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REAL LARA
EXPOSED
INSIDE

VOLUME 01 NO. 02

OCTOBER 1998

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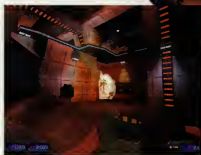
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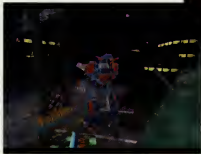
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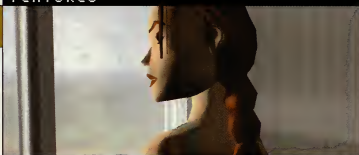
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No, she hasn't been associated with the president. Instead Lara is on trial for *Tomb Raider III*. Is the sequel worthy? Can a three-year-old engine compete? Find the answers and see all that is new



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The best level designers in the business tell you how to make your levels shine



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Naked pictures of Lara Croft models — Real-life camping spots — Pete's Wicked Ale (mmm, so smooth) — Microsoft force feedback steering wheel — France goes down — Jerry Springer on games — and more reasons for you to read the damn section



ON THE COVER

We're all a little old to be lusting over fictional polygonal characters, but a real woman is something completely different — just away. The photo shoot with model Nell McAndrew took place somewhere in England and, sadly, we weren't invited. Qi furiously cropped the picture until there was no more evidence of her disturbing leg positions. If you think "All Rise!" is offensive, you should have seen the cover line we cut.

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The illegitimate child of *Redneck Rampage* and *Deer Hunter* — ew!

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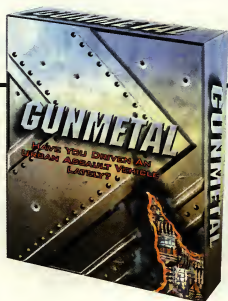
THE DISC



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Find out why yours doesn't work and what games you could be playing if you didn't install Windows 98

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EDITOR'S LETTER

THE DIRTY TRUTH

There isn't a day that goes by that at some point we don't tell a lie — they vary from "Of course those shoes don't make you look fat" to "Body, what dead body?" Hell, as far as commandments go, "Thou shalt not lie" is second only to "Thou shalt not commit adultery" for most violated. (And often one is not possible without the other. Just ask Bill Clinton.) The PC gaming industry is no different — press releases, game boxes, websites, help lines, and even magazines are all littered with lies and half-truths.

At PC ACCELERATOR we are here to find the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. It all starts with brutally honest reviews, but unlike other magazines, it doesn't stop there. Our previews are in-depth looks at upcoming games and our honest opinion of them. Often previews are glowing press releases with a few screenshots and a quote from some overpaid producer who doesn't even play games. Nice for the game companies, but useless for consumers. Our interest gauge and honest progress reports give you an idea if this game is really worth getting excited about.

This is why we put Lara on trial for our cover story. We all feel a bit apprehensive about *Tomb Raider III* and felt it was only fair to share these concerns with you. If it turns out that our fears are realized then you better believe we'll kill *TRIII* just as good (err, bad) as we do *Redneck Deer Huntin'* and *Nam* in this issue. Of course, if *TRIII* shines, you'll be the first to know.



MIKE SALMON, Editor in Chief

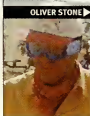
THE TEAM

EDITOR IN CHIEF



MIKE SALMON
HANDLE → Major(s) Crazy Mike
WORST DATE → All of them except for the magical moments shared with beautiful fiancée (and her two lesbian supermodel friends)
IF HE WERE A HOSTESS PRODUCT HE'D BE A → Hi-Ho
IN A MOVIE HE'D BE PLAYED BY → Lorenzo Lamas
NOW PLAYING → Quake II, Rainbow Six, GameDay '99

OBJECTOR



OLIVER STONE
HANDLE → Classified
WORST DATE → November 1963 (the day JFK got shot)
IF HE WERE A HOSTESS PRODUCT HE'D BE → Steak
IN A MOVIE HE'D BE PLAYED BY → Robert Wagner with eyebrow wigs
NOW PLAYING → ... with the idea of making another *Dragnet* heart by geezy
Next Generation editor

EXECUTIVE EDITOR



ROB SMITH
HANDLE → Colonel Blade
WORST DATES → Extreme consumption of alcohol leading to expulsion of vomit bodily fluid
IF HE WERE A HOSTESS PRODUCT HE'D BE A → Choco-dillo
IN A MOVIE HE'D BE PLAYED BY → Ralph Fiennes
NOW PLAYING → Rainbow Six, Quake II, and more Quake II

MANAGING EDITOR



CARRIE SHEPHERD
HANDLE → Supreme Commander
WORST DATE → Taken to a free screening of *Dragonheart* by geezy
Next Generation editor
IF SHE WERE A HOSTESS PRODUCT SHE'D BE A → Sussy-Q
IN A MOVIE SHE'D BE PLAYED BY → Sherry Stringfield
NOW PLAYING → Need For Speed III, and nothing else because she doesn't have the damn time

ASSOCIATE EDITOR



DAN EGGER
HANDLE → Corporal Punishment
WORST DATE → Oh geez, all of 'em
IF HE WERE A HOSTESS PRODUCT HE'D BE A → Ding Dong
IN A MOVIE HE'D BE PLAYED BY → Tom Cruise or Herve Villechaze
NOW PLAYING → Rainbow Six, GameDay '99, Redneck Deer Huntin'

DISC/ASSISTANT EDITOR



ED "SLASH" LEE
HANDLE → General Lee
WORST DATE → Korean FOB who only knew one word in English — "No"
IF HE WERE A HOSTESS PRODUCT HE'D BE A → Twinkie
IN A MOVIE HE'D BE PLAYED BY → Jet Li (but we were thinking the twerp from "Star Trek")
NOW PLAYING → Rainbow Six, Tribes, StarCraft

ART OBJECTOR



Q DOROZQUEZ
HANDLE → Stearns Staynes
WORST DATE → She fell asleep at dinner, but did Q have dessert?
IF HE WERE A HOSTESS PRODUCT HE'D BE → The all-new Bessie's
IN A MOVIE HE'D BE PLAYED BY → John Leguizamo
NOW PLAYING → Rainbow Six, Tribes, GameDay '99, NHL '98, You Don't Know Jack

ASSISTANT ART OBJECTOR



KYLE LEOEUF
HANDLE → Le General LeBoeuf
WORST DATE → Date once said, "Sex is overrated" after he paid for dinner
IF HE WERE A HOSTESS PRODUCT HE'D BE → Frosted Donettes
IN A MOVIE HE'D BE PLAYED BY → Matt Damon
NOW PLAYING → Farsenken, Unreal, StarCraft

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Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned or acknowledged. We reserve the right to edit letters for space and clarity, and we may make fun of any content therein. This issue is dedicated to Mike Mika and Frank O'Connor, for providing rides to and from work. Dear Dan's Mom: You never call. You never write. Don't you like us?



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Microsoft

DEMO MANIA

I'M A MANIAC, MANIAC...

Buy 'em before you try 'em —
er, that's the other way around

Yep, that's right, we've gone demo crazy at PC ACCELERATOR this month. It might have had something to do with all the smoke we inhaled during the big brush fire outside our offices (we didn't do it on purpose). At any rate, we've got no fewer than 14 playable demos on the disc this month — and more to come, as we're still improving our already fantastic product. A whole mess of other cool stuff is on the disc too, a lot of which is way too huge to download. So cough up the dough and check it out, if you haven't already. As always, your feedback is welcomed at disceditor@pckl.com.

DEMO	PATCHES	TOOLS	MAPS	A/V	STRATEGY	RATING	
D							SIN The demo that has the first-person shooter community buzzing, and our version comes virus free!
D							NEED FOR SPEED III An early look at this great-looking racer
D							SHOGO Check out the gameplay with this action-packed AVI
D							STARSIEGE Intense multiplayer mech combat. Duke it out over the Net; there are always lots of games going on
						9	UNREAL Seven new DM maps, the exclusive Big Kahuna SE skin pack with 75 skins, and the UnrealEd FAQ
						9	QUAKE II A rockin' sound total conversion, and films of the PGL <i>Quake II</i> finals to see how the pros do it
D						8	MECH-COMMANDER FASA's mech universe gets the realtime strategy treatment
D						7	URBAN ASSAULT A realtime strategy/action hybrid reminiscent of <i>Battlezone</i> and <i>Uprising</i>
D							COMMANDOS Take a squad of elite troops and perform covert operations during WWII
							KLINGON HONOR GUARD You can try one of <i>KHG</i> 's weapons, the sith har, in <i>Unreal</i> . Also, a cool movie of gameplay
D							RECOIL It's fast, it's loud, it's got tanks and big explosions
D							DELTA FORCE A killer sniper mode is one of the highlights of this action/sim that puts you in the role of an elite soldier
D							MONTEZUMA'S RETURN It's like a first-person shooter, except the shooting is replaced by jumping. Interesting
D							TOTAL ANNIHILATION: BATTLE TACTICS An add-on to the RTS favorite features quicker and bloodier missions
D						7	WARGAMES A solid RTS game with excellent graphics
D							HARDWAR It's space flight combat with strategy and trading
D							CYBERSTRIKE 2 A single-player version of the online mayhem to come from the makers of <i>Torus</i>
D						6	GAME, NET & MATCH! Despite the cheesy title, a fun tennis game
							CANOPUS New drivers for your Pure 3D and Pure 3DII



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, PENTIUM 133MHz, 32MB RAM, DIRECTX 5.0, MOUSE, 100% SOUND BLASTER COMPATIBLE CARD

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- Q:** Why are the colors screwed up? You idiots!
A: Make sure your desktop is set to 16-bit color or higher before running.
- Q:** Why is my CD cracked in half? You Pi-S@t@g Idiots!
A: No good answer to that one. If this happens, or if the disc is missing, give your letter carrier a good talking to and call 800-333-3890 to get a replacement.



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Lara on Trial

LET THE ACCUSED RISE

The rain fell. It was a typical summer afternoon in Derby, northern England, and hometown of the delectable Miss Lara Croft. Or more importantly, the home of Core Design, developers of the hottest property in computer gaming today. As Core's operations manager Andrew Thomson muttered, "Bloody hell, when's it going to stop? Where's the summer gone?" a team of 12 was beavering away on the latest of the seemingly too frequent appearances of the spelunking sweetheart.

Another one? Already? Oh yes. Maintaining the oft-quoted plan to release one *Tomb Raider* game a year, part three will be on shelves in time for the holidays. So we have to ask, being the cynical types that we are, is it really necessary? Most importantly, given that it's essentially the same game engine that debuted three years ago in the first game, aren't gamers going to be paying for old technology and old ideas?

In these days of all-new engines, licensed technology, and games pushing the limits of creative imagination and technological possibilities, *Tomb Raider III* strikes out. Sporting an engine that's being slightly enhanced for a number of new graphical effects (such as weather conditions, footsteps in the snow, and a particle lighting system that gives weapon effects more style), what you're going to get this holiday is another familiar romp around the world. But is that a problem?

The court is in session; Lara is on trial.

Opening Arguments

DEFENSE: Sirs, madams, do you really think that *Tomb Raider* has a case to defend? I put it to you that you have played the former games incessantly, and once completed, clamored for more. I shall show how the new *Tomb Raider*

maintains the splendor and value of its earlier incarnations while providing an entirely new experience. Members of the jury, *Tomb Raider III* can take all that the prosecution will throw and come out on top.

PROSECUTION: Truth, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, truth is what we're after. Let's face the facts, *Tomb Raider III* is an irrelevance in this day and age of technological advances in gaming. It's a flagrant misuse of an admittedly astounding license that serves no benefit to the game-playing public but merely ensures the bulging pockets of those marketing whiz kids at publisher Eidos Interactive. The prosecution will prove that there are numerous other games heading your way that better serve gamers' needs. That, members of the jury, is the truth that we will present. To be honest, your honor, this is possibly the easiest case I have contended.

LARA ON TRIAL

The Evidence

DEFENSE: The *Tomb Raider* franchise has been a colossal hit and not for just one (or two) reasons. Let's consider the history: *Tomb Raider I* appears with a new game formula. It has adventure in the classic sense with the benefit of a 3D environment. It had never been done before, and it was done astoundingly well. I put it to you that *Tomb Raider* is one of the most important games in PC gaming history.

In defending this prize asset, do we really need to look beyond this basic point? Adventure. The spirit of conquering the wild. Of uncovering hidden artifacts. Of unearthing long-lost ruins. Of recovering cultures thought long dead. This third installment follows this pattern perfectly. Were you aware that thousands of years ago a meteor crashed in Antarctica and through a strange combination of its radioactive ingredients, it managed to create a livable environment that the wayfaring Polynesians stumbled upon and eventually called home? Intrepid adventurer Lara Croft now is aware of this incident. And through information from other sources, she discovers that the ancient artifact she's currently seeking in the depths of India is part of a set of four.

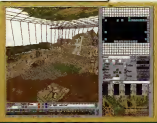
Now who can resist an intriguing tale like this that takes Miss Croft from those Indian jungles to the rooftops of old London town, into the secretive vaults of the Area 51 base in the Nevada desert, on to the depths of a cannibal-infested South Pacific Island, before culminating in the freezing wastes of the Antarctic? The adventure rests.

PROSECUTION: My learned friend raises valid points. Adventure is key. So allow me to introduce into evidence Exhibit A: *Prince of Persia 3D*. The new polygonal version of this classic is once again set to be the best adventure game anywhere. In fact, the original *Prince of Persia* was clearly the inspiration for *Tomb Raider* and the many other clones that succeeded

Around the World

LEVEL 1: INDIA

Tomb Raider III's jungle level incorporates the editor's ability to use triangles in the polygon building of levels, which allows much smoother contours to the rolling tracts of land. Use of environment effects such as rain and mist are used here in the first, outdoor part of the level, before Lara heads inside a temple.



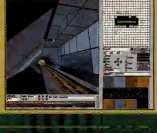
LEVEL 2: LONDON

After accepting Dr. Willard's offer to find the remaining pieces of the artifact, Lara heads to the rooftops of London. Again she moves inside, into a museum, and then into the basement of a cosmetic company (providing ample opportunities for statements on the cruel nature of testing procedures, no doubt). The sewer area, serving as the conduit between locations, offers plenty of opportunity for a quick (and smelly) swim.



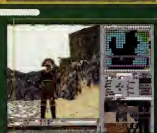
LEVEL 3: NEVADA

The desert shows off a different texture map of more rolling terrain, before Lara reaches the fabled Area 51. There's also the potential for scripted sequences to set up new challenges. Although it's still to be confirmed, Lara could be captured and placed in a high-security complex (naturally, it's not that secure since she escapes, albeit without her accumulated kit, again).



LEVEL 4: SOUTH PACIFIC

Pushing the story through its Polynesian background, the South Pacific Islands offer plenty of scope for adventure. Most importantly, there's a return of the dinosaurs, with the T-Rex and raptors making another appearance. They've been updated and remodeled and promise to inspire the same level of anticipation that caused such a stir in the first game.



LEVEL 5: ANTARCTICA

Radiation is always a tricky thing to deal with, and it's evidently had an effect on some of the critters inhabiting the final location. Timing puzzles are being incorporated as the cold weather restricts the amount of time Lara can survive in certain areas (despite whatever snow-fitting costume she ends up wearing). Snow and ice are always popular, and there will be greater interaction with the environment, with Lara leaving behind footprints as she moves.



it. Smooth animation, which was the trademark of the original game, will return to make the Prince even slicker than Lara. The high adventure together with sword fighting should be more than enough to make the aging *Tomb Raider* series finally start to look dated.

DEFENSE: Perhaps a match for

TRIII, no more. And what about the sheer bravado of the adventure? Miss Croft has shown through her tomb raiding activities that she is more than a match for any action hero with her lithe range of movements. Her latest adventure sees her adding yet more moves to her extensive repertoire. I call defense witness Adrian Smith, operations director at Core.

Mr. Smith, tell us about the philosophy behind the new moves.

Adrian Smith: Lara now has much greater maneuverability. She can strafe while swimming, she has a limited burst speed dash, can duck and crawl through small areas, barge down weak doors, swing on ropes, and monkey-swing across vines or other obstacles.

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IT'S



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CARDS
TODAY!**

Exhibit C: Redguard

(Left) Redguard's environments certainly have a unique style.

(Right) And the combat system is getting a lot of attention as the swashbuckling Errol Flynn thing is worked out.



DEFENSE: And how do they affect gameplay?

Adrian Smith: Essentially they're designed around new traps that she will have to face. The new moves give us more opportunity for setting time-based traps, more inventive environments to traverse, and more possibilities to defeat the monsters.

PROSECUTION: C'mon, my learned buddy, take a look at Exhibit B, *Beneath* from Activision. While its setting of a world below the Arctic may sound familiar, the range of adventure is equally compelling. Featured in the gameplay are all the classic elements of adventure, including strange alien races, 12 levels of terrain, an interactive environment that throws nature's forces against you, as well as the strange denizens of this land. Of course the main character has a Tarzan-like range of motions, including repelling, rope swinging, dodging, climbing... anything that's going to get him out of a sticky situation fast. Anything your gal can do, someone else can do it waaaay better.

DEFENSE: *Tomb Raider III* will retain its action quotient, albeit in a slightly different format from the second game, where human enemies were introduced (to save the world's endangered species, per-

haps). Rather, it's returning to the roots of the adventure/puzzle-focused original. Weapons are important, and as such a rocket launcher and grenade launcher will join the army, along with other possible options, supporting the pistols and shotgun familiar from the earlier games. Certain enemies will wield their own original weapons, such as a flamethrower, although Lara would never deem to use this kind of destructive device herself. So I offer that *Tomb Raider III* will, in fact, increase the adventure and danger level during this epic exploration.

PROSECUTION: Let's get down to business. I call to the witness stand Todd Howard, producer of Bethesda Softworks' *Redguard*, and I present *Redguard* as Exhibit C.

Mr. Howard, what are *Redguard*'s stand-out features?

Todd Howard: A huge open world. This is no "level crawl" game. Nonlinear is the focus. If you get stuck on a puzzle, you can leave the area and move onto other parts of the game. Then there's the story. I'm talking about real puzzles and character interaction with a brilliant three-act story. You live the story, and 90% of our scenes are done with the game engine as well, so the cinematic quality is amazing.

PROSECUTION: But what about the action?

Todd Howard: There's sword fighting. Most games have the "point and shoot and watch the thingy die; if it don't die switch to larger gun and shoot more; if not work run away" action. We have dueling, which involves a totally different style of action, and one I hope is a little more personal.

PROSECUTION: Take it from the experts, *TRIII* has its work cut out in the action department. It does-

n't have anything like this combat system with its auto-targeting nonsense. And I'm not letting you off with just one exhibit. Take this: Exhibit D, *Heretic II* from Activision. While much more of an action game in essence, the third-person perspective makes it relevant to this trial.

DEFENSE: Objection, your honor. It's not the same kind of game.

PROSECUTION: Stop whining. It has all the relevant points in the action department, and the third-person perspective. Of course it's the same kind of game.

JUDGE: Objection sustained. We must remember that many of the games bring different elements to the gamer's desktop. It is therefore unfair to draw direct comparisons with some games simply because they use the third-person perspective. Counsel, kindly remember that. ▶ p. 24

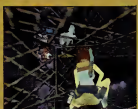


A zoologist's nightmare: another endangered species extinct.

The New Moves

You'd think that modeling Lara into different poses to get the animations for her new moves right would be a swell job, right? So when pried about that fact, the animator responded with, "Nah, I'm only doing it cuz no one else wanted to." Despite the animator's lack of enthusiasm, Lara remains one of the best-animated characters in any PC game.

TRYING DOORS
Sick of Lara blurtly saying "no" whenever a door was blocked or locked? Now she tries the handle



CROUCHING AND CRAWLING
Avoiding some traps will require squatting down, and then moving forward in a crawl

THE BITCH SLAP
Like any woman of the '90s, Lara grows tired of motion-captured heads constantly staring at her other eyes. Now if you perform a special combo she'll slap the onlookers silly.

SHOVING WALLS
More interaction with the environment is offered by giving Lara the ability to smash through weaker doors and walls.

ROPE SWINGING
Jump, grab on, swing, and release

when safe — think *Pitfall*. It adds a new option to the level design possibilities for getting from one part to another.

ADJUSTING HERSELF
Even the sternest of sports bras can't hold her considerable polygons in place. Now with a simple button push, Lara can restore order and continue adventuring.

STRAFFING WHILE SWIMMING
The addition of new underwater predators requires Lara to be more nimble in the water.



MONKEY SWINGING
Some ceilings offer hand grips for Lara to clamber across. She can also move sideways.

I HAVE AN ENORMOUS TANK BATTALION.

I HAVE AN ARSENAL OF WEAPONS AT MY FINGERTIPS.

I'VE DESTROYED BUILDINGS IN MY WAY.

S O W H Y

I AM ONE WITH THE CROSSHAIRS.

I AM A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH.

DMS 100
FLD 88%

EGY 11
AMR 58%

FOX



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Computer Graphics Solutions

Hey hot shot, you're dead because you didn't think. To save the Earth in Urban Assault,[™] you must manage your resources, upgrade your technologies, control your squadrons, and deploy your troops using an interactive map. All this at the same time you're shooting everything in sight.

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I'VE TELEPORTED INTO MY SATELLITE.

I'VE DRIVEN MY VEHICLES LIKE A MANIAC.

AM I DEAD?

I HAVE THE FIERCE AIR FORCE.

I TORCHED A TAERKAST BIPLANE.

I KNOW HOW TO DEFEND MY HOST STATION.

It's the perfect blend of action and strategy that you can make even more challenging with multiplayer capabilities. So use that gray matter. Or you'll lose it. Think yourself over to www.microsoft.com/games/urbanassault

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LARA ON TRIAL

Goons & Wildlife

THE BATTLES IN THE Tomb Raider series have always left a bit to be desired, but for Tomb Raider II Core has lined up a whole new gang of enemies. They have promised an AI upgrade from the morose circle-walkers of TR1, but we'll wait to see on that.

MAEKACK MONKEY
Will attack in packs and can take weapons from Lara

PIRANHAS
Attack in frenzied packs, and look to make lunch meat out of Lara's lovely curvaceous body

COBRAS
Coiled snakes hide in rocky areas and unleash a poisonous bite, which whittles down health until an antidote is used

MERCENARY X 2
They look a bit like Sub-zero (the old Sub-zero for MK freaks) in a parka

and attack with a melee weapon

LINDA TRIPP
Tried to make a Pamela Anderson model, but the lack of polygons made her look disturbingly like the namish Tripp

SUB AQUA SBS
Lara gets to hide in a similar unit and attack enemy subs; however, if not in her sub, it will be extremely hard to take these out

SOCCER HOOLIGANS
While tripping through London, Lara runs into a pack of liquored-up footy fans who still can't believe England lost to Argentina

FLOATING CORPSE
We're not making this up: Apparently, rotting bodies floating in the sewers of London will actually attack

SWAT BUNY
Complete with riot gear, these guys are ready to work in South Central. It's possible they will have tear gas as a weapon — finally, a chance for the hardened Lara to weep like a little girl

T-REX
The return of this prehistoric beastie and some dinosaur friends is a welcome addition we all missed in TR1

OL' M-H
Not the most creative name for an enemy, but they sound as if they're made up of stornitroopers, and that is always good

GRAVITY
The all-new realistic physics model in TR1 introduces a little thing Isaac Newton liked to call gravity, and Lara just continually falls flat on her face

OTHER ENEMIES PLANNED → whale, hussies, sea lions, mutants, jelly fish, Komodo dragon, tribesmen, magic man, crocodile, cony, raptor, pterodactyl, hyenas, civvy (aka male English bloke), guard dogs, scientist (oh, scary!), alligator (which is different from a crocodile although we don't know why), girl boss (meowcat cat fight), sewer dweller, rats, bats, and Bengal tigers



► **p. 21 DEFENSE:** Members of the jury, I feel that this far into the trial I should turn over our trump card, the one that cannot be questioned. I present Exhibit DD, Miss Lara Croft. No computer game character has ever had the far-reaching impact that Lara has achieved. I call Adrian Smith back to the witness stand.

What would you say that Lara was guilty of?

Adrian Smith: Probably overexposure. She's guilty of bringing third-person action/adventure to the market. Perhaps she's guilty of becoming bigger than the game. Put a new character in *Tomb*

Raider and it probably wouldn't be as successful.

Neither Sonic nor Mario have the depth of Lara Croft; she has a personality, a background, and even vital statistics.

DEFENSE: What do you make of the competition?

Adrian Smith: It's generally very good. There's a lot of advanced AI work blended into fantasy settings; AI seems to be the major step forward. But because of Lara it is a little

easier for us to compete against other products. But while competitors' products are taking AI further, the core element of *Tomb Raider* is adventure, and that doesn't need a complex AI.

DEFENSE: How do you feel about the criticism that *Tomb Raider III* has taken?

Adrian Smith: I think that a lot of it is unfair. So long as we maintain III the great gameplay that there was in I and II, then that's fine. Had we just banged out levels then we deserve to be shot, but the fact is that we

haven't. There's a lot of new stuff in III, such as environment effects such as rain, Lara leaves footsteps in the snow, and particle effects from the weapons add to the lighting and make it different.

DEFENSE: Do you think you're guilty of releasing too many games?

Adrian Smith: No. There are so few AAA titles, and people who played the first two games finished them in, say, three months, and then asked when the next one was coming out. We said from the outset that we would do one game a year. We have.




Run, Lara, run!

PROSECUTION: Trump this, my honorable friend. I have an exhibit here, which I present as Exhibit E, that's gonna kick your Miss Croft's butt straight to where she came from.

Ladies and gentlemen, Indiana Jones is the man. Let's face it, if Lara were male, she'd be Indy. Indiana Jones is a major league character who's batting .1000. With a whip in one hand, that had played firmly on his head, old Indy has certainly got Lara's number. Who doesn't like a good Indiana Jones movie? (And let's face it, there hasn't been a bad one.) Well, Indy's heading to the PC, and his adventures sure knock the stuffing out of the "random artifact from beyond time" nonsense. *Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine* will be like nothing you've ever seen. The pacing, the action, the adventure, and shining above the lot, the character will be the lot. *The Infernal Machine* takes your best pitch and knocks it right out of the park. ► **p. 26**



Look! It's a new special effect in the water!



I DEPLOYED MY GUYS USING THE TRANSPARENT MAP.

I TOLD MY GUYS TO ATTACK FROM BOTH FLANKS.

I KNOW WHERE THE TECH UPGRADE SECTOR IS.

I KNOW WHERE TO PLACE MY HOST STATION.

I KNOW WHERE THE POWER STATIONS ARE.

SO WHY AM I STILL DEAD?

I SAW A MYKONIAN CUBOID FORMATION.

I'M BEING SMART ABOUT MY MOVES.

I KNOW WHICH SECTORS ARE SECURE.



Use your map to deploy your troops and jump into any of 15 different types of vehicles.



Create your squadrons and set their level of aggressiveness to defend, attack, or raid.



Battle 5 unique alien and human enemy races.



Hey mastermind, you're dead because you didn't get your hands dirty. In *Urban Assault*,[™] you have to battle on the frenzied front lines at the same time you're strategizing the entire war. Of course, your years studying at military school will come in handy, but to win, you better warm up that trigger finger. Shoot your browser over to www.microsoft.com/games/urbanassault.

URBAN ASSAULT

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Go to <http://www.pcxl.com/gaming411>. Product Number 34



LARA ON TRIAL



Watch the bullets fly. The engine tweaks enable ambient details.

► **P. 24 DEFENSE:** Moving on, *Tomb Raider III* will certainly not wither in the face of criticism. The development team understands that it is working with an engine designed some four years ago and that it simply does not have the flexibility of newer engines. But it is more than fair to say that *Tomb Raider* has held up remarkably well over the past two games.

With a new team working on the tweaks that have allowed triangles to be used in the building of levels, they are able to create smoother contours to the environments. The weather effects add to the ambience, the 30 all-new monsters add to the action, and then there are the vehicles. Lara will pilot a kayak down raging rapids in the South Pacific, and a Quad bike will make traversing some parts of India much easier (fortunately these have been tied to gameplay to incorporate adrenaline-filled events such as a chase, culminating in a giant leap across a gaping chasm).

Other vehicles such as a jeep and a snowmobile are also possible, but since the customers are demanding their product, those that can be finished in time will be included. Perhaps the others will be saved for *TRIV*!

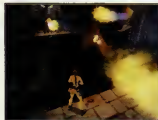
PROSECUTION: Yep, you've really got a problem with that engine. You just can't pump out of it the same variety of features that these newer exhibits offer. And that means you

don't get the same options for gameplay experience.

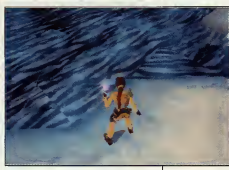
I'm sorry, folks, but come release date, there will be many better options in the whole gameplay department simply due to the progress of technology. Take a look at this fine example of what I mean. I offer *3D Realms'/Remedy Entertainment's Max Payne* as Exhibit F. The flexibility of this engine, incorporating scripted sequences in which to push the story forward, makes it technologically the one we're bubbling over. Added to that is the gripping storyline of a vengeful father and the presentation through use of highly stylized comic book art. It's the package, and, my friend, your collection of ideals and one character don't add up to those that my collection of exhibits has proven.

Closing Arguments

DEFENSE: Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, you have seen through the course of this trial that *Tomb Raider III* does most certainly rep-



Tomb Raider III still manages to create memorable scenes.



resent a worthwhile continuance of the massively popular franchise. It is accepted that the dated engine cannot compete with those being developed for the top-of-the-line machines, but that ignores the spirit of Lara and her adventures through the world. There's an inventiveness to the game design that no other title has matched, or will match.

Her feats are legendary, and that will only be emphasized by this third installment. Core Design is working on a new engine that it hopes will allow the creation of another new genre for a future Lara-headlining game. But for now the qualities that have made the first two games such a massive success have been enhanced with a new team and will offer another truly remarkable adventure with a spirit that is truly Lara.

Certainly Core is guilty of sticking to its plan to release a game a year; and sure it is guilty of using an enhanced version of the origi-

nal engine. But the game's inventive style is still fresh, the scenes are still entertaining, and with the audience clamoring for more, should Core really be chastised for supplying what the market demands? I think not. The gamers think not. I rest my case.

PROSECUTION: You've heard the easy way out. Competition is fiercer in this coming year than ever before. To be fair, for the past two years there hasn't really been many clones that could match *TR III's* imagination and flair. But technology marches on, and the advent of the 3D accelerator has raised the bar to heights unattainable by Core's current restrictive building tools. My guys here show

that unmistakably. Timing is, admittedly, key, and *Tomb Raider III* will beat to the shelves many of the games I paraded for your delight. But that dominant position won't be so easy to hold for long. Enough games are breathing down Lara's neck with evil thoughts on their minds. Her demise will come soon enough, and there are enough contenders for that to be guaranteed.

Guilty of overexposure, guilty of off-loading uninspired "new" adventures to the gullible gamers wanting to lap up every Lara-filled moment, guilty of getting a (hopefully) last hurrah from a sorely outdated engine. The prosecution considers this practice to be a slight on gamers. C'mon guys, you know that the other exhibits are gonna do the same stuff, but better. So who needs the hot stuff in the tight-fitting outfit? Aren't you offended that a cute face and hot body are prodding your gaming decisions? You should be.





THE EVIDENCE ROOM

Exhibit A (right): *Prince of Persia 3D* takes the setting of the earlier two PC gaming classics and brings it into the 3D world.

Exhibit B (right inset): If the screens are to be believed, *Beneath* certainly has staggering good looks.

Exhibit DD (above): No doubt that Lara's curves are a head-turner. Just ask Formula One motor racer, Damon Hill.

Exhibit E (top): Indiana Jones is a bona fide hero. Simple as that.



LARA ON TRIAL

The Verdict

You get the final say — as the gamer you are the jury. **PCXL** reckons that both sides make good arguments, but just look at some of the newer games. Can't you get a sense already that Lara's time has come? No Icon has ever been this endearing to the masses. Franchises in all areas of gaming are evolving (look at *Mask of Eternity*, while still in the classic vein of the *King's Quest* adventures, it's moved onward and upward). Credit to Lara for remaining so endearing with people who are far too ready to move on to the next big thing. But it really is time for the next big thing.

Who's to say that Core Design won't be leading that with its new engine (currently in secret development)? It has a point to prove if it can make the same impact on the gaming world that *Tomb Raider I* managed. But didn't anyone notice how *Tomb Raider II*, while easily a better game than the first one, was greeted with less critical acclaim? Wasn't that

because it didn't add enough, and the bold outline of the first installment was still so prominent? Surely that's going to be worse with part III. However, who is to say that critical acclaim is the only measurement of a game? Isn't it more important that the consumers are happy? As game journalists we tend to get bored or tired of games just as the public fully embraces them. It looks like Lara and her adventure are still the game to beat for another year, but without an engine change for '99, there could be real trouble.



What? No bathing suit?
Lara takes an unexpected little swim.

Overexposure? Me?



Lara Croft is undoubtedly the biggest star in the game industry. She has appeared on more magazine covers than Michael Jordan or Bill Clinton (even with the sex scandal). The legend continues to grow, with Lara carrying over to all different types of media. Watch out, Howard Stern!

MOVIE → In production and with a big budget plan. No official word on potential stars, although some of the biggest names have allegedly expressed an interest.

RECORD → Rhona Mitra (the first Lara model) recorded an album so bad that Eidos had it killed, although it managed to get released in some parts of Europe, and then became available in the U.K. through import stores.

MUSIC → U2's concert tour featured a video wall that displayed Lara and helped put her on the map as a cultural icon.

MODELING → An attempt was made to register Lara (the polygonal version) with the Elite modeling agency, although this never went through. (Apparently being human is still key to modeling, although you can't tell from some of the popular models; right now)

CLOTHING → Two new outfits in *TRIII* — a crop top black outfit for the London rooftops and snowsuit for the Antarctic — could see a brand name on them if certain deals are done.

ACTION FIGURES → How many buyers will die out their G.I. toes for a brief encounter?



WIN A DATE WITH THE REAL LARA

We've teased you with pictures of Lara model Neil McAndrew, but now **PCXL** is going to deliver. If you are over 21 (it's those damn drinking laws) and would like to spend an evening guzzling beer with the **PCXL** staff and rubbing elbows (and only elbows you prevent) with the real Lara Croft, then you need to enter this contest. It costs you nothing and the reward is like a dream come true. Answer the following questions correctly and send them to realwomengames@pcxl.com to enter the drawing. If you think a picture will help (and we doubt it will!) then attach one to the email. Of course you can also enter with snail mail (although we hate that stuff) by sending the answers to **PC ACCELERATOR**, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005.

FIRST NAME
LAST NAME
EMBARRASSING NickNAME
AGE (must be over 21)
YOUR SIGN

IF ALONE WITH LARA I WOULD →

- Impress her with my vast gaming knowledge and invite her to play *Ultima Online*
- Queue nervously in the corner until she left
- Ignore her and get another beer (knowing all along that the lack of attention is turning her on)
- Act like a complete gentleman

HANGING OUT WITH THE PCXL STAFF WOULD BE →

- Like a dream come true, just being near their greatness would overwhelm me
- Scary as hell, especially that Dan Egger character
- OK, but the real reason I'm going is for the chicks
- Much better than hanging out with my geeky friends

WHAT DO YOU SAY TO A BEER?

- Yes
- No thanks, I'll have some straight whiskey
- Mmmmm — beer
- Hey there good lookin', how about going smoothly down my esophagus

PRIZE PACKAGE

- Roundtrip airfare for one person to beautiful San Francisco, California
- Invitation to an industry bash for *Tomb Raider III*
- Opportunity to meet and greet the real Lara Croft
- Trip to the **PCXL** offices to be destroyed in a game of the staff's choice

LEGAL CRAP: Winner will be chosen randomly by a blind man. You are not entitled to any sort of "touching" or cravishing with Lara Croft or the **PCXL** staff (we'd), and if the model's plans change and she doesn't show up we are not responsible. There is one winner and the rest of you are screwed.



Contest rules: No purchase is necessary to win. Entries must be received no later than November 1, 1998. The winner will be chosen on or about November 1, 1998, and the winner will be notified either by email or U.S. mail. The name of the winner will be sent to anyone who requests it and provides a self-addressed, stamped envelope. The odds of winning depend upon the number of entries received. Winners shall not be responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or incomplete entries. The prize is non-transferable and no substitutions will be allowed. The winner will be determined by a single random drawing of all valid entries and the decision will be final and binding. This contest is open to residents of the United States only. Return of any prize or prize notification as understood will result in disqualification and alternate winner will be selected. The winner may be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility (verifying the ability to win a contest) and/or agree to accept the prize. Failure to do so upon request will result in forfeiture of the prize. In acceptance of the prize, the winner agrees to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. Image may not be responsible for any damage or injuries that the winner might incur as a result of this contest or the receipt of a prize. The winner is responsible for paying any income taxes on the value of the prize received. Void in states where illegal and where prohibited by law.



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RUTHLESS
REVENGE
DEATH
BEFORE
DISHONOR.

RATING PENDING

RP

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So sharpen your Bat'leth and prepare to defend your honor in the heart of the Klingon empire — presented in awesome *Unreal™* 3-D action. Shred vicious

Nausicans, Andorians and even other Klingons. Overpower intelligent enemies

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Deathmatch and multiplayer challenges created by the Internet's top level designers.

It's the ultimate test for the ultimate warrior.

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THE SOLAR SYSTEM. WHEN CIVIL WAR
BREAKS OUT, IT BURNS
ACROSS WORLDS.



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ARE DIVIDED, THE REAL

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IN A WHOLE NEW UNIVERSE OF 3D COMBAT SIM.

ON VENUS, MERCURY, AND A HOST OF

MOONS, **BROTHER** IS LOCKED

WITH **BROTHER** IN

DESPERATE BATTLE.



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Never Buy a Bad Game Again

The old adage "you can't judge a book by its cover" is widely agreed to be an accurate statement, even though it plainly is not true. Take a look at the books in your local megabookstore/bohemian coffee house, and you will automatically know a few things about what they contain. If Fabio is on the cover, you can guarantee that the words "breathless," "arching," and "manhood" (not necessarily in this order) are to be found inside. If someone

in a cowboy hat is on the cover, you know the word "hankerin'" is included. This same concept also applies to the computer games at your local minimall.

Just about all of us have bought bad games based on covers that looked good in the stores. And in an effort to make sure that our readers never have to waste money that way again, we embarked on a thorough investigation of how to read a computer game box (and, naturally,

reading our tell-it-how-it-is reviews will help). Four months and three thousand dollars later we came up with two conclusions: First, three thousand dollars will only buy four months worth of beer and pizza, and second, game boxes lie.

Knowing that, we were able to catalog the following packaging conventions, which will help you know what a game really is like, and help you never to buy a bad game again.

THE BOX

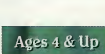
In reality, a game doesn't really need a box. A CD jewel case and inserted manual are more than enough for most games, but in order to compete on crowded shelves, game companies have decided to stick with the large boxes. Consequently, the box's size offers these companies a little artistic freedom to try to attract new buyers. Here are a few standard cover methods that game companies use to lure you to spend money, and what those methods really mean.

CRAZY SHAPES



Unusual shapes are an easy way to make your title stand out. Be warned — an odd-shaped box is an alert that the company is trying awfully hard to sell its game.

AGES BLANK & UP



If a game mentions what ages it is recommended for, forget it — it was made for some not-nosed kid, not you.

RESEMBLES ANOTHER BOX



Big warning sign here. If you see two boxes that look similar, find out which was released first. That one is usually good, the other usually is a clone. A further warning in this similarity contest is the use of rebates. If a company offers you \$50 or \$20 back if you own another company's game, it means that their game is a clone — likely, a less appealing clone.

THE WORD "GOLD"



If a game has the word "Gold" in its title, it most likely is the same as the original with some incredibly minor changes and a few extra levels that were put together by the company intern.

NUMBER OF CDS



If a game's box is emblazoned with the number of CDs it includes, be wary — that almost guarantees that you will be sitting through endless, boring FMV sequences.

FIGHTING GAME



OK, it doesn't matter what the game is, there has not been a good fighting game on the PC since its inception. Until we let you know, pass on all of these titles.

WOMEN



A sexy girl on the cover means one of two things: Either it's a play to get you to lose focus on what game you are buying, or it's a Leisure Suit Larry game. Case A: Don't Buy. Case B: Buy.

BAD COVER ART



If a company can't even find good art to put on the cover, then don't expect the game to look very good.

CUTE CHARACTERS



This game is full of nothing, so obviously, the company is trying to sell to mothers, fathers, and guys trying to hit on single moms.

"CREATED BY" TAGS



When a game has the name of a developer slapped across the top (especially Sid Meier, Peter Molyneux, Blizzard, Westwood, or 3D Realms), it is usually a good sign.

FANTASY ART



Game boxes with fantasy art usually contain dull RPGs. The hot girl on the cover is usually so pixelated in the game that you can't tell if she looks more like Pamela Anderson or Ed Asner.

OTHER COVER CLICHÉS

BRIGHTLY COLORED BONES
Dear Hunter sold more than a million copies, and everyone knows the game stinks. So the conventional wisdom is that orange sells games. Look for plenty of orange boxes coming to a store near you.

EMBOSSED COVERS
Easy way to judge a game: The more

bumps a game has on its cover, the worse it is.

THE IN WITH CORPORATE NAME
This is pretty much bad news. A corporate tie-in almost always comes with a lot of baggage, which means that many of the ideas that would have made the game fun were nixed by executives in

the planning stages. We would, however, think twice about any game titled *Schizit Malt Liquor Golf or Blowtorch Volleyball*.

SEQUEL
No straight rule applies here. If the game is a sequel, the results are pretty much a toss-up. If the same development team

stayed from the original project to work on the sequel, it generally means the latter title will be stronger and more evolved than the first. However, companies often replace the original team with a new group to finish the sequel, which often results in the follow-up losing the magic that made the original sequel-worthy.

ACTUAL MODELS ON BOX
This is one of the best signs that a game has good graphics. First, you get to see what they look like, and second, you know that the company is very proud of its game's look. It also means that you won't have to sit through tons of FMV because you know the company wants to show off the in-game visuals.



THE QUOTES

Translating press quotes on game boxes is a tough skill to master. All companies want their games to look good, so they will cull only the best quotes possible for each title. As members of the press who have been quoted in the past, we cast shed some light on what these lines really mean.

OVERBLOWN QUOTES

"Put simply, Temüjin crushes all other games in a comparison of realism, gameplay, and story."

TRANSLATION → "We paid good money for this quote, so you better read it." If a quote is too good to believe, you probably shouldn't — check the source and look to see if other box quotes support it.

"EAGERLY ANTICIPATED" QUOTES

The most eagerly anticipated simulation of the past decade.

TRANSLATION → "This title has been delayed for way too long, and the fans of the original are now drawing Social Security."

QUOTES BY NONGAMING MAGS

"The instantaneous nature of the animation is impressive"
— MSNBC

TRANSLATION → "Gamers hate us, but the uninformed media say we are almost as good as Myst." These quotes are put in place because the PR guys are proud of getting attention from respectable mainstream media. Usually they have no credence.

IRRELEVANT QUOTES

"DEFIANCE" SEEMS DESTINED TO ACHIEVE NOTEWORTHY STATURE.

TRANSLATION → "Read the source and not the quote. Please." These are usually culled from unfriendly previews and reviews from respectable sources. The company hopes that you will just flash on the sources and translate that into a recommendation.

QUOTES BY STRANGE SOURCES

"The graphics are unbelievably good and the action is frantic."
— Chip and Jonathan Carter

TRANSLATION → "Read the quote and not the source. Please." Who are these guys? If you've never heard of them, don't trust them.

QUOTES THAT INCLUDE ...

... aims to be the biggest, baddest space strategy sim yet.

TRANSLATION → "We don't want to tell you the rest of what the game reviewer thought, but this bit (taken out of context) sounds good enough." In the actual preview, the part not mentioned usually says something negative about the game.

"COMPARED TO OTHER GAMES" QUOTES

"IT'S LIKE REBEL ASSAULT WITH REAL GAME PLAY"

TRANSLATION → "If you liked this game, then you will love our game." Comparisons usually mean trouble; a good game will stand on its own.

"PROMISES TO BE" QUOTES

4 Promises to be one of the most entertaining strategy games released in a long time.

TRANSLATION → "Reviewers do not like our game so we decided to quote previews that got caught up in our prerelease hype." In the actual preview, the part not mentioned says something negative.

ONE-WORD QUOTES

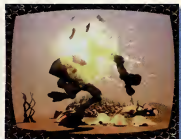


TRANSLATION → "Crapt"

SCREENSHOTS

A picture is worth a thousand words, so screenshots that a game displays on its cover are extremely crucial. The screenshots displayed on the box tell a tale of what's really inside the game. Here are a few warning signs that what's inside might not be so good.

RENDERED (VS. GAMEPLAY) SCREENS



If a company includes more rendered screens than actual gameplay screens, this means that either the company paid a lot of money for FMV, or the game is uglier than Janet Reno in the morning.

LENS FLARE IN SCREENSHOTS



If more than one screenshot has a nasty lens flare in it, you can bet dollars to doughnuts that you will have the overdone special effect flash in your face for the entire game.

AUFUL BUT HONEST SCREENS



Don't think for a second that if a company puts ugly screenshots on its box it means you can overlook the graphics because of good gameplay. Face it, the best screenshots available will always be on the box.

DEMONS FROM THE PAST

CAN TORMENT YOU...

OR SET YOU FREE

A movie poster for the film "Sanitarium". The background is a dark, textured, brownish-red color. In the upper left, a man's face is shown in profile, looking upwards with a wide-eyed, terrified expression. In the upper right, a woman with dark hair is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark, possibly black, bra-like top, looking towards the viewer with a slight smile. In the lower left, a large, close-up shot of a man's face is shown. His face is painted a vibrant blue, and he has a wide, open-mouthed, screaming or laughing expression. To the right of this face, a human skull is visible, partially obscured by the shadows. At the bottom center, the title "SANIARIUM" is written in a white, serif font. A vertical double-headed arrow with a crossbar is positioned behind the letter "I".

SANIARIUM™



"Sanitarium is a triumph. Irresistably compelling. Deeply metaphorical"

-Next Generation Online



"Through its deft juggling of mood and story, Sanitarium creates one of the most compelling, involving adventures to grace a hard drive in a long time"

-Game Spot



"Sanitarium is easily the most disturbing computer game of 1998"

-PC Games



"If 'Jacob's Ladder' was reality squared, Sanitarium is reality cubed"

-J.C.Herz The New York Times

The first adventure game where your emotions play with your intelligence.

A SHOCKINGLY DISTURBING ADVENTURE...

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Windows® 95
PC CD-ROM



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Never Buy a Bad Game Again

▶ P. 35 BURSTS

That big yellow tag on the front of your box is commonly referred to as a burst. These are created to quickly grab your attention and convey an important piece of information. Because these are created to be the first thing most people read, you can learn a lot from what they say.



WHAT IT MEANS → Even big stars have to pay taxes.



WHAT IT MEANS → The game sucks, but it still sells because some Southern senator called it obscene.



WHAT IT MEANS → Don't get your hopes up. It's all stuff you would see on TV. It's important to protect kids from being exposed to passionate kissing.



WHAT IT MEANS → This game is aimed for a niche market roughly the size of the Little Rock, Arkansas Mensa Society.



WHAT IT MEANS → Run away!



WHAT IT MEANS → This title was rushed into stores to take advantage of another game's phenomenal sales.

THE LURE OF FREE STUFF

Many games try to draw you in with free stuff, and some do it better than others.



BAD → Who exactly wants this freebie?



BETTER → Well at least you might be able to trade it to your local D&D kiosk for something good.



BEST → Now this is our kind of freebie.

COVER TEXT

So, the bright cover, industry quotes, screens, and info bursts have piqued your curiosity, but you still don't know if the game is right for you. Now it's time to read the back of the box and figure out exactly what the game is all about.

RELATIONSHIPS

Build A Long-Lasting Relationship With A True Friend

The only relationship that belongs in a good game is the relationship between your opponent and your crosshairs.

BAD '80S SLANG



Simple rule: If a game uses outdated '80s slang, leave it on the shelf.

PUZZLES

• DARK PUZZLES AND SINISTER GAMES

This is an absolute guarantee that if you buy this game, you will find yourself trying to decipher theme puzzles involving chess pieces or sliding tiles.

UNPARALLELED AI



It must be some kind of mandatory regulation or something, but just about every game we survived said that it had unparalleled AI. What does this mean then? Pretty much nothing.

MORE RELATIONSHIPS



See relationships above.



AND THE

After judging the boxes of almost 200 games, we decided to pull together the best lines and give them the awards they truly deserve.

WINNERS ARE ...

The "should we really be excited about this?" award
JACK THE RIPPER

Over fifteen minutes of original CD quality music.

The "just call them sprites" award
EVOLUTION

View more than 160 3-D rendered fully animated species.

The gratuitous use of adjectives award
MERIDIAN 59

In a perilous and uncertain time, you help decide the fate of the world's ancient land full of wonder, treasure and danger. Battle fantastic monsters, meet an international cast of brave explorers - like yourself - on this thrilling journey. Ally yourself with the beautiful Princess or throw your support behind it.

The best explanation for a lack of a feature award
CHASM THE RIFT

Chasm: The Rift does not require 3D accelerator enhancements, although features are already incorporated into the name.

The "best in a category of one" award
MORTALUS

Experience the ultimate VRML action game...

The "they got paid for this?" award
ANGEL DEVOID

CAST OF PROFESSIONAL ACTORS

The "and this is a good thing?" award
TANARUS

a booming soundtrack by **The Fatman.**

The "context please?" award
ENTREPRENEUR



The "gratuitous use of '80s slang" award
BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN



The humble appraisal award
OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS

if game environments were paintings, these would sell for \$10,000,000.

THE PERFECT GAME BOX?

So, what have we learned about how to sell boxes? The bigger, the brighter, the bolder, the better they sell. So here is PCXL's own version of the perfect computer game box.

- Quotes from sources you can trust.
- Brightly colored boxes mean big sales.
- If you see the actual in-game models on the box, you know the graphics are going to be good.
- Easy-to-identify symbols make the game more recognizable.
- Freebies you can use are always the best.
- If a company consistently makes good things, you can trust its track record.

1 "THE GREATEST GAME WE EVER PLAYED" — PC ACCELERATOR

FD EITHER PLAY THIS GAME THUR E 11



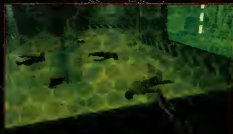


WINDOWS 95



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Take bloodshed to the next level with new 3D engine and fully modeled 3D characters.



30+ screaming fast, totally immersive and completely bloodsoaked levels.




Run a savage gauntlet of multiplayer mayhem from Teamplay to Level Racing.



...and the seas became as BLOOD.

THE ^{blood II} CHOSEN


the second cut is the deepest



Explore vast, vivid, environments
and destroy everything in sight.



Four customizable, playable characters:
Caleb, Ophelia, Gabriela and Ishmael.



Flame Throwers, Tesla Cannons,
Voodoo Bells and Humiliation Animations.

YOU

YOUR TANK

GO TO WORK



It's you, your tank, and the U.S. Army going to war in the heat soaked deserts of Tunisia. Spearhead puts you in charge of the Army's best armored weapon, the M1A2, immersing you in intense battles with state-of-the-art graphics and innovative adrenaline-pumping gameplay. Stop playing around, it's time to go to work.

- Features 3D accelerated graphics for 3Dfx® and Power VR®.
- Stellar multiplayer mode allows battling over modem, LAN or the Internet.
- Competitive gameplay for novice through hard-core players.
- Choose from 20 action-soaked single missions or the exhilarating desert campaign.

SPEARHEAD™

Go to <http://www.pcxl.com/gaming411>: Product Number 32



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Now Hear This: 3D Ain't Just Visual

Maybe you've read one of the millions of articles that start: "Sound on the personal computer is one of the most overlooked aspects, blah blah blah ..." Well, that's a big, fat pile of you know what. Sound isn't overlooked at all; digital audio has come a long way from the early days of 8-bit Adlib beeps to today's digital, PCI-based perfection. Nonpowered placeholder speakers have given way to high-fidelity, better-than-dad's-stereo powerhouses.

What has been overlooked, until recently, is 3D sound. Think about it: What's 3D about video cards, really? Your monitor is still flat, for heaven's sake, and nothing pops out of it just because you have a 3D accelerator! With a 3D sound

card, sound really does pop out of your speakers.

SOUND AROUND YOUR HEAD →

Once it was believed that you needed four speakers to hear sound all around you. Nobody gave any thought to this simple notion: Can't you hear sound all around you with only two ears? If you're like most of us, the answer is probably yes. So why can't 3D sound be made with only two speakers?

It can be. DirectSound 3D is doing it, Qsound is doing it, but far more successfully, the industry leader in 3D positional sound, Aureal, is doing it — really well. The acclaimed line of A3D audio accelerators makes sounds seem to come from above you, below you, behind you, and beside you — through two speakers.



Aureal includes a program that enables you to wow your friends with positional sound from your new A3D audio accelerator.



Battlezone is one of the first titles to fully embrace A3D-powered sound cards, so you can hear in 3D as you play.



Another title that makes excellent use of A3D sound is Jedi Knight. That stormtrooper you hear is behind you.

HOW CAN THIS BE? →

Well, those two ears of yours are a measurable distance apart, right? And since sound waves travel at a finite speed, sound waves from the same source reach your ears at different times. Your brain can figure out, from the milliseconds between when each ear hears a sound, what direction it's coming from. (Yet people still bought the Spice Girls' second CD. Go figure.)

SO WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH A3D? →

Games that support A3D chips send information about where around you they would like you to think each sound is coming from. The A3D chip, then, tweaks the timing of the sound coming from each channel to fool your brain into thinking it came from somewhere other than in front of you.

If you know somebody with a 3D sound card who has supporting software, give it a listen. It's hard to believe what this technology can do until you actually experience it. ➤

THE CONTENDER



LIVE, FROM CREATIVE, IT'S ... LIVE!

A3D and Dolby aren't the only 3D sound schemes in town. Creative Labs has finally dragged the SoundBlaster line kicking and screaming into the modern era with SoundBlaster Live! The so-called "Environmental Audio" (Creative's fancy name for 3D solution uses a proprietary, backward-compatible sound card based around Creative's EMU80Ks processor — and a proprietary API called EAX, or Environmental Audio Extensions. While Creative says it works all right with two speakers, the company recommends one of its four-plus-speaker, Cambridge SoundWorks-engineered systems like the Desktop Theater 5.1.

The \$200 SoundBlaster Live! is DOS- and Win 95-compatible, and support for EAX is starting to trickle in from companies like EA and Activision.

GOT A3D?

The list of A3D-powered sound cards has grown ever since Diamond's Monster Sound made them a household name. They range in price from as little as \$30 to \$200 and up!

Card	Manufacturer	Website	Street price
Monster Sound (line)	Diamond Multimedia	www.diamond.com	\$99-\$150
DCS Sound Image S809	Acer-Servertek	www.usservertek.com	\$30
Predator 3D (line)	Shark Multimedia	www.sharkmm.com	\$80
Mont-go A3DXtreme	Turtle Beach	www.tb-arc.com	\$120
MuSound 3D	Orchid Technologies	www.orchid.com	\$60
PCI 338-A3D	Aztech	www.sztech-ls.com	\$70
Storm VX	Xilite	www.xilite.com	\$80

For more info, check out www.a3d.com. Street prices are approximate, and will vary by region and retailer.

Banshee:

3Dfx's single-slot holy grail or Voodoo 2 Rush?

In the beginning, there was the Voodoo Graphics chipset, and it was good. Then, 3Dfx said, "Let there be a single-slot solution as good as Voodoo Graphics." And 3Dfx took the chips from Voodoo Graphics and created Voodoo Rush, and it was good. Or so they thought. Unfortunately for us, they thought wrong.

This time, 3Dfx isn't claiming that Banshee, the new single-slot 2D/3D solution, will perform as well as its add-on cousin, Voodoo 2, and if you recall the Voodoo Rush controversy, you know why. In fact, folks apt to scream in anguish when their *Quake II* framers turn out to be a tiny bit lower on a Banshee card than on a Voodoo 2 card should hit 3Dfx's Banshee FAQ before they buy (www.3dfx.com/docs/vbfaq/vbfaq.html#Q2). It states, in part, "Voodoo 2 is higher in performance in many leading games because it contains two texture processors rather than the single texture processor in Voodoo Banshee."

Even though the Banshee will run a few games slower than Voodoo 2 does, it sure doesn't suck. 3Dfx did all the design in-house, including the 2D. Guillemot was kind enough to let us check

2D/3D SOLUTIONS

MATROX MYSTIQUE G200

PRICE: \$150
HIGHS: Great image quality, 2D performance, and just as about as fast as a single Voodoo 2

LOWS: Not many

INTEL I740

PRICE: \$150-\$200
HIGHS: Great image quality, solid 2D performance, and fast 3D acceleration

LOWS: Not as fast as the GeForce

NVIDIA RIVA 128ZX

PRICE: \$150-\$200
HIGHS: Decent 3D acceleration
LOWS: Image quality lower than other 2D/3D cards

RENDITION VE200

PRICE: \$175-\$200
HIGHS: Decent 3D acceleration
LOWS: Lackluster developer support

3DFX VOODOO RUSH

PRICE: \$140-\$150
HIGHS: Almost as fast as Voodoo 2
LOWS: Many games do not support
Rush; performance below what was promised



The Voodoo Banshee board is 3Dfx's second try at a single-slot 2D/3D solution, and this one just might work.

out an alpha version of its Banshee solution, the Maxi Gamer Phoenix. On a PII 300 with 64MB SGRAM, the framers we saw were varied. *Forsaken* banged out 81.1fps at 800 x 600 (compared to 97.8fps on a Voodoo 2). Unfortunately, due to the early nature of the hardware and drivers, *Turok* and *Incroming* wouldn't run, and *Quake II* numbers were low, to the tune of a mere 25.4fps at 800 x 600 (compared to 49.2fps on a Voodoo 2).

At this early stage, Banshee's only shortcomings are the same as Voodoo 2's. Primarily, Banshee will be unable to take full advantage of AGP's full 2D implementation; textures will have to be cached in local memory. That's not going to be a problem right away, since most boards will come with a minimum of 8 or 16MB, but when

games start taking advantage of full-blown 2X AGP, 1X solutions may come up lacking. Also, you won't be able to double up two Banshees in SLI mode.

3Dfx promises full compatibility for the Banshee, but it did the same for Voodoo Rush — and patches are still coming out. Banshee is slated to support DirectX 6, Glide, and OpenGL, but only time will tell if all of your old games will run on a Banshee. The bottom line: It's probably a good idea to wait a little while before rushing out to buy those first Banshee boards — if there turns out to be a Rush redux, you won't get stuck with a dog. We doubt that will be the case because 3Dfx has proven to know what it's doing, leaving the Banshee with an excellent shot to take the throne as the king of graphics accelerators later this year. ▶

THE STORY BEHIND VOODOO RUSH

The Voodoo Rush chipset first debuted in 1997. The card was 3Dfx's second shot at the mainstream PC hardware market, and the company's first commercial failure. The card was first promised to be an all-in-one solution that would give players solid 2D acceleration on the same board as a Voodoo chip, and 3D acceleration in a window.

Unfortunately, the 2D acceleration (based on the Alliance AT3D chipset) was subpar, and people quickly found out that despite 3Dfx's promises, the 3D performance was below that of a standard Voodoo card for most games (and as much as 25% slower for games that use z-buffering and alpha blending at the same time).

To add to the problem, many titles would simply not play on the chipset. Even now owners have problems playing the games they want (*Unreal* requires a patch to play on Voodoo Rush). From the problems encountered with the Rush chipset, 3Dfx has learned quite a bit. And we can be assured it won't make the same mistakes a second time with Banshee.



BANSHEE Q&A

STRAIGHT TALK ON VOODOO BANSHEE

Our question and answer guy takes a look at 3Dfx's latest accelerator chip.

Q: If I already have a Voodoo 2 card, what will a Voodoo Banshee do for me?
A: Well, the Banshee is not really meant to complement the standard Voodoo 2, but rather it's made to be a single 2D/3D solution on its own. Its 2D performance is very impressive, but if you already have a good 2D card you might not need this.

Q: Really? Can I at least hook it up in an SLI configuration with my existing Voodoo 2 board and run my games super fast?
A: Nope, the Banshee will not run in SLI with the Voodoo 2. You can set the Banshee as your primary display device and the Voodoo 2 as a secondary device, but they will not help each other.

Q: Well, once the drivers are completed, will the board be faster than a Voodoo 2?

A: According to its specs, the Banshee should run games that don't use multi-texturing a little faster than the Voodoo 2. But games that use multi-texturing, like *Quake II*, *Unreal*, or the upcoming *Need For Speed III*, will run a little slower on the Banshee because the Voodoo 2 has a second texture-processing chip that applies multiple textures faster.

Q: So it might be slower? Are we talking Voodoo Rush all over again? I had that board, and some of the games I wanted to play most needed patches just to run.

A: The company promises that this board will have full developer support in upcoming games, but that's what it said about the Rush. Most likely 3Dfx, which is a pretty savvy company in the first place, will not make the same mistake twice and will do everything in its power to ensure that this board is fully supported.

Q: Cool, [awkward silence] Um, how good is the 2D acceleration of the Banshee, and will I even notice a change if I install it?

A: Compared to an older 2D accelerator, you will definitely notice the difference when you plug it in. But even though the Banshee is a strong 2D performer, the difference between it and other recent cards, which have proven to be very powerful themselves, like Matrox's G200 is not all that noticeable.

Q: So if I already have a Voodoo 2 setup and a decent 2D card, my money would be better spent on another Voodoo 2 to use in SLI configuration, but if I am just looking for a fast card to put in my system...

A: Then the Voodoo Banshee is a great alternative because of its 3D graphics speed and excellent 2D performance.

Q: Don't put words in my mouth.
A: Sorry, that'll

Q: I guess so. Wanna get a chill doc?
A: Yeah.



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DREAMFORGE



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Matrox Mystique G200 Matrox doesn't suck anymore!

PRICE → \$229 (16MB), \$149 (8MB)

CHIPSET → MGA G200

CARD TYPE → AGP 2X

16MB RAM, 60MB hard drive space

API SUPPORT → DirectX3D

BUNDLE → Tonic Trouble, Incoming, Motorhead

In the consumer market, Matrox is the undisputed king of 2D. Who cares? When's the last time you played a 2D-accelerated game? You know Matrox as the evil conglomerate that assaulted gamers everywhere with the Mystique, a so-called 3D accelerator that nearly had the same effect on 3D gaming that Yoko Ono did on the Beatles.

We would now like you to try to forget that old Matrox, though. With the new Mystique G200, based on the fresh MGA G200 chipset, the company has gone a long way toward earning the forgiveness of gamers — especially the financially challenged ones.

Before you get too excited, let me say that the new Mystique does not equal the performance of a Voodoo 2-based card. It comes damn close though, and it does a few things that Voodoo 2 can't: It supports full 2X AGP with sidebands (which enables your AGP chip to handle requesting and processing data at the same time) and the 8MB version goes for under

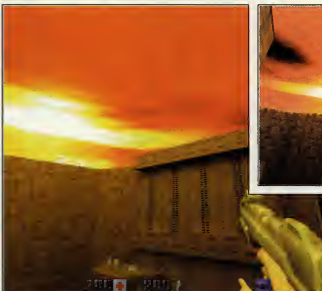


Image quality of the G200 is much better than that of the Voodoo 2. Just compare these two screenshots. The one on the left is running on G200 while the one on the upper right is on Voodoo 2.

\$150 — in fact, the savvy online shopper can even find it for \$120.

The new Mystique is also superior in visual quality. Textures are crisp and bright, even close up, and there's no sign of dithering or banding. Visually, this baby's on the level of the (gasp) Intel I740 — but it's much faster.

The G200 chip is an AGP-only solution, so you PCI users are SOL.



Tonic Trouble is just one of the games that will be packed in the G200.

The chip supports the full feature set of DirectX 6; advanced functions like bilinear and trilinear filtering, per-pixel mip mapping, full-screen antialiasing, and every single lighting effect are natch. Unfortunately, the beta OpenGL driver Matrox supplied was unstable and insufficient for benchmarking.

Still, GL looks promising, and you can't deny that the G200's D3D scores show more bang for the buck than anything else on the market. If you need a decent 3D card but you don't have \$220 to shell out on a Voodoo 2, snag one of these — you can always add Voodoo later.

ALTERNATIVE USES

THINGS TO DO WITH YOUR OLD MYSTIQUE 220

You blew a few bucks on that sorry excuse for an accelerator that you tore out of your machine in disgust, so you certainly didn't get your money's worth. Don't throw it away; you can still reclaim some value.

- Keep it in a shirt pocket over your heart in case you get shot
- Handcuff it to your wrist and carry it with you at all times. When people ask what it is, don't acknowledge them
- Melt the solder out of it and use it to make something cool, like a nipple ring
- Drop it into a grimy toilet in a busy public restroom and cry out, "Dear god! That's 20 thousand dollars worth of equipment! I must fetch the custodian!" Run away, come back in 10 minutes, and see if anybody got it out
- Slip it into someone's carry-on luggage just before he goes through the metal detector. Hang around and watch him get arrested
- Give it to somebody you don't like and tell 'em it's a Voodoo card
- Take it to the National Enquirer and tell them that an alien that looked like Ernest Borgnine used it to probe your darkest nether regions

IT AIN'T VOODOO 2, BUT IT STILL ROCKS

The 8MB Mystique G200 churned out some seriously admirable frames. The test machine: PII 300 running on a 300MHz 440BX motherboard with 64MB 10ns SDRAM running Win 95 OSR2 B build 1111.

MYSTIQUE G200 →

	800 x 600 x 16
Forsaken	69.9
Incoming	44.2
Turok	53.7

VOODOO 2 →

	800 x 600 x 16
Forsaken	97.8
Incoming	53.2
Turok	61.7

All numbers represent frames per second.

There are no OpenGL game scores because the supplied driver is very early and temperamental. We couldn't get through an entire time demo without general protection faults.

RATING

+ Pluses

- Really low price; best performance on the cheap side of Voodoo 2

- Minuses

- No working OpenGL mini-driver yet

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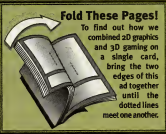
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battlefields. It rips through the most extreme 2D action at resolutions up to 1920 x 1440. It delivers smoother, faster 3D images at 60 frames per second. In fact, it even tools your system for faster performance in other applications. Plus, It includes an explosive software bundle featuring the latest in 3D gaming. So nuke that slow PC. Pick up some Fusion today.



MECHS



PC ACCELERATOR October 1998

BATTLE OF THE GIANT ROBOTS

Fifty tons of mechanized, lumbering death, destroying everything in its path as it cuts a swath of devastation through the enemies of some righteous cause.

What exactly is the appeal here? It's plain to see that the giant robot game has big appeal with gamers who grew up watching "Ultraman," "Voltron," and Godzilla movies. In

fact, the allure of going on a giant robot rampage was so strong that we decided to go one step further and actually build one of the things for ourselves. Think we're joking? Insane? I'll bet you know the answers to those already, but press on, brave reader.

Having no real idea where to start, we went with the obvious: Home Depot.

"Hi, do you guys sell giant robot kits?" One extremely unproductive and frustrating conversation later, we were back to ground zero and sitting around glumly. Then someone suggested going to the various developers who were working on giant robot games. They were sure to give us some tips, right? Aside from being a brilliant idea, it was the only lead we had, so off we went.

MECHWARRIOR 3

DEVELOPER: ZIPPER INTERACTIVE
PUBLISHER: MICROPROSE
RELEASE DATE: Q4 '99
3D SUPPORT: DIRECT3D, GLIDE

(Quotes are from Michael Mancuso, producer)

WHAT IT'S ABOUT: It's finally here, the latest version of the series that started it all. Expectations are high all around, but the early buzz is extremely positive. The engine is phenomenal and seems to justify MicroProse's high trust in Zipper, giving the team the reins to this megapopular franchise.

THE STORY: "Takes place during the Inner Sphere attack on the planets that were taken over by Clan Smoke Jaguar during the Clan invasion. The player is part of a mech commando team sent behind enemy lines with enough support



vehicles to survive and accomplish his first couple of missions. However, the player must find and salvage equipment if he is going to complete the entire campaign."

THE DRAM: "Cutting-edge technology. Capable of running in both software and hardware. An integrated campaign and storyline. Able to fight in both first- and third-person views. Capable wingmen that you can give orders to. The FASA license."

THE WEAPONS: "Nearly all of the weapons described in the *BattleTech* universe, 33 in all. From machine guns to PPCs to NARC missile beacons. My favorite right now is the PPC (which are way cool). But I think that using the Narc missile beacon to call down space-based artillery is going to be a blast."

MISSIONS: "The campaign is broken down into a series of operations, each of which can have four to six missions. Each of the mission areas is tied into one another. The player has a number of objectives to accomplish during each operation, and the missions are designed to allow him to achieve these objectives in the most effi-



cient way, with the least amount of damage to his and his lance-mate's mechs. Of course, intel isn't always right ..."

HOW IT'S DIFFERENT FROM A TYPICAL FPS LIKE GDI: "The enemies are way too powerful to take out with only a few shots. You have to use tactics. You have to watch many more systems, like heat management. The game gives you more information — you pretty much know what your target is and where most of your enemies are. You have to figure out how to accomplish

your mission."
MULTIPLAYER: "Up to eight people. Cooperative and head-to-head deathmatch. IPX, modem, Internet."
GIANT ROBOT FACTOR: Lots of stuff that formed the backbone of the whole giant robot game thing: missile packs, customizability, heat sinks, complex missions, and a rich atmosphere. At this point, it seems as if this franchise can't go wrong.

GIANT ROBOT QUOTIENT: **GRQ: 9**

Our first stop was MicroProse. We dropped in on 'em just as they were putting the finishing touches on another exhaustive mech motion-capture session. The 50-foot-tall armored behemoth was taking a smoke break outside the building, puffing away on a cigarette that looked as if it had the whole tobacco output of Cuba in it. Inside we found a grizzled old guy who looked like he ate nails for breakfast, barking orders. While we waited, we poked around, checking out what was going on with *MW3*.

The Big Daddy of giant robot games, the long-lived *MechWarrior* series set the standard and is widely imitated, a tribute to its impact. And now, with a powerful new engine built by Zipper Interactive, the robust mechs of FASA's *MechWarrior* universe never looked so awe-inspiring.

"Can I help you?" a voice belted. It was the drill-sergeant-type person. Not wishing to risk annoying him and face probable death, we held back on our patented sarcasm and asked politely about how the game was going.

"It's one of the most anticipated games in years. It has been a long time since *MechWarrior 2*, and gamers are chomping at the bit to get a worthy successor. The graphics and animations are the best in the business, and the special effects are incredible."

"Great ... so do you think we can borrow one of your mechs, you know, for trial purposes? We want to test the physics and all that." After making us sign a bunch of legal forms, he agreed. "You civvies be careful, this ain't a toy."

We paid no attention, of course; we were too busy stuffing the giant mech in a Fed Ex box addressed to us. Luckily they had a couple of extra 50-ton capacity boxes lying around. Of course, it didn't have any guns — again, for insurance purposes. We were gonna get around that, though, no question.

"So you know where we can find some weapons for this thing?" I asked.

"You might wanna try the *Starship Troopers* team. They're out on the gunnery range," the Mech Commander replied.

We headed there just as an explosion ripped the side of a hill clean off. We made our way to the assembled group of game developers, who were tinkering around with some big-ass guns that were hooked up to PCs running the latest build of the game. The person holding the smoking gun was a dead ringer for Denise Richards.

"Hey, you guys got any extra guns we can borrow?" we asked. The team that resembled the mobile infantry immediately threw a tarp over everything.

"Game journalists! Who let you in here?" she yelled, still holding the gun menacingly.

"Uh, we're outside," I said. She frowned. "These weapons are still under development — they're secret."

"Tell ya what: You let us borrow a few, and we'll pretend we never saw 'em."

"All right, fine," she said in resignation.

So while we worked out the details, we took a look at the game. Huge fans of the movie, we were happy to see that it contained



bugs by the bucketload. The addition of powered battlesuits packing some heavy-duty weaponry made the odds a little better, but it looked like mankind was gonna be up the creek anyway.

"The bugs will always have a huge advantage in numbers; they operate as a swarm rather than as individuals. We spent a lot of time making it possible to support a very large number of enemies to reproduce as closely as possible some of the scenes in the movie," explained one of the team members.

So after taking our pick from the weapons rack, which looked like a few rocket launchers and a couple of tactical nukes, we took off before they changed their minds.

Next on the list was ▶ p. 53

STARSHIP TROOPERS

DEVELOPER: MICROPROSE
PUBLISHER: MICROPROSE
RELEASE DATE: Q4 '98
3D SUPPORT: DIRECT 3D, GLIDE

(Quotes are from Simon Finch, producer)

WHAT IT'S ABOUT: Two words: nuking bugs. The vicious critters from the movie and uh, the book (OK, so I haven't read it) make the transition to your computer monitor with a vengeance. Expect to be overrun by more bugs than you can shake a nuclear stick at, if there is such a thing. Squad-based tactics are the new trend in multiplayer games this season. In games like *Tribes* and *Rainbow 6*, and *Troopers* is making it a focus. Good for them.

THE STORY: "The game takes place a few years after the events depicted in the film. The player will take the role of a PFC trooper on the new "Roger Young." Over the course of the game, he must survive on the battlefield and progress through the ranks. Scattered and disorganized, the five fleets will not cooperate, and no

single fleet has the force to stop the bugs. Mankind's only hope is that the character can gain control of the fleets, unifying them to stop the bug invasion."

THE DRAW: "The bugs. They are becoming truly scary as we add more and more to the game. I also think gamers will enjoy the massive firepower of the armored suits, high-tech suits of armor about 10-feet tall that come in varying styles from light, fast scout suits with few weapon options to heavy, slow assault suits with maximum firepower. All of them, however, are far more maneuverable than the traditional 40-foot mechs



of the *BattleTech* universe, for example."

THE WEAPONS: "They range from small handheld melee weapons to the truly huge tactical nuke. I don't want to give away too much here, but I would have to say that many of the rocket types are very cool, and of course, you have to love the nuke."

MULTIPLAYER: "We are currently focusing on having up to five players across all network types, which is one full squad. Once this is fully implemented we will see how many we can support for some of the faster network types such as LAN."

HOW IT'S DIFFERENT FROM A TYPICAL FPS LIKE QUAKE II: "*Quake II* and games like it are what I would classify as creep-and-save type games. Although we are planning to have an In-game save, we also plan to balance the missions. In such a way that this does not become an integral part of gameplay. To me a save game should simply be a convenience to the player, not a necessity for winning missions. Also the tactics of games like *Quake* tend to be focused on deal-



ing with a single enemy or a few enemies at a time and gradually making your way through a level by killing absolutely everything and then searching the level for the button that opens the next door, lowers a bridge, etc. Don't get me wrong, I loved *Quake*, *Unreal*, and many games like it, but *Troopers* is never going to be about trying to figure out where to go, but about trying to get there without dying and not losing too many of your squad mates. Learning the swarm tactics of the bugs and how they use their advantage of numbers will be an important part of surviving in the *Troopers* universe."

GIANT ROBOT FACTOR: What, you wanna live forever? Get into your powered armor and break out that extra-strength Raid!

GIANT ROBOT QUOTIENT: GRQ: 6

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getting a setting to fight in — you know, a noble cause of an intergalactic war or reuniting the clans or something like that. We had heard that Monolith was doing some interesting stuff in this area, so we paid a visit. We sauntered into the offices where some oddly proportioned, cartoony characters were standing around contemplating life.

"I suggest you go anime," one schoolgirl-looking character chirped, a billion little highlights flickering in her eyes, which were the size of dinner plates. Of course, she was referring to her company's latest game, *Shogo: Mobile Armor Division*. In the near future, you run around in a cyberpunk-style world both on foot and in a 40-foot mech, blowing things up. Seeing our interest or perhaps confusion, she opened her mouth until it looked like a giant wedge.

"You play Sanjuro Makabe, an MCA (Mobile Combat Armor) pilot who has fallen from grace due to a tragically botched mission which you were blamed for," she gushed. "The game begins shortly after this

tragedy, with most of the action happening on or near a planet called Cronus. Clouds of revolution currently threaten the balance of power on this hostile planet, with an incredibly powerful energy source, known as kato, as the ultimate prize for the winner. The biggest threat to peace and order on Cronus is a maniacal rebel leader known only as Gabriel. As a lieutenant in the UCA, you are given a mission that could offer you the ultimate redemption. Locate and assassinate Gabriel."

"Sounds cool," we agreed. So we still needed a setting — but how could we come up with something as good as that? This inspired-by-animation thing sounded promising, but we couldn't just use anime, could we? After all, that would be copying, and you can't do that in the game industry.

"Well, what about claymation?" We all agreed this was a stupendous idea, and we came up with an elaborate back-story involving Gumby and Mr. Bill, as they fight the evil minions of Wallace and Gromit.

OK, now that we had our setting,

the next thing we needed to work on was missions. Just then, a giant Voltron landed next to us, grabbed us, and used its foot rockets to blast off again. "I didn't even get a chance to shit myself," someone said. It flew us to the secret underground testing labs of Accolade's *Slave Zero*.

"Missions you say?" the giant Voltron boomed. "We're all about missions in *Slave Zero*!"

Wincing with pain and holding our ears, we heard him out, as if we had a choice. "You see, we are trying to have a variety of game mechanics in our missions," he screamed. "One is an escort mission where you need to protect

your rebel force as they travel through the city. In another mission you need to get to the power core of the factory and destroy it — then get out before the explosion envelops you. Another immerses *Slave Zero* on a giant freight train that moves through the city. The objective is to survive hosts of other giant robots while being attacked from all sides. We have 16 missions planned with five bosses — each mission and boss features unique gameplay elements and enemies. Sounds fun, huh?"

"Yeah, absolutely," we assured him. "I had no idea Voltrons were such a pain in the ass." I ▶ p. 56



SHOGO: MOBILE ARMOR DIVISION



DEVELOPER: MONOLITH
PUBLISHERS: MONOLITH
RELEASE DATE: Q4 '98
3D SUPPORT: DIRECT 3D, GLIDE

(Quotes are from John Jack, product manager)

WHAT IT'S ABOUT: Anime-inspired mayhem in both a 40-foot-tall mecha and on foot, running around futuristic cityscapes blowing things up. Awww yeah. Running on the upstart LithTech engine, which according to early reports is a very robust, fast engine with lots of fancy extras.

THE STORY: True to the spirit of anime, it's very convoluted and melodramatic and involves personal redemption, rescuing a faithful girlfriend, and an evil villain. Storytelling was a high priority for the *Shogo* team, and it should show in a strong single-player mode.

THE DRAW: "We think that gamers will definitely enjoy the two modes of play in *Shogo*. The mecha levels are really over the top in terms of

special effects, weapons, explosions, and the sense of scale. There's nothing better than piloting a 40-foot mecha, and then splattering a six-foot tall screaming civilian against a building wall. The on-foot levels, which take place when players are outside of their mechas, will offer slower-paced, more stealthy gameplay. The balance between these two gameplay experiences should offer a lot of variation for all gamers. Also, our single-player experience is focused more on character and story development rather than equipment and weapon acquisition."

THE WEAPONS: "Since there are two separate arsenals in *Shogo* (one for the on-foot missions and one for the MCA missions), the weapons are pretty varied. In the on-foot levels you'll be using more real-world oriented weapons — shotguns, machine guns, assault rifles, automatic pistols — our favorite on-foot weapon is probably the assault rifle, which also offers a sniper mode, which is great for picking off targets from a

long distance. We've spent a lot of time perfecting the MCA weapons — our special *ix* and explosions are some of the best we've seen in a game to date and really emphasize the power you wield while piloting your MCA. The Bullgut, which is an MCA rocket launcher that fires four spiraling, snaking missiles, is probably our favorite. This weapon is probably more anime-inspired than any other weapon in *Shogo*."

MULTIPLAYER: "*Shogo* is client-server based and will ship with a stand-alone server app, so we're going right after the hardcore multiplayer crowd. *Deathmatch* has been our primary focus, but we've got some other games in the works as well. The games will be high-speed, and you'll be able to play either MCA or on-foot levels in multiplayer."

GIANT ROBOT FACTOR: "Anime giant robots are where it's at; hopefully it won't play much like an ordinary first-person shooter. A 3D card will be required, which is fitting considering the abundant special effects and big explosions.



GIANT ROBOT QUOTIENT: 8



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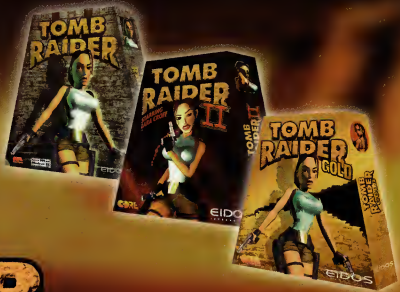
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EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

MECHS



► muttered under my breath.

The game, which was running on gigantic screens manned by other giant robots, looked incredible. The shocking speed and fluidity of the 60-foot Slaves, as well as the sense of scale as you picked up cars and hurled them into screaming tiny people, was absolutely

fantastic. So how could we come up with a good idea for a mission? What if we combined all their missions to come up with one super-huge-extra-hard mission that would last the whole game? That's better than lots of smaller missions, right? Jotting down all the ones we could remember, we said our goodbyes and left, only to realize we had no idea how to get out.

"Can I offer you a lift?" the Volttron bellowed.

"Sure, can you give us a lift to Activision?"

"They're our competitors, but

why not?"

We dropped in on the *Heavy Gear* // team just as it was testing out the multiplayer mode. It had turned an abandoned miniature golf course into killing fields, with "Gears" running around, switching between tank and walking mode. Some people obviously unaccustomed to the suits were wobbling around while trying to get used to the different range of movement.

"Hey dude," I called over to one who was lining up a putt through a rotating windmill. "How's all the multiplayer stuff coming along?"

"Great. We have several different types of play. You can go one-on-one in arenas against other Gears in all out gladiatorial-style combat. We also have team play that contains strategic base elements like repair bays, gear bays, ammo dumps, and other important buildings. Once they get destroyed, players lose the ability to get repaired, respawn, rearm, and stuff. In our historical mode, you'll be able to team up with your friends against the computer. Each historical mission takes place at a different time on Terra Nova and

puts the you in a bunch of exciting situations."

Another Gear walked up and tapped him on the shoulder, motioning him to end the interview. "Well, gotta run, we're playing the *Starsiege* guys in a skirmish." The *Starsiege* team had just arrived, arrayed in Herts. During preparation, we saw one sitting out the action, directing his troops with a megaphone.

"So, what's going on with your multiplayer? We've been hearing good things," we asked.

"Yeah, we posted two multiplayer Alpha Technology Releases or ATRs of *Starsiege* this year to test and refine our multiplayer code," he replied. "The statistics and feedback we got have been extremely valuable. In the latest ATR you frequently see Internet multiplayer games with 16 players running very smoothly. It's gonna be great."

"All right, can't wait to see it," we said, leaving just as the battle began to break out. We woulda stayed, but we were too eager to get back to build our own giant robot.

So we came back to our offices

where we found all the packages we had addressed to ourselves. This was gonna rule. Tearing into them with a frenzy, we soon had our bounty assembled in the middle of the floor. That's when it started dawning on us that a mistake, or several, had been made. We were left with an empty mech frame, a few handheld rocket launchers and tactical nukes, a buttload of modeling clay in different colors, and of course no other giant robots to battle against. Hmm.

"You know what... I bet there are some playable builds ready." A few phone calls later we were deep in giant robot nirvana, any thoughts of building our own robot completely forgotten.

So what did we learn from this? Uh, you got me. Never build a giant robot if you're not a mad genius bent on world domination? In lieu of blaming ourselves for our stunning failure, we decided the real villain here was Home Depot for not offering do-it-yourself home giant robot kits. For your fix, I suggest waiting for these games to ship.

PC ACCELERATOR October 2008

Independence Day grossed \$50.2 million its opening weekend

SLAVE ZERO



DEVELOPER: ACCOLADE
PUBLISHER: ACCOLADE
RELEASE DATE: Q1 '99
3D SUPPORT: ALL APIS

(Quotes are from Matt Powers, producer)

WHAT IT'S ABOUT: Quite possibly the most pure giant robot game ever. You're in a 60-foot robot called a Slave that's nimble as hell and is set loose in a futuristic city battling tiny humans as well as other Slaves. Ultraman would be proud.

THE STORY: "A future megacity is run by an evil military dictator. The population has either been forced out of the city or now works toward the ruler's evil goals. You are part of a rebel force determined to reclaim the city. You steal the ruler's secret weapon, Slave Zero. You use Slave Zero to destroy the infrastructure set up by your nemesis. Your missions include taking down a communications array, destroying a weapons manufacturing facility, and defeating the evil ruler himself (who has his own Slave)."
THE DRAMA: "Slave Zero is a giant

robot ACTION game. You FIGHT giant mech inside of a bustling metropolis of the future. Gamers will love being a 60-foot-tall robot and being able to crush cars, pick up and throw people, climb buildings, and battle other giant robots in the city. The tremendous sense of scale we are offering will attract many people to *Slave Zero*. Everyone since we were kids wanted to be giant robots in a city wreaking havoc! Now *Slave Zero* gives it to you."

THE WEAPONS: "Most of the weapons in *Slave Zero* are still in development and being designed. One of my personal favorites is the Shock Wave Cannon. Inspired from *Independence Day*, this weapon releases a wave of force that travels through the city streets. Cars will be thrown, people killed, and windows shattered as the wave of energy leaves destruction in its wake. Another weapon is the Black Hole Gun, which sucks nearby matter into its gullet and into oblivion."

HOW IT'S DIFFERENT FROM A TYPICAL FPS LIKE OUNAKE II: "You play *Slave Zero* from a third-person perspective. The *Slave Zero* world is open, and you can see for



miles and miles. The Slave is 60-feet tall, and gameplay is in a world created for six-foot-tall people. *Slave Zero* has a very interactive (and destructive) environment. Fighting many different enemies with a variety of weapons is the heart of the game."

MULTIPLAYER: "We will definitely have a strong multiplayer presence. Current plans are to support at least 16 people simultaneously. We will have multiplayer game scenarios

beyond the regular deathmatch." **GIANT ROBOT FACTOR:** Third-person-only point-of-view (used in order to preserve the sense of scale) is a possible setback for hardcore gamers. However, *Slave Zero* has the potential to make the first true leap in giant robot game design since the genre was conceived. Sounds like hellacious fun.



HEAVY GEAR II

DEVELOPER: **ACTIVISION**
PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
RELEASE DATE: **NOVEMBER '98**
3D SUPPORT: **DIRECT3D, GLIDE, POWER9G**

(Quotes are from Jack Mamais, director)

WHAT IT'S ABOUT: A souped-up sequel to the somewhat disappointing *Heavy Gear*, Activision still needs to prove it can lead in the genre without the FASA license. Gutsy move to hardware-only graphics engine is a start. *HG II* was also criticized for a lack of variations in environments, and that has been addressed with a bunch of new ones including swamps,

D.P. 10 arctic zones, volcanic areas, and urban base sites.

THE STORY: "The single-player game takes place several years after the events in the first *Heavy Gear*. Earth has seemingly committed a grievous crime against Terra Nova, and you are assigned to take a squad of Elite Gears behind enemy lines to a planet called Caprice. Caprice is a world currently being controlled (to their

desire) by Earth Forces. Our job is to land on this planet to discover what Earth has in store for Terra Nova."

THE DRAW: "First of all, it looks amazing; it is just incredible to me around in almost photo-realistic worlds destroying things because you feel like you are there! Many of the new features we're adding are going to be lots of fun, including a tactical map that is used to control your squad of Gears. Also, being a 3D-only game makes *Heavy Gear II*



one of the first in the next generation of technology. By eliminating a software renderer, we are able to support more polys on the screen, which means better terrains, buildings, game pieces — players will see much more complex battlefields. There are many kinds of Gears that range from the small and fast Cheetah to the huge and lumbering Spitting Cobra. You can customize many items on Gears including weapons (of course), sensors, maneuverability, and you can

also add special enhancements like making them waterproof."

WEAPONS: "We have at least 80 weapons in *Heavy Gear II* from a slug-throwing autocannon to intense energy weapons like particle accelerators. My personal favorite is the Heavy Laser Cannon."
MISSIONS: "We are introducing smaller, quicker missions with much more action! There will be 40 in all..."

MULTIPLAYER: "We will have many different modes of multiplayer including Capture the Flag-type games and many new strategic and tactical situations that can be customized by the user."

GIANT ROBOT FACTOR: Sure to have some of the best graphics of the lot. Being able to convert your Gear into a tank at any time speeds-up gameplay and is unique to the series.

GIANT ROBOT QUOTIENT **GRQ:** 8

STARSIEGE

DEVELOPER: **DYNAMIX**
PUBLISHER: **SIERRA**
RELEASE DATE: **OCTOBER '98**
3D SUPPORT: **OPENGL, GLIDE**

(Quotes are from Dave Selle, designer, and Rick Overman, lead programmer)

WHAT IT'S ABOUT: It's The Game Formerly Known As *EarthSiege 3*, which means it's got a big fan base already, as well as a good pedigree. The mechs are called Hercs, and there are some tanks for variety, but the bottom line is it's gonna be intense combat with an emphasis on multiplayer. Two alpha releases have gotten a lot of positive response, as servers are crowded with die-hard fans. It was nothing but good for everyone involved. The developers got some good early buzz going as well as valuable feedback, and the fans got to actually play the game. It really shows Dynamic's "gamer first" attitude — rare in an increasingly market-driven industry. Other developers would be well served doing the same.

THE STORY: "You can fight from

either the human side (beginning as a rebel on Mars) or as a Cybrid in the single-player missions. As a human you fight to the outer reaches of the solar system to destroy the Cybrid threat. Your aim as a Cybrid is conquest of Earth."

THE DRAW: "Initially, it's the great graphics. But the visuals are backed up by lots of really cool and unique vehicles and weapons as well as compelling missions, an engaging storyline, and great multiplayer play. A feature that has already generated a lot of heat on our website is the ability to create your own vehicle 'skins.' The bottom line is we are aiming to give people the whole enchilada: great technology and a really fun game."

WEAPONS: "Two of our favorites are the MFAC (magneto-fusion assault cannon) and the ELF (electron flux) whip. The MFAC is a giant

energy cannon that's perfect for when you just absolutely, positively have to erase every mo'fo' from your radar screen. The ELF rips your hapless victim a new one at close range, delivering "lightning-bolt" beams of death with great precision. There are lots of other cool weapons including a radiation gun, a quantum gun (QGUN) that has a chance to kill your victim with one shot, particle beam, and blink gun."

HOW IT'S DIFFERENT FROM A TYPICAL FPS LIKE QUAKE II: "Starsiege has intense action, but you have to consider battle tactics much more so than in a Quake-type game. For example, it is important where you hit something, not just that you hit it. You might wait a few tenths of a second longer to line up a good shot on an opponent's leg in Starsiege, rather than spraying ammo at the maximum rate in the general direction of an enemy. In addition, the soldiers in Quake are all basically the same. In Starsiege, choosing a different vehicle or weapons loadout will require you to alter your tactics considerably."
MULTIPLAYER: "We have SWARM



(tag), King of the Hill, and Capture the Flag multiplayer games, as well as the traditional deathmatch types. Our goal was to support a large number of players and make joining a multiplayer game as easy as playing single player. So we spent a lot of time up front researching various approaches to multiplayer, looking at what had been tried before, what had worked and what did not. We decided on a rogue server networking architecture, which alleviates many of the common networking problems like latency reduction, cheating, and more."

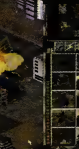
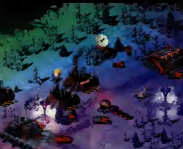
GIANT ROBOT FACTOR: It's big on customizability, a key factor of giant robot games. A big part of multiplayer strategy is finding just the right combination of weapons, armor, and support systems to make your Herc the most efficient killing machine it can be.

GIANT ROBOT QUOTIENT **GRQ:** 8

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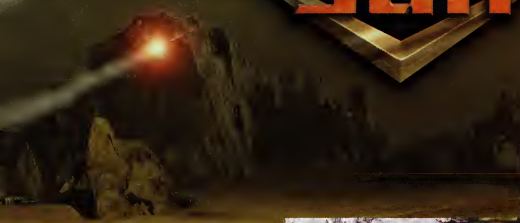


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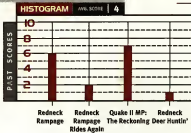
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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



EXCLUSIVE & HOT

Kingpin

Quake II, foul language, and organized crime — fogedaboutit!

Movies and games often steal from each other, and all too frequently share the same tired content.

However, one genre that has never been fully realized in games is the mob movie. Clearly the manliest of themes, a mob-inspired game has been long awaited by the PCXL staff. Sure there was *Grand Theft Auto* and a couple of others that dabbled with organized crime, but *Kingpin* is set to make all the others sleep with the fishes.

So why hasn't a mob game been done before? Drew Markham, head honcho at Xatrix, has these thoughts: "One of the big factors for me was trying to do something that wasn't straight sci-fi or fantasy. Don't get me wrong, I love them both, but [I] was starting to get sick of them becoming the 'fallback' genres."

Fair enough, but how is *Kingpin*



"Take the cannoll."

going to pull this off? For starters, Xatrix is using the *Quake II* engine (one the team is quite familiar with after developing *The Reckoning* mission pack) and tweaking the look of the game to reflect a gritty urban dwelling. "We currently have added fog, transparent textures, 32-bit color, environment mapping (for chrome effects), volumetric fire, and smoke," Markham says, noting how these technological additions affect the game is what really matters. They have also created a new model format, called .mdx, which allows



The city environments look excellent, and the game has managed to escape the use of *Quake's* brown completely.

them to break up the character's models into 15 body pieces, plus a couple of additional areas for guns, hats, briefcases, and the

like. This will allow you to target specific body parts, and actually see the damage done. For example, if an enemy starts to take a certain amount of damage in his legs, he will develop a limp and start walking around the game like one of Jerry's kids. More damage to the legs will eliminate ▶ p. 64

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Xatrix
PUBLISHER → Interplay
RELEASE DATE → Q3 '99
3D SUPPORT → OpenGL

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

The modified *Quake II* engine coupled with gritty mobland warfare is a match made in heaven.

THE HURDLE

The combination of strategy/action/adventure is a tricky one, and there has yet to be a decent mob game.

THE HIT

Of all the 3D shooters on the horizon, this could be the most intriguing just because it isn't set in a post-apocalyptic future.

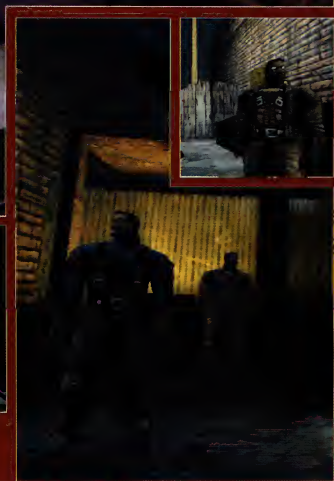


"I spent my whole life trying not to be careless. Women and children can be careless, but not men."





KINGPIN GALLERY



Choosing whether to get in people's faces or back down completely changes the way the game is played. Of course, as a man you only have one real choice — shoot the punk or lose your street cred.



Thugs have never been known for their fashion sense — wonder why?



FIVE QUESTIONS

THE DON CORLEONE OF XATRIX, DREW MARKHAM, GAVE US AN OFFER WE COULDN'T REFUSE (EITHER PUT HIS NAME IN OUR MAGAZINE, OR WE'D HAVE REDNECK RAMPAGE RIDES AGAIN PERMANENTLY INSTALLED ON OUR HARD DRIVES).

Q: You looking at me?

A: Not if I have a choice ...

Q: To make a true mob game you have to include naughty language. Is this actually going to make it in the game?

A: What the %*#! do you think?

Q: *Redneck Rampage Rides Again* — be honest, you're a little embarrassed?

A: Hell no, it's paying for all my cousins to get their teeth fixed!

Q: What PC game company deserves to wake up with a horse's head in its bed?

A: How much space do we have?

Q: Favorite line from a mob movie?

A: "Don't say a word to me ... I'll get up and I'll bury this telephone in your head." — Dennis Farina in *Midnight Run*.



"You looking at me?"

► their use altogether, but as long as his heart is beating, he can continue to fire away. Even more intriguing is that the game engine will track blood loss, so if you don't heal your wounds, you'll eventually bleed to death.

What type of game is *Kingpin*? Markham sees it this way: "Originally, there was a big strategy component in *KP*, but during the pre-production cycle the game has evolved into an action/adventure game. We now internally acknowledge that the slider is set at 70% action and 30% adventure, with the adventure elements playing an integral role in advancing the plot and characters within the game."

Basically the game puts you in the role of a mob underling, whose

main goal is to become kingpin. Much as in life, you must do whatever is necessary to climb the corporate (err ... family) ladder. The voice of actor Dennis Farina and the explosive-loaded dialogue are crucial in setting the proper tone of the game, which is going to be set somewhere between classic cinematic gangsters and the modern-day mob.

Kingpin uses an episodic structure, with multiple elements contained within an episode. Each of the five episodes will be split between two or three parts and take you to a completely different-looking area (from downtown city streets to lush mob boss hide-outs) where you have to use intelligence and brute force to manipu-

late your way to the end goals.

You come to this land of Italian warlords armed with a satisfying arsenal and an exceptionally foul mouth. Melee weapons like a baseball bat (the Louisville Persuader) and a crowbar let you get up close and personal. Of course there will be a variety of pistols (silencer and scope attachments as well), a submachine gun, sawed-off pump shotgun, the inevitable sniper rifle, and a flamethrower especially useful for deep-frying ignorant Italians. A seamless interface incorporates a posture-based realtime conversation system that gives you options for how to address different people (anything from blissfully indifferent to maniacally combative).

Kingpin is a game that is truly attempting to create its own subgenre, something only successfully achieved about every three years. Only time will tell if this ambitious effort is destined for the trunk of a '78 Cadillac Velare or a hacienda in Columbia.

— MIKE SALMON, while not a mobster, is scary in his own right.

DONS OF NOTE



All this Mafia talk: Just us thinking about Dons that you should fear.

DON CORLEONE

LAST SEEN: Eating four courses at an Italian restaurant in the Bronx.

WHY FEAR HIM: Duh, he's the head of the most powerful crime syndicate in the world and could kill you and your family in between helpings of spaghetti.

HOW TO AVOID: Stay away from running numbers, lounge singing, and talons not born from guys named "Little Tony."



DON JOHNSON

LAST SEEN: Drinking it up outside the Betty Ford clinic.

WHY FEAR HIM: The funked freak is almost always on a bender, and overexposure to pistol suits has been clinically proven to cause insanity.

HOW TO AVOID: Friday and Saturday night TV should never, I repeat, never be watched.



DONNY OSMOND

LAST SEEN: Oddly enough, on VH-1's "Where Are They Now?"

WHY FEAR HIM: Giant teeth and unhealthy relationship with horse-faced sister have likely created a madman.

HOW TO AVOID: Hanging out in places with talented people should serve to act like garlic to vampires.



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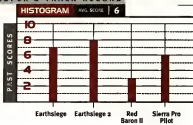


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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Tribes

A first-person shooter, a jet-pack sim, and a strategy game all in one

Let me explain real quickly how this industry usually works. A game publisher brings a new title and its developer to our lush corporate headquarters (uhh ... yeah, that's the ticket) and proceeds to talk up the game's virtues. After showing off a movie of gameplay and giving us a glimpse of some early levels, they may even let us play the game for a few minutes. Then we use our innate skill at determining the game's worth to create a preview full of so much information that public relations people often call us for info on the title.

When Dynamix swung by our offices with *Tribes*, they did it the right way. They came armed with four networked PCs, a tasty lunch, and what is already looking like one helluva game.

When we first heard of *Tribes*, and even after we saw a few screenshots, we were only mildly interested. After spending an



You really can see for miles and miles in *Tribes*.

entire afternoon playing against the developers we became damn excited. They even lent us a copy of the game so we could play on our own time (which we did in a big way, much to the detriment of our deadlines and the displeasure of our publisher). Usually companies are fearful of leaving early, buggy games behind with the press, but

Dynamix knows it has something special and just wants people to play it. The demo was full of the usual bugs associated with beta software, but it was quite evident that the playing experience is certain to be one of the best and most surprising this year.

Tribes is a unique first-person shooter set in the *Stars*ige

universe. A back-story of factional splits among the Tribesmen who fled Earth to discover the universe serves as the basis for getting involved in one of the five Tribes. Set 1,100 years after the final

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Dynamix
 PUBLISHER → Sierra
 RELEASE DATE → November '98
 3D SUPPORT → Direct3D, Gild.

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

Amazing new engine and spectacular team-oriented multiplayer battles are the way of the future.

THE HURDLE

Without any single-player game to speak of, is *Tribes* narrowing its audience?

THE HIT

The jet pack, zoom, vehicles, and astonishing levels should be enough to warrant this game as a must-have.



Indoor and outdoor areas maintain rich graphic detail and offer incredible gameplay variety.



Earthsiege, the story links together events you may have experienced in *Earthsiege 2*.

But the action is the key ingredient. The combination of absolutely breathtaking visuals, detailed and fluid motion-captured animation, and innovative gameplay are a true revelation. It's a multiplayer squad-level game that takes popular *Quake* mods like *Capture the Flag* to the next level. The single-player game will merely be you

and bots in a practice run for the enthralling multiplayer adventure.

You are a human (well, in the game anyway) who can choose from one of at least five armor suits all equipped with jet packs. One of the key ingredients to this original slant is the use of jet packs to fly over snow-covered mountains and perform aerial attacks from miles away. An adjustable zoom lets you get in close enough to shoot a mosquito off an enemy's ass from

three states away — with the sniper rifle anyway, which at this point is by far the best weapon in the game. Scoring a kill from miles away is a great feeling indeed. This will be toned down though, so that of the other weapons, including a rocket launcher-esque disc gun, grenade launcher, and machine gun (deadly at close range), all have their own advantages.

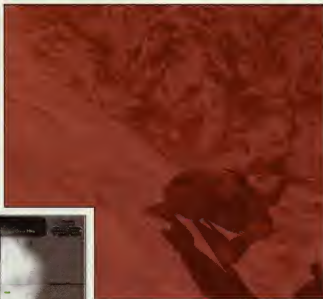
This long-distance warfare is balanced beautifully with undulat-

ing terrain and some of the best outdoor level design PCXL has ever seen. Environments range from snow-covered mountains to elevated bases, and each requires its own strategy.

The type of mission changes as well. Seamless blending of expansive outdoor areas directly into underground bases without any loading time immerses you into the tribal warfare that rages constantly.



The all-out aerial battles in *Tribes* have already been one of the best gaming moments this year.



This is what the *PC Gamer* team looked like the whole time we played against them; now they've suddenly stopped playing us. Wonder why?

There will also be a jet and land cruiser for traveling around the giant maps, and you can enter any one of the several turrets around your base to fend off attackers. If this were all, then *Tribes* would already be pitching its claim for best new game of the year. However, the way the levels are controlled and played out is really what makes *Tribes* such an addic-

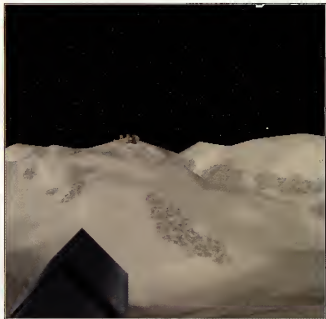


Carefully using the limited power in the jetpack is essential to surviving and traversing the tricky landscapes.

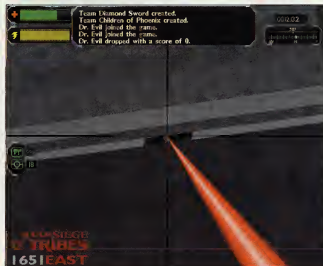
tive experience. One commander on each team (with upper team size yet to be determined) gets access to a command screen where he can set waypoints for his teammates (with modifiers such as attack, defend, and repair) and orchestrate precision attack and defense strategies. Additionally, the game will come packaged with about 20 preboud voice communications so you can quickly inform your team of trouble without taking your hands off of the main controls.

Look at the screenshots and you'll see the obvious attention to detail, but believe me, until you've taken to the field for a vicious six-on-six battle royale you will never know what you are missing. ➤

— MIKE SALMON writes poems, rap music, and just can't stop playing *Tribes* no matter how hard he tries.



Entering vehicles and turrets gives the game more variety and gives each team additional strategy.



You can almost see something in the distance, but zoom in at 20X and you are face to face with another dead opponent.

FIVE QUESTIONS

THE CRYPTIC INTERVIEW USING *TRIBES* VOICE COMMANDS WAS PUT ON HOLD AS PCL LET DEVELOPER SCOTT YOUNGBLOOD USE HIS OWN WORDS.

Q: Do you think the sniper rifle is too powerful?

A: The E3-build sniper rifle was definitely too powerful. It turned the game into a sniper-fest at points. We have reworked the rifle to be an energy-based weapon now. The end result is that you cannot fire the sniper rifle with the same rate of damage that you could before.

Q: Any plans for a rap song featuring the voice commands in *Tribes*?

A: Uh ... no.

Q: If you could gather a tribe of the best talent in the industry, who would you pick (no one off your team)?

A: John Carmack, Michael Abrash, Seamus Blackley, Sid Meier, and John Romero.

Q: Aren't you a little embarrassed about the Oregon college nicknames (Beavers and Ducks)?

A: Well, granted the names don't strike fear into the average foe ... but think of the feeling that results when a big, tough husky is trounced by a duck. It's like picking one of those "funny" names for your player in Quake, then handing out a big ol' can of whoop-ass to everyone on the server.

Q: Teamplay: wave of the future or strictly for wusses?

A: Definitely wave of the future. Granted there will always be a market for the one-on-one deathmatch style of fighting ... but the feeling that you get when a group of talented players gets together to face another talented group of players is unsurpassed.

TRIBAL POETRY



Editor in chief Mike Salmon tries his hand at poetry writing. Ah yes.

The voice commands that come with *Tribes* provide a limited dialogus to communicate quickly with team members. We've composed a poem solely using thus commands. To discuss poetry with PCL, email us at apocanddiditknovw@pclf.com.

I Don't Know

Hey! I don't know
Acknowledged, I don't know
Yeah
Yeah
Yeah
I don't know

I have the enemy flag, heading back to our base
Come get some!

Hi! Missed me!
Retreat
Regroup
Attack
How'd that feel?

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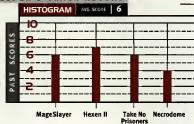
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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Heretic II

The game that was excommunicated by the pope

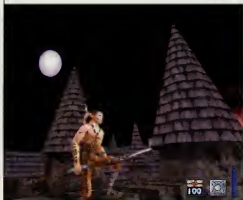
On an example of the full extent of its influence on the gaming world, we are now starting to see not just *Tomb Raider* clones, but clones of those clones. *Heretic II's* design and gameplay owe a debt to *Nightmare Creatures*, which was an action-based third-person game with a fantasy setting. But simply dismiss-

ing this game as a *Tomb Raider* — er, *Nightmare Creatures* clone only because of its third-person POV is pretty short-sighted. Also, getting hung up on whether a game is a clone of this or the other can be rendered meaningless if it ends up as a fun game. That said, we need to take a closer look at what could make *Heretic II* fun and unique.

After playing a beta copy of this game, I can say that the game makes a great first impression. It's hard to put your finger on why the graphics look so much better than *Quake II* considering it's basically an enhanced version. "It's the 32-bit color," according to project administrator Dan Freed. "Gone are the days of 256-color limitations."

In addition, a skeletal animation system makes the main character much more agile and real looking. The character in question, the apparently anorexic Corvus the Elf, certainly doesn't have much in common with *TR's* Lara Croft. You might know him from such games as *Heretic I*. After beating the villain in the first *Heretic* and losing a lot of weight, Corvus is off in search for a cure to a deadly plague affecting his people. Much drama will ensue.

Combat is the bread and butter of the game, and you'll have five spells and four weapons with which to fight for what's right. Corvus' main weapon is a spear that is a moderately effective close-range weapon, and you'll be able to pole-vault with it as well. Weapons like the rocket launcher-esque phoenix bow will require ammo, but spells drain a mana bar that unfortunately is not self-replenishing over time. So ▶



Corvus the Elf contemplates life surrounded by the detailed art and textures of *Heretic II*.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Raven Software
 PUBLISHER → Activision
 RELEASE DATE → November '98
 3D SUPPORT → OpenGL

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

Nightmare Creatures on steroids. *Heretic II* has the awareness factor for fans of the original.

THE HURDLE

Auto-aiming and sluggish controls will hurt gameplay if not corrected.

THE HIT

Poised to make strides in the third-person action genre — if it can find an audience, that is.



Nothing repels the undead better than some alpha-blended colored lighting.

FIVE QUESTIONS

PROJECT SUPERVISOR DAN FREED REPORTS ON SOME OF THE GREAT MYSTERIES OF LIFE.

Q: What was your goal in creating this game, and do you think you accomplished it?

A: We set out, almost a year ago, to create a fun, exciting third-person game that motivated players to want to continue through an engaging storyline. I think we have already succeeded.

Q: Who's your favorite 70s celebrity?

A: Jack Tripper.

Q: Who do you admire most in the industry and why?

A: Outside of my co-workers, I would have to say Sid Meier. While I have never met him, and he makes a different kind of game than we do, he is a very talented and intelligent game designer.

Q: Can you explain this whole *Heretic/Hexen* naming thing? Are they supposed to be a series or what?

A: All of the *Heretic* and *Hexen* games are part of a series. *Heretic*, *Hexen*, and *Hexen II* were part of the *Serpent Rider* Trilogy. They each took place on different worlds, and they each had different heroes. The one thing that bound them together was the fact that they all were fighting against one of the three *Serpent Riders*. *Heretic II* is just going back to see what happened to the hero of *Heretic*. We are exploring what his story is after he killed D'sparil, the first of the *Serpent Riders*.

Q: Why do hot dogs come in packages of eight and hot dog buns in packs of 10?

A: Because telephone poles don't have car doors. Actually I think you get 10 dogs and eight buns. You are expected to offer two of them to the god of grills, so you only need eight buns.



In a world where evil plagues strike down the innocent, one man must rise to save the day. He's an elf. He's a man. He's Elfman.

► you'll have to be easy on that trigger, as a few mace ball spells will drain that bar in a hurry. Four defensive countermeasures are a good idea, including a quartet of fireballs that circle you in a shield, and a teleport spell. The whole thing about *Heretic II*'s combat is that because of its third-person view, some concessions had to be made involving aim. Where the crosshair normally appears in first-person games is blocked by the character you control, so even shooting things in front of you takes some getting used to. So, a degree of autoaiming is present at all times and cannot be fully turned off. In addition, while not as sluggish as *Tomb Raider*, movement is definitely slower than *Quake II* — specifically, the circle strafing we all know and love. But hey, it's a different game.

Level design seems to be based around creating realistic fantasy

environments, if there is such a thing, as well as puzzle solving. As in *Tomb Raider*, there are some reasonably difficult jumping sequences, as well as plenty of switch-pulling and swimming-type puzzles, but it's definitely lacking the former's imagination and sense of discovery. With the phoenix bow, I found myself able to rocket-jump like a flea on crack over vast chunks of turf, which might be a good tactic to circumvent parts of a level if you get stuck.

This game has a multiplayer mode, something that many gamers take for granted nowadays. But, as Freed points out, *Heretic II* is the first third-person action game with multiplayer capabilities. Thanks to Id's robust client/server model, multiplayer games should be fast and stable. Planned gaming modes run the gamut of straight deathmatch to Capture the Flag to cooperative.

Heretic II has a chance of being a fun game, but it seems to be suffering from a distinct lack of new ideas. I'm also left wondering who the intended audience is: It doesn't seem likely to get a mass-market following because of its setting and main character, and hardcore first-person-shooter players, a picky bunch if ever there was one, might be turned off by the lack of precise aiming needed and the slightly short of *Quake*-like responsiveness in the controls. Basically, it seems that *Heretic II* isn't focusing enough on either the action or the exploration to really stand out from the crowd of upcoming games in this super-competitive genre. Since it's still in development, it can repent before it's too late.

— ED LEE is also a clone of a clone.

FAMOUS ELVES

CORVUS

WHY HE'S AN ELF: Cause he's a male wolf

ELF-LIKE ACTIVITY: Shoots a bow
REAL OR FICTIONAL: Polygonal



ERNIE

(aka The Keebler Elf)

WHY HE'S AN ELF: Because he lives in a tree

ELF-LIKE ACTIVITY: Bakes
REAL OR FICTIONAL: Real — he's on TV!



SPOCK

WHY HE'S AN ELF: Because he has pointy ears

ELF-LIKE ACTIVITY: Pinches people when they aren't looking

REAL OR FICTIONAL: Leonard Nimoy doesn't exist



LEPRECHAUN

WHY HE'S AN ELF: Because he has a pot of gold

ELF-LIKE ACTIVITY: Sings, dances

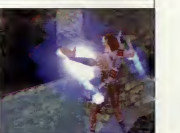
REAL OR FICTIONAL: He told me to burn down my house



The 22 levels are more linear than *Heretic I*'s hub system.



Client-side physics and special effects will reduce lag.



AI "buoys" will tell monsters where to go and what to do.



"Arrrrgh, I just had my chest waxed! I'll make you pay for that, you vile fiends!"

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surrounding you.

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your last
few rounds -

cold, dog-tired,
wounded.


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day was
yesterday.




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Who Are They?

Sierra funded Relic for the development of *Homeworld*. CEO Alex Garden previously served as lead programmer on *Triple Play 98* at EA, preparing him for his position at Relic. The talented team looks like it'll be a player for years to come.

Homeworld

Epic space battles the way they oughta be

Call Alex Garden, CEO of Relic Entertainment, a current hot property in the development market after wowing the crowds at E3 with *Homeworld*, its new realtime strategy game set in the depths of space. He's playing *Unreal*.

"I'm in the floating city. I must be near the end," he says.

"No, you're not."
"Damn it."

I'm not calling about *Unreal*, or *Fallout* ("Finished that recently. Excellent game," enthused Garden), but about *Homeworld*. After spending time with a beta version, playing single- and multiplayer skirmishes, I consider it something different enough to be worth following.

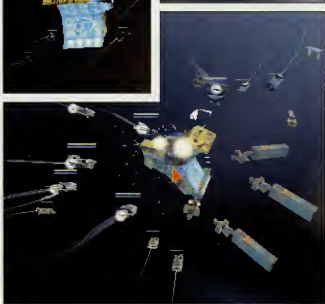
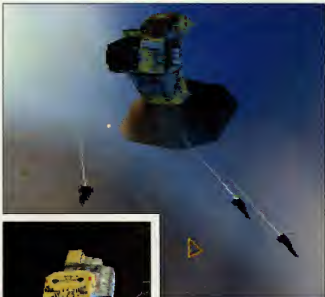
"It began in a discussion I had with friends about two and a half years ago," Garden explains. "I was working at EA [as lead programmer on *Triple Play 98*], drinking a case load of Coke, and then this physical thing happened. [This was Coca-

Cola, right?] After 30 seconds I had the entire game design in my head. It was weird. I took it to Radical Entertainment but they didn't like it, nor did EA, but Scott Lynch at Sierra saw it and that was that."

So, just 18 months into the full-time development of *Homeworld*, a team of 17 are now putting together what Garden describes as "a straight realtime strategy game, a fact that we're not trying to hide,

but we just got rid of all the things we hated in games like *StarCraft*, *C&C*, and *WarCraft II*."

A fairly detailed storyline sees you leading your race of people across the galaxy back to their



The complex but elegant interface lets you attack with massive fleets.

FIVE QUESTIONS

ALEX GARDEN WAS ONLY TOO HAPPY TO STAND IN THE SPOTLIGHT OF THE PROBING FIVE QUESTIONS.

Q: What do you think of being referred to as "the next Dave Perry"?

A: I haven't finished a game yet. *Homeworld* isn't out, and although I love it, who knows if anyone else will. It must be because I'm tall.

Q: Why hasn't anyone thought of *Homeworld* before?

A: Don't know. But credit where it's due, Peter Molyneux [former Bullfrog creative mastermind] had a project that he described that appeared almost identical. But they killed it because he didn't think that it had it.

Q: So you're 23 and CEO of a company with one of the hottest titles of the coming year. How cool is that?

A: Terrifying. And certainly not as cool as people think it is. The frivolity of youth is not available any more. If I screw up, 30 people lose their jobs. I'm a big fan of racing, and it's like that, tearing headlong around a bend but never taking the chance to pause for reflection in case you miss something. That's what running Relic is like.

Q: Is it possible that the artists on *Homeworld* have been watching too much "Babylon 5"?

A: That's the least influence. I've seen it once, and an artist has seen it once, but people mention it. If we create a ship design that looks too much like a "Babylon 5" ship, then we scrap it. *Star Wars* is certainly the biggest influence.

Q: Have you ever stolen wine?

A: When it was left to me to find alcohol, I'd say that I "finagled" some wine, rather than stole it. [Either way Mike Solman had no moral dilemma in drinking it.]

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Relic Entertainment
PUBLISHER → Sierra
RELEASE DATE → Q1 '99
3D SUPPORT → Their own GL, Direct3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

Amazed crowds at E3 with the — ahem — "Babylon 5"-style cinematics and action sequences.

THE HURDLE

A good balance of unit style and format in an environment without real boundaries has never been done in the RTS market.

THE HIT

With Blizzard's *StarCraft* such a strong seller, those gameplay elements have to be real standouts.



"Just step on the gas, Herb. I may be paranoid, but I still think that battlecruiser is following us."

fabled *Homeworld*. Of course, the races that displaced your people eons ago are still around and not willing to give up their territory, so the only option is strategic battle.

Sporting 25 units, each with its own carefully balanced strengths and vulnerabilities, the game's vast tracts of space offer a unique perspective on the strategies familiar to the C&C crowd. There's no ground, no hills, no trees or ridges, so how is space made into an interesting battle map? "There aren't choke points that limit the number of units travelling through a particular area, as in C&C for

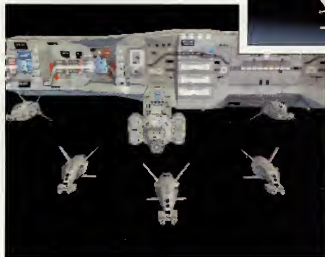
example," explains Gården, "but gameplay elements like balancing fuel consumption, giving your fighter units limited range, nebulae that block sensors, and resource availability [mining asteroids] make the game interesting."

Homeworld's core engine is not something that is open-ended in the vein of *Total Annihilation*. "Chris Taylor [designer of *TA*] was something of a mentor of mine," Gården says. "We had big arguments about this, and I don't agree with *TA's* style. You can't identify with any unit other than the commander and you never feel like you're in

charge and know what's going on because there's always something new coming along."

The influence of *Star Wars* is evident in some of *Homeworld's* action sequences, as the swarms of fighters and interceptors descend like flies into raging battles. The scenes it creates are certainly in the epic vein of the *Star Wars* franchise, but with the backing of a complex set of possibilities for strategy, incorporating research, building queues, and fuel or

resource limitations, *Homeworld* certainly has the ingredients necessary to make it a standout



All your fancy formations won't amount to much if you don't bring enough fire power to take the target down.

OUT OF THIS WORLD

The venture back to this *Homeworld* got us thinking about a few people who couldn't possibly be from this planet, and why they are really here.

TAMMY FAYE MESSNER (NÉE BARKER)
ALIEN TRAITS: Just look at her

EVIL PLOT: Mate with phony Christian evangelist and lure dull Midwestern senior citizens into a cult of same-minded freaks

BOB BARKER
ALIEN TRAITS: Perfect hair, ability to maintain straight face when

encountering money-crazed idiots

EVIL PLOT: Continually provide bizarre reminders to castrate cats and dogs and therefore eliminate household pets

KATHY LEE GIFFORD

ALIEN TRAITS: Always freakishly happy, and tends to surround herself with other aliens

EVIL PLOT: Give birth to "the chosen one" (God) who will one day take over and destroy the Earth

DICK CLARK

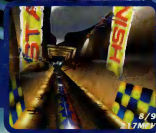
ALIEN TRAITS: Been alive for nearly a century and still looks the same

EVIL PLOT: Brainwash teenagers with catchy music and 15 minutes of fame, and one day take over the Earth (likely because he'll be the only one still alive)



when it hits shelves, likely in Q1 '99. What you're hearing right now is the sound of the execs at EA and Radical kicking themselves.

— **ROB SMITH's** *Homeworld* is Sheffield, England.



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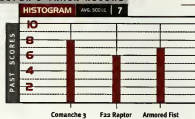
Sonic cannon accesses short cuts and creates obstacles.

www.segasoftware.com/planecrazy

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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Delta Force

Polygons? No. 3D support? No. Voxel Space 3, that's what it's all about

Things seem to be getting a little more, dare I say it, realistic these days. Take *Delta Force*, for example. NovaLogic, not a name generally associated with the action side of gaming (but a hot player in the fascinating, albeit a bit boring, world of the realistic modern jet sim) has taken its in-house Voxel Space engine and thrown a commando-mission, first-person, action/strategy type affair at it.

For background, *Delta Force* is a division of the U.S. Army created in 1977 as an elite commando unit. Its specialization is in the area of hostage rescue and covert commando shenanigans behind enemy lines in seriously hostile countries.

In previous NovaLogic releases, the Voxel Space graphics engine, created by programmer Kyle Freeman, was used in flight sims. But a year ago, under project leader Daniele Gaetano, the concept for

using human characters rather than planes in a large-scale, realistic environment took shape.

Delta Force throws you into the position of a commando unit leader. Forty missions will see you cross varied dangerous locales (including parts of Asia, Africa, and Eastern

Europe), rescuing hostages, eliminating drug-trafficking facilities, destroying chemical weapon plants, and finding SCUD target sites for aerial bombardment.

From either a first- or third-person perspective, you control one commando in a unit with direct

control over one other person. Get killed and it's mission over — there's no jumping into the body of another character. Here, the realism factor is adjustable — you can select either a level where one or two bullets will kill, or a more arcade-style mode, where you ▶



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → NovaLogic
 PUBLISHER → NovaLogic
 RELEASE DATE → November '98
 3D SUPPORT → None

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

The fantasy world of the hard-as-nails Doom Marine is given a real-world perspective.

THE HURDLE

Voxel Space 3 engine doesn't have the same buzz, nor does it look as good as *Quake II* or *Unreal*.

THE HIT

Team play is a hot multiplayer property, and there's nothing like a good commando raid with buddies to highlight that.



Ahhh, a return to the Cold War. Ruskies in the crosshairs. (Is that Dolph Lungren?)

FIVE QUESTIONS

PCLX WENT UNDERCOVER AND STEALTHILY APPROACHED WES ECKHART, PRODUCER OF DELTA FORCE, TO GRILL HIM WITH THE FIVE QUESTIONS.

Q: Did you have to watch your commando advisor kill anyone to ensure that you got the right effects?

A: While we were rehearsing for the motion-capture shoot, our *Delta Force* advisor demonstrated the rear kidney-stab stranglegold — on ME! There also used to be two lead producers for the game ... now there is just me.

Q: Is it possible to make a game with guns without a sniper rifle?

A: If a gamer is doing all of his shooting within 25 feet, I can see why a sniper rifle would be unnecessary. But if you want to rain death and destruction on your opponent from 3/4 of a mile away, you need a weapon with the proper reach.

Q: What was the most fun weapon to test during research?

A: Definitely the sniper rifle. There is just too much fun in looking through a sniper scope and seeing your target trying to be sneaky 3/4 of a mile away. He has no idea you're watching him and no idea he's about to become one with the ground.

Q: Any bazooka-type weapons for big explosions (for taking out buildings or vehicles)?

A: For dealing with tanks and other armored vehicles, you'll have access to the Light Anti-tank Weapon (LAW). For taking down buildings, a satchel charge is the weapon of choice.

Q: Why can't you play the bad guys?

A: How would you like to be in the middle of a high-pressure arms deal, only to see your associates drop to the ground and not know where the shots are coming from? You run for your truck, only to see it blow up right in front of you and one of your compatriots running around on fire. Finally, with your camp in ruins and nowhere to go, you are reduced to a crying, quivering mass. I mean, I guess we could add that as an option ... but we're not.



The Voxel engine demonstrates its ability to show huge distances without fogging.

► have a health bar and can take 10 or so hits. This great flexibility, allowing for varied playing styles.

But the real key appears to be the realism. NovaLogic has been working on incorporating a responsive AI to enemies and players' teammates to ensure the detailed reactions can create those pants-wettingly nervous moments. For a start, the AI is going to be adjustable for accuracy and awareness. Enemies will have hearing, so they will respond to footsteps or gunshots by doing anything from taking cover, to calling in reinforcements, to running like hell, to cowering away like the drug-addled bad guys they really are.

They'll also have vision, so spotting a dead comrade might make them yell out to alert others, or simply put them in a heightened state of readiness (which likely means they'll be shooting as soon as you pop your head over the smoothly rolling voxel landscape). The method and direction of an attack can also make a difference.

There doesn't seem to be any really detailed pre-mission strate-

gic planning, but you're going to have a number of devices at your disposal to make getting in and out of locations fast and quiet. The sniper scope for the M4 rifle allows enemies to be taken out from long, long distances. Of course, this in itself could alert the baddies' buddies, and this is where weapons like the knife might come in handy. I never thought I'd be able to sneak up on a character and slit his throat in a game — should make for some interesting moments in the co-op and team multiplayer games (you can play all 40 missions cooperatively, with enhanced objectives the more players you have on your team).

Stealthy movement allows your commando to crawl (and strafe while crawling), lie prone, jump, and sneak up on enemies. There's an arsenal of real-world weapons, including the HK MP5-SD (suppressed fire for keeping it quiet) and M203 grenade launcher that attaches to the M4 rifle.

Body-specific damage has been incorporated into the motion-captured movements, providing a total of 30 different death animations.

Rainbow Six has brought stealthy team gameplay into vogue, and *Delta Force*'s 24-bit palette Voxel Space engine, while still not embracing 3D support (it doesn't really need it, apparently), gives the game a look and style that could certainly hit the mark. Adjustable options and a compelling AI are the key elements to make missions tense yet still action-based, and NovaLogic looks right on track.

— ROB SMITH can't wait to slit someone's throat — but refuses to soy whose.

WHAT WE WANT

We've spent far too much time playing *Rainbow Six*, and we have a few ideas on things that could make this tactical hostage rescue thing even better.

SMOKE BOMB
Crimes, with fogging effects, this should help the stealth moves.

SAVING PRIVATE RYAN MIRROR MOVE

I want to see around corners without having my head taken off.

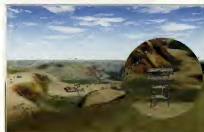
UNDERCOVER
Kill enemy, steal uniform, avoid getting captured and shot as a spy.

DANCING AROUND NAKED AND ACTING LIKE A CHICKEN
As the enemy watches your antics, a buddy sneaks up with the killing blow.

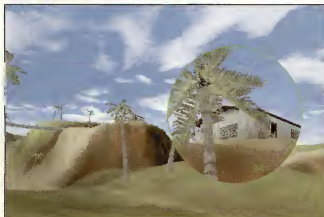
CRAZY GUY FROM BROOKLYN
Hard as nails, but with a heart of gold. He lasts till the last 10 minutes of the game before tragically biting it. There's not a dry eye in the house.

THE LEAVE-ME-HERE-I'LL-HOLD-THEM-OFF GUY
He's shot in the leg, will slow you down, but does the honorable thing. Could be combined with the guy who throws himself on the platoon-threatening grenade.

LOVE INTEREST
 Aren't you more inclined to save a chick than even your besties of buddies? Take a leaf from the *Race Dawn* Chung character in *Arnie's Commando* — get bazooka, hold it the wrong way, fire, let sweet hilarity ensue.

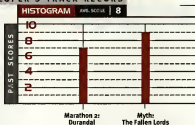


He reckons he's safe, but one clean shot to the head and the lookout is cleared.



Enemies will use windows for cover, making use of the sniper mode a key factor.

DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Myth II: Soulblighter

Heads will get flown

If you haven't played *Myth*, the killer realtime gore-fest from Bungie Software (and one of PCXL's Top 25 Guy Games in our September Issue), I'll sum it up for ya: A bunch of crazed *Braveheart* extras charge

some pissed-off, bloated zombies and begin hacking them up until the zombies stab themselves, triggering a gigantic explosion, which sends body parts and heads flying around and rolling down hills. Sound like fun?

"People like explosions," observes project leader Tuncer Deniz, "so we're incorporating a lot more of 'em." It's good to know Bungie's got its priorities straight.

Seriously, *Myth II* is by all indications shaping up to be one well-thought-out sequel that isn't content with just adding some new units and levels and calling it a game. "If you have a formula that works, don't mess with it," says Deniz on sequel making. "However, I think you need to look at all

the deficiencies that were in the first one and work on those things. And you have to take the notch a little bit higher."

You can see that way of thinking all over *Myth II*. The graphics have been improved, with much finer detail in the terrain, more frames of animation for the units, adjustable resolutions up to 1024 x 768, and animated 3D models, such as windmills and a drawbridge, in the battlefield. The improvements to gameplay all revolve around increasing the ease and amount of control you have over your units. The team decided they wanted the game to be fully playable using just the mouse. The



Your mother was a hamster and your father smelled of elderberries. Now go away before I taunt you a second time.



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Bungie
 PUBLISHER → Bungie
 RELEASE DATE → Q4 '98
 3D SUPPORT → Glide, Redline

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

Myth II follows the sequel tradition of making incremental changes on a good foundation.

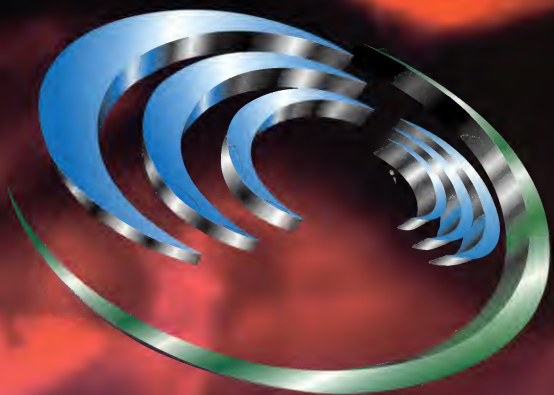
THE HURDLE

The tactical RTS arena *Myth* helped create is getting increasingly crowded. And *Myth* didn't sell well.

THE HIT

Nothing but a sure thing if the critical acclaim can turn into sales.

The warlock's wide assortment of spells will put you in a world of pain.



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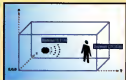
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Here, some librarians bitterly debate the Dewey decimal system.

camera now rotates by moving the cursor to the corners of the screen, and a control bar lined with buttons is new, and includes important commands like Scatter and Stop that were previously only hard-to-remember hotkeys.

Formations have been upgraded and now can be quickly oriented to face any direction. We've got some new content here, too, with a bunch of new units and a totally revamped and beefed-up magic system making entrances. For example, a new unit, the warlock, has access to a wide range of offensive spells such as fireballs and poison gas, and has an energy bar that recharges over time.

The multiplayer mode has gone through the sequel mill as well. Free Internet play will still be available on Bungie.net. *Myth II* will retain gameplay missions such as Capture the Flag, as well as add new ones such as the tentatively titled Choke the Chicken, in which each team must protect a chicken while trying to kill the enemy's. It's the same twisted humor that made *Myth* an original.

What diehard fans of the first *Myth* incarnation most frequently asked for, according to Deniz, was a map editor. Bungie will come through with not just a powerful, intuitive map editor that implements changes into the game engine in realtime, but also an editor for all the

units in the game — you'll be able to alter every last ability and statistic of a unit. Bungie is not yet sure whether the editor will be ready in time to package with *Myth II* (or whether the company will have to charge you for it), but you will definitely be able to either download it or buy a boxed copy if it doesn't make it in time.

Besides being able to customize the game, Deniz cites increased immersiveness as the main goal, which might be one of the buzz words all the developers are using, but Bungie and Deniz really seem to mean it: "The bottom line is we're trying to make the experience for *Myth II* a lot more immersive in gameplay — the terrain itself is more detailed and alive. It'll be a far richer experience, and the battles will be more intense." Sounds good to me.

The last thing I wanted to know was whether Bungie planned to

FIVE QUESTIONS

TUNCER DENIZ, PROJECT LEADER, ON HALLOWEEN COSTUMES AND ROLLINGS HEADS:

Q: What were some of the inspirations for *Myth*?

A: The most obvious one is *Braveheart*. We all fell in love with that movie. We tried to create a game that was similar in spirit. Hack and slash, but with strategy.

Q: Who do you admire most in the biz and why?

A: I'd probably have to say Carmack, cuz he really does his own thing and pushes technology to its fullest extent, and he doesn't worry about what other people are saying. He just wants his game to kick ass. He's a total workaholic too, and I really admire that.

Q: So which character in *Myth* would you be most likely to dress up for Halloween?

A: The berserker — they've got these long dreadlocks and kilts and painted faces. That or the wight, cuz they're half decayed and bloated with gas.

Q: Did you motion capture a real rolling head for true rolling-head physics?

A: We're not at liberty to say.

Q: Who's your favorite *you* celebrity?

A: I'd have to say Father Brady from "The Brady Bunch" [Mike Brady]. It was the clothes, man, the clothes.

tone down the insane difficulty level for the sequel. And after much whining, they agreed. I wonder if the Molotov cocktail I was casually tossing up and down had anything to do with it.

— ED LEE was an extra in *Braveheart* who got violently dismembered after showing his arse.

GAMING MYTHS

We here at PCOL are set to dispel all of the untruths and myths to provide a community where truth, justice, and the freedom to abuse these liberties can prevail.

MYTH: The *Nadu* Builder code
REALITY: We tried and tried to get this code to work, but the fact is, it just isn't there — although there are some patches on the Internet that have Lara getting off her kit faster than the Spice Girls.

MYTH: Playing with yourself will make you go blind
REALITY: With more than 40 years of, uh... alone time between us, you'd think at least one of us would be blind if this were true. Still, multi-player (mmmh... *mégage à trois*) is preferred when do-able.

MYTH: Playing violent games often leads to tri-state killing sprees
REALITY: Violent games are actually a great means of aggression. Besides, most hardcore gamers are scared of the real world and rarely venture outside the Internet.

MYTH: *Nudities* in *Mortal Kombat*
REALITY: I also, and who'd want to see Raiden nude anyway?



The Dutch deal with their World Cup defeat by chopping each other to bits.



Myth's sequel lets you run around on big 3D models such as a boat (left).



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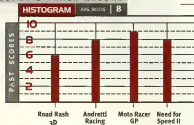


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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Need for Speed III: Hot Pursuit

Police chases without consequences

Admit it, you were dying to speed away and leave that snippy, uptight cop in the dust the last time you got pulled over. Those tawdry flashing lights are just another element that taunts you to step on the gas for a

full-on law-breaking chase, which you always imagine is the world's best form of racing.

Need For Speed III lets you bash into cop cars and drive away like mad. Or if you want to do the chasing, you can insanely pursue civilians in your cop car. Either way,

the chase along treacherous roads is challenging and exhilarating.

Unlike typical sims such as *NASCAR*, *NFS III* speaks to the common man. "It's more about the fantasy of getting behind the wheel of stunning and powerful exotic cars in a real-world setting rather than racing ovals and adjusting the pressures," producer Mark Madland says. "I think people relate to their desire to drive these stunning cars in a very different way than the fantasy of

taking part in a sanctioned racing event. Chasing or being chased is very different than shaving seconds off your lap times to get to the finish line."

While it avoids much of the tweaking inherent in racing sims, *NFS III* does strive for realistic handling based on the car you choose to drive. Among the models are a Jaguar XK8, a Lamborghini Diablo SV, an Aston Martin DB7, and a Ferrari 456 GT. "Each car drives very differently based on its performance specs," Madland says. "You can learn how to use the particular strengths of a given car on different tracks to beat the challenging AI opponents and your friends." You'll even be able to race against yourself with a ghost mode (where you race against a cloned version of your last race), as well as replay your best moments. The multiplayer element should add as much to the game's lifespan as it did in *NFS II*, but ▶

A little bit country, a little bit rock and r — er, city: You'll have to learn the ins and outs of both.



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Electronic Arts
 PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts
 RELEASE DATE → October '98
 3D SUPPORT → Glide, Direct3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

NFS III adds downloadable cars, multiplayer capabilities, and 3D support to an already-successful framework.

THE HURDLE

The competition — such as *Acidade's Test Drive 5* — is getting better as well.

THE HIT

Realistic racing environments and the ever-changing menu of cars to drive give it extra appeal.

Neither snow, nor rain, nor gloom of night can stop cars from the swift completion of their appointed tracks.

FIVE QUESTIONS

NFS III PRODUCER MARK MADLAND SLOWED DOWN FOR A SECOND TO SUBMIT TO PCQL'S OFFICIAL INTERROGATION.

Q: What's your favorite NFS III course?

A: I like them all for different reasons, but right now I'm spending a lot of time on Rocky Pass. I think that goes back to the fact that I grew up in central Washington and have spent lots of time negotiating the challenges of those types of roads.

Q: Do you get to drive the supercars in real life to see if the game models handle correctly?

A: A couple of members of the team have been in the cars when they've been put through the paces. I know I'd want to spend a considerable amount of time behind the wheel before taking them up to anything close to those kinds of speeds — it's kinda different when you have to face real-life consequences.

Q: Have any team members actually outrun the police?

A: Not that anyone will admit to publicly, though I'm pretty suspicious that a couple of our guys have. We did drive around with Eric Collier (deputy sheriff from Chelan County) when we were researching the Pursuit mode, which gave us a chance to really feel what pursuing and chasing down cars is all about.

Q: What kind of car do you drive in real life?

A: Ford Bronco.

Q: Do you ever race it?

A: Not at sanctioned events.



Weather effects, such as raindrops splattering on your windshield and slick roads, up the challenge factor.

▶ even after you test drive the game's 11 models on each of nine tracks, you'll be able to download new car models from EA's website.

Besides the cars, the tracks, too, were modeled after real environments. "We studied sight lines, road curvature, elevation changes, etc. that are represented in real-world driving, and applied what we learned to our tracks to replicate the challenges of driving on a wide variety of differing road conditions," Madland explains. Tracks range from twisting country roads to futuristic cities.

Ambient sounds, including mooing cows, barking dogs, cathedral bells, and, of course, police chatter add atmosphere. Besides that, elements like reflecting off road surfaces, and weather effects not only help immerse you into the experi-

ence, but also test the cars' handling differences. "Weather, time of day, police — these are all real-life factors that we need to consider that really change your approach to the game," Madland emphasizes. A balance of track design, car handling, and opponent AI is the number one goal of the NFS III team, Madland says.

If this tricky combination can be mastered, NFS III could be the racing game with mass appeal. As Madland put it: "NFS provides a fantasy that's tied to something we know and something I think most of us want. People like to push the limits of performance, competition, and their own skills, and racing is a fantastic environment to get to all of these."

— CARRIE SHEPHERD doesn't really have anything against cops.

BAD BOYS. BAD BOYS

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O.J.

O.D.B.

Or Dirty Dumb of the Wu-Tang Clan CRIME: Stealing a pair of \$10 tennis shoes despite the fact that he is on his probation. PUNISHMENT: It's time for O.D.B. to go back to the "hood with no money, no clothes, and a sign that reads "I work for the man."



O.J. Simpson

O.J. SIMPSON

CRIME: Getting away with murder. PUNISHMENT: It's time for O.J. to go back to the "hood with no money, no clothes, and a sign that reads "I work for the man."



Bill Clinton

BILL CLINTON

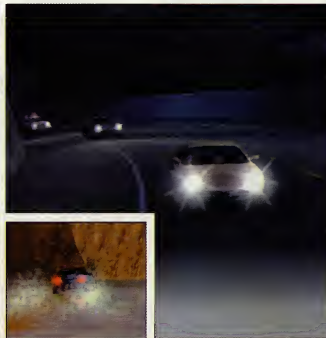
CRIME: Criminally putting a woman in a wheelchair, and an audience reaction to the American people. PUNISHMENT: Humbly offering public apology in national TV... if it's not too late.

GARY COLEMAN

CRIME: Punched a lady in the eye (she would have been sitting down) and said "I hate black people!" PUNISHMENT: Should be thrown in some jail cell as "O'Brien's (stolen)" co-stars Dany Plato and Todd Bridges, or made to star in "The Emmet Lewis Story."

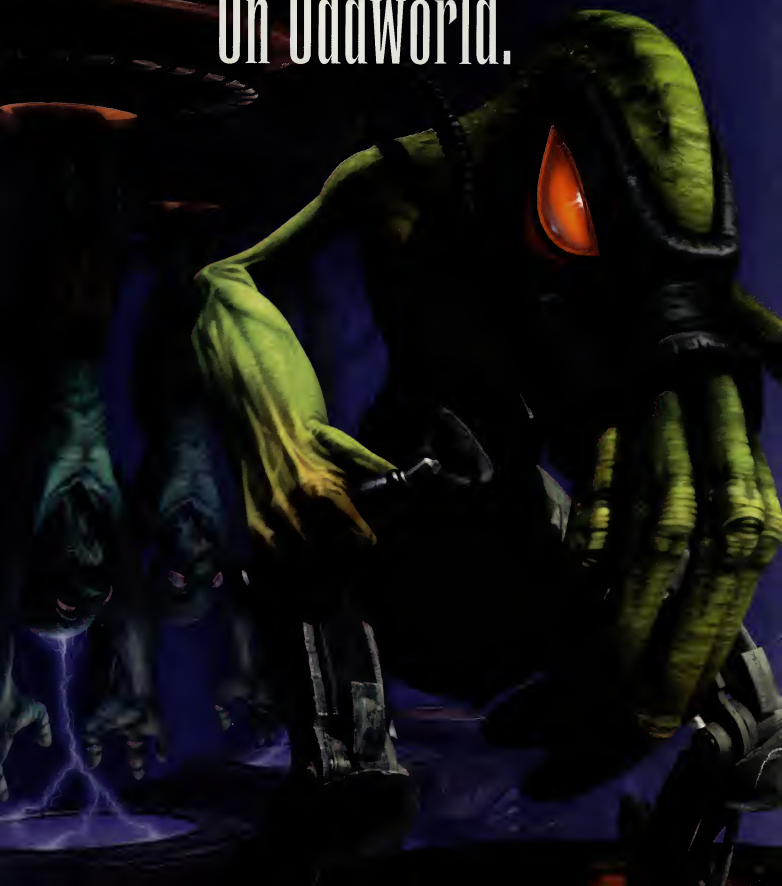


Gary Coleman



Replicating real-world driving conditions, NFS III provides a wide variety of tracks that allow you to test your speed at different times of day.

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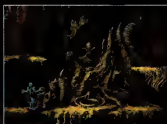


Some cry because of the challenging gameplay. Others cry for their enslaved brothers. But most Mudokons cry because electrodes are attached to their tear glands, stimulating the ingredients for SoulStorm Brew, the best-selling nauseating elixir from SoulStorm Brewery.

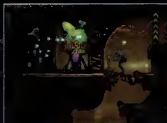
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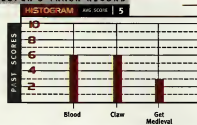
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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Blood II: The Chosen

New engine, new *Blood*, but is that enough?

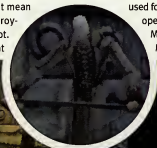
Conspicuous by its absence in last month's "Quake II Killers" story, *Blood II* hopes to bring home its unique gameplay elements and macabre sense of humor on an all-new, cutting-edge 3D engine.

So why didn't *Blood II* make the cut for our story? Simply put, we didn't rank it among the 15 best first-person shooters on the horizon. Does that mean it's going to suck royally? Absolutely not. The fact is that

there are more than 20 new 3D shooters that all look amazing, *Blood II* included.

The LithTech engine being used for *Blood II*, developed cooperatively by Monolith and Microsoft, looks to

have all the features and capabilities of *Unreal* with a few major additions. Since Microsoft collaborated on the design of the engine, it will use all the new DirectX 6 features and, unlike *Unreal*, should run smoothly on every 3D card. Additionally, the LithTech engine



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Monolith Productions
 PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
 RELEASE DATE → October
 3D SUPPORT → DirectX6, OpenGL

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

Brand-new LithTech engine gives the *Blood* series a much needed shot in the arm.

THE HURDLE

The original was nothing to write home about, and the competition is incredible.

THE HIT

Coming out just after *Half-Life* and *Sin* could prove to be the death of *Blood II*.

The captions for these pictures are actually the award-winning one-liners to appear in *Blood II*. We rank them on a scale of 1 (retarded) to 3 (passable).



"When you get to hell, tell them I sent you. You can get a group discount." Verdict: 1 — And this won't

FIVE QUESTIONS

PCXL THROWS FIVE INTERESTING — YET UNMISTAKABLY DISTURBING — QUESTIONS AT THE UNFLAPPABLE JAMES WILSON, GAME DESIGNER OF BLOOD II: THE CHOSEN, AND HE DOESN'T EVEN FLINCH.

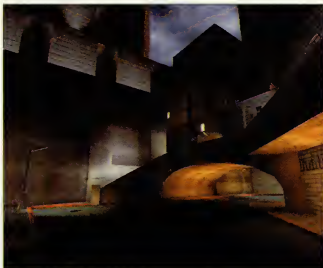
Q: Have you ever bathed in blood?
A: I used to all the time, but I've found that you can't really get that deep-clean.

Q: Your call: Unreal vs. Blood II vs. Quake II vs. Nam?
A: Well, Unreal would start off strong, dazzling everyone with its good graphics, but once the fighting got down and dirty, the Unreal arsenal just wouldn't hold up to the powerful Blood II weapons. The Quake Marine would perform valiantly, but its movement would be too slow, and jumping too weak, and Caleb would run circles around him. With only Nam left to face The Chosen, I think you know how it would turn out.

Q: Is Blood II like one more bloody than Blood, you know, because it is one more than 1?
A: More like 20 times. We were never really good at math. With dynamic limb loss, hit location damage for recoils and deaths, and enough blood to fill a cabal-owned oil tanker, Blood II will do a lot more than just one-up the gore from Blood.

Q: Some say the action in Blood augmented a bit prematurely. What do you say to them?
A: Actually I agree with that, but it is a mistake we won't make again. We're putting a lot of work into Blood II to make sure that there are plenty of surprises throughout.

Q: What is Blood II going to do to stand out from the plethora of other first-person shooters?
A: A variety of things. Blood's gameplay is pretty unique, with faster movement, more robust jumping, better control, outrageous weapons, tons of gore, lots of dark humor, etc.



"Every night it's get revenge this and get revenge that — what about MY needs?" Verdict: 2 — Good punch line, but retarded lead-in.

► allows for interactive backgrounds that players can affect by blowing up walls, knocking down buildings, and leaving a trail of bullet holes on any surface. With the new technology in place, Blood II already has an enormous advantage over the original Blood, which ran on the aging Build engine.

Like nearly every game ever released, Blood II is set in a not-too-distant post-apocalyptic future. Caleb returns from the original and is one of four playable characters. No matter which character you choose to play, the basic idea is to shoot all the bad guys until you reach a final bad guy, and once you kill him, it is game over. I don't mean to make this sound trivial, but to go on and on about the lurking evil the player must overcome seems a bit redundant these days.

Remaining true to its bodily fluid-inspired name, Blood II has no shortage of gore. In fact, the game

will feature more than 30 weapons including microwave guns, the flayer (a unique Hellraiser-inspired weapon that unleashes chains of your unsuspecting foes), the decapitator (I'm guessing heads will roll), and old faves such as the voodoo doll and flare gun. Anyone who played the original knows that the single best part of Blood is the ability to dismember enemies and then kick around their heads. The sequel will up the ante even more.

Like any first-person shooter, the key to Blood II is its multi-player mode. A variety of options such as Bloodbath, Co-op, Capture the Flag, and Teampay will come packed with the game. Even if the deathmatch levels aren't up to Cone of Tragedy standards, Monolith plans to include a level editor that allows you to build levels, create skins, and even animate characters. The complexity of the editor may be a bit much for our resident level designer Dan to handle, but the variety and features make it a very professional tool.

Utilizing 3D sound technology enables the worlds to be alive with ricocheting bullets (they actually make different sounds on each surface hit) and more dialogue (I should say one-liners) than any game to date.

Like many of the games I have had the opportunity to see and play, Blood II really does look great. I'm just not convinced that it is up to challenging the likes of Sin, Half-Life, and Prey, but I have been wrong before. ►

— MIKE SALMON has actually only been wrong once, and it wasn't about games.

BLOOD SUCKERS

The members of our cultists and other-worldly hainars reminded us of a few groups and how we'd best deal with them.

MICHAEL JACKSON APPEARED IN: "Thriller" (his as date from his)

VICTIMS: Mostly 22-year-old boys
HOW TO KILL: He's been dead for years. Current incarnation is actually sister LaToya

JASON PATRIC APPEARED IN: The Lost Boys

VICTIMS: The few movie geeks who actually paid \$7.99 to see *Spew 2*
HOW TO KILL: Cancer already died, but an FMV game appearance should finish the job

OZZY OSBOURNE APPEARED IN: Concert with five animals

VICTIMS: Headless boys and girls
HOW TO KILL: Upstairs-down stairs through his black heart

CHECH MARIN APPEARED IN: From Desk 'N' Down

VICTIMS: Stained high school dropouts who try desperately to model their lives after *Up In Smoke*
HOW TO KILL: Lace his train with garlic



Michael Jackson



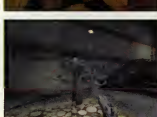
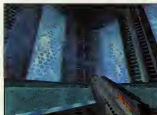
Jason Patric



Ozzy Osbourne



Cheech Marin



"If you run, you're only gonna die tired." Verdict: 3 — Cocky and imaginative.



"If I'm going to miss getting into heaven, why miss it by inches?" Verdict: 3 — Classic delivery.

**The meek
may inherit
the earth,
but we strongly
suggest they
stay off our
playing field.**



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Deadly

Unreal was abandoned in the PCXL office this month. Now, it's all about *Rainbow Six*. This game had editors working around the clock — unfortunately, on their playing technique, not on their stories. As a result, you can be sure that our review is extremely insightful and well-thought-out.



Rainbow Six: Cause for murder?

Unfortunately, much of the rest of the magazine was written the day before it was to go to the printer. Will the editorial staff be murdered by the deluged managing editor and art staff? Will next month be any better, or will a new game arrive that offers equal gameplay addictiveness? Stay tuned for next month's reigning distraction.

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
MORTAL KOMBAT 4	It's a PC fighting game. Enough said.
EMERGENCY FIGHTERS FOR LIFE	D.O.A.
RAILROAD TYCOON II	Aren't you a little old to be playing choo-choo?
AXIS AND ALLIES	We fell asleep before we even got the box open.

WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN

Flawless. Perfect. Better than that sex dream with Cameron Diaz and Gwyneth Paltrow

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 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 — don't even accept this game for free

1

KILLER GAME

Any game that receives a 9 or 10 from our rigorous 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 5 or 3 to qualify for the noose around the neck. Stay away from these gamers at all costs.



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

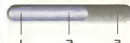
ACCELE-RATED >>

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 solid, and the smooth transition 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



DEVELOPER → Red Storm
PUBLISHER → South Peak Interactive
REQUIRED → P566, 16MB RAM, 20MB hard drive space
IDEAL → P200, 32MB RAM, Direct3D card, 28.8Kbps Internet connection, 320MB hard drive space

Rainbow Six

Hey *Quakeboy*, it's time to grow up



MULTIPLAYER

ACCELE-RATED

Rainbow Six may not move as smoothly as *Quake II* or *Unreal*, but its real-world environments are very convincing. The game runs best on the *Voodoo 2* and runs decently, but is a little more choppy, on the other cards.

VOODOO 2	1	2	3
VOODOO 1	1	2	3
RENDITION V2000	1	2	3
RIVA 128	1	2	3

API SUPPORT: Direct3D

SERIES HISTORY

Perhaps you're not familiar with the *Rainbow* games, but it has roots in the very beginnings of the computer game industry.

RAINBOW ONE (1966)

Running on an 80-ton supercomputer, this first game in the series enabled players to shoot a small square dot at a line representing Nikita Khrushchev.

RAINBOW TWO (1972)

The *Odyssey II* played the first multiplayer *Rainbow* game. One paddle represented Woodward and Bernstein and the other represented Nixon's chief of staff H.R. Haldeman.

RAINBOW THREE (1979)

Warren Robinett, the creator of *Adventure for the Atari 2600*, designed the third *Rainbow* game, which featured the stars of the popular "B.J." and the Bear" television series.

RAINBOW FOUR (1984)

The great videogame crash of 1984 sunk the fourth game in the series, which was made for Coleco's Adam computer. This racing game featured the exclusive Dodge Diplomat license.

RAINBOW FIVE (1990)

The last *Rainbow* game almost killed the franchise, as the Sega CD-based game introduced point-and-click to an audience not yet ready for *Myst*.

OK, it's time to put away all your pre-conceptions. I know exactly what you're thinking when you see *Rainbow Six*. The publisher pitches the game with words like "strategy," "simulation," and, worse yet, "realistic." To us hardcore action gamers, these words usually join together to spell one thing: "B-O-R-I-N-G." But trust me, your mind will change.

You will, at first, skip the daunting pre-mission planning, pressing as many buttons as possible to lead your crack military unit into a mission that ends in quick, sure death. You will return, using all your deathmatch skills to outmaneuver your enemies who simply laugh that smarmy terrorist laugh and slaughter you and every computer AI squad member who foolishly followed you on this suicide mission. If you are like me you'll try it a couple of times, won't get what the game is about, and simply quit.

Justifying why you quit is easy. The graphics, while detailed and

realistic, are not as polished as those in *Quake* and *Unreal*, and the sound is lackluster, never once ringing true. Compared to more-familiar shooters, the control feels sluggish, and frankly, it stinks to die after a single hit. Even the puffs of smoke that represent grenade explosions are subdued.

But something happens the next day. While you are chewing on your deviled ham sandwich at lunch, you begin to think about how your attacks could have been planned better, and the once-daunting pre-mission stuff suddenly becomes fascinating. Perhaps you could split your teams and choreograph simultaneous attacks on the same room, or better yet, sneak in and rescue the hostages without alerting the terrorists at all. You start to realize that the more you plan

beforehand, the less you have to be a superhero during the mission. It's at this point that you begin to appreciate the involving back-story and attention to detail.

Even if you're not a fan of Tom Clancy novels, you're sucked in by the drama behind each mission and now realize that the little sorties you embark on are building to a world-threatening conclusion.

When you return to the game you begin to see how the graphics, which once seemed drab, show far more variety and familiar environments than your typical first-person shooter. The control begins to make you see the limitations of real-world physics, and lets you know just how frightening it would be to be a real soldier in a dangerous situation. And the puffy grenade explosions that you once



Every conflict is not black and white. For instance, you have to decide if it's necessary to execute this surrendering prisoner in order to save others' lives.



Rainbow Six is not the first-person game you expect. Before you lead a unit of crack soldiers into battle, you must select who goes, outfit them, and then plan their actions. If you rush into battle without planning, you will, I repeat, will be slaughtered.

scoffed at are now the most frightening thing you could imagine.

As you slowly become more involved in the progression of 17 increasingly difficult missions, you find yourself thinking like a real spec-ops soldier. Whether the mission requires sneaking into a jungle hacienda, assaulting a biological weapon factory, or rescuing hostages in an amusement park, you're constantly forced to adapt your strategy to the situation.

You will also find yourself growing attached to your individual team members. Each of your operatives, be they assault, demolition, or electronics specialists, has their own skills and training levels. Keeping them alive becomes a major priority, because if they die, their replacement is often a wet-behind-the-ears recruit (or a hapless reserve). It's at this point that you wonder if the game could be any more involving, and the answer is yes.

Even though your thinking has been changed by the single-player game, you will still not be prepared for the multiplayer mode. Your first inclination will be to start a straight deathmatch, which quickly digresses into a bunch of scared soldiers hiding out, hoping

someone will cross their path. Then someone will suggest trying a mission together and you begin progressing through the same missions you've already solved, quickly learning the real strength of this game.

Once your squad is well trained against the computer, you will begin to desire more intense competition, which will be readily available on the Internet via free matching services. You will begin raiding strongholds controlled by the guys in architecture lab #6 at Purdue and fending off attacks by a crack squad from Boy Scout Troop 120 in Boise, Idaho. The camaraderie you build with your fellow team members is unmatched as you protect

each other, watch each other die (occasionally because of your own bullet), and avenge those deaths with all your well-honed skills.

Even though you will begin to love this game, you will be frustrated with it from time to time. You will find plenty of bugs (awful clipping problems being just one), and be prepared for your PC to crash often — it's just gonna happen. You might even curse the fact that the voice communication just doesn't work (at least we couldn't get it to work). The absence of this feature becomes painfully apparent as you frantically type warnings to your squad about flanking enemies, only to watch helplessly as your buddies are terminated one by one.

Despite these flaws, you will find yourself coming back again and again to test your skills. So face it, *Rainbow Six* may not mean the end of your knuckle-dragging deathmatch days, but it will certainly change the way you think about shooters. I can't think of another game in recent years that has brought a real-world experience so frighteningly close to home.

— DAN EGGER wears pads on his knuckles to keep them from scuffing.

GRAPHICS

They aren't as smooth as in *Quake* or *Unreal*, but the real-world detail they provide is an absolutely crucial factor.

SOUND

Sound effects are easily the weakest part of *Rainbow Six*, but the soundtrack and the music that plays when your teammates die is perfect.

DEPTH

The strategy elements and multiplayer possibilities in this game put other first-person shooters to shame.

DESIGN

Rainbow Six has innovation and originality that other first-person shooters lack.

RATING 9

+ Pluses

- The multiplayer mode (LAN) is brilliant
- Strategy elements mean plenty of replay value
- Too many to list

- Minuses

- Bugs, graphic glitches, lack of polish
- Graphics and sound not on par with recent shooters
- Getting shot in the head by a teammate



With hostages, team members, and innocents running around, you'll find that friendly fire will end your mission as often as enemy attacks do.



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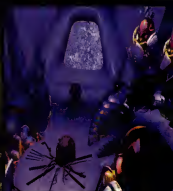


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DEVELOPER → Rainbow Studios
PUBLISHER → Microsoft
REQUIRED → P333, 16MB RAM, 30MB hard drive space, 4X CD-ROM, 3D card
IDEAL → PII 400, 128MB RAM, Voodoo 2 card, force-feedback joystick or gamepad

Motocross Madness

Now, if this game had blood ...



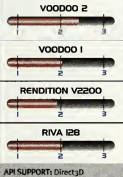
MULTIPLAYER



GAMEPAD

ACCELE-RATED

Motocross Madness is a Microsoft game, so it supports only DirectX. Although it's subjective, since framerate is more important to a racing game than rendering quality, we have to give the slight nod, once again, to Voodoo 2.



The latest redneck — cough — “mass-appeal” game to come from Microsoft’s “Madness” franchise, *Motocross Madness* aims to please, with some intense, high-flying, hard-crashing motorcycle racing. The physics and nature of motocross racing are well suited for the computer game treatment, and the sheer fun factor of this game surpasses its competitors. It’s all about revving up your motorcycle to 80 mph and charging up a steep incline to pull off an insane stunt of Evel Knievel proportions.

So, the stunts were a major factor in this game’s appeal for me, but if conventional racing is your bag, *Motocross Madness* covers that too. Baja racing is waypoint-based and takes place over sprawling outdoor maps across deserts and grasslands. The Supercross style of racing takes you through two campaigns, in which tracks steadily increase in difficulty, and tricking jumps are the rule. The track editor is easy to use and greatly extends the life of the game.



Multiplayer games support all the race modes and then some, with a variant of Baja called Moto-Tag which is exactly what it sounds like. It would have been nice to have a campaign mode that didn’t make you manually switch races between each stage, but the sheer variety of tracks and race modes is commendable.

Control of jumps is responsive, and pulling off crazy jumps and stunts becomes second nature after a while. A force-feedback joystick works well for the game, but the precise nature of controlling your jumps, which is central to the game-play, makes a gamepad the better choice. The Freestyle Pro, although terrific in concept, must be tweaked for gyro sensitivity for each game. Frankly, it’s easier to just grab a SideWinder and get into the game.

Now if crashes could only cause your body to fly apart into *Quake*-like gibs ...

— ED LEE is a bloodthirsty maniac.



If you can't beat 'em, knock 'em down after the race.



Don't pause to enjoy the view while you're up there.

GRAPHICS

Nothing too special. Landscapes are varied and look nice, but they're low on detail.

SOUND

Solid. Bike sounds are well done, and the crowd noise is a nice touch.

DEPTH

There are a good number of tracks and play modes, and the multiplayer version is more than a token effort.

DESIGN

Captures the wild and crazy world of motocross racing.

RATING 7

+ Pluses

- Separate physics for bike and rider
- Wicked jumps
- Bone-crushing crashes

- Minuses

- Steep learning curve
- No real campaign mode
- Touchy collision detection

It's All About Pain

THE VERTICAL CLIMB

WHERE: The Arizona map.
HOW: Find the seemingly insurmountable cliff wall. This represents the end of the world. Hal Get far, far away, and head like a bat out of hell straight at the wall. Your speed needs to be at least 80 mph to pull this off. Tear straight up that wall and break on through to the other side.

THE MASS AIR

WHERE: Any map with a ridiculously high jump.
HOW: Pull back—all the way back—at the apex of the jump. You'll fly off your bike, crash hard, break every bone in your body, and everyone will get a good laugh out of it. Bonus points if your bike hits you on the way down.

THE DEATH BOUNCE

WHERE: Any map with lots of speed and a low jump.
HOW: With enough speed, you'll be skimming low off the ground. Turn in midair so your bike becomes parallel to the ground. You gotta hit another bump while still at top speed. You and your bike will immediately part company and you'll go spinning ahead to your death. Guaranteed to make your rider go fetal.



Urban Assault

DEVELOPER → Terratech

PUBLISHER → Microsoft

REQUIRED → P133, 16MB RAM, 100MB hard drive space, 4x CD-ROM, local-bus SVGA video card (1MB VRAM)

IDEAL → P11 233, 32MB RAM, Voodoo 2 card, joystick

Gang war without the Mad Dog 20/20

ACCELE-RATED

The graphics flow along nicely on an 8MB Voodoo 2, but also played well on a 4MB Voodoo card. Difficulties were experienced on Voodoo Rush.

VOODOO 2



VOODOO 1



RENDITION V2200



RIVA 128



API SUPPORT → DirectX3D

GREAT BUILDINGS



...that are, albeit, destroyed ...

EMPIRE STATE BUILDING

WHACKED IN: Independence Day

HOW: Hefty vertical beam weapon

WHY: Ground zero for alien attack on New York City

LOOKS LIKE: Perfective Roman candle



CHRYSLER BUILDING

WHACKED IN: Armageddon

HOW: Top 50 or so floors severed by rogue asteroid

WHY: These are things man was not meant to understand. And if man doesn't understand, we're certainly not going to help you.

LOOKS LIKE: An enormous broken syringe



METLIFE BUILDING

WHACKED IN: Godzilla

HOW: Tears it a new one

WHY: What, Godzilla needs a reason?

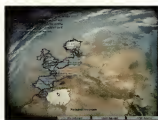
LOOKS LIKE: The ID4 boys are turning out of buildings to decimate

Roll over, *Extreme Tactics*, and tell *Dominion* the news. It'll probably grandfather in *StarCraft*, and may make certain sentimental allowances for *Dune 2000*. But the next 2D realtime strategy game better bring along Tea Leoni in a thong bikini and tassels as a distraction. This genre is dead.

Urban Assault is from the *Uprising/Battlezone* side of the fence. The planet is having a helluva hair day. We've more or less destroyed it in a holocaust charitably referred to as "The Big Mistake." As if that's not enough, aliens have landed and started stripping the Earth of its few remaining resources.

As commander of The Resistance forces, you must trek across a wintry, *Syndicate*-like map of Europe, consisting of 30-plus territories. In each, you'll have to capture power stations and use the resultant resources to build up your forces (captured technology upgrades improving your options). Once you've grabbed the last key sector, you pack as many of your surviving troops as you can into a "beam gate" (shades of *Myth*) and then teleport the whole shebang to do it again.

It's all carried out in first person — either from a distance at your



See what I mean about *Syndicate*?

"host station" base (using a map and standard realtime mechanics), or from the driver's seat in the thick of the action, where the effectiveness of your tanks and aircraft climbs markedly.

But it's appealingly basic. The game gives you a lot of help — with tips, tutorial levels, and with the Squadron Manager, which makes re-assigning individual units a breeze.

And yet, easy as it is to play, *UA* is (cliché alert) hard to master. In later levels if you don't start responding in a focused, informed fashion, you'll find yourself swimming against an inexorable tide of enemy units. That can be like getting hit by a train — an elaborate, embarrassing way to die. After a little success, try hitting zone.com for what are initially two-player games, although it claims to support four. Getting a game going was virtually



Mission briefings give you a good idea of what you'll face.

Impossible and the number of opponents very limited. Still, the action/strategy blend proved an entertaining challenge over a LAN.

Potential tweaks: Mission debriefings. (Everyone likes a pat on the back.) And I wish the cluttered layout had default configs or drop-down functionality.

But when it comes down to fun *Urban Assault* was fun indeed ... and very much alive.

— PETER OLAFSON can't even get plastic soldiers to listen to him.

GRAPHICS

Grim and gray, and the darkness is more effective than *WarGames*'s mist.

SOUND

Does the job, but doesn't work overtime.

DEPTH

Surprisingly enough for a game so dedicated to simplicity.

DESIGN

OK, it's *BattleRising*, but they went into this marriage eyes open.

RATING

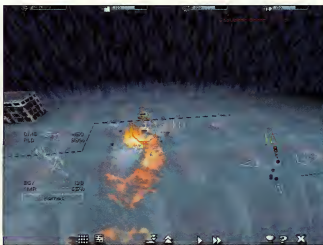
7

Pluses

- Strategy and action combo works
- Challenging
- Easy to learn

Minuses

- Interface is clunky in spots
- Lackluster post-mission debriefing
- Flickered with Voodoo Rush



A palpable illustration of the power available in first-person play. Here, one Hornet takes out a whole cluster of enemy units.

DEVELOPER → Codemasters
PUBLISHER → 3DO
REQUIRED → P133 with 3D card or P166 without 3D card, 16MB RAM, 30MB hard drive space
IDEAL → P200 MMX, 8X CD-ROM, Voodoo 2 card

TOCA: Championship Racing

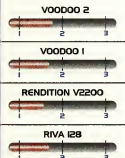
Shunts happen



STEERING WHEEL

ACCELE-RATED

While *TOCA* does not have the fish and special effects of most other recent PC racers, its graphics are reasonably solid. No specific support for Rendition boards is implemented in the game, docking that card's score.



3D SUPPORT: Specific support for 3Dfx, S3, ATI Rage, and Nvidia Riva 128, although problems with the S3 chipset have been encountered.

RUDE RULES

Bumper stickers like "Baby On Board" can incite rage in even the calmest of drivers. Below we look at a few bumper stickers, what they tell you about the driver, and what you should do.

GUIT HAIRPENS

FOUND ON: Dented Gremlins
DRIVER PROFILE: Graduated from high school nearly a year ago, but still holds kegers on Friday

PROPER REACTION: Don't even get near this car. Clearly the driver is a moron and couldn't care less about a few pesky dents

METALLIC FISH SYMBOL

FOUND ON: Economy cars in the Bible Belt

DRIVER PROFILE: Highly religious, undereducated simpletons who feel the need to shove their limited viewpoint down everyone's throat

PROPER REACTION: Hit it, and hit it hard

WHEN GUNS ARE OUTLAWED ONLY OUTLAWS WILL HAVE GUNS

FOUND ON: Every truck in Texas
DRIVER PROFILE: Armed and dangerous, undereducated simpletons who feel the need to shove their limited viewpoint down everyone's throat

PROPER REACTION: When the car's armed, you leave it the hell alone

Let's get something straight. I hate Volvos. I especially hate those Volvo drivers who don't seem to understand that gas pedals have more than half an inch of travel and who inevitably wind up in front of me when I'm in a hurry. Slap a "Baby On Board" sticker (look at me, I'm virile!) on their rear bumper and I'll reach critical mass.

So it was with a delicious sense of irony that I found myself lined up behind a four-door Volvo S40 sedan when I first booted up Codemaster's *TOCA: Championship Racing*. Catastrophing off the line, I proceeded to drill the bejezus out of the unsuspecting S40 driver's back end going into the first corner. Wham! Take that you sanctimonious piece of crap! Crunch! That's for holding me up on the 1-5 last week. By the time I completed the first lap my car was shaped like a banana and I was in dead last place. It was one of the most cathartic and satisfying PC races I had ever run.

TOCA has been one of the most popular racing sims in Europe since its release in late '97, and for good reason. Although not as sophisticated as high-end simulations like *F1 Racing Simulation* and *NASCAR 2*, this sim/arcade hybrid is still an absolute treat to drive. There are no in-depth garage menus or complicated tire wear algorithms to worry about, just in-your-face rac-



The graphics are a bit coarse, but they get the job done.



Wet weather lap-times are just as fast as in the dry.

ing and lots of it. Based on the 1997 RAC British Touring Car Championship, the game is fully licensed by TOCA and features all of the factory cars (eight), drivers (16), and tracks (nine) found in the prestigious U.K. circuit.

The real joy in playing *TOCA* (Volvo-bashing aside) is the highly entertaining wheel-to-wheel racing it offers, with some of the most superb AI drivers I have ever encountered. The blocking, weaving, and retaliatory tactics of these digital Schumacher wanna-be's is a uniquely enjoyable experience that elevates *TOCA*'s gameplay above many serious racing sims on the market.

The game's 3D graphics are somewhat low-res, but they look decent in accelerated mode and include such often-used eye candy as lens flare, working brake lights, and reflective wet surfaces. *TOCA* also lets you go head-to-head with up to four human opponents via a split screen or up to eight players

over a LAN or the Net, which plays surprisingly well.

Turning the side-impact pillars of a Volvo S40 into pretzels is also very rewarding. If we should meet online while playing this game you'd best not be driving one. I may not be accountable for my actions.

— ANDY MAHOOD bears no ill will toward Swedish people. Some of his best friends drive Saabs.

GRAPHICS

Not as gorgeous as *F1 Racing Simulation*, but still clean and attractive.

SOUND

Excellent reproduction of 4-bangers wound-out to the limit.

DEPTH

Additive gameplay, plenty of cars and tracks, and multiple play options.

DESIGN

Superb AI and solid driving physics for what is effectively an arcade racer.

RATING 7

+ Pluses

- Wonderfully aggressive driving AI
- Good car physics
- Eats up only 30MB of hard drive

- Minuses

- Relatively low-res graphics
- No garage setups for gearheads
- Lacks high profile with U.S. fans



Typing CMGARAGE at the driver name screen unlocks the bonus car — er, tank. So who wants to contest that corner with me?

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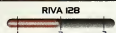
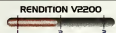
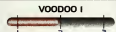
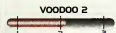
DEVELOPER → Interactive Studios
PUBLISHER → MGM Interactive
REQUIRED → P133, 16MB RAM, 17MB hard drive space, 4X CD-ROM
IDEAL → P233, 32MB RAM, 52MB hard drive space, 8X CD-ROM, Voodoo 2 card

WarGames

Hold nose and repeat: "Shall-we-play-a-game?"

ACCELE-RATED

WarGames' 3D engine moves smoothly on just about any of the supported accelerators. The difference between Voodoo 2 and other cards is nominal at best, and the title's 3D environments look good on every card.



API SUPPORT → Glide, Direct3D



Missiles rain down.



Fighting takes place even on busy city streets, where buildings can hide units waiting in ambush.

Remember the MGM movie *WarGames*? Matthew Broderick hacks his way through the phone book, looking for a way to steal computer games. Instead, he stumbles across WOPR (War Operation Programmed Response), NORAD's new early-warning computer.

In the movie, the computer mistakes the young hacker for the scientific genius who created it and says, "Greetings, Professor Falken. Shall we play a game?" Broderick happily selects "Global Nuclear Warfare" from among the options, and nearly starts World War III.

MGM Interactive has turned the movie into yet another RTS game, as if there weren't enough already. It's 20 years later, and WOPR has prepared a string of 30 war simulations between human and mechanized forces (15 for each side). But as you play through the simulations, the separation between reality and fantasy is blurred, and before you know it, the world is in terrible trouble, and you (taking up the Broderick role) are the only person who can save it.

Other than the movie tie-in and a rotating 3D camera, there's little that's new, but that doesn't keep it from being fun. The multiplayer



A WOPR walker is destroyed near a neutral computer site.

mode is standard RTS fare, but most of the focus is on single-player action. These campaigns begin simply enough, with evenly matched ground forces. As the game progresses, weapons become more sophisticated. WOPR forces are all mechanical and futuristic in nature, including walkers, drones, and a slew of tough robots. NORAD forces feature super tanks, missile launchers, a fully outfitted navy, and enough flying gadgetry to satisfy most third-world dictators.

The real star of *WarGames* is the utter destruction, bloody enough to desensitize the most jaded of players. Buildings blow up with ground-shaking and prolonged explosions, with enough photo-realistic flames and flying debris to fill a Mel Gibson movie. Smaller characters die well, too. They cry out in panic, "We're under enemy attack" and "We're taking heavy fire," then shriek as missiles and shells tear them apart.

On the other hand, the WOPR forces, being nonhuman, never complain at all. Professor Falken would be proud.

— JOHN LEE *doesn't need to steal computer games.*



Militant Machines

Other famous inactivity culprits, is that have taken it upon themselves to take over the world:

HAL
APPEARS IN: The Stanley Kubrick film *2001: A Space Odyssey*
VILLAINOUS GOAL: Didn't want to be turned off, so tried to destroy anyone who reached for the power switch.

AM
APPEARS IN: Cyberdreams' PC game *I Have No Mouth, And I Am Scram*
VILLAINOUS GOAL: Torture the last five humans on Earth by forcing each to relive abysmal episodes in their lives.

SKYNET
APPEARS IN: *Terminator 2* and *2*
VILLAINOUS GOAL: Bid the world of flawed human vermin so perfect computers can rule the world.

WINDOWS 95 (GATES 2000)
APPEARS IN: Every computer in the world.
VILLAINOUS GOAL: Monopolize the software industry with buggy product that slowly drains humans of patience with constant crashes.

GRAPHICS

Rolling 3D terrain and rotating camera viewpoint create special cachet.

SOUND

Explosions and panicky chatter in battle add to realism.

DEPTH

You can play both sides through 30 missions, with 50 optional units.

DESIGN

Weapons, maps, and mission goals seem a shade too familiar.

RATING 7

+ Pluses

- 3D engine
- Prolonged explosions, shrieks
- Moderate learning curve

- Minuses

- Troops not rendered correctly
- Forces tend to stack up
- You've played similar games

DEVELOPER → Two Finnish Guys
 PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
 REQUIRED → 486DX 100,
 16MB RAM, 60MB hard drive space
 IDEAL → A very high tolerance for
 pain

Nam



We can't get sued for this, can we?



MULTIPLAYER

ACCELE-RATED

OK, just look at the screenshots. Do you really need to check this space to see if your 3D accelerator will make this game look good? Be honest, you have better things to do with your time, don't you?



I don't remember Vietnam being this pixelated.

The Real Conspiracy

What exactly is the deal with Oliver Stone's, yep, yep! Forget JFK, Vietnam, and even the Nixon presidency. The only conspiracy we care about is the secret behind the director's gigantic booty drives.



CONSPIRACY THEORY #1
 The brows are actually a disguise to hide Stone from anyone who might recognize him as one of the writers of the original *Conan the Barbarian*.

CONSPIRACY THEORY #2
 The brows are, actually, alien beings belonging to the universe's only sentient race that thought, *Natural Born Killers* was a good film.

CONSPIRACY THEORY #3
 The brows are simply a mass hallucination caused by the movie *The Doors*.

Sometimes the stuff of *PCXL* is busy saving children from fiery school bus accidents, so we often find it necessary to use freelance editors to help get the magazine out in time. For *Nam*, we used a source who is knowledgeable on this game's topic — the writer/director of *Platoon*, *The Doors*, and *JFK*, *Oliver Stone*.

I appreciate this opportunity to vent my opinion about a game that is very close to my heart. You see, in the '60s, America was a perfect place — until the aliens (in league with the CIA, the Cubans, and Pennsylvania's Brockway Middle School PTA) killed my personal hero JFK. That led to the darkest moment in our nation's history (and the inspiration for 18 of my films), the Vietnam War.

GT Interactive's *Nom* tries to capture the pure tragedy of the Vietnam conflict using the well-worn Build engine. However, it doesn't get far, with graphics that are uglier than a presurgery Paula Jones when compared to today's shooters. The sound is no better, using effects stolen directly from *Duke Nukem 3D*.

To make matters worse, the faux-3D environments cause anyone familiar with modern shooters to feel completely constricted in their control and jungle awareness. Even with 34 single-player missions and a decent supply of real Vietnam-era weapons, this game is nothing like the Vietnam I remember. And I don't think that anyone else has noticed this, but all the enemies look suspiciously like *Osmonds*.

I suppose all this would be OK if the game played all right. But unfortunately it offers absolutely nothing new to 1993's *Doom*, let alone 1996's *Quake* and *Duke Nukem 3D: Shadow Warrior* and, heaven forbid, *Blood*, which used the Build engine, are more fun (well, perhaps not *Blood*). *Nom* should have been available for



Federal law requires us to include screenshots of the game in every review. In this case, we actually considered the merits of a long prison sentence, rather than uglify our magazine.

free over the Internet as a total conversion years ago. And don't be fooled into thinking this is some kind of simulation, because it isn't even close.

At best it will remind players of their early gaming days, at worst it could cause posttraumatic stress syndrome. In reality, its \$20 price tag is just a way for retailers to find out exactly how many stupid people buy games.

How *Nom* was ever released is truly a mystery wrapped in a riddle inside an enigma within a soft, flour tortilla. Dare I say conspiracy? Some may want you to think that the game was released because GT got a cheap deal with a no-name developer and is trying to reach the same audience that choked down more than a million copies of *Deer Hunter*, but I think there's more. Call me paranoid if you like, but I am willing to bet my reputation that Nixon's ghost or the Brockway Middle School PTA has something to do with this. Trust no one.

— The real OLIVER STONE was busy writing yet another bad movie, so DAN EGGER watched *Platoon* six times and then wrote this article in his place.

GRAPHICS

Pixels, pixels, and more pixels. Either Vietnam was one ugly place or these graphics are absolutely awful.

SOUND

The best sound is the sound it makes when you click the Quit button.

DEPTH

Since it isn't really 3D, the developer concentrated on height and width. Unfortunately depth had to be left out.

DESIGN

Design, what design? Perhaps our country would have been better served if '60s radicals protested this game instead of the war.

RATING 2

+ Pluses

- Shows the true horror of war
- It's not a *Deer Hunter* clone
- It's slightly more fun than an *Oliver Stone* movie

- Minuses

- Multiplayer mode means others get hurt
- Makes you wish you were playing *Deer Hunter*
- No more, this is just too easy

Stood up by a blonde?



GLOBAL DOMINATION ATTACK VIEW

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Download the demo at www.psygnosis.com/globaldomination

DEVELOPER → Xatrix
PUBLISHER → Interplay
REQUIRED → 790, 16MB RAM,
 80MB hard drive space, IQ under 25
IDEAL → P333, 32MB RAM, another
 game (any other game will do)

Redneck Deer Huntin'



Having three teeth and marrying your 12-year-old sister isn't necessarily fun ...

ACCELE-RATED

We're glad interplay didn't include 3D support: It would have given a bad name to any other game with 3D support. As it is, *Redneck Deer Huntin'* will play just as good (or should we say bad) on the 486 at the local video store.



This is Leonard. He wants to be your special friend. Real special ...

REDNECK GAMIN'

After *Redneck Rampage* and now *Redneck Deer Huntin'*, the PCLX staff is paralyzed with fear over what classic genres might face the wrath of this toothless licensee.

LEISURE SUIT BILLY BOB

WHAT IT IS: You've got one day to sail an immediate family member, and only your redneck charms to help.

SELLING POINT: Great practice for that upcoming family reunion.

SCARY MOMENT: Having to choose between your uncle Rufus and cousin Betty (and trying to figure out which is which).

REDNECK ALERT

WHAT IT IS: Realtime strategy in which you control an army of rednecks versus the coffee-sipping culturally aware of the North.

SELLING POINT: Building up resources for the ultimate Ford truck rush.

SCARY MOMENT: Mining the land for possum stew.

MICROSOFT REDNECK SIMULATOR

WHAT IT IS: A detailed simulation of life in the hills of Arkansas.

SELLING POINT: Apparently people will buy anything from Microsoft (see sales figures on Microsoft Flight Simulator).

SCARY MOMENT: The special force feedback joystick that comes packaged with the game has buttons for sp1, fart, and belch.

REDNECK KOMBAT

WHAT IT IS: The Ultimate Fighting Championship with even less teeth (if that's possible).

SELLING POINT: Special projectile attacks include spitting chew and tossing poocypies.

SCARY MOMENT: Plumber's crack on each and every fighter.

Somewhere in an office building far, far away, someone once said, "Hey, I know! Let's make a hunting game that will make fun of all the other hunting games! We can call it *Redneck Deer Huntin'*, and we can make fun of hillbillies at the same time. It'll be great!" Well, it might have been a good idea, but Interplay's *Redneck Deer Huntin'* not only doesn't make fun of all those other hunting games, it doesn't deliver a good game itself.

Graphically, *RDH* doesn't offer a damn thing, unless you consider forests that look like they were painted on a wall a good deal. Everything is pixelated, even at a distance. The animals look like cardboard cutouts, assuming, of course, that you ever get to see one. Welcome back to the good old — and we mean old — Build engine.

The sound effects aren't much better. True, the guns have an accurate report, but other effects, like the sound of boots trudging through snow, are boring and repetitive. The creepiest thing about this game has to be Leonard,

You'll watch in amazement as various animals slide back and forth on tracks, just begging for you to end their meaningless existences. Do yourself a favor — shoot yourself!

your good ol' boy hunting guide. When you first meet him, his head is spinning around faster than Linda Blair on crystal meth, but the real spooky part is when he pops up from the bottom of the screen and gives you that "Howdy cousin! Wanna make out?" look. While his accent will make your skin crawl the first few times you hear it, this sensation gets old quickly as well.

Apparently your main goal while hunting is to avoid the twigs that are scattered all over the place. Step on just one, and you can forget about shooting anything except your own foot. Not that shooting anything is an option — I sat for days in the damn snow, blowing on that damn deer call, spraying down deer perfume, and didn't even see one freekin' animal. Granted, the control isn't bad. You can aim the gun fairly easily, as long as you remember to hit the buttons that raise and load your weapon first (which alone is annoying enough to give this game a crap score).

If Xatrix had included all the stuff that makes redneck hunting fun — the pickup truck you shoot from, the white lightning in the trusty clay jug, Daisy Mae's enormous hooters, a few city boys to



Check out the amazing Wall O' Trees, but don't try to walk through it, like you can all the other trees.

harass — it might have had a winner on its hands. As it is, *Redneck Deer Huntin'* is a poor excuse for a boring genre that just won't die. Shoot yourself in the foot or even buy the *Deer Hunter* expansion pack before you even think about walking down to the store for this piece of crap.

— Yes, **BILL DONOHUE** owns guns. No, he doesn't like banjo music.

GRAPHICS

The amazing Wall O' Trees is a sight to behold!

SOUND

Well, at least the guns sound kinda real ...

DEPTH

Yes, this game should have depth. It should be buried about six feet down.

DESIGN

There's design in here? Well, I'll be ...

RATING

+ Pluses

- The box is purty. Real purty ...
- Uh ... Leonard's head spins around real good!
- Did I mention the box was purty?

- Minuses

- You won't see a damn thing for days
- The graphics are subpar, at best
- How about that box, though? Real purty, huh?

DEVELOPER → K-O Lab

PUBLISHER → Interactive Magic

REQUIRED → P333, 16MB RAM,
4X CD-ROM, 195MB hard drive spaceIDEAL → P200 MMX, 32MB RAM,
8X CD-ROM, 200MB hard drive space,
gamepad

Vangers

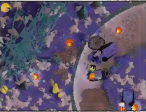
Driving through the *Vangers* world is as unpredictable as an LSD trip

ACCELE-RATED

Vangers' graphics are powered solely through software, but they're smooth and fast, with realistic dust trails, flashing weapon fire, and bouncing, rolling cars.



Roads can be smooth, tortuous, or obstacle-filled.



You'll battle the clock, but don't ignore the other cars.

Russian Plots

Vangers is proof that Communists are still secretly in charge — a devious attempt to confuse silly Americans with a game that defies description.

OTHER NEFARIOUS RUSSIAN EXPORTS

PRODUCT: Milk-hall Baryshnikov
PURPOSE: Grown man in lights, to soften sappy Yanks with esoteric dance

PRODUCT: Caviar (at \$460 for just two ounces)
PURPOSE: Salty fish eggs, to drain fat-cat capitalist's wallets

PRODUCT: Vodka
PURPOSE: Cheap potato beverage, to numb the senses of proletariat

PRODUCT: Fur hats
PURPOSE: Fuzzy head wear, to sap American resistance to cold

PRODUCT: Borzoi
PURPOSE: Anyone dumb enough to eat it is ready for conversion to party line

PRODUCT: Space station MIR
PURPOSE: Invite U.S. astronauts aboard clunky collection of rusty pipes and balling wire, to heat limbs of Yankee legions

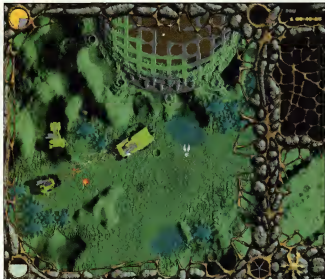
As if the Cold War and *Tetris* weren't hard enough on frayed American nerves, the Russians have devised a truly frazzling game called *Vangers*.

What is it? That's a tough one. It's a racing game, driving little cars through twisting turns and past barricades. Well, not exactly. It's a game of exploration, solving puzzles and carrying out quests. Maybe not. It's more of a fighting game, blasting other mechs before they get you. Hmmm. A trading game? Running over cockroach-like bees so you can exchange their skins for other goodies?

Actually, *Vangers* is all of the above — a torrid racing/shooting game, with puzzles, surprises, rewards, and unlikely worlds to conquer. While there are multiple game concepts to placate a variety of hungers, perhaps the most satisfying is the use of bee skins to buy new weapons. *Vangers* uses guns, tracers, insect swarms, amputators, missiles, and a couple of nasty little balls called degradator and incarnator. The weapons blast, pulverize, and mutate other cars so vividly that you can hardly wait to see what the next will do. Bizarre graphics show cars bouncing realistically over pulsating ground, leaving dust trails.

Vangers is unpredictable, but that's half the charm. You'll spend almost as much time underground as you do on the surface. Each world comes in eye-popping psychedelic colors, with its own twisting paths, barricades, hide-outs, energy stations, and stinkhorn (a fungus that explodes on contact).

There's even a story. Humans learned long ago to travel the universe by building space tunnels called Passages. Thoughtless as usual, the humans rushed off to explore and colonize, without considering the cost. This spelled the end for humans, since many of the new worlds were hostile. And the Passages allowed movement in both directions.



The worlds you are forced to traverse may come in all kinds of crazy-quilt colors.

The universe has passed through several hands (or tentacles) and now belongs to the *Vangers*. There's a new vocabulary to learn — words like bees, citriner (a box used to ship cirt), escapes (underground hives), Podish (the main burrow of the Eleepods), and Feengers (Eleepods that sit in incubators).

The game is both fun and frustrating. The cars are hard to control, and the terrain is full of surprises. It takes time to learn your way around, and yet the action never slows.

If you hate playing games alone, you'll want to avoid *Vangers* altogether. The multiplayer mode (over LAN or the Internet) is virtually useless. You still play and fight pretty much for yourself, same as in the single-player game. The main difference is that all cars sporting the same color are your allies.

But single-player is worth sticking with if this somewhat schizophrenic gameplay sounds appealing. Some will enjoy the added complexities. Others may find *Vangers* too eccentric and too intense.

— **JOHN LEE** is on intense reclusion living in Texas, where he raises Eleepods. (Do Eleepods grow into Ed Lees?)

GRAPHICS

Psychedelic terrain is "alive," and you can rotate your view and zoom in and out.

SOUND

Ditsy (often irritating) music, but it's easily turned off.

DEPTH

The multiple worlds plus a wide selection of cars and weapons make for extended replay.

DESIGN

The game has no peer. Utterly unique. But is different always good?

RATING 5

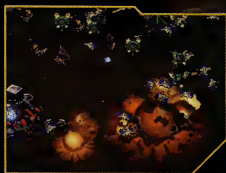
+ Pluses

- Like nothing you've ever played
- Little cars careen and bounce realistically
- Cheapest high since the invention of hillbilly moonshine

- Minuses

- Simple game; steep learning curve
- Cars can be exceedingly hard to control
- You actually have to read the damned manual

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Golf, PC Accelerator Style

THE STANDINGS

The standings haven't changed much this month, as the only new game in the big four sports is *GameDay 99*. Next month look for some big changes when the fall titles begin to impact the list.

	W	L	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	REALISM
FOOTBALL						
GameDay 99	-	-	-	-	-	-

GameDay 99 is in and it looks great, but next month is the real test as *Madden 99* hopes to make its triumphant return to greatness.

BASKETBALL						
NBA Live 98	1	0	1	1	0	0
NBA Action	0	1	0	0	1	1

Electronic Arts relied on 3D acceleration and excellent presentation to win this category, but Sega's software-only version of *NBA Action* played a little better.

HOCKEY						
NHL Hockey 98	1	0	1	1	1	1
Powerplay 98	0	1	0	0	0	0

NHL Hockey 98 is still in charge, but with its sequel and Radical's *National Hockey Night* just around the corner, the competition will surely heat up.

BASEBALL						
High Heat 99	3	0	0	2	3	3
Triple Play 99	2	1	3	3	2	1
HardBall 6	1	2	2	0	1	2
Microsoft Baseball 3D	0	3	1	1	0	0

The baseball standings are set for a while as developers begin to focus on the winter sports.

SOCCER						
World Cup 98	1	0	1	1	1	1
Fox Sports Soccer 98	0	1	0	0	0	0

Our resident Brit Rob Smith says that *World Cup Soccer 98* is the best PC sports game bar none. Even though it is far better than *Fox Sports Soccer*, it still isn't as fun as *NHL 98*. Frankly, we think Rob is high on British crack.

OK, this is the month for PC sports. Not only did we get new information on the sequel to the sports game that we play most often in the office (*NHL 98*) and a reviewable version of the addictive *GameDay 99*, but now we also have information on a golf game that seems to be made exactly for our readers.

Links Extreme (we will forgive the word "extreme" in this case only) is a franchise extension to the stuffy *Links LS* series. With events such as Demolition Driving Range and Deathmatch Golf added to a truckload of options for cheating against your opponent, this game is right up our alley. It's about time someone made a golf game that lets the players have a little fun.

— DAN EGGER started the "Extreme" movement by riding his tricycle off a cliff at age three.



Golf is infinitely more playable when your long drives explode into flames or pop like bright firecrackers.

HEAD TO HEAD: GAP-TOOTHED SMILES

Because we don't have any head-to-head reviews this month, we decided to settle a long-standing question: Who has the best gap-tooth grin, sports stars or celebrities?

THE CONTESTANTS



THE HOT TALK: JEWEL
"This girl's pretty as a peach, but her teeth?"

THE HOT TALK: MADONNA
"You just find a square and then [between her teeth]..."

THE HOT TALK: DAVID LETTERMAN
"You just find a square and then [between his teeth]..."

THE HOT TALK: BOBBY CLARKE
"The [teeth]... [teeth]... [teeth]..."

DEVELOPER → Electronic Arts

PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts

RELEASE DATE → Fall '98

THE HYPE → Improved AI, better animation, and harder hits could mean this game will exceed its predecessor.

THE HURDLE → Is the game improved enough to justify a full-on sequel?

THE HIT → The best hockey game for any system is back with a vengeance.

NHL 99

The reigning king

Few could argue that no better sports game than *NHL 98* exists on the PC. The improvements in *NHL 99* start with its revamped player AI. The goalies are smarter, play behind the net is more realistic, and the fighting is more, well, hockey-like. A classic feature from earlier incarnations has returned by popular demand; now players go on hot and cold streaks that affect their playing ability and performance statistics throughout the season. For those who prefer a rougher style of play, the body checks and slap shots have been made faster, stronger, and more intense, and players now have the ability to change game strategies on the fly, making the action far more strategic.

Along with these AI improvements are changes in other, more fundamental areas. A new puck physics engine enables shots to be deflected off another player's



Philly's Alexander Daigle is about to get plugged.

carcass and into the net, which happens quite often in real games (hence the lack of teeth). EA has also added a beginner's mode that lets the computer decide when to pass, when to shoot, and when to knock someone into the glass. This mode is meant to lure freaky beginners into the game so they can be destroyed by masterful artists like the PCXL staff.

If EA manages to make the game enough of an improvement over last year's masterpiece, *NHL 99* will cement that franchise's place as the premier sports name for the PC.



Better animations mean bigger hits, more realistic players, and a more believable overall presentation.



Jaw-dropping graphics are worthless without gameplay to back it up. Fortunately, *NHL 99* has both.



WIN A 3D CARD

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STARFIGHTER

How did you acquire this copy of PC ACCELERATOR?

- Newsstand
 Subscribed
 Other

We want to know what you read... (check all that apply)

- Used to read Console magazines
 Still read Console magazines
 Regularly
 Every once in awhile
 Read other PC gaming magazines regularly (almost monthly)
 Subscribe
 Newsstand
 Read other PC gaming magazines casually (up to 6 mags a year)
 Subscribe
 Newsstand
 Don't normally read game magazines (0-3 times a year)

Which gaming magazines do you read regularly? (check all that apply)

- PC Gamer
 PC Games
 Computer Gaming World
 Computer Games Strategy Plus
 Next-Generation
 Game Buyer (formerly Ultra Game Players)
 Gamers' Republic
 Electronic Gaming Monthly (EGM)
 Expert Gamer (formerly EGM2)
 GamePro
 PSM (PlayStation Magazine)
 The Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine
 Other: _____

What do you think of PC ACCELERATOR?

- Awesome Da bomb... laughed so hard, I cried...
 Good I'd read it again, but I wasn't crying.
 So-So It was better than a visit to the dentist.

If you read other PC gaming magazines, what would you change: (check all that apply)

- Don't or won't read them, therefore I have no opinion
 More humor (What are you guys writing, a bible? Make me laugh.)
 Better design (Get better graphic designers and get out of the BOs.)
 More 3D coverage (More frickin 3D coverage guys!)
 More edge (I need some attitude... you guys are a bit conservative.)
 No boring game coverage (Please no more chess reviews.)
 Better screenshots (Bigger and better screenshots would kick ass!)
 Don't change it at all (This mag suits me well.)

Are you a Console gamer turned PC gamer?

- I play mostly console games, but am starting to play PC games
 I play both console and PC games about equally
 I have abandoned consoles and am now a PC gamer
 I have always been primarily a PC gamer

How long have you been playing video games (console or PC):

_____ Fill In How Many Years

How long have you been a PC gamer:

- Newbie (less than a year)
 Amateur (1-5 years)
 Expert (playing for over 5 years)
 Veteran (been playing PC games forever - 10 years+)

Do you own a Console game machine? (Playstation, Nintendo64, etc.)

- Yes No

What do you have:

Computer Speed:

- Under a Pentium (piece of junk, but my piece of junk)
 90-99 MHz (not as big of a piece of junk)
 100-132 MHz (a little junky)
 133-165 MHz (in the race)
 166-199 MHz (a contender)
 200-239 MHz (what a rush)
 240-299 MHz (burn baby burn)
 300-399 MHz (hold on tight)
 400+ MHz (my nose bleeds)

3D Card:

- Own
 Own, But Plan to Upgrade
 Plan to Buy in the Next 12 Months
 Whatsa 3D Card?

Controllers (check all that apply):

- Nope - (and I don't have electricity either)
 GamePad (the only way to go)
 Force Feedback (ahhhh ... magic fingers)
 Steering Wheel/Rudder Thingy
 VR Headset (got \$ to blow)

Internet:

- Don't Use (I think it's just a fad)
 Of Course!
 28.8 or less
 33.3 to 56.8
 ISDN/T1/LAN/++

Age: _____ Fill In Actual Age and Pick Which Range ▼

- 0-12 Yum... Pixie Sticks
 13-17 Attitude Overload
 18-20 Craves Beer
 21-24 Hung Over
 25-29 Still Partying
 30-34 Am I Losing My Hair?
 35-49 Where Did I Put That Game?
 50+ These Games Are Getting Too Damn Fast!

Status:

- Hitched (Ball and chained)
 Available (Single and loving it)

Sex:

- Male - Me Tarzan... you Jane.
 Female - This mag is so sexist... but a good read

Occupation Status:

- Student - Getin Sum Good Lerrnin
 Full Time - Working for the Man
 Part Time - Bit of a Slacker

Yearly Household Income:

\$ _____ Fill In Actual Income and Pick Which Range ▼

- 0-10,000 Barely can afford this magazine
 11-25,000 At least I am in a lower tax bracket
 26-35,000 Beer Budget
 36-50,000 Bigger Beer Budget
 51-75,000 Keg Budget
 75-100,000 Rollin
 101,000+++ For Real
 2,450,000 Just Yanking Your Chain... (I Ain't Telling You How Much I Make)

Comments: _____

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Contest Rules: No purchase is necessary to win. Entries must be received no later than November 10, 1998. The winner will be chosen on or about November 15, 1998, and the winner will be notified either by e-mail or U.S. mail. The name of the winner will be sent to anyone who requests it and who provides a self-addressed, stamped envelope. The odds of winning depend upon the number of entries received. Imagine shall not be responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or incomplete entries. The prize is nontransferable and no substitutions will be allowed. The winner will be determined by a single random drawing of all valid entries and the decision of Imagine shall be final. This contest is open to residents of the United States only. Return of any prize or prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected. The winner may be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance within seven days of receipt; failure to do so upon receipt will result in forfeiture of the prize. By acceptance of the prize, the winner agrees to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. Imagine shall not be responsible for any damages or expenses that the winner might incur as a result of this contest or the receipt of any prize. The winner is responsible for paying any income taxes on the value of the prize received. Void in States of Rhode Island and Washington and where prohibited by law.

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ESPN National Hockey Night

The up-and-comer

Starting with the AI behind the *NHL Powerplay* hockey series, Radical is building a game that it hopes will create a niche in a hockey market dominated by EA's icy superpower. While this task may seem daunting, the company is not coming to battle alone; it has brought a powerful ally in ESPN. The much-watched sports network has loaned its name, feel, and much of its look to *National Hockey Night*.

The title mirrors an ESPN broadcast, from the pregame stats to the in-game presentation. The programmers spent the early months of the project talking with the broadcasters so that they would be able to accurately recreate the television look of hockey right down to the slightest camera angle. If that wasn't enough, SportsCenter's Steve Levy and hockey analyst Gary



In case you forgot you were playing an ESPN-licensed game, check the screen; it's displayed at least three times. And they say subtlety is dead.

Thorne provide commentary, which adds significantly to the ESPN broadcast feel (they being ESPN broadcasters and all).

Radical created many of the standard features that hockey games use today, including calling plays, polygonal players, and other innovations like momentum-based checks, but the company is facing a serious leap in competition as it returns for another try on the PC. *National Hockey Night's* graphics are satisfying, with a variety of realistic animation and character models. And while they are not up to par



Every NHL stadium has been faithfully re-created down to the smallest details, such as video screens and championship banners.

with the eye-popping graphics found in the *NHL* series, they are a step in the right direction.

One of the best features in this game (and all the other upcoming ESPN sports games) is a live score ticker. While you are playing, the game will download live scores from the Internet and display them onscreen like a real 10-minute ticker, which means you can follow an actual game while simulating it on the PC.

This is just the first round of a

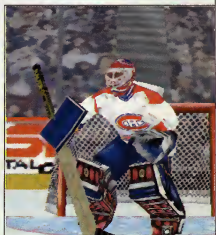
battle that could last for years between *NHL* and *National Hockey Night*. And while EA seems to have an early leg up on its competition, it's good to see that a hungry new competitor is willing to pose a serious challenge to the reigning king of hockey games.



Each view represents a real broadcast camera angle.



Even though he's getting older, Gretzky's going to score unless this defense gets back.



DEVELOPER → Radical Entertainment
PUBLISHER → Radical Entertainment
RELEASE DATE → Fall '98
THE HYPE → The ESPN license tagg'd on a smart hockey game.
THE HURDLE → Taking on EA's hockey series is a very formidable task.
THE BIT → Radical Entertainment wants a piece of the hockey market and is willing to face off against *NHL 99* to do it.



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H

**E WENT 92 YARDS, BROKE TWO
TACKLES, JUKED ONE CORNER AND BLEW
THE NUMBERS OFF THE FREE SAFETY.
C'MON, LET THE GUY DANCE.**

Football doesn't get any more real than NFL GameDay '99. This year, we've given NFL GameDay '99 a stadium full of new features, like all-new graphics and gameplay, brilliant sportscasting by Dick Enberg and Phil Simms, and Authentic Football Intelligence, a new innovation which has players thinking and reacting just like they do in the pros. NFL GameDay '99 by 989 Sports. Take a few snaps and you'll see why it's the best-selling football game around.

NFL GAMEDAY 99



www.989sports.com

Go to <http://www.pcxl.com/gaming411>: Product Number 12

DEVELOPER → Radical Entertainment

PUBLISHER → Radical Entertainment

RELEASE DATE → Fall '98

THE TYPE → Real manufacturers, snowboards, and gorgeous graphics could reach people who don't usually play games.

THE HURDLE → Are people getting tired of the overexposed "extreme" sports?

THE HIT → Finally a decent snowboarding title for your 3D-accelerated PC.

X Games Pro Boarders

Radical tries to spice up winter sports with the ESPN X Games

To date, few PC games have managed to capture the speed, beauty, or excitement of winter sports, but thanks to the exploding popularity of snowboarding, at least one company is giving it a try. *X Games Pro Boarders* is Radical Entertainment's ambitious attempt to capitalize on the winter sport that has all but shoved traditional skiers into large pine trees all over the ski slopes of America in recent years.

Making a game of this sort is a delicate balance between re-creating a culture and identity without falling into self-parody. From early looks, *Pro Boarders* does exactly that. The real gear that snowboarders use, including the '99 boards planned by companies such as K2, AirWalk, and Salomon, are in the game. Music from bands such as NOFX, Rancid, Lunatic Calm, and the Foo Fighters supply the right background buzz for the X Gaming culture. However, the game smartly avoids an overabundance of annoying faux-hip Gen-Xers shouting out "EXTREME" while drinking their Mountain Dew.

The way Radical best avoided the mistake that plagues many other games of this sort is by

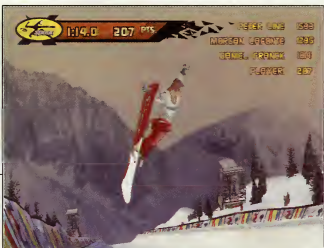


He should've held on tighter to the ski lift.

focusing on the experience more than atmosphere. *Pro Boarders'* graphics are positively stunning, making the most of 3D acceleration with crisp runs and a deep field of view that helps you keep an eye on what's ahead. Each of the tracks is also built wide enough to give you a feeling of freedom as you explore the slopes, looking for the best line in events such as the highly competitive Boarder X



Gorgeous lighting effects, beautiful environments, and great music are all important, but big air is even better.



The halfpipe is the best place to practice your tricks and master the best of more than 2,000 move combinations.

(boardercross). Other events such as the Halfpipe, Slopestyle, and Big Air let you try out any of the 2,000 trick combinations the game includes.

Judging by the continued growth of the sport, people aren't yet tired of snowboarding, and with its realistic representation of the overall experience, *Pro Boarders* could very well be a hit in an untapped market.

EXTREME CRIMES

OK, this "extreme" thing has gone way too far. It seems that when ever Madison Avenue runs out of ideas, they try to latch onto this supposed Gen-X appeal. In light of that, we have sent a formal request to the American Advertising Federation to punish those ins of this kind of technique. Here are our suggested punishments:

YOUR COMMERCIAL CRIME → Showing some product so something screaming into the camera while about college band plays in the background.

THE PUNISHMENT → Jolly Shore must be your product spokesperson for the next two years.

YOUR COMMERCIAL CRIME → Supposed "tough" girls run around and do decidedly un-feminine things while a fake Birth Day band plays in the background.

THE PUNISHMENT → Your product must sponsor the ex-Spice Girl Gert Halliwell's first solo tour.

YOUR COMMERCIAL CRIME → Anyone jumps out of a plane while holding your product.

THE PUNISHMENT → Your entire ad team will be... shot and replaced with Bud Reynolds and the entire cast of "Touched by an Angel."



Tiger Woods 99

Next generation of golf games, or next generation of star licensing?

DEVELOPER → Electronic Arts

PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts

RELEASE DATE → Fall '98

THE HYPE → It's got Tiger Woods, a new 3D engine, and snazzy special effects.

THE HURDLE → Links is still the king of computer golf, but this new contender has the best chance to take the crown.

THE HIT → Tiger Woods in a computer golf game? Who saw that one coming?

When Tiger Woods stepped onto the links for the first time as a professional, a change blew over the entire PGA. The tour had long been a stuffy affair full of showdowns between middle-aged men who insisted on wearing funny pants, but since that time things have changed — a little. You still won't see eagle dances, unnecessary roughness calls, or even in-your-face taunts from guys like Mark O'Meara, Davis Love III, or the ever-exciting Lee Janzen (all of whom are in *Tiger Woods 99*), but there seems to be a little more pizzazz in the PGA now that Tiger's onboard. If you don't believe it, just ask Fuzzy Zoeller.

In the computer game world, things have changed as well. EA's long-standing *PGA Tour* series has been renamed *Tiger Woods 99* and now features the young golfing phenom. Like the PGA, the series hasn't been completely overhauled, but the new version certainly feels more exciting than what came before.

The changes are evident right from the start, as EA unveils its latest batch of trademarked names on the gaming public. For instance, when you go past the suggested swing distance, it is no longer called overswing, but instead it's called entering the "Tiger zone." You also get scary lightning effects (much like the golfing bishop in *Caddyshack*) when you hit the ball dead-on (which is now called a "Tiger shot"). Sure this all sounds silly, but it actually makes the game a little more fun.

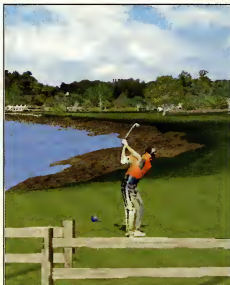
If you have read this far (and we're certain you have — if you haven't, then this is a good time to tell you what a complete loser you are and how much we despise you half-reading our well-thought-out articles — you should be ashamed!) you might think *TW99* is just a minor update to the *PGA Tour* series, but some major changes have been made as well. First off,



You get the picture. This is Tiger Woods' game. But look past the young phenom and check out the backgrounds, lake, and realistic fan galleries.

the graphics engine is now truly 3D, rotating and panning as you hit the ball to give a view of the action that television broadcasters would give their bloated left leg to replicate. Full 3D-accelerator support makes things look even better. The game also lets you play with the pressure of a full gallery of fans that grow and shrink depending upon your performance.

With courses at Pebble Beach, Sawgrass, and Summerlin, *Tiger Woods 99* will keep you occupied until the company releases at least two other course discs shortly



If you hit the meter dead-on, an announcer screams "Tiger shot," and you light up like fire.



after the first. All of the courses have been mapped in painstaking detail to within an inch or two of actual heights and positions using GPS imagery. And for those who value competition over course variety, EA has not left out the free Internet matching service that made last year's version so much fun to play.

TW99 attempts to add a bit of fun to a very stuffy sport while

keeping the feel and realism of professional golf. It's a mix that, if done right, will make this game an instant hit for the new breed of golf fans.



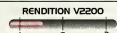
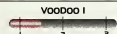
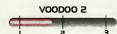
The 3D engine enables you to follow this shot along the same path the ball takes as it screams toward the hole.



DEVELOPER → 989 Studios
PUBLISHER → 989 Studios
REQUIRED → P166, 32MB RAM,
 75MB hard drive space, Direct3D-com-
 patible accelerated card
IDEAL → P200, 32MB RAM, Voodoo 2
 card, gamepad

ACCELE-RATED

While *GameDay* certainly looks much better than its PlayStation equivalent, this version still does not take advantage of all that 3D-accelerated PCs have to offer. Next year look for 989 Studios to rectify that oversight.



API SUPPORT → Direct3D



No way on earth Marino is going to outrun this Indianapolis pass rush.



Even rugged football players need a good hug from time to time.

GameDay 99

For the first time, the best football is on the PC

On the past, the best-playing sports games have almost exclusively belonged on consoles (sorry, it's true), but 3D accelerators have changed all that. Take, for instance, *GameDay 99*. The title is essentially a port of last year's positively stunning *GameDay* for the Sony PlayStation, but thanks to the more powerful graphics capabilities of today's PCs, it looks and plays much better.

Gone are the blocky, indistinguishable players from the console version, and in their stead are high-res players all sized according to their actual weights and heights. Even though graphics do not make the game, they do add significantly to the feeling of realism. It also makes it easier for you to spot your favorite receiver at a quick glance.

While *GameDay's* graphics will make a good first impression, the gameplay is what makes the title worth buying. Sure the engine is essentially the same as last year's console game, but that game was one of the best football games ever. What makes the plays so fun are players that run, block, and play like real ones. While most



If you don't master total control passing, you won't win.

football games virtually ignore the running game, *GameDay* embraces it with intelligent blocking and holes that open and close in a realistic manner. This gives you the feeling that you are actually in a football game in which every play is not a Hail Mary pass to the end-zone.

Even though *GameDay* offers a realistic running game, it doesn't mean that the passing game has been ignored. The clever use of Total Control Passing lets you instinctively control where your receivers run and where the pass is thrown. Mastering this technique is the closest thing you will ever experience to being a real NFL quarterback.

The AI is the same as last year's console version's, which means decent play calling but occasion-



GameDay has the best rushing in any football game to date.

ally awful time management. The opposition will learn your calls over a season if you rely on money plays too much. Unfortunately, the computer AI can be overcome if you have a stable of four to five good plays.

Right now nothing on the PC even comes close to *GameDay*, but tough contenders from EA and Sierra are just around the corner.

GRAPHICS

Even though players are not high-poly models, they move very realistically.

SOUND

The hits sound good and the commentary is strong.

CONTROL

Almost as tight as the PlayStation version, but much better than any other PC football game.

REALISM

GameDay plays realistically, but many sim fans may be disappointed with the arcade feel of the game.

RATING

+ Pluses

- Great running game
- Intuitive but complex passing controls
- Intelligent AI play calling

- Minuses

- Internet play is a joke
- No names on jerseys
- Diving through several blockers to get a sack



Right after this first down toss, Jeff George flipped out and demanded to be traded to the New Orleans Saints.

DEVELOPER → Gremlin
 PUBLISHER → Fox Interactive
 REQUIRED → P130, 16MB RAM, 87MB
 hard drive space
 IDEAL → P200, 32MB RAM, Direct3D-com-
 patible accelerator card

ACCELE-RATED

VOODOO 2



RIVA 128 ZX



Fox Golf's 3D engine is not perfect, but it is a nice break from the standard slide-show PC golf games.

Fox Sports Golf 99

Fox's first golf title doesn't quite make the cut

Easily the most snobbish sports game fans are golf fans. They've been spoiled by polished and highly realistic games such as *PGA Tour Pro*, *Jack Nicklaus 5*, and the *Links* series, and they expect the best on a year-to-year basis. With this kind of competition, it seems almost unfair for an innovative but ultimately flawed game like *Fox Sports Golf 99* to compete on a head-to-head basis.

Most of the charm in this Gremlin-developed title centers around its 3D engine. In contrast to most golf games' slide-show-like presentation, *Fox Sports Golf 99* presents the action over any of eight fully polygonal courses. This means that each shot can be shown in realtime as it flies to its

final destination. The engine also allows the courses to feel more real and alive, with players as an actual part of the environment rather than sprites pasted on a pretty picture.

Where this game breaks down is in its control (which, for a golf game, is absolutely the most important factor). Even though it includes three different control methods, none feels fully refined, and putting is made into a joke as you sink an "easy" 50-foot putt. Add this to ball physics that just don't feel right and you have a game that you'll be unlikely to follow through for a full 18 holes. Hopefully next year Fox will be able to return and add better gameplay to its graphics. Until then, hold on to what you're playing now.

— DAN EGGER wears funny pants whether he is golfing or not.

GRAPHICS

This game's 3D courses and ability to walk the course are where the future lies.

SOUND

Decent commentary and surrounding sounds keep things interesting.

CONTROL

Needs a lot of work in this area. First Fox should choose one method and do it right.

REALISM

Sloppy ball physics and lack of options for tough shots leave hardcore fans feeling gyped.

RATING



+ Pluses

→ The 3D graphics are cool
 → I love making 50-foot putts

- Minuses

→ The control is frustrating
 → I shouldn't be making 50-foot putts

DEVELOPER → MediaGAMES
 PUBLISHER → Blue Byte
 REQUIRED → P133, 16MB RAM,
 100MB hard drive space
 IDEAL → P300, Voodoo 2 card, 32MB
 RAM, 100MB hard drive space, gamepad

ACCELE-RATED

VOODOO 2



RENDITION V2200



Various camera angles are a pretty useless addition.



Remember: serve and volley, serve and volley.

Game, Net & Match

Somewhere to start in an uncrowded market

I could count the number of PC tennis games on the fingers of one hand. I could count the number of good ones on no hands. Blue Byte has delved back into the market with a real focus on Internet multiplayer. Pity it forgot to do a decent job on

the single-player side.

GNM isn't all bad. Animation on the 3D-accelerated players is pretty decent. It's chunkier and slightly slower under software. And it manages to play like a good, fast-paced tennis game most of the time. One problem in single-player mode is that it's ridiculously easy (serve and volley on any of the court types and you'll win with ease); and when winning doesn't mean anything — no victory podium after a tournament win or any form of recognition of your achievement — the whole experience goes cold.

So try the neatly modeled online server. From a German-based client, it matches players to peer-to-peer connections for very playable games (a U.S.-based server should be available now). The ranking system works (but is likely to be fairly inaccurate as it's easy to quit out of a game if you're losing ...) and the chat function, buddy list, and game setup are all user-friendly. Let's face it, tennis options are limited, which helps

GRAPHICS

Uninspiring — but you can't expect much from clay, grass, and concrete.

SOUND

Ball thumps, cheap commentary, occasional applause. It took a few days to put together. Tops.

CONTROL

A gamepad helps, but it's pretty easy all the way.

REALISM

More importantly, it plays pretty well. Shoddy AI makes the single-player version dull.

RATING



+ Pluses

→ Internet play works
 → Uncomplicated

- Minuses

→ Pointless single-player mode
 → Far too easy

GNM, as does the Internet play, but there's an overall sense of it being rushed.

— ROB SMITH was a ball boy at Wimbledon until a racket thrown by Bjorn Borg ended his career.



PGL

TIPS FROM THE PROS

PROFESSIONAL
GAMERS' LEAGUEOR, HOW TO MAKE A LOAD
OF CASH PLAYING QUAKE II

New stars are emerging. Professional *Quake* playing is not all about Season 1 victor Thresh.

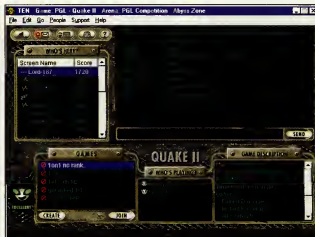
When you've gone blurry-eyed from sitting in front of that monitor for eight straight hours, fingers unresponsive to anything but flying rockets and the sight of an enemy, you've got to question whether there's a higher purpose to all that. It's the new Wild West, the new frontier. All those rules still apply — there's always someone out there faster than you. It's a sad, sobering realization when that moment arises, but there are ways to get better. And better still, if you're still at school and are getting berated for bad grades or that haggard look from being up til 3 a.m., there's now a genuine response: "But folks, I'm gonna be a pro."

SEASON 2 WINNERS

Rosco accepts a check for \$7,500 from PGL commissioner Nolan Bushnell for winning Season 2.

THE TOP EIGHT WINNERS

- 1 Rosco
- 2 Kulin
- 3 Makaveli
- 4 Unowned
- 5 (tie) SlickSoul
- 5 (tie) Freak
- 7 (tie) Ren
- 7 (tie) IceWolf



Top players practice against top players. It's the only way to learn the lessons that will keep you alive longer.

As qualifying starts for the third AMD Professional Gamers' League, the prize pot has reached \$110,000. Not bad for a tin-pot idea variously ridiculed and scoffed at when it was first conceived. The Season 2 finals saw the eight top *Quake II* and the eight top *Total Annihilation* players slug it out. For Season 3, *TA* has been dumped in favor of *StarCraft*, but of course, it's the *QII* tourney that generates the most interest, having made a household name of Thresh (for those households with a PC and *QII* installed). Season 2 *QII* winner Rosco is likely to be back to try to defend his title, but the impression from the early qualifying stages is that the competition is getting tougher.

For \$50 (or as part of the deal if you're a fully paid-up TEN subscriber) the chance of glory and, increasingly, riches beckons. And of course, with dollar signs in our eyes and egos bubbling, PCXL had to get involved. Naturally, we thought we'd cheat.

How to get good at *Quake II*, PGL-style? Well, get in cahoots with the top players from the previous season, as well as some of those topping the rankings in the current qualification and hit them up for the inside scoop, promising their appearance in the finest of gaming mags. That's what we did, all in the spirit of journalistic investigation.

— ROB SMITH, aka *PCXL-Blode*, is currently ranked 132nd in the PGL, but he does have a real job.



In the practice room, mouse pads and configs are checked, re-checked, and balanced before competition.

WORTH WINNING

Sponsors are throwing a bunch of kit at the finalists of Season 3 of the PGL. There's also a decent amount of cash on offer. Here's the breakdown.

1ST PLACE: \$8,500

AMD K6-2 MMX machine
Rendition V2200 3D graphics card
US Robotics X2 56Kbps modem
Logitech controller
AV1390 PL Advent Powered Partner speakers

2ND PLACE: \$4,500

AMD K6-2 MMX machine
Rendition V2200 3D graphics card
US Robotics X2 56Kbps modem
Logitech controller
AV1390 PL Advent Powered Partner speakers

3RD PLACE: \$3,200

AMD K6-2 MMX machine
Rendition V2200 3D graphics card
US Robotics X2 56Kbps modem
Logitech controller
AV1390 PL Advent Powered Partner speakers

4TH PLACE: \$1,400

AMD K6-2 MMX machine
Rendition V2200 3D graphics card
US Robotics X2 56Kbps modem
Logitech controller
AV1390 PL Advent Powered Partner speakers

5TH - 8TH PLACE: \$300

Rendition V2200 3D graphics card
US Robotics X2 56Kbps modem
Logitech controller

9TH - 16TH PLACE: \$150

TOP 128: PGL T-SHIRT

MVP

A league MVP will also be awarded to one person who will score himself:
AMD K6-2 MMX machine
US Robotics X2 56Kbps modem
Logitech controller

ROSCO

AKA: DANNY
ALIBES**What's your config choice?
And do you use any specific binds or aliases?**

I use the two-button Microsoft mouse. I use Q to bind my rocket launcher and E for the rail gun. W is to walk forward, S to walk backward, D to strafe right, and A to strafe left. Second mouse button for jump and first mouse button to fire. I play in video mode 512 and like to use the crosshair.

What's your most memorable frag?

The one I remember the most was in the final match at Season 2 PGL. I had just had a battle with Kulin in the pit and I ran up the elevator as we both went for life. I took a risk and went after him when he was hurt. I jumped off a ledge, did a 180 in the air, and fired a rocket right between his eyes (the crowd loved it).

RB-RENNARD

AKA: ERIK
CHARBOIS**What's your config choice?
And do you use any specific binds or aliases?**

I use the keyboard and Logitech First Mouse+ (light and precise) with a Microsoft mouse ball instead of the Logitech one (the MS ball is bigger and picks up less dust). I have mouse acceleration turned off and use a high sensitivity. I also use a 3M precision mousepad.

On the mouse, I have button #1 bound to shoot and the third button bound to jump (I don't use the other two).

On the keyboard, I use the standard W-A-S-D for moving forward and backward and strafe left and right. I use the spacebar to crouch and go down in water. I also have V bound so I can toggle between running and walking. Walking allows you to be totally silent and not make any footstep sounds, at the cost of speed.

Here is the alias:

```
alias walk "set cl_run 0; echo
Walking...; bind v run"
alias run "set cl_run 1; echo
Running...; bind v walk"
bind v "walk"
```

I also have my weapons bound as follows:

```
bind 1 "use shotgun;wait;use
super shotgun"
bind 2 "use machinegun;wait;use
chaingun"
bind 3 "use rocket launcher"
bind 4 "use hyperblaster"
bind 5 "use railgun"
bind 6 "use grenades;wait;use
grenade launcher"
bind 7 "use bfg10k"
```

Since you will generally always use super shotgun over shotgun, chain over machine gun, and grenade launcher over grenades, and anything else over the blaster, I rebound my keys 1-7 so I don't have to reach across the keyboard to hit "g" for the rail gun. As a side note, if I do want to use the shot-

DEATH FROM ABOVE

Dropping in from above and performing a 180 on the way down is an effective way to dispose of the enemy.



gun instead of ssg, I need only tap 1 twice, once to switch ssg, the second to use shotgun (some weird *QII* bug allows it).

I use field of vision 120 (fov), which allows me to see 30 degrees more of the battlefield. The downside is that objects appear to be moving faster, yet I find the added

viewing is worth it (plus I find fov 90 too slow). Also, these commands are helpful to keep aim steady and consistent:

```
set bob_pitch "0"
set bob_roll "0"
set bob_up "0"
set run_pitch "0"
set run_roll "0"
```

What's your most memorable frag?

None I can think of.

Practice regime/tips

I play for one or two hours every day. The best way to get better is to avoid public servers and play on private servers against good, experienced players, even if it means losing a lot.

CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE



Using the fov cheat (err ... code for 45 and for 180) you can see much more of the area, albeit a bit skewed, or you can use it to zoom in (handy if you bind it to the rail gun).

SLICKSOUL AKA: ROB CORNIDE

What's your config of choice?

Mouse and keyboard. Test mouse sensitivity and choose a config you're comfortable with, including keys near your main controls to change weapon.

Any other tips?

There are three things to play by: 1. pressure, 2. strategy, 3. aim. Keep it cool, relax those muscles, and take a deep breath before entering a fight. Try to play your game and not the other guy's game. That's a very important goal to go by; it's the reason why a lot of people can't play the way we do, meaning the 10 or 12 other Q/I top guns I know. It's a mental game, you have to stay cool and watch your mistakes. What makes a good strategy is knowledge of the level. Get to know every detail of the most-played map, and then build a solid strategy. Normally what I do on a map I'm just beginning to play is RUN from the guy, run until it's almost impossible for him to catch you. This helps you learn all the escape routes for the next time you're in the same situation.

Aim is obviously a good skill to have; this takes practice. Practice makes perfect.

THE ROCKET JUMP



The most useful "pro" skill to have, firing a rocket at the ground and leaping to extra height, is odd. You're going to damage yourself — that's a fact. But on most one-on-one levels, you gain positioning and level control advantages from this technique. The purists pull this off manually (fire a rocket into the ground and jump simultaneously) ... then wave your opponents as you fly to extra health or armor!

The easy way: bind one key to pull off the move. While we don't condone this kind of gamesmanship (although consider our current rankings, perhaps we should), here's the alias you need to be "j-Ing" all over the place:

```
bind x [where x is the key you want to use] +rj
alias +rj "rj;rj2"
alias rj1 "c_pitchspeed 10000;wait;lookdown;wait;lookdown;c_pitchspeed 150"
alias rj2 "set rj_hand $hand; hand2+moveup;+sttck"
alias +rj "~+sttck;+moveup; set hand rj_hand;centerfov"
```

DON'T STOP MOVING



Lighting up a room like a madman may be effective on servers with more than 30 players, but the real pros pick their shots carefully.

ICEWOLF AKA: JOSH CARUTHERS

What's your config of choice?

Three-button Logitech g8 Mouse-Man. Keyboard cfg is based around a home key row of QWERG. Q and R are left/right strafe, G and E are duck and jump. Surrounding keys are filled in with macros and weapon binds. I generally use a number of cheat aliases that let me worm my way to a win. Rg autoaim script, Item/weapon timing script, etc. Of the few aliases that aren't the hardcore cheats, only the walk toggle and the zoom script stand out. Other than that, just team macros, weapon drop macros, usual crap.

Memorable frags?

I once killed three guys in midair while falling with only a hand blaster ... ya, that's the ticket.

Practice regime/tips

For all those who wanna be like Wolf, study different principles of

war; try to understand human psychology during combat. Practice aim and movement, try to learn the sounds of each level you play on. And above all else, get your daily bran requirements.

MAKAVELI AKA: VICTOR CUNDRU

What's your config of choice?

I use a pretty standard config, a combination of a Microsoft two-button mouse and keyboard. I use W-A-S-D and left mouse for fire. Alt is crouch. For switching weapons I use: 1 - use rail gun, 2 - use rocket launcher, f - use chain gun, 3 - use super shotgun, and c - use hyper blaster. I don't use any aliases or fov scripts. I am personally against these because it's not the player doing the action. I almost consider it cheating.

Memorable frag?

I would think taking opponents out of midair with the rail are my

When you hear a noise in one-on-one play you better know where it came from or you'll be dead before you ever find out.

favorite kills. Although in RA2 (Rocket Arena) I would bounce the player in the air with a rocket three times in a row and before he lands, I would switch to rail and take him right out of the air. Those are the sweetest-looking kills I have ever done.

Practice regime/tips

The most important tip I could point out is listen for sounds and be sure to know the level really, really well. Most of the game in a one-on-one is in the mind. Use your head and know where your opponent is at all times. Take unusual paths and use unusual methods of play to throw him off balance. If you can do that, you have a good chance of coming out on top. Also aim is very important, so practice, practice, practice. I play a lot of one-on-ones to work on strategy and level knowledge, and Rocket Arena to work on my aim.



Going to the rocket arena is the best way to practice the all-important aim.

BE A RANK WHORE

As players strive for gain ground on the rank ladder, some questionable techniques can show up. For starters, there's the simple "kill a pal" method, in which a ranked friend comes online and you slaughter him, vastly improving your kill-to-death ratio. If you're an HPB (high ping bastard), checking the pings of new opponents to a game and bailing if they're all lower than yours can help reduce the lag-induced deaths you may suffer.

FFAs (free for all) can also be dangerous to rank scores. Accidentally find yourself in a game with any of the top players and that ratio and rank will plummet. Carefully selected one-on-one games against a well-matched opponent give you the chance to do the best you can and score points. That said, FFAs offer more opponents, so if you're up to the challenge and can control a level, there are many fast kills to be had. If you end up in a game against a much higher-ranked opponent and you get the first kill, quit!

Q2DMI: THE EDGE PRO TIPS

Getting by far the most play during ranked qualifying was Q2DMI: The Edge. But there's a vast difference between being proficient on a level, and mastering it (as I found out during a 43-to-1 thrashing by SilkSoul — I still suffer the nightmares).

Here are some of the pro tips to make the most of this level's intricacies. (And many thanks to Evil-Demon for having the patience to hand me a thrashing and then point out where I was going wrong.)



Take a shortcut to the armor by rocket jumping here. It's possible.



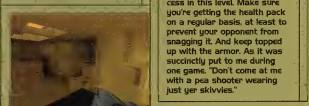
It's possible to jump up to the ledge, using the slight ramp as extra leverage. Practice, practice, practice.

Quick armor. Move at the corner of each of the boxes and you can leap to the top with two jumps, rather than four.



Accessing all parts of the map quickly is vital. Rocket jump up to this platform to get the hyper blaster. Make sure to temper your aggression. Patient, controlled dominance of the level will score more kills than Rambo tactics.

Do a double-jump (tap Jump twice) when standing at the corner to leap onto the top box. With practice you can then turn and leap to the health pack without sustaining rocket jump damage. Control of this room is vital to success in this level. Make sure you're getting the health pack on a regular basis, at least to prevent your opponent from snagging it. And keep topped up with the armor. As it was succinctly put to me during one game, "Don't come at me with a pea shooter wearing just yer skivvies."



Making that jump is tricky and needs perfect timing to land from corner to corner.

SEASON 3

Qualifying for Season 3 saw many of those familiar names at the top of the rankings, as well as a bunch of newer names joining the fray. Many were only too happy to help out with some pointers, particularly with their configs. Here are a couple of options worth considering.

VLUCIFERV

What's your config of choice?

Keyboard and mouse (Logitech three-button MouseMan

I use /-jump, m=duck, [comma key]=strafe left, [period key]=strafe right. I also use a custom run/walk alias that I have bound in my autoexec.cfg:

```
bind n moveswitch
alias walk "set c_L_run 0,alias
moveswitch run;echo walking"
alias run "set c_L_run 1,alias
moveswitch walk;echo running"
run
```

Practice regime/tips

Only play people who are better than you. Never go into ffa's fragging newbies with 600 ping. I play about 2 1/2 to 3 hours a day... [It's the] only way you'll get good.

QAZEW

What's your config of choice?

Won't catch me dead without my Dell QuietKey board and an Intellimouse. I have keys bound to each weapon around where my hand is, and also change the yaw speed (M_yaw ###), and pitch speeds (m_pitch .###), for up and down and left and right.

This is a short excerpt from my config, and I have to give most credit to Lord-187 and Nod... I got the original config from them and edited it to my liking.

```
bind 1 "use machinegun; wait; use
chaingun;wait; sensitivity
12.5;wait;set m_yaw .023;wait;set
m_pitch .020"
bind 2 "use rocket
launcher;wait; sensitivity
12.5;wait;set m_yaw .023;wait;set
m_pitch .020"
bind 3 "use
```

```
railgun;wait; sensitivity
6.5;wait;set m_yaw .035;wait;set
m_pitch .025"
bind a "use shotgun;wait;use
super shotgun;wait; sensitivity
12.5;wait;set m_yaw .023;wait;set
m_pitch .020"
bind d "use Grenade
launcher;wait; sensitivity
12.5;wait;set m_yaw .023;wait;set
m_pitch .020"
bind e "use
hyperblaster;wait; sensitivity
12.5;wait;set m_yaw .023;wait;set
m_pitch .020"
```

Note how the machine gun and chain gun are grouped to pick the best, same with shotgun and super shotgun (thanks again to Nod... and Lord-187).

Memorable frag?

The first time I killed vLUCIFeRv with a blaster. Being railed in midair on Frag Pipe by x-timber-x. Shooting through the pipe in Frag Pipe randomly and killing two people.

BUT HE CHEATED

When you've got cash and big brains at stake, it's rarely impressive the lengths that some people will go to get up the ladder. In Season 2, eight players were disqualified by the league for trying to cheat. But how do people do?

The main method is using bots. Through particular hacks it's possible to enter a game and have a bot (and the artificial accuracy that a computer controlled bot has) play for you. But mention cheating and people get defensive. "We're doing the best we possibly can to find it," commented one PGL representative. "And we actually have a very effective method in place to spot bot users."

Of course, once the hack is blocked by TEN's PGL system, the cunning tricksters find another way around it. It seems like a constant battle, but with vigilante groups adding to the goading and the PGL reps scrutinizing match scores, comparing screen-bots to scores and following up on complaints, getting your bot through is tough.

Once you get to the real final qualifying, each game is watched by officials, so if you cheat and you don't have the skills, you're gonna be found out real quick.

Another intriguing method involves stripping out the code for character models and replacing it with a large block, which is then covered by a brightly colored skin. What this manages to do is give the cheater a bigger, brightly colored target to aim at. Proving this, of course, is far from easy, but after investigation, PGL reckons that the PGL is about as above-board as possible. Respect.

10 Essentials of Deathmatch Design

OK, you've mastered the *Unreal* editor, WorldCraft 1.6, or whatever level editor you call your own, now how do you make those levels shine? You do what the experts do. And to help you find out what that is, we (with the help of the best in the level design business) have compiled a list of the 10 most essential aspects of multiplayer level design.

1. CREATE EVERYTHING FOR A REASON

Good design is not just about making a level look nice. It requires significant forethought and planning, where every area and object has a purpose. Unnecessary rooms and unneeded items make the gameplay less intuitive and less enjoyable than it should be.

EXAMPLE--> *Quake II's Q2DM1 (The Edge)* seems to be the best-designed deathmatch going. Check it out and see if you can find anything placed without a reason.

"I remember playing a level with a lift that takes you to what I call *The Nexus*. *The Nexus* is merely the absence of textures, and it creates a disorienting warping effect. The author not only forgot to texture this room, but the room served no purpose in the first place! It was merely somewhere else to go and did not add anything useful at all. No weapons, no ammo, nothing!"
— ANDY "SNARF" BLACK, editor of *Snarf's Unreal Map Emporium*
www.unreal.com/sume

Q2DM1



Quake II's The Edge is a perfect example of tight level design.

2. HAVE A DISTINCT DESIGN CONCEPT

Always make your levels memorable. Starting with a clear concept keeps your design focused and keeps your levels from becoming bland. The more original the better, but always avoid letting your concept overwhelm your gameplay.

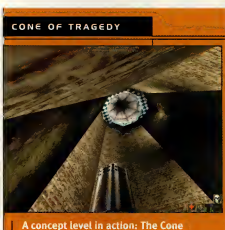
EXAMPLE--> *Cone of Tragedy* for *Unreal*: OK, we are biased about this level, but it is a great example of high-concept design (players fall, players die).

"This is great for gimmick DM levels. The cool portals in *Unreal's DMRadikus*. Or the great lava tube in *Quake II's Frag Pipe*. People love and remember these little touches."

— CLIFF BLESZINSKI, *Unreal* lead level designer/ca-designer

3. KEEP THE ACTION MOVING

The perfect deathmatch level will keep players constantly moving with nowhere safe to hide. This is



A concept level in action: *The Cone*

accomplished by making sure that every single room has multiple entrances, and every sniping area has danger behind it. You can also keep players moving by showing them rewards in the distance, which motivates them to constantly move forward.

EXAMPLE--> *DMMorbias (Unreal's Rocket Arena)*: Nowhere, absolutely nowhere is safe in this level, so the only way to stay alive is keep moving.

"Avoid dead ends, unless they have a highly prized item at the end. Even then, don't make them too 'deep' down a hallway, as a good DM flow is helped by a minimum of two exits to every room."
— CLIFF BLESZINSKI

4. REWARD PLAYERS FOR DIFFICULT MANEUVERS

If you're going to give something good to a player, he should be made to work for it. Consequently if you make players use a great deal of skill to find a weapon, don't disappoint them with a lame reward (*Tomb Raider II*, while not a first-person shooter, is a perfect example of this crime). The goal should always match the effort it takes to find it.

EXAMPLE-->

Q2DM6 (Quake II's Lava Tomb): This level has several particularly nasty traps protecting the best weapons and power-ups. Nothing comes easy here.

"The goal, weapon, power-up, whatever should be as accessible to the novice as it is to the veteran player. You can make an area accessible by rocket

jumping, but be sure that there's another way to get to it for the less-experienced players. Punishing beginners by dangling carrots in front of them that they'll never be able to reach is no way to win over new players; it will only frustrate them."

— RICH CARLSON, level designer at *Ion Storm*

5. BALANCE WEAPONS

A level is only as good as the warfare that takes place inside it. And this is often dictated by the balance of ammo and weapons in the level. But don't take our word for it. The experts say this better than we ever could.

EXAMPLE--> *Unreal's DMDeck6*: This level has plenty of weapons and ammo so you can reload even if you are away from your gun's spawning point.

"It's really quite easy to balance the weapons, ammo, and armor. The hard part is balancing the power-ups. You might want to exclude certain weapons and power-ups to give your level a certain feel or play style. Just because *Id* included a BFG and an invulnerability power-up doesn't mean that you have to use them

DMDECKIG


In Unreal's DMDeck6 you can find ammo for your weapon even when you aren't close to its spawning point.

in your levels." — RICH CARLSON

"I have seen way too many levels placing much of the ammo far a particular weapon next to that weapon. This causes a terrible imbalance in gameplay because it is far too easy to 'run' a particular level because ALL of the rockets are in the same damn place." — SNARF

6. OPTIMIZE

Understand your engine and use its strengths while hiding its weakness. Also reduce the overall number of polygons in the levels to maintain a good look without slowing the game down. Optimization can be done in the Unreal engine by using "zones" to split up what needs to be rendered as a player enters a new area.

"Just because on engine can handle x number of polygons doesn't mean a designer should slap that many up on the screen. Less is more." — SNARF

7. PLAYTEST OBSESSIVELY

Look for little flaws and cheats that others will eventually discover, by playing with bots, friends, or anyone willing to try out an unfinished level. Before you release the level on an unsuspecting public, be sure you know there are no major flaws. Nothing is worse than watching someone find a flaw or imbalance in your level that makes it immediately unplayable.

gameplay has been smoothed out by proper placement of items, clip brushes, and the like, another pass with the texture set can't hurt at all." — RICH CARLSON

9. SET UP CONFRONTATIONS AND GREAT MOMENTS

Great levels create great moments. When you are designing your level, think about what it would be like to play in it and create places where players will have tense confrontations. Whether it is a tight section in a hallway, a single area with many entrances, or a wide open room that players must cross without being shot, a clever level design creates the best situations.

EXAMPLE→ *Quoke E3M7*: This small level was a constant battle to secure the elevator that led up to the rocket launcher and the accompanying tactical advantage.

"Be imaginative and create the most dramatic fight locations you can think of. If you think it's cool, build it. And dare to be different! I must have seen thousands of DM maps by now, and even so, I still feel that the surface has barely been scratched with what one can do with deathmatch." — RICH CARLSON

"It is cool to have some tight corridors in your DM maps, but make sure you also have some wide open areas where a straight gunfight will please all onlookers." — CLIFF BLESZINSKI

"Playtest with varying player count loads such as one-on-one, two-an-two, four- to six-player free-for-alls, eight- to 10-player free-for-alls, and more if you can." — T. ELLIOT CANNON, Unreal level designer

B. POLISH, POLISH, POLISH

Take time after a level is finished to clean up textures, make paths easy to maneuver, further balance the weapons, and take care of all the little details that make a level great. Care in this area is the key difference between an average level and a truly spectacular one.

"Levels are never finished, only abandoned. Even when you think a map is complete, there are always improvements to be made. Once

DMRADIKUS


Unreal enables players to try a host of lighting methods and special effects without slowing down the gameplay.

10. USE ENVIRONMENT, SOUND, AND LIGHTING EFFECTS TO CONVEY MOOD AND ENHANCE GAMEPLAY

Be careful with this. Many a flashy deathmatch level has been forgotten because the designer got cute and used too many effects at the expense of fast gameplay. However, intelligent use of lighting, sound, and effects can make a good level look great, as long as it is balanced with tight design.

EXAMPLE→ *Unreal's DMRadikus*: This deathmatch level has plenty of colored lighting, sounds, and special effects, but it still plays lightning fast.

"If you have to choose between a flickering light or a great sniper overhang, go for the gameplay rather than the cool effect. A lot of deathmatch players play in the lowest resolution possible for the fastest experience. They won't care if your level has special effects." — CLIFF BLESZINSKI

10 DESIGN SCHOOL TIPS

- These level design tips came courtesy of Tim Lister, the lead level designer at id Software.
- **SKETCH OUT** your ideas on paper before you ever start your computer. Having a clear design in mind before you start will save hours and make your level more refined.
- **DON'T DELETE** bad ideas. Save your concepts, you never know where they might fit.
- **FINISH YOUR LEVELS**. Some people put out bad levels too early, while others keep polishing and never finish. While you don't want to release something too early, no one can play your level if they can't get their hands on it.
- **MOVE PLAYERS** through levels. You can do this in two ways, by pushing or by pulling. Pulling players means leading them with power-ups and rewards in the distance, so no matter where they are, they can always see something good further on. Another method is to push players, which means keeping danger at their back so they are continually moving to stay safe.
- **AMMO** is a good thing, people like to kill things with it. Players hate to run out!
- **LEVELS NEED A MAIN FOCUS POINT**, something players can recognize and find easily such as a main computer, power core, or a special machine. These focus points should look unique to the world and have a direct relationship with the mission's objective. This makes the level a lot easier for people to understand.

GAMESCAN
THE JERRY SPRINGER EDITION

Since we can't cover every upcoming game in our Preview section, Gamescan helps keep you informed of stuff in the pipes. This month, in a tribute to the king of trash Jerry Springer, we've programmed a computer to replicate his always-poignant closing thoughts on each game.



TUROK 2

DEVELOPER → Iguana

PUBLISHER → Acclaim

RELEASE DATE → Winter '98

"I'm proud to be a chronically displaced Native American"

THE SCOOP → *Turok 2* has more special effects and mind-blowing weapons than your usual first-person shooter, and now it has a death-match mode to boot

THE CONFLICT → It will have to overcome the "just a port" impression to woo *Quake* fans

JERRY'S FINAL THOUGHT →

Even with some of the best-looking and best-animated bad guys I've seen in a while, as a society we must never condone the killing of dinosaurs



SHADOWMAN

DEVELOPER → Iguana UK

PUBLISHER → Acclaim

RELEASE DATE → Winter '98

"Voodoo magic changed my life"

THE SCOOP → This third-person shooter based on a comic book lets players fight in both the real world and the supernatural world of the dead

THE CONFLICT → It will have to rely on its moody graphics, multi-tear of weapons (including a teleporting teddy bear), and dark storyline to stand out on its own

JERRY'S FINAL THOUGHT →

Shadowman deals with the ever-present social issue of blowing away serial killers, but does it in a touching, heartfelt manner

EA Acquires Westwood

The computer game publishing market is rapidly boiling down to just a few competitors, a fact made more apparent by EA's recent purchase of *Command & Conquer* maker Westwood Studios. The company announced that it plans to pay \$122.5 million to buy crucial assets of Virgin Interactive, including Westwood Studios and all of Virgin's current in-development titles. The move is considered a major coup for EA, which purchased most of the valuable parts of Virgin Interactive for roughly half the asking price of the entire company. All that is now left of Virgin are the company's rights to its old titles, its powerful European distribution, and its U.S. sales and marketing office.

"EA got some good talent, some good brands," said James Lin, a senior analyst with Wedbush Morgan Securities, "and they got arguably the best strategy brand (*Command & Conquer*) in the business. This is very much in line with what EA has been doing over the last year and a half. EA is recognizing that it's the number one player overall, and it's realizing it has to defend its territory on all fronts."

With this acquisition, EA has established itself in the top-selling realtime strategy field, with one of



Now that EA has *Tiberian Sun* in its arsenal, can Blizzard and *StarCraft* be far behind?

the two biggest names in the genre. The *Command & Conquer* series has garnered more than a million sales, and with the recent success of *StarCraft*, *C&C 2* is a sure bet to sell one million units as well. "We are so excited because Westwood is one of the best development studios in our industry," said Pat Becker, EA spokesperson. "It's the crown jewel. We want to change as little as possible because it's clearly working. Anything we do will be additive."

The company is currently second in computer game publishing only to Cendant, a company that just announced that it was looking to

get rid of its gaming interests. Cendant should be very happy, since this latest deal will no doubt drive up the price of its own realtime strategy maker, Blizzard. The bidding for this prize development house will likely go through the roof as companies scramble to establish their footing in this profitable genre.

Both GT and Activision have made it clear that they desire to expand (despite the former canceling plans to finance acquisitions via a \$100 million Wall Street offering). Eidos has been reported to be close to buying Psygnosis, and Hasbro spent \$70 million to merge with MicroProse after buying Avalon Hill. Any of these hungry companies (except the recently extended Hasbro) could move to acquire the wildly successful Blizzard, but EA, with its massive capital base, could be in the running as well. If it were able to acquire that company it would have two of the best-selling franchises in PC gaming today, which is a very enviable place to be.

FANTASY FRAG

FRANCE



WHY WE HATE IT: If not for its rudeness, the smell, the Nazi sympathizing, or even the Jerry Lewis thing, we would hate France just because it's populated by an inordinate number of guys named René.

HOW IT SHOULD BE

FRAGGED: Either we should raise the barest semblance of an army to invade France (it would surrender to anyone with a force more powerful than a Girl Scout troop), or else someone should invent the Super BFG (Big French Weenie-Killing Gun) and toast the entire country.

KEY GAMES

FROM WESTWOOD

→ *Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun*
→ *Lords of War III*
→ *Dune 2000*

FROM VIRGIN INTERACTIVE

→ *Demolition*
→ *Quest 78: Mega-Blitz*
→ *F-05 Aggressor*
→ *Professional Sports Car Racing*
→ *Harold*
→ *Superdudes World Championship*
→ *Swords & Sorcery*

[Your Product] Is Our Favorite



Free non-game-related gifts have no effect on our editorial content or choice of pictures.

Just because we run a computer gaming magazine doesn't mean that we don't have other interests. We like plenty of other stuff, including things non-gaming companies produce. Take for instance the fine folks at Pete's Wicked Ale. On a whim, the generous brewmeisters sent us a keg of their finest ale. While this will not affect our editorial content in the slightest, we truly appreciate this gift of the smoothest

and best-tasting beer on the planet.

While we cannot accept gifts from computer game companies (it's that stupid ethics thing), we are open to items such as CDs, movies, sound equipment, weed-wackers, convertibles, ski boats, and other things that guys really like. And like we said, it will not affect our content at all.

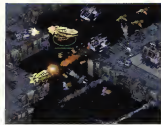
Next month: Why we love Phillips flat-screen TVs

Blizzard Strikes Gold, Again

Even though Blizzard missed the holiday season with *StarCraft*, it became the company's third title in a row to hit the magical million units sold mark.

It seems that the PC gaming audience is a quick-to-forgive bunch. Many cried foul when Blizzard announced last year that its realtime follow-up to *WarCraft II* would not make it to shelves by Christmas, and instead pushed its release into the early spring of this year. But according to PC Data's sales numbers, the buying public's anger did not last long.

The title has already racked up more than one million units sold, and seems to be well on its way to surpassing the sales numbers of *WarCraft II* and *Diablo*. Cendant executive Todd Coyle calls *StarCraft* "the fastest-selling launch of a game in Cendant Software's history," and expects the sales to continue throughout the year. Mil-



Even a late start didn't stop *StarCraft* from selling one million units.

lion-selling games are rare in the PC game business, and to have three in a row hit that mark is a major feat.

StarCraft's many delays actually helped its overall sales, as the title faced far less competition than the games that managed to ship for the holiday season. Blizzard wisely (and maybe not so accidentally) positioned both *Diablo* and *StarCraft* for the usually quiet spring season and has reaped rewards both times. Retailers have also enjoyed the success of these

games that helped spice up the early half of the year. Bob McKenzie of Babbages Etc. said, "*StarCraft* is our biggest game year-to-date, and Blizzard has become one of the few companies in the industry that customers will buy games from on reputation alone."

In the coming year, more companies will follow Blizzard's lead and hold their titles through the holiday season, in a gamble that has paid huge dividends for games like *StarCraft*, but has sunk other titles that were not so lucky.

GAMESCAN



TEST DRIVE 5

DEVELOPER → Accolade

PUBLISHER → Pitbull

RELEASE DATE → Winter '98

"I'm in love with my '69 Dodge Charger"

THE SCOOP → The fifth in the *Test Drive* series brings back more tracks than ever (17), 28 licensed cars, and music from KMFDM

THE CONFLICT → The bar is being raised for racing games thanks to 3D cards, so *Test Drive 5* will have to look really spectacular if it wants to overcome its flashy competition

JERRY'S FINAL THOUGHT →

I have a firm belief that you should always cooperate with the police, unless they are asking about your relations with a known prostitute. In that case, get in your Dodge Viper and drive



SOUTH PARK

DEVELOPER → Dreamforge/

Iguana

PUBLISHER → Acclaim

RELEASE DATE → Winter '99

"Help! I hear the voice of talking poop"

THE SCOOP → Acclaim is making two different games based on the wildly popular "South Park" series. The first is a puzzle game, and the second is a deathmatch-style game where players use a variety of tasteless weapons

THE CONFLICT → By the time these games are finished, will the gaming public have tired of the potty humor of "South Park"? (Our opinion is that potty humor never gets old)

JERRY'S FINAL THOUGHT →

Bathroom humor and the repetitive killing of an economically depressed child have no place on television. It's time we take responsibility for what goes out over the airwaves. Tomorrow on "Jerry": "I Married a Horse"



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**MOTO RACER 2**

DEVELOPER → Delphine

PUBLISHER → EA

RELEASE DATE → Winter '98

"Something between my legs is making noise"

THE SCOOP → The first super-glossy 3D racer is back, with souped-up graphics and an easy-to-use track editor. Better accelerator support enables flashier graphic tricks like full weather effects

THE CONFLICT → Dirt bike racing is one of the most guy-friendly sports around, but now the *Moto Racer* series has a fierce competitor in Microsoft's *Motocross Madness*

JERRY'S FINAL THOUGHT → Listen, when they are out riding dirt bikes, do you really think I would say anything bad about this game?

**TNN OUTDOORS****PRO HUNTER**

DEVELOPER → ASC Games

PUBLISHER → Dreamforge

RELEASE DATE → Winter '98

"Deer killed my family and now I want revenge"

THE SCOOP → The hunting game genre is about to get a kick in the pants from the *Unreal* engine. Players will, for the first time, be able to shoot 3D deer and will be able to hunt with friends online. Bring on the fully polygonal deer

THE CONFLICT → Word has it that you won't be able to shoot your hunting partners, your dog, or use the minigun on particularly nasty deer. (We are officially disappointed)

JERRY'S FINAL THOUGHT → Nature is our friend, but as repulsive as the idea of shooting harmless animals is to me, I am actually looking forward to a little bunny blasting in a hunting game that doesn't suck

THE WOMEN WE LOVE TO PLAY

→ You know it had to happen sometime ... Lara Croft as the **WOMAN WE LOVE TO PLAY**. No single character in videogames has had such a crossover impact

as the lovely *Tomb Raider* herself. Although she is constantly being copied (enabling us to keep up this section of X-TRA on a monthly basis), Lara still holds an important place in our hearts and minds (among other places).

Perhaps what we like best about Lara is the models that Eidos hires to portray her. Beyond their resemblance to the polygonal heroine Lara Croft, we also like the fact that they just can't seem to keep their clothes on. Below are the last few models who portrayed Lara and pictures of their off-hours modeling (they were young and needed the money or something).



HELL MCANDREW → No hair, no clothes, no problem.



RHONA MITRA → Daddy was a plastic surgeon, apparently a pretty good one.



VANESSA DEMOUY → If cleanliness is next to godliness, then this really is heaven.



The Heat-O-Meter

SUPER FALL EDITION

WHAT'S HOT

QUALITY CONTROL→ Interplay snagged the publishing rights to a supposedly bug-free version of *Battlecruiser 3000AD* version 2.0, one of the buggiest games ever released. Wanna bet it beefed up its technical support budget?

CHEESECAKE→ Comic book star J. Scott Campbell has signed with n-Space to develop a videogame based on his pinup/spy series *Danger Girl*. Lara better start working out.

MICROSOFT→ The megalocorporation signed *Total Annihilation* creator Chris Taylor and his newly formed company, Gas Powered Games, to a multititle development deal. Alternate energy advocates protest immediately.

VIRTUAL HUNTING→ OK, we've made enough fun of hunting games. Now that ASC Games announced its Unreal-based hunting title, we can't wait to see what an eightball rocket launcher will do to Bambi's mom.

THE ULTIMATE BATTLE→ Peter Molyneux takes on GOD (Gathering of Developers) with his own group called Lionhead Satellites. As of press time, the creator of *Populous*, *Syndicate*, and *Dungeon Keeper* has not been struck by lightning.

WHAT'S COLD

VIRTUAL HUNTING (PART II)→ Xatrix recently shipped a hunting game, which we review in this issue. The new title, *Redneck Deer Huntin'*, is already being called the most redundantly titled game of the year.

THE DARKEST SINS→ The long awaited *Sin* demo released with massive downloads, but a virus tagged on a few demo sites had computers crashing everywhere. Mplayer is hit especially hard with a tainted demo that was downloaded by more than 1,500 users.

ACTIVISION→ Gambled on making its own *Civilization* game only to lose in court and find itself forced to pay license fees to MicroProse for the name.

BLIZZARD→ Ten employees (including *StarCraft* team members) left to form their own company called Fugitive. While they say their first title will be out by Christmas 1999, our bet is on March 2000.

CONSOLES→ A PlayStation emulator has surfaced that not only plays that system's games, but also accelerates the 3D graphics. Woo-hoo! Forget about *Quake II*, it's *Punky Skunk* time!

BEHIND THE SCENES AT PCXL THE ART OF THE BOXOUT

PCXL prides itself on giving you all the information you need about the latest games. One of the most important tools in that endeavor is the handy boxout. These fact-filled snippets of knowledge are created through a complex and time-consuming process. Follow along if you dare.

Step 1→ Find a key piece of unexplored information in the story
Example→ *Quake III* will employ many new technical features such as Java network support, bump mapping, and hardware-accelerated trilinear mip mapping



Sitcom stars and actresses make great boxouts.

Step 2→ Expand on the issue that people want to know most about, the issue that is most timely, or whichever issue is easiest to find a relating cultural reference for
Example→ The early employment history of "Good Times" actor J.J. Walker



Step 3→ Use the latest in technology (and private investigators) to search for information
Example→ J.J. Walker was first employed in a militant poetry performance group. Later he warmed up crowds for the short-lived sitcom "Carlucci's Department,"

then went on to star in "Good Times" before he was named Comedian of the Decade by *Time* magazine

Step 4→ Try to work in a picture of a hot girl somewhere in the boxout
Example→ OK, who are we kidding? This usually has nothing to do with the boxout, we just want to get a picture of a good-looking model in our magazine from time to time

Step 5→ Find some tiny thread to tie it all together and you've got yourself a perfect boxout

GAMESCAN



DOMINANT SPECIES

DEVELOPER→ Red Storm

PUBLISHER→ Southpeak

Interactive

RELEASE DATE→ Winter '98

"I wish I had eaten my offspring"

THE SCOOP→ It's realtime 3D strategy where you control hives and breed odd creatures that attack and destroy other odd creatures

THE CONFLICT→ The unique character design in this game will take a little getting used to for those in the habit of commanding tanks, helicopters, or futuristic spaceships rather than alien blobs of goo

JERRY'S FINAL THOUGHT→

Just because the game talks about breeding small animals doesn't justify anyone who likes breeding with small animals



SPACE BUNNIES MUST DIE

DEVELOPER→ Jinx

PUBLISHER→ Ripcord

RELEASE DATE→ Winter '98

"My girlfriend dresses like a Dixie whore"

THE SCOOP→ It's similar to *Tomb Raider* with giant mutant space rabbits and a character who looks a lot like Lara Croft as a member of "The Beverly Hillbillies." Plenty of tongue-in-cheek action ensues that this game won't be boring

THE CONFLICT→ Through a strange mix-up at this year's E3, Ripcord accidentally gave away lucky rabbit feet that were made from real rabbits. What exactly does Ripcord have against bunnies?

JERRY'S FINAL THOUGHT→

Dead bunnies are nothing to joke about, but big-chested Southern girls are ratings gold

NOW
PLAYING

We weren't able to sneak in a review of these games just yet, but these games should all be in stores now.



SIN

DEVELOPER→ Ritual

PUBLISHER→ Activision

RELEASE DATE→ Fall '98

"I can't give up being bad"

THE SCOOP→ This Quake II-based shooter gathered much attention early on for its multiplayer game, but from what we've played, the innovative single-player levels are worthy of the most notice

THE CONFLICT→ Not much here.

Even though there are plenty of Quake II- and Unreal-based shooters in the works, Sin should be the first on the streets, hitting a hungry and ready-to-play audience

JERRY'S FINAL THOUGHT→

No one has the right to judge another person even if he sins by blowing away opponent after opponent with a sniper rifle. It's just his freedom of expression



GROUND ZERO

DEVELOPER→ Rogue

PUBLISHER→ Activision

RELEASE DATE→ Fall '98

"I'd sell my body for more Quake II"

THE SCOOP→ More Quake II levels, more weapons, and more baddies

THE CONFLICT→ Ground Zero is basically just more of the same Quake II we've already seen

JERRY'S FINAL THOUGHT→

Everyone has addictions. For some it's dating 79-year-old strippers, and for many it's playing Quake. So whatever your addiction is, call me at 555-ON-JERRY. I want to help you and besides, it makes great TV

REAL-LIFE CAMPING SPOTS

Have you ever played Quake II so much that the real world starts to look a lot like the game? If that's true, you need real professional help. We're not kidding. If anyone would know, we would, because it's happened to us.

After countless deathmatches, we can't help but be on the lookout for spots where evil campers may

lurk in the real world. The following are a few spots that we have determined to be the most camper-friendly environments in the real world. If you have others, send them to onefragtoomany@pcxl.com, and if they don't frighten us too much we just might print them.



THE MALL

WHERE TO HIDE→ Behind the Beanie Baby pushcart found in the middle of every mall in the United States

SPAWNING POINT→ Starbucks (this seems to be the best place to get clean shots at those irritating coffee-drinking yuppie leftovers)

WEAPON OF CHOICE→ A rocket launcher or flak cannon can take care of the biggest number of khaki-wearing Gen X-ers

POTENTIAL DANGERS→ Vengeful young professionals sneaking up behind you from a nearby Baby Gap or Pottery Barn



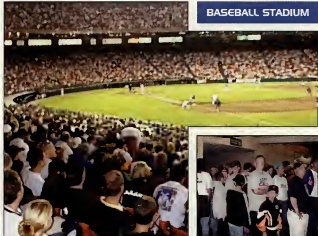
BASEBALL STADIUM

WHERE TO HIDE→ Behind an overpriced pretzel stand (or Tony Gwynn if he's around)

SPAWNING POINT→ Bathroom doors (Even the threat of instant death will not keep opponents from flocking to the bathroom to answer nature's call after drinking countless beers)

WEAPON OF CHOICE→ Eightball or grenade launchers (Fire into door and around corner to clean out a whole line of guys waiting to use the overcrowded urinals)

POTENTIAL DANGERS→ Long-distance Mark McGwire home runs



THE SENIOR CENTER

WHERE TO HIDE→ Hide? Just get out of view of their fading eyesight and fire away

SPAWNING POINT→ Front porch, the TV room when "Matlock" is playing, and the path to the bingo room

WEAPON OF CHOICE→ Use your standard pistol; the oldsters aren't going anywhere

POTENTIAL DANGERS→ A well-armed Charleton Heston



IMPORTANT NOTE→ Don't shoot real people. Killing is only acceptable in America if you are Jack Kevoorkian, a good lawyer, or a rich celebrity who can afford a good lawyer. The rest of us should just play games.

RPG Fanatic Sees Girl, Ponders Dating

Experts say 3D hardware to blame

Long-time PC owner and self-proclaimed RPG guru John Talcott of Nampa, Idaho stunned local residents with the announcement that he had seen a girl and experienced momentary impure thoughts. Though Talcott, according to *Ultima Online's* monitoring department, has amassed riches and notoriety in the realm of Britannia beyond the grasp of mere mortals, he is best known in the real world as "that guy who licks his palms in Social Studies."

Talcott's first, last, and only known female encounter was with a young elfin maiden named Gabriella, from the city of Minoc in East Britannia. Talcott recalls the encounter: "She broke my heart when I found out that not only did she not love me, but she was a 43-year-old parole officer named Earl." Whereas the incident might deter the normal, sex-deprived nerd, Talcott persisted, "I was willing to make things work, but Earl said long-distance relationships never work out — that wench."

The new object of Talcott's affection, 18-year-old Jennifer Nelson, first came to his notice in a



RPG fanatic John Talcott discovered women after a 3D card purchase.

perume ad in the back of his sister's *Jane* magazine. Subsequent sightings of the teen model in a Clearasil ad and the WB sitcom "The Smart Guy" helped cement this new frame of mind.

A close friend of Talcott's observed that "John just hasn't been the same since he bought

his 3D card. He hardly ever wants to play *UO* any more, and when he does he just shoots everybody. Also he prefers Xena over Hercules now, which just seems stupid. Hercules is way stronger."

Experts also point to John's recent purchase of a 3D graphics accelerator as a motivating factor behind this decision. Dr. Edward Revour of the Pond's Institute stated, "I am not really an expert in this area, but the 3D thing sounds right. What I do know is that Oil of Olaj moisturizes your skin so you can look years younger."

Talcott concurs. "I agree with Dr. Revour," he said. "Since I had the new hardware installed in my computer everything has changed. I find myself using words like mana and lifeforce less often and instead use words like frag and respawn. I also spend more time looking at my sister's fashion magazines and regularly purchase **PC ACCELERATOR**, but I haven't seen Jennifer Nelson in that one yet. Y'know if she could just get to know me, she would really like me. Maybe I'll send her a letter. I don't agree with the Oil of Olaj part though, that stuff gives me a rash."

When told of Talcott's impending plans, Nelson stated, "Yeah, whatever."

NOW PLAYING



MASK OF ETERNITY

DEVELOPER → Sierra

PUBLISHER → Sierra

RELEASE DATE → Fall '98

"I won't reveal my secret identity"

THE SCOOP → Adventure games enter the world of 3D. The long-running *King's Quest* series is back, and this time the game is set in a fully 3D world. Along with the three dimensions is a change in gameplay that requires players to actually fight bad guys instead of solving problems with only their brains (We officially approve)

THE CONFLICT → Are hardcore adventure gamers ready for hand-to-hand combat? Are action gamers ready to solve puzzles? The answers to both will determine the fate of this game

JERRY'S FINAL THOUGHT →

We all wear masks, don't we?



RETURN FIRE II

DEVELOPER → Silence Software

PUBLISHER → Rigcord

RELEASE DATE → Fall '98

"Saddam Hussein thinks he's all that, but I'll show him I'm jiggler"

THE SCOOP → *Return Fire* has been a favorite with action fans for years, and now it's been revamped for 3D accelerated PCs and multi-player action. All the great gameplay is still in place and the graphics keep in stride

THE CONFLICT → *Return Fire II's* gameplay is the kind traditionally found on consoles, so some PC gamers may be a bit snobbish about the title. If the final gameplay is as fun as the original, it will be their loss

JERRY'S FINAL THOUGHT →

I'm tired of talking about computer games. Bring on the cross-dressing tapoca wrestlers.

Half-Life to Sell 2 Million, Says Drunk Sierra Source

To outsell Doom, or was source just sloppy drunk?

In an exclusive interview with a source deep inside Sierra, **PC ACCELERATOR** learned that the upcoming shooter *Half-Life* was not only going to be "the biggest game of the year," but also that it would sell more than two million copies. The source made these projections after four Hefeweizens and two glasses of Merlot. Later in the evening he also revealed that "I love you guys, really."

The only real games (*Myst* and *Microsoft Flight Sim* don't count) to hit the two million mark were *Doom* shareware and its follow-up, *Doom II*. Considering sales of *Quake II* and *Unreal*, the two million goal seems a little steep; the exclusive one mil-



We felt like this in the morning!

lion mark (according to a decidedly sober PC Data) hit by *StarCraft*, *C&C*, *Diablo*, and 23 other top games is far more reachable.

More revelations were made later in the evening, but unfortunately our reporter was too drunk to remember anything else.

THE POWER METER

There's plenty of movement on this month's Power Meter. The big gainer is EA, which opened its wallet for the C&C franchise.

THIS MONTH'S HEAT

1 4

GT INTERACTIVE→ Deer Hunter and all its follow-ups keep selling, and the company has a bunch of actual good games in the pipe.

2 1

3D REALMS→ Having to restart development on Duke Nukem Forever hurts, but the company still has its big titles on track.

3 6

SIERRA→ Tribes could be one of the biggest hits of the fall, if it's not beaten by Homeworld.

4 8

ELECTRONIC ARTS→ Snagging Westwood and its C&C series makes the ever-growing EA even tougher to beat.

5 5

ACTIVISION→ As the first of many Quake II-powered shooters, Sin could be huge.

6 2

EPIC MEGAGAMES→ Problems with Unreal's multiplayer mode keep the hardcore playing Quake II.

7 7

MICROPROSE→ Hasbro's purchase of the game maker could free up lots of development cash, or it could mean X-COM: The Frogger Files.

8 3

3DFX→ Voodoo 2 is still tops, but 3d and Nvidia are offering tasty alternatives.

And to make matters worse, its Glide 3.0 API is getting ignored in favor of DirectX 6.

9 -

BLIZZARD→ Another million seller—will this streak ever stop?

10 -

MICROSOFT→ Pray jumps on DirectX 6 bandwagon, with many more to follow.

OTHER CONTENDERS

RED STORM→ Rainbow Six is reminding many people of the early days of Quake.

NVIDIA/S3→ Nvidia's Riva TNT and S3's Savage 3D board both stand head to head with Voodoo 2, but offer 2D/3D acceleration at a lower price.

NOWHERE IN SIGHT

LUCASARTS→ Rebellion hits near the top of PC Data's sales chart, which just goes to prove you can slap Star Wars on any old crap and it will sell.

POWERVR→ The company seems preoccupied with Dreamcast details, so second-generation hardware may have to wait.

Microsoft

Force-Feedback Steering Wheel

While everyone is focused on the recent leaps in computer game graphics and sound, a subtler (but no less important) change is happening in computer game

controls. Force feedback has become a key feature for new joysticks, and with all but a few new games supporting them, these controllers are becoming a standard part of the gaming experience.

Not to be left behind, the makers of steering wheel controllers are also embracing force feedback. One of the best examples of this new movement is Microsoft's SideWinder Force-Feedback Wheel. Force-feedback steering wheels have traditionally been available for high-end racing fanatics and supported only by games that appeal to that crowd. At its suggested \$209 price point, the SideWinder wheel is clearly marketed for the average race fan, and because it has Microsoft's considerable muscle behind it, plenty of games will support it.

In a hands-on test, the wheel and the foot pedals that come with it felt sturdy and solid. A quick connect latch secured the wheel to our desk quickly and tightly, keeping the device steady and the action on the road. Once we hooked up the wheel, it provided more crashes, bumps, centrifugal forces, and vibrations than the Kennedy Compound's guest bed. Another nice feature was the shifting levers on the steering column, which let us change gears like the professionals do.

The SideWinder Force Feedback Wheel will ship this fall with two games, *CART Precision Racing* and *Monster Truck Madness 2*, but more games that will support force feedback are in the pipe. When you use it, just remember what your driving instructor told you: Keep your hands on ten and two. Otherwise you might lose control while running over pedestrians.



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Radical Entertainment

From the minute you walk into the Radical offices in Vancouver, you get the hint that this company is serious about sports development. Maybe it's the constant broadcast of ESPN on TV monitors throughout the halls, maybe it's the jerseys and sports paraphernalia that the developers wear, or maybe it's just the smell that emanates from the bottom floor of the studios. Those brave enough to investigate this odor will be greeted by a pile of well-used hockey apparel used mostly daily by the guys who, in their non-hockey time, are creating Radical's lineup of ESPN sports titles.

Using a team-based philosophy, the company hopes to break into the lucrative and very selective field of premier sports developers. To do this, Radical has taken a different approach to its game development. Rather than organizing and managing employees by position, the company puts them in teams that stay together through projects. This enables the large company (240 employees) to feel like a small development house with many parts.

This small-company feel is maintained in almost every aspect of Radical Entertainment. Each of the groups works together in rooms that can basically be described as dream college studios. In the place of sterile cubicles and quiet workspaces are large open rooms where everyone is in close contact with the rest of their team without being cramped. This way the groups can work together to create a cohesive product rather than a patchwork game from different departments.

Each of these sports groups is creating its game with one purpose in mind: to recreate the ESPN broadcast feel in a game. This means plenty of time watching SportsCenter (tough job) and talking to the directors of actual sports broadcasts. It also means talking to the directors that broadcast sports to find the exact cam-

STATUS

Titles in the works→ Pro Boarders, ESPN Basketball, Hockey, and several other sports games

Number of televisions in the office tuned to SportsCenter→ 8

Number of televisions in the office tuned to MTV→ 1

Number of televisions playing annoying PBS children's programming→ 1

Number of times "oh" overheard in Canadian office→ 0

Number of development teams→ 8

Number of current employees→ 240

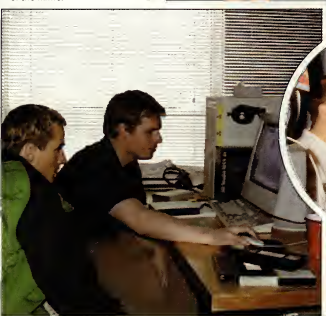
Number of guys named Ian→ Too many to count

Number of piercings on the person in charge of quality control→ 8 (six above the neck, and two below)

Number of PCXL pages on fridge→ 1



era angles and onscreen graphics that could make the game feel like a real sports event. And while breaking into territory long dominated by bigger companies will require more than the ESPN license, Radical is solidly focused on making its games worthy of the name.



When they aren't creating games or making out with large metal objects, the crew at Radical is busy practicing for the "blue flame" world championships.

letters@pcxl.com

FEEDBACK

→ Sometimes we get lonely holed up in here, with only our PCs and stacks of games to keep us company. Save us from the inane banter we endure daily from our violence-tainted co-workers. Write us and let us know what's going on in the real world, tell us what you want to read about, what you like about PCXL, and what you'd like changed. We're here for you. (And besides, they pay us to work here.)

UM, THANKS ...

Great premiere issue! This is my submission for the '80s Idol for your next issue. No flashback would be complete without him.



Rick Astley

— Francesca Reyes

Our filthometers have identified you as people who may well be interested in *The Filthy Truth*. You can find it here: www.goo.gl/cities.com/Soho/Atrium/8820/. — xxxx from *The Filthy Truth*

I just got your first edition in the mail and I'm really impressed. I'm so used to hearing stuffy tech briefs that I had almost forgotten what die-hard computer gamers sound like, and they sound very different than some magazine that thinks that *Creatures* is a big leap in computing AI and that *Myst* and *Riven* are action-packed computer gaming adventures. And it's also different than a magazine that won't shut up about how many polygons some new 3D card can pack. Don't get me wrong, high polygon counts are good, but if the technology never catches on it's not worth a dime (sorta like MiniDiscs and Betas). Anyway, your magazine rules and I thought you might want to hear about it.

— Matt Oliver

IT'S A GUY THING

Thanks for that copy of PC Misogynist magazine. I think some testosterone came off on my hands.

— Anne Marie Feld

I just got your ad for PC ACCELERATOR. I'm very surprised to see a woman on the staff because you

would never know it from the ad I received. First, the letter says: "PC ACCELERATOR talks to you in your own language, man-to-man" ... excuse me? Then the two cover issues say: 1) Are You Man Enough? and 2) Best Guy Games Ever Made. Uh huh. Just take me off your mailing list please.

— Carole Dodge

Oops. Apparently, our marketing staff didn't screen their mailing list, but the truth is, PC ACCELERATOR is targeted to men, just as *Jane* and *Redbook* are targeted to women. But hey, as soon as *Jane* moves to San Francisco and offers me a position, I'm there.

— Carrie

YOU COULD ALWAYS ASK SANTA ...

I want to get a new PC. I'm looking at a PII 400MHz with 64MB RAM. I wanna get a Voodoo 2 card and a 3D audio card. I'm looking to get them for \$400 or less. Any suggestions? Also, I'm thinking about ordering the PC from Micron which comes with the Intel 740 AGP card. Is this a 2D or 3D card? Will this conflict with my Voodoo 2 card?

— Dan Allison

What do we look like? Comp USA? But since you asked nicely, we will tell you that we have had many problems getting the Intel 740 card to work with our Voodoo 2 cards. Surely it can be done (possibly by a crack team of Bill Gates clones), but it is a major hassle. The 1740 is a decent accelerator, but the Voodoo 2 conflicts with it and is a better — and better supported — card. Your best bet is to still get the computer, sell the 740 card and use your earnings to purchase a Diamond Monster 3D II board for

\$249 and use the rest to pick up a quality 3D sound card like the ones we discuss in TechPhiles this month.

QUAKE II VS. UNREAL

Quite frankly, I couldn't care less whether the single-player mode in a PC first-person shooter is of *Final Fantasy VII* or *Rascal* proportions. What I care about is multiplayer mode. Even though *Quake II* is older than *Unreal*, there are still tons of people who think it's better than *Unreal*. So please tell me, in your opinion, which game has the better multiplayer mode, and why.

— Ivan O'Brien

It's our feeling that *Quake II* deathmatch is still the best out there. It's fast-paced, well balanced, and has this gritty satisfaction that makes

you cackle with glee after taking off someone's head with the quad-damage rocket. *Unreal's* deathmatch is almost a moot point because of its bugginess over the Internet. Epic promises to get a patch made soon, and aside from that, it's still got a few things going for it. The weapons are well designed and require lots of skill to use (the sniper rifle), so it really rewards skilled players rather than campers or lucky scrubs. Carmack admitted that *Quake II* weapons aren't optimal for deathmatch. And portals open up tons of possibilities in level design (one round of *Cone of Tragedy* will show you that). So basically it's still *Quake II*, but an improved *Unreal* will almost give it a run for its money. Almost.

I have had the chance to check out the article about *Unreal* and *Quake II*. I am very disappointed at the outsider view that you are taking on this. Every LAN party that I

have been to for *Unreal* is run for maybe an hour at most due to poor multiplayer support. Then the real gaming begins as *Quake II* or even *Quake* is dug out.

The gamers I know seem to like *Unreal* but they see it as a single-player game, not a multiplayer game. This may change in time when the Internet support is fixed, but the damage is already done. You need [opinions from] people in the KNOW as far as gaming from the inside, not press or company info, but true gamers. The article was well-written, but the sentiments about the game are not as close to home as they seem to be.

— John

We agree that if Epic doesn't get its Internet patch in gear, *Unreal* could very well go the way of the

Amiga. But as for your comment on having true gamers comment on games, we guarantee that the editors here spend much more time playing games than they do writing or editing!

WHAT + EVER

I was reading through the

Unreal vs. Quake II story on your web page, which states *Hexen* came before *Heretic*. I think *Heretic* came first: *Heretic*, *Hexen*, *Hexen II*, *Heretic II*.

— Aar

In the beginning there was *Heretic*, correct. We went straight to the source for the full story: See our *Heretic II* preview.

MORE FLATTERY!

I'm the lead programmer of *Mesiah*. I just wanted to tell you that the layout for the *Mesiah* preview is by far the best I have seen from any magazine. I wish you luck.

— Saxe



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Who You Callin' Stupid?

The single biggest lie in the game industry is the term "artificial intelligence," or as we like to call it, AI. Essentially AI is a scripting device that programmers use to make nonplayer characters act with purpose and intelligence. However, as it currently stands, the acronym AI seems to stand for artificial idleness. Computer characters in today's best games still act like the same brainless monkeys that were represented by four-color pixels nearly a decade ago.

With all the advances in technology, graphics, and design, how come AI has remained untouched? Let's take a look at a standard development team that is staffed by artists, level designers, sound engineers, and programmers. The artists create textures and animations, the level designers create levels (duh!), the sound engineers work on music and sound effects, and the programmers work on the engine and technology. Who does that leave to work on AI? Currently most AI work is done by programmers, but it is clearly a second or third priority. When a multi-million dollar company goes to some random guy on the web to create its AI, then you know exactly how important this is to developers. What is even more disturbing is that this random guy on the web has created some of the best AI to date (and is now working for Epic MegaGames).

So why is AI important to games?

In order to create a realistic and varied immersive experience, the computer must act with the same odd combination of randomness and thoughtfulness that makes the world go round. Imagine a gaming world alive with thinking individuals. The personalities of enemies would lead some to hide in a corner while others would search and destroy. In basketball games a player like Dennis Rodman would be quick to double team, while someone like Toni Kukoc will often react late and end up creating an easy lane to the bucket.

Currently, all computer-controlled enemies and players act with a random scripting device that often makes no sense whatsoever. For example, the Skaarj in *Unreal* will be standing guard when one of their mates gets his head taken off. Yet they continue to walk their scripted guard pattern until they get attacked themselves. The same is true for any game. In *Rainbow Six* you must use suppressed weapons in some missions so the enemies can't hear you attack, but if three bullets hit the post next to your head, wouldn't you react? Well, they don't, and they never will until developers start to take the time and research necessary to create characters who think and react.

I'm not saying AI is easy or that today's games suck, but rather am pointing to the next step in creating games. However, I fear that advancing graphics technology and a focus on multiplayer will delay this needed adjustment indefinitely. This is my plea for one of the me-too 3D games on the horizon to take some time, do some research, and deliver a game that isn't dumb, and at least then you'll stand out.

— MIKE SALMON

SECOND PERSON

Evidently it's the case that all the upcoming games are putting much more effort into AI. The industry understands the weakness, but whereas graphics power is accommodated by more colored textures, etc., the PC is never, ever, so long as we live, going to fully recreate that sentient effect that makes people unique.

Not that that's a cop-out for programmers and developers. As we covered in last issue's "Quake II Killers" story, AI development was a huge priority, but it's also the trickiest. And face it, wouldn't you rather face your buddies in a *QII* deathmatch than computer characters who acted like them? The taunts and the personality are going to be missing no matter what AI is in place.

So don't hold your breath on the AI issue. It's going to get better, but it's not going to be perfect.

— ROB SMITH

NEXT MONTH

→ "IT WAS WRONG. WE SHOULDN'T HAVE THREATENED OLD LADIES OR POKED FUN AT DOWN-AND-OUT CELEBRITIES." The full apology and reform for issue #3 — yeah, right and Bill Clinton is really sorry too!

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● WHAT IS OUR BIG STORY NEXT MONTH?

Wouldn't you like to know. You'll just have to wait 30 long days to find out. (Besides, by then we'll know as well!)

● THE DISC

Demos for *Tribes*, *Top Gun*, *Klingon Honor Guard*, *Rainbow Six*, *Vigilance* (this time we mean it), *Madden '99*, and *Quake III* (umm ... we wish)

New levels, patches, and maps for *Unreal*, *Sin*, and *Quake II*

● KILLIN' MADE EASY

Our expert strategies for *Sin* and *Rainbow Six* are certain to be the best and most entertaining anywhere

● CHECK BACK NEXT MONTH

These three very lovely girls are coming back next month, and you don't want them to be lonely, do you?



**Some of you won't
be going home.**

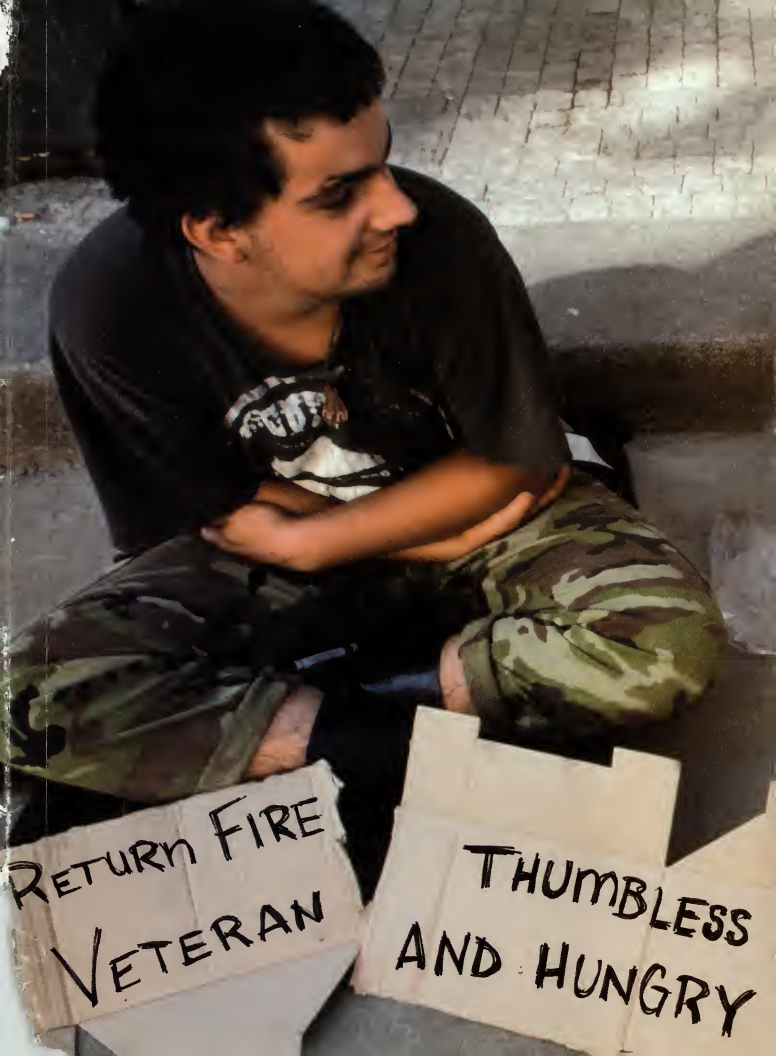


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A photograph of a man with dark hair and a mustache, wearing a dark t-shirt and camouflage pants, sitting on a concrete sidewalk. He is looking to his right with a somber expression. In front of him are two cardboard signs. The background is a light-colored brick wall.

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