BRITAIN'S BEST PC GAMES MAG PCZONE.CO.UK

PCZONE

ISSUE 192 APRIL 2008

THE COMMAND & CONQUER ISSUE!

RED ALERT 3

Welcome back Comrade! The insane Soviet war machine returns!

TIBERIUM

The C&C battlefield goes first-person! But will it work?

THE WITCHER

The fascinating creation of the controversial Polish RPG

WIN!

TINY COMPO

What's the name of the Soviet airship in Red Alert games?

Future MEDIA WITH PASSION

APRIL 2008 £5.99

9 771471 753016 04>

pcspecialist.co.uk

Apollo CM-X

£2095.00 incl VAT & Delivery*

INTEL® CORE™2 QUAD QX9650 (4 x 3.00GHz)
64bit Windows® Vista Home Premium
4GB CORSAIR® Dominator 1066Mhz Memory
ASUS® P5N-T Deluxe (3-Way Sli Support)
150GB WD Raptor® X Clear (10000rpm)
750GB Serial ATA Hard Drive (7,200rpm)
20x Dual Layer DVD RW + Lightscribe
768MB nVidia GeForce 8800GTX
Sound Blaster® X-Fi™ Xtreme Music
800W Super Quiet Quad Rail PSU
ASUS® Silent Knight II CPU Cooler
52 in 1 Memory Card Reader
Onboard 10/100/1000 Gigabit LAN port
CoolerMaster CM Stacker 831 Case
Six USB Ports (2 Front / 4 Rear)
2 x 1394 Firewire Port Onboard
1 yr RTB + 1 Month Free Collect & Return Warranty

GAMING MACHINES

THE WAY NVIDIA. IT'S MEANT TO BE PLAYED™

opening times 9-5pm Mon-Fri & 9-1pm Sat
email:enquiries@pcspecialist.co.uk

you dream it... we'll build it!

intel Core™2 Extreme inside™

Extreme Performance

Apollo GT

£792.00 incl VAT & Delivery*

INTEL® CORE™2 DUO E6850 (2 x 3.00GHz)
32bit Windows® Vista Home Premium
2GB CORSAIR® XMS2 800Mhz Memory
ASUS® P5N-E Sli Motherboard
500GB Serial ATA II Hard Drive
20x Dual Layer DVD RW + Lightscribe
512MB nVidia GeForce 8800GT
8 Channel Supreme FX High Def Audio
600W Super Quiet Quad Rail PSU
ASUS® Silent Knight II CPU Cooler
52 in 1 Memory Card Reader
Onboard 10/100/1000 Gigabit LAN port
Stylish Silver/Black Trident Case
Six USB Ports (2 Front / 4 Rear)
2 x 1394 Firewire Port Onboard
1 yr RTB + 1 Month Free Collect & Return Warranty

Apollo GT Sli

£1208.00 incl VAT & Delivery*

INTEL® CORE™2 QUAD Q6600 (4 x 2.4GHz)
64bit Windows® Vista Home Premium
4GB CORSAIR® XMS2 800Mhz Memory
ASUS® P5N32-E Sli+ Motherboard
2x 500GB Serial ATA Hard Drive (7,200rpm)
20x Dual Layer DVD RW + Lightscribe
2x 512MB nVidia GeForce 8800GT (Sli)
Sound Blaster® X-Fi™ Xtreme Music
700W Super Quiet Quad Rail PSU
ASUS® Silent Knight II CPU Cooler
52 in 1 Memory Card Reader
Onboard 10/100/1000 Gigabit LAN port
Stylish Silver Aluminium Trigon Case
Six USB Ports (2 Front / 4 Rear)
2 x 1394 Firewire Port Onboard
1 yr RTB + 1 Month Free Collect & Return Warranty

Apollo GTX

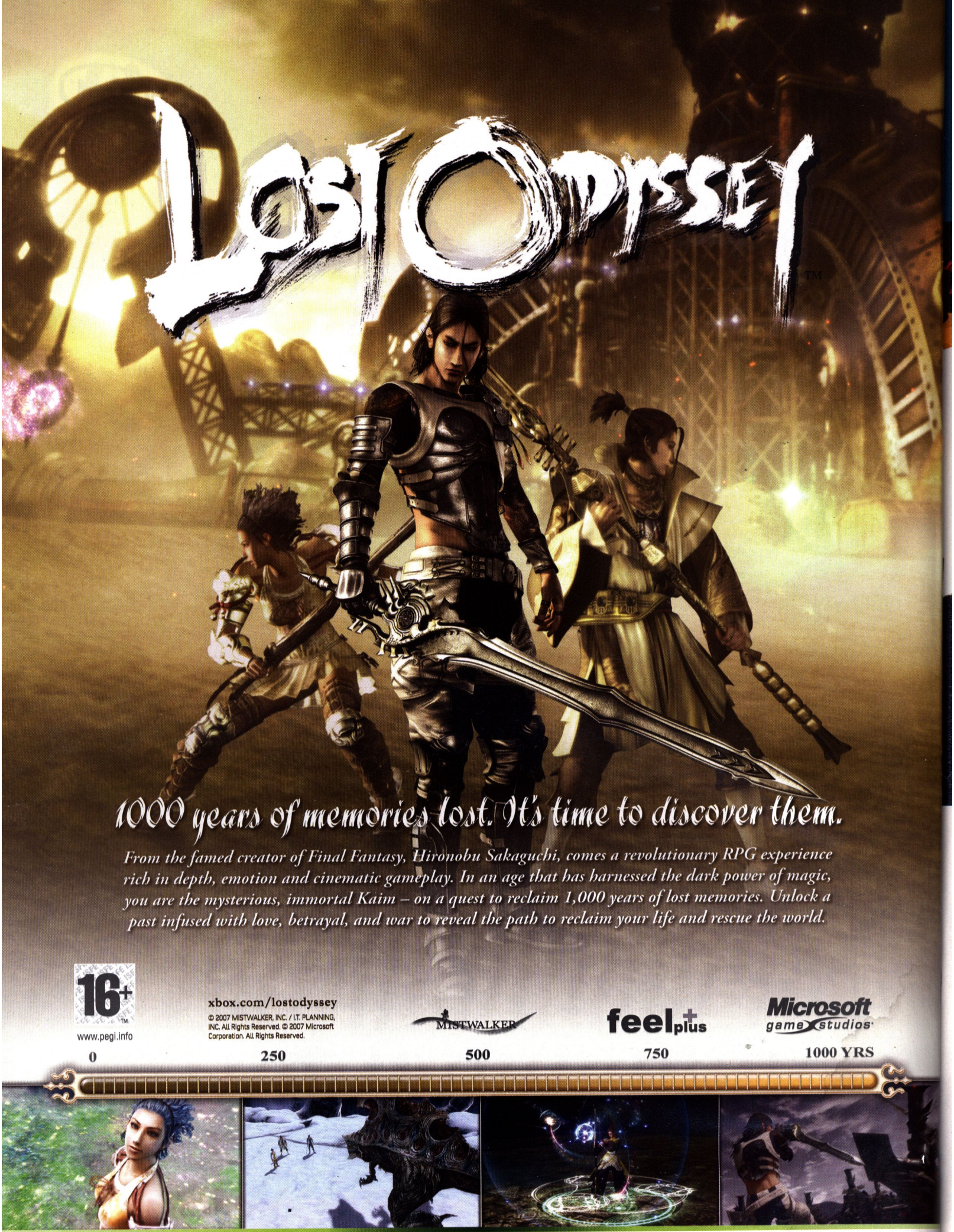
£1488.00 incl VAT & Delivery*

INTEL® CORE™2 QUAD Q6600 (4 x 2.4GHz)
64bit Windows® Vista Home Premium
8GB CORSAIR® XMS2 800Mhz Memory
ASUS® Striker Extreme Motherboard
150GB WD Raptor® X Clear (10000rpm)
750GB Serial ATA Hard Drive (7,200rpm)
20x Dual Layer DVD RW + Lightscribe
768MB nVidia GeForce 8800GTX
Sound Blaster® X-Fi™ Xtreme Music
800W Super Quiet Quad Rail PSU
ASUS® Silent Knight II CPU Cooler
52 in 1 Memory Card Reader
Stylish Silver Aluminium Trigon Case
Six USB Ports (2 Front / 4 Rear)
2 x 1394 Firewire Port Onboard
1 yr RTB + 1 Month Free Collect & Return Warranty

* Prices subject to change.

order online or call us on: **0844 499 4000**

other methods of payment include:



Jump in.

XBOX 360 LIVE

BRITAIN'S BEST PC GAMES MAG

PC ZONE

COVER STORY

56 RED ALERT 3

EA's big red blockbuster finally rears its metal-clad head...

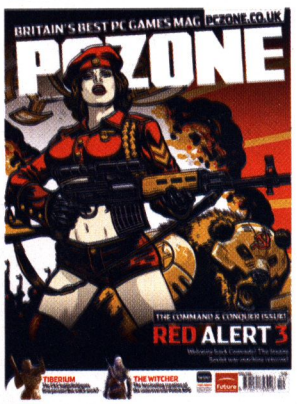
NEVERQUEST 123

"The local populace acts as if Elvis has just walked in..."

WE ARE THE MODS 38

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH NCSOFT'S MMO CARETAKERS

WHAT'S ON THE COVER?



45 C&C SPECIAL
56 *RED ALERT 3*
124 THE MAKING OF *THE WITCHER*

Too busy? *PC ZONE* in 71 words...
Jamie goes undercover and gains valuable intel on *Tiberium*, *Red Alert 3* and *Kane's Wrath*, as well as the history of the entire series. Log plays with crayons while Steve goes behind the scenes and watches the watchmen of NCsoft. Ed hurts our heads by ranting about *Hellgate*, while setting fire to things in the dark. Finally, we all talk about our favourite things to shoot while hiding behind a sofa.

MASTERPIECE

NOT EVEN IN my wildest dreams, have I ever conceived a day in which I could put an angry bear in a metal helmet on the front of a magazine. Even if his ursine charms are over-powered by the presence of a rifle-toting Soviet sex kitten. The fact that he's from an awesome sounding game like *Red Alert 3* just seals the deal.

So often cover artwork delivered to our doors involves an angry man with a gun shouting while standing in front of a tank, or an angry man with a gun pointing at something. But this time the *Red Alert 3* artwork turned up and we were blown away. The propaganda look, the stylised Russian lady, the angry bear with the bear hat, the toothy zeppelin we had to sadly cut out: it took the breath away.

More than ever before we're seeing mindblowing artwork coming out of game companies. Valve, GSC Gameworld, CD Projekt and Blizzard have been pumping out oil paintings, charcoal sketches and concept designs that, in my eyes, outstrips the crap in the Tate Modern. And yet outside of their companies' game artists are still unsung heroes. This is a nonsense – coders may iron out the bugs and big-name developers may call the shots, but often they'll be riffing off a spark of genius from a bloke clutching a bag of crayons with his tongue between his teeth. Game artists of the world: *PC ZONE* salutes you.

Will Porter

Will Porter, editor

SUBSCRIBE NOW!
PCZONE

SEE PAGE 42
SUBSCRIBE AND GET AN EXCLUSIVELY COOL PCZONE HOODIE!

IMPERIVM
ROMANVM

WWW.IMPERIUM-GAME.COM

THE DESTINY OF ROME LIES IN YOUR HANDS

From Friday 22nd Feb

"A game for Real Time Strategy fans that had us begging for more." - *zfxgamer.com*

"Imperium Romanum" (..) can absolutely compete with genre highlights like "Anno 1701", "Caesar IV" and "Settlers VI" - *Gameswelt.de*

kalypso

PC DVD ROM

HAEMIMONT GAMES

Imperium Romanum Copyright © 2008 Kalypso Media GmbH. All rights reserved. Developed by Haemimont Games. Published by Kalypso Media GmbH. All other logos, copyrights and trademarks are property of their respective owners.

BRITAIN'S BEST PC GAMES

CONTENTS

REVIEW

66 DAWN OF WAR – SOULSTORM

Relic brings new factions and new battles to the *Warhammer 40,000* strategy juggernaut

38 UPFRONT
Inside NCsoft

74 REVIEW
Savage 2

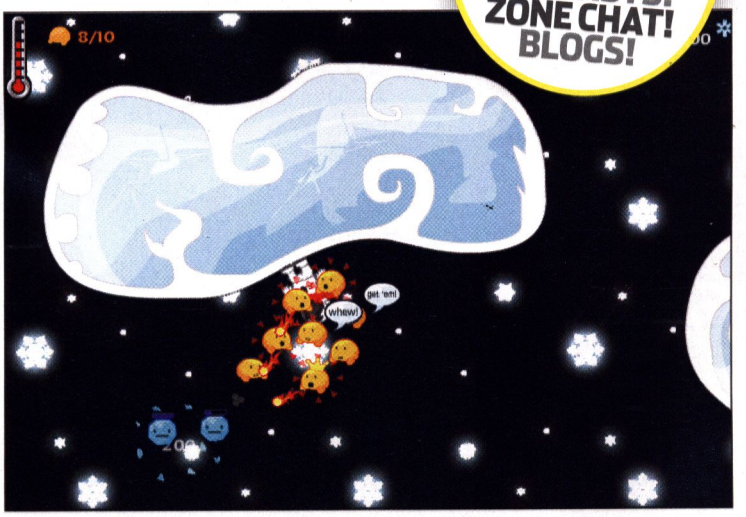
96 HARDWARE
Dear Wandy

124 LOOKING BACK
Developer's Commentary

34 UPFRONT
Alone In The Dark

GET INVOLVED! 118

ONLINE ZONE
FIGHT CLUB!
PUBCASTS!
ZONE CHAT!
BLOGS!



108 FREEWARE
The most imaginative games are made by individuals who aren't pressured by publishers. And they're often free.

CONTENTS

UPFRONT

18 SPECIAL REPORT: GAME SPECS
20 ROPER ON THE ROPES
22 CHARTS
26 STARGATE WORLDS
30 HOT SHOTS: LEGO BATMAN
32 RACE DRIVER: GRID
34 ALONE IN THE DARK
36 HOT SHOTS: PROTOTYPE
38 CARE IN THE COMMUNITY
45 THE HISTORY OF COMMAND & CONQUER
50 TIBERIUM
54 COMMAND & CONQUER 3: KANE'S WRATH
56 RED ALERT 3

REVIEWS

66 WARHAMMER 40,0000: DAWN OF WAR – SOULSTORM
70 WARHAMMER: MARK OF CHAOS – BATTLE MARCH
72 THE CLUB
74 SAVAGE 2
76 PIRATES OF THE BURNING SEA
78 PUZZLE QUEST
80 KWARI
81 STRANGER
82 CONFLICT: DENIED OPS
84 PENUMBRA: BLACK PLAGUE
85 IMPERIUM ROMANA
86 INDIE ZONE
88 BUDGET
The Max Payne Collection, Grand Theft Auto 3, Hospital Tycoon, Call of Juarez and many, many more...
90 BUYER'S GUIDE
The games you must buy. The great and the good. The very top of the tree.

HARDWARE

93 HARDWARE NEWS
94 HARDWARE REVIEWS
96 DEAR WANDY
98 WATCHDOG
99 HARDWARE BUYER'S GUIDE

FREEPLAY

102 ON THE DVD
104 NEWS & BUZZ
108 FREEWARE
110 MAPS AND MODS
114 JACKASS: BAN THIS FILTH
118 ONLINE ZONE

LOOKING BACK

120 RETRO ZONE
122 SUPERTEST
123 STEVE HILL'S NEVERQUEST
124 DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY: THE WITCHER
129 NEXT MONTH
130 BACK PAGE

"Online poker is about to take a giant step forward"

Inside Poker

Raise your game

"It rocks!"

FHM

"The future of online poker is here..."

Poker Player

Experience poker the way it was meant to be played – with state of the art 3D software that brings the game to life with unparalleled excitement and realism.

Over one million players have already experienced the difference that PKR makes, now it's your turn. Join today and we'll welcome you with a range of fantastic bonuses.

PKR

let's play

www.pkr.com

18+ Please gamble responsibly. For more information and advice visit www.gambleaware.co.uk Licensed by the UK Gambling Commission

BRITAIN'S BEST PC GAMES MAG
PCZONE
SUBSCRIPTIONS OFFER

FREE PCZONE HOODIE!

Subscribe to **PCZONE** for only £9.99 today and we'll send you exclusive **PCZONE** merchandise: a FREE **PCZONE** hoodie in black (L) or in grey (M)!

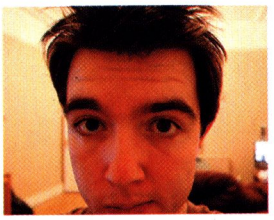
ONLY £9.99 EVERY THREE MONTHS!

Save £39.96 on the cost of **PCZONE** in the shops!

Call our order hotline now!
Quote the code p039
0870 837 4722
Lines open Mon-Fri 8am-9.30pm, Saturdays 8am-4pm
Or subscribe online
www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/pzv/p039
Closing date: 26 March, 2008

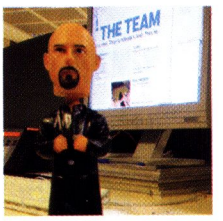
MEET THE TEAM

They're sharp. They're cool. They're nobody's fool. They're...

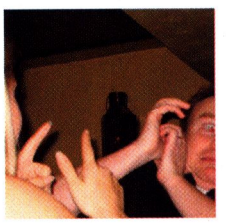


STEVE HOGARTY
Sectioned Editor
AGE: 21
LIKES: Coffee, sunshine
DISLIKES: Illnesses
FANCIES: Will's chair
FAVE GAME: *Sims: Eggs and Guinness*
NOW PLAYING: *Audiosurf*

Steve is now a massive 21 years old, a fact that older members of the team just can't accept. In deference to his new status as a grown-up Steve parted ways with Bitey, his pet velociraptor in *WOW*. The pair had been distant recently so it wasn't a surprise that they had outgrown each other. Bitey is said to be happy in her Orgrimmar pet sanctuary, though she's bitter about 'that Irish prick'. Steve, meanwhile, recently met an owl called Beaks at a party and got on like a house on fire – not least because she can 'screech' and 'dive'. Two things that Bitey always refused to put out on.

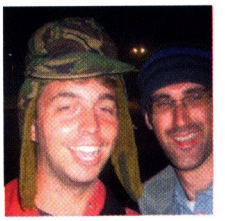


KANE
Evil bobble-headed warlord
Having taken over much of the known world, and cackled incessantly as he did so, the team are fairly narked with Kane to be honest. He's a decent worker, but will he buy a round in the pub? Nope.
NOW PLAYING:
Supreme Commander



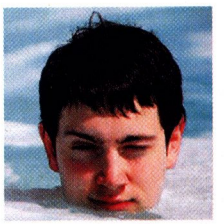
PAUL PRESLEY
Over-friendly uncle
Prez sent in his review with an emailed promise of "wonderful words, peachy punctuation, jolly judicious use of super spaces and one giraffe." This revealed that he has too much time on his hands.
NOW PLAYING:
Conflict: Denied Ops

LOG
Lvl 60 Priest lfg
What's that sound we hear? Oh yes, it's Log whooping at his now-working internet connection, and the fact that he finally pushed himself to spend enough time in *WOW* to get to level 60. Hooray!
NOW PLAYING:
Crayon Physics Deluxe



WILL PORTER
Big Boss
Will has spent much of his editorship making promises he can't keep and blaming the previous administration. News of undeclared donations to his editorial campaign can't be far away.
NOW PLAYING:
Half-Life 2: Episode Two

MARTIN KORDA
King of Freelance
"An armoured war bear? On the cover?" Korda practically exploded with indignation when he discovered we were giving undue exposure to his ursine foe. He's still excited about *RA3* though.
NOW PLAYING:
***Kwari* (for his sins)**



ED ZITRON
Never incorrect
Ed is a walking contradiction. He plays MMOs intensely, yet attends the gym. He is a nerd for *Warcraft* lore, yet he plays just as much *Madden '08*. Who is Ed Zitron? Who knows, or indeed cares?
NOW PLAYING:
***WOW* (again and again)**

WHAT'S HELPED THIS MONTH... Googling the word "Shakespeare" and a worrying numbers of lattes
WHAT HASN'T HELPED THIS MONTH... Disc surprises, those bloody Irish Whistles and Polish men shouting "Late! Too late!" down the phone

WHAT WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...

CIABATTAS, FOCACCIA AND OTHER POSH BREAD 90min Will never heard of them before he came to London.
ARMOURED BEARS 20min We never thought we'd have a bear wearing a helmet on the cover. But we're glad we do.
"*EPISODE TWO* IS AMAZING!" 15min Porter melts with joy at his belated journey through Freeman's latest. Antlions and all, surprisingly.
MORE *LAW OF THE PLAYGROUND* 60min The TV show of Log's book (for sale at Amazon) that came out of his website is back.
DOES *RED ALERT* SET UP THE TIBERIUM *C&C* GAMES? 53min This debate took forever and a day to discuss. Then we discovered the boring truth.
THE BALLAD OF RICHARD COSGROVE 15min The quest for a flatmate provides for much hilarity and despair. Although mainly despair.
SODOMY 3min How it must have come close to being called Gomorrahery.
BILL ROPER All the bloody time "Jesus Christ Ed! Shut up about Bill Roper!" "But Bill Roper said..." "Shut up! SHUT UP! ***SHUT UP!!!***"
NIRNROOT 25min And how the search for the Cyrodiil's fabled herb has repercussions when visiting garden centres.
SPLAT! IN YOUR FACE! 10min The best paintballing adventure you ever did see. Though we guessed the ending.

WIN! Tiny Compo was recently caught in a honeytrap sting by a tabloid Sunday newspaper. He would like it known that the claims made by Trudi Simons (19) and her step-sister Samantha (23) are by and large fictitious. And he certainly wasn't sick on the carpet. Last month's winner was Mr Ian Moloney from Poole. He wins our love and affection for ever and ever. Send this month's answer on a postcard addressed to 'We agree that *PC ZONE* is BRILLIANT!', *PC ZONE*, Future Publishing, 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW.

GENERAL COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS: 1. Only completed entries received before the closing date – 26 March 2008 – will be entered. 2. Winners will be notified by post. 3. No cash alternative. 4. Prizes not necessarily as shown. 5. No correspondence will be entered into. 6. The editor's decision is final. 7. Responsibility cannot be accepted for lost or undelivered entries. 8. Competitions are not open to readers outside the UK or employees of Future or its affiliated companies, their families, agents or anyone professionally connected with the competition. 9. For full conditions visit snipurl/futuretc.

LETTERS

***Will Porter* books a day off work and sits in for a parcel that never comes**

KING OF LETTERS

THINK OF THE KIDDIES

In your last issue Richard Rose was quick to blame parents for ignoring PEGI ratings and letting their kids play mature games. But this issue isn't quite that simple. To show you what I mean, here's a challenge. My 10 year-old son is growing up fast. He's fed up with Nintendo-land and wants to play more grown-up action and adventure games. Can you find him a decent PC game that's PEGI rated 7+?

I'll save you some time. *Orange Box*: no. *BioShock*: no. *Crysis*, *UT3*, *COD4*, *Max Payne*, *GTA*, *Gears of War*: no. Even *Psychonauts* is a 12+. Beyond *Good and Evil*: yes! In the entire *PC ZONE* Buyer's Guide, there's only one game that he can play, and, of course, he's already played it.

Now sure, there need to be games where we grown-ups can do our thing without worrying about the kiddies. But gaming as a whole is becoming obsessed with adult themes, and parents like me are being squeezed between their kids who want exciting, grown-up games and developers who only seem interested in the 18+ market. *Beyond Good and Evil* shows that you can make good action games that appeal to all ages, but until more developers take up this challenge, we'll continue to see *Daily Mail* stories about age-inappropriate gaming.

Mike Heroys

Not just for kids.

If you ignore film tie-in dross then there are few big releases that are kid-friendly, and there should be more awareness of that. Then again *Spore* is on the way and, despite everything, I know plenty of kids who love *The Sims*. The PC's rich back catalogue of games like *Theme Park* also should not be ignored. Nevertheless, please accept a new graphics card in exchange for a good letter and giving me a chance to plug *Beyond Good & Evil* yet again.

WIN!

Want to be King of Letters? Then you'd better put pen to paper, or if you're all modern-like, fingers to keyboard. Every month, we'll reward our chosen royalty with a posh XFX GeForce 8600GT PCI-E graphics card. For more info, check out www.xfxforce.com. You can also buy one at www.dabs.com for £75 (product code PV-T84J-UDF3).

"No, I didn't take your pot of honey. Now go away."

HORRID HOBBITSES

After playing *Lord of the Rings Online* for three months I decided to restart on an American server so I could play with some people I know. Soon after logging on I noticed the in-game chat channels were pretty lively.

"How do I increase my reputation with the men of Bree?" asked one soul. "You have to suck their dicks," came the jovial, if inaccurate, response.

Within minutes of playing I had been called a noob by someone through a tell (without any provocation) and was witnessing some of the worst aggro and hostility on an OOC channel that I had ever seen, ever.

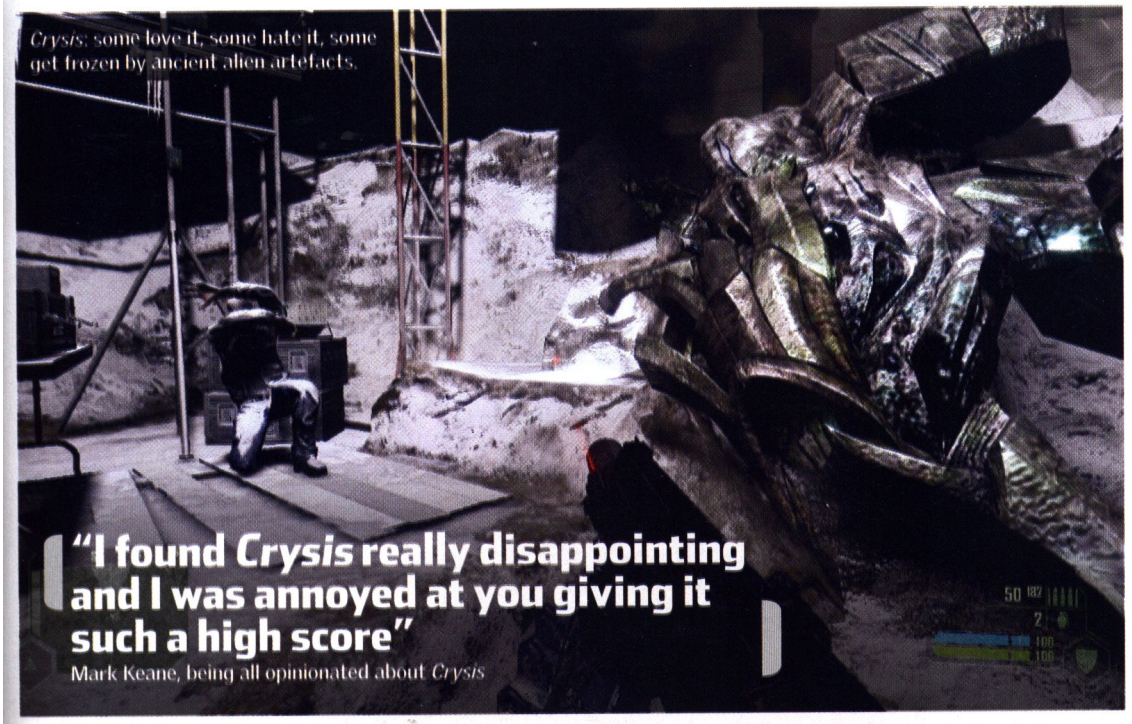
I found on the EU server I used (Eldar) people would assist in a combat if they saw someone in trouble, even though they had nothing to gain from it themselves. Here a level 50 character wandered over to me, watched me struggle to a painful death against a bear a few levels higher than me, and then used /mock, before running off.

All the griefing I've seen before pales to what I'm seeing on the US Brandywine server. It's like *Jerry Springer* every day...

Roberto Terrazzano

Without letting any yankophobia enter my response, the times I've

letters@pczone.co.uk @
letters, pc zone, future publishing, 2 balcombe street, london, nw1 6nw



Crysis: some love it, some hate it, some get frozen by ancient alien artefacts.

"I found *Crysis* really disappointing and I was annoyed at you giving it such a high score"

Mark Keane, being all opinionated about *Crysis*

found myself on American servers in MMOs or shooters have been painful in the extreme – aided and abetted by teamspeak that reveals most of those destroying the game around me are less than half my age. Indeed, I'd argue that age is a primary factor here – not only are there more tweenager MMO players in the US but the times that you'll probably be logging on in the evenings are exactly the sort of time that kiddiwinks will be logging on after school in the states. But yeah – let's stick with EU servers everyone. They turned up late for the war anyway.

CRYSIS (STILL)

I found *Crysis* really disappointing and I was annoyed at you jumping on the bandwagon and giving it such a high score. If it's judged on looks alone then it deserves the high score but I want a game that's about the gameplay. It's just *Far Cry*: same setting, same script. And the less said about that last boss the better! It's the size of the island, yet it has four little cannons and a hatch to shoot off, could you be more unoriginal? I feel you dropped the ball on this one. Either that or you just didn't have the balls to tell it how it is.

Mark Keane

I've been playing *Crysis* for a few days now, it just has to be the best game I've ever played. The graphics are just incredible and all the little details they have put in like moving shrubbery just makes you melt into the screen. The ice/core levels have to be the greatest thing ever in a game ever. The gameplay is just perfect, and the nanosuit makes the whole thing even more replayable.

Rob Allen-Rowlandson

In terms of the letters we get I haven't known such mixed opinion on a game since *Doom 3*. This seems to be another case of the Marmites – some just can't get enough, others just don't get the nanosuit and hate the alien sections. Me? It wasn't entirely the game I was promised, but I'm on my third playthrough of the Korean sections and haven't stopped loving it yet.

WHERE'S WALLACE?

I've been a fan of *PC ZONE* for a long time, but one of the main things that kept me reading month after month was the superb Suzy Wallace. Her reviews were always a joy to read. I'm sure you can appreciate how I felt when she left.

YOUR SHOUT!

SEND US YOUR REVIEWS WIN A FREE GAME!

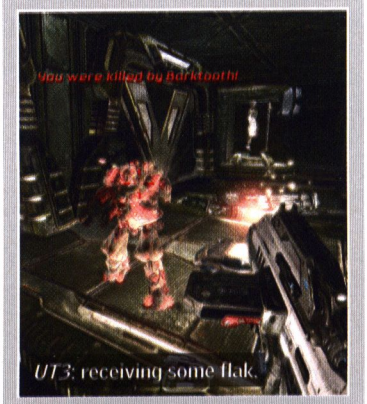
UNREAL TOURNAMENT 3

Sent in by Greg Davids

PC ZONE score: 89%

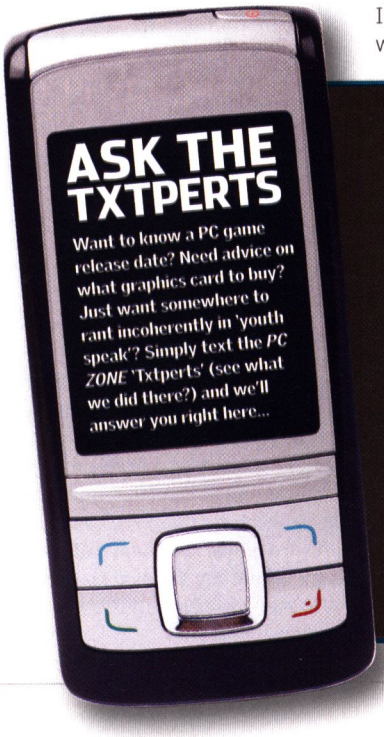
So I finally picked up *UT3*, and what an absolute waste of money that was. I can't believe how little they've done to the game since *UT 2004*, apart from giving it a needless graphical overhaul that muddies up the whole style of the game. *UT* isn't fun now, it's all serious and moody. It's gone My Chemical Romance and I hate it. The vehicles unbalance everything and make the game feel like *Battlefield 2* but dull and ugly. It's a shame because Epic have been really impressive recently – what a disappointment.

Your shout: 65%



UT3: receiving some flak.

Send your reviews with a maximum of 100 words, your name and a percentage score to letters@pczone.co.uk. Every one printed here wins a top PC game.



ASK THE TXTPERTS

Want to know a PC game release date? Need advice on what graphics card to buy? Just want somewhere to rant incoherently in 'youth speak'? Simply text the *PC ZONE* 'Txtperts' (see what we did there?) and we'll answer you right here...

Gah! Getting *Gears of War* to run properly is a total nightmare! Who invented *Games for Windows LIVE*? I want him dead!

Anon

We know. The *GFW* brand is rapidly turning into a reason to worry about buying a game rather than being reassured by it.

Thanks for the gazillion pages on *WOW* this month. Complete waste of space.

Ben

Ten million people can't be wrong can they? Even if there is a case to be made that they are deluded to the last blood elf... er... man.

I'm in the pub.

Anon (again)

Thanks for that. Give us another text and we'll find you and buy you a pint or something.

Text your PC game-related nonsense to 87103, putting PCZTXT at the beginning of the message, then leave a space, and continue with your text – and don't forget your name. Texts should be no more than 160 characters long.

By texting *PC ZONE* you're agreeing to receive details of more offers from Future Publishing Limited and related third parties. If you don't want to receive any info on offers and promotions, please text the word NO at the end of your text message. Texts will be charged at 50p plus your standard network tariff rate.

The thing that hit me real bad though came in the first issue without her. I, swallowing my tears, was still able to enjoy the magazine. But, then, I turned to the fight club page. Guess who was still there! Suzy Wallace! It was something like living with your best friend, but then one day they die. A month later you're starting to recover, you sit down at the table for dinner, and you've made dinner for two. We'll miss ya Suzy!

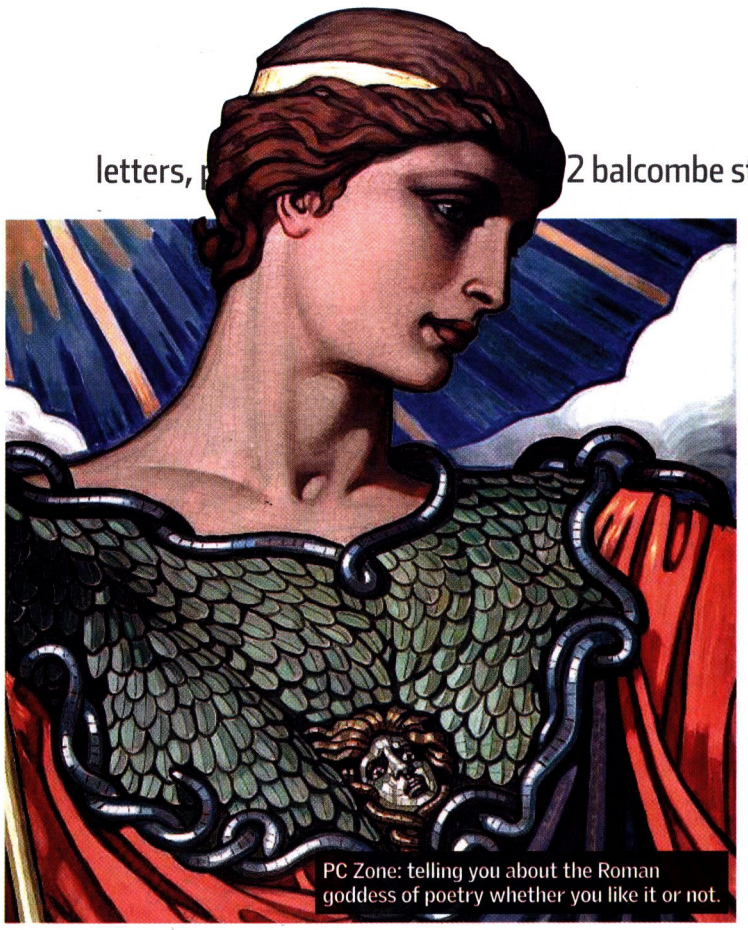
Jimi 'aceupmysleeve' Cullen

If I had forwarded that email to Suzy then I think she'd have been very appreciative. But also a little scared. As a compromise I've sent it to some doctors who deal with PEOPLE WHO ARE MENTALISTS. Put down the magazine! Have a cold shower! Stop eating the flesh of the innocent!

CLEVER MAN

I moved from Spain to North Devon about three years ago, and I love living here. However, I do have a gripe: the constant efforts that the media put into reducing our levels of culture to that of a five-year-old. In December I felt particularly splendid, so I treated myself to various magazines about films and classical music.

Go-Go Suzy.


PC Zone: telling you about the Roman goddess of poetry whether you like it or not.

Now, you'd think that a magazine about classical music should contain clear examples of refined, intelligent reports highlighting all that is beautiful and sublime, right? Wrong! I don't think that I have been so condescended in my entire life!

The main reason I read *PC ZONE* is because it's an interesting read that is capable of awarding the wonderful Dump badge, and then two pages later start a review with a sentence like "When your name your mod after the Roman Goddess of poetry..." Basically, this whole mail is essentially a long, elaborated thank you for not believing that complex concepts might be harmful to my health.

David M Garcia

Thank you David M Garcia. Your letter is a ray of light on an otherwise rainy day. We also try to get in at least three references to 17th century literature in each issue, alongside a few nods to Thoreau and the transcendental movement if we can get away with it. It's probably the only way we can counter Log's obsession with drawing cocks in screenshots. So on balance, I'd say our clever-karma is somewhat balanced.

CRAP AT BEING SPY

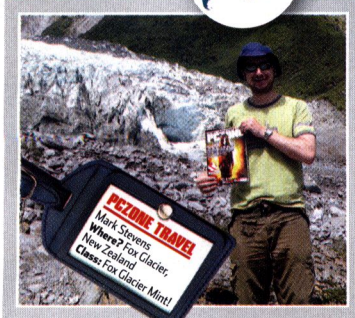
Why all the hubbub revolving around the Spy in *Team Fortress 2*? Every review of the game glorifies and cherishes the silent killer but as soon as I put my cloak on and chuckle an evil chuckle I get set on fire, batted to pieces by a scout or bombed to kingdom come!

Everyone adores the freak so I decided to do a bit of training – swotting up on YouTube videos. I take notes. I study hard. I smile devilishly with anticipation of my impending revenge. I then use every darn technique I learnt and... I'm set on fire, I'm batted, I'm sniped. So I just restart as demoman. The spy is just crap.

Wade Philip

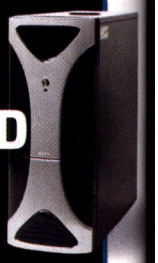
I hate to say it Wade, but have you ever considered that you're just really shit at *TF2*? It's OK, I'm rubbish too. I'm so useless that I hardly ever stray from playing as a soldier. But, from my experience, there are some people who are really, really good at being the spy – in that my survival-to-backstab ratio really is biased in the wrong direction. Sorry.

PCZONE AROUND THE WORLD



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!

WHAT'S ON THE PCZ HARD DRIVE?

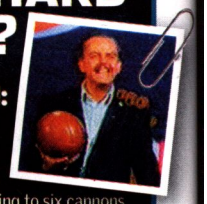


MYTHOS
www.mythos.com
Just like *Diablo*. Pretty much free. Nowhere near as broken as *Hellgate*. We didn't expect to be charmed, but consider us hypnotically clicking our mice in unison.

PRIBOI STORY
snipurl.com/priboi
A *STALKER* mod that's tough as nails, but any excuse to walk to the wastes is a welcome one.

OFF-ROAD VELOCIRAPTOR SAFARI
raptorsafari.com
This browser-based game is *Jurassic Park* meets *Carmaggedon*. Not technically on our hard drive, but it's on one somewhere.

WHAT'S ON YOUR HARD DRIVE?



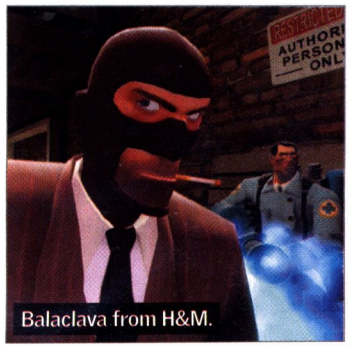
THIS MONTH: CUZBAG

BLITZKRIEG
You've got to love getting to six cannons and just pulverising a base before moving in six tanks and infantry. Lovely overkill...

COSSACKS 2
Just for the sheer joy of having thousands of troops clashing head-on into thousands of enemy troops

OPERATION FLASHPOINT
Need I say more? I have a somewhat disturbing habit of spending hours in the editor ambushing Americans. Am I all right? I wonder sometimes.

Want to tell us what's on your hard drive? Visit the forums at www.pczone.co.uk and let rip.


Balaclava from H&M.

NEED MORE SPEED?

intel Centrino inside™

Core™2 Duo inside™

For the ultimate mobile gaming experience get the Fujitsu Siemens Computers AMILO Xi 2550 with Intel® Centrino® Processor Technology.

GAMES TO GO More games. More Play. Your way, with a Fujitsu Siemens AMILO Laptop, preinstalled with Windows Vista® Home Premium. You get the hottest titles, the latest features, the most vivid 3D graphics, and an infinite number of ways to more safely connect you with the world-wide gaming community! The AMILO takes gaming to a new level. With Intel® Centrino® processor technology now available with the Intel® Core™2 Duo processor, get breakthrough performance with great power savings. So whatever your game, now you can play it harder for longer.

ULTIMATE GRAPHICS EXPERIENCE with the latest ATI Mobility Radeon™ HD 2700 graphics ready for OpenGL® or DirectX® 10 games. Advanced Shader Model 3.0 Support for realistic mobile gaming. ATI Avivo™ HD Display Technology for superior quality pictures and videos. HDCP support prepares for HD ready screens. HD Video Playback up to 1080p. ATI PowerPlay™ 7.0 for extended battery life.

Fujitsu Siemens Computers recommends Windows Vista® Home Premium

TECH SPEC • AMILO Xi 2550 with Intel® Centrino® processor technology and Intel® Core™2 Duo processor T8100 • Genuine Microsoft Windows Vista® Home Premium • 2048MB DDR2 Memory • 1GB Intel Turbo Memory • 500GB HDD (2 x 250GB) • ATI Mobility Radeon™ HD 2700 with 256MB GDDR3 dedicated video RAM and up to 767MB HyperMemory™ • Built-in webcam • Blu Ray DVD RW • Wireless LAN 802.11 a/g/n. • 17" WUXGA+ screen • HDMI

Fujitsu Siemens SCALEO Pi 2662 Desktop Computer with Intel® Core™2 Quad Processor.

With four processing cores to handle massive throughput, this is the powerful desktop choice for multimedia and gaming enthusiasts.

TECH SPEC Option 1 • Intel® Core™2 Quad processor Q6600 • Genuine Microsoft Windows Vista® Home Premium • 2048MB DDR2 Memory • 500GB HDD • NVIDIA® 8600GS graphics with 512MB

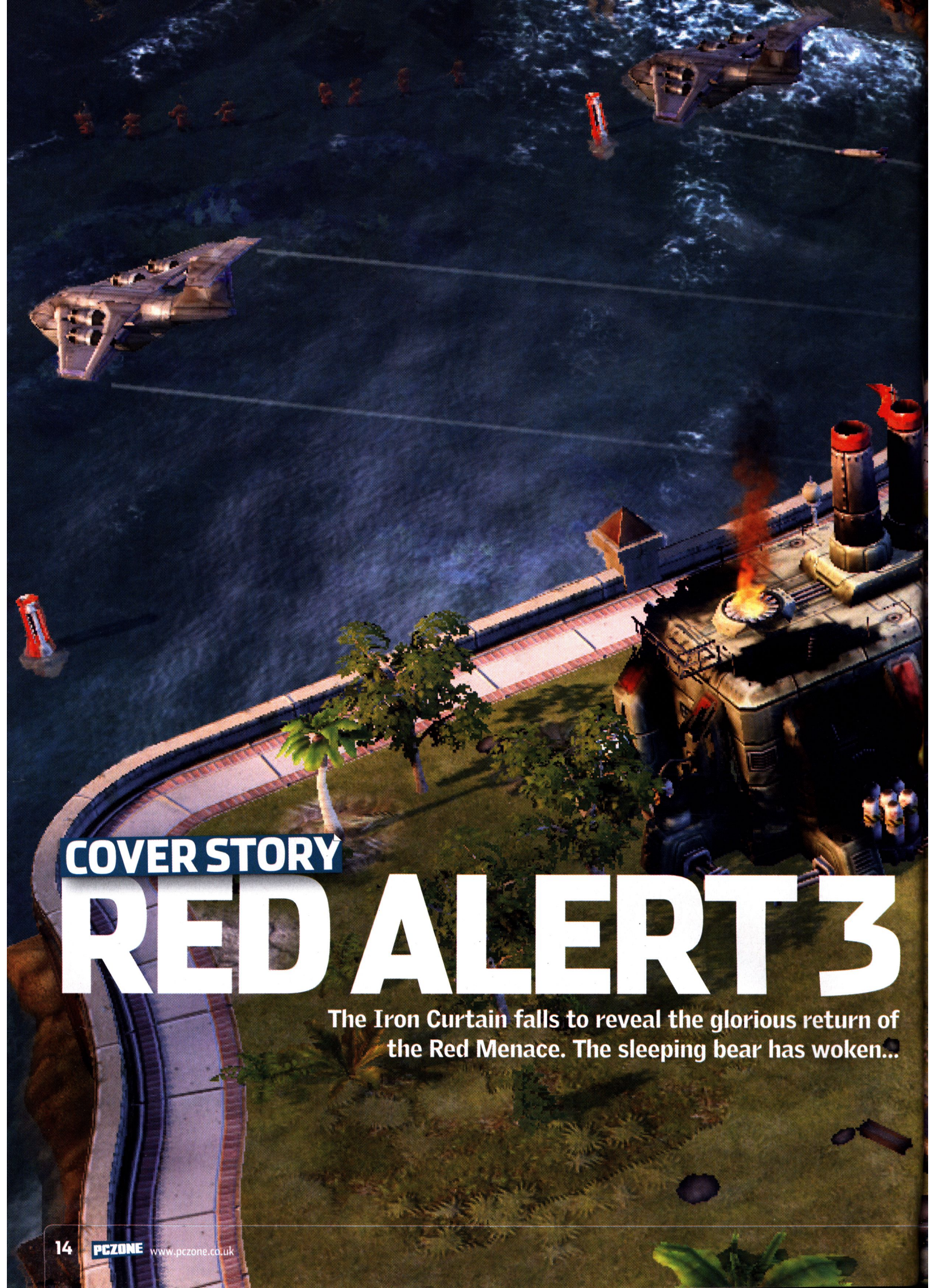
TECH SPEC Option 2 As above but with Blu Ray DVD and 1 Terabyte HDD

Products available from www.fscgaming.co.uk

© 2008 Intel Corporation. Celeron, Celeron Inside, Centrino, Centrino Inside, Centrino Logo, Core Inside, Intel, Intel Logo, Intel Core, Intel Inside, Intel Inside Logo, Intel Viiv, Intel vPro, Itanium, Itanium Inside, Pentium, Pentium Inside, Viiv Inside, vPro Inside, Xeon, and Xeon Inside are trademarks of Intel Corporation in the U.S. and other countries.
© 2008 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Windows and Windows Vista are trademarks of the Microsoft Group of companies. All trademarks acknowledged.
© 2008 Electronic Arts Inc. EA, the EA logo and Need for Speed are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. All Rights Reserved. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Fujitsu Siemens Computers endeavours to ensure that the information in this document is correct and fairly stated at the time of going to press but does not accept liability for any error or omission.

We make sure

FUJITSU COMPUTERS SIEMENS



COVER STORY

RED ALERT 3

The Iron Curtain falls to reveal the glorious return of the Red Menace. The sleeping bear has woken...

THE MOTHER(LAND) OF real time strategy is on its way back to the fray – and it's just as gloriously batshit crazy as it always was. Bears being fired out of cannons before gently parachuting down to earth? Sexy ladies bearing arms? Men with ridiculous moustaches? All present and correct – alongside the now fashionable third faction in the form of the Empire of the Rising Sun. As for whether it'll topple *C&C3*, whether they'll feature another pretty woman in a skin-tight green top and whether Mark Hamill will be in it... Well, roving *PC ZONE* reporter Jamie Sefton has had free range in EA's *C&C* offices in Los Angeles to discover just these vital items of information. Read on...

PAGE 56

UPFRONT

Everything that matters in the world of PC gaming

General Blight

I WOULD MAKE a rubbish army commander guy. In fact, give me any sort of authority and I'll make a hideous, irreparable mess. Even managing this news section is mostly beyond me: the previews are always catching fire, fingers are getting caught in printing machines, one time I spilled orange juice – it's a joke. I've never enjoyed a *Total War* game either, despite trying really hard to. I'm just not a strategically minded person; the whole RTS genre goes right over my head.

I follow the tutorials, I understand that archers go at the back, and the guys with the spears can kill the horse fellas, but when it comes to the action my army always falls to pieces. This is the *Command & Conquer* issue, and I won't pretend to enjoy *Command & Conquer* just to fulfil some sort of perceived obligation to the magazine. I can't command, and I only conquered once, and even then that was a fluke – the thing I conquered was already three-quarters the way conquered, I just showed up. I punish myself by playing *Red Alert 2* against my mates only to be nuked repeatedly, my only recourse being to hide my last harvester in the corner of the map so it takes ages for the other guy to win.

RTS, you are an uncrackable egg of a genre, borne of a chicken of pure hate, and nurturing a grotesque hatchling of inaccessibility. That said, I've heard there are loads of places to hide your last harvester in *Red Alert 3* behind all sorts of rocks and stuff. So you're not all that bad.

Steve Hogarty

Steve Hogarty, section editor

TRIBES REBORN?

GarageGames get all tribal with *Fallen Empires: Legion*

www.garagegames.com | ETA: 2008

FOUNDED BY FORMER members of *Tribes* creators Dynamix, in one fell swoop GarageGames managed to make an entire part of the internet cry "Will it work in *Firefox*?" in unison by announcing the spiritual successor to *Starsiege: Tribes* in the form of browser-based team FPS *Fallen Empires: Legion*. *Tribes* was once the glitterati of pixel-perfect teamplay and whizzing down green hills, and its fans are rabid. Far from resigning himself to a squalid life of making a knock-off 2D monsterpiece, Project Manager Tim Aste assures us it'll be a fully formed game.

"When we first started throwing the idea for *Legion* around I was sceptical. The idea of next-gen quality game running through a browser was a stretch; even if we did manage to get the tech behind it I was expecting an awkward gameplay experience. However, once we actually started seeing games up and running through the browser I was instantly sold. Not only did the games play smoothly, but being able to play wherever you want is amazing."

Legion is planned to be a multiplayer experience based at InstantAction.com, with a selection of modes planned to be pruned through testing to fit in with *Tribes* gameplay, as well as something a little bit different. "We knew that it would be compared to *Tribes* from day one. Granted we were founded by key members from the *Tribes* team, but we see *Legion* as a game that can stand on its own two legs – not just a rip-off with a new paint job."

"In *Legion*, quick movements are pivotal to the gameplay and experience and while we do have some type of 'skiing' in *Legion*, we think of it more as 'how it was meant to be' rather than a bug as in *Tribes*. We also have incorporated jetpacks into *Legion*, but they're much more refined than in *Tribes*. I don't want to give away too much, but I think players are going to be very impressed with the changes and tweaks we've made to the controls and capabilities of the packs.

"The technology behind the game will allow us to roll out new classes, weapons, and additions very easily and quickly. We did not want to predispose the game to a particular trajectory from the get-go, so we decided to start basic and depend on the games to help us decide which way they want the game to evolve."

They might not admit it, but this is the next *Tribes*.

Jetpacks are back.

There's a bit of community business going in too, built on the idea that the stats that tell the tale. "On InstantAction.com you'll be able to keep track of all your stats, chat with friends in real time and keep profiles, but when it comes to your character, they're fresh every time. We're not out here trying to make the next MMO; this is all about FPS action from the go. Sometimes I feel like levelling a character becomes too much of a hassle and takes the focus away from the gameplay," chirps Aste, putting his foot down on an entire genre.

Sadly it isn't free, but Aste is intent on making it an open-ended, value-added service. "We haven't announced any sort of plan for pricing, but we're sticking by two principles: We think gamers deserve to have a choice in how they'll pay; and, these days gamers are shelling out $60 dollars for a game that gives them less and less quality time. We're looking to be innovative on the pricing side of things to make it fair for all."

Still no word on whether the phrase 'shazbot' will be returning though.

STOP PRESS!

LEGO INDY NAZI NO-NO

Traveller's Tales say that Lego have said *Lego Indiana Jones'* Nazis aren't Nazis, but a generic "genocidal, occultist, trenchcoat-wearing master race".

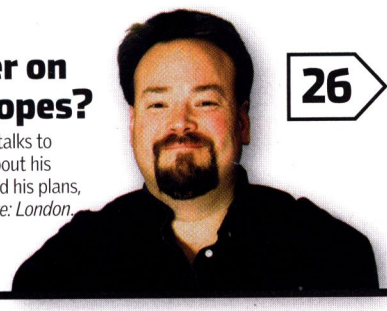
ASSASSIN'S GREED

Delight! The PC version of *Assassin's Creed* will be a 'director's edition', meaning we'll have four more mission types than the arserag Xbox version. Get in.

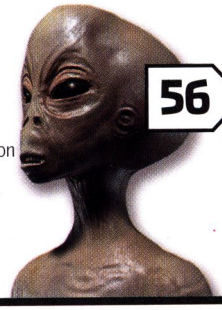
OCTOBER RELEASE FOR GTA

Rumour has it that the fourth *GTA* game will be seeing a release by the end of 2008, hopefully even by October. Fingers crossed.

20 **Roper on the ropes?**
Bill Roper talks to Upfront about his regrets, and his plans, for *Hellgate: London*.



26 **Stargate Worlds**
The epic science-fiction TV series goes online at last, in this eagerly awaited MMO.



56 **Red Alert 3**
The glorious return of the world's most insane RTS. Angry bears and all.

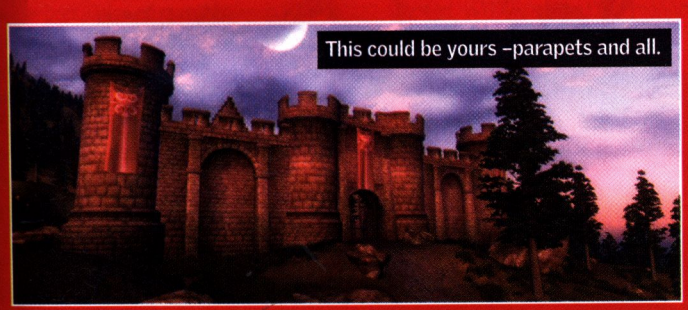
"The idea of a next-gen quality game running through a browser was a stretch"
Tim Aste found *Fallen Empire: Legion*'s concept was a hard sell

ONE FREE FORT

PC ZONE gives away a whole castle

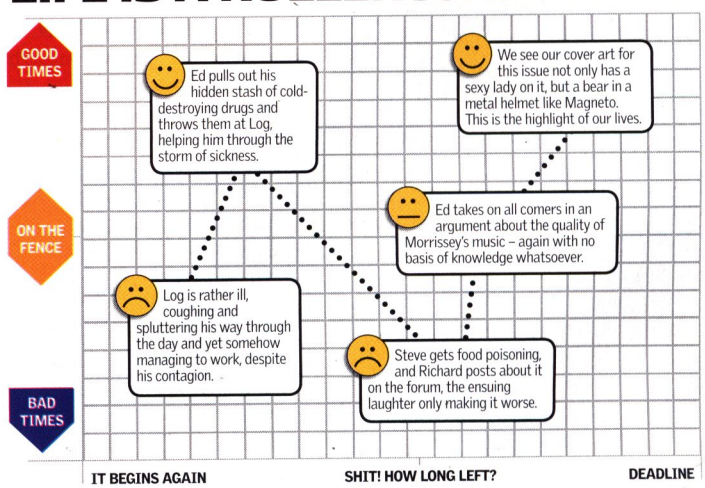
On the very cover disc that came with your delightful issue of *PC ZONE* this month you'll find free content for the one and only *The Elder Scrolls: Oblivion*, which until now has been found at www.obliviondownloads.com. In fact, by getting this off of our disc, you're saving yourself money straight out of your wallet, as this thing goes for almost two whole American dollars. But to you? It's free.

Oh, you want to know what's in it? Well, The Fighter's Stronghold will give you your own stronghold in the Colovian Highlands west of Chorrol, which you can furnish to your liking, hire a winemaker, spar with your own combat trainer, and even use your own forge to buff your armour. Just how amazingly generous are we?



STUFF **Valve have released *Steamworks*, a free toolkit for games developers and publishers who are spending more and more time and money cobbling together all the tools and backend systems needed to build and launch a successful title: "Developers and publishers are spending more and more time and money cobbling together all the tools and back-end systems needed to build and launch a successful title," said Valve president Gabe Newell.**

LIFE IS A ROLLERCOASTER



SYSTEM SHOCKS

Are demanding system specs forcing PC game sales on a downward spiral?

Reporter
Pavel Barter

PEOPLE WHO GO on about the death of PC gaming are a bit like those who stand on a street corner screaming about the end of the world. But after hearing the death knells for the umpteenth time, you do start to worry that perhaps the doomsayers are on to something.

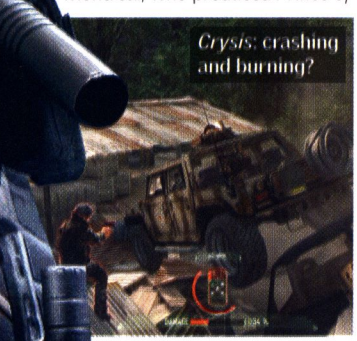
After all, who can turn a blind eye to the performance of PC games in 2007? In a year of fantastic releases, sales were low. According to official stats *Crysis*, one of the year's most anticipated titles, only sold 86,633 copies in the US in its first month of release (although sales have reportedly leapt lately, with EA claiming one million sold), while *Unreal Tournament 3* amassed just 33,995. Meanwhile the Xbox 360 version of *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare* shifted over 1.57 million.

The industry can blame poor sales on all manner of scapegoats – limited retail shelf , piracy – but, arguably, another culprit is unfeasibly high system specs.

Gadi Pollack, from Ubisoft Montreal, who produced *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within* and *Lost: The Video Game*, agrees that developers can alienate players: "I think Crytek is a technology-driven company, which is fair enough, but it was a bad idea to make the specs for *Crysis* so high."

Crytek have defended their *Crysis* requirements (256MB of video card memory, 2GB of RAM, and a mid-level DirectX 10 card) saying that around 70 per cent of gaming computers can play the game at a medium setting. The problem is, who wants to miss out on the high-res experience? And who can afford to keep shelling out for upgrades, or a new PC, every time a ground-breaking title is launched?

"This is threatening the PC market because developers think that they can push technology as far as it can go," says Pollack. "In the end, people won't buy these games because they don't want to spend additional money upgrading."



Crysis: crashing and burning?

OLD COMPLAINT

People have complained about game specs since the days of the Intel 486, but there are good business reasons for making hardware-hungry games. Developers exploit advanced technology available for PCs because it gives games a long shelf life, allowing them to license their engines to other developers. And

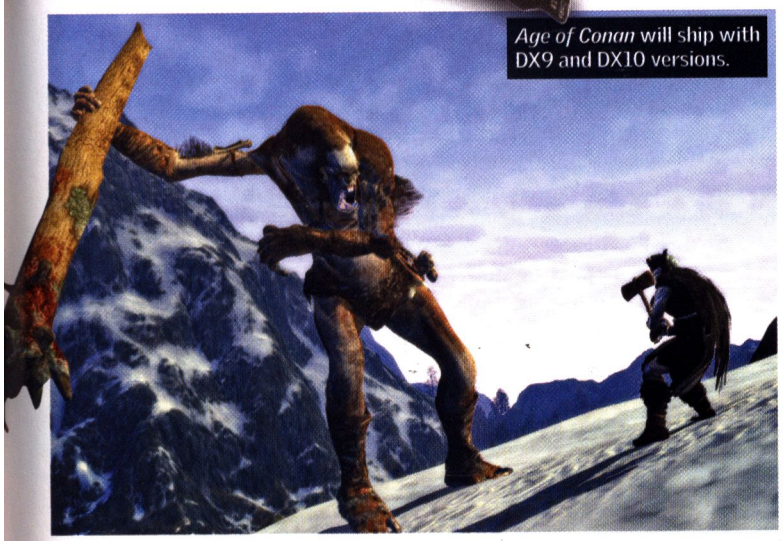
UT3: no bugger's playing it

PC game developers set the bar for graphical wizardry.

But, in recent times, show-offs like Microsoft's *Flight Sim X*, *Hellgate: London* and *BioShock*, have irritated the hardcore gamers. When a new game reveals visible lag and stodgy graphics, and its low settings on an average PC are frankly arse, there's reason enough to be peeved. This is a huge dilemma for developers, says Jørgen Tharaldsen, Funcom's Product Director.

"Getting the system requirements right is something we've spent a lot of time on for *Age of Conan*. On the one hand we have to develop a game that pushes the boundaries of the MMO genre; on the other we need to make sure that the largest amount of people can play it. I think we have found a nice middle ground. Most PC gamers get to play it (Shader Model 2.0 or higher is required). The older machine you have,

Aion: potentially the prettiest MMO ever.



Age of Conan will ship with DX9 and DX10 versions.

Developers use the most advanced tech available for PCs because it gives games a long shelf life

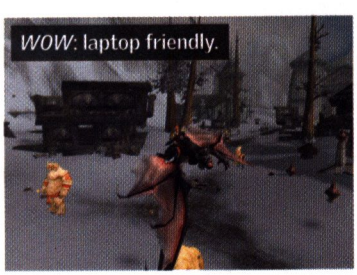
the less of the goodies you can run, but in general we have tried to develop our tech so it runs on old machines too."

Aion: Tower of Eternity, an upcoming MMO, in which you can fly above landscapes as an angel, sounds like a holy recipe for screen lag. However, the developers aim to keep everyone happy. "Accessibility is the key to developing any game," says Thomas Bidaux, product development director for NCsoft. "Predicting the high-spec capacity upon a game's release isn't too difficult. The real trick is predicting the portion of the player population that will have the minimum specs. We always aim as low as technically possible (without putting the project's visual quality in jeopardy)."

Aion's spec requirements – a 3GHz processor with 1GB RAM, and a GeForce 6600 or Radeon x1550 graphics card – are reasonable, but the question is whether cutting-edge graphics are needed, especially when moderately specified games like *Team Fortress 2* and *WOW* are so popular. In 2007, *World of Warcraft: Burning Crusade* was the top-selling PC title – shifting 2.25million copies worldwide, while the original *WOW* was in second with 914,000.

"It has been a priority to ensure that all our titles, including *WOW*, can be played on the widest range of systems," says a J. Allen Brack, lead producer for Blizzard. "One of our core philosophies is to make our games as accessible as we can – this is reflected in our approach to interface and gameplay design, and in the fairly modest minimum system specs required to play the games."

Indeed, *WOW* can run on a monitor attached to a toaster – its engine updated every now and again at little or no hardware cost to the player. "The *WOW* engine has been built to be graphically scalable, but we are very aware of balancing graphical and technical improvement with ensuring our players do not suffer a loss in performance. Our visual updates are based on refining our artistic design, rather than using intensive technology."



WOW: laptop friendly.

THE MMO MODEL

NCsoft's Bidaux suggests that developers might take a tip from MMOs: "MMOs are all about community – being accessible to as many players as possible. Creating a game that requires high specifications limits our potential audience, which is what we don't want."

Initial sales of *Crysis* sent out a warning signal to developers, but many still appear to ignore the facts that only a minority of PC owners have 8800GT graphic cards or quad-core processors and no-one enjoys upgrading their graphics cards every six months.

"Games like *WOW* have succeeded, and they'll continue to succeed, because their specs are low," says Pollack. "If developers don't try and make their specs lower in the future, PC games are not going to exist for much longer. Sure, RTS games and RPGs will continue to be created, but not shooters... I really hope that developers start making more lower-end PC games. They want to make the games graphically appealing, but it should be more about the experience of playing the game. It doesn't have to be the most beautiful looking game, but as long as you get a memorable experience you'll be happy." PCZ

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

@ letters@pczone.co.uk
✉ pavel barter, pc zone, 2 balcombe st, london, nw1 6nw

Motherboard melters

Games with specs that put terror into the heart of every penny-skimper

Doom 3

id's 2004 shooter sold loads. But its glistening zombie fatties came at a price: 384MB of RAM and 2GB of HDD space. "We know that we will be excluding some of the game-buying public with fairly stiff hardware requirements," id boss John Carmack said at the game's release, "but we still think it is the right thing to do."

EverQuest II

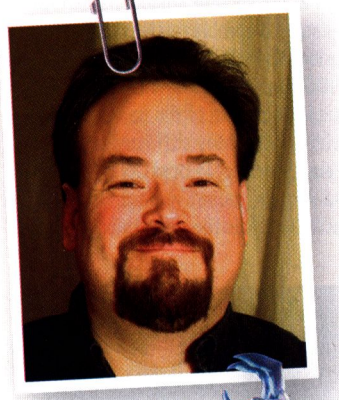
"Some thought we were crazy for releasing an online multiplayer game that needs a 3D card, but the gamble paid off," Sony Online Entertainment said on launching their MMO sequel. "Likewise, we make no apologies about making a game that awaits a new generation of hardware to see its full potential. We intend our game to be around for years to come..."

Assassin's Creed

As rumour has it, the PC port of Ubisoft's medieval stalker sim, released next month, will require a recommended 3GB of RAM. With specs this high, you'd expect nightie-wearing Altair to pop out of your monitor to make you a nice cup of tea after murdering a cavalcade of slave traders and uppity swordsmen with his rusty blade.

ROPER ON THE ROPES

Flagship CEO Bill Roper talks us through his *Hellgate* regrets



FOUR MONTHS AFTER its release, it's fair to say *Hellgate: London* didn't live up to expectations. There was an unfortunate gulf between what people wanted – a polished successor to *Diablo*, and what they received – a buggy, seemingly unfinished dungeon crawler. This abyss of expectation isn't something that's gone unnoticed by Flagship, and a string of subsequent patches (a content update – *The Stonehenge Chronicles*) have begun to set right what went so wrong. But how do you change first impressions? You can't. Can you?

"I think that people had incredibly high expectations that we simply didn't meet," admits Roper. "The game came out with some major bugs and that threw fuel on the fire. We've been killing ourselves addressing all of those issues, and the game is so much better now than it was when it came out. We just hope people will come back and give it a try again, if they played in those first few weeks of its release and were disappointed."

"As for development issues," continues Roper, "we simply tried to do too much with the game. *Vista*, DirectX 10, being both a single-player boxed product and a multiplayer online game, a simultaneous launch in seven languages across Europe, the US, and South East Asia, and creating our own fully-featured online destination on top of all that.

"We'll take the blame for not getting enough testing done while working to meet our committed ship date. There were so many issues that came up just before launch that just compounded the things we were working on, right up until the game launched, that we didn't get fixed. Or that we thought had been fixed, but came up again when we had tens of thousands of players online concurrently."

FLAGSHIPPED

Issues like items for level 70 characters being dropped by mobs, when the level cap is 50 – as if the loot's taking the piss out of you – was one example of the maddening wrongness that riled players into such a frenzy they coined the scathing term 'flagshipped', and the hypercritical 'fansite' www.flagshipped.com. The word's even appeared on UrbanDictionary.com – not quite the *Oxford English Dictionary*, but embarrassing for Flagship all the same. An example of how to use this new piece of internet slang follows:

Tim: "I just bought a new table today and one of its legs broke."

Jeff: "Man you got flagshipped!"

The internet is always going to be an angry, bubbling vat of criticism-spitting piss, but the reaction to *Hellgate* was especially negative online. Maybe more testing would have offset the nerd rage?

"Our issues when we launched were less about the total months of testing (which were numerous) as opposed to the vast number of issues that came up right at the end," explains Roper. "The game would certainly have benefited from a couple of more months in the oven, so to speak, but we didn't have the ability to do so. The challenges of an independent game studio are drastically different than those owned by a publisher. We're fortunate that the online nature of the game has allowed us to continue to fix bugs, add content, and respond directly to our player's wants and needs."

Other reasons contribute to an unfinished product reaching the shelves – the most upsetting being pressure from the men in suits holding the briefcases full of cash. So were Flagship rushed into completing *Hellgate: London*?

"Yes and no," claims Roper. "We made a commitment to ship the game on a certain date, and that decision was made jointly between us and our publishing partners. We wanted to stay true to that date because of all the marketing and sales work that had been put into a timed launch. We also thought we could get everything completed by that date. In a different situation, we could have said, 'Let's delay this until we get these last things hammered out.' But that's not as easy as people think when you don't have the hundreds of millions behind you that a publisher's development team does."

Still, you can't fault Flagship for not sticking to their guns – the game is constantly being improved upon, and for all its problems its essential framework is that of an enjoyable, and heavily addictive RPG.

> **"People had incredibly high expectations that we didn't meet"**
> Bill Roper comes clean about *Hellgate: London*'s flaws on its release

This guy doesn't think so though, angry man Gapes from www.flagshipped.com believes that "single-player Hellgaters are treated like baby girls in China, thrown out after the box sale. No extra revenue, no great need to bother fixing it... you aren't even wanted. If you're not paying or at least being tempted to pay by playing online it seems like Flagship would rather you go play in traffic." Oh my, what say you Bill?

"There is this huge misconception that we aren't doing things for our free players," says Roper. "A massive amount of work went into the patches after the game came out, as well as what's in *The Stonehenge Chronicles*, and that's available to everyone. All of the class rebalances, the PvP duelling arena, the numerous UI changes, group-play balance, quest work, item and mod issues being addressed (as well as a new upgrade system), crafting and more are there for everyone. We're very dedicated to providing updates and a better experience to everyone who plays the game."

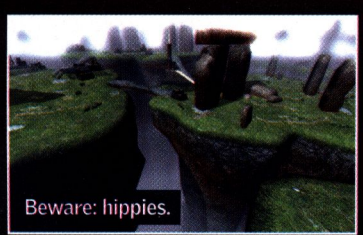
"At the same time," Roper explains, "we're building a lot of content for our subscribers to make their dedication to the game worthwhile. We've not only added new areas and items and monsters for them in *The Stonehenge Chronicles*, but also entirely new types of gameplay.

"We'll keep pushing on all fronts with *Hellgate: London*." PCZ

The Stonehenge Chronicles

***Hellgate*'s first content update has gone rural**

"With *The Stonehenge Chronicles*," intones Roper with Neolithic finesse, "we wanted to move outside of the city and have some wide open spaces to explore. The mythology surrounding the place is well known, and fits within our world's backstory very well. In the future, we'll probably continue to take people to new places outside of the city, although we're also looking at how we can make exploring within the confines of London more interesting and dynamic.

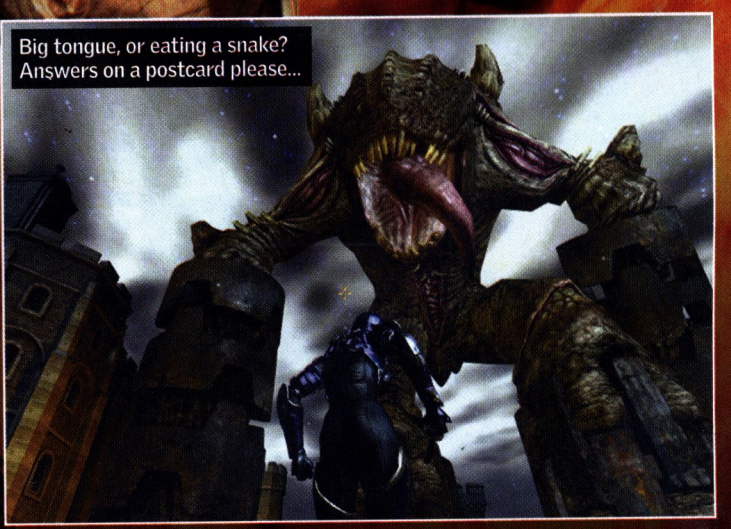


Beware: hippies.

"We're very focused on getting in much more core gameplay," Roper adds, "as well as supporting our subscribers with new content. We'll continue to work on creating large quarterly updates that focus on adding major new mechanics to the gameplay while also releasing smaller updates in between. We're listening intently to what our players are telling us they want and striving to create the content to reflect those desires."

Kew Gardens is a lot more dangerous in *Hellgate*.

Since when did the Tube stop at Stonehenge?



Big tongue, or eating a snake? Answers on a postcard please...

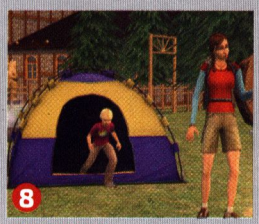
PCZONE CHARTS

ChartTrack

1	—	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2008	Issue 188 90%
2	—	CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN COMBAT	Issue 188 89%
3	↑	CRYSIS	Issue 188 92%
4	NEW	PIRATES OF THE BURNING SEA	Issue 192 40%
5	↑	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2008	Issue 188 71%
6	↑	WORLD OF WARCRAFT: BATTLE CHEST	N/A
7	↓	THE SIMS 2: BON VOYAGE	Issue 188 38%
8	↓	THE SIMS 2	Issue 147 82%
9	↓	UNREAL TOURNAMENT III	Issue 189 90%
10	↑	COMMAND & CONQUER 3: TIBERIUM WARS	Issue 180 85%
11.	↓	THE ORANGE BOX	Issue 187 n/a
12	↑	THE WITCHER	Issue 188 88%
13	↓	SIM CITY: SOCIETIES	Issue 189 61%
14	RE	THE COMPLETE COLLECTION OF THE SIMS	N/A
15	↑	WORLD IN CONFLICT	Issue 186 92%
16	NEW	UNIVERSE AT WAR: EARTH ASSAULT	Issue 191 79%
17	↑	MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR	Issue 175 91%
18	↑	THE SETTLERS: RISE OF AN EMPIRE	Issue 187 74%
19	RE	WARHAMMER 40,000: DOW ANTHOLOGY	N/A
20	NEW	CIVILIZATION IV COMPLETE EDITION	N/A

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2008

This game doesn't leave the charts because it's afraid it will be shat on by mischievous birds if it does.



THE SIMS 2

This game stays in the charts because it's hoping if it sticks around long enough it will receive a commendation.

WORLD IN CONFLICT

This game is waiting around in the charts because its master said 'stay' but then moved house and forgot about it.

MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR

This game remains chart-side by digging its barbs into the chart's fleshy thighs, so it can only be removed with surgery.

LOTS MORE HEROES

Battlefield Heroes – 'inspired' by TF2?

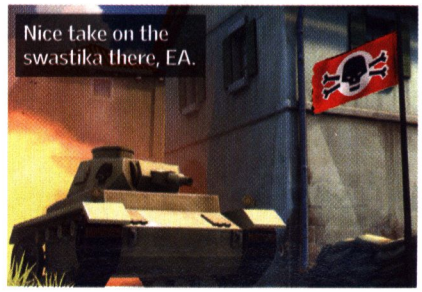
www.battlefield-heroes.com | ETA: Summer 2008

YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED to go around screaming accusations about companies ripping off other companies' ideas. For example, you cannot say that *Battlefield Heroes* is EA's attempt to cash in on *Team Fortress 2*'s recent popularity. So we won't say that – it might be libellous, and judges might gavel us in the teeth.

Battlefield Heroes is the latest in DICE's much celebrated *Battlefield* series, and will form the first release in EA's new 'Free 2 Play' range – games you pay for not with money, but by allowing your eyes and brain to absorb advertisements plastered about the game's front-end (and through optional microtransactions).

From what we've seen *Heroes* is lovely looking, though EA have mentioned (and we're not quoting them here) that the skills and strategic ability required to play will be minimal, so that players of all skill levels will be able to have fun. Not at the expense of 'deep character development' though, perhaps not unlike the clever characterisation we've seen in *Team Fortress 2*, and you know, doesn't that *Battlefield* soldier there look a little bit like a Heavy?

Will it be a neutered *Battlefield*? Or a bit of throwaway fun on par with its forbears? However it turns out, it won't cost a penny to give it a whirl, and what's more you can spend all the money you save on lottery tickets and those 29p cans of cider they do in Sainsbury's. We can't wait!


Nice take on the swastika there, EA.

We're told the adverts won't be in-game, unlike *Battlefield 2142*.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

The Man Behind the Mythos

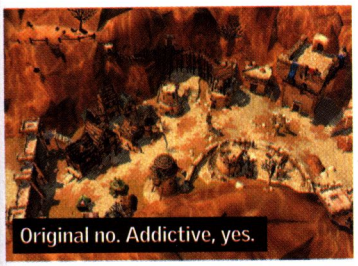
TRAVIS BALDREE – PROGRAMMER PRODIGY ON FLAGSHIP'S *MYTHOS*

The man, the *Mythos*, the legend – Travis Baldree started out making indie *Diablo*-alike *Fate* before being plucked to make free-to-play MMO *Mythos* not only work well as a casual multiplayer experience, but deliver the same addictive, slick combat that both *Diablo II* and *Fate* were so well known for.

Q PvP was huge in *Diablo II* – how is it going to work in *Mythos*?

A We're doing your standard silly duelling, because it's something people will want, but the main component is a PvP mirror-world – a separate version of the normal game, but with less instancing and no consent to kill one another. It's a kind of Wild West, no-holds-barred area where people can meet and fight people on the way to and inside dungeons. It's completely separate to the normal game, but anyone can take part and then pop out when they need to.

Surely there'll be griefing of lower-level players...



Original no. Addictive, yes.

Not with our karma system. If you constantly murder players much lower than you, you'll get really bad karma. When you have good karma, you only lose one item when you die – the worse it gets, the more you lose, to the point that everything you own drops in front of you when you die. Worse still, your karma only gets better by staying in the PvP world – you can't just wait it out by logging off.

So what's something that differentiates *Mythos* from both other MMOs and *Diablo II*?

The tradeskill system is less repetitive and grind-centric than other MMOs, instead factoring in a level of risk. That risk is based on sliders that are incentives to improve the speed, damage, or give it a chance to get a random range of effects, from turning into an epic item to having more slots. The higher these sliders go – meaning the greater chance of them having these bonuses – the greater the risk that the item will fail. With a general-purpose short sword, the ingredients are easier to get, but this really becomes interesting at the higher levels of crafting, when you're gambling with rarer materials you've got the chance to have something really amazing – or end up with nothing. The best part is that we don't have any progress bar, if you've got the materials, you'll just make it.

Maybe we won't need *Diablo 3* after all.

How're you making traditional dungeon crawls interesting?

Players can pick up maps as they go that pop up instances for their group set aside from the rest of the world. The interesting part is that you can get rare epic maps, that allow you and your group to enter a new dungeon with a much higher chance of good loot. These maps are fully tradeable, so there's going to be an economy built on the buying and selling of these really rewarding dungeons – but they can drop for anyone like normal gear, so it won't shut out casual players.

tat Zone

To bid or not to bid, tat is the question...

WARNING CONTAINS SHAKESPEAREAN SPOILERS

Is this tat which I see before me? Come, let me auction thee on eBay. I have thee not, yet I want thee still, especially the ace *Lineage II* figurine. Art thou not, fatal tat, all in aid of charity? Or art thou tat of the mind, a manipulative creation proceeding from the tat-powered games industry? I see thee yet, tat, in form as purchasable as that which I now draw from mine pocket of nice surprises. Find us neath the tag of 'PCZoners' on eBay, sire. Ride you tonight, readers?

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

THIS MONTH'S TAT

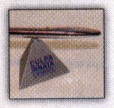
***LINEAGE II* FIGURINE**
Thine plastic pups are not to scale, madam, but we admire thee still

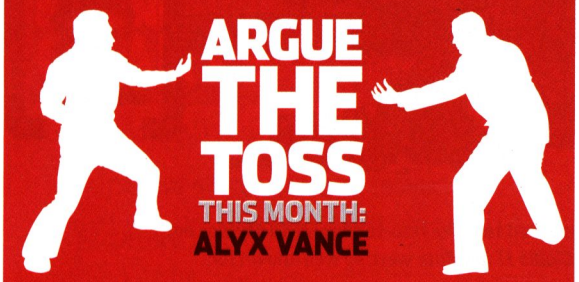
***FOOTBALL MANAGER* KEYRING**
This doth make jingling cowards of thy who wear't

***LINEAGE II* STANDEE**
A cut-out for thine desk, or for the incestuous pleasure of thine bed

LINEAGE II T-SHIRT
Banquo says: "With this *Lineage II* T-shirt you'll be the belle of the ball."

THE TAT BOARD

COMPARE	ITEM TITLE	SOLD FOR	BIDS
	WOW TRADING CARDS Swits and spurs! £30? Your heads shall be houseless and sides unfed!	£30.00	15
	INEXPLICABLE DIARY Withold thine indignation, readers, and tempt us not to sell you more diaries	£13.00	7
	**PEN MAGNET SET** Speak the speech, I pray you, or pronounce thee upon thine papery wotsits	£10.00	8
	POPCAP GOODIE BAG [Enter Lady Macbeth] Art thou peggish? Wouldst thou have EXTREME FEVER?	£8.50	10



ARGUE THE TOSS

THIS MONTH: ALYX VANCE

Dear Will,
I hate Alyx Vance. When she got run through by a Hunter in *Episode Two*, I swung my arms around in broad, jubilant circles, and whooped like a spring chicken. There's not a thing I like about her, from her bulletproof face, to that so-called funny bit where she named the zombines, and that coy face she pulls when she lunges for my manly scientist's chest. Steve Hogarty

Dear Steve,
You hate the best animated, best voiced, most realistic character to grace gaming? You hate the realistic ways she moves, the way she hugs you, and the fact that even when you zoom in on her face she still looks life-like? In creating a character and then giving her such life Valve have just nailed it with Alyx. What isn't to like? So what if she's bulletproof? You'd hate her more if you had to rescue her all the time... Will Porter

Will,
Alyx Vance's sole purpose is to narrate the player's situation because Valve didn't give their main character a personality. The millionth time she says "Gordon, thank goodness you're alright," you want to gravity gun her to the moon. SH

Steve,
Can you imagine how dull the game would be without her? She's warm, she's funny and she repeats herself less than any other NPC friendly. Have you played other games in which you have to protect a feeble female ally? They're all duff, with crap AI, lazy pathfinding and a throbbing vein of misogyny – Alyx adds loads to the *Half-Life* experience. Just because she hangs around a lot doesn't make her a bad person. WP

Will,
Can you imagine how rockin' the game would be if your sidekick was a wise-cracking robot, and not Alyx "This way Gordon!" Vance? With each passing scene your relationship with her becomes increasingly creepy too, culminating in her dad basically ordering her to do you, sex-wise. White Forest indeed. I won't fault her pathfinding though, in fact I celebrate her pathfinding, but I wish she'd find a path leading her boring arse off a cliff. SH

Steve,
You are just provoking me in an attempt to look cool. You are showing off and pretending to be at the helm of a depressingly inevitable backlash that's arrived four years late. She's brilliant man, grow up and realise it. WP

Will,
Wrong. Clearly you're just a blinkered idiot repeatedly "zooming in on her dazzlingly life-like face", barely concealing your shameful arousal. SH

Well done Lara, you climbed that thing. I hope you're proud.

Lara can now burn ancient ruins with mind powers.

STAFF AND A HALF

Tomb Raider Underworld to give Lara a big stick

www.tombraider.com | ETA: Winter 2008

MORE DETAILS ARE emerging about Lara Croft's new adventure, and further to last month's feature, we have now examined Lara tumbling around in the mud even more closely. First she became slightly dirty, then the rain started and it all washed off. Watching this on a massive screen whilst an Eidos representative described the process in an earnest monotone made for a bemusing 20 seconds.

Underworld certainly looks accomplished, art-wise, and thankfully some new gameplay elements came to light. Lara's dual pistols can now be trained on different creatures, her repertoire of moves has been expanded, again, to include wall jumps (no word yet on her yelling "ya-hoo" after a well-timed triple jump), and a staff that can be used as both weapon and a portable swing bar. The grappling hook, meanwhile, has also been updated. Say, if you grapple a rock and walk around, you can use the cable to bend round other items – it won't suddenly retract, like in *Legend*. We were also assured that the environmental clues would be more subtle – hopefully ending the 'Grapple Here' blue arrows – but then again, they said that with *Anniversary*.

This may sound like a large list of small changes, (and we may well sound like sarcastic bastards) but it all looks like it might piece together to create the most immersive *Tomb Raider* yet. And some of the shadows using that 'hybrid lighting system' were actually very impressive. These days it may not be cool to be impressed by shadows, but we were. Sorry.

BACK IN VEGAS

We rappel madly into *Rainbow Six: Vegas 2*'s new multiplayer modes

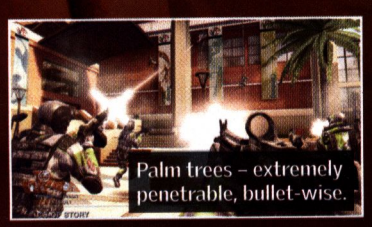
rainbowsixgame.us.ubi.com | ETA: March 2008

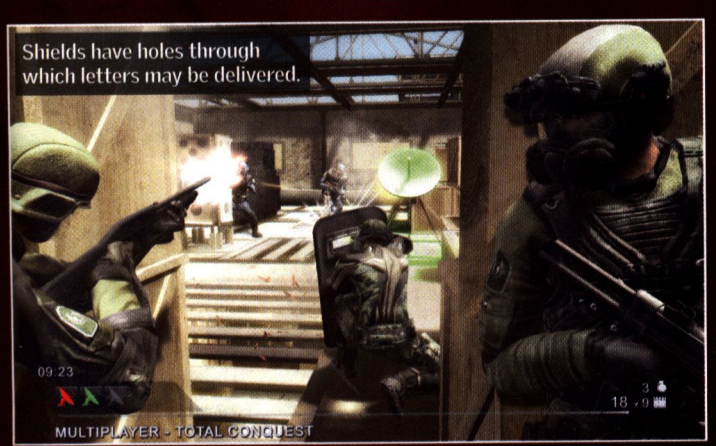
OH WE DO love rappelling, especially through skylights. Imagine, then, how elated we were to be allowed rappel down a selection of *Rainbow Six: Vegas 2*'s new multiplayer game modes and maps.

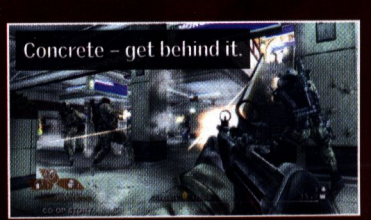
While not being a huge leap forwards in terms of look and feel (a hare's trump away from being a standalone expansion, some might say), *Vegas 2* adds two new game modes: Team Leader and Demolition. The former sees two teams, each with a team leader, attempting to reach their respective extraction points – essentially a VIP mode in which both team leaders' locations appear on one another's HUDs. Bullet penetration now allows for a level made of thin wooden panels too, so the ability to know whether your nemesis is standing on the other side of a shelving unit often leads to a splintery victory. Unconfirmed is the existence of a post office level in which shipments of bullet-proof glass and non-bullet-proof glass have been mixed up.

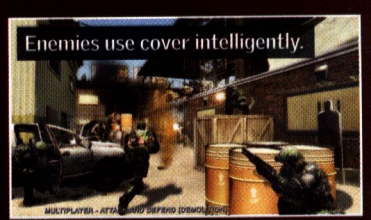
Demolition is a self-confessed take on *Counter-Strike*'s bomb-planting game mode, with two zones designated for bomb-placement, and one team attempting to disable the devices before they pop. Having played both of these game modes, we can merrily announce that they work extremely well, complementing a repertoire of excellent multiplayer features that went somewhat under appreciated in the original *Vegas*. The Team Leader mode is especially attractive, with the death of the team leader meaning team members can no longer respawn. With both team leaders down, the game turns into a survival mode (often interminably so, with the maps being so detailed this time round) – it throws up huge amounts of strategic options.

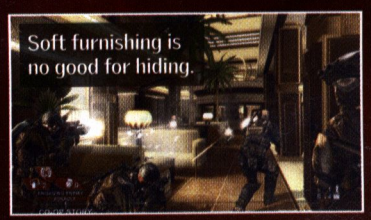
Meanwhile, we're promised that the single-player side of things will not only properly end the *Vegas* storyline, but should clock in at close to 12 hours, and feature improved AI capable of using the bullet penetration mechanic to its advantage. That means they won't hide behind giant stuffed teddy bears, and will instead hide inside shops full of Kevlar vests. Clever.


Palm trees – extremely penetrable, bullet-wise.




Concrete – get behind it.


Enemies use cover intelligently.


Soft furnishing is no good for hiding.

GREY'S ANATOMY

STARGATE WORLDS

***Jon Blyth* sticks a hand through and tries to guess what he's stroking**

DEVELOPER Cheyenne Mountain **PUBLISHER** Cheyenne Mountain **WEBSITE** www.stargateworlds.com

ETA AUTUMN 2008

THE LOWDOWN

A familiar interface in a familiar universe	✓
Novel attempts to get everyone involved	✓
Faithful to the TV series franchise	✓
PVP, factions, all sounding good	✓
Mini-games? Are we talking *WarioWare*, here?	✗

LIKE ALL SCI-FI TV, *Stargate* has devotees. Some align themselves with the movie and the original writer's intentions to make a trilogy. Others dismiss the film in the same way *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* fans dismiss the rubbish film that spawned their series of choice, while most people don't give a toss. The forthcoming *Stargate* MMO is aimed at the last two groups.

Stargate Worlds will be an MMO set in the world of the TV series. Last month's trailer didn't give much away, so we were keen to find out where in the spectrum of the new wave of MMOs this would fit. We spoke to Dan Elggren, the head of Cheyenne Mountain, a company named after the home of Stargate Command, that's been set up to develop *Stargate Worlds*.

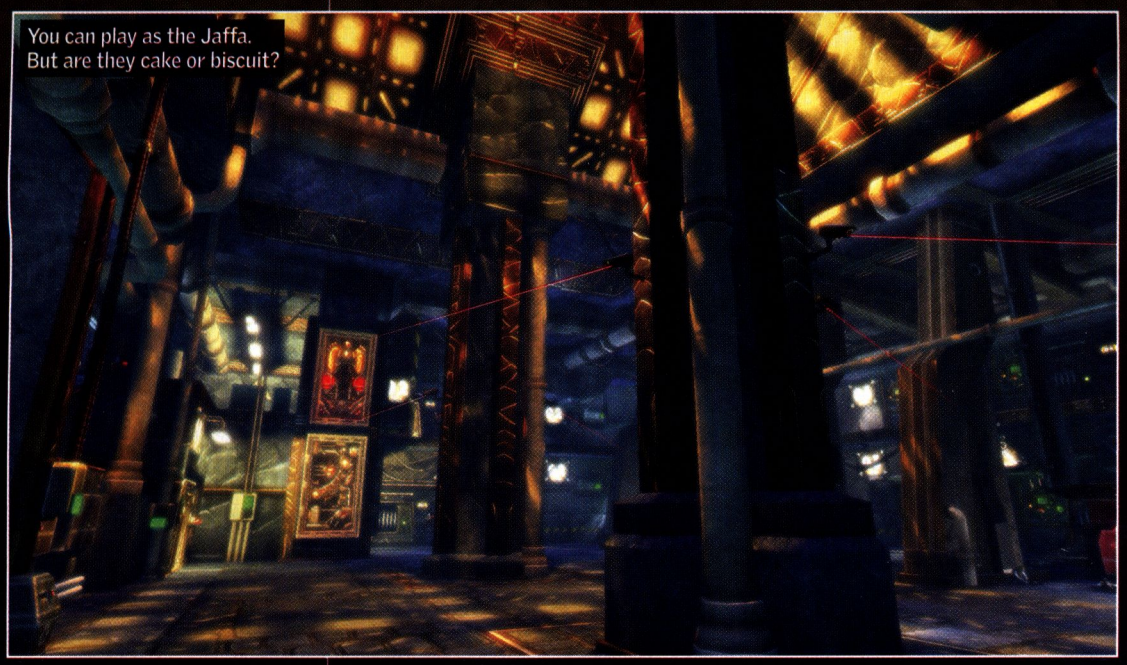
"It's a traditional MMO system that will be very familiar to gamers, but with more depth and tactical options. We are not a twitch-based game or any type of hybrid MMOFPS," explains Elggren. So there won't be a re-imagining of the genre to get our heads around. But while it tries to trade in on the familiarity of *WOW* and provide a well-defined and popular sci-fi universe to play in, *Stargate Worlds* will try to distinguish itself using its brains.

Your face, my asp.

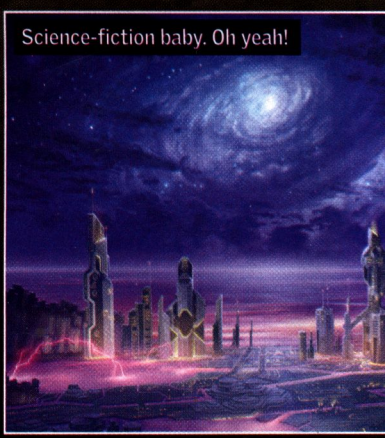
"One of the big differences will be our AI. In most MMOs if you walk into a set of mobs, once you've seen how they react once, you know how they will react every time you walk into that group. Mobs in *Stargate Worlds* won't give you the same look twice." This is a fair accusation; PvE combat can be a hypnotic drudge, and anything to make it feel like you're not fighting one routine with your own routine can only improve the experience.

Then it gets a little bit more surprising. "For those gamers who aren't interested in combat, we're integrating minigames in a way to provide alternative gameplay styles. We're consciously building our game to be easily accessible to non-gamers and gamers who have never picked up an MMO." Setting the target audience to 'everyone' will thrill the money men, but it's a strategy that tends to fail. But Elggren remains adamant.

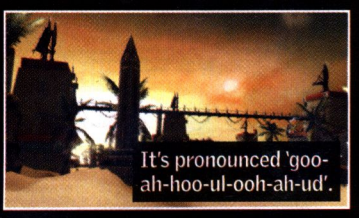
"We believe our combat system is challenging and different enough to



You can play as the Jaffa. But are they cake or biscuit?



Science-fiction baby. Oh yeah!



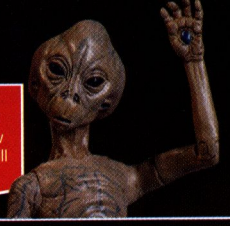
It's pronounced 'goo-ah-hoo-ul-ooh-ah-ud'.

THE STORY SO FAR... STARGATE

1994
OH, HE'S A BLOKE!
The *Stargate* movie ends Jaye *'Crying Game'* Davidson's acting career, after he plays Ra.

1997
SG-1 BEGINS
Stargate SG-1 bursts the TV series dam. *Atlantis* followed, and *Universe* will be next.

1998
ACTION FIGURES
Hell, there's a market for it. God knows how or why, but people will happily buy this shit.



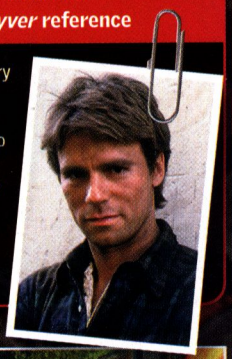
2008
AT LAST, THE MMO
Stargate Worlds will be released in the Autumn of this very year we're in right now

Cheyenne Mountain have got some funny ideas about their evolution of the MMO

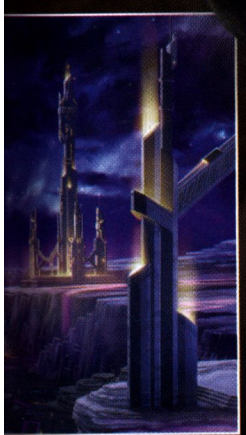
Go on, it's got MacGyver in it

We're never ones to shy away from an easy *MacGyver* reference

Stargate Worlds will be set over many planets, and the discovery of new gate codes is the perfect device to explain modular expansion packs. That's all very well and good, but we're most heartened to know that Richard Dean Anderson – the bloke who played everyone's favourite '80's TV action hero MacGyver will be appearing as an NPC. We can only imagine the mission chain which has you fetching Brigadier General O'Neill/MacGyver a packet of Chewits, a box of matches, a Toby Jug and the all-important paperclip, before he orders you to use them to prevent a sun from going nova.



Fans of alien flora, gasp now.



attract the hardcore gamers, but we also know that we have to build a game that is accessible to *Stargate* fans who may have never played an MMO before. Our minigame integration and our respect for the *Stargate* IP will make these gamers feel at home in the universe of their favourite sci-fi TV series." They're also in talks with the series' actors, to get them to appear as NPCs.

Hellgate suffered from a lack of serious PvP at launch, and Elggren is keen to point out that *Stargate* won't fall into the same trap. There'll be good and evil teams to pick, and classes available will be Archaeologists, Soldiers, Commandos and Scientists. Good guys can also play Asgard or Free Jaffa, whereas the bad lot get to play Goa'Uld or Loyal Jaffa.

This is a break from magic, with technology boosting the physically frailer races such as the weedy Asgard (the massive guy on the left). But it's the description of the Archaeologist that makes us raise our eyebrows: "Archeologists are an integral part of many *Stargate* teams who act as translators and advisors on dealing with other civilizations. They will work with their allies to translate Ancient texts and puzzles and communicate with alien civilizations."

The idea that there is a puzzle-solving, communicating class is intriguing. How this will work, how challenging the puzzles will be, and how popular the class will be when you can play as an awesome symbiote dude – all this hovers unseen in a fog of PR.

Stargate Worlds sounds like the spawn of *WOW* and *Puzzle Pirates*. Cheyenne Mountain have got some funny ideas about their evolution of the MMO, and we're feeling a bewildering cocktail of curiosity, scepticism and bemusement. The problem is, when it's difficult to imagine how a game will work, it's just as hard for the people creating it to make it good. PCZ

Let Thy light and blessed influence
be shed upon this afflicted land.
Pity the evils which we suffer under
the power and tyranny of war.
Help us to see that suffering delivers justice.
Harken to our prayers and provide
a remedy for our calamities.

Say a Prayer

CRYSIS®

is upon us

Out now

HELP SAVE THE WORLD AT
ELECTRONICARTS.CO.UK/CRYSIS

© 2007 Crytek GmbH. All Rights Reserved. Crytek, Crysis and CryENGINE are trademarks or registered tradmarks of Crytek GmbH in the U.S and/or other countries. Electronic Arts, EA, and the EA logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. NVIDIA, the NVIDIA logo, and The Way It's Meant To Be Played are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation. All rights reserved. Intel, the Intel logo, Intel Core, and Core Inside are trademarks of Intel Corporation in the U.S. and other countries. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. *As awarded by E3 Game Critics at the 2007 E3 Media and Business Summit. As awarded by Leipziger Messe GmbH at the Games Convention 2007 held in Leipzig.

1

HOT SHOTS

LEGO BATMAN

DEVELOPER Traveller's Tales **PUBLISHER** Warner Bros **WEB** batman.lego.com **ETA** Summer

HAVING PROVED THAT Lego isn't just a choking hazard from the past with *Lego Star Wars*, it seemed inevitable that the Danish '80s think-toy would attach its attention to other pop culture figureheads. Indiana Jones isn't the only one to get bricked – the Caped Crusader (or the Dark Knight, if you're a goth) is getting an original adventure of his own. What can we expect? Humour, excellent design, gameplay simplicity, lots of nubbins to collect, and a charming game that you can even play with your partner, or your kids. This won't be the most challenging experience of your life, but we're convinced we're going to come out of it with a daft smile on our faces.

7

The Bigger Picture

1 KNIGHT AND DAY
This Batman game isn't tied to the plot of the films, like *Star Wars* and Indy – instead, it'll be an original story. Well, we say original – there'll be all the characters we've come to love.

2 GO WEST
There may be little sign of Adam West's baggy suit in these shots, but we're willing to bet it'll be an unlockable costume.

3 HOW MANY LIVES WAS THAT AGAIN?
This Catwoman shot gives us a chance to mention the fact you'll be able to play as the game's villains. The Joker, Scarecrow, The Penguin, and even rubbish ones like Killer Croc. Just like *Lego Star Wars*, actually.

4 THOSE WONDERFUL TOYS
A lot of the gadgets will be familiar to us, but something less familiar to fans is the idea of changing suits to get new crime-fighting powers. There's no shark repellent spray, but you'll be wearing magnetic boots...

5 I GET AROUND
Batman never walks when he can use a vehicle – and he won't get in a vehicle that doesn't start with the word 'Bat'. The Batmobile, Batwing, Batamaran, Battery-Powered Scooter, he rides them all, and they're all in the game. Except for the ones we just made up, obviously.

6 SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE
The game is for kids and gamers with a sense of humour. Working to the old adage that kids will tell you when they hate something – if you make something good for kids, you'll make something good for everyone.

7 ACTION STATIONS
Classic *Batman* rope action – we hope there's a scene where they climb a rope up the side of a building, and talk to a woman in the shower.

FAST AND FURIOUS...

RACE DRIVER: GRID

ETA JUNE 2008

Jamie Sefton **takes the chequered flag, and is arrested for illegally removing valuable race property...**

DEVELOPER Codemasters **PUBLISHER** Codemasters **WEBSITE** www.codemasters.com

THE LOWDOWN

- Fantastic real-time damage model ✓
- Innovative Flashback mode for rewinding crashes ✓
- New drift racing style ✓
- Upgradeable garage and AI team-mates ✓
- No gruff Scottish mentors (or is that a positive?) ✗

NICK PHILLIPS IS lead artist on *Race Driver: GRID* and has just spent the best part of 10 minutes demonstrating dozens of cars smashing, splintering and crumpling into walls, metal barriers, and other vehicles – including tanks – in the kind of exceptional detail you'd expect to see in one of those terrible car crash compilation DVDs usually presented by Jeremy Clarkson.

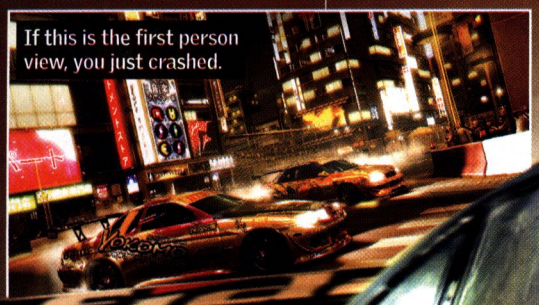
Sadly, the tanks he's referring to don't appear in a bizarre new American motorsport event, they feature in the forthcoming *Operation Flashpoint 2: Dragon Rising* – another Codemasters title using the same powerful physics damage system that's built into the company's cross-platform, multi-purpose EGO engine.

We're big fans of the *Race Driver* series here at *PC ZONE*, and despite the fact they've dropped the '*TOCA*', this is still the Codemasters racing game we know and love. But now it's set in a world across three distinct areas – the USA, Europe and Japan – with 600 different AI driver personalities and up to 20 vehicles on-track at once with full real-time damage.

There's also an upgradeable garage of powerful cars and a brand new race style in addition to Open Wheel, GT and the rest of the *Race Driver* canon – the burgeoning sport of drifting (see the 'Catch My Drift' box).

GO WEST

After being bombarded with images of vehicle destruction, I settle down for a play of *GRID*, behind the wheel of a muscle car on a San Francisco circuit, characteristic of the kind of big city racing the team want for the USA section. As I skid round the first corner, clipping the wing of the Dodge Viper SRT-10 on a barrier, it's immediately apparent that the series' great pick-up-and-play handling (slap-bang between realistic and arcade) is already in place, along with a terrifying sense of speed.



If this is the first person view, you just crashed.

THE STORY SO FAR...

RACE DRIVER

STARTING GRID
Codemasters' first *Race Driver* is *TOCA Touring Car Championship*, 11 years ago.

1997

POLE POSITION
The first 'Car-PG' that had a plot is *TOCA Race Driver*, which we gave 76% to in issue 128.

2003

PIT LANE
TOCA Race Driver 2 is launched in 2004, with the mighty addition of supertruck racing.

2004

CHEQUERED FLAG
TOCA Race Driver 3 is the series' last game, and included Open Wheel and GT racing.

2006

Race Driver: GRID is fast and frenetic, but then the prospect of ramming your souped-up car into a solid object at over 200mph at any time, showering the track with car parts and twisted metal, is an extremely potent mix for petrol-heads.

"Playing a racing game where you inexplicably just bounce off a ribbon barrier is such a glaring hole in a beautifully-simulated world, that it wrenches players out of the experience," says chief game designer, Ralph Fulton. "We don't want to do that. By implementing a full damage system for cars, and the barriers and other objects on the track, it causes us huge logistical problems, but it makes for a much more thrilling and memorable game."

Another corner, and I hit a tyre wall, sending a few skittering and rolling down one of San Francisco's steep hills. I then manage to take off at a ridiculously dangerous speed that lifts my car off the ground and slams it back down, instantly reminding me of that iconic car chase in the '70s cop movie *Bullitt*. Ahead, I see one of the race's other 11 AI-driven cars making a similar mistake, but losing control of the car and careering into a barrier – proof that the computer opponents are not just following pre-programmed racing lines.

TURN BACK TIME

Although the realistic damage system is great for producing an exciting, edge-of-your-seat racer, it can become frustrating – especially if you're a beginner – when you're constantly having to restart a race if you write off your car after a major collision.

Codemasters agree, and so in a 'why hasn't this been done in a racer before (besides the fact that time travel is silly and impossible)?' kind of way, have introduced a Flashback mode, which cleverly allows you to rewind the action and re-enter the race before you critically damaged your vehicle.

It's not yet been agreed how many Flashbacks are to be included in each race. But if you use the feature, it prevents you (obviously) from posting fastest race times on the online leaderboards, which we think is a fantastic addition.

As an example, I managed (not for the first time) to plough my gleaming Mazda into a barrier on the Milan circuit, buckling the bonnet like a concertina and leaving me as much chance of winning a trophy as the England football team. A quick use of the Flashback mode's DVD shuttle-type controls and I watched as my car reversed slowly, un-creasing and mending itself in real time, into a position on the road a few crucial seconds before the smash.

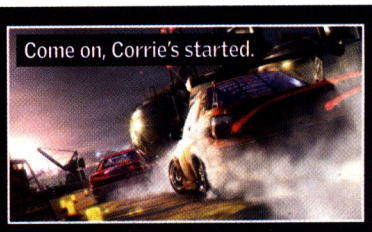
Setting the game going again, I managed on the second attempt to hit the brakes and skilfully drift the car around the sharp bend as trouble-free as Lewis Hamilton's Swiss visa application.

Even at this early alpha stage, *Race Driver: GRID* is looking like a championship contender, with a non-linear career mode that allows you to build your own race team and even hire and fire AI team-mates, more than 90 different circuits and tons of racing styles, 45 hand-picked cars including the Aston Martin DBR9 and 1970 Boss 302 Mustang, day/night cycles, real-time damage and online multiplayer for 12 cars. Shame they left the tanks out though... PCZ

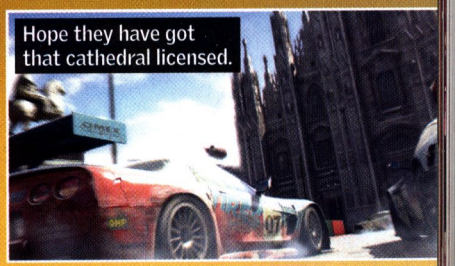
Catch My Drift

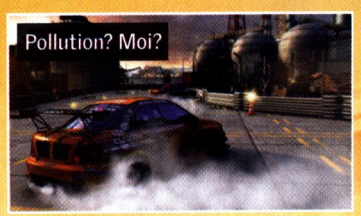
Drift racing is the latest *Race Driver* addition

Codemasters have employed Team Orange, the current drift racing world champions, for advice and technical help on getting the feeling of drifting just right. "Hopefully we've found a middle ground between realistic and arcade, where we're still using real physics, and all the same rules apply to drift cars as they do to other cars, but you can pick it up and play immediately," says chief game designer Ralph Fulton.

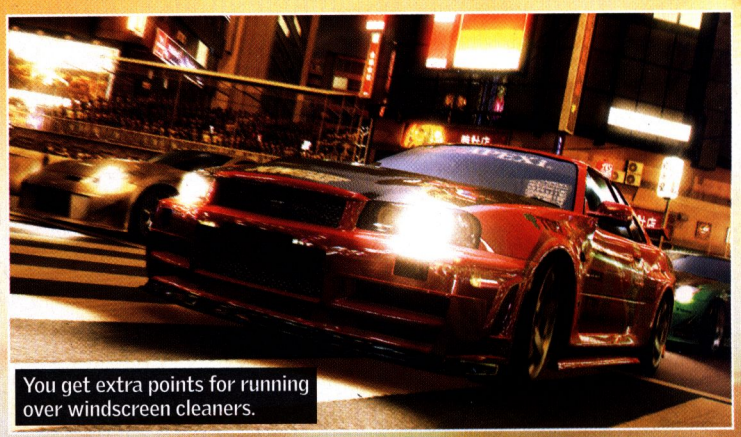

Come on, Corrie's started.

Another factor is making sure that drift racing rules, involving a points system scored by judges, is accessible to gamers unfamiliar with the sport. The result is a display of the score and number of combos chained together similar to *Project Gotham Racing*'s Kudos ratings.


Hope they have got that cathedral licensed.


Pollution? Moi?

These inanimate objects got attitude.


You get extra points for running over windscreen cleaners.

I'll certainly be buying Dunlop tyres from now on.

Tiny screenshot, obscured by a cut-out and long caption.

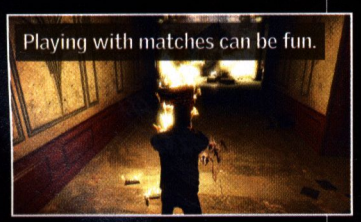
ALONE IN THE DARK

Ed Zitron experiences the *AITD* gameplay first-hand, before setting a magazine on fire and wedging it under a kettle

DEVELOPER Eden Studios **PUBLISHER** Atari **WEBSITE** www.centraldark.com

THE LOWDOWN

- Cinematic, atmospheric graphics ✓
- An intriguing, original plot ✓
- Fantastic Havok physics ✓
- Driving sections are smooth and well-crafted ✓
- Could be fairly short ✗


Playing with matches can be fun.

WHEN I HEARD about *Alone in the Dark* and saw screenshots of a man walking down spooky corridors with a torch, I feared the worst.

Would it be yet another survival horror game, built upon a franchise that, beyond all reason, still has an iota of quality attached to it? Imagine my surprise when the first thing I see moving in the game proper is a full-on fight scene, and instead of Edward Carnby gingerly running away from *Resident Evil*'s extras, I see Gordon Freeman's long-lost cousin whacking enemies like a man possessed.

This isn't about cowering in the shadows – it's about progression, survival and manipulating the environment in your favour.

DARK TIMES AHEAD

The game kicks off with you waking up drugged on a bed, with some moody looking men saying nasty things to you, before promptly picking you up and taking you upstairs to be shot. So far, so everyday New York. But before you can say "But I haven't seen the giant keyboard from *Big* yet" one of them gets their arse torn asunder by a demon, and you escape into an urban nightmare. Very quickly then, you find yourself stranded in the game's main arena – Central Park – where the bulk of the story takes place. And, if you haven't been there or seen *Home Alone 2*, it isn't the sort of park with teenagers smashed on cider shouting at old women. This is a sprawling area full of greenery, buildings, roads, underground passages, churches and, in this case, mutated fiends from hell.

A city in chaos at least reduces traffic.

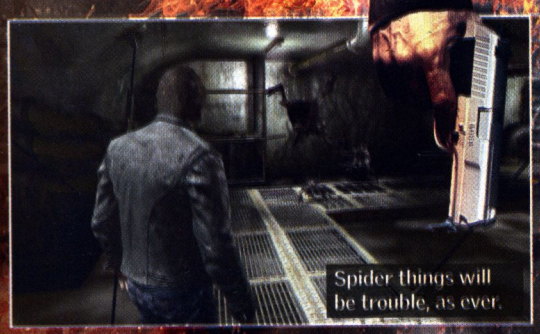
Thankfully, conquering this expanse is made easier by the inclusion of vehicles. These aren't an afterthought either, Eden's entire development team has transferred from the now-complete *Test Drive Unlimited* to work on *Alone in the Dark*, ensuring that each vehicle controls distinctly, usefully and accessibly – it's not a racing game, after all. You're able to move about inside cars, too, letting you shoot through the windows or roof, and use parts of it as cover against the mutant menace.

SO VERY, VERY LONELY

As mentioned before, Carnby is spoiling for a fight. He can pick up anything that you or I could pick up, and moves it in a realistic way with a neat right-click. He also picks stuff up depending on its position on the floor, and moves it through his hands realistically. Everything just works as you would expect it to dependant on its situation. This also factors into Carnby's inventory, which can be used to combine things or place an item in each hand. A Zippo and an aerosol will make a flamethrower, and combining tape with a flare lets you throw it at an enemy and stick it to them, making them not only easier to see, but also a moving light source.

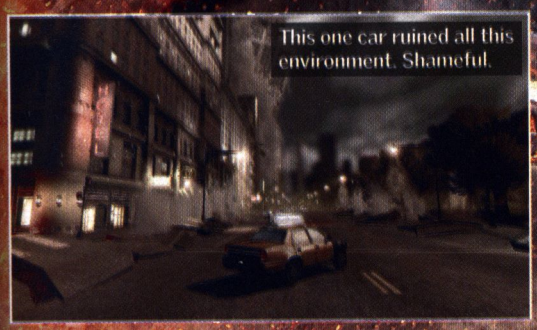
In fact, light, sound, and smell are key to *AITD*. Some monsters will smell blood, which can be a blessing and a curse. If you're hurt, you'll bleed, and you will be easier to track down, but conversely a human corpse can be dragged to form a trail of blood to guide an enemy into a trap. These traps are of your own devising, the most obvious being to create a pile of wooden objects, cover them in petrol, and then pour a trail to a hiding spot, where you lie in wait for a hungry monster to come foraging. Conversely, some enemies are scared of light or fire – so just like in a proper monster movie, you can find yourself walking down a hallway, holding back an evil bloodthirsty mob using nothing but the flaming chair in your hand and the gun in your pocket.

This utility factor makes *AITD* thrilling. You're far from defenceless, the entire world feels like it can be exploited, though how much freedom you'll have remains to be seen. Doors can be battered, buildings burnt with fiery aplomb, and cars used as gigantic, moving bombs – it's entirely up to you. Combined with a Hollywood level of special effects and disaster-drama, *Alone in the Dark* could potentially be the shock hit of the summer. PCZ

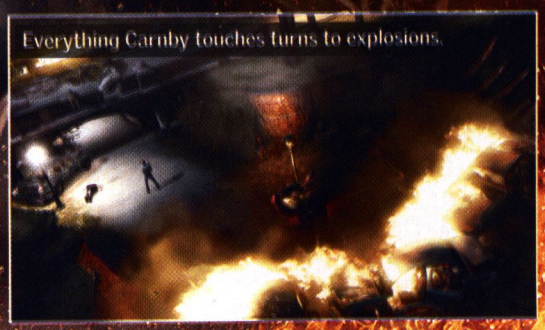


Spider things will be trouble, as ever.

Light, sound, and smell are key in *AITD*. Some monsters smell blood, which can be a blessing and a curse



This one car ruined all this environment. Shameful.

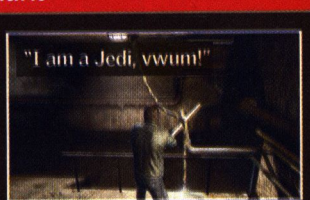


Everything Carnby touches turns to explosions.

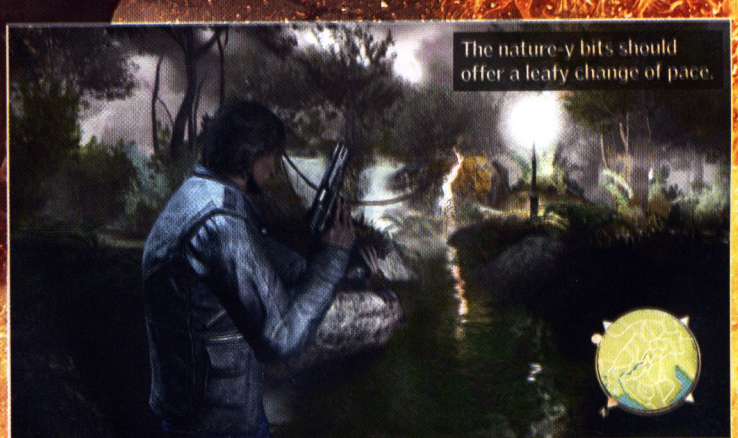
Let's get physical

If you can grab something, you can hit with it

AITD's vaunted physics engine is both satisfying and useful, and the physics puzzles themselves are intuitive and built upon the idea of a real world with real problems. If you have a wire poking into some water, electrifying it, you don't have to find an alternate route – just pick up a pole, move the wire out of the water and drape it over a railing. Problem solved, move on. Generally, problems in the game are all solved like this. If there's a big wooden door, you shoot away the lock. If there's a metal one, you bash it until it caves in. The game has a practical feel to it – no artificial roadblocks caused by locked doors. There's still a chance that the released game may throw objects in your way, but that relentless video-game phrase "It's locked!" may be about to meet its end.



"I am a Jedi, vwum!"



The nature-y bits should offer a leafy change of pace.

SYMPHONY OF DESTRUCTION

Like the Hulk, Alex's superhuman strength lets him both use and abuse the environment by throwing cars, kicking tanks and punching enemies through windows. Fights cause untold levels of graphic and physical destruction. It's like a full-scale disaster film – and you're the disaster.

CITY SLICKERS

While it's predominantly made up of free-roaming terrain, you'll find yourself occasionally in New York's infected and military zones. These can be played against each other by deliberately leading groups of monsters into the path of the military, causing both sides to call in backup and cause a gigantic fight – while you casually escape the area, or even join in.

HOT SHOT

PROTOTYPE

DEVELOPER Radical **PUBLISHER** Vivendi **WEBSITE** www.prototypegame.com **ETA** Summer

ALEX MERCER HATES Mondays. He's woken up with amnesia, he can inexplicably shapeshift, and the military wants to capture him for some invasive probing. The good news is that Alex is a walking weapon, able to turn to stone, run up buildings, or even assume the form of anyone he meets by placing a hand casually through their chest. This will help, as New York City is under siege from a viral epidemic that mutates people into 'The Infected', classically evil-looking and destructive monsters that can tear the average man limb from limb. All good reasons for you being aware of this game's existence. Opinion throughout the *PCZ* office is split asunder, one half believing it could be a console-centric, paper-thin, idiot-pleasing chunk of well-intended wrongness, the others thinking it could be the best free-roaming *GTA*-esque title since *GTA*. As soon as we figure out who's right, we'll let you know.

MIGHTY MORPHIN'
You're able to transform into anybody you see in the street, be they military personnel or a regular John reading the paper. This can be advantageous to avoid a fight, or to sneak into highly guarded areas unfettered.
COOPED UP
A co-op mode will allow for two Alex Mercers to rampage around the city at once, causing double the amount of carnage. Players can play independently of one another, or join forces to become a walking superpower.
MERCER-NARY
Alex is similar to The Infected, in that he's got superhuman abilities. He can run at lightning speeds, jump huge gaps, is ridiculously strong and can even run up the side of buildings.

Care in the Community

Steve Hogarty finds out how MMO communities grow together and are policed...

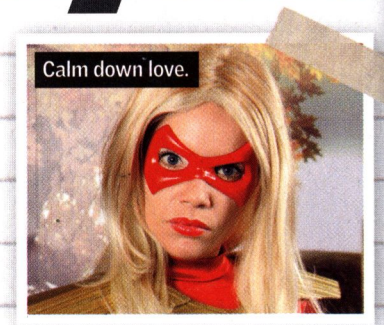
TENS OF MILLIONS of people throw themselves headfirst into massively multiplayer online worlds, their rules unbreakable and rulers unseen. Setting out in search of the people pulling the strings of some of the more popular MMOs leads us to NCsoft's Brighton offices, where they're willing to divulge the secrets of their string-pulling ways. Keeping online societies sweet is no simple task, and the key to maintaining a happy community, according to NCsoft's team of happy community co-ordinators, is simple: just keep in touch.

"When we were at Memorabilia, the movie and gaming convention, in Birmingham last November," begins Martin Kerstein, community team lead on *Guild Wars*, "there was one player from *City of Heroes* who baked shortbread villains and heroes for the team. It's always very funny when you first meet players, as we only know them by their nick. There was this one PvP player who was always very outspoken, so at this convention in Germany I asked 'Which one of you is this guy?' It turned out to be this really nice, sweet kid," laughs Martin, "every mother's dream!"

Community management is an aspect of MMOs than many people don't consider, and just one of the things your lamented monthly subscription fees pay for. If you've got a problem with the game you're paying to play, there'll be somebody there to help you out. This isn't just about developers showing face at BlizzCon either; interaction with the community filters right the way down through to forums, in-game events, and even player meets.

"In Cologne we had a *City of Heroes* player meet where about 50 people turned up," reminisces Jörg Koonen, German *City of Heroes* community co-ordinator. "It started at 7pm and went on until about 4am. We went to a restaurant, and then we went to a metal club," he chuckles. "We had a lot of fun. Whatever we do, it's all about building relationships with our community."

"Early last year we did a *Guild Wars* player meet here in Brighton," adds Alex Weekes, English *City of Heroes* community team lead. "We had players coming from Italy, Scandinavia, all over the UK, Germany and France – 50-odd people turned up. We invited a member of staff from ArenaNet, the developer of *Guild Wars*, and ended up eating a full English breakfast with some players in an all-night café at two in the morning."


Calm down love.

HELP I'VE FALLEN

MMO players pulling all-nighters might not be the strangest thing you've come across, but occasionally odd things do happen in-game. In these moments, when your loot starts back-talking you or your group falls into the sky, GMs

Jörg Koonen, German COH community co-ordinator, doing a bit of loading.

He looks vicious. Call in the community!

This man isn't really a superhero.

The guy on the right clearly doesn't know what he's doing.

One rogue *EVE Online* developer allegedly used his powers to generate in-game cash for his corporation

from the game's customer support team wade into the game world with their godlike powers, and the ability to cure your problems. The job is not all about divine intervention though, having authoritative status in an MMO allows you to do other things too. "It's not always about having the tools to solve problems," explains Kerstein, "but also about having the tools to run small-scale events in-game, for the players."

"In *City of Heroes* we've run emote contests," adds Koonen, with disarming enthusiasm, "with people pairing up to play Rock Paper Scissors against each other. The community team was there to referee and watch over the event. Then we also have PvP events organised by us, with cups, medals and titles for the winners to distinguish these players from the rest."

Tasty little justice-bringers.

One rogue *EVE Online* developer allegedly used his powers to generate in-game cash for his corporation, a high-profile case that seriously damaged relations between that game and its community, what's to say that a *City of Heroes* GM couldn't rule a game of Rock Paper Scissors in his favour? Loic Claveau, community team lead for the upcoming, CryEngine-powered MMO, *Aion*, steps in to provide an answer.

"There are safeguards in place to stop abuses of power," he explains. "If, for example, I logged into *City of Heroes* and gave 10 million to a friend, or simply generated that much currency – it would be flagged, customer support would see that. I would be fired on the spot!"

"It could happen," admits Claveau, "but I don't think it would happen. We all talk to each other, and we're all mature enough not to do anything like that, because it ruins the game. In *EVE Online* you can't trust the GMs any more, now they've been accused of this stuff..."

"I don't know how other companies do it," adds Kerstein, "but when we're hiring at NCsoft, we always look very carefully at who we're hiring. We all play one another's games here, so if one of us were to do something stupid it would be obvious. We're as much players as we

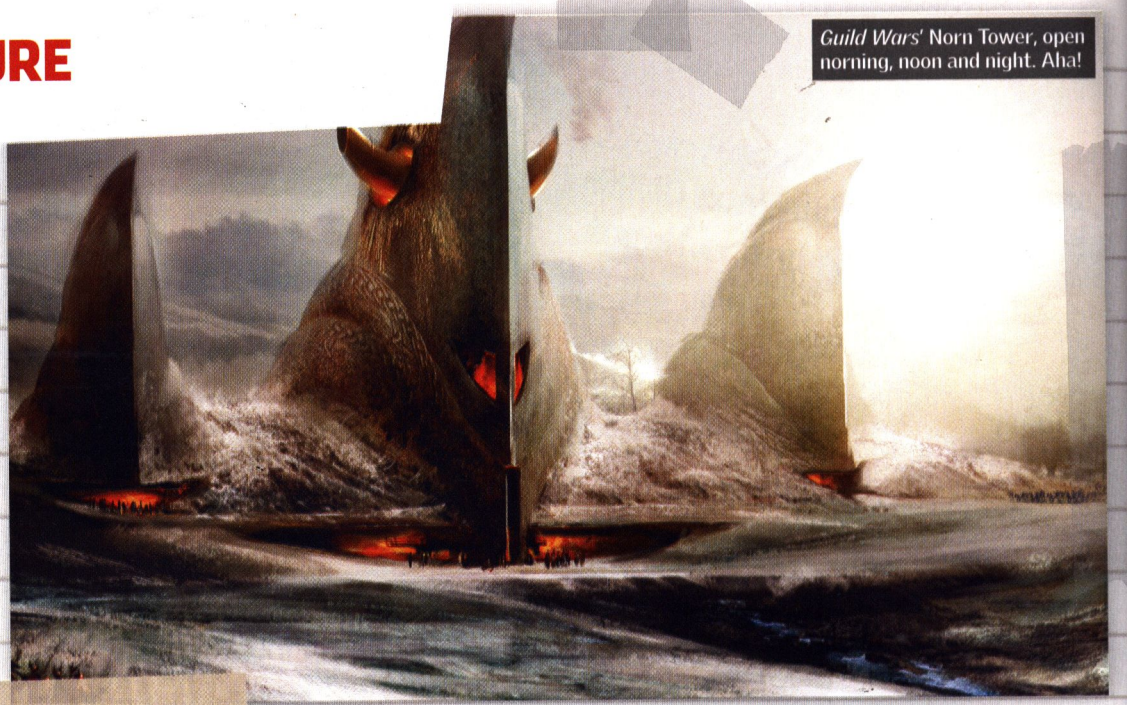
Red Dwarf's Kryten (Robert Llewellyn) and Lister (Craig Charles), waving fake weapons about.

Celebrity Squares

Where cult television and MMOs collide

The Memorabilia Show houses not only a booth full of NCsoft staff munching on fan-made confectionary, but some of our favourite actors starring in 'live action screenshots' from *Guild Wars* and *City of Heroes*. Here is Greg Grunberg, who you might know as the policeman in *Heroes* who can read minds, with some pouting characters from *City of Heroes* and *Villains*.

And here's the bloke who played Jaws in James Bond films, who's really old now. It's sad how people get old, isn't it? That man shouldn't have to put up with these sorts of photo shoots, he's clearly very confused. But what NCsoft wants, NCsoft gets I suppose – and if they want dazed Hollywood veterans, this photo is what we all end up printing. I think we know who the real villains are.


Guild Wars' Norn Tower, open norning, noon and night. Aha!

are community managers. If I'm playing a game and somebody's fooling around with it, I'm annoyed."

"That, and we generally don't run around with our GM characters," laughs Koonen, "I levelled my villain like everybody else, it took a long time and I played at very odd hours, but I play like everybody else. We do have special characters that we fool around with on non-public servers. We can do everything we want there, even crash a zone or kill every mob in an instant, but it never impacts on live servers."

DRAWING INSPIRATION

Love it or hate it, fan-made art and fiction is a sign of a healthy community claims Jen Bolton, community manager. From *MS Paint* doodles to sprawling deviantART galleries and manuscripts, each piece of work is a labour of love inspired by the game.

"One of my favourite things is seeing how players of our games create stuff," explains Bolton, "how they make art and create fiction. We see an awful lot of this high-quality work. We had a contest to design a weapon for *Guild Wars* and there were loads of loads of entries. Some were absolutely beautiful.

"With *Tabula Rasa* there are a lot of roleplayers," she continues. "They really love the military themes and that inspires them to write some wonderful fiction. I just find it exciting that the players of our games can be so creative and passionate, and want to share that with us."

Writing fan fiction is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to getting fun out of online games. Turning up to conventions dressed as your in-game persona is all the rage among the more eccentric players.

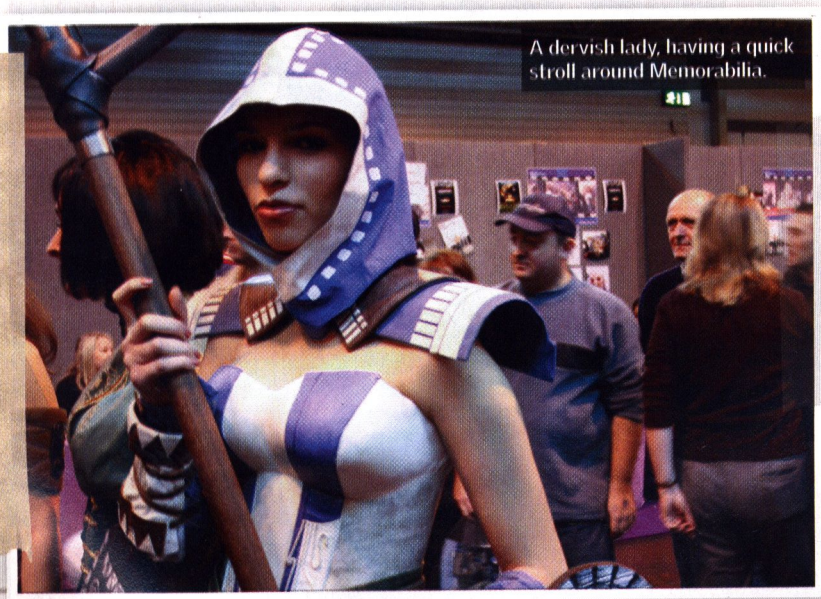
"In Leipzig 2006," explains Weekes, "we had a whole bunch of *Guild Wars* players turn up in costume to a PvP world championship, which was fun. Some *City of Heroes* players turned up as their in-game hero characters – some that were definitely makeshift, and some that were almost professional. There was a *Guild Wars* ritualist, dressed all in black..."

"With her boyfriend dressed as a monk," interrupts Koonen.

"Yes, with her boyfriend dressed as a monk," adds Weekes, "their costumes were great, inexpensive but well made."

MMOMANCE

And then there are the few lucky heroes, or villains, who decide to tie the knot in


A dervish lady, having a quick stroll around Memorabilia.

Tia Paraurahi, European community co-ordinator for the exciting space adventure that is *Tabula Rasa*.

Out of MMOwhere

Events that rocked the socks of online communities...

THE END OF *EVERQUEST* BETA

When *EverQuest* came to a close, there was a free-for-all war in the city of Qeynos (Sony EQ, geddit?) in which many GMs and players launched into each other, tearing themselves apart in what could only be described as the bloodbath to end all bloodbaths.

THE END OF THE *WORLD OF WARCRAFT* BETA

In an act of cruelty much akin to shooting puppies with a BB gun, the end of *WOW*'s beta was hailed with the release of several endgame bosses into towns, the most hilarious being Magmadar (of the Molten Core) replacing Stormwind king Anduin Wrynn's usual perch and squishing all that walked in.

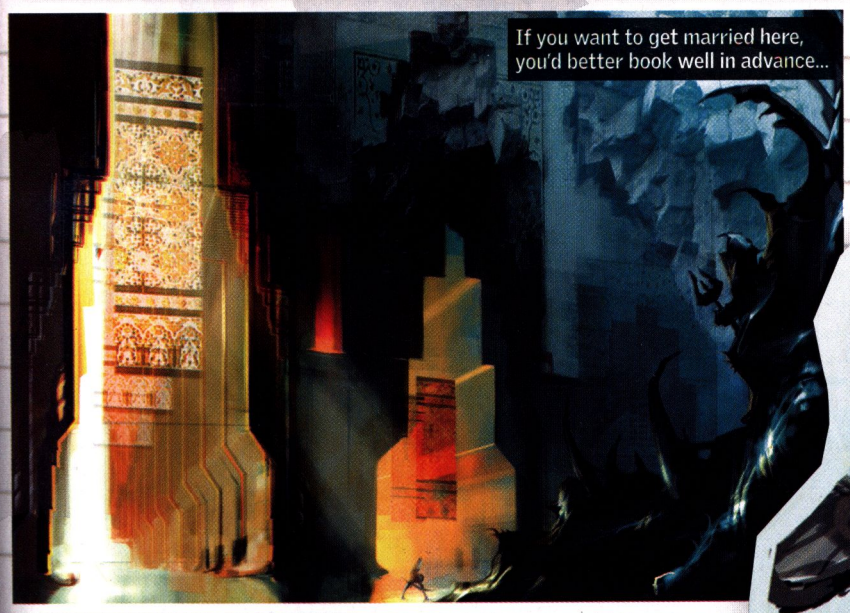
ASHERON'S LAST CALL

When ill-fated MMO sequel *Asheron's Call 2* was shut down on the 30 December 2005, the last day was a wake with the GMs, with eggs that could teleport you, level you up and heal you, and a giant war across the world.

LORD BRITISH GETS BRUTALISED

In a stress test in the *Ultima Online* beta, Lord British made a public appearance and talked to players, the ensuing mass pushing the servers to their laggiest limit. In several trips around Britannia, British's invulnerability tag dropped – allowing the cunning multigriefer Rainz to catch him in a fire field, murdering him on the spot.

Where exactly does this fit in the *Star Wars* canon?!



If you want to get married here, you'd better book well in advance...

Tyria, before doing a /kiss emote and /dancing the night away.

"I've been invited to at least three or four in-game marriages," ponders Kerstein. "I'd get a message on the forum saying 'Hey, we'd like you to come to our online wedding!'"

"We see people who've met in-game and then gotten married in real life too," adds Koonen. "I met one couple a few weeks ago who obviously liked me so much that they asked me to be their, I dunno what you call it, the person who brings them together and gives them this blessing. Which was quite strange... But hey, I'm a roleplayer, so if they wanna have an in-game wedding, they've got my blessing!"

Weddings aren't the only real-life events to have made the jump to MMOs either. With communities this tight-knit, the death of a fellow player rarely goes unnoticed. It's sad, but heart-warming to see the occasion marked online.

"There was one in *Guild Wars*," begins Weekes. "The community had become aware that a player had passed away in a car crash. This guy was one of the more creative players too, always posting up *Guild Wars*-related art on the forum. The community kept his art alive."

"I've seen a few occasions where players will gather just to talk about a person who's died," adds Koonen, "or just to sit peacefully and mourn, before moving on."

"It wasn't a funeral," adds Kerstein, "but among the *Guild Wars* alpha testers – the guys who test the game in the background – there was one girl who was really sick and had to have a couple of operations. When she finally recovered, she came back and said that the support her fellow players gave her, people she'd probably never even met in real life, helped her to pull through. So we see stuff like that as well, it's just amazing."

"I know it comes up all the time," explains Kerstein, "but there's that tendency to think of MMO players as people with no social skills, that they're isolated and have no real-life contacts: that's bollocks. These people have social lives, although not all of them of course," he laughs, "As I said MMO players are a diverse group, but most players have real lives too. Through the game, players often make real-life friends, I mean, I've become friends with people all across Europe. We shouldn't forget that MMOs have this huge social aspect, it's not like everybody playing is a nerd sitting in a cellar, never seeing the light of day."

Koonen agrees. "Yeah, the people who meet in-game and then get married, that's a tiny percentage of what's going on. There are people who meet each other, like each other, go to rock gigs, go to clubs, do real life stuff. Then go back into the game and just level, or PvP, or do whatever they like."

"Times are changing," adds Kerstein. "MMOs are becoming a way of relaxing, like TV and cinema. It's just another social tool, and many people don't understand it."

"And when these people meet up," laughs Koonen, "it's funny how the conversation always starts off about *City of Heroes* or whatever, but then quickly turns into general talk about all sorts of things. The game is just this medium that's brought them together."

And then you involve alcohol, and end up at some metal club at four in the morning... PCZ

The death of a fellow player rarely goes unnoticed. It's sad, but heart-warming to see it marked online

BRITAIN'S BEST PC GAMES MAG

PCZONE SUBSCRIPTIONS OFFER

Subscribe today and you can choose your free hoodie!

OFFER 1

☐ DIRECT DEBIT – Pay only £9.99 every 3 months and receive a free black [L] hoodie

OFFER 2

☐ DIRECT DEBIT – Pay only £9.99 every 3 months and receive a free grey [M] hoodie

YOUR DETAILS

Title ..... Forename .....

Surname .....

Address .....

..... Postcode .....

Telephone .....

If you'd like to receive emails from PCZONE and Future Publishing and its group companies containing news, special offers and product and service information, please include your email below.

Email .....

GIFT SUBSCRIPTION

If recipient's details are different from above

Title ..... Forename .....

Surname .....

Address .....

..... Postcode .....

DIRECT DEBIT MANDATE

☐ I would like to pay by Direct Debit
(I understand that £9.99 will be debited from my account every 3 months)

DIRECT Debit | Originator's Identification Number 768195

Future MEDIA WITH PASSION

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay Direct Debits

To the Manager (Bank name) .....

Address .....

..... Postcode .....

Name(s) of account holder(s) .....

Branch sort code ☐☐ ☐☐ ☐☐

Bank/Building Society account number ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Ref No (Office use only) .....

Signature(s) .....

Date .....

Please pay Future Publishing Direct Debits from the account detailed on this Instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Future Publishing and if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank or building society.

POST YOUR ORDER

PC ZONE Subscriptions, FREEPOST RLSC-SXSE-SKKT, Sovereign Park, Market Harborough, LE16 9EF

OFFER CODE P039

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: Details of the Direct Debit guarantee are available on request. This offer is for new subscriptions only. You will receive 13 issues per year. The minimum subscription is 12 months, but if at any time during the first 60 days you or your recipient are dissatisfied in any way, please notify us in writing and we'll refund you for all unmailed issues. In the first 60 days you can also change which magazine you're subscribing to. Personal subscription will start with the next available issue and gift subscriptions will start with the first issue of the new year, unless otherwise requested. Offer ends 26/3/08. Stock subject to availability. In the unlikely event of stocks becoming exhausted, we reserve the right to substitute with items of a similar value. Full terms and conditions of this offer are available at snipurl.com/substerms Please tick here if you do NOT wish to receive relevant information about products or services from Future Publishing or any of its group companies by post ☐ or telephone ☐.

SUBSCRIBE NOW GET A FREE HOODIE!

SUBSCRIBE TO BRITAIN'S BEST PC GAMES MAG TODAY!

WHY SUBSCRIBE?

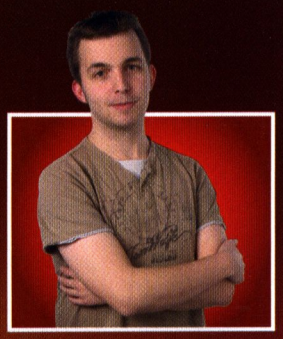
- ✔ You get a free black (L) or grey (M) limited edition *PC ZONE* hoodie
- ✔ Save £39.96 on the cost of *PC ZONE* in the shops!
- ✔ You ensure that you never miss an issue of your favourite PC games mag!
- ✔ You get the magazine delivered early directly to your door, hassle-free every month!
- ✔ All for £9.99 every three months!

ALL FOR £9.99 EVERY THREE MONTHS!

(OFFER ONLY AVAILABLE IN THE UK)

GET A FREE HOODIE!

Subscribe today and you can choose your free hoodie!



"Believe it or don't, but I have worn my *PC ZONE* hoodie almost every day since the first ones were brought into the office. It's warm, sleek, well produced and (I think) dryly witty. What's more I will not rest until every youth at every bus stop, and every gamer in front of every PC is adorned by one. To this end we're giving them away free for anyone taking up a *PC ZONE* subscription – available in black (large only) and grey (medium only). Some say that the *PC ZONE* hoodie brings you luck, although for legal reasons we cannot back up these claims."

Will Porter

Will Porter, editor

Black (L)

PCZONE
In The Absence Of Sexier Hobbies Or Bands I Like, I Wear PC Games Clothing

PCZONE
In The Absence Of Sexier Hobbies Or Bands I Like, I Wear PC Games Clothing

PCZONE
In The Absence Of Sexier Hobbies Or Bands I Like, I Wear PC Games Clothing

Grey (M)

ORDERING IS EASY!

ORDER ONLINE: www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/pzv/p039

BY PHONE: CALL OUR HOTLINE 0870 8374 722 (quoting code P039)
(lines open 8.00am-9.30pm weekdays, 8.00am-4.00pm Saturdays)

BY POST: Complete the order form opposite and send to the Freepost address:
PC ZONE Subscriptions, FREEPOST ELSC-SXSE-SKKT, Sovereign Park, Market Harborough, LE16 9EF

JACK KEANE

"...Jack Keane has managed to evoke warm and fluffy feelings of nostalgia from some hardened PC veterans, purely because it succeeds in looking and feeling like a Monkey Island sequel."
Total PC Gaming

Release Date March 7th 2008

FIND OUT THE SECRET.
FACE THE PAST.
AND RESCUE THE BRITISH EMPIRE!

JACK KEANE IS A DARE DEVIL ADVENTURER AND IS SET TO VISIT LONDON, CAPE TOWN AND THE INDIAN JUNGLE IN THE NEW ADVENTURE MASTERPIECE PACKED WITH ZANY CHARACTERS AND A MASS OF HUMOUR.

kalypso

DECK13

10TACLE STUDIOS

www.JACKKEANE.com

Jack Keane © 2007 10TACLE STUDIOS AG. Developed by Deck13 Interactive GmbH. All rights reserved. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

"In this British comic there was a strip called something along the lines of *Colonel Arsewipe and his Pocket Army*. The memory is hazy, but what I do remember for certain is this: *Colonel Arsewipe and his Pocket Army* was brilliant. This sad, old git had an entire remote-controlled miniature attack force: soldiers, tanks, planes – the whole nine yards. And I dreamt of one day being like Colonel Arsewipe myself, with my very own 'pocket army'. And now, thanks to *Command & Conquer*, I am. And you will be too."

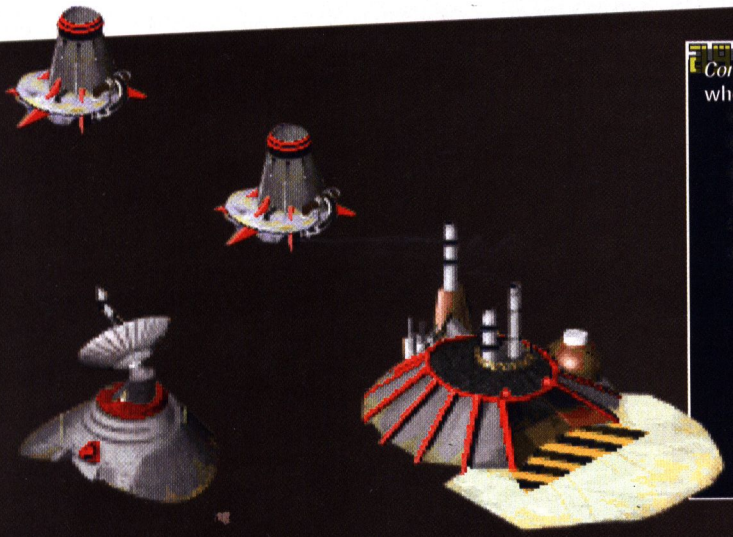
Excerpt from Duncan MacDonald's PC ZONE review of the first Command & Conquer July 1995

THE COMMAND & CONQUER ISSUE

PC ZONE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH *Command & Conquer* began 13 long years ago, from which point the RTS would run through gaming like the word 'Morecambe' through a stick of rock.

We've had highs (Tanya, Kirov Airships and Kane's ranting) and we've had lows (*Renegade*, and the lack of hamminess in *Generals*) but that same thundering mentality, that same feeling of triumph, and that same beautiful tinkling of resources turning into currency have remained constant.

This month, what with the announcement of *Red Alert 3* in our own pages, we thought it high time to examine the origins of the blockbusting series and the directions in which it's going. *Kane's Wrath*, *Tiberium* and *Red Alert 3* are all shaping up to carry the torch of *C&C* further than ever before. In fact when we're all wiped out in a futuristic war, all that will remain will be cockroaches and the impending release of *C&C7: Kane's Got A Right Strop On*. So, without further ado, let's send out the Harvesters...



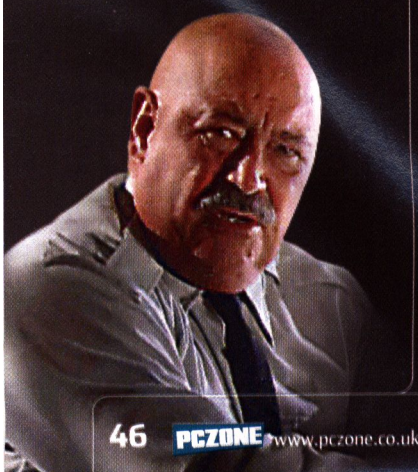
Command & Conquer – where the legend began.

LEGACY OF KANE...

HOW THE WESTWOOD WAS WON

Will Porter **harvests the knowledge of *C&C* co-creator Louis Castle and stores it in a silo**

Tiberian Sun – Kane gets his comeuppance.



BEFORE *C&C* WAS absorbed into the EA mega-corporation, the company who made it were known as Westwood – founded in 1985 by two chaps called Louis Castle and Brett Sperry. The pair set up shop in a garage in Las Vegas, and 10 years later would create one of the biggest gaming franchises on Earth.

"We had zero business acumen at the time, and when our first cheque to Westwood came to us we had no idea how to cash it," laughs Louis Castle as we chatted with him while preparing this month's *C&C* extravaganza. "We had never filed to register a company, opened a bank account, or anything like that. I guess you could say we learned how to be entrepreneurs from the very basic stages – as ignorant as you could possibly be."

From here came a long line of worthy games. "One of the very first games we did as Westwood was a port of a game called *The Temple of Apshai Trilogy*, and the reason I bring that up is because we implemented realtime gameplay into it," explains Castle. "Our publisher told us that it was just too difficult for people to understand, and that we had to go back to making it a turn-based strategy game like the original was. So from the beginning we were always looking to make games that had that sort of time pressure in addition to making you think. It's not enough to make people have to act quickly, but they have to think quickly as well."

EARLY GLORIES

After this came a deluge of titles – notably *Eye of the Beholder* (a classic RPG influenced by *Dungeon Master*) and also fantasy point-and-click trilogy *Legend of Kyrandia* and the *Lands of Lore* RPGs. The most direct steps towards *C&C* came with *Dune II*.

"The first time we showed that game internally it had wizards and castles," recalls a smiling Castle. "We were working with Virgin at the time, and they said that they had this great IP, Frank Herbert's *Dune*, and Brett loved the books. So we took the game we were working on and recreated it in the *Dune* universe. It solved one of the fundamental problems we had with making an RTS, which was that we wanted to have a central resource that everybody was fighting over. *Dune* has spice, which made perfect sense – and it was also used when we came to the idea of tiberium. It became the anchor of the *C&C* universe because people were arguing over a limited resource that represented wealth and power".

But, for their next trick, they had to create a living world around this soon-

> **"We wanted to have a resource that everybody was fighting over"**
>
> Louis Castle on why tiberium became core to the *C&C* series

Wow! 'CD-ROM' technology!

THE COMMAND & CONQUER ISSUE

to-be-fabled crystal.

"We wanted to make it a contemporary war for a contemporary world, with contemporary politics." says Castle. "At the time, Brett had said that it seemed to him that the next wars won't be fought nation-to-nation, but fought between Western society and a kind of anarchistic terror organization that doesn't have a centralised government. That's the scariest thing in the world: something you can't actually attack. It turned out to be very prophetic".

Before this unexpected social commentary from a game that contains the macho line "That was left-handed!", came the revolutionary way in which *C&C* portrayed itself.

"We wanted to make a game that used the things conspiracy theorists suspect," explains Castle. "We wanted players to imagine that their computer at home was a terminal to a real battlefield that communicated

GDI troops restoring freedom to Earth.

Westwood used FMV to aid the gameplay, rather than overcome it

directly with your units in the field. That led to that whole concept of the *C&C* game with the commander in control. It also inspired some things that were unique to the game, like the installation software, which was meant to be a piece of software that you used to hack into the military infrastructure."

MUGGING UP

The most pertinent outside factor in the success of *C&C* was the fact that it rode the wave of the CD-ROM revolution. While dross like *Phantasmagoria* or LucasArt's *Rebel Assault* traded gameplay for the 'excitement' of full-motion video, Westwood used FMV to aid the gameplay, rather than overcome it.

"We took ourselves very seriously," claims Castle. "You have to when you try to make your own movies with the budget that we had! In spare rooms, in warehouses... with all of our staff doing the acting."

In fact, the only actual actor involved was Joe Kucan – the man who to this day plays Kane and directs *C&C*'s FMV.

"Compliments to Joe for taking that ragtag group of people who had no business in front of a camera and making something reasonably good!" continues Castle. "We had no illusions that we were as good as TV or film. We weren't settling for campy, we just happened to be campy because we weren't professional at making videos."

The evolution of *C&C* towards *Red Alert* came partly because Westwood simply didn't want to wait another two or three years to ship another game – the bastard-hard *Covert Ops* expansion not quite plugging the gap.

"While we were doing the military research for *C&C* we'd come across all these crazy ideas, like the Philadelphia Experiment, from World War II that Nikola Tesla and all these brilliant scientists of the day believed might be possible – time travel, teleportation, and so on," smiles Castle. "So we built the history of *Red Alert* around the concept of all these crazy ideas working. That set a tone that felt very much like this kind of '50s sci-fi drive-in theatre, and we intentionally went after that kind of 'Attack of the Giant Ants' angle".

"I'd also say that with *Red Alert* we wanted to make a game about bad guys.

The Nod army on the move.

When isometic 3D ruled the world.

A return for Generals?

After *Red Alert 3*, could *C&C* return to familiar ground?

Generals: too po-faced?

Generals was technically proficient, but in many eyes never captured the same element of charm or fun as its predecessors. Stripped of FMVs and placed in less silly environs, the SAGE engine may have impressed – but the result wasn't as memorable as its forerunners. It has its fans though.

"*Generals* delivered phenomenal in-game experiences, and proved to be time and time again a really powerful way to tell stories in the RTS genre," comments Louis Castle. "I would say I could imagine another *Generals* game as a possibility, that may or may not have FMV. That's one thing about being with the series as long as I have – I'm more open-minded as to how we approach the next one!"

THE COMMAND & CONQUER ISSUE

GREATEST HITS OF C&C

COMMAND & CONQUER
The daddy of the RTS. Slick and groundbreaking, *C&C* provided a gameplay model so successful that it's barely changed to this day.

1995

RED ALERT
The 'other' *C&C* universe – a Soviet-addled planet created through Einstein's temporal meddling. Things get very hectic, and very silly.

1996

RED ALERT: COUNTERSTRIKE
Famed for its engaging levels, but also the bizarre secret giant ant mission, 'It Came From Red Alert.'

1997

C&C: TIBERIAN SUN
Tiberian Sun spruced up the graphics and rejoined the epic battle between GDI and Nod. It delved still further into the story of tiberium.

1999

RED ALERT 2
Red Alert 2 introduced mind-control squid and an electrified Eiffel tower and even the ability to garrison troops inside buildings.

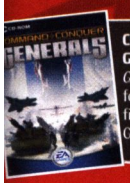
2000

RED ALERT 2: YURI'S REVENGE
Ruskie agent Yuri succeeds in mind-controlling the entirety of America, so Einstein sends you back in time to stop him.

2001

COMMAND & CONQUER: RENEGADE
The *C&C* shooter was far from a success, but had a interesting multiplayer mode – if you ignored the bugs.

2002



COMMAND & CONQUER: GENERALS
Generals focused on the allied forces of China and the USA fighting a terror cell called the Global Liberation Army.

2003

COMMAND & CONQUER 3: TIBERIUM WARS
A successful attempt at reigniting past glories – plus aliens – make *C&C3* a slick, well-tuned nostalgia trip.

2007

Red Alert 2 – for many a classic RTS.

and we were sick and tired of Nazis being the bad guys, so that's one of the reasons we re-invented history," he adds. "It was the best way to get a bad guy that people could still feel empathic towards but that still wouldn't have that hit-you-below-the-gut feel."

Soon after in the Westwood canon came the cruelly forgotten *Blade Runner* point-and-click – and beyond that *Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun*. Louis Castle's favourite offering, however, remains the second instalment of *Red Alert*.

"I think one of the best RTS games ever on any platform was *Red Alert 2*, along with the *Yuri's Revenge* expansion pack. Since the sides were just so dramatically different from each other," he explains.

"It was just wonderful, and of course by that time we had decided to go full into the campy range with the videos and everything, so Tanya and all of our characters really leaned into that a lot.

Eye of the Beholder – an early Westwood hit.

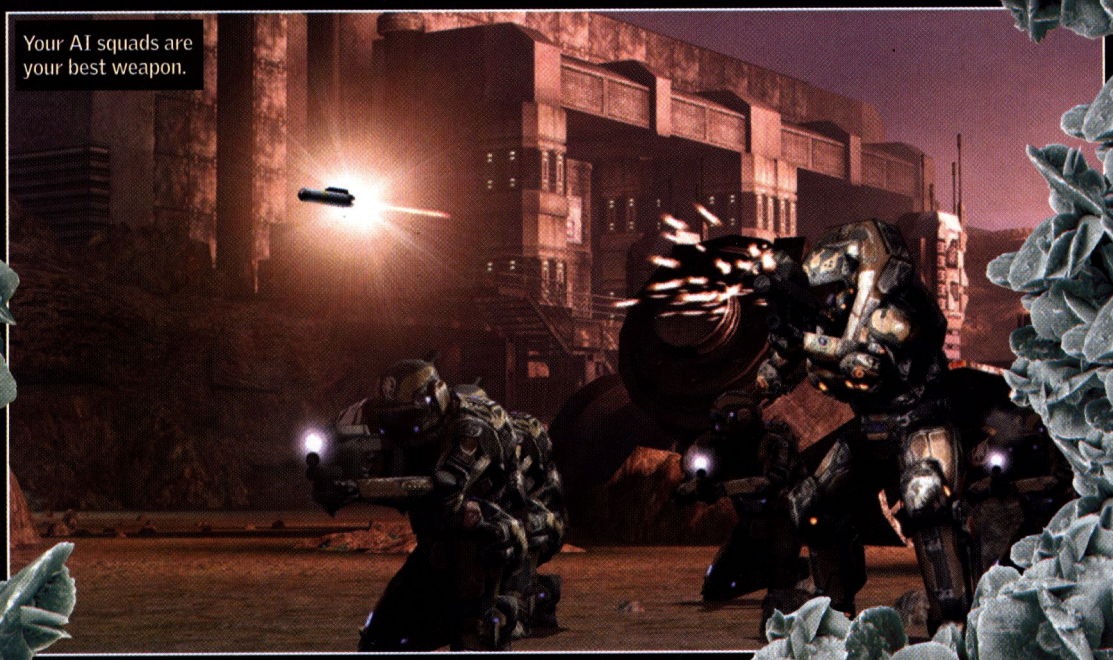
The whole universe of *Red Alert* really expanded with it".

Westwood itself, first sold to now defunct publisher Virgin Interactive in 1992, became part of the EA mothership in 1998 (running in parallel with a studio in Irvine who became known as Westwood Pacific and who coded *RA2*) later to be fully assimilated in 2003. At this point a substantial proportion of former Westwood staff went off to create Petroglyph (developers of *Universe at War: Earth Assault*) but Louis Castle and the heart of *C&C* remains within the Los Angeles branch of EA.

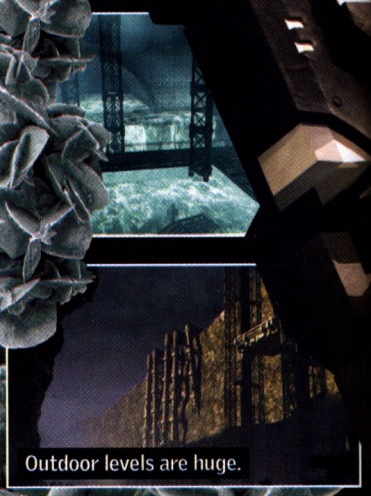
This is the bit where you die horribly.

With their big-name actors (come on, they had Lando!) and eye-watering budgets, the likes of *Command & Conquer 3* and *Red Alert 3* couldn't be further away from Westwood's rather more lo-fi roots, but the charm remains even if the quirky installation routines do not.

"I'd never have imagined that we'd have anything like this huge success," adds Castle at the close of our conversation. Let's just be thankful he did. PCZ



Your AI squads are your best weapon.



Outdoor levels are huge.

CRYSTAL METHOD...

TIBERIUM

GDI Marine *Jamie Sefton* is ordered into a field of suspiciously glowing rocks by an unseen god-like commander...

DEVELOPER EALA **PUBLISHER** EA **WEBSITE** www.commandandconquer.com **PREVIOUSLY IN...** 190

ETA WINTER 2008

THE LOWDOWN

New FPS set in the *C&C* universe	✓
Control up to four squads at the same time	✓
Transforming primary weapon	✓
Large, stompy mechs blowing shit up	✓
Another squad shooter	✗

FORGET GLOBAL WARMING – the greatest threat to planet Earth and the survival of mankind is a green radioactive extraterrestrial crystal that is spreading like a cancer across the entire surface of the globe. Or maybe *Deal Or No Deal*. Anyway, this new form of matter happens to also be a rather excellent resource for a globe starved of oil, and three factions – two human, one alien – are now at war over control of it.

Welcome to the brutal, sci-fi world of *Tiberium*, a new squad-based shooter set in the *C&C* universe of the GDI (Global Defence Initiative – good), Brotherhood of Nod (led by evil baldy/beardy Kane – bad) and the Scrin (mysterious aliens – very bad).

"Tiberium is the catalyst for everything, it's our One Ring, our Matrix, our Force, and that's why it's the name," says executive producer Christopher Plummer. "We really want to take people deep into this universe – unravel these great mysteries and mythologies. We hired in scientists to work on the science of tiberium, such as how it works at a molecular level, for example. These elements allow the universe to really hang together and allow us to present our ideas with conviction."

This is classic sci-fi stuff with the promise of a great, twisting campaign mode stuffed with balls-out first-person blasting – if you're expecting the *C&C* series' trademark RTS micromanagement, you're better off looking elsewhere.

"I think if we do our job right, *Tiberium* will be for both *C&C* fans and gamers who've never played it," continues Plummer. "This isn't a strategy game, it's a shooter with tactical elements. You'll recognise certain bits from *C&C*, but this is a story-driven FPS concentrating on action rather than building bases."

BIG GUNS

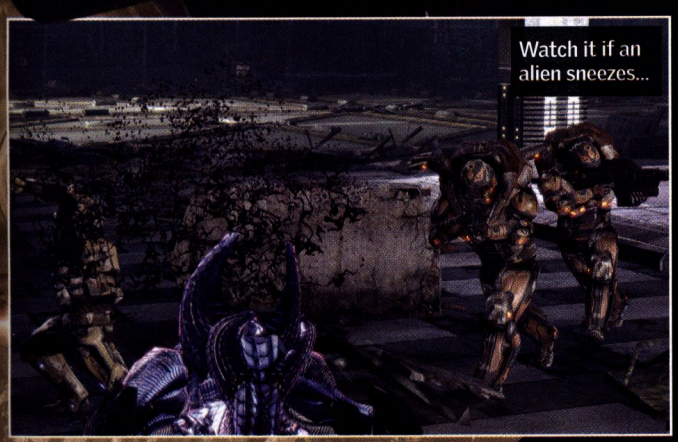
Tiberium is set 11 years after *C&C3: Tiberium Wars*, when the Scrin were finally defeated – but not before they had managed to build an enormous indestructible tower on top of the world's largest tiberium field, just off the coast of Italy. You play as Ricardo Vega, a war hero who is dragged back into the GDI as a Forward Commander to investigate the Scrin's giant structure after an earlier RAID (Rapid Assault and Intercept Deployment) team disappears.

Fortunately you're backed up by the technology of the GDI war machine, and the first of your considerable arsenal is a unique transforming weapon. Described by the development team as the "rock, paper, scissors of FPS weaponry", the GD10 packs four different states: Mag Rail (standard assault rifle), Missile Launcher (rockets), Explosive Indirect Weapon (grenades) and Energy Cannon (sniper rifle). Each of these weapon states has alternative fire modes too, so you could launch multiple homing rockets with the Missile Launcher for example, or take direct control of grenades to roll them around corners with the Explosives option.

In combat, this means you have access to a range of different

THE COMMAND & CONQUER ISSUE

If you're expecting the *C&C* series' trademark RTS micromanagement, you're better off looking elsewhere



Watch it if an alien sneezes...

Glowing knee pads now available.

Using cover is important in battles.

Center Parcs 2128.

attacks through just one weapon, allowing you to choose whether you sneak up on one of the alien invaders and blast them in their otherworldly nether regions, or hang back and snipe their stupid faces, tossing in a casual grenade or two for kicks. This flexibility was in evidence in the first level we witnessed inside an industrial tiberium reprocessing plant. A group of Shrike – the spiky grunts of the Scrin – began to attack as soon as Vega entered the facility, and were easily dismissed with a few blasts of the Mag Rail. However, when a pair of tough, ridged Archon warriors stepped into a dimly-lit corridor, only the one-two punch of directed grenades could flush them out, followed by a flurry of rockets that saw them explode in a mist of blue entrails.

To help with your defence, you can also take cover behind walls and structures, and you're provided with a jetpack for jumping over large obstacles, accessing high platforms and moving around the battlefield. Further on, you can also call in devastating orbital strikes to take out whole areas – as with the *C&C* RTS games – and use other GDI weapons that the team aren't willing to divulge just yet.

MEET THE TEAM

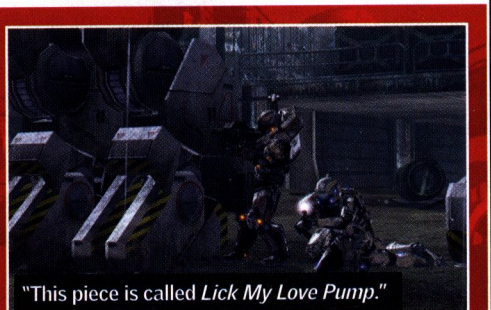
What makes *Tiberium* truly unique however, is the ability to reinforce and command up to four squads during missions, with a choice of infantry, armoured units, and air units. Infantry are great against other ground troops and for capturing areas including

"It's mixed in Dobly"

Tiberium's revolutionary new audio system explained

The reason for the *Tiberium* launch event being held at the prestigious Dolby Theatre in San Francisco was obvious as soon as the soundtrack blasted out of the huge surround speakers – this is an impressively-sounding game. While the soundtrack is a combination of elements including gun blasts, voices, alien screeches, metallic clunks, environmental effects and orchestral sweeps, each part is clearly heard in the mix, which audio director Erik Kraber ascribes to EA's new ASX, or Adaptive Sound Experience.

"The idea behind the technology, is that it's analysing moment to moment scenarios and player choices to decide how it's going to mix the game to give you the best feedback and immersion possible." What this means when playing *Tiberium* is that, for example, a Titan mech may begin as just background sound, but when you give it an order, the noises from the metal behemoth are brought up in the mix to give maximum impact. An AI mixer cleverly reacts to the action on-screen, monitoring more than 30 different sound layers in real time, and altering the volume, avoiding the soundtrack becoming a confusing mush.


"This piece is called *Lick My Love Pump*."

You have 20 seconds to comply...

THE COMMAND & CONQUER ISSUE

valuable drop zones (for calling in squads), and tiberium fissures (indicated by green gas) where you can summon a large tiberium spike from above to grant you reinforcements. Armoured units, meanwhile, including the impressive Titan mech, are slower but pack a larger punch against installations, and allow you to take cover behind their bulky, metal legs. Finally, air units are fast, good for accessing areas unreachable by foot and great at targeting a wide area, but vulnerable to attack from ground units.

All these types of units give you choice during battles and, most importantly, the mission isn't over if a squad is killed – all you do is call in another bunch of cannon fodder, or maybe a different unit to try a new tactic on-the-fly. Also, they're controlled simply by pressing one button for each squad, with the AI reacting to whatever situation they're in automatically.

"If you put them close to a wall, they'll take cover – you don't have to tell them," adds Plummer. "We've just made the decision-making more about the movement and the action – which thing do you want to attack next?"

Another level was demonstrated, this time an outdoor urban environment with destroyed buildings, chunks of concrete and metal debris littering roads and a general look of Slough on a typical Saturday night. The main character of Ricardo Vega was backed up by a squad of soldiers, and reinforced by a large Titan mech, gently lowered into the battlefield by a GDI dropship. The display in the bottom left-hand corner of the HUD now showed that two out of four squads were available, and after a quick tap of the relevant button, the robot hulk blurted "Executing order!" and stomped off down the street looking for things to kill.

A Scrin contingent was dug in around the corner, so the other squad of soldiers were pointed in the direction of the enemies, while Vega himself jetpacked onto a nearby roof. From here, the Forward Commander had a better view of the action (an example of tactical choices during the game) and watched as the mech and soldiers dispatched the Scrin, while he picked off individual enemies from above.

After the battle, Vega jumped down and with the aid of his teams, captured a nearby tiberium deposit indicated by an impressive tiberium spike being lowered into the glowing fissure. A third squad – a missile team – was then ordered, who joined the action thanks to a dropship, just as a swarm of Scrin aerial drones swooped overhead, blasting a couple of the GDI grunts. The missile team began rocketing the enemies above their heads without any prompting, as Vega sent the mech ahead to mop up any ground-based resistance.

A real-time map was then brought up on-screen, showing all the units and major strategic points in the area. From here, you can order a squad to protect a tiberium spike, ask for reinforcements or just check out the battle – all done with one button press, and no RTS frippery. "The map actually started out in the prototypes as grid-based," says Plummer, his face lit by the on-screen mayhem. "There was a great deal of experimentation and part of the thinking there was that it might be easier under the gun if you had a grid for placing squads. However, freeform squad control works great in first-person, so why not use that control on the 2D map?"

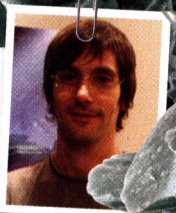
TEAM DEATHMATCH

The multiplayer will be as frenetic as the Campaign mode, with two to four GDI players competing against each other, or in two-versus-two teams, each controlling up to four squads with more than 50 units on-screen. Different strategies will again come into play – do you rush around capturing tiberium spikes for more squads, or do you go for an orbital weapon installation and use it to wipe out an enemy's entire force?

Tiberium is a brave experiment for shooters – until we get a full hands-on, we can't say whether the mix of full-on FPS action and multi-squad control will be incredibly satisfying or an awkward sub-RTS experience. However, the signs look good – with two years of intense development already under its belt and some genuine gameplay innovations (such as the transforming primary weapon) it has the potential to spread the fantastic imaginative *Command & Conquer* universe like tiberium, infecting legions of new fans. The world is turning green, and there's nothing you can do to stop it... PCZ

Tiberium Talk

With Chris Plummer, exec producer



Q How much of the world of *C&C* is in *Tiberium*?

A *Tiberium* will look different, because you're down on the ground, not hundreds of feet above looking down, but it's the same universe.

Is there a tech tree for units?

Tiberium doesn't have an RTS tech tree, but there's a progression of units as you play. So, you won't get the Titan mech at the beginning, just as you wouldn't get a Mammoth tank at the start of the RTS. Like every *C&C* game, the units always evolve from war to war – *Tiberium* is no different, so the Orca is another classic air unit which has evolved in the past 11 years, so it's now unmanned. The same thing with rocket troops and infantry. But it'll be very familiar to fans.

Do you have choices of the path you take in the Campaign mode?

The missions have various non-linear options, especially with battles and your plan of attack. But we're deliberate about the story and the progression, and you'll start to uncover some revelations about the universe...

What about the *C&C*'s famous FMVs?

We're not having FMVs. I think the paradigm is different when it's an RTS game, because you kind of need to be able to see things in high detail. In the original *C&C*, those are some of the most effective cinematics in a game ever, because in those days, a tank was a handful of pixels, but in the cinematics you saw what was going on inside a building. In *Tiberium*, you're inside that building, so it would've been difficult to keep a consistency with presentation if we were using FMVs.

Will the Brotherhood of Nod appear?

The Scrin are definitely the primary force in the fighting. However, without divulging secrets, it wouldn't be the tiberium universe if the Nod weren't present.

Erm... and Kane?

Well, Kane is only character who's appeared in all the *C&C* tiberium games, so I'll leave it at that...

Find out what happens to Kane between *Tiberian Sun* and *Tiberium Wars*.

Alien Scrin tripods attempt a new *War of the Worlds*.

GET YOUR WRATH ON...

C&C 3: KANE'S WRATH

***Jamie Sefton* meets a bald man with anger issues and a pretty lady...**

DEVELOPER EALA **PUBLISHER** EA **WEBSITE** www.commandandconquer.com **PREVIOUSLY IN...** 190

ETA SPRING 2008

THE LOWDOWN

First expansion to *C&C3*	✓
Six powerful new sub-factions	✓
Thirteen mission Nod campaign	✓
New strategic game mode and turn-based gameplay	✓

AFTER EXPERIENCING THE Soviet time-travelling thrills of *Red Alert 3* at EA's impressive Los Angeles development studio (page 56) I was prepared for an anticlimax of *Phantom Menace* proportions when getting to play the upcoming *C&C3* expansion *Kane's Wrath*. However, I was very, very wrong.

This is a huge expansion that adds a 13-mission Brotherhood of Nod campaign, six sub-factions, dozens of new units, structures, powers and upgrades, 30 minutes of new hi-def FMV sequences and a new *Risk*-style Global Conquest Mode.

Kane's Wrath spans over 20 years of Nod history from just after the second tiberium war (featured in *Tiberian Sun*) when the slap-headed terrorist has to rebuild his shattered organisation, and follows the action through *C&C3* and beyond, when a rare alien artifact called the Tacitus is being chased around the globe. I was shown a couple of new in-game movies – one where Kane is being wrathy about a renegade Black Hand splinter group leader called Brother Marcion (Carl Lumbly from *Alias*) and another where I'm being briefed by a suspicious-but-sexy agent called Alexa Kovacs (played by Natasha Henstridge – the often naked lady from *Species*).

LAND OF NOD

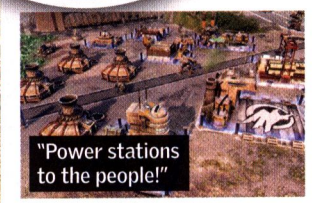
The hands-on revealed the six new sub-factions in the three main warring parties of GDI, Nod and Scrin. The Global Defence Initiative's Steel Talons use older technology, such as the popular Titan and Wolverine mechs and heavy vehicles that are fantastic to garrison infantry. ZOCOM is a futuristic GDI outfit, reliant on sonic technology, that goes into red zones with protective armour to eradicate tiberium using weapons with large area effects, such as the Shatterer sonic beam and Orca attack helicopter.

Nod have the Black Hand who are the in-your-face propaganda wing of the terrorists – they lack stealth, but have tough infantry and vehicles packing flamethrowers and other fire weapons. Mark of Kane is an experimental technology sub-faction with powerful cyborgs – the Awakened (armed with an EMP cannon to disable vehicles) and the Enlightened (very fast troopers for hit-and-run raids). However, the most fun I had was with the Scrin – Traveller 59 who are a force that can implant brain slugs in humans to control them, and Reaper 17, a fundamentalist sub-faction populated with tripods and otherworldly units that can suck up tiberium and fire out lasers or shards of the radioactive green death for monstrous attacks.

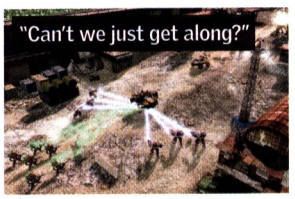
Global Quest Mode finishes things off, giving you a turn-based way to play *C&C*, watching a rather lovely glowing red tactical world map, moving bases and forces around and either dropping into the RTS mode or auto resolving battles. This first expansion has much to offer the *C&C3* addict – find out next month if our review is positive or receives the wrath of Kane... PCZ

Six new sub-factions means tons more units to play with.

THE COMMAND & CONQUER ISSUE

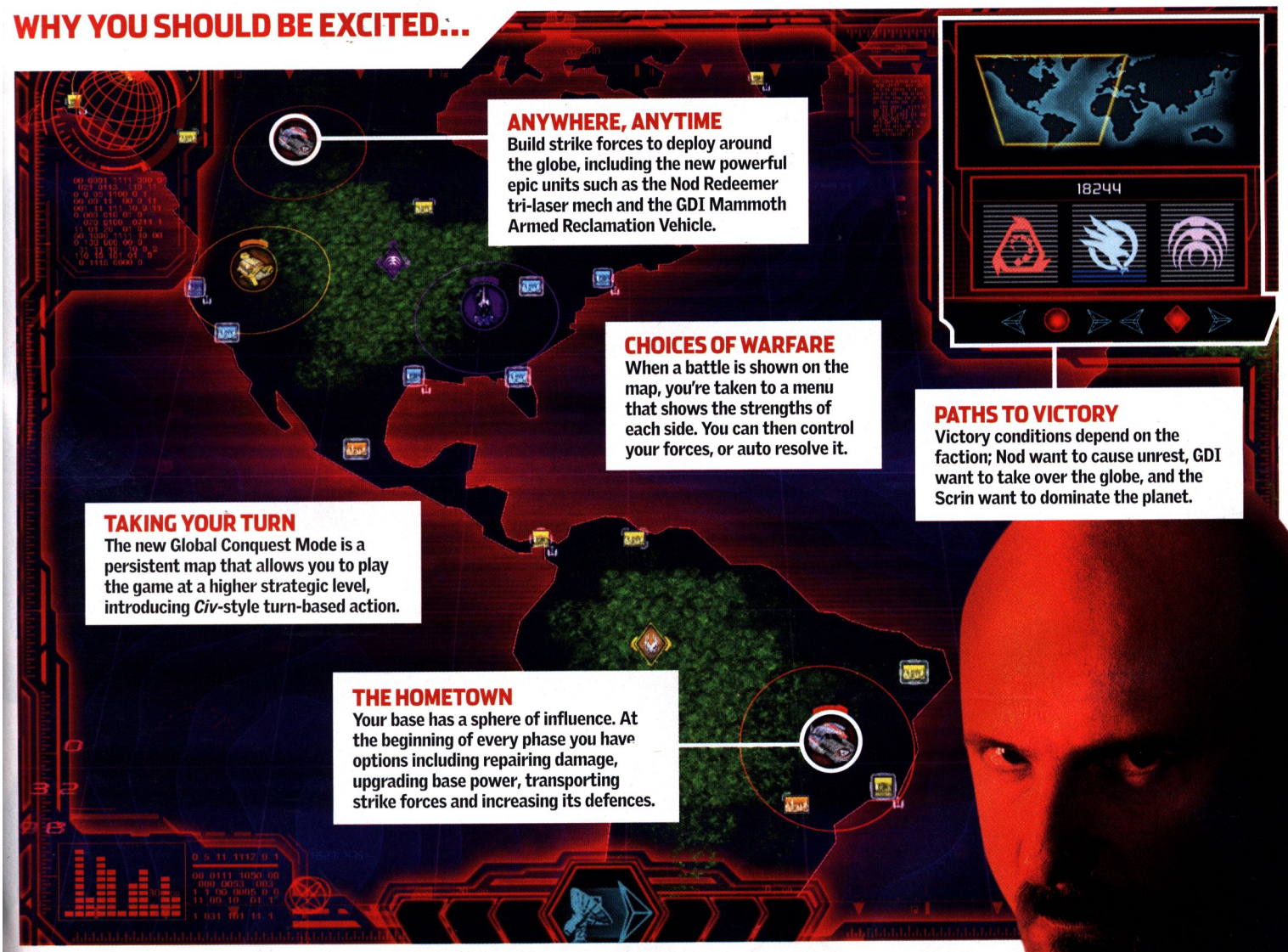


"Power stations to the people!"



"Can't we just get along?"

WHY YOU SHOULD BE EXCITED...



ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Build strike forces to deploy around the globe, including the new powerful epic units such as the Nod Redeemer tri-laser mech and the GDI Mammoth Armed Reclamation Vehicle.

CHOICES OF WARFARE

When a battle is shown on the map, you're taken to a menu that shows the strengths of each side. You can then control your forces, or auto resolve it.

PATHS TO VICTORY

Victory conditions depend on the faction; Nod want to cause unrest, GDI want to take over the globe, and the Scrin want to dominate the planet.

TAKING YOUR TURN

The new Global Conquest Mode is a persistent map that allows you to play the game at a higher strategic level, introducing *Civ*-style turn-based action.

THE HOMETOWN

Your base has a sphere of influence. At the beginning of every phase you have options including repairing damage, upgrading base power, transporting strike forces and increasing its defences.

EINSTEIN A GO-GO...

RED ALERT 3

ETA WINTER 2008

***Jamie Sefton* climbs aboard a secret Kirov Airship for the exclusive story on the biggest RTS of the year...**

DEVELOPER EALA **PUBLISHER** EA **WEBSITE** www.ea.com

THE LOWDOWN

Follow-up to the monumental *Red Alert 2*	✓
Story-driven campaign with co-op multiplayer	✓
New Japanese third faction	✓
Full naval warfare	✓
We're going to have to wait until Christmas	✗

AS I'M USHERED into a demo room at EA's Los Angeles studio, I clutch my ultimate wish list of features tightly in my hand, and catch a tantalising glimpse of a fleet of grinning Kirov Airships on a stupidly-large hi-def screen.

This is a big deal.

I'm the only UK journalist allowed to see *Red Alert 3* – a title that millions of gamers across the globe have been waiting to play for seven years. The previous title, *Red Alert 2*, is one of the most iconic real-time strategy games ever created; a beautifully-balanced, fast, colourful, silly and exuberant Cold War classic stuffed with ridiculous units (Giant Squid), OTT technology (weather machines) and campy cinematics featuring actors hamming it up as presidents, Russian commanders and sexy agents with a penchant for C4 explosive.

Over the next couple of hours, I'm talked through the features of the game, shown concept art plastering numerous walls throughout the offices and given a personal demo of a *Red Alert 3* Allied mission. As it all unfolds, I start to tick off the wish list of features one-by-one – crazy time travel plot, a third faction, story-driven campaign with co-operative play, German shepherds, more naval combat, more Tanya – until I'm frantically scribbling down more features than Soviet psychic agent Yuri could psychically shake a stick at. If you're a fan of the *Red Alert* series, you'd better relax, sit down and take in every word that follows – I think you're going to be a tiny bit excited...

RISING SUN

At the beginning of *Red Alert 3*, the situation is dire for the Soviets – the Allies have driven back their forces to Moscow and the leadership is cowering behind the gates of the Kremlin. In a crazed act of desperation, the Soviets head to the basement where they have been working on a time machine which they plan to use to go back in time and get rid of Einstein – the man most responsible for the technological achievements that have led to the Allies' victories. And also, let us not forget, the man who travelled back in time to kill Hitler in the first game so that this whole Red-centric timeline could happen anyway.

This notwithstanding, the Soviets erase Einstein and come back to the present day

THE
COMMAND
&
CONQUER
ISSUE

Apocalypse Tanks and Tesla Coils defend a Soviet base.

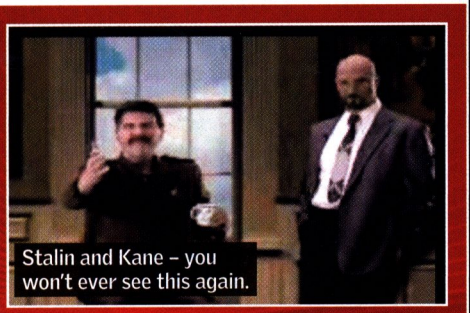
This the first time in a *Red Alert* game that there's been a third faction

"*C&C* and *Red Alert* are separate!"

EA put an end to the universe link-up speculation once and for all

For years fans have been saying the *Red Alert* universe is related to the Tiberium universe, after Kane appeared with Stalin in *RA1*.

Chris Corry, executive producer on *Red Alert 3* sets the record straight: "There's no relationship between the two universes. Westwood – Louis Castle and Brent Sperry – had an intention that they would exist in the same universe, which is why in *RA1* Kane appears. But Lou's done interviews where he's said that it was a 'failed experiment'!"



Stalin and Kane – you won't ever see this again.

Significantly the new game is called *Red Alert 3*, not *C&C: Red Alert 3*, and the team seems weary of the speculation. "We have no plans to bring them together. *C&C* is all about Kane, and tiberium being the black gold and a corrupting influence – heavy themes and really different in tone to *Red Alert*. If you tried to force the two together, you'd just have a bit of a mess."

So there you go. *PC ZONE* would like to kindly ask the internet to amend all the thousands of *C&C* sites, blogs and Wikipedia entries now please...

where it looks like the experiment has been a great success – the Allies have retreated and the Red Menace has returned to its former glory. However, almost immediately, klaxons begin blaring and the Russians are again under attack, except this time from a superpower their time meddling has spawned upon the world stage: the technological cult of the Empire of the Rising Sun. A sickening feeling hits the Soviet commanders' stomachs as they realise that they've created a new enemy for themselves, and the new war begins...

This is the first time in a *Red Alert* game that there's been a fully-fledged third faction (the *Yuri's Revenge* expansion had a sub-faction), and each of the three campaigns will have eight to 10 missions, with the Japanese Rising Sun currently aimed at being unlockable when you've completed the Allied or the Soviet campaign.

"It's really important to us that we don't just build one faction, then cut and paste those units into another faction," says executive producer Chris Corry. "Each will feel very different from a capability standpoint. Japan has the most dramatically different building mechanic with an emphasis on higher technology weapons, so it'll feel and play uniquely."

The *RA3* team aren't revealing much about the new faction just yet, but we eked out a chunk of stuff about their design and gameplay style. The Empire of the Rising Sun will be the most sci-fi faction, drawing from Japanese influences like samurai warriors, anime, ninjas and military history.

Aerial units are useful for both land and sea attacks.

Remodel towns with the game's destruction physics.

We saw concept art displaying beautiful dragonfly-type ships, as well as techno-updates of military uniforms from WWII, ninja dudes with futuristic weaponry, units packed with attachments looking like Shinto gates and huge intricately-designed robots, all splashed with those distinctive red-and-white national colours.

"The Sea Wing is a submarine unit that can shoot out of water and be used as an aircraft – the only unit in the game that can do that," says Chris, visibly hurting as I drag the information out of him. "Japan are probably the strongest in the water. Many of their units deploy into a different unit, so there's lots of, er, transformation." Robots in disguise? Oh yes.

NAVAL GAZING

Another major addition is fully-integrated naval combat, which has been a tough challenge for the development team, aware that countless RTS games in the past have torpedoed the idea. *Red Alert 3* cleverly achieves naval gameplay by what they describe as "blurring the shorelines", basically making it much easier for players to get their units in and out of the water. Many of the units are now amphibious and all you have to do to utilise this ability is click where you want to move – the unit will automatically do a contextual transformation from land-based to ocean-based and vice versa. However, amphibious units are not as powerful as a dedicated land or sea unit, so the skill in combat comes in deciding which direction you want to go – flexibility or maximum firepower.

Your mobile construction yard is also amphibious, allowing you to build your base in the ocean, resulting in major ramifications for gameplay. If, for example, you only build land units and storm off to kill your opponent, you might find they've built their HQ out at sea, rendering your army a useless waste of money.

C&C legend Mike Verdu is still very much involved in *RA3*.

Soviet Tesla Troopers go on a major offensive against Allied units.

There are resources out at sea, so it's wise to have a naval presence

EALA hopes this will encourage players to play more with the aircraft, which will be the only units able to locate and strike at targets on both land and in the ocean with equal power. Amphibious units can strike at ocean-based targets of course, but they're not as powerful as aircraft.

Cleverly, there are significant resources out at sea, so even if you don't build an ocean base, it's wise to have a naval presence or you're basically handing your opponent an enormous bag of money with "Please kill me!" written on in bold crayon.

What's more all this messing about on boats has led to EALA giving water a new graphics engine so it ripples, shimmers and splashes like real stuff.

TWO'S COMPANY

After the revelations of the naval combat, Chris drops another bombshell: while previous RTS games have included special co-op missions, *Red Alert 3* will include a finely crafted story-driven campaign that you can play in both single-player and online co-op.

"Every single mission has been designed with you and a teammate in mind. But we obviously don't want to leave people out if they haven't any online friends, so you can also enlist the help of an AI co-commander."

Every faction has three commanders, each with a unique play style and personality, played by an actor who will appear in video clips and voice-overs. So if you're starting a Campaign mission with a co-commander who prefers tanks and heavy armour, you'll probably approach how you go through that mission differently than if the co-commander you signed up was an expert in the air force. A monitor in the top-left of the screen allows you to see the AI's state, with four orders available: attack or defend a unit or location, stop or help me. If you don't give the co-commander guidance, the AI will do its own thing, depending on the situation and its personality.

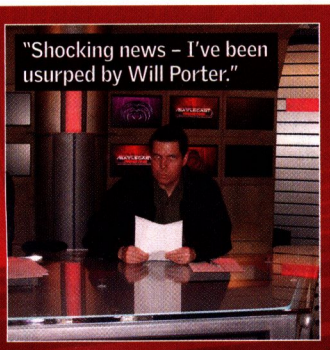
C&C TV

EA plans to expand the *C&C Web TV* shows

While visiting the EALA development house I was shown the *C&C Web TV* studio, which has been used in the past to deliver *Battlecast Primetime* shows, which feature the making of the games, celebrity interviews, online multiplayer matches and other essential community info.

The studio is currently getting a snazzy new makeover, with Soviet-style set decorations, in anticipation of *RA3*'s launch.

For previous shows, and to keep up with the latest bulletins about the *C&C* and *Red Alert* series, simply point your browser over to www.commandandconquer.com.



"Shocking news – I've been usurped by Will Porter."

A new graphics engine produces gorgeous water effects.

THE COMMAND & CONQUER ISSUE

The system poses challenges when playing with a friend (of the communication variety) but this is easily solved with VoIP, and it's worth the effort. The co-commander includes other advantages such as sharing a line of sight, being able to put units in friendly transports, using an ally's airfields and repair abilities, and even building units and giving them to your ally. "However, we're not allowing you to give money directly, which causes balance problems," explains producer Amer Ajami. "If your buddy is under attack, it's more fun to send units rather than money, as there's physical gameplay tied to them – they might get ambushed by the enemy on the way to the rendezvous, for example."

But if you leave the AI co-commander to his own devices, will he just complete the missions for you? "No, that wouldn't be much fun!" says Chris. "We have to make sure that the AI is competent enough, as you'll always compare it with human players, but also that the experience is always satisfying. I feel that the AI in *C&C3* was the very best in the business, and the early indications for *RA3* are very good."

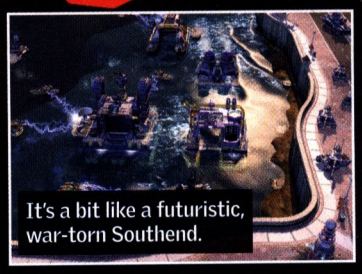
Other aspects of the gameplay are being finely tuned up until the game's late 2008 launch. EALA want fast, fluid fun, but they felt that the wide-open economy of *C&C3* (allowing you to generate units very quickly) made for a game that was perhaps too fast – in fact the 1.09 patch gated the economy and slowed the action down, which is the direction they're going for in their next offering. Games will still be quick, but instead of matched multiplayer games lasting 10 minutes, *RA3* will have matches of between 20-30 minutes.

Instead of matched multiplayer games lasting 10mins, *RA3* will have matches of between 20-30mins

Apparently Corry is attempting to head off the traditional "rush-fest" of other *C&C* games: "We don't want to lose that feeling of being under pressure, but we're going to dial that back a notch. If you try to rush early on, you probably won't be successful. Gamers have got more sophisticated and we want to inject more depth – the combat chain isn't just rock, paper, scissors, so there's more nuance to which units are effective against other units."

As a result, *Red Alert 3* will have fewer units that have multiple capabilities, with most being dedicated units that do one thing very well. So, a large force of one type of unit won't be wildly successful now; a response to the Mammoth 'tank spam' from *C&C3*, which was popular with gamers because the super-vehicle could crush infantry, destroy vehicles and shoot down aircraft. Also, every unit now has a primary and secondary ability; a very clear cut, binary rule that's easy to grasp but adds complexity to gameplay. Plus, *Red Alert 3* will be adopting the tried-and-trusted RTS staple of building on grids, to avoid any issues of choke-points or units getting stuck behind badly-placed buildings.

Enough talking: onto the actual game. I got to see *Red Alert 3* in action, as producer Amer took me through a cut-down version of the second-to-last mission from the Allied campaign, where you're sent to investigate suspicious Commie goings-on in Cuba. After viewing the close-to-final intro screen complete with smart Russian propaganda-style graphics, we're taken to the mission screen, where the choice of three co-commanders were visible – although earlier missions will limit you to one or two. Amer chose to play alongside Major Giles, a stiff upper lip British AI commander specialising in special weapons and aircraft, and portrayed to tongue-in-cheek perfection in the FMV by *Beowulf* actor Greg Ellis (see 'Casting Couch' box).



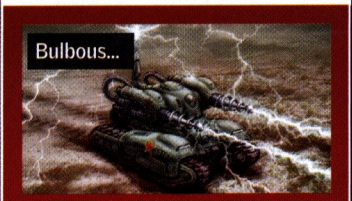
It's a bit like a futuristic, war-torn Southend.

CUBAN CRISIS

Then we're into the mission, and presented with an absolutely gorgeous scene of a Cuban shoreline; deep blue water lapped the beach while a few disparate Soviet units were just visible at the edges of the fog of war. A Mirage Tank under the command of Major Giles was chronosphered (matter-transported) to the island, while our group of four amphibious Assault Destroyers from a Caribbean base nearby rolled up on the beach, immediately sprouting tank treads. The Mirage Tank then disguised itself as a Soviet

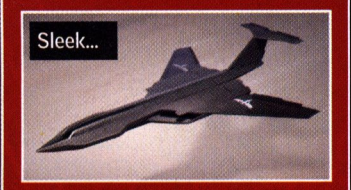
Art For Art's Sake

Art director Matt Britton on the *Red Alert 3* factions' art stylings



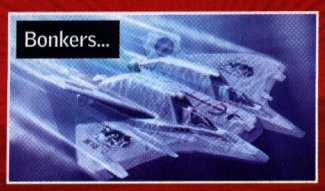
THE SOVIETS

"The real-world HIND gunship is a touchstone for their style. It's got bubble cockpits, so everything has bulbous, organic shapes. The Soviets also have odd aircraft – four engines on each side and counter-rotating propellers – that are right out of *Thunderbirds*. We've also been inspired by images of the Kremlin, plus Stalin and the founders of Soviet missile and space programs for statues."



THE ALLIES

"These guys have a grounded, familiar feel. You'll see angular stainless-steel unpainted finishes, to pick up more specular highlights. Aircraft have a stealth finish, with black, non-reflective surfaces, and bright yellow stripes for that *Red Alert* feel. The German shepherd and the dolphin have audio weapons, so we've added speaker backpacks for them, so you can see there's tech behind it all."



EMPIRE OF THE RISING SUN

"These guys are the most sci-fi – mixing samurai, robot culture, anime, manga, all sorts of cool stuff. We've also taken a little bit of Japanese military uniforms from WWII and blended them – it was important to find a way of making them work together as one faction. You'll see dragonfly-type ships and other bugs in there too. We spent some time in Japan taking reference photos, and we're all big fans of Japanese popular culture."

What happens when you drop a toaster in the ocean.

Building your base at sea gives you strategic advantages.

Apocalypse Tank and covered the entire force in a cloaking shield, as we moved inland to check out the area. Ensuring we carefully remained hidden under the Mirage umbrella in this stealth portion of the mission, we witnessed various Soviet activities including an Akula Sub and a hilarious Bullfrog Transport.

Similar to the Flak Track, the Bullfrog is an amphibious vehicle that doubles as a troop transport, blasting infantry units (in this case armoured bears) into battle using a man cannon, before seeing them float to the ground using parachutes.

The incompetent animals failed to sniff us out, and we continued our reconnaissance mission, edging past a regiment of bubble-helmet-wearing Tesla Troopers, busily powering up Tesla Coils in anticipation of an attack. Major Giles suddenly spotted a group of real Apocalypse Tanks and joined the end of the line, as they eventually led us past saluting soldiers to a secret Soviet base.

"Fire at will!" said Giles, as we decloaked and began blasting the base to smithereens, the buildings collapsing with spectacular pyrotechnic explosions and real-time physics. Showing off what the team are describing as *RA3*'s visceral 'footprint of destruction', that transforms idyllic environments into war-ravaged hell-holes.

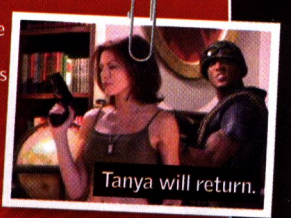
EA have delivered on the checklist of must-haves for *RA3*. Now all they have to do is deliver the game

The Kirov Airship – a deadly aerial unit capable of dropping nukes.

THE COMMAND & CONQUER ISSUE

Casting Couch

FMVs confirmed for *Red Alert 3* – but who are the cast?



Tanya will return.

Red Alert's FMVs are a ridiculous gaming anachronism, but they're loved by fans and one of the *C&C* universe's unique features.

"In *C&C3* we returned to FMVs, which was a bit of a gamble as the whole industry has moved away from cinematics," comments executive producer Chris Corry. "But I think the *C&C* FMV was successful – it's a good way of telling story, with a little kitsch. In *RA3* you can look forward to even more of that, with very earnest characters chewing up the scenery."

A good portion of the cast has been locked down, and EA aren't revealing names. But what about Tanya? "Tanya will be back. But when you fool around with time, a lot of things change. At the moment, she is the only main character we plan to bring back."

What about mind-control psychopath Yuri? "Last time we saw him he was a brain in a jar, but with messing with time, all bets are off and we could bring him back sometime."

One of the commanders in the demo looked suspiciously like Peter 'Robocop' Weller, but Corry denied the actor was involved. "When we did all unit profiles, we'd often look to famous actors to liken them to. But Peter Weller is not in *Red Alert 3*."

So come on Chris – who is? "I feel that this cast may be even be better than *C&C3* – we've just had good news on one of the biggest names in the game."

Mark Hamill? "Well, maybe when we do the *Wing Commander* RTS game..."

It's *Red Alert 3*! Look!

Unfortunately, this was a trap, and an FMV featuring a stereotypical Soviet commanderrrrr (roll those Rs) informed us that 'Operation Grandslam' was now in operation, as a nearby sports stadium opened up to reveal a Kirov Airship carrying a 50 megaton bomb! A new objective of stopping the deadly zeppelins was given to us, and because we hadn't the time to build up a force to take it down, our co-commander was called in to help simply by us clicking on the attack button and placing a beacon on the Kirov. Apollo Fighters were launched by Major Giles and the airship was destroyed, leaving the AI commander to blast the stadium.

On the ground, Amer spawned four Soviet Conscripts and two Allied Peacekeeper infantry units to demonstrate the primary and secondary weapon concept of *RA3*. The Conscripts' primary AK-47 weapon tore into the two Peacekeepers, who were quickly dispatched, as their shotguns were unable to match the machine gun's longer range of fire. Two new Peacekeepers were created, this time utilising their secondary weapon – a riot shield – allowing them to get up-close to the Conscripts so they could unleash lethal shotgun blasts.

To counter, a new battalion of Conscripts appeared, firing their secondary weapon of Molotov cocktails, which then burned the riot shields and left the Peacekeepers open to a deadly spray of AK-47 gunfire. The Conscripts' flaming projectiles were then countered by some nearby German shepherds who unleashed an amplified bark secondary weapon, that stunned the Soviet quartet and allowed the dogs time to run up and bite them to death.

In addition to this balanced RTS gameplay, I was struck by the detailed animation (the dogs stop and scratch themselves when resting, for example) and the hilarious unit voices, which were very much a feature of *RA2*.

"We've put together a personality page for every unit in the game, where we have a bit of art to depict their style, plus a description of how they sound," says Chris. "For Commander Kirov, for example, we have a picture of a big gluttonous crime boss, and this personality all flows into the dialogue."

END GAME

Amer next took the battle into the ocean, first packing up his construction yard and redeploying it on the water, away from the enemy's tanks. Three Allied Hydrofoil ground-to-air boats were launched towards the enemy's new Kirov, which had just emerged from a nearby football stadium. Soviet Stingray vessels were protecting the waters, and it took a fleet of Allied Assault Destroyers to sink them, leaving the Hydrofoils clear to blast the airship out of the sky and pepper the stadium with rockets.

Finally, the third launch facility was attacked by six Guardian Tanks, a vehicle with a cannon and a secondary laser rangefinder, that can be used to paint enemies, and give nearby units an extra damage boost. The base was strongly defended by two Russian Apocalypse Tanks that soon decimated our forces with their dual cannons and a mean magnetic harpoon that drags captured units into a metal grinder mounted on the front of the vehicle.

So, our commander was given clearance to use a Time Bomb, which was chronosphered into the base.

"If you're playing against another person in multiplayer, you can chrono the bomb back to the enemy like a hot potato," adds Amer. "Whoever has it when that clock hits zero is the loser."

This is demonstrated when the bomb displays a smiley face with the words 'Have A Nice Day!' before unleashing a massive explosion, that in this case flattened the Soviet stronghold and won the mission for the Allies.

While I only witnessed the Cuban mission, *Red Alert 3* also has missions in locations including San Diego, Cape Cod, Amsterdam, Heidelberg, Easter Island, Mount Fuji and Santa Monica, the latter so that Chris and Amer can "assault their home."

There are also plans for a public beta of the game over the summer (with keys given away free in the forthcoming *Kane's Wrath C&C3* expansion), so that EALA can hopefully avoid any bugs and server problems when the game launches later this year.

Exhausted, I collapse back into my leather armchair after the presentation and try to absorb all the juicy *Red Alert 3* information that will soon be devoured by starving fans when *PC ZONE* hits the shelves, including the cool Japanese third faction, a co-op campaign, naval gameplay, a new tech tree, primary and secondary weapons across all units, an AI-controlled co-commander and full physics damage. EALA have certainly delivered on the checklist of must-haves for the next *Red Alert 3*. Now all they have to do is deliver the game.

If they don't, Comrades, a Tesla Coil to the testicles may be the only suitable Soviet-style punishment... PCZ

Cyberpower recommends Windows Vista™ Home Premium

Unleash THE POWER

CREATE THE PC OF YOUR DREAMS

intel Core™ 2 Extreme inside™

Hard core. Quad-core.

All Desktop systems come with 3 year Limited Warranty

CyberPOWER Inc.

Gamer Infinity SLI™ 900

nForce® 750i -SLI™ Chipset Motherboard w/ Dual 16X PCI-E
Genuine Windows Vista™ Home Premium
OCZ® 4096MB PC-6400 DDR2-800 Dual Channel Memory
400GB 7200RPM SATA-II 3.0Gb/s 16MB Cache Ultra Fast HD
2x GeForce® 8800 GT 512MB Video running SLI™ Mode
18x Double Layer DVD+/-RW Drive & 16x DVD-ROM
NVIDIA® nForce® 6 7.1 3-D Surround Sound
Logitech® Keyboard and Optical Mouse
NZXT® Lexa Blackline Tower Case w/ MOD See Through Window
Dual Engine High Performance Power Supply
Monitor not included but optional

£839

Intel® Core™ 2 Extreme Processor incl. Del & VAT

(12MB Cache, 1333Mhz FSB)	
Extreme QX9650 3.00Ghz	£1459
(8MB Cache, 1066Mhz FSB)	
Quad Q6700 2.66Ghz	£1135
(6MB Cache, 1333Mhz FSB)	
Quad Q9300 2.50Ghz	£945
E8500 3.16Ghz	£945
E8400 3.00Ghz	£889
E8200 2.67Ghz	£875
(2MB Cache, 1066Mhz FSB)	
E4600 2.40Ghz	£855
E4500 2.20Ghz	£839

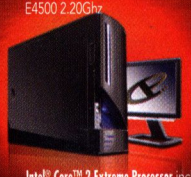
Gamer Infinity SLI™ 800

MSI® 650i P6N SLI™-2F Chipset Motherboard
Genuine Windows Vista™ Home Premium
OCZ® 2048MB PC-6400 DDR2-800 Dual Channel Memory
320GB 7200RPM SATA-II 3.0Gb/s 16MB Cache Ultra Fast HD
GeForce®8800 GT 512MB Video
18x Double Layer DVD+/-RW Drive
NVIDIA® nForce® 6 7.1 3-D Surround Sound
Logitech® Keyboard & Optical Mouse
Turbo X-Cruiser® Case 420 Watt w/ See Through Window
6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
Monitor not included but optional

£579

Intel® Core™ 2 Extreme Processor incl. Del & VAT

(12MB Cache, 1333Mhz FSB)	
Extreme QX9650 3.00Ghz	£1185
(8MB Cache, 1066Mhz FSB)	
Quad Q6700 2.66Ghz	£865
(6MB Cache, 1333Mhz FSB)	
Quad Q9300 2.50Ghz	£685
E8500 3.16Ghz	£685
E8400 3.00Ghz	£629
E8200 2.67Ghz	£615
(2MB Cache, 1066Mhz FSB)	
E4600 2.40Ghz	£595
E4500 2.20Ghz	£579



Gamer Infinity 700

MSI® P35 Intel® Chipset Motherboard
Genuine Windows Vista™ Home Basic
OCZ® 2048MB PC-6400 DDR2-800 Memory
250GB 7200RPM SATA-II 3.0Gb/s 8MB Cache Ultra Fast HD
Geforce® 9600 GT 512MB Video
18x Double Layer DVD+/-RW Drive
High Definition 7.1 3-D Surround Sound
Logitech® Keyboard and Optical Mouse
Nzxt® Hush Silent Case
Monitor not included but optional

£495

Intel® Core™ 2 Extreme Processor incl. Del & VAT

(12MB Cache, 1333Mhz FSB)	
Extreme QX9650 3.00Ghz	£1099
(8MB Cache, 1066Mhz FSB)	
Quad Q6700 2.66Ghz	£785
(6MB Cache, 1333Mhz FSB)	
Quad Q9300 2.50Ghz	£599
E8500 3.16Ghz	£599
E8400 3.00Ghz	£545
E8200 2.67Ghz	£529
(2MB Cache, 1066Mhz FSB)	
E4600 2.40Ghz	£509
E4500 2.20Ghz	£495

Gamer Infinity X5-80

Intel® Centrino® Duo processor technology
- Intel® Core™ 2 Duo Processor
- Mobile Intel® PM965 Express Chipset
- Intel® PRO/Wireless 4965a/b/g/n Network Connection

Genuine Windows Vista™ Home Premium
Asus® S96S Notebook Verified by Intel
2048 MB DDR-II PC5300 667 Memory
120GB SATA150 Hard Drive & 8x DVD+/-RW Drive
15.4" WXGA+ TFT Display 1280x800
1000/100/10 Network, 56K V.92 Fax Modem
NVIDIA® GeForce® 8600M GS 256MB + Turbo Cache
3-in-1 Built-in Media Card Reader, 3x USB 2.0 Ports,
1x IEEE-1394 Firewire Port, 1 PCMCIA Type II Slot,
3 Hours Battery Life, Weight only 6.39 Lbs, Free Carrying Case,
6 Custom Colors to Choose From, 1 Year Limited Warranty

£775

Intel® Core™ 2 Duo Processor
(800Mhz FSB), incl. Del & VAT

T7800 4MB L2 Cache, 2.60Ghz	£985
T7700 4MB L2 Cache, 2.40Ghz	£849
T7500 4MB L2 Cache, 2.20Ghz	£799
T7250 4MB L2 Cache, 2.00Ghz	£775

* Images for display only.

Free shipping

www.cyberpowersystem.co.uk • 0800 019 0863

CyberPower PCs use genuine Microsoft® Windows® www.microsoft .com/piracy/howtotell

Intel®, Intel® logo, Intel Inside®, Intel Inside® logo, Intel® Core™, Intel® Core™ 2 Duo, Intel® Core™ Duo, Core Inside®, Intel® Centrino®, Intel® Centrino® logo, Celeron®, Celeron Inside®, Intel® Xeon™, Intel® SpeedStep®, Itanium®, Itanium Inside®, Intel® Viiv™, Intel® vPro™, Pentium®, Pentium Inside®, Pentium® III Xeon™ and Xeon®, and Xeon Inside® are trademarks or registered trademarks of Intel® Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries. All prices are subject to change without notice or obligation. CyberPower is not responsible for any typographical and photographic errors. Copyright © 2008 CyberPower. All rights reserved. NVIDIA®, nForce®, GeForce®, SLI™ are trademarks or registered trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries.

PCZONE REVIEWS

Our verdict on the latest PC

66 WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR – SOULSTORM

Can the Dark Eldar and Sisters of Battle cut it in Relic's laser-pocked 40,000 warzone?

SPOILS OF WAR

THE SIGN OF a good RTS is when expansions and updates ensure it keeps trucking far beyond an average game's shelf life. For evidence take a look at *Soulstorm* (page 66), the latest standalone expansion to the fall off the back of the *Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War* lorry.

Dawn of War came out in 2004 – an ice age ago in terms of graphics, but the magic of the gameplay never dies, even if we all long for the true sequel that must be in development. Elsewhere, nine years on, Blizzard are still patching *Starcraft* for competitive play, while various iterations of *Total Annihilation* remain a solid fixture on certain parts of the internet. You just can't kill a good RTS.

When it comes to an average one though, like *Warhammer: Mark of Chaos* and its belated expansion pack *Battle March* (page 70), you'll struggle to remember it even existed next month. This is survival of the fittest. If Darwin was knocking around still then he'd probably write a book about it.

Will Porter

Will Porter, 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...**

Crysis | World in Conflict | The Orange Box

The PC ZONE Awards

CLASSIC (90%+)
The best games ever. If you're lucky enough to see one, stop and buy it.

RECOMMENDED (75-89%)
Pretty, pretty, pretty. Any game that turns *PC 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 ZONE gaming machine

As you'll see on the many pages of resplendent reviews that follow, we list the minimum specifications you need to play each game in each review. Please refer to the publisher's website to check out their recommended optimum specs that'll make the games super-whizzy. We review all new games on a variety of systems, including our top-spec, very desirable Xworks X81-C2D, (pictured right). For more info on Xworks, tap into the wonder that is the Internet and type the following selection of letters into your browser: www.xworksinteractive.com.

ALSO REVIEWED

70 **WARHAMMER: MARK OF CHAOS – BATTLE MARCH**
More scrapping Orcs and Elves.

72 **THE CLUB**
Sign up and start with the murdering.

74 **SAVAGE 2: A TORTURED SOUL**
It's an MMORPGRTS – pronounce that.

76 **PIRATES OF THE BURNING SEA**
Boring online buccaneer action.

77 **FANTASY WARS**
Sign a peace treaty instead.

78 **PUZZLE QUEST**
A serious casual game? Weird.

80 **KWARI**

81 **STRANGER**

82 **CONFLICT: DENIED OPS**

84 **PENUMBRA: BLACK PLAGUE**

85 **IMPERIUM ROMANUM**

86 **INDIE ZONE**
Bedroom coders of the world unite and take over.

88 **BUDGET**
Featuring *Max Payne*, *GTA3* and a dose of *CivCity Rome*.

90 **BUYER'S GUIDE**
Every game that matters, mattering as hard as they can.

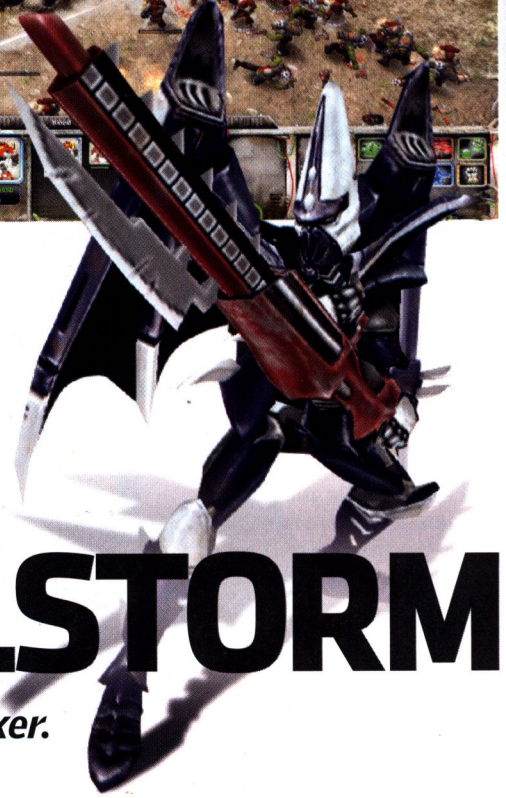
PCZONE SWEARS...

- 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

Dark Eldar like to get in and out before the enemy knows what's hit 'em.

Ork vehicles ain't pretty, but get the job done.

WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR – SOULSTORM



The sun may have set on the relic that is *Richie Shoemaker*. But the *Dawn of War* juggernaut just keeps on coming...

DEVELOPER Iron Lore/Relic
PUBLISHER THQ
WEBSITE www.dawnofwargame.com
ETA 7 March
PRICE £19.99

RECOMMENDED PCZONE RECOMMENDED

AT A GLANCE...

Shit-off-shovel fast RTS action, a much-loved *40,000* universe, and an ageing graphics engine combine to great more-of-the-same effect.

Minimum system requirements: 2GHz processor, 512MB RAM, and a 64MB DirectX 9 video card.

HOW IT STACKS

COMPANY OF HEROES 93%
WARHAMMER: DOW – SOULSTORM 81%
UNIVERSE AT WAR 79%

EIGHTEEN MONTHS HAVE passed since the last *Dawn of War* release, and nearly four years since the original game emerged from the RTS void.

In the life-cycle of interactive electronic entertainment (*Sims*-branded shop fodder notwithstanding), that's a lengthy span to have to endure to keep a single game alive. Most developers, even the lazy ones, can usually find enough time to squeeze out a proper sequel. To be fair to Relic though, who've been credited as co-developers on *Soulstorm*, they have been a bit preoccupied with *Company of Heroes*, which (apart from being set 38,000 years before the game that first pretty much nailed down the take-and-hold RTS mechanic) was in every respect as good a sequel as we could've hoped for anyway.

With that in mind, you have to wonder what minds were at work to conceive *Soulstorm* – when in almost every area the underlying gameplay has been refined (or superseded in the case of the graphics) multiple times over.

The answer to that conundrum lies within a certain magic number. Previous to *Soulstorm* that figure stood at seven – representing the number of Warhammer *40,000* races that featured after *Dark Crusade*, *Dawn of War*'s last outing. *Soulstorm* brings the total to nine, and whilst the two latest factions might not be fan favourites, the fact that you'll have to try them out against the seven established ones adds a considerable amount of playtime as you throw them into the fray.

"Yo, check out my new tag."

It's capture-and-hold time again folks.

RESPECT YOUR ELDARS

Of the two newcomers to the series the Dark Eldar are the more intriguing. Being the dark elves of the *40,000* universe, they're sturdier than their leaf-eared counterparts, can hit hard and dominate a map quickly given half a chance. Their ability to keep up the pressure as a battle wears on may be called into question, since their vehicles aren't the most sturdy, but their battlefield spells have enough sting to keep up the pressure. On the other side of the moral spectrum are the Sisters of Battle: a bunch of female fundamentalists that fall in between the original game's Space Marines and *Winter Assault*'s Imperial Guard, and they're hard to play because of it, being stalwart in defence and solid enough going forward that an all-arms frontal assault is often the best policy.

Although the new litter falls short of *40,000*'s iconic and established races, the developers certainly haven't skimped on the details in how the units look. Dark Eldar warriors will open a vein before draining themselves to take a control point, whilst the righteousness of the Sisters of Battle is taken to extremes of parody. The Pope himself would surely laugh at seeing an Exorcist: a tank-mounted church organ ridden by an armoured soldier, that fires deadly rockets into the unbelievers rather than playing out music for the soul.

TAKING FLIGHT

Each of the seven old races have received a new unit, all being of the airborne variety. To be fair these new flying units don't behave much differently to the ones that skimmed above the

Sisters of Battle take feminism into brave new worlds.

Nothing you haven't seen before, but it's still fun.

Sisters of Battle: a bunch of female fundamentalists that fall in between the original game's Space Marines and *Winter Assault*'s Imperial Guard

Faith in action

Sisters are doing it for themselves

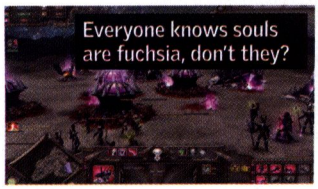
Check out the faith on that!

What the Sisters of Battle may lack in subtlety they more than make up for in searing weaponry and blind enthusiasm. These girls are so keen to offer redemption to those who might not wholly share their particularly narrow world view that they collect their very own resource, Faith, which accumulates slowly by having certain units and buildings active on the map. If a unit has a halo or a particular yellow glow about it, you can bet that faith is causing such eminence imbuing its leader with special abilities and powers that evangelical religious-types can only dream about.

Ork vs Marine – the original and best.

Who stole the soul?

It's a dirty job, but someone dirty has gotta do it

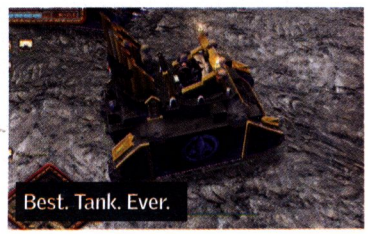


Everyone knows souls are fuchsia, don't they?

If you know your Eldar history you'll know that the reason why those of the dark persuasion are morally corrupt is because, in order to stay alive, they have to find fresh souls to keep them going. Luckily on a battlefield there are plenty about, so Dark Eldar commanders can send their builder units to collect the purple blobs off the floor. Being a dangerous frontline task for such a unit, it's far easier to farm souls in your base, but once you have enough you can unleash powerful soul-powered spells across the battlefield without having to rely on heroes that keep getting killed just when you need them.

Four planets, three moons, nine races, but only one Starbucks.

Aircraft hover more than they fly, but we don't mind.



Best. Tank. Ever.

ground in previous releases – indeed they often can get stuck behind units on the ground, highlighting the limitations of the game engine. Even so they are a welcome addition to each races' armoury, not least because they can be pretty devastating even with the small numbers the game allows thanks to its zealous unit cap. By using aircraft to skip over terrain and with clever use of jump units it's possible to really throw your enemy off guard.

The clever thing about *Dawn of War* has always been that, because you can tell by the mini-map how many units your opponent will be able to field, when the fog of war lifts you can start to calculate what and where they might be.

The game's poker-like balance of quick guesswork and calculation has always been important in multiplayer games and that's now even more true with so many different sides potentially involved. There are still imbalances: the Necrons remain the end-game master race in my book and the new Dark Eldar are hard to repel early on, but then again when you put those two head-to-head you've got yourself quite a game.

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

Soulstorm opens up all the *DOW* races for solo play, but if you want to try *40,000*'s more established civilisations online you're going to have to pick up or dust off the *DOW Anthology* box set. The thing is that apart from the two new races, *Soulstorm* doesn't offer up much that's wildly new that might justify itself to lapsed fans who might have moved on to greener blood-stained pastures. The total number of multiplayer maps may be over a hundred-strong, but being a game where terrain isn't that much of a big deal, and where maps are largely symmetrical and designed to be fair, that doesn't really widen the potential for variety – not that the vast number isn't welcome.

As for the single-player campaign – which will be less of a draw for the multiplayer crowd – well it's pretty much an expanded version of the one from *Dark Crusade*, with the battle map stretched across a number of planets and moons rather than a single globe. You move your army between territories once per turn, and should you tread on hostile soil the 3D battles take over; with increasingly bland skirmish-style battles for the most part, mixed with the more enjoyable objective-based battles when you attack a 'stronghold' territory. What makes the campaign an improvement on *Dark Crusade*'s is that the battle map has obvious choke points that cut down on having to fight over the dull

Spoils of war Planetary patrolling the *Soulstorm* way

Each turn you get to choose a territory to move your army into. If it's held by the enemy, a battle ensues on the planet below.

If your army lands on a stronghold territory then the battle will be fierce, but victory will eliminate the stronghold's faction from the game.

Victory rewards your commander with spoils and your war chest with lots of lovely requisition points. Yay. Now repeat to fade.

In adding to the weight of maps and playable factions, as a collection, *Dawn of War* with *Soulstorm* alongside it sets itself apart from a lot of the more youthful games out there

maps again and again, whilst each faction has special abilities that in almost all cases either speeds up the settlement part of each battle, or allows armies to attack stronghold regions more directly.

REMAIN FAMILIAR

If your RTS enjoyment is about having the latest live-fast, die-young RTS with a 3D engine that'll most likely churn your PC into an early grave and a multiplayer game that spends most of the time fumbling for a connection, then *Soulstorm* probably isn't the game for you. Though it shames me to have reel out this old line, this really is more of the same, but in adding to the weight of maps and playable factions, as a collection, *Dawn of War* with *Soulstorm* alongside it sets itself apart from a lot of the more youthful games out there. Being ancient in the graphics department doesn't mean *Soulstorm* is in any way ugly either. The screens are as vibrant and bombastic as ever and whilst there are textures that lack detail, for those that enjoy fast multiplayer, it will be heartening to know that you won't have to endure the wait suffered by players whose GFX cards lag behind the times.

As for whether you should purchase what will undoubtedly be *DOW*'s final outing, well, personally I would be more tempted to pick up the *Anthology* first, if only because you get two single-player campaigns plus *Dark Crusade*'s less story-based skirmish-style campaign – all for less than the price of this standalone effort. Such has been the wait that *Soulstorm* will suffer from having to compete with its bargain-bin brethren, but for *40,000* fans there is good value for money – certainly more than you'd get should you spend the same sum on paint and blister packs of *Warhammer* figures.

World in Conflict arguably took things a step further and we could reel off a whole list of RTS games that offer better graphics, bigger wars, faster cars and hotter wives than *Dawn of War* could ever hope to provide. But with that said, there's still something special lurking within the series that four years of post-release love have relentlessly polished and *Soulstorm* is a fitting testament to that fact. PCZ

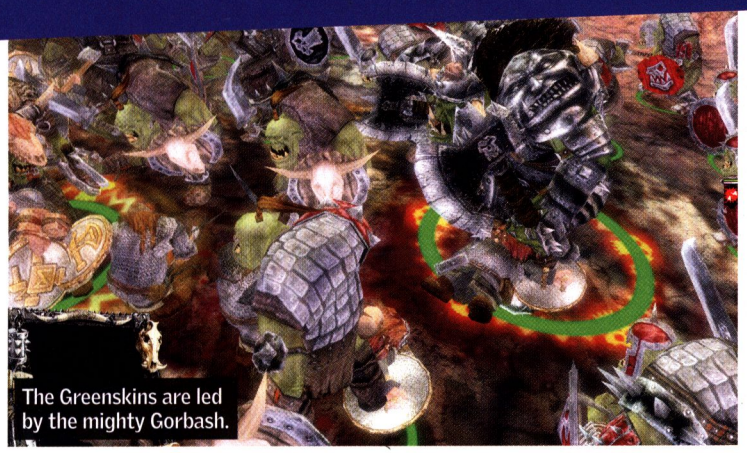
PCZONE

Graphics Like an old friend
Sound Boisterous and hammy
Multiplayer Sublime

- ✓ Evolved and balanced
- ✓ No-mess multiplayer
- ✓ Completes a great series
- ✗ Not the next big thing
- ✗ Old engine

81

Still freaking sweet


The Greenskins are led by the mighty Gorbash.

The athletics team had finally perfected a simultaneous Fosbury Flop.

WARHAMMER: MARK OF CHAOS – BATTLE MARCH

The campaign and missions are fairly linear.

Total War: Extra Lite.

Martin Korda marches to war and gets a bit tired in this long-overdue expansion pack

DEVELOPER Deep Silver
PUBLISHER Black Hole Entertainment
WEBSITE www.markofchaos.com
ETA 14 March
PRICE £19.99

AT A GLANCE...

The first expansion pack to *Warhammer: Mark of Chaos*, featuring a challenging new campaign and two new races.

Minimum system requirements: 2.4GHz processor, 512MB RAM, and a 256MB graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS

MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR – KINGDOMS: 90%
SUPREME COMMANDER: FORGED ALLIANCE: 86%
MARK OF CHAOS – BATTLE MARCH 69%

HERE'S A SCENARIO for you. You're about to publish a well-designed, if somewhat glitched, RTS set in one of the most successful fantasy universes of all time. You feel pleased with yourself. You're happy.

Maybe you even smile. Now, for some reason you decide not to bother marketing your game much. After all, who needs exposure? You release the game. It scores moderately well, sells a few copies, then disappears. You're no longer pleased with yourself. You're unhappy. Maybe you cry.

Fifteen months later, the game's first expansion pack arrives. To your surprise, it's actually half-decent. You now have a choice. Make the expansion available only to the handful of people who bought the original (or the palm-full willing to buy the original), or bundle it together with the main game and release it as a standalone package for £19.99, market it properly and hope you sell more copies second time around. What's it gonna be? Well, if you're Deep Silver and your expansion pack is *Warhammer: Mark of Chaos – Battle March*, you go for option one. Why? Beats me, but it's probably something to do with squiggly lines on charts, profit yields and long sentences containing words like 'fiscal'. Maybe.

That *Battle March* hasn't been given more marketing oomph behind it is actually a travesty, because as RTS add-ons go, it's one of the better ones. The package's main feature is an all-new campaign featuring two new forces: the Greenskins (Orcs and Goblins) and the Dark Elves.

GOOD TO BE GREEN

With the battle between the Empire and the Hordes of Chaos having taken a heavy toll on both sides, a powerful Orc Warboss called Gorbash gathers a mighty army of Orcs and Goblins in an attempt to seize power. These pea-coloured oafs – whose cockney accents are so meaty you could make a hearty sandwich out of them, "Yeeeaaaar, we gonna rip 'em spikee ooomans ta sherheads!" – are considerably more robust (and in some cases, exponentially larger) than the comparatively puny Empire and Chaos units from the original game's two campaigns, exuding fearsome power as they wade into battle, scattering foes in all directions with the ferocity of their charges. The majority of the Greenskin levels involve large-scale battles, many infused with a steeliness that'll challenge you to the max, forcing you to approach each encounter with forethought and tactical planning.

Allied with the Greenskins are the Dark Elves. These creepy, whispering masters of magic with a penchant for smug self-satisfaction are the perfect counterpoint for the visceral Orc and Goblin slugfests, and their missions often require subterfuge and stealth rather than brute force.

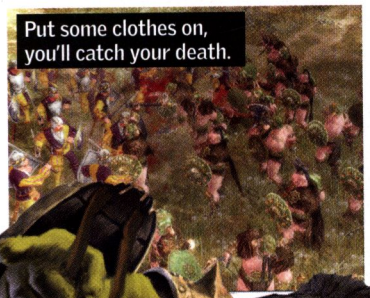
Both side's collection of Hero units are solid if hardly jaw-dislocatingly impressive, though intelligent use of these super slayers is even more paramount here than it was in *Mark of Chaos*.

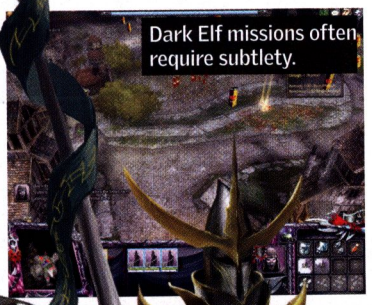
LEVELLING UP

Battle March's levels are generally well designed if somewhat linear, packed with pockets of skirmishing enemies that you can choose to join or ignore. Some missions see you working with an AI force, which adds a second variable to the outcome of the level and makes for some interesting strategic situations. Attempting to bring opposing AI-controlled enemy factions into conflict with each other is also a hoot.

Sadly, many of the problems that marred the original game remain. The camera is still inept during siege missions, often leaving you staring at castle walls while your troops are massacred somewhere behind the slabs of stone you're gazing at, and you can still grow a beard that a Dwarf would be proud of in the time it takes to load a level.

Look at him hogging the limelight!


Put some clothes on, you'll catch your death.


Dark Elf missions often require subtlety.

Round and round we go

When enemy AI simply can't make up its mind...

Shall we stay or shall we go?

Enemy AI. It's an anomaly. One minute it's giving you the kind of hiding you've not had since you painted the dog green when you were a child, the next it's acting like a moron. *Battle March* has examples of both. That many missions prove incredibly hard to defeat is a testament to Black Hole's AI programmers. However, there are also far too many instances where the AI blatantly protects a predefined patch of land, incessantly advancing then falling back depending on how far you venture in and out of its zone. The resulting *Benny Hill*-style chases make a mockery of *Battle March*'s boasts of authentic battlefield skirmishes, let alone those of other RTS developers. Get it sorted!

That *Battle March* hasn't been given more oomph behind it is a travesty, because as RTS add-ons go, it's one of the better ones

Closing time, *Warhammer* style.

Even if you're a girl. What's more, combat animations are still weak, the Deployment Phase at the inception of each level is about as useful as a light bulb on the sun and a few missions feel a little too obviously tacked on, like a gratuitous, dark alley fight scene in a B-grade martial arts movie.

While *Battle March* is no *Medieval II: Total War – Kingdoms*, it's still a competent expansion, which despite being similar to the main game, offers just about enough faction variety to satisfy. However, it's just not good enough to warrant shelling out for both this and the original. And that is the real problem. PCZ

PCZONE

Graphics **Crisp and detailed**
Sound **Quality**
Multiplayer **Frenetic and fun**

- ✓ Two decent new races
- ✓ Very tough
- ✓ Great universe
- ✗ Glitches from original persist
- ✗ It's not standalone

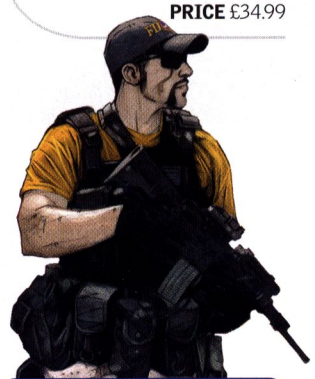
64

Same game, new races

THE CLUB

Want mindless violence and a biscuit? Join *Steve Hill's* club

DEVELOPER Bizarre Creations
PUBLISHER Sega
WEBSITE www.bizarrecreations.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99



AT A GLANCE...

The developers of *Project Gotham Racing* try their hand at a different genre, with a frantic challenge-based third-person shooter.

Minimum system requirements: 2.0GHz processor, 512 MB RAM and a 128MB graphics card.

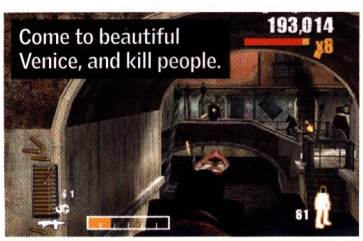
HOW IT STACKS

GEARS OF WAR	90%
TOTAL OVERDOSE	75%
THE CLUB	58%

MOST OF US have probably been a member of a club at some point in our lives, be it Youth, Tufty, Groucho or Conservative. However, there can't be many clubs where membership carries the considerable risk of a brutally violent death within seconds of joining (although chess clubs can get quite lively). Imagine the membership form for *The Club*. Do you have any medical conditions that may impair your performance? Have you ever been involved in moral turpitude? Do you have any objection to being shot in the face, neck, chest and genitals by a succession of heavily armed mercenaries on a near-constant basis?

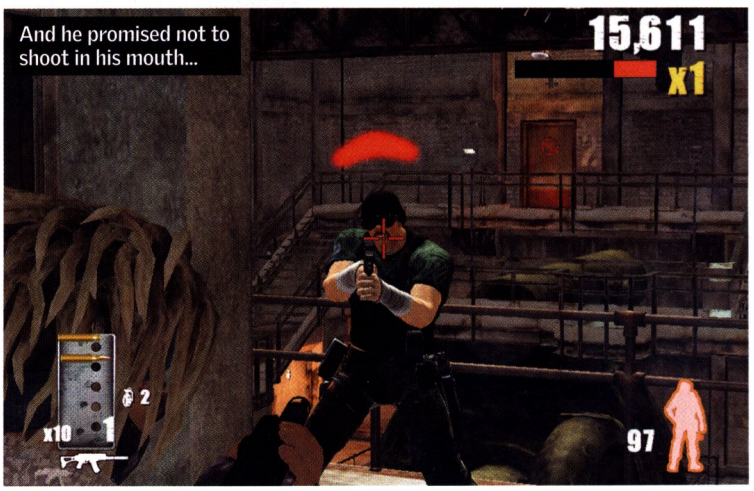
This is a risible premise, as vaguely brushed over in an intro by 'The Club secretary,' his clipped upper class English intonation suggesting a clandestine society somewhere between *The Avengers* and *Fight Club*. In reality, it's not nearly as interesting as either, the game consisting of a succession of wholly linear levels whereby you run like hell, shooting everyone in your path until you either succumb to your injuries or successfully reach the end. Imagine a James Bond training level with the subtlety, ingenuity and humour replaced by a gallon of blood and a cavalcade of twisted corpses.

The Club is about more than simply racking up a body count though, as it's not about how many people you kill, but how you kill them, with points effectively awarded for artistic merit. Simply unloading into someone's midriff may be effective, but the judges will be more generous if you dive through a window, perform a forward roll and shoot him in the temple from range.



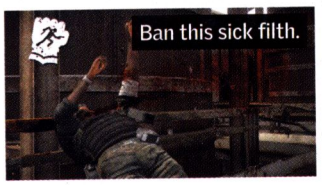
CLUB SANDWICH

The score count is constantly running on screen, and can be boosted by linking kills together in combos – imagine Tony Hawk going postal. If you fail to take a human life for five seconds, your combo starts bleeding out and you may have to start another. Points make prizes, and some levels require a certain score to ensure your progress.

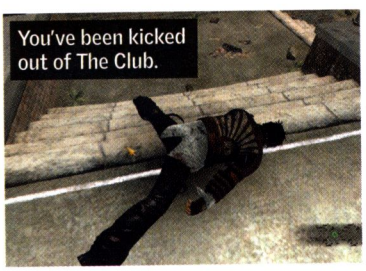


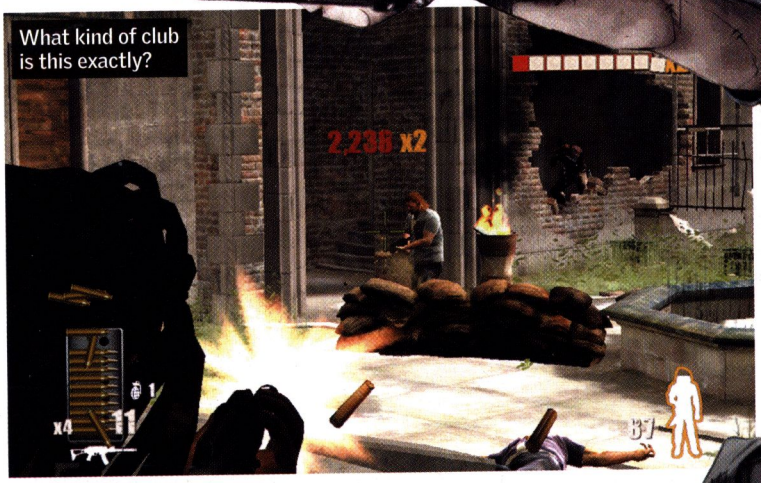
Bleed for me

Killing in the name of...?



Games are taking a kicking in recent months, including some clueless Doris from (behind) *The Times* hilariously describing them as "Satan's Sudoku". While *The Club* doesn't have the marketing budget to attract the attention of the mass media, there's enough contentious content to spark a tabloid furore with players required to indiscriminately kill and kill again in a relentless orgy of bloodletting. And, like the original *Manhunt*, they're rewarded for the style in which they do so. As the press release claims, "Some are driven by greed, some are adrenaline junkies, and some are driven by pure insane bloodlust." Lovely stuff...





It's not about how many people you kill, but how you kill them

Timed levels are also common, some literally involving doing laps around the level, with a three-second boost given as a reward for each kill.

Certainly this is an original approach to what is ostensibly a third-person shooter, although closer inspection of the developer's heritage may betray its genesis. Liverpool-based Bizarre Creations are best known for the excellent Xbox arcade driving series *Project Gotham Racing*, whereby Kudos points are awarded for stylish driving. The plot thins when you consider that game also spawned the *Robotron*-inspired *Geometry Wars*, the 2D shooter that puts you in the centre of a relentless barrage of attacks from geometrical shapes.

Replace Kudos points with manslaughter points, and geometrical shapes with crazed assassins, and you essentially have *The Club*, your honour. And given Bizarre's console history, it's no surprise that this is a straight port of the Xbox 360 version, replete with contemptuous instructions to 'press A' and so on. In fact, it almost demands investing in a 360 pad, as with mouse and keyboard you always seem to need an extra finger (so it should sell well in Wales).

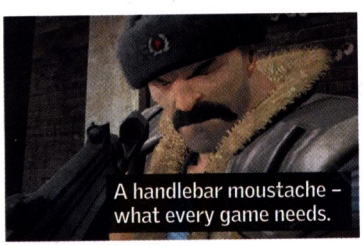
CLUBBED TO DEATH

The antithesis of a stealth game, *The Club* is an unashamedly unsophisticated affair that scoffs at such notions as taking cover or assuming any kind of tactic other than running and gunning. And in the short term at least, it's mildly compelling fare that certainly keeps you on your toes. Failing a level by a matter of seconds or points will have you frustratedly slapping the keyboard for another go, and – like a driving game – you do eventually learn the levels, knowing where each baddie is going to appear, where the health and ammo is stashed, and ultimately the most effective way to stay alive, even if that does involve standing in a corner and running the clock down.

Ultimately though, *The Club* is a puddle-deep affair that struggles to justify a full-price release. The console conversion is functional at best, with borderline suicidal AI, tricksy controls and no real sense of purchase or recoil from the limited range of weaponry.

With the possible exception of a largely unrecognisable Venice, the settings are fairly generic, and your choice of eight so-called gladiators ticks every cliché in the book, comprising the usual collection of *Street Fighter* refugees. The Hard Russian, Smooth American, Dreadlocked Assassin and Speedy Oriental are all members of the club, running round in ever decreasing circles with their fingers on the trigger and an eye on the combo score.

But we won't be joining them, as we won't be renewing our membership. PCZ



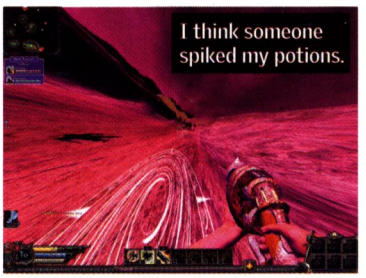
PCZONE

Graphics	Console standard
Sound	Tinny weapons
Multiplayer	Through *Windows LIVE* (good luck!)

- ✓ Frenzied gameplay
- ✓ No stealth
- ✗ Absurd concept
- ✗ Irksome controls
- ✗ Obvious console port

58

Stick to what you know



SAVAGE 2: A TORTURED SOUL

PCZONE ON THE DVD

ONLINE ONLY

Ed Zitron sits at his desk, his shirt torn and bloody, before screaming at the very gods. Then levels up!

DEVELOPER S2 Games
PUBLISHER S2 Games
WEBSITE savage2.s2games.com
ETA Out now
PRICE Free to play, £15 ($29.99) one-off for full version.

RECOMMENDED PCZONE RECOMMENDED

AT A GLANCE...

Out-of-this-world multiplayer RPG-FPS-RTS that, with a stable group, is more fun than trying to catch a greased pig on a bouncy castle.

Minimum system requirements: 2.2GHz processor, 1GB RAM, and a 128MB video card.

HOW IT STACKS

SAVAGE 2	82%
SAVAGE: THE BATTLE FOR NEWERTH	80%
SACRIFICE	62%

EVERYBODY'S HYBRIDISING THESE days, to the point that even sports games have some quasi-RPG elements. You can call it 'fans' or 'influence,' but it's all the same in my eyes, and most attempts to try and shoehorn in stats where they're not needed fail, and badly too. Lucky for me that S2 Games have done it before, otherwise this would all be a terrible mess.

Savage 2 is a multiplayer affair that pits man against beast – it's an RPG, an RTS and an FPS mixed with a *Guild Wars*-style interface, and forged by an outfit that's dedicated themselves to the complex, the coherent and the original. Unbelievably, all of the ridiculously varied things that *Savage 2* tries to do work beautifully, without the familiar clashing bugginess of usual hybrid affairs.

Battles in *Savage 2*, to the layman, sound like confusing affairs, but when you're in the action they make an amazing amount of sense. You have a commander who orders the players on a team to various spots on the map using gigantic waypoint markers, who can also build structures and buff the team. Builders and Conjurers carry out the commander's orders, making structures and creating supply areas where other players get ammunition. Then there's the general-purpose attack players for both the races of Beast and Man that get progressively bigger and meaner as the game progresses, with more structures unlocking bigger things that are better at either killing or destroying buildings. This may sound simple enough, but ultimately both your ability to win and the units that are available hinge on both your commander and on the dedication of your team.

If everybody decides to be a have-a-go hero, create bugger-all buildings and merely has a gigantic fight in the middle, you'll find yourself outnumbered, naked and face to face with a player controlling a bus-sized Behemoth who will hit you with an uprooted tree. At which point you'll be sorry.

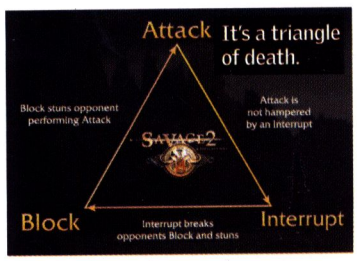
BIRCH AND DESTROY

The persistent character system is where stuff gets a mite more complex; you gain experience to level up, giving you four more stat points to allocate arbitrarily to make your character stronger, and go up the player "ladder," meaning you'll face off against tougher groups of people. Players are matched by level, so you'll never find yourself against a group of people who will instantly crush you, but that doesn't mean

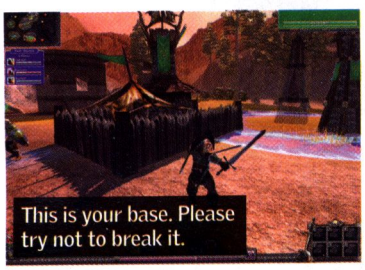
I'll teach you to flash me in public!

Rock, paper, Apocalypse

Savage **melee isn't all about clicking one button...**



...it's actually about clicking three! Using a kind of rock, paper, scissors mentality, you use attack, block and interrupt to out-do the other opponent when you get all up close and personal. Blocking stops attacks, and interrupt breaks blocks, but doesn't stop attacks. Meeting any particular melee move with its antithesis stuns the opponent, so it's key to get it right – and immensely satisfying when you do. It can be rather hard to get right at times, but it's great to launch into an established skirmish and block constantly, stunning multiple over-excited attackers at once. Just be careful about being too predictable, or your arse is grass.



This is your base. Please try not to break it.

If it's got a red circle, you really should be killing it.

Fighting a Behemoth is truly an epic experience.

Buy this with four friends, make a team and watch in awe as an excellent FPSRPGRTS unfolds around you

that there isn't a fair bit of frustration when you realise that your team are a bunch of drooling, slavering idiots facing off against some kind of fantasy version of the A-Team.

In fact, a really bad team completely ruins the experience, leaving you with basic units facing an impossible battle against – in the worst-case scenario – the enemy's fearsome Hellbourne units.

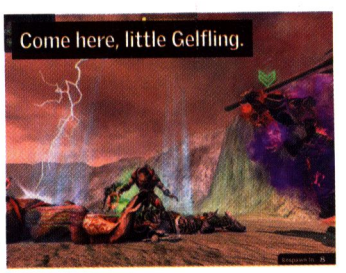
Fighting back, once the edge has been gained on you, is tough and leaving a game loses you the EXP from the fight – so a fair amount of time can be wasted if you realise a game is a washout. Seesawing combat can be extremely enjoyable if you have a chance to retaliate, but all too often you find yourself in one-sided battles against unstoppable goliaths, your own team seemingly made of piss and felt. This makes playing strangers a potentially worrying and wasteful experience.

Conversely, a good team can be amazing to fight alongside. With dedicated builders, a commander with two brain cells and some actual teamwork, you'll find yourself engrossed in the emotion of a gigantic war. You'll quake with fear as a load of Steambuchets roll towards you, and cheer as your team mounts that crucial counterattack that brings them down.

The Tempests are like *Doom*'s Mancubuses, but magical.

WAR MACHINE

Savage 2, even with these annoyances, is recommendable if you can get a group of two or more other people to buy it. The Free To Play option (which can be found on our cover DVD) is limited, lacking stat persistence, but gives you a taster of the full package. As a paid-for game, when everything goes right, it's a marvel of genre hybridisation – the quintessential team play experience. The problems at present are based around how many people you can round up who are intelligent enough to play with, as games are long and rely so much on tactical thought that playing with unknowns is a risk in itself. If you can, buy this with four friends, make a team and watch in awe as an excellent FPSRPGRTS unfolds around you. PCZ



Come here, little Gelfling.

Savage 2 runs well with so much stuff going on.

PCZONE

Graphics	Crisp, smooth, fast
Sound	Sword clashing and generic orchestral music
Multiplayer	All there is

- Looks the part.
- Great value for money.
- Does every genre right.
- A great team makes the game...
- ...and a bad team ruins it.

82

Savagery civilized

PIRATES OF THE BURNING SEA

ONLINE ONLY

Banished to a desert isle on the internet, *Ed Zitron* weeps into his bootlegged rum

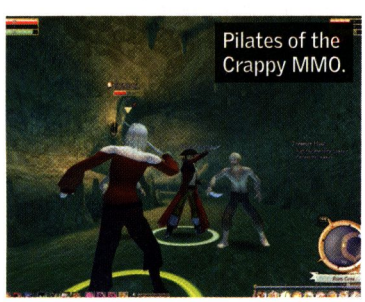
DEVELOPER Flying Lab Software
PUBLISHER Sony Online Entertainment
WEBSITE www.piratesofthe burningsea.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

FROM THE MOMENT you log on, ***Pirates of the Burning Sea* crashes mediocrity upon your shores, beginning with the jingling '90's Midi soundtrack that blares from the character select screen. The dreams you had of a fun pirate MMO still flutter in your head, but your gut says "hold on a minute, this doesn't look right".**

While it would've been easy to create a game that was at least serviceable in the art of seafaring piracy, copying *Pirates!* for the ship combat and *WOW* for the hand-to-hand, *POTBS* has boldly stepped up and said "No! I will be my own game!" only to fall flat on its face, leaving a bloody mess.

The game is split into two – on foot, and on board. As a pirate, you run around town, talking to the locals, buying new ships, and engaging in its much-touted economic system. This is worryingly like the ill-fated *Star Wars Galaxies*' player-driven economy. Players create buildings (seen as in-game menus) to create ships (in-game items) to trade to other players for doubloons (see 'Money Can't Buy You Love' box out).

This is a simple, boring and unremarkable system that's slightly more inventive than the *WOW* auction house, yet twice as mundane. If you want to trade, you'll have to make a load of buildings and sail endlessly between ports. While it's extensive in the sense that you can make a lot of different inventory-fillers in various different places, that's about it. There will be some to who this inane trading of funnily-named items will be interesting – bully for both of you, to everybody else it's dull as ditchwater.



SWASHBUCKLED

Progression is through your average experience system, with level gains mostly made through the completion of arbitrary missions that mostly require you to go to a place and kill a certain person, destroy ships, or protect ships while destroying other ships. This is the meat of the game, which makes it all the more surprising how gut-wrenchingly dull combat is.

Naval combat involves you piloting your woefully slow vessel in circles, aiming cones to fire three kinds of rounds at a ship to either take out its crew, its sails, or its hull. You can either destroy it outright or board it, getting more booty in the process, but also have to enter the single worst part in the game – mano a mano melee. Close-quarters combat feels floaty, distant and repetitive, and is usually a complete wash of button-mashing mayhem that ends with a ridiculous-sounding cheer or moan from your crew.

Ultimately, *POTBS* accurately depicts how arduously slow sailing into combat in

AT A GLANCE...

Awful combat, boring visuals, and a stunning amount of missed opportunities in the most dull MMO since Thimble Collector Online.

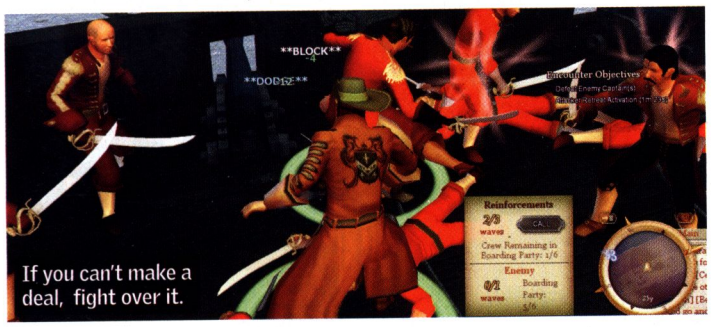
Minimum system requirements: 1.5GHz processor, 512MB RAM, and a 128MB video card.

HOW IT STACKS

EVERQUEST 2 95%
BOUNTY BAY ONLINE 65%
PIRATES OF THE BURNING SEA 40%

Money Can't Buy You Love...

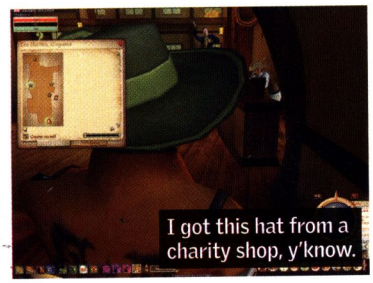
...but it can buy you rum



If you can't make a deal, fight over it.

The economy in *Pirates of the Burning Sea* is built totally by players, who make things by creating buildings in various ports around the world. These buildings are really just ever more sophisticated menus, in which you create little icons that can be traded to other players. The key is that certain things that you can build require certain other things – ships need masts, for example, which are made of wood. You may not have enough woodcutters to make enough, but you may have rum – so maybe you can trade some rum to another man, and he will give you wood. This, my friend, is the ultra-complex nature of the world-defining economy of *POTBS*.

Character creation lets you look like a degenerate with ease.


I got this hat from a charity shop, y'know.

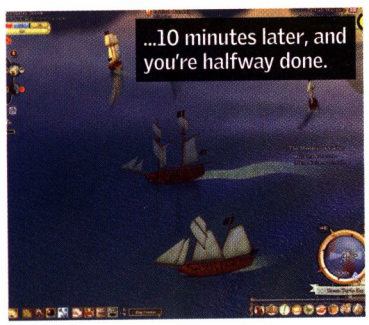
This parade of mediocrity is actually the most polished part of the game

these sea-going vessels must have been, with battles taking anywhere from five to 10 minutes of sailing around waiting for your cannons to reload, or manoeuvring your sloth-like ship into position – and that's just against one enemy.

Amazingly this parade of mediocrity is actually the most developed and polished part of the game, mixed in as it is with missions that lack variety, storyline or pizazz. Graphically, meanwhile, *POTBS* is as standard as standard can be, with the same few models strewn through the generically plotted towns, with the entire mise en scène lacking any kind of charm whatsoever.

This is the Venus flytrap of games – one that will pull so many towards its sweet-smelling nectar, only to swallow them, and slowly digest them inside its cold, hollow insides. *Pirates of the Burning Sea* is a lazy game that makes no effort to be atmospheric or fun, leaving only a husk of ideas that could have, potentially, been fun.

If it had been a shamefaced copy of other MMOs with a Guybrush Threepwood sheen I'd be dancing on the rooftops. As it is I'm depressed. And it's not that seafaring wanderlust kind of depression that kick-starts a wild adventure. No, I feel more like a tramp outside Londis, sipping on special brew, my pirate hat crooked and my life destroyed. PCZ


...10 minutes later, and you're halfway done.

PCZONE

Graphics	Stilted animation
Sound	MIDI soundtrack, sloshy sea sounds
Multiplayer	Nothing else to it

- ✓ Quirky economy
- ✗ The melee combat
- ✗ The ship combat
- ✗ The graphics
- ✗ The missions

40

Daylight Piracy

Behold! The green fields of mediocrity!

FANTASY WARS

The strategy genre takes a nasty turn

DEVELOPER Ino-Co
PUBLISHER Ascaron/Nobilis
WEBSITE www.fantasywars-thegame.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

Minimum system requirements:
1.5GHz processor, 512MB RAM, and a 128MB video card.

WHEN YOU SEE ***Fantasy Wars*** **on the shelf, you would be forgiven for thinking that it was a generic and equally terrible fantasy RTS in which goblins have made war with humankind. So imagine our shock when we loaded up** ***Fantasy Wars*** **to find out that it was exactly that – and yes, it is terrible.**

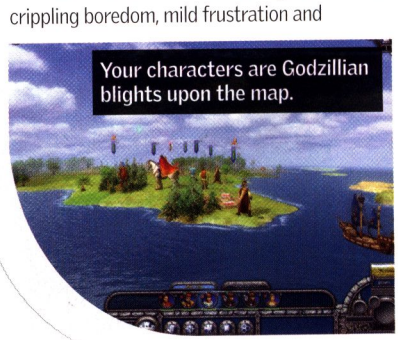
I would tell you the whole story, but there's no point – it's exactly the plot you'd imagine from a game called *Fantasy Wars*: some man wants to save the kingdom, there's a council that thinks he's reckless, and somewhere in the middle he has to kill a load of orcs or goblins. Mix in some magical weaponry and whoop-dee-doo, it's *Fantasy Wars*.

The turn-based action is a mixture of crippling boredom, mild frustration and a mild sensation of imminent doom – based on a huge, hexagonal board-game style map with gigantic pawns that you control scattered across it. You move a person near another person and they attack, or you move an archer within range and attack, taking off HP and hopefully killing them.

Every so often you even get a half-heartedly animated fight, and you can sit back and watch in awe as the badly animated soldiers waddle about while poking each other – if you really want to, that is.

There is a chance, no matter how slim, that you may have seen this game and imagined a world where you owned it. Now, right now, you must unimagine this world, and create a new one in which *Fantasy Wars* does not exist.

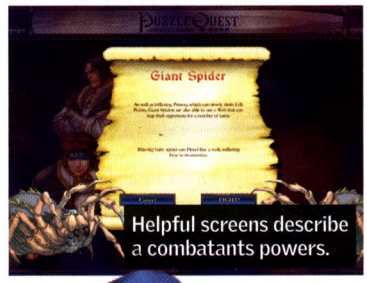
Ed Zitron


Your characters are Godzillian blights upon the map.

PCZONE

35

Farcical



PUZZLE QUEST: CHALLENGE OF THE WARLORDS

Sudoku Master and Wordsearch King *Jon Blyth* enjoys a completely contradictory DS port

DEVELOPER Infinite
PUBLISHER D3Publisher/Steam
WEBSITE www.infinite-interactive.com/puzzlequest
ETA Out now on Steam
PRICE £19.99

RECOMMENDED PCZONE RECOMMENDED

AT A GLANCE...

The much-mocked genre of Match 3 casual gaming suddenly seems less casual – and strangely unmockable.

Minimum system requirements: You'll be alright with a Pentium III and a GeForce 2 series, or above.

HOW IT STACKS

PUZZLE QUEST: CHALLENGE OF THE WARLORDS	86%
BOOKWORM ADVENTURES	85%
PEGGLE	80%

FIRST OFF, A bejewelled 'Match 3' role-playing game shouldn't work. The most casual and the least casual ends of the gaming spectrum shouldn't be brought together and tied in a strange knot like this.

However, anyone who played the Nintendo DS version of *Puzzle Quest* will know that, against reason, it does work – and that this is a finely-balanced and incredibly compulsive re-invention of the basic *Bejewelled* recipe that should rightfully have slipped into derided cliché.

Basically, you and an opponent take turns on a board populated by four colours of mana, skulls, coins and stars. Swap two adjacent squares to match colours, and you'll charge your mana reserves. Skulls directly damage your opponent. Coins add to your wealth, and stars give you an XP boost. Spells can be cast at different costs to each of your four elemental mana banks, and the huge range of spells can all be deployed to beneficial effect (and sometimes backfire) depending on the state of the board.

On top of competitive play, you can capture enemies, learn their spells, train mounts and forge items from runes – each of which takes you on a variation on the main game's theme.

MANA MIA

Playing against another human is obviously more rewarding (internet and LAN play are both supported), mainly because there's nothing more annoying than watching a computer perform a set of faultless, lightning-fast moves before making a patronising random "mistake". Having said that, the fortunes of battle rest in more areas than spotting possible rows of four – you have to prevent your enemy from building the mana he requires, gamble with the randomness of what's dropping in next, and tactically deploy your ever-growing arsenal of special attacks. If you lose – and it'll take an hour or two before that becomes really likely, thanks to a gentle learning curve – then it generally feels like your own fault. And that's a genuine achievement for a game of this kind.

With so many diverse distractions it'd be easy to forget to mention that the fundamental gameplay is so repetitive. So, if you're completely averse to the simplicity of the Match 3 format, then chances are you won't like *Puzzle Quest*. But it's not that straightforward – because of the deep sense of planning, strategy, story and general slickness, it'll probably suck you in, anyway. PCZ

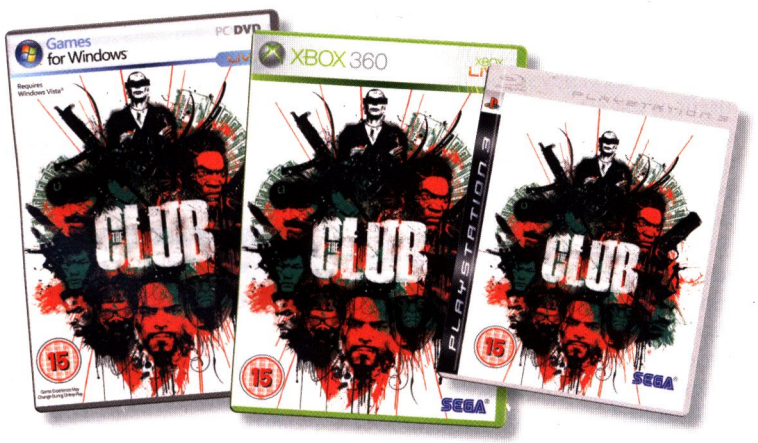
PCZONE

Graphics	Bigger than the DS screen
Sound	You might end up turning it off
Multiplayer	LAN and internet

- ✓ Derived yet original
- ✓ Simple yet complicated
- ✓ Classes change play styles
- ✗ Repetitive gameplay can become boring

86
Puzzlingly good

YOU CAN'T RUN FROM DEATH...
...BUT YOU CAN DIE TRYING



Welcome to The Club. Out Now

www.theclubgame.com

15 ask about games .com

XBOX 360 LIVE

PLAYSTATION 3

Games for Windows LIVE

BIZARRE CREATIONS

SEGA®

www.sega.co.uk

© SEGA. SEGA, the SEGA logo and The Club are either registered trade marks or trade marks of SEGA Corporation. Developed by Bizarre Creations Limited. All rights reserved. "PS", "PlayStation", "PLAYSTATION" and "PS3" are trademarks or registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox Live, and the Xbox, Xbox 360, and Xbox Live logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries. Windows and the Windows Vista Start button are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies, and 'Games for Windows' and the Windows Vista Start button logo are used under license from Microsoft. All rights reserved.

KWARI

An online FPS goldmine or a sitting target? *Martin Korda* logs on...

DEVELOPER Micro Forté
PUBLISHER Kwari Holdings Ltd
WEBSITE www.kwari.com
ETA Out Now
PRICE Free. But bullets cost $5 (£2.50) per 5,000

TRUST ME, I'M not trying to be negative but after playing *Kwari* – an online FPS that allows you to compete for financial stakes – it's hard to be anything but.

Billed as a 'Superior rapid-action first-person shooter', *Kwari* is in fact an inferior, dated FPS mess, a poor man's *Quake III* that borrows heavily from the illustrious classic and copies it with shocking ineptitude. Signing up for the game is free and your only outlay is approximately £2.50 per 5,000 rounds of ammunition. You then earn and lose money depending on how much damage you inflict or suffer in one of the four unimaginatively designed levels.

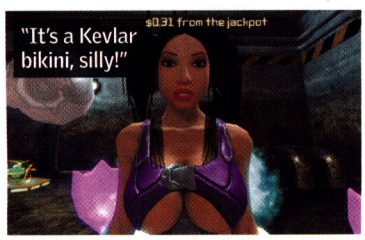
Cash prizes can also be earned by holding an object called the Pill for the longest period of time (which leads to everyone turning on you) and collecting certain colour keys scattered throughout each level. Strangely, at the time of going to press, the Silver key jackpot was considerably lower than the Bronze one, despite being harder to attain. Go figure.

CRAPPED OUT

One of the most prominent problems with *Kwari* is its lack of servers and players. There's no way of knowing how many combatants are active within a server unless you join it, meaning you're usually left staring at a loading screen while you vainly wait for another player to join.

Things only get worse. The multiplayer action is lamer than a three-legged arthritic dog, with hideous lag resulting in you regularly peppering thin air with your precious ammo. On occasions when the lag lessens, you can find a few adrenaline-filled minutes fuelled by the thrill of playing for cash stakes, but the gameplay is so mediocre compared to *UT3* or *Quake III* that you soon tire of it, especially when you realise just how hard it is to make even a modest profit. The single-player game AKA Crate Smasher, meanwhile, proves is as gripping as watching fingernails grow, as you run around shooting crates in search of keys.

Novelty value aside, there's little here to recommend. I've little doubt there's a future for the fledgling play-for-cash market, but in its current format, *Kwari* isn't it. PCZ



AT A GLANCE...

Online play-for-cash action FPS catering for single and multiplayer gaming.

Minimum system requirements:
2GHz processor, 1GB RAM (1.5GB for Vista), 128MB graphics card, and broadband

HOW IT STACKS

UNREAL TOURNAMENT III	90%
KWARI	37%
SOLDIER OF FORTUNE: PAYBACK	31%

PCZONE

Graphics	Dated
Sound	Passable
Multiplayer	Better than the crap single-player

- ✓ Fairly novel idea
- ✗ Laggy
- ✗ Lack of servers
- ✗ Lack of players
- ✗ Single-player is absurd
- ✗ Hard to win cash

37
All bets are off

GASP! At the jerky, half-arsed graphics!

STRANGER

Just say 'no' to stranger danger

DEVELOPER Fireglow Games
PUBLISHER Empire Interactive
WEBSITE www.stranger-game.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

Minimum system requirements:
2.8GHz processor, 512MB RAM, 128MB graphics card.

LET'S GET ONE thing straight here, people. Making a fantasy RTS or a *Diablo*-rip-off that doesn't run like a pile of rotten shit is not the most challenging thing in the world. *Stranger* proves that it's still possible though, as it proves to be the jerkiest, sorriest car crash of a game since *Rise of the Robots*.

Usually one can ignore how ugly a game is if it plays well, but *Stranger* looks remarkably terrible and plays worse. The game is just hideously optimised. Units move with all the polish of the first season of *South Park*, while the graphics barely even compare to an early *Warcraft*.

And don't expect a good game, either. The RPG parts are sparse, "oh you can level up and use items" affairs, and the RTS elements range from basic to out-and-out broken – for instance, you can order your creatures to go in a straight line and watch in awe as only one out of seven moves.

This game is an unbelievable mess, crowned with the kind of hammy, RPG hogwash that can only spew from a game this poorly conceived and executed. While it should have been easy to plonk this standard fantasy garbage into a serviceable 3D engine and make it purr enough to be at least playable, this game struggles to even look bad.

Stranger takes the fantasy RTS genre backwards before breaking it. With so many other games to ape, it's unbelievable that any developer could deliver something this diabolical.

Ed Zitron

PCZONE 12
Enough of this

GREAT TITLES OUT NOW!

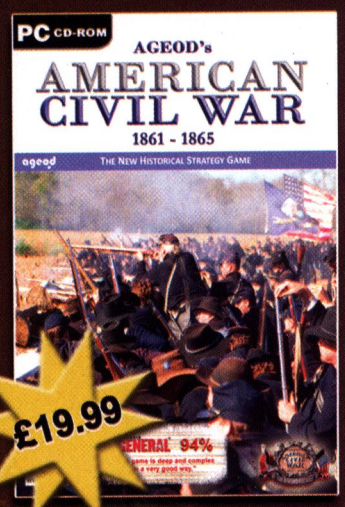
STRATEGY

- April 12th, 1861 -
Fort Sumter, off Charleston, is captured by Confederate forces. The Civil War has begun...

Replay one of the bloodiest conflicts ever fought on the American continent... The American Civil War of 1861-1865.

Scenarios and full Grand Campaign
Over 300 historical characters
Highly responsive AI & combat system

"Historical turn based strategy at its best!"
83% PCGAMER



£19.99

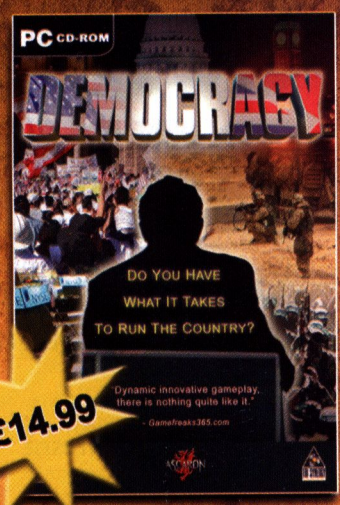
SIMULATION

Become the Prime Minister or President of the world's most powerful countries!

Secure over 50% of the vote in each election to stay in power, influencing the voters and the country by putting the right policies in place at the right time.

We all think we can do better... and here's your chance to prove it with!

"Easy to pick up and strangely compelling."
PCZONE



£14.99

SIMULATION

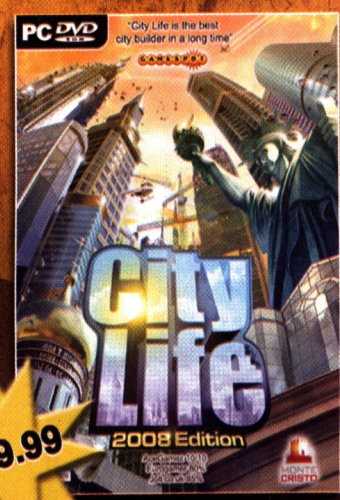
City Life 2008 takes the city building genre into the 21st Century.

Create a thriving 3D metropolitan paradise from a huge collection of beautifully designed structures.

Walk the streets of your cities, or zoom out to multiple levels for a better view of the overall action.

City Life 2008 provides the full city building experience!!

"City Life is the best city builder in a long time."
GAMESPOT



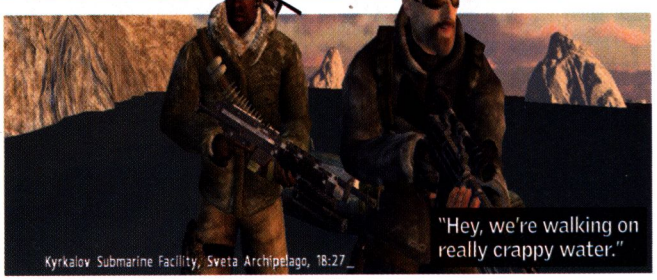
£19.99

12+ www.pegi.info

ASCARON
www.ascaron.com

PC DVD ROM

CONFLICT: DENIED OPS



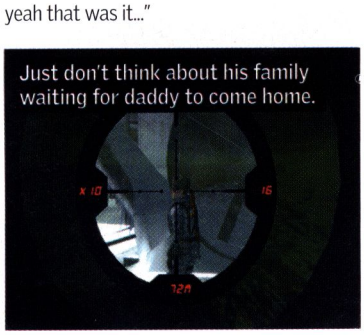
A grizzled veteran of decades of conflicts, bemoaning the impetuousness of youthful colleagues and looking forward to retirement? That's *Paul Presley*

DEVELOPER Pivotal Games
PUBLISHER Eidos
WEBSITE www.conflictdeniedops.com/uk
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

I FEEL KIND of bad for Pivotal Games. There's nothing intrinsically wrong with their *Conflict* series, and the latest – *Denied Ops* – certainly ticks all the standard boxes for your average tactical shooter and does so with above-average degrees of professionalism and technical competence.

But while it merely continues to ape what everyone else is doing, dressing in slightly newer clothes rather than trying to pull off anything ground-breaking itself, it'll always be one of the genre's also-rans.

Conflict will never have the name-branding cachet of your *Splinter Cells*, *Ghost Recons*, or *Half-Lifes*, destined instead to remain the average Joe Gamepad in your local pleasure palace will "sort of, maybe, kind of heard about or actually am I thinking of the new *Call of Duty*? Sorry, yeah that was it..."



The downside to all this is that you end up feeling like you've seen (and played) it all before. Team-based, semi-tactical shooters? Try *Rainbow Six: Vegas*. Covert CIA teams stopping rogue nukes ending up in war-crazy dictators' hands? Try, well try just about every modern-day shooter going. Bitter old man with a penchant for creeping around in the dark and long-distance night-vision scopes? Try my creepy uncle Frank... I mean Sam Fisher's photophobia simulations.

BRING ON THE OLD MEN

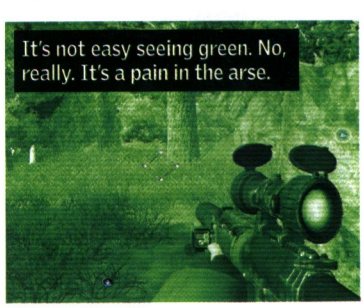
Where *C:DO* falls over the most is in the actual storyline and scripting. Every time gaming seems to turn a corner and says "Right, let's actually try and be interesting with our plots" along come half a dozen games with sub-sub-sub standard, lazy Hollywood action shoot-a-thon plots and 'grizzled' lead characters.

For instance, this game's so-called plot involves Russian gangsters selling nukes to unstable warlords – yawn. A grizzled, grumpy and overly bearded war 'vet', seen action in every major conflict – yadda yadda yadda. A jive-talking, younger partner, funky-ass 'black dude' who swears like a trooper and plays the angry race card at the drop of a hat – sigh. (How about a *Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney*-style minigame taking place at a court martial for racial abuse amongst the ranks? Sheesh, do I have to think of everything?)

You could tell me this game was penned by a hyper 12-year-old and I'd believe you, so lazy are the stereotypes, the settings, the objectives and the whole package. Even the people behind Bond have realised you have to try something new to survive and if that old cliché-loving warhorse can still pull out surprises, there's no excuse for everyone else not to try.

SMALL MERCIES

Anyway, the story is just an exercise to provide meaning to the hi-tech explosions (barrels of explosion juice flying up in the air a bit before going bang seems to be the 'hook' here), which unfortunately happen so frequently they actually lose their sense of awe and just become the default way of progressing through a level. Enter room,



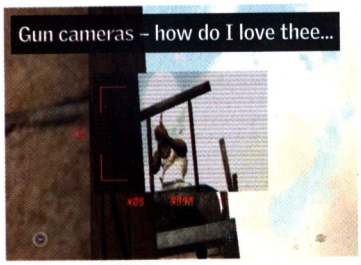
AT A GLANCE...

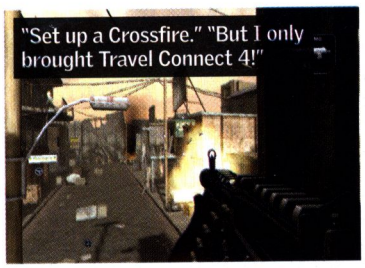
The 'multi-operative' military shooter series trudges on for its fifth outing, still failing to achieve anything other than mild interest. But hey, beards!

Minimum system requirements:
2GHz processor, 1GB RAM, and a 128MB graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS

COD4: MODERN CONFLICT	89%
RAINBOW SIX: VEGAS	82%
CONFLICT: DENIED OPS	62%


Gun cameras – how do I love thee...


"Set up a Crossfire." "But I only brought Travel Connect 4!"

All the nice little things can't mask the gaping void at the game's centre

Tanks: for when you have to blow everything up.

Disembark Battle Tank

come under heavy fire, look for the handily-placed red barrels to quickly clear things out before eventually ending up in the final area arena while waiting for a chopper pickup. Time and time and bloody time again.

What variety there is mainly comes from the occasional use of a vehicle section – either tank, APC or hovercraft – which provides momentary respite from the ongoing bipedal slaughter to administer it at higher speeds.

C:DO does score points in terms of map design with lots of varying routes that feel like real locations rather than artificially hemmed in linear 'rides'. The weapons feel meaty enough too, and gadgets such as the gun camera are fun to use and make a certain tactical sense.

The multiplayer co-op mode is always fun for casual get-togethers (even though I still maintain that's more to do with the social aspect of playing rather than anything intrinsic to *Conflict*'s actual design – you could make *Space Invaders* co-op and it would be a fun experience).

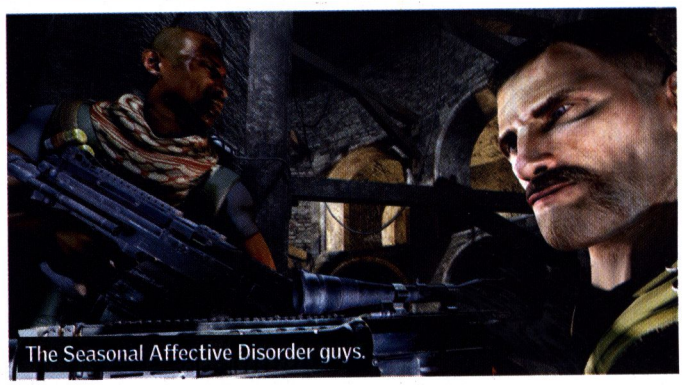
But all the nice little things in the world can't mask the gaping void at the game's centre. There's just no real reason for *C:DO* to exist. This game fails to bring anything of any lasting substance to the standing-room only tactical shooter party. PCZ

The recurring theme of the game.

Hovercrafts: 2008's must-have shooter accessory.

Double time

Laurel and Hardy, Morecambe and Wise – double acts are great!


The Seasonal Affective Disorder guys.

Apparently you're part of a SAD squad. Don't look at me, that's the name. The CIA Special Activities Division. Pity it doesn't follow with Tactical Weapons And Terrorist Subduement, but you can't have everything. Anyway, these SAD twats consist of patriot, family man and founder of the Sam Fisher Appreciation Society, Lincoln Graves (he probably has a shrine to Michael Ironside in his house), and ex-high school football player, ex-SWAT trooper and black man (in case the point hadn't been laboured enough by now), Reggie Lang. They start each mission with a new 'toy' to play with, from the extremely well-worked gun-mounted camera that lets you dispense hot, leady love without having to stick your head around corners or over the top of your current hidey-hole, to bigger ammo boxes to reduce reload times and silencers to help you remain ever-more sneaky.

Many parts of the game play themselves, which is some sort of blessing really.

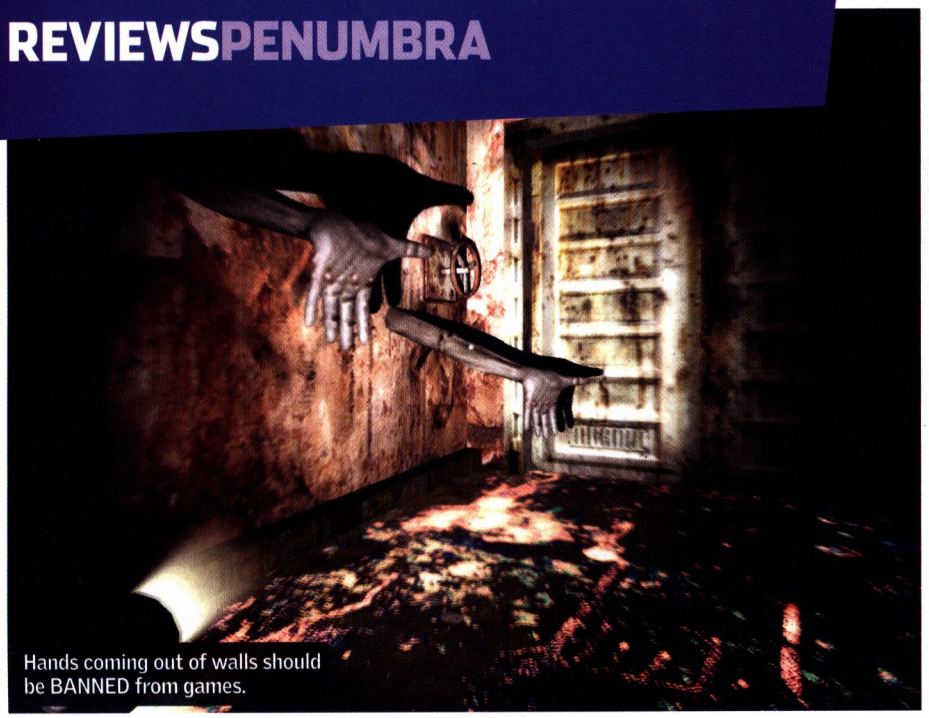
PCZONE

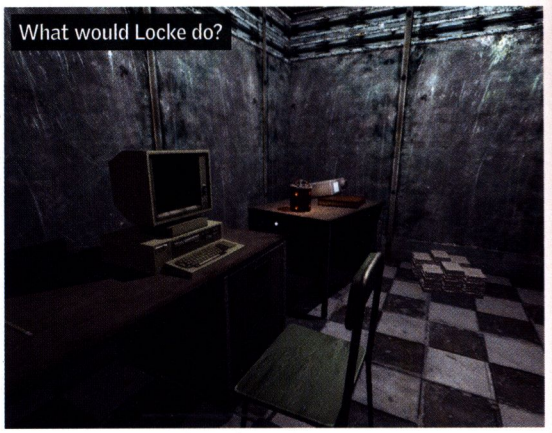
Graphics	Nice detailing, but processor hungry
Sound	Standard Hollywood action movie loudness
Multiplayer	Redeems it slightly

- ✓ Good location design
- ✓ Co-op has its moments
- ✗ Lazy plotting
- ✗ ...characterisation...
- ✗ ...game content, etc

62

Deny everything


Hands coming out of walls should be BANNED from games.


What would Locke do?

Black Mesa, much?

PENUMBRA: BLACK PLAGUE

Dan Marshall places himself in the most disturbing place since *Garth Marenghi's Darkplace*

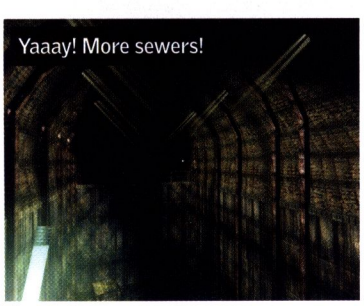
Kitchens: creepy.

DEVELOPER Frictional Games
PUBLISHER Paradox Interactive
WEBSITE www.penumbra blackplague.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £24.99 or $19.99 from www.gamersgate.com

BLACK PLAGUE IS now the second, and final, part of the *Penumbra* trilogy, after part three went and got the chop. (So really the series should be renamed as a *Penumbra* dilogy. Or a *Penumbra* duology. Either way, it just isn't a trilogy any more.)

The sequel picks up where the original left off, leaving you trying to investigate your way around a glum little research facility while various fiends do their best to put the willies up you by making noises and stomping about the place.

All this spookiness manages to come across as some sort of ugly horror hybrid of *Portal* and *Half-Life 2*: you jaunt about a mysterious deserted laboratory trying to piece together the plot, while the puzzles that are stopping you are largely physics-based and mostly pretty inventive.


Yaaay! More sewers!

At first, they're all also bastard-hard compared to *HL2*'s see-saw jollities and you wonder how you'll ever get by with its uncompromising complicatedness, but once you get into the swing of things you'll be quite happily using your surroundings in brilliantly clever ways in order to progress. Click-and-drag planks to make a trendy walkway, use bricks to smack the door off a fuse box, that sort of thing.

BLACK DEATH

Building on almost every aspect that let the original – *Overture* – down, the locations are surprisingly varied, while the atmosphere is gloriously dank and relentlessly oppressive. In a world where even looking at a baddie wigs your character out so much that he reveals himself to his foes (presumably by whimpering loudly while doing a rather smelly soil in his undercrackers), you're instead forced to look at the floor-catching horrifying glimpses of monstrous feet and squeezing your eyes tightly shut like the big silly sissy you are. Remarkably, this makes the game a tad more realistic.

So it's all just a bit of a shame that the game's engine is a little drab and the 'geniuses locking themselves away to make monsters and whoops-a-daisy look something's gone wrong and now they're all running amok' plotline is deader than Chris Langham's career.

Black Plague delivers quality puzzles and shits you up something rotten with equal aplomb. That this is the last game in the *Penumbra* series is a genuine tragedy, because the series has finally found its footing. PCZ

AT A GLANCE...

Horror sequel that delights in real-world approaches to solving puzzles, and also real-world whoopsie trouser botty problems...

Minimum system requirements: 1GHz processor, 256MB RAM, and a 64MB graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS

PENUMBRA: BLACK PLAGUE	74%
CALL OF CTHULHU: DARK CORNERS OF THE EARTH	73%
PENUMBRA: OVERTURE	62%

PCZONE

Graphics	Fairly dowdy, but 'physics' is always a hoot
Sound	Horrible, in a good way
Multiplayer	None whatsoever

- ✓ Tense and scary
- ✓ Perfect price, if you download it
- ✓ Graphics can look tasty
- ✗ Graphics can look iffy
- ✗ Lacks star quality
- ✗ Initially frustrating

74

Not for scaredy-cats...

IMPERIUM ROMANUM

We came! We saw! We liked!

DEVELOPER Haemimont Games
PUBLISHER Kalypso Media
WEBSITE www.imperium-game.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

Minimum system requirements:
1.7GHz processor, 512MB RAM and a 128MB graphics card.

YOU'VE PROBABLY NEVER heard of *Glory of the Roman Empire*, even though it sold a million copies worldwide.

Maybe you've never heard of this sequel either. But that's all about to change, because *Imperium Romanum* is a quality management sim that even Julius Caesar would have given the thumbs up to. If he'd owned a PC. And the game was lying at the feet of a slavering gladiator with the crowd baying, "Kill! Kill! Kill!"

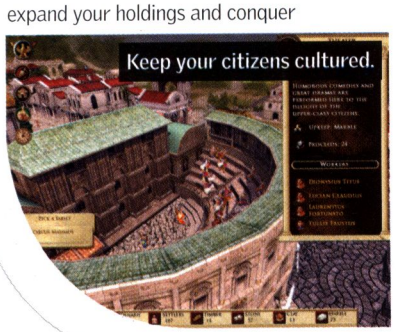
I think you get the point...

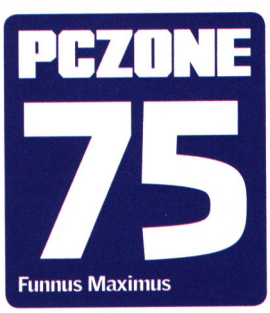
Taking charge of a Roman city – be it the sprawling metropolis of Rome or a sandbox town in need of construction from the ground up – you must cater to the needs of your incessantly mewling citizens as you expand your holdings and conquer nearby barbarian tribes. The number of available buildings and monuments is impressive, while the beautifully streamlined interface makes construction quick and simple.

The game's pace is also impressive, moving at a fair clip but never leaving you feeling overawed, while the visuals are bold and detailed, though sadly citizens do tend to lack charisma as they go about their daily routines. Ultimately, combat is the only major shortfall, feeling rather lacklustre next to the intricacies of city management.

You may not have heard of it, but *Imperium Romanum* deserves your attention. If you can turn a blind eye to the ropey skirmishes, you'll be in for weeks of city building goodness.

Martin Korda





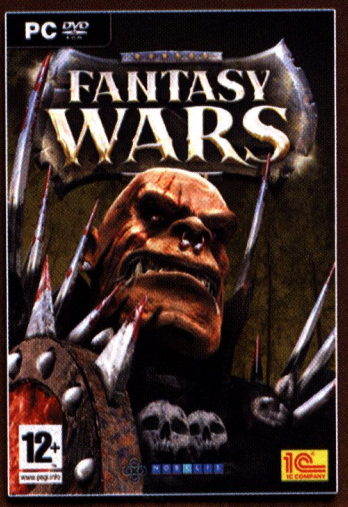
GREAT TITLES COMING SOON!

STRATEGY

Divided and outnumbered humans ally themselves with elves and dwarves to fight the hordes of orcs and goblins.

"Plenty of hours of entertainment"
GAMESPOT

"Fantasy Wars is an example of how games should be made"
ACE GAMES



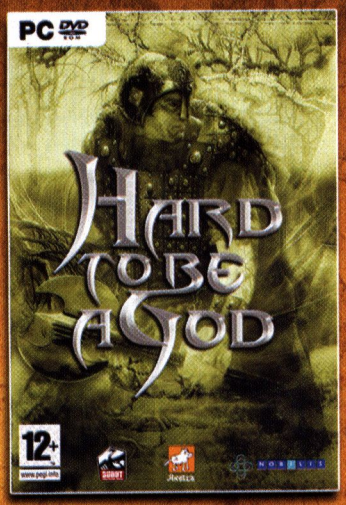
RPG

This medieval age is not the past of our home planet, it is in fact the future, but the future of another world lost in space between billions of stars and hundreds of dimensions.

Choose the best strategy between diplomacy and aggression in your quest for the salvation of Arkanar.

"This could very well be the best RPG of the decade"

"Perhaps the single most fun game I've ever played"
ACE GAMES

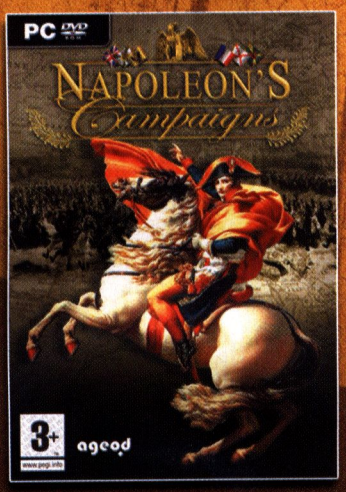


STRATEGY

The latest historical strategy game from AGEOD, the creators of epic titles including Birth of America and American Civil War.

7 playable nations...
Dozens of different troops...
Hundreds of events...
And over one thousand historical leaders with unique abilities!

90%
"A highly playable and highly addictive game"
ARMCHAIR GENERAL



12+ www.pegi.info

ASCARON

PC DVD ROM

www.ascaron.com

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

indiezone

PCZONE ON THE DVD

Martin Korda **checks out the latest offerings from the indie gaming world**

AVEYOND II: EAN'S QUEST

INDIE ZONE GAME OF THE MONTH

DEVELOPER Amaranth Games **WEBSITE** www.amaranthia.com **PRICE** £10.50

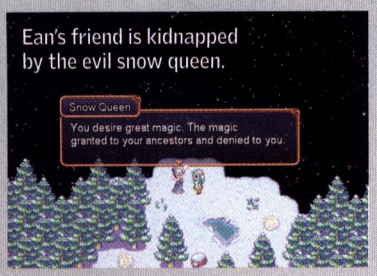
AVEYOND II IS an accomplished RPG full of quality, intrigue and depth that bears more than a passing resemblance to the *Zelda* series.

You play as Ean, a young elf who embarks on a mission to save his friend from an evil snow queen. What follows is a stunning adventure through an impressive variety of lands, each packed with puzzles, colourful characters, combat and side quests. The sheer level of detail that's been lavished on this game is simply breathtaking, trumping its predecessor in every department.

While the plot tilts towards a younger audience, it's heart-warming, well-written and compelling, while the turn-based combat will have Nintendo RPG lovers grinning like they've just had a boomerang rammed in their gob.

The copious amount of player guidance, faultless tutorial, masterful soundtrack and the staggering number of quests suck you into a beautifully realised fantasy world, which puts those in many commercial RPGs to shame.

PCZONE 87



Sure, it all looks peaceful now...

ESCHALON: BOOK I

DEVELOPER Basilisk Games **WEBSITE** basiliskgames.com **PRICE** $27.95 (£14)

IF THE CUTESY, cartoony look of *Aveyond II* isn't for you, then how about this grittier, more traditional RPG, in which you must explore a fantasy, war-ravaged world in order to uncover the truth behind your forgotten past?

Things get off to an excellent start thanks to an exhaustive and impressively detailed character creation screen. Once you're done tweaking your skills and stats, it's time to start exploring, with the game broken down into passages of exploration, click-fest combat and NPC interactions. The quality (and sheer amount) of the text is impressive, with a gripping story slowly unfolding around you.

The large number of areas to explore and creatures to battle ensure that *Eschalon: Book I* has longevity aplenty. You're often handsomely rewarded for heading off the beaten track in search of new adventures, while a superb interface ensures that you're rarely left frustrated. There are also some neat graphical effects, such as lights casting haunting shadows in the night, while the soundtrack is also worthy of praise. The only major shortfall here is a clunky navigation system, but this aside, *Eschalon: Book I* is a very accomplished RPG.

PCZONE 82

Click, click, click, click, click, click, kill!

THE TUTTLES MADCAP MISADVENTURES

DEVELOPER Legacy Interactive **WEBSITE** www.legacygames.com **PRICE** $19.99 (£10)

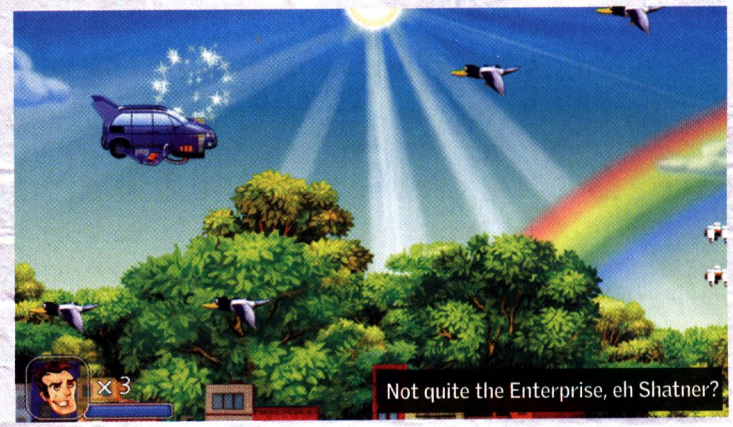
HEARING VOICE TALENT like this in an indie game is a rare thing. Actually, it's not every day you hear voice talent like this in any game. William Shatner, Jamie Lee Curtis and Bob Saget are just three of the Hollywood stars who've contributed their time and voices to this side scrolling action/adventure, made for the Starlight Starbright Children's Foundation. Three-quarters of the proceeds are being given to the charity.

Thankfully, the game has more appeal than just the novelty of hearing celebrity voices. You control four members of a family – mum, dad, son and daughter – intent on taking a holiday together. Each character has their own specific tasks to complete and must navigate a set of increasingly taxing (though somewhat forgiving) levels packed with jumps, special items, pits and enemies.

Yes, it can get repetitive, but no more so than most other games of this ilk. The music is well-composed and visuals bright, but best of all is the humorous script, which is superbly delivered by the actors.

This isn't complex or original, but it has enough to recommend a play.

PCZONE 70



ARCADE RACE: CRASH!

DEVELOPER Arcade Studio **WEBSITE** arcadestudio.com **PRICE** £10.50

ARCADE RACE: CRASH! sits somewhere between '90s favourite *Micro Machines* and Dynamix's highly underrated '80s racer *Deathtrak*. Taking control of a sports car, you must compete against numerous opponents across eight tracks, each of which can also be raced in reverse.

As well as providing a straight up, top-down racing experience, *Arcade Race* also throws destruction into the mix with a collection of excellent weapon upgrades, including heavy machine-guns, mines and a selection of missiles. Alternatively, you can spend your winnings (earned from destroying enemies, picking up bonuses and winning races) on bolstering your car's capabilities with speed, steering and armour upgrades.

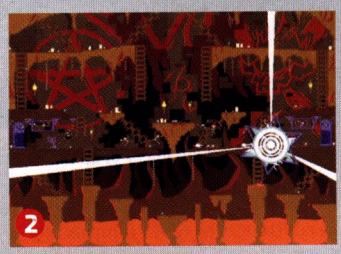
Vehicles degenerate in real time, shedding parts until they explode and the opponent AI feels fairly lifelike, often making as many mistakes as you.

There's plenty here to keep any arcade racing fan happily occupied for a few hours, though slightly suspect collision detection, overly twitchy steering and the odd clumsy piece of text manage to sully what is an addictive experience.

PCZONE 67

TOP 5 ARCADE SHOOTERS

DEVASTATIONZONE TROOPERS
www.cgssoftware.com
Reviewed Issue 174
Big stompy robots and some excellent destructible terrain help make this 3D science-fiction blaster the king of the indie arcade shooters. However, it's the stunning array of upgradeable weapons and the sheer intensity of the action spread over 50 missions that sets this apart from the competition.



GIBBAGE
www.gibbage.co.uk
Reviewed Issue 169
Sitting somewhere between *Rag Doll Kung Fu* and platform adventures of yore, *Gibbage* is a frenetic ride of reaction gaming. Just superb.

MUTANT
www.napoleongames.cz
Reviewed Issue 191
Mutant injects the blaster genre with originality with a hero that brandishes four weapons simultaneously. Intense action.

BARNSTORMING
www.defactogames.com
Reviewed Issue 188
Fly a biplane as you attempt to thwart the dastardly plans of an evil mastermind in this side-scrolling shooter. Frenetic with humour.

SCAVENGER
www.pieyegames.com
Reviewed Issue 184
A top down sci-fi blaster that trumps rivals with the sheer quality of its maniacal, skill-based flying action. Slick, fast and fun.

BUDGET

Ed Zitron **exudes thriftiness like a poisonous yet frugal mushroom**

BUDGET GAME OF THE MONTH

MAX PAYNE BUNDLE

PUBLISHER: Rockstar Games **WEBSITE:** www.steampowered.com **PRICE:** $19.95 (£10)

THE STEAMIFICATION OF Rockstar's PC catalogue means that our favourite gun-toting cop Max Payne has been given another budget rebirth. These classic games are great in terms of play, but where they really stand out is in excellent storytelling.

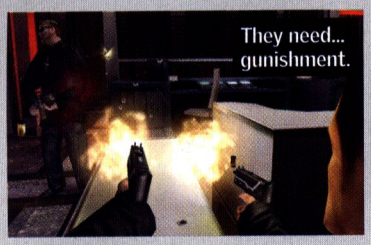
Mixing hard-boiled detective tales and John Woo's bullet-time action in both games, Rockstar blend a cheesy, yet engrossing, story with intuitive, satisfyingly blood-drenched, gunfighting.

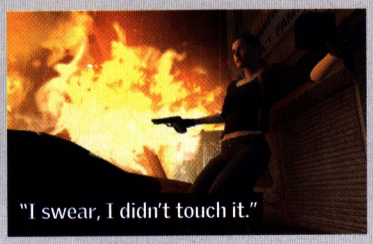
Both games follow the story of harrowed cop Max Payne, who finds his wife and daughter murdered by junkies high on wonder drug Valkyr. This leads him down the rabbit hole of conspiracies, Illuminati types and femme fatales. Yes, it's a world of noir cliché – but it's perfectly executed.

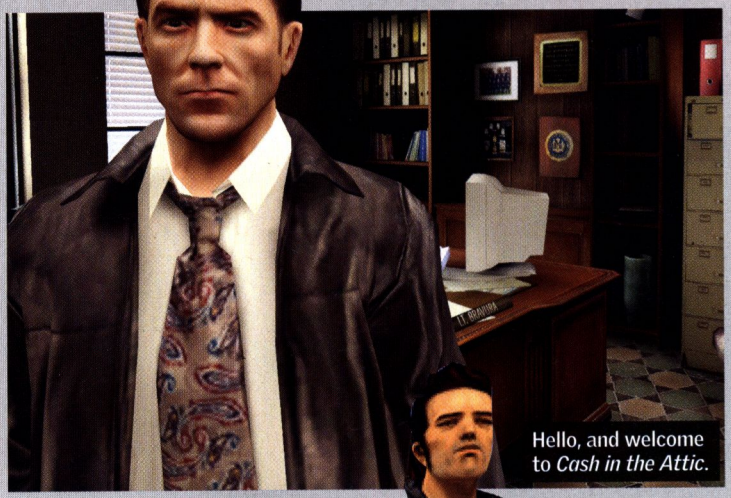
The thrill of the action would be enough to carry at least a tepid budget recommendation, but the fantastic tale that both games tell is nigh-on unrivalled. For the price of 1,000 cola bottles, you get an adrenaline-packed 15 hours of solid third-person shooter action without damaging your teeth, and the only reason you'll feel sick is if you hate the phrase: "It's Payne! Get him!"

PCZONE 90

Not as pretty as it once was. But just as slow-motion.


They need... gunishment.


"I swear, I didn't touch it."


Hello, and welcome to *Cash in the Attic.*

GRAND THEFT AUTO 3

PUBLISHER: Rockstar North **WEBSITE:** www.steampowered.com **PRICE:** $13.95

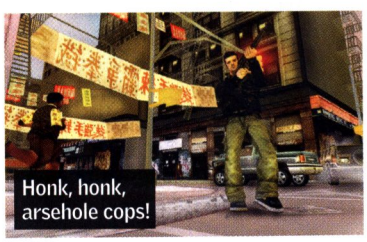
DEEP AS THE ocean blue, and slightly more controversial, *GTA3* remains one of the most celebrated open-ended games, allowing you to drop into a city and be completely unreasonable on the population's asses. Playing as an everyman criminal, you complete missions and rise to power by shooting, tooting and booting your way across the three islands of Liberty City.

For a game that set so many standards for 3D adventuring as a whole, *GTA3* stands the test of time well. While graphically it lacks a lot of the punch it once had, the thrill of open-ended mayhem is still palpable, the side-missions are still engaging, and the city is still rife with things to do and back alleys to explore.

While we're sure you've already played it, there might be some people out there who've never succumbed – so those in search of an even bigger penny-shaving deal, will be happy that Steam is also selling the *Grand Theft Auto* pack for $43.45 (about £22), which includes every *GTA* game to date.

PCZONE 88

A young Morrissey goes shopping.

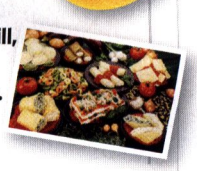

Honk, honk, arsehole cops!

THIS MONTH PCZONE SAVED MONEY BY...

Will got a pay rise, which is sort of like saving money!
Saved: 'Not enough'

Richard spent way too much money gambling on duck races.
Lost: £300

Steve was very ill, so he consumed no food for days.
Saved: £35



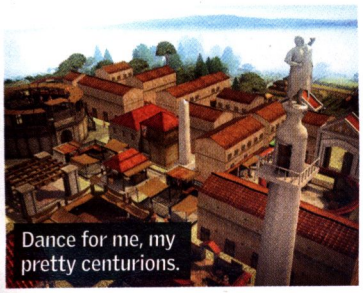
CIVCITY: ROME

PUBLISHER: Mastertronic **WEBSITE:** snipurl.com/civcity **PRICE:** £9.99

SOME OF US, few though may we be, miss resource management in strategy games. Sometimes, you just want to sit back and turtle down, building up a little world that you can play in, and then ruin, at a moment's notice.

CivCity let you play in the Roman Empire, taking care of the general duties of a city, from the creation of housing, entertainment in the form of the (rather sterile) Colosseum, and generally doting on otherwise helpless denizens that would not be able to live without your fair (or unfair) hands controlling their lives. Created using the *Stronghold 2* engine, it bears some similarities, but shies away from combat of any kind, dealing with it in a few clicks and then going back to the placid life of maintenance.

Voyeurism, Roman style.


Dance for me, my pretty centurions.

If you are the type of person who wants to play a game in which you can try running an ancient city council, then *CivCity* is a soothing salve for your otherwise hectic and violent life.

PCZONE 70

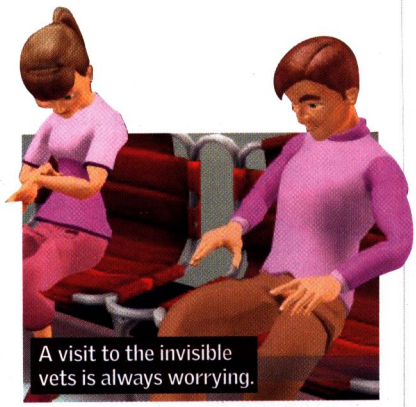
HOSPITAL TYCOON

PUBLISHER Mastertronic **WEBSITE** snipurl.com/hospital **PRICE** £9.99

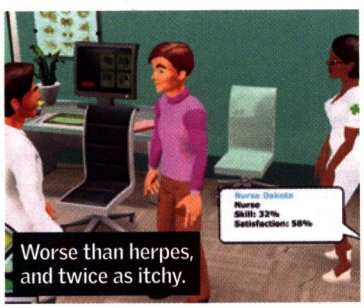
HOW DOES A title released years after the game it desperately wants to copy manage to be a great deal worse?

Like this! *Hospital Tycoon* is a carnival mirror of *Theme Hospital*, layered in ill-thought-out ideas and exactly the kind of weak humour you'd expect from a pants rip-off. If you were hoping you'd be able to pick up something with gameplay akin to Bullfrog's fantastic disease simulator, you're in for a horrible surprise. If *Theme Hospital* was a nicotine patch, *Hospital Tycoon* is an unnecessary injection in the abdomen. Instead of buying this, set fire to a tenner in front of a tramp. The reaction will not only be funnier, but the resulting chase will set your heart racing more than this smouldering pile of pap.

PCZONE 15


A visit to the invisible vets is always worrying.

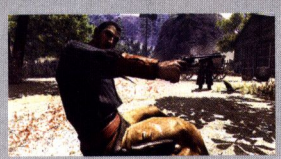
Doctor, doctor, my game is terrible!



Worse than herpes, and twice as itchy.

And the rest...

Ain't no party like a cut-price party



CALL OF JUAREZ
$30 (£15), STEAM
Varied yet rough around the edges, *Call of Juarez* is an interesting enough cowboy romp if you can forgive it its transgressions against good design. If you're disappointed there's no sequel to *Unforgiven*, then buy this. Twice.

PCZONE 75

LOCK ON: AIR COMBAT SIMULATION
£4.99, FOCUS
In *Lock On* you take to the skies in real F-15s, zooming about and keeping the peace by blowing up other people. *Lock On*'s controls are dense, and it definitely needs a joystick and patience, but there's some fun in its gun-metal frame.

PCZONE 65

COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 3
£9.99, MICROSOFT
World War II is rarely as detailed as it gets in *CFS3*. Letting you play as either the Luftwaffe or our boys in the RAF, you can set your various bits and bobs to accommodate plane-nuts or simple newbies who want to blow up the Germans.

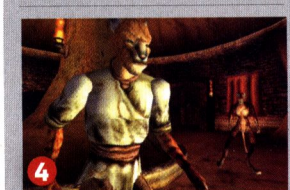
PCZONE 72

PCZONE TOP 5 BUDGET BUYS

HALF-LIFE 2
$19.95 (£10), STEAM
Do we really need to explain why you need Gordon's physics-based outing? For a tenner? OK then, it's PC gaming at its finest. Happy now?

FAR CRY
£4.99, MASTERTRONIC
An island paradise with extra explosions and terrific enemy AI. Formerly the only real rival to the FPS dominance of *Half-Life 2*.

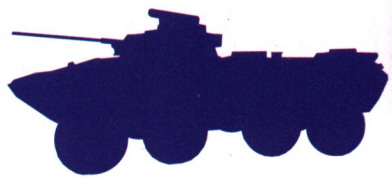
COMPANY OF HEROES
$29.95 (£15), STEAM
Relic's title made the World War II RTS into an enjoyable genre again, with an excellent campaign and taut, tactical gameplay.



THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND
£4.99, MASTERTRONIC
The precursor to *Oblivion*, Bethesda's classic free-roaming RPG offers cheap goblin bashing.

PSYCHONAUTS
$19.95 (£9.99), STEAM
Brilliant humour, creative level design and a range of psychic powers propel this title into the stratosphere of the platforming greats.

BUYER'S GUIDE



The greatest games that money can be frittered away on...

PCZONE TOP 5 MOST OBESE NPCS

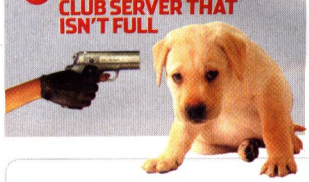
1. NORTON MAPES
   F.E.A.R.
2. THE MANCUBUS
   DOOM 3
3. ABOMINATIONS
   WORLD OF WARCRAFT
4. THE FAT ZOMBIES
   HELLGATE: LONDON
5. MORE FAT ZOMBIES
   DOOM 3

PCZONE TOP 5 GAMING INSECTS

1. ANTLIONS
   HALF-LIFE 2
2. NERUBIANS
   WARCRAFT
3. GIANT ANTS
   RED ALERT
4. GIANT CENTIPEDES
   ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION
5. THE INSECT QUEEN
   DUNGEON SIEGE II

PCZONE TOP 5 WORST PC GAME TASKS

1. KILLING 15 ANIMALS
2. BEING A BODYGUARD TO A USELESS NPC
3. WAITING FOR A GROUP TO FORM
4. MAKING MAGICAL AXES
5. FINDING A PCZ FIGHT CLUB SERVER THAT ISN'T FULL



FPS

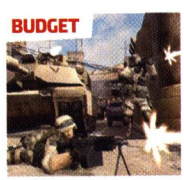
Must buy!

HALF-LIFE 2 + EPISODES
PCZ Issues: 148 (97%), 170 (91%), 187 (82%)
Excelling in terms of action, storyline, emotion and ingenious set pieces, the continuing adventures of Gordon Freeman have yet to be equalled. Yes, a moderate amount of the action has faded through repetition by the time the episodes kick in – but with its Combine-defying freedom fighting, this is still the most finely crafted shooter experience ever released on PC. Gordon's alive, and long may he remain so.

BIOSHOCK
PCZ Issue: 185 – 96%
The spiritual sequel to *System Shock 2*, *BioShock* will suck you right into its intricate, art deco world. A destroyed Utopia under the sea, terrifying characters and emergent combat make this an unmissable experience.

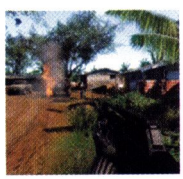
TEAM FORTRESS 2
PCZ Issue: 187 – 93%
Beautifully balanced and engaging, Valve's update of the classic mod is a triumph, bringing together everything that's good about online shooters and topping it all off with some superb animation to rival Pixar's films.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT III
PCZ Issue: 189 – 90%
The daddy of online shooters returns with a mule-kick of intense deathmatch, epic vehicles, high-speed combat, Warfare mode, and a graphical sheen that outdoes its ageing insta-gib rivals.

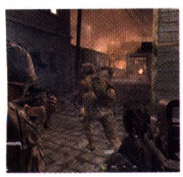


BUDGET

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 ability to zap people with medic shock pads.



CRYSIS
PCZ Issue: 188 – 92%
A retooled, condensed *Far Cry* for newer hardware, with *Crysis*'s neat nanosuit and 'anything can happen' action-bubble mentality making it a winner. The last act falters, but the Korean-bullying is endlessly replayable.



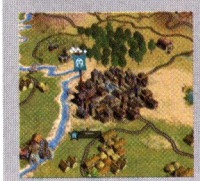
CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE
PCZ Issue: 188 – 89%
Big, brash and extremely loud, Infinity Ward's latest ultra-intense shooter offers some strikingly original military action. With superb multiplayer in tow, it's often an utter delight to play.

Strategy

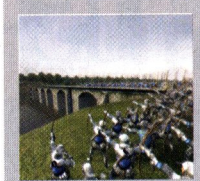
Must buy!

COMPANY OF HEROES
PCZ Issue: 173 – 93%
The fact that despite hailing from that most overpopulated of genres, the WWII RTS, *Company of Heroes* is still number one is a testament 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.

WORLD IN CONFLICT
PCZ Issue: 186 – 92%
A stunning RTS set at the height of the cold war, *World in Conflict* offers genuinely innovative online play, a solid single-player campaign, jaw-dropping graphics and the best nuclear blast you're ever likely to see.



CIVILIZATION IV
PCZ Issue: 162 – 92%
A Buyer's Guide without a *Civ* game would be a sorry place indeed, and the latest version is the greatest yet. It's now available with added warmongering and diplomacy thanks to the expansion packs.



MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR
PCZ Issue: 175 – 91%
A blend of maniacal plotting on the strategic map and cheering with delight as your warriors collide spectacularly with your opponents' armies. Now complemented by the excellent *Kingdoms* expansion.

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.

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

LOTR: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH
PCZ Issue: 149 – 91%
Although the *LOTR* RTS doesn't hold a candle to the genre-dominating *Total War* franchise, there's nothing quite like ordering a Balrog around for guaranteed strategy fun.

Action/Adventure

Must buy!

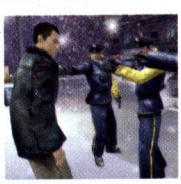
GEARS OF WAR
PCZ Issue: 188 – 90%
Who knew the all-conquering console title would work so well with a mouse and keyboard? *GOW*'s skirmishes against the aggressive Locust Horde are enjoyably tactical, while its cover system and difficulty level combine to make you genuinely fear the bullets flying around you. With the battle against the almighty Brumak near the game's close, the PC has the best version of an already excellent shooter. So hooray for us.

MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE
PCZ Issue: 136 - 93%
A bit frayed around the edges now, but it still shows how to do bullet-time right. A noirish tone, a glowering voice-over and remarkably evergreen gun action mean that Payne is still a force to contend with.

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 pinnacle of gaming achievement.

BUDGET

SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY
PCZ Issue: 154 – 91%
A tour de force from Ubisoft, *Chaos Theory* takes the *Splinter Cell* format and runs with it in solo, co-op and the now well-established spies vs mercs multiplayer. Smooth, lithe and good with a knife.



FAHRENHEIT
PCZ Issue: 159 – 90%
Murder most foul, with you as the killer. Boasts a twisting, turning, brilliantly told story, featuring multiple character control, split-screen tension, branching scenes and several endings. From the brains behind *The Nomad Soul*.

BUDGET

PSYCHONAUTS
PCZ Issue: 156 – 90%
Clever, witty, impeccably detailed and absolutely off its rocker – *Psychonauts* is proof that the anarchic edge of LucasArts hasn't completely left us. A slightly flawed game in some respects, but still a dazzling feat.

BUDGET

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
PCZ Issue: 138 – 89%
We heap praise on this game on a monthly basis, but it's for a reason. Michel Ancel's superb journey through the strange land of Hillys is nothing short of storytelling magic. It's cheap now, so go out and buy it.

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.

LOTR ONLINE
PCZ Issue: 182 – 87%

A near-perfect representation of Tolkien's stories, with solid combat and engaging plots, all bound up in a tasty MMO bundle. Meet Gandalf! Play as a hobbit or a spider! The whole of Middle-earth awaits...

EVERQUEST II
PCZ Issue: 150 – 95%

A *Star Trek* to *WOW*'s *Star Wars*, *EQII* gives the original game a much-needed lick of paint, and adds a whole new world to play in and a greater sense of depth and immersion. A timesink in a good way.

GUILD WARS
PCZ Issue: 156 – 94%

How to make a gaming genre accessible to the masses. A lot of polish and thought have been applied, and there are no 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 has come the closest yet to making it a reality. Its slow pace belies the options on offer, from mining to trading to piracy – it's up to you.

Simulation

BUDGET

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. Oh, and it plays pretty well to boot.

IL-2 STURMOVIK: FORGOTTEN BATTLES
PCZ Issue: 128 – 92%

While flight sims are getting rarer and rarer, at least the quality remains high. None are more impressive than this ultra-classy WWII combat sim. Chocks away, comrade!

MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR X
PCZ Issue: 175 – 89%

This latest iteration in the *Microsoft 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 *X³* 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.

SILENT HUNTER 4: WOLVES OF THE PACIFIC
PCZ Issue: 181 – 82%

If a life beneath the waves tickles your fancy, then this submarine simulator fits the bill. Tactics, torpedoes, sonar and sailors combine to make the ultimate ship-sinker.

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. It comes with an improved driving model, new modes and many other improvements.

GT LEGENDS
PCZ Issue: 161 – 92%

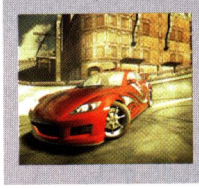
While *GTR* takes care of modern-day racing, *GT Legends*, a natural successor to *Grand Prix Legends*, does the business for historical driving. It's like the swinging '60s never ended.

LIVE FOR SPEED
PCZ Issue: 158 – 90%

Online racing at its best. *LFS* offers 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.

COLIN MCRAE: DIRT
PCZ Issue: 183 – 88%

The rallying legend returns, and this time he treats us to a host of other off-road events, an excitable Travis Pastrana and some of the best-looking graphics to grace any driving game on PC so far.



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.

Oddball

PORTAL
PCZ Issue: 187 – 89%

Ingenious and absurdly funny, *Portal* is a four-hour slice of perfect puzzles and discovery. Hurling yourself through floors and walls sounds odd, but games are rarely more delightful.

GARRY'S MOD
PCZ Issue: 179 – 88%

The god game-like *Garry's Mod* gives you the tools to create almost anything you can think of in the Source engine, from working robots to saucy ragdoll JPEGs. Try it out and see for yourself.

VIVA PIÑATA
PCZ Issue: 190 – 85%

Madder than a mercury-blooded clown, *Viva Piñata* looks simple but is a ridiculously addictive animal-raising game. Don't be put off by the kiddy graphics – it's a keeper.

PEGGLE DELUXE
PCZ Issue: 183 - 83%

A weeping unicorn and a sequence of bagatelle-inspired peg-bouncing puzzles combine to make a casual game of unparalleled addictiveness. If you doubt us, you haven't played it.

BUDGET

THE MOVIES
PCZ Issue: 162 – 95%

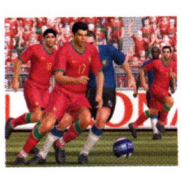
Life as a movie mogul – games don't get better than this. Not only a god/management game par excellence, but also a complete home movie-making kit. Brilliant.

Sport

Must buy!

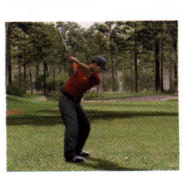
FOOTBALL MANAGER 2008
PCZ Issue: 188 – 90%

The latest version of the 'still playing at 3am' title is all about noob-attraction and an improved interface. As usual, *FM* succeeds, and is the best management sim on earth.



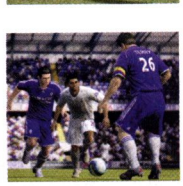
PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2008
PCZ Issue: 188 – 87%

Still in a different league to *FIFA*, *PES* lacks the official stamp but offers amazingly lifelike football. Whether it's end-to-end stuff or a nil-nil slog, it's always compelling.



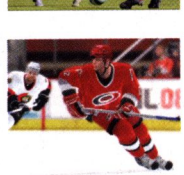
TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 06
PCZ Issue: 161 – 85%

Not the most recent version, but still our favourite, *Tiger 06* has you time-travelling as Mr Woods. The best PC golf game yet, mainly thanks to the two career modes.



FIFA 08
PCZ Issue: 188 – 80%

A veritable compendium of all that is football, and a good sports game too, the recent *FIFA* still lags behind *PES*, but benefits from layers of EA spit and polish. A decent variant of the beautiful game.



NHL 08
PCZ Issue: 187 – 80%

Bringing the American sport we 'get' (it's like *Speedball*) to our PCs, the latest *NHL* is chock-full of large Canadians knocking seven bells out of each other. Exciting, fast, smooth and exhilarating.

Role-playing games

Must buy!

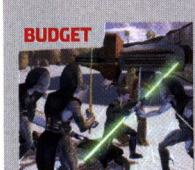
THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION
PCZ Issue: 167 – 95%

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.

THE WITCHER
PCZ Issue: 188 – 88%

Adult and intelligent (if a mite sexist), the world of *The Witcher* is as fascinating as it is violent and corrupt. With moral bite and an epic story, this has come out of nowhere to revive an ailing genre.

BUDGET



KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC
PCZ Issue: 137 – 94%

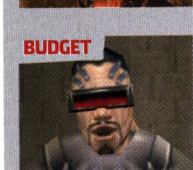
KOTOR is the best *Star Wars* game of recent years. Moving, dramatic and fairly adult in tone, it also has a hefty dose of lightsabers to keep you happy.

BUDGET

THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND
PCZ Issue: 116 – 94%

Quite possibly the most intimidating yet wonderful game we've ever 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 ensure *Deus Ex* remains the alpha male of the gaming world.

INCOMING!

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

March

ASSASSIN'S CREED	UBISOFT
COMMAND & CONQUER 3: KANE'S WRATH	EA
RAINBOW SIX: VEGAS 2	UBISOFT
TURNING POINT: FALL OF LIBERTY	CODEMASTERS

Spring/summer

LEGO INDIANA JONES	ACTIVISION
MERCENARIES 2: WORLD IN FLAMES	EA
RACE DRIVER: GRID	CODEMASTERS
SPACE SIEGE	SEGA
STALKER: CLEAR SKY	DEEP SILVER
TUROK	DISNEY/TOUCHSTONE

Autumn/winter

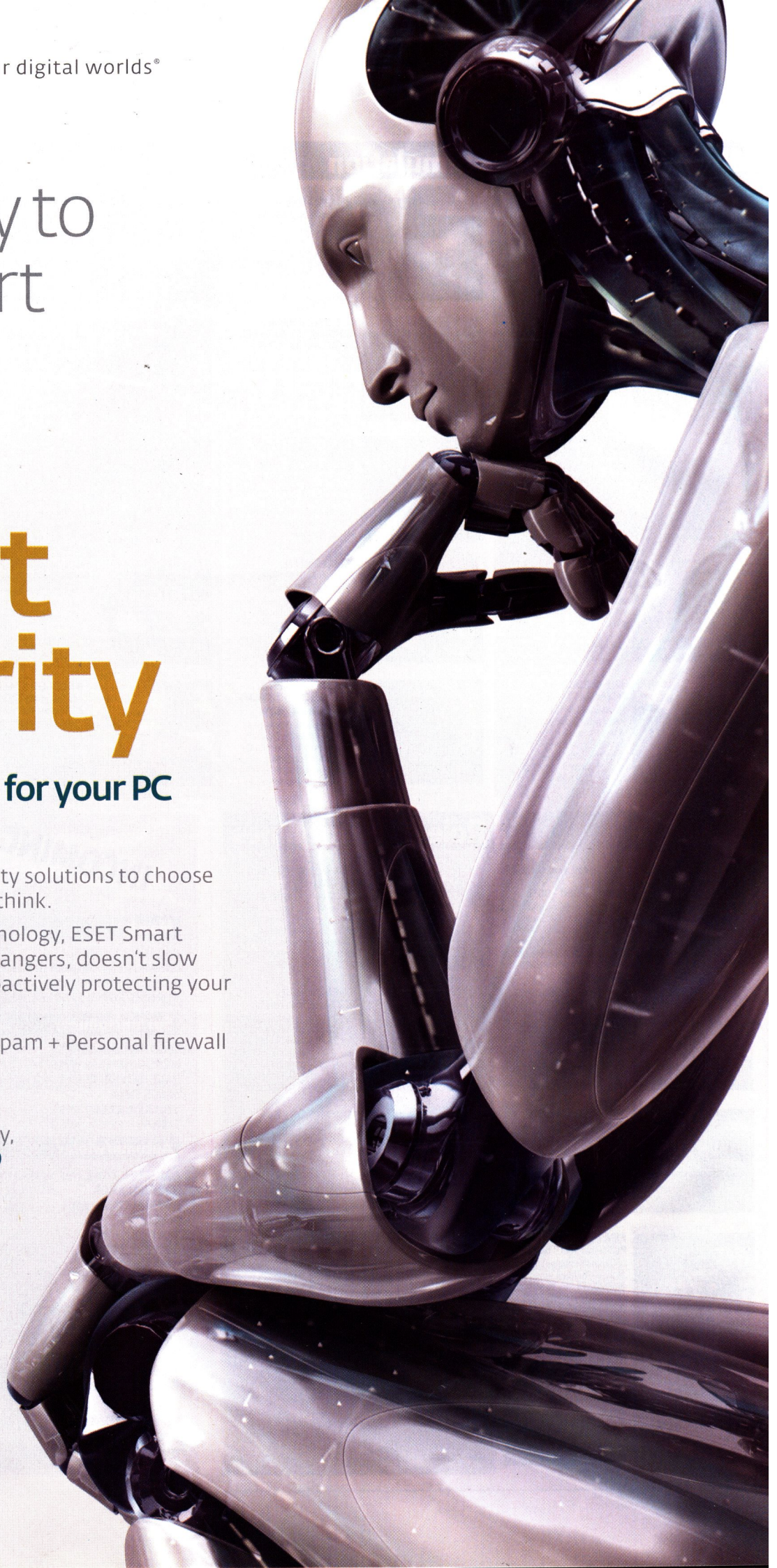
AION: THE TOWER OF ETERNITY	NCSOFT
BORDERLANDS	2K
EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR	SEGA
FALLOUT 3	BETHESDA
FAR CRY 2	UBISOFT
GHOSTBUSTERS	VIVENDI
LEFT 4 DEAD	VALVE
PROJECT ORIGIN	WARNER BROTHERS
RED ALERT 3	EA
SPLINTER CELL: CONVICTION	UBISOFT
SPORE	EA
TIBERIUM	EA
TOMB RAIDER: UNDERWORLD	EIDOS

TBC

MAFIA 2	2K
MIRROR'S EDGE	EA
STARCRAFT II	VIVENDI
WORLD OF WARCRAFT: WRATH OF THE LICH KING	VIVENDI

eset we protect your digital worlds®

A new way to think smart



ESET®
Smart Security

Intelligent protection **for your PC**

There are many software security solutions to choose from but only one can actually think.

Powered by ThreatSense® technology, ESET Smart Security anticipates potential dangers, doesn't slow systems down and excels in proactively protecting your computer. It's smart.

Antivirus + Antispyware + Antispam + Personal firewall

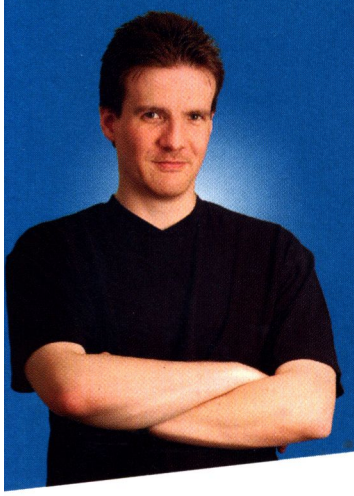
For Antivirus + Antispyware only, try **ESET NOD32 Antivirus v3.0**

Call 0845 838 0832
or download at ESET.co.uk.

ThreatSense technology

NOD32 technology

©2007ESET. All rights reserved.
Trademarks used herein are trademarks or registered trademarks of ESET.



PCZONE

HARDWARE

Better gaming through technology

Simply hard

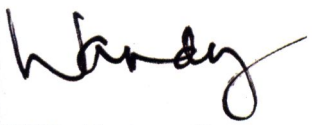
I'VE JUST SPENT a frustrating time hooking up a printer. Now I know it doesn't sound like the sort of thing to test the outer reaches of my knowledge, but so often the simplest tasks end up eating entire evenings.

This time it was the wireless network that swallowed my time, and the Buffalo wireless bridge wasn't helping matters – its web interface needs such understanding that ordinary consumers could not possibly configure it.

Anyhow, the job was to get a network laser printer connected to the WLAN by means of – you guessed it – a wire. I could have gone the homeplug route, connecting one device to a 240V socket next to the router and another close to the printer, but that would be something of a cop out. The house was already humming to wireless data, and the cheaper homeplug kits would require the addition of a switch before they made any long-term sense.

So I went for the £30 bridge, enabling me to make use of the existing network. Trouble was the bridge's software hung repeatedly, refused to update the device with new settings, and in the end left me no choice but to configure it manually. Same with the printer, which ignored my attempts to get it to use DHCP.

In future I think I'll ask people to email me their documents, I'll print them off here, and then pop them in the post. It'll certainly save time.



Phil Wand, hardware editor

GAMING GIANTS

Large format TVs appearing with integrated Ethernet port

TWO MONTHS FROM now, Samsung will launch a range of TVs available in 40in, 46in and 52in sizes (the (LN40A750T, LN46A750T, and LN52A750T respectively), complete with multiple HDMI inputs and USB ports – even an ethernet connection and built-in games.

The new screens are all rated 4ms and will use your existing internet connection to provide the latest weather news, war news, sports and stock information, shown picture-in-picture while you watch *Emmerdale*.

Samsung are keeping surprisingly quiet about the fact that their new flagships will come with a variety of simple games such as sudoku preloaded on up to 1GB internal flash memory. Users will be able to add new games as well as movies, images and screensavers by hooking up to the USB port.

Samsung have also redesigned the remote. The updated device will feature a scrollwheel, much like the one on your mouse, to give more intuitive control of the content management interface.

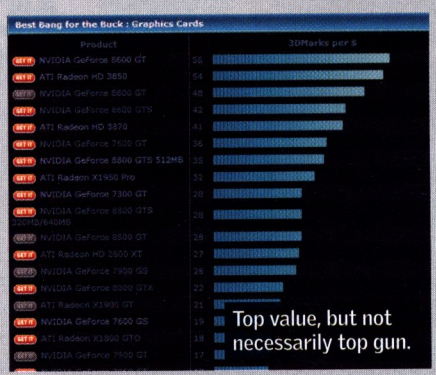
Given that PC owners will simply connect their machine and enjoy both their desktop and games in the lounge, an ethernet connection and parlour games do seem like gimmicks. But they give us a tantalising glimpse of where things are heading. www.samsung.com/uk

BEST BUY

Futuremark rates CPUs and video cards

3DMARK06 DEVELOPERS FUTUREMARK have created their own 'Price and Performance' index, aimed at ranking video cards by value.

More than 20,000 benchmark results are received each day from 3DMark06 users around the globe, and Futuremark use that data to create the index. The GeForce 8600 GT is out front, a whisker ahead of the Radeon HD 3850 and 8800 GT from our *Buyer's Guide*. Note that although the 8600 GT leads, it's not that fast – buy only if you put value far ahead of frame rate.



Top value, but not necessarily top gun.

Of the 20 cards listed, just six are powered by AMD.

snipurl.com/priceandperformance

NEWS ROUND-UP

Vista Service Pack 1 should be available for download now. Guinea pigs have been testing the Release Candidate for some time, and Microsoft are reportedly happy with it. The patch doesn't do much, though, and isn't likely to tempt the many *XP* owners holding out for its 2010 replacement. microsoft.com

There's talk of Foxconn making a keyboard with screens embedded in every key. Users would be able to redefine the appearance of each button, as well as what they do, and manufacturers would no longer need to create separate products for each language market. There's no word on the actual technology involved but Foxconn promise we'll see it this year. www.foxconn.com

WARNING: THIS MONTH'S HARD WORDS

BY JON BLYTH & ED ZITRON

Futuremark: When Mark Wahlberg slips on an errant banana peel, crashing through a window and falling five stories, he falls into a deep coma. When he awakes 2,000 years later, to maintain his youth – and his acting ability – he's placed into a robotic shell, and must act in the deadly deathcamps of the year 4007, sating our spider overlords' sick obsession with *Boogie Nights*. **Wireshark**: A creature that hides in the internet, and jumps out and bites you mid-*TF2* session, providing you with a slightly more credible excuse than "soz got lag" and "my mouse flew out the window". **Xfones**: Hey kids! Need a phone that suits your XTREME lifestyle? Use XFones! Use them as a cudgel for when you want to get off your hippin-hoppin skate-blades and mug someone! XXXTREME! **HDCP**: The original four Town Musicians of Bremen – Horse, Donkey, Coypu and Penguin. Only the Donkey went on to star in the well-known line-up, and is seen as a massive sell-out.

CASH VS GRAPHICS

Many people have been wondering whether they should make the investment and buy a graphics card with the new 8800 GT chipset or the slightly less expensive 8800 GS cards. The answer is simple: if you have the money and want the extra graphical oomph, go for the GT cards. But if top-class graphics aren't vital to your life, pick up a GS, as for most people it will prove to be adequate.

3D GRAPHICS TEST	8800 GS	8800 GT	HD 3870	8800 GTS
Supreme Commander	16,523	17,759	16,896	17,401
Counter-Strike: Source	263.48	262.06	266.07	241.19
Call of Juarez	17.4	26.9	28.5	19.3
3DMark06	9,227	9,492	10,189	8,336

EN8800GS TOP 384MB

PRICE £115 **MANUFACTURER** ASUS **WEBSITE** uk.asus.com

THE 8800 GS is much cheaper than the 8800 GT we've seen before in these pages, and yet the difference between them is barely noticeable on-screen.

While this newest GeForce has been priced to combat its rival HD 3850, most people are interested in how the card compares with its larger, more powerful 512MB GT brother.

The ASUS box includes the card, driver and manual CDs, laughably bad quickstart leaflet, some cables and a VGA-DVI converter you'll never use. No crappy game bundles or paraphernalia to put the price up.

The large 80mm fan rarely makes itself heard, but the cooling apparatus alone is 30mm deep, so while this is sold as a single slot card it's actually dual-slot height.

There are fewer stream processors, a slower core and a crimped memory interface here, but with 384MB it offers more thinking space than cheaper GT variants and is about 10 per cent faster than the HD 3850. Unless you can find an 8800 GT 256MB for under £115, the GS is better value – particularly at higher resolutions, which demand extra RAM.

VX2240W

PRICE £185 **MANUFACTURER** ViewSonic **WEBSITE** viewsonic.co.uk

AS YOU'D EXPECT, ViewSonic's latest 22in panel offers top drawer quality, excellent game performance and an appealing design.

There are some obvious shortcomings. As it's been built to a price, the base looks like a comedy plastic cowpat and the stand above is only capable of tilt adjustment. While nobody faces their screen and fiddles endlessly with its position, it is a far less accommodating setup than Samsung's SM226BW (issue 186, 90%) or my favourite HP L2045W, which in addition to tilting also swivels, pivots, height adjusts – you name it – but which now is obsolete.

The VX2240w panel itself offers deathly black blacks and Persil bright whites courtesy of a 4,000:1 contrast ratio, but from within a rather tight viewing angle. If you move your head a few inches side to side, the picture can darken markedly. That's not a big deal if you're using it on its own, but if it's the second or third screen of a multi monitor arrangement, a picture that loses its vibrancy even a few angles from the dead ahead is hardly ideal.

For budget-conscious gamers, though, none of the above are genuine deal-breakers. The VX2240w's 1680 x 1050 resolution, snappy 2ms response time, high-contrast, high-vibrancy image and HDCP DVI-D input are what we really want for our desks.

If you're working to a £200 budget, this one's worth a long look.

It's built to a price, so the base looks like a plastic cowpat

SIGNAL DETECTOR & USB WIFI

PRICE £25 **MANUFACTURER** Edimax **WEBSITE** edimax.co.uk

WIRELESS DETECTORS SOUND like the illicit tools of wardrivers, but they can be useful to anyone on the move.

The Edimax EW-7317LDg shown here fits in your palm and surreptitiously gives detailed information on every 802.11b and g wireless network in the area, and includes identifying SSIDs, signal strengths, channels and security levels on its tiny backlit display.

If you're someone who takes their laptop on holiday, or if you frequent high street coffee bars and can't bear to be unplugged for more than five minutes, it'll be a good investment, as it means you don't have to walk around with your laptop half-cocked to seek out public access points.

Connect it to your PC using USB and it charges the battery used for detection, and it acts as a WLAN adapter.

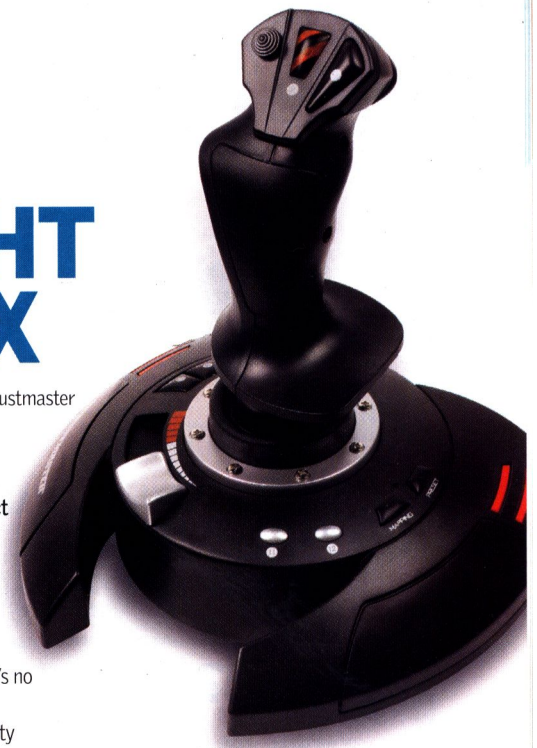
While that's unlikely to impress laptop users, desktop owners may find it useful.

Connect it to your PC via USB and it acts as a WLAN adapter

PCZONE 79

T.FLIGHT STICK X

PRICE £19 **MANUFACTURER** Thrustmaster **WEBSITE** thrustmaster.co.uk



I'VE SAID IT before, but car manufacturers need to contact mainstream joystick makers and find out how they make something so inexpensive feel so good.

The build quality of the T.Flight Stick X is simply exceptional: there's no doubt it would survive years of maltreatment at the hands of angsty gamers. Even the plastic itself feels proper, with a matte and grippy surface so you can eat crisps and fly without slipping off.

The trigger and related buttons are rapid-fire friendly, while those on the base have a satisfying give to them. The stick itself has a knob underneath allowing you to loosen or tighten its resistance to input.

My only complaint is that the joystick's USB lead is too short, meaning those who keep their PCs to one side under desks will need a USB extension cable, or – most probably – a dedicated desktop USB hub, if you don't already have extra USB sockets fitted to your keyboard or monitor.

PCZONE 91

X2040

PRICE £39 **MANUFACTURER** Pertelian **WEBSITE** pertelian.com

THE PERTELIAN X2040 is a mono LCD display – small, solidly built, and keenly priced too.

The unit is essentially a dumb USB terminal capable of showing four lines of up to 20 characters each, and while you'll not be able to watch PornoTube clips you can display text-based data such as info from Counter-Strike servers or alerts when new posts appear on designated forums.

The software you install with the X2040 is essentially a hub for plug-ins that control what gets shown. There are more than a dozen genuinely useful ideas here, ranging from mail checkers and IM notifiers to stock and eBay auction watchers, and those of a programming bent will be able to create their own using the supplied framework.

The one downside is that the software feels a little ropey and behaves strangely under Vista. But then the same could be said of me.

PCZONE 86

XFONES

PRICE £65 **MANUFACTURER** Hauppauge **WEBSITE** hauppauge.co.uk

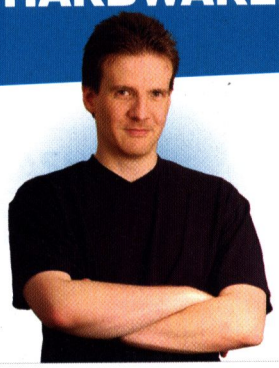
BILLED AS THE "ultimate audio experience", these wireless cans are nowhere near as awful as such a statement would lead you to believe.

Some seriously nasty plastic and the fact Hauppauge are better known for TV capture cards – and the world's worst TV capture card software – don't help.

But the fact is the XFones aren't that bad. In actual fact, they're really rather good. The range of sound is a little narrow, lacking sparkling highs and pumping lows, but the big filling of sound in between is clean and precise.

Add a range of about 30ft (10m), a worthwhile bass boost feature, plus a bundled copy of PowerDVD 7 that provides Dolby Headphone playback – a virtual surround that works almost flawlessly with films – and the experience is rounded off nicely.

PCZONE 89



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... Mistook your wardrobe for the toilet again? Local shop stopped stocking your favourite green-flavoured Pringles? Been playing *WOW* so long your partner's left you? We can't help with 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.

HALF-COCKED

Q My computer stutters every few seconds when playing games. I've looked on the internet, and it seems to be a problem with dual-core processors. I've downloaded patches from AMD and from Microsoft, and have installed all the latest drivers, but the problem is still there. If I switch off one of the cores games run fine with no problems.

Am I doing something wrong, or is my CPU buggered? I've only had it one week. My system is an AMD Athlon X2 6400, ASUS M2N-X board with 8600 GTS and 2GB RAM running *Windows XP*.

Simon Aspin

A *The chances that there's something seriously wrong with your machine are low. The stuttering problem you describe affects countless gamers, mostly AMD die-hards, and is down to the dual-core Athlon.*

I'll assume that you're running the latest drivers for your GeForce; you've already installed the latest version of the AMD Dual Core Optimizer and Athlon 64 X2 Dual Core Processor Driver from AMD's website (www.amd.com); and you've also run Microsoft's KB896256 patch ("Computers that are running Windows XP Service Pack 2 *and that are equipped with multiple processors that support processor power management features may experience decreased performance"); and have finally torn out several large clumps of hair.*

Sadly, there's nothing more you can do. The only advice I can give is to create a separate batch (.BAT) file for each game you wish to play, using the following command in each:

'start/affinity 01 program.exe'

(to run the game whose executable is program.exe). This simply makes sure the game in question runs on one core, and means you shouldn't have to alt-tab out in order to make the change in Task Manager yourself.

VISUALLY IN PAIRS

Q I'm in the market for a new PC but need your help on two aspects of it. First, the graphics card. I've opted for a GeForce 8600 GT 512MB, but is there much difference between this and the GTS, or could the £50 difference between them be put to better use? Secondly, I want to have two 19in monitors, but I don't want a massive black line down the middle. What in your opinion is the best 19in monitor with the smallest rim to reduce the centre blindspot? Alternatively, would it just be better to buy a decent 22in monitor and do away with two screens altogether?

Ben Marks

A *You don't say the budget you're working to. If you're spending around £100 on a video card, you need to use a shopping comparison tool such as Google Products (www.google.co.uk/products) or NexTag (www.nextag.com) to find an 8600 GTS 512MB – you'll find several variants for under £110. If you're spending closer to £150, you need to take a long look at the Radeon HD 3870 and see if you can't find another £5 down the back of the sofa for an experience that's truly head and shoulders above the 8600 line.*

As for monitors, I've never got along with dual-screen setups for the simple reason that they're largely redundant. They're great for page layout applications and for coding, in that you can have your development IDE on one screen and the project debugging on the other, and they make sense in the few games that support them (eg Supreme Commander*), but at all other times they're just a waste of desk and electricity. I would far rather have one, large, premium quality screen than two compromise models.*

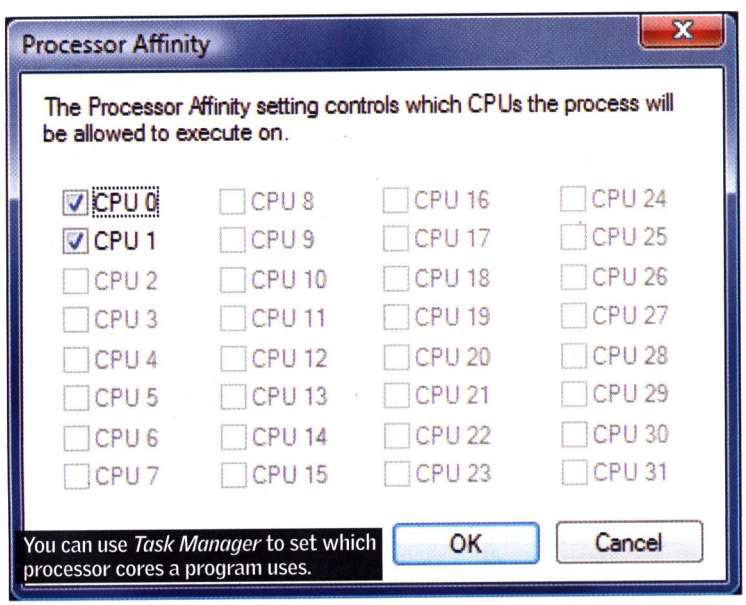
My recommendation for a large-format panel would be the 22in Samsung SM-226BW from our Buyer's Guide *(pg 99), or if you're really wanting to push the boat out, Dell's recently announced 24in 2408WFP with HDMI, successor to their brilliant 2407WFP. And don't laugh: Dell make some of the world's best screens.*

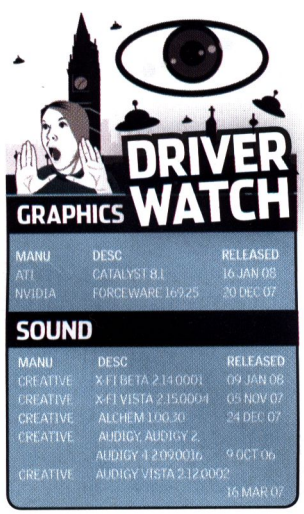
DIAMOND GEEZER

Q For the last month my six year-old Mitsubishi Diamond Pro 920 has been intermittently showing pinky/red images, and it's getting worse. Initially I wasn't sure if it was my graphics card or my monitor. I had a GeForce 7600 GT which I replaced for an 8800 GT, so I can now eliminate that as the problem.

If the screen is on its last legs, I know I'm going to be forced to buy an LCD. I'd look at getting the Samsung from your *Buyer's Guide*, but I'd like to know if flatpanels still have the problems with resolution that they used to. I run *Windows* at 1280 x 960 and my games at 1024 x 768. I remember you said that LCDs only like running at their native resolution and if you deviate from it the image gets blurred.

I also have a projector hooked up to my second DVI port so I can watch movies, and it can only show a maximum resolution of 1280 x 960. With the Samsung TFT





wandy@dearwandy.com @
ne, future publishing, 2 balcombe st, london, nw1 6nw

Mitsubishi's Diamondtron was once the screen technology to have.

running at a higher native resolution, will this cause problems with the projector?

Austin Hubbard

A *A monitor that shows fluctuating colours will almost certainly have a damaged connector. In your case, the redness will be caused by the remaining blue and green elements of the image dropping out. Unscrew the video cable from both the Mitsubishi and the PC and check you don't have any bent pins showing at the two connector ends. Reconnect it and screw it firmly in place, noting on the screen to see if the image changes as you move the cable. If so, you might just need to replace the cable.*

As for the LCD issue, today's screens are good at interpolating non-native resolutions and you shouldn't have a problem running games at odd sizes. I suggest that you set Windows *to run at the monitor's native pixel count as there's no reason not to.*

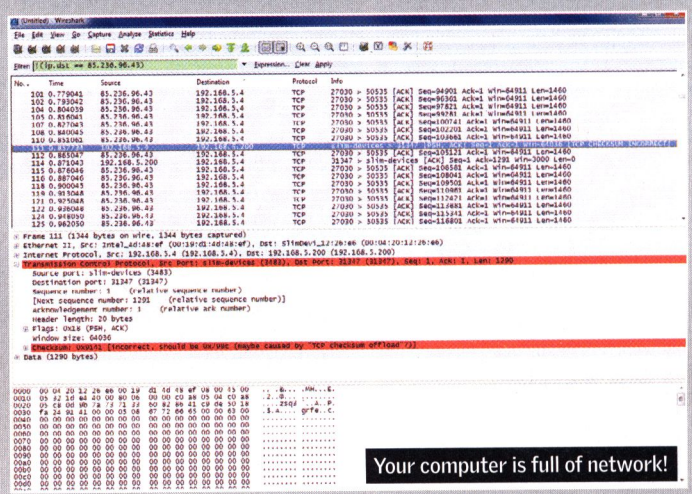
As for your projector, its resolution is set by your video card's Control Panel, not by the screen attached to the other port. PCZ

While it may surprise you, Dell does make very good monitors.

"Stuttering affects countless gamers, mostly AMD die-hards, and is down to the dual-core Athlon"

Wandy points out a flaw in AMD's CPUs

50 UTILITIES YOU HAVE TO USE BEFORE YOU DIE



Your computer is full of network!

34 WIRESHARK

COSTS Free FROM wireshark.org

Wireshark is a network packet sniffer. Packet sniffers are hacker tools we're told we should distrust, because they're capable of spying on network data, collecting passwords and emptying bank accounts.

In actual fact, looking at other people's data as it whizzes about between hosts isn't as easy as it sounds. Sniffing out traffic requires specialist knowledge and often physical access to mirror ports on switches and, unless you're a government department, data tends to be encrypted these days anyway, making it a pointless exercise for all but the most dedicated hacker.

So while you could use *Wireshark* for nefarious purposes, ordinary, sane people use it for troubleshooting network problems.

If you run a server, *Wireshark* enables you to see exactly what data is being exchanged when your clients connect. This is also how game tool authors get to understand how all the various game protocols work.

Wireshark is also useful for working out what's happening on your home network when things aren't behaving properly. If you're getting poor broadband rates, or dropped connections and reconnects, it'll show you a comprehensive list of all the data dashing back and forth from your PC. You might find that it's a Trojan trying to phone home, or you may discover all the traffic is being directed over the wireless to your neighbour as he downloads his favourite films (of course this would never happen, as you all will have made sure your WiFi network is encrypted... right?).

To get started, download the latest version and read wiki.wireshark.org.

FORUMS: DIRECT FROM DEARWANDY.COM

(marcus) I'm trying to start an HL2DM game server and every time I try I can get one going on my PC but no-one can see it in the list of servers. I've tried setting up port forwarding on my router, made sure firewall settings are OK, all to no avail. (wandy) I would be inclined to download the dedicated server install and try that. You need to download the update tool from Valve and run: HldsUpdateTool.exe -command update -game "hl2mp" -dir C:\srcds. It'll be much easier to troubleshoot HLDS without having to ALT+TAB in and out of your game the whole time, and of course you can always connect from within *Half-Life* anyway.

@ watchdog@pczone.co.uk
watchdog, pc zone, future publishing, 2 balcombe st, london, nw1 6nw

WATCHDOG

Dell and Microsoft get in a face off with *Richard Cosgrove*

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 Richard at **watchdog@pczone.co.uk** with the subject heading 'Watchdog', or write to him at the address above. Remember to include your name, address and contact number, and all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers, and date of purchase. We can't guarantee a personal reply to every emails, but every one is read.

The fault is down to Microsoft's draconian anti-piracy measures

The Dell 720 H2C is a good value and powerful gaming PC.

THE ACCUSED: Micom (but really Microsoft)

THE PROBLEM: OEM *Windows Vista*

Ian Mogano purchased a copy of the 64bit version of *Windows Vista Ultimate* along with some hardware from Micom (www.micom.co.uk). According to Ian the *Vista Ultimate* page on Micom's website showed a boxed copy of *Vista*.

But when Ian tried to activate his copy of *Vista*, Microsoft wouldn't let him because it was an OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) version. According to Ian "the (very unhelpful) people at the other end of the Microsoft helpline tell me that I was sold a version which I am not legally entitled to own, because I am not a 'licenced system builder'."

Ian has tried to return the goods to Micom, but they are charging him a 25 per cent fee for returning the items as they aren't faulty.

Ian's stuck with a copy of *Vista* he can't activate, and a bunch of hardware he can't get rid of without suffering a penalty.

PC ZONE INVESTIGATION: OEM software is sold to companies that build PCs for selling on – they aren't meant to be sold separate from hardware. Some retailers get around this by including a token piece of hardware with *Windows* (like a USB-to-serial adapter).

However, OEM *Vista*'s copy protection systems prevent users from installing the software on more than one machine. And if you replace too much hardware in your PC the OEM version of *Windows* won't activate on re-installation. Also Microsoft will only allow people who have been licensed to install OEM *Vista* anyway.

We checked Micom's website, and the page for *Vista Ultimate* does use a photo of a retail version of *Vista*. But it's marked 'For illustration only' and the item itself is described as an OEM product. So Micom is doing nothing wrong in selling it this version of *Vista* – the fault is with Microsoft's draconian anti-piracy measures.

FINAL VERDICT: This really is a case of 'buyer beware'. Micom haven't broken any laws. Whether Micom have breached any agreements with Microsoft is another matter and is between that retailer and the Borg of the consumer electronics world. The good news is there may be a solution for Ian. By registering with Microsoft's OEM program at snipurl.com/vistaoem, he might be able to become a 'licenced system builder' himself and install his OEM copy of *Vista*. There are no guarantees this will work though.

Regarding the 25 per cent returning fee: if Ian had bought the goods by mail order he'd have seven days to return them for a complete refund. But Ian bought the components in person at Micom's store. If they're all working, Micom are well within their rights to offer a partial refund.

We contacted Microsoft about Ian's problem, but didn't get a reply as we went to press.

THE ACCUSED: Dell

THE PROBLEM: PC wasn't what was ordered

When Ian Fergusson decided he wanted to play system hog *Crysis*, he decided to get a Dell 720 H2C gaming PC. He asked if he could upgrade the 720 with two 8800 Ultra graphics cards, three different sales reps told him "yes", "no", and "maybe in three month's time after they're tested".

Then he asked if the PC could be fitted with Corsair overclocked RAM, that was available on the US Dell website. The first sales rep said "yes", the second it would be Asus RAM, and the third said it would be Dell's own brand.

Ian then tried to get a new QX9650 processor, instead of the 720's QX6850. But Dell's sales people said there were problems with the QX9650 that meant the QX6850 was a better choice.

Eventually Ian emailed a manager in Dell's sales team, asking if "they would overclock the processor to 3.67GHz and if I could get the Corsair overclocked RAM as advertised on USA website. I also asked if I could get the Ultra cards." And he received an email that said "the system would be exactly as I wanted it."

A week later Ian "received the system and surprise, the cards weren't Ultras, the processor wasn't overclocked to 3.67GHz, and the RAM wasn't Corsair."

PC ZONE INVESTIGATION: Dell told us: "While discussing his requirements he requested details on a particular processor and on having this processor overclocked. He also requested information on a particular type of system memory.

"Dell does not provide either of these as an option with this system. Our agents receive product training only on items we sell in a particular region. As these have not been released in the EMEA [European] region our sales agents would not have received training on these products."

Although Ian couldn't get the dual 8800 Ultras, Dell UK does offers dual 8600GTS in the 720 H2C. And Dell has a good reason to avoid the Intel QX9650 CPU, as according to our hardware expert Wandy: "The QX9650 isn't a 'dud' in gaming terms, it does have some serious issues with certain chipsets. If I were Dell I'd be wary about recommending them."

FINAL VERDICT: There's little to do about this problem. But Ian had to return his Dell, after it turned off and wouldn't turn on again. Thankfully, Dell gave Ian a full refund.

REMEMBER: CRTs CANNOT BE TURNED INTO FLATSCREENS

If you want a slimline monitor, you need to buy an LCD. Don't flatten a bulky CRT with an anvil dropped from a height. It didn't work for Wile E Coyote, and it won't work for you.

HARDWARE DIVIDE

We see plenty of new gear at *PC ZONE*, but these are the bits we just adore

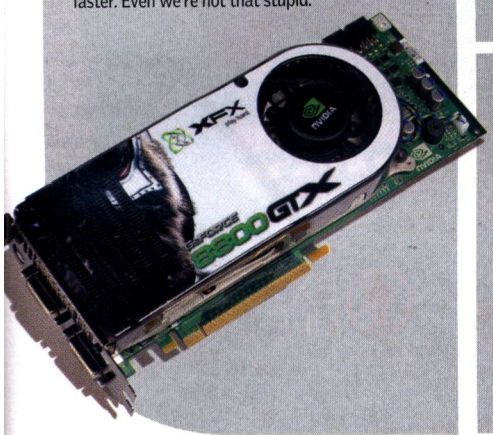
LOADED?

GRAPHICS

8800 GTX

EXPECT TO PAY £370
MANUFACTURER XFX
WEBSITE xfxforce.co.uk

AMD have arrived! And the Radeon they brought along is nice enough, but it's neither faster or slower than the 8800 GTS, so our favourite GTX keeps hogging the top spot. Yes, we could have put the Ultra here, but it's over £500 and not much faster. Even we're not that stupid.



PROCESSOR

CORE 2 EXTREME X6800

EXPECT TO PAY £630
MAN Intel
WEB intel.co.uk

Faster than its predecessor and any Athlon FX, Intel's new 2.93GHz Extreme CPU has 1066MHz FSB, 4MB cache, and LGA775 packaging. With a shorter pipeline, unique Smart Memory Access and Advanced Smart Cache technologies, it has people wondering what AMD can do to catch up.

MOTHERBOARD

D975XBX2

EXPECT TO PAY £155
MANUFACTURER Intel
WEB intel.co.uk

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

WD7500 AAKS

EXPECT TO PAY £109
MANUFACTURER Western Digital
WEB wdc.com

Almost as fast as the outgoing 150GB Raptor but with five times the capacity and half the noise. Products like the WD7500AAKS and Hitachi's (noisy and pricey) Deskstar 7K1000 are now so quick that you don't need to be spend extra on 10,000rpm drives. So don't.

SCREEN

SM226BW

EXPECT TO PAY £219
MANUFACTURER Samsung
WEBSITE samsung.com/uk

The Samsung SM226BW is handsome and fast – just 2ms grey to grey – and has no hint of the motion sickness that plagued LCDs a few years ago. It produces a bright, evenly lit image that's full of reverberant colours, sharp edges and dark blacks, making it ideal for any kind of game.

SOUNDCARD

SOUND BLASTER X-FI FATALITY FPS

EXPECT TO PAY £130
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

Slightly bonkers soundcard for audiophiles. 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

GeForce 8800GT

EXPECT TO PAY £142
MANUFACTURER XFX
WEBSITE XGXforce.com

Ladies and gentlemen, the card of the moment. While we've yet to put a retail GeForce 8800 GT against its Radeon opponents, reference benchmarks have shown that the NVIDIA box is the one to buy. Just avoid those fussier model variants that sail close to £200.

PROCESSOR

CORE 2 DUO E6300

EXPECT TO PAY £105
MANUFACTURER Intel
WEBSITE intel.co.uk

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 speed for the money. A great entry-level buy.

MOTHERBOARD

CONROEXFIRE-ESATA2

EXPECT TO PAY £60
MANUFACTURER ASRock
WEB asrock.com

Paired with an E6300, this ASRock board can help you wring high-end performance from a budget 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.

HDD

CAVIAR 160OAAJS SATA-II

EXPECT TO PAY £30
MANUFACTURER Western Digital
WEBSITE www.wdc.com

It's not like a 160GB hard drive is unfeasibly huge any more, but it remains more than enough for the casual gamer to do a spot of casual gaming. A few good titles, Steam, a couple of thousand music files and the odd porn flick still leaves plenty of room for *Windows* to manoeuvre.

SCREEN

VA903M

EXPECT TO PAY £118
MANUFACTURER ViewSonic
WEBSITE www.viewsonic.co.uk

The VA903m ousts our favourite VE710s as it's cheaper and has a 19in screen. Plus, it's a better bet than any of the similarly-priced widescreen variants as there are more pixels on the screen: its 1280 x 1024 pixel panel offers greater depth than the 1440 x 900 panel of its VA1912w sibling.

SOUNDCARD

SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY 2 VALUE

EXPECT TO PAY £20
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

X-530

EXPECT TO PAY £55
MANUFACTURER Logitech
WEBSITE logitech.co.uk

Say goodbye to Creative's P5800s, longest serving denizens of the *Buyer's Guide*, and guten tag to Logitech's swisher X-530s. With the edge on quality and available everywhere, the Swiss-designed 70W, 5.1 system offers Logitech build quality with superb sound in games, movies and music.

INSIDE PC GAMER

HOW GAMES LIE TO YOU
The truth about system specs

BATTLEFIELD HEROES
The online fave's weird new direction

TEAM FORTRESS 2
Shock changes plus how to play like a pro

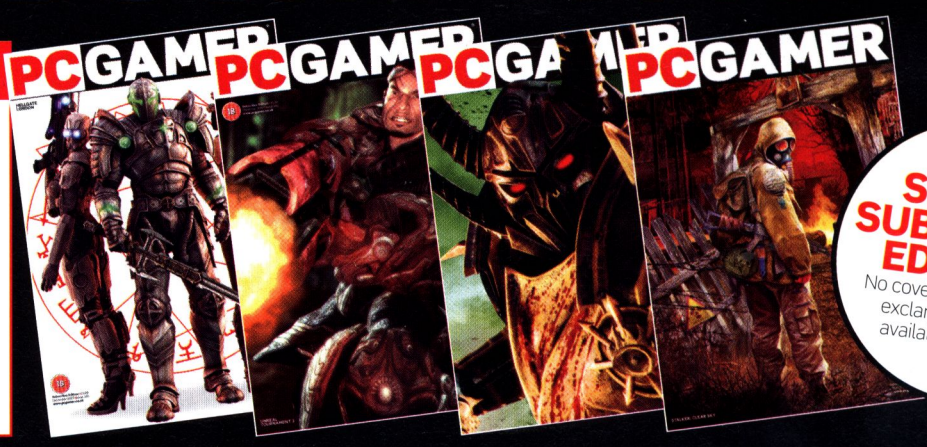
PLUS...
LEFT 4 DEAD › DEMIGOD › FAR CRY 2 › AGE OF CONAN › PIRATES OF THE BURNING SEA REVIEWED › MORE

NEW ISSUE ON SALE NOW

WIN A YEAR'S FREE SUBSCRIPTION!

HOW TO WIN

To enter the draw for a free subscription to **PC Gamer** magazine simply text **87103** within the time specified below with **PCGFREE3** followed by your date of birth and the name of this magazine. Alternatively send your name, address, mobile number, date of birth and this magazine name and issue number to **Subs Draw, Future Publishing, Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW quoting reference PCGFREE3.**



SPECIAL SUBSCRIBER EDITIONS
No cover lines: a gorgeous exclam-free zone not available in any shop.

Competition rules and Terms & Conditions

1. Entries must be received between 27th February 2008 and 26th March 2008.

2. The winner will be selected at random from all entries received between the relevant dates.

3. The 10 winners will be notified within 28 days of the closing date and will need to supply their full address including a UK postcode.

4. Texts will be charged at 25p plus your normal network tariff. Lines are open all day, and you can enter as many times as you like.

5. By entering this competition, you consent to us using your personal details to send you information about products and services of Future Publishing Limited which may be of interest to you. If you do not want to receive this information, please include the word "NO" at the end of your text message or in your postal entry.

By taking part in a Competition, you agree to be bound by the Competition Rules which are summarised below but can be viewed in full at www.futuretcs.com. Late or incomplete entries will be disqualified. Proof of posting (if relevant) shall not be deemed proof of delivery. Entries must be submitted by an individual (not via any agency or similar) and, unless otherwise stated, are limited to one per household. . The Company reserves the right in its sole discretion to substitute any prize with cash or a prize of comparable value. Unless otherwise stated, the Competition is open to all GB residents of 18 years and over, except employees of Future Publishing and any party involved in the competition or their households By entering a Competition you give permission to use your name, likeness and personal information in connection with the Competition and for promotional purposes. All entries will become the property of the Company upon receipt and will not be returned. You warrant that the Competition entry is entirely your own work and not copied or adapted from any other source. If you are a winner, you may have to provide additional information. Details of winners will be available on request within three months of the closing date. If you are a winner, receipt by you of any prize is conditional upon you complying with (amongst other things) the Competition Rules. You acknowledge and agree that neither the Company nor any associated third parties shall have any liability to you in connection with your use and/or possession of your prize.

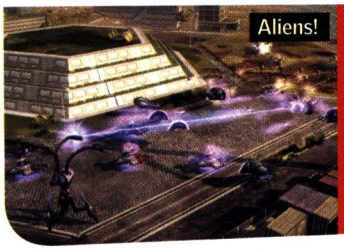
PCZONE FREEPLAY

PCZONE ON THE DVD

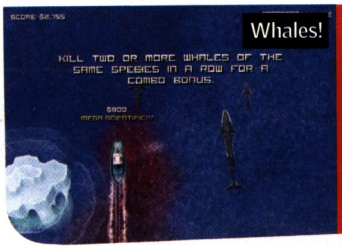
Born free, as free as the wind blows

FREE GAMES!

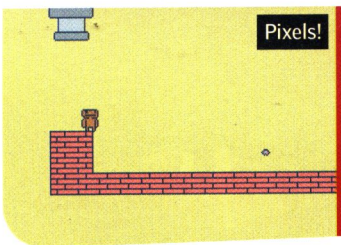
WHAT'S FREE THIS MONTH



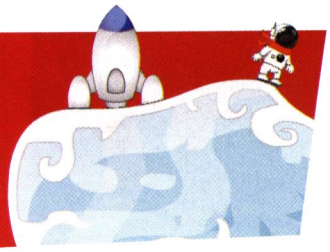
102 Demo pages
Save months of downloading stuff (if you have a 9600 baud modem)



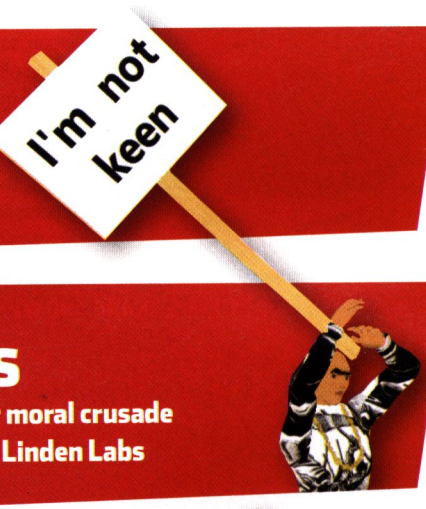
104 News
The event bugle has been sounded! The fact horses must be ridden!

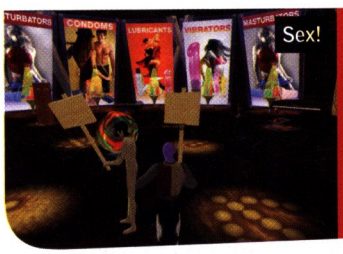


108 Freeware
The best crop of free games around, and on our DVD

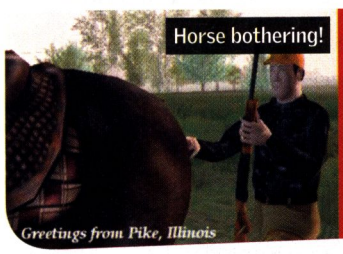


110 Mods
Play your games in different ways





114 Jackass
Ban this filth – our moral crusade takes us deep into Linden Labs



116 Online Zone
All the internet that has us on it

Office drunkard

I WAS AT a loss about what to write in this column, as I simply hadn't done anything notably free. So, I went to the pub. Partly out of frustration, and partly because that's what I do every bloody night.

What happened explains why I rolled into work stinking of Curacao and ass, and provided me with this flaccid column. But first, a memory...

At my school, it was a tradition for children to pile around to a house at lunch, and take sips from the bottles in the host's parents' cocktail cabinet. We were quite the mixologists; advocaat and sherry became a Brouhaha, brandy and schnapps was self-expanatory. As adults, you rarely get the pleasure of unpunishable theft, because you probably buy the booze yourself. And if anyone who isn't your mum catches you stealing, you can't scream "I didn't ask to be born" and hide in your room.

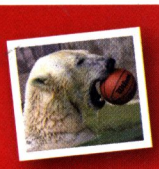
But back to my story: the night in question was the pub's 10th birthday party, and the cloakroom had been turned into a area for staff, with free booze. Being a former staff member, I smuggled myself in, and conjured a new and delicious free treat: the Cheeky Monkey. A half-drunk Marguerita topped up with port, amaretto, Blue Bols and cherry brandy. It had the cloying fug of a wedding cake, and immediately set to work on concocting a troublesome gut that threatens to explode at a moment's notice, 24 hours later.

The fact that I'm sitting here, residually drunk and wincing at voices, may be a terrible metaphor for free games – but it does show how committed I am to not paying a penny for shit if I can help it.

Jon Blyth

Jon Blyth, staff writer

PCZONE FREE-O-METER



0 HOURS

297 HOURS*

*Approximate amount of completely free stuff this month

Demos

Ed Zitron **is making a new disc, and it's mean jive**

PCZONE ON THE DVD

Having problems getting something on our DVD to work? Phone our helpline on **01225 442244** and ask for cover disc support. Or email **support@futurenet.co.uk**, including as much information as possible about your system and the nature of your problem.

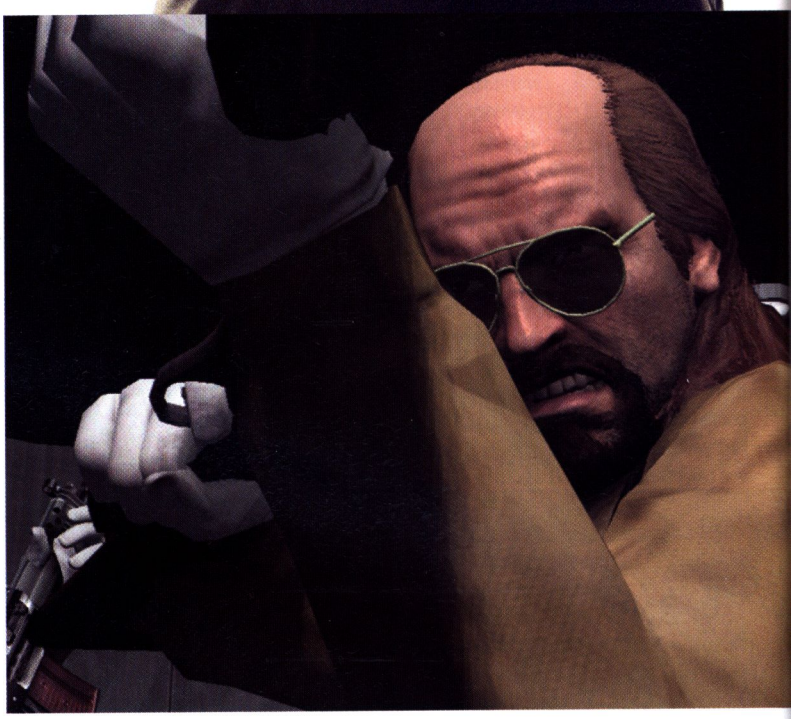
KANE & LYNCH: DEAD MEN

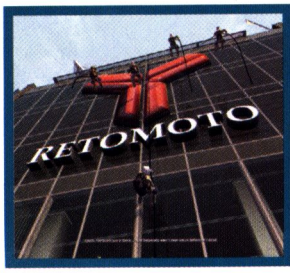
The Odd Couple 2: Die Harder

www.kaneandlynch.com

HELLO EVERYBODY, IT'S me, Lynch. I'm here with my buddy Kane, and we'd like you to join us on a whirlwind adventure across America. Maybe we'll find ourselves. Maybe we'll have a sexy misadventure with a duchess, then drive off a cliff. Who knows? The demo that you may be playing right now follows us as we rappel down a skyscraper, set a bomb, and then shoot a great deal of businessmen.

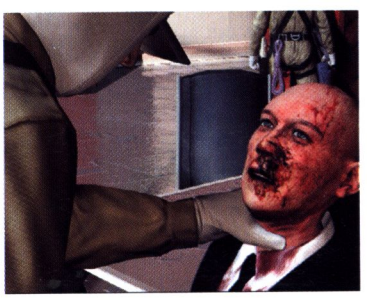
You'll find yourself battling into the Retomoto building on the lookout for a Yakuza boss, also called Retomoto, who Kane not only doesn't like, but kills and looks at in a rather creepy way. Don't ask me, I just like cultivating my beard. This demo includes a good chunk of third-person, squad-based shooting for all of you people who are fans of murder. You'll fight all manner of men in suits, both with guns and without, and have the chance to take any repressed anger against the tax man out against them – so sit back, enjoy, and let both Mr Kane and I take away your troubles for an evening.



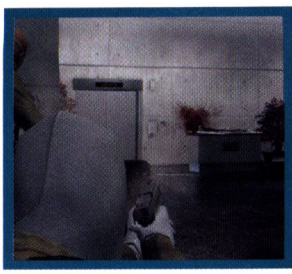


KANE AND WYNCH
Freshly released from prison, Kane and Lynch are not only doing very well physically, but also have the means to magic up some rappels and a bomb to blow up a Japanese corporation's headquarters.

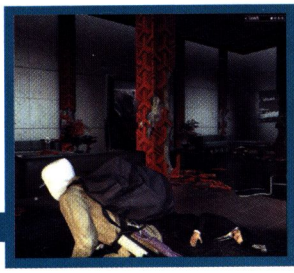
COVER STORY
Taking cover in Kane & Lynch is like a box of chocolates – you never know when you are going to find yourself stuck to a wall in a thrilling action pose. Although it won't be as good as *Gears of War*.



PRISON BREAK BEATS That-that-that don't destroy them, can only make them stronger



BLEEPING BLEEPS
If you take offense easily, this demo is not for you – there's constant swearing and all kinds of violence. That is, unless you want to build your tolerance up to both of these things, in which case, play this game.



ALL-TERRAIN VIOLENCE
A good way not to get shot is to hide behind things, but watch out – most of the surfaces in the game can be blown off with bullets, and a grenade will blow your cover, right into your face.

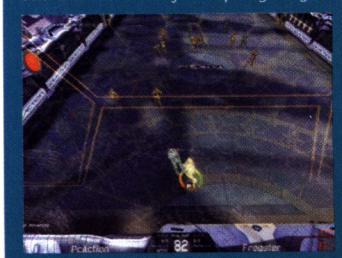
SPEEDBALL 2: TOURNAMENT

Pass the interception touchdown quarterback, hike!

www.speedball2.com

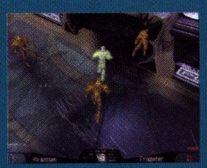
SPORTS AND VIOLENCE go together like love and marriage, death and coffins, and romance and gut-ripping disappointment. *Speedball 2: Tournament* is the natural continuation of this sentence in that it combines at least a few of the above.

This is a mix of American Football, real football (with the feet) and a bunch of surly tramps fighting over 50p. Your goal is to get the ball and throw it into the opposition's goal. If they've got the ball, you should be trying to hurt them. It sounds simple enough, but is actually rather challenging. It isn't as good as old-school *Speedball*, but it is shinier.



Ouch! My Balls!

This would be the sound you would make if I hit you.



DONOVAN MCSCAB
So much of *Speedball 2*'s gameplay is hitting the other team that there's a dedicated slide-tackle button that's guaranteed to take them out of their shoes.

TEAM SPLAY
Practice mode is a must in *Speedball 2*. At first the whole thing can be a little overwhelming and the computer will be better than you. So get practicing.

COMMAND & CONQUER SPECIAL

Four for the price of none www.ea.com/official/cc

WHY DO A feature on one game when you can do it on four? This month, tying in with our big *Command & Conquer* feature, we've decided to take you through the history of the game through the medium of demo. This month you can play *Tiberian Sun*, *Red Alert*, *Renegade*, *Generals*, and finally *Tiberium Wars*. This trip down memory lane will not only remind you how great the series has been so far, but also how little it's progressed as far as acting in cutscenes goes. Lando or no Lando.

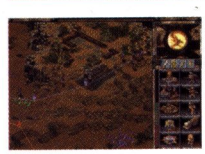
Snakes alive, nancy!

They've got demos!

TIBERIAN SUN
The sequel to the original *Command & Conquer* still holds up as playable in today's hum-drum world of talking dogs and space-travel, and is a slice of classic RTS pie.

RENEGADE
This multiplayer demo of *C&C: Renegade* will let you play either internet denizens with the same demo or friends over the LAN – even better than Ace of Base!

GENERALS
Generals took the series out of the tiberium-infested fields and into the real country-on-country combat, and a lot of military bravado. It's realistic and brutal, and also fun.

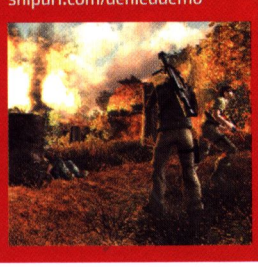


C&C3: TIBERIUM WARS
C&C3 is the latest in the series, full of campy acting, ridiculous moustaches and sexy ladies dressed up in military garbs – and even our hero Michael Ironside.

PCZONE HOT DOWNLOADS

CONFLICT: DENIED OPS

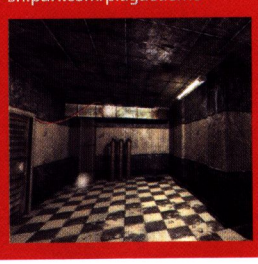
snipurl.com/denieddemo



Reviewed on page 82 of the thing in your hands, *Conflict* puts you in the shoes of a pair of CIA bozos on only the deadliest of covert missions. It's full of co-op action, very real danger, and the chance to blow up things en masse. Just like real life!

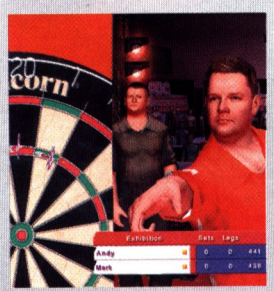
PENUMBRA: BLACK PLAGUE

snipurl.com/plaguedemo



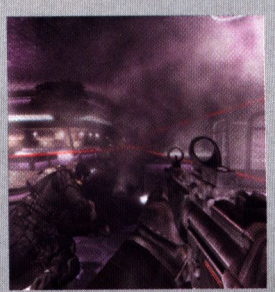
A two-person development team have created the spooky adventure that awaits you in this demo of Frictional Games' brand new horror game. You can play four levels of it to give you a taster, then flick to the review on page 84 and say "Hey, cool! That's a game I played."

THE BEST OF THE REST



PDC WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP DARTS 2008

180! Bullseye! From the oche! We have no idea what these mean, but if you do you might have a mild interest in this game of 3D darts. According to our editor, when you enter a game of darts, everybody screams "LET'S... PLAY... DAAARTS." So be sure to do so if you play it.
www.oxygengames.net



RAINBOW SIX: VEGAS 2

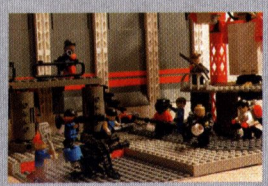
Tom Clancy doesn't gamble, selling his licensed titles all over the world in a few million different iterations. *Vegas 2* is the newest, and this trailer is a thrilling fun-packed adventure through a theatre, taking on people who are no doubt terrorists. And who likes them?
rainbowsixgame.us.ubi.com

DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

Technically in development since before the first *Duke Nukem* came out 17 years ago, 3D Realms' first-person shooter apparently gets released sometime this year. Or next year. Or the year after. This teaser is the first thing we've seen in ages, though, so do watch it to keep that hope alive.
www.3drealms.com

SNIPPETS

GOLD LIMIT REACHED
snipurl.com/wowgoldlimit
A tiny, unimportant insight into the *WOW* database was reached when someone discovered they could no longer receive gold. The limit, it was discovered, is 2^{31} bronze, which comes out at just over 214,000 gold. This also means that the number is stored as a signed integer – which seems a little pointless, given that you can't have minus gold in the game. Perhaps they're planning a loan service?



TEAM FORTRESS 2 LEGO
snipurl.com/tf2lego
Even with the streams of merchandise coming out for *The Orange Box* – including T-shirts that are actually stylish enough to wear without feeling like a complete cock – people can't get enough of their *Orange Box* stuff. Brendan Mauro has made this excellent Lego tribute to the best multiplayer shooter around. Check out his Flickr photostream at the above address.

MASSIVE WHALE COMBO

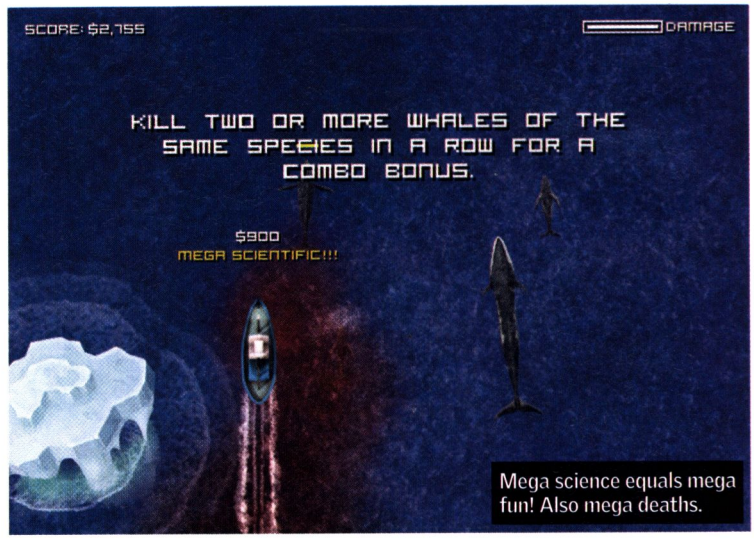
Research has never been this scientific

harpooned.org

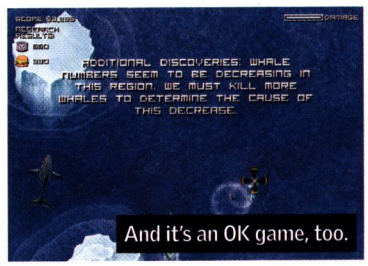
WHEN YOU DO something stylish and satirical, three responses are absolutely guaranteed, in proven percentages: 25 per cent will say "srsly wtf lol", leaving you unsure about the impact of your message, and questioning whether it was worth it, and 35 per cent will get it, and appreciate it, restoring your faith in humanity. This leaves 40 per cent to descend into a gigantic knee-jerk miff before getting told by the first 25 per cent to "get a life," and the people who get it gently explain their mistake. Eventually, everyone gets along.

So it was with *Harpooned: Japanese Cetacean Research Simulator*, a shmup that unsubtly satirises the Japanese whaling industry's excuse that it the kills it carried out are scientific. Especially bloody combos are rewarded with the phrase "SUPER SCIENTIFIC!" and your meat collection is researched into whale burgers at the end of the level.

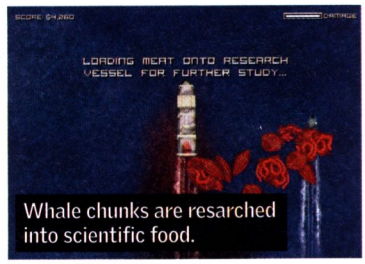
This is done with enough respect to the shmup genre and humour that's savvy enough to be funny rather than embarrassing, with such lines as "Perform research on the whales – by shooting them with your explosive weapons".



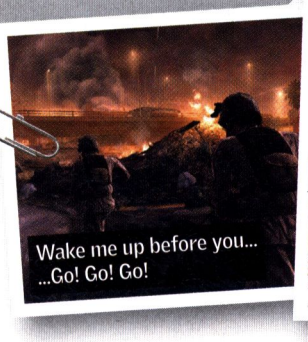
Mega science equals mega fun! Also mega deaths.

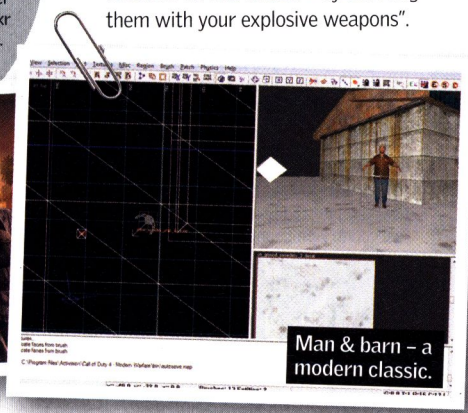


And it's an OK game, too.



Whale chunks are researched into scientific food.


Wake me up before you... ...Go! Go! Go!


Man & barn – a modern classic.

MOD WARFARE

COD4 mod tools released

snipurl.com/codmod

AFTER A CLOSED beta involving members of the modding community, Infinity Ward have made the modding toolkit for *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare* available for public download. The 600MB package includes everything you'd expect, and if you're interested in starting up your own mod, or just reading about how it's done with a sense of jealous awe, then they've setup a (read-only) Wiki at www.infinityward.com/wiki. You can even import *COD2* maps – the models and textures won't make it through, but you'll have the framework and geometry.

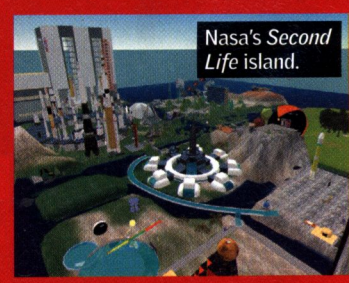
The privileged beta testers will have a headstart, but we can now look forward to featuring more *COD4* mods in these pages.

NASA PLANNING AN MMO

A chance to be a real virtual spaceman

www.nasa.gov/home

NASA AREN'T SHY of the virtual world – in 2007, they bought property in stuttering shark-jumping alternaworld *Second Life*, keen to exploit Linden Labs' toolkit "as a frontier for collaboration and technology". Now it turns out they're thinking about starting a whole MMO of their own.


Nasa's *Second Life* island.

The space agency has submitted a request for information on how MMOs are developed, which basically means it's got past the boardroom shit-shooting stage, but it isn't being developed yet.

The request states that a "synthetic gaming environment is a vital element of Nasa's educational cyberstructure," which confirms our suspicion that it'll be an educational and collaborative experience in physics/recruitment tool for new astronaut wannabes, as opposed to being a "let's all raid Saturn for better helmets" affair.

CRAYON PHYSICS DELUXE

A game worth going back to

www.kloonigames.com/blog

PETRI PURHO MAKES games. He makes lots of games; producing one a month throughout 2007. A lot of them were disposable and forgettable, in his own words "crappy" but one captured the imagination of visitors to his site, Kloonigames. That game was *Crayon Physics*: a beautifully presented game in which you draw items that become real with the release of the mouse button, and behave as real items would in the world. While it was hugely charming, the game was a bit of a tease – the time restraints Petri imposes on himself limited the amount of features he could include. Why the limits?

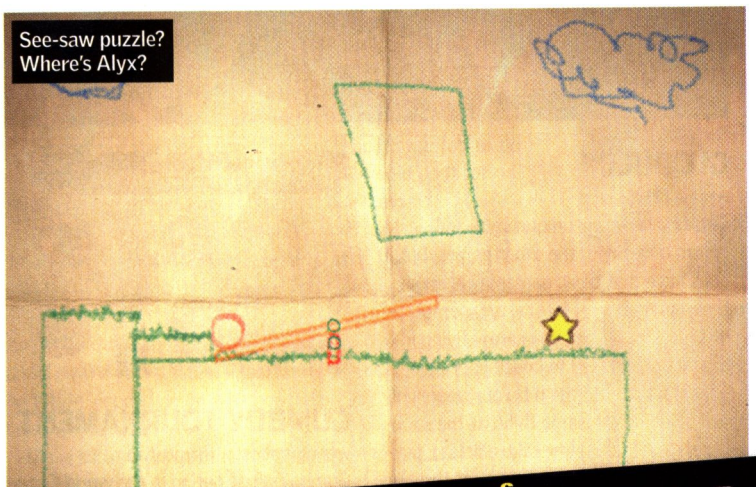
"Doing smaller, simpler projects means you actually get something done and released," he explains. "And because of the tiny development time, you can take risks, risks that nobody would ever take if they had to spend two years making it happen. If game I've made turns out to be a complete turd – as is the case in many of my games, I've wasted a maximum of seven days on it. It doesn't really bother me that much."

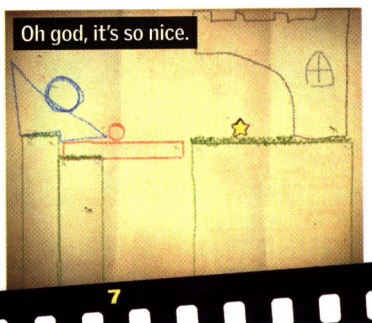
Crayon Physics received such good feedback, that he decided to return and build the concept – and the *Deluxe* version is a testament to how adding just a few simple features can explode the gameplay possibilities. You're no longer limited to drawing squares; you can hang mallets from pivots, creating a waxy golf club. But most interestingly for the player, you can now screw in your own pivots. "The addition of pins created an opportunity to do some very kinky levels, and I've been exploiting that," says Petri.

Every level has many solutions.

On top of being a great idea, Petri has also put thought into the learning curve, so you're introduced to new ideas steadily, and given a chance to test them out. There's no finer feeling than the transition from confusion to triumph, and we haven't felt quite as chuffed with a level solution since *Armadillo Run*.

Add a level editor and a whole bunch of predefined levels, and you've got a compelling title that deserves a lot of attention. *Crayon Physics Deluxe* is very tentatively scheduled for a summer release, and we can't wait to see the polished final version.


See-saw puzzle? Where's Alyx?


Oh god, it's so nice.

SNIPPETS

THE OLD ID AND EGO

kotaku.com/346816/

John Romero and Mike Wilson: two of PC gaming's venerable figures (even if they've not produced anything good in a long time) can dish out the trash talk. Romero suggested Wilson was a useless party animal, and Wilson replied that Romero had left a "bloody wake of ex-wives and fatherless children" across America. You go, girls!

EVE TRIAL ON STEAM

The 14-day free trial of *Eve Online* that came with the download from CCP was barely enough to give you a full whiff of this most absorbing and freeform of space-trading MMOs. Now it's available through your Steam account, and the free play has been boosted to 21 days. Worth a tiddly peek, if you don't like fresh air.

Bug-Fix of the Month

THIS MONTH

HELLGATE: LONDON

Characters killing 65,534 monsters in one session will now be able to save their progress.

Movie of the month

STARGATE WORLDS

Stargate... from campy Egyptian-styled science-fiction with the ladyboy guy from *The Crying Game* and B-movie action hero Kurt Russell to this; a sub-*Halo* jokey drain of a teaser movie that'll wipe out any notion that 2007 marked the return of sophisticated humour in gaming. Enjoy! Or (more likely) not.

Stargates are justifiably considered a *Stargate* staple, in the *Stargate* universe.

Apparently the Grey guys are technologically powerful. You'd have to be, looking like that.

This is where the frigging appalling line "We come in peace. Wait, no we don't." is delivered.

Does it matter? Can any trailer, or game, recover from the crippling lameness of that line?

INDEPENDENT GAMES FESTIVAL 2008

The best of the indie movement get the praise they deserve

THE 10TH ANNUAL Independent Games Festival will be happening as you read this, amongst the Golden Gate Bridges and San Francisco hillocks, and that's a great excuse for us to mention the finalists, many of which have a history in these very *Freeplay* pages. Some of these games are new, some aren't out yet, but they've got some things in common: they've got no massive publisher forcing them to ship early, they've got a unique style and risk-taking attitude, and they remind us why we got into gaming in the first place.

So here's our favourites from the IGF finalists line-up (apart from *Crayon Physics Deluxe*, which got its own page that you'll be able to see if you hold this page up to the light), and let us take this opportunity to congratulate everyone involved, winner or not. And to the winner – don't blow that $20,000 on lipstick, wigs and cocaine.

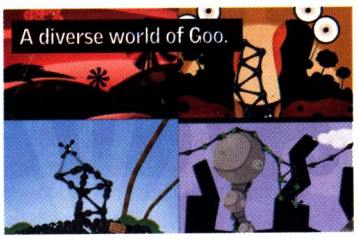
Last year's winner – *Aquaria*.

AUDIOSURF

www.audio-surf.com

Multi-track *Vib Ribbon* meets *Klax*: drive your ship down a track created by your own music collection, and collide with coloured blocks to form clusters on the grid. *Audiosurf* is hectic enough in basic mode, but when you command some of the advanced ships, it's a mental breakdown waiting to happen. The best album we played through was Bowie's *Hunky Dory*.

Drive time.


A diverse world of Goo.

WORLD OF GOO

www.2dboy.com/games.php

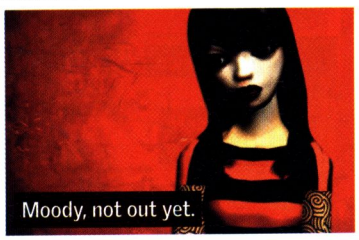
World of Goo sees developer 2D Boy going back to *Tower of Goo*, an old idea on the Experimental Gameplay Project. *Tower* was like slimy *Meccano* – a simple, physics-based joy that was only limited by the one-track nature of the game. *World of Goo* adds so much character and variety to that simple premise that it deserves to be sold for all the money in the world.

FLIPSIDE

www.playflipside.com

You don't get a chance to be put off by the saccharine-sweet opening of *Flipside*, because you're immediately forced to flip the camera around to the evil world. Both sides are the 2D delusions of a mental patient who is trying to escape the hospital. The attention to detail and beautiful design work make *Flipside* one of the most imaginative, thoughtful and disturbing uses of the Source engine we've ever seen.

It's not all sunshine.


Moody, not out yet.

THE PATH

www.tale-of-tales.com/thepath

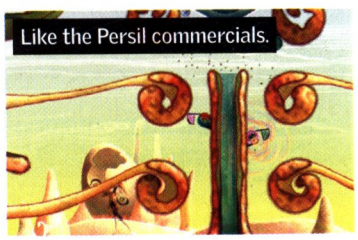
With a release date planned 'tentatively' for 2009, this horror adventure is swelteringly with atmosphere and style. With choices such as the "path of needles, or the path of pins", and a reassurance that completing the game will end in the death of your character, the teaser trailers give a strong sense of *Silent Hill*, but will hopefully contain far fewer hotels and schools with loads of locked bloody doors.

GLOBULOS

www.globulos.com

Globulos lacks the unique style and charm of many of the other games, but it does have that basic gameplay element that can make you forgive any number of sins. Simply send your army flying in a direction, and try to knock your opponent's king into the pit. Your opponent will be doing the same thing at the same time, so this is a game of prediction, psychology and skill. *Globulos* swept through our offices a while back.

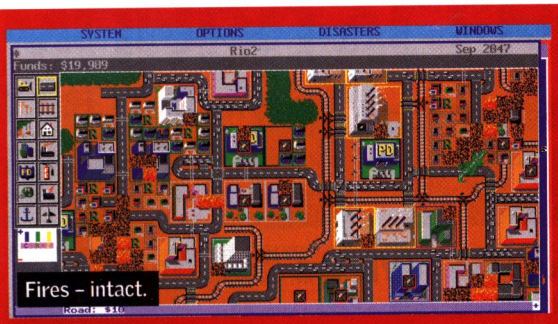
Cutesy Flash nonsense.


Like the Persil commercials.

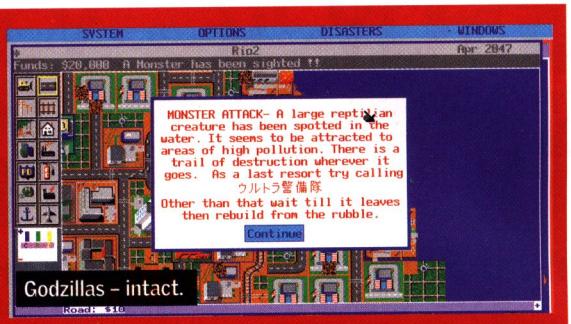
GUMBOY TOURNAMENT

www.gumboytournament.com

Gumboy's first outing in the world *Crazy Adventures* won him some acclaim, and was even made available on Steam last year. This sequel takes the action into the multiplayer arena, without neglecting the loners amongst us with 80 new levels. Once you get used to the peculiarities of the controls, and the behaviour of the different fabrics you can become, it's an engrossing play, and multiplayer can only add to the fun.



Fires – intact.



Godzillas – intact.

MICROPOLIS

Sim City released under GNU – now without plane crashes

www.donhopkins.com/home/micropolis

WILL WRIGHT PROVIDED EA with the cow that couldn't stop shitting money in the form of *The Sims*, and he's working hard on revising evolution to include creatures that have bums for eyes, hopefully, in *Spore*. But this is where it began: the classic dad-game, *Sim City*. Which is now completely free and open source.

Released under the GNU licence, *Micropolis* (EA own the *Sim City* name, naturally) is now open to everyone to play and muck around with. The version of the game that has been released has had plane crashes removed, because humans are a hypersensitive bunch of idiots, and newspapers are cynical and just dumb enough to report the game as a low-res terrorist trainer if they were left in. However, as it's open source, we daresay the planes will be back in soon enough.

You'll need to compile *Micropolis* yourself to run it under Windows, as the game was intended for use with the *Sugar* UI used in the PCs being provided by the One Laptop Per Child programme, so it's not something for the code-averse.

But if coding doesn't terrify you, you can replay this classic and experience the fun of exploiting the game's imperfections and wondering how, so many years on, *Sim City: Societies* managed to get the formula so very wrong.

MULTI-MOD SAMPLER

The best goodies in one place

snipurl.com/multimod | Mod for: *Rome: Total War*

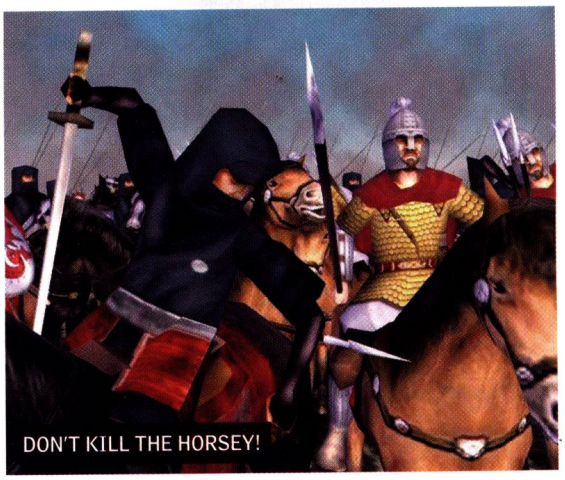
THE NUMBER OF mods for any given game is so large, and of such variable quality, that sometimes you just wish people would sort out the good ones for you. Hell, it's our job to do exactly that, and even we wish someone would do it for us, freeing up our afternoons to stare at our hands.

Readers who can spot a rapidly approaching segue will have already worked out that this is exactly what this mod does, but the *Multi-Mod Sampler* for *Rome: Total War* is more than that. This is a collection of best parts of nine great mods, created in conjunction with the original mod-makers, giving you a pick and mix of new units for campaigns. New units may be included in the future, depending on whether the project is a success, and based on requests.

Make sure you've got the latest patch from Creative Assembly, and this is a breeze to install, and reduces a lot of the effort of research, installation, and general faff that all too often goes hand in hand with mods that don't use the Source Engine.

Although the *MMS* is a great idea, and works perfectly in the narrow slice of gaming where it lives, it's probably not something that'll work in many other areas. The plug-in modularity of units is something that simply wouldn't apply to most other areas of modding – although we'd love to see the guy from *Flipside* (opposite) battling it out in *Team Fortress 2*. Until that day, with any luck, the ranks of our mighty legions will continue to swell..

A sword vs a musket? That's just unfair.


DON'T KILL THE HORSEY!

INTELLIGENT DESIGN

WITH MAXIS SENIOR DESIGNER: ALEX HUTCHINSON

The two 'I's

AN OLD ADAGE that I'm making up right now says that there are two basic ways to make a successful game: innovation or iteration. Either you make something that's completely new that manages to find a fresh way to entertain players or you make a game that's similar to those that have gone before, but you do it better than anyone else.

Iteration seems like it makes the initial design simpler. Most of the core features have already been implemented successfully by other games and you can point to flawless executions in existing titles so your engineers know what they're building. Better still, there's probably some existing tech you can license or build on to get the game off to a running start. But if you don't have the time or money to reach the level of polish Blizzard or Valve puts into their titles, then you're probably wasting your time.

On the other hand if your game hasn't been built before, then the audience will usually forgive a few rough edges or half-realized features – the game is so new and fresh that it doesn't matter!

But the unfortunate truth is that most games that strive for innovation usually wind up making something that's just different, learning the hard way that there's usually a good reason why something hasn't been done before.

Spore is trying to find its mark by pushing innovation, a decision which has lead to some tangible successes as well as some painful lessons. When we finally ship it I hope people get a kick out of it, otherwise the next game I work on better have a jump button, a shoot button and hand-designed levels, or my head will explode.

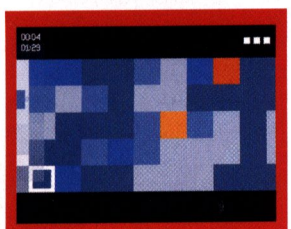
SPORE IS DUE OUT IN 2008 – WWW.SPORE.COM

Freeware

PCZONE ON THE DVD

Skinflint *Steve Hogarty* has a secret: he reviews free games

This month, get frozen over while melting some fiery aliens, set off a chain reaction without Diana Ross, save the president from philosophical sprites, live out your dreams, hump and kill things, shoot lots of tiny things, and click more things, all for free on our lovely DVD.



CHAIN REACTION

In the middle of it

Dev: BenW | snipurl.com/chainreaction

A CHAIN REACTION of events has led me to a game called *Chain Reaction*, which is in itself part of a chain reaction of events inevitably leading me towards a low-res death.

In *Chain Reaction*, you play an orange tile, moving ever rightward through a scrolling patchwork of blue shades of tiles. The left edge of the screen destroys everything it touches, and connected tiles of the same hue become part of the destructive sequence you must avoid. You've got to keep an eye on where your tile is headed, while avoiding the tendrils of annihilation forever reaching after you.

The tiles chime beautifully as they're destroyed, turning the game into a frantic musical cacophony. Offensively addictive, and pleasingly simple, you'll play it at least four times. Maybe more.

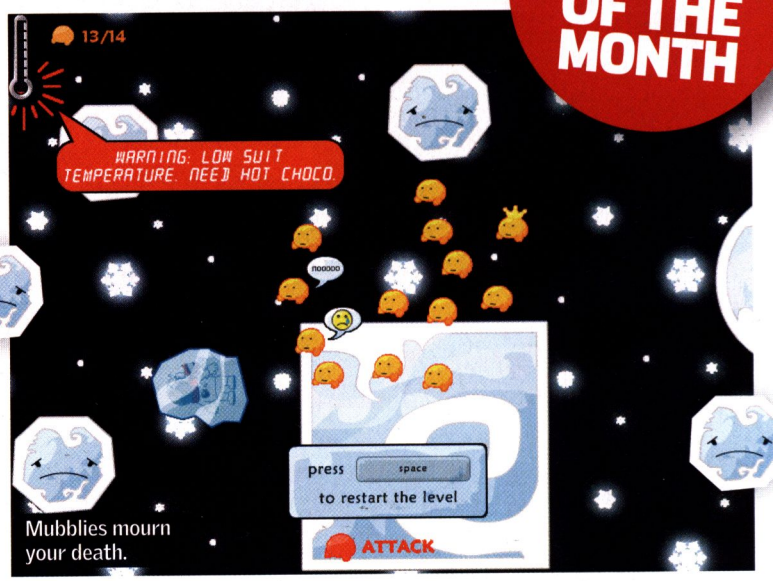
FROZZD

FREEWARE GAME OF THE MONTH

Lovely Mubblies

Dev: Jesse Venbrux | snipurl.com/frozzd

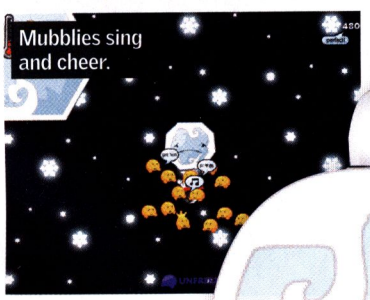
ACCUSING *FROZZD* OF being a 2D *Super Mario Galaxy* clone, and gleefully reiterating Nintendo's tiny planets and gravitational gameplay, would be very easy. It'd also be unfair. Extremely unfair actually, because the interplanetary aspect of *Frozzd* is accompanied by some very clever gameplay mechanics, drawing parallels with fantastic games like *Katamari*, *Loco Roco*, and *Pikmin*. In *Frozzd*, you play an astronaut who's been set the task of rescuing stranded Mubblies from frozen planets across the galaxy. Mubblies are these little yellow squidgy guys who shoot fire, by the way.



Mubblies mourn your death.

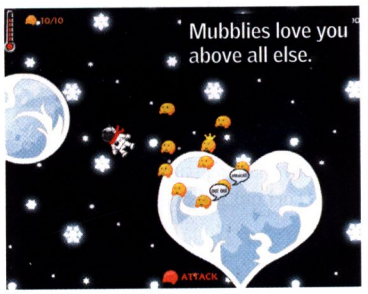
You do this by guiding King Mubbly, finding a frozen Mubbly and unfreezing him with fire. Rescued Mubblies then follow you, adding to your firepower. The enemies are the Frozzd, blue guys who love the ice (fire and ice, see?), and they come in various forms: some can refreeze your Mubblies, others act like turrets, some are obstacles, and others break into smaller, faster foes. The Mubblies alternate between two different orders, one to unfreeze their friends (allowing all your Mubblies to be frozen, or indeed freezing yourself by not collecting hot chocolate, means game over), another to attack the Frozzd – the key is in balancing these two commands, switching between them with the space bar at the right time.

Mubblies get the job done.


Mubblies sing and cheer.

The different enemies create countless strategies. Increasing the number of Mubblies by your side will let you overpower most Frozzd, but later levels place frozen allies in heavily defended areas, meaning you've got to out-think and out-manoeuvre the enemy to reach them – quickly defrosting any friends caught in the icy ordinance, before counter-attacking with a burst of fire.

After collecting the required number of Mubblies (count how many times I've said Mubblies so far), you return to your rocket to deposit them on their toasty warm planetoid, which is just lovely.


Mubblies love you above all else.

Frozzd looks as cool as its icy planets (hurrrr), and controls incredibly smoothly too. Even the game's menu has been made brilliant fun, using your rocket as a means of selecting menu items and new levels.

If only every freeware game had this level of professional polish, then maybe there would be much fewer wars and absolutely no terrorists.

MONDO AGENCY

What is mountains?! Dev: Cactus | www.cactus-soft.co.nr

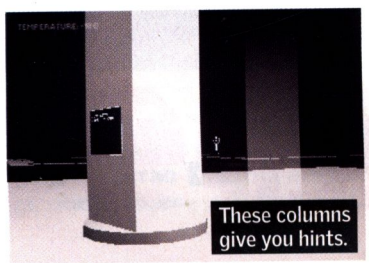
A SEMI-SEQUEL TO the previously covered first-person psycho-puzzler *Mondo Medicals*, *Mondo Agency* **sees you embark on a mission to save the president.**

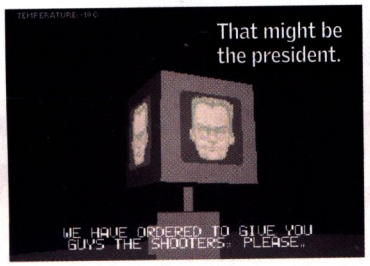
The same bleak, grey graphical style is utilised to great effect, with the jittery, pixellated look adding to the world's already-ominous air of menace.

The game is an interesting experiment at the very least (probably too weird for some), this time around offering you a gun to play with, and the reappearance of scary sprite-men screaming nonsense philosophy at you between levels (my favourite being "WHAT IS MOUNTAINS?").

Each level is a puzzle in itself, perhaps a little self-indulgent on the creator's part (which I'm ashamed to say, having sent him a letter saying I love him), leading to some easily confusing situations.

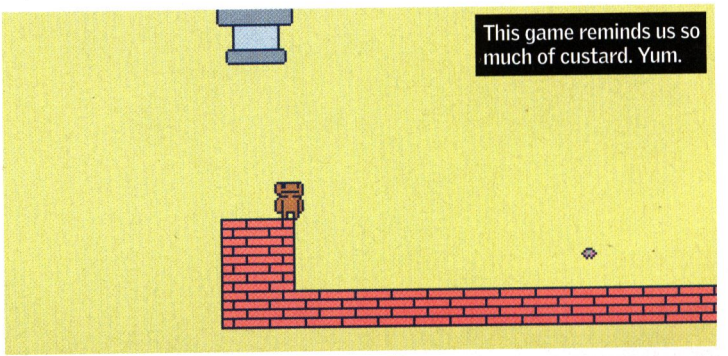
Mondo Agency is very basic, and more interesting than it is fun to play, but we enjoy the originality and mind-buggery far too much to care. Good show.





PSYCHOSOMNIUM

This boy needs therapy Dev: Cactus again | www.cactus-soft.co.nr



THIS IS A short, but extremely sweet platform adventure game from Cactus. You play Jimmy, in one of his dreams. Inside Jimmy's dreams anything is possible, as long as it involves running and jumping and talking to butterflies.

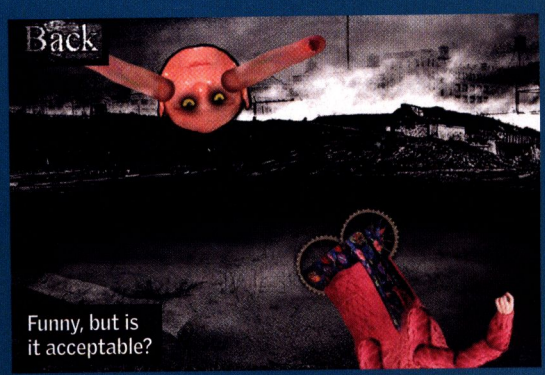
The game is more of a brainteaser than a reflex-testing platformer, turning the traditions of the genre upside-down, and making you think laterally about basic game concepts – we'd love to see bigger developers try this once in a while. Assuming you don't run into too much trouble, you'll play through to the fantastic conclusion in minutes, encountering some brilliant twists along the way. The game's title screen and music are obscenely special too. This is a teensy freeware gem.

HUMPSTERS

The Humpsters are coming Dev: Petri Purho | www.kloonigames.com

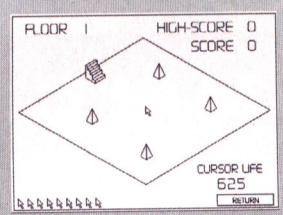
THIS GAME IS called *Humpsters* because the monsters you create are allegedly prone to humping one another, but the closest thing to humping I've noticed is a sort of crab monster who grabbed my monster's hand and frotted relentlessly – otherwise there's no humping at all.

Your task is to build a humpster using body parts you win in fights with other humpsters. Arms, tendrils, wheels; they all combine to form a great big flaying creature, all disturbing and grim, and yet vaguely reminiscent of those cartoons from *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. It's not clear how damage is calculated, but it seems to be dependent on the number and speed of your grotesque limbs – and as you can't control the fight at all, your ability to construct the right creature is the key to victory.



WEBGAME OF THE MONTH

CURSOR*10



snipurl.com/cursor10

IN *CURSOR*10*, AS with most things on the PC, you control the mouse cursor. The objective is to ascend through 16 levels by clicking on upwards leading stairways, some of which are obscured by boxes, which must be opened, but others which only appear when a button is held down.

The problem, then, is that you can't hold a button down with your cursor and then let go to click on the stairs. This is why you have 10 cursors – once your time expires, you move on to your next cursor on the first floor and watch as your old cursor goes through the motions you'd carried out in the previous round. Wait for your 'past-self' to hold down the button for you, before clicking on the stairs to proceed. Fun eh?

The game gets one billion times more complex too.

MINISHOTERRS DELTA

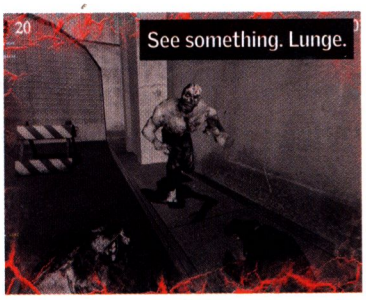
A tiny side-scrolling... shoter Dev: Some Japanese man | snipurl.com/minishooter

AT 320 PIXELS wide and 200 pixels tall, *MinishoterRS Delta* is the most minuscule side-scrolling shooter you're ever likely to play. Firstly, let it be known that you can scale the window up to something approaching a playable size by using the Q, W and E keys – and secondly, let it be known that despite its dimensions, *MinishoterRS Delta* is an astoundingly good shoot 'em up.

The game sounds amazing, it even looks great (if you enjoy pixels as much as you should), and it's got all the depth of play you'll see in a full-resolution, commercially released game.

MinishoterRS features multiple ships, each with their own shooting styles, along with loads of levels, enemies, and strange boss characters. Exactly why it's been made small as a gnat's cock is still a mystery though.

Most authentic chat ever.



ZOMBIE PANIC: SOURCE

PCZONE ON THE DVD

George Romero's Lonely Hearts Club Band...

www.zombiepanic.org | Mod for: *Half-Life 2*

LEFT 4 DEAD **is keeping the zombie genre cool, even if they're not zombies. Although you can't help but wish that more people watched the old Italian eye-popping, face-eating spider zombie films as well as *Shaun of the Dead*.**

So it's still good to see *Zombie Panic*; where the developers have enough time and love for the zombie genre that they've set the scene for a potentially hilarious full version (it's currently in beta). Players can either be survivors or the shuffling dead, and in general must get all kinds of murderous on each other.

The living have weapons (guns and melee), the zombies have night-vision and get most of their kills through hiding in the dark and swiping with their hands. Sadly, the overall effect for the zombies is one of frustration. If you happen to miss your first strike, you'll get quickly pinned down and taste a salty mouthful of gunishment. The humans are ridiculously powerful, and if there's any distance between the two sides, it's bedtime for the undead. Even if the shambly cadavers manage to team up, their slow pace means that you can skip happily up the stairs and make them two shades deader than they already are.

Play: MOD

However, there is a laugh, maybe even two, in *Zombie Panic*, and the beta stage is the right time to iron these issues out. With the proper attention, we're sure it'll turn into something a little more balanced.

HALF-LIFE 2: WARS

PCZONE ON THE DVD

What everyone does when Gordon's not there

hl2wars.moddb.com | Mod for: *Half-Life 2*

LAST YEAR SAW a lot of modding based around the idea of combining the RTS and FPS genres, by pitting one RTS overlord against a plucky troop of FPS heroes. It was interesting – certainly a more satisfying blend than the RTS games that gave you token first-person control of your hero. At the end of the year, though, came *Half-Life 2: Wars*, a pure RTS that requires both *HL2* and *Episode One* installed.

This is a game comprised of those squad members who follow you around, and step back occasionally. That means there's no Gordon hero unit, avoiding the awkward issue of seeing him third-person. After seeing those God-awful cyborg-like action figures, that's something to be thankful for.

Play: MOD

The mod is still in its infancy, with the v0.1 release we played being little more than a training level and a showcase map. It borrows fairly heavily from the presentation of *Company Of Heroes* – which instantly sets up expectations that would be hard to meet – but it's intelligently conceived, well executed, and you get to see headcrab zombies from a new angle. Granted, a few people were floating, and zooming in too far takes you through the floor, but who plays RTS games zoomed all the way in? This is another one we'll be tracking like demented nosehounds.

Bit late love, they're already dead.

BID FOR POWER

PCZONE ON THE DVD

The hellspawn of *Dragon Ball Z* and *Quake III*

www.quakeunity.com/file=888 | Mod for: *Quake III*

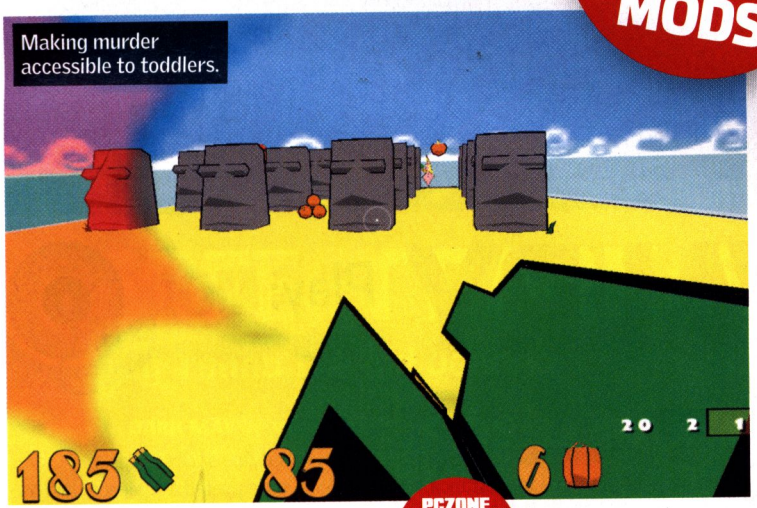
Play: MOD

ANIME – IT'S NOT all bestial hentai, barbed tentacles and furry vore. Some of it's much less interesting. Take *Dragon Ball Z* – a TV show that's often a half-hour grunting match as two sides struggle to produce a more cataclysmic energy beam than anyone previously thought possible.

Bid For Power bucked our rather low expectations by being great. It's a frantic and hilarious total conversion that lets you fly around, firing off explosive 'Ki' attacks. Matches are long – they need to be, as you gain power through every kill, and get new attacks – and can feel epic as everybody reaches their full potential. All powers centre around the mysterious Ki energy, be it flight (which controls remarkably intuitively), blowing people up, or double-tapping strafe to zip about like what we can only describe as a zippy bugger.

The experience is nothing like *Q3A* – it's super-powered, with spectacular high-speed vaulting and gigantic explosions. The controls take some getting used to, especially aiming in the skies, but once you do *Bid For Power* is as total as total mods get. We encourage you to get a game going as once characters develop over a map the fight constantly changes, and Last Man Standing battles can become painfully tense.

BY POPULAR DEMAND... THE BEST QUAKE III MODS



MONKEY KOMBAT ARENA

PCZONE ON THE DVD

Monkey see, monkey blew (up)

snipurl.com/q3monkey | Mod For: *Quake III*

Play: MOD

WHILE WE'RE ON the subject of cartoon graphics, *Monkey Kombat Arena* takes the cel-shaded appeal of the excellent *Jet Set Radio* and the shit *Cel Damage*, and applies it to *Quake III*'s engine. Characters bounce around in a manic Picasso-esque fashion, shooting coconut-rockets and squid-ink at each other.

Monkey Kombat Arena overhauls the weapons and characters of *Quake III Arena*, and adds a stylistic map full of bright yellow sand and bouncing things that make every sentient being fancy a cool carton of Um Bongo.

If you're a fan of monkeys, *Quake* and cartoons, then this may be your cup of tea, with a nice assortment of biscuits and cake on the side.

CHILI QUAKE XXL

Quake III Extreme Makeover Edition

PCZONE ON THE DVD

snipurl.com/chiliq3 | Mod for: *Quake III*

Play: MOD

JUST UNDER EIGHT years old, *Quake III Arena* doesn't look as special as it used to. *Chili Quake XXL* improves it by upgrading the textures to a high resolution (for 2005) finish, adding some special light effects, and making all the characters look a bit sharper.

This mode spruces up the old game, meaning that you can play it all through and play online without anyone being any the wiser to the fact that you can see their blood in glorious HD (whatever that means).

To be honest, it can be hard to notice any real difference. And besides, when you play old games you want the graphics to be shit. That's what nostalgia is all about. Still the effort is appreciated.

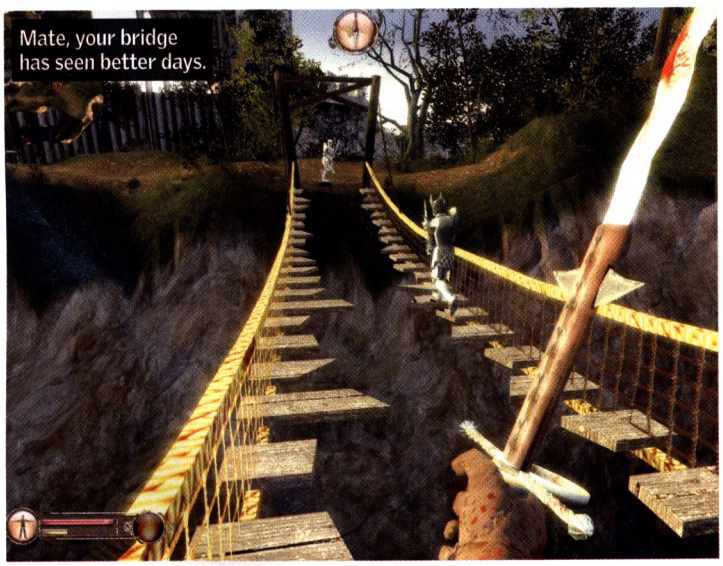
Looks great. Plays OK.

AGE OF CHIVALRY

Play: MOD

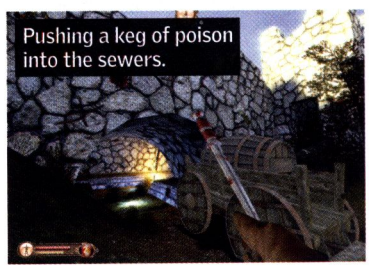
Get your coat love, you've pulled

www.age-of-chivalry.com | Mod for: *Half-Life 2*


Mate, your bridge has seen better days.

MY KNOWLEDGE OF history isn't particularly organised – for instance, when you say the "Age of Chivalry", I instantly think "knights, swords, trebuchets, and putting your cloak over a puddle". But because that last act of chivalry is more strongly associated with Victorian London, my cast list of Medieval England suddenly includes Sweeney Todd, Jack the Ripper, and a dozen wasp-hipped ladies swooning because their whale-bone corsets are too tightly laced.

Which is where I start to talk about the mod itself – playing the multiplayer team-based *Age of Chivalry* is a suffocating, corseted experience. Just as it should be – they're wearing suits of armour, and hauling ruddy great swords around. In terms of realism, it's faultless. In terms of struggling back to the action after getting your chops lopped out by a morning star, it's a bit of of a hindrance.


Pushing a keg of poison into the sewers.

The maps revolve around objectives, such as poisoning the aqueduct with a septic wagon – and there are three classes to choose from – the faster Footman, the heavily armed and armoured Knight, and the Archer with his inaccurate ranged attacks. Each has a choice of weapons, and there are environmental weapons lying around, like a self-reloading explosive catapult.

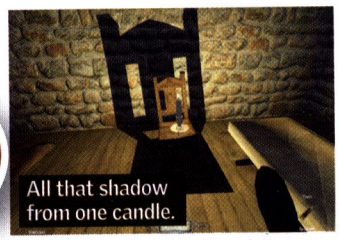
This is all fun for a while, but the imprecision of ranged weapons and the sheer sluggishness of swords make it a game for people who're interested in realism over scintillating gameplay. Try *Dark Messiah*, instead – you get spells in that, too.

Age of Chivalry is a suffocating experience. Just as it should be: they're wearing suits of armour

DARK MOD: THIEF'S DEN DEMO

As if it *Doom 3* wasn't dark enough

www.thedarkmod.com | Mod for: *Doom 3*



Play: MOD

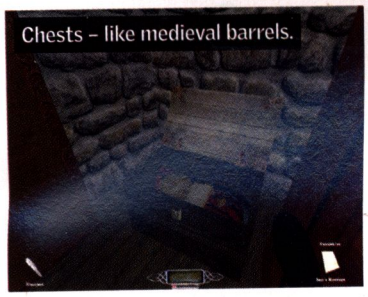
WE REPORTED ON the *Dark Mod* a few months back – it's the total mod for *Doom 3* that was going to try and reproduces the moody brooding, stealth action and rope arrows of the *Thief* universe. Broken Glass Studios have just released their teaser demo – a short level called *The Thief's Den*.

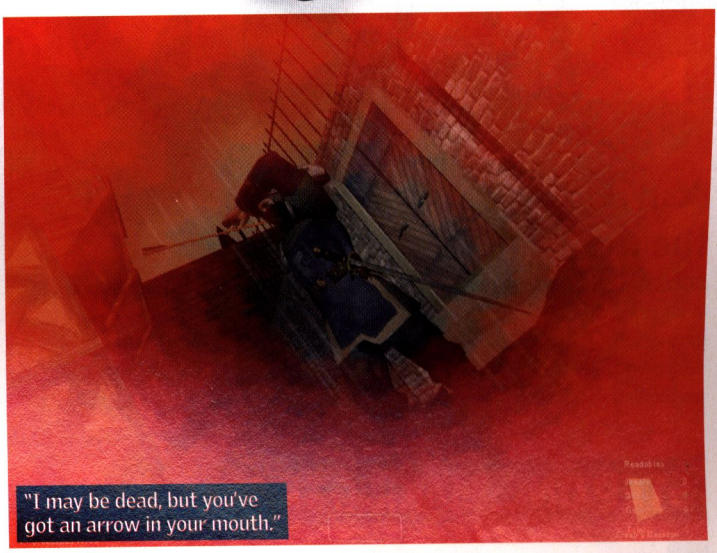
First, lets get the caveats out of the way – this is only an alpha demo, and the team are at pains to point out how rough a demo this is. Voices are just placeholder, they say – the AI isn't developed, and there are bugs and glitches. By the time you've finished reading the explanation of how bad it's going to be, you'd be forgiven for not playing the demo at all.

Which would be a mistake. Sure, the soldiers don't react to an non-fatal arrow in the neck the same way I would (it's fair to say I'd be substantially more foul-mouthed, and far less inclined to resume my post) but the voice acting is better than *Hellgate* and the sound and music are perfectly atmospheric.

The Thief's Den is only a short level, so the opportunity for exploration and mistakes are limited, but this demo gives a great insight into how good the final mod might be. There's no real point in us pointing out the areas that need attention (melee combat, AI, and the annoying propensity to miss the ledge when jumping off a rope) because they're working on it.

The mod doesn't install itself automatically – you need to copy a .dll file into the *Doom 3* installation folder. But here's some time-saving advice: launch *The Thief's Den* from *Doom 3*'s mod option on the title screen then enjoy.



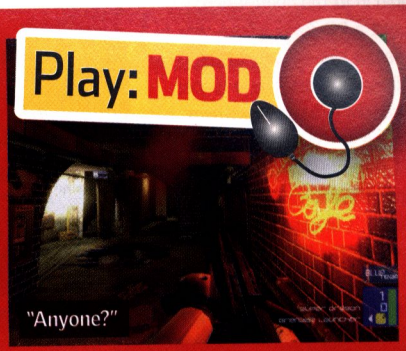


PERFECT DARK: SOURCE

Sitting 'round the old Joanna

www.pdark-mod.com | Mod for: *Half-Life 2*

Play: MOD



JOANNA DARK MAY be appearing in OK-ish games on the 360 at the moment, but her debut on the N64 was a fantastic explosion. The spiritual successor to *Goldeneye*, Rare pulled off a combination of amazing level design, interesting mission objectives, and a whole slew of innovative weaponry.

PD:S is a decent attempt to reproduce the style of Joanna's world in the Source engine

PD:S is a pretty decent attempt to reproduce the style of Joanna's world in the Source engine. Being a multiplayer mod, it's necessarily restricted by the considerations of that game-style. You won't, for example, be hacking a taxi to make it crash – you'll be more interested in capturing flags. The weapons feel solid, the alt-fires are well-implemented, and the main drawback is that no-one's playing, so you'll need a substantial and organised clan to pad out a game. This mod is only at beta stage, so that may explain the dearth of activity, but we felt a bit lonely, rattling around the maps.

PC ZONE JACKASS

BAN THIS FILTH!

Join *Jon Blyth* and *Steve Hogarty* in their crusade against naughtiness

***SECOND LIFE*: A** world of heaving decadence, polygonal pleasures and fleshly indulgence. Just thinking of all those oily, smooth bodies writhing around makes us angry. Well, not really. Then again, it did make it the perfect place to stage our very own tribute to *Father Ted*, by staging a mildly disapproving protest while pretending to be priests. Step forward Father Tedeschi and Father McDonnell!

STEP ONE: MAKING THE SIGNS

LOCATION: Being reluctant to join in to the point where we bought a *PC ZONE* island, we made our signs in one of the public sandboxes. These places are generally free of rudeness, although we did find a massive anti-Scientologist sculpture. A sculpture we're reluctant to agree with, in case Tom Cruise is reading. The last thing we need is a demented midget biting our ankles off.

DEMONSTRATION: Building the placard was easy. One cuboid for the handle, one for the sign. Cuboids are free in *Second Life*, but if you want to texture them, it costs L$10: a shocking 2p. We offset this cash injection into Linden's filthy coffers by donating 3p to abstinence programmes in the American Mid-West. Making a gesture to wave the placard was difficult, but the built-in gesture that happens when you're typing created a gentle wave that was, luckily, perfect.

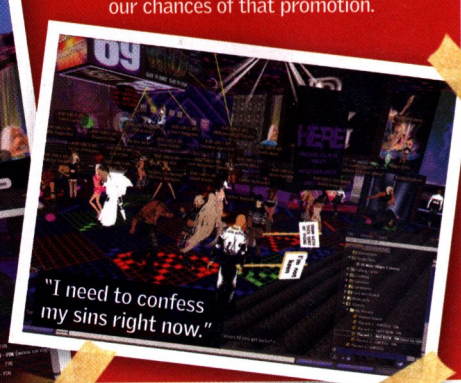
RESULT: People who were building genuinely complicated structures flashed "NEWBIE" above our dumb, cuboid-gluing heads. We've never been happier to be noobs.

STEP TWO: NIGHT CLUB

LOCATION: Dancing has been somewhat naughty ever since Elvis Presley made a bumming gesture on the person in front of him in a queue, and it made a woman's nipples tingle. A Hollywood agent noticed how sexy this hip movement was, and rock 'n' roll was born. This is exactly the kind of sauciness that we needed to slightly protest against. Down with dancing!

DEMONSTRATION: We were welcomed into the club by the amiable owners. Our banners drew a few laughs, as though they thought we were joking – but after that, we were ignored. It quickly became obvious that this was a light S&M nightclub, as the revellers kept slapping each other. Becoming slightly bored, we noticed a couple of scripts lying around that, when touched, would make us tango. We decided to have a little dance before leaving.

THE RESULT: We forgot to put our placards away before dancing, causing them to swing around like gigantic spanking paddles. Considering the fetishistic nature of the club, this is the point where the Bishop Brennan should have walked in, and scuppered our chances of that promotion.



PCZONE PCZONE

SEND US YOURS!

We didn't have time to mobilise a full protest this month. However, if you're interested in joining a solemn, priest-led parade in the world of *Second Life*, Father Tedeschi and Father McDonnell would love to meet you. But as we're not in Lindenworld that often, you should register your interest by emailing letters@pczone.co.uk. Let's make this world a more awkward place.

STEP THREE: POLE DANCING

LOCATION: A brief search turned up a number of lap-dancing joints. The first one we visited was a small, out-of-town affair, with a couple of girls performing unlikely gymnastics with scant regard to collision detection. We were the only visitors there, so we took a seat.

DEMONSTRATION: We had to make sure that this was worth protesting, so we observed the goings-on for a while before whipping out our placards. Taking the charitable approach, we even offered to donate L$10 so they could upload a texture to clothe their poor, topless avatars.

THE RESULT: Even though we were the only customers there, and despite our generous offer of a tuppence, we were quickly banished to the roof of a nearby stadium. When Father McDonnell tried to fly back into the club through the walls, we were banned.

They're not even naked – disgusting.

STEP FOUR: SEX SHOP

LOCATION: Sex shops are possibly one of the naughtiest places in the world. Ever since the dawn of time, furtive businessmen have emerged from sex shops with brown paper bags, looked both ways with melodramatic flamboyance, before running screaming down the street. Fertile protesting ground for priests...

DEMONSTRATION: If placards can't bring down the multibillion pound sex industry, then nothing can. We roamed the massive sexy superstore looking for people. If we saw someone buying a butt plug or a hat for their boobs or whatever these people are buying, we'd gently remind them that a benevolent god was watching them. With placards.

THE RESULT: Sadly, the sex shop was deserted. There wasn't even a sales assistant. With no-one to protest to, we decided to have a little sit down on a pool table until someone came in. Unfortunately, there was a script attached to the seats that triggered an eyebrow-raising act of ecclesiastical man-on-man fellatio. This is the point at which the Pope should have walked in, saying "I hear you boys have been spanking people in nightcl-" crossed his chest and swooned.

Accidental fellatio – a risk of *Second Life*.

STEP FIVE

And finally, here is a picture of Steve wearing a penis costume he made. Being a priest – it's not all protesting. Sometimes we dress up as a 12ft penis.

No comment necessary.

DOWN WITH THIS SORT OF THING

Online Zone

www.pczone.co.uk

Can't wait for the next *PC ZONE*? Don't panic! Just hit www.pczone.co.uk now for up-to-the-minute news, exclusive features, forums, special competitions, pubcasts, Fight Club news, online chats and the *PC ZONE* blog!

NOTES FROM THE FORUM

Let's all talk about our game-related dreams...

I had the most horrific nightmare once. I'd taken some holiday, and filled up my otherwise empty days flitting between *Quake III* and *Tetris* on the GameBoy.

Anyway, in this dream of mine, I was running around in some unholy amalgamation of my favourite *Q3* maps, completely pwning with a rocket launcher. Flipping through the air like an acrobat, frag after frag, gore everywhere.

It was beautiful.

Just when I reached the culmination of my one-man killing spree, a huge shadow began to wash over the courtyard I was running through. I looked up, and to my horror, the sky was filled by the biggest L-shaped Tetronimo, descending without mercy to crush the life from me.

I woke up sweating just before it landed...

SunScramble

I dreamt *GTA3* the night after I'd heard about a 3D *GTA* game – but before I'd seen any screenshots or whatever. I actually got déjà vu when I played the game because I had dreamt the stadium (correct pinkish colour and all) and the surrounding roads almost exactly. Also, the character in my dream (third person view) had a micro Uzi, a leather jacket and brown hair... scary.

concretepiggy

I had dreams of being in *Morrowind*, trying to sort out whatever mission I was on, or just have me doing weird things in the *Morrowind* world. Funny thing is, when I got and started playing *Oblivion*, I carried on having the odd dream that now involved *Oblivion* quests, but they would always take place in the *Morrowind* world, not *Oblivion*'s!

humorguy

The last one I remember was a few months back, jumping out of my bed when my alarm went off for work. I felt like I had to start frantically repairing a deployable as a GDF technician in *ETQW*.

Marzeh

ON THE BLOG

PCZONE 2007

What's been happening on *ZONE's* web diary this month...

THE INTERNET and all its denizens were shaken with a mighty quake of Steve Hogarty's blog about the blinding similarities between *Robocop* and *BioShock*, only for him to be mobbed by belligerent fans of both, drawn from a link on Kotaku.

Will also treated us to a trip inside his mind when he revealed that a long haul of *Oblivion* had left him with Nirnroot infested dreams (see Notes From The Forum), which were better than the time that he played too much *Team Fortress 2* and attempted to kill Steve with a wrench.

We also blogged ourselves numb inviting you to chat with us on Zone Chat and fight with us on Fight Club – which you'll already know if you read pages from right to left, like they do in Saudi Arabia.

PCZONE PUBCAST!
Round 6 now available on the *ZONE* website and iTunes!

POSTCARDS FROM THE EDGE

WIN!

Send us your MMO character screenshots to win stuff...

You already know all about our '*PC ZONE* Around The World' bit in Letters, where we ask you to send in your photos of yourself holding your favourite mag all over the globe. Well now, you're cordially invited to send us screenshots of you or your clan in your favourite MMO with a brief, jolly explanation of what you're up to. The best two postcards sent to us every month at letters@pczone.co.uk will be printed here and win a PC game. Get snapping...

FIGHT CLUB

It's right to fight for the right to fight

COME AND TAKE ON THE ZONE STAFF IN OUR MONTHLY ONLINE GAMING FREE-FOR-ALL!

FIGHT CLUB IS excellent for several reasons. First, you guys can take out the frustration of getting paper cuts from the issue on us personally, and secondly, we can take the frustration of a day's work out on you. Personally.

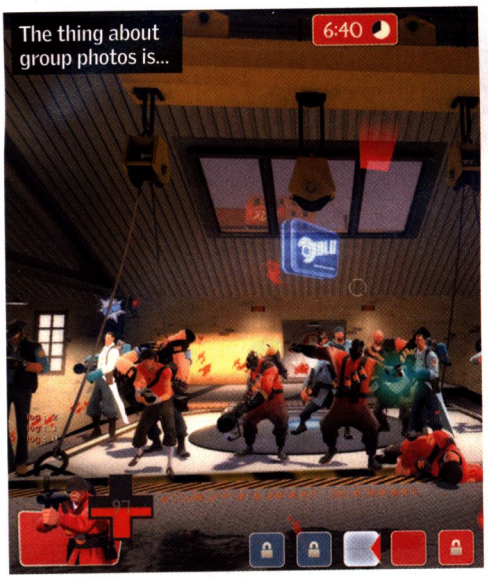
This month was, again, *Team Fortress 2*, with Log, Ed and Will split across two servers and two maps: Dustbowl and Gravelpit. Ed had a sudden Zen reaction to playing the Heavy, and found himself vaulting up the scoreboards meteorically, much to everyone's surprise.

Log played medical trickery by hiding in corners and healing the people actually doing something, and Useless Dave used his teamspeak to shout German at us. Will ranted about bastard heavies, spies, snipers, and pretty much every other class destroying his Soldier.

A special mention must go to the epic battle waged between Nightmonger and Ed Zed, who traded dominations and revenges for the whole event.

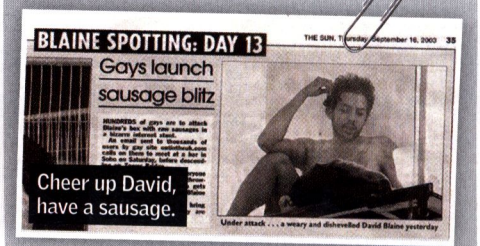
Late-comer teenagemoustache also made his mark, bringing the Red Team back from their initial failings to nearly take the game from the mostly dominant blues, along with Electro Bull, who filled the third checkpoint with more grenades than even an invulnerable Heavy can stand.

Naturally, Log made the players stand around for a photo, until somebody went all Mark Chapman on us and set everybody on fire, ending the amnesty and causing a Blue team rush to the capture points. Sigh.



ZONE CHAT

Last Train To Chatanooga



The move from IRC to Steam Community chat room is still somewhat overwhelming – chats have never been so busy, and it's never been easier for people to say "stuff this, come on, let's play *TF2*". We stuck diligently to our guns though, and bantered about inconsequential shit.

We remembered the competition this month, in which Will asked the headline under which Log had got into *The Sun* in 2003. The answer was, of course, "Gays Launch Sausage Blitz". Unitled (sic) wins a bucket of games – if you want the chance, join our Steam group at www.steamcommunity.com/groups/pcz and you'll be warned of forthcoming events.

How to join in!

To be a part of next month's Zone Chat, join our Steam Community group: PC Zone (PCZ). Keep an eye out for announcements at the www.pczone.co.uk forums for the date of the next chat event...

Can't make Fight Club?

If you can't make it to Fight Club – perhaps you're too busy fighting fires in East London armed with a special hose – then join other *PCZ* readers on the following public servers. Who knows – some of us might even be there. The latest info can be found at www.pczone.co.uk.

WHO'S WHO

Jamie Sefton PCZ_NorthernScum
Will Porter PCZ_Batsphinx
Steve Hogarty PCZ_escaped_monkey
Phil Wand PCZ_People's Front Of Judea
Jon Blyth PCZ_Log
Ed Zitron PCZ_Edz

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. **ENEMY TERRITORY: QUAKE WARS**
pczone2.jolt.co.uk
6. **PREY**
prey.zonegames.co.uk:27719
7. **BATTLEFIELD 2142**
bf2142.zonegames.co.uk:16567
8. **TEAM FORTRESS 2**
pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27115
pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27125
pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27135

Here I am facing off against a gigantic worm in the Bone Wastes. You have to beat a gigantic drum to make it appear, and this process is called 'fumping'. Fump fump fump.

Bogfather (Will Dibley)

This delightful chap from America, Illinois showed us a trick in the *Deer Hunter 2005* demo, in which he managed to lodge a digit in the arsehole of a horse. Amazingly enough, he wasn't kicked to death.

Matt and Mike

Take your PC gaming to the next level

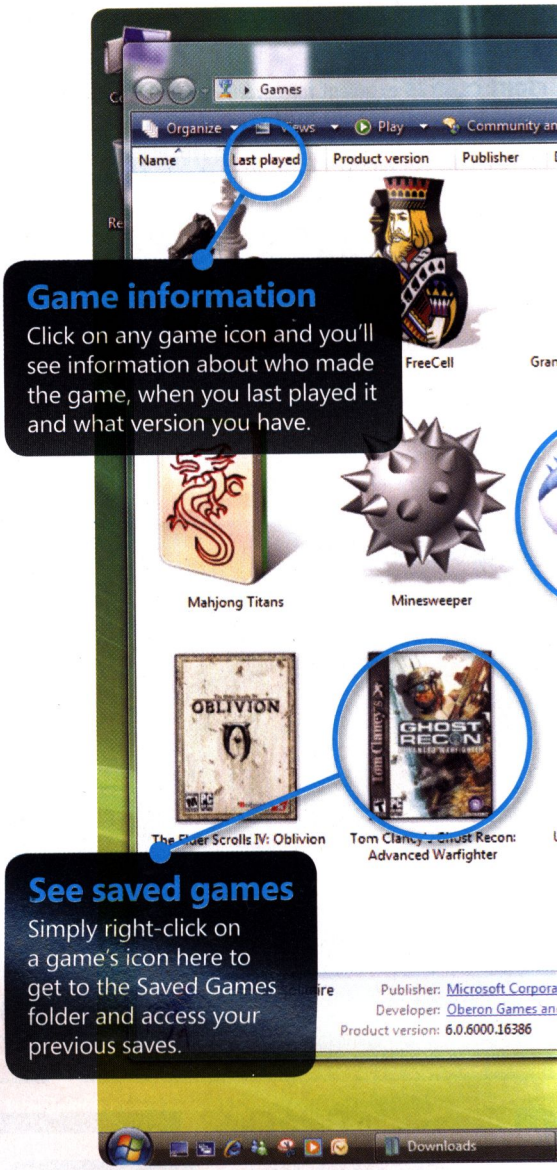
Windows Vista brings a whole host of next-generation features to the discerning PC gamer. Here are just a few that you need to know about

Windows Vista is the brand new version of Windows. Not only does it offer huge improvements in security, usability and appearance over Windows XP, but it's primed to meet all the demands that 3D games will be throwing at it.

It all revolves around DirectX 10, the new interface that games programmers are going to be using to push the boundaries of 3D games. DirectX 10 brings with it incredible new levels of detail and the ability to have more complex objects moving around in each scene. The result is stunning and offers a much more cinematic experience. Want to see what we're talking about? Just take a look at the in-game footage of Crysis at www.crysis-online.com. You'll be blown away.

There are other improvements, too. Windows Vista also introduces a new Games Explorer, which will make all your games accessible from a single location. And if you share your PC with your kids, you'll be happy to know that there are built-in parental controls to prevent them playing games unsuitable for their ages. Also, if you own an Xbox 360, it's good to know that its wireless controllers will work with Windows Vista as well.

So, if you want to stay current with your PC gaming, then Windows Vista is the way to go. Oh, and those massive improvements in PC security, usability and appearance? Don't worry, they're all thrown in for free.



Game information
Click on any game icon and you'll see information about who made the game, when you last played it and what version you have.

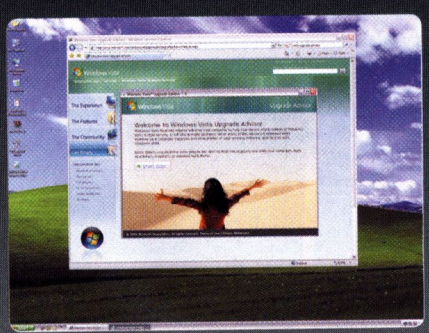
See saved games
Simply right-click on a game's icon here to get to the Saved Games folder and access your previous saves.

Is my PC up to running Windows Vista?

Don't panic, there's every chance your PC will run Windows Vista without upgrades, especially if it's capable of playing the latest 3D games. But all PCs are not created equal, and to ensure that you get the best gaming experience, only PCs that are worthy can upgrade to Windows Vista.

It's easy to find out if your PC meets the requirements – simply download the free Windows Vista Upgrade Advisor from www.microsoft.com/windowsvista/getready. Run it on your PC and you'll get the definitive verdict on whether your computer is up to running Windows Vista.

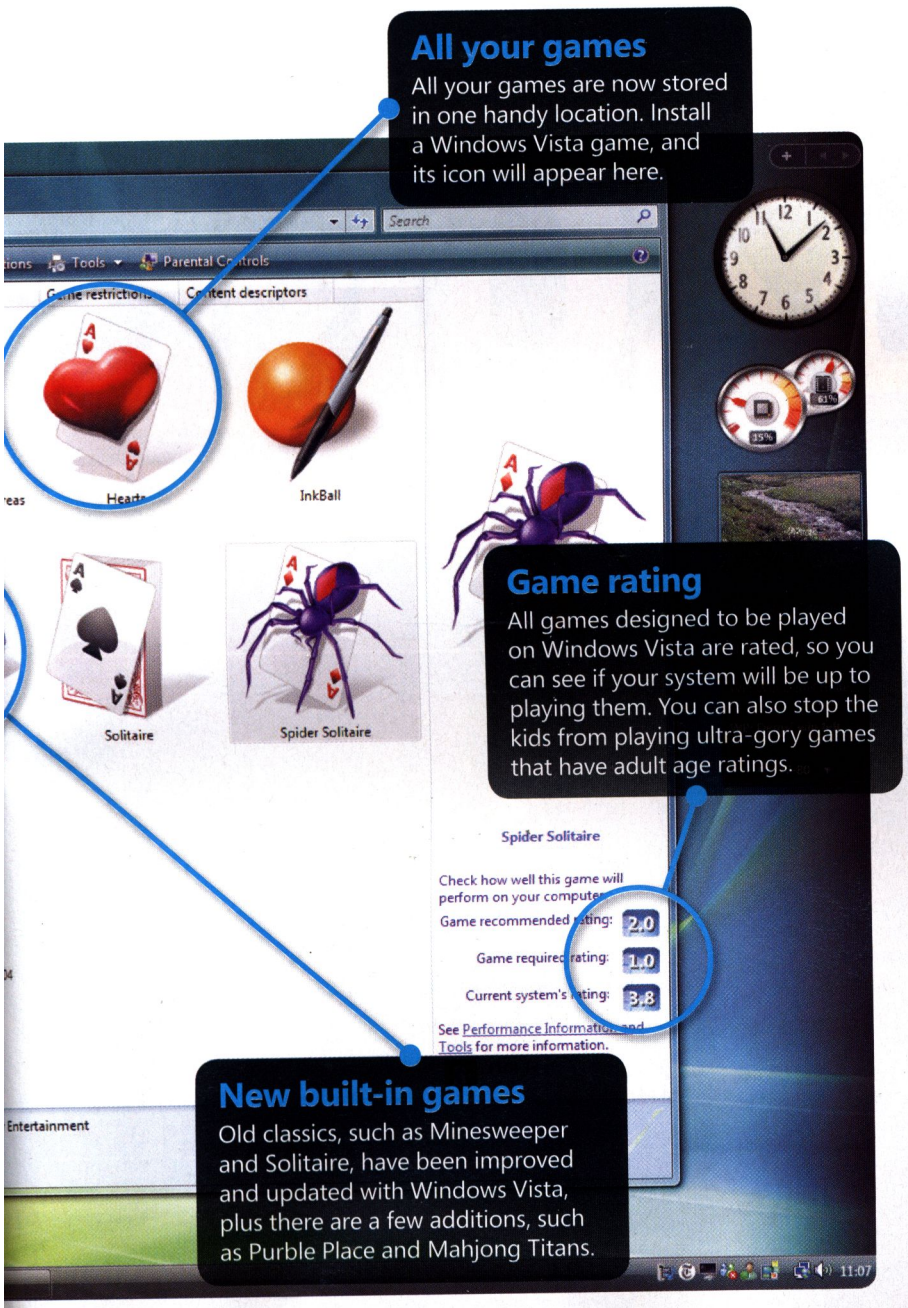
Windows Vista gives each PC a Windows Experience rating that tells you at a glance how powerful your processor, graphics card, memory and hard drive are, with a single combined score. The higher the number it comes up with, up to a current maximum of 5.9, the better your PC will be able to run Windows Vista and whatever games you want to play on it.

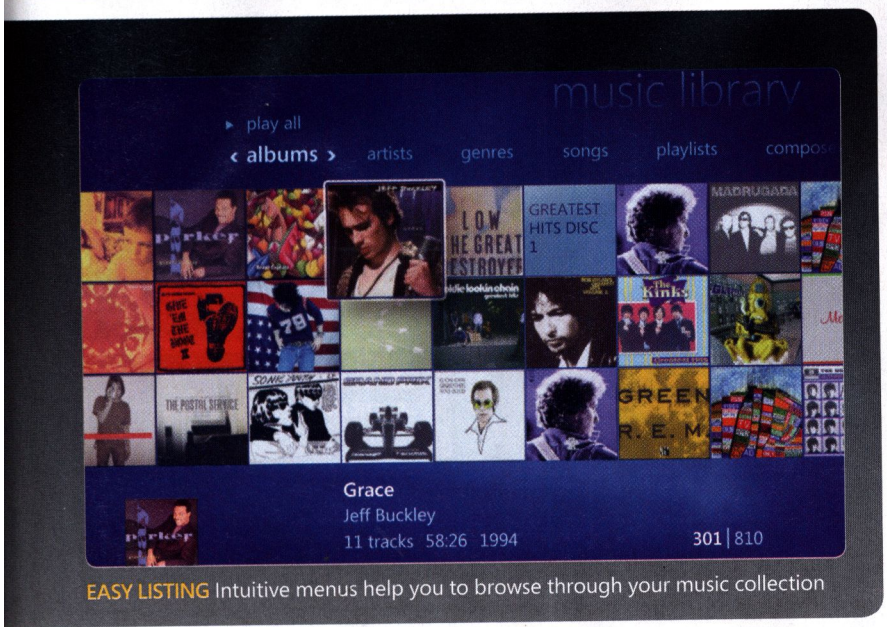


RATE YOUR PC Get an at-a-glance rating of how well your PC will run Windows Vista

Super Media Cente

Windows Media Center is at the heart of the Ultimate and Home Premium editions of Windows Vista. Connect up your PC to an HDTV and browse your music and video collection. What's more, you can bin your set-top DVD recorder! With Media Center and a TV tuner card in your PC, you can play, record and timeshift TV programmes. Get hold of Windows Media Center Extender (a device that plugs into your TV) and you can stream your media from a PC anywhere in your house. If you own an Xbox 360, this Extender capability is already built into it.





EASY LISTING Intuitive menus help you to browse through your music collection

Get more from your PC with *Windows Vista: The Official Magazine*

Whether you're already running Windows Vista, or thinking about upgrading, *Windows Vista Magazine* tells you everything you need to know

We'll show you...

- The wide, wide world of Web 2.0 – build a site from scratch in just 15 minutes!
- How to solve wireless network problems, without knocking down walls!
- 15 fast fixes – from hardware to installation, you can sort it yourself
- How to sort your finances on your Windows Vista PC

Plus...

- Free web-building software disc and Windows Vista Home Entertainment book

Issue 15 is out now

Find out more at
www.windowsvistamagazine.co.uk

RetroZONE

GALAXY MODE ACTIVATED

***Jon Blyth* commits genocide using a phrase book**

EMULATION OF THE MONTH

BUT HOW?

We couldn't get the DOS version of the program to work under *DOSBox*. However, the Atari ST version was a reasonable facsimile, and that's the version we played. To get it running, you'll need the STEem emulator, and automation disk A_077.

Downloading hacked disk images adds a double-naughty thrill that you can only normally get eating triple chocolate cookies whilst farting in a church.

Once you're in, prepare to be bewildered by an effete self-pitying alien, a muscular idiot who wants you to blow up planets, and some of the most absorbing nonsense ever.

Links...

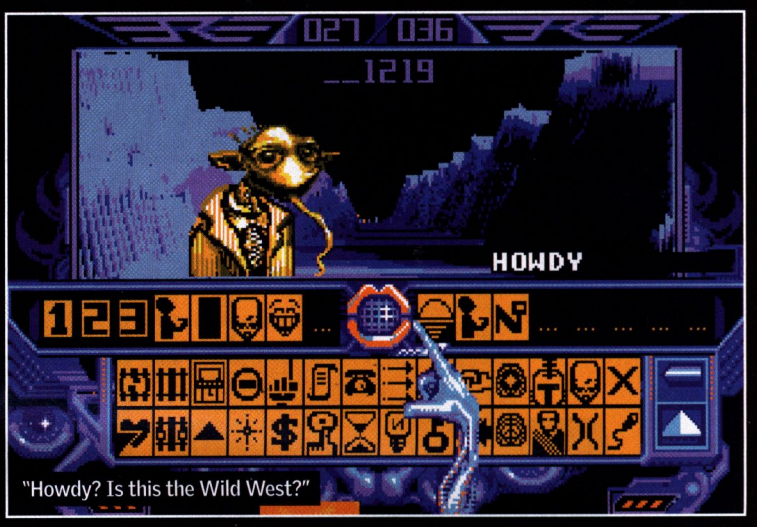
1. **tamw.atari-users.net/steem.htm**
   The Atari ST emulator
2. **steem.atari.st/automation.htm**
   A page full of links, to who knows where

TO GIVE YOU an idea of the era *Captain Blood* comes from, let me describe the two video options: you could choose the dazzling kaleidoscopic palette of 16 colours, or if your system was one of the older 286 chipsets, you could compromise with the screaming drug overdose that was the four-colour set.

If you weren't aware of the kind of game you were about to play, *Captain Blood* would be an incredible experience. Not so much a game, as a perplexing exploration. You played Blood – a disembodied, fleshless arm fingering the console of his ship – during his mission to hunt the galaxy for his clones, called the 'Numbers'.

The game is broken into several sections. There's a galaxy map, with thousands of destinations you're free to explore. A planet view lets you examine and land on the planet. This included a short flying minigame, where you could pause the wireframe action to let the game draw in the (always) icy blue landscape.

Then there was the game's centrepiece: the UPCOM. A lo-fi but feasible version of a Babel fish, it could decipher alien pidgins, and allow you to construct your own clumsy sentences. Depending on the outcome you might get the co-ordinates of a new planet, a request to beam aboard your spaceship, or – if you're lucky – the chance to blow the planet up.



"Howdy? Is this the Wild West?"

Destroying planets though typos makes it very easy to make this game impossible, but for many *Captain Blood* was just a cool planet explosion graphic and hyperspace effect that was to be unmatched until the opening credits of *The Day Today*. For others it was the most engaging and original game of the time. And it also had music by Jean-Michel Jarre, but the game's good enough to forgive that.

TALKING BLOOD

Phrase book for the intergalactic Lothario

FORBIDDEN SEX TIME (LAUGH)
I decide to open with the Brazen Slag Gambit. What can you lose?

YOU GIVE ME BAD REPRODUCTION MISSILE
When that doesn't move, I try the more delicate phallic innuendo.

YOU NOT WANT ME (SOB)
When it looks like my cheeky moves have failed, I go for pity.

GENETIC MALE, FEMALE IDENTITY
Best to be honest about these things before we make it to the bedroom.

SAY YOU LIKE ME, ME NOT DESTROY YOU
Soon enough, the rejection brings out the violent brute in us.

ME FRIEND PRESIDENT, YOU DEAD
Our parting shot is the simple, classic death threat. Always wins.

NOW & THEN

RED ALERT 3 vs *RED ALERT*

NOW

THEN

WHILE IT'S ALWAYS tempting to go back to *Dune* when looking at retro RTS games (especially when there's such a great conversation to be had about sandworms, and how the sandworms in *Dune* weren't as good as the ones in *Beetlejuice* and *Tremors*) that undersells *Red Alert*'s own longevity. Plus we've got that whole *C&C* mega-feature thing going in this issue, so we should give some attention to the first spin-off from *C&C*.

The alternate-historical adventures of Josef Stalin's attempt at world domination, caused by a time-travelling Einstein assassinating Hitler, came out the same year as Deep Blue beat Kasparov at chess and Lara Croft took her first running leap over a three-squares-wide gap.

Although *Red Alert* was originally, somewhat tenuously, tied into *C&C*'s tiberium storyline, it's the cast and arsenal of sexy Russian spy ladies and Tesla coils that makes *Red Alert* a slightly more daft, balls-out fun experience.

Not to mention that the two sides had different strengths and weaknesses, as opposed to the blue scissors beats red paper, red paper beat blue stone of most previous RTS games. Here, red scissors were fairly slow, and prone to getting a nasty paper cut. Analogy murdered.

PLAY IT!

PCZONE ON THE DVD

To taste the oddest RTS setting around, break out our cover DVD and give it a lick.

1. ***Red Alert* is a classic PC game, and you can still buy it. *Command & Conquer: The First Decade* is a superb collection, and is available from retailers for £30.**
2. **However, if you want to play the original *Red Alert* right now, you're out of luck. The demo didn't work on our machines, so we didn't put it on the disc.**
3. **However, there's plenty more *C&C* on the cover disc, and it's all stuff we managed to get to work, despite Microsoft's best efforts.**
4. **If you want to download the original *Red Alert* demo yourself, head to snipurl.com/redalertdemo.**

MAME FRAME

LUPIN III

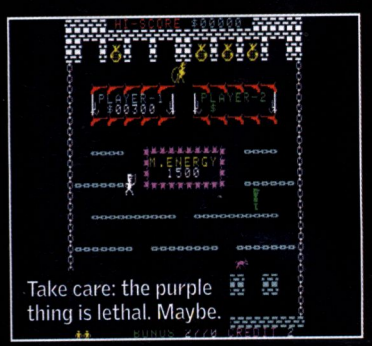
Year: 1980

LUPIN III'S FIRST adventures date back to the '60s – and his comical, ungentlemanly heists have been the subject of manga, anime, TV shows, musicals and computer games ever since. He's a lot bigger in Japan, and the 1979 anime *The Castle of Cagliostro* – one of the few Lupin anime to reach the UK – may be 30 years old, but to this day, it features one of the best animated car chases you could ever hope to see.

The PlayStation 2 games (stealth-'em-ups in the style of *Metal Gear Solid*) may not have been Lupin's finest moments, but they were full of character. So it's a shame that this 1980 *Pac-Man/Frogger* chunky pixel hybrid was such a tedious bucket of shit, really.

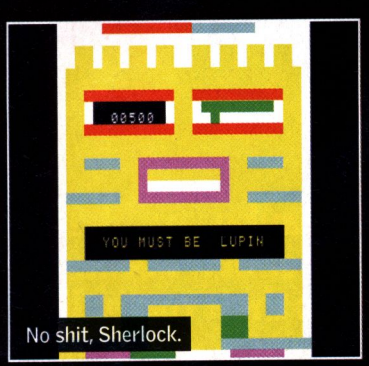
The point is to move the eight bags of coin down to the bottom, using only your walking skills and the ability to teleport three times. For a maze game, cornering is the only thing you need to do, so it's amazing that they managed to make it such a stuttering clunky chore.

As far as we remember, this is the first movie tie-in disappointment – and if you know better, then get to the bloody forums at www.pczone.co.uk and tell us what morons we are. Everyone else who visits there does, so why not you as well?


Take care: the purple thing is lethal. Maybe.

WHAT IS MAME?

MAME is the *Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator*, currently emulating over 3,500 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.



No shit, Sherlock.

This looks fun, but isn't part of the game.

BACK IN THE DAY...

PITY THE MEAT

By Future Log

I remember when I worked on *PC ZONE* – a bleak and hopeless time when my body was still absurd flesh, and I saw not the glittering 12-dimensional hyper-helices that to my old eyes would have appeared as little more than a kaleidoscopic madness.

Although humans have migrated upwards, we often gather together in hypothetical palladia to stage reminiscences. Only three glimmers ago myself and a few co-dependant subroutines were talking about *Pac-Man* and *Robotron*, and saying we should definitely do a remake. Games in the year 39D2 are shit.

SUPERTEST

BEST SHOOTER ENEMY

PCZONE ON THE DVD

In our long killing careers, have we kept any trophies?

YOUR VIEW

Last month we talked in a fairly haphazard way about shooters in 2007. Your replies were equally, if not more haphazard, and we deserved nothing more.

UNFAIR I SAY
I can't believe *Call of Duty 4* scored less than *Gears of War* and *Crysis*, and scored a whopping 7% less than *BioShock*! Anyway, *COD4* would be my shooter of the year, followed closely by *STALKER*...
Beats12

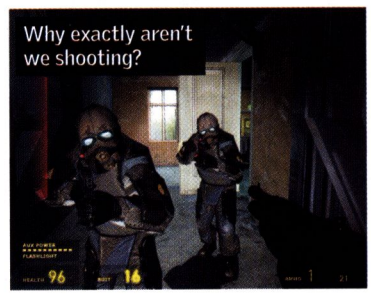
ICE KILLED MY PC
I liked *Crysis* until I got the snow jungle and it all turned into one pretty corridor that almost killed my computer, which had run it fine up to that point. *Call of Duty 4* was great even though it ended just as I was getting good at it. As for *BioShock*, I hate it, because my girl got hold of it and now I am banned from my own PC.
JoWoo

CHERNOBYL FUN PARK
STALKER – Probably the shooter of the year for me. I do love exploration though, so that probably has something to do with it. I would have liked a little more in the way of content designed to make use of the freedom and the beginning and end were pretty bad, but overall good stuff. If we're giving scores, I'd give it 413 grotesquely mutated animals out of 100,000. And that's way above average, by the way.
Musicalgibbon

WHAT IS THE most satisfying enemy to kill? It's an ambiguous question, and can be read in different ways. Lovers of strategy might find most satisfaction in a challenging boss with superb AI. They might take satisfaction from a prolonged battle, in which the tides occasionally turn. Being defeated once or twice might even add spice to the eventual victory.

Fans of the old-school pre-AI shooter might love cannon fodder – take *Serious Sam*, and its stress-relieving weak-ass goons approaching you in a straight line, right into the range of your shotgun. If you don't mind a bit of AI, perhaps *Half-Life* blew you away, when you overheard the marines talking to each other.

You might think fondly of the *Doom* bestiary, from Cacodemons to the Mancubus, as one of the first times you really played a game where it felt like you were actually ploughing through a crowd of demons.


Why exactly aren't we shooting?

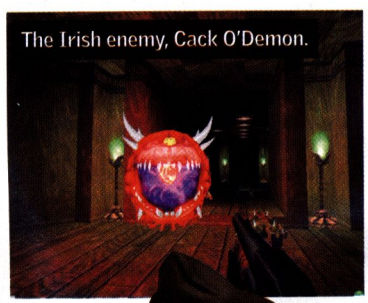
Or perhaps mowing down *Duke Nukem 3D*'s mutated swine coppers with a rocket launcher made you whoop in excited bacon-tinged bloodlust.

And just possibly, maybe you like killing *WOW*'s Treants, because they look a bit sad and undignified as their top half slides onto the floor. There's very little tactical satisfaction, but – well, you made a tree sad, and that's its own reward.

So, what seems on the face of it a facile question is, in fact, a fascinating window into the mind of the answerer, and should be included in psychological testing for people who've expressed an interest in killing things – whether they be a soldier, pest exterminator, or a local GP.

Register your opinion on the forums at pczone.co.uk. There'll be a thread at the top just for this very question on that very page. PCZ

We're mental us!


The Irish enemy, Cack O'Demon.

Honestly, I mean, honestly.

Maybe you like killing *WOW*'s Treants, because they look a bit sad as their top half slides onto the floor

STEVE HILL'S NeverQuest

Steve Hill finds something fishy in *WOW: The Burning Crusade*...

***NEVERQUEST* IS A** bit cloak and dagger this month, with mysterious talk of hilarious surprises. An appointed time is agreed, and in an unprecedented move, overlord Will Porter even gives me the keys to his account. This is a bit like rummaging through someone's belongings, and I'm shocked and appalled to discover that he has a character called Junewhitfield. Ignoring his fetish for '70s sitcom actresses, as instructed I select a Blood Elf called Batsphinx and enter the world with some trepidation.

The gang's all here, namely Will (in another guise), new boy Ed, and the Irish one. Although there's a slight problem in so much as the latter is stuck behind a jug. Watching his pitiful attempt to escape his embarrassing jug entrapment, I ask if this is the big surprise I was promised, an Irishman stuck behind an item of pottery.

"No," replies Will. "This is amusing stuff AS IT HAPPENS."

He's half-right, and while Irish Steve attempts to extricate himself from earthenware, Will tries to distract me by showing me a Spectral Tiger, a beast that is apparently worth £400 on eBay.

HILLY THE FISH

Eventually, Steve's jug hell is over, and it's time for my actual surprise.

"Right then," says leader Will. "Shall we don our garb?"

"Yes!" squeals the dejugged Irishman.

"Steve," continues Will. "In your inventory there is a Murloc suit. Right-click on it and we shall become the most famous players in all Orgrimmar. If all goes well, this will be the closest to being a celebrity you will ever know."

"I doubt it," I reply. "I'm a big deal."

Nevertheless, I follow his instructions and am astonished when my generic character is transformed into a bizarre fish-like creature. I'm not the only one to be taken aback, as with all four of us in full Murloc garb, the local populace reacts as if Elvis has just walked in and ordered a burger. The reaction is understandable, as thanks to a Christmas present from Blizzard, we are apparently the only Murlocs on the entire server, and so perhaps the world. This is enough to stop people in their tracks, and within minutes a crowd has gathered. Lapping up the fame, we gleefully converse in our native tongue, as the multitude looks on agog.

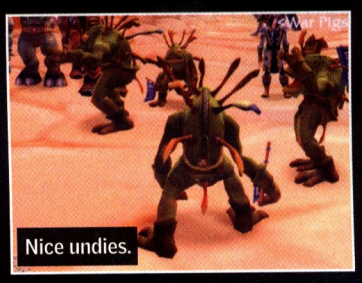
"Grlrglrglrgllrglr..." says Ed, apropos of nothing.

MURLOC KINTYRE

"Wtf is that??????" inquires the passing Sorith. If he were to check wowwiki.com (seriously) he would know that "the Murloc is a bipedal, amphibious, ichthyoid (fish-like) race residing along coastlines, lakeshores and riverbeds." They're not generally found on baking house roofs, but that's where the four of us decamp to dance, sing and take the acclaim of the gobsmacked throng.

Ed causes an exodus that leads to an innocent being torn limb from limb...

"Rgrlgrlgrl RGRLRRR!"



Nice undies.

"We're like The Beatles," exclaims Will, with a modicum of overstatement. The rooftop setting may be redolent of the Fab Four at their most indulgent, but they didn't sport fishman costumes, even if it was the '60s. All the same, we are mobbed in similar fashion and I have to issue an appeal for all non-Murlocs to get off the roof so we can take the publicity shots.

Yet a lumbering oaf by the name of Calter refuses, saying he'll get off the roof if we give him the code to get his own Murloc costume.

"Here's the code," I generously offer. "F U C K O F F".

As I'm using his hard-earned character, Will immediately goes into a flap, terrified that I'll get him banned. Steve actively encourages me though, urging me to "call him a %^&*," whatever that is.

SUITS YOU

Meanwhile, Ed has come up with an ingenious ploy to get rid of the hangers-on, many of whom are now offering money and favours for a mere sniff of the fêted Murloc costume. By claiming that's there's a guy in a nearby auction house that has to be killed in order to earn it, Ed causes a sudden exodus that leads to an innocent being torn limb from limb by a baying mob. To add insult to injury, Ed claims he killed him and earned a second costume.

By now the crowd are borderline feral, but I'm relishing the power.

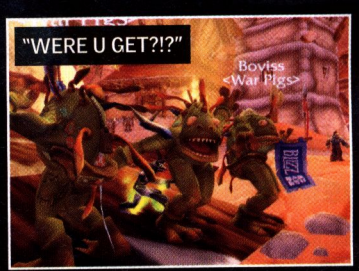
"MURLOC COSTUME FOR SALE," I yell. "ONE CAREFUL OWNER."

"Me me," come the replies. "Plz plz plz."

Will is less pleased however, yelling "SHUT UP PLEASE STEVE" and throwing a genuine strop that involves spitting at me, glaring angrily, and threatening to "honestly" kill me if I damage so much as a zip on his beloved suit. His helplessness is tangible, and in a fit of pique he storms off, never to return. After an hour of baiting the public, I wander into the desert, take off the Murloc suit, and leave Will's Blood Elf under a noose. PCZ

"WAT IS CODE 4 COSTUME?"

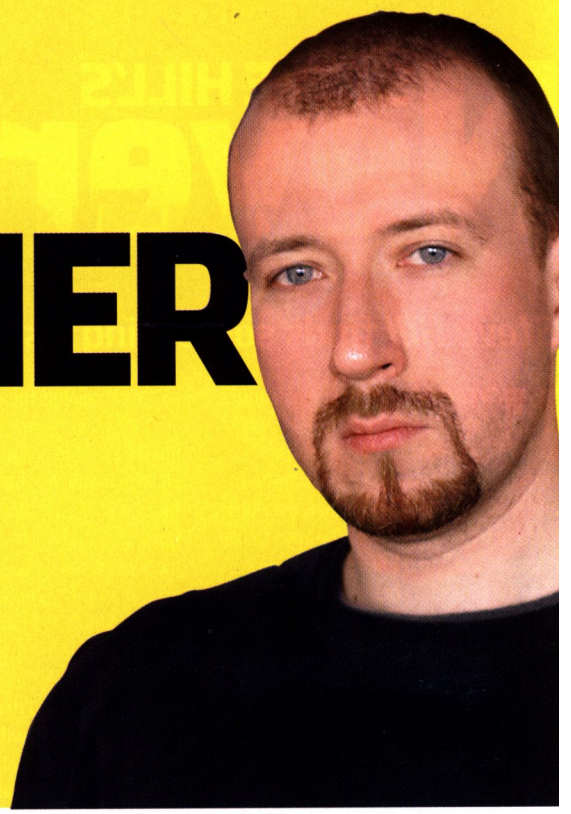
"How??"



Just hanging around.

DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY

THE WITCHER

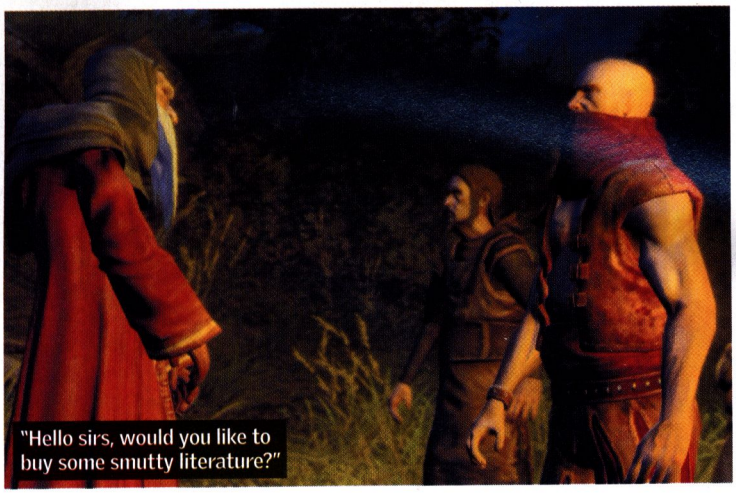


Will Porter talks Polish fantasy, racism and soft porn with its chief designer Michal Madej

WHAT HAVE THE Polish ever done for us? I mean apart from coming over here with a strong work ethic and doing plumbing, building, coffee-making, bartending and vegetable picking in the middle of winter? Well, what they're starting to do is develop some mighty fine games.

The most recent example of this is *The Witcher*, developed by CD Projekt. A development team comprised of a hardy bunch of individuals that cut their teeth by translating RPG heavyweights like *Planescape: Torment* and *Baldur's Gate* into Polish.

Somewhat controversial in that it allows the player to collect sexy ladies in rude stances, but nevertheless a fine outing in roleplaying, the thinking behind this mature-themed RPG adaptation ran deeper than the designers' overindulgence in female flesh suggests...



"Hello sirs, would you like to buy some smutty literature?"

01 **BIG IN POLAND:** "The initial idea was to create a fantasy RPG based on a known franchise. We started talking to Interplay about making a PC port of *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance*, and after some time and some problems, we started looking for something else. We realised Andrzej Sapkowski's *Witcher* saga would be great. First of all, he's our own Polish writer and because he has a new vision of fantasy his work was fantastic to turn into a game. It was inspiring, it was unique, it was fresh, and while we had to translate the IP to other territories and that would be a challenge, we knew it would be a success. In Poland, Russia and the Czech Republic, people are crazy about his work. I believe he's as popular as Tolkien, or even more so. Everyone went crazy about the game when it was released. In these countries it's not just a game – it's more like a cultural event. We had mainstream newspapers writing about it, it was on TV, everywhere. He's the most popular Polish writer today – and not just in fantasy writing – he's just the best Polish writer."

> **"In Poland, Russia and the Czech Republic it's not just a game – it's more like a cultural event."**
> Michal Madej on the impact *The Witcher* has had in Eastern Europe

02 **AUTHOR'S NOTE:** "Andrzej Sapkowski is quite an old guy – he's almost 70 – and because there was an incredibly bad movie in Poland based on his books he'd had bad experiences. He was really afraid that we'd make a bad game. Initially he said 'I've sold you the license, I just want the money, I'm not interested,' but after one or two years, he realised that it looked good, and the story was interesting, and got more and more involved. He began to help us to create the map of the world, which was something he'd never done before. He was really excited – by the end he said it was the sort of thing that he'd always wanted to create. Him saying that was almost as important as what gamers thought and the review scores we got. We had created something that even the original author found exciting."

Geralt seeks out the local ladies of the night.

03 **DECISION MAKING:** "Sapkowski's books are different from the usual fantasy books, as you don't have the eternal struggles between dark and light. You don't have good and evil in his books – just shades of grey, having to choose between lesser evils. So it was important to have choices in the game that were morally ambiguous. Each time you have to think to yourself 'Which one of these is right or wrong?'. Decisions have to have an effect not only on your own character's life, but also on other people's. In most RPGs, your decisions only affect you, but I feel it's more emotional if you see somebody else dying, rather than just seeing yourself change. If you see the whole city dead because you made a key decision and those people were close to you, then that has a profound emotional effect. The core idea is that these important, emotional decisions make up the story that you're told."

Whoa there, steady on.

04 **THE QUICKSAVE CURSE:** "RPGs should let you save and load games – but it does destroy the illusion of choice, as you can load and reload to test what can happen when making key decisions. So we decided to separate decisions from results with large amounts of time, so that it would be impossible to reload to see a different choice's effect without replaying a large chunk of the game. Their separation also means that when you encounter a situation that's a result of your own choices there's a cutscene that reminds you that something you did 10 hours ago actually meant something."

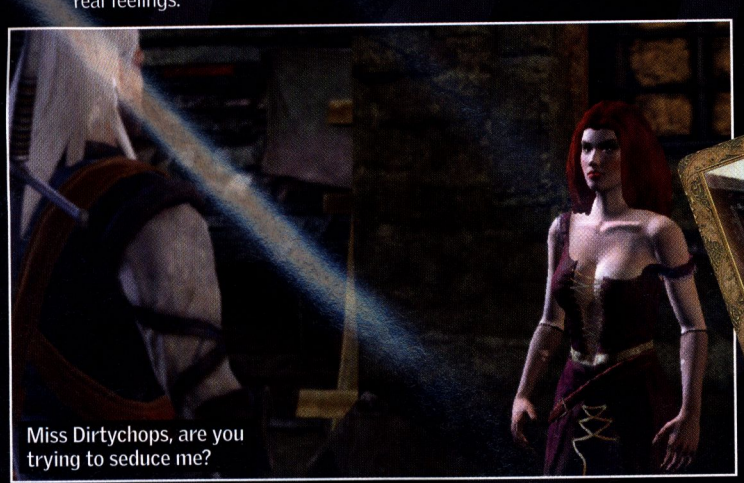
Gollum? Never heard of him.

"Small differences get people killed. Can you imagine a fantasy world in which Elves and Dwarves and Humans all loved each other?"

Unlike Tolkien-esque fantasy, racism is realistically portrayed in *The Witcher*

05 **SOCIETY AND THE ROLEPLAY GAME:** "If you read Sapkowski's books, it's more like reading a newspaper. It's really smart – much more entertaining than reading about some knight going to a bad kingdom and fixing everything. They're about real problems, real people, and about our real history – it says a lot about the way we live with things like racism. If you look around nowadays, people kill each other just because of the colour of their skin, their religions, their favourite team – small differences get people killed. Can you imagine a fantasy world in which different races like Elves and Dwarves and Humans all loved each other because they're naturally good creatures? Sapkowski created a world that is much more real – asking what would actually happen in fantasy if those races were real people, with real emotions that are more similar to our own. It's kind of an anticipation of what would happen in a Tolkien world if characters had real feelings."

06 **ALL THOSE SEXY BITS:** "Sex is probably the most important element of our lives. The sex is in *The Witcher* because the game is about real people. It's not the main element of the game, but it exists: it's the main motivation for many characters, and it's a driving force for many plots. In real life, there are many wars that have begun because a king wanted to have sex with another queen. We imagined that, but in a fantasy setting. We wanted to have Geralt to be able to have sex, but it's difficult to show it in the game, logistically and legally. However, we wanted to give some kind of reward to players for having sex. The cards were inspired by calendars with beautiful girls on them. We wanted to do something like that with different postures as a reward, without showing exactly what's happening. From the beginning the European countries were the most important, so we weren't afraid of showing nudity. However, we knew the game would be released in America, so we did alternative versions for them."



Miss Dirtychops, are you trying to seduce me?

Just as he got to second base, her dad walked through the door.

07 **TRANSLATION DIFFICULTIES:** "*The Witcher* was produced in Poland and written in Polish, it's based on Polish literature and uses lots of fragments from those books. So translating it into English was hard, as the languages are just so different. In Sapkowski's writing there's a lot of swear words – and in Polish we can create thousands of swear words, it's easy to create something new. In English, there are about five ways to say it. So translating this rich vocabulary into English was simplifying things somewhat. Also, one sentence in English will be much longer in Polish, about 20 per cent longer, just because we have longer words and so on. So, as we tried to estimate the number of words in English, we decided that it would be about 20 per cent less – that was a big mistake. You have lots of short words in English! We made this very rough estimation of how long the English translation would be, and soon realised we had twice the amount of text to record. Which was just impossible in the time we had before the game's launch. The only way to get around it was to make the script shorter."

08 **THE HACK AND THE SLASH:** "The most interesting development of the game was the combat. The goal was to create a really exciting system, combining tactical, skill-based roleplay elements with something that was much more emotional – action-adventure, *God of War*-style. If you read the books, the witchers fight in a dynamic, fast-paced way. We wanted to have the same impression as in the books: that you're playing as a professional. He's not excited at all, he's a fighting machine trained to kill in the most efficient way. It took about a year of different prototype fighting systems to create something that was based on timing, which focuses on what's happening on screen in real time, and add some very simple choices to, in the end, create a complex, enjoyable system. We wanted it to be simple, fluid, and focused on what's happening around you, reacting tactically and intuitively. It's there to make combat fun, cinematic and exciting – very much part of the story."

Click, click, click, click, boom.

In Poland, it's always raining, and everybody has long hair.

"Because of World War 2 and Communism, we lost 50 or 60 years of our culture"

Madej says *The Witcher* will help Poland regain some pride

09 **POLISH PRIDE:** "Because of the Second World War and Communism, we lost about 50 or 60 years of our culture, because we were closed. We weren't able to make movies or anything for the western world, and this is one of the first times we've created something that's been a major success there. The game has also appealed to Polish people who don't usually play games – there's this stirring sense of patriotism. But for me, the most important element was thinking about the people around the globe playing the game. They're not thinking about it being a Polish game, but as a European game. For me, it's the game we always wanted to create – having something that can be recognised as having European qualities and culture."

SCI-FI-LONDON 7

THE 7TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASTIC FILM

30 APRIL - 4 MAY 2008

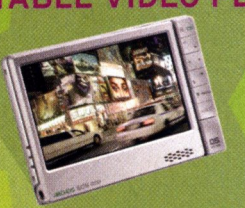
APOLLO WEST END
19 LOWER REGENT STREET
LONDON SW1

TICKETS: 020 7451 9944

APOLLO WEST END FILM LONDON SFX

www.sci-fi-london.com

WIN THIS ARCHOS WiFi PORTABLE VIDEO PLAYE



visit www.sci-fi-london.com/arch to enter the draw

PCZONE

Future Publishing,
2 Balcombe Street
London NW1 6NW

TEL: **020 7042 4720**
FAX: **020 7042 4729**
EMAIL: **letters@pczone.co.uk**
WEB: **www.pczone.co.uk**

Question: What game would you live in?

ALLIESS
Editor Will Porter 020 7042 4725 *Crayon Physics Deluxe*
Production Editor Richard Cosgrove 020 7042 4723 *Baldur's Gate*
Art Editor Dale Pratley 020 7042 4727 *Super Mario Galaxy*
Deputy Art Editor James Roff 020 7042 4722 *Samantha Fox Strip Poker*
Disc Editor Ed Zitron 020 7042 4726 *Viva Piñata*
Section Editor Steve Hogarty 020 7042 4728 *The Sims 2: H&M Fashion Stuff*
Staff Writer Jon 'Log' Blyth 020 7042 4724 *Peggle*
Editor at Large Jamie Sefton 020 7042 4721 *Red Alert 3*
Contributors Pavel Barter, Alex Dale, Steve Hill, Martin Korda and Philip Wand, Alex Hutchinson, Dan Marshall and Richie Shoemaker
PCZONE.CO.UK Editor Gavin Ogden 020 7042 4311
Hardware Photography In-house

SOVIETS
Group Senior Editor Steve Jarratt
Group Art Director Ian Miller
Creative Director Robin Abbott
Design Director Matthew Williams
Editorial Director Jim Douglas

Ad Director Ryan Ferguson 01225 788114
Ad Manager Charlie Oakman 01225 7322880
London Sales Director Malcolm Stoodley
UK Sales Director Jayne Caple

MARKETING
Acquisitions Product Manager Stuart Brann

CIRCULATION
Circulation Manager Stuart Agnew

PRINT & PRODUCTION
Production Co-ordinator Michelle McCormack
Production Manager Ralph Stringer
Head of Production Richard Mason

LICENSING
Head of International Licensing Tim Hudson
Tel + 44 (0)1225 442244 **Fax** + 44 (0)1225 732275

FUTURE PUBLISHING LIMITED
Assistant Publisher Lee Nutter
Publishing Director James Binns
Chief Operating Officer Simon Wear
UK Chief Executive Robert Price

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Phone our UK hotline on 0870 837 4722
Subscribe online at www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk
For back issues call 0870 442 0957

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE... 27 March

Printed in the UK by Southernprint on behalf of Future.
Cover printed in the UK by Midway.
Distributed in the UK by Seymour Distribution Ltd,
2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT. Tel: 0207 429 4000

Future Publishing Ltd is part of Future plc. Future produces carefully targeted special-interest magazines, websites and events for people who share a passion. We publish more than 170 magazines and websites and 100 international editions of our titles are published across the world.

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

Non-executive Chairman: Roger Parry
Chief Executive: Stevie Spring
Group Finance Director: John Bowman
Tel +44 (0)1225 442244

PCZONE is the registered trademark of Future Publishing Limited. All rights reserved.

© Future Publishing Limited 2008. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used or reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. The registered office of Future Publishing Limited is at Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. All information contained in this magazine is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. Readers are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this magazine. If you submit unsolicited material to us, you automatically grant Future a licence to publish your submission in whole or in part in all editions of the magazine, including licensed editions worldwide and in any physical or digital format throughout the world. Any material you submit is sent at your risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents or subcontractors shall be liable for loss or damage.

SUBSCRIBE NOW!
PCZONE
Call **0870 837 4722** or log on to
www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk

recycle
When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

FSC
Mixed Sources
Product group from well-managed forests and other controlled sources
Cert no. TT-COC-1815
www.fsc.org
© 1996 Forest Stewardship Council

All details correct at the time of going to press. But they might change. *PC ZONE* is a fickle mistress, much like the sea or lady luck.

NEXT MONTH!

MAFIA 2

Don your trilby and dust off your Tommy gun: the PC's greatest free-roaming shooter is back, and it's ready to blow your mind

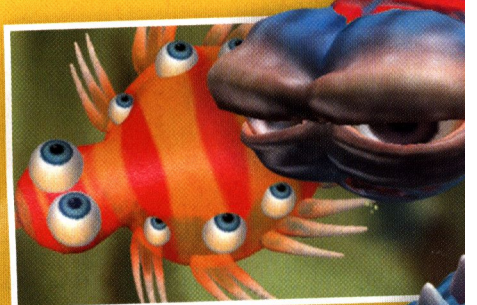
LOST: THE VIDEO GAME
Will the game live up to the TV show and the hype?

RAINBOW SIX: VEGAS 2
The sequel to the tactical shooter. But has it gone bust?

ASSASSIN'S CREED
The crusading time adventure finally arrives on the PC.

THE BITCH IS BACK

New details burst out about the latest acid-spitting *Alien* first-person shooter.



SPORE

Why Will Wright's take on evolution is taking so long.

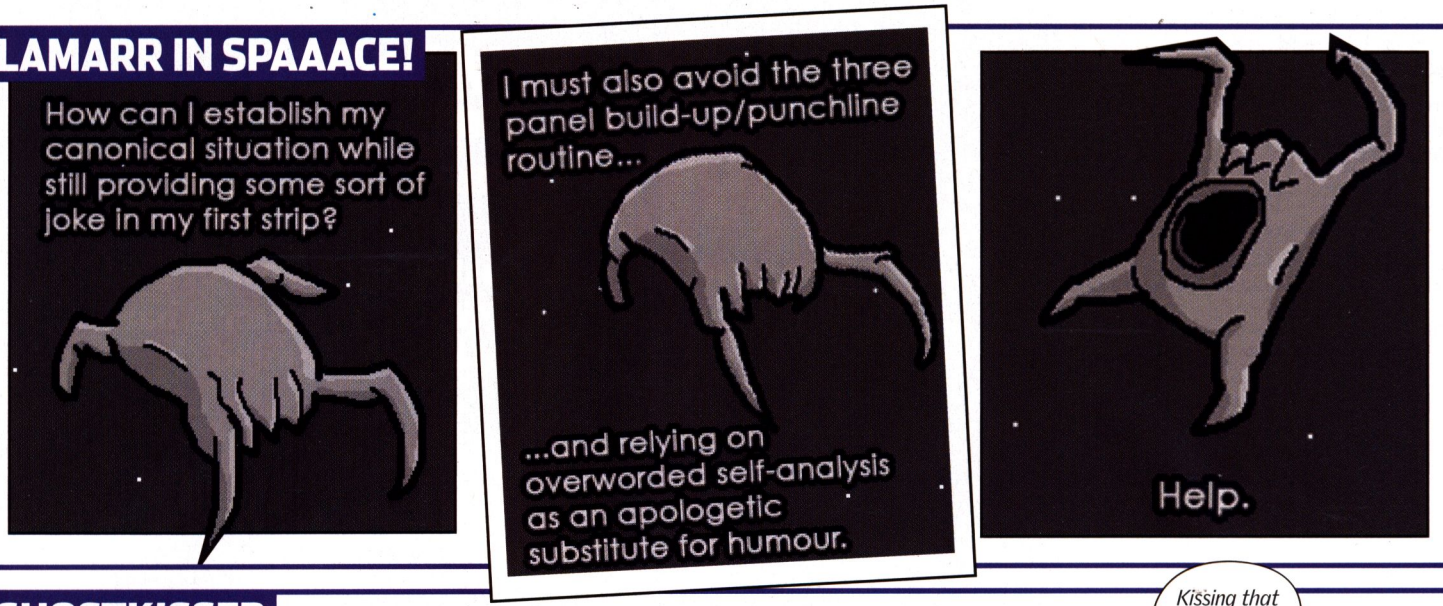
ALSO! **Steve Hill returns with an incredible Reality Check, Retro Zone brings teary-eyed nostalgia, and a whole crapload of new mods, maps and free games**

ON SALE 27 MAR

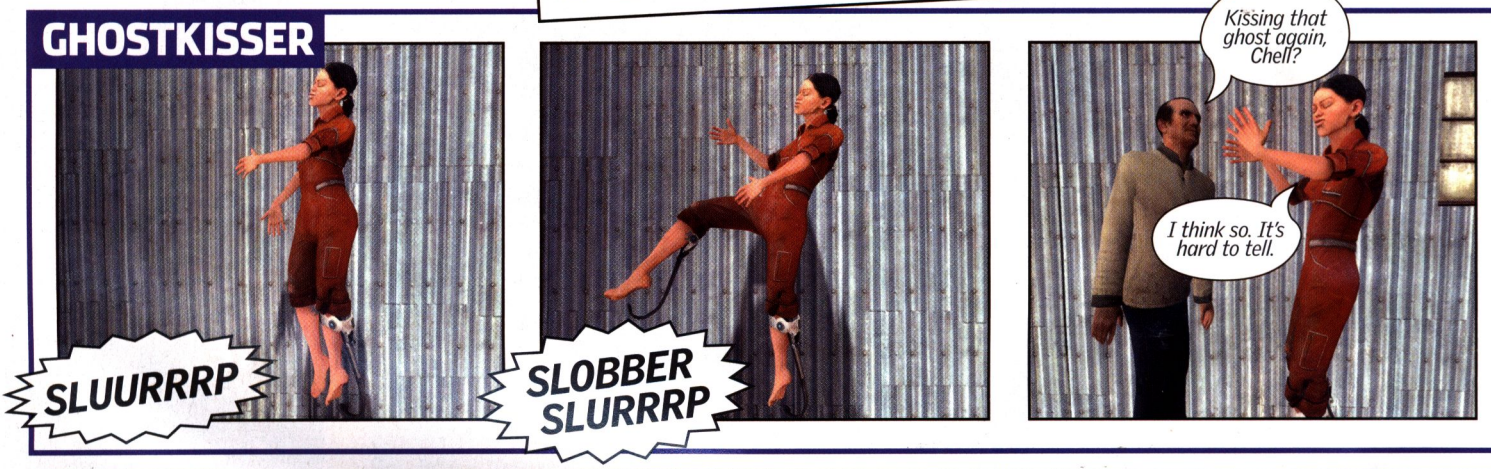
VALVE FUN STRIPS

Because we have too much free time the current trend in the *PCZ* office is to knock together crap comic strips and email them around. Here, for your viewing pleasure, are the least rubbish ones...

LAMARR IN SPAAACE!

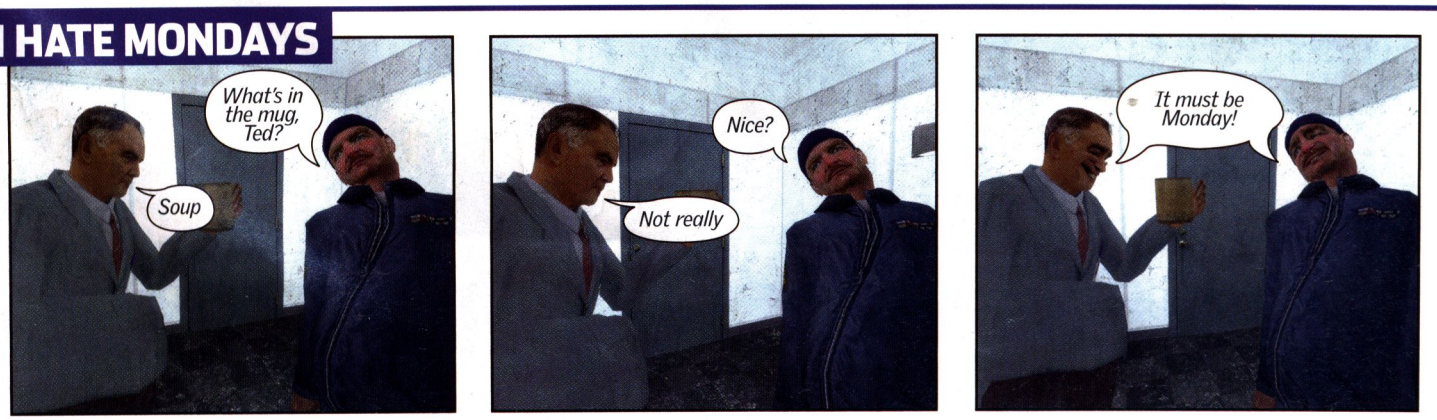


GHOSTKISSER



THE WRY MIDDLE-CLASS DOG ALIEN

I HATE MONDAYS



Magazines aren't for reading...

they're for reloading.

Get your ass kicked for free on the mind-blowing jolt public servers or take complete control with your own jolt clan server.

Take no prisoners. Accept no substitutes.

www.jolt.co.uk

© 2008 THQ Inc. Developed by Kaos Studios. Frontlines: Fuel of War, Kaos Studios, THQ and their respective logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of THQ Inc. All rights reserved. All other trademarks are property of their respective owners. Microsoft, Windows, the Windows Vista Start button, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox LIVE, and the Xbox logos are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies, and 'Games for Windows' and the Windows Vista Start button logo are used under license from Microsoft. NVIDIA, the NVIDIA Logo, GeForce and "The Way It's Meant to be Played" Logo are registered trademarks and/or trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation in the United States and other countries.