

BRITAIN'S BEST PC GAMES MAG **OUTLAND-ISH!**

PCZONE

ISSUE 175 CHRISTMAS 2006

EXCLUSIVE!

WORLD OF WARCRAFT

THE BURNING CRUSADE

We play Blizzard's finest while Azeroth burns



BEHIND ENEMY LINES!
Bethesda reveal their brutal new shooter Rogue Warrior



SAM FISHER - TERRORIST!
We go undercover for the exclusive review of Splinter Cell: Double Agent

WIN!

TINY COMPO
What destroyed planet in WOW did Outland used to belong to?



WWW.PCZONE.CO.UK

CHRISTMAS 2006



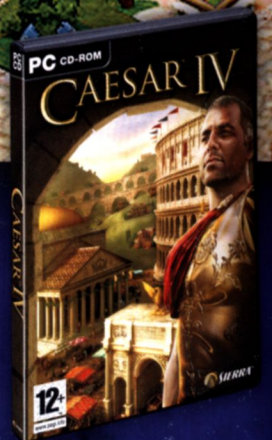
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BRITAIN'S BEST PC GAMES MAG

PCZONE

COVER STORY

46

WORLD OF WARCRAFT: THE BURNING CRUSADE

Who left that Dark Portal open?
Were you born in a bloody barn?

NeverQuest

NEVERQUEST 135

"She punctured my leathery green skin in a visceral orgy of hooves, blood and fur"



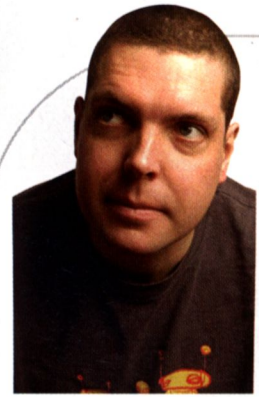
ROGUE WARRIOR 40
BETHESDA'S NEW REALISTIC TACTICAL SHOOTER TOUCHES DOWN IN KOREA

WHAT'S ON THE COVER?



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40 ROGUE WARRIOR
64 SPLINTER CELL

Too busy? PC ZONE in 53 words... Well, it's all about games, really. We play games and talk about them. That's it. Sometimes you have a moment of cosmic clarity; sometimes, you have a moment where you can't for the life of you work out what you're supposed to be DOING. That's generally when we make a cup of tea.



A WORLD OF WARCRAFT

A FRIEND OF mine currently living in the Far East recently got in touch after we hadn't seen each other for a few years. After the briefest intro about his family and how his job was going, he went straight into his addiction to *World Of Warcraft*. "For the last year I've been playing non-stop - I've got three level 60 characters now!"

No doubt about it - *WOW* has become more than just an online RPG played in a darkened study or bedroom; it's now a cultural phenomenon, a game you must experience for fear of being left out and teased by the geeky in-crowd for not knowing your Azeroth from your elbow.

In celebration, this issue we have our most experienced PC ZONE correspondents reporting straight from the heart of *The Burning Crusade*, including Will and Log's first baby Blood Elf/Draenei steps and Rhianna's journey into the Dark Portal.

In addition, we bring you the definitive reviews of cracking RTS *Medieval II: Total War* and stealth adventure *Splinter Cell: Double Agent*, as well as our best DVD ever, packed with playable demos including *Battlefield 2142*, *FM2007* and *DEFCON*. All that, and we also give you a free, utterly exclusive *Warhammer: Mark Of Chaos* die. There's so much love for you in PC ZONE, it's scarier than the Burning Legion themselves...

Jamie Sefton, editor

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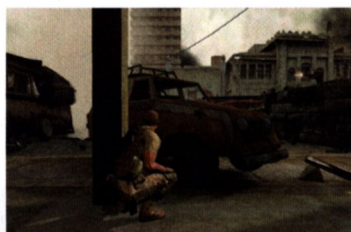
REVIEW MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR

Only you - and thousands of archers, cavalymen and trebuchets - can save 15th-century England...

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Alan Wake



64 REVIEW
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Tokyo Game
Show Report



SEGA MEDIEVAL II COMPO! 120

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FREEPLAYPLAY

ETERNAL SILENCE

Steve Hogarty breaks his vow

Play: MOD

FREEPLAYPLAY

IRON GRIP: THE OPPRESSION

Steve Hogarty is dressed to oppress

Play: MOD

115 **FREEPLAY**
Steve Hogarty only needs thruppence a week and a rag soaked in gin to survive. Find out how, in Freeplay

FREE GAMES!

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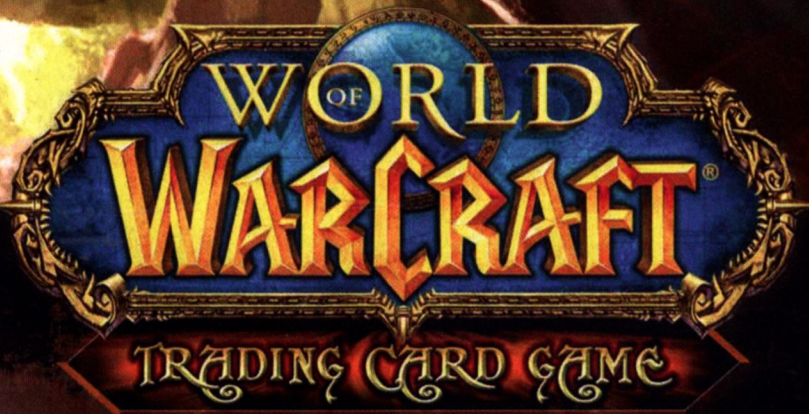
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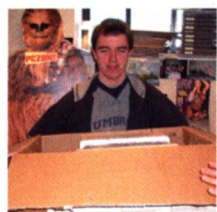




UPFRONT

MEET THE TEAM

The page you can't read without thinking of teeming meat



STEVE HOGARTY
Staff Writer
AGE: Barely even numbers
LIKES: Memorising coffee codes
DISLIKES: 55 Weak
FANCIES: 96 Strong
FAVOURITE GAME: *Flimbo's Quest*
PLAYING NOW:
Splinter Cell: Double Agent

Steve Hogarty is currently undergoing a trial of near-Biblical proportions. Having gone a bit mad and shelled out £300 on a set of speakers that are capable of blotting out the sun with their tonal range, he's realised he can't get them home. The box is bigger than he is. Taxis won't turn up. He's managed to take the smaller speakers home one by one, but the subwoofer is still hanging around like that massive cube in, er, *The Cube*. Does this madness have an end? Will Steve finally hear the sound of sweet, sweet music? Find out next month in Meet The Team!



WILL PORTER
Deputy Editor
 Reactions to Will's appearance on TV this month included "run-down", "unfit", "spotty", "wearing that T-shirt you always wear", and perhaps most charitably, "you were on before Peter Molyneux".
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:
WOW: *The Burning Crusade*



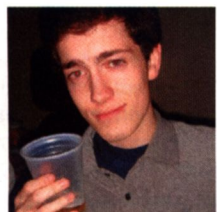
LOG
Staff Writer
 Log utterly refuses to look in the mirror in the mornings, because he doesn't like going to work in a bad mood. He only ever sees what he looks like on this page, which he hates.
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:
WOW: *The Burning Crusade*



SUZY WALLACE
Reviews Editor
 Suzy is used to tolerating drunken morons. But when they're drunk, moronic and bellowing karaoke, it's a feat of restraint that she didn't punch our lungs out. Thanks, Suzie!
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:
Dawn Of War - Dark Crusade



JAMIE SEFTON
Editor
 Jamie is so pleased with his free die that he's living his life by it, à la Luke Rheinhart's Dice Man. He's restricted any possible craziness by allocating 'be more or less normal' to all six numbers.
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:
PES6 (like the sides on a die)



ED ZITRON
Freelance Fella
 Big-hearted Ed and Log never met. But Ed sent Log's novice Draenei mage 20 gold and a nice letter, sharing his adventures in the grown-up world. That's the kind of adorable guy he is.
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:
WOW: *The Burning Crusade*



RHIANNA PRATCHETT
Tauren For Hire
 When not being our high-level WOW correspondent, Rhianna can be found doing journalism and scriptwriting. When not doing those things, she's probably a cat-burglar and Triad hitman.
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:
WOW: *The Burning Crusade*

STUFF THAT HAS HELPED US THIS MONTH... The promise of a Square Pie on an otherwise desolate Friday morning
STUFF THAT HASN'T HELPED US THIS MONTH... At the time of writing, it's 10:32, and that's YEARS away from acceptable pie time

STUFF WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...

- AND HE STILL HAD CHANGE FOR'T WHIPPET** 25 Mins Steve paid £2 for pizza, chips AND A DRINK
- WHO IS CLOCK?** 18 Mins Turns out it's short for Cherie Lock, but we didn't know that when Steve emailed her...
- CANIS CANEM EDIT** 2 Mins Oh, Currys. You absurd bastards
- LIMBO** 27 Mins Do the kids who've spent 1,000 years in limbo get compensation from god?
- SALTY LIQUORICE** 44 Mins We're all going home to shave our tongues right now
- PORTER MEDIA OVERLOAD** 65 Mins Will on the TV, his dad on Radio 4's *Farming Today*...
- FISH FINGERS** 10 Mins Meanwhile, Steve kept burping up fish fingers - without even eating any
- HELIUM IS COOL** 4 Mins Will helium in your ears make everyone else high-pitched?
- THE FRIEND SMELL** 2 Mins Log has one friend who smells of beans, and another of lime cordial
- DIE, DICE, DIE** 14 Mins The problems of giving away less than two dice. Who wants a free die?

WIN! Here in the Arctic Tundra, we can see the Tiny Compo in its natural habitat. It's natural diet is mystery and enigma, but it'll make do with a bag of chips. Tiny Compo 173 was wrestled into submission by Peter Wright in York, who has every right to think himself god of the permafrost. Send this month's answer to Tiny Compo (175), PC Zone, Future Publishing, 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW. That's where we are. Post it to us.

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!

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LETTERS



Got an issue you want to rant about? Tell *Jamie Sefton*...



HARD REIN

So Epic's Mark Rein is saying that PC games are dead, eh? (issue 173, lead news.) Hmm, where have I heard that before? I know! When the last generation of consoles was released – and the generation before that! There's a demand for sophisticated games that don't use a retarded control system (*cough* console pad *cough*). And as long as there's a demand, PC games aren't going anywhere. Good games don't require Hollywood-style budgets, and I think PC gamers are intelligent enough to look past the flashy graphics, which seem to be the only thing the next-gen consoles have going for them. **James Fingleton**

HARD REIN PART 2

In last month's *PC ZONE* you kindly described Epic's Mark Rein as a 'cheeky chappy.' I feel it's my civic duty to point out your typo, as the caption should clearly have read 'clueless chump.' How a man who describes PC gaming as something that "you can't make any money at" and says that "it's hard to justify dumping down Xbox titles for the PC market" made vice president of a games company is beyond me. Clearly these are the words of gaming's equivalent to John Prescott. PC gaming has been at the forefront of original and ground-breaking titles since the dawn of gaming, and has proved a nice little earner for the likes of EA. Not to mention a certain billionaire called Bill Gates, who's just announced plans to push PC gaming further into the mainstream than ever. Xbox 360 publishers can only dream of the kind of sales that popular PC titles such as *The Sims*, *Battlefield 2* and *World Of Warcraft* enjoy, but then at 50 quid a pop, is it any wonder they can't compete? **Steven Corry**



I recently read *The Righteous Men* by Sam Bourne (a religious detective thriller in a similar vein to *The Da Vinci Code*). In this book, the main character is called Will, and is a journalist for *The New York Times* (if I remember correctly). Apart from your *ZONE* scribe, I know of no journalists by the name of Will, and so throughout the entire book, I pictured the protagonist as Will Porter, with the small picture of him shouting into an N-Gage used in *PC ZONE* as a reference.

I just wanted to say thank you for making a serious and otherwise slightly dull book far more humorous and easy to read – it really did vastly improve it. Perhaps you could commission a series of books with the main character dubbed Will? I'm sure that the comedy value would far outweigh the expense, and the untold fame and fortune that could be accrued from it would be a boon to Mr Porter's standing within the *ZONE* team. **Jimmy Leach**

That's great Jimmy – although Will tells me he's ever so slightly scared of you. That and he's got an urgent conspiracy to unravel right now...

BLAME GAME

I've just been reading an article on the BBC website about the recent shootings in Canada and, surprise surprise, computer games are somehow implicated in the lone gunman's motives. Having virtually no background information on the man's past or the psychological problems he may have suffered from, the writer of this article had to come up with his own

Letter of the month

(Not) breaking and entering

I recently went on holiday to Reykjavik with a few friends, and while there we decided to go and see CCP, the *Eve Online* developers. We did this completely unannounced, on a Saturday, and found their office building on an industrial estate. The only thing indicating they were there was a sheet of paper in the window with 'CCP' printed on it. Mildly disheartened, one of my friends tried the door and to our surprise it was unlocked, so we wandered upstairs. The office looked closed, but it too was unlocked and with a shrug of the shoulders we entered, chatted briefly to a couple of nervous staff members and took some photos. As we headed back down the stairs, we heard someone run through and hastily lock the door behind us. So that's how we terrorised the hard-working staff of CCP, who clearly weren't expecting any invading foreigners that weekend. **Tim Lambert**

Good work Tim! Your developer-stalking antics have won you a graphics card. Can anyone beat this?



I don't think Mark Rein was saying that PC games are dead, just that for Epic, it's becoming harder to justify the extra time and expense to ensure their titles work on the crappiest PC specs. However, we think PC gaming has a healthy future and as you rightfully say James, good games don't always require Hollywood budgets. Also, with the introduction of Vista and DX10 next year, we're going to see PC games with visuals surpassing anything next-gen consoles can offer. Make sure you read our Special Report on this topic on page 18.

THE WILL PORTER CODE

I felt compelled to write to you after a recent event that 'involved' one of your writers.

WIN!



ONE OF THESE!

This magazine would be nothing without you. And this page would be, well, an embarrassingly blank space, devoid of love and devotion. Don't let it happen – write in, and if we deem your letter to be the sparkliest, we'll sprint round to your house with a brand new Connect3D X1600 Pro 512MB graphics card. Or we'll put it in the post – one of the two.

SAY WHAT?

"I've been reading about the shootings in Canada and, surprise surprise, PC games are implicated"

Thomas Birch gets irate at the knee-jerk reactions of the mainstream press

conclusions, and quite obviously chose to pick up on the fact that the man enjoyed playing *Postal* and other such games. Almost a quarter of the article was dedicated to implicating computer games. No mention is made about the state of gun control or why this man was so alienated and alone in the world that he felt this was the only thing he could do. People find it so much easier to take when there's something specific to blame rather than accept the fact that some people have this in them regardless of outside influence.

Thomas Bird

We were contacted by a number of news hacks wanting to interview us about *Postal* after the shootings, but we fobbed them off – it's pointless even entering a discussion with most non-games journos, as they don't understand videogames and will only use things you say out of context to write more prejudiced crap about the hobby we all love. Bloody journalists – scum of the earth I tell thee!

LOG! LOG! LOG!

What rolls down stairs alone or in pairs, rolls over your neighbour's dog? What's

great for a snack and fits on your back? It's Log, Log, Log!

It's Lo-og, Lo-og, it's big, it's heavy, it's wood. It's Lo-og, Lo-og, it's better than bad, it's good! Everyone wants a log! You're gonna love it, Log! Come on and get your log! Everyone needs a Log!

Andrew X

Nice one Andrew. A superb song from *Ren & Stimpy* cleverly applied to our own Jonathan 'Log' Blyth. You eediot.

INNOVATION PLEASE!

Happily scrolling through last month's issue, I stumbled upon the ChartTrack top 10 and almost stabbed my eyes out. Within the top 10: *The Sims 2*, *The Sims 2: Open For Business* and *The Sims 2: Nightlife*. Now, I don't mind *The Sims*. It's fun and enjoyable. But I'm sick of it, and there's no stopping it.

Take for example *Tribes: Vengeance* and *XIII*. Two perfectly good games, both better than some of the trash developers churn out these days, yet, funnily enough, they both flopped. Nobody bought them, yet people are content to throw their cash at some cack-handed *The Sims 2* bathroom accessories (now with gold-rimmed

toilet!). To me, it's a shame – and it doesn't stop at *The Sims* either. Other developers aren't interested in doing something new – they stick to proven concepts and rake in the cash. If this goes on, new and innovative games will be a rarity and developers won't be as quick to step into something new because nobody will buy them. Will people buy *Bioshock*? Or will they go flocking to the nearest *GenericShooter 2012*?

Ross Gardner

On the mag, we're always keen to 'big up' lesser-known titles that maybe gamers missed the first time around – hence our 'The Greatest Games You've (Probably) Never Played' feature last issue. There'll always be mainstream gamers who want to buy *The Sims*, but I do hold on to the belief there are thousands of discerning gamers like yourself out



I was just pottering about when I saw a bunch of registered users I'd never heard of. There are guys out there who spend more time on this forum than I do but who never say a word. Come on chaps, step into the light and say hello!

csdaveuk

I was a lurker for five years before I discovered the joy of posting. Only advice – don't get carried away like me when you start and make a load of posts, including some mad ones.

jonny_p66

When I first joined, I skulked for the first few days. I was scared of posting just in case I got scolded for my noobishness. But then I started posting, and now I'm happy!

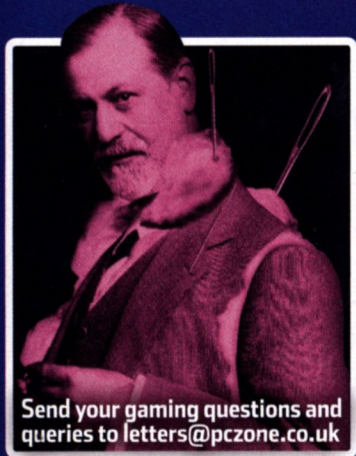
jamie G

I've been a member for around seven years. I go through phases of lurking, with intermittent phases of verbosity and skulkage.

SunScramble

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

PINK FREUD After our metallic Dr Jung wiped his memory banks in a tryst with a babe magnet, we fashioned Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) from flesh, fabric and pins. With his research team of 700 toy poodles, Pink Freud exists only to answer your questions...



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

DEAR DR FREUD,

Q Anything worth knowing about the development of *SimCity*? I await canals and other goodies with sweaty anticipation, but there's not a word from whatever gulag is working on it. It's been years now.
Dr John Wilkes

A Good day, doctor. Looking to indulge in fictitious municipalities are we? No doubt derived from your clear attraction to your mother, I might speculate. Maxis at this point are working on their latest non-traditional simulation *Spore*, which is fast approaching completion. Excuse the conjecture, dear doctor, but the probability of Maxis producing a fifth iteration of the *SimCity* series once they've dispensed with their latest opus is high indeed.

DEAR DR FREUD,

Q So Xbox 360's getting *Call Of Duty 3*. What about us louts on PC?
Lee Harvey

A The smut they're peddling on Xbox 360 is no true *Call Of Duty*, as developers Infinity Ward are not at the helm – so there's no cause for envious alarm. Instead, one could speculate that Infinity Ward are busy working on a PC outing for the historic first-person shooter. In fact, my unconscious mind informs me that there are thoughts which pertain to it not taking place in its traditional World War II setting, rather shockingly. I shall pass on any additional information to my protégé at *PC ZONE* as soon as I come across it, or my middle name is not 'Schlomo'.

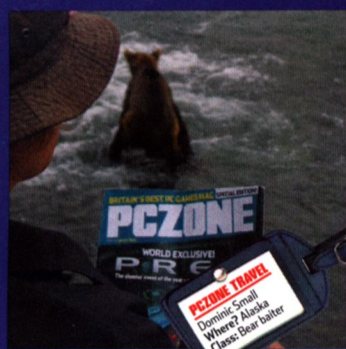
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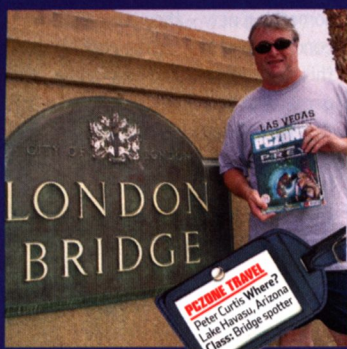
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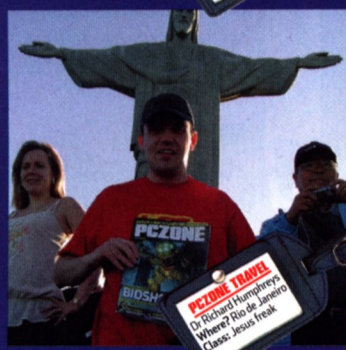
PCZONE Around the World



PCZONE TRAVEL
Dominic Small
Where? Alaska
Class: Bear baiter



PCZONE TRAVEL
Peter Curtis
Where? Arizona
Class: Bridge-spitter



PCZONE TRAVEL
Dr Richard Humphreys
Where? Rio de Janeiro
Class: Jesus freak



PCZONE TRAVEL
Alan Tin Ferris
Where? Corfu
Class: Toad catcher

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

You make a valid point Mike, but we always think long and hard about every review score – especially when a game might make the top of the charts, such as *Company Of Heroes*, which finally relegated *Rome: Total War* to second place in the strategy genre this month. I actually agree with every top spot in our current Buyer's Guide (page 100), but if you strongly disapprove of any of them, let us know.

HALF-LIFE HEADS-UP

Half-Life 2: Episode Three to be set somewhere chilly? Yes, Will is definitely on to something (issue 173), and the evidence is there in the Source engine as well: the 'ash flakes' falling around you in the intro to *Episode One*; the slipping and sliding on the oil during the Route Kanal section in the original... I wonder if the Portal Gun will be in there too? It would be a hoot to use it against the Combine – and have them use it against you!

Mark Ezra

Well, we shouldn't have long to find out Mark – *Episode Two* is launched in January and could include some little clues and a trailer to hint at where the series is heading... **PCZ**

I hate FPS games that you can't see your feet in! Dude how much is that asking! Billy

Tiger Woods 07 LAN play is shit. WTF is going on with shot turn? A patch better fix it or it's ebye bound...

I want GTA LCS on PC! Make it so No. 1. And the same goes for GTA VCS. Thank you! :-D TommyG

they shud make a supermarket: totalwar game, wud b cool to have armies of trolleys and food fighting. Scaart

TEXTS SHOULD BE NO MORE THAN 160 CHARACTERS LONG – ANY MORE, AND THEY'LL BE CUT SHORT!

To txt (text) this magnificent gaming rag, send your mssgs (messages) to 87103, putting PCZTXT at the beginning of the message, then leaving a space, then continuing with your text – and don't forget to include your name.

By texting **PC ZONE**, you're agreeing to receive details of future offers and promotions from Future Publishing Limited and related third parties, that may or may not include double glazing salesmen, pornographers and Hoxton fin-wearing marketing scumbags. If you don't want to receive info relating to future offers and promotions, please text the word NO at the the end of your text message. Texts will be charged at 25p plus your standard network tariff rate. Bargain.

there Ross, who'd rather read **PC ZONE** and buy titles such as *Bioshock*, or indeed, Will Wright's latest amazing project *Spore*.

TOP OF THE FLOPS

Back in 1997 a game called *Quake II* was launched. It was OK as games go, but because of the hype and the fact that it was a massive franchise, everyone gave it massive scores. **PC ZONE** gave it 97% I believe, and because the top 10 was based around scores, it wasn't taken down until the mag got a revamp and the Buyer's Guide was re-done without scores. Fast-forward to 2006 and look what's at the top of the chart.

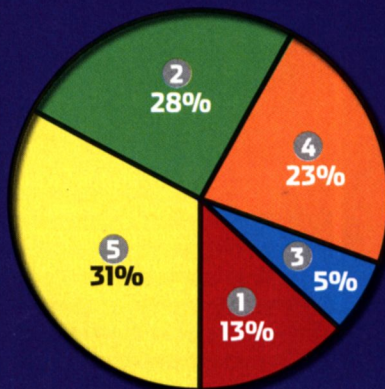
The problem with this system is that no game is so good that it's worth 97%.

There are always flaws. The fact that there are lots of flaws in *Half-Life 2* (the lack of plot, the terrible AI, etc) is neither here nor there. It means that nothing can replace it as number one until something 'better' comes along, and no game will ever get 98%. Scores are given in the heat of the moment. After months of playing *Oblivion* most people have come to the same conclusion: that while technically it's the best RPG money can buy, it's far from being the best one you can play in the real world. (I still prefer *Vampire*. We all have our little oddities.) Please re-think the top 10. It's such a shame to have something like this hovering over the head of an otherwise very good magazine.

Mike Morwood

The Big Question

What were the rejected names for Alan Wake?



- 1 Wayne Wake: 13%
- 2 Montague Perriweather III: 28%
- 3 Max Scary: 5%
- 4 Mr Sleepy Head: 23%
- 5 Ian Somnia: 31%

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THERE'S A REASON NIGHTMARES HAPPEN IN THE DARK.

Mankind has no one else to turn to. Nowhere else to run. The planet is falling apart. Its people cornered within the only safe area remaining. The Locust Horde has risen and they won't stop coming. They won't stop killing. The government turns to whoever they have left. The sick, the wounded, the imprisoned. An inmate named Marcus Fenix. Once left to die, he is now humanity's last hope. He can take comfort in but one fact. The human race isn't extinct. Yet.

"The best game we've ever seen!"
GamesMaster



GEARS OF WAR



Microsoft
game studios

XBOX
LIVE

Jump in.

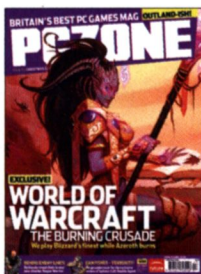




COVER STORY

WORLD OF WARCRAFT: THE BURNING CRUSADE

What lies beyond? We take a deep breath, step through the Dark Portal and discover an insane world of hurt...



IN SPACE, NO-ONE can hear you scream. In the void of the Twisting Nether, there's little else to hear – apart from maybe a plaintive call for some rare Outland herb or other in the chat box. This month, we've breached the Hellfire Citadel, crash-landed our inter-dimensional spaceships on Azuremyst Isle, fought the Burning Legion on a floating rock in space and tapped in 'dance' to watch an elf wriggle her arse in the face of the most extreme danger. *The Burning Crusade* is the most important MMO expansion to date, and we now also know that it's shaping up to be one of the best... Roll on the flying mounts!

PAGE

46





CAMPAIGN FOR CHANGE

AS THE LARGE game companies of the world slowly compress everything into nuggets of bland similitude, there are bound to be some things lost to the depressing tide of inevitability. One of which is very dear to my heart. Installing a game used to be even more of a hassle than it is today – all config. sys, sound drivers and 'Do you hear a noise coming from your left speaker?' Until one day a game series came along and changed everything. *Command & Conquer*, and everything that followed it, with its beautiful green screen, sexy voice and ingenious way of camouflaging a lengthy install process with the notion that you're actually linking up to the GDI battle networks.

But now, oh cruel fate, they're only going to do away with it – replaced with the same generic EA installer shared by other games. Why? Why take away something so cherished, crushing dreams and stamping on things good and pure? I'll tell you why: the businessman in his suit and tie.

Now, seeing as I single-handedly rescued *Sam & Max* from the gutter – or at least whined about the whole affair a little – I'm going to ignite a political campaign the like of which hasn't been seen since the great 'Marshmallows in Ricicles' debacle of 1991. I want a sexy computer voice fiddling with the contents of my hard drive, and I want it right now! The campaign will be a long and arduous one, but friends, we shall be victorious! One vision, one purpose!

Will Porter

Will Porter, deputy editor

BROTHERS GONNA WORK IT OUT, AGAIN

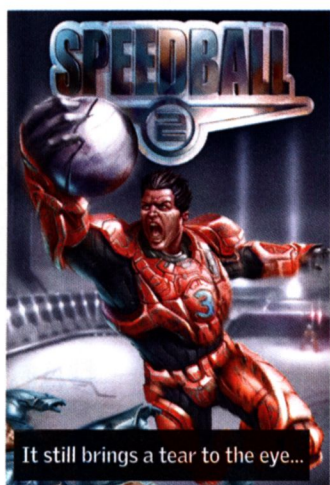
The mighty Bitmap Brothers announce a new age of *Chaos Engine* and *Speedball 2*

www.speedball2.de | ETA: Early 2007

IF A SOULFUL CALL for ice-cream during a particularly violent sporting replay doesn't send a pleasant shiver down your spine, then you're either emotionally numbed or perhaps a little on the young side. *Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe*, from erstwhile gaming gods The Bitmap Brothers, was the best future sports game ever released – and it still remains unbeaten. Why the lasting appeal?

"It's simply down to great gameplay as a result of rock-solid game design," shrugs Bitmap legend Mike Montgomery while chatting with ZONE about his latest industry moves.

The reason we're excited is that *Speedball*, *Chaos Engine* and potentially a whole raft of other Bitmap classics are on their way back to glory. Mike Montgomery explains: "We're going to enhance the graphics of *Speedball 2* to match any AAA title, but we're not changing the gameplay," he says. "We are working on the multiplayer side though, to make it one of the essential online multiplayer action games. This'll include community features, and will offer gamers the chance to tailor their teams individually to play in leagues and tournaments. We're also developing 'ranking features' for international competitions." Fancy signing



STOP PRESS! **OBLIVION EXTENDED** *Knights Of The Nine*, a DVD of Bethesda's downloadable *Oblivion* content, is out Nov 23. It includes a new Holy Knight faction and quests.

ACTIVISION 'HEART' STEAM As you may be aware, Activision have made *Call Of Duty*, *COD2* and *GUN* available for download on Steam. Can we get *Vampire: Bloodlines* too please?

C&C 3 STARRY-EYED Billy Dee Williams out of *Star Wars* will star in *Command & Conquer 3*'s cut-scenes, alongside Michael Ironside and Sawyer out of *Lost*. Don't trust Lando!

20 Alan Wake

The best gaming sleepy-head since Comic Relief's 1993 *Sleepwalker* game that starred a dog who was a bit like Brains out of *Inspector Gadget*.



40 Rogue Warrior

A team lost behind enemy lines. A bearded real-life hero. Meet the new John Mullins of PC gaming.



46 World Of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade

So hot it's burnt a hole in our ISP's mainframe. Behold the wonder that is Outland!



The Chaos Engine: classic Gauntlet-style action.



up for the cause? Simply visit www.speedball2.de and sign on the dotted Internet line.

With some major-league publishers and developers sniffing around the Bitmap estate, these are some heftily exciting times for veteran gamers. But what of the sadly missed Z series – the RTS of robot manufacturing plants and

ceaseless battle? "We're actually working on Z for Windows XP at the moment," smiles Montgomery. "We're including a much better multiplayer interface so the gameplay can work more fluidly in online play."

Ladies and gentlemen, The Bitmap Brothers (who aren't really brothers) have come back to play.

ROLL WITH IT

ID6 free with PC ZONE



THE HISTORY OF the die is a noble one. Did you know that Pablo Picasso started the cubist movement after rolling stats for his dark elf? It's also the best place to find a quincunx, and quincunx sounds filthy, doesn't it?

To celebrate the review and exclusive demo of *Warhammer: Mark Of Chaos* next month, we're giving away one of these tiny palm-computers free – with four different ones to collect. Games Workshop and Koch Media have entrusted PC ZONE with thousands of these magical items, and a grisly pact has been sealed – from henceforth we have to use them to make all the major decisions in our lives, such as, "How many dice should I roll next?" and, "How many pies is good for me?"

To thank us for this munificent gift, why not email us pictures of the numbers you rolled? We'd absolutely love to see them. Send them to letters@pczone.co.uk, with the subject: "Look what I rolled, I think it's a four."



Better hope for a double-six...



"No, I expect you to 'die'. Mwah ha ha!"

GRAY GIANT FOR FREE

Free with next month's PC ZONE: A *Guild Wars* mini-pet!

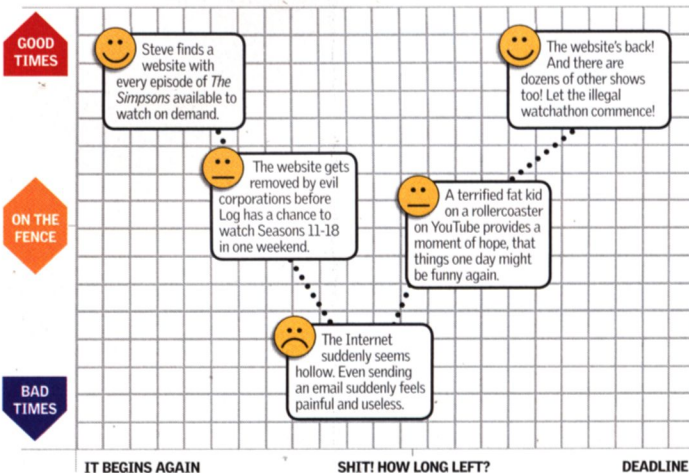
IN CELEBRATION OF how great we are and how good *Guild Wars: Nightfall* is bound to be, every reader will next month be granted access to this little chap. He's a Gray Giant, and what he lacks in social skills he makes up for by having his head split down the middle and a horn on one side. Essentially a miniature version of some of the *Nightfall* baddies you'll battle, he's smart, loyal and only available in next month's PC ZONE, on sale December 7! Now, back to regular programming...



STUFF

The tinkering chaps at Valve are at it yet again. This time they're sticking some sort of a market economy in *Counter-Strike* so that guns get more expensive the more they're bought, while less popular weapons get cheaper. If you want to shout 'What's the f***ing point?' then visit: steampowered.com/stats/csmarket. If, however, you want to simply read about it, wait for our coverage in *Freeplay* next month.

LIFE IS A ROLLERCOASTER



DEATH OF THE PC?

With a cross-platform frenzy engulfing shop shelves and exclusive PC titles apparently drying up, should we start getting worried?



Reporter
Pavel Barter

WITH *UT2007*, everything *Half-Life* and even the odd RTS now getting a push on PS3 and Xbox 360, these are

interesting times for PC gamers. I mean, even Peter Molyneux is leaving us. Lionhead's development wunderkind, who created ground-breaking PC titles such as *Black & White* and *The Movies*, is taking his *Fable* franchise to new pastures. "I just want Lionhead to focus on one thing this time," he says. "At the moment, it's *Fable 2* on the Xbox 360." PC gamers can peer over the fence, but we've effectively been dumped. We are now the Jennifer Aniston of the gaming world.

Whether or not Lionhead returns to PC game development remains to be seen – and certainly Molyneux has paved the way for some of the most inspiring gameplay on your desktop – but his decision reflects an unsettling trend. US games industry research group NPD recently announced that PC software sales fell by 10.5% in 2005, and earlier this year, at the QuakeCon convention, id co-owner Kevin Cloud announced that piracy was "killing PC games".



Merchants of doom are not unusual in an age of console hype, when a fantastic game like *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* can't be released without sweaty-palmed misfits sullying its reputation via control pads. Some of the best PC games (*Splinter Cell*, *Far Cry*, *Call Of Duty*) hop from platform to platform like unfaithful floozies, while others (*Grand Theft Auto* take a bow) tease you from a distance for up to a year.

DIVERSIFY OR DIE

"In this day and age, you can't put all your eggs in one basket," says Chris Taylor, head honcho at Gas Powered Games, creators of *Supreme Commander*. "We can't just become an RTS company or a console company – we have to have diversification." He adds: "The PC business is our true love, but we don't know what the future holds", which isn't very romantic at all, when you think about it.

Sid Meier, whose very blood is coded with the history of PC gaming, is also flirting with living-room entertainment, announcing that: "In terms of power and capability, there's a lot more overlap between PC and consoles today." Sad but true. Consoles are growing in power: high-def screen resolution has narrowed

the gap between TVs and top-end PC screen res, and online gaming is open to all. "I think we're seeing a decline in PC games at the moment," says Meier. Just to rub it in.

IT'S HOW MUCH?!

Perhaps one of the problems is the fact that high-end PCs are so expensive that your grandchildren will be making the repayments. Someone who wanders into a store with £500 ends up playing *FIFA 2001* instead of *F.E.A.R.*, reducing the amount of laptop or desktop owners who get into gaming because the hardware is close at hand.

Mark Rein, vice president of Epic Games, creators of *Unreal*, eloquently rants about Intel-integrated graphics that can't play top-end games and leave their owners with a three-legged humpbacked donkey of a machine.

"Back in the days of *Doom II*, any computer was capable of running it – you just needed a decent CPU. Now, you can buy a very expensive, very high-end CPU and still have a computer that's incapable of playing your average, decent action game. That's a problem.

"*Doom 3* probably sold half of what *Doom II* did... And I'll bet you that *Half-Life 2* sold significantly less than *Half-*



And they wonder why Americans get a bad press abroad.



Huxley loves 360...



...And Oblivion always has.



UT2007: on as many platforms as you've had hot dinners.



Prey: 360-degree combat in more ways than one.



At least we got the finished version of Fable.



Life, again for that same reason. People take it home, they try it on their PC and think, 'Half-Life worked fine on my old computer'. Guess what? Now you need a GPU to have a decent experience and most people don't have a good one."

WERE REM RIGHT?

Like any end-of-the-world prophecy, this sob story should perhaps be taken with a pinch of salt. After all, PC titles are cheaper than console games because their developers aren't subjected to extortionate licensing fees. Also, the PC game back-catalogue would make any console snivel in the corner like a mangy cur.

While the fastest gaming hardware will always come at a premium cost, prices drop fast. Kevin Unangst, director of global marketing for Microsoft's Games for Windows, points out: "Faster PCs and more powerful graphics processors continue to decrease in price

over time and that's one of the great advantages of the PC platform."

What's more, despite fears that online multiplayer gaming might be shifting in favour of consoles, statistics suggest otherwise. According to data released by US research group Parks Associates, the online games market is expected to be worth £2.35 billion by 2010, but a large wedge of this windfall will come from PC gamers who spend around 18.5 weekly hours playing games, compared to console gamers who play 13.6 hours. PC gamers are hardcore, though thankfully not in a Ron Jeremy sort of way.

There's more light on the horizon. Windows Vista could turn out to be the ultimate gaming platform, with features such as Games Explorer (that'll make it easier to store games), DirectX 10 (allowing developers to create more complex environments and characters),

"You can't put all your eggs in one basket... The PC is our first love, but we don't know what the future holds"

Chris Taylor, Gas Powered Games



One vision

Consoles, keep your grubby mitts off these titles, they're all ours. At least, they are for the time being...

CRYSIS

Cevat Yerli, Crytek president and *Far Cry* svengali, has said flat-out to forget about other platforms because PCs deliver the best shooters. Next-gen consoles wanted a slice of *Crysis*, a poorly spelled but promisingly fantastic sci-fi shoot 'em up. He told them to get lost.



Crysis hearts PC.

Heroes loves PC.

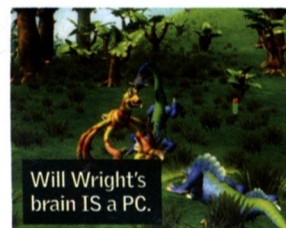


COMPANY OF HEROES

More authentic than a Walther P38 shot to the skull, this WWII RTS makes *Medal Of Honor* look like a girly pillow fight. Games like this scream out for a keyboard, and sitting on your couch with a console peripheral is wrong on so many levels.

SPORE

OK, so Will Wright eventually plans to bring the *Spore* universe to consoles, TVs and probably a small LCD screen on the side of your dog's dinner bowl. But at first, PC owners will be the only ones genetically engineering a race of mutants and pillaging other planets.



Will Wright's brain IS a PC.



C&C & PC, sitting in a tree.

COMMAND & CONQUER 3: TIBERIUM WARS

As PC as spittle stains on the monitor, this battlefield RTS is a nod (geddit) in the right direction: exclusive PC titles. Notably, the franchise bears the same acronym as top pop act C&C Music Factory. Everybody dance now? No way, just PC owners.

along with Parental Controls (which will stop little Johnny from going mental after playing *GTA* and subsequent *Daily Mail* whining).

PC HURRAH!

Meanwhile, Microsoft's Games for Windows campaign is snowballing, as the first games to carry the new DVD-style packaging hit High Street shelves recently. According to Microsoft's Kevin Unangst, the philosophy behind this new division is to drag PC gaming back into the spotlight and away from the pitiful shelf at the arse-end of the games shop.

"Simply put - we have the largest gaming platform on the planet with Windows, and we see the opportunity to treat it like a platform. By investing in Windows as a world-class gaming platform akin to any console, we maintain innovation and ensure games publishers continue to deliver great titles that engage the literally hundreds of millions of users."

The rise of consoles will continue unabated, but will it really be at the expense of PC games? Perhaps we'll

all end up loving each other hippy-style in games like FPS/MMO hybrid *Huxley*, where, according to producer Kijong Kang: "Both PC and Xbox 360 gamers live in their respective worlds, where they can buy and sell items, fiercely fight in battle grounds, and enjoy certain content together."

As for Peter Molyneux, he might be leaving us but he hasn't lost faith. "As long as there are people making unique stuff for the PC, PC gaming will exist," he smiles. "Maybe it won't be as big as it was, but as long you have *World Of Warcraft*, *Half-Life 2* and developers looking at the PC, saying 'we can build something fantastic', I think the future is going to be there." We do too. **PCZ**

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

@ letters@pczone.co.uk

✉ pavel barter, pc zone, 2 balcombe st, london, nw1 6nw



Yes Alan – you did leave the gas on.

I CAN'T GET NO SLEEP...

ALAN WAKE

A shattered writer on the edge of a nervous breakdown? Jamie Sefton has much in common with the latest creation from the makers of *Max Payne*...

DEVELOPER Remedy **PUBLISHER** Microsoft **WEBSITE** www.alanwake.com **PREVIOUSLY IN...** 156

THE LOWDOWN

- Psychological episodic thriller from the *Max Payne* dev team
- Jaw-droppingly huge and detailed next-gen environments with full physics
- Inspired by the work of Stephen King, David Lynch and M Night Shyamalan
- Superb, eerie atmospheric orchestral score
- Alan runs a bit like a girl

ETA
2007

A LAN PARTRIDGE. ALAN Green. Alan Whicker. Alan Bennett. There really have been some top-drawer Alans over the years, but none quite so unsettling and genuinely frightening as Alan Wake (well, apart from Alan Titchmarsh, but we'll skip over him for the sake of argument.) The incredibly nice chaps at Remedy, who will forever be lauded and worshipped in *PC ZONE* for making our favourite action-adventure title *Max Payne 2: The Fall Of Max Payne*, have finally emerged from their Finnish hidey-hole to reveal further tantalising details on their beautiful new game. And I mean it when I say beautiful – take a drooling gawp at the screenshots over the next four pages and nod in agreement. Are you nodding? Then we'll continue with a bit of background...

Alan Wake is an American writer, and after meeting his girlfriend Alice, starts to experience strange dreams which he uses as material for his first

book, a psychological thriller. The novel practically writes itself and becomes a best-seller, but Alice vanishes without trace after publication.

Wake then starts to suffer from severe insomnia, and in desperation seeks out a private sleep clinic outside the small town of Bright Falls, Washington. However, here he begins to see glimpses of Alice, and horrible words in his own handwriting appear in his notebooks while he sleeps. Not only that, but there now seems to be something dark, something evil hunting him in the shadows of Bright Falls...

EVERYTHING CHANGES

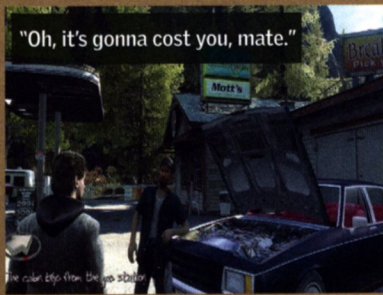
The Remedy team begin by giving us a quick aerial tour of the massive outdoor environments that we were first blown away by at the *Wake* unveiling at E3 2005, displaying almost photo-realistic detail. "We have a pretty impressive level of world simulation, with day/night

time and weather patterns," says creative director Petri Järvillehto. "The cool thing about that is that the player can be in the same area that he's explored many times earlier and it can still feel completely different. Almost any environment can be transformed from a picture-postcard view into claustrophobic and spooky surroundings."

WHO LEFT THE FAN ON?

To demonstrate, a sunny, midday view of mountains and a calm lake is transformed instantly into a scene at sunset with blustery wind making thousands of rendered trees sway in the distance. We're also shown an incredible real-time sequence where a tornado rips through a built-up area, destroying all in its path (see 'Wind Wake' p23).

We then zoom down from above to where Alan Wake is standing, and are given our first look at an early mission from the game, when Alan has to



"Our world simulation levels are good – most environments can be transformed from a picture-postcard into a claustrophobic, spooky view"

Petri Järvilehto, creative director, *Alan Wake*

collect the keys to his cabin-retreat where he plans to write his second book. Alan climbs into his car, and rather like *Grand Theft Auto*, a mission summary and direction-arrow are shown at the bottom left-hand corner of the screen, as Wake himself narrates over the action.

"Missions are built around a single linear storyline, so that the player always knows how to progress, but then there are other story fragments spread all around the world – smaller games for the player to mess around with," continues Järvilehto. "While we allow for free-roaming exploration, we don't want you to get lost or frustrated."

Unsettling piano music is playing as Alan drives to the gas station to meet the mechanic holding the key, who's busy fixing a car engine. As Alan approaches, the mechanic is startled,

but then slowly recognises our hero: "You're that writer guy." The strange mechanic gives the key to Alan, then challenges him: "Must be tough. Knowing that your words will... Change things." "You read too much," quips Alan. "I only write to entertain people."

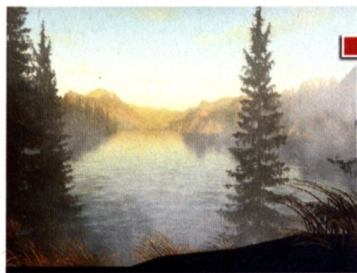
THE HITCHER

Alan Wake is episodic, but only in the structure of the game, which is modelled on multiple seasons of TV series', with episodes containing multiple missions, cliffhanger endings and an ensemble cast of characters with very different backgrounds and personalities. Yep, you can relax – there'll be no six-monthly downloadable updates to contend with.

On with the playable mission, and as Alan drives to the cabin, he reveals through voice-over



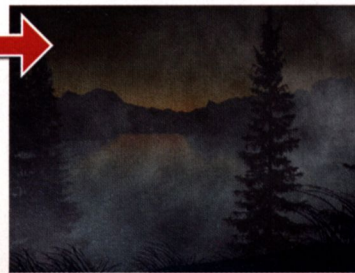
Wake's world Remedy's game engine can instantly transform any scene with a change of weather and lighting...



Midday. With full HDR (high dynamic range) lighting throughout, Remedy are modelling a 10x10km seamless open play area.

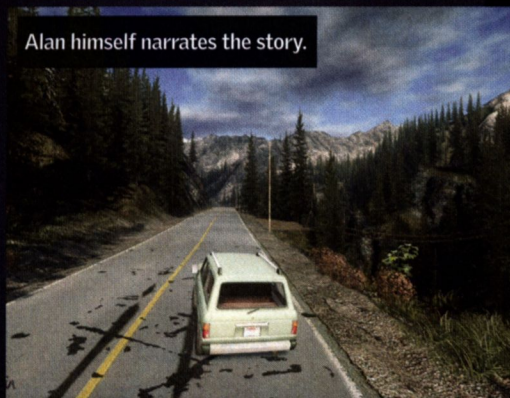


Sunset. Everything in the environment reacts in real-time, so if a wind is introduced, trees start swaying and leaves blow around.



Night. Volumetric fog creates atmosphere. Light in the game from any source shines realistically on all the physically-modelled objects.

that his new book is about a writer, who, after a tragic loss, goes to live in a secluded cabin where he creates a horror story about creatures of darkness disguised as men. However, when the writer leaves the cabin he discovers the world has turned into the nightmare he's written. Alan's story begins with the writer picking up a hitch-hiker on the way to the cabin – and right on cue, the spooky piano music strikes up again and a real hitch-hiker is spotted on the road ahead. "That's creepy..." says Alan.



Alan himself narrates the story.

PAPERBACK WRITER

"Alan Wake is the narrator of the game, very much in the style of a narrator in a novel," says lead writer Sam Lake. "He's perfect for the job, because he's a storyteller by profession. In essence, that means that the player could well be playing Wake's next book."

Of course, Wake picks up the shabby hitcher and begins telling him about the fact he's a writer, and that his story has a hitch-hiker in it. "The hitch-hiker's a killer of course," says the creepy guy in a gruff drawl. "No," replies Alan. "The hitch-hiker gets killed. Then he comes back, or something, a creature of darkness that haunts the writer." Alan drives on, but then is stopped in his tracks – ahead, on the road, a car has overturned, the result of an accident.

Alan pulls up, and gets out of his vehicle to examine the wreckage – there are bloodstains on the road, but no-one around. Suddenly, a lorry hurtles round the corner and smashes into his car with the hitcher still inside, as Alan has to frantically dive to safety, losing consciousness. He starts to hear voices, then wakes up – it's now dark and he has a gun and torch in his hands, and the hitch-hiker is nowhere to be seen. Alan still has to reach the cabin, now

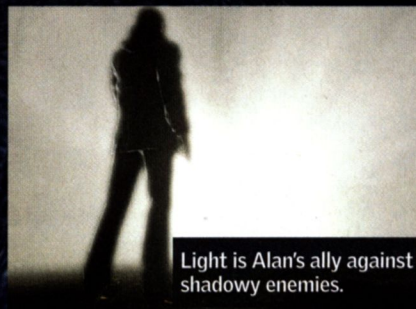
on foot, which is up on a nearby hill and across a rickety wooden bridge, which he bravely skips across.

The camera cuts to a first-person shimmering view of the bridge, as we hear a horrific whispered voice: "Waaaaaake!" The enemy zooms *Evil Dead*-style towards the other side of the bridge, causing a streetlight to shatter. Alan starts to run on the path up towards the cabin, pursued by the unseen enemy, as each street lamp that he passes explodes and plunges the area into more darkness. Wake turns around and shines the torch at the creature, allowing him to shoot at a shadowy human form that recoils in agony.

SEEN THE LIGHT

"Darkness equals terror and danger for Alan," adds Järvillehto. "Enemies seem to be invincible, but light reveals enemies as they truly are and makes them vulnerable. There are many different light sources in the game, so that way we can offer a lot of variation – how you combine light with combat."

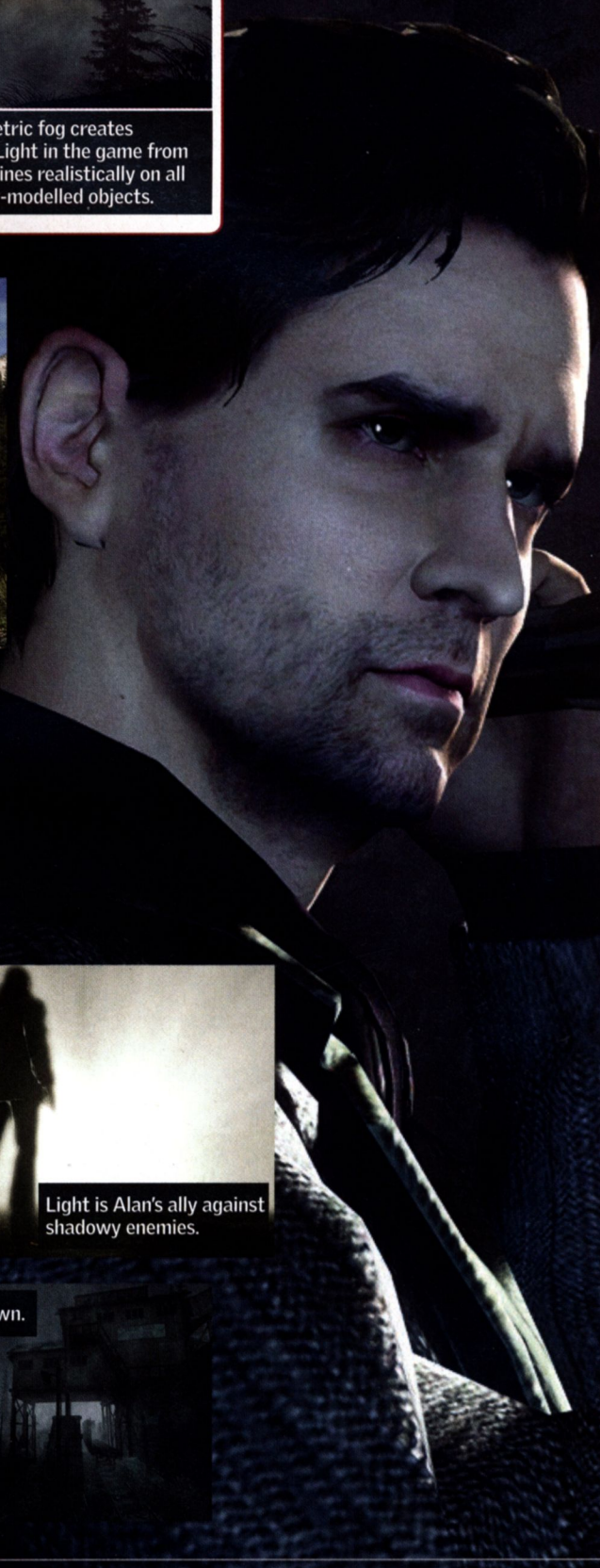
Back to the heart-stopping demo, and as the chaotic music rises to a crescendo, Wake runs the rest of the way, more lights smashing as he moves past them on the path to the cabin.



Light is Alan's ally against shadowy enemies.



Dirty old town.



THE STORY SO FAR...

REMEDY



Cold
Remedy are founded, and base themselves in the hilariously-named Espoo in Finland.



Warm
Death Rally is their first PC game, a decent enough racer that we gave 70%.

Hot
Rockstar release *Max Payne*, an action game with revolutionary bullet-time effect.



Scorching
MP2: The Fall Of Max Payne is launched. It's a masterpiece. Will Porter cries with joy.

1995

1996

2001

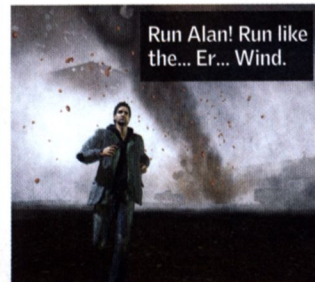
2003



Alan escapes the accident, but the hitcher is less fortunate...

Wind Wake

A tornado brings chaos to Alan's realistic interactive environment



Run Alan! Run like the... Er... Wind.

In one of the most impressive sequences of the *Alan Wake* presentation, creative director Petri Järvillehto showed a motel and trailer park beyond the mountains of Bright Falls in a different, more arid area of the Pacific North West. Using an Xbox 360 pad (compatible with PC of course), Järvillehto summoned up a real-time tornado that he moved through the level using an analogue stick, picking up cars, crashing through destructible buildings, exploding oil tanks and whipping up all kinds of debris high into the air, the interactive physics-heavy environment in full effect. Shutting off the twister with the touch of a button, bits of broken houses and other debris start to fall slowly back down, until, SMASH! A car that had been carried high into the air by the force of nature crashes down, close to where Wake is standing. "You can imagine the gameplay possibilities for technology of this kind," says Järvillehto smiling.

"Wake knows how to use a gun - he used to be a nightwatchman - but he's certainly no Max Payne"

Sam Lake, lead writer, *Alan Wake*

Finally, he reaches the hideaway, but we can see from outside that all the bulbs in the rooms are exploding, creating more darkness. Trapped, Alan turns around, and as the screen fades to black we hear a voice say: "Wake, we have a common destination..."

WAKE UP

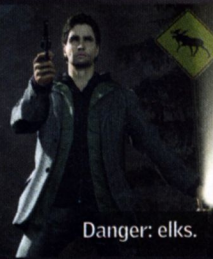
Alan Wake is looking fantastic, but the new presentation has raised even more questions about gameplay, such as the weapons you'll have access to. "Wake knows how to use a gun, as he used to work as a nightwatchman, among other things, before he became a famous writer. However, when it comes to guns, he's definitely no Max Payne," answers Lake. "Resources are definitely limited, which is one of the ways we can build suspense. Bright Falls is famous for its annual Deerfest, so there are a few hunting rifles around, but you won't be tripping over ammo boxes. Although there is that army base outside the town..."

Also, what about the horror aspect: will there be full-on blood and gore in *Alan Wake*? "We're not making a horror game, we're making a thriller, and as

such, suspense and anticipation are vital ingredients in creating the mood and the atmosphere in the game," continues Lake. "There will be horrific and surreal sights - the game contains wild, hallucinatory dream sequences, for example - but we feel confident that you can make them without resorting to gore. In fact, we feel that you can make the game more suspense-orientated and scary without that."

We're running out of time, so as we get up to leave the presentation room and collect the smart souvenir *Alan Wake*-branded torch (check out Tat Zone on p35 if you want a chance to bid for it), I ask Sam Lake about the frightening shadowy foes in the game - who are they, and why are they tormenting poor old bleary-eyed Alan?

"The nature of Wake's enemies is at the very core of the mystery - what are they and where are they from? They seem to be linked to Wake's dreams and writing, but at the same time appear to be tied to Bright Falls. Are they real at all, or is Wake going mad and imagining the whole thing? You'll have to play the game to find out..."



Danger: elks.



The environments approach photo-realistic quality.



COMING SOON...

Mind that atmosphere!

ENGAGE...

STAR TREK: LEGACY

Exclusive! *Martin Korda* boldly goes where no Slovakian has gone before: Guildford! And also: space!



DEVELOPER Mad Doc Software PUBLISHER Bethesda Softworks WEBSITE startrek.bethsoft.com PREVIOUSLY IN... 170

THE LOWDOWN	
Voiced by each of the captains from the five series	✓
Massive space battles	✓
Intriguing storyline	✓
Huge selection of ships to command	✓
Camera controls feel a bit dodgy	✗
Lack of tangible speed during combat	✗

SHATNER! STEWART! BROOKS! Mulgrew! Bakula! Five captains united for the first time in the history of the *Star Trek* franchise! Had this been a press release, that's exactly how I would have started it. In fact, I may just have left it at that, because let's face it, the idea of having the voice talents of the five major *Star Trek* captains under one roof would be enough to sell this game to even the most tepidly enthusiastic of Trekkies.

I wouldn't even have to mention *Legacy's* epic space combat battles, the potentially mesmerising era-spanning plot or the stupefying collection of Starships just waiting to be kicked into warp 19 (it's OK, I'm exaggerating for effect) and sent into battle against alien races. Neither would I have to mention the fact that I'd spent several hours in an intimate clinch with the latest code.

Of course, this being a playtest, you'll be wanting a few more juicy nuggets of info, so here goes. Visually, *Legacy* is looking little short of spectacular, with

Starships accumulating real-time damage as they're pounded by pyrotechnic phaser and torpedo displays, while the dark, airless void is dotted with bright planets and mammoth spacestations. Even Deep Space 9 makes an appearance.

INTO BATTLE

Your fleet of four ships (you start the game with just one) can be upgraded or sold for scrap metal to fund the purchase of newer, more advanced vessels that pack enough firepower to bring down a Borg cube the size of a moon. Just as well really, as the Borg, coupled with the Romulans and Klingons, seemed responsible for the majority of the game's combat in the levels that I sampled. Being able to redirect my ship's power on-the-fly and issuing my mini armada with orders added a tactical edge to the brutal action, while the option to use Nebulas to thwart the enemy added a genuine sense of immersion to the proceedings.

If you're a die-hard fan, you'll be pleased to know that all of your favourite

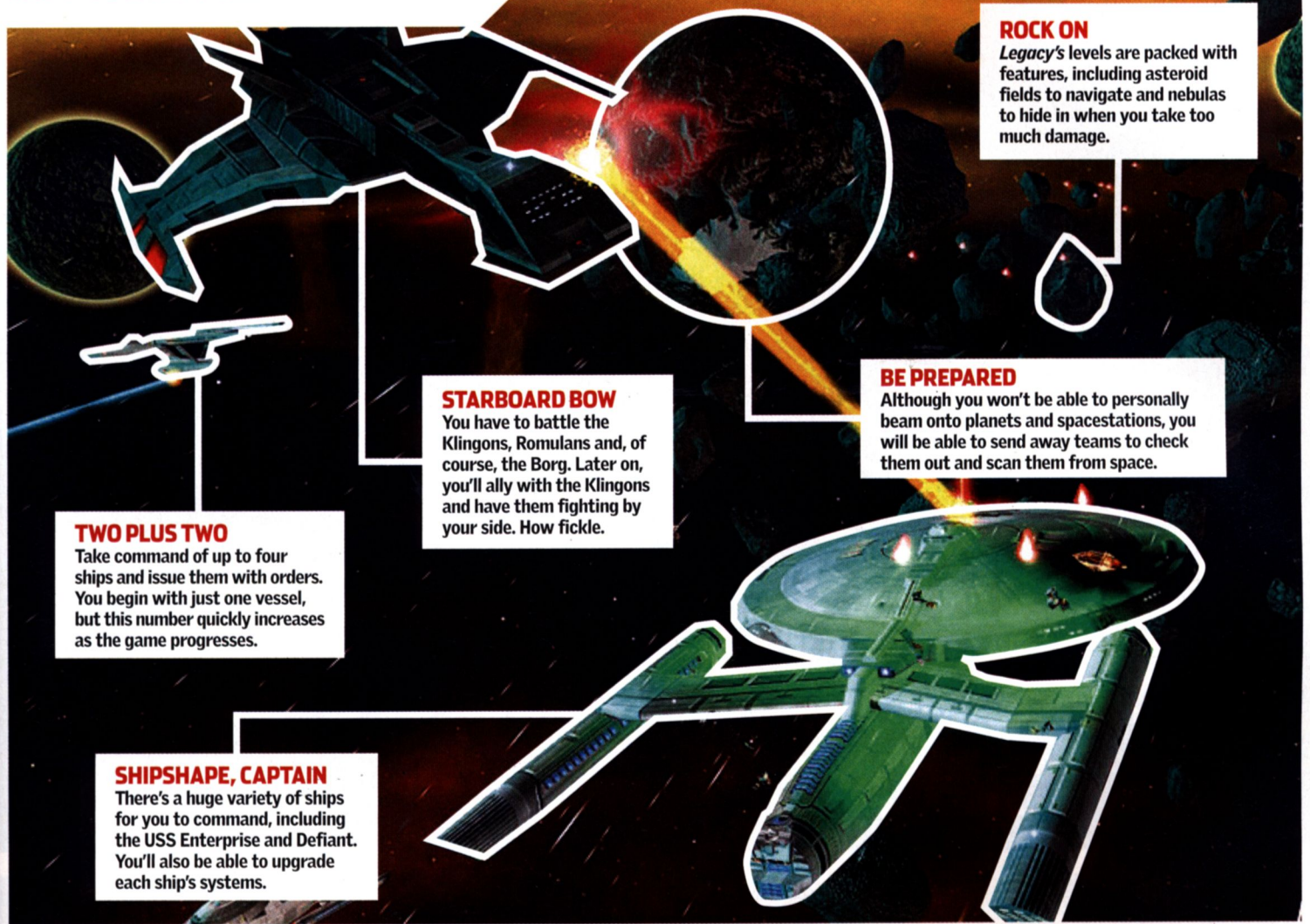
Starships have been recreated in loving detail and are available for you to command, including the Defiant, Intrepid and Mildly Insubordinate. OK, I may have made that last one up, but you get the picture.

However, it's not all positive. Despite later battles being breathtaking in their magnitude, the inherently cumbersome handling of my craft, coupled with some asphyxiating camera controls and a lack of perceivable speed when the view fixed behind my ship, restricted the excitement levels somewhat. Thus, I was forced to spend half my time looking for the enemy while firing off-screen with my phasers. Let's just hope that Mad Doc iron this out in the month they have left to complete the game, as once I was facing the action, the battles proved highly evocative of the space jousts that made the movies' action-sequences so thrilling.

While questions marks hang over the game's camera interface, the rest of *Legacy* appears to have bags of potential. Whether it'll be a *Wrath Of Khan* or a *Nemesis* though, is yet to be seen. **PCZ**

ETA
XMAS 2006

WHY YOU SHOULD BE EXCITED...



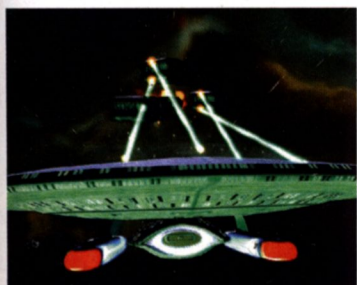
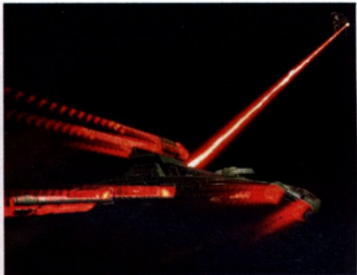
ROCK ON
Legacy's levels are packed with features, including asteroid fields to navigate and nebulas to hide in when you take too much damage.

BE PREPARED
Although you won't be able to personally beam onto planets and spacestations, you will be able to send away teams to check them out and scan them from space.

STARBOARD BOW
You have to battle the Klingons, Romulans and, of course, the Borg. Later on, you'll ally with the Klingons and have them fighting by your side. How fickle.

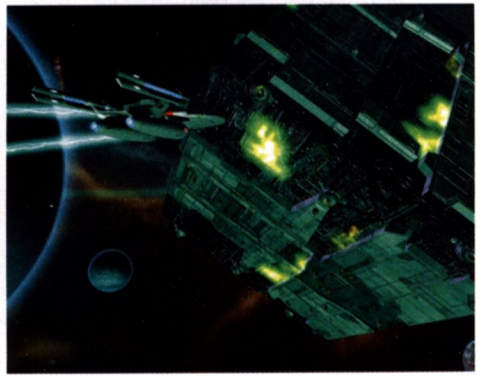
TWO PLUS TWO
Take command of up to four ships and issue them with orders. You begin with just one vessel, but this number quickly increases as the game progresses.

SHIPSHAPE, CAPTAIN
There's a huge variety of ships for you to command, including the USS Enterprise and Defiant. You'll also be able to upgrade each ship's systems.



All of your favourite Starships have been recreated in loving detail

Ready to fly around in inky blackness with asteroids and spaceships for company? Welcome to *Legacy*.



TURNING JAPANESE? WE REALLY THINK SO...

Daniel Robson avoids a legion of schoolgirl/pantie anecdotes as PC games thrive at the Tokyo Game Show

JAPAN, AS WE all know, is a console country. But while Nintendo DS games regularly clog the all-format chart and excitement about the next-gen machines is at fever pitch, PC gaming plays an important part in the national diet too. Drop in to any Internet café and you'll find hordes of gamers quietly absorbed in MMORPGs, and the streets of Tokyo's gadgets and porn district Akihabara are filled with discount hardware and PC games outlets.

Among the otaku (translation: manga/animé/tech nerds) at this year's

Tokyo Game Show desperately seeking out playable Wii games and having their pictures taken with booth babes, there was still plenty of PC action to be had. Pick of the bunch was Tecmo's excellently named *Bastard!! Online*, a MMOG based on the popular manga series that's run since 1988 and follows the story of a somewhat mean sorcerer. Despite the manga's heritage, this is its first videogame incarnation since the SNES in 1994 and PlayStation in 1996.

Set to launch in Japan in spring 2007, the game invites players to join one of

four armies: Kal, Nei, Gara or the army of the Meta-Ricana Kingdom (known as Metallicana in the original heavy metal-obsessed manga). Players battle online across a world taken from the pages of *Bastard!!*, although Tecmo is keeping tight-lipped on the specific details. A UK release has yet to be scheduled, but expect the Bastardisation of Britain in autumn 2007.

RISING SUN

Japan is, of course, insatiable in its consumption of RPGs, and others generating interest include Bandai Namco's *Gundam Online: Zero G Attack* MMOG, *Bright Shadow* from Gamania and Sega's on and offline *Phantasy Star Universe*.

This isn't to say more 'westernised' role-players don't get a look-in; the hotly-tipped first-person RPG *Hellgate: London* had a major presence at the show, and Turbine's *The Lord Of The Rings Online: Shadows Of Angmar* is making similar waves. Microsoft's mammoth stand at TGS, meanwhile, was almost entirely devoted to Xbox 360 (a platform that isn't so much treading water in Japan as sinking without a trace), but also housed *Flight Simulator X* running on a gigantic concave screen. Players were even allowed to take liquids onboard.

There are also a surprising number of Asian FPSs on the way, despite the fact



that most Japanese would rather cut off their hands than get behind a sniper rifle. Alongside some hardcore shooters on show at TGS, Korean newcomer Cykan's *Paper Man* offered a wafer-thin approach to the genre, all lurid colours and two-dimensional targets. The game places paper combatants into 3D environments, which makes a moving target a lot harder to hit, and characters are prone to burning or getting wet. (And, in typically cutesy fashion, you can customise your character with lacy skirts and rabbit-ear headbands.) With online play and urban settings, it's a smart little shooter, due in Japan by Christmas.

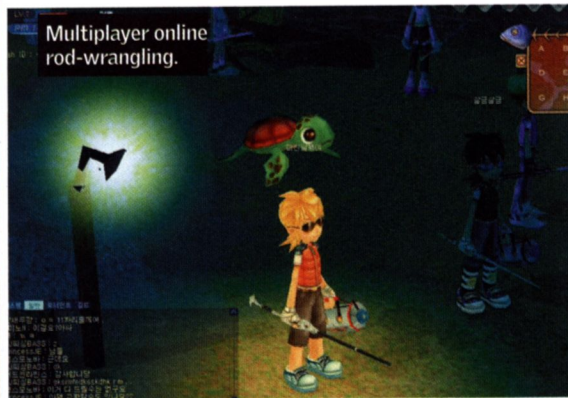
RISING FUN

Also from Cykan comes *Fishing On*, a great 'battle fishing' game that pitches players against one another in online angling tournaments. A variety of real and imaginary fish can be caught, and





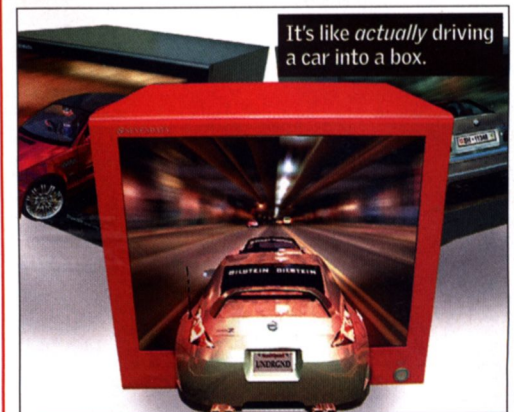
Like E3, but with less fat people.



Shadows Of Angmar offered respite from the incessant cuteness.

Another dimension

Behold the might of Korea's magic 3D spectacles



While Japan undoubtedly led the fray at the Tokyo Game Show this year, a Korean company showed the most innovation. With its unbelievably convincing 3D system, Sevendata showcased a jaw-dropping selection of games running in 3D on HD screens, including *Warcraft III* and several of Sevendata's own games.

Sevendata is peddling not only the games but also the technology behind them. It claims that its stereoscopic imaging system can be used across entertainment industries from arcade gaming to cinema, as well as more sober applications in health and marketing.

We'll admit we were sceptical as we donned the flimsy plastic glasses, but it didn't take long to be bowled over. Arcade-style games burst out of the screen with incredible clarity, and the booth even offered a full-size racing cabinet.

Sevendata's monitors range from 6-inches to 42-inches and run on high-end PCs. The price is as yet unconfirmed, but we want one.



In Korean FPS *Paper Man*, you can customise your character with lacy skirts and rabbit-ears

you can even breed the little fellas in the game's aquarium, or customise your character to your heart's content. The game supports a motion-sensitive fishing rod peripheral and is extremely intuitive and fun to play. The game's simplicity has already won international fans, and Acclaim have picked it up for American release. If it does well, a UK release is sure to follow.

Indeed, *Fishing On* seems to be the jewel in Cykan's crown, and with several PC games hitting the market in a variety of genres, the publisher is one to watch, especially for younger gamers. We did give online community game *Puppy On* a VERY wide berth, mind.

Finally, if you're a bit nostalgic, you may be keen to learn that T2i Entertainment has released a free online version of the classic *Game Of Life* boardgame.



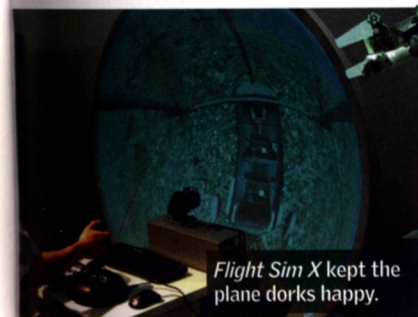
2D fights back in *Paper Man*.



Hellgate: London turned a few heads.

Available from www.jinseigame.jp, it allows players to play a much cutesier rendition of the game than that released in the US by RealNetworks, complete with the signature roulette-style spinnny thing from the original boardgame. It's only available in Japanese, though, so if you can't handle your kana and kanji, you might not have much fun.

PC gaming may not grab the headlines in Japan, but its presence should be noted. We'll have a report on how *HL2* has made the jump to Japanese arcades in the coming months. **PC7**



Flight Sim X kept the plane dorks happy.





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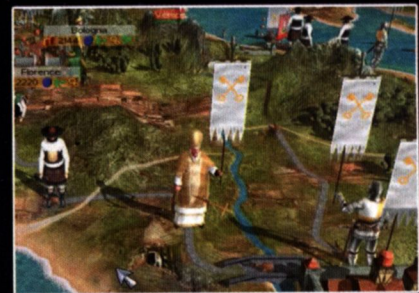


THE BATTLES ARE ONLY THE BEGINNING.

Once the shields have clashed and battles been won, there is still a nation to build. Manage your economy, spread or squash religion, marry princesses off in exchange for territory and wage war on your enemies. From 1080 - 1530 you must use every tactic to emerge the invincible ruler of the medieval world.



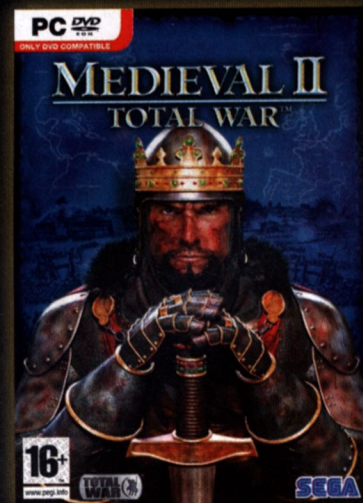
Actual in-game screenshots.



NOVEMBER 2006



SPRAWLING POPULACE.



www.totalwar.com

1



BIOSHOCK

DEVELOPER Irrational Games PUBLISHER 2K Games WEB www.irrationalgames.com ETA 2007

THE SPIRITUAL SUCCESSOR to the groundbreaking sci-fi shooter/RPG *System Shock 2* is growing and mutating like stem cells in a pint of Guinness. *Bioshock* takes place in a massive underwater city called Rapture, built in an art-deco style in the 1940s as a utopian hideaway for the planet's cultural elite, but now decaying and ripped apart by a genetic war between two enigmatic leaders. A recent new presentation given to us by Irrational's creative director Ken Levine demonstrated the huge array of combat techniques available to you when hunting the hulking, diver-suit-wearing behemoth known as the Big Daddy. In Ken's own words: "We don't want the game to be 'magic spell-y' - this is a very brutal, awful world."



7



The Bigger Picture

1 WHO'S THE DADDY?

The Big Daddy is the most dangerous enemy in the game – kill him to get to the little girl he protects, for the genetic material Adam. In the demo, it took a combination of shotgun blasts, grenades, fire and hacked robot drones to destroy him.

2 TWISTED FIRESTARTER

Fire in *Bioshock* spreads dynamically, but you can really use this to your pyromaniac advantage, setting up chain-reaction traps using trails of flammable liquor bottles or even lighting objects such as teddy-bears and hurling them at enemies to burn them alive.

3 WEAPONS GRADE

Bioshock has six different weapons, all modifiable and each with different ammo types, plus over 50 genetic powers including teleportation and telekinesis, which allows you to literally pluck grenades out of the air and hurl them back at foes.

4 SAY CHEESE!

You can research new genetic mutations simply by taking photographs of the frightening entities you encounter. Described as a bit like *Pokémon Snap*, the better your panicky piccie of the lurching monstrosity coming towards you, the more research points awarded.

5 NO HUD-ACHES

Although no screenshots show the HUD, Ken Levine revealed the top-left corner graphic switching between normal weapons and genetic powers using one button, and the bottom left-hand corner displaying ammo types or how much Eve (genetic ammo) you have.

6 DOCTOR WHO?

The Splicer NHS-reject chucks fireballs and teleports around, leaving tiny, floating bits of flesh behind. However, you can also set it on enemies by throwing a pus-filled ball called a Splicer Irritant at anything you want attacked.

7 WE BUILT THIS CITY...

Rapture is a huge city with no linear path preventing you exploring. "We want to redefine the FPS," says Levine, "by giving the player choice. Letting you define your own gameplay experience, rather than us defining it for you."





THE PROFESSIONALS

Uncovering the lies and slander perpetuated by PC gaming

WE'VE BEEN LAUGHING at *Pro Cycling Manager's* silly 2D wheels for some time now, but then Ellis Bacon who works downstairs walked past and was summarily outraged. And when we say outraged, we mean the full red face and steam coming out of ears outraged. If only, we said, there was some

kind of feature in *PC ZONE* in which specialists in certain areas could comment on the various representations of their chosen fields in gaming. Then we realised that there was! And so Ellis went off and tapped away at his keyboard, while we continued to mock *Pro Cycling Manager* behind his back...

THIS MONTH: BIKES
 Expert: Ellis Bacon Job: Deputy editor at *ProCycling* magazine Expert pedantry: Bicycles



BROTHERS IN ARMS: HELL'S HIGHWAY

"Apart from being some bizarre, double-top-tubed shopper, that pushbike certainly looks like it's got all its bits in the right places. Can you

ride it in the game, though? Doubt it. The game's set in Holland, and they like their bikes - so I guess it's accurate that there would be a bike there. Not sure if those lovely bike paths that are normally everywhere have been blown to bits or not, perhaps they haven't been invented yet. Whatever, I wouldn't fancy my chances on that thing against a f***-off big tank, but getting away from it would be faster than running."

PCZONE
 ★★☆☆☆
 Shopper-holic



HALF-LIFE 2

"Has this pile of rust just been hoiked out of the local canal? Even if you could get on it, you wouldn't really want to, tyre-less, brake-less and useless-looking as it is. And hang on a minute: that chainset (you know - the cogs that the pedals are attached to) is on the wrong side of the bike! As are the cogs at the back! This is nothing but sheer bicyclic misrepresentation. Unless it's some sort of bamboozling piece of Combine technology that's been snuck in to confuse the residents of City 17, it's a crock of shit."

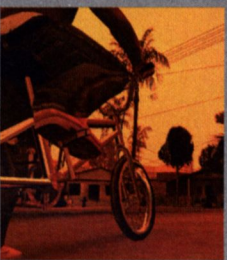
PCZONE
 ★☆☆☆☆
 Bad ride



PAPERBOY

"Is that a bike our little £1-a-day-earning lad is on? Or just two dustbin lids joined together with a spade? To be honest I don't really care, I'm just looking out for those pesky breakdancers! Ah, delivering papers seven days a week, and bikes: this is the official game of youth, recreating your own daily life on a rubbish computer. Awesome gameplay though: desperately delivering papers and simultaneously attempting to avoid death on the streets."

PCZONE
 ★★☆☆☆
 Reality gaming. Sort of



GTA: SAN ANDREAS

"Now you're talking. Jump on your BMX and pull some radical stunts, or just kill people. Or both. A proper bike you can interact with and do stuff on, rather than being part of the

background furniture... It even feels like you're on a bike, with its turning circle and the way CJ's leg sticks out round corners, rather than a cut-and-pasted motorbike driving model. Saying that, though, why would you steal this BMX off some poor, unsuspecting homie, rather than nicking an Infernus off some rich stranger?"

PCZONE
 ★★★★★
 Pimp my ride



PRO CYCLING MANAGER 2006

"Bike-racing nerd heaven! OK, so at the end of the day this game's only really as nerdy as a football management game, but this really is the business. Manage a pro-cycling team through the season, and decide during the races what your riders do - drafting, attacking, sprinting and so on. The riders and bikes are very realistic, right down to being able to see the brands on your equipment. This is the game that bike-racing nerds have been waiting for. It's serious stuff, and I have nothing humorous to say on the matter whatsoever."

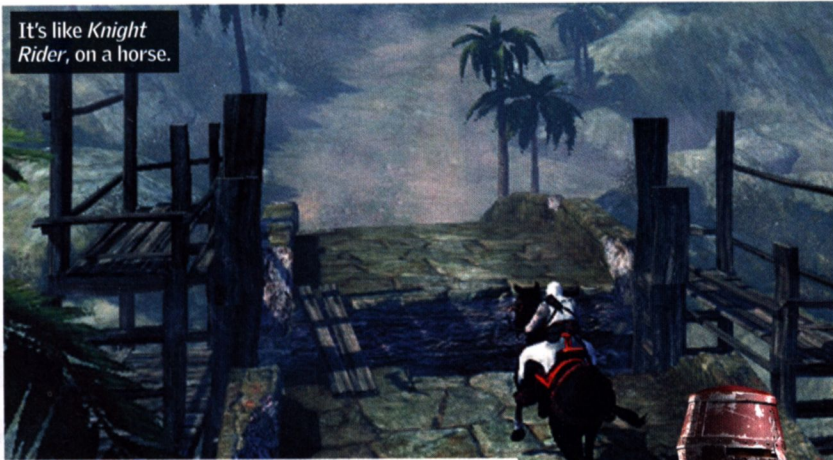
PCZONE
 ★★★★★
 Better than real life?

WINNER: Pro Cycling Manager 2006
 (Warning: the views of *PC ZONE* do not necessarily coincide with those expressed herein.)
 Hooray! *Pro Cycling Manager 2006* gets the plaudits. Just as we expected!

ARE YOU A PROFESSIONAL?
PC ZONE is in search of readers with professional knowledge or anally-retentive knowledge in the following fields, and many more:
 *Light Fittings *Portable Light Sources *Crates *Locksmithery
 *Burglary *Nazi uniforms *Foreign Accents *Monkeys *Vending Machines

If you want to cast your eye over these or any other PC gaming areas, then email us at TheProfessionals@pczone.co.uk and stick your oar in as far as it'll go.

It's like *Knight Rider*, on a horse.



Hairdressing technology was still in its infancy back then.



THE NEED FOR CREED

Fresh details on *Assassin's Creed* leap from the rooftops

assassinscreed.uk.ubi.com | ETA: 2007

IT'S NOT A sandbox game: it's a flower garden. That's the claim of the team behind *Assassin's Creed* – quite simply one of the most intriguing games on the horizon. But how freeform can such a narrative-driven game really be? "Well you'll have a list of guys to take out, and before you can go and assassinate a target there's a whole portion of the game that's investigation," explains the game's producer Jade Raymond.

"So you'll want to eavesdrop on conversations, find out where your target is and set things up – and if you want you can do your investigation throughout the whole kingdom, which we've modelled around southern Syria and Israel. So there's Jerusalem, Damascus, Acre, the area in-between, the famous battle of Arsuf, the assassin's stronghold – all that is open. So if you're the sort of person who likes exploring you can go explore, make your investigations, collect all your information and then take the guys out in rapid succession."

As well as your main quests, there'll be individuals in the swirling crowds asking for your

help which may ultimately aid your assassination attempt, and there's bound to be more than a little excitement as you gallop from city to city atop your beautifully animated steed.

More than anything, we're starting to realise how organic the gameplay in *Assassin's Creed* is going to be. One of its primary aims is to remove unrealistic gaming conventions like double-jumps and heroes who can take a hundred sword-cuts before dying. As for its dynamic nature, well, every post-assassination chase is set to be entirely different, thanks to the many routes you can take through the streets and over the rooftops, and other variables such as the crowd response, the abilities of the guards and the level of fear gripping the town as a whole.

But how will a game with such a gamepad-led control system translate to PC? "We're going to have to work a lot to figure that out!" claims Raymond, exposing the only fly in the ointment so far. "We don't know yet." A worrying statement perhaps, but if anyone's going to figure it out, then you'd hope that it would be these guys.



Dear Steve,

I've endured your yelps for days now. It's as if you're in pain, but when I look over to your desk, I see you wrestling – gleefully – with your joystick. Flying without event through a well-rendered sky, with half your screen covered in switches you daren't even press. Please stop pretending that *Flight Simulator X* is fun, Steve. It's dad-minded tedium of the most offensive order.

Jon 'Log' Blyth

Dear Log,

No, that's wrong – you're lying. I only made happy shouts when I was racing against jet-powered trucks down runways, or landing my antique stunt plane on the back of a school bus at a 1930s airshow. Yes it's often boring, but so's being a pilot – *Flight Simulator X* does everything it can to make it exciting and succeeds. Anyway, I'm surprised you can tear yourself away from the raging intensity of *Sid Meier's Railroads!* to even notice what I'm doing. That thing must be a veritable feast of action.

Steve Hogarty

Dear Steve,

I was as surprised as anyone to be playing *Railroads!* and enjoying it. But I simply cannot see the fun in a horizon. I can see the effort they've gone to, and they've certainly decorated flying through the air in a straight line with a good amount of tinsel and Silly String. But the fact remains, it's take off, landing and a whole barrel-roll of f***-all else. The fact that they've made it to nine sequels speaks terrifying volumes about the state of the whole world. I'd rather play a hardcore German tank sim in a genital clamp. JB

Dear Log,

I have decided that your argument is based on a foundation of mistrust of the non-combat flight sim genre rather than any real objective analysis of the new *Flight Simulator X* game. Just because you can't shoot stuff doesn't make it dull. SH

Dear Steve,

You're young – you can afford to throw hours recklessly into mind-scouringly prolonged flights through a realistic cloud. It deserves a high score, because it's the leader in its field, goes some way to mitigate the innate boredom, and the honest title will put off any sane person who values their hours. But I reserve the right, next time you say, "Look Log, it's lightning", or, "Most realistic cumulonimbus EVER!" to spit in your ridiculous face. JB

Dear Log,

You got bored and walked off before you'd even SEEN the lightning in *Flight Simulator X* – no wonder you don't understand. Nobody understands. SH

PCZONE CHARTS



- 1 **NEW** COMPANY OF HEROES
Issue 173 93%
- 2 **NEW** FIFA 07
Issue 174 84%
- 3 **↑** WORLD OF WARCRAFT
Issue 152 95%
- 4 **↓** THE SIMS 2
Issue 147 82%
- 5 **NEW** TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 07
Issue 174 68%
- 6 **↑** THE COMPLETE COLLECTION OF THE SIMS
Issue 165 N/A
- 7 **NEW** GTR2
Issue 173 92%
- 8 **↓** THE SIMS 2: OPEN FOR BUSINESS
Issue 166 72%
- 9 **NEW** JUST CAUSE
Issue 173 82%
- 10 — **ROME: TOTAL WAR - GOLD EDITION**
Issue 148 93%
- 11 **NEW** FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006
Issue 162 90%
- 12 **NEW** LMA MANAGER 2007
Issue 173 60%
- 13 **RE** GUILD WARS: FACTIONS
Issue 156 94%
- 14 **NEW** BROKEN SWORD: THE ANGEL OF DEATH
Issue 172 78%
- 15 **↓** AGE OF EMPIRES III
Issue 162 84%
- 16 **↓** THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION
Issue 168 95%
- 17 **↓** CIVILIZATION IV
Issue 162 92%
- 18 **RE** HALF-LIFE 2: GOTY EDITION
Issue 148 97%
- 19 **↓** THE SIMS 2: NIGHTLIFE
Issue 161 58%
- 20 **RE** CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2006
Issue 175 69%



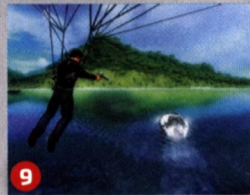
1
COMPANY OF HEROES
The approach of Yuletide has produced some healthy charts, with our favourite WWII barnstormer at their very summit.



2
FIFA 07
Either Steve Hill and Sefton are being given envelopes stuffed full of cash again, or this year's FIFA is really quite good. Charts agree too.



7
GTR2
GTR2, the most realistic driving experience this side of the A1's famed Black Cat Roundabout near Bedford, enters at number seven.



9
JUST CAUSE
Seeing as it boasts a brothel in a volcano, you'd think Just Cause would be a mite higher. Clearly magma's not for everyone.

SUPER FRIENDS

Worst of enemies now best of friends in *Marvel Universe Online*

www.crypticstudios.com | ETA: TBC

THIS TIME LAST year *City Of Heroes* creators Cryptic Studios were deep in all manner of legal wranglings with comic giant Marvel. Marvel were miffed that through judicious use of the *COH* hero-creator, characters who shared more than passing resemblance to Spidey, Wolverine & co could be formed – and a hearty band of money-sniffing lawyers agreed too.

Eventually Cryptic won the day, but clearly there were a few coy winks and 'accidental' brushes of feet beneath the discussion table – as the two are now part of a super-team hellbent on creating *Marvel Universe Online*. So expect a less hardcore variant on the *City Of Heroes* theme (the game is also earmarked for an Xbox 360 release) starring the goodies, baddies and in-betweens of the Marvel world and their many alliances and factions. Can't be a bad thing, can it?



COH: now 100% legal.

GEAR CHANGE?

Flagship 360 game *Gears Of War* to hit PC?

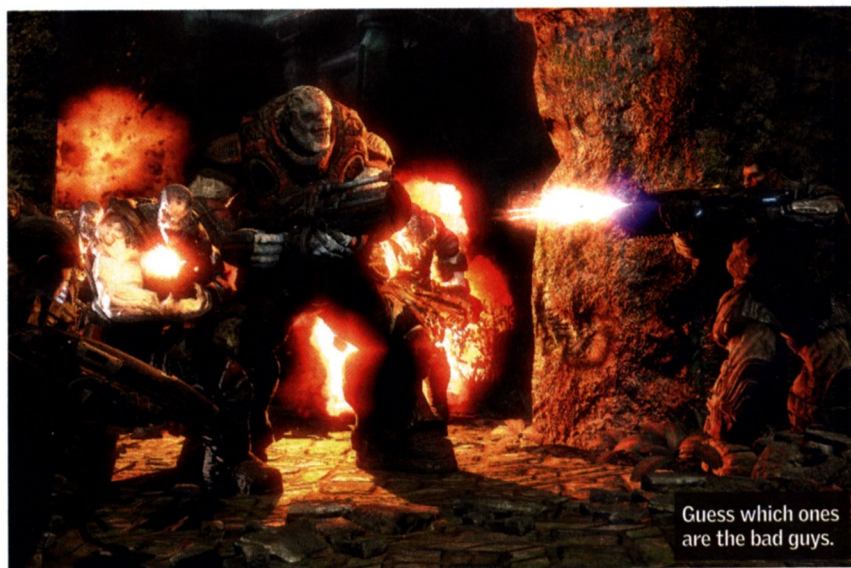
www.epicgames.com | ETA: TBC

GEARS OF WAR on PC? "Watch this space" – that's the message given to *PC ZONE* at this year's Microsoft X06 event when we asked whether thundering 360 title *Gears Of War* would be making an appearance on home turf. That's a yes then, isn't it?

Epic's brilliant squad shooter aims to blend third-person survival horror with all-out war blasting, and it's a remarkable thing to see in motion. Not least when the chainsaw attachment on your gun rips through members of the Locust Horde who get that little bit too close...



Unreal Engine 3 in all its splendour.



Guess which ones are the bad guys.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT:



The guy who makes Crysis look nice and icy

MICHAEL KHAIMZON - ART DIRECTOR ON CRYISIS

Michael Khaimzon has one of the best jobs on the planet, for it is his job to fly away to Tahiti and research paradise by taking lots of photographs of palm trees before going home and wondering what it looks like when it's all frozen and stuff

So what are your inspirations when designing artwork for Crysis?

"It's very hard to name any major references. *Predator* is a good reference for how the jungle looks, like how the lighting of the jungle looks. As far as aliens ago, and as far as frozen jungle goes, it's purely down to imagination. Maybe *The Day After Tomorrow* gave us some inspiration because it's also an instant freeze of the whole environment - but in the end I don't think our environments looked that much like *The Day After Tomorrow*. We came up with our own unique look, which works for us."

Crysis deals with an entirely alien environment imposing itself on Earth. Where do you even begin with imagining what it looks like?

"The first thing we do is come up with a storyline which gives us enough room for imagination. With the aliens, we have to design something that doesn't have to walk, but has to fly and move in zero-G environments, so we tried to reference something that exists underwater. Then we just have to come up with an environment in which this character would fit best.

Combine it all with our desire to make it scary, dark and cold, and that's *Crysis*."

Tell us a bit more about your location research for Crysis...

"We spent one week in Tahiti - me, a programmer and a level designer. The problem with *Far Cry* was nobody on the team was ever in the jungle. I mean, how can you work on something when you were never in the environment you're trying to make? So we had to go there. We took gigabytes of videos and images, and basically came back with enough material to answer any question that could pop up during development. If you want to see how the palm trees should be, sure. If you want to see how the house should be, it's there. So it saved us a lot of time, and we didn't actually do that much concept art for our locations, because it's so wild and open."

Did you shoot any trees down to see what that would look like?

"We didn't shoot them down. Tahiti's all about palm trees - everywhere you look there's a palm tree or a banana tree. It's illegal to cut a single leaf down, but we

had to do it because we needed the texture. I said: "I don't care if there's a fine, we've gone halfway across the world, you think I'm not going to cut a leaf down?" So we found a place, we chopped this leaf down and we spread it on the ground. Two guys watched for the police when I was climbing around taking pictures. It was a little bit dangerous, but nobody got arrested."



No-one likes an ice age.



Many Tahitian laws were broken to bring you this screenshot.

tat Zone

Gaming merchandise is for life. Not just for Christmas (or any other religious festival)

When you first obtain an XXL T-shirt with a game logo on it, there's a honeymoon period. You play with it, wear it on country walks, let giggling children play in its voluminous tent-like folds and even wear it to bed. But after a month or two it starts to smell, the novelty fades and you have to leave it in a gateway somewhere and hope someone will love it more than you. So to avoid this we sell our tat on eBay! For charity! Find us under the tag PCZoners and buy some of our shit.

Buy our tat at www.ebay.co.uk
All proceeds go to charity. Honest.
www.entertainmentsoftwarecharity.org



THIS MONTH'S TAT



ALAN WAKE TORCH
Lets you see monsters in the dark. Existence thereof withstanding.



ERAGON TAG
Not a keyring as such, but to advertise the dragon movie/game.



WORLD OF WARCRAFT T-SHIRT
Large, slim-fit, with Horde image on back.



WARHAMMER: AGE OF RECKONING STRAP
A strap of some sort. Holds things together.

THE TAT BOARD

COMPARE	ITEM TITLE	SOLD FOR	BIDS
	WARHAMMER: AGE OF RECKONING T-SHIRT Now you've got a free die to roll too!	£18.77	9
	COMPANY OF HEROES VOICE-RECORDING DOO-DAH Now recording a voice near you!	£36.00	13
	HALF-LIFE 2 DOG T-SHIRT Perhaps would have sold for more if we'd printed it right last month.	£18.00	8
	GOA.COM T-SHIRT We're still not sure what goa.com actually is. And still haven't been arsed to look. T-shirt's nice though.	£5.19	4



The mass media has finally felt the oily embrace of gaming. First *World Of Warcraft* locked horns with nefarious US toon *South Park*, now the quite good US version of the very good *The Office* has taken up *Call Of Duty*. "Look how cute he is, he's trying to shoot with the smoke grenade," smiles the love-interest as the guy who's like **Tim from The Office**, bar the fact that he's American, **struggles with gaming**. Bungling US-Tim, newly moved away from the offices of US-Gareth and US-Dawn, then **goes on to teamkill** and generally be lambasted by his boss when it's revealed he's using the sniper rifle - prompting indignant cries of "Saboteur! Saboteur! I'm going to kill you for real! The game is over! I'm really going to shoot you!" The amount of money paid by **Activision** for this **product placement** has yet to be disclosed.

In response to this **amusing gaming name-drop**, the Internet has spat out its **first computer-gaming sitcom** - the woeful, inexorable and tragic *PlayedOut* on **gamepro.com**. Replete with two teenagers with **floppy hair** acting by moving their hands up and down, and sometimes side to side, its **floppy-mouthed gaming console characters** make the walking, dancing and flute-playing abilities of *Fingermouse* puppeteer **Iain Lauchlan** seem nothing short of godlike. With lines like: "The only thing that **hertz** is your incessant bragging!", "Sounds like the girls will have **higher resolutions** that the ones you bring round here!", as well as a **PS2 coming out of a toilet** to boldly proclaim, "I had to drop a disc! The latest movie-based game! Clogged up my system!", it's another example of why **comedy** is best left to people **who aren't dickheads**.

Meanwhile, reaching a **colossal number two** in the **Dutch** charts, is a **Euro-dance hit** based on an **IRC bot**. *Boten Anna* (Anna the Bot), is taken from the album **LOL <(^ ^)>** by Swedish dance guru **Basshunter**. Dealing with the happy tale of Basshunter thinking that a someone called Anna is an IRC bot (only she isn't), the Dutch have **taken the tune to their hearts**, even though many presume he's talking about **Anna being a boat**. Silly Dutch.

"It's yet another example of why comedy is really best left to people who aren't dickheads"

STILL RATHER PECKISH...

The endangered brains behind *They Hunger: Lost Souls* speak out

www.blackwidowgames.com | ETA: Q1 2007

PERHAPS YOU WERE too young, perhaps you'd never heard of it, perhaps you were a big scaredy girl; but none of these are a good enough excuse for not having played the venerable *They Hunger* series - the best single-player *Half-Life* mods in all of mod-town. But don't worry - shambling from the self-same shadows comes *They Hunger: Lost Souls*, an all-new zombie offering that sees the undead's transition into Source.

The plotline has now been transferred to the increasingly zombified plains of north-eastern Europe, yet has a few similarities with *They Hunger* past. "It's the early 1960s, and strange anomalies have culminated with dead corpses rising from their graves," explains designer Neil Manke in portentous tones.

"As a tourist recovering from a tragic accident, you initially seek shelter in an ancient monastery, but soon realise bloodthirsty zombies have overrun the entire area... It's not exactly a sequel, so younger players that never had a chance to play the original adventures can

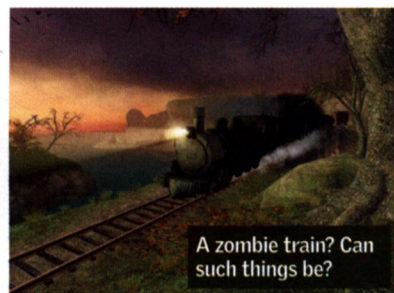
fully enjoy the new game. And it's certainly not a remake either, so the original fans will have a chance to play a fresh game with original challenges instead of just replaying an old game with better graphics."

Pay attention to the time period too: a prime reason for the '60s setting is that it ups the terror quotient quite a bit - and not just because of the terrifying advance of women's lib either. "Zombies aren't nearly as scary if you have powerful modern weapons capable of quickly exterminating everything in sight," explains Mr Manke. "In comparison, 1960s weaponry is just capable enough to give you a surviving chance against zombies." And if you're really struggling, you'll still be able to pull out your trusty zombie-battering spade.

We'll have a ton more information on *Lost Souls* in next issue's gigantic zombie feature, and although it hasn't been announced, we'd be the uncles of particularly gruesome undead monkeys if it weren't headed towards some form of Valve-associated online delivery system in the near future.



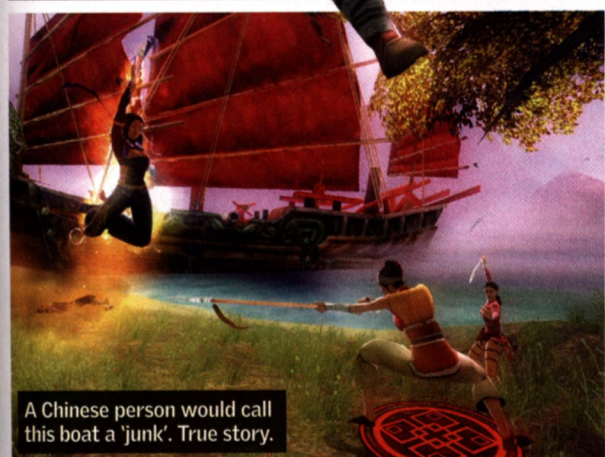
Being a zombie plays hell with the spine...



A zombie train? Can such things be?



Why people go to church less these days.



A Chinese person would call this boat a 'junk'. True story.

"Sonic head-butt boom!"

UP THE ORIENT

Will Porter couldn't resist *Jade Empire*. Not for all the XP in China

Jade.bioware.com
ETA: January 2007

BEFORE WE ROLL out the Buddhist barrel of improvements that BioWare are pumping into the PC release of oriental RPG *Jade Empire*, let's first take into account that John Cleese is in it. John Cleese! Playing a blundering Brit explorer with a blunderbus! That's great!

However, if you want a less superficial take on affairs, what really strikes you as the silk painting tableau of *Jade Empire* rolls out its opening dojo scenes are its real-time battles. Whereas in engine-mate *KOTOR* on PC, battles were rather static (if tense), the many and varied martial arts disciplines on show can now happen while nipping around the enemy at will – sometimes in slow-motion 'focus' according to your whim and chi-level.

It's got a greater emphasis on combos and the killing blow now too, which can

leave an enemy as little more than a fine mist and growing puddle of blood, and touts numerous additions to the console release such as a new monk character to play as, bigger and more varied monsters to fight and a bonus extra-special hard mode in case you're begging for more come completion.

Fighting styles, meanwhile, are unlocked as you progress through the game (opened up to you through sub-plots and your varying allegiances), and this time there'll be two extra on show – one of which being a tasty and rather nippy Viper stance, as used by real assassins. Oh, and a first-person view as well if you're in the mood.

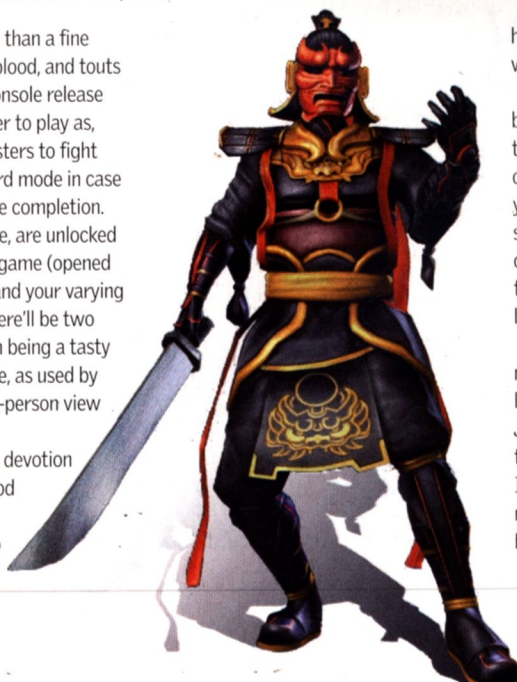
With BioWare's patented devotion to letting you plough into good or evil, or rest somewhere in between, and 12 followers to



Combat is much improved on PC.



Kung fu man: bendy.



help you in combat and exchange banter with, the charms of *Jade* cannot be denied.

It's a special game, perhaps somewhat beleaguered by the graphical superiority of the *Neverwinter Nights 2s* and the *Oblivions* of this world, but its pedigree is clear. Did you know, for example, that the old language spoken by many NPCs is actually a specially created tongue made by clever people from university to ensure that it was linguistically sound?

Set in a mythical ancient China where magic is real and the fate of the Emperor is linked empathically with that of his lands, *Jade Empire* should be as rare and magical a treat as it was on Xbox all those aeons ago. Its age could possibly show through the manifold tinkering going on backstage at BioWare, but it'll be a beauty nevertheless.



OI! 
TAYLOR
WHAT'S YOUR GAME?

The Gas-Powered legend discusses *Supreme Commander* with our own lager and kebab-powered Andy Robinson

Who are ya?



NAME Chris Taylor
DEVELOPER
Gas Powered Games
POSITION CEO and
creative director
AGE 40
FIRST GAME *HardBall II*
GAMES WORKED
ON BEFORE *Total Annihilation,*
Dungeon Siege, Dungeon Siege II
FAVOURITE GAME *Battlefield 1942*



Q What amazed me today was just how much fun *Supreme Commander* is to watch, even if you're not playing. Why do you think that is?

A "It's because the game has a lot of original components, it's big and there are a lot of possibilities for players to go in different directions – big super weapons, lots of little ones... It's a function of it being original and it being a game where anything can happen. You know when we watched that big Soul Reaver go across and crash on that giant heavy-range artillery? That was hilarious! That big bug corpse? That was funny as shit!"

So how are you propping up the multiplayer end of SC?

"Well, you're going to find a lot of things that you look for in multiplayer: up to eight players, teams, different victory conditions and commander options if you kill the other player's Supreme Commander. Plus, we've also got what we call GPGnet, which is our matchmaker – so you can get a rating when you play, get matched against other players with a similar rating, create clans, compete in ladders, have chat and friends lists. You can launch Supreme Commander from within GPGnet if you want as well. We have a lot of cool things that we're now able to do – for example, you can start a replay that's taken as you play and broadcast it out in real-time – so your friends can come along, click and watch the whole game."

So with three months to go, all the features are in there – are you doing loads of balancing at the moment?

"Yes. RTS games are hard to do, so they'll never be 100% balanced even when the game ships – it's a work in progress. After people play it,

hundreds and thousands of them – maybe even millions – then you get better data and can do a better job of balancing the game. We're going to balance it, don't get me wrong... But we're just not going to get every last thing tied down till we've had some time pass to really study it. Heck, Blizzard brought out a patch for *StarCraft* in this last year. I mean, that's eight years later! The more complex, interesting and dynamic a game is, the more balancing you need to do..."

Are you going to be releasing new units on the Net, as they were in the days of Total Annihilation?

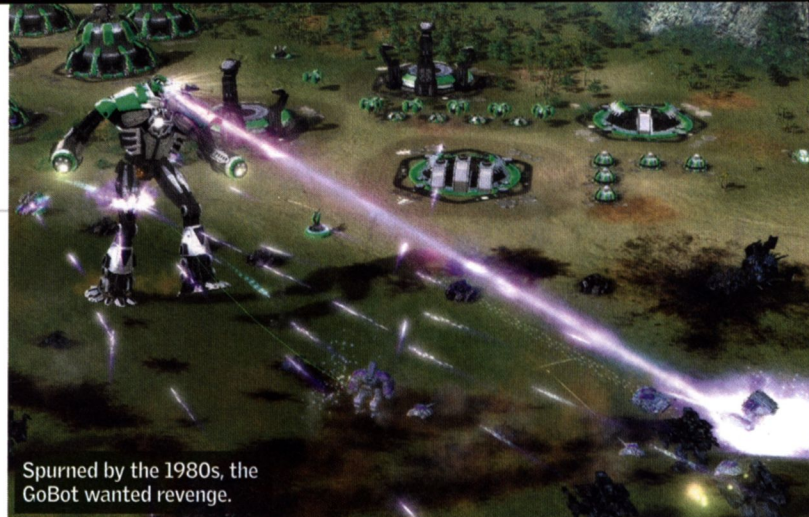
"We are – but we're not promising a new unit every week like we did back then. There's something positive about saying 'a new unit is coming' and everyone gathering around for midnight of the day it's supposed to be coming out. Saying that, it does put a lot of pressure on development to put a unit out whether or not the game needs it. Back then, we wanted to study what was going on – but we were forced to get these units out: one a week, one a week, one a week, Christmas, New Years... We want more flexibility now."

So what's your favourite unit in the game?

"It's hard to pick a favourite. I like the Galactic Colossus as it's a character – it's like a big drunken Frankenstein. Like Frankenstein's monster could get any weirder... But I like them all – it's like being asked to pick your favourite child. I love them all the same – all the units and factions. Although I do lean towards the Cybrans."

Is there anything you really wanted to fit into the game that you just couldn't?

"There are so many things I wish we'd



Spurned by the 1980s, the GoBot wanted revenge.

"There was way more competition back in the Total Annihilation days – someone counted 100 RTS games..."



The sequel, *Supremes Commander*, is set to star Diana Ross.



Nothing so wonderful as messing around in mecha-boats.

fitted into the game. We had this whole system of alternate abilities – every unit had them if you held down the Alt key. So those little bots could jetpack. However, we had to cut all of the Alt abilities right across the board, which was a real heartbreak because there was a great deal of really cool design done there. But no-one's going to miss it, as no-one knows it exists..."

With Company Of Heroes out and C&C3 on the horizon, how do you think Supreme Commander will stand up against these other big RTS contenders?

"Well, it's a very different game – those other games you describe are much more tactical and close-in. We're not the same,

we're in a very different part of the genre. I'm really quite xen about competition, there was way more competition back in the old days when I did *Total Annihilation* – somebody said they counted 100 RTS games back then."

Plus, I think C&C: Tiberian Sun came out about a year after?

"Yeah and there was *Dark Reign*... There was a glut of everything you could imagine. Everybody was doing RTS games, and management just looked at me and said: 'Are we really going to succeed with this game?' But in the end, we managed to come out of the fog – we stuck our head up out of it and did OK. I'd say we did great, all things considered." **PCZ**



Nothing had happened for 3,000 years, then the desert didn't know what hit it...

CHRIS TAYLOR

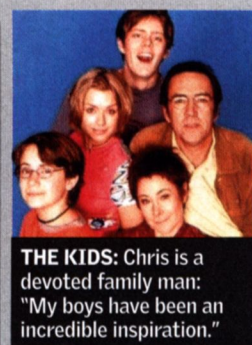
Where he turns for inspiration...



HISTORY: Chris loves the "incredible tapestry of different technologies" during times like WWII.



MOVIES: Hollywood has a huge bearing on Chris's work – but perhaps not the abysmal *Dungeon Siege*...



THE KIDS: Chris is a devoted family man: "My boys have been an incredible inspiration."



He's surrounded by gun-toting Koreans, but at least the water effects are pretty.

HIDDEN AND SLIGHTLY DANGEROUS... ROGUE WARRIOR

Martin Korda gets trapped behind enemy lines as we take our first look at Zombie's new tactical shooter

DEVELOPER Zombie PUBLISHER Bethesda Softworks WEBSITE www.zombie.com

THE LOWDOWN

- Powered by Unreal Engine 3 ✓
- Excellent AI 'Lure' system ✓
- Freeform levels that allow for multiple playing styles ✓
- Huge variation of multiplayer maps assured ✓
- You can't pick up and hide dead bodies ✗

ETA
**AUTUMN
2007**

DICK MARCINKO IS a very dangerous man. He could kill you with his thumb. While sleeping. That's why he's considered to be one of the toughest and most accomplished counter-terrorism commanders in US military history. Shorter than he looks in his photo, his unwavering eyes emanate the calm, steely confidence of a trained killer, while his long dark hair and solid physique belie an age that's just four years short of 70.

Sitting in front of Marcinko are 40 comparatively harmless international games journalists (41 including me). We've been pulled away from the hypnotic lights and pinging slot machines of Las Vegas and rammed into a room to catch the first glimpse of Zombie's new Unreal Engine 3-powered first/third-person tactical shooter *Rogue Warrior*, a game based on Marcinko's SEAL-team exploits during the Korean war.

Eager to begin the presentation, Bethesda frontman Pete Hines brings the room to calm, and we catch our first glimpse of a game that's aiming to be one of the most open-ended shooters of all time.

DICK-TATOR

"We wanted to do some different things in the tactical shooter space than what's already being done. We

wanted to do something more open-ended and less constrained," explains Hines as a vivid level swells onto the monitor, revealing a North Korean ship-breaker's yard teeming with detail and enemy patrols.

It's one of the campaign's earliest levels, a recreation of the start of Dick and his team's marathon undercover journey to get back across the border to safety after they've been stranded in North Korea at the start of the North/South conflict. Yes indeedy folks, this actually happened and you're going to get to relive it.

"We wanted to base the game on a licence that would give the game a sense of authenticity, so the things that you see are as realistic as possible," explains Hines as Zombie producer Mark Long pans around the level. On the screen, Marcinko's digital twin and three Spec Ops sidekicks stand knee-deep in water that looks so convincing, I'm already stripped off to my pants and inflating my arm bands: an urge quickly suppressed when Long lets off a burst from his silenced MP4 into the water. The bullets kick up spray and steam rises from the superheated silencer. "We're also working with Dick

to make sure that the weapons and equipment look and feel authentic," continues Hines as Long leads his team out of the water towards a North Korean truck parked nearby.

RING OF FIRE

In a further attempt to make *Rogue Warrior* look and feel as authentic as possible, Zombie are not only carefully recreating Marcinko's exploits, but are also taking pains to ensure that the freeform battlefield you inhabit reacts as realistically as possible.

Whereas many shooters (the likes of *Quake Wars* aside) still utilise a simple

Use stealth or go head-on - both are valid tactics.



THE STORY SO FAR...

ZOMBIE



WHITE HOT

After forming in 1994, the company gets off to a solid start with *Ice & Fire*.

1994



SPECS ON

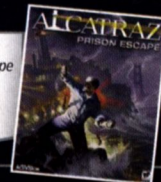
The first *Spec Ops* game's mix of action and stealth is a sign of things to come.

1996

BREAK OUT

Alcatraz: Prison Escape is a prison breakout game that fails to set the world alight.

2001



RED MERC

While it's fun in a mindless sort of way, FPS *Shadow Ops: Red Mercury* largely bombs.

2004

Dick may be tough, but he wears his watch like a lady.



Multi-brawl

Revolutionary tiling system set to make multiplayer truly massive?

The tiling system allows for over 200 map variations.



Keen to lavish as much attention on the online game as the single-player campaign, Zombie have designed a unique map tiling system for the multiplayer side of *Rogue Warrior*. It allows up to 24 players to slug it out on over 200 unique battlefields. That's right, 200! So how does this revolutionary system work?

At the start of a bout, each team begins by picking a section of map. This is the area in which the team will spawn and enter the battlefield. However, the central section of the level is chosen at random, so you'll never know exactly how each map will look once you've left your starting point. As simple as it is, this system should add hugely to gameplay variety and help combat the 'map fatigue' that so many other shooters suffer from.

But wait, there's more juicy goss to be spilled on the multiplayer game. As well as the huge collection of teamplay maps, you'll also be able to play through the main campaign in co-op mode. Your mates will be able to jump in and out of your campaign at will and communicate with you via voiceover IP. Are you getting excited yet?

The obligatory sniping pic...



Now that's what I call a varied wardrobe.



"If you shoot a truck's engine, it'll set alight and the fire will spread, eventually reaching the gas tank"

Mark Long, producer, *Rogue Warrior*

vehicle damage model, *Rogue Warrior*'s regional approach to inflicting damage is set to infuse the game with a genuine sense of believability.

"We've created a destructible system that's really interactive," enthuses Long. "If you shoot a truck's gas tank, it's going to explode. If you shoot the bumper it won't really do any damage. But if you shoot the engine enough, it'll set alight and the fire will spread, eventually reaching the gas tank."

HIT THE GAS

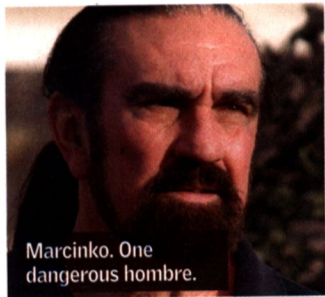
Eager to prove his point, he lets off a flurry of bullets, which hammer into the truck's front bumper causing it to shake like a headboard in a brothel until it falls to the ground with a clang. Moving his sights to the engine, Long lets rip again, this time igniting a small flame that licks hungrily at the truck, slowly devouring it until it reaches the petrol tank. Seconds later, the truck is blown into a thousand molten shards while Marcinko nods sagely in the background.





Fun with Dick and pain

Who's Dick and what does he do?



Marcinko. One dangerous hombre.

Dick Marcinko is one of the US Navy's most revered and accomplished soldiers and commanders. Having created the now legendary SEAL Team Six – the Navy's first counter-terrorism unit, he and his team were sent on a variety of deadly infiltration missions into the likes of the Middle East, Africa and of course North Korea.

Later in his career, Marcinko created and commanded Red Cell, a second counter-terrorism unit which was tasked with infiltrating US bases and highly secure areas such as Air Force One, in order to test their readiness for terrorist attacks. Infiltrating them all one by one, Dick and his team embarrassed the US government by proving that these so called impenetrable areas were about as watertight as a paper bag.

Marcinko has also released a series of semi-fictional books about his exploits (under the title *Rogue Warrior*), and by this time next year, you'll be able to experience his adventures for yourself in this very game.

Visuals aside, perhaps *Rogue Warrior's* most impressive attribute is its attempt to meld run-and-gun gameplay with open-ended squad-based combat, theoretically allowing you to approach each level as aggressively or as stealthily (or indeed, as tactically) as your cold heart desires.

"We wanted to go with something that was a departure from the genre's current nondescript, over-stylised direction," explains Long as he moves his team towards a cluster of nearby North Korean patrolmen with a single mouse click, while propaganda music blares from speakers mounted high on poles throughout the yard.

With the option to command each individual team member (each of which has the same set of abilities that you have), or to issue orders to your entire team, *Rogue Warrior's* gameplay is looking more flexible than a Russian gymnast, clearly leaning towards the more open-ended approach adopted by the likes of *Splinter Cell: Double Agent* than more conventional, linear shooters.

SLOW AND FAST

But there's little time for contemplation right now as Long's eager to showcase both of these playing styles. First, he chooses a tactical, stealthy approach to the conundrum of taking out the guards. Leaving the rest of his squad behind cover, he slowly flanks a lone

guard before drawing a bloody smile across his throat.

Next he cycles through his collection of booby traps – remote, time and pressure bombs – and plants one on his victim's uniformed corpse. The dead man's radio crackles briefly as one of his fellow guards checks in on his status, but the enquiry is met by silence.

Alerted by their comrade's lack of response, three nearby guards rush to check on him, kneeling low in apparent concern as they search for a pulse. Big mistake. Grasping the remote detonator switch, Long takes out all three men with a single press of a button without having to fire a single shot.

"This is a system that we're calling 'Lure Behaviour'," beams Long. "Guards communicate with each other via radio and they're going to be checking on each other so they'll know if something bad has happened to someone on patrol. You can also place a booby trap on an alarm in order to take out any enemies that try to activate it."

While the Lure Behaviour system is a welcome addition to the fold, it strikes me as somewhat baffling that Zombie aren't planning to include an option to pick up and hide enemy corpses. It's an omission that seems strangely at odds with what's clearly shaping up to be a highly detailed and tactical experience. Let's just hope they change their minds before it's too late, eh?

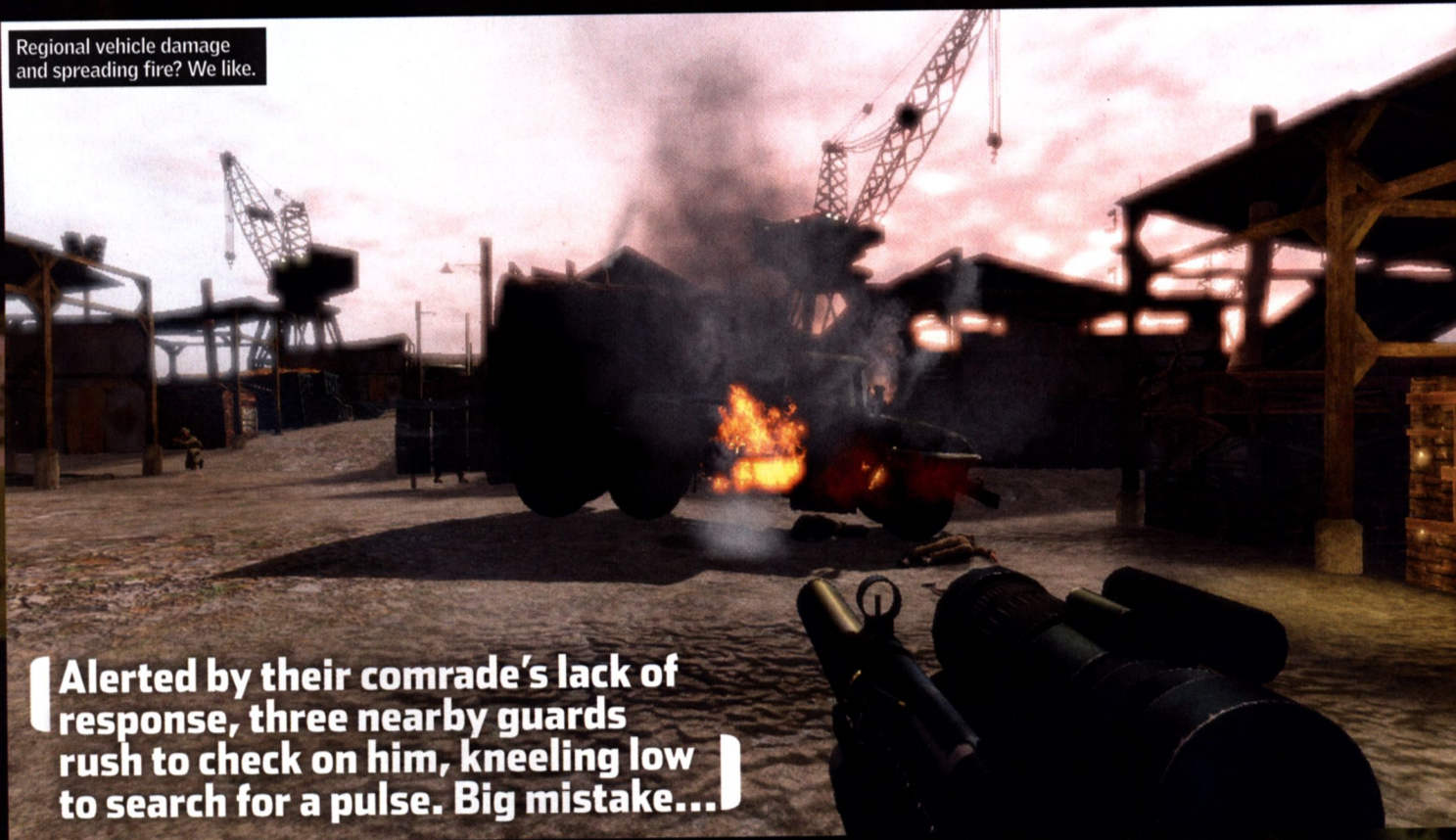
With the presentation coming to a close, it's clear that Long is determined to go out with a bang by showcasing the game's all-out action features. Selecting one of the many routes through the level, he leads his team towards a group of gargantuan rusting hulls, surrounded by pockets of enemies.

BIG BANG

"There are a lot of different routes that you and your team can take through the levels," says Long as he waits for a pair of North Korean soldiers to pass his hiding place. "The AI is integral to this setup. It's designed to react to you and your team regardless of where you are on the map. The AIs communicate to each other, call for alarms and reinforcements, see you and hear you. Sometimes they'll fight you, sometimes flank you, other times they might flee and regroup. We want to keep the unpredictability of warfare as authentic as we can."

Lofty promises, but these are sentiments we've heard before. *Far Cry* promised the same thing, as did the likes of *Rainbow Six 3* and *Half-Life 2*. All of these games offered a slight element of unpredictability, yet their enemies' intelligence never quite matched the claims of the developers. As Long gives the order to break cover and attack, we hold our breaths to see what this latest pretender can deliver.

Regional vehicle damage and spreading fire? We like.



Alerted by their comrade's lack of response, three nearby guards rush to check on him, kneeling low to search for a pulse. Big mistake...

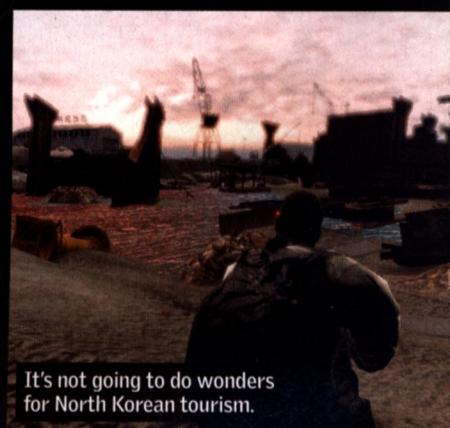
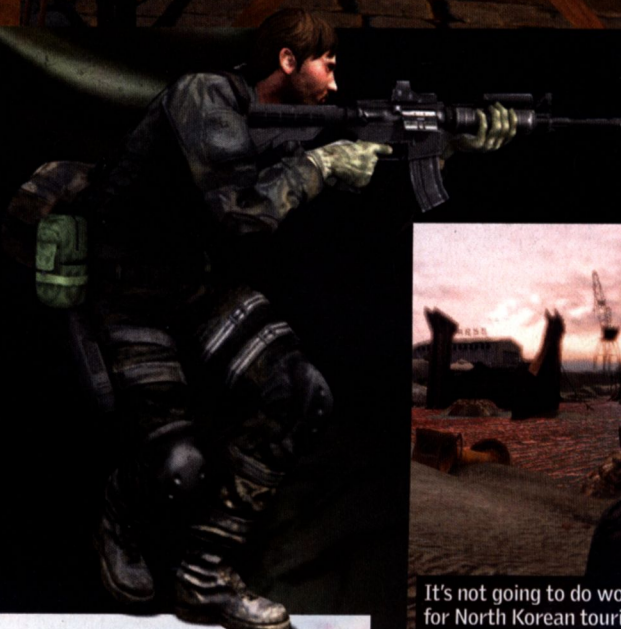


With all eyes on North Korea, the timing of this game seems almost *too* perfect...

Surprisingly, we're not disappointed. As the ship-breaker's yard is engulfed in a hail of lead, Long sends two of his men to flank the enemy soldiers, who instantly seek out cover. Short bursts of gunfire are exchanged, as each side preserves its limited supply of ammo. Enemies duck out from their hiding places, before diving back, but they're soon overpowered with a few well-placed grenades and a cunning flanking manoeuvre that they never see coming.

THE LONGEST JOURNEY

"We're trying to give you a tactical shooter with tons of potential to play the way you want to play and we're going to throw tons of curve-balls at



It's not going to do wonders for North Korean tourism.

Water so real you can taste the industrial pollution.



you along the way," says Long as the end of level cut-scene kicks in. In it, Marcinko and his team are left contemplating their predicament as the sheer extent of their task is revealed – the camera panning for miles over the North Korean countryside, over countless battlefields, all the way to the South Korean border and safety.

With that, Long sits back with a smile, confident that he's proved *Rogue Warrior* really is the game that finds the elusive middle ground between tactics and exciting action. A quick glance at Marcinko reveals a satisfied, approving smile. Praise doesn't come much higher than that. **PCZ**

VEGAS NEEDS A SAVIOUR



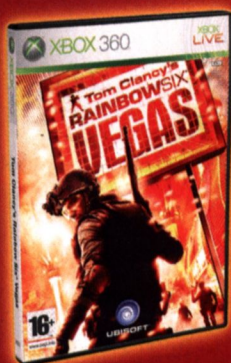
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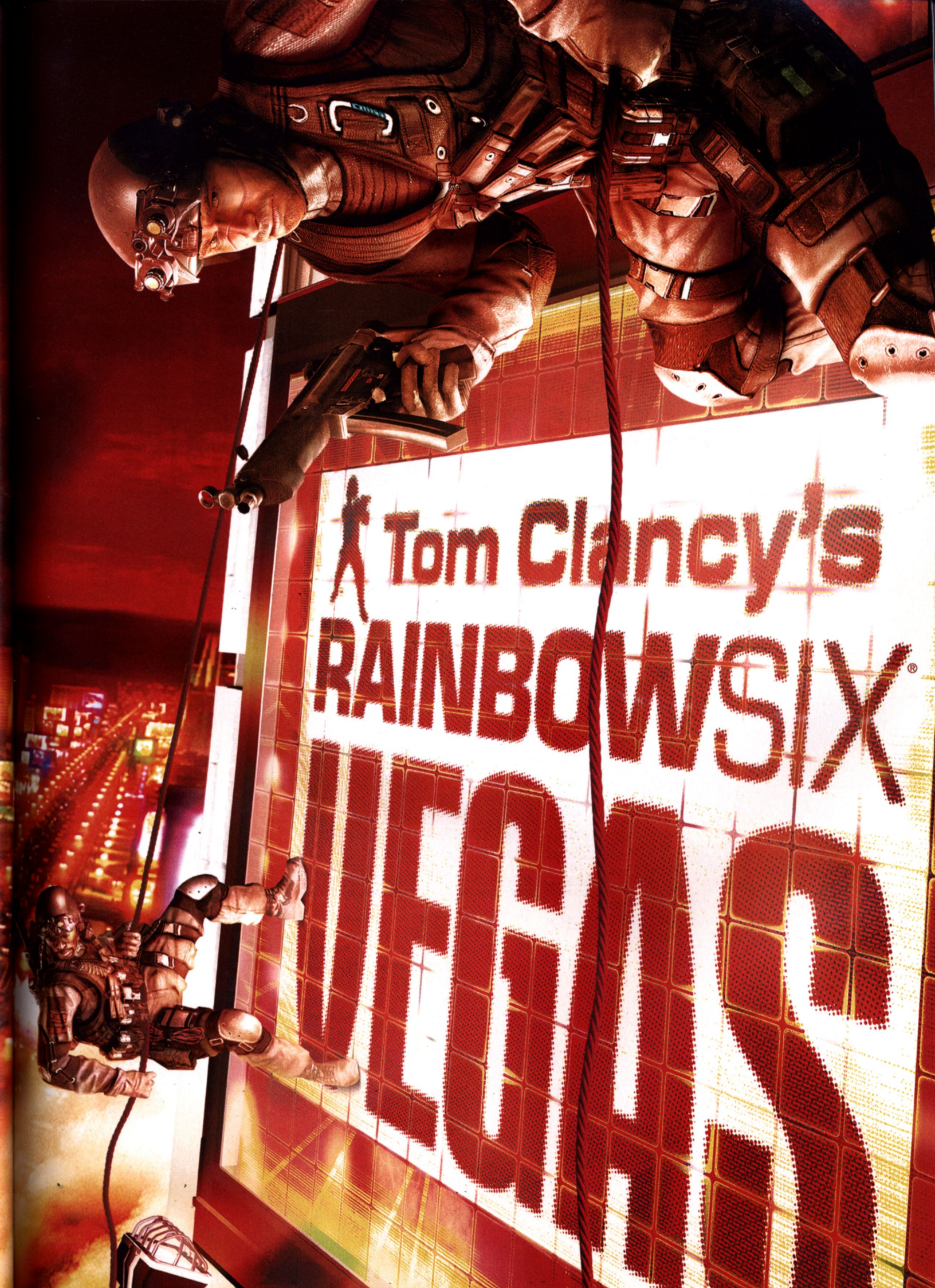
Available from
November 2006



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UBISOFT



Tom Clancy's
RAINBOW SIX

SIEGE

DEEP INSIDE...

WORLD OF WARCRAFT

THE BURNING CRUSADE

DEVELOPER Blizzard PUBLISHER VU Games WEBSITE www.worldofwarcraft.com/burningcrusade

THE DAY HAS COME. The Dark Portal has opened. To celebrate the imminent arrival of *World Of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade* and our entrance into its hallowed realms, team **PC ZONE** has been cavorting through Azeroth and the remains of Draenor. Jon 'Log' Blyth has become a Draenei Mage on the gloomy Azuremyst Isles, while Will Porter has reclaimed his role as a nudie-dancing sexy elf – see below for their (mis)adventures. Meanwhile, Rhianna Pratchett and Ed Zitron have flung themselves into the high-level terror of Outland (see page 50), and Steve Hogarty wasn't allowed to play. He's spent most of his time whinging and watching *South Park*. Either way, we can't think of a time when we've had more fun in the past year. *The Burning Crusade* is nothing short of a triumph, and we're here to show you why...

LOOK WHO'S JUST MOVED IN NEXT DOOR...



Will: "Meet NanaBadMoon, a subtle reference to my former life as a Night Elf (*/spit*) and *EastEnders*. I'm now a sultry Blood Elf, and one of the few survivors of the Undead Scourge's attack on my lands of Quel'Thalas. My capital city has been hewn in two, the Sunwell is bugged and magic is spilling out and corrupting beasties left and right. The only way to reach my Blood Elf pals in Outland is to get slaying – and stealing monster guts..."

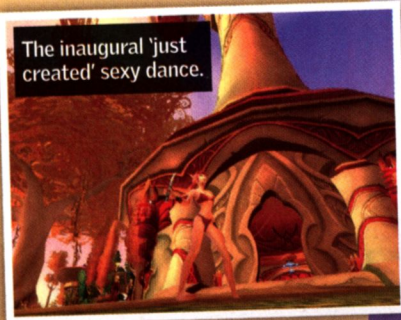


Log: "I've created Mahoney, a Draenei mage. In another universe, he'd be a wise-cracking trainee policeman, but there's not much scope for that in *WOW*, so I'm one of the long-suffering Draenei instead. Barely 25,000 years after being forced out of our ancient homeland of Argus, we've been catapulted out of Draenor, and we've crashed our spaceship into Azeroth because of those meddling Blood Elves. Tch!"

GETTING STARTED

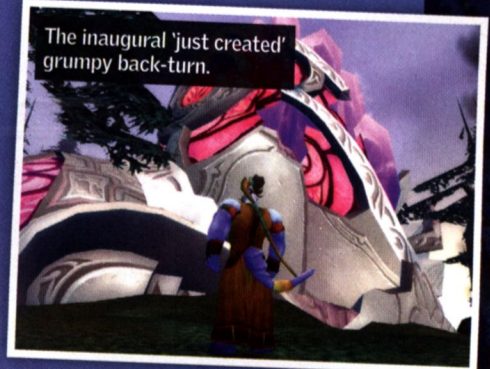
Will: "They may be new races, but the early-level rituals of *The Burning Crusade* certainly don't stray far from the expected template. 'Slay and gather', 'go here, do this' and 'take your clothes off and dance' tasks combine with gentle nudges towards exploration. They are, however, perfectly designed in terms of size, design and scale. Little mana worms make noises like balloons deflating as you spear them, little wooden chaps look a bit worried as you cleave them in two and their upper torso gradually slides to the floor and everything just pulsates with colour. It's all as absorbing as Bounty kitchen roll and twice as magical."

The inaugural 'just created' sexy dance.



Log: "You've just crash-landed into Ammen Vale, and your fellow Draenei are in a mess. The injured are lying all over the place, and it's not just your lot. The radiation from your crash has caused the local flora to go mental, some weird Owlkins (feathered beaky bears) are looking aggressively red, and a massive crystalline shard is prettily steaming up the nearby lake. Your first few missions will be to apologetically mop up the area. Luckily, there's a few Blood Elves to the North, and they're at just the right level for murdering. Sweet."

The inaugural 'just created' grumpy back-turn.



Blood Elves have got them some fancy inns.

MOVING DEEPER

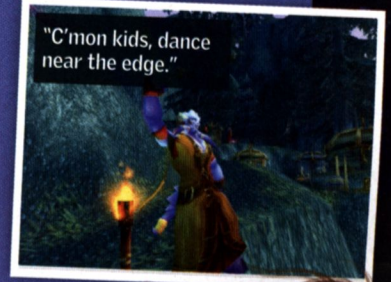


"Next stop is a ruined part of my capital city. Here, the colours become slightly mottled and the cheery *Fantasia*-style sweeping brooms, pet cats and magical book stands disappear for a while. Feral

guardians and The Wretched fill the broken walls; but if there's one key theme with the Blood Elves, it's contrast. Amid the gloom therefore is cheery Falconwing Square, where you encounter your first true Blood Elf inn. It turns out to be more like an exotic brothel than a place of rest, full as it is of velvet cushions and silken hangings. Man, I love being an elf. We're sex on a stick."

"Whereas the Blood Elves enjoy a rich and colourful environment, the Draenei's start in the fairly overcast Azuremyst Isle (off the north-west coast of Kalimdor, geography freaks). It's all greys and blues, streaked with polluted purple ground and eco-unfriendly red mist. As you move further out, it feels like perpetual morning, a misty lilac-tinged environment that you can't describe without sounding like a pretentious prick. It's hardly overwhelming – in fact, you could be forgiven for feeling a shade disappointed. That is, until you get to The Exodar, which is totally gorgeous, innit."

"C'mon kids, dance near the edge."



CRIQUEY! WOULD YOU LOOK AT THAT!

"In *Warcraft III*, the Burning Legion's Undead Scourge essentially burnt a fiery straight line through the entire Blood Elf kingdom, and this Dead Scar remains clearly visible on the landscape of both the pleasant Eversong woods and the more dangerous land to the south. It's best avoided if you're lacking in XP as it's jam-packed with nefariousness – but there's a rotten Dwarven spy and some lying students who need to be turned into warthogs nearby if you're not tough enough. Needless to say, this death-irradiated scar pulls the whole Blood Elf theme of contrasts into even sharper resolution. It runs all the way into Silvermoon City like an evil magical runway strip, bisecting it into the ruined chunk and the more habitable areas. Pretty it ain't, but it gives the Blood Elf zones an ambience like no other."

The Dead Scar: a road to nowhere.

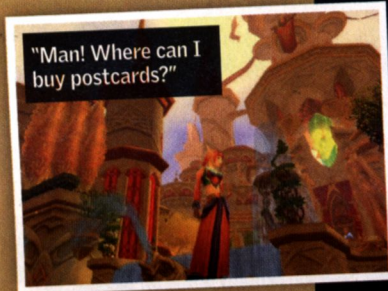


"For a peace-loving race who often slip into hippyish cliché ('Help those weaker than yourself! – it's 'cuddle o'clock!'), the Draenei aren't averse to a touch of unquestioning slaughter. For instance, the Owlkins who've mutated seem to get on quite well with their non-mutated brothers. They live together peacefully – until you pop up like a pure-blooded fascist and kill everything that glows red. To be fair, the unmutated ones don't react that badly to you butchering what were, until very recently, their friends and family. Perhaps they're stupid. I suppose you can't expect too much from the union of an owl and a bear. I wonder which one was the mum and the dad?"

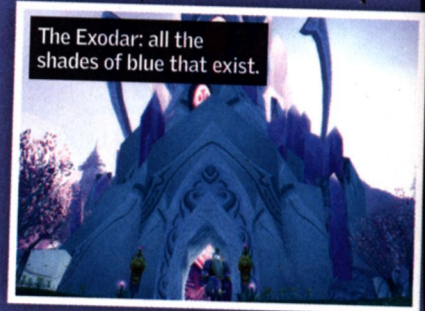


BRIGHT LIGHTS, BIG CITY

Will: "Man, Silvermoon city kicks Darnassus' arse in so many ways I can't even count them. I don't even know why I liked being a Night Elf. Something *The Burning Crusade* has definitely brought is a tremendous sense of vertical scale, with towering minarets, beautiful statues, trickling fountains and a general sense of 'Woo!' There's a touring party of Horde leaders wandering around if you spot them, along with a chap with a portal that links to the UnderCity if you've reached level ten. And get this: two auction houses and two inns! If being evil gets you crazy excess like that, then colour me bad."



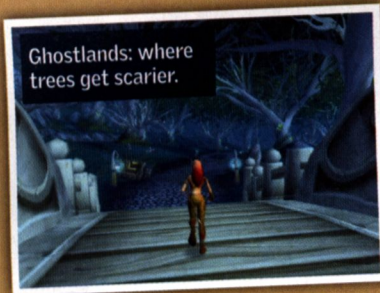
"Man! Where can I buy postcards?"



The Exodar: all the shades of blue that exist.

Log: "The Exodar is the Draenei capital city, constructed from the largest shard of crash-landed spaceship. The impact of the crash drove the fragment underground, so what you see on the surface is just a fraction of the city, and it's a winding trek down to the good stuff. Not only is it visually stunning, there are some sweet touches too. Take the Vault of Lights, where a group of Draenei tourists are shuffling around the holographic museum, looking at members of the Burning Legion (but in translucent pink, so they don't scare people away)."

LEVELS 10-20



Ghostlands: where trees get scarier.

"The starting areas for Blood Elves and Draenei alike cover two map screens – one for levels one through ten and the other for the drive up

to 20. As a Blood Elf up to level ten, you only really seen faint signs of the Undead Scourge that's been snarling up Blood Elf central – but when you get to the Ghostlands, a lack of pulse in your neighbours has become the norm. The Forsaken (the 'good' playable undead who've broken away from their Scourge roots) are also present in NPC form, while some meannies of epic proportions are hanging around under the sullen canopy of the forest. Also present nearby is Zul'Aman – Aztec-themed home to the Forest Trolls and 20-man raid zone, which is perhaps a little hardcore for an adolescent Blood Elf huntress right now. Fit as I am."

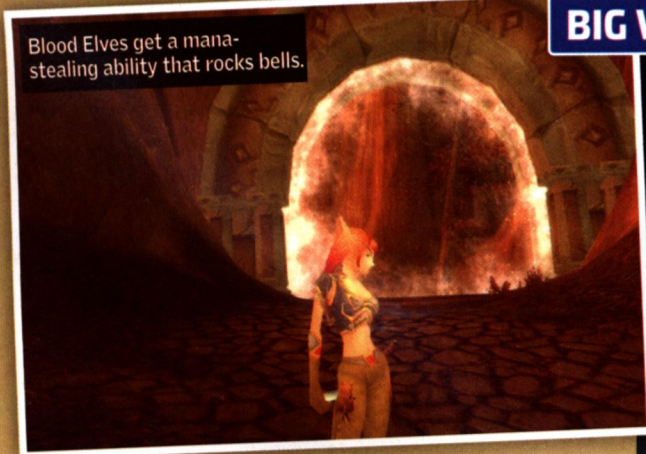
"When mutant begonias and dopey-looking owl-bears no longer provide the thrills you're looking for, head north. Using the 'airy-fairy names must give way to cool, tough names' rule of fantasy progression,



When sky goes red, get axe in head.

Azuremyst is followed by Bloodmyst, and unless you're in your teens you'll be wiped out by a collaboration of grizzly bears and horsewomen. Talking of cool names, there's a Warp Piston, Vector Coil and a Cryo Core up here too: all technological and crystalline structures designed to keep the wonderful fantasy-meets-sci-fi ambience of the Draenei sternly in play."

BIG WIDE WORLD



Blood Elves get a mana-stealing ability that rocks bells.

"So this is it. I'm at the exit to the Eastern Plaguelands, and excitement, adventure and Outland lie beyond. And, of course, a chicken/dragon concoction called a cockatrice to call my own come level 40 (which between me and you looks an awful lot like a *Final Fantasy* chocobo, but never mind). I've seen a lot; I even met an impressively-sized murloc called 'Mmmrrrrggghh', but I've outgrown this place. Maybe tomorrow I'll want to settle down, until tomorrow I'll just keep moving on. /kiss reader."



"You're Betty, you're Susan... Oh right, you can be Keith."

"It's not for everyone, this fighting and becoming a hero. In fact, I reckon society is far too achievement-oriented. What's wrong with the 99% of people who'll never make the headlines (without molesting a dog)? Brimming with happy apathy, I decided to hang around with some elekks. The man wouldn't let me ride one (some nonsense about 'levels' and 'gold'), but I did have fun positioning Mahoney so his nose was near their bums, then making him emote. Who needs missions when you can wave at an elephant's arse?"

OMG! THEY PWNED KENNY!

South Park lovingly mocks Azeroth in *Make Love Not Warcraft*

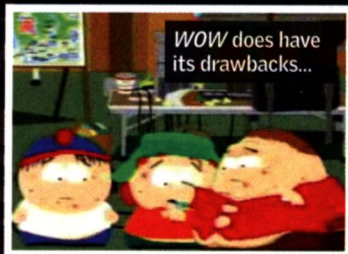
WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

You can rely on *South Park* to tackle the issues of the day: Scientology, 9/11, ginger hair, and now MMORPGs, with their new *World Of Warcraft* machinima episode. The story goes like this. A high-level semi-nude man is killing innocent people in Azeroth – and he's not even asking them for a duel first. He's so powerful that people are getting bored and playing outdoor sports. Blizzard have to stop him. There were rumours of a sword that might be powerful enough, but it was taken out of the game and put on a flash drive. Can they get it to Stan in time?

BEST QUOTES:

A Blizzard board member about the in-game terrorist: "How do you kill that which has no life?"

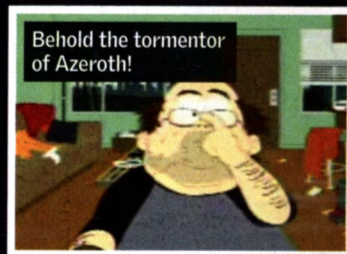
Cartman to the others: "You can just hang outside in the sun tossing a ball around, or you can sit at your computer and do something that matters."



Blizzard to Stan's father: "We can't trust the Sword of A Thousand Truths to a noob!"

FAN REACTION:

South Park's at its best when Tom Cruise is trying to ban it to prove he's straight, but this was done with Blizzard's co-operation, so naturally people are accusing Parker and Stone of going soft, which is only partially fair. The best complaints have been about the appropriateness of the characters' dress to their levels, which only goes to show that some people are utterly immune to satire.



OUR REACTION:

Well, it's certainly not one of Parker and Stone's finest offerings – but there's plenty to keep a *WOW* fan happy here, and it goes beyond Cartman using a term like 'pwned' as he slays the big, fat MMO transgressor. There's his plaintive cry of "I don't wanna go back to the graveyard!" earlier in the episode for example, or the direct nod to the Leeroy video as he solemnly dictates "I WILL use intimidating shout" to his grotesque group of *WOW*-addicted friends. It's all good fun, and it shows a) Blizzard's keen sense of humour, and b) Blizzard's keen sense of good advertising in equal



Scientology, 9/11, ginger hair, and now MMORPGs

measure. Gags like Cartman spraying shit on his mother's face might be getting a bit tired now, but staging a large chunk of an episode in Azeroth machinima-style makes for a lot of fun. You should definitely check it out – it can be found on all the usual suspects online and perhaps on UK TV at some point within the decade.

HOT ELF-ON-ELF ACTION!

Don your +1 kinky boots as *Warcraft* enters a realm of distinct rudeness

Saving Ryan's Privates, *Jurassic Pork* – naughty remakes of big licences are hardly a new thing. But the massive success of *World Of Warcraft* has just spat out the first gaming equivalent (to our knowledge): *Whores Of Warcraft* – better known as *Whorecraft* when the lawyers get twitchy.

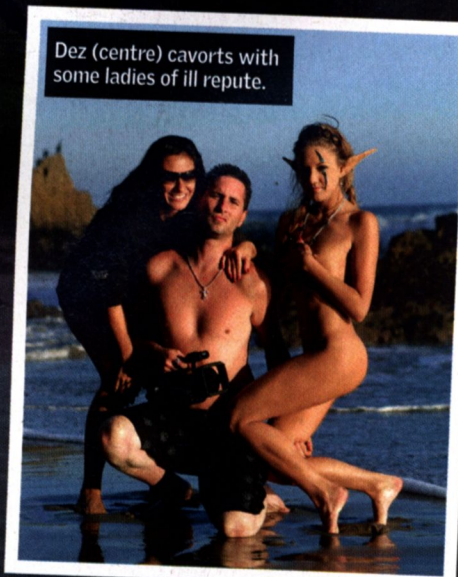
It's the brainchild of a chap called Dez, who seems nice enough even if your mother probably wouldn't approve. "*Whorecraft* is not a parody of *Warcraft*

TM," underlines the star of Hustler DVD series *Dez's Dirty Weekends* as we slowly mouth the words, "Yeah. Jimmy Hill..." "That would limit the influences we have picked up from all over. We'd never want to limit it to one game, games or movies. It's more of a collective of the entire fantasy world." Then, lawyers successfully scared away, we move onto the elves.

"Elves are like flirty pixie teasers," firmly underlines Dez. "I've seen cartoons of elves having sex but I've always dreamed of seeing them in live action and from the response I'm getting from the site, I think others feel the same way." Every person behind *Whorecraft* is a gamer, plus every sexy lady bar one – who apparently makes up for it by looking hot when dressed as a succubus. But with *WOW* serving as 'inspiration', surely there's a few lines to be crossed: undead, gnomes, taurens?

"We'll definitely have undead-type characters, but gnomes can be confused with midgets (not that it's a bad thing but maybe just not our style) – and Taurens cross that bestiality line that we don't want to be associated with. Later on, you

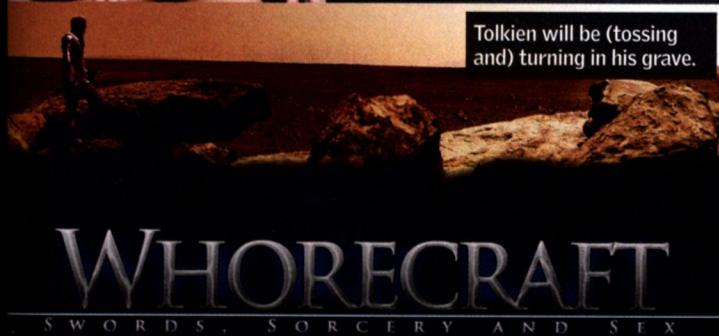
Dez (centre) cavorts with some ladies of ill repute.



might even see us do first-person shooters, animé characters and other stuff. We don't want to limit ourselves." We don't know whether to applaud or cry, but we do agree about the elves.



Tolkien will be (tossing and) turning in his grave.



TOUCHING THE VOID...

Rhianna Pratchett reports back from the frontlines of the war against demonic terror

WHAT DOES ONE pack for travelling through the Dark Portal? My trusty kodo mount? Certainly, because when you're beyond the Dark Portal it's like America – no-one walks when they can ride. Spider sausages in case I feel peckish? Handy, but maybe they have all sorts of weird and wonderful things that I can meet, kill and make into deli snacks. Healing potions up the yin-yang seems a good idea, since this is +55-level territory and it's doubtful that anything is going to be queuing up to make friends.

These and many other questions will enter your mind, as they did mine, when you stand before the giant wobbly green portal that's loomed ominously in the Blasted Lands – unreachable, until now. There are these pushy demonic invaders you see, known as the Burning Legion, and we've beaten them back beyond the portal. Not content with sending them packing, the forces of Azeroth have decided to follow them through the portal and give them a

sound thrashing on their own turf, just so they don't even think of doing it again. Sounds like a daft plan to me. But ours is not to reason why, ours is but to do and die (a lot).

ONE STEP BEYOND

Yes, we're rough, we're tough and we're clearly insane. When you step through the portal and see what's waiting for you on the other side in the new continent of the Outland (which is, basically, one hell of a rumble), you'll certainly agree with the latter. You can see for yourself in the screenshot with the big blue chap on page 52. It's one of those events that you're mesmerised by, while at the same time being a serious contender in the All-Azeroth nonchalantly-walking-away-from-trouble contest.

Once you've bypassed the welcoming committee though, what awaits you is the Hellfire Peninsula – an inhospitable Martian landscape, strewn with battle wreckage and very angry demons.

Above it blazes a rich celestial canvas, guaranteed to make even the biggest and burliest Tauren feel small and insignificant. Assuming you don't stop to murder some of the local fauna, you'll want to head for Honor Hold (if you're Alliance) or Thrallmar (if you're Horde). These little bastions of sanctuary stand either side of the Hellfire Citadel dungeon (see 'Citadel Of Chaos', p52) and are the first ports of call for the questing adventurer.

WAR TORN

You'll be expected to pitch in with the war effort, whether it's doing things like picking up salvage (much more dangerous than it sounds), disrupting communications or just good old-fashioned slaughter. At present, this is where the whole +55 thing starts to





The Dark Portal in all its greenish glory.



Some things don't want to kill you. But they're rare.



This is hard country, and going solo may not be an option.

Even if you're in the high 50s, you'll still find yourself flying by the seat of your pants if you choose to trundle around solo

Sects and the city

Choose your allegiances carefully in the Outland capital of Shattrath



The Naaru: not just pretty and floaty, but shrewd wheeler-dealers too.

The Outland comes with its own shared capital city, Shattrath. This city contains portals to all eight major hubs in Azeroth and is populated by three sects. The Sha'tar are a group of Naaru, sentient alien beings which hail from the Draenei's home world of Argus, who run the city. Alongside them are the Draenei-run Aldor and the Blood Elves' Srycers. These two underdog sects vie constantly for a bigger share of the city pie and favour with their Naaru bosses. Once you get to Shattrath, you'll have to choose whether to ally with the Aldor or Srycers. The Alliance starts out friendly with the Aldor and neutral with the Srycers, while the Horde is friendly with the Srycers and neutral with the Aldor. Both are neutral with the Sha'tar. You'll need to choose your allegiances carefully since you can pick up some great gear depending on who you side with, including some epic rewards for completing the high-level dungeons.



Shattered Hand Grunt

I had a lovely shattered hand grunt last night.



Shiny stuff = exciting.

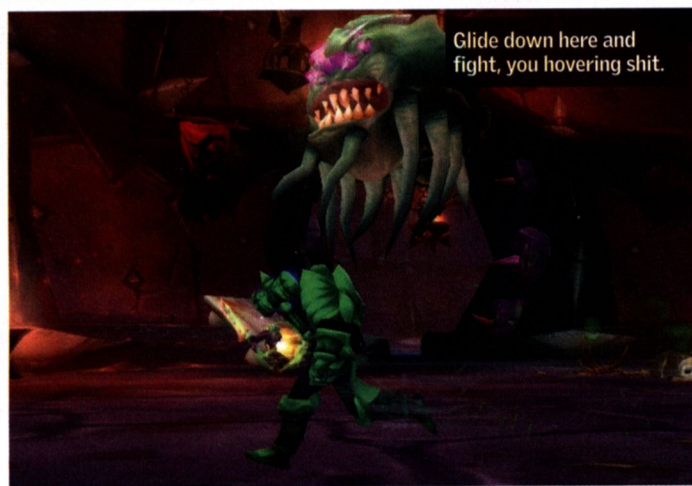
break down a little. Even if you're in the high 50s, you'll still find yourself flying by the seat of your pants if you choose to trundle around solo. Not only are the Burning Legion hard buggers, (and also have a strange creature on their side that sounds a lot like Glen Quagmire from *Family Guy*), but they seem to have an unusually wide aggro area as well, and love nothing better than a pile-up, with you at the bottom.

The Outland welcoming committee.



Citadel of chaos

Ed Zitron scampers gingerly into Hellfire Citadel in pursuit of phat loot



Glide down here and fight, you hovering shit.

After a spell in Outland, a do-gooding Alliance hero like myself will be led to the bastion of truth, goodness and fine wines that is Honor Hold. Now, surrounding the Hold is the Hellfire Peninsula, and slap-bang in the middle of that is the Hellfire Citadel, where Pit Lord Magtheridon's blood is being used as magical death-Ribena by the Illidan's Fel Orcs. And so, for the average level-60 player, the first ports of call are its Ramparts or its Blood Furnace.

These offer an explosive start to the expansion's instance maps, with the Ramparts continuing the epic nature of *The Burning Crusade* by chucking dragons, demons and Fel Orcs aplenty at you in a short space of time. The Furnace is the twisted sister of Gnomeregan, where weird mutants, angry technicians and proximity bombs await you, along with some well-conceived endurance events. In both cases, the bosses are varied and a lot of fun to fight. They have a few nasty surprises up their sleeves too, from a sudden dragon onslaught to a move that flings you in the air like a frisbee; but there's some great loot to make up for it. They're a laugh, not unbeatable and a clear sign of the goodness yet to come on the long march to level 70.

It's nice to be able to wander by a PvP game, stop and observe for a while without worrying that some bastard rogue is going to stab you in the back



The bother is worth it though, because you can get some seriously nice goodies through questing, as well as a nice fistful of cash. Drops are thrilling again, and you can pick up new and mysterious loot like Nethercloth and Felweed. Master craftsmen in Honor Hold and Thrallmar will also teach you what to do with them and allow you to expand your professions, as well and create all sorts of exciting oddments to take back to Azeroth.

BREAKING OUT

As opening areas go, Hellfire Peninsula is aptly depicted as a giant battlefield, but it's not overly easy on the eye. Venture further into this arrow-shaped continent, however, and you'll find that the 'ooohs' and 'ahhhhs' start mounting. Beyond Hellfire is Zangarmarsh, a kind of alien, Lewis Carroll-esque area full of giant glowing mushrooms and oversized insects. This is also a nice area for hunters to pick up new pets. The sporebat in particular – a delicate ray-



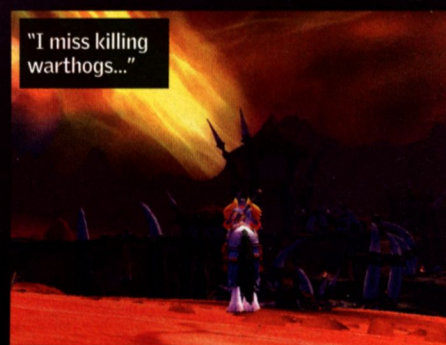
The Burning Legion are big on horns, wings and demon-y garb.



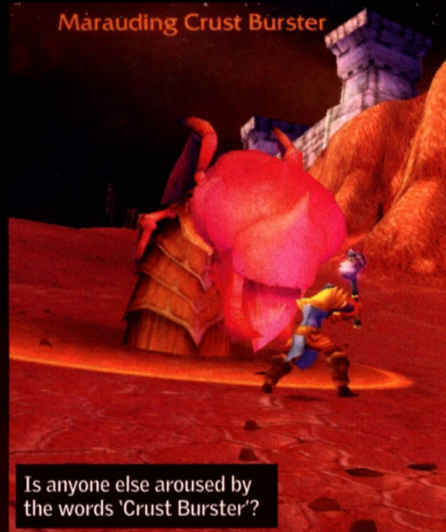
The clearly drug-inspired Zangarmarsh.



"I miss killing warthogs..."



Marauding Crust Burster



like floating creature that looks like something straight out of *The Abyss* – is likely to be a popular choice.

To the north of Zangarmarsh are the Blade's Edge Mountains, and beyond that Netherstorm, the area only accessible via the new flying mounts. Sadly, I haven't yet spotted one, let alone bought one. But then druids do get flight form at level 70, which is possibly even more exciting than the prospect of a flying mount (druids FTW, etc).

Blizzard have been fairly reserved when it comes to giving details on flying mounts, save for the fact that the Horde and Alliance will get their own individual ones, and there will be rare flying mounts. Just to give the high levels more of a reason to sacrifice their lives to the great god *WOW*. Making up the rest of the Outland continent are the Southern areas of Nagrand, Terrokar Forest, home to the city of Shattrath (see 'Sects And The City', p51) and Shadowmoon Valley, which is the old Skeletal Coast.


LIVING THE HIGH LIFE

There's no doubting that a hell of a lot of work has gone into the high-level portion of the expansion. The Outland area adds a great deal to the game and is bigger and more comprehensive than

the most ardent *WOW* fan could have hoped. As well as discovering the wonders of the areas themselves, there's also the integral PvP element to lure you in, should you be that way inclined. Several of the areas, including Hellfire and Zangarmarsh have their own PvP games built into the area.

Unlike the world PvP element in Silithius, these PvP elements are much more like the traditional Warsong Gulch, Alterac Valley games, only much more integrated into the areas themselves. In Hellfire Peninsula, it's a case of capturing and holding three different areas in the centre of the map. In Zangarmarsh the desirable hold areas are more spread out and also contain hotspots such as graveyards.

It's nice to be able to wander by a PvP game, stop and observe for a while without worrying that some bastard rogue is going to stab you in the back.

Starting alt-characters never has that same sense of thrill as 'the first time.' But the new Outland areas are a way to relive that same feeling without having the embarrassment of being killed by a wheezing, arthritic wolf. Balancing still seems to be a bit of an issue, but to say there's something for everyone here is an understatement. Grinding has always been a somewhat unfortunate feature of *WOW*. But at least now there's something that makes it worthwhile. I've seen life beyond the Dark Portal, and it is good! 

All New Content for Oblivion™

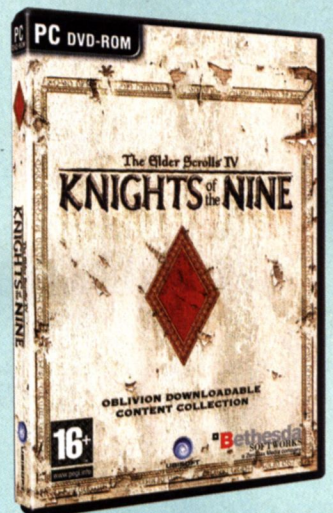
Winner, Best RPG of E3 2005

Game Critics Award, GameSpot, IGN, GameSpy,
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"#1 Game of All Time" - PC Gamer

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The Elder Scrolls IV

KNIGHTS of the NINE™

THE GODS HAVE FORSAKEN TAMRIEL.

A fallen King has been unchained from the darkness of Oblivion to seek vengeance upon the Gods who banished him. Only a champion pure of heart can vanquish the evil that has been released upon the land. You must heed the call, reclaim the lost relics of the Divine Crusader, and return the Nine to glory. New dungeons, characters, quests, and mysteries await.

- **Begin a new faction**

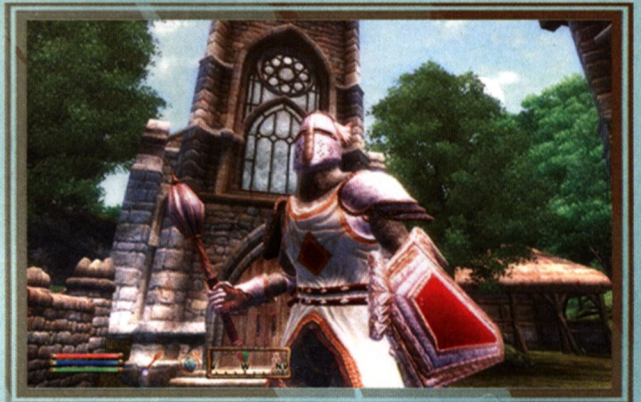
The Knights of the Nine have long been disbanded. Reclaim their former glory as you traverse the far reaches of Cyrodiil across an epic quest line.

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Encounter Umaril, the ancient Ayleid Sorcerer-King, and his minions, the fearsome Aurorans.

- **Discover unique items**

An entirely new armour set and weapons, each with unique powers, are within your grasp... if you are worthy.



Downloadable Content Collection for Oblivion



gr.

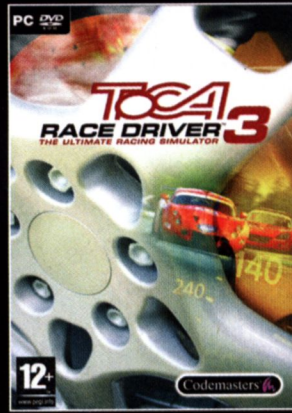
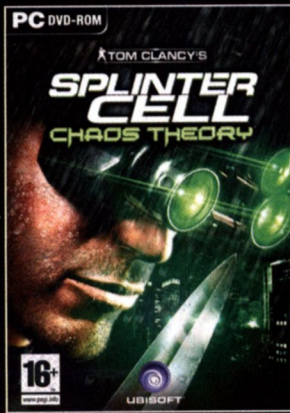
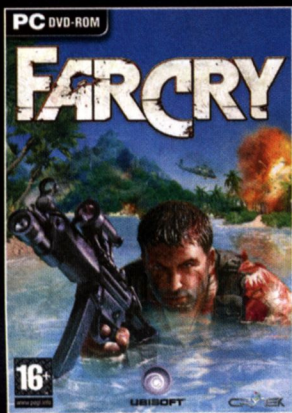
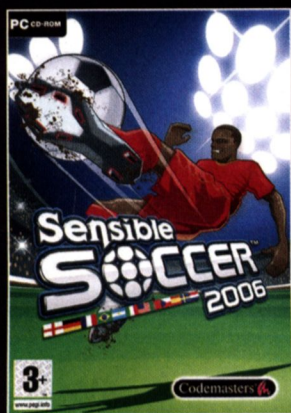
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PCZONE REVIEWS

Our verdict on the latest PC games

You name it

I'VE NOTICED A growing trend recently. A bit like celebs showing their love for their offspring by giving them names that will torment them for the rest of their lives, the done thing in gaming at the moment seems to be giving your game a ridiculously long title...

Warhammer 40,000: Dawn Of War - Dark Crusade. The Lord Of The Rings: Battle For Middle-Earth II - The Rise Of The Witch-King. Star Wars: Empire At War - Forces Of Corruption. Are simple names like *Pong* just not good enough for us these days? Will they just keep increasing until a half-page review consists of *just* the title of the game? Do publishers have any idea how stupid it feels to walk into a games shop and spend 30 whole seconds in front of the till while you stumble over the convoluted title of the game you're after?

Anyway, not wanting to be the one to buck a trend, I'm going to head off to the Deed Poll office. From now on, you can refer to me as *PC ZONE: Suzy 'Uzibat' Wallace III - Driver Of Fast Cars & Common Abuser Of Swear Words.*

Suzy Wallace

Suzy Wallace, reviews editor

Must Buys!

PC ZONE Classics are our highest award, with only the best games deemed worthy of the honour. These are our personal top tips for sheer gaming excellence...



HL2: Ep One Company Of Heroes Oblivion



GAME OF THE MONTH

58

MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR

Can The Creative Assembly prove themselves to be our 10,000 knights in shining armour?

The PC ZONE Awards



CLASSIC (90%+)

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



RECOMMENDED (75-89%)

Pretty, pretty, pretty. Any game that turns ZONE's head is worthy of your love.



DUMP (0-19%)

Don't shirk your duty - it's the only responsible thing to do to a game like this.

AND THE REST



ONLINE ONLY

Don't have an Internet connection? Then you're wasting your time. Move along please.



EXPANSION PACK

See this and you're going to have to own the original to play the expansion. We know - life's not fair.



ON THE DVD

Good news! Check out the cover DVD for a playable demo or movie.

The PC Class System

Not all games are created equal, so how do you know if your PC's up to the job? Using real science, we've graded your system from 1-5. Match it with the icon on each review to see if your PC will play the game. We review all games on a variety of systems, including our top-spec, very desirable Xworks X6a-64.

	1	2	3	4	5
CPU	1.2GHz	1.8GHz	2.4GHz	3.0GHz	3.8GHz
RAM	64MB	256MB	512MB	1GB	2GB
Video	32MB	64MB	128MB	256MB	512MB

ALSO REVIEWED

- 64 SPLINTER CELL: DOUBLE AGENT
- 68 FOOTBALL MANAGER 2007
- 72 CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2007
- 73 FLIGHT SIMULATOR X
- 74 PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 6
- 76 F.E.A.R.: EXTRACTION POINT
- 77 AGE OF EMPIRES III: WARCHIEFS
- 78 STRONGHOLD LEGENDS
- 80 WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR - DARK CRUSADE
- 81 MADE MAN
- 84 ARCHLORD
- 85 SID MEIER'S RAILROADS!
- 86 SAM & MAX: EPISODE ONE - CULTURE SHOCK
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- Buy this little lot

PCZONE SWEARS...

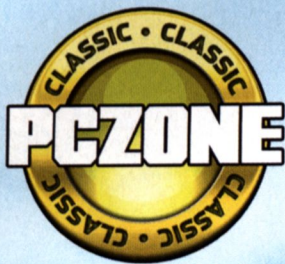
- To only review code signed off by the publishers AND the developers
- To give you our honest opinion. We're gamers. We love games. And we hate bad ones. Just like you
- To tell you if a company refuses to send a game to us before it's on sale. There's always a reason
- To hang up on companies who say that 79% isn't a good score. What do they know?
- To listen to you if you think we've got something wrong. Email us at yourshout@pczone.co.uk

MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR

It's finally here, but will the latest instalment of the all-conquering RTS series rule supreme? *Martin Korda* takes to the battlefield to find out...



DEVELOPER The Creative Assembly
PUBLISHER Sega
WEBSITE www.totalwar.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99



REVOLUTION, EVOLUTION, REVOLUTION, evolution. That's the development cycle by which the *Total War* series has single-handedly redefined the RTS genre over the past six years. And now, two years after *Rome* rode into town like a triumphant king to batter its competitors into a powdery submissive pulp with its ground-breaking blend of strategic depth and visceral, awe-inspiring real-time action, we arrive at an evolutionary junction for the franchise.

As with the last time the *Total War* series swapped renovation for decoration (with *Medieval: Total War*), we once again find ourselves revisiting the religiously fanatical era where superpowers from Europe, North Africa

and Asia Minor carved each other up in the name of religion in order to extend their holdings and rake in as much cash as their coffers could hold.

GET ON YOUR HORSE

Before your rampage of conquest begins, you must pick an empire from a choice of England, France, Spain, Venice, Denmark and The Holy Roman Empire. Aficionados of the series needn't worry though, as a multitude of other factions become unlocked once you've completed the 40-60-hour campaign.

Each nation proves suitably distinctive and provides a unique challenge, both in terms of unit selection and starting position. England's island-bound holdings prove a mixed blessing with only the

rampant Scottish hordes to contend with, though across the channel, the single English foothold in Europe needs to be quickly expanded upon and protected from the marauding French.

If you decide to play as the French, you'll find yourself equipped with the best cavalry in the West, though it's not till later in the campaign that the country we commonly associate with affordable booze, snails and mass-rioting really comes into its own, when it starts spewing out professional armies that don't just stand around grunting with dissatisfaction before trying to sleep with the wives of their fellow comrades.

At first glance, The Holy Roman Empire is the most tempting nation to start your *Medieval II* experience with, due to its



AT A GLANCE...

Reprising the medieval theme of *Rome*'s predecessor and packed with a myriad of new features, it's the most detailed *Total War* game to date, though it does possess its fair share of niggles, too.

System requirements 3

HOW IT STACKS	
ROME: TOTAL WAR	93%
MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR	91%
RISE OF NATIONS RISE OF LEGENDS	91%

generous land holdings – but as you'll soon realise, its realms are beset on all sides by enemies eager to take a bite out of any unprotected provinces.

Venice finds itself in a similar situation, though its meagre collection of starting states means it's perhaps the most challenging of the six, while the axe-wielding Danes make for a perfect introduction if you're a *Total War* virgin.

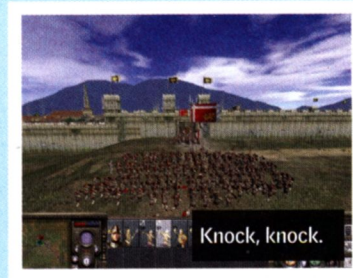
TO WAR!

So you've chosen your faction, disconnected your phone, stocked up on cheese puffs and you're ready to go.

So what's new? Well, where do I begin? How about the revamped engine, which takes the graphical splendour of *Rome* and remodels its already ample assets with a plastic surgery-style makeover? Yup, that sounds like a pretty good place to start. So let's get started...

Without doubt, *Medieval II* is a visual feast, one that'll milk your 3D card to within an inch of its life and fill your monitor with battlegrounds so detailed, you'll be reaching for a towel to wipe your enemy's blood from your forehead.

Proving far more power-hungry than its predecessor (if you want to really get

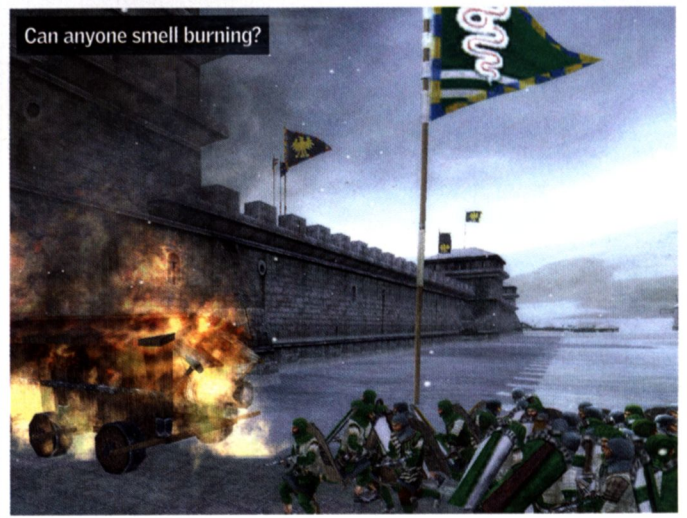
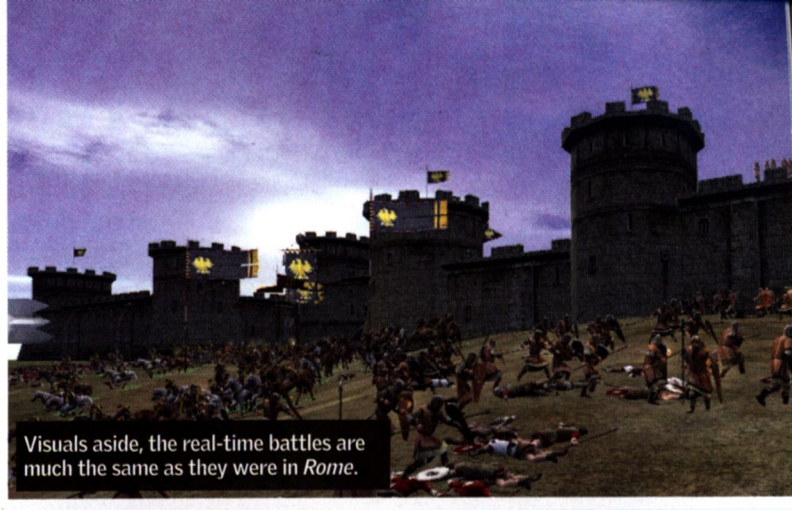


the most out of it that is), your medieval troops radiate the kind of detail that *Rome* could only dream about after a hard night's orgy.

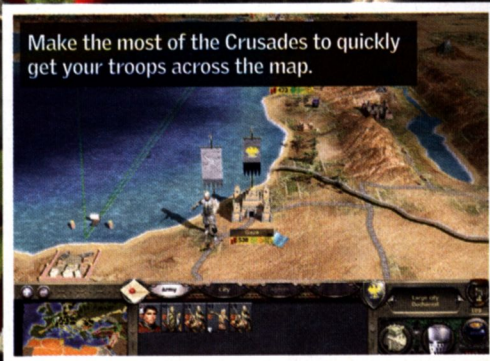
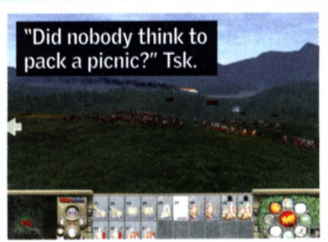
Gothic Knights rumble across grassy plains, kicking up plumes of dust as they march, their hooves pounding thunderously against the turf and their polished plate-armour suits glinting majestically as they catch the rays of the sun.

Cities steam with smoke that spews from the chimneys of each stunningly detailed building and billow smoke as enemy catapults and roaring cannons hurl balls of flame over their towering stone walls and set them ablaze.

But that's just the edge of the glacier my-friends, as *Rome's* clone armies have been replaced by



The graphical splendour of *Rome* has been remodelled with a plastic surgery-style makeover





Yellow was clearly in vogue in 1142.



Siege battles still degenerate into bottlenecked slugfests.



If you wanted the city that badly, you only had to ask.

squads of fairly unique soldiers, while battlegrounds now possess far greater geographical diversity than ever before.

ROLLING HILLS

Terrain undulates, creating makeshift vantage points on which to plant your archers and artillery, while jagged, impassable mountains block your escape routes and make you think in new strategic dimensions. What's more, you can now line towering rock faces with missile troops who can send deadly volleys down the mountainside at their foes.

Fog, rain and snow restrict your view like never before, forcing you to squint into the gloom for the slightest hint of enemy movement, while your pulse beats in your brain like an overheating jackhammer. In the presentation stakes, *Medieval II's* real-time battles are almost beyond reproach.

Now you may not have seen this coming – I know I didn't – but despite their undoubted qualities, these real-time battles aren't quite the leap forward for the series that perhaps they could and should have been. While having unique-looking troops using melee combinations rather than clone armies that simply hack at each other is an RTS wet dream, the level of differentiation isn't always all that easy to distinguish in the midst of the game's titanic blood-baths. As a result, these skirmishes often don't look and feel all that different to *Rome's* unless viewed from extremely close range.

What's more, the bone-crushing army impacts captured so perfectly in *Rome* – particularly the cavalry charges – seem to lack a certain amount of weight and brutality here, with units often pulling up at the crucial moment of impact.

Finally, the control issues that haunted *Rome: Total War – Alexander* once again

Agent provocateur

Proving that smashing people's skulls isn't the only way to win a war

The role played by non-military units has been hugely expanded since *Rome*. Here are just a few examples of what we're gabbering on about...



PRINCESS

These fair maidens can be sent out as emissaries to strike deals with rival factions. Either that or they can be married off to some buck-toothed enemy inbred in order to forge an alliance.



PRIEST

Priests don't just keep the Pope happy, they also weed out witches and heretics by wrapping innocents in polystyrene, throwing them into lakes and seeing if they float. How quaint.



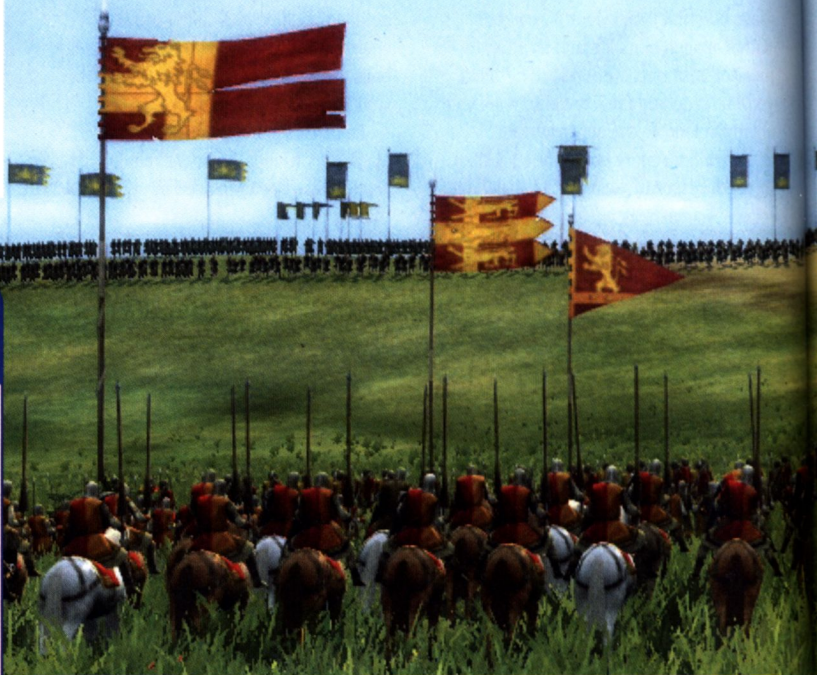
MERCHANT

These walking marketplaces help generate extra income for your empire by travelling the lands, setting up monopolies and ruining other merchants' businesses through hostile takeovers.



INQUISITOR

While these characters aren't under your control, you should keep a close eye on them, as they're notorious for bumping off your family members at the merest hint of heresy – or if they've simply nothing better to do.



rear their ugly heads here. Cavalry is a particular culprit here, sometimes doing the exact opposite of what you tell them to and generally galloping their way into situations that threaten the very outcome of your carefully laid battle plans while you scream at your monitor and your neighbours call the police.

BUGGING ME

Don't get me wrong, *Medieval II*'s battles are superb, visceral, brutal and so thrilling your heart will fracture your ribcage. They're also further embellished by the return of hostage-taking and the reprisal of *Barbarian Invasion*'s visually spectacular night-time encounters. However, they never really feel all that different to *Rome*'s conflicts and fail to quite live up to expectations due to an assortment of niggles that chip away at you like a

woodpecker that's been surgically implanted into your skull.

Why, for example, can you no longer place your formations anywhere within a city or castle when defending it? Why do siege battles, despite their pyrotechnic splendour, still often boil down to just knocking a hole in a wall and charging through it? These problems are by no means terminal and in no way prevent *Medieval II* from being a sublime piece of programming, but they're enough to irk you and make you realise that in terms of the real-time battles, perhaps *Medieval II* isn't the hugely impressive leap forward from *Rome* that we were all hoping for.

RETURN OF THE MAP

Thankfully, the same can't be said for the turn-based strategic map, which trounces

all of its predecessors with its sheer level of detail and breathtaking array of options, despite the odd balancing issue. Coupled with innumerable tweaks and improvements, it's this part of the game that makes *Medieval II* stand apart from its predecessors like a giant at an under-tens' basketball club.



Conquering the Americas

Just when you thought it was all over...



About three-quarters of the way through the game, you're in for a treat as an all-new *Total War* feature makes its debut and turns the entire campaign on its head. Suddenly, the Americas are discovered and a massive rush ensues as you and your rivals conduct a mad genocidal assault on the unsuspecting and incredibly rich Aztec tribes. The nation that proves most successful in this conquest suddenly finds itself in a very advantageous financial position and the wealth to be gained can turn even the most redundant enemy into a superpower.

However, standing between you and bags of gold are tens of thousands of fanatical Aztec warriors, who make up for their lack of armour and technology with sheer numbers. The first time you saunter up to an Aztec army, you'll be struck by the sheer magnitude of your task. And with your armies being stretched back home due to the numbers you need to send to defeat these tribesmen, your dreams of conquering the natives could turn your European/Asian campaign into a nightmare.

Hope the troops packed their thermal pants.



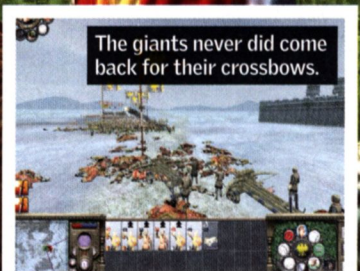
Shorts? In winter? What were you thinking?



Elephants with cannons? Brilliant!



The giants never did come back for their crossbows.



Return of the cinematic

Proving that absence really does make the heart grow fonder



Cut-scene cinematics are back after a six-year absence.

Having been AWOL since *Shogun*, we've been crying out for the return of the cut-scenes that added so much character to the series. Now, back by popular demand, the cinematics have returned – bigger and better than ever.

Charting everything from a royal marriage to the humorous attempts of your spies to infiltrate cities, these cut-scenes add to the atmosphere of the game and provide a colourful respite from the rigours of war. And with several having numerous outcomes, they add yet another layer of tension to an already right-rollicking *Total War* experience.

Regions burst at the borders with geographical features, while armies, agents, merchants, priests and princesses meander between settlements on a variety of diplomatic, military and clandestine missions. The sheer magnitude of options available to you between each titanic real-time encounter is stupefying, urging you to tinker with every facet of your empire from population control to your relationship with the Pope.

Reality quickly melts away as you navigate the map, tending to the minutiae of your rule with the superbly streamlined and intuitive interface, and guided by the excellent advisors which prevent you from ever having to trawl through the hefty manual to learn how a certain game mechanic works. You'll spend hours agonising over how to best balance your economic and military budgets, while brokering deals with rival factions and forging alliances that'll best serve your nation's interests.

MONEY OR MIGHT?

Perhaps the strategic map's biggest overhaul is the way that settlements work. No longer is every region ruled from a city/fortress hybrid that's as economically adept

as it is militarily. Oh no my compadres, those days are gone. You now have the option of constructing either castles or cities, both of which carry their own unique set of advantages and disadvantages.

Cities are the economic and cultural centres of your empire, allowing you to build roads and markets, and tax your populace as you see fit. However, despite being encircled by stout walls, their defensive capabilities are limited, a problem that's compounded by the meagre selection of units that you can train within their walls.

Castles are, as you'd expect, the exact opposite. While these fortresses may be militarily mighty and provide a cornucopia of options when it comes to constructing armies and defensive structures (including multiple layers of defence later on in the game), they're about as economically viable as a pissed-up tramp asking for a loan while knocking back his fourteenth can of Special Brew of the morning.

Another new feature is the emergence of guilds. Every so often, one of these guilds will want to set up shop within your city walls and for a small price, you can reap the benefits that they bring to your

provinces. Merchant guilds, for example, help cities to prosper economically, while Thieves guilds will bolster your nation's subterfuge abilities and cause the sudden mysterious disappearances of thousands of hub-cabs.

This subtle shift in settlement emphasis forces you to think about your every move even more strategically than ever before, ramping up the realism level and utterly immersing you in a *Medieval* world, where only the most ruthless and two-faced prosper.

THE POPE AND I

The Pope also plays a prominent role in deciding your nation's prosperity. Having made a cameo-like appearance in the original *Medieval*, the Pope's role has been significantly bolstered this time around and now reflects his true influence throughout the medieval period.

Making sure you keep His Holiness on side isn't just a necessity, but a serious challenge. Constructing churches and spreading the good news will help keep him on side, but making sure you don't attack too many Catholic factions is also paramount if you're to avoid being excommunicated.

Cities possess a stunning level of detail.



"Quick everyone, to the car park!"



They're either very ugly or very safety conscious.



This is no time for gardening.



The Holy Roman Empire is surrounded by enemies.



Medieval 2's strategic map is a hulking world of murder, intrigue and goodness, with no major historical event ignored

Get on his good side, and he'll show you favour. Displease him and he'll order you to stop attacking your fellow Christians. This latter scenario also works as a subtle way of balancing the campaign, as it prevents you from becoming too powerful too quickly, and means you actually take the time to slow down your conquering exploits and enjoy the multitude of social and political options on the medieval menu.

KEEP HIM SWEET

Of course, the best way of keeping the Pope onside is by getting one of your own (or an ally's) cardinals elected. Once he departs from this medieval world and meets his maker, elections are held to find a new resident for the Vatican, and if your man amasses enough votes, then you'll be in for an easy ride for the next 20 turns or so.

The Pope can also call Crusades, ordering you and your Catholic brethren to muster armies and march to the Middle East in order to 'reclaim' the Holy Land. Should you decide to jump onto the Crusading bandwagon, your men will be sped along by religious fervour, allowing them to cover ground quicker than normal.

Staying clear of the Pope's legion of roaming inquisitors is also highly prudent, as they're more than happy to unceremoniously burn any of your family members or generals who whiff even



slightly of heresy. Of course, there's always the option of simply attacking the Vatican, but with the risk of incurring the wrath of every Catholic faction on the map, it's a hugely risky strategy.

Medieval II's strategic map is a hulking world of murder, intrigue and goodness. No major historical event is ignored, be it the first sightings of the Mongol hordes approaching Europe or the discovery of windmills. And with the map expanding to even more impressive dimensions when the Americas are discovered (see 'Conquering The Americas', page 61), this is unarguably the most enthralling *Total War* turn-based experience yet.

CONCLUDING AN ERA

As evolutions go, *Medieval II* has certainly delivered, upping the stakes both visually and in terms of gameplay. While the slightly glitched real-time battles may not be all that much different from *Rome's*, and naval battles and new multiplayer options are still conspicuous by their absence,

there's simply no way that any self-respecting strategy fan can spend this Christmas doing anything other than rampaging across the world on a whirlwind of medieval conquest.

This latest evolutionary step for the franchise feels like the final piece of the jigsaw for the series in its current guise, filling in the omissions of the previous games with aplomb, while bolstering the strategic map to even greater heights.

However, it's starting to feel as though the franchise now needs to take that next major step – be it naval battles or more detailed siege warfare (or preferably both) – in order to maintain the superiority that it's enjoyed over its competitors for so many years.

For the time being though, sit back and enjoy the evolution and all of the delightful tweaks and innovations it brings to this majestic series – because if The Creative Assembly sticks to its strategic template, then another *Total War* revolution could be just around the corner. **PCZ**

Naval battles would have been nice too.



PCZONE

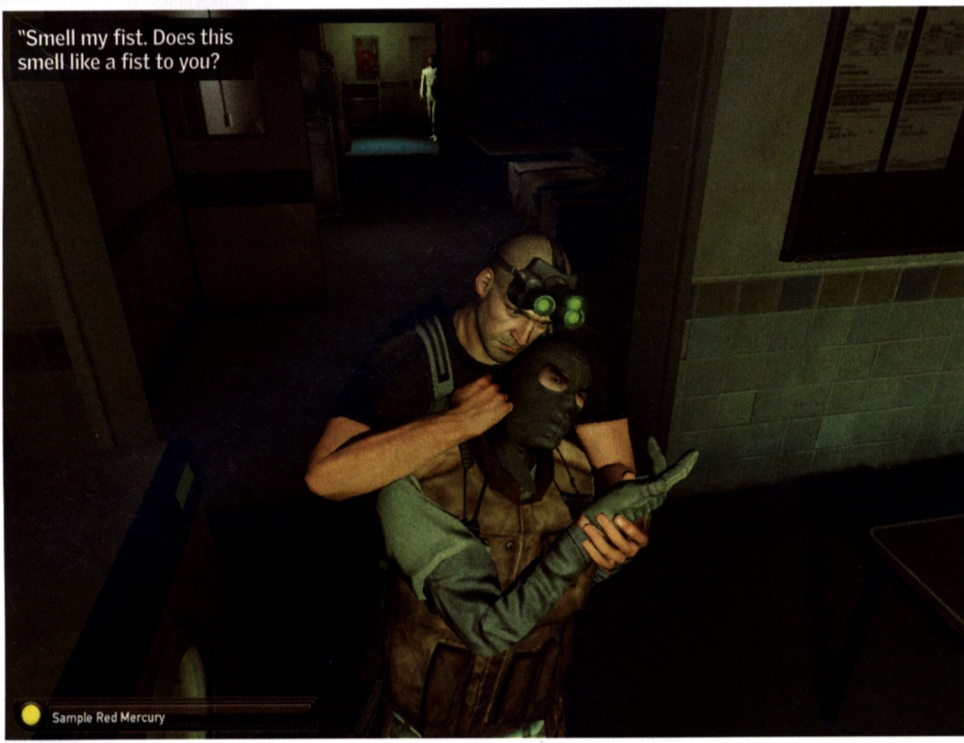
Graphics Stunning
Sound Rousing soundtrack, weaker sound effects
Multiplayer Titanic online battles

- ✓ Most detailed and immersive campaign map ever
- ✓ Cracking RTS visuals
- ✓ Massively strategic yet incredibly accessible
- ✓ You can conquer the Americas
- ✗ Some niggling glitches
- ✗ Siege battles still a little hollow

91

Detailed, if occasionally cracked, masterpiece





SPLINTER CELL: DOUBLE AGENT



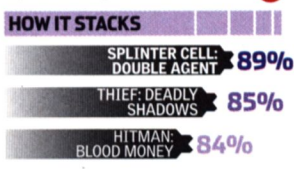
Steve Hogarty renews his vendetta against all sources of light

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

AT A GLANCE...

The fourth *Splinter Cell* casts Sam Fisher in a new light in an attempt to dispel the cobwebs the series was beginning to attract. And it works!

System requirements 4



AND SO FLOWED forth the Ubisoft press releases. Sam Fisher's gone bad! He's killed all the younglings! He's wearing a top hat and a cape and twirling his moustache! He's tying a young girl to a railway track, accompanied by the ragtime rhythms of a honky-tonk piano! In the run-up to the release of *Double Agent*, the PR hounds stopped just short of posting out A4 renders of Sam Fisher snapping the necks of puppies in their mission to make him seem a bit risqué.

Of course, they were trying to get the message across that the fourth *Splinter Cell* game wouldn't simply be another collection of exotic locations in which to shoot out lightbulbs and stalk terrorists in an acrobatic and vaguely homoerotic way. Oh no – this time Sam Fisher's received that alluring Jack Bauer-style air of moral ambiguity everybody seems to be craving lately.

His new outlook on life is born at the end of the game's astoundingly good prologue mission in Iceland (spoiler warning!), where Fisher loses his rookie spy-in-training partner, only to be told that his daughter has been killed in a hit-and-run accident.

It's at this point that Sam chucks his trinooculars into the ocean and weeps with despair and deep moral ambiguity. Ubisoft actually tried to license Johnny Cash's excellent cover of *Hurt* to play through this rousing introduction, before deciding it would cost too much. It probably would've been over-egging the depressing pudding a bit, but its near inclusion highlights the sombre direction the series has taken.

RAINY FACE

Inspired by these horrible events, Sam forgets to shave and robs a bank, landing himself behind bars complete with an edgy, stubbled makeover. But not really, as it's all an NSA plot to have Sam infiltrate the ranks of a terrorist organisation. What's more, this is all explained in a 20-second FMV montage. How's that for adding depth and colour to a previously bland character? Good job, Ubisoft.

Sam Fisher's fresh perspective leaves us with a new addition to the *Splinter Cell* mantra – the much talked-about trust system. It's a brilliant premise, something that's been done so many times on the big

screen, but never truly investigated in games. The terrorists you're working for have plans to start exploding cities, and if you want to overthrow their little plot you're going to have to nod and smile and play along for the time being. Like waiting for everybody to put down their hotels first before flipping the Monopoly board over and kicking your opponents in the face.

TRUST ISSUES

Fortunately, this doesn't just mean a linear set of objectives with some text on the loading screen to further the story of subterfuge. That would be far too easy, and not very interesting. Instead, each mission throws several objectives at you, some from the JBA (misguided bad guys), and some from the NSA (overbearing good guys).

Failing these objectives results in a loss of trust in one or both of these camps, meaning that over the course of the game you find yourself straining to complete nefarious deeds to remain undercover, while adhering to the NSA's objectives, which range from simply not killing anyone to specific instructions to plant bugs or listen in on



Even tough guys like fireworks.



"Argh! Confetti! One of my many weaknesses!"

secret terrorist meetings the JBA has employed you to guard.

Sometimes, trying to juggle the two sets of objectives is genius. You might be sneaking around doing your NSA spying stuff when you see your boss heading for the room where he left you, forcing you to race him back and pretend you were there the whole time (like the dog racing back to his clothes in *Woof!*).

For the most part however, keeping both your employers happy isn't a massively difficult task. All the objectives from the JBA and the NSA can generally be satisfied, apart from the occasional 'choice objectives'. These pit your interests against one another, forcing you to take sides. Not wanting to spoil any of these choices for you, as they're the icing on *Double Agent's* stealthy cake, I'll only say that they range from intriguing and clever set-pieces to achingly blatant good conscience/bad conscience decisions. I'm talking about Sam (almost) literally holding a big switch that says 'Do The Right Thing!' and 'Do The Wrong Thing!' on it. When the trust system isn't being too lenient, it's being far too obvious.

It's absolutely clear what the developers intended to do with the system, and it works insofar as you'll find yourself being extra careful not to trip any alarms on a mission, as the NSA trust-o-meter is a bit low after you shot a guy in the last one. But you never truly feel torn in either direction, and ultimately you'll enjoy *Double Agent* more for its classic *Splinter Cell* thrills. Several missions see you knocking about the JBA headquarters, with some inane task given to you by one of your colleagues in crime.

It's these sections which were really meant to employ the trust system to maximum effect. Huge areas of the base are off-limits to a mere rookie terrorist, meaning that in order to carry out your duties, you have to sneakily collect the various voice samples and fingerprints of your cohorts required to get through security doors.

START THE FANS

These sections play out in real-time, allowing you 25 minutes to finish objectives for both the JBA and NSA. It's a generous amount of time though, meaning what should have been about



Get together, in leather

In the dark, everybody's a potential friend



The new remote hacking adds to the stealthy shenanigans.

Aside from the single-player game, *Double Agent* plays host to one of the most creative multiplayer games on the market. Built separately from the ground up, *Double Agent's* multiplayer involves one team of three spies infiltrating an area while three guards, who play from a first-person perspective, do their best to stop them. It's the same concept used in the previous games, but this time it's far more noob-friendly. 'Ghosts' indicate where you can climb and jump, while post-death screens relentlessly remind you how crap you are by pointing out the guy who shot you. It's brilliant, and far more tense than anything the solo game has to offer.



Sam (almost) literally holds a big switch that says 'Do The Right Thing!' and 'Do The Wrong Thing!'

Gear freak

There's a host of unlockable pretties to earn if you play nice

Equipment Guide

Thermal Vision



Thermographic infrared radiat temperature-b Because this v with variations can be used to presence of he structures. sud

Warning: this style of goggles will seriously mess with your hair.

Complete certain special objectives and you can unlock new equipment, such as upgraded hacking and lockpicking tools (no more faffing about with locks, listening to Sam's oddly pushy mutterings of "hurry" and "come on, you stupid lock!"). Your collection of grenades and silent guns has the potential to grow, incorporating an improved EMP device on your pistol (for knocking out things like electric fences), new scopes, improved goggles for seeing through walls and ladies' clothes, and all manner of exploding gubbins which you can stick to walls. If ever there was an incentive to sneak, rather than go in all guns blazing, these gadgets are it.



sacrificing some objectives for the sake of others based on who trusts you more, is more about getting everything done before filling the remainder of your time grabbing a few non-essential bonus objectives such as obtaining medical files and whatnot. The mundane tasks given to you by your evil overlords often involve monotonous *Crystal Maze*-style puzzles (such as a sudoku-style hacking game), clearly geared towards analogue sticks and consoles.

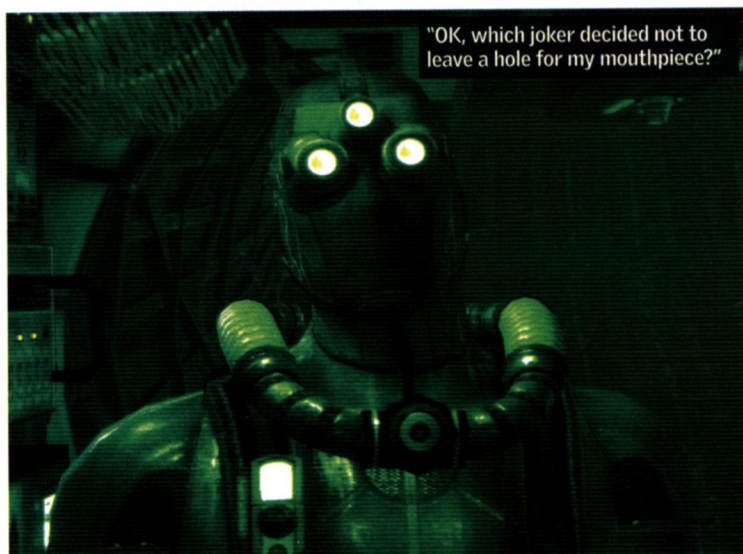
A STORIED CAREER

The fact that you're going hands-on with the bad guys brings some strong narrative to a typically story-lite series, and even though nothing really comes of it, some of the characters you meet have obviously been designed with care and attention to detail. Not least of which Sam himself, whose fluid animation never fails to impress. In fact, he gets this really funny apologetic look on his face when a JBA member catches him in a restricted area, which is almost worth getting caught for.

Oddly however, Sam's array of gymnastic abilities seems to have taken a slight hit. Not in any major fashion, but enough to



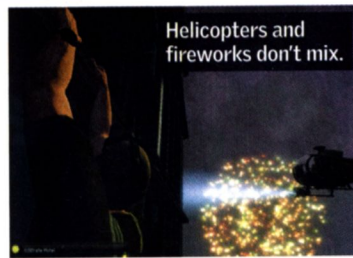
You can't help but yearn to be back in your tight spandex overalls, hanging upside down from a pipe



"OK, which joker decided not to leave a hole for my mouthpiece?"



"Nobody calls me 'five-eyes', got it?"



Helicopters and fireworks don't mix.



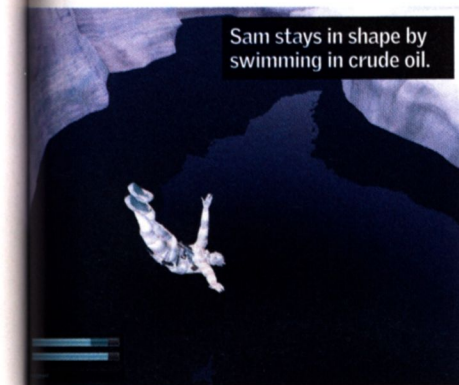
The level of detail makes us glad it's not all shrouded in darkness.



"Damn pesky BASE jumpers!"



The Congo mission is best described as 'exploding'.



Sam stays in shape by swimming in crude oil.



Sadly, someone had already made off with the hubcaps.

make you stop at the end of a mission and realise you never once did the splits to suspend yourself between walls before silently dropping down behind somebody and grabbing them. As you conduct your terrorist duties (which amount to things like 'putting the kettle on' and 'watching our PowerPoint presentation about terror'), you can't help but yearn to be back in your spandex overalls, hanging upside down from a pipe and waiting to catch whomever crosses your path, like some exotic cave centipede.

Despite the game's producers claiming more reference was drawn from movies like *Infernal Affairs*, you can't deny just how *24* it's all become, especially as Lambert was voiced by the guy who plays President Palmer in *24* (at least, he was in earlier games - he's now been replaced with a decent soundalike). Not that any of this is a bad thing, as we love *24*.

Speaking of references, the environments in *Double Agent* give off a definite *Hitman* vibe. The two games are about as dissimilar as two gadget-heavy, *Metal Gear*-inspired third-person stealth-action games can be, but they do share a certain colourful, sleek character in their surroundings. In fact, fans of *Metal Gear Solid* will notice some familiar locations too - a tanker (albeit stuck in some ice), and a bout of sneaking through a civil war in the Congo - you can almost hear that codec ringing in your ear.

There's also a further move towards the daylight outdoor levels seen in *Pandora Tomorrow*, with fewer shadows to hide in and more walls to crouch behind. It's all excellently designed stuff, and it doesn't need to be pointed out that *Double Agent*

looks absolutely stunning, whether you're abseiling down the side of the tallest hotel in the world during Chinese New Year or freefalling high above a Siberian coastline.

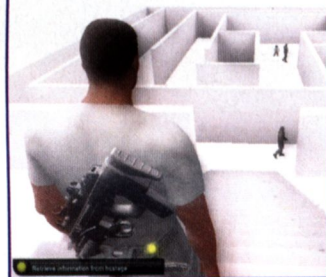
Double Agent comes close to earning a Classic award, let down only by the fact that we wanted to see them run a bit further with the trust system idea. At its heart, it's still the same old stealth 'em up we love. The dialogue between Sam 'Ironsides' Fisher and his hapless captives is as sharp as the knife he holds threateningly against their throats, the world feels solid and polished, the animation is sublime on an artistic level, and you'll get to one of the multiple endings and feel truly satisfied with yourself. Sam Fisher may have gone bad - but he hasn't got any worse. How's that for ambiguity? **PCZ**



Brain training

Holograms are the future

They've taken their neutral colour scheme way too far.



The training missions in *Splinter Cell* are always well executed. In the first game you got the chance to break into the observation room and take your trainer hostage (and really impress him in the process), and in *Double Agent* it's a bizarre *Matrix*-style (or indeed *Metal Gear*-style) holo-world. Each stage sees you attempting to nab an object dear to Sam's heart (such as a framed picture of his deceased family) in increasingly tricky circumstances. Quite why the NSA had to go to all this expense just for a bit of training is beyond us, but it's still an interesting way to learn the game mechanics. More holographic training levels in games please!

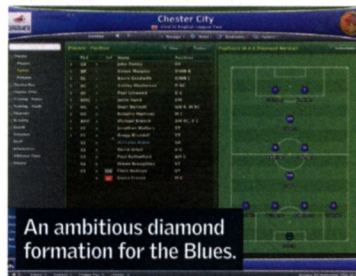
PCZONE

Graphics Staggeringly beautiful
Sound Excellent voice-acting
Multiplayer Astounding fun

- ✓ Trust system works
- ✓ Looks amazing
- ✓ Infallible stealth action
- ✓ Multiplayer is great fun
- ✗ Turns you into a quacksave whore
- ✗ Trust system isn't deep enough

89

Good to be bad



FOOTBALL MANAGER 2007



Another year, another update, another *Steve Hill* review...

DEVELOPER Sports Interactive
PUBLISHER Sega
WEBSITE www.footballmanager.net
ETA Out now
PRICE £24.99

AT A GLANCE...

With the inevitability of winter, the Sports Interactive drones churn out another all-encompassing, life-ruining football management game.

System requirements 1

HOW IT STACKS

- FOOTBALL MANAGER 2007 90%
- FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006 90%
- FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005 90%

IT'S DEBATABLE WHAT the biggest waste of time is: the annual *Football Manager* update or my annual review of it. Seasoned readers will know what to expect: a denial that I'm addicted to the game, a list of new features, a whimsical tale that suggests that perhaps I am still slightly addicted, all topped off with a shiny conspiracy-theorist baiting 90% score and a reminder that it's still the best game of its type available to mankind.

Here goes then. I gave up playing *Football Manager* (or *Championship Manager*, as was) years ago, following a wretched existence of meaningless campaigns that were a waste of life, the hours ticking by in a fetid existence of lower league survival. All things considered, I'm better off without it – you have more time on your hands, enabling you to embark on other arguably equally pointless pursuits.

As such, when the annual update (and it is just an update) comes around, it's with a

vague sense of superiority that I boot it up and scoff at its array of new features, all designed to lure me into its sick world.

So what is this year's model offering? 100 new features. Yep, that's the message coming out of the Sports Interactive office, although what their definition of a 'feature' is remains unconfirmed. If you call having an official club badge for every league team a feature, that's 92 of them taken care of already.

CHAIRMAN OF THE BORED

Churlishness aside, there is a host of new stuff to be found here, from boardroom level right down to the youth team. As is becoming commonplace in modern football, the board can now overrule the manager should they receive an offer for a player that's too good to refuse. Again reflecting real life, they can also decide to up sticks and move to a new stadium. Furthermore, should they lose interest in the club or run out of

cash, they may invite offers for the club, which will certainly impact on the security of your job.

As for the aforementioned youth team, the entire process has been overhauled. Instead of simply regenerating retired players, the boffins at SI have come up with a way of creating a lot more youth players. As in real life, the vast majority will slip into obscurity, but there's always the slight chance of unearthing the next Wayne Rooney (although one look at his face and you might want to re-bury him).

FEED ME

Elsewhere, a big step forward has been made with the addition of affiliate clubs. On paper an ideal symbiotic relationship, the feeder club gets the chance to loan theoretically superior players from its 'parent' club, which in turn gets to blood a few youngsters and immediately recall them should they prove to be any good. It can also



Chester

00:00

Barnet



Play Manager World Bookmarks Options

Wayne Rooney

Preview - Line Ups

View

- Preview
- Overview
- Match Stats
- Action Zones
- Pitch
- Report
- Home Stats
- Away Stats
- Player Ratings
- Formations
- Latest Scores
- Goal Updates
- League Table
- Post Match
- Split View

Play Save

Match Speed Highlights

- Replays
- Highlight Mode
- Show Highlights In
- Chestr Team Talk

Chester

Barnet



Last 5 Mins

Anything can happen.

Stephen Hill

England meet expectations in dominant win

They dominated FYR of Macedonia from first to last, pulling off the result most people expected thanks to constant pressure and lethal finishing.

England thrash Macedonia. Hang on...

Hints and tips about.

Remember how your players react to certain instructions in certain situations. Your mental attributes will determine how effective your instructions are.

8. Wayne Rooney

Player Profile Attributes

Quite good, by all accounts.

I did forego free food and beer and the attention of 20 models to arrest my team's slide



prove to be a bit of a money-spinner for the feeder club if you can convince the big boys to come down to your place for a friendly once a season.

DEVA-STATED

As for the rest of the 100 'features', the majority of them are subtle little things that become apparent over time, including numerous tweaks to the match engine and the way your players interact. Unfortunately, during the course of this review, time wasn't on my side. Having installed the code to my laptop, I was promptly informed that it would expire after four days. By chance, this coincided with a four-day press trip to Ireland for the annual Pro Evolution Soccer European 5-a-side tournament.

Tucking straight into a season as The Mighty Chester, it was business as usual, feigning indifference at the mainly poor

pre-season results before realising I had a week until the real thing. With a budget of nought pounds, desperate attempts were made to bring in loan players as the team rapidly slumped to the bottom of League Two.

Naturally, I was unconcerned by the situation at Deva Stadium, as I'm not remotely interested in the game. That said, I did briefly forego free food and beer and the attention of 20 teenage models dressed as referees in an attempt to arrest the slide, putting together a four-match unbeaten run.

And I may have once woken up at 2am and played through til 8am before going for breakfast. There's also a possibility that I've been ignoring the editor of this mag for a week as the deadline slips over the horizon. And I may have just opened the laptop to discover with horror that the code has expired. But at least I'm not addicted. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Words, pictures and moving dots
Sound Passable crowd noise
Multiplayer Of sorts

- Comprehensive world of football
- Genuinely new features
- Slicker interface
- Runs on virtually any PC
- Only real skill is thoroughness
- A complete waste of time

90

Same as it ever was

Are you frightened of you



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Website Settings Wizard
Step 1 of 3
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Slogan: 2006 - 11 years of adventures!
Footer: Created with 1&1 WebsiteBuilder

2 Choose your layout

Website Settings Wizard
Step 2 of 3
Choose your layout
Select a layout for your website

3 Add pages

Website Settings Wizard
Step 3 of 3
Add pages
Select the pages you would like to use in your website

4 Add text and publish

Website Preview
My Kayaking Adventures
This site was created in order to let you know about my kayaking adventures. It's also a journal of my last three years of kayaking. The content is available, you can view them. Click on kayaking to see up and I've loved every minute of it.
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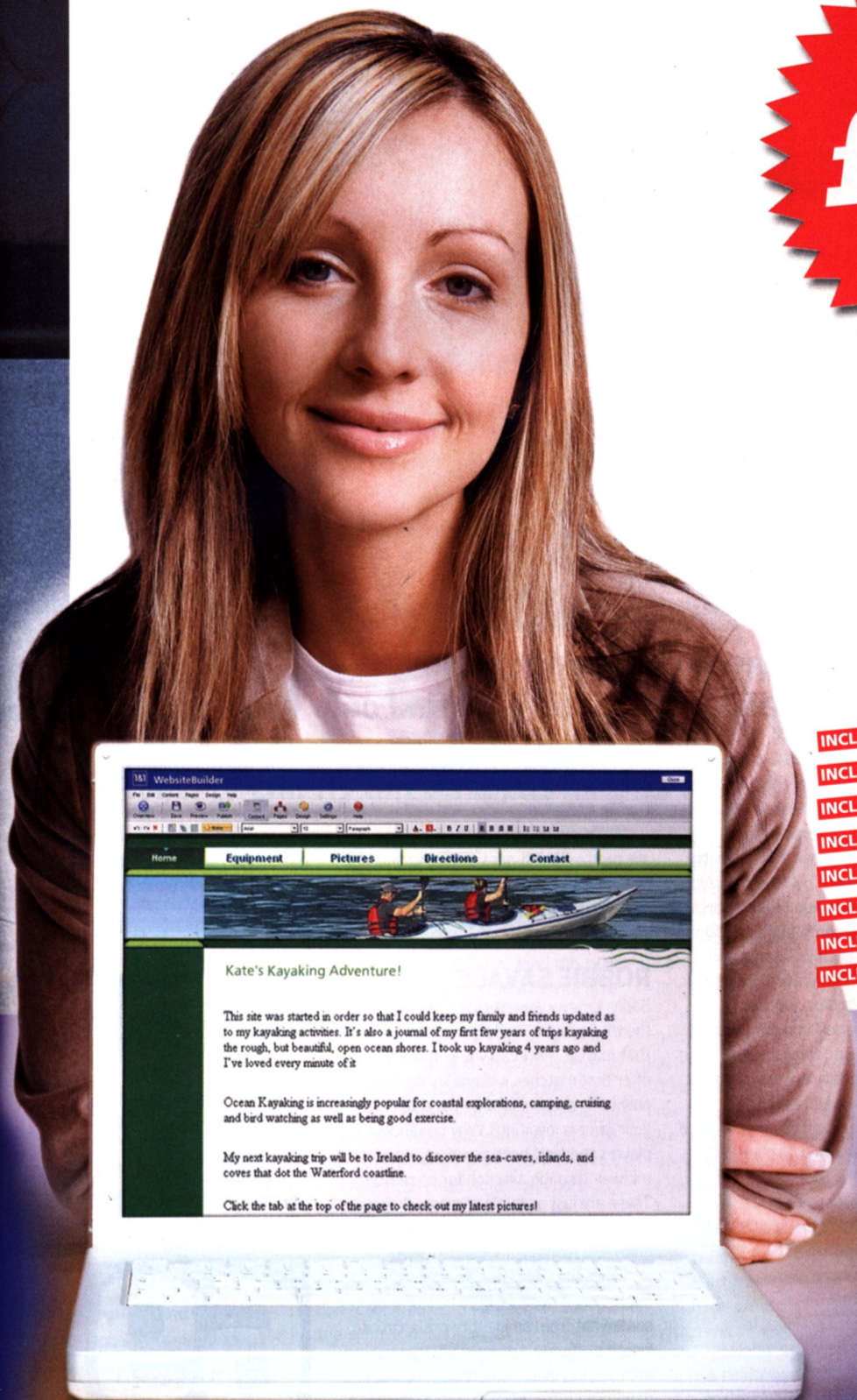
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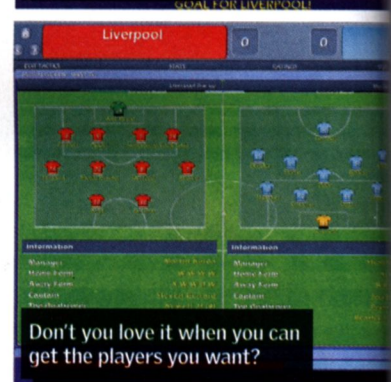
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2 Attempts On Target
 1 Attempts Off Target
 47% Possession
 63% Pass Completion
 61% Tackles Won
 3 Corners
 1 Free Kicks

OVR ATT PAS SET DEF
 CAMERA VIEWS
 HIGHLIGHTS FILTER



CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2007

Pushing for top spot or another season of heartbreak and disappointment? *Martin Korda* stalks the touchline to find out

You can always rely on Stevie G. Apart from in an England shirt...

DEVELOPER Beautiful Game Studios
PUBLISHER Eidos
WEBSITE www.championshipmanager.co.uk
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99



The new team-talk option seems a bit tacked-on.

AT A GLANCE...

CM2007 sees the addition of several new features, but while the series continues to show improvement, it lacks the quality and depth of FM.

- System requirements** 2
- HOW IT STACKS**
- FOOTBALL MANAGER 2007: 90%
 - CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2007: 69%
 - LMA MANAGER 2007: 60%

IMAGINE IF CHELSEA were suddenly stripped of their millions and ego-driven superstars. They'd still be Chelsea, but the rebuilding process would take years. This is pretty much what happened to *Championship Manager* a few years ago when Sports Interactive parted company with Eidos, took all but the franchise's name and handed over the *Champ Man* reins to Beautiful Game Studios, who were forced to start the series from scratch.

So it's hardly surprising then that while this third season under new management continues to show progress, the series is still some way off competing with *Football Manager 2007* (reviewed on page 68).

Among this year's additions are ProZone, an ugly but hugely in-depth tactical analysis tool with which to chart player performances and a team-talk option that proves more throwaway than a used condom.

The match engine continues to improve, and while viewing a whole fixture can often be akin to watching a local pub match – with the odd flash of genius thrown in for good measure – it does work well as a highlights simulator.

Your tactical changes also seem to have slightly more impact this time around than in CM2006.

While player stats and valuations are pretty hit-and-miss, wheeling and dealing is hugely enjoyable and unlike FM, you actually have a chance of buying your favourite players.

ROBBIE SAVAGE

Sadly, for every merit that CM possesses, there's a shortfall, glitch or contradiction that mars it. Why can you put in a transfer offer that matches a player's valuation, only to be admonished by the club that your offer is insulting? Why do random players suddenly become utterly exhausted midway through a match for no reason? These are just a couple of many irksome oversights that blemish an otherwise enjoyable management experience.

While the CM series is certainly improving, it does seem to be suffering somewhat from an identity crisis. On one side, it's offering a more mainstream approach to management gaming with its generous stats and lax transfer market; on the other, it's trying to be FM with its detailed match analysis tools.

Ultimately, if realism's not your number-one priority, you'll find enjoyment here. CM2007 may be the second best footy management sim on the market, but it's still akin to playing in the Championship rather than the Premier League. **PC7**

PCZONE

Graphics Match engine looks OK
 Sound Decent crowd noises
 Multiplayer None

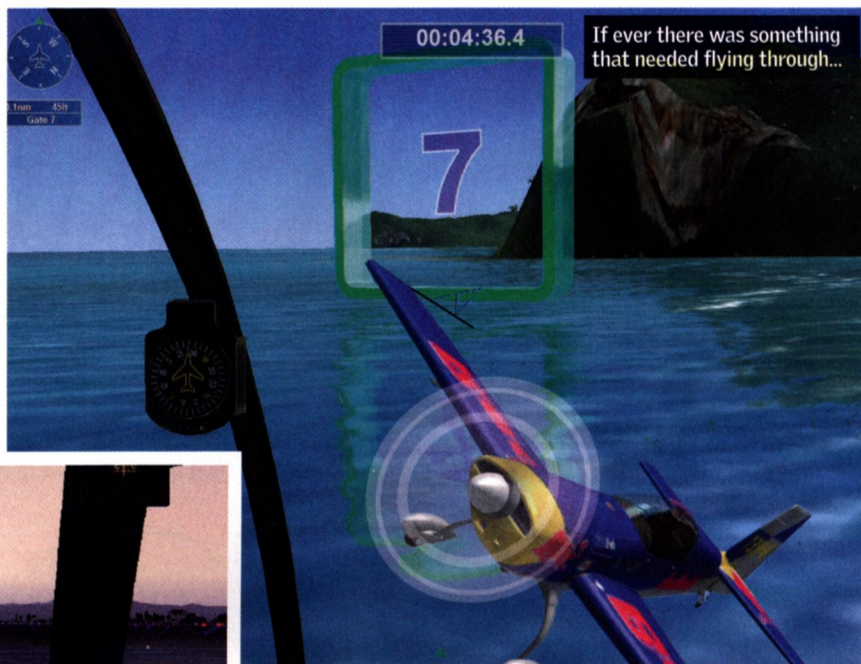
- ✓ Better than CM2006
- ✓ Fun transfer dealings
- ✓ Detailed match analysis tool
- ✓ Entertaining match highlights
- ✗ Too many glitches
- ✗ Watching full matches is still frustrating

69

Fun but flawed



Still looks phallic, even from a helicopter.



If ever there was something that needed flying through...

"And this button temporarily eases the feeling that you've wasted your life."



Gatwick runway: a looker.

FLIGHT SIMULATOR X PCZONE



Steve Hogarty can fly anything, as long as it uses a Saitek joystick

DEVELOPER Microsoft
PUBLISHER Microsoft
WEBSITE
www.microsoft.com/games/pc/flightsimulatorx.aspx
ETA Out now
PRICE £49.99

AT A GLANCE...

The greatest flight simulator series delivers another stunning update, albeit a tad premature for our poor current-generation PCs.

System requirements

5

HOW IT STACKS

FLIGHT SIMULATOR X 89%

FALCON 4.0 82%

ACTUALLY FLYING A PLANE 62%

JUST ONCE I'D like a plane I'm on to have its crew fall ill, and for the flight attendant to calmly ask if anybody knows how to land a plane, so that I could push in front of any real pilots to announce: "I can land this plane miss, I've played *Flight Simulator* to bits!"

Well I say 'to bits', but to be honest I find that if you're not a hardcore flight enthusiast, interest in Microsoft's most prosperous sim (beating the *Train Simulator* series hands down, shockingly) goes from: "Wow, this is amazing, it's like I'm actually flying a plane"; to, "I'm bored, let's make gun noises and then find a building to crash into." And yes, we rolled back the in-game clock to the day before *that* day and *they* weren't there – Microsoft didn't just dodge the political-correctness bullet, they steered clear of the entire shooting range.

Flight Simulator X is the biggest advancement the series has seen since polygons, and while it might not have become instantaneously appealing to normal people, Microsoft have taken steps

to add some bizarrely creative missions to counteract the long-haul boredom the series radiates.

TAKE FLIGHT

These include missions which involve flying government officials to Area 51 only to be buzzed by UFOs as you land, or an ordinary chauffeuring job for some Japanese execs turning into an action movie, with an actual James Bond wannabe as a co-pilot. This actually makes the simulation feel really exciting (in a geeky way), and some *Pilotwings*-style checkpoint and gate challenges in helicopters further this feeling of *Flight Simulator X* being more of a game than ever before.

Unfortunately, this is a Vista showcase which has arrived a few months too early. Visual enhancements such as actual 3D traffic on roads, boats, water effects etc will bring most machines to a crawl when ramped up to anywhere past medium settings. Still, when Vista and DirectX 10 do arrive, *FSX* will look magnificent. As it

is, it remains the most exciting iteration of the series yet. Exciting, *Flight Simulator*. Look at them in that sentence together. Odd, isn't it? **PC7**

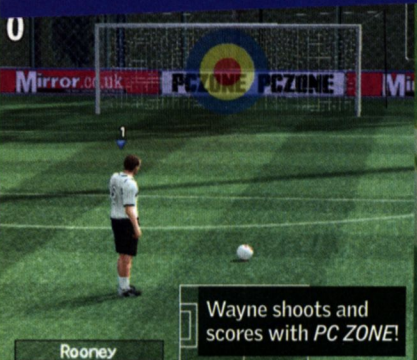
PCZONE

Graphics Great, better with Vista
 Sound Perfect
 Multiplayer Yes, hardly noteworthy though

- ✓ Infallible simulation
- ✓ Exciting missions
- ✓ The bit with James Bond
- ✓ Looks incredible
- ✗ Could do with a few more planes
- ✗ Really needs Vista

89

Adjust flaps for FUN



Wayne shoots and scores with PC ZONE!

Rooney



CMF Emerson



Look! Michael Owen's not broken!

Goals today 1



All to play for.

Like R Kelly, the Barca man believes he can fly.



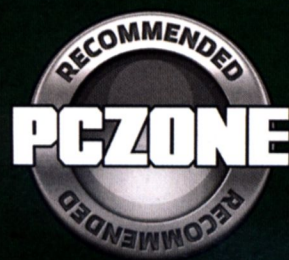
Goals today 1

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 6



Jamie Sefton celebrates the return of Konami's footy legend

DEVELOPER Konami
PUBLISHER Konami
WEBSITE www.konami.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99



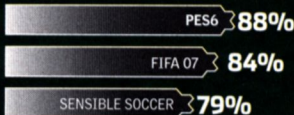
AT A GLANCE...

Pro Evo is still the true football fans' choice of PC kickabouts, but the new *FIFA 07* has to be considered a serious alternative.

System requirements

3

HOW IT STACKS



IN FOOTBALL – as in life – if you stay still, you'll be overtaken. A promising season leaving fans with a glimmer of promotion or a cup win can soon turn to disappointment and a relegation struggle if their team doesn't bring through new talent over the summer. Similarly, the sixth iteration of *Pro Evolution Soccer* remains the best kick-a-ball-about you can buy, but the series has only evolved ever-so-slightly since last year. Bitter rival *FIFA*, with EA's financial backing approaching Abramovich proportions, is now snapping at the studs of *PES*'s boots.

However, for another season at least, only a moron/FA executive would say that *FIFA 07* is better than *PES6* – Konami's sim plays more fluidly, has more crunching interaction between players, more realistic ball physics and – yes I've said this before – it just 'feels' like real football. *FIFA 07* has finally included decent ball physics, but the development team needs to understand that to truly lose the feeling that you're playing a videogame, you need unpredictability.

SHE FELL OVER

PES6 knowingly builds in animations and gameplay that simulates human error and the cruel fates of the beautiful game. For example, a defender may jump for the ball and miss, a trailing leg from a midfielder might trip a forward on a run, or a keeper could make a dramatic last-gasp save with

his elbow. All these random occurrences can make for a frustrating spectacle, but also heart-stopping moments of elation if, like I did in a cup qualifier, you get a lucky penalty in the 90th minute. Other sublime touches in *PES6* include the nearest player to the ball at half-time sometimes juggling the ball with their foot and picking it up, and players collapsing if they're hit with the ball at full whack in the face.

Pro Evolution Soccer 6 now includes all the official teams from the Italian, Spanish,



They're still going to score one more than you.

Selling out

Why in-game advertising is actually really fantastic!

Two of England's greats in one screenshot!



Here's a thing – you remember last month when we said how bad it was that EA are going to be placing advertising billboards in *Battlefield*? Well, actually, we've discovered since then, that having overt product placement is officially The Best Thing Ever. Take this screenshot. Is that David Beckham taking a free-kick near a hoarding with Britain's Best PC Games Magazine™? That means that the ex-England free-kick specialist only reads (or has read to him) one games magazine – PC ZONE. Really. The absolute truth. Oh, and don't forget to drink Pepsi.

French, German and other leagues – all apart from the English ones it seems, although Man Utd and Arsenal appear in the Premiership mock-up alongside fictitious sides such as Merseyside Reds and Berkshire Blues. The addictive Master League 'mini-*Football Manager*' mode has also included a few additions including stat data for analysing shot patterns and ball possession after matches, and the familiar default players Ximelez, Castolo and friends are back, ready to level-up in an RPG style.

COME PLAY WITH ME

Mainly, however, the improvements over *PES5* are the improved AI for players (who now make slightly more intelligent runs), a more physical game for shielding the ball and making quicker turns, improved shooting and more dribbling options for Ronaldo-style ball-faffing. Producer 'Seabass' Takatsuka has also eliminated the over-zealous referees that often slowed down matches to a succession of niggly fouls and made multiplayer a smoother experience, with opportunities for up to 16 players to get involved.

One thing really irks, however: the reason I won't be awarding *PES6* a coveted

Classic award is that the PC version is basically a version of the standard last-gen PlayStation 2 and Xbox game. Why the f*** haven't Konami given us the Xbox 360 version with the enhanced graphics, sound and AI? It may have something to do with the exclusivity deal with Microsoft, but it still causes me great gnashing of teeth and pulling of nasal hair. Despite this slight towards the PC crowd, *Pro Evo 6* remains the best 'arcade' football game around – just. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Sufficient – great animation
 Sound Crap music and passable commentary
 Multiplayer Yep – up to six players

- ✓ Feels like real football
- ✓ Plays like real football
- ✓ Can make 0-0 games as exciting as 4-3 ones
- ✓ More online multiplayer options
- ✗ Only minor improvements since *PES5*
- ✗ Game is the same as last-gen console versions – why no Xbox 360 features?

88

Top of the league



Those Argentinians are quite good, aren't they?

WHOSE...



WARHAMMER MARK OF CHAOS

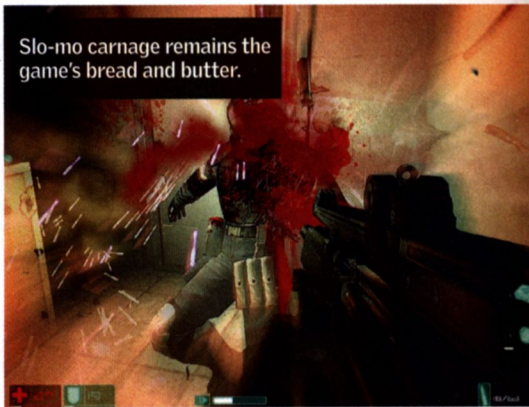


www.markofchaos.com

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Despite what you may see, the spark is gone for most of the game.



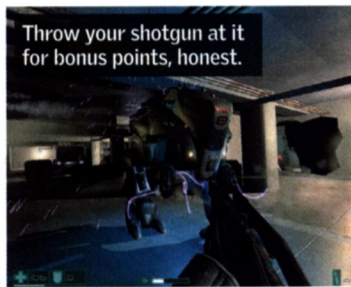
Slo-mo carnage remains the game's bread and butter.



Everything blows up now, especially shelves.

F.E.A.R.:

EXTRACTION POINT



Throw your shotgun at it for bonus points, honest.

The dead fat guy is back and *Steve Hogarty* doesn't know whether to laugh or cry

DEVELOPER TimeGate Studios
PUBLISHER VU Games
WEBSITE www.whatisfear.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99

AT A GLANCE...

It's an add-on pack, Alma's back and she's out for revenge against a bunch of dumb frat boys. She's going to put the *Ring* back into 'spring break'!

System requirements 4



YOU HAVE TO laugh when the expansion pack of the game we criticised for having repetitive environments finally lets you leave the subway level you've been running around in for an hour, only to have it explode and launch you onto the roof of a parking garage. Come on, a parking garage? Why not get blown off a bridge and land in a zoo? Or an arboretum? *Extraction Point* takes *F.E.A.R.* nowhere other than down the same corridors you've no doubt tired of.

In fact, for almost the entire first half of this expansion pack, I found myself playing monotonous filler levels. Odd new additions such as *Max Payne*-style gas canisters were annoying, unpredictable things. Fights were badly paced and tedious, and characters were characterless.

In fact, *Extraction Point* does nothing to progress *F.E.A.R.*'s story at all, besides arbitrarily reintroducing dead characters and killing off others (and yes, that fat Cheesy Poofs-loving bastard makes a short and bafflingly pointless appearance). Even the game's trademark terror comes

on far too strong to begin with, rendering the player tickled rather than terrified. It's a mixture of us becoming desensitised to little girls walking in puddles of blood, and new developer TimeGate's inability to nail the timing required to make us piss ourselves.

PUT THE FETTEL ON

It's not all mediocrity and gloom though, as later levels are a true return to form for the *F.E.A.R.* name. It does nothing particularly original, but the new mini-gun serves up insane amounts of hilarious carnage, and the red laser beam gun (excuse my ignorance) offers some fun moments as it sears through wall and flesh alike. There's a solid few hours of gaming excellence in here, surrounded by hours of disappointing *F.E.A.R.*-lite action.

Although this isn't really *F.E.A.R.* is it? This is the husk that was left on publishers VU Games' doorstep after the original developers Monolith left. While *Extraction Point* certainly does pick up towards the end, providing some absolutely sublime moments of action, ultimately it feels far

too much like the worst bits of *F.E.A.R.* all over again, masquerading as something we love. Like lifting up your new wife's veil on your wedding night only to find out it's actually Murdock from the *A-Team*. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics	Looking slightly dated
Sound	Still got the nice AI dialogue
Multiplayer	Essentially unchanged

- ✓ New weapons are ace
- ✓ It's still *F.E.A.R.*
- ✗ Almost zero significant plot
- ✗ Starts off really slow
- ✗ Not much original content
- ✗ Uninspired level design

69
Afraid not

...SIDE...



AGE OF EMPIRES III: THE WARCHIEFS



Mingling with the natives

DEVELOPER Ensemble Studios
PUBLISHER Microsoft
WEBSITE www.ageofempires3.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £24.99

System requirements **3**



WHILE ENSEMBLE WERE concentrating on putting the final touches to their Stetsons and swinging saloon doors in *Age Of Empires III*, they only offered a cursory glance at the native population. Now, they've set about putting that right in this expansion by featuring three native American tribes; the Sioux, the Iroquois and the Aztecs.

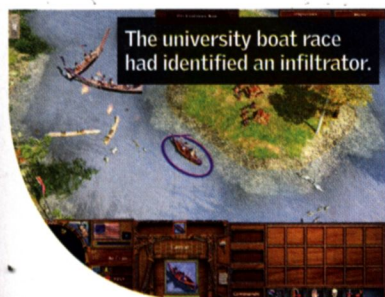
As well as the expected units and buildings associated with a new race, the three tribes all have access to a Fire Pit which villagers dance around to procure new bonuses, from producing healer units to increasing the strength of your troops. This offers a new slant on tactics and with each tribe specialising in different areas (the Sioux, for example, have a very

strong cavalry), the new races are well-balanced and a joy to play.

The new campaign follows the saga of the Black family and is presented with all the slickness you've come to expect from Ensemble, with a host of historically based and well-varied missions. There are also a slew of other additions, many either new for the Europeans or aimed at balancing the new races in multiplayer.

If you're looking to expand either your single or multiplayer experience of *AOE3, WarChiefs* proves itself to be a slick affair and caters well for series fans. However, it still doesn't address the simplistic combat and will make a full game-sized dent in your wallet, thus still leaving us, a bit like the tribes, with some reservations.

Suzy Wallace



PCZONE
72
Little big chief



WARHAMMER MARK OF CHAOS



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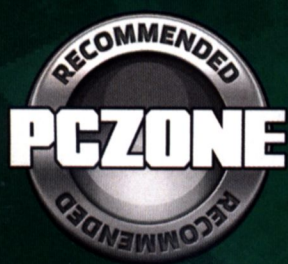


STRONGHOLD LEGENDS

King Arthur? Check. Huge tracts of land? Check. *Richie Shoemaker* reads the Monty Python book of quotations...



DEVELOPER Firefly
 PUBLISHER 2K Games
 WEBSITE
www.strongholdlegends.com
 ETA Out now
 PRICE £29.99



I'VE ALWAYS LIKED the *Stronghold* games. I like them because I'm what's known in RTS parlance as a turtler – one who likes to sit at home, erect a few walls and wait for the enemy to come to me. My turtling skills are such that I can make a multiplayer game of *Total Annihilation* last for four hours and, in *Dawn Of War* – the most anti-chelonian game on the planet, as long as four minutes. Yeah, eat my shell, bitch!

Unfortunately for the likes of me, *Stronghold Legends* makes it easier for zerglings to bring the proceedings to a sharp end. This is because, not content with nerfing archers (OK, so they were a little overpowered), Firefly have introduced all manner of wall-climbing and flying creatures – all pillaged from European myth, which perhaps explains the canny title of the game – in an effort to ensure the walls come crashing down sooner than they might have done in previous *Stronghold* games.

In truth, and despite my own selfish reservations, the switch to an attack focus is a very good thing. Plus, with dragons flying about and wizards casting spells, not only is strategy that much more open, the battles are that much more interesting to watch.

CHOP CHOP

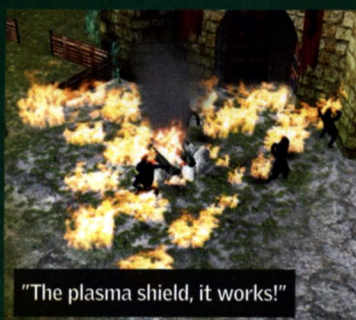
Thankfully, the economic side of the game hasn't suffered. There are still apples to pick, wood to chop and hops to brew, meaning that apart from making sure the toilets are clean, very little has been cut from *Stronghold 2*.

AT A GLANCE...

The same old castle building you know and love, but this time with Merlin the wizard, dragons, werewolves and Excalibur.

System requirements **3**

HOW IT STACKS	
HEROES OF ANNIHILATED EMPIRES	82%
CIVILIZATION: ROME	81%
STRONGHOLD LEGENDS	78%



Food trough wiper

All together now: "Ekki-Ekki-Ekki-Ekki-PTANG"



Hang on, there's something wrong here. Firefly have only gone and forgotten to add the voices to their new game. Not all of them, obviously. There's plenty of all that "Yes, my liege" stuff, but *Stronghold* has always been happy to borrow lines from Monty Python, only now that the series has a King Arthur of its own and various brave sir k-niggets, it's odd that Firefly have opted to play it straight. Perhaps they felt the humour would be too obvious, which is perhaps understandable. Still, a mission to find shrubberies, now that would be... Crap, actually.

Sorely missing from previous games is a very welcome Skirmish mode, but the biggest change is the influence of mythical units set across three increasingly difficult 8-mission campaigns: one covering Arthurian Britain, one with über-vampire Vlad The Impaler, and one based on Burgundian dragon-slayer Siegfried (yeah, him). There are no goblins, elves or orcs here, in fact the roster of men-at-arms, archers and knights still forms the backbone of any army. The myth units, which include heroes and wizards, merely add a layer of tactics rather than change the game completely. *Stronghold* fans will be pleased. If you were hoping for *Sim Minas Tirith* though, you'll likely be a tad disappointed

RISE OF LEGENDS

At the end of the day then, *Stronghold Legends* is covering very familiar territory, but the new units certainly aren't just more of the same. A dragon may be able to roast dozens of villagers in a ball of flame, but for knocking down walls, a catapult is still needed. It's true to say that a few features have been lost to accommodate the new units and campaigns, but with this reduced level of micro-management, Firefly's streamlining of what has become a fine RTS series is generally successful.

As with their recent *CivCity*, the interface is excellent, the code stable and the graphics solid – if somewhat unspectacular (the new castle types especially). Battles away from

walls and towers are reliably underwhelming (as ever), and the AI tends to dribble units your way at times, making the campaigns feel a bit turgid.

However, with an idiot-proof map editor and that delightful Skirmish mode, *Stronghold Legends* will certainly be on my hard drive longer than any of the previous games in the series. Whether it will survive past the imminent arrival of *Medieval II* is another matter. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics **Functional and unobtrusive**
Sound **Suitably medieval**
Multiplayer **Still a lot of fun**

- ✓ The *Stronghold* formula stays largely intact
- ✓ A Skirmish mode – at last!
- ✓ Stable and reliable, surprisingly
- ✗ Not vastly different
- ✗ Graphically shoddy in places
- ✗ Where's the humour?

78

More hit than myth

...ARE YOU...



WARHAMMER MARK OF CHAOS

PC
CD
ROM

DEEP SILVER

BANDAI
NAMCO
Games

16+

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Never bring a sabre to a robotic death-laser fight.



All the death and destruction you need.



The world, tomorrow.



This is no time to invoke the power of Grayskull.



War is a messy business.



WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR - DARK CRUSADE



The best crusade since the Middle Ages? *Suzy Wallace* reckons so...

DEVELOPER
Relic Entertainment
PUBLISHER THQ
WEBSITE
www.dow-darkcrusade.com
ETA Out Now
PRICE £24.99



AT A GLANCE...

Standalone expansion for *DOW* featuring two new races, a host of other additions and plenty of the usual bloodthirsty futuristic warfare.

System requirements

3

HOW IT STACKS

COMPANY OF HEROES 93%
DOW: DARK CRUSADE 88%
DAWN OF WAR: WINTER ASSAULT 86%

FORMERLY THE PRESERVE of feverish enthusiasts huddled around tables comparing lead-figure painting techniques, the brutal futuristic world of *Warhammer 40K* was brought to the masses by 2004's excellent *Dawn Of War*. Its combination of fast-paced action, beautifully detailed units and brutal animated violence turned thousands of us who'd never even seen the inside of a Games Workshop into instant fans. And while this standalone expansion contains yet more of the tried and tested formula, it contains so many new features that it feels more akin to a proper sequel.

The action is set on the planet of Kronos, a seemingly popular destination which seven distinct races are battling to control. Each race starts from their own stronghold, shown on a new campaign map which details every territory on the planet. Once you've decided which territory to attack next, things transfer over to the more familiar real-time view. It's hardly a unique system but it works well enough, and serves to remind you that you're part of a much bigger conflict.

Key to *Dark Crusade* are the two new races: the Tau and the Necrons, both of which are excellently implemented and balanced. The Tau are composed of a variety of ranged robotic warriors complemented by several melee races – an incredibly powerful combination, provided you're an astute commander who can keep your forces in order. On the other hand, the Necrons are slightly easier to pick up and play, and are *Dark Crusade's* real highlight. Their sinister-looking units and ability to resurrect themselves provide endless opportunities for surprise on the battlefield.

PLAY IT AGAIN

There are other additions too, including upgradeable commanders and new units for each race, but above all it's the same fast and frantic action we came to love in *Dawn Of War*. There's tons of replay value too, thanks to all seven races being playable, as well as the excellent multiplayer.

In terms of difficulty, it's hardcore warfare from the word go, and while veterans of the series will relish the opportunity to try out their race-specific

tactics, newcomers to the series may find things a bit of a struggle.

For the sake of balance, if I had to moan about something, I'd point out that the maps are still a bit bland. But by god, holy war's never been so much fun. **PCZ**

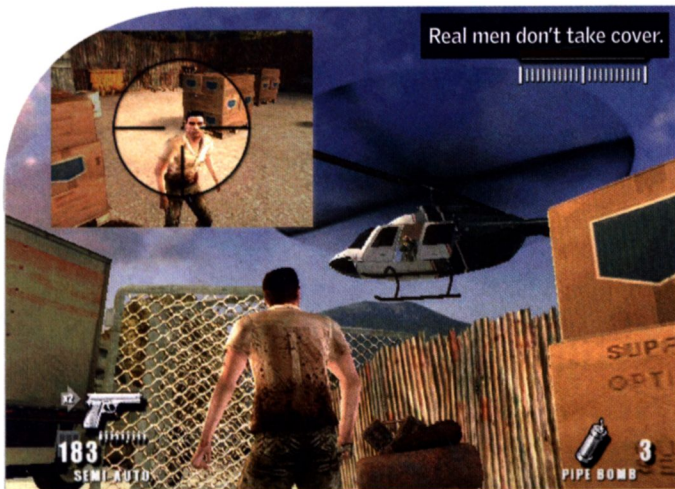
PCZONE

Graphics Blood-soaked and beautifully animated
Sound Decent battle sounds
Multiplayer Up to eight players

- ✓ Gorgeous animation
- ✓ Well-balanced new races
- ✓ Great campaign map
- ✓ Frantic action
- ✗ Maps are still disappointingly bland
- ✗ Tough for newcomers

88

A righteous war



MADE MAN

In just seven days, I can make you a man

DEVELOPER SilverBack Studios
PUBLISHER Mastertronic
WEBSITE www.silverback-studios.com/mademan_intro.htm
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99

System requirements 1

THIS IS A game that had the potential to wipe the floor with the competition. David Fisher is the real mafia deal – not that he's in the mafia, you understand; but his non-judgmental biography of the hitman Joey Black has earned him friends in the Family. Who better then, to write an original storyline for a mob game than Fisher?

Sadly, that's the wrong question. I have no issue whatsoever with the storyline, script or even acting in *Made Man*. The story unfolds perfectly well through a series of flashbacks in different eras, as you drive to the game's conclusion. I even grew to quite like Joey, for all his tough talk and bitterness.

The problem's with the lack of inspiration or effort. I don't mind imperfect graphics. But shooting at identical hicks in a scrapyard filled

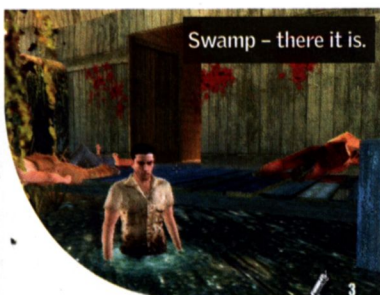


with identical cars brings a certain gaming bleakness, and the last time someone's hat flew off when I shot them in the leg... Well, it was long before I became a games reviewer.

The action is little more than a nine-hour rinse and repeat; a loop of taking cover, shooting and occasionally sniping. There's no battle of wits; the maps are linear. Ammunition and medkits are so abundant you'll rarely be in fear of your life. The enemies, if they move at all, run directly into your bullets. The first boss, a helicopter, feels like there should be an interesting way to kill it, but there isn't. You just shoot it dozens of times.

If any dog-owners have tried reading a newspaper on the floor, they'll know how frustrating it is when their stupid mutt keeps lying down on it, thinking it's a game. Here, we have the same problem – *Made Man* thinks it's a game.

Jon Blyth



PCZONE
39
 Would be a good Sopranos

...ON?..



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If you gave him a wedgie, he'd still scream like a girl.



GM crops gone horribly wrong.



Deer-paintballing is a hit in Chantra.



Archlord has now scrapped its controversial payment system.

ARCHLORD

Ed Zitron is a massive Arch-hole...



DEVELOPER NHN Games
PUBLISHER Codemasters
WEBSITE
www.archlordgame.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99
 (Plus subscription)

AT A GLANCE...

Enjoyable yet unoriginal high-fantasy MMORPG with a Korean lilt that plays like a *Guild Wars*/*World Of Warcraft* lovechild.

System requirements 4

HOW IT STACKS

WORLD OF WARCRAFT 95%

ARCHLORD 76%

LINEAGE 2 61%

MANY PEOPLE WILL attack *ArchLord* for one thing before they even look at it – mainly, that it's not *World Of Warcraft*. While it's weaker but with similar ideas, it's also fun, rewarding and not half pretty for a game that's been out for more than a year overseas.

Like *RF Online*, *ArchLord* is a Korean MMO localised for our fair seas, entering a rich canon of inaccessible grindfests built to steal your waking hours and push you to malnutrition and social isolation. Plus, what you actually get for your money has a somewhat milder learning curve mixed with newbie-friendly quests that will ease in even the most unseasoned of gamers.

With an appeal similar to the National Lottery, you'll seek to defy the awful odds and rise to the top of each server through a series of events to become the one and only 'ArchLord', a PvP goliath who rains fire on other players, rides a dragon to work and always has a bird on his arm. Regardless of this heavy emphasis

on PvP gameplay, there's a generous amount of questing to be had around a varied and expansive landscape, and while the classes and combat don't do a lot new for the MMO industry, they're familiar, intuitive and a laugh to play.

LORDING IT UP

The PvP atmosphere is what brings *ArchLord* down, though. The current model of player-on-player combat in MMOs is a hurricane of half-skill and the ability to circle your opponent endlessly, and there can only be one ArchLord per server. What's more, the actual odds of reaching it are so remote that it's hard to justify a great investment of your time – and even if you do make it, your 15 minutes of fame will be that of an empty PvP god-mode.

While not a *WOW*-beater, *ArchLord* is definitely a viable alternative. It's a mishmash of unoriginality behind slick, gorgeous graphics, with a fair bit of content to plough through to get to level

99 and potential to expand. It ends up being a fun MMO romp for casual players and a rich PvP hamster wheel if you're sitting out there with an axe to grind. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics A real looker
 Sound Rolling orchestral flourishes and clangs of swords
 Multiplayer Yes

- ✓ Well put together
- ✓ Accessible
- ✓ Smooth graphics
- ✗ Generic
- ✗ Still involves grinding

76

Worth lording over



SID MEIER'S RAILROADS!



Jon Blyth readies his 'choo choo' noises...

DEVELOPER Firaxis
PUBLISHER 2K Games
WEBSITE
www.firaxis.com/games/game_detail.php?gameid=12
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

AT A GLANCE...

The fourth installation in the *Railroad Tycoon* series, and with Sid back onboard, it's a welcome return to form.

System requirements



HOW IT STACKS

RAILROADS! 80%

RAILROAD TYCOON 3 68%

HOLIDAY WORLD TYCOON 14%

I'M IN MY early 30s, and have made it this far in my life without ever giving the tiniest toss about trains. I can watch steam coming out of a train funnel, and feel absolutely no nostalgic twang for typhoid and top hats. And replacing the word 'Tycoon' with an exclamation mark is fooling no-one. If they hadn't wired my eyes open and sat me in the restraining chair, I daresay I'd have gone another 30 happy years without playing any kind of railway business simulator.

So it's confusing to confess that I loved this game. With Sid back onboard after a little holiday, they've actually created a passion I never had, and didn't want.

Railroads! is simple where it matters; building tracks that curve elegantly through the countryside is as easy and satisfying as slapping a spoilt child. Setting the route and consist – cargo to you and me – was intuitive enough for me not to need a manual or tutorial. At the

start of the game, industries chug away fruitlessly, waiting to be connected to towns. It's a kind of Bizarro approach to the industrial revolution, but for all its nods to history and realism, *Railroads!* never forgets it's a game.

HELLO, IVOR

Once you're over the simplicity, you can begin to enjoy the complexity. Your first train, which will probably be shuttling humans and mail between towns, will bring in enough revenue to start reaching out to industry. The growth creeps up on you, too – from your first shuttle run to providing town industries, to buying those industries and eventually buying out your competitors is so smooth and balanced that it only becomes explicit when you nostalgically click on your old mail truck and notice that it's 70 years old and costing you \$10,000 a month in maintenance. Don't be sentimental; scrap the junk and sack the driver.

It's impossible to pretend this game is anything more than what it transparently

is – an accessible business strategy game with choo choos – but behind the faintly sickening opening video, there's a silo full of deep fun to be had here. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Charmingly stylised
 Sound Joplin rags and chrr-di-cuffs
 Multiplayer Excellent

- ✓ Easy to get into
- ✓ Sweet stylistic trappings
- ✓ Hugely involving
- ✓ Rarely overwhelming
- ✗ Processor-heavy at times
- ✗ Now do spaceships

80

RIP Hornby



The rat should be afraid. Very afraid.



"Hey Sam, I mean Max - no, Sam!"

SAM & MAX:

EPISODE ONE - CULTURE SHOCK



DEVELOPER Telltale Games
PUBLISHER Telltale
WEBSITE
www.telltalegames.com
ETA Out now

PRICE \$8.95 for the individual
Culture Shock download, \$34.95
for the season of six

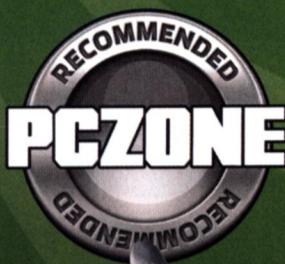
Either termites are burrowing into his skull, or *Will Porter* is excited and wants to tell you something

THERE HAVEN'T BEEN many times that I've wanted to reach over and give my monitor a nice big hug, but it happened today. Sam had just fired an onion-powered tear-gas grenade launcher into the face of a hypnotised former child star, allowing Max to knock him out with a handy boxing glove, and I just went all gooey. If I'd have been there myself I'd have nestled up next to them, stroked their luxuriant fur and whispered something along the lines of: "It's been

so hard while you've been away. Please don't leave us again..."

Because the new *Sam & Max* game is really bloody good! Hurrah! After the *Bone* games that held promise but could never get over their inherent twee-ness, Telltale have gone and rustled up a little gem. It's an adventure game packed with genuine innovation, puzzles and well-rounded incidental characters that tease the brain rather than pound on the doors of your neurons in relentless *Broken Sword* fashion.

Rather than gallivant around the USA as they did in times past, *Culture Shock* sees the gruesome-tuosome exploring their more immediate environs. Former child stars have been hypnotised into delivering suspicious self-help videos and generally spread the monotonous, swirly-eyed word about a chap called Brady Culture. Having made a rat regurgitate their phone, it's up to Sam, Max and your godlike clicking abilities to solve this crime through equal measures of witty dialogue and violence.



AT A GLANCE...

Everyday stuff really: a talking dog and rabbit solving crimes. It's a bit like *CSI*, only more believable.

System requirements **2**

HOW IT STACKS

PSYCHONAUTS **90%**

SAM & MAX: CULTURE SHOCK **80%**

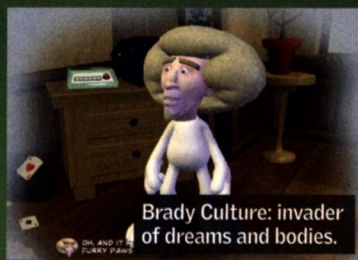
BROKEN SWORD: THE ANGEL OF DEATH **78%**



Max may do the violence, but Sam does the shooting.



Bosco: sadistic, yet helpful cornershop man.



Brady Culture: invader of dreams and bodies.



There aren't many locations, but at least they're wacky. And zany!

It would probably serve this review well to rustle up an example of gameplay to explain a fondness that the casual observer could easily misinterpret as simply being born in the burning lidless eye of my infinite LucasArts-associated fandom.

So at one point, you need a psychoanalyst to fill in an assessment form so that you can gain access to a home for former child stars as a patient – one of the requirements for which is that you must be obsessed with marrying your old mother. As Sam, as indeed you always are apart from in certain conversations, you can then choose to tell your shrink (formerly a tattoo artist) about your dreams – which you then play through as Sam narrates and the shrink comments on what he discovers in the dream version of Sam and Max's office.

IS THAT YOU, MUM?

The way to go all Freud on the analyst, meanwhile, is to point-and-click on different parts of the office and choose apt things to imagine from a set-list. So you imagine the analyst herself being maternal, a wedding cake, a hotdog placed in a rather phallic position near to a rat hole and an all-knowing CCTV camera: ergo, you fancy your mum and feel guilty. It's genius, and something rendered even more genius by your later return to Sam's actual subconscious when he's knocked himself out to rid himself of the villain's evil hypnotic brain attack – complete with fish swimming past the windows and a giant pencil replacing the coat rack.

The way dialogue works is also very clever: despite the brevity of the episode, a truckload of speech has been recorded for



Despite the quality of the game, the former child stars are a tad annoying.

the game, and repetition never really becomes an issue. And yes, *Culture Shock* is short. I played through it in what I guesstimate to be three hours – and there are only four or five places to visit.

Thing is though, the structure of *Culture Shock* makes it feel more like an actual 'episode' than other episodic games. It's self-contained in the way that your average episode of *Diagnosis Murder* is, and also sets up some great soon-to-be-recurring characters (Bosco the inconvenience store clerk is hilarious), along with probably a fair number of running gags to boot.

FUNNY HA HA

I won't lie to you – it's not all chuckles. I still haven't warmed to the new voices, and only a fan of BBC1 'comedy' and unremitting shite-fest *The Green Green Grass* will be found cackling constantly. A lot of Max's retorts to Sam's observations, for example, feel contrived – and there's no denying that

Drive time

Who's driving? Dog is driving! How can this be?



In real life, his ears would flap in the wind.

Now Telltale haven't proved themselves to be the mini-game kings in times past – in fact, the first chapter of *Flash For Dummies* could probably have helped you produce better fare than that present in *Out From Boneville*. So it is then, that the mechanics of the driving section aren't exactly riveting – but the sparkly dialogue as you shoot out car brake lights and accuse innocent motorists of crimes like worshipping false idols does make up for it. Sam can wave his gun around and shoot indiscriminately at most stages of the game by the way. It's just like the real America!

Episodic Sam & Max is more polished than I ever dreamt it would be – a lot of love has been poured into this project

PCZONE

Graphics **Stylised, amusing, detailed**
 Sound **Voices aren't the same**
 Multiplayer **Max helps out with driving**

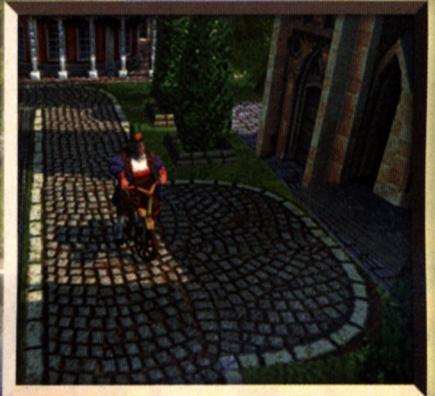
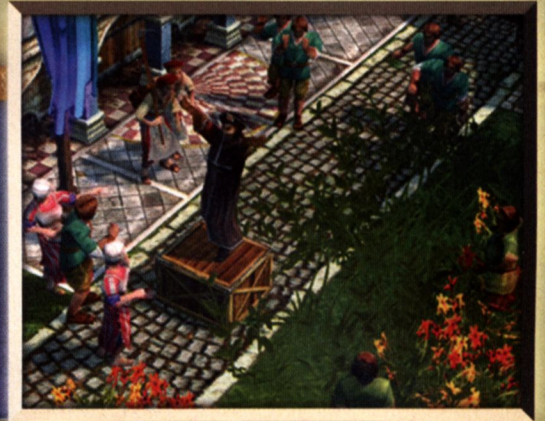
- ✓ Warm, amusing, chaotic, imaginative
- ✓ Well structured & scripted
- ✓ Good supporting cast
- ✓ Genuinely episodic in nature
- ✗ Dialogue sometimes loses 'teh funnel'
- ✗ It's short. But that's half the point

80

Less a dog's dinner, more a banquet

ANNO 1701





Expand your
Horizons





SCARFACE: THE WORLD IS YOURS



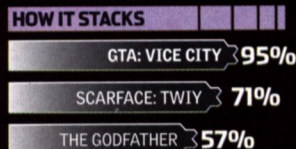
The world is apparently *Will Porter's*. To celebrate, he shoots some people in the face

DEVELOPER Radical Entertainment
 PUBLISHER VU Games
 WEBSITE www.scarfacegame.com
 ETA Out now
 PRICE £29.99

AT A GLANCE...

Hopelessly offensive and hateful, yet simultaneously brings some novel and engaging gameplay to the world of the interactive crime-spree.

System requirements **3**



TO SAY *SCARFACE* is reprehensible is an understatement. It's the worst fears of *Daily Mail* readers condensed into a nugget of abhorrence that's black as night, dense as lead and very rude indeed. It's a crime against cinema too, dancing merrily and shouting 'f***' repeatedly upon the good name that is *Scarface* – taking a landmark piece of film history and changing its ending, message and morals while taking a gigantic shit on any trace of emotion it once engendered.

It's also not a PC game – it's a console game that's practically (and I say 'practically' when I mean 'completely') impossible to play with mouse and keyboard. The people who did the conversion are such monumental idiots that on the save-screen, they have the gall to say, 'Now saving. Please don't turn off your PC' as a console hangover. Even my mother knows how to turn a PC off, and let's face it – any game that thinks a PC audience is liable to randomly jab at the power button is far away from home.

Scarface is yet another console intruder into our precious land, and in many ways can only be seen as the very firmament of noxious evil. Indeed, if you've ever suffered

from depression or have felt yourself liable to self-harm, it would be wise to avoid playing the first three-quarters of an hour of *Scarface*, unless a masked man is holding a gun to your head and reciting biblical text. You'll honestly hate it *that* much.

BUT REALLY...

In other news however, once you're released into the free-roaming meat and two 'Tony f***in' Montana!' veg of the game, you suddenly realise that there's some actual intelligence behind its sheer, horrible gratuitousness. Yes I know... It surprised me too. *Scarface* may blankly remove the humour and knowing intelligence of the *GTA* games it apes (making it seem nothing but pubescent, angry and embarrassing), but it also genuinely brings some real improvements to its crime-business template. Boggles the mind, doesn't it?

Whereas in *GTA*, your varied tasks have always felt rather disparate and unconnected, the reconstruction of Tony Montana's fallen empire provides a real sense of ownership and expansion. Your bank account won't necessarily be

continually sky-rocketing, and you really do feel like you're running some kind of business. To take over an area, you have to find local gangs and rout them out, violently aid local businesses and buy them out as fronts for coke distribution and then kick-start the pricey powder's distribution.

With the money you earn, you can then start hiring henchmen (some of whom you can play as if different talents are required), 'pimping' your lush mansion with tasteless paraphernalia and filling your virtual forecourt with fast cars and boats that can be delivered to you wherever you are on the map with an expletive-ridden phonecall to your hired help.

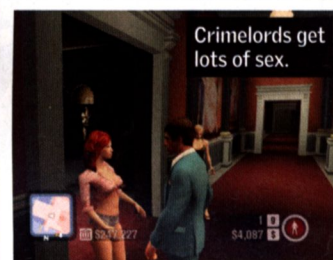
The goons who simply appear in token places in *GTA* games have suddenly taken on an *Evil Genius*-lite system of micro-management – and everything honestly feels as if you're the heart of an expanding empire. Little things like laundering money and saving your game at the bank – rendering it safe from harm through death or arrest – are yet another way that Radical have cleverly integrated the game world and the game itself, with touches like 'negotiating' the bank's take from the



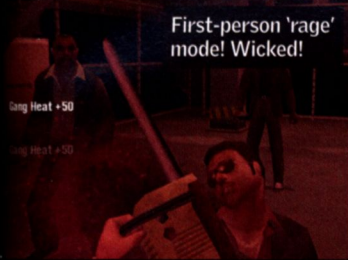
If he was Herbie, he'd go bananas.

Sexy ladies

Get them while they're hot!



The thing about *Scarface* is that whereas its rivals have their titillation clad in irony (*Just Cause*'s volcanic whorehouse and *GTA*'s sheer *GTA*-ness), you wouldn't be surprised if alongside Tony's 'taunt/swear' function there was a key-press that unzipped his flies and waved his bits around. Alongside countless amputations, decapitations, bullets to the kidney and Balls-meters that result in crap first-person killathons and swearing beyond your gran blushing, there's even a way of meeting sexy ladies on your travels. You can chat them up and have them strut around your den saying sexy things as if they were your real girlfriend! Maybe you can do sexy things with them at night! Every single night!



First-person 'rage' mode! Wicked!



"Hello? I'm in the f***in' bath!"



That's right Tony! In the face!

This is an engaging abomination aimed at gutter gamers, yet sprinkled with some pizzazz



Someone will get killed. In a minute.

money through a simple mini-game really adding something to proceedings.

MARCHING POWDER

Also, *Scarface* manages to make crimes feel like crimes. There's only a limited amount of time before you're irretrievably screwed when you're doing misdeeds and the police are hot on your tail – how much time depending on the extent of your crimes and how much you've paid off the cops recently.

Because of the annoyance of the cheery 'You're f***ed!' screen, you get a brilliant feeling of 'should I stay or should I go?' whenever the fuzz turn up at a crime-scene, not least because the penalty for being caught is having all the money and coke you have on you confiscated.

The way to lose heat is quite clever too; a purple circle appears on your map around the scene of your crime which you have to get out of, while also getting out of range

of trailing police cars that have similar, yet smaller, circles of detection around them.

Scarface then: an engaging abomination aimed at gutter gamers, yet sprinkled with an undeniable few keys of pizzazz. But do you honestly want to play a game that lists the vital organs you pierce with bullets? Left kidney, right kidney, left nut, right nut etc. Do you really want to play something with a Balls-meter?

The Godfather was a far inferior game, but at least when you played it you felt you were in the company of a grown-up. Despite design cleverness and an engaging cityscape, there's just no joy here – the simple pleasure of *GTA*'s breathlessly innovative missions or the daft fun of *Just Cause* is nowhere to be seen. I'll admit that deep down, *Scarface* isn't entirely the teenage abomination it first appears to be, but I'd also be a little disappointed in anyone who actually went out and bought it. **PC2**

PCZONE

Graphics An extremely old-gen console affair
Sound Excellent actually
Multiplayer Little friends not invited

- ✓ Genuinely brings in some fresh ideas
- ✓ Feels as if you're building an empire
- ✗ Made for angry American teenagers
- ✗ Deliberately headline-baiting
- ✗ So console it hurts

71

Calm down dear



CAESAR IV

Jon Blyth builds loads of towns in a day – none of them Rome

DEVELOPER Tilted Mill
PUBLISHER Sierra
WEBSITE
www.caesariv.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

FANS OF ROMAN city-building games must feel like they've been invaded by a procession of near-simultaneous Christmases. Or, perhaps, like they've opened a high cupboard, and a couple of precariously stacked Christmases have fallen onto their face.

It's been eight years since *Caesar III* – that's 2,922 days of desolate, featureless savannah in the world of Roman town management. All of a sudden, we've got the Sid-smothered *CivCity: Rome*, and now the big-trumpets return of the *Caesar* franchise. We're privileged to be living through the golden year of post-Republic village development.

Tilted Mill seem like a relatively new company to be taking the *Caesar* development reins from the long heritage of Impressions – until you consider that Tilted Mill was founded by ex-members of the Impressions team. Incidentally, the founder of Impressions is now at Firefly studios – the team behind *CivCity: Rome*. It's like a Mississippi family tree, with less girls and sex, and considerably more town sims.

INFAMY, INFAMY

So, is the excited mountain of froth that we've all produced justified? What have four versions of DirectX added to the mechanics of well-placing and the manufacture of



pottery? Well, it all looks pretty, and it's all in proper 3D, like. As we've come to expect, you can get feedback from your townsfolk and follow them around like a needy god.

Their chirpy in-character responses are along the lines of "Cutting wood for the Empire is my passion!" and "Oh my god, I just farmed a vegetable". All this loveliness comes at a price, though; when you're fully zoomed out on a budding megalopolis, the frame-rate can drop like a randy clown's trousers. And it has to be said, the squareness of the overlay maps look a little brutal and clumsy next to *CivCity*'s spheres of influence.

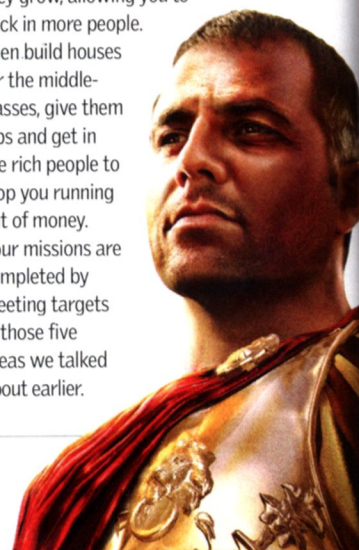
The 'Kingdom' tutorial levels introduce you gently enough to the game's five measures of success; population, culture, favour with Rome, cash money and security. It's pretty much the same as in *Caesar III*, but then I suppose the needs of Roman

towns haven't changed much in the last eight years. Sitting through the tutorials is a worthwhile chore to newcomers. If nothing else, they'll drill into you the basics of starting up a town that won't fall down, as that's what you'll do, five times.

OUTCLASSED

So, you've got your basic three classes of people. The plebs are your basic workforce, who mine clay and are relatively unfussy, even if they don't like living next-door to a pottery factory. The equites provide services, such as tax collection and civil service – they're too posh for wells, and require fountains and bathhouses. Then patricians, who'll pay hefty taxes if you give them a villa and a nice patio, and won't be happy unless you throw posh plazas and theatres at them.

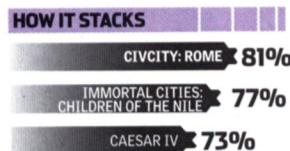
Every town starts the same way; build for the plebs, get some farms down, send people off to get clay, wood, metals, build production units out of town and markets near homes. Once buildings are catered for, they grow, allowing you to pack in more people. Then build houses for the middle-classes, give them jobs and get in the rich people to stop you running out of money. Your missions are completed by meeting targets in those five areas we talked about earlier.



AT A GLANCE...

Can you build a town that would make Caesar go: "I like that town it is nice, thanks boss"? Can you really?

System requirements **2**



A day in the life

Clicking on people makes them talk!



Say something then.

Click "I am thrilled to be a citizen of this budding city!" *click* "Truly, it is a pleasure to carry out my daily duties!" *click* "Look, I like it here, OK?" *click* "I'm harvesting grain. Leave me alone." *click* "Ignore it, darling, it'll go away if we both just ignore it." *click* "What do you want from me? What is it? What can I say that will satisfy you? How can I stop this?" *click* "Right. That's it. Come on, Sandy. We're taking the 68 people we share this hovel with and we're moving to the next town. It can't be worse than this living hell." *pause* *click* "Piss off."

An aqueduct fit for an emperor.



Brave, but ugly.



It all looks pretty, and you can get feedback from your townfolk and follow them around like a needy god

Apart from your usual (struggle-free) class system, you've got to prepare for military action. The *Civilization* series taught us that barbarians roamed the countryside picking on anything that looks like a city, and *Caesar* is no different. Combat was always a feeble part of the *Caesar* games, and it remains so here; but at least it's less of a bother now. Simply despatch your chaps to the enemy, and one terribly animated skirmish later, someone's won.

FORM & FUNCTION

Town-building games – being docile creatures – should be judged on their intuition, functionality and the sense of satisfaction they bring. *Caesar IV* will feel natural to anyone who's played this sort of thing before. Click on a building, the relevant options click up. As for functionality, it can be difficult to figure out a building's radius of influence, as the overlay maps sometimes don't show this; but the information's available in text form from your advisors panel. As for satisfaction, the town-building's fine, but the combat remains unbloody and unconvincing – the work's in the preparation, not the fighting.

Caesar IV is a worthy successor to the *Caesar* family of titles. But chances are, you already know if this is going to be your cup of tea – follow your heart, young governor. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Perfectly good thanks
Sound Classic town-planning themes
Multiplayer Yessir

- ✓ Absorbing
- ✓ Engaging
- ✓ Infinity time sponge
- ✗ Combat is bum
- ✗ No true innovations behind the graphics

73

Caesar, jolly good fellow



That's a lot of cockpit, son.

WINGS OVER EUROPE

WOE is me

DEVELOPER Empire Interactive
PUBLISHER Destineer
WEBSITE www.boldgames.com/products/woe/woe.html
ETA Out now
PRICE £2999

System requirements 1

THE FIRST THING that popped into my mind when *Wings Over Europe: Cold War – Soviet Invasion* (to give it its full name) dropped onto my desk, was that it had two band names in the title. The idea of playing a perfectly adequate (if dated) combat flight simulator dissolved from my mind, to be replaced with hazy scenes of Paul McCartney offering me a piggy back to the fanfare from *The Final Countdown*.

Suddenly, on my ex-Beatle stallion, the world of visually sub-par Cold War action was miles away. Frustrating keyboard mappings were nothing to me. When the instinctive reflex to use the Escape key as a pause button didn't pause the game, instead aborting my mission without a confirmation prompt, I wasn't bothered. How could I be, when Joey Tempest, lead singer of Europe, had just dedicated *Rock The Night* to me?

Reality is all too frequently a total bummer, and coming from my happy



"Those ants are getting bigger."



I say, is that flying over Europe? With wings? You could say...

dreams to playing *Wings Over Europe* is a perfect example. Although it's a genuinely passable simulation, the same thrills are to be found – in a considerably more thrilling form – in a dozen other places. *Wings Over Europe* looks and plays like a game from 1999, and I went through all the hassle of living through 1999 with the strict understanding that things were going to get better.

To end on an upbeat note, *Wings Over Europe's* American subtitle is one of the best I've seen. 'Cold War Gone Hot' is so hammy that you can just picture a US General saying: "Gentlemen, I'm upgrading our defence status to tepid." It's just a shame that the most fun I had in this game was with my own flights of fancy.

Jon Blyth

PCZONE

52

Eject the program

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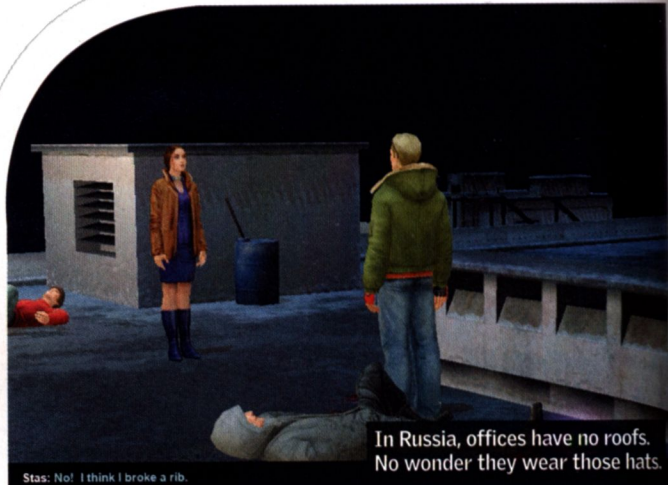
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THE ORIGINAL DAWN OF WAR



Stas: No! I think I broke a rib.

In Russia, offices have no roofs.
No wonder they wear those hats.

NIGHT WATCH

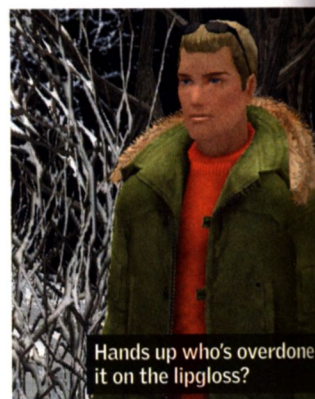
Night-time ain't the right time

DEVELOPER Nival Interactive
PUBLISHER Ascaron Entertainment
WEBSITE www.night-watch-game.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99

System requirements 2

MOST OF RUSSIA'S exports, with the exception of Anna Kournikova and hard vodka, are not incredibly popular among the Western masses. *Night Watch* (the film), on the other hand, was an surprisingly enjoyable thriller, and – as we expected, considering it was chockful of vampires and sorcery – those crazy ex-communists have gone and made a game as well. As you might have guessed from its relegation to half-page status though, it's a bit shit.

Coming in that top-down turn-based strategy form that Eastern Europe so loves, *Night Watch* is – literally – lost in translation. Dialogue in the game is laughably bad, mostly consisting of juvenile quips and characters threatening to "kick each others' asses", while voice-acting remains at 'genitals-in-beehive' levels



Hands up who's overdone
it on the lipgloss?

of pain. "Who goes there?" asks the train driver. "It's me, passenger," our hero replies. "Passenger?" We're just as confused as you are.

Gameplay-wise, the combat system is easy to get and competent enough to keep you occupied for a moment, but it gets repetitive and never adds anything new to the mix. The skills and inventory system again are functional, but lack the polish and depth present in other titles in the genre that are so, so much better.

This is possibly worth playing for a chuckle at the awkward voice-acting, but other than that, there's not much to recommend. Unfortunately, *Night Watch* is not from Russia with love.

Andy Robinson

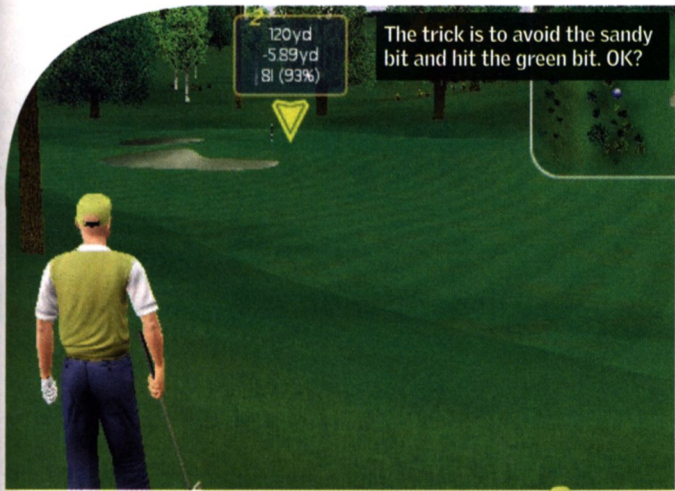


It's cold in Russia, you see.

PCZONE

38

Nightly night



PROSTROKE GOLF: WORLD TOUR 2007

On par, on par, stick
it up your jumper



DEVELOPER Gusto Games
PUBLISHER Oxygen Elite
WEBSITE www.prostrokegolf.com/UK/
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

System requirements 1

IT'S DIFFICULT TO think fondly of a game that's a symbol of privilege and exclusivity. But then, it's impossible to hate the idea of hitting a stupid pocked ball as hard as you can. Even if you hate it, it's hard to make jokes about a sport that's traditionally played by comedians. And *Caddyshack* was a cool film. You might say I have mixed feelings about golf; and yet, I've always enjoy golfing games. From the C64's *Leader Board*, to the stupid mini-golf game that came free in my mobile, I just enjoy pissing around with a sand wedge.

ProStroke Golf may not be pretty – and sure as pies is pies, PSG ain't pretty – but it's made out of proper golf. *Tiger Woods* may have smooth mouse gestures and an interface

requiring minimal tuition, but those very features wrestle and subdue the living soul – the pernickety faff – of golf. Bruce Forsyth doesn't click on a button that says 'Punch'. He moves stance, foot weighting, spin, makes that weird vr-vr-vr sound, with no need for a pop-up menu. That's the PSG way, and it's slower and more involved, but at least you're involved in the swing beyond accidentally punching your speakers.

It's not all fairways and short putts; the strength/accuracy meter feels shockingly inaccurate and sluggish. It's a part of every single shot you take, so more time spent making this aspect feel professional would have done wonders for the overall game. That said, you still have an enjoyable, serious game of golf here, with decent commentary and a course builder for cock-shaped links. If you have a knowledge and love of golf, this might give you a more substantial – if less fun – game than *Tiger Woods*.

Jon Blyth



PCZONE
58
One wood, wouldn't one

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RTIDA

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

Indiezone



Martin Korda tackles goblins, ghouls, demons, dark lords and things that go boom in this month's indie gaming round-up...



STYRATEG

DEVELOPER Rake In Grass WEBSITE www.rakeingrass.com
PRICE \$19.95 (£11)

THIS MONTH'S AWARD for the most unpronounceable title (and of course best indie game) goes to this excellent, if overly brief turn-based strategy-fantasy adventure. Grasping your destiny like a fist full of nettle-covered tenners, you must save a mythical land from the hordes of evil, guiding your hero and his companions through a series of levels packed with ruins, monsters, towns and ye olde shopse. Limited to a set number of turns per level, you must venture into the wilderness to complete a series of quests, with the option of taking a detour to spank up some nasties and get gold and magical items.

Hugely simplistic in nature *Styrateg* may be, but while it lasts, it's incredibly compelling and more addictive than pulling strands of dead skin from your elbows. Packed with magic, combat and adventure, and backed up by one of the best indie game musical scores we've heard for a while, *Styrateg* is well worth the exertion of sitting up in your chair and taking notice with an interested exclamation of delight.



It might not look like much, but it's great fun.



Horses modelled on Playmobil.



Arena mode offers a nice alternative to the story-driven Arcade mode.

RAGE OF MAGIC II

DEVELOPER Gamebrew WEBSITE www.rageofmagic.com PRICE \$19.95 (£11)

HARKING BACK TO the halcyon days of *Double Dragon* and *Golden Axe*, *Rage Of Magic II* is a side-scrolling beat 'em up which combines melee and magical attacks into one all-out-action retro romp. Driven by a nonsensical plot that charts the story of a power struggle in a mystical land, you must navigate your way through a myriad of increasingly taxing levels, beating seven shades of excrement out of hordes of enemies. Despite the trite storyline, low quality sound and jerky animation, this hack-and-slash

adventure does prove surprisingly entertaining, thanks to a superbly intuitive keyboard layout, lashings of unadulterated violence and more enemy types than you can shake a sapling at. What's more, you constantly find yourself controlling different characters, meaning the game takes longer to get stale than a vacuum-packed loaf of Kingsmill Long Life. If you hanker for the glory days of side-scrolling beat 'em ups, then *Rage Of Magic II* might just be the game that brings the past flooding back.



Contenders, ready?



AGE OF CASTLES

DEVELOPER Anarchy Enterprises **WEBSITE** www.anarchyent.com **PRICE** \$1999 (£11)

AGE OF CASTLES casts you as a king in a mythical land, who must lead his people to victory over the forces of evil by building up a castle and conquering enemy armies.

Things start off in an agonisingly pedestrian manner as you shift around your resources to build your castle, earn gold and amass a fighting force. In fact, the game's early stages are about as gripping as a dead man's handshake.

However, it's not long before things start to liven up and as you delve into the game's later stages, you can really

start to bolster your powers, while the turn-based battles become far more tense affairs, despite their overly simplistic mechanic.

While *Age Of Castles* is certainly far more entertaining than early impressions suggest, it's likely that strategy fans will find it somewhat threadbare, while its overly steep price tag (for what it is) means it's hard to recommend it to non-strategy fans either. Shame really, as with a bit more depth, it could have been a corker.

PCZONE
61



HACK IT

DEVELOPER The Core Team **WEB** thecoreteam.de **PRICE** \$14.95 (£8)



WHAT'S THIS? A tense hacking game that sees you infiltrating government agencies in order to divulge secrets of paramount importance to global stability and thwart a dastardly plot to plunge the Middle East into crisis? Well, sadly, no, as *Hack It* is actually a 3D sliding puzzle game that sees you pushing around blocks to create a circuit before a timer runs out. And that's about the size of it, I'm afraid.

However, while its approach may be more simplistic than arithmetic for the under-fives (months), the game's execution really is top-notch, with a bold graphical style and pounding soundtrack raising the

cumbersome pastime of sliding blocks around a grid to borderline levels of respectability.

If you're mad about puzzles (we're talking eating-cereal-while-sitting-in-your-own-faeces levels of neurosis here), then you might like *Hack It*. If puzzles aren't your bag, you won't

PCZONE
50

PCZONE TOP 5 INDIE GAMES



NEW STAR SOCCER 3

www.newstarsoccer.com | Reviewed issue 164

This novel take on the beautiful game melds *Sensible Soccer* with *Football Manager* and *Goal* (the film) to provide the most complete indie gaming footy experience currently available. Create a player, choose their position and then lead them from obscurity to superstardom without succumbing to the pitfalls of fame.



MORNING'S WRATH

www.morningswrath.com | Reviewed Issue 163

A superbly written, beautifully crafted isometric RPG that leads you on an epic adventure to save your land from destruction. A must-buy for any self-respecting RPG fan.



FATE

www.playfate.com | Reviewed issue 158

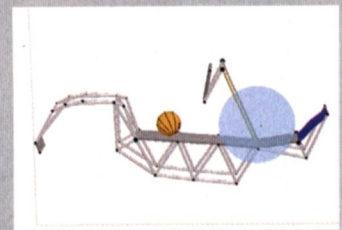
A compelling fantasy RPG, which takes the action-RPG formula of *Diablo* and wraps it in a charismatic, cartoonish package. Oodles of depth and hours of excellent gameplay.



LUGARU: THE RABBIT'S FOOT

www.wolfire.com | Reviewed issue 162

An ambitious and extremely entertaining third-person action/adventure in which you play a killer rabbit bent on revenge after his entire family is murdered. Inspired stuff.



ARMADILLO RUN

www.armadillorun.com | Reviewed issue 171

Physics-based puzzles have never been so much fun. Set up a mix of ramps, pulleys, catapults etc and navigate an armadillo to a specific end location. Simple, yet brilliant.

BUDGET

Broke + cheap = this page is for you

**BUDGET
GAME
OF THE
MONTH**

RISE OF NATIONS

PUBLISHER Xplosiv WEBSITE www.xplosiv.net PRICE £9.99

IN THE FACE of *Age Of Empires III*, a new age of *Civ* and its own (unfortunately rather ignored at retail) progeny *Rise Of Legends*, should you still consider purchasing *Rise Of Nations* at a knock-down price?

A primary reason to say 'no' would perhaps be the visuals, which were ropey even back in the day (the day in question being one in 2003). Beyond this however, *Rise Of Nations* remains an eminently playable experience. In describing the game to a layman you might say 'it's *Civilization* but an RTS that looks a lot like *Age Of Empires* but

also has a *Total War*-style strategic map' - but you'd honestly be doing it an injustice. You can get lost for hours in its empire-building and 'Risk' aura, meaning that even if the economics bits can get a little overbearing, it still comfortably holds its own these days. If someone came knocking, I'd probably direct them to more recent efforts (*AOEIII*, if I'm being honest) - but you can't deny that behind the graphical mire, *RON* still has a spring in its step.

Will Porter

**PCZONE
82**



Pleasant beach, unspoilt by tourism.



You do *RON, RON, RON*, you do *RON, RON*.

Tsar Peter The Great - great daisy more like!

ACT OF WAR: DIRECT ACTION

PUBLISHER Mastertronic WEBSITE www.mastertronic.com PRICE £9.99

MULTIMEDIA USED TO mean a CD player and a free copy of Encarta. Apart from turning your PC into the least efficient CD player in the world, one benefit of CD-ROMs was the introduction of FMV cut-scenes into games. Despite having perfectly good televisions, it was unexpected and thrilling to see proper faces make words on our monitors.

Even today, with the Source engine giving us ever more realistic winks and smiles, *Act Of War's* news-report opening and military cut-scenes do something no engine can properly mimic; pure, ham-handed macho human bullshit. It's brilliant, and whether you enjoy them sincerely or with irony, either way, they get you in the mood for this excellent RTS game.

The absurd, overblown plot is a perfect shroud for a game that still looks good and plays well - even if more than a little

dwarfed by *Company Of Heroes*. It's classic RTS gaming that takes the C&C template and lovingly rips stuff out and replaces it with its own grand style. It feels like it works, and 18 months on, *Act Of War: Direct Action* is still capable of holding its own in a scrap.

Jon Blyth

**PCZONE
80**



We miss *Airwolf*. Sniff.



Jet power: in both planes and gladiators.



Trees and tanks: mankind vs nature.

**THIS MONTH
PCZONE
SAVED MONEY BY...**

A nice woman on the More>Than phonenumber explained to Will how insurance worked
Saving: £150 for a smashed camera

Steve being too cash-strapped to buy a book
Saving: £6.79 to spend on food

Clare getting two-for-one cocktails
Saving: £4.95



ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3

PUBLISHER Atari WEBSITE www.mastertronic.com PRICE £999

ROLLERCOASTER, OF LOOOOVE.

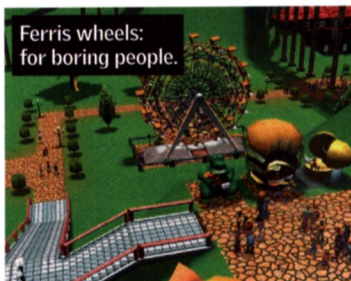
Rollercoaster, a-oooh-oooh-oooh. So goes The Ohio Players' classic song about rollercoasters in which the honey lady gets stabbed in the recording studio and her dying scream is imprinted on the track forever more. The butt of almost every metaphor, the rolling and coasting theme parks have enjoyed much representation in the games market, as well as adequate exposure in the music industry. At the top of the pile of rollercoaster tycoon games is, funnily enough, the *RollerCoaster Tycoon* series.

Veterans of the series went positively ape-shit about *RollerCoaster Tycoon 3*, in a bad way too. They didn't like Chris Sawyer's absence, they outright didn't like Frontier Developments (make *Elite 4*, Braben!), and they didn't like the bugs (understandably enough). Still, all the bugs have been fixed now, and the game's

only a tenner. Ardent fans aside, I reckon *RollerCoaster Tycoon 3*, despite its ups and downs, is the best rollercoaster tycoon game you can get.

Steve Hogarty

PCZONE
76



Ferris wheels: for boring people.



"Seen *Final Destination 3*?"



AGE OF MYTHOLOGY

PUBLISHER Xplosiv WEBSITE www.xplosiv.net PRICE £999

FOR THE SECOND time in as many pages, I decry a game for its ugliness even though it's of venerable 2002 vintage – but then again, *Age Of Mythology* looked like a slapped arse compared to its rivals even when it was released. So don't let the dogs loose just yet.

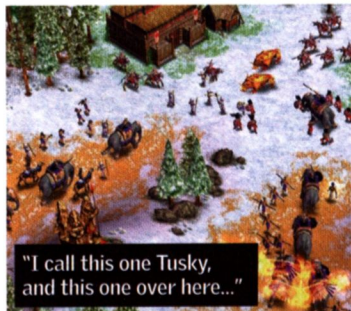
If you're an *Age Of Empires* nut, then you should by all means make use of its budgetary presence to bump up your back catalogue – it remains an intriguing strategy affair with a neat storyline. A tenner does seem a bit much though. Potential buyers should perhaps check out *Stronghold: Legends* first (p78) – which may not have so much of the civilization-management, but still plays some similarly neat tricks for a relatively low price.

Will Porter

PCZONE
74



Patiently, the giant beetle lay in wait.



"I call this one Tusky, and this one over here..."

And the rest...

Games that Lidl will start importing from Germany any day now...



RAVEN SHIELD: GOLD
£9.99, MASTERTRONIC

It was pretty good at the time, though recent *Rainbow Six* affair *Lockdown* was hardly edge-of-the-seat stuff, but *Raven Shield's* appeal has waned. Still, for low-spec bargain-basement thrills it provides some solid, if predictable, squad violence.

PCZONE
63



DUNGEON SIEGE: LEGENDS OF ARANNA
£9.99, XPLOSIV

There's no point in getting this: *Dungeon Siege II* is fairly cheap now and that did the self-same thing a bit better and had a plot and everything – only the flow of time dimmed our enthusiasm towards it. Still a nice hack-and-slash though.

PCZONE
55



HOUSE OF THE DEAD III
£4.99, MASTERTRONIC

Is your PC actually a Dreamcast? If so, then by all means buy *House Of The Dead III*, remove your lightgun from its holster and shoot away. If your PC isn't a lump of defunct Japanese console, then stay far, far away.

PCZONE
32



"Damn, all the best parking spots are taken."

PCZONE TOP 5 BUDGET BUYS



1

FAR CRY

£9.99, MASTERTRONIC

Better than *HL2*? So some say. The best non-gravity gun shooter of recent years anyway. An island paradise with extra explosions and terrific enemy AI.



2

THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

£4.99, MASTERTRONIC

Bethesda's classic free-roaming RPG now offers the cheapest goblin-bashing around. Essential stuff.



3

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

£9.99, FOCUS MULTIMEDIA

Glorious story-telling, engaging gameplay and the greenest lips in gaming-dom make *BG&E* a must-buy. Deep, imaginative, brilliant.



4

ROME: TOTAL WAR

£9.99, GSP WHITE LABEL

Long-term chart-topper, *Rome: TW's* glorious real-time battles feature thousands of units blocking each other to bits. A bloody must-buy.



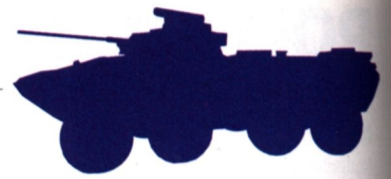
5

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY

£9.99, BESTSELLER

Great melee, sneaky stealth and oodles of lawless violence – not all console conversions are a pile of old poo.

BUYER'S GUIDE



The bestest games your money can buy...

PCZONE TOP 5 GAMES BEGINNING WITH G

- 1 GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY**
PCZ ISSUE: 131
- 2 GUILD WARS: PROPHECIES**
PCZ ISSUE: 156
- 3 GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS**
PCZ ISSUE: 157
- 4 GRAND THEFT AUTO**
PCZ ISSUE: 58
- 5 GTR 2**
PCZ ISSUE: 173



PCZONE TOP 5 BIGGEST CROWD DRAWS

- 1 STAR WARS AND LEGO (LEGO STAR WARS)**
PCZ ISSUE: 155
- 2 WEEING MINI GAMES (7 SINS)**
PCZ ISSUE: 158
- 3 LES DENNIS (FAMILY FORTUNES)**
PCZ ISSUE: 111
- 4 BOOBS AND SEX (VIRTUALLY JENNA)**
PCZ ISSUE: 156
- 5 CRAP PUZZLES (THE DA VINCI CODE)**
PCZ ISSUE: 170

PCZONE TOP 5 BIGGEST GAMING DISAPPOINTMENTS

- 1 DAIKATANA**
PCZ ISSUE: 91
- 2 BREED**
PCZ ISSUE: 141
- 3 DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR**
PCZ ISSUE: 137
- 4 CS: CONDITION ZERO**
PCZ ISSUE: 132
- 5 EVERY MATRIX GAME EVER**
PCZ ISSUE: VARIOUS



Shooters

Must buy!



HALF-LIFE 2
PCZ Issue: 148 - 97%

Everyone knew this would be good, but no-one quite expected the tour de force that Valve managed to pull off. Easily a contender for the best game of all time, *Half-Life 2* is just one stunning set-piece after another, and is guaranteed to leave you dribbling with awe. Be warned though, a (fast) online connection is needed for Valve's mandatory Steam delivery service.



BATTLEFIELD 2
PCZ Issue: 157 - 94%

If it's online action you want, look no further. *BF2* sets the gold standard for team-based shooting, with huge 64-player maps, squad and commander modes and the best graphics ever. Just make sure you have a ninja PC.



FAR CRY
PCZ Issue: 140 - 93%

In many eyes, Crytek's shooter outweighs even the mighty *Half-Life 2* in its tension, tactics and expansive level design. It's a mighty achievement with seemingly freeform action and the best sniping money can buy.



HL2: EPISODE ONE
PCZ Issue: 170 - 91%

Suffering slightly from thematic overlap from *HL2*, *Ep One* nevertheless contains the greatest moments from the entire *HL* series. Warm, funny and thrilling, it may be short, but the first five minutes are worth the entry fee alone.



CALL OF DUTY 2
PCZ Issue: 162 - 91%

Brutal, relentless and totally gripping, the WWII shooter sequel packs more action into a single level than most pack into an entire game. Epic scale battles and intense drama. *World War II* at its unforgiving best.



F.E.A.R.
PCZ Issue: 160 - 90%

With more shocks and scares than an episode of *Rentaghost* (and a much higher body count), *F.E.A.R.* pushes the shooter part of FPS to the limit. It might not be the scariest game ever, but it will make you jump.



BATTLEFIELD 2142
PCZ Issue: 174 - 86%

Adding bucketfuls of novelty mechanical future-warfare, *BF2142* pushes the *BF* formula ever closer to perfection with its exciting new game mode - despite not being revolutionary by its own merits.

Strategy

Must buy!



COMPANY OF HEROES
PCZ Issue: 173 - 93%

The fact that *Company Of Heroes* has knocked *Rome: Total War* from its strategy throne is testament enough to how utterly refined and slick it is. Relic have taken the best bits from strategy games and stripped out the crap, leaving you with a game that's fun, intelligent, accessible, taxing, tactical and exciting. And with that many positive words in one sentence, you know it must be good. Essential.



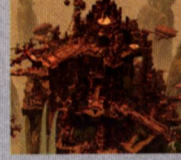
ROME: TOTAL WAR
PCZ Issue: 148 - 93%

Mixing breathtaking 3D with troop numbers reminiscent of a Hollywood epic - along with staggering historical accuracy - *Rome* is a stunning strategy masterpiece. Hell, how many other titles are made into TV shows?



CIVILIZATION IV
PCZ Issue: 162 - 92%

A Buyer's Guide without a *Civ* game would be a sorry, sorry place, and luckily the latest version does the business with aplomb. Violent Buddhist Romans take over the world.



RISE OF NATIONS: RISE OF LEGENDS
PCZ Issue: 168 - 91%

Takes the great gameplay of *RON*, improves on it with elements from *Civ IV* and *Total War* and wraps the whole lot in a gorgeous sci-fi setting. An RTS bursting with innovation and imagination.



LOTR: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH
PCZ Issue: 149 - 91%

Although the *LOTR* RTS doesn't hold a candle to the *Total War* franchise, there's nothing quite like ordering a Balrog around for guaranteed strategy fun.



SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WORLD WAR II
PCZ Issue: 144 - 90%

The strategy of *Commandos* meets the fun of *Cannon Fodder* in this top-down game of tactics. Being the underdog has never been so much fun, and the rumble of tanks never so worrying.



RISE OF NATIONS
PCZ Issue: 129 - 90%

One of the best of the 'last generation' of empire-builders, *Rise Of Nations* - coupled with exemplary expansion pack *Thrones And Patriots* - is a uniquely satisfying and addictive treatment of the *Civ* genre.

Action/Adventure

Must buy!



MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE
PCZ Issue: 136 - 93%

The chosen poison for certain PCZ staffers after a long hard day, Payne's second outing is perhaps the most pixel-perfect example of joy-through-excessive-destruction on the market. Slicker than slick, breathtaking and quite beautiful, *Max Payne 2* provides the greatest gaming kicks that money can buy. It's extremely short, but so tense, well designed and replayable that you just won't care.



GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
PCZ Issue: 155 - 92%

To think that the simple top-down car game has turned into this - a work of creative genius. Violent, brutal, smutty, freeform and hilarious - *San Andreas* is the summit of gaming achievement.



SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY
PCZ Issue: 154 - 91%

A tour de force from Ubisoft, *Chaos Theory* takes the *Splinter Cell* format and runs with it in solo, co-op and the now well-established spies vs mercs multiplayer. Smooth, lithe and good with a knife.



FAHRENHEIT
PCZ Issue: 159 - 90%

Murder most foul, with you as the killer. This twisting, turning, brilliantly-told plot features multiple character control, split-screen tension, branching scenes and several endings. From the brains behind *The Nomad Soul*.



PSYCHONAUTS
PCZ Issue: 156 - 90%

Clever, witty, impeccably detailed and absolutely off its rocker - *Psychonauts* is proof that the anarchic edge of LucasArts hasn't completely left us. A slightly flawed game in some respects, but still a dazzling feat.



BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
PCZ Issue: 138 - 89%

We heap praise on this game on a monthly basis, but it's for a reason. Michel Ancel's superb journey through the strange land of Hillis is nothing short of storytelling magic. It's cheap now, so go out and buy it.



PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE TWO THRONES
PCZ Issue: 164 - 86%

The shirtless wonder finally makes it into the Buyer's Guide. Not that any of his outings can be considered bad games, but *TTT* manages to get all the ingredients just right this time around.

MMOs

Must buy!



WORLD OF WARCRAFT
PCZ Issue: 152 - 95%
Blizzard's recreation of the classic strategy world in MMO form doesn't disappoint. Beautiful to look at, absorbing to play and with more content than you can shake a magic stick at.



EVERQUEST II
PCZ Issue: 150 - 95%
A *Star Trek* to *WOW*'s *Star Wars*, *EQII* gives the original a much needed lick of paint, a whole new world to play in and a greater sense of depth and immersion. A time-sink in the true, classic sense.



GUILD WARS
PCZ Issue: 156 - 94%
How to make a gaming genre accessible to the masses. It shines with polish, thought and lack of monthly subscription fees. Newbies can feel at home too, thanks to a totally skills-based set-up.



EVE ONLINE
PCZ Issue: 130 - 88%
Elite online has been a long-held fantasy and this space sim is the closest yet to making it a reality. Its slow pace belies the options on offer, from mining or trading to piracy - it's up to you.



CITY OF HEROES
PCZ Issue: 155 - 86%
Nothing beats the feeling of spandex and fire-beams shooting from your eyes. This super-powered MMO lets you live all those heroic dreams to the full. Nietzsche would have a field day.

Simulation

Must buy!



X3: REUNION
PCZ Issue: 162 - 92%
Finally, a space sim to better *X2: The Threat*, and it just happens to be the sequel. Possibly the best-looking game ever to appear on a PC. Plus, it plays well too.



IL-2 STURMOVIK: FORGOTTEN BATTLES
PCZ Issue: 128 - 92%
While flight sims are becoming rarer and rarer, at least the quality remains high. None more so than this ultra-classy WWII combat sim. Chocks away, comrade!



MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2004: A CENTURY OF FLIGHT
PCZ Issue: 133 - 89%
No, you don't shoot things, no there's no mission structure, yes there's the best non-combat flight experience to date. History can be fun.



FREELANCER
PCZ Issue: 128 - 84%
If *X2* is too slow for you, *Freelancer* should fit the bill. Plenty of trading, bounty-hunting and space piracy, but with the emphasis on action rather than realism. Space has never been this much fun.



FALCON 4.0: ALLIED FORCE
PCZ Issue: 158 - 82%
An example of fanbase enthusiasm saving a once-dead series, *Falcon 4.0* lives on thanks to the dedication of its players. The best modern-day fighter sim on the market.

Driving/Racing

Must buy!



GTR 2
PCZ Issue: 173 - 92%
Can't afford a Ferrari? Then pick up this scarily realistic driving sim and race the car of your dreams, complete with an improved driving model, new modes and many other improvements.



GT LEGENDS
PCZ Issue: 161 - 92%
While *GTR* takes care of modern-day racing, *GT Legends* does the business for historical driving. A natural successor to *Grand Prix Legends*, it's like the swinging '60s never ended.



GTR
PCZ Issue: 153 - 90%
As real as it gets. Probably. The complete driving solution on a PC, with all the drifting, shunting and racing you need. Invest in a decent force-feedback steering wheel and pedals set-up though.



LIVE FOR SPEED
PCZ Issue: 158 - 90%
Online racing at its best. Realistic handling, hilarious crashes and a racing community second to none. On the right servers that is. A remarkable achievement by such a small team.



NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED
PCZ Issue: 163 - 88%
Thrill-packed racer from EA this time with the emphasis on high-speed police chases and notoriety factors. You can still make like Westwood with the car pimping though.

God games

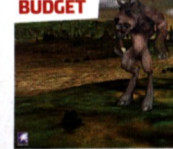
Must buy!



THE MOVIES
PCZ Issue: 162 - 95%
Life as a movie mogul, games don't get better than this. Not only a god/management game par excellence, but also a complete home movie-making kit. Brilliant.



BLACK & WHITE 2
PCZ Issue: 161 - 93%
The original split opinion, and this sequel does the same. We love it though, and think it's erased all the problems as well as adding plenty of new options to boot. It's gorgeous too.



BLACK & WHITE
PCZ Issue: 150 - 90%
Lionhead's controversial vision brought out your good/bad side and featured an ambitious mix of role-playing, strategy and great AI. It can now be yours for a mere fiver, making it a god among mortals.



EVIL GENIUS
PCZ Issue: 147 - 84%
Ever wanted to say "No Mr Bond, I expect you to die", or create giant evil lairs inside hollow volcanoes? Well now you can with this great megalomaniac sim. It's always fun being bad.



VEGAS: MAKE IT BIG
PCZ Issue: 135 - 84%
An in-depth tycoon game with all the 3D graphical glitz and glamour of Vegas itself. Provide hotels, casinos and over-priced magic shows that suck the money out of the punters.

Sport

Must buy!



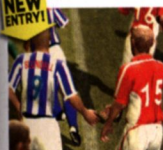
PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5
PCZ Issue: 161 - 93%
Football, football, football. Morning, noon and night. The beautiful game in a beautiful game. Not only the best version of *Pro Evo* ever, also the best footy game ever.



FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006
PCZ Issue: 162 - 90%
One year on and the best footy management game is even better. Quick Tactics, half-time team-talks, physio reports - changes are small but add up to a terrific whole.



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2006
PCZ Issue: 161 - 85%
Travel through time playing Tiger Woods throughout history. Only in an EA Sports game. *Tiger 06* is the best PC golf game yet, mainly thanks to the two career modes.



FIFA 07
PCZ Issue: 174 - 84%
EA's come up trumps with the latest *FIFA*. PES-style controls, great ball physics and a decent management option combine with EA's usual top presentation to make this the best *FIFA* yet.



NHL 06
PCZ Issue: 160 - 84%
Ice hockey may not be the UK's number one sporting pastime, but that doesn't make EA Sports' incarnation of it any less fun. Exciting, breathless and violent ball-out fun for the whole family.

RPGs

Must buy!



THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION
PCZ Issue: 167 - 95%
Oblivion's sublime graphics, intuitive character-creation and massive freeform gameplay put paid to the myth that you have to own a beard to enjoy RPGs.



KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC
PCZ Issue: 137 - 94%
KOTOR is the best *Star Wars* game of recent years. Moving, dramatic and fairly adult in tone, it also has a hefty dose of lightsabers to keep you happy.



THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND
PCZ Issue: 116 - 94%
Possibly the most intimidating, yet wonderful game we've played - the breadth and depth of *Morrowind* remains a remarkable achievement.



DEUS EX
PCZ Issue: 93 - 94%
This remains the benchmark in FPS RPGs. Twisting sci-fi plots, exciting freeform levels and some moments of pure exhilaration and drama help retain *Deus Ex* as the alpha male of the gaming world.



NEVERWINTER NIGHTS
PCZ Issue: 118 - 91%
It may not have the depth of *Fallout*, but the customisation options in this are so extensive that it's been granted a very long life. Still a wonderfully immersive game.

INCOMING!

All approximate monthly dates are correct at the time of going to press

November

BIONICLE HEROES	EIDOS
BLITZKRIEG 2: FALL OF THE REICH	ASCARON
CATZ	UBISOFT
CRICKET 07	EA
DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES	BUENA VISTA GAMES
DOGZ	UBISOFT
DUCATI: WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP	LEXICON ENTERTAINMENT
F.E.A.R.: EXTRACTION POINT	VU GAMES
HEROES OF MIGHT & MAGIC V: HAMMERS OF FATE	UBISOFT
IL-2 STURMOVIK: 1946	UBISOFT
MADE MAN	MASTERTRONIC
MEDIAEVAL II: TOTAL WAR	SEGA
NEED FOR SPEED: CARBON	EA
NEVERWINTER NIGHTS 2	ATARI
PHANTASY STAR UNIVERSE	SEGA
RACE	EIDOS
RAINBOW SIX: VEGAS	UBISOFT
STAR TREK: LEGACY	BETHESDA
TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED	ATARI
WARHAMMER: MARK OF CHAOS	NAMCO
WORLD OF WARCRAFT: THE BURNING CRUSADE	VU GAMES

Late 2006

INFERNAL	PLAYLOGIC
LORD OF THE RINGS ONLINE: SHADOWS OF ANGMAR	CODEMASTERS
LOTR: BFME2 - THE RISE OF THE WITCH-KING	EA
MYST ONLINE: URU LIVE	GAMETAP
RAYMAN RAVING RABBIDS	UBISOFT
RESIDENT EVIL 4	UBISOFT
SAVAGE 2: A TORTURED SOUL	TBA
SONIC RIDERS	SEGA
SPELLFORCE 2: DRAGON STORY	JOWOOD
THE WITCHER	CD PROJEKT

Magazines
aren't for
reading...

they're for
reloading.

The logo for 'jolt online gaming' features the word 'jolt' in a bold, blue, lowercase font with a yellow lightning bolt striking through the 'o'. Below it, the words 'online gaming' are written in a smaller, blue, lowercase font.

jolt
online gaming

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

Better gaming through technology



Butter fingers

I DROPPED MY PHONE the other day, and I was really annoyed about it, because dropping phones never used to be such a big deal. My first Motorola bounced off the ground on at least 84,000 occasions, and each time my only concern was whether I'd been cut off. Because then I'd have to waste time playing engaged-tag with the other party, and when I finally got through I'd feel compelled to lie. "No idea what happened there mate," I'd say, brushing dirt from the mouthpiece.

Chunky, ugly and capable of shrugging off all manner of abuse on their travels, '90s phones were built to be properly mobile. Today, the same devices are so packed with features that at least six of them stop working when they receive even a minor knock. I only have to have to dab the brakes in my car to have my phone's battery fall out and the camera I never use return to its default settings.

When it comes to a proper fall, my heart stops the moment I see the thing disconnected from my hand and en route to the ground. Contacts, photos, movies, music and next week's appointments flash past my eyes. How will I know when my haircut is now?

Technology is marching on at such a pace that its creators have forgotten that users need more than just features. We want something that just plain works, and keeps working when accidentally dropped into a pint of Löwenbräu. Please.

Wandy

Phil Wand, hardware editor

NICKEL RADEON

X1950 Pro puts the boot in

WE THOUGHT THAT the GeForce 7900 GS (issue 174, 91%) would take up residence in the Buyer's Guide, with its serious performance and tiny price tag. Unless ATI came up with a new product offering more performance and features for similar money, no Radeon looked capable of making it in the mainstream arena.

Thing is, it looks like ATI have done just that. The X1950 Pro is based on the RV570 graphics core, and as such is quite different to other cards bearing the same number. The PCIe single-slotter features a 575MHz core, 1,380MHz

memory, 36 pixel shaders – the 7900 GS has just 10 – and its performance ends up just shy of the X1900XT. ATI even make a bold claim that the Pro is not that far behind the £400 7900 GTX 512.

The X1950 Pro is also the first Radeon to tuck its CrossFire connectors internally, and to do away with the need for separate Master and Slave cards. When running a dual setup, the drivers make the assignments for you.



Expect to see this new Raddy in the Buyer's Guide soon.

GALE FORCE TEN

NVIDIA to launch new DirectX 10 cards

FANCY BUYING YOURSELF a nice Christmas present? The new flagship GeForce 8800 GTX and second-in-command GTS will be here shortly (around November), offering full DirectX-compliance and up to 768MB of GDDR-3 RAM.

Based around NVIDIA's new G80 graphics processor, the GTX has a core speed of 575MHz and 1,800MHz memory. It also promises 86GB per second memory bandwidth, 128 shader units and a fill-rate of



close to 40 billion pixels per second. The GTS has a 500MHz core, 128MB less RAM and a per-second bandwidth of 40GB on offer. Both are dual-slot and with dual-link DVI, VIVO and HDTV.



HOT NEWS

ATI are set to release a £99 card in late October which promises benchmark results not far behind the 7900 GS.

NEWS ROUND-UP

Still sure you want to make the move to Vista? Because Microsoft's licensing of its new OS looks set to be more restrictive than ever. As an example, you're only allowed to install the new Windows twice, meaning if you regularly upgrade your motherboard or other key components, you're going to have to fork out for a new box of Windows. Add in some of the crazy, ill-conceived crap like DRM, and 'security' measures which amount to little more than beating the user over the head with confirmation dialogs, and it's a mass migration to Apple just waiting to happen. www.microsoft.com/vista

Dell's new 207WFP 20-inch widescreen LCD, the cheaper brother of the UltraSharp 2007WFP, should be on sale now at the Dell website for not much more than £250. The 1680x1050 panel has a 5ms response time, making it ideal for gamers looking to widen their view on the world. The budget 207WFP lacks a USB hub and assorted video inputs, but if it's anywhere near as good as the benchmark 3007WFP, it's definitely worth saving for. www.dell.co.uk

WARNING:
THIS MONTH'S
HARD WORDS

BY STEVE HOGARTY

BLITZMAX: What Hitler demanded of the Luftwaffe after they said they were already blitzing as hard as they could. **SECONDARY DRIVE:** "Well, that was a fun drive, shall we have another one, consecutively?" **CLAMPING MECHANISM:** Pretty sure this was part of the DeLorean which was broken in the second movie. **CARPET GRIPPER:** A very obvious and rude euphemism for a lady who prefers the presence of other ladies. **HEEL-AND-TOE:** Alternative lyrics to the 'Head, shoulders...' song, changed due to complaints of lower back problems. **DARKBASIC:** 10 PRINT "MWAHAHA"; 20 PRINT "TOGETHER WE SHALL RULE THE GALAXY!"; 30 GOTO 10.



The wheel's a treat to hold, comes gift-wrapped in dead animal and is a whopping 11-inches in diameter

G25 RACING WHEEL

PRICE £150 MANUFACTURER Logitech WEBSITE logitech.co.uk

AS DRIVING TITLES racked up solid sales and a growing fanbase, Logitech had no real answer. Its Driving Force Pro (issue 158, 93%) was an ageing PlayStation 2 product never officially supported on Windows, and while the MOMO Racing was a decent enough alternative, it had a less convincing feedback engine, only 240-degrees of rotation and looked like it had fallen off the front of a 1980s arcade cabinet.

So the G25 Racing Wheel came as no surprise. It's the Driving Force Pro you always wanted: a product which does its level-best to replicate the controls of a real car, only this time with a full pedal set, a gear-lever on its own centre console and a wheel uncluttered by dumb-console-owner-appealing buttons and switches. Most importantly, it comes with Windows drivers and works with all the games you already own.

Everything about it is special. The pedals have their own dampener settings, meaning the brake now offers the proper resistance when you push it.

The centre console is host to all the main switchgear, and the shift lever not only has a leather gaiter, but can also be switched between sequential and six-speed modes. And at last, reverse gear gets the recognition it deserves (push down, then towards you and down).

WORLD OF LEATHER

What's more, the wheel's a treat to hold without being too chunky: it comes gift-wrapped in dead animal and is a whopping 11-inches in diameter. As with the Driving Force Pro, there are 900-degrees of rotation: that's two-and-a-half turns lock-to-lock – fantastic for street racing. Even the clamping mechanism and carpet-gripper feel as though someone put proper thought into them. Add in the £150 price tag and there's no feature that isn't an eye-opener.

The G25 worked flawlessly in *Live For Speed*, *rFactor* and *GTR2*. If your game allows you to assign each of the car's gears to buttons, you'll be able to use the six-speed shifter – even if you can't, sequential mode means you can still bang the stick up/down or use the paddles behind the wheel.

The only reservation I have is that the G25's extra controls and dedication to realism are made redundant by the fact it's still just a game. While it's nice to see that third pedal and stick shift, what's the point? It's not faster. And though you could practice heel-and-toe, the technique had no obvious impact on lap times. With no feedback in the pedal set, and no way of determining the clutch's bite point, the experience is rather remote and joyless.

But if you're after for a wheel that looks and feels like the one on your driveway, the G25 is perfect. However, if you already have a Driving Force Pro, the extra controls it provides will make no difference to your driving, and the price tag will put you off.



PCZONE
88

X8i-C2D

PRICE £1,880 **MANUFACTURER** Xworks Interactive
WEBSITE www.xworksinteractive.com

XWORKS INTERACTIVE no longer needs an introduction, so I'll get straight to the point and say that the X8i-C2D is the Conroe rig I would build, given someone else's credit card.

The motherboard is an old favourite from the Buyer's Guide. It has virtually no overclocking features to speak of, making the E6700 an ideal partner for it: the only real reason to have the Core 2 Extreme is its unlocked multiplier, and since the Intel board can't exploit that feature, there's little point spending the extra.

The GX2 would be a weak point in any other configuration, but when allowed to stretch its legs – it's a card which only makes sense when helped along by an assertive processor – and you're playing a game for which there's an accompanying SLI profile, the results are stunning.

The X8i-C2D's memory might seem like overkill, but you just have to look at recent *Battlefield* releases to see that 2GB isn't just for database servers – it can deliver

tangible benefits to gamers as well.

The primary drive is a fast Western and is the perfect home for Windows. The 500GB secondary drive is a useful repository for your games, MP3s, movies and unspecified crap from the Internet.

The only weak point is onboard audio: stuttering is evident in *Half-Life 2*, so if you're still stuck playing oldies, you may be disappointed to find your game not supporting hardware acceleration. You'll need to muck about with DirectX settings to enable this feature.



SPECIFICATION

Case X8i-SLIDC Xworks Workstation **PSU** Zalman 460W Silent **Mainboard** Intel D975XBX **CPU** Intel Core 2 Duo E6700 **GPU** NVIDIA GeForce 7950GX2 **1GB RAM** 2GB DDR-2 800MHz Corsair XMS2 **HDD1** WD 150GB SATA 10,000RPM **HDD2** Seagate 500GB SATA II **Optical** Pioneer DVR-111D - DVD+/-R/RW **RAM OS** Microsoft Windows XP Pro



SP-F350

PRICE £14 **MANUFACTURER** Genius **WEBSITE** www.geniusnet.co.uk

OPENING THE BOX and lifting one of the speakers from its polystyrene nest, I was struck by how heavy it was. And I couldn't help but imagine the life of the Chinese worker paid to assemble it so that, after shipping it halfway round the world, and having had distributors, retailers and Her Majesty's Government add their respective margins and duties, it was still less than £15.

I then noticed a mains cable dangling from it and, picking up the other speaker, quickly realised that any weight was due almost entirely to the integrated 240V transformer. Had Genius ensured that the two units weighed the same – perhaps by filling the lighter one with a couple of good-sized pebbles – I'd have been none the wiser.

Still, the set remains remarkable value, and while the sound quality isn't going to win any awards, it's actually very good when you consider the cost of the speakers. The 1-inch tweeter and 3-inch woofer do a fine job with every kind of gaming, and with all kinds of music, and are really rather decent.

SPECIFICATION

Configuration Stereo **Main Speakers** 10W RMS **Subwoofer** N/A **Frequency Response** 20Hz-20kHz **Signal To Noise Ratio** 70dB **Warranty** 36-months

They produce a more rounded, much beefier sound than the abysmal-but-fashionable Creative I-Trigue 2200s which, at three times the price, are insultingly bad.

The Genius set also has a 3D button, which appears to do nothing, and an input for an external line together with mini-jacks for your headphones and a microphone. The cables could be longer, but that's about it. For this price, I don't want to hear you grumbling.



HOW TO... MAKE YOURSELF A GAME

Need:

An idea, a little money, a lot of midnight oil

Time:

Ongoing

Difficulty level:



Phil Wand

Deep Blue

Medium doofus

Big Brother contestant

Jamie Sefton

Want to make your own games but think it's too tricky? Phil Wand looks at five tools that help demystify development

THERE WAS ONCE a time when the top-rated games were the ones people had the most fun playing, rather than ones that had been five years and ten million dollars in the making.

Games never used to have trilinear interpolated textures, specular highlights, motion blue, blooming, grooming, mipmaps, flip-flops, clip-clops and slip-ups. They weren't overrun with producers and publishers, and they weren't slammed together by an assembly line of body-odorous programmers hunched over PCs

in office blocks on both sides of the Atlantic.

Until the release of *DEFCON*, Introversion Software's beautiful nuke 'em up, it looked as though the era of simple pleasures from small teams was gone for good. *DEFCON* is conclusive proof that what you need more than anything is a good idea.

And if you have that idea, what are you going to do with it? The following five tools allow you to create your own game without needing to be fluent in several programming languages you've never heard of...

01 XNA Game Studio Express

msdn.com/xna | Cost: Free

More and more people are toying with the idea of making games rather than just playing them, and Microsoft has something to help them turn their ideas into code.

Called XNA Game Studio Express, the beta development tool for XP borrows heavily from the company's existing C# programming tools and will include 'starter kits' to help people get going in all genres of games development, from simple parlour games to real-time strategy titles.

An interesting feature of Game Studio Express is that it will create games that will run not only on Windows, but on the Xbox too.



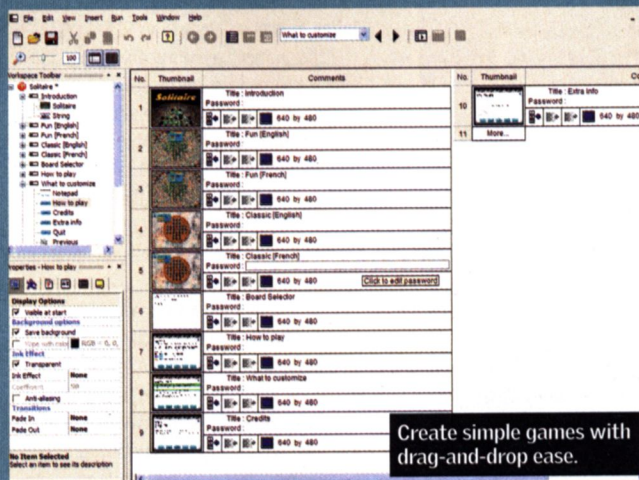
Microsoft's tool includes some great templates.



The XNA Framework is Microsoft's new suite of managed development tools, designed to help you make games. Released recently, XNA Game Studio Express is a free tool aimed at hobbyists and small companies looking to make simple games. It's in beta. XNA Game Studio Pro and XNA Studio are aimed at larger dev teams, and include extra features not seen in the Express edition such as support for multiplayer. C# (pronounced See-Sharp) is a recent programming language developed by Anders Hejlsberg at Microsoft, with simplicity its goal. BASIC is an old language that's been frowned upon for years because of the limits imposed by the simplistic way it was written, and because it lacked key features of complex rivals. However, it's evolved and is now just as powerful as any alternative, including C#. A parlour game is, typically, a small logic puzzler or word game.

02 The Games Factory 2

www.clickteam.com | Cost: £34



Create simple games with drag-and-drop ease.

Clickteam has been helping mere mortals make games for over a decade now. The company's first product, Klik & Play, did away with complex languages and scripts, and instead allowed users to point-and-click their way to a brand-new game.

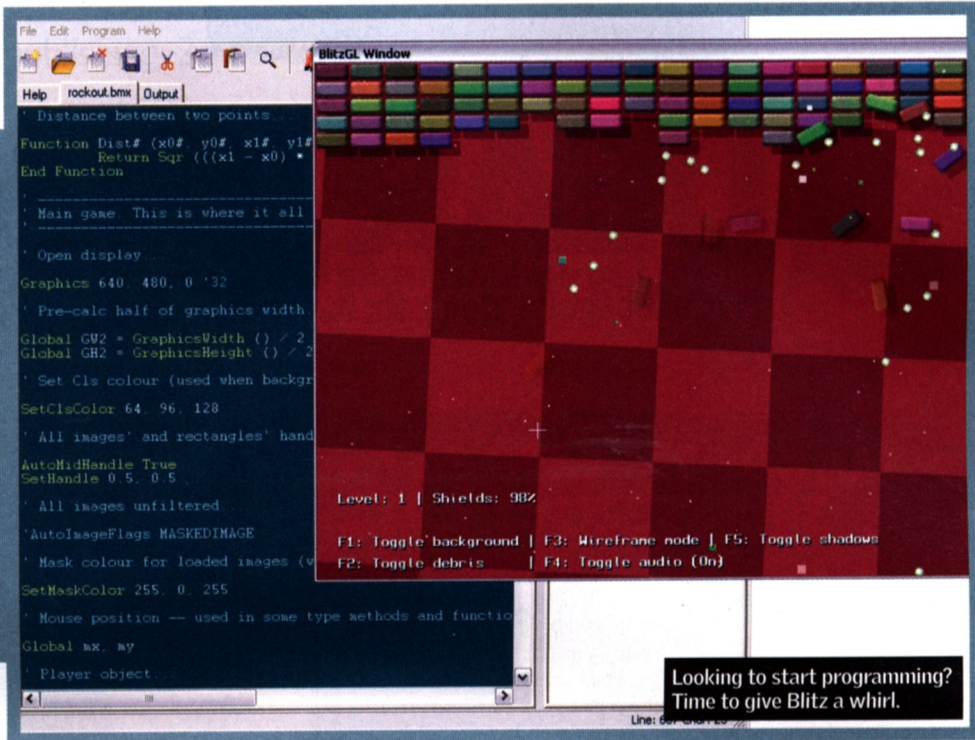
The Games Factory 2 is more of the same, only better. And although such a simple concept can only lead to simple results, games can still be unique and enjoyable - two of the main ingredients for any successful title. Don't forget to check the downloads section of the Clickteam website for more.

03 BlitzMax

www.blitzbasic.com | Cost: £42

If you're still scoffing at the idea of making your own bedroom blockbuster, bear in mind that the original *Worms* was written entirely in Blitz BASIC. What matters most is how the game plays, not how it looks, nor which kind of development tool was used to make it.

Before you rush out and buy a copy, be warned that Blitz BASIC is a programming knowledge. It asks that you understand and apply programming principals, so you'll probably need a book to go with it. Don't skip any of the tutorials and bookmark the Community link on the Blitz website.



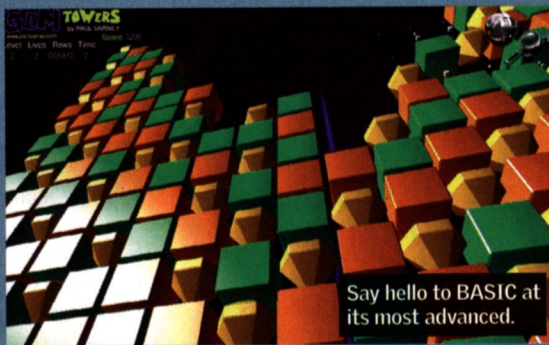
Looking to start programming?
Time to give Blitz a whirl.

04 DarkBASIC Professional

darkbasicpro.thegamecreators.com | Cost: £50

BASIC was invented to allow students at Dartmouth College to program computers without having to have beards and cord jackets. Forty years on, its creators would marvel at how DarkBASIC Professional still manages to retain the original language's simple instructions, yet at the same time be capable of making advanced 2D and 3D games.

This latest version of DarkBASIC now makes DirectX 9 titles, runs significantly faster and includes support for networked multiplayer. A substantial community has formed around the product, and new developers will find a wealth of information to get them going.



Say hello to BASIC at its most advanced.

QUESTIONS QUESTIONS

Q Why should I bother writing my own game?
A Get your game right and you'll go far.

Q What will people need to run my games?
A Today's games creators create self-contained

applications that people can download and run on their PCs without needing other software.

Q How can I get better at this?

A Become an active member of the community relevant to your development tool. Browse the Programming-Games category at Amazon.co.uk and practice, learn, practice. Download all the tutorials you can lay your hands on, and get to know them inside-out. Change them. Make them do what you want to do.

Q Can I sell the games I make?

A Check the license terms of the tool you've bought. But generally speaking, yes, you're free to sell them for whatever you think you can get.



Make your own mini-games for *Half-Life 2*.

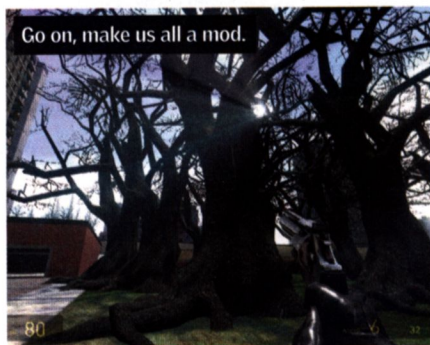
05 Torque Game Builder

www.garagegames.com | Cost: £54

Parlour games are all the rage at the moment, and Torque Gamer Builder is an ideal tool to help you create them. Published by Garage Games and the team responsible for the Tribes engine, Torque has a decent pedigree and is ideal for creating logic games and puzzles.

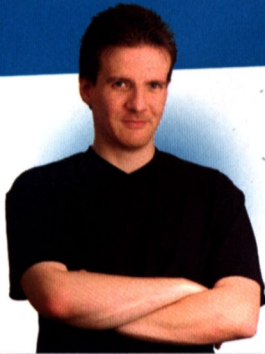
Originally called T2D, the program focuses on the development of single-player and multiplayer 2D games using a hybrid scripting language called TorqueScript. Any game you make can be compiled to run on Macintosh OS X and on Xbox.

Mods are rocking



You've probably heard that a good number of mod developers have gone on to work for big games companies. So using *Garry's Mod* to create a *Half-Life 2* mini-mod is the perfect way for fledgling devs to learn not just how to come up with good games, but how to make those games popular.

Understanding what people want to play is just as important as understanding how to make it: knowing what's fun, addictive and accessible will enable you to create something that everyone wants to download, whereas thinking you know best will get you nowhere.



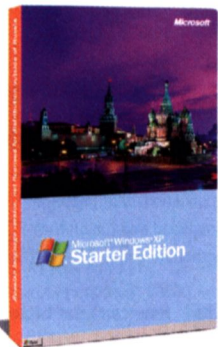
DEAR WANDY

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. If it ain't working, don't panic...



Problems?

We've all got them you know... Overdone it with the spray-on tan? Other half wants you to go to a Will Young concert? Bought Baked Beans With Sausages when you meant to buy regular? We can't help with any of those (no, not even the Mighty Wandy), but we can solve all of your hardware hassles. Wandy knows everything and is willing to help if you email him at wandy@dearwandy.com, including as much info as necessary and system specs where applicable.



DRIVER WATCH

GRAPHICS

MANUFACTURER	DESC	RELEASED
ATI	CATALYST 6.9	20 SEP 06
ATI	CATALYST BETA FOR VISTA	2 SEP 06
NVIDIA	FORCEWARE 91.47	14 SEP 06
NVIDIA	FORCEWARE 96.33	1 SEP 06

SOUND

MANUFACTURER	DESC	RELEASED
CREATIVE	X-FI 2.09.0001	19 SEP 06
CREATIVE	X-FI FOR VISTA 2.10.0000	12 JUL 06
CREATIVE	AUDIGY 2.24	24 JAN 06
CREATIVE	AUDIGY 4.2.08.0004	11 AUG 06
CREATIVE	AUDIGY FOR VISTA 2.10.0000	

MUST HAVE VISTA, BABY

Q This is probably a newbie question on the whole Windows Vista and DirectX 10 issue, but I'll ask it anyway. I understand Vista and DX10 are linked together, but I'm trying to figure out if I'll be able to run Vista on my notebook. If so, will I be able to use the new DirectX with my graphics card?

I have a Dell Inspiron 9100, 3.4GHz Pentium 4, 2GB RAM and a 256MB ATI Radeon 9800. I ran through a Vista diagnostics test on the ATI homepage and had a thumbs-up, but still feel a bit clueless on the whole DX10 issue. Any input would be greatly appreciated.

Martin S Bakkeili

A Vista doesn't need DirectX 10 hardware to work. Microsoft says that any machine with a 1GHz processor or better, together with 512MB and a 128MB DirectX 9 graphics card, will handle 'premium' versions of the new operating system just fine. Vista will demand a DX10 video card to run DX10 games, but since none of these have been written yet, and the first ones will undoubtedly include a 'compatibility' mode to allow your current gear to render them, now is not the time to start worrying about what gear you'll need. Given that DX10 is rumoured to bring a tenfold performance increase, it may be that you'll no longer need to buy a £2,500 thug just to render the game's front menu.

What I can say with absolute certainty is that the new Windows works just fine with existing DX9 products. Along with trillions of others, I downloaded Vista Release Candidate 1 (RC1) from Microsoft's website and found it to be fast and reliable with a wide range of PC configurations. The new desktop, undoubtedly Vista's most talked-about feature, is actually created using DX9 - all those whistles and bells on the new interface were turning up on a mid-range Radeon.

In short then, although Microsoft says your "experience will vary" depending on specification, your Dell lappy should have no bother at all running Vista Ultimate.

WHIM FANDANGO

Q A couple of years ago, I decided to be ahead of time and buy one of those new fancy 64-bit processors. I was



Your old laptop will probably run Vista. It's not as demanding as many people think.

so into the new 64-bit revolution that I installed Windows XP Pro x64 Edition, and I was the envy of all my friends. I didn't have any major problems with it, I was able to find 64-bit drivers for most of my hardware and the OS ran fairly smoothly.

It wasn't until I found my old copy of *Grim Fandango* that I learned I'd sold my soul to the devil for the luxury of 64-bits. The classic LucasArts game uses an old 16-bit installer that's no longer supported. My roomies - all of whom use 32-bit systems - laugh at me while going on yet another adventure with Manny and Glottis. Is there no way for me somehow to install the game on XP 64? Are there any emulators or tricks I can use?

Kristján Lindberg

A I'm afraid you're quite stuck, because the 64-bit version of XP will not run 16-bit programs. Never, full stop, end of.

What this means is that if you have a bunch of yesterday's games kicking about, or ones which open in an MS-DOS window, you shouldn't make the move to x64 Edition because they simply won't work. While the x64 Edition does use a sub-system called WOW64 to run 32-bit programs in an emulated 32-bit mode, there's no equivalent

for 16-bit programs. And no, there's no clever registry hack or 'bit conversion' tool to spark them into life.

As you've discovered, the real problem here is that there's no definite list of which titles rely on 16-bit components, and so there's no way of knowing which games work in a 64-bit environment.

The best course of action for you would be to install the regular 32-bit flavour of Windows XP on another partition - never, ever install it on the same drive as x64 Edition or it'll screw everything up - and boot into that for your games.

Better still, strike off your foray into 64-bit as a mistake and stick with mainstream versions of Windows from now on.

ANOTHER SCREAMING BANSHEE

Q Regarding Dave Chandler's screaming GeForce 6600 ('Banshee Meets Helium', issue 173), I too suffered a 'scream' from my computer when I upgraded from a GeForce 6600 GT to a 7800 GS. I was still using a 300W power supply (stupid I know, but I couldn't wait for the new PSU to turn up), and I'd failed to connect the auxiliary Molex connector to the GPU board. A second side-effect was that my BIOS settings were all messed

@ wandy@dearwandy.com

✉ dearwandy, pc zone, future publishing, 2 balcombe st, london, nw1 6nw

"I may also stick my face in the case fan, short-circuit the CMOS battery with my tongue and tip a can of Fosters into the hard drive for fun to see what sort of sounds come out"

Not really, Anthony Williams – Wandy's only joking

around. When I hooked up my new 550W supply, the scream was gone.

Anthony Williams

A Thanks for the heads-up. I must be honest and say that I've done very little research into the agonised noises computers make when they're not configured properly, or when the power supply falls short of the recommended minimum by the order of several light bulbs. Leaving connectors off graphics boards is not something I normally do, though I'm certainly going to give it a whirl next time I get the chance. I may also stick my face in the case fan, short-circuit the CMOS battery with my tongue and tip a can of Fosters into the hard drive just so I'm aware of what sort of funny sounds come out.

DO THE HARDWARE SHUFFLE?

Q I've been counting down the days since I heard about Windows Vista and the new DirectX. I have an ASRock 939S56-M motherboard with an AMD

3000+ processor and 1GB RAM. My graphics card – an XFX GeForce 7800 GT – used to 'own' every rival. Now I'm faced with the question of whether my PC will be able to take full advantage of DX10. Is it time to upgrade?

Tim Roberts

A Don't upgrade. New hardware from Intel, AMD, NVIDIA and ATI is waiting in the wings and there's really no point splashing out just yet.

IF THE BOOT FITS

Q My brother's machine won't boot at all. He has a Pentium 4 2600 with 512MB RAM on an ASUS motherboard with GeForce FX 5950 card. While his daughter was playing a game, the machine crashed. He was unable to boot and called me. We managed to boot into Safe Mode, and after installing a different graphics card and drivers, the machine was working again. The following day it failed to start and again he phoned me. We've so far been unable to get the machine to boot. The graphics card came out of my PC and worked fine. We've now tried a different monitor, graphics card and motherboard battery, and have also disconnected the hard drive, but still the machine fails to boot.

D Crosby

A I'm a little confused by some of your definitions. You said that in the first instance, your brother's PC was 'unable to boot', yet would start in Safe Mode, suggesting that while the machine would turn on it would freeze loading Windows. And now that's happening again? Or does 'unable to boot' now mean that it's completely dead? I'm not sure.

If it won't show anything on-screen when you power up, it's a hardware issue – most likely a motherboard or power supply in its death throes. If it passes the BIOS screens but locks up starting Windows, I'd try reinstalling the operating system from the original CD. **PC7**



I was JOKING, OK?

50 UTILITIES YOU HAVE TO USE BEFORE YOU DIE

FOR DOSBox 0.65, Cpu Cycles: 3000, Frameskip 0, Program: DOSBOX

```
DOSBox Shell v0.65
DOSBox runs real and protected mode games.
For supported shell commands type: HELP
For a short introduction type: INTRO

If you want more speed, try ctrl-F8 and ctrl-F12.
To activate the keymapper ctrl-F1.
For more information read the README file in the DOSBox director

HAVE FUN!
The DOSBox Team
```

Z:\>SET BLASTER=A220 17 D1 H5 T6

Z:\>SET ULTRASND=240,3,3,5,5

Z:\>SET ULTRADIR=C:\ULTRASND

Z:\>

SET BLASTER=A220
17 D1 H5 T6!!

17 DOSBOX

COSTS FREE

FROM dosbox.sourceforge.net

People of a certain age all have a cardboard box at the back of their loft filled to the brim with the games they once loved. Titles such as *Starflight*, *X-COM*, *Red Storm Rising*, *Sword Of The Samurai*, *Steel Empire*, *Pirates!* and *Master Of Orion* were developed in bedrooms and published by forgotten names including Ocean, Microprose and Domark. They came from a time before the likes of NVIDIA had even been founded, and before pointless concepts like 'high dynamic range rendering' sent the whole industry hurtling towards games that were pleasing to the eye but not the mind.

The sad thing is that the earlier the game, the less like it is to play on modern systems. Problems range from seemingly

simple workarounds, such as CPUs being too fast, to complex issues surrounding correct emulation of a Gravis Ultrasound and/or modem. But there is a way round all this, and a way which works.

DOSBox emulates the old 286, 386 or 486 you binned years ago, complete with its soundcard, graphics card and indeed any number of antique components you'd forgotten ever existed. In doing so, it enables you to run all those old titles you used to play in the evenings before and after your homework. If you download it, use it, and find it brings you pleasure, go and browse the world's most extensive list of yesteryear games at www.the-underdogs.info and at www.abandonia.com. Have a look around the DOSBox site and you'll also find game launchers and graphical front-ends.

FORUMS:
DIRECT FROM
DEARWANDY.COM

Q: If I move my stuff onto a new RAID array, does the software automatically become RAIDed? Do I have to re-install everything again? **A:** Windows doesn't know about arrays: all it sees is one big drive. If you're looking to reinstall the operating system after you've created your array, you will also have to reinstall all your games and applications. You can't just copy everything back and expect to have it all working as it was. If your current setup is working just fine, I'd make a clone of it on a backup drive using Acronis True Image and then restore it to the new array.



WATCHDOG



Not all companies are bad – but if they are, write to us for help...

Here to help!

Companies pissing you off? Don't feel your voice is strong enough to shout down the suits? Email Suzy at watchdog@pczone.co.uk with the subject heading 'Watchdog', or write to her at the address above. Please remember to include your name, address and contact number, and all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers.

tiscali.

THE ACCUSED: Tiscali

PROBLEM: Dodgy broadband

It seems the curse of the faulty broadband has struck again. This time the unlucky individual is Phil Yelland, who'd been happily using Tiscali's 2MB service without problems until a couple of months ago. But after discovering that Tiscali were rolling out their 8MB Max service, he duly signed up.

For three weeks everything was great, but one day he was greeted not by his speedy Internet connection, but a nasty looking error message. He got straight on the phone to the dedicated MAX technical support, but after a lengthy phone call they concluded it must be a BT problem. However, BT looked at the line and determined that the problem lay at Tiscali's end.

After being stuck between the two companies, Phil has installed, "a replacement modem, changed my filters, used two different firewalls and even re-installed XP after formatting my machine," but nothing has made a difference.

Tiscali eventually told Phil that they'd have to move him back to the 2MB service as his line couldn't cope with the faster speed. Thinking that would at least solve

the problem, Phil grudgingly obliged. But he still can't connect and to his disgust, he's still being billed.

PC ZONE INVESTIGATION: When we began making enquiries, Tiscali informed us: "This has been a very difficult technical problem which we have not yet resolved and it's also unique in the experience of our senior tech team. We will, however, be sending him a new router tomorrow, which should ensure a more consistent connection while we pursue the root cause."

Luckily, the router turned out to be the solution to most of Phil's problems, as just over two weeks later, Tiscali reported back "We sent the customer a new router and with technical support, his service is now stable. Our high-level customer support rang and spoke to his wife, who said everything was fine. At that time, we also advised that we were applying a three-month credit to the account."

FINAL VERDICT: Problem solved and compensation offered. Result!



Phil's broadband nightmare had a happy ending, eventually.

Tiscali concluded that it must be a BT problem, while BT determined the problem lay with Tiscali

MESH computers

THE ACCUSED: Mesh Computers

PROBLEM: Faulty new computer

When it comes to buying a new computer, avoiding dodgy second-hand sellers and obtaining a warranty by buying brand-new is generally the safest way to go. Or so thought Duncan McKenna.

However, after his Mesh-built system was delivered, he discovered that his premium wireless mouse and keyboard had been replaced, rather cheekily, with a basic set. Also, the only disc enclosed with the system was the Windows disc despite the fact that the system was "supposed to come with the Cyberlink suite OEM and a drivers disc". But these things paled into

insignificance when he fired up the machine, as it wouldn't even load past the Windows splash screen, except in safe mode.

It transpired that there were no drivers installed for the motherboard or indeed, anything else. After phoning Mesh, the only help he received was when the tech support guy emailed him a link to where he could download the drivers; obviously not the biggest help when Duncan's computer wouldn't even turn on! With the help of a friend, he eventually got hold of the elusive driver which did, at least, allow his computer to run Windows. However, his wireless capability and his digital TV tuner are still not working and his machine keeps telling him he can safely remove his C drive. Despite several attempts to contact Mesh, Duncan's had no luck so far.

PC ZONE INVESTIGATION: After apologising to Duncan, Mesh stated that he had been sent the generic mouse and

keyboard as temporary replacements. They also stated: "We do not provide driver discs as we load all system drivers and pre-loaded software on the PC. However, as a gesture of goodwill, we will copy these drivers and Cyberlink software and post it to the address we have on our records."

Unfortunately, this didn't resolve the problem and Mesh then arranged for an engineer to visit Duncan and install a replacement motherboard and hard drive. Duncan concludes: "Now it's

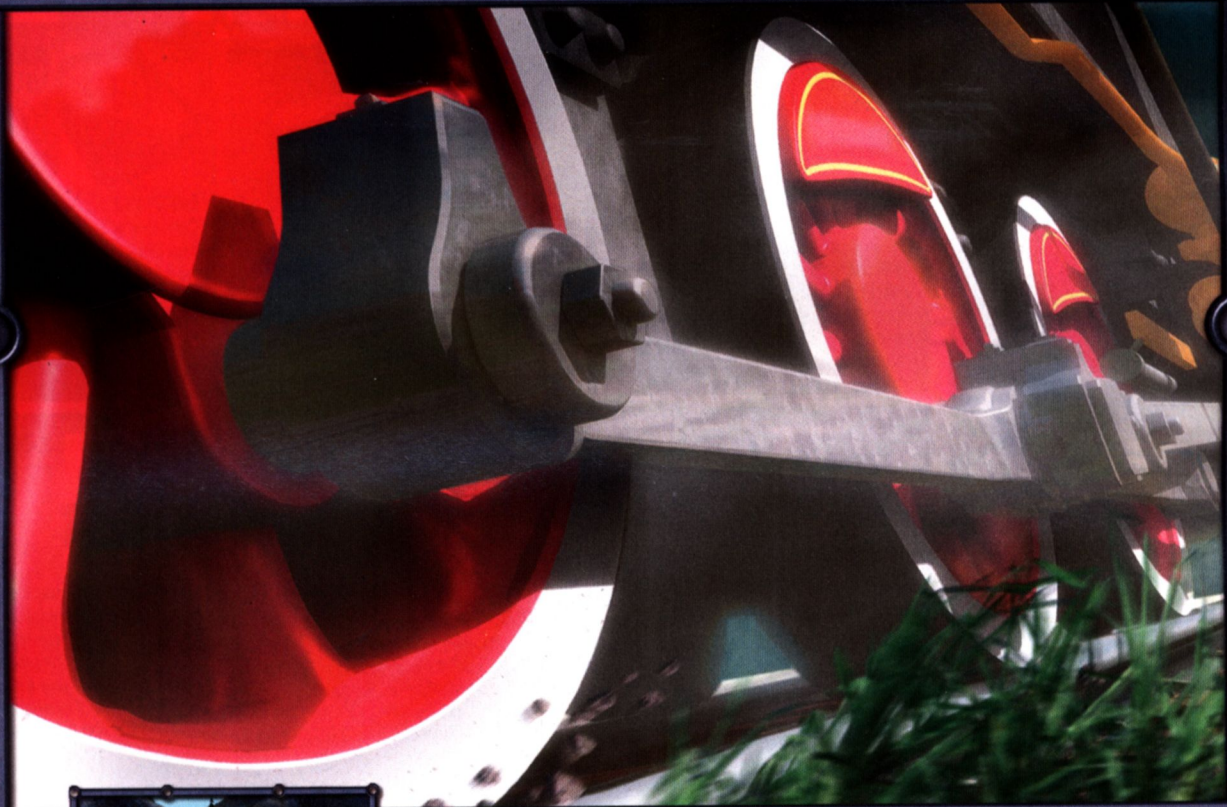
working, it's a collection of good components for a reasonable price; but if people want to buy on service reputation, I've encountered nothing but sarcasm, incompetence and disinterest from Mesh." And he's still not received his mouse and keyboard.

FINAL VERDICT: Main issues resolved but some niggly ones still to be addressed. Poor form. PCZ

Another fine Mesh – or not, as Duncan McKenna discovered.



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Lay track, expand towns and cities, transport goods and watch the world come to life.



Ruthless LAN and online multiplayer. Sabotage your rivals and monopolize the industry.



Build your dream railroad world or dive into competition against J. Pierpont Morgan, Cornelius Vanderbilt and others!

Creators of the world's best strategy game, Sid Meier and Firaxis Games put you in charge of building the greatest rail empire in the nation! Manage trains, cargo and your bottom line while engaging in all-out corporate warfare against rival tycoons, slick entrepreneurs and robber barons!



www.pegi.info



www.sidmeiersrailroads.com



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REMEMBER:
MONITORS AND PROCESSORS ARE LARGELY INEDIBLE

A cutting-edge graphics card will not impress most debt collectors. Always remember to leave some cash for the boring things which sustain your presence on the planet, like food and clothes.

HARDWARE DIVIDE

Whether you shop at Primark or Harvey Nicks, this page has something for you...

LOADED?

GRAPHICS

X1900 XTX

EXPECT TO PAY £371

MANUFACTURER CONNECT3D

WEBSITE www.connect3d.com

Like its GeForce 7800 GTX predecessor, our current video card champ is a reference card. It's also the fastest single device available, putting most dual-card configurations in the shade. We've chosen the Connect3D variant as it's a no-nonsense package for sensible money, making it an ideal grounding for CrossFire rigs.



PROCESSOR



CORE 2 EXTREME X6800

PAY £790

MAN Intel

WEB intel.com

Faster than its predecessor and faster even than any Athlon FX, Intel's new 2.93GHz Extreme processor has 1066MHz FSB, 4MB cache and LGA775 packaging. With a shorter pipeline, unique Smart Memory Access and Advanced Smart Cache technologies, its performance has people wondering what AMD can do to catch up.

MOTHERBOARD



D975XBX

EXPECT TO PAY

£150

MANUFACTURER

Intel

WEBSITE intel.com

Gamers back away from motherboards bearing the Intel logo, but you should be reassured by the name, not put off by it. The D975XBX is a power-user product, with ATI CrossFire, eight USB holes, four SATA interfaces with RAID and eight-channel HD Audio. And it takes Core 2 Duo chips.

HDD



RAPTOR 150GB

EXPECT TO PAY

£175

MANUFACTURER

Western Digital

WEBSITE www.wdc.com

Travelling at 10,000rpm and with a 4.5ms seek time, the Raptor is billed as the world's fastest SATA drive. It's also now double the size, meaning you now need just one of them in your rig. But two in RAID-0 configuration will give you oodles of space and make *Battlefield 2* really fly.

SCREEN



VP930

EXPECT TO PAY

£250

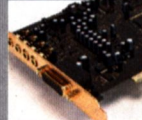
MANUFACTURER

ViewSonic

WEBSITE viewsonic.co.uk

With our favourite LCD1970GX stuck at around £350, the VP930 makes more sense. It's a superb all-rounder at a fantastic price, and thanks to ViewSonic's elegant styling it looks just as commanding on your desk as the ousted NEC. It also pivots, tilts and offers 270-degrees of swivel.

SOUNDCARD



SOUND BLASTER X-FI FATALITY FPS

EXPECT TO PAY

£140

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

Slightly bonkers soundcard for audiophiles with deep pockets. Supports EAX 5.0, with 64MB X-RAM for top-quality sound effects. CMSS-3D works magic on a stereo signal and makes headphone gaming crystal. Sounds nicer than an Audigy, but still ultra pricey.

SPEAKERS



Z-5500

EXPECT TO PAY

£195

MANUFACTURER

Logitech

WEBSITE www.logitech.co.uk

The price has just dropped below £200 and these speakers are simply the best we've ever tested. They make both games and movies ravish your ears, and you'll soon find yourself blowing the dust from your old CDs and DVDs just so you can sit in the middle of the sound and revel in it.

SKINT?

GRAPHICS

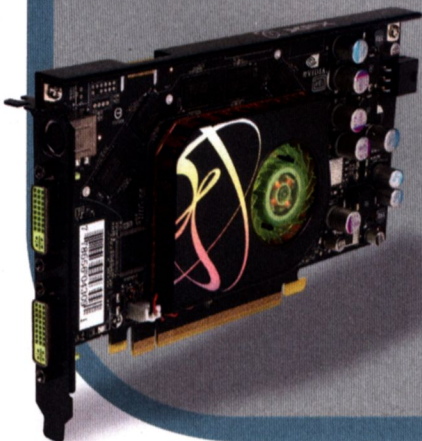
7900 GS 480M

EXPECT TO PAY £150

MANUFACTURER XFX

WEBSITE xfxforce.co.uk

Choosing a graphics card is never easy, except when NVIDIA takes one of their high-end G71 cards, makes a few nips and tucks and offers it with a mid-range price tag. Make sure you get the 480M Extreme version, as this is the one with faster clocks and an easygoing overclocking nature.



PROCESSOR



CORE 2 DUO E6300

EXPECT TO PAY

£126

MANUFACTURER

Intel

WEBSITE intel.com

The 1.86GHz Allendale E6300 might be a stripped-down Conroe, but don't wrinkle your nose: it clocks up like nothing else. A smaller die and lower temperatures mean that, with the right board and the right settings, it delivers amazing performance for the money. A great entry-level buy.

MOTHERBOARD



CONROE EX-FIRE ESATA2

EXPECT TO PAY

£65

MANUFACTURER

ASRock

WEB asrock.com

Paired with an E6300, this ASRock board can help you wring high-end performance from your budget-priced rig. It features a 1066/800/533 MHz FSB, SATA II with RAID, Vista-friendly 7.1 HD audio onboard, Gigabit LAN and ASRock's easy overclocking features. It even has CrossFire support. An awful lot of features for not a lot of money.

HDD



1200JS SATA

EXPECT TO PAY

£41

MANUFACTURER

Western Digital

WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com

It's not like a 120GB hard drive is unfeasibly huge any more, but it's more than enough for the casual gamer to do a spot of casual gaming. A few good titles, a couple of hundred music files and the odd porn flick will still leave plenty of room for Windows to manoeuvre.

SCREEN



VE710S

EXPECT TO PAY

£142

MANUFACTURER

ViewSonic

WEBSITE www.viewsonic.co.uk

Not a lot of dosh buys you an awful lot of screen. The VE710s is a budget-priced 17in flat panel featuring an 8ms response time, 1280x1024 resolution and producing bright, crisp images worthy of the ViewSonic name. The company's UltraBrite technology gives rich and vivid colours in games too.

SOUNDCARD



SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY 2 VALUE

EXPECT TO PAY

£32

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

If you're a casual gamer, there's little point throwing half a mortgage payment at your soundcard because you'll not be able to tell the difference. The cheap Audigy features EAX 4.0 and Dolby Digital EX support, and makes an awful lot of sense.

SPEAKERS



INSPIRE P5800

EXPECT TO PAY

£37

MANUFACTURER

Creative

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

You can go cheaper, but to meet the quality of the P5800 you'll need spend a lot more, as there's no better set in this price range. The subwoofer is deep and creamy, the satellites crisp and clean. A wired remote, line-in and headphone jack complete a very decent little package.



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- Factory Overclocked Intel Core 2 Duo Processors
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*Applies to Chillblast Fusion Hard Core Crossfire and Atlantis Crossfire respectively.

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Logitech keyboard + G5 mouse
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Microsoft Windows XP Home.

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M2N32-SLI Deluxe AM2 Motherboard,
Quad SLI ready Nvidia 7950GX2 512MB,
2GB Corsair memory, 250 GB SATA2 HDD,
NEC DVD-RW, 16x DVD-Rom drive,
Microsoft Windows XP Home.

Only £1349 inc VAT.

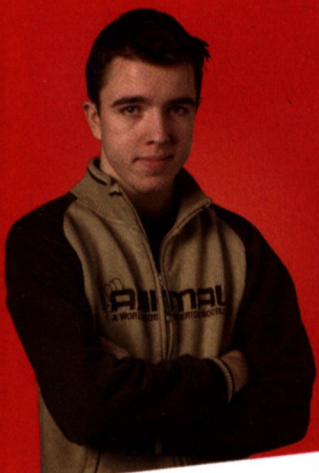
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PCZONE

FREEPLAY



Skint? Play PC games for feck all...

WHAT'S FREE THIS MONTH

FREE GAMES!

Because I can

I'VE GOT THE biggest, most powerful PC in the building, and that includes the cash register company on floors one and two whose computers have to do awfully big sums. I didn't ask for it, and even though it's only marginally more powerful than the other gaming PCs, everybody hates me because of it.

So in order to compound this unjustifiable hatred, I play *NetHack* on it. I play a dungeon crawler from the '80s, which uses ASCII text for graphics (or at a push, little graphics tiles). Then I play things like *Bollen* and *String Theory*, and other Freeware games which would probably run on a Pentium, all the while ignoring the graphical delights of *Splinter Cell: Double Agent*, *Oblivion* and *Battlefield 2142*. "Steeeeeve," they whine, "play some *Far Cry*, we want to see the pretty trees". So I do, but I angle the monitor away from everybody in defiance. I'm not entirely sure why I do that.

Steve Hogarty

Steve Hogarty, staff writer

Try this!

Letter from America

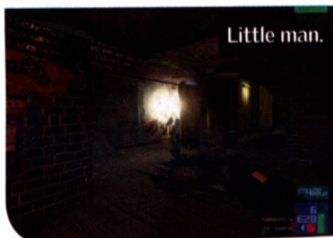


OK, so this is actually just a picture of a microwave in *F.E.A.R.: Extraction Point*, but on one of the desks, there's a letter addressed to the developers of the original *F.E.A.R.*, Monolith. We went back to get a screenshot but we'd forgotten where it was because *everywhere looks the same*.



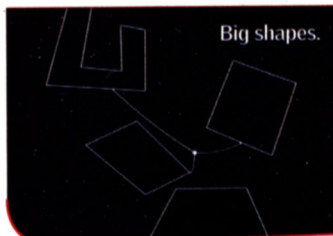
116 Demo Pages

Try out the latest games right now!



118 Buzz

News and culture from a world of free PC gaming



122 Freeware

The crop-cream of free Internet gaming delivered straight to your doorstep



126 Play!

Essential reviews of the latest mods, maps and add-ons



129 Fight Club

When two tribes go to war, we generally lose repeatedly



130 DEFCON

Let us show you the best way to press the big red button



PCZONE
FREE-O-METER



0
HOURS

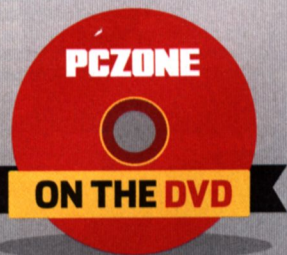
*Approximate amount of completely free stuff this month



271.1
HOURS*

Demos

On the DVD – free games galore!



Having problems getting something on our DVD to work? Phone our helpline on **01225 442244** and ask for cover-disc support. Alternatively, email support@futurenet.co.uk, including as much information as possible about your system and the nature of your problem.



BATTLEFIELD 2142

www.battlefield2142.com

It's like fighting today but with super-new guns and stuff

HAVING SUCCESSFULLY designed the Death Star, the idiot who thinks up massive sci-fi spaceships with really obvious weak points turned his attention to *Battlefield 2142*'s Titans. I mean, honestly, a base the size of a moon was taken out by a single proton torpedo, and now this – four arbitrary control panels to be destroyed in sequence until the Titan's nuclear core opens up. Nobody even needs to see a nuclear core – it should all be controlled from another room with levers and dials and clicking noises.

Then there are areas of the Titan you simply can't get to because there's an impenetrable forcefield blocking the way. Why not put one of those around the nuclear core instead of using them to protect the cafeteria or whatever's down that corridor? Honestly, if you place your base's weak point in such a position as to offer a progressively increasing challenge with an ultimate goal resulting in victory, you're asking for trouble.



On top of that, your Titan – your ultimate command ship – has exactly the same weaknesses as theirs! Who sold us these Titans in the first place? Some kind of intergalactic Del Boy?



SPAWN

The first step to not succeeding in your overall mission to blow up a Titan is to choose a spawn point nice and far away from it. Choose one near your own Titan to avoid any hostile soldiers who might shoot you.



HIDE

Most military bases have a huge number of things to hide behind. Be careful not to hide in a vehicle, though – someone else might get in and drive you into enemy territory. This sharply increases the chances of combat.

IT'S GONNA BE A TITAN Fail to be a hero with our step-by-step guide to not blowing up a Titan



LOSE

One enemy Titan, completely undamaged. Your time-wasting efforts have not gone unrewarded, and you've done your bit for world peace, by bringing about the swift victory of your enemy. Give yourself a hug.



PRETEND

If everyone's telling you to stop hiding, you can show you're willing by standing on the ground and vaguely firing towards the behemoth. If your colleagues shout at you, simply reply "What? I'm shooting it, aren't I? God!"



FOOTBALL MANAGER 2007

It's a game of innumerable sequels www.sigames.com

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, *Football Manager 2007* is Sports Interactive's 15th football management game. (Come on, you remember - they did all those *Champ Man* games? Yeah, *them*.) It's not a bad record, and proof of both their experience and strange devotion to pretend sports management.

It's never going to impress with its screenshots, but if you value time spent without human contact, trawling through huge tracts of inter-dependent statistics (and let's face it, humans don't half get on your tits after a while), you'll enjoy the quick-start option available in this demo.



Be Steve McClaren!

Only, try not to be quite as mediocre as him



MENU STRUCTURE

If there's one thing *FM2007* isn't short on, it's options, menus and statistics. It's like paddling in numbers, only to get pulled under and swept away on a choppy decimal sea without end. Who knows if it's safe?



MAN-U STRUCTURE

You start out with a similarity of the word 'Menu' and the team 'Man U', then you realise you've got nothing to say about Man U's team structure, and no screengrabs to make it relevant. What do you do? You write THIS paragraph.

MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR

www.totalwar.com

Mass slaughter never looked so good

I'LL NEVER FORGET the date of the Battle of Agincourt, because my grandfather taught it to me over a game of ping pong. It was his serve, and I'd pulled out from a 14-all draw with a lucky dribble over the net. "14-15", he said, before adding, "that's the Battle of Agincourt." It worked so well as an

educational tool, that I insisted on learning everything through the medium of ping pong. That's how I ended up here.

You've read the review of The Creative Assembly's latest RTS classic, but if you're too stubborn to take our word for it, you might want to prove it to yourself by playing the demo.



1 Banners give you an immediate handle on the team and the kind of troops they are. You can click on them too, unlike in the real 15th century.

2 Nice simple controls, representing simpler times. You never had to refuel a horse, did you? Apart from the whole hay and apples thing.

3 Boys! Come on. Is this all really over a silly thing like national sovereignty? I see two would-be monarchs who need cuddle therapy...

MASSIVE ATTACK

It's how they fought back then



CAVALRY

Men on horses beat men with poles. Men with bows and arrows beat men on horses (until they get close, and ride their horses over their faces).



ARCHER

Men with big shields beat men with bows and arrows. It's just rock/paper/scissors with good graphics. Oh, and not nearly as crap.

THE BEST OF THE REST



DEFCON

After we reviewed *DEFCON*, but before we wrote this, North Korea tested its first nuclear weapon. So while you play this excellent global thermonuclear war simulator, just bear in mind that we're all doomed. www.everybody-dies.com



POKERWIZE

Seeing as there's nothing to look forward to, and history is coming to a close, why not learn poker? Perhaps an analysis of the statistics and probabilities in the game will distract you from the utter certainty of world destruction! www.pokerwize.com



STAR WARS: EMPIRE AT WAR - FORCES OF CORRUPTION

It'll be just like when the Death Star blew up Leia's home planet, we imagine. Or that cool bit at the beginning of *Terminator 2*... www.lucasarts.com/games/swempireatwar



FIFA 07

Who will save us? Only the Red Foundation can save us now, with celebrity footballers launching a credit card to voice their disapproval of self-inflicted omniscience! David Beckham, stop having your hair cut and save us! fifa07.ea.com

AGE OF EMPIRES III: WARCHIEFS

www.ageofempires3.com



Attention historical strategy buffs. Ensemble Studios continues their empire-building saga with this demo of the *WarChiefs* expansion, where you can choose to play the missions as either the Iroquois or the Germans. Hmm, teepees or bratwurst?

FLIGHT SIMULATOR X

www.microsoft.com/games/flightsimulatorx



Piloting your own private jet around Caribbean islands - normally the preserve of eccentric billionaires, but now you too can partake in this mostly pointless activity, as well as dropping sacks of flour onto targets from a glider. Hoorah!

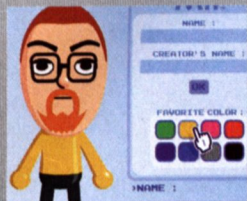
PCZONE
HOT
DOWNLOADS

SNIPPETS



EMERGENCY EXITE

www.exitemod.com
A mod which we've dubbed 'The best *Portal* rip-off mod yet', *Exite* is now downloadable as an alpha version. A thorough playtest has revealed that it's definitely not as smooth as we'd hoped, with lots of clipping and bugs and stuff, but it's a brilliant effort nonetheless. We want *Portal* now!



NEVER BEEN TO MII?

www.joystiq.com/media/2006/10/mii.swf
As we're all slaves to Nintendo here at *PC ZONE* (and we're not ashamed of it, even though we're supposed to downplay our concealed love of other formats), take a look at this fan-made Mii creator. A Mii, as you should already know, is your personal profile on the Nintendo Wii. Try it out now.



Lots of stats and tips to aid your game.



"I've got a shiny Charizard. Do I win?"



"Bzzt. Look at my textures, bzzt."



Old crates...
And new crates! (Or are these the old ones...?)

DEUS SEXY

Denton gets a facelift

www.offtopicproductions.com/hdtp | Mod for: Deus Ex

THERE ARE A few things certain people will never appreciate. Things like getting braces removed after having a mouthful of metal for four years, or going to the optician for a regular eye test only to receive the perfect vision you didn't know you were missing. This

high-definition texture pack for *Deus Ex* is a bit more like the latter, updating the game's textures to, well, higher definition versions of themselves.

The change isn't immense, but the developer plans to replace weapons and character models with higher-resolution

replacements too – and that will be something quite special to behold when it happens. If you're planning to play *Deus Ex* again, this is an essential download. As it is though, it's probably not worth reinstalling *Deus Ex* just to see some of the furniture a bit more clearly.

POKER FOR FREE

Sharpen your game

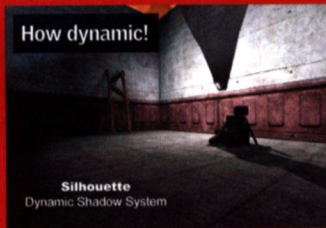
www.pokerwize.com

ATTENTION BITCHES: POKER-WIZE, a 3D poker client normally worth £14.99, is completely free of charge on this month's DVD. Rarer still, this poker game comes with a tutorial from Helen Chamberlain – somebody who'll teach you to play in a non-patronising, friendly and – let's face it – ample-breasted way.

What could be better than a sexy poker maiden teaching you to play cards? Well, real-time advice from Matt Broughton of Pokerzone TV of course! Imagine turning up for a game of poker with your mates, beating them all hands-down and having them ask: "Where'd you get the silky poker skills?!", only to reply, "With a little help from Helen and Matt," before touching your nose and turning to the camera with a smile and a wink. Sound tempting? Play it now!



They've nailed the interface.



How dynamic!

Silhouette
Dynamic Shadow System

GREAT DEUS EXPECTATIONS

Deus Ex meets *Unreal Tournie*

mods.moddb.com/6569/Deus-Ex-Reborn | Mod for: Unreal Tournament 2004

THIS IS MORE like it! Why try to add clarity to the original *Deus Ex* when you can port the entire thing into *UT2K4*? Well, we can think of several reasons, one being that it's going to take ages to reach any sort of playable state. But just look at what they've done so far on *Deus Ex: Reborn* – actual lighting!

As proof that work is being done on the *UT2K4* mod, the creators have

launched an alpha version straight onto the internet, which was immediately met by sage nods of approval from *Deus Ex* fans across the globe.

We recommend not holding your breath for a final version any time soon, but do keep it in the back of your mind – if only so we can start the mod review with 'remember back when...'

A SHOT IN THE DARK

We speak with the developers of *Perfect Dark: Source*

www.pdark-mod.com | Mod for: Half-Life 2

PCZ: Hello, who are you?

IO: "I'm Igor 'Iggy' Omodei from the *Perfect Dark: Source* devteam."

PCZ: What made you choose *Perfect Dark* as the basis for your mod?

IO: "*Perfect Dark* was a game that all the team members loved to play. We felt that with today's advances in technology, we could recreate it. At first, our wish was simply to recreate the atmosphere of the original game with new techniques by pooling together our different talents – consisting of a few French coders, mappers and translators. The Source engine suggested itself very quickly because it's so widespread, has a large community and is easy to modify with beautiful results. It inspired us not only to recreate the fun, fast-paced action we all remember and love, but to re-envision the environments and weapons."

PCZ: Will the mod focus on single or multiplayer?

IO: "We aim to release a fully functional multiplayer game first. If our multiplayer mod generates enough popularity, we'll follow up with a single-player game as well, but we'd like to emphasise that we want the multiplayer part to be fully functional before we begin to create a solo campaign."

PCZ: What about the infamous *Perfect Dark* gadgets?

IO: "The gadgets were what made *Perfect Dark* so unique and dynamic compared to other FPS games at the time. We'd never ignore them, but some may turn out to be totally useless when integrated into the PC platform. For instance, certain buttons on the N64 pad were used for things like auto-aim, crouching or zooming, but these are no longer necessary with a keyboard and mouse. As for the laptop gun, no iteration of *Perfect Dark* would be complete without it!"



PCZ: What about Elvis the alien – does he make an appearance?

IO: "We have mixed thoughts on this. In fact, the Maian race is one of our main subjects of discussion at the moment. We don't know exactly what affect disproportioned characters will have on the Source engine in multiplayer. However, Elvis should show his head in the solo campaign at least."

PCZ: Will the single-player mode be a remake of *Perfect Dark*?

IO: "We'd like to make a sequel to *Perfect Dark*; our scenario for the solo game has already been written down. What we can tell you is that the game will take place in 2024 (a year after the *Perfect Dark* story), and start in an abandoned

warehouse where Jo is going to meet some pretty odd stuff. The weakened Skedars will make a return and another bizarre race will likely show their supposedly extinct faces!"

PCZ: When playing this mod, what do you think will please fans most?

IO: "Definitely the gameplay. Most games these days are too focused on overly complicated, realistic or technical structure. We just want to recreate the original's simple sense of fun. We want to take what once was old and make it new with incredibly powerful, original and alien weapons. We want the fans to have fun; we're making this mod for that simple reason."

SNIPPETS

COMPETITION WINNERS



PREY
(ISSUE 172)

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| John Hilbert | Cardiff |
| Gregory Brayley | Middlesex |
| Alex Joule | Cumbria |
| Andrew Espin | Nuneaton |
| Ben Procter | Earby |
| Jonathan Walker | North Yorkshire |
| Edward Fogg | Sheffield |
| Paul Hardy | Sheffield |
| Peter Reynolds | Sheffield |
| Toby Wilson | London |

BUDGET
(ISSUE 172)

- | | |
|--------------|-----------|
| John MacLean | Inverness |
|--------------|-----------|

Bug-Fix of the Month

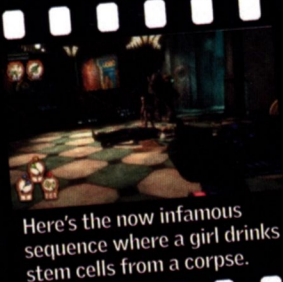
THIS MONTH RFACTOR



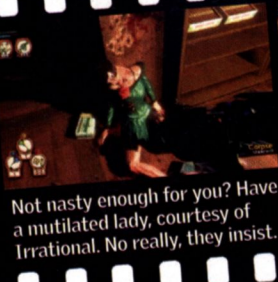
Patch 1.150 fixed 'safety car always drives 10m off road/crashes into walls' bug. That old doozy.

Movie of the Month

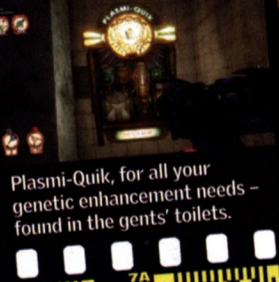
BIOSHOCK
Ken Levine's voice isn't as nasal as it sounds in this presentation, but we've still no doubt that he needs to be locked away in a mental asylum – no normal person could create a game this twisted and upsetting. Take a look at *Bioshock* on this month's DVD and decide whether murdering children is your bag.



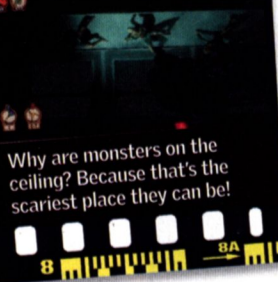
Here's the now infamous sequence where a girl drinks stem cells from a corpse.



Not nasty enough for you? Have a mutilated lady, courtesy of Irrational. No really, they insist.



Plasmid-Quik, for all your genetic enhancement needs – found in the gents' toilets.



Why are monsters on the ceiling? Because that's the scariest place they can be!

WIN A FREE GAMING PC!



Win a Dell XPS700 courtesy of Sega and *Medieval II: Total War*!

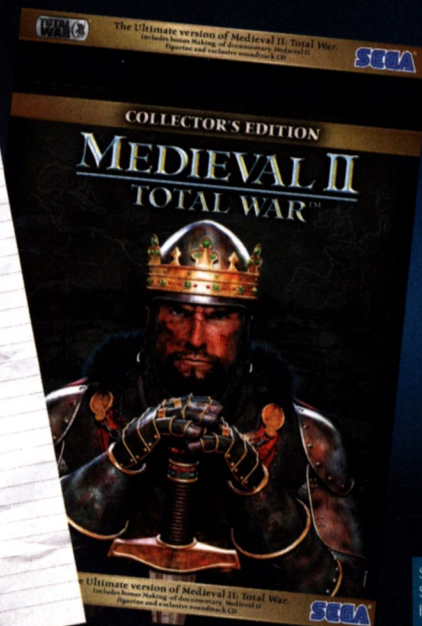
IMAGINE TAKING A trip through time to around 600 years ago. Chances are you'd be surrounded by woods, castles, knights and medieval stuff (unless you're one of our few readers outside of Europe, in which case you'd be floating in some undiscovered limbo). Now imagine waddling over to whatever battle is taking place and showing them this mag, namely the bit with the *Medieval II: Total War* review. "Gosh," a knight would cry. "That's soooooo much like what we do here." A horse would whinny in agreement before somebody would exasperatedly jab at the page with a gauntleted hand: "Look sarge, it's me!" The troops would laugh in

amazement, before grinning at the score and exchanging happy thoughts about just how much the future loves them. One soldier will decide not to marry a girl he was courting, instead deciding to fight in a lot more fun battles – and you would cease to exist.

Avoid this happening by entering our amazing *Medieval II: Total War* competition and bagging yourself a brand-new Dell XPS700 PC and a *Collector's Edition* copy of the sterling RTS. Even if you don't win the PC, five runners-up can still win a copy of the game. Clearly, this will stop you from creating a time paradox any time soon. Here's the challenge...

THE CHALLENGE

Draw a picture depicting a medieval knight in a modern world, and the hilarious consequences no doubt derived from his quirky inability to understand how things work in present times – you know, trebuchet-ing stuff and chasing wenchies. You can use any medium you like (bar bodily fluids), as long as it fits in an envelope – also, we won't send your stuff back because that'd be a massive bother. The winner will be chosen by a committee of judge-types, who'll base their decision on style and humour. Check out our example for a bit of guidance, and get scribbling...



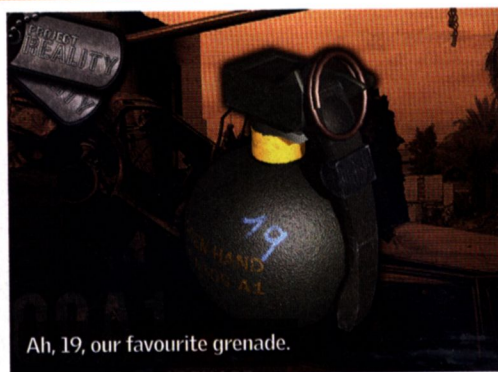
SPECIFICATION
 XPS700 Core 2 Duo processor E6300 (1.86GHz, 1066fsb, 2MB cache) ■ Memory Dual Channel 1024MB 533MHz DDR2 ■ Floppy disk drive ■ 160GB 10,000rpm SATA hard drive ■ 16X DVD+/-RW dual drive ■ Mouse and keyboard ■ Windows XP Home ■ Base warranty ■ All sorts of niggly software and junk ■ Monitor/speakers/modem not included



Send your entries to Knight In Modern Times Compo, PC ZONE, Future Publishing, 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW. Competition ends December 6, any entries received after this will be sold to art museums to raise money for our misdeeds. We can't return your entries either, so photocopy them or something. Our decision is all-knowing and final. Standard competition rules apply – check out page 9 for more.



All the cranes agreed, it was a lovely sunset.



Ah, 19, our favourite grenade.

BATTLEFIELD GETS REAL

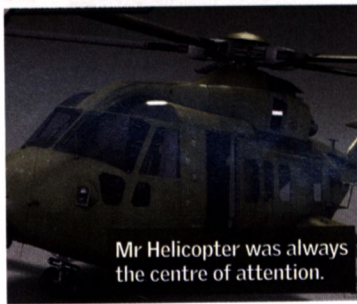
Project Reality saves the day www.realitymod.com | Mod for: Battlefield 2

DESPITE ALL OF Tony Blair's best efforts, the guys at DICE refuse to recognise Britain's modern-day war efforts, apart from that bloke in the *Euro Force* expansion who had a British accent – but he doesn't count.

The latest version of the vastly popular *Project Reality* mod is not only going to continue its long-held tradition of swapping out the arcade stylings of EA's online shooter and replacing them

with cold, hard, unforgiving realism, but it's also going to give old Blighty some recognition too. Hoorah!

HUDs shall be removed, bullets become more deadly and pilots shall carry nowt but their pistols and their pride. Not only does it make the virtual war far harsher, *Project Reality* also adds fantastic new maps, vehicles and weapons to the fray. Head to their website to download the latest version now.



Mr Helicopter was always the centre of attention.



"I hope this thing holds when I stand up..."



"This is how I get my head so smooth."

BLOODSPELL ON YOU

Finally, a machinima with a scouser in it www.bloodspell.com

WE HAVEN'T WATCHED an episode of *BloodSpell* yet, so while we download the first episode, let us fill you in on what we know. It's a machinima built in the *Neverwinter Nights* engine, being released in small episodes which will eventually end up in a feature-length release. This, the creators claim, is the biggest machinima production ever.

Interestingly, *BloodSpell* was banned from the Leipzig Games

Conference this year due it being too violent, but was then re-introduced when somebody, somewhere, protested. Who that person was we don't know, but this violence thing seems pretty interesting.

In terms of storytelling, *BloodSpell's* about Jered, a young monk of the Church Of The Angels, an organisation that exists to purify the Blooded, a term for those who release magical

power when their blood is spilt. We hope 'purify' means 'slay', and 'Blooded' means 'vampires' and Jered is a sexy lady. As the download's finished, we can go find out right now, brb!

Oh well, close enough. Jered turned out to be a squeaky-voiced bald guy and he kicked some old lady in the face – brilliant, 95%. What, we don't give these things scores? Nevermind, go watch it anyway.

PCZONE TOP 5 FREEWARE GAMES



1

GOLF?

www.golfquestionmark.com
A beautifully surreal and artistic rendition of the classic sport. Obscenely funny with two players and a fantastic game to boot.



2

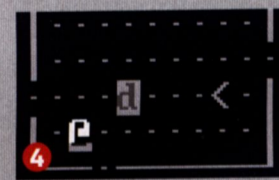
N www.harveycartel.org/metanet/n.html
Old-school platforming mixed with new-school style. Not that new schools are stylish, but N's inertia-harnessing physics are gloriously entertaining.



3

ROOTAGE

snipurl.com/r/Rootage
Concentrate your fire on procedurally-generated bosses while avoiding massive amounts of bullets in what we reckon is Kenta Cho's best shooter.



4

NETHACK

www.nethack.org
A real oldie, but still as deeply involving now as it was back then. Some aspects of this freeware RPG classic have simply yet to be bettered.



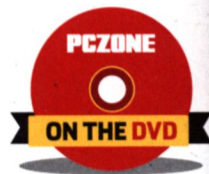
5

NARBACULAR DROP

www.nuclearmonkeysoftware.com
We only love this because we can't play Valve's *Portal* right away, but this mind-boggling dimensional puzzler is simply amazing to play.



Freeware



Steve Hogarty's wallet has rusted shut. A likely story...

Freeware is dedicated to bringing you the best free games the Net has to offer, be it freeware, homebrews, remakes or webgames – you'll never have to buy a game again. This month, Steve makes ancient *NetHack* the Game of the Month because there isn't much else around right now.



BOLLEN

An ounce of bounce

Dev: Monokey
www.daikenkai.com/monokey/bollen

I'M NOT SURE whether the ball you play as in *Bollen* has sentience or energy of some sort, but it seems to be able to bounce in a perpetual manner – in a way similar to Freeware favourite *Within A Deep Forest*, except *Bollen's* ballgames are a bit more puzzle-like and level-based. The idea is to bounce around the happy platforms, using green blobs to jump large distances and avoiding red blobs, collecting coins and chalices and reaching a flag.

It's a metaphor for life: you bounce and bounce, and sometimes you bounce higher and sometimes you get obliterated on a rock. If you're one of the few who can reach the flag, your achievements go unappreciated and you're forced to start another, harder level. In a retirement home. Smelling of piss.

NETHACK

They've thought of everything...

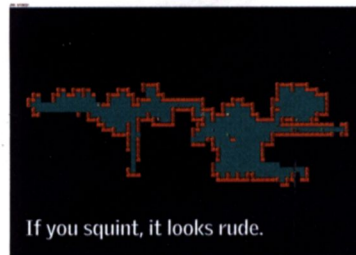
Dev: The DevTeam | www.nethack.org

AFTER DISCOVERING THAT *NetHack's* been ported to both the Nintendo DS and the PSP, my interest in the ancient roguelike has been rekindled. Not only is it the only game of its kind still in development (although updates are infrequent), but in my opinion it remains the greatest dungeon-crawling, tile-based hack-and-slash RPG around.

Ostensibly, your task is to travel downwards through hundreds of levels of a randomly-generated dungeon in order to retrieve the Amulet of Yendor. More realistically however, *NetHack's* about getting as far into the dungeon as possible before you die in a really stupid way, like food poisoning. The real genius lies in exactly how thought out everything is – the objects (of which there are thousands) hidden about the dungeon are rarely identifiable, wands for instance, appear as 'a wooden wand' or 'an ebony

wand' until you discover what they do. Every time you play a game, these descriptions are randomised, as well as the layouts of every level of the dungeon. You could discover a wand of polymorph, and use it on yourself to become a female dragon. Then you could lay eggs, polymorph back into a human, wait for the eggs to hatch and then have your own army of pet baby dragons. That's not even a feature, it's just a brilliant hidden thing which you might discover.

There's far too much depth here to even begin to scratch this game's surface, but if you've never played a roguelike before, and don't mind the archaic visuals, I simply cannot recommend this game any harder. The only problem is, if you play *NetHack*, you sacrifice any delusional notions of not being a massive nerd.





It's got jump-pads too!

"You're the worst synchronised jump-padding partner I've ever had."



ALIEN ARENA 2007

Unreal, this certainly is not Dev: CodeRED | red.planetarena.org

DESCRIBED BY SOME AS 'like *Unreal Tournament* but not very good', *Alien Arena 2007*, sequel to *Alien Arena 2006*, is a multiplayer FPS which does pretty much exactly what its predecessor did. This time however, it does it a bit better, and people actually seem to be playing it online.

Somebody's spat on it. I mean, it's got a spit-and-polish – meaning the garish colours now bleed and glow like a radioactive wound. The levels are like something out of Mark Rein's nightmares,

and the default weapon shoots slow-moving blue things which I remember hating in *Alien Arena 2006*. But for everything the game does wrong, it seems to haphazardly make up for it through its economically sensible (read 'free') price point, and an underlying sense of fun hidden somewhere deep, deep inside.

It's this nugget of enjoyableness *Alien Arena 2007* keeps dangling in front of you which will keep you playing, if indeed you keep playing. However, you can't help but feel a little ridiculous doing so, when

you've got a copy of *Unreal Tournament* installed. Without wanting to undermine the amount of hard work invested in the *Alien Arena* series, I can't help but feel the role of these developers should be to produce free titles that publishers wouldn't touch, instead of trying to compete with commercial online shooters.

On the other hand, if you have a decent PC, but somehow can't afford a decent online shooter, *Alien Arena* will be your backup in that crazy world you obviously live in.

STRING THEORY

Prepare for some science abuse

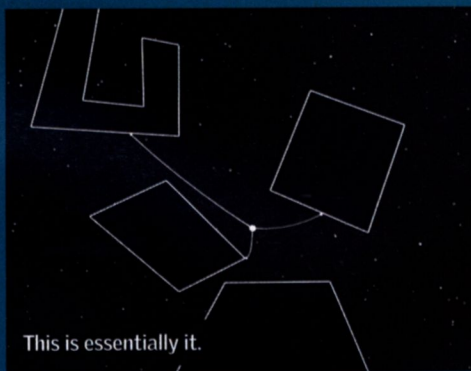
Dev: dcover | www.experimentalgameplay.com/game.php?g=267

RATHER THAN BEING a model of fundamental physics whose building blocks are one-dimensional extended objects rather than the zero-dimensional points that are the basis of the Standard Model of particle physics, *String Theory* is a game where you're a spider-thing trying to not fall off the screen.

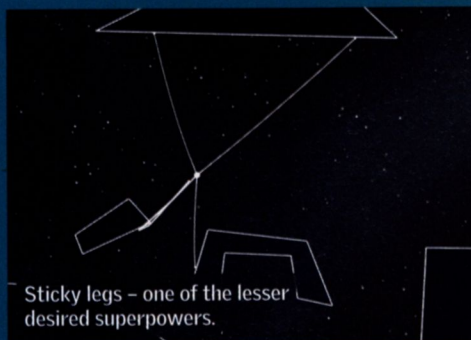
Another piece of genius from the Experimental Gameplay Project, *String Theory* was born of a contest to see who could create the best game controlled using a dancemat. We don't have a dancemat, so we had to use the number pad instead, but it's probably easier that way.

The corresponding keys shoot your stretchy arms out in the respective directions (a bit like Spider-Man), and you must stay on-screen as the camera pans around wildly. Your arms, though sticky, lose their stickiness gradually, so constant flailing and lucid arm movements are required just to stay in one place.

Also, that first paragraph is almost entirely taken from Wikipedia, as I don't actually know anything about string theory other than that documentary in which the guy takes a special elevator all the way down to the surface of an atom. That was crazy.



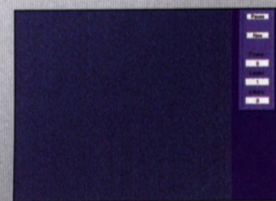
This is essentially it.



Sticky legs – one of the lesser desired superpowers.

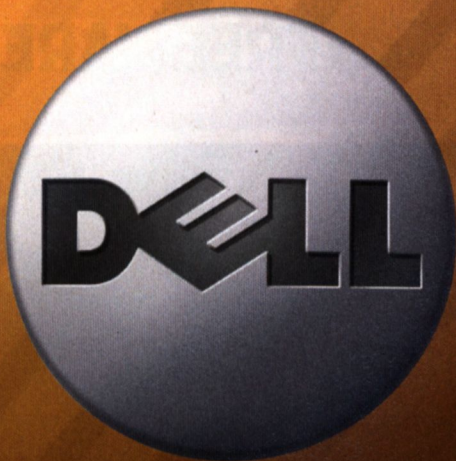
WEBGAME OF THE MONTH

Magic Eye Tetris



Dev: Lutz Tautenhahn
www.lutanho.net/play/magicyetetris.html

Apparently, the part of the brain which comprehends Magic Eye pictures is the same part which stores intelligent political opinions, good business sense and wine-tasting terminology. People who cannot 'do' Magic Eye pictures are less 'human' than those who can, with their DNA having more in common with chimpanzees than their Magic Eye-seeing kin. This is *Tetris* rendered in that crazy stereoscopic fuzz. Even the best Magic Eye viewers will find this challenging, if only because your head really starts to hurt after around 2,000 points. Maybe it's just me, but the playing grid seems a bit too small: if you're going to set *Tetris* to 'bloody hard' by making it night-on invisible, at least give us a bigger playing area.



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ETERNAL SILENCE



Steve Hogarty breaks his vow www.eternal-silence.net | Mod for: Half-Life 2



BLAISE PASCAL ONCE mused on the unfathomable nature of an infinite universe, saying something profound about its 'eternal silence', something I would have explicitly quoted had I not closed the webpage with all of his quotes on there. So why is it, developers of this FPS/space shooter mod for *Half-Life 2*, that the unfathomable vastness of space isn't eternally silent at all, not by the longest of shots. Instead, the inky blackness is riddled with blasting lasers, exploding spaceships and homing missiles. And sometimes the sound it makes when you crash into the back wall of a hangar at 90 metres per second. Pascal would spit.

Eternal Silence was one of the first mods announced for *HL2*, throwing out ideas of inter-mothership battles using smaller fighters, the ability to board the enemy ship and take over control points, and basically subverting almost everything about the Source engine to create something not entirely unlike *Battlefront 2*. When announced, *Eternal Silence* smacked of over-ambition, but the team have pulled it off and delivered on their promises even with this beta version.

The control point-capturing system works just like *Battlefield*, with each area under your command becoming a spawn point. Between the two main spacecraft (which are huge, with fully navigable interiors) lies an expanse of space (again, really big – bigger than anything else seen in the Source engine). It's in this space that intense dogfights ensue. Brilliant dogfights too, when the lag lets up.

For the most part, flying through space is a fluid experience, even including an option to fly with semi-Newtonian physics enabled (which allows for sneaky sideways shooting). On foot, however, the combat isn't quite so lucid, and lag really kills any sense of fair play. This is easily the mod's greatest stumbling block, and something which we hope is rectified soonish rather than laterish.

So while it's still extremely laggy, its on-foot section a tad weak and there's an odd glitch which seems to make all of the turrets spin around so fast they make a weird sort of strobe effect, it's clear that with work, *Eternal Silence* has the potential to become one of *Half-Life 2*'s greatest mods – and possibly one of the loudest too.



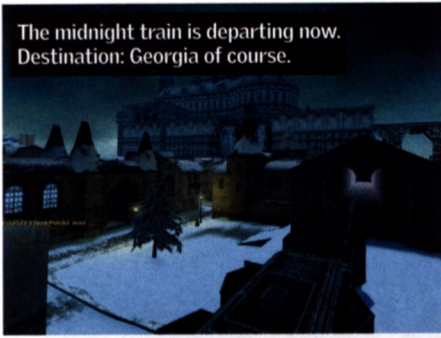
We're guessing 'lagaa vaha' is foreign for 'omg lag'.



Primary Weapons	
Autus Cannon	100
Autus Cannon	100
Annella Cannon	100
Annella Cannon	100



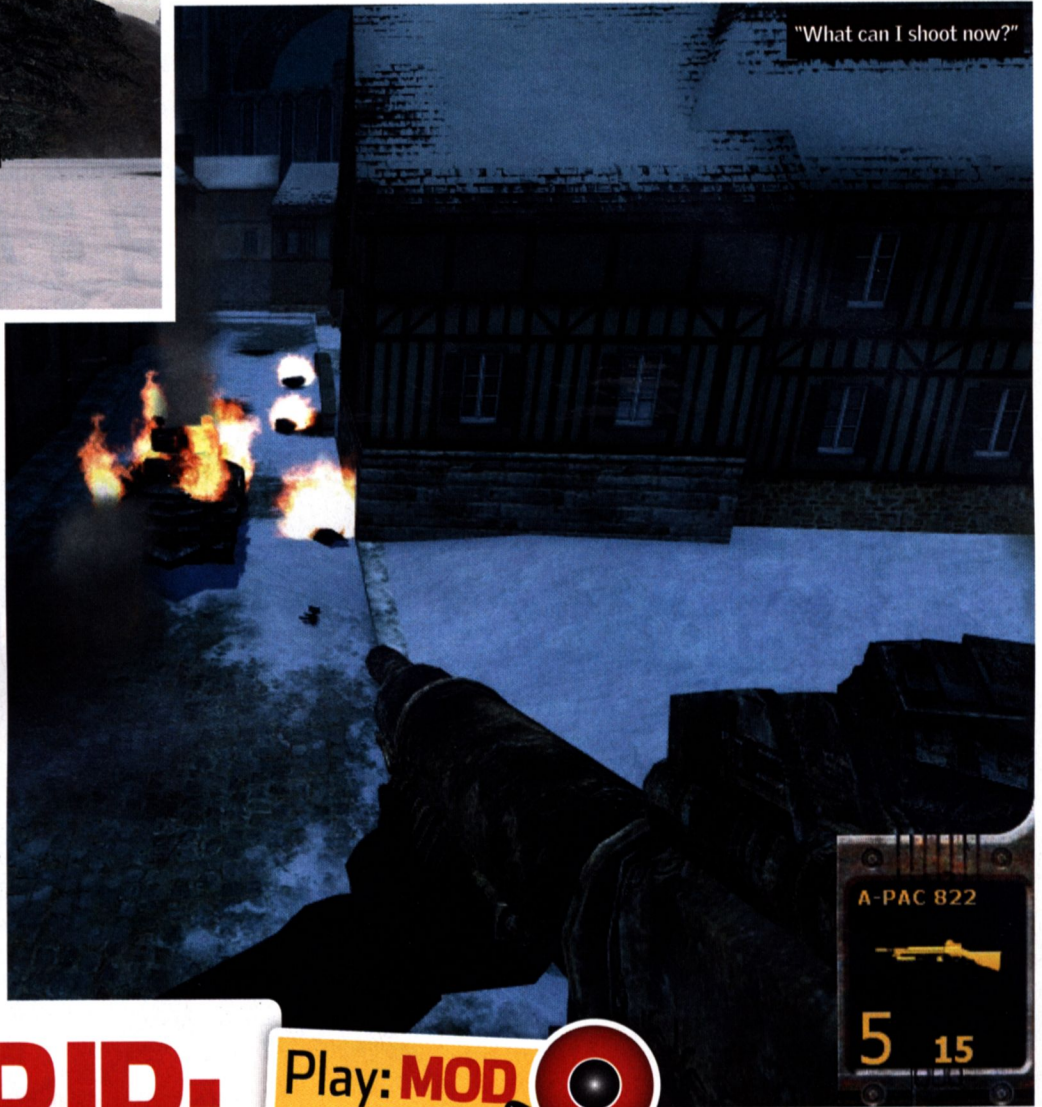
"You're right Sarge, these new boots keep my feet toasty warm."



The midnight train is departing now. Destination: Georgia of course.



Road closed due to constant and sustained exploding.



IRON GRIP: THE OPPRESSION

Play: **MOD**



Steve Hogarty is dressed to oppress www.isotx.com | Mod for: Half-Life 2

WHILE PLAYING THIS mod, I have to admit I accidentally team-killed more than four or five times. When I wasn't shooting my own team-mates, other people seemed to be doing it to me. Or if that wasn't happening, somebody was complaining about it happening to them – all this because *Iron Grip*, presumably in the name of realism, neglects to include enemy markers.

Outside of clumsily lethal camaraderie, mediating Resistance players often called for their team to hold back until the Opposition's commander could build up his army. Just like at a football match in school when somebody passes to the shy kid and everyone's told to go easy on him in case you destroy his confidence at that crucial moment of his life.

Playing *Iron Grip* in its current form is like a walking race: it demands self-restraint for the sake of everybody having a good time. And that's more than slightly annoying if you just want to have fun, as the gameplay's far too easy to break. Get over this gung-ho attitude however (or wait until Isotx refine the mod), and it becomes apparent that *Iron Grip* is a *Half-Life 2* mod crammed with innovative ideas, atmospheric level design and an Eastern European alternate future style which can't be faulted.

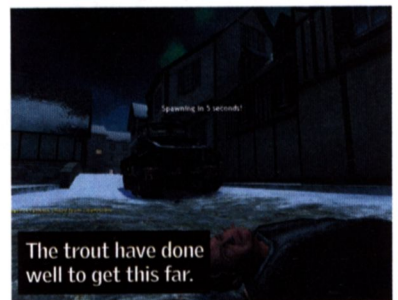
On the Opposition side, a single commander controls AI troops and tanks from a top-down, RTS perspective. It's surprisingly effective, and while the HUD could do with some tweaking (as well as removing some seemingly unusable options such as patrol routes), it still

works undeniably well. The commander must hide his own avatar somewhere safe, as dying results in victory for the Resistance. To balance the obvious skill difference between the AI and players, the Opposition can deploy eight AI troops and a tank per Resistance player.

On the Resistance side of things, a more familiar FPS view is utilised. Fighting against the commander-controlled bots smacks of *Sven Co-op* – but tanks seem too numerous and easy to defeat. Make the tanks less abundant and more thick-skinned and fatal, and we'll be happier resistors methinks. *Iron Grip* has some way to go before becoming what its creators envisioned, but even now it's a promising and brilliant mod – a must-play, even for cack-eyed team-killers like me:



Can't see the tanks through the trees...

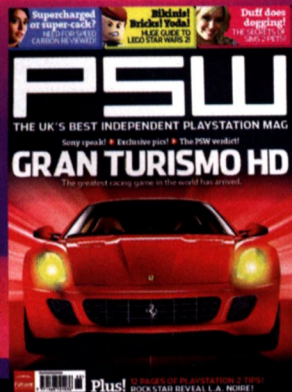


The trout have done well to get this far.

"FAST AND FURIOUS" NEED FOR SPEED CARBON

"VAGUIER LOOKS LIKE A CHEAP HOOKER
BUT THE CARS ROCK!"

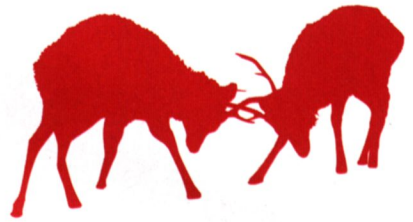
★★★★★ PSW MAGAZINE



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MORE ATTITUDE,
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Fight Club



The sixth rule of Fight Club is... Enable Punkbuster

GOOD OLD BATTLEFIELD. Ten minutes into our proposed *BF2* session and the office was little more than a hive of weeping and gnashing of teeth – patches, Punkbuster and server issues causing widespread panic that could be felt the length and breadth of Britain.

Still, we got in eventually and maybe didn't play a full server, but at least had a nice chat while firing guns in the air and standing in comedic poses on fast-moving vehicles. The next Fight Club is at 6pm on Thursday, November 16, and it'll be our faithful old friend *Counter-Strike: Source* – now with marketplace economies! So hooray for that.



By the time we sorted our technical issues out, the streets were deserted.



COME AND TAKE ON THE ZONE STAFF IN OUR MONTHLY ONLINE GAMING FREE-FOR-ALL!

Maybe this is why no-one ever wants to join our squad...

ZONE CHAT
Tippetty-tap, it's an online chat! Now with 10% more nuns!

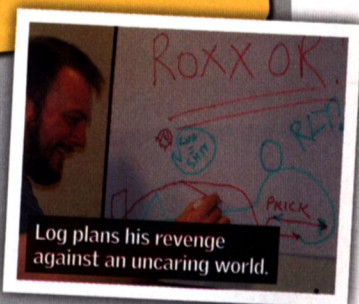
WHATEVER LIFE MAY throw at you, however many injustices and trials are visited upon you, you're only one picture of a dog wearing pyjamas away from happiness. There were no such pictures on this month's *ZONE* Chat, but it is a useful adage for living your life. Keep one in your wallet.

Back to the matter in hand: this month's *ZONE* Chat kicked off with an unusually civilised discussion about cheap German wine. It seemed entirely possible that we'd invented the slogan 'Blue Nun FTW'. Sadly, a Google search showed that someone called 'Blunteh' said it in February. You win this round, Blunteh. Whoever you are.

Conversation moved on, with eyebrows aloft at EA's in-game *Battlefield 2142* adware, not to mention the uninformed tabloid-led dementia of the Curry's chain not stocking Rockstar's *Bully*. But everyone seemed to agree on these matters, so conversation moved on to Blu-ray, and whether Log should ever reprise his predatory rendition of *Baby It's Cold Outside* on karaoke.

The winner of our impromptu caption competition was one James Phoenix, who came up with: "After 30 years, Log had finally advanced to drawing simple lines and swear words." Well done sir. (Though to be fair, taking the piss out of Log is far too easy. We expect better next time.)

The next *ZONE* Chat is at 5pm on Wednesday, November 15. Be there!



Log plans his revenge against an uncaring world.

How to join in!



If you fancy joining the *ZONE* Chat, then you'll need an IRC program and a Net connection. We recommend mIRC and you can find it on side two of our DVD. Just install the program, set the options, devise an online identity that'll make you stand out from the crowd, connect to a Quakenet server nearest to you, type /join #pcz into the command line, and hey presto, you're there! Chatting with the friendliest bunch of online readers you could hope to find. Remember, play nice and don't be rude.

Can't make Fight Club?

If you can't make it to Fight Club – perhaps due to your impotent rage at *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* being passed over by the BAFTAs – then join other *PCZ* readers on the following public servers. *ZONE* staff might even be there. The latest info can always be found at www.zonegames.co.uk.

WHO'S WHO

Jamie Sefton PCZ_NorthernScum
Will Porter PCZ_Batsphinx
Suzy Wallace PCZ_Uzibat
Steve Hogarty PCZ_escaped_monkey
Andy Robinson PCZ_EssexHoodlum
Phil Wand PCZ_People's Front Of Judea
Jon Blyth PCZ_Log

- 1 SWAT 4**
swat4.zonegames.co.uk
- 2 COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE**
cs1.zonegames.co.uk:27015
cs2.zonegames.co.uk:27025
cs3.zonegames.co.uk:27015
- 3 HALF-LIFE 2: DEATHMATCH**
hl2.zonegames.co.uk:27065
- 4 DAY OF DEFEAT: SOURCE**
dod.zonegames.co.uk:27085
- 5 BATTLEFIELD 1942 DC MODDED**
dc.zonegames.co.uk:14567
- 6 TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC**
tfc.zonegames.co.uk:27045
- 7 WOLFENSTEIN: ENEMY TERRITORY**
et.zonegames.co.uk:27960
- 8 UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004**
ut1.zonegames.co.uk:7777
ut2.zonegames.co.uk:8888
- 9 CALL OF DUTY**
cod.zonegames.co.uk:28960
- 10 JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING**
Listed on NovaWorld



Obliterate the planet in... DEFCON

Hello gentlemen, *Steve Hogarty's* set us up the bomb

Need:

- A copy of DEFCON
- Diplomatic immunity
- A payload of nuclear bombs

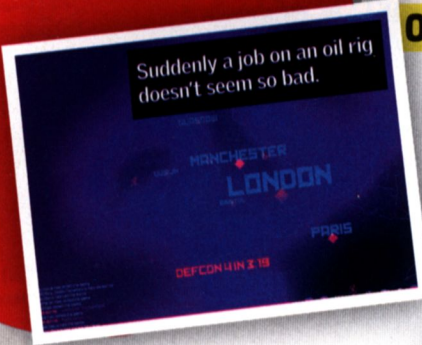
What you'll get:

- ✓ World domination
- ✓ Radioactive fallout
- ✓ Irreversible global catastrophes
- ✗ A medal

IN A BUNKER cluttered with wires and barely illuminated by rows of flickering screens, a man finally stamps his fist on a desk. "Dammit Hogarty, we need a decision now! My son is out there," he shouts, stamping his fist on a desk. I fire an indomitable glance in his direction. "You think I don't know that?" I ask, stamping my fist on a desk. "I've got a wife out there too," I declare with a fist stamp. "God help us all." Stamping my fist on a desk, I give the order. "Launch the ICBMs, and have our families en route to Australia within the hour." My fist really hurts...

01 YOU'RE UP, EUROPE

Europe has a rather unfair advantage over the rest of the world, in that it's the smallest continent available (thank you, continental drift). This means that all of its high-population cities are more easily defended by a few silos placed on the mainland. If you're playing against North America, be sure to place radar in Iceland to get a heads-up on any nuclear missiles heading your way. Silos in Scandinavia, Scotland and Ireland will start swatting away many nuclear attacks from the US, but be sure to defend London well - it's Europe's bullseye for nukes, worryingly.



02 Youth in Asia

When playing as Asia, your main priority should be to defend your eastern coastline. Your most populated city is Tokyo - if it gets bombed, there won't be any Nintendo, Sony, soiled knickers or cartoon porn, so you should consider placing almost all of your silos on the eastern side of China. In Diplomacy mode, try to ally with Russia - there's enough hostility in the world without having to worry about Siberian nukes from the north. If they combine their forces, the East makes a formidable opponent. Just don't tell them that.



03 AMERICA, HELL YEAH

Any idiot can choose to control the United States. The same rule applies in DEFCON (ahahah, see what we did there?), but it takes a bit of know-how to defend the country well. A passing interest in geography will tell you that it's a wide country with major cities on either coast. Europe will have subs sitting outside New York waiting to blow it up (goddamn them all to hell), while the Russians will be loitering around San Francisco and Los Angeles. A couple of fleets of battleships and carriers should put them off, while radar in Canada and Alaska will warn of freedom-hating nukes from the sky.



04 SUB SCOUTS

Submarines don't appear on conventional radar, meaning you can march them right up to your enemy's coastlines and they won't notice. It also means they can do the same to you. If you wait by the beaches until your foe begins launching ICBMs, you can quickly retaliate with nuclear strikes from your subs on the now-undefended silos – a tactic which will render your enemy partially defenceless. Be warned that subs themselves are easily wiped out when surfaced, and also remember that not all fleets have to contain six units, so don't be afraid to spread the sub-love around.



05 Sub of the day

Defending yourself from sub attacks can be achieved in a number of ways. The most effective way is by right-clicking on any aircraft carriers you own and putting them in anti-submarine mode. This means subs will show up within their radar range, so have them patrol the coastline around your big cities – those underwater sailors won't know what hit them. Another way is to wait until they surface before attacking them with fighters, bombers and battleships, but this method usually allows subs to fire off a nuke or two before you can destroy them.

China takes the nukes out for a 'test-fly'.

06 OF RADARS AND SILOS

One of the most basic strategic elements of DEFCON is the fact that to launch an ICBM from a silo, you must deactivate its air defences. Silos are effective at shooting down nukes, but confuse them with bombers, nukes, fighters, more nukes and nukes from submarines, and they'll let a few slip through. Destroy nearby radar installations to severely cripple the silos' ability to stop nukes, and if enemy silos are launching their own death rockets into the sky, hit them while they're defenceless. It's all about timing, and playing against people who don't know any better.

Keeping a low profile is crucial in this game.

07 Carrier command

Fleets are so much more than victims of DEFCON 3 scuffles, and having most of your ships still afloat is a massive advantage later in the game. Battleships should always be accompanied by some carriers or subs, as they're vulnerable to attacks from enemy submarines. Carriers locate and attack subs, as well as launch fighters (who can also scout) and launch bombers carrying nukes. A fleet of six subs is a powerful and rapid way of levelling a freshly revealed enemy silo, but they'll be destroyed almost instantly by nearby fleets or airbases along the coastline if they don't have floaty protection.

As if Ethiopia doesn't have enough problems...

0:58 REMAINING

08 SOMETHING IN THE AIR TONIGHT

Place airbases during DEFCON 4, when you can see enemy silos on your radar (or at least the ones within range). Otherwise, your planes become targets as soon as they take off. Also, because bombers require 240-seconds to arm themselves after taking off, you might find them being shot down before they can drop their bomb. To prevent this, have them fly away from the enemy territory for a bit, giving them a chance to prepare themselves, then command them to fly to their intended target for the best strike possible, while repeatedly muttering: "My god, what have we done?" You just scored another 20 points is what you done.

"I am become death, how do you do?"

Retro ZONE

Making old people feel superior since a few months back...

FRUIT MACHINES

EMULATION OF THE MONTH



SLOT MACHINES IN America work by a random number generator. It's just you against the machine, or however you choose to personify 'statistics'. For me, luck is a drunken man in a butcher's apron, throwing darts into the air and laughing. Something else might work for you.

Here in the UK, we've got 'progressive' machines. The chance of winning on each play isn't the same, because the machines have to pay a percentage of what's put in. It's around 72%, and that's shit odds for a gambler. But, the more people put in, the more likely you are to win – to the point where wins become inevitable; and that's why people sometimes hang around fruit machines like non-circling vultures. The machine pretends to be random, of course; it shows you carrots and throws out the occasional £3. But it's not you against the machine in the UK. It's you against everyone else in the pub.

ZONE veterans will remember Stuart Campbell's heroic crusade against the big boys. Using the emulators, he proved what everyone suspected – that sometimes, you simply don't stand a chance. In other words, the Hi/Lo gamble isn't just not random, throwing out pre-set, unlikely results – it goes so far as to change the result to make you wrong, whatever you choose.

This knowledge doesn't stop the afflicted, of course. We know the odds. But we'll still lose focus on the conversation when someone else puts a quid in. We'll still listen out for that sound of the coin bypassing the payout tubes and landing in the cash trough. We'll still itch like maniacs when we see someone else on a jackpot-guaranteed feature. But that feeling... When you drop £25 with a skill repeat chance. It's like kicking god in the tits.



Sadly, current games aren't emulated.

BUT HOW?

Spiny, spiny wheels. When will they stop?

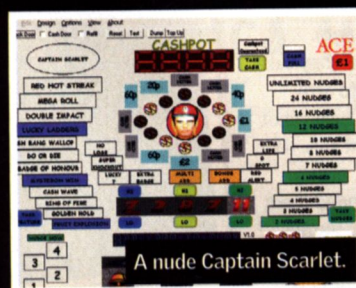
You won't find emulators for the latest games; it's too big a racket for the money-makers to tolerate that kind of nonsense. But older games are out there. You need the ROM and the visual layout for a convincing copy, and there's a different emulator for each of the big manufacturers. There have been attempts to create a MAME-style cross-platform emulator, but with mixed (little) success. Go and have a fanny about.

Links...

- Fruit-Emu**
www.fruit-emu.com
Home of forums and a number of emulators.
- Fruit Forums**
www.fruitforums.com
If you're not already a gambler, it's not something to aspire to.



£250 jackpot: exciting, or scary?



A nude Captain Scarlet.

The machine pretends to be random – it throws carrots and pays out the odd £3

MEAN MACHINES

Six machines and some things that they did

TWILIGHT ZONE
One of the first to make 'secret' wins explicit; but infuriatingly, it didn't tell you exactly what to do.

EASY MONEY
One of the occasional and more unpopular variants on the traditional 'number 4 is the bonus'. Rubbish.

JEWEL IN THE CROWN
1992, the jackpots went up to £10. The long build-up to today's £25 jackpot is blamed for dying interest.

AFTERSHOCK
From Red Games, a company notorious for fast losses. Dedicated addicts could lose a tenner in minutes.

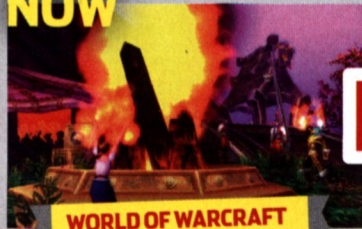
BARCODE
Gave special feature for 1-2-3 and 3-2-1 combinations of bars. But not every time. Just when it felt like it.

POWERBALL
Trueskill is a red herring – the machine still chooses when you get to use 'true skill'. (Not emulated.)

NOW & THEN

World Of Warcraft vs Warcraft: Orcs & Humans

NOW



WORLD OF WARCRAFT

THEN



WARCRAFT: ORCS & HUMANS

IF ANYBODY'S EVER played that practical joke on you, where they balance a glass of water on the back of each of your hands and then walk away, then you're an idiot. In all likelihood they would have used their own glasses, so simply drop them and feel no remorse. You're probably in their house too, so you don't even have to clean it up. And as they clean up their own broken glasses from the cold puddle on their kitchen floor, you can laugh and say things like: "Look who's laughing now! The answer is me!"

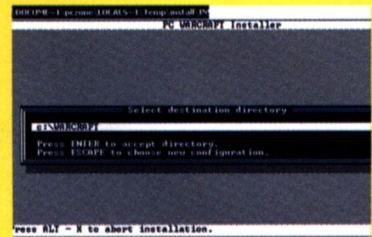
Blizzard put their fans in a similar situation when they announced they were going to go from their successful real-time strategy series to the then *EverQuest*-ruled MMO genre, asking us to put all of our nerdy faith in their genre-swapping ventures. What if they'd gotten it wrong? Where would we be today? Probably still playing *EverQuest*? Playing *Warcraft 5*? What would that be like? Would that be fun? Who knows?! Thank god we live in a universe of causality and certainty.



PLAY IT!

You too can revel in ye auld wonders of DOS installation prompts and the 8.3 file-naming convention, by downloading the original *Warcraft* demo from the Blizzard website. Did we really wear those clothes back then?

- 1 Go to www.blizzard.com/war1/ - now THAT'S a 1990s webpage. There's an animated gif of a trophy and everything.
- 2 Click on the 'Download The PC Demo' link. You've used the Internet before, right?
- 3 Click everything that needs clicking and obey the screen prompts. Remember that DOS is a dungeon in which your mouse is useless.
- 4 Sooner or later, you'll find yourself playing one of the first strategy games to pit orcs against humans ever on the PC, by Blizzard.



SINISTAR

MAME FRAME

Run, coward! says Jon Blyth Developer: Williams | Year: 1982

THE DEATH STAR was pretty scary. I mean, it could blow up a planet, causing millions of voices to cry out in terror. But when it comes down to hardcore star-based death terror, it's *Sinistar* for the win. Did the Death Star fly around, shouting and eating spaceships? I put it to you, sir, that it did not.

In most arcades, *Sinistar* was left alone. It was the machine that growled 'I hunger' when you put in 10p, instead of making a welcoming bloop or f-dring. It was twitch gaming that left you so

drained from wrestling the joystick that you didn't even want to get better at it.

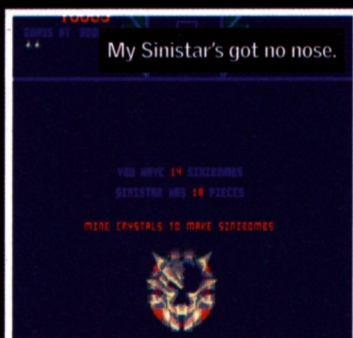
The premise? Mine rocks at dizzying speeds to make sinibombs, while the Moon Cresta-esque worker ships try to steal them to build Sinistar. If you haven't collected enough sinibombs by the time ol' Chompy Chops is born ("Beware! I live!"), then you might as well give up. Or you could try to abuse the 255-lives bug - but I wouldn't advise it. After 255 lives on *Sinistar*, you'll be gibbering in a cage.



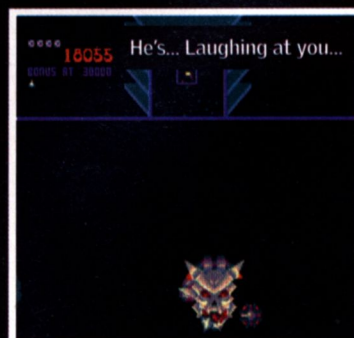
Where's my ship?
Dead, that's where.

WHAT IS MAME?

MAME is an emulator for over 6,000 arcade games, and is perfectly legal. However, on its own it's useless, and requires ROMs to play all the old coin-ops. These ROMs are copyrighted, so it's illegal to own them unless you own the arcade machine. We're not nagging, we're just letting you know.



My Sinistar's got no nose.



He's... Laughing at you...

BACK IN THE DAY...



Wolfenstein 3D

by Will Porter

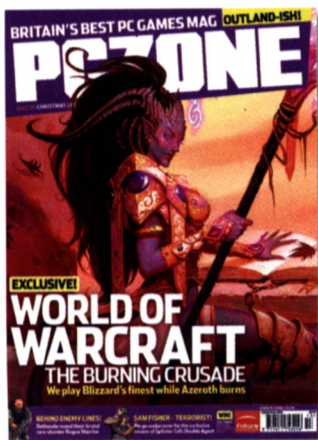
Ah, Wolfenstein castle - with your delicious roast dinners and secret moving walls behind oddly placed Nazi insignia. How I do miss thee... But, beyond your scary dogs and blue-eyed sentry boys, I think I miss your bosses the most. A giant blue man with giant guns turning my monitor into a fine red mist, or a mad blood-splattered doctor who threw syringes... *Wolf 3D* didn't just invent the modern shooter, it absolutely bastard nailed it. What FPS since has provided a boss like Hitler in his chaingun-toting robot suit and forlorn death cry of, "Eva, Auf Wiedersehen...?" And what FPS has had a cool death-cam for said demise with the tag: "Let's see that again!"? Forget *Doom* and its cyberdemon, the Aryan foes of William 'BJ' Blazkovicz have never been topped since.

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STEVE HILL'S NeverQuest



Steve Hill walks among Orcs in ArchLord...

NO ORCS, NO ELVES, no goblins. It's a mantra that I repeat on a near daily basis in my capacity as games editor of a leading men's interest magazine, sternly rebuffing clueless PR executives' ambitious attempts to hawk their fantasy-riddled wares on my hallowed pages. However, hidden deep in the back pages of this magazine lurks a dirty secret: I am an orc berserker and I live in a fantasy world.

Apart from the fact that I've just admitted it, the secret may already be out. When I checked my communal postal area to take delivery of the game, the envelope was ripped at the top, revealing the shameful words, 'ArchLord. Online fantasy adventure.' This means that not only are the neighbours aware of my twisted double life, but that the inhabitants of the nearby young offenders unit who regularly pillage my games are becoming increasingly discerning. Rapidly smuggling the offending article into the flat as if it contained a subscription copy of *Teenage Eskimo*, tearing off the remaining packaging reveals the full horror within.

ORC THIS WAY

Featuring an earnest man in improbable armour, the box invites me to 'Raise an army, rule the world' and indeed 'Embark on an epic tale of conquest and glory in the search for absolute supremacy.' What, like Adolf Hitler?

Unlike wartime Germany though, the continent of Chantra is a racially diverse place, and faced with a choice of humans, moon elves or orcs, it's with

a sense of resignation that I opt for the latter. What is an orc anyway? For years I thought it was a type of bird, and I haven't managed to stay awake during *The Lord Of The Rings* long enough to learn otherwise. A green-skinned creature with bad teeth, I am essentially a less friendly version of Shrek.

Stuck in the village of Golundo, there's a definite rustic vibe, and early attempts at conversation with a Billy Goat prove fruitless. Attempting to integrate into the community, it's not long before the locals have got me running errands, picking up supplies for a blacksmith and carrying out pest control. Giant bats are comfortably put to the sword, but when I'm sent to kill five dark spiders, one of them fatally bites me on the arse.

ORC ON THE WILD SIDE

Meanwhile, a row has broken out among the inhabitants, with Acelee inviting all comers to Dayton, Ohio to "make me shut up," providing of course "any of you 'tards can get the chair out of under neeth your asses". By way of riposte, Evaleigh asks him to: "Hold on while I act like you matter, or I care." It never mentioned this on the packaging...

Considering that the aim of the game is to 'rise from amongst the many and lead your army to be crowned ArchLord!', I'm

I feel so ashamed right now.



Taking over the world, one bat at a time.

Not what I had in mind when they mentioned a 'wild stag night'.



[Sound] Calhan: I can say Fuck, Slut, Bitch.
[Sound] Slise: FUCK.
[Sound] Greenranger: Slut.
[Sound] Slise: Wow. That's awesome.
[Sound] Dynastine: SHIT!
[Sound] Greenranger: SLUTTY WHORE BITCH!
[Sound] Calhan: try to say PAVN without it capitalised.
[Sound] Slise: Hahaha.
[Sound] Greenranger: haha thats stupid

The box invites me to 'Raise an army, rule the world.' What, like Hitler?

mildly surprised to see somebody calling himself ArchLord casually sauntering by.

"Are you really the ArchLord?" I quiz him, and the cheeky orc admits that he simply commandeered the name in order to impress people. I'm impressed, and ask to be his friend. "Sure," replies the faux-dictator. "I'll even let you come fly on my dragon some time."

"Cool," I enthuse, hastily adding, "I'm not gay."

"I'm not either," laughs ArchLord.

"Let's do some non-gay quests,"

I suggest.

ArchLord (*not* Gaylord) is mulling over the idea when we're rudely interrupted by a lithe female orc called Nagi, who curtly suggests that we "get a room you batties".

Responding to my earlier invitation, ArchLord claims: "Actually I'm kind of busy now, I promised Nagi some oral action first."

Nagi doesn't seem too keen though, telling him: "I like my men with a waist size below 50."

"Let's spit-roast her," I suggest, somewhat unhelpfully.

Changing tack, I plead: "Nagi, will you be my friend?"

"Uhm, sure," she acquiesces.

"Can you invite me to a party or something?" I ask.

"You're too low," says Nagi, and with that she's gone.

DEER PARK

Venting my frustration on dumb animals, I take a job killing deer, hacking into them wildly with my sword in a scene reminiscent of the end of *Apocalypse Now*. Unsurprisingly they fight back, rearing up at me with their antlers and puncturing my leathery green skin in a visceral orgy of hooves, blood and fur.

Feeling calmer, I take a quest that involves killing a spider and bringing back his claw. Following a few failed attempts, I enlist the help of a friendly sort called Gormandghast and the offending arachnid is slain. However, due to a bug (of the computer sort) I can't pick up the claw and am too embarrassed to ask for help again.

Elsewhere, the rednecks are testing the game's profanity filter, which previously barred me from using the word 'cocking'. Nevertheless, it doesn't seem to mind "F***, Slut, Bitch," "SHIT," or indeed "SLUTTY WHORE BITCH!" from three of Golundo's deeper thinkers.

"This game totally sucks ass," adds Jiman, correctly. **PCZ**



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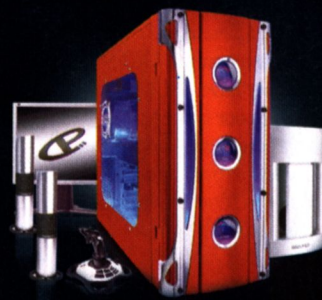
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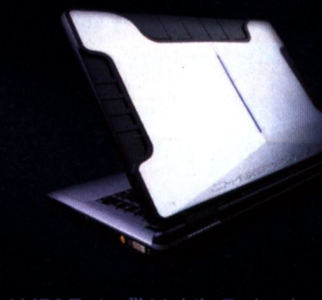
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SUPERTEST BEST FRANCHISE

What makes a good one great, and which one is truly the best?



YOUR VIEW

Last month we talked about online shooters – what did you have to say about that?

DAY OF DEFEAT: SOURCE

"I've had some great times on CS:S. However, these days all I play is *DOD: Source*. I prefer it to CS because of the wave respawn feature. I've never tired of its sense of urgency, and that you can go it alone or team up with a few guys and charge a flag."
Madameye

QUAKE 1 DEATHMATCH

"If there were enough good UK servers, I'd still be playing *Quake 1* deathmatch on a daily basis. I dust it off every time I have a LAN party and it never fails to amaze me how they got the weapon balance and player physics so right in such an early multiplayer game."
speakafrreaka

COD: UNITED OFFENSIVE

"This game has clocked up a massive amount of time for me – I was completely hooked on it. I remember playing it at 12am on Xmas morning."
DAEDALUS79

HALF-LIFE 2: DEATHMATCH

"I love *HL2: Deathmatch*. It's fast, easy to pick up and never fails to raise a smile."
Dogen_D_Derrible

DOOM 3 DEATHMATCH

"I'm gonna throw a curveball in: I really enjoyed *Doom 3* deathmatch for the entire three weeks that I played it. Just to be original, contradictory and all that."
SunScramble

AROUND TWO YEARS ago, Supertests were purely written. Pages long, they were, and by virtue of the paper and ink, our ridiculous opinions were given authority. And it wasn't on the DVD either, so you'd never have had the opportunity to listen to our whining squawks or to wince at our bumpkin dialects.

Nowadays, over 37% of commuters listen to the Supertest on their mp3 players, and our voices are so familiar to the world that many children think we're their parents, rejecting mother's milk to suckle on a Sefton-shaped sponge. How things have changed since we last talked about game franchises. But have the franchises kept up with us?

Well, there are plenty of new franchises coming out at the moment – if you can call them franchises at this stage, they're more like 'new games'. *Alan Wake*, *Kane & Lynch*, blah blah – whatever the state of the big boys, it's reassuring to see

exciting new titles coming through that aren't relying on improved tit physics.

But what makes a good franchise in the first place? Is it a consistent output of great games, like the *Total War* series? Is it an expertly realised gaming universe, like *WOW*? Or does it just boil down to the fact that when somebody says there's going to be a new *Sam & Max* game, you pad your feet on the floor and start imagining what it's going to be like? Whether they'll do all the things you dreamed about? The word 'franchise' may be nauseatingly commercial, but it's just the business face of loyalty and love.

If you decide to listen to the DVD, notice how Jamie and Will take over and get all misty-eyed about Supertests gone by. It's like Log and Steve aren't there, honestly. If you've got any opinions of your own, get on the Internet, go to www.pczone.co.uk, click on Forums and hurl yourself naked into the passion. It's nothing dirty, don't worry. **PCZ**



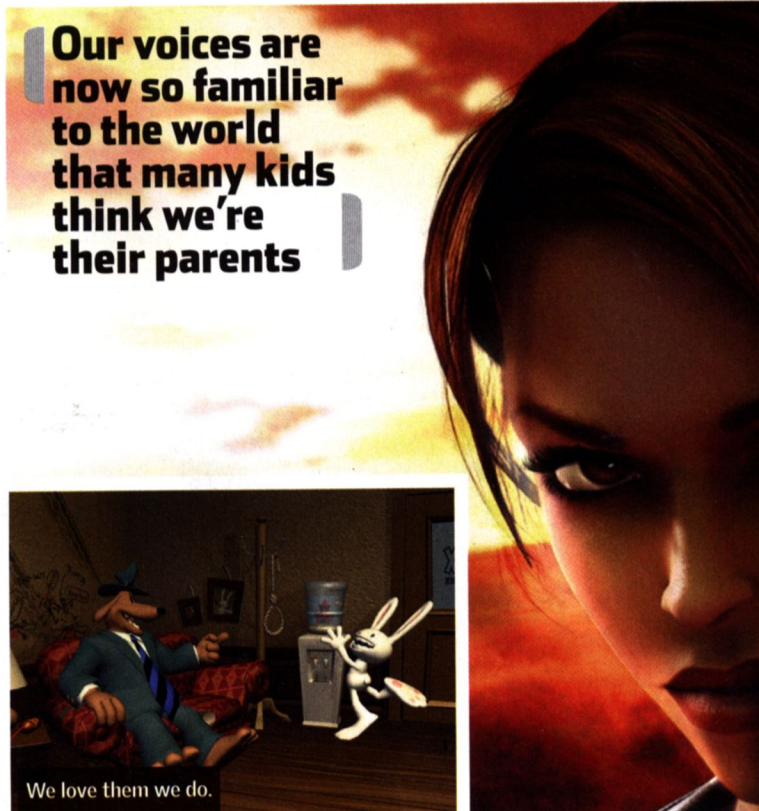
We've told you before Steve: you can't fly.



The Pete and Nicki saga had Will gripped.



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Lara Croft: franchise star and all-round sultry minx.



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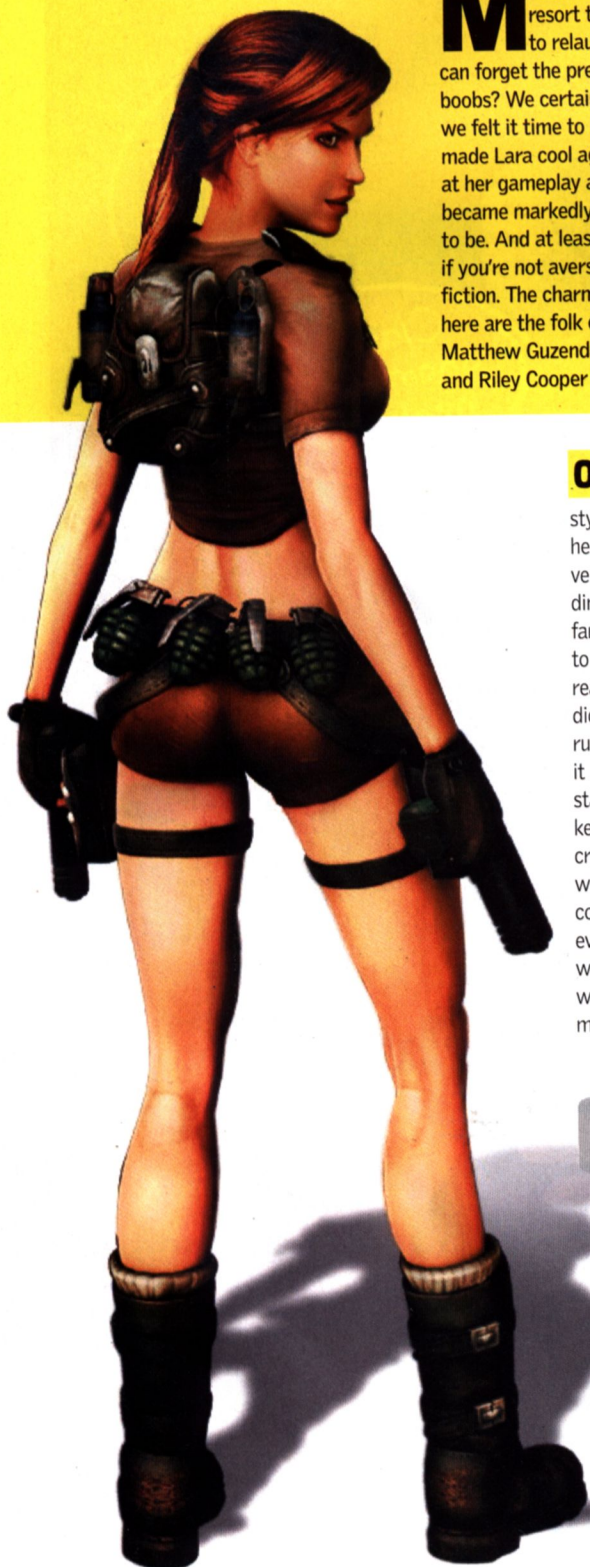
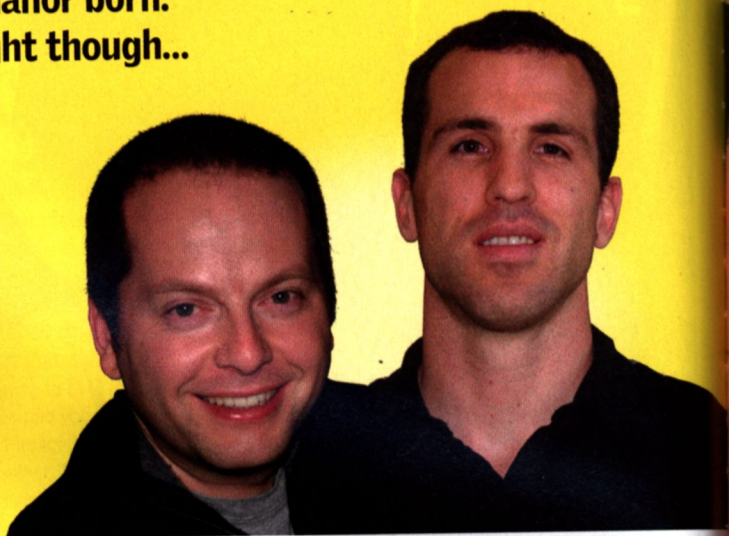


DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY

TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND

Both Lara Croft and Penelope Keith were to the manor born. *Good Life* fan Will Porter knows who'd win in a fight though...

MOST MEDIA STARLETS have to resort to plastic surgery in order to relaunch themselves – who can forget the press furore over Jade's new boobs? We certainly can't. Which is why we felt it time to investigate the men who made Lara cool again – nipping and tucking at her gameplay and figure until she became markedly less shit than she used to be. And at least 45% more kissable too, if you're not averse to fancying works of fiction. The charming smiley faces seen here are the folk of Crystal Dynamics: Matthew Guzenda (senior producer, left) and Riley Cooper (principal designer).

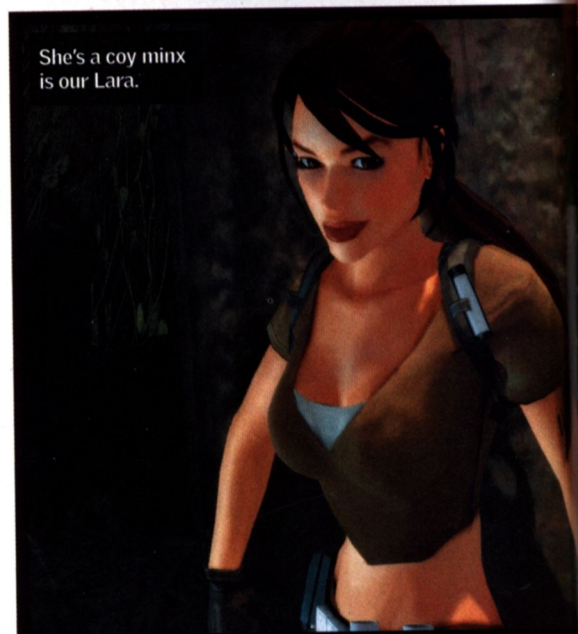


01 **NU-LARA:** Guzenda: "Going from the *Angel Of Darkness* model, she was very stylised at that point so we wanted to make her look more human. Obviously she still looks very perfect in a lot of respects, as far as dimensions go, but her proportions now are far more human. In *AOD* if you compared her to the other characters, the others were quite realistic but she stood out. Now obviously, we didn't want to make her too realistic as you run into the whole 'uncanny valley' thing when it looks too close to a human person – you start seeing odd things... But we wanted to keep her a little more realistic. Lara Croft creator Toby Gard played a big part in that when he came back in. We'd gone through a couple of different models which I'd say were evolutionary from previous models, so then we moved onto this third base model that was pretty different. Which led to the fourth model which is the one we used."

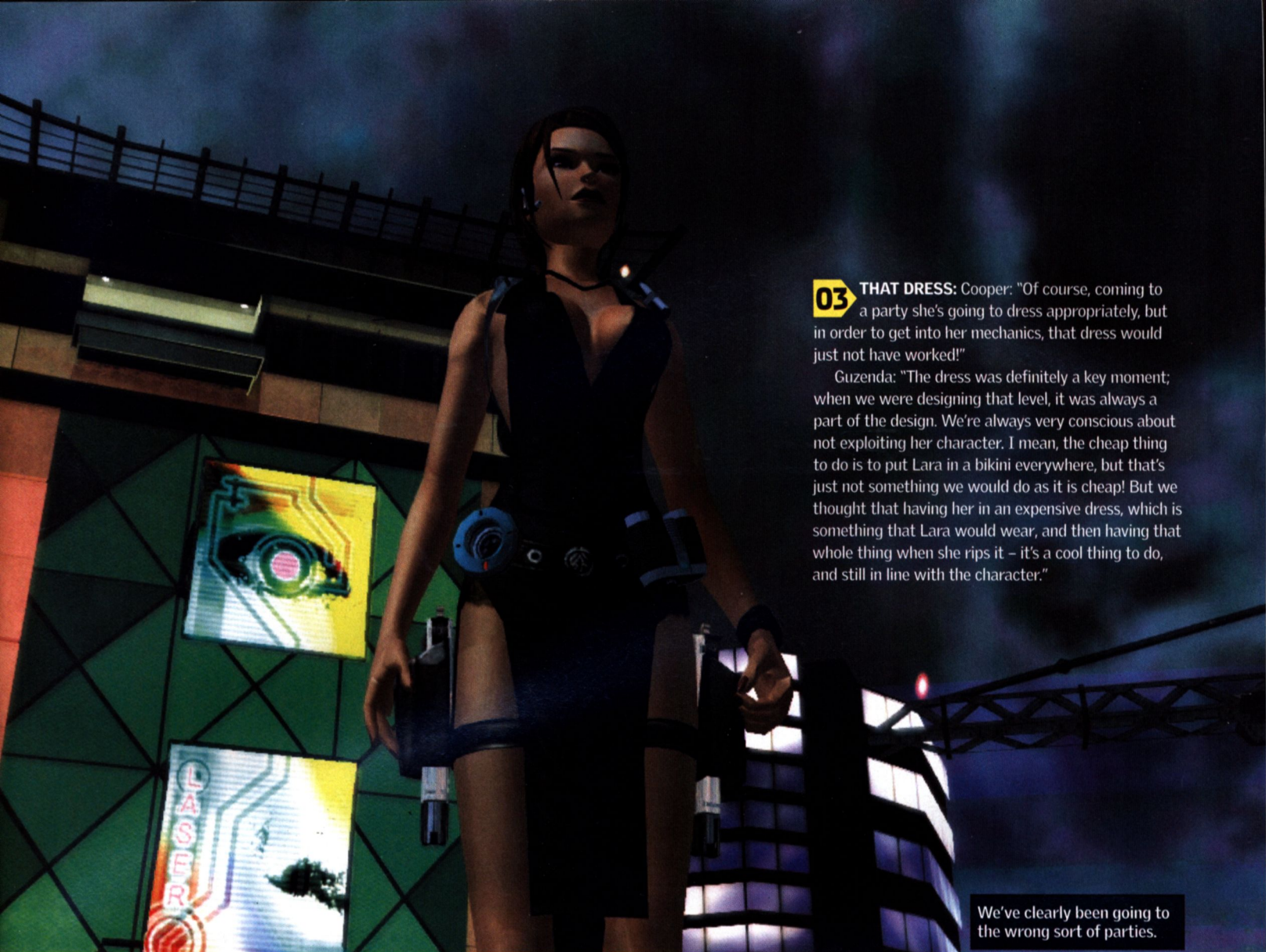
"Obviously she still looks very perfect in a lot of respects, but her proportions now are far more human"

Matthew Guzenda, senior producer, *Tomb Raider: Legend*

She's a coy minx is our Lara.



02 **THE PRIME OF MS LARA CROFT:** Guzenda: "If you're looking at all the previous stories and games, Lara pretty much kills everybody she's interacting with or competing against. There really wasn't anything that we could continue, so we wanted to establish a Lara-world where there were other characters and enemies that we could continue instead of starting from scratch every time. It was also unclear why Lara was doing what she was doing, as she's obviously rich but she's really into archaeology and takes all these risks – and we wanted to add emotional background and flesh out her story. In past games there were one or two mentions of what happened to her mother. We knew something had happened in the Himalayas, but it wasn't very clear, so we thought that was a good way to tie in a few good storylines."



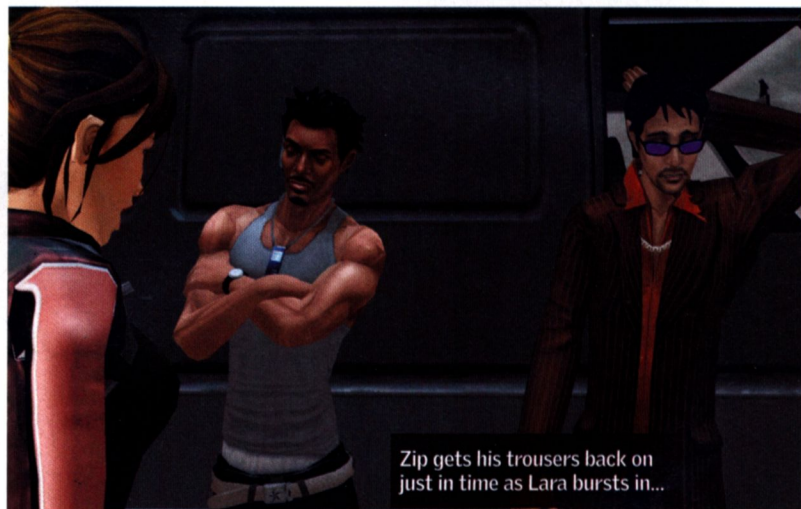
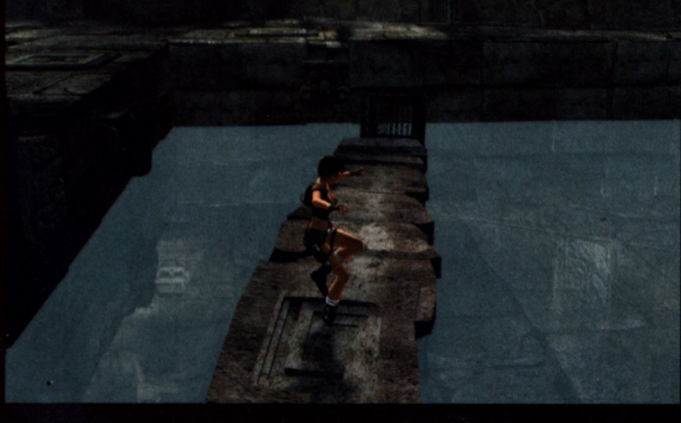
03 THAT DRESS: Cooper: "Of course, coming to a party she's going to dress appropriately, but in order to get into her mechanics, that dress would just not have worked!"

Guzenda: "The dress was definitely a key moment; when we were designing that level, it was always a part of the design. We're always very conscious about not exploiting her character. I mean, the cheap thing to do is to put Lara in a bikini everywhere, but that's just not something we would do as it is cheap! But we thought that having her in an expensive dress, which is something that Lara would wear, and then having that whole thing when she rips it – it's a cool thing to do, and still in line with the character."

We've clearly been going to the wrong sort of parties.

04 TOMB PHYSICS: Cooper: "We set this as a goal really early on – although at first our efforts didn't quite fit in and it was hard to see whether people were actually going to understand what to do with it. But after a while, we managed to do some things that we thought were pretty cool. Flipping the block in the air by jumping on the other side of the see-saw was the most enjoyable thing to design, and the most fun to watch people play. We got all giddy when we watched it – it was great! The main thing we would have done if we'd had more time would have been more physics set-ups, but we were happy with what we did in what was new territory for all of us."

Because every ancient civilisation relied on see-saw technology...



Zip gets his trousers back on just in time as Lara bursts in...

05 TEAM LARA: Guzenda: "Zip was actually one of the very few characters from previous games who wasn't killed or 'disappeared' that came into contact with Lara. In the original game she was pretty much always alone, and although that's actually key to the game – feeling that you're alone in the tomb and Lara's the first person to get there – the problem was that it's also very hard to move her personality along if she's not talking to anyone. Unless you're using flashback scenes and interrupting gameplay, it's very hard to add personality to a character – which is something we really wanted to do with *Legend*. Having Zip and Alister, having her interact with those guys, adds to her personality and obviously moves the story along. It was also an easy way for us to do a help system that was a little bit more subtle. If you get stuck in a level and don't know what's going on, those guys pipe up and give you some hints."



LOOKINGBACKCOMMENTARY

06 **ARTHUR'S TOMB:** Guzenda: "The thing with Arthur, the myth of King Arthur, is that it is a weapon, and depending on who you talk to, there are about 20 different versions of the myth. So it's a really cool one to play with – there's plenty of room to explain it and you can't get proven wrong."

Cooper: "At first it was like 'Well, where would we put the Arthurian tomb?', and we knew that there were a lot of museums and locations in the UK that claim to be the true location, so we went with that. One influence for the museum was the funhouse level in *Max Payne 2* – it had come out before we'd started, but was still fresh in our minds..."

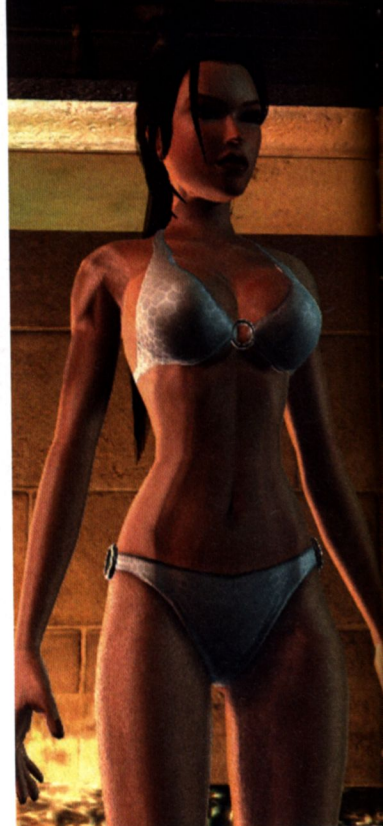
"What's that, Wooden Merlin?
A tomb? Down there?"



Bad posture is a sure sign of evil.

07 **THAT GO BUMP IN THE FIGHT:** Guzenda: "We do this layered approach when we do tombs – Lara always starts out somewhere that's realistic, and I don't want to call this 'an onion' as I hate that analogy. But basically she starts somewhere like outside a waterfall, where anyone can go – so it starts normal and everyday. Then she gets to a second layer between the two where maybe there are mercenaries, but it's still not supernatural and there's nothing unusual going on. As she gets further into the tomb it's fair game for more supernatural things to occur, so for example, with Arthur's grave, she starts off in an abandoned museum, she goes deeper and eventually ends up in the tomb where the sea monster is."

Nothing like standing
in the near-nip next
to a roaring fire...



“Obviously there’s a worldwide audience for Lara, but she’s also somewhat of a UK icon. There are a few Brits on the team, so we were very protective”

Matthew Guzenda, senior producer, *Tomb Raider Legend*



“Live long and prosper...”

09 THE INEVITABLE SEQUEL: Guzenda: “Based on the feedback we got for *Legend*, we’ll obviously focus on game length next time. I think this time around, we just wanted to get the game right. We spent a lot of time redoing areas we’d already done. We could have made more areas, but we wanted to make sure the game was good.”



08 HOME (COUNTIES) GIRL: Guzenda: “If you ever get an email from me, my tagline is ‘That’s Lara, not Laura!’ We were very aware when it moved to Crystal that the game was going from a UK developer to a US developer. Obviously there’s a worldwide audience for Lara, but she’s also somewhat of a UK icon. So we were very protective – I’m actually British and there are a couple of other Brits on the team, and obviously Toby Gard too. He was a great source of, ‘She wouldn’t say that, she’d say it this way.’ Even with little things like when we say that it’s her manor, rather than her mansion. Although technically it’s a mansion because we don’t show any of the estate...”

10 MASSACRE OF THE FURRY INNOCENTS: Guzenda: “Originally, we wanted more creatures in the game than we had. We ended up using human enemies quite a lot, and I think that, based on some of the feedback we’ve got, they’re something we’ll go back to in future games. With Lara you’re always very careful, asking ‘would Lara do this?’, even when you’re killing humans. It’s not a shooter, and she doesn’t do it for the thrill of killing people, so you always have to wonder what Lara would do in the situation. The team have had plenty of discussions saying, ‘Well Lara wouldn’t shoot that’. Like one time we had chickens running around a village and you could shoot them. But would Lara actually shoot chickens? You get lots of weird conversations about stuff like that.”



Lara eyes up her next pair of shoes.





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PCZONE.CO.UK Editor John Houlihan 020 7042 4311
Hardware Photography In-house
Origination ColourFlow 020 7323 0022
Printed in the UK by Southern Print
Distribution Marketforce (UK)

BURNING LEGION

Publisher James Binns
Group Publishing Director Mia Walter
Advertising Manager Darren Gratton
Product Manager Helen Gulleton
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Distributed by Marketforce (UK) Ltd, 5th Floor, Low Rise Building, Kings Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London, SE1 9LS. Tel 0207 633 3300

Printed in the UK by Southernprint



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Splash Damage and id Software give us the scoop on the sci-fi shooter that pits Strogg against Human in a battle for survival! Unmissable feature with brand-new levels and screenshots revealed!

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MY BOOTS!*



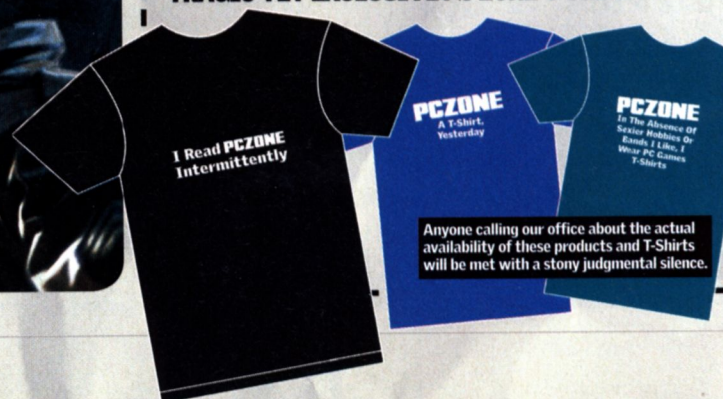
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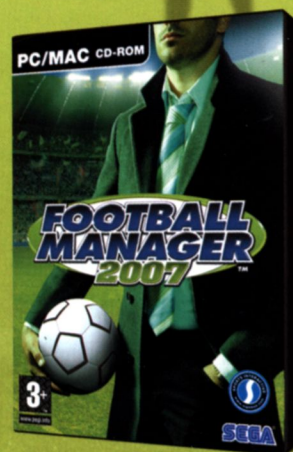
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