PCZONE

UNREAL 3 TOURNAMENT

Direct from Epic's HQ – the inside scoop
on the world's favourite shooter

COMMAND & CONQUER 3
Huge 6-page review! Has Tiberium
Wars defeated Supreme Commander?

PCZONE JACKASS
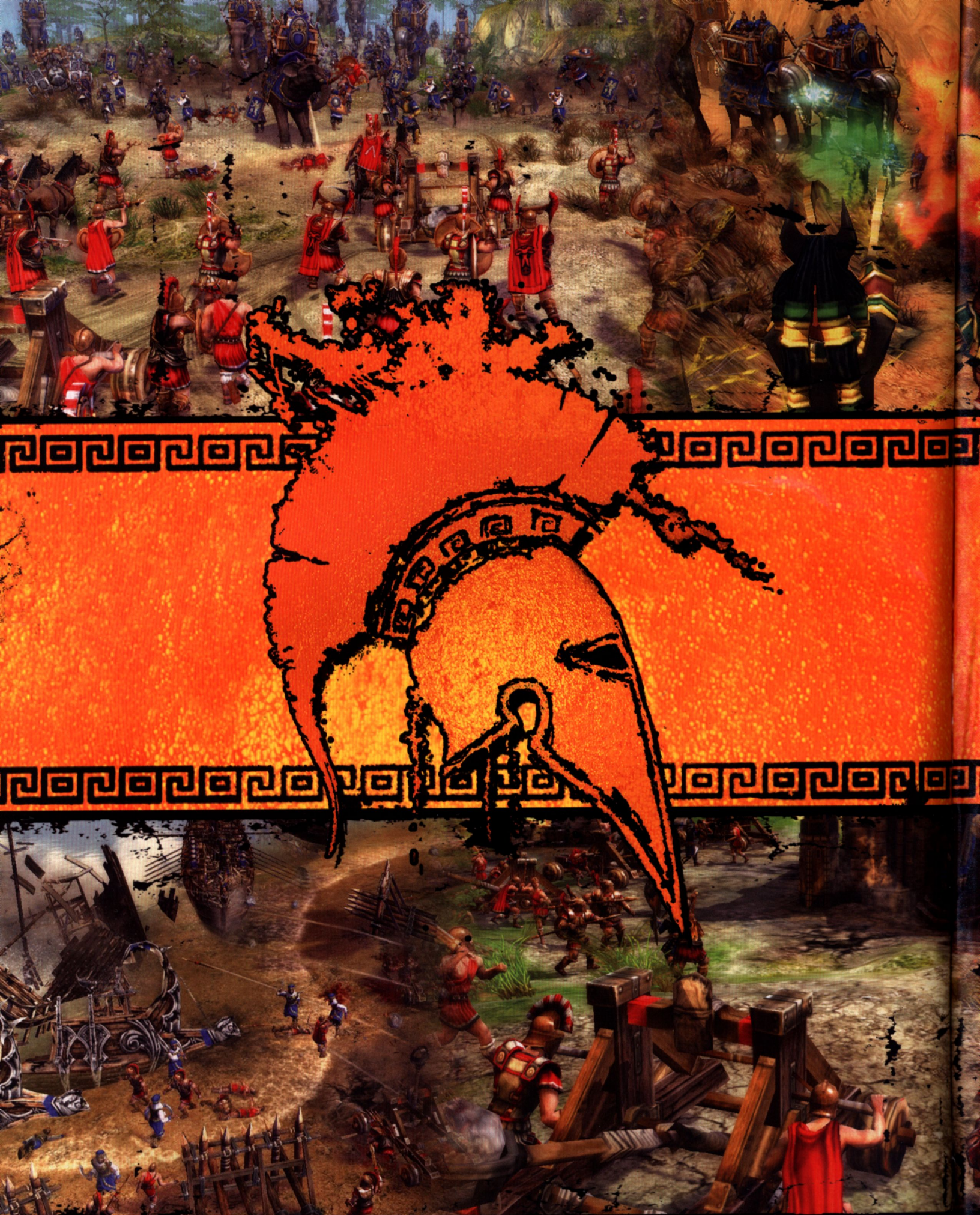What happens when you play
games and break the rules…

WIN!
TINY COMPO
What do the UT3
Necris villains have
instead of blood?

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COVER STORY

46 UNREAL TOURNAMENT III

A game worth multi-killing for? Behold the return of the deathmatch king!

NEVERQUEST 123

"I do like the look of the slippers," I muse…

WHAT'S ON THE COVER?

Too busy? *PC ZONE* in 56 words…
In no particular order: angry men with big guns, cartoon men with big guns, small RTS men with big guns and tanks, a shite console port featuring a man and his big guns, two PCZ writers pissing around in games with big guns and some more stuff with big guns in. Plus: orcs with big swords.

TEAM FORTRESS 2 **20**
HANDS-ON! WHERE CAPTURE THE FLAG MEETS CATCH THE PIGEON…

HOLDING THE FORT

IN SPRINGTIME WE get an avalanche of invites to see the latest incredible PC games in every corner of the world, but in most cases, it's timing that decides who from the team can pack up their jotter pad and spare pants. This issue, Suzy jetted to Sweden to play *World In Conflict*, Steve flew to Seattle to grab a hands-on with *Team Fortress 2* (and *Left 4 Dead* – more on that next month), and Will left for an exclusive couple of days at Epic's North Carolina HQ thrashing *Unreal Tournament III*.

Meanwhile, back at base, it was lucky Log and myself left to make sure all the essential bits of the mag were written and then beautifully edited and created by our production and art squads – like that Driver Watch bit in Dear Wandy, or The Big Question in Letters. We had a great time! Oh, how we laughed about that thing that happened.

I wasn't jealous. In fact, the *last* place I'd have rather been is at the buzzing hubs of the world's greatest game developers, playing games no-one in the outside world will see for at least six months. How crap is that, compared to arguing with a man from Vodafone about their shoddy customer service? Or cramming myself onto the tube for another smelly, depressing, hour-long crush home?

Bastards.

Jamie Sefton, editor
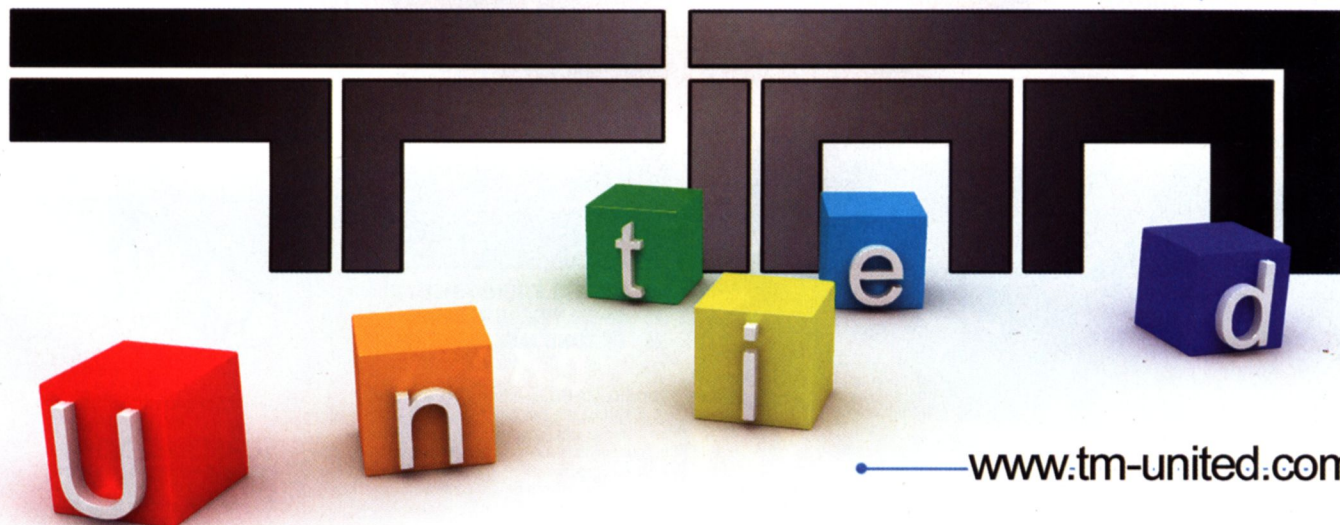
REVIEW

62 > COMMAND & CONQUER 3: TIBERIUM WARS

The perennial RTS blockbuster comes back for more. But can it topple *Supreme Commander*?

24 > UPFRONT Guild Wars 2

68 > REVIEW Resident Evil 4

30 > UPFRONT Dragon Age

126 > DEV COMMENTARY Rainbow Six: Vegas

WANT SOMETHING FOR NOTHING? GO HERE! **113 >**

SHINY **PACKARD BELL PC** UP FOR GRABS! WORTH **£1,499!**

UPFRONT FEATURE

PC ZONE JACKASS

Steve Hogarty and Jon 'Log' Blyth defy convention with a guide to dicking about in games

THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

THE BRAIN DAMAGE
THE SET-UP:
THE OUTCOME:

THE TEST OF PRIVACY
THE SET-UP:
THE OUTCOME:
WE RECKON:

BATTLEFIELD 2142
THE POD LONG JUMP
THE SET-UP:
THE OUTCOME:
WE RECKON:

THE ROBOT PLANE
THE SET-UP:
THE OUTCOME:
WE RECKON:

PCZONE

PRANKS LOL!

38 > UPFRONT The Witcher

54 > PC ZONE JACKASS
Sometimes the best way to play a game is to break it...
We present an in-depth guide to dicking about in games

CONTENTS

Gamers, get an unfair advantage

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MEET THE TEAM

All aboard the jolly bus to tinkle town

STEVE HOGARTY
Staff writer
AGE: Just gone 20
LIKES: Snipers
DISLIKES: Pyros
FANCIES: Valve's receptionist
FAVE GAME: *The Sims 2: Seasons*
PLAYING NOW:
Team Fortress 2

Steve Hogarty got a photo on page two of free evening rag *The London Paper* this month, which means he can add 'photographer' to his burgeoning list of achievements. The list also includes having a member of Valve Software look over his shoulder while he sat in their offices playing a game, then saying he was "the best he'd seen" at *Portal*. When Log just told him this fact was going on the Meet The Team page, he looked nervous and said, "don't make it look I've been boasting like a stupid dick." Bless his big boasting socks, the stupid dick.
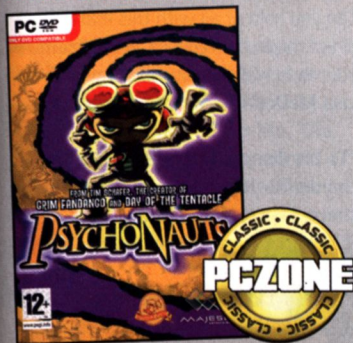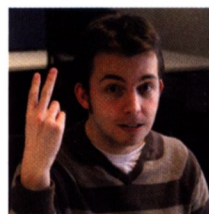
WILL PORTER
Deputy editor
Will Porter, a name which is a synonym for violence and filth, has just come back from Epic Games, where he claims to have had "a lovely time, very nice." We bet you did, you vile monster.
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:
Unreal Tournament III

JON 'LOG' BLYTH
Staff writer
Log was forced to play *Little Britain* and *Left Behind: Eternal Forces*, both of which caused him to die a million times. Two million deaths later, he's evolved into a burbling puddle of muck.
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:
Supreme Commander

JAMIE SEFTON
Editor
If Jamie were to exercise all his editorial powers at once, the kinetic energy would rip his clothes to shreds and knock all the ceiling tiles off. This is the third reason we keep him in a glass cage.
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:
Resident Evil 4 **(and weeping)**

JIM DAVIDSON
Dream colleague
Our first imaginary writer, we'd like to think Jim Davidson would spend most of his time talking about his '80s sitcom *Bottle Boys*, before getting drunk and punching the wall with his face.
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:
Some pier-end
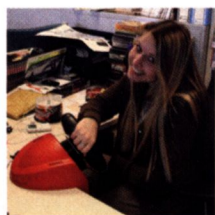
SUZY WALLACE
Reviews editor
Suzy went to a Track Day this month, where she went around in a Mitsubishi Evo. The chuffed grin on her face has provided enough UV rays to power six calculators through a maths exam.
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:
Titan Quest: Immortal Throne

PAVEL BARTER
Freelance newshound
Pavel's band, the West Seventies, are peddlers of catchy pop, and their MySpace page features such comments as, "Hey Guy's, Thanks alot!" (sic) Talent like this sickens us to our envious cores.
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:
12-string guitar

STUFF THAT'S HELPED US THIS MONTH... 'Working from home' days, Dairylea Triangles between Ritz crackers, all-you-can-eat Thai buffets
STUFF THAT HASN'T HELPED US THIS MONTH... Crazy crap about the Rapture, interminable cover-line meetings, Suzy's transatlantic conference call with Soundwave from the *Transformers* (or so it sounded), telephone messages where you just hear a click-burr...

STUFF WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...

|		
ISLE OF WIGHT FESTIVAL TICKETS	**94 Mins**	Will needs two. Phone Will if you have any spare. Contact details at back of mag
GRANDPARENTS NAMES	**42 Mins**	Never mind Harold and Maude – our American art guy's grandfolks are called Zelda and Clarice...
PHLEGM	**13 Mins**	Is it spitty gob, gobby spit, or a genuine food group?
CALMING HOSPITAL MUSIC	**200 Mins**	Jamie used to compose the last songs hundreds of people have heard
MOBILE PHONE COMPANIES	**250 Mins**	Replacing estate agents as the most obviously scumbag industry
IMPORTANT LIFE DECISIONS	**420 Mins**	What's the best floor to jump from to ensure a speedy death?
WILL'S CONSTANTLY SHAGGING NEIGHBOURS	**50 Mins**	Their enthusiastic moaning and screams puncture both sleep patterns and sanity
VOLVER	**19 Mins**	The Spanish film. No, not *Revolver*. No, not vulva, Valve or Volvo. Oh, never mind
EXCITING TRAIN PICNICS	**25 Mins**	Five kinds of cheese on the way to Cardiff = constipated bliss
LIVING IN SEVEN SISTERS	**32 Mins**	And the joys of getting your front door kicked in, and walking around your house with a knife at 3:30am

WIN! It's the time of month when Tiny Compo wipes his pinhole eyes and draws a name out of the bag with his miniature cactus-spike hands. In a voice that doesn't suit his fragile body, he bellows "JULIE RAMWELL OF MANCHESTER WON ISSUE 178'S TINY COMPO!" before falling into the fitful slumber that takes up the rest of his month. Congratulations Julie, you've won! Send this month's entries to 'Wee Wee 180', *PC ZONE*, 2 Balcombe Street, London, NW1 6NW.

LETTERS

Send your mail to one of our finest males, *Jamie Sefton*
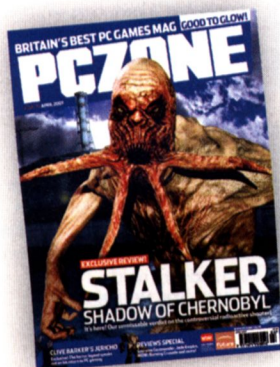
PERFECT COMMANDER

Only 88% for the *Supreme Commander* review? Come on! 100% is far more like it. *Supreme Commander* has got to be one of the greatest games I've ever played!

The amount of gameplay and fun you can have is fantastic, and the resourses system is revolutionary. The feeling you get down your spine when you see your finally-built Sacred Assault Bots marching into the enemy base is the best I've ever had in a computer game.

Then comes the satisfactory nuke as their commander commits suicide and consequently blows the shit out of himself in a massive mushroom cloud. The multiplayer LAN is class too, and the

Supreme Commander: RTS perfection.

story mode is also intense. Here's hoping that Chris Taylor and the lads start production on *Supreme Commander 2* as quickly as possible!
Rob Allen-Rowlandson

A 100% perfect game? Hmmm... We thought it was fantastic, but a few issues such as AI pathfinding prevented it getting a Classic award. Check out our forum comments bit 'Say What?' on the right for more reader comments.

BY YOUR COMMAND

Why does no-one talk about the current incarnation of *Battlestar Galactica*? Perhaps the name still conjures up images of '70s cheese, or perhaps the sci-fi hardcore have still not recovered from Starbuck becoming a girl. Whatever the reason is though, there doesn't seem to be the loud-and-proud support for *Battlestar Galactica* that perhaps it deserves.

I wonder if this is the reason that it's all quiet on the spin-off game front? If you dig around, there are hints and an Auran/Vivendi space sim, but there doesn't seem to be a lot of info. If that's all there is in the pipeline, then we're missing out on a superb excuse for some hot first-person shooter action! Could you turn your mighty influence towards getting someone working on this double-time so we can get frakin' some toaster ass!
Steve Hare

We're big fans of the new *Battlestar* series here on

ZONE, but we haven't heard of any FPS projects yet – even from the ever-creative mod community. As for the Vivendi space sim, well that definitely exists – but it's currently only confirmed for Xbox Live on the 360...

PC ZOH-NO

I purchased what I thought was *Xbox World 360* mag in the foil wrapper this evening from our local Co-op store here in Leicestershire. When my son opened it up, to his disappointment he found the March edition, issue 178 of *PC ZONE*. Can you help at all with this matter or direct me to the relevant department. Your help would be much appreciated.
Lisa McDonagh

"To his disappointment"? Jesus – thanks for letting us down gently there, Lisa.

PAYNE GAIN

It's been a long time coming, but I have at last finished *Max Payne 2: The Fall Of Max Payne* – and what a brilliant experience it was! Plot, delivery, dialogue; it was all truly ground-breaking. Even now, though there are graphically better games, I haven't got so personally involved in a game since *Wing Commander 3* and *4*. All the

---

Letter of the month

Not in my day...

Nostalgia isn't what it used to be. While game-box-flipping during a recent visit to a computer shop, I overheard a couple of young lads scoffing at some of the items in the budget rack. Lad A: "Hey mate, check out the crap graphics on this, bet it's rubbish!" Lad B: "My dad has that on the PC in the shed. It's mingin'!" What were they talking about? *Doom II*! Now I may be 32, but those chaps were just not showing the game the respect it deserves.

I propose a gaming boot camp, where the ignorant are forced to play *Pong*, *Space Invaders* and *Chuckie Egg* through *SimCity*, *Populous* and *X-Com*, all the way through to the games of today with no distractions. Only then will they show the respect that's due when looking at the games of today.
Jon Holland

In my day this was all green screens I tell thee. Great idea Jon, a gaming boot camp would be just punishment. As Will found out reviewing the re-issue of *Another World* (page 78) this month, retro games are tougher than hard labour. Have a top graphics card to play *Doom II*...

"I can't understand why anyone buys games when you can download them for free from BitTorrent"

Jolly Roger warms the hearts of games developers and publishers the world over

threads of the plot come together and every character has life – love them or loathe them. The real clincher for me was the end sequence and the credits track by Poets Of The Fall.

It's no surprise it still holds the Action/Adventure game top-spot in your Buyer's Guide after all this time, and in its own way, is a benchmark for a lot of the arguments over the content vs graphics debate so often talked about nowadays. Let's hope that Remedy's Alan Wake is as inspiring a person as Max is.
Paul Clewlow

Will Porter has played through *Max Payne 2* now about 20 times – which, if you include the bullet-time, is about a year of his life. The game's a bona fide Classic and yes – we're as excited about *Alan Wake* as you are Paul. Watch this space for more news soon...

FOR SPOCK'S SAKE

I am gullible. Why? Because I fell for the shine and gloss on the cover of a game and didn't wait for the wise souls of *PC ZONE*, who have guided my way though the gaming mire to greatness –

Company Of Heroes being the best recommendation ever.

The only good thing about buying *Star Trek: Legacy* was getting that piece of rubbish off my hard drive and slowly out of my mind. The box itself doesn't cloak, which is a shame, as then it would be hard to find on the shelves and buy. I promise never again to make a decision about buying a game before first checking with your fine magazine first.
Eoin Kenneally

May that be a lesson to you Eoin. Yes, *Star Trek: Legacy* has to be one of the most disappointing games we've ever had in the office. Will we ever get another decent *Star Trek* title? Kaaaaaaahhhhhnnnnnn!

PIRATE SCUM?

I can't understand why anyone buys games anymore when you can download them for free off your nearest, broadband-friendly BitTorrent site. £30 is just a ridiculous amount of money to pay for what is (usually) a couple of hours of rehashed, unimaginative

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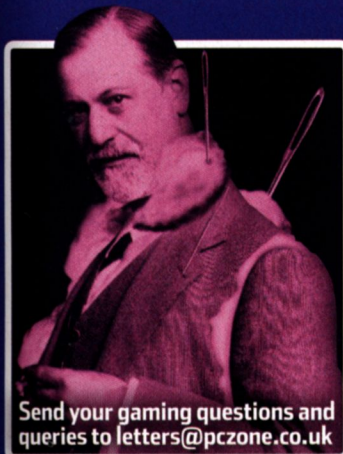
Send your gaming questions and queries to letters@pczone.co.uk

DEAR DR FREUD,

Q Have you any news on a new *F.E.A.R.* game? I quite fancy seeing what that scary girl is up to.
T Kirby

A Well, Mr Kirby, as you may well know (and curses upon you if you don't), the developer of the first *F.E.A.R.* game Monolith don't actually own the licence, but they are apparently planning a 'spiritual sequel' to their 2005 smash-hit shooter. However, holders of the *F.E.A.R.* IP Vivendi Games recently released a decent expansion, *Extraction Point*, and have never ruled out a sequel. I'd say watch this space. Well, not this one, but you get the idea.

DEAR DR FREUD,

Q Please can you tell me when *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars* will be released? I've just seen another incredible hi-res movie of in-game footage and I need it very badly!
Ben Ashcroft

A Hmmm. Well, as with any other id Software title, *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars* will be "done when it's done", with the chaps at UK-based Splash Damage currently working themselves onto my couch to get it finished. Originally, I'd have said that the game will be released in the autumn, but there are rumours it could launch much sooner – I can feel it in my stuffing.

LETTERS

PCZONE Around the World — MALAYSIAN SPECIAL!

PCZONE TRAVEL
David Leigh **Where?**
Petronas Towers, Kuala
Lumpur, Malaysia
Class: Tourist no.1

PCZONE TRAVEL
Robert Miles **Where?**
Petronas Towers, Kuala
Lumpur, Malaysia
Class: Tourist no.2
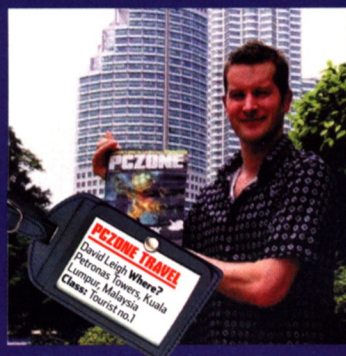
We want photos of you with *PC ZONE* in the most exotic or inappropriate locations. Candid celeb shots count double. Every one printed wins a prize!

entertainment. When I heard about a Torrent site in Sweden getting raided by police recently, it made me furious – why can't we have complete access to any digital content we want without interference? Free the games! Liberate the IPs! Pirate now!
Jolly Roger

This might be considered a slightly controversial and breathtakingly cynical standpoint Mr Roger (I assume that's not your real name). Downloading copyrighted games, music and movies is illegal here in the UK, and officially very, very naughty.

Colin Wilson's verdict on *Armed Assault*.

However, do such downloads actually affect the overall amount of money that developers and publishers make? Are pirates like Jolly Roger inherently evil? Let us know your comments – we'll have a special *PC ZONE* investigation in a few issues' time.

DEFINITIVE VERDICT

I got *Armed Assault* today, so I thought I would review it with my own face. Here you are.
Colin Wilson

Thanks Colin. That's actually a better review than most US websites...

VISTA VIDI VICI

I concur strongly with your column in issue 178 that the PC is a bastion of first-person shootery and real-time strategy-ing, and would mourn greatly if it were in any way curtailed. If anyone seriously suggested I go and play *Call Of Duty 2* on a console, I think I'd have to chop

them into teeny-weeny pieces in disgust or just laugh at their puny analogue sticks.

However, Windows Vista has clearly been designed to make us gamers shell out for more RAM, a better CPU and a better GPU just to run a stupid 3D desktop thing, probably slower than our old rig ran XP. It's this unavoidability I can't stand – however long we stick with XP, we'll almost certainly have to shift at some point, losing the back-catalogue of comforting favourites (for instance, will *Fallout 2* still run on Vista?), and being forced to run a home entertainment system behind our beloved games engine.

The only way I can see of protesting is holding onto XP until we really, *really* want that DX10 game (hello *Crysis*), but this doesn't really seem like enough. I mean, who really thought that a 3D version of alt-tab was a selling point?
Freddie

You're right Freddie – eventually you will have to upgrade to Vista to play the latest PC games, but your protest can continue for at least another six months. As for Vista-compatibility with current and older PC titles, we'll be looking into this very soon... PCZ

The Big Question

What are the most popular uses for *Command & Conquer 3's* green crystalline material tiberium?
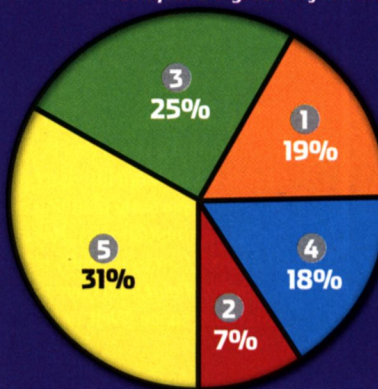
① A replacement for monosodium glutamate: 19%

② As a healing stone for sale in hippy stalls at Glastonbury: 7%

③ So scientists can create mutant humans for a laugh: 25%

④ As an insidious way to colonise planets for Tiberium-based alien life forms: 18%

⑤ As a cleanser for Bernard Matthews turkey farms: 31%

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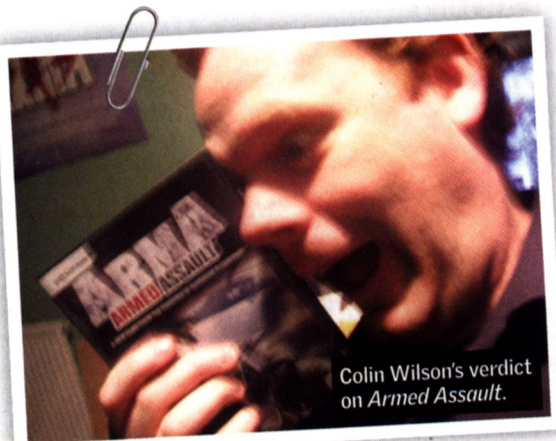
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murder of innocents. JOIN GDI at GDI.EA.COM

UNREAL 3 TOURNAMENT

The rampage gets a reboot! Prepare to be blown away by the carnage brewing in Epic's multiplayer maelstrom...

WE'VE PLAYED IT, we've fired incessant questions at the minds behind it and we've sat around daydreaming about how much fun we had doing both. *Unreal Tournament III* is big, bold, brash and beautiful – and absolutely piss-funny to play. Whether you're careering around on a jet-powered skateboard, pumping laser-fire into a cliff-face in a giant tripod or simply being sliced in two by a vehicle's razor-edged bull-bars, the brilliance of *UT3* is set to be a force to be reckoned with. There's an almighty battle brewing in the wings of multiplayer shootery, and from what we've experienced, id and *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars* had better watch out...

UPFRONT

Everything that matters in the world of PC gaming

WHAT ABOUT US?

S OMEONE ASKED ME the other day whether I was worried about the likes of *Quake Wars* and *C&C3* coming out on consoles, and I said I wasn't. That's old news, we've been on about it for months. At the end of the day, any true gamer would rather play *Quake Wars* with a mouse than an analogue stick, and the day I play an RTS on my television will be a strange one indeed. What's far more worrying, in my opinion, is when games simply aren't announced for PC at all. I'm talking, of course, about *Star Wars: Force Unleashed* – the knee-trembling action game from LucasArts whose technology blew me away at last year's E3.

This would be a success on PC (how could it not?), but for some reason it seems unlikely to surface on home ground. Why is this? We're reaching a point where increased post-release support, the need to manage a variety of different system specs and rabid piracy is making simultaneous PC development of big-name games far less profitable – and a far bigger pain in the arse – for big publishers. Under stress to get a game out, it seems increasingly natural that the PC version is the first to drop.

I've never been a fan of multi-platform releases, but potentially not getting *Force Unleashed* really grates. The future of the PC isn't in danger, but I really hope that publishers get over the current whizz-bang and fizz of next-gen consoles and remember where most of it began...

Will Porter

Will Porter, deputy editor

BEFORE THE FALL

Bethesda's Pete Hines speaks out on the mixed emotions surrounding *Fallout 3* www.bethsoft.com | ETA: TBA
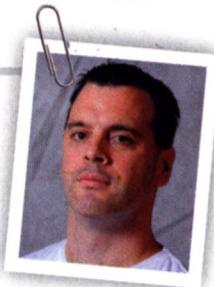
"WE'VE SAID THIS before and we'll say this again: not everybody is going to agree with the game we're making: it's a solid-gold lock," exclaims a tired and emotional Pete Hines when we ask him about the forthcoming *Fallout 3*. He's just spent a long day plugging the hugely anticipated *Oblivion* expansion *Shivering Isles* and the inevitable query about Bethesda's 'other' RPG has reared its head. "Some people will like it, some people will hate it. Some people already like it or hate it, and they don't even know what we're doing yet!"

Few developers have been so honest in regard to a game's potential reception, but then again few developers have had to face a fanbase quite so rabid, rigid and (sad to say) repeatedly screwed over as those of the post-nuclear role-player. Hines, however, is insistent about how dedicated to the wasteland cause Bethesda truly are. "I have it on my laptop here, I play it on the road. We're all big *Fallout* fans: we play *Fallout*, *Fallout 2*, we play the non-RPG ones. I mean, I play *Fallout: Tactics*, I played *Brotherhood Of Steel* (the abysmal Xbox 'action' game) because I felt I had to give it a look. And I was sorry I did so.

"We feel that we're doing *Fallout 3* having done one and two, even though we didn't. Much like *The Elder Scrolls*, we look at what worked, we look at what didn't; we look at where we want to take it, how to move it forward and keep it relevant. But we also want to stay true to the stuff people remember and took to heart in *Fallout*, which was the kinds of quests you did, the choices that were laid before you, the way the game would play differently depending on how you were role-playing and the setting... That sort of stuff."

You also shouldn't expect the lewdness of *Fallout 2*, as Hines reckons it got "a little too caught up in trying to be funny or controversial or whatever." Which is a shame, as certain *PC ZONE* staffers thought choosing to be a low-paid fluffer at a post-apocalyptic porn studio, only to find the fluid exchange left them with a traditional RPG poisoning, the height of hilarity back in 1998. Whatever the case, the smart bets are for *Fallout 3* to be a free-roaming, first-person action/RPG – with more dialogue, violence and grit than *The Elder Scrolls* has ever seen.

Unconfirmed rumour has it that the game will take place on the America's east coast rather than the original's iconic west, while promotional posters suggest that the franchise's cheery combination of optimistic 1950's propaganda and arid, desolate solitude will remain firmly in place. And what with the only other hope for *Fallout* being an extremely unlikely MMO being crafted (possibly) by the remnants of what was once gaming giant Interplay, it's safe to say that a lot is riding on its success. Internet buzz, meanwhile, is suggesting an official unveiling at some point this summer, perhaps at the revamped E3.

Hines, however, seems to think it inevitable that no matter how happy Bethesda are with their offering, there are bound to be murmurs of discontent from the more radiation-soaked parts of the Internet. "People will have to take it for what it is. If they like it, great, if they don't like it... Well some folks just aren't going to give it a chance out of the box. And you know what? That's your choice. If you don't want to give it a shot, there's nothing we can do about that..."

Shivering Isles will get a review next issue.

The promo posters are promising, to say the least.

FALLOUT 3

Sci-fi meets fantasy? Heresy!

So FASA, so good

Have the *Shadowrun* developers turned things around?
www.shadowrun.com | ETA: Summer

SHOCK AND INDEED, horror, but FASA Studios' Xbox 360 vs PC multiplayer shooter *Shadowrun* is looking better. Yes, it's still a daft idea – but we've played it, and weren't instantly nauseous. The game involves fantasy races using modern weapons in a cyberpunk multiplayer fest, mixing *Counter-Strike* with *Baldur's Gate* with a bit of *Neuromancer*. In action, its combination of teleportation and gliders makes for an astoundingly rapid game, with each race (troll, human, elf and dwarf) having their own strengths, weaknesses and roles as they hop over and through walls. Having played it, we can affirm that it manages to combine all of these themes easily, while staying fun. No platform seems to have an accuracy advantage, but we're still withholding judgement. It's looking nearly finished, so a review should be due soon.

STUFF *Dreamfall*, the well-crafted if simplistic adventure of a girl in her pants and her trans-dimensional friends, is getting the episodic treatment – thanks mainly to the Norwegian government being good sports and providing a nice juicy grant. We've always been fans of developers Funcom (they of *Anarchy Online* fame), and look forward to their further sexy pant-lady adventurings...

LIFE IS A ROLLERCOASTER

GOOD TIMES 🙂 It's away day for *PC ZONE* as Suze heads off to Sweden and Will boards the USA express to Epic HQ in North Carolina.

🙂 The tickets arrive that night, in what can only be described as the very nick of time. Steve rolls on floor yelping in delight.

ON THE FENCE 😐 Steve turns down the chance to fly a helicopter on TV because he's supposed to be visiting Valve in Seattle. Even though his e-ticket hasn't appeared.

🙁 On the very eve of the proposed flight, Steve leaves the office ticketless, forlorn and certainly not flying a helicopter.

🙁 Steve, wide-eyed and decked out in his smartest of clothes, is informed that the lack of flight details makes his Valve trip unlikely. The carpet is pawed worriedly.

BAD TIMES

IT BEGINS AGAIN   SHIT! HOW LONG LEFT?   DEADLINE

HOW GREEN IS YOUR PC?

When will gamers destroy the planet? The day after tomorrow, suggest scientists...

> "Gaming PCs are the Chelsea Tractors of home technology. A single graphics card can consume about 145 watts"

Reporter
Pavel Barter

THE END IS nigh. Ice caps are melting, polar bears are being forced to beg for coins outside bus stations, and everyone is moving to the Midlands as coastal areas shrink and temperatures soar. Good god, we're doomed. OK, so global warming scaremongers occasionally get carried away with stories about our impending demise, but even the most delusional flat-earthers can no longer deny it. Things are definitely heating up.

Homo sapiens have been farting obscene amounts of CO_2 into the atmosphere since the Industrial Revolution, but what's that got to do with you and me? After all, incinerating zombies in *Half-Life 2* is hardly the same as incinerating lumps of rainforest. Or is it? The more electricity you use, the more blokes in a factory somewhere burn stuff. The average UK citizen has a carbon footprint of 11.81 tonnes and research shows that home entertainment gizmos are hefty contributors.

What's more, gaming PCs are the Chelsea Tractors of home technology. A single graphics card can consume about 145 watts, and many high-end PCs run two cards at the same time. Plus of course, there's additional drainage from high-end processors, hard drives, fans and peripherals.

GAS GUZZLERS

Fiona Gatt, editor of the VIA Arena website, recently ran an experiment using a PC with an AMD FX55, 2.41GHz processor and an ATI X1900 GT graphics card. A Thermaltake power supply displayed the total wattage for each PC activity. Email drew 175W, Windows Movie Player drew 188W, but at the top of the pile were two games: *Call Of Duty* (292W to 334W) and *Blazing Angels* (240W to 338W).

Combine these findings with the fact that many of us leave our machines on almost 24/7, consuming around 150 watts when we're nowhere near them, and PC gamers might as well drive to the ice caps and start a bonfire with baby seals. *PC ZONE's* hardware editor Phil Wand says: "Most people don't have a clue about being energy efficient, least of all when it comes to luxury items."

Nicholas Carr, author of the book *Does IT Matter*, agrees. "There are plenty of leisure activities, from reading

"Let's get out there and stab some trees!"

We counted two layers of irony. Can you find more?

to kicking a football to having sex, that leave far smaller carbon footprints (than gaming). If the choice is between playing *World Of Warcraft* and flying a private jet, you're going to use less energy playing the game. But for most people, that's not the trade-off."

Carr recently estimated the electricity consumption of the average *Second Life* citizen by combining an individual's PC usage with *SL*'s power grid. It translated into 1.17 tons of CO_2 production per virtual citizen per year – the equivalent of driving an SUV for 2,300 miles. "Gamers should be concerned about this, just as they should be concerned about other ways they consume energy. But I don't think they need to feel guilty about it," Carr reassures us.

DEEP IMPACT
Much of the responsibility lies at the feet of the games industry itself, especially MMOG hosts. A 2007 survey entitled 'Estimating Total Power Consumption by Servers in the US and the World' revealed that online servers account for 1.2% of all power consumption in the United States and 0.8% worldwide.

"Blizzard are rumoured to have 500 servers for *World Of Warcraft* alone,"

says Wand. "Add in all the other titles, all the other genres, add in the games-mad Koreans, then consider that a fully occupied server will be using more power than a colour TV, and you have some serious power slurping going on. And that's before you consider the millions of people actually playing the games at the other end."

MAX POWER
Philip Rosedale, head of *Second Life*'s Linden Lab, is all too aware of his vast power needs. He recently announced during a podcast: "We're running at full power all the time, so we consume an enormous amount of electrical power in co-location facilities (where they house their 4,000 servers)... We're running out of power for the square feet of rack space that we've got machines in."

But Linden Lab also insist that their watts/CPU ratio has been reduced over the years. "MMOG companies have a big incentive to reduce their energy use, as electricity represents one of the biggest costs of running a data centre," explains Carr. "But I think it's fair to say that, as with other data centre operators, some games companies are smarter than others when it comes to minimising

Planet Earth: probably buggered.

electricity consumption." Is *Second Life* 'ecologically sustainable'? Perhaps. It's still rubbish though.

Of course, the games industry pales in significance to the likes of Google – which is rumoured to sport hundreds of thousands of servers – but energy saving and other environmental concerns are becoming priorities for every successful company. "As much as 30% of energy in the UK is wasted, costing businesses millions each year," says Joanna Bacon, PR for the Carbon Trust group.

Surprisingly, Valve, Ubisoft and EA all fluffed or declined to provide feedback for this article. Blizzard "won't be able to comment on this", while ELSPA – the body representing the British computer and videogame industry – are "unable to comment... As it's not something that we have full information on."

As we know, recycling is a big part of environmentalism, and the industry is dead-set against second-hand game sales. Could this be the reason behind the silence? Perhaps downloadable content is the route to reducing energy consumption... Only Valve can tell.

CASE BY CASE
Some PC component and peripheral creators are making moves to shrink their carbon footprint. Creating a 24kg PC with a monitor requires at least 240kg of fossil fuels to provide the energy. Add water and chemicals, and your friendly neighbourhood desktop has consumed the weight of a car in

resources before it even leaves the factory. While this state of affairs is mostly ignored, a few tentative steps are being taken in some quarters. A Swedish company called Swedx sell wooden mice, keyboards and displays, all sourced from ecologically managed forests in China. Local Cooling is free downloadable software that optimises a PC's power savings, and Dell have announced two new 'green' servers that have been tweaked for performance per watt.

Gamers can also green their PCs by buying energy-saving components, but the information is often misleading. Wand points out: "Almost all PCs now come with 'Energy Star' stickers, but the requirements for being considered green and part of the program haven't changed since 1992."

Perhaps the answer can be found at the Center for Biomedical Engineering at MIT, where boffins have isolated a wacky spinach extract that could power our PCs within the next ten years. If world leaders screw it up, only Popeye can save us from sizzling temperatures, enforced encampment in the Midlands and polar bear tramps. Toot, toot! **PCZ**

He ain't Heavy...
Oh, hang on.
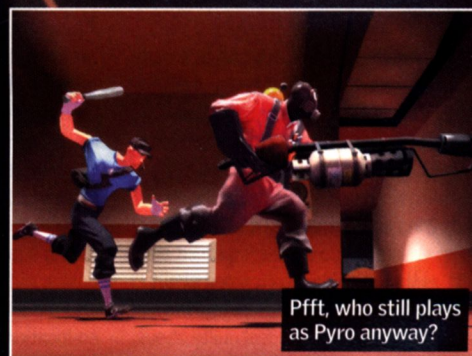
Pfft, who still plays
as Pyro anyway?

TEAM FORTRESS 2

Steve Hogarty goes hands-on with Valve's classic shooter reborn

DEVELOPER Valve **PUBLISHER** Valve/EA **WEBSITE** www.teamfortress.com **PREVIOUSLY IN...** 173

THE LOWDOWN

Sequel to the best
class-based shooter ever ✓

Looks slick and
brilliantly stylised ✓

Classes are
drastically different ✓

Some great *TFC* maps
make a joyous return ✓

Taking its sweet time ✗

ETA
WINTER

FOR FANS OF the original game there's an eerie sense of déjà vu when playing the 2Fort map in *Team Fortress 2*. Even if you'd already been told it was a remade version of the popular *Team Fortress Classic* map, or realised simply by looking at the map's name, its layout already exists as a semi-familiar strategy map in the back of your mind. There's that central bridge across the moat, treacherous to cross and half-concealing the alternate entrance to the enemy base. There are the snipers perched along the barricades, the supplies outside the spawn room – strategically it remains almost completely unchanged. Especially the part with the snipers, as I've come to learn over and over again.

It was in this state of half-already-knowing-what-to-do that I found myself sitting with the co-creator of *Team Fortress*, Robin Walker, as he explained the basics of capturing the flag and pointed earnestly at the HUD furniture displaying the direction of the objective. Feeling more confident than was appropriate, given the fact that I was playing with a flock of Valve employees in the next room, I chose the role of Scout and was promptly mown down by a Gatling gun. Well, I was still figuring out the buttons, wasn't I?

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

In fact, dying throws up the first of many beautiful touches in *Team Fortress 2*. The action freezes as the camera cuts to your killer, giving you his name as if to nudge you and say, "Oooh, don't you just hate this guy? He got you again." Conversely, a cheerful box in the corner of the screen pats you on the back, claiming: "On the bright side: You've caused more damage as a Scout in this round than ever before."

Of course, these achievements become less frequent the more you play, until the sight of one becomes cause for celebration, as Robin Walker points out. When somebody in the Valve office breaks their damage record, or kills more enemy players, or stays alive for longer than ever before, or indeed any number of stats the game keeps track of, everybody knows about it.

The Scout, meanwhile, was not the class for me. Walker assured me that in the right hands the Scout could nimbly avoid foes while making daring dashes to the enemy flag room. Personally, I found that his increased speed and ability to double-jump only helped me run into danger faster than with any of the other eight classes. A change of class to the Soldier, and a change of map to another old favourite, Dustbowl, and we were ready to go again.

THE STORY SO FAR...

TEAM FORTRESS 2

Hand of mod
After the success of *Team Fortress*, *TF2* is planned as a free mod for *Quake II*.

1996

You're hired
Team Fortress co-creators Robin Walker and John Cook are snapped up by Valve.

1998

Fortress forever
TF2 is shown at E3, looking nothing like it does now. It then disappears.

1999

Sweet release
Team Fortress 2 is almost here and it's actually coming out. Wow!

2007

Who could've imagined Dustbowl looking so good?

The Heavy is ideal when you don't really know what you're doing.

I chose the role of Scout and was promptly mown down by a Gatling gun. Well, I was still figuring out the buttons wasn't I?

Heavy dishes out massive damage with his Gatling gun, the Medic stays close and provides temporary invincibility. For ten seconds, they're an unassailable target, and all anybody else can do is simply take cover and hopefully pick off the Medic when he becomes vulnerable.

Even baby turrets do their part.

DOUBLE TEAM

This symbiotic relationship between the Medic and the receiver of his magical health beam allows for some great moments of strategic cleverness, and sometimes a nice bit of hilarity too. The ultimate achievement for a Spy, whose main ability is to go undercover and appear to be an ally to the enemy, is to persuade an enemy Medic to begin healing him. Not only does it make his disguise all the more convincing, but it provides excellent comic relief the moment the Spy's ruse is discovered and he's killed in

The Scout can also install Freeview TV.

While waiting for the gates between the opposing areas of the map to open, a congregation of Soldiers and Heavies had begun damaging themselves in a corner by firing rockets at their feet. A few patient Medics looked on. Noticing my puzzlement, Walker began to explain what was happening. Medics have the ability to heal team-mates to above their normal number of hit points, as well as regenerate their own health gradually. They heal using a beam that remains attached to the team-mate as

long as they stay within range and sight of one another. The Medic earns a charge by healing players, and when that charge reaches 100%, the Medic and his team-mate can become invulnerable for ten whole seconds.

What this means, besides the start of the round featuring the kind of self-harm usually reserved for the toilets at a My Chemical Romance concert, is that an experienced Medic can be the most effective player on the team if paired with an equally skilled Heavy. While the

By now, everybody knows there's a secret base under the farm.

front of the hapless and embarrassed Medic who was helping him.

Another returning hero from *Team Fortress Classic*, the Well map, has had a similar aesthetic overhaul, and now sports a train yard where previously there was none. On top of this, it's also become a control-point map, with a linear series of points that must be captured in order. As an Engineer, I found myself placing teleporters to move my team-mates forwards more quickly. Turrets were built, upgraded and repaired using metal found in guns and ammo on the battlefield, and dispensers were constructed to shovel ammo and health into the needy hands of other players on my team.

Part of the challenge of being an Engineer is placing turrets in the right spots – too far behind the combat and they're no help, too far forward and they're impossible to repair or upgrade without taking one between the eyes. All the while, information on the objects you build appear on the HUD, telling you not only when they need repairing, but how much they're being used. And yes, seeing ten people use your teleporter really does make you feel loved.

READY TO BLOW

Hopping over to the Demoman class turned it into a different game again. Turrets and teleporters were now somebody else's problem, and it was

Hydro power

Team Fortress 2's chopping-and-changing wonder-maps

Got a light?

2Fort: eco-unfriendly.

As a way of combating the repetitive nature of maps and adding a little bit of spice to the game, *Team Fortress 2* will feature dynamic maps. That is, there will be large maps containing non-linear control points. At the beginning of each round, the game will choose two of these control points and players will duke it out on the part of the map between those two points and nowhere else. Depending on who wins, the game will pick another two opposing control points, and so on until one team captures the other's base. A little bit confusing? Well yes – Valve had to draw it on a whiteboard for me to understand. Just think of it as different paths through a map opening and closing between rounds. In one round, a certain passage will be blocked, and in another, it'll be open. We played the Hydro map and it worked quite well. So there.

Kill a Demoman, and all of his carefully placed bombs explode.
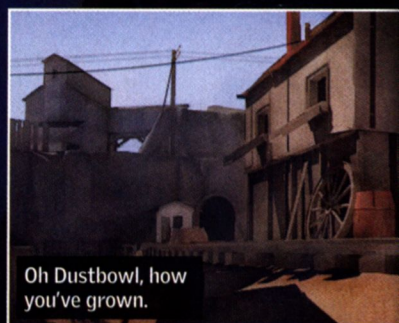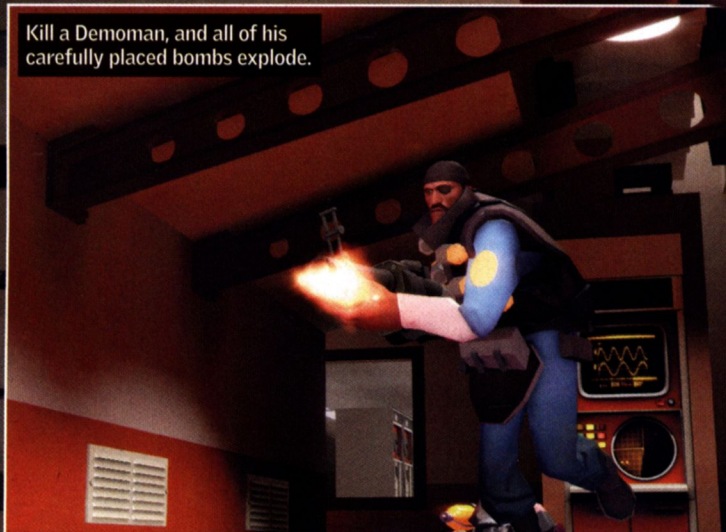
Oh Dustbowl, how you've grown.

my job to load control points with pipe bombs before heading to the frontline. The Source Engine's physics capabilities allow for some interesting ways to kill people with grenades, and when the train yard you're fighting in sees more than a few speeding trains thundering through it, the sight of somebody evading your explosives only to be hit by an oncoming train is as thrilling as it is frequent. And of course, the pipe bombs I'd left back at the control point could be detonated as soon as the HUD showed it was under attack.

Quite clearly, the classes in *Team Fortress 2* are more than just different weapon loadouts – they're drastically different ways of playing the game.

VIEW TO A KILL

On the next map I found my class niche as a Sniper, quickly noticing that staying zoomed in increases the power of your shots. More than a few times I killed somebody in the same instant that they killed me, resulting in the camera cutting to the cluster of gibs who'd delivered my fate. There was the

> ## The sight of someone evading your explosives only to be hit by an oncoming train is frequent and thrilling

occasional ragdoll Scout being blasted across the screen by a lucky grenade, and a paranoia-fuelled Spy hunt in which several innocents were mistakenly targeted.

It's in these moments that the reasoning behind the vibrant Disney-esque visuals becomes apparent, and you realise exactly why Valve ditched the realism in older builds of *Team Fortress 2*. It's because it's a bloody funny game, and there's no point trying

to fight that on any level of design, from the visuals right down to the broken bottle melee weapon.

SAFE HANDS

On top of all this, *Team Fortress 2* simply feels like a really solid online shooter. The running speeds, the jumping, the weapon balance – from what I've played, it's all absolutely spot-on. Valve are building on over a decade of experience, and as I'm

sure you've noticed, their back-catalogue of online shooters contains some of the most played games in existence. For them to get something fundamentally wrong with *Team Fortress 2* would be damn near impossible (touch wood).

So while just a few pages from here you might learn that each weapon in *Unreal Tournament III* contains more polygons than entire levels in *Unreal Tournament 2004*, I'm more than willing to argue that, back here with the Source Engine, *Team Fortress 2* has more style and graphical charm than anything else we've seen this year. And after playing it, I'd argue it'll be more fun too. **PCZ**

It takes more than a head-shot to take out a Heavy.

Explosions by Acme Inc.

Turrets unfold in exaggerated *Transformers* fashion.

The Scout's melee weapon returns.
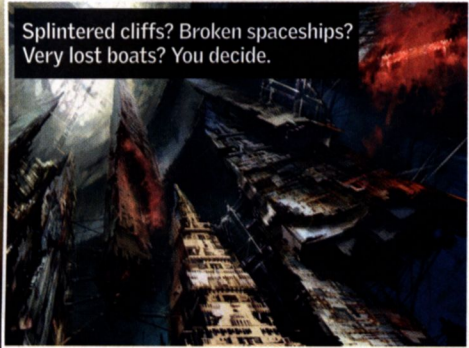
ALL EYES ON
GUILD WARS

Radical change incoming with *Eye Of The North* and *Guild Wars 2* reports *Will Porter*

Question: how do you go about convincing people who've ploughed countless hours into an MMO to give it all up and start afresh in a sequel? Answer: you don't. You simply churn out expansion pack after expansion pack until your MMO is graphically dated, irrelevant and attractive only to a dwindling number of obsessives made up of either the dead or the dying. Then you release the sequel and there's mottled rejoicing. Or, alternatively, you choose the road untaken...

Splintered cliffs? Broken spaceships? Very lost boats? You decide.

GUILD WARS: EYE OF THE NORTH
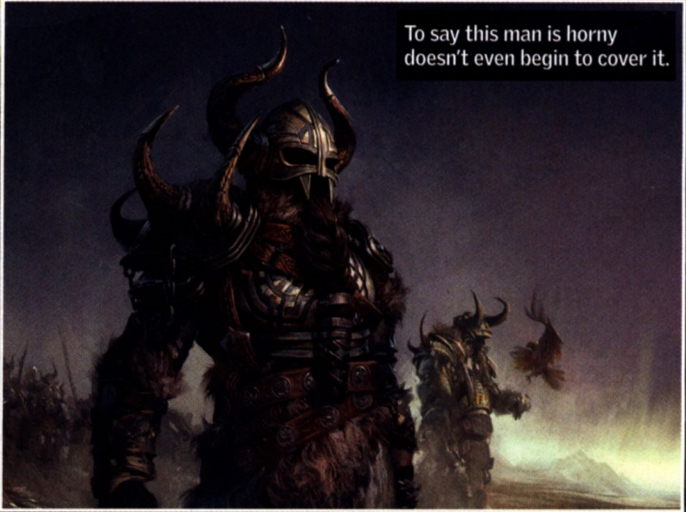
www.guildwars.com | ETA: Q3

EYE OF THE NORTH is an explosive end-of-season-style expansion pack – success in which, and indeed the rest of the *Guild Wars* canon, will filter into *Guild Wars 2*. Noobs should look away now.

Whereas *Prophecies*, *Factions* and *Nightfall* were separate, yet linked, chapters where anyone could start off a new character, *Eye Of The North* is designed solely for max-level characters. It's being built as a stepping stone for both the existing community and the *GW* storyline in the lead up to the all-guns-blazing sequel. It introduces villains and big bad evils, bigging up the Human and Charr races, while introducing the Asura and the Norn (all of whom shall be playable come the advent of the sequel), and giving its famed instanced gameplay an almighty send off.

Beyond the 150 new unlockable player skills, 18 individual dungeons set in the *Prophecies* lands and the usual gamut of fresh mobs, weapons and stat-infested armour, there's also *GW2* inheritance to think of. You'll be granted digs up in the northern bits of Ascalon, you see, and here you'll discover a Hall of Monuments that reflects your achievements throughout the entire span of the *Guild Wars* canon.

For every pedestal you fill, there'll be an unlock waiting for you in the sequel as inheritance – and seeing as you're in a fantasy land, Gordon Brown can't snatch a penny of it. Not that he'd be able to do much with passed down mini-pets, clothing, weapons and companions apart from perhaps sell them on eBay. But there you go...

To say this man is horny doesn't even begin to cover it.

He'd be within his rights to cry, "No fair!"

To avoid buddy separation through differing levels, there's a *COH*-style sidekick system.
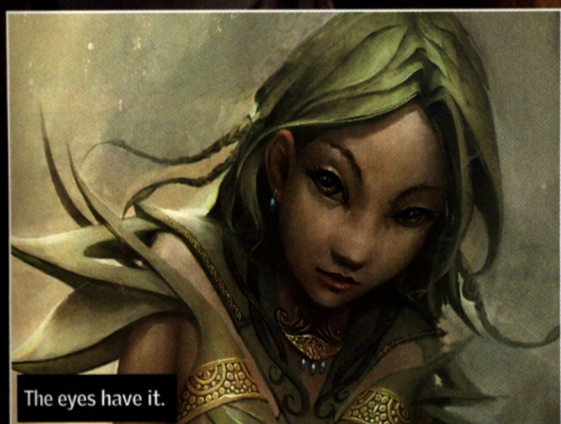
The eyes have it.

GUILD WARS 2

www.guildwars.com | ETA: Public beta aimed for 2008

IT'S 100 YEARS later in the world of Tyria, in the kingdoms of Ascalon and Kryta – the original *Guild Wars: Prophecies* setting. The same key tenets of gameplay remain in place, but much has changed alongside the ever more sparkly graphics; not least that everything seems... Well... Persistent. Up until the advent of the sequel, when you ventured outside a settlement there wasn't much chance of bumping into a mate.

No chance actually – you and your party would meet up, then fight through an instanced zone. Loads of other people could well be fighting there, but you'd be in a curtained-off, parallel dimension, and ne'er the twain would meet. *Guild Wars 2*, however, will take in a fully persistent world – and still won't ask you for any fees.

Everyone won't be plonked onto one gigantic playing area though, filled with exuberant teens yelling 'WTF Laaaag!'. Much like *WOW*, everything will be carried out on different worlds/realms sharing the same content. However, unlike *WOW*, these separate worlds won't be on different servers – instead being linked through the almighty clicks and buzzes of one über-server. This allows for something unthinkable in something like *WOW*: namely, World versus World combat.

Far from the isolationism shown by *WOW* servers, those fancying a spot of PvP can either stick with traditional Guild on Guild action or venture into areas known as The Mists and take on representatives of other worlds – and a gigantic strategy game ensues with each parallel realm fighting for territory. In what's perhaps a push for simplification too, you'll no longer have a separate RPG and PvP avatars either – NCsoft are not afraid of ruffling the feathers of the hardcore with this one.

The level of interaction you have with the environment is also being notched up a fair few gears – you'll be able to jump up and down without the aid of a console command, break stuff and set things on fire – while environmental clutter will react should your weapon, intentionally or unintentionally, smash through it. The zones you fight through, meanwhile, will be made even more vivid by the interaction of the environment at large with the entire player-base in the area.

The example given is that of a dragon that's been seen flying worryingly close in recent days – if enough players 'shoo' it away with conveniently placed catapults, they'll all be paid a reward by the local landowner. If, however, the dragon doesn't get dealt with, it'll go on a rampage – destroying a bridge perhaps, which will in turn trigger a team of NPCs rebuilding it and an envoy of wood sent from a nearby town. If, again, you choose to protect the cart from wood-hungry bandits, then you'll get a reward.

It's tempting to say that *Guild Wars* is donning the mantle of a *WOW* in the hope that its subscription-free ethos will rob Blizzard of some of their impoverished minions. In another departure, meanwhile, you'll be able to play as many different races, including Humans, Charr, Sylvari, Asura and Norn – the last of which's ability to turn into a bear creature is ably displayed above. It's too early to tell if *Guild Wars* will succeed at this, but the betting is that the sheer class of ArenaNet's storytelling and game design teams should render that argument null and void. Don't miss our exclusive *Guild Wars* interview and new free mini-pet next issue... **PCZ**

"Dammit Barry, that's your cigarette lighter!"

It's rumoured there's a mission on a boat.

"Let's split, it's the fuzz!"

Press 'E' to swap insurance details.
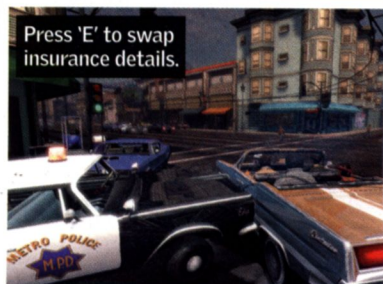
LITTLE HAND SAYS IT'S TIME TO ROCK AND ROLL

Stay cool and nobody gets hurt, as *Jon Blyth* steals an early look at Codemasters' stylish new bank-robbing caper, *Hei$t*

www.inxile-entertainment.com | ETA: Q4

IF YOU WERE a pensioner, and I said "1960s San Francisco" to you, you'd probably tut and roll your eyes, or else go all misty-eyed and complain that you just can't get decent LSD anymore. It depends what kind of pensioner you are, really. As it happens, this is the exact setting for *Hei$t*, the Hollywood-inspired robbery sim from developer inXile – though the closest you'll get to any peace-and-love daisy-age nonsense here is driving your getaway car through a crowd full of hippies.

It's been a while since the last free-roaming crim sim rolled off the production lines, and astute readers will have noticed that the fallback phrase 'sub-*GTA*' hasn't been used in these pages for months. So is *Hei$t*, with its carefully chosen era and location, aiming to fill that Rockstar-shaped

hole? Not according to Sean Patton, the senior designer at inXile.

"It's all about being a badass bank robber," he explains. "We didn't really think about other games when we were coming up with *Hei$t*, we just started with all the things that make bank robbery exciting. The perfect plan, the gunfights, leading a hand-picked crew of expert thieves, car chases and so on." Apparently, these are the raw ingredients of what makes robbing banks cool. In that hypothetical way that you'd have to be lightly psychotic to actually enjoy.

Hei$t will take you through the preparation, execution and getaway of a variety of different robberies. As Patton explains, the preparation comes in the form of "getting better equipment, developing and improving skills, or making allies on the

inside." Once you're in, the execution will have to be tailored to the environment. It'll be a lot easier to keep the crowds under control on the floor in a bank than in a strip club, for example; people tend to want to leave those places when the hypnotic boobs stop swinging. And bouncers are more likely to act twitchy than the cops, so keep an eye out for them buggers.

REACH FOR THE SKY

You can go mental and kill everyone if you like, and it might even work once or twice. But Patton has a word of warning for the gung-ho mentalists in the audience. "Once the police know they have a bloodthirsty band of robbers in town, banks will improve their security. Police will shoot on sight and shoot to kill. You don't want to be Bonnie

It's so embarrassing when your dad picks you up from school...

"Haha. Missed me!"

and Clyde." Without ruining the Bonnie and Clyde story for anyone, they died in the end.

There will also be a multiplayer element (more details on which soon), and some classic characters, including a mentally imbalanced safe-cracker, trash-talking muscle and an older mentor called Uncle Sam.

If it all feels familiar, that's the point. Our love affair with bank robberies is entirely down to the cinema, rather than having our lives directly threatened by violent gangs – and *Hei$t* is bound to flirt with the well-loved caper-film cliches.

"Design meetings for *Hei$t* would frequently evolve into 'then we could do that scene from *Heat*'," agrees Patton, "or 'remember in *Point Break*? Let's do that!' I hope players get the same rush that inspired us when we watched those classic scenes." We hope so too, although we could probably do without Keanu Reeves.

16 THE SIMS 2: OPEN FOR BUSINESS
At last! Your sims can now join the rat race. Watch out for the Stuff pack with extra pension packages!

17 THE SIMS 2: NIGHTLIFE
Praise be! Now you can watch your sims downing Bacardi Breezers and puking on the floor! Watch out for the Stuff pack featuring WKD Blue!
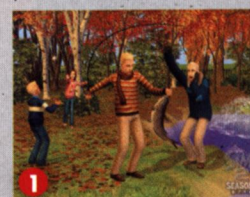
1 THE SIMS 2: SEASONS
Finally! See what your sims look like in autumn! Then pray for the Stuff pack that features sun lotion, a rake, snowmen and baby lambs!

9 THE SIMS 2: PETS
Yay! You can own a lovely chocolate Labrador! Mmmm, chocolate. Mmm, Labrador. Can we have another Labrador? We've eaten ours.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS

Relatively famed developer **Wideload**, responsible for the mediocre ramblings of *Stubbs The Zombie*, are headed by a man called **Alex Seropian**. Some have pointed out that this is dull and widely known news. Wideload, however, have **teamed up** with a company called **Gamecock** (headed by a man called **Mike Wilson**) to publish their next game *Hail To The Chimp*. Again, largely dull news. What's brought the games industry to a **frothing state of frenzy**, however, is the announcement which begins: 'Alex Seropian's Wideload and Mike Wilson's Gamecock...' Just how game for **Seropian's wide load Wilson's cock** actually is was unknown at the time of going to press.

In other news, a famous face is once more rapidly becoming more **haggard and bloody** as its health levels are cruelly taken away. Yes, the **enduring face of DoomGuy** has been artistically compared to the volatile history of **Sarajevo**. Beamed onto the ruins of the **Hotel Europa** in the Bosnian capital, the **face of Flyn** (the official name for the Martian rampager) is shown to slowly decrease in health before **regenerating at the art installation's close** – after having presumably found a nearby medpack or some funny blue droplets. "The projection of a health-bar in a public space of Sarajevo transforms the simple display of an energy level of a player immersed in a videogame into the symbol of a collective health status," explained artist **Damiano Colacito** to a baffled populace.

Finally this month, *Postal* creators **Running With Scissors** have cashed in on the death of vacant, yet tragic, gold-digging model **Anna Nicole Smith**. The cheeky **controversy-baiting rapscallions** released a press emission suggesting that it was actually their iconic *Postal* guy who had impregnated the buxom... Oh... Christ... **Why do we bother**? There's only so many times we can defend *Postal 2* you know guys...

> **"Just how game for Seropian's wide load Mike Wilson's game cock actually is was unknown at the time of going to press"**

This game has the X factor...
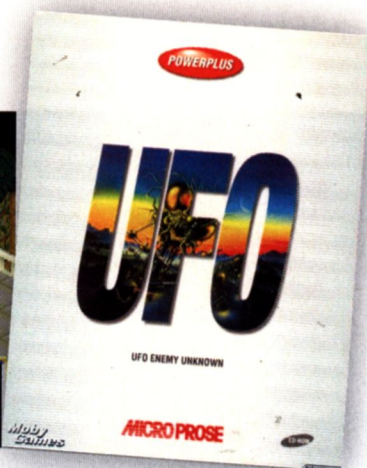
X-COM REBORN?
Strategic alien-bashing linked to Irrational – does X really mark the spot?

www.irrationalgames.com | ETA: TBA

WE WERE TOLD last year in a relatively loose-lipped fashion that Ken Levine's Irrational were working on the reinvention of an older game with 'a crappy interface' – and now a law firm linked to Irrational have labelled *X-Com* as among their wares. It's not confirmed, publishers 2K are keeping schtum, but it's happening as sure as the Pope shits in the woods.

But will the traditional turn-based combat remain? Well, if it's in the spirit of a pausable *Freedom Force*, then potentially yes. But if it's being created with the mentality of *SWAT 4*, then perhaps no. Who can say? We'll get digging...

He looks cute, but we're betting he isn't...

DUNGEON CRAWL

Hero: a game worth holding out for

www.heroherohero.com | ETA: 2009

FIREFLY, THOSE HAPPY chaps responsible for *Stronghold* and various other examples of British niceness, like their dungeons. But they reckon dungeon representation is a bit iffy – why should there be bags of gold sitting around? Who keeps two bottles of potion in a chest? What's a wandering monster's true motivation?

Welcome then, *Hero*, with its realistic dungeons – but not until 2009. Then, we'll finally have a living, breathing representation of a proper dungeon – and one that's at war to boot. An action RPG in the truest, most visceral sense, we'll wake you up when you need to start caring...

THE PROFESSIONALS

Uncovering the lies and slander perpetuated by PC gaming

SWIMMING GALAS ARE often fun affairs, with bunting, people swimming fast and children doing slow-motion underwater kung fu in the shallow end. It's a jolly affair, but while Merlin Batchelor stands on the ridged tiles next to the pool encouraging his protégés to kick their legs off, deep inside he's angry – angry that his chosen passion has been so churlishly treated by PC gaming for so very, very long. So much so, that he contacted us to finally put the verruca-sock-covered boot in. So join us as we retrieve the plastic block of justice from the deep-end wearing our pyjamas...
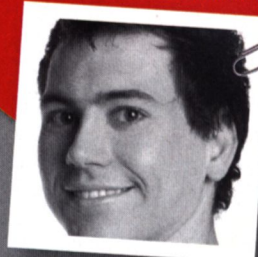
TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND
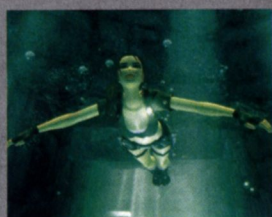
"Lara's breaststroke has efficient timing; she's obviously been a competitive swimmer in the past. I can only nit-pick really. Her arms recover nicely across the surface of the water, although to be honest her hands do wobble inwards on entry – which could be put down to nerves. Also, she'd do better to keep a low profile than overarch her body to show off her cleavage each stroke cycle. While her leg action is an unusual diagonal slice, she still needs to dorsiflex her feet more. Her front crawl, meanwhile, is a little better. She's got a short but powerful arm action and fluid motion, even though her feet are not plantar flexed, which means they would move her back with each kick."

PCZONE
★★★★☆
Diligent pupil

FAR CRY

"I can't quite ascertain either stroke or method of propulsion here. Spinning the arm in a complete circle may, at a push, provide limited movement if the Mr Carver is good at sculling, but it's no good when half of the spin is executed above the water. An extension and retraction of the legs would provide a bare amount of movement, but nothing as fast as we see. Minimal movement would make it easier to keep a weapon steady, but such steadiness is surprising when he should be worried about imminent drowning. I wouldn't recommend this stroke."

PCZONE
★☆☆☆☆
Don't go back to the water

SPLINTER CELL: DOUBLE AGENT

"Fisher's hands never come past his shoulders, but you can maintain movement with a flutter action and strong scull. It wouldn't be very fast, but could move the character one length of a 25m pool in a minute. He needs lessons. The leg kick is fluid, but unless the feet are plantar flexed, a great deal of energy is wasted for a small gain in propulsion. If Fisher's suit had fins, I could understand the speed obtained – but there are none, and with only minimal arm contribution he'd be moving far more slowly in real life."

PCZONE
★★★☆☆
Not a finalist
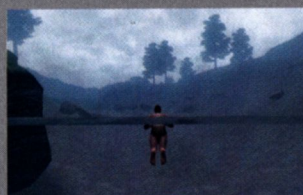
THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

"*Oblivion* characters swim breaststroke with the head out of the water and an inclined body position: a sure sign of a struggling swimmer. There is only minimal propulsion obtained from a poor kick, while the arms start well but follow with a minimal downsweep and wide hesitant recovery. These are all the hallmarks of a classic beginner timing issue. In real life, your avatar would be ill-advised to swim beyond his depth and should get some armbands."

PCZONE
★★☆☆☆
Struggling swimmer

WORLD OF WARCRAFT

"This Blood Elf swims old-fashioned sidestroke, and moves forward with a scissors kick and sculling. If he turned his hands to face away from where he's moving, he'd move faster. His movement backwards combines breaststroke legs with short sweeps of the hand, a relaxing but inefficient means of propulsion. What puzzles me is how little the water impedes him when fighting and the length of time he can hold his breath; I can only assume Blood Elves have a few evolutionary adaptations I'm unaware of."

PCZONE
★★★☆☆
Wasted talent

WINNER: TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND

Lara's posh parents clearly paid for a number of swimming lessons before they died in whatever tragedy it was. A useful skill, and also pleasing to the eye.

ARE YOU A PROFESSIONAL?

PC ZONE is in search of readers with professional and/or anally retentive knowledge in the following fields, and many more:

*Glass bottle manufacture *Torches *Crates *Keys and locks *The Weather *Vending Machines *The Paranormal *PC Monitors *Nano-technology *Boats

If you want to cast your eye over these or any other PC gaming areas, then email us at letters@pczone.co.uk with 'The Professionals' as the subject title.

FLAMMABLE
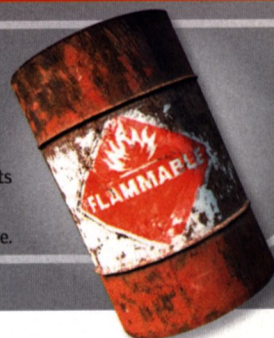
HERE BE...
DRAGON AGE

Will Porter chases the dragon. Gets a bit tired.
Writes about it for a little while...

DEVELOPER BioWare **PUBLISHER** TBA **WEBSITE** dragonage.bioware.com **PREVIOUSLY IN...** N/A

THE LOWDOWN

A PC exclusive title from BioWare	✓
Fabulously constructed new fantasy world	✓
Dark, gritty and real	✓
A glorious future for the RPG	✓
Still bloody miles off...	✗

ETA 2008

YOU AND I both know that BioWare are fundamentally one of the most important development houses in the known world, but despite a small flotilla of amazingly crafted games, they've always been slightly masked behind licenses and console releases. They've shocked and awed us, but they've been modest about it. They've never climbed upon a metaphorical pub table, disrobed and bellowed: "My name is BioWare! And these are my giant, fantastic and gobsmacking role-play balls!", before placing them in a pint glass for public viewing.

DROPPED TROUSERS

Haven't placed their big balls in a pint glass – until now that is! For five whole years, four gentlemen have been tasked to sit in a room deep within fortress BioWare, itself a studio imprisoned within the wintry wastes of Canada. The deal is this: pizza boxes get sent in, and an entire lorebook of a fantasy world's history, politics and peoples gets sent out.

In the true spirit of Tolkien, BioWare have dispensed with setting their stage within existing canons, that of *Star Wars* or D&D's *Forgotten Realms*, and created their own mythos and IP from scratch. Yes, *Jade Empire* was constructed in a similar fashion – but this runs far deeper, and the thoughts

This is certainly from the *Oblivion* school of screenshot taking.

Phallic, moi?

Up on the roof – a song *and* a fighting style.

THE STORY SO FAR...

BIOWARE
BioWare CORP

GP TO RPG
BioWare are formed by a trio of medical doctors. A bizarre, but strangely true story.

GATEKEEPER
The roleplay world is stunned by the awesomeness of *Baldur's Gate*.

Baldur's Gate

NIGHTY NIGHT
Neverwinter Nights brings joy to the world. Sweaty palmed, dice-rolling joy.

SUPER FRIENDS
BioWare and FSW creators Pandemic team up to create a dev supergroup.

1995   1998   2002   2005

going into it are entirely more revolutionary than what's gone before.

You start out by, as is tradition, selecting a certain race and a certain class – the latter giving the relatively broad canvasses of fighter, rogue and mage for you to build upon.

In each race, however, there are two options – rather than sticking with multiple endings, BioWare are now plumping for multiple beginnings as well – so you can start as someone who begins at the top of the tree, perhaps as a noble of acclaimed worth, and another who has an edgier background – having to drag himself up from the gutter and into the history books. Each origin tale is

set to have two hours of gameplay devoted to it, having you run into shared characters who play a role in both tales – treating you differently according to your status in the world at large.

After a while though, the main plot will rampage into view. Then, you venture out into the main plot arc – complete with your very own nemesis to shake your fist at when the narrative demands.

TIME TO PARTY

But what's a BioWare game without an amusing and engaging party to go questing with? Banter with living, breathing NPCs is a primary motion high on the agenda – with the dynamics of your own *LOTR*-style fellowship never too far away from the developers' mindset. You'll have up to three followers, each with their own ingrained

There'll be tons of dark bits too.

personality and moral standpoints, and you'll be able to alternately pander to them and piss them off as you see fit.

One example of how interaction will work is Shale – a character similar to *KOTOR's* annihilistic droid HK47 – he's a 9ft dwarven War Golem who you can inscribe with runes as the game progresses to power him up. Whether he ends up as a happy, opinionated member of society or remains an unthinking tool of destruction is up to you. As indeed, ultimately, are kingships, the lives and deaths of countless people and the fate of entire races...

NO HACK 'N' SLASH

The dark, edgy and (fantasy-withstanding) realistic tones of *Dragon Age* means that fighting isn't of the 'slash, slash, move back, move forward, slash, slash, dead' variety. Indeed, some of BioWare's developers have been bashing each other with weapons in public places – reportedly being thrown out of a mall car park for doing so. Such behaviour has helped combat production no end. Viewed from an almost top-down perspective, you'll bear witness to real-time meaty swipes, jumps, ducks, shield clashes and novel interactions with the environment (overturned tables, distraction tactics etc) – alongside the ability to pause the action, issue commands to your party and queue up spells and special attacks.

Above all, though, BioWare are creating a world in which things connect far more than just blade on flesh. Legends, mysteries, relationships, actions and reactions – all taking place in an age, unsurprisingly, of dragons – where frazzling someone with a fireball is going to have more repercussions than a few extra points to slot into your staple RPG growth development spreadsheet. All this and, so far at least, it's a game designed with PC gamers solely in mind.

Dragon Age is pure BioWare: distilled, refined, stored in a barrel in a Scottish cellar and then sold somewhere posh like Waitrose. It's the future of role-playing and it's the new messiah. Hallelujah! And indeed: yay! **PCZ**

The *Dragon Age* HUD is clean and clutter-free.

The thoughts going into *Dragon Age* are far more revolutionary than what's gone before

Choose your own adventures
Anything BioWare can do, you can do better. Potentially...

Blue, angry devil giant, WLTM similar.

BioWare realise that the cornerstone of fantasy has always been putting role-play tools into the hands of fans – the success of the *Neverwinter Nights* modding community bringing the art of dungeon master-teering far beyond your mate Jason solemnly intoning "you pull the lever to the right, fall into a hole and then die" during lunch-break back at school. *Dragon Age* is set to be released, then, with a toolkit that'll allow you to create a game that's just as detailed and professional as the full game – if you think you're up to it. I doubt you are, to be honest, but if you fancy chancing your arm, go ahead...

ARGUE THE TOSS

THIS MONTH: THE LOST ART OF PINBALL GAMING

Dear Steve,

A little tear ran down my cheek this morning when I realised that no more original pinball games are being made for PC. Yes, we have the superb pinball emulator Visual Pinball so you can thrash *Twilight Zone*, but where's the *Pinball Dreams* for the 21st century? There seem to be a few popping up on console, but none for us lot. If larger publishers don't bother, why don't smaller indie developers take up the challenge and make some, instead of endless *Puzzle Bobble* clones and platformers? Why Steve, why do I cry?
Jamie Sefton

Dear Jamie,

Hold on, let's take a step back from the 'why not on PC' argument and look at the 'why, why, oh god why' argument as a whole. Playing pinball on anything but a pinball machine is just stupid. You don't get any sort of physical feedback from a pinball videogame, and the size and shape of the monitor or television means everything scrolls up and down and makes you nauseous. And using a button to nudge the machine? Ridiculous! I'm glad indie developers have realised this, and instead spend their time remaking *Boulder Dash* over and over again.
Steve Hogarty

Dear Steve,

No physical feedback? So those shooters we play then – 'Ooh, I can't play those because there's no recoil from the gun and I have to press a button to shoot'. Dolt. They're both 'simulations' – good pinball sims recreate the skill and luck needed to play real pinball, and actually improve your game in real life too. You're deaf, dumb and blind, but without the mean pinball skills. JS

Dear Jamie,

Sefton. Listen to me as I write this. Shooters are less about replicating the act of pulling a trigger and more about the accuracy of your mouse hand – but to truly play pinball, you need the feel of real buttons under your fingertips. It's a mechanical thing. SH

Dear Steve,

Gah! I KNOW that real pinball is a superior experience, but what I'm saying is that pinball sims are still a fantastic genre and have been criminally ignored on PC, when they're still pottering around on console. Am I the only person who still plays pinball games? Hello? Hello? JS

Dear Jamie,

I will respond to you only with damning silence. SH

Wouldn't go that way mate. Loads of rocks and stuff blowing up.

When spacestations go "OMG!"

RISE OR FALL?

The rollercoaster ride that is a first play of *Genesis Rising*...

www.genesisrisinggame.com | ETA: April

WHAT'S MORE IMPORTANT – the way a game plays or the way a game presents itself? On the one hand, *Genesis Rising* provides an interesting new twist on space combat – an RTS where your resource management lies in the blood that the ships are made of, and upgrades come through the genes harvested as your ships gobble up the clotted hunks of defeated spacecraft.

On the other hand, the early code we've played has voice-acting and storytelling that feels so German, it's untrue. Saying that, it might not even be from Germany, we haven't bothered to check – but voice-acting is currently iffy and encounters with aliens outside of their ships are painfully stilted.

Yet, the game still seems to have so much to offer. Just wait until you see a ship explode in a shower of omni-directional gore, or hear the beautiful music being pumped out over the explosive waves of fire that correspond to direct missile hits – it's honestly quite special.

All too often a game's bold graphical stylings are a million times removed from the staid nature of its gameplay – but this feels quite new. The tactics provided (birthing motherships, reservoir ships ferrying health from one side of a battle to another and 50 different upgrades to organically morph your ships) make things strikingly different from the *Homeworlds* of this universe, while still singing from the same hymn book.

It won't change space RTS forever, but in a remarkably barren genre (when was the last one? *Empire At War*? *Nexus: The Jupiter Incident*?), it should provide a pleasing brain-rub for a much ignored species of gamer: the armchair star commander.

The man who helped open the Dark Portal

JON LECRAFT: *WOW* GAME DESIGNER AND ALL-ROUND NICE CHAP

Mr LeCraft got his MMO legs with the ongoing adventures of EA's *Ultima Online*, before heading over to the good ship Blizzard to work on the phenomenon that is *World Of Warcraft*...

Out of all the stuff you could have gone for with *Burning Crusade*, why was it the Dark Portal?

"It was there! That's actually part of it – it was there and it allowed us to make a connection. It's been there, it's been closed, and now all of a sudden it's been opened from the other side. It actually made a lot of sense, and it also gave us tons of flexibility to make these totally wild zones that people had never seen before."

Out of all the cool stuff in Outland, what's your favourite area?

"I'd say Shadowmoon Valley, partially because I got to work on a lot of that, plus it's an end zone. I like the vibe of that place as it's got tons of lore – everywhere you go there's something going on..."

So when you make areas like that, what comes first – cool ideas for gameplay, or where the lore takes you?

"It's a little bit of both – Chris Metzen our creative director keeps all that cohesive. He doesn't do all of it, we have a lead-world builder guy who sketches out the world with Metzen – then the quest designers get a high level outline and they fill out all these quests and he looks over them. It's kind of a top-down process."

Does it work the same way when designing capital cities?

"Yes – we design them like we do the rest of the game. We start out with the concept artists, who make this beautiful and really original artwork. They draw the towers and the outline of the city – they give you the world in bits and pieces to work with, then we just start to put it together. Then there's the step where we look at the flow and check that everything works out well. We were especially careful with Silvermoon City, for example – which has two banks and auction houses to hopefully split up the load when a lot of people choose it as their home."

I know it's a shift in gears, but can we talk about Blood Elf dancing animations? They look familiar...

"The Blood Elves were certainly a challenge. They originally had the dance from *Pulp Fiction* – and that just didn't look right. It didn't work out well, so I think the animators got all crazy-haired one day and put in Napoleon Dynamite for the Blood Elf male. I think part of the reason was that Blood Elves are totally full of themselves, and Napoleon Dynamite thinks he's doing a great dance when he's doing it, right? So that's why it fits, even though it's really silly – silly is cool for the dances. Then there was this real slew of suggestions for the female, and we ended up going with Britney Spears' *Poison*. Just because the vibe fits really well – y'know, they're blonde and beautiful..."

Editor's note: interview conducted before Britney went mental.

"Can you smell that? Or is it just me?"

It's not that colour any more...
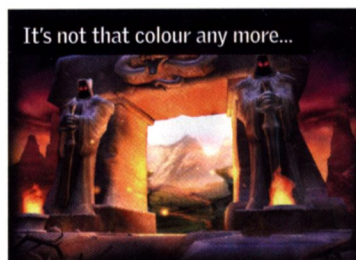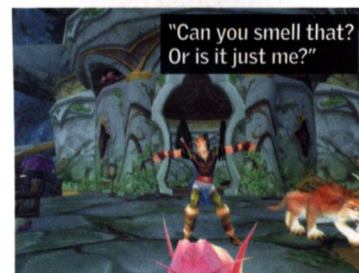
tat Zone

Tat's the way, ah ha ah ha, we like it, ah ha ah ha. Tat's the way...

It's written in the lost dialogues of Plato that the Greeks discovered a small island called Tatalonia, with a population comprised solely of nubile, buxom women wearing XL *UT2004* T-shirts and spraying each other with hoses. Sadly, the preponderance of tat upon Tatalonia caused the gods to get angry – so they blew it up with a volcano. To avoid a similar fate, we auction off all our gaming tat on eBay when every new issue hits under the tag PCZoners. Up yours, Zeus!

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

THIS MONTH'S TAT

GUN BAG
Not for guns, but built to advertise the game *GUN*. Yee-hah.

ART OF EMPIRES BOOK
Artwork from the acclaimed strategy series. No nudie ladies.

HEADCRAB HAT
Straight from Valve HQ. Warning: can zombify if used incorrectly.

WORLD IN CONFLICT T-SHIRT
Red with a yellow trim, it's fashion in harmony.

THE TAT BOARD

COMPARE	ITEM TITLE	SOLD FOR	BIDS
	HAWAIIAN FLOWER GARLAND Sent to promote *Runaway 2: Dream Of The Turtle*. Model thankfully not included.	£1.20	3
	BAG OF NURGLE DICE So exclusive, whoever's bought them should be able to make a tidy profit... Maybe.	£23	15
	STARCRAFT: LIBERTY'S CRUSADE NOVEL Slightly more expensive than the bookshelf at Oxfam, but even more charitable!	£10.50	12
	STALKER MOUSEMAT For little more than a tenner, some happy chap is, right now, rolling a mouse over an unpleasant, irradiated man's face.	£10.65	6

OI! DAX! WHAT'S YOUR GAME?

Steve Hill discusses Lara with the Eidos man who has to wait for the San Francisco-based developers to wake up...

Who are ya?

NAME Dax Ginn
DEVELOPER Eidos
POSITION Executive designer
AGE 31
GAMES WORKED ON BEFORE *Crash Bandicoot, I-Ninja, Total Overdose, Tomb Raider: Legend, Just Cause*
FAVOURITE GAME *Tetris*

"Giant cataclysm-causing meteor? What giant cataclysm-causing meteor?"

Q *Tomb Raider* was a huge legacy for Crystal Dynamics to take on. Was it like stepping into dead man's pants for them? How big a deal was it for those guys?

A "I think it was always going to be a big deal. They've done a bunch of really successful games and are very confident in their own ideas. So to adopt a world which you weren't primarily responsible for creating, that's a big challenge. The key to helping them through that was Toby (Gard) coming back to Eidos. So Toby was stationed over in San Francisco with Crystal Dynamics and his primary role was to make sure the character, animation and story-telling was up to standard. He was also there to be the voice of Lara, and the voice of Core effectively, maintaining the original attitude of the first game. I think it was a massive challenge for them, but what they showed with *Legend* was they can master lots of different aspects of Lara's world and make it feel like a *Tomb Raider* game, as well as setting it up for the future."

And the response, both critically and commercially – you couldn't have hoped for much more could you?

"We knew that it was looking good. You get the feeling before the release of a game that it's not going to let you down because you know it's a good game, and that was the great thing about *Tomb Raider: Legend*. We've sold about two-and-a-half-million copies worldwide so far, and that was the

target, to make sure that there's still gamers out there who like Lara, who like this experience and to justify making decisions like we've done with *Tomb Raider: Anniversary*. We wanted to reinvest in the franchise and make sure that it's going somewhere."

So why do an anniversary version? Because the public wanted it?

"Yeah. We had the idea that it would be popular simply because of the number of people who were asking for it. But we couldn't really do it until the point where we understood the original game, and that's where Toby really came into it. Toby's role as being the creative father of the original game has enabled us to do it. Previously, we couldn't really do it accurately and do it justice."

Obviously this now draws parallels with the movie industry. Remakes of movies are a staple – do you think that's the way the games industry is going to go?

"There's not a lot of games that stand up to being re-imagined like this. Games just don't stay around that long to justify recreation. I think that movies hold their appeal over time much better than games do for pure technology reasons, so I wouldn't say that it's going to be as consistent as the way Hollywood treats recreations. But when you've got

> "Lara's the kind of girl who doesn't take her clothes off, that you lust after for longer than the girl who does…"

Who stands with their legs that far apart?

Lara: lithe and sweaty.

long-standing characters that have got long-standing appeal, there's a really good case for revisiting it."

What has ten years' worth of technology given you in terms of making *Tomb Raider: Anniversary*?

"The real change has been our design attitude towards it. We know from playing the game now that certain controls just don't work, but they were tolerable at the time. So we've got a far more contemporary attitude to our level design, our character control, AI interactions, all of that stuff. The technology has primarily been invented in the last three years. Crystal Dynamics have
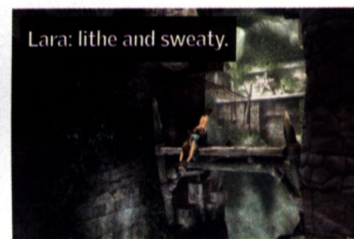
done seven games with this engine and they know it inside out."

There's always been a lascivious element to the Lara character. With state-of-the-art graphics, what has been the approach towards it? How far can you go?

"We treat Lara with respect. A lot of magazines want to see her sexed up, but I think that's what keeps her appeal – that she's the kind of girl who doesn't take her clothes off, that you lust after for longer than the girl who does. It means we don't have to strip her down and concede our moral position, and it also means we get much more longevity out of her appeal." **PCZ**

Hungry for bullets, like the wolf.
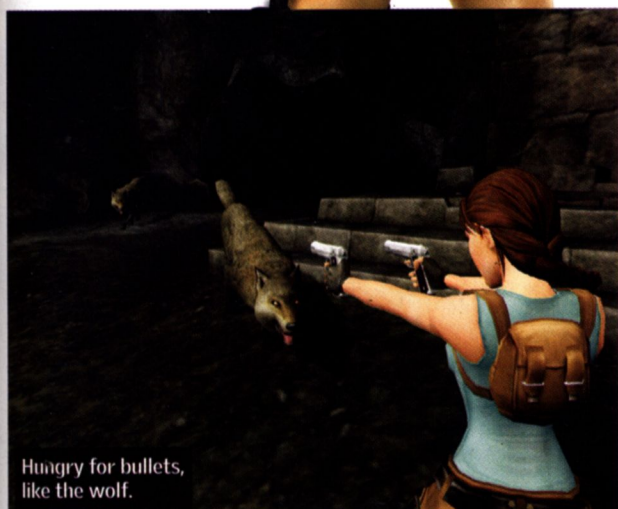
DAX GINN

Where he turns for inspiration…

Hard Rock: When looking for inspiration, Dax sticks some Tool on and turns the volume up.
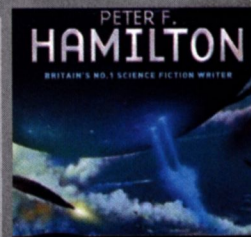
Peter F Hamilton: Mr Ginn just loves the musings of this sci-fi author extraordinaire.

Whoopi Goldberg: "I watch awesome movies like *Sister Act 2: Back In The Habit.*"

①

HOT SHOTS **STRANGLEHOLD**

DEVELOPER Midway **PUBLISHER** Midway **WEB** www.midway.com **ETA** Q2

WITH *MAX PAYNE'S* creators Remedy currently busy planning *Alan Wake's* shadowy nightmares, it's down to Midway to fly the slo-mo, bullet-ridden flag for third-person shooters. *Stranglehold* is being co-produced by John Woo's Tiger Hill Studios, and is a game sequel to the 1992 Hong Kong action movie *Hard Boiled*, which starred Chow Yun-Fat as Inspector 'Tequila' Yuen. Along with Midway's 'Massive D' technology for fully interactive and destructible environments, which include a tea house and market (both packed with hundreds of delicate items to destroy), *Stranglehold* is looking every bit the violent, cinematic, gun-toting explode-a-thon we all desperately want...

⑦
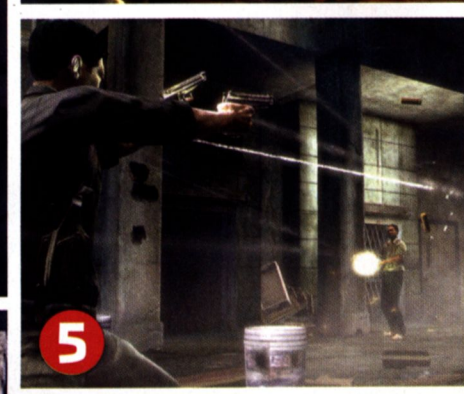
The Bigger Picture

1 HE DINOSAUR-US
As well as third-person action, a useful *Resident Evil 4*-style over-the-shoulder view allows you to pick off distant targets more accurately – especially with the superior PC mouse-control.

2 WOO'S IN THE HOUSE
John Woo has been fully involved in the creative process, using his movie team to make storyboards, writing the script and making stylistic decisions such as ensuring the game developers don't include any limb-splattering.

3 MUSEUM PIECE
Locations for *Stranglehold* include Hong Kong and Chicago, where this historical museum level takes place. Here, Inspector Tequila can unleash bullet-fury on rare porcelain vases, dinosaur skeletons, fossils in glass cases – and the criminal underworld.

4 SHOT MACHINE
Inspector Yuen has three lethal 'Tequila Bomb' special moves: Precision Aim which targets enemies for a one-shot kill; Barrage for concentrated gunfire; and Spin Attack for a 360-degree killing.

5 D FOR DESTRUCTION
Midway's 'Massive D' technology means you can blast most of the game's scenery, creating chaotic debris-flying action reminiscent of the lobby scene in *The Matrix*.

6 SMOOTH MOVES
Controlling Tequila is easy, with context-sensitive moves such as leaping across tables done by running towards them – you don't even have to press jump – keeping the John Woo action flowing fast.

7 OFF HIS TROLLEY
Inspector Tequila can interact with objects like this service trolley, which you can leap onto and, with your built-up momentum, ride into a room full of surprised enemies to take them all out with extreme prejudice.

BROOM BROOM, SHAKE SHAKE THE ROOM…

THE WITCHER

Despite leaving his pointy hat at home, *Richie Shoemaker* still found time to oil his sword in downtown Warsaw…

DEVELOPER CD Projekt **PUBLISHER** Atari **WEBSITE** www.thewitcher.com **PREVIOUSLY IN...** 171

THE LOWDOWN

Not your usual fantasy setting	✔
What you do matters (in the game, we mean)	✔
Morally ambiguous fantasy world	✔
It's got sexy bits and swearing in	✔
Still has the potential to stink	✘

ETA SUMMER

SUCH IS THE way of things that, when a publisher (in this case Atari) is tasked with the safe passage of games journalists to a developer destination (the Warsaw offices of CD Projekt), they like to make it easy on themselves by numbing the senses of their charges with alcohol the night before, in so doing ensuring the herd are more receptive and less belligerent.

It's in such a state of numbness that I find myself listening to a shuffling round of people talking about a game called *The Witcher* that's being made just down the hall. We're told about a storyline based on the celebrated works of Polish fantasy author Andrzej Sapkowski. We're treated to a bizarre demonstration on how to turn a random image from the Internet into a credible piece of concept art in less than five minutes.

Finally, we're assured that the game we're about to at last play – by this point two hours has inexplicably past – is highly original. The reason for this is that the central character Geralt – the eponymous Witcher – is "truly unique to RPG games". The world is truly unique too, and the control system is like none ever devised, apparently. And in case we haven't noted all this down, they tell us again... And again. It's soon after this verbal erosion of a will to live I realise that, when it comes to an effective marketing strategy, there comes a point when hangovers are counter-productive.

POTION OF RESTORATION

Thankfully it isn't too long before I find myself with *The Witcher* on-screen before me, and while CD Projekt have almost succeeded in turning me off the thing before I've even had the chance to try it out, almost immediately the withering vines of hope have begun to flourish.

I instantly think of *Oblivion*, but also of the immediacy of *Guild Wars* (there's no multiplayer, before you ask) – even the multitudinous flavours of White Wolf's *World Of Darkness* universe, in the sense that you're plunged into a

An adult game means that some monsters are in the nip.

THE STORY SO FAR...
CD PROJEKT

THE WITCHER

Witches brew
Polish writer pens a short story called *The Witcher* for Polish sci-fi mag *Fantastyka*.
1986

Burnt at the stake
After five novels and four anthologies, movie *The Hexer* is produced, and flops.
2001

Witchfinder general
CD Projekt announces their first game – *The Witcher* – through BioWare.
2004

Life's a witch
Having sold millions across Europe, the novels are arriving in English in April.
2007
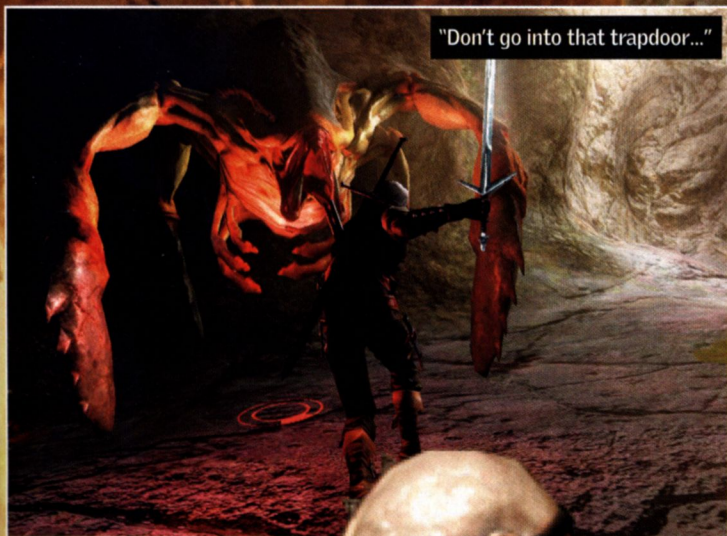
"Don't go into that trapdoor..."

Size-zero dragons are increasingly frowned upon.

> **The interaction between the racial hues is refreshingly contemporary, with intolerance, fundamentalist musings and even terrorism**

fantasy world that at once seems familiar, yet also not quite right.

There are quaint cottages and rolling hills, but nothing is quite as fragrantly colourful as the lands that *Warcraft* occupies. Behind the bushes there's a kind of seething animosity rather than any kind of overt forest-of-doom hellishness that you might come across in other beardy games. Walking through a village you almost get the feeling that the NPCs are watching you from behind their curtains, turning only occasionally to beat their children.

ELVES-YOU-LIKE

This all points to a stark and morally ambiguous world that is indeed quite novel, but the game is replete with many staples of the fantasy diet; elves, dwarves, wizards, gnomes and a bestiary that wouldn't look out of place

among the collected works of Tolkien, Gemmel, Feist and Jordan.

However, the interaction between the various racial hues appears to be refreshingly contemporary, with racial intolerance, fundamentalist musings and even terrorism being cited as background goals for the game's 100-plus quests.

If suicide-bombing gnomes and the ethnic cleansing of elves is a bit too much, be happy that our silver-haired hero is rather more stereotypical; kind of a fantasy Jedi, born with superhero powers, a mastery of swords and a destiny that can weave in-between light and dark, depending on your preference for such things.

Rather disappointingly for a game based on acclaimed literary works, it seems incongruous and slightly lazy that the makers are relying on the old

Top tip: duelling next to graveyards saves costly undertaker fees.

Shit happens

Do what you will and things will be undone, or something...

Scarf over mouth = evil.

In *The Witcher*, the decisions you take – even the iddy-biddy ones – will have consequences, and they could be really quite serious. For instance, in an early quest you find yourself with some food that some elves insist is for them, and that if you hand it over, it will save them the bother of having to find the person who gave you the mission. If you don't hand it over, you end up in a scrap and the elves end up suffering from mass starvation. Now to me that's a bit excessive, but then small decisions can indeed have grave consequenc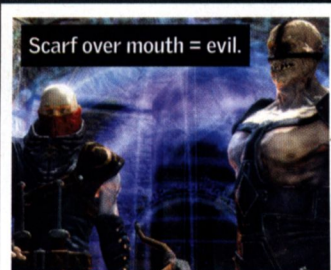es. Even so, if they had only said please things might have been different. Manners maketh the man – or elf in this case.

amnesia trick to set the scene for the game, especially since a knowledge of the books isn't essential (which is just as well, seeing as they're not published in English until April).

I KNOW MY NAME IS...

The game begins with you waking up injured on the back of a cart, clearly having received a whack on the head that's rendered you unable to remember much. Thankfully you're among Witcher friends, en route to your crumbling fortress, which is conveniently besieged within seconds after having trundled through the gates.

"I assume you haven't forgotten how to fight?" screams the guy whose name you've forgotten (you've got amnesia, see)? The developers are keen to stress that *The Witcher* is not meant as an action game, where you incessantly jab at the mouse button until either enemy or mouse splinters apart.

As I quickly try to learn, in order to properly dispatch the enemy you must accurately click on them and time your attacks if you want to queue up

impressive combos of thrusts and sweeps. Lose the rhythm – which is easily done as enemy strikes throw the timing somewhat – and a battle can quickly go awry.

Thankfully, there are all sorts of complementary abilities to help sway the tide in your favour, with special moves, spells (not too dissimilar to the Jedi powers of the *Knights Of The Old Republic* games), potions and weapons upgrades. Despite initial frustrations with the combat system, the method shows promise, even if there's still a way to go before total control nirvana.

ON THE SAUCE

During playthrough, one obvious difference between *The Witcher* and its RPG contemporaries is that loot is not in the kind of abundance you'd expect. If you like to slice up creatures and find they're carrying more worthless tat than a Wembley market stall, you may be disappointed to hear that I didn't find gold, bread, arrows or rusty weapons in one corpse, barrel or cupboard. There will be a few items about the place come release time, but not to the degree most RPG gamers are accustomed to.

The justification for the lack of litter is that since *The Witcher* is a master

swordsman, he really wouldn't be going through the game upgrading slowly from a rusty spoon.

What you will be able to collect are ingredients to concoct potions, which can be mixed to different strengths. You see, as well as health and all the other on-screen indicators, Geralt has to keep an eye on the toxicity of the strength potions he throws down his neck. Too many stimulants and our hero might get a bit woozy – with graphical on-screen wibble-wobble to match.

Indeed, the game tester who's sat beside me through all this was proud to announce that you can get drunk in the game, his grin suggesting that his own in-game benders might be more entertaining than those out of game.

GETS A BIT BLUE

We've almost come full circle, but there's more to come – the, ahem, adult nature of the whole shebang. My real-world companion encourages me to approach a woman standing outside a cottage. Without much effort on my part, she offers to service me in an eager manner that's a little too unnerving to be realistic (perhaps she knows who I am).

I try to back away from her advancing breasts, and although they're

Countryside walks bring out the worst in some people.

In the world of *The Witcher*, sexy women may even want to sleep with you.
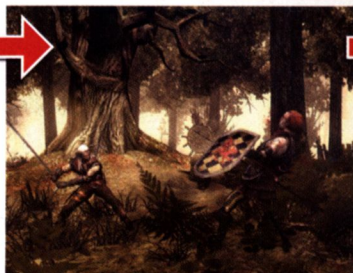
# The Mary Whitehouse XP Confessions of a Witcher

Contemporary parallels with real-world geopolitics be damned are promised. These chaps are having a right moral barney, for example.

What's more, the dialogue has more "shits", "pisses" and "f***s" than it does "thou arts" and "gadzooks". They swear like goblin navvies so they do.

Violence? Check. Not much blood to see, but the animations are suitably X-rated, with plenty of decapitations and finishing moves.
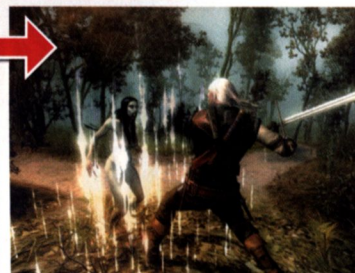
They need to work on the faces, but they've got the breast movements sorted fairly well. Which, when all's said and done, is vitally important.
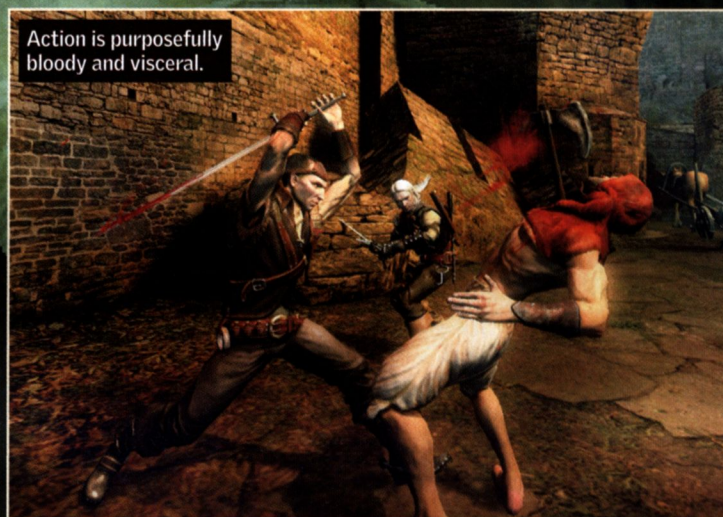
Action is purposefully bloody and visceral.
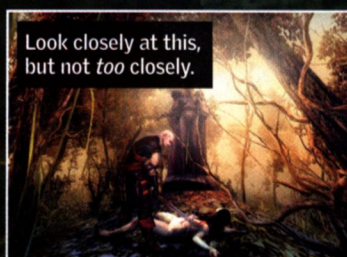
Look closely at this, but not *too* closely.

The Witcher's lighting is mightily pretty.

> **I try to back away from her advancing breasts, and although they're as convincing a pair as I've witnessed, I decline her offer of hanky-panky...**

as convincing a pair as I've witnessed in a game, I have to decline her offer of horizontal hanky-panky. Partly because it's not something you want to do while you're being watched, partly because there's very little challenge to the whole encounter, but mostly because while the on-screen woman has the protruding charms of a younger Pamela Anderson, she has the face of a 90-year old crone. Never before, in-game or out, have I seen a more hideous visage of femininity. It may be a computer game, but I still have standards...

Apparently, CD Projekt are working on prettying-up the faces. I later heard that had I done as I was supposed to in the above encounter, the crone transforms into a creature rather more approachable. I would then have seen her bounteous pleasures fill the screen and heard my own (*and* been in receipt of a small health boost). There was also mention of some curious instance where a woman has rotating mammary glands, which would have been a sight to behold in-game or out. Regardless, *The Witcher* looks certain to deliver more than it initially promised when the day began.

BEWITCHED?

Despite feeling that CD Projekt may be trying a little too hard to ensure their game stands out from what is an increasingly crowded genre, with attention in the right areas, *The Witcher* should be able to hold its own. It may be the company's first game, but they've translated enough BioWare stuff into Polish to know that storyline, characterisation and good humour usually go most of the way to making an RPG memorable. Let's hope nothing is lost in this particular translation. **PCZ**

WE NEVER STOOD A CHANCE...

UNIVERSE AT WAR: EARTH ASSAULT

Jon Blyth joins the first wave of casualties...

DEVELOPER Petroglyph **PUBLISHER** Sega **WEBSITE** www.sega.com/universeatwar/ **PREVIOUSLY IN...** 178

THE LOWDOWN

Looks a bit nice	✓
A strong and deep storyline	✓
Alien zombie mutant hordes running amok	✓
A bit where a massive alien spaceship is tied down with ropes, probably	✓
I am not an alien resource, I am a free man	✗

ETA LATE 2007

PETROGLYPH HAVE ALREADY stacked up a whole bunch of goodwill, by creating a *Star Wars* RTS that wasn't a forgettable mess. So it's with a positive predisposition that we step up to their new offering. As we revealed back in issue 178, *Universe At War: Earth Assault* takes place in 2012, on planet Earth where three factions have decided to scrap among themselves. Humanity – pretty much a non-participant in the strategic elements of this cosmic scuffle – has been reduced to the status of an annoying-to-harvest crop. We thought we'd be a faction. Instead, we're a resource.

Petroglyph are very keen on their storytelling – when your scripting team come from the FMV-fuelled background of *C&C*, you'd expect nothing less. So, the single-player game will be a linear set of missions. That means there's a trade-off in the free-roaming nature of the game, in the single-player at least. But it also gives Petroglyph the chance to tell their story. "Each campaign will have its own conflicts and resolutions... And losses," says Petroglyph's design visionary Adam Isgreen, with an unseemly relish. "Don't get too attached to everyone, some of our characters won't be coming back."

The story includes some moments that encourage its developers to get carried away. While trying to avoid breaking their self-imposed restrictions on what they can

Luckily, it was national 'cars off the road' night.
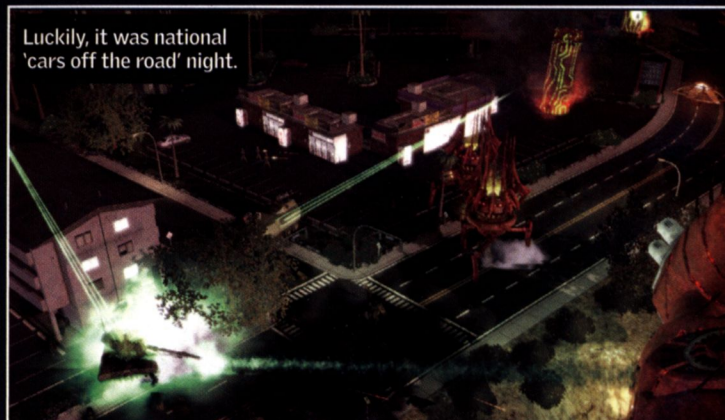
> **"Each campaign has losses... Don't get too attached to people, some of our characters won't be coming back"**
> Adam Isgreen, design visionary, Petroglyph

talk about, Isgreen gets excited when discussing the destruction of Washington, not to mention the scenes borrowing from *King Kong*.

"They're trying to take the ship down in the ruined city, the humans have thrown ropes all over it and it's wrenching its limbs around, fighting for its life, causing destruction and chaos..." When you can get that breathless while avoiding saying too much, you know you've got a good story – or a very excitable gentleman on your hands.

NOT DRIVING MISS DAISY

Well, at least they're killing each other, as well as us. Let's look at the Hierarchy, the one faction of the three that Petroglyph are talking about. Even talking about individual units causes Isgreen to wax daft.

"They're like grandma behind the wheel of an oversized diesel truck," he says, referring to the way you point the Brute at the enemy and tell it to charge. "It's in every way similar to an out-of-control tank." Then there's the Foo Fighter, a healing flying saucer with

three glowing orbs that detach like... Well, orb-detachment similes fail me. However, it's the Defiler who looks most fun; using radioactive ooze to melt foes and mutate fallen troops.

"One thing we really like about the mutated slaves is that they chase down other civilians or infantry, and turn them into slaves as well. Things get out of hand very quickly if you're not keeping an eye on the situation," explains Isgreen, while presumably smacking his lips.

GO! GO! GO!

Watching the game in action, you get the immediate sensation that 'action' is the right word. For a PC-only strategy game, it has more than a whiff of the arcade about it. *Earth Assault* is about action. It could be something as simple as the italicised letters in the minimalist interface.

Petroglyph call it 'UI-on-demand', and from what we've seen, the amount of playing screen lost to menus, buttons, unit info and mini-maps is close to zero. Managing to lose the clutter without

A mobile Hierarchy unit spells its name in the snow.

THE STORY SO FAR...
PETROGLYPH
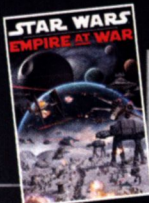
EMPIRE AT WAR
A flawed RTS gem from the brains behind *Command & Conquer*, and, er, *Monopoly*.
2006

FORCES OF CORRUPTION
You liked our game? Have an expansion pack then. Thanks, bye.
2006

UNIVERSE AT WAR
A short time in the future in a galaxy that's not very far away at all. Earth, in fact.
2007

One seriously unfair game of British bulldog.

God bless America
It's the home of the free

Look at that. Destruction has landed on the Earth like those adverts for fabric conditioner where the woman flips a blanket towards the camera. Flares of arcane energy have reduced all civilisation to soil... But:. Hang on. What's that shiny, unblemished dome? They spared the White House? There's a strange reason for that, and it's not an alien respect for our democratic systems. It's because blowing up American icons is considered 'a bit rum'. With stupid media reports of *Counter-Strike* being used as an Al-Qaeda training tool, and *TOCA* forcing every player to drive into a field full of prams, it was prudently decided to spare Bush's hidey-palace. Go America!
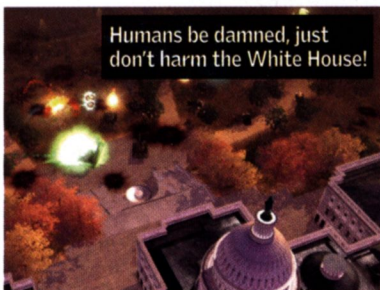
Humans be damned, just don't harm the White House!

losing the depth of gameplay – cutting back without cutting back – is their cleverest trick, and seems to mark a current trend. Mad Doc are doing a similar thing with their forthcoming *Empire Earth III*.

THE DECISION IS YOURS
The neatness of the display ties in with the Tactical Dynamics system. Want to customise your mobile Hierarchy units mid-battle? Go ahead. Select the glowing hardpoints on your mobile units, and all the options will appear in a fussless daisy, depending on which branch of your tech tree you've decided to develop. That's the twist; all RTS games force you into elaborate games of scissors, paper, stone. But now you can look at your opponent's hand and change your mind.

Any itch to get playing *Universe At War* has been left unscratched so far. However, Petroglyph will be regurgitating more worms into the press nest over the next few months, and we're looking forward to chewing on that fleshy blend of storyline, complexity and action. **PCZ**

FRAGS TO RICHES...
UNREAL TOURNAMENT III

Will Porter visits the home of *Unreal* and generally makes a nuisance of himself

DEVELOPER Epic Games **PUBLISHER** Midway Games
WEBSITE www.unrealtournament3.com **PREVIOUSLY IN...** 179

ETA
WHEN IT'S DONE

THE LOWDOWN

Breathless, beautiful and bloody	✓
Remarkable vehicle combat	✓
Fleshed-out single-player game	✓
Even more fun than the last one	✓
No guarantee that it'll be out this year	✗

SOMEWHAT BELYING THE fact that I'm an evil badass from space intent on puncturing a planet with giant alien vertebrae and dripping blackened tentacles, I'm currently more occupied with giggling like a schoolgirl. Skimming over charred hill and craggy dale in my personal Viper hover-bike with a joy previously reserved for nuns singing atop the Alps, I tumble over the crest of a hill beneath the sunny skies of the Izanagi Corporation's base of operations.

I see a tank in front of me, and instinctively raise the Viper's suicide hackles – slowing down and bringing up its sides so that my craft looks like a mixture of Batman in flight, a Cobra about to strike and an angry short man leaning back and arching his shoulders so that he can spit into the face of a provincial bouncer. I release the payload and the body of my craft jets into the innocent wall next to the tank while I'm flung backwards and neatly scythed in half by the blades of a passing Scorpion buggy. The tank, it seems, was empty.

As I suppress manic laughter at my ineptitude, a door behind me inches open and the beaming face of Epic boss Mark Rein pokes through and stage-whispers to his cohorts: "You're not showing them that crappy game are you?" I nod almost unconsciously, my grin extending further upwards; I've just seen a vacant Necris Darkwalker and am about to piss molten laser-fire into the faces off all those who oppose me. Today is a good day.

MULTI-KILL

"One thing we've always found is that science-fiction kicks ass," claims *UT's* characteristically exuberant producer

Red is definitely 2007's colour. Or maybe 2008's...

Topographical titillation

Maps: you'll love them like they love you...

In terms of map settings, producer Jeff Morris has a mental list that comprises frozen vistas, green plains, the wreckage of crashed spaceships, the interiors of non-crashed spaceships and echoing halls containing vast statues. All well and good, but Epic are also striving for a feeling of geography in *UT3*, to avoid a problem of previous games whereby the maps all felt solitary and disparate. The idea is to make the tone of a map fit in with everything on a global scale: if you fight on Izanagi turf then pagodas, terracotta, waterwheels and beautiful torrents of water will never be far away. If you're in the presence of the Liandri corporation then strip clubs, neon and skyscrapers will signpost it. Each map will have a definite feeling of location too. Fan favourite Coret, for example, has been remade alongside a handful of other oldies, but while it may have an identical layout, it has now become the shiny metal and glass of a shopping mall hundreds of metres above the decaying streets of a Liandri city level. So you'll be able to gaze down and reminisce about past fraggings within its urban sprawl.

Jeff Morris later on. "It's so liberating to be able to go in and say stuff like, 'wouldn't it be cool if the giant robot fought the giant lizard thing?' We don't have to worry that the thing never actually existed – we're not trying to do the Wehrmacht in 1944." No, they're most certainly not. Despite the occasional nod to reality, the vibrant, fast-paced world of *UT* has always had both feet in the somewhat surreal, with more of a focus on fun, instant gratification than its more po-faced rivals.

IN YOUR FACE

"*UT* is a very 'short time to spectacle' game," agrees Morris. "When you spawn there should be a cartwheeling, exploding vehicle and two guys dogfighting in front of you. Forget walking anywhere!"

The thing is, less than half the people who bought the previous outing,

narrative trickery – something you might think difficult given the game's inherent frag-fest setup, but not so. Once again, the kickass nature of science-fiction saves the day...

"The key piece of military technology in this time is the 'respawner', which allows military forces to come back to life over and over," explains lead designer Steve Polge, a perceptible twinkle in his eye showing just how much he loves that his job allows him to impart such brilliant nonsense.

"What that's done is changed military combat from being between large armies to being between small units of highly trained soldiers, who know that they have infinite lives and know that they can throw themselves at something." Life, then, is dispensable – yet not always infinite since maps might see the destruction of the enemy's respawner. Or the respawners may only be capable of giving life to combatants a certain number of times before they hit their limit. Their 'frag limit'. Do you see? Do you SEE?

POLITICAL FLAK

The planet of Taryd is not a happy one. The government of Earth is distant, and the planet's precious resources are controlled by three giant, evil corporations in a constant war of attrition. You've got the Axon (rugged, traditional sci-fi stalwarts), the Liandri

(cyberpunky creators of the 'Unreal Tournament' competition itself) and the Izanagi (oriental, pagoda-loving artistes). It's for the latter that your muscle has been hired.

Rather than the simple tournament structure of yore, the single-player missions, whether they boil down to deathmatches or Warfare matches (see 'How The Warfare Was Won', opposite), now link together to

> **There'll be four main characters in your team, with plenty of verbal sparring and neat dialogue**

UT2004, simply did not connect their musclebound deathmatch to the Internet, so by way of response Epic are upping their single-player adventures considerably. We're talking proper characters, dialogue, branching storylines, twists, turns and general

RUBBISH NAME
Epic is formed under the catchy name of Potomac Computer Systems.

GOOD GAME
The original *Unreal* appears on the scene. Impressive is not the word.

INTO THE ARENA
Originally meant as an *Unreal* expansion, *UT* becomes a success all on its own.

TITLE-HOLDER
UT2004 blows the socks off all and sundry. Some socks are never found.

1991   1998   1999   2004

form a branching narrative. The plot will see you doing stuff like stealing technology from another corporation, laying claim to an area important for the refining of Tarydium or simply pushing forward with a military campaign.

What missions you embark on and whether or not you defect to a rival corporation will remain up to you – Epic are designing the game so you'll be able to see the ramifications of your decisions in the world at large. This whole shebang is controlled from what's currently a global view – a beautiful Earth-like planet with clusters of white spots marking specific map/mission areas. It's from here, or a screen very like it (Epic are still fine-tuning) that most of your decisions will be made as you play through the game. The 35-40 dots spiral up and over the globe alongside the story arc, eventually leaving terra firma for a few orbital frag-fests, then to another planet entirely for the final set of face-offs.

How the Warfare was won

The quivering innards of *UT's* new game mode laid bare

UT's new game mode essentially mixes the best of *UT2004's* Onslaught (capture and connect the power nodes) and Assault (attack or defend an area through scripted objectives). With the former sometimes lacking a real mission focus and the latter easily unbalanced by differing skill levels and easily formed choke points, Warfare is very much the best of both worlds.

"In Warfare, there's a focused fighting mechanism," explains producer Jeff Morris. "So your objective might be destroying the enemy power core, but you can only attack the core if you link it up with these conduits over the map. Because of that, only one conduit is ever in contest at one time, so you'll have most people fighting around that location." So far, so dressed-up Onslaught, but level designers will also be able to work in Assault-style objectives. A node connection may run over a bridge for example, which, if destroyed, totally changes the way the battle is raging.

The Necris faction, you see, with their devastating Darkwalker tripods and flying Furies aren't just sitting around the multiplayer maps looking menacing. Partway through the single-player campaign they invade the planet of the bickering corporations and start transforming it to their own needs, hungry for Tarydium.

BLACK DEATH

For a while you'll be able to ignore it, carrying on with the petty squabbles and demands of your faction, but it's not something you can ignore forever. To begin with, the Necris send in the Krall – horned reptilian chaps who thrive on outnumbering *UT* squads – and then the Necris and the big guns of their terrifying armoury start to hit the ground. After the invasion, you return to familiar maps that have become infected with the goopy nanoblack that not only runs in the Necris' veins, but also is pumped through their lands. Dark clouds hang over Necris bases, black bony tentacles punch through walls and viscous black liquid oozes where clear water once ran. In short, in single-player and multiplayer alike, it's pretty bloody obvious at which end of the map the goodies and baddies live.

In the single-player campaign you won't be alone in your fight either, since Epic don't want you to feel like you're relentlessly fighting alongside barking AI bots. There'll be four main characters in your team, with plenty of verbal sparring, neat dialogue and personal tics crammed in. The aim is to make them feel and fight like real

Whisperish: pride of the Necris home world.

Stick a flag into an oblivious friend's rucksack and watch the hilarity...

> **Many of the vehicles in *UT3* have different modes of manoeuvre, to thunderously brilliant effect**

humans, though if you want to test the comparison there will also be a four-player co-op option with all the usual drop-in/drop-out functionality.

Despite intense journalistic pressure, Jeff Morris refuses to spill exactly which characters will be in your squad, what former *UT* teams are kicking around (although the Iron Guard certainly seem to be) or what role *UT* icon Malcolm will play. However, he does admit that you can see some of your pals in the surrounding screenshots, including, "the chick with the reverse bandit mask and the guy with the corn-rows and the tattoos".

When quizzed further, Morris also mentions that a fair number of key *UT* characters, such as Necris villain Loque, will be making a return to keep the fans happy. No more details escape the man's lips, however, as he uses the brilliant diversionary tactic of dropping a delightful nugget of game trivia into the conversation: *Gears Of War's* lead character is voiced by the same guy who plays Bender in *Futurama*. Did you know that? I didn't know that…

WARM AND FUZZY

Unreal Tournament III may have been built from the ground up with an entirely new engine, but the old 'comfy slippers' adage still holds with the gameplay. That familiar, nay iconic, roster of weaponry remains intact – the Bio-Rifle, the glorious Redeemer, the Shock Rifle with its ingenious ploy of being able to shoot the alt-fire plasma emission with the primary fire

zapgun for added death-bringing hilarity. But look closer and you become aware of one or two gaps having been plugged – gaps that you probably weren't aware of in the first place.

At the shallower end of the pool, for example, the Stinger (*UT*-speak for mini-gun) always had a slightly crap alt-fire option. Now, however, it's been gifted with the ability to fire bursts that can pin an enemy to a wall by his head. In a similar fashion, the rocket launcher can now chuck grenades as well as its familiar racked-up missile salvos, while the Unreal Engine physics can now provide stuff like real physical attributes for every individual pellet of a Flak Cannon round.

Gobsmackingly, Epic also claim that the insane graphical complexity of each weapon means that each holds more polygons than an entire map in *UT2004*. Honestly, that's the sort of factoid that would make the Germans declare a national holiday.

JUMP START

Epic have also noticed that when people are speeding around their imaginary lands in vehicles, two of the most common action keys are rendered redundant, namely duck and jump. So it is that, in a tradition kickstarted by *UT2004's* Manta, many of the vehicles now have different modes of manoeuvre, to thunderously brilliant effect.

Take the Necris Nemesis for example. As lead designer Steve Polge eloquently puts it: "Real tanks can't crouch" – but this one can. Or at least, it can switch between a ground-hugging sleek-mobile whose turret is firmly fixed forward and a standard drive-and-aim mode, before slipping into a far more interesting gear: having you move along at an absolute crawl but granting you a higher viewpoint, a tremendous amount of firepower and (I admit, grudgingly) a lot more rockets fired in your direction.

If you think that's quite cool though, just wait until you see the Leviathan. Jesus 'Capital H' Christ! A tank of the corporations rather than the Necris, the Leviathan is a five-man beast and is – as

At this point it's perfectly acceptable to run.

The Necris do not care for diplomacy.

you might have guessed – bloody big. The driver has control of the accelerator pedal and a smaller gun, while each of his companions blasts happily away with different varieties of heavy weaponry from the tank's roof and sides – each with their own cheery purple energy shield to boot.

When you first see the tank deploy itself into 'crouch' mode, however, your eyes will widen and you'll temporarily forget to breathe. Unfolding itself like the best Transformer base you've seen, with its four guns raising on fire engine-style hinged platforms, the thing becomes a veritable machine o' death: double the gun barrels circling one über-gun with infinite range and almighty explosive capabilities.

THE POWER OF THE DARK SIDE

The Leviathan still doesn't quite match the Necris Darkwalker though. I know you've seen a ton of material on these wavy-legged monstrosities – but I promise you that until you fight against them yourself, there's no way you'll realise quite how intimidating they are.

In my playtest, I was happily nipping around atop my Marty McFly patent-pending hoverboard on the crest of a craggy outcrop, when a previously crouched Darkwalker raised itself to its full height so it popped into view

Chairman of the boards

The fast-travel gadget set to outsell even Heelys…

I can't tell you much about the new *UT* hoverboards that isn't already widespread knowledge, but I can tell you how much they kick arse. There's no feeling quite like snatching an enemy flag and scooting away in the full knowledge that one hit from anyone at all will knock you flying – leaping over babbling (and speed-sapping) brooks and generally acting like a complete poser.

The pleasure is further enhanced by the way the thing moves. Articulating itself according to your speed, direction and weight you're putting on it, its swish is wonderfully natural. Hopefully the mod community will also get busy and produce a version that comes in Mattel pink…

directly in front of me. At the risk of using two *Back To The Future* references in close proximity, it was almost exactly like the bit in *Back To The Future II* where Biff stands on the top of his hotel and is thunderstruck by the sight of the De Lorean appearing over the lip of the building. Only this time the encounter ended with a burning death-ray and a beautifully rendered fried skeleton. Oh, and burning trees. The trees got set on fire too…

BUT WHEN?

To wrap things up, the Epic lads show me a final scene of Whisperish – an outcrop of rock hundreds of feet above water on the Necris home world. For some reason, the broken buildings (minus the black tentacles) remind me of some unholy mixture of Alcatraz and the Vatican. As a tower of smoke billows up in the centre of the map and pillars flare up with flame in the near-distance to indicate the presence of the Redeemer in their midst, I get to wondering – are we actually going to get to play the finished product this year? As ever, Epic respond to that question with a shrug – it'll be released when they're happy with it.

There's still a lot they refuse to spill on as well. The introduction of deployables for example (something beyond the spider mines of *UT2004*, although categorically not including auto-turrets, which Epic see as distinctly 'not fun') – not to mention a number of still undisclosed vehicles.

I loved *UT2004* because it seemed to do everything – whatever mood I was in, I could find a map or a mode that slotted into the pleasure-hunting parts of my brain like a missing jigsaw piece. *UT3* is pulling the same trick – but has found a remarkable number of areas to drizzle tasty gameplay juices

into an already successful recipe. I don't know whether it's the hoverboards, the eye-candy or simply the way it delivers instant exhilaration when others specialise in frustration, but it's suddenly leapt above *Quake Wars* in my estimation. I like having fun, and *Unreal Tournament III* really likes being fun. Blood, pain and death aside, it's a match made in heaven. **PCZ**

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PC ZONE JACKASS

Steve Hogarty and *Jon 'Log' Blyth* defy convention
with a guide to dicking about in games...

There comes a time in many games where the expected method of play becomes a bit too expected. It's when you're on this cusp of boredom that you realise that the greatest gift gaming has given us is the ability to plough your own furrow – to refuse to enter the test chamber just to see if you get in trouble.
So join Steve and Log as they subvert the basic concepts of gameplay by generally pissing about in games, whether through harassing NPCs, torturing virtual people or organising naked foot races in faraway fantasy lands. Just don't expect them to staple their balls to their legs...

This is how Steve's bed at home looks. Yes, even the shiny pantaloons.

THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

"Yes, I'm afraid there will be small bits in your poo."

THE BRAIN DAMAGE

THE SET-UP:
1 Using *Oblivion's* incredibly accessible cheats, turn off the artificial intelligence. Then simply live an abusive, foul-tempered life in a world of passive morons.

THE OUTCOME:
Whereas the 'Toggle Combat AI' option certainly removes people's physical responses, it doesn't shut them up. A soldier followed us into a house and shouted fairly unpleasant names at us every time we picked up an apple. When we grew tired of his empty threats, we killed him, only to have him stand up in three seconds and try to arrest us for his own murder. After a while, this became creepy, so we tried to offer him a sweetcorn. He declined the offer of stolen corn and carried on trying to arrest us.

WE RECKON:
There's no escaping the inner voice of guilt, even if the inner voice sometimes takes the form of a soldier screaming at you.

THE TEST OF PRIVACY

THE SET-UP:
2 Test how much the radiant AI values its privacy by breaking into an NPC's home, putting all their stuff onto the bed and waiting for them to come home.

Sleeping like a baby. A stupid baby.

THE OUTCOME:
Having placed the marrows and pumpkins on the bed, along with the family's entire library, gardening tools and as many apples as we could be arsed with, we set about waiting. Our first obstacle came when we discovered you can't use the game's 'wait' feature when you're trespassing in a house, which made for a gruelling real-time stare. However, when our test resident came home, he simply ignored his bed-mounted inventory, climbed in and slept like a baby. Then we got arrested.

WE RECKON:
The people of Cyrodiil don't mind if you fanny about with their stuff while they're out, but the soldiers go mental. Don't you want to ask the Sleeping Beauty if he wants to press charges, officer?

BATTLEFIELD 2142

THE POD LONG JUMP

Ready, steady, jump!

THE SET-UP:
1 Unlike the real sport of long jumping, players pile into an APC and launch themselves as far as possible using the vehicle's launch pods. While this might be a massive waste of military resources, it's great fun and a clear indicator as to who's the coolest. Bonus point for killing the guy who went before you.

THE OUTCOME:
Our first jump was completely rubbish – a bit like thinking you can jump for eight miles and demonstrating it by leaping out your front door, only to turn around and see your house still just a few feet away. Once we parked the APC under a Titan to activate the super-jump mode though, our long jumps were far more spectacular, with Log being the eventual winner.

WE RECKON:
The pods in *Battlefield 2142* are more than just a way of getting to a Titan, but they're rubbish when they don't go far. Actually telling who went furthest can be tricky too, although this can be settled with a knife fight.

THE RODEO PLANE

THE SET-UP:
2 Use the APC launch pods to land on top of things you shouldn't be landing on top of, like buildings, players or jetplanes.

We weren't very good at this one.

THE OUTCOME:
While one of us hovered about in one of the steadier aircraft, another moved an APC into position and launched skywards. After missing the aircraft three times, we finally managed to land on its back. Frantic hammering of the 'Go go go' button compelled the pilot to move forward and absent-mindedly knock the rider from his lofty perch.

WE RECKON:
With enough effort we really reckon we could stay atop one of the aircraft and ride it around like in *Dr Strangelove*, or Frank Drebin on the cover of *Naked Gun 2 1/2*. The air transport vehicles have a flatter roof and therefore are easier to ride, but riders should always be ready to open their parachutes as any sort of speed will tip them off, just like a man in stilts atop a train.

WORLD OF WARCRAFT

Having spent months doing an endless chain of missions, upgrading our spells and hunting for crazy phat loot in dungeons, we needed to surface for air and find other ways to amuse ourselves. The main difference between AI and humans, we found out, is that humans swear more...

THE SWEARING

1 THE SET-UP:
In a crowded area, we ask everyone to say a swear word. This will allow us to assess the effects of suggestibility and peer pressure on gameplay, while allowing us to say rude words.

THE OUTCOME:
In Orgrimmar, just four people replied to Steve's plea to say 'bums'. However, everyone responded far more readily to his suggestion that they all jump together, and "try to shake the server". Meanwhile, in Stormwind City, the Alliance were proving far more mature. Only Electrolux replied to Log's appeal for "any swear word you like", happily improvising such obscenities as "nipples". Apart from a single lol, no-one else took part, although someone did ask Log's character, Olmankytits, if she was Dutch.

WE RECKON:
Virtually no-one will make up their own swear word. More will repeat a provided word and nearly everyone will jump. The level of compliance is inversely proportional to the effort required; in other words, no-one can generally be arsed.

They're a mild-mannered lot.

THE TROLLYMPIC NAKED RUN

2 THE SET-UP:
All willing competitors started a new Troll character, and assembled in the Valley of Trials. They removed their shirts and trousers (some requiring excessive peer pressure in order to do so), and once on their marks and set, they bolted for Orgrimmar.

Naked! And blue!

THE OUTCOME:
Strangely, people seemed more willing to set up a new character and run for three minutes than they were to simply shout a rude-ish word. Our band of attention-seeking idiots caused one man on a raptor to pause briefly and rub his eyes, before writing us off as a bunch of hopeless noobs. Because everyone had the same running speed, winning the competition was mainly down to people not running into cliffs while yelling: "I can feel the wind on my big troll balls!"

WE RECKON:
People are always getting naked and dancing in *WOW*, but the spectacle's the thing. What's moronic with one is amusing with ten. Imagine the joy of 100 nude trolls. Oh, the tusks!

THE FOLLOW-ME CONGA

3 THE SET-UP:
Using the '/follow' command, we attempted to create a train around Orgrimmar, using only cheerful train emotes and the phrase: "Come on and join the conga, let's all make it longer."

THE OUTCOME:
Starting a conga is nigh-on impossible. People tap movement keys, which not only breaks the follow command, but starts a rival splinter conga. Some people mistakenly follow someone in the middle of the line, which doesn't make the conga longer at all. The Aerie Peak War Pigs valiantly gave us a hand and boosted the total conga line to a rather feeble six. Jubilant shouts from the conga line, such as, "This conga is the best!", and, "This is surprisingly good fun, I'm glad I tried it!" fooled no-one.

WE RECKON:
You really need a big guild or a lot of friends to start a decent *WOW* conga line. Even then, people ruin it by being unwaveringly thick.

"Everybody! Do, do, do, come on and do the... Oh forget it."

THE SIMS 2

It's easy to write off *The Sims 2* as a soul-destroying virtual soap opera designed to turn the suggestible masses into mindless zombies while shovelling as much cash into EA's pockets as possible – but it's more than just that. How much more? Well let's ask our test subject Sim, Barry Test...

THE INCREDIBLE MAZE

1 THE SET-UP:
Just how clever are these Sims then? We investigated by building a giant maze and placing a toilet in the centre of it, before commanding Barry Test to take a piss. Will Barry prove more intelligent than a mouse or a squid?

THE OUTCOME:
Without even pausing to consider the best way to tackle the labyrinth, Barry went straight in, marching up and down the corridors of the maze as if he'd done it a thousand times before. A previously unseen level of purpose and tenacious determination filled Barry, and within minutes he'd reached the toilet and pissed in it.

WE RECKON:
The Sims 2 contains some excellent pathfinding AI, good enough to help them find toilets in virtually any situation. Larger mazes left Barry unfazed – he simply knew where to go every time. We admit that we were ever so slightly amazed that Sims can solve mazes, but we doubt they can do crosswords and Sudoku.

Barry: many things, but not door-challenged.

THE DECISION

THE SET-UP:
2
In another toilet-centric experiment for Barry Test, our guinea pig Sim, we gave Barry a phone and made him order a pizza. Once it had arrived, we placed the pizza in an empty room next to a toilet, and then built a wall around Barry to lock him in place. Hours later, when Barry urgently needed to empty his bowels, but at the same time really needed something to eat, we freed him to see whether he went for pizza or potty.

THE OUTCOME:
Pizza! Even though the pizza was cold and about to go off, Barry made a beeline for the fast food. Once he'd eaten a slice, he went to the toilet. It's almost poetic.

WE RECKON:
Although Barry went for the pizza, his immediate desires kept switching between toilet and food right up until he was released. To be honest, it could've gone either way. The needs of Sims to eat and defecate are alternating and equally important.

Food first, pee later.

THE CORRIDOR O' DOORS

3 THE SET-UP:
Yet another toilet experiment for Barry sees him standing outside a house we'd built especially for him. The house is one square wide, and long enough to accommodate nothing but a series of 20 doors with a toilet at the end. How long would it take Barry to open all those doors? We took bets.

THE OUTCOME:
A staggering 23.2 seconds.

WE RECKON:
Sims don't pause to open doors, as every door in *The Sims* is the swinging sort found in most American sitcoms. This allowed Barry to glide through at lightning pace. Suzy won the bet with her guess of 48 seconds, while Sefton's estimate of five and a half minutes went a little wide of the mark. That's 16.5 seconds per door by his reckoning, a guess which possibly highlights Sefton's lack of understanding of the basic concepts of door operation.

This man knows where a toilet is, and no mistake.

GARRY'S MOD

Garry's Mod is a subversion of the Source Engine itself, so what better medium in which to conduct our nefarious fun-seeking? Steve and Log took part in three self-designed competitive games, each of which can be set up in moments, and each of which is an example of unfettered brilliance...

BABY GUESS

THE SET-UP:

1 We attach a balloon to a baby so that it helplessly floats skywards. Each player spawns a single bucket and paints it their chosen colour. The objective is to place your bucket where you believe the baby will fall. If the baby falls in your bucket, you get 2,000 points; if it falls nearer to your bucket than your opponent's, you get 500 points. Either shoot the balloon or undo it to make the baby fall. Repeat for a deciding number of rounds, or until you're suitably disgusted.

THE OUTCOME:

Five rounds of *Baby Guess* left Steve leading with three 'near babies' (1,500 points) to Log's two (1,000 points). Neither player scored a 'baby in'. Log's defeat caused him to use his bucket like a mallet to crush Steve.

WE RECKON:

Log is not as good as Steve at predicting where babies will fall and placing a bucket correspondingly, and does not accept defeat well.

Social Services, look away now.

Never a good colour combo.

UN-JENGA

THE SET-UP:

2 This is almost Jenga in reverse, if you don't think about it too much. Players take turns to stack desks on top of one another to form a really tall tower of stuff. The player who topples the tower while placing an object on top is the loser. Turning on 'noclip' is encouraged to aid tower construction at great heights.

THE OUTCOME:

Steve fared slightly better than Log in this game, having had a bit more experience with the physics gun. In losing, Log decided to smash Steve with a desk, only to find that he was protected by noclip. Steve laughed nervously as the desk passed harmlessly through him again and again.

WE RECKON:

It's very difficult to judge distances in *Garry's Mod*, as demonstrated by Log continuously dropping desks behind the tower. Once it gets going however, *Un-Jenga* becomes an extremely tense game, especially as the tower begins to teeter madly.

THE BIG TRAP

THE SET-UP:

3 On any online server there are many people ripe for the trapping. This is usually achieved by building a trap, and then using laser ropes to draw arrows and tempting words on walls and floors. Traps themselves are limited only by your imagination – as long as your imagination isn't very inventive.

THE OUTCOME:

Our trap was essentially a big car hammer, which smashed whomever was standing in the right spot with a big car. The unfortunate victim was Log, who haplessly followed a line leading him from his location to a big X, with 'Free Seed' written just above it. Once the victim was in place, Steve (who'd been hiding behind a box), pushed a button and turned Log into a bloody mess on the floor.

WE RECKON:

Log is stupid and falls for traps of sub-Wile E Coyote quality.

Yes, that's it Log, free seed, come and see...

ANNOYING THE NPC

This is a staple of gaming, so much so that sometimes we do it without even being aware of it. Whenever in the vicinity of a friendly NPC, it's common practice to attack them, molest them or to push them into the sea. This is the test of the bonds of robot friendship...

ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE

DARK MESSIAH

Take *Dark Messiah's* Leanna. She ignores sexual harassment, perhaps because of a reciprocated sexual interest. When we used the spellcasting animation to simulate caressing Leanna's boobs, we were met with deadpan tolerance, and running into her bum as she walks through a ship door went saucily unmentioned. However, physical violence is rightly frowned upon, to the point where Leanna's death causes you to black out and start again.

"Come here, you little minx..."

THE MARK

In *The Mark*, try shooting your camp English co-combatant in the head. He's so blinded by love for your rugged American good looks that he tolerates it without blinking. Stab him in the calves, however, and he complains with a grumpy: "Oh, I say". This is probably how English squaddies react to friendly fire all the time.

PREY

When you're eventually forced to kill your girlfriend, test her love for you by killing her very slowly with the wrench. In the Cherokee afterlife, will she bear a grudge, saying, "Thanks for saving the world, Tommy, not to mention smacking up my chops with a ruddy monkey wrench"? Er, no.

"Do you come here often?"
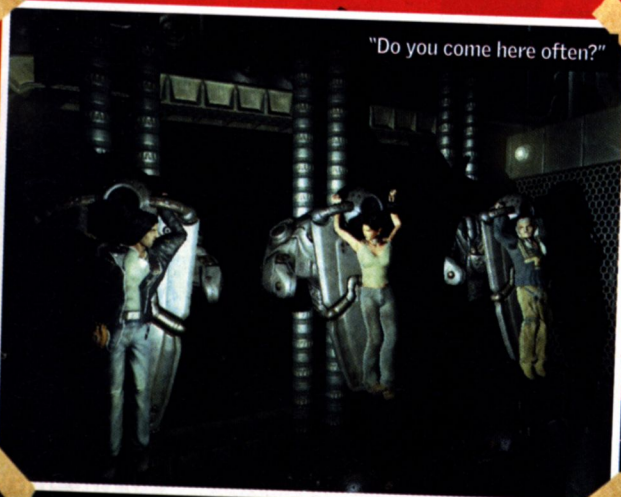
LOOKING FORWARD...

Games we can't wait to fanny around with in improper ways...

BIOSHOCK

With the cheat codes, will we be able to spawn multiple Little Sisters and watch Big Daddies run around in complete confusion?

PORTAL

A game that seems to be designed with the sole intention of letting you find new ways to kill yourself with crates.

WARHAMMER ONLINE

Given the strong personalities of the Greenskins, we reckon it's going to be great fun making an arse of yourself in Eight Peaks.

THE JACKASS CONCLUSION

No-one likes being told what to do. If you were going down some stairs and there was a barrier blocking the way just before the floor you wanted, you wouldn't go back up three flights and solve a riddle to unlock another staircase. You'd kick over the barrier and do a little pleased dance to show how you've beaten the system.

And that's how it should be with games. Fight against being pushed down every corridor. Shoot every TV, crowbar every corpse and crouch to groin level whenever an NPC gives you any exposition on the plot. The developers have to trust you with some free will, otherwise you're just watching a movie. Put a lot of effort into abusing that trust, and you can have as much fun as playing the game 'properly'... **PCZ**

REVIEWS

Our verdict on the

Being dumped

A **FTER THE BARE** winter months, last issue's reviews section was so good that I actually felt compelled to dance a little jig of joy (I think Steve's Irish influence is wearing off on me).

However, despite having plenty of titles to review again this month, as well as some great names such as *Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars*, this issue also plays host to what may well prove to be a record-breaking three Dump awards. Yes, *three*.

So, after declaring that this year will one of the best in memory for PC games (and I still don't doubt that it will be), we've born witness to and been subjected to playing an unprecedented number of rubbish games this issue. I suppose you've got to take the good with the bad, but it's a bit like having the most amazing starter at a restaurant, only to have them serve up the main course with a side order of dead dog.

Still, the gaming cosmos should have balanced itself out now, so here's hoping that normal service will resume next issue...

Suzy Wallace
x

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

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62 ▶ # COMMAND & CONQUER 3: TIBERIUM WARS

Kane's back, but is he able?

The PC ZONE Awards

CLASSIC · CLASSIC
PCZONE
CLASSIC · CLASSIC

RECOMMENDED
PCZONE
RECOMMENDED

DUMP

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 X81-C2D.

	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

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 letters@pczone.co.uk

COMMAND & CONQUER 3: TIBERIUM WARS

Back with a bang and back on form, the *C&C* series returns with its biggest, most explosive conflict to date. *Martin Korda* signs up for Tiberium War III...

DEVELOPER EA LA
PUBLISHER EA
WEBSITE
www.commandandconquer.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99

RECOMMENDED PC ZONE RECOMMENDED
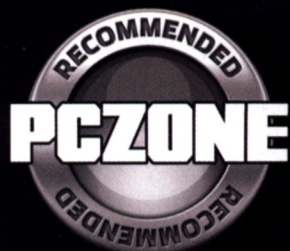
AT A GLANCE...

The third instalment of the original *C&C* series provides a polished, entertaining and action-rammed – if resolutely old-school – RTS experience.

System requirements ④

HOW IT STACKS	
SUPREME COMMANDER	88%
C&C3: TIBERIUM WARS	86%
STAR WARS: EMPIRE AT WAR	85%

IT'S BACK! AFTER a barren spell of over a decade, the original *Command & Conquer* franchise has come home, the prodigal son returning after years of wayward meanderings and ill-advised investments. Forget the debacle that was *Tiberian Sun* and the misjudged digression that was *Generals* – *Tiberium Wars* is the game we've been waiting for since that first, unforgettable moment way back in 1995 when the RTS genre was truly born.

It's a comeback of admirable proportions, like an old, much-loved slugger stepping back into the ring, a decade of saggy man-boobs replaced by a chiselled physique not seen since his heyday when he reigned supreme over his division. And while *C&C3* may lack the tricks and guile of its more visionary title contenders (*Total War*, *Supreme Commander*), its old-school approach to combat still raises a nostalgic smile and sends a shot of adrenalin through calcified arteries as it comes out punching like its life depends on it.

THE WAR CONTINUES

The year is 2047. Tiberium – that energy-rich yet dangerously toxic otherworldly power source – has spread to cover much of the known world. After several years of inactivity, the terrorist faction Nod suddenly strikes at the very heart of the world's peacekeepers the Global Defence Initiative (GDI), obliterating its entire chain of command in a single, devastating attack.

So begins the Third Tiberium War, a battle for global supremacy presented from two diametrically opposed perspectives and packed with enough twists and turns to make your head fall off.

As your faction's leading battlefield commander, it's up to you to spearhead all military operations, taking orders from your commanding officers and, every once in a while, liaising with the head cheeses: Kane, Nod's enigmatic slap-headed leader and GDI Director Redmond Boyle, a glorified number juggler promoted by proxy to the head of GDI's military command when all of his superiors are wiped out by Nod's calculated attack.

JUST LIKE OLD TIMES

After the initial FMV formalities (for more on which check out the 'FMVs: The Verdict', page 65) you're thrown straight into the action, in a blistering, aesthetically sumptuous battlefield that screams, "C&C is back!" like a foghorn signalling the return of a super-tanker.

This is *C&C* how you remember it from all those years ago: base-building, unit-massing, Tiberium-harvesting madness. It's RTS gaming in its purest form, bolstered by a myriad of additions and improvements that try to take the series' two-dimensional template and inflate it into a multifaceted yet recognisable strategy experience. And while the gameplay is still rooted in the build-and-rush mechanics of its forebears, *C&C3*, to its credit, does more than simply rest on the fading memories of past glories.

Tiberium Wars simply teems with excellent features that perfectly complement its established gameplay model. Infantry units, for instance, can now be garrisoned, allowing you to place them cunningly inside buildings for both height and armour advantage, spitting out bullets and missiles at enemies as they pass beneath, then tumbling to earth along with chunks of concrete after tanks pummel their hiding places to dust.

Directional unit armour is another feature that goes some way towards transforming the heedless skirmishes of yore into something approaching tactical subtlety – though admittedly, you'll still rarely (if ever) feel the need to employ any recognisable battle plans or flanking manoeuvres. Like it or not, sheer weight of numbers still takes precedence over cunning tactics in the *C&C* universe.

But that's kind of beside the point. Y'see, *Tiberium Wars* isn't so much about innovation as it is about a slick, polished and exciting gaming experience. There's nothing here whatsoever that'll make you coo with awe, rub your eyes with disbelief or drag your jaw along the floor, but ➜ conversely, there's

Hope they've got insurance.

Each campaign is broken into several theatres.

Upgrade GDI tanks with railguns. Yay!

It's *C&C* how you remember it: base-building, unit-massing, Tiberium-harvesting madness

Ground attack aircraft, but no dogfighting!?

The interface is wonderfully intuitive.

He was only asking for directions to Mars.

little here that'll truly disappoint if you approach the game with eyes wide open.

If you're a *C&C* fan, you already know the drill. Build a base, fortify it, collect resources, amass a force and hit the enemy as hard as you can. But unlike countless *C&C* copycats still doing the rounds these days, *Tiberium Wars* pulls off this template with an almost unparalleled finesse – so much so that you start to forgive it its archaic approach to RTS gaming.

DAZZLING

Every nook, every corner, every second of your experience is buffed to the kind of sheen that will strip you of any lurking cynicism you may harbour. This is mass entertainment at its finest, a hugely accomplished piece of programming that will no doubt unify the hardcore and mainstream markets while placating us critics with the sheer joy of its pick-up-and-play action.
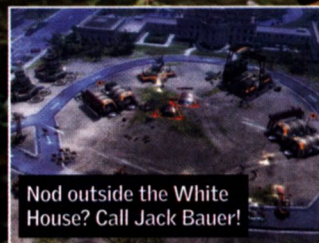
Play as GDI, Nod or even the Scrin.

Eastern Seaboard of the United States

The White House

Andrews Air Force Base

Go To Theatre

Where do you want to go today?   HARD DIFFICULTY   PLAY MISSION

Nod outside the White House? Call Jack Bauer!

Put simply, RTS games don't come much more polished. Take player guidance, for example. Never – not once – are you left in any doubt as to what you're supposed to be doing, where your next target is or what bearing your next objective will have on the outcome of a level, thanks to regular mid-mission briefings that keep you updated yet never patronised or mollycoddled.

Visually, *C&C3* is also beyond reproach. The engine purrs along like a finely tuned Ferrari, generating levels of detail that many other RTS games can't even sniff at, yet never compromising on performance. While *Supreme Commander* and *Medieval II: Total War* made even higher-end machines beg for mercy, *Tiberium Wars* wholeheartedly invites you to crank up the graphics settings to the max with a near-unparalleled smoothness of play, even on its largest, most demanding levels.

SPIT AND POLISH

The attention to detail is also superb. Buildings degenerate as your shells and bullets pound them, sagging, cracking, charring and then tumbling down. Vanquished vehicles no longer just explode, they spew out their contents, sending ragdoll corpses arcing through the air on waves of fire. Meanwhile, back at your base, small repair droids buzz around autonomously fixing any damaged units that lie within your immediate borders.

Each building and unit has its own character, distinct appearance and unique movement – a level of detail that makes a mockery of many of the game's rivals – while the interface is one of the most streamlined you'll see any time soon, with only the somewhat fiddly queuing options coming in for any real criticism.

Every building you construct plays a key role in the race for unit upgrades and battlefield reinforcements, and while the upgrades may be somewhat throwaway and simplistic, the range of reinforcements on offer is quite the opposite.

Ion Cannons, nukes, Orca strikes, additional infantry, sniper units, decoy armies, radar jamming, cloaks and mortar

> ## Units can gain promotions, and some can even be upgraded with railguns, jetpacks, mortars or superior armour

attacks are just some of the many trump cards you can call in to help sway the outcome of a battle, each with a beautifully clear icon situated on the left of the screen as it becomes available. In fact, they're so intuitive to use that incorporating them into your tactical vocabulary becomes second nature in no time.

UNIT READY

So what about the units? Well, if truth be told, they're somewhat of a mixed bag, with both Nod and GDI's arsenals borrowing a too heavily from the original *C&C* for comfort.

All of the units you'd hope to see are present and correct here (as well as a whole new arsenal once you've completed the two main campaigns). These include the terrorist faction's fire-spewing and stealth units or the GDI's hulking, twin-turreted Mammoth tanks that you'll welcome back with the type of sloppy kiss usually reserved for a long-lost loved one, especially once you hear the familiar squish of enemy corpses beneath your tracks.

Orcas and Venom assault craft buzz around the skies harassing ground units, while foot soldiers come equipped with the traditional line-up of machine guns, flamethrowers, bazookas and grenades (grenadiers can even throw their exploding pineapples from inside APCs, which is a great touch), and engineers can capture enemy buildings and units. What's more, units can gain promotions (making them more effective killers), and some can even be upgraded with railguns, jetpacks, mortars or superior armour.

GOOD & BAD

The good news is that there are at least a few newcomers to both the GDI and Nod folds, including hulking, powerful two-legged robots for both factions that give even the Mammoth a genuine run for its money. Meanwhile, the GDI also sport a unit called the Rig, a mobile fortification post bristling with guns and repair droids that's deployable anywhere on the battlefield. While it's an

FMVs: the verdict
The FMV returns, and it's about time too!

The GDI plot is told through newscasts and briefings.

Tricia Helfer puts in a fine performance.

After many years in the wilderness, the FMV (that's Full Motion Video, kids) has made a triumphant return to the gaming arena. *C&C's* well written – if exposition heavy – plot is superbly acted by a cast that would make many movies throw envious glances at the casting couch. More importantly though, not a single actor comes across like they're just there for an easy payday, with excellent performances across the board, most notably from Nod duo Tricia Helfer (as Kilian Qatar) and Josh Holloway (aka Sawyer from *Lost*, who plays intelligence officer Ajay).

In fact, the Nod cast prove far more sharply developed than GDI's somewhat one-dimensional stereotypes, which include Michael Ironside as your CO and a passionate, verging on over-acting Billy Dee Williams (aka Lando Calrissian) as the increasingly unstable GDI director Redmond Boyle.

Hopefully the sheer quality of *C&C3's* FMVs will prove to the countless detractors out there that this form of in-game storytelling can work, and work well. *Tiberium Wars'* FMVs highlight one alienable fact: it's not the FMV that failed all those years ago, but the developers, who all too often presented us with hideously cheap and poorly acted cut-scenes that undermined this most excellent of storytelling tools.

Attack! Attack! Attack!

Damn those aliens and their shields.

The Orcas are back in business.

Scrin and bear it
C&C welcomes its third, totally new faction

Now GDI and Nod have a common enemy.

It was always going to be a bit of a risk introducing a new faction into the *C&C* universe, but any reservations we may have had have been swept away. Having loitered in the outer regions of our solar system for many years, the Scrin – an alien race heavily reliant on Tiberium – launch a devastating surprise attack on Earth against both Nod and GDI forces.

While there isn't a massive difference in how the Scrin play compared to GDI and Nod, and while their units are fairly standard – a collection of tanks, walkers, artillery and sleek bombers – it's the aliens' special abilities and distinctive look which really set them apart from the *C&C* mainstays.

The otherworldly aggressors can call upon a host of cool abilities and super-weapons with which to tear up their opponents, including the devastating Rift Generator, which can literally teleport half an enemy base into orbit. Equally menacing is the ultra-slow but über-powerful alien mothership, which can cause mass destruction if it can get itself over a base or collection of units. What's more, the Scrin's ability to generate ion storms and partially displace their buildings (in order to minimise damage) makes for some spectacular visual effects.

The Ion Cannon is more powerful than ever before.

Giant Warmechs bolster Nod's arsenal.

Ever heard of knocking?

ingenious idea, the Rig actually proves a tad too powerful, and its numerous offensive and defensive capabilities tilt the balance of power a little too much in the favour of GDI.

Now for the bad news. Almost unforgivably, *Tiberium Wars* is bereft of naval combat, and what aerial skirmishing exists is so tenuous it's virtually redundant. After *Supreme Commander*'s superb air and sea conflicts, it's impossible not to feel deflated by their omission here. What's more, the game suffers by their absence, with both campaigns blighted by too many samey land-based invasion missions.

Not even a smattering of Commando infiltration missions and a cornucopia of throwaway secondary objectives – that clearly have one eye firmly fixed on the Xbox 360 version – can alleviate the nagging sense of repetition that begins to set in about halfway through each campaign.

The AI is also nothing to get overly excited about, despite its concerted efforts to probe your weaknesses with incessant attacks. Your foes simply don't have the tactical repertoire to cause you any real problems, generally employing the same three tactics time and time again: endless head-on attacks on your strongholds; attempting to take out your harvester (or equivalent); and holing up in their bases in anticipation of your mass onslaught.

If you're a hardened RTS fan, you'll rarely feel that cold, foreboding breath of defeat on the back of your neck (even on the hardest of the three difficulty settings) – though with the game spanning some 30-40 hours, there's definitely more substance than in EA LA's last offering, the threadbare and disappointing *Battle For Middle-Earth II*.

NOW IT GETS REALLY INTERESTING
So there you are, back in your cosy comfort zone. It's *C&C*. It's fun. You're battling Nod or GDI in highly entertaining battles, harnessing the intuitive interface and enjoying all the new features that EA LA have lavished on the franchise. You're happy. You've been here before. And then, everything changes.

Just as you think the war is going well and the game is coming to a somewhat premature end, a third faction belatedly enters the fray. It's an old RTS trick, but this new enemy nonetheless manages to reinvigorate proceedings with a shot of originality and excitement.

All of a sudden, the game's somewhat predictable battlefields are transformed into wastelands of destruction and carnage. You're no longer in your comfort zone. You've not been here before. But it's still *C&C* and you're still going to love it as you fight off this new, unknown
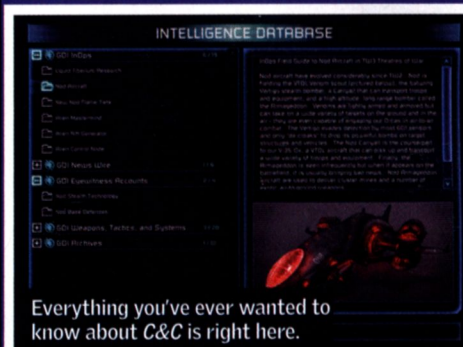
> **C&C3** is bereft of naval combat, and what aerial skirmishing exists is so tenuous it's virtually redundant

When two worlds collide.

GDI must fall.

The AI still throws incessant waves of units at your bases.

aggressor. And, as an added bonus, you'll even get to sample their abilities firsthand once you're done with the Nod and GDI campaigns. See, told you it got interesting...

AIN'T OVER TILL IT'S OVER

Much has changed in the world of RTS gaming since *Command & Conquer* made the genre a worldwide phenomenon, but to this day, the series' heritage and following remains as ardent as ever. After so many failed attempts to recapture the magic of the original game, EA LA must be congratulated on its success. Not only has it managed to raise the franchise from the grave dug by *C&C: Generals*, it's also managed to create an RTS outing packed with entertainment and slick gameplay.

But, for all *C&C3's* entertainment value, for all its beautiful craftsmanship and stunning attention to detail, the fact remains that the RTS genre has moved on. We've gone beyond the basic build-and-rush premise represented here, and however brightly it gleams, *Tiberium Wars* still lacks the substance of some of its more modern and forward-thinking rivals.

Like a once-great champ who's come out of retirement for one last crack at the title, *C&C3: Tiberium Wars* doesn't quite have enough tricks in its repertoire to defeat its younger, fresher opponents. But while it may be more contender than king these days, it still packs one hell of a punch. Welcome back *C&C*, we've missed you. **PCZ**
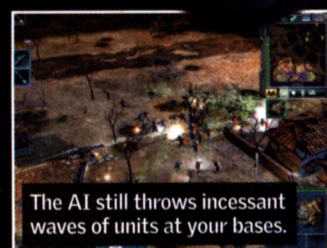
PCZONE

Graphics	Sumptuous and teeming with detail
Sound	Excellent in all departments
Multiplayer	Basic but fun skirmish games

- ✅ C&C, back on form
- ✅ Slicker than an oil spill
- ✅ Looks fantastic
- ✅ Triumphant return of the FMV
- ✅ Excellent new faction
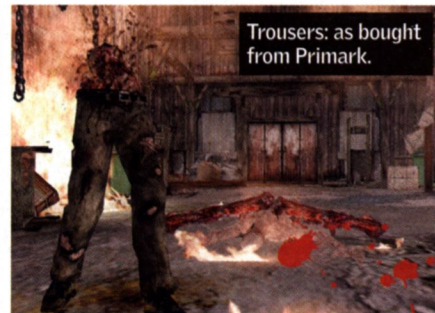- ❌ Dated gameplay

86

Old school 2007

When first kisses go wrong...

Trousers: as bought from Primark.

RESIDENT EVIL 4

"More a shit sandwich than a Jill sandwich," says *Will Porter*

DEVELOPER Capcom
PUBLISHER Ubisoft
WEBSITE
www.capcom.com/re4
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99

Resi Evil 4 is 24-carat gold dust that everyone should play – just not on PC

AT A GLANCE...

The archetypal zombie blaster comes to PC a few years late. It remains an amazing game, but you'd be better off playing it on GameCube.

System requirements ❸

HOW IT STACKS

DYNASTY WARRIORS 4 HYPER	70%
ONIMUSHA 3	66%
RESIDENT EVIL 4	57%

IN ALL HONESTY, I didn't realise they still peddled shite like this. A console port so insultingly cut-and-pasted that its menu systems make you weep, its refusal to recognise even the existence of a mouse makes you incensed with anger and its insistence on showering one of the greatest games of the past decade in noxious shit makes you gag. Yes, I'm pissed off.

Let's imagine you don't have a gamepad and you want to play *Resi 4* on PC. Well, use your imagination – you're pretty f***ed. Controls are entirely keyboard-based – and as soon as one of the game's *Fahrenheit*-style timed button-bashing sequences kicks in, you'll get requests like 'Button 5 and button 6!', and you'll be staring at your tildes, inserts and right-shifts in shock, horror and growing nausea. I played this abhorration with a 360 pad in the end – but even then I had to alt tab out to find out exactly how the buttons were numbered in my computer's control panel.

What's more, *Resi 4* simply doesn't look as good on PC as it did back on my lowly GameCube a couple of years ago. Weird I know, but drizzling higher resolutions onto a console game that previously had no lighting system and instead relied on textures to

complement each other in their shared darkness has rendered the game stark and unlovely. A darkened cavern may now be crisper, but the more detailed rocks in its walls look silly and unrealistic – and any aid given to the game by a television's inherent blur completely evaporated. Cut-scenes too now seem cruelly dated and fuzzy – meaning that much of the 'wow' factor is now lost despite the sheer excitement that can still brim over in them...

LIFE ON MARS

If you've been on a lunar expedition for a little while, and missed out on the fuss, then *Resi 4* follows Leon Kennedy – a man who may share Ian 'H from Steps' Watkins' floppy blonde hair, but is a far more competent killing machine. He's in generic Eastern Europe to find

"Fell off the back of a lorry guv..."

One of the best things about *Resi 4* is the deranged shopkeeper who sits between zombie-infested areas, clearly oblivious to the threat, who has a vast stockpile of weapons to sell you – but gobsmackingly enough, no ammo whatsoever. He's also barely able to do anything else but open half his trenchcoat like a half-hearted flasher, and say the words 'What are ya buying?' and 'What are ya selling?' in a mockney pirate accent. In the real world, you'd avoid odd characters like this; in *Resident Evil*, he's a voice of sanity in a world of shambling madness...

El Gigante wants huggles.
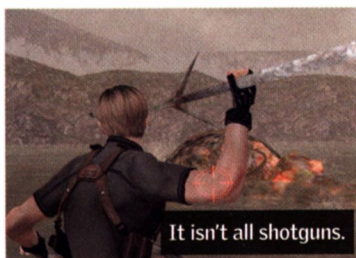
It isn't all shotguns.

Animation still good, graphics now bad.

the US President's kidnapped daughter – but not only has everyone been turned into a zombie, but some are wearing bags over their heads and waving chainsaws. Chainsaws whose distant revving noise chill your soul to its very core, and which can and will cleave your head in two at a moment's notice.

FRIED GOLD

Despite the bitter yellow bile Ubisoft have managed to spew into its PC iteration, *Resi 4* is, remains and ever more shall be one of the best games I've ever played. It's the best zombie shooter ever: thrilling, inventive, exciting and persistent in its desire to throw countless ingenious set-pieces in your direction.

From the legendary early village assault to battles with shambling minions on cable cars, scuffles with lake monsters and thrilling knife-battles with other members of the uninfected cast, *Resident Evil 4* is 24-carat gold dust that should be sampled by every self-respecting gamer on earth. Only not on PC – because when it's been so sloppily ported, it becomes obvious it doesn't belong here. Still – if for some reason you're unable to get it on console, I can't deny that you'll still have a lot of fun. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics **Look shit due to high resolutions**
Sound **Great. Amazing even**
Multiplayer **Not really**

✓ It's one of the decade's finest action games
✓ It's an outing in sheer gaming class
✗ No mouse support
✗ Graphics don't work on PC
✗ Doesn't belong here at all

57

Will make you *so* mad

...And you've probably driven some straight men to the dark side yourself, Edie.
Feel the desperation.

DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES
Look after the kids, shag the hired help

DEVELOPER Liquid Entertainment
PUBLISHER Buena Vista Games
WEBSITE buenavistagames.go.com/desperatehousewives/
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99
System requirements 2

IT'S A BEAUTIFUL day on Wisteria Lane. After getting up, I pop outside to collect the mail and promptly seduce the mailman before taking him upstairs to 'collect his special delivery'. I then head to the shopping mall in my underwear, slap my husband's female assistant around a bit, bribe my son, break into my neighbour's house, steal anything lying about to sell in the pawn shop and round the day off by sleeping with the gardener.

That's pretty much a normal day in the life of *Desperate Housewives*, a *Sims*-style game inspired by the massively popular TV series. You play the role of a new neighbour, complete with as-yet-unidentified shady past and a husband, son and gorgeous house to match. Each day is broken down into separate tasks and although none of it's exactly taxing stuff, consisting mostly of

And left, and right, and spin...

go here and talk to so-and-so, the game does feature plenty of the trademark outrageous stories that make the TV series such a success.

While these stories, the good character likenesses, excellent Danny Elfman score and glee that you'll feel the first time you royally screw a neighbour over will at first draw you in, the shallowness of the gameplay quickly starts to show through the cracks.

Rubbish gardening/cooking mini-games, a lack of official voiceovers, the occasional stutter in play and the fact that your slutty actions have little impact on the overall game means that while this will appeal to fans of the TV series and perhaps the odd *Sims* dabbler, anyone else is likely to love it on the first day but then dump it on the second. Just like the mailman...
Suzy Wallace

In Wisteria Lane, a neatly trimmed bush is a must.

PCZONE
53
Sub-suburbia

Flooded ruins

He's certainly got an axe to grind.

Rentokil really had its work cut out.

"Me like pink!"

Fire and ice, *Silverfall* style.

SILVERFALL

Suzy Wallace is many things, but she ain't no hippy...

DEVELOPER Monte Cristo
PUBLISHER Deep Silver
WEBSITE
www.silverfall-game.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99

AT A GLANCE...

Action RPG in the vein of *Diablo*, with a unique visual style and a nature vs technology theme that's marred by a lack of optimisation.

System requirements ④

HOW IT STACKS

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS 2	86%
TITAN QUEST	81%
SILVERFALL	65%

IN TERMS OF jobs, working at *PC ZONE* doesn't really rate very high on the risk list – unlike, say, a tiger dentist or a *Top Gear* presenter. That is, as long as we refrain from sticking our fingers into the workings of an unearthed gamepad while standing in a puddle – or alternatively, insist on playing an action RPG, bringer of RSI and all-round mouse-hand hurter.

Silverfall's RPG action stems from a rich mouse-clicking heritage, kick-started by the legendary *Diablo* and continued more recently with *Titan Quest*. *Silverfall* tries to make a niche for itself with its nature vs technology theme that runs throughout the title. You either fall into the category of a tree-hugging, daisy chain-making, long-haired hippy; alternatively, you swing more towards the earth-polluting, technologically savvy, steampunk crowd. Having never hugged a tree, danced barefoot in circles or braided daisies into my hair, it's fairly safe to say that I fall firmly into the latter category.

However, I didn't spot this theme – the one that supposedly sets *Silverfall* apart from its rivals – for over five hours. While it does affect things like the skills you

can train in and the development of your home city, it would have been nice to see it have a greater impact on the rest of the game.

MY PRETTY

Another of *Silverfall's* distinctions is its artistic style. At first glance it's easy to assume that the game's cel-shaded, but on taking a closer look, you soon notice that the game just outlines all of the characters with a thick black line. Despite sounding a bit like cheating, the result is still pleasing to the eye. What's more, the starting area for your character (a swampy bit full of small, reflective puddles) is similarly impressive, with a full day/night cycle and detailed water reflections. However, this level of graphical flair comes at a price...

Silverfall is perhaps the biggest system-hog of any game I've ever played. Forget *Dark Messiah* and *EverQuest II*; go for a wander in the swampy starting zone with everything maxed out and you'll be lucky if the frame-rate gets into double figures. In such a rapid-paced genre, this a real problem.

Other zones improve on matters slightly, but the game still feels like it's been shipped without any real effort at optimising it. On

You make me wanna shout
Raising your blood pressure and offending small children...

An ideal candidate for breath fresheners.

You've seen Sefton getting stressed playing *PES*, but I'll admit to getting pretty mad at *Silverfall*. One particular session saw my character dying in a remote area. After five minutes of loading screen, I walked for 15 minutes back to where I died, before being killed again before I could react. If any kids had been about, their mothers would surely have had their hands over their ears with a disapproving pout on their face. *Silverfall's* world is an unforgiving place...

Should have picked a lighter sword...

Pick on someone your own size.

> It's nature vs technology, and you'll either be a tree-hugging, daisy chain-making hippy or swing more towards the techno-savvy, steampunk crowd

top of this, loading times between zones are extraordinarily lengthy and there are other smaller niggles to contend with, like the odd spot of dodgy path-finding, cumbersome menus and the difficulty level. Yes, what's meant to be a generally easy, hack-your-way-through-millions-of-monsters genre is pretty unforgiving at times (see 'You Make Me Wanna Shout', above).

IT'S A LONG ONE
The selection of skills on offer is decent though, and means you can customise your character as you see fit. There's also a huge amount of play to be had from the title, with over 25 hours of the main storyline alone, not to mention the multitude of side-quests and companion characters.

However, while *Silverfall's* artistic style and nature vs technology theme do set it aside from its rivals, the game still feels a bit rough around the edges. If you're willing to brave the risks of RSI, then *Titan Quest* is more worthy of your pain. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics	Attractive and stylised but a real system-hog
Sound	Melodic background music, varying voiceovers
Multiplayer	Co-op through campaign or quick play

✓ Unique visual style
✓ Masses of quests
✓ Interesting theme
✗ Theme not used to its full potential
✗ Poorly optimised
✗ Can be too difficult

65
Not quite a silver lining

A common presidential hallucination.

LOOKIT, FELLAS! MY FINGERTIPS LOOK LIKE LITTLE TADPOLES!

SAM & MAX: EPISODE 4 – ABE LINCOLN MUST DIE!
I wouldn't say that at customs...

RECOMMENDED PCZONE

AFTER LAST MONTH'S little disappointment, with *Episode 3* barely covering its skeletal structure with the dressing gown of distraction, it's a relief to see *Episode 4* concealing its point-and-click dignity, and getting back to the solid fun of the first two chapters. The most immediate relief is that you don't start the story in the same office, surrounded by the same clickable jokes; this time, you've crashed into the White House.

You'll be heading back to your home street soon enough, of course, but even that's done better this time. Cultist magician Hugh Bliss has set up a new stall, and career-hopping Sybil is now running a dating service. The relevance of her new occupation hits you later on in the game, and when it does it's with pleasure, rather than with the obvious and strained relevance of 'professional witnessing' in the previous episode's mob-led story. The one-liners are better, too; the phrase "crazier than a caffeine-addled dingo in an Adelaide maternity ward" has to win some kind of award for stopping perfectly short of tortured.

It feels like someone at Telltale noticed the balloon was deflating, and brought out a comically oversized pump. Some of the puzzles may feel a little recycled; the ketchup pump provided solutions in episodes *Two* and *Three*, and the 'reading from a cue card' trick from *Situation: Comedy* is here, too. But that said, *Lincoln's* longer, more engaging, and a better adventure than *The Mole, The Mob And The Meatball*, even if it doesn't quite tip the hilarity see-saw when up against *Situation: Comedy*. Bring on the climax!

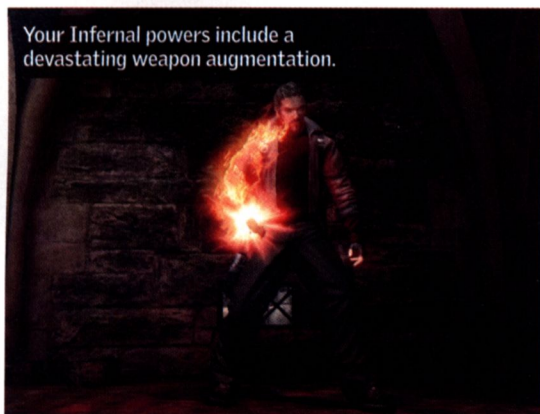*Jon Blyth*

Stop it, you figurine-molesting hound.
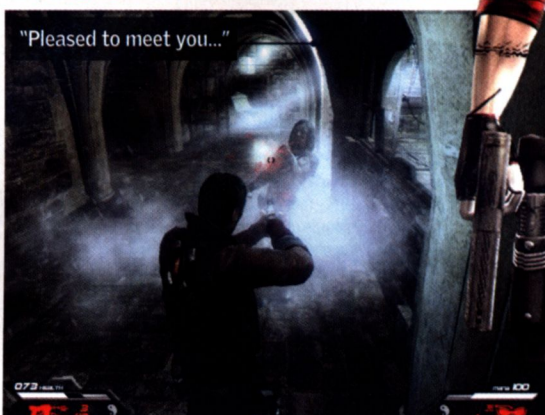
PCZONE 79
Beating the bush

Your Infernal powers include a devastating weapon augmentation.

Enemy AI isn't exactly the best we've seen.

Regenerate health by sucking it out of dead bodies.

"Pleased to meet you..."

INFERNAL

Martin Korda gets hellish in this action-packed blaster...

DEVELOPER Metropolis Software
PUBLISHER Eidos
WEBSITE www.infernalgame.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

RYAN LENNOX'S WORLD has just gone to hell. One minute he's part of god's army of peacekeepers on earth (EtherLight), the next he's hooking up with El Diablo himself to thwart the uncharacteristically evil plans of his former employers, who've just sacked him with zero severance pay and not even a fake gold clock to show for his years of service.

Despite appearances suggesting the contrary, *Infernal* – a third-person shooter with adventure pretensions (find key, open door) – does contain some unexpected merits.

Armed with a varied arsenal and an excellent collection of demonic powers – including teleportation and a devastating weapon augmentation – you're thrown into battles in which you can utilise cover and blind fire. A bit like *Rainbow Six: Vegas* really, only nowhere near as good.

Enemies, while half-decent opponents, are capable of pulling off ridiculously pointless rolls and flips with the fluidity of frozen concrete, while the massively forgiving damage model means that mowing your way through each level is often about as taxing as mowing the lawn.

Boss battles prove the exact opposite and for the most part are hideously irritating trial-and-error affairs, where finding the right (and only) way to defeat each one is the very definition of tedium.

SUM OF ITS PARTS

Whatever you do, though, don't write *Infernal* off, because somehow it manages to be far more entertaining than you'd expect. While no part can be called exceptional, the whole experience does keep you fairly entertained, albeit in a mindless sort of way. There are plenty of flickers of originality throughout that colour it with patches of uniqueness, most notably the inclusion of a Mana bar that increases as you sin and dwindles whenever you approach holy places or heavenly lights.

What's more, the physics are solid, the plot's fairly intriguing, Ryan and the devil are well acted (shame about the other characters though) and the action, despite some balancing issues, is always frenetic and extremely well paced. *Infernal* is hardly essential, but if you do decide to part with your cash, it'll hardly be a sin. **PCZ**

AT A GLANCE...

A third-person shooter with a smattering of adventure elements in which you wield both conventional and supernatural powers.

System requirements ❸

HOW IT STACKS

SPLINTER CELL: DOUBLE AGENT	**89%**
RAINBOW SIX: VEGAS	**82%**
INFERNAL	**69%**

PCZONE

Graphics	Decent if hardly spectacular
Sound	Heavy metal barrage
Multiplayer	None whatsoever

- ✓ Mindlessly fun
- ✓ Well paced
- ✓ Some decent, original ideas
- ✗ Combat is too easy
- ✗ Boss battles are too hard
- ✗ Too much atrocious voice-acting

69

Not celestial or hellish
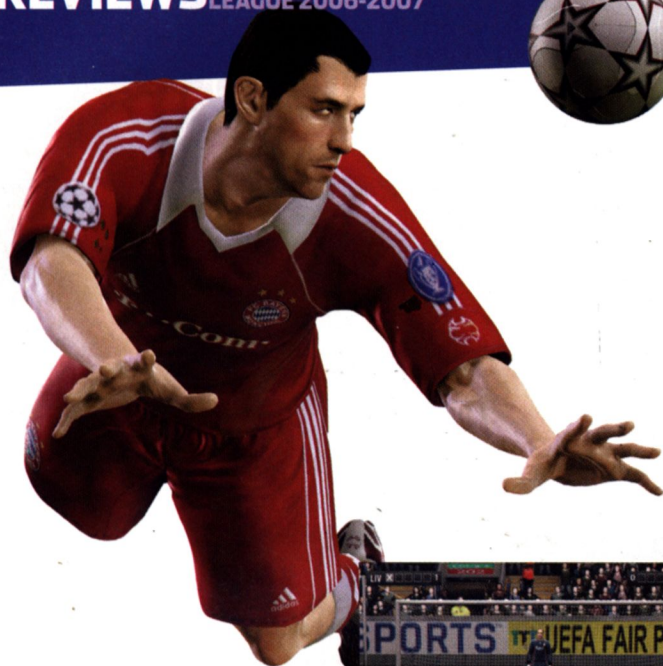
Free kicks actually offer a decent chance of scoring.

Penalties are pretty limp.

Booked for not joining in with karaoke.

"Goals win games, Clive."

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2006-2007

Steve Hill brings you the cream of Europe...

DEVELOPER EA SPORTS
PUBLISHER EA SPORTS
WEBSITE
www.easports.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

MIDWEEK, MIDWINTER: the familiar strains of the Champions League theme tune give you a reason to keep breathing for another two hours. Taking its cue from the terrestrial coverage of the tournament, the resemblance here is uncanny, with the titles matching those of its televised counterpart.

The similarities continue behind the mic, with the knockabout commentary team of Clive Tyldesley and Andy Townsend going through the motions in typically slick fashion. It certainly doesn't look as good as on the telly though, with the graphics relayed via a strangely faded palette. That said, there are some nice touches, such as being able to see the players' breath.

As for the all-important action, it is of course relayed via some bastardisation of the recent FIFA engine, albeit one that seems to have been speeded to almost comical levels, with players' legs pumping away ten to the dozen. Those players naturally appear with the correct names, shirts and occasional facial

likenesses. As ever, if there's a licence to be had, it's in the game.

THREE'S UP

Being the official game of the Champions League, you can obviously play out that tournament in its entirety, which will take you all of a couple of hours. As such, other modes have been shoe-horned in, including a comprehensive 'scenarios' challenge in which you recreate a series of real-life historical situations, albeit with the present-day squads.

That's still stretching a full release, so enter The Treble, a typically obtuse management mode that sees you at the whim of a despotic chairman who demands that you bring home all three trophies in your first season. Taking a hands-on approach from the outset, the unseen oligarch demands that you sell players, play certain individuals and even adhere to his tactics. While it may be an accurate reflection of the modern game, it's frankly a pain in the arse.

Even worse is the fact that you often don't even get to play an entire match,

joining the action 2-0 down with 75 minutes gone, for instance. For all that though, it is weirdly compelling, if only to see what injustice it throws at you next. Or indeed when you'll get sacked, which comes as a blessed relief. **PCZ**

AT A GLANCE...

Inevitably little more than *FIFA 07* in a Champions League kit, but it still plays a half-decent game of football.

System requirements ③

HOW IT STACKS

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 6	88%
FIFA 07	84%
UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2006-2007	70%

PCZONE

Graphics	Average
Sound	Superb commentary
Multiplayer	Yes

✔ Instantly playable
✔ Highly authentic
✔ Loads of teams
✘ Bizarre pseudo-management mode
✘ Limited by definition

70

Quarter-finalist

AL EMMO AND THE LOST DUTCHMAN'S MINE

That's not a pun, Emmo isn't even a word

DEVELOPER
Himalaya Studios
PUBLISHER Telltale Games
WEBSITE
www.himalayastudios.com
/alemmo/
ETA Out now
PRICE $29.99 (£17)

System requirements ❶

THIS IS A game from another decade, and it's definitely not the '90s. A time when adventure games had lots of screens, many of which were just graphical interludes to walk through. Where your inventory quickly swelled with dozens of items, and visual clues telling you what to pick up were considered patronising.

Al Emmo isn't just old-school in its VGA looks, it's total old-school immersion that'll thrill genre-lovers and the pathologically curious.

It does its best to be funny, with an every-line-as-joke approach similar to Sam & Max. Some of the jokes hit the spot, especially the knowing in-jokes about the shoddiness of the medium. But, it doesn't always work. The hero is a pitch-shifted cross between Ronnie Corbett and Woody Allen, and the humour too often sails past the predictable and ends up paddling in toe-curling waters. Focus on the hits, and you'll finish Al Emmo with some fond memories. If you're an unforgiving sort though, you might just end up with a fist full of broken pixels.

Interacting with the environment uses a similar method to Full Throttle, where you can interact with anything using your hand (examine), eyes (get/use) or tongue (speak, or prompt a terrible joke about licking or kissing whatever you've clicked on, just like Full Throttle). It's not as elegant as the LucasArts implementation, but serves its purpose well enough.

So, you're deep. You're not interested in cutting-edge graphics and surprisingly good music, and you don't mind walking around (a lot). Best advice is to pretend Al Emmo is a lost gem from the '80s that you've just discovered. It'll feel far more precious that way.

Jon Blyth

"OMG! I love cacti!"

PCZONE
63
Worth a wee dabble

What a shocking carpet.

Close your eyes and imagine it's 1985.

Moonwalking was never a good look.

Phil's narcolepsy was proving problematic.

Looks like his leg wasn't the only thing cut off.
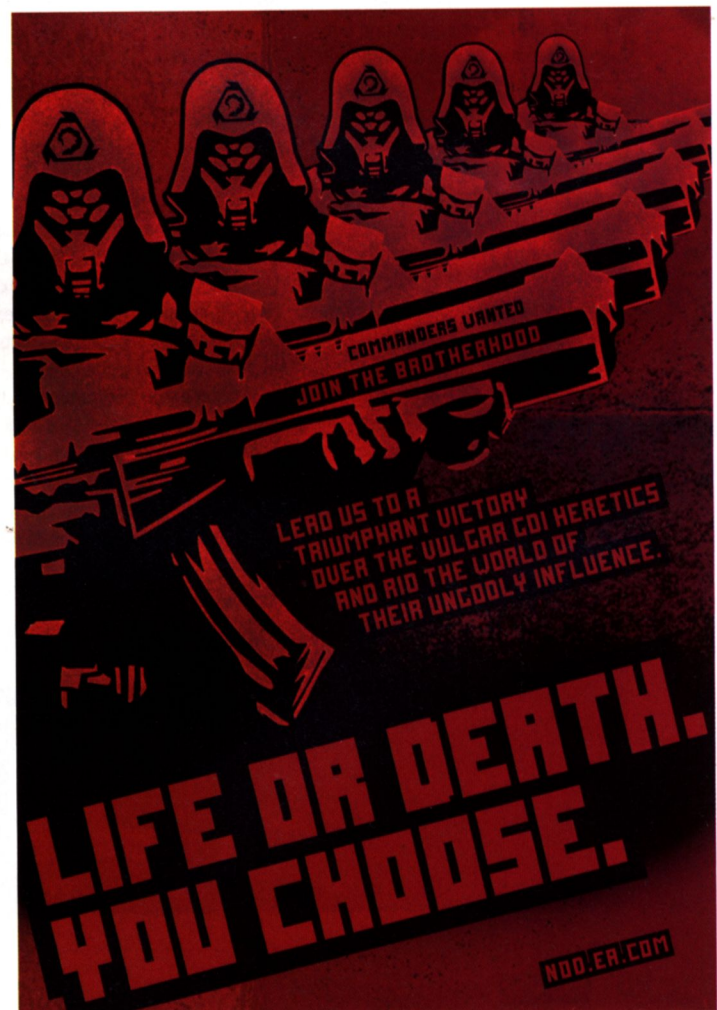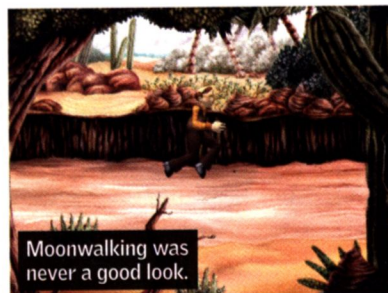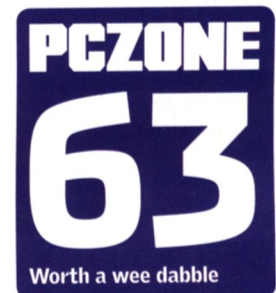
WAR ROCK

Originality? Move along please...

DEVELOPER Dream Execution Tech Co Ltd
PUBLISHER K2 Network
WEBSITE www.warrock.net
ETA Out now
PRICE Free/$5/$10/$20

System requirements ❷

HERE'S A GOOD idea – an online first-person shooter where players choose different classes of soldier and join opposing teams to fight it out over strategically important positions. That's just what the world of PC gaming is crying out for. Especially a really rough-edged, half-arsed one that's still bugged to buggery. Yeah, that's what we need.

This shameless online shooter clone is available for free, but considering you can't get your time back, it feels a little expensive at that. Besides, those who do stump up the monthly asking fee, or buy the boxed copy, get a bunch of advantages that make the experience even more wretched for those sensible enough to save their cash.

Give the developers credit, mind – at least they've copied the lot. There are different game modes, a variety of maps and clans – the whole kit and caboodle. Some of the maps are reasonably well designed, and there are vehicles and gun emplacements to add to the so-called fun. Saying that, the vehicles are sluggish and go down like nine-pins, and the environments and character models are functional at best, dire at worst.

Paying money for something this shameless and undercooked feels like shaking the hand of the guy who's shagging your wife. It'll no doubt get better as the developers scrub it up as the months go by, but right now, this suxxors.

Steve O'Hagan

Throw yourself from that bridge.

PCZONE
31
Rock crock
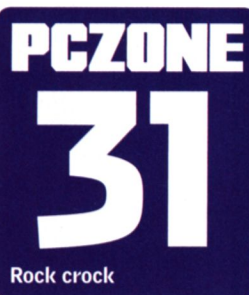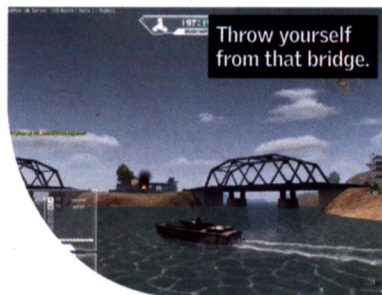
SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE AWAKENED

There's nothing of interest down there

DEVELOPER Frogwares
PUBLISHER Ascaron
WEBSITE www.sherlockholmes-thegame.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99

System requirements ❷

HOLMES' NEW ADVENTURE requires the Ageia software drivers, which is exciting. Is there going to be a puzzle where you have to drive a remote-controlled car through a load of tiny boxes? Perhaps Moriarty turns out to be a skyscraper-tall mech, and you have to swing demolition balls into his shins.

Occasional physics puzzles there may be, but *The Awakened* is primarily a first-person point-and-click, so Frogwares win double-kudos for giving Holmes his first mission in which he strafes around a dockyard.
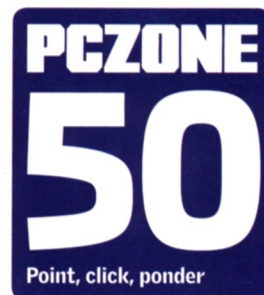
The storytelling and acting are fine, the script isn't terrible, and there's a drunk piratesque character with a hook-hand who scratched his worm-infested derrière with the wrong arm. Anyone expecting an "alimentary, my dear Watson" joke, hang your heads. He really hurt himself.

Frustration comes quickly. There are stages where you have to enter a word to continue, and the inflexibility with the game's rejection of synonyms is nothing short of infuriating. Harbour, Thames, Dockyard, Jetty, Wharf? If these moments weren't an impenetrable barrier to progress, it wouldn't be so annoying.

That's the beef. This game suffers from awkward trigger points – you'll be rudely hobbled until you've pointed-and-clicked at everything. Despite that though, there's a gentle, frustrating satisfaction to be had from playing *The Awakened*.

It's nothing more than average, and occasionally nothing less than irritating, but snakes do come out of a dead guy's guts. Fans of the genre should play this, maybe after most of the others.

Jon Blyth

"Yes, I know, I keep meaning to change the curtains."

PCZONE
50
Point, click, ponder

"Are we having fun yet?"

Here come the Christians.

Upgrade Completed!

Bruce Barnes
HEALTH 250/250
DEFENSE 10
STRENGTH 4
ATTACK SPEED 1.43
SPIRIT
VIEW LIFE STORY

Bruce becomes the leader of the Tribulation Force and one of the leading scholars among new believers. He begins a ministry of churches and travels over the world teaching about Christ.

Bill Barnes, super-preacher, pulls a tank top onto another rock musician.

LEFT BEHIND: ETERNAL FORCES

Lost soul *Jon Blyth* discovers the one thing less fun than religion...

DEVELOPER Left Behind Games
PUBLISHER Left Behind Games
WEBSITE
www.leftbehindgames.com
ETA Out now
PRICE $29.95 (£15)

DUMP

AT A GLANCE...

Post-Rapture tribulations in New York, as you RTS towards a battle with the Antichrist himself. Praise be!

System requirements ②

HOW IT STACKS

SUPREME COMMANDER	88%
MAELSTROM	67%
LEFT BEHIND: ETERNAL FORCES	19%

THE STORY OF the *Left Behind* books, if you've never had one hurled at you in the street, is a fictionalised future, when the Rapture has plucked millions of people from the Earth's face. They were the lucky ones, cleaved to god's always-generous bosom, dragged without choice to a world where they could talk forever about how bloody lovely they were, and how nice it is to share a Twix with someone as tediously pious as yourself.

The ones who were left behind would be made to suffer the tribulations. It's based on prophecy: apparently there's a bit in *The Bible* that damns the impure to suffer hour after hour of lacklustre, shockingly dated real-time strategy. Truly, hell is a bug-riddled inferno of unfair gameplay, where depth is replaced by difficulty.

If you're fragile and spineless enough to think that playing this game might somehow benefit your life, get ready for trial by repetition. Convert the same buildings on the same map into banks, cafés and training camps at the start of every level. Bring the same people, again and again, to your cultish corner of faith.

That's if you can deal with the camera, wonky zoom, instant deaths, adverts for staying in school and endless walking.

IT'S A SIN

The surprisingly tender mindset behind this full-frontal assault on all non-proper-Christians makes the game barely playable. The disgust and fear of modern life is palpable, and for the first three levels, you're forced to walk to your destinations, praying constantly while surrounded by swearing and guitar-wielding musicians. Overhearing swear words or an amplified chord drops your unit's spirit, and if even one of your units drops under 60%, you lose. It's game over, unless you constantly pray. Sing. Believe. Rejoice. Oh, and once you start training fighters you can shoot the evil bastards, too. Praise the lord.

If you play games at all, you'll instantly see this game for the unbalanced, unfair and unattractive mess that it is. If you came here for the religion, you'll be battered into submission by rapid, unwarranted deaths before you've heard a fraction of the inspiring music and anti-evolution bullshit that goes on between

levels. Hopefully, everyone – believer or no – can come together and condemn this game as a disservice to gamers, and the humanity it's grotesquely purporting to save. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Blander than a hymn
Sound "Let's sing a new song!" "Praise the lord!"
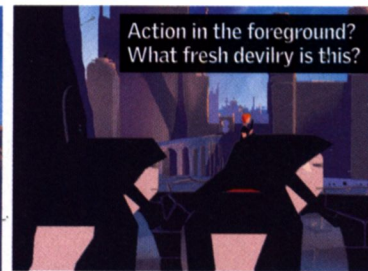Multiplayer Play against an evil friend

✓ Music is surprisingly decent
✓ Veers into unwitting self-parody
✗ Irredeemable gameplay
✗ Unforgivable preaching
✗ Over 60m books have been sold

19

I'll take hell

Caught by slave traders! Like Jawas, only more evil!

Action in the foreground? What fresh devilry is this?

The intro is still special.

"Can't get this thing out of third gear..."

ANOTHER WORLD: 15TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Will Porter dons rose-tinted spectacles and prepares for fond remembrance

DEVELOPER Eric Chahi
PUBLISHER Lexicon Entertainment
WEBSITE www.anotherworld.fr
ETA Out now
PRICE £14.99

NOSTALGIA IS A dangerous thing. I remember *Another World's* beautifully animated alien vistas and a cinematic and narrative edge conjured up with nary a syllable of the written or spoken word.

What I don't remember, however, is the hours I must have spent as a 12-year-old screaming and shouting as the game forced me to replay the same bastard-hard cavern jumping sequences after a cruel one-shot kill from a lumbering monkey-man guard. Games just used to be harder, and we were used to repetition back then. Whoever patented the quicksave must be rich by now...

For the uneducated, the ill-advised and the irrepressibly young, *Another World* was the remarkable platformer that begat *Flashback* that begat *Oddworld* that begat, well... Lots of things. The reason it's so fondly remembered though, is the fact that in its day it showed a touch of the *Half-Lifes* – thinking outside of the traditional gameplay box.

Bear witness, for example, to the scene where Lester is racing through a darkened chamber with red alien laser shots lighting up the room as they fire through a grille from the floor below. Or even the most memorable scene, in which you're punching at the buttons of an alien craft – accidentally letting missiles and laser blasts rain down on a crowd of thousands – until you're launched into a naked spa bath usually reserved for naked alien ladies.

PRESENT DAY

Now placed in a higher resolution and packaged with PDFs of production notes and a gallic documentary interviewing the creator Eric Chahi, the *Another World: 15th Anniversary Edition* is certainly an interesting purchase. I had a crowd of five people simultaneously reminiscing behind me at one point, and the gentle warmth of recognition that gushes over you at regular intervals is every kind of wonderful.

However, by today's standards *Another World* remains tongue-bitingly frustrating and extremely short. At £15, it's also heftily priced – especially compared to the retro revival on other platforms (£7 or so for stuff on Xbox live, £5 for a SNES game on the Wii shop channel).

Truth is, I don't think this game is worth one pound for every year it's been in existence – unless perhaps I was richer or so nostalgic that I could do nothing but drink Soda Stream and watch *Grange Hill*. Only for the oldies this one, and even then only for the oldies with deeper pockets than I. **PCZ**

AT A GLANCE...

Aged classic gets a lick of high-resolution paint and is thrown into the shops of today.

System requirements ❷

HOW IT STACKS

ANOTHER WORLD IN 1991	95%
ANOTHER WORLD: 15TH ANN EDITION	59%
HEART OF DARKNESS	55%

101800

Projectile vomiting! Imagine the hilarity!

LITTLE BRITAIN: THE COMPUTER GAME

I will not use a catchphrase here

DEVELOPER Blast Games
PUBLISHER Mastertronic
WEBSITE snipurl.com/1bi52
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99

System requirements ❶

I HAVE TRIED to put myself into the minds of the people who made this game, but I failed. Perhaps I'm being naive – it's possible the makers of this game think they're lucky to get paid to produce such artless shit. If that's the case, they need a good slap.

Little Britain is a punch in the balls for anyone paying the steep asking price. The seven mini-games are awful, nothing more than a five-minute extension of the simplest *Wario* micro-game. If this were a bunch of free Flash games, and a dear friend had sent you a link to them, you'd be perfectly within your rights to drive around to your friend's house and stage a dirty protest in his kitchen.

Playing this game is more bleak than any survival horror; it devours minutes of your life, leaving a joyless scar in your memory. It's tantamount to evil. I hope I seem angry, because this has made me f***ing furious.

Mastertronic knew that *LB* would be as profitable as it is reprehensible, so they deliberately wouldn't send us a review copy. So, perhaps the main use of this belated review might be to give post-sales advice to anyone luckless enough to have bought it. That advice is this; it says there's eight games on the back of the box. There's actually seven. So go and demand your money back today.

Meanwhile, Lucas and Walliams, let's hope you don't alienate too many of your fans with this nauseating cash-in. Unless, perhaps, you hate your fans as much as Blast Games hates gamers.

Jon Blyth

022200 04:05 01/02

Not the only gay in the village, then.

PCZONE 7

No, and no buts
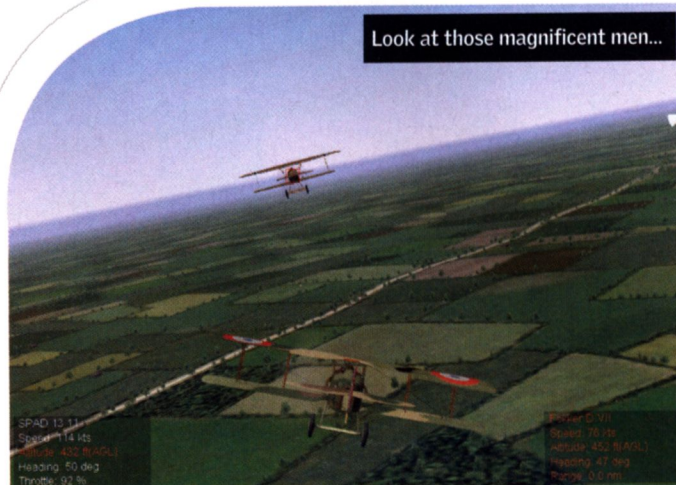
Look at those magnificent men...

SPAD 13.11
Speed: 114 kts
Altitude: 432 ft (AGL)
Heading: 50 deg
Throttle: 92 %

FIRST EAGLES: THE GREAT WAR 1918

Waxed moustaches at the ready...

DEVELOPER Third Wire Productions
PUBLISHER G2 Games
WEBSITE www.first-eagles.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £24.99

System requirements ❷

Warning: turbulence expected.

THE HEROIC AIRMEN who took the skies above the trenches of Flanders during WWI were flying some of the slowest, least manoeuvrable fighter planes ever constructed. Which presents certain problems for anyone wishing to create an entertaining simulation of this particular aerial conflict. The way Third Wire get round this inconvenience is to make their sim, based on the Joint Strike Fighters engine, as simple and playable as possible.

That said, and even if you are in the mood for some Flying Circus action, there isn't all that much to do here. All the aircraft are single-seater bi-planes with very similar handling and weak armaments, and all there is to do is low-tech dogfight, shoot up some crappy tanks or burst a balloon or two. Which is made all the more tiresome over drab low-res carpets of green and brown, supposedly representing the fields of Flanders and the Somme, punctuated by the odd explosion and puff of flak.
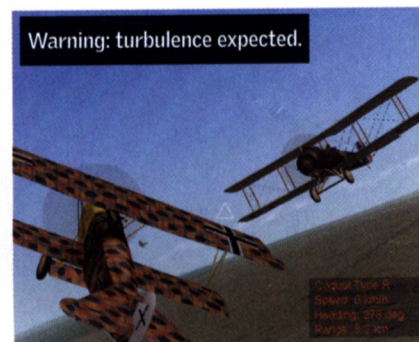
If it was the first flight simulator you'd ever seen, you'd probably think it's quite fun, all this honourable duelling between knights of the sky in their canvas-and-wood flying coffins. But if you're used to the quality and class of your average Oleg Maddox product, this all feels a little geriatric.
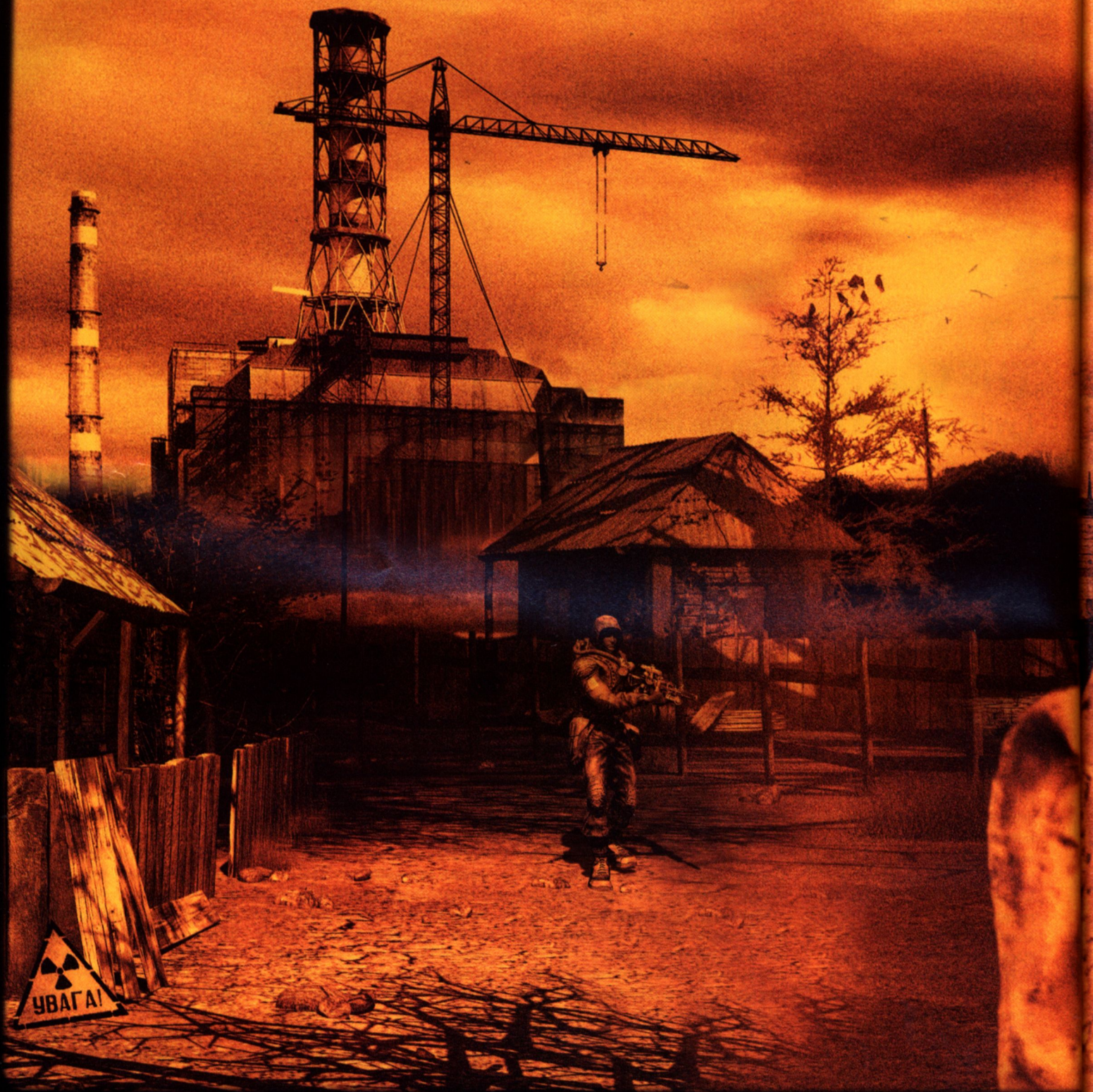
Steve O'Hagan

Two wings is better than one.

PCZONE 46

Down diddly-um down

"Grrrr... Woof... Grrrr... Etc."

Tracey Emin's latest piece was causing a stir.

Unfortunately when the light shone down, the chosen one was on the loo.

"I said the left lever you eejit..."

Somebody give that dog some food please.

PENUMBRA: OVERTURE – EPISODE ONE

Steve Hogarty finds himself alone in the dark...

The game isn't just dark – it's purple too.

DEVELOPER Frictional Games
PUBLISHER Lexicon Entertainment
WEBSITE www.penumbra-overture.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £14.99

"I've got doggy chews! Here doggy!"

AT A GLANCE...

Once a freeware horror-adventure, now a three-part commercial release, this is the closest I've come to soiling myself in public since I was four.

System requirements 4

HOW IT STACKS

MYST V: END OF AGES	87%
PENUMBRA: OVERTURE – EPISODE ONE	62%
RESIDENT EVIL 4	57%

MAYBE IT WAS all the coffee I'd been drinking, but *Penumbra: Overture* (the first in this three-part series) is one of the few games that's actually made me jump with fright. Entering the mysterious hatch and opening the mysterious door into all of that mysterious darkness, the protagonist nervously claims he thinks something might be down here in the darkness with him, and that if he happens to run into it, it would most likely kill him. So you crouch, and you hide in the dark from the thing because you're no 'Hollywood action hero', and through some magical trick of character empathy, you're actually scared. Then a wolf howls and you promptly shit yourself.

Trouble is, beyond this fantastic sense of fear that *Penumbra: Overture* so artfully applies through tense music and atmospheric lightning (that is, darkness), it's actually a fairly average first-person adventure. Secret notes from a dead father, elaborate puzzles and a slowly unravelling storyline aside, there's at least one interesting feature to be had – a physics system which sees you grabbing door handles and pushing with the mouse to open them, or clutching valves and moving your mouse in big circles to turn it.

This works better than you might think, being accurate enough to let you build ramps and basic platforms, while not forcing you to swing your mouse hand about in a 'wax-on, wax-off' fashion. Something as simple as physically holding a lantern with your cursor as you walk, then placing it on a barrel while you use a keypad and picking it up again as you continue onwards just feels really clever.

NOT A FIGHTER

If that wolf spots you though, *Penumbra: Overture's* greatest faults become all too apparent. Not only is the game's combat woefully bad, the same swipe-your-mouse system being a massive hindrance to actually hitting anything, but the AI is basic, predictable and irritating, turning that feeling of fear into a feeling of wanting to avoid fighting because it's so awful.

Having come from an excellent little freeware game of the same name, I really wanted *Penumbra: Overture* to be better than this. That said, avoid combat and it remains an extremely smart adventure game with a lot to offer. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Oddly varying between impressive and bland
Sound Spooky music to shit yourself to
Multiplayer No, get out

- ✓ It can be very pretty
- ✓ Only 15 quid
- ✓ Puzzles and physics go hand in hand
- ✓ Genuinely terrifying
- ✗ Combat doesn't work
- ✗ Repetitive locations

62

Slightly broken, but still good fun

So few clothes in such heat is a wise move.

It's as deep as a puddle, and twice as muddy.

TITAN QUEST: IMMORTAL THRONE

EXPANSION PACK

Who said dead men tell no tales?

DEVELOPER Iron Lore Entertainment
PUBLISHER THQ
WEBSITE titanquestgame.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £24.99

System requirements 3

RECOMMENDED PCZONE

BEING DEAD CAN'T be much fun. Sure, you might not have to worry about the daily commute or taxes any more, but when Charon, the ferryman of the dead has decided to take a day off and therefore doomed you to wander the misty banks of the River Styx for all eternity, then you might start to see the bad side.

Immortal Throne's storyline is based around the underworld and manages to cram in even more Greek mythology than before. The normally bright and sunny settings have been replaced with the spooky realms of the recently deceased, and Iron Lore's high production values are evident throughout, with some excellent graphical effects and some inspired design in the underworld.

There are plenty of great non-living monsters to battle with too, such as Keres (Greek female death spirits), unhappy ghosts and three-headed mutt Cerberus. It would have been nice to see all mythology-based monsters here though – I'm sure the Greeks didn't believe in frogmen...

There's also a smattering of new features, such as caravans so you can transfer items between characters, scrolls, and the new dream mastery, a good all-round skill featuring pets, buffs and offensive spells. Expect *Immortal Throne* to add around ten hours of play, but despite the occasionally tough boss, don't expect it to be too taxing. If you've finished the original and want to keep that mouse finger in shape, this expansion is worth a trip to the land of the dead for.

Suzy Wallace

DREAMLORDS

It's more of a nightmare...

DEVELOPER Lockpick Entertainment
PUBLISHER Lockpick Entertainment
WEBSITE www.dreamlords.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £10 (Plus subscription)

System requirements 1

IT'S NOT TOTALLY obvious who decided to combine two of the most over-saturated PC gaming genres, but whoever did deserves a slap. *Dreamlords* is the epitome of horrible ideas and worse execution, with a great big dollop of crap on top.

Developers Lockpick, in a moment of madness, decided to split the game into two parts: an MMO-meets-*Civilization* Web-based client (but without any of the good bits), in which you fight bitterly with your browser to make it work; and a sub-par RTS that makes *Populous* look modern. Using the Web client, you control your cities, build your armies and attempt to cultivate your empire to fight against doddering NPCs and other players, in an endless buzz of clicking and nausea.

To make matters worse, the Web client is an uppity bastard, loading and reloading as you painfully struggle to move around your armies, only entering the RTS to do battle where you've sat down your grainy expedition. It's an awful idea that just doesn't work – while Lockpick tout that you can "control your army from anywhere!", the client is an absolute mess. Doing anything takes an age and is as exciting as tea with your granny.

There's simply no reason to play *Dreamlords*. The RTS is a shallow, boring experience, and the Web interface is a jerky, abysmal joke of an attempt at an MMO. Don't touch this even with your longest of sticks.

Ed Zitron

Disco inferno!

PCZONE
77
A dead cert

The Web interface is abominable.

PCZONE
17
Lordy lordy

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 **likes nothing better than to wrap up warm and surf down some mountains. So long as he's sitting in front of his PC while he does it...**

STOKED RIDER: ALASKA ALIEN

DEVELOPER Bongfish Entertainment
WEBSITE www.stokedrider.com **PRICE** $24.99 (£13)

IT'S RARE TO find a game this accomplished and polished in indie-land. *Stoked Rider* is a snowboarding sim of the highest quality, brim-full of some of the most realistic physics yet seen in an independent game.

After a learning curve that's steeper than Everest, you slowly start to master the art of skimming down mountains at breakneck speeds, while executing death-defying leaps and tricks.

The level of detail is impressive, with clouds of snow kicked up by your board and some excellent ragdoll physics ensuring that collisions are fittingly brutal and convincing.

You can also customise your rider's gear – all of

which affects their performance and appearance – while a quirky alien rider option adds a whole new dimension to the art of snowboarding.

A superb soundtrack and multi-angled replays further bolster this already highly adept package and lend it a veneer that verges on retail standards.

If you're willing to put in the time to master *Stoked Rider's* intricacies, then you'll be in for one hell of a ride. For the less patient though, the learning curve may prove too steep to warrant the exertion.

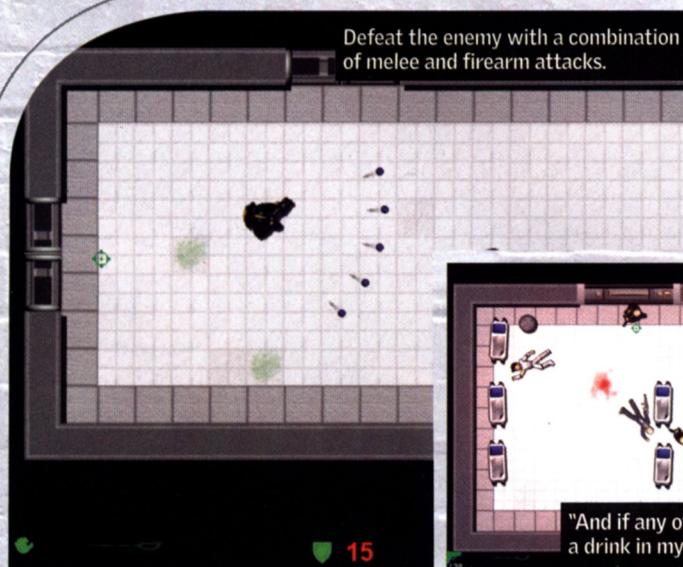**INDIEZONE GAME OF THE MONTH**
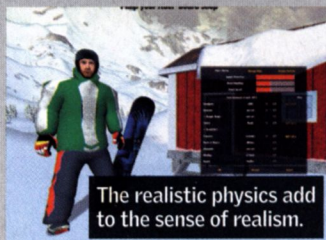
The realistic physics add to the sense of realism.

This could end in tears.

PCZONE 80

SANCTUARY

DEVELOPER Nate Bradley Games **WEBSITE** nate-bradley-games.com/ **PRICE** $9.95 (£5)

Defeat the enemy with a combination of melee and firearm attacks.
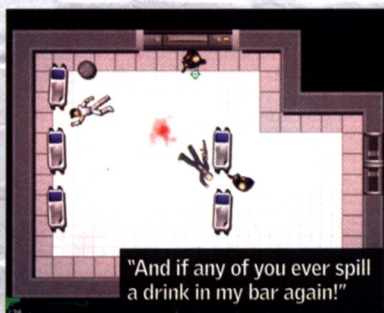
"And if any of you ever spill a drink in my bar again!"

THIS TOP-DOWN 2D beat 'em up may look like something from 1923, but beneath its basic visuals nestles a game overflowing with entertainment and imagination.

Set in a futuristic USA where all firearms have been banned, you play a martial arts master intent on preventing an evil mastermind from taking over the country with his secret army of gun-toting heavies.

While your repertoire of moves is pretty basic, the

number of weapons and enemy types certainly isn't, forcing you to use a combination of fists, melee weapons and firearms to defeat wave after wave of enemies in some cleverly designed levels.

Throw in an excellent cut-scene-driven plot, perfectly judged retro musical score and some great changes of pace, and you're left with a surprisingly entertaining beat 'em up that belies its ugly visuals.

Admittedly, *Sanctuary* does become repetitive after a while, but considering it costs less than a fiver, it's hard to argue that you're not getting value for money.

PCZONE 73

GALCON

DEVELOPER Imitation Pickles **WEBSITE** www.imitationpickles.org/galcon **PRICE** $19.95 (£11)

TOUGH ONE TO score, this. On one hand, *Galcon* is an addictive, simple strategy game that melds lightning-quick decisions with speedy mouse-clicking. On the other though, it's got as much depth as a paddling pool.

The concept couldn't be easier. Starting with a home planet that produces ships at a steady rate, you must send out your fighters to nearby planets in order to capture them. Every new planet generates more ships, and the larger it is, the more it produces. Meanwhile, your opponent is doing exactly the same. The first team to eliminate the opposition's holdings wins.

During this manic race to get a foothold on the map, you're forced to make on-the-fly choices as to how many ships to hold in reserve for defence purposes and how many to send out to capture new worlds.

However, while the madness is briefly captivating, it's not long before you're slapped by the realisation that the side which noses in front within the first 60 seconds usually wins.

Pity, as with a little more depth, this could have been one hell of a strategy game for the indie circuit.

PCZONE 62

Destroy the enemy before it destroys you.

FIZZBALL

DEV Grubby Games **WEB** grubbygames.com **PRICE** £10.80

The kids'll love it.

IF THERE'S ONE type of indie game even more common than *Space Invader* clones, it's *Breakout* copycats. Still, at least *FizzBall* can stake a claim in the originality stakes, despite being somewhat lightweight in challenges.

Clearly aimed at a 'family' audience, *FizzBall's* simplistic and cartoonish approach is offset by shots of humour and imaginative power-ups that'll have both dad and the nappy-wetter chortling with glee.

The standard *Breakout* template is augmented by the extra variable of capturing animals in your increasingly large ball. Once you've caught them all, it's off to the next level with you for more of the same.

Breakout with a twist. I'll have mine on the rocks please.
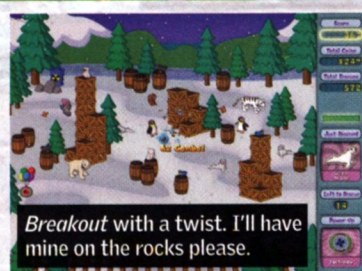
Colourful and mindlessly fun with a hint of innovation, this is a *Breakout* clone that will probably satiate the youngsters (there's even a special Kids mode) more than the taxpayers. If *Breakout* is your bag but you no longer use crayons to write your name, you're probably better off sticking to the likes of *Boom Voyage* (issue 178, 71%).

PCZONE 58

PCZONE TOP 5 INDIE GAMES

1

ROBOBLITZ
www.roboblitz.com
Reviewed issue 177
This stunning third-person action-puzzler about a robot trying to defend a space cannon from attacking pirates is the highest-scoring Indie Zone game we've ever had. Packed full of physics-based puzzles, excellent combat and jaw-dropping visuals thanks to Unreal Engine 3, you simply can't allow yourself to ignore this gem.

2

NAKED WAR
www.zee-3.com | **Reviewed issue 177**
A highly addictive and visually bold turn-based strategy game played via email in which your team of four soldiers kill off the opposition with guile, tactics and some serious firepower.

3

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.

4

NEW STAR SOCCER 3
www.newstarsoccer.com | **Reviewed issue 164**
This novel take on the beautiful game melds *Sensi Soccer* with *Football Manager* and *Goal* (the film) to provide the most complete indie gaming footy experience currently available.

5

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.

BUDGET

What's available on Steam?

BUDGET GAME OF THE MONTH

Napoleon level, complete with one bugger of an awkward jump.

PSYCHONAUTS

PUBLISHER Steam **WEBSITE** www.steampowered.com **PRICE** $19.95 (£10)

IF YOU WERE one of the many people who didn't get involved with Raz the first time around, then you missed out. As a platform adventure, it was solid, fun action – even if the gameplay benefited greatly from using a joypad.

Psychonauts truly sparkled through its humour and level design. Everyone who's played this game has a favourite level, which they'll gabble on about with joy in their eyes. Did you love the B-Movie anime pastiche of the Lungfishopolis level? Or were you more hooked by the twisted paranoid delusion that was the Milkman

Conspiracy? With a wonderful script and spot-on delivery of the dialogue, *Psychonauts* marks some kind of new benchmark for humour that works *with* the game, instead of feeling clumsily lumped on top.

Sure, there's moments of control frustration, but there's enough gaming pleasure and laugh-out-loud moments to forgive it. At this price, buy it now, or alternatively, subscribe to *PC ZONE* (see page 118) and get it for free.

Jon Blyth

PCZONE 90

Greetings from sunny Lungfishopolis...

...It's not sunny, it's on fire!

Time to stamp out this sort of thing.

THIS MONTH PCZONE SAVED MONEY BY...

Log being too ill to drink alcohol:
Saving: £100

Clare changing her mobile phone contract:
Saving: £20 per month

Kevin cutting down on smoking:
Saving: £2.75 a day

FLATOUT 2

PUBLISHER Steam **WEBSITE** www.steampowered.com **PRICE** $19.95 (£10)

THERE ARE A multitude of different driving games out there: hardcore sims which require the driving skills of a Schumacher to get round a corner; arcade racers with over-the-top power slides and enough nitro to blow up a building; and rally games with more mud than an average year at Glastonbury. Then of course there's *FlatOut 2*, with its bonkers combination of crazy driving, destructible scenery and morally dubious mini-games.

In fact, unless you honestly want to make it through the entire campaign, you don't even need to be a big driving fan, as the real fun to be had here is in smashing your way through fences, collapsing bridges and shunting other cars about (especially in the derby mode), thanks to the wonderfully over-the-top physics engine.
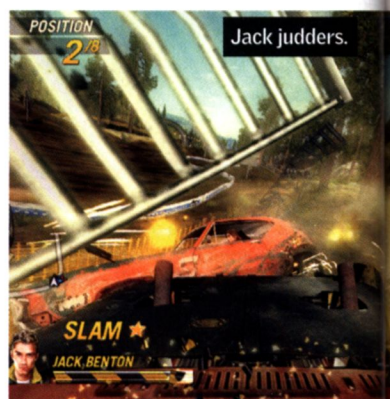
Even better fun though is grabbing a collection of mates so that you can partake in the mini-games which all somehow feature your ragdoll driver being flung through the windscreen. Great for parties, as long as none of your mates are easily offended.

Suzy Wallace

PCZONE 75

Jack judders.

Frank tanks.

Sofia swerves.

PAINKILLER GOLD EDITION

PUBLISHER Steam **WEBSITE** www.steampowered.com **PRICE** $19.95 (£10)

LIFE GETTING YOU down? Can't be bothered with the latest high-maintenance real-time strategy epic with the impenetrable interface? Want some ridiculously OTT dumb fun? From the same DNA as *Doom*, *Duke Nukem* and *Serious Sam*, *Painkiller* is a no-bullshit run-and-gun blaster that sets you loose in purgatory against the devil and his hellish minions.

Fortunately, god has blessed you with some serious meaty weapons, including a shotgun which has a superb alt-fire freeze ability, and a stake-gun that fires wooden projectiles that nail enemies to walls. *Painkiller* uses Havok physics to hilarious effect, so within seconds you'll be hurling ragdoll bodies around and staining your monitor with buckets of bloody gib-splattering.

Enemy AI is simplistic, with creatures including mad monks, asylum freaks and Templar knights simply blundering towards you, but the quite beautiful levels packed with foes, giant boss battles and decent multiplayer modes make for some intense action. For just over a tenner, you get the original *Painkiller* and the not-quite-so-good expansion pack *Battle Out Of Hell* – both a healthy cure for PC gaming malaise.
Jamie Sefton

PCZONE 77

Painkiller gets the blood flowing.

Calm down, dear.
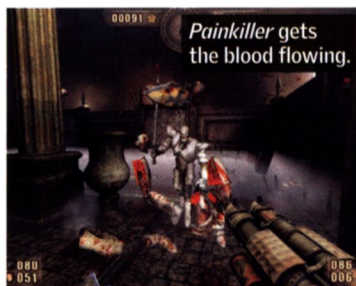
X3: REUNION

PUBLISHER Steam **WEBSITE** www.steampowered.com **PRICE** $19.95 (£10)

ALWAYS BEEN A little starstruck? Well this could be the game for you. With unmistakable beauty, *X3: Reunion's* gorgeous nebulae-filled starscapes are filled with all manner of spacecraft, and the relatively open-ended nature of the game means you can choose to eke out your existence among the stars in many different ways, from mining rocks to selling goods.

Although the combat isn't quite at *Freelancer's* speedy levels of action, *X3: Reunion* is possibly the closest any game's yet come to emulating the ultimate space classic *Elite*. So for all prospective Kirks, wannabe space pirates and intergalactic mini-cab drivers, there's no excuse in this world (or out of it) for not owning this slab of space for this meagre price.
Suzy Wallace

PCZONE 88

Space has never looked so inviting...

...Or so vast.

As close to *Elite* as gamingly possible.

And the rest...

Old games + cheap prices = budget heaven (or hell)

GUN
$19.95 (£10), STEAM
Cowboy titles on PC are thin on the ground, so *GUN* is a welcome offering, even if its Wild West shooting can feel a bit console-y and the world a bit bare. On the plus side though, you still get to ride horses, shoot guns and befriend indians.

PCZONE 70

CALL OF DUTY: UNITED OFFENSIVE
$19.95 (£10), STEAM
If you missed out on this brutal and bloody expansion the first time, here's a second chance. With tough but excellent action-packed missions such as gunning down planes aboard a bomber and blowing up bridges, you can't afford to miss it.

PCZONE 78

EARTH 2160
$19.95 (£10), STEAM
Earth 2160's strength lies in its masses of customisable units, along with four races, troops that gain experience and some cool graphics. But with some unremarkable gameplay and *Rome: TW* being a tenner too, it's hard to recommend.

PCZONE 68

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
THE MOVIES
£9.99, ACTIVISION 'BEST OF' RANGE
A great movie-studio management title that transcends the genre by also offering a raft of brilliant film-making tools. Home-made machinima ahoy!

4
ROME: TOTAL WAR
£9.99, GSP WHITE LABEL
A long-term chart-topper, *Rome: TW's* glorious real-time battles feature thousands of units hacking each other to bits. A bloody must-buy.
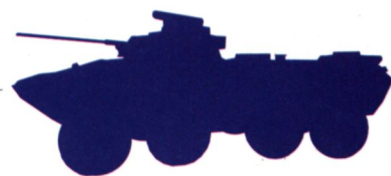
5
THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS
£9.99, MASTERTRONIC
A flawed masterpiece, *Deadly Shadows* may have been compromised by its dual-development, but for suspense and level design, it can't be faulted.

BUYER'S GUIDE

The bestest games your money can buy...

PCZONE TOP 5 GAMES BEGINNING WITH 'L'

1. **LINKS LS** (ISSUE 43)
2. **LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE 2: TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY** (ISSUE 54)
3. **LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE** (ISSUE 21)
4. **LIVE FOR SPEED: S2** (ISSUE 158)
5. **LANDS OF LORE III** (ISSUE 74)

PCZONE TOP 5 WORST CAMERAS IN GAME

1. **THE MATRIX: PATH OF NEO** (ISSUE 163)
2. **UFO: AFTERLIGHT** (ISSUE 179)
3. **JAWS UNLEASHED** (ISSUE 176)
4. **ADVENT RISING** (ISSUE 168)
5. **MAELSTROM** (ISSUE 179)

PCZONE TOP 5 MOST RIDICULOUS RAGDOLLS

1. **THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS** (ISSUE 144)
2. **DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR** (ISSUE 137)
3. **FLATOUT 2** (ISSUE 171)
4. **UBERSOLDIER** (ISSUE 167)
5. **THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION** (ISSUE 167)

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 BUDGET
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.

NEW ENTRY!
STALKER: SHADOW OF CHERNOBYL
PCZ Issue: 179 – 85%
Despite being a bit on the late side, STALKER remains a fantastic outing for PC shooters with its unique setting, great action and genuine attempt to do something new.

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.

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.

MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR
PCZ Issue: 175 – 91%
A blend of maniacal plotting on the strategic map and whooping with delight as your many warriors spectacularly collide head-on with your opponents' armies. History was never this much fun at school.

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 BUDGET
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.

NEW ENTRY!
SUPREME COMMANDER
PCZ Issue: 179 – 88%
Massive battles and huge armies comprising of thousands of air, sea and land units? Tick. Giant stompy robots and a superb tactical map? Tick. One of the most unique RTS titles around? Tick.

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 BUDGET
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 BUDGET
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 BUDGET
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 Hillys 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 X
PCZ Issue: 175 – 89%
This latest iteration in the *Flight Sim* series is the biggest since they started using actual polygons. What's more, the visuals may just sear your eyeballs.

BUDGET

FREELANCER
PCZ Issue: 128 – 84%
If *X2* is too slow for you, *Freelancer* should fit the bill. Plenty of trading, bounty-hunting and space piracy, but with the emphasis on action rather than realism. Space has never been this much fun.

FALCON 4.0: 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!

GTR2
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.

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.

NEW ENTRY!

TRACKMANIA UNITED
PCZ Issue: 179 – 86%
Now with online play and community via broadband, this previously Gallic institution is a total joy to play. Not your conventional racer, and so fast it'll make your eyes do backflips.

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.

NEW ENTRY!

GARRY'S MOD
PCZ Issue: 179 – 88%
While it might not strictly be a god game, *Garry's Mod* gives you the tools to create almost anything you can think of in the Source Engine, from functional robots to saucy ragdoll jpegs. Try it out and see for yourself.

BUDGET

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.

BUDGET

VEGA$: 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!

FOOTBALL MANAGER 2007
PCZ Issue: 175 – 90%
Still reigning supreme as one of the most popular ways to fritter away the hours, the latest edition of *FM* has tons of improvements. The best footy management title.

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 6
PCZ Issue: 175 – 88%
Konami's arcade kickabout is the best yet, with improved AI, fantastic animation and enhanced multiplayer. Not the Xbox 360 version, but still better than *FIFA* – just.

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2006
PCZ Issue: 161 – 85%
Not the most recent version but still our favourite. *Tiger 2006* has you time-travelling as Mr Woods. The best PC golf game yet, mainly thanks to the two career modes.
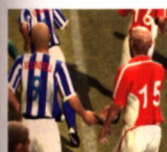
FIFA 07
PCZ Issue: 174 – 84%
EA's come up trumps with the latest *FIFA*. *PES*-style controls, great ball physics and a decent management option combine with EA's usual top presentation to make this the best *FIFA* yet.

NHL 06
PCZ Issue: 160 – 84%
Ice hockey may not be the UK's number-one sporting pastime, but that doesn't make this 06 incarnation of it any less fun. Exciting, breathless and violent balls-out fun for the whole family.

Role-playing games

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.

BUDGET

KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC
PCZ Issue: 137 – 94%
KOTOR is the best *Star Wars* game of recent years. Moving, dramatic and fairly adult in tone, it also has a hefty dose of lightsabers to keep you happy.

BUDGET

THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND
PCZ Issue: 116 – 94%
Possibly the most intimidating, yet wonderful game we've played – the breadth and depth of *Morrowind* remains a remarkable achievement.

BUDGET

DEUS EX
PCZ Issue: 93 – 94%
This remains the benchmark in FPS RPGs. Twisting sci-fi plots, exciting freeform levels and some moments of pure exhilaration and drama help retain *Deus Ex* as the alpha male of the gaming world.

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS 2
PCZ Issue: 176 – 86%
An identical twin to *NWN* but using modern technology, *NWN2* has all the gleeful D&D levelling we love, plus tons of modding opportunities. If you have a beard, this is for you.

INCOMING!

All approximate monthly dates are correct at the time of going to press

April/May

THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION – SHIVERING ISLES	2K GAMES
LOTR ONLINE: SHADOWS OF ANGMAR	CODEMASTERS
TOMB RAIDER: ANNIVERSARY	EIDOS

Rest of Q2

BIOSHOCK	2K GAMES
BROTHERS IN ARMS: HELL'S HIGHWAY	UBISOFT
COLIN MCRAE: DIRT	CODEMASTERS
ENEMY TERRITORY: QUAKE WARS	ACTIVISION
HELLGATE: LONDON	EA
KANE & LYNCH: DEAD MEN	EIDOS
LEFT 4 DEAD	VALVE
MEDAL OF HONOR: AIRBORNE	EA
OVERLORD	CODEMASTERS
SHADOWRUN	MICROSOFT
STRANGLEHOLD	MIDWAY

Q3/Q4

AGE OF CONAN: HYBORIAN ADVENTURES	EIDOS
BLACKSITE: AREA 51	MIDWAY
CLIVE BARKER'S JERICHO	CODEMASTERS
CRYSIS	EA
FRONTLINES: FUEL OF WAR	THQ
HALF-LIFE 2: EPISODE TWO	VALVE/EA
HEIST	CODEMASTERS
HUXLEY	TBA
PARABELLUM	TBA
ROGUE WARRIOR	BETHESDA
TABULA RASA	NCSOFT
THE WITCHER	ATARI
TIMESHIFT	VIVENDI GAMES
UNIVERSE AT WAR: EARTH ASSAULT	SEGA
WORLD IN CONFLICT	VIVENDI GAMES

Hasta la Vista

FOR SOME TIME now, I've been banging on about the way Windows turns your phone or PDA cumbersome by making the simplest tasks – starting up or checking email – take several seconds longer than you're prepared to wait. Your blood pressure rises sharply and then, moments before you hurl your device at the floor, the requested items appear and you're left with clenched fists and an increased likelihood of stomach ulcers.

Well, would you believe it. Analysts at Pfeiffer DTA Labs in France have determined that Microsoft's latest Windows is a big step back from XP in terms of 'User Interface Friction', or just how much the operating system grates on your nerves. Pfeiffer managed to determine that Vista's menu latency – in essence, the time it takes between a user clicking an item and its menu popping up – has grown by 20% compared to XP. In addition, simple desktop operations such as deleting files or creating new folders are now up to 16% slower.

Pfeiffer argued that, over time, Vista can do nothing but hinder users. "XP was a major step forward from Windows 98, but Vista is back to where 98 was," they said. "In Vista, a folder fades in as though appearing from nothing. It looks great, but after ten times, you realise you're wasting time waiting for that to happen."

Microsoft declined to comment. Or perhaps they'd just given up waiting for Office to start?

[signature]

Phil Wand, hardware editor

TIME FOR TEN
Affordable DirectX 10 cards here in weeks

NVIDIA WILL SOON be launching the cards that most of us will buy. The GeForce 8600 GTS and GT, together with the 8500 GT, will be bringing DirectX 10 within reach of most PC gamers.

The two 8600 GTS and GT cards will see 256MB GDDR3 RAM and a 128-bit memory interface, but won't be supporting HDMI at launch. The GTS will oust both the 7950 GT and 7900 GS, while the GT makes the 7600 GT redundant. The 8500 GT steps into the boots of the 7600 GS.

The fastest GTS will be on shelves for around £175, and clocks in with 2GHz memory and a 700MHz core. Its sibling GT clocks slightly lower and comes in two flavours: a plain vanilla, and one which supports Digital Rights Management. Expect it to cost somewhere around £140. As for the 8500 GT, it too is

At last, Vista hardware for the real world.

available in two configurations, but manages to duck under £100.

The launch of these cards should coincide with the flagship Radeons, and it won't be until summer that we start seeing the equivalent mainstream offerings from ATI. www.nvidia.com

LATE EIGHT
WHQL drivers for NVIDIA 8-Series here at bloody last

IT'S TAKEN ROUGHLY 70-thousand-billion forum posts and the threat of a class action suit, but NVIDIA have finally released a WHQL-certified driver for their 8-Series cards on Windows Vista.

And it would appear to work. Version 100.65 appeared on the NVIDIA website on February 20, instantly giving GeForce 6, 7 and 8-Series products the DirectX 9 support they needed, plus DirectX 10 support for the 8-Series under Vista in both 32-bit and 64-bit modes.

One of these will do nicely, thanks.

It's not all good news, though, as SLI support is being deferred to a later release. Just goes to show, you can't have everything in life. www.nvidia.com

NEWS ROUND-UP

Geeks at Stanford University have come up with a replacement for the mouse: a device that looks back at you from your screen and tracks eye movements. The technology was created to allow disabled users to use computer interfaces, but EyePoint is now touted as the obvious replacement for our familiar 'palm rodent'. Presumably in games, you'll be able to tell when you've pissed off your team when everyone looks skyward. hci.stanford.edu

Last month we heard how working versions have been demonstrated to card partners, and this month we know that the new Radeon R600 won't be on shop shelves until at least April, with NVIDIA not only bumping the power of the flagship cards, but also introducing its mainstream line-up. On the plus side, AMD have confirmed that the new Raddy will have WHQL-certified drivers supporting both SingleFire and CrossFire modes from the get-go. www.amd.com

CLASS IN ACTION

You've probably heard that the drivers for 8-Series cards don't work with Vista. And you've probably read there's a website that's intent on slapping NVIDIA with a lawsuit. But don't worry. The new 100.65 drivers from nvidia.com are WHQL-certified, meaning they've passed compatibility tests and come digitally signed by Microsoft. They're also available through Windows Update. Saying that, there's a large number of complaints from GeForce users on Web forums that both the 100.65 and 100.64 Beta drivers are causing endless headaches, and there's the fact that SLI doesn't yet work. So if you've invested in two cards, stick with XP for now.

GEFORCE 8800 GTS 320MB

PRICE £196 **MANUFACTURER** XFX **WEBSITE** xfxforce.co.uk

THE 'BABY' GTS you see here will save you £80 or more on the cost of migrating to Vista, but without sacrificing anything significant in the benchmarks department.

At its launch, NVIDIA's GeForce 8800 GTS (issue 178, 93%) came with a full 640MB memory and was generally rather awesome. It didn't quite lower your jaw in the same way the 9700 Pro did all those years ago, but it did make you realise that all the games you'd been reading about and dreaming about might actually be playable.

It had one major downfall: the price. At £305, it was more costly than a brand-new Dell, and certainly didn't come bundled with a 17-inch LCD and colour printer. In addition, it was the entry-level point for all DirectX 10 hardware, meaning that if you were all set to upgrade your PC and get the most from Vista, you had to set aside half your budget for the video card alone. So while its performance made your mouth water, everything else about it made your wallet leap out of your pocket and hide behind the sofa.

WHAT TO DO?

There were other things that didn't add up. The performance of the GTS was, in many tests, so close to that of the even more expensive GTX that NVIDIA were obligated to separate them. They would either have to turn up the wick in their flagship in order to distance it from the GTX, and in which case it wouldn't seem quite the same value, or they'd have to somehow shackle the runaway GTS. Given that the former would undoubtedly be getting a boost to coincide with the launch of AMD's new Radeon, halving the RAM in the latter became the most sensible option.

And you know what? In almost all circumstances, you simply would not know the difference. Throwing away 320MB of RAM and dropping the price below £200 has made a great card seem like an unbelievable one. It's astonishing good value. Coupled with a Core 2 Duo and 2GB RAM, the GTS just makes a mockery of any other card within 50 quid of it. It's also quiet, a manageable size, and won't make huge demands of your power supply.

Quite simply, this XFX GTS is a great card at an unbelievable price. Go out and buy one right now.

PCZONE 94

GEFORCE 7600 GT FATAL1TY

PRICE £97 **MANUFACTURER** XFX **WEBSITE** xfxforce.co.uk

LAUNCHED MORE THAN a year ago, the 7600 GT still has the balls to deliver a decent frame-rate in the games you're playing now.

The Fatal1ty variant comes overclocked from the factory, meaning that all the hard work has been done for you, and when stressed the card is no less stable than any vanilla equivalent.

This GT also comes with PureVideo, SLI features and is passively cooled. You could put a very nice, totally silent dual-card Media Center together using this card, though you would need a 420W PSU and some pretty advanced cooling inside the case. Just one card needs a minimum 350W and reached beyond 70C during benchmarking.

When it comes to playing games, the GT is even able to worry the more expensive X1950 Pro, giving deliciously fluid frame-rates in Source engine titles and in *Battlefield 2*. It even looks great.

PCZONE 89

PN2 SLI2+ EXTREME

PRICE £163 **MANUFACTURER** ECS **WEBSITE** www.ecs.com.tw

BY AND LARGE, ECS stuff makes a lot of sense – because it's cheap. So it was a surprise to see the company's new flagship is not just a Swiss Army knife of features, but is a 680i board costing over £160. It's a real 'enthusiast' product with three PCIe slots – two for SLI, the third allowing another card for physics processing or more screens.

The PN2's competitors are all over £200, so even up here ECS remains best value. It's also a reference design, and so comes beautifully laid out: adorned with passive sinks and NVIDIA logos, it's both handsome and reliable.

That said, a rich feature set is of secondary importance to the processor and video card you use with it. While the 680i is a paradise for tweakers, going for Intel's cheaper P965 platform lets you put the money you save to better use.

PCZONE 81

S.W.A.T. MOUSE

PRICE £16 **MANUFACTURER** Cyber Snipa **WEBSITE** cybersnipa.com

THE S.W.A.T. IS a comfortable, accurate, right-handed laser mouse let down only by some poor button positioning.

It seems to have been designed specifically for people with no thumbs, with all three of the device's additional clickers positioned directly under your innermost digit. There's no point assigning them to anything, because you spend the time pushing them accidentally and then shouting.

That aside, the S.W.A.T. is really, really lovely to use. If you have big hands and long fingers like me, or are Martin Korda with a wrecking ball on each wrist, you'll know that most devices require that you form your hand into the shape of a crab and then crook your thumb in at right-angles. Well, this one doesn't. This one just fits.

What I'd like is a baby S.W.A.T. – a T.W.A.T. perhaps? – with no additional buttons and £6 chopped from the price. Now that would be perfect.
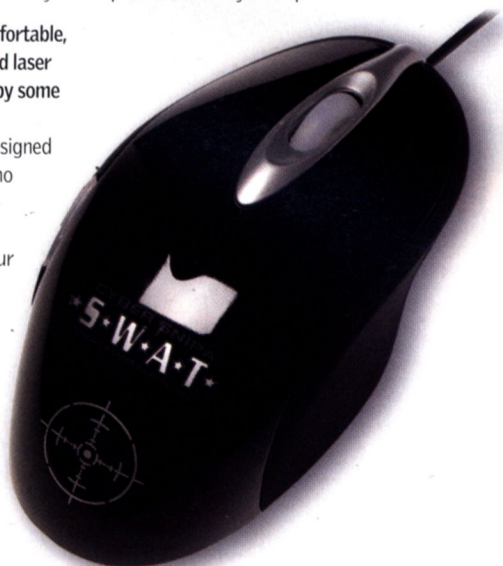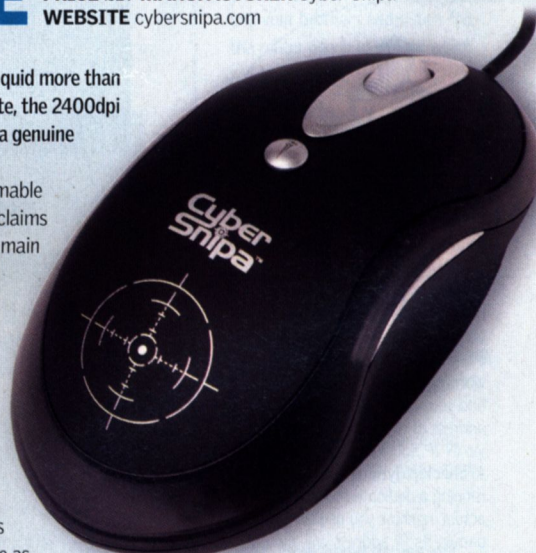
PCZONE 82

INTELLISCOPE MOUSE

PRICE £19 **MANUFACTURER** Cyber Snipa **WEBSITE** cybersnipa.com

COSTING ONLY A few quid more than its 1600dpi stablemate, the 2400dpi Intelliscope feels like a genuine big-ticket product.

There are three programmable buttons (the marketing spin claims six, but this includes the two main clickers and the mousewheel and is therefore cheating), with each positioned away from flailing fingers and thumbs and requiring a good push to use anyway. As is the fashion these days, there's a dpi switch you won't use, together with a laser engine which a) delivers the same end-user experience as almost every other device on the market, and b) won't make you any less crap than you are now.

The design is symmetrical, the weight is perfect for most titles (ie light, but with enough mass to aid low-speed accuracy), and the satin finish to the top doesn't have that greasy feel of the S.W.A.T. Mouse. Definitely one for budget buyers.

PCZONE 86

HOW TO...
RUN YOUR OWN GAMES SERVER

Having your own games server is no longer the preserve of big clans and big wallets. *Phil Wand* **shows you how...**

Need:
Internet connection

Time:
1 hour

Difficulty level:

Phil Wand

Deep Blue

Medium doofus

Big Brother contestant

Jamie Sefton

IT'S SUNDAY NIGHT and you're talking with a few friends on Xfire. You've all just been kicked off a *BF2* server, the admin having taken an instant dislike to the way you were better than him. He says he's "making way for clan members", but a refresh of the server shows nobody else has turned up. He's simply knocking seven bells out of a poor sap who bought the game on budget yesterday. The mark of a true champion.

It's a sad fact of life that out on the Internet, each game is a self-contained dictatorship – and if you're not contributing to its upkeep, you have no right to be there. Instead of having your butt kicked between servers by short-tempered 14 year olds, why not set up your own server for you and your friends and make your own set of rules? Here are five easy ways to become your own admin...

01 Home PC

Want to make a game other people can join while you play it yourself? The obvious place to start is the PC on your desk. If you're behind a router, you'll need to open its configuration page and forward ports to your machine (see the router's manual for full details).

The ports themselves will be numbers between 1024 and 65534, and will be different for each game – visit the Common Ports section at portforward.com to establish which ones you need.

To run the server, simply start a multiplayer Internet game. Other people will be able to connect to your WAN IP address and start playing straight away.

PROS: Costs nothing over what you're already paying for broadband. Easy to set up with a private networking tool such as Hamachi.
CONS: Home broadband has limited upstream bandwidth not suited to servers. It also advertises your presence to hackers and other ne'er-do-wells.

HUH?

Your WAN IP address is basically your unique 'telephone number' on the Internet. Depending on which broadband provider you use and which package you've chosen, it could be **static** or **dynamic**. If you want to tell your friends where to find you, you'll need to know the address of your server. Find your WAN IP address by browsing to checkip.dyndns.org. If you're running a dedicated server on the actual machine you use to play games, its IP address will always be 127.0.0.1. Together with **Source Dedicated Server (SRCDS)**, *Half-Life* **Dedicated Server (HLDS)** is the entertainment world's most popular server software, given that it powers every *Counter-Strike* game, together with every entry in Valve's back catalogue.

02 Dedicated home PC

If you're an exhibitionist, setting up a dedicated server on a home PC means you don't need to be playing the game yourself for people to join in. A dedicated or 'standalone' server will run in the background, accepting requests from newcomers and hosting games without you having to be there.

Running such a setup depends entirely on the game you're wanting to play. For example, *Half-Life* games such as *Counter-Strike: Source* include tools called HLDS and SRCDS that allow you to get going within only a few minutes, whereas *Battlefield* derivatives require you to visit the main battlefield.

Run your own action in *HL2: Sourceforts.*
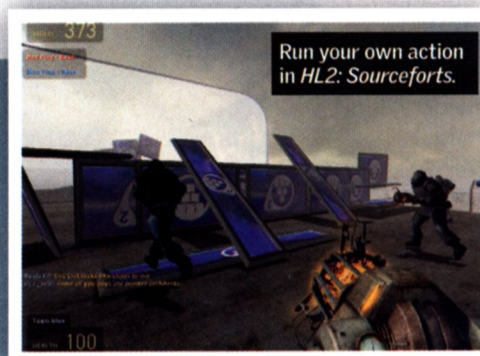
ea.com website and download the tools separately.

PROS: Leaves you free to do something else while the server is running – and your friends can join in and play while you're out.
CONS: Without a password, your network is a target for hackers. Also likely to use up all your bandwidth.

03 ▶ Games slots

An increasing number of hosting companies will rent you player 'slots' on ready-made games servers, meaning you get to avoid all the complications of setting up the software and administering an entire Windows PC. All you have to do is pick the title you want to play, decide the maximum number of players you want to allow on it and then reach for your credit card.

Buying game slots is the first step away from hosting games inside your house, and if you're really not keen on the idea of running your own server, it's simply the most sensible choice here.

PROS: Cheap to run, especially if you restrict the number of player slots. Easy setup, zero maintenance and no long contracts.
CONS: List of games titles can be restrictive, no beta or demo versions. Also, you can't run other software or host other services.

Select the slots, pay the money.

04 ▶ Dedicated server

A dedicated server is a slimline PC bolted into a cabinet of ten or more similar machines sitting alongside countless others in an air-conditioned room. You pay monthly to rent the server from the hosting company which owns it, and get to treat it as though it was your own for the period.

You can host games, run a website or blog, start a file download service – anything that takes your fancy. Most dedicated hardware will be capable of running two or more games servers at once, meaning you could even start your own business renting player slots to others.

PROS: You can use the machine for anything, not just games, and it leaves your broadband line decongested.
CONS: You're paying for hardware you'll never actually own. Also, for the best rental price you'll need to sign a 12-month agreement.

Don't want it in your house? Then rent it.

05 ▶ Dedicated clan server

A clan server is the same as a dedicated server, only it's hosted by a company which specialises in games and has games players for customers. What that means is that all the software you need comes pre-installed, and it's easy to have new titles added as they're released. Depending on your host, you can also elect to cut your monthly costs by restricting the server's coverage to UK-only bandwidth.

The best thing about renting a clan server is that you and your clan become part of a bigger community, with access to specialised technical support, tournaments and competitions.

PROS: All the software is provided for you. You're helping to support gaming communities by buying into them.
CONS: Expensive, so everyone in your clan will have to chip in. As with dedicated hardware, you're paying for something that isn't yours.

Shared server suit you?

Does having a piece of the pie suit your needs?

Renting a shared server gives you a slice of a dedicated machine that's been divided into a number of virtual portions. Each portion functions as a separate PC and has its own dedicated resources. They're inexpensive, at least when compared to renting a full server, and yet give you all its advantages. There are two obvious drawbacks of using a shared server. The first is it will never be as powerful as dedicated hardware; the second is that you'll have a tough time finding a company prepared to give you a share of a Windows machine – most shared server hosts deal only with Linux.

QUESTIONS QUESTIONS

Q Why do I need to forward ports?
A The reason for doing this is because when someone connects to your IP, the router has no way of knowing where to direct them. If your parents have PCs, and your brothers and sisters too, the router needs to be told which machine has the server.

Q How do I control a dedicated server?
A Using a Microsoft tool called Remote Desktop. It allows you to see the server's desktop on your own PC, and to control it remotely across the Net.

Q How many players will my broadband line support?
A It depends on the broadband package you have, but typically not many more than four players.

Q How many games will my server support?
A How long is a piece of string? This depends on server hardware and what you're playing, but you should be able to host at least two games with 10-16 player slots on each.

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... Partner clonked you with a Tefal frying pan after you played *WOW* for 187 hours solid? Take That's improbable comeback too beautiful to contemplate without sobbing? Eaten a tub of margarine again while drunk, mistaking it for ice cream? 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 you can and system specs where applicable.

PERSISTENT POP-UPS

Q I have Windows XP Home Edition, and had to phone Microsoft for a new activation key after reformatting. I'm now getting pop-ups, even with Spyware Blaster, Spybot and Lavasoft Ad-Aware installed. I'm not sure where they're all coming from, but it's starting to be a total pain. Can you please offer any help?

Cainekwai

A *Would you allow me a brief moan? I believe I have a reasonable understanding of Microsoft Product Activation, and can tell you that it's a lot more elaborate than most people realise.*

Every installation ID has 12 bit-fields which are used to describe the host PC's exact configuration. Your processor type is recorded, along with its serial number, any SCSI adaptor, IDE controller, hard drive and CD-ROM, video adaptor, MAC address, RAM size and volume serial number, together with some lesser-known things such as whether it's a laptop with a docking station – in which case the process becomes more tolerant towards any changes you make.

Despite all this complexity – despite all manner of clever mechanisms designed to thwart Russian hackers – it always bloody asks me to activate. Every time I reinstall XP, a product I bought with real English money some five years ago now, I'm made to contact Microsoft like some naughty schoolboy. And you know what? Six of the 25 most widely-pirated software packages on BitTorrent and eDonkey are from Microsoft. Office 2003 was the second most-pirated title behind Adobe Acrobat 7, despite having product activation. Broadly speaking, it doesn't work.

Anyway, your problem. I don't know what you've installed on your PC since reinstalling, but I can promise you that Windows XP – at least, a properly maintained XP with all the correct Service Packs and updates – does not litter your desktop with pop-ups. Quite obviously you have installed something horrible on your system. If you're not too far down the line, I'd start again, only with no screensavers, no themes, no sound packs, no codec packs, no media players with futuristic interfaces, and certainly none of those fraudulent utilities that claim to speed up your Internet

Dell support is valid only where you made your purchase.

connection. Windows will run trouble-free for years as long as you use Firefox, a recognised anti-virus tool and work under the assumption that everything you download is potentially lethal to your data.

WONDER DOWN UNDER

Q I'm heading off to university in New Zealand, and want to buy a new desktop for the latest games such as *Supreme Commander*, *Crysis* and *Oblivion*. The machine I have at the moment is three years old and doesn't make the grade. The system I'm eyeing is the Dell Dimension 9200 with E6600, 2GB DDR2, 7900 GS, 320GB HDD, plus a monitor for £1,250. My first question is, do you think these specs are OK for a PC I intend to use for more than a year?

Second, I contacted a computer dealer in New Zealand and he quotes the same basic specification at £1,000. The motherboard is an ASUS P5PL2, there's a 420W Enermax PSU, the screen is a 19-inch ViewSonic VA903B, the speakers are Genius 2.1, the graphics card is an ASUS EN7600GT and there's a 320GB WD Caviar Lite-On DVD writer. My second question is, is this any good?

Robert McGee

A *I must say that I'm extremely jealous of you. Not only are you going to spend proper money on a proper*

PC, you're also going to a beautiful country with a population 16 times less dense than ours. There's also hardly anyone living there.

Be careful about buying a Dimension 9200 from the UK. There won't be any trouble with power – the Antipodes run on 240V AC at 50Hz, same as the rest of the civilised world – but the Dell support service is valid only in the country in which the product was purchased. While you can complete a transfer form online, you'll have to do so twice and will also run the risk of the system and your data being damaged irreparably or washed up on a beach in Devon.

The Kiwi system is not only cheaper but is probably a safer bet, especially if it's a local supplier, and by the time you return from your studies you may well be wanting to sell it. And in which case, they may even buy it back from you. The PC you described is a reasonable specification, although I would change the GeForce 7600 GT card for one of the entry-level 8800 GTS, variants of which are now available for under £200.

ACE VENTURER

Q This is the first time I've ever contacted you, and it's because of an annoying little message I get every time I boot up my PC. The message is headed 'MACE Service' and says, 'Could

DRIVER WATCH

GRAPHICS

MANU	DESC	RELEASED
ATI	CATALYST 7.1	10 JAN 07
ATI	CATALYST VISTA 7.1	29 JAN 07
NVIDIA	FORCEWARE 93.71	2 NOV 06
NVIDIA	FORCEWARE 97.46 FOR VISTA	05 JAN 07

SOUND

MANU	DESC	RELEASED
CREATIVE	X-FI 2.09.0007	30 OCT 06
CREATIVE	X-FI FOR VISTA 2.13.0001	28 DEC 06
CREATIVE	AUDIGY, AUDIGY 2, AUDIGY 4 2.09.0016	9 OCT 06
CREATIVE	AUDIGY FOR VISTA 2.12.0001	12 JAN 07

> # "You've obviously installed something horrible on your system. If you're not too far gone, I'd start again"
> It's slam-the-brakes-on time for Cainekwai

not connect to the ACE Runtime'. It doesn't appear to affect anything, and all seems to run OK, but it's just becoming a little annoying, especially as I have absolutely no idea where to even start to look to fix it. Is it Windows, a game, what?

The machine I run is an Evesham Athlon 64 and with 1GB RAM. I have Windows XP Media Center Edition and Blueyonder broadband. I regularly run defrag, cleanup, CC Cleaner and Ad-Aware plus Norton. Can you point me in the right direction to swat this irritating little bug?

Stuart Clarke

A *The clue was Media Center Edition. Although you don't say it, I suspect you're using an Radeon card, because the error you're seeing is the CATALYST drivers complaining that they're being blocked from working correctly. You need to open Windows Firewall from your Control Panels, then select the Exceptions tab and click the Add Program button at the bottom. Browse to the ATI folder within Program Files and add the executables inside ATI.ACE.*

Don't share. Use a router.

DYNAMIC DYNAMODE

Q After reading Anthony Hulse's letter ('Down the Wires', issue 178), I have a query. Computer A is always on, connected to the Internet via a router and uses ICS. Computer B is also connected to the router, as is my Xbox 360. Both use files on the network as well as the Internet. In addition, Computer A has a wireless card which acts as an access point to allow my girlfriend's laptop to hook up. I also use wireless for my DS, PSP and forthcoming Wii.

If I bought the Dynamode router as you suggested, would I still be able to access the files on the network? My girlfriend needs this for her work, and she seems to think it's more important than my gaming needs! In addition, my current wireless setup is insecure as my DS does not support WEP.

David McPhillie

A *Actually, your DS does support WEP, and the first thing you should do on reading this is turn it on. It might be an obsolete method of securing your wireless data, and there are plenty of free tools you can download to bust into pretty much any WEP-enabled network, but it's better than having nothing at all.*

Of course, what you really need is WPA, which the Xbox 360, PSP and Wii all support in addition to WEP. Buying the £30 Dynamode will allow you to make the switch, to do away with the wireless card and ICS on Computer A, and to allow devices such as your girlfriend's laptop to connect and browse all the shares on your network. Unlike your current setup, a router will mean you no longer need to leave Computer A on the whole time – a major limitation in my book. **PCZ**

50 UTILITIES YOU HAVE TO USE BEFORE YOU DIE

It's just like being there.
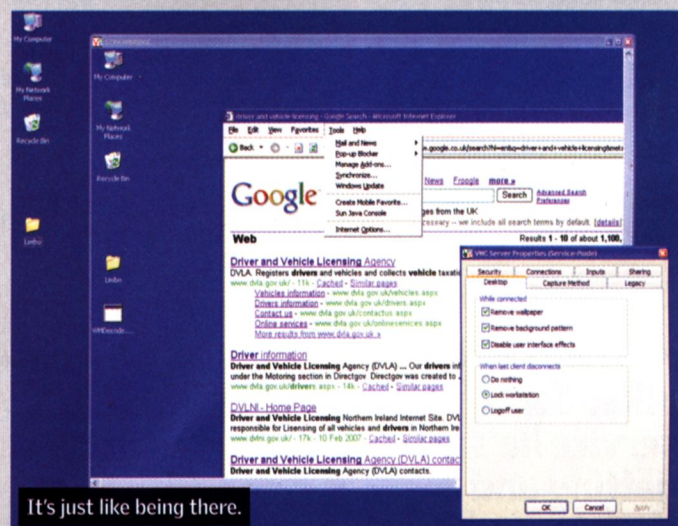
22 REALVNC

COSTS Free **FROM** realvnc.com

Developed by a severely large number of boffins at Cambridge University all called Tristan, you would be forgiven for thinking that RealVNC demands you develop a brain somewhat larger than the one you currently have, together with a snooty disregard for anyone without a PhD or virginity.

In actual fact, while the VNC interface has a few quirks, and while many of its simplest features can only be understood through trial and error, at heart it's a refreshingly straightforward piece of software.

Put simply, VNC gives you control of another machine. When you run VNC and connect to a remote PC, you see exactly what you would see were you sat in front of it. Mouse movements and keyboard presses are

sent not to the local system but across the network, giving anyone there the impression that the PC in question is possessed. It means you could dial into home from work, or while on holiday, and use your machine without actually being there.

You can do everything you would normally do, from checking your email to browsing the Web. If you use your PC on a regular basis, you'll know what it feels like to be separated from it for any length of time. And the good news is that the Free Edition is exactly that, free. Pay money only if you intend using RealVNC over the Internet or want to move documents between your two machines, and in which case you will need the file transfer and security features of the Personal or Enterprise Editions.

@ watchdog@pczone.co.uk
✉ watchdog, pc zone, future publishing, 2 balcombe st, london, nw1 6nw

WATCHDOG

Bad companies need sorting – and good companies need praising...

Here to help!

Companies pissing you off? Don't feel your voice is strong enough to shout down the suits? Or, has a company done something so great you want to nominate them for a 'Saints Not Sinners' mention? Email Suzy at **watchdog@pczone.co.uk** with the subject heading 'Watchdog', or write to her at the address above. Remember to include your name, address and contact number, and all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers.

> **Now he's been billed for a service he's not getting and is close to reaching 'The Hulk' levels of anger**

**THE ACCUSED: Orange
PROBLEM: Internet not working properly**
Twas two nights before Christmas and all through the house, not a browser was stirring, not even a mouse. Yes, just two days before Christmas, reader Lawrence Merille's Orange wireless service was having trouble connecting to the Internet. He noticed that the connection lights were flashing and thinking that it might be busy downloading an update, he left it to its business. The next morning though, it was still going.

Lawrence dug out his manual and tried everything possible to get it working, but after having no success, he spoke to the Orange fault management team. After trying some more tests, the operator insisted it must be a problem with the local communications exchange and that if he left it a day or two, it should sort itself out.

This didn't happen, and Lawrence has now written to us, complaining that over five weeks, he's spent over nine hours on the phone trying to get it sorted. Now he's been billed for a service he's not actually receiving too and he's "close to reaching 'The Hulk' levels of anger".
PC ZONE INVESTIGATION: Fearing that we might be partly responsible for unleashing that crazy green beast on the world, we dialled Orange's number as quickly as we could to let them know what was going on. Just over a week later, Lawrence got in touch: "I received a call from Orange regarding my line, a specialist escalation team fixed my Livebox issue and it's now working better than it was before. Thanks for the help."
FINAL VERDICT: Internet working. World saved from potential green-skinned disaster.

**THE ACCUSED: Blizzard
PROBLEM: *World Of Warcraft* account transfer issues**
When reader Ruud Dirven started playing *WOW*, his wife didn't like the fact that it took up a lot of his time. However, after a couple of months she relented, created her own character and was soon hooked. Having acquired another PC and another account, and reading that 'Blizzard had the plan to allow character transfers, for a fee, between two accounts within one household', they envisioned a time

WOW: fun for all the family, so long as you remember to register with the same name.

when they could play together, side by side.
However, they soon learned that Blizzard had its own take on character transfers: 'The transfer requires the two accounts to share the same name,' is the company line, effectively prohibiting pretty much all transfers (despite Ruud and his wife sharing the same surname, address and password).

Ruud's not impressed: "If I'd known, I would have obviously registered the second account in the same name." With no reply from Blizzard and Ruud's account even being banned after one particular deluge of emails, he turned to us for help.
PC ZONE INVESTIGATION: Wondering just how far our influence would reach with the MMO behemoth, we got straight in contact. Just over a week later, we received this response: "The account sharing that led to this situation is in fact a violation of the

WOW Terms of Use. Our rules regarding paid character transfer, which are stated on the community website, are in place to safeguard against the theft of accounts and characters. In accordance with these rules, transfers between accounts are only permitted when the same person is listed as the subscriber on both accounts.

"We do not support the transfer of characters between friends, guild mates or family members, as there have been numerous occasions when claims have been filed regarding the misuse of account access even in the same household. Though our rules regarding account sharing may, regrettably, cause inconvenience, we have to give priority to the overall protection of player accounts and the game integrity."
FINAL VERDICT: Even *ZONE* wasn't strong enough to budge Blizzard on this one. Don't mess with the EULA...

SAINTS NOT SINNERS

ALIENWARE Reader Neale Stoffberg's a massive *Star Wars* fan, but just after he'd taken delivery of his Alienware system in February 2005, Alienware announced the very cool *Star Wars* edition machines. Neale wrote to them, asking if he could have his case retro-fitted or buy the panels separately, but was met with a firm but polite "no". Then, out of the blue, in January 2007, Alienware US wrote to Neale asking him to forward on his UK address. Bemused, he sent them his details and received a tracking number and a note saying not to do anything until told to do so as he would be contacted to receive tech support. Four days later, a tube dropped through his door and upon opening it, Neale was shocked to discover that he'd been sent the *Star Wars* panels. Says Neale: "I can't thank them enough. It's just one of the many reasons I will always be an Alienware customer for life."

Oh sure, shelling out bucks on those new speakers seems like a good idea. But how foolish will you feel when the debt collectors cut off your ears after you miss another mortgage payment?

REMEMBER: SPEAKERS ARE NO GOOD IF YOU'VE GOT NO EARS

HARDWARE DIVIDE

The right kit for you – whether you're as loaded as Tesco, or can't afford their value beans...

LOADED?

GRAPHICS
8800 GTX
EXPECT TO PAY £420
MANUFACTURER XFX
WEBSITE xfxforce.co.uk
It would have been nice to have an ATI card against which we could compare the flagship GeForce, but the new Radeon isn't due for at least a month. So NVIDIA's DirectX 10 heavyweight won by default. It's still the fastest video card you can buy, but be careful – there are no Vista drivers yet.

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
D975XBX2
EXPECT TO PAY £155
MANUFACTURER Intel
WEBSITE intel.com
Everything that was good about our long-term favourite D975XBX, only with a thick coating of overclocking goodness. Intel's flagship desktop product represents all that's good about the company's products: solid, reliable, no-nonsense and fast. Saddle up with a Core 2 Duo and away you go!

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.
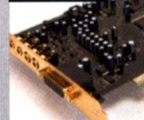
SOUNDCARD
SOUND BLASTER X-FI FATALITY FPS
EXPECT TO PAY £140
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com
Slightly bonkers soundcard for audiophiles with deep pockets. Supports EAX 5.0, with 64MB X-RAM for top-quality sound effects. CMSS-3D works magic on a stereo signal and makes headphone 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
RADEON X1950 PRO
EXPECT TO PAY £130
MANUFACTURER Sapphire
WEBSITE sapphiretech.com
A dazzling card at a glaringly low price. Sapphire's X1950 Pro gives you class-leading performance, beating both the GeForce 7900 GS and X1900 GT – the card on which it's based. And if you're looking to get into CrossFire, two of these filling your slots will keep you entertained for months.

PROCESSOR
CORE 2 DUO E6300
EXPECT TO PAY £125
MANUFACTURER Intel
WEBSITE intel.com
The 1.86GHz Conroe E6300 might be a stripped-down version of its peers, but don't sneer: 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
CONROEXFIRE-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, 1,280x1,024 resolution and producing bright, crisp images worthy of the ViewSonic name. The company's UltraBrite technology gives rich and vivid colours in games 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.

FREEPLAY

Skint? Play PC games for feck all...

PCZONE
ON THE DVD

FREE GAMES!

WHAT'S FREE THIS MONTH

Terror bytes

Y OUR MOD IS so fat, that when it installs to your 'EA\Battlefield 2\mods' folder, it installs *around* your 'EA\Battlefield 2\mods' folder. We're sure this is just one of the jeers the developers of *Project Reality* (p110) have to put up with on a daily basis – but if you're going to create a mod so huge that it causes smaller mods to gravitate towards it, expect to have rubbish jokes hurled at you.

Project Reality is 1.6GB, and we couldn't make room for it on this month's DVD. Perhaps sometime in the distant future, somebody will read this column and laugh. "They thought 1.6GB was a big mod?! Hahaha, mods these days average at 1.8GB! Now where is my hovering hat, I wish to go into space."

Mods are getting bigger, but like games, they're not necessarily getting better. Oh, except for *Project Reality*, because that's actually great, and puts the 'mega' back into, "Oh god, that's a lot of megabytes".

Steve Hogarty

Steve Hogarty, staff writer

Try this!
Outlands Map fun

Head to the *World Of Warcraft* website and look for the interactive flash map of The Outlands. Now, click on each of the regions in the correct order to make lights appear above each letter in 'OUTLAND'. Then just sit back and watch secret *World Of Warcraft* things happen!

Swish, swish.

104 **Demo pages**
Try out the latest games right now!

Brrrmm, brrrmm.

106 **News**
News and culture from a world of free PC gaming

Bang, bang.
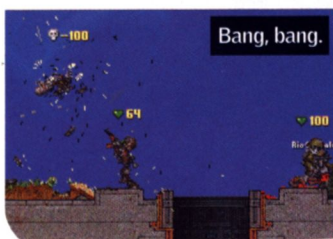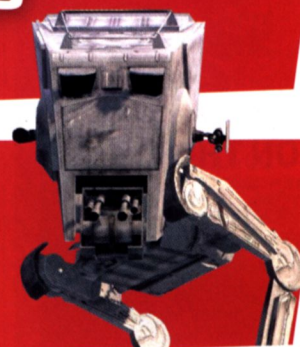
108 **Freeware**
The crop-cream of free Internet gaming delivered straight to your doorstep

Click-clack.

110 **Play!**
Essential reviews of the latest mods, maps and add-ons

Shhhhh.

114 **Garry's Mod**
Construct the most amazing plane you'll ever fly in your life, ever

"You f***er!"
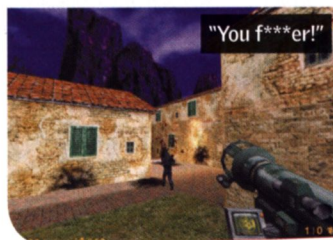
116 **Fight Club**
You've got the eye of the tiger, we've got the arse

PCZONE FREE-O-METER

0 HOURS

NEW RECORD! 436.1 HOURS*

*Approximate amount of completely free stuff this month

Demos

Jon Blyth rounds up our free DVD...
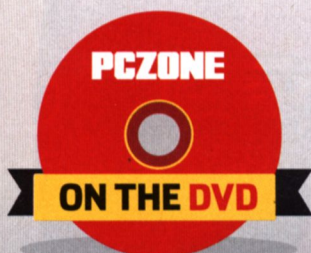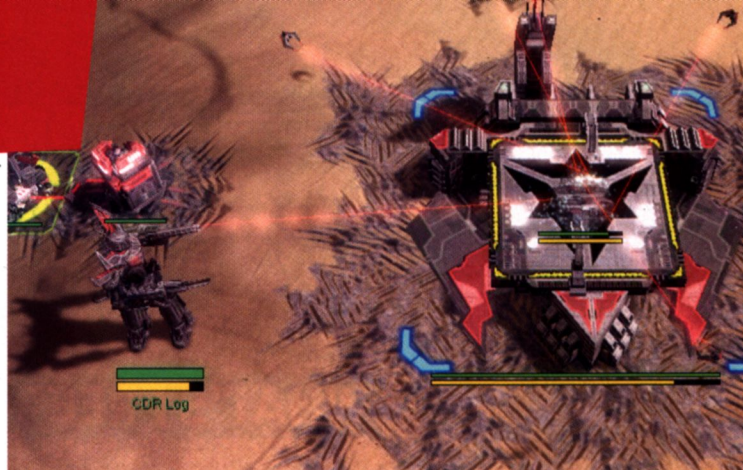
SUPREME COMMANDER

Just like the *Iron Giant*, except with laser-beams for eyes...

www.supremecommander.com

AS GOOD AS *Supreme Commander* undoubtedly is, modesty is clearly not its strong suit. The new demo leaves you in no doubt that this is the first game – ever! – to use actual strategy. I like to imagine a cocaine-fuelled argument in a glass-walled room somewhere, with the one guy not ripped to the tits saying, "can we say that? I mean, can we really say this is the first game to ever use strategy, and look like we mean it?"

"Of course we mean it!" bellow the half-dozen others, trying to clamber up each other to be the first to reach the ceiling. "This game redefines strategy. It wipes its arse on the rule book! We haven't built a conservatory on strategy, we've suicide bombed it and built a marble palace where it one was!"

Of course, *Supreme Commander* is an outstanding game, with a review score that took it as close to a *PCZ* Classic as you can get without being 89%. With its innovative resource system, superb interface and exciting combat, it really is close to being as good as it says it is.

This demo gives you a taste of the single-player campaign and one skirmish map, and will slip around you like a comfortably elasticated sock, without leaving ugly ribbing on your calf.

HEY BIG GUY
Hey, big guy. What you doing, all alone? You should build some mass extractors, power generators, that sort of thing. Then you'll have some other massive metal stuff to talk to. And perhaps an army or two.

MAKE BOMBERS AND THAT
Now, that air field can make bombers, interceptors and so on while you walk round building more mass extractors. Soon you'll have friends that you can actually care about!

EVERY DAY IS AN ADVENTURE With my super metal friend

BATTLE STATIONS
This is the life. Bombers flying around your head like explosive bees, factories occasionally trumping out another interceptor and a big guy making laser eyes at everything. Damn this mechless century of ours.

LET'S MURDER THE OTHER COLOUR
Well, I suppose we should start killing the other factions. If it was down to us, we'd invite them all around for sherry, but they'd only get oil on the carpets and walk through the walls.

FREAK OUT: EXTREME FREERIDE

snipurl.com/PCZ_freeride

Slap on your planks, mother

THE PLAYSTATION HAS *SSX*, the 360 has *Amped*, and no doubt the Wii will soon have some hyperactive alpine sim that'll make anyone peeking through your front window think you're giving hand relief to a pair of invisible sailors. And here's the PC version (or a demo at least), in which you can play one side of one of the mountains, with all challenges intact. If you've never seen a console, this could all be utterly new to you.

CLIMB EVERY MOUNTAIN

But be sure to pull some radical air on the way down
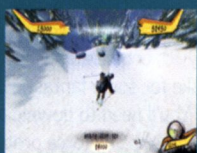
IMPORTANT CHECKLIST
Jumps, tricks, rails and a soundtrack by bands who explicitly claim not to 'give a shit'? Check checkity check. Plus, as the website would have it, you can "get the adrenaline pumping even more by high-speed slaloms!" Er, gnarly!

KISS SOME ROCK
Remember, this is 'xtreme' alpine action, so it's only a matter of time before you suffer a horrific injury. Yes sir, you be kissing some rock right now. How you be liking that? The taste of hot rock and blood from your face? Shyeah.

BATTLESTATIONS: MIDWAY

www.battlestations.net

Turn the seas red with the blood of your foes

JOIN THE OFFBEAT shenanigans of Henry Walker and his kooky sidekick Donald, as they get involved in a series of sticky scrapes from wacky Pearl Harbor to the zany old Battle of Midway.

Wait, we're not pitching this right. Perhaps if we frame it as a romantic body-swap comedy... Or maybe a WWII game somewhere between simulation and arcade action, where you can control boats, subs and planes in 11 missions spanning the US participation in WWII?

OK, so it didn't quite make the 'splash' we were hoping for after three years in development, but complaining about free stuff is quite rude, so stop it.

1 War is generally deemed to be a bad thing. Even undertakers don't really like it, preferring us to die in less concentrated, more manageable bursts.

2 Vibrant colours are considered poor form during combat. Animated neon signs in particular are frowned upon. As such, the mood here is 'sombre'.

3 Submarines live a solitary life, rarely getting to meet cars and planes. Even hovercrafts try to steer clear, mostly by 'hovering'.

SIM OR ARCADE?

It's 'midway' between, of course

PLANES
It's not a dedicated simulation, so plane combat is like a drink made from diluted *IL-2 Sturmovik* cordial. Mmm, watery.

SUBMARINES
Meanwhile, the subs are like a *Silent Hunter* dinner, only without the trimmings. Is this good? Depends whether you like sprouts, really.

COMMAND & CONQUER 3

www.gamershell.com/download_17978.shtml
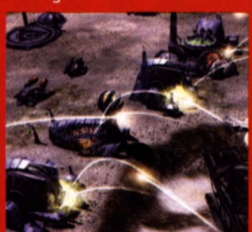
Playing the tutorial, two single-player missions and one skirmish map of EA's new strategy epic is all well and good, but you'll be glad to hear this massive 1.18GB download also features live-action video sequences of the bloke from *Lost*.

PENUMBRA: OVERTURE

www.penumbra-overture.com/demo.htm
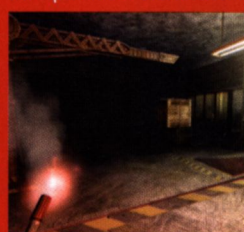
We got the demo of this physics-laden horror-adventure just too late to slip onto the disc, so until next month you'll have to download it yourselves. If it could be any other way, we'd make it so. But it isn't, so shut up – it's only 115MB.

PCZONE HOT DOWNLOADS

THE BEST OF THE REST

SAM & MAX: EPISODE 3 – THE MOLE, THE MOB AND THE MEATBALL
It's not the best in the series so far. In fact, you could say it's the least best. But the others were really good, so that's not to say this is terrible. It's just less best than the others.
www.telltalegames.com/samandmax

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES
They used to make *TMNT* pizzas in our local supermarket by putting marshmallows and bits of chocolate on a deep-pan base. And they had meat shaped like a teddy bear's face, too. Sigh...
tmntgame.us.ubi.com

STOKED RIDER: ALASKA ALIEN
If the charms of *Freak Out: Extreme Freeride* are lost on you (and there's every chance of that), try this physics-soaked indie gem instead.
www.stokedrider.com

SANCTUARY
Some people reckon the 2D top-down shooter is dead. They probably think that point-and-click games are dead too, and there's dozens of *them* around. Slip off your shoes and forget 3D graphics cards ever existed.
www.nate-bradley-games.com

THE SHIP: FAWLTY TOWERS
www.fpsbanana.com/maps/20693
Remember the silly but popular Fawlty Towers map for *Counter-Strike: Source*? Well, it's now a silly but popular map for *The Ship* too. It seems you just can't get enough of the Torquay residence, only now it's being served up with a side order of seasickness.

TROUBLE IN SPACE
www.eve-online.com
EVE Online developer CCP were embarrassed after allegations that a member of their dev team used his admin powers to create exclusive items for his in-game corporation. The MMO space-sim is now awash with angry players, outraged by the possibility that CCP are cheating and monopolising their own game world.

INSANE NOW FREE
Codemasters' 2002 racer available for nowt

ftp://downloads.codemasters.com/digitaldownload/INSANE.exe

WHAT DO PUBLISHERS do with ancient titles they've long since squeezed every last penny out of through budget and compilation releases? Why, they stick them in a giant vault of course, never to be played or purchased by anybody ever again. Alternatively, they release them into the wild as freeware, which is exactly what's happened in the case of Codemasters' *Insane*.

Scoring 73% in issue 112, the arcade truck racer remains an excellent game. Its deformable vehicles, still impressive physics engine and hilarious online play make for some fantastic freeware fun.

You'll need to download a patch to remove Starforce protection (as Codemasters' have released this 'as is'), and tweak your connection a lot before you can get online, but it's worth it. Expect a full review next month.

Crashing happens quite often.

That's our Joe.

Spinning is a frequent occurance.

Flipping – always going on.

Basically, no time on the ground.

DSF UNOFFICIAL STARGATE SIMULATOR
Much furrowed brows for *Armed Assault* mod

www.dsfproductions.co.uk

JUST OUT OF the pram itself, *Armed Assault* has started a family of mods before its skull has properly formed. DSF Productions are in the early stages – a self-estimated 30% – of making their Stargate Simulator. Get that? It's a simulator, not just some childish sci-fi nonsense with soldiers and Anubis running around, and everyone pretending that ladyboy from *The Crying Game* was never in it.

It's difficult at this stage to know what to expect, but using the ultra-realistic *Armed Assault* probably lets you know how earnest they are, and when the feature list boasts such deadpan gems as 'demolecularisation at the event horizon', along with a solemn assurance that they're the first mod to provide such intangible treats, you just know you're in for a homage and a half. Watch this space.

Stargates in your eyes.

Roger, roger.

Like an angry metal chicken.

MORE STAR WARS?
First Strike makes a dash for the Net

www.firststrikemod.com | Mod for: BF2142

IT'S DEPRESSING TO think that all the hard work of the mod team behind *First Strike* will most likely be dashed upon the rocky coast of 'Stop That Or We'll Sue You' land, but the sight of AT-STs in the BF2142 engine makes us hope the roaming eye of LucasArts will overlook it for just a little longer.

Check out their website for a movie showing Stormtroopers battling against Rebels using real *Star Wars* lasers. How much more lawyer-baiting can you get?

OK, so there has been one other *Star Wars* mod to receive the official nod from LucasArts, way back in the misty era of *BF1942*, but the chances of it happening again here are slim – especially with a new *Star Wars: Battlefront* in the pipeline. We'll keep an eye on it though, just to be safe.

SNIPPETS

COMPETITION WINNERS

WORLD OF WARCRAFT: THE BURNING CRUSADE

The winner of issue 177's *WOW: The Burning Crusade – Collector's Edition* was Daniel Millward from Birmingham. Nine runners-up receive standard copies of *WOW: The Burning Crusade*. They are: Chris Spain, Manchester; Will Steele, Oxon; Chris Wilson, Lewes; Paul Godden, London; Callum Wood, Peterborough; Chris Byrne, Anglesey; Adam Mitchell, Luton; Richard March, Aberdeen and John Boyes, Glasgow. You all answered 'C', which was exceedingly correct.

Bug-Fix of the Month

THIS MONTH
WORLD SOCCER MANAGER 2007

Patch "fixed humans being offered countless players by German and Spanish teams in particular".

SOLVED!
Perplex City finally figured out www.perplexcity.com

THE HUGELY POPULAR alternate-reality game (ARG) Perplex City has been won by Andy Darley of Middlesex, meaning that he bags £100,000, a weird cube thing and the respect and envy of about 49,999 other puzzle-fiends. The ARG had been running for nearly two years, with players from all over the world piecing together clues from Perplex City puzzle cards, events and a bloke at the bus shelter who mumbles cryptic phrases.

So where was the fabled Perplex City cube hidden? Well, in a forest in Northamptonshire of course. Where else would you hide the ultimate objective of a massive world-spanning conundrum other than in the bocage of Middle England?

The game starts anew this month, so we've decided to give away some free puzzle cards. Some Season 2 cards are included, but remember, Season 1 is still valid, as points earned from solving the cards can still be claimed.

PC GAMING DIES AGAIN?
Are free PC mods on their way out? www.tripwireinteractive.com

EPIC'S MARK REIN recently spoke of plans to port popular *Unreal Tournament 3* mods to PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360, prompting many developers to foresee the very demise of all mods everywhere. With the prospect of anything half-decent being snapped up and price-tagged, where does it leave the PC modding scene? Is it doomed to scrabble around in the dirt trying to eat its own shoes? John Gibson of Tripwire Games, developer of free-mod-gone-commercial *Red Orchestra*, thinks so.

"I think the PC mod scene as a whole is already in trouble," he states. "It isn't like the early days of modding when there were just a few mods, and when a mod came out it was a big thing. Mod teams seem to expect to just roll a buggy pre-alpha mod out the door and have it become the next *Counter-Strike* overnight. It takes a lot higher quality these days to get a player's attention, and even then making a great mod doesn't guarantee anyone will play it." Freeplay agrees somewhat, although Freeplay doesn't want to accept it.

Soon you might have to pay for this. Oh...

The original *Red Orchestra* was free, like a bird.

Movie of the month
UNREAL TOURNAMENT III

Unreal Tournament is everywhere at the moment. Round every corner, there's a hi-res screenshot of bump-mapping between the toes of some lizard creature or a bead of sweat on the forehead of a man with a rocket launcher. It's not quite as good as playing the game, but it's the best we can do right now...

Yep, it's still just as pretty as we'd remembered. And a bit Neo-Tokyo flavoured too.

The brilliant motion blur effect means all our shots will look like photos taken by coffee addicts.

It's a strider! I mean, a death walker! It'll take more than a cold to knock this thing down.

And finally, a bit of villainous scum for you. Makes for a well-rounded *UT3* movie we reckon.

Freeware

PCZONE ON THE DVD

Steve Hogarty is free to have a good time. Just like you...

CORTEX COMMAND

Experience the gift of the gib
Dev: Data Realms | datarealms.com

FREEWARE GAME OF THE MONTH

Freeware brings you the best free games content the Net has to offer, be it freeware, homebrews, remakes or webgames – you'll never have to buy another game again. This month, you get to ride a bike, clean up Asia, drill for treasure and be a pig. And who hasn't always wanted to be a pig?

YOU MIGHT REMEMBER *Cortex Command* from an earlier Freeware (issue 172), but just like Jesus on Easter Sunday, it's back and it's actually better than ever. To refresh, *Cortex Command* is a true 2D side-scrolling shooter strategy game in the vein of genre greats like *Worms*.

Two teams attempt to defend two bases, while they must also mine for gold to fund their war efforts. Mining is achieved by literally firing a digger gun at the ground until you hit a seam, whereas purchasing assets is a matter of selecting a bunch of guns, units and tools and then ordering a dropship to deposit them somewhere on the battlefield. The reason it feels so good to play is partly due to the whole thing being wrapped in a delicious physics engine, which dictates even the walking animations of your soldier. It's massively visceral too, with gibbing being a huge feature of battles.

Changes since the last version we reviewed are monumental. The cumbersome keyboard controls have been replaced with seamless gamepad controls, with particular support provided for the office-favourite wired Xbox 360 pad. Mining for gold has been greatly improved too, with the sounds-good-on-paper notion of bringing your gold back

Mining for gold – just like Eddie Izzard's drilling cats.
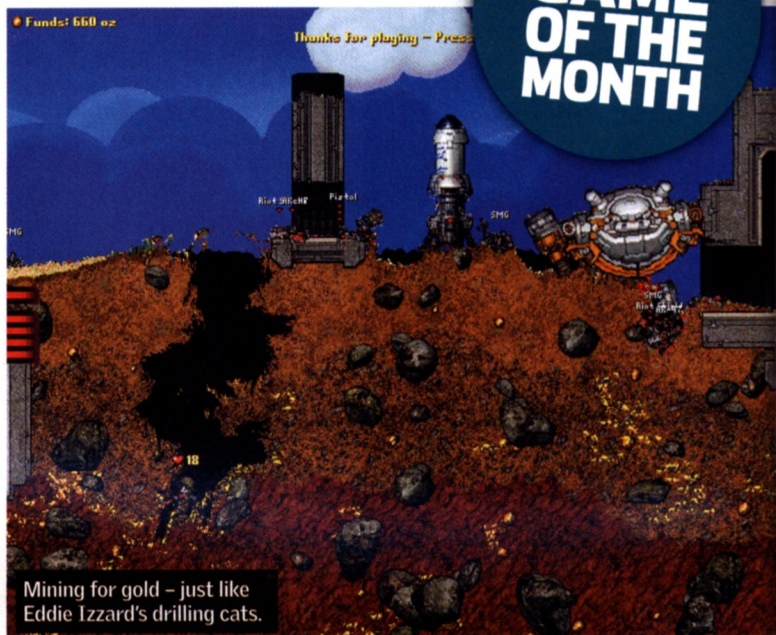
> **The reason *Cortex Command* feels so good to play is partly due to the whole thing being wrapped in a delicious physics engine...**

to a dropship and flying it into space to claim your currency being swapped out for a far easier method of simply picking the stuff up.

With split-screen support for up to four players (playing with two is probably best though), *Cortex Command* shines in multiplayer. In fact, we'd say it's one of the most fun sit-around-the-monitor-style multiplayer titles on PC, and that's including commercial titles. Play this now, and keep watching for updates.

The worms have turned.

Buy menus and dropships – all new.

INO
Now with added trotters
Dev: Omega | nagoya.cool.ne.jp/o_mega/product/ino.html

THERE AREN'T MANY games where you play the role of some sort of pig thing in a minimalist side-scrolling platform world, but this is one such title. *INO* has been developed by the same people who did *Every Extend* (the hugely popular freeware game gone commercial PSP title), and in it you must collect random objects in order to possibly succeed. It's not in English, so it's not clear why the game ends after a certain number of items are collected, but it's a really fun game nonetheless. *INO*, which I've personally titled 'The Pig Who Couldn't Slow Down', features a character who runs in whatever direction he's facing. Just watch out for the blocks you can walk through, and the almost invisible ones. They'll give you headaches.

RIDER V2 Like a bat out of hell

Dev: Crest Computer System | www.crest-cs.co.jp/html/rider/dl_rider.html

IT'S EASY TO generalise and say that the Japanese are a bit crazy when it comes to developing games, but they do have some strange ability to find arcade-style fun in following the rules of any monotonous task.

They've got brilliant train-driving games like *Densha De Go!* in which you've got to maintain the correct speed and stop in the right place at stations, with points for accuracy and temperament of your passengers. It's just one example of how pretty much anything can be fun once boiled down to a set of rules and about six buttons.

Rider is a freeware motorbike driving simulator from Japan, in which you must deliver a package to a location a few kilometres down a stretch of

road in a certain time limit. It's entirely mouse-controlled too, with the position of the cursor on the screen affecting turning and speed. If a police officer spots you speeding or breaking a red light, you'll be pulled over and forced to spend a few precious seconds at the side of the road. Riding a motorbike in a city has been boiled down to these simple rules, and it makes for a stupidly fun freeware game.

Extra touches like cars indicating before they change lane, level crossings, pedestrians at the red lights and people smoking out their car windows makes it that little bit more charming too. It'll take you a minute to figure out the barmy-language menu though.

You only need to obey the law when cops are watching.

Beat the clock to unlock faster bikes.
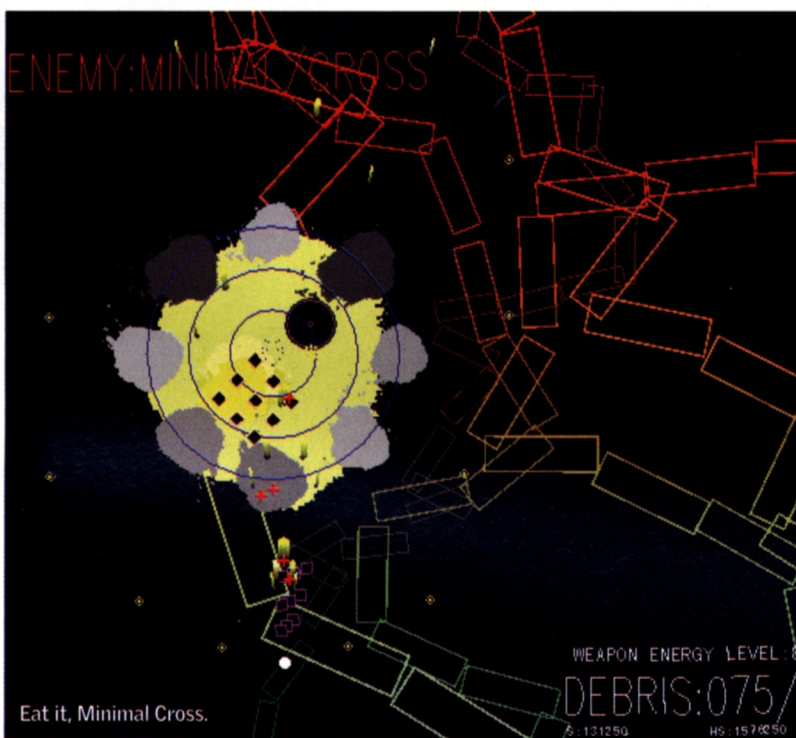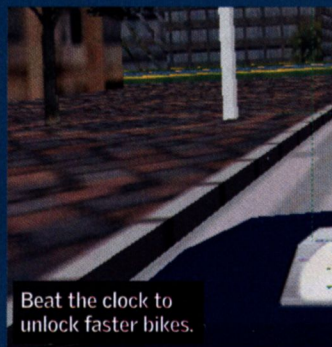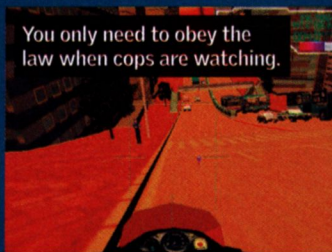
CLEAN ASIA! I'll get the mop and bucket

Dev: Cactus Software | www.cactus-soft.co.nr

Eat it, Minimal Cross.

WEAPON ENERGY LEVEL
DEBRIS:075/

You shoot...

You die...

And things explode.

THIS IS QUITE possibly one of the hardest shoot 'em ups I've ever played. Unfortunately, some of that difficulty stems from bad design, but on the whole it's the sort of game which will have you slamming your fists on the keyboard one minute and compulsively hitting restart the next.

Think *Warning Forever* (most shoot 'em up developers seem to), with an amazing soundtrack and two different types of ships (one original and hardcore, one traditional and easy) and you'll have a decent grasp of what's going on. The fact that enemy bullets are often obscured behind flashy graphics does act as a point on which to focus all

your annoyance, but it's forgivable – *Clean Asia!* is a brilliant shmup.

Make sure you get the right Web address though, otherwise you just might end up ordering a Thai bride, and seeing as this is Freeware and Thai brides are expensive, we'd have to shake our heads disapprovingly.

WEBGAME OF THE MONTH

OWATA
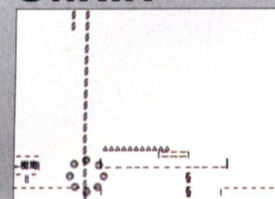
Dev: king_soutuku
blog53.fc2.com/k/king75/file/owata.html

There are stupidly difficult games, and there are games which revel in killing the player in every conceivable fashion. *Owata* is an ASCII art Flash game which actively tries to kill you. For example, the very first platform you come across unleashes a bed of spikes when you touch it. Later on, there are floating platforms who get scared and fly away when you need them most, and signs blatantly leading you into traps. Also, Guile from *Street Fighter* sometimes kicks you in the face when you least expect it. There's even a Mario parody hidden in there if you know where to look. I managed to get as far as the giant floating lion's face who shoots little things at you, but quickly died.

Owata is a cruel and ruthless platformer, but ultimately quite funny. Give it a shot.

Is it time for a mirage of a pretty lady yet?

Team damage! Don't hurt your teammates!

With cutting-edge image manipulation, we've made it look like the helicopter did it.

"If I sneak up this road, maybe nobody will see me..."

HQ: capture Firebase North and Firebase South.
HQ: capture Firebase North and Firebase South.

Come closer, I wish to shoot you...

A feat of British engineering.

Like the end of a Warner Bros cartoon
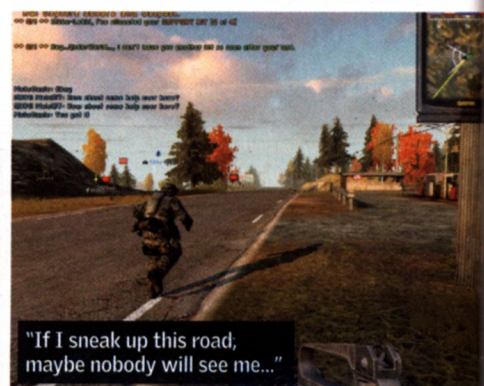
PROJECT REALITY

Play: MOD

Steve Hogarty gets a 1.6GB dose of war-themed reality   www.realitymod.com | Mod for: Battlefield 2

EVERYBODY REMEMBERS THAT army recruitment ad, the one which looked like a normal driving test before it turned into a mad rally through the woods in the dark with a scary man shouting orders into the driver's ear. It was terrifying and exciting, and for 30 seconds it made us all want to slip into some camo-gear and join the Reserves.

Luckily we've got games that replicate the feeling of war with varying degrees of accuracy. On one end of the spectrum there's *Operation Flashpoint* and *Armed Assault*, gritty and realistic facsimiles of

the things that probably happen when you sign up. And of course, on the other end you've got *Battlefield 2*, which likes to pretend that war consists of two evenly matched teams of no more than 32 soldiers capturing control points and driving tanks and planes and whatever.

If you're crying out for a happy medium, you might just find it in *Project Reality*. The *BF2* mod not only bolsters the original game's map count with over 20 entirely new and excellently designed maps, but also adds the British army to the wartime furore.

And what's more, they don't even have rubbish accents either!

Other changes see the crosshair being removed, forcing you to aim with your gun's iron sights rather than shoot from the hip. There's no hit or kill indicator, meaning you can't be entirely sure you've killed somebody until you're standing over their warm dead corpse. All kits generally use the same rifle and only special kits earned from being in a squad allow you to pilot aircraft or use a tank.

Tanks themselves require a three-man team to operate, and can have their

tracks destroyed to immobilise them. The modifications made to the original are so extensive as to almost make it feel like you're playing a whole new game.

The inclusion of a mammoth 30-second spawn time might infuriate less-serious players, but (along with the great supersonic 'whip noise' bullets make when they zip past your ears), it ultimately adds to the mod's tension. *Project Reality* is an essential addition to *BF2*, and almost certainly the game's finest mod. At 1.6GB however (too big for this month's DVD), it's also one of the heftiest.

MATT04

Enter the numbers... To HELL

www.fc-kartografen.de.vu | Mod for: Far Cry

ON THE DVD

AT THE END of *Matto3*, Jack Carver had been shot. That kind of thing happens all the time in shooter games, but when things like this happen in a cut-scene, you know it's serious. *Matto4* picks up the story from this cliffhanger, and naturally, you'll be wanting to shoot people back.

A loving fanfiction, *Matto4* makes that extra effort. There's a lovely scripted moment, when you're overheard crawling through the ventilation system. Bullets puncture the metal, tubes of light leak through, and when the grenade flies into the tube, it's almost possible to forget you're playing a mod. There are also new weapons – "take the pump, it just rocks" – and gas cylinders that you can cause to fly around erratically for five seconds, before blowing up in your face.

The voice-acting is so cheesy and jaw-droppingly awful it could only have been meant as a joke. With this attitude, it works. When Jack slurs: "It looks like I've entered the numbers... To HELL," after entering the code sequence from *Lost* to open the "emergency hat", you'll stop caring whether it's supposed to be funny and just start enjoying yourself. Have a go.

Wanted for crimes against beards.

Play: MOD

Rubber duck = humour.

"Me? Just having a sit down, chilling..."

Press DROPWEAPON (Default) to drop the G3A3 and pick up the M4 Assault Weapon

---

AIRMAPS

Battlefield 2 takes to the skies

www.airmaps.fr | Mod for: Battlefield 2

ON THE DVD

OBSERVE ANY ONLINE game of *Battlefield* and you'll quickly notice how everybody rushes for the best seats on the map. Those seats are inside the cockpits of the game's various F-15s and Apache gunships – even getting a gunner seat inside a plane is more fun than flouncing around on the dirt like a fool. Flying in *BF* games is fun, but it's an infrequent pleasure.

AirMAPS is a French-made mod that adds several plane-based maps to *Battlefield 2*, as well as modifying a few original maps to allow for full-on air combat. One map in particular – easily the best of the bunch – features not only a big chunk of sky to fight in (and about 15 planes littered about the place), but also a massive track for jeep races, and two semi-secret hovering aircraft carriers 600m above the map, so very almost out of reach. On a LAN it becomes an arena for dicking about in, and something that every *BF2* fan should have installed.

Hmmm, Nutella...

Play: MOD

Where did you park the aircraft carrier?

"This doesn't look like the Sandals resort, darling..."

"Goddamn it Maverick!" etc.

INTELLIGENT DESIGN

WITH MAXIS SENIOR DESIGNER: ALEX HUTCHINSON

Hard candy

Games are the only form of entertainment where you can dial the challenge down before you begin – a ridiculous idea. *War And Peace* is long and challenging, but nobody's saying it should have had a bit more sex up front to draw you in.

Every game has an inherent challenge level that should be embraced, and discussions on the game's simplicity, shortness or explosiveness should be confined to pre-release, not abandoned to the player. Some games are simply aiming for an experienced audience. My massive satisfaction in beating GameCube classic *Viewtiful Joe* was because they were mashing my face into the sidewalk constantly, which forced me to master their controls and become more skilled.

While marketing would love every game to be accessible to everyone, they need to understand that a targeted audience can be satisfied, while trying to meet everyone's needs satisfies nobody. If a game offers a truly different experience at different settings, such as *GoldenEye*, then brilliant. However, far more games offer the tuned version of the game, bracketed by two other broken versions labelled 'easy' and 'hard' which have merely had the math for the various stats doubled and halved.

Even *Gears Of War* falls prey to this – the game is average on the easiest settings in single-player, but on the highest difficulty setting it's truly brilliant.

Let's put it this way: Nintendo has the highest average review scores in the world, and I can't even think of an in-house-developed Nintendo game that has a difficulty setting. Nor do *GTA* or *The Sims* or *WOW*. Why? Because there's one version that plays right, and it's the only version you should be allowed to choose.

SPORE IS DUE OUT LATER THIS YEAR – WWW.SPORE.COM

DE_WANDA

Wasn't there a fish called that?

www.fpsbanana.com/maps/19140 | Map for: Counter-Strike: Source

PCZONE ON THE DVD

IF YOU'VE EVER had a smug console owner brag about how *Shadow Of The Colossus* has never and will never be released on PC (probably thankfully, looking at some other console ports this issue), you can now metaphorically slap them with this *CS: Source* map.

Weighing in at 160MB – which means you can't download it from game servers and so you probably won't see many people playing it online – de_wanda (named after the literal translation of the mistranslated name of the game's hero, fact nerds) is possibly the most beautiful map ever rendered in the Source engine.

Set in a section of a city which visibly rolls out to a pretty coastline in the far distance, the map is fully HDR-enabled. Inside a giant theatre is the map's main spectacle, a statue of a colossus wrestling with another similarly sized beast. Textures are crisp and hi-res, and the detail on the massive models is so excruciatingly fine that frame-rates will suffer on all but high-end machines. It's a novelty map for sure, but hop into spectator mode, fly about for a bit and you'll be in awe.

Of course, being the choosy sort of beggars we are, we'd much rather have a decent port of *Shadow Of The Colossus*.

Play: MAP

He'll stand on that balcony for hours, staring at that bloody tree.

Unfortunately, they don't move.

Our bet's on the tentacle dude.

Classic: MOD
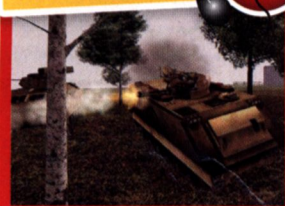
DESERT COMBAT

Fun in the sun

www.desertcombat.com
Mod for: Battlefield 1942

IT'S BEEN A few years since *DC* was widely heralded as the best thing to happen in the modding community since *Counter-Strike*.

In fact, some might speculate that its popularity was so immense that EA themselves took note and shaped their very own *BF2* around an almost identical premise to that of the mod – a modern-day version of their WWII shooter, set in the sandy Middle East.

Some strength is given to that particular rumour by the fact that the modders were subsequently hired by DICE, and have now left to create *Frontlines: Fuel Of War* – a *Battlefield*-esque shooter which will be going head-to-head with EA's own online behemoth. *Desert Combat* meanwhile, remains the most popular *BF1942* mod around.

BF2 SANDBOX

PCZONE ON THE DVD
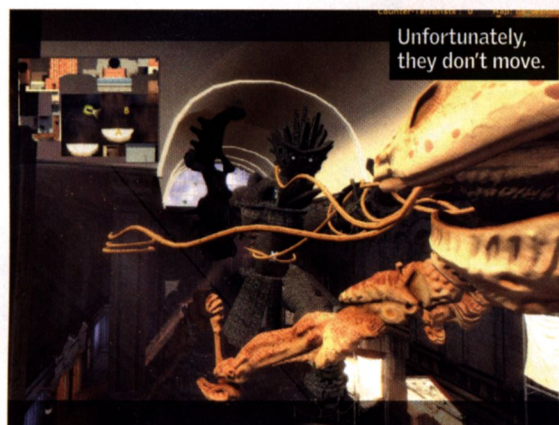
And not a Garry in sight

labs.elxx.net | Mod for: Battlefield 2

Play: MOD

EVEN THOUGH IT doesn't strike anybody as the sort of game in which a *Garry's Mod*-style sandbox would work, *BF2* functions rather well as a LEGO-sim.

Lacking the sort of features which make *Garry's Mod* so fantastic to play, such as proper physics and constraints, you can't expect to build anything particularly spectacular in *BF2* sandbox.

However, what it does provide is the ability to spawn any object in the game on any map (or on the open map the mod provides). Crates, barrels, girders and other war-themed paraphernalia appear with a few clicks of the rose menu system, and all can be turned, twisted and tipped to any angle you please, before being placed on the map.

OK, so it's a slightly exaggerated object-placement game, but it did allow me to create a wall of crates before seeing if an F-15 could fly through it and come out unscathed. It couldn't, and the resulting debris slowed my PC to a crawl. What other hilarious scenarios can you envisage? I bet you're thinking of 20 right now.

Even helicopters love *PC ZONE* magazine.

I'd like to see Derren Brown create a jet plane using just a rose menu.

WIN A PACKARD BELL GAMING PC!

Win this strapping PC worth a colossal £1,499!

WE SPOIL YOU, we actually spoil you. If you were a cat, you'd be that super-fat cat we saw in the paper a few weeks ago. If you were a toddler, you'd be on an episode of *Panorama* or something, munching on some chips while your pendulous chins flap about. But you're not a toddler (unless you're a super-reading toddler), or even a cat. No, you're our reader, and we're going to spoil you with a chance to win a superb iPower 8810 PC, courtesy of Packard Bell. Ding dong!

At this year's i-Series LAN party, Packard Bell will be giving gamers a chance to compete in an international gaming competition in Portugal. i-Series is the UK's largest LAN party with 1,500 spaces for gamers and cash prizes across several games tournaments. It's called i30 (being the 30th event in the series), and it takes place on April 6-9 in Newbury. Find more details at i30.multiplay.co.uk.

To be in with a chance of winning this sleek piece of black machinery, just answer the following question...

Q Which greasy-haired eco-warrior whose name means 'having swamp-like characteristics' famously protested against the construction of the Newbury bypass?

A: Kofi Annan
B: Bill Bailey
C: Swampy

To win, simply send a text message to 84383. Start your text with PCZPC, then a space, then either A, B or C, then a space, and finally your name and address. It only costs £1, and you don't have to fanny about with postcards and stamps and rubbish. Competition ends April 25, 2007, any entries received after this date will be, frankly, laughed at. Standard competition and texting rules apply, see page 9. If you do not want to receive details of further offers and promotions from Future Publishing, please put the word NO at the end of your text message. If you insist on entering by post, you can do so by sending a postcard to Packard Bell PC Compo, PC ZONE, Future Publishing, 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW.

TEXT TO WIN!

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Build a working plane in... Garry's Mod v10

PCZONE ON THE DVD

Steve Hogarty explains how to get airborne...

Need:
- A copy of *Half-Life 2*
- A copy of *Garry's Mod v10*
- A basic understanding of how it all works

What you'll get:
- ✓ A kick-ass plane
- ✓ Annoyed if it doesn't work
- ✗ The urge to become an engineer

YES, WE'RE GOING to build a plane in *Garry's Mod v10*. Truth be told it's quite easy once you get the hang of it, but if you've never used this wonderful piece of software before then you might struggle as I've glossed over the basics. Luckily, *Garry's Mod* itself provides an introductory tutorial to get you going.

Once you know how, you could build a bigger plane with more guns, a retractable gear and a working sit-in cockpit for other players to use when playing on a server. For now though, here's an easy one...

01 ▶ TOOL UP

First off, grab these essential add-ons for *Garry's Mod* from our DVD: they install to either the garrysmod/gamemodes/sandbox folder, or into the garrysmod/addons folder.

Freespace06_v2-1 – snipurl.com/pcz_freespace
This is the rather excellent map most decent servers are running.

Phoenix Pack v3 – snipurl.com/pcz_phoenix
A whole bunch of objects suited to building all sorts of things.

Mountable Cannons – snipurl.com/pcz_cannons
You'll be using these on your plane, for obvious reasons.

Weight Tool – snipurl.com/pcz_weights
Very handy if you find your plane's a bit on the heavy side.

Wing Tool – snipurl.com/pcz_wing
The most important add-on, this will actually make your plane fly.

Note Tool – snipurl.com/pcz_note
Very handy for saving information on your props, as you'll see.

Garrysmod.org provides the goods.

Get this wrong and it'll never fly.
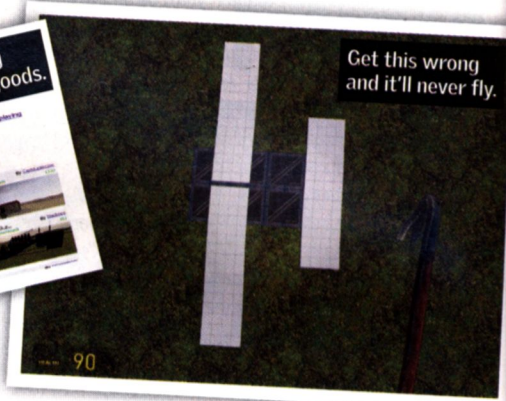
02 ▶ The basics

Your plane is made of a few basic parts. The body will be a metal_plate2x4, the two wings will each be plastic_panel1x4, and the rear wing component (the horizontal stabiliser if you're into this sort of thing) will be another plastic_panel1x4. Weld them together as shown in the screenshot (above). The best way to achieve this is to press SHIFT+E when rotating an object with the physgun, as this will make it snap to angles, meaning everything will be nice and straight. Try to keep things as symmetrical as possible otherwise it'll be lopsided. For extra stability, weld everything to everything else.

03 ▶ MAKE IT GO

Your plane needs to move on land, so give it some wheels on each corner, making sure to keep things even – don't bind them to any keys either. It might not be very plane-like, but you can make more adventurous wheel designs once you've nailed the basics. Place two cola-can thrusters on the back of the rear wing, with force set to 10,000. Bind them to the plus key for push and the minus key for pull, and set them to toggle on and off. These will act as your main engines, providing the necessary thrust to get you airborne.

Use the grids on the panels to keep things aligned.

Not as complicated as aeronautical engineers would have you believe.

Wing Tool

Lift Coefficient	0.900
Drag Coefficient	1.000
Wing Area	1.000
Allow tool to modify wing area	✓

04 ▶ Take flight

Now here's the really annoying and tricky part. Quicksave before you do this. Take out the wing tool and change the all settings to 1. Apply these wing settings to the three wing components of your plane, fire the thrusters and watch what happens. If it's anything like the one I built, the arse-end should start rising while the nose drags along the floor. In this situation, lower the lift setting for the rear wing and slightly increase the lift setting for the front wings, before applying the tool to the wings again and firing the thrusters.

05 ▸ TWEAK

We finally settled on a lift setting of 0.9 for the front and 0.7 for the back – this gives a nice speed without the plane rising too quickly. Keep your other wing settings at 1. The next thing to do is place thrusters allowing you to control the movements of the plane. Place a cola-can thruster on top of the left wing (facing upwards), non-toggle, force of 2,000, push bound to the 4 key, pull bound to the 6 key. Do the same on the right wing, but with inverted key bindings (that is, push bound to 6, etc). This lets you tilt the plane left and right with the 4 and 6 keys.

You can make the thrusters invisible at the end if you like.

Not strictly how the real planes do it, but still.

06 ▸ Barrel roll!

The method of controlling the pitch of the plane, if you haven't already figured it out, is to place a thruster on top of the rear wing (or alternatively on the front, but let's not confuse things). Give it a force of 4,000, non-toggle (again, this is so it only works while you hold the key down), and set push to 5 and pull to 8. You should now have a WASD-style control system for the plane, set across the 8, 4, 5 and 6 keys on the numpad. It should fly like a feather on the dreams of a thousand angels. If it doesn't, you're clearly an idiot.

Just like *MS Flight Sim* really.
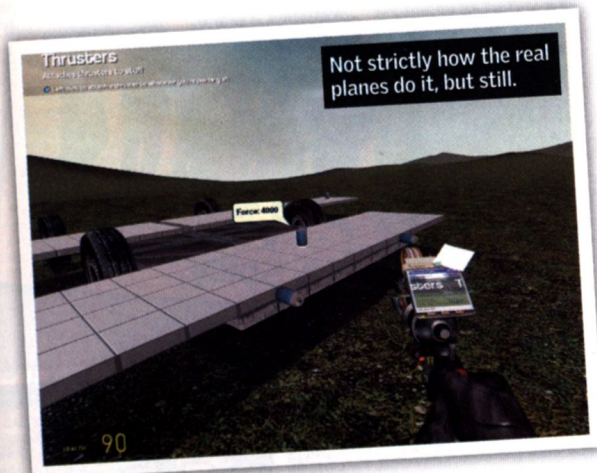
07 ▸ CAMERAS, ACTION

To save yourself having to chase the plane around as it flies, you can add a camera to it. Put yourself in the position you want your camera to be in by using noclip in the command console. Take out the camera tool and bind the camera you're about to make to zero on the numpad. Ideally, you want to be looking in the same direction as shown in the screenshot, before hitting the mouse button to make the camera. Now weld this camera to the two front wings. You can now hit zero to swap between normal view and the camera you've just made.

08 ▸ Guns

Grab your plane with the physgun and snap it to an angle using SHIFT+E: you're about to give your creation a nice bit of offensive firepower. Select the turret tool, bind it to 7 and spawn two turrets on the ground. Use the physgun to pick these turrets up and place them on the wings, snap them to the correct angle so they fire directly forward, then weld them to their corresponding wings. Now, as I'm sure you've figured out, the 7 key fires a nice stream of bullets. And yes, they hurt.

Re-enact *North By Northwest* in *Garry's Mod*!

09 ▸ GUNNING FOR YA

As an added incentive to get the hell out of the way of this plane, you can add cannons to the underside of the wing, bound to 9 on the numpad. I prefer sticking heavy bomb bays directly to the underside, but we've come so far now that I trust you to do whatever you want with regards to ordinance. This is where the weight tool comes in handy too – if something you add to your plane (like a G-man on a rope) weighs it down, give it a weight of 1 to lighten the load.

Hold down the 'c' key and you can position things with the cursor.
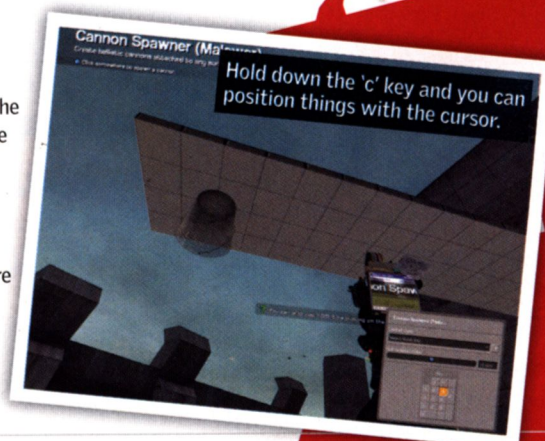
10 ▸ PIMP MY RIDE

Now to make it pretty. If you want that pesky camera to be invisible, go to the colour tool and set the far right slider (transparency) to the bottom and apply it to the camera. Use the colour tool to colourise the plane, and the material tool to change the texture to something other than metal (matte white works well for showing colour). A word of warning though: wing settings don't survive save games – so note them using the note tool and reapply them when you load. And there you have it, one fully-working plane with guns and bombs on it. Well done. **PCZ**

Fight Club

1st rule of Fight Club: tell your friends about Fight Club

THIS MONTH'S FIGHT CLUB screamed into action like a meteor blazing through the crisp, dawn sky, colliding with the cake-like surface of the Earth and rippling out in great big chocolate-y waves of sugary delight. With all these metaphors, who even has time to talk about what happened? Well OK, if you insist.

This month, our ongoing reader vendetta tumbled into the realms of

Team Fortress Classic, partially because we've played *TF2*, but mostly because it's a great game. KerazyJoe continually smashed team-mates in the face with his wrench, while Reverend Joseph managed to snipe Steve enough times to draw expletives from his lips.

Next Fight Club takes place on Thursday, April 5 from 6pm, where we'll be playing good ol' *Counter-Strike: Source*. Check www.zonegames.co.uk...

"Please stop hitting me," isn't part of KerazyJoe's vocabulary.

COME AND TAKE ON THE ZONE STAFF IN OUR MONTHLY ONLINE GAMING FREE-FOR-ALL!

It's no fun when everyone's a spy.

ZONE CHAT
Rib & Saucy > Nice & Spicy

ZONE CHAT KICKED off half an hour early this month, and conversation settled briefly on a few PC games, mainly the processor-intensive excellence of *Supreme Commander*, *Sam & Max's* return to form in *Episode 4*, and thrilling about *Clive Barker's Jericho*.

All the games in the world couldn't distract us from the hottest topic of the day though. The salt-and-MSG coated subject on everyone's lips this month was the unhealthy deliciousness of crisps. Crisps! Just one bag a day is "like glugging back three litres of oil a year", say the government, meaninglessly. Yeah, 'the government', but Tangy Toms are only 10p and so delicious. These questions were answered: Do Transform-A-Snacks taste better if you make the little car before you eat them? How fast can Suzy eat Nik-Naks? And vitally, were Beefburger Monster Munch any different to Roast Beef? (Answers below.)

If you feel the urge to join in with some high-brow conversations that occasionally touch on PC gaming, then you should join us on Wednesday, April 4 for what promises to be 2007's only *ZONE* Chat in April.

What I wouldn't give for a packet of A6 right now.

1. Yes. 2. Really quickly. 3. Yes. The Beefburger ones were even more delicious than Roast Beef, but they only came out for a while, and were (probably) withdrawn because the idiot Monster Munch purists demanded Roast Beef back when all they ever do is bang on about Pickled Onion anyway. And besides, you can only get stupid big sizes of Flamin' Hot these days, so where does that leave your precious monster snack tradition, eh? Thanks for ruining Monster Munch, you idiots.

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 because you're making your very first moussaka and have to chop aubergines – then join other *PCZ* readers on the following public servers. Who knows, some *PC 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
Phil Wand PCZ_People's Front Of Judea
Jon Blyth PCZ_Log

1 COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE
cs.zonegames.co.uk:27015
cs.zonegames.co.uk:27025

2 HALF-LIFE 2: DEATHMATCH
hl2.zonegames.co.uk:27065

3 DAY OF DEFEAT: SOURCE
dod.zonegames.co.uk:27085

4 TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC
tfc.zonegames.co.uk:27045

5 WOLFENSTEIN: ENEMY TERRITORY
et.zonegames.co.uk:27960

6 PREY
prey.zonegames.co.uk:27719

7 BATTLEFIELD 2142
bf2142.zonegames.co.uk:16567

8 JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING
Listed in NovaWorld

All details correct at the time of going to press. But they might change. We're fickle like that.
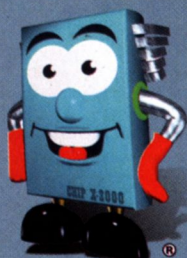
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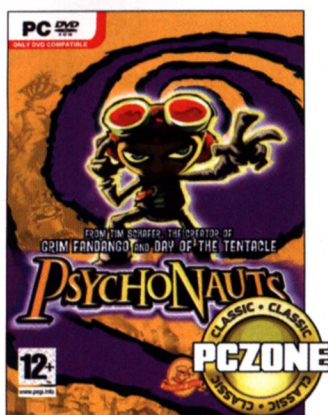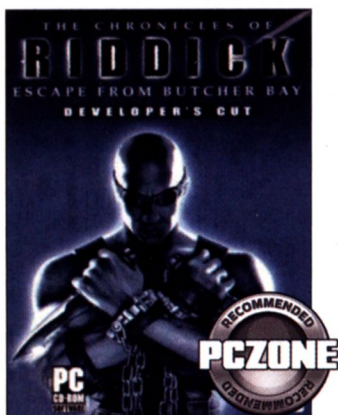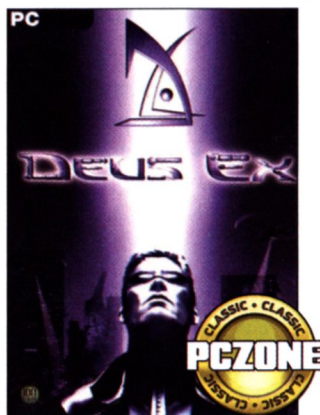
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Retro**ZONE**

Tentacles, professors, bikers and Indiana Jones. And you can click on them all...

SCUMMVM

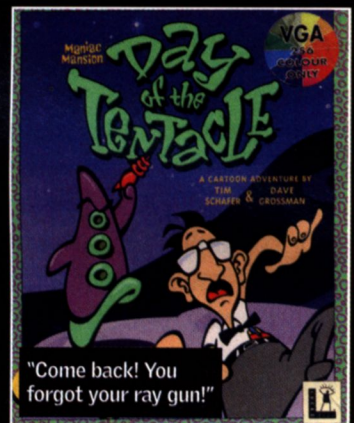**EMULATION OF THE MONTH**

IN 1987, *MANIAC MANSION* introduced the unspectacularly-named hero, Dave Miller, and his kidnapped girlfriend. Her name was Sandy Pantz, but the less said about that, the better. It also introduced the SCUMM engine; and as you're no doubt aware, this stands for Script Creation Utility for Maniac Mansion.

This engine went through eight versions, and sung its piratical swansong in 1997, when *The Curse of Monkey Island* brought LeChuck's beard to new levels of flaming animation, and Guybrush Threepwood was pushed to unprecedented heights of foppish gangliness. That was the last we heard from SCUMM, and several versions of Windows later, those old games aren't going to work.

That's what SCUMMVM is for. It isn't the usual emulator you'll see in these pages; by which we mean it's not designed to force every game made for another platform into your PC, thus starting you on a downward spiral into piracy, cartoonish supervillainy and a

"I ordered pizza!"

"Come back! You forgot your ray gun!"

BUT HOW?

First, install the SCUMMVM emulator from the disc. SCUMMVM works by replacing the executable files from the discs, but you'll still need all the data files from the floppies or CD. Then you'll have to copy the game data files into a place SCUMMVM recognises, and if you're using the CD version, copy the sound files to your hard drive too. There's full documentation on their home page about the files you'll need...

Links...

❶ SCUMMVM
www.scummvm.org
Home of the emulator, and a couple of games that the developers have graciously handed over to freeware.

❷ Compatibility
www.scummvm.org/compatibility.php
For a full list of games that can be played using the virtual machine. It's not all LucasArts you know.

> **You can even play *Hit The Road* on your PSP, which immediately doubles its count of decent games...**

lifetime of pushing prams down steep hills. This one works the other way round; instead of bringing all formats to the PC, it lets you play old PC games anywhere. In modern versions of Windows, on your SymbianOS mobile phone; you can even put *Hit The Road* on your PSP, which almost immediately doubles the big-

faced handheld's count of decent games.

Apart from the freeware games generously freed up by their owners which we've generously included on our DVD, you'll need the original game discs to play. But that's fine, isn't it? You hate getting things for free as much as we do.

Vroom and indeed, vroom.

SIX OF THE BEST

You can play more than LucasArts games, but...
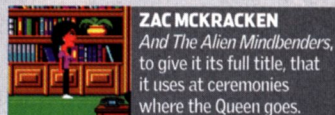
ZAC MCKRACKEN
And The Alien Mindbenders, to give it its full title, that it uses at ceremonies where the Queen goes.

DAY OF THE TENTACLE
The sequel to *Maniac Mansion*, and one of the most fondly remembered classics.
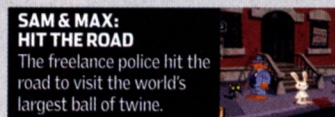
SAM & MAX: HIT THE ROAD
The freelance police hit the road to visit the world's largest ball of twine.

FULL THROTTLE
Luke Skywalker played Ripburger, the bad guy who killed people and wanted to sell mini-vans.
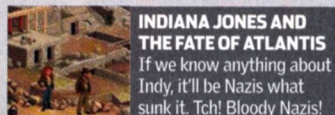
INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS
If we know anything about Indy, it'll be Nazis what sunk it. Tch! Bloody Nazis!

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND
She may not be pretty, but she gets by because she's simply brilliant.
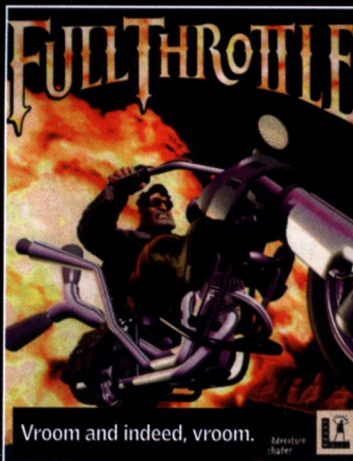
# NOW & THEN

Sam & Max vs Head Over Heels

NOW

SAM & MAX

THEN

HEAD OVER HEELS

LONG BEFORE THE freelance police, Jon Ritman created a pair of special agents from the planet Freedom. These intrepid explorers comprised of a dog's head with muscular arms where most dogs have ears, and a bipedal cat whose destiny included having his best friend's arse resting on his scalp. One could jump and throw donuts, one could run and climb stairs. But when they sat on each other... Well, they could do both. Theirs was a friendship that would never be broken, unless they had to go through a low doorway.
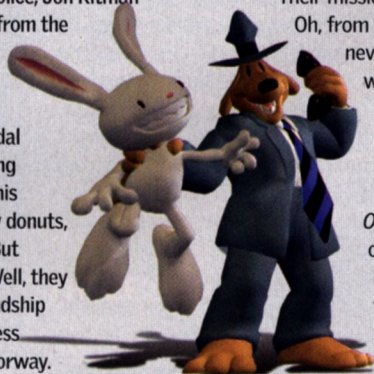
Their mission was to save five worlds from... Oh, from something or other. Most people never really found out what they were fighting against anyway, they were too busy getting disintegrated by royal daleks and mistiming jumps over toasters. It's not *Dreamfall*, it's *Head Over Heels*. For PC gamers, the original art of Bernie Drummond has been updated in a freeware version that can only be described as loving. To play it right now, look at the column to the right.

PLAY IT!

Head Over Heels was originally on the 8-bits, but when a good game has cats and dogs in it, it's bound to get remade by talented fans...

1. Visit the excellent Retrospec site, at retrospec.sgn.net.

2. Keep focused! There's a world of remakes here, but we're only after *Head Over Heels*. Stop playing *Atic Atac*.

3. Stop it! Now you're playing *Attack Of The Mutant Camels*. We haven't even got past 'A' yet.

4. When you finally do make it to 'H', download the 14MB file and get stuck in the space and robots zone, just like we did.

MAME FRAME

Q*BERT Dev: Gottlieb | Year: 1982

Q*BERT

The thrilling night level.

"A NOSE THIS big is pretty useful," said Q*Bert. Or, at least, he did in the one spoof erotic fanfiction we could bring ourselves to read. We won't go into detail, but faces get sat on. Well, you wouldn't write a spoof erotic fanfiction about *Q*Bert* unless you were going to use the nose.

Q*Bert himself wasn't so eloquent; his voice was created by randomised processes through the Votrax chip, which, fans of tedious trivia, was the first integrated speech synthesis chip, beating Speak & Spell by two years.

It was probably his filthy speech patterns which charmed the world. He spawned a largely-forgotten sequel, *Q*Bert's Qubes*, and a pinball table with the flippers on the wrong way. But charm us he did, even if he didn't get his own cartoon like *Pac-Man*. We'll never quite be able to work out why we still know the names of Ugg and Wrongway. They certainly don't appear on the arcade game. How does that information enter your brain? Did they do a poster in Saturday's *Guardian*?

WHAT IS MAME?

MAME is the Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator, currently emulating over 6,000 games. You can download it from www.mame.net – use Mame32 for a nice front-end. Then you can download *Robby Roto*, which is legal. You can play all the others too, but not legally. So stop it. Right now.

*Q*Bert Qubes*: long lost for good reason.
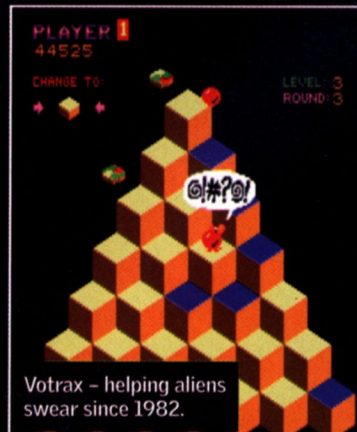
Votrax – helping aliens swear since 1982.

BACK IN THE DAY...
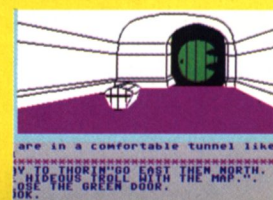
THE HOBBIT

By Jon 'Log' Blyth

All this graphical adventuring takes me back to my primary school teacher, Mr Barker. He was a bit of a shit – he sent me to the headmaster for sniffing a Pritt Stick, and constantly corrected my spelling of 'computer program' to add a mistaken 'me' at the end. Worse still, he stopped me stroking through my zeroes like my Spectrum did. And his breath smelled. However, he did let us play *The Hobbit* in maths classes. Besides feeling like an incredible conversation with a machine (I don't understand penis, Dave), it taught me how to ask a wizard to carry me and go east. Which, as far as core life skills go, is up there with working out how far up a wall a five-metre ladder goes.

SUPERTEST
BEST CONSOLE PORT

PCZONE ON THE DVD

It's a journey strewn with possible pitfalls. Which games navigate it best?

RESIDENT EVIL 4. Having that title so close to the headline 'best console port' could be misleading. It might suggest, for example, that *Resi 4* was a decent port of the GameCube's finest moment, and therefore anything other than a heartbreaking disappointment. Only a strong sense of denial had ever made us believe we'd get anything more, but for god's sake – no mouse control?

When developers get it right though, they deserve praise to be sprinkled upon them. Take Rockstar – they might not be too quick in getting their games to PC, but when they do put the *GTA* games across, it's like being given a chance to play the game as graphics cards intended.

As well as paying tribute to *The Chronicles Of Riddick* and BioWare's excellent *KOTOR* and *Jade Empire*, an appreciative nod was given to Grin Software, who make the PC version of *Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter*. It was a bit off-topic, what with *GRAW*

being a PC-unique version of a simultaneous release, but considering the extra effort required, it's a pleasant surprise this was even considered, let alone commissioned.

If you want to hear the full discussion, check out our chitter-chatter on the DVD, where you'll hear Log hacking up a partial lung, and Suzy screaming: "For god's sake – no mouse control?" Then you should log on to the forums at www.pczone.co.uk and share with us your favourite games that have ridden the crap-strewn road from console to PC, and made it through with their boots unsoiled. **PCZ**

Tiny Steve! Far away!

They couldn't quite rebuild him.

Big Porter, lumbering over the horizon.

"Tell Jamie... I'm not... Talking... To him..."

Playing *GTA* on PC is like being given a chance to play the game as graphics cards intended...
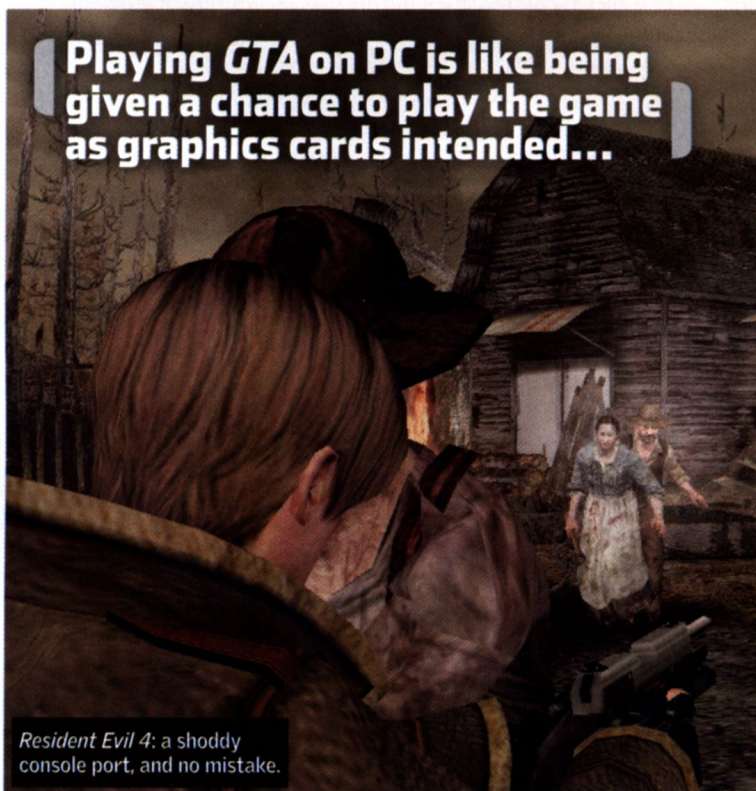
Resident Evil 4: a shoddy console port, and no mistake.

STEVE HILL'S NeverQuest

Steve Hill returns mob-handed to World Of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade...

WHAT IS WRONG with three grown men meeting up at lunchtime to prance around a fantasy world sporting hooves and tails? Ostensibly nothing, although as I point out to my esteemed colleagues, Will and Log: "This feels wrong."

"Anything in particular feel wrong?" asks Log. "Or just the whole thing?"

"The entire concept," I confirm.

Nevertheless, we are a fearsome trio of newly spawned Draenei, me sat at home alone, flanked by my more experienced office-based wingmen. Somebody called Kinus also tries to join our gang, but when his request is politely denied he charmingly resorts to: "F you gay boys."

"Shall we go and kill some moths then?" interjects Will.

"You all suck," offers the spurned Kinus. Rattle, pram etc.

The moth blood isn't going to collect itself, so we split up and launch into the giant insects as I galvanise the assault with a cry of "Kill kill kill". It seems to work, and the oversized lepidoptera are swiftly slain. Will finishes first, and

smugly points out: "I'm clearly a more experienced moth blood harvester than either of you."

Killing my last moth, I deliver the blood to Proenitus, and am faced with my first crucial decision – whether to accept a salvaged leather belt or a pair of worn slippers.

"I like the look of the slippers," I muse out loud.

"Then get them," urges Will. "You only live once."

THREE'S UP

I think it's the right decision, and as I pace around in my newly acquired footwear, I make a rude gesture at Botanist Taerix.

"You really don't like botanists, do you?" says Will, who has been dancing with her.

"I, on the other hand, am captivated by them," claims Log, and starts flirting with her. Confused, I roar with bestial vigour at Will, who points out that there are "some more quests inside the magic glowy thing". Heading in, we all make a beeline for the pert-breasted Fanalina.

"Hello Fanalina," proffers Will as an opening gambit, perhaps erring on the rudimentary side.

Log is slightly more creative, claiming: "Fanalina was my mother's name."

Biding my time, I give her the once over and declare: "She's got a nice tail. Let's spit-roast her."

"One at either end," pipes up Log. "I'll do the belly button."

"This could be seen as sexual

harassment," points out Will. "If Fanalina wasn't a man from Norway."

"She has cloven hooves," I notice, and our interest rapidly wanes.

OWL IS MURDER

Heading back into the outside world, we embark on a series of quests, the first of which seems to involve slaughtering giant owls. They're the size of Wombles, and as I plaintively cry: "This is murder."

More comfortable slaughtering the flora, I viciously hack into ten mutated root lashers in return for the grand sum of 35 pence. Our good nature is being abused, and in the space of an hour we've healed a lake, inoculated some owls and rescued some survivors. It's all a bit local though, not to mention a bit dull, the only mildly comical respite being when we bump into somebody calling himself Milfhuntr.

This isn't what I signed up for – I'm a warrior and I want to see the world. Appealing to my comrades, they solemnly decide that I am ready.

"Steve," announces Will, sagely. "We're going to our glorious race's capital."

Linking up in a three-man daisy chain, Log leads the way and Will can barely contain his excitement.

"Hurrah!" whoops the young warrior. "I feel like I'm in *Lord Of The Rings* or some such thingy, going on a big journey of great importance." In the meantime, I stick the kettle on.

Returning to the fray, I appear to have become detached from the daisy chain, and my colleagues are attempting to rouse me.

"I think he's died," posits Will, and slaps me across the face. More prosaically, Log moots either a "wank" or a "coffee".

BUGGER OFF

It's tea actually, and with a sip of the cup that cheers, I rejoin the chain. Coming to a sudden halt, Will lurches into my back.

"Stop bumming me!" I yell.

"Yeah Will, that's totally not on," concurs Log.

"It's all part of the fantasy travel experience," pleads Will the Sodomist.

Despite the uninvited buggery, we journey on and eventually make it to a large pink building, possibly called The Exodar. Now leading the way up front, Will peers over the edge of a huge abyss and asks: "What do you reckon? Would I survive the drop?"
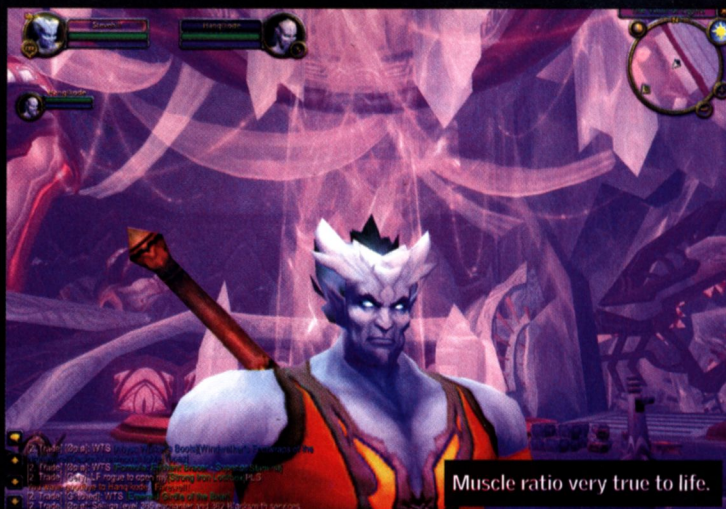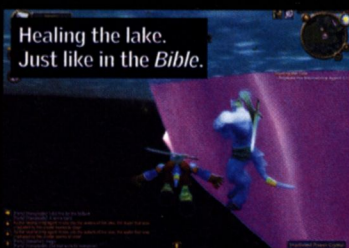
Not waiting for a response, he launches himself down with a "goodbye cruel world" and there's only silence.

"Is it safe?" I bellow.

"Not dead!" comes the joyful reply, and Log and myself leap in unison to join the heroic Will, where the most amazing sight greets us. Oh hang on, *Countdown's* just starting. As Des O'Connor's orange face fills the screen, I silently log out. **PCZ**

Three men, no baby.

> "I do like the look of the slippers," I muse. "Then get them," urges Will. "You only live once after all..."

Hooves are all the rage.

Healing the lake. Just like in the *Bible*.

Muscle ratio very true to life.

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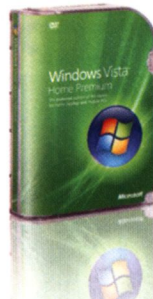
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DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY
RAINBOW SIX: VEGAS

Jamie Sefton extends a snake cam under the door of Ubisoft Montreal to eavesdrop on the making of the glitzy tactical shooter...

LAS VEGAS – A CITY synonymous with Hollywood glamour, Elvis, casinos, the Rat Pack and endless dodgy escort/contact magazines promoted by unfortunate illegal immigrants. America's gambling paradise, however, is an unlikely setting for a notoriously hardcore tactical shooter with a squad that has to take on a band of particularly brutal South American terrorists. Ubisoft Montreal's game designer Steven Masters (right) huddles in Canada's -14-degree big-freeze to give us a warm insight into the making of *Rainbow Six: Vegas*...
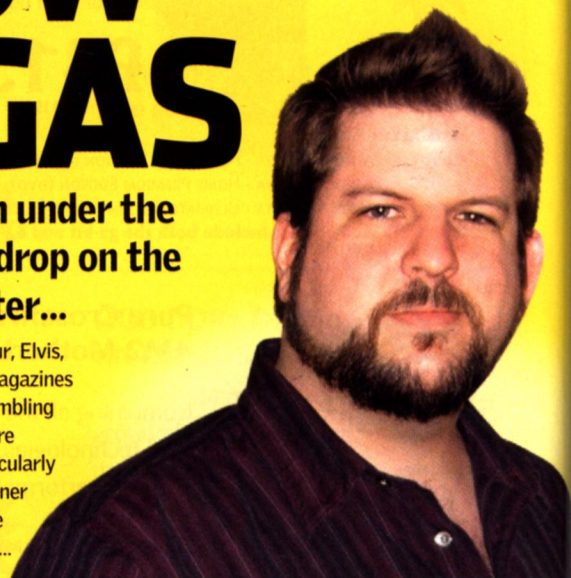
Mexico: less glamorous than Vegas.
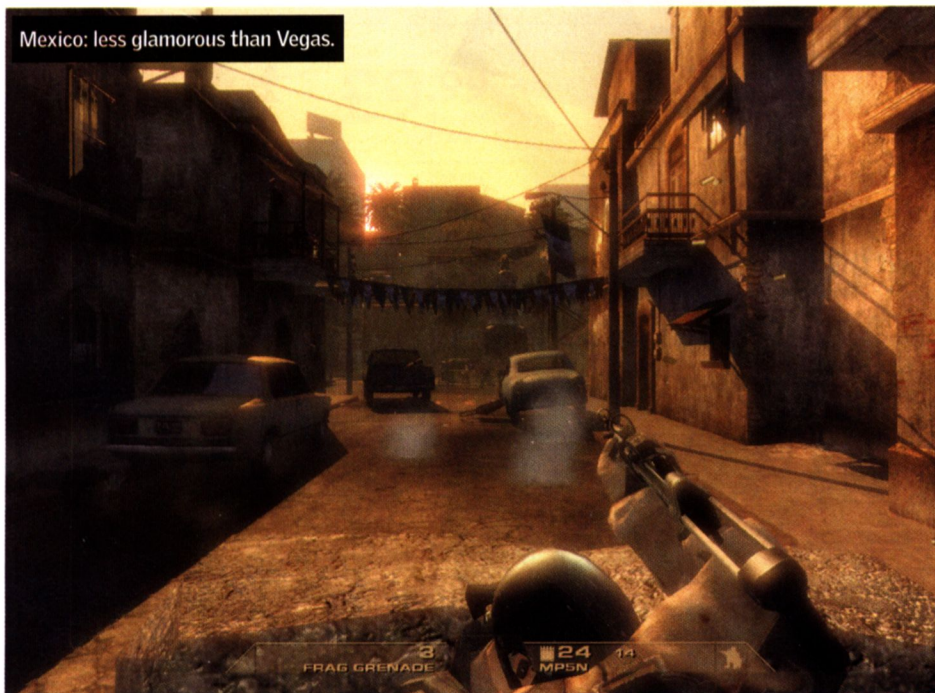
01 RAINBOW SIX: MEXICO?: "We began the game in Mexico, largely for narrative reasons and to tell the story of the terrorist organisation, but we were trying to do a few things too. We wanted to introduce the team to the player and then take it away again – we wanted that to be an emotional experience. Second, we wanted to make a really distinct contrast between the dusty streets of Mexico and the glitzy glamour of Vegas. I think perhaps, the Mexican missions went on a little longer than we intended, but we also wanted the player to explore and get used to the game before they got to the 'money shot', as it were."

> **"*Rainbow Six* has traditionally been about multiple teams of four, so it was a tough decision to reduce that to just three guys. We wanted to make them feel like humans"**
> Steven Masters, game designer, Ubisoft Montreal

02 INTELLIGENT SOLDIERS: "*Rainbow Six* has traditionally been about multiple teams of four, so it was a tough decision to reduce that to just three guys. We wanted to improve their characterisation, to make them feel like humans, and having only two team-mates made that a lot easier, and let us put a lot more into their AI. The context-sensitive command system was a huge effort right across the team – just from the programming side, we had one guy from start to finish developing all the info we'd need in the game to allow us to do that. We went through half a dozen different iterations, trying again and again until we got something we were happy with."

HOLDING
ASSAULT
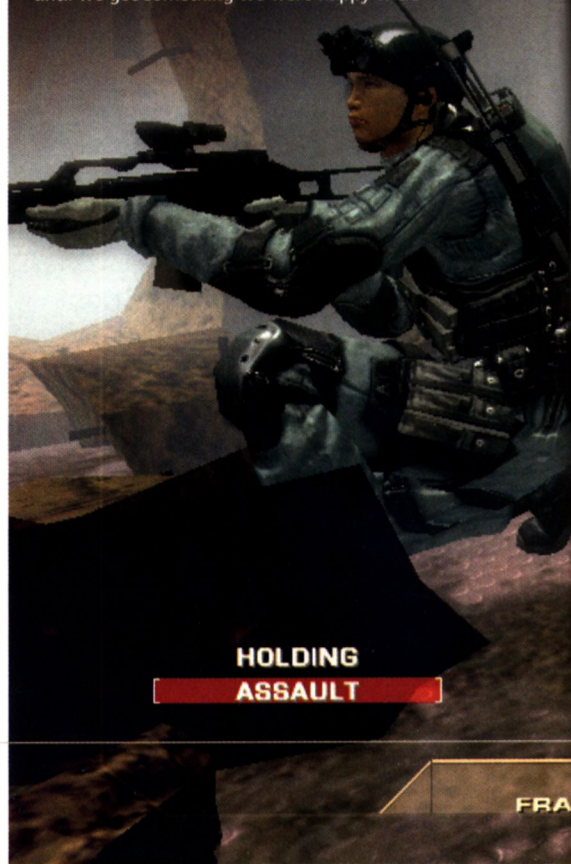
An oasis of hookers and gambling in an otherwise barren world.
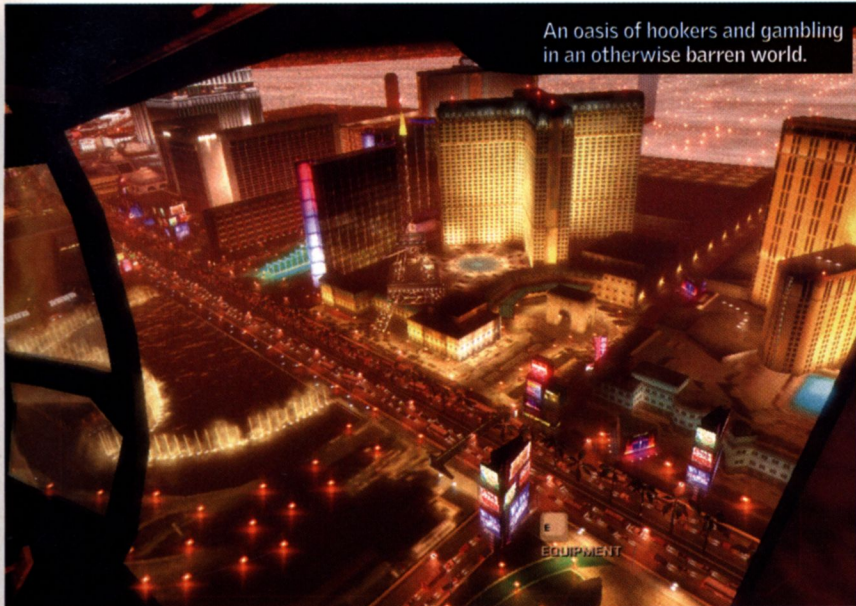
VIVA LAS VEGAS: "We sent three of our artists down there for a week, and they took thousands of photos and gave us really amazing reference material that the level designers could work from. Las Vegas is a very well publicised place – people know what it looks like. We could use the exteriors of the buildings – the shape of them – but we couldn't use the names of the casinos and hotels, or anything copyrighted. However, a lot of what you see is what's actually there in Vegas, apart from the stuff we blow up, which is our own invention."

"The heart of the *Rainbow Six* experience is that it's brutal and unforgiving, so moving to the new health system was a tough sell"

Steven Masters, game designer, Ubisoft Montreal

LOW AMMO

Less guys means fewer tactics, but lots more 'special moments'.

3   NADE   14   FAMAS

04 **GOOD FOR THE HEALTH:** "The heart of the *Rainbow Six* experience is that it's super-brutal and unforgiving, so moving to the new health system was a tough sell. The real driving factor was that we were producing this *24*-esque continuous experience where you spend the night in Vegas, and to do that with only three health points wasn't really feasible – it would've made the game extraordinarily hardcore. There was no way we were going back to the health pack mentality, so we went with the idea of the bullet just grazing you rather than hitting you in the heart, and it proved the best solution. It also leads to some really intense moments, when you've got your screen darkened out and you're under fire."

Gun wound? Have a sit down and you'll be right as rain.

USING FAST ROPE
ASSAULT

"Did someone say they were slicing a pie?"
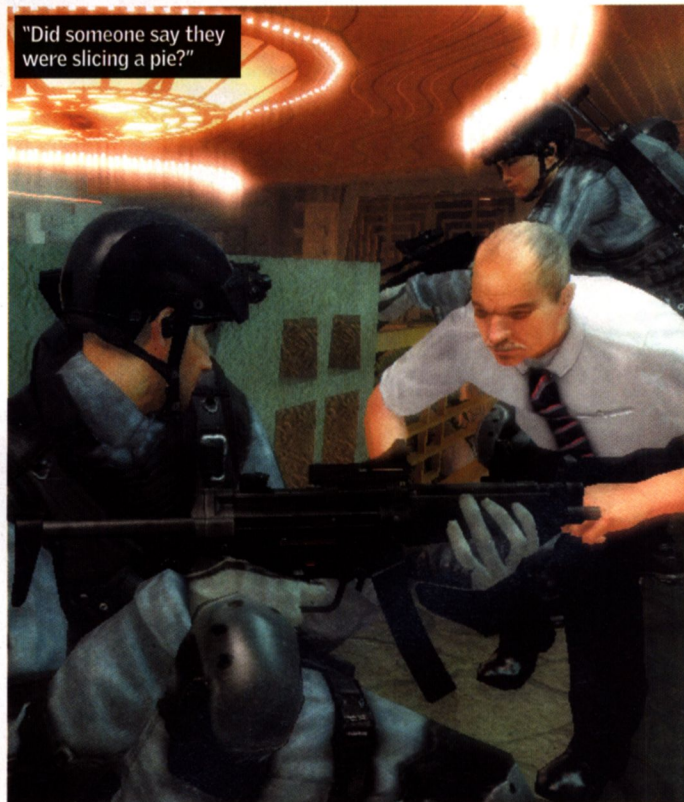
05 **TAKE COVER:** "This actually happened really early in development. Two-and-a-half years ago we decided to have this cover system, and from then it was just what it was going to be and how flexible it was. There was a lot of fear from fans earlier on, especially the multiplayer crowd, that it wasn't going to allow for balanced games and so forth. We were looking at forums and they were saying 'It'll destroy *Rainbow Six*!', but we were like, 'Don't worry – it's all under control'!"

06 **MULTIPLAYER:** "It was absolutely crucial to get this right for the PC game. FPSs live or die by their multiplayer mode, and it's always been integral to and a big focus of the *Rainbow* experience. Personally, I'm a big fan of co-op, so I really wanted to make that work well. We wanted people to have fun going through the casinos together – it's always a really powerful experience when you gather your friends together, and instead of competing against each other, you're working together against the AI. It's great fun and I'm aiming to put co-op in all my future games."

The terrorists get laser blasters? No fair!

JUNG IS DOWN
YOU MUST SAVE HIM

07 **WEAPONS:** "A lot of it is just real Spec Ops, what they actually use. We looked at teams around the world, but unfortunately it still boils down to a very limited range of weapons. So we had two focuses – the Rainbow weapons and the terrorist weapons, which can be more varied but are mostly things we know are really common out there. Of course, we wouldn't work on *Rainbow Six* if we didn't have a certain fascination with weaponry, and we all have our personal favourites – mine is the Raging Bull handgun. There are certain manufacturers we're not allowed to work with though, because they're very protective of their IP, which is unfortunate for us because we'd like to put those weapons in."

Shooting your buddy is not the best start in co-op.

08 **SNAAAAAAKE!:** "The snake cam is my favourite gadget. I love the experience of just sitting there, peering under the door, watching the guys chatting away with each other and marking a couple of targets for my team-mates. We spent a lot of time getting that whole room entry stuff right – the snake cam ties everything together for the player really well and gives you some great moments."

Q
EXIT SNAKE CAM

> "I'm a big fan of co-op, so I really wanted to make that work well. It's always a powerful experience when you're working together as a team against the AI"
>
> Steven Masters, game designer, Ubisoft Montreal

Irena: actually a bloke called Aaron.

09 **JUST FOR LAUGHS:** "We had some great funny moments during development, including some unbelievable stuff from the AI such as turning themselves inside out, growing 50ft tall, or bouncing around like the Crazy Frog; but that's development for you. Also, I'll never forget our animation director Aaron Gilman, who did the mo-cap for our main bad girl, Irena. Aaron's a method actor, so for a while he was actually walking around the office as Irena. Having this bloke prancing around as a psychotic chick was pretty weird for a while! He's mostly back to normal now, with only the occasional flashback..." **PCZ**

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FANTASY DEVELOPERS! Have you just released an MMO designed to sponge up billions of man hours, and reduce humanity's overall potential? Perhaps you've made an action-adventure where people click on centaurs until they die. Whatever it is, chances are you'll already be working on the expansion pack. It's so easy, you've already made three games without realising!

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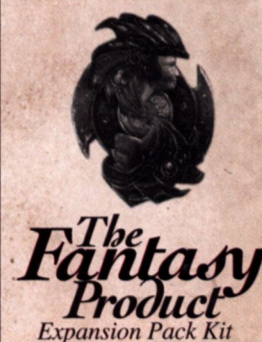
Step 1: *Choose from 6,561 possible titles*

What goes after the colon sets the tone of your expansion. Choose one box from each column, and as if by arcane magic – there's your subtitle. Use your discretion, though: 'Forgotten Damnation of Hammer Time' could easily result in law suits from religious rap stars of the '80s. But with potential classics like 'The Lost Crystals of Ruby Dominion' and 'The Wailing Throne of Endless Lament', it's nearly impossible to lose!

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BURIED	TREASURE OF	ELDRITCH	AGONY
WAILING	CRYSTALS OF	THE SHADOWS OF	DOMINION
FORGOTTEN	LEGENDS OF	RUBY	SHADOWLAND
IMMORTAL	SHADOWS OF	BAAL'S	UNDRENTIDE
LOST	THRONE OF	CHEEKY	B'FURRRR
BURNING	CAVERNS OF	ENDLESS	LAMENT
WRETCHED	DAMNATION OF	CORRUPTED	SORROWS
SHADOWY	SWORD OF	STEVE'S	TIME

WARNING: 'The Wretched Sword of Endless Flesh' has already been reserved for Lula's next 3D adventure.

Step 2: **Box Art**

Should you go with a skull in a misty cavern, a snake coming out of a skull, or maybe an arcane symbol etched into cavern rock? Perhaps an arcane symbol formed by a snake in a smoky cavern would suit your title. You should also consider using a Valkyrie or an Amazon, or one of the other bra-wearing classes.

Cut out these figures and throw them onto the table to make your own unique box art!

Magic book

Step 3: *Classes and Races*

Enhance character development by including two of the races, classes or professions from this list! Then pretend they existed all the time, but have only just decided to get involved in the action. Perhaps they crashed in a spaceship or something like that...

Just close your eyes and poke the page!

RUDE ELF
CRAFTER OF OBSCURE STUFF
SIX-BREASTED CAT-WOMEN
SHOPLIFTER
PEOPLE ACTUALLY MADE OF ROCK
OBSTETRICIAN
TIMELORD
SPACE GANDHI
COMBAT LADIES

Step 4: *The finished product*

Congratulations! Now use the same monsters as last time, but make them undead, on fire or underwater. Then, add an axe that kills undead, on fire, and underwater stuff, and you're finished! Just climb into a wheelbarrow and wait for the steaming hot deliveries of cash!

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