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1937: Spirit of Speed

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The Kingdoms

THE ONCE MAGNIFICENT land of Darien has been brutally divided among four warring sibling monarchs. Now it is time for you to embark upon a massive crusade to rule the Kingdom of Darien.

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- Play as one of four unique civilisations with different build hierarchies and combat strategies.
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- Challenge friends over LAN, modem and on Cavedog Entertainment's own **Boneyards**™.
- Features hardware support for stunning graphics and special effects.

Attack on full 3D terrain filled with forests, castles and cities.

"TA: Kingdoms is a fantasy tag-team match on a global scale. It's melodrama, it's excitement, it works."
–Computer Gaming World: Cover story

"...the ... look of Kingdoms is completely unbelievable."
–Imagine Gaming Network

"...some of the most amazing character design we have ever seen ..."
—GameFan

Charge with hundreds of unique units including monsters, dragons, catapults and skeleton archers.

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Good day! Sun shines!

At the launch event for the Blade Runner game, 2 years ago, we sat in Virgin's boardroom and watched the intro for their new game. The 21st century cityscape panned across the scre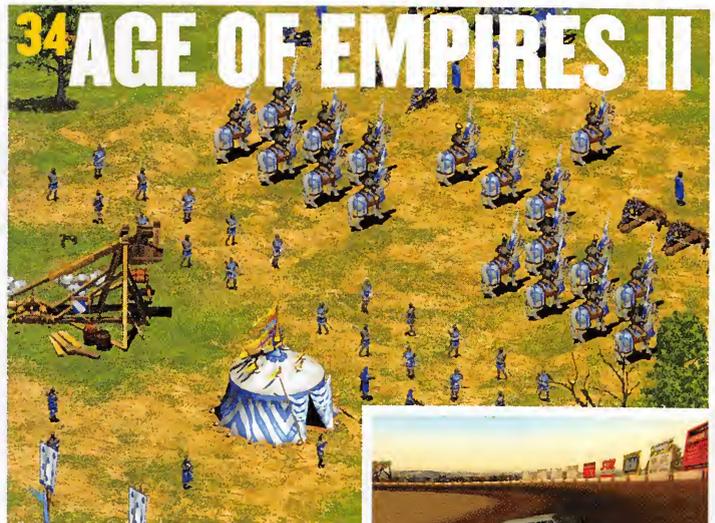en, aircars hummed by. The camera passed a flickering billboard TV screen, which showed an advertisement for some product available to the citizens a hundred years hence. One of the journos present then asked "what was the billboard ad for?', quick as a flash, some wag piped up with "Tiberian Sun - Coming Soon".

In the 2 years since that day we've seen RTS games move into new directions - culminating in the genre-breaking Homeworld. We've seen RTS as a whole take a back seat to the all-conquering FPS. We've seen key Westwood staff depart midway through Tiberian Sun's development. We've seen the failure of their interim RTS game, Dune 2000. We've seen Westwood Studios kiss Virgin goodbye, shacking up with new owner Electronic Arts for the release of their Big One, Tiberian Sun, which just so happens to be reviewed in this very issue.

No, really. Tiberian Sun is real. It is finished and it is available NOW. It's good too, that's important to know. The game, as expected, looks as pretty as hell - despite using mostly traditional 2D techniques, it's a deep and often surprising gameplay experience, and Tiberian Sun has that magic, indefinable charm that marks a Westwood game.

So we move on now, searching the release schedules for another game of the "over-hyped and unbelievably late" genre. Daikatana, Duke Nukem Forever and Ultima Ascension spring to mind... Sigh. We'll miss picking on Tiberian Sun for being the Big Tease of gaming.

In PowerPlay news, I'm sorry to report that our military sim reviewer, the military man himself, Major Ian Lindgren, has moved on. Being a serving Army Major, Ian has accepted a lush overseas posting, which means no more PowerPlay reviews and features. Putting the security of the country ahead of PowerPlay's needs is something we have great difficulty understanding, but if the big'n'scary looking bloke in the uniform, carrying a gun, says it is so, then comply we will. Thanks Ian, you're the only bloke in the world who can write a game review comprised entirely of military acronyms. Priceless.

Actually Ian's not the only bloke around who can look at milsims with authentic authority - there is another. Thus, I am honoured to introduce Major Desmond McNicholas, our new milsims reviewer. Des too, is a serving Army Major. We're nice to him because we fear him. All you have to do is trust his words, we do, and not at all because he carries a gun...

Ben Mansill
Editor

CD POWERPLAY #41

The original dose of Gaming Goodness™. Beware of Imitations

Starting the PC PowerPlay CD

Welcome to the PCPowerPlay double cover CD. We have included all the popular programs to make the most of your PC. Using the CD is easy. Simply insert the CD into your CDROM drive and it should automatically bring up the Menu interface. (If not, don't panic, just click on the RUNME.BAT file to manually install the program). Once the menu is up, you can navigate the screens using your mouse. Click on the category of your choice (eg Education, Fun, Games, etc..) to begin. Have a look at the programs, and if you see something you like to try out, just click on it. Depending on your choice, the program will either install itself to the hard drive or run straight off the CD.

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PC PowerPlay CD Returns
Reply Paid 634
78 Renwick St
Redfern NSW 2016 (No postage required)

UTILITIES

Eric Cartman 3D Extravaganza

This screen saver features the lovable Eric Cartman from South Park bouncing around in glorious 3D. He also makes a bit of noise, so if you're in an office turn the sound all the way up! Surprisingly, it features OpenGL 3D acceleration.

Spector

Spector automatically takes hundreds of screen snapshots every hour, undetected. It records all applications loaded, all Web sites visited, all chat conversations, and all incoming and outgoing email activity. Useful for parents who want to know what their children are doing on the Internet and employers concerned about inappropriate use of business PCs, Spector allows you to see exactly what the user was doing on the PC and the Internet. Screen shots can be taken as often as once per second, or as infrequently as once every few minutes. Screenshots can be played back like a video recording, displayed frame by frame, or exported to a BMP or JPEG file. To save disk space, an inactivity timeout feature is built in to stop recording if the PC is not being used.

Outcast
Infogrames
Genre: Action/Adventure
Need: P200, 32MB, SVGA
Want: P2-300, 64MB, SVGA 2MB

An intervention team has been ordered on its most important and dangerous operation ever. Catapulted into Adelpha, an unknown world, its mission is to prevent a dangerously out of control scientific experiment from destroying earth. The adventure starts with your first step. You are at the heart of the quest. The story unfolds while you play, following your every move, with the action inter-cut with camera moves, linking sequences and special scenes that build on the drama. Breathtaking camera angles derived from American action movie techniques. Hyper-realistic pyrotechnics illustrate every shot fired and every strike made, further deepening the sense of immersion, and illustrating the destructive power of the weapons you carry. These weapons aren't toys, they're for real.

Arcade Pool 2
Hasbro
Genre: Sports - Pool
Need: P75, 16MB, SVGA
Want: P133, 32MB, SVGA 2MB

Enter the pool halls of Arcade Pool 2 and prepare to seal your glory in this ultra playable sequel to the chart topping Arcade Pool. Shoot your way through a Tournament or take a shot at Arcade Challenge. This game is easy to pick up and fun to play. Challenge your opponent, chalk up your cue and experience the thrill of making the break and walking away a winner. Put yourself in the spotlight with the most realistic pool game, endorsed by the European 8-Ball Pool Champion 1998/9 - Darren Appleton.

I-War: Deluxe Edition

Infogrames
Genre: 3D Shooter
Need: P100, 16MB, SVGA
Want: P200, 32MB, 3D Card

Based on the award-winning space simulation Independence War, the Deluxe Edition features an all-new Defiance Campaign, where the player fights from the enemy side in many new missions. The year is 2268 and the Independence War is reaching a crucial phase. The Commonwealth Navy is laying siege to the Indie stronghold Midway, hoping to starve the planet into submission, while the Independent Fleet commits acts of piracy and terrorism. The conflict is escalating, with no end in sight. Edison Hayes and his crew are propelled headlong into the conflict, fighting the Navy, and using all their courage, wit, and strength to best their foe with the fate of mankind hanging in the balance.
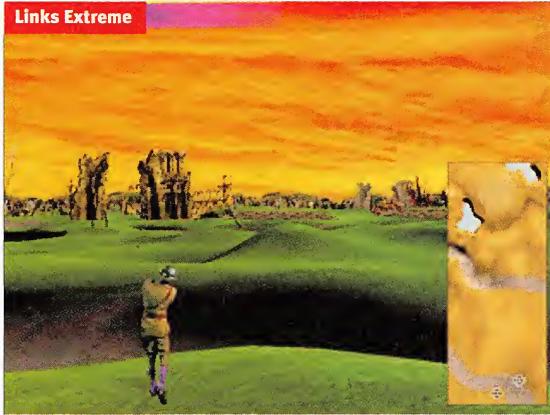
Links Extreme

Links Extreme
Microsoft
Genre: Sports - Golf
Need: P200, 32MB, SVGA
Want: P266, 64MB, SVGA 2MB

You've never seen anything like it. Kamikaze pilots. Blues singers. Swamp things. All in three competitive arenas with golf at the core: Mojo Bay Country Club, Demolition Driving Range and Dimension X Battlefield. Dust off your clubs, helmets and first-aid kits. It's time for Links Extreme! The Links Extreme trial version offers gamers their choice of two golfers, as well as two levels of gameplay on the hilarious Armadillo Al's Demolition Driving Range.

Here, points are awarded for accurately hitting exploding golf balls into moving targets such as cows, flamingos, and uptight course marshals before time expires. Golfers can also take lessons on swinging and driving range strategies.

Grand Theft Auto: London 1961
Take 2 Interactive
Genre: Driving Sim
Need: 486 DX/100, 16MB, SVGA
Want: P100, 32MB, 3D Card

An excellent mission disk for Grand Theft Auto. Your goal throughout the game is to rise through the ranks of a seedy criminal syndicate. Gain the crime boss' favor ▶

Castrol Honda Superbikes 2000
Midas Interactive
Genre: Driving Simulator
Need: P133, 16MB, 3D Card
Want: P233, 32MB, 3D Card

Castrol Honda Superbike 2000 brings the complete motorcycle-racing package straight into your home. This is true simulation software where the detail is phenomenal. Now you can tinker and tweak the performance of your bike without worrying about oil on the carpet. 100% Accurate Simulation of World Championship Winning Castrol Honda RC45 Superbike.

UTILITIES

FireTalk
Introducing FireTalk, the complete, Internet-based voice communication service that elegantly combines high quality voice and conference calling with the best of online text messaging and chat. FireTalk lets you find friends online and talk to them in real time using only a PC (with speakers, a microphone or headset) and the Internet. FireTalk's sound quality is excellent even with a 28k dial-up connection. And unique only to FireTalk, a voice conferencing feature that allows many people to talk and be heard at once, and more than a thousand people to participate on a single conference call.

GameSpy
GameSpy is a tool for Internet gaming that allows you to get server listings from anywhere on the Internet. Players of multiplayer Quake, QuakeWorld, Quake II, Shogo, Sin, Blood 2, Hexen II, Heretic II, Unreal, and Half-Life can use GameSpy to find lots of servers for multiplayer play. It provides detailed information for each server and can launch games and connect you to the server you want to join. GameSpy also can join the Internet game you specify and offers many other cool features. This release adds Starsiege: Tribes support.

Spinner Plus
Spinner Plus is a free Net music player that gives you access to over 175,000 songs categorized into over 120 channels of music. Choose from channels such as Awesome80's, Swing, Techno, Country, Hip-Hop, Latin Pop, and Oldies, and enjoy a continuous stream of music right from your desktop. As with previous versions, Spinner 2.0 operates independently of a browser, with no additional software or plug-ins needed. In addition, by incorporating RealNetwork's G2 technology, version 2.0 improves sound quality by 80 percent and can adjust audio streaming to match your Internet connection speed, which helps to eliminate sound distortion and choppiness.

UTILITIES

ICQ
The latest release of ICQ ("I seek you"), the popular messaging program that lets you communicate with friends and colleagues in real time over the internet. This update offers improved security features. You can seek out friends on the ICQ network by entering their ICQ number, name, nickname, or email address. Once your contact list is set up, you'll be notified when your friends are online so that you can chat, send instant messages, files, URLs, play games or just hang out.

Klik-Lok
Klik-Lok (formerly Desktop-Lok) is a utility developed to lock your desktop when you walk away from your computer or when your computer starts up. When running, it displays the standard desktop icons with a black background as camouflage, making it seem as if the desktop is not locked. When the user clicks on one of the standard icons, a dialog box will pop up, prompting the user for a password. This utility also disables all multitasking keys so the user won't be able to cancel the application via the Windows Task Manager

mIRC
This highly configurable IRC client features a clean and intuitive user interface, an events handler, and full send and receive capabilities for DCC (direct client connection) file. The program offers colored text lines, aliases, remote commands, and support for sound. It even includes an option to load your own backgrounds for virtually all windows available in mIRC. In this version, an option has been added that automatically opens Web sites as they are mentioned in a conversation. Your Away status is now shown in the Status window title bar, you can ignore any DCC Sends that match specified filenames or types, and the message highlight feature has been highly improved. A new lock feature has been added that allows you to password protect the program and disable various features. Several other improvements and fixes have also been included in this version.

Webshots
The Webshots Desktop includes more than 1,000 full-screen color images in categories such as sports, scenics, wildlife, and more. These photos are used as your desktop wallpaper and screensaver via the Webshots Desktop software. The software includes an automatic Web connection that downloads a new photo each day. You can also add your own images into the software. Features include display effects, password protection, daily new photos, and image display control.

Sneak Preview
www.wartorn.com

Wartorn

Eyst
Genre: Real Time Strategy
Need: P90, 24MB RAM, SVGA
Want: P166, 32MB RAM, 3D Card

SPECIAL PCPP EDITION

WarTorn is a next generation Real Time Strategy game that provides a full 3D gaming environment. The player can custom design their own units, then use them on a battle field of their choosing. The game uses a new engine code named the ETTE engine, that also includes a very comprehensive AI - never seen in a game of this type before - which also allows for an unlimited number of camera angles. All battles are country based and may be played in single player, multiplayer with two co-operative modes or on the internet in world wide competitions. This game is also unique as this includes 3 types of play: action, in depth resource management and a turn-based mode, which should appeal to a very wide audience.

▶ by stealing cars, running narcotics, performing hits, kidnapping, and various other criminal acts. You get a top down view brought to you by a camera that zooms in and out depending on the surroundings and situation. What you would have gathered from the title is that all the action now takes place in London 1961. *Requires full version of Grand Theft Auto.*

Jeff Gordon XS Racing

ASC Games
Genre: Driving Simulation
Need: P166, 32MB, SVGA
Want: P233, 64MB, SVGA 2MB

Jeff Gordon XS Racing is an action/arcade racing game that combines the heat of fierce competition with a next generation look and feel of stock car track and vehicle designs. Modern technology has advanced - and has ultimately changed - the face of racing. Cars reach speeds in excess of 300 mph around steep banks, corkscrew loops, and air-catching jumps. In order to succeed,

Jeff Gordon XS Racing

100 Megs!
Patches

- Age of Empires: Rise of Rome Fix
- Aliens vs. Predator Savegame Patch
- Aliens vs. Predator build 98 Patch
- Alpha Centauri v3.0 Patch
- Alpha Centauri Scenario
- Blood II: The Chosen v2.1 Patch
- Caesar 3 v1.0.1.0 Patch
- Civilization Call To Power Update
- Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines Savegame Fix
- Daikatana LAN/Internet Patch (No Mplayer Required)
- Excessive Speed Fix
- Expendable Joystick Patch
- FIFA 99 Fix
- Falcon 4 v1.07 Patch
- Gangsters Fix
- Gex 3D: Enter the Gecko Reg Fix
- Grand Prix Legends Fix
- Grand Prix Legends v1.1.0.3 Patch
- Grim Fandango v1.01 Patch
- Half-Life v1.0.1.0 Patch
- Heretic 2 v1.06 Enhancement pack
- Hidden and Dangerous v1.1 Patch
- High Heat Baseball 2000 v1.1 Patch
- Imperialism II v1.03 Patch
- Jack Nicklaus 6: Golden Bear Challenge Patch
- King's Quest: Mask of Eternity v1.0.0.3 Patch
- Kingpin v1.1 Patch
- Klingon Honor Guard .DLL Fix
- Lode Runner 2 v1.1 Patch
- MechWarrior 3 v1.1 Patch
- Myth II: Soulblighter v1.3 Patch
- Populous: The Beginning Sound Fix
- Quake 2: Reckoning Mission Pack Fix
- Quake 2 (Upgrade v3.15 or later to v3.20)
- Rage of Mages Patch v1.1
- Rainbow Six Fix
- Redline Sound Fix
- Requiem: Avenging Angel Patch v1.2
- Rogue Squadron Naboo Fighter Addon and Patch
- Settlers 3 v1.37 Patch (All Versions)
- Sin v1.05 Patch
- Space Bunnies Must Die Level Fix
- Spec Ops: Rangers Lead the Way v1.3 Patch
- StarSiege: Tribes 1.7 Patch
- Starcraft v1.05 Patch
- Starcraft: Brood War v1.05 Patch
- Test Drive 5 v1.1 Patch
- Thief: The Dark Project v1.33 Patch
- Tomb Raider 3 Fix
- Top Gun: Hornet's Nest Patch
- Total Annihilation: Kingdoms v1.1 Patch
- Triple Play 2000 Voodoo3 Patch
- Turok 2: Seeds of Evil v1.04 Patch
- Unreal Cyrix Beta Patch
- Unreal Cyrix Working Patch
- Unreal Install Fix
- Unreal v2.24 Patch
- Vegas Games 2000 v1.4 Patch
- Vigilance v1.1 Patch
- Virus 2000 Savegame Fix
- WWII Fighters v1.08 Patch
- Wargasm Patch
- Warzone 2100 v1.05 Patch
- X Games Pro Boarder Reg Fix
- X-Com: Interceptor v1.2 Patch
- X-Wing Alliance Fix
- X-Wing Alliance v2.02 Patch
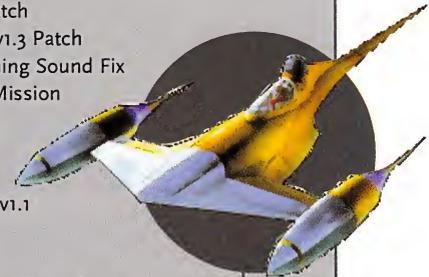
Shadow Man
Acclaim
Genre: 3D Platform
Need: P166, 32MB, SVGA 4MB
Want: P233, 64MB, SVGA 8MB

Enter the dark world of Mike LeRoi. Voodoo hero. Dead man, Shadow Man. He is coming, walking between worlds. Trailing evil from Liveside to Deadside. He is coming, skull in one hand, calabash in the other. A voodoo mask in his chest and lines of power in his back. He is coming, stalking monsters in tenements and deserts, subways and swamps, spirit world and real world. Shadow Man is coming. Voodoo disciple and hero. Seeker and defender. Gather Voodoo artifacts - eyes, ears, nail clippings, necklaces of human teeth and the Govi - in order to solve the mysteries of Deadside.

players must rely on their skills, split-second decision making, and coaching from racing veteran, Jeff Gordon. However, in order to experience the true thrill of victory, players must eventually face the ultimate challenge...

Tanaka

Star Trek: Starfleet Command
Interplay
Genre: Real Time Strategy
Need: P200, 32MB, SVGA
Want: P2-300, 64MB, SVGA 2MB

Starfleet Command (SFC) is a strategic combat simulation set in the Star Trek Universe. Based on a license of the popular Starfleet Battles (SFB) board game, SFC incorporates the richly developed game mechanics of SFB into an original

Star Trek: Starfleet Command

design. The single-player experience will feature dynamically generated missions responding to events in the galaxy and the player's career. SFC also features up to six players in multi-player missions.

Tanaka
Pacific Media
Genre: Arcade
Need: P150, 16MB, SVGA
Want: P233, 32MB, SVGA 2MB

After a journey through space and time you have reached the planet of Tanaka. Eons into the

future on the industrialized planet of Tanaka, a highly advanced society will have developed. So small a world, and so competitive will this society be, that the people of Tanaka will take even their drive to work seriously. Only the fastest and fittest can survive on the streets of the planet's capital, Tanaka City. Every commute isn't just the daily grind to work. No, the entertainment starved and efficient people of Tanaka will make a race out of their most mundane tasks.

Mortyr
Interactive Magic
Genre: 1st Person Shooter
Need: P2-233, 32MB, SVGA 4MB
Want: P2-300, 64MB, SVGA 8MB

It is 2093, and Hitler had won WW2. The world is run by the Nazi World Order, with strange anomalies and weather effects occurring all over the world. How they won the war is subject of much debate among the experts. Some believe the party line, others suspect that Hitler had a secret weapon. Jurgen Mortyr, a Nazi officer at the Advanced Weapons facility, hears of a secret device being kept at the base. Carefully checking around, Jurgen comes to suspect that the anomalies and odd weather is linked to this device, and that the problems started in 1944. As he searches for more documents, he finds a door, and with his son, Sebastian, opens it to find a time machine. He sends his son back to 1944, to find what caused the problems, and to save humanity from the Nazi threat.

GAMENEWS

SIDELINES

As part of their new development studio located in Queensland, Electronic Arts have recruited former Lucasarts executive, Steve Dauterman. Having been at Lucas for a decade and most recently worked on the Star Wars Episode One games, Dautermna is ideally equipped to head up the nascent studio. EA's intention is to consolidate its range of Australia-specific sports titles, including AFL, cricket and rugby.

Fans of really, really - and we mean really - old games will be delighted to learn that Hasbro are set to package together six of Atari's more memorable moments from years past. The compilation, featuring classics such as Asteroids, Pong, Super Breakout and Tempest, as well as lesser lights like Centipede and Missile Command, obliges the trivially-inclined with an assortment of desktop themes, screen savers and an interview with Atari founder, Nolan Bushnell. Released very soon under the title Atari Arcade Hits.

Clubbed to death by long sticks of bread? Victim of nuclear test fallout? Guillotined? Oh, we're just trying to think of some possible weapons of destruction that may appear in a future edition of Team 17's multiplayer combat classic, Worms. Why? Because French publishers Infogrames have snapped up the rights to one of the funniest games of recent times.

Fresh from their success with Mechwarrior 3, development team Zipper Interactive have signed a deal with Microsoft to begin work on another FASA licensed title. However, light years from the Bloody Big Robots genre of yore, the new game is based upon the Crimson Skies board game and will eject the player skyward to battle it out with air-borne pirates. The middle of next year is pencilled in as the release date.

At the time of print, Ubi Soft were in the final stages of forging an agreement with Disney over two of its movies - The Jungle Book and Tarzan. We're currently taking bets from anyone who thinks that both titles won't be 3D platform games.

HALO
THERE GOOD-LOOKING!

This was the real star of this year's E3, but due to NDA (Non-Disclosure Agreement) obligations, we weren't allowed to tell you about it until now. These NDA's usually exist purely so gameco marketing types can have something over we game journo's, who, in a food-chain way, wield a far mightier sword. This time though, they wanted us to wait until the current Macworld Expo, in order that Steve Jobs could show it off and attempt to claim this stunning game as one of their own, for Mac. The

(below) Concept art of an alien transport and (right) a space marine

developer, you see; Bungie, are Friends of the Mac - their pleasant Myth being one of the mere handful of Mac games around.

Enough talk of Macs! Halo is coming to PC and that's all that matters. Several key features lift this 3D action game above the dreary crowd. Foremost (give in to it) must be the truly beautiful 3D game world. With aggressive use of advanced 3D techniques, Bungie have made their world one of rolling hills and what must be the best looking sky in a game ever seen. Shadows play over the terrain, adding a sense of reality missing in lesser games. Character movement too, is way ahead of the pack. The bipeds look believably human, thanks in part to a technique

Bungie use which randomises subtle variations of the character's movements and gestures.

Forging ahead in gameplay areas as well as graphics, Bungie have endowed their game with no clear ending. There are no missions or levels in Halo - just jump in and play, save and exit when you're done. The plot is probably the thinnest aspect of Halo, but we don't mind a bit. In the future, Humanity discovers a giant artificial world floating through space, dead and abandoned. But before we can pilfer and loot, another alien species shows up with the same intentions - and it's on! Halo won't be finished until around midway through next year. But hang around, we'll be going on about it frequently.

Sid Sells More SMAC

In the future: there will be no trees.

Sid Meier (and let's not forget Brian Reynolds, who actually lead the development team) has been busy of late working on a follow-up to the wildly successful Alpha Centauri earlier this year. The fruits of this should emerge sometime prior to Christmas in the shape of Sid Meier's Alien Crossfire, the first expansion pack for SMAC. Ready for inclusion in the pack are an impressive seven new factions to infiltrate (even aliens!), a bunch of extra technologies, secret projects, and, naturally, a wholly original scenario.

Elsewhere in the Firaxis camp, the first of a planned series of Gettysburg add-ons is scheduled for download any day now. The first Great Battle, as they will be known, is Antietam, and will be only available via the internet. Firaxis are pursuing the unusual strategy of self-publishing the title, which should ensure a decent price for fans willing to download.

RC Windows 2000

Stop press! Windows 2000 has been released to the public! Well, almost. Surprisingly, the recent unleashing of Windows 2000 RC1 (or Windows 2000 Build 2072 as it otherwise known) to the public isn't the final, ready for mass consumption version of Win 9.x kernel OS that many people thought it'd be. The release follows the recent Windows 2000 Beta 3, and is the first version of the software that is fully feature-complete. At this stage in Microsoft's rather elaborate development cycle, the Release Candidates are used to gather mass user feedback regarding bugs and signifies the final stretch in its development. Microsoft usually release three RCs before making the full version available.

Confusing as all this is, it must be stressed that Windows 2000 RC1 is not the full release of Windows 2000. If you're not comfortable being a bug tester for the next Windows platform, hang about till the end of the year - Windows 2000's tentative release date.

And the winner is... Eidos?

Olympic Games, er, games have an unenviable history of being somewhat less-than-good titles (I think you mean crap - Ed). Yet there are those among us who still bear fond memories of the classic Epyx series of Summer Games, California Games, and the rest, and so expressed suitable enthusiasm upon learning that Eidos had secured the rights to all Olympic-related games for the next six years. The title based on the Sydney Games is currently under development by UK team, Attention To Detail, while both the Salt Lake City Winter Games in 2002 and the Athens Summer Games in 2004 will get their turn. Rumours that central African IOC members partook in the deal are, of course, completely unfounded.

WARTHOG NO MORE

Origin have cancelled further development of Jane's eagerly-awaited flight sim A-10 Warthog. As of July, the entire Warthog team have been dispersed among other projects throughout Origin and EA. This is an incident of interest to a wider section of the gaming community than just sim fans. Warthog is the first public casualty of Origin's surprising decision to abandon single-player gaming in preference for online-only titles. Although a number of other Jane's titles are still in development (USAF, World War and F/A-18), they appear to be a dying breed. From this we tend to think that Ultima Ascension could possibly mark, not only the end of the Ultima series, but the final single-player game Origin ever release. Interesting times indeed.

Ascension - better late than never.

GUILLEMOT'S DUAL SHOCK

Soon you won't have to be either insane (like an F1 racing driver) or stupidly rich to get behind the wheel of a Ferrari. Thanks to Guillemot's recently arrived at collaboration with the Italian car giants, all Guillemot driving game peripherals (steering wheels, pedals, the lot!) will now proudly sport Ferrari's famous "prancing horse" symbol. Apparently, Ferrari may even lend some of their design expertise in time.

In a related story, the busy people at Guillemot have bought out the joystick division of Thrustmaster for a reputed $US15 million. Basically this means Thrustmaster will continue to do what they do best - that is, making some of the most popular peripherals around, except it'll be labelled Guillemot (and now Ferrari as well). The Thrustmaster name is to be retained for their ongoing work on real-time, voice communication Internet products.

SEKRETS OF BO-FU
PCPP probes the Back Orifice

The "underground computer programmer's ball", otherwise known as Defcon 7.0 and held annually in Las Vegas, was chosen by infamous hacking collective, Cult of the Dead Cow, as the location where they would unleash their latest version of the Back Orifice program. Named "sekrets of BO-Fu", one CDW member has claimed that "it will make Back Orifice v1.0 look like LOGO for the TI99/4a". Cryptic hacker-references aside, the Back Orifice core program is arguably the most insidious "hack" program ever released. This Windows OS based executable gives remote users access to infected computers via a network or Internet connection. Remote users can then virtually control an infected computer, giving almost complete access privileges (such as access to hard drives, the ability to delete files and programs, etc.) with practically no apparent indication of its presence on such systems. Once Back Orifice has been "installed" on a computer (most often illegally), it doesn't show itself on the Windows task list or menu bar, and restarts itself automatically when a system s rebooted.

Although Back Orifice has been condemned by the industry as a particularly malicious virus, its creators assert that the software simply exploits a feature hidden within the Windows OS and isn't a virus at all. They also claim that it is an effective remote management tool, and all illegal activities conducted using this software is completely misappropriate and not in any way encouraged.

Still, this is one program to be weary of. Thankfully, computers infected by Back Orifice can be treated. Anti-virus software vendors are working on an update that will detect Back Orifice and its variants. So until protection and detection measures are made available, we recommend that you take great care in accepting files from dubious sources.

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spotlight

Exciting times!
PCPP gives you a sneak preview of the gaming months ahead...
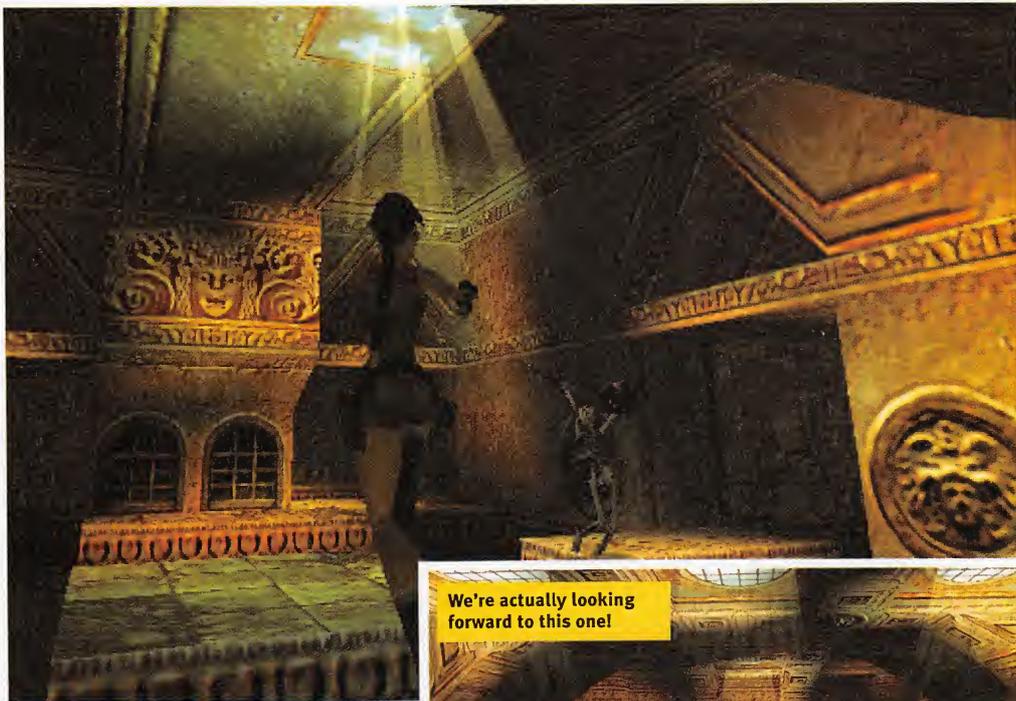
We're actually looking forward to this one!
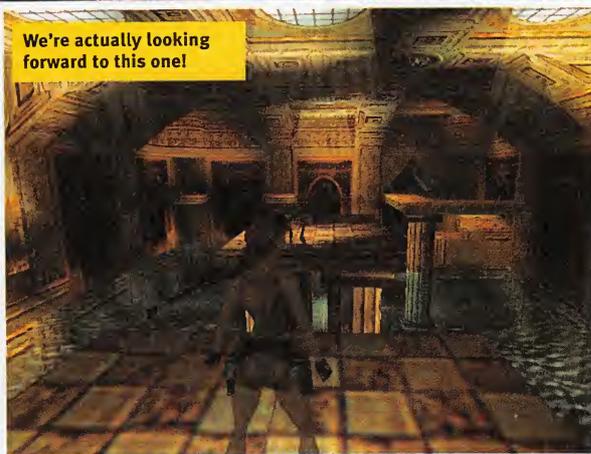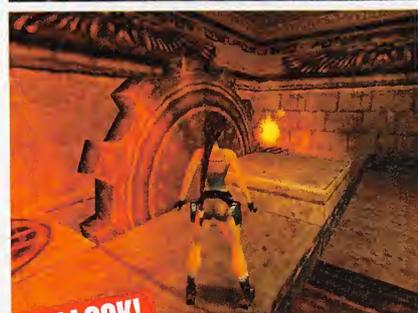
FIRST LOOK!

TOMB RAIDER 4

● Genre: **Action/Adventure** ● Developer: **Core Design** ● Due: **November**

Subtitled The Last Revelation, Lara's fourth expedition into the world's most ancient and dusty crypts will, we surmise, be the final game to feature the Tomb Raider title - but obviously not the end of Lara herself, of course. In an attempt to recapture the cohesive feel of the original game, and in sharp contrast to the global scale of the last in the series, the new game is set wholly within various locations around Northern Africa.

Seamless is a word Core have been reinforcing a great deal. In this sense, they've borrowed the continuous level design of Half-Life, thus removing the need for long loading delays. Also promised is a certain seamlessness between game and cut scenes, though quite how this is to implemented is unclear at this stage.

All told, it seems as if Core have put considerably more thought into this fourth iteration than perhaps they did with the third. However, any enthusiasm ought to be tempered by previous experience; Tomb Raider 3 was similarly said to mark a return to the first game (in terms of less combat, more exploring), but instead did the opposite. We await the anticipated pre-Christmas release with no small degree of interest.

AUSTRALIA'S MOST WANTED

PCPP wants to know what are Australia's Most Wanted Games. Which game are you waiting for? Which have you got slavering uncontrollably? Which games cause pools of unsightly drool to form at your feet when you hear the merest mention of its name? Send us your Top Five Most Wanted Games and, each month, one lucky entrant will win a special PCPP Mystery Prize (ie. whatever we have spare lying around the office). Email: *wanted@pcpowerplay.next.com.au*

To kick off the list, here's one we prepared earlier:

1	FREELANCER
2	Deus Ex
3	Grand Prix 3
4	Ultima Ascension
5	Thief 2
6	The Sims
7	Giants
8	Imperium Galactica 2
9	Spirit Of Speed
10	Nerf Arena

We recite the Deus Ex mantra daily...

Hard as nails, these guys. Judging from their footwear anyway.

SUMMONER

PCPP's Tokyo bureau.

● Genre: **RPG** ● Developer: **Volition** ● Due: **3rd Qtr '99**

Although a year away from release, Volition's Summoner already looks most impressive. A party of four predefined characters will tackle the single-player story, while a multi-player game allows for more open-ended adventuring. Free from narrative constraints, the latter mode features indiscriminate treasure-collecting and monster-slaying aplenty. In addition, the distinctively oriental flavour of the design and architecture should make for a refreshing change to the typical medieval taverns and castles in countless other RPGs. Whether Volition can fulfil their lofty goal of devising an RPG that appeals to hardcore and casual gamers alike remains to be seen.
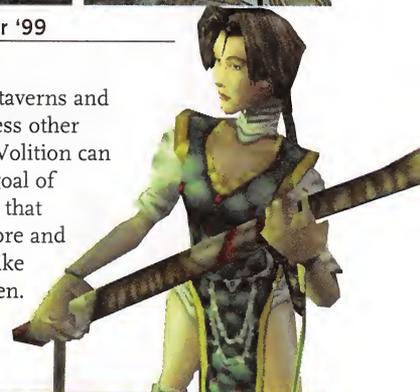
Ninja! Come out! The tea party is over!

NEW SHOTS!

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

● Genre: **FPS** ● Developer: **Raven** ● Due: **4th Qtr '99**

Regarded as perhaps the single most violent game on display at E3, Soldier Of Fortune is likely to come under significant scrutiny when it finally passes before the OFLC's watchful eye. Developed by Raven Software, creators of the Hexen and Heretic series' amongst others, it uses a modified Quake 2 engine to portray the exploits of a bunch of gung-ho mercenaries whose job it is to clean up messy situations in various political crisis zones throughout the world. As might be expected, this typically involves the purchasing and subsequent deployment of an extensive arsenal of bloody big guns. And all in the most entertainingly bloodthirsty manner possible, of course.

Would it be silly to say "Don't shoot!"?

HANGSIM

● Genre: **Flight sim** ● Developer: **Wilco** ● Due: **4th Qtr '99**

All games can manage at least one claim to fame, no matter how dubious, tenuous or unlikely. HangSim can proudly boast to be the "first light aviation simulator". Daring pilots can opt to situate their bodies within the flimsy frames of six aerial vehicles - a microlite, a sailplane, and two types of both hang-glider and para-glider. With allegedly realistic physics modelling, dynamic weather conditions, races and stunt competitions, HangSim veers mighty close to entering the airspace of Pilotwings. Let's hope it's just as accessible and compulsive as Nintendo's classic title. The promised "deathmatching" is interesting, to say the least.

Ooh, look at the fluffy white clouds!

● **spotlight**

MDK2

FIRST LOOK!

COMPLETE

● Genre: **Action** ● Developer: **Bioware** ● Due: **4th Qtr '99**

Scaring off many gamers with its deeply surrealist leanings, Shiny's MDK was an outrageously entertaining shooter that never really found the kind of success it deserved. Responsibility for the sequel may have been passed into the capable hands of fellow Interplay team Bioware (of Baldur's Gate fame), but the same lunatic feel should remain. One noteworthy change sees the introduction of the M (Max the robot dog) and D (Doctor Fluke Hawkins) as playable characters to complement the previous lone hero K (Kurt Hectic). No doubt each character will force the adoption of a individual playing style, adding variety to what is to be a single-player only game.

Max, the six-armed dog

One of the bad guys - Hans (oh, man that's corny)
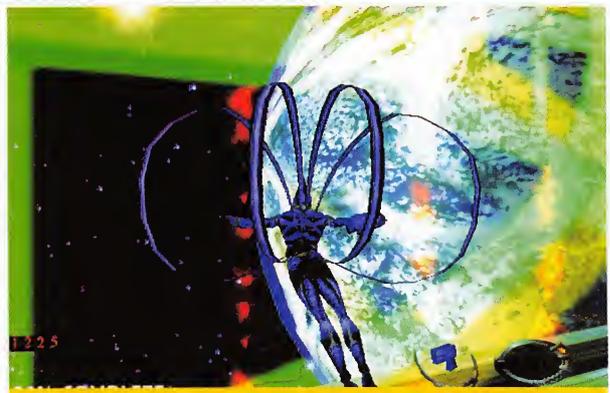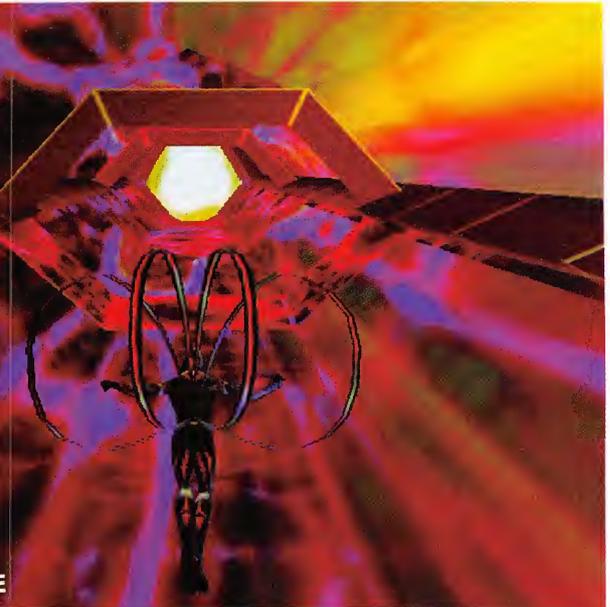
Quite frankly, these are the most ridiculous wings we've ever seen.

DARK REIGN 2

● Genre: **3D RTS** ● Developer: **Pandemic** ● Due: **1st Qtr 2000**

NEW SHOTS!

Pandemic Studios have reached the infamous "post-E3 crunch mode" phase, with the latest batch of Dark Reign 2 screenshots showing just how far the game (visually, at least) has come. Ohh.. Ahh... How we like real-time and coloured lighting effects...

While it will undoubtedly shine in the looks department, it's Dark Reign 2's physics engine that has been stealing the lime light of late. All units will be subject to a fiendishly detailed physics model. Units can fall off cliffs, roll backwards down slopes, even be pushed around if in the immediate vicinity of an explosion. If not frustrating and annoying, this feature should at the very least provide for some very interesting gameplay.

The unit design seems excitingly different.

An everyday scene in Survivalist middle America

JAGGED ALLIANCE 2

● Genre: **Strategy/RPG** ● Developer: **Sit-Tech** ● Due: **3rd Qtr '99**

Ensnared within the collapse of Sir-Tech's publishing house, Jagged Alliance 2 has done well to survive its prolonged development period. Talonsoft, long-time purveyors of fine hardcore wargames, have since snapped up the distribution rights and actually released the game in parts of Europe. However, the rest of the world will have to wait until next month to partake in this intriguing blend of tactical, turn-based combat and character-based role-playing, where you command a troupe of hardened, individualised mercenaries intent upon quelling a rebellion in the land of Arulco.

No sign of the slug beasts yet...

MECHASOMA

● Genre: **Insanity** ● Developer: **K-D Lab** ● Due: **Early 2000**

It remains, in all probability, quite the maddest game we've ever had the (dis)pleasure of reviewing here at PCPP. A bewildering mixture of top-down driving action and role-playing type quests interspersed with bizarre shopping expeditions and conversations with grotesque slug beasts living in subterrenean burrows. Oh, and you had to learn a whole new language, too. It was called Vangers, and it was a "courageous" slice of game design.

Now the patently bonkers Vangers team are back with Mechasoma, promising more of the same but with a manoeuvrable camera to show off the spritely new 3D terrain. Somewhat more accessible gameplay is also high on the agenda, thankfully.

Glowing, yellow goats! Proof that Garriott has finally gone mad.

We won't mention Resident Evil... Damn!

UNIFICATION

● Genre: **Action/Adv** ● Developer: **Take 2** ● Due: **4th Qtr '99**

Subtitled Martian Gothic, Unification presents a near-future plot concerning the further scientific examination of our closest planetary neighbour. Disaster strikes the research base on Mars and a team is sent to investigate the situation; the only hint of what they might find there arriving via a radio message from the base's director, crying in desperation, "It's a disease - and it thinks!"

Thus the scene is set for an action/adventure that is unashamed in its Resident Evil style inspiration. However, one novel twist requests that the player coordinate three characters simultaneously; their distinctive talents and abilities necessarily utilised in conjunction to negotiate the game's numerous problems.

NEW SHOTS!

ULTIMA: ASCENSION

● Genre: **RPG** ● Developer: **Origin** ● Due: **4th Qtr 99**

It's time once again for the obligatory mention of Ultima: Ascension, only this time - as March would say - there's a twist! Instead of the usual message from Lord British explaining why the game has slipped, this month he informed us the game was actually nearing completion. Apparently, Ascension has entered an in-house Quality Assurance phase, basically to check all aspects of the game work properly and that there are no gaping holes. Recording the game's unprecedented amount of dialogue is also well underway and expected to be wrapped up by the time you're reading this. Next on the development schedule is more beta-testing to ensure the play balance is in good shape. In the meantime, check out these lovely new screenshots.

spotlight

gaming on a shoes

THE ULTIMATE BUDGET PC SETUP

By PCPP's resident skinflint Hugh Norton-Smith

$CHEAP!

tring

Let's face it: when it comes to upgrading your PC, not everyone can just go out and purchase the latest and greatest hardware available. Unless your bank manager doesn't mind you running up a debt the size of a small European nation's GDP, few gamers could afford to go near a top-of-the-line Pentium III with all its fanciful trimmings ready to go. A better bet is to lower your sights a little and shop around; staying ever-so-slightly behind the current state-of-the-art will save you loads of money and, more importantly, still allow you to play all the hottest new games.

With all this in mind, bargain hunting and a bit of the old do-it-yourself work ethic are prerequisite. Scour the classifieds section of your daily newspaper thoroughly - many of the best places that sell PC hardware advertise there and only run their businesses out of the family home. Local computer markets are also places where the keen eye can spot a great deal. Although it requires a modicum of techy knowledge (for example, working out which cards go in which slots and which cables connect to which ports), buying parts separately is the only way to go - boxed PCs typically don't provide that vital value for money you're no doubt searching for.

Now that you're prepared, just follow the shopping list detailed below and a very respectable Complete Gaming Beast can be yours for less than $1500.

Motherboard: Abit BE6

The BE6 is essentially a souped up version of the Abit BH6 - the overclocker's favourite BX board. The board is very well priced and is feature packed. It includes high speed ATA/66 hard disk support, Softmenu II technology, 5 PCI slots, voltage adjustment, satisfactory stability and a host of overclocking tools. The built-in 'Softmenu' makes this a great board to squeeze every bit of potential from your processor. Finally, the board is Slot-1 compliant, allowing it to be upgraded to any Celeron, Pentium II or Pentium III processor. Will outlast most other components in your rig.
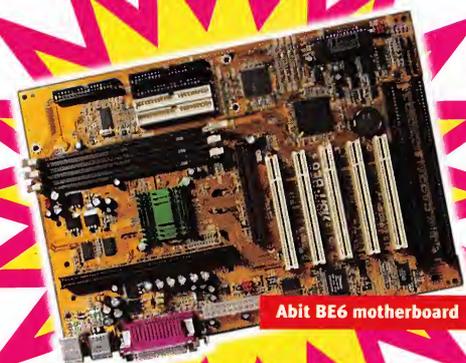
Abit BE6 motherboard

CPU: Intel Celeron 400

Don't be put off by the low-tech Celeron nametag, as the Celeron performs almost identically to similarly clocked Pentium II processors. In fact, it often surpasses the Pentium II in games due to its high speed cache. The Celeron is also an overclocker's dream processor; as the L2 cache is mounted on top of the processor, both parts can be cooled by the same fan. Combined with the Abit BE6 motherboard, you should be able to attain speeds in excess of 450mhz with little effort. It is also dirt cheap. If you are a real hardcore overclocker, you might even get lucky with the slightly cheaper Celeron 366. ▶

Intel Celeron 400 CPU

► 2D/3D Video Accelerator:
16MB Asus Riva TNT

Although relatively old, the nVidia TNT chipset has become the benchmark video accelerator on the market. It's still a competent performer with full AGP 2X implementation, 16 MB of texture RAM, a 250Mhz RAMDAC, 32-bit colour support and a twin pipelined polygon engine. The TNT also features the best set of drivers for any video card, with especially good OpenGL performance and rock solid stability. In Quake 3, it works commendably all the way up to 800x600 resolution. The image quality is fantastic. It's also dead cheap.

So why the Asus card above the other available makes? The Asus card includes SGRAM memory, a built in fan, quality construction, finely tuned drivers and one of the lowest prices on the market. You can also buy it OEM, without any software bundle.

If you absolutely, positively need Glide support - and don't mind losing AGP support, paying a bit more and forsaking some image quality - try the 3dfx Voodoo3 2000 with 16 MB of memory. Not too bad at all.

Memory: 64 MB of generic PC100 SDRAM

PC100 is the ONLY type of SDRAM that you should purchase. Despite marketing hype, we found that all RAM performs at similar performance levels. Most half-decent PC-100 DIMMs should easily be clockable past 100Mhz front-side bus speeds. Try to buy this from a reputable manufacturer, as many unscrupulous dealers will attempt to sell you inferior remarked PC-66 RAM from old stock or second hand systems.

64 MB is the absolute minimum amount of RAM you should get under Windows 98. If you are using WinNT or Win2000, you should get 128MB. With AGP video cards

Diamond Monster Sound mx300
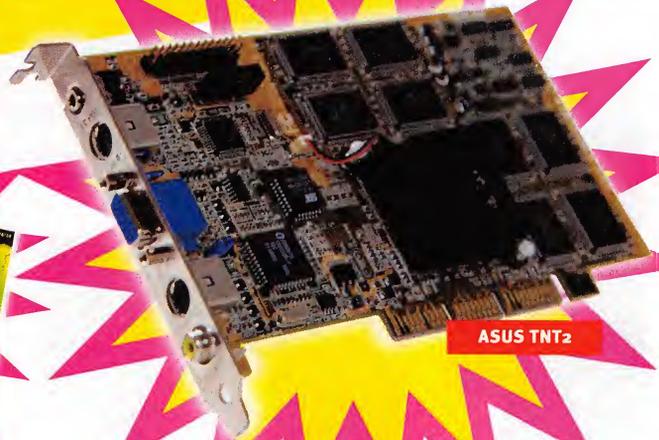
ASUS TNT2

"A very respectable Complete Gaming Beast can be yours for less than $1500."

hogging a large portion of your RAM, the more RAM you can throw at your system, the merrier. In most instances, 64 MB should give adequate performance with some swapping in games.

Hard Drive: Quantum Fireball CR 6.4

The Quantum Fireballs only run at 5,400rpm, but consistently provide us with good performance and excellent reliability. The Fireball CR also comes with built in support for the new standard, ATA/66. This is featured on the Abit BE6 motherboard, and provides in most cases performance in-line with SCSI hard disks. 6.4 GB is relatively small, but should last some time with intelligent file management. Remember that many brand new games, like Unreal Tournament, require massive installations due to the sheer size of textures. You also want room for all those extraneous Mp3s!

Sound Card: Diamond Monster Sound MX300

It's not worth getting anything below the MX300. For that tiny bit more than the really low end cards, you get Aureal A3D 2.0 support, excellent Midi, low noise ratios and PCI compliancy. This card provides stunning sound with low CPU overhead. With more games supporting 3D sound, this one is a no-brainer.

CD ROM: Aopen 40x EIDE CD ROM

It's a CD drive. It's quiet. It's damn fast. It's under $100.

Try and avoid generic makes, as they are often repackaged 24x drives; as it is difficult to benchmark CD drive speeds, you will often find yourself with an inferior and damn noisy 24x drive.

Case: Aopen HX45 Mid Tower

This is a well designed case with enough space, sturdy construction and satisfactory appearance. 250 watts should provide you

with sufficient power. Also includes a space for a case fan.

Controller: Logitech WheelMouse USB

Once you've used a wheel mouse, you'll never go back. The wheel is great for scrolling down lengthy web pages and word documents. It also doubles as a handy method of selection for games. The Logitech was chosen over the Microsoft IntelliMouse due to its competitive price and similar operation. USB means that it will work over a wide variety of platforms, including Macintosh.

Monitor: Cheap 17"

No self-respecting gamer will buy anything less than a 17" monitor. A 15" or, dare I say it, 14" (but why?) monitor just won't do justice to modern games and the clarity of the nVidia TNT video card. The monitor is the centre piece of your computer setup and a long term investment due to the price and relatively unchanging technology involved in a CRT. A good monitor should last you several years, so invest wisely. Things to look out for include: a dark picture tube, high refresh rates, high levels of resolution (1280x1024 and above), flat picture tube and low radiation output. You might want to check out computer markets or computer auctions for cheap, ex-government monitors. Make sure you get some form of warranty, however.

Operating System: Windows 98

As much as I would want to recommend Linux to the budget-minded readers, you can't go past the compatibility, ease of use, and hardware support available under Win 98. It is also significantly cheaper and less demanding on memory than Windows NT or 2000.

Extra Peripherals:
Generic Keyboard
Generic Floppy Drive
Generic Speakers

Monitor (Viewsonic shown)

de

USEX

TAKING GAMING INTO THE NEXT MILLENNIUM
We chat with ION Storm's Warren Spector about his stunning new game

While ION Storm's Dallas HQ, helmed by John Romero, has been hogging the hype, their sister office in Austin has quietly spent its time preparing to unleash Deus Ex upon a thus far unsuspecting world. Now the secret's out: Deus Ex is undoubtedly one of the most eagerly anticipated titles around and, we believe, will be one of the biggest games of 2000.

Set in a near-future nightmare world on the very brink of apocalyptic meltdown, Deus Ex promises to be a gaming revolution. Combining the visceral action of the best first-person shooters with the thought-provoking interaction of the deepest role-playing games, this Unreal engine powered title has the potential to redefine the way we play and think about games.

Spanning the globe from Hong Kong to New York to Paris, Deus Ex fashions an immersive environment with an emphasis on credible, real world detail. As an anti-terrorist agent replete with nanotech-augmentations, throughout the course of the game you will expose and subdue the plottings of a centuries old conspiracy to assume control of the world. The future is in your hands...

PCPP Dictionary

Deus Ex - correctly pronounced "day-oos ex" - comes from the Latin phrase deus ex machina, which literally means "god from the machine". The phrase is commonly used to describe an unlikely agent which arrives to resolve a seemingly hopeless situation. Sounds perfect to us.

PCPowerPlay: Your official title at ION Storm is Executive Producer for Deus Ex. What the heck does that mean?
Warren Spector: Beats me what "Executive Producer" means. Whenever anyone asks me what my title is, I just kinda shrug and say, "Call me whatever you want."

Specifically, what is your role in the project or, to put it another way, what does an Executive Producer actually do?
WS: My role varies from project to project — heck, it varies from day to day! With Deus Ex, I'm the one who said: "We're going to make an espionage/X-Files kind of first-person, realtime game, and it's going to be set in the real world, and there's going to be conversation and character development and problem-solving as well as action." The original idea was mine and I built the team to make that game. I worked with the members of the team to flesh out that high concept into something implementable. I either give the initial guidance to designers and artists on what goes into each mission or I have final Yes/No authority on every aspect of the game — look, feel, characters, dialogue, weapon ▶

The detail in Deus Ex is astonishing - right down to the smallest detail. Check out the creases on this guy's suit!

effects, everything. I'm also responsible for making sure the ION Austin office runs smoothly, that the rent gets paid every month, that everyone has the tools they need to do their jobs, that we stay within budget, that we're on schedule and all. I'm point man on all of our Deus Ex PR and marketing efforts — the public face of the project, if you will. So, basically, I'm run-the-office boy as well as a designer and scheduler and PR guy and biz person. I like wearing a lot of hats!

Many games at present appear to be wearing lots of different hats! We're thinking of the abundance of Action/Adventures or Action/RPGs. Deus Ex seems to be one of the leading lights in this trend toward genre hybridisation.
WS: I'm actually quite pleased about the fact that genre lines are being blurred and that Deus Ex is going to blur them even further. I love the adrenaline rush of an action game but I also love the intellectual challenge of solving puzzles, adventure game-wise. And, obviously, I love RPGs, with their character development and character interaction.

How are these gameplay elements balanced in Deus Ex?
WS: In Deus Ex, we're not trying to consciously blend all of these according to some formula or anything. What we're doing

is trying to create problems and providing enough tools — in terms of character capabilities, player knowledge and world simulation - that the player gets to decide how each problem should be overcome. In a way, we're being lazy and letting players do the work of gameplay element balancing for us!

The obvious follow-up to that is to ask how these disparate, blended elements get translated into actual gameplay. So, for example, thinking in terms of Player Character flexibility, how will this balance you mention be evident in the various skills to be learned? How heavily will the player's choice of skills and augmentations weigh upon the course of action

DEVELOPER PROFILE
WARREN SPECTOR

A bit of background, first. You've worked on several of what we consider to be the best games of all time - Ultima Underworld 1&2, System Shock, Ultima VI, the Worlds of Ultima series, to name a few. How would you assess your role in these titles?
Warren Spector: On some titles, I guess you'd say I was the creative and/or guiding force; on others, where I had a team or an individual capable of realizing his/her/their own vision - where I AGREED with that vision - I'd take a step back and provide whatever support or assistance that person needed rather than direct things myself. So, for example, while Doug Church at Looking Glass was the driving, day-to-

day force behind the Underworld games and System Shock, those games came out of our shared belief in what Games Should Be Like. They grew, conceptually, both from specific discussions about what our next game together should be and from an on-going dialogue about The Future which Doug and I have been involved in for the last eight or nine years. The same is true on Deus Ex, where my original concept is being developed and implemented by a team of designers led by Harvey Smith, a team of programmers led by Chris Norden and a team of artists led by Jay Lee.

Modesty aside, can your games be seen as "Spector" games or is the development process far more of a team effort than an outsider might imagine?
WS: I've gone on record many times saying that gaming is the most collaborative medium I know of. For that reason, I'm not particularly comfortable with the idea of "Spector" games. If that idea has any validity at all it's only in that all of the games I've been involved with have been games I was committed to from a creative and conceptual standpoint. The most important thing I do is make sure all of the team members on any

And justice for all... pigeons.

he chooses in a given situation?
WS: Skill choices will drive a lot of Deus Ex gameplay. The goal is that every player will be able to do everything but upgrading specific skills will make certain kinds of tasks easier. What that means, is that players who are skilled in lockpicking, for example, will likely solve game problems (well, locked doors, anyway) stealthily. Another player, one skilled with demolitions, will probably choose to blow doors off their hinges. Both players get through the door but each takes a different tack in doing so. But, remember, there's nothing to say the lockpicking player CAN'T demo the door and there's nothing to say the demolitions expert CAN'T pick it - they're just not likely to.

With that in mind, how far does Deus Ex then veer away from traditional RPG stats and skills system? Are stats still there lurking in the background or have you implemented something far more sophisticated and opaque?
WS: Stats and traditional skill system stuff are pretty much not a part of Deus Ex. What we're trying to do is keep the player focused on interaction with things in the gameworld, not worrying about hidden die-rolls and increasing a character's Charisma by a point. To me, roleplaying is all about playing a role...

That sounds bold and daring!
WS: It's a novel concept, I know! You see, most of our game systems are designed to differentiate one player's character from another's. The idea is that those character differences will differentiate experience. I don't know that what we're doing is more "sophisticated" than other RPGs, but it is a bit different. We'll see how people respond...

"The goal is that every player will be able to do everything..."

Something else that's a "bit different", as you say, is the mission-based structure of the game. Is this compatible with the vaunted RPG ethos of freedom and linearity?
WS: There's a real temptation to make a game, especially a roleplaying game, non-linear and open-ended; but, you know, I've done that and it's (a) an insane amount of work, most of which isn't apparent to players and (b) not a very effective way to create the kind of cool, compelling moments players remember long after they've finished the game. Deus Ex is

mission-based, completely linear - every player will play mission 1 before mission 2 before mission 3 and so on.

But many role-players are vehemently opposed to being "lead by the hand", as it were.
WS: The key to making this work is to leave players as unconstrained as possible WITHIN any mission. That way, my experience of mission 1 may be completely different than yours. We'll both end up at the same place by the end of the mission, because we both have ►

"I feel like such a prat in these orange jump-suits, Trev."

game team are on the same page about what game we're all trying to make. Everyone on one of my teams should be able to say "That's MY game."

Having worked with them for so many years, can you tell us what is so special about the Looking Glass school of game design?
WS: The guys at LookingGlass think about games more than any other bunch of people I've ever worked with. Every aspect of each game gets analyzed and discussed and dissected and sewn back together in new and interesting ways. This is possible, I think, because they've managed to keep a core group together long enough that a unique

culture has grown up around them. Doug Church, Marc LeBlanc, Tim Stellmach, James Fleming and others have been there, basically, since the company started. We've all been talking about the kinds of games we love and hate and want to play for so long we have a core set of shared assumptions and a direction we know gaming can and should take in the future.

From Ultima Underworld to Terra Nova to Thief, Looking Glass have consistently produced games that challenge our pre-conceptions over what defines a certain genre.
WS: People who sign on with LookingGlass either become a part of

Ultima VI - The False Prophet. Warren's touch extends as far as the venerable Ultima series.

that unique, analytical culture and buy into the direction or they move on. I've often joked with the guys up there that they make games by and for MIT grads, which limits their market some, but ensures that each new game will

advance the state of the art just a bit. If they can't do something new in a game, there's no point in doing the game at all.

Is this a deliberate philosophy? Or a happy accident?
WS: Both, in that a bunch of guys from MIT came together at just the right time with just the right set of skills and worldviews and opinions to change the world. And there's a group of us who intend to spread that same philosophy far and wide, let me tell you!

We assume this thinking has followed you to ION Storm...
WS: Frankly, that kind of culture isn't easy to build. They've got some of it at

(left) Even the graffiti in Deus Ex is realistic - it's appalling!

▶ the same goals, but the minute-to-minute experience will be different for all players. I have a saying: "Figuring out what to do isn't fun; fun is figuring out how to do something." Players should always have clear goals and then get to determine how to accomplish them. A mission structure makes that much easier for us to accomplish.

The missions take place in recognisable, real world locations. How much of a concern was realism, and why?
WS: Realism has always been a concern in Deus Ex. We're trying to build believable real world spaces - city streets, subway stations, missile silos, and so on. We're even trying to build some specific real world spaces - the Statue of Liberty and the White House, most notably. And the emphasis in the game is on interaction with other people, not with aliens from outer space or extra-dimensional creatures invading the planet or some such goofiness. I've said before that Deus Ex is all about people, the things they build and the things they do to one another. But you always have to remember we're making a game. And there are times when realism gets in the way of fun, or when trying to simulate the real world is beyond our technical (and creative)

capabilities. In those cases, reality takes a back seat. I hope players say Deus Ex is the most realistic roleplaying game they've played or, at least, the most believable. But, more important, I just hope they think it's a ton of fun.

A significant part of that believable interaction comes in the form of combat. What tangible effects will things like body/location damage and limb/region impairment have on the gameplay?
WS: What effects would damage have in the real world?

Er... Painful ones?
WS: Yep, that pretty much answers your question! If you get hit in the arm, be prepared for less effective aiming in combat situations. If you get hit in the leg, you're going to move slower. Take a bullet to the brain and you're going to die. Combat isn't pretty and there are consequences to getting into shootouts that aren't often dealt with in games. We want to make those consequences real for players. The decision to involve yourself in a firefight shouldn't be an easy one to make...

Speaking of consequences, we recently read an interview with Harvey Smith, lead designer on

Freedom of choice

What do you personally consider to be Deus Ex's most exciting feature(s)?
WS: I don't know if you consider this a feature but, even now, though we're still months away from shipping, you can watch a variety of people play our Alpha missions and get past game obstacles in different ways. That's got to be the most exciting thing to me because it validates the idea that character differences really can lead to experiential differences.

Deus Ex, where he said: "Immersion is a product of a number of factors. One of my friends in the business, Rob "Xemu" Fermier said it best at Austin's CGDC last year. He talks about the elements contributing to immersion as completeness (does the world act like you'd expect?), realism (is the world convincing?) and investment (do you care about what happens?). The presence of pigeons is realism. That they fly away if you get close to them or fire a gun is completeness. The investment part is harder to pull off. If we can make people feel guilty for shooting down a pigeon (or an NPC), then we have succeeded there as well."
WS: A bit earlier, you asked about how Deus Ex would blur the lines between genres. If you really press me, the genre I most want Deus Ex to fall into is the "immersive reality simulation" genre. I want you to feel like you're really in our gameworld, every minute you're playing Deus Ex. Anything that pulls you out of the

Valve (and I think it shows in the quality of HalfLife and Team Fortress). I'm just beginning to build that kind of culture at ION Storm Austin and, if I do my job right, it'll show in Deus Ex and in subsequent projects.

Considering your work on System Shock, have you had much to do with the development of System Shock 2? Does it impress you?
WS: I've played some of the Shock 2 beta and it rocks very, very hard. Many of the guys working on it worked on the original System Shock and the entire team has been steeped in the LG design and development philosophy. The Shock 2 team has made some design choices I

wouldn't have made, of course, but the bottom line is that it FEELS like Shock and it's a blast to play.

Would you consider it to be the strongest competition for Deus Ex?
WS: It's without question the strongest competition for Deus Ex; players are going to see some similarities between Shock 2 and Deus Ex. I don't see that as a problem, though. What LG and ION Austin and Valve and Irrational and some other folks are doing is spreading the gospel of immersive reality simulation. The more of us doing cool stuff - similar

Ultima Underworld's infamous Slasher of Veils - a push over, really.

stuff - the better. For players and for gaming in general.

So, Warren, to conclude, how does it feel to be regarded as a genuine Gaming

God? And we should warn you that we may or may not have our tongues in our collective cheek when we say that...
WS: Mostly, it feels weird and embarassing. When I look in the mirror all I see is a game geek. Every time someone refers to me as a legend or a "gaming god" or something, I feel like they diminish all the other people on my teams, and without them you wouldn't be interested in a thing I have to say. I mean, I'm a pretty good designer and a pretty good manager and a pretty good businessman and a pretty good PR guy — and that's a unique package, I've come to know — but I have designers on my team who are better at system design, say, or at map creation than I am.

Thunderbirds are go!
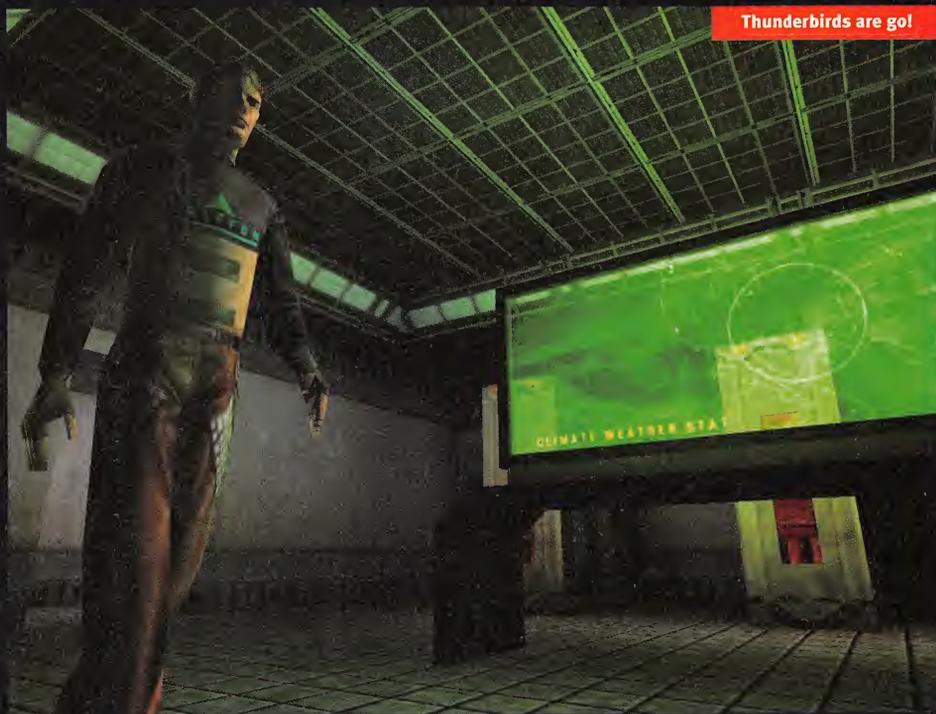
"I want Deus Ex to fall into the 'immersive reality simulation' genre."

gameworld, anything that reminds you you're just playing a game, is bad. Anything that makes you feel more a part of the world is good. When you DO shoot a pigeon, everything in the gameworld — the other pigeons, other characters close enough to hear the shot, the guy who was training that pigeon to fly in pigeon races — responds as the player expects them to. That's a critical element in immersing players in an alternate reality. Pigeons are just one, visible, example of the kind of detail that will draw players in and make them feel like they're really in New York or Paris or wherever. There are a thousand details like that in Deus Ex, all designed to ground you in the reality of the experience.

You've used the Unreal engine to create that immersive reality. What was the reason behind this choice?
WS: Lead Programmer, Chris Norden, and I looked at several different 3D engines before deciding to go with Unreal. Ultimately, Unreal was the obvious choice. It offered the best

combination of power, speed, extensibility, developer support, designer tools, cost... We've been really happy with the decision.

Just how modified is the engine?
WS: The engine itself isn't heavily modified but we've made lots of extensions to it — a new skill system, a new augmentation system (character powers, basically), conversation system, user interface, lots of new AI stuff, some new physics modeling, etc. The programmers have been hard at work and their efforts will be apparent on-screen.

So, is there anything you couldn't include in Deus Ex - for various reasons, technical considerations, etc - that you would liked to have made it into the game?
WS: You don't have time for all the stuff we wanted to do in Deus Ex but didn't have time or technology to implement!

Okay, slightly different angle, is Deus Ex the game you've always wanted to create?

WS: Deus Ex is a game I've had in mind for years - since I was at ORIGIN. I started thinking of a more human, more real-world oriented first-person game during the development of Underworld. I used to say that I wanted to make a game anyone could play without being embarassed - a game without furry footed freaks with pointy ears, a game where no one would misuse the words "thee" and "thou." Deus Ex isn't exactly the game I envisioned then but it's clearly an outgrowth of my thinking over the last eight or so years and a logical next step in the development of gaming, as I see it.

Can Deus Ex be seen then as a kind of culmination of many of the aspects you've attempted to incorporate in your games thus far?
WS: To say it's the culmination of anything is tantamount to saying it's the end of something. And that it most certainly is not. There's so much I want to do that we can't do yet, for technological reasons, for time and budget reasons or simply because none of us on the team is clever enough to have solutions for some very knotty problems. Look at Deus Ex as the "next" in a series of philosophically related games or the "first" in a series and that's fine. It's not the be all, end all - not by a long shot.

Actually, Warren, it is. ◄

I'm not an artist by any stretch of the imagination and, as a non-programmer, I rely VERY heavily on talented, creative programming leads. I've been fortunate enough to work with some of the best people in this field — people who deserve more attention than they've received. I've mentioned Doug several times already and the rest of the LookingGlass guys. And there's Bill Baldwin, Whitney Ayres, Tony Bratton, John Talley and Dave Beyer (the guys who made Wings of Glory so much fun) and Jeff George and Mike McShaffry are every bit as responsible for Martian Dreams as I was. I had as many as 50 people working on Serpent Isle at various times - those were the guys who created the

minute to minute gameplay, not me. THAT's the stuff of greatness. The ability to keep a player involved and engaged - enraptured - minute-to-minute is the real deal. Anyway, if I am a "gaming god," I'm one who believes in giving people free will. I set goals but it's up to each individual on the team to achieve them. They should get credit for that and they almost never do. It's a real shame.

Sure, we'll continue to do our best, giving credit where it's due. Thanks for your time, Warren, and we hope you and the ION team achieve the lofty goals you have set for yourselves with Deus Ex.
WS: Thanks guys.

An essential item in any RPG arsenal - the wrench (Sys Shock 2).

EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW

AGE OF EMPIRES II
THE AGE OF KINGS

Ashton gets his eager hands on the only playable version of Age 2 in the country - and squeals with delight!

In the days before moats, they used grain farms to protect castles...

01:07:10 (1.0)

Archery Range

2310/2310

Saracens
Caliph Abu Bekr
Ally

The Britons
The Byzantines
The Celts
The Chinese
The Franks
The Goths
The Japanese
The Mongols
The Persians
The Saracens
The Teutons
The Turks
The Vikings

The Britons

The British (goes on)

Following the withdrawal of the Roman legions to Gaul (modern France) around 400, the British Isles fell into a very dark period of several centuries from which almost no written records survive. The Romano-British culture which had existed under 400 years of Roman rule disappeared under colonisation invasion and migration by barbarian Celts came over from Ireland (a tribe called the Scotti gave their name to the northern part of the main island, Scotland). Saxons and Angles came from Germany, Friesans from modern Holland, and Jutes from

1400   987   1112   331   19/45   Imperial Age

01:06:40 (1.0)

Mini Map
Shows the entire gameplay area in smaller scale. To navigate using the

Town Center
2640/2640   Saracens
4+3   Caliph Abu Bekr
5+3   Ally

...And it didn't take long for this technique to spread to the East.

DETAILS
- **Genre:** RTS
- **Players:** 1-8
- **Developer:** Ensemble Studios
- **Publisher:** Microsoft
- **Due:** 3rd Qtr '99

Age Of Empires is often regarded as one of the best real-time strategy games of all time; this being the case, it's fortunate that it's also one of the best-selling titles of recent years. Now, with the sequel almost upon us - and having received an Australian exclusive preview of the game in action - we feel it's time to examine the question: will Age 2 be a worthy successor?

The RTS genre is continually evolving, and while many developers are making the transition to the realm of three dimensions and first person perspectives, there are a renegade few which are taking the original 2D art form to new levels. Age of Empires 2: The Age of Kings holds firmly onto the 2D model, refines it, and gives us more of the traditional high color, high resolution, build'n'biffo gaming that we've come to know and love. If you thought 2D real-time strategy gaming was dead, then think again!

Age of Civilizations?

There's something intriguing about an RTS that combines popular strategy gaming with the essence of Civilization. Who can forget playing through the first few levels of Age Of Empires, marvelling at the way Ensemble Studios, headed by strategy game veteran Bruce Shelley, managed to inject some much needed depth to an otherwise lacking genre? Forget about researching a

new tech and pumping out new units in a mundane manner. AOE let you advance your civilisation from one age to the next, bringing with it all the advantages the new age had to offer, all with a wonderful sense of cohesion that remains unparalleled in the genre.

This has been one of Age of Empires' strong points, and the Age of Kings is absolutely no different. It's a nice twist to the genre that strengthens gameplay and creates mini-goals to strive for in production. For example, the player that reaches a new age first has the upper hand. So the game is as heavy on resource ▶

MONASTERY

The monastery produces monks who, in the hands of a skilled player, can be nothing short of devastating. Monks, although weak, can convert units and buildings to your cause in just a few seconds, and at a range. If you're not using them, you should be. If you see an enemy monk walking towards your city, call on your archers. Quickly.
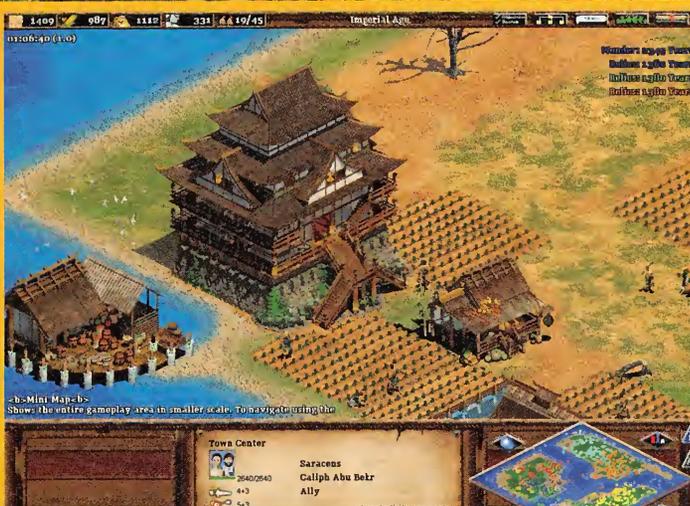
MARKETPLACE

The marketplace allows you to trade resource types, allowing you to quickly fill a need. You can also build trade carts to trade with allies and research technologies such as cartography, which lets you see the exploration zones of your allies. Handy feature that.

Note the real-real time cloud effects - giving units protection from the glaring sun.

Onager
Britons
Earl of Warwick
Enemy
60/60
50
0/7
8

"And this one's for your deplorable taste in post-rennaissance architecture!"

UNIVERSITY

The university is the place to research new ways of taking out your foe as well as improve production efficiency and city defence. You need a university to reach the most powerful offensive units in the game.

SIEGE WORKSHOP

You want one of these. Dedicated purely to producing weapons of mass destruction, if you can produce a few siege units you can turn the tide of battle from near-victory to complete wipeout. They come at a cost, of course.

▶ management and advancement as it is on good old bashing and dashing, which is, needless to say, a winning combination.

Warm and friendly

As with the original, finding food and resources for your followers is central to building your empire. You can send your loyal populace out to gather berries, herd animals, and decimate forests in traditional human splendour. Without this constant flow of resources, your megalomaniac dreams would quickly grind to a halt. As a result it's worthwhile to dedicate people purely to resource gathering and, at every opportunity, improve their efficiency when building upgrades allow.

Of course, when the time comes to upgrade resource buildings you'll also have the opportunity to improve the attack or defence ability of your troops, or build new types of buildings to gain new abilities. Where you decide to spend your resources is critical to winning the game. It's a

" which is, needless to say, a winning combination"

refreshing change to the recent flow of RTS games (Total Annihilation: Kingdoms comes to mind) where unit conflict is the primary focus.

New units!

AOE2 sports 13 completely new sides in the form of (deep breath) the Britons, Byzantines, Celts, Chinese, Franks, Goths (ooer), Japanese, Mongols, Persians, Saracens, Teutons, Turks, and Vikings. Each has unique advantages and disadvantages and each has a unique unit type that only they

can build. As you'd expect there are specific unit and building graphics for each side and for each of the four ages (Dark, Feudal, Castle, and Imperial) you progress through. Combine this with the number of building and unit types in the game and you have vast scope and variety of the in-game graphics. Speaking of which you can play AOE2 in any resolution up to 1280x1024. This is an ideal resolution as it lets you see plenty of action without losing too much detail on the wonders of your empire.

Structure detail is superb.
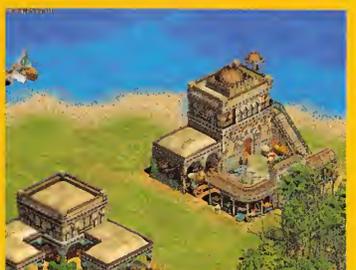
Who could want a moat when a grain farm does the job just as well?

Essential resources

One of the better features of AOE2 is the ability to build city walls by simply clicking and dragging the start and end points of the wall. Although a little fiddly when it comes to building walls around your resources, such as forests, if done properly you can completely seal off your empire bar the use of a gate that only opens for your troops. Walls can take a lot of damage, so building them is always a wise move near the start of a game to stop

harasing attacks by the computer or LAN-linked friends.

Also of note is the ability to trade resources between allies. You can build trading carts that will make their way to the marketplace of another player. Depending on the map, this could be problematic if the cart needs to travel through enemy territory, but what better excuse for war than that of losing an essential shipment of meat lovers pizza to your neighbour's inconsiderate forces?

The dreaded fog of war strikes again.

"attempting to use their bows as rather oddly shaped swords."

The AI test

For one player skirmishes the AI is a mixed bag. Playtesting against two allied AI players (with a computer ally of my own) revealed that while the AI enemies proved exceptionally good, my computer friend was hopeless and easily wiped out. (Note to self: Don't ally with computer players!). Seeing the computer falling at the hands of a few siege units also displays how important technology, or advancing in ages, is to overall victory.

Smarter units

For variety, AOE2 scores well - standard unit types include infantry, archers, mounted troops, warships, monks (to convert enemy units and buildings), siege units, and special troop classes specific to each race. Considering there are one or two classes within each of these troop types and considering that advancing an age often allows you to upgrade their abilities, the result is an excellent and varied mix

of troops and abilities to choose from. Your armies will need to consist of a selection of troop types to be successful, and managing their formations is another nifty aspect of AOE2. Once highlighted you can dictate how a group will move and behave. You get to choose from a few pre-defined formations that keep your troops in line both during movement and combat. So, for once, you really can protect your archers and not have them running into battle attempting to use their bows as rather oddly shaped swords.

Barbarossa!

AOE2 supports both single player and multiplayer, and also includes a number of campaigns based on famous historic figures and events, true to the era. You

can play out historical conflicts involving Joan of Arc, Genghis Khan, Barbarossa, and the Saracens, to name but a few. Campaigns are fought across Europe and the Far East, with scenery changing accordingly.

Age of Empires 2 will be the thinking gamer's strategy title, much like the first; while there is a heavy focus on all out military muscle, this aspect is beautifully balanced by a fantastic advancement and management system. Although the core of the game remains unchanged, there are enough differences and advancements present to ensure that AOE2 will be a must have title for any strategy game enthusiast. Look for the full review in a coming issue of PowerPlay. ■

Ashton Mills
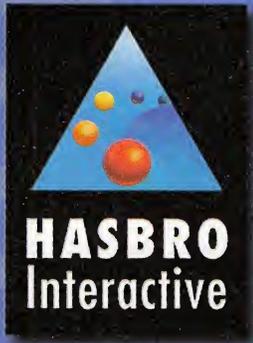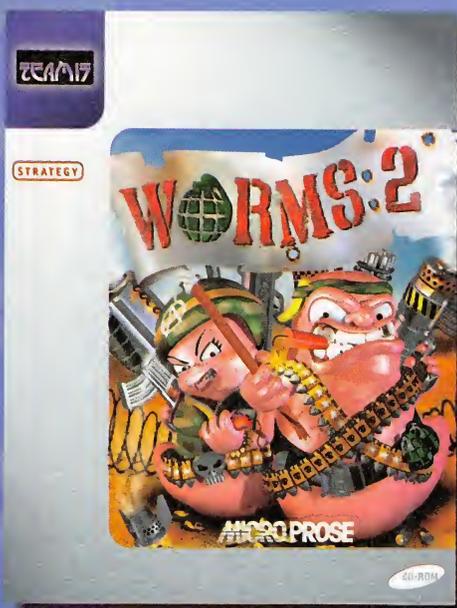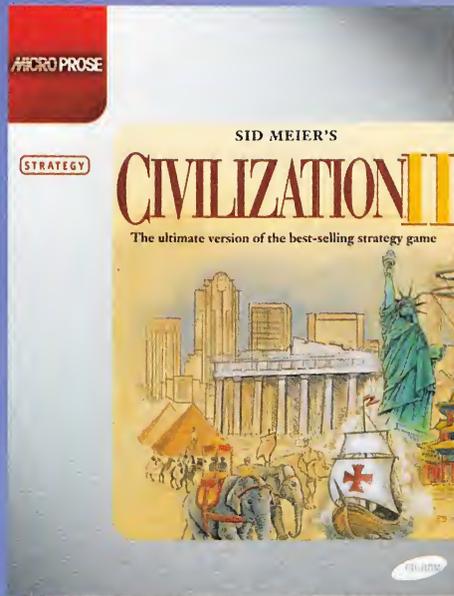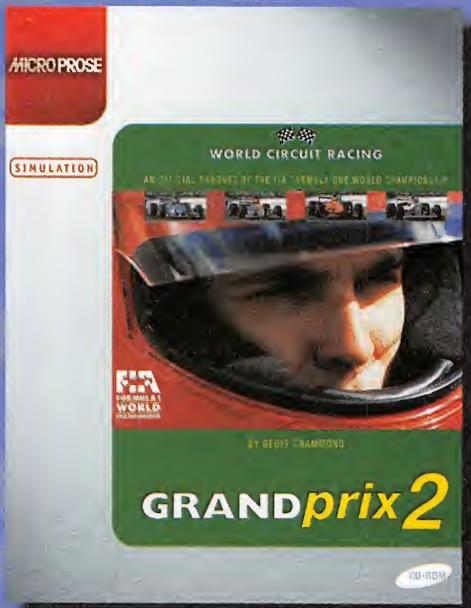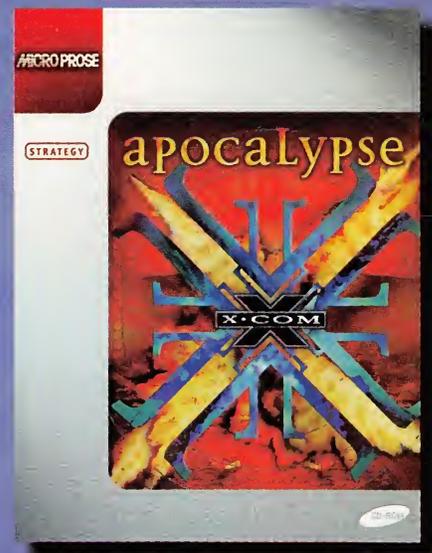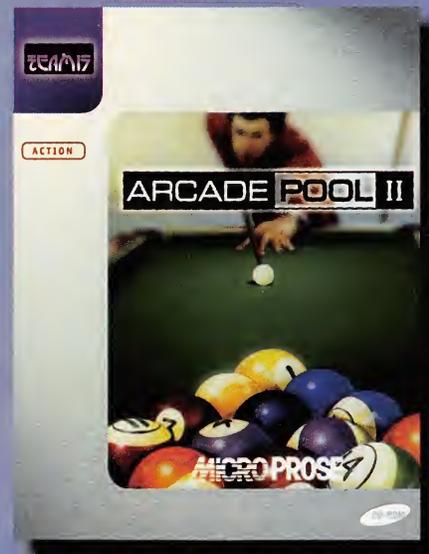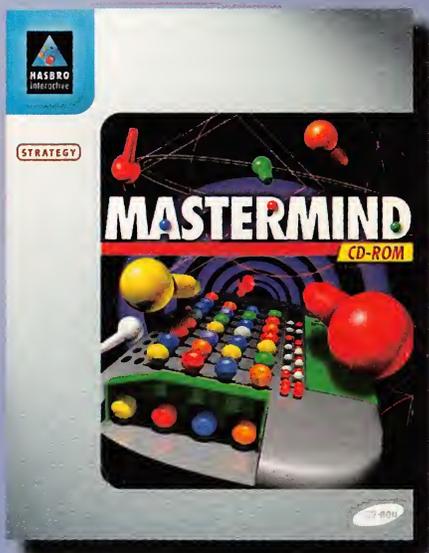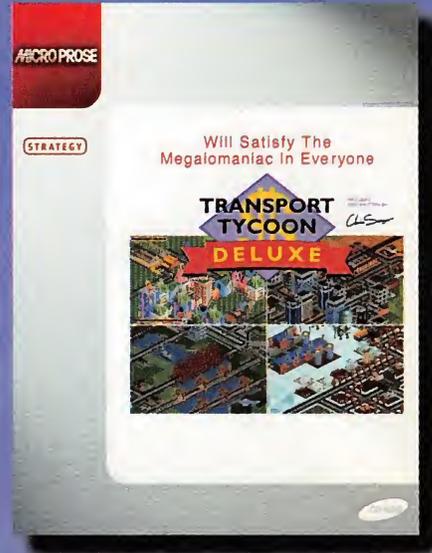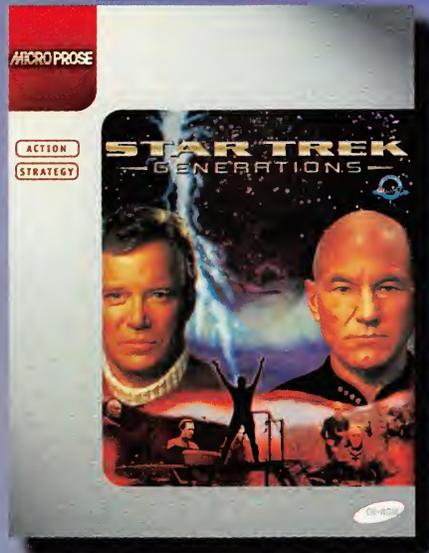
1937: SPIRIT OF SPEED

A true gentleman's racing game.

No sign of the Screenshot Curse here...

BEST 00:58:22
RACE 02:14:71

3/3

Even the huts have been lovingly and painstakingly re-created.

DETAILS
- **Genre:** Racing
- **Players:** 1-8 (Multi)
- **Developer:** Broadsword Interactive
- **Publisher:** Hasbro/Microprose
- **Due:** Xmas

* At this years E3, we cornered Broadsword MD David Rowe, who gushed joyous enthusiasm for the mighty GPL. He assured us that it was a definite influence for Spirit of Speed, and how terrific it is that driving sim won't be forever trapped in the Formula 1/road car cycle of tedium. Thanks David, saved us a lot of trouble there.

Where GPL modelled the 1967 Formula 1 year, with its nimble, twitchy and seriously overpowered engines, Spirit of Speed focusses on a more sedate era of motor racing. In 1937 the engineering thrust was purely devoted to building engines with as much torque and horsepower as could be mustered from a sand-cast iron block. Tires, suspension and the gearbox were primitive, even by the standards of those early days. At E3 we took the stupendous 24 litre Napier Railton for a hard thrash around the Brooklands circuit (UK). Sorry, thrash? Uh, no. These things don't respond well to thrashing. Sailing gracefully up to a medium-speed corner, this driver let the revs slip a bit, then tenderly dropped down from fourth to third gear to slow the momentum our block of iron on wheels had developed. Next in the sequence of events was a loud bang, followed by purple smoke billowing forth from the bonnet. "you can't do that, it's not a Japanese turbo-4", offered the Broadsword bloke.

The correct approach is to drive the cars in Spirit of Speed like they're a train - settle in comfortably, let the almighty thrust of the enginebuild up to a velocity where you can point the beast through corners without any significant slowing, and repeat as necessary. Powersliding comes very naturally, and these cars handle it with grace, but so low-revving are the engines that the energy you'll loose from powersliding make it a no-no.

We embrace all new forms of simracing, and Spirit of Speed is guaranteed to offer challenges unlike anything you've felt before. There will be 9 tracks in the final game, including Avus in Germany, Tripoli in Libya and Roosevelt in the US. Not all will suit the Nascar technique, and we look forward, as should you, too, to figuring out how to man-handle these barges around a tight circuit.

Securing licenses for the use of classic cars has been a problem, due to the non-existence of many of the companies which built the cars they wanted for the game. Confirmed at this stage are the Napier Railton, Alfa Romeo P3, Bugatti 35B, Auto Union C, E.R.A. and Bently Blower. We look forward to many hours spent huddled in the accurately recreated cockpits of these beauties.

Spirit of Speed is scheduled for Christmas. The game engine was virtually complete at the time of showing at E3, all we're waiting for now is for the Broadsword team to build us some cars and tracks... ∎

Ben Mansill

FUNNY FOOTNOTE: Whoever wrote the Press Release for Spirit of Speed has games on the brain, in the list of included cars, is the "Alfa Romero"...

ROGUE SPEAR

The return of the intelligent FPS.

Rainbow Six was Red Storm Entertainment's flagship title. At the time, Red Storm was a relatively unknown developer struggling to establish itself in an industry dominated by giants like id, Microprose and Interplay. Developing an innovative and groundbreaking game paid dividends in both the retail sector and the public recognition stakes (Tom Clancy's name must have helped as well - Ed). Red Storm are now one of the industry's most well respected developers,

and, undeniably, a force to be reckoned with.

Rogue Spear doesn't make a significant departure from the classic Rainbow Six formula. Instead, it reinforces the old adage "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" with its multitude of enhancements. From thousands of fan emails, Red Storm took the best suggestions on ways to improve on Rainbow 6 and incorporated them, along with quite a few ideas of their own, into the design of Rogue Spear.

Hard As Nails

In many respects, Rainbow Six's AI was superior to everything else out there. Only Half Life's elite Commando AI came even close. However, Rainbow Six's AI also

Brett takes up a sniper post, ready to blast those Commie bastards!

Two of the new movements: (above left) The crouch and lean. (above right) Climbing ladders.

SWAT forces: famous for poor posture.

had its fair share of problems, the most notable being the tendency for team mates to congregate in dense packs directly behind the player. This caused innumerable problems when beating a hasty retreat was the player's best course of action. Tangos also failed to react to the deaths of their compatriots. Seeing a Tango (R6-speak for "Terrorist") watch impassively as his buddy's skull was shattered by a fusillade of bullets was an aspect that significantly affected the player's suspension of disbelief.

In light of such problems, Red Storm have scrapped their entire AI algorithm. They've also completely scrapped the Action Phase engine. This has granted the Rogue Spear team much more overall freedom in designing the game, and eliminated a number of other problems that plagued Rainbow Six in the process. The new Action Phase engine means that players aren't forewarned of the presence of a Tango behind a door, as limbs no longer project through.

Hecklers Will Be Shot

A rather significant addition to Rogue Spear is the inclusion of sniper rifles, and both team mates

and Tangos specialising in sniper ops. Heckler & Koch's PSG-1 is one of the three precision sniper rifles available in the game. Delta Force aficionados will also gleefully note the inclusion of the Barret M95 .50 calibre rifle, an astoundingly powerful weapon capable of penetrating armoured vehicles at a range in excess of one kilometre! While lacking access to the phenomenal power of rifles like the M95, Rogue Spear's Tangos still represent a serious threat to the player. The weapon of choice for many Tango snipers is the infamous Dragunov SVD, a Soviet weapon made famous by numerous Cold War movies.

Immersed In Snow

Rogue Spear also enjoys numerous cosmetic enhancements. The mission environments are much more detailed and visually appealing than those in Rainbow Six. Weather effects such as snow and rain have been added, and these greatly increase the game's immersion factor. The mission locations are quite varied, and range from the Kosovo town of Djakovica to a

Siberian military base. One hotly anticipated mission also involves the termination of terrorists who have hijacked a 747.

Run The Gauntlet

Two new modes have been added to Rogue Spear, and these become available upon successful completion of each mission. Terrorist Hunt tasks the player with hunting down up to 30 terrorists distributed randomly throughout the environment. Lone Wolf requires the player to run the gauntlet of concealed snipers and teams of Tangos in order to reach a designated extraction point. There's also the option of recording each and every mission. This allows the player to view the action from the perspective of any team member, and from variety of camera angles. It also serves as perfect documentary evidence for those wishing to showcase their skills, kills and achievements.

Multiplayer support is included, and several new modes have been added. Those who enjoyed multiplayer matches of Rainbow Six should hold onto their hats; Rogue Spear multiplayer is absolutely phenomenal. Rogue Spear has the potential to be one of the best, and highest grossing titles of 1999. Like countless others worldwide, we're counting the days until its release. ■

Brett Robinson

THIS GUN IS SERIOUSLY SPAS

Rainbow Six's weapons complement has been further expanded in Rogue Spear. The SPAS-12, a shotgun capable of fully automatic fire is just one of many new weapons available. The player is also able to select either FMJ (Full Metal Jacket) or JHP (Jacketed Hollow Point) ammunition for their weapons. Weapon effects have also been enhanced. Players foolish enough not to look away when they throw a Flashbang suffer temporary retinal burns similar to those caused by looking at a bright light. Explosives that detonate in close proximity to the player also cause temporary deafness - a side effect with potentially lethal consequences.
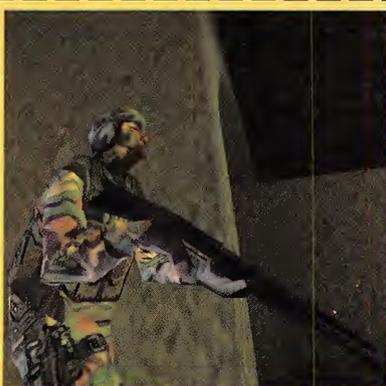
DIRT TRACK RACING

Ahh ha! So this is what those Ratbag lads have been working on since the mighty Powerslide.

DETAILS
- **Genre:** Stock car racing
- **Players:** 1-12 (TCP)
- **Developer:** Ratbag
- **Publisher:** TBA
- **Due:** Xmas/1st Qtr 2000

✱ Our Sydney readers will be familiar with the regular TV ads for Parramatta Speedway, where the voiceman at the end commands authoratively: "Be there!". Well, for those already wondering why the hell PCPP is talking about something so seemingly irrelevant and off-topic, "Be there!" the game cometh.

It won't be called that, of course, that'd be just silly. Furthermore, this game isn't

Here we have the perfect opportunity for in-game advertising.

actually set in the Parramatta Speedway, nor does it, in fact, have anything to do with the Sprint Cars normally seen at the Speedway. What it's got though, is a huge array of ovalesque tracks with a thick coating of overnight fallen powder-mud. The game is called Dirt Track Racing, and now, despite our best attempts to confuse you, you know why.

Left, left, left, left

Dirt Track Racing is being developed by those clever lads in Adelaide; Ratbag. For those weak of mind, Ratbag are the team that brought you the divine Powerslide (PCPP #32, 93%). You may remember the Speedway track from Powerslide? Compared to the wild tracks spread through the rest of the game, this one was

"Bump and grind too is unavoidable, which we heartily endorse."

markedly different. It wasn't, as we expected, a dull NASCAR-style left 4 times per lap job, instead the true essence of powersliding came to the fore, where the car spends virtually 100% of its time sideways.

Dirt Track Racing is more of the same - much more. The beta version we've been thrashing contains but an early selection of three tracks, but they're great indications of where Ratbag are able to take this new style of racing. These, and presumably most of the new tracks, are designed with almost no slow corners. It's all flat out - usually sideways too, at full throttle. Coming out of the straight and entering a high speed corner is a precarious affair, with judicious use of throttle to keep the car hurtling in the right direction - even if it's not facing that way.

Pack dynamics

This style of racing is the stuff of multiplayer dreams. You'll always be able to see the pack (whether you're in, behind or ahead of it), due to the relatively short, and oval nature of the tracks. Bump and grind too is unavoidable, which we heartily endorse. In our experience with the beta showed that it takes but a mere tap from another car to bring about a potential spin - particularly during corners, when everything is on the razor's edge. Hopefully the dynamics won't be quite as delicate in the final version, in this respect.

The big Nice Touch

Let's take a brief break, dear reader. You have glanced at the screenshots, read a bit of this preview and now you probably think you've got your head around this seemingly simple game. Wait!

Never underestimate the cleverness of talented game designers! How's this for a great whopping Nice Touch... You've probably heard of dynamic scenery in racing games, an example is WipEout's Quake Disruptor which warps the track ahead for a few seconds. Ratbag too, understand dynamic scenery, but apply it in a far more respectable, real-world fashion. Read on...

The tracks in Dirt Track Racing, being wet mud, behave like wet mud. Over the course of a race, a groove will be progressively dug into the racing line from the heavy traffic repeatedly following the same optimum line. If you're playing career mode, a particular track will be raced several times over the course of a session, and the 'racing groove' will become more pronounced, with its effect on your car's handling more severe.

The water boy

Good stuff, but that's not all. In real stock car racing, a water truck will be periodically rolled out to spray down the track, lessening the effect of the 'groove'. Human nature being what it is, sometimes the water truck boy will err in his duties, and apply too much or too little dampening water, which will affect the track surface in new and unpredictable ways.

This kind of racing game has a definite appeal due to the initial approachability and big fun component. Ratbag are working hard to ensure that Dirt Track Racing delivers this racing experience, plus much more, thanks to their innovation, which is only in the early stages. We'll be watching this one closely. So, watch us closely. ■

Ben Mansill

Life Node

Summon Druid

⚔ 4	✳ 2	Walking	Mana
🏹 2	👣 5	Forestry	30
🛡 26	♥ 6	Magic Strike	
		Strike	Turns
Alignment: Neutral		Entangle	3
Level 2			

Magic Mon

MAIN

1. <empty>
2. <empty>
3. <empty>
4. <empty>
5. <empty>

Power Ba

Research

Net Mana Income   2-0=2   4 turns left

Produce
Queue
Done

Power Distribution   Research   Enter

Realm   Magic   Events   Structure

3:27   292   149

Great magic is required for a beard like that.

AGE OF WONDERS

Seven Master Hero Warlords of Might & Magic Kingdoms, anyone?

DETAILS
- **Genre:** Strategy
- **Players:** 1-Multi
- **Developer:** Epic Megagames/ Triumph Studios
- **Publisher:** Gathering of Developers
- **Due:** 4th Qtr '99

✱ Here's an analogy for you: in the middle of last year Interplay released Descent Freespace. Although seemingly nothing greater than a shameless clone of almost every space sim ever made, it nonetheless stole with such audacity, and such efficiency, that it elevated itself above and beyond its inspirations. Arguably, Descent Freespace is the best space sim ever made.

Upon first glance, Age Of Wonders appears to be a blatant amalgam of what would be considered the fantasy strategy genre's strongest forces. There's a helping of Heroes Of Might & Magic, dashes of Lords Of Magic, a dose of Warlords, several pinches of Master Of Magic, a smidgeon of Seven Kingdoms, and mixed together they form the exotic base of what is surely one of the more interesting strategy titles on the horizon. But do the diverse elements gel? Have Epic and Triumph managed to transcend the sum total of their influences? Judging from the beta I have been inspecting for the past week, that's not entirely out of the question.

Basically, this is a game of conquest. Castles, towns and villages are situated across the land, the occupation of which is vital to success. Complementing the income raised from the above population centres, mines and farms provide unlimited sources of raw materials to be exploited and converted to cold, hard gold. In addition, the fortunate adventurer will stumble upon caches of treasure littering the ▶

I'LL TAKE THAT CASTLE, THANK YOU
When you launch an attack on an enemy's town or castle, the game whisks you off to this screen here - the Battle Map. Neatly, it's also exactly the same as the normal Castle screen, providing a seamless feel to heighten the atmosphere.

Battle Map

3:59   93   354
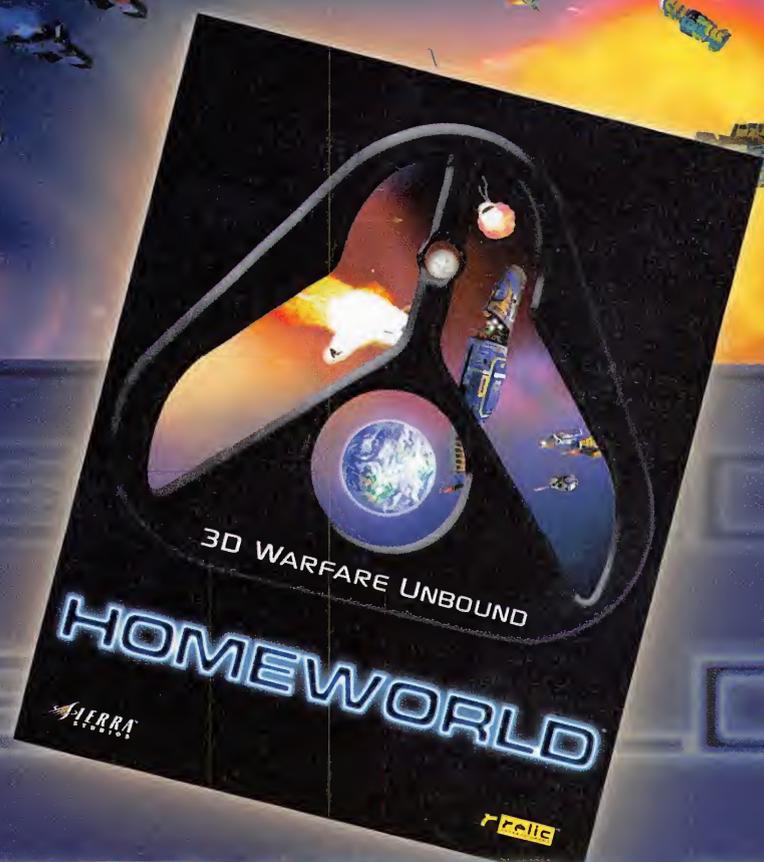
The row of masks shows whether relations are friendly, neutral or hostile with each race. Obviously, Anke finds bad teeth a real turn-off.

Whether you're exploding or protecting things, magic is an important part of AOW.

▶ countryside, while the brave will plunder ancient artifacts from caves and ruins.

With supply thus established, attention can be turned to building and production. Each town type is home to one of the twelve races in the game - Azracs, Dark Elves, Dwarves, Elves,

"plunder ancient artifacts from caves and ruins"

Frostlings, Goblins, Halflings, High Men, Humans, Lizard Men, Orcs, and the Undead - and, while the basic structures are the same for each town, the abilities of the troops available for recruitment differ quite drastically. For instance, Elves are highly skilled

wizards, yet poor fighters; conversely, Dwarves are determined warriors, but have weak in the magic arts.

Race relations seem to play a large role in the strategic thinking required for the game. You can order part of your population to migrate to newly-conquered

regions, albeit at the expense of damaging diplomatic relations with the race forced to evacuate. Further, there are the usual treaties, tributes, and alliances to be forged (and, of course, broken at a whim). Although the diplomacy options aren't properly

functioning in the beta, the necessary depth seems to be there.

One aspect that is working, and did impress, is the use of magic. Such a wide range of spells, allowing the alteration of the terrain on the global map (raising mountains, constructing impassable holy woods, even setting fire to whole forests) as well as the typical array of offensive and defensive magic, means there's plenty of variety for

the sorcerically-inclined.

With a number of crucial features still to be fully implemented, it's still too early to say whether Age Of Wonders can mount a challenge to current king HOMM3's reign. But, let me assure you, it certainly wouldn't look out of place in the throne room, perhaps as a dashing lord returned from diplomatic dealings abroad. ■

David Wildgoose

AT THE END OF THE DAY, IT ALL COMES DOWN TO THIS...

GAME	SCORE	ISSUE
101st Airborne	71	#33
3D Mini Golf	80	#14
3D Ultra Mini Golf Deluxe	60	#30
3D Ultra Pinball	77	#21
3rd Reich	82	#12
688i Nuclear Sub	90	#16
7th Legion	53	#19
A-10 Cuba!	65	#11
Abe's Exoddus	86	#32
Abe's Oddysee	90	#18
Abuse	25	#2
Acclaim's D	80	#1
Achtung Spitfire	80	#22
Actua Golf 2	73	#23
Actua Soccer	54	#16
Actua Tennis	84	#32
Adrenix	72	#29
AFL	62	#10
AFL 98	94	#19
AFL 99	90	#34
Afterlife	81	#5
Age of Empires	93	#17
AOE: Rise of Rome	90	#33
Age of Sail	79	#13
Agent Armstrong	68	#16
AH-64 Flashpoint Korea	92	#11
AH-64D Longbow	86	#3
Air Warrior II	73	#12
Air Warrior III	92	#22
Al Unser Jr Arcade Racing	40	#3
Albion	70	#8
Alien Earth	54	#27
Alien Incident	86	#6
Alien Trilogy	51	#10
Alien Virus	69	#5
Aliens vs. Predator	96	#36
Alpha Centauri	96	#36
American Civil War	53	#5
Amok	79	#8
Anastasia	20	#27
Ancient Conquest	79	#35
Ancient Evil	72	#26
Andretti Racing	77	#21
ANNO 1602	71	#40
Apache Havoc	84	#34
Apache Longbow Gold	92	#13
Arc of Time	75	#11
Archimedean Dynasty	90	#9
ARL Rugby League 96	88	#4
Armor Command	86	#25
Armoured Fist 2	82	#20
Army Men	85	#29
Army Men 2	79	#38
Asghan	43	#36
Assassin 2015	55	#8
Assault Rigs	50	#1
Asteroids	74	#33
ATF Gold	86	#13
Atlantis	73	#17
Atmosphere	55	#2
Atomic Bomberman	72	#16
Australian Cricket Captain	86	#36
Azrael's Tear	80	#8
Babe Ruth Baseball	60	#17
Back to Baghdad	75	#5
Bad Day on the Midway	70	#2
Bad Mojo: the Roach Game	82	#2
Baku Baku	89	#7
Baldur's Gate	87	#35
Balls Of Steel	89	#23
Bass Masters Classic	76	#28
Battle at Ardennes	86	#17
Battle Cruiser 3000AD	78	#12
Battle of Britain	62	#38
Battleground 8: Waterloo	78	#22
Battleground Antietam	83	#11
Battleground Ardennes	67	#2
Battleground Bull Run	75	#15
Battleground Napoleon	75	#15
Battleground Shiloh	84	#6
Battleground Waterloo	67	#4
Battleship	71	#15
Battlespire	54	#30
Battlezone	90	#22
Beast Wars	43	#26
Beasts and Bumpkins	92	#18
Beat The House 2	76	#23
Beavis and Butthead	68	#36
Bedlam	68	#8
Betrayal at Antara	71	#16
Beyond Time	50	#30
Big Hurt Baseball	79	#5
Big Race Pinball	90	#33
Big Red Racing	67	#2
Bio Freaks	72	#28
Birthright	79	#17
Black Dahlia	82	#24
Blackstone Chronicles	75	#36
Blade Runner	96	#19
Blood	71	#14
Blood 2	72	#34
Blood and Magic	86	#9
Blood Plasma	55	#21
Blue Ice	77	#10
Boss Rally	5	#39
Brainstorm	43	#9
Breakneck	86	#39
Bridge Deluxe 2	85	#4
Broken Sword	89	#6
Broken Sword 2	80	#19
Bud Tucker	70	#3
Bug	53	#9
Buggy	74	#33
Burnout Drag Racing: PC	70	#35
C&C for Win 95	80	#14
C&C Sole Survivor	28	#23
C&C: Red Alert	97	#8
C&C Red Alert: Counterstrike	69	#13
C&C Red Alert: The Aftermath	70	#19
Caesar III	88	#31
Caesar's Palace	75	#21
Callahan`s Crosstime Saloon	80	#14
Capitalism	40	#2
Carmageddon	90	#15
Carmageddon 2	92	#33
Cart: Precision Racing	84	#19
Castrol Honda Superbikes	89	#26
Cave Wars	72	#12
Championship Manager 2	78	#10
Championship Manager 3	85	#38
Chaos Overlords	64	#3
Chasm: The Rift	60	#19
Chess Master 4000 Turbo	86	#3
Chess Wars	70	#15
Chronicles of the Sword	48	#3
City of Lost Children	74	#12
Civ 2 Fantastic Worlds	68	#21
Civ 2: Multiplayer + classic	90	#28
Civilization: Call To Power	96	#36
Civil War	84	#8
Civil War 2: Generals	81	#22
Civilization 2	90	#1
Claw	62	#26
Close Combat	72	#5
Close Combat 2	90	#18
Close Combat 3	88	#35
Cluedo	71	#34
Clyde's Revenge	69	#6
Colin McRae Rally	94	#30
Comanche 3	80	#14
Comanche Gold	85	#27
Combat Chess	70	#20
Commandos	82	#28
Commandos: Call of duty	83	#38
Complete Carriers at War	61	#2
Conquest of the New World	71	#2
Constructor	84	#15
Constructor: Street Wars	74	#39
Corsairs	65	#40
Creatures	85	#8
Creatures 2	86	#31
Cricket 97	87	#17
Cricket World Cup '99	93	#38
Croc	74	#22
Crusader: No Regret	95	#7
Curse of Monkey Island	92	#21
Cyber Judas	43	#5
Cyberball	6	#29
Cyberstorm	91	#3
Cyberstorm 2	68	#28
Cyberstrike 2	83	#34
Daggerfall	83	#8
Dark Colony	60	#18
Dark Earth	91	#19
Dark Reign	94	#14
D.Reign: Rise of Shadowhand	80	#25
Dark Seed 2	80	#3
Dark Side of the Moon	47	#36
Dark Vengeance	30	#36
Darklight Conflict	89	#14
Davis Cup Tennis	17	#10
Dawn of Aces	72	#36
Daytona	60	#10
Daytona USA Deluxe	25	#19
Deadline	66	#5
Deadlock	74	#6
Deadlock 2	78	#23
Death Rally	83	#11
Deathkeep	30	#4
Decathlon	20	#6
Deer Hunter 2	55	#32
Delta Forces	91	#33
Descent 2	90	#1
Descent 2 Infinite Abyss	89	#16
Descent 3	95	#38
Descent To Undermountain	31	#23
Descent: Freespace	93	#27
DF: Silent Threat	80	#32
Destiny	37	#10
DethKarz	85	#31
Deus	72	#11
Diablo	91	#11
Diablo: Hellfire	87	#22
Die by the Sword	92	#25
DBTS: Limb From Limb	79	#32
Die Hard Trilogy	80	#13
Dinotopia	55	#3
Discworld 2	88	#10
Discworld Noir	83	#39
Dog Day	82	#13
Dominion Storm	55	#31
Dragon Dice	71	#17
Dreams to Reality	71	#19
Duckman	73	#18
Duke 3D Plutonium Pack	80	#16
Duke Nukem 3D	90	#3
Dune 2000	87	#28
Dungeon Keeper	85	#16
Dungeon Keeper: Deeper	60	#22
Earth 2140	86	#16
Earthsiege 2	85	#2
Eastern Front	75	#22
Eastern Front II	85	#39
Echelon	15	#31
Ecstatica 2	86	#12
Egypt 1156 BC	77	#26
Eidos Official F1	65	#39
Elk Moon Murder	65	#5
Enemy Infestation	76	#30
Enemy Nations	69	#17
Entrepeneur	81	#22
Episode 1 Racer	90	#39
Euro 96	85	#4
European Air War	94	#31
Everquest	90	#39
Evidence	49	#20
Extractors	30	#5
Extreme Assault	88	#17
Extreme Games	60	#1
Extreme Lawn Bowls 2000	89	#47
Extreme Tactics	61	#27
F-16	80	#17
F-22 Lightning 2	80	#8
F-22 Raptor	74	#22
F/A-18 Hornet 3.0	78	#16
F1 Manager	75	#8
F1 Racing Sim	79	#22
F16: Aggressor	69	#32
F22 ADF	87	#21
F22 ADF: Rea Sea	85	#27
F22 Lightning 3	85	#40
FA/18 E Carrier Strike Fighter	68	#30
Fable	46	#10
Falcon 4.0	98	#33
Fallen Haven	71	#13
Fallout	89	#18
Fallout 2	88	#32
Fantasy General	82	#2
Fatal Abyss	62	#33
Fields of Fire	53	#29
FIFA 97	69	#10
FIFA 98	95	#20
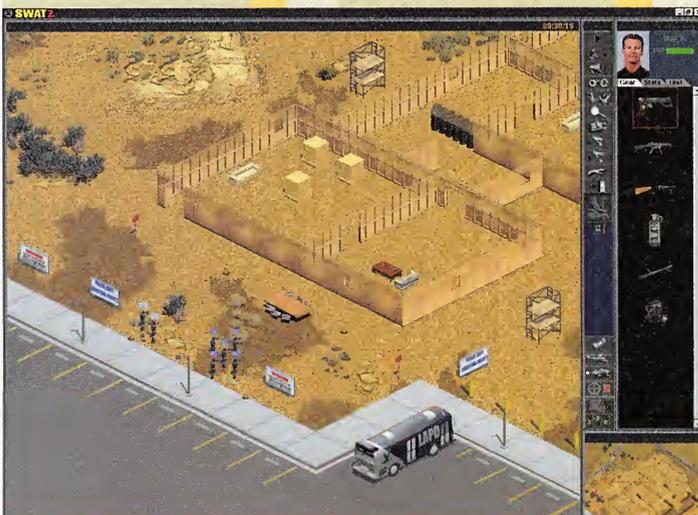
QUIZ: Who was the female lead in the original Police Quest?

GOLD: Games scoring 90-94%   **PLATINUM: Games scoring 95-100%**

GAME	SCORE	ISSUE
FIFA 99	92	#32
FIFA Soccer Manager	71	#16
Fighter Pilot	71	#32
Fighter Squadron	85	#36
Fighting Force	70	#23
Final Conflict	20	#24
Final Doom	82	#6
Final Fantasy VII	90	#27
Firefight	82	#5
Fleet Command	89	#39
Flight Unlimited 2	89	#22
Flipout	73	#14
Flying Corps	76	#11
Flying Corps Gold	74	#20
Forbidden City	74	#32
Fork in the Tale	58	#13
Formula 1 3Dfx	77	#12
Formula Karts	84	#19
Forsaken	93	#25
FPS: Skiing	63	#24
Fragile Allegiance	85	#10
Front Page Sports Golf	77	#18
Full Court Press	82	#7
G-Nome	80	#15
G-Police	92	#18
Galapagos	77	#19
Gangsters	85	#34
Gender Wars	72	#4
Gene Wars	86	#8
Get Medievil	61	#30
Gettysburg	80	#1
Gex	80	#7
Gex 2: Enter the Gecko	87	#28
Global Domination	63	#32
Golf Pro 2000	65	#12
Goosebumps	79	#10
Grand Prix 2	90	#1
Grand Prix Legends	95	#30
Grand Theft Auto	65	#18
GTA London	75	#38
Grand Touring	60	#35
Great Battles of Alexander	80	#17
Great Battles of Hannibal	62	#23
Grim Fandango	91	#31
Gruntz	45	#36
Half Life	98	#31
Hang Time	79	#11
Hard War	59	#29
Harpoon 97	90	#10
Heart of Darkness	89	#27
Heaven's Dawn	25	#6
Heavy Gear	91	#20
Heavy Gear II	93	#40
Hedz	69	#32
Helicops	79	#15
Hell Bender	54	#7
Heretic	50	#3
Heretic 2	91	#34
Heroes of Might and Magic II	88	#10
Heroes of Might and Magic III	94	#35
Hexen	90	#3
Hexen 2	91	#18
Hexen 2: Portal of Praevus	78	#27
Hexplore	75	#28
Hind	84	#9
Holy Casino	71	#10
House of the Dead	59	#28
Howzat	2	#22
Hoyle Casino '98	73	#22
Hunter Hunted	70	#10
Hyperblade	89	#8
I Have No Mouth and...	79	#3
I-War	89	#21
IF-22	65	#17
Ignition	81	#18
Imperialism	81	#21
Imperialism 2	72	#36

GAME	SCORE	ISSUE
Imperium Galactica	80	#14
In Pursuit of Greed	70	#5
Incoming	67	#24
Incubation	84	#19
Independence Day	85	#13
Indy Racing	64	#28
Int. Rally Championship	79	#21
International Cricket Captain	91	#28
Interstate '76	93	#12
Interstate '76 Arsenal	78	#25
Into the Void	86	#14
Isis	32	#3
Israeli Air Force	90	#34
Jack Nicklaus 5	89	#21
Jack the Ripper	46	#6
Jagged Alliance 2	83	#7
Jane's A.T.F	72	#2
Jane's F-15	85	#25
Jedi Knight	95	#18
JK: Mysteries of the Sith	93	#23
Jet Fighter 3	85	#10
Jet Fighter 3: Mission Disk	85	#15
Jet Moto	72	#22
Jetfighter: Full Burn	67	#32
Jimmy White's Cueball 2	67	#38
Johnny Herbert's Grand Prix	91	#30
Joint Strike Fighter	85	#20
Jonah Lomu Rugby	45	#20
Jouneyman Project 3	69	#22
Judge Dredd Pinball	82	#30
Karma	20	#2
King's Quest 8	85	#34
Kingdom of Magic	69	#4
KKnD	90	#7
KKnD 2: Krossfire	65	#28
KKnD Extreme	70	#19
Klingon Honour Guard	84	#31
Knights and Merchants	81	#32
Krazy Ivan	57	#9
Lander	95	#36
Lands Of Lore 2	92	#17
Lands of Lore 3	60	#38
Last Bronx	70	#24
Legacy of Kain	65	#18
Legal Crime	77	#23

GAME	SCORE	ISSUE
Lighthouse	88	#8
Links 99	86	#32
Links LS	90	#6
Longbow 2	88	#21
Lords of Magic	74	#23
Lords of the Realms 2	84	#10
Luftwaffe Command	68	#35
Lunatics	61	#14
M.A.X. 2	81	#30
M1 Tank Platoon	91	#25
M1A2 Abrams	80	#13
Madden 98	81	#20
Madden NFL 97	84	#8
Madden NFL 99	88	#32
Machines	90	#38
Mage Slayer	64	#20
Magic the Gathering: Spec. Ed	69	#25
Magic: The Gather-MicroProse	91	#12
MTG: Spells of Ancients	70	#21
Magic: The Gathering-Acclaim	71	#12
Man of War	71	#18
Man of War II	15	#40
Manx TT	44	#23
Mass Destruction	78	#17
Master Levels for Doom 2	30	#1
Master of Orion 2	92	#10
Mastermind	71	#26
Maximum Roadrage	32	#6
MDK	83	#12
Meat Puppets	71	#16
Mech Commander	86	#27
Mechwarrior 2: Mercenaries	85	#7
Mechwarrior 2: Titanium	86	#26
Mechwarrior 3	91	#39
Mega Race 2	69	#7
Metal Storm	25	#10
MIA	65	#34
MIB	78	#20
Micro Machines v3	80	#29
Microsoft Combat Flight Sim	89	#33
Microsoft Golf 99	80	#36
Might & Magic VI	91	#26
Might & Magic VII	70	#40
Mike Stewart's Bodyboarding	34	#40
Mini and the Mites	78	#6

GAME	SCORE	ISSUE
Monaco Grand Prix	74	#32
Monopoly: World Cup 98	45	#26
Monster Truck Madness	77	#7
Monster Truck Madness 2	82	#26
Monster Trucks	59	#19
Montezuma's Return	42	#32
Monty Python's Meaning of Life	57	#25
Moon Buggy 98	81	#18
Mortal Kombat 4	80	#30
Moto Racer	94	#16
Moto Racer 2	86	#30
Motocross Madness	94	#30
Motorhead	83	#26
MS Flight Sim v6	83	#10
MS Football	36	#10
Mummy	65	#10
Muppet Treasure Island	62	#5
Myth 2	91	#35
Myth: The Fallen Lords	93	#20
Nascar 2	76	#11
Nascar Truck	80	#38
NBA Action 98	85	#23
NBA JAM	39	#14
NBA Live 98	88	#20
NBA Live 99	86	#31
NCAA Final Four `97	74	#12
Necrodome	70	#10
Need For Speed 2	90	#13
Need for Speed 2 SE	80	#21
Need for Speed 3	79	#28
Need for Speed SE	56	#5
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QUIZ: What is the most offensive word spoken in The Creed?

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Whopper Double Beef with Cheese

This issue of PC PowerPlay has turned out to be the Whopper Double Beef with Cheese of the games world. Bloody hell. It's a big one alright. We've got Tiberian Sun. Truly. Turn the page... there it is! Amazing, huh?

If you only buy one game each month - then you're in real trouble. For yes, you will want your own copy of Tiberian Sun, but of course you knew that several years ago. What you also need, in order to make your gaming life complete, is a copy of Homeworld. I could go on about it here, you can read the review and end up thinking "yeah, I've got the idea, sounds great", but Homeworld is one of those games you really need to see in action to fully understand. Homeworld is a gobsmackingly beautiful game, and there's nothing like it out there.

Then there's Kingpin, which is also essential gaming. For the review we roped in our colleague Ewan Corness. 'Hydrolic', as he prefers to be called, writes for PlayStation Gamer, but in fact spends most of his time playing PC First-Person Shooters. Besides, he begged for the review, which assures us that he'll give a damn and call it like it is. Hydrolic also looks and talks like the Kingpin characters, which we find funny, but would never say so to his face. Anyway, top game.

Golly, a bit further along we've got Re-Volt, which I personally can't stomach due to my unbending, elitist, pig-headed attitude towards arcade racers, but the lads assure me that it's a top play, so it is. All I can say with any authority on the subject of Re-Volt is that it is possibly the best looking PC game ever. For this week, at least...

In the more of the same dept. we take a luke-warm look at Civilization: Test of Time. An undeniably magnetic game it is, but animated seashores and additional fantasy scenarios do not a new game make.

Crikey, I haven't even made half-way point here in this wee banter, and I'm running out of space fast. Told you it was a monster month. So, briefly, Dungeon Keeper 2 is fun, if not slightly frustrating. Shadowman could be viewed a number of ways, we decided upon "ordinary 3D platform game". "Tough to get into, but tops", is how we'll call Hidden and Dangerous, while I'll let Ed tell you about Need For Speed: High Stakes, in his lovely review on page 76. I shall refrain from commenting on this one, I'll leave Sega Rally 2 alone for the same reasons.

All done, can't stay and chat, games to play. Top, big, epic games. At last...

Ben Mansill
Editor, PC PowerPlay

THE PC POWERPLAY SCORING SYSTEM

95%+	PLATINUM The Best. Virtually faultless, reserved for games which cause loss of sleep from thinking of nothing else.
90-94%	GOLD A classic. Either an unquestionable example of superiority within its genre, or a ground breaking game that'll be setting trends.
80-90%	A strong, eminently playable game. Hard to fault and likely to still be on the hard drive in 6 month's time.
60-80%	Competent and generally enjoyable. Flaws or mediocrity hold these games back from higher ratings.
40-60%	Average and ordinary. Not bad, not good. Ideal gift.
0-40%	Bad, really bad. Boring, shamelessly unoriginal, cheap and horrible.

COMMAND & CONQUER
TIBERIAN SUN

● **Genre:** RTS ● **Players:** 1-4 (Internet), 1-8 (LAN) ● **Developer:** Westwood ● **Publisher:** EA ● **Distributor:** EA ● **Price:** $TBA ● **Rating:** G ● **Available:** September
● **Need:** Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM ● **Want:** Pentium 2, 64Mb RAM ● **URL:** www.sierra.com

It's here! No, seriously!

PCPP GOLD

This is NOT a tank rush, we repeat: this is NOT a tank rush!

17 [RANDMAP.MAP]

The little green men writing their names in the snow.

Here it is. After almost three years, a countless number of RTS derivatives and just as many scheduled release delays later, Tiberian Sun is finally upon us. By the time you read this, you will have undoubtedly been bombarded by its likeness in retail chains everywhere, its presence announced to you like a 16 pound trout to the side of the head. About bloody time, eh?

Like an old friend

The brief run-down. Tiberian Sun LOOKS like Red Alert. Tiberian Sun steers like Red Alert. Tiberian sun features a stack of units seen both in the original C&C and Red Alert. And - dammit! - the side bar is almost identical to those seen in Westwood's previous efforts! Not even the slick intro sequence could negate the sinking feeling that we were about to embark on a well-travelled journey down the RTS lane. ▶

This time around, ice poses a new dilemma.

JAMES EARL JONES

No C&C experience could be complete without a lavish helping of full-motion video sequences. Forget what you've seen in other RTS efforts - and this means StarCraft too people - Tiberian Sun features perhaps the slickest FMV sequences ever. All of the cutscenes are carried on the back of James Earl Jones, veteran actor almost better known for his roles in Shakespearean productions than the chap that lent his vocal chords to give Darth Vader his menacing wheeze in the original Star Wars trilogy. Giving life to General Solomon - the Supreme Commander of the Global Defense Initiative in Tiberian Sun - Jimbo will have you under his spell every time he uses the term "Damnit!" The dynamic expression of this single contraction by Jimbo, we predict, will cement his undying popularity as coolest game actor ever.

Also, rather than simply creating some incidental atmosphere and providing some light (read dark) comic relief, Tiberian Sun's FMV is used extensively to propel the player throughout the game's many missions like their lives depend on it. Propaganda footage has been put to great use here, providing you with more than enough conviction to attack your next mission with an almost religious fervor. There's also the obligatory pre-mission briefing which, not surprisingly, rarely pan out as smoothly as planned.
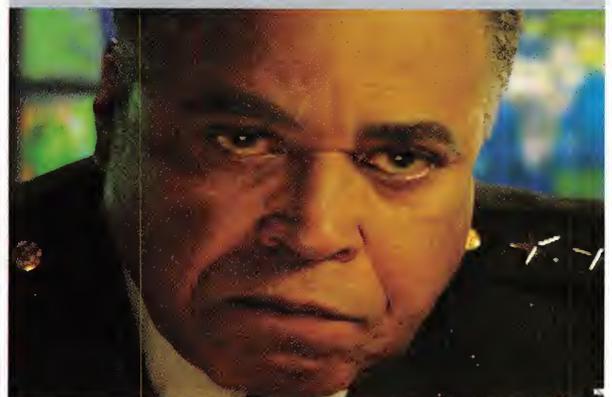
TERRAN TERRAIN

Tiberian Sun's terrain adds a totally new twist to the gameplay. It is quite adequately dynamic - as seasons pass certain areas will become passable, while others will be closed off. Night sorties add a new strategic element too, with the darkness of the night providing suitable cover for surprise attacks. Couple with the dynamic lighting engine, the effects are absolutely stunning. Try not to shite yourself as spotlights dance around your units during a midnight run. Fantastic stuff!

Ice also plays a treacherous role in proceedings. Where once the ice could support a chapter of your finest tanks, it'll eventually wear thin till your units fall through and disappear. Thankfully, the terrain gives tell tales signs that something is about to go down, but you'll have to be especially wary to notice.

In the end, you become so much more particular (and paranoid) about the path you take to your next destination - knowing full well that a wrong turn could be just as lethal as running into a surprise ambush. TS succeeds in keeping you on the edge of your seat almost the entire time.

Then there are the bridges. These are strategic hot points, and control of them can make the difference between victory and defeat. This time though, their functionality is much more dynamic. They can be destroyed, then repaired, and destroyed again all over again - there are no limits to the number of times these structures can be repaired. Makes for some tense single player missions, but really come into play during multiplayer battles. They're absolute gems!

▶ Not our beloved Westwood. Not the creators of the first incarnation of the RTS, that sacred chapter in gaming history that is Dune 2. They wouldn't succumb to the spoils of success and release a patched up version of their last hit, would they?

Of course they wouldn't. First impressions can always be misleading. It takes only a few missions before the gates are opened and a flood of relief crashes through your system. Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun is a superb real-time strategy game, if not

The annual fireworks display gone horribly wrong.

Home base - a veritable pleasure palace.

slightly flawed. What C&C did for the RTS genre, Tiberian Sun will do all over again.

Process of perfection

Tiberian Sun has been met by exceedingly high expectations, not least of all our very own. And nobody is more aware of this than Westwood themselves. They've spent the last three years finetuning what is the biggest RTS release of this year - a lengthy process that has seen them attempt to cater for all types of gamers. From the casual minesweeper to the hard core RTS freak with no knowledge of the outside world, Westwood have aimed to please just about everybody with Tiberian Sun. While they have succeeded in creating an easily accessible game, TS remains a simple affair, retaining a strikingly similar feel to C&C and Red Alert. Simple, yet superbly elegant.

A few good units

The design ethos employed is obvious. First, that Tiberian Sun should run comfortably on most systems (including the average pizza box) - a game where mass firefights involving scores of units can take place without slowing down the system to a crawl. Secondly, that quality far surpasses quantity when it comes to implementation of units and features. So don't expect to see hundreds of units available in Tiberian Sun. In fact, there are only approximately 20 units for each side in the game. So rather than

DOTS AND LOOPS

Undoubtedly one of the most useful additions to the sacred C&C formula is the new waypoint system. While AI pathing has progressed amicably in the last few years, no one has yet succeeded in creating units that take the most appropriate path through to a destination. For example, units still tend to march straight through an enemy encampment where the destination is a ravine on the far side of it. The days of wild and frantic mouse clicking while trying to recall your units should be over with Tiberian Sun's waypoint system. Placing multiple points down will see your squad follow them with impeccable order - pausing only to take pick off any interference along the way.

Whilst not particularly useful when trying to get from one side of your base to another, the waypoint system comes to shine when negotiating the treacherous terrain of Tib Sun or when planning a detailed attack on enemy forces. Missions have been created such that there are often only a couple (if lucky) apparent paths through to your objective, and these are usually surrounded by enemy forces or defences. This is just another way Westwood have ensured that Tiberian Sun is less a game about military muscle and more about tactical cunning.

Looping the last waypoint to the first has the effect of setting the selected squad on patrol. Medics and repair units on patrol will tinker with any affected unit that happens to cross this path.

commandeering countless unit types - half of which you will never be completely familiar with - Tiberian Sun offers a select bunch of highly specialized units, all of which you will come to know with an intimate passion. Each has clear strengths, but each also has an Achilles Heel, a balance which will need to be mastered for success in later missions.

To further enhance Westwood's commitment to quality, each unit now amasses experience with time on the battlefield. Not only do unit's hit points increase as they gain experience, they also gain speed, new skills, and greater armor and fire power. Losing such units can mean the difference between success and defeat, and part of Tib Sun's magic is that you actually give a damn about almost every unit. The days of purely expendable units are over. Rejoice and be happy.

SANS 3D ACCELERATION

One of the first things you'll notice about TS is the use of voxels (the same system used for Infogrames' Outcast) instead of the ever-in-vogue polygonal system. While the units and environments are at times painfully average, the trade off becomes evident whenever full scale battle comes into play. Where TA Kingdoms would choke attempting to render a sizable skirmish on screen, TS effortlessly churns out the necessary art.

Mmmm... chunky pixels. Sexy or what?

"Tib Sun's magic is that you actually give a damn about almost every unit."

Nod's recently opened new-age spiritual retreat.

Don't queue here

Oddly enough though, there's no queuing feature in the production of these units! That's right, the implications are so far fetching that it must be repeated for dramatic effect - no unit queuing! How could they do such a thing? Whilst it's all too easy to jump on the sensationalist bandwagon and call for Westwood to be drawn and quartered for this seemingly inexcusable omission, a little investigation reveals that this is perhaps one of the most important - and carefully arrived at - decisions made by Westwood regarding Tiberian Sun's almost perfectly balanced gameplay.

GDI VS. NOD

Tiberian Sun is set in 2030 and details the ongoing struggle between the GDI and the NOD Brotherhood. Kane is dead (long live Kane) and both forces have fled to the polar caps to escape the devastating effects of Tiberium. The Nod Brotherhood prefer units that are stealthy and fast, while the GDI thrive on heavy air domination. Both sides feature base infantrymen and heavy vehicles however, so expect plenty of rabid skirmishes on the battlefield.

There's also a third group vying for control in Tiberian Sun. Named the Forgotten, these people will surface on occasion and will either help or hinder your progress. They get special mention for having the coolest looking units in the game.

Bad guy. The goatee's a dead giveaway.

Tanks for the memories

They, of all developers, still bear the scar of the Tank Rush - a tactic developed early by Red Alert players, especially in multiplayer, which had the effect of ruining the longterm enjoyment of the game. They're not going to make the same mistake twice and have taken great pains to ensure that the Tank Rush tactic, at least in their RTS games, is dead and buried. Coupling the lack of production queuing with a limit on the number of certain units you can have in your forces (you are only allowed one super unit, like the Mammoth Mk II or the Cyborg Commando, per army), players are forced to take much better care of their units and employ more cunning strategies to get the best of the opposition.

Missions play almost entirely like TS's predecessors - you build bases, with an aim to maintain a fine balance between defensive structures and unit/vehicle building plants. These structures are built using the precious Tiberian ore, so harvesting (and protecting) this resource becomes an important priority.

The only difference to the well-worn C&C model being - and this is the big one - mission scripting. You aren't plonked at the beginning of level with a handful of units, a construction yard, and a convenient patch of Tiberian in the near vicinity and asked to build your forces from scratch. Instead, you've given a teaser in the form of an in-game movie, showing, for example, an installation in the throes of decimation at the hands of your enemy. After watching them kill and scores of innocents, you are let loose

to do as you please. More often than not in Tiberian Sun, you begin a mission with very clear mission objectives, delivered beautifully, often vastly different from the previous ones, and given barely enough time and resources to complete them with.

Balancing act

This is the ultimate strength of Tiberian Sun. Each mission varies greatly, and has been balanced so lovingly and carefully that you'll be compelled to make it through to the next mission. Westwood have also found a happy medium between challenge and pace - while at times an obstacle may seem insurmountable, persistence reveals that a simple solution is close to hand...

Hype and the C&C name will sell Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun. That much was obvious from the onset. It is however strongly reassuring that Westwood have delivered with this sequel, and delivered something so engagingly playable. ■

Ben Mansill

PLUS

http://www.revelations.org.za/Countdown.htm Countdown to Armageddon homepage. Put down your toys kids, here's the real thing. Read how the forthcoming post-apocalyptic nightmare will unfold. Funnily there's no mention of Kane...

FOR: That special C&C magic, it's actually been released, friendly to slower PCs.

AGAINST: Graphics are a bit crusty in low-res, no big leap forward for the genre.

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PCPP 57

HOMEWORLD

● **Genre:** 3D real-time strategy deep-space conflict sim ● **Players:** 1-TBA ● **Developer:** Relic Entertainment ● **Publisher:** Sierra ● **Distributor:** Dataflow ● **Price:** TBA ● **Rating:** G ● **Available:** Now
● **Need:** P166 with 3D accelerator/P200 without, 32MB RAM, SVGA 2MB video card, 50MB Hd space ● **Want:** P3, 64MB RAM, 3Dfx or TNT 3D accelerator, decent joystick. ● **URL:** www.sierra.com

A funky, 3D, real-time strategy deep-space conflict sim. And no, it's not dull!

PCPP PLATINUM ★

Starlings in the slipstream.

TIPS

Do all the introductory training - it's the best way to quickly learn all of the interface and tools available in Homeworld. When starting out in Homeworld, the instructions from the command base are invaluable to help illustrate basic methods of approaching a mission or situation. In the menu at the bottom of the screen, in the lower right corner there is a console window that will show you the recent instructions, and the ones you have carried out, which fade to a darker colour. Carry out these tasks as quickly as you can. You'll soon be pillaging the universe.

Homeworld running on a TNT2, in 1280 x 1024. Oh wow...

Homeworld. Right. We've dug up a big rusty spaceship in the desert sands. Whoopee, cool technology for us. But the major thing we find is a monolithic rock with a map of the galaxy carved into it. Convenient, that! The rock-map shows us where the origins of our civilisation lie, obviously having arrived on the ancient spaceship, several eons ago. So much for Adam and Eve.

Ambitious

So humanity strikes forth to go make friendly with our distant-but-oh-so-close relatives, and presumably hold some kind of barbecue event to celebrate the emotional reunion. This involves building the biggest spacecraft ever attempted - so large and complex it takes us sixty years to put it together. Partly because the rather ambitious plans are based on speculative technology that doesn't exist yet. A rather cluey young engineering type is cryogenically immortalised, and somehow plugged into the ship as a much-needed kind of "bio-authority" over proceedings. She becomes the living "Mothership Command". Not to be messed with at all.

Righty-ho, so we're off to meet the Joneses, and attempt a short experimental hyperspace jump. No problems. On arriving at the point where we sent a cargo ship some sixty years ago, it seems to have been shot to bits... bugger. And here come the nameless intergalactic pirates, all full of themselves and just dying to stuff up our immaculate plans. Ahem, we think not! Lucky for us some American insisted we equip the mothership with a full-scale war factory and offensive weapons. Phew!

Homeworld thus chronicles the journey of the Mothership across uncharted space, and the trials and skirmishes her crew undergo in reaching their historic objective.

Where's the P-Funk?

Homeworld is a masterpiece. It's a massive, complex, three-dimensional, space-combat-realtime-strategy game, but wait for it: it's got an interface that rolls along like a game of checkers. In fact, it plays like Command & Conquer, but with much more AI and unit autonomy. And naturally the interesting depth added by the vastness of 3-space.

Everything hinges around the centre

of your mothership, which obviously, is your home base. From there you switch camera views around between selected units, and have a 360 degree perspective from every unit. This is controlled with the mouse, and you can instantly zoom in and out, and rotate your view effortlessly in all directions. It's almost too easy.

Selecting units, also is a snap. You simply drag a 2D selection box on the screen, and any units visually "trapped" inside that are selected. You can then pick the unit or group of units out of that selection, with one click.

Navigation is performed with a funky spherical crosshair which ▶

COMBAT FORMATIONS

Fighter units in Homeworld can be organised into a range of formations, which influence the first moments of contact, mostly based on the direction all the fighters are facing. Press Tab while you have the squadron selected to quickly scroll through formations. You have the requisite X, and wall formations but there are some zero G variations like the defensive sphere, where the units fan out and face in as many of the 360 degrees as they can. Doing this with 50 units is an impressive sight indeed!

Hey, isn't this a re-enactment of a scene from Robotech?

"It's a massive, complex, 3D, space-combat, real-time strategy game"

The obligatory ship-leaving-docking-bay pic.

COMBAT TACTICS

The minute details of dogfighting are left up to the pilots in Homeworld, so it's only up to you to decide what tactics they should use, of three possible options. The default is to have engine speed and weapon power evenly balanced, but in the aggressive tactical mode, most power is diverted to weapons. You would use this if you are attacking a target that cannot not retaliate, or units with significantly less armour than your units. The evasive tactical mode diverts most power to engines, making each craft faster, harder to hit and generally long-lived. Evasive is a good choice if your units are up against superior craft, with stronger armour than theirs.

Hold down the [ALT] key and leftclick on any ship. You can even use this to focus on enemy ships.
‹Restart Lesson›

"We're gonna hit the mothership! Where's the brakes?!"
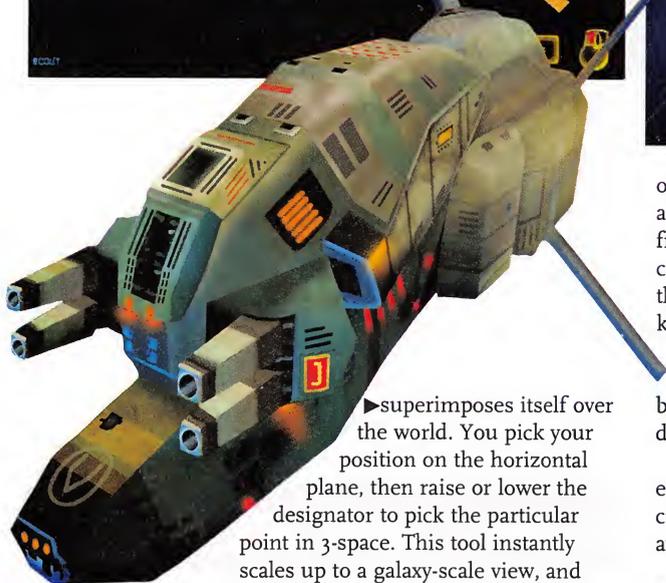
▶superimposes itself over the world. You pick your position on the horizontal plane, then raise or lower the designator to pick the particular point in 3-space. This tool instantly scales up to a galaxy-scale view, and back to surroundings level at the press of a button. It's a very elegant system.

Build and deploy

You can build units from the main base, which basically incorporates all of the functionality of every building you can imagine from Command & Conquer. It can build anything, but you

Hold down the [ALT] key and leftclick on any ship. You can even use this to focus on enemy ships.
‹Restart Lesson›

For such an original game, the tutorial is invaluable.

often have to build a research vessel, and then research the unit you want from a technology tree - fairly familiar concepts to RTS gamers. For example, the resources are simplified to one kind, which is rock dust or something, which you just get by collecting asteroids with a harvester unit. Once back in the mothership they can be directly used to create units.

Of course there is a massive entourage of fighter types, probes, scout craft and early warning systems in the available units.

A Space Odyssey

You would be forgiven for thinking that the game sounds conceptually like one of many hundreds of attempts in a similar vein, but the interface has been refined till it shines. It's like it's not even there. You really become like the symbiotic "Mothership Command" person.

Even though objects are often so far away they might as well not be there, at the flick of a key your camera vaults into the centre of the action, and you are instantly in control once again. Likewise if you find your viewpoint is too close to the firefight - you can zoom out to several kilometres almost instantly to get a different perspective.

Mostly, it'll be the jaw-droppingly spectacular visuals which will excite most people into playing Homeworld. The sensation of space itself is incredibly well-captured in Homeworld. Rather than the usual token stars and bland spiralling galaxies, Homeworld's

space-sky is dripping with massive, glorious nebulae, giant glowing planets, sunblinding, coloured dust fields and reflective debris. You feel, especially with the disembodied camera, an eerie sense of "hanging" in a vertical tank of nothingness. It's like a strange feeling of vertigo, where you don't know which way is up! It gives you some idea of how astronauts must feel at all times while on board spacecraft in orbit. Thankfully the upper portion of your mothership provides a kind of "absolute up" direction that you can orient yourself to.

CONSTRUCTION QUEUING

When building units you can set up any number of units to be built in sequence. The two bars in the build progress window indicate the progress of the current unit, and the overall progress. Construction in Homeworld is frighteningly fast, really. So much so that if you see a threat coming in good time, you can comfortably have a small Armada constructed to meet it, where before you may have been less dangerous than sugar in instant Coffee.

Choosing what to research is largely influenced by the mission characteristics and the state of the warfare around you. Obviously if the enemies' craft are far superior it'd be a very good time to research new warcraft, weapons and upgrades for existing models. On the other hand if you are in comfortable control the time is well-spent on defensive measures and better surveillance and probe technology. Especially things like armour for your science craft, which are expensive but absolutely vulnerable in battle.

Yikes! That looks complicated. Thankfully, it isn't. Phew!

(below) Here you can see the oft-neglected Jackson Pollock influence.

Fictiontastic!

The luscious intensity of the storyline will also appeal: it's told in lean, artistic slides in a style reminiscent of Robotech, or Ghost in the Shell. With full voice-over narration, it's quite obvious that Relic Entertainment have not only a top-notch crew of game designers and developers, but a richly talented art team as well. It's as if the game were based in some greater fictional universe, and playing it is only a little window into a much bigger, more detailed world. There is definitely a sense of wonder that this creates. You are always wondering what will be the next twist in the story, and keen to finish the current level so that you can find out what happens. Rarely is computer-game scripting so good! I'd compare the dramatic weight with Starcraft, and Half-Life, which both had excellent storylines indeed.

After every mission you are rewarded with a beautiful rendered story-scene, which really makes playing through the tougher missions worthwhile. It's efficiently rendered, highly expressive stuff.

Superb AI

Then there's the gameplay, which is often action-packed and suspense-filled, with huge squadrons of fighters and bombers set up against each other in enormous, space-sized Mexican stand-offs. You choose a formation, then a tactic like neutral, aggressive or defensive, choose a target and away they go. It's quite a sight to see - from two or

"fighters and bombers in enormous, space-sized Mexican stand-offs"

so kilometres away as the units cluster, circle and explode around each other in a rippling myriad of destruction. This kind of unit autonomy is commonplace in Homeworld. Harvesters don't need to be told where to harvest. They just go looking for the closest deposits and get to work. The AI is so good in this game, that you actually begin to "trust" the units to do their job when they are told, and find that they don't need hand-holding at all. It's a refreshing change in the RTS world. After all, if the average soldier really is a drooling idiot then what you have is flawed recruitment policies, not tactics, and should just shoot your HR department rather than the enemy. They are the ones doing the most damage!

Deep and accessible

Homeworld has an excellent, in-depth tutorial covering all of the major functions and shortcuts the game has to offer. Even if you're new to strategy games, Homeworld is so easy to use that mastering the controls should be instantaneous.

The action flows smoothly and with a level of class never experienced before. Naturally it's full of full-voice radio communications between units, so you have that extra layer of illustration to proceedings. Also, in the earlier missions you have objectives handed down to you from a higher authority, and you have a nice list of things you need to do to stay on top. This is a great way to show how an average mission should be handled, and again, just smoothes out the learning curve a little more.

Utterly amazing

Overall, Homeworld is an utterly amazing, whopping, behemoth of a game, yet your head doesn't spin with irrelevant information. It's very existence is an astounding feat, let alone the challenging strategic gameplay it offers! ■

Ed Dawson

FOR: An absolute Genre-Buster. Homeworld is the new mould for all games set in the majestic vastness of space.

AGAINST: Unit-based camera focuses can make it difficult to view certain angles, and units can't be made to auto-attack enemies in range. Minor gripes, really.

PCPP

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KINGPIN
LIFE OF CRIME

●**Genre:** First Person Swearer ●**Players:** 1-16 ●**Developer:** Xatrix Entertainment ●**Publisher:** Interplay ●**Distributor:** Interplay ●**Price:** $TBA ●**Rating:** M15+ ●**Available:** Now
●**Need:** P233, 64Mb RAM ●**Want:** P2 300, 128MB RAM, 570Mb HDD, 4 X CD ●**URL:** www.interplay.com/kingpin ● **3D:** Glide, OpenGL D3D

Our colleague and guest reviewer, PlayStation Gamer's Ewan Corness, is the living embodiment of Kingpin. He also plays more PC Quake than us lot combined.

Kingpin: Life Of Crime is one of the most engrossing first-person shooters that I've played in a long, long time. Big wraps, yeah? Well, to put it in context, I also thought that 2 Live Crew's groundbreaking single "Me So Horny" deserved a Grammy, Ice Cube's movie "Friday" was the Movie of the Year in 1997 and the best jeans money can buy have the word "Playaz" written down the left leg in big orange letters.

To take the 2 Live Crew analogy a little further, playing Kingpin is a lot like the first time you hear a hiphop song with lots of unnecessary, explicit language in it. When you first hear the word "f*%k", you laugh and think it's funny. After the 17,835th time though, you're cringing.

Expletive artists

It would have been great if Kingpin brought a fresh new outlook to the sometimes-tired FPS genre. Unfortunately Xatrix have decided instead to simply bring a couple of street thugs into their sound recording booth and given them $50 worth of crack for each time they utter an expletive into the microphone marked: "Kingpin: Life Of Crime voice acting".

That's not to say that Kingpin is a bad game. Far from it actually! It features excellent, realistic gunplay, insanely tough enemy AI, and

STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON

Kingpin features some very atmospheric locations to bust caps, but they're not like you'd expect. If you thought you'd be running around the streets of Compton, yelling "die muthaf%@$a!" every two minutes while shooting your gun (held sideways, Ice Cube style) and holding your genitals, you're wrong. In fact, in Kingpin you find yourself in a much seedier, bleaker world than the red-and-blue-flannel world of Boyz N Tha Hood. The environment is actually much more like George Orwell's 1984 - it's very grim, dark and there are gangster bitches around every corner with semi-automatic weapons. Although I'm not quite sure if 1984 had the gangster bitches.

1984? Ah, the days of Grandmaster Flash...

Kingpin has taken the world of gibbing an opponent and turned it on its ear. Well, it's actually not only turned it on its ear but also decapitated the ear, hung it up on the nearest Hills Hoist and taken pot shots at it with a rocket launcher until there's nothing left but ear vapours.

What this means is that once you've killed a bad guy (or a good guy, depending on your mood at the time), you can stand over his (or her - Kingpin is an Equal Opportunity Destroyer) dead body and take shots at crucial joints, causing body parts to become detached from the main part of the body. If that's not enough you can keep pounding away at the torso until it's nothing but a slightly undercooked t-bone steak.

The official PCPP Step-By-Step Guide To Efficient Dismemberment.

The flamethrower - useless but hugely entertaining.

All gangsters really are this fat.

a cool "posse" feature where you can purchase "homies" to tail you and help you out when you need to drop plates in this mutha (see Ebonics Dictionary).

Let's dive into Kingpin's plot. Actually, let's not - if Kingpin's plot was a body of water it would be a wading pool. Like plenty of other FPS, all you really need to know is that you walk around various locations with big guns, and you'll face other human beings, similarly armed to the teeth. You need to kill these people, before they do the same to you.

Kicked to the curb

The only real "aim" of Kingpin is to become - you guessed it - the 'Kingpin'! When you start the game, you're as far from being the Kingpin as John Howard is from becoming the next Tupac Shakur. You've just had your ass beaten to the pavement, treated like a stepchild, kicked

STOP THE VIOLENCE

Being the concerned developers that they are, Xatrix have also included an option to install a PG version of Kingpin. This version is like comparing the South Park movie to the South Park TV series - it's pretty much exactly the same, except instead of hearing the word "f*&k" you now hear a bleep. So you'll basically be hearing a constant "bleep" in the background of the game while you're busting caps in sucker-punks.

Oh, and there's also no blood in the PG version, because when kids see red pixels on a PC monitor, they automatically want to go and make people bleed in real life. Scientific fact.

Bleep.

to the curb like a cheating boyfriend on Ricki Lake. In fact, you're only alive because the two goons administering the ass kicking wanted you to remember the beat-down you just received.

The enemy AI is absolutely insane, but just what you'd expect from a game that's trying to depict life on the streets. If you start a fight in Compton or Cabramatta (Australia's very own Compton), the guys that you're fighting aren't going to show any mercy. So in Kingpin, if you find yourself getting the better of a battle, beware of enemies running away - they'll return with three homies, ready to bust a cap in your lily white ass. And yelling "f&#ker!", very loudly.

Dog squad

Thankfully however, you can also acquire some homies (or "dogs", check

your the Ebonics Dictionary!) to assist when the numbers are stacked against you. Once you've killed an opponent, check his body for cash. The cash won't just appear either, you actually need to crouch next to the body and search it for money. After you've got enough cash, you'll find the occasional fool who'll offer protection, and they really go into bat for you in a firefight. Unfortunately, these clowns don't have the same level of AI as your enemies, so they'll generally get quickly mowed down in a hail of bullets.

When your homie gets capped, look on the bright side - at least they'll do it looking phat (check back to your

TIPS

•Make friends! As you wander around the Kingpin killing fields, make sure that you've got your weapon holstered and talk nicely to the locals. This way you'll receive plenty of tips about where you need to visit and what you'll need to look out for as the game progresses. Also, some characters will be your bodyguards for cash - use these guys as human shields and you'll be laughing.

"Give me a call and I'll call you a 'f&%khead' for free"

"Hey! It's them PowerPlay fellas takin' grabs. Better look sharp!"

EBONICS DICTIONARY
1999 REVISED EDITION

Although the extent of the urban language used in Kingpin is basically "f*$k" and "bitch", there are a few tricky phrases thrown in every now and then. Here's an "Ebonics" (ebony + phonics) dictionary to help you put the smack down on the playa haters.

BENJAMINS: *noun*. Money. "It's all about the Benjamins, baby."

BEOTCH, BIATCH: *noun*. Term used as a greeting. May or may not be negative.

BITCH: *noun*. Female companion, or if you're homosexual, your male partner. *Example:* "Hey baby, you'll always be my bitch."

BOOTY: *noun*. Female buttocks; an attractive female. *Example:* "Jennifer Lopez has some mad booty action goin' on."

BUST A CAP: *verb*. Shoot a bullet at someone. *Example:* "Bust a cap in that cracker!"

BUSTIN' YO GRILL: *verb*. Being hit in the mouth / face.

CHRONIC: *noun*. Marijuana. Also: **Mary Jane.**

CRIB: *noun*. An abode.

DA BOMB: *adj*. Good stuff. *Example:* "Ed Dawson is da bomb."

DOG: *noun*. Term used to describe another homosapien "down" with your crew.

DROPPING PLATES: *verb*. A situation where a level of negative emotion reaches the point where physical violence is reached. *Example:* "Bitch, if you don't get your hands of my benjamins, I'ma start dropping plates in this

muthaf*$ka!"

FADED: *adj*. Intoxicated.

FAKE THE FUNK: *verb*. Portraying yourself as being more important or having a higher social stature than your broke ass really does.

FORTY: *noun*. 40 ounce bottle of Olde English Malt Liquor.

FRONTING: *verb*. Lying.

GAT: *noun*. A gun.

GET BIZZY: *verb*. Engaging in sexual acts. If spelt with three "Z"s, refers to having sexual intercourse. If spelt with four "Z"s, refers to golden showers.

HOOCHIE MAMA: *noun*. A woman who's dressed up to attract attention

HIT SKINS: *verb*. To have sexual intercourse. Also: **Knockin' boots.**

HOMIE: *noun*: Friend.

ICED: *verb*. To be killed, rejected or otherwise stopped from going about your daily bizness. Not to be confused with **ICED OUT**, which is to wear excessive amounts of platinum diamond jewellery.

JIMMY: *noun*. Penis, male genitalia.

JIMMY HAT: *noun*. Condom.

KEEPIN' IT REAL: *adj*. Staying true to yourself. Also means to shoot white people and call women hoez.

PEACE OUT: Goodbye, stay safe.

PLAYER: *noun*. Someone who's surrounded by beautiful women 24-7 and also has lots of material wealth.

PLAYA HATERS: *noun*. Fewls who like to tear down playas because they don't have the

(l to r) Ewan, March, David, Ben, Malcolm & Eddie

skills or smarts to acquire wealth and beautiful women themselves. The hood's version of the Tall Poppy syndrome.

PHAT: *verb*. Nice, appealing.

SCRUB: *noun*. Used to describe a non-desirable member of the opposite sex.

SHORTY: *noun*. Girlfriend, female companion.

SKANK HO: *noun*. A woman of loose morals who may have venereal diseases.

SMOKE HIM, FOO: Shoot him, friend. Used in ghetto culture to denote a killing of another homosapien.

WHITEY, CRACKER, WHITEBREAD, HONKY: *adj*. Caucasian.

YO MAMA: An insult, referring to the fact that your mother ("yo mama") may have messd up teeth, hair or body odour, or may be extremely sexually active.

YOU BE TRIPPIN', FOO: You are paranoid, friend.

Ebonics Dictionary, cracker). Kingpin features some of the most spectacular, realistic graphics you could ever want to see. The game isn't exactly "eye candy", where you'll find your retinas burned out by excess pastels, it's actually quite the opposite. Greys, browns and blacks dominate the landscape here, with the occasional burning bin providing some lighting effects. While it might sound (and even look, from the screenshots anyway) drab, the further you play the game the more you'll appreciate the little touches that make the game spring to life. Even usually overlooked visuals like rubble or rats running around your feet really help bring the seedy underworld to life.
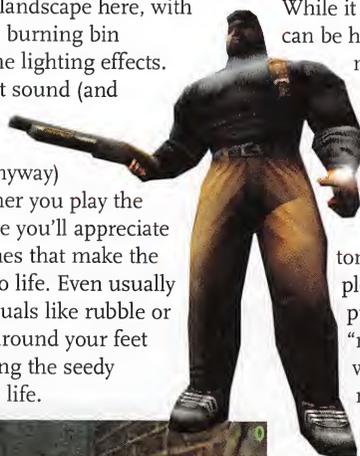
Flame on, biatch!

Another ultra-realistic element to Kingpin is the weaponry. Unlike most FPS, the gats you get to bust are just like real-life guns. There's no real "super weapon" either, with the most powerful weapon being the simple flamethrower. While it doesn't have much range and can be hard to aim properly, it does make for some good comic relief when you stumble across a drunk lying in the gutter. Flame on, biatch!

Now to the most talked about aspect of Kingpin...the almighty F word. Yes, there is a ton of swearing in this game. But please, please, please do NOT purchase this game to hear "naughty words". If you really want to hear someone swear for money, give me a call and I'll call you a "f&%khead" for free.

Kingpin may have built up some unrealistic expectations in some people's minds due to the excessive hype that it's received lately, but if you're after a game that focuses

on realistic violence, plenty of gritty gutter talk and the way too much repetitive key-finding, then Kingpin is all dat, bruh. Just don't (a) purchase it purely to hear the word "f*#k", (b) expect Half-Life 2, or (c) pin the blame on it the next time some American geek kid gets dumped by his girlfriend and decides to shoot half of his school down in flames. ■

Ewan Corness

A boom with a view.

68

PCPP

FOR: Swearing, violence, hoochie mamas - what else can you ask for?

AGAINST: Slightly repetitive "search for keys" gameplay, insanely hard enemy AI.

86

WORLD WAR III
WORLD DOMINANCE
21ST CENTURY WARFARE

THIS AIN'T A TEA PARTY

FORCE 21

CIV II: TEST OF TIME

After Frogger 3D, comes the latest instalment in Hasbro's trawl through the past...
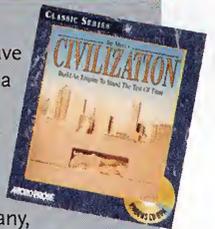

There was much rejoicing when the city finally got its... Algae farm?

CIVILIZATION TIMELINE

It's been a long ride for Civilization. Not only have we seen the creation of a legendary series, we've seen the departure of the creator, Sid Meier from Microprose. He now has his own company, Firaxis. License wrangles make Civilization the game, a saga all its own! Here are the titles that form the history of this unique strategy title:

1991: Civilization
1996: Civilization II
(90%, PCPP#1)
1997: Sid Meier's Gettysburg
(92%, PCPP#20)
Civ II: Fantastic Worlds
(68%, PCPP#21)
1998: Civ II: Multiplayer & Classic
(90%, PCPP#28)
1999: Alpha Centauri
(96%, PCPP#36)
Civilization: Call To Power
(96%, PCPP#36)

TIPS

• Generally there is a lot more opportunity for terrain based tactics than in the earlier Civ II. The new impassable terrain in Test of Time can prove very useful tactically. Use terrain to your advantage!
• Controlling a portal to the other worlds, especially early on, is a good way to take control of the game - you can stop invaders colonising your world and have a foothold into theirs.
• The same rules of Civ II still apply: always have your cities fortified with at least two archers (or equivalent); trade technologies and maps with other civilisations early on to help kickstart your civilisation; and try not to break peace treaties and ceasefires - unless doing so will give you a significant advantage (heh heh).

Civilization II is without doubt one of the most important games in the short history of gaming. It set the benchmark for what is now a lively community of strategy games. The original Civilization II was reviewed in the very first issue of this publication, some three years ago. Wait, three years? At the time in 1996, we were playing Grand Prix 2 and Doom. That's quite a long time ago as far as gaming is concerned. This is why the release of yet ANOTHER reincarnation of Civ II seems ridiculous to me.

A vintage lineage

The first few reworkings of Civilization II made sense since the game was actually the pinnacle of another gaming era. The game is so good - why not upgrade it for a new generation? Multiplayer gaming as we now know it just wasn't around, so an upgrade, in the form of Civ II: Classic & Multiplayer, was a logical one. But let's get this straight: we're in 1999, there have been TWO next generation successors to Civ II (Call To Power and Alpha Centauri), that are excellent in their own right and now another Civ II? Everyone's waiting for Civ III, which is supposedly due next year (don't hold your breath!) and what we don't need is an old game with a makeover. Smells like marketing to me.

So here's what you get for your ninety-odd dollars. You get an engine that was written somewhere in the mid 1990s - virtually untouched! There seems to have been some AI tweaks and corrections (such as settlers now obeying territory), but nothing startling. The visuals haven't improved much either, with the exception of some unit animation. There better be something special content-wise, to make this worthwhile!

Some new worlds

Admittedly there are some good things in Test of Time. First of all, you get three completely separate Civilization games. You have the original game, a fantasy game on a world called Midgard and a sci-fi game on the planet of Lalande 21185. The last

It was rather lonely in Mistrel City.

TOO HOT! BODY MELTING...!

One of the nicest additions to Civ II in Test of Time is the four different worlds in the Midgard and Lalande 21185 games. The twist is that many units won't be able to make the journey to the other levels and survive. You'll need to wait until you have units that can stand the atmosphere of cloud world, or the heat of the underworld. Of course this will probably mean that by the time anyone's ready to attack effectively in another world, they'll be the master of their own... Earth vs. Hell? Sure, seen it before, but it's usually one guy with a chaingun against the minions of hell, isn't it?

two fictional worlds play exactly the same as the original game but they do offer some variation, as the promo material says: "These are not scenarios; they are true worlds within the game."

In Lalande 21185 and Midgard (a popular scenario from Fantastic Worlds), the game is not based merely on one surface; there are four levels to the worlds. In Midgard, there is the surface world, the undersea world, the underworld and the cloud world. So effectively, the playing area is four times as large as in a normal

form of victory - the defeat of all of your enemies. There is also the option of The Grand Project. The spaceship is still the option for the normal world. On Lalande 21185, it is sort of the opposite. You can build a spaceship back to Earth, since your home planet and the colonies on Lalande 21185 have no contact. For the Midgard world, it's a little different. The Grand Project is the construction of a giant contraption to crush the Evil of the Land. The rules remain the same for all however. You have to construct components to

"...what we don't need is an old game with a makeover."

Civilization game. Obviously there is the option of switching between worlds. There are certain gates or portals that accomplish this, but it has also been incorporated into city improvements that can be built, as well as individual unit types. It's a well thought out variation and does affect strategy in the game.

More of the same

All of the worlds enjoy some improvements. There is the traditional

complete the Grand Project and are in a race with the other civilizations to do this. So it's very much a case of "one more time for the fans."

The problem with all of this is that it's the same Civ II we played years ago with a few more frills. Somehow it seems perverse to be putting a big price tag on a game that is essentially a reworking of a game you can get for tuppence on a discount rack. It just seems like big business, rather than gaming for the gamers. While it's impossible to say that Test of Time is not worth your time, it has extremely limited value, particularly for those who've played Civ II (or any of its other doppelgangers).

And it still runs in that damn ugly Win 95 window.

The 50s B-Movie influence is clear.

That said, it's the same tried and true fun that has made Civilization II a legend in strategy gaming. For those too young to remember the game, those with low-end machines or those who have an unhealthy fixation on Civilization II, this is probably the game for you. However, if it's a choice between this and the newer Civ games (that were mentioned above), I think you're probably better off with one of Test of Time's more attractive cousins. ■

John Dewhurst

Frankly, this is two years too late.

The "other dimension" world map.

PC PP

FOR: As fun as it ever was in three different worlds! New animation and... Ooooow, dragons!

AGAINST: Not different enough for the average gamer. It's three years old, dammit!

81

RE-VOLT

BEST reflections EVER!

Taking over the supermarket, the toy store, the Titanic, even your home - the little cars are re-volting!

TIPS

- Aside from the usual speed/acceleration/weight factors, a cars wheel base will affect the way it handles.
- Skidding around corners may be fun and make cool noises, but you'll lose speed every time the tires squeak. Tapping left or right will steer in increments and stop skidding.
- Power-ups:
Bowling ball: an annoyance only if it starts rolling in narrow corridors
Oil Slick: Very effective, especially if the car hits it with two wheels.
Fireworks: Unpredictable but effective. Don't get too close!
Electricity: A great defensive weapon - use when in 1st to stay that way.
Energy Bolt: Use on a straight and watch cars fly. The best offensive weapon.
Star: Extremely useful, but hard to find

On first impressions, Re-Volt looks like a logical progression from the famous Micro Machines series. Little cars (in this case remote-controlled rather than hand propelled) hurtle around tracks taken from a variety of almost everyday life surroundings like a museum, a neighbourhood, a toy shop, all complete with obstacles and hazards fitting the scene. Throw in some weapons and power-ups more than a little reminiscent of Nintendo's Mario Kart and you've got a fun if slightly derivative racing game. Nuff said? Hell, no.

Don't get too close! Candy Pebbles zaps the hapless Dynamo San.

Evil Weasel

Look out for that oil slick!

A few trips round the first track and it's obvious that Re-Volt has been coded with the attention to detail usually reserved for the serious sims. The physics model is near perfect, conjuring up real life memories of unsuccessfully trying to keep a friend's Tamiya Grasshopper from flipping after launching off the shoebox and wooden plank jump. Try the same thing in Re-Volt and you'll get exactly the same results, along with the same frustrated determination to get it right on the next lap.

This realism carries through to the tracks too, which look and feel very solid. In "Toys in the Hood" for example, one of the obstacles is a basketball that bounces around the track more convincingly than a majority of NBA games. It's very cleanly textured and lit as well, cartoony without sinking into silliness like the movie Toy Story. Unfortunately, there's downside to this attention to detail in the lack of variety in tracks, most evident in cases like "Toys in the Hood 2" turning out to be a mirrored version of the first.

Aargh, not the tunnel again!

In true console form only a few of the tracks are "unlocked" to start with, the rest available through success in the various championships. This is where the player develops a definite love/hate relationship with Re-Volt as they become hopelessly addicted. It's hard to say whether it's a case of wanting to see the next whimsical yet beautifully crafted course or the aquisition of new, faster and even more uncontrollable cars, but the pull Re-Volt has over people is almost scary. Grown men

"Take the inside line, or you'll end up in the jaffa crates"

The Hatchback jump is daring, but rewarding.

THE PCPP RE-VOLT CHALLENGE

While Ben muttered to himself about the finesse of Grand Prix Legends, the rest of the crew played with their toys...

MARCH as the Volken Turbo
DAVID as Col. Moss
MALCOLM as Dr. Grudge

MALCOLM V. MARCH

Botanical Garden

Botanical Garden
As the first race got underway, March was immediately heard complaining: "Hey, that's unfair! I demand a restart!", but Malcolm got wedged under a fern halfway through and surrendered the lead.

March 1-0

Toys In the Hood
Again Malcolm raced away, but then fell hapless victim to the dreaded bomb twice in a row and allowed March to overtake on the final lap.

March 2-0

Toy World 2
March cried "This car's shit!" as Malcolm once more got the better start and snatched the first powerup. It was Dr Grudge all the way, winning by a record margin.

March 2-1

MARCH V. DAVID

Toy World 2

Botanical Garden
A close race from start to finish, though eventually decided when March misjudged his acceleration on a critical jump and didn't cross the gap!

David 1-0

Toys in the Hood
March had some bad luck on the curbs and David was racing a consistent line, but a mistake in the final tunnel almost cost him the race. 0.002 seconds was all that seperated them in the end.

David 2-0

Toy World 2
Both players spun out in a nasty collision on the first lap, but March recovered first. He then led for the rest of the race, helped by a timely use of the electricity power-up and David getting stuck behind a beach ball. "Damn that beach ball!"

David 2-1

DAVID V. MALCOLM

Toys in the Hood

Botanical Garden
This proved to be the closest race thus far. After a near fatal collision at the start, David shot away to be a consistent leader, victory assured when Malcolm mistimed the final corner.

David 1-0

Toys in the Hood
The tunnel can make or break even the keenest Revolt racer. Malcolm was the latest to succumb to its perils, screaming "It's all over! No!!" after running into an oil slick left behind by the sneering Col. Moss. Not surprising, Malcolm never recovered, giving David his clinching win.

David 2-0

Toy World 2
"No!! He got it AGAIN!" yelled Malcolm. David shot away to a seal a perfect win, having twice foiled Malcolm's lunge for the lead with the lighting powerup.

David 3-0

1 2   **1 2**   **3 0**

POST-RACE INTERVIEWS

David: "I'd like to thank the Col. Moss pit team - I couldn't have done it without you guys!"
March: "Until the championship organisation committee get their act together, we will continue to have substandard meets like the one witnessed today."
Malcolm: "Well, the day of the gentleman racer is long gone. Both those guys are psychos. They nearly killed me out there!"

---

have been known to develop a paranoid hatred of the other cars ("Curse you once again, Mystery Car!"), start seriously discussing absurd racing tactics ("No, you have to take the inside line through the freezer room, or you'll end up in the Jaffa crates!") and even form racing teams ("Quick, get Dave over here! I suck at this track but we have to win it to see Toytanic!").

It's always nice when games like Re-Volt come along that show how much care has been put into its creation. As well as a purely fun arcade racing game, it's obvious the programmers wanted to create the definitive remote-controlled racing sim complete with all the frustrating intricacies. They've suceeded on both counts, and Re-Volt is the perfect distraction from endless deathmatches and empire-building. For a little while, at least. ■

Malcolm Campbell

Unleashing the Energy Bolt allows Aqua Sonic to get some air.

PCPP

FOR: Too addictive to be legal. Incredibly accurate physics engine and a believable yet fun gameworld.

AGAINST: A steep learning curve and impossibly difficult 'sim' mode. Extensive use of mirror tracks.

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DUNGEON KEEPER 2

●**Genre:** Upper management god-complex sim ●**Players:** 1-4 ●**Developer:** Bullfrog ●**Publisher:** EA ●**Distributor:** EA ●**Price:** TBA ●**Rating:** M ●**Available:** Now
●**Need:** P166, 32MB RAM, 40MB HD ●**Want:** P3, 128MB RAM, D3D video card. ●**URL:** www.bullfrog.com

Bullfrog strike again with a superb, er, strategy game?

PCPP GOLD

And the award for the coolest game characters this month goes to the Vampires of DK2.

Your imps do all the dirty work, clearing out your dungeon for you.

In the well-appointed business colleges of the future, eager students nearing the award of their diploma will be ushered into heavily curtained rooms, featuring immaculately (and almost religiously) setup PCs, to put complex theory into practice. On these systems - just one piece of highly educational software - Dungeon Keeper 2.

See, although DK2 has its roots in the real-time strategy genre and oftentimes plays like one, it is, at its heart, a god-sim all the way. Yet still, this description is only barely adequate. DK2 is better described as an "upper-management exploitation sim".

It really works

As a dungeon keeper of the highest magnitude, you've got to retrieve twenty fragments of a "magical portal gem" which have been scattered throughout the land of Harmonia. This so that you and a bunch of associates can make the hasty transition from the grind of the dank and musty underworld to the yet-untapped commercial potential of the sunlit overworld. To succeed in this, you're going to have to engage in a bit of rough and tumble with a slew of opposing factions, and maintaining a fighting force well equipped enough to withstand the ravages of war isn't as simple as may be initially imagined.

First you need to entice an army into your fold, and this is only done by creating only the most modern of dungeons complete with all the latest trimmings and amenities. Then you have to ensure that they remain in good spirits, and nothing warms a Warlock's heart more than opening up a big fat pay packet on payday. Since your minions display a more realistic range of thought patterns than most RTS units, you're also going to have to run after them and pander to almost all of their self-indulgent whims - "I'm hungry... and on strike!" or "I refuse to sleep in the same room as that repugnant and incontinent Bile Demon!" Otherwise, they'll up and bugger off, leaving you with a less-populated and more vulnerable dungeon. You've also got to maintain the expansion of your dungeon, making sure that your imps (the only characters that can excavate the dark cavities of your dungeon and furnish them) are hard at work and not slacking off. Finally, when push comes to shove and a bunch of goody-two-shoe heroes start mounting an offensive, you've got to ensure they don't run the other way. Sigh. It's tough being an upper management slave.. er, dungeon keeper. Thankfully, you can literally slap most of

DEM BONES

One of the standout differences between DK2 and other RTS/god games is the way you acquire units. The system is superb - managing to combine functionality and logic with charm and plenty of character. The closest Bullfrog have come to the RTS way in DK2 is with the Skeleton.

To amass the invaluable skeleton, you need to first construct a prison. Then, you fill it with either freshly captured enemies or problematic minions of your own. After a sufficient period of time, presto! The prisoners die of starvation and come back in the form of these dreaded super-units!

First death...

...then decay...

... and voila! New unit!

DK - NOT TOO COMPLICATED

Underneath its complex gameplay, Dungeon Keeper 2 doesn't stray far from its RTS roots at all. Each of your dungeon's rooms serve as the equivalent of unit production and support buildings. For example, the hatchery provides food for your minions, the combat pit ups the experience (and effectiveness) of your forces, and the library serves to entice Warlocks into your pad. Building these is a simple affair - highlight an area to be excavated, choose the room to be built, then layout the flat-plan with the mouse and all is complete.

Defensive structures come in the form of a huge variety of traps - all of which have the potential to slow down (if not stop) any enemies poking about in your humble abode.

Your base structure is the Dungeon Heart - lose this and the mission ends.

Resources to gather include gold (for obvious use) and mana - the essence that fuels your Warlock's spells and the food stuff for the imps.

Combat is entered into automatically, though you can speed things up by "picking up" your units and dropping them into the thick of things.

The biggest difference of DK2 to its kin is that you have no direct control of your minions (except when using the possession spell, and in refurbishing your dungeon). Instead, you have lure and shape them to do your bidding, an innovative system which plays extremely well in this combat oriented god game.

Me so horny.

POSSESSION SESSION

As a wonderful diversion to the isometric perspective nature of the game (which is broadly customisable, incidentally), you can fire off a possession spell and take the helm of one of your many minions. Not only does this give the unit some Kamikaze courage and up your attack and defence points, it's an absolute 1st-person blast!

"Thankfully, you can slap your minions into submission"

your minions into submission (more of a necessity than a mere indulgence). If there were a more perfect upper-management god simulator around, it'd be called Dungeon Keeper 3.

Easy learning curve

DK2 is heavy in features and symbiotic relationships between units and rooms, and the result is a game that can seem frighteningly intimidating. Thankfully, there's an exquisite tutorial that gradually introduces to you the wonderful

nuances of the game. Also, to maintain a sense of mental well being throughout the missions, there's an elegant information system complete with a "centre action on screen" zoom option which informs you of significant events in your dungeon (like an attack in a far corner of the dungeon, for example). Keeping a tab on things thankfully, is a painless procedure.

Balanced juggling

Dungeon Keeper 2 is a beautifully balanced game - with a huge variety of units that in culmination provide for some intensely frantic moments. Theoretically, the game sounds like a bit of a nightmare - to be constantly attending to minor details and juggling

a huge range of responsibilities seems about as much fun as spending an entire weekend sorting 100kgs of M&Ms into separate colour bags. However, never being fully in control of your forces (something that only Bullfrog have thus far managed to pull off with any success) is perversely alluring. It's a refreshing change to the norm of RTS/strategy gaming.

The greatest criticism of Dungeon Keeper 2 is that other than a cosmetic overhaul and the implementation of a couple of new rooms and units, it's virtually identical to first Keeper effort. But when the end result is a game that is so thoroughly engaging and entertaining, Bullfrog don't need to be forgiven. ■

March Stepnik

FOR: Unique and addictive. Atmosphere to burn, partly thanks to the superb graphics.

**AGAINST:** Complicated. Lack of unit control can be an Achilles Heel at times.

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SHADOW MAN

●Genre: Ooh! Spooky Platformer ●Players: 1 ●Developer: Iguana ●Publisher: Acclaim ●Distributor: Acclaim ●Price: $TBA ●Rating: MA ●Available: Now
●Need: P166, 32MB RAM, 20MB HD, 3D graphics card (D3D) ●Want: PII 300, 64MB RAM, 620MB HD ●URL: www.acclaim.net

Come face the darkest demons of your soul - and jump on their heads! Nearly...

The chic "thin and bony" look is back this year.
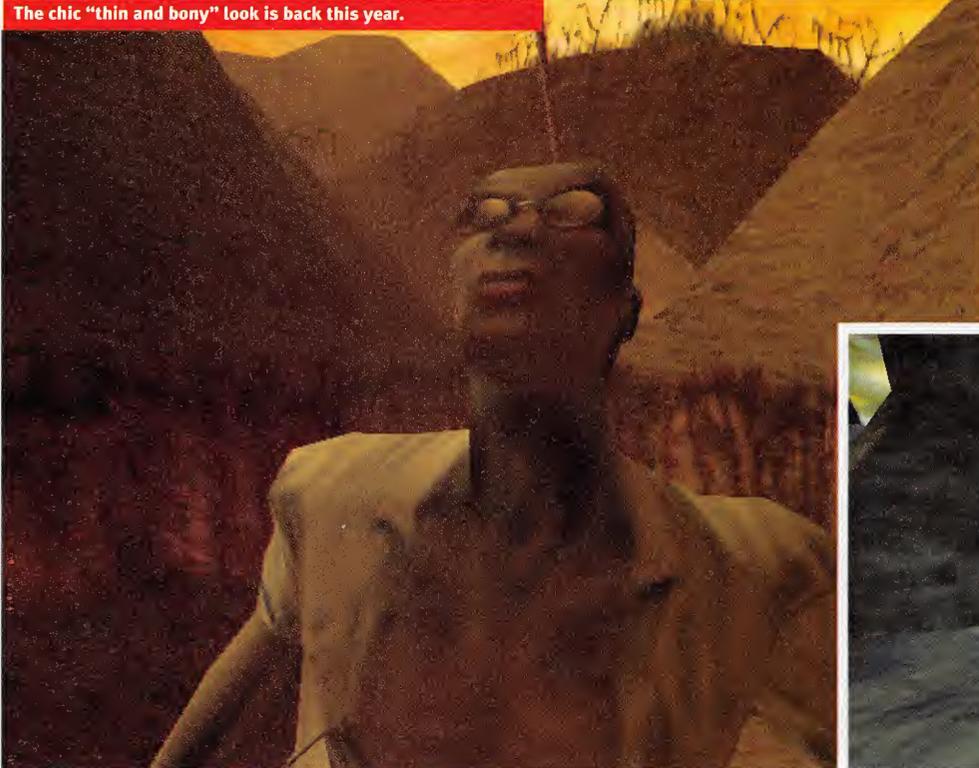
What price would you put on your soul? Let's say the devil came for you one night, overflowing with promises of eternal decadence and debauchery, proffering a seductive assortment of pleasures of the flesh, and the tempting prospect of further acts of wickedness come judgement day. Possibly involving root vegetables. And all you have to do is give up one teensy, weensy, tiny thing: your soul. You'd have to be mad not to do it, right?

What if instead the devil offered you the chance to become the Shadow Man? What if you could transform into Michael Leroi, the Lord of Deadside, the Walker Between Worlds, the Bad Bald Dude in the Funky Morpheus Shades? Yes, yes, yes! I hear you cry. Give me dat black magick and West Indian accent, give me dem dark souls and voodoo dolls! I'll serve you Master,

let me build you your Cathedral of Pain! The horror... The horror... I embrace it!

Fish, birds, and books

Come now. Let me tell you exactly what you're getting yourself in for. All Acclaim's pre release hype had convinced me (and others, no doubt) that Shadow Man would usher in a brave new dawn of action/adventuring; yet, sadly, it merely turns out to be what my colleague Gareth Jones would call a "jumpy jumpy" game. Thus, a game that should have been causing panic, terror and its fair share of heart seizures, will instead merely prompt

one almighty collective shrug. Is that really worth your soul?

Virtually the first thing the game expects is that you read a dossier provided by Nettie, Shadow Man's girlfriend (And I bet he does the laundry every weekend, too - Ed). The dossier is about thirty pages long and tedious with it, mistaking pretentiousness for portent in its desperation to describe exactly how disturbed you should be feeling. Let me repeat: with the first area of the game in view - a gorgeous tract of swamp with birds circling above, fish darting below, and Shadow Man standing there centre-stage, thin shirt coolly flapping around his loose-limbed

JUMPY JUMPY JUNK

Whatever faults the Tomb Raider games may have possessed, jumping was not one of them. You always knew (though perhaps not with utmost certainty) whether Lara could make a particular jump. This was due to the grid based level design that allowed you to calculate distances precisely one square for a standing jump, two for a running jump, three for a running jump and hold, while four was impossible and execute any leap with confidence. In stark contrast, Shadow Man fails to grant such a luxury. Here, every jump is potentially perilous, and, coupled with the often cretinous design philosophy and the less than slick camerawork, ultimately makes for a game that is far more frustrating than fun.

Lara: A great jumper

It was an emotional moment worthy of Mike Munro and "This Is Your Life". It was the day we reunited Shadow Man with his long lost brother, Akuji. Separated at birth by the cruelty of multiple formats, Akuji was condemned to a life of struggle on the Playstation in the guise of Akuji The Heartless, while Shadow Man has only now managed to pick up the pieces of his existence and produce something to bear the family name. After laying eyes on each other for the very first time since they were barely days old, neither man could contain the tears: "He looks just like me," they sobbed in unison. Afterwards, they retired to discuss their eerily similar Southern voodoo gothic, soul-seeking, netherworld adventures in private.

As a god I step forth upon the writhing, suppurating surface of the Deadside serpent.

Weapon in my hand. My hand the arcing deathblow at the End of All Things. The horror. The horror. I embrace It....
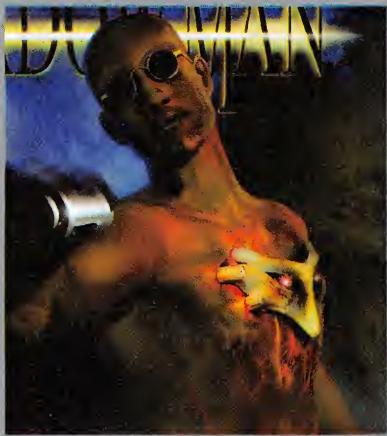
(above left) Jaunty, the oddly Irish snake demon, sounds exactly like Dougal from Father Ted.

> ## "Will instead merely prompt one almighty collective shrug."

Nipple rings by John Dewhurst.

torso, all bathed in the honeyed light of dusk - you are told to drop everything and read a bloody book. So, just when you think the game is starting, it grinds to a halt and says, "Hey, tricked you! I'm not a game, I'm a novel!", like it's actually doing you a favour, heightening the atmosphere or something. Whatever the intention behind this bewildering design choice, it's a clear failure.

Hearts, ropes, and keys

Past this tedious opening, the game proper delivers a real mixture of both success and, again, failure. The level design is perhaps the area in which this is most evident. While there are some superbly realised settings and a sporadic touch of inspiration, much of what remains is stubbornly old-fashioned. Dark souls (or keys, by any other name) must be collected to travel through soul gates (better known as doors), for example. Shadow Man also picks up hearts much like Mario pockets stars, and elsewhere monsters are shot,

ropes are swung across and platform after platform is jumped upon.

Cleverly, the separate controls for each of Shadow Man's hands allow two different weapons to be held and multiple enemies targeted simultaneously. It's only a shame that combat still degenerates to hammering the shoot key while strafing left and right. The neat manner in which his head turns (a la Manny from Grim Fandango) when he notices something is also quite useful. But, again, it's a shame, due to the lack of useable objects, that most of which gains his attention is irrelevant.

Fools, souls, and zombies

Once you accept the fact that it's just another platform game, Shadow Man becomes moderately enjoyable. Underneath all the extraneous clutter - the ludicrous cut scenes, the hilariously written story and accompanying background gumph - lurks a genuinely decent, if utterly derivative, game. Quite why Acclaim deemed it so necessary to

persuade us that this was oh-so-much-more than a platform game is a bit of a mystery. Rather than being taken for fools, though, what really palls is the startling contrast between the cut scenes and the gameplay. Ironically, instead of adding depth to a fairly simplistic title, the cut scenes serve only to expose that gameplay as hollow and banal. All the time the question lingers: if I'm the Shadow Man, if I've lost my entire family to some great evil, and if I'm trying to avoid becoming evil myself in order to save their souls, then just what am I doing running down yet another nondescript corridor shooting yet more zombies?

As a platform game, Shadow Man certainly has more polish than most, though it still fails to satisfy in so many areas. Mostly bereft of wit and imagination, the gameplay becomes frightening only when you realise how underdeveloped it is. This is game design abandoned at the concept stage; a scenario with so much potential criminally wasted on a slightly above average platform game.

Cursed by mediocrity, Shadow Man is a game that may well be worth your collection of old Mega Drive platformers, but certainly not your soul. ∎

David Wildgoose

The Dragon Fly is a nice touch.

PCPP

FOR: Occasionally memorable locales and a nice dual-hand control advantage a game hero with more than usual charisma. Suitably horrible sound.

AGAINST: Predictable, formulaic gameplay is compounded by the aimless level design. The illusion of story depth is broken by the tedium of run-and-jump platforming.

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HIDDEN AND DANGEROUS

Put your left foot in...

●**Genre:** 1st Person combat strategy ●**Players:** 1-4 ●**Developer:** Illusion Softworks ●**Publisher:** Jack Of All Games ●**Distributor:** Jack Of All Games ●**Price:** TBA ●**Rating:** M ●**Available:** Now ●**Need:** P233, 32MB RAM, DirectX 3D accelerator, 60MB Hard Drive ●**Want:** 64MB RAM (or more), sound card, AGP 3D card, 500MB Hard Drive (full install) ●**URL:** www.illusionsoftworks.com/hd.htm

These men are trained to be in and out before you know it. And yes, they're single too.

This poor fool's one man protest in front of the truck was doomed to failure.

It's interesting how things change over the years. When we first saw first person 3D titles, this perspective was used for action gaming exclusively. And when I say action, I mean violence, guns and more violence. Think Doom and Blood. Not that this is inherently bad, you understand. It's just that the two were almost exclusively joined at the hip. Far be it for me to judge whether the FPS genre became tired - suffice to say, the changes that have come in last 18 months have been warmly welcomed by the gaming community. Thief: The Dark Project, Rainbow 6 and Spec Ops are prime examples of first person games that require the use of the head as well as the trigger finger. And now we have Hidden & Dangerous - a first person shooter with a twist.

Covert operations

Hidden & Dangerous is based on the history of the S.A.S. Brigade that served in North Africa against German forces in WWII. Their mission was to carry out covert operations behind enemy lines, in small numbers, in order to confuse the enemy and deplete their weapons and resources - that which is basic guerilla warfare. Illusions Softworks have chosen an intriguing event from the Second World War that also happens to translate perfectly to the PC in the form of a combat game.

Hidden and Dangerous involves the deployment of troops into combat situations where very specific tasks are required for level completion. This

SEE IT FROM MY PERSPECTIVE

Different perspectives offer different advantages, especially when considering the particular roles that you are called on to take. The third person, three-quarter view is good for keeping an eye on the rest of your men and what they're up to.

The first person view is the most useful and a revelation for this genre, especially in sniper situations. The use of your telescopic lens can help to knock down those stray enemies quick. Just as useful is the way you can use your man in a more conventional FPS fashion (in a coordinated attack, of course...). You can take up your submachine gun and take on the entire freakin' German army. Thankfully, unless you're one hell of a shot, this won't work.

You can choose a number of perspectives within the first person view. You can have the sights of your weapon, a crosshair or a blank screen. All the perspectives you're ever likely to need.

3rd person close

1st person with gun

1st person crosshair

1st person blank

3rd person far
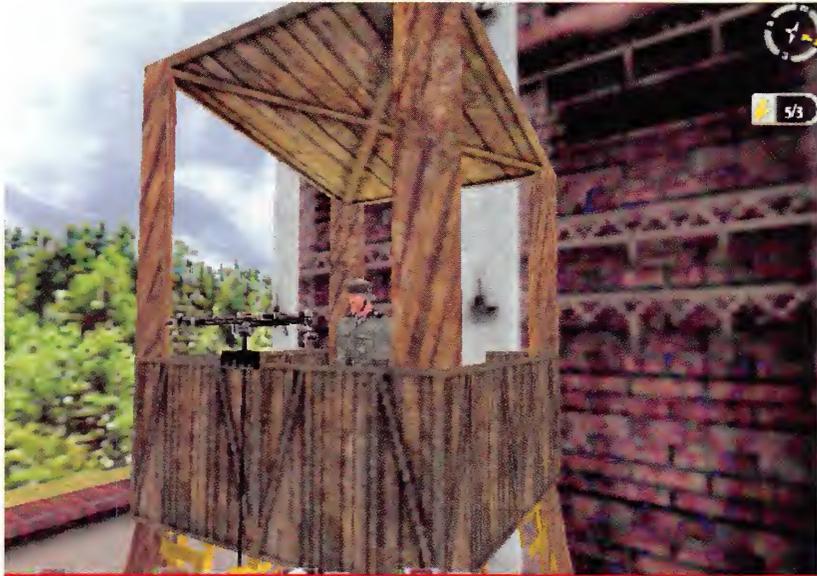
We have John permanently stationed in the PCPP Watchtower to eliminate any tresspassers.

might include destruction of particular aircraft or other targets, the rescue of hostages and the like. This game is a part of the new breed. This game requires very particular planning and co-ordination of your four man platoon in order to achieve a satisfactory result.

Smart and sophisticated

This is where the depth of control comes in. Obviously if you want to create a decent game in this style, you'll have to be able to control your troops in a sophisticated manner. Hidden & Dangerous achieves this in a number of ways. First of all, there is the planning map. Here you can assign orders to the individuals of your group. That is, you can order them to attack a target, stand, lie down, use an inventory item and others. But the best is yet to come. Not only that but you can co-ordinate the movements of each of your men!

So two men might move sneakily to a particularly point, another may be setting explosives and the last one, controlled by you, might be in a position to lob a grenade in the laps of the enemy troops or be a sniper and pick them off one by one. The thing is, until you're ready to take your first shot, your men will wait as ordered. Then when they hear the first shot, it's into action and those Nazis won't know what hit 'em!

Superbly anal

The interface is very easy to use, if a little difficult to pick up, and the game is as visually satisfying as you'd expect. Movement within the 3D game is exceptional and Hidden & Dangerous looks a treat. With the neat effects of

Obviously not Men Without Hats fans.

fog, rain, smoke, etc., the game maintains all the atmosphere that's been seen in dozens of war films.

The preparation of each mission is often the most crucial aspect when contemplating victory. This is why the setup is so exhausting. You are briefed on the campaign, then you need to decide who you want to have over the course of its entirety. After you choose your 8 men, you then can choose the particular combination of men you'd like for each mission. Then you select the weapons you want for the whole campaign, then for each mission and THEN for each individual, etc, etc. The detail is welcome but if you feel a little out of your depth at this stage (and I don't blame you), you can auto setup the lot.

At this stage, there is everything to like about Hidden & Dangerous, with depth, great visuals and freedom to control your troops as you wish.

Hyper-resourceful enemies

The issues that may bother are minor, but if not rectified by a patch in the near future, could come to ruin this

GENUINE CERTIFIED WAR GAME

An interesting feature of this game is how it strives for authenticity. From the set-up screen where you need to be aware of all your likely requirements, to the authentic weaponry (that differs between Allied and German weapons) and the ability to give detailed orders, Hidden & Dangerous does the job of realism very well.

Most interesting of all, is the fact that it really doesn't take a lot of shots to kill you! Forget action shooters like you've seen before, where you could survive one rocket in the tail - one shot to the head in Hidden & Dangerous and you're MIA. The fact that your enemies are very aware and just as good a shot - if not better - than yourself, helps lend some gravity to the proceedings. No kidding around, this is war and it's SERIOUS...

Can I be Mr. Enigma on the right, please?

"Mysterious subterranean body snatchers"

fantastic and authentic wartime experience. I found that at times, your troops were decidedly stupid, running off into raging water or in some other way, forfeiting their lives. Worse was when they died for no apparent reason i.e. they laid down on a slope, somehow went BELOW the surface and then perished! And the fact that you CAN'T climb down ladders very easily leads to many falling to their deaths. Over a campaign, if you lose a man, he cannot be replaced. You can imagine the frustration while watching your finest sniper being swallowed by mysterious subterranean body snatchers.

Challenging gameplay!

That said, Hidden & Dangerous is a great combat strategy sim. With authentic situations and weaponry from the era, an interesting story and above all challenging gameplay, Hidden & Dangerous is great fun. It'd be an absolute must-have for combat fanatics and strategists alike, if not for a few minor design oversights. ■

John Dewhurst

PCPP

FOR: Atmosphere like no other! All the depth required of strategy, all the slick handling required of a FPS, with tonnes of style.

AGAINST: Some of minor issues which SHOULD be picked up in upgrades. Features a steep learning curve and high difficulty level.

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NEED FOR SPEED: HIGH STAKES

The fourth revision in the classic driving series gains momentum.

(left) There's something not quite right with that BMW...

The Need for Speed series is a massively popular, lighthearted excursion into the world of expensive sports cars - the kind that real people can't actually afford.

But what exactly is the appeal of the Need For Speed experience?

Scenario:

You cruise smoothly over the rise, the suspension kissing air for a microsecond before you land softly, skidding slightly on the smooth cobblestones. You apply the accelerator again as you round the chicane leading into the main street of a sleepy European village. You're doing a nasty 140mph, but the comfortable interior of this luxury car is only feeding you a low, progressive purr - you're completely insulated from the deafening roar of air and engine outside. Skating across the main street paving to avoid the row of monuments and trees in the centre, the sun blazes down the boulevard between the quaintly rustic architecture. It fills your vision with blinding reflected

orange and a starburst of lens flare through the windscreen. It's late afternoon in this picturesque rural valley. Winding through the gears as you reach the town's outer limits, you fall under shadow again. Clear, darkened clarity returns and you hug the row of trees at street right to prepare for the sharp exiting bend that leads to freeway. For a moment, tall elms strobe with glimpses of golden hillside, then you are sliding - a huge, controlled skid across both lanes to the open road. The engine purrs and rumbles compliantly, like a dozing Bengal Tiger. You pulse the accelerator to flatten your direction and leave the town a brief, receding memory.

This is what the Need for Speed series delivers, and is why it's one of the most successful racing series of all time. A real-life, expensive sports car, absolutely hooning along realistic roads, behaving as true-to-life as you could want it to (*if the last game you played was Pole Position - Ed.*), with a dizzying sensation of speed. This

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Career mode is the most addictive new feature of NFS4. It's better to buy a car upgrade that an entire new car in most cases, as the benefits you receive are immediate, and you can use them to win a series, for example, which then leaves you more cash for the next car. Try to skip models: there's not much point in buying every single car available in sequence. It's much better to save a bit longer, buying car upgrades instead, then buy a car in a better category. Doing this gives you an unfair advantage as it puts the other cars in the "catch-up" position until the racing series reaches your calibre of vehicle.

Nice reflections!

BLUE HEELERS

The Cops in NFS4 are no longer your typical sleepy Twin Peaks country down doughnut dunkers. They're now an elite pursuit force, and have improved as a law-enforcement agency no end. They now have pursuit choppers that coordinate roadblocks and extra pursuit vehicles onto your case. Their repertoire of tongue-lashings has also been expanded and improved. Expect a thorough dressing-down if you are busted by these hardball boys in blue. They kick ass and chew bubble gum.

Camaro

Corvette

Lamborghini

BMW M5

La Nina

Porsche

"The engine purrs and rumbles, like a dozing Bengal Tiger"

all conveyed in the closely modelled characteristics of cars that came out this year and last year, from all major car manufacturers, including our beloved Holden Special Vehicles.

To hoon

Enough said, let it be known that Need for Speed: High Stakes (NFS4), is the fourth and best iteration in the NFS series.

The graphics and features in NFS4 on PC are so unbelievably superior that they parallel anything you've ever seen in an Arcade game. They really are outstanding, right up there with Sega Rally and Daytona, and still slightly better. They are completely "wow"-inducing, and then some.

On top of the graphics NFS4 has a fully-revamped police force, that are nastier than ever at catching and busting you for speeding. They now have choppers and concrete blocks, as well as the old tyre-shredding spike strips. Playing as the speeder or the Cops in multiplayer is now much more

of a fleshed out experience, the Cops now have Chopper surveillance and other cool stuff.

Supercar splendour

Another excellent new mode in NFS4, which is quite shamelessly ripped off the Playstation title Gran Turismo, is called "career" mode. This is where you race to win money, and buy better cars and upgrades as you go. Eventually you are racing the toughest courses with the absolute best supercars.

Which are naturally this year and last year's twelve highest-profile sports models, including the convertible BMW from the recent James Bond film. These are tweakable at component level, with adjustable suspension, brakes et al. Cars in NFS4 are now fully destructible, and suffer amazing visual and performance impact when you pile them into a fence.

There are a host of new tracks, 18 in all, including all the tracks from the recent NFS3 game. This is actually *tres-cool*, as you get to keep your track

knowledge, yet take advantage of the new cars and sublime new graphics engine. Whoohoo! And once again you can download additional cars from the NFS website, which is always a plus.

NFS rocks

Overall, NFS 4 presents tangible improvements from its previous versions in all areas, while retaining the central, fun elements and enjoyable gameplay that fans of the series love. NFS still rocks. Hard. ■

Ed Dawson

Stepping up to caption the above screenshot, this box was callously mown down by the Ferrari.

How utterly beautiful.

What's with the letterbox view, eh?

PCPP

FOR: The best looking PC game so far, where you race real road cars through pretty locations. Pure racing fun.

AGAINST: Some players might despair at the formulaic game structure that remains constant through the series. No massive conceptual changes.

89

FIGHTING STEEL

● **Genre:** Strategy/Naval Combat ● **Players:** 1-4 ● **Developer:** Divide by Zero ● **Publisher:** SSI ● **Distributor:** GT Interactive ● **Price:** $79.95 ● **Rating:** G8+ ● **Available:** Now
● **Need:** P133 64MB RAM 3D Card (Direct 3D) ● **Want:** P200 ● **URL:** www.fightingsteel.com

Successfully captures warfare on the high seas, and the mounting tension that comes with thousands of sailors in confined spaces together.

Stunning vistas to bring tears to your eyes.

No, seriously. This isn't a bath-time toy?

Old sailors used to fall into one of two camps - those who liked big battleships and those who liked bigger battleships! Fighting Steel takes you back to the glorious age of the big guns, before guided weapons and aircraft carriers ruled the waves. 1999 has been a good one for naval sim enthusiasts and SSI seem to have produced a winner that focuses on big ship actions from 1939-42. You won't find submarines or air wings in this game. The complexities of World War II era fleet actions will give you more than enough to think about though, if strategy is your caper.

Comprehensive naval action

Fighting Steel offers single missions and campaigns based around the US, British, Japanese and German navies of WWII. All are introduced by first class animated briefings, and the accompanying scenario notes are remarkably detailed. The manual is excellent and the traditional SSI walkthrough tutorials bring you to grips with the interface very quickly, although some in-game prompts would have been useful.

Armchair Admirals will appreciate the comprehensive database and the flexible scenario editor, with over 1000 ships and 50 types of guns and

PLUS

www.navy.gov.au
Check out the Royal Australian Navy's official website for current and historical information on the best navy in the world. Current highlights include a "Report to the Minister for Defence on the Collins Class Submarine and Related Matters", although this might be a bit of a heavy read for some people.
This site also features a huge archive of photographs detailing some of the particulars of being in the navy.

torpedoes available in to play around with. The Battle Generator is an added bonus; enabling players to create a random battle by selecting nationalities, force size and environmental conditions.

Command span

SSI have chosen to concentrate on the commander's role in Fighting Steel, with an emphasis on the management of fleet assets and manoeuvring for operational advantage. Some players will be disappointed at the lack of a hands-on element, such as crewing individual guns or directing torpedo fire, but there's more than enough to fiddle around with to keep most satisfied.

Your span of command can be set as a single ship or as whole fleet, with considerations including crew experience and fatigue, targeting, multiple engagements and ship refurbishment. The big choice in the campaign mode is when and where to fight, bearing in mind the need to rest ships and crews, as well as protect vast areas of ocean.

> ## "Fighting Steel even sounds good in battle, with the thunder of battleships bringing a tear to this old gunner's eye!"

Fighting Steel has a straightforward interface that provides a terrific degree of situational awareness. The various camera views are useful instead of just pretty, and the graphics, although not as good as claimed on the box, are quite effective. Fighting Steel even sounds good in battle, with the thunder of battleships bringing a tear to this old gunner's eye! Orders and reports are provided in appropriate accents, adding to the overall atmosphere of the game.

Authentic atmosphere

The lack of a genuine strategic element is a little disappointing however, as naval warfare is often about the strategic implications of tactical actions. Fighting Steel counters this by capturing the atmosphere of big ship battles beautifully. I just wish that SSI realised that the sea is full of bits of land - anything to break up all that blue on the screen! ■

Major Des McNicholas

PCPP

FOR: Great manual, great scenario editor and great big guns! It ships with Silent Hunter and Steel Panthers III.

AGAINST: Average graphics, despite the claims. Released rather buggy - visit the SSI web site for the latest patches.

80

SEGA RALLY 2

● **Genre:** Arcade Racing ● **Players:** 1-4 ● **Developer:** Sega PC ● **Publisher:** Sega ● **Distributor:** Ozisoft ● **Price:** TBA ● **Rating:** G ● **Available:** Now
● **Need:** Win95/98, P200, 32MB RAM, 90MB HD, 3d graphics accelerator required, x4 CD ROM ● **Want:** PII 300, 64MB RAM, 650MB HD, Direct 3D Board VRAM 16MB ● **URL:** www.segaozisoft.com.au

A gorgeous looking racer that should have stayed in the arcades.

A helicopter tries to join in the fun.

COROLLA WRC
DRIVER JHAR

(top) Aargh! It's the snow track! Oh how we hate the slippery-slidey snow tracks...

This racing simulation from Sega features some cool 3-D graphics, easy to handle controls, and challenging courses that should please the speed demon in anyone. Sega Rally is an arcade look at the unique world of rally-racing, one that is peppered with just enough driving-model realism, great graphics, cool options and of course the always popular replay function. All this works together producing that wholly distinctive arcade rally-driving experience.

Arcade perfect

Being an adaptation of an arcade game, Sega have not modified user interaction very much at all, which is perhaps, to their detriment. This game plays like you're feeding it bucket loads of coinage. In other words, if you don't cut it by the time limit, then you have to start over, over and over. But this doesn't matter much because the graphics are impressive. Smooth rendering and no visible glitches, the scenery is more than enough to please most eye candy addicts. Furthermore, the car responds realistically to the controls, moving accurately through turns, sliding dynamically and complete with bona fide simulated flying dirt, mud or snow. The fully textured and colourful scenery runs the gamut from misted mountains to rocky deserts, complete with small, and yet striking touches such as leaping animals, helicopters flying overhead and over-zealous flash equipped spectators.

"...a superb sensation of speed."

Crash Derby it ain't

Racing surfaces vary from mud to snow and ice, with each giving varying control response. Mastering these is a necessary element of the SR2 experience.

So it's rough, but just how rough?. One pretty major downfall is that you cannot total your car. What, I can't total my car, what kind of rally game is this anyway? Well, to give you an idea, slamming into the sideline only produces a few small sparks and a great big "OH NO" from your navigator. That's it. I'm sorry Sega, but not being about to smash up your car in frustration (and this is something that I think most people would agree with) is very necessary in this kind of game. Not to worry, we will get over it. What choice do we have?

Standard, plus extras?

As a fairly standard addition to most racing games these days, Sega have included the "customisation" feature - set the car up as you prefer it for

different conditions. These features, along with many different cars to choose from shows that the developers have certainly covered their bases. On top of this, you'll find race replay and this rocks! (it's something that ruins the best of games when not included). A cinematic collage of stock standard camera angles will please the spectator even if they came last in the race.

Overall the game provides an above average challenge, complete with championship races, and a superb sensation of speed. It also offers 3D acceleration and if you're into that human factor thing, race over a LAN as all the standard protocols are supported. But if you prefer it solo, there's enough in Sega Rally 2 to keep you interested, but more importantly, to justify a purchase. ■

Jhar

PCPP

FOR: A near arcade-perfect translation of the arcade smash.

AGAINST: Since when were PC's better than arcade machines? This one is generally lacking in an options department worthy of a PC racer.

68

UNREAL MISSION PACK
RETURN TO NA PALI

● **Genre:** Outdoor Admiration (FPS) ● **Players:** 1 ● **Developer:** Legend Entertainment ● **Publisher:** GT Interactive ● **Distributor:** GT Interactive ● **Price:** TBA ● **Rating:** MA15+ ● **Available:** Now
● **Need:** P166, 64MB RAM, Win95/98, either Unreal or Unreal Tournament ● **Want:** 400Mhz, 128Mb RAM, Voodoo2 or better 3D card (Glide, Direct3D and OpenGL supported) ● **URL:** www.gtinteractive.com/unreal/missionpack/

Unreal joins Mission Pack Mediocrity

The Unreal engine was an accomplished piece of engineering and, despite the fact that it's now over one year old, remains the most adept contender in the 3D gaming race. Return to Na Pali has continued on with the graceful style established by its predecessor, using its powerful graphics engine to overkill. Like many mission packs, Na Pali promises a rich and engrossing standard, but ends up delivering only a decimal more to what we were playing twelve months ago.

Basic FPS plot, take 2

After escaping in a pod at the end of

powered explosive shell, you'll always find it handy to have rounds in stock. The grenade launcher is a fairly useless armament due to its slow firing rate and extremely slow projectile speed, though the secondary mode allows you to lay down explosives for later destruction - pity that they aren't proximity based. The rocket launcher is actually quite unique in that the rocket accelerates as it travels through the air, while the subsidiary mode allows you to guide the rocket in multiple directions (read: Half-Life). It's nice to see a few weapons that deviate from the diverse collection featured in the original.

> ## "...ends up delivering only a decimal more to what we were playing twelve months ago."

the original, your craft comes under the tractor beam of the UMS Bodega Bay - a large military starship that is on a salvage mission, searching for a missing ship, the US Prometheus. When the starship's superiors discover your identity, you are "volunteered" for the venture back to the surface, where you'll fight to retrieve the valued weaponry research logs and ultimately, your existence.

Surprise! New weapons!

It couldn't be labelled an expansion pack without the inclusion of extra weaponry and Na Pali provides three new tools of dismemberment: the combat assault rifle (CAR), the grenade launcher and the rocket launcher. Available early in the game, the CAR is a nice, general, all-purpose tool for the job. Sporting a primary firing mode of light, armour-piercing rounds and a secondary mode that delivers a high

Accredited enemies

To complement the three new weapons, Legend has seen fit to include three, diversified new enemies: the Predator, Spinner and the devilish Terran Marine. Though the spinner (a spider-like creature that shoots gooey projectiles) isn't exactly awe inspiring, the other two are worthy adversaries. Alone, the predator is a feeble creature who will oftentimes run away, shrieking in terror and posing little threat. In groups however, the predator gains confidence and will insistently hunt you down, shrieking in joy and rapture. The Terran Marine was a particularly invigorating opponent - perhaps the most difficult (though believable) enemy ever created for a first person shooter. They are highly formidable opponents, beating even the Skaarj for both flexibility and deviousness in artificial intelligence.

A tad outdated

Though it succeeds in re-creating what Unreal established, Return to Na Pali adds little to what's now old and outdated. While other games develop

These guys have a library? Your kidding us!

their story through in-game features, Na Pali is like a book that outlines its events before the beginning of each chapter, with flimsy structure and tacky dialogue. The graphics are still superb, but with this comes still exceedingly high system requirements and a barrage of unpalatable features. Return to Na Pali isn't entirely bad. As a mission pack it succeeds, but as stand alone amusement give me Half Life any day. ■

Elih Brading

PLUS

www.nervedamage.com
Nerve Damage is a well-constructed site with tutorials, utilities and examples for creating models and monsters in Unreal.

The full moon is ominous.

PCPP

FOR: Music and appearance, sweet skies, the reasonable monster placement may startle...

AGAINST: ..but this does little to shun the fact that the bloated storyline lacks structure. OpenGL and D3D support is still below par.

72

BALDUR'S GATE ADD-ON
TALES OF THE SWORD COAST

A difficult expansion aimed directly at the RPG addict.

So it came to be that on the nineteenth day roaming the Sword Coast, my relatively inexperienced party and I (note: if I don't alleviate the party of the presence of that irksome chaotic dwarf that we picked up just south of the Friendly Arm Inn, I fear my other companions will turn rabid and exchange blows. I can't afford to lose any other comrades in arms. And besides, he snores as loud as a horse and has a particularly odd stench about him that I just can't stomach) came across a most peculiar man. This figure reeked of greed and invited us to tempt the fate of Durlag's Tower, now a tourist attraction representing the "brave new era of Mercantilist expansionism", for a small fee. If we had not heard that Durlag's Tower was indeed something more sinister, we may have accepted his offer of escort. We continued past the now hostile entrepreneur, and made our way toward the grey building looming in the distance.

After a whirlwind of events, we resurrected ourselves at the delta of the path towards Durlag's Tower and began another attempt on the entrance to the infamous prison. Each successive attempt was met with our untimely death at the hands of brutal Battle Horrors, situated a good hundred yards or so from its entrance. Perhaps the gods would rather we continue our assault on the Mines of Nashkell?

Polvo Dragoiu
2nd Level Elven Ranger.
19th Day after the death of Gorion

A rare jewel

Expansion packs for RPGs have always been rather intriguing. Rather than providing the gamer with a totally new adventure set after the events covered in the core game (as is the case with most FPS or RTS add-on packs), the RPG pack adds quests within the game itself, usually before the game's fitting conclusion. Such was the case with both of the Ultima VII mission packs. Although the expansions brought new, well-conceived quests to the game, they had the side effect of

leaving gameplay slightly off-balance. Who can remember finding no challenge in the monsters met in the Black Gate after acquiring the Blackrock sword of the expansion pack?

Such is the case with Tales of the Sword Coast. The quests are fantastic, the new locations interesting, and there are a slew of new items, features, and general enhancements expected of an expansion pack that will surely please fans of Baldur's Gate. In terms of challenge and difficulty, the balance has been shifted to the other side of the scale. The quests of TotSC, starting in Ulgoth's Beard and including the fiendish Durlag's Tower, are desperately hard, especially if you're new to Faerun. Unless you're an 8th level character leading similarly skilled and equipped party members, your progress through the new areas introduced in TotSC will be severely stunted. Experienced players however, should find joy in the challenges the new quests offer.

No Prumpy

Interplay have kindly made an experienced party available to the players that never finished the original in the first place, including a save game set prior to the final battle in Baldur's Gate. The problem is, with plenty of references to earlier events in the game, and of course playing with a ready-made party, it's hard to feel involved in the events that transpire. This is an RPG after all. That said, playing through Tales of the Sword Coast in conjunction with Baldur's Gate from the beginning works extremely well. If you're an existing Baldur's Gate fanatic - you're set. ■

March Stepnik

After sampling the local fungus, things became a little strange...

"The quests of TotSC… are desperately hard, especially if you're new to Faerun."

FOR: Fantastic quests and locations. Minor enhancements that improve upon the original.

AGAINST: Having to start the original game up from the Tales CD. New quests blend in too well with the original Baldur's Gate.

76

NASCAR Road Racing

● **Genre:** Racing Simulation ● **Players:** 1 ● **Developer:** EASports ● **Publisher:** Electronic Arts ● **Distributor:** Electronic Arts ● **Price:** TBA ● **Rating:** G ● **Available:** Now
● **Need:** P133, 16MB RAM, 75 MB hard disk space (requires DirectX 5) ● **Want:** P166, 32MB RAM, 75 MB hard disk space (No 3D Support) ● **URL:** www.easports.com

A NASCAR game where you don't turn left four times each lap. Surely it's too good to be true...? Yep.

The patchwork quilt on the road made driving rather tricky.

In gaming, as in most things, there are many degrees that distinguish the high-end quality products from the low end slap togethers. With NASCAR Road Racing, I feel I'm interacting with the latter degree of this separatist scale - a disappointment that the developers themselves don't seem all too keen to excite with their product description. A casual pre-game visit to the EA Sports website reveals what seems to be a discernable lack of enthusiasm for their very own game. The kind of uninspired sales pitch you image would sound more appropriate coming from a dead bored telemarketer in the 7th hour of their night shift.

Behind the times

Racing simulations must be fast. They must also look and sound good. With the release of such a large number of high quality racing simulations over the last couple of years, it's actually quite quaint to come across something that looks like it was made in the pre-Pentium days. NASCAR Road Racing is definitely behind the times in all aspects of game standards. It's one of those games where if you were silly enough to buy it in the first place, you'd swear never to rush a purchase again. This title is, in every way, a patchy underdeveloped excuse to increase the volume of titles under a publisher's brand.

No 3D support!

The graphics in the title are woefully inadequate with very little attention to detail and no 3D acceleration support. Racing games have gotten to the stage where criticisms can be made of blended textures where even the slightest suggestion of block pixels can be seen. This title is all block.

The sound is equally underdeveloped with one getting the impression that the effects were cut in a single afternoon with a stock disk of bad quality sound effects. A spinout for example, sounds like a cross between

"behind the times in all aspects of game standards."

sharp nails on a blackboard and a fish in a puddle with sub-radio quality sampling and repetitive sequencing. On top of this, you have the pleasure of listening to the cliched announcer whose two favourite phases are "great move" and "you might try heading in the right direction". Compelling commentary, though not after you've heard it ten times in a single race.

Over and over... and out!

There is really not a lot more that can be said about this game, aside from that fact that it obviously serves to promote two other titles by the same publisher. NASCAR 99 and NASCAR Revolution are plugged from both the installer that carries a demo of the latter and the website that promotes the former. So if you're hell bent on NASCAR titles, then I'd suggest you check out either of these two titles and steer well clear of NASCAR Road Racing - a definite flop! ■

Jhar

The Micro Machines cam. If only.

PLUS

DAYS OF THUNDER Also based on the wonderful world of NASCAR racing, this feature film starring the unflappable Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman is almost as riveting as NASCAR Road Racing.

PCPP

FOR: Well, it doesn't delete the contents of your hard drive while installing...

AGAINST: No 3D support. Does anything need mentioning? Oh, yes, the appalling sound fx.

28

GUARDIAN OF DARKNESS

"Now, pretend you are a mating duck."

● **Genre:** First Person Action/Adventure ● **Players:** 1 ● **Developer:** Cryo Interactive ● **Publisher:** Cryo Interactive ● **Distributor:** Playcorp
● **Price:** $TBA ● **Rating:** TBA ● **Available:** Now ● **Need:** P200, 16MB RAM, 3D graphics card (Glide, D3D) ● **Want:** A game worth all of this!
● **URL:** www.cryo-interactive.com

You'll be needing an exorcist yourself after playing this...

One day in the near future, the word "cryo" might become a common term amongst computer gaming types, in memory of the work by the eponymous developers. If so, I tend to think that people won't be saying, "Geez, that was awesome, talk about cryo!". Rather, they'll be saying, "What a pile of cryo! Who could be bothered with this?" On the reputation of such absolute stinkers as Dreams to Reality and The Ring, Cryo games for me are usually filed under "B" (for the bin) but I thought Guardian of Darkness deserved the benefit of the doubt. Well, at least they're consistent...

Where's Smithers?

The premise of the game is that you are Ekna, an exorcist monk. Your job is to protect the Earth from the monsters of the Beyond. Along to help you is a fellow guardian, Mr Burnst. So it's a supernatural joyride through urban locations and it's all a bit cryptic (as these games tend to be).

In your arsenal against these forces are various spells that you can use. Some are offensive, others cause action in your location. You have a certain amount of spell force, and so you must economise your use of the spells. Progressing through the game, you learn more spells - and you're going to need them because there's precious little else to do in this game but use them!

Miraculous teleportations

Guardian of Darkness is a game that LOOKS fantastic in screenshots, so it seems to be worth checking out. But after five minutes of actual play, it's obvious the game is clunky and awkward, even in the basics of acceptable gameplay. Commands such as pick up an object has our main character picking something up, even when the text tells us there is nothing there!

Your supporting cast seems to be able to walk through walls. If you leave a room with someone in it, you might

I'm here to help you. Everybody's worried sick.

+1 0366   +1
Blast Positive   **Trance**

"Excuse me, Miss, but that posture looks incredibly painful."

"This isn't a game without hope, it's just a very, very ordinary one."

PLUS

www.hata.org/anime/gs/exorcism.html
The Japanese know how to exorcise properly. Go Ghost Sweeper Mikami!

find they miraculously appear a few rooms ahead! The figures too generally look awful. A doctor that you meet in the first mission looks like she has serious spinal problems... The game just looks fairly appalling.

Dull, dull, dull

Then you have the old standards from Cryo. These are: the disconcerting and repetitive music, the awful voice acting, the general lack of an interesting storyline - what we've come to expect. It's hard to see why someone would go

for this when there are plenty of titles out there that are worth touching.

It must be said that the 3D engine is not terrible, in comparison to earlier efforts. This isn't a game without hope, it's just a very, very ordinary one. I guess we can only hope that Cryo will improve from here, and perhaps in 5 or 10 years, they might be a genuinely innovative game developer. But for the moment, this one is best left to the die-hards of Continental weirdness. ■

John Dewhurst

PCPP

FOR: It's kooky and spooky, supernature here we come!

AGAINST: Poor control for an action game, obscenely ordinary animation, a fairly dull game really.

30

GRIM FANDANGO

Is adventure gaming dead? John Dewhurst exhumes this bony corpse from Lucasarts and conducts the autopsy.

"With bony hands I hold my partner,
On soulless feet we cross the floor.
The music stops as if to answer
An empty knocking at the door.

It seems his skin was sweet as mango,
When last I held him to my breast.
But now we dance this grim fandango
And will four years before we rest."

So in a beatnik club in Rubacava, hip cat Olivia Ofrendi gives us this poem that neatly summarises the predicament in which our hero,

Manuel Calavera, finds himself. Starting out as a soul reaper for the Department of the Dead, Manny will cross the Land of the Dead on his four year journey of the soul.

In that time, Manny will have to confront haunted woods and demon beavers, oppressed workers and beat intelligentsia (daddy-o...), monsters of the deep and a sinister crime boss in his search for one deceased female, Mercedes Colomar. All with the help of his big orange sidekick, Glottis and various friends in other places. So that's the scene for the most ambitious

adventure title yet. Part noir, part comedy, part moral tale, Grim Fandango is the big brother to its predecessors in Sam & Max Hit The Road and Full Throttle.

Adults in the backseat

Nine months on and Grim Fandango has aged particularly well, still offering extraordinary gaming. The big draw cards in Lucasarts adventures are the artwork and the humour. This time around though, the humour has taken a backseat to the story. This dark and involving tale of intrigue and the
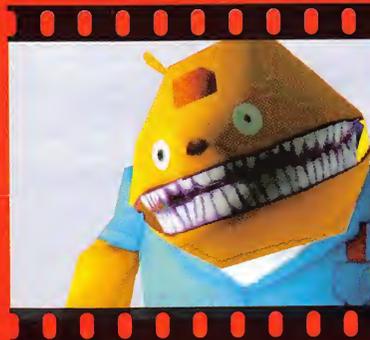
Faithfull Glottis is always around.

A GRIM CAST OF THOUSANDS

Grim Fandango is full of great characters, so please tip your hat to the main players.

Manuel Calavera
"Love is for the living, Sal."
Enjoyed many careers such as soul collector, resistance agent, club owner and ship captain. Is searching for Meche to save her soul, or is there more?

Glottis
"I'm a big demon success story!"
Demon of the Earth and motorhead who becomes Manny's chauffeur & mechanic in their travels. Really a big softy at heart.

Domino Hurley
"The kid's alright... heh heh... She's a firecracker." (of Meche)
Manny's high-achieving colleague, who is also the right-hand man of the evil Hector Lemans.

Mercedes Colomar
"I'm gonna crack you open like a fake Ming vase!"
Deceased saint. She disappears to walk to the 9th Underworld, causing Manny to follow her. Beneath her mild manner lies a mean streak! Nicknamed Meche.

Salvador Limones
"Viva la revolution!"
Leader of the Lost Souls Alliance resistance movement and loyal friend of Agent Calavera. Breeds carrier pigeons for communication purposes.
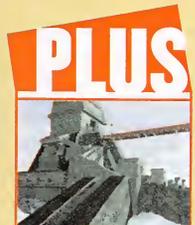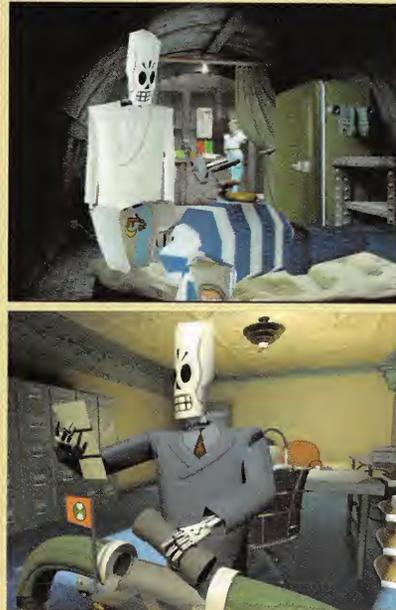
Hector Lemans
"You see, I've been a very bad boy!"
Dastardly villain with a scheme to horrify all the deceased! Rather spider-like and very creepy...

Manny in one of those moody, staring into the distance, scenes.

search for happiness is what makes Grim Fandango a more adult affair and ultimately more entertaining.

Perhaps this is why the gaming public received this Lucasarts game a little more coolly than previous titles. There isn't the song-and-dance of Sam & Max Hit The Road or the screaming-guitar-rock of Full Throttle. Manny's story is a parody and homage (almost a genre in itself) to hardboiled fiction and the film noir era. See all the stereotypes: Manny, a pessimist searching for redemption with the world against him, the femme fatale (Meche - sort of), villainy, corruption and the treachery of apparent allies (I won't spoil the story...). Above all there is the characteristic lighting and music (think dark and foreboding) as well as the stagey, brooding, here's-looking-at-you-kid characters.

Your ice-pick, Mr Trotsky

For those of us who grew up on American culture (everyone raise your hands), Grim Fandango offers a well-worn story in a rather familiar setting. It relies on the styles of The Maltese Falcon, The Big Sleep and Casablanca. Refreshingly, the game doesn't only

"The fate of Manny Calavera is an engaging story in itself and the attention to narrative in Grim Fandango is refreshing."

make fun of these films for its own sake, it also manages to capture some of their drama. The fate of Manny Calavera is an engaging story in itself and the attention to narrative in Grim Fandango is refreshing.

That's not to say that there is an absence of humour but that it is a more subtle type of humour that soars over the heads of younger gamers. To this end, the game is really a gift to the older gamer who grew up on Day of the Tentacle et al. The humour remains in Grim Fandango, but it is more conversation based rather than the all out wackiness of Sam & Max. There are some hilarious set-pieces, like the Blue Casket, the previously beatnik club featuring cool cats spouting revolutionary sentiments (Mr. Trotsky!), performance poetry and the clicking. Also there are the hilarious conversations where, listening to someone tell you their life story, you can

occasionally interject with stupid asides. Marvellous! The visuals are so classy and beautiful but again, will probably only appeal to the seasoned gamer.

Manny reasons to love

The puzzles in Grim Fandango are fairly challenging but never intrusive on the gaming experience. The middle section of the game offers the really large-scale scenario that will slow you up, but generally the different chapters won't cause too much stress. This is because the narrative is the most important feature - of course, you want to see what happens to Manny.

My only real gripe with the game is that you never find out who Manny was- why was he working for the D.O.D.? What were his sins in life? (Maybe cause for a sequel...) The finale seemed a fraction rushed, too. However, I loved Grim Fandango. It is a super adventure in a pretty sparse genre. For those who haven't had the pleasure of dancing the Fandango, pick it up because it is one of the greatest adventure titles of recent years. ■

John Dewhurst

Darn useful things, those scythes.

Have you ever eaten bark? It's not that bad. I remember I had a hairball once... Could I hold that metal detector for a second?

HOYLE BACKGAMMON AND CRIBBAGE

● Genre: Card/board games ● Players: 1-2 ● Developer: Hoyle ● Publisher: Sierra ● Distributor: Dataflow

In the greatest of all traditions, Hoyle have brought us yet another complete and definitive guide to some of the most cryptic originally-non-digital games out there. You know, the ones that promote contact with others to play, like cards and board games. Hoyle now presents the complete, the official, the animated... Wait for it... Backgammon and Cribbage!

Ahh... Backgammon. That once mysterious exercise where little checkers are used (and lost), the dice are always missing and nobody has the foggiest idea of how to explain the nature of the game, is confusing no more! Best summed up as "kinda like chess but with an element of chance in it", Sierra succeed in first tutoring the player in its wily ways then hooking them in to a state of near-permanent addiction.

Cribbage, on the other hand, is a

different story. We are still trying to understand this one. You start by putting two cards in the crib, then each remaining card has a value and you try and get pairs or to a certain number so you can move your peg. If you get the most points you get the crib cards as well and then move the little peg around the board even more. Make sense? On a side note, it's probably the game Terry Pratchett based "Cripple Mr. Onion" on, i.e. no one really knows the rules, and even if you do, you still don't know what you're doing while you are playing it anyway. Sierra do their best to make you understand though, and maybe, just maybe, with a lot of reading and dedicated game play, you too may be able to master the Cribbage way.

You've got to bless Sierra for having the conscience to bring the magic of Backgammon and Cribbage to the masses. Bless 'em.
Agata Budinksa

Backgammon is a sure fire hit with the ladies.

ART OF THE SKIES

● Genre: Art edutainment ● Developer: Millennium Multimedia International ● Need: Win 95/98, 16MB RAM, Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Internet Explorer (included on disk). ● Need: Internet connection.

Flight has captured the imagination of artists throughout the ages, and the last century has been no exception. Rather than being limited to capturing the graceful movements of an eagle or the delicate structure of a hummingbird for example, artists of this day and age are bringing to their canvas big birds of the giant, metallic variety.

Art of the Skies is a comprehensive collection of work, including paintings, sketches, photos and essays, documenting the modern artists' love affair with aviation. Millennium takes you through the entire history of manned flight, though concentrates heavily on the airplane's role in war - especially that of both World Wars. There is an abundance of material covering modern fighter planes, and commercial aviation enthusiasts

have also been catered for.

In all, there are thousands of separate pieces featured on this compilation, encompassing images of paintings, drawings, art prints and photography. For those wanting a more complete experience, there's a sound room with over forty sounds of different aircraft, and a HUGE glossary of aviation and art technology. What a combination!

Before you rush off and buy yourself a copy (if you are such inclined), it should be known that Art of the Skies is an Internet browser-based edutainment title. That is, you'll need a working copy of either Microsoft Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator to run the program. Browser-based titles have copped a lot of flak lately due to their limited nature. Art of the Skies escapes drudgery by using a variety of browser plug-

Who'd want to fly a plane when you could paint one instead?

ins, making for a more visually stimulating ride than recent browser based efforts. Better still, Art of the Skies features an extensive range of related links built in to the title, which if used

whilst online, will instantly whisk you away further topics on the subject. Constant updates are also planned, though you will require an Internet connection!
March Stepnik

AFL HALL OF FAME

● Genre: Sports Stats/Infotainment ● Developer: Gordan Multimedia ● Publisher: Playcorp

Australian Rules Football is about as Aussie as you can get. The sport attracts great crowd attendance and is the definitely the national game (of the foot variety anyway). The game has a long history, originating in 1858, as a winter fitness recreation for cricketers. In that year, Thomas Wills wrote the first official rules for a game that would continue to be adhered to till the present day. These intriguing details came from the AFL Hall of Fame, a detailed resource on the history of Aussie Rules. If you're a footy fan, who's keen on stats (and who isn't?) then this one's for you. There's a wealth of football knowledge in this title that's sure to excite no less than the most keen football enthusiast.

The presentation of the information is always going to be the hardest part of these kinds of titles. How do you make the statistics & records clear and easy to access, without it seeming too dry? In AFL Hall of Fame, the main menu is a virtual "Hall of Fame", just as you'd imagine the information to be presented at a club. You just click on the portrait on the wall or an information screen to get to the details.

There's a lot here as well. You get to see some good video: great marks, archival and recent footage of games. There's a great variety of information too, from a timeline of events throughout the game's history and club profiles, to the winners of the major medals and famous rivals.

There are flaws in AFL Hall of Fame, and these come in the form of repetitive animation and music. There's only so many times you can listen to an "Up There Cazaly" medley! Afterwards, it becomes VERY annoying. The fact that there is no options screen makes this one a little inflexible. These small problems aside, AFL Hall of Fame is a well presented resource for the football enthusiast, with an enormous amount of detail.

John Dewhurst
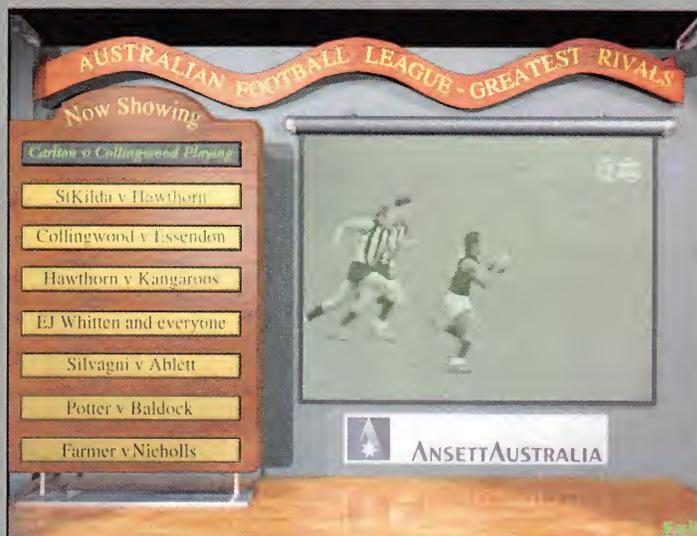
All that's missing is the legendary Dewhurst v Plugger duel.

THE ADVENTURES OF JONNY QUEST

● Genre: Children's Adventure ● Developer: Dreamcatcher ● Publisher: Hilad Corporation

Jonny Quest was one of those Saturday morning cartoons classics from decades ago that made something of a comeback. You may remember the revamped series on our screens recently. The show concerns a little guy, Jonny Quest, as he dashes about with his friends, Haji and Jessie, saving the planet from the evil villain, Dr. Surd. Good healthy stuff for a young boy scout. From first glance this looks to be an educational title, thinly veiled as a game. But no, this no edutainment, it's just adventure the whole way.

This game is aimed at the quite young gamer. The ones who can use a computer competently but aren't quite ready for full scale gaming. So you could say this is adventure gaming with training wheels. So it's catering to a particular market - that's good. And the fact that it's mostly basic puzzles rather than just shootin' stuff is good too (that's sort of educational, isn't it?).

The system requirements are for a 486, so the game appears on screen in a tiny window. Your heroes don't actually move on screen, they just stand around in the mannequin positions. When you move to a new scene, they stand around in fixed position, while their lips move. It's fairly solid but not very exciting at all. The visuals being rather gloomy, I can't see how it would entrance a child for very long. As a diversionary tactic for the kids, it's pretty uninteresting!

It's easy to feel like it's a repackaged game from five years ago and a poor one at that. The game has some cute animated cut-scenes (a la Hanna Barbera) and there might be some nostalgia value in this game, for the Jonny Quest fan. Otherwise, it's another terribly average puzzler for the young ones.

John Dewhurst

Point. Click. Point. Click. Point. Click. Click. Click. Die.

GAMEPLAY

THE ORACLE

The Oracle is a Wisdom Dispensing Service. He cannot abide cheaters. Write to him at:
Oracle
PC PowerPlay
78 Renwick st
Redfern, NSW 2016
oracle@pcpowerplay.next.com.au

In just one hair of his long, wispy, white beard, he holds more gaming knowledge than the entirety of mankind will ever know...

CODE

Rollercoaster Tycoon

Invite some VIP guests into your park. Just rename any visitor with one of the following names for the cheats to take effect.

Chris Sawyer - Takes pictures of rides
Simon Foster - Paints pictures of rides
Melanie Warn - Increases guests' happiness
Katie Brayshaw - Waving guests
John Wardley - Constantly thinks "Wow!"
John Mace - pays double the price for every ride
For some easy money, go to the Finances screen, then press **Enter-M** to receive $5,000. This may be done only once per month of game time. Shameless cheaters, should go to the main menu, then hold **Shift**, type **RCT2**, and press **Enter.** You'll receive a round of applause for doing it properly.

Need For Speed High Stakes

The following deeply despicable codes are to be entered at the main menu.
Hot Pursuit:
DCOP - Bonus car
ECOP - Bonus car
FCOP - Bonus car

Final Fantasy 7

Q I've had Final Fantasy 7 for almost half a year now and I'm up to the second CD. I've captured Cid's Highwind (as Tifa) and I'm completely lost! I have no idea where to go as most places I can't land because it's not level! Could you please tell me what I should do? Also, I accidentally sold the Chocobo Lure Materia. Is there another one around?
**William Turner**
Brisbane, QLD

A A crippling lack of foresight on behalf of the Highwind designers means that the aerial vehicle can only land safely in a grassy plain or on the Northern Continent's canyon floor. Areas you may wish to explore include: a cave beyond the mountain range near Midgar City, a house to the east of Icicle Lodge, and the Chocobo Farm where you will find another materia near the fence of the Chocobo enclosure. To get your quest back on track, fly the Highwind to the Southern Continent and land in the vicinity of a forest that encompasses a small village. Explore it thoroughly and, well, you'll soon see...

Leisure Suit Larry 2

Q My wife and I are stuck in Leisure Suit Larry 2. We have got in the lifeboat and are on the island. How do we find the bottom half of the bikini, please?
Colin and Pam
Mallacoota, VIC

A I regret to inform you that this may require some backtracking and possible restoring of an earlier save game. You see, what you should have done immediately upon disembarking from the lifeboat is to walk to the left hand side of the screen and - voila! - pick up the bottom of the bikini. In future, investigate fully each screen before continuing to the next.
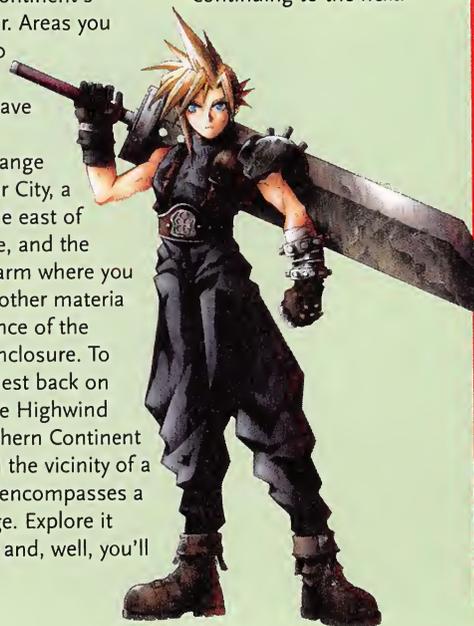
tips&tactics

Need for Speed: High Stakes

● Although a fun diversion, shortcuts rarely live up to their name and save you time. The real route to success comes from hours spent practising to hit the perfect racing lines through each corner.

● Thus, getting your cornering technique down pat is absolutely paramount. Braking is for girls - hey, it is called Need For Speed, after all - so don't fret too much about finding the right braking distance before each bend. Try instead to approach the corner from the correct angle - usually the wider the better - touch the brakes momentarily then hammer the gas to power through.

● As soon as you feel comfortable, choose the manual gear option. Keeping your revs near the redline is the best way to faster times, and sadly the automatic transmission just refuses to cooperate with this ideology.

● Selecting a car is always a tricky decision to make. While the cars with the highest top speeds are obviously sexier beasts to be seen in, more often than not they'll be outperformed by those cars which have less grunt but more refined handling and grip.

Tip! Avoid cars parked on the road.

CODE

Might & Magic VII

Alchemy is an important skill to know, but just because your character has learnt it doesn't mean they can start mixing potions immediately. Experimentation is necessary until you discover which combinations have the desired effect. Of course, you could always simply look at the list we've compiled below. But, be warned, you won't be able to look at yourself in the mirror ever again.

Normal Skill

Red = Cure Wounds
Yellow = Cure Weakness
Blue = Magic Potion
Orange (Red + Yellow) = Cure Disease
Purple (Red + Blue) = Cure Poison
Green (Yellow + Blue) = Awaken

Expert Skill

Green + Blue = Recharge Item
Green + Yellow = Harden Item
Green + Red = Bless
Green + Orange = Cure Insanity
Green + Purple = Remove Curse
Orange + Red = Haste
Orange + Yellow = Stone Skin

Orange + Blue = Preservation
Orange + Purple = Remove Fear
Purple + Red = Heroism
Purple + Yellow = Water Breathing
Purple + Blue = Shield

Master Skill

Green/Blue + Orange = Noxious Potion
Green/Blue + Green = Personality Boost
Green/Blue + Purple = Swift Potion
Green/Blue + Green/Yellow = Divine Power
Green/Blue + Orange/Red = Divine Restoration
Green/Blue + Orange/Yellow = Body Resistance
Green/Blue + Purple/Red = Mind Resistance
Green/Yellow + Orange = Cure Paralysis
Green/Yellow + Green = Intellect Boost
Green/Yellow + Purple = Noxious Potion
Green/Yellow + Orange/Red = Fire Resistance
Green/Yellow + Purple/Red = Divine Restoration
Green/Yellow + Purple/Blue = Water Resistance
Orange/Red + Orange = Speed Boost
Orange/Red + Green = Flaming Potion
Orange/Red + Purple = Shocking Potion
Orange/Red + Orange/Yellow = Divine Cure
Orange/Red + Purple/Blue = Air Resistance
Orange/Yellow + Orange = Accuracy Boost
Orange/Yellow + Green = Cure Paralysis
Orange/Yellow + Purple = Flaming Potion

Orange/Yellow + Purple/Red = Earth Resistance
Orange/Yellow + Purple/Blue = Divine Restoration
Purple/Red + Orange = Shocking Potion
Purple/Red + Green = Freezing Potion
Purple/Red + Purple = Might Boost
Purple/Red + Purple/Blue = Luck Boost
Purple/Blue + Orange = Freezing Potion
Purple/Blue + Green = Swift Potion
Purple/Blue + Purple = Endurance Boost

Grand Master Skill

Orange/Yellow + Orange + Green = Pure Accuracy
Green/blue + Green + Purple = Pure Personality
Green/Yellow + Green + Orange = Pure Intellect
Orange/Red + Orange + Purple = Pure Speed
Purple/Red + Purple + Orange = Pure Might
Purple/Red + Purple/Blue + Orange = Pure Luck
Purple/Blue + Purple + Green = Pure Endurance

Anal inventory neatness at its best.

Tomb Raider 3

Q I'm stuck in Tomb Raider 3, in London, Aldwych. I have a walkthrough, but I don't understand what I have to do. I have gone down the right escalator and run-jump diagonally over the pit. Then I killed the thug. Now I have to open the door on the right, but I can't find the door. I have tried opening a door that's on the right of the train platform, but it doesn't open. I already have the maintenance key. Please tell me what door I am supposed to open.
Alvaro
Email

A Seek the light, Alvaro, seek the light. The door you must pass through is located in a darkened corner, its frame visible as if illuminated by a mystical aura. Sadly for your untrained human eyes, the keyhole isn't blessed by such fortuitous magic. Light a flare and, to the right of the door on the adjacent wall, you'll see where that maintenance key should be put to use.

Dreamweb

Q Help me, oh wise and foreseeing Oracle, for I am in a state of distress. In Dreamweb I have cut the wire in the elevator and climbed up onto its roof. Then I have pryed open the door with the axe, but when I enter the room a guy points his gun at me. So I use the axe and get the guy sitting next to the pool and the guy with the gun misses. But then I can't do anything to stop him from shooting me!
Glen Keong
Email

A Although I have noted upon many occasions, throughout the innumerable eons I have spent gaming, a curious implausibility concerning the resolution of combat situations (triremes sinking battleships in Civ, for instance), this is not one of them. When faced with a gun-toting hoodlum, my weapon of choice would always be a ▶

No key? Try your guns instead.

---

tips&tactics

Rollercoaster Tycoon

● If you need a quick injection of money for some major upgrade, then start charging a large entrance fee ($50 for starters) and make all the rides inside free. You should also have food and things to bring in some money as well.

● Boredom with a particular ride can be offset simply by repainting or giving away free tickets to it. Likewise, a good theme park needs to be dynamic. Investing in new rides at regular intervals will maintain interest in your park.

CODE

Need For Speed cont...
Arcade mode:
GOFAST - Engine upgrade
MADLAND - Superhuman opponents
MONKEY - Automatic transmission upgrade
MOON - Extra low gravity
TR# (00-15) - Drive as traffic cars
Career mode:
BUY - Free purchase
GATES - Cash increase
UP0 - No upgrades
UP1 - First upgrade
UP2 - Second upgrade
UP3 - Third upgrade
Miscellaneous:
ACAR - Bonus car
ALLTIERS - All tiers open
BCAR - Bonus car
CARS - All cars available
CCAR - Bonus car
OUTMYWAY - Horn causes other racers to crash
RESETYA - Horn causes other racers to reset
TRACKS - All tracks avail.

CODE

tips&tactics
Might & Magic VII

● Deciding upon the balance of your party is possibly the most important choice you'll make all game. While individual preferences will vary, it's recommended that you have all nine schools of magic covered - either in the form of specialists (sorcerer, cleric, druid) or dilettantes (rangers, thieves, paladins, archers, monks); and everyone capable of ranged attacks from the start - this means having either the Bow skill or spells like Magic Arrow or Swarm.

● Turn Undead is a very useful spell early on. When you get to the Barrow Mounds and the Haunted Mansion, it'll be a lifesaver on more than one occasion. Your cleric or druid should get it before you venture to these locations.

● When clearing the goblins that surround Harmondale, take control of the hillfort as soon as possible.

Dancing Demons.

Once there, switch to turn-based mode and kill everyone en masse with the cannons.

● Turn-based combat is the only way to survive, especially when you have ranged weapons. When the movement round arrives, turn around and run away from your opponent instead of simply backing off; this puts much more distance between you and your enemy.

▶ Dreamweb cont...
firearm of similar capacity. Use your axe on the first goon near the pool by all means, however, once the second thug misfires his shot, use your gun on him when the opportunity arises.

Myth 2
Q I've finally finished Myth 2, but I cannot find the so-called secret "Deer Hunter" level, where several units are armed with muskets! This is supposed to be accessed once the game has been completed. How do I find it?
**Dennis Maney
Email**

A Actually, there are in fact two secret missions to be uncovered within the muddy, medieval confines of Myth 2. One, to use your somewhat vulgar term, is indeed a "Deer Hunter" type mission, entitled A Long Awaited Drinking Party. It is to be unlocked during the third mission by ordering your bowmen to massacre a trio of bullfrogs found on an island in the northwestern region of the map. Limbs, Heads and Smoking Craters, the attractively named second secret mission, is revealed at the very end of the 20th mission - when following the Deceiver near the conclusion, do not travel in the obvious direction to the right, but instead head through an opening to the left.

Zork: Grand Inquisitor
Q I saw Zork:GI for $30 the other day and snapped it up. Trouble is, I'm stuck in the beginning. I have just gone underground, but can't get into the wizard's house. I used the cigar to blow off one of the arms of the security thing, but he still won't let me in. I've gotten into GUE Tech, but don't know what to do, and I can't catch the Underground train to Hades. Any tips to help move me along would be great.
**Andrew Phillips
Email**

A Do I have any tips? Oh, Andrew, your naivety amuses me greatly. I have more tips than you could possibly imagine. In fact, your all-too-human inability to comprehend the infinite is shown up in one of your problems with this game. Inside the GUE Tech, cast the IGRAM spell on the inscription that reads 'Infinite Corridor'. While in the subway, another spell - KENDALL - will make the underground plan much easier to understand. And, briefly, in addition to the cigar, you'll need the Mead Light from Port Frozzle and a spell scroll to disable the security door.

Tomb Raider
Q We are also stuck in Tomb Raider, the Obelisk of Khamoon. We're in the Mummies' Tomb and have got Secret #3, shimmied and dropped to the ledges. However, we cannot entice the mummies from their caves until we drop to the tomb floor, have killed the mummies (but cannot find the passage on the left to use the switch), and lower the bridge to get the scarab to open the underwater door.
**Colin and Pam
Mallacoota, VIC**

Discretion is the better part of valour, or so they say. I've never been entirely convinced by such platitudes, partly because I don't know who "they" are, but mainly because I tend to ignore the advice of cowards. In this particular circumstance, though, "they" may well be right. Do not drop to the floor of the tomb until you have actually killed those mummies. The doorway to the switch you seek is underneath the ledge where you enter the room. To get to it you have to work your way around the room mainly by shimmying, then finally drop to the column in the last corner. From there you can jump and grab the ledge under the entrance.

tips&tactics
Midtown Madness

● If the other cars are causing headaches, drive where there aren't any - on the footpaths! There's plenty of room there, so don't be cautious.

● Learning how to sideswipe effectively will boost your chances in a tight corner. When being jostled by another car, don't drive side-by-side trying to muscle it off the road; rather you should veer suddenly in and away, hopefully deflecting it into the oncoming traffic or off the road altogether.

● Drive through each circuit a few times and try to memorise its layout before you attempt to win it seriously. Take your time to thoroughly explore every sidestreet and park as well, just to check for the shortest possible route.

This screenshot will never lose its appeal.

PC GAMEGUIDE

There's developers all across the world working hard every day and night for years to get their games made right. They put a hell of a lot of work in to them, and they make 'em tough. That's where PC GameGuide comes in. We've got everything you'll ever need, and more.

WALKTHROUGHS! You'll find more than your average walkthroughs in PC GameGuide - we do so much more than the usual "go here, turn left, kill baddie". Once you've read one of our playguides you'll know everything there is to know about that game. **TIPS!** But it's not just walkthroughs that we pride ourselves on. General tips, gaming help, and strategies for a huge variety of games are covered in every issue. **HINTS!** All the hints to get you through the hard bits in all the cool games. If you want it, we'll have it. **SECRETS!** Because we go beyond the traditional 'walk-throughs', you'll find out about all the secrets in the ga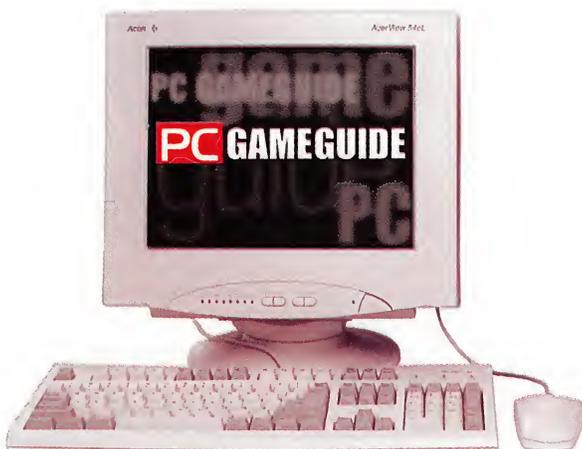mes, and you'll know where all the weird stuff happens. **PLAYGUIDES!** In short, there's enough material in every issue to allow you to live your gaming lifestyle to the fullest. Live your life the way you want, with **PC GAMEGUIDE** at your side.

HEAVY GEAR II

PLAYGUIDE

After two weeks spent locked in a small room with nought but a few essentials, a computer and Activision's latest action offering, Brett Robinson emerges hungry, spent, and one with Heavy Gear II. Here's the walkthrough.

GENERAL TIPS:

■ This is a rather obvious tip, but complete ALL the training missions before commencing the campaign. Those who neglect to do so won't know what the hell is going on when they're trying to figure out how to go prone under heavy fire. Just try mission 5 without having completed Zero G training!

■ When fighting enemy Gears and Frames, aim for the head. The inclusion of location based damage sometimes enables you to expend less than 25% of the ammunition you would normally need to defeat a rival Gear/Frame.

■ If it is safe to do so, use a Vibro weapon to take out buildings. You'll save a lot of ammo that way.

■ I cannot stress the importance of Mortars enough. Every gear should be equipped with a Light Guided Mortar at the bare minimum, and a Heavy Guided Mortar if you're feeling adventurous. If you really want to kick some NEC arse, equip your Gear with both! Mortars are powerful, and their ability to clear high structures means that you can lob them over walls at a relatively safe distance from any defensive turrets and units. You can use them to deal with units at the very edge of your sensor range i.e. before they can get close enough to hurt you. They're also awesome for bombarding encampments, particularly if your position lies above them.

MISSION 1

This is a very straightforward mission that shouldn't give even the complete novices out there any cause for alarm. Use it to familiarise yourself with your Gear's various systems. Practice stealth movement, maneuvering over different terrain types, and take the opportunity to just sit back

mission 1
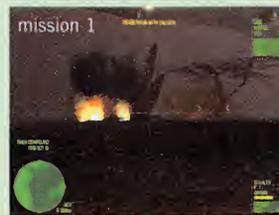
mission 1

mission 1

and drool over how cool your Gear looks from the external viewpoint. When you're ready to get down to business, head for the first nav point. There you'll meet with laughable resistance in the form of three Infantry units. Even in large numbers, Infantry units are only capable of inflicting minimal damage to your Gear, so take your time and get in some valuable target practice. Take out the watch tower and destroy the encampment for good measure, then head for the second nav point.

The GREL turret stationed there is more threatening than the infantry you just massacred, but not by much. This is an excellent

opportunity to get some indirect weapon practice. Find some cover (trees are perfect) and move into a prone position. Switch your sensors to 'active', target the GREL turret and whip out your Light Guided Mortar (LGM). When you achieve a lock, fire off a couple of mortars and watch them vapourise the turret and dice any nearby Infantry. Rinse and repeat for the watch tower and any Infantry unlucky enough to still be in the area.

On the way to the next

nav point, you'll be ambushed by a sneaky Gear submerged in the swamp. While its pilot is obviously well versed in concealment tactics, his combat skills leave a lot to be desired. Again, take advantage of the opportunity to get some target practice. Rendezvous with Calesto at the nav point and take out the lone tank and remaining buildings. After some words of encouragement from Calesto, it's on to the next mission.

mission 2

mission 2

mission 2

mission 3

mission 3

MISSION 2

Icy Northern Terra Nova is just as picturesque as the Okavango Swamp, and there's a welcome absence of paranoia-inducing lightning strikes. It's almost a shame to tarnish the landscape with craters and smouldering wreckage... almost. At nav point 1, you'll come up against some pitiful resistance from a lone APC and three Infantry units. Just try not to waste any more ammunition than is necessary, and follow the remaining nav points. The three APC's, numerous Infantry units and the solitary Gear at nav point 4 put up a much more admirable fight. When you've dispatched the Gear, be alert for the small group of Infantry intent on ambushing you from atop the hill to your left. They're armed with shoulder-launched rockets and heavy machine guns. Don't let them scratch your Gear's nice new paint job. Temporarily re-seal your can o' whup-ass and move on to the final nav point. Destroy the two tanks, the warehouse, the storage bunker and the two barracks to complete the mission.
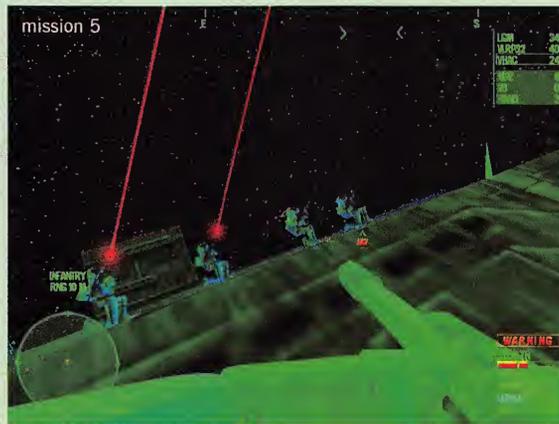
MISSION 3

When you arrive at nav point 1, find some cover and go prone while the tanks move into position at nav point 2. As Proust and his lackeys approach your position, keep your sensors on passive and target the closest escorting Gear. When your commander issues the 'go' order, open fire on the targeted Gear, then take down the remaining escorts as quickly as possible. Proust's Kodiak will make minced meat of anything that remains stationary for more than a millisecond, so zipping around in SMS mode while you blast away at his boys is advisable. When Proust's escorts have gone to that big Gear cockpit in the sky, he'll safety his weapons and surrender. Make sure you get some much needed 'R&R', the next mission won't be so easy.

MISSION 4

You'll find a well-stocked Light Guided Mortar (LGM) and a Vibro Weapon invaluable in this mission. Follow the canyon to the north until you come to a river. An enemy patrol will soon come within sensor range of the opposite bank. Follow the patrol, keeping an eye on your stealth indicator. The patrol will eventually approach a concealed entrance disguised as a cliff face. When the patrol has driven through the entrance, follow them through. Refrain from shooting the guard post to the right of the entrance, as doing so will alert the rest of the base to your presence.

Once through the gate, head up an incline on the left. There, several hovertanks and infantry units will accost you. Two guard posts will also attack you, though moving out of their line of sight allows you to destroy them from behind at your leisure. Once you've taken care of the pesky defenders, launch several mortar salvos at the communications array. Now that the CEF communications have been rendered inoperable, head back toward the main entrance and destroy any vengeful hovertanks, APC's and infantry units that may assembled there. Level the CEF base using your LGM, or use your ▶

mission 4

mission 5

mission 6

mission 6

mission 4

mission 5

mission 6

mission 7

mission 4

mission 5

mission 7

mission 7

▶ Vibro Weapon if you want to conserve ammo.

When you've leveled the base, your commander will transmit a vector to the suspected location of an antimatter device. To complete the mission, destroy the building containing the antimatter device, then pursue and terminate the cowardly convoy fleeing the base.

MISSION 5

Before attempting this mission, make sure you've completed the training missions. Maneuvering in a Zero Gravity environment is difficult and disorienting. Vibro Weapons are useful for taking out the communications modules.

Bear in mind that mortars and other indirect weapons are useless in this environment. When the mission commences, move directly ahead, float through the tunnel and land on the section containing the two communications modules. Waste any infantry protecting the station, and smash the modules. Use your radar to locate the other four modules, and repeat the process. Once you've taken care of the modules, hunt down any remaining Infantry. Now comes the tricky part. The laser turrets attacking the Fury are capable of vapourising any Gear with two shots. Their armour is tough, so attacking them

with your most powerful weapon is advisable. It's generally safer to order your squadmate to take out the turrets, but if s/he gets killed, they won't be available in future missions. If you have to take them out yourself, fire a couple of shots, then float out of the turret's line of sight as it tries to lock onto you. Repeat until all turrets have been destroyed.

MISSION 6

Before beginning your patrol of the nav points surrounding your base, use your radio to order your squadmates to "stand their ground". They'll defend the construction robots if the base is

attacked in your absence. Follow the nav points, paying careful attention to the radio chatter. When a skirmish between Liberati Rebels is detected, head for the new nav point. When you reach it, you'll see a Liberati Encampment under attack. Help them out by destroying the aggressors. You'll then hear an urgent message saying that your base is under attack. Head back toward it at high speed, and destroy the invading hovertanks. The mission ends when the invaders have been repelled.

MISSION 7

Follow the Liberati Guide through the canyon,

and send the two Battle Mounts that ambush you to meet their manufacturers. You'll receive a radio message directing you to rendezvous with the Liberati Patrol. Meet them on the crest of the hill, and lie prone as the NEC Patrol lumbers past. Target the largest vehicle, then order your squadmates to attack it when its weaker rear armour is exposed to your position. When you've massacred the patrol, move on to the Liberati Outpost. You'll find it under attack from a large number of Hovertanks and Battle Mounts. Defend the outpost from the NEC forces and the Liberati will
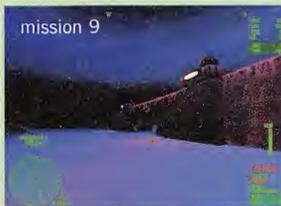
mission 8

mission 8

mission 8

mission 9

mission 10

mission 9

mission 9

mission 10

mission 10

agree to assist you in future missions.

MISSION 8

Escort and protect the Liberati Guide as he leads you toward the prison. Numerous patrolling Hovertanks and Battle Mounts will ambush you en-route. Make sure you silence them before they can transmit a distress signal to the prison. When the opposing forces have been taken care of, your Liberati Guide will direct you to the observation point overlooking the prison. Ensure that the guards do not spot you by crouching or going prone behind outcrops of rock. Use your reticle to target and scan the main gate, turrets, power generators, landing pad, main enclosure and Hovertank bay within the prison complex. Once the structures have been scanned, target the Battle Mounts patrolling around the perimeter and monitor their patrol patterns.

MISSION 9

The name of the game in this mission is speed. Outfit your Gear with a Vibro Weapon (preferably a Vibro Axe) and a Light Guided Mortar with as much ammunition as possible. Rocket Launchers and Autocannons are also useful for taking out the small defensive force stationed within the base. As soon as the mission commences, switch to SMS mode, select your Vibro Weapon and head toward the main gate. As you near the gate, try to hug the walls to avoid the devastating laser turrets. Ignore the oncoming fire from the guards as it does very little damage. Enter the main gate, take a sharp right and zip through the center of the arena toward the power generators. Six or seven solid whacks with the Vibro Axe will take care of each generator. As rapidly as possible, head toward the hovertank bay and level it with the Vibro Axe before the enemy can dispatch more hovertanks. Now mop up the remaining defences. These consist of a few Hovertanks and Battle Mounts, and shouldn't be too much trouble.

Watch the brief cut scene showing the Liberati transport entering the base. As soon as you're dumped back into the mission, switch sensors to

"My dog's got no nose."

"Active". Here's where your Light Guided Mortar comes in handy. The mortar shells can easily clear the walls, so target the incoming enemy units and launch five or six mortars at each. NB: incoming enemy units occasionally get caught on terrain features and don't come within radar range of the base. Fortunately they're never far from the main gate, so hunting them down is easy.

Once the incoming forces have been taken care of, escort the Liberati transport back to the base. As you near the base, you'll hear a radio message, and the waypoint will show the location of the base instead of the ▶

mission 11

mission 11

mission 11

mission 12

mission 12

mission 12

mission 13

mission 13

▶ transport. Prepare to be attacked as you make your final approach. Two or three hovertanks armed with powerful lasers are usually waiting in ambush near the base entrance. Again, the light guided mortar is your best bet. Take out the hovertanks and the mission is over.

MISSION 10

Remaining undetected until you find the staging area is essential if you hope to survive this mission. Follow the waypoints, activating your night vision mode and using your sniper zoom to detect and track roving patrols before you get within range of their

sensors. If you are detected, destroy the patrol before it can radio for backup. As you approach nav point 4, activate your radar and prepare to target the enemy turrets. Destroy them as soon as they show up on your scope.

Following the cut scene, you'll find yourself near the main gate. Target the turret defences and take them out as quickly as possible. Then blow open the gate and head through the base to the western entrance. Chase after the APC containing the colonel and the data core. As you approach its last known position, you'll find that it has rendezvoused with a large contingent of

Hovertanks and Battle Mounts. Because you're significantly outnumbered, the mission ends.

MISSION 11

Successful completion of this mission means that you won't have to undertake the next one. Approach the first nav point and observe the Colonel's APC and its escorts. Eventually they'll disband and move off in different directions. When given the signal, follow the APC, and then attack its escorts when you're out of sensor range of the remaining NEC forces. The two escorting Hovertanks are easy to subdue, but the larger

vehicle will put up a much stronger fight. Attacking it in concert with your squadmates is your best course of action.

Once the APC is undefended, select a weapon that won't nuke it with one shot (hint: avoid using a railgun at all costs) and cap away at the APC until it has sustained too much damage to continue onward. Chalk up one NEC colonel and one extremely valuable data core for your side.

MISSION 12

Make sure your sensors remain in "passive" mode for the duration of this mission. You can use the same loadout as the

previous mission. However, using any weapons while in the first phase of the mission will result in an instant mission failure. Following the initial cut scene, activate your night vision mode and head toward the nav point. The main entrance is heavily guarded, and your commanding officer will suggest looking for another way in. As you near the tanks guarding the entrance, head to your right and follow the cliff around to the left until you come across a lone Hovertank guarding a small canyon. Ignore the Hovertank, and run past it and into the other canyon

EXOTIC POSITIONS

Crouch: Exactly what it says. Your Gear will adopt a crouching position that significantly reduces its Radar Cross Section (RCS) and visual profile. While crouching, you can shuffle around to adjust your position, and quickly move into either a Standing or Prone position. Crouching also allows you to take cover behind large objects and fire over them.
Prone: Your Gear will adopt a face down, 'flat on its stomach' position. This position further reduces your Gear's RCS, and is ideal for sniping and mortar bombardments. The extremely low visual

profile that this position affords makes it perfect for covert infiltration and ambushes. Moving around while prone is extremely tedious, but often pays dividends when going in with guns blazing is not an option.

prone

crouching

mission 13

mission 14

mission 14

mission 14

mission 15

mission 15

mission 15

on the right. Follow this meandering canyon until the slope of the left wall becomes shallow enough to climb. Head directly for the nav point and you'll find yourself atop a cliff overlooking the rear of the base. Near the base of the cliff, you'll see a lit-up building shaped like a cross, and a group of Battle Mounts. Go prone and slide down the cliff face, being careful to head toward the Battle Mounts and not the lit up building. The Battle Mounts are not manned, so crawl under them, and approach the nav point. When you reach it, watch the cut scene.

Now here's where speed becomes crucial. As soon as you're back in control of your Gear, switch to SMS mode and look for a section of the cliff where the incline isn't too steep to climb. The enemy will have been alerted to the theft of the Data Core, and will be gunning for you, so scale the incline post haste and head for the nav point. There, you'll rendezvous with the Fury and you'll find your squadmates waiting. A small contingent of enemy

Hovertanks and Battle Mounts will attack the Fury. Destroy them before they inflict too much damage.

MISSION 13

Go to the first nav point. While it's easier to go straight ahead through the rock arch to get to the camp, it's much safer to take the western path around the ridge. Take the western route and you'll find yourself overlooking the camp. Go prone and target each of the APC's so that the Fury can lock them into her tracking systems. When instructed to attack the camp, target the experimental defensive units (frames) and destroy them. They are armed with powerful experimental weapons, so using mortars to take them down is a good idea. Ignore the fleeing APC's as they're already locked into the Fury's systems, and level the camp at your leisure.

MISSION 14

Approach the cliff face and target the Hovertank. Destroy it and the Battle Mount with your Light Guided Mortar. Head left down the gradual slope,

targeting enemies at the periphery of your radar and taking them out with your LGM. The Liberati Engineers will then enter the Power Station. As you stand guard, several Large Hovertanks will attack you. Heavy Guided Mortars (HGM) are excellent for cutting short their assault.

When the power is down, enter the base and prepare to be attacked by several Frames. Again, HGM's come in handy. When all opposition has been quelled, move on to the Research Facility. You'll be attacked once again by more Frames. Be careful though, as several are equipped with Railguns whose slugs can penetrate walls and structures. Give them a dose of LGM, and do the same for the Research Facility.

MISSION 15

Move ahead to the sealed off section of the tunnel, and break through

with your Vibro Axe. Head deeper into the caverns, and take the middle path when the tunnel branches into three directions. Throughout the tunnel are three deep canyons that spell instant death for anything foolish enough to fall into them. Switch to SMS mode and keep your speed up. Doing so will enable you to use your momentum to cross the canyons. At the end of the tunnel, you'll come to another sealed off section. When you break through the boulders, you'll see a small light pod. Take note of the way it projects light onto the ceiling of the cavern. Battle Mounts populate most of the tunnels. Run past them when you encounter them. Travel further down the tunnel and you'll come to a cliff located above some mining equipment. Drop down the cliff face, and duck under the large horizontal pipe. Nearby

"How does he smell?"

you'll see another light pod. Head in that direction and follow the path laid out by the light pods. As you near the elevator shaft, two Frames will attack you. Teach them a lesson, and then follow the remaining pods until you arrive at the elevator shaft.

MISSION 16

This is one of the longest and most difficult missions in the campaign. Smash the Frame standing in close proximity to your starting position, then ►

mission 16

mission 16

mission

mission 17

mission 17

mission 17

mission 18

mission 18

mission 18

mission 19

mission 19

mission 19

"Terrible!"
"Hahahaha!"

▶ head outside and take out the Kestrel guarding the bridge. Cross the bridge (get used to this) and enter the Fujigowah building. Put the smack down on the two waiting frames, then head outside and repeat for the hovering Kestrel. Cross the next bridge and follow the outer edge of the building. Take out the Kestrel, cross the bridge and enter the Hashima building. Dispose of the Frames then board the elevator. At the top, destroy the two turrets using your LGM, then waste the two Kestrels

floating below. Cross the bridge into the Anderson building and step onto the elevator. If you remain in the centre of the elevator, you only have to take care of one out of the three turrets. Ride the elevator down, then follow the walkway and cross the bridge.

A Heavy Assault Frame is waiting to greet you at the next nav point in the Kushin tower. Kill it and take the elevator down. Destroy the frame waiting for you at the bottom, then mortar the two turrets guarding yet another bridge. Walk across it and switch your sensors to active. As you approach the large bridge, try to take out the two Frames, the turret and the two Kestrels from a distance using your mortar. Ride the next elevator down, then go down the slope in a westerly direction. Drill the two turrets and hop the elevator down to the Mainframe. You'll be greeted by a

rather fearsome experimental Assault Frame piloted by a high ranking commander. Instruct him in the intricacies of a good old-fashioned Black Talon arse kicking. Move over to the Mainframe Interface Pad and wait for the hacker to download the data to your gear. Make your way back up to the surface, taking out the two turrets on the way. Cross the small bridge, avoid the turret and take out the Kestrel. Cross the even smaller bridge to enter the another building and escape the city. If you managed to complete this mission with only a few dents and scratches, consider yourself a true master.

MISSION 17

Go ahead through the tunnel leading out of the Subway. When you enter the first dome, dispose of the Frame waiting there. The internal security system will detect your presence and vector Frames in on your position, so try not to hang around for any longer than necessary. Enter the centre tunnel and you'll emerge in a dome containing a

large pool of green sludge and two Frames. Take them out, then enter the third tunnel on your left. Destroy the three Frames blocking the exit, then wait for your contact to blow the tunnel.

MISSION 18

When you touch down, head for the nav point and keep a constant lookout for patrolling Frames. Travelling in SMS mode makes evading them a simple matter. When you approach the Spaceport, watch the cut scene, and then move on to the next nav point. Resist the temptation to brush up on your skeet shooting skills when you see the lumbering transports that regularly land at the Spaceport. The first Nav Point won't yield any potential jumping spots, so head for the next one. When you get there, you'll come face to face with four exceptionally well-armed Frames. Eliminate them as quickly as possible. Once you've accomplished this, watch the cut scene and gasp in awe as your Gear performs a majestic leap (snicker, snicker) onto the back of a truck.

MISSION 19

Travel in the direction of the truck you saw in the opening cut scene. You'll soon reach a vehicle yard filled with machinery. Turn right to face the nav point and look along the wall for an open gate. Go through it and make your way to the nav point. As you near it, you'll enter a channel with a bridge overhead and a control tower at the opposite end. Take a right at the control tower, then take the next left. Climb the ramp and approach the gate blocked by a force field. Travel back down the ramp, turn left and then left again. Ahead will be a gate guarded by two Turrets. Mortar them, then go for the nav point where the generators are located. Turrets heavily guard the generator compound. Mortar them as well as the generators themselves. Return to the ship yard, avoiding the large Battle Mounts that are now alerted to your presence. When the cut scene ends, you'll be ambushed by 4 Frames. Kill them and make a break for the final Nav Point. A large group

mission 20

mission 20

mission 21

mission 22

mission 21

mission 22

of heavily armed Frames will be waiting for you. Teach them to play nice, and commandeer the ship.

MISSION 20

The remaining missions occur in zero gravity conditions. Make sure you're very comfortable with maneuvering your Gear in this environment. If you need some more practice, redo the applicable training mission. Trek over to the opposite side of the station and head toward the centre. Look out for a ship that's not being gripped by a huge docking claw. When you find one, destroy the maintenance bots and avoid the roving sentry drones. If they detect you, the lethal automated laser turrets will be activated. Morgan will enter the ship, and Space Frames will attempt to subdue you both. The Space Frames are fond of moving into a firing position above you. Keep that in mind when you fight them. When the Frames have been taken care of, travel parallel to the space station and take out the docking mechanisms on the six

ships docked on either side. Once you have done this, seek out and destroy any remaining Space Frames, then pack your bags for Terra Nova.

MISSION 21

Jump off the commandeered NEC spacecraft and travel the length of the mass driver. Avoid the patrolling space frames by ducking behind asteroids. As you near the airlock, you'll come across a large attack frigate guarding it. Try to take out the turrets on it from a distance. Remember that mortars don't work in a Zero G environment. When the turrets have been destroyed, kill the two Sentry Drones guarding the airlock, and then float inside.

MISSION 22

This is the big one. Screw this up and your people face certain extinction. Enter the open hatch and waste the Sentry Drone. Go through the open hatch to the side and follow its twists and turns. You'll encounter several Sentry Drones within the tunnels, though they're extremely easy to

destroy. At the end of the tunnel, float around the strange device anchored in the centre of the room, and then enter the tunnel on the opposite side. Go straight down the tunnel, ignoring the offshoots on either side. Eventually, you'll arrive at an opening where your commander will detect a sudden increase in electromagnetic interference. Walk onto the centre of the circular pad, and wait as your commander taps into the command module. Look above and below the pad for an open hatch. Enter the hatch and place the nuke on the asteroid at the end of the tunnel. Return to the command module and launch the asteroid. You now have exactly three minutes to retrace your steps and get the hell out of there. You'll get there much faster if you use your thrusters to fly down the tunnels instead of running through them. When (and if) you make it back to your ship, kick back, watch the cut scene, and be content in the knowledge that you single handedly saved your entire race. ■

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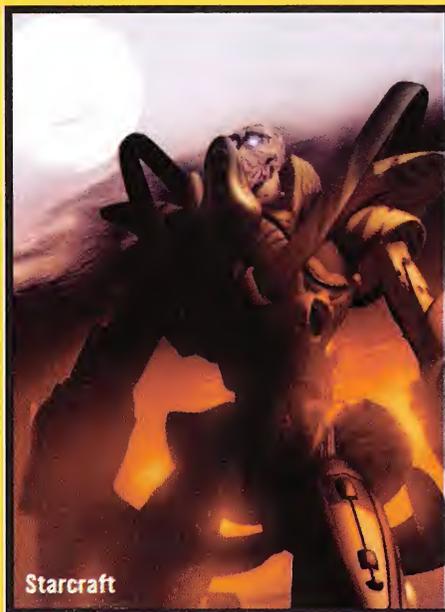|	
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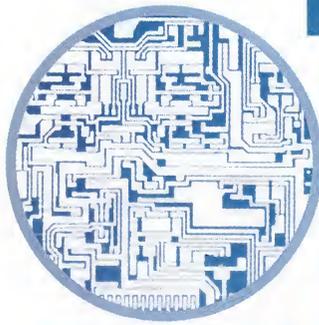
TECHNEWS

The Silicon State-of-the-Art with Hugh Norton-Smith

NVIDIA NV10 CHIPSET: VOODOO4 KILLER?

As you are probably aware, the major graphics card manufacturers have just released a new wave of competing, 3rd generation 3D solutions. Both the TNT2 and the Voodoo3 are excellent accelerators, but both are merely refinements of relatively dated technology. The Voodoo3, for example, is little more than the venerable 3dfx Banshee with the addition of a second Texture Mapping Unit and a slightly improved RAMDAC. NVidia's TNT2 is also a rehash of old school chip architecture; the only advantage of the TNT2 over the TNT1 is its superior clock speed, achieved by the move to .25 micron fabrication. Only one chipset, the Matrox G400, can make claim to being a completely innovative design.

What gamers really want is a quantum leap in technology. Thankfully, the new nVidia chipset should prove to be a huge step forward in 3D gaming. It should feature a brand new design, improved feature set and performance that nips at the heels of Silicon Graphics workstations. For the moment, the new model has been tentatively titled the nVidia NV10. There is a good chance, however, that nVidia will name the new chipset the TNT 3 in order to capitalise on the established TNT brand name.

Glancing at the intended specifications for the NV10, we can safely assume that this card will create graphics on par with pre-rendered animations a la Toy Story. Suffice to say, the NV10 should push hardware acceleration to the next level, and blow the current crop of accelerators out of the water. Manufactured on a .18micron fabrication line, the NV10 should also be substantially smaller and cooler than current graphics processors. This means that far more individual transistors can be crammed onto each die. nVidia engineers have already dubbed the new chipset a GPU, or Graphics

means is that the graphics card will be able to take a substantial workload away from the CPU, leaving the CPU to work on other tasks besides geometry calculations. In most games, triangle calculations take up over 85% of the CPUs available processing time, leaving the meagre 15% spare for all the other tasks. In the best case scenario, the CPU could be used purely for running artificial intelligence routines, voice recognition software, physics and other tasks, leaving the add-on card to handle the graphics processing. If the GPU feature is properly implemented on the NV10, games like Quake 3 could potentially reach as yet unheard of frame rates. Alternatively, developers could just increase the polygon count of the game to take advantage of the spare processing time. This also suggests that the NV10 would be nowhere near as processor dependent as the TNT or TNT 2 cards, as graphics speed will not rely solely on the speed of your processor to push out

"The new nVidia chipset should prove to be a huge step forward"

Processing Unit. The nVidia representatives have decided upon this label, as the new chipset will offer roughly twice the transistor count of a Pentium III processor. Traditionally, videocards have worked in tandem with the CPU. However, the next-generation of videocards, including the NV10, will include geometry processing, allowing them to operate largely independent of the CPU. What this

triangle calculations. This will be a boon for everyone, moving the emphasis in gaming upgrades away from extortionately priced CPUs towards more fully featured graphics solutions.

There have been rumours that the card will have as much as 256MB of memory on board. We assume that nVidia will release a budget version with 32MB of texture RAM, a standard card with 64MB and finally,

a professional card with as much as 256MB of memory. The architecture will allow for an almost limitless quantity or RAM to be used, dependent on the configuration required. This enormous amount of RAM would be used for only the most demanding applications and texture dependent tasks. With the ever-increasing amount of texture usage in games, larger local RAM would be enormously beneficial to overall speeds, reducing the amount of swapping to and from main memory via the AGP bus. We can expect the RAMDAC, which controls 2D image quality, to be at least 350Mhz or above.

Other unconfirmed rumours about the nVidia NV10 include support for full screen anti-aliasing, AGP 4x, support for high definition TV and the implementation of S3 texture compression. The use of S3TC should dramatically increase the quality of displayed textures, and also add to the overall amount of textures resident in memory.

Truly, photorealistic graphics are at hand! But the best thing about nVidia's next chipset will be its impact on the PC landscape. The addition of geometry calculations should directly impact upon sound,

AI, networking code, game physics etc within games. By freeing up the CPU, developers will be given an opportunity to really exploit this extra power for the other, frequently neglected components that make a well-rounded game.

The relative silence from nVidia regarding the features of the NV10 can also be considered as an attempt to turn up the hype. The specifications of the TNT2, for example, were a complete surprise. Expect us to get our hands on a reference board in the coming months.

QUICKBYTES

TNT2 Pro?

Another industry rumour hints at the release of a TNT2 'Pro'. Apparently nVidia might tide gamers over with the TNT2 Pro while the NV10 is prepared for release. With the release of the NV10 in several months, nVidia need an interim solution to keep gamers away from the Voodoo3 3500 and the ever-looming Voodoo 4. The TNT2 Pro will undoubtedly be little more than a regular TNT 2 clocked at a higher

speed. nVidia are unlikely to make any architectural changes to the core design, which remains based around the antique TNT 1 design. To reach these speeds, nVidia are likely to move their TNT2 Pro fabrication to a .18micron process, in order to accommodate the extra heat created by the increased clock speed.

Celeron 500mhz and Pentium III 600mhz

Intel has just released locally the Intel Pentium III at 600 Mhz and the Intel Celeron at 500Mhz. Both offer no design improvements, save the increased clockspeed and faster cache. The Intel Celeron 500 will be released using the PPGA form factor, whilst the Pentium III 600 will utilise 'Flip-Chip' packaging that will mount any standard Slot-1 motherboard. Whether or not the Pentium III 600 can hold its own with the AMD Athlon is yet to be determined. However, it denies AMD the psychological advantage of selling the highest clocked processor on the market.
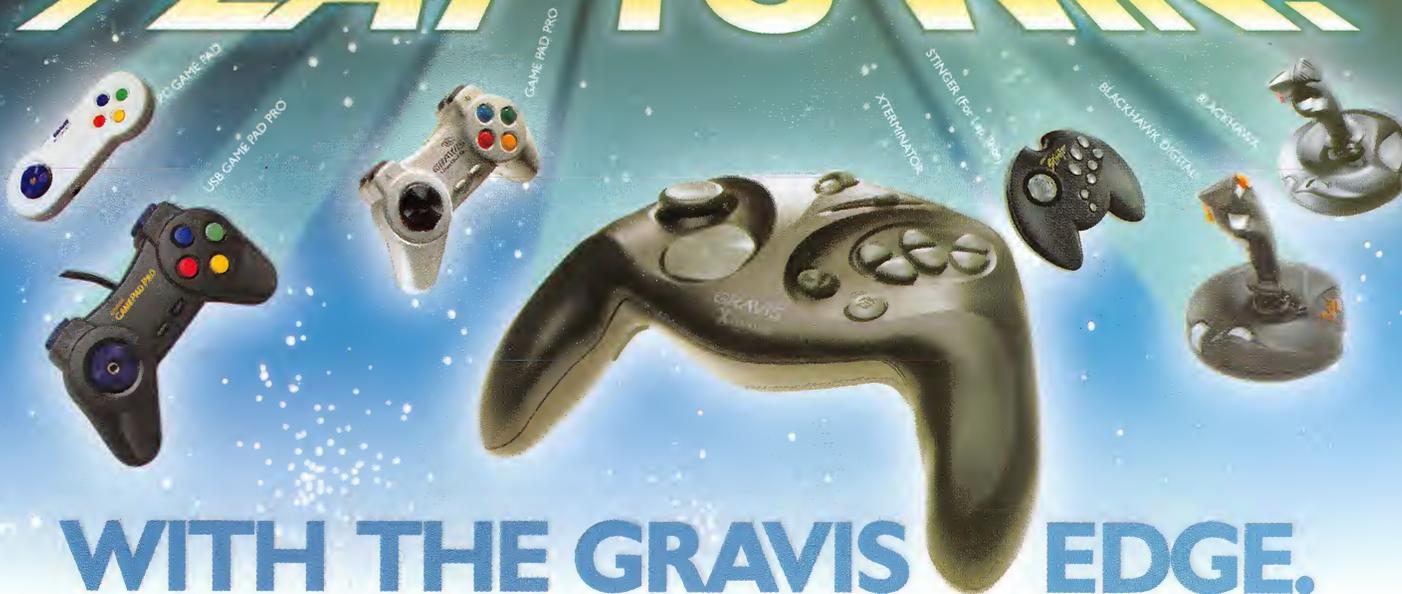
3dfx T-Buffer Technology

3dfx has just announced the development of 'T-Buffer

Quake 3, running on the Diamond Viper Ultra TNT2

Technology' that will be utilised in its next-generation chipset, the Voodoo4, or Napalm. T-Buffer Technology solves the problem of aliasing within games. Aliasing is a nasty artifact present in most games. Jagged edges and 'sparkling' when approaching finely detailed objects are common symptoms of aliasing. The T-Buffer allows for 'full scene spatial antialising'. On announcing the T-buffer, 3dfx have dismissed all previous attempts by other hardware manufacturers to implement anti-aliasing as merely ineffective software 'hacks'. The T-Buffer also allows for real-time motion blurring, soft shadowing and soft reflections.

Glaze 3D Videocard

The Bit Boys (relations to the Vengaboys) have announced the forthcoming release of the Glaze 3D accelerator. The Glaze 3D will purportedly be at least 4 times as powerful as the fastest chipset currently available on the market. The pre-release boards deliver a theoretical fill-rate of 1200 million texels per second and a geometry throughput of 15 million triangles

per second. Roughly, these numbers translate to a real-world performance in, for example, id Software's Quake 3 Arena of over 200 frames per second at true color in full resolutions with all details and features enabled. The future is looking peachy.

Celeron SMP Disabled?

Last month we reported on the interesting new Abit BP6 motherboard, and its ability to run two Intel Celeron processors in tandem (SMP). Supposedly, Intel are planning to disable this feature on all Celeron chips as it seems to be having a profound impact on their sales of Pentium III and Xeon multi-processor workstations. The ability to run two Celerons simultaneously gives users a machine with performance comparable to a dual Pentium III system at a much more acceptable price. Several upcoming games will be able to take advantage of multi processors, including id Software's Quake 3 Arena. If this rumour proves to be true, you'd better snap up two Celerons pronto!

Preliminary Quake III SMP Benchmarks

The processor is increasingly becoming the bottleneck in new systems that use a cutting edge graphics card like the TNT2 or Voodoo 3. By adding another CPU, it's possible to split the intensive 3d-rasterization work. John 'God' Carmack recently stated that multi processor systems under Quake 3 should gain a minimum 20-30% increase in frame rate using a second CPU, and up to 80% in an intensive gun fight. Sounds intriguing? Our labs just got hold of a dual Celeron system, and were able to whack out some prelimary benchmarks using Q3Test v1.08. The system was configured as follows:

• **Abit BP6 Motherboard**
• **2x Celeron 366 at 550**
• **256 Meg of generic PC100 RAM**
• **Diamond Viper V770 Ultra TNT2**
• **Windows NT 4.0 Workstation**

All of the tests were run on the 'Fastest' graphics setting. SMP can be enabled at the console, via the command r_smp 1. Have a look at the unexpected results:

640x480 Resolution
SMP Enabled: 103.2
SMP Disabled: 87.4
800x600 Resolution
SMP Enabled: 95
SMP Disabled: 85.2
1024x768 Resolution
SMP Enabled: 68
SMP Disabled: 66

As you can see from the results, the differential largely disappears at higher resolutions where the game becomes less CPU dependent. Hopefully updated versions of Quake3Test will improve SMP support in line with Carmack's optimistic forecasts for the technology. ■

TAKING IT TO THE MAX

Matrox Millennium G400 MAX

Garry Wallis takes the first high-end Matrox 3D card for a spin.

Matrox have always been synonymous with high-quality professional 2D video cards. Their original Millennium video card was at one stage the fastest 2D card in the world. Although Matrox have always been the preferred card of the graphics professional, their 3D performance, especially from their earlier cards, has left a lot to be desired. A Matrox based card really wasn't even considered when a gamer was on the look out for a new 3D card for their system. Matrox hope that will change with their latest graphics card series based on their new graphics chip the G400.

Two heads are better than one

The first thing that strikes you when you first look at a Millennium G400 MAX card is the fact that there are two VGA connectors on the card's back plane. This is what Matrox call DualHead; it basically allows you to attach two monitors to the same card. DualHead offers much more than a standard multi-monitor system, in that the same card generates both images. The best example of this is when a DualHead capable G400 card is used in conjunction with a standard monitor and a TV. With this configuration it is possible to see your usual desktop display at the same time as watching a DVD movie on the TV screen. DualHead can also be handy for gamers in that on one monitor you could have map information, while on your other monitor the action could take place.

DualHead supports three modes, well four if you count the standard multi-monitor configuration:

Zoom Mode:
This mode would certainly be very useful for the graphic designers out there. This mode allows for a selected region of your main display to be zoomed in on and displayed in full screen mode on your second display.

DVD Max Mode: This mode is one of my favourites as it allows you to display a DVD

Here you can see the difference bump-mapping makes.
(left) Expendable and Slave Zero without. (right) Expendable and Slave Zero fully bump-mapped.

THE BUMP-MAPPING EFFECT

There are many ways to actually create an effect whereby the surface of an object has a bumpy effect. This is best seen in some of the screen shots on this page. Bump-mapping is very 3D accelerator intensive, as it requires multiple passes to achieve a good effect.

Emboss bump-mapping

This method is supported by most 3D accelerators and uses a shift in textures to achieve an embossing effect of the texture. The look of emboss bump-mapping can be very good depending on the textures and the objects.

Environment bump-mapping

Environment bump-mapping is only presently supported by the G400 chip, but achieves a bump-map effect by using a special additional texture that has details about the bump's height. The effects that Environment bump-mapping creates is far superior to that of emboss style bump-mapping.

The funky Dualhead in action - two monitors at once! Wow!

Game Benchmark results

QUAKE II (Ver 3.20) Demo2.dm2

1024x768x32 bit colour	57.6
1024x768x16 bit colour	59.2
800x600x32 bit colour	61.1
800x600x16 bit colour	61.3
640x480x32 bit colour	61.2
640x480x16 bit colour	61.7

Q3Test (ver 1.07) Q3testdemo1

	G400MAX	Diamond V770 16MB
High Quality setting (800x600x32bit)	31.6	30.9
Fast setting	25.1	26.0

All testing was done on a PII 400 with 64MB PC-100 SDRAM.

video stream on a secondary display full screen while allowing you to keep using your desktop. The applications that can be used while you're watching a DVD video full screen depends on the speed of your system though.

Clone Mode: This mode allows you to clone your present display and output it to a secondary display. You can display your desktop directly on a TV at a flicker-free high resolution of 1024x768. Perfect for all those gamers that have a big screen TV / projection screen lying around the house.

Features, features and yet more features

Matrox obviously know that competing at the top end of the 3D-accelerator market is very cutthroat. It is very difficult to beat 3dfx or Nvidia at the speed game, so why not produce a fast card with lots of cool features. Matrox certainly haven't held back any punches when it comes to the G400.

Bumpy Environment maps

As the only currently available graphics card that supports DirectX 6's Environment bump mapping in hardware, this is one of the G400's most talked about features. The effects that environment bump-mapping produces are amazing - just glance at some of the screenshots around these pages. Environment bump mapping looks absolutely amazing but an entire rendering pipeline is needed to accomplish this complex task. That could effectively cut the fill rate of the card in half; so if environment bump-mapping is used it can't be used for all objects in a scene. The same performance issues are also true for 3-pass emboss bump mapping which pales in comparison to the look of environment bump-mapping.

I hope game development houses will include support for environment bump-

mapping in their future games. There are already a few games available - and the list is growing - that support Environment bump-mapping. Expendable from Rage Software is one very good example of how bump-mapping can enhance the visual quality of the game without hampering performance.

The MAX Factor

The Millennium G400 MAX doesn't have the term MAX in its name for nothing. The G400 MAX has a massive fill rate of 333 Mega Texels per second - that's fast! The G400's DualBus design allows for two 128bit channels that are totally independent, effectively giving the G400 a bus width of 256bits!

No BrokenGL

Matrox have finally got their act together and the latest drivers available at the time of writing have a full OpenGL ICD that is reasonably stable and performs very well. In the past Matrox haven't exactly excelled where OpenGL drivers are concerned, so this is a very positive step in the right direction. Although, it must be said that the ICD still needs some work and isn't as robust or speedy as Nvidia's current OpenGL ICD driver.

The Results

From the outset it could be seen that the Matrox G400 MAX was thirsting for more CPU muscle. This can been seen in the benchmark results, notice how the frames per second doesn't change dramatically when higher resolutions are chosen. The actual polygon count in a game's scene doesn't actually change at all when a higher resolution is selected in most games. That is, when you do choose a higher display resolution the only thing that changes is the number of pixels the 3D accelerator has to pump onto the screen. Your processor is still only calculating the

vertices of the same number of objects, it's the 3D accelerator that is pushed harder.

Those of you that have a Pentium II based system should think about looking at a low end TNT2 or a standard G400 card. The performance difference experienced when running a G400 MAX and a 16MB TNT2 on a P II 400 system was negligible. Those that are planning to buy a PIII 500+ or an Athlon system should seriously consider the Millennium G400 MAX. Thoroughly recommended. ■

ATHLON
King of CPUs

AMD

Athlon
PROCESSOR

AMD

PC PowerPlay
ULTIMATE
HARD
WARE

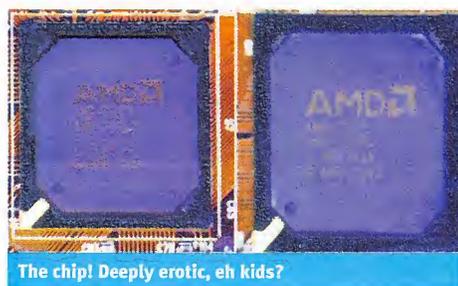Garry Wallis was there to witness AMD launch their new wonder chip.

We first got a good look at the AMD K7 - or Athlon as it's now known - at the Athlon media briefing held in Sydney in early July. What we saw blew us away, we had to get our hands on one to benchmark. AMD were kind enough to send us an evaluation system to put through its paces. Special thanks must go to Bella Glenny from Communication solutions and Steven Fraser from AMD Asia-Pacific for making this possible. The Athlon is not just a new CPU from AMD its a whole new architecture change which will raise the bar on x86 performance. From our in-house benchmarking it would appear they have succeeded.

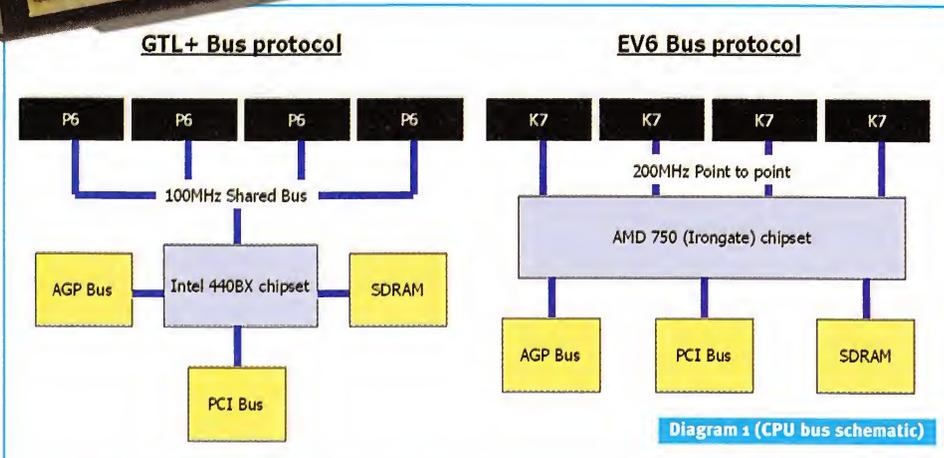## What makes this Athlon chip so special?

AMD Athlon processor is the first 7th generation x86 microprocessor available on the market. The Athlon's architecture is extremely advanced for a x86 processor. Similar to that of the Pentium II and Pentium III, the actual chip itself sits on a SEC style cartridge. The major difference though is in the way the Athlon talks to the motherboard.

The Intel bus didn't stop here

Intel's SEC style processors and their BX based system board counterparts use a bus protocol called GTL+. The bus protocol is

The chip! Deeply erotic, eh kids?

GTL+ Bus protocol

P6   P6   P6   P6

100MHz Shared Bus

AGP Bus   Intel 440BX chipset   SDRAM

PCI Bus

EV6 Bus protocol

K7   K7   K7   K7

200MHz Point to point

AMD 750 (Irongate) chipset

AGP Bus   PCI Bus   SDRAM

Diagram 1 (CPU bus schematic)

basically the specifications for the method the processor uses to talk with the motherboard. AMD could have used Intel's GTL bus scheme but they would have had to pay Intel for a license - that's if Intel would even grant them a license in the first place. So instead of taking the GTL+ bus route, which would have been very restrictive and expensive for AMD, they decided to use the lesser-known Alpha processors EV6 bus scheme. This was a very good decision by AMD as the EV6 bus protocol is extremely flexible and certainly more advanced than Intel's GTL+ bus scheme. Take a look at the diagram below to see the differences between the two bus schemes.

The EV6 bus protocol has given AMD the ability to increase the system bus from the now standard 100MHz to 200MHz. The best Intel will do is raise their system bus to 133MHz when Coppermine and the 820 Camino chipset eventually arrive. I have heard no plans for a 200MHz-system bus processor from

Intel anytime soon.

The other added bonus of using the EV6 bus protocol is that it was designed with Symmetric Multi-Processing (SMP) in mind, with up to massive 16 processor SMP system on the horizon. AMD needed SMP support as none of their previous chips had this feature, which excluded them from the high-end workstation and server markets. AMD are calling the high-end version of the Athlon the Athlon Ultra and it will be accompanied by a new chipset presently dubbed HotRail. The release of the Athlon Ultra should allow AMD to enter this high-end niche market where Intel has been the only player in the past.

Athlon processor core

As I said before, the Athlon processor is a genuine 7th generation x86 processor; the sort of features this chip boasts would have seemed ridiculous for a general purpose CPU only 5 years ago.

AMD Athlon PROCESSOR™

3DMARK99 MAX - AMD Athlon 600MHz V770 TNT2 Ultra

Test — Lowest Score / Highest Score	V770U K7-600 800x600x16	V770U K7-600 800x600x32	V770U K7-600 1024x768x16	V770U K7-600 1024x768x32	V770U K7-600 1280x1024x16	V770U K7-600
Rendering Platform	NVIDIA RIVA TNT2	NVIDIA RIVA TNT2	NVIDIA RIVA TNT2	NVIDIA RIVA TNT2	NVIDIA RIVA TNT2	NVIDIA RIVA TNT2
Resolution	800*600	800*600	1024*768	1024*768	1280*1024	1280*1024
Color Depth	16-bit Color	32-bit Color	16-bit Color	32-bit Color	16-bit Color	32-bit Color
Frame Buffer	Triple buffering	Triple buffering	Triple buffering	Triple buffering	Triple buffering	Triple buffering
Refresh Rate	73 Hz	74 Hz	74 Hz	73 Hz	58 Hz	58 Hz
CPU Optimization	AMD 3DNow!(tm)	AMD 3DNow!(tm)	AMD 3DNow!(tm)	AMD 3DNow!(tm)	AMD 3DNow!(tm)	AMD 3DNow!(tm)
3DMark Result	6,584 3DMarks	5,924 3DMarks	6,397 3DMarks	4,439 3DMarks	4,772 3DMarks	2,603 3DMarks
Synthetic CPU 3D Speed	11,555 CPU 3DMarks	12,043 CPU 3DMarks	12,230 CPU 3DMarks	12,287 CPU 3DMarks	12,032 CPU 3DMarks	12,076 CPU 3DMarks
Rasterizer Score	2,330 3DRasterMarks	1,894 3DRasterMarks	2,284 3DRasterMarks	1,707 3DRasterMarks	2,233 3DRasterMarks	1,639 3DRasterMarks
Game 1 - Race	70.8 FPS	61.2 FPS	68.4 FPS	39.7 FPS	48.9 FPS	23.7 FPS
Game 2 - First Person	61.5 FPS	57.4 FPS	60.1 FPS	50.4 FPS	46.6 FPS	28.8 FPS
Fill Rate	241.2 MTexels/s	150.6 MTexels/s	252.1 MTexels/s	133.2 MTexels/s	255.7 MTexels/s	133.2 MTexels/s
Fill Rate With Multi-Texturing	232.7 MTexels/s	217.8 MTexels/s	237.7 MTexels/s	215.6 MTexels/s	239.0 MTexels/s	218.1 MTexels/s
2MB Texture Rendering Speed	352.6 FPS	241.9 FPS	253.5 FPS	155.4 FPS	177.4 FPS	97.9 FPS
4MB Texture Rendering Speed	238.7 FPS	175.4 FPS	185.6 FPS	119.3 FPS	141.7 FPS	80.2 FPS
8MB Texture Rendering Speed	148.7 FPS	130.7 FPS	116.4 FPS	92.1 FPS	96.0 FPS	66.0 FPS
16MB Texture Rendering Speed	100.2 FPS	89.5 FPS	74.5 FPS	63.1 FPS	61.4 FPS	35.9 FPS
32MB Texture Rendering Speed	60.4 FPS	48.5 FPS	38.6 FPS	2.4 FPS	26.1 FPS	2.4 FPS
Bump Mapping Emboss, 3-pass	99.3 FPS	52.9 FPS	80.1 FPS	45.7 FPS	54.6 FPS	27.9 FPS
Bump Mapping Emboss, 2-pass	120.6 FPS	67.6 FPS	96.6 FPS	57.4 FPS	65.6 FPS	36.1 FPS
Bump Mapping Emboss, 1-pass	191.9 FPS	109.9 FPS	150.0 FPS	89.1 FPS	101.9 FPS	56.4 FPS
Point Sample Texture Filtering Speed	101.1 %	100.9 %	100.8 %	100.6 %	100.7 %	100.5 %
Bilinear Texture Filtering Speed	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %
Trilinear Texture Filtering Speed	90.8 %	88.1 %	91.4 %	91.0 %	93.3 %	93.0 %
Anisotropic Texture Filtering Speed	90.6 %	88.0 %	91.3 %	90.9 %	93.3 %	93.0 %
6 Pixel/individual	1,573.4 KPolygons/s	1,286.1 KPolygons/s	1,574.1 KPolygons/s	1,339.1 KPolygons/s	1,595.8 KPolygons/s	1,360.4 KPolygons/s
6 Pixel/strips	4,002.5 KPolygons/s	1,923.7 KPolygons/s	4,831.8 KPolygons/s	4,542.5 KPolygons/s	4,898.5 KPolygons/s	3,283.4 KPolygons/s
25 Pixel/individual	966.7 KPolygons/s	531.2 KPolygons/s	1,362.5 KPolygons/s	1,035.2 KPolygons/s	1,459.1 KPolygons/s	933.2 KPolygons/s
25 Pixel/strips	1,601.8 KPolygons/s	695.7 KPolygons/s	2,526.3 KPolygons/s	1,586.5 KPolygons/s	2,288.3 KPolygons/s	1,112.2 KPolygons/s
50 Pixel/individual	761.9 KPolygons/s	387.7 KPolygons/s	836.3 KPolygons/s	573.1 KPolygons/s	1,014.4 KPolygons/s	565.2 KPolygons/s
50 Pixel/strips	1,193.5 KPolygons/s	495.4 KPolygons/s	1,618.7 KPolygons/s	873.3 KPolygons/s	1,631.0 KPolygons/s	738.6 KPolygons/s
250 Pixel/individual	396.9 KPolygons/s	180.4 KPolygons/s	477.9 KPolygons/s	239.8 KPolygons/s	453.7 KPolygons/s	209.8 KPolygons/s
250 Pixel/strips	476.7 KPolygons/s	196.6 KPolygons/s	588.6 KPolygons/s	273.5 KPolygons/s	555.3 KPolygons/s	239.2 KPolygons/s
1000 Pixel/individual	162.4 KPolygons/s	68.9 KPolygons/s	173.2 KPolygons/s	78.3 KPolygons/s	171.1 KPolygons/s	73.2 KPolygons/s
1000 Pixel/strips	176.0 KPolygons/s	72.2 KPolygons/s	186.2 KPolygons/s	81.2 KPolygons/s	184.1 KPolygons/s	76.8 KPolygons/s

Athlon Microprocessor Architecture features

The Athlon is endowed with three parallel x86 instruction decoders each capable of dynamic scheduling with speculative, Out-of-Order execution. That is, the instruction pipelines do not have to wait for an instruction to finish executing; they can start decoding other instructions then assemble them back in the right order later for instruction execution.

The Athlon's advancement over previous AMD chips is the fact that the internal FPU is very fast. Intel has always led in this area, but looking over the benchmark scores this seems to have changed. The new improved FPU has 3 Out-of-Order multimedia pipelines that have a 1-cycle throughput. Heavy 3D games like Quake3 and Half-Life absolutely fly on the Athlon.

3DNOW! Gets a face-lift

Not only have AMD increased the performance of their floating point unit they have also made some additions and speed enhancements to their 3DNOW! instructions.

A total of 24 new instructions have been added to 3DNOW! 19 of these new instructions improve integer math performance providing much faster speech recognition and video encoding.

There are also five new DSP instructions added to the 3DNOW! instruction set. These instructions are dedicated to DSP functions like, Soft modem, Soft xDSL and MP3 decoding. AMD are still unable to confirm if these newer instructions will stay Athlon only or will filter down to their lower end CPUs, the K6-2 and K6-III.

It's the size that counts

While present Intel systems still have a limited 32KB of level 1 cache, split 16KB for Instruction cache and 16KB for data cache. Athlon on the other hand has a whopping 128KB of Level 1 cache, 64KB for instruction cache and 64KB for data cache, that's the same size as a Celeron A's level 2 cache!

Athlon like the Pentium II and Pentium III has its level 2 cache on the CPU cartridge. The Athlon's level 2 cache is very flexible in that it has programmable interface speeds. That is, the level 2 cache can run at a variety of different frequencies from 1/3 the speed of the processor all the way up to full processor speed. The size of the level 2 cache can also be varied with sizes ranging from 512KB to a massive 8MB.

The Benchmarks Results

The AMD supplied Athlon PC came with the same AMD created benchmark suite that we saw at the media briefing. This is all well and good, but the way AMD display the results is by showing the relative speed against a Pentium III 550. Thus, the normalised score and the Athlon systems are gauged as a percentage of the PIII. We here at PC PowerPlay prefer to use actual benchmark figures so we ran our own benchmarks instead. The only driver change that was made was the loading of the .208 Nvidia reference drivers. This actually increased the Athlon's performance quite a lot from what the standard installation of .181 Nvidia reference drivers produced. ▶

DSP

Digital Signal Processor - DSP chips are used for the purpose of decoding video or sound streams very quickly. DSP chips perform this task with a much greater throughput than a general-purpose microprocessor would. The new 3DNOW! instructions that AMD provided on the Athlon processor will greatly increase the speed at which general purpose CPUs perform DSP functions.

TEST SYSTEM SPECS

System:
Windows Version: Windows 4, Build 1998
DirectX Version: 4.06.02.0436
Bios Version: Award Modular BIOS v4.51PG
Bios Date: 05/20/99
Total Physical Memory: 128 MB
Free Physical Memory: 37 MB

Processor:
Processor Type: AMD-K7(tm) Processor
Processor Speed: 600 MHz
Processor Caps: MMX 3DNOW
L1 Cache Size: 128 KB
L2 Cache Size: 512 KB

Other:
SoundBlaster Live! sound card
Toshiba SD M1212 6x DVD-ROM drive
LinkSys Homelink 1/10 PCI Network Card

Video Card:
Name: NVIDIA RIVA TNT2
Driver Name: NVDD32.DLL
Driver Version: 4.11.01.0208
Total Video Memory On Card: 32,474 KB
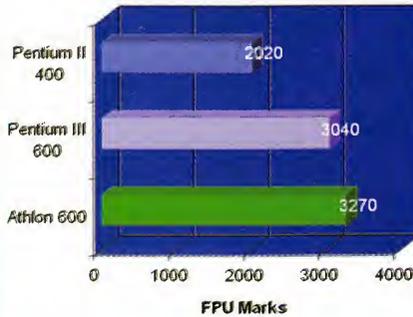**Total Texture Memory:** 45,786 KB
Bus: AGP

"All gamers should seriously take a look at an AMD Athlon system"

No animals were injured in the making of this ad

Q3Test 1.08 timedemo

The latest release of the Quake3Arena test is a good gauge of a systems performance. To actually use the benchmarking feature within the 1.08 test release all you need to do is bring up the console by pressing the tilde key ~ and type:

Timedemo 1 <enter>

Demo q3demo1 <enter> or Demo q3demo2 <enter> to run either the first level demo or the second level demo respectively.

Looking over the results for Q3test you will see that the Athlon when running the low-resolution tests streaks ahead of the Pentium II 400 system. The higher resolution tests don't show a significant lead for the Athlon as the lower resolution tests showed. That is because the higher resolution tests are taxing the video cards fill-rate not the CPU raw processing power.

Q3demo1 Results:

Pentium II 400 Fast (1280x960)	25.7
Athlon 600 Fast (1280x960)	31.6
Pentium II 400 High Quality	37.7
Athlon 600 High Quality	51.2
Pentium II 400 Normal	51.3
Athlon 600 Normal	81.3
Pentium II Fast	56.1
Athlon 600 Fast	91.9

Frames Per Second (FPS)

Q3demo1 Results:

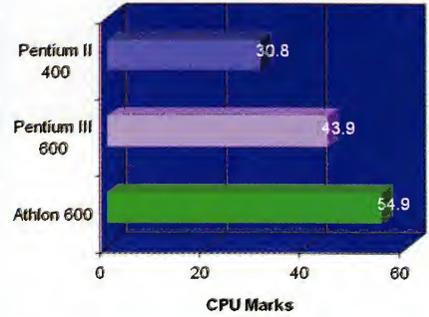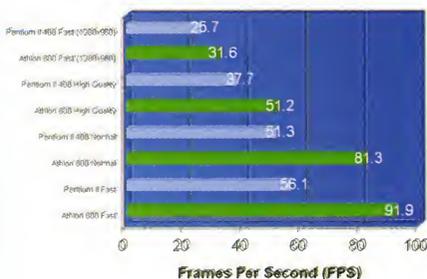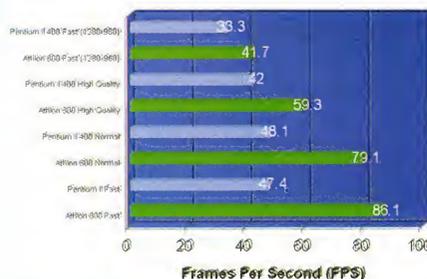|	
Pentium II 400 Fast (1280x960)	33.3
Athlon 600 Fast (1280x960)	41.7
Pentium II 400 High Quality	42
Athlon 600 High Quality	59.3
Pentium II 400 Normal	48.1
Athlon 600 Normal	79.1
Pentium II Fast	47.4
Athlon 600 Fast	86.1

Frames Per Second (FPS)

FPUmark32

The Athlon again beats the PIII 600 although this time not by such a wide margin. Lets not forget that the P6 core used in the Pentium III has an extremely fast floating point unit, which until now has never been bettered in the x86 market.

Pentium II 400	2020
Pentium III 600	3040
Athlon 600	3270

FPU Marks

▶ **3D MARK 99 MAX**

This benchmark program is considered by us to be our standard tool for benchmarking gaming systems. The Athlon system totally wiped the floor with any other system we have tested, besting every maximum score we have recorded. This is partly thanks to the awesome Diamond Viper V770 TNT2Ultra card, but mainly due to the advanced Athlon architecture. The scores for the 3DMARK99 Synthetic CPU 3D speed are a testament to this fact - a score of 12,287 CPU 3DMARKS is just incredible.
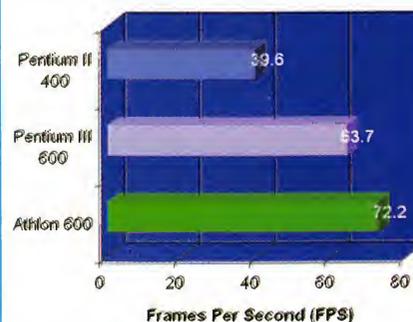
Winbench99

This benchmark utility is usually used when discerning business performance.

Quake II Crusher demo

The crusher demo was created by Brett "3Fingers" Jacobs to really stress the CPU during benchmarking. You can grab a copy of the crusher demo from *www.voodooextreme.com/3fingers*

The crusher demo is a good test of the raw CPU speed of a system. That is why we set the resolution to 640x480x16bit colour, so that the video card isn't the bottleneck in the system. The results clearly show that the Athlon has awesome gaming performance. This is the fastest we've ever seen the crusher demo run.

Pentium II 400	39.6
Pentium III 600	53.7
Athlon 600	72.2

Frames Per Second (FPS)

CPUmark99

As you can see the Athlon wipes the floor with all competitors the raw integer performance of the Athlon is astounding, a full 11 CPUMarks above the Pentium III 600MHz!

Pentium II 400	30.8
Pentium III 600	43.9
Athlon 600	54.9

CPU Marks

Although there are some components of this benchmark that we have used.

Conclusion

We believe that if all goes well for AMD they have a winner on their hands with the Athlon. The only problems that we can foresee will be whether AMD can actually have enough Athlons manufactured to feed the market on official launch date. AMD have told us that there will be Athlons available as of the Launch date, so let's hope that this is true. I assure you, I will be purchasing an Athlon 600MHz and AMD-750 based motherboard as soon as they are available.

The Athlon is the fastest x86 compatible chip on the market today, bar none. All power users especially gamers should seriously take a look at an AMD Athlon system, if ultimate performance is important to you. The speed of these Athlon CPUs in action is really a sight to behold. They will certainly become the must have CPU for gamers in the coming months. My hat goes off to AMD, Well done, this chip could be the one. ■

Garry Wallis

It's Christmas!

The Athlon PC AMD sent us was to say the least packed with some serious stuff. We were given an evaluation system that comprised of the following components.
- **AMD Athlon running at 600MHz**
- **AMD Athlon motherboard (Fester Rev B) utilising the AMD-750 chipset**
- **128MB PC100 SDRAM**
- **Diamond Viper V770 TNT2Ultra 32MB**
- **Creative SoundBlaster Live! Soundcard**
- **LinkSys Homelink 1/10 Network Adaptor**
- **Western Digital WD41800 18GB ATA/66 EIDE hard drive**
- **Toshiba SD M1212 6x DVD-ROM drive**

If that wasn't enough the 18GB drive was packed full of benchmarking software and other goodies. It's just a shame we had to give the machine back... bummer!

SETUP

Come share in the wisdom of the Yoda of computer tech, Ashton Mills.

TECH TIPS

NUMLOCK SHMUNLOCK

If you're one of those really picky people who has a thing about the numlock key, specifically that you like it either on or off at bootup, you can bend Windows to your will by adding the following line to your CONFIG.SYS:

Numlock=on/off

Nice and simple. Behave, numlock.

BUYING OVERSEAS

Q I'm going to the US soon, and quite naturally the question of incredibly cheap electronic goods comes to mind. Even with our appalling exchange rate, hardware is cheap (Voodoo2 goes for around $70!). Apart from the obvious hassles regarding warranty, which I'm assuming won't extend to our fair shores if bought abroad, I am also curious about compatibility. Is there any significance in say, a PIII 500 or a TNT2 bought in the US, as compared to one bought in Australia? I remember seeing somewhere in a previous issue that someone had ordered 100ms RAM, and that seemed okay. I'd like to get a new motherboard, video card, PIII etc, and assuming it doesn't get wrecked on the flight home (or sent to Pakistan), would it be okay to use here? It's probably a yes or no answer, but it would be nice to know at any rate.
Mark Jeffries

A No, there aren't any compatibility issues with CPUs, video cards and the like, but there are with anything that involves power - such as cases with powerpacks or monitors. It's not just a matter of changing plugs or voltage either, as monitors, for example, are built for different hemispheres and power supplies. So go all out and buy some cheap upgrade parts. Be careful though - the cost may not so cheap when you enter Australia and pay sales tax.

BINARY

Q Hopefully you can help me out of a spot of bother I find myself in. I'm trying to download a patch for my old Warlords II from the SSG site (www.ssg.com.au) but there is a message saying that if I try to download the file in ASCII mode it will cause a CRC error when I try to unzip it.
Well blow me down if it didn't do just that.
It then goes on to tell me to download the file in binary mode to avoid the error.
What the heck are they going on about and how do I change from one to the other (if possible)?
David Thomson

A The standard choices for file transfers are ASCII and binary. As you may be aware, ASCII is the name of the standard that defines the character set modern PCs use, and happens to include our alphabet.
You can transfer text files as ASCII or binary, but binary files can only be transferred as binary, as ASCII cannot represent the range of bits that make up binary files. If you try to do so, information is lost. All FTP programs and browsers support downloading in binary, and often default to binary mode.
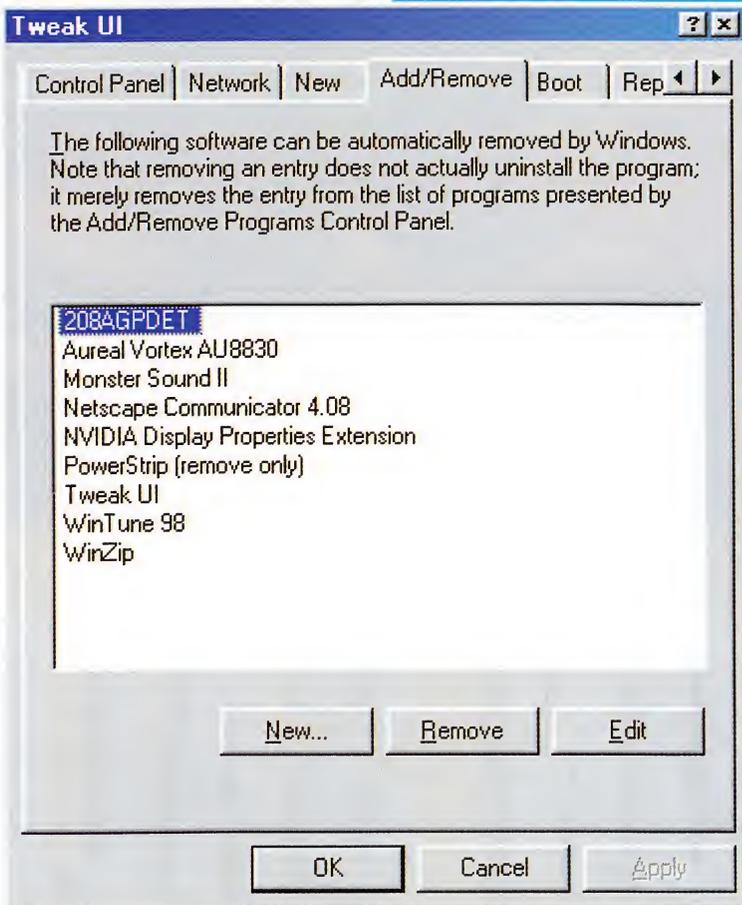
CLEANING UP

Q Yeah g'day great guru of computing. Is there anyway to clear out stuff from the control panel? I looked in it and saw that I still had links to programs that I had deleted long ago. When I tried to delete them, the buggers wouldn't go. Any suggestions would be great.
Kirky

A Microsoft's TweakUI tool contains a nifty little section where you can toggle which control panel thingies are installed. You can find TweakUI on the Windows 98 CD under \TOOLS\RESKIT\POWERTOY, just right click on the TWEAKUI.INF file and select 'Install'.

Forget Warney, Ashton is our own Sheikh of Tweak.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

ALL ABOUT REFRESH

Q After looking through various internet sites and through my display settings, I noticed the 'refresh rate' cropping up numerous times. I could not find what the refresh rate actually did, and I am now very curious. Could you help me out?

Blasted Away

A There is a short and a long answer to this. The short answer is that the refresh rate is the frequency the picture on your monitor is updated. Why is the refresh rate important? Welcome to the long answer. Firstly, from a human perspective, a high refresh rate is desirable because the faster your screen is updated the more 'solid' an image will appear. At refresh rates of 60Hz and below the human eye can discern a 'flickering' on the monitor. You can see this effect pronounced if you turn your head to the side and look at the monitor out of the corner of your eye. Apart from being slightly annoying, this flickering will result in sore eyes and headaches, and prolonged exposure to this is just plain bad for your brain. High refresh rates where the flickering is barely discernible range from 75Hz and up, but for those truly 'solid' images that look sharp and crisp on screen with no flickering at all require 100Hz and higher.
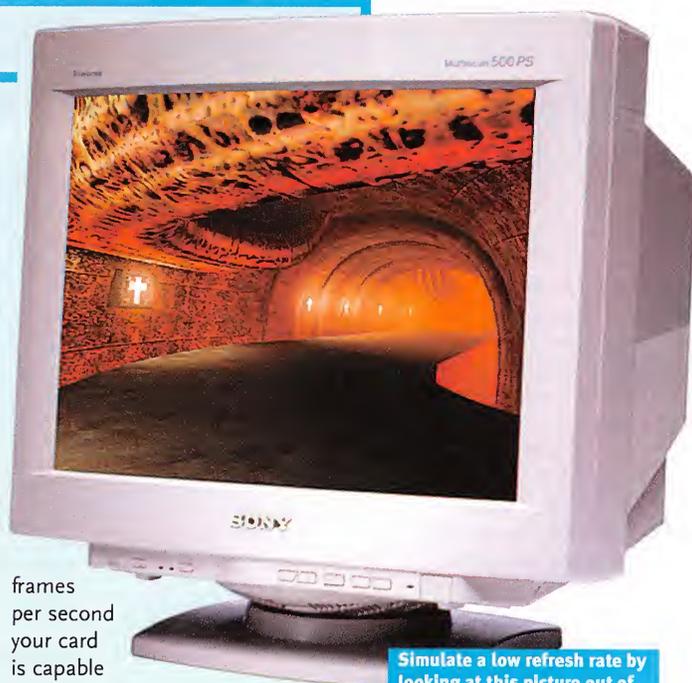
What defines the refresh rate? Your video card is the source of the signal and it regulates how fast an image should be updated. Just about all video cards, even old crappy ones, can utilise high refresh rates. However you can only use what your monitor is capable of displaying. Low end or cheapo monitors, even if they sport nifty high resolutions, often don't support high refresh rates. Apart from quality of picture, this is what you pay for in a monitor. Check the specs of two same-inch monitors and compare the refresh rate at the maximum resolution they support. A good 17" monitor for example might support up to 1280x1024 at 85Hz, whereas a cheapo monitor might be capable of 1280x1024 at 60Hz. Sure, you can run at 60Hz, but it's so bad on the eyes that Doc Ash automatically disqualifies any resolution that runs at 60Hz, because you might as well not use it. This makes the 'effective' maximum resolution for such a monitor the next level down, such as 1024x768 at 72Hz. This is the rule

with resolutions and refresh rates: the lower the resolution, the higher the refresh rate supported. For example, a Sony Platinum 19" (woo baby, expensive) can support 1280x1024 at 85Hz going up to a whopping 150Hz at 640x480. It supports resolutions of 1600x1200 and higher, but it's at such a low refresh rate you wouldn't bother (not to mention you wouldn't be able to read the text!). So, if a cheapo monitor supports 1280x1024 at 60MHz, then it will have no problems doing 1024x768 at 72Mhz. Keep this in mind next time you go shopping for a monitor. Look at the maximum resolution and refresh rate, and decide what resolutions you want to work and play in. Since most ads only mention the maximum resolution and refresh rate, use this as a guide. If you want to have a desktop of 1280x1024 running at a decent refresh rate, and the ad lists the maximum resolution and refresh rate as 1600x1200 at 60Mhz, then you can be sure you'll be getting 75Mhz or higher at 1280x1024.

Now, while the refresh rate makes no difference to performance for 2D graphics, the same cannot be said for 3D. The refresh rate is a key element in 3D games — 3D accelerators use it to create solid, fixed frequency updates to the screen, thereby producing a clean image and, if the card isn't pushed to its limit, a steady frame rate. You've probably heard about 'disabling vsync' in drivers and games. Wassat all about? Here's the low down.

Simulate a low refresh rate by looking at this picture out of the corner of your eye and shaking the mag violently.

frames per second your card is capable of pumping out. Sounds good doesn't it? But it's not for two reasons: firstly, you often get image 'tearing' with vsync disabled - when you're playing this looks like an odd overlaying of graphics, more noticeable when you're turning; Secondly it means that your frame rate can go from very low to very high depending on what's happening on screen. Part of the illusion of 3D games is the smooth transition between frames, with vsync disabled this is lost. So, the general rule is that you disable vsync when you want to benchmark a video card as this allows you to see its maximum raw fps potential unlimited by the refresh rate. When it comes to playing games, however, you should keep vsync on so you can get a consistent, solid image. But to get high frame rates with

"Those truly 'solid' images require 100Hz and higher."

If a game is synchronised to the vertical refresh rate (vsync) then you generally receive a solid image but the framerate cannot exceed the refresh rate or a division of it. If you're running at 60Hz then you'll either get 60fps if the card can produce that speed or, if it can't, just 30fps max. This is another reason why 60Mhz should be discounted as an option — most modern FPS games can't pump 60, but can often pump more than 30, but if you've got a low refresh rate this is all you'll get. Disabling vsync gets around this as the picture updates are no longer synchronised with the monitor updates. This allows you to achieve whatever

vsync enabled, you need a monitor that can support high refresh rates, so you see it all comes back to the importance of monitor quality. If you can afford the extra cash, always spend it on a good quality monitor. You spend all your time looking at it, so you might as well.

Lastly, you also have to tell your card to pump out high refresh rates, as most Windows drivers default to a bare minimum of 75Mhz or less, even if the monitor is capable of more. That's a topic for another time, however if you're having trouble setting these with your drivers, get Powerstrip (*http://www.entechtaiwan.com*) to do it for you.

TECH TIPS

COPY OR SHORTCUT?

When copy/moving files around your hard drive you don't always know if they were actually copied or just making a shortcut. If you want to copy files to a certain place, select the files you want and hold CTRL while dragging them; if you just want to create a shortcut, instead of holding CTRL, hold ALT.
Cameron Wilmot

TECH TIPS

UPDATING WINDOWS

Most people find Microsoft's Windows update tool to be a royal pain in the rear end, mainly because it forces you to use IE, it takes a look at your system (and, if you're using the latest version, states clearly that it is "not sending any information to Microsoft" (ahem...)), and binds you to the Microsoft download and install mechanism. You can't, for instance, finish a long download at a later date using file-recovery software like Getright if you're using the Windows update mechanism. What we would like is the ability to simply download and install updates like we do any other file on the Web. Well, Microsoft actually provides this option, not that it's offered as an alternative by Windows update however. Just surf to:

http://www.microsoft. com/windows98/down loads/corporate.asp

You can even browse it with Netscape. Isn't choice a wonderful thing?

The Windows patch you don't have to pay for. Cheers, Bill!

STARTUP BIOS

Q Oh, Yoda of computing, I come before you to ask two questions:

1) I have noticed that on some of my friends' newer computers that instead of seeing the BIOS load and the memory count etc at startup, an IBM or Compaq splash screen comes up and stays until the Win98 screen comes up. Is there any way to change the picture to my own screen, like the logo.sys in Win98, or at least disable the screen completely, and also to put said screen on my own, older computer which currently doesn't have one.

2) Is there any way to change the gradient that runs up the side of the Win98 start menu. Someone told me that it was a simple bitmap somewhere in windows, but I can't find it. Please help me, oh Guru.

Anthony Birt

A No you can't change or remove those IBM and Compaq startup screens you see on your friends' computers. They're simply an addition to the BIOS of the machine. Some vendors, namely big names like IBM and Compaq, insert the screen to trademark the PC. I personally don't like them as they hide BIOS reporting information such as what PnP cards have been detected, the state of your RAM and so on. If you've got a brand name PC like this, you just have to put up with it, but it's another reason why building your own PC is better if you don't mind playing with hardware.

I've not heard of being able to change the gradient that runs up the side of the start menu, but I'm sure

it's changeable if you know where to look (some of the Windows hacking tools available on the Web might help). Alternatively try turning on 'Show small icons' in the properties of the Task Bar, it gives your system a cleaner look (and lets you fit more on your menus).

GETHOW

Q I just finished downloading a file from the net. During the download I got disconnected by call waiting. When the call was finished I pushed resume on Getright. My question is, how come the modem doesn't confuse the call waiting beeps with info and write garbage onto my drive? How does it tell the difference?

One other question, how does Getright resume downloading? Is it possible to get Windows95 to do this? I have a network that likes to crash in the middle of transferring files between computers (not often but it does it) and think it would make my life just that little bit easier if I could resume transfers after a crash.

Matthew Tyers

A Nice question. Somewhere back in the murky depths of technology history it was realised that many conditions (such as line quality) could affect the information travelling down the phone lines. How could you be sure that the information being received is exactly the same as it was when it was sent? The answer is error checking. Data is

broken down into packets, a checksum is calculated and attached to the packet, and the whole lot is sent down the line to the other modem. At the other end, the modem creates a checksum based on the data it reads and if it doesn't match the checksum sent by the original modem, it sends a signal to resend that packet. Of course, what if the checksum itself suffered during the transfer? Then it certainly won't match with the data, and again the packet is resent. You'd be surprised how often information is lost over the phone lines and how often modems are compensating for it, especially using high speed modems, which is why error correction technology has been improving over the years along with compression technology. In fact, if not for error correction you wouldn't be able to connect at any speed greater than 9600bps.

But this is only part of the puzzle. When modems communicate, they can ensure that the packets they send arrive as they should, but what about the contents of the packet? Error correction isn't perfect and it's possible that dodgy data could arrive on the other end. In this case, it's up to the transfer protocol to ensure that what's being received is what is expected to be received. You may remember the old BBS days when people used Zmodem to transfer files between machines. Zmodem had the greatest error correction without sacrificing speed too much, but you could actually use Ymodem to transfer files faster — it didn't use

any error correction at all, so bits weren't wasted on producing checksum values. Of course, it meant you had to have a line that wouldn't cause a single error, which is surprisingly easy at speeds of 9600 and below, but I digress.

So, when call waiting beeps it inserts some major frequency changes to the signals being received by the modem, and that certainly screws up incoming data. The modem picks this up and simply asks the sending modem to resend its information. Good modems can stay online despite the call waiting interference, negotiating with the modem on the other end to drop speed for a while. Cheaper modems can't handle the interference and assume the link is lost, and so hang up.

As for the second question, this is a matter of protocols. It's not Getright that is necessarily able to resume aborted transfers, it's simply a feature of some FTP servers known as 're-get' which any application can be written to support. Getright, or any other download resuming program, can't do squat if the FTP server doesn't support re-get transfers (and there are plenty out there that don't). Re-get works by having the client request data from a file from a specific byte, which would be determined by looking at the size of the file downloaded so far. The server then simply starts sending that file from that byte onwards, and the client appends to the original file.

You can't resume transfers over a network this way. Networks are considered fast enough that if you have a problem you simply resend the whole thing. If you're having major transfer problems then your network is having issues and I'd look at what might be causing the problem. In the meantime you could setup an FTP server that supports re-get on one machine and FTP to it from the other to download files, allowing you to resume any transfers that run into problems.

This neat little program will save you plenty of headache.

SERIAL LINKING

Q I'm about to get a brand spanking new Celeron 400 computer (built by yours truly) and I'm wondering how I'm going to get about 1 GB of data off the clunky family computer onto my new gaming beast. I'm not allowed to pull out the old hard drive and stick it into the new machine and copy as was suggested in Drive Copy (PCPP #37). I'm not enthused with the idea of hiring a zip disk drive ($$$) or using a floppy disk a couple of billion times. Can I set up a serial connect between the two (I have no network cards handy) and transfer that way?

I also have another question, in the same letter, Drive Copy, Steve mentioned that an old drive would slow the new drive's read/write rates. I have an old 400 MB HD that I plan to use for files that don't need to be accessed fast, pics, documents etc. Is this true?

Rory Hart

A You can indeed, using a null modem cable or a laplink cable. A null modem cable connects two PCs via the serial ports and thus gives you a transfer rate up to 115200bps. Sounds high, but it's nothing compared to the speed of a network and you'll find copying files over this to be very slow. A null modem cable is simply a serial cable with the send and receive wires swapped. Just go to your local computer store and ask for one, they should have it handy. To transfer files using it you can download any number of shareware programs from the Internet that'll let you send and receive files over a null modem cable.

A laplink cable is similar but links PCs via the faster printer port. When it was invented it was a patented design and required commercial software to use. They're pretty rare these days, so your best bet is just to use a null modem cable.

And yes, it's true that an older, slower IDE drive will slow down another drive on the same channel only (that's an important distinction to remember). So, stick it on your second IDE channel and any drives on the first channel will be fine.

NGN
NET GAME NEWS

SPECIAL SNEAK PREVIEW!

SOVEREIGN
The first massively multiplayer persistent RTS game ever!

FROM: www.verant.com
DUE: 2000

It was only a matter of time before someone announced that they'd taken the particulars of the RTS genre and combined these with the potential of a persistent, massively multiplayer online world. It's an RTS gamer's dream come true. Rather than having short, sharp melees where all is forgotten post-match (with the exception of perhaps a few points for a league ladder), consider the spell-binding effect of fighting for territory day in day out. Knowing full well that territory gained in the last battle may well be lost in the next. A game where alliances are a much more important and dynamic affair, often decided by a players long term plan as opposed to a pre-game "guess and go" mentality.

Verant Interactive, producers of the renowned massively multiplayer Online RPG EverQuest are working on bringing us the next paradigm leap in

QUICK POLL

In #39 we asked *"Which do you consider more in a multiplayer game - co-op mode or deathmatch?"*

The biggest surprise with this question was that it was almost completely one sided. Almost all of the responses indicated that they preferred co-op mode when it comes to multiplayer gaming. Here a some of your responses:

"I enjoy each different mode depending on the mood I am in when I log on. Co-op is great, but it has been ruined for me a number of times by idiots who don't understand the meaning or the concept of cooperation. My fav co-op games are Rainbow Six, Team Fortress Classic, Commandos and Diablo.

On the other hand when I want to kill I play those games which are designed for the purpose. Games such as Quake, Quake II and Q3ATest and Red Alert."

MrGronk
Email

"For me, multiplayer is best played with a team, against another team. I'm finding games (like Tribes) much more satisfying when you work as a team together, for a common goal. Complex team work with Tribes, using Roger Wilco for communication, is the ultimate MP experience for me thus far.

And Deathmatch? Well, Quake is old... and getting boring.

Team play all the way."

Ciler
Email

"Currently Deathmatch. Co-op thus far has been an extremely disappointing experience, where you just hack your way through the single player levels. Since you can just respawn when you die, and the enemies don't, it becomes boring very quickly and turns into a deathmatch anyway. Until somebody can come up with a more complex co-op play, with puzzles that *require* multiple people (like Thief 2 is planning), Deathmatch is the way to go."

Ben Slinger
Email

"Deathmatch all the way!"

Magda Makar
Email

This month we ask one for the more inexperienced net gamers out there.

"Has the complexity and/or difficulty of setting up and playing multiplayer games online put you off playing this way?"

Email your responses to ngn@pcpowerplay.next.com.au, with "Quick Poll" in the subject line. Results to be published in #43.

TOP5 ONLINE GAMES

1. **Half-Life**
2. **Quake 3 Arena Test**
3. **EverQuest**
4. **Starsiege Tribes**
5. **Aliens vs Predator**

What has the world come to? Quake 3 Arena has been knocked off the top spot as most popular online game this month. We were absolutely inundated with votes for Half-Life instead. Perhaps gamers have decided to give the Q3A Test a break till something a bit more substantial comes along? As id release updated versions of the Q3A Test, expect this to be the most played game online ever, even in it's current stage of development.

We've also had a vocal portion of the EverQuest community writing in and singing their praise for the massively multiplayer Online RPG. It seems the more people play EverQuest, the harder they find it to log off.

To cast your vote for the Top 5 Multiplayer Games, email *ngn@pcpowerplay.next.com.au* with your favourite online game.
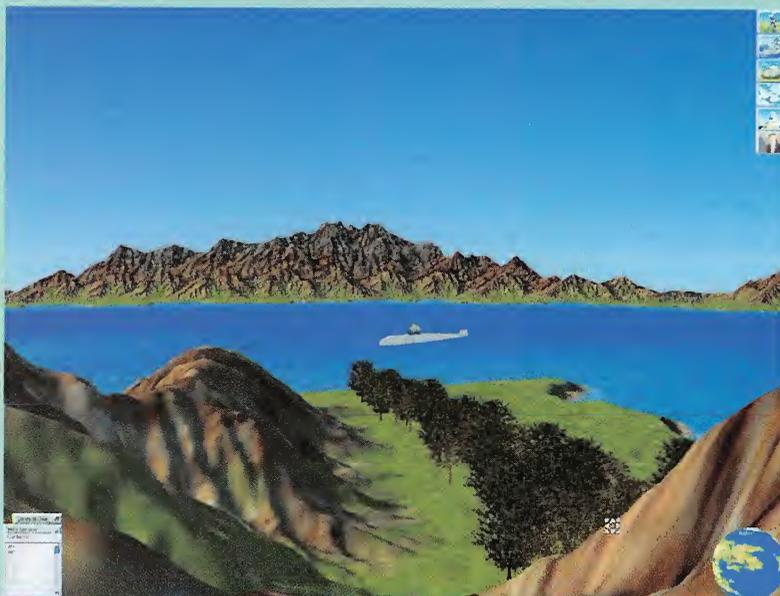
Sovereign means having supreme power or authority, like a king or queen. Now you know.

multiplayer RTS gaming. Considering the genre's popularity online (StarCraft, TA, Red Alert are still played with fervour online), it's surprising that this hasn't been attempted before.

Details are scant at this stage, save that around 500 players will be supported per game server (world). Players will no doubt have to construct bases, airfields, seaports, massive armies made up of both infantrymen and vehicles, and more. While the player is logged off, the game's AI will keep your empire running automatically. Great care has been taken to ensure that a player's absence will not be exploited by mega-lo-maniacal commanders. As for the level of interaction between players - little have been revealed. It's a safe bet though that diplomacy will play a major role in the proceedings.

There's little doubt about it - Sovereign will be huge. Expect a detailed report next issue.

LATEST VERSIONS

Blood 2 - 2.1
Quake 2 - 3.20
Half-Life - 1.0.1.0
Quake3Arena Test - 1.08*
Unreal - 2.25
Sin - 1.05
Starsiege Tribes - 1.7*

* changed in last month
Note: these patches appear on the PCPP cover CD, with the exception of the Qauek 3 Arena test

Essential Online Gaming Files

mIRC - www.mirc.co.uk
ICQ - www.icq.com
Gamespy - http://www.gamespy.com
Note: these files appear on the PCPP cover CD.

Essential Online Gaming Sites

MPU - www.mpu.com.au
ACGP - www.acpg.com.au
Multiplay - www.multiplay.com.au
Wireplay - www.wireplay.com.au

PATCH NEWS

Most games receive at least one update in the form of downloadable patches. Here's the lowdown on the latest patch announcements.

XWing Alliance v. 2.02
(appears on this month's PCPP cover CD).
Corrects: This update includes further enhancements to 3D sound support and is compatible with all foreign language versions. The xwaupd202.exe update includes the following features and fixes.
New Features:
• Problems associated with foreign language versions after installing the 2.01 update (a red hue appearing on the screen and a sudden increase in the firing rate of the Death Star cannon) have been corrected.
• The Film Room: The film room will allow you to record and view the missions you have flown. See the beginning of this document for instructions.
• Aureal A3D Interactive™ sound support: Provides hardware accelerated 3d positional audio. To enable this support go to the sound options menu in the game, and select on for 3d sound enabled. If you have an Aureal supported sound card it will default to A3D support.
• Improvements to Direct Sound 3D support: We have made adjustments to our sound system to create a more fulfilling experience for users with Direct Sound 3D supported soundcards.
Mission Updates:
• Prologue mission 3: Sometimes after a player would inspect 97% of the craft in Cargo area 2 the goal would appear as satisfied when it wasn't. This has been addressed.
• Prologue mission 7: Changes in the ordering and triggering conditions that make the mission more cohesive.
• Prologue mission 8: Occasionally the player's craft would inexplicably get disabled in the freighter region; this has been fixed.
• Battle 4 mission 2: Occasionally a mission critical container would spontaneously explode; this has been fixed.
• Battle 6 mission 5: On Easy difficulty only there was a problem with TIE Fighter AI; this has been adjusted.

Rogue Squadron v. 1.2.0
(appears on this month's PCPP cover CD).
Adds the Naboo Starfighter to the game. The Naboo can only be accessed after completing a level with the default craft for that level. Addresses the problem with graphical corruption when using a 3D

NGN Action News

By Elih Brading

PATCH NEWS

1.7 Patch Update for Starsiege Tribes
(appears on this month's PCPP cover CD).
Note: release of Starsiege Tribes patch 1.8 is imminent.
• You can no longer throw grenades & mines if you are not controlling either your player object or a vehicle.
• Fixes a bug where mines and grenades that exploded while the player was not in control of his body would have an invalid team number.
• Players can no longer activate any station if their primary weapon is in its fire or reload state.
Player weapons are unmounted for all active stations (was left mounted for permanent ammo stations in 1.6)
• Fixes a bug with palette management introduced in 1.6
• Typing unclosed single quotes in the console no longer crashes.
• Turret::verifyTarget now has two arguments (%this,%target)
• GameBase::getMuzzle Transform() should now work correctly with turrets.
• There is now a 2 sec. timeout after using a station in which you can not throw mines & grenades.
• A few fixes have been added to the 1.6 fix list.
• Players now throw weapons

Be Redeemed

Version 1.13 of the ReDeMpTiOn Bot for Sin is now available, boasting "a seriously improved combat engine" that incorporates a comprehensive though realistic "aim leading code." Available from:

www.planetquake.com/redemption/

Quake Done Quick2

QdQ2 is a speed run through the full version of Quake2 on HARD difficulty, which was completed in under half an hour! Although the final version wasn't available at the time of writing, the preliminary run is available both from first-person perspective and as a recammed offering from the Quake-Movie-King Phil Rice aka Overman. To check out this humbling piece of work, visit:

www.planetquake.com/zs/
www.planetquake.com/qdq/

Kingpin's first mod

"Hoodlums," the first modification to be developed for KingPin is said to feature over 25 new weapons, real-world location such as schools, parks and city blocks, a realistic hit location system, powerups like steroids which give stamina for a selected period of time and a bandaging system ala Action Quake2. However, the scariest addition will be the prospect of increasing the level of realism on the in-game gibs, whose

authors say that it will be the most realistic ever yet featured! Check out:

www.planetkingpin.com/

Exist

We commended the efforts of Derek Smart for his passion to refine Battle Cruiser 3000AD, and Mike Fricker is a man who deserves similar attention for his devotion to Exist: a multiplayer-only, first person shooter created entirely by the man himself.

With technologies that hadn't even been thought up at the time, Fricker began work on his project - a project that now sports curved geometry, weapon extensions and a new, totally devised control system which is said to revolutionise the way you see and feel a first person shooter. Mike is the engine designer, programmer, level editor, modeler, artist, sound editor, play tester and marketer - all in his spare time. For that, we salute him.

http://exist.starix.net/

Genesis 3D

Genesis 3D is not a game, but rather a game engine. And best of all, it's completely free! If you've ever been interested in making your own games, here's a good place to start.

The engine allows you to create fully interactive 3D worlds, and incorporates support for both Glide and Direct3D. The screenshot pictured came from a
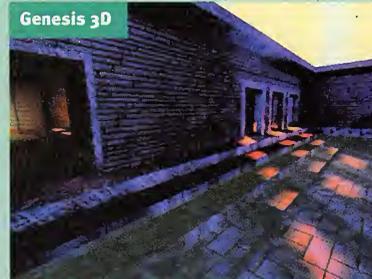
Genesis 3D

multiplayer-only game, built on the Genesis 3D engine. Check out:

www.genesis3d.com/ for details.

Quake Coach

The wheels on the bus go round and round, up the east coast of the United States in an effort to promote QIIIA (like it isn't hyped enough already!). This massive, Quake mega-coach houses 8 networked computers and will stop at various locations, giving lucky gamers the chance to enter the van and experience what is said to be "the top action franchise" ever. Only time will tell if Q3A will be as big as everyone predicts.

www.quake3arena.com/roadtour/

Quake 3 Arena Test

At time of press, Q3TEST v1.08 - Version 1.08 of the Q3TEST was the latest iteration of id's next FPS masterpiece to be released, inducing widespread panic and indecision in the online gaming community en masse. Many were
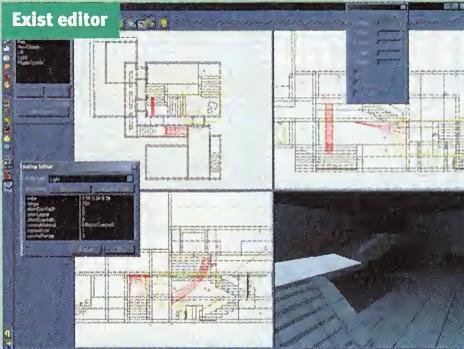
MOD OF THE MONTH
ACTION HALF-LIFE

http://ahl.telefragged.com/
The beta version of this Quake2 classic is available for Valve's premiere action shooter "Half-Life." With realistic weaponry and in-game physics, Action HL is sure to follow in the footsteps of its Quake counterpart by becoming a classic, must have add-on to expand your scientific experience. You can download the latest version from the above address.

Exist editor

Exist

You're telling me there wasn't enough action in Half-Life already?

HALF LIFE MODS

Not too many moons ago, the Valve team met up with developers of Half-Life user-created mods at an expo aimed to showcase the talents of these small teams. Not only for promotion, but it also gave mod-authors a chance to conference with the Half Life's developers and gain some insight in FPS development. The event was a huge success, and many walked away better versed in the art of creating memorable games.
The following mods were showcased:

ACTION HALF-LIFE
http://ahl.telefragged.com/

CHEMICAL EXISTENCE
http://www.redgenesis.com/

COUNTERSTRIKE
http://www.planethalflife.com/counterstrike/

GUNMAN
http://gunman.valveworld.com/

KANONBALL
http://www.primal-clarity.com.au/

SCIENCE & INDUSTRY
http://www.planethalflife.com/si/

More err... realism in Action Half Life

Q3Test v1.08

3 : 27

reluctant to embark on another huge download session, however id rewarded those who braved the lagged-ridden conditions to acquire the huge download. Suffice to say - it rocks!

The new version incorporates both teamplay and tournament modes, a map orientated towards one-on-one play (which starts to become mighty frantic when four players are involved), the lightning gun, numerous gameplay tweaks, a funky, powerful new interface and finally, an additional player model! The Sarge - is a cigar smoking, railgun toting psycho army colonel with attitude (Duke Nukem anybody?).

There's no doubting it - Id now has the development of Q3A on a roll. Stay tuned over the coming months for more on what's happening with this earth-shattering multiplayer experience.

And yep, id have still politely requested that the Quake 3 Arena Test be not placed on any cover CD. You can download this free test from:

www.quake3arena.com/.

Team Fortress 2

TF2 is sure to combust the online multiplayer world with revolutionary gaming superfluities that expand on the software's centrepoint - teamwork. Not only will you require steady aim and perfect control, the ability to successfully accompany your teammates will be vital for the success of the mission, or the infiltration and destruction of the opposition. The game features player-operated vehicles, helicopters, tanks and gun turrets, all of which can be used in the midst of battle and are actually more effective with multiple players in control. For example, the freestanding machinegun is more effective with one player feeding in the ammunition while the other fires. TF2 expands on Half-Life by including new engine features such as realistic smoke effects and MRM (multi-resolution mesh), which scales models based on proximity. Keep an eye out over the coming months - if you're into multiplayer or teamplay games at all, TF2 is the one for you.

PATCH NEWS

Team Fortress 2

Team Fortress 2

NGN RPG News

By Lindsey "Australis Dragon" Smith

PATCH NEWS

bound to keys of the players' choosing for ease of use (e.g. "BIND F6 QUICKSAVE") will save the current game to the first save slot every time it is pressed until no more saves are allowed.

Here are some other notable features in the patch. For a more detailed list of the what the patch includes, refer to the readme.txt file on the PCPP cover CD.

• Normal Console Commands and Variables
The following CONSOLE VARIABLES are made available (replace the # sign with a number), in-game help is available by typing the "LISTVAR" command at the console.

• "MOTIONTRACKER VOLUME" - this is set at its maximum of 1.0 by default, the volume of the tracker can be reduced by changing this number (e.g. to 0.75 or 0.5).

• "CROUCHMODE" - this new console command allows players to change the Aliens crouch/crawl to a toggle on/off key by typing "CROUCHMODE 1" at the console. "CROUCHMODE 0" changes back to the default setting.

• Music CD/Frame Rate Issue
Some players reported loss of frame rate if Disc 2 was not in their CD drive while playing the game. This situation has been resolved and the presence of a non-music CD (or absence of a CD) in the drive will no longer cause frame rate glitches.

Heretic 2 v1.06 Enhancement Pack
(appears on this month's PCPP cover CD).
This 14MB file brings a new female character: Kyra the elf, new weapons, new offensive moves, a new difficulty level, eight new multiplayer maps, additional 3D sound support, as well as a number of graphical enhancements and bug fixes. A must have.

Requiem: Avenging Angel Patch v1.2
(appears on this month's PCPP cover CD).
Allows dithering in the Direct 3D render of Requiem and disables auto-mipmapping. In non-technical terms, this patch improves the general graphical quality of the game a few notches.

Asheron's Call

The world of Dereth, once sparsely populated, but about to be inundated by adventurers, is lush and vibrant. Bordered by snowcapped mountains, and wide-open plains, Dereth is the setting for the world of Asheron's Call, the new ORPG by Turbine and Microsoft. The NDA on the beta test currently in progress was only recently lifted, so there's been a flood of non-official information on the Net. Tales of encounters within the game and tantalising screenshots filled the message boards, and adventurer's scrambled to tell the world about AC. It has now gone into Phase 2 of the beta, which means the whole game will be getting a major overhaul. The entire world of Dereth, including the dungeons, is being re-shaped. New dungeons are to be added and, above ground, groups or camps of monsters will be a major addition. Some camps may range up to 100 or more monsters! Entire new towns have been added, along with "outposts" outside of town in which new characters start. The monster AI has been revamped, and monsters are much more dangerous now. The magic system has been rebuilt, with a completely new user interface. New sets of shortcuts have been set up, so casting spells is much clearer and easier. The chat system has also been upgraded, with new commands to make it easier to talk and emote.

Another big issue in the AC world is the graphics, in particular, the 3D engine. The AC graphics engine is scalable, meaning that the graphics are scaled for your particular computer setup. One thing is for sure - to experience the lavish graphics on offer in full, you're going to need.

Of particular note, the Asheron's Call world will be fully seamless much like UO - meaning there should be no loading times when traversing the great expanse of Dereth.

Expect a full preview of Asheron's Call in an upcoming issue.

Ultima Online

New life has been infused into the UO world, with the opening of 2 new servers. The first, Siege Perilous, is a shard designed for "veteran" gamers. Features such as no recalling and 1 character per account look set to make this an exciting - albeit hard - shard to play on. People have been reactivating long dead UO accounts, just to play on this new shard, and some of the great

We bet he was shocked - a million volts to the genitals tends to have that effect!

"old school" PKs, Graybeard, Ronald MacDonald and Nighthawk, to name but a few, have been spotted online. The increased difficulty of playing on this new shard has frightened off the "less committed" citizens of Britannia, leaving only experienced players to duke it out. The second, and more controversial, shard is Arirang, which is based in Korea. Still no news on an official

Australian shard and because we connect via the USA to Korea, pings on this shard as just as bad if not worse than pings to standard US servers.

Everquest

Updating is the flavour of the month down at Verant, and EQ is being updated quicker than you can say, "don't nerf that skill". Recent changes include spell overhauls, changes to player-based trade skills, enhancements to the warrior class and the nerfing of the Pottery Skill. Most classes of magic users have had at least one spell in their inventory tweaked. A new server, Brell Serilis, has also been opened, but as with UO, no news yet on a local server.

Webstalk

By Rod "Spoonman" Campbell

SITE OF THE MONTH

PLANET HALF-LIFE

http://www.planethalflife.com/

PHL is the ONLY resource for Half-Life fans. It's impossible to describe the amount of work that has gone into its construction. Of major interest will be the section devoted to the mission pack, Opposing Force, which looks absolutely stunning. Of further interest is the Pre-Fabs section, which gives you all sorts of vehicles and other objects to put into your own levels to make them utterly awesome. PHL is so huge that you can only appreciate it by going there. Do so now.

Site Design: ★★★
Content: ★★★★★

SA WONDERLAN

http://www.kastinet.net.au/sawonderlan/

Continuing around this wide brown land of LAN we live in we now move to south Australia, and most certainly the people to know if it's great LAN action you crave is the SA Woinderlan crew. They hold monthly events with up to 200 people, which often results in wonderfully frantic multiplayer experiences. SA Wonderlan is also a good place to go if you're looking for reasonably cheap hardware (their prizes simply ROCK as a result of fantastic sponsorship). If you're in Adelaide or nearby and want some LAN in your diet, get over to Wonderlan.

Site Design: ★★★★
Content: ★★★★★

SETI@HOME

http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu/

The SETI Program (Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence) has been going on for years although the US and anyone else involved generally keep a bit quiet about in case they actually find something. Now you too can be a part of the great search using SETI@home. You download a free program which analyses radio telescopic data that may possibly lead to finding new civilisations. So why are we putting this in Webstalk? If you're the first person to find anything you have the right to report it to the world, such a discovery will make you very famous and an instant millionaire. And of course,

furthering the cause of science. Sounds like a good enough reason to us. *Sent by Flamebird*

Site Design: ★★★★
Content: ★★★★

I.AM KINGPIN

http://kingpin.pcgame.com/

With Kingpin being so new there aren't that many community websites available. i.am Kingpin is one of the first and looks like it will be one of the best for a long time to come. Almost everything you could want is here from skins and patches to cheats and walkthroughs, there is also an extensive FAQ for people who are wondering what the whole deal is with the game. An easily navigated site with everything Kingpin related you could possibly want. *Sent by uberhacker*

Site Design: ★★★★
Content: ★★★★★

LEGO PURISTS

http://www.robotcity.com/lp/Home.html

Come on admit it. You still play with your Lego, although instead of making the trucks and houses you made when you were six you're making complex bridges over ravines and scale models of F-16s now right? Well this site should be your inspiration. This site is hardcore to the max, featuring some absolutely awesome Lego models made by some of the purest purists you'll ever see. *Sent by Sootydog*

Site Design: ★★★★
Content: ★★★★★

SA Wonderlan

I.AM Kingpin

Seti@home

LETTERS

Letters Page Tip #1: Being utterly lazy bastards, we simply can't be bothered with extremely long letters. Keep them under 400 words, though, and we might just manage to read it all the way to the end.

Oh, please! The Matrix is so passe nowadays.

JOLT COLA Letter of the Month
A case of the good stuff for the letter that says it best

Be crap-hot anyway!

Beautiful magazine men! It's superbly written with a perfect balance of humour, wit, and precise analysis: a joy to read and of supreme use.

I am writing in response to Rowan Fraser (PCPP #39) who suggested "games are for fun, not intensive study." Fair enough. There is barely a game on the shelf today that you could analyse in terms of artistic or social MEANING. But, god damn it, I'm looking forward to the day that we CAN play a game and get a lot more out of it for our MINDS, not just our senses. Imagine the Unreal engine powering a game full of political and social intrigue! (*No need to imagine it, Murray, it'll be with you soon in the shape of Deus Ex - Ed.*) It can be approached bizarrely or humorously; it needn't be too serious! I look forward to a time when games are layered deep with meaning as well as being sensory delights. This won't upset those who do not recognise or care about the deeper meaning because the gameplay should be crap-hot anyway! But these games will offer a richer and more intellectually and culturally rewarding experience for any who can pick up the details.

I'm currently finishing my Arts degree at Melbourne Uni (already guessed?!) and have concentrated on Cinema Studies. We analyse what is offered to the viewer by the author of a film, looking at characters, narrative, editing, lighting, music and sound, etc, as well as it's cultural and historical context. And although we get into serious discussion, it is above all FUN while we learn and think.

These elements we study are largely the same as those found in computer games and the two are getting closer each day.

Perhaps this is why they are offering a new subject next year which is purely about computer games. I was so excited about doing it that I had to go part-time this semester because otherwise I'd finish my degree this year and be gone before the subject was introduced!

One day, I hope to make and play games which can be studied as ART! After all, the more artistic our chosen form of escapism is, the more credibility it has, right guys?!

Murray Lorden
Park Orchards, VIC

Good choice, Murray. Who'd want to spend hours on a frame-by-frame analysis of the lighting techniques in Citizen Kane, for example, when you could be studying the effects of globalisation and hyper-accelerated capitalism in Syndicate Wars. Or something. Anyway, a slab of Jolt is now on its way to help you through those end of year exams.

Help the humans

For all too long we have been forced to abide by rules in computer games which give us no choice in how we behave. Only recently have there been the release of games which enable us to be evil (GTA being a prime example). This is hardly enough however.

I recently purchased Requiem: Avenging Angel and, despite the fact that I enjoyed it thoroughly, I was annoyed that the main character, Malachi, had no choice but to help the humans. What I want to see is a demonic force which wipes out the humans! Think about it!

People have recently been debating on direction which gaming has yet to take. Well, I think one of them is the path which leads to wholesale destruction! Remember the Nali in Unreal? Didn't you ever want to just blast them to pieces and end their mindless gibbering! But no! We had to protect them from the infinitely cool-looking Skaarj! I want to see more bloodshed and less protecting of innocents!

Now don't get me wrong, I have nothing against being opposed to the alien forces poised to destroy Earth. Being a good guy is fun for a while, but I think that the time has come for more games like Aliens Vs Predator in which you can choose which path you take and whether we save the human race or crunch it into pieces and use them as hosts for the brood, or whatever.

Lucas Whybin
Email

So many games fail to provide an adequate and convincing motivation for your character's actions. Requiem is perhaps a case in point. For us, it's not so important whether we're being "good" or "bad" guys, but whether the reasons for being so are persuasive enough. Half-Life succeeded in making you want to be the good guy, while Thief even made you question what constituted good and evil. Having said that, Kingpin sounds right up your nasty, ugly alley, Lucas.

Known to the "elite"

OK, I'm not trying to prove anyone wrong, but the issue of pirating is a very large and very real topic. The amount of pirated software out there is quite sickening. It's available to ANYONE, FREE! and it's a disgrace. Whether you find it on mIRC or browsing it's there and is known to the "elite" as warez. Also, the issue of emulators is unfortunate but true. In mIRC, I joined one of these channels briefly only to find a guy with over 1000 different "games/emulators/roms". I have been helping the IRC operators close down such channels but, under the law, free speech prevails. I just wanted to post this message to people out there: Don't be tempted. If you download that programme, you are making the price of it and others go up.

Now would probably NOT be a good time to save.

Super-evolved killing machines, yet they still manage to drool on themselves.

Buy it from the shop, do it by the law and it will be a much more enjoyable experience.
Jake Jarrett
Email

Hey Jake, you're gonna go to heaven! Seriously, we only wish there were more people out there who had a similar attitude.

You guys and gals

I don't often disagree with your reviews but 96% for Aliens Vs Predator goes against the standards you have set in past reviews - unless you guys and gals think those standards have been a little too high anyway. The biggest fault in your review, and please correct me if I am wrong, is that there was no mention about the lack of a save game option during a mission. Normally, your magazine totally frowns on this omission. In the case of AVP it's a disaster because this high tension, high action game results in frequent player death. Now, starting it all over again is frustrating. The reviewer also mentioned the great sound, but did they mention that anyone with an MX300 (A3D) need not apply. David Wildgoose was right about the sound in Thief (*Hey, I was, too! - DW*). For a game played in the dark, four speaker support is wonderful. But in AVP, which is also played a lot in the dark, there is no 4 speaker support. Damn, that is a obvious omission on the reviewers behalf! Yes, all the right sounds from the movie are there but if I can't tell where they are coming from, what's the use?
George Tsalacopoulos
Email

Perhaps Brett should have mentioned the save game issue, but we think his overall review (and score) was spot on. Although it clearly wasn't appreciated by everyone, it's our belief that the lack of a mid-level save was significantly responsible for creating that "high tension" to which you refer. The fact AVP is still resident in What We're Playing several months later speaks volumes for its quality.

Those old geezers

I won't give you all that suck up crap everyone else gives you and I will get straight to the point. I love strategy (not turn-based. I hate turn-based) and shoot 'em up games. I don't care what anybody else says, but I think Quake is better than Quake 2 for online gaming. Particularly Team Fortress. Now after seeing a 60 Minutes report and various newspaper reports, I was compelled to correct those total and utterly INCORRECT things said. If you haven't guessed what I am taking about already I will tell you. I'm talking about violence in computer games.

Come on. It's violence that makes a game great. That is the reason why nobody buys Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego? I loooooove violence - and I'm sure most other people here share that same feeling. But after saying that I am not going to go out and brutally murder every man, woman and child.

So, in conclusion I think all those old geezers who wrote and presented those reports about violence in computer games should shut up. If they don't like violence they can go back to their educational games but don't spoil the gaming goodness for us all.
Shane Dowd
Email

Blame the teenagers

I would just like to say something about that violence in video games thing. Those teenagers who did that massacare in Littleton were said to be avid fans of the computer game Doom. But what teenage male with a computer ISN'T a avid fan of Doom? Don't blame Doom, blame the teenagers. Personally I love Doom, and Quake and all of that, but have no intention of going on a massacre. They should leave Doom and all other computer games alone. A computer never hurt anyone (except those ones that work for the military and stuff). Computers don't (usually) kill people, people kill people.
Phillip Munt
Euroa, VIC

Both sides of this debate get into trouble by seeking to oversimplify the whole issue. While it's silly to think that computer games such as Doom are directly responsible for the tragic events earlier in the year, surely it's equally ridiculous to suggest they have absolutely no effect at all. If people weren't influenced by media, why would there be so much money spent on advertising?

Happily playing whatever

I've been a reader of PC Powerplay for the last year or two, and every so often I notice some mail in the letters section of the mag about PC vs Consoles. One thing I'm wondering is why do people bother writing in about them? (I should ask myself the same thing, as this letter is kinda about that as well). It kinda reminds me of the Sega vs Nintendo arguments back when the NES/Sega

Master System, and the Super NES/Megadrive were kings (or queens, if you will) of the gaming 'scene'. No one won these arguments, and the people just went along happily playing whatever system they were happy playing on. Why don't people do that still? Just play games on whatever system you enjoy playing your games on? I personally own an N64, Playstation and of course, a PC. I love my Playstation, and my PC, but I'm not going to get into an argument about which is better. Both machines offer different features. For instance, the Playstation is a dedicated gaming console, and the games that are written for it are going to work just as fine on one person's machine as they are on another. As for PC, the games vary depending on what sort of system you own. Detail/speed wise at least.

But also, each system is much better for certain types of games. I can't picture myself playing something like Quake 2 or the like on a Playstation. And I can't picture myself playing something like Tekken 3 on the PC. What I really am trying to say is, just enjoy your games, regardless of what system you're playing them on. Cos all it comes down to at the end of the day is entertainment.

Dale/Sui
Reservoir, VIC

Idea regarding Doom

I have some problems with the letters that were in your previous edition (PCPP #39). Firstly, we have the loser (being he retarded or otherwise) and his 'KickUInDaNuts4It' letter. Whether he was trying to be funny or not, it sucked, plain and simple. Second, we have the letter entitled 'In The Head'. That guy obviously has no idea regarding Doom and location damage. Thirdly, the 'I Completely Agree' letter. Well, if all games were intended to be educational, why have games such as Half-Life, Hidden & Dangerous and so on? I highly doubt they teach you any skills necessary in the future. No game, that I have seen anyway, has provided me with additional education and they will never provide us with education (hopefully). Games are designed for recreation as opposed to assisting our education, that's what school is for. Thirdly, I am totally in agreement with the letter by Andreas (entitled Special of $74.95). If piracy does stop, I highly doubt that the retailers will decrease the price of games as there is no need to as people will still purchase them, despite the price. If you can get something for free (or a decreased price), why not take it? That's the attitude that majority of the world has adopted. If a game company created a great, involving, beautiful game, they should be supported. It's as simple as that.

Byte Size

Also to all those unoriginal DICKS out there using my original online Quake 3 name, "PIMP DADDY", get a life for I am the ORIGINAL!
Martin Zachar
Email
Oh dear...

OK, Terry, we have to play co-operatively. Now, you distract him while I sneak around the back

Yeah. Thanks a lot Gordan.

100 | 0 6 | 22

And he thought no one would see him scratching his arse.

Blade
Email
That's a real shame, Blade. In our experience, school offered at least as much in the way of recreation as it did education. And, of course, everything we know about, say, American history was picked up whilst playing Colonization and Day Of The Tentacle.

Australia is Telstra's

I am sick and tired of downloading slow, having high pings while playing games (if I can actually get on the server) and generally surfing the net at a slow pace. Sure, I have a 56k modem, but that's just not enough. I want high speeds, so I can play quake with 30 ping and be able to download at 200k/sec. This is only possible, at a reasonable price, with a cable modem. However, the only cable modem service currently available in Australia is Telstra's. They charge so much, that it isn't even worth looking into. They charge $70 a month for unlimited access, but allow only 100 Megs of downloading. This downloading includes viewing webpages, playing online games, and even going on ICQ. What garbage!

In the USA you can get unlimited cable modem access and unlimited downloading for around $45US a month. Why can't we get similar prices? It's about time companies like Optus and other major Australian ISP's realised that there is a huge market for reasonable priced cable modem access. We deserve better, we deserve to at least have the service 'available' to us at a

decent price. Anyways, I suppose we'll just have to look towards to the future and hope!
Damian
Email
It's probably got something to do with economies of scale, but we couldn't say for sure. None of us played SimCity 3000 for long enough, you see.

Fine thank you

I have been recently going around to different computer stores asking for some quotes about a new system, as mine is a piece of shit, and you don't know how much you have helped me. I use the buyer's guide in PCPP #31 non-stop, and it is my bible. If you had not put that out, I don't know what I would have done, I would have been clueless. I know that that buyer's guide is out of date, but I do not have much money to spend so it suits me fine thank you very much. Just one suggestion, it would be really good if you put a page in the magazine (just one page) dedicated to a buyer's guide, one half for the budget gamer and one half for the power user. Just a quick run down on all the latest and greatest parts that people should buy to make a quality PC, not a paragraph explaining each part, just the name, manufacturer, price and other recommended parts/brands in the same category. As I know, there are a lot of people in the same boat as me. Keep it up champions and consider my suggestion.
Rob
Email
Food for thought, Rob. We'll see what we can come up with.

I got an idea

Why are games getting so hardware dependent and concentrating on multiplayer? Single player should be concentrated too, look at Half Life. It's got a great storyline! You're more like wanting to play the single player than the multiplayer. Sure lotsa games have multiplayer and single player but they should watch what Half Life does. Both multiplayer and single

player are great! With Quake 3, id are making it harder for some gamers (like me) to catch up with all that hardware. I got an idea. Why don't we make a single player game that supports like 2 to 8 people in the storyline. Not just for one person. We should put that up in the main menu "Multi-Single Player" or thereabouts.
Yun "Xothermic" Khang Lai
Email
You mean like some sort of co-operative mode? Yun, you're a genius.

Caption: Is there too much tomato sauce in computer games?

Nearest firearms store

I know you have had a ton of letters about the controversial topic of "The Violence in Video Games" particularly in relation to the 60 Minutes segment and the Colorado School Massacre but I feel I can add a different and unique perspective to this topic.

I am a Police Officer and have been so for the past 10 years. I am 30 years old and have been playing computer games since I was 12. I must stress that any views I put forward in this letter are my personal views and do not reflect those of any Police Department or Law Enforcement Agency whatsoever. That said, in expressing my opinion I will run the risk of attracting internal disciplinary action or enquiry.

Now for some actual facts (from my personal experience). The so called 'expert' interviewed on 60 Minutes claims that video games such as Doom and the like, and the use of light gun arcade machines were training the kids how to kill and in the use of firearm techniques. Now I have played Doom 1 and 2, Quake, and Half-life etc. and I have used light guns in the arcades and on home consoles, and through my occupation, I am proficient in the use of

firearms especially having experience in the use of handguns and shotguns.

Now there is no way you can compare moving about a mouse on a mousepad using it to line up a cross hair on a computer screen nor even aiming a light gun at a screen to aiming and firing a real firearm. The real physics, recoil and weight involved with the use of real firearms is completely different and there is no way that you can learn to shoot using a computer game. If 60 Minutes was serious about presenting an unbiased and non-sensationalist approach they could have easily found and spoken to some 'real' experts regarding this area to get the other side of the story. If the use of firearms in games was anywhere near accurate and able to be used as training, I'm sure my Department would get rid of the highly qualified and accredited firearms trainers and buy a couple of copies of Doom for us to play during our lunch breaks.

However in all fairness I am unable to comment on the use of such weapons as Rocket Launchers and Hand Grenades

as I do not have access to this sort of weaponry and have no experience in this area. It may be the case that any kid can pick up a Rocket Launcher and use it effectively after playing Doom.

The blame put on computer games by the media, parents and the like is unfounded and computer games are being used as a scapegoat. The issue is too complex to assign blame to any particular thing. I know after spending time in the States that their culture is partly to blame. Some parts of their Constitution give their citizens a basic 'right to bear arms'. Purchasing a firearm is as simple as taking your driver's licence to the nearest firearms store, which are numerous, and filling out a basic form. Surely there is something wrong with this to start off with.

There is so much to say and comment on however your magazine could not afford me that much space. In conclusion though, I can say that during my 10 years experience as a Police Officer, not ONCE have I come across a crime committed by an adult or child, that had been influenced by any violence in computer games. I can only hope that when classifying games that the OFLC keeps a level head and can see through the unfounded blame placed upon computer games by some sections of the community.
Andy Whitehead
Email

Caption: Why get a real gun when you can use one of these?

COMPETITIONS

KINGPIN
6 COPIES OF THE GAME

Kingpin is da bomb, biatch! Phatter than my bitch's booty, Kingpin depicts life in the hood where cold lampin' and droppin' plates are de rigeur. Keep it real and become the playa you were always meant to be by winning a free copy courtesy of our homies at Xatrix and Interplay. Without it you'll just have to fake the funk. Peace out.

Q. Translate into proper Queen's English the following quote from resident Ebonics expert, Ewan Corness:

"All yo crackers out there chillin' and illin' in da crib, ya'll better show mad skillz with dis translation or I be forced to school you sucker-punks by breaking my foot off in yo ass. It's time to drop plates in this mutha, you wack biotch. Time to blaze up some chronic and keep it real, yo."

RE-VOLT
6 COPIES OF THE GAME

Finally the PC has an arcade racer to match the classic Micro Machines series our console cousins have been playing for years. Re-Volt is insanely fun and intensely frustrating in equal measures; it'll make you want you punch the monitor in disgust and yet keep you addicted for weeks and weeks. We know we're not going to stop playing until we discover all the stars on all the tracks and unlock every last car available.

Q. Dead Formula One champ Ayrton Senna's favourite off-track hobby was playing with which radio-controlled toys?

DUNGEON KEEPER 2
1 HORNY LEATHER JACKET PLUS 6 COPIES OF THE GAME

Bullfrog have an enviable track record for producing titles that are innovative and possess unhealthy amounts of gameplay. Dungeon Keeper 2 is up there with the best of them. This comp's a bit special: not only do we have the usual six copies of the game to give away, but one of that fortuitous sextet will also receive a snazzy DK2 leather jacket complete with a picture of that horny devil dude on the back. It's black so it looks cool.

Q. Complete this sentence: the Gimp's favourite S&M outfit is made from _____?

HOMEWORLD
6 COPIES OF THE GAME

With Homeworld, Sierra have presented us with the first revolution in real-time strategy since Total Annihilation. Realising that space has no boundaries, Homeworld offers a never before seen, completely, utterly, totally, fantastically, truly (That's enough - Ed) 3D environment within which to wage war. Nebula effects have never looked so good!

Q. Bearing the same name as Keanu Reeves' rock band, what is the star Sirius also known as?

ISSUE 39 WINNERS

UNREAL TOURNAMENT
Q. What kind of helicopter was featured on the cover of Abba Arrival?
A. The Bell (Model 47) light utility helicopter.
S. Nicklin, Buff Point NSW
N. Nguyen, Belmont WA
J. Fell, Keilor East VIC
L. Sinfield, Morphettvale SA
L. Miskin, Te Anau NZ
D. Gatty, Burleigh Heads QLD

MECHWARRIOR 3
Q. Which, in your opinion, is the least feasible sci-fi combat unit and why?
A. Forsaken's hover bikes, for the following reasons:
1 - Flight requires two things: thrust and lift. While the hover bikes achieve thrust of forward motion by a jet engine, they do not have wings to produce lift. An air-plane wing for example, has a special shape (called an airfoil), that bulges more on top than on the bottom. When air meets the wing it splits into two streams, top and bottom, which meet up again in the back. The air passing over the top has to travel farther than the air going underneath, so it is forced to move faster. Faster-moving air has less pressure (called the Bernoulli Principle), so the air above the wing has less pressure than the area below the wing. This creates lift.
2 - Without wings, Forsaken's hover bikes are unable to gain more lift at a lower speed just as a plane does via minor adjustments to its wing flaps;
3 - Forsaken's hover bikes do not have tail wings which assist a plane to change direction (left or right as opposed to up and down) via minor adjustments to its tail wing flap.
4 - As Forsaken's hover bikes are open, their riders are virtually unprotected.
5 - Unlike true hovercraft, Forsaken's hover bikes do not have a large base area to obtain lift. True hovercraft rely on the so-called 'ground effect' to form an air cushion on which the craft is supported. The flow of air produced by a true hovercraft fan on the surface of the ground acquires an annualar pattern; all the flow and turbulence is concentrated at the edges, while at the centre an air cushion is formed in which the air is very nearly at rest. At the edge of this cushion, an annular jet of air develops which creates a curtain that insulates the cushion from the surrounding lower-pressure atmosphere.
6 - Extensive tests have shown that hovercraft give the best performance and stabiltiy when the 'hovering' height is somewhat less than one-tenth the craft's diameter. That is, a craft of 20 feet diameter should operate at a height of 2 feet above the surface of the ground. Given this principle, it would not be feasible that Forsaken's hover bikes could even get off the ground, let alone travel at the heights they do in the computer game; and lastly
7 - If hover bikes were feasible, they would have been produced by now.
Other answers included;
• MechWarriors, because they would need an A1 System capable of balancing 50 - 100 tons of lumbering metal. Pretty much impossible.
• Harry Harrison's 'Cosmic Camel Corps' in 'Space Rangers of the CCC' where the Cosmic Camels attack their own riders.
• The Combat Droids in Star Wars: The Phantom Menace because they're just plain useless. (Even the witless Jar Jar Binks can kick their ass, so basically they're crap!).
• An Ewok Hand-glider (Would you like to be dropping stones on Storm Troopers in this flimsy piece of junk?)
• Anything from Star Wars and Star Trek (I mean, C'mon! Really!)
B. Cox, Burleigh Heads QLD
J. Sax, Albany Creek QLD
J. Leong, Balaclava VIC
J. Ho, Merrylands NSW
T. Verschuken, Sheffield TAS
T. Perry, Huntindale WA

EPISODE 1: RACER
Q. To date, who has played Darth Vader in the Lucasfilm movies?
A. Jake Lloyd (Anakin Skywalker in Episode 1), David Prowse (Body in Episodes IV, V & VI), James Earl Jones (Voice in Episodes IV, V & VI), Sebastian Shaw (Face in Episode VI), Andrew Nelson (Episode V Special Edition), Bob Anderson & Peter Diamond (Stuntmen).
J. Allen, Seymour VIC
D. Broadley, West Launceston TAS
N. Godfrey, Glenalta SA
S. Figar, Dapto NSW
J. McNaughton, Yeronga QLD
B. Sochan, Burwood NSW

EIDOS F1 RACING
Q. Which Formula 1 drivers career, and arm, was cut short by a helicopter crash?
A. Alessandro Nannini
P. Walker, Holland Park QLD
S. Edwards, Beaconsfield QLD
D. Wajchman, East Brighton VIC
P. Dunn, Elsternwick VIC
D. Lindgren, Hamilton South NSW
J. Marriott, Woodberry NSW

Battlezone 2

COMING IN PC PowerPlay

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Past, Present and Future
Brett Robinson reports from the virtual battlefield.

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Driver • Braveheart • Jagged Alliance 2
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Ensemble Studios further refine their RTS magic.
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Can System Shock 2 live up to its predecessor?
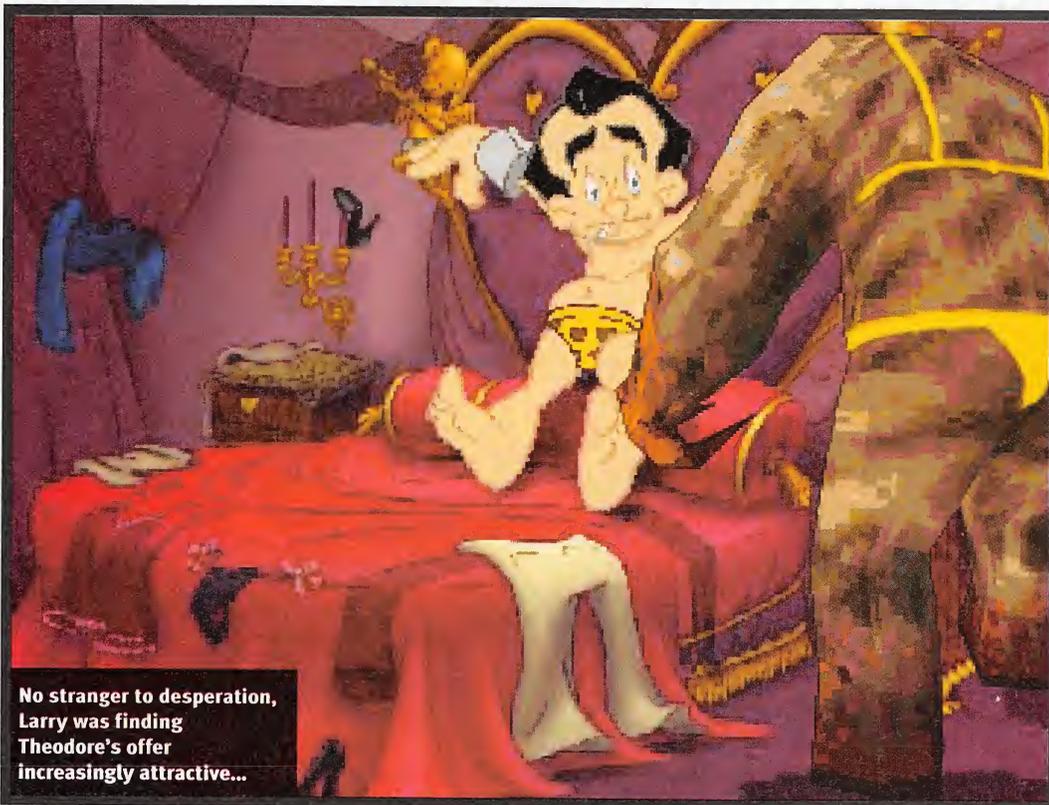
No stranger to desperation, Larry was finding Theodore's offer increasingly attractive...

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Read Error assesses the contenders...

HOMEWORLD
Key Feature: Nebula effects!

IMPERIUM GALACTICA 2
Key Feature: Nebula effects!

STAR TREK KLINGON ACADEMY
Key Feature: Nebula effects!

STAR TREK STARFLEET COMMAND
Key Feature: Nebula effects!

STARLANCER
Key Feature: Nebula effects!

I-WAR DELUXE
Key Feature: Nebula effects!

CONQUEST
Key Feature: Nebula effects!

JUMP RUNNER
Key Feature: Nebula effects!

DESCENT FREESPACE 2
Key Feature: Nebula effects!

FREELANCER
Key Feature: Aaargh!

The Read Error Interview series with
William T. Ford
❖ ❖ ❖
"COOL, CALM, AND CORRUPT - HE'S THE GREATEST GAMES JOURNALIST IN THE WORLD."

This month:
Duke Nukem

Duke caught up with me at the vast compound in the Nevada desert he calls home. After being ushered through the strict security with the aid of a few carefully-placed brown envelopes, I was greeted with the customary reverence.

Duke: "Who wants some?"
WTF: "William T. Ford, of course. How are you, Mr Nukem?"
Duke: "Damn, I'm lookin' good!"
WTF: "You are indeed. Almost as good as myself, actually. You've been out of the public eye for some years now. Are you not worried that you may be seen as something of a yesterday's man?"
Duke: "Damn, those alien scum are gonna pay for shootin' up my ride!"
WTF: "I see, so it's the aliens' fault for the delays to Duke Nukem Forever, not your own incompetence and dereliction?"
Duke: "Ya feeling lucky punk?"
WTF: "Luckier than the aliens, I expect. How do you plan to get the project back on track?"
Duke: "Heh heh. I'm gonna rip 'em a new one!"
WTF: "That's the spirit! So, you're planning a big comeback then?"
Duke: "It's time to kick ass 'n' chew bubblegum - and I'm all outta gum!"
WTF: Oh, yes, with that kind of attitude I can now see why you're so popular. Tell me, do you enjoy your own games?"
Duke: "I don't have time to play with myself."
WTF: "Well, of course. I'm sure it was an honour for you to meet me, but I really must be going now."
Duke: "Come get some!"
WTF: "No, really, I have enough already, thank you. Must dash."
Duke: "See you in hell!"