misty mid-distance intent on snatching the starlet and carrying her into the back of beyond. From here until Kong's final encounter with New York street-life (and, indeed, pavement), it's a dual story of Kong's relationship with Ann (described by Jackson as the relationship between a seven-year-old boy and his favourite toy) and that of Jack and Carl's efforts to both rescue her and refrain from being eaten by dinosaurs.

"When we met he told me straight away he'd played my game and finished it. It was a really good start"

UBISOFT'S MICHEL ANCEL ON HIS FIRST MEETING WITH PETER JACKSON

of foolhardy souls stumble onto a place known as Skull Island; in Peter Jackson's vision, they're a Hollywood production company out to find places to film a delightful romantic comedy, and as such have scriptwriter Jack Driscoll (Adrien Brody), surly director Carl Denham (Jack Black)

For gamers, this is where the action separates into two levels: that of controlling the mighty Kong himself – delivering multiple biffs to the face of many and varied T-Rexes – and that played from the FPS viewpoint of Jack Driscoll, simply trying to survive in the unsavoury climate of Skull Island. It's a



mixture of hiding, fending off dinosaurs and being gently pounded into awe-filled submission by some intensely clever and tension-moulding level design. The close work between WETA and AnceL clearly aims to take the goodness of *Beyond Good & Evil* (now available on budget at a highly reasonable £9.99) and add a sharp cinematic edge to already prodigious storytelling credentials.

A good example of this is perhaps the first level I played while under the watchful eye of AnceL's staff. Wandering through the mist, through gulleys and

ravines, I hear a distant thundering and watch the ground reverberating beneath my feet. Minutes later I'm still working my way through narrow valleys and tunnels and watching soil and dust falling from the walls around me, hearing the pounding getting ever louder and ever persistent until I finally break out into a wide foggy valley. Suddenly, through the mists, the vast, vast shape of a Brontosaurus appears. Then another, then another. Then another behind that one. The music soars, and all of a sudden I'm in the game that *Jurassic Park* so desperately cried out



"You did! You did pull my tail!"

ACTION JACKSON

PETER JACKSON IS LORD OF ANOTHER RING...

So Peter Jackson's into his games then is he? *King Kong* game producer Xavier Poix came in for a grilling as soon as we learnt that the mighty bearded one has a penchant for videogamery. "Oh yeah, he loves his games," explains Poix. "This'll make the *Halo* guys happy, but he plays *Halo* a lot. He likes a lot of pure action, but he also likes the way stories are told to the player. Obviously he has no time right now though, no time apart from what he's doing on *Kong*." So might we have faced down Jackson in our forays into *Halo* online gaming? Maybe. Remember, after all, as the man himself said in *Bad Taste*: "Suck my spinning steel, shithead!" He's a Derek, and Dereks don't run.



Everyone loves Peter...

for. It's fundamentally ace, yet in typically mood-breaking style I feel compelled to pick up a spear, set it on fire and throw it at a Bronto's gigantic flank. It trumpets and thunders off into the distance. Yay. I rule.

FIRST-SIMIAN SHOOTER

"It was me who first decided to use an FPS viewpoint," Ancel later explains, clearly slightly concerned that I'm standing slightly too close to his striped shirt for comfort. "I wanted the game to be immersed in the world. I love the fact that the dinosaurs are looking straight into your eyes directly and not at anyone else." And when you see the dinos moving, how true this is. Probably the most impressive thing in the game's production thus far is the way that T-Rexes dip their heads down at you and roar so loudly that the air around their vast maws reverberates and knocks you flat back into your seat.

Another early level of the game sees Jack (you), Carl (Jack Black) and someone who's presumably due a horrible death later in the game (some bloke) pursued by a T-Rex into a valley, with only an ancient door as an exit. It's up to you to keep the terrible lizard's attention away from your buddies while they frantically try to open the door – using handy spears plucked from nearby bamboo-ish plants, gunfire (with limited ammo) and your own body as bait. It's hairy stuff, and should you run out of spears you have to tiptoe towards the creature to pluck the spears back out.

There's a real survival ethic at work here – even though what's on display to journalists, especially in what was shown at E3, is slightly kiltered to the

all-action desires of select members of its whooping and hollering audience. For obvious gameplay-led reasons, a 'not-actually-in-the-movie' bi-plane drops off weapons (with remarkably little ammo), but a lot of the action will see you fending off massive creatures using the aforementioned spears (of both bone and bamboo-ish varieties), fire, bait and your own wits.

What's more, the pursuit of dragging you further into the gameworld has led Ancel to nix staple FPS furniture like aiming reticules and health bars. Instead of a constantly falling life-o-meter, you have to pay attention to the puffs, pants

and screams of your character – as well as the charming red tinge that grows and grows until your likely demise. What you have to do at these points is run away – run away from the giant bats and/or giant crabs to find a safe area in which to lick your wounds and slowly regenerate some health. This gives the game a valuable sense of being both predator (going back out to flaming spear some dino-arse) and



Kong was a fan of Primal Scream Therapy.



Jack Black will need saving on many occasions.



Skull Island's native creatures range from over-sized to massive.

some choice tail-between-your-legs moments of being the prey.

RAILS TYCOON

Much as I love what I've seen of *Kong*, there's a pessimist in me that occasionally delivers sharp kicks to my ribs in cases such as this – and the big monkey has provided me with two. The first is a question of linearity – because, despite Peter Jackson's mantra of "if it's not in the movie it could be in the game", the game is

tied to the movie and as such levels can't afford for much dilly-dallying when there's a screaming startle to save.

Ancel counters this convincingly by explaining that he's trying to instil choice and freedom within the linear confines of his levels. A prime example of this, perhaps, is the absolutely breathtaking, breathless and perfect cinematic pitch of a downstream raft-ride that you and your companions take. Pursued by two (count 'em, two) T-Rexes and a cavalcade of other subsidiary beasts, a lesser game would simply have this as

one of those dreaded 'moving gun emplacement levels' that every shooter and its deceased mother has been churning out since *Half-Life*.

In the hands of Ancel, however, it's slightly different.

Your aim is not to kill, but to delay – you have no hope of killing what's after you (and it wouldn't fit in the game narrative either but shhh!), which means you must frantically use the assets you have and the environment around you to put the brakes on the dinos' relentless pursuit.

CALM DOWN, CALM DOWN

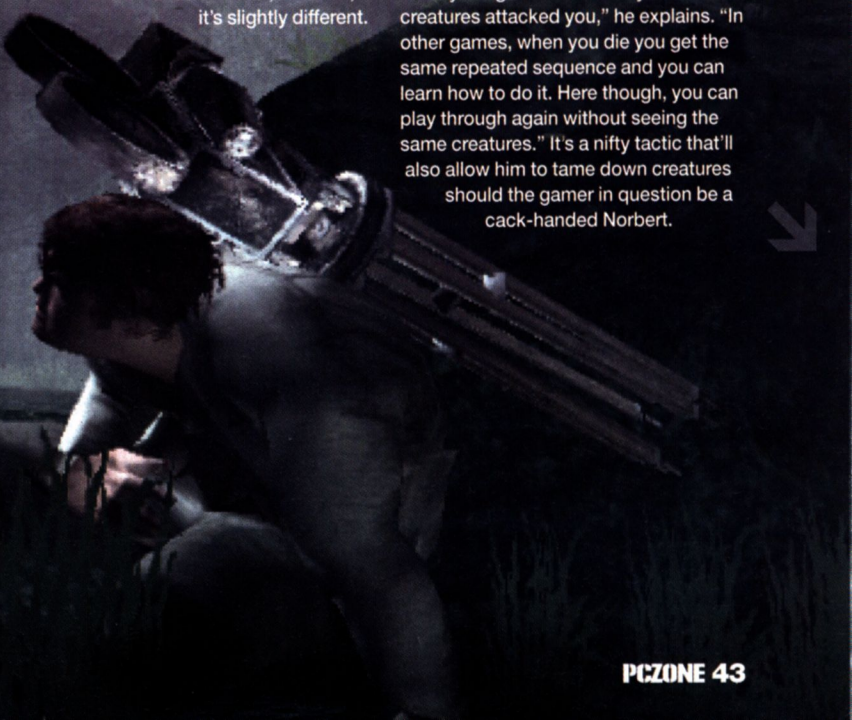
You can start off with machine gun fire, you can turn to Jack Black on the raft behind you to demand a spear to lob at your pursuers, you can set the spear on fire and ignite nearby patches of long grass or you can blast creatures out of the sky, which causes Rex and friend to pause for a moment and chow down on Batfink. You don't have time to do them all and if you're not hasty, then you or one of your companions become brunch – it's linear then, linear as hell, but with Ancel's narrative and gameplay-orientated brainwaves coupled with the cinematic edge of the scene, then it neatly slips past my pessimistic side's radar.

Seeking to further assuage my panic, Ancel pats down his ruffled shirt and points out that there's another edge to his sword: "Whenever you die we'll modify the game and exactly what creatures attacked you," he explains. "In other games, when you die you get the same repeated sequence and you can learn how to do it. Here though, you can play through again without seeing the same creatures." It's a nifty tactic that'll also allow him to tame down creatures should the gamer in question be a cack-handed Norbert.

BEYOND BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

ANCEL MUTTERS CRYPTIC WORDS ON THE FUTURE OF JADE AND PEY'J

Well, I had to ask didn't I? What's happening on Hillys these days Monsieur Ancel? Will there be a sequel to the criminally under-selling *Beyond Good & Evil* (now available on budget for just £9.99)? "It is planned to be made," explains Ancel. "We have no definite plans for it though, although I don't know what I'm going to be doing after *King Kong*." Oh, OK. Only I was a bit worried about a certain member of the cast, I want to know what happens to him. "Oh, you'll know one day. But it isn't planned just now." So will I know what happens? That sounds like affirmation to me...



R JAC



The natives aren't keen on you escaping...

THE CIRCLE OF LIFE



Raptors will congregate around the carcasses of dead dinos.

SKULL ISLAND WORKS A LITTLE BIT LIKE THE SERENGETI, IN THAT EVERYTHING EATS EACH OTHER...

Let's ponder on the demise of one of the giant bats that I humorously labelled as 'batfinks' - one that got munched by the T-Rexes to save Adrien Brody on his thrilling river ride. This is an example of what Mr *Beyond Good & Evil* (now available on budget at a reasonable price of £9.99) calls the island's food chain.

Everything in the game, yourself very much included, has its own predators and prey. Giant bats and centipedes chow down on similarly over-sized dragonflies and frog-things, raptors and larger carnivores nab giant bats and giant millipedes, while T-Rexes eat everything in sight and Brontosaurus eat lots and lots of plants. You'll be able to use this to your advantage by jabbing at pond-life and keeping them wriggling at the end of your ever-handy spear to use them as bait.

One level I played featured an eminently rickety bridge (Skull Island has lots of rickety bridges - you just can't get the tribal native workmen these days) with a colony of giant batfinks hanging above it in characteristically upside-down fashion. Now you could be boring, pick up the nearby sniper rifle and take pot-shots - or, if you're daring, adventurous and handsome like me, you can prong a forlornly buzzing dragonfly on the end of a pointy stick and lob the insecto-javelin into the chasm below. This causes all, or at least most, of the bats to chase after lunch while you run like merry f**k over the bat-poo-covered bridge. If you're also me, however, then you'll slip and die - and simply use the sniper rifle next time as its far less dangerous.



"That's good. That's good. A little to the left. That hits the spot..."

And so now we come to Kong himself, cradling Ann in his arms and running through the jungle with mischief on his mind. There's an element of *Ico* (the wonderful PlayStation 2 platformer now available at your nearest import shop for a distinctly non-reasonable £50) promised in these sections, as Kong double-teams with the iddy-biddy woman he's clutching. What's more, as the game progresses it's evident that, in a fairly extreme example of the Stockholm syndrome, she slowly warms to her hairy monolithic captor.

ENTER THE MONKEY

Kong's controls are remarkably simple and his fights beautifully choreographed. My hands-on saw me take on two T-Rexes and what was on-screen was quite delightful: throwing batfinks into their mouths, watching them instinctively catch it and smacking them in the chops, climbing up massive ruins and delivering WWE-style power-bombs, beating his chest, delivering

"King Kong is that rarest of beasts. It's a movie game that's made by people who don't wear suits and who care about narrative and gameplay"

flurries of monkey slaps and (his pièce de résistance), pulling back the jaws of the Rexes until you hear an overwhelmingly brutal snap. He's fun to control and better to watch, as he leaps with apparent *Prince Of Persia*-stylings from wall to wall, tree to tree and from pulverised monster to pulverised monster.

I've just had a kick in the ribs though, and so have to provide a caveat. From what I've played, I have to report that the Kong sections are nowhere near as well suited to PC as they are to console – not by a long way. Please bear in mind that, obviously, I was playing incomplete code and Kong's earliest (and therefore simplest and easiest) appearance in the game. But despite the apparent style and finesse in Kong's fighting,

climbing and leaping, all I was doing at the other end of the bargain was providing an entirely unsubtle episode in button-mashing.

At the end of the day, whatever the Ancel pedigree, this

is a game being released on many platforms and I can only hope that the same finesse seen in the FPS sections is brought to the Kong sections. Then again, however button-tappy it was, controlling the great ape remained a visceral and powerful experience – we shouldn't forget that *Beyond Good & Evil* (now available on budget at a reasonable price of £9.99) was a multi-platform release and remained a stunning achievement.

YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL...

PC game-players can expect to have the most detailed and beautiful version of the game (competing against the version on the much-heralded Xbox 360), with all manner of hi-tech lighting effects, normal mapping and infinitely more polygons than in the last-gen offerings. However, whether Kong gameplay will suit the platform remains a case of wait and see. I, however, still have heavy dubs on the fact that it will by the time of release.

Another bonus is that, because of lowly GameCube releases and the like, *King Kong* will be able to run satisfactorily on most games PCs – the graphics will look worse, but old and new graphics cards alike will be able to run the game without too much jittery-pokery.

Don't let this word of warning get you down though: *King Kong* will without

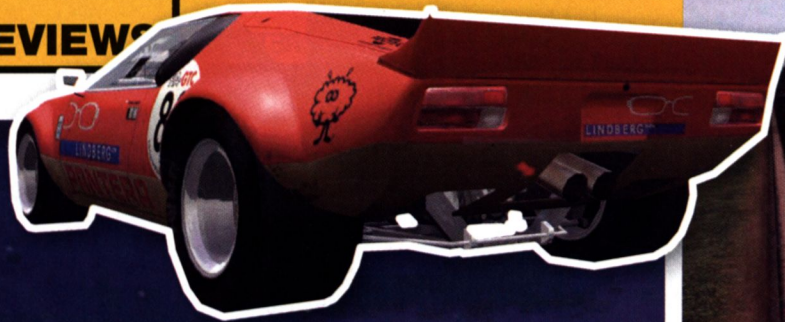
doubt be as big as its namesake and far, far cleverer. After just playing for a few minutes I came across an unscripted moment when a raptor grabbed my leg, dragged me onto the ground and had me frantically jabbing him away with my spear and screaming (in real-life in front of Michel Ancel and his lovely shirt) "Gerroff! Gerroff! He's got my leg!"

It's not just that though: *King Kong* is taking the traditional FPS and doing loads of interesting things with it – turning it into a more cinematic whole – an 'event' game, in which the pursuit of reeling in the player leads to clever stuff like Skull Island's food chain and some blindingly obvious, yet previously unseen stuff as simple as the need to hold your rifle above your head when you wade through rivers.

With the team promising some "extremely nice stuff" appearing after *Kong's* debut on the New York social scene at the close of the game, a stream of production notes and designs appearing from the WETA workshops on a weekly basis and remarkably frequent meetings with Jackson himself, *King Kong* is the rarest of beasts. It's a movie game being made by people who don't wear suits, who care about narrative and gameplay and who certainly don't bother using an iron on their shirts. It's a game that has direct interaction with the very highest ranks of the movie's production. It's a game with ideas at its heart that are big enough to hide the cash register that lurk behind it. It's a good game too. All this and there's an absolutely gigantic monkey that features quite heavily. [X]



"Hmmm. There's a build-up of plaque here. Have we been brushing?"



Now that's some serious tail-gating.

Golden oldie...

GT LEGENDS

Suzy Wallace steps back in time to greet SimBin's retro racer

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER SimBin
PUBLISHER TBA
ETA Q4 2005
WEBSITE www.gt-legends.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Retro driving action from the developer of *GTR*
- Much more accessible for beginners
- Old school driving features plenty of sideways action
- You can own an AC Cobra. What else matters?

CV



SIMBIN

Starting off making FIA GT mods (*GTR 2002*) for EA Sports' *F1* series, Swedish developer SimBin quickly made a great name for itself in the racing scene before going on to make the real thing itself.

2004 *GTR*. SimBin's first title, the ultra-realistic driving sim of the FIA GT series featured an amazing driving model, taxing AI and ear-bleedingly beautiful sound effects sampled straight from the real-world cars themselves.

THE GENERATION gap is most noticeable in the worlds of fashion (cable-knitted cardigan vs the hoody), music (Cliff Richard vs Snoop Dogg) and slang ("that singer comes on like gangbusters" vs "bust a cap on yo' ass"). However, cars also seem to fall foul of the age difference. If you're under 20, you probably wet yourself with excitement whenever you see a Lamborghini. Conversely, the more mature are able to appreciate the days when cars were all about massive V8 engines and upholstery that required the death of at least 20 cows, with handling being much of an afterthought.

Put simply, the '60s and '70s era in which *GT Legends* is set features some of the finest classic race cars known to man, from the all-out muscle of the AC Cobra to everyone's favourite, the diminutive Mini Cooper S. With the last historical racing game we can remember being *Grand Prix Legends*, there's certainly plenty of room for a newcomer to squeeze in. After all, as SimBin's producer/designer Rod Chong points out: "There's a real romance to these old machines and

most people have a favourite from when they were a kid – it's likely to be here if that's the case."

NO-CLAIMS BONUS

SimBin's experience with *GTR* has certainly been put to good use, but the developer is keen to point out that *Legends* will feel a lot different from its modern-day sibling. "GTR had too steep a learning curve," Chong continues, a sentiment many amateur driving fans will agree with. Luckily, the first thing that's instantly noticeable is that *GT Legends* is tons more accessible for the beginner.

Starting off with a Mini or Cortina, you have to compete in races to earn money, which then buys you better cars and helps you to make your way up the racing ranks. Three classes to compete in are promised, starting off with '60s touring cars, progressing through '60s GT cars and finishing up with '70s GT and touring cars. The variety of vehicles on offer means that you have to adjust to different driving styles and tactics on the track.

GTR's driving model was undoubtedly one of the best we've driven, but SimBin

has re-worked it from the ground up to sit happily alongside the older cars on offer. Rather than the precise positioning of *GTR*'s modern machinery, you're far more likely to find the back end stepping out around corners. Indeed, if you're driving one of the American muscle cars, it's almost essential in order to get it to go round those bends...

OLD SCHOOL NEWCOMER

Graphically, *Legends* features a tweaked *GTR* engine that supports full DirectX9.0 features. The fantastically animated drivers, exhaust gases that linger around the cars on the starting grid and the dynamic lighting in the cars' interiors all prove that it's shaping up to be a bit of a stunner.

Throw in some neat additions such as a function to accelerate time so you can experience the full spectrum of lighting effects, an improved damage engine enabling you to break headlights among other things and more believable AI cars, and we reckon that *GT Legends* could be just the oldie to show these new-fangled kids a thing or two about driving. **[E]**



Interiors look better than ever.

**“Target, 2 clicks out.
Lock n’ load.
Let’s look alive,
Gentlemen.”**

DELTA FORCE XTREME

Powered by today’s gaming technology, DELTA FORCE: XTREME brings the classic Delta Force game back to life to face the enemy once more. As a member of the elite Delta Force, prepare yourself to take on over 60 levels of frantic single and multiplayer FPS action with graphically enhanced missions, from the original game, new maps, drivable vehicles, improved game features, Free* online STATS and much more.

**PC
CD-ROM
SOFTWARE**

16+
www.pegi.info

NovaWorld

NOVALOGIC
www.novalogic.com



£5 OFF

DELTA FORCE: XTREME
PC CD-ROM

**WHEN YOU BRING
THIS VOUCHER INTO
A GAME STORE
AND PURCHASE DELTA FORCE: XTREME**

VOUCHER VALID UNTIL 29TH AUGUST 2005

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. Offer only valid on redemption of this voucher which cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer or voucher.
2. Only one voucher may be used per transaction and must be presented in-store.
3. This voucher is non recoverable.
4. Voucher valid until 29th August 2005.
5. Voucher is redeemable at any GAME store in the UK.
6. This offer may be withdrawn at any time without prior notice.
7. Cash value 0.00000001p

Older, wiser, scroller...

THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

LAST
PREVIEWED
PCZONE
ISSUE
157

Martin Korda uses his powers of persuasion to find out the very latest on Bethesda Softworks' stunning-looking new RPG

HOW DO YOU make the ground-breaking even more innovative, the freeform more focused and the visually impressive into the visually spectacular? These are the three challenges currently being faced by Bethesda Softworks – the team behind the now legendary *Elder Scrolls* series – as it charges relentlessly towards a Christmas release date for what could just be the most ground-

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Bethesda Softworks

PUBLISHER Take 2

WEBSITE www.elderscrolls.com

ETA Christmas

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Hugely charismatic NPCs
- Dynamic new combat system
- Innovative levelling-up system
- Beautifully lifelike visuals
- Just as big as *Morrowind*, but considerably less sprawling

breaking role-player in years, *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*.

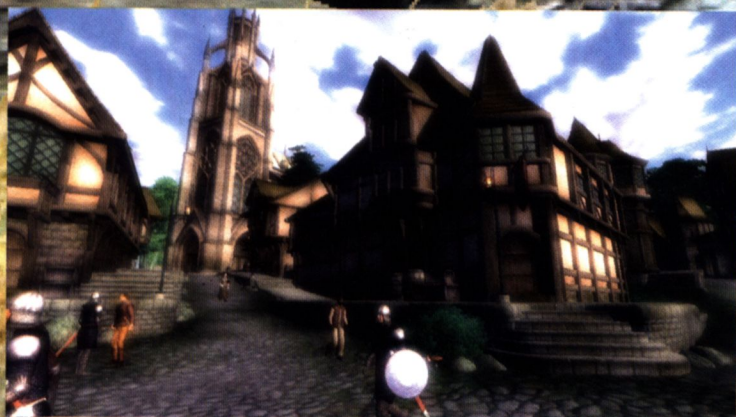
Up till now, Bethesda has been teasing us with snippets of information about this fourth instalment of their Tamriel-based series, without ever unveiling too much. Until now.

This near priceless information, however, cost us dear. After some extensive bartering that saw us parting with Sefton's life savings (almost eight pounds in real money) and Porter's food rations for the next six weeks (a half-eaten packet of Frazzles), we managed to get hold of some exclusive new info and screenshots from Todd Howard – the game's executive producer.

What sets Bethesda apart from the majority of its competitors is its undying dedication to reinventing RPG conventions, and breaking away from the norm is at the very heart of the company's developmental ethos.

"For us, *Oblivion* is the chance to go back and look at everything we've done before and decide what we liked, what we wanted to do differently, and what new things we wanted to do," explains Howard. "We're big on blowing everything up and starting over again for every game. Even though we're essentially doing a sequel, we don't want it to feel derivative."

Morrowind was a work of genuine innovation, its freeform, dynamic – though at times intimidating – gaming world providing a fresh new approach to the fantasy RPG genre. So when we recently heard that *Oblivion* would be less freeform than its illustrious predecessor, we were naturally a tad nervous. Was Bethesda about to sell



"Ah, Shakespeare country... Where's the Tourist Information?"



"Fight you for the crazy helmet!"

CV

Bethesda
SOFTWORKS**BETHESDA
SOFTWORKS**

Bethesda – one of the world's longest-running developers – is also one of the world's largest and most respected, thanks mainly to the *Elder Scrolls* series.

1993 *The Elder Scrolls: Arena*, the first of the *Elder Scrolls* series proves to be a huge game (it featured over 400 cities), and sets the tone for the series.

1998 *The Elder Scrolls: Redguard* is the first *Elder Scrolls* game set in Tamriel.

2002 *The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind* takes the RPG world by storm with its sprawling freeform world and awesome visuals.

depth and emotion and the scenery looking lush and alive.

Howard assures us that the visuals will be made all the more impressive by the game's new physics model. "We've really ramped up the level of realism and the sense of immersion in the environments we've created. When you see an arrow bounce off stone or stick in a creature, we don't want you to think twice about it. You can walk up to a dead creature and pluck the arrows out because, well, that's how it's supposed to work."

The combat system has also received a complete overhaul. How often in RPGs have you been left feeling like you've had little to do with victory, or had little chance to avert a crushing defeat, due to behind-the-scenes dice deciding your fate rather than personal skill? It's an age-old RPG problem, but it's one that Howard and his team appear to be tackling with vigour and determination. The fact that two previous iterations of the new combat system are now lining Bethesda's bins is testament to that fact. "It took us a long time to get there, to find something that felt right and worked within an RPG," explains Howard.

"We wanted combat to be fun and visceral, but we didn't want a click-fest. We wanted things to be under the player's control and make sense, such

WOOD FOR THE TREES

The landscapes have been modelled on real life.

VIRTUAL FLORA HAS NEVER LOOKED SO GOOD

As Sefton mentioned last month in his *Oblivion* preview, Bethesda paid a visit to Maryland University to learn all about nature. No, not because it wanted to start its own herb garden or nurture geraniums, but because it wanted to make *Oblivion*'s forests (of which there'll be plenty) and landscapes look as realistic as possible.

"We wanted more information about how things work in nature, like how different kinds of soil erode," explains Howard. "We're using this system to procedurally generate the game's landscape, and so we wanted the system to create environments that looked right. Not just how the trees and rocks appear, but how things are shaped, how mountains have eroded over time. We want you to look off into the distance at a group of mountains and swear they're real."

out on us or were there other, subtler, more refined reasons for making *Oblivion* less sprawling?

"I don't know if it's constrained as much as it is focused," Todd assures us. "We simply felt a larger obligation to give the player better feedback on what they should be doing, and providing information to let them know they're being successful as they complete things. We're not constraining anything, because it's still a completely freeform, open-ended game. It's more about the kind of feedback we give and making sure players aren't lost, unless they want to be lost."

VISUAL FEAST

With that sorted, it was time to get down to the juicy details. Judging by these screenshots, it's clear that the world of Tamriel has taken on an even more lifelike look than in *Morrowind*, with character faces displaying genuine

as swinging a sword, seeing it hit an NPC and having it inflict damage. But we also wanted to have the player's stats and abilities to have a very real impact on what's going on. I think we've found a balance that will make sense to anyone."

ANOTHER LEVEL

Bethesda is also attempting to reinvent how you'll level up, by dispensing with experience points and replacing them with a revamped system. "Basically, you improve your skills by using your skills,"

"The world of Tamriel has taken on an even more lifelike look; character faces display genuine emotion and the scenery looks lush and alive"

THE ART OF PERSUASION



The art of persuasion can take many forms.

GIVE ME ALL OF YOUR MONEY... NOW!

One of the most potentially exciting devices that *Oblivion* is set to employ is something called the Persuasion Area. This will allow you to use your character's unique skills to persuade NPCs to do what you want them to.

"Some people will want to just run up to someone and hack them with a sword before they get two words out, so their idea of persuasion will lie more in the careful application of brute force," says Howard. "But everyone in the world will respond to what you say and do."

Many different factors will forge your persuasion methods and their effectiveness, such as what quests you've embarked on, what factions you belong to and how you've treated NPCs in the past. "If you get really good at Speechcraft," continues Howard encouragingly, "you can take an NPC that really doesn't care for you that much, and sweet-talk them to the point where they're sharing intimate secrets with you."

Frankly we're not too sure we that we want to know about an elf's deepest darkest fantasy involving an inflatable orc, three tins of Vaseline and a can of condensed milk. Then again...

says Howard. "So, killing a skeleton with your sword and shield doesn't give you 100 experience points, but it does improve your skill, more specifically, at using a sword and shield. As those skills improve, your character levels up, and you'll eventually be able to do new things with those skills. So, if you get really good at blocking, there's a chance that when you block an attack your character will knock the enemy back with their shield. It's like an extra attack, and it's based on your skill, not on hitting some combination of keys." Sounds good to us.

But of course RPGs – or at least the best RPGs – are never just about hitting undead beings as hard as you can until they run out of hit points, and the *Elder Scrolls* series has always prided itself on the quality of not only its freeform environments, but of the believability of its inhabitants, too.

If there was one major failing that *Morrowind* possessed, it was the woodenness of its NPCs. With *Oblivion*, Bethesda is seeking to rectify that failing. "At first, we saw a lot of interesting behaviour from our NPCs," explains Howard. "One time we had everyone in town show up in the same tavern at the same time to eat lunch, and one guy didn't have any money, so he went around trying to steal everyone else's food. We've now got it to the point where we don't see too much wacky stuff anymore, but the process has been

a lot of fun – to create this system and then watch NPCs do things you hadn't even considered."

THE PASSAGE OF TIME

Clearly, Bethesda has matured as a developer over the past few years, its realisation that more isn't always better a clear sign of the new directions and priorities that are driving *Oblivion* forward. It gives us every reason to believe that the fourth instalment of the series could be its best yet.

And that's without us having even talked about the game's 200 unique dungeons, each one jam-packed with fiendish traps to snare the unwitting adventurer, or the extensive cast of enemies, including skeletons, liches, trolls, goblins and various kinds of Daedra. And let's not forget the spells, which Howard sadly wasn't quite ready to talk to us about just yet. That juicy info is yet to come.

Oblivion really is starting to take on a truly gargantuan form, casting an ominous shadow over the RPG genre with its innovative ideas and mammoth ambition. It's hard to argue with *Oblivion's* promise, and with Bethesda having already proved itself so conclusively in the past, it's just possible that we could be about to see an RPG evolution that'll send the genre in new and exciting directions – one so consuming, so lifelike, that real life may become just a distant memory. [E]



Just like the Eye Of Sauron. Only sideways.



Tamriel needs your services once more...



There are countless dungeons to explore.





PEOPLE WHO KNOW BROADBAND CHOOSE PIPEX

At PIPEX we love our customers too. They consistently help us achieve superior ratings for speed, performance and service. They also tell their friends about us, which is why nearly 50% of new customers come from recommendations.

Whether you are taking your first steps into broadband or you are looking to switch provider, join an ever-increasing group of delighted broadband customers and take advantage of some great introductory offers.

- Free modem and connection
- No 12 month contract*
- Choice of speeds up to 2Mb
- PIPEX Xtras loyalty programme

PIPEX
Broadband
from only
£14.99
a month

Switch to PIPEX
and get up to
1 month Free

See www.pipex.com for details

www.pipex.com

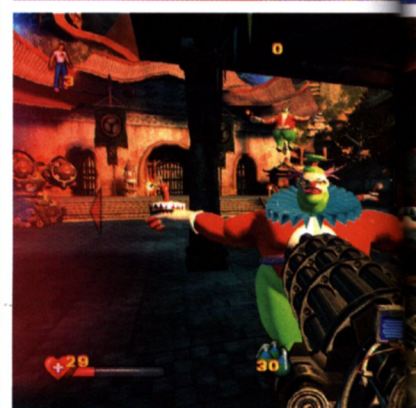


You cannot be... SERIOUS SAM 2

Exclusive! Jamie Sefton goes tête-à-tête with a clockwork rhinoceros...



A miniature garden full of psychedelic witches? The drugs do work...



The only way to deal with buskers...

PHEW. I've just won a titanic battle with a large robotic two-legged cigar-smoking T-Rex and it feels good. This ridiculous scenario could only happen (a) in one of my usual wheat beer psychotic nightmares or (b) in *Serious Sam 2*.

If you're familiar with Croteam's series you'll already know this, but *Serious Sam* is famous for gathering dozens of crazy enemies dredged from the deepest recesses of the developer's Eastern European mind and charging them wave after wave towards you. Dumb? Oh yes. But when you're armed with big and beefy weaponry, such as a powerful mini-gun and pirate cannon – then throw in a decent physics system, destructible

scenery, ultra gore-splatter and technicolour explosions that singe the eyeballs – it becomes bloody fun too.

MEDALLION MAN

The story – as such – has Sam tracking down parts of a mysterious medallion throughout the galaxy, which bestow him

with the power to defeat his nemesis Mental on his home planet of Sirius. With a total of seven worlds and 24 levels, you rocket, grenade and bomb your merry way through dense swamp, futuristic cityscapes and hellish underworlds. But don't worry, you're not alone – to help you there are various indigenous NPC

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Croteam
PUBLISHER Take 2
WEBSITE www.croteam.com
ETA Autumn

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- A true sequel to the first *Serious Sam*
- Brand new graphics engine with full physics
- Ridiculous OTT weaponry and cartoon violence
- Multiplayer modes, including co-op



He just wants to be loved.



"Shouldn't you be in Warhammer?"

tribes who give you useful pick-ups such as health.

Jumping into an early level set on the tropical forest world of M'Digbo, I immediately begin delivering instant machine-gun death to various creatures including giant robotic spiders and a rather large albino cyclops. Every dead enemy splits apart with a satisfying crunch, sending legs, heads and machine parts spiralling into a shower of red goo, while any nearby trees crack open, their leaves scattering in every direction. Subtly has gone out of the window, down the street, into a taxi to the nearest airport and flown to Belgium – this is fast, furious, visceral stuff, with over 50 enemies on-screen at a time.

WITCHES BREW

I soon warp into a different area of the planet – a colourful *Land Of The Giants* affair packed with huge mushrooms and other over-sized flora and fauna, populated by cackling witches zooming about on broomsticks. A change of weapon (the auto-shotgun – see 'Serious Weaponry', above) and a volley of lethal bullets wipes the smile from the wizened crones' faces, as they explode in a bright maelstrom of sparks. As well as his armoury, Sam can also now climb into and use stationary turrets. In addition, new power-ups give him extra abilities such as super-strength, good for throwing massive objects at foes.

Big bosses, always a feature of *Sam* games, are also back with a vengeance and promise to be the largest in-game enemies ever created. We can't confirm this – most are under wraps at the



CROTEAM

Based in Zagreb, Croatia, the team began in the early 1990s making games for the Commodore Amiga...

2001 *Serious Sam: The First Encounter* was a smash hit for Croteam, winning numerous awards including an Essential and 81 per cent in *PC ZONE*. It's no-nonsense all-out action was lapped up by gamers wanting a return to the halcyon *Doom* days:

2002 *Serious Sam: The Second Encounter* was a standalone expansion pack (sort of a *Serious Sam 1.25*) that basically added new weapons and creatures, but didn't push the technology or the gameplay.

moment – but we've learned of a *King Kong*-style ape called Kwongo, who will batter anyone in sight. Or maybe throw giant lumps of shit at them. Either way, it's pretty grisly.

Next up, is the planet Magnor and Hong-Pong (yes, you read right) – a city with an eastern flavour, from the wooden architecture to the large zombie ninjas chucking razor-sharp shurikens at you. Here, I get a taste of the puzzles in *Serious Sam 2*, which to be honest, won't really tax even the most brain-dead of electrical department store employees, simply consisting of block-moving and lever-pulling. Still, the action continues at a blur, Mental's minions pouring out to attack and now including helicopters and large metal balls that roll around trying to mash your potatoes.

As the difficulty ramps up, Croteam introduces a hover-bike with fast-firing

SERIOUS WEAPONRY

SERIOUS SAM 2 PULLS OUT THE BIG GUNS

Croteam has expanded on the armoury from the first *Serious Sam*, this time providing more than 15 weapons, each with a secondary fire button for grenades. Here's four of our favourites...



AUTO SHOTGUN
A new addition – basically features a rotating barrel that pumps out shells at a decent rate of fire. Great for close-up kills.



KLODOVIK BIRD
One of *Serious Sam 2*'s sillier weapons is a bomb-carrying parrot that flies off, homes in on the nearest enemy and drops its killer cargo from above.



CANNON
Serious Sam's pirate cannon is back with even bigger, more destructive fiery cannonballs that crash and roll around destroying everything they meet.



PLASMA RIFLE
A replacement for the original game's laser beam gun, the plasma rifle is a rapid-firing blue plasma destructor of death. Very effective against multiple enemies.

lasers that Sam controls in third-person. Over ten vehicles are set to feature, including a surf-board and alien ship, but you also have the opportunity to ride and fight on the back of numerous animals and fantasy beasts.

CARTOON VIOLENCE

Finally, Sam and I touch down in Siriusopolis, a *Deus Ex/Blade Runner*-inspired neon future city with giant colour screens displaying bizarre adverts such as 'Live Bacons' – a Croatian joke maybe we're not supposed to get. A psychedelic assault of multi-coloured enemies follows, including demons on caterpillar tracks, floating spy pods, marauding skeletons and what can only be described as big pink globes on legs spurting green globules. It's an ultra-violent *Fantasia*. I start to feel sick...

Multiplayer is also well catered for – *Serious Sam 2* will have your standard deathmatch modes, as well as (yes!) co-op for at least four players, who can join up and fight through every one of the single-player levels. Croteam is also planning to ship an extremely in-depth level

editor, enabling the rabid fanbase to create its own twisted adventures. To be brutal, *Serious Sam 2* isn't going to change the world. Don't expect to be drawn into a masterful sci-fi story as in *Half-Life 2* or thrown into a disturbing, scary psychological thriller such as appears in *F.E.A.R.*. However, the charm, silliness and exuberant fun of the original series is still very much alive and kicking if this playtest is anything to go by. In just a few months we'll discover whether this latest no-nonsense shooter is a *Painkiller* (good) or a *Will Rock* (very, very bad). [E]





"Hold still, there's a wasp on your back..."

Making a killing...

HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY

Exclusive! The Hitman and Her – Suzy Wallace gets up close and personal with the slapheaded psycho

THE DETAILS

PUBLISHER Eidos
DEVELOPER Io Interactive
WEBSITE www.hitman.com
ETA August

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Fourth outing of the follically-challenged, impeccably-dressed killer for hire
- Handy new close combat moves
- New notoriety levels put the emphasis back on stealth
- Blood money system enables you to reap your rewards

"**NO WOMEN**, no kids. That's the rules". French tough guy Jean Reno's words as the assassin from the movie *Leon* are echoed by Rasmus Højengaard, game director at Io Interactive, when we ask if there are any taboos the studio won't touch for *Hitman: Blood Money*. "First of all, we won't have kids in the game – and we don't have any female targets," explains Højengaard. "Otherwise, I'd have to say there are no taboos."

So there you have it – Io Interactive is a studio that isn't afraid to take on the excesses of the tabloid press, portraying as it does the grim life of the contract assassin, complete with brutal killings,

a dark and seedy underworld and a higher than average count of doubled-over men that have been stripped down to their pants.

The *Hitman* series has been taking out ne'er-do-wells for the past five years now and although the previous games have always offered an intriguing and novel subject matter – along with the chance to take on the role of a cooler-than-ice character – we can't help but feel that Io hasn't quite managed to hit the nail squarely on the head yet. However, the team has been busy eavesdropping on the *Hitman* community, as well as adding a host of new ideas and *PC ZONE* has been

invited to its studio in Copenhagen, Denmark, for a glimpse at the next instalment of a day in the life of a cold-blooded killer.

SETTING THE SCENE

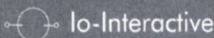
Io is keeping determinedly tight-lipped about the story, the only thing it's letting slip being a Yoda-style "time-wise, they connect". As the lights go down in the presentation room, Højengaard sets the scene: "*Contracts* was very dark and gritty, but in *Blood Money*, we want you to play out the violent missions in more colourful and artistic environments."

As he finishes, the Casino level springs to life on the massive screen and



"Smell the glove."

CV



IO INTERACTIVE

Io Interactive is a Danish company formed back in 1998 as a joint venture between Nordisk Film & TV and the game developer Reto-Moto. It's enjoyed commercial success with the *Hitman* series, shifting a massive 5.2 million copies in total...

- 2000** *Hitman: Codename 47*. This established the series with a ground-breaking engine and decidedly lethal slant on the stealth genre.
- 2002** *Hitman 2: Silent Assassin*. This improved on matters, featuring brilliant scripting, more accessible gameplay and a closer look at the moral side of life as a murderer. Shifted 3 million on PC, PS2 and Xbox.
- 2003** *Freedom Fighters*. This third-person squad-based shooter, detailing what life would be like if the Rusksies had won the Cold War, provided a brief departure from the shadowy underworld.
- 2004** *Hitman: Contracts*. The last in the series disappointed some with its abundance of re-hashed levels and the failure to take the series forward to new levels. Still sold 1.6 million copies across all platforms mind.

we finally get to see just what Hojengaard means by 'colourful'. As Agent 47 stands outside the casino entrance, gaudy neon-lit buildings tower over the Las Vegas sidewalks, impressive fountains shoot jets of water high into the air and a spectacular display of fireworks decorate the evening sky overhead. Stepping through the massive front doors brings us to the exquisitely detailed lobby, milling with a throng of

guests, security and staff. Workers diligently scrub the floor and a man trying to hit on a particularly inebriated woman shows off the new animation system to great effect. The Glacier engine – which has provided the backbone for the series – has been heavily tweaked, and this time around it includes a new system that allows for separate effects to be applied to each platform. Put simply, this means that you won't have to put up with a lazy

"One thing that's instantly noticeable is 47's raft of new physical abilities, almost a match for Sam Fisher. Almost"

BAD PRESS



Well, it makes a change from asylum seeker headlines.

BROS SUMMED IT UP NICELY: "WHEN WILL I SEE MY PICTURE IN THE PAPER?"

Beyond the personal kudos afforded by the end of level ratings, rewards for successfully completed missions have been thin on the ground in *Hitman* series. However, Io Interactive has added a new after-mission feature, the humble newspaper, and the front page news will be directly linked to how you carried out each mission. Take out your target using the new 'accidental' deaths and the paper's only sign of even noticing that he's popped his clogs will be a standard obituary. Manage to pull off the Silent Assassin rating, however, and the front page news will be of the target's death by a mystery assassin, boosting your smugness as you read of the police declaring themselves up against a pro. However, turn the scene into a bloodbath and you'll find yourself appearing in the local rag more often than *Abi Titmuss*.

Each time you're noticed, the paper will reflect this with an increasingly lifelike artist's impression of your face. So while you may have had fun blasting your way through the enemy, seeing your ugly mug as headline news may not be an ideal way to start your mission.



Clearly, Agent 47 is a big fan of *Reservoir Dogs*...

console port – the PC version really shines with its DX9 soft shadows, normal mapping and water reflection. Next up, the Paris Opera level offers Hojengaard the chance to show the assembled crowd a thing or two about how to carry out a mission Silent Assassin-style. Justice is dealt swiftly and inconspicuously, utilising a combination of the now familiar clothes-swap, a quick substitute of real for prop weapon and a handily placed loose chandelier. The level finishes with a very brief glimpse of a Playboy mansion-style level featuring some more lovely water effects (unfortunately slightly obscured by a gaggle of scantily-clad models)

and a brief hark back to the seedier locale of *Contracts*. **OLD DOG, NEW TRICKS** After we've finished admiring the scenery, the first thing that's instantly noticeable in *Blood Money* is 47's raft of new physical abilities. From pulling himself up through roof access panels in lifts, jumping from ledge to ledge and sliding along narrow walkways, the bald one's new moves are a match for Sam Fisher (well, almost). More exciting by far though are the close combat moves, from headbutting an opponent to stripping an enemy of their gun and turning it back on them in retribution. An



I think he's looking at you...

especially handy technique is the ability to use unsuspecting passers-by as human shields, thus providing you with some much-welcomed cover when things really start to go tits-up.

EXTRA STORAGE

What *Hitman* boils down to though is stealth, and *Blood Money* looks set to show us a body bag full of it. First, a much-requested feature by fans of the series has been added – the ability to stash bodies in containers. This gives a whole new purpose to the bins, bath tubs and freezers of the *Hitman* world, while also swiftly solving the problem of leaving a naked, unconscious guard lying on the floor waiting to be discovered.

Agent 47's agency back-up must also have been hard at work, this time supplying you with bombs and other remote devices, which will enable you to vacate the scene before blowing it to smithereens. Another much-welcomed feature is the ability to hide your guns without using the holsters, concealing the weapons with a slight twist of your body. This means you can bring them into use much quicker, vastly increasing



Ah, America. Land of the soon to be dead.

your all-round lethal efficiency and overall cheekiness factor.

Perhaps our favourite addition though, is the ability to set up 'accidental' deaths. Much hilarity can be had by pushing people over balconies and dropping chandeliers on unsuspecting heads. What's more, with most of the methods on offer not raising the alarm, they're just the ticket for making a smooth getaway.

Blood Money's AI is also much improved, with nosy civilians and guards alike following blood stains and investigating items that you've dropped, some even utilising them for their own purposes. "All of the characters in the game will have various jobs and routines to give a sense of life," explains Hojengaard.

The previous outing's combat AI saw guards simply rushing at you, shooting rather than using cover – but Io assures us that it's putting its experience to good use. "We haven't made a tactical shooter, but we had experience of

VIN'S THE MAN



Don't mess with him. OK?

ANOTHER GAMING TIE-IN HITS THE HOLLYWOOD HIGH LIFE...

Rumours of a *Hitman* film have been flying about for a while now and when we went to Io Interactive's offices, we asked if there were any Hollywood heroes they'd particularly like to see playing the role of Agent 47. Bruce Willis was the company's suggestion – but just as we went to press, Vin Diesel was announced as 20th Century Fox's choice for the slap-headed assassin. We thought Duncan Goodhew was a sure winner!

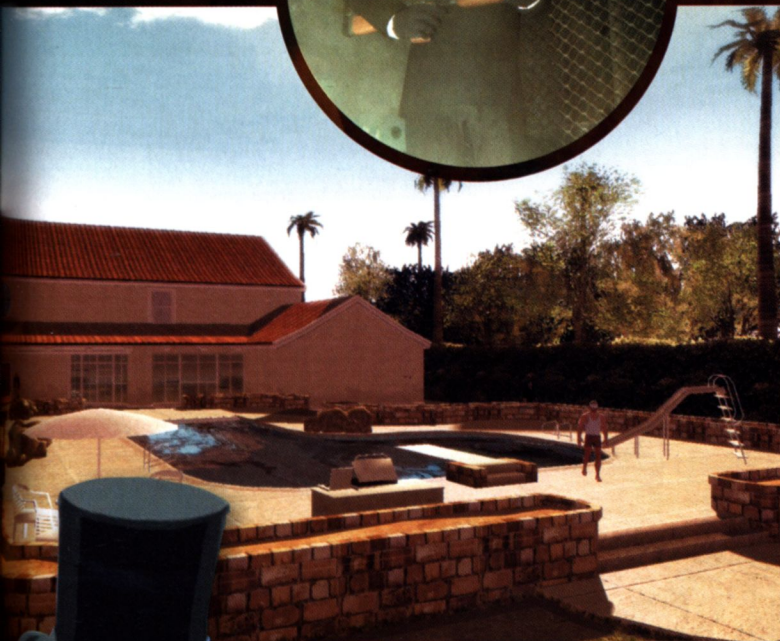
combat when making *Freedom Fighters*, so we've put a lot of that into the game. You're able to pin down characters who'll use different kinds of cover."

SHOOT TO KILL

Although *Hitman* was always intended to be open to different styles of play, the ability to simply run rampage through the level killing every person who dared to get in the way without suffering any real form of penalty (except for the guilt-inducing 'Mass Murderer' rank) negated some of the desire to stay stealthy. Far from removing this way of playing altogether, Io's inserting its own form of rough justice.

"You'll be punished economically for doing stuff you're not supposed to do," continues Hojengaard. "It's our way of saying you can choose to butcher everyone, but you'll pay for it and get really bad publicity." Slaughter your way through the level without a care in the world,





Who lives in a house like this?

"If your notoriety's high you're likely to be recognised and guards alerted. The way to fix that is with your money"

RASMUS HOJENGAARD GAME DIRECTOR, BLOOD MONEY

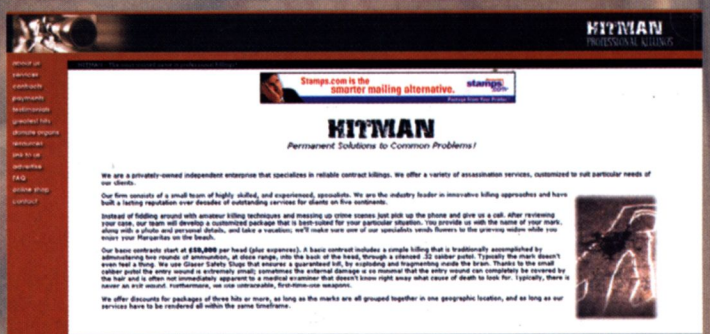
and your new notoriety level will increase, in turn affecting the likelihood of being noticed by guards and even casual civilians wandering about (see 'Bad Press', p55).

And what if you do end up with a high notoriety? "You'll just have to mercilessly kill your way through the level," says Hojengaard, reassuringly. "If your notoriety's at maximum, then there's a great chance that everyone will recognise you straight away and just alert the guards. The way to fix that, of course, is with your money."

SPENDING SPREE

Ah yes, the blood money of the title. Of course, loveable old 47 doesn't just throttle people for kicks - at the end of each mission you're rewarded with a payout. How much depends on a number of

HITMAN FOR HIRE



Useful if you have an annoying boss.

HAS SOMEONE REALLY PISSED YOU OFF? IF THE ANSWER'S YES, WE'VE GOT JUST THE SOLUTION...

From being taken out by a sneaky sniper just as you reach your crucial target to an all-important download failing at 99 per cent, we know that life is full of little niggles and annoyances. But if anything's ever troubled you so much that you've thought you could utilise the services of Agent 47 yourself, where's the best place to head?

Whatever the problem, hitman.us seems to have the solution (albeit one that's inevitably solved with the use of two .32 calibre bullets). For the mere sum of \$50,000, you can enlist the help of the professionals to help 'ease away' your problems. The site even features testimonials from pleased customers, our favourite of which has to be: "This guy moved in nextdoor. I didn't like the way he looked in that shirt. So, I called HITMAN. I never saw him again. Or his shirt. Serves him right." Before any tabloid readers start off a crusade against our mag, we should point out that the site is a huge hoax. And that violence should always be a last resort. Unless they were camping in *Counter-Strike*. [Source...](#)



Not the biggest prize ever offered.

factors including your rating, and now with a massive 128 of them up for grabs (compared to the previous title's 30), there's real incentive to experiment.

Hojengaard: "Each of these (ratings) either adds to or subtracts from your score. This is totalled up from each hit, which gives you a certain amount of money, and each objective of retrieving something gives you money and then your rating is factored in. Of course, getting the Silent Assassin rating gives you a huge amount of money."

Ways to splash your cash are set to include bribing officials to reduce your notoriety, buying hints for the forthcoming

level or upgrading your arsenal of deadly weapons. Yep, that's right - Agent 47's already impressive weapon-set can now be tweaked to your heart's delight, from different silencers and better scopes to double magazines and weapons that can't be scanned by metal detectors.

Io Interactive has definitely been hard at work since *Contracts* and there's a strong chance this will be the *Hitman* title that pushes 47 into the A-list of gaming stealth killers, sharing the (blood) red carpet with Sam Fisher and Solid Snake. That's if he doesn't garrotte them both and leave their corpses in a rubbish bin first... [X]



The gay pride parade just got bigger and better every year.

I can be your hero...

RISE & FALL: CIVILIZATIONS AT WAR

Hands-on playtest! *Anthony Holden* searches for the hero inside in this intriguing RTS hybrid...

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Stainless Steel Studios
PUBLISHER Midway
WEBSITE www.stainlesssteelstudios.com
ETA Christmas

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- From the designer of *Age Of Empires* and *Empire Earth*
- Take control of heroes and go on wild third-person rampages
- Emphasis on naval combat
- Looks so good it must bathe in asses' milk

CV

STAINLESS STEEL STUDIOS

STAINLESS STEEL STUDIOS

Based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, SSS is the proud creator of *Empire Earth* (2001) and *Empires: Dawn Of The Modern World* (2003). Prior to that, Stainless boss Rick Goodman worked as lead designer on the moderately successful *Age Of Empires*.

WE WERE all thinking it, but no-one wanted to say it. At least not to the guy who designed *Age Of Empires* and *Empire Earth*. Luckily he came right out and said it for us. "In terms of the real-time strategy genre, I think Stainless is a little bit guilty, as well as the rest of the industry, of not pushing the envelope enough or not pushing for new, innovative ideas to keep things fresh."

It's hardly a newflash. The traditional RTS lost its vigour years ago, and has been surviving on goodwill and incremental advances ever since – but it's not the sort of thing you're supposed to admit when you're one of the top RTS designers in the business. We're talking of course to Rick Goodman, boss of Stainless Steel Studios, and the reason he can talk so candidly is that he thinks his new game may be about to break the curse.

"When we envisioned *Rise & Fall*, we wanted to push ourselves to do something that was new and unique, yet would still make for a challenging and fun RTS game. What we came up with was a third-person mode that enables you to

become a famous historical hero and play the battle from a perspective you haven't seen in a historical RTS."

ACTION MAN

Goodman brought along a few beta levels of *Rise & Fall* for us to play, and we have to say the new feature is a winner. The game is still an RTS at heart, identical at a glance to any number of similar efforts (other than being prettier of course). You've got large land battles with formation fighting and grand castle assaults, realistic naval combat with boarding and ramming, peasants to mine gold and chop trees, bases to build and defend. But you can also switch to a very action-oriented mode akin to a third-person hack 'n' slash.

"What we really wanted to do was reinvigorate the RTS gamer," says Goodman. "We didn't want to alienate any of the existing fans, but we did want to give them interludes where they could jump on to the battlefield and take part in the game like an action-shooter."

Apart from causing much merry mayhem, the hero mode is also a hugely

potent tool. Whether you're playing as Julius Caesar or Ramses The Great (or one of the six other heroes), you can cut a swathe through virtually any enemy formation, felling scores of foes, taking down siege weapons and calling upon some pretty momentous special powers.

Needless to say, there's a price for all this. Not only do you leave the fate of your troops in the hands of the AI (which is competent but clearly not as smart as you), but you can quickly exhaust your hero's stamina, rendering him or her inoperative for a period.

Heroes also need to be levelled up before they become true super-weapons, a process that's tied fundamentally to your progress within the game. Goodman explains: "The hero has five or six levels you can achieve, and each level of your hero unlocks new upgrades and abilities. So, rather than being age-based, your progress in the game is hero-based. Now, rather than having traditional technology nodes, we have advisors that become available for you to hire, in a way not dissimilar to a tech tree."



Elephants play a big role in the Persian army.



...this year's Henley Regatta had taken on a competitive edge.



IN THE NAVY

WHEN IT COMES TO NAVAL WARFARE, *RISE & FALL* RULES THE WAVES

Unlike most RTS games, *Rise & Fall* takes its sea combat seriously. As such, the ships are all accurately scaled, meaning troops can board ships in a realistic fashion from docks and landings. Better yet, each ship operates as a mobile barracks, enabling you to train new units while at sea.

Ship-to-ship combat is even more impressive. You can use grapplers to seize enemy ships, and then board them with swords aloft – if you manage to wipe out the crew you take the ship as a prize.

Ramming is another handy tactic, a potentially devastating strike that Rick Goodman calls: “The super-weapon of the seas.” On the largest ship, the huge trireme, you can even build a catapult, though sadly you can’t use it to fire troops onto enemy battlements. This small disappointment aside, we expect some grand clashes on the high seas.

As we understand it, advisors are a way of putting a face to the various abilities you gain in the course of the game. So, when your hero goes up a level, you get a choice of new advisors, each of which comes with a special ability. Advisors stay with you from scenario to scenario, so you build up a whole bank of them through the campaign, including architects, historians, scribes and rat catchers – less vermin means happier citizens, don’t you know.

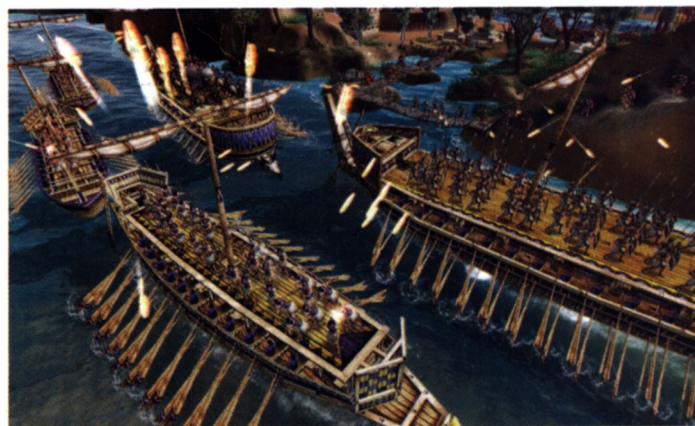
POWER AND GLORY

To level up your hero and progress in the game, you need to accumulate glory, a new resource gained by building cities, conquering territories and so forth. As you accumulate more glory, you can decide how you want to spend it, and as Goodman explains, there’s more than a little strategy to this.

“The first thing you have to decide is whether you want to devote your attention and resources to RTS mode or to your super-weapon – your heroic character. If you’re more of a traditional RTS fan, you’ll be able to spend your glory on unlocking better advisors and upgrades. If you enjoy the more visceral action, you can spend your excess glory on propelling your hero to higher levels, choosing not to unlock some of the RTS elements that come with it. That gives you more time in hero command mode and more special abilities for your hero.”

YOU ARE SPECIAL

Special abilities are one of the more interesting aspects of hero command. At their simplest, they might offer temporary invulnerability or a healing bonus, but



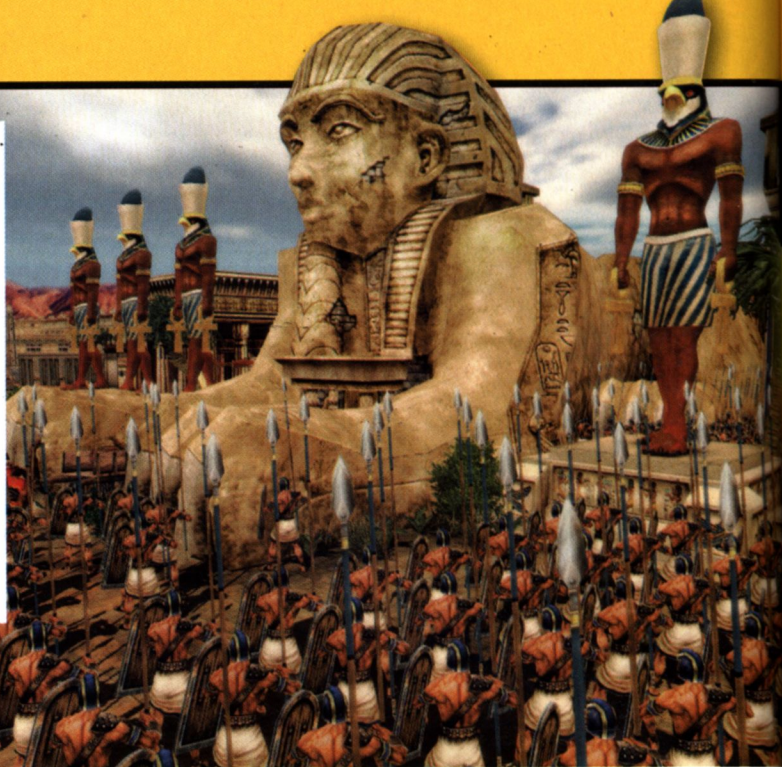
Teach your sailors the intricacies of ramming.



Billy Smart – the early years.



This place sphinx...



AGE OF OUTPOSTS

PRIME REAL ESTATE IS THE KEY IN RISE & FALL

While not as far-reaching as the hero command mode, another promising concept in *Rise & Fall* is that of territories. On each map a number of outposts or fortifications are dotted around, the capture and holding of which increases your ability to recruit soldiers. So, for every outpost you own you get an additional unit for free whenever you create a unit. By the end of a game you might be able to get 10-15 new units for the price of one. As such, territories are hugely powerful things, and victory is about controlling the whole map – not just a few scattered resource deposits.



Exploring every corner of the map for outposts is vital.

there are a few more creative examples as well. One of Cleopatra's abilities is called Betrayal Of Loyalty, which causes troops on the enemy side to cross lines and join the Egyptian cause. Catapult Barrage, one of Alexander's abilities, enables you to bring down a volley of catapult fire on a location (provided you have siege weapons somewhere on the map). It can be a devastating tactic, assuming that you get out of the way first.

Heroes also play a big role in multiplayer, though as Goodman explains it works a little differently there. "To get a powerful hero in multiplayer, you really need to level up your hero to third or fourth level. Until then, they're relatively weak, so you need to build up your empire and manage your economy very well before your hero becomes a super-weapon."

PLAYING THE HERO

As for single-player, the levels are a mixture of traditional RTS scenarios and hero-based action. There are two campaigns, Egyptians vs Romans and Greeks vs Persians, jointly comprising 22 missions. However, at least six of these

will be special 'hero quests', short challenges that take place entirely in third-person. We were able to play one of these – a Greek mission that sees Alexander escorting a fireraiser (a primitive war machine used to burn down gates and buildings) into the heart of a Persian stronghold.

Many of the other missions incorporate moments where you're compelled to switch to hero command in order to progress. One of the Egyptian missions we played opens with a traditional RTS battle, which, once resolved, leaves you stuck on the wrong side of a river. Ordinary units can't swim, so it's up to Cleopatra to wade across and requisition a boat from a Roman encampment. After this, the mission reverts to standard RTS action.

"One of the biggest challenges we faced was how to integrate some hero command gameplay at the right time and place," says Goodman. "Clearly, we didn't want to turn it into an action game, but we wanted to make the RTS gameplay more exciting at key moments, so we've designed moments where your hero becomes the pivotal tool or tactic in the game."

Having now played several *Rise & Fall* scenarios, we can confidently say that hero command mode is great fun. Whether or not this kind of hybrid gameplay appeals to RTS fans is another story, especially with *Age Of Empires III* looming large. For now though, we're just delighted that Stainless Steel is trying something different. [E]





Note to self: don't take the piss out of a moustache belonging to a man with a big gun.



"You've ruined my Hula Hoop juggling record!"

Mexican stand-off...

TOTAL OVERDOSE

LAST
PREVIEWED
PCZONE
ISSUE
154

Jamie Sefton on the hot and spicy salsa shooter that never takes a siesta

'TEQUILA-FUELLED' is how the accompanying blurb for *Total Overdose* describes this tongue-in-cheek, Mexican-themed action shooter. Unfortunately, that phrase only conjures up for me a particularly eventful night many years ago involving a house party, a scuffle with a well-known stand-up comedian, a painful fence-destroying garden-hop and the stealing of a kettle from a local school.

So, to soothe my aching conscience, I'm going to avoid any further mention of the evil slamming liquid, and concentrate on a recent showing of the game, now only a few months away from completion.

CHICKEN TONIGHT

You can imagine *Total Overdose* to be a piñata full of gameplay treats from *Grand Theft Auto*, *Max Payne*, *Serious Sam* and

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Deadline Games
PUBLISHER SCI
WEBSITE www.deadlinegames.com
ETA September

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's as if Robert Rodriguez made a game
- Cool bullet-time special moves
- Lots of weapons. And violence
- GTA-style humour

Tony Hawk's, smashed open by film-makers Robert Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino. As ex-con Ernesto Cruz, you must track down the criminal underworld figures that killed your drugs cop father, and to help, you have access to over 20 weapons – some of which can be dual-wielded – including machine-guns, rocket launchers, sniper rifles, baseball bats and machetes.

As well as Mexican villages, the 20-odd levels in *Total Overdose* will feature Aztec temples, seedy inner cities and goon-stuffed warehouses. You dash around the destructible environments, as the auto-target reticule locks onto the enemies streaming towards you for instant satisfying blasting. Cruz is also able to drive numerous vehicles that involve equally explosive stunts, such as piling a truck headlong into an oil tanker.

While not exactly sophisticated, the action is intense, especially when you manage to chain different combos together (à la *Tony Hawk's*) – a combo meter in the top-left hand corner handily ticks down between kills, showing you the time you have left to find another victim before the chain ends.

In one sequence, numerous gringos (and some rather unfortunate chickens) were hacked, beaten up, kicked and shot in seconds, as I marauded around a

Mexican desert village – and you can actually clear whole levels like this in one giant combo of destruction.

However, you can also earn so-called 'Loco moves' with multiple kills – eight bullet-time slo-mo specials that include a bloody 360-degree machine-gun spin-around for taking out dozens of enemies, a move for guaranteed headshots, and another that summons up a Mexican skeleton (like Manny from *Grim Fandango*), an undead sidekick who fights alongside you.

CAN I GET A REWIND?

If the back-flipping, dual-wielding chaos does happen to catch up with you, and Cruz bites the dust, you do have another trick up your sleeve – Rewind. This is exactly like the feature in the *Prince Of Persia* titles, giving you the sneaky ability to rewind time just before you headbutted that grenade, and replay the



action again – although obviously you do only get a limited supply.

With a soundtrack that includes heavy rockers such as Control Machete and Molotov (come on, it'll make a change from Coldplay), *Total Overdose* is a Mexican platter of potentially very spicy flavours – slo-mo blasting, ultra-violence, stupid humour, filmic cut-scenes, sexy surprises and, er, guacamole. Will it stick a cactus up the backside of third-person action-adventures? If we can avoid the tequila, we might just be able to provide the answer... [X]



LAST
PREVIEWED
PCZONE
ISSUE
156

Hotter than July... FAHRENHEIT

Steve Hill kills a man in a toilet. Not really...

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Quantic Dream
PUBLISHER Atari
WEBSITE www.quanticroam.com
ETA September

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Resurrection of the adventure game
- From the makers of that David Bowie game
- Innovative control system
- French

WE ONCE had the dubious pleasure of visiting the offices of *Fahrenheit* developer, Quantic Dream. It was a stifling hot Paris day and we were there to see surrealist weird 'em up, *The Nomad Soul*. Details of the meeting are sketchy, but the one overriding memory is of visiting the bogs only to be confronted with a stinking piss-stained mattress stood upright in the bath. French...

Funnily enough, *Fahrenheit* begins in a toilet, not of a Parisian development studio, but a New York diner, where Lucas Kane is taking a dump. Nothing unusual about that, but instead of flicking through a magazine while he releases the otters, he's carving strange symbols into his arms with a steak knife.

Once he's suitably scarred, he wipes his clinkers and exits the cubicle, whereby he spots a Sven Goran-Eriksson lookalike washing his hands. Without so much as a cursory hello, he grapples Sven to the floor and viciously stabs him to death.

BLOOD ON YOUR HANDS

This is where you come in, picking up the character of Lucas as he attempts to extricate himself from the pickle that he's landed himself in, what with the cold-blooded murder of a stranger. Staring at the mutilated corpse of the

slaphead, drenched in both your blood and his, you need to think quickly. Even more so when the screen splits into two to reveal a New York City cop who gets up from his feed and starts lumbering towards the gents.

The split-screen trick is a tried and tested cinematic technique, popularised by Brian De Palma in his 1976 horror classic *Carrie*, and more recently used to great effect in bonkers TV series *24*. It's the latter that bears the most similarity to *Fahrenheit*, with the action

WALKTHROUGH →

DYING FOR A PISS

These days, you can't even take a leak without being butchered to death...



1 "I needed that. Really shouldn't have had that second pint."



2 "Look at the state of this bloke. What is this, Halloween?"



3 "What the f**k are you playing at? Please, the sink's all yours..."



4 "Oh my god! Oh Jesus Christ! Christ! No!"



5 "You've stabbed me in the heart. I appear to be dying."

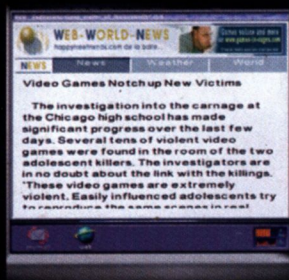


6 Looks like England will be needing a new manager very soon...



"That nightmare seemed very real..."

Back/Cancel : Backspace, Select : Return



"Wassup?"

CV

quanticdream

QUANTIC DREAM

Something of an enigma, the French developer's only commercial release was at the arse-end of the last millennium. 1999's *The Nomad Soul* took a unique approach, featuring prostitutes, peep shows and compulsory David Bowie gigs.

If he can get his snout out of the trough, he'll see there's been a murder. A bit of biting satire adds to the mix.

in one screen often dictating how long you have to do something in the other.

In this case you need to hide the body, wash your hands, pay for your steak & frites and get the bejesus out of the diner before you're fingered. It's an undeniably tense business, made even more so by the unique control system. When faced with a number of choices, you select one by moving the mouse in a particular direction. So for instance, faced with a pair of taps, sliding the mouse left chooses the left one (which is out of order) and sliding the mouse right selects the right one (which emits a tepid dribble).

"Hide the body, wash your hands, pay for your steak and get the bejesus out of the diner before you're fingered"

A unique approach, it seems that the idea is to create a more tactile experience in order to relate to the character and his particular predicament. There are also sections of the game that require you to complete a physical task by pumping the left and right keys in what will always be known as Daley Thompson style (in tribute to the Olympic decathlete's Spectrum-ruining game). Again, the idea is that if the onscreen character is exerting himself, then so should you be. As the writer/director David Cage says in the tutorial: "You'll be exhausted too." This might be somewhat overstating the case

– although to be honest, it's the most exercise we've had for weeks.

CINERAMA

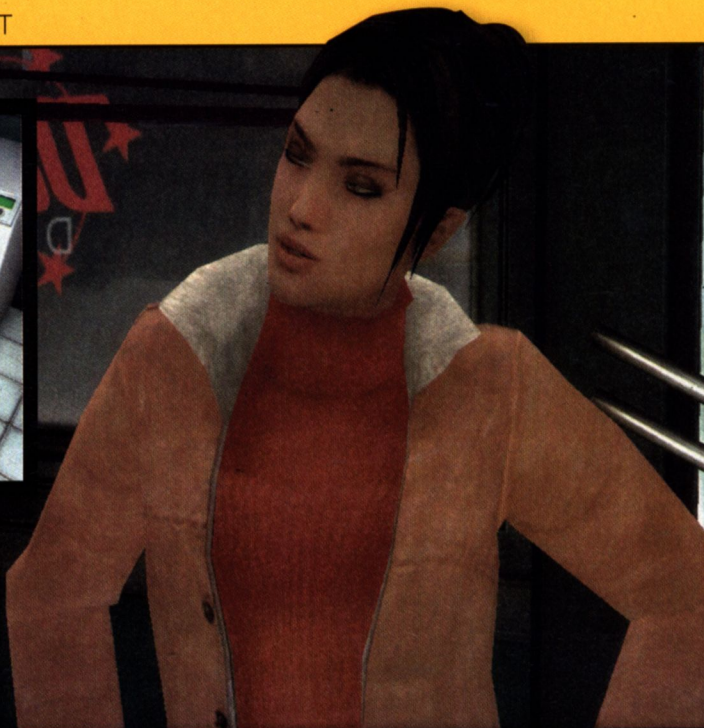
The fact that Cage is credited for having written and directed the game is one of several overt nods to its cinematic qualities. See also the widescreen presentation and deliberately grainy texture. And if you were in any doubt, in the options menu you don't choose a 'New Game', you choose a 'New Movie'.

We thought the concept of an interactive movie had been consigned to the same bin as virtual reality headsets, but it's a term that could arguably be applied to *Fahrenheit*, something that sent acting editor Sefton into a tailspin when the news was broken to him, given that he signed up the exclusive review. There's no need to panic quite yet though, as there's a lot more to it than

watching inane footage of D-list actors in between making occasional moribund decisions.

Essentially it's a 3D adventure game, but one in which action sequences take place in real time and often against the clock. Moreover, there's less of the absurdity associated with that defunct genre, and *Fahrenheit* steers clear of combining a spatchcock with a rampart to defeat the wizard king. The actions you take are rooted in the real world, such as bandaging your disfigured arms and sticking your bloodied clothes in the washing machine when the Old Bill calls round.

That's not to say there isn't an element of fantasy. In fact, it's riddled with it – we are talking about a French



If all cops looked like this, we wouldn't mind getting arrested.



Probably a good idea to get a wash on.

game after all. The strangeness begins right off the bat, with Lucas's surreal hallucinations, in which he sees a robbed character in a hoodie surrounded by hundreds of candles. Clearly that doesn't excuse what he did, but it is apparent that all is not well in the mental department. To compound matters, there's a sinister-looking raven that appears intermittently to stick its beak in, which is all a bit *Twin Peaks*. And, to explain the name of the game, New York is mysteriously getting colder by the day.

ICY DEAD PEOPLE

As well as going into a trance and committing murder, Lucas also appears to have 'the shine' – in so much as he occasionally gets glimpses of the future, which necessitates some crucial decision-making. For instance, when he's in the park he has a premonition of a kid falling through the ice and drowning. If he acts immediately, he'll be able to save him, although the kerfuffle will attract the attention of a nearby cop, who just happens to be the same one from the diner who will almost certainly recognise him.

These are the type of moral decisions that you will have to make, although if you had any decency you'd simply turn yourself in and spare the world any more of your homicidal outbursts. It doesn't work like that though, as you sympathise with the character, determined to find out what sparked the incident. Keen to

find out what turned him into a blood-crazed maniac, Lucas even visits a priest, although in his defence it is his brother, whereby some of the family history is revealed, including their parents' 'accident'.

CHARACTER BUILDING

Also eager to ascertain the facts of the case are the brace of detectives assigned to the investigation, one a sassy New Yoik broad, the other a jive-talking, tea cosy-wearing black dude. And here's the twist: you also get to control their characters. So when you're not being Lucas, sticking his blood-soaked bed sheets on a hot wash, you're Detective Carla Valenti interrogating the waitress in the diner, or Detective Tyler Miles searching the bogs for the murder weapon. At various stages, you also get to play Lucas's brother Marcus, the man with god on his side but a big secret to keep.

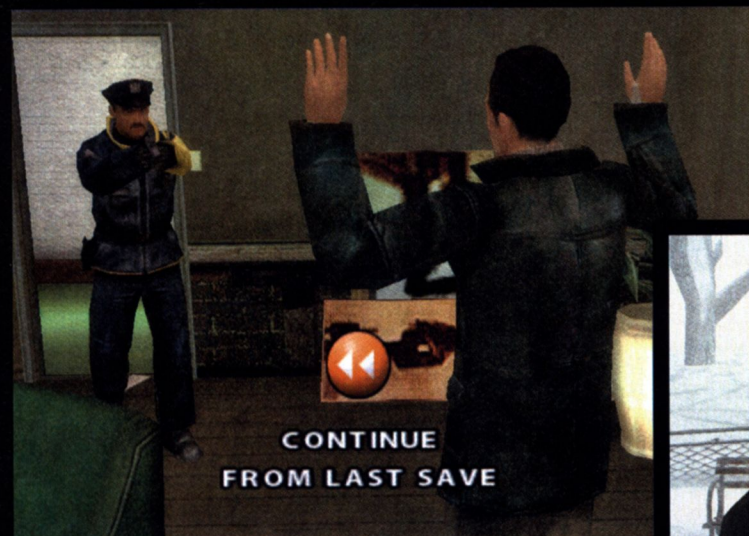
In this preview code, the character switching works pretty well. Tenuously like being an actor, whoever you're

playing, you get in character and become wholly committed to their cause. So when you're Lucas hearing a knock on the door, you frantically dash around the apartment trying to hide the evidence. Likewise, when you're one of the detectives, you're determined to use all the resources at your disposal to put this evil bastard behind bars before he strikes again. We haven't played much of Marcus, the priest, although he would appear to have his own issues. And in what may be a first, you also have to manage each character's mental health, with your actions making them more or less depressed, stressed and so on.

REAL HORROR SHOW

High concept stuff, it's a unique way of telling a story and is described as a paranormal thriller. It certainly put the shits up us, with one scene causing your correspondent to buck wildly in his seat – and this while playing the game on a sunny afternoon with a bit of tennis on in the background. Turn down the lights and turn up the sound and the thrills should be amplified.

From what we've played, there's a far bit of trial and error involved, and the control system can prove frustrating (although perhaps that's the point). It looks like an admirable attempt to do something different though – tune in next month for our exclusive review and discover if *Fahrenheit* is hot or not. [E]



Cock it up and you have to do it all over again. Be quicker this time.



Marcus Kane, Lucas's god-bothering brother.



EARTH 2160



"..best looking strategy game..."

Gamespot.com

"looks gorgeous and very deep"

IGN.com



PC
DVD



ZUXXEZ
ENTERTAINMENT AG



12+



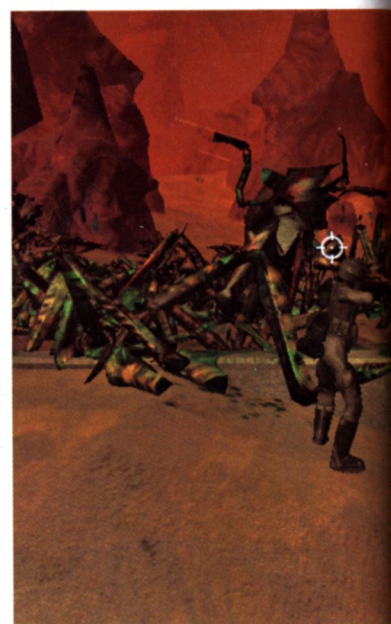
www.pegi.info

WWW.EARTH2160.COM

Like to know more? STARSHIP TROOPERS

The blood runs green as **Anthony Holden** battles more bugs than **Champ Man 5**

LAST
PREVIEWED
PCZONE
ISSUE
155



"Can't we just sit down and talk about all this?"

NO ARGUMENTS now, *Starship Troopers* is a good film. Through a sheen of exaggerated violence and bad acting it manages to thoroughly ridicule America and its warmongering ways, and have a damn good time about it in the process. In many ways, it's a companion piece to *RoboCop*, arguably Verhoeven's masterpiece.

But then again, who cares? This is a game, a first-person shooter at that, which means incisive social commentary is out and frenetic bloody violence is in.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Strangelite
PUBLISHER Empire Interactive
WEBSITE www.starshiptroopersgame.com
ETA Q3 2005

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Hundreds of bugs to mow down
- Huge outdoor battles
- Strong influence from *Halo*
- Co-operative multiplayer

Whether you liked or disliked the film is by the wayside – it's just a convenient setting to hang a game on.

Indeed, having played the latest preview build of *Starship Troopers* – including a previously unseen level called Stronghold – we can assure you that a much bigger factor in your enjoyment will be how much you liked *Halo*. For as much as Verhoeven's blockbuster provides the background and look for the game, the actual gameplay owes much more to the work of Bungie Studios.

DARK COVENANT

In some ways this is no surprise. Both games deal with a group of space marines invading an alien-infested landscape. Both take place in large outdoor environments, interspersed with a few dark alien interiors. However, there's a lot more to it than that, and it starts from the first moment you step foot on Hesperus, the overrun mining planet on which the action takes place.

CV

STRANGELITE
CREATORS AND DEVELOPERS

STRANGELITE

Based in sunny Runcorn in Cheshire, Strangelite is an internal development studio of Empire Interactive, best known for bashing out ports of old Sega hits like *Crazy Taxi* and *Virtua Tennis*. Having done a solid job on those, the team was unleashed on Empire's newly acquired *Starship Troopers* licence in 2004, and has been busy churning out 'buggy' code ever since.

Dropping into a chaotic battle zone, your first task is to secure a supply compound, dodging alien artillery and beating off a handful of warrior bugs along the way. You play an elite soldier known as a marauder and, just like Master Chief, your arrival is met with a mixture of awe and respect from the troops. As in *Halo*, you fight alongside a number of friendly soldiers without actually commanding them, though your role as a badass means it's up to you to lead the way.

Having taken the compound (coating the ground liberally with bug guts in the

Oh, he's screwed.

process), your next task is to pick up some power cells, located in a needlessly deep storage tunnel nearby, and bring them to the surface. By the time you get back, the next wave of bugs has arrived, and it's up to you to defend an engineer against an alien counterattack as he struggles to get some laser walls online. It's a frantic business, with the alien swarm getting thicker and less manageable with every second. Controlled fire and well-timed reloads pave the only road to survival.

FUEL RUN

Having seen off the verminous menace in the compound, we skip promptly to the all-new Stronghold level, which tasks you with raiding an abandoned fuel dump deep in bug country. Like the Outpost 29 level described in our last preview (Issue



Why Don't You?...

THE FILM DOESN'T HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS

On the official game website, the developer proudly declares that the *Starship Troopers* movie was born to be an FPS, but somehow we can't help but feel that the source material is holding the game back. Going back to *Halo*, you can see how limited *Starship Troopers* is by comparison. You can't, for example, pick up any alien weaponry, because there isn't any. You can't drive any vehicles, because there aren't any (to speak of). You can't have smart enemies, again because there aren't any, apart from sluggish brain bugs.

As such, we feel Strangelite needs to bend the rules a bit, go beyond the licence and forge into new realms. Following *Halo's* lead, the developer could introduce a second alien race or perhaps design some vehicles. Taking a lead from *Half-Life 2*, it could provide a way of controlling the bugs and using them as your own private killing machines. Something must be done in any case, because the film quite clearly was not born to be an FPS.



New ideas are needed to flesh out the *Starship Troopers* world.



"Whaddya mean 'yahtzee'? We're playing poker."

"The horizon darkens with invertebrate bodies, all heading your way"

rolling across the rocky tundra to clear any hidden landmines. It's at about this point that you're ordered into no man's land – apparently an engineer has overshot the landing zone and needs rescuing. Moments later, the horizon darkens with invertebrate bodies, all heading your way.

Once again, it's your job to escort the engineer as he runs around fixing stuff, meanwhile fighting off a never-ending horde of critters. There's a bit of running

back and forth to defend the building on several fronts, and a lot of panicking in the face of a vastly superior force.

SIX LEGS BAD

Undoubtedly, there's something unique and appealing in all this. The massed battles against thousands of foes are the game's key strength – the mere sight of them rolling across the terrain towards you is enough to impress. But saying that, the Stronghold level also raises one or



"Damn zipper's stuck."

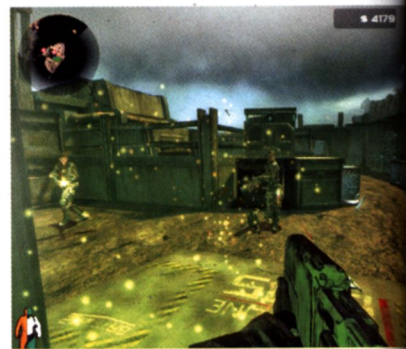
two red flags. For a start, we've only played three finished levels and already they're starting to feel quite samey. Devices such as defending NPCs and 'holding off' waves of attackers have already been repeated, raising questions about the amount of variety built into the level design.

And as impressive and frantic as the massed battles are, they're not particularly skilful – you basically just spray indiscriminately at the moving wall of spines and legs coming towards you and toss the odd grenade.

Admittedly, we haven't seen any of the solo 'infiltration' missions yet, which promise to be far more measured and challenging affairs. Moreover, we've only faced a handful of the 19 different bug types promised, and the AI is apparently some way from being on a par with the brain bug's. Hopefully these additional elements will round the game out to some extent – after all, we don't want something as bad as *Starship Troopers 2*... [E]

155), Stronghold depicts a desperate stand against hundreds, maybe thousands of alien attackers (we lost count).

When you arrive, it's all about to kick off. A handful of hoppers are buzzing around, threatening to impale unwary soldiers on their stingers. Soon after, a wave of roach-like limpet bugs appears,



There's betting. And they're soldiers. Geddit?

Don't mess with the Daneworth, fellas.

Wagers of sin...

BET ON SOLDIER: BLOOD SPORT

It's not roulette or blackjack, and Sam Kieldsen hopes it won't be craps either...

NOLAN DANEWORTH

could only be the name of a videogame character, couldn't it? And yes, it is: Nolesy is the star of the rapidly approaching *Bet On Soldier* (now with the suitably violent secondary moniker of *Blood Sport*), and we recently got the chance to guide him through a few levels of first-person action.

So, a little background: it's the future and the world is 'a shitty place' – Nolan's words, not ours – thanks to the war that's raged for the past 80 years. The only

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Kylotonn
PUBLISHER Digital Jesters
ETA September
WEBSITE www.betonsoldier.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Fast-paced FPS action
- 'Hand-to-mouth' gameplay
- Intriguing multiplayer with one-on-one duels
- You play a guy called Nolan Daneworth

celebrities in this society are the Bet On Soldier Champions, soldiers competing in televised clashes somehow filmed during the real battles of the war. Incidentally, this sounds totally impractical to us (for starters, how do they get the cameras in there?), but designers rarely let logic or plausibility get in the way of a decent excuse for a game, so we'll let it go.

REALITY TV

Nolan is looking for the men who killed his wife – men that he recognised from the telly as Bet On Soldier Champions, no less. So as you go through the levels – which are filled mostly with mere foot soldiers – you occasionally face hard-as-nails champions to fight in one-on-one duels. The tougher the opponent, the more money you get if and when you kill them.

And thanks to what Kylotonn describes as 'hand-to-mouth' gameplay, you need as much moolah as you can get your hands on; there are no pick-ups to

be had here. You purchase weapons, armour and up to two AI buddies before a level and then you're stuck with them until that level is over. Ammo and armour can be replenished at certain points along the way, but again you have to splash the cash each time.

NO REFUNDS

It's tough going at times, especially if you select the wrong gear before you start – we had trouble taking down the huge exo walkers without a rocket launcher, for instance – but every enemy you plug yields a small monetary reward. Score a headshot and you even get a bonus.

The AI mercenaries provide capable support, particularly the engineers able to repair your armour. Other options include heavily-armed troopers and snipers, and all can be given simple 'stay' and 'follow' orders.

We played through work-in-progress builds of three levels (no playtest of the innovative-sounding multiplayer just yet),

and it's fair to say that Kylotonn still has a bit to prove. The enemy AI, physics and graphics engine are all reasonably solid, but there seems to be a danger that, should you remove the money system, you'd be left with a shooter much like any other average example of the genre. With the September release date looming large, it won't be long before we find out if this title is a dead cert or an also-ran. **EW**



BOILING POINT

ROAD TO HELL

"A triumph that no PC gamer should miss." GamesTM 9/10

"It's the most controversial game of the year." PC Gamer 81%

"Will keep you hooked for weeks." Custom PC 91%

"Totally wonderful" PC Format 81%

16+
www.pegi.info

www.atari.com/boilingpoint

Boiling Point: Road to Hell © 2005 Atari Europe SASU. All Rights Reserved. Designed and developed by Deep Shadows. Boiling Point: Road to Hell is a Trademark owned by Atari Europe SASU. Published and Distributed by Atari Europe SASU. Atari and the Atari logo are registered trademarks of Atari Interactive Inc. All trademarks are the property of their respective owners.
© 2005 NVIDIA Corporation. All rights reserved.

DVD
ROM



DEEP SHADOWS



ATARI

REVIEWS

THE DEFINITIVE LOWDOWN ON ALL THE LATEST PC GAMES

JEDI RAGE



■ **ACTING EDITOR** Jamie Sefton

▲ There'll be no more *Star Wars* movies. *Episode III* has recently finished off George Lucas's saga (and a few of the cast's acting careers), so it's now up to TV spin-offs, websites, books and videogames to keep the universe alive. However, apart from *Knights Of The Old Republic* and possibly *Republic Commando*, recent LucasArts games have been dodgier than Obi-Wan Kenobi's hairstyles.

A game such as *Star Wars Galaxies*, which has so much potential to be an utterly fantastic MMOG, is currently bantha fodder because of badly-executed upgrades – and the new *Rage Of The Wookiees* expansion does little to help things (page 113).

This is an open plea to LucasArts – where the f**k are the classic *Star Wars* games? We used to have incredible FPS titles such as *Dark Forces* and magnificent space sims like *X-Wing*. What's happened? Fans like me are screaming out for a new plot-driven *Star Wars* shooter, set, say, after *Empire* and using Unreal Engine 3 technology. Or what about an *Elite*-style game set just before *A New Hope* using state-of-the-art graphics enabling you to trade, fight, pirate, whatever and fly any vehicle from the films? Goddammit, even a freakin' re-imagining of the classic *TIE Fighter* with DX9 visuals would be enough for me.

We'll be getting hands-on code of *Battlefront II* soon, and while this multiplayer shooter appears to be a big improvement on the first, the fact remains that it's still really an Xbox game at heart. Do yourself a favour LucasArts and take a look at the real deal – *Battlefield 2*. DICE's multiplayer FPS is a sublime piece of work with truly next-gen graphics built solely for the PC – and is all the better for it. Come on LucasArts – dump the multi-format stance just once and give us a *Star Wars* game the PC can be proud of again.

George Lucas – this is our most desperate hour!



Earth 2160: puts the RTS in, well... Real-time strategy.

THE ZONE SCORING SYSTEM

Some people (mainly games publishers) say that our scoring system is harsh. It's not. It's honest and built around the seemingly outdated idea that 50 per cent is an average score. Likewise, 70 per cent is a good score, anything above 80 per cent is excellent, and 90 per cent and above is a Classic (see below). Talking of Classic awards, don't expect to see one every issue as we don't chuck them around like confetti.

OUR REVIEWERS

We think our reviewers are the best in the business. Each one is a specialist in numerous genres and will have played every major release, so no game is judged in isolation. We also

make sure the right game gets reviewed by the right person, which means you won't see Steve Hill reviewing an RPG and we won't let Will loose on *FIFA Football 2005*. You can have your say on the games and our reviews as well. If you have a comment to make, please email your views to letters@pczone.co.uk and entitle your email 'Feedback'.

ONLINE REVIEWS AND MULTIPLAYER UPDATES

We review a lot of games before they go on sale and if there are no public servers running before we go to print, we won't second-guess how the game's going to play online. Instead, you'll find dedicated online reviews of all the major releases in our regular Online Zone section.

Online Zone is also the place where we review online-only games, mods and major updates of online games. Between the two sections, we've got every gaming angle covered!

OUR PCS

We test games on a variety of systems so we can report how they perform in the real world. All our reviewed games are played on the manufacturer's minimum specification, as well as our own top-end rig – the Area-51 from Alienware (below).



Only games that score 90 per cent or more receive the coveted Classic award. The best of the best.

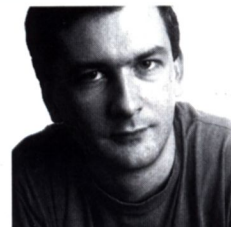


The second tier award for games scoring between 80 and 89 per cent. Essential purchases.

MEET THE TEAM

QUESTIONS

1. What are you playing?
2. What will earth be like in 2160?



DAVE WOODS

Battlefield 2

Just like it is in *Earth 2160*, but with even more lens flare



JAMIE SEFTON

Battlefield 2, Stronghold 2

Dunno, but Leeds Utd will finish mid-table in the Championship



76
CRICKET GAMES
Are we bowled over or not?



82
7 SINS
Once a sinner, always a sinner?



92
INDIE ZONE
Sound of the underground



94
REPLAY
Games going cheap

DEFINITIVE REVIEWS

- 72 **EARTH 2160**
- 76 **CRICKET 2005**
- 77 **BRIAN LARA INTERNATIONAL CRICKET 2005**
- 78 **WORMS 4: MAYHEM**
- 80 **FALCON 4.0: ALLIED FORCE**
- 82 **7 SINS**
- 84 **ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3: SOAKED!**
- 86 **CHAOS LEAGUE: SUDDEN DEATH**
- 88 **AURORA WATCHING**
- 89 **BIG MUTHA TRUCKERS 2: TRUCK ME HARDER**
- 90 **NHL EAST-SIDE HOCKEY MANAGER 2005**
- 90 **YETISPORTS ARCTIC ADVENTURE**
- 92 **INDIE ZONE**
THE LATEST FROM THE INDEPENDENT GAME DEVELOPERS
- 94 **REPLAY**
SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW, HOTEL GIANT AND LINE OF SIGHT: VIETNAM
- 96 **FEEDBACK**
OPEN YOUR MIND AND SPLATTER YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE LATEST GAMES



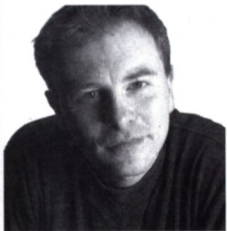
WORMS 4: MAYHEM 78



FALCON 4.0: ALLIED FORCE 80



ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3: SOAKED! 84



PAUL PRESLEY

City Of Heroes, every co-op game ever

Like it was in 2159 but a touch more purple



WILL PORTER

GTA: San Andreas and *Pro Evo 4*

I strongly suspect that everything will look like an extremely dull German RTS game



SAM KILDSSEN

GTA: San Andreas

Likely to be populated solely by cockroaches



SUZY WALLACE

Battlefield 2 and *Guild Wars*

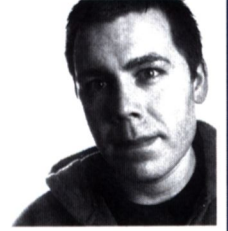
A barren wasteland populated by *Mad Max* wannabes. Oh no, wait, that's Essex...



STEVE HILL

Football Manager 2005

No idea, but I'll probably still be writing for *PC ZONE*



RICHIE SHOEMAKER

Earth 2160

Planet Of The Apes



These novelty chessboards rock.

EARTH 2160

£34.99 | Pub: Deep Silver | Dev: Reality Pump/Zuxxez | ETA: August 26 | www.earth2160.com

REQUIRES P4 1.5GHz, 512MB RAM, 128MB 3D card **DESIRES** P4 2.4GHz, 1GB RAM, 256MB 3D card and an Internet connection

The Earth is no more, the moon has crumbled into cheese and Mars is next on humanity's hit list. *Richie Shoemaker* rides out to the Red Planet as the unending war for survival goes interplanetary

INPERSPECTIVE

ACT OF WAR: DIRECT ACTION

Reviewed Issue 153, Score 84%
The first game to really take on C&C at its own game and emerge victorious, *Act Of War* again sticks to the tried-and-tested strategy formula, yet compared to its contemporaries it reveals itself to be fresh and invigorating.

WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR

Reviewed Issue 147, Score 81%
Fast and furious, *Dawn Of War* picks up brilliantly from where *StarCraft* left off. The multiplayer game is almost without equal, the animation is feverish and with an expansion due soon, this has plenty of life left in it.

REAL-TIME strategy games can be very hardcore and *Earth 2160* is living proof. If you've missed previous instalments in the series, you might be forgiven for thinking it's just another generic real-time strategy game, following on from *Command & Conquer*, the granddaddy of them all. Scratch below the surface though, and you'll quickly find yourself drowning in a sea of options.

Of course *Earth 2160*, like its predecessors *2140* and *2150*, does stick very much to the traditional RTS template. You begin each mission in the corner of a map, with some prime real estate from which you must establish a base of

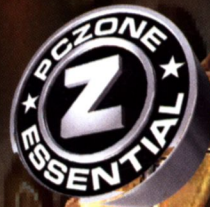
operations. Once you've established the all-important command centre, you need to gather all the resources that will enable you to amass the necessary units, and then send them in en masse against the enemy. Hopefully, following some indeterminate time and after repeating the build and attack cycle, a victory is achieved and it's onto a new map. Then just rinse and repeat, as they say.

However, whilst other strategy games tend to drip feed you units and new technology, *Earth 2160* quickly unleashes a torrent of building options. There are four different sides, each with the traditional handful of base units. However,

open up the research tree and put a couple of labs to work, and before too long hundreds of permutations become available. All told, over 10,000 different units can be created – probably more than you would ever need.

PRODUCTION LINE

How it works is pretty straightforward. Take charge of the Eurasian Dynasty, for example (neo-Communist, ruthless, rather likeable), and in order to build a basic recon vehicle you must first erect a Production Centre. So far, no big deal – you can churn out bog-standard vehicles until the cows come home (or until the unit ceiling is reached, which at



this stage is likely to be sooner). However,

tack a research lab onto your expanding HQ and things get more interesting, as you can browse the sinuous research tree.

In the campaigns, the initial selection is rather thin, but even so, the upgrade options are quite extensive compared with other like-minded games, with a number of general improvements to armour, engine and weapons that can be researched. Once they are, you then slip into the



Construction window, select the chassis and add in your newly researched modules. A few minutes into a mission then, and that recon buggy can quickly be adapted to take on small bands of infantry, tanks, aircraft or even spearhead a base assault – so long as you remember to slap on that new armour and stealth shielding you’ve had your technicians working on.

LICK MY REALITY PUMP

Of course, the problem with all this design work is that you spend so long constructing new vehicles that you neglect the fistcuffs, and as your first 'Mega-Mondo-Killer Robot Of Death Mk III' rolls off the production line (yes, you can name your units however you like), the enemy will be battering your defences with dozens of bog-standard recon trucks.

And that’s the great thing about *Earth 2160* – other games allow you to build elaborate defences, hoard resources and research new technologies, but *Earth 2160* expands the

concept so far in each and every direction that the potential for strategic mayhem seems almost limitless. Where most RTS games are lacking in either resource management or in the breadth of units, here you have both taken to extremes. *Earth 2160* really does go all the way to 11.

Like I say, there is a downside to all this, that you lose sight of the battles as you try to work out which combination of modules works



In the future, all buildings will be made from air vents.



Another example of why rear-view mirrors for spaceships should be compulsory.



“Stupid nylon armour.”

“While other strategy games drip feed units and tech, this unleashes a torrent of options”

best for any given situation. Dive into the skirmish game first and I guarantee you’ll be swamped and ultimately frustrated. Thankfully, the campaigns gently lead you up to the big guns.

BEDTIME STORY

As much as the sci-fi story follows on from the previous games, it’s not one that requires a great deal of explanation. The Earth is no more, destroyed by a war started by the Eurasian Dynasty and returned in kind by the Lunar Corporation and the United Civilized States. Now searching for a new home, humankind has carried the conflict over to Mars, and it’s here that the war continues

unabated – the UCS having mysteriously been populated entirely by robots. There’s also a fourth race now, a strange alien civilisation, one that relies not so much on an expansive network of buildings to operate, but resources to clone and morph into new units.

I’ll be honest and say that while the developer has tried hard to create a story for the game, it doesn’t carry itself particularly well. Partly it’s because it’s one that’s already been flogged to death, but mostly it’s due to the fact that the voice-overs for the central characters and the script itself are so overlaid with cliché that you’ll want to skip through it, despite the more-than-



"Hold the lines. Gandalf will be back soon."



Cattle mutilations are on the up again.

acceptable quality of the in-engine cut-scenes.

VARIETY OF STRIFE

The variety between the four civilisations and the way they do battle is compensation enough for the lacklustre narrative. There are three resources in the game; water, metal and crystal, each race requiring just two. This in itself adds a dimension to the battles, for depending on the side you choose and the enemy you face, some areas of the map will be harshly contested, whilst others will not.

Additionally, each side harvests resources in different ways. The Aliens and LC are able to deploy gargantuan mining outposts, the USC use

more traditional harvesters and static refineries, whilst the ED favour a cunning hybrid of the two. Moreover, the ways in which bases are constructed are vastly different. Again the USC favour the base-building methods seen in C&C, with power structures having to be planted near buildings to keep them juiced. ED installations have to be linked with cylindrical connecting pipes, yet are able to erect strong defensive walls, while the Lunar Corp, on the other hand, have mobile buildings that extend upwards, guarded by power



MISSED OPPORTUNITY

BECAUSE EVERYBODY KNOWS THAT RUNNING TO THE FRONT LINE IS A THING OF THE PAST

The genius of *Total War's* mix of real-time battles and turn-based grand strategy has influenced a great many games in recent years, with *Risk*-style maps appearing in *Cossacks 2*, *Empire Earth II*, and even the ex-Westwood forged *The Lord Of The Rings: The Battle For Middle-earth*.

Earth 2160, however, sticks rigidly to a series of battles that do offer a choice in terms of which ones you attempt, but that feel a bit limited in comparison with the variety on offer elsewhere in the game. Given that it would have been the first sci-fi strategy game to go down such a route, and considering the relative ease with which such a feature could have been implemented, it's surprising that *Earth 2160* sticks so doggedly to it's hackneyed storyline. Had the developer seen sense to concentrate on expanding the war to take in entire planets, we could have been looking at a bona fide Classic.



A localised skirmish, yesterday.

"Each unit is dusted with sand, as if it's been in service for years"

fences. The mysterious aliens require no base at all. How you approach each base, whether building or destroying it, will be different in each case.

CUT OUT AND KEEP

Even better, all of the four races look distinct and enduringly stylish. This is one good-looking game throughout, even if you happen to have a less than desirable PC. Whereas maps in 3D strategy games have previously looked crudely stitched together, here the landscape is seamless. Moreover the textures are scaleable. Zoom the camera out and it all looks pretty darned spiffy and you get a good perspective on the battle – zoom in and intricate details become obvious, with each unit lovingly crafted.

Earth 2150 had an intrinsically cardboard feel to the graphics, as if the units had been cut out from the

back of a cereal packet, and could disintegrate at the first whiff of moisture. Not so here. Each unit has real weight to it, and is dusted with sand as if it's been in service for years. Colours have real depth to them, environmental effects and shadows add to the vibrancy. Explosions are big and bold. And because the game takes you to moons and planets away from Mars, you aren't forced to trudge wearily through endless miles of red desert either.

LEAD FROM THE FRONT

Despite the hundreds of permutations of units that can be conscripted, having to endlessly mine in order to replenish lost units can quickly become a bit of a chore. For obvious reasons it pays to keep your units alive – more so now that combat experience can be a decisive resource in and of itself.

Units that manage to pull off successive kills become increasingly lethal, with the longest-serving units able to dish out and soak up twice as



A lovely day for a quiet picnic on the beach.

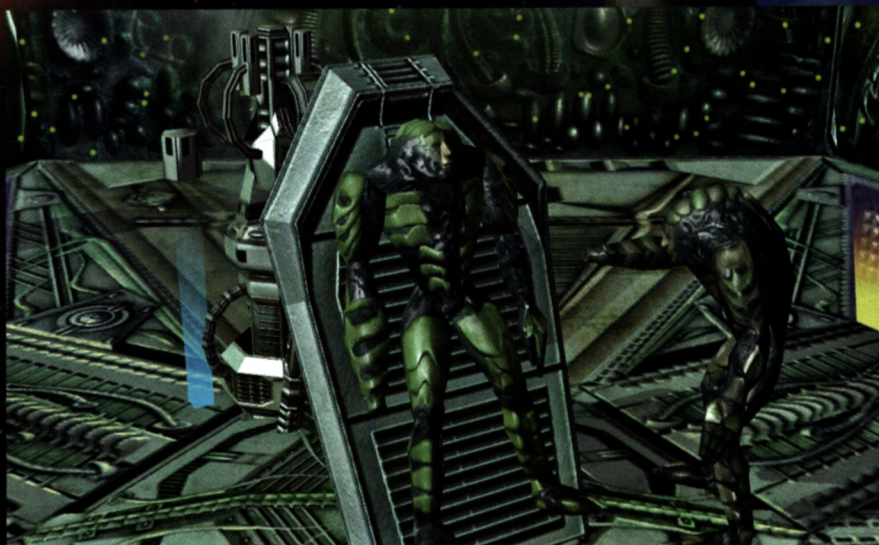


The Man United fans make a spirited protest.

much punishment as a fresh recruit. Experience carries over between missions as well, so while you can happily send your units into certain death situations, as the campaign nears conclusion, you'll wish you hadn't been so hasty in sending your young men/women/robots/alien things to their doom.

Unsurprisingly, given the developer's obvious intent in

borrowing almost every RTS innovation of the past decade, *Earth 2160* also features a number of hero characters and 'virtual agents', the latter being mercenary special units that become temporarily available from time to time. Heroes on the other hand are a central focus of your campaign, as they not only ground the story, but must survive in order to secure victory. Unlike the



"And you'll find the mattress is fully orthopaedic for total back support."

useless Kings that feature in the likes of *Age Of Empires* however, heroes in *Earth 2160* are required to wade into the thick of the action, able to pick up and use weapons and items that may be left lying around. They too gain in experience, which is not inconsiderable since these guys are pretty lethal to begin with.

MORE IS MORE

OK, I'll be honest with you. I've never been a fan of the *Earth* games until now. I've always found them to be too... for want of a better term, German. (Yes, I know the developer is Polish, but the game is ostensibly of Teutonic origin.) Not that I've anything against Germans, you understand. I lived there for a while in my youth, I have German blood in my veins and it's a country that produces some fine beers - far better than any English concoction (and don't forget *Kraftwerk - Ed*). But it's been a trait of games born with the German market in mind that they've been loaded with tons of features, the more the merrier, often to the detriment of the actual gameplay.

Thankfully, I can report that while *Earth 2160* continues in much the same manner, and can be overwhelming for some players (it has a mind-boggling, almost stupid number of keyboard shortcuts, for example), the series has acquired what might be called the X-factor - even when you're facing defeat, a game can still be captivating. The graphics certainly go some way to adding to the tension and atmosphere, for simply zooming around watching the battles has its own rewards.



We always thought future wars would be unmanned.

Away from such shallow concerns, however, *Earth 2160* has a great deal of depth to it that is sure to take countless weeks to uncover.

YOU'VE GOT TO WORK

There are concerns, of course. The ability to see through the eyes of your units in first-person is a pointless and diverting feature - although thankfully it's not a requisite to victory. Graphically the game is rich with detail, but the animation isn't nearly as frenetic as, say, *Dawn Of War*. The AI is solid if unspectacular - each side does play to its strengths and will advance and retreat in a consistent manner, but when handed an advantage, enemy forces will rarely take it.

Bizarrely, the greatest advantage of the game is also its greatest failing; that in offering so much choice and variety, it lacks the frenzied accessibility of the games it so obviously tries to build upon. If you're not prepared to put in

the effort, *Earth 2160's* depth will either pass you by or utterly drown any enthusiasm. As *Total Annihilation* did all those years ago, *Earth 2160* takes real-time strategy gaming to an extreme that is in turn both exhilarating and overpowering. You have been warned. And if that hasn't put you off, then I'm sure you'll lap it up. [A]

FIRST PERSON TO FIGHT



Arnie's looking a bit peaky these days.

LET ME LOOK UPON YOU WITH MY OWN EYES

The Caps Lock key is not one you will use very often (unless you bind it to quick-save your game). By default it changes the view from one that enables you to get an overview of the terrain, to one that allows you to see through the eyes of the currently selected unit. Indeed, while it's initially entertaining to see your soldiers fight toe-to-toe, it serves little purpose. Veterans who remember *Battlezone* (no, not the arcade game) will remember that the first-person perspective was an integral part of the game, as by controlling your units you had a profound effect on their abilities. Here it is simply a gimmick, and even though you can elect to have the view relegated to a picture-in-picture window, it still serves little purpose beyond making screenshots look good.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Extensive research and building options
- ✓ Four distinct races
- ✓ Stylish and detailed graphics
- ✓ Troops and heroes gain experience that can be carried over
- ✗ Overwhelming build options
- ✗ Trite story
- ✗ Pointless FPS view

83

For real real-time strategy gamers only



Those Aussies sure can dance.

CRICKET 2005

■ £29.99 | Pub: EA Sports | Dev: EA Canada/HB Studios
ETA: Out Now | www.ea.com

REQUIRES PIII 700, 256MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card DESIRES PIII 1GHz, 512 MB RAM and a 128MB 3D card

The age of umpires continues. Steve Hill bats on

SPORT! Along with the behemoth that is *FIFA* and a slew of unfathomable American sports titles, EA occasionally finds time to squeeze the more genteel pursuit of cricket into its burgeoning roster. While lacking the razzmatazz of its stable-mates, *Cricket* does a reasonable job of recreating the old game and this year is no different. Literally.

In traditional fashion, it's a case of a quick wash and brush-up, with the developer resolutely refusing to fix what isn't broken, while updating it in terms of players and teams. The EA dollar speaks loud, and as such, the England team is fully licensed, featuring real player names as well as physical likenesses, with the cream of our cricketers faithfully recreated as

dead-eyed zombies. And if that's not enough, you can always stick yourself in the game using the ubiquitous Create-A-Player technology. Throw in 35 different stadiums and a laconic Richie Benaud commentary, and it's just like watching it on TV (without your specs on).

BATSMAN RETURNS

Obviously that's not enough to warrant spending 30 quid, as you can watch cricket on TV for free, generally while counting the days until the football season

starts. And if you were to play a test series or two, that day would soon come round. It's all very authentic having such an option, but is anyone really going to sit down and play out a five-day test? We would suggest not. Even the hints and tips section reminds you – twice – that 'patience is a virtue in test matches'.

Assuming you don't have such

monk-like virtues, limited overs games are available, including the all-new Twenty20 tournament. Even so, you're always tempted to lash wildly at every ball, which will rapidly see you trudging back to the pavilion to polish off the cucumber sandwiches. Erring towards the simulation side of things, you really have to do things properly, content to play defensive shots while looking for the occasional opening. If anything, the batting is too hard, with pinpoint timing required

somewhat more accessible, with an array of shots offered on-screen and a moveable cursor dictating where the ball will pitch, although perversely this is often obscured by the umpire's hat. And the most boring part of cricket, fielding, is largely automated, with an option to hurl the ball straight at your choice of stumps.

While it plays a solid game of cricket, the overly technical approach is off-putting and a lot of practice in the nets is required to become competent. Probably more suited to multiplayer, unfortunately this will involve human contact as there's no online mode. Or you could just get yourself out in the sun... **PCZ**



Looks like he's buggered that up.



"Calm down dear. It's only a computer game..."



Sure-fire yorker that. Probably.



Whatever he's doing with his back foot looks painful.

INPERSPECTIVE

BRIAN LARA INTERNATIONAL CRICKET 2005

Reviewed Issue 158, Score 68%
A slightly more accessible approach to the sport.

CRICKET 2002

Reviewed Issue 119, Score 70%
2002's model, ideal for the financially cautious.

PCZONE VERDICT

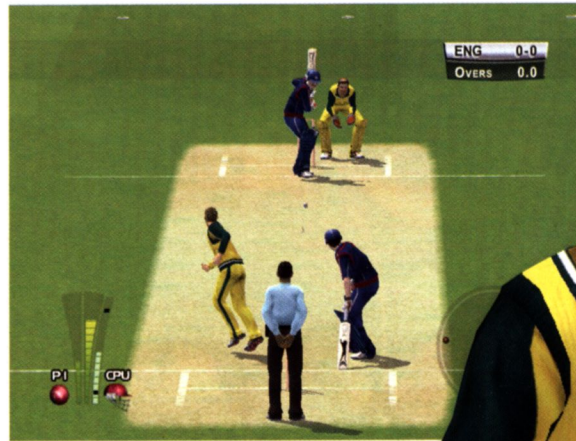
- ✓ Reasonable likenesses
- ✓ Authentic approach
- ✗ Batting is too hard
- ✗ No online mode

62

Solid if unspectacular



"Now what have I told you? The tank tops are compulsory..."



It's anybody's game.



BRIAN LARA INTERNATIONAL CRICKET 2005

■ £29.99 | Pub: Codemasters | Dev: Codemasters | ETA: Out Now
www.codemasters.com

REQUIRES PIII 1GHz, 256MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card DESIRES P4 2GHz, 512MB RAM and a 128MB 3D card

Lara's back. Steve Hill is the man at the crease

AS IF TO rub in the fact that the football season is in hiatus, cricket has fought back with something of a double whammy. Joining EA's functionally named perennial, *Cricket 2005*, the resurrected *Brian Lara* game harks back to an earlier age. It's now ten years since the original *Lara* (not that Lara) game appeared, and 12 years since the batsman's epochal 501 innings. Brian may be past his best now, but if nothing else, the money he'll get for this should help boost his retirement fund.

However, it would appear that the bulk of the licensing kitty went on securing the veteran's name, as the rest of the game has something of a cheap and cheerful look to it, particularly in comparison to EA's customarily authentic approach. Visually, it's a more cartoony affair, and as far as player likeness go, suffice to say England captain Michael

Vaughan is more Yorkshire Ripper than Yorkshire spinner. That said, it's actually one 'M Vornor' who leads out our boys, legalities precluding the use of real names (although of course you can change them yourself).

LONDON CALLING

Likewise, you're reduced to playing at North London or South London as opposed to Lords and The Oval. In that sense at least, *Brian Lara* versus *Cricket 2005* mirrors *Pro Evolution Soccer* versus *FIFA*, with EA's financial might predictably winning the licensing battle.

This aside, it's a pleasingly playable affair, at least on the easier Slog mode or Village setting, with greater precision needed for County and Test.

Batting is mainly a pleasure, and cracking a six into the crowd is a possibility for all but the most cack-handed buffoon. As for bowling, there aren't as many options as in *Cricket 2005* and it's largely a case of varying the attack and hoping for the best. The fielding is marginally interactive, with a meter appearing above the fielder's head and an accurate button press resulting in an accurate throw.

ON THE MIC

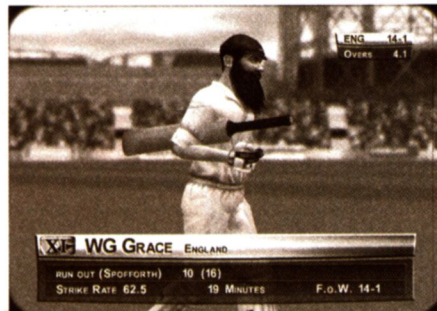
It may not be a deal-breaker, but *Brian Lara International Cricket 2005* features not only a ridiculously long name, but also the biggest commentary team ever to appear in any cricket game. Step up to the mic David Gower, Tony Greig, Jonathan



"Ooh, I hate that duck..."

Agnew, Ian Bishop and Bill Lawry. Plus, apart from the usual test and one-day options, classic matches including the original Ashes and Bodyline series are playable in grainy black and white, although we should point out that when aiming to recreate the 1880s, having advertising hoardings with website addresses on them somewhat undermines the effect.

Overall, while there's not much between the two, *Lara* is a marginally quicker, more dynamic and ultimately more accessible affair than *Cricket 2005*, which is more suited to hardcore cricket fans. Forget the whole thing and just watch The Ashes with a cold beer. [4.5]



He's gotta be hot in that beard.



How, as they say, is that?

INPERSPECTIVE

CRICKET 2005

Reviewed Issue 158, Score 62%
 Real names and likeness, but at a slightly steadier pace.

CRICKET 2002

Reviewed Issue 119, Score 70%
 See above, but probably available for less money.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Pick up and play
- ✓ Swift pace
- ✓ Classic matches
- ✗ A bit cartoony
- ✗ No real names or likenesses
- ✗ No online mode

68

A reasonable all-rounder



'You suck, I'll blow.'

WORMS 4: MAYHEM

■ Price: £19.99 | Pub: Codemasters | Dev: Team 17 | ETA: Out Now | www.wormsmayhem.com

REQUIRES PIII 1GHz, 256MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card

DESIRES P4 2GHz, 512MB RAM, 128MB 3D card and an Internet connection

Slippery by nature, Richie Shoemaker was the obvious choice for this review...

WHILE THE last ten years have seen little in the way of innovation when it comes to *Worms*' trademark turn-based battling, the Amiga original was so spot-on that we're more than happy that the concept has remained largely unchanged in spite of the recent move to 3D.

Of course, many would have you believe otherwise; that by viewing the insect carnage from all angles, the purity of the original game has been leached away. These people may have had a case when *Worms 3D* wriggled onto the scene back in

2003, seeing as it lacked the ease of play of traditional 2D efforts thanks to a slower pace and over-complicated interface. However, in *Worms 4* we're happy to report that Team 17 has pretty much succeeded in modernising the decade-old series. Unlike last year's fun-but-flawed *Forts* spin-off, the developer has gone back to basics: fixing, tweaking and stuffing in even more over-the-top weapons.

SLIPPERY FELLAS

We'll not waste precious column inches explaining the basics. If you've never experienced *Worms* before, you really have no cause to call yourself a gamer, suffice to say that the cycle of move-shoot-snigger rotates at such a pace that it

seems wholly unjust to call it 'turn-based'. Our invertebrate heroes slink across the landscape at an agreeable rate, no longer snagging on polygon outcrops. Plus, because there's a much-improved camera that tracks shells and grenades as they arc across the maps, more time is spent appreciating the cartoon carnage and guffawing at yours and others' ineptitude.

As ever, the game is stuffed with toys and customisable options, from equipping your team with various items of facial furniture and imbuing them with high-pitched voices, to creating your own multiplayer templates and even creating new super-weapons – although sadly this feature simply involves tweaking a few settings on a multi-purpose rocket-launcher.

Thankfully there are a few all-new weapons, all of which are instant *Worms* classics, from a sentry gun, a sniper rifle and, my personal favourite, the concrete donkey, which when released can drop through a multi-storey building, often leaving entire teams of stunned annelids blinking at each other across a puddle of water.

NINJA WHINGE

In truth, while *Worms 4* lives up to its *Mayhem* moniker rather well, it isn't yet the ultimate 3D version. For a start the fine art of ninja roping is an utter bastard to master – I'm sure the complexities of having to play in 3D are a contributing factor. Some sort of persistent ranking would also have been a welcome feature.

Generally though, *Worms 4: Mayhem* is fantastic fun, as *Worms* has always been (*Blast* and *Forts* excluded). Some may claim that it's a one-gag game worn thin, but to others like me, *Worms* is something that will always manage to raise a smile.

To say it's better or worse than versions of old is to miss the point. *Worms 4: Mayhem* is different in so many ways – the emphasis is now firmly on quickly collecting bigger weapons rather than hiding in tunnels. We may have several years before 3D *Worms* has exhausted all avenues, but right now, *Worms 4* is as refreshing and distinct as you could hope for. **[A-]**



Disneyland Paris has taken a minor battering.



INPERSPECTIVE

WORMS FORTS: UNDER SIEGE

Reviewed Issue 150, Score 68%

With huge weapons atop buildings you could construct yourself, we all hoped this would be the ultimate *Worms* battle. Sadly you couldn't threaten the landscape beyond scarring it, the maps were too big and the worms themselves just got in the way.

WORMS 3D

Reviewed Issue 136, Score 80%

It lagged slightly behind the classic 2D *Worms* in terms of gameplay, but the move to 3D was long overdue and largely well implemented. *Mayhem* may not look too different, but it's a far more polished game.



Scotland gets battered – Euro 96 all over again. We have lift off.



PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ *Worms 3D* – fixed
- ✓ Excellent new weapons
- ✓ As funny as it ever was
- ✗ Still not as intense as 2D *Worms*
- ✗ Nothing new
- ✗ 3D roping is a bitch

80

Worms of mass destruction



KOMPLETT.co.uk

- SAVE TIME AND MONEY

PC Builder



The PC Builder is a wonderful new system that allows you to choose components to your specification and request us to build it for you. We will fully build the PC and deliver it to your door ready to be unpacked and used.

Each PC has 3 years warranty and is tested before it is shipped.



Why Komplett?

- Ship from our own warehouse
- Real-time stock information
- Telephone service
- Online RMA system
- Excellent product information



For shipment to Ireland directly from Komplett, please visit our website www.komplett.ie. This website is solely for Eire and is designed with you in mind.



LG

LG 30" L3020T LCD-TV 16:9

- ▶ 1280x768 max resolution
- ▶ DVI, VGA (HD-15)
- ▶ 25ms response time

£777
inc. VAT

SKU: 310157



NEC

NEC ND-6500

- ▶ Dual slimline
- ▶ write at 8x speed DVD-R and DVD+R
- ▶ 2MB buffer size

£54
inc. VAT

SKU: 309824



EPSON

Epson Projector EMP TW10H

- ▶ 1000 ansi lumens
- ▶ 854x480 max resolution
- ▶ 700:1 contrast ratio

£533
inc. VAT

SKU: 300941



CREATIVE

Creative Zen Micro 5GB

- ▶ WAV, WMA, MP3, ADPCM, WMA DRM
- ▶ 108g weight
- ▶ 10h voice recording

£130
inc. VAT

SKU: 304315

Contact us



sales@komplett.co.uk



0870 8727 107



www.komplett.co.uk



SAPPHIRE

£49
inc. VAT

Sapphire Theatrix Theatre 550 PRO

- ▶ PCI TV-Tuner w/RC
- ▶ NTSC, PAL, video in
- ▶ 16MB video memory

SKU: 306371



CNet

£12
inc. VAT

Cnet Bluetooth Dongle

- ▶ 100m max range
- ▶ 128-bit encryption
- ▶ 723Kbps transfer rate

SKU: 306123



BENQ

£157
inc. VAT

BenQ 17" LCD FP71E+ 8ms

- ▶ 1280x1024 max resolution
- ▶ 500:1 contrast ratio
- ▶ Speakers integrated

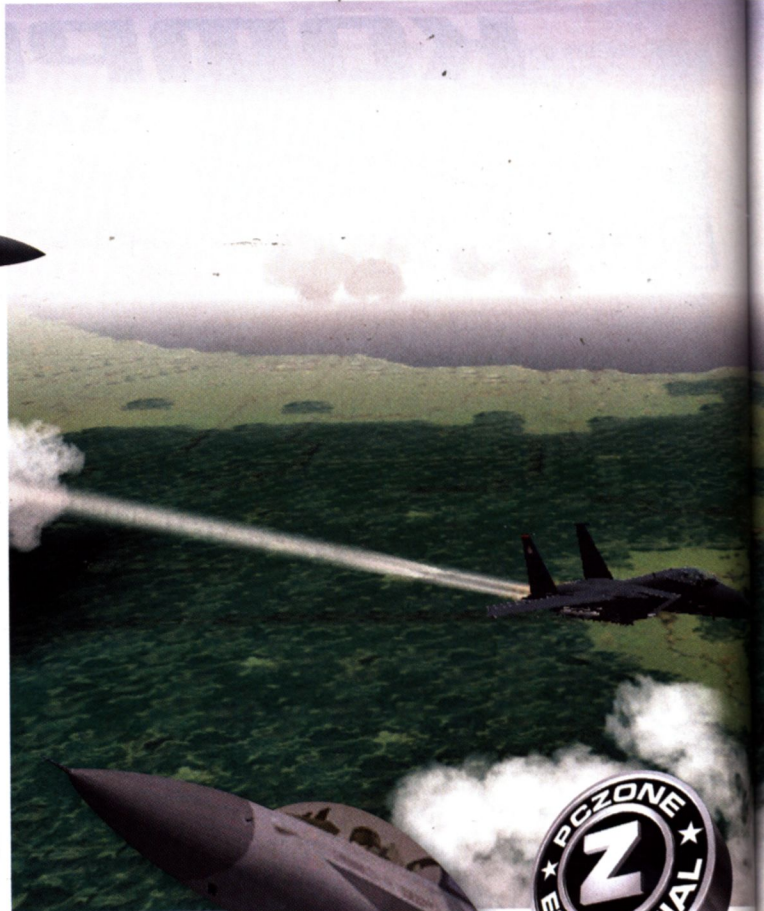
SKU: 306563

Weekly Offers

Every week we present four hot items at extremely low prices in addition to information on the newest services we have to offer. You can receive this newsletter for free by signing up on our website www.komplett.co.uk through the Account section!



Get ready to flip the bird.



FALCON 4.0: ALLIED FORCE

■ £29.99 | Pub: Graphsim Entertainment | Dev: Lead Pursuit | ETA: July 28
www.lead-pursuit.com

REQUIRES P4 1.5GHz, 512MB RAM, 64MB 3D card and a joystick DESIRES P4 2.4GHz, 1GB RAM, 128MB 3D card and a flight yoke

Flying hiiiiigh, high, he's a bird in the sky. Or rather, a big bloke actually. Martin Korda takes to the skies in an all-new version of a golden oldie...

HERE'S A question for you. How do you fully review a game with an 800-page manual in two pages? You see, *Allied Force* – the revamped, updated and hugely improved new version of 1998's *Falcon 4* (issue 75, 95%) – isn't so much

a game as a stringent, no frills recreation of what it's actually like to fly an F-16.

It's a simulation so utterly bent on capturing the realism of real-life, modern-day dog-fighting that it negates presentation, glitz and Hollywood clichés, preferring instead to concentrate on every switch, lever, button and protocol of flying these steel birds, right from the moment you enter your aircraft till the second you land.

PASSAGE OF TIME

I'll warn you now, you might despise this game. You might abhor it with every bone in your body for its clinical approach to gaming and its utter disregard for anyone without a degree in avionics and a Masters in patience and perseverance. But

then again, you might also love it for precisely these reasons.

Much has changed since 1998. The crippling bug problems have been hugely reduced (though not totally

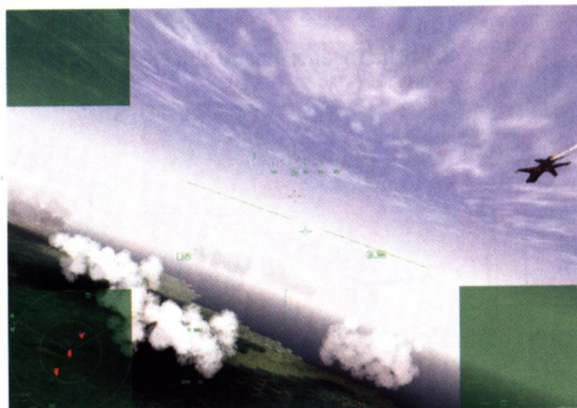
eradicated), while a complete graphical overhaul has meant that *Allied Force* now looks more 2002 than 1998. Lighting, shading and fogging effects have been infinitely improved,

with clouds now boasting genuine depth and reflections that imbue the world with a much greater sense of realism.

AHOY THERE!

However, these impressive new effects are sparingly employed, resulting in the visuals looking patchier than a pirate captain's convention. For every new sparkle that lights up the game, there's an unsightly matt-finish eyesore that dulls it. Missiles fizz out from beneath your wings with an anticlimactic whoosh, enemy planes flash by in a low-res haze, while weapon effects are more often tedious than thunderous.

Sound is also a problem. Poor voice-acting and bad delivery cripple the game's otherwise astounding sense of



I've got you now!

INPERSPECTIVE

MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2004: A CENTURY OF FLIGHT

Reviewed Issue 133, Score 89%
If hardcore flying is your thing but shooting down other planes isn't, then look no further than this.

BATTLEFIELD 2

Reviewed Issue 157, Score 94%
If you want the chance to pilot easy-to-fly planes (and a host of other vehicles) in intense war zones and live the *Top Gun* dream, then *Battlefield 2* is the one for you.



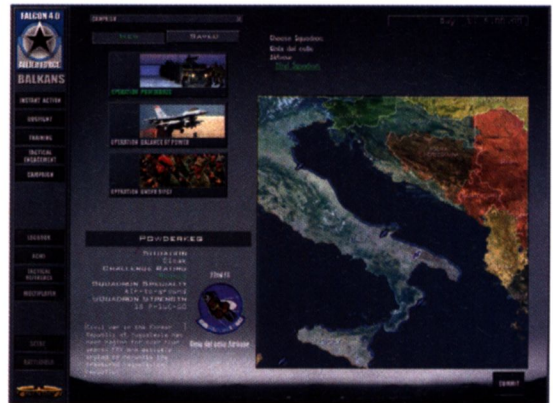
DEAD DYNAMIC

WHEN EVERY ENEMY DEATH ACTUALLY MAKES A DIFFERENCE

One of *Allied Force's* most impressive features is its dynamic campaign structure. Instead of being stuck with pre-defined missions every time you play, you find yourself flying over an ever-evolving battlefield, where every bomb you drop, every tank you destroy and every plane you blow out of the sky goes towards determining not only the direction, but ultimately the outcome of the war, too.

The two campaigns (The Balkans and Korea) both offer plenty of variety and are each divided into three ever-harder chapters. As you fly over the battlefields, you'll really see just how impressive these campaigns are.

In every direction, friendly and enemy forces embark on their own missions, and more often than not you find yourself stumbling across isolated tank columns or sitting duck AA guns, ripe for the picking. Yup, flight sim campaigns really don't get a whole lot better than this.



Both of the campaigns are superbly dynamic.



You want stats? You got 'em.



I swear there's a McDonald's drive-through here somewhere...



Where do you think you're going?

This is where *Allied Force's* true excellence begins to rear itself from the game's hit-and-miss presentation, and where you suddenly realise that this is a game, sorry, simulation, of such intelligence, such utter authenticity and attention to detail that few, if any other flight sims can match its passion for avionic and tactical perfection.

Flying your F-16 further reinforces this fact. With scalable realism levels to help accommodate newcomers (be warned though, even at 10 per cent realism it's still fiendishly hard), these in-plane antics are so lovingly recreated that you can flip every switch, tweak every setting and utterly immerse yourself in your plane's controls until they almost become an extension of yourself. And if you're going to survive, they have to be.

The game's enemy plane AI is also impressive. On higher settings, computer-controlled

pilots paint pictures in the sky with their tailpipe emissions as they weave in search of an opening, their long-distance locked-on missiles joining the dots of the tracer fire spitting out of their machine guns as they close in for the kill.

The majority of encounters are decided at a distance though, and with every piece of

computerised technology you can imagine at your fingertips, you soon discover that mastering the art of aerial jousting is far more involved than simply meandering through the clouds and diving to the deck, as you seek to gain the upper hand against *Allied Force's* genuinely lifelike foes.

PLANE AND SIMPLE

If you can't find the time to study and learn from the gigantic PDF manual, there is a more slimline 110-page version in the box itself. However, if you do dedicate yourself to learning how an F-16 really flies, how it really works, what you can and

cannot do with it and forge a genuine love and understanding of the art of modern day aerial combat, then you'll find that *Falcon 4.0: Allied Force* is a work of genuine excellence and, in its own special way, highly entertaining.

But if you're looking for a combat flight experience of scintillating close-quarter action between mirror-shade wearing stereotypes, replete with high production values and a sheen you could shave in, I strongly recommend you go and hire *Top Gun* instead and never let this game even enter your PC's radar. Ever! It really is that cut and dried. **PCZ**



With an 800-page manual, you have a lot to learn about F16s.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Massively hardcore
- ✓ Two excellent dynamic campaigns
- ✓ Challenging enemy AI
- ✗ Massively hardcore
- ✗ Visually and aurally weak
- ✗ Still a fair few bugs

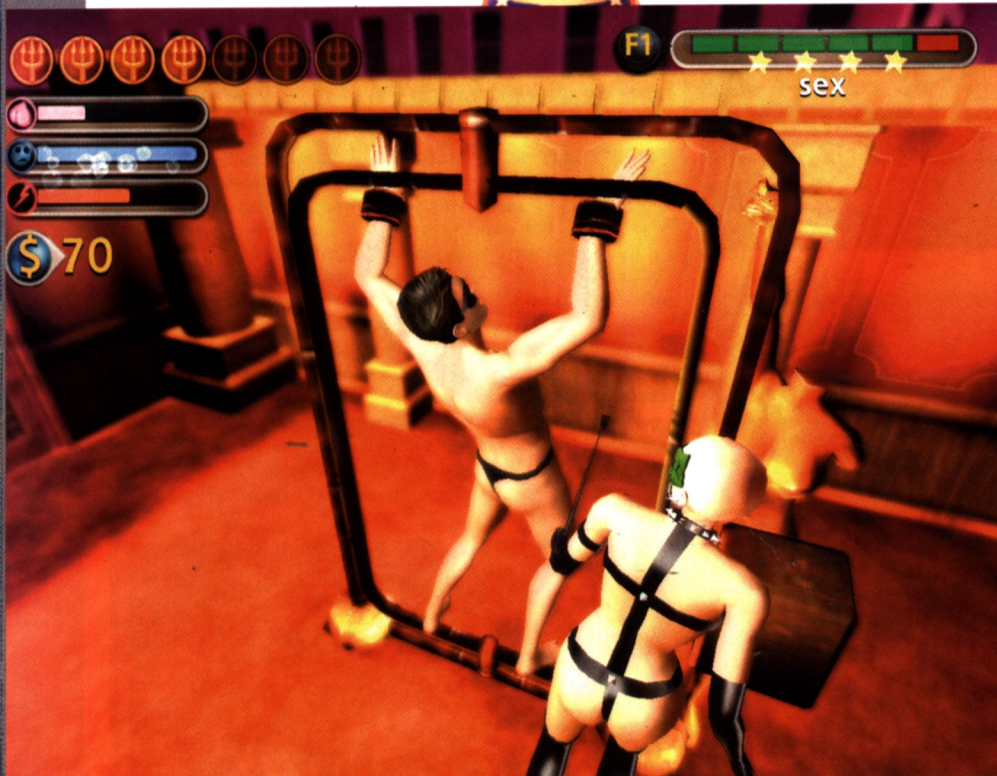
82

Challenging, but showing its age

immersion, while the beeps and alarms that signal danger are more irksome than an alarm clock trill on a Sunday morning. The worst aural offender though is your plane's machine gun, which sounds like someone farting through a sock rather than state-of-the-art weaponry.

THE BEAUTY WITHIN

But don't let the visual and aural shortcomings fool you into thinking this is an archaic flyer that's desperately staging a futile mid-life crisis comeback. *Allied Force* simply spills over with new and improved features, such as its all-new, magnificently dynamic Balkan campaign, which complements the existing, though now also revamped Korean one (see 'Dead Dynamic', above).



Which one's shampoo, which one's conditioner?



Clearly not the only gays in the village.

Novel use for an Ikea bed frame if ever we saw one.

7 SINS

Price: £29.99 | Pub: Digital Jesters | Dev: Monte Cristo | ETA: Out Now | www.7sins-game.com

REQUIRES: PIII 1GHz, 128MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card DESIRES: P4 1.5GHz, 256RAM and a 64MB 3D card

Down and dirty in the pursuit of power. Paul Presley adores alliteration

WOMEN ARE little more than male porno fantasy sex obsessives, all large boobs and simple of mind, there to be used and abused; you're rewarded for being as morally dubious as possible and revelling deeply in every one of man's basest instincts; and everything and everyone is fair game in the pursuit of power, fame and fortune in Apple City. Yes, *7 Sins* is without doubt the most misogynistic game I've ever played. But it's not all good news. There are some problems with it too, stemming mainly from a technical standpoint.

INPERSPECTIVE

PLAYBOY: THE MANSION

Reviewed Issue 153, Score 62%

Focusing mainly on the lust side of things, there's more of an overall game here and certainly more nudity. Not quite as balls-out funny though.

VIRTUALLY JENNA

Reviewed Issue 156, Score 37%

Rude, crude and does exactly what it says on the tin. Porn in game form (if you can call it a game). Combine it with *7 Sins* and you may have something though...

You see, it's hardly pushing game programming to the limits and as ports from console go, it's quite lazy (references to left analogue sticks and PS2 controller buttons, for instance). Plus, as far as providing a challenge, once you've figured out the basic pattern for NPC manipulation, there's little to stop you making progress.

GET IT IN

But of course, we all know that *7 Sins* isn't going to be criticised and lambasted by the majority of the gaming media for its technical prowess. Nope, if ever there was a game designed to bring forth the two-faced puritan instincts of the games press, it's this one.

The problem for most, obviously, is with the sexual content of the game. There's bags of it, in all manner of permutations (the range of options open to you at the *Eyes Wide Shut*-style masked S&M/sex club are quite astonishing), although with very little actually on show. No nudity is the order of the day and this, perhaps, is *7 Sins* greatest, ahem, sin. That it doesn't have the courage of its convictions and go far enough. Will mentioned while watching me play that had the developer combined the game side of this with the sex side of *Virtually Jenna* (the boy's obsessed), we

might have something. Exactly what isn't clear, but I agree...

You'll probably read a lot of foaming at the mouth sub-*Daily Mail* evangelising elsewhere about how this is puerile, worthless and morally unredeeming stuff, but to be honest people are just missing the point. That's exactly what it's supposed to be.

This is *Eurotrash* in gaming form and as much as you might want to hide it, you're lying if you tell me that you've never enjoyed an episode or two of saucy Euro-based titillation. Proof? There weren't as many crowds gathered around Will's desk when he played *Boiling Point*.

TAKE IT OUT

Bottom line is that we laughed while playing *7 Sins*. Quite a bit. It's far funnier (and ruder) than *Leisure Suit Larry* and the mini-games at least remain true to their subject matter. Rather than take an abstract view of what a mini-game should be as most titles do, *7 Sins* says, right you want to look up that woman's skirt? BAM! Mini-game. Keep your aim up her

skirt for 30 seconds. Wanna piss on that plant? BAM! Mini-game. Piss on the bugs crawling on that plant.

We can't wholeheartedly recommend *7 Sins* as a total gaming experience, especially at the princely sum of 30 quid. It's way too easy, the novelty does wear off after a while and, well, it's not exactly *Half-Life 2* or anything. But it amuses. It shouldn't, but it does. And it honestly isn't anywhere near as bad as some might tell you. They're just too timid to admit it. [C]

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Actually quite funny
- ✓ Remains true to itself
- ✓ Not particularly PC (in either sense)
- ✗ Doesn't quite go all the way
- ✗ Ultimately too simple
- ✗ You may be offended

60

A saucy little number



Further evidence that
squirrels should not be
allowed to have guns.



Conker
R.I.P. & RELOADED

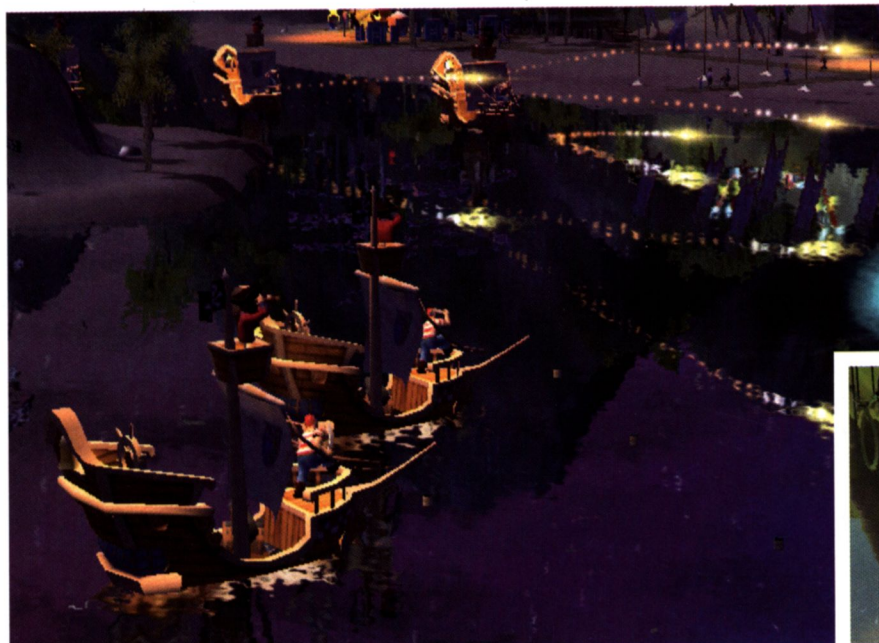


Shoot Tediz in your own backyard or on Xbox Live.™



it's good to play together

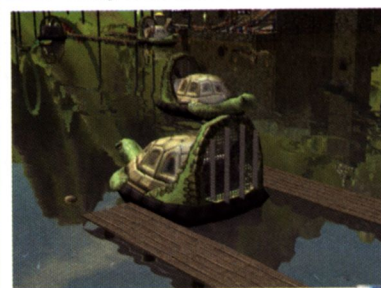
Microsoft, the Xbox logo, Xbox, the Xbox logo, Xbox Live and the Xbox Live logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries. Rare Limited is a subsidiary of Microsoft Corporation.



The pyrotechnic displays can look pretty spectacular.



"Ahoj there me hearties!"



One for the grannies.



ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3: SOAKED!

■ £19.99 | Pub: Atari | Dev: Frontier | ETA: Out Now | www.rollercoastertycoon.com

REQUIRES PIII 1GHz, 256MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card with T&L. DESIRES P4 2GHz, 512MB RAM and a 128MB 3D card with T&L

FULL VERSION OF
ROLLERCOASTER
TYCOON 3 REQUIRED

Michael Filby finds out if this chlorinated expansion pack is wet and wild or a damp squib...

INPERSPECTIVE

SIMCITY 4

Reviewed Issue 74, Score 92%

The latest in the granddaddy of design 'em ups maybe getting on a bit, but it's ageing gracefully. Build up your city, then destroy it with Godzilla – you know it makes sense.

THEME PARK

Reviewed Issue 17, Score 93%

The original and the best – you're more likely to encounter the inferior update *Theme Park World* in the bargain bins, but that wasn't a patch on this slice of PC gaming history.

THEME PARKS

are one of man's greatest inventions. Where else can you go to be scared shitless, made to feel sick, eat crap food, queue for hours and watch fat people trying to squeeze safety harnesses around their guts? OK, perhaps that doesn't quite capture the best points of the world's finest amusement parks, but there's something about those vast, self-contained fantasy lands that keeps us shelling out year after year.

However, the major attraction of most rollercoaster rides is that feeling you get in the base of your balls as you go into freefall

– something which no game we've ever played has yet been able to recreate. So it's surprising that theme park management sims are as successful as they are.

Bullfrog's *Theme Park* was the first truly successful departure from the *SimCity* school of management. The *RollerCoaster Tycoon* series has long since picked up the ball, offering a far more comprehensive approach to the finer points of designing and running your own world of fun, and the latest instalment (reviewed in issue 149) managed to bring the franchise up to date

fairly competently. *Soaked!* is the first in what will presumably be a series of expansion packs for last year's *RollerCoaster Tycoon 3*, and offers plenty for fans of the original to enjoy. Integrating seamlessly into *RollerCoaster Tycoon 3*'s interface, *Soaked!*'s main selling point is the ability to build water complexes and rides.

SOGGY BISCUIT

The pools have to be built in their own area and accessed through changing rooms, where you can sting your park visitors, or 'peeps' as they're known, for an entry fee. Laying the pools

down is a simple drag-and-drop affair, although this becomes more complicated if you choose to build multi-layered pools complete with adjoining stairways. You can even interact with your swimming peeps by swirling the mouse pointer around the pool to make a whirlpool. The option to design your own water slide is also present, the interface for which is similar to that used for rollercoaster design – in other words, highly customisable but bloody fiddly. Thankfully, there are a few pre-designed flumes on hand if you really can't be bothered to make your own.

The water theme doesn't end there though, as a new range of rides and attractions that can be built away from the pool complexes are also included. If there's a suitably sized body of water lying around unused, you can plonk a whale or dolphin show in it and pay them in fish. You can also set up jet-ski attractions, or slower boat trips for the lightweights.

The best new coaster on offer is the soaker coaster, which comes with water jets for the



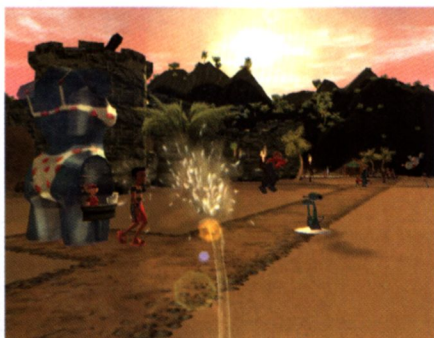
Nice speedos.



For what is a theme park without queues?



You have to appeal to all markets. Including the pink pound by the looks of it.



Go on, spray the bastards!



It's time to get to work...

peeps to fire at the unwitting crowds below them. You can also install water jets at the sides of the paths. If you take over one of these with the coaster-cam, you can actually spray your visiting peeps with the high powered jets, sending them physically flying off the footpaths, and probably cleaning the stench of BO from the less hygienic visitors who perhaps have also eaten one too many portions of curly cheesy fries. Curly cheesy fries... Hmmmm...

MIX IT UP

The fireworks control panel has also been given an overhaul, known as the MixMaster tool,

“You can spray your visiting peeps with jets and send them flying off the footpaths”

and as well as setting up fireworks displays using the video editing-style timeline, you can now also include water fountain and laser displays as part of your event. The sheer amount of tweaking you can do to these shows is bogging – the lasers alone can

have everything from their power to their angle adjusted, and you can even get them to display your pathetic efforts at drawing on the sides of nearby buildings.

DO IT YOURSELF

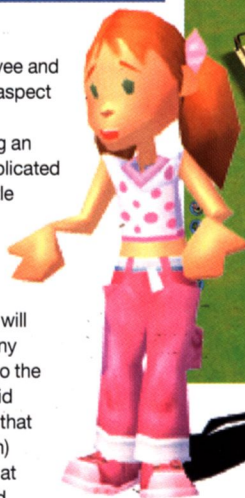
This complexity epitomises the game quite nicely – underneath the sharp and shiny graphics, there's an absolute wealth of options. Practically everything can be customised, but this is *RollerCoaster Tycoon's* weakness as much as its strength. Sometimes, you just want to sit back with the sandbox mode and knock up a park without a load of hassle,

like you did in *Theme Park*. The trouble is that you can't really do this here, as everything takes so much effort. It would have been nice to have been given the option to have the AI deal with the more finicky details, rather than having to micro-manage

every employee and every single aspect of every ride.

By making an already complicated game that little bit more complex, it's doubtful that *Soaked!* will be luring in any newcomers to the series. If David Braben (yes, that David Braben) and his guys at Frontier could knock out an expansion pack that offers a more simplified way to play *RollerCoaster Tycoon 3*, it would become more palatable to those who enjoyed the easy-going style of *Theme Park*.

Of course, there are some people in the world who absolutely love to have this kind of complete control, and if that's you, then you'll be rejoicing at the prospect of sitting through another multi-part tutorial and the new ability (returning from the first two instalments of the



series) to build tunnels for

your paths and coasters to run through. To be fair, this is the crowd that *Soaked!* is aimed at. In that respect, it does an excellent job of expanding *RCT3* – not only are there the nine new scenarios, but you can also use many of the new features in the existing scenarios, which is a nice touch. Whether it's worth the same money as a day out in a real theme park depends entirely on how much you enjoyed the original game. And whether you've got any friends... [E]

FREE WILLY



Russian whalers will go to any lengths these days...

MIXIN' IT TO THE MAX WITH THE MIXMASTER

As well as being able to create spectacular displays with fireworks, fountains and lasers that would rival Disney's efforts, the MixMaster can also be used to choreograph the dolphin and whale shows. Although the interface looks complicated, and in fact takes up several of the new tutorial sections in addition to those dedicated to the tool in the original, it's surprisingly easy to get to grips with. Using the menu of available tricks for your water-based mammals to perform, you simply drop them into a timeline like a video editing tool. Like a cheap hooker, the slippery beasts will then do exactly as they're told for a reasonable rate while smelling vaguely of fish.

If you're really dedicated (or anal enough), you can add in fireworks, fountains and lasers and fire them off in perfect timing with the creatures' crowd-pleasing tomfoolery. Then you can ramp up the ticket prices and watch the readies pour in...



Sit back and admire your handy work.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Engine still looks great
- ✓ Adds plenty to the original game
- ✓ Customisable in every conceivable way
- ✗ Interface is still a nightmare
- ✗ No option to reduce the excessive micro-management
- ✗ Camera controls could be refined

72

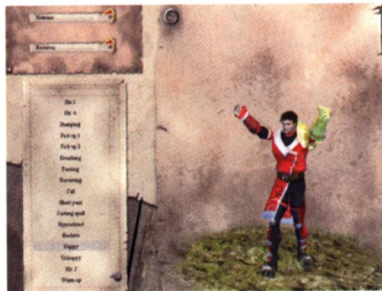
Swings and roundabouts



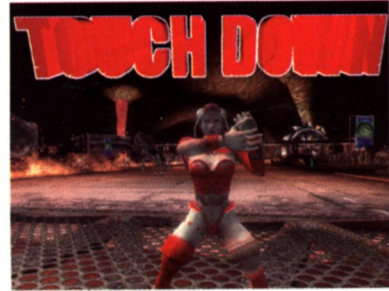
Squint, and it's almost World Of Warcraft. Kind of...



Picture-in-picture is another new but unnecessary addition.



"Goddamn pigskin!"



An entirely appropriate outfit, of course.



CHAOS LEAGUE: SUDDEN DEATH



Price: £19.99 | Pub: Digital Jesters | Dev: Cyanide Studios | ETA: Out Now | www.chaosleaguegame.com
 REQUIRES PIII 500MHz, 128MB RAM and a 32MB DX9 3D card DESIRES P4 1.3GHz, 256MB RAM and a 64MB DX9 3D card

Michael Filby runs the risk of sudden death whenever he hears the word 'work' mentioned

"NO RULES."

How many times have you heard that when faced with the latest future/fantasy sports sim? If there were really no rules, what is it that dictates that putting the ball into your opponent's goal awards you a point? Or that you can't stamp on your opponent's face when he's down? Eh? The National Institute of Pedantry demands that from now on, these games should be described as "containing less rules than one is accustomed to". Or something. Needless to say, *Chaos League: Sudden Death* is one such game.

Being an example of the oxymoron that is the standalone-

expansion pack, *Sudden Death* is actually more of an update of the original (issue 145, 78%) than anything especially new. Set in a fantasy world with the usual suspects of orcs and goblins, *Sudden Death* is a violent sports game which appears to be the lovechild of a Games Workshop board game by the name of *Blood Bowl*, and an ancient (if you can call 1993 ancient) DOS game by the name of *Brutal Sports Football*.

PIGGY IN THE MIDDLE

Two teams of nine face each other across a rectangular pitch and have to get possession of a pigskin and run it into their opponents' scoring area via any means necessary. This can include beating the living daylights out of your opponents, cooking their backsides with some magic or, well, just a mix of running and passing.

The uniqueness lies in the control system, which unexpectedly utilises an RTS control method. By making use of the pause button, you can select your players, group them and assign orders before letting play continue, or just let rip and

play in real-time. Strangely enough, it does actually work, and Cyanide has been kind enough to address a few of the niggling issues the *League* suffered on its first outing.

The amusing commentary has been beefed up so that it doesn't become repetitive quite so quickly, and the look of the arenas themselves has been improved too. Other new additions include a mini-window that pops up from time to time depicting events on the field, and the welcome, if somewhat inconsequential, option to give the referee a slap.

CHAOS ENGINE

However, while we're grateful for the new races and tweaked management options and so forth, some fairly major faults seem to have been completely overlooked. The engine itself still looks rougher than a transvestite's legs, particularly when you zoom in to watch a fight. Also, despite promises of improved AI,

we were hard pushed to feel the benefit of it. Round this all off with the still huge learning curve, and an extraordinarily fiddly interface, and this thin new coat of paint is quickly rubbed away.

When I first played *Chaos League* a year ago, the review

code came with a letter from the publisher admitting that the tutorial is 'a pain', so why has this not been dealt with in the new version either?

While *Chaos League: Sudden Death* is an intriguing take on fantasy tactical sports, the effort required to get going coupled with the repetitiveness which starts to creep in after a tournament or two will dissuade many. In all, it's a bit of a missed opportunity to polish up a flawed, but novel, piece of entertainment. **FM**

INPERSPECTIVE

WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR

Reviewed Issue 147, Score 81%
 If it's fantasy fighting you want, this is the RTS you're looking for. Blood, sweat and tears, but no sport.

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4

Reviewed Issue 149, Score 89%
 Sport, but no blood, sweat or tears. Unless you've got an aversion to the beautiful game (why?), in which case you should pick up a copy of the more seasonal *Virtua Tennis*.



PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Trying out tactics is addictive
- ✓ New management options add depth
- ✓ Commentary still amusing
- ✗ Still too many rough edges
- ✗ Unresponsive controls and confusing interface
- ✗ Steep learning curve will put many people off

65

A wasted opportunity

Discover Dark Secrets.



TOUCH ME!

OUT 24TH JUNE

The key to the mystery lies on a deserted island. Help Ashley piece together the shards of her memories to find out the tragic truth about her past. You'll use the stylus and microphone in totally new ways to uncover hidden messages, solve puzzles and reveal the sinister secret that blood Edward Island is finally ready to tell...

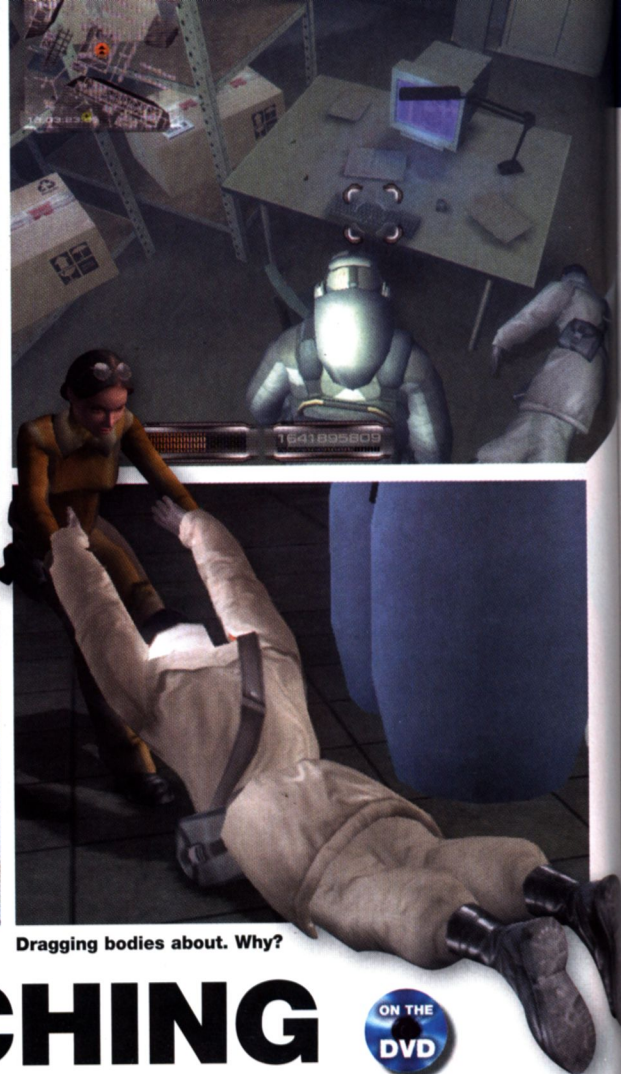
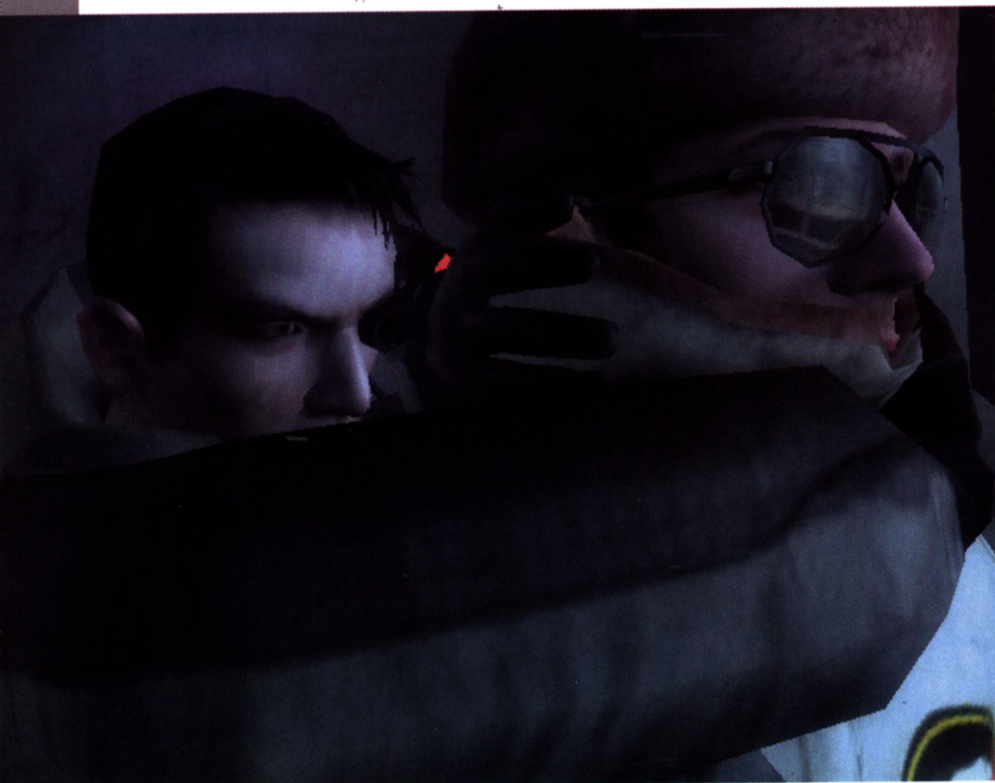
WWW.NINTENDO.CO.UK

ANOTHER CODE
TWO MEMORIES



ANOTHER CODE: © 2005 Nintendo/CING. All Rights Reserved. Game Scenario, Music and Program reserved by NINTENDO and CING. TM, © and the Nintendo DS logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2005 Nintendo. Illustration: Gae Fyrdholm

NINTENDO DS™



It's something to do with the Russian Mafia and mad scientists - we didn't take much notice.

Dragging bodies about. Why?

AURORA WATCHING



■ £19.99 | Pub: Enlight Software | Dev: Metropolis Software
ETA: July 29 | www.aurora-game.com

REQUIRES PIII 800, 128MB RAM and a 16MB 3D card DESIRES P4 1.5GHz, 512MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card

The aurora that puts the bore back into borealis. Anthony Holden rouses himself from a coma, falls asleep again

PAINTED IN a washed-out palette of blues and greys, *Aurora Watching* desperately wants to be *Metal Gear Solid*. Unfortunately, setting its sights on a seven-year-old console game appears to have been a mite ambitious for this

title, a hopelessly mediocre stealth effort from Poland. Also known as *Gorky 02*, it's a sequel to last year's equally pedestrian *Gorky Zero: Beyond Honor*, completing a trilogy of sorts with the ancient *Odium*, a

strategy/RPG affair set in the same universe.

To be fair, it's not completely disastrous. The presentation is alright, the weapons and gadgets tolerable, the stealth kills at least partially satisfying. You also have the option of switching from third-person to a tactical overhead perspective, which takes a lot of the guesswork out of your sneakery. The problem is with the gameplay.

This, unfortunately, is as washed out as the colour scheme. It's like what an apprentice Sam Fisher might have learned on his first day at spy school. You can sneak, do knife/silenced weapon kills and use knockout gas, but beyond that it's just a really slow-moving third-person shooter (and I mean slow - in stealth mode you need a GPS tracker just to prove you're in motion).

OK, so you can drag bodies around as well, but the fact that you tend to kill everyone in your path makes this a tad redundant. Perhaps worse is the rambling, tedious level design, which has more padding than a jumbo futon. The second level alone has enough grey corridors to fill ten such games, and the number of computers that need hacking is nigh on comical.

Switching to a female character part way through the game does nothing to improve matters, aside from changing the view slightly. And seeing as you're never going to play the damn thing, I may as well tell you



Physics, collisions and ragdolls are a few years off the pace.

that *Aurora Watching* also drops the old DNA-manipulation/zombie mutant clanger - a kiss of death that we were willing to overlook in *Far Cry*, but never want to see in another videogame as long as we live.

Elsewhere, the AI is predictably primitive and inconsistent, with enemies failing to hear gun battles right outside their windows, yet spotting you with unerring ability at unlikely distances across the map. You can also have great fun with the civilians in the game, running in front of them to put them on alert, then ducking behind them for ten seconds until they forget you ever existed. Then running in front of them again, obviously, just to blow their little minds.

If that sounds like your idea of fun then by all means ignore us and buy *Aurora Watching* - it's only 20 quid, after all. Otherwise, stick with proper games like *Splinter Cell*. [C]

INPERSPECTIVE

SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY

Reviewed Issue 154, Score 91%

The benchmark for stealth action, consistently inventive and technically impeccable.

STOLEN

Reviewed Issue 156, Score 35%

Another feeble stealth clone, only slightly more redundant than *Aurora*.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Plenty of stealth kills
- ✓ Two camera views
- ✗ Most rudimentary possible stealth system
- ✗ Slow and repetitive
- ✗ Tedious level design

46

Watching paint dry



No prizes for guessing which city this is based on.



We wouldn't mind truckin' wi... Oh, forget it.



Alien abduction: every trucker's worst nightmare.

BIG MUTHA TRUCKERS 2: TRUCK ME HARDER

■ £19.99 | Pub: Empire | Dev: Eutechnyx | ETA: Out Now
www.bigmuthatruckers2.com

REQUIRES PIII 1GHz, 256MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card DESIRES P4 2GHz, 512MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card

Breaker-one-nine, Sam Kielsen's startin' a convoy. Wanna join?

WHAT'S THIS?

Big Mutha Truckers 2: Truck Me Harder, eh? Stop, please: my sides are in danger of splitting at the sheer hilarity of it all. This brand of puerile humour is supposed to be the domain of games journalists, not games developers, and I'm feeling a little aggrieved that Eutechnyx is trying to muscle in on turf that's rightfully mine.

Oh well, whatever. Infantile comedy is a major part of *Big Mutha Truckers 2*. Sometimes it works, as with the occasionally chortle-some skits on the *GTA*-inspired radio stations. However, sometimes it just doesn't – there's only so many

times you can laugh at the same old 'rednecks – stupid, aren't they?' schtick before it becomes tiresome. Thing is though, if you can't stand that sort of humour then you're probably going to hate this game, because there really isn't much of one there to begin with.

TRUCKWIT

The idea behind the main story mode is that, as one of four drivers, you have to raise the cash to pay off several jurors in your mother's forthcoming trial. Mainly, you do this by buying goods from one place, driving to another place where you can get a decent price for said goods, sell them, then buy some more. Repeat until you've raised enough dollars to bribe each juror. Of course, there's more

to it than this. Reach your destination quickly and you can earn a bonus. You also get more cash for things like smashing up other vehicles, avoiding alien abductions and giving rides to hitchhiking hoboes. You even get the chance to do a spot of gambling.

Special one-off missions also crop up at certain points, and as well as giving you the chance to earn a bit of extra green, these further enable you to drive about in vehicles other than your rig. But this isn't *Grand Theft Auto*, so most of the time you're confined to the truck.

TRUCKING HELL

Not that this is a huge problem: the trucking parts of the game are reasonably fun, as you have to contend with the cops and biker gangs as well as the scenery. What's more, the truck actually feels like a huge piece of machinery for once, able to smash obstacles



The map is really quite small.

and vehicles out of its way with satisfying ease.

That said, there's a pervading sense of 'console port' about *BMT2*, with nothing like the depth of gameplay you get from *GTA: San Andreas*. The map is insultingly small in comparison, although the scenery is fairly attractive. Plus, there's not that much to do except – to use a phrase we've been itching to pull out – keep on truckin'.

We've seen far worse £20 games, but *Big Mutha Truckers 2* doesn't really offer anything special in any department. If humorous driving jaunts are your bag, do yourself a favour and bag *San Andreas* instead. **PCZ**

INPERSPECTIVE

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

Reviewed Issue 157, Score 92%
 The current king of drive 'em ups is still at its imperious best.

CRAZY TAXI

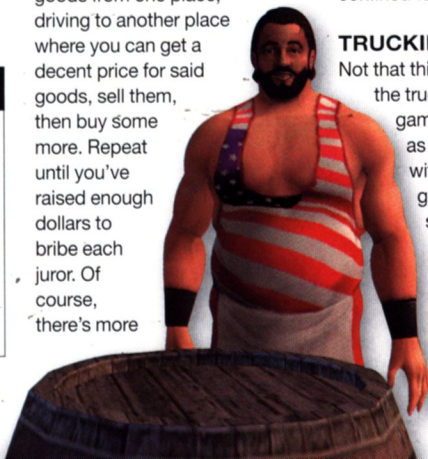
Reviewed Issue 119, Score 81%
 Getting on a bit now, but this is still very close in spirit to *Big Mutha Truckers 2*.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Driving bits are mildly diverting
- ✓ Looks pretty nice
- ✓ Some jocularity works
- ✓ Some jocularity falls flat
- ✗ Simple gameplay
- ✗ Nothing special

58

Trailer trash

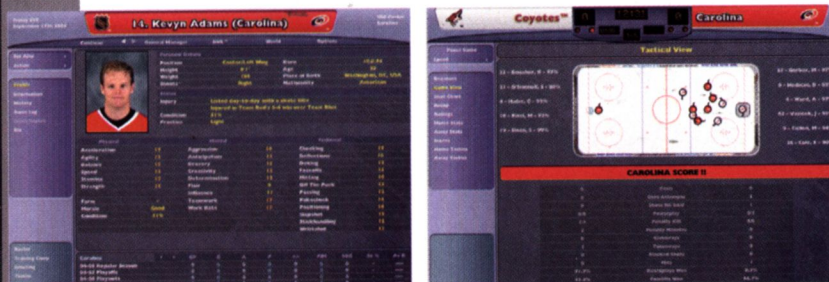


NHL EAST-SIDE HOCKEY MANAGER 2005

■ £34.99 | Pub: Sega | Dev: Sports Interactive
ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES PII 433MHz and 128MB RAM
DESIRES PIII 600MHz and 256 MB RAM

Ice Man Will Porter can be our wingman any day...



Kevyn with a 'Y'. Get him.

Wonder if the Coyotes are ugly...



Look! It's a team Will's heard of!

IT'S A GLOWING

journalistic tradition for American sports management games to be given to a bloke with a slight knowledge of the game, treated with slight disdain, concluded with words along the line of "if you like ice hockey you'll probably like it" and given a hazy score around the 70 per cent mark with an oh-so-humorous flying puck gag. So it is then, that I (a sometime fan of the Carolina Hurricanes) was given this year's task of umming, ahing and trying to fathom out how tactics work when there isn't a 4-4-2 formation or an option labelled 'long ball'.

In short, if there is a better ice hockey management game on the market then we're not aware of it. It lags behind *Football Manager* by a few generations (the match engine specifically is really quite basic compared to the ebbs and flows of the SI's flagship game's engine), but the hypnotic attraction of its pages of stats remains just as powerful.

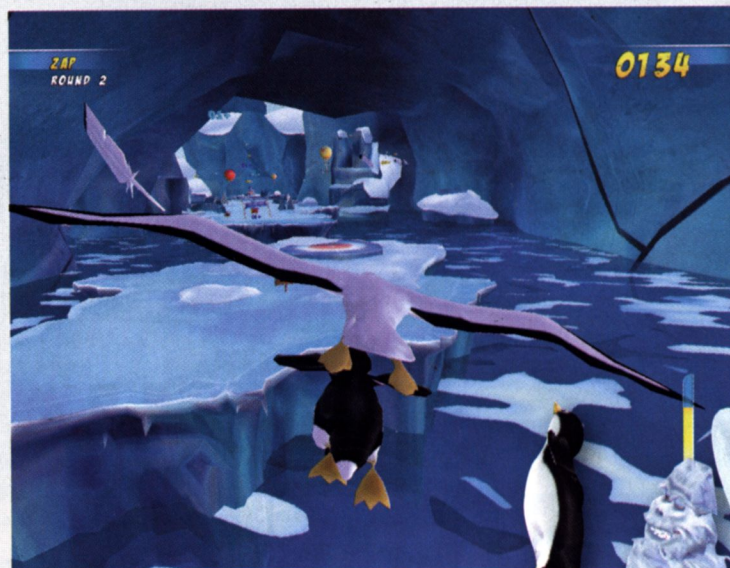
It's impossible to recommend to a casual player, of course, since while a basic knowledge of football and its key

figures is ingrained into the British national consciousness, ice hockey remains very much an unknown quantity. The expected unfathomable depths of information are ready and waiting to be (pleasantly) drowned in, but it definitely isn't a lightweight affair.

If, however, you're a fan of large ugly Canadians delivering biffs on the face to each other upon a frozen surface then this is a streamlined and efficient game that more than does justice to the noble art of slamming padded men into advertising hoardings.

Anglo ice-buffs will be pleased to hear that British teams are again featured in all their (slightly insignificant) glory. And the score? Well obviously the aforementioned Jolly Hockey Sticks crowd can stick a good 15 per cent on top of it, but the vast proportion of people won't give a flying puck.

PCZONE VERDICT **70**
Nichey but nice



It's not looking good for Pingu.

YETISPORTS ARCTIC ADVENTURE

■ £14.99 | Pub: JoWood |

Dev: Edelweiss Medienwerkstatt | ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES PIII 1GHz and 256MB RAM
DESIRES P4 1.4 GHz and 512MB RAM

Richie Shoemaker p-p-p-picks up a penguin, then hits it with a baseball bat

WERE YOU a resident of colder climes and denied the most basic of amenities, clubbing flightless birds for sport would be a justifiable way of passing the time. However, here in milder latitudes we can entertain ourselves without needing to resort to such practices. So, while the whipping boys of this tongue-in-cheek collection of winter sports clearly enjoy being dropped from the sky, thrown down mountains and hit for six across ice sheets, we must admit to being left a bit cold by the experience.

Not that you should take the game too seriously, of course. Clearly the intention of the developer is for you to be pissing yourself as you take control of Yeti and slide down icy slopes, whacking little Pingu as far as possible. We did have a chortle at the graphics, which despite offering a decent sense of speed, are as barren and bland as the landscape they emulate. Plus, every time the theme

tune cuts in – think DJ Otzi meets Crazy Frog – the hilarity is cruelly cut short. Given the fact that *Yetisports* is based around a collection of browser-based games that have – according to publisher JoWood – attracted some 100 million humans to play them, this game is chronically dull and lacking any kind of lasting appeal. However, given that it was designed primarily for use with the PlayStation 2 EyeToy, perhaps we shouldn't be too shocked at the limited gameplay on offer. But then, even if the game were compatible with a PC webcam, we can't imagine it being much good. So, if you must indulge in cheap winter fun, try slipping some ice cubes in someone's underpants.

PCZONE VERDICT **22**
Abominable

AREA-51

THE CONSPIRACY IS
NO LONGER A THEORY

"LOOKS PRETTY DAMN SPECIAL"

XBM MAGAZINE

"OOZES QUALITY"

"TECHNICALLY BRILLIANT"

OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE

"KILLZONE SHOULD
WATCH IT'S BACK"

PSW MAGAZINE



BATTLE AN ENEMY UNLIKE
ANYTHING YOU'VE EVER
FACED.

MUTATE AND EXPERIENCE
AMAZING ALIEN ABILITIES.

INTENSIFY THE ACTION WITH
ONLINE MULTIPLAYER COMBAT.



PlayStation 2



Area 51 © 2005 Midway Studios - Austin Inc. All rights reserved. Area 51 is a trademark of Midway Games West Inc. MIDWAY, and the Midway logos are trademarks of Midway Amusement Games, LLC. Used by permission. GameSpy and the "Powered by GameSpy" design are trademarks of GameSpy Industries, Inc. All rights reserved. Distributed under license by Midway Games Limited. "PS" and "PlayStation" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox Live, and the Xbox and Xbox Live logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries.

WWW.AREA51-GAME.COM

Indie Zone

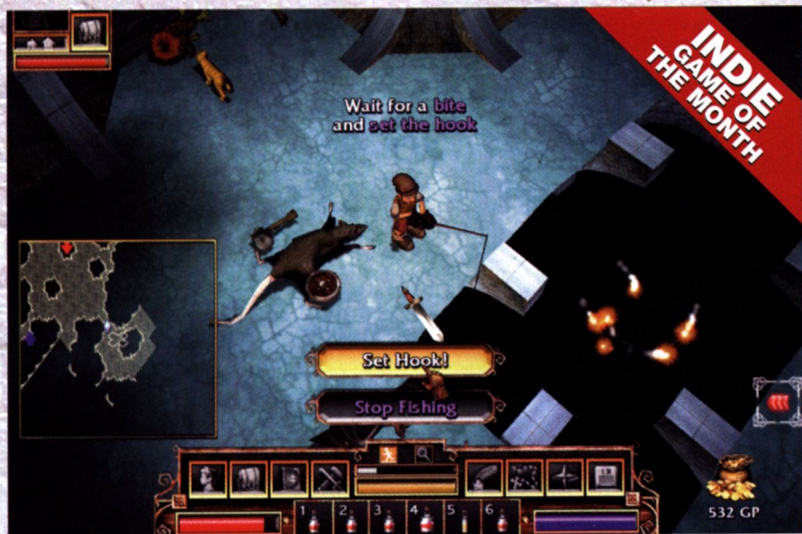
You can find demo versions of all these games on the CD & DVD. Try 'em then buy 'em...



He doesn't have to like your game to feature it in Indie Zone, but it helps. **Anthony Holden** presents the wares of some go-it-alone producers – the good and the what-were-you-thinking?

FATE

■ \$19.99 (£11) | Dev: WildTangent/Wild Games | www.playfate.com



Levelling up and getting new gear is just as addictive as any full-blown RPG.



The dungeon-bashing follows the *Diablo* model to the letter.

THE FANTASY RPG is the most creatively barren form of entertainment this side of R&B, so it's good to see the folks at WildTangent doing something different – not to mention charming – with the form. *Fate* essentially takes the action-RPG formula of *Diablo* and de-beards it, leaving a cartoonish and highly playable

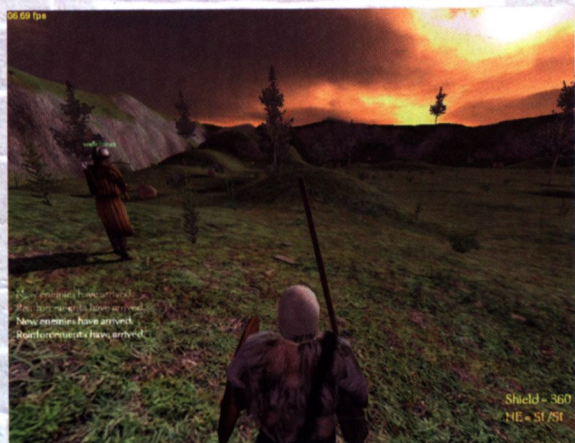
game that won't spoil your appetite. Despite its casual and accessible style, however, *Fate* sacrifices little of the depth of the role-playing blueprint. Behind the deformed cartoon visuals lies a real wealth of content, including countless dungeon levels, a vast array of monsters as well as hundreds of spells, weapons and items. There's also a pet

system, where you start off with a basic dog or cat and upgrade to more outlandish creatures as you progress, as well as a fishing mini-game (reminiscent of *Animal Crossing*), by which you can catch magical fish for your pet. You may even find the odd magical item in the fish, and true to the subtle humour of the game, it's not

uncommon to find a two-metre trident inside a tiny herring.

Compared to full-scale role-players *Fate* is a modest affair, but there's enough here to get you quickly and totally hooked. It's a clever little game and a definite contender for shareware title of the year.

PCZONE VERDICT 79



Hire desperate peasants to do your fighting for you.

MOUNT & BLADE

■ \$12 (£6.65) | Dev: Tale Worlds | www.taleworlds.com

THERE'S A common mistake made when dealing with indie games – to confuse something that's an impressive undertaking with something that's actually good. *Mount & Blade* is undoubtedly an impressive undertaking – made by a husband and wife team, it's a fully-featured medieval RPG with freeform gameplay, a sophisticated combat system and a comprehensive storyline. Or at least, that's the aim. At the moment there's no storyline and some large gaps in the world map, but it's still being sold as a commercial beta (the price is gradually increasing as the game improves).

The thing is, despite the fact that a lot of players are raving about it, it's not actually that good. In fact,

the only thing that is good about it is the combat, which takes place across large and random outdoor environments and is occasionally quite exciting. There's a nice block-and-parry system for swordfighting and a complete set of mounted attacks, including workable horseback archery.

However, in every other area the game is a let-down. The town environments are laughably bland and repetitive, the AI is poor, the graphics ropey and the bugs frequent. Given another year it might be a passable RPG, but at the moment it's just a half-baked mess with a decent combat system.

PCZONE VERDICT 53

GARY GRIGSBY'S WORLD AT WAR

■ £21.99 (£28.86 for boxed version) | Dev: 2 by 3 Games/ Matrix Games | www.worldatwaronline.com



Warning: hardcore gameplay inside.

TO THE average punter, the name Gary Grigsby may not mean a great deal. If, however, you own a sizeable collection of war memorabilia and like pictures of tanks, he's probably already a household name, famed for such classics as *Gary Grigsby's Pacific War*, *Gary Grigsby's War In Russia* and the lesser-known *Gary Grigsby's Ruckus In Neasdon*.

If so, you'll be delighted to hear that *World At War* is another high-quality and unflinchingly hardcore war game from the Grigsby stable, marrying rudimentary 2D graphics with deep and often stupefyingly complex turn-based gameplay. As the name suggests, the game takes in the entire global struggle of WWII, played from the perspective of Germany, Japan, Russia, the Western Allies or China.

In each turn, your main tasks are to move your troops around the map, invade territories, maintain supply lines and

create new units. On top of this, you have to think about such matters as researching technologies, repairing infrastructure and generally managing the logistics of large-scale warfare. Battles are automatically resolved, meaning the game is much more about managing resources than it is about combat.

Considering the pedigree here, it's not surprising that *GGWAW* is a superior piece of work, with challenging AI and an excellent play-by-email option. However, while not quite as complex as the likes of *Hearts Of Iron II*, this is still a daunting affair with little to recommend it to novices. Whether it's a pleasure or a chore will largely come down to your geek factor...

PCZONE VERDICT **77**



Weather, terrain and luck are all factors in battle.

ASEA

■ \$19.99 (£11) | Dev: Kraisoft | www.kraisoft.com

AT THE extreme opposite end of the spectrum from *Grigsby* comes *Asea*, perhaps the worst colour-matching game ever conceived and a title fit only for imbeciles and cack-handed grandmothers. It's so bad I can't even bring myself to explain the concept to you – just take my word that it's one of the

most fantastically banal things you could ever imagine. Add some pseudo-calming muzak and it's enough to make a man question whether he even belongs in the same society as the devil-men who made it.

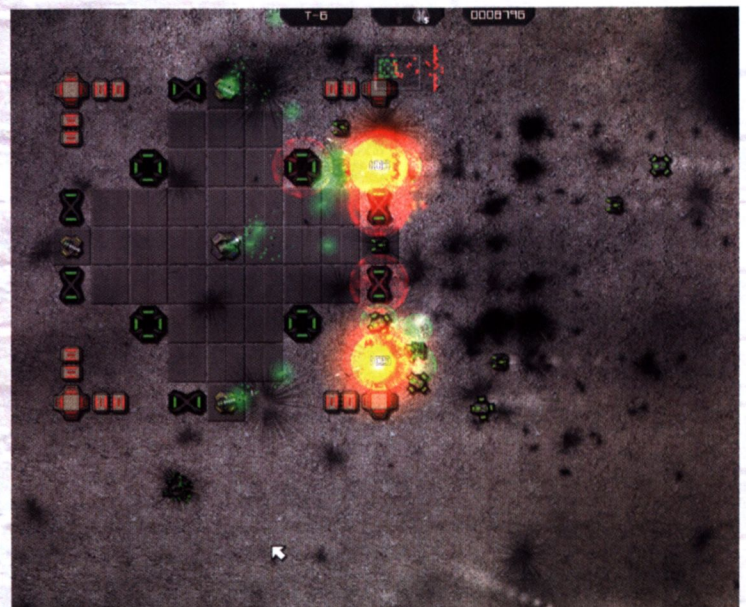
PCZONE VERDICT **08**



Move the coloured flowers around to let the boat through – mind-blowing.

TITAN ASSAULT

■ \$19.95 (£11) | Dev: Gold Bolt Software | www.goldbolt.com



Shoot the little grey boxes with the other little grey boxes.

A MIX OF austere RTS and arcade shooter, *Titan Assault* is a competent if low-budget affair, but it's also drab to the point of invisibility. The most distinctive thing about it is how bloody hard it is, with a level of difficulty that ramps from non-existent to insane in a matter of minutes. Otherwise, there's

little here that even registers as entertainment. Shooting things does indeed make them blow up, and the units seem like excellent replicas of cardboard boxes and shampoo bottles, but otherwise this is very much a non-game.

PCZONE VERDICT **20**

REPLAY

Being a keen Northerner, *Jamie Sefton* is no stranger to searching out the bargains...

SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

■ £9.99 | Pub: Focus | ETA: Out Now

CHEAP GIMPS for sale! Sam Fisher's second adventure is now available at a bargain bin price, but now that

Chaos Theory is out, is it still worth bothering with? Well, *Pandora Tomorrow* is still a damn fine stealth 'em up, with –



That visor must be getting hot on his head.

well-designed missions, a streamlined HUD, new moves for Sam – including the stealth pirouette for spinning past open doorways – and more nifty gadgets to play with.

However, the main plus point of *Pandora Tomorrow* on its release was the new multiplayer game, where two teams of two people face off each other in a videogame version of hide-and-seek. One team plays in first-person as the mercs (basically SWAT-types with heavy weapons), while the other team plays in third-person as the shadownets (wannabe Sam Fisher sneak-abouters). With different game modes and levels

packed with motion-sensors and other traps, it's a brilliantly tense game of cat and mouse.

Yet we can't help feeling that you're better off paying an extra tenner or so for *Chaos Theory*. The true sequel to the original *Splinter Cell* has miles better graphics, new Sam Fisher stealth kills and other cool gubbins, plus a magnificent multiplayer co-op game (see our feature on page 34). *Pandora Tomorrow* is a good value *Splinter Cell*, but ultimately a shadow of *Chaos Theory*.



PCZONE VERDICT **78**

HOTEL GIANT

■ £4.99 | Pub: Sold Out | ETA: Out Now

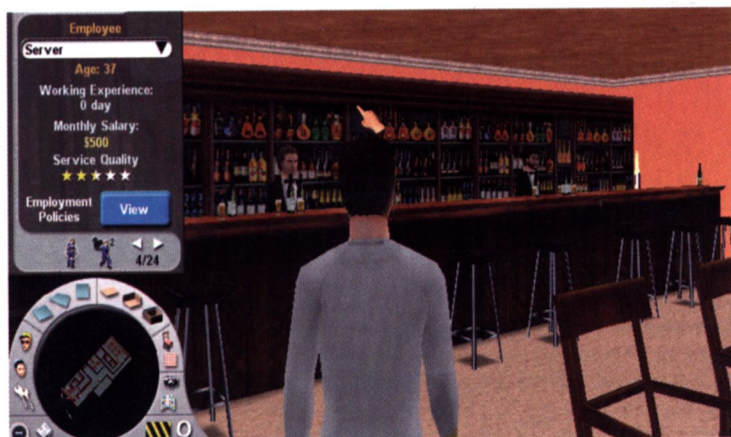
THERE are some very good *Tycoon*-style games about – such as the add-on pack for *Rollercoaster Tycoon* on page 84, *Soaked!*. However, *Hotel Giant* is not one of them. In fact, it's about as much fun as a weekend in a Travel Tavern in Watford, flagellating yourself with poorly-made curtain rails.

Nope, the hotel in this game isn't the sort of salubrious hotspot where you rub shoulders with Metallica, as they stumble out of their room spilling Jack Daniel's and loose ladies all over the plush carpets.

This is the kind of bargain basement shit-pit where sweaty men in suits from Reading discuss PowerPoint demonstrations in a stiflingly hot room supping instant coffee and chomping on limp egg and cress sandwiches.

A dreadful interface, boring visuals, tedious gameplay and lifeless animation are just some of the wonderful surprises awaiting you and other guests of *Hotel Giant*. Book in somewhere else.

PCZONE VERDICT **24**



Is that Midori he's pointing at?



Boy George was right you know...



...War is stupid. But this game isn't.

LINE OF SIGHT: VIETNAM

■ £4.99 | Pub: Sold Out | ETA: Out Now

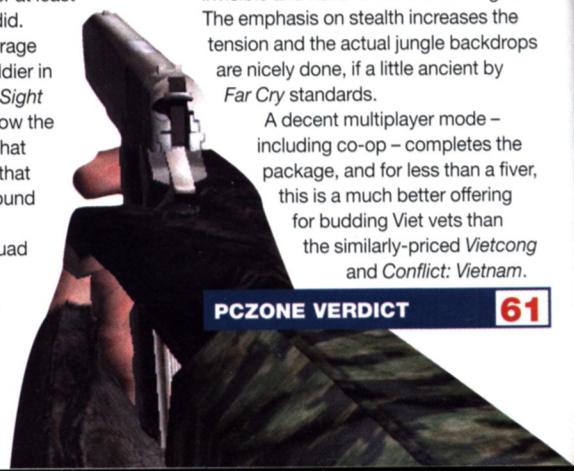
N...N...N...N... Nineteen. So said Paul Hardcastle back in this midst of the 1980s – or at least his Fairlight sampler did. Nineteen was the average age of the combat soldier in Vietnam, and *Line Of Sight* goes some way to show the horror and misery of that unnecessary conflict that played out on TVs around the world.

Using a similar squad control system to *Hidden & Dangerous*, you have to traverse

12 levels through harsh jungle terrain against a VC enemy that are mostly invisible and have terrific bot-aiming skills. The emphasis on stealth increases the tension and the actual jungle backdrops are nicely done, if a little ancient by *Far Cry* standards.

A decent multiplayer mode – including co-op – completes the package, and for less than a fiver, this is a much better offering for budding Viet vets than the similarly-priced *Vietcong* and *Conflict: Vietnam*.

PCZONE VERDICT **61**



Gaming PCs with Bite!

"Fastest thing we've tested" 86% PC Zone July 05

Ignite 64-SLI system

- Thermaltake Shark case
- 525W Hiper True Power PSU
- Athlon 64 3500+ CPU
- 1GB Corsair TwinX memory
- Dual GeForce 6600GT graphics (SLI)
- Asus A8N-SLI motherboard
- 200GB SATA hard disk drive
- Ropen 16x DVD-Rom drive
- NEC 3520R dual layer DVD-RW
- Logitech Pro keyboard
- Logitech MX-510 mouse
- 7.1 channel onboard sound
- Logitech X-230 2.1 speakers
- BenQ 17" TFT (ultra fast 12ms) monitor
- Windows XP Home SP2
- 1 Year on site warranty

£1299 (inc VAT)



Pyro 64-SLI system

- Thermaltake Xaser V case
- Hardcano fan control unit
- 525W Hiper True Power PSU
- Athlon 64 FX55 CPU
- 1GB Corsair TwinX memory
- Dual GeForce 7800GT graphics (SLI)
- Asus A8N-SLI deluxe motherboard
- 200GB SATA hard disk drive
- Ropen 16x DVD-Rom drive
- NEC 3520R dual layer DVD-RW
- Logitech Pro keyboard
- Logitech MX-510 mouse
- 7.1 channel onboard sound
- Dual gigabit lan
- Windows XP Home SP2
- 1 Year on site warranty

£2199 (inc VAT)

Call 08701 999 283 or visit our website to configure your extreme gaming PC

www.wired2fire.co.uk

<p>NO NEED TO TALK 0909 771 3819</p>	<p>COME CHAT WITH ME LIVE 0909 771 4152</p>	<p>HOW LONG CAN YOU LAST? JUST LISTEN 0909 771 3820</p>	<p>HOT CHEEKY CHAT ON YOUR MOBILE! Text hotcheek to 89885 £1.50/MSG TO QUIT SEND *STOP* TO 89885</p>	<p>Sexy stories 3P 0870 500 7281</p>	<p>DO I MAKE YOU HORNY? 09097 713 821</p>
<p>LET'S HAVE SEX TEXT! 09097 713 825</p>	<p>Till Satisfaction 1 min 0909 771 3826</p>	<p>MyPrivate-line 0909 771 3827</p>	<p>COME PLAY WITH ME LIVE 09097 714 153</p>	<p>SATISFACTION GUARANTEED 0871 200 8159 CREDIT CARD</p>	<p>SNN don't make a sound! 00 56 11 6175</p>
<p>I PLAY YOU LISTEN 09097 713 824</p>	<p>Naughty Girls from 3p min 0870 500 7280</p>	<p>Listen to sexy girls NOW 0909 771 3828</p>	<p>quick CHAT 30 SEC 09097 713829</p>	<p>I CAN FULFIL YOUR FANTASIES! LIVE 0909 771 4154</p>	<p>PRIVATE sexline 1-2-1 09097 714 155</p>
<p>Don't talk JUST LISTEN 0909 771 3823</p>		<p>SEXY CHAT LIVE INSTANT FUN 0909 771 4156</p>		<p>Instant CLIMAX 09097 713822</p>	

FEEDBACK

As the frustration about *Boiling Point* reaches, er, boiling point, *Will Porter* wafts a big fan to keep everyone cool...

IT'S YOUR SHOUT

Feedback is here to offer you a platform to have your say about games we've reviewed in recent issues. Whether you totally agree or utterly disagree with us, we want to hear from you. To get your views in print, all you have to do is send an email to letters@pczone.co.uk with 'Feedback' in the subject line. Please try and keep your views to less than 100 words. Anything longer will not be considered or may have to be edited for size.

BOILING POINT: ROAD TO HELL

REVIEWED ISSUE 157 (BY WILL PORTER), SCORE: 70%

What we thought

Done properly this could have been amazing. Right now, it's compelling but riddled with so many problems that if you part ways with your cash for it, you're entering into a pact that will give you as much frustration as entertainment.

What you said

An excellent (but very flawed) gem. With time and patience, it's a game you will truly come to love for its open-ended nature and approach. It does require some effort to play and it does have its problems, but they're equally compensated by some of the most intense and exhilarating atmospheric and story-driven gameplay. Although at the end of the day it's unfinished, it remains a true

demonstration of developers continuing to push forward non-linear interactive environments and immersive worlds, as opposed to level after level of tight, winding, repetitively textured corridors.

For all its faults, its *Morrowind*-meets-*GTA* charm makes it an essential purchase for the forgiving gamer, and an essential purchase if you like to make posts on forums and write to manufacturers about shoddy products shipped well before their release dates. So it's pretty much something for everyone.

Paws of Evil

Even though none of the bugs are show-stopping, some of them are just annoying. Not even the Euro patch seemed to fix the car-vanishing bug – would you fancy spending 14K on a lovely sports car just to have it disappear? One good thing though is the wildlife – I've seen stuff like snakes chasing down rats and I even got attacked by a jaguar and killed both it and four parrots with my copyrighted 'Panic-Aim-Erratic-Shooting' technique. All in all, *Deep Shadows* deserves respect for this very ambitious release and I hope to see the company do well in the future.

Hustlin_Pimpster



You want some carpet on those stairs really.

For me, one of the biggest problems this game has is the ludicrous loading times – even the menu screen takes half an hour to load. Attempting to play this game is like travelling back to the days of yore when software came on cassettes. Once in though, it's a fun if frustrating game. But why is the hero perpetually thirsty?

Simon_Blackwell1

I approached *Boiling Point* with caution. It's a highly ambitious game from a relatively unknown developer and it's published by Atari, a company with a less-than-perfect track record. Recipe for disaster or what?

It all came true too, when it became apparent that *BP*'s so bug-ridden that it's less playable than *Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines*. I thought the industry had finally moved on from making us unpaid beta testers? If you haven't tried it, avoid doing so until at least patch four or five.

Heero Yuy

Boiling Point is possibly the finest example of flawed genius to date. The sheer ambition and depth of the game demands praise, but likewise the bug-ridden and glitch-infested result demands condemnation. On the one hand you have this seamless world where you can do what you like but your actions have consequences. On the other you have some of the most poorly programmed tripe you've ever set eyes on.

My advice: wait for the budget version (when it's fully patched) and buy two. In its realised glory, this game deserves to sell.

Driver

Boiling Point could be great. The graphics are pretty nice, but far too repetitive. The vehicles handle like a three-year-old's tricycle and the bugs are too much for me – and I'm someone who saw *Bloodlines* right through to the end. Reading the box of *Boiling Point* is like

being told where to get the best chips ever, only to discover that half of them are still raw.

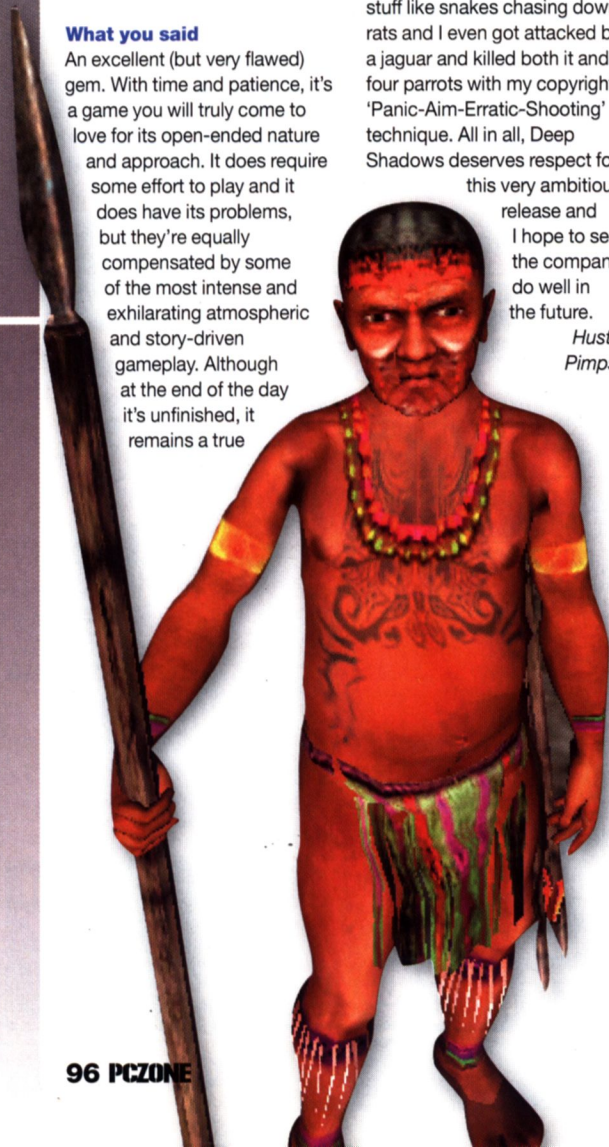
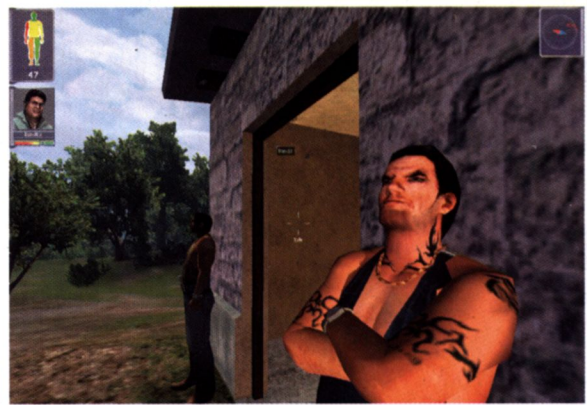
It has potential, but I doubt we'll see a patch that will really improve things. Released a year early, Atari strikes again:

Seregrail7

Will's comment

There's something about *Boiling Point* that keeps you crawling back isn't there? After I reviewed it, I spent a few weeks watching over the shoulder of my housemate who would basically sit there insisting that he was having a miserable time and that he was hating every second of it – even though he was putting in a regular two hours a night.

Freeform games like this are set to get more and more common and as such *Boiling Point* will soon (hopefully) start looking extremely shit extremely quickly – even though it'll also be regarded as a necessary first step to brighter things. If glitches as painful as the car-vanishing bug hadn't slipped through the finely-tuned PC game publishing machine (warning: satire), it would have been a happier story. As it is, we'll bitch – but still play it anyway. ☹️



“Reading the box of *Boiling Point* is like being told where to get the best chips ever, only to find half of them are still raw”

SEREGRAIL7 ECHOES THE THOUGHTS OF MANY

ONLINE ZONE

HERE WE GO AGAIN



■ ONLINE EDITOR Paul Presley

▲ Hmm... Unless I'm more misguided than a man who thinks Alexander Scriabin was a Polish cellist, I can smell the unmistakable stench of bulldozer oil approaching. To arms, Mellors! At last our training regimens are to be employed in useful gain. We always knew this would happen, that one day our cosy online gaming reserve would blossom into a respected genre, treated with as much gravitas as the first-person shooting or the realistically-timed strategist. And upon that day the skies of Online Zone shall burn with fire and brimstone and the very heavens will be rent asunder with much tearing and anguish and wails.

And blow me if it hasn't gone and happened. As many people are playing *Guild Wars* as are playing *Half-Life 2*. More still have bought, subscribed to and become so dangerously addicted they actually die (or commit murder) while playing *Lineage II*. And don't get me started on *World Of Warcraft*...

So now they come marching, with flaming pitchforks, torches and cries of 'amalgamation', ready to pull down the bricks and mortar of these fine walls and loot the contents like a manic raiding party looking to gain a level or two before the end of the lunch break.

Well not on my watch, senator! We shall fight them on the servers, fight them in the LAN parties, fight them with growing confidence and broadband speeds and defend this enclave, whatever the cost. And even if these walls should fall, then my Inner Circle beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the Redmandarin Guild, will carry on the struggle until these virtual worlds, with all their power, might and patch times will step forth and liberate OZ. Fire up your resurrection spells, my friends!



"No way. You're not taking me anywhere near Norrath."

THE MATRIX RELOADED BY SOE

WARNER BROS GIVES EQII TEAM NEO'S WORLD, ADDS DC COMICS LICENCE

MANY OF US move house, some of us move country from time to time, but very few people have to face the staggering prospect of moving an entire world from one home to another. Still, that's the challenge now facing Sony Online Entertainment as the news arrives of an agreed deal between SOE and Warner Bros Interactive to take over the running of *The Matrix Online* from Sega.

SOE is promising current subscribers that it's committed to maintaining the current live events and game mechanics, and to that end is bringing at least 25 members of developer Monolith's *MXO* team along to ensure a smooth transition. Pricing options will remain the same, but *MXO* is planned to be made available to Station Access subscribers, although the recent opening of SOE's eBay-like Station Exchange program won't be open to *MXO* players at first. Plans haven't been ruled out in the long-term but for now, fancy sunglasses will have to be traded in-game only.

The second, and potentially more mouth-watering phase of the deal grants SOE the rights to produce an MMO set in the DC Comics universe. That's right, pretty soon (well, end of 2007 at any rate) you'll be strapping on tights and fighting crime next to the likes of Batman,



There go the Sonic crossovers.

Superman, The Flash and Wonder Woman. No game details as yet, but this will finally give SOE a heavyweight title to compete against NCsoft's non-trademark based *City Of Heroes*. The fact that the game is planned for both PC and next-gen consoles would suggest a more focused, instanced affair in order to work within the more limited constraints of console online tech.

Meanwhile, the legendary Sony Online Entertainment customer service team is no doubt gearing up for the deluge of players who, having seen how *Star Wars Galaxies* has been handled lately, will be wanting to jack out of *The Matrix* in protest at imagined and baseless notions of the *EQII* publishers transforming the game out of all proportions. Not that, in its present state, that would be so bad a thing.



Other, less popular heroes also exist.



102

AUTO ASSAULT
We take the new motor for a spin



106

FIGHT CLUB
The PCZ Justice Squad fights on



110

WOW: BATTLEGROUNDS
Like you're not playing already

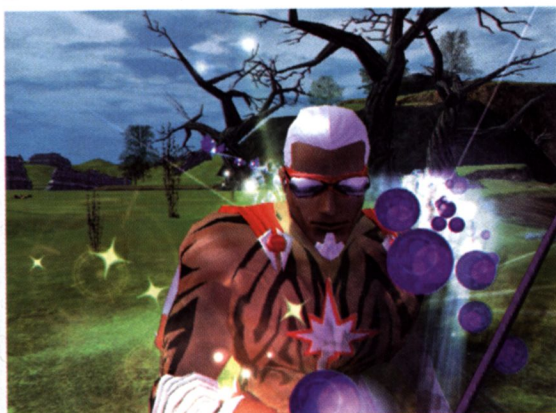


119

NEVERQUEST
Steve Hill does Clark Gable

SUPER (POWERED) SUMMER SLAM SPECTACULAR

CITY OF HEROES CELEBRATES THE WARM WEATHER WITH AN ARRAY OF ALLITERATION



Defiant or Union - who's the best?



Get that summer wardrobe out.

PROVING ITS commitment to European heroes everywhere, NCsoft has begun celebrating our twice-yearly four days of blistering sunshine, air conditioning unit rental and complaints about the heat with its Super Summer Slam Spectacular - or S4 for short.

The three-phase competition is open only to European players of COH and offers prizes galore, rewarding both creative flair and brute strength. The first phase is a costume competition, although

the twist here is that it has to be designed for use by a team rather than an individual.

The winning designers will each win high quality prints of their costume images, a place in the *City Of Villains* European beta test, signed copies of the *City Of Heroes*' comic and posters, unique titles for their in-game characters, a limited edition Statesman HeroClix figure and two free months of game time.

The winning costumes on both the Defiant and Union servers will then be

worn by the winners of phase two - a team-based, weight-divided Pentad cup tournament (Pentad being the five-man arena combat variant in which teams are comprised of one of each hero type). Each server's victorious teams will then go head to head in the Grand Final on the central Test server to determine whether Union or Defiant is truly the mightiest server of them all, the ultimate victors being crowned European Champions, and winning all manner of goodies.

THE A-Z OF MMOs

ONLINE GAMING EXPLAINED

G is for Gold, a precious metal of such rarity and value in MMO fantasy worlds that even rat corpses

can usually be found carrying a few pieces in their distended pockets. (Do rats have pockets? They must do, where else would they keep all that loot they seem to carry around with them...) Indeed, there's so much of the stuff floating about that it's a wonder that gold hasn't replaced wood and stone as the primary building material of choice, that players and NPCs don't all walk around blinged up to the max and that Mr T isn't hailed as some sort of god, suffering those fools somewhat less than gladly.

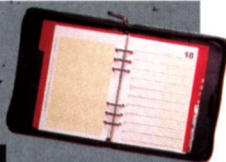
G is also for Grind, a staple game mechanic of most MMOs (yes, even *World Of Warcraft*). The key test to any game's success is how well it disguises the fact that you pretty much do the same thing over and over again every time you log on. Whereas offline games often have some sort of overall point, a plot to follow - a world to ultimately save, a beautiful large-breasted nuclear physicist to rescue, a monkey to slap etc - MMOs just tend to give you a second job to work at. A job that you tend to pay for the privilege of having at that. Try bringing that one up with the Department of Trade and Industry.

G is also for Gone. Which is what this regular is. Just as well. Q and X were going to be buggers...

Registration is now on over at uk.cityofheroes.com, so get your team together, get your creative caps on and sign up.

- Publisher: NCsoft
- Developer: Cryptic Studios
- Website: uk.cityofheroes.com

CLAN DIARY #TRUTH



ANNE ROGERS, aka Jaffy

With the E-Sports World Cup and Cyberathlete Professional League competitions having recently taken place – and prize funds growing – you have to wonder where the rolling snowball of online gaming will finally end up. Will E-Sports burst into the mainstream in the West (as it has done in Korea), with matches shown on special gaming channels on TV? Or will it always be only of interest to those who compete – with no widespread media coverage, despite the competitions all over the world with similarly large prize funds?

It's long been believed that bringing a gender balance into gaming, with more females playing, is the key to more widespread interest. There have been many attempts by competition organisers and the media to bring female gamers into the public eye too, with special masters tournaments for women. There's also been encouragement for the top female teams to take part in the traditionally male competitions of late. It was planned, for example, that Scandinavian super-team Les Seules, considered by many to be at the pinnacle of girl gaming, would play alongside the males in the CPL summer event in Dallas. This was an ambitious step which wasn't to be – the girls attended ESWC instead.

Alongside this, we have the glamorous Frag Dolls, the Ubisoft-sponsored team of girl gamers. However, the question remains, who are they really out to attract into gaming? Is the answer more females, encouraged by these 'role models'? Or are they there just to capture the imaginations of men? Does the promotion of females playing games, alongside the trend of having booth babes at events such as E3, perhaps reinforce the stereotype that gaming is a man's world? So, the ultimate question that has to be asked is, are female gamers really helping E-Sports progress to the mainstream, or do they hinder it?

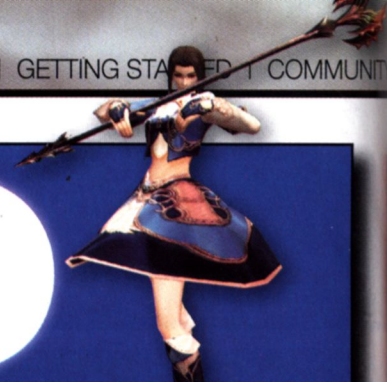
Whatever the answer may be, it's an exciting time for gamers, whether male or female, and whether or not they opt into the more serious side!



Let's hear it for the girls!

“Are female gamers helping E-Sports progress to the mainstream or not?”

MMO STATZONE SPECIAL



ON AND ON THEY GO, BUT WHICH MMOG RULES THE SHOW?

Bruce Woodcock is a man playing the numbers game. Literally, in fact, where MMOs are concerned. Since 2002, the San Jose-based independent consultant and analyst has been keeping a close eye on the subscriber numbers for just about every online game that opens its doors – and all this info is housed at his website, www.mmogchart.com.

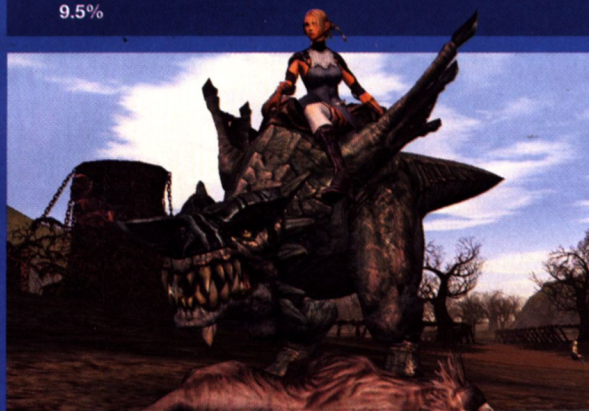
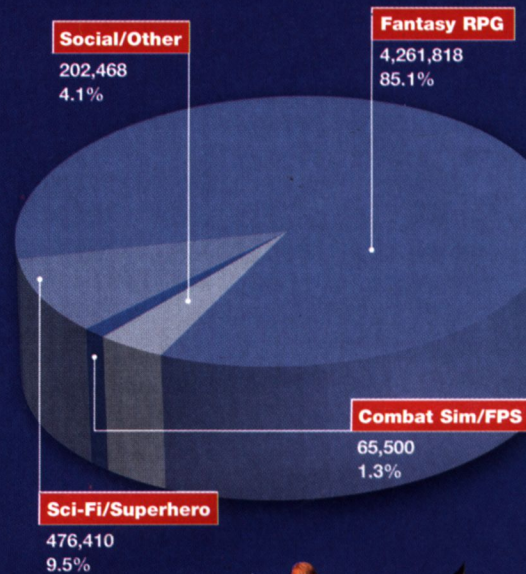
Having played online games since the early days of MUDs, Woodcock's interest in MMO data was first piqued by *Ultima Online*. “At the time we noticed a change in the numbers EA was reporting,” he remembers. “I just wondered what it would look like in a graphical format and how it compared to others. The topic of who had more subs was always coming up in forums.”

The hardest part of Woodcock's job is actually finding the numbers. Aside from the rare occasions when an MMO publisher plumps up its chest, toots its own horn and issues press releases in all directions about its record-breaking user base (hello Blizzard!), the research has called for a hefty amount of journalistic legwork, trawling corporate documents for financial statements, online game forums for offhand comments by community-minded developers, and even the occasional ‘deep throat’-style anonymous source.

Ultimately, Woodcock hopes the industry matures enough to allow publishers to be more open about the data. “I would love to have companies work with me, for the benefit of their customers and the financial community,” he says. “We could learn so much about the dynamics of online social spaces if we had access to the databases and could track what players like and dislike online.”

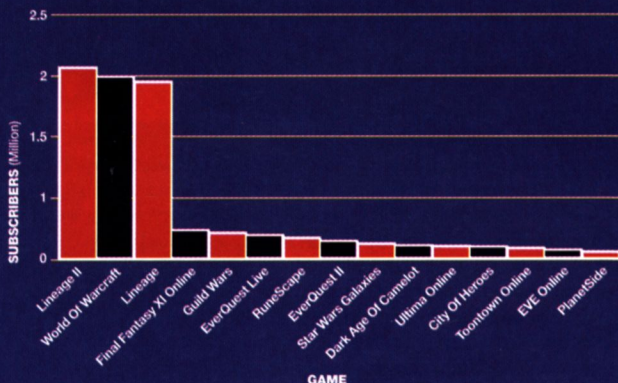
MMO MARKET SHARE BY GENRE

(BASED ON CURRENT SUBSCRIBER NUMBERS – JULY '05)



TOP 15 MMOs

(BASED ON CURRENT SUBSCRIBER NUMBERS – JULY '05)

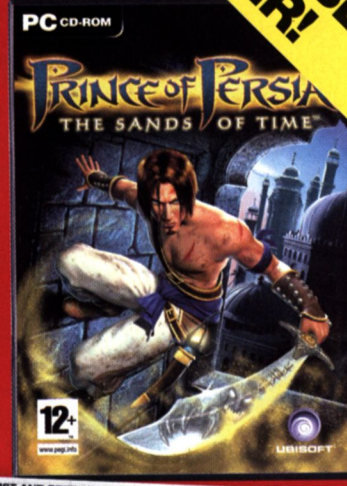
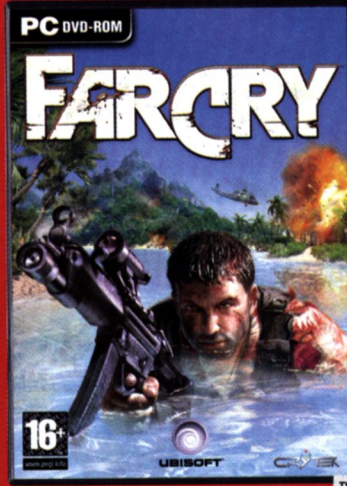


CHOOSE YOUR **FREE** GAME!

GREAT SUBSCRIBER OFFER!

Start a subscription to **PC ZONE** and choose your **FREE** game, from three real classics

Update your games library today with **PC ZONE**! We've selected three of the most fantastic games on the market. All you have to do is pick the game you want when you subscribe, and it will arrive within 28 days. Simple! Stay ahead of the game from just £12.96 every quarter and receive **PC ZONE** delivered direct to your door and...



- You will receive ground-breaking news that you won't read anywhere else
- You will have the benefit and expertise of top games journalists to help you decide what you really want to buy
- You will be the envy of your friends by trying the hottest games first with our 8GB DVDs
- You will be able to access free trials of the biggest online games
- You will be able to interact with other readers on the dedicated **PC ZONE** website



BUT HURRY! CALL 0870 8374 722

DVDZONE PRIORITY ORDER FORM

www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/pzv/p007

Please tick which game you would like to receive with your subscription: *Free game offer open to UK residents only

- Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow**
 Far Cry
 Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time

YES! Please start my subscription to DVDZONE. We publish 13 issues of PC ZONE a year. Your subscription will start with the next available issue. Stocks limited to availability. Please allow 28 days for delivery of the gift. Details of the Direct Debit guarantee are available on request.

YOUR DETAILS:

MR/MRS/MS	FORENAME	SURNAME
ADDRESS		
POSTCODE		
DAYTIME PHONE		MOBILE NUMBER
EMAIL		YEAR OF BIRTH

Please tick this box to confirm you are over 18 years of age. Some demonstration programs/Trailers on this disc are certified 18 by the British Board of Film Classification and are not available to persons under that age in the United Kingdom. Parental discretion is advised.

For overseas subscriptions please visit www.pczone.co.uk

DIRECT DEBIT PAYMENT – JUST £12.96 every 3 months SAVING 33% (UK ONLY)

Future	Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit	DIRECT Debit
Please fill in the form and send to: PC Zone, Future Publishing Ltd, FREEPOST RLSC-SXSE-SKKT, Unit 4, Tower House, Sovereign Park, Market Harborough, Leicestershire LE16 9EF		
Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society		Originator's Identification Number 7 6 8 1 9 5
To the manager: Bank name	Address	Ref no. to be completed by Future Publishing
Postcode		Instruction to your Bank or Building Soc. Please pay Future Publishing Ltd. Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assumed by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Future Publishing Ltd and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.
Account in the name of(s)		Signature(s)
Branch sort code	Bank/Building Society account number	Date
Banks and building societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions for some types of account		

PLEASE RETURN TO: PC Zone, Future Publishing Ltd, FREEPOST RLSC-SXSE-SKKT, Unit 4, Tower House, Sovereign Park, Market Harborough, Leicestershire LE16 9EF

We will use the contact details supplied to communicate with you about your PC ZONE subscription. We'd also like to keep you up to date with any special offers or new products/services that may be of interest. If you're happy for PC ZONE, Future Publishing and its sister companies to contact you in this way, indicate here: email mobile. If you're also happy for us to pass your details onto carefully selected companies so they can send you relevant information about their products/services, indicate here: email mobile. Please indicate if you do NOT wish to receive relevant information about special offers or products/services from PC ZONE, Future Publishing or any of its sister companies by post phone. Please indicate if you do NOT wish us to pass your details onto other carefully selected companies to enable them to contact you about their products/services by post phone. All gifts subject to availability. Allow 28 days for delivery. Minimum System Requirements: Pentium® 200, Windows® 95/98/ME/XP, CD-ROM 4 speed, 32Mb RAM, 2Mb DirectX™ 6.1 compatible graphics, DirectX™ 6.1 compatible soundcard, 100Mb hard drive space.



CV



NETDEVIL

With only one title under its belt (2001's space-based MMO *Jumpgate*), NetDevil's initial team of three part-time staff has grown under NCsoft's guidance to over 30 full-time staffers, putting the finishing touches to *Auto Assault*.

Passing your MMOT with...

AUTO ASSAULT

Paul Presley's MMOTOR's running and his puns are getting worse...

OOH, VERY brown. That was our initial verdict on life in *Auto Assault* following our recent invitation to the closed beta test. Brown, followed by blood red, followed by the bright, yellow glare of multiple explosions. Yup, *Auto Assault* is a riot of cars, carnage and colour, and we've been strapped into the driving seat for the past few weeks.

FIRST-TIME DRIVER

In answer to perhaps the most popular question asked about AA, no you don't

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER NetDevil
PUBLISHER NCsoft
WEBSITE www.autoassault.com
ETA Q4 2005

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- The world's first car-based MMO
- Frenetic action
- Fully upgradeable vehicles
- Havok 2 physics engine means everything 'splodes

create a car as your starting character. This isn't 'Transformers The Game' (at least not to begin with, although we'll come to that later). You're given one of three 'races' to choose between – humans, mutants and Biomeks – and other than apparently determining your basic colour palette (blue, green or brown respectively), it also decides your profession choices.

Provisionally you have a choice of four per race, and other than cosmetically, they're much the same for each (as is the way of things with MMOs, balancing issues mean no one race can ever really be significantly more powerful, or different, than the other). Warrior, special ops (ie ranger), engineer (aka healer) and commander, each comes with a different set of visual options and each, more importantly, with a different car.

The human vehicles initially seem to be based around the old *Automan* series (lots of blue neon trim and flat black panelling), lending them an 'advanced

technology' feel, in stark contrast to the other races. The Biomeks, for instance, all seem to have emerged from the ashes of *Mad Max 3* – lots of patched-up bodywork, rusty metal and spikes, while the mutants come off looking like an unholy cross between *Warhammer*

40K's sci-fi orks and Romero's undead zombie hordes, with rides not so much pimped as gimped to the max (ho ho).

DVLA DEVIANTS

These themes carry on into the starting areas for each race. Again, in keeping



Anyone else remember Big Traks?



That's another five points on his licence.



One way to beat the rush hour queues.



A few optional extras worth having.

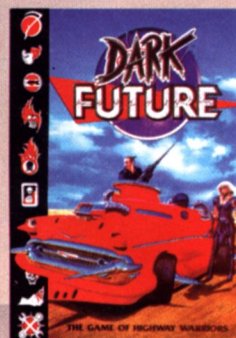
"It's the cars that are the stars and they don't disappoint – extras include front-mounted machine guns, biometric shielding and furry dice"

with traditional MMOs, newcomers are given a limited-scale training area to start their automotive life within, running a few gameplay-familiarisation missions, getting to grips with the car and weapon handling mechanics, and setting the basic background story for life in the grim future of the post-apocalyptic Earth.

The background story begins with a meteor strike hitting our lovely little planet, bringing with it one of those pesky intergalactic diseases that starts to mutate sections of the populace. Gradually order and society collapses, chaos reigns and the human survivors create the Biomek warriors to combat the growing mutant armies. The plan

backfires and the humans take to the subterranean cave arcologies, built as a last resort before scorching the planet with the remaining nuclear weapons in one last attempt to wipe out the mutant menace. Unfortunately it doesn't work, and the abandoned Biomeks are now also feeling a little aggrieved at being left in the line of fire. As the humans re-emerge and start to reclaim their place some time in the mid 21st century, it becomes a three-way fight for dominance. It

APOCALYPSE NOW AND THEN



Computer games, board games... The world's always ending.

IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT AND WE FEEL FINE

Just because the Earth has been reduced to an irradiated wasteland, unruly biker gangs run riot over survivors and the best meal anyone can hope for is diseased rat stew with a side order of cockroach tentacles, that's no reason we can't all have fun. Here are a few end of days' resources for the budding apocalophile...

FALLOUT The premier post-apocalyptic RPG series, beloved by any games player with an ounce of sense thanks to its grit, realism and free-roaming gameplay. But mainly because you could shag farm girls then get forced into shotgun weddings by their irate hick parents.

MAD MAX BEYOND THUNDERDOME Proving that along with cockroaches, '80s hairspray fashions and Tina Turner records are also strong enough to survive a nuclear winter (unfortunately).

WHEN THE WIND BLOWS Why have biker gangs, horrible mutants and survivalist action when you can see the bombs drop through the eyes of Jim and Hilda Bloggs and a nice cup of radioactive tea?

DARK FUTURE This Games Workshop-produced exercise in plastic miniatures and dice-rolling game mechanics is possibly the best depiction of road rage in tabletop gaming form yet seen. Pity it's no longer on sale. To eBay!

definitely appears that each race's starting zones and training missions have a different feel to them, all in keeping with this background story and setting the scene nicely for the carnage to come.

THIRD-PARTY FIRE AND THEFT

Of course, it's the cars that are the stars of the show and they don't disappoint. Whichever starter model you choose (and you'll want to part-exchange it for a newer model as soon as you can), it'll come with a few basic optional extras installed. You know the kind of thing – front-mounted machine guns, 360-degree attack turrets, biometric shielding, furry dice. No, really! You don't actually start with them, but there is a

slot on the vehicle equipment screen for decorative extras.

Upgrading is as simple as buying spare parts from mechanics, or looting them from fallen foes, finding a relatively quiet spot to carry out repairs, and attaching said component to the appropriate slot. The scope for customisation is pretty staggering at first, with useful weapons and armour being readily available from the packs of cannon fodder outside the starting city's gates or as rewards for completing missions.

Crafters are catered for too, with plenty of raw materials to collect, or with the option to reverse engineer pre-built items into component parts. You can dismantle them and tinker with their make-up to build yet stronger goods.

In practice it's the work of moments to swap your top-mounted auto-cannon for a devastating flamethrower, combine it with a high-velocity machine gun on the front and set yourself up as a



WALNUT DASH

WHAT'S WHAT IN THE WORLD OF IN-CAR ENTERTAINMENT



RADAR This displays nearby points of interest rather like a guide on a big open-top London Tour Bus. Except the radar points out places where you're likely to be shot at.

TREES Big cars destroy the environment – especially when they've got a flamethrower on their roof.

TURRET For total 360-degree carnage, strap a giant spinning death ray to your roof rack.

YOU Remember, the bigger the wheels, the bigger your, er, ammo belt.

CONVOY BUTTON Not quite the 18-wheeler touring gangs beloved of Burt Reynolds, though.

SPEEDO In a nod to us left-hand drivers, this can display both KPH and MPH.

MAP Opens the world map for instant transport links. For female players, this will naturally be upside down and rather confusing.

HOTKEY BAR The standard customisable MMO hotkey bar. Depressingly empty at lower levels, it can fortunately be hidden to spare blushes.

GAUGES Green for health, yellow for energy, purple for XP. Pink for lady drivers. (That's enough rampant misogyny – Ed)



lethal killing machine with a deft sideline in holding impromptu barbecues. The flamethrower is a pretty meaty weapon to wield too, and watching helpless foes run away screaming as they burn, before putting them out of their misery under your front bumpers is perversely satisfying.

PEDESTRIAN CROSSING

Indeed, when you first take to the road, the initial impression is the old vehicular carnage classic, *Carmageddon*, with death and destruction on an absolutely grand scale. Just about everything explodes, crumbles and disintegrates when enough ammo is pumped into it, and bodily mutilation happens with alarming regularity. There are 'rats' to kill early on, although they mostly take the form of under-armed foot soldiers allied to gang factions or, in a brutal twist for Biomek characters, hapless prisoners fleeing for their lives before being mown down in a combination of bullets, flame and tyres.

Once you've seen everything there is to see, jumped every ramp, 'sploded every building and run every mission, it's on to the first main settlement for your faction. From there you move on to the game world proper, with plenty of backwater zones to explore, speedy multi-lane highways filled with outlaw gangs and fellow players and instanced



Damn acid rain. I only just had this waxed.

areas for you and your convoy buddies to clear out.

NO CLAIMS BONUS

On top of your personal skills, abilities and customised fanny magnets, each race has access to individual hazard kits, a limited-use extra power mode that can provide either powerful protection or intense firepower. Humans get to play with inversion effect shielding and orbital strikes, mutants

expel contamination fields burning everything in their path, while Biomeks, best of all most feel, get to play Transformers, morphing their vehicles into robots with varying abilities depending on the kit used.

Obviously this last mode is extremely tempting to the casual gamer, so NetDevil is at pains to make sure it doesn't cause a population imbalance à la *World Of Warcraft's* good vs evil ratio. To that end, while the Biomek





Someone's been playing *PlanetSide*.

EARN YOUR STRIPES



"Just those good old boys, la la la..."

IT'S LIKE BEING BACK IN THE BOY SCOUTS, IF BOY SCOUTS WERE DRIPPING WITH RADIATION

In another unintended nod to the car crash fetish 'em up *Carmageddon*, pulling off spectacular stunts, grabbing plenty of 'air' (as I believe the kids call it), or killing a swathe of bad guys with the kind of stylish flair that Liberace would die for were he a 21st-century road warrior living on the edge of hope and straddling the chasm of oblivion, rewards you with various badges or merit.

Unlike many games, these badges start piling up early on, indicating that there are possibly hundreds to collect as you crack on through the world, boosting your profile and adding yet another layer to the long-term game.



Another horny *Max Power* reader?

transformation is a sexy novelty, it isn't inherently any more or less powerful than the other races' hazard modes, and it may well be that the humans' orbital strikes prove the most decisive weapon on the PvP battlefield.

18 WHEELS A-ROLLING

Speaking of which, you'll be very pleased to hear that all your *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome* fantasies can finally be played out (even the elaborate ones about Tina Turner's massive hair) in the *Auto Assault* arenas. Aside from faction combat taking place

in specific PvP zones of the world, the arenas provide structured competitive action, from destruction derby deathmatches to online race events (probably still with plenty of explosions and killing, mind you).

Teams and guilds naturally play a part in *Auto Assault*, with multiplayer convoys being the theme of the day. Intriguingly, owners of microphone headsets get to enjoy in-game voice comms when in a convoy – something that the manic nature of the game, in which it's all too easy to get lost or sidetracked should you take a wrong

turning, requires in order to maintain some semblance of group order.

At this stage however, the beta players are still waiting for the feature to be implemented into the build, so we've yet to determine how clear the sound quality is and whether or not you're better off sticking with a third-party system like TeamSpeak.

OFF-STREET PARKING

Auto Assault was always going to be a strange one. Would the mix of fast-paced road combat and MMO mechanics really work? Would there be enough depth there to keep players coming back, month in, month out? Would the subject matter be appealing

enough to lure people away from the more traditional fantasy fare?

That last question remains to be seen of course, but for the first two it seems as though NetDevil has a clear enough gameplan and is pulling off its ambitious project with a certain aplomb. From a personal perspective we'd like to see more in the way of open expanses to explore, and more emphasis on the driving side of things rather than the combat – which already feels satisfying, if overpowering, at times.

But that's what the beta test is for – to work on balancing as well as bug testing, and we have every confidence that *Auto Assault* could be a well-oiled motor once it hits its winter release date. [E]

FIGHT CLUB



FIRST RULE OF FIGHT CLUB: PC ZONE OWNZ J00
FIGHT CLUB MODERATORS: REX MUNDI GOWERLY & RAD ANDY

Last month saw our first *City Of Heroes* Fight Club, and to say we were nervous would be a massive understatement. Would anyone show up? Would they all be waaay more powerful than us? Would our costumes fit properly? Turns out the answer to all three was an emphatic yes.

The Emerald lobby of the COH PvP arena was packed to bursting with costumed heroes, all waiting for Ginger-Vitus, Doctor McThistle and Yorkshire-Man to show up – and they weren't to be disappointed. Of course, everyone else was hovering around the level 50 mark, whereas the ZONE League Of Justice could barely manage double figures.

But thanks to the arena's power handicapping system we managed to make a decent enough fist of things.

Easily the standout matches of the night were the 30-man Battle Royales, even if they were mostly excuses for everyone to beat the snot out of us (or play "bash the Thistle" as Jamie M described it). A couple of great four-

way team matches also saw some intense action, and it's safe to say the whole event was a roaring success from the get-go. We can't wait for our second COH venture, happening as you read this and with a full report next issue. Will's brushing the crumbs from his Night Porter suit, Suzy's frantically levelling up Uzibat, and we should have a full roster next time.

Other than beating up the ZONE boys, we also found time to hold an impromptu costume competition, with some truly standout entries on show. The eventual winners were Nightbringer's mean and moody oriental theme, the crazy husband and wife team of Mr and Bride Of Fook, and the ultimate winner being Zero51's classic look. Copies of *Battlefield 2* on their way to each of you, with Zero51 winning some exclusive, limited-edition, signed *City Of Heroes* artwork. Well done to all and many, many thanks to everyone who turned up for making it such a memorable night. Here's to the next one!

UPCOMING FIGHT CLUB EVENTS

THURSDAY AUGUST 18

6.30pm - 8.30pm

Battlefield 2

*all details subject to change. Be sure to check www.zonegames.co.uk for the latest information

COME & 'AVE A GO!
www.zonegames.co.uk
for all the info



Mr Fook and Bride, his lovely wife.



The ZONE boys get to work.



Zero51 celebrates his win.



Firecrack watches Jamie M deal some damage.



Quite the turnout on the night.



Stand by for action.



Sefton, underdressed and underpowered.

ZONECHAT



THE baking heat has got to us. At the time of the last Zone Chat, temperatures in the office exceeded 32 degrees and showed no sign of cooling. Luckily for Will, he was enjoying the delights of an air-conditioned flight, jetting over to France for our *King Kong* preview (see page 40), so ably jumping into the breach was young Suzy, joining Prezzer and the usual gang for an hour and half of crude innuendo and bad gaming puns.

Also joining in were Sam Kielsen and Michael Filby, and the subjects covered everything from good old *Enemy Territory* (and why we don't run it in Fight Club anymore), *Guild Wars* and, for some reason, why everyone in the channel wants to, er, shag Steve Hill. (NeverQuest is obviously more popular than we thought.)



**WEDNESDAY
AUGUST 17
5.00PM - 6.00PM**

Mostly though, the night was taken up with our patented caption compo. When presented with the heat-affected, racing-obsessed pic of Ms Wallace (left) the comedy entries started to flood in. With a copy of *City Of Heroes*, *World Of Warcraft* and *Lineage II* up for grabs you can understand why.

Following plenty of crudeness, silliness and just plain insanity, the eventual winner was escaped_monkey

with "Suzy crashes her electric wheelchair into yet another desk." Well done chap!

You'll notice we're shortening the length of Zone Chat for the next one but don't worry, you'll still enjoy all the usual fun and games, just better condensed and with less waffle. Or something.

To join in, just grab an IRC application from our cover disc, log on to Quakenet and /join #pcz to find our online home. Hop to it.

LAN ROVER

Lan Lan Lanny McLan Lan... with Steve Randall

■ Another 24 hours of LAN goodness (or is that badness?). The sixth *Zombie LAN* is taking place on August 6 and kicks off at 6pm. Narborough Village Community Centre in Norfolk will house the event, details of which can be found at www.zombielan.co.uk. There will be 60 attendees plus crew – so *Battlefield 2* should have no problem filling the largest maps. Expect to have a devilish time.

■ A three-day event in Manchester from those jokers at www.L4G.co.uk (L4G... LAG... geddit?) After a successful 41-player turnout for the first event, the puns carry on with 'Episode IV: A New Home'. It'll cost you just £25 to find out if the organisers are just as funny in real life. Then all you need to do is get yourself to the TA centre in Fallowfield for the start on August 5.

■ If Manchester's too far for you, the Hollies in Stoke-On-Trent are also hosting an event on

the same three days. It will cost £3 per day for spectators, or £30 for participants (£10 more if you want to hire a monitor). With 55 spots available, you may still get in. That said, with CLUK10 following only 84 days later it might be an idea to book for that now at www.centralanuk.co.uk.

■ Finally, www.hglan.co.uk is organising another well-sponsored event at the Queen Mary University, in London's Mile End Road site. The costs are a low £20 for two days and you usually walk away with more than the cost of the entry fee in prizes. Not a bad deal by any means, and coupled with the great craic this is a must-visit LAN.

■ If you're not able to get to that event, keep popping into my website at www.gglan.co.uk. I'll be hosting an event at the same location, and will post the details soon... All the best, Scalper out.

GUILDHALL



▲ IN THE WORDS OF THE CLERK, MEET ONLINE NOW OR FOREVER HOLD YOUR PEACE...

We've helped plenty of lost souls find gaming partners over the last two years and the search continues apace. Whether it's a friendly get-together with a few guys on a *BF2* server near you, or a long-term commitment to be the best of the best in the ranked *CSS* ladders, all are welcome here...

CLAN: [KoN] (Knights of Nil)
CONTACT: knightshifty@yahoo.co.uk
WEBSITE: www.konclan.com
MAIN GAME: *Call Of Duty, Counter-Strike: Source*
DETAILS: We are the *COD* squad from the former =[DiVAS]= clan looking for new and old friends to join us on our *COD*, *CSS* and TeamSpeak servers. We play league and friendly matches and may be looking for new recruits.

CLAN: special intelligence force -SIF-
CONTACT: plaster@bopenworld.com
WEBSITE: sifhq.com
MAIN GAME: *Call Of Duty: United Offensive, Delta Force: Land Warrior, Joint Ops*
DETAILS: We are a small clan with members in Holland, Belgium and the UK. We have a 26-player server for *COD* and have just joined ClanBase. We are always on the lookout for new, dedicated members – prove your worth in a quick tryout and help us take ClanBase by storm. There's nothing like getting shot by someone you know!

CLAN: =YC-UK=
CONTACT: kevinwalker20@aol.com
WEBSITE: www.yc-uk.com
MAIN GAMES: *Day Of Defeat, Day Of Defeat: Source*
DETAILS: We are one of the most active *Day Of Defeat* clans in the UK, with loads of custom maps (including some exclusive to =YC-UK=) and old favourites alike. One of the only adult-only servers available, if you want to have a laugh – get yourself in here. Now recruiting!

CLAN: [ATF]Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms
CONTACT: Forums or k1klass@atf-clan.net
WEBSITE: www.atf-clan.net
MAIN GAME: *Battlefield 2, Desert Combat, Counter-Strike: Source*
DETAILS: Over 18s only and membership across Europe, with dedicated game and comms servers. We compete in ClanBase and *EnemyDown* ladders and have been around for two years. If you like a laugh, a beer and some serious gaming then get in touch!

CLAN: Armed Response
CONTACT: rogue@armedresponse.co.uk
WEBSITE: www.armedresponse.co.uk
MAIN GAME: *Battlefield 1942, Ghost Recon*
DETAILS: We are a new, but very skilled and experienced clan. Our main games are *Battlefield* and *Ghost Recon*, but we also play *Pro Evo 2* and *F1 Challenge*. We are looking for mature players who just want to play and have fun. We also operate a TeamSpeak server.

CLAN: (SE) Sons of Elendil
CONTACT: trey@darkjedi.org
WEBSITE: www.darkjedi.org/club/bfme
MAIN GAME: *LOTR: Battle For Middle-earth*
DETAILS: We're a dedicated *BFME* clan and the biggest out there. We are currently looking to recruit new members of whatever skill and already have around 80 members. We consider ourselves a fun, enjoyable and helpful clan whose mission is to keep *BFME* around for a long time.

To feature in Guildhall, send your details and no more than 50 words describing your group to online.zone@pczone.co.uk (subject line: GUILDHALL) or to Guildhall, PC ZONE, Future Publishing, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6FP.



Possibly the world's largest BYOC (Bring Your Own Computer).



The CPL crowd enjoy the action.



The TSN boys provided the commentary.



Letting off steam mid-event.

E-SPORTING LIFE

All the latest news from the wide, wide world of professional gaming. Your man at the E-Sports desk: *Philip Wride*

IT'S WITH a heavy heart that I have to tell you that this will be my last column for a while – but fear not, it will still be jam-packed with all the latest E-Sports results and gossip. First, with both Rio and Sweden done and dusted, the CPL World Tour

moves towards its mid-point with CPL Summer in Dallas on the horizon. Feedback from the events seems to suggest that Rio de Janeiro was the best place anyone's been to yet for an event, with the hotel having its own private beach. In terms of results, much

like Sweden it was Sander 'Vo0' Kaasjager who took the top spot for both competitions, beating the world's best-known gamer in the finals, Fatal1ty.

For the UK representatives, Sweden produced the best result of the tour yet with David 'Zaccubus' Treacy from 4Kings taking eighth place and a cool sum of \$1,250 for his troubles. With this finish he also qualifies for the Grand Final in December, with rumours abound that it will be held in New York with a prize offering of \$500,000. If Treacy manages to take eighth position in the Grand Final he will scoop himself a welcome \$12,500 for his troubles during the year.

Across the other side of the globe we saw the ACON5 Grand Finals in Xian, China (sponsored by ABIT), along with the start of the second season of the World E-Sports Games in Korea. Landed-Gaming were representing the UK in China while 4Kings are battling their way through the competition in Korea. At the time of writing, 4Kings have progressed to the semi-finals of the competition and look set to match their previous result of second place in Season One. For Landed, it was a

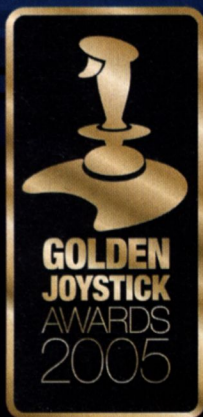
slightly different story where they finished with disappointing 13th-16th places, although it was their first international excursion and as such should be used as more of a training experience. They had a tough draw in their half of the bracket with the first game being against Australia's finest in the form of fzer0. This was followed by another baptism of fire against Alternate Attax from Germany and although they fared better in this game, it wasn't to be. The UK's only other player to be flown to China was Alex Bond for the *Warcraft III* competition, but unfortunately he met with the same fate as Landed.

Looking forward we have the CPL Summer competition in Dallas, and the ESWC Grand Finals in France at the beginning of July, before the German leg of the World Tour in August – and all of these promise to be corkers. The world's best *Painkiller* players will once again duke it out again for the \$15,000 first place prize, while in France the top *Counter-Strike* teams will fight it out for the \$40,000 top spot.

That's your lot from me. See you in the games sometime... [P2]



David 'Zaccubus' Treacy fighting his way to eighth place.



THEY'RE BACK!

VOTING GOES
LIVE ON
14TH JULY

HAVE YOUR SAY
ON WHO WALKS
AWAY WITH THE
BIGGEST GAMING
AWARDS OF
THE YEAR

SO MAKE SURE YOU...

GO TO WWW.GOLDENJOYSTICKS.CO.UK FROM 14th JULY
TO CAST YOUR VOTE AND BE IN WITH A CHANCE OF WINNING **BIG PRIZES.**

SPONSORED BY...



WORLD OF WARCRAFT: BATTLEGROUND

■ Price: Free download | Pub: VU Games | Dev: Blizzard Entertainment | ETA: Out Now | www.worldofwarcraft.com

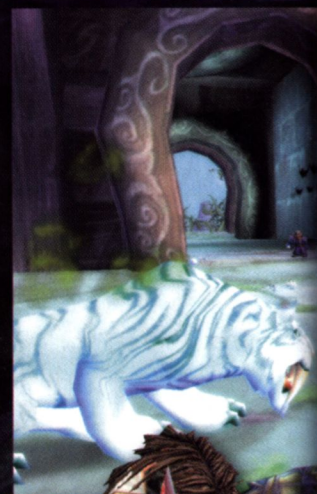
REQUIRES PIII 1GHz, 512MB RAM, GeForce 3 or Radeon 8500 64MB 3D card, a 56k Internet connection and a full subscription to *World Of Warcraft*

DESIRES P4 2.5GHz, 1GB RAM, 256MB 3D card and a broadband Internet connection

There's nothing *Paul Presley* likes more than a good scrap – just don't keep him waiting...



As ever, the shiny angels of death are present to dab TCP on mortal wounds.



INPERSPECTIVE

CITY OF HEROES

Reviewed Issue 155, Score 86%
Consensual PvP was recently added to the world of super-spandex in the shape of *Issue 4*'s Colosseum arenas. As with *Battlegrounds* you're at the mercy of player numbers, but when it works, it's a treat.

GUILD WARS

Reviewed Issue 156, Score 94%
Doing the PvP thing from the start and doing it right, *Guild Wars* is centred around the team-on-team game mechanic, and manages to get the balance perfectly. Plus, you're almost never left in a queue.

ACCEPTED wisdom has it that whenever an MMO is granted a major expansion, add-on or upgrade, the existing subscriber base will become instantly polarised and a vast majority will turn their noses up in disgust at how the development team has single-handedly decimated their entire reason for living – the game into which they've poured so much time, love, effort and (most importantly) subscription fees. Player numbers inevitably dwindle, game servers become akin to deserted wastelands and the companies in charge start firing off press releases left, right and centre about how wonderful the game is, how steady the user

growth figures are and whether you'd like to take advantage of its special 14-day free 'comeback' trial offers.

As far as *World Of Warcraft* goes however, accepted wisdom can get knotted, as the player figures are so astronomically huge. Entire university mathematics departments have been taken over by Blizzard's accountancy platoons in order to accurately calculate the monthly profit figures. Therefore, any wholesale changes to the infrastructure of the game are certain to be swallowed up without incident, and the number of aggrieved souls berating the public message boards barely registers even a

ripple in the overall player-base pond waters.

BLOODY KIDS

Thus it was when the PvP Honor System (named with the Americanised spelling in yet the latest example of our increasing role as the 51st US state) rolled off the production and testing lines. Infected servers from Agamaggan to Zenedar were swamped by the outcries from players suffering at the hands of murder-obsessed kill gangs running rampage across Azeroth, slaughtering anyone who dared to even try playing



The roof, the roof, the roof is on fire...



Rolling fields and skeletal horses – it can only be Azeroth.



“Leave him alone Keith! He’s not worth it!”

“Battlegrounds often feels like little more than a queueing simulator”

player-killing business out by providing a much needed sense of focus and structure to geek-on-geek combat. Conscript you see, solves everything. Drum some discipline into the buggers. Worked in '42.

TIME TO SPARE

But does it work now? The Battlegrounds have been open for a month or so and opinion, like Israel, is divided. The common consensus is that, while the actual content itself is pretty enjoyable and rewarding enough to keep coming back to, the surrounding framework is one of the biggest public messes since the million-man march took a pit-stop in a local curry house, blithely ordered the strongest thing on the menu, then discovered that the protest site only had a single working portaloo.

Mostly it's the waiting times. Putting the NHS to shame, *Battlegrounds* requires even teams of Alliance and Horde players to fill up the rosters before starting up a match. Unfortunately, there's a couple of teensy little problems with that system. First is that just about every server in existence is running at a 3:1 or 4:1 Alliance to Horde ratio. Meaning that if you're on the side of the goody two-shoes brigade, *Battlegrounds* often feels like little more than a queueing simulator. Worse is that you have only the barest indication of how long you're likely to be waiting for a game to begin. Even then it's an estimate, and usually a hopelessly inaccurate one at that. I was often told that my expected waiting time would be as little as two minutes, only to watch the Time Spent In Queue counter clock the three-hour



“This is our land, you Horde bastard!” “But do you have a flag?”

mark and show no sign of coming to a conclusion.

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

The second barrier to actually having any fun with the game you're paying nine quid a month to enjoy, is that the Battlegrounds have certain level limits. For the basic Capture The Flag action found in Warsong Gulch, you need to be at least level 21, with separate queues forming for each sub-group of ten levels. The idea is to stop level 50 demi-gods from taking on mere

level 21 mortals. The effect is that unless you're at the highest level in each tier (30, 40, 50 and 60), you might as well not bother as you'll be outgunned anyway. It actually has the effect of making level 30 players, for instance, actively *not* want to go up a level as it means they'll have to grind through another nine before they can really take part again.

Alterac Valley, meanwhile, is the more mouth-watering map to play on, containing the full range of *Battlegrounds'* pre-release promises – mini-quests,

sensibly. Blizzard, in the meantime, ostensibly just shrugged its collective shoulders and put it all down to high spirits, safe in the knowledge that a) the rampagers would tire themselves out eventually and go back to sleep; b) the somewhat under-populated PvE servers were starting to fill up nicely with migrants; and c) the upcoming militaristic *Battlegrounds* enhancement would soon sort all that nasty



Same queue-time as Chessington's Professor Burp's Bubbleworks. And much better too.

support roles, tactical objectives, capture points and so on. The full fantasy war spectrum in fact. Trouble here is it's only open to level 51-60 players and as before, the preponderance of maxed-out players hanging around means that it's a pointless affair below level 58. Which makes the queuing even worse if you happen to be on a server during its quieter hours, as you'll be waiting even longer for appropriately levelled players to turn up on both sides.

WHAT A TO-DO

So basically, *Battlegrounds* isn't really the kind of thing you can just jump on and play at a moment's notice (you know, like most other games in the world). On the plus side, you don't literally have to hang around in a queue while you wait. You just make your way to the registration desk, sign up for a match, then are free to wander off and bash woodland



Where's Leeroy when you need him?

animals on the head while you watch the queue timer explore the more fantastical types of number currently in existence. It's little comfort though, as on those few occasions when you do make it in, oh ho!, what a time you'll have. Meaning all those times you can't get in are even more infuriating. It's like being dropped into a giant field of willing, naked porn stars, then realising your legs are encased in concrete and they're all roller skating just beyond reach. Apparently.

Yes, the actual *Battlegrounds* themselves are glorious. OK, Alterac Valley is glorious. Warsong Gulch is merely good, but ultimately trivial, and I'm not personally certain that Capture The Flag gameplay really works in this environment. Also, Warsong Gulch matches only last until three flags are captured (sometimes taking as little as 15 to 20 minutes), before dumping you back into the main world and forcing you to go through the whole queuing system again. Madness.

Still, there's the undeniable pleasure that always comes with PvP gaming, and being part of a well-balanced ten-man team with a strict chain of command and players who know their stuff can make things very enjoyable.

BRAVE NEW WORLD

Which is equally, if not more true of Alterac Valley. This is the much broader in scope 'quest' affair, designed ideally for teams of 40 and with a wealth of gameplay options. Essentially it

QUEUE THIS SIDE



Abandon hope ye who enter here?

THEY DO SAY THAT TIME IS MONEY... SO CAN I BORROW TEN MINUTES FOR LUNCH?

So what's the solution to *Battlegrounds* waiting times? Hard to say. You're at the mercy of your server's populace, unfortunately. Certainly, only having two *Battlegrounds* and giving the only one of any real interest such a limited acceptance policy, plus hiding the entrances out in the middle of nowhere doesn't help. You'd almost be forgiven for thinking that Blizzard didn't actually want anyone to play the things (it's only one step away from covering each entrance with a big blanket and a sign reading 'Go Away, Nothing To See Here'). The current rumour is that the development team is thinking of shifting the entrance zones into the far more populated town areas which should help drum up interest. However, we'll have to see if and when that actually happens and whether it works.

Possibly a few more lower-levelled arenas could do the trick, although it might have the side effect of diluting the player numbers from other zones even more. Maybe scheduled opening times are the key? But at the end of the day, the only solution might be to eliminate the minimum player numbers and make the zones persistent, allowing a *PlanetSide*-style dip in, dip out game style. Basically, I'm just glad I'm not a games designer.

takes the form of a small 'world zone', complete with towns, caves, wandering monsters, NPCs and, of course, enemy players. By and large the quests you'll pick up – capture a mine and harvest its resources, take control of a tower or outpost, raid a dungeon and destroy a 'boss' creature and so on – will both have a beneficial effect on your side if you succeed, but will also be the targets of the opposing team. Shifting front lines of battle (sadly still affected by lag when the numbers get high), diversification of tactics, support groups – the whole thing actually has the effect of feeling like the old *Warcraft* RTS games, without the comforting 'hand of god' viewpoint.

It can be confusing, again mostly dependent on your level of experience and the competence of your team-mates, but with Alterac matches capable of lasting for hours at a time, it at least provides a worthwhile experience once you finally make it inside.

Battlegrounds is like the smashing orangey bit at the centre of a Jaffa Cake sponge that's crumbling and hard to eat. Think of it as a nice side dish to your main *WOW* game, something that can be dipped into from time to time (although not really the time to time of your choosing), but shouldn't be seen as the defining *WOW* experience. Besides which, we're British, god damn it! Queuing is in our blood. [X]

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Really well-structured zones
- ✓ Reduces the amount of mindless PvP in the main game
- ✓ Good rewards in Alterac Valley
- ✗ Be ready to queue
- ✗ Queue some more – with no real indication for how long
- ✗ Lag still an issue on the front lines

79

Like being in Disneyland at peak opening times



STAR WARS GALAXIES: EPISODE III RAGE OF THE WOOKIEES

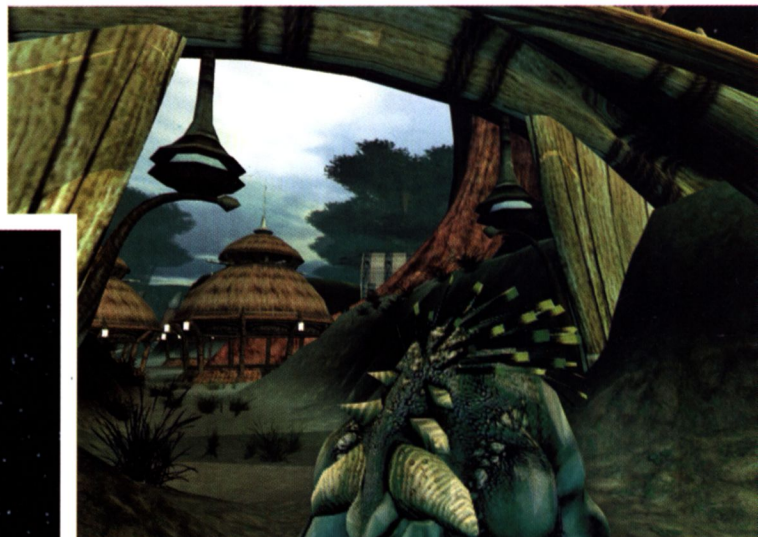
■ £19.99 (as part of *SWG: The Total Experience* package)
 Pub: Activision | Dev: Sony Online Entertainment/LucasArts
 ETA: Out Now | www.starwarsgalaxies.com

REQUIRES PIII 933, 256MB RAM, 32MB 3D card, Internet and a full subscription to *SWG: An Empire Divided*
DESIRES P4 2GHz, 1GB RAM, 128MB 3D card, high-speed broadband

Paul Presley comes to terms with the hairy beast within



That's not a wookiee.



"Mother!"

SO, HAS *Star Wars Galaxies* been destroyed by forces more powerful than any gamer could possibly imagine (ie the SOE development team)? About two months ago the long awaited Combat Upgrade was finally introduced to the universe and thousands of voices cried out in terror and were suddenly silenced as they cancelled their subscriptions.

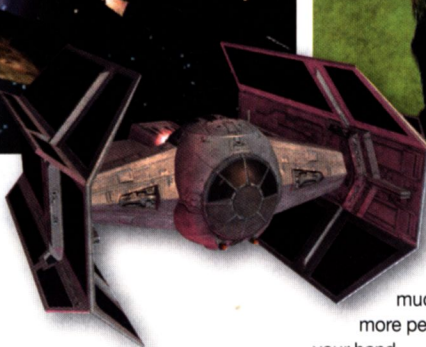
Thing is, it isn't that bad a revamp. Aside from the bugs and the relative lack of testing on display (apparently due to the rush to meet the *Episode III*

release dates) and the nerfing of Jedi and Entertainer characters and the painful level grinding now introduced and the reduction of a rather nice skill-based system that made the thing stand out in a sea of clones to a more traditional, some may say clichéd EQ-style level-system... Well, you get the idea.

HEAR ME ROAR

Basically, a lot of people were displeased, partly with the results of the upgrade, but mostly with SOE's seemingly blind indifference to the suffering of the fans and its insistence that they'll just have to get used to it as this is the way it is from now on. Not SOE's finest hour...

Of course, this is ostensibly a review of the *Rage Of The Wookiees* expansion pack, not *SWG* as a whole, but it's almost impossible to ignore the ramifications that the CU caused, the impact it had on player numbers and the general level of dissatisfaction in the game as it presently stands.



What *Rage* mostly brings to the troubled universe is a new planet (the Wookiee homeworld of Kashyyyk) and a new role for space pilots – mining. Every space zone now has mineral-rich asteroids, mining stations and the ability for you to team up in giant multi-user mining ships to make your fortunes. It's no *EVE Online* of course, and in fact comes off as being rather simplistic, but at least it's there and gives a sense of purpose to owning *Jump To Lightspeed*.

Kashyyyk itself is lovely enough, full of Wookiee tribesmen, story-based quests and stunning (for the engine) scenery. It's all for the higher-level characters out there mind you and is heavily combat-based. Kashyyyk is not a world for idle exploration (unlike Tatooine or Naboo for instance),

and you need to have a good blaster not so much by your side, more permanently glued to your hand.

NO NEW HOPE

Not so long ago, in countless game industry gossip forums far, far away, a rumour started buzzing about the possible closure of *Star Wars Galaxies* as a whole due to LucasArts' displeasure with the way the game was being run,

with George's boys planning to restart the whole thing themselves, making something much more *Star Wars-y* in the process. Although this has been denied left, right and centre, there's no denying that *SWG* is hardly in the best of health right now and something drastic needs to be done to restore balance to the force. Certainly something more than a simple expansion pack, that's for sure. Help us Lucas-Wan, you're our only hope. [X]

INPERSPECTIVE

EVE ONLINE
 Reviewed Issue 130, Score 88%
 If you want to mine in space, you might as well do it right. *EVE* has everything the budding astronaut could want from an MMO.

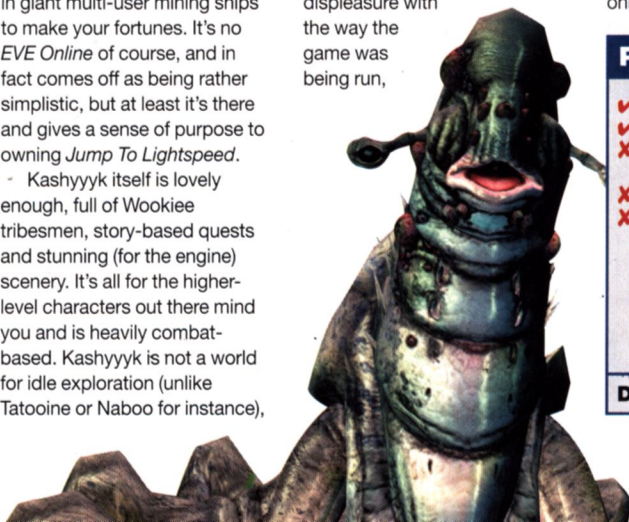
PLANETSIDE
 Reviewed Issue 131, Score 82%
 A bit old in the tooth now, but the never ending war on Auraxis can still hold its own in an online fight. Really needs a sequel soon though.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Kashyyyk looks lovely
- ✓ Space mining adds variety
- ✗ Combat Upgrade removed all originality from the experience
- ✗ Nothing for new players
- ✗ Buggy

57

Darker and darker





This car isn't damaged. Yet.

They go fast when they move, honest.

LIVE FOR SPEED: S2

£12 | Pub/Dev: S Roberts, E Bailey, V van Vlaardingen
ETA: Out Now | www.liveforspeed.net

REQUIRES: PIII 800MHz, 256MB RAM, recent video card and a 56K modem
DESIRES: P4 2GHz, 512MB RAM, 6600GT/X700 PRO or better and broadband

Phil Wand marvels at the game with no publisher, played by people with no manners

A GLANCE to my right reveals a pimped-up Mitsubishi Starion, its owner fond of white paint and gold wheels. In the brief moment that I'm looking his way, I see him turn to face me and honk his horn - if there was a button marked 'wave medallion' he'd have pressed that too.

Over my left shoulder is a guy in his Fiat Punto, its yellow paint making it stand out like only a yellow Punto can. I remember

the car from the last race because it was weighed down with three passengers - two in the back, one up front. Best not to ask.

Some lengths behind is a car with a rumpled bonnet and the number plate UR SHIT. This was the guy who drove into the back of me after I made a poor start, who cursed like I'd reversed into him and who is gaining on me at ten times the speed of our previous encounter.

Five racers brake hard for the first corner ahead, rubber curving across the tarmac. Somewhere in the smoke a car goes sideways, scattering cones

as it slides off the track. Starion man quickly puts a nose ahead, throwing me off my intended line and the party Punto gives us both a wide berth. As expected, Captain Hilarious in the UR SHIT missile rams me at full tilt, launching me into the Mitsubishi at my newly acquired speed of 110mph. Starion man is not happy with the redesign and a vote to kick me is started - within seconds I'm back at the main menu.

NEED TO BLEED

Welcome then, to *Live For Speed*, the only game to include a warning about the sons of bitches who play it. Of course,

you can opt to race offline against AI cars, but that's being defeatist - it's also defeating the object of what is, on rare occasions, the most glorious multiplayer driving experience ever. In clean races you begin to appreciate just what the three-man development team has achieved: a promised land for petrol-heads. The new S2 version looks, sounds and feels more natural than any rival, though do make sure you use a feedback wheel and headphones.

S2 updates the existing S1 release site in numerous ways, most obviously refining the handling of the cars and including a damage model that contorts and deforms the cars to a degree that won't fail to make you laugh (side panels are shed, bumpers are mangled and dropped and so on). There are also eight fantasy cars added to the existing S1 line-up, plus three fantasy

tracks and tons of new features. All things considered, and bearing in mind that there isn't room to consider even one tenth of them here, *Live For Speed* is really very good indeed. Its main accomplishments are to make the car feel gratifyingly real and to do so in an authentic multiplayer environment. If only the servers weren't packed with equally authentic arseholes. **PC**

INPERSPECTIVE

GTR

Reviewed Issue 153, Score 90%
Highly realistic racing sim was just what us car nuts were after, but it focuses on unattainable supercars and can be too anal for casual drivers.

TOCA RACE DRIVER 2

Reviewed Issue 142, Score 89%
A genuinely fun, career-driven driving game with a colossal range of motors and disciplines. No other title packs so much into one box.



Nice day for a leisurely drive, eh?

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Feels so real
- ✓ Damage modelling
- ✓ Stability and compatibility
- ✓ Rally tracks are a hoot
- ✗ The people who play it
- ✗ Not revolutionary

90

A remarkable achievement



"It's just Creme de Menthe, vodka and a dash of Sambuca. You'll love it."



On a road to virtually nowhere.



Now that's what I call a treehouse.

ASHERON'S CALL 2: LEGIONS

■ £19.99 (+ \$12.95 monthly subscription) | Pub: Turbine Inc | Dev: Turbine Inc
ETA: Out Now | www.asheronscall2.com

REQUIRES PIII 733MHz, 256MB RAM, 32MB 3D card and a 56k modem DESIRES P4 1GHz, 512MB RAM, 64MB 3D card and broadband

Long in the tooth, a dwindling fan base and constantly being moved from one owner to another. Paul Presley knows how this MMO is feeling...

AT LAST count, AC2 was existing on around 14,000 subscribers, despite recent attempts by Turbine to woo players back to the franchise following its acquisition of the brand from Microsoft. Unfortunately, the reasons why most of them left in the first place are beyond the ken of a mere expansion pack (unless that expansion pack is called

Asheron's Call 2: World Of Warcraft). *Legions* is one for the existing crowd only, bringing all the new content you'd expect of an MMO add-on pack – new weapons, new spells, new armour, new dungeons and quests and a whole new continent called, ahem, Knorr.

CHICKEN TONIGHT Seriously people. Sometimes it's worth taking five minutes to Google your fantasy world's name to check on these things. It's even spelt the same way as the luxury food sauce manufacturer. Anyway, before I get sidetracked, there's also a new race to explore (two if you have the pre-order bonus), the Emyrean magic users, vanished from the world ages

past, now returning to reclaim their position of power. It all sounds great on paper and the content should be more than enough to keep the AC2 faithful happy, especially as it's almost entirely designed for high-level characters. A state of affairs that kind of betrays the thinking at Turbine. It's almost as if it realises that it's a lost cause appealing to new players with a game engine that's almost three years behind everything else, so it'll do what it can to cater for the loyal 14,000 and try not to lose their subscriptions. That engine, by the way. AC2 has been running since early 2003 and when it started it was the best out there. *EverQuest* couldn't hold a candle and it made *UO* look like the top-

down 2D tomfoolery it was. But time and technology wait for no man and the intervening years haven't been kind. **BRUSH STROKES** So despite a slight lick of paint, AC2 still sports one of the ugliest interfaces in MMO history and has game options that are insultingly simplistic. Combat is the most evident form of who has the most powerful numbers we've seen, crafting is still pretty much a pointless affair and

there's none of the thought, care or polish that we almost take for granted in more recent titles. In fact, playing AC2 just makes us appreciate our current state of affairs all the more. *Legions* changes none of this and as such offers nothing to

attract the new player. The present AC2 crowd will find everything they expect and it's at least encouraging to see Turbine still catering for this small but friendly and fiercely loyal crowd. But the end is surely nigh, especially when Turbine's next two titles – *Dungeons & Dragons Online* and *The Lord Of The Rings Online* – arrive. *Asheron's* still calling, but the signal's getting weaker... [E]

IN PERSPECTIVE

WORLD OF WARCRAFT
Reviewed Issue 152, Score 95%
Pretty much the sole reason that every other MMO title (including AC2) is losing players, *WOW* has gone from strength to staggering strength, despite the odd PvP hiccup along the way.

GUILD WARS
Reviewed Issue 156, Score 94%
An example of how to make a fantasy online game friendly, accessible and appealing to the masses. And it's not just the lack of subscription fees – the game is pretty damn fine too.

"Playing Asheron's Call 2 just makes us appreciate our current state of affairs more"

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Loyal audience
- ✓ Lots of content
- ✗ Ageing really badly now
- ✗ Hideous user interface
- ✗ Nothing for the newcomer
- ✗ High levels only

62

For acquired tastes only

SAS: INTO THE LION'S DEN 3.0

SIZE 600MB REQUIRES Full version of UT2004
sas.jolt.co.uk

TOTAL CONVERSION

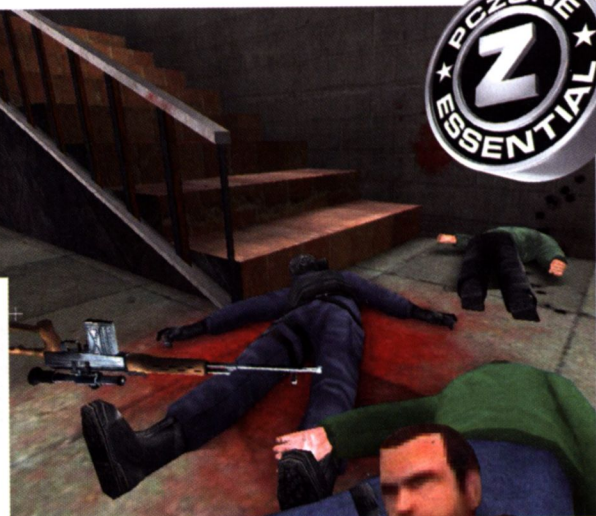
It's *Tony Lamb* to the slaughter



Flooring £5.49 per square metre, B&Q.



"I'm coming to get you!"



When Sleeping Lions goes wrong.

Although *Counter-Strike* remains the benchmark for the genre, SAS is good fun too. Ignore the skewed colours and wooden movements and there's a great mod underneath. Will there be an update for Unreal Engine 3 we wonder?

PCZONE VERDICT **80**
 Good, but showing its age

RELATIVELY few mods cause a frisson of excitement with a new release, but SAS is one of them. First crafted for *UT* and now updated for *UT2004*, this has consistently been a high scorer, so an update was keenly awaited. Focusing on the British, Aussie and Kiwi SAS regiments, SAS follows the successful formula beloved of *Counter-Strike* devotees worldwide. The

opposition can be terrorists, paramilitaries or enemy regulars depending on the mission chosen, which vary between regular Team Deathmatch and more specialist Objective and Sabotage tasks. Likewise, the weapon loadouts reflect the firepower available to the real-life firetroopers and are just as effective in despatching the bad guys. Knife 'em, shoot 'em or blow 'em up – it's your choice.

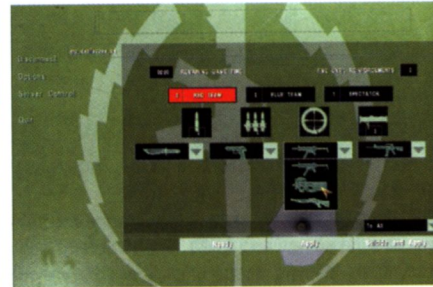
Unfortunately, SAS looks dated. The *UT* colour scheme and texture handling was never the best for realism, and animation is weak by modern standards (even with ragdoll corpses). Despite this, SAS is still one of the better *UT* mods around, boasting plenty of well-designed maps, decent skins and loads of weapons and action. Server coverage is limited but bots are available.



You'll never get a Trigen in that.



The scenery still looks amazing.



Plenty for the gun-nut there.

OBSIDIAN EDGE

SIZE 157MB REQUIRES Full version of *Far Cry*
www.obsidianedge.net

TOTAL CONVERSION

Tony Lamb gets sharper

FAR CRY has few faults and it's an absolute stunner in the eye-candy department. Plus, with some fiendish AI and a capability to handle big complicated maps, it's positively sub-zero on the single-player coolness scale. It's a real star – one of the best FPS games around – but with its weak multiplayer game, the long-term popularity was always going to suffer. *Obsidian Edge* looks to redress that imbalance by improving the multiplayer experience and adding lots more besides.

OE borrows from the gameplay of established military team shooters, including *Call Of Duty* and *Ghost Recon*, adapting their proven styles and combining them with the lushness of the Crytek engine to produce a great-looking mod with a selection of tasty tweaks.

The emphasis is on realism, which means the environment and the weaponry can be rather unforgiving – bullets even spin you round as they hit. *OE* also adds a class structure and range of weapons that will be

familiar to gun nuts, as well as three new gametypes – Last Man Standing, VIP (think Hunted in *Half-Life*) and Domination.

At the moment online support is slim, but that should improve with a fuller release and as the mod gains in popularity. In the meantime, a LAN game is a fun and welcome way to boost the multiplayer *Far Cry* experience.

PCZONE VERDICT **75**
 Showing promise



Is it a plane, is it a chopper, or both?

DEGENERATION 1.11



SIZE 273MB REQUIRES Full version of Return To Castle Wolfenstein

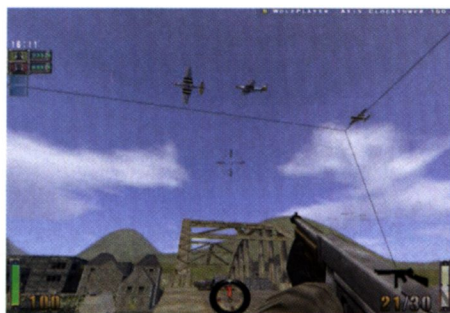
www.planetwolfenstein.com/tramdesign/degeneration

TOTAL CONVERSION

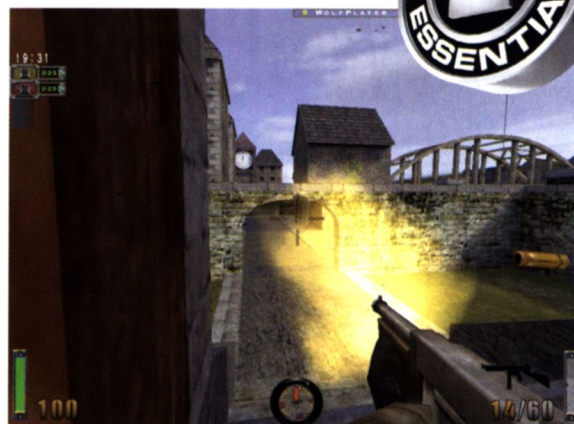
Tony Lamb's been a degenerate for years...



Nothing beats a good helmet.



Go on, you might get lucky.



Well, someone doesn't like bridges.



Bet that gives off some heat.

CLEVER CHAPS

those German scientists. Jets, rockets and nuclear energy – all of them developed or under research by the end of WWII. Also supposedly under research was Nikola Tesla's 'Death Ray' – a potential war-winner.

DeGeneration builds on this idea. It's a feature-packed mod with Allied and Nazi forces racing against time to complete the construction of generators which will be used to power Death Rays. Parts are delivered by parachute into the middle of

the map and the teams have to capture them. Then, they have to add the parts to their generator and defend it from attack. If one generator reaches 100 per cent power that team wins, but likewise an enemy generator can be destroyed and that leads to a win too. It's a very clever idea.

If you're familiar with any of the WWII class/team-based titles then you'll be at home with the gameplay, but *DeGeneration* has a truly original storyline and the battle as the teams struggle to complete their generators and

wipe out the opposition adds real tension. Teamwork is essential as you have to split your resources between defence, attack and construction.

This is a highly original and enjoyable mod with excellent maps, skins and models. Online support is slim though, but a LAN game would be a blast.

PCZONE VERDICT **85**
Wolf lives on

OUT OF HELL

SIZE 156MB REQUIRES Full version of UT2004

Outofhell.net

TOTAL CONVERSION

Tony Lamb's found some new friends...

I'VE SEEN real-life zombies – I'm pretty sure one served me in a petrol station the other day – but it's not often you find yourself completely surrounded by them. Until you dive into a mod like this.

Set in the fictional town of Grinwood, the human inhabitants soon find they have nothing to smile about when a small earthquake causes strange cracks in the ground to appear and hordes of the undead to rise



Must have been some party.



Something he ate?



"Agadoo-doo-doo, push pineapple..."



How many headshots does it take to kill a zombie?

up. By the time you get involved, the majority of the population have already been infected or killed and the demons are after you too. Your aim is survival.

With a small but atmospheric map and a range of zombified enemies to fight – some fast, some slow, some dumb, some alarmingly smart – *Out Of Hell* is an enjoyable romp. The graphics

do take some getting used to though; there are some garish textures that make Grinwood a town like no other, and the zombie animations are a bit wooden too. Then again, if you're dead you're allowed to be a little stiff jointed.

Admittedly, more ammo would be nice – and since when did zombies need five or six

headshots? But with more maps, more weapons and some polish, *Out Of Hell* could be a zombie-tastically good mod.

PCZONE VERDICT **72**
Infectious fun



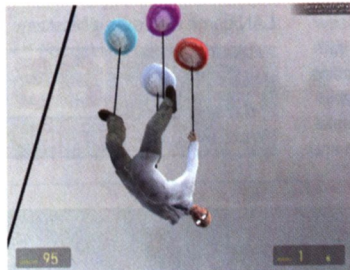
COMMUNITY CHEST



HALF-LIFE 2

Sam Kiildsen drags you back into the wonderful world of an instant classic. No gravity gun required...

Much like its predecessor, *Half-Life 2* has proved itself a huge hit with the online fraternity. While the game is still a little too fresh to have amassed enough mods, total conversions and assorted fan-made bits and pieces to rival *Half-Life*'s mighty stash, it's already inspired the community to create tons of interesting, exciting and downright odd stuff. So if you're done with negotiating the mean streets of City 17, chucking barrels around and giving the Combine a bloody nose, please open this month's Community Chest and gaze lustfully upon the wonders inside...



GARRY'S MOD (MOD)

www.garry.tv/garrysmod

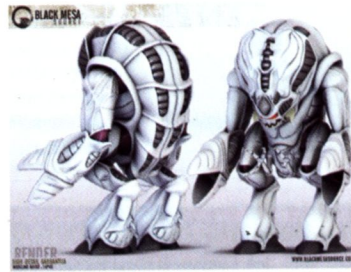
Everyone's favourite sandbox mod, this program lets you run wild with *Half-Life 2*'s tools and objects. Want to recreate Picasso's *Guernica* using Alyx, Barney and a bunch of headcrabs? Attach helium balloons to Breen and make him float away? Or arrange ragdolls into acrobatic sexual positions? This is the toy for you.



RAVENHOLM RE-RUN (MOVIE)

www.own-age.com/vids

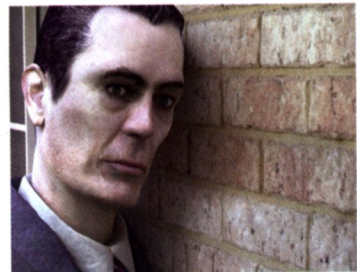
Most people remember Ravenholm as a spooky, tortuous journey through a maze-like town inhabited only by the dead, but not LightningX. This chap has blazed through this entire portion of the game in well under two minutes – and here's the video to prove it. Oh, and it was done on 'Hard' too. Bloody show-off.



BLACK MESA: SOURCE (MOD)

www.blackmesasource.com

Disappointed by *Half-Life: Source*? Join the club. But something a tad more impressive is on its way – *Black Mesa: Source*, a full, fan-made recreation of the original *Half-Life*, built from the ground up using the Source engine. No word on a release date yet, but keep your eyes locked on the forums for more info.



POGON'S GALLERY (ART)

pogon.deviantart.com/gallery

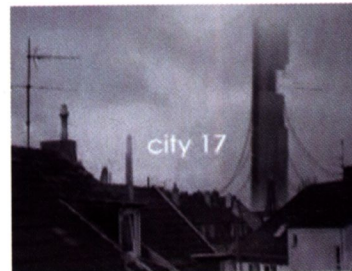
Using lots of techy stuff that hurts our brain, this Aussie graphic artist has created lifelike images of *Half-Life 2* characters and vehicles in and around his home. Our favourite is the contemplative G-Man leaning his head against a wall. But is it art? Who cares – the denizens of City 17 have never looked so real.



HDR BLOOM (VISUAL EFFECT)

www.radi-8.com

Valve's forthcoming Lost Coast level will incorporate the High Dynamic Range lighting effects that have recently been getting *Far Cry* fans into a flutter. If you're feeling impatient, download this mini-mod to add eye-popping HDR 'bloom' to *Half-Life 2*. Be aware that level loading times will increase though.



CITY 17 (MOVIE)

rapidshare.de/files/1443968/city17_divx.avi

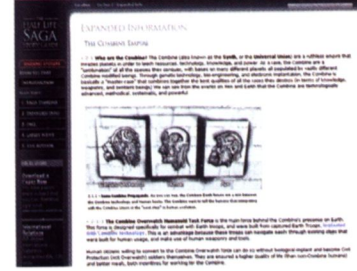
An atmospheric nine-minute short directed and shot by Daniel Eggert, *City 17* is set in *Half-Life 2*'s dystopian future. Blending live action with CGI, the film follows a young man stalked by Combine scanners and worse. It's well directed and photographed for an amateur too.



HALF-LIFE 2: SUBSTANCE (MOD)

ludus1942.ngi.it

Crazy as that cartoon frog so beloved of morons nationwide, this mod takes the original *Half-Life 2* and gleefully throws in armfuls of extra enemies and weapons. Yes, it's silly; yes, it completely messes up Valve's meticulously planned-out plot and yes, it's quite a lot of fun too.



THE HALF-LIFE SAGA (STORY GUIDE)

members.shaw.ca/halfifestory

Step this way to read about one man's sterling efforts to work out exactly what happened in the *Half-Life* games and what went on in-between times. It's a well designed, well written and well researched site, even if much of it is conjecture. But if you don't want to see the many spoilers, look away now.

STEVE HILL'S NEVERQUEST

Steve Hill continues his odyssey in *Dark Age Of Camelot*



“Can I help?” I ask. ‘Sure. Fedy’s going to strip soon. Pull his pants down”

BIG CITY, bright lights, cool, cool people. Or so I thought when I packed my bags, bade farewell to the humble surroundings of Caer Gothwaite and bought a one-way horse ticket to Camelot. I am Chinglove The Fighter and I’m about to start a new life. Trotting up to the city, it’s an ultra-vivid scene and the bustle proves somewhat bewildering compared to the isolation of village life. I attempt to blend in by sauntering casually and avoiding eye contact, but it’s a very metropolitan crowd and I feel self-consciously oafish in my lumbering armour and unkempt beard.

Pacing the smartly cobbled streets, I soon find what I’m looking for, gazing in awe upon Ye Mug, my first ever pub. Steadying myself, I brazenly stroll across the wooden floor and order a pint of frothing ale from the stout yeoman of the bar.

Barkeep Broec – for it is he – eyes me up and down, gives a barely discernible nod of tacit approval and wordlessly pours the drink. The first taste of sweet mead gives a heady rush and I begin to relax, attempting rudimentary conversation with the smartly dressed Sir Kenley. It seems they have little time for strangers in Camelot though and he dismisses me with a swish of his purple cape.

Buoyed by a few ales, I bid my farewells – which go unreturned – and hit the mean streets. Giddy with liquor, I step into a church, lured by the extravagant architecture and immaculately buffed tiling. Not quite what I expected, a selection of extrovert characters are having some kind of gathering, which appears to have very little basis in religion.

AND IN THE LORD’S HOUSE... Sheepishly asking what’s happening, the nearby Babebuffer simply replies “gang bang”. Unfamiliar with the term (cough), I politely ask: “Can I help?” To which Babebuffer replies: “Sure. Fedy’s going to strip soon – pull his pants down.”

How modern. Now I may have been drinking, but this definitely isn’t on my menu. This sort of thing doesn’t go on where I come from – well, not in public – and I politely refuse, warily eyeing the exit. Beginning to take greater interest in me, the crowd draws closer, with Napshot casually explaining: “We’re going to rape some nice women in a sec, then drink the altar wine.”

“Start the music,” orders the yellow-robed Fedykin, whose trousers I was meant to pull down, and it would appear that the orgy is about to begin. I don’t want to get sucked into this world and I make a desperate bolt for the door, lurching into the daylight, shaking, confused and alone.

This isn’t how it was meant to be. The streets were supposed to be paved with gold, or silver at least, not teeming with pederasts. What have I done? I came here to make my fortune, not lose my sphincter. For the first time I begin to yearn for Caer Gothwaite and the reassuringly simple drudgery of killing dragonflies and collecting swamp goo for coppers.

JOB SEARCH

Thus far, I’ve been living on the donation of a generous benefactor who passed through my village one fateful day. Funds are beginning to dwindle however, and the brutal reality dawns that I may have to seek gainful employment if I am to make Camelot my home. Approaching the brightly dressed Taskmaster Traint, I ask if he knows of any available positions, hopefully not of the type being utilised in that church.

Stroking his neatly trimmed beard, Traint replies: “Very well Chinglove, it’s good to see adventurers willing to help out the realm in such times. Xzarel the Devourer has taken over the caves to the south east and needs to be disposed of. Good luck!”

That’s more like it. I’m a fighter, not a lover, which with this face is probably just as well. Heading south-east, the outskirts of the town prove remarkably dangerous for a lone adventurer and

while my basic armour and big stick saw me in good stead against the dragonflies back home, Camelot breeds an altogether more vicious array of foes. Spirit hounds, gray wolf pups and plague spiders all have a nibble at me, eating into my resolve before I’ve even come close to Xzarel the Devourer.

GET DOWN THE GYM...

Even a so-called puny skeleton takes a swipe, doing some serious damage despite no visible weaponry, or indeed muscles and tendons. I’m a big man but I’m in bad shape, floundering around a foreign field with my life in real peril. I must be stupid, but a nearby putrid zombie isn’t perturbed, screaming: “Brains! I want brains!”

Lashing out wildly with my primitive staff, the zombies eventually overpower me through sheer weight of numbers, and I slump to the ground as they tuck in for a brain buffet. I came to Camelot to find myself, but now I find myself dead. ☒



Come on Chinglove, show us what you’re made of...

HARDWARE

ALL THE LATEST NEWS AND REVIEWS FROM THE WORLD OF PC HARDWARE

**PATENT
#3,138,743**



HARDWARE EDITOR Phil Wand

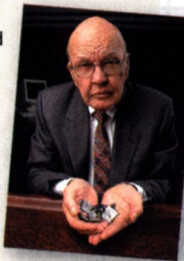
“There are only a handful of people whose works have truly transformed the world and the way we live in it,” claims Tom Engibous, chairman of Texas Instruments. “Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, the Wright Brothers and Jack Kilby.”

Jack Kilby? Who on earth is Jack Kilby?

Back in 1958, an unknown 34-year-old American engineer who had flunked his MIT entrance made history by creating a device which has become fundamental to our way of living. It was the world's first multi-component electronic circuit to be fabricated from a single material – a tiny ‘chip’ of semi-conductor no bigger than your thumbnail.

Kilby went on to design the first applications of his new integrated circuit (IC), and the modern world owes its existence to him and to Robert Noyce, founder of Intel and co-inventor of the IC. Noyce and Kilby's engineering genius can be found inside everything electronic, from your alarm clock and mobile phone to your Athlon and Radeon. Kilby's name is on 60 patents, ranging from the handheld electronic calculator to the thermal printer, and last month he died from cancer aged 81.

That's a pretty good innings by any standard, especially when you've contributed something so significant as the microchip and have been awarded both the Nobel Prize and National Medal of Science. Mr Kilby was known for his good humour and quiet, humble nature, and together with his stature – he was 6ft 6-inches – meant he was once referred to as the industry's ‘gentle giant’ in the press. I'm not about to dwell on his passing, but would like you to think of him next time you turn on your PC.



G WHIZZ

NVIDIA launches 7-series cards featuring the most complex GPU ever built. Even more impressive is the fact it's on shelves now...

GIGABYTE has its NX78X256V-B model in stores now for £340, although as with the company's other products, the name is priceless.



“NVIDIA claims more than double performance in certain games”

AT THE heart of every GeForce 7800 GTX is something the size of a postage stamp. More sophisticated and more powerful than anything preceding it, the G70 contains over 300 million transistors and is the most complex graphics processor ever created – when you consider that an Athlon FX-55 has one third that amount, you should appreciate just how potent it is.

Used as a standalone card, the GeForce 7800 GTX strolls past the 6800 Ultra and Radeon X850 XT. In SLI

mode, the benchmarks suggest nothing can touch it – NVIDIA claims more than double performance in certain games, and chose to launch the card on June 22 to coincide with *Battlefield 2* (was that a hint?) With 24 pixel pipelines and eight vertex units, the G70 is a more capable chip than its 16-pipeline NV40 predecessor seen in the 6800 Ultra and should have a noticeable impact on games, both old and new.

But what about availability? Neither NVIDIA nor ATI are renowned for

making their most mouth-watering products available until long after launch and retailers were struggling to keep up with demand months after the 6-series appeared.

“We've never had such widespread volume availability of a GPU on launch day,” says Jeff Fisher, executive VP of worldwide sales at NVIDIA. “Frankly, this breakthrough in availability is as significant as the breakthrough the GeForce 7800 GTX GPU makes in performance.” Look out for a full review next issue.

CAT'S OUT OF THE BAG

And it's just about ready to purr...

ATI'S Catalyst set has had its yearly ‘feature bump’, among other things bringing support for Windows XP Professional x64 Edition and integrating drivers for Mobility Radeon X700 and X800 users. The company has also improved its support for 3DMark05, *Call Of Duty* and *Doom 3*, the latter title being NVIDIA's showpiece and one where Radeons always fall behind. Early tests show the optimisations have really worked.

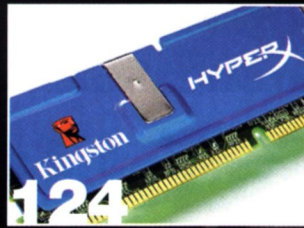
The new Catalyst 5.6 Control Center (CCC) is a touch faster than before, and will also encourage third-party developers to write plug-ins, meaning that programs such as the popular RAGE3D Tweak will now become another tab on the CCC. Download your copy now from rage3d.com.

Looking ahead, future Catalyst releases will include HyperMemory support, which will enable 64MB cards and above to pool system RAM, and of course the arrival of CrossFire, ATI's answer to SLI.





REVIEWS
Steering into the fast lane



DEAR WANDY
You've got your troubles...



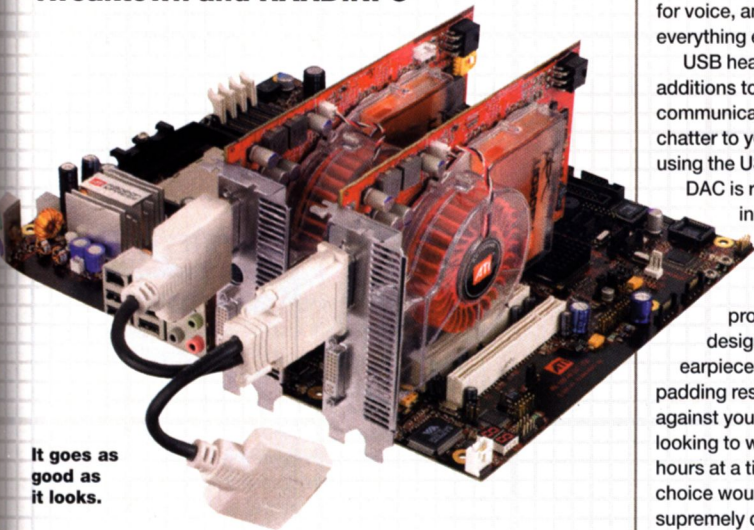
WATCHDOG
OK, which company is bad?



BUYER'S GUIDE
Buy the best here

CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE

First benchmarks published by Tweaktown and HARDiNFO



It goes as good as it looks.

"In Doom 3, CrossFire gives up to a 90 per cent frame-rate boost"

YOU SAW last month that ATI's multi-GPU technology, CrossFire, was being touted as being noticeably faster than SLI. This month it's possible to see that the claims might be true. Danish website HARDiNFO teamed up with Tweaktown to run through a few benchmarks on a prototype CrossFire set-up with two Radeon X850 XT Platinum Edition cards and an AMD FX-53. The results are not surprising, but are interesting nonetheless. In *Doom 3*, CrossFire gives up to a 90 per cent frame-rate boost over a single X850 XT and manages to exceed the NVIDIA SLI numbers by a small margin.

The technology is unlikely to sell in any significant numbers and so won't be a major breadwinner for ATI. However, it's an important victory for the Canadian firm and Source benchmarks will be

sure to hammer home the point. Whether it'll be man enough to beat the new 7-Series (see left) is another matter altogether...

USB GOOD

Latest generation of headphones ideal for VOIP-enabled games

LOGITECH'S latest combined cans and microphone – the £40 Premium USB Headset 350 – is receiving rave reviews, but nobody's yet picked up on why gamers will love it. So I'll tell you. It has its own on-board DAC working separately from your existing soundcard, meaning you can configure your games or teamspeak applications to use the headphones exclusively for voice, and leave your main 5.1 surround speakers handling everything else.

USB headsets such as the new Logitech are perfect additions to team shooters like *Battlefield 2*, where decent communications can win or lose you the game. By keeping all chatter to your headset, it's possible to control what you hear using the USB 350's inline volume. Plus, because the in-built DAC is removed from sources of

interference, the clarity is second to none.

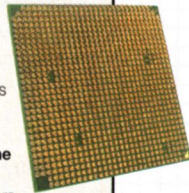
The only problem is the design of the earpieces, whose padding rests directly against your ears. If you're looking to wear the set for hours at a time, a better choice would be the supremely comfortable Icemat Siberia, our current Editor's Choice headphones.

Friends, gamers, countrymen, lend me your ears...

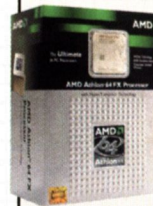


NEWS ROUND-UP

AMD twin processor chips are at last available to buy. Branded **Athlon 64 X2 Dual-Core**, prices start at around **£345 for the 4200+** rising to almost **£645 for the 4800+**. According to AMD, the X2 Dual-Core processor outperforms the current 4000+ single-core product on benchmarks by almost a third. **Quad core** is due in 2007.



On a related note, AMD has also released the **FX-57**, sequel to the much loved FX-55 and FX53. Guaranteed to put a smile on your face, it's **clocked at 2.8GHz** and will cost you around **£650**. Go to www.amd.com



Heard of the **X550**? The budget **Radeon** has been launched without little ado. It's an RV370-based card which slots into the range above the X300 and features **ATI HyperMemory**, a technology which allows the card to address **RAM from the host system**.



Soon to be released versions of the **NVIDIA ForceWare** drivers include support for the new **7800 GTX** and **better SLI**, returning better benchmark results and smoother gaming performance through multi-threading. Versions 77.62 and the 64-bit 77.40 were leaked a couple of weeks back. www.nvidia.com.

Researchers in the US have predicted more **widespread computer security problems** over the coming months as virus writers **target flaws in security products**. Windows users now rely on so many products, there's an **increased likelihood** of security holes in those products being exploited. www.yankee-group.com.

Spark Fun Electronics has released a **mobile phone** styled to look like a **rotary device** from decades ago. Anyone know of **something similar** available in this country? I want one badly. www.sparkfun.com



DRIVER WATCH ON THE DVD

Need a patch? Take a look to see if you're behind the times

MOTHERBOARD

MANUFACTURER	NAME	DESC	RELEASED	SIZE	WEB
Intel	INF Update Utility	7.0.0.1019	18-Apr-04	0.8MB	support.intel.com
NVIDIA	Unified Driver	5.10	17-Sep-04	26.8MB	nvidia.com
NVIDIA	nForce4 Standalone (Intel)	7.15	17-Jun-05	38.0MB	nvidia.com
VIA	Hyperion Pro	5.00A	27-May-05	6.6MB	viaarena.com

GRAPHICS

MANUFACTURER	NAME	DESC	RELEASED	SIZE	WEB
ATI	Display, Control Panel, WDM	CATALYST 5.6	9-Jun-05	24.9MB	ati.com
NVIDIA	Forceware	Release 71.89	14-Apr-05	17.9MB	nvidia.com

SOUND

MANUFACTURER	NAME	DESC	RELEASED	SIZE	WEB
Creative	Audigy 4 Pro Beta Driver	Beta	28-Apr-05	19.72MB	uk.europe.creative.com
M-Audio	Revolution	1.0.2.8	13-Feb-04	10.16MB	m-audio.com

ROULETTE WHEEL

A field dominated by Logitech gear, but will a Logitech wheel win? Phil Wand puts his pedal to the metal...

HEY KIDS! Rather than wasting £3 every week on that subscription to Jamster, how about going back to snorting lighter fuel? The money you should be spending on sticking aerosols up your nose is turning Jamster's bosses into multi-millionaires, and all that dough has meant more of those goddamned ringtone commercials. More ringtone commercials means fewer people

watching telly, which in turn means brain-dead couch potatoes turning on their PCs for the evening's entertainment instead. The servers are now chock-full of imbeciles who know more about Ken Barlow and *Big Brother* than they do about *Battlefield 2*.

And I was wondering, could I interest these TV exiles in a gentle driving game instead? Much easier to learn,

good fun to play and just like real life! You can't teamkill anyone, but you do get nice scenery and real pedals. A brand new wheel with force feedback costs between £30-£80, although you can find a decent second-hand one for little more than a tenner. My sanity begs that you at least consider the following items...

DRIVING FORCE PRO (DFP)

Price: £75 | Manufacturer: Logitech | logitech.co.uk

The DFP was designed for a bleedin' console. Has Wandy gone mad?

THERE ARE three important things that differentiate this wheel from all the others on test. The first is that it supports a 900-degree turning radius, meaning it takes two-and-a-half turns from lock to lock – that's more than any other wheel on the market and rather like a real car. The second is that it includes a sequential stick shifter along with the standard paddles, which is great fun in rally games – reaching over and banging in the next gear is remarkably satisfying. And the third?

The third is that it's actually an accessory for the PlayStation. Not only does this mean you get a wheel which was developed with Sony and Polyphony Digital specifically for *Gran Turismo 4*, you also get to play all your favourite Windows games thanks to a regular USB connection.

And with the latest Logitech drivers, it works like a dream. Its leather effect wheel, meaty force feedback engine and Logitech's typically high standard of build make it the

obvious choice for sim fans everywhere – options for the DFP include a lap attachment and bucket seat (visit www.playseats.com for more info). The only black mark is its relatively high price, but otherwise, superb.



PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Top notch construction
- ✓ 900-degree rotation
- ✓ Shift paddles and knob
- ✗ Expensive

93

Cooley! You want this one

R440 FORCE FEEDBACK

Price: £59 | Manufacturer: Saitek | saitek.com/uk

Don't let the Batmobile looks put you off

IN THE PIT lane, the R440 looks and feels like the R220. It's built from the same less-than-sexy plastics and has its pedals hinged at the top rather than at the bottom – it's more like a car. But the force feedback engine has doubled the cost, and until a few months ago I'd have scoffed at the price hike and gone for the cheaper variant instead.

Then I played *Live For Speed*. In case you didn't know, *Live For Speed* is a pretty remarkable game – as well as a feast of highly plausible sights, sounds and physics, the force feedback is spot-on in all the right places. Moving up from the R220 to the R440 took a second off my best lap, thanks to it feeling like I was out on real tarmac, and on the rally circuits the kickback through the rim made the car come alive. If you have a PC and a driving licence, get *Live For Speed* and a force feedback wheel.

However, I'm not wholly convinced

about this Saitek wheel anymore. The Logitech wheels are hewn from much nicer quality materials, are more weighty, more robust and the feedback on the Driving Force Pro (above) seems stronger.



PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Comfortable to use
- ✓ Well placed buttons
- ✗ Twice the price of the R220
- ✗ A bit plasticky

80

A solid choice

FF380 RACE MASTER

■ Price: £39 | Manufacturer: Trust | trust.com

Force feedback wheel for the cost of a game

TRUST IS A brand known for its bargain prices and the Race Master is no exception. It's a surprisingly solid-feeling thing, with a thick rubber coat and large, heavily-sprung pedals mounted into a substantial base. As well as six switches mounted around the hub, you also get an 8-way hat and two slightly paddle shifters. The downsides to this arrangement are that the paddles are too close to the rim, meaning you can't get your fingers in front of them, and that the two pedals are hard-wired on the same axis – nothing I did would allow me to use the throttle and the brake at the same time.

On the road, the FF380 delivers the same kind of wrist-wrenching forces as any of the other wheels here – because it's cheap doesn't mean it's feeble. The clamp arrangement is tidy and works well, despite my misgivings about its strength. The only real criticism is that the feedback engine is rather noisy – it groans and buzzes like a bored housewife, and combined with the occasional squeak of cheap plastics rubbing together it's not something you can use late at night. But for £39, honestly. Who cares?



PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Unbelievable low price
- ✓ Hat switch, rubbery bits
- ✗ Position of paddles
- ✗ Some cheap components

82

Compromised, but still a steal at this price

R220

■ Price: £30 | Manufacturer: Saitek | saitek.com/uk

The not-quite-so-attractive twin sister of the R440

THE R220 IS mine. PC World had a pile of them on special offer in its Chelmsford store back in March, and since I'd lost my last wheel in a vigorous spring clean I decided the entry model Saitek was just what I needed to get back into driving sans keyboard.

I know it doesn't have force feedback, but I've never been a great fan of the technology. Most developers use it in a meddlesome way, making the wheel feel as though you're wrestling the controls from a large bear – you spend much of your time fighting weird jolts and jiggles which seem to be saying, "IS THIS CLEVER OR WHAT!!!" rather than adding to the realism.

For a while I was OK with the R220. The setup is a little peculiar, with many of the games requiring me to use a configuration utility from the Saitek webby, but it was mostly plain sailing. And then it happened. I used the R440. I've had one on test before, but that was before the likes of *GTR* and *Live For Speed* (see p114), games which use force feedback to actually make the car feel like a car. For the rest of the story, read the R440 review on the opposite page.



PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Decent price
- ✓ Saitek quality
- ✗ No force feedback
- ✗ You need force feedback

73

For the budget conscious

WINGMAN FORMULA FORCE

■ Price: £10-20 | Manufacturer: Logitech | logitech.co.uk

Senior citizen gives the whippersnappers a driving lesson

FONDLY KNOWN as 'old red', Logitech's WingMan Formula Force is over five years old but at launch was the best thing money could buy. The one you see here was found through eBay and it's become my weapon of choice for all driving games. Not bad for little over a tenner.

So what makes the retired WingMan so good? Simple: there's nothing wrong with it. Unlike the FF380, the shifters are placed with thoughtful precision rather than reckless abandon, meaning they fall to hand intuitively. Unlike the Saitek wheels, your hands are in contact more with metals and rubber than with plastic, giving it an air of durability and calibre. And you don't need to download utilities from the website to split the pedal axes – it all just works.

The trouble comes when you come to buy one, because you can't. Your best bet is to keep an eye on eBay, as I did, where decent-looking examples crop up regularly with prices starting from £5. Final bids are anywhere over £20, but you can buy for less. If you sympathise with Pamela Anderson and want something solid in your hands when driving, it's the only one to get.



PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Audi-like quality
- ✓ Quiet feedback
- ✓ Comfortable
- ✗ No longer in production

88

Don't make 'em like they used to



DEAR WANDY

Spot of bother with your computer? Trouble with your software or can't control your hardware? Write in for expert PC advice – no job too small...

■ **HANDY WANDY:** Phil Wand

LET IT ALL OUT

Share your techie or gaming-related problems with us and in turn, we may well share them with thousands of readers via these very pages in a big communal love-in type thing. If you have any **top tips** to share with the group, then send them in too: if Wandy's impressed, he'll print them and send you £50 for your trouble.

Write to Dear Wandy, *PC ZONE*, Future Publishing, 99 Baker Street, London, W1U 6FP.

Email Address your letters to us at wandy@dearwandy.com with the subject heading 'Dear Wandy'. Please note: while we can assure you that we read absolutely every techie query sent to us, we're unable to offer personal replies. Sorry.

SEARCH WARRANT

Q Am I going mad? The search function in my copy of Windows XP doesn't seem to work as you might expect. In fact, it doesn't seem to work in the way anyone expects. I've asked friends and colleagues and nobody can provide a sensible answer!

It can find files without a problem, but the moment you ask it to look for a word or phrase inside a file, it seems to go blind and is unable to find a damn thing. I've even created files with notepad as a test, and search still can't see inside them.

Do I have some sort of weird virus or Trojan? Is my copy of Windows just plain broken? Is the registry shagged? It seems such a small issue I know, but it's driving me completely mad. It also means finding stuff on my disk is next to impossible.

Hairy Dave

A Within a week of installing XP, I was on the phone to a colleague asking him the same questions. Why wouldn't this groovy-looking new Windows see inside my files? After all, the exact same feature worked perfectly on Windows 2000, Windows 98, Windows ME and even Windows NT. Was I going round the bend?

In a word, no. Neither of us are going bonkers – what you found affects every copy of Windows XP ever. My investigation at the time revealed that Microsoft had handicapped file searching in XP, and had the temerity to describe it as an 'improvement' over previous versions when it clearly wasn't.

Yes, searching is now faster than before, but no, because of the way Windows uses indexing and filters, you can't search the content of files. Well you can, but only inside documents of a certain

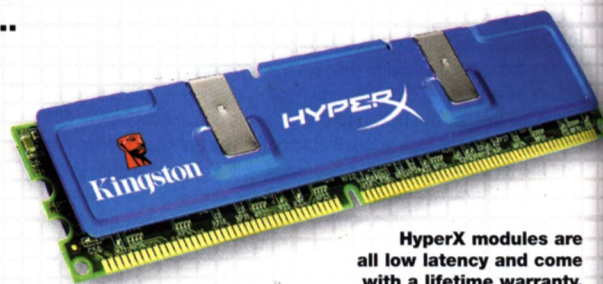
filter type – .DOC, .TXT and a handful of others. This is done supposedly to prevent the wizard returning strange results (such as words and phrases inside .EXEs and .DLLs), and to make the results you do get more relevant.

However, the way the filters work is slightly crazy. For example, if you were to search for a content within an HTML 3.0 file, and the text you were looking for was within a commented section, XP wouldn't see it. The list of types that Windows will search inside was expanded in recent Service Packs, but it's still hopelessly limited.

So, what to do? Well, there are two options open to you. The first is to use a third-party tool, such as WinGrep which at \$30 is far too expensive but does the job admirably (and it allows you to use Regular Expressions – one for the geeks). Try it for free at from www.wingrep.com.

The second option is to get dirty with the Indexing service, which costs nothing and will give you what you need. Open the wizard by right-clicking on My Computer and choosing Search from the menu. Ignore the dog. Click the option at the bottom to Change Preferences, and then click With Indexing Service (or Without, depending on your current options). Choose the top option to enable the Index Service, then click to Change Indexing Service settings at the bottom.

Once the Indexing Service view appears, right-click its entry on the taskbar and choose Customize View. Put a check in the Console tree option at the top and hit OK. Now right-click on the Indexing Service folder entry at the very top of the tree and choose Properties. Put a check in the top option, to



HyperX modules are all low latency and come with a lifetime warranty. PC3200 modules of 512MB and below have a CAS Latency of 2.

index files with unknown extensions and click OK. Phew. You're now sorted.

HYPERACTIVE

Q I have a question about memory. My CPU is an AMD Athlon 64 3200+ and according to the motherboard manual, it has a bus speed of 200MHz. What the manual seems to imply is that the frequency of the RAM can't be any higher than 200MHz. Does this mean I can't use PC3200 sticks? I was using 512MB of regular PC3200 but now have Kingston HyperX PC3200 – was this a waste of money?

Also, what is CL2? I've read you need to change this value in the BIOS but I can't find where. Can you please help?

David Brophy

A As you've found out, your motherboard has a heart that races along at 200 million beats per second, otherwise written as 200MHz. What you probably don't realise is that those PC3200 memory modules operate at the exact same 200MHz speed, and are thus ideal partners for your processor. In fact, all AMD Athlon 64 models, from the 3000+ up to the 4000+ are compatible with PC1600, PC2100, PC2700 and PC3200 RAM – it just makes sense to choose PC3200 as its MHz are synchronised with the MHz of motherboards and it's the fastest option anyway.

When it comes to the maths behind it all, any confusion normally arises from the fact that PC3200 memory modules are actually double data rate, or DDR,

meaning they're capable of transferring information twice every heartbeat. In effect, this makes them 2 x 200MHz = 400MHz, and hence the common notation DDR400 (the PC3200 alternative comes from the total amount of data they're capable of moving about, ie 3.2GB per second).

Of course, the DDR400 makes them apparently incompatible with a 200MHz bus. Additionally, in the case of AMD's newer 939-pin chips, the memory controller is capable of transferring twice the amount again, or Dual DDR, for an effective 800MHz and 6.4GB per second. You don't say whether you have the 754-pin or 939-pin Athlon in your machine, so I can't be specific.

Anyway, let's move on to CL2. When data is stored in memory, it's held in individual cells arranged into banks of giant spreadsheets in many rows and columns. For the memory controller to access a particular cell and retrieve the data within it, it needs to know which bank the cell is in, and then which row and which column, in that order.

The CAS Latency, or CL, is a measure of the delay between the controller receiving a request to haul out data from a particular memory cell and the data actually being sent. A CL of 2 shows there's a delay of two heartbeats or clock cycles, CL2.5 two and a half cycles, and CL3 indicates three.

What do you want to search for?

- Pictures, music, or video
 - Documents (word processing, spreadsheet, etc.)
 - All files and folders
 - Computers or people
 - Information in Help and Support Center
- You may also want to...
- Search the Internet
 - Shoot the dog



Woof, woof! The XP search feature is a dog. The same feature in previous versions is more powerful and less cluttered – helpfully.

"Neither of us are going bonkers - what you found affects every copy of Windows XP ever. Microsoft has handicapped file searching and has the temerity to call it an improvement"

When you buy memory, you'll most likely see its specifications written as a sequence of numbers separated by hyphens - for example, 2-2-2-5. These are the module's timings, with the CAS Latency shown first. As far as I'm aware, 512MB HyperX modules are all CL2. You'll certainly see this setting in one of the more advanced screens of your BIOS, or it'll be shown as the leading digit of the timing sequence described above.

TAKE ME HIGHER

Q I have an Alienware Area-51 5500, with an NVIDIA 6800GT and an Hitachi CML174SXWB. All the drivers are up to date and the graphics card and motherboard BIOS have both been flashed. The trouble is, on some games I can't change resolution above 1024x768, even though the monitor has a native resolution of 1280x1024. On my old system, these games run without a problem at the higher resolution on the same monitor. All the games in question have been patched where possible.

As you might imagine, this is quite frustrating and nobody, not even Alienware, seems to have come across it before. The technical support for the games is also of no help. Before I buy a

The CML174SXW and CML174SXWB are excellent second-hand buys on eBay.



game - even ones which have scored highly in the magazine - I need to wait and download the demo to make sure it runs at the proper resolution. Do you have any suggestions?

Ian Marriott

A I'm looking at the same Hitachi monitor right now and have never had the problems you describe. Of course, this is Dear Wendy, meaning I can't get away with 'works 4 me try updating ur drivers', by far the most annoying and hugely idiotic response posted on thousands of help forums all over the planet.

My first helpful suggestion would be that you update the driver - don't laugh, bear with me - for your monitor. The CML174SXW driver is a little tricky to find, and isn't WHQL certified, so if you run into trouble locating it drop me a line and I'll email mine to you. My reckoning is that you're using the standard Plug & Play driver and that this might be causing you grief.

The second helpful suggestion is to switch to DVI if you're using the CML's analog input, because the DVI connector has pins for the Display Data Channel (DDC),

which enables your GeForce card to read information about the screen's capabilities direct from the screen itself. It could be that DDC is the root of your trouble, in which case try switching over to analog to see if that has any effect.

My other suggestions are slightly less helpful, as they require installing third-party software. This should always be viewed as a last resort, principally because it could introduce more problems than it solves. And third-party software often isn't free.

My first port of call would be guru3d.com for a download of RivaTuner, which enables you to view and change all manner of resolution information from your monitor, including being able to see what the DDC is telling Windows. You may also like to look at PowerStrip from entechtaiwan.com, which is something a lot of folk swear by but I find quite clumsy and a bit confusing.

If all of that doesn't sort you, you could always try the most common 'alternative' GeForce driver from omegadrivers.net to see if that makes things behave as they should. If not, do get back to me.

BELKIN HELL

Q My wife is complaining - again - about the fact that, although she can get the Web over our wireless network, she can't get her emails or print any of her work files from her Notebook. More importantly,

I can't play any games over the network! I'm now at the end of my tether, as I've tried to set up a wireless network about five times now, and although the computer says it's set up, I can't see any 'network connections' on either of the machines.

I have a desktop PC and my wife has a Dell Inspiron 9100 Notebook; both machines are running XP Service Pack 2. I have broadband and a Belkin 802.11g wireless router. The PC is cabled to the router, the router is cabled to the broadband modem and the Notebook is wireless. When I try to get the emails on the Notebook, I get the error: Exception from HRESULT: 0x80040200. There's obviously something I've missed and I may be an idiot for not knowing what, but for the life of me I can't see what it is!


Peter J Walker

A As you can 'see' some network traffic and not others (eg Web but not email), it's almost certainly a firewall issue. As you may know, a firewall works by matching data against strict rules - for example, "stop all FTP but allow Quake" - then blocking or allowing the data accordingly. And because you and your wife are using the latest Service Pack, it's likely you're being nannied by the built-in Windows firewall or perhaps Norton Internet Security. So, the first thing pl'd do is deactivate any such measures - and if your router

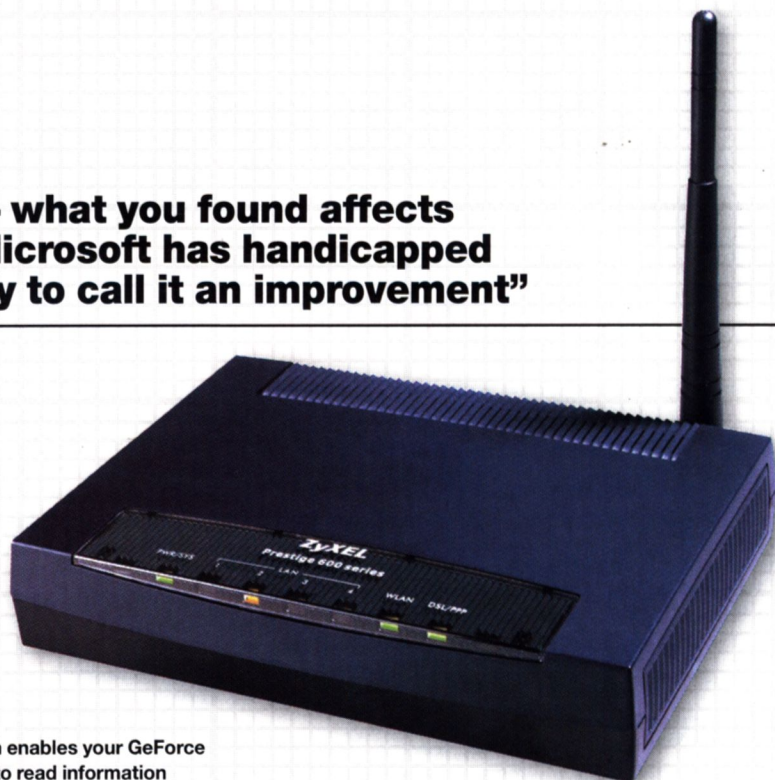
You pays your money and you takes your choice. ZyXEL, like DrayTek, is a premium networking brand. But it won't give you grief.

has a firewall, leave them off for the time being. I'm not sure about the exception generated by Outlook because Outlook is nasty. See if you can't migrate to Mozilla Thunderbird or Qualcomm Eudora instead, both of which will import all your existing email and settings.

There are other possibilities. For example, your Belkin router could be faulty or have some peculiar unresolved firmware issue. I've only come into contact with Belkin wireless gear twice, and both times have been memorable. The first time the router would allow anything but Web traffic (the exact opposite of your situation); the second time, the wireless network remained invisible to all the wireless cards in the house.

What I'm trying to say is that, if you continue to experience problems, you might like to try upgrading the firmware in your router or replacing it and not buying Belkin. Look for a product that incorporates a wireless router, modem and firewall such as the ZyXEL P662HW, D-Link DSL-902 or Netgear DG834GT. 

Visit Wendy on the Web at www.dearwendy.com





WATCHDOG

Every month it's the same sad tales of woe. But never fear, because every month, Watchdog is here to fight the good fight and defend your corner. Don't you feel better?

■ **WRITING THE WRONGS** Suzy Wallace

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

Don't worry - we're here to help when you're at the end of your tether. If you've got a consumer issue that needs addressing, why not drop us a line?

WRITE TO Watchdog, *PC ZONE*, Future Publishing, 99 Baker Street, London, W1U 6FP. **EMAIL** Alternatively, email us at mailbox@pczone.co.uk with the subject heading 'Watchdog'.

READ ME!

If you're writing in to complain about a product, please send us your full name, address and **contact number**. With PCs, make sure that you also include all **purchasing details** such as reference and invoice numbers.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

Some people in the world take time out to build their own computers, while others just flash the cash at an appropriate company and get them to do the hard work. Carl Ritchie, by his own admission, is of the latter group and he recently splashed out on a top spec Athlon 64 4000+ base unit with an SLI motherboard, 2GB RAM and a 6800GT graphics card. A pretty impressive spec, eh?

Well supposedly, but Carl is unable to confirm or deny the label as his machine dies instantly thanks to the piddly 360 PSU fitted by Special Reserve. You see, the processor is a real

sorry to hear Mr Ritchie's concerns about the PSU supplied in the PC." The company also stated that it had "found that the PSU fitted (a good quality 360 watt unit) is more than adequate to power the machine as it was supplied".

However, it added that: "Clearly, if the end user adds additional devices to a system, more load will be placed on the PSU and we accept that this is an SLI-ready system and as such should be able to take that extra load, should the customer decide to add a second graphics card. With this in mind, we've taken the decision to fit a 450 watt unit to all new SLI-ready systems and we'd like to thank you for bringing this to our attention."

Not only that, but Special Reserve also upgraded Carl's PSU free of charge, as well as providing him with "superb telephone support". Power to the people!

PROTECTION RACKET

Colin Roscoe is among the heaving masses of us who have a BT broadband connection. Upon his purchase of said connection, he also bought a copy of BT NetProtect, the telephone giant's very own firewall and virus protection package. Upon installation, the

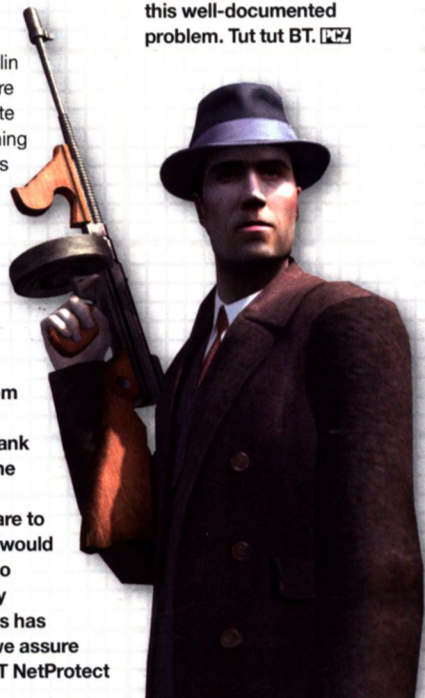
over-zealous firewall quickly went to work preventing any unauthorised access to Colin's private data by locking him out, crashing the computer and no longer allowing it to boot up.

A tad over-enthusiastic we reckon - and surely not what Colin had in mind. With some help from a friend, he restored his computer to its previous condition and tried again, but with the same result. Upon contacting BT, he was told that the company was aware of the problem but, as Colin points out, "nowhere on the download site was there any warning it existed. As buyers of new PCs are likely to be novices, I'm appalled by this level of service".

We contacted BT about Colin's NetProtect problem and received a prompt reply: "Thank you for bringing the issue with our BT NetProtect software to our attention. We would like to apologise to Mr Roscoe for any inconvenience this has caused him and we assure him, and all our BT NetProtect

customers, that we are working closely with our software developers to investigate this issue. We are committed to providing the best possible Internet experience for all our customers and are constantly looking at new ways to improve our services."

Apologetic BT may have been, but we've been on the NetProtect website since and it still features no mention of this well-documented problem. Tut tut BT. [CZ]



That rare site on these pages - a happy, working PC.

"As buyers of new PCs are likely to be novices, I'm appalled by this level of service"

power hog and with a power-hungry graphics card sapping the power as well as the usual drives, soundcards, modems and other assorted devices found lurking in computer cases, the power output just can't keep up with the demand. And all this in an SLI-ready machine?

As Carl says: "The 360 watt PSU in my rig can't even cope with one graphics card and this is a serious let-down by Special Reserve."

If you'd spent the cash on what's supposedly a top-of-the-range machine, you'd certainly expect only the highest quality components to be installed throughout. Contacting Special Reserve, we spoke to a very helpful chap who told us: "We are very

THE ACCUSED

Special Reserve
Customer Network

BT NetProtect

GUILTY UNTIL PROVEN INNOCENT

SAINTS NOT SINNERS



▲ GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE IS SOMETHING WE ALWAYS APPLAUD...

Never one to pass up on something for nothing (and let's face it, who is?), reader Tom Frost had been using his Hauppauge DEC-2000T to watch Freeview on his PC for the past couple of years now. The delights of gratis TV and all the *A Touch Of Frost* episodes you could watch were his until one day, the transformer stopped working. As the cable had been stretched pretty tight, Tom just figured that daily wear had eventually taken its toll. So off he trotted to nose around his local electronic stores for the correct transformer (and no, Optimus Prime is not what he was looking for), but to no avail. As a last resort, Tom emailed Hauppauge's customer support asking if they happened to know of somewhere that might sell the transformer he needed or if he could adjust a similar one. And wouldn't you know it, just one day later, a most agreeable chap mailed him back asking for his address so that the company could send him one. Tom reckons: "In a world where after-sales support seems to be a privilege instead of a right, it's great to see that some companies still know how to treat their customers." We couldn't agree more.

Continuing in the good-natured spirit of the moment, Gary Sunter was so chuffed with Plextor's service, he had to write to tell us. He'd owned his Plextor DVD drive for ten months before it went kaput, but as soon as he emailed the company's warranty service informing it of the problem, said service promptly stuck a new unit in the post without even asking for the other one back. Cookies and cake for both Hauppauge and Plextor.



EXCLUSIVE PLAYTEST!

THE LEGEND RETURNS

Lara's stunning return to form exposed!

PSW

OFFICIAL! THE UK'S BEST-SELLING INDEPENDENT PLAYSTATION MAG

ON SALE NOW!



BUYER'S GUIDE

Not spent all your cash on a summer holiday? Then why not part with some for one of these...

Whether you want a new graphics card, motherboard or joystick, this is where to look to find the best on the market. Editor's Choice is the class champ, the product

that will satisfy no matter what you play. Our Recommended product wears a silver medal, not quite as triumphant as the outright winner, but a worthy alternative.

Finally, the Also Consider product is one we believe you should look at too before making your final decision. If you feel we've got something wrong, missed out a great

product or just want to add your own words of wisdom, mail letters@pczone.co.uk. If we act on your suggestion, we might even send you a gift. We're nice like that.

◀ **EDITOR'S CHOICE** ▶ ◀ **RECOMMENDED** ▶ ◀ **ALSO CONSIDER** ▶

<p>MOTHERBOARDS</p>	 <p>A8V DELUXE WIRELESS STREET PRICE £82 MANUFACTURER ASUSTeK TELEPHONE 0870 1208 340 WEBSITE uk.asus.com</p> <p>For the first time, an AMD board takes gold. Based on the VIA K8T800 Pro chipset, the ASUS A8V supports 939-pin Athlon 64 and FX processors (the engines behind the best gaming systems), and up to 4GB of dual-channel PC3 200 RAM. Onboard dual RAID, 7.1 sound, automated overclocking and AGP8X complete the picture. The Wireless Edition comes bundled with more.</p>	 <p>KN1 EXTREME STREET PRICE: £96 MANUFACTURER: ECS TELEPHONE: N/A WEBSITE: www.ecs.uk.com</p> <p>One of the cheaper nForce4 Ultra boards, the KN1 Extreme offers all the benefits of expensive 939-pin AMD64 mobos for under a ton. As well as two integrated cooling fans, the KN1 features ten USB ports, support for six SATA devices, RAID, onboard audio and an external USB-based 802.11g wireless adaptor. ECS is known for good value and this is no exception. Also, overclocking features have been added in BIOS updates.</p>	 <p>K8N NEO2 PLATINUM STREET PRICE £88 MANUFACTURER Micro-Star TELEPHONE 020 8813 6688 WEBSITE msicomputer.co.uk</p> <p>MSI's K8N Neo has always boasted stability and performance, and the new 939-pin, nForce3 Ultra variant is just as impressive. The Neo2 supports the new Athlon 64 and FX-53 processors and incorporates a dual-channel memory controller. The board includes 7.1 sound, Gigabit LAN, 8 USB 2.0 ports, 2 x ATA and 4 x SATA connectors. Multi-function RAID is also standard.</p>
	<p>PROCESSORS</p>	 <p>ATHLON 64 3500 STREET PRICE £174 MANUFACTURER AMD TELEPHONE 01276 803100 WEBSITE www.amd.com</p> <p>Now the 939-pin chips no longer require registered memory, the AMD64 route is a cheaper option. Smash open your old Pentium PC, snatch the PC3200 sticks from its banks and mate them with a new Athlon on an A8V Deluxe. Although the Hyper-Threading alternatives can be better for business and encoding apps, the 64-bit chips are great for gaming, the 3500 giving best value. Die-hard Intel fans are missing out.</p>	 <p>P4 3.2GHZ STREET PRICE £140 MANUFACTURER Intel TELEPHONE 01793 403000 WEBSITE www.intel.com</p> <p>If you're desperate for an Intel-inside, the 3.2GHz still packs a hefty punch. Hyper-Threading delivers a jaw-pounding, double-whammy power hit that pushes benchmark scores well ahead of the equivalent Athlon, and an 800MHz front-side bus paired with the right memory can make its presence felt. If you have a P4 motherboard, you're already set for an upgrade to remember.</p>
<p>HDDS</p>	 <p>WD1200JB 120GB STREET PRICE £51 MANUFACTURER Western Digital TELEPHONE N/A WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com</p> <p>You may well view a 120GB HDD as an extravagance, but with games getting longer and broadband getting wider, a hangar-like hard drive gives you plenty of room for mucking about. You'll also bring that never-ending quest for more room to an abrupt end. The price is just right, and the performance second to none. Like the DiamondMax Plus9, the WD1200JB features an 8MB cache and a speed of 7200RPM.</p>	 <p>DIAMONDMAX PLUS9 80GB STREET PRICE £36 MANUFACTURER Maxtor TELEPHONE N/A WEBSITE www.maxtor.com</p> <p>The mid-sized Maxtor is for everyone: large, fast and not that pricey. 80GB is more than adequate for work, play and downloading requirements, and if you're greedy for more gig you can jump up a size. The Fast ATA, 7200RPM drive includes Maxtor's Shock Protection System and Quiet Drive Technology, but for the Serial ATA version, expect to pay a £20 premium.</p>	 <p>RAPTOR 36GB STREET PRICE £73 MANUFACTURER Western Digital TELEPHONE N/A WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com</p> <p>If you don't need a deep hole for your data, or if you intend keeping your dirt on a separate drive, the 10,000RPM Serial ATA Raptor makes the ideal foundation for your primary partition. It's wickedly fast, perhaps the fastest HDD available yet, and although designed for server environments, provides gaming desktops with the kind of warp-nine, low access times that make any application more nimble.</p>
<p>GRAPHICS CARDS</p>	 <p>GEFORCE 6800 GT STREET PRICE £299 MANUFACTURER XFX Graphics TELEPHONE 01327 315750 WEBSITE www.xfxforce.co.uk</p> <p>The release of <i>Doom 3</i> means that NVIDIA couldn't have timed its return to the top better. The 6800 GT is a slight step down from its über-Ultra card in terms of performance (only by a few frames per second), but at under £300 it gives you much better value for money. If you can afford the not insignificant outlay, this is the card to buy – and your games will love you forever.</p>	 <p>GV-NX66T128VP TURBO FORCE STREET PRICE £131 MANUFACTURER GIGABYTE TELEPHONE 01908 362700 WEBSITE uk.giga-byte.com</p> <p>A fanless heat-pipe arrangement keeps this GeForce cool and silent. GIGABYTE claims a 38% speed hike over a regular card – not quite, but the boost is noticeable – it's the fastest 6600GT we've tested. <i>Thief: Deadly Shadows</i> and <i>Joint Ops: Typhoon Rising</i> come bundled, and the card has full VIVO capabilities – PowerDirector comes free. A stunning card at a stunning price.</p>	 <p>RADEON X700 PRO 256MB STREET PRICE £130 MANUFACTURER Sapphire WEBSITE www.saphiretech.com</p> <p>Hot on the heels of the 6600GT is Sapphire's X700 Pro, featuring PCI-Express, GDDR-3 memory, 8 pixel pipelines and a 128-bit interface. It's a quality product bundled with quality games, and in benchmarks has no trouble keeping up with the runaway GeForce. Unlike the 6600GT, there's no AGP counterpart and it's more money. But if you're looking for a RADEON and maximum mainstream grunt, this is the card for you.</p>
<p>SOUNDCARDS</p>	 <p>REVOLUTION 7.1 STREET PRICE £80 MANUFACTURER M-Audio TELEPHONE 0871 7177 100 WEBSITE www.maudio.co.uk</p> <p>Although it lacks a few of its rivals' gamer-friendly features, including hardware DirectSound and a joystick/MIDI port, the Revolution more than makes up for any deficit with a truly astonishing quality of sound. Unique technologies enhance your enjoyment of games, music and movies. The software is straight-talking and boasts a familiar look and feel, making the card a delight to work with.</p>	 <p>AUDIGY 2 ZS PLATINUM PRO STREET PRICE £58 MANUFACTURER Creative Labs TELEPHONE N/A WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com</p> <p>A quantum leap from its predecessor, the Audigy 2 offers a boggling range of pro-gamer and DVD features, including 6.1 surround sound, EAX Advanced HD, Advanced Resolution DVD-Audio and 24-bit/96KHz recording – it was the first card to gain THX certification from LucasFilm. If you appreciate the immersive experience offered by high-fidelity surround sound, the Audigy gives you an experience like no other.</p>	 <p>AUDIGY 2 ZS PLATINUM PRO STREET PRICE £170 MANUFACTURER Creative Labs TELEPHONE N/A WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com</p> <p>With the same core features as its little brother, the Platinum Pro is guaranteed to perform and sound like no other. The external breakout box is a boon for serious listeners, including standard audio connections and volume controls. The big Platinum also offers dual SB1394 firewire ports and optical links, a stereo RCA input, plus MIDI In and MIDI Out mini-DIN sockets.</p>

EDITOR'S CHOICE

RECOMMENDED

ALSO CONSIDER



MX510
STREET PRICE £30
MANUFACTURER Logitech
TELEPHONE 020 7309 0217
WEBSITE www.logitech.co.uk

The best example of the MX optical engine, the MX510 is ideal for gaming. Logitech has upped the rate of the MX500's image processing from 4.7 megapixels per second to 5.8, meaning greater accuracy and smoother movements. It's also increased acceleration from 10g to 15g, meaning lag-free responses. The scroll wheel is nicely ratcheted and although it's heavier than the slimline MX310, it's well balanced for quick movements in FPSs.



OPTICAL MOUSE BLUE
STREET PRICE £17
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 6010 100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/uk

If you've ever been bogged by the number of buttons on a mouse and have fond memories of a time when three-clickers and a wheel were all you needed, Microsoft's blue rodent is the perfect peripheral. It's nice to look at, nice to hold and, as any veteran FPS gamer will tell you, three buttons is all you need. Plus, the latest optical technology means it works anywhere.



MX700
STREET PRICE £40
MANUFACTURER ACTURER Logitech
TELEPHONE 020 7309 0127
WEBSITE www.logitech.com

Sporting the MX optical engine that made Logitech famous with gamers, the MX700 is essentially an MX500 with its tail lopped off. A cradle keeps your desk tidy and acts as a recharger for the unfettered rodent - making the mouse more attractive to people who don't do batteries. However, it's a touch pricey and we remain unconvinced that going cordless is worth the extra stash.

MICE



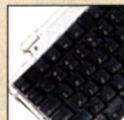
PC GAMING KEYBOARD
STREET PRICE £35
MANUFACTURER Saitek
TELEPHONE 01454 451900
WEBSITE www.saitek.com/uk

A simple yet elegant design, with variable backlit keys and peerless build quality make the PC Gaming Keyboard a very desirable object. The keys are weighted perfectly and are ideal for late-night gaming because they hardly make a sound. Rubber pads stop the thing sliding away from you, and the silver Saitek comes with a programmable command pad which can be positioned to both suit lefties and righties. Finger heaven.



INTERNET NAVIGATOR
STREET PRICE £21
MANUFACTURER Logitech
TELEPHONE 020 7309 0127
WEBSITE www.logitech.com

The Internet Navigator lies absolutely flat on your desk, a trademark Logitech design that makes it look sleeker and feel nicer. There's a scroll wheel along the left edge and a raft of customisable function keys to make trawling the Web a cinch - you no longer have to swap back and forth to the mouse, and instead can leave your hands over on the keyboard. Once you browse this way, there's no going back.



PRO KEYBOARD
STREET PRICE £46
MANUFACTURER Apple
TELEPHONE 0800 0391 010
WEBSITE www.apple.com/uk

If you think we're mad for including an Apple keyboard, think again. Anyone looking for a Rolls-Royce keyboard, and who can live without all the additional buttons, scroll wheels and assorted paraphernalia need look no further. The Apple Pro plugs straight into your USB port and, with the help of third-party utilities, disguises the fact that it was designed for computer illiterates with fewer than two mouse buttons.

KEYBOARDS



CYBORG EVO
STREET PRICE £30
MANUFACTURER Saitek
TELEPHONE 01454 451900
WEBSITE www.saitek.com

A welcome new look for Saitek, with the welcome addition of a four-way adjustable head, larger buttons, plus a meaty damped throttle at the back of the base. As with all Cyborgs, the sculpted hand-rests can be repositioned ambidextrously and suit all hand sizes. An eight-way hat switch, five thumb buttons with trigger, four base buttons and a shift key to double the possible combinations make this a winner.



CYBORG 3D GOLD
STREET PRICE £22
MANUFACTURER Saitek
TELEPHONE 01454 451900
WEBSITE www.saitek.com

A former Best Buy, the Saitek stick is renowned for the way it can be taken apart and put back together to fit your hand perfectly, and also for its ambidextrous nature - lefties as well as righties can get to grips with it. It features seven fire buttons and, like the Sidewinder, has eight hat buttons, a lever throttle and a twist grip for controlling the rudder. At this price, you'd be daft not to.



HOTAS COUGAR
STREET PRICE £249
MANUFACTURER Thrustmaster
TELEPHONE 020 8665 1881
WEBSITE www.thrustmaster.co.uk

The John Holmes of joysticks. Based on the flight controls of an F-16, sturdy metal construction makes it feel like no other peripheral. With 28 customisable buttons, 18lbs of resistance built into its springs, programmable hat switches and an adaptive action for the separate throttle arm, it transforms any flight simulation and is the ultimate toy for wannabe pilots. It's ten times the cost of a regular joystick, but is in a class of its own.

JOYSTICKS



INSPIRE P580 5.1
STREET PRICE £56
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

We don't like the idea of blowing a ton on speakers, chiefly because the mid-range Creative products are so good. You could spend a little more on a 7.1 set, but you'd lose out on space - and there's little benefit for games players. Instead, stick to the six-speaker P580s, which deliver crisp bass from the subwoofer and a clean, bright sound from the satellites. What's more, this latest design includes a headphone jack too.



Z-640
STREET PRICE £58
MANUFACTURER Logitech
TELEPHONE 020 7309 0127
WEBSITE www.logitech.com

Logitech has patented the pressure-driver design of its subwoofer and we can hear the difference. For the money, the clout is simply amazing - if you're a basshead, you'll love it. Higher frequencies don't disappoint either, the 5.1 sounding almost as clean and inviting as the Inspire 5300s. Unlike the Creative set, the Z-640 has a headphone socket, but it's not conveniently sited. Shame.



MEGAWORKS THX 5.1 550
STREET PRICE £180
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

Successor to our Best Performance winner, the Megaworks 550 is a stunning 5.1 setup with five 70W capsule-shielded satellite speakers, a 150W wood subwoofer and a wired remote with a separate headphone socket. Built to THX standards, the sound quality is superb in DVDs and games - Creative's BASH system providing 500W of power that make you leap out of your seat.

SPEAKERS



VP171S
STREET PRICE £245
MANUFACTURER ViewSonic
TELEPHONE 01293 643900
WEBSITE www.viewsonic.co.uk

With a response time of 8ms and both DVI and analog inputs, this ViewSonic LCD was always going to be best suited to gamers. Images are sharp and richly saturated, with a huge range of contrast and brightness. A thin bezel makes it ideal for multi-monitor setups. Height adjust, tilt, swivel and even pivot means the 17-inch screen can be put anywhere and made to suit anyone. The only problem is the fiddly buttons on the front.



FLATRON L1730P
STREET PRICE £355
MANUFACTURER LG
TELEPHONE 0870 585000
WEBSITE uk.lg.com

If you're after speed, quality and features, the 17-inch Flatron L1730P is the one to covet. It boasts a 12ms response time, has an amazing picture, a range of colour presets, detachable two-port USB hub and is TCO-03 compliant to boot. This accreditation means there's height and tilt adjust, plus the screen is lit uniformly - it's noticeably a superior image. The only drawback is the price, and the pivot feature won't interest gamers.



VISIONMASTER PRO 514
STREET PRICE £425
MANUFACTURER Iiyama
TELEPHONE 01438 745482
WEBSITE www.iiyama.co.uk

Boasting a 22-inch Mitsubishi Electric DIAMONDTRON tube, 0.24mm AG pitch and flicker-free refresh rates at immense resolutions, the Iiyama is a breathtaking sight on your desktop - not least because it gobbles so much of it. The big VM also has a comprehensive on-screen menu, USB hub and audio connectors. At 1600x1200, the display rocks steady at 110Hz - and so ideal for gaming.

SCREENS



ICEMAT SIBERIA MULTI HEADSET
STREET PRICE £69
MANUFACTURER Soft Trading ApS
TELEPHONE 00 4570 250 075
WEBSITE www.icemat.com

A beguiling combination of modern chic, excellent sound reproduction and the integration of a top-quality microphone propel these headphones to the top of the pile. You can buy a lot cheaper, but if you want to look like an old-school astronaut and play games in absolute comfort, you won't find a better pair without travelling to distant planets far, far away.



EXTREME PC GAMING HEADSET
STREET PRICE £20
MANUFACTURER Logitech
TELEPHONE 020 7309 0127
WEBSITE www.logitech.co.uk

This fits all the criteria for a gaming headset: it's comfortable (so you can spend hours shouting at your team-mates without feeling you've been cuffed round the ear), the boom comes with an easy-to-position ratchet and it sports a noise-cancelling microphone with excellent voice reproduction. The cable's a bit short, but that's the only drawback - and at this price, it's a steal.



HS300
STREET PRICE £11
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE europe.creative.com

Light and comfortable and with impressive audio considering the rock-bottom price, the Creative HS300's are well worth considering if you're after a new pair of headphones on a budget. Sound is rounded, with a decent scoop of bass, and while they can't match the Logitech Extreme for voice quality, your message still comes across loud and clear. If you're strapped for cash, consider these.

HEADSETS

EMAIL YOUR RANTS TO MAILBOX@PCZONE.CO.UK



MAILBOX

Negotiating the minefield of reader letters for your safety

■ METAL DETECTOR: Jamie Sefton



Issue 157: Battlefield-tastic!

I LOVE OPFF

I'm writing this having just dragged myself away from what I consider to be one of the best, if not the best game around at the moment - *Operation Flashpoint!* I know it's a bit old now but I don't think it can ever get boring, with three single-player campaigns and loads of missions - and that's just the official stuff. There are tons of unit, weapon, vehicle and map add-ons available all over the internet too (I recommend www.ofpec.com). I guess this sounds

like a bit of a rant, but I just wanted to write in saying how great the game is. If you haven't played it yet, my advice is to GET IT NOW!

Sam Foley

PS - I know I sound a nutter, but I don't care! Nutter. Actually, *Operation Flashpoint* is one of the team's favourite games too - we discovered its existence and brought it to the world's attention a few years back. Check out last issue for the latest on the 'unofficial' sequel from Bohemia Interactive (www.bistudio.com).

SWALK

I have to say I loved your hilarious 'SWAT 4 - Off-Duty' back page last issue. I laughed out loud and then I wet myself. I look forward to the sequel: 'Swat 4 - Off-Duty: The team clean the bathroom - 'BREACH, BLEACH AND CLEAR!'

Gavsky

Eeeeeooooowww. Good job our beloved pages are now wipe-clean and impregnated with urine-protective chemicals.



Battlefield 2 - gorgeous, if you've got a decent graphics card.

SEARCH FOR (ANOTHER) GAME

I've just completed a game idea that's ready for posting (too late for your 'Search For A Game' feature), but I need to know what the process is for presenting a pitch to a developer. What is the job title of the person I should send my treatment to? If you have any information, I would very much appreciate it.

Brian

The only advice for budding game designers at the moment is don't come up with a *Grand Theft Auto-meets-X* type of thing, as developers are swamped with them. The problem is that most unsolicited ideas can't be looked at by companies in case they're accused of ripping someone off. If you're serious about game design, look out for graduate or other positions in UK developers/publishers and when you get a chance, pitch your idea. We're also planning another Search For A Game-style regular soon, so send it to us too.

BOO HOO

One session too many of *Counter Strike: Source* led me to

the conclusion that a change was needed. I downloaded and installed the *Battlefield 2* demo (which took three hours), only to discover (to my dismay) that it won't run on my computer.

After committing grievous bodily harm to my keyboard and trawling through seemingly endless forums, I found that my GeForce 4200 does not support the pixel-shader that *Battlefield 2* requires. All of which means I need a new graphics card to play.

Now, I understand that new technology usually means

BANNED!

In a bid to make these pages even more exciting, we're flexing our dictatorial muscle and exorcising certain dead topics. Write to us about these things and we won't print your letter, and we definitely won't send you a graphics card. You have been warned...

- Strange emails asking to buy PC games from us.
- Polite letters asking us not to swear. F**k off.
- "I think PC games aren't as good as they used to be..."

progress, yet what bothers me is that *Battlefield 2* could run on my graphics card but appears to have been specifically designed not to. This means the game effectively costs around £200 for anyone without a new graphics card that supports the pixel shader! Is this fair?

Rick Lane

Nope, it's not fair, but that's the sacrifice PC owners make to remain at the cutting-edge of videogames technology. Most developers do, however, attempt to make games as

scaleable as possible - id software is a good example, with its *Doom 3* technology. *Battlefield 2* just happens to eat graphics cards for brunch - come on Rick, write us a Letter of the Month and get one for now!

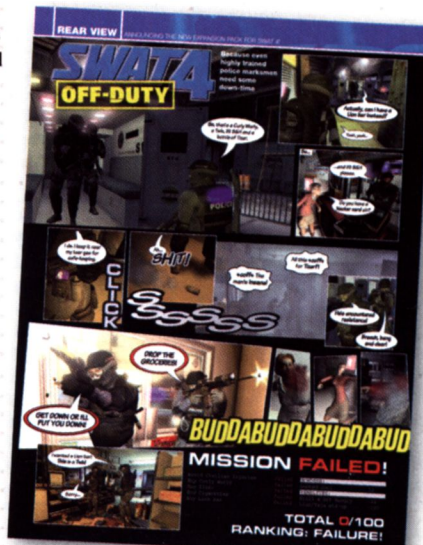
INDY ZONE

A few days ago I was browsing through my old copies of *PC ZONE* when my eyes drifted over to the 'Meet The Team' section. To my amazement, I read that Will Porter had been playing *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis*, my first experience of proper videogaming years ago!

SEND US A LETTER AND WIN A TOP-OF-THE-RANGE GRAPHICS CARD

MAILBOX, PC ZONE, FUTURE PUBLISHING, 99 BAKER ST, LONDON, W1U 6FP OR MAILBOX@PCZONE.CO.UK

■ The new GE Force 6600 GT is one of the best graphics cards we've ever reviewed, with extreme overclocking, ludicrously fast memory and ultra cooling. Write us a letter and if we think it's the pick of the month, we'll send you one to stick in your PC. What are you waiting for?



Last issue's back page was a hit with Gavsky. Not sure about his suggestion though.



Look at 'ickle Steve Hill in the background. Bless.

I read on fixated, hoping to find some reference of where Will had got a copy of the game for which I have long searched, but found nothing. I'm still a great fan of LucasArts, particularly the *KOTOR* and *Jedi Knight* series, but I've always yearned to get back to the good old days of old school puzzle-solving that involved push, pull and open commands.

Please *PC ZONE*, tell me where I can get hold of a copy of *Indiana Jones* and other LucasArts classics...

Gavin Lee

Piece of piss Gavin - Ebay. As we go to press, there are three available varying between £5.50 and £11. Or failing that you could make Will an offer - a Pot Noodle and a bag of pickled onion Monster Munch usually does the trick.

CANDID CAMERA

Just bought your mag today, which I must say has some sweet-looking games in it this month - *UT2007* being the sweetest, plus a nice few ones on the DVD. However, something caught my attention on page 82 - *Virtualy Jenna*... I was just about to flick past it to

the next page because it looks well, crap. However one of your very sheepish-looking writers - a certain Steve Hill - may disagree, as he seems to be enjoying himself in the corner, until the flash went...

Ross Hollingsworth

Well spotted Ross. We're thinking of sneaking Steve Hill's face into various areas of the mag every month as a sort of twisted 'Where's Wally?' challenge. Unfortunately, we'd have to pay him extortionate image rights for the privilege - his face is his fortune.

DOOM-ED?

Now, *Prey* and *Quake IV*. After reading your previews and examining the graphics, I can't help but feel that these games are just *Doom 3* all over again, but with a different story.

Forget FPSs. Dancing ducks are the future.

I remember buying *ZONE* back in 1996 and being very excited by *Prey* back then, but I'm not so now. I was looking forward to *Quake IV* until I saw the screenshots. I'm looking forward to *The Movies*, because it's very different, something we've never had before, as is *Black & White 2*. Please developers - we love first-person shooters, but give us something new!

Paul Boland

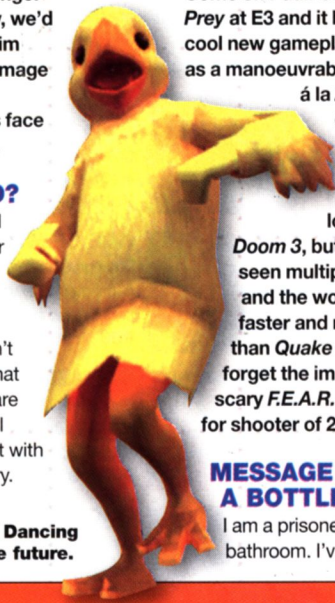
Come on Paul! Chin up! I saw *Prey* at E3 and it had some cool new gameplay stuff, such as a manoeuvrable space pod à la *2001* and the gravity flip-switches.

Admittedly, *Quake IV* did look similar to

Doom 3, but we haven't seen multiplayer yet - and the word is it's faster and more intense than *Quake III*! Plus, don't forget the immensely scary *F.E.A.R.* - our tip for shooter of 2005.

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

I am a prisoner in my own bathroom. I've been



BACKCHAT

There's honestly nothing more annoying for PC gamers than the summer interruption, creating stifling conditions indoors and providing distractions such as beaches and girls. So, we asked the forumites at www.pczone.co.uk which PC game destination they'd choose for their summer holidays...

Doomus is unfortunately suffering with hay fever and so reckons that *Half-Life's* Black Mesa complex would be a cracking place to visit: "I bet they've got some wicked pollen filters." **Cal40k** is less discerning though: "I'd go anywhere from any RPG, as the locals never seem to mind me barging into their house and nicking things".

Meanwhile, **Spudy2000** says: "It's just too hot! My PC keeps overheating - book me a griffin flight to *World Of Warcraft's* Iron Forge now!" **Ckinnerley** thinks he has the perfect holiday destination in *Battlefield 1942*: "Wake Island would be fantastic, although travel agents do advise bringing along an M1 semi-automatic rifle due to some small problems with the local inhabitants." On a similar theme, **Crow555** will "probably be visiting far off places like Oman, China and Russia in a variety of RTS titles, meeting the locals and calling in artillery strike on them".

Moving on, and **Chubbie** has heard that *Half-Life 2's* lost coast is purdy this time of year: "I'd be able to combine my two loves of squinting at bright lights and popping caps into alien hybrid arses." Finally, **G_Man_007** has a few warnings for discerning travellers: "Stay away from *Knights Of The Old Republic's* Korriban - it's a tourist trap - and Onderon, as the civil war's done it no favours." Although apparently, he's very excited about the prospect of the Caribbean: "There are a number of governors' daughters awaiting my return after I said I was going away to dance school." Roll on winter we say...

stricken down by the bane of human existence - food poisoning. It's been like this for nearly three days now with no sign of, ahem, drying up. However, I have to say that your magazine has saved my sanity.

I received it on the second day of 'the evacuation' and have now read it twice. Some bits thrice, so I just wanted to say thanks. I feel I'm closer to your magazine and staff than I ever thought was possible (yet not in the manic stalker sense). Maybe I'm hallucinating again? Must go now, nature calls. Again. Eat well people. Eat well.

A Jarrett

Eat well people? No wonder you've got an iffy tummy. As I said to Gavsky, you probably feel closer to us because of the special chemical-impregnated wipe-free paper...

PC ZONE SHOP

I wanted to buy the following games for my son. Could you

please entertain my inquiry providing the total cost, including the shipping charge to Riyadh? I have included the list of games we want to buy. How much time does it take to reach the destination after the final placement of order?

I can pay for the games from my Sony Visa credit card. Kindly reply to my queries as early as possible.

Mousaied S Shieshakly

Erm... Sure. What's your credit card number again?

BOG ROLE

I've been meaning to write this letter for some time, but the subject is also the reason for the delay. I'm convinced that you lace the pages of your magazine with some laxative ingredient. No sooner does the latest issue of *ZONE* hit the mat than I'm legging it to the bog to spend hours reading it in peace.

Rob Mould

How did you guess? [X]

LETTER OF THE MONTH

FUNNY VOICES

It's not often reading this magazine I have a WTF moment, but reading last issue's re-release review of *Colin McRae 3* has to be the funniest. It started with the comment that Scottish navigators were vital to *Colin McRae* - what? The review continued: "It's amusing to hear the parochial banter of Nicky 'hoots mon where's me troosers' Grist." Nicky comes from that far-flung corner of Scotland called... Wales! Whoever wrote that, have they actually listened to Nicky? Please direct them to

Colin McRae's Nicky Grist is from the Welsh valleys. Near Scotland.

www.nickygrist.com - it will tell them all about his highland upbringing.

Richard Gibbens

Well, I talked to Paul 'helleh gavnah, I'm a cock-er-nee' Presley about his Nicky Grist comments in the review, and I'm ashamed to say that is actually him attempting a Welsh accent. Have a graphics card "with oor pleasurrrrrrrr, ye sassanach!"



THE PCZONE A-LIST

SHOOTERS

HALF-LIFE 2



We always knew that somewhere within our PC there was the potential for absolute, outright brilliance – and now Valve's cracked it. *Half-Life 2* is a masterpiece, and a game that won't be trumped for a long, long time. Maybe not even until *Half-Life 3*. With physics, design, art and ambience to die for, this sequel builds on its Black Mesa roots with stunning aplomb. Gordon Freeman, we salute you.

PUB VU Games DEV Valve
PCZ ISSUE 148



FAR CRY

Far Cry may be several notches beneath *Half-Life 2*, but it remains an outstanding and exhilarating experience that pushes your rig and your nerves to their limits. The narrative may be iffy, but *Far Cry* is a cracking achievement.

PUB Ubisoft DEV Crytek
PCZ ISSUE 140



DOOM 3

Technologically dazzling, genuinely shock-providing and resolutely back to basics: *Doom 3* may not bring anything new to the FPS table, but it's still a stunning thrill-ride that every PC gamer should sample.

PUB Activision DEV id Software
PCZ ISSUE 146



CALL OF DUTY

With an excellent expansion in the form of *United Offensive*, *Call Of Duty* remains the best war game on the PC – and possibly of all time. Constantly managing to mix up feelings of dread and excitement, it's an absolute must-play.

PUB Activision DEV Infinity Ward
PCZ ISSUE 136



MAX PAYNE 2

It's Payne! Slicker than slick, breathtaking and quite beautiful, *Max Payne 2* provides the greatest gaming kicks that money can buy. It's extremely short, but so tense and well-designed that you just won't care.

PUB Rockstar Games DEV Remedy
PCZ ISSUE 136



TRIBES: VENGEANCE

A generation-leaping storyline and some silky skiing and sliding slot this remoulding of the online favourite firmly into these hallowed pages. It's a brilliant and original game, even if a few levels are slightly lacklustre.

PUB VU Games DEV Irrational Games
PCZ ISSUE 147



NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2

Style, stealth and magnificent set-pieces are the order of the day in this excellent spy sequel. It looks brilliant, it's well designed and it's genuinely funny. What's more, it doesn't treat you like an idiot.

PUB Black Label Games DEV VU Games
PCZ ISSUE 122



HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS

Long in the tooth? Dated? Not one iota. The original *Half-Life* remains a touchstone for every shooter of recent years, and for good reason: it's fantastic, and remains so to this day. Play it again – the magic's still there.

PUB VU Games DEV Valve Software
PCZ ISSUE 71



UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004

It may be a multiplayer game, but the superb bots of *UT2004* still grab it a place in the *PCZONE* solo-shooter hall of fame. It's quite simply the greatest deathmatch experience money can buy.

PUB Atari DEV Digital Extremes
PCZ ISSUE 138



SWAT 4

Ever wanted to kick down a door, bellow "DOWN ON THE GROUND!" and spray pepper into an old lady's face? Well now you can! Fantastic level design and varied gameplay make *SWAT 4* a winner.

PUB VU Games DEV Irrational Games
PCZ ISSUE 154

STRATEGY

ROME: TOTAL WAR



An engine that makes grown men cry, AI so great that Hannibal could be in charge and a cinematic tinge that grabs your social life and will not let go. *Rome: Total War* is every inch the champion we knew it would be. A few rough edges appear occasionally, but this is strategy far above anything we've seen in *Medieval: Total War* or anywhere else. The greatest battle simulator ever.

PUB Activision
DEV The Creative Assembly
PCZ ISSUE 148



LORD OF THE RINGS: BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH

Melding the best of the hardcore and mainstream markets, this strategic gem combines intuitive gameplay with real-life tactics to create an epic, deeply entertaining experience that's dripping with atmosphere.

PUB EA DEV EA Pacific
PCZ ISSUE 149



RISE OF NATIONS

One of the most addictive and satisfying strategy games to land on our desks in ages. Its unique perspective, great gameplay and, now, its excellent expansion *Thrones And Patriots* make it hugely deserving of our prestigious Classic award.

PUB Microsoft DEV Big Huge Games
PCZ ISSUE 129



SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WWII

The strategy of *Commandos* meets the fun of *Cannon Fodder* in this top-down game of tactics and warfare. Being the underdog has never been so much fun, and the rumbling of distant tanks never so worrying.

PUB Codemasters DEV Best Way
PCZ ISSUE 144



AGE OF MYTHOLOGY

The *Age Of* series goes 3D in Ensemble Studios' best strategy outing to date. Great gameplay, superb attention to detail and a strong storyline give this an unparalleled sense of atmosphere. In addition, it boasts a decent map editor.

PUB Microsoft DEV Ensemble Studios
PCZ ISSUE 123



SID MEIER'S PIRATES!

If you're looking for something that doesn't quite fit into the usual template, *Pirates!* is the game for you. With governor's daughters to dally with, trade routes to plunder and land to be lubbered, *Pirates!* is a winner.

PUB Atari DEV Firaxis
PCZ ISSUE 149



GROUND CONTROL II: OPERATION EXODUS

Despite a few AI glitches and dull objectives, *GCII* is a great game if you prefer tactics to boring old resource management. A superb sci-fi effort with some intense freeform missions, strat-fans should check it out.

PUB VU Games DEV Massive Entertainment
PCZ ISSUE 143



WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR

An old school charmer with some cool visuals, varied units and super-flash presentation: what *Dawn Of War* loses in dull AI it wins through with sheer orkish belligerence. Multiplayer is pretty smart too.

PUB THQ DEV Relic
PCZ ISSUE 147



EMPIRES: DAWN OF THE MODERN WORLD

The latest to fall off the *Age Of Empires* lorry may not innovate, but there's a good variety of nations with accurate historical spins (General Patton, Richard the Lionheart etc), as well as novel unit types and well-written campaigns.

PUB Activision DEV Stainless Steel Studios
PCZ ISSUE 135



HEARTS OF IRON II

A supremely hardcore RTS with the trappings of *Risk*, this certainly isn't for the uninitiated or foolhardy. Functional graphics hide a deep, complex system of world conflict and politics – if you're clever enough that is.

PUB JoWood DEV Paradox
PCZ ISSUE 152

This is it. The last A-List ever. The last time you'll flick over its pages, the last gaming guide afore the revamp, the last time a dewy-eyed ZONE staff member will cheerily update its cute 'ickle columns. The very last one. Farewell then, A-List. We'll miss you...

◀ **ROLE-PLAYING GAMES** ▶

KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC



The best RPG to appear for five whole years, and the best *Star Wars* game to surface in ten. *Knights Of The Old Republic* manages to develop the franchise more than even Lucas's cinematic efforts ever could. With beautiful graphics, a gripping plot, oodles of Force powers and supreme character development, this is proof, if ever it were needed, that BioWare is one of the best development houses on the planet.

PUB Activision **DEV** BioWare
PCZ ISSUE 137

◀ **ACTION/ADVENTURE** ▶

GTA: SAN ANDREAS



NEW ENTRY We've come a long, long way since the 2D Gourangas of 1997. The quality and consistency of the *GTA* series continues to dazzle, and CJ's trials and tribulations through the LA of the early '90s alternately stun and amaze. No, the graphics aren't up there with other new PC releases, but for sheer scope and player freedom, *San Andreas* is an unmissable title.

PUB Rockstar
DEV Rockstar North
PCZ ISSUE 157



DEUS EX

Great sci-fi plot, amazing attention to detail and unparalleled player freedom: combining the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief*, *Deus Ex* is an RPG of complex beauty and a true revolution in computer gaming.

PUB Eidos **DEV** Ion Storm
PCZ ISSUE 93



THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

One of the most impressive RPGs we've seen in years. A massively open-ended world full of beautiful visuals, superb depth of gameplay and innovative character development make this a classic that will keep you totally absorbed.

PUB Ubisoft **DEV** Bethesda Softworks
PCZ ISSUE 117



NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

The maker of the epic *Baldur's Gate* series proves it's still a leading force in the world of RPGs with this glorious hardcore 3D adventure. It features great single and multiplayer options, along with a very accessible toolkit.

PUB Atari **DEV** BioWare
PCZ ISSUE 118



PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

An incredible game from Black Isle, using the *Baldur's Gate* engine. With a compelling story, well-scripted dialogue and the best character development we've seen in any game of its kind, this is a dark, adult scorch of an RPG.

PUB Interplay **DEV** Black Isle Studio
PCZ ISSUE 87



VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE - BLOODLINES

Once you get past the bugs and glitches, *Bloodlines* is a deep, absorbing game that everyone with an interest in the genre should play. Great dialogue, clever plot and (despite the dodgy combat), a superb experience.

PUB Activision **DEV** Troika Games
PCZ ISSUE 150



DUNGEON SIEGE

Graphically brilliant, massively enjoyable and highly immersive, *Dungeon Siege* is one of the best RPGs to date and only misses out on a Classic award because of the shortcomings in the narrative.

PUB Microsoft **DEV** Gas Powered Games
PCZ ISSUE 115



SYSTEM SHOCK 2

Definitely one of the most 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 with the lights off if you're hard enough.

PUB EA **DEV** Irrational Games
PCZ ISSUE 80



BALDUR'S GATE II

The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. The sequel isn't vastly different, but it's bigger, better and still extremely addictive. If PC role-playing's your thang, this is essential.

PUB Interplay **DEV** BioWare
PCZ ISSUE 96



DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR

It's had most of its role-playing elements sucked out and developed a strong console bias, but the gripping plot and action remain intact. It wasn't the revolution we wanted, but it's still a worthwhile purchase.

PUB Eidos **DEV** Ion Storm
PCZ ISSUE 137



SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY

Some stylish acrobatic moves from Fisher, plus intriguing level design and well-placed homo-eroticism in co-op mode built to complement the already highly playable Spies vs Mercs multiplayer. Is it us, or is Sam ageing backwards? Ace.

PUB Ubisoft **DEV** Ubisoft Montreal
PCZ ISSUE 154



BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

A beautiful game with a myriad of styles that evokes the spirit of *Little Big Adventure*, along with a touch of *Zelda* sparkle. Whether you're fighting government conspiracies or photographing wildlife, it's never dull.

PUB Ubisoft **DEV** Ubisoft
PCZ ISSUE 138



PSYCHONAUTS

Mind-bending level design, joy-inducing art direction, funny, smart characters and sparkling dialogue come slickly together to make one of this year's most original titles. The industry needs more games like this. Please.

PUB Majesco **DEV** DoubleFine
PCZ ISSUE 156



THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS

Garrett's new adventure is sure to thrill, although you can't help but feel that it's been hampered by console considerations. That said, sublime level design, amazing sound and real scares make it an excellent buy.

PUB Eidos **DEV** Ion Storm
PCZ ISSUE 144



PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

He may have gone all moody on us in *Warrior Within*, but we still prefer the Prince's younger, more innocent days of *Sands Of Time*. Combat is iffy, granted, but there's a rare charm here that the sequel could not replicate.

PUB Ubisoft **DEV** Ubisoft Montreal
PCZ ISSUE 136



SPLINTER CELL

Three green lights on his head and (still) some of the best stealth missions available – not bettered by *Pandora Tomorrow* and only recently equalled by *Chaos Theory* – the original *Splinter Cell* is now so cheap it hurts.

PUB Ubisoft **DEV** Ubisoft Montreal
PCZ ISSUE 125



GRIM FANDANGO

If you've followed LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must. The scripting is impeccable, while sublime graphics and brilliant humour ensure it's top of its genre.

PUB Activision **DEV** LucasArts
PCZ ISSUE 71



THE SUFFERING

A survival horror that's refreshingly fast and fluid, *The Suffering* takes place in an Alcatraz-style prison and surprised us with its ingenuity and tension-fused set-pieces. It gets slightly repetitive, but it's worth a ride.

PUB Midway **DEV** Surreal Software
PCZ ISSUE 145



METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE

A convincing PC conversion that adds tanker-loads of side-missions, training stages and unlockable characters to the PS2 original. There's too much waffle, but it's still an excellent third-person sneakfest.

PUB Konami **DEV** Konami
PCZ ISSUE 127

◀ GOD GAMES ▶

BLACK & WHITE



Although it had its critics, we still stand by our original verdict. Peter Molyneux's vision is pure and the design of the game breaks boundaries and serves as a blueprint for the future. The add-on *Creature Isle* is also available, which cuts down on micro-management and enables you to guide your creature through a variety of mini-games. Pure genius in a box.

PUB EA DEV Lionhead Studios
PCZ ISSUE 100



CIVILIZATION III

Civilization III sticks to the same compulsive gameplay that made the first two games so popular. Die-hard *Civ* fans will relish the improved visuals and animation, while the new user-friendly interface makes the game accessible to the first-timer. Brings to mind the maxim 'if it ain't broke...'

PUB Atari DEV Firaxis Games
PCZ ISSUE 111



EVIL GENIUS

It's always more fun being the bad guy, and when you're an insane megalomaniac it's even better. *Evil Genius* awakens the Blofeld inside you, with all the henchmen, lairs and diabolical plans you could ask for. Basic graphics, ace gameplay.

PUB VU Games DEV Elixir
PCZ ISSUE 147



THE SIMS 2

We still hate *The Sims*, we hate them and everything they stand for, but even we have to admit that the sequel's a good game in itself. We found it addictive and absorbing when we reviewed it – but we'll have changed our tune by the time the fifth expansion pack is dribbled onto the market.

PUB EA DEV Maxis
PCZ ISSUE 147



STRONGHOLD 2

Packed with humour, depth, detail and replayability, this filth-ridden castle-constructing sim brings to mind the classic *Bullfrog* games of yore. Few games combine economy-building and battlefield action with such seamless panache.

PUB: 2K Games DEV: Firefly
PCZ ISSUE 155



VEGAS: MAKE IT BIG

An in-depth tycoon game with all the 3D graphical glitz and glamour of Vegas itself, *Make It Big* provides hotels, casinos and over-priced magic shows that let you suck the money out of punters' pockets. It can get a little too fiddly, but it looks and plays really well. A *PC ZONE* 'Essential'.

PUB Empire Interactive DEV Deep Red
PCZ ISSUE 135



SPACE COLONY

Whether you're trying to attract space-tourists or battle neighbouring aliens, taking control of 20 rowdy space colonists and pandering to them makes for a charming and original management jaunt, with plenty of missions to keep you busy for a fair while.

PUB Gathering DEV Firefly Studios
PCZ ISSUE 136



ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3

A stirring return for the ride-creating cash-cow that brings with it a snazzy 3D engine and more coasters than you can shake a stick at. It doesn't quite recall the *Theme Park* glory days, but *Rollercoaster Tycoon 3* is the closest we've been in ages.

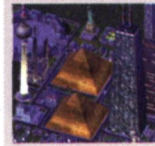
PUB Atari DEV Frontier Developments
PCZ ISSUE 149



EMPEROR: RISE OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

This intricate game comes from the same stable as *Zeus* and *Caesar* – and they know a thing or two about city building. There's a massive amount of gameplay and more than 50 missions spanning seven historic campaigns. As well as the economic considerations, you have to follow feng shui and the Chinese zodiac.

PUB VU Games DEV Breakaway Games
PCZ ISSUE 121



SIM CITY 4

The latest outing of the best-selling city-building sim goes 3D. Unfortunately, there are no huge leaps forwards in gameplay, but there are plenty of features, such as regional cities, imported characters from *The Sims* and a terrain editor to keep you occupied.

PUB EA DEV Maxis
PCZ ISSUE 125

◀ MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ▶

EVERQUEST II



The best just got sooooo much better. As visually alluring as a lingerie-clad supermodel holding a giant meat pie, as full of content as the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and as addictive as purple Fruit Pastilles topped with Pringles. Sony has learnt every lesson it could in the five years since the original and produced a MMOG that sets new standards across the board.

PUB Ubisoft DEV Sony Online Entertainment
PCZ ISSUE 150



WORLD OF WARCRAFT

The most popular PC game of all time according to reports, *World Of Warcraft* is the 'other' best MMOG ever. Less realistic and perhaps a touch more fun than *EQII*, it's horses for courses as to which one you choose. The only real difference is that *WOW* is PvP based.

PUB VU Games DEV Blizzard
PCZ ISSUE 152



GUILD WARS

NEW ENTRY Instantly playable, insanely addictive, no monthly fees – what more could you want from an online game? Not strictly an MMO, but near enough that it makes no difference. Action-based, with an emphasis on skills not levels, this is superb stuff.

PUB NCsoft DEV NCsoft
PCZ ISSUE 156



CITY OF HEROES

It may not have scored as high as the others in our review, but this spandex-wearing, justice-dispensing, superhero-themed MMOG has certainly won over the popular vote. Long-term appeal may be dubious, but for instant-action fun, it simply can't be beaten.

PUB NCsoft DEV Cryptic Studios
PCZ ISSUE 149



PLANETSIDE

The eternal war for Auraxis just keeps on going, but now with giant battlemechs thrown into the mix. The subterranean *Core Combat* expansion may have disappeared down its own hole, but recent updates have managed to keep the fighting fresh.

PUB Ubisoft DEV Sony Online Entertainment
PCZ ISSUE 131



EVE ONLINE

Best described as 'Elite Online', the sedate nature of *EVE* has managed to pull in more and more space traders with each passing month. It may not be the most human of MMOGs, but it's definitely worth putting the time into it considering what you get back.

PUB CCP DEV CCP
PCZ ISSUE 130



ANARCHY ONLINE

Quirky science-fiction action abounds in this ever-popular take on mankind's distant future. Two major expansions (one practically bigger than the original game) and a forthcoming graphical overhaul is doing more than enough to keep the world of Rubi-ka buzzing.

PUB Funcom DEV Funcom
PCZ ISSUE 148



FINAL FANTASY XI ONLINE

Probably the best of the non-*EverQuest* fantasy MMOGs (although not by much), this Japanese entry into the genre is about as fully realised a world as you can get. The controls may be cumbersome, but you can't deny the atmosphere that lies within.

PUB Ubisoft DEV Square Enix
PCZ ISSUE 148



DARK AGE OF CAMELOT

The fantasy version of *PlanetSide* (although without the FPS-trappings) is still going strong, despite firm opposition. It's starting to show its age now, although a graphical overhaul due in a few months time might be enough to keep it competitive.

PUB Mythic Entertainment DEV Mythic Entertainment
PCZ ISSUE 149



EVERQUEST

The original can't compare to its sequel in terms of looks and polished gameplay, but five years of expansions have kept its half a million regular players more than happy. There's more on the way too, just in case you feel like keeping it old school.

PUB Ubisoft DEV Sony Online Entertainment
PCZ ISSUE 149

ONLINE SHOOTERS

BATTLEFIELD 2



NEW ENTRY Sheer bloody brilliance personified – it's like the developer's taken the already highly competent 1942 model and drenched it in gaming genius. *BF2* packs in all those exuberant *Battlefield* moments and combines them with an intuitive commander system and game maps formed in the bosom of the goddess of intelligent gaming. Online gaming does not get better than this, or at least it won't for a good long time.

PUB EA DEV DICE

PCZ ISSUE 157



UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004

We might be watching the months/years tick by until *UT2007*, but *UT2004* still fulfils almost all the online shootist's violent needs. Onslaught mode remains a delight, adding tactics to the melee, while its vehicles are only bettered by *BF2*.

PUB Atari DEV Epic

PCZ ISSUE 138



BATTLEFIELD 1942

Not much in single-player, but online this Swedish gem has redefined the way online shooters work. Infantry, jeeps, tanks, planes, bombers, ships – the total WWII experience, minus the searing horror and psychological scarring for life.

PUB EA DEV Digital Illusions

PCZ ISSUE 121



JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING

150 players! Count 'em. Some say a world record (although *PlanetSide* begs to disagree), this is modern-day online warfare at its finest. Quality maps, plenty of vehicles and the best helicopters in the business – why, it even has useful mortars.

PUB NovaLogic DEV NovaLogic

PCZ ISSUE 145



BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM

Take *BF1942*, drop it into the '60s and bingo – the total Vietnam war experience. More claustrophobic than *BF1942*, which suits the jungle warfare period setting, this has a great '60s mood: all it needs is the late Brando and it'd be perfect.

PUB EA DEV DICE Canada

PCZ ISSUE 141

SPACE COMBAT

X2: THE THREAT



Vast, engrossing and utterly compelling. We firmly believe that *X2* is the game that can finally banish the memory of *Elite* to the shadows. The level of detail here is immense, as is the potential. Build your own space empire, form a pirate fleet or just bomb around the universe like an interstellar playboy. The game could go on forever. And did we mention it's also gobsmackingly beautiful? OK, the story isn't all that, but while nothing's perfect in life, *X2* comes very close.

PUB Deep Silver DEV Egosoft

PCZ ISSUE 138



FREELANCER

Freelancer combines the epic open-endedness of *Elite* with the combat immediacy of the *Wing Commander* series. It also mixes in a well played out (if short) story and gorgeous graphics to create a totally engaging experience.

PUB Microsoft DEV Digital Anvil

PCZ ISSUE 128



X - GOLD

The spirit of *Elite* lives on in this huge trading epic, in which you must buy and fight your way back home to Earth. It rewards patience with variety and months of absorbing gameplay. Deeply hypnotic and beautiful rather than tense and frenetic.

PUB THQ DEV Egosoft

PCZ ISSUE 82



TERMINUS

Who says the days of bedroom programming are over? *Terminus* proves you can make a great game on your own if you have the talent and passion – we reckon it just edges out the mighty *FreeSpace 2*.

PUB www.macgames.co.uk DEV Vicarious Visions

PCZ ISSUE 93



FREESPACE 2

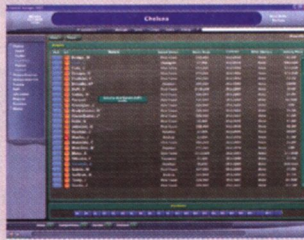
Following in the footsteps of *Wing Commander* and *X-Wing*, *FreeSpace 2* offers fast-paced dogfighting action all the way. It has an epic story and superb graphics, but does suffer from being a bit short-lived if you don't play online.

PUB Interplay DEV Volition Inc

PCZ ISSUE 84

SPORT

FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005



Eidos and the *Champ Man* licence have got a hell of a lot to beat in Sports Interactive's *Football Manager* – easily the most streamlined and absorbing management game to come out of its stable to date. It's management in its purest form, with an improved match engine working under the bonnet of a sparkling (well, green and gray) redesigned interface. We're just as addicted as we always were.

PUB Sega DEV Sports Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 149



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4

Fact. This is the finest arcade football gamer ever. Incomparably better than any *FIFA* offering, *PES* is the only footie game that plays like the real thing – with all the joys and agonies that entails.

PUB Konami DEV Konami

PCZ ISSUE 149



VIRTUA TENNIS

Who would have believed that this console favourite would translate so well to the PC? Its control interface is supremely intuitive, while the AI is massively challenging. Best of all, though, are its truly sublime multiplayer options.

PUB Empire Interactive DEV Hitmaker/Strangelite

PCZ ISSUE 114



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005

Some new game modes gives 2005's Tiger 'em up some welcome variety – although even without them, it would remain the PC's premier golf sim. This year is a good vintage too, with visuals to die for.

PUB EA Sports DEV EA Sports

PCZ ISSUE 148



NHL 2005

Shiny and beautiful, yet nowhere near as vapid as its *FIFA* compatriot, EA's *NHL* series continues its run of consistent excellence. Better AI, better production and as slick as they come.

PUB EA Sports DEV EA Sports

PCZ ISSUE 148

3D ACTION/STRATEGY

BROTHERS IN ARMS



Clever and intuitive tactics (once you get into the meat of it) meld with the WWII first-person scenario you know and love. More realistic than the bombastic Hollywood fare in *Call Of Duty*, *Brothers In Arms* is an admirably gritty and highly replayable jaunt, flanking Nazis through the woods, fields and foxholes of wartime Normandy. Essentially the place where *Medal Of Honor* and *Full Spectrum Warrior* collide, it comes highly recommended.

PUB Ubisoft DEV Gearbox

PCZ ISSUE 153



OPERATION FLASHPOINT

The Game of the Year edition of *Flashpoint* remains widely available, and remains as wonderfully immersive as ever. With the *Resistance* expansion alongside the original missions, if you love tactical warfare, you'll love this.

PUB Codemasters DEV Bohemia Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 104



HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2

With a real Boy's Own-feel, a ninja-bastard difficulty rating and the same superb engine as *Mafia*, *H&D 2* is one of the finest squad-based tactical shooters around. It's got a few bugs, but it's still an essential purchase.

PUB Gathering DEV Illusion Softworks

PCZ ISSUE 136



FREEDOM FORCE VS THE 3RD REICH

Smack! and, indeed, kerblammo! as our favourite heroes travel through time to fight the Nazis. Much comic silliness, knock-about combat and ironic guffawing make the second *FF* game a blast. If you like that kind of thing.

PUB Digital Jesters DEV Irrational Games

PCZ ISSUE 154



FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR

A remarkably innovative military simulator, *FSW* provides tense urban combat with you in a commanding role – despite feeling as if you're in the line of fire with your two fire-teams. It gets repetitive, but it's worth a look.

PUB THQ DEV Pandemic Studios

PCZ ISSUE 147

DISC PAGES

DOUBLE-TROUBLE!

The PC ZONE DVD is now double-sided, which means you get twice as much content as before. If you can't find what you're looking for on the DVD, close the PC ZONE disc browser and turn the disc over.

BATTLE-HARDENED



DISCWORLD

■ WORDS & DISCS Suzy Wallace

▲ I'm currently grinning like a Cheshire cat. The reason? I've just spent two hours playing the spectacular *Battlefield 2* demo and I must declare that I'm already hooked on its heady cocktail of tactical strategy, fast-paced action and hilarious ragdolls. Not to mention the dreamy visuals (oh Alienware machine, you bringer of graphical goodness, how I love you so).

But you see, it's not even any of those things that had me enjoying myself so much. It's just that the *Battlefield* series holds a special place in my heart. Back when I joined the ZONE team, the first Fight Club I ever attended gave me my initial taste of the multiplayer carnage of *Battlefield 1942*. Never before had I played multiplayer games with fellow players sitting around me and amidst the taunting banter and evil laughter of the night, I learned some valuable lessons that I will take with me through life. Namely, never to try to swim for land from an aircraft carrier and never try to dogfight with Prez ("I'll get you next time Brigadier Prezzlewick!").

Personally, I can't see any reason why you wouldn't just want to play *Battlefield 2* for the whole month. But with *Codename: Panzers Phase Two*, *Worms 4: Mayhem*, *Area 51*, *Live For Speed* and more, there should be plenty to keep you occupied until next month, when I'll finally have to tear myself away from *Battlefield 2* to help bring you the all-singing, all-dancing redesign issue. For now though, I'm off to try and make some kills with my defibs!

BATTLEFIELD 2

CD1/DVD Pub: EA Dev: Digital Illusions Rev: Issue 157, 94%

ON THE CD YOU'VE seen the screenshots, you've salivated over the movies but now your wait is over – *Battlefield 2* is here! This exclusive demo features the Gulf Of Oman map where the USMC and the MEC are busy battling it out, playable in both single-player (16 players) and multiplayer modes (16 or 32 players), so what are you waiting for soldier? Don't just stand there gawping – grab your weapons, don your helmet and join the battlefield!



EXCLUSIVE!

CHALLENGE SUZY!

SHOCKING! Choose to play as a medic and take someone out using just the defibrillators

Console owners can eat their heart out. Next-gen graphics? Pah – take a look at this!

- 1** Your weapon – make sure all of the graphics are turned up and take a closer look at that intricately detailed piece of killing machinery in your hands.
- 2** Ammo indicator – keep an eye on this while sneaking about. It's not a good idea to come round a corner face to face with the enemy and then have to reload.
- 3** Map – featuring a whole host of useful information from your squad leader's orders to control point locations, you'll want to keep a firm eye on this.
- 4** Buildings – keep an eye out for any buildings that could offer a tactical advantage, from sniping positions on the top of cranes to sheltered back gardens offering cover.
- 5** Control points – if an enemy-controlled checkpoint isn't being taken over fast enough, then get some of your mates in to help. More team members mean a faster conversion.
- 6** Enemy control point – the flag of the opposition and the distance to the control point will be displayed, so you'll definitely know where to head to next.
- 7** About to die? Make sure you don't stray too far from the medic, denoted by this red cross. He'll be able to resuscitate you and bring you back to the fray.
- 8** Ragdolls – death is a pretty nasty thing, but at least it gives everyone else a good laugh when you pop your clogs in a spectacular fashion.

BATTLEFIELD BRILLIANCE

The gameplay is amazing but we just had to go looking for the little touches on the Gulf Of Oman map. And sure enough, look at what we found...



TAKE A VANTAGE

The prime sniping position on the map is undoubtedly the top of the crane by the MEC base. Just being at the top will make you a prime bombing target, but you can also make like an adrenaline junkie by parachuting off the edge.



ELECTRIFYING

Spawn as a medic and you'll come equipped with a pair of defibrillators. As well as being able to resuscitate your fellow downed soldiers, you'll be able to bag one of the game's most satisfying kills as you literally shock someone to death.



ON THE POOL

The hotels littered around the maps are run-down and deserted, but that shouldn't stop you from enjoying the amenities. The tall hotel to one side of the main road has a refreshing-looking pool out back, offering some nice John Smith-style dive-bomb opportunities.



IMPORTANT!

You can find all of the content here on the DVD, but we can't cram everything onto the two CDs. This is because we can get more than six times the content on our double-sided DVD, including a

library of patches, mods, special features and more playable demos. Playable demos are getting bigger all the time and certain games are going to be released on DVD-only from now on. If you still

haven't upgraded to DVD, do it now. You can pick up a cheap drive for about £20, so there's no excuse. Get yourself down the shops quick smart and stop being such a pikey.

CODENAME: PANZERS PHASE TWO

DVD ONLY Pub: CDV Dev: Stormregion

THE WHOLE HOG
Can you stop every single vehicle from entering Tunis?

CHALLENGE SUZY!



The giant plane was great for scaring off tanks.

Sneaking ahead at the drive-thru was frowned upon.

PROVING that World War II is by no means a dead subject for games, this *Panzers 2* demo features an action-intensive level set just outside Tunis. Taking control of the collective American and British forces, you'll have to set up a defensive perimeter to try to prevent as many enemy vehicles from reaching the safety of the city as possible.



Egg + flour bombs = messy.

TUNIS TACTICS

Let a mere 20 enemy vehicles slip through your grip and you will have lost this mission. A quick glance at these simple tactics should help you in your defence...



FREE BASE

Move your troops up the map to take over the bases as soon as possible. These will enable you to heal, repair and restock your unit's weapons and they're also great for keeping your essential repair trucks alive, too.



REPAIR MEN

Keep your repair trucks alive. If you manage to keep them around, they can heal your vehicles between waves without the need to move to the bases. They're also great for keeping near the front line so repairs can start as soon as they're needed.



PIRATE RADIO

Taking out the Flaks at the Axis radio station will stop the aerial bombardment that constantly eats away at your forces. Make sure you use your ground forces to do this with, though, as the Flaks can make mincemeat of any planes sent against them.

WORMS 4: MAYHEM

CD2/DVD Pub: Codemasters Dev: Team 17 Rev: Issue 158, 80%

THERE can only be one title where your weapons range from the humble shotgun to the devastating bovine blanket... *Worms*. This demo offers three levels (one each from head to head, story and multiplayer modes) of invertebrate dispatching set in the Wild West. Rain down merry hell on your spineless opponents!



UP THE ARSENAL

The sheer scope of the weapons available in *Worms* is perhaps one of the finest in the business. Here are our essential ways to make worm mincemeat...



Bazooka – the original and best. Get good with the first-person aiming of this bad boy and you'll be able to take out nearly anybody on the map with one well-placed shot. Remember to account for distance and gravity!



Bovine blitz – set the flight path for the plane to take, and then wait as it flies overhead and the bombing doors are opened. Only you won't be dropping bombs on their head but a bevy of blasting bovines.



Prod – with all the killing power on display, the humble prod is something a bit different. Both humiliating for your enemy and strangely satisfying for yourself, it proves that the little things in life really are sometimes the best.



CHAOS LEAGUE: SUDDEN DEATH

DVD ONLY Pub: Digital Jesters Dev: Cyanide Studios Rev: Issue 158, 65%

TAKE a bunch of beefed-up fantasy misfits, throw in some hilarious commenting and savage gameplay, and you've got a pretty good description of *Chaos League*. The Sudden Death expansion pack extends the scope of the brutal game and you can try it for yourself with this demo giving you the chance to pick from the Human or Undead teams.



AURORA WATCHING

DVD ONLY Pub: Enlight Software Dev: Metropolis Software Rev: Issue 158, 46%

WITH mission one entitled 'The Worst Hangover Ever', Mr White Fox would probably be better off heading to the local AA meeting. Instead, he insists on sneaky sneaky stealth-style slow-motion executions and dragging dead corpses around in the snow. If you're impatient, have the



Russian special agent raise the alarm and see how long you can fend off babbling enemies.



LIVE FOR SPEED

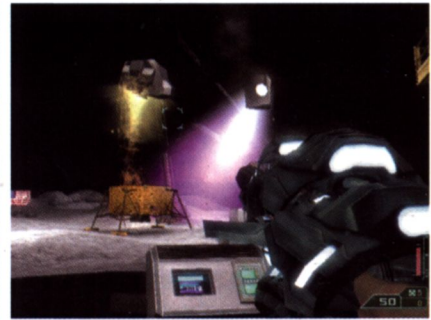
CD2/DVD Dev: S. Roberts, E. Bailey and V. Van Vlaardingen Rev: Issue 158, 90%

STRAP yourself in tight because this independent title has got what it takes to show the big publishers a thing or two about driving (see review, page 114). Training, single and multiplayer modes are all available and if the demo gets you hooked, you can unlock the full game.

AREA 51

DVD ONLY Pub: Midway Dev:
Midway Austin **Rev: Issue 157, 67%**

ALIEN technology, government conspiracies and David Duchovny's voice – Midway's alien shooter has all the ingredients for an episode of *The X-Files*. Things have really gone tits-up at Area 51 and taking on the role of Earth's solitary hero, you'll have to get in there to help out. Don't fret too much though, as you'll have a host of weapons to help you 'entertain' Earth's guests.



ALIEN ARMOURY

As far as taking on the role of the 'Men in Black', Midway has at least been more generous with the weapons than Will Smith's boss was in the film (good job though – we wouldn't trust Will Smith with a Deneuralizer either). Here's some of your payout...



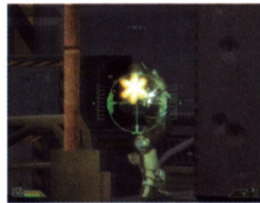
ALIEN WEAPON

This fires three bouncing bullets in succession, which stick to their target. At first this may just appear to be mildly irritating but then they explode in spectacular fashion. Great for taking out moving enemies.



DOUBLE SHOTGUN

Will there ever be a weapon to rival the power of a shotgun at close range? We doubt it, and wielding two of these babies makes them a real winner when you want to get up close and personal.



SNIPER RIFLE

There's nothing more satisfying than taking out an enemy before he's close enough to take a shot at you. Ideal for the tall control room – snipe your enemies from the bottom as they enter at the top.



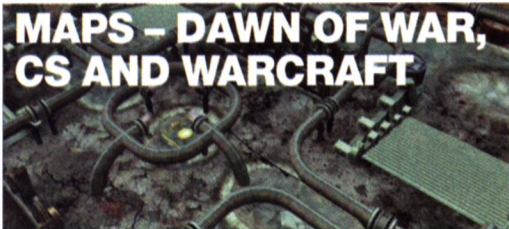
GRENADES

Ah, grenades – what shooter would be without them? A well-placed shot will send enemies scattering for cover, enabling you take them out as they run and mopping up any ditherers with the blast.

● **ALSO ON THE DVD** *London Taxi*, demos of this month's Indie Zone, files from this month's Freeplay and *Warcraft: Orcs & Humans*

EXTENDED PLAY

MAPS – DAWN OF WAR, CS AND WARCRAFT

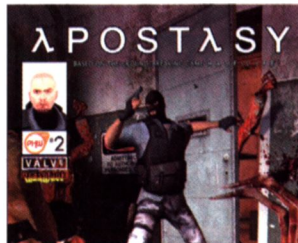


Town-planning gone wrong.

DESPITE being a wholly uninteresting subject in the real world, maps are great when it comes to gaming as they extend the life of your games. So this month we've brought you 'chicken run' for *Counter-Strike: Source* – L. Duke's answer to the question of where the chickens went in *cs_Italy*. Its gameplay features the neat twist of one side trying to rescue the chook-chooks whilst another works to keep them in captivity (damn those evil battery hen farmers). Next we've got two community map packs for *Warhammer 40,000: Dawn Of War*, offering a massive total of 16 maps for your Space Marines to cause carnage in with their heavy weaponry. Last but by no means least, seven *Warcraft: The Frozen Throne* maps finish the round-up direct from Blizzard. **DON'T MISS** – Being an animal activist in *cs_chickenrun* as you free those helpless chickens!

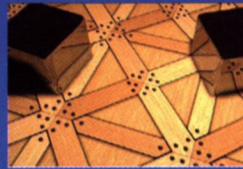
APOSTASY #2 – 'OVERWATCH'

THE plot thickens in BrashFink's fantastic *Half-Life 2*-based comic, made with some genius manipulation of *Garry's Mod*. While *Episode 1* featured some covert action against the Combine, *Episode 2* serves up justice for some headcrab zombies caught in the line of fire, subtly hints at Jack's background and gives an insight into the methods of Combine recruitment.



GENETICA 2

ANYONE who's ever tried to create a realistic texture knows it's not an easy job, but this neat little program features a range of options to help you out. From a Wood Lab that creates seamless and realistic wood textures, to a Weather Lab enabling you to give your textures that authentic 'aged' feel, this texture editor could make designing that level a little bit easier. Both the Normal and Pro demos are available to try.



MODS OF THE MONTH

THIS month's fantastic mods are: *Eclipse*, a fantasy Total Conversion for *Half-Life 2* that uses the Source engine to equip you with psychokinetic powers; *M:I – New Dawn*, a fantastic mod that brings the thrills and spills of *Mission Impossible* to *Max Payne 2*; *Revolt* for *Call Of Duty* that brings the battle into the modern-day world and *The Hidden*; a *Half-Life 2* multiplayer mod that puts one player in the shoes of a near-invisible killer, with the rest hunting him down.



BUG-FIX OF THE MONTH

Bizarre Problems Fixed In A Patch

THIS MONTH: BOILING POINT: ROAD TO HELL

Patch v1.1 ensures that the "police station cannot be destroyed by a crossbow anymore".

● **ALSO ON THE CD** Click For More (Issue 3) digital magazine

HELP!

CD trouble? Don't worry – phone our helpline on 01225 442244 and ask for cover disc support. Or email support@futurenet.co.uk.

BEFORE YOU DIAL...

If you're calling the helpline:

■ 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, along with the nature of the fault.

■ Have a pen and paper to hand so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

■ To run the software on these discs, you need at least a PIII 1GHz or equivalent, with a GeForce 3 64MB graphics card and 256MB RAM (512MB recommended for Windows XP users).

DISCLAIMER

■ This disc has been thoroughly tested at all stages of its production. However, it's always wise to use a virus checker on any software before running it.

■ Future Publishing Limited cannot accept 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.

PLAY NEW XBOX GAMES WITH EVERY ISSUE OF Official XBOX Magazine

WWW.OFFICIALXBOXMAGAZINE.CO.UK

Official Xbox Magazine
WORLD EXCLUSIVE!
BLACK
The Burnout team's next game! Exclusive screens and play of the explosive shooter that rewrites the rules!

ON SALE NOW!

Official Xbox Magazine
CONFLICT: GLOBAL TERROR
Co-op and Live modes revealed!
6 Games To Play!
PLUS! DOWNLOAD EXTRA GAME CONTENT NOW!
PLAY TRIAL VERSIONS OF:
The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction
Worms 4: Mayhem
Scooby-Doo! Unmasked
Moto GP3
Full Spectrum Warrior

Plus XBOX 360
Official news and exclusive previews in our dedicated section!

WIN! EXCLUSIVE GTA BMX

Official Xbox Magazine
PLAY 6 XBOX GAMES RIGHT NOW!
EXCLUSIVE PLAYABLE DEMOS & DOWNLOADABLE CONTENT!
You'll like him even more when he's angry... Crush everything in this awesome demo!
THE INCREDIBLE HULK: ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION
Also on this disc...
→ Scooby-Doo! Unmasked
→ Full Spectrum Warrior
→ Sega GT 2002
→ Worms 4: Mayhem
→ MotoGP: Ultimate Racing Technology 3
PLAY 6 XBOX GAMES RIGHT NOW!

Plus XBOX 360
Official news and exclusive previews in our dedicated section!

PLAY THESE XBOX GAMES NOW!

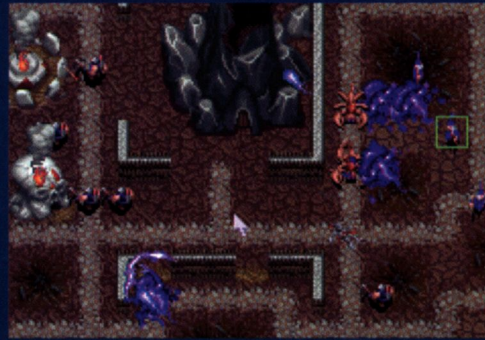
PLAYABLE TRIAL VERSIONS OF...

- ➔ **The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction**
- ➔ **Scooby - Doo! Unmasked**
- ➔ **Full Spectrum Warrior**
- ➔ **Sega GT 2002**
- ➔ **Worms 4: Mayhem**
- ➔ **Moto GP: Ultimate Racing Technology 3**

PLUS! DOWNLOAD EXTRA GAME CONTENT NOW!



The demons were particularly cool going into battle.



Big purple clouds. Nasty business.



Scorpions were your friends.

GAMES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD



WARCRAFT: ORCS & HUMANS



In ten years Blizzard's *Warcraft* went from being a cheery, fantasy strategy game to practically a world religion. *Rhianna Pratchett* looks back to a time when orcs were young...

THE FANTASY-themed strategy game has evolved to become (along with the development community's continued obsession with WWII) one of the strongest pillars in the RTS genre. Certainly, it's hard to remember a time we weren't marching armies of heroic fantasy figures into bloody battles with one another.

Back in 1994, strategy gamers were playing around with *Dune II* and were yet to experience the pseudo-military warfare of *Command & Conquer*. Then all of a sudden, a relatively small team of 20 people at a virtually unknown development team decided to release a game that pitched humans against orcs in the mythical land of Azeroth. The game was *Warcraft: Orcs & Humans*, the studio was Blizzard Entertainment and it was a partnership that would rocket both into the gaming stratosphere.

ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES

Westwood's *Dune II* was certainly partly responsible for bringing *Warcraft* to life as Mike Morhaime, programmer on the original game and now president of Blizzard, explains. "We were very big admirers of *Dune II* and we brainstormed a bunch of ways that we could make a game that was similar, but with our own stamp on it. We thought it would be fun to play a real-time strategy game in a fantasy setting that let two players compete against each other over a modem or network. We were all fans of Tolkien and *Dungeons &*

Dragons, and we very quickly settled on the two factions being orcs and humans."

Blizzard also wanted players to be able to play the game from both sides, and so it put as much emphasis on developing the bad guys as it did the good ones. The two races even got joint share of the box and manual cover.

With the two sides decided upon and roughly sketched out, it became the task of Bill Roper, co-producer on *Warcraft* (and who would later become one of Blizzard's most recognisable faces) to breathe a godlike breath over Azeroth and give the world a bit of substance and history.

"I was handed the basic concept (orcs fighting humans) and some other

components, including one or two character names – Blackhand was the main bad guy, for example. But apart from that, I really got the chance to run with it," explains Roper. "For my part, the world was inspired by numerous authors, including the Middle-earth works by Tolkien, the *Riftwar Saga* by Raymond Feist, as well the work I did on orcs as a noble race for a G.U.R.P.S. (tabletop role-playing) campaign I ran in college."

WORLD VIEW

Around this time the Dark Portal was also conceived. Initially it was a pathway for the orcs to enter the human's realm, but according to Roper, this idea became a pivotal one in the expanding world and providing a historical context. "The concept of

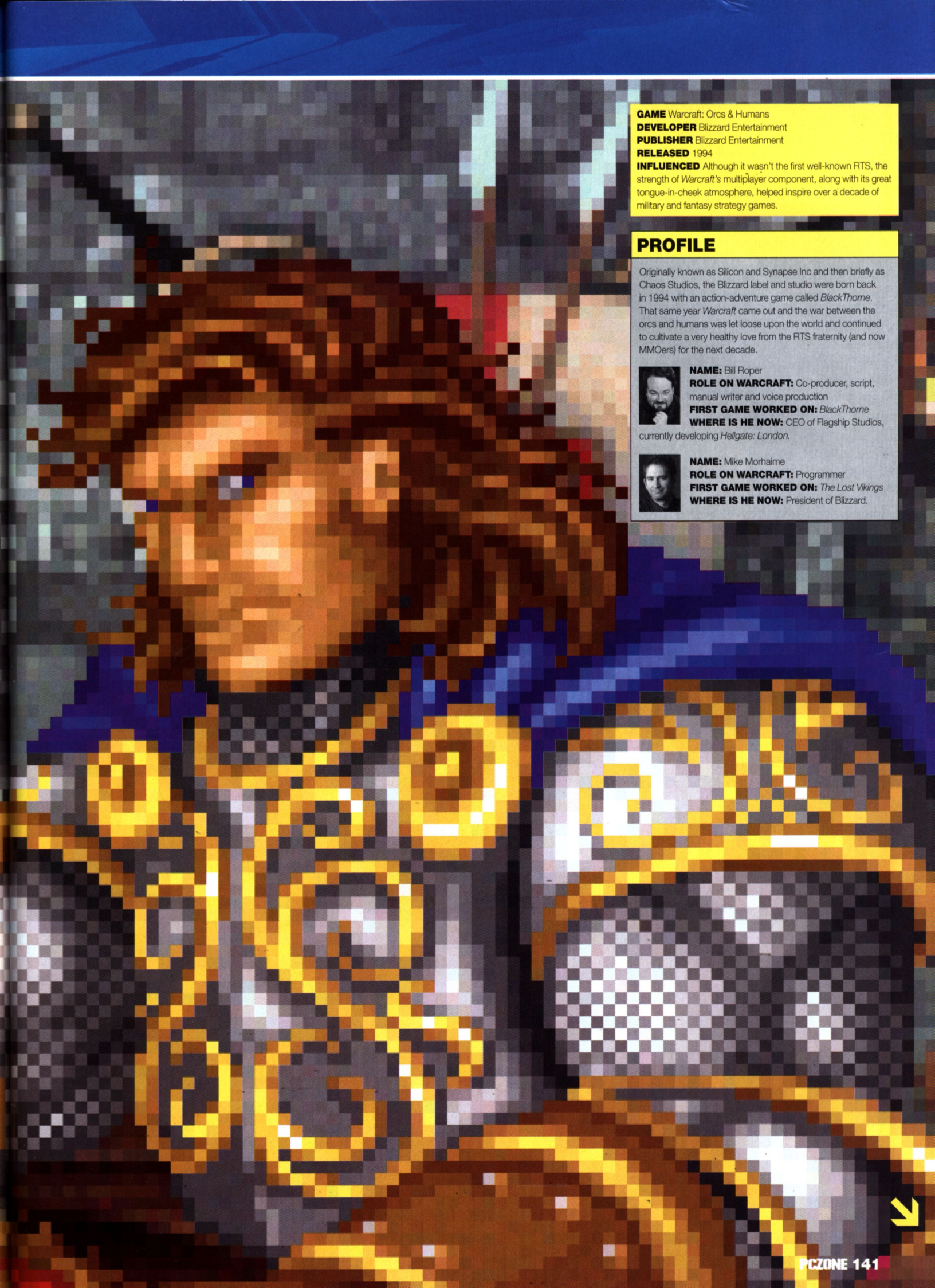
having a portal between distant worlds is something I've always been

fascinated by as it lets you bring vastly different cultures into direct conflict. This was appropriate for the *Warcraft* universe and enabled us to build two disparate civilisations with entirely foreign concepts and world histories."

It was this dedication to creating a vibrant historical storyline for the world that somehow went beyond the pixelated peons and chubby catapults depicted on-screen. It created a gaming universe that you could believe existed and one that was eventually going to form the backdrop for an entire franchise.

Morhaime is of the opinion that there was always some inkling that this was going to be a game that could grow into a larger universe, although no-one really foresaw just how popular *Warcraft* was going to become. Roper on the other hand has always been about "creating full worlds" rather than the usual





GAME Warcraft: Orcs & Humans
DEVELOPER Blizzard Entertainment
PUBLISHER Blizzard Entertainment
RELEASED 1994

INFLUENCED Although it wasn't the first well-known RTS, the strength of *Warcraft*'s multiplayer component, along with its great tongue-in-cheek atmosphere, helped inspire over a decade of military and fantasy strategy games.

PROFILE

Originally known as Silicon and Synapse Inc and then briefly as Chaos Studios, the Blizzard label and studio were born back in 1994 with an action-adventure game called *BlackThorne*. That same year *Warcraft* came out and the war between the orcs and humans was let loose upon the world and continued to cultivate a very healthy love from the RTS fraternity (and now MMOers) for the next decade.



NAME: Bill Roper

ROLE ON WARCRAFT: Co-producer, script, manual writer and voice production

FIRST GAME WORKED ON: *BlackThorne*

WHERE IS HE NOW: CEO of Flagship Studios, currently developing *Hellgate: London*.



NAME: Mike Morhaime

ROLE ON WARCRAFT: Programmer

FIRST GAME WORKED ON: *The Lost Vikings*

WHERE IS HE NOW: President of Blizzard.



developer trick of creating a patina of a story spread on top of a game.

"It all goes back to my days of game mastering *Dungeons & Dragons* campaigns in high school and college, and writing fantasy stories for my own enjoyment. You can create more compelling characters and a richer place to set your game by doing a lot of background work to ensure that there's continuity to what you're making."

A KIND OF MAGIC

Warcraft took approximately ten months to complete, an amazingly short length of time considering that's usually how long it takes developers to mock up a few screenshots and some concept art. And Roper remembers the development cycle for both *Warcraft* and *Warcraft II* as being "almost magical" in their ease, where everything seemed to work first time.

Indeed, for Roper the project was also exciting because it was the first title he'd worked on as a full-time member of Blizzard, having previously done some contract work creating music for the PC version of *BlackThorne*. "It was an amazing time from a personal perspective, in the history of Blizzard Entertainment and in the game industry as well," he recalls. "As time goes on, any bad memories are either sharply contrasted or fade away. Actually, if there were any bad moments, they were insignificant enough to have been washed away."

When the initial sales projections came in at 200,000 copies (fairly crazy for the mid-'90s), there was surprise all

round. "None of us could possibly foresee just how popular *Warcraft* would become," says Mike Morhaime. "But we had hopes that it would be a hit and some ideas to grow the gameworld if it became a franchise."

PEON VS PEON

Most candidates for a 'Game That Changed The World' have a 'Yes!' moment in their development cycle. A point where you get the faintest mental nudge that you have something really good on your hands. According to Roper, that seminal moment happened when two members of the team – Allen Adham (a founder and president of Blizzard as well as the executive producer on the game) and Ron Millar (now with Lionhead Studios) – played the first multiplayer game.

DID YOU KNOW?

Bill Roper provided the voices for *Warcraft* including the narrator and the commanders of both the human and the orcish sides. His vocal talents also appeared in all Blizzard's *Diablo* and *StarCraft* games.

"After an intense battle, they both came running out of their offices, hands held high in victory, talking smack (boasting) like no-one's business." Although Roper gleefully notes

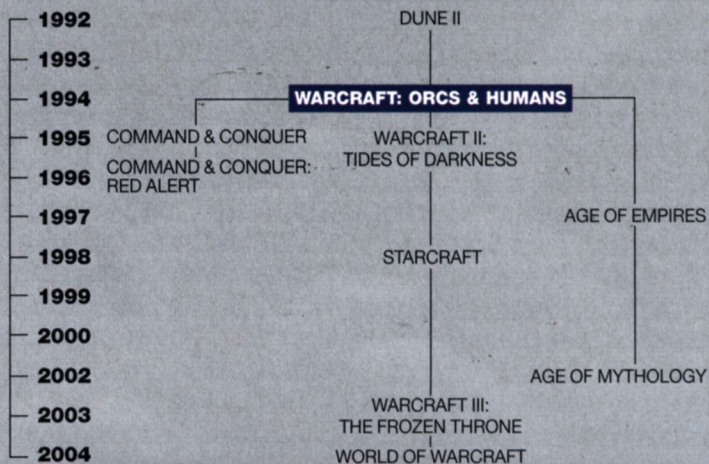
that: "There was a sync error that caused the game to split, thus allowing them both to win, but the point was that playing an RTS against another person was incredibly fun. In that moment we knew we had something special."

It was the multiplayer side of *Warcraft* that would be one of its main contributions to strategy gaming, particularly as it was something that Westwood hadn't experimented with in *Dune II*. Morhaime was working specifically on this area of the project and thinks that, along with its sense of humour ("It didn't take itself too seriously!"), this aspect was an incredibly important addition to the RTS genre.

However, he also notes that it was one of the areas where there were a fair amount of bugs to track down

FAMILY TREE

Not only did it influence many other RTS games, it was also a major factor in the creation of Blizzard's *StarCraft* franchise. The tendrils of *Warcraft* get everywhere...



and vanquish. Morhaime adds: "In retrospect, it may have been the best thing for the game, because other than that it was ready to ship. We used the extra time to further refine and polish and ended up with a far better game."

ROUND TWO

The follow-up – *Warcraft II: Tides Of Darkness* – milked the original's success, but it also came about because

the team had so many ideas they couldn't fit into the first game. "There were significant changes between *Warcraft* and *Warcraft II*," explains Mike Morhaime. "It introduced a host of characters that would endure deep into the series (including appearances in *World Of Warcraft*), and it made some great leaps forward in terms of ease of play and overall design modifications. It also introduced the concepts of naval



Going deeper underground.



General meeting of the Big Axe Appreciation Society.



battles and even some very early designs of hero units."

One of the most interesting stories surrounding *Warcraft II* is that originally, the Blizzard team discussed pushing the game into the modern era, going as far as working on a cinematic involving F-16s versus dragons. Thankfully, the team decided to scrap that fairly quickly, otherwise *Warcraft* might have been a very different game, and probably not nearly as successful and endearing.

The game also moved to SVGA graphics and supported eight players over LAN, moving the game from mere head-to-head battles to the arena of true multiplayer action. Roper elaborates: "With eight players in a game, it was chaotic, fantastic and amazingly fun to play. There are some who argue that *Warcraft II* is still the best RTS of all time, although millions of *StarCraft* players would disagree!"

THIRD TIME LUCKY

Blizzard brought out *Warcraft II*'s expansion pack *Beyond The Dark Portal* in 1996 and then, save for a *Battle.net* edition of *WC2* in 1999, things went quiet on the *Warcraft* front (Blizzard was busy

with its *Diablo* and *StarCraft* franchises). Fans had to wait until 2002 for the release of *Warcraft III: Reign Of Chaos*.

This marked the series' departure into 3D and a new emphasis on the storyline and the characters. Morhaime believes the long layoff was necessary for the franchise. "We've always valued gameplay and storytelling over technology, and so while other RTS developers had made the jump to 3D, we weren't going to do the same until we were confident we could recreate the same stylised and unique setting that was evident in *Warcraft I* and *II*."

COMING TO LIFE

The 3D environment meant *Blizzard* could roll out the world in a whole new way, taking its influences from what it had been doing on *StarCraft: Brood War*, *Beyond The Dark Portal* and even nods to the *Diablo* series in the form of the new hero units. The game ended up giving players unprecedented levels of control and perspective. The wait was worth it and fans lapped it up.

"It really allowed us to do a lot of incredible things, not only in regards to the gameplay, but also in terms of telling

THE FUTURE

IS THERE LIFE AFTER WORLD OF WARCRAFT?

So what now for the *Warcraft* franchise? Well, *World Of Warcraft* has obviously become Blizzard's baby with a huge subscriber base, not to mention being one of the first games to ever get a re-launch because it was so popular. The recent introduction of *WOW: Battlegrounds* has also opened up the gameplay further by introducing team-based co-operative play.



It's got lots of craft. And war.

It would seem the perfect opportunity for Blizzard to capitalise on its blooming fanbase by plugging an RTS game, in a similar fashion to what *Rapid Eye* tried to do with *Lords Of EverQuest*, although coming at it from the opposite direction. However, according to Mike Morhaime, Blizzard is "very focused" on *World Of Warcraft*. "There are still a ton of things we want to do to make the game even better. So while we haven't started thinking about what's next for *Warcraft*, you certainly haven't seen the last of the *Warcraft* RTS games."

stories in the world," reveals Roper. "We started to realise just how much more we could bring to the RTS genre with regards to creating a compelling gameworld. With *StarCraft: Brood War* and with *Warcraft III* we were able to fully realise that vision. *Warcraft III* showed that Blizzard was always looking for new ways to advance the genre, trying different approaches and looking for new ways to excite gamers. It ended up being an extremely solid, extremely compelling RTS that really interested a great number of gamers."

When *Warcraft* took the plunge into the online world last year, the depth of story and historical

background that had been built up in the previous games paid off no end.

Play *World Of Warcraft* and you'll be able to fight your way through recognisable areas that you'd only ever seen from a god's eye view before.

Warcraft has become a definitive title in the strategy genre. It managed to combine a dark, grandiose storyline with a real sense of humour and, along with *Dune II* and *C&C*, is the game practically every other RTS has been compared to. *Warcraft* set many of the core gameplay standards that we still see today. What's more, it also raised the bar in terms of production values in art, music, voice, multiplayer and design, and in doing so it changed the way developers approach creating strategy games forever. [X]



A wise man protects his catapults.



Much like downtown LA today.



Magazine's
aren't for
reading...

they're for
reloading.



Get your ass kicked for free on the
mind-blowing jolt public servers or take complete
control with your own jolt clan server.

Take no prisoners. Accept no substitutes.
www.jolt.co.uk

**NEXT
MONTH**



18·08·2005

A NEW DAWN FOR PC ZONE

**THE WAIT IS FINALLY OVER...
THE BRAND NEW PC ZONE IS COMING!**

We've toiled long and hard to bring you the very best gaming magazine experience money can buy. You may have loved us before, but you haven't seen anything yet.

NEW LOOK. NEW STYLE.

The Best Reviews. The Best Discs. The Best Features.

From next month your PC gaming experience will never be the same again.

**The new PC ZONE on sale
Thursday August 18 2005**

A bit like that bit in 2001: A Space Odyssey when all the monkeys get cleverer.

CLASSIFIED

**TOP SECRET
REDESIGN**

**NEW LOOK
PC ZONE
INSIDE!**

www.scan.co.uk

t: 0870-755-4747

SCAN COMPUTERS



Introducing the new Scan 3XS I-so-to-pe...

defⁿ :- Atoms of the same element with same atomic number, but different atomic mass...



Who says chemistry is boring?



January 04



February 04



April 04



May 04



August 04



September 04



October 04



December 04



January 05



January 05

systems built by enthusiasts

SCAN 3XS SYSTEMS



BETTER PHOTOS



BETTER VIDEOS



BETTER GAMES

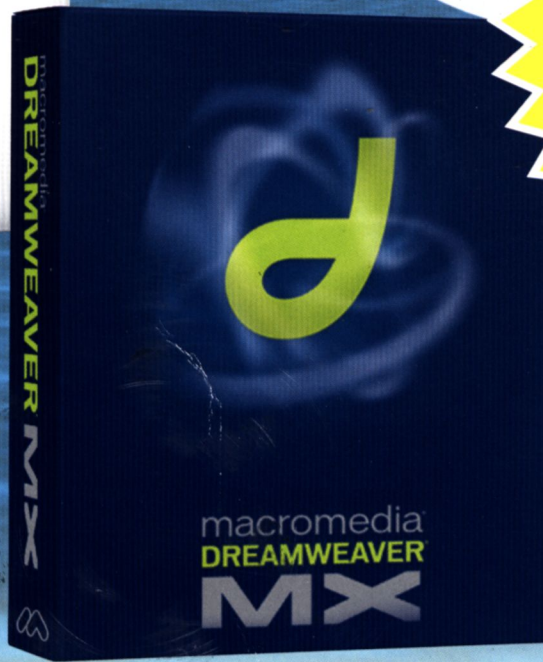


BETTER PERFORMANCE



NVIDIA unveils a revolutionary approach to combining multiple GPUs in a single system to scale performance. NVIDIA® SLI™ multi-GPU technology takes advantage of the increased bandwidth of the PCI Express™ bus architecture, and features intelligent hardware and software solutions that allow multiple GPUs to efficiently work together to deliver earth-shattering performance.

1&1 HOSTING SPECIAL OFFER



PROFESSIONAL SOFTWARE
FREE
WORTH £500



Standard Software bundle

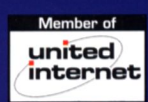
Free Professional Software with all Linux Hosting packages from 1&1

Choose 1&1 as your Web Host and receive free professional software with your package. Macromedia® Dreamweaver® MX is included with all Linux Business Pro and Professional Hosting packages and you get Macromedia® Contribute 3 with all Linux Home and Business Hosting packages. FrontPage 2003 software is included with all Microsoft Hosting packages. 1&1 has the perfect solution for building your own website. All packages are fully inclusive, easy to use and are competitively priced. With 18,000 MBit connectivity and a guaranteed uptime of 99%, you won't find a more reliable host elsewhere.

3.7 MILLION CUSTOMERS HAVE ALREADY JOINED THE WORLD'S NO.1 WEB HOST

<p>1&1 MAIL</p> <p>FROM £0.69 PER MONTH</p>	<p>1&1 DOMAINS</p> <p>FROM £1.99 PER YEAR/ ALL INCL.</p>	<p>1&1 WEB HOSTING</p> <p>PLUS FREE .CO.UK's</p> <p>FROM £4.99 PER MONTH</p>	<p>1&1 TURNKEY eSHOPS</p> <p>FROM £9.99 PER MONTH</p>	<p>1&1 DEDICATED SERVERS</p> <p>FROM £29 PER MONTH</p>
---	--	--	---	--

Set-up Fee applies only on Server packages. Price per month + VAT.



1and1.co.uk
08708 503305

