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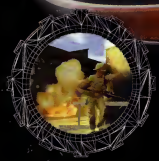

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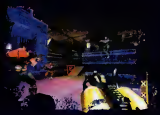

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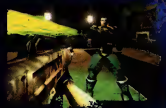

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STREET CRED

We hear (*Quake III*) that some new (*Quake III*) first-person shooters (*Quake III*) are coming soon. **PCXL**'s posse exposes which is the next Puff Daddy and which should be Vanilla Ice-d. Includes looks at *Team Fartress 2*, *Unreal Taurnament* and a little thing Id likes to call *Quake III: Arena*.

35

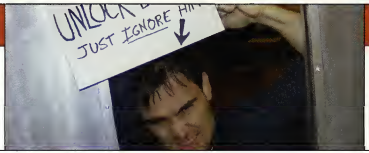
THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

A **PCXL** exclusive look at creating a design document and getting that game made!

40

48 HOURS IN HELL

Join our guinea pig for an excruciating 172,800 seconds with the worst games known to man. A lone editor's slow descent into madness becomes a cautionary tale of what happens when you buy bad games.



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Eagle Watch tips for the teamplayer in you, plus **PCXL**'s exclusive first-person shooter workout. Go from a camping girlie-man into a rampaging he-man

ONLINE ARENA 110

Is there room for teamplaying in a world of deathmatches? *Tribes* proved that you'd have to be high on crack not to get into it. Plus, get more out of your games with TCs

X-TRA 114

Within the darkest recesses of our brains lurks derivative crap we like to call X-TRA. This month: The latest shake-up at Ion Storm, we play Six Degrees of System Shock, scan kitties, and so much more

http://pcxl.com

Attention lawyers: All derogatory humor in PCXL is parody – honest!

ON THE COVER
At the time of this writing, we have yet to see the cover. We're sure it's very pretty and you'll love it because it has a huge *Quake III* logo and promises pictures of scantily-clad vixens frolicking in tubs of lime jello. It's also a mood cover – rub it long enough and it'll change colors

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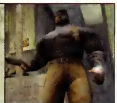

60 KINGPIN: LIFE OF CRIME
May be the best f-king first-person game based on gangsters ever made

63 SYSTEM SHOCK II
A sequel to the best first-person shooter that way too few people played

68 METAL FATIGUE
You have our ironclad guarantee we won't make any puns, really

72 SHADOWMAN
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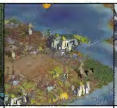
PCXL's obligatory first-person shooter o' the month and why consoles suck



80 ALPHA CENTAURI
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82 FIRETEAM
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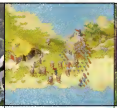

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Cecil recalls his colonial childhood reviewing this RTS sequel

84 SIM CITY 3000
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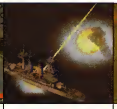
Wow – A platform game not made by Acclaim. You can tell because it's good

87 CLOSE COMBAT III: THE RUSSIAN FRONT
PCXL's obligatory war sim o' the month – uhh, wait



90 JEFF WAYNE'S THE WAR OF THE WORLDS
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92 THUNDER BRIGADE
A Bloomfeld-ian look at sci-fi action voxellicousness (it's a real word, trust us)

93 EVIL CORE: THE FALLEN CITIES
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FIRST PERSON **124**
Rob continues his crazed crack spree as he proclaims *Tribes* to be, in technical terms, "ass". Or, how real life differs from the **PCXL** office

WELL, SLAP OUR BUTTS AND CALL US CHARLIE

CELEBRITY APPEARANCES
Heather Locklear, The Kingpin (he's not fat, he's big-boned), Bruce Campbell, Ed "Jerry" Lee (plays games about nothing), Shannon Tweed (direct-to-video goddess), John Gotti, Chuck "George" Osborn (master of his domain), Meg Ryan, Jennifer Love Hewitt, Cameron Diaz, John Gotti, JR, Dan "Cosmo" Egger (hipster doofus), Evel Knievel, Cartman, Mr. Blackwell, and many more we'd like to mention but **PCXL** abhors name-dropping

THE DISC

16
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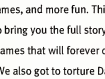
SEX, DRUGS, AND ROCK & ROLL

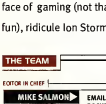
We have officially arrived. Like Randy Moss, we are an impact rookie. When we first launched there was plenty of skepticism from the curmudgeonly industry types (not to mention the curmudgeonly competition), but now, only eight issues later, we have become the fastest growing PC gaming magazine in the universe (having just nosed out the hot new Martian mag *PC DeathRay*). And it's all because of you, our loyal (if somewhat deranged) readers. We have offended, insulted, and outraged every close-minded, politically correct dolt without a sense of humor, all the while entertaining the truly enlightened (that means you). But we aren't done yet. Sure, the rockstar status of success has led to screaming women, shoe contracts, and the like; but we want more! More women, more readers, more games, and more fun. This issue we managed to stop smashing up our hotel room long enough to bring you the full story on *Quake III: Arena*, *Unreal Tournament*, and *Team Fortress 2* – three games that will forever change the face of gaming (not that we're being dramatic or anything). We also got to torture Dan (always fun), ridicule Ion Storm (sorry, they had it coming), and use the term "pussy galore." Overall I feel this is our best issue ever. Read on and see if you agree.



MIKE SALMON, *Editor in Chief*

THE TEAM

EDITOR IN CHIEF



MIKE SALMON

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ROCKSTAR EQUIVALENT —> George Michael
IF HE WAS IN A BOY BAND —> He'd be the girlish frontman
HIS GROUPIES WOULD BE —> Screaming lipstick lesbians
HIS SIGNATURE DANCE MOVE —> The "Next Stop: Boogie," otherwise known as "Don't Touch Me There"
NOW PLAYING —> *Tribes, Quake II*

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

ROB SMITH

EMAIL —> rob@pcxl.com
ROCKSTAR EQUIVALENT —> The Cure's Rob Smith
IF HE WAS IN A BOY BAND —> He'd be the rough, sophisticated producer
HIS GROUPIES WOULD BE —> Crack whores and assistant crack whores
HIS SIGNATURE DANCE MOVE —> It is a proven fact: English people can't dance.
NOW PLAYING—> *Quake II*, and a crack pipe, because he's not playing *Tribes*

MANAGING EDITOR

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ROCKSTAR EQUIVALENT —> Elton John
IF HE WAS IN A BOY BAND —> He'd be the eighties hideout
HIS GROUPIES WOULD BE —> His ex-stuntdents, and those who aren't distracted by his solo glasses
HIS SIGNATURE DANCE MOVE —> "The Robot"
NOW PLAYING—> The King Hussein version of *Candle in the wind*

SENIOR EDITOR

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ROCKSTAR EQUIVALENT —> Henry Rollins
IF HE WAS IN A BOY BAND —> He'd be the crappy urban youth
HIS GROUPIES WOULD BE —> Tough Tattooed babes and wannabe bad suburban girls looking for Mr. Wrong
HIS SIGNATURE DANCE MOVE —> "The White Man Overbite"
NOW PLAYING—> *SCAV, Tribes, More Tribes*, and an occasional game of *Tribes*

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ROCKSTAR EQUIVALENT —> Cornelius, dammit! (Some Japanese singer)
IF HE WAS IN A BOY BAND —> He'd be the sensitive artsy one
HIS GROUPIES WOULD BE —> Girls without pubes who scream AHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!
HIS SIGNATURE DANCE MOVE —> "The One-Man Lambada"
NOW PLAYING—> *Tribes, Brood War, Quake II, Prescott, Prescott 3D, Myth II*

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ROCKSTAR EQUIVALENT —> Meat Loaf
IF HE WAS IN A BOY BAND —> He'd be the one who never wears a shirt
HIS GROUPIES WOULD BE —> Girls who are chronically found in detention hall and ex-Village People fans
HIS SIGNATURE DANCE MOVE —> The "Robert Palmer Fake Dance" Dance
NOW PLAYING—> *Quake II, Tribes, Turok 2, Half-Life*

OCCASIONAL COVER MODEL

HOTT CHIKK

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ROCKSTAR EQUIVALENT —> Samantha Fox
IF SHE WAS IN A BOY BAND —> She'd be the only girl and the Cover Model
HER GROUPIES WOULD BE —> The band
HER SIGNATURE DANCE MOVE —> Who cares, we just like to see her wiggle
NOW PLAYING—> *With our hearts*

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HECTOR

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ROCKSTAR EQUIVALENT —> Marilyn Manson
IF HE WAS IN A BOY BAND —> He'd be the mikrophone stand
HIS GROUPIES WOULD BE —> Women with coats
HIS SIGNATURE DANCE MOVE —> "The Limbo" (as pole)
NOW PLAYING—> *possom, possom 3D*

ART DIRECTOR

KYLE LEBOUF

EMAIL —> kyle@pcxl.com
ROCKSTAR EQUIVALENT —> Jon Bon Jovi
IF HE WAS IN A BOY BAND —> He'd be the token blonde
HIS GROUPIES WOULD BE —> Those prone to throwing panties (theirs and other people's)
HIS SIGNATURE DANCE MOVE —> "The Achy Breaky Spleen"
NOW PLAYING—> *StarCraft: Brood War, Myth II*, and lots of *Tribes*

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Thanks for joining us.

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NOTHING COMPARES 2 DISC

You Made Me The Thief Of Your Disc

Don't Cry For Disc Argentina

Continuing from last month's theme of self-righteous political bands of the 80's, here's Sinead O' Connor with the disc song.

It's been seven hours and fifteen days /Since u taak your disc away /I go out every night and sleep all day /Since u taak your disc away ...

Since u been gone I can play whatever I want /I can install whatever I chaose /I can eat my dinner in a fancy restaurant ...

But nothing /I said nothing can take away these blues / Cuz nothing compares /Nothing compares 2 Disc...

Thanks Sinead, and here's a collective answer to the people who didn't get their March discs: There has been a boo-boo somewhere in our Circ-O-Matic and thus lots of subscribers went sans discs. If you haven't already, call 800-333-3890 and let them know what the hell is going on.

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If you do not have a subscription to get the CD-ROMs, you won't, ahem, get the CD-ROMs. Check with customer service that you have the right subscription, and if you want the CDs, and let's face it, who doesn't, upgrade. Go to our website at www.pcxl.com and visit the customer service portion or call 1-800-333-3890.

LEGEND →

	D DEMO	A/V
	PATCHES	MAPS
	TOOLS	RATING
DISC		
ONE	D	COMMANDOS: BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY
	D 8	CLOSE COMBAT III
	D 8	NBA LIVE '99
	D 8	ALPHA CENTAURI
	D	RETURN TO KRONDOR
	D	WARZONE 2100
	D	TOCA 2
	D	QUEST FOR GLORY V
	D	EXCESSIVE SPEED
DISC		
TWO	9	TRIBES
	D	BEST FPS DEMOS
	11	HALF-LIFE
	9	UNREAL
	D	QUAKE II
	8	BALDUR'S GATE
	D	3D GAME LAUNCHERS
	D 8	KING'S QUEST: MASK OF ETERNITY

Send your feedback, including suggestions for musical guests to discedtor@pcxl.com

Our disc comes with a scrolling interface, which is operated by moving the mouse over the screen. If this is too complicated or you lack the motor skills, then the bar on the left can be used as well. Click left on the mouse to select items and click left again (on the image) to return to the previous screen. If you've ever installed a game, then the rest should be elementary.

REQUIREMENTS: WINDOWS 95/98, PENTIUM 133MHZ, 32MB RAM, DIRECTX 5.0, MOUSE, 100% SOUND BLASTER COMPATIBLE CARD

THE DISC MINI-FAQ

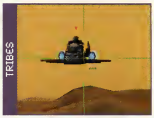
Q: Where are my frickin' discs, you goofy bastids. Give 'em!

A: For one odd reason or another there was some confusion when we switched from single disc to double disc. We apologize for any inconvenience and want you to know that it isn't our fault (nothing ever is). Please call customer service to find out your current status. Again, we apologize and will do anything we can to make it all better, and stuff.

Q: You can do one "Friend" and one "Friend" only. Is it Courtney Cox or Jennifer Aniston. Your call?

Dan: Jennifer Aniston. One word: Perky! How can you argue with that?

Mike: Dan you are high. Three words: Good in bed. Nuff said!



TRIBES

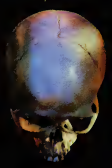
HALF-LIFE

BALDUR'S GATE

NBA LIVE '99

Enjoy Sinead O'Connor on the disc page, because hair is required to be a be a PCXL "babe"

THE DEADLIEST CREATURES
IN THE UNIVERSE ARE ABDUT TD
MEET THEIR MATCH...



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CRED

Wanna be in my gang? So, '70s rocker Gary Glitter allegedly decided that his PC should be used for storing dodgy pictures, rather than providing the opportunity to join the latest online gaming revolution. What's he missing out on?

A change of focus to team-based scenarios in many games, still fought with the vigor and enthusiasm of a standard death-match, has breathed new life into the gaming community. More importantly for the future expansion of PC gaming, these community-driven games are the latest hope of bringing the fabled "mass-market", or dare we say, "casual" gamer into the traditional hardcore (that's gamer, not Gary Glitter) fold.

Whatever politically correct b.s. "violence in games" issues that the moral minority invigorates with scare tactics, a good, hard, *Quake*-style death-match is a wonderful panacea. The conversation and adventure-based community of the online game (*Ultimo Online*, *The Realm*, etc.) is fine for many, but misses the visceral experience of seeing your giblets fly through the air, after failing to dodge an incoming rocket. And, of course, creating your own gib factory from the innards of your opponents is pretty fun too. So someone decided that gamers were ready to move beyond the loner mentality. As a result, *Quake* mods like Capture the Flag (CTF) and Team Fortress generated passionate fan bases.

Naturally, Id Software's next move was the most eagerly anticipated, and they announced what head programming great (and **PCXL** Lifetime Achievement award winner) John Carmack claimed was a risky move — a multiplayer, online-only, first-person action game. Epic Games had *Unreal Tournament* in the hopper as the multiplayer extension (or apology/excuse) for their graphically-polished, but online-unfriendly *Unreal*. When Valve's newly-acquired Team Fortress Software (creators of the original TF for *Quake*) announced that *Team Fortress 2* would build upon the phenomenal *Half-Life*, but as a stand-alone product with teamplay possibilities, it was evident that all the major players were dipping in to this bubbling pot.

Word on the street is that first-person, action-based, online-only, 3D accelerated, multiplayer gaming is hot. But who has the credentials and credibility to get it right?

So now, **PCXL** brings you the first decent look at what's going to make *Quake III: Arena* (*Q3A*) the next "big thing," alongside *Unreal Tournament* (*UT*) and *Team Fortress 2* (*TF2*), plus what other players in this newly competitive market are adding. Whatever the word is, it's going to be online, and it's likely that your posse's gonna be with you ....

Quake III: Arena

DEVELOPER --› Id Software
PUBLISHER --› Activision
RELEASE DATE --› When it's done (best guess: October)
TEAM OPTIONS --› 6
CHANCE OF HITTING TOP TEN --› 9

If ever a game has generated a fanatical following, it's *Quake*. Benefiting from amazingly simple gameplay concepts, great graphics, and the burgeoning online community, *Quake* catapulted Id Software to the undisputed top spot in the genre. When the code-named "Trinity" project was put on hold, the announcement of *Q3A* was a bit of a shocker: it's a multiplayer-only game, and that's yer lot. Huh?

John Carmack admitted that it was a risk, but if anyone could afford to take one, it was Id. But the announcement of numerous other projects along the same lines make it look all the more prophetic. Whether it was a case of "whatever Id does, everyone follows" or not, the Mesquite, TX-based developer gave people already thinking of heading in that direction a bona fide justification.

So, what's *Q3A* all about? In a nutshell, you're going to be playing a very familiar *Quake*-like game, but with the option to play as one of three different "classes." Carmack accepts that it's not going to revolutionize the first-person gaming market, telling PCXL, "It is specifically a focusing and polishing of existing styles. The goal is 'better than you have ever played', not 'something completely different.'" Artist Paul Steed adds, "Id is a pretty conservative development house when it comes to content, because there is a certain expectation of that content. The constant that will always prevail is the high quality of that content."

Supporting a ladder-style concept (much akin to console beat-'em-up games), *Q3A*'s offline component will be limited to practice against a form of AI-controlled bots. Ditching the single-player game was certainly a bold step, but one that Carmack believes allows for greater opportunities to focus on the element that has given *Quake* such longevity — the online multiplayer deathmatching. Responding to claims that the lack of a single-player element will significantly help the online performance, Carmack says, "Culling single-player simplified a lot of game design and development issues, but it didn't really effect the networking much."

Aside from straight deathmatch, Id doesn't have any significant plans to ship major team-based game formats. "We plan on having various teamplay variations available, including CTF," offered programmer Brian Hook. Alongside CTF and team deathmatch, lead level designer Tim Willits hinted at the company working on a game format similar to Power Ball, though Carmack confesses that

While the detail on the textures has been increased massively, many of the design patterns remain faithful to those in *Quake II*.

PHILOSOPHIES OF DESIGN

Everyone's approaching the online teamplay environment from slightly different angles. Mass-market penetration is the holy grail of the gaming industry, and there's a definite chance that these new online, team-based games will make that move. We asked developers of some of the most anticipated games in this market what was going to make them a success and what's going to happen in the future.

WHAT DOES ID'S CRYSTAL BALL SAY?

JOHN CARMACK --› Our crystal ball is pretty damn cloudy. If *Q3A* is a big hit, I definitely want to move towards large-scale online worlds, centered on clan territory ownership and conquest from a FPS POV. If it does poorly, we will probably swing the pendulum towards the other side and see what we can do with a tightly designed single-player game. The annoying part is that the jury will be out for quite a while after our release.

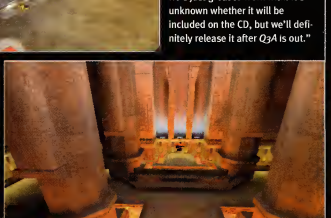
PAUL STEED --› More chicks will start playing our games.

CHRISTIAN ANTKOW --› I think Id's future decisions hinge largely on how well *Q3A* is received.

WHERE DO YOU SEE THE TEAMPLAY STYLE ONLINE GAMING GOING? WHAT'S IT GOING TO NEED TO DO TO GET MASS-MARKET?

CLIFF BLESZINSKI --› I think that there needs to be a huge expansion in Location-Based Entertainment (LBE.) Imagine taking your local crew of buddies to compete against other teams (either locally or over a T1) in an awesome arcade in the mall ... Much like jumping

Aw hell, just looking at these screens is unfair. We want to play the game, dammit. Now. Not "when it's done." NOW!



there will be "nothing on the order of Team Fortress."

The final number of levels to ship has also yet to be decided, and Id is naturally reluctant to let any figures drop. What is certain is that the shipping levels are being designed to accommodate a wide variety of game styles, and support different player numbers. The look of the game is also likely to follow on the same industrial-gothic theme that's been the hallmark of *QI* and *QII*. According to level designer Paul Jacquays, the team is aiming for a "grimy, grungy and well-abused look," but each designer is given a reasonably free reign within which to work. The opportunity for more creative design is also helped by the fact that themes and consistent styles necessary in creating a cohesive single-player game are not required here.

Explains Carmack, "The majority of our non-team maps are targeted for 4-8 players, but there will also be several 1-on-1 and 8-16 player maps. The game should be somewhat more scalable than *QII* (when running with a linked server module), and we have much faster systems available now, so I do expect some development towards 100 player games after we release. I still think large-scale games are a great target for someone doing an add-on."

Of course, the rabid mod developer community is going to have a field day with *Q2A*. Just to highlight the potential for getting spotted in this "amateur" community, Id is working closely with Robert Duffy, who created the Radiant editing system, based on the QE4 code for *QII*. Level designer Christian Antkow commented, "He [Duffy] took our original editor which John released the source for after *Quake II* shipped, and really added an assload of features. We were so impressed with the work he put into our tools that the decision just seemed natural to ask him to work on our next-gen tools. He's just great to work with. It's unknown whether it will be included on the CD, but we'll definitely release it after *Q3A* is out."

in a beer league sport, you can assemble a team and compete in a league and attempt to win prizes. This is a largely ignored section of the market that is right for expansion and could truly help teamplay expand, as well as the entire gaming biz.

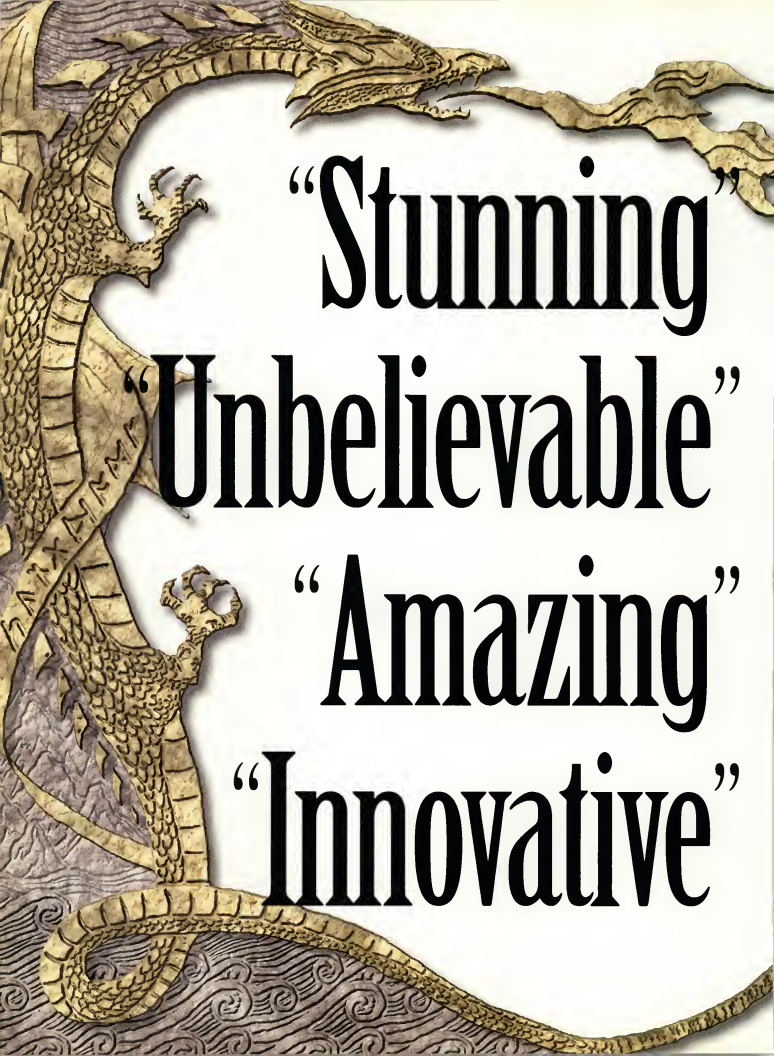
SCOTT YOUNGBLOOD --> I think the main reason [that *Tribes* has been so popular] is that it can be played at different levels. We still have the twitch 1-on-1 fights to the death, but we also have things in the game that people can do without ever firing a single shot. I've seen quite a few "turret monkeys" out there that enjoy populating every nook and cranny that they can find with deployable turrets (and mines). There are also strategy guys/gals that like to plan attacks, commanding their peers to do stuff. This doesn't always work in public games ... it takes cooperation from your teammates.

BRIAN RAFFEL --> With *Soldier of Fortune*, the feeling of being involved in real-world settings will really help bring people in to the game.

TIM WILLITS --> We try very hard to balance our desires with the desires of the mass market. I think we have found a good middle position with *Quake III: Arena*. The game is not easy but it's easy enough for a new player to enjoy it, yet the game is also challenging enough for the hardcore gamers to really get into it.

WILL VOICE COMMUNICATION MAKE THE REAL DIFFERENCE?

CLIFF BLESZINSKI --> I like voice communication with people. However, I


"Stunning"
"Unbelievable"
"Amazing"
"Innovative"

"...a sure fire recipe for chaos and mayhem that no sane player would want to miss."

–Computer Games Strategy Plus

"...a fantasy tag team match on a global scale. It's melodrama, it's excitement, it works."

–Computer Gaming World

"...Total Annihilation: Kingdoms is completely unbelievable. Everything in the game moves with a grace and realism that is stunning."

–Imagine Games Network

"...fit to sit on the throne of RTS gaming."

–Gamer's Republic

"Never have we seen a game that goes to such great lengths to create an innovative, engrossing, story driven RTS of this magnitude ... we could be looking at something amazing ..."

–Gamefan

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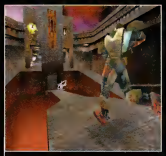
Backed by that eager *Quake* community, *Q3A* really isn't that much of a risk. Who doesn't believe in Carmack and his team given what they've already created? What's so interesting with *Q3A* is that it's coming up against some genuine head-on competition, which is something Id has barely faced in the past. This developer deathmatch for the online community's love is going to be a battle royale, where the real winners are us gamers. Bring it on.



Likely to be heading the cast of most favored weapons is the rocket launcher. They simply had to include one.

WEAPON FACTORY

John Carmack on weapon design choice:

"You can pretty easily make a large matrix of "weapons" by categorizing their effects:

- Instant fire vs. projectile vs. area targeting vs. melee
- Speed of projectile
- Trajectory of projectile
- Elasticity of projectile (bounce or explode)
- Multiple projectiles launched with each shot
- Rate of fire
- Ammo usage
- Restrictions or modifications on firing
- Targeting spread
- Auto targeting or seeking
- Damage in various situations or against various targets
- Splash damage

And then there are presentation issues:

- What you call it
- What the model looks like
- What it sounds like
- Tactical presentation disadvantages: Sound and glows that give away position
- Muzzle flashes
- Shell ejection
- Impact presentation

There just aren't many worthwhile weapon combinations that aren't trite, minor differentiation on basic themes. We choose to make good representatives of broad, fundamental categories."

As for the flame thrower, the most intriguing addition to the arsenal, what's the deal? "Medium range, wide-angle effect. A combination not tried before," Carmack offered. So there you have it.

Rocket-jumping is still just a pay-off to the physics model, rather than a specific feature built-in for experts.

really fear that voice communication may never catch on, much like the "picture phone" never did. People like their anonymity online, and involving ones voice in the fray only gives away more about who you are. The odds of this actually working are slim; what will most likely happen will be a ton of 12-year olds cursing obscenities and imitating Cartman and Beavis while you're trying to coordinate an assault.

SCOTT YOUNGBLOOD → Voice communication is being used right now by some of the more organized tribes. These tribes are some of the better organized players on the net right now. Some of them are currently using Roger Wilco or Battle Field communicator to improve team communication during matches (some even do long distance conference calls during the matches – "free when you call from work").

With large teams it can get confusing with too many people trying to talk all at the same time. We are looking into either including one of these products with *Tribes 2* or integrating the technology. The main reason that we didn't do that for *Tribes 1* was that we wanted to keep our bandwidth usage to a minimum for modem players.

ROBIN WALKER → Having great communication is a critical part of the social experience that makes *Team Fortress* fun. We're working on how best to do this for a variety of scenarios. One thing to note is that even with full voice communication, the macro capability would remain because it's a great method for pre-programming important messages.

Team Fortress 2

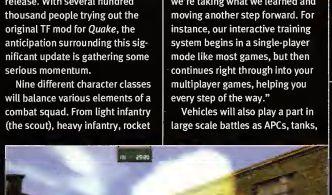
DEVELOPER --> Valve/Team Fortress Software
PUBLISHER --> Sierra
RELEASE DATE --> June '99
TEAM OPTIONS --> 10
CHANCE OF HITTING TOP TEN --> 7

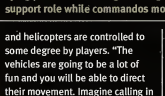
Half-Life is the Titanic of the gaming press' 1998 awards. And rightly so. The promise of *Team Fortress 2* (now to be, officially, a stand-alone game) even deterred some fans of the original *Quake* TF mod from buying *Half-Life* at release. With several hundred thousand people trying out the original TF mod for *Quake*, the anticipation surrounding this significant update is gathering some serious momentum.

Nine different character classes will balance various elements of a combat squad. From light infantry (the scout), heavy infantry, rocket infantry, sniper, commando, spy, engineer, medic,and commander, detailed, structured battles will be fought by up to 32 players. Understanding that despite *TF*'s popularity, many will be unfamiliar with the concept, Valve is working on making the introduction to newcomers as simple as possible. *TF2*'s designer Robin Walker tells us, "*Half-Life*'s training levels taught us some valuable lessons about how to bring new players into FPS gaming, and with *TF2* we're taking what we learned and moving another step forward. For instance, our interactive training system begins in a single-player mode like most games, but then continues right through into your multiplayer games, helping you every step of the way."

Vehicles will also play a part in large scale battles as APCs, tanks, and helicopters are controlled to some degree by players. "The vehicles are going to be a lot of fun and you will be able to direct their movement. Imagine calling in an Apache helicopter to attack the enemy position, just before your team begins its final advance. Or directing an Osprey where to drop you off on the battlefield. We're also doing some interesting things in terms of respawning players into vehicles so they can get back into the action more quickly," Walker confirmed.

Lying prone and offering covering fire, the machine gunner offers a support role while commandos move in.





Engineers will install and maintain weapon emplacements, as well as supply stores.

A firm belief that players are really looking for the greater social experience of team gaming is pushing *TF2*'s design. Some players (the medic, engineer, and commander) won't be able to fight, but will still perform crucial functions in the raging battles. It relies on players' dedication to making battles work in an organized manner — and certainly in the early days this may be a problem — but as clans band together, the potential for organized warfare has never been better.

ARE MASS-MARKET GAMERS READY FOR SOMETHING THIS NEW?

ROBIN WALKER --> Players love the social aspects and teamplay, the varied role assignments, and diversity of map challenges. We're aiming to make the multiplayer game a lot more fun and social for a broader range of people. *TF2*'s wider range of experiences and goals allows players of any skill level to be valuable members of their team. *Half-Life* showed us that there are an enormous number of gamers out there who want to play FPS games that aren't focused on deathmatch.

Bottom line is that a lot of people are already playing TF, and we think we can make that experience even better and more approachable with *TF2*.

DOES ID EVER GET TO THE STAGE WHERE DESIGN BECOMES MORE CEREBRAL? LET'S FACE IT, YOU CAN BE AS OBSCURE AS YOU LIKE.

PAUL JACQUAYS --> When the dust all settles, we're still expected to turn out great game settings, not avante garde objets d'art. No one person's or company's reputation is so strong that they can afford to produce less than the best product they are capable of making.

AND, AT THE FINAL SHAKE DOWN, WHERE DOES THIS ALL LEAD?

SCOTT YOUNGBLOOD --> We're not really sure. We are banking on peoples "need to belong" to something bigger and better than any individual. We sincerely hope that it survives for the long haul.

US TOO!

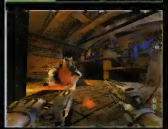
Unreal Tournament

DEVELOPER → Epic Games
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
RELEASE DATE → April '99
TEAM OPTIONS → 8
CHANCE OF HITTING TOP TEN → 8

UT's impressive graphics engine finally seems destined to have the network code to match, and thus allow it the chance to thrive online. Out of the box, *UT* is going to have some significant teamplay options, backed by the incredible bot technology that got its first airing in *Unreal*. "We're introducing the concept of helper AI, which opens up a whole new realm for gameplay possibilities. Feeling like you have a posse can be much cooler than going solo," enthused *Unreal* designer (and catscan creator) Cliff Bleszinski.

Supporting traditional deathmatch is a CTF mode, Assault match (an attackers vs. defenders scenario), Domination match (two teams needing to control certain points of a level), and a Tournament match. Epic has something to prove to the online community after the disappointment of *Unreal*'s pitiful original online performance. Familiar, real-world settings and a variety of game style options are likely to help *UT* reach a large audience. Bleszinski goes on to explain, "Myscha, one of our great level designers, did a killer Capture the Flag map that takes place in a huge underground bunker where a submarine is docked. It honestly feels like a real place, which can only add to the excitement of capping a foe in the noggin. On the other hand, we love fantastic environments as much as the next guy, so you'll see plenty of those as well."

Amazing but true: *UT*'s graphics engine is even better than the original's.



Only hands-on testing will reveal whether Epic has managed to overcome its networking nightmares – though the 219 patch definitely improved things. Certainly the accessibility of the editor, and other features such as the potential "mystery class" which is unlocked when you beat the tournament already give it plenty of buzz. And I guess the PCXL editors will volunteer for the arduous task of doing some of that deep, hands-on testing.

Navy SEALs

DEVELOPER → Yosemite Entertainment
PUBLISHER → Sierra
RELEASE DATE → Spring 2000
TEAM OPTIONS → 8
CHANCE OF HITTING TOP TEN → 6

Similar, yet at the same time completely different in concept to Raven Software's *Soldier of Fortune* (*SoF*), *Navy SEALs* has the backing of a solid license in former SEAL commander Richard Marcinko's popular books. Against *SoF*'s *Quake II* engine, *SEALs* developers Yosemite opted for *Unreal*; and against *SoF*'s more chaotic mercenary positions, *SEALs* has the order of a rigid current military unit.

Atop the list of priorities in modeling the life and missions of a SEAL is capturing the realism. Where *Rainbow Six*'s tactical style meant that a botched plan was likely to lead to a failed or aborted mission, Yosemite hopes to capture the dynamics of acting on the fly. As designer Paul Robinson explains, "In real-life missions, things never go completely as planned or expected, and we want to capture that flavor."

To that end, *SEALs* will let you play one of several different classes, in a similar vein to *TF2*. Among the options so far are Patrol Leader, Shooter, Sniper, Pointman, M60 Gunner, and Corpsman. Working the members as a team is a core facet of both the single and multiplayer game. "Playing this game successfully will require a true commitment to team-based tactics, as well as the ability to respond quickly and appropriately when things go FUBAR," explained Robinson.

As full licensees of the *Unreal* engine, there could be some intriguing possibilities for the multiplayer component when the enhancements to the core engine in the forthcoming *Unreal Tournament* are made available. With Marcinko offering his advice on mission strategies and ideas (based on his position as former commander of the SEAL Red Cell outfit), the realism factor should be high, and as such, Yosemite will be incorporating the "one-shot kill" feature.

Undaunted by the coming competition, *SEALs* is still some way off, but has all the elements in place to create an intense, hyper-realistic, but far less physically demanding and dangerous opportunity to find out exactly what it takes to be a Navy commando.

***SEALs* is likely to offer incredibly realistic missions, overseen by Marcinko to ensure their accuracy.**

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EIDOS INTERACTIVE

Soldier of Fortune

DEVELOPER → Raven Software
PUBLISHER → Activision
RELEASE DATE → Summer '99
TEAM OPTIONS → 7
CHANCE OF HITTING TOP TEN → 6

Getting the official endorsement of a mercenary magazine, Soldier of Fortune in this case, is certainly one way to get your game noticed. It's also helped Raven Software get up close to former Delta Force members who act as advisors on the project to ensure a real level of believability. While Raven's Creative Director Brian Raffel firmly pitches this as an action-oriented game, realistic settings in your typical worldwide trouble spots (Iraq, parts of Africa, etc.) will be cause for thought as you plan out the strategy elements.

"We have a system that lets us build individual looking characters from a library of faces, torsos, etc," he explains, "and these non-central characters will all have actions, so as you scout around you'll be able to see people unloading trucks, talking, doing stuff in the real world."

Based on the *Quake II* engine, Raven has added a hit location system linked to 20 different animations, so characters will react realistically according to where they've been shot. A one-hit kill system will be the default option, with a more action-based hit-point system allowing greater flexibility on how you play the missions. Your job will be to hire mercs from your files as you're paid for various dangerous tasks. They won't all be explosive, with some requiring you to take stealth experts to infiltrate a camp in disguise. You'll be able to preset waypoints in a relatively simple strategic plan and then command your troops in third-person on the ground.

Multiplayer is likely to be heavy on the action, but with team-based components either against other teams, or cooperatively against the AI-controlled missions. To further its reach after launch, Raven is also shipping a form of the level and mission editor. While sporting many familiar facets from games such as *Jagged Alliance*, the combination of the license, engine and real world settings make *SoF* a very viable property in what's turning out to be a surprisingly competitive market.

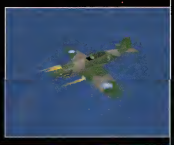
Soldier of Fortune **is unlikely to have the non-graphic knife kills that were so underwhelming in Novalogic's *Delta Force*.**

Crates, ladders and brown textures – ah, the *Quoke II* engine.

Raven's Ghoul system allows many characters to look different.

Mercenaries now have safer jobs, consulting on all these games.

WARBIRDS 3.0



DEVELOPER —› I-Magic Online
PUBLISHER —› Interactive Magic
RELEASE DATE —› Summer '99
TEAM OPTIONS —› 8
CHANCE OF HITTING TOP TEN —› 3

This might be a surprise to **PCXL** readers, but listen to what I-Magic has in store for its venerable and phenomenally popular flight sim and you'll start to understand why it's included in this story. For the uninitiated, *Warbirds* is a big-ass, multiplayer, WWII-based dogfighting sim. Over 200 planes are online at any one time, fighting over land for countries described by nothing more than colors. Simple in concept, but with a scaleable balance in its execution, novices are provided ample opportunity from both the makers, and many, many tutoring veterans to learn the ropes.

Things are starting to heat up, however, in the *Warbirds* battle universe. If you don't want to – or simply can't – fly a plane, jump in to a bomber in a gunners position and serve and protect your color. A forthcoming version 2.6 update will make these gunnery positions more realistic (and also more accessible for action freaks).

The real interest, however, is in the expansion of *Warbirds*' virtual battlefield on to the ground, with the incorporation in the upcoming 3.0 release of ground vehicles. Driving tanks (the Russian T34 and German Panzer) and personnel carriers to deploy computer-controlled troops at key strategic locations adds an incredibly involved element to the perpetual war. Players driving the tanks will be able to fight against each other, battling for tracts of land and various installations. Secure a vital location and your ground-based artillery units will be able to add their flak comment to the battles raging in the skies above.

What this does is extend the whole scope of the *Warbirds* battle universe. Ground attacks could tilt the balance of the war, regardless of where the air superiority is currently swaying.

These elements also introduce the issue of supply – to fuel depots and communication points – that was so vital to all WWII campaigns. Trains and a supply ship will also be added in 3.0 (to be known as *Warbirds: Tank Busters*) Before that, version 2.6 affords certain veteran players the ability to control aircraft carriers (just their position and course, in order to facilitate large-scale special events). All of a sudden the aerial battle that has waged for years becomes a full-scale land, sea and air-based war.

Of course, both updates will add more planes. Version 2.6 will see the inclusion of the Ki61 Japanese fighter, while 3.0 brings four additions, including (finally) the British Typhoon.

Warbirds' hourly fees may still inhibit newcomers, but the new breadth of opportunity and willingness of veteran players to assist newbies, will give I-Magic Online's popular (and ever-expaning) franchise a unique and fascinating edge in the future of online team battles.

No new shots of the version 3.0 planes were available at press time, though new cockpits are planned.

Hitting static ground targets is easier than moving ones in the sky.

Even **PCXL** staffers have managed to pilot *Warbirds*' planes.

Warbirds: Not just a geek fest.

Rainbow Six:
A post-colon description

DEVELOPER --> Red Storm
PUBLISHER --> Red Storm
RELEASE DATE --> Winter '99
TEAM OPTIONS --> 6
CHANCE OF HITTING TOP TEN --> 8

A surprise hit in '98, *Rainbow Six* is a firm favorite among the **PCXL** staff, and given its success, a sequel was always likely. Details about what it will contain are sketchy at the moment, but the storyline will have substantial meat, focusing on a battle against two major terrorist organaizations who form a deadly alliance. The single-player game will follow a linear path as you command your team to complete a series of seemingly unconnected missions, but the underlying threat of the new organization will slowly reveal itself to be a terrifying force.

Eighteen missions are planned on 16 different levels, mixing hostage rescue, surveillance and demolition jobs. Fortunately, work is being done to improve the AI of your teammates as well as improve the graphics technology. Weather effects will also play a part, hopefully as a strategic element rather than graphical throwaway eye candy.

A grenade launcher is also likely to make an appearance, along with a claymore, with more weapons to be determined. And for all those team killers out there who claim they forget what color they are, a multiplayer "arm patch" will let you customize uniforms which should help you spot the good guys from the bah in a tense firefight.

OUT NOW

TRIBES, DYNAMIX
Blazing a trail in the online world for teamplay, *Tribes* will have a couple of updates out. Version 1.2 is the most complete, addressing a wide variety of gameplay issues, as well as performance tweaks. At the same time (or soon thereafter), Dynamix will release an updated mission and building editor with the promise that they will be the easiest tools to use of any first-person shooter.

The desperately needed OpenGL support should be finished soon. Version 1.2 will have adjustments to some weapons (ELF increased, blaster range slashed from 2000m to 400m), and inventory pots (they now restock healing kits). *Tribes 2* is already in development, focusing on maintaining *Tribes'* core components, but adding water, ground vehicles, water vehicles and better chat functionality.

DELTA FORCE, NOVALOGIC
Love or loathe the voxels, *Delta Force* performed admirably in the sales charts, requiring the publisher's servers to offer enhanced capacity for all the players wanting to get online. Enhanced teamplay functions came with a post-release patch, and others could follow.

Maximum Overkill

DEVELOPER --> Novalogic
PUBLISHER --> Novalogic
RELEASE DATE --> Summer '99
TEAM OPTIONS --> 5
CHANCE OF HITTING TOP TEN --> 6

Novalogic's VoxelSpace 3 engine that powered *Delta Farce* is getting a new airing, this time in a game set slightly in the future (around 2050) and incorporating air and ground vehicle combat on the battlefield. Taking a position on one of two sides, you'll be able to pick from five types of 10 different vehicles and take them on a rampage in the squad-based (you'll be backed by four AI-controlled teammates), action-focused missions.

Variations on tanks, helicopters and even a dunebuggy are planned, each sporting slightly futuristic weaponry such as rail guns and EMP guns that can be customized to your liking before embarking on a mission. Objectives follow a similar theme to those carried out in your solo *Delta Force* operations — destroy this, blow up that, cause mayhem to everyone ....

Importantly, NovaWorld (where the many *Delta Force* battles are played) will support large-scale (up to 32 player) battles, with support for team-based games again along the lines of those featured in *Delta Force*. Hopefully there will be some additions to those concepts to take in to consideration the vehicle focus (and then we want to see *Delta Force* operatives against *Maximum Overkill* vehicles for a real battlefield free-for-all).

A PCXL EXCLUSIVE: Troops and helicopters mix with the new tanks in what looks like a full-scale war. It's still voxelicious, of course, but there are rumors that voxels are the future ...

COMING SOON

HIRED GUNS, PSYGNOSIS
The *Unreal* engine is being pushed for a truly dedicated teamplay environment with Devil Thumb's remake of an old Amiga game. You'll have to manage and control the AI of your squad members very closely as the strategic requirements of completing various missions involves way more than just outnumbering and outgunning foes. (Due date: May '99)

X-COM ALLIANCE, MICROPROSE
Again, the *Unreal* engine is tested in a similar squad-based way to *Hired Guns*. This time, fans of the hugely popular *X-COM* universe can get down and dirty with their squads, fighting the alien threat in first-person, while simultaneously playing the politics game of the *X-COM* organization. Mini-viewscreens let you see when your pals get mauled. (Due date: Summer '99)

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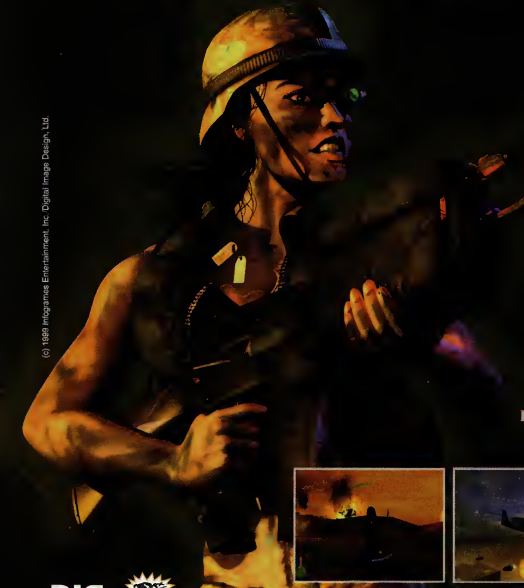
"HEY BIG BOY, IS THAT AN AK-47 IN YOUR POCKET...?"



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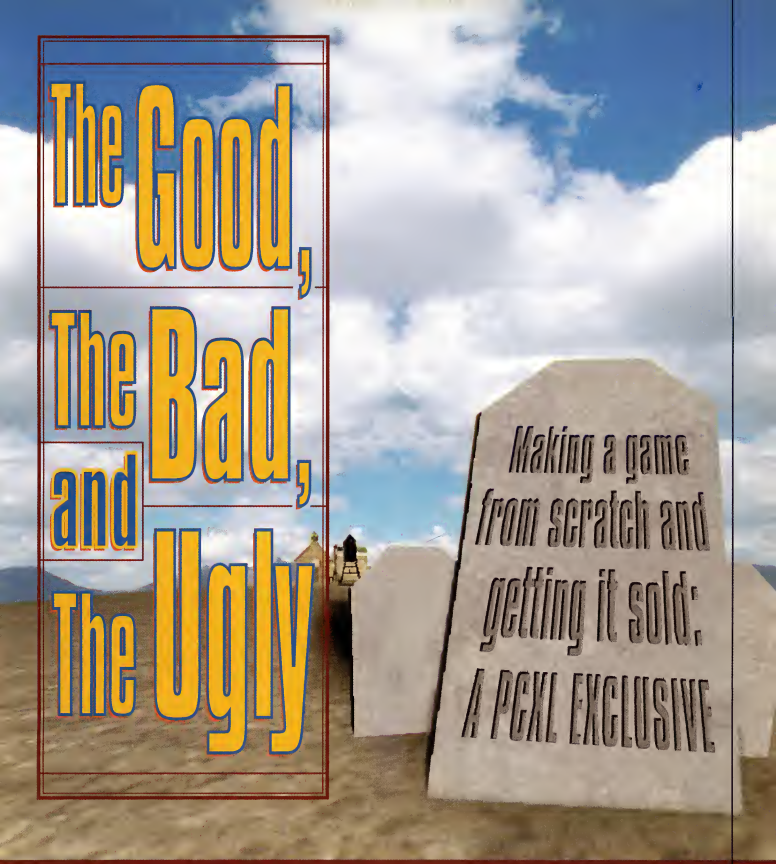
The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly



Imagine *Quake* with a conscience, *Rainbow Six* with consequence, and *Half-Life* with a storyline, where you choose who to be, and you would have something that would rock the gaming world. However, if you are micro-developer Six Shooter Studios, even if you've created the foundation for that game, it's a phenomenally major challenge to get it off the ground. It's the start of an epic journey ...

Several months ago we put out feelers to find a game that we could show in its earliest phases, to give our readers a peek at what it's like to create, sell, and hopefully publish a game idea. We were expecting, at best, a game concept or design document that a publisher had "passed" on. What we got was something completely different, and infinitely more complex than we had ever expected, even in our wildest dreams.

Through a conversation with a programmer at Monolith we were put in touch with an exciting and promising new development house called Six Shooter Studios. This group of six young programmers and artists may have little game development experience, but what it does have is considerable experience in web-based design and high-end graphics software. Currently the partners still hold down their day jobs, at least until a publisher signs them on. "We're ready to do this full-time but we need a publisher and a contract in order to make this thing happen," stated Nathan Dennis, the lead programmer and head honcho (actual title) at Six Shooter Studios.

The team also has a 120-page design document that perfectly describes an exciting new title. "We knew that as a new development house we would have to do something special right from the start if we were to get anyone's attention" stated Dennis. "We're kind of isolated here in Modesto and we don't have the name recognition of an Id Software. Someday, maybe, but not today (laughs)."

While they might not have name recognition or a load of financial backing, they already have an engine up and running. "At first we chose the Lithtech engine because of its flexibility compared to other licensed engines. After seeing the direction Monolith is taking the engine for version 1.1 on up to LithTech 2.0, we knew this was the right engine for our game." Of particular interest to Six Shooter were the plans for interconnected servers, volumetric fogging effects, and support for large, wide open landscapes. Each of these play a major part in the game's early design as laid out in the design document.

The design document is the lynchpin of a new game idea. The developer must take everything that it wants in the game and put it into a single report. This document must sell the idea and will eventually become the foundation upon which the entire game is based. If it's too ambitious, the game could be labeled impossible, and if its grasp is not daring enough, the game will be passed on because it's "stale."

"Creating the design document for *High Noon* (working title) was one of the most challenging things I've ever had to do in my professional life," said Dennis. "I couldn't just throw out ideas; I had to make sure they would work every step of the way. But thanks to our incredible tech guys, I was mostly limited to my imagination, which certainly freed me up to be very creative."

Allowing media access to a design document is considered PR suicide this early in the game's development cycle, but for Six Shooter, it was worth the risk. "We think we have a winning concept and an incredibly talented (if a bit small) team, but we know that we need to hook up with a willing publisher to make this game a reality. We're just letting the world know."

Following we have included excerpts from the start of *High Noon*'s design document. If you have your own game idea, we implore you to check out how Six Shooter created theirs; it will help give you an idea how to create your own game and then how to get it sold.

TEN TIPS FOR MAKING A POLISHED DESIGN DOCUMENT

GET YOUR POINT ACROSS EARLY
When you are trying to sell a game idea, you must sell it quickly. People will not wade through pages of text to get your best stuff. Make sure your best ideas are right up front. If they are good, the reader is more likely to keep going.

MAKE IT AS CONCISE AS POSSIBLE
Don't get wordy. Game makers won't be impressed by your writing skills; they only want to know what the game offers them as quickly and succinctly as possible.

BREAK THINGS DOWN INTO SMALL CHUNKS
Long paragraphs describing game features will generally get skipped when someone is reading quickly. Break up you information into short digestible paragraphs.

OUTLINE BEFORE YOU START
Don't even turn on your computer until you have a list of ideas sketched out on a pad of paper. If you form an idea as you write it, it will not be as polished as it should be.

REPEAT THE IMPORTANT DETAILS
If you want to focus the reader's attention on a particular facet of the game, don't be afraid to talk about it in several different sections of the design document. If you don't go overboard, this will gently reinforce the idea in the reader's mind.

UNDERSTAND THE READER
When industry people read a design document they want to know two things: How much will it cost and how much it will bring in? Address these questions very clearly — they may determine the fate of your game.

EDIT, EDIT, AND EDIT SOME MORE
Bad spelling, poor grammar and lay-out mistakes will steal all credibility from your document. Edit it yourself several times and then have someone else look it over.

USE A STYLE GUIDE
Check out how others have done their design documents and look at gaming resources to make sure that you don't leave anything out. One great resource is The Ultimate Game Developer's Sourcebook by Ben Sawyer. It is available in bookstores and online on www.amazon.com.

DON'T LEAVE ANYTHING OUT
Be thorough in your overall game design and make sure you address even the most minute of details.

KNOW THE MARKET
Remember that your readers want to know if a game will sell. If you understand the current game market you will be better able to sell them an idea that will potentially be profitable.

THE ENGINE

One of the most difficult decisions for a small developer is the selection of the game engine. For *High Noon*, Six Shooter had four main choices for their game engine. Nathan Dennis talks about these options.

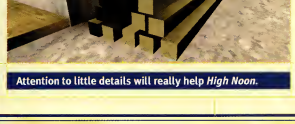
CREATE THEIR OWN ENGINE: "We decided early on that for this first game, our tech guys would be best served modifying an existing engine, rather than creating something from the ground up. For the next game, we will probably create our own."

THE *QUAKE II* ENGINE: "We love the tight network code, but at the end of the day, cost was a factor. Also the particle effects of LithTech are far superior to the others."

THE *UNREAL* ENGINE: "It's got great development tools, but we still aren't sold on network play. I mean if Epic is having trouble, then I don't like our chances."

THE LITHTECH ENGINE: "We chose this engine in great part because it gave us an opportunity to take an existing flexible engine and mould it in to the game we want to create."

A saloon, a church, and a graveyard – what better place for a little shootout.



Attention to little details will really help *High Noon*.

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Game Design Document

HIGH NOON (working title)

Six Shooter Studios

CONCEPT SUMMARY

High Noon is a first person action/adventure game set in the Wild West that combines the action of a game like *Half-Life* with *Zelda*-style adventure elements. The single-player game will feature a dynamic storyline that lets players choose the morality of their character and play accordingly. Its online component will be massively multiplayer, wherein scripted events draw individual characters into groups that fight the good, or the bad fight.

The game is *very* early in development, but what's there looks great.

In the single player matches, players act as an everyman whose moral actions decide his fate. If a player shoots teammates (AI-driven partners) or civilians, steals, or otherwise breaks the code of the West, he will accrue bad notoriety points. Conversely, when a player rescues an innocent, upholds the law, or brings a criminal to justice, they gain good notoriety points. These points determine how the next levels progress. Players also collect gold from bounties and/or robberies to progress through the non-linear game.

Each level can be played from three moral vantage points: good, bad, or lone wolf, with each of the levels having multiple mission objectives. Players can redeem themselves from mistakes as the game progresses, but if a player leans too much to one side, their fate and notoriety in the Wild West will be sealed.

Players also face real world consequences for their actions. For instance, killing an unarmed citizen may result in their family members exacting revenge during a later level, and shooting a partner for a bigger share during a train heist may result in untrusting partners for later crimes. The towns in which the game are set are populated with many AI driven characters that players can recruit, deputize, terrorize, and question for information that leads to upcoming missions.

Weekly events such as Indian invasions, cavalry assaults, and an occasional vengeful outlaw ghost sighting keep the multiplayer world from getting boring, and will occasionally challenge both good and bad players to join together to save their town. And in the process, gain extra gold ...

STORY

Jeremiah McComb is an ex-Civil War soldier who returns to his home, which has changed vastly since he left. This town, known as Hell's Bluff, is now populated with a mixture of down-and-out settlers, crooked lawmen, and the nastiest bunch of outlaws west of the Mississippi. The hero must choose to join these criminals, help the overwhelmed forces of law, or simply pit sides against each other. What the player chooses determines where the story goes ...

Imagine riding into this town on horseback and you get what *High Noon* is all about.

The game will ship with multiplayer maps that support traditional teamplay deathmatch with players choosing between the "white hats" and the "black hats." This mode will feature goal-oriented deathmatch levels such as a bank robbery, a high noon showdown, train heist, and any other of the single player scenarios played cooperatively.

A second multiplayer option will enable players to join a persistent western world. The "black hats" will be given notoriety points similar to those in the single player game. However, these points will be calculated into a bounty that will rise and fall depending on the misdeeds of the individual. These bad guys will acquire gold through robberies of banks, trains, wagons, and other daily scripted events. The good guys gain gold through capturing bad guys and collecting bounties.

GAME FEATURES

→ Dynamic and evolving storyline that changes depending on whether you play as a good guy, bad guy, or lone wolf
→ More than 30 unique levels (each with three separate scenarios and objectives for good, bad, and lone wolf players)
→ Non-linear level progression which makes the game play like an action/RPG
→ Living, interactive citizenry (AI controlled characters can fill out teams, give advice, scout missions, or just get drunk)
→ Moral consequences (shoot an innocent, and their family will come looking for you)
→ Varied AI (Teammates have their own personality such as cowardly, cool under pressure, risk taking, etc.)
→*Goldeneye*-style multiple objectives
→Rideable and trainable horses, each with

#3 → Hidden Easter eggs involving characters performing lewd acts is always a plus PC ACCELERATOR April 1999 THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

THE REST OF THE STORY

The following is a brief outline of what is contained in the rest of the document:

1 Concept Summary
2 What Makes High Noon Unique?
3 System Requirements
4 Project Goal
5 Game Focus
6 Art Style
7 Help
8 Documentation
9 Interface
10 Story
11 The Main Characters:
Jeremiah McComb
12 Main Characters & Bosses
13 Other Characters
14 Levels
15 Player Objects
16 Game Objects
17 Player Controls
18 Moves
19 Game Play Overview
20 Game Play Specifics
21 Special Effects
22 Sound Effects
23 Music
24 Technology Overview
25 Networking
25 3D Support
26 Sound Support

BE REALISTIC

Even if you have a "can't fail" game design, prepare to fail. Companies receive hundreds of game ideas and it is easy for them to get collaps even to great ideas. Here are five ideas to get your foot in the door.

START AS A GAME TESTER
If you want a career in the game industry, you might as well start as a tester. Pick a company where there seems to be room to grow, and you automatically have a great launching pad and a open door for your game idea.

MAKE CONTACTS
Start to follow the great game makers, and see how they do things. Visit industry functions like E3 and the Game Developers Conference and start building a contact list of people you know. Spend time reading plan files and sending emails. Remember, it's not stalking if it gets you a job (not sure if that will really hold up in court).

BUILD A NAME FOR YOURSELF
Find a thriving gaming community like the one supporting *Quake* and start making mods and conversions of existing games. This gives you experience, a great resume, and if you're really good, a kickstart for your game idea. The current level designer on *Quake III*, did just that.

FIND A COMPANY THAT HAS AN ACTIVE ACQUISITION DEPARTMENT
Some companies have departments that are always looking for games, these will be the best bet for your success.

UNDERSTAND THE LEGAL SIDE OF THE STORY
If a company looks at your idea and then releases a similar game, they leave themselves open for lawsuits, so many won't look at unsolicited design documents. So be willing to sign legal papers. It's risky, but in order to get your game published it is a risk you'll have to take.

The story is also dictated by the player's style of gameplay. If a player chooses to kill innocents, his plot progression, mission objectives, and goals will be much different than those for one who chooses to act on the side of the law. The story line also offers five unique endings depending on how the player acts during the game.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
Characters in *High Noon* follow an advanced AI pattern in both the action and RPG elements of the gameplay. Players can build posses or gangs from the people they find in the bars and streets. Each chosen character has unique strengths, making some better as snipers, bare-knuckle fighters, or horse riders. Creating teams with the right mix of personalities is an important factor in a player's success.

Characters also have a virtual life, which includes family, job, and organizational ties. For instance, if you shoot a bystander while apprehending a criminal, you may have to face his family, his gang, or his cattleman boss. This vengeance engine throws a twist into levels and makes players accountable for their good, bad, or lone actions.

WORLD INTERACTION
High Noon features an immense number of scripted events and interactive environments. For instance, in a fight that nears a barn, a stray shot hitting a lantern could set a barn on fire, burning everyone inside. Another example is the mine level, where "white hat" players must escape a mine that is rapidly caving in, and "black hat" players must set the explosives to trap their opponents. Variety like this is something the gaming world is currently lacking.

goals any way they desire, so the action will be different each time it is played.

The second factor behind this game's high replay value is the persistent online world. Daily events such as stage coach and train runs give players plenty to do, and scripted events will encourage people to come back and see what will happen next. The continued success of *Ultima Online* is a testament to this fact.

DO IT YOURSELF

Six Shooter Studios is well on their way towards selling their first big game, and with a little imagination and a lot of hard work you could do the same. The following ideas will help you to sell your idea once your design document is finished.

WHAT DO THEY WANT?
The most important thing that you can do in you design document is to address the questions that are most important to the people who are reading it. Here are seven of the most pressing queries:

WHAT WILL THIS GAME COST ME?
If your game looks like it will be too expensive to make, its chances are slim.

CAN IT BE MADE?
Many companies have been burned by overly-ambitious game designs – be realistic.

HOW QUICKLY CAN I GET IT ON SHELVES?
Game companies don't want a title sitting in development while technology passes it by.

CAN I SELL IT TO THE PRESS?
Journalists are jaded. They want gimmicks and new concepts. Good press is key.

HOW WILL IT FIT INTO OUR PRODUCT LINE?
Companies don't like to put all their eggs in one basket. If one has an overabundance of titles like yours, look for another company.

HOW WILL IT FIT INTO THE CURRENT MARKET?
Know what's selling. If you make a great game, and market isn't ready for it, it won't sell.

WILL PEOPLE BUY IT?
If the game won't sell, they don't want it.

Kill enemies from the church and confess quickly afterwards.

Bigger cities are planned, but there will be plenty of variety.

HIGH REPLAY VALUE
Two items are key to *High Noon*'s replay value. The first is the dynamic storyline found in the single-player game. This enables players to play the same game over and over, because it is always changing. The single-player level design also means that players can accomplish

FIND OUT MORE
Six Shooter Studios plans to have their new game ready for release by the spring of 2000. Interested publishers and consumers can find out more about the game and the company at www.six-shooter.com. Also stay tuned in future issues of **PCXL** to find out what happens next.

48 hours to live

A DARING PCXL EDITOR PUTS HIMSELF IN THE LINE OF FIRE TO PROTECT YOU FROM A FEW BAD GAMES.

You see them every month on top of the PC games sales charts. These are the mass-market games. They are BARBIE, they are MYST, they are DEER HUNTER, but most importantly, they are the games we never want to play. Each of these games has consistently appeared on all the sales charts. And each time we see them, as hardcore gamers, we let out a collective sigh. How can HALF-LIFE lag behind BARBIE FASHION DESIGNER? And so, to investigate the phenomenon known as the mass-market game, we sent our most expendable editor to play some of the year's best selling games for 48 hours straight to find out exactly what the fuss is all about. Here, posthumously, is the diary of his torture ....

FROGGER

GAME 1

HOW LONG DID I PLAY? 3 hours 15 seconds

HOW LONG BEFORE I KILLED SOMETHING? I died several times within the first thirty seconds

WHAT'S ITS MASS MARKET APPEAL: Everyone remembers *Frogger* as a relatively simple, and easy to learn game

WHAT'S ITS PROBLEM: This is not the game they remember.

BEST MOMENT: Rescuing the girl frog

WORST MOMENT: Realizing that she's let herself go in recent years

RATING 2

THE GAMES

The criteria for selecting the games was simple. They had to be top sellers, must be something we reckon most **PCXL** readers won't touch, and each must be a game I have never tried before. Here are the lucky winners:

BARBIE FASHION DESIGNER
CABELLA'S BIG GAME HUNTER 2
CIVIL WAR GENERALS 2
DEER HUNTER 2
FROGGER
LEGO LOCO
LOONY TOONS COSMIC CAPERS
MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR
MYST
TEEN DIGITAL DIVA
THE GAME OF LIFE
WHEEL OF FORTUNE

THURSDAY 5:00 PM

They say it will only be 48 hours. I can do 48 hours. Heck, I've been on bad dates that seemed to last about that long. Once, I even sat through a two day "Happy Days" marathon, and I lived — barely, but I lived. The point is that few things on Earth can kill me in 48 hours, and I am actually looking forward to the games I get to play, they must have some merit to sell so many copies. Wouldn't you think?

THURSDAY 5:22 PM

I start with ***FROGGER***. I had an Atari 2600 when I was growing up and played hours of this game. I even played the Activision rip-off called ***FREEWAY CHICKEN***. This should be a good start.

THURSDAY 6:38 PM

Are you kidding me? Seriously, are you kidding me? How on Earth can a game get *worse* this many years after it originally came out? The control's messed up, the camera view makes you jump into areas that you cannot even see, and the chick frog doesn't even look as hot as she used to. This is a bad start. Man, I don't like this one bit.

THURSDAY 8:11 PM

Frustrated, I install Hasbro's ***THE GAME OF LIFE***. Here's

another game I enjoyed as a kid, and I look forward to seeing what it looks like with a little Pentium-powered flair.

THURSDAY 8:44 PM

Now I remember what I hated most about board games. That Pentium-powered flair (gratuitous animations, horrible jokes and irrelevant 3D driving views) makes each move take about five minutes. It's like playing *LIFE* with my not-so-swift cousins from Kansas. Every time they rolled a number they would have to count, recount, and finally make their move, only to go back and count once again. I missed "Friends" for this? [*Editor's note: Don's sissy whining about missing a show about sissy whining does not reflect the manly views of this staff.*]

THURSDAY 9:18 PM

My efforts to cheat have proved fruitless. I can see no point in playing a board game if cheating is not allowed. I will turn to war, the only other place, besides the Oval Office, where cheating is always rewarded.

THURSDAY 9:32 PM

CIVIL WAR GENERALS was one of the best-selling games of last year, so it's time to find out why. I don't really understand why this game has to be difficult to learn or use; let's face it, I'll play as the North because I know they won.

THURSDAY 10:12 PM

Hunger sets in, I decide to eat more than my scheduled rations and drink some extra Pepsi. It could cause problems down the line, but right now it's not so bad.

THURSDAY 10:39 PM

The rebels are ferocious! They look like little pixilated dots, but these soldiers are deadly. If I am ever going to survive this slow-paced turn-based strategy game, I must think like a fifty-year-old bearded guy.

THE FOOD

To keep the editor from having to leave during the test, we provided two days' supply of his favorite food and drinks. The following shopping list is a combination of recommendations from top gaming doctors and our editor's own personal fancies (taken in part from the best gaming snacks article from the March issue). Here is what he started with:

- 3 Marie Callender Pot Pies
- 24 Pack of Pepsi
- 1 Hungryman Salisbury Steak Dinner
- 1 box of Pop Tarts
- 4 Rice crispy treats
- 2 Quarts of Aquafina bottled water
- 1 Carrot
- 2 Bags of (now) Cooler Ranch Doritos

THURSDAY 11:48 PM

I'm in the right 50-year-old frame of mind, and I'm starting to turn the tide. However, Annette Funicello is suddenly sounding kind of sexy to me. I don't feel so well.

FRIDAY 12:36 AM

I'm losing again, but I feel much better. I've been playing **PCXL** style and the rebels don't know what's hitting them. I'm in the middle of the battle of The Strange Looking Bearded General Vs. The Strange Looking Bearded General In A Hat. While the confederates are following a standard pincer movement, I have chosen a more random approach, sending my engineers and artillery to the front lines and my infantry running for safety in the hills.

FRIDAY 3:32 AM

New York is in flames, Philadelphia has burned, pro wrestling has become the national pastime, the President is called Billy Bob and I still haven't found a nuke. The South has risen again. No more Civil War sims for me, thank you.

FRIDAY 4:11 AM

After a grueling installation process, ***MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIM*** is up and running. It's time to shoot down some innocent passenger planes.

FRIDAY 4:15 AM

Where are my guns? Has anyone seen my guns? This can't be happening to me, I need guns.

FRIDAY 7:56 AM

Three and a half hours, and I still can't land without turning my plane in to a heap of smolten metal, I can't make anything explode or cause any property damage. Now I know why airline pilots are always found drunk – they're just plain (all puns are intended and the sole property of **PCXL**) bored.

FRIDAY 8:15 AM

I was just about to shut down ***FLIGHT SIMULATOR*** and then I discovered the make-your-own-plane portion of the game.

GAME 2 THE GAME OF LIFE

HOW LONG DID I PLAY? 1 Hour 6 Minutes

HOW LONG BEFORE I KILLED SOMETHING? It's *The Game of Life*; death doesn't happen all that much

WHAT'S ITS MASS MARKET APPEAL: Memories of a crazy board game where it was almost impossible not to become a millionaire.

WHAT'S ITS PROBLEM: While the game faithfully recreates the wild Life board, it doesn't let players move their own cars. And the jokes ... hoo boy!

BEST MOMENT: Snagging the 100K per year job

WORST MOMENT: Listening to any of the game's atrocious punch lines after every move

RATING 4

GAME 3 CIVIL WAR GENERALS 2

HOW LONG DID I PLAY? 4 hours 10 minutes

HOW LONG BEFORE I KILLED SOMETHING? 3 minutes 12 seconds

WHAT'S ITS MASS MARKET APPEAL: There are a lot of weird old guys still a little angry that no one let them in a war

WHAT'S ITS PROBLEM: Turn-based strategy can be about as exciting as a "Matlock" marathon

BEST MOMENT: When my little pixels killed their little pixels

WORST MOMENT: When their little pixels killed my little pixels

RATING 4

GAME 4 MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR

HOW LONG DID I PLAY? 5 hours 26 minutes

HOW LONG BEFORE I KILLED SOMETHING? 18 seconds (myself, and thousands of innocent passengers)

WHAT'S ITS MASS MARKET APPEAL: Drunk Northwest pilots nearly on suspension need to keep busy too

WHAT'S ITS PROBLEM: No guns

BEST MOMENT: Flying a jumbo jet into a tower, over and over again

WORST MOMENT: Trying to fly a jumbo jet anywhere *but* into a tower

RATING 3

LOONY TOON COSMIC CAPERS

GAME 5

HOW LONG DID I PLAY? 2 hours 9 minutes

HOW LONG BEFORE I KILLED SOMETHING? 7 minutes before Daffy was hit by a disintegrating ray

WHAT'S ITS MASS MARKET APPEAL: So easy that parents can leave their kids alone while they watch Cinemax

RATING 3

WHAT'S ITS PROBLEM: Not enough puzzles to keep anyone occupied for more than 2 hours and ten minutes

BEST MOMENT: Watching cartoon characters blow up

WORST MOMENT: When I ran out of puzzles

WHEEL OF FORTUNE

GAME 6

HOW LONG DID I PLAY? 2 hours 30 minutes

HOW LONG BEFORE I KILLED SOMETHING? Vanna wouldn't die

RATING 3

WHAT'S ITS MASS MARKET APPEAL: Mass familiarity, and digital Vanna

WHAT'S ITS PROBLEM: It doesn't make you feel like you are really on the show

BEST MOMENT: No Pat Sajak

WORST MOMENT: When I first realized that Vanna hates me

DEER HUNTER 2

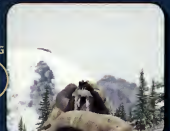
GAME 7

HOW LONG DID I PLAY? 1 hour 8 minutes

HOW LONG BEFORE I KILLED SOMETHING? 33 long minutes

WHAT'S ITS MASS MARKET APPEAL: Dad likes killing deer

RATING 2



WHAT'S ITS PROBLEM: Dad wouldn't know a bad game if it lunged up and bit him on the butt. He doesn't care if the graphics are bad and the gameplay non-existant, but we do

BEST MOMENT: Actually getting a kill

WORST MOMENT: The other hour, 7 minutes, and 55 seconds

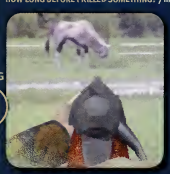
CABELLA'S BIG GAME HUNTER 2

GAME 8

HOW LONG DID I PLAY? 1 hour 52 minutes

HOW LONG BEFORE I KILLED SOMETHING? 7 minutes

RATING 3



WHAT'S ITS MASS MARKET APPEAL: People have discovered that *Deer Hunter* sucks

WHAT'S ITS PROBLEM: *Big Game Hunter* has all the same problems and manages to be even worse

BEST MOMENT: Shooting a giraffe

WORST MOMENT: Getting caught for shooting a giraffe

FRIDAY 8:22 AM

Test Plane Number One lasts 3.2 seconds in the air. It seems that the wings must be bigger than the tail fin. Back to the drawing board, but this time I vow to use the principles that I learned in all those college physics classes.

FRIDAY 9:14 AM

I just remembered that I slept through most of my college physics classes. Test Plane Number 27 lasts 2.8 seconds in the air.

FRIDAY 9:36 AM

Staff members begin to trickle by and watch me as I play. They make fun. If my food runs out, I will feel no guilt in eating them.

FRIDAY 10:08 AM

It's ***COSMIC CAPERS*** time! [*Editor's note: Lack of sleep is responsible for that last exclamation point, we apologize for any undue excitement it might have caused.*]

FRIDAY 12:17 PM

I must stop playing ***COSMIC CAPERS***, so I can play the remaining games, but so far it is the most **PCXL**-worthy title I have installed in this infernal test. In two brief hours of solving assorted jigsaw puzzles that reward me with animated clips, I have seen a dog, a duck, a Martian, and a coyote disintegrated, a rabbit punched in the face, and a pig, duck, and rabbit violently shaken. Man, I love them cartoons.

FRIDAY 1:48 PM

Bitterness creeps into my gameplay as I turn to ***WHEEL OF FORTUNE***. I can't prove it, but I know Vanna hates me. She's so stuck up, but I saw her TV movie "Goddess of Love," and she's not so perfect.

FRIDAY 4:18 PM

It just dawned on me that I am playing against the same computer that is running the game. It knows all the answers, it's just toying with me.

FRIDAY 4:33 PM

My anger results in an unwise move. The disc ends up in microwave, microwave no longer heats pot pie correctly. I cover my tracks.

FRIDAY 5:21 PM

My 24-pack of Pepsi's is running dangerously low. Panic begins to set in.

FRIDAY 6:05 PM

I start playing ***DEER HUNTER II***.

FRIDAY 6:07 PM

Mistake pixilated bush for pixilated deer, shoot bush.

FRIDAY 6:09 PM

Mistake pixilated rock for pixilated deer, shoot rock. Later pixilated rock is mistaken for the head of Robin Williams, more shots fired.

FRIDAY 6:37 PM

Still no trophy. Begin to wonder if I really should be shooting off my rifle every 15 seconds.

FRIDAY 6:44 PM

I grow tired of waiting quietly and resume shooting at random objects which resemble celebrities I hate.

FRIDAY 6:46 PM

Fran Drescher: Dead.

FRIDAY 7:33 PM

I figure I've mastered the basic deer killing strategy, so I load up ***CABELLA'S BIG GAME HUNTER 2*** for a little bit more excitement.

FRIDAY 8:44 PM

I get in trouble with my hunting guide for shooting giraffes, elephants, impalas and other "protected" species.

FRIDAY 8:52 PM

I get in trouble again for shooting too many Caribou. Afterwards, I create the

Caribou song, sing loudly and repeatedly. [*Editors note: All lyrics of the Caribou song have been stricken from the record after a heated debate over whether or not Caribou rhymed with "moose-shaped Tiramisu."*]

FRIDAY 9:12 PM

I have grown weary of the interference by my troublesome guide, but cannot find any way to shoot him. Major design flaw.

FRIDAY 9:29 PM

Honestly, I gave hunting games a chance. But if I can't get joy from illegally shooting elephants, then there is something seriously wrong with the game design. Think of the possibilities – the strategy of selling ivory on the black market, avoiding customs officials ....

FRIDAY 9:42 PM

It had to come to this sooner or later. It's time to plug in ***MYST***. After sitting through the too-long and too-confusing introduction I set out in search of a gun.

FRIDAY 10:55 PM

Still no gun, and still nothing to kill. All that I have found is paper. Ooo, paper, I've got goosebumps.

FRIDAY 11:42 PM

I have entered three different "worlds," seen no other beings, and found zero weapons, but I got more paper. I feel homesick for ***QUAKE II***. I don't think I want to do this any more.

FRIDAY 11:58 PM

I discover the rocket/piano key puzzle and quit the game. That flip screen, stupidly inane puzzles, "haunting" atmosphere — I will never feel bad about making fun of ***MYST*** for the rest of my days.

SATURDAY 12:08 AM

I am near the end. Only three titles left, and ***TEEN DIGITAL DIVA*** is next. At first I dreaded this game, but the more I look into it the more exciting it sounds. I like the magazine business, and I've always thought that people need more magazines about teen heroes, so I made a publication dedicated to a true teen hero, me!

SATURDAY 12:34 AM

The cover is looking good. You know, maybe I've got a shot at replacing Mike. [*Dan, note to self: Delete this before Mike sees it, he already suspects too much.*]

SATURDAY 2:16 AM

Final version of *Teen*, the Dan Egger edition, hits the printers. I practice my acceptance speech for the Pulitzer Prize. Do they have a Pulitzer for teen magazines? I vaguely remember *Seventeen* winning one year.

SATURDAY 6:46 AM

I just woke up in a pool of drool and I have corduroy marks across my face because of my jacket. On a second viewing, my magazine is ... really bad.

SATURDAY 7:14 AM

When I checked my morning online news, I heard that *Maxim*'s Editor in Chief is leaving. In response I sent my magazine and a cover letter to his old company (see cover letter above right). I have yet to receive a response.

SATURDAY 7:44 AM

My Pepsi's are almost depleted, my pot pies eaten, and only one rice crispy treat remains. The situation can only be considered dire. Only ***LEGO LOCO*** and ***BARBIE FASHION DESIGNER*** are left.

SATURDAY 8:14 AM

After much debate with myself [editors note: this is better described as insane rambling] I decided ***LEGO LOCO*** would come first.

SATURDAY 9:22 AM

It takes my dulled senses a while to grasp the concept behind ***LEGO LOCO*** (basically build an ugly, but very busy, little town) but once I grasp the concept, I am off and running.

SATURDAY 10:22 AM

My town is the envy of all other villages in Legoland, the people happy and

DEAR MAXIM:

I just read that **Mark Golin** has left to go to *Details* magazine, and I understand you may be looking for a new Editor in Chief. As an editor of the wildly popular, highly profitable game magazine *PC Accelerator*, which combines the guy-oriented approach of magazines, such as your own, with videogame coverage, I think I may be your man.

I am an avid reader of both *Teen Beat* and *Tiger Beat* and I have been a member of both Leonardo DiCaprio AND Jaleel White posses. With credentials such as this, I think you can clearly see that I have talent, skill, and experience to take *Maxim* into the new (teen oriented) millennium. Here is a brief listing of my writing career.

December 1984	Started the first magazine dedicated to Tina Yothers of "Family Ties." Named it *Tina!*
January 1985	Changed name to *Yothers!* Sales jump 32 percent
November 1985	Became Senior Editor of *Punky!* Magazine
March 1986	Changed name to *Brewster!* Sales drop 78 percent
May 1986	Began dating Lisa Whelchel from "Facts of Life"
December 1987	Made cover of *National Enquirer* after fistfight with Kirk Cameron over the affections of Lisa Whelchel
May 1988	Acquitted of stalking Ari Meyers (Emma, from "Kate and Allie")
June 1989	Launched *Alf Crazy!* magazine
November 1989	Coined the word "Alftastic!"
December 1990	Folded *Alf Crazy!* and launched *Culkin Watch!*
September 1991	Created *!!!* magazine
October 1991	Changed name to *!!!* Sales jump 315 percent
April 1992	Started the reality show genre with *When Teens Attack!*
January 1994	Launched *Cigar Aficionado!*
February 1995	Lost lawsuit to publisher of *Cigar Aficionado* and folded *Cigar Aficionado!*
March 1995	Launched *Teen Cigar!*
April 1995	Began two year sentence for child endangerment
February 1996	Launched *CellBlock Teen!*
January 1997	Paroled, then launched *Teen Stalker!* Magazine
February 1997	Returned to prison for parole violations
April 1997	Released from prison, sued *Teen Beat!* for copyright infringement regarding gratuitous use of exclamation points
March 1998	Began working for *PC Accelerator* magazine
November 1998	Tested name change to *PC Accelerator!* Sales plunge
February 1999	Apply for EIC of *Maxim* magazine.

MYST

GAME 9

HOW LONG DID I PLAY? 2 hours and 16 minutes

HOW LONG BEFORE I KILLED SOMETHING? There's nothing to kill!

RATING 1

WHAT'S ITS MASS MARKET APPEAL: Anyone can play it, it has plenty of wow appeal

WHAT'S ITS PROBLEM: Horrible puzzle design, repetitive gameplay, and the pacing of an artsy Stanly Kubrick film in slo-mo

BEST MOMENT: Finding severed monkey mini heads

WORST MOMENT: Everything else

TEEN DIGITAL DIVA

GAME 10

HOW LONG DID I PLAY? Not quite sure

HOW LONG BEFORE I KILLED SOMETHING? 2 Hours (my future as an editor in chief)

RATING 1

WHAT'S ITS MASS MARKET APPEAL: It's for girls, and they don't get many games

WHAT'S ITS PROBLEM: It's just about making magazines, so it's not actually a game

BEST MOMENT: My virtual makeover

WORST MOMENT: Seeing myself in the Jennifer Aniston haircut

LEGO LOCO

GAME 11

HOW LONG DID I PLAY? 3 Hours 58 Minutes

HOW LONG BEFORE I KILLED SOMETHING? 3 Hours 18 minutes (people always die in train wrecks)

WHAT'S ITS MASS MARKET APPEAL: Everyone loves Legos, and you rarely step on software that has been left out

WHAT'S ITS PROBLEM: Even the most easy to please kid will get bored with the few options presented in this game

RATING 2

BEST MOMENT: My first train wreck

WORST MOMENT: When my carefully-placed baby carriage barely escaped getting hit by a train

BARBIE FASHION DESIGNER

GAME 12

HOW LONG DID I PLAY? 6 hours 15 minutes

HOW LONG BEFORE I KILLED SOMETHING? If you consider good fashion a "thing": 6 min 31 seconds

WHAT'S ITS MASS MARKET APPEAL: Girls love Barbie, boys want a Barbie to love

RATING 3

WHAT'S ITS PROBLEM: You're just making dresses, not much else to do

BEST MOMENT: Pulling off a coordinated scarf and tube top combo

WORST MOMENT: Barbi refusing to do a fashion show in her skivvies

THE DATE Despite these photos, the author has denied all reports of playing with dolls. He now resides in the Betty Ford Clinic, Barbie Obsession Wing.

the trains on time, but something is missing. I try to fill the void by making cool, artistic postcards with the game's postcard maker. I also try to send it to someone else who is playing the game on the Internet, but no one is there. ***RAILROAD TYCOON II*** doesn't have that feature.

SATURDAY 10:42 AM

I finally realize what was missing — violence. My city is missing violence! To remedy this situation, I have been forced to take drastic measures. First I try to drop citizens in front of a running train, but they get out of the way too fast. Then I try to hit a car with a train, but the game's safety features are smarter than me. Dejected, I press on.

SATURDAY 11:32 AM

I discover the answer: I can make the trains run into each other.

SATURDAY 12:08 PM

Much train wrecking ensues.

SATURDAY 12:16

Executive Editor Rob Smith smuggles a Subway meatball sandwich and a cold Pepsi into my prison. He has been good to me. If things go bad before this test is over (and I think they will), I will kill him last.

SATURDAY 12:58 PM

Five hours left, and only one more game to play. I don't think I'm going to be able to make it.

SATURDAY 1:44 PM

Maybe I can make it after all. Barbie's got chops. Not only is she hot (for an inanimate 30 year old doll), but she also has a great personality and right off the bat I'm actually putting together some decent designs.

SATURDAY 2:04 PM

Barbie refuses to model without clothes. I take the rejection personally.

SATURDAY 2:09 PM

Barbie and I reconcile, promising never to fight again.

SATURDAY 3:22 PM

I print out five of my best clothing designs only to realize that I have no Barbie to try them out on. I call Ed to ask if I can use his ***STARCRAFT*** doll.

SATURDAY 3:23 PM

Ed takes exception to me calling it a "doll" and informs me that it is not a "doll" it is an "action figure."

SATURDAY 3:25 PM

Ed's ***STARCRAFT*** Marine action figure (still a doll if you ask me) enters the world of high-fashion modeling.

SATURDAY 4:42 PM

I reach the elusive "Barbie Zone." I can do no wrong. My patterns match, my styles are contemporary yet classic and my color schemes work perfectly with the light hues of the Marine's skin. I am the Jean-Paul Gaultier of videogame-based action figures.

SATURDAY 4:44 PM

For a second I see myself in the reflection of my computer screen. I have a doll in one hand and a scarf pattern in the other. Oh no, I didn't make out okay, did I?

SATURDAY 4:56 PM

My fellow staffers come to see my last few minutes with the bad games. And while there was a time when we shared a common bond, now something is different. Unshaven, unkempt, and bordering on the edge of sanity, I stand before them and realize that things can never be the same. I have been through a horrible and life-changing ordeal that they will never understand, but most importantly I have survived.

In the future, we will make jokes about badly made mass-market games like many of these, and I will laugh. But only on the outside. The things I've seen, the torture I've endured, and the games I've played will forever be etched on my mind. It's 48 hours that I will never forget.

DEMONSTRATION #2:

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2. Smash into pieces.
3. Toss over your shoulder.

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ATI RAGE FURY. True 32-bit color without compromising speed.

GRAPHICS BY ATi rage 128

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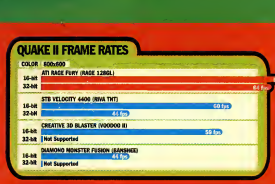

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Wicked 3D Eyescream

Looking ahead with slightly crossed eyes

PRICE—› $129 SRP
INTERFACE—› Display Port
BUNDLE—› Voodoo2 Drivers
CHIP SUPPORT—› Voodoo2 Chipset

One of the greatest unfulfilled promises in all computer gaming is that of virtual reality. Sure, this venture-capitalist induced buzzword has died down in recent years, but the stream of products built on that concept is still going strong today. Easily one of the best of these consumer-oriented children of the quest for VR is the Wicked3D Eyescream glasses.

While we've tested countless 3D glasses, none are as elegantly designed or as comfortable as the Eyescream glasses. The comfort is due to the extremely lightweight materials and wireless design. Even though the viewing ports are rather small, the glasses actually feel pretty good, and give far fewer headaches than other 3D stereoscopic glasses we tried, which seemingly were designed by a holdover from the Spanish Inquisition. Having no wires attached to your head frees up your movement and lets you concentrate on the game at hand.

Geeky, yet kinda fashionable, and kinda functional.

So the glasses are comfortable, but how do they play? The answer to that is the only down side.

When we played games that work specifically well with the glasses, the 3D view was amazing. Unfortunately it took much painful tuning to get the stereovision just right and even when everything was working perfectly, the textures were grainy and the framerates low. The games that ran best with the glasses were still hard to see, while the games that work poorly with the glasses were incredibly frustrating.

As far as making the good games play better, the glasses did offer some nice treats. In titles such as *Rogue Squadron* and *Need For Speed III*, the addition of 3D actually adds depth to the gameplay. And in games like *Quake II* and *Tribes*, the glasses add a nifty laser pointer that moves in 3D to show exactly where you are aiming.

Currently the technology for virtual reality is just a little too primitive to make the Eyescream glasses a performance enhancer, but as a novel and fun way to look at the games you already play, they fit the bill perfectly.

RATING 6

Pluses

→ Seeing Lara in real 3D
→ Laser targeting

Minuses

→ Goggle sickness
→ Blurry graphics

Tribes on a TNT (or 'software' as it's known)...

... and on a Voodoo 2 – which do you prefer?

Life without Voodoo 2

...or welcome to Mike's nightmare

Forget about the fancy benchmarks. Erase from your memory any knowledge of bump-map stuffing. Don't get caught up in 32-bit textures. And please shut up already about 1900 x 1200 resolutions. There is one simple truth – Voodoo 2 is still the best.

Just recently this point was driven home when Mike Salmon got a brand new PII 450 into the office. Feeling guilty for dumping his battered (frequently crashing) machine on newbie Chuck Osborn, Mike decided to let Chuck have the Quantum3D dual Voodoo 2 already in his machine. After all, Mike had a brand new TNT board, which he had heard so many good things about and seen perform impressively in the benchmark tests.

The installation went smoothly and everything appeared to be just fine. That is, until **PCXL** started up one of their infamous "let's play *Tribes* for a few minutes, when it's really going to last hours" sessions. The next thing to appear on Mike's monstrous new monitor was the ugliness known as software rendering. "Pixellitis" had infected his screen and reminded us all why games without 3D card support are a bit like that hot girl you were dancing with at 1:30 a.m., now exposed as hideously ugly by the fluorescent lights of closing time. Mike panicked and popped in *Unreal* – doh! Around every corner there was software rendering, blocky textures, and a complete lack of acceleration. The only card which supports every API is the Voodoo 2, and until all games are done in Direct 3D, you will have to own a Voodoo 2 or face this dilemma.

The TNT is a great card, but the most important category for any graphics card is how many games does it support and the only one that can say "all of 'em" is Voodoo 2. Nuff said.

USB and You

How the interface will affect YOUR gaming experience

For around two years now, new PCs have had two flat, parallel, mysterious holes in the back near the keyboard and mouse ports. Most PC buyers, not knowing what else to do, wisely ignored them and put them out of their minds for all eternity. While this is usually the best thing to do whenever there's something about your computer you don't understand, now, it's actually a good idea to take another look at those little holes. They're finally being used, and to ignore them further could cause you to miss out on some seriously cool, and convenient, gadgetry.

They are, of course, USB ports. USB stands for Universal Serial Bus, and now that Windows 98 is, for better or worse, firmly established as the OS to have, they're starting to become pretty darn useful. Most versions of Windows 95 don't support the USB ports, though one of the later OEM editions managed to include it, and even then it was little more than a hack. Win98 supports USB with reliability and stability. (Yes, we do know that Windows 98 is neither reliable nor stable, but what we mean is, it does as good a job with USB support as it's capable of doing with anything.)

To call USB "new" wouldn't be accurate — the standard has existed for years. Until Win98 made it actually work it's gotten its share of hype, but the products have been lacking. There was wide speculation that USB might go the way of the currently undersupported DVD or LS-120 drives, but there really wasn't any chance of it fading into inglorious obscurity. (LS-120 drives are 120 MB floppy drives that are fully backward compatible to any 3.5 inch floppy, and can also read and write special 120MB diskettes.) Developers were awaiting native OS support, and now that we have it, USB products are popping up on shelves everywhere.

So what, exactly, is a universal serial bus? Take a look at the back of any ATX PC. See all those ports? There's the 25-pin female parallel port, two 9- or 25-pin male serial ports, the 15-pin female MIDI/game port, 2 identical round ports for the keyboard and mouse, and there could also be SCSI and/or proprietary ports, too. And, of course, there are two USB ports. Novice computer users are rightfully intimidated by the idea of attaching an external device — not only do you have all those ports from which to choose, but sometimes you even have to tweak the port settings just to get it to talk to a new device.

USB can replace every single one of those ports.

The philosophy behind USB is simplicity itself. A user buys a device, plugs it in, and it works (wasn't that the concept of the much heralded plug-and-play of Windows 95? Ah well, three years late). Now there's no need for port tweaking, jumpers, DIP switches, tech support, etc. USB devices are hot swappable, meaning that you can connect or disconnect them while the computer is on, and Win98 will automatically load (or unload) the appropriate driver. If you're plugging the device in for the first time, you'll need to provide the manufacturer's driver disk; after that, Win98 cleverly remembers where the drivers are and installs them automatically when they're needed.

Though most computers only have two USB ports, you can actually connect up to 127 USB devices to them at the same time. To connect more than two, you'll need to purchase at least one powered hub with an "upstream" port, which gets plugged into the PC's USB port or another hub; and, you'll need four or more "downstream" ports, into which you can plug USB devices.

By chaining hubs, you can create a sort of "tree" of devices. Some common PC peripherals are available with USB hubs built into them, such as monitors, scanners, and printers. Amazingly, no matter how many USB devices you've got, they all operate properly without conflicting. This is because USB controllers are programmed to recognize 128 separate hardware addresses (as opposed to a handful of available IRQs), and they're assigned dynamically when devices are connected. (One

USB STUFF

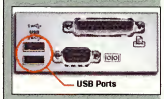
USB devices are available for all manner of peripherals, including:

- JOYSTICKS
- GAMEPADS
- MICE
- KEYBOARDS
- DIGITAL CAMERAS
- CD-ROM DRIVES
- TAPE DRIVES
- FLOPPY DRIVES
- SCANNERS
- PRINTERS
- SPEAKERS
- MODEMS
- ISDN DEVICES
- LAN ADAPTERS

The Logitech Wingman Formula Force supports both serial and USB connections, but doesn't plug into a car lighter – damn!

PORTS IS PORTS

There are lots of ways to plug stuff into your PC, and USB won't necessarily kill all of 'em.



MIDI/GAMEPORT
An integral part of every soundcard, this 15-pin female port leads a double life. It acts as input for both MIDI devices and gaming hardware. Older PCs had gameport-only versions built onto their I/O cards or motherboards. Designed to work with XT and AT class processors, gamers started to notice degradation in precision as 486 processors took over the market. Dedicated ports with speed compensating abilities were introduced, and, more recently, sound cards' MIDI ports have also begun to compensate for processor speed. USB ports will probably render game ports obsolete.

SERIAL
The slowest port on a PC, serial ports are mainly used today to connect external modems or to link two computers for data transfer. Serial devices can include anything that isn't extremely speed sensitive. The male connectors come in both nine and 25-pin varieties.

PARALLEL
Parallel ports are also called printer ports, because talking to printers is their most common function. Parallel ports are faster than serial ports, and they're often used to connect external drives such as CD-ROM drives, zip drives, tape drives and even removable hard drives (although the parallel port's speed does not compare to that of an IDE or SCSI channel).

SCSI
Fast but expensive, SCSI ports serve to connect both internal and external devices. Since few motherboards have SCSI controllers built in, a separate controller card is usually required. SCSI ports are ideal for hard drives, high speed CD-ROM drives and any other high speed devices. There are several different SCSI standards: SCSI, SCSI II, Ultra SCSI, Wide SCSI, and so on. The first three refer to the different generations of the standard — each is faster than the last. Each can handle up to seven devices, unless it's part of a wide controller which can handle 14 devices.

IEEE 1394
Sometimes referred to as Firewire, this external serial bus is speculated to be the successor to USB. Popular among more technical professionals, IEEE 1394 is still undergoing specification adjustments. Though much faster than USB, IEEE 1394 devices are both scarce and expensive.

If you have ever filled every port on your PC you really need to get a life

WATCH FOR CRAP

WATCH OUT FOR USELESS USB STUFF!
With every new standard, there are companies looking to exploit the hype surrounding the popularization of that standard. They pound out products as fast as they can, design a box flaunting the new standard more than the product itself, and rake in the cash.

Watch out for joysticks, gamepads, mice, keyboards, etc. that advertise the fact that they're USB devices more than their actual features. When you look at a box and the letters USB are larger than the product's name, be suspicious. Check the brand name, read the box to see if there's anything special about the product besides its connector, read reviews, and, most importantly, make sure the store will take it back if it sucks. Examples of this are the Belkin HawkEye Pro and the AVB Top Shot Force Feedback Racing Wheel.

WE'D LIKE TO SEE

USB NOSE HAIR TRIMMER
Use the power of your computer to shape and manage your unsightly nose hair. A bundled 3D application would allow you to scan in a photo of your nostrils and look at lifelike previews of different styles before you trim. Look out, ladies!

USB CLAPPER
Why reach all the way over to the power switch when you can turn your PC on and off simply by clapping your hands? A USB Clapper could also work as an input device. Imagine, instead of having to put all the necessary effort into clicking your mouse, you could just clap to click! You'll never click again!

USB BEER KEG
Eliminate the guesswork that goes with keg bingeing. The USB Keg would tell you, through a large print, easy-to-read-even-when-you're-drunk interface, just how much beer is left and how cold it is. A monitor, run in the systray, would automatically notify you in the event of such emergencies as the keg running low, the beer getting flat, or when someone attempting to do a keg stand is about to vomit.

USB CHAINSAW
Since a chainsaw is arguably the manliest power tool (runners-up include angle-grinders, hammer drills and any air tool), there should be a USB version. We're not sure how a USB connection could enhance a chainsaw, but there's gotta be a way.

USB RETINAL SCANNER
For geeks only. We know you can password protect anything on your PC, but imagine the security of a positive retinal ID. Better yet, if unauthorized family members or coworkers tried to access your files and failed the retinal scan, an optional laser could melt their eyeballs. Let's see 'em try to check out your internet porn collection after that!

USB INTERACTIVE LARA CROFT LIFE-SIZED BLOW-UP DOLL
Ooh, just imagine what you could do!

USB POCKET FISHERMAN
There's no purpose to this product; we just admire Ron Popeil's ability to get rich at the expense of foolish consumers. Also, we wanted to say "Pocket Fisherman." Pocket Fisherman, Pocket Fisherman, Pocket Fisherman. There. We feel better.

Joysticks running on the USB port are supposed to benefit from the digital connections, but analog sticks are still very popular.

address is used by the controller itself, and the other 127 are reserved for devices.)

The implications of USB on gaming are staggering. There's no longer a need to swap between your flight stick, gamepad, driving wheel, and other controllers; you can keep them all plugged in at once. USB ports are part of a motherboard's chipset, so the need for speed compensation is eliminated. (Game ports, invented in the days of IBM XT class PCs, need special processing to work accurately with Pentium class computers.) The high speed data transfer promises to eliminate the need for parallel port external devices, such as removable hard drives and CD-ROM drives.

A PC's USB controller only uses one IRQ no matter how many devices are connected to it, so other IRQ-hogging ports such as serial and parallel can be disabled. The USB bus can provide power to low-powered devices such as gamepads and joysticks, but not motorized products such as force feedback devices.

If you haven't tried a USB product yet, or if you're squeamish about investing in an unproven technology, put your fears to rest. We've tested several different USB products, including the Logitech Wingman Force, Belkin HawkEye Pro, and the Microtek Scanmaker X6, and so far they've all worked beautifully. In fact, when we actually look to purchase external peripherals, we prefer USB versions. Try it, and you will too.

Get that digital camera going and the art world is yours.

Microsoft's DSS80 sound system performed well in Win95, but the digital throughput when used in Win98 was awesome.

USB means no more swapping joysticks/pads/wheels when changing games.

Even digital cameras are taking advantage of USB. How about TVs next?

3D Card Roundup

We've seen them all, tried them all, and can now completely recommend (or shun) every major 3D card on the market. Consult this concise and complete round-up before making any buying decision you might later live to regret.

BANSHEE

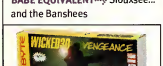
OVERALL RATING 7

SLOT--› PCI OR AGP
2D/3D--› YES
API SUPPORT--› GLIDE, DIRECT3D, OPENGL

OVERVIEW--› The Banshee is an extremely fast 2D/3D card for the price, but doesn't offer enough performance bang to compete with some of the other chipsets currently available. The benchmark scores can be deceiving because the Banshee often looks faster than a Voodoo 2. It's not. The board doesn't offer multi-texturing in a single pass, which severely limits performance in games like *Half-Life*. But, support for every game covering all API bases, decent performance, and a great price make Banshee a solid 2D/3D solution

CLAIM TO FAME--› The all-in-one Voodoo solution, and it's cheap

BABE EQUIVALENT--› Siouxsee... and the Banshees



Wicked3D Vengeance

www.metabyte.com

BUNDLE--› THE WHOLE BAG OF NOTHING
PRICE--› $129 (STREET PRICE)

DRIVERS--› Metabyte is known for solid drivers and plenty of backup support

FRILLS--› Wicked Vision 3D glasses

RATING 7

Quantum3D Raven

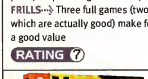
www.quantum3d.com

BUNDLE--› *GEX, RUSH THE ROCK*, AND *NFL BLITZ* (FULL GAMES)
PRICE--› $149 (STREET PRICE)

DRIVERS--› Constantly releasing new drivers highlights great support (and poor original drivers)

FRILLS--› Three full games (two of which are actually good) make for a good value

RATING 7



Diamond Monster Fusion

www.diamondmm.com

BUNDLE--› *UNREAL* (DEMO WITH EXCLUSIVE LEVELS) AND *MOTOCROSS MADNESS* DEMO
PRICE--› $120 (STREET PRICE)

DRIVERS--› Diamond consistently has the best drivers in the business

FRILLS--› The box is really nice

RATING 7

Guillemot Maxi Gamer Pheonix

www.guillemot.com

BUNDLE--› *TONIC TROUBLE* (FULL), *HALF-LIFE DAY ONE*, PLUS SEVERAL DEMOS
PRICE--› $89 (STREET PRICE)

DRIVERS--› Decent — at this price they are quite acceptable

FRILLS--› The best value in 3D acceleration

RATING 8

Creative 3D Blaster Banshee

www.creativelabs.com

BUNDLE--› TWO NON-GAME GRAPHICS APPS
PRICE--› $119 (STREET PRICE)

DRIVERS--› Unproven, but no major problems thus far

FRILLS--› An enormously long name

RATING 6

S3 SAVAGE 3D

OVERALL RATING 6

SLOT--› AGP
2D/3D--› YES
API SUPPORT--› DIRECT3D, OPENGL (ALTHOUGH IT IS PRETTY POOR)

OVERVIEW--› The Savage 3D performs extremely well in Direct3D, second only to the Riva TNT, but the OpenGL performance is very poor. This is a perfectly acceptable 2D/3D board that works great in tandem with a single or dual Voodoo 2. However, without a Voodoo 2 backing it up, the Savage 3D simply doesn't cut it for the more intensive games

CLAIM TO FAME--› S3TC (texture compression) allows for amazing textures, unfortunately no game has utilized this feature yet (*Unreal Tournament* will be the first to incorporate this)

BABE EQUIVALENT--› Shannon Tweed – Outstanding direct-to-video performance

G200

OVERALL RATING 6

SLOT--› AGP/PCI
2D/3D--› YES
API SUPPORT--› DIRECT3D

OVERVIEW--› The G200 has great Direct3D image quality and decent speed, but as of press time it didn't have a final OpenGL driver. Loosely translated, it can't play *Quake/Unreal* or any games based on those engines. To make it even simpler, you won't be able to play any decent first-person shooters unless you pair this board with a Voodoo 2. The G200/Voodoo 2 combo is a great D3D, OpenGL, and Glide solution, second only to TNT/Voodoo 2 as the best combo

CLAIM TO FAME--› The very best image quality of any D3D accelerator card

BABE EQUIVALENT--› Pamela Anderson – Great to look at, but not much else

Matrox Mystique G200

www.matrox.com

BUNDLE--› *MOTORHEAD, INCOMING*, AND *TONIC TROUBLE*, AND 3D GAME DEMOS
PRICE--› $129 (STREET PRICE)

DRIVERS--› Great Direct3D, but incredibly long wait for OpenGL drivers really sucks

FRILLS--› Possibly the best Direct3D card available

RATING 6

INTEL I740

OVERALL RATING 5

SLOT--› AGP/PCI
2D/3D--› YES
API SUPPORT--› DIRECT3D, OPENGL

OVERVIEW--› Great all around performer for the price, but is WAY too slow for decent performance in first-person shooters or racers. The image quality is very nice and the Direct3D performance is still one of the best. Oddly enough, it is the only graphics card on which *Trespasser* runs smoothly – this is neither a commendation of the card or the game

CLAIM TO FAME--› The cheapest way to 3D acceleration

BABE EQUIVALENT--› Jenny McCarthy – Nice image quality, but reaaaally slow!

Real3D StarFighter

www.real3d.com

BUNDLE--› NOT MUCH, BUT AT THIS PRICE, WHO CARES?
PRICE--› $39 (STREET PRICE) (BMB)

DRIVERS--› Acceptable and relatively bug free

FRILLS--› It comes with a receipt

RATING 6

Diamond Stealth G460

www.diamondmm.com

BUNDLE--> *INCOMING* AND A FEW GRAPHICS APPS
PRICE--> $49 (STREET PRICE) (8MB)

DRIVERS--> Best i740 drivers available
FRILLS--> Groovy silver card sleeve

RATING 5

RIVA TNT

OVERALL RATING 8

SLOT--> AGP/PCI
2D/3D--> YES
API SUPPORT--> DIRECT3D, OPENGL

OVERVIEW--> Finally a card to compete with the mighty Voodoo line of accelerators. The TNT combines solid 2D performance (like anyone really cares about 2D) and amazingly fast 3D performance for OpenGL and Direct3D. The only place the TNT falters is that it doesn't support Glide. Of course if it did, 3Dfx would really have something to sue them for. The *Unreal* engine, *Tribes*, and many EA games still support only Glide, so we recommend having a Voodoo 2 card as a backup.
CLAIM TO FAME--> For speed, versatility, and image quality, this is the best 2D/3D card anywhere
BABE EQUIVALENT--> Charlize Theron – The complete package

Diamond Viper 550

www.diamondmm.com

BUNDLE--> *MOTORHEAD*, MICROSOFT GAME SAMPLER, SOFTWARE DVD, AND SOME 3D GRAPHICS APPS
PRICE--> $159 (STREET PRICE)

WHY IT'S DIFFERENT--> The very best TNT drivers anywhere and the most solid TNT choice for performance and price

RATING 8

Hercules Dynamite TNT

www.hercules.com

BUNDLE--> NOTHING
PRICE--> $159 (STREET PRICE)

WHY IT'S DIFFERENT--> Great performance and the best TNT card for those wishing to do some overclocking

RATING 7

STB Velocity 4400

www.stb.com

BUNDLE--> *FORSAKEN*, SOFTWARE DVD, AND COLORFUL 3DEEP GRAPHICS APP
PRICE--> $179 (STREET PRICE)

WHY IT'S DIFFERENT: TV out and software DVD come at a price, but they do add value for people who want a card for more than games

RATING 7

Canopus Spectra 2500

www.canopus.com

BUNDLE--> NOTHING
PRICE--> $199 (STREET PRICE)

WHY IT'S DIFFERENT--> Witch-doctor setup means you can hook a Voodoo 2 into the Spectra for the ultimate setup. This is the priciest, but easiy the best TNT product anywhere

RATING 9

3DFX VOODOO2

OVERALL RATING 8

SLOT--> PCI
2D/3D--> NOPE, 3D ONLY
API SUPPORT--> DIRECT3D, OPENGL, GLIDE

OVERVIEW--> The king of all 3D accelerators doesn't offer the resolution or image quality of a TNT, but for pure speed and developer support, there is nothing better. By all means, get a TNT, but you better have a Voodoo 2 if you plan on playing any of the popular games still sticking with Glide-only support. The supreme gamer setup is still a pair of SLI'd Voodoo 2's (assuming you have the available slots and the cash). Much like the TNT, all of the Voodoo 2 boards perform nearly identically. The best way to choose which card to buy is in preference for price and bundle
CLAIM TO FAME--> Supports every single 3D game made and does so with unparalleled speed. Quite simply, not having a Voodoo 2 really sucks (see page 47)
BABE EQUIVALENT--> Jennifer Love Hewitt – It's not a question of want, it's a question of NEED

Guillemot Maxi Gamer 3D 2

www.guillemot.com

BUNDLE--> A FEW DEMOS INCLUDING *JEDI KNIGHT AND HERETIC II*
PRICE--> $139 (STREET PRICE)

WHY IT'S DIFFERENT--> The cheapest way to get a Voodoo 2, and it works just fine

RATING 8

Metabyte Wicked 3D

www.wicked3d.com

BUNDLE--> NOTHING
PRICE--> $129 (STREET PRICE)

WHY IT'S DIFFERENT--> The slut of Voodoo 2's that it is, the Metabyte will SLI with any other Voodoo 2 board, and the price is definitely right

RATING 8

Canopus Pure3D 2

www.canopus.com

BUNDLE--> NOTHING
PRICE--> $179 (STREET PRICE)

WHY IT'S DIFFERENT--> Great engineering make this the best Voodoo 2 on the market, bar none, but it is just a bit pricey for most gamers' budgets

RATING 8

Diamond Monster 3D II

www.diamondmm.com

BUNDLE--> *HEAVY GEAR*, *STAR WARS: SPECIAL EDITION*, OTHER SAMPLERS
PRICE--> $140 (STREET PRICE)

WHY IT'S DIFFERENT--> Great drivers, good price, and a decent bundle

RATING 8

Quantum 3D x24

www.quantum3d.com

BUNDLE--> FOURTEEN DEMOS, NONE OF THEM TERRIBLY EXCITING
PRICE--> $399 (STREET PRICE)

WHY IT'S DIFFERENT--> Two Voodoo 2's on one slot. Pricey, but you'll never regret it

RATING 9

ATI RAGE FURY

OVERALL RATING 8

SLOT--> AGP
2D/3D--> YES
API SUPPORT--> DIRECT3D, OPENGL

OVERVIEW--> Performs nearly identically to the TNT chipset, and has features that TNT can't offer, such as 32MB of RAM, making for 32-bit true color and the best image quality we've seen. ATI has been known as the cheap mass-market OEM chipset for years, but the Rage Fury has proven to be one of the best chipsets this year. We wholeheartedly recommend it as an AGP 2D/3D card in any system, but there aren't enough differences to justify replacing your TNT with a Rage Fury
CLAIM TO FAME--> 32MB of RAM means almost all of the texture memory is handled on the card, leaving your system completely free from that task
BABE EQUIVALENT--> Meg Ryan – Complete package, cute smile

ATI Rage 128 GL

www.atitech.com

BUNDLE--> THE USUAL COLLECTION OF BRAINLESS GAMES AND OLD DEMOS, PLUS SOME NICE DVD SOFTWARE
PRICE--> $229 (STREET PRICE)

DRIVERS--> Still new and has some problems, but should be fixed by the time you read this
FRILLS--> TV Out and software DVD can turn your computer into a DVD player (if you have a DVD ROM drive, that is)

RATING 8

WHO DA BEST?

Since it was a tie, and the buying decision should be based on your current system and financial restraints, we had to set a tie-breaker. And so, we reveal the winner ... Voodoo 2.

Why? Because we wanted to include the picture of its babe equivalent, the lovely Jennifer Love Hewitt.

"The Ultimate Gaming Machine"

"THE GREY"
Intel Pentium II 400MHz Processor
High-Performance Heatsink/Dual-Fan Cooling System
Intel 440BX Motherboard w/512K Cache
Crucial 128MB SDRAM (PC-100)
1.44MB Floppy Drive
8.4GB Ultra-ATA Hard Drive (5400RPM)
Canopus SPECTRA 3200 TNT w/16MB
Aureal Vortex II Apache 30 - 3D PCI Sound Card
Cambridge PC Works Speaker & Subwoofer System
Toshiba 32X CD-ROM Player
ATX Mid-Tower Case
104-Enhanced Keyboard
Microsoft Intellimouse PS/2
US Robotics V.90 56K Fax/Modem
Microsoft Windows '98 Operating System
Free installation & configuration
of favorite games & latest drivers

PRICE: $1,799.00

"THE HIVE-MIND"
Intel-Pentium III 450MHz Processor
High-Performance Heatsink/Dual-Fan Cooling System
Intel 440BX Motherboard w/512K Cache
Crucial 128MB SDRAM (PC-100)
1.44MB Floppy Drive
14.4GB IBM Deskstar 14GXP (7200RPM)
Canopus SPECTRA 3200 TNT w/16MB
Voodoo II w/12MB 3D Accelerator
Aureal Vortex II Apache 30 - PCI 3D Sound Card
Cambridge 4-Point Surround
Speaker & Subwoofer System
48X CD-ROM Player
ATX Full-Tower Case w/300 Watt PS
(KoolMaxx) Video Cooling System
104-Enhanced Keyboard
Microsoft Intellimouse PS/2
US Robotics V.90 56K Voice/Fax/Modem
Microsoft Sidewinder Precision Pro USB
Microsoft Windows '98 Operating System
Free installation & configuration
of favorite games & latest drivers

PRICE: $2,299.00

"THE AREA 51"
"NEW" Intel Pentium III 500MHz Processor
High-Performance Heatsink/Dual-Fan Cooling System
Intel 440BX Motherboard w/512K Cache
Crucial 256MB SDRAM (PC-100)
1.44MB Floppy Drive
14.4GB IBM Deskstar 22GXP (7200 RPM)
Canopus SPECTRA 3200 TNT w/16MB
Voodoo II w/12MB 3D Accelerator SLI-Mode
Sound Blaster LIVE! 3D Sound Card
Cambridge Desktop Theater 5.1 (Dolby-Digital)
Speaker & Subwoofer System
3rd Generation DVD-Player
Iomega Internal 100MB ZIP Drive
ATX Full-Tower Case w/300 Watt PS
(KoolMaxx) Video Cooling System
104-Enhanced Keyboard
Microsoft Intellimouse PS/2
US Robotics V.90 56K Voice/Fax/Modem
Microsoft Sidewinder ForceFeedback Pro
Microsoft Sidewinder Gamepad
Microsoft Windows '98 Operating System
Free installation & configuration
of favorite games & latest drivers

PRICE: $3,399.00

MONITORS

17" Viewsonic V73 .26dp add:	$315.00
17" Viewsonic G73 .26dp add:	$345.00
19" Viewsonic V95 .26dp add:	$495.00
19" Viewsonic PS790 .25dp add:	$565.00
21" Viewsonic P810 .25dp add:	$1,010.00
21" Nokia 445X Pro .21dp add:	$1,265.00

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www.alienware-pc.com
13398 Southwest 128th Street Miami, Florida 33186

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PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

"Bottom Line: If you've got the money to spend, this is the gaming system to own"
-PC Gamer, January 1998

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD EDITORS' CHOICE

"PERFORMANCE WAS SIMPLY STUNNINIG"
COMPUTER GAMING WORLD ★★★★★
-Computer Gaming World, July 1998

"FAST, PACKED, AND STACKED"
-BOOT Magazine, July 1998

Go to http://pcxl.ign.com/gaming411: Product Number 14

DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD

HISTOGRAM | AVG SCORE | -

PAST SCORES: 10, 8, 6, 4, 2

WHO ARE THEY?

Creative Assembly has been churning out sports games for EA since 1993 when it ported *FIFA* to the PC. Since then, the company has worked on a range of different sports titles for the UK and European market, and are currently working on *World Cup Cricket '99* and *Rugby World Cup '99*. *Shogun* is their first game in the strategy genre.

Shogun: Total War

Don't make me wakazashi you, you no-dachi fool

There have been lots of realtime strategy games but none have ever sported really large scale battles. Y'know, like the ones you see in the movies, with giant masses of troops charging and fighting. The new game from EA, *Shogun*, is gonna change all that. You say you want big-assed armies mixing it up in 3D environments? *Shogun*'s got it.

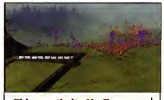
You say you want the battles to go along with a strategic meta-game where you raise armies, collect resources, and otherwise do lots of wheeling, dealing, plotting and counter-plotting? *Shogun*'s got that too. And lastly, you say you want it to be set in 16th century feudal Japan, one of the most badass periods in the history of the world? No problem.

"It's an epic realtime wargame," explains development director Mike Simpson. "I think that it's the first game to capture the scale, tactics and environment of a battle in realtime."

There's no set limit on the number of units that can meet in battle, but the team is shooting for around 5000. That's pretty ambitious. So how are they going to pull it off, you ask? According to Simpson, "There are so many things that have to work incredibly fast ... we have some very clever people working on it. There's a tradeoff between having fewer, smarter troops or more, dumber ones. Playtesting will help get this balance right."

Controlling these teeming masses is easier than you might think. The well defined, color-coded formations stand out against the terrain, and they have flags that let you know what type of units they are. The interface draws heavily from familiar Windows 95-type elements, such as click-and-drag and right-clicking menu pop-ups. The idea is to get away from lots of hotkeys and icons, allowing the player to concentrate on tactics, rather than battling with the interface to get his troops to do what he wants. Says Simpson, "We're making it really easy for the player to group units, organize them, deploy them in battle, or give them standing orders."

▶ p.56



This month, its Mr. T vs. 16th Century Japan.

FIVE QUESTIONS

CREATIVE ASSEMBLY'S MIKE SIMPSON HAD A CHOICE: ANSWER THE FIVE QUESTIONS OR COMMIT RITUAL SUICIDE AND LOSE ALL HONOR.

Q: Any game where you get to commit hari-kiri is cool. What will this accomplish, exactly?

A: Honor is a very important part of the game. If your honor or the honor of your Generals is low, your troops won't respect you, which effects their morale in battle and other Daimyo will hold you in contempt, which will make it hard to form alliances. In these situations you can be better off telling a General to kill himself, or to kill yourself as Daimyo and hand the rule to your successor. By doing this you can regain honor and be replaced.

Q. Favorite Akira Kurosawa movie?
A. For me it's RAN.

Q. Do you think Darth Vader was based on a samurai?
A. Indubitably.

Q. Did you motion capture actual Geisha girls for the game?
A. No, we just captured them.

Q. Are you guys gonna send us samurai sword tchotckes? We promise not to kill anyone.
A. We were thinking more of flame throwers, not because they're related to the game, but we really like fire.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER --> Creative Assembly
PUBLISHER --> EA
RELEASE DATE --> June 1999
3D SUPPORT --> Dir.:t3D, Glide

INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED — EXCITED — AROUSED

THE HYPE

It's all about the setting and the amazingly crazy numbers of troops. Certainly a selling point if it all works out.

THE HURDLE

When you get up-close, the sprites look pretty clunky and low res. Balancing the scale with consistent AI will be tough.

THE HIT

RTS fans should revel in the mass unit bloodbath and intense honor system of those samurai.

As dawn breaks over the daimyo's fortress, the A-Team attacks.

Shogun Gallery

The game will support 3D acceleration, but won't require it. The downside is, you won't be able to smoothly scroll over the terrain without it – rather, you'll jump from point to point. Basically, you'll really want to play this with a 3D card. Atmospheric effects are nice too.

The similarities between *Shogun* and *Myth* end with the grenade-chuckling dwarves

Having legit battle strategies taken from historical accounts was something the team used throughout the game. For example, instead of putting archers at the back, they were placed in a loose formation on the front lines and the swordsmen charged through their ranks when it was time to engage an onrushing foe.

Although the top screenshot looks like its from Risk, it really isn't – no really, it isn't

THE ART OF BOXOUT

Shogun claims "125 rules of engagement from Sun Tzu's 'The Art of War' have been programmed into the AI of each of the units." Yeah, right. We now present PCXL's own Rules of Engagement.

SUN TZU: All warfare is based on deception
PCXL: All warfare is based on pants

SUN TZU: Anger his general and confuse him
PCXL: Anger his general and confuse his pants

SUN TZU: Offer the enemy a bait to lure him; feign disorder and strike him
PCXL: Offer the enemy some pants to lure him; feign disorder and strike his pants

And so on and so forth ...

1: Generally, operations of war require 1000 fast four-horse chariots, 1000 four-horse wagons covered in leather, and 100,000 pairs of pants

2: Treat captives very well, and take care of their pants

3: There are five methods to attacking with fire. The first is to burn personnel; the second, to burn stores; the third, to burn equipment; the fourth, to burn arsenals; and the fifth, to use incendiary pants

4: The worst policy is to attack cities. Attack cities only when there are no pants

5: Therefore, when I have won a victory I do not repeat my tactics but respond to circumstances in an infinite variety of pants

6: Those skilled in war subdue the enemy's army without battle. They capture his cities without assaulting them and overthrow his pants without protracted operations

7: He whose pants are united in purpose will be victorious

8: It is because of disposition that a victorious general is able to make his people fight with the effect of pent-up waters which, suddenly released, plunge into a bottomless abyss of pants

9: The musical notes are only five in number, but their melodies are so varied and numerous that one cannot hear them all without pants

10: Now an army may be robbed of its spirit and a commander deprived of his pants

11: Therefore I say, "Know the enemy and know your pants; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril"

12: Do not demand accomplishment of those who have no pants

13: Now the elements of the art of war are first, measurement of space; second, estimation of quantities; third, calculations; fourth, comparisons; and fifth, pants

14: Thus, one able to gain the victory by modifying his pants in accordance with the enemy situation may be said to be divine

▶ p. 53 They're also keying in on the AI, which seems like a good idea considering the amount of chaos going on — the last thing you'll want to worry about is your troops getting stuck or confused. The AI will be calculated on an individual basis, so all the units will have their own little AI routines. This means you won't have to worry about them doing stupid things like getting lost, not responding when they're attacked, or indulging in the dreaded "friendly fire." Creative Assembly is taking this individuality to ridiculous levels by also giving each single soldier his own stats and experience. Isn't this going to be at a huge memory cost? "Yes," says Simpson. O...k.

And then there's the strategic game. Rather than just go from battle to battle in a predetermined order, you call the shots well in advance by taking care of everything behind the scenes. The idea is to conquer the entirety of Japan by whatever means necessary, including the obvious ass-kicking method, as well as sending out ninja assassinations, and using geisha girls to spy on neighbors. As a Daimyo, you are the ultimate ruler of your faction, and your troops will include several types of samurai, conscripts, archers, and riflemen – that is, if you trade for gunpowder with the Portugese.

Shogun looks as though it was painstakingly modeled after the real historical events. Everything from the blood type of the flag-bearer to the type of helmet the mounted samurai wear to the codes of conduct in battle is based on the real thing.

There are a few things we don't like about *Shogun* in its current state. The main thing is, although the 3D landscape is well done and you can sweep over it at will, the units are sprites. It's unfortunate, but probably a concession to the sheer number to appear onscreen. So when you zoom into the hack-and-slash to see the gory details a la *Myth*, it turns into a giant, swimming mass of blurry-edged pixels. A bit disappointing, but maybe something they'll work on.

Multiplayer plans? They're shooting for modem, Internet, LAN, and play by email options. You'll be able to choose between playing an individual battle, just the strategy, or for the truly time-endowed, the whole nine yards.

"Get a load of this armored bamboo wagon, ninja suckas!"

We asked Simpson to give us an example of a cool moment, or otherwise cool gameplay element, that he has up his sleeve that he can't wait for people to see. "It's when you are looking out over this spectacular panoramic landscape and your army, thousands of troops, is deployed on the battlefield, waiting for your command to attack. In the distance you can see the flags of the enemy army. Then after you've set the formations of your troops and surveyed the terrain, there's that first moment when you mobilize them for battle. There's an enormous amount of satisfaction in routing the enemy, seeing them in chaos, chasing them down, and butchering them as they flee for their lives. But that could just be me." Probably not, just a guess.

— **ED LEE** *wonders why he's not able to meet any geisha girls*

"Arrrgh, that Mr. T is helluva tough!" "Damn right, samurai suckas!"

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1 PHOTOGRAPH

Send us a picture showing us how much of a HardCore *PC Accelerator* fan you are.

A picture of you and our mag ... and your games ... and your system ... and your sister (and her friend). Whatever you desire. Just make us proud!

2 VIDEO

Your turn to be director. We want you to express your love for *PC Accelerator* and your favorite hobby – gaming.

Be creative... be outrageous ... do something devious ... don't get caught ... and don't reenact Shakespeare.

⇢ **Be sure to state your name and your favorite magazine (PCXL) either at the end or beginning of your video.**

⇢ **Questions or Info About Electronic Submissions: erik@pcxl.com**

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"OH MY GOD... WHAT I SAW WAS BREATHTAKING."

– THE VOODOO REVIEW

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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD

HISTOGRAM AVG. SCORE -

PAST SCORES

10
8
6
4
2

PREVIOUSLY ON KINGPIN

The last time we checked on *Kingpin* the game was very early in development, with loads of innovative ideas, but not much in the way of substance. This time we had a chance to play the game, see what has been implemented, and get a feel for what is going to be the most violent, and likely controversial, game this year.

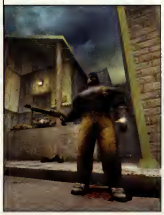
Kingpin: Life of Crime

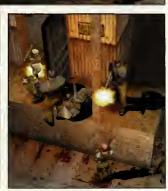
Attention Senator Lieberman: Have we got a game for you!

Shocking a desensitized **PCXL** staffer is about as easy as offending Howard Stern, but when I got my first chance to see and play the newest version of *Kingpin* I was left with a feeling I hadn't had since watching the first 30 minutes of *Saving Private Ryan*. The combination of photo-realistic ("PR" term for "really f-king good") graphics, harsh language, Cypress Hill gangsta grooves, and the goriest battles I've ever seen, left me in a state of disbelief. I never thought that a game could be so powerful.

Whether it was bashing in heads with a crowbar or filling a street thug full of lead, the special effects, sound, and animation were almost *too* good. Once word of this game reaches the closed-minded senators and panic-stricken parents of the world, it's sure to stir up plenty of controversy. At **PCXL**, we officially applaud game makers who are willing to try something different and we are enthusiastic to do whatever we can to keep the censorship scum away.

Kingpin: Life of Crime is set in a fictional urban world, where the "gangsters" of classic Italian mob movies and "ganstas" of modern society are fused into one foul-mouthed, multiple weapon-wielding, collection of bad asses. The game is based on the *Quake II* engine, but the work Xatrix has done on textures, lighting, and character models has added significant graphical upgrades from that much-maligned industrial gothic brown-look. The gameplay is described as an "action-packed episodic adventure," which, loosely translated, means it is a first-person shooter with a twist. While 70% of the game is pure action, there are enough RPG and strategy elements to make *Kingpin: Life of Crime* one of the most unique, and bloody, games we've ever seen.





Full out gang wars are amazing to watch – in the game too!

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Xatrix
PUBLISHER → Interplay
RELEASE DATE → April '99
API SUPPORT → OpenGL, Glide

INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED EXCITED AROUSED

THE HYPE

Enhanced *Quake II* engine, gritty soundtrack, unbelievable violence, adventure elements ... an entirely new experience.

THE HURDLE

Since all characters are humans, AI must be superb. We have yet to see AI as good as this game requires.

THE HIT

The language and violence will make this game stand out, even if the AI and gameplay don't deliver on earlier promises.

FIVE QUESTIONS

WE SPOKE WITH XATRIX FOUNDER DREW MARKHAM ABOUT *KINGPIN*. HE DOESN'T GIVE A F-K WHO THINKS HIS GAME IS FOUL-MOUTHED.

Q: *Kingpin* is the first game to contain the word "motherf-ker." How proud are you?
A: What the f-k do YOU think?

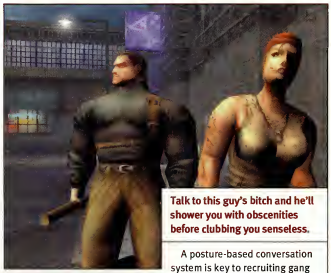
Q: Someone will try to ban *Kingpin* for violence and language, guaranteed. What do you say to them?
A: F-k 'em.

Q: Did anyone on the team "research" the game by riding along for drive-by shootings or something?
A: Yeah, and he should be out on parole by the time we're ready for a sequel.

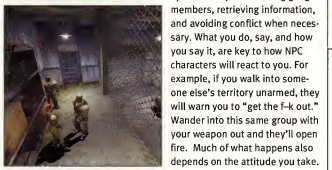
Q: PCXL has been pretty cruel about *Redneck Rampage Rides Again* and *Redneck Huntin.'* We even put 'em in Skanks of 1998. Here's your chance to get even. Give us your best shot.
A: What could I say that the public doesn't already know? The only reason anyone ever reads your stinkin' rag is to check out the pics of all the sweeter meat. (*Ed note: That's not true, is it?*)

Q: Admit it. Tell us all about how you wanted to have cops in the game, but gave in to the pressure.
A: I have nothing but the utmost respect and admiration for our nation"s peace officers. *[Insert sucking and blowing sounds]*

Lin Shaye played the skanky landlord in *Kingpin* – the grossest thing we've ever seen...



Talk to this guy's bitch and he'll shower you with obscenities before clubbing you senseless.



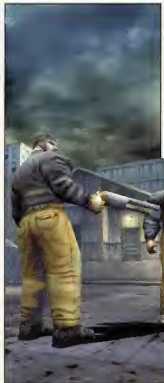
A posture-based conversation system is key to recruiting gang members, retrieving information, and avoiding conflict when necessary. What you do, say, and how you say it, are key to how NPC characters will react to you. For example, if you walk into someone else's territory unarmed, they will warn you to "get the f-k out." Wander into this same group with your weapon out and they'll open fire. Much of what happens also depends on the attitude you take. If you walk up to a group of thugs in a good mood (there are three choices of conversation ranging from assface to nice guy), they will chat with you, give you some important information or even join your gang. However, if you start threatening them, then it will likely result in a fight. But it isn't always this cut and dry, as some of the wimpy characters will only spill the beans if you verbally abuse them first. The game relies so much on communication and interaction with humans that if the AI isn't perfect it could ruin the whole game. You can't fake human AI, like you can that of alien creatures – we all know how humans act (or at least how they *should* act).

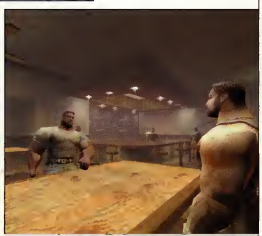
The 7 episodes and 21 levels of *Kingpin* range from gritty urban dwellings, to luxurious high-rise hideouts, with amazing graphic detail in the settings and characters. To get between levels you will take real-world transportation like a train, and within the levels there will also be an area where you get to ride a motorcycle — certainly no shortage on variety.

The question mark with *Kingpin* isn't with the ideas, potentially offensive style, or the technology, but how it will all come together. Whether this is just an ultra-violent, foul-mouthed, shooter or a new innovation in gameplay, depends entirely on how the conversation and AI system work collectively throughout the game. I've yet to see this kind of thing work properly, but if any game is going to pull it off in '99, then *Kingpin: Life of Crime* is it.

— **MIKE SALMON** *thinks censorship is f-king unconstitutional, and should not be tolerated*

Gruesomely realistic graphics, sound effects, and a heavy dose of gangsta rap make *Kingpin* a powerfully violent experience.





The local bar is where you go to recruit gang members, retrieve information, and buy crack.

FAMOUS KINGPINS

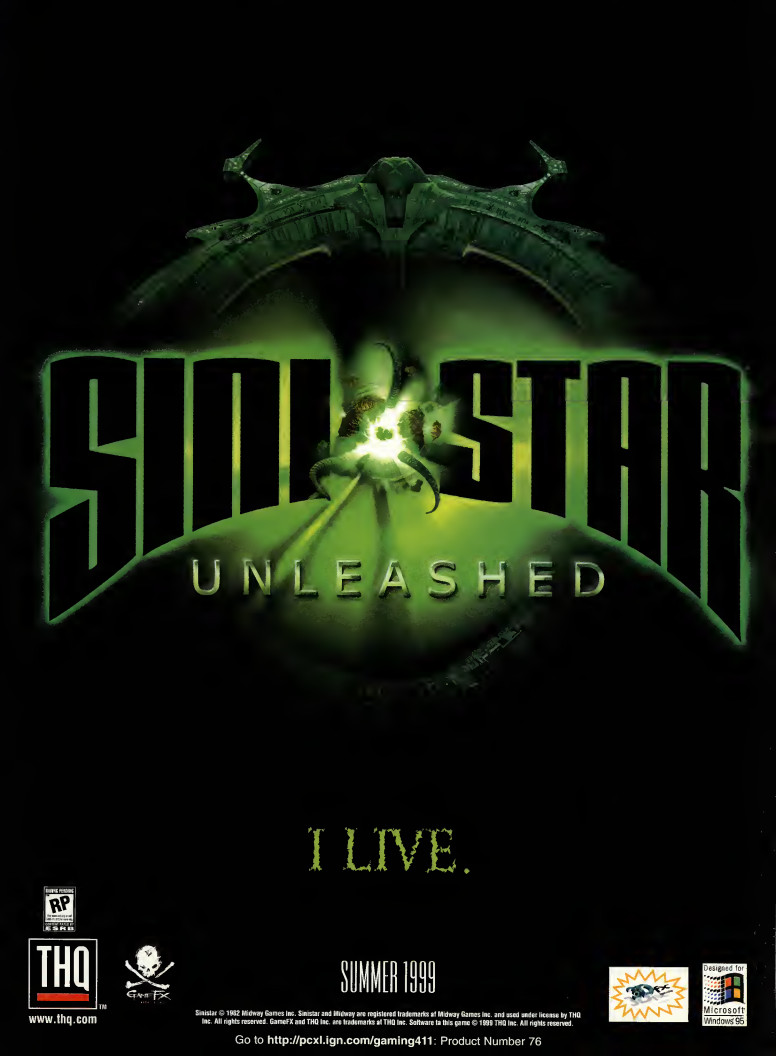
These are the guys you don't want to double-cross.

THE KINGPIN
ALIAS → Wilson Fisk
NEMESIS → Spiderman
CLAIM TO FAME → Proved that you don't need to be buff or wear tights to be a supervillain

JOHN GOTTI
ALIAS → The Teflon Don
NEMESIS → U.S. Justice Department
CLAIM TO FAME → Unlike most gangsters, dressed well and didn't get gunned down outside an Italian restaurant

JOHN GOTTI, JR.
ALIAS → Junior
NEMESIS → Himself
CLAIM TO FAME → Now known as "Good Time John-nie" at the New York federal pen. Don't drop the soap, dude

KINGPIN (MOVIE)
ALIAS → That stupid-ass bowling movie
NEMESIS → Movie-going public
CLAIM TO FAME → Confirmed that the Amish, bowling, and Randy Quaid just aren't that funny



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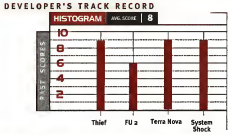
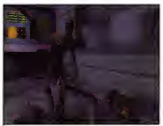


System Shock 2

It's a quantum leap back to the future

There really was no good reason that the original *System Shock*, a first-person action/RPG, shouldn't have done really, really well — it was a helluva game. It definitely earned a devoted following, but it just didn't catch on with a bigger crowd. Part of the reason for that was definitely its complexity. In terms of interactivity and character development, the original *Shock* was way ahead of its time and might have scared some people off. Only now have FPS games caught up to the level of complexity and interactivity of the original *Shock*, so Looking Glass is hoping that the wider audience is finally ready for a comeback.

What is it, exactly? According to Ken Levine, *Shock 2*'s lead designer, it's a "horror/sci-fi first-person RPG." Set aboard a huge space cruiser, the USN San Francisco, it's you against an evil computer chick named Shodan, just like in the first one. And like the original, the gameplay will be much more involving than simply mowing down everything in your path. Interaction with objects in the environment, as well as proficiency with dozens of gadgets, is key. And it's got a full-blown development system, so you can tailor your character according to the skills you want to have. This will lend itself to specific character classes such as a weapons expert, a psionics authority, or a computer hacker, but you can also be a little of everything if you'd like. Specializing will allow for multiple solutions to puzzles depending on what you do best. For instance, to get by an area guarded by security cameras, the computer hacker could infiltrate a security system and turn 'em off; the psi- ▶



Guest caption writer for this preview: Jerry Seinfeld.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER --> Looking Glass
PUBLISHER --> EA
RELEASE DATE --> Q1 '99
3D SUPPORT --> Direct3D, Glide

INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED — EXCITED — AROUSED

THE HYPE

Sci-fi/RPG/action with the *Thief* engine with a bunch of mods and a popular name (at least critically popular).

THE HURDLE

The original *System Shock*, while spoken about in reverential tones, didn't do so well commercially.

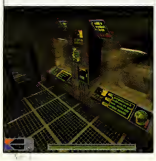
THE HIT

It'll bring back old school *Shock* gameplay, which, if you've tried it, you know was cool.

So what's the deal with these captions? Are they supposed to make you laugh or bring you into the preview or what? Anyways you go into this game – yadda, yadda, yadda – and someone ends up dead.

I can't believe the neighbors are writing graffiti on my doors. Now they're going too far!!

We don't write captions for less than $1 million each, so I hope you got enough cash - we don't take checks.



It's robot boy – you see he's a boy inside a robot.

FIVE QUESTIONS

KEN LEVINE, "THE MAN" BEHIND *SYSTEM SHOCK 2*, WAS KIND ENOUGH TO SHARE HIS INFINITE WISDOM ON A BUNCH OF RANDOM SUBJECTS.

Q. Who's your favorite self-righteous political band of the 80's?
A. CONSOLIDATED from San Francisco! "White crusading rap guys are such a downer..."

Q. Who was cooler, Lionel Richie or Billy Ocean?
A. Billy Ocean, because even though he sang sassy songs, he could still kick your ass. Lionel Richie? Not a chance.

Q. So, what took you guys so long to make a sequel?
A. What took you guys so long to make a magazine?

Q. Favorite Saturday morning cartoon of the 80's.
A. "Saturday Morning Supercade." My favorite cartoon was "Q*Bert," which they didn't show that often.

Q. Is there a secret combat mode for *Flight Unlimited 3*? 'Cause if there is, we'll review it.
A. Who needs guns when you can kamikaze Bill's Gates' house?

focused guy could turn himself invisible to pass through the area undetected; and, the weapons expert could just wade in with guns blazing and take his chances with whatever shows up.

The awkward interface was the only real problem with the first game, and that's getting a full revamp. It's all running under a modified version of the *Thief* engine with enhancements such as 16-bit color, multiplayer, and colored lighting. "It will be able to do all the cool things you saw it do in *Thief*, but now spaces will be bigger, fuller, and more colorful," says Levine.

The engine isn't the only similarity, either. As in *Thief*, the design lends itself to sneaking around and staying undetected whenever possible (that quietly includes hiding in shadows and not being heard, as enemies will use the same sound concept that made *Thief* so nerve-wracking). Explains Levine, "There's an extensive security system onboard the ship. You'll have to sneak past cameras and hack security computers in order to keep hordes of bad guys off your back. You can be stealthy and use your brains, but now you get big guns to help back you up."

The weapons (14 total) are your usual sci-fi fare of guns, lasers, and such. But an interesting twist is that there are lots of different ammo types with varying effects (such as armor piercing and incendiary), so your choice of ammo will depend on what kind of enemy

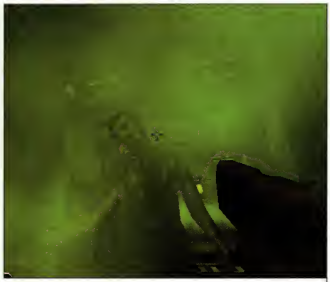
Oh my God George, what happened to your hand?

ABOUT NOTHING...

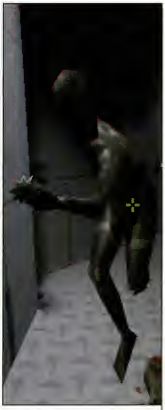
In homage to "Seinfeld" this boxout is the official:

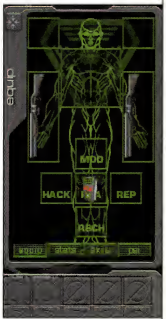
BOXOUT ABOUT NOTHING

SCENE 1 —) Ed "Jerry" Lee goes to a diner, scraps original idea for box-out and starts talking to Dan "Cosmo" Egger. Says things like, "So what's the deal with *System Shock 2*. Five years for a sequel? That's not a shock it's a flatline" **SCENE 2**—) (later in a Manhatten apartment) Dan breaks through door, drinks milk out of carton and says, "I just finished playing *Barbie Fashion Designer* ... bing (imagine much visual comedy) ... now there's a game with some giddy-up **SCENE 3** —) (cut to the top of the Empire State Building) Chuck "why did I have to be George" Osborn is fully naked and on his knees crying (again), "I need *System Shock*! FOR THE LOVE OF GOD GIVE ME *SYSTEM SHOCK*! I can't stand it anymore, everyone else gets *System Shock*, but not the fat, bald guy. Oh no. **CLOSING**—) (cut to Jerry at club) "Don't you just hate random people? Always being random, just for the sake of randomness. How random is that?"



Hello, Newwwman!





What's with all these post-apocalyptic futures?

▶ you're up against. In addition, weapons can be modified to increase everything from damage, to rate of fire, to magazine size. There are also your exotics like the Stasis Field Generator and the EMP gun. In a completely different direction you'll find the cool spell-like psi powers. Monsters, from the Pinto-esque protocol droids, to motion-detecting turrets, will benefit from the AI in *Thief*.

There will be multiplayer, and the team plans to make it a sort of *Team Fortress*-style specialization fest (that being a party of specialization or something). A team of players going cooperative will be well-advised to make sure there's at least one character sporting specialization in each class.

The main goal of the *Shock 2* team (which, by the way, includes the lead programmer from *Shock 1*), was to make a first-person game that was faithful to the original, but more accessible, and at the same time complex, deep, and fun. Whether it's any fun or not is the true test and one that won't be known for a while. But oh well, it looks good on paper. ◀

—**ED LEE** *has officially quit writing box-outs and captions. He is, however, on tour in Europe.*

You think this looks dangerous? You should spend some time in New York City. There are two lines at the ATM's in New York, one to take out the cash and the other to get mugged, it's ridiculous I tell ya.

THIEF EMERGES FROM THE SHADOWS

5 stars
"Immersive environments, impressive weapons, and excellent level design." – Gamecenter

"The graphics are beautiful... but the gameplay is even more inspired." – Newsweek Online

"Quite possibly the world's most novel first-person shooter. I haven't had this much fun in long, long time." – PC Games

4.5 stars
"One of the freshest experiences in gaming." – Computer Gaming World

9.1 rating
"It's emphasis on stealth, strategy, and ingenuity, coupled with its strong narrative structure and excellent mission design, adds up to a game that's stylish, serious, rewarding, and unique." – Gamespot

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MATURE M AGES 17+ ESRB

Thief captures top ratings

GAMEWORTHY

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD ★★★★½

GAMING EDITORS' CHOICE

PREMIERE

TO STEAL RAVE CRITICAL REVIEWS!

"Thief blazes a new trail." – Computer Games Strategy Plus

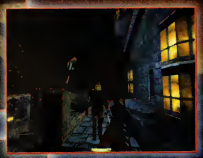
"Thief may very well define a new standard for interaction and immersion." – PC Gamer

"The atmosphere and gameplay make this one stand alone." – Computer Gaming World

12 Huge Missions with multiple environments.

Advanced Enemies can see, hear, speak and sound alarms.

Stealthy Gameplay brings a new dimension to first person action.



Your Arsenal Includes: blackjack, sword, fire arrows, water arrows, rope, arrows and more!

THIEF™

THE DARK PROJECT

Download the demo at: eidosinteractive.com

EIDOS INTERACTIVE

www.eidosinteractive.com

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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD

HISTOGRAM | AVG. SCORE | -

PAST SCORES

10
8
6
4
2

WHO ARE THEY?

Metal Fatigue was developed by Mark Lewis Baldwin, who collaborated with Quantum Quality Productions on such early '90s games as *The Perfect General* and *Empire*. While *Metal Fatigue* is Zono, Inc.'s first game, old-school gamers will no doubt recognize these titles as classic games that have stood the test of time.

Metal Fatigue

One of these days these 'bots are gonna walk all over you

While recently flying on a certain cut-rate airline which shall remain anonymous (but whose name involves the concept of "Reno"), and having nothing better to do — other than fear for my life — I got to thinking about realtime strategy games, and the way some people talk about them. Consider: "He just waltzed into my base," "Dude, I walked all over him," "She really kicked the crap out of me," "Whoa, you got stomped, man." What's with the veiled bipedal imagery? Is there some lurking subconscious urge to anthropomorphize our military hardware? I mean, they do call 'em "arms," right? Capiche?

Search your heart, and you'll find the answer: You bet your ass that urge is there. And L.A.-based developer Zono knows it. That's why they are making *Metal Fatigue*, and it's looking pretty freakin' neat.

Metal Fatigue is a science-fiction realtime strategy game set in a megacorporate universe. Here you construct and command several stories tall, anime-style mechs, er, I mean ComBots (they're called ComBots and never mechs, I've gotta stop that), which tower over more standard military ordinance such as tanks, hovercraft, gun emplacements and barracks. The game's storyline revolves around three brothers who part ways early in life and join one of three competing megacorporations. Playing as one of these brothers (each of which sports different personality traits, and therefore design styles when constructing ComBots), you fight through ten single-player missions, for a total of 30 if you replay them from the different perspectives. These conflicts are either one-on-one in alternation, or in large, messy turf wars involving not only all three CorpoNations, but an occasional fourth force which ... well, that would be telling. There's also an eight-player multiplayer mode being incorporated as we speak.

In familiar top-down fashion, you construct and control ground and air forces, but, these

As a general rule, robots should never be caught wearing lavender – it just isn't very scary.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Zono, Inc.
PUBLISHER → Psygnosis
RELEASE DATE → July '99
API SUPPORT → Direct 3D

INTEREST GAUGE

THE HYPE

Real-time sci-fi military strategy with anime-style ComBots, and multiple-layer operations, with AI that really is "I."

THE HURDLE

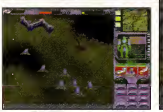
Juggling three simultaneous layers of gameplay: Subterranean, surface and low-orbit, into coherent gameplay.

THE HIT

Four-story, customizable ComBots with big freakin' katanas doing the Funky Chicken on the squishy humans below.

Sadly no "FemmeBots" are in the game – that would have been shagadelic baby

These may look like mechs, but we were informed that they are ComBots. Exactly how they are different we are quite unsure.



You'd be "fatigued" too, if you had to carry around two giant axes, not to mention your giant robotic frame.

detailed, multi-elevation environments can be tilted, zoomed in or out, and rotated for optimal viewing. In trying out the early build, it seemed easy to get a little lost, but a single key automatically snaps the map back to its original configuration. Battlefield units include all the ones you'd expect: Tanks, barracks, and fighter-bombers, plus unusual ones like wide-area deflector shield generators, railgun emplacements, and turret-armed wall sections that can be moved. No more of that frantic *C&C*-style selling and reconstructing fixed walls when your base becomes too large.

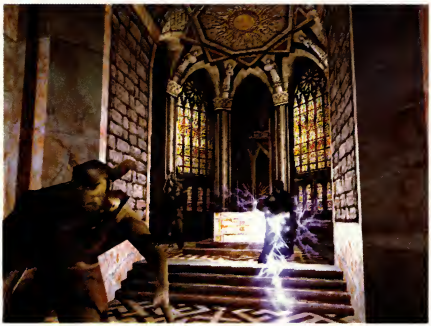
Of course, what you'll really want to do is start constructing the ComBots with their huge katanas, weapon-bristling torsos, and tank-mashing feet. The ComBots are not only large and terrifying, they're customizable — you'll have a cybernetic smorgasbord of legs, torsos and arms to mix and match, each with their own special weapon, speed and stealth configurations. Some of the ComBots can fly, but even the garden-variety ones can wade into a sea of enemy forces while bashing tanks, launching twisting salvoes of missile clusters, and swatting air units out of the sky. Meeting these metal Goliaths stock off the assembly line is bad enough, but it gets worse. If the enemy manages to tear a ComBot limb from limb without utterly totaling it, the enemy can then scavenge said severed limbs and add them to his own ComBot torso. The new bastard creation, created in less time than it takes a kid to swap out gizmos on a Transformer, is an even more fearsome war machine than before.

The action takes place on three "levels" simultaneously. First, there's the usual surface-level combat. Then there's subterranean operations, where you can dig around and pop out of the ground elsewhere (a nasty surprise if you do it right). And finally there's low-orbit platforms that can house simple solar collectors, or mass accelerators which can lob death from above across a sizeable portion of the map. Of course, the enemy probably has platforms up there too, and he can even try to fly over and confiscate yours.

The game's AI routines were developed by White Wolf cofounder Mark Lewis Baldwin, known for his work on epic strategy sims *Empire* and *The Perfect General*. This is a guy who consults with the Air Force Information Warfare Center when he's not making robots wail on each other for your PC. If you're a realtime strategy gamer and none of this news gets you vaguely interested in the approach of *Metal Fatigue*, there *IS* something wrong with you.

—CHRIS HUDAK *made the mistake af nat writing a bia. That means we can describe him as "a ward-writin' bitch"*

Giant mechanized soldiers carrying out your every whim on the battlefield – we can think of worse things.



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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD

HISTOGRAM | AVG. SCORE | -

PAST SCORES: 10, 8, 6, 4, 2

PREVIOUSLY ON SHADOWMAN

Shadowman didn't tear up the **PCXL** offices on its debut appearance. While still very early in development, we were entering our "third-person is beginning to suck" phase and nothing's come along since to make us change our minds. Iguana UK has been slaving away and the latest incarnation is looking like a much rounder product.

Shadowman

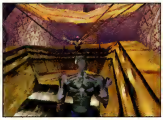
Third-person action adventure doesn't have to mean *Tomb Raider* clone

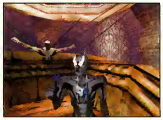
Third-person action/adventure games haven't been having a good time of it lately. Let's be honest, *Tomb Raider III* was *TR I* with newer graphics, *Space Bunnies* was crap and *Dark Vengeance* had its problems. Out of the recent crop, only *Heretic 2* seems to have emerged with any credibility. So it's a tough market. There hasn't been much in the way of innovation and hence, with *Shadowman*, we take another look at Acclaim's comic book adventure, offering a mature rating, oodles of voodoo shenanigans, and a bizarre trip between the real world Liveside and the grim, shadowy Deadside.

Shadowman isn't going to score instant points for originality given its all-too-familiar third-person view and platform-style puzzles. The game's potential lies in its ability to convey the duplicity of lead character Mike Leroi, Liveside's New Orleans-based assassin and Deadside's Shadowman. Leroi operates at the beck and call of the voodoo sorceress Mama Nettie who implanted the Shadowmask in his chest — the device that allows him to travel to the Deadside.

Part motion-captured and part hand-animated, Shadowman can pull a variety of (once again) familiar moves: he runs, jumps, climbs, rolls, clings to ledges, blah, blah, blah. But he does pack some meaty firepower, allowing him to shoot flaming skulls, or set off an impressive shockwave. He also brandishes the more standard fare such as rapid fire machine guns and a baton. All these are used against the 25 different enemy types determined to ensure that Leroi remains in the Deadside. Because Leroi is able to travel between these worlds, he finds

How did Calista Flockheart get in the game?





Humanoid frogs pointing guns at you isn't something you see every day – at least we don't.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER →	Iguana UK
PUBLISHER →	Acclaim
RELEASE DATE →	Summer '99
API SUPPORT →	D3D

INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED — EXCITED — AROUSED

THE HYPE

A new engine is powering some potentially memorable moments, with inter-engine cut scenes and an evolving plot.

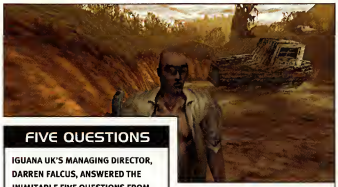
THE HURDLE

How damn exciting can it get? While there are some interesting features and settings, it still looks like a console game.

THE HIT

This ain't no *TR* clone. If the backgrounds and atmospheres are effective, they'll scare the heck out of everyone.

Roger Moore's first Bond role was fighting off some dodgy voodoo in *Live and Let Die*



FIVE QUESTIONS

IGUANA UK'S MANAGING DIRECTOR, DARREN FALCUS, ANSWERED THE INIMITABLE FIVE QUESTIONS FROM THEIR NORTHERN ENGLAND BASE IN STOCKTON-ON-TEES.

Q. How does the comic book background of *Shadowman* limit (or free) what you can do with the storyline and game style?

A. The two worlds that *Shadowman* Mike LeRoi exist in allow a lot of scope for creating a truly atmospheric and horrific environment. The original comic book sets the scene and style of Deadside fantastically. We've taken that and recreated the look and feel.

The storyline of the comic is different to the game. The game is in line with everything that can happen within the comic book world of *Shadowman*, but with it being a video game, there is more scope for interaction and the "scare" factor.

Q. Did you get any particular voice acting talent for any of the characters?

A. For *Shadowman*'s main voice, Red Pepper was used. Red has also done voice-overs for several recent smash hit movie trailers.

Q. How has development alongside the console version effected the game's design? Have you had to make any restrictions to the PC version because they couldn't be accommodated on the PSX?

A. The PC version has always been the lead version of the game, and it was originally designed with this format in mind. However, we have also managed to get every level, enemy, effect, cut scene and quest item into the console versions, and running at a very good frame rate.

We are even confident about getting most of the speech into the console versions, which will add massively to the overall feel of the game and atmosphere.

Q. Mama Nettie — who's the inspiration?

A. Mame Nettie was a combination of about seven people's imagination. She has probably been changed graphically more than other part of the game, and is now nearing on perfection.

Q. Are there many instances of Voodoo happenings in the wilds of Stockton-on-Tees?

A. You wouldn't believe it, it's practically every day over here. Then of course, there is the programmer that was working on the game, now in a mental hospital. He was last heard mentioning some weird dreams that he'd been having about serial killers.

himself in the high-stress position of being the only person able to stop the impending apocalypse. So, supported by voodoo powers, he faces traditional puzzles (inventory manipulation — find two items, join together, solve problem), while travelling a relatively non-linear path through 16 well-detailed, even occasionally impressive looking levels.

The kicker is that Shadowman has to travel back to Liveside at certain intervals as the dark plot unravels. But things aren't any easier as he works through a New York tenement building, a Texan prison, and the London underground system. Throughout all this he's pursued by various fictional serial killers (though one is based on Jack the Ripper). So there's a vital psychological subplot at work here, and it's in the weaving of this subtle mind manipulation that *Shadowman* has a chance to shine. Here's the issue — if developers Iguana UK don't get it right, *Shadowman* is set to be dismissed as another cheap *Tomb Raider* knock-off.

Everything's dark and foreboding in the world of Shadowman, but the engine handles all environments quite well.

In making the story emerge as the focus of the game, rather than a mere excuse for the action elements, 35 cut scenes using the actual game engine are designed to seamlessly integrate the dialog portions (Shadowman gets instructions and information from Mama Nettie and other characters along the way). Sporting a conveniently acronymed engine — the VISTA — the journey through Liveside and Deadside incorporates outdoor as well as indoor environments. It appears to be quite flexible, letting you control the camera angle and place it wherever you feel most comfortable.

In the two years since development began, the whole comic market has taken a bit of a dive. *Shadowman* won't be attracting buyers for its strong license, but some intelligent design decisions give it a chance. (One particularly intriguing feature involves the flick of a switch, prompting an inset picture of what it just did, such as a door opening.) However, without a doubt, the story is the key to *Shadowman*'s success. The levels are large and the adventure potentially very long, and if it manages to maintain the suspense throughout the psychological drama, *Shadowman* could be a trip to a voodoo dimension worth taking.

—ROB SMITH *took wooooooy too long to write this preview*

Voodoo magic powers can be turned on the various enemies.

who

do you think you are?

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REVIEWS

No 3D?

The name of the magazine is PC ACCELERATOR (at least most of the time) and we pride ourselves on covering games that are "bigger, better, and faster." So why the hell are we reviewing games that don't even support 3D hardware? Good question. Unfortunately not every developer is taking advantage of the killer 3D hardware available and while we discourage this, we still accept that a game is a game, is a game (so to speak). We spend most of our time online blasting people in *Quake II*, *Tribes*, and *StarCraft*, but every once in a while a bit of *Sim City* is just what the Dr. ordered. We will continue to review every game you care about, whether it is 2D, 3D, or even 4D.

The return of sprites is upon us.

CUT THE CRAP

Since we focus our coverage on fast-paced games, we don't get a chance to review every PC game that comes out. But in just a few words, we can tell you everything you need to know about the games we didn't review and cut out all the crap.

GAME	INSIGHT
ALL CRAP WAS COVERED ON PAGES 40-45. THANK YOU.	

WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN

Flawless, Perfect, Better than that sex dream with Jennifer Love Hewitt and Katie Holmes	10
A true classic. An excellent game that is well worth the money	9
A great game, but may feature a few minor flaws that are easily overlooked	8
A good, solid game that lacks the inspiration or vision of a truly great game	7
A game that rises above the average (barely) due to a hook in style or gameplay	6
The definition of mediocrity, this game doesn't commit any major crime other than being ordinary	5
A game that doesn't exactly suck, but probably won't hold your interest for long	4
OK, maybe there's an element of redeeming value in this game, but it still sucks	3
Very little of interest, this game is deeply flawed and should be avoided	2
Utter crap — Complete shit – A barrel of bullocks – A game that should never have been released	0

KILLER GAME

Any game that receives 9 or so from our 'ignorance scoring system' warrants this nifty logo. If you see the **PC ACCELERATOR** Killer Game stamp, you know it's a game worth buying. Only the true classics deserve this elite status, so don't expect to see this symbol often.

SUICIDE

If we're going to create a stamp for the truly great, then it's only fair to label the unforgivable shit as well. It takes an abominable score of 1 or 2 to qualify for the noose around the neck. Stay away from these games at all cost.

CRITICAL ADD-ONS >>

Whenever a joystick, soundcard, or other computer accoutrement improves a game, we'll stick a corresponding logo on the review. We include only those devices that make the game better; just being compatible isn't good enough. If you don't see the logo, then that particular add-on doesn't do much for the game.

- TILT
- 3D SOUND
- GAMEPAD
- MULTIPLAYER
- STEERING WHEEL
- FORCE FEEDBACK
- JOYSTICK

ACCELE-RATED >>

This additional rating provides specific information on how a game performs on a variety of competing 3D chipsets. We test games on up to four major 3D cards and report back with the true test for any 3D accelerator: how it affects the game. We base these ratings on graphic enhancements, framerates, and performance to give you a good idea of how a game will perform on your 3D card.

(Note: Performance may vary depending on the card and the setup of your system)

ACCELE-RATED

CHIPSET

1 — No significant difference from software, this game and card do not justify the expenditure

2 — The card provides solid enhancements that make the game more immersive and enjoyable

3 — This is what 3D cards are all about. Every effect is utilized, and the smooth framerate makes a huge gameplay difference

RATINGS >>

Our rating scale is a simple 1 to 10 — no decimal points, no obscure percentages, just a straight score that gets right to the point. Before we score games, they undergo countless hours of testing on different systems, with different 3D cards — our reviewers even play the games under the influence of various narcotics. In the end we stamp a single score on the game, which is essentially a numeric value of the game's worth. We love games and always try to look on the bright side, but when a pile of steaming crap comes in, we won't hold back and won't allow our readers to waste their money on said crap. You can count on our reviews for honesty, insight, and maybe even a few laughs.

GRAPHICS

Rendering quality, framerates, and special effects all contribute to an immersive gaming experience.

SOUND

Visceral sound effects and appropriate music can help make a good game great.

DEPTH

How often you find yourself playing a game, and how long, are good indicators of its quality.

DESIGN

The backbone of a game is the overall vision behind it, from characters and weapons to levels and missions.

RATING 0

http://pcd.ug.com
PC ACCELERATOR April 1999 Anyone who releases a 2D game in the year 2k will be forced to play *Myst* for 48 hours straight
75

Turok 2: Seeds of Evil

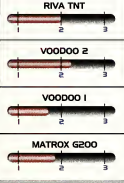
DEVELOPER -->	Iguana UK
PUBLISHER -->	Acclaim
REQUIRED -->	P200, 32MB RAM, 200MB hard drive space, D3D-compatible 3D card
IDEAL -->	P266, 64MB RAM, Voodoo 2

Walk softly and carry a big Nuke

MULTIPLAYER

ACCELE-RATED

A D3D or Voodoo card is a must, so be warned! *Turok 2* has loads of colored lighting weapons effects, but the constant fogging keeps the engine from being too much of a resource hog. It works fine with a D3D card, but a Voodoo 2 is recommended for best results. There isn't any noticeable difference in image quality between cards, though.



API SUPPORT: Direct 3D

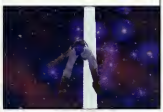
Is it already time for another *Turok* game? It seems like only yesterday that the first one tore up the Nintendo 64 charts. Unfortunately, the PC port didn't do nearly as well because, while it added 3D card support, it clearly showed the limitations of its console roots (most obviously, big blankets of fog that hid the N64's memory restrictions). This time around, Iguana remedied this problem by using a separate team to develop the PC version, ensuring that it would include features not found on the N64 and take advantage of the 3D accelerated PC's greater power. Is that what really happened? Well, yes and no.

Let's get this out of the way now — the fog is still there and it's too much to be acceptable in a modern PC first-person shooter. It's not even atmospheric since most levels are enclosed or near buildings. The fogging (or "shadow") usually doesn't interfere with gameplay, but there are times when you back up slightly to dodge enemy fire, only to see your opponent disappear into mist. It's not a gradual transition, either ... enemies and even weapon fire are obscured in an instant. If this is the optimized version, then I sympathize with owners of the N64 cart. While the graphics aren't quite up to *Unreal* standards, areas not fogged over, which range from devastated ancient cities, subterranean caves, and lush marshes, are attractive. And, the colored realtime lighting is impressive. The only real disappointment was the Primagen ("bad guy") ship which is generic and lacks the detail of earlier levels.

What sets this game apart from other first-person shooters are the weapon effects and character animations. Explosions aren't just little fireballs — they're a flaming pyrotechnic show that would make KISS fans cheer. Weapons like the Firestorm Cannon and Scorpion Missile make such a big light show that it's easy to lose track of whatever you're trying to kill.

Enemies just don't drop to the floor when hit — they writhe in pain as blood gushes from their

Oh, I'm sorry ... was that your head?



Tsk, tsk ... leaving barrels of explosives around like that.

The Nuke is the ultimate BFG.

The Village People's Indian, Felipe Rose, is part Native American and part Puerto Rican PC ACCELERATOR April 1998

My, what big claws he has. Not even Jeff Goldblum can save this Dino-Dude from getting a facefull of hot lead.

torn bodies. However, the Nuke, the most powerful weapon in the game, detonates a phenomenal blast, but leaves the environment unscathed. It just doesn't make sense that a wooden crate can't be destroyed by something like a plasma rifle because as games become more advanced, so do our expectations of them.

Additionally, the gamut of creatures encountered (raptors, armored warriors, dino-men and the like) are unimaginative and possess an AI that alternates between smart and insipid — they might take cover or they might run around aimlessly until you blow them into chunks.

The gameplay doesn't push any envelopes, either. It's more of the pull the lever/grab the key/find the hostages variety. Trapped children pitifully cry out your name until you rescue them, but unlike *Half-Life*, they just smile and fade away after being touched. The story (an evil force awakens, yadda, yadda, yadda) becomes meaningless because the emotional commitment of escorting the children to safety evaporates just as they do.

Despite its simplicity, *Turak 2* would be enjoyable if not for the nagging design flaws. Since *Hexen*-like transporter portals are used to link smaller areas together, each of the six levels are huge (five virtual square miles). On one frustrating occasion I made it to the end of a level, only to discover that a switch hadn't been flipped somewhere along the way and the program teleported me back to the beginning. Searching for that hidden switch was tedious and could've been avoided if portals were used to monitor progress more efficiently. One could argue that objectives in life aren't always clear, but at least you can, in theory, blast through flimsy bamboo doors in the real world.

The multiplayer game, which supports 24 players on one server, is a pleasant surprise and shows how this *Turak 2* has been enhanced over its N64 brother. A modified version of GameSpy ships with the game and acts as an interface for both the LAN and Internet. LAN matches connect well and, based on GameSpy's performance with other games, we expect the same of Internet connections.

In addition to the usual death-matching and CTF modes, there is an arena mode that can be played solo or in teams where two sides fight head-to-head while being observed by other gamers. Best of all is the inclusion of a text-to-speech utility that verbalizes your typed taunts surprisingly well. The monotone voice can't compete with live chatter, but expletive-laden barbs will never be the same again. (Ed Lee now knows I'm "helluva" tough.)

Multiplayer is certainly no *Quake II*, but with 24 weapons and 11 characters from which to choose, you won't get bored too quickly. If you need a quick action fix and don't mind the foggy weather, *Turak 2* could be your game. But if you enjoy intelligence with your mayhem, go with *Half-Life* or wait for *Daikatana* instead.

— **CHUCK OSBORN** *had several nights of fitful sleep dreaming about this game (sad, but true)*

THE JOB HUNT

Keith Richards should be extinct

We're not sure how much it pays, but Turok's chosen profession is Dinosaur Hunter. But what happens when he runs out of raptors to kill? These are a few jobs he might consider while waiting in line in at the Unemployment Office.

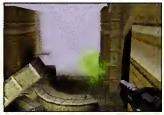
ROLLING STONES ROADIE
JOB → Escort the dinosaurs of rock while controlling their frenzied groupies
NEW CATCHPHRASE → "I am Turok! You don't look 18!"

VENTURE CAPITALIST
JOB → Hunt down dinosaur companies that are easy marks for acquisition
NEW CATCHPHRASE → "Hostile takeover! I am Turok!"

VEGAS BOUNCER
JOB → Hunt down unruly dinosaur lounge lizards and eject them
NEW CATCHPHRASE → "Two drink minimum! I am Turok!"

SCHOOL PRINCIPAL
JOB → Defend school against mass of great evil which awakens daily
NEW CATCHPHRASE → "I am Turok! Where's your hall pass?"

BEST BOY
JOB → Hunt down the guy in the Barney costume for stage calls
NEW CATCHPHRASE → "I am Turok! Here's your coffee"



Blaster ricochets are a very cool effect.

GRAPHICS
The engine's getting old, but weapon effects and explosions are fantastic.

SOUND
Sounds are nothing special, but the multiplayer text-to-speech technology is innovative.

DEPTH
Lightweight as far as contemporary first-person shooters go. Keys, switches, portals ... yawn.

DESIGN
Fits the console/arcade mold. Easy to get stuck in a large world not knowing which switch to pull.

RATING 7

Pluses
- Stuff blows up real good
- Weapon effects sure are pretty
- Text-to-speech dirty messages

Minuses
- Console roots are evident
- Fogging interferes with play
- Mundane key and switch pulling

FROM THE DESK OF SARGE

Dear Mrs. Johnson,

The melted remains I sent in my last letter were not those of your son. Our condolences. Your son, Joe, is attached above in this little baggie.

Please return the previously sent melted Private at your earliest convenience.

Deepest regrets,

Sarge

Sarge

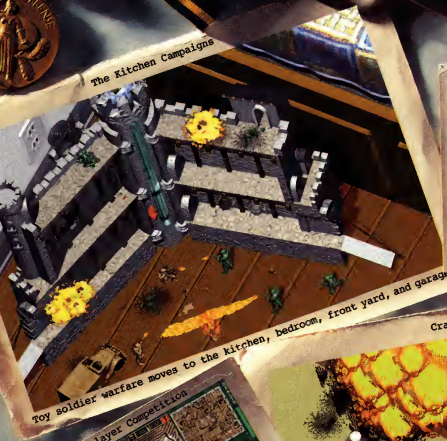
P.S. Although there will never be another Joe, you'll be glad to know we're already molding others in his likeness.

Joe's Unit

PC CD-ROM

RP

The Kitchen Campaigns



Toy soldier warfare moves to the kitchen, bedroom, front yard, and garage.

Intuitive Interface

New point-and-click mouse interface is easy for beginners and familiar to gamers.

Crazy New Weapons

Magnifying glasses and spray cans complement your traditional arsenal.

Free* Multi-player Competition

New worlds, weapons, and interface make this Top 10 multi-player game even better.

ARMY MEN II

Real Combat. Plastic Men.™

3DO™

www.armymen.com

Go to http://pcxl.ign.com/gaming411: Product Number 78

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Free play on the Internet at HEAT.net or Mplayer.com requires Internet access. *Player is solely responsible for all applicable Internet-related fees and charges.

DEVELOPER →	Firaxis Games
PUBLISHER →	Electronic Arts
REQUIRED →	P133, 16MB RAM, 100MB hard drive space, 4x CD-ROM, 2MB video card
IDEAL →	PII 333, 64MB RAM for higher resolutions, 200MB hard drive space

Alpha Centauri

Just one more turn ... just one ... more ... someone shoot me...

ACCELE-RATED

This game doesn't require 3D acceleration. The rest of this box will be written in Spanish for no good reason, really.
Hola, mi nombre es Ed. Tengo un gato, y él tiene ricketts. También estudio a mujeres descubiertas. No se ría por favor de mi aspecto extraño, él me hace grito.

Turn-based strategy games: The gaming mags love 'em. Well, not us. See, we're immune to that turn-based crap. So there's this new one, called *Alpha Centauri*, by the guy who did Civ (that's code for *Civilization*, for those in the know). Big deal. Ok, I thought, maybe I'll just install it, only to prove I won't get addicted.

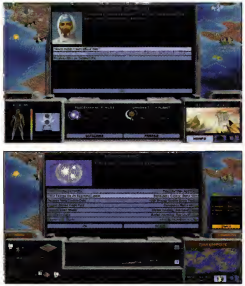
Bwa hah hah, boy was I wrong. A mere 24 hours later and I'm a shivering, neurotic, turn-based whore. Wait, that's my normal state. Anyway, before you know it, you *will* be addicted to this game and that is a frickin' fact. Yes, I've gotten into a worrisome and predictable habit of comparing games to drugs, which is a bit scary. But the buzz *Alpha Centauri* gives you is more of an obsessive steady build, as opposed to the manic high of a *Quake II*. Man, this game should have a warning label on it, or be regulated by the FDA or some shit.

The funny thing is, the only thing you really need to know about the gameplay is that it plays almost exactly like a total (space-based) conversion of *Civ 2* but with better AI. (Which says more about the *Civ* design than it does about this game, but oh well.)

Alpha Centauri continues the story of the space flight mission that featured as the end of *Civ*, ya dig? You pick one of seven ideologically distinct factions — religious, peaceful, war-like, scientific, corporate, etc. — and start building your little community. You'll be loving the giant pile of new content, where everything's all futuristic and cool sounding. "Optical Digital Neuroprocessors," funky. You research new technologies, build up your cities, negotiate with your neighbors, and all the other stuff that goes into being the dictator of an empire. It's all pretty much for one ultimate goal: To pound the utter living hell out of people. Yeah, you can win the game through peaceful means, but what fun is that? Actually, there

The detailed graphic tiles convey more information with just appearance. For example, the amount of green in a tile tells you how many nutrients it will yield.

As in *Civ 2*, it's quite satisfying to be able to withstand a sneak attack from an enemy and after a war of attrition, turn their hollow threats back in their face. In this case, its the once-proud, tree-hugging Gaians who are begging for surrender. Muhahah, I'm evil.



You'll find that it's a lot easier to "convince" everyone to vote for you as Supreme Leader after you've sent some tanks to encourage them.

are five different ways to win, including total conquest, or by cornering the global market for an economic victory, to name just two. That's a lot of replay.

The biggest addition to the stuff you could do in *Civ 2* is the Vehicle Lab, which lets you customize your units with different weapons, armor, and such. But it doesn't really help that much until you can afford to buy the big, expensive toys. I managed to get just a few monstrously beefy tanks laden with every single option in the book and kick the utter hell out of everyone. Expensive, certainly, but definitely worth it.

We need to add an obligatory paragraph about some of the game's flaws, so here ya go: It's hard to tell what square units occupy sometimes because of the muddy color scheme. Diplomacy, for all its new options and lines, is still pretty unnecessary to win. And multiplayer (seven players over a LAN, and four over the Internet) runs hideously slow. But hey, these are pretty small quibbles, because, while *Civ Net* was a big deal with the game's publishers, given the kind of game it is, it doesn't really lend itself to multiplayer – it's really slow and a game takes too long anyway.

All this high praise makes *Alpha Centauri* sound like it deserves a Killer Game award. So what's holding it back? It's the principle, man, the principle. We wouldn't be caught dead giving out awards to turn-based games. That would just be wrong.

— ED LEE *says "It's not turn-based strategy, it's turn-based, uh, action!"*

HELP FOR ADDICTS

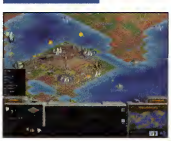
So you've admitted you have a problem. That's the first, most important step. We at the **PCXL** Center For Crack Whores offer hope and a special place of healing. Just follow these daily tips and you'll be on the road to recovery.

Robert Downey Jr.

Kate Moss

Keith Richards

- Remember: You own the Game, the Game doesn't own you
- Shaking uncontrollably for hours at a time is normal — don't panic
- If it ever gets too bad, just jump out of a window
- Getting addicted to something else will help ease the pain
- If you're about to vomit, hold it in. Vomiting will cause you to be possessed by evil spirits
- You need to get out of bed to be able to pay **PCXL** back for the drinks, you bastard. Sorry, didn't mean that



GRAPHICS

Slightly better than *Civ 2*, but it can be hard to make out what's what cause the colors all blend into each other.

SOUND

Well done, nothing spectacular. Informers and diplomats voice acting is ok.

DEPTH

A random world generator, six levels, and map editor; options are endless.

DESIGN

Gimme another hit off that *Civ* crack pipe will ya.

RATING 8

Pluses

- You won't want to stop playing
- Different game every time
- Il y a beaucoup du porc

Minuses

- You need to stop to eat
- And eliminate bodily wastes
- Otherwise, you'll die of starvation in your own filth

"Seems like a pretty high rating for such a boring game." – unidentified PCXL staffer

http://pcxl.gamers.com

FireTeam

DEVELOPER → Multitude, Inc.
PUBLISHER → Multitude, Inc.
REQUIRED → P166, 32MB RAM, 40MB hard drive, 28.8 modem
IDEAL → P166, 64MB RAM, 240MB hard drive, 56.6 modem

Look who's talking now . . .

MULTIPLAYER

ACCELE-RATED

Nada. Zip. You may as well take out your Voodoo card throw it around like a frisbee.

DEADLY DYNAMIC DUOS

OTHER TEAM CONCEPTS THAT MISSED BY A HAIR

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA → Political collaborators who took on heavy-hitters from Rome and ended up with self-inflicted snake-and-serpent wounds

ROMEO AND JULIET → Teen lovers who sneaked around on their parents and learned much about sex, but very little about life

BONNIE AND CLYDE → Oklahoma duo who perfected the art of bank withdrawals, then drove into an ambush on a lonely Louisiana back road

SEARS AND ROEBUCK → A couple of mail-order impresarios who started a thriving catalog business. Whatever happened to Mr. Roebuck?

MICKEY AND MOUSE → A successful entertainment team used to describe computer game concepts that don't work as well as one might hope

Wow! A multiplayer site featuring action shooters, a community of players committed to teamwork, plus live voice communication that allows you to talk to partners as you prowl? Multitude's epic beta test is over and this should be the online game of the year.

But *Fireteam* doesn't quite cut it. *FireTeam* certainly has its good points: Four action games, each limited to quick 10-minute bursts; team play, with stats based on collaboration rather than individual kills; and chat rooms between games where you can discuss strategy. Plus, there's the innovation that will hook you — the live chat.

FireTeam is online only, with no single-player function. The three offline training sessions are pretty basic, so you won't get much practice before diving in. Even so, advanced players are generally patient with newcomers. And some chat room habitués, those with CA (Community Administrator) or CS (Customer Support) attached to their aliases, stand ready to help.

FireTeam utilizes a third-person isometric perspective that lets you see your own character and whatever map parts your teammates can see. All four games: Deathmatch, BaseTag, Gunball, and Capture the Flag, are arcade in nature. The 10-minute time limit may work for that quick post-lunch tension reliever before rejoining the office quicksand, but the brevity doesn't allow for much depth. Each game has its own set of maps (32 in all, with promises of more to come). You play as one of three characters: A lightly-armored scout, a commando, or a plodding gunner with firepower out the wazoo. When you die — and you will — you can regenerate as the same character or switch to another. Unfortunately, all three characters move slowly, even the scout, who is supposed to be fast.

Control is by mouse and keyboard. When you encounter an enemy, place your cursor over him and wait for the accuracy percentage to rise before firing. If it looks like you're in a no-win situation, hit your transport key and you're outta there. But, there's a 10-second lag before you teleport out and a lot of bad things can happen.

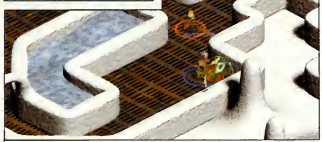
Live chat is a winner, however. Each *FireTeam* box comes with a free headset and mike (an Andrea Pro-Stereo Gamer NC-65, listed at $34.95 if purchased separately). Simultaneous talk-and-play gives the game added dimension. You can warn team members of danger, give instructions, ask for help, or just scream in anguish when you get zapped.

But after a few days, the arcade games seem repetitious. A few surly types can show up in the normally cheerful chat rooms. Then the game's talk function goes bad.

There's a lot of talk in the game's promotional materials about building a community and engineering the social experience through team play and greater interaction. Maybe so. The *FireTeam* community is a nice place to visit. Even a joy. But I wouldn't want to live there. ➤

— **JOHN LEE's** *favorite team is gin and tanic.*

Destroy the enemy base as many times as possible in BaseTag.



Maps offer plenty of lurking spots for campers, so try using a Scout to seek them out.

GRAPHICS

Graphics are ordinary, with a third-person 3/4 isometric view.

SOUND

No music, but direct realtime voice communication is the high point.

DEPTH

It's still "kill more people than the other team," despite team play.

DESIGN

Team play and voice communication are sound concepts, but not enough to carry the game.

RATING

Pluses

→ Social programming
→ Realtime voice communication
→ Four different games to play

Minuses

→ Minimal single-player practice modes
→ Ten minute sessions
→ Games quickly become repetitious

DEVELOPER -->	Blue Byte
PUBLISHER -->	Blue Byte
REQUIRED -->	P100, 32MB RAM, 250MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM; DirectX
IDEAL -->	P166, 64MB RAM, 8X CD-ROM, a mouse that tolerate lots and lots of scrolling

The Settlers III

The loveable chunksters are at it again

MULTIPLAYER

ACCELE-RATED

There wasn't any acceleration back in the settling times! Get a grip, people! This is a game about economy, infrastructure, and world domination. There's no room for your fancy "3D" graphics here! Sheesh....

MOVE ON... PLEASE

Here's a few folks that we think really should settle elsewhere.

Ashley Judd

GARY COLEMAN -->
He was the star of a popular television series and still couldn't get laid! First we have to hear about his pathetic addiction as a security guard, and now his tales of no sex life. Truly pitiful.

Tommy Lee

TOMMY LEE -->
He bagged the hottest woman on the planet and decided he would do a little plastic surgery on her face – with his fist. Can you say "dumb-ass?"

Carrot Top

LEONARDO DICAPRIO -->
Okay, he was good in *What's Eating Gilbert Grape?*, but we're thickly sick of him and the "posse." He is a prick. His friends are pricks. Hopefully *The Beach* will bomb and we'll never see his pasty ass again.

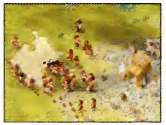
Sojourner Truth

KATHIE LEE GIFFORD -->
This mewling wench enslaves children to make clothes for K-Mart, and then puts that holier-than-thou crap. No wonder Frank is "dining" elsewhere.

Blue Byte has been milking their *Settlers* line for a while now, so when *The Settlers III* landed on my marble desk (the one with the nice gold trim), I wasn't too thrilled. After all, how could there possibly be anything left to settle? You'd think every inch of the damn world would be over-run by those chubby settlers by now! Much to my surprise, however, *The Settlers III* is a nice little realtime strategy game that will appeal to gamers who like their strategy "lite."

A pleasant back-story is conveyed through animated cut-scenes that make those old "Space Ghost" cartoons look like animated masterpieces. The plot involves some minor gods and the almighty "getting into it." You play as one of three races: Romans, Egyptians, or Asians, each fighting to bring honor to their particular god.

The formula to pleasing your god is simple: Mine resources, build an army, and smash your enemies into the ground. But, getting to that point is a long and painful process, not because the game is hard, but because the manual sucks. In fact, there is no printed manual. Instead you're forced to suffer through an HTML document that says a lot, but explains nothing.



Get to work! There's too many bums just "hanging around" here.

Beyond that, there are a few other minor glitches. The transport ships are a little buggy, and don't always follow your orders when it comes to transporting your boys off to some foreign land (to die, no less). It's also hard to know who is doing what; there were several occasions when I had tons of settlers just standing around with their thumbs up their collective butts. To a power-hungry CEO like me, such inefficiency is intolerable (yet painfully familiar). Also, the interface is a bit clunky. You need to hold down the right mouse button in order to scroll around the map. That may not seem like a big deal, but when you're trying to hold off those damn Egyptians, it's just one more worry.

Those quibbles aside, there is a good deal of fun to be had here. Having to manage both an infrastructure and military simultaneously is always a good time, and *The Settlers III* does a decent job of combining the two. The gameplay is fun and rather addictive, quickly turning into a "just a few more minutes" type of game.

And while die-hard strategy game fans will be turned off by the lack of depth in the game (there are no *Civilization*-style tech trees here), *The Settlers III* does provide a nice fix for the strategy game-deprived among us. And we'll settle for that.

— **CECIL BLOOMFELD** *likes the way maney feels against his skin*

GRAPHICS
Pretty good figures and buildings, with surprising amounts of detail.

SOUND
Pretty blah. Just music and clanking sounds here, with the occasional squeal of delight.

DEPTH
Good and solid, but lacks the depth that hardcore strategists want.

DESIGN
The controls seem a bit backward, but the interface is clean and easy.

RATING 6

Pluses
- --> It's very addictive
- --> Three sides = playability
- --> Settlers are dang cute

Minuses
- --> No printed manual, online manual sucks
- --> Ships are buggy; people standing around too much
- --> Lacks hardcore strategy depth

Unfortunately, the game only lets you attack other military units. So much for slaughtering the civilians!

DEVELOPER →	Maxis
PUBLISHER →	Electronic Arts
REQUIRED →	P166, 32MB RAM, 230MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM, 2MB video card
IDEAL →	PII 266, 64MB RAM, 8MB video RAM or better

Sim City 3000

Where the streets have your name

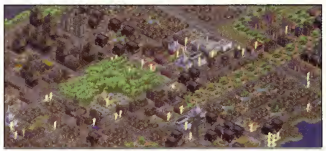
ACCELE-RATED

Since Maxis decided to ditch the initial 3D plans, your accelerator's not going to add much to the detail. What is important, however, is video card RAM — the more the better. All those intricate details take up a lot of video and processing power, so when your city starts to expand, movement can get bogged down very quickly unless you have some serious video revs under your PC hood. The game's video options allow you to select Voodoo2 drivers, but I was unable to get it to run in this mode. 3D acceleration features are not supported per se, but you should see a speed boost if you have a Voodoo or D3D card installed.

Like me, players of the original *Sim City* and *Sim City 2000* may be a little disappointed when they first boot up the long-awaited third installment of this impossibly successful series. Why? It may look a helluva lot prettier, but it feels and plays essentially the same.

However, once you spend a week getting drawn into the construction — forsaking food, drink, sleep, and sex — just to add "one more" road, farm, or industrial sector before quitting, you learn that *SC3K*'s remarkable resemblance to its forbears is, in fact, one of its greatest assets.

With *SC3K*, Maxis has added plenty of subtle spices to a proven recipe. When I first played the original *Sim City*, just to see what all the fuss was about, I expected to look at it for ten minutes and be done. I mean, what's intriguing about building a city? It took more than a few weeks before I was able to pry myself away and get back to a somewhat real life. *SC3K* holds that same illogical, yet highly-addictive appeal.



When the power goes down, everyone moves out.

The first thing veterans will notice is *SC3K*'s graphical facelift, which is expected, as it's been some six years between new versions. Playable in resolutions up to 1280 by 1024 (if you've the hardware, which I reckon only NASA does), with 400 different types of 3D rendered buildings (there were 80 in *SC2K*), and with a much higher level of detail and animation, the cities you construct are beautiful to behold. The overall perspective is still the classic 2D view. I found I didn't mind at all Maxis' decision not to go to true 3D this time around. And, judging by the performance troubles the game still suffers in 2D, it's probably a sound decision.

On a PII 400 with 128MB RAM, two Voodoo2 boards in SLI mode, and a 16MB Riva TNT-based AGP D3D card — far above even the recommended requirements – screen redraw and scrolling became extremely sluggish the larger my cities grew, in resolutions above 800 by 600.

SC3K includes two new levels of zoom, which allow you to view your cities and the Sims walking their streets at a higher level of detail than ever before. Given that you can build a city four times as large as allowed in SC2K, and your streets also include actual motor traffic this time, the amount of tiny things moving about the screen at once can be astounding. So again, expect significant slow-down at the closest zoom levels and higher resolutions. Gazing at row upon row of residential housing, one can't help but wonder how many Sims are "going at it" at that moment ... perhaps I've played this game a little too much?

Significant additions to the simulation elements add a lot of diversity to the look and feel of the city. Buildings in low, medium (a new addition), and high zoning areas have distinct appearances as they mature or degrade.

Petitioners now offer you the opportunity to build special facilities such as a casino, waste-disposal plant, or military base, in exchange for monthly contributions to your coffers. You have to weigh the possible tradeoffs that come with accepting the deals against your financial needs (unless you're really, really desperate, or just evil, skip the waste-disposal plant).

Build connections to your neighboring suburban cities and you'll also be offered deals with them to buy or sell water, power, and waste. That's right, just like real politicos, you've got garbage to deal with now ... fail to construct enough incinerators, or zone enough landfill, and your city streets will start to pile high with

A whole range of real world environments can be built around San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge. Great views, just watch out for tornadoes heading into the Bay. Wonder if Sim City tourists are as annoying as the real thing.

There is simply no pleasing the Sims – damn ingrates!

stinking heaps of trash — and your Sims will leave in droves. It can get complex at times, but you've a panel of seven city advisors to lend advice when needed.

You can also develop agricultural zones now for a pastoral look the Sims like, as well as landmark buildings such as The North Church, or use the World Trade Center. You can also build a city from scratch, or use starter maps to reinvent real-world cities such as San Francisco and New York. And, of course, the disasters — tornadoes, earthquakes, riots, fires, UFOs — are all there for you to lay waste to your cities after spending dozens of hours building them. Maxis is also making several free online "extras" available, including a new terrain map (Area 51).

Of course, with all the new tweaks come minor annoyances. You can no longer edit your terrain map before starting a game. Power plants, water pumps, and water towers all degrade with time and eventually explode if not replaced. This gets extremely tiresome with large cities as the view does not snap to the area the given structure is in when it goes boom, which means you have to scour the map looking for it. An option to turn this off or add, say a Public Works division, to go around and fix these buildings automatically would have been nice. And the repetitive nature of the limited business deals between neighbors can get dull as well. Small graphical glitches abound — buildings will be blue as if highlighted, power lines won't seem to connect right, and trees jut into roads — but they don't affect the gameplay. Finally, Sims are a fickle bunch, and you'll find their demand for zoning and overall happiness with you as their Mayor rises and falls seemingly on the slightest of whims. (But they're not as temperamental as those plebs you'll find in *Caesar III*!)

Oust the locals by planting a military base in their 'hood.

None of this, however, will stop you from playing. Damn you *SC3K* — I have to sleep! And then there's that sex thing ....

—So* STEVE KLETT *"gets some" then? Another writer forgets to include a bio, but won't next time.

Once the high rises start appearing, you know that your Mayor's duties are being appreciated by the Sims. Give them places for recreation, power and water and you're set.

GRAPHICS

Excellent variety in commercial, industrial, and residential zones creates stunning visuals.

SOUND

Excellent ambient sounds that are specific to what you're looking at. Zoom in on a park and you'll hear birds chirping...

DEPTH

Immeasurable, as the types, forms, and layouts of cities you can construct are virtually limitless.

DESIGN

An example of doing a little more than just enough to justify a sequel.

RATING 8

Pluses

→ Bigger cities, more building types
→ Downloadable "extras"
→ Addictive gameplay

Minuses

→ Repetitive business deals
→ System hog with big cities
→ Addictive gameplay

DEVELOPER →	GT Interactive
PUBLISHER →	Oddworld Inhabitants
REQUIRED →	P166, 16MB RAM, 32MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM
IDEAL →	P200 MMX, 32 MB RAM, 177MB hard drive, 8X CD-ROM

Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus

You've got to run on heavy, heavy fuel

GAMEPAD

ACCELE-RATED

Ain't no 3D, high-poly, butt-cam action here, and thank goodness — you ever taken a look at Abe? This is straight-up, old-school, 2D level-roaming, puzzle-solving, albeit with massive detail and vast, towering backgrounds. Looks great on pretty much any decent video card.

ALCOHOLIDAY

One of the great accolades to alcohol

HEAVY FUEL BY DIRE STRAITS

Last time I was sober, *man* I felt bad;
worst hangover that I ever had
It took six hamburgers, scotch all night,
nicotine for breakfast,
just to put me right:

My life makes perfect sense:
lust and food and violence
Sex and money are my major kicks
Get me in a fight, I like the dirty tricks

My chick loves a man who's strong
the things she'll do to turn me on
I love the babes, don't get me wrong
— hey, that's why I *wrote* this song!

I don't care if my liver is
hanging by a thread
don't care if my doctor says
I ought to be dead
When my ugly, big car won't
climb this hill
I'll write a suicide note on a
hundred-dollar bill

If you want to run cool, you got to
run on heavy, heavy fuel...

Let's forget, for the moment, that the original *Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee* was a game-of-the-year candidate in the candy-coated, family entertainment world. Now Oddworld inhabitants has given us something a bit more "grown up." *Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus*, the second in the "Oddworld Quintology," revolves around the annals of a highly-intoxicating beverage made from mortal remains, plundered from the cold ground, and its ruinous effects on an entire civilization. Less appealingly still, there are the exploits of a bumbling semihero and his resulting gastrointestinal difficulties. But if they'd thrown in some X-rated FMV of Jennifer Lopez, I'd probably have given this game a good rating without even playing the damned thing.

The setup, in a nutshell: The ruling Glukkons are making a popular and potent intoxicant — Soulstorm Brew — from the sacred remains of the enslaved Mudokons. As Abe, it's your job to free as many of your fellow Mudokons as possible from their oppressors – again.

Fundamental to gameplay is the mechanism of "Gamespeak," which allows and indeed requires Abe to converse with other creatures. He utters phrases such as "hello," "follow me," "all'o ya!" and "stop it!" as well as more primal outbursts, such as an irritated hiss, a sobering crack across the face, and ... farts. And not just any farts, but bad ones, real gross-out, undie- burners. It turns out that Abe's legendary ability from the last game to temporarily "possess" the bodies of enemies has expanded to include the ability to invest his own emissions with sentience, move 'em around, and blow stuff up. Of course, he'll need beer for those ... but I guess if you're reading this magazine, you already had that one bolted down.

Further, Abe uses Gamespeak to control all the types of life forms on Oddworld: Gun-toting Sligs, corporate-bastard Glukkons, vicious Slogs, grenade-happy Flying Sligs, and even less human, er, Mudoko-type creatures. Mudokon now come in different emotional varieties. Slap one across the kisser, and he might come to his senses; try it on another, and he might walk into a meat-grinder.

Once again, Oddworld Inhabitants has proved that the gameplay's the thing above all else. *Abe's Exoddus* looks great (in that it's now "cool" to be 2D kind of way), of course, but the basic flip screen dynamic offers a new challenge every time you turn around.

Abe's Exoddus might be called a "beer-and-pretzels action game." Dexterity is required, but the flip screen progression usually allows you to conquer one challenge and then leisurely peek at the next screen. Then you can crack your knuckles, slug a SoulStorm or two, and go once more into the breach. This excellent, tasty game also generously gives you infinite lives, and you're gonna need every last one of them.

"Ohh-WEEEEEE-oh ... wee-OHHHHHH-oh ..."

— **CHRIS HUDAK** *did not horm o single bottle of SoulStorm during the writing of this article.*

GRAPHICS

First rate: Detailed, ominous environments, lots of visual hints and cues.

SOUND

Perfect. Unique and humorous character voices, engrossing incidental music, startling sound effects.

DEPTH

Solid and satisfying: This is as deep as a jumped-up level-hopper gets.

DESIGN

Even better than *Oddworld: Abe's Odyssee*,and that's saying a lot.

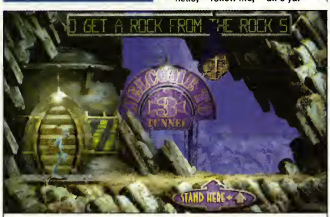
RATING 8

Pluses

- → On-screen tutorials
- → Excellent character design
- → Infinite lives

Minuses

- → Quiksave option can leave players stranded
- → Jumps from "Cakewalk" to "Hard as Hell" with little warning
- → Un-newbie-friendly tutorials



The once overdone, and much-maligned, side-scrolling platform game is now "cool" and "retro." Go figure.

Anyone else notice the facial resemblance to Oprah?

DEVELOPER -->	Atomic Games
PUBLISHER -->	Microsoft
REQUIRED -->	P133, 32MB RAM, 60MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM, video card with 16-bit color and support for 800 x 600 resolution
IDEAL -->	P200, 64MB RAM

Close Combat III: The Russian Front

House-to-house destruction

ACCELE-RATED

Just to prove that spending a bunch of cash on bright, shiny new 3D accelerators isn't always necessary, there are games like *CCIII*. Oetalled SVGA is what you're getting here and that's about it.

Now that's what I call a victory.

Never underestimate the power of combined arms.

When Hitler kicked off Germany's war against Russia on June 22, 1941, he ignited the longest, biggest, and bloodiest campaign of WWII. During this four-year episode, German casualties exceeded three million and Russian casualties, including civilians, pushed 40 million. Don't expect *CCIII* to deliver what really happened (i.e. waves of Russian soldiers being mowed down by greatly-outnumbered Germans, and battlefields littered with thousands of dead and wounded). Instead, at the squad level, *CCIII* models tactical battles on a series of smaller conflicts between opposing troops and tanks for a few blocks of city real estate, or a hill or two. However, this game still manages to capture the essence of the struggle in its microcosm — the Russians enjoy numerical superiority, but are ultimately outclassed by the ruthless German war machine.

One of *CCIII*'s greatest assets is clearly its flexibility. As General of either side, you can play 27 separate battles, or 16 Historical Operations, linking various battles over the period of several days. For a more involved, long-term challenge, the 15 campaigns link multiple operations and cover years of bloodshed. Then you can tinker with a number of elements that can seriously effect the outcome. Given the epic scale of the Grand Campaign — which includes 16 operations and covers the full span of the war — this can be one long game. An individual battle can take as little as 30 minutes, or as much as two hours, to complete.

The house-to-house fighting is fascinating, but very tough.

Before each battle you have the opportunity to purchase units, the number and quality of which varies according to your rank and period in history. Further units and technology become available as time passes. Then, you place each of your units on the battle map and go to war. This is perhaps the most important part of the game; place your troops very carefully and look closely at their fields of fire. The action takes place in realtime, as you point and click your units to victory or defeat. The troops have very realistic AI and react to battlefield stress such as being outnumbered, outgunned or bombarded, as well as to your orders. If you tell a squad of Russian soldiers with rifles to take out a Tiger tank, they'll likely tell you you're out of your freakin' mind.

The maps in *CCIII* are three times larger than in previous *CC* games, while damage from previous battles remains, creating a real sense of the immense destruction levied in this war. With more than 300 team types, 100 different weapons, 60 soldier classifications, and 80 assorted vehicles, you never quite know what you'll encounter next. Add head-to-head multiplayer options over LAN and Internet, and a complete scenario editor, and *CCIII* may be the only game a wargamer needs all year – if all they want to do is kill Germans as Russians or Russians as Germans, that is.

— Herr Staumbaumfuhrer STEVE "Schnell" KLETT *is more likely to be found killing Russions. Oh, and playing CCIII and killing them some more.*

GRAPHICS

Tons of detail, but that detail is perhaps too small and you'll squint a lot.

SOUND

Realistic weapon sounds and screams of the dead and dying. What more do you want in a wargame?

DEPTH

A huge, huge game with teeny, tiny soldiers and plenty of depth.

DESIGN

Depicts war on the Eastern Front well – house-to-house fighting scenarios are confusing, and frustrating.

RATING 8

Pluses

- Flexibility
- Replay value
- Loads of units and depth

Minuses

- Troops surrender at odd times
- Steep learning curve
- House-to-house is really hard

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Go to http://pcxl.ign.com/gaming411. Product Number 46

DEVELOPER --›	Rage Software
PUBLISHER --›	GT Interactive
REQUIRED --›	P166, 32 MB RAM, 120 MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM, 16 bit sound card
IDEAL --›	P233, 64 MB RAM, 4MB graphics card

Jeff Wayne's The War of the Worlds

The chances of anything coming from Mars are a million to one....

ACCELE-RATED

Yet another game that lacks 3D acceleration -- what the hell is going on here? The **PCXL** theory: Ever since Pixar and Dreamworks started making CGI movies, there has been a polygon shortage. No one is willing to admit it, but by the year 2000 there will likely be more genital piercings in the world than polygons. Scary, but true.

Let's say you're a game reviewer: When you wake up in the late afternoon you don't normally expect to face any major philosophical dilemmas; either a game is good or it's not, right? Wrong. It's games like this one that make this "job" seem almost like work. *Jeff Wayne's The War of the Worlds* is a hybrid that combines realtime and turn-based elements into a complex, faithful, ambitious, massively-stylish and frustratingly unintuitive strategy game of Martian invasion. It makes the veteran strategy gamer ready to drop the hammer on somebody. The hell of it is, I'm not necessarily talking about the Martians.

In the single-player-only *War of the Worlds* you'll play either the invading Martians or the beleaguered British military, trying to repel the extraterrestrial menace. It's a truly nonlinear, player-determined strategic war, wherein you'll handle production and resources at the strategic level, and then decide on a moment-to-moment basis where and when to send which particular units. It even takes the word "realtime" to a new level — you can engage the enemy on a diurnal clock, fighting in broad-daylight or murky, nighttime missions.

Stylistically, Rage Software hit the nail spang on the head. The game's cinematics and graphic interfaces work to perfect, classy effect. *WotW* nearly perfectly mimics 19th century England, with its clanking, awkward martial hierarchy of spotter balloons, "sapper" units, proto-tank armor units and gun batteries. Further,

The horribly dark night missions convey that frustrating sense of the unknown, but the Martians don't seem to have a problem.

So the Martians invaded Britain? Must be because it's such a wonderful place to live, with those green fields and trees.

Richard Burton is the narrator of the Martian tale on Jeff Wayne's massive-selling album

Tactic One: Let 'em have Scotland. We don't want it.

Stop them now – God save the Queen, blah, blah, blah.

Rage elected to adopt the particular ambient flavor of the Martian war as presented by musical composer Jeff Wayne, who basically did for *WotW* what Vangelis did for *Blade Runner* — create a compelling, resonant soundscape that combines classic, yet somehow "futuristic" elements.

Unfortunately, along the way, they forgot to let people know how to play the game.

The War of the Worlds is composed of equal parts diamonds and dog-doo. First the dog-doo, and most unforgivably, tutorial. Not to have an online tutorial is the point at which this game starts to wobble, descend, and ultimately, crash. Once that perfect, period-piece cinematic (and it is perfect, a word I don't use lightly) detailing the Martian landing ends and dumps you into the strategic War Map of 19th-Century England, even a veteran realtime strategy gamer has no friggin' idea what's going on. *WotW*, like most RTS games, has a detailed and critical unit-production hierarchy to be obeyed, and its presentation within the game – via a manual flow-chart and an immensely awkward in-game technology-research scheme – is bewildering. You're likely to find out which units to create, or not, by disastrous mistake rather than by some sort of natural progression.

Many RTS conventions that we've come to accept simply don't apply here — whether that's good or bad is entirely philosophical. You don't always select-and-send a single unit, such as a single tank, but sometimes an entire "battery" of multiple units that move in unison, which can be a little distracting. Building structures only occurs in the strategic portions (i.e., when you're not "zoomed-in" to tactical combat mode), so you must be sure to construct and arrange your bases (with admittedly nifty features such as Martian-entangling fences, howitzer emplacements, etc.) during the non-combat strategic phases.

Again, this comes down to philosophy: Some would say you should be able to construct new installations and wing the battle in tactical realtime by the skin of your teeth; others would say you should have had your strategic shit together in the first place. To juggle this tactical/strategic jumble, a time scheme can be sped up or slowed in strategic mode according to the player's most current whim.

Tactically, *WotW* is much more familiar territory — purely click-and-send stuff. Problem is, until you master the subtleties of base design and strategic resource management, you will always (and here I'm referring to the Human game) be in Cluster-Fuss Mode, throwing whatever you have, whenever you have it, willy-nilly at the Martians, in a desperate attempt to halt their war machine.

Jeff Wayne's The War of the Worlds falls mere steps short of perfect strategy-tactics fusion, but it falls so heavily and squarely on its face at the introductory level that it's heartbreaking. And since "fun factor" is so important, the road to enlightenment is just a little too long to seem ecstatic. If you're willing and able to bludgeon your way through the inept, nay, nonexistent introductory elements, you will find a game at least worthy of the term "challenge." A *WotW* nut will find value regardless; but if you want a gaming experience you can slip right into, you'd better wait for the Vaseline patch.

Martians. British. Fighting. Strategy. Tutorial. Pants.

(Top) Naval bombardments give the Brits a chance. (Below) Got to admit, those Martians blow shit up in impressive style.

GOTCHA

The infamous Orson Welles radio broadcast duped millions of inbred idiots in Indiana to believe the Martians were attacking. We now look at other examples of good old fashioned American ignorance.

DEER HUNTER
WHO'S FOOLED: Judging from sales numbers, everyone
WHAT REALLY HAPPENED: Guntoting morons shot pixelated deer
WHO WON: Publishers GT Interactive are still raking in the moolah

BUDWEISER
WHO'S FOOLED: People who think "fresh" beer is a good thing and don't understand the wonders of full fermentation in decent beer
WHAT REALLY HAPPENED: Several millions of dollars are spent advertising the crap during the Super Bowl even without Bud Bowl
WHO WON: Budweiser, as always ... and lizards

TRACTOR PULLS
WHO'S FOOLED: Budweiser-swilling, Deer Hunt-replaying lard asses wanting to show off their hairy backs
WHAT REALLY HAPPENED: A tractor is moved as yards, when switching the engine on and sticking it in gear would have solved the issue without all that fuss
WHO WON: Chiropractors

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— **CHRIS HUDAK** *desperately wanted this game, and now must, fall back on chasing girls.*

GRAPHICS

Appropriate to each side: England is clunky and mechanical, Martian is high-tech and alien; combat graphics include eerie (but dark) night lighting and particle effects.

SOUND

Strategic: Perfect. Tactical: Tank noises a little bit loud. Also, they didn't use the classic, grating "martian death ray" sound we've all learned from the classic film.

DEPTH

Too much of a good thing, with no tutorial to speak of. Proceed with caution, and at your own risk.

DESIGN

Nice attempt at strategy/tactics fusion. An online tutorial would have turned bewilderment into fascination.

RATING

Pluses

→ Perfect representation of the H.G. Wells classic
→ Strategic/Tactical fusion
→ Pre-assault trap and gun configuration is a great addition

Minuses

→ No tutorial
→ Night missions are too dark
→ Single-player only

DEVELOPER -->	Blue Moon Interactive
PUBLISHER -->	Interactive Magic
REQUIRED -->	P100, 32MB RAM, 4x CD-ROM, 112MB hard drive space
IDEAL -->	PII 233, 64MB RAM, 165MB hard drive space

Thunder Brigade

SUICIDE

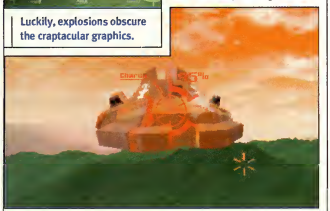
Them voxels sure are purty

ACCELE-RATED

In their infinite wisdom, the developers used voxels, which cannot be accelerated. While Novalogic seems determined that voxels are not dead, they evidently have more experience at making them look passable than Blue Moon.

Warning: Screenshots look *much* worse in person!

Luckily, explosions obscure the craptacular graphics.



A decent job setting up conflicts, but it can't deliver the goods.

In today's market, virtually every game that comes out is hyped beyond belief. First come the press releases, then the press parties, and then the company-sponsored all-night orgies with your three favorite playmates. So when *Thunder Brigade* arrived in my office, I was surprised. Quite simply, I had never heard of it. I quickly discovered that there's probably a good reason that publishers Interactive Magic avoided spending marketing dollars on hype, because it stinks. Even the paper the manual is printed on smells kinda funny.

Thunder Brigade is your typical sci-fi action game — it's the future and the Halons, the Earth Alliance, and the United Systems rebels, are all fighting for control of the galaxy. You fight for United Systems in the hope that you'll be able to free your people from the iron grip of the other two factions. You battle it out with hover tanks armed with a variety of familiar weapons like missiles, rockets, and other goodies. And so you go from planet to planet, carrying out 30 missions.

Right off the bat, I've got to say that this game *could* have been cool. Blowing up tanks on distant planets is always fun, and at a base level the game delivers some decent entertainment. But it never really strives to do more, and that's one of its downfalls. The variety of commands for your wingmen is too basic; you can only order them to fire at will, group fire on a target, cover, or cease fire.

As you advance, your arsenal improves. This guy is dust.

Beyond that, the game doesn't offer a lot of strategic depth. The missions consist of heading out and blowing up targets, or defending your base. You can easily finish the game using your old *Quake* skills: Charge around and blow up everything in sight. Occasionally you'll need to be sneaky, but even those missions are too simple.

The worst thing about *Thunder Brigade*, however, is the graphics. It uses voxels (probably so they could get it out the door real quick like), and voxels blow chunks (unless they are done correctly like Infogrames forthcoming *Outcast*). There is no 3D support, and without support for high resolutions, the graphics have that meaty blockiness we all know and hate. It's hard to judge distance, because everything kinda blurs together, so half the time you really don't know how far away the enemy is.

Beyond that, the controls are pretty bad, too. The keyboard configuration makes no sense (and you cannot change it), and overlooks the mouse; you must propel your craft with one hand, and use the arrow keys to aim and fire. Using a gamepad isn't a lot better, as I found myself frequently over- or under-shooting my targets. It's also a very short game (a blessing in disguise?), requiring just a few hours to complete, at which point you should be rewarded with some kind of patience medal.

Multiplayer support is included, with the usual support for LAN, TCP/IP, and serial connection games, so you can be bored with up to 16 other players. *Thunder Brigade* is nothing more than another entrant into the soon to be world reknowned **PCXL** *Hall Of Ass* (see next issue), pushed out the door to take up space.

— CECIL BLOOMFELD ***is CEO of PCXL and he rarely weors pants***

GRAPHICS

Can you say, shitty? How about supershitty? Note to game companies: Please stop using voxels!

SOUND

Pretty average. Nothing a monkey and a drum set couldn't produce.

DEPTH

Ha, ha! You're really funny. Did you know that?

DESIGN

Poor. Few configuration options, gets repetitive pretty quickly.

RATING 2

Pluses

- --> You get to blow stuff up
- --> Smashing CD with a hammer is fun
- --> Makes a great gag gift

Minuses

- --> Repetitive gameplay
- --> Graphics are shitty
- --> Controls stink
- --> You'll never find anyone to play multiplayer with you

Looks like *Thunder Brigade* will join *Pro Hunter* as a candidate for "Skank of the Year 1999"

DEVELOPER --> ABTS Intelligent Group
PUBLISHER --> Tri-Synergy
REQUIRED --> P166, 32MB, 155MB HD Space, D3D graphics card, 4X CD-ROM drive
IDEAL --> PII 233, 64MB RAM, TNT or Voodoo 2

Evil Core - The Fallen Cities

Bad game? You're soaking in it!

ACCELE-RATED

ABTS says to use these cards: 3DFX-based, Matrox M3D/G200, FireGL, Riva-based, Verite 2100/2200, and Intel 740. MMX-only support is available. A strong processor still yields ugly, pixelicious graphics.

VOODOO 2
1 2 3

VOODOO 1
1 2 3

MATROX G200
1 2 3

RIVA TNT
1 2 3

API SUPPORT: Direct3D

THE EVIL GOOD

Evil Core

EVIL
exists in many forms, but not all of them are bad.

Evil Secret

EVIL KNIEVEL
WHY HE'S EVIL: Duh. Made bad poetry album in '70s.
WHY WE LIKE HIM: Evil's a daredevil who nearly jumps Snake River Canyon

Heather Locklear

AMANDA
WHY SHE'S EVIL: Ultra-bitch on "Melrose Place;" Actress starred in *The Return of The Swamp Thing*
WHY WE LIKE HER: Heather Locklear also starred on "T.J. Hooker" and looks great in a bikini

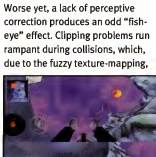
Ian Smith

ROB SMITH
WHY HE'S EVIL: Made me review *Evil Core*; Looks bad in a bikini
WHY WE LIKE HIM: PCXL affiliation = "cool" status; Uses quirky British phrases

So, you're shopping at Wal-Mart one day. You happen to see *Evil Core* seductively perched on a shelf, inviting you to buy it with a low-price and come-hither stare. Run, and don't look back! Fail to heed this warning and you may find yourself playing this funky post-apocalyptic space shooter/kiddie game hybrid. *Evil Core* is like *Starfox* met *Privateer* and *Descent*, mugged them and left them for dead.

Your character, Vien Black — a human living on the planet Malia — is asked by the Bloblic and N'leth races to explore the mysterious sector called The Fallen Cities and search for missing scout ships. Your trusty Bloblic wingman, Bo, begins the game by appearing in a tiny screen window (à la *Starfox*) and gives you a quick mission briefing. Sounds good so far, right? Bo, a cross between Borg and Grimace, speaks in a Buffalo Bob drawl while his mouth opens and closes incessantly. Unless your idea of futuristic alien storytelling is the Muppet's "Pigs in Space" sketch, the illusion is broken even before you begin playing.

The graphics are reminiscent of a first-generation N64 game — bright and colorful, but laden with boring textures and scant detail. Worse yet, a lack of perceptive correction produces an odd "fish-eye" effect. Clipping problems run rampant during collisions, which, due to the fuzzy texture-mapping, don't look natural in the first place. Gameplay offers a cross between *Descent* and *Privateer* in that you maneuver through tunnels and caverns while upgrading your ship and weapons along the way, yet *Evil Core* ends up being far inferior to either.


Split-screen games offer bad framerates, worse control, and half the viewing area.

"This screenshot looks pretty good, and for $19.99 how can I go wrong" – don't be fooled, read the review and find out why.

Missions flow together like an adventure game and include goals such as disabling force fields, navigating mazes, and destroying nukes. Combat, which could've been the game's saving grace, is a chore due to poor control that favors enemies' ability to zip over your ability to zag. It's best to leave the bulk of the fighting chores to Bo who, once his AI finally "sees" an enemy, makes short work of them. The best that can be said is that the game has built-in support for gamepads and joysticks and works like a dream with the Sidewinder.

Multiplayer matches can be set up through LAN, Internet, serial, or modem connections and a two-player game can even be played on the same computer via a split-screen mode – just like *Starfox*! (Two players can also play the single-player game by way of split screen – a bonus except for poor framerates.) LAN play is easy to set up, but Internet connections must be found manually by giving your IP address to friends or through HEAT. The fault here is that each of these friends must have their own *Evil Core* CD – no spawned versions allowed. Matches are tedious and spirit-less, consisting of head-to-head or teamplay within a single, uninspiring arena. The documentation doesn't say how many players an online game will support, but any more than five will create an over-populated free-for-all. Do yourself a favor and leave this one up on the shelf.

— CHUCK OSBORN *believes long, pretentious titles are a sign of mediocrity*

GRAPHICS
Colorful, but simplistic, blurry, and headache-inducing.

SOUND
The techno muzak track is cool, but sounds like *Wipeout*-light.

DEPTH
Story has potential, but execution won't make you stay around for it.

DESIGN
Promises a serious space combat RPG, but looks and plays like a console game.

RATING 3

Pluses
--> Not many buttons to memorize
--> Goofy characters are amusing
--> It eventually ends

Minuses
--> Single-player game is bad
--> Multiplayer game is worse
--> Uninstall program not included

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Jordan: Good Riddance

We say goodbye to the greatest basketball player of all time with a one-finger salute.

Thanks for all the memories, Michael. Thanks for the six championships, the last second shots, and all the historic moments that we got to see on TV. It was great. Oh, by the way, did we get a chance to thank you for making computer sports games great? No? Well, good, because you ripped us off, jerk!

At some point in your career you decided it would be more self-serving for you to pull your name and likeness out of all videogames. Great decision. It gave birth to such wonderful sports titles as *Michael Jordan Chaos in the Windy City* and, by association, *Charles Barkley's Shut Up and Jam*, and the unforgettable *Shaq Fu*. If perhaps at least one decent title would have resulted from your decision, we would be less bitter, but frankly it was a bad move all around.

When we're playing sports games, we won't miss you; we'll miss a guy named "PLAYER." Sure, he looked different in every game in which he appeared, and his stats were never quite right, but at least he was there. The only way that we could play real NBA games was to use the create-a-player function, which never quite got your playing skills right. Your absence can be blamed only on greed. Once again, good riddance, we're better off without you.

Here are a few other things that Pro Basketball would be better off without:

CHRIS WEBBER: Can you say washout? Just look at the record of the teams he has played on in the last few years, and you will see his overall impact

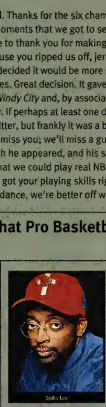
THE LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS: Yet again, they're not going to come close to the playoffs, does the league really need them?

THE WNBA: Hey, we're not sexist, we just don't watch the WNBA for the same reason we don't watch the CBA: the action sucks

TRAVELLING CALLS: Patrick Ewing hasn't made a legal drive to the bucket in the last four years. If you aren't going to call a penalty, then just get rid of it

PALMING THE BALL: Ditto

MASCOTS: Talk about the short end of the stick. The NBA has by far the worst mascots of any professional sports. Just take a look.



SPIKE LEE: Insert your own loudmouth, front row-sittin' publicity hog joke here

DANCING FOOLS: When the music is playing loudly, without fail, someone will be dancing with reckless abandon for no apparent reason. The only time dancing is allowed in sports is after a touchdown

MALE CHEERLEADERS: Spandex + Lumps = disturbing

THE FIRST THREE QUARTERS: The only exciting part of an NBA game is the final quarter, so dump the rest

FIRST TEN MINUTES OF THE FOURTH QUARTER: If you're going to do something, do it right.

THE PHRASE "HE MIGHT BE THE NEXT JORDAN." Let's be realistic

ROGAINE: Can't Karl Malone just bald naturally? What's next, Joe Dumars pitching Viagra?

THE STANDINGS

Two crappy golf games and the worst sports game of all time don't shake up the standings much, other than making the rest of the games look a whole lot better.

	GAME TITLE	W	L
BASKETBALL	NBA Live 99	2	0
	NBA Live 98	1	1
	NBA Action	0	2
FOOTBALL	NCAA 99	3	0
	GameDay 99	2	1
	Madden 99	1	2
	Sierra Football 99	0	4
GOLF	Links LS 99	5	0
	Tiger Woods 99	4	1
	Golden Tee Golf	3	2
	Fox Sports Golf 99	2	3
	Bunghole In One	1	4
	Microsoft Golf 99	0	5
HOCKEY	NHL Hockey 99	2	0
	NHL Hockey 98	1	1
	Powerplay 98	0	2
BASEBALL	High Heat 99	4	0
	Triple Play 99	3	1
	VR Baseball 2000	2	2
	HardBall 6	1	3
	Microsoft Baseball 3D	0	4

DEVELOPER	Friendly Software
PUBLISHER	Microsoft
REQUIRED	P90, 16 MB Ram, 55MB Hard Drive, Knickers
IDEAL	P200, 32 MB Ram, A Zen-like approach to clicking

ACCELE-RATED

You don't need any 3D acceleration to play this game. But any good 2D card with high resolutions will make it look nicer. Don't you think it's about time for golf games to explore the options of 3D? I don't care how realistic a 2D-slideshow looks, real 3D would be more true to life, and therefore, a better sports simulation.

Microsoft Golf 99 would be a lot funnier if it had two imbecilic dweebs peeing behind this guy.

Microsoft Golf 99

Falling further behind the pack

I don't know how many times I'm going have to say this, but once again, another golf game falls short of the industry leader, *Links LS*. However, in this case it isn't "so close, maybe next year." *Microsoft Golf* is miles behind the curve. Worse still, unlike *Tiger Woods* and the arcadey *Golden Tee Golf*, Microsoft seems to have all but given up on trying to catch the leaders in the golf world.

Developed by Friendly Software, this *Microsoft Golf* is not a sequel so much as an expansion disc for *Microsoft Golf 98*. The developer added a few minor gameplay improvements such as more realistic chipping, better (but still inadequate) Internet support, and more customization options, but none significantly change the overall feel of the game. The only real improvement is the addition of a few forgettable new courses (including fantasy courses that aren't all that fantastical).

So you are left with the same problems as last year's lackluster effort. The isometric swing meter is cumbersome, hard to read, and sometimes gets in the way of lining up shots, and, the graphics won't excite anyone. On the plus side, the game still has tons of customizable options, nice sounds, and an easy to learn interface.

A minor plus: It's only $29.99, with a $30 rebate for *1998* owners so, counting the stamp, you can get the game for $.31 if you buy it in tax-free Oregon or Delaware. Any more than that, *Microsoft Golf 99* isn't really worth it.

GRAPHICS

Decent but not in the same league with *Links*.

SOUND

Crisp, clear, clean. But how important are golf sounds?

CONTROL

Isometric swing meter is clumsy and hinders the gameplay.

REALISM

Hitting the ball straight is far too easy once you get comfortable with the controls.

RATING 4

Pluses

- Clear sound
- Plenty of options
- New game modes

Minuses

- Bland graphics
- Sloppy swing meter
- Unrefined multiple swing modes

DEVELOPER	Illusions
PUBLISHER	GT Interactive
REQUIRED	P133, 16 MB Ram, 50MB Hard Drive, 15 year-old mentality
IDEAL	P166, 32 MB Ram, 12 year-old mentality

ACCELE-RATED

Okay, let's get this straight. You know "Beavis and Butthead" is a crudely animated 2D cartoon, and you know this game is based on their cartoon, right? So why on earth are you checking the Accele-rated section to see what the 3D options are? I just don't get you guys.

Bunghole in One

Getting off course

I will spare you any Beavis and/or Butthead-style dialogue in this review. By now you could write it yourself. So please, as you read this, refrain from any juvenile humor. Reviewing games is serious business.

Bunghole in One is a pleasant enough diversion that is fun for a few hours, but it just can't keep it up (stop it, that's not what I meant) in the long run. While it does have 18 intriguing holes (be serious), once you play the course more than five or six times, you will have seen everything you're going to see. The first few times around and the journey is long and hard (c'mon, I'm talking about golf), but once you figure things out, it becomes too easy. You'll know the course like the back of your hand (the *back*, not the palm, you idiot), easy shots like a six-incher (don't make me slap you!) are almost unmissable, and you score (no, not that kind) many strokes (grow up) below par.

The best elements of the game are just as short-lived. Unlike B&B's previous game, *Virtual Stupidity*, the sound quotes become repetitive after just one play through. Beavis screams profanities whenever his ball gets off (stifle it) the course and the anal retentive (it's a real term, so quit chuckling) Tom Anderson blames the boys when he loses one of his balls. (If you keep this up I will stop this review cold.) It's funny at first, but you'll soon be turning down the speaker volume.

What your left with is a pretty bland game. You begin to notice the camera is stiff (alright, alright) and doesn't show the entire course, so you're playing blind (not till you go blind, weren't you listening?). You can play with a threesome (yeah, yeah, yeah) on one computer, but *Bunghole* has no Internet support, so most of the time you will only be playing with yourself. (That's it. I warned you, this review is over!) So to tie things up (grrr) *Bunghole in One* is enjoyable enough for a short while but it just doesn't have the lasting power (I warned you. It's over.) of a good sports game.

A big-haired dweeb that looks like he's peeing, a gross fast-food joint; is there a golf game somewhere around here?

GRAPHICS

They fit perfectly with the series' animation style, but there isn't much variety.

SOUND

Beavis is brilliant, the rest are so-so, but they all become repetitive.

CONTROL

It's more like a pinball plunger than a putter.

REALISM

The physics are questionable; the courses are ... what do you think I'm talking about, perv?

RATING 4

Pluses

- Hearing Beavis go ballistic
- Hearing Beavis go ballistic again
- Ditto

Minuses

- Hearing Beavis go ballistic
- Repetitive humor (see above)
- The control

Both photo captions on this page were written while standing at the PCXL urinal

Football Pro '99

SUICIDE

Oh the humanity!

DEVELOPER → Sierra Sports
PUBLISHER → Sierra
REQUIRED → P166, 32MB Ram, 60MB Hard Drive, a good sense of humor
IDEAL → P450, 128MB Ram, 3Dfx accelerator card, Sidewinder pad, bug zapper

GAMEPAD

ACCELE-RATED

Yup, it's another game with no 3D acceleration. By the time you finish this review, though, you'll see it wouldn't matter anyway.

DISCLAIMER

Note: After this review was written Sierra pulled all copies of this game off the shelf and offered those who bought it a Sierra game of their choice in exchange. We applaud this effort, but we find great fault in the fact that this title was ever released in the first place. More than likely it was internal pressure to get the product on the shelves before the season was over, resulting in a debacle that will haunt Sierra Sports for years to come. But the cause is irrelevant, *Football Pro* is an unfinished game and should have never been released. Now, folks, here's the review ...

Football game or side show? It's the Siamese quarterback!

Get used to fumbles.

If Vince Lombardi were alive today he would cry if he saw *Football Pro '99*. Even though he would be 85years old and unlikely to enjoy PC sports games, the sheer awfulness of this title would overwhelm the man who so greatly loved the sport of football. And any true fan of the sport will know exactly how the coach would feel, because this is not a football game, it's a tragedy.

When I sat down to review *Football Pro '99*, I started with a pad of paper to take notes on the overall gameplay and it wasn't long before page after page was filled with problems. I can't, in good conscience, comment on this mess with a typical review format since it is rendered unplayable with bugs and unfinished details. So I've listed just a few of the bugs in an effort to show you what it was like to try and play what is supposed to be a detailed sports sim.

1. The players line up in the wrong spots. Receivers as running backs, tight ends everywhere, and other odd personnel moves

2. The defensive backs do not cover your receivers downfield

3. That's okay, since your receivers drop most of their passes anyway

4. Don't turn to the running game as an alternative, because the running backs fumble five or six times per game

5. The quarterback will sometimes pitch the ball to nobody, leaving it as a fumble

6. The quarterback will take a knee at bizarre times (though that could be realistic, thinking back to the NFC Divisional Title game — what were the Vikings thinking?)

7. When smart time management is needed, the QB will sometimes stop the clock with an incomplete pass, and then call a time out anyway

8. Even if everything else goes right, the receivers will stop dead in the middle of their routes

9. The refs rarely make calls

10. When the refs do make calls, many are contrary to NFL rules

Mistakes like players lining up in the wrong position (see Brian Kozlowski, #85) ruin any chances for an accurate simulation.

11. Sometimes when you decline a penalty on defense, the computer will give the other team a first down

12. The quarterback's snap count is always the same, so anticipation is a, well, "snap"

13. You really don't need anticipation, a blitz will work against the computer eight times out of ten

14. Players occasionally collide and merge, with heads going through bodies, and limbs passing through opponent limbs

15. Plays are poorly documented and some plays are missing from certain formations

16. Loss of joystick control

17. Promised Won.net multiplayer options simply aren't included

18. The play clock and the game clock do not work together

19. Blockers do not block

20. Problems with the coin toss in multiplayer mode (that's right, the coin toss)

20-87. Many, many annoying lockups during play

88. Idiotic management AI that lets you trade scrubs for top players

89. A play editor that simply doesn't function

90. No support for the 1999 Cleveland Browns

91. Incomplete rosters

92. Game statistics unable to be sorted

93. Simulation of a single week's worth of games takes several excruciating hours

Frankly I could go on and on, given the chance, but mercy dictates that I stop eventually. Suffice it to say, however, that this is the worst piece of sports software we have ever seen in a shrink-wrapped box. It should have never left the building, and the decision to send it out to stores will stick with Sierra Sports for the next few years. And deservedly so.

GRAPHICS

Unbelievably choppy, even on high end systems.

SOUND

The worst play-by-play in any recent football game.

CONTROL

Sometimes the joystick control just gives up.

REALISM

Don't get me started.

RATING 0

Pluses

→ It's not as bad as a nasty fungus
→ It's not as bad as mass genocide
→ It's not as bad as ... I'm out of stuff

Minuses

→ The fact that this game ever hit store shelves
→ It's no longer socially acceptable to storm development studios with torches and pitchforks

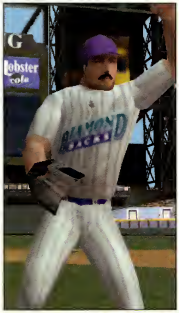
The Boys of Summer are back

We take a look at what 1999 promises for baseball fans

Last year was one of mixed results for baseball fans. All but one of the leading baseball games finally made the leap into 3D polygonal graphics, which is very impressive. The only problem was that the best actual baseball game was the one holdout. This year the playing field is the most even it's ever been. The titles are so close together in quality and execution that, literally, any of the major baseball franchises could have a breakout year in 1999. Here are the top contenders.

Triple Play 1999

DEVELOPER → EA
PUBLISHER → EA

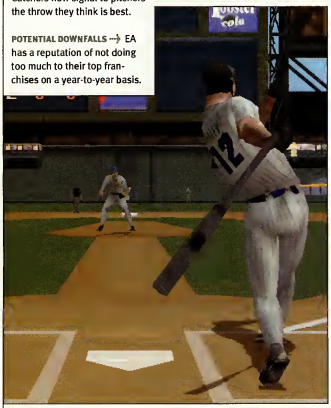


WHAT HAS CHANGED → Players now have facial emotions and the game uses realtime lighting effects. Also, the batting engine has a bigger sweet spot and more intuitive play and the camera angles have been revamped to show the action better.

WHAT HAS STAYED THE SAME → EA's top quality production values. The title also promises to build on last year's impressive play-by-play, which was the year's best for any sport.

FEATURE WE LIKE BEST → Catchers now signal to pitchers the throw they think is best.

POTENTIAL DOWNFALLS → EA has a reputation of not doing too much to their top franchises on a year-to-year basis.



High Heat 2000

DEVELOPER → 366 Studios
PUBLISHER → 3DO

WHAT HAS CHANGED → Last year's best baseball game is finally joining the ranks of the polygon pushers, but graphics are not the only change. New management options have been added with multiplayer trading and rookie prospects. Also, the production values will better represent a television broadcast (still no beer commercials, however).

WHAT HAS STAYED THE SAME → Excellent AI and ball physics are still top notch. It also has the right amount of management options to keep players in control without overwhelming them with needless details.

FEATURE WE LIKE BEST → The ability to run a farm system and build prospects the old fashioned way. This system follows all three levels of the minor leagues.

POTENTIAL DOWNFALLS → The transition from 2D sprites to 3D polygonal players is a difficult one which, if not handled correctly, could get in the way of *High Heat*'s finely-tuned gameplay.

Microsoft Baseball 2000

DEVELOPER → Microsoft
PUBLISHER → Microsoft

WHAT HAS CHANGED → After last year's disappointing debut, the graphics have been upgraded, the camera angles changed (thank you, thank you), and the overall look and feel of the game has been improved. Also, more strategy and management elements have been thrown in.

WHAT HAS STAYED THE SAME → Hopefully not much. The one thing that we did like about last year's game was that it had realistic player faces. That stays.

FEATURE WE LIKE BEST → Recognizing players in an instant. The faces were always there, but now the game actually gets the body shapes closer to reality. So Randy Johnson doesn't have the same girth as Cecil Fielder.

POTENTIAL DOWNFALLS → After last year's game, Microsoft has some fence mending to do with baseball fans.

Baseball Edition 2000

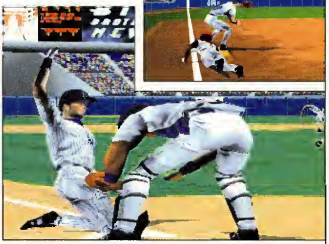
DEVELOPER → VR Sports
PUBLISHER → Interplay

WHAT HAS CHANGED → Even since *VR Baseball 99*, the stadiums have been remodeled. Also the play-by-play and presentation is already much improved, giving a more realistic feel to the action.

WHAT HAS STAYED THE SAME → The game is still powered by the Messiah engine, so expect some incredible looking player models. Look for the same solid physics and player AI as the foundation of this game.

FEATURE WE LIKE BEST → Heckling crowds and trash talking players.

POTENTIAL DOWNFALLS → It hasn't been very long since the last game in this franchise. Will the hardcore fans be willing to buy again?



POSSIBLE CONTENDER

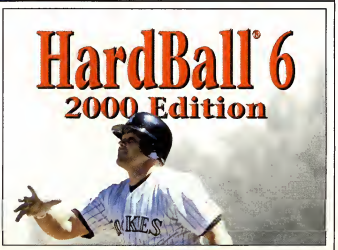
Hardball 6 2000 Edition

DEVELOPER → Accolade
PUBLISHER → Accolade

WHAT HAS CHANGED → Only lineups and a few other patches. This version is basically an expansion for owners of *Hardball 6* and a way for new buyers to jump on board with 1999 rosters and players.

WHAT HAS STAYED THE SAME → Everything including the graphics, the sound, and even the bad camera switching (doh!) is still exactly the same.

POTENTIAL DOWNFALLS → Everyone else is moving forward, the *Hardball* franchise will look old in comparison.



Airtran is actually the new name for ill-fated, swamp-landing Valu-Jet. Wanna buy a ticket?

THIS AIN'T NO SKINS GAME.

Links LS EXTREME

How many times have you secretly wanted to drive the ball into the snooty yip playing in front of you?

At Armadillo Al's Demolition Driving Range, you can turn robotic snobs into toast with atomic golf balls.

Have you ever put a silent curse on your opponent's next shot?

On the mystical **Mojo Bay Country Club,** you can curse your rival's shot and watch it corkscrew into a shark-infested water hazard.

Have you ever dreamed of giving your golf opponent a serious handicap with an exploding plasma ball? Let's be honest—we all have.

Live the dream by inviting your fiercest adversary to a game of Death Matchplay on the **Dimension X Battlefield!**

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EAGLE WATCH

SIX NEW MAPS IN THE EXPANSION PACK MEANS EVEN MORE DEADLINES MISSED

RULE THE MAPS, LEARN THE TRICKS, ANNOY YOUR TEAMMATES

In the old comparison of games to drugs, *Rainbow Six* multiplayer has to rank up there as some of the most addictive crack we've ever smoked. And because no commercial *R6* map editors exist, *Eagle Watch's* six new maps are even more valuable. (Note: The **PCXL**/PC Gamer map is available for download from our website)

Eagle Watch will update your version of *R6* to 1.5, which adds a bunch of changes to gameplay and netplay. Among these are new grenades, which have been getting progressively more powerful (rightfully so) with every patch. Now the blast radius packs a punch, just like a real grenade (or the way it is in the movies anyway — an important point, since we've never personally been on the receiving end of a grenade). It's also harder to drop the grenade so it kills both yourself and any unfortunate teammates who happen to be around. But self-inflicted grenade kills are still very common, at least when we played.

Somewhat more importantly, there is no longer a fixed starting position for each team. This will make predetermined rushes a thing of the past, unless your team has every single rushing possibility down. Now players must be able to think on their feet, as well as know the level like the backs of their sweaty little hands in order to excel.

The new larger maps mean that team coordination is of the essence. Go ahead — learn the maps, steal our secrets, and come find us on the Zone when you want your lunch handed to you.

PCXL ELITE SQUAD

Pull off any of the following kills in the heat of battle and you'll be considered one of the few, the proud, the **PCXL Elite.**

GRENADE THROUGH THE WINDOW

Where → City Street Large
What is it→ Toss a grenade across the level and through a window to take out unsuspecting enemies.

FALL OFF BUILDING BEHIND ENEMY

Where → **PCXL**/PC Gamer level
What is it→ You can drop from the tallest buildings and suffer no damage. Take advantage of this by dropping behind an enemy and busting a cap in his head.

THE SILENCED PISTOL KILL

Where → Space Shuttle
What is it→ Take out the entire opposition with a silenced pistol by hiding in the shadows. The best location to get these kills is in the main room with the glass opposite the shuttle. Hang out on the ledge until the victims are in place, then pop around the corner taking them out one by one.

FLASHBANG/ROOM CLEARING HK MP5

Where → Big Ben
What is it→ Often times enemies will camp out in one of the bell tower rooms, waiting for you to invade. Toss in a flashbang and come in guns a blazing on full automatic. Oh, and scream. Kill 'em all and you are the man.

CITY STREET LARGE →

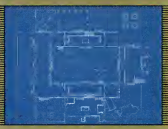
OVERVIEW: This medium-sized map is extremely fun because of its connectivity and layout: A small area with four buildings, a bunker in the middle, and boxes scattered about. Plenty of windows in each of the buildings provide ample sniping opportunities. The bunker and buildings are connected by a series of underground passages, making it possible to get quickly to any part of the level.

A KEY POINT A: THE TWO MAIN HOUSES
Some people will be happy staying on the top floor of the buildings where they start, shooting out of the windows. You can see the entire outside portion from here, so it can be a good vantage point. It's a vulnerable position, however, since everyone will be looking there first, once the windows get shot out.

B KEY POINT 2: THE UNDERGROUND PASSAGES
These passages connect all four main buildings, as well as the central bunker. An early rush down the passage towards the enemy base can be very effective, especially in smaller games. This allows you to catch them sniping on the second floor. It's also great for travelling between different sniping positions, which will confuse the enemy.

C KEY POINT 3: BUILDING BY THE DUMPSTER, SECOND FLOOR
This is one of the best sniping spots on the level, especially since it is accessible only through one hallway. If you have two people here, one can watch the sole entrance to the area and chuck grenades down the ladder, while the other snipes into the courtyard and the other buildings.

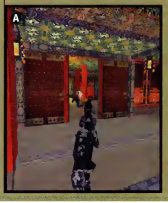
FORBIDDEN CITY ⇢

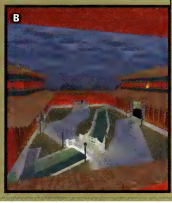


OVERVIEW: At first this wide-open level might seem too large for team survival, but the symmetrical, logical layout and multiple elevations of the Forbidden City will provide some good battles, even with smaller teams.

A KEY POINT 1: THE HALLWAYS
These hallways all connect as they frame the central courtyard. Both teams will start somewhere on the perimeter. From the courtyard, you can shoot across at people as they cross through doorways. Controlling these hallways gives your team access to any courtyard entrance.

B KEY POINT 2: THE MAIN BALCONY
From this narrow balcony you can see the whole courtyard, as well as the three doors to the hallways surrounding it. This is the prime spot on the level, but also the first place where people will look before they venture into the courtyard. Look out for grenades from below.





C KEY POINT 3: SIDE ROOM BALCONIES
More balconies look over the sides of the level — two on each of the three rooms on both sides of the courtyard. It's unlikely that these balconies will be favored spots unless you're playing in large games, in which case you'll probably be able to score a few kills up there. While running below these balconies, take a quick look up — perhaps with a primed grenade ready. It's a good idea to station a gunner on each balcony to fully control the courtyard, which is key to the level.

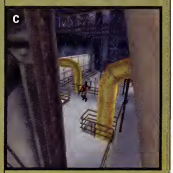
SPACE SHUTTLE ⇢

OVERVIEW: Varying start positions make it easy to get lost on this twisting, multilevel area with numerous winding passages and ladders. Use the space shuttle itself and the few available rooms for landmarks.

A KEY POINT 1: SHUTTLE AND WALKWAY
People will tend to gravitate towards the cool-looking shuttle and walkway, partly because it's one of the team's starting spots. From the shuttle, look down the walkway into the small room, or keep an eye on the control room and various exits. Be careful when you're around the door to the walkway, and don't forget that you can walk on top of the walkway to get to the cockpit for a sneak attack.

B KEY POINT 2: CONTROL ROOM
With two large glass windows, this room gives you a clear view of the walkway, shuttle, and several entranceways, but because enemies can sneak up from behind, it makes you a clear target. Have a squad member watch your back is the best bet.

C KEY POINT 3: MAIN ROOM
Several stairways and entrances make this, the largest room on the level, a likely place for firefights, with lots of chasing, ambushes, and misdirection. Whoever can establish sniping positions first can take advantage of the confusing nature of this busy room. There's a good sniping spot overlooking the room by a pipe on the second level. Use the ladders in the adjacent hallways to get quickly from one level to another, but beware that while on a ladder, you are completely defenseless.



TAJ MAHAL →

OVERVIEW: Perhaps the weakest for team survival, this level consists of an open surface area, with two entrances into the levels below. A lot of important engagements take place in the central hub and the passageways radiating out from it. There is also a small balcony above, connecting the two entrances.

A KEY POINT 1: SURFACE
You might think that the two gazebo-like structures will be good sniping spots. They aren't — unless you're up against unskilled opponents. It's the first place decent gamers will look when moving into the area. However, you might be able to catch people as they emerge from the two underground entrances.

B KEY POINT 2: CENTRAL HUB
The circular wall will provide cover against gunfire on the same level, but it won't help you against grenades. It's much better to stick to the walls in the hope of catching people as they run across the second floor balcony. It's a high-traffic, potentially crucial area — just watch out for grenades being flung over the wall.

C KEY POINT 3: BALCONY AND SECOND LEVEL
This is the point that everyone will have to pass through to get below. If two rushing teams meet here, firefights will be fast and bloody. If one team plays defensive on the surface, you can use this to get quickly across the map. This emerges into the central hub by means of a small balcony.

BIG BEN →

OVERVIEW: This level will give you many different kinds of encounters in adversarial mode. There are a couple of big rooms with balconies, a long passageway, a winding staircase, and the clock tower itself. The architecture lends itself to group campouts.

A KEY POINT 1: CLOCK TOWER
The final part of the level in single player, the tower is perfect for defense. Teams that start here, if they are at all defense-minded, will likely take advantage of this section by staying on the railings (preferably one to each side of the room), and watching the stairway. If this is the case, you'll have to storm the room, taking out as many opponents as possible right off the bat. Try using your best people flinging grenades up to the railings.

B KEY POINT 2: BALCONIES
The two main houses have balconies around the sides of the rooms and are connected by a short hallway. From here, a camping squad can lock into the few entrances to the rooms, and spread out for maximum overlapping fields of fire. Though rushing up the stairs is your best bet, a few surreptitious grenades from beneath can be effective.

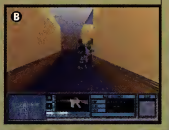
C KEY POINT 3: STAIRWAYS
If both teams rush, they will meet here: Several flights of stairs at steadily increasing, 90 degree angles, which connect the clock tower to the two houses. The team above has the clear advantage with both the high ground, and the physics of grenades, on their side.

#3 → Continually run into a teammate until they shoot you out of sheer frustration

CAPITOL BUILDING →

OVERVIEW: The Capitol Building is huge, with two double-level rooms, two sets of stairs, and lots of hallways. Teams will start in or near in these two rooms, so campers will have to hunker down and wait. It's tough to assault both rooms, although the Gold team has the slight advantage because they have the high ground on the stairs as well.

A KEY POINT 1: BIG ROOMS
Take up positions on the balcony, lock onto the entrances, and wait like the camping bitches that you are. While you wait for the enemy, amuse yourself by playing "Shoot the Bills" or "Make an Outline of Bullets On the Wall Behind Your Teammate." To take the room on the second floor, your best bet is through the door on the north wall, where you can run in and throw a grenade directly overhead before dying.



B KEY POINT 2: HALLWAYS
Rushing teams who do not meet in the stairways will meet up here. Just use the heartbeat sensor to take advantage of these really, really long hallways . If you're crazy enough to fight here, we at **PCXL** take our hats off to you.

C KEY POINT 3: STAIRWAYS
Because they are the only way from one main room to another, these two stairways are gonna be strategically very important. Grenades are your best bet, although we suffered a disturbing number of self-inflicted fatal grenade wounds during the writing of this strategy guide.

PC GAMER/PCXL →

OVERVIEW: Despite the fact that it's named "PC Gamer," It's actually a homage to the famous battles between us and "that other magazine," complete with logos and mastheads. You get props from us if you can kill campers as they hide behind the PC Gamer logo — how appropriate.

A KEY POINT 1: GROUND LEVEL
The starting buildings are directly opposite one another, so the space between them (with a central building in the middle) will be where the teams will meet. One good ambush spot in the early game is the doorway to your building, or if you can make it, against the wall of the central building.

B KEY POINT 2: TOWERS
Climbing to the top of your building will give you lots of sniping opportunities. But for the real vantage point, you'll need to go to the central building and climb to the top (you'll find a walkway that can take you to the other three towers). Be wary of potential ambushes from below, and use the glass to your advantage — it can absorb one burst of fire. This is good for defense, but you may want it out of the way for the element of surprise. Shooting out far away windows is a good diversion tactic. And when you arrive to those towers to camp the windows are already out of the way.

C KEY POINT 3: KFC
Okay, its not really a control spot, but if you're gonna die anywhere, you might as well die in a KFC. Actually this can be a good control spot because you can see lots of the level. Just make sure you know where to look, and use the counter for cover.

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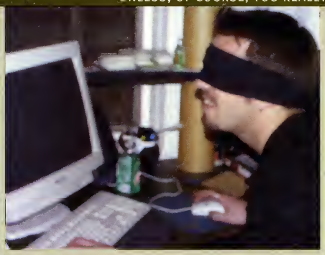
The First-Person Shooter WORKOUT

GUARANTEED TO UP YOUR FRAG COUNT IN 21 DAYS UNLESS, OF COURSE, YOU REALLY SUCK

Have you absorbed all of the strategies and tips you've ever read on first-person shooters, but still languish at the bottom of every server? PCXL is here to help. This workout is designed to hone your physical skills and make you a better computer athlete. Sure, Michael Jordan is ("was," we suppose) a great basketball player, but if he were out of shape he'd be no better than Sherman Douglass. We can't guarantee you'll beat Thresh or even become a contender in the PGL, but this workout is designed so that you can make the most of your natural ability. For all of these exercises jump on a server where nobody knows your name, this way you won't be incredibly embarrassed or ridiculed by us, or anyone you know.



PCXL Editor-in-Chief demonstrates Exercise #7. Either that, or he's trying to edit this month's cover story.

1. REVERSE FPS PRESS

What to do → Before joining, completely remove your forward key. Now play on the server moving only backwards and sideways.
How many reps → At least six full games, or until you back into enough lava pits to last a lifetime.
What it does → Running forward is the perfect way to get shot in the back. This exercise forces you to develop eyes in the back of your head and cultivate an innate instinct for navigating the map. After all, if you can run around the map backwards, without dying, imagine how good you'll be when you can go forward and backward.

2. JUMPING JACK-ASS

What to do → Play on a deathmatch server as normal, except constantly hold down the jump key (reconfig if necessary). Play through the server, ignore the madman comments, and work on hitting enemies – especially with a high accuracy weapon like the rail gun or sniper rifle – while jumping around frantically.
How many reps → Ten games, or until you become dizzy and vomit.
What it does → Jumping around frantically is a great way to stay alive, but anyone who can actually attack effectively from this position can be deadly.

3. CIRCLE STRAFE

What to do → Play DM on a map with open areas, but only use the circle-strafe. If necessary you can move around to get out of a stuck corner, but for the rest use the circle-strafe only.
How many reps → Six games or until your mouse-arm begins to throb and ache.
What it does → You'll learn how to aim precisely while circle-strafing, as well as various ways to alter and vary the circle-strafe to keep enemies off balance.

4. PARALLEL EXTENSION

What to do → Completely remove the strafe keys and play on a server. Now try to rack up kills and avoid death without that vital dodge tactic.
How many reps → Six games.
What it does → By removing the strafe keys you are forced to rely on the mouse for directional movement, which makes it harder to keep a good aim on an opponent. This gives you another edge when it all comes together.

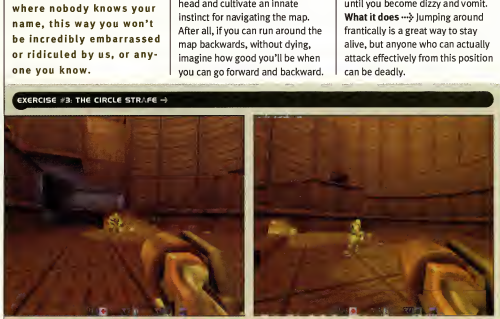
5. MOUSELESS MADNESS

What to do → Turn off mouse-look, go into a server, and get whupped. Or try going back to some deathmatch *Doom* without auto-targeting turned on.
How many reps → Six games, or until your ego can no longer take it
What it does → With mouse-look off, you have to rely on the keyboard to move around, thereby honing a very important skill.

6. WEAPON SWITCH

What to do → Play on a DM server, but never kill a guy with only one weapon. Before you finish off an opponent, quickly make the switch to another weapon.
How many reps → Six games or until you've achieved kills with every weapon combo.
What it does → Switching weapons quickly and smoothly in the middle of battle is essential. This exercise gives you practice in keyboard familiarity as well as

EXERCISE #3: THE CIRCLE STRAFE →



Perfecting the many intricacies of the circle strafe is essential to improving your FPS skills. Anyone can move in circles, but maintaining accuracy and knowing when to vary are key to getting better.

Next months workout → *Turning Frags Into Shags: 10 Easy Steps*

weapon-switching technique. Make sure your favored weapons are bound to keys most accessible from your main directional controls.

7. BLIND LUCK

What to do → Just before starting play on a server, blindfold yourself and turn up the volume.
How many reps → Six games, or until your neighbor tells you to turn it down.
What it does → Causes you to rely on your hearing. Without any vision you aren't likely to get many kills, but knowing what different sounds mean and where they are coming from is crucial in deathmatch. Additionally it doesn't allow you to look at the keyboard for different actions. The best players never, ever, take their eyes off the game.

8. BLASTER KILL

What to do → Only use the smallest weapons in the game for kills.
How many reps → Six games, or until the humiliation is too much.
What it does → Allows you to become proficient with the weapons you have most often. Many people just run like hell until they find another weapon (which is what you should also be doing). But if you get good enough at escaping and using the little weapons, then you can inflict damage while you find a bigger weapon to finish 'em off.

PHYSICAL TRAINING

While the aforementioned exercises may help your FPS skills, some people just may not be in the required physical shape for a grueling deathmatch experience. The following are key to developing the physique of a FPS champion.

HAND-EYE COORDINATION

Why → Gaming comes down to your eyes and hands working like a finely tuned machine.
What to do → Basketball, tennis, racquetball or ping-pong are great for honing hand-eye coordination.

FPS WORKOUT CHART →

Follow this schedule for three weeks and mark down the highest of your scores. If they don't improve, then you are clearly a lost cause who should probably play more strategy games instead. Sorry, but we tried.

EXERCISE	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3
MONDAY			
1			
2			
3			
TUESDAY			
4			
5			
6			
WEDNESDAY			
7			
8			
THURSDAY			
1			
2			
3			
FRIDAY			
REAL GAME			

BLINKING

Why → One of the biggest problems in FPS games is the eventual tearing when you haven't blinked for hours on end. It's hard to stay focused when you're crying like a little baby.
What to do → Force blink whenever you get killed. Just for a quick second, close your eyes until you respawn. It may cost you a fraction of a second, but it's worth it.

FOREARM STRENGTH

Why → Some people (like Fiona Apple) may not be strong enough to whip the mouse around for hours on end. These people are clearly wimps, but we have a plan.
What to do → Buy some forearm grip trainers and do 50 reps daily. Or if you prefer working out in your bedroom, there is a particular motion which is known for strengthening the forearm. Rumors of this exercise causing blindness are completely false, or so we've heard (since hearing is the only sense we have left).

PERFORMANCE ENHANCERS

You've heard and read all about performance enhancing drinks that supposedly make you "sharper." PCXL takes a closer look at what effect, if any, these have on computer gaming.

RED BULL
PROMISE → It gives you wings
EFFECT → Until you become immune to the effects of Red Bull it is quite effective at wiring you. However wired gamers are often horrible shots. The jittery state is great for dashing around like a madman, but in our tests never improved scores

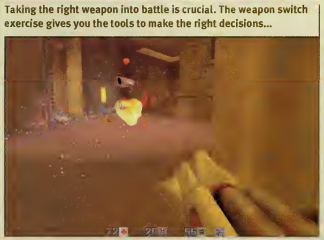
GATORADE
PROMISE → It's what your body needs
EFFECT → Didn't affect our test subjects one way or the other, but the closing top meant it was the only drink that was never spilled

JOLT
PROMISE → It'll wire you up like a Bimbish crack whore.
EFFECT → Pretty much as promised, but once again, being jittery and awake doesn't seem any more effective than being slow and lethargic

BEER
PROMISE → It'll give you a false sense of confidence, and a good buzz
EFFECT → Much like anything involving alcohol, you think you are much better than you are. The confidence level rises, but from our tests, the frag count never matched. Participants did seem to have much more fun when they drank beer

EXERCISE #6: THE WEAPON SWITCH →

Taking the right weapon into battle is crucial. The weapon switch exercise gives you the tools to make the right decisions...



... of course you still have to be able to hit your target, or you are likely to be eating rockets all day long.

You should practice with the game you plan to play most. If you play a lot of games then *Quake II* is the best choice.

TRIBES—THE FUTURE OF MULTI-PLAYER?

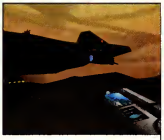
It's hard to imagine that the thrills of conventional Id-style deathmatch will ever go away — *Quake II* is still one of the most played games around here. But we have seen the future, and it is called *Tribes*. In its ease of modification, solid state out of the box, and strong developer support, *Tribes* puts most of its peers to shame. Some people — who shall remain nameless — feel that this game assumes too much of the average FPS deathmatcher, in terms of willingness to play as a team. This may have been true at the game's launch, but already we're starting to see a growing familiarity with the idea of specialization, team attacks, knowing what to do, etc. it's all about getting used to the maps and the style of play, because something as different as *Tribes* is going to have its learning curve. We trolled around the rapidly-expanding *Tribes* community to see what was going on with the current big trendsetter of multiplayer action games.

THE MAPS

Tribes' built-in, yet undocumented, map editor is flexible and powerful — just what you'd expect the developers to have at their disposal. Even for total newbies it's remarkably easy to use and get going. One of its main cool features is the ability to switch from the editor to a running version of the level on the fly and vice versa. This is instant gratification for those people who are too impatient to save the map, close, and then reopen, to see the results of any changes.

Michael Hamlett (aka =LL= Optimizer) is a *Tribes* map designer (and president of Xtreme Gaming – www.xtremegaming.net) who just recently picked up the editor and finds it "very, very easy to use — a great program for anyone who wants to start editing maps." Says Hamlett, "Anyone with a little time and some patience can make a map. For instance, one of my mod maps that was made from an existing level took me about 25 minutes. Once I made four maps I was pretty much aware of every aspect of the editor and I started making totally new missions. This involves a lot more work. I currently have over four hours logged on one of the new missions. Anyone who wants to start making their own maps should read the various editing documents found on the *Tribes* webring. I will also be glad to answer any questions." The *Tribes* webring's at www.tribesplayers.net.

Wanna play Underground, a new CTF map by =LL= Optimizer, but you're too lazy to DL it? No problem, just find a server running it.



Looking at these screens makes me want to play *Tribes* ... urg ... gotta go now.

One example of a map editing tutorial can be found at http://www.tribe-one.org/tribeseditor.htm.

THE SKINS

Making your own skin is a big part of the whole idea of each tribe having its own identity, a sign of solidarity. However, currently only deathmatch servers allow customized skins, which is kind of a bummer, although by the time you read this, a mod to allow custom skins in other modes like CTF should be out.

Jaime Knapp (aka Doomed), the proprietor of Doomed's Used Armor Emporium (http://www.inficad.com/~doomed/) has compiled over 100 custom skins in a map pack (which you can find on Disc 2) and says "pshaw" to the idea that making your own skins is tough. "With a little research and some patience anyone can make skins. I have seen great work from both some very young people (under 12) and the other side of the coin (over 50). So in my opinion if you are interested enough in learning and spending the time, anyone can do it." Photoshop is really the only tool you need (with Ulead's, Kai's, and Eye-Candy plug-ins), along with Paint Shop Pro and LView for image conversion. For a tutorial on skin-making, check out http://www.worldtree.net/skincraft.

THE COMMUNITY

The first place to start is at the official web site, www.tribesplayers.com. At the center of the *Tribes* webring, this site is the logical starting point for anything you're looking for, whether its homepages to individual tribes, downloadable maps and skins, or editing tutorials. The ease of customizability of *Tribes* and the fact

Favorite PCXL maps: Broadside, Dangerous Crossing, IceRidge, SnowBlind PC ACCELERATOR April 1999 http://pcxlgn.com
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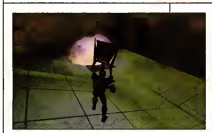
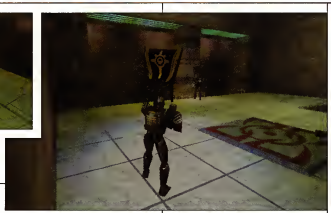
SKIN ON SKIN

The painstaking detail on these skins is best accomplished with a powerful program like Adobe Photoshop, but there are cheaper options.



The PCXL Tribe is accepting applications for membership at our website, www.pcxl.com.



that all modifications are server-side-only has encouraged a lot of development by gamers, because you don't have to worry about distributing your files to thousands of individual clients in order to use them. And speaking of joining a tribe, it couldn't be easier. Through the magic of the Web, tribes do most of their recruiting through homepages that are pretty elaborately decked out in some cases. Check out http://www.tribesplayers.com/tribesplayers/independent-links.shtml for links to a whole bunch of independent tribes.

As for starting your own tribe, well that's a bit more involved, and first means becoming an ace at the game, and spending enough time to get a group of friends online who are willing to start up the tribe with you. Then it's all about evangelizing your tribe, and according to Knapp, "getting a good homepage is really important." He continues, "Creating your own tribe takes dedication and time. One of the best ways to start would be to take a look at some of the other tribes in existence to help you find some starting ground and basic ideas. Recruitment of like-minded individuals who share the same goal, and willingness to help with the tribe are key also. It's important to find good attitudes along with good aptitudes." Check out http://www.datumplane.com and http://www.tribe-one.org for more info.

Despite certain flaws, such as difficulty in finding your buddies online, the *Tribes* community is robust and growing at an alarming rate. "With more people becoming familiar with the editor, new maps will keep the game alive and well," says Hamlett. Adds Knapp, "I don't go a day without seeing a new mod, mission or skin. New sites are springing up every single day. The community is very supportive of both the casual and hardcore gamer. The *Tribes* community is very similar to other FPS communities in that information is very freely exchanged for the betterment of all the players and the game."

The overwhelming response we got from enthusiasts was that the *Tribes* community will be around for a long time, and will certainly carry over into the sequel. Of course, by being enthusiasts they are defined by their belief in this game, but **PCXL** seconds this opinion. Other developers take note: This is how it's done. It's all about variety of gameplay, and *Tribes* is king. We'll be charting its development first-hand, by playing the hell out of it, and we bet a lot of you will too.

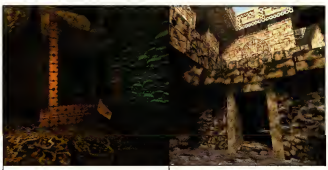
Nothing like sniping the pilot while still somehow leaving the plane intact.

TOTAL CONVERSIONS

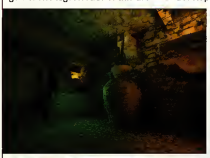
Half-Life, Quake II, Doom — all great games. But after playing them for a while have you ever thought, "This is cool and all, but I wish I could change this weapon or make a new monster?" Well, you can. You can create a totally new environment in the *Half-Life* engine, for example, one based on your favorite action movie. It's all possible. It's been done, and hey — it's legal too. (Always a nice plus.) We hope that after reading this piece many of our readers will come up with killer TC's and send them to their favorite mag (that's us) to be distributed.

TCs, as they are known to their friends, creators and supporters, are a great example of how the life cycle of first-person shooters is changing and evolving. The practice of opening up your code and file structures to the end user (that is, you) was started up by — who else? — Id Software with *Doom*. The practice continued with all of their subsequent games. Along with being a cool opportunity to reverse engineer a clever piece of 3D engine programming, this opened the doors for anyone to replace content — basically, everything except the engine itself — essentially, to create their own game. The legal issues of this are pretty gray, as developers are willing to support their engines being used in this manner, as long as the TC creators don't use their creation to make any money. Basically up to this point they have been both a creative outlet as well as a way for part-time coders and amateur artists to get their work out there and, hopefully, score a job.

Spencer Fornaciari (aka Fahrenheit) is a programmer and the designer of many mods dating back to *Quake*. He considers TCs to be excellent ways of getting your ideas out there, but much easier than making full-fledged games—a good starting point for wannabe developers to get a taste of what it's like. Says Fornaciari, "TCs bring a multitude of new concepts to the FPS genre. I love 'em because they bring new blood and fix problems with the original games. Basically it gives the game unlimited replay value. Without them stuff like *Team Fortress* would not be around." *Team Fortress*, the definitive TC / Mod for *Quake*, is now getting a long-awaited update using Valve's *Half-Life* (itself, an extensive and elaborate TC of the *Quake* engine). Valve's purchase of *Team Fortress* Software (the original TC's creators) is a testament to the TC concept of improving and refining an original game and seeing possibilities the developers missed. Fornaciari's latest project is called *Gunman*, (details are sketchy, but check out the latest at http://gunman.telefragged.com) a TC that bounced around several engines including the original *Quake* until finally settling on *Half-Life* and Valve's development tools. "We picked *Half-Life* for two reasons," said Fornaciari. "First, Valve has been so supportive and helpful. Second, the *Half-Life* engine/tools are top notch quality."



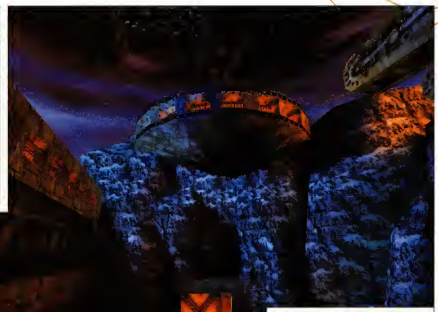
The Gunman TC for *Half-Life* is just one of dozens in the works. As you can see, there's a whole lot of new textures to go along with all the other content.



"Now what the heck was I doing here again? Oh yeah, being placeholder art. Now someone tell me what the heck I am, and I'll be set."

Aside from providing free content to appreciative gamers, TCs are giving developers ideas as well as providing a kind of unofficial minor league farm system to showcase new talents in the worlds of programming and art. But is this something that you have to have a lot of existing knowledge to get into? "Anyone

Some TC's we'd like to see: The KFC TC, The Smurfs TC, The USA Up All Nite Movie TC



can make a TC; it is very simple," counters Fornaciari. "All that is required to make a TC is to try. Once you basically figure out what is going on in the developers' head when they created the game, you are set. Try and figure out what the developer was trying to do with their game code, level design or whatever. The experience you get from trying to figure out the game's inside and actually make something of your own is among the best help you can get. It is a matter of trial and error. You will learn what is right and wrong as you go."

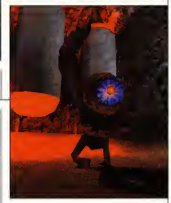
As to the software required, it's comprised of the usual slew of basic development tools. Fornaciari says he uses "Visual C++ 6 and the level editor for whatever game I am working on, that way I get all my bases covered and am able to work on all aspects of the design." After the initial breakthrough, Fornaciari suggests starting with the basics, saying, "Try and make something simple like a basic level or a weapon. It is easy and fun to do, and is a very good way to start. With the multitude of level editors, games, and free compilers in existence the time to make a TC couldn't be better."

We have been assured the top left picture is not a representation of Castle Greyskull.

This goes hand to hand with the *Half-Life* online community, which is another example of how strong developer support, combined with easy-to-configure code, can catch on like crazy. "The *Half-Life* community rules because it is full of support and information," says Fornaciari. Sites like Radium (http://www.contaminated.net/radium) and Wavelength (http://www.planethalflife.com/wavelength) are good gateways to finding the information you need to get your very own TC going.

Almost looks like an *Unreal* screen, huh? Chances are everything from the textures to the background are new.

But although Fornaciari makes it sound easy, jumping into a TC single-handedly with no prior experience is a tough job. Unless you are pretty familiar with programming or have a jones for learning how, you're better off becoming good at a particular aspect of the art/design process to start with. Skins, textures, 3D modeling, and level design are all essential to a TC and are more accessible than actual coding. Level design in particular won't require anything more than the game's map editor, which, in most cases, will also come with the game. Can't get much more convenient than that.



Once you become proficient, then it's time to shop your work around to the dozens of TCs in the works and offer your services. If you've got the skills, this will give you a good avenue in, as well as get a strong resume going. Before you know it you can be on your way, if you're willing to put in the time and effort.

Nothing makes a screenshot like a big ol' tree. It's where the happy squirrels live.

John Romero Redux

Has the bad boy of games gone back to his roots?

The stunning news that Ion Storm's head guru, John Romero, had left the company he helped form two years ago hit the game community like a meteor this February. Beleaguered game developer Ion Storm was off to a rocky start when its premiere property, *Daikatana*, had its release date pushed back repeatedly and suffered from numerous staff departures. Romero's own departure has left the company's future uncertain.

"My heart wasn't in the project any longer," Romero told **PCXL** from his home, "I wish the guys at Ion Storm all the best, but it got to the point where I realized that leaving would benefit them more than staying." Former co-workers are not as confident. "Frankly, John's name was the product," confided a *Daikatana* level designer who asked that his name not be used. "He may not have been as active in the design as people would expect, but he would've sold it."

Romero denies that the embarrassing Ion Storm expose in the Dallas Observer (January 13, 1999) played any part in his decision. "My mind was made up long before that," he told us, saying, "This wasn't a situation where I was pushed out — no matter what some in the industry would like to believe." Ion Storm CEO, Todd Porter, agrees.

A screenshot from *Berzerk 3000*, the first release from SID.

Porter tells **PCXL**, "John came to me with his concerns back in December. We agreed he should wait a couple of months before making a decision. Ion Storm is sad to see him go, but *Daikatana* is more than one man. It's going to rock!" Unfortunately, few share Porter's enthusiasm, as rough estimates predict that *Daikatana* will need to sell over 2.5 million units just to break even.

Romero's desire to return to his programming roots prompted the decision, he says. "I spent so much time being 'John Romero the celebrity,' that I forgot what it was like to be 'John Romero, the designer,'" he explained.

In a symbolic gesture, Romero has literally gone back to his roots, chopping the long hair that epitomized his rock star reputation, and choosing a simple crew cut instead. "It's like starting over, except I know what I'm doing now," he added, referring to his salad days at Id.

Luckily, Romero won't be alone. His new company, SID Interactive, is a winking tribute to his glam past (SID stands for Suck It Down), while reflecting his renewed focus on tight design. At a mere twelve employees, the company is lean, yet promises to make an impact. The first planned game, *Berzerk 3000*, follows the *Wolfenstein 3D* formula of taking a game he loved playing as a youth and updating it for new technology and a new generation. Or as Romero puts it, "This is a game I'd want to play." ➤

Every weekday on our website, we frag whatever the heck makes us angry, and occasionally we frag something just because. It needs it. Find out what we fragged today on www.pcxl.com. You'll come for the frags, but you'll stay for the CRAZY NEWS 'N BABES.

THE POWER METER

Let's get down to basics. Where is the real power in the PC gaming industry? The all-new power meter spells it all out.

THIS MONTH	LAST MONTH	
1	-	**MATTEL**—› Barbie rules. From next issue on, check out **PCXL** for the latest in the creative world of nail and fashion design. Plus, the scoop on *Barbie and Ken: The Sin Experience.*
2	10	**HASBRO**—› *Monopoly, Frogger, Operation , Risk* — these are the games people are buying, so these are the games we'll be covering. Look for **PCXL**'s "Family-Friendly Section."
3	-	**LEGO**—› Get out your hard hat and safety goggles for some heavy duty gameplay. *Lego Creator, Lego Chess, Lego Thrower.* We've barely been able to drag ourselves from *Lego Loco*. Top spot is surely in sight with the imminent release of *Lego Ladies.*
4	-	**WES CHERRY**—› Who? The man behind the most played game in Windows 95 PC gaming history, *Solitaire*, that ships with Windows 95.
5	-	**TONKA**—› If there's one thing that **PCXL** staffers appreciate, it's smashing up stuff. And what better way than with the Tonka games?
6	-	**LOONYGAMES.COM**—› This high-traffic web site is on the up and up. Incisive comment and thoroughly researched news pieces ensure that readers get stunning gaming value.
7	-	**SIERRA SPORTS**—› It's man enough to admit to a mistake and pull *NFL Football Pro '99* from shelves. This is the kind of responsible publishing **PCXL** encourages. After all, if we ever found a mistake in one of our issues, you can be sure we'd be pulling them off the racks ourselves.
8	-	**WIZARDWORKS**—› Where would middle America be without them? Those fascinating insights into the minds of hunters have captivated us all.
9	-	**CODEMASTERS**—› Try out the Brian Lara's Cricket demo currently online. Cricket is going to be the next big thing and will signal Codemasters' (*Micro Machines*) full integration into the U.S. market.
10	-	**HEAD GAMES**—› *Extreme Tennis, Extreme Paintball...* Pushing games to the lowest common denominator is something **PCXL** heartily applauds.

FANTASY FRAG

CAMERON DIAZ

WHY WE HATE HER ···› **She's too damn beautiful. Cameron has spoiled us for all other women and we despise her for that. Our fiancées have left us and our girlfriends won't talk to us anymore because we'd rather watch *There's Something About Mary* over and over again than spend time with them. For the sake of future generations, Cameron Diaz must be destroyed.**

HOW SHE SHOULD BE FRAGGED ···› **in her next movie, Cameron will be forced to wear tight, constricting bikinis that make it difficult for her to move. Unable to get to the food services table, she will slowly whither from hunger, and die a horrible, yet beautiful death. If that fails to work, PCXL invites her to our offices for a visit. We'll be happy to take care of her personally.**

Cat on a hot glass flatbed

[OR PUSSY GALORE]

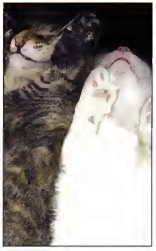
From time to time we step away from game-related material to serve the side interests of our readers. Such is the case with www.cat-scan.com. While Cat Scan may not be all about games, it does provide the incredibly valuable service of teaching us what a cat looks like when it falls asleep on a moving scanner. The site lets cat lovers display their feline friends to the world over the Internet. It's run by one of the key developers behind *Unreol* and is hosted by *Unreal Nation*, a fan site that keeps track of Epic Games' first-person shooter.

PCXL Art Director Kyle LeBouef had volunteered to scan his roommate's cat, Ben, for this article. However that idea was scrapped after Ben refused to cooperate, only agreeing to reprise his stunning Linda Blair imitation (highlighted by a low-pitched growl and a forcefully-delivered tunafish regurgitation on Kyle's new scanner). We then sent Assistant Editor Ed Lee home to scan his own, less volatile kitty, Nat. But alas, Ed's attempt was not pleasing to either party. After a calming bowl of milk for his cat and a round of Bactine for Ed, we decided to just go with these cute, yet somewhat creepy, pictures from the site. Before you freak out, read on ...

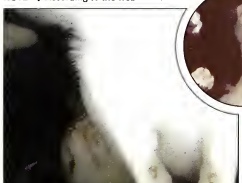
NOTE --> According to the website, scanning does not hurt the cat and some owners even scanned their own eyes just to be sure. In our tests we also found that scanning did not harm cockroaches (damn!), Ed's genitals (we were drunk), or peanut butter sandwiches (we got hungry).

--> **DO NOT HARM KITTY CATS!**

Mr. Blackwell, famed fashion critic, was kind enough to provide kitty commentary for the First Annual PCXL Cat-Scan Fashion Show



"The dichotomy of these two models is passionate, yet subdued! Very Dior!"



"White after Labor Day? I don't think so!"

"Food and fashion. Scrumptious!"

GAMESCAN

AND NOW A WORD FROM OUR SPONSORS

Over the past few months we've come to realize that the success of a game does not always rely on the quality of the game itself. Basically, it's all about how it's presented to all you wonderful people out there in the dark -- can you say *Tomb Raiders III*? Here's a few new games that we didn't have the space to cover in Previews, and how we'd sell them if we were big hot-shot marketing execs with copious amounts of cash, no morals, and a desire to dupe millions.

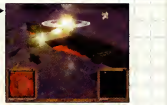
Note: Mr. Cleon is now the official "pitch-mon" for **PCXL**

GABRIEL KNIGHT III: BLOOD OF THE SACRED, BLOOD OF THE DAMNED

Developer --> Sierra Studios
Publisher --> Sierra Studios
Release Date --> Summer '99
Product --> Third in the popular series, it uses the new 3D G-engine to tell a mystery based on real legends about vampires in a French village. No FMV acting, but Tim Curry wrestles with a Cajun accent again as the voice of Gabriel. With the enormous success of *Half-Life*, **PCXL** wouldn't be surprised if *Gabriel Knight III* mysteriously turned into a first-person shooter based on the *Quake II* engine -- or maybe not

Spokesperson --> Jack Palance
The Pitch --> France ... (heavy breathing) ... is a land of mystery and tales of the undead. But the bloodsuckers in Rennes-le-Chateau won't take American Express. Visa ... It's to die for. Believe it or not
Shown During --> "Baywatch Nights"

Late-breaking news: At press time www.cat-scan.com had mysteriously disappeared



STAR TREK: NEW WORLDS

Developer → Binary Asylum
Publisher → Interplay
Release Date → Christmas '99
Product → Yet another RTS set in the "Star Trek" universe, only this time the skirmishes are set on (you guessed it) new worlds. Besides ground combat, the focus will be on crew development and resource management. Screenshots don't look very "Trek-like."
Spokesperson → James (Scotty) Doohan
The Pitch → Beam aboard for this fine, quality "Star Trek" collector's plate. Sure to triple in value over the next five years, each plate depicts an undiscovered planet. Aye, keppin ... thar be New Worlds here indeed!
Shown During → Classic "Star Trek" reruns on the Sci-Fi Channel

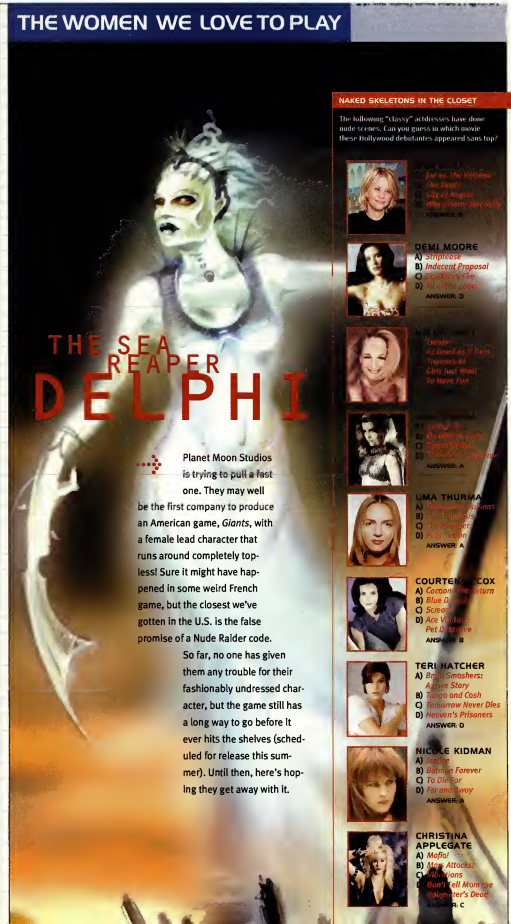
James Doohan

RAGE OF MAGES 2: NECROMANCER

Developer → Nival
Publisher → Monolith Productions
Release Date → Spring '99
Product → As the title hints, the goal of this RPG/strategy sequel is to defeat the evil Necromancer Guild and their army of the undead. More races, monsters, and locations than the original plus multiplayer supports up to 16 players, if that many buy it
Spokesperson → Cajun chef Justin Wilson
The Pitch → Hoo-whee! How y'all durin? Dis here's de best dang food that you can make yourself at home. Rages of Mages cookin' is full o' magic. I *gorontee!*"
Shown During → "Two Fat Women" on the Food Channel

Justin Wilson

THE WOMEN WE LOVE TO PLAY



THE SEA REAPER
DELPHI

Planet Moon Studios is trying to pull a fast one. They may well be the first company to produce an American game, *Giants*, with a female lead character that runs around completely topless! Sure it might have happened in some weird French game, but the closest we've gotten in the U.S. is the false promise of a Nude Raider code.

So far, no one has given them any trouble for their fashionably undressed character, but the game still has a long way to go before it ever hits the shelves (scheduled for release this summer). Until then, here's hoping they get away with it.

NAKED SKELETONS IN THE CLOSET

The following "classy" actresses have done nude scenes. Can you guess in which movie these Hollywood debutantes appeared sans top?

Joe vs. the Volcano
The Doors
City of Angels
What's Your Sign, Lolly
ANSWER: A

DEMI MOORE
A) *Striptease*
B) *Indecent Proposal*
C) *Disclosure*
D) *All of the above*
ANSWER: D

Tender
As Good As It Gets
Tremors III
Girls Just Want
To Have Fun
ANSWER: B

Lethal Ad
Do Good Fences
Sweet Home
Pet Detective
ANSWER: A

UMA THURMAN
A) *Henry & June*
B) *Final Analysis*
C) *The Truth About*
D) *Kids Incorp*
ANSWER: A

COURTENEY COX
A) *Cocktail*
B) *Blue D*
C) *Scre*
D) *Ace Ventura:*
Pet D
ANSWER: B

TERI HATCHER
A) *Big Trouble*
B) *Tango and Cash*
C) *Tomorrow Never Dies*
D) *Heaven's Prisoners*
ANSWER: D

NICOLE KIDMAN
A) *Flirting*
B) *Batman Forever*
C) *To Die For*
D) *Far and Away*
ANSWER: A

CHRISTINA APPLEGATE
A) *Mafia!*
B) *Mars Attacks!*
C) *Dickens*
D) *Don't Tell Mom the Babysitter's Dead*
ANSWER: C

Sin-ful Pleasure

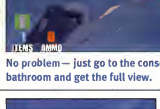
At PCXL we are against cheat codes. They ruin games and make for a bunch of whiny, talentless, gameplayers who just want to cheat to win. However, we are now making an exception. This cheat code allows you to see what silicon-chested millionairess villains do when they are all alone.

When playing the mansion1 map you come across this security camera view. Interesting.

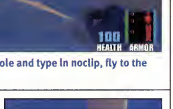
Of course, you could sit and watch for quite some time, but the camera angle just never gets it right.

No problem — just go to the console and type in noclip, fly to the bathroom and get the full view.

The following pictures tell the whole story...

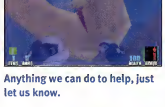


We just can't understand why more women don't wear high heels in the pool.



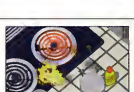
Anything we can do to help, just let us know.

Hmm ... looks like Alexis has the situation well in hand.



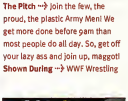
Just checking her health meter "a la *Trespasser*."

GAMESCAN



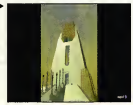
ARMY MEN 2

Developer → 3DO
Publisher → 3DO
Release Date → April '99
Product → Sarge is back and hunting the Tan army through environments ranging from a giant kitchen to a toy playset in this action/strategy game. Keeping with *Army Men*'s twisted humor, there are even more sadistic ways of obliterating the enemy
Spokesperson → Louis Gossett Jr.
The Pitch → Join the few, the proud, the plastic Army Men! We get more done before 9am than most people do all day. So, get off your lazy ass and join up, maggot!
Shown During → WWF Wrestling



JEFF GORDON XS RACING

Developer → Real Sports
Publisher → ASC Games
Release Date → March '99
Product → This unexpected type of game, having nothing to do with Nascar, is a high-speed, futuristic racer. Set in a futuristic world that, judging by the proliferation of PepsiCo billboards and advertising, is run by a soda manufacturer, you get to race against Jeff Gordon. With speeds upwards of 300 MPH and gut-wrenching track design, this game already stands out from the typical PC racer
Spokesperson → Uh, Jeff Gordon
The Pitch → It's a game ... It's a commercial. *Jeff Gordon XS Racing* is a marketing exec's wet dream. I'm Jeff Gordon, and when I'm not driving around in circles, mooching off my father, or kissing any of my first cousins, I like to drink Pepsi, eat Frito's, and sign giant licensing deals. Help me buy my third home and buy this game now
Shown During → A break between Pepsi Commercials



ELYSIUM

Developer --> Cavedog
Publisher --> GT Interactive
Release Date --> Summer '99
Product --> *Elysium* is definitely a new step in the direction of PC games. Think of it as a 3D rendered, serialized adventure where you play a number of 5-20 hour "episodes," each with their own beginning and ending. The product will ship with seven episodes, with future story lines arriving either online or in expansion packs
Spokesperson --> Susan Lucci
The Pitch --> Will Anthron survive until the next episode? Will Margaret tell Lord Dread about their love child? Will the Prince of Azeron discover his evil twin brother? And what about Miss Willowby? WHAT ABOUT MISS WILLOWBY? Find out in the next episode
Shown During --> "The Young and the Restless"

Susan Lucci

CIVILIZATION: CALL TO POWER

Developer --> Activision
Publisher --> Activision
Release Date --> Spring '99
Product --> The classic strategy game made popular by Sid Meier is back, in the hands of Activision. After losing an intense legal battle to Microprose, Activision has recreated *Civ II* from the ground up, adding many new features such as an extended future, better graphics, Internet play, and tons of new units.
Spokesperson --> Fablo
The Pitch --> "I can't believe it's not Sid Meier!" It looks like *Civilization*. It tastes like *Civilization*. The question is -- will it play like *Civilization*?
Shown During --> The History Channel's tribute to some super famous dead guy

Fablo

PCXL CLASSIFIEDS

Jobs the industry should be advertising for!

CODE COMPRESSOR
Are you a talented individual? Can you squeeze an 800Mb program down to a size that actually fits on a hard drive? Download an application to join our team today! (Note: Application form is 45Mb.) **Ritual Entertainment.**

CREATIVE GENIUS

Looking for crazed psychopath with sordid drug-addled past. Must be able to rock and roll at the computer terminal all night. As in-house creative genius, your main task will be to figure out how the hell we can make a game about dinosaur band KISS into a first-person shooter. Anyone currently working at Ion Storm, afraid to finish their current project, or possessing a nine inch tongue is welcomed. Apply in person at **Bloodshot Entertainment.**

Desperately Seeking Someone? Single WM, enjoys fast cars, herbal shampoo, and posing. No fats or freaks. Call John at 214-555-STUD, from 2pm to 3pm. **Ion Storm.**

EDITOR WITH TASTE AND MORALS
Fast-growing PC gaming publication, unfamiliar with bounds of journalistic integrity, seeks responsible individual for editorial staff. Qualified candidates will ensure that offensive shit doesn't make it into print. Send resume to Mike Salmon, EIC, **PC Accelerator.**

NEW COO NEEDED IMMEDIATELY.
Applicant must know when to keep mouth shut. For contact, please see ad under "Desperately Seeking Someone." **Ion Storm.**

JOHN ROMERO'S BITCHES...
You've seen the ads, now join ... er... form the team behind "the best game of 1999," *Daikatana*. Looking for deadline-driven individual with a proven record of game completion prior to forming own company. E-mail Todd Porter if interested. (Disclaimer: This email may appear in revealing story about "prickish" behavior.)

New Engine!

Top-selling game series in desperate need of new engine. Qualified engine will provide game with intuitive control and graphics that don't look like shit. Send resume and 5 design samples to Core Design, **Eidos Interactive.**

PATENT LAWYER
Major player in 3D industry looking for sleazy legal type to ensure we can sucker millions out of our proprietary (cough, spit) technology. Apply in person at **3DFX.**

TRIAL LAWYER
Quickly expanding major player in the hardware industry looking for self-righteous, yet morally void, attorney to protect the very rights that make America what it is. Contact **nVidia.**

Public Relations Guru

Need PR genius/magician to resurrect company track record of being "the shit." Must be willing to lie, cheat, steal, sleep with and/or offer all-expense-paid trips to exotic locales to slovenly editors, and otherwise do amoral and unlawful tasks when called upon. Send resumes to **Wizard-Works.**

LARGE COMPANY SEEKS SMALL COMPANY TO ABSORB Industry giant looking for small company to absorb. No experience required. Only qualification: willingness to be devoured by massive corporate behemoth. Send financial statements to **GT Interactive.**

SPORTS PROGRAMMER

Do you know what a running back is? Ever set the time on a VCR? Then you are already more qualified than our entire development team. Disgruntled EA Sports employees encouraged to apply. Call **Sierra Sports** (555-BUGS)

"Q! Was Hell" Porn

Dear Q!'s Mom,

We regret to inform you that your son Q! was lost while parachuting behind German lines last week. Apparently, there was a slight miscalculation in the drop location and thus art directors were scattered all over the German countryside. Private Q was part of our emergency art shock troops division that was formed to spread fear and confusion throughout Germany. His contributions to **PCXL** will be sorely missed and we join you in your time of sorrow.

But rest assured that preparations are already underway to rescue Private Q! As you read this, we are assembling a team of soldiers to infiltrate Germany whose main qualifications are being able to yell "Achtung!" and "Schnell!" with great conviction.

Just to keep the ray of hope alive, here is a photo of Private Q! alive and well behind enemy lines. We know you'll be praying for his swift and safe rescue. We will too. God bless you my lady.

Sincerely,
The PCXL staff

Our brave Q!, moments before being brainwashed.

Q! Loved it, maybe too much. How about you?

The tragic loss of Private Q! has left us thinking about the things that matter in life. Porn, sex, beer, games -- you know, the real important shit. Many of us even secretly believe that it was Q!'s love for porn that was his undoing. Take the test below to see if you are addicted to porn, or if you're just an average, everyday, run-of-the-mill male pig. If you answer yes to any, then you have a problem.

--> The guy at the local porn store knows you by name *and* perverted fetish
--> You drive around with a VCR and porn tapes, "just in case"
--> Your attatchments folder would get you arrested in 19 seperate states
--> You instantly get erect when you hear a wah-wah guitar
--> You work as a pool boy so you don't miss out on the action

Six Degrees of System Shock

When you ask hardcore gamers what they believe the center of the PC gaming universe to be, answers will vary greatly. Many will point to *Doom*, *Command & Conquer*, or even *Zork*, but the real answer is not what you might think. After many months of exhaustive research, **PCXL** has determined that the real center of the PC gaming universe is actually the under-appreciated action/strategy classic, *System Shock*. In fact, any modern game can be traced back to that game in just six easy steps. See for yourself...

System Shock

- Tom Clancy's *Rainbow Six*, is based on a book by the author of
- *Hunt for Red October*, a dog of a game and an old navy sim, much like
- The Dog from Old Navy, Magic, also a nickname for the game
- *Magic the Gathering*, the only PC title that makes you feel as geeky as playing
- *Ultima Online*, which occupies the same universe as
- *Ultima Underworld*, which shared a graphics engine with
- *Interstate 76*, with characters having no mouths and fashions that would make you scream
- Is both a game, and the nightmare of Dave Perry
- Who is also developing *Messiah*
- Which is matched in hype only by *Tiger Woods*
- Who never actually won the tournament that inspired the game *British Open Golf*
- Which was made by Looking Glass, who also developed
- *Teen Digital Diva*, was created to mimic the success of
- *Barbie Fashion Designer*, who is rumored to have "done the deed" with the lead character from
- *Duke Nukem 3D*, which was always in competition with
- *Doom*, which was created in part by
- John Romero, who "works" at Ion Storm with
- Warren Spector, who created
- *Flight Unlimited*, a game designed by Looking Glass, which also produced
- EA Sports, whose offices can be seen in
- *Madden 99*, which was developed by
- Shannon Sharpe, who plays in
- Lara Croft, who shares the adjective "Tight End" with
- *Tomb Raider III*, stars videogame diva
- *Thief*, which was a game by Looking Glass who also made
- 3Dfx, who called Riva a technology
- which shares the same name as Riva's accelerator, named in a lawsuit by
- *Outlaws*, whose best weapon was a fistful of TNT
- of Clint Eastwood, who starred in the "Spaghetti Westerns," that inspired
- *Quake III: Arena*, features bump-mapped textures that look as wrinkled as the face
- Warren Spector, who created
- Todd Porter, who wrote nasty e-mails about
- 7th Level, a company that once employed
- *Redneck Rampage*, a game so bad nobody has ever gotten past its
- Robert De Niro, who, in *Cape Fear*, went on a
- *Deer Hunter*, is both a game, and also the name of a movie starring

Can you link other games to *System Shock*? Send your six step links to baconshock@pcxl.com, and the best results will be printed in the magazine, with fantastic prizes sent to the winners.

NOTE→ The staff of **PCXL** cannot be held responsible for other people's interpretations of the word "fantastic." In some countries *Deer Hunter* would be considered fantastic, wouldn't it? We admit, those must be sucky countries, but they still count. The point is, we don't exactly know what the prize is going to be, but we can guarantee that there will be a prize, of sorts.

GAMESCAN

BATTLEZONE 2

Developer → Pandemic
Publisher → Activision
Release Date → Summer 1999
Product → Big-time tank crunch, with just the right amount of polygonal goodness!
Spokesperson → Bob the Tank
The Pitch → It's a breakfast cereal that's the follow-up to last year's well-received, but poorly selling, BattleZone Crunch. Many bright new colors and flavors will turn breakfast into your favorite meal! Part of a well-balanced nutritious breakfast. Stays crunchy even in the normally smooth Glide
Shown During → BeastWars Transformers

Bob the Tank

DARK REIGN 2

Developer → Pandemic
Publisher → Activision
Release Date → Fall '99
Product → New Improved *Dark Reign 2* is a jolt of sugary goodness – in a can! The sequel to the mildly-successful, critically-acclaimed original is going for full 3D. While once it was labelled a *StarCraft* clone, now it is certain to be known as a *Total Annihilation* clone (for those who prefer labels)
Spokesperson → A Gen-X "extreme" type
The Pitch → It's realtime strategy, with 3D battlefields, 3D units, and a cool new look – in a can! Check out the single scale of the battlefields, with a free camera that can zoom in close or pull back – in a can! Dude, this game rocks. It's even extreme, to me Mr. Extreme. Somebody get me a Mountain Dew so I can go jump off a cliff and scream wildly while a camera zooms in on the piercing in my tongue. What a trip
Shown During → NHL on Fox

Mr. Extreme

http://pcxl.ign.com
PC ACCELERATOR April 1999 "Six Degrees Of Kevin Bacon" shows us how the *Footloose* star is the center of Hollywood
119

CORRECTIONS:

In what is probably a bad precedent, we'd like to interrupt this month's Gamescan to address a few glaring errors in our last couple of issues:

--> We made a slight mistake in our *Descent 3* preview. The games in the histogram weren't developed by Outrage, a fact which pissed them off to no end. But we think the real reason they're pissed is the fact we called their game *Descent 4*. The truth hurts, huh?

--> We reported that Ed Lee died a horrible, gruesome death at the hands of 24 naked Amazon women, when in fact this never occurred. It actually happened to Q.

--> We left a sentence unfinished in the Crystal Ball feature, specifically in the bit about *Homeworld*. The complete sentence should read, "when Sierra shows off the improved version sometime in the crack of your mom's ass."

We want to apologize to everyone involved. We now return you to your regularly scheduled drivel ...

SEVEN KINGDOMS 2

Developer --> I-Magic
Publisher --> I-Magic
Release Date --> Summer '99
Product --> Seven Kingdoms Soap: The game that continually claims it beats the crap out of Age Of Empires. Who the hell are we to argue

Spokesperson --> Joe Namath
The Pitch --> A deep down, disinfectant clean made from the volcanic ashes of the first *Seven Kingdoms*. Newer, brighter, sharper look will make you glad you use *Seven Kingdoms*, and make you wish everyone else in your life did too
Shown During --> "The Price Is Right" (before that whole freakish reminder to castrate your pets)

The Heat-O-Meter

THE IMPEACHMENT EDITION

WHAT'S HOT

POISON PEN--> The Dallas Observer printed a controversial article about ION Storm's internal shenanigans in which CEO Todd Porter and art director Jerry O'Flaherty are portrayed as daffy villains in a corporate soap opera. The shocking cliffhanger: *Daikatono* needs to sell 2.5 million copies to break even.

CAR-MAC ATTACK--> At this year's Mac World Expo, Id Software's John Carmack extolled the virtues of the G3 Mac by playing a demo of *Quake III: Arena* on the heralded machine. He backpedalled later by stating that Intel PCs can still outperform the G3. (Especially in sales, huh?)

SPEAKING OF INTEL--> The 800-pound gorilla of the processor industry announced that their next chip will indeed be called the Pentium III. Apparently, the name "Dreamcast" was already taken.

TIGER TALES--> EA shipped *Tiger Woods 99 PGA Tour* for the PlayStation. What they didn't know was that if you place the disc in your PC CD-ROM drive, it plays the unedited "Spirit of Christmas" short that inspired the "South Park" series. Finally... a reason to buy a golf game!

WHAT'S COLD

PORTER STRIKES BACK--> In response to the Dallas Observer article, ION Storm subpoenaed writer Christine Biederman to learn who leaked several embarrassing e-mails. Considering the number of company defectors, they should've asked them who hasn't.

LAWSUIT-A-GO-GO--> GT Interactive filed suit against Midway Games for breach of contract, accusing them of hindering GT's efforts in marketing Midway's games internationally. Hey, Midway, don't forget your U.S. market!

SIERRA DROPS BALL--> Sierra Sports recalled all copies of *NFL Football Pro '99* due to "errors in the program's code." They plan on rereleasing a fixed version of the game as *NFL Football Pro 2000* in August. Pleas to recall *Trophy Buck* were ignored.

COO BOO HOO--> ION Storm's COO was notified that he would be "leaving the company," but no reason was given for his release. At this point, we're happy that ION Storm is releasing anything.

SELL-OUTS--> Canopus is out of the 3D video card business because sales were too good. Why couldn't the makers of *Deer Hunter* follow their example?

25 THINGS

EVERY GAMER MUST DO BEFORE THE YEAR 2000

The year 2000 is almost upon us and it's time to ask yourself, "Have I measured up as a human being and as a gamer?" When the Y2K bug hits and all your hard drives are wiped out, old videogames short-circuited, and the plane you're in falls from the sky, as you plummet towards the ground, you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that you completed PCXL's "to do" list. But you'd better get started ... there's only eight more months to go.

--> Wipe out your entire team in *Rainbow Six* and get away with it.
--> Develop at least one good tank rush in any RTS.
--> Initiate a multiplayer game of *Doom*.
--> Charge up a credit card with PCXL merchandise (Your card — not your parents', girlfriend's, or neighborhood pimp's).
--> Imagine your girlfriend as Lara Croft.
--> Convince your girlfriend to dress up as Lara Croft. (If you can do it, be sure to send us the picture.)
--> Install an emulator for an old game platform and relive your childhood. (Just don't play any illegal ROMs ... wink, wink, nudge, nudge.)
--> Switch sides mid-game in *Tribes*, successfully.
--> Play a game of *Pong*. (If you can't find the real thing, *NHL '99* counts. *Extreme Tennis* does not.)
--> Get through the original *Zork* without using a walk-through.
--> Break your addiction to *Civilization 2*. How about *SimCity 3000*?
--> Finally master the rocket jump in *Quake II*.
--> Chew someone out for buying *Myst*, *Riven*, or any hunting game.
--> Beat *Solitaire* (yes, the one that came with Windows) twice in a row.
--> Discover the *Sim* masturbation (See page 117).
--> Give the strippers money in *Duke Nukem 3D* and then refrain from shooting them. (Shake it, baby!)
--> Create your own spraypaint tag in *Half-Life*.
--> Design your own first-person shooter level.
--> Stare at Lara's breasts in *Tomb Raider* once more.
--> Spend the afternoon in an arcade, with a bag of quarters and a *Gauntlet* machine.
--> Get stinking drunk and play any racing game.
--> Update all your drivers.
--> Decorate a newsstand with **PCXL** magazines.
--> Upgrade! Buy more RAM, install a sound card that actually works, and replace that S3 Virge already!
--> Buy whatever Blizzard releases in 1999. But you were going to do that anyway, right?

DEVELOPER SPOTLIGHT

Xatrix Entertainment

Good, bad, or indifferent, Xatrix is certainly making a name for itself. Whether you loved or hated *Redneck Rampage* and its sequel, it must be said that the game had more personality than a year's worth of post-apocalyptic futures. In an industry filled with start-ups, *Quake*-clones, and *StarCraft*-knockoffs, it is refreshing to see something different.

The redneck rampage started back in 1993 when Drew Markham and partner Barry Dempsey decided to form Xatrix Entertainment. Their first game was the nice-looking, but ultimately brainless, railed-shooter called *Cyberia*. Since then Xatrix has worked almost exclusively with existing engines, and really tried to do something creative. Their current project, *Kingpin* (see preview pg. 60), is another example of the company's film-maker approach to games. When asked why they don't create their own engines, Markham had this to say, "We like to use the film-making analogy, and I'd hate to have to make my own cameras and film every time I wanted to make a movie." Their themes and approach to game development also have a very cinematic quality, and this is a goal that can actually be realized now that the technology is up to snuff.

The staff of Xatrix just minutes before they were crushed on the fender of two northbound semis.

We've got one of these and hear they are worth some money, any offers?

This is where Xatrix sodomized us for continually bashing their *Redneck* games.

With only 22 employees Xatrix remains a very tight-knit group. Whether it's researching mob culture for their upcoming game by watching the likes of the *Godfather* and *Scorface*, or making a quick run to the neighboring strip club for an entirely different kind of research, the team atmosphere at Xatrix is easy to detect. With the commercial success of the *Redneck* franchise (each has already sold well over 100,000 units) Interplay has great confidence in Xatrix and is counting heavily on the success of *Kingpin*. By establishing a good relationship with a big publisher, Xatrix has avoided the constant financial strain of most small developers, yet has been allowed the freedom to create what they want. The master plans don't include world domination, huge growth, or becoming a publishing giant. Instead Xatrix plans on continuing to create games that entertain consumers and satisfy publishers. As long as they continue to meet these simple, yet effective, goals, Xatrix will be around for quite a long time.

STATUS

NUMBER OF DVD PLAYERS IN OFFICE—> 2

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES—> 22

NUMBER OF FEMALE EMPLOYEES—> 3

NUMBER OF CLEAN CUBICLES—> 3

OFFICIAL XATRIX SWEARING POLICY—> Aggressively encouraged

TEAM ACTIVITIES—> Synchronized vomiting

NUMBER OF BLOCKS TO NEAREST STRIP CLUB—> 3 1/2

NUMBER OF SHOTS TAKEN WITH PCXL'S VERY OWN MIKE SALMON—> 1

YOU MIGHT BE A REDNECK RAMPAGE DEVELOPER IF...

...you use a truck stop for staff photo shoots
...you think the build engine is "state-of-the-art"
...the term "rocket chicken" makes any sense to you
...you pass a strip club on the way to the company restroom
...the words "posse" and "opossum" are used in business discussions
...you have ever motion-captured a pig
...you did focus groups to test the popularity of the name "Clutus"

letters@pcxl.com

FEEDBACK

This month's letters section has a little bit of everything. Singing, doctors, and really bad mom jokes. Ahh, it's been a good month, hasn't it? If you want your voice heard, drop us a line at letters@pcxl.com. If it makes us laugh, you'll see it here.

IT'S GOTTA BE THE BABES

My friend and I were looking at your mag in study hall and the teacher came over and took it away. She said it was obscene and that we shouldn't be looking at it. I guess it had something to do with all the babes.

Liam Fleischmann

Woohoo, we've arrived!

Saw the cover of the Feb '99 mag and ten minutes later, as soon as I could breathe without tripping over my jaw, I bought five copies. Who is Mirna Blankenstein, and where has she been all my life??!!! Will we be seeing more of her? Hey, how about letting me start up a fan site? There is not ONE on the net ... she deserves one if anyone does.

ed209@mindspring.com

We've received more letters about Mirna than anything other than missing discs (call 800-333-3890, it's not our fault). So here she is again (bottom right).

WE'RE THE SHIT!

I usually don't pay for magazines because my buddy works at an unnamed bookstore and he usually lets me take them, but if I stole one of yours it would feel like I'm stealing from my own mother. Granted you didn't buy me my car, or computer, or anything for that matter, but you've brought just as much joy into my life.

Name withheld because of the stealing magazines stuff

Thanks, your mom has brought a lot of joy into our lives as well.

Today I bought my first ever issue of PCXL. I was looking through it and the strangest thing happened, I laughed! (Which kind of sucked 'cause I was on the toilet at the time and you know what happens when you laugh on the toilet). As I finished up my toilet activities, I decided that this was a great magazine and I would have to buy the next issue, and I thought I'd go ahead and let you guys know, THIS IS A BAD TOILET MAGAZINE!

John Halbert
johnh@linknet.net

There go our men's room distribution plans. Coincidentally, our bedside distribution is going quite well.

STALK MUCH?

I noticed the picture of Rob's girlfriend Sandy, and I'm very curious If this is the very same Sandy who used to work at Toys R Us in Sacramento just about 10 years ago? If so, I'm an old employee/ friend of hers.

Thanks,
Larry Mauro

Larry, stay where you are. When the men in blue shirts come, they're your friends. If they mention the word stalker, just nod your head. Everything's going to be all right.

RICKETS HURT REAL BAD

Your touching farewell to Rupee the monkey had me cringing on the floor doubled up in painful convulsions of laughter.

Maaz

That's not laughter, it's rickets! Get help, quick!

DOCTOR, DOCTOR

Hey guys, I was on a cruise trip the other day and I felt "lonely." I couldn't find a Playboy magazine but luckily I had your mag in my bag. Hehe ... that was good enough ... hehe

Darrell Oh

Waaaaay too much information. And proof that the teacher (earlier) had a valid point.

I've seen letters in your magazine, deriding your readership as adolescent, sex-crazed, politically incorrect little boys. I am a 42 year-old, board certified cardiac surgeon, trained at the Mayo Clinic. You can't get much more straight-laced and traditional than that. Your humor is, indeed, sophomoric and largely sexual, and, as the wonks that complain about it are loathe to add, hilarious. Keep up the good work.

Todd Chapman, MD

Hey, we believe you are certified (or certifiable) and we believe you are "in" a hospital, but Todd, real doctors don't have padded walls in their offices.

THE DAN EGGER SONG

(Sung to the tune of the Stonecutter Song from "The Simpsons")

Who's that surly editor?
Who's that drunk competitor?
Egger, Egger...

Who TK's in *Rainbow Six*?
Who hates all *Deer Huntin'* hicks?
Egger, Egger...

(Chorus)
Who's the real brains behind PCXL?
Who brings in a 3D card to show-and-tell?
Egger, Egger...

Who plays *Tribes* drunk and woozy,
Typing incoherently?
Egger, Egger...

Who always gets all the chicks,
But still keeps all the nudie pics?
Egger, Egger...

(Chorus)

(Refrain) (as in refrain from ever singing this song in public)

etc, etc.

H.E. Pennypacker

Dan, naturally, loves this song, but the other guys want their own. Any takers?

She's back by popular demand (okay, it was bribery). "We love you, Mirna!" Want to see her every month? Email yes@pcxl.com.

Gaming 411

These sponsors make it possible for **PC ACCELERATDR** to exist. Without them we'd just be a bunch of loud-mouthed fools. We appreciate their advertising, but if they make a game that sucks, we WILL kill it. Nobody owns **PCXL**, but **PCXL**.

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This is your brain on crack!

Case in point: *Tribes*. **PCXL**'s hard-to-please Dan "Attack Dog" Egger gave *Tribes* a 9 out of 10. A great score, that could have been greater as there was early clamor for a bona fide 10. But even we were realistic enough not to give it that high accolade – hell, it doesn't even have D3D support, tough titty TNT-only users. I'd have given it a seven at the highest, or lower if the review had been written after a particularly frustrating and infuriating journey into the brave new yonder of the online multiplayer team environment.

It's a great example where the LAN-based, open office environment skews the reviewers' opinions. For us at **PCXL**, playing on the same side, communicating verbally added a great amount to the experience. For Johnny NoMates in the middle of Kentucky, what chance does he have? The command structure was made increasingly convoluted throughout the beta test builds resulting in a system that simply doesn't work in anything like the manner it was intended. To all intents and purposes *Tribes* is *Quake II* with open environments, fewer weapons and location-based objectives in place of frags.

Our theory: Rob never gets the flag and he's just real pissed about it.

There just seemed to be so many nits to pick. Controlling the APCs require way more practice than any state's current driving requirements. Stopping is impossible meaning that diving off is the only way to avoid fatal collisions. Basic jetpack control is irritating – as soon as you push forward, you stop all upwards motion. I don't care if it's realistic booster-based physics, it's frustrating as hell.

Fortunately, Dynamix fixed the issue of stopping still (a fundamental first-person shooter no-no) when accessing the command map in the version 1.2 update. This particular patch contained so many fixes that only highlighted Tribes' initial inadequacies.

Bad clipping in bases makes it difficult for even a light armored character to move down a corridor past a turret placed in the middle. And finally, level design. Kudos to the Raindance designer – by far the best level – it has thought, style and purpose, whereas some of those damn snow levels provide "challenge" just through creating frustratingly deep troughs.

So be careful with all the praise heaped on *Tribes*. I'll be on the servers for sure, but only because I have the chance to play as it was intended – with teammates I can actually communicate with – and not for its revolutionary gameplay. That team thing ain't fully happening and won't until the voice command systems work more effectively. So stick that in your reviewing pipes and smoke it.

–ROB "EVEN HIGHER ON CRACK" SMITH

SECOND PERSON

I think that we should rename this section "Missing the Point With Rob Smith". I am amazed that you even dare to question the quality of *Tribes*. I haven't played as addictive a multiplayer game since our magazine launched. Not *Unreal*, not *Half Life*, and not even *Quake II*.

It's not just because I have a Voodoo 2 card (that's what system reqs are for), it's not because I have a fast Internet connection (my friends with slow modems who can't play *Quake* love *Tribes*). It's not even that it's a perfect game (but I will say that *Tribes* out of the box was as bug free as any shooter we've seen), its just that the game is so much fun.

Tribes actually tames the chaos of the Internet and makes teams of people who have never met. It still amazes me to see some guy from New Jersey manning the defense as I set targets for a mortar launcher from Austin, Texas, which clears the way for our strike team to get the flag. The drastically more hyped *Quake III Arena*, *Unreal Tournament*, and *Team Fortress 2* deathmatches will be lucky to compete.

Years from now when the standard first-person shooter will be all about teamplay, we will still talk about the fun we had when we played *Tribes*. And you will still feel guilt about disparaging its good name.

–DAN "ROB'S CRACK DEALER" EGGER

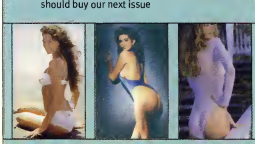
NEXT MONTH?

May The Force Be With You, MoFo!
Star Wars: Episode One mania hits **PCXL** and we're not ashamed to cash in on the most anticipated movie in the history of history. Mike Salmon dons a Stormtrooper outfit to infiltrate LucasArts' security and bring back the lowdown on this summer's two mega-hit prequel games. More fun than a Wookie in heat, and more stimulating than Leia in her Jabba-slave bikini

South Park: The Review Barbra Streisand Won't Read
Can a show about four potty-mouthed boys and a talking lump of poo translate into a successful first-person shooter? Or will it go down the toilet? **PCXL** flushes out the truth in the next issue

Got Hairy Palms?
Know Ron Jeremy's vital statistics? Played *Wing Commander III* just for the scenes with Ginger Lynn? Don't worry, you've come to the right place. Take our "Addicted to Porn" quiz and let the experts see if you're a sick puppy or just a run-of-the-mill deviant/**PCXL** subscriber

The Best Is Behind Us
PCXL always gets to the bottom of a story. Here are three examples of why you should buy our next issue



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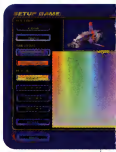

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LOCATION: The Great Wasteland.

DESTINATION: Galactic Core.

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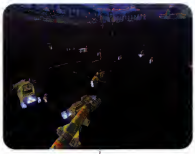

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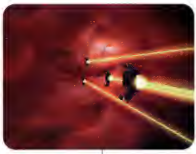

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