

PCZONE

ISSUE 161 DECEMBER 2005

EXCLUSIVE REVIEW & DEMO!

BROTHERS IN ARMS: EARNED IN BLOOD

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outflank Call Of Duty 2?

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OUT 21ST OCTOBER



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A PLAN D?

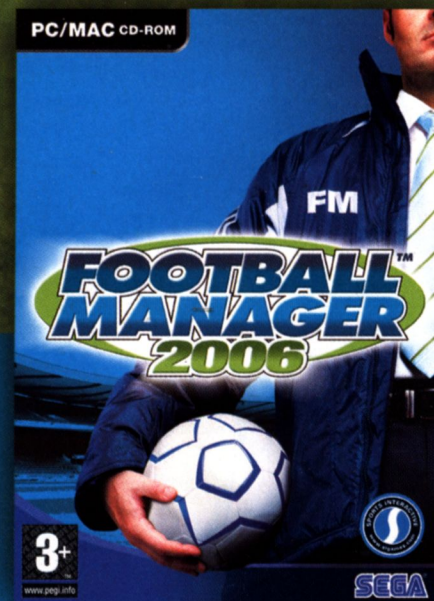


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COMING SOON

9/10



"Chillingly atmospheric and gruesomely beautiful"



PlayStation 2



COVER STORY

62

BROTHERS IN ARMS: EARNED IN BLOOD

PC ZONE goes to war! Exclusive review of Gearbox's WWII squad-based shooter sequel



MORAL MAZE

HERE'S A NICE gentle poser – are realistic war videogames immoral? A good friend of mine finds games that recreate certain battles and situations from real conflicts – such as the rather spiffing *Brothers In Arms: Earned In Blood* (p62) – completely distasteful and refuses to play them. Now, I'm someone who will snipe someone in *Far Cry* from 30 metres away, give a yelp of boyish satisfaction, then follow it up with a few short rounds of machine-gun fire into the still-twitching ragdoll body, cackling insanely as I do it. Videogame morals? Pah. I don't think *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* is violent enough.

However, in a rare moment of contemplation (an ad break in 24), I thought about the fact that many WWII games include real photos and film footage – *Medal Of Honor* is especially keen on using 'authentic' artefacts from the time. How many of those faces we see flash by in grainy images on our monitors belong to brave soldiers who perished on the field of battle? If they could speak today, would they be happy about being a minor part in a piece of pure digital fun? Or are games such as *Call Of Duty 2* keeping alive the memory of the soldiers who sacrificed their lives to give us the right to sit on our backsides and play PC games?

Strangely, my friend has no problem with movies like *Saving Private Ryan*. Personally, war-themed first-person shooters always bring home to me how horrible war must be, and how useless and ineffectual I would be in a life or death situation. Also, I just love shooting Nazis...

Jamie Sefton

Jamie Sefton, editor

DOMINIK DIAMOND 146

I see exposed wood, but on her walls rather than poking out of my pants...



CITY OF VILLAINS START CACKLING ...NOW! 56

WHAT'S ON THE COVER?



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Too busy? PC ZONE in 110 words... First off we do contents and that, and there's this big picture of a tank. Then there's the Upfront bit, which is ace and full of space-ships, monsters and other such unlikely things. Then there's this bit where we play a load of games and then mark them out of a hundred. Then there's technical stuff, then Suzy comes along and does her Freeplay stuff after that. Then, after a little while, Dominik Diamond comes on again and spouts profanity about *Virtually Jenna*. Which we promise never to mention ever again by the way. Think that's about it. You can put this back on the shelf at WHSmiths now.

Gary Grigsby's WORLD AT WAR™

IGN - 8.5/10 | GameSpot.com 8.4/10

**"A DEFINITE MUST-HAVE FOR STRATEGY
FANS." - Steve Butts**

PC Gameworld

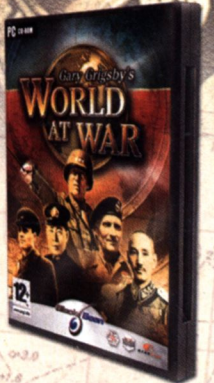
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BLACK & WHITE 2

Proof that the best games include giant monkeys. And sometimes cows...

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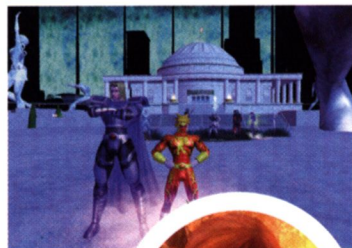
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I take it the rest of your clothes don't come off?

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FREEPLAYHOWTO...

Get the most out of F.E.A.R.

Fantastic Expectations, Amazing Revelations. Will Parter's got the F.E.A.R.

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TRADE FIGHT BUILD THINK



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UPFRONT



MEET THE TEAM

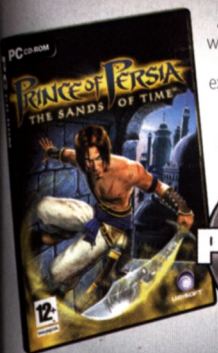
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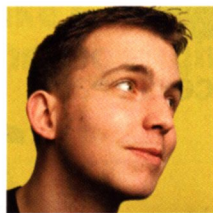


This is a classic action-adventure game which we described as "a near-seamless gaming experience... Ubisoft has kissed a frog and it's turned into a prince".
PC ZONE verdict 84%



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WILL PORTER
NEWS EDITOR

AGE 25

LIKES Cheap food, 'Allo 'Allo

DISLIKES Wearing shirts

FANCIES Willow out of *Buffy*

FAVOURITE GAME *Max Payne 2*

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?

Brothers In Arms: Earned In Blood

Forever tagged with the role of chief tea-maker at ZONE towers, Will has actually been refusing to do the honours for what amounts to two whole years. This, however, has not stopped letters, emails, phone calls and entries on wikipedia.org centred on his prowess in beverage retrieval appearing on what constitutes a frighteningly regular basis. He'd like to point out that the joke is no longer funny, that he is now an established journalist and far beyond such menial tasks. He'd also like to thank everyone for their concern about the much heralded time when his wee started smelling like coffee. It seems to have gone away now.



SUZY WALLACE

Disc Editor

Suze is going to be really cross with us when she gets back from her holidays in Mexico. We're going to try to keep schtum and hope she doesn't find out. Or else we're in trouble.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?

GT Farcking Legends



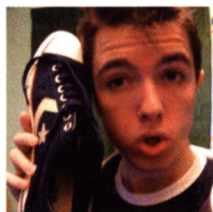
JAMIE SEFTON

Editor

Normally cynical and somewhat dour, Sefton has been skipping through meadows this month - joyful and fancy-free. The presence of *Pro Evo 5* on his PC may be the reason...

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?

Pro Evo 5



STEVE HOGARTY

Staff Writer

Three weeks into his new life in London, Irish lad Steve has already engaged in banter with prostitutes, been evicted and been forced into watching Will's *Citizen Smith* DVDs. Poor little lamb.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?

Black & White 2, Psychonauts



PAUL PRESLEY

Section Editor

Proud ginger father Prez has spent the month showing workmates pics of his (non-ginger) offspring and demanding that they make cooing noises. He also finally conceded and finished *Half-Life 2*.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?

City Of Villains, X3: Reunion



DOMINIK DIAMOND

Minor Celebrity Columnist

Currently appearing between Crazy Frog ads on cable, Dominik Diamond is, nevertheless really famous. At least as famous as Lucky the dog out of the More Than insurance ads. Maybe more.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?

Rude games and *Far Cry*



ANTHONY HOLDEN

Freelancer Extraordinaire

Aussie charmer Holden spent this month fending off Nazis while quaffing a variety of extravagant Polish ales. On this occasion, we're sad to report that the Third Reich were victorious.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?

Call Of Duty 2

STUFF THAT'S HELPED US THIS MONTH... *Pro Evo* tournaments, *Fahrenheit*, pre-chopped chicken breasts and the wondrous Magners cider
STUFF THAT'S BEEN OF NO HELP WHATSOEVER... Missing fonts, late dissertations, the fourth-floor butter mafia and pesky lampposts. Ouch

STUFF WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...

MMOGING 90 Mins Should the online sex craze have one 'j' or two?

RAISINS AND KETCHUP 15 Mins The equivalent of kryptonite to our new staff writer Steve

STITCH A STAR 37 Mins *Quick & Easy Cross Stitch* magazine's celebrity patterns. This month, Philip Schofield and Fern Britton!

MONKEYS OR COWS? 23 Mins *Black & White 2* re-ignites the age-old debate

VIRGIN TRAINS 46 Min Getting Will back into Euston at 4am. Cheers Branson

FUTON SOFA BEDS 2 Mins Double or single? Argos or Ikea?

THE AMERICAN SLAVE TRADE 67 Mins Curiously unreferenced in the new *Tiger Woods* game

LETTERS

You write, *Jamie Sefton* reads. It's a simple process really



SWAP SHOP

Does Dominik Diamond want to swap his Alienware for my PC seeing as he only uses it to play *Minesweeper*?

Mark Brown

Sorry Mark - Dominik has just discovered he can now use it for downloading a heap of filthy interactive stuff as well (see page 146), so that's out of the question.

EVOLUTION?

Just think how games have changed since the early days of the Atari 2600 console. When 3D came out it was like, 'OMG, a miracle has happened!', and now we have stuff like *Doom 3* and *F.E.A.R.* But will we

ever be shocked by another wave of brilliant technology? Are virtual reality games close? Wouldn't it be great for the next *Battlefield* game to have goggles and gloves and all the sci-fi virtual reality gear? Is this dream technology underway? I hope so, because it'd make games more physical and I need a workout...

Ryan Clarke

Sorry Ryan, I honestly don't think the next *Battlefield* game (page 34) would be improved by any virtual reality nonsense - a fad that happily died out in the mid '90s. I'm sure in the next 50 years we'll have true *Star Trek* Holodeck-style simulations, but for the time being you might want to try *GameTrak: Real World Golf* (page 73). A great game which actually gave Prezzer his first exercise of the new millennium.

with my girlfriend, and immediately afterwards felt compelled to play *Soldier Of Fortune II* and blow the heads off as many people as possible.

WHY I OUGHTA...

Now, before I start my rant I need to make it clear that it's been a long, long time since I've been compelled to spend so much time on a game since *Battlefield 2*. Yet there are, in my opinion, some serious issues with the game itself as well as the way it's managed online.

For a start, why the hell do you lose the remainder of your clip when you reload before it's emptied? [Edited for space]. Second, why the hell do vehicles have to explode when they get submerged more than a few feet?! [More edits] Now for the online component... [Yet more edits] What the hell is going on? [HUGE edit] Phew, I feel so much better after that. Now where's that *BF2* disc? All that ranting's got me right in the mood. By the way, top marks for the best and most enjoyable gaming mag ever. shammo

Blimey shammo - well over 1,000 words slagging off a game you seem to love very, very much. Can't wait to read a critique of a PC title you don't get on with. Again, don't forget to read our exclusive play of the *Battlefield 2* expansion on page 34.

SNACK ZONE

Ah, the delight of playing into the night without having to worry about getting up from your gaming chair and setting off for school or work. However, I find there's still not enough time left to squeeze in as much MMOG action as possible before morning, unless I keep awake with Jaffa Cakes and coffees with nine sugars. What's the *PC ZONE* team's favourite gaming snacks to help you through the night/day?

Charles McDonald

A quick poll among the team gave us the following results: Me: Ben &

Letter of the Month

State of the Nation

It's come to my attention that PC games are being held responsible for all of the world's ills. Games such as *Half-Life 2*, *Max Payne* and *F.E.A.R.* are encouraging teenagers to have unprotected sex, while the likes of *GTA: San Andreas*, *Microsoft Flight Sim* and *EverQuest* are causing them to throw eggs at politicians. Meanwhile, I'm told by reliable tabloid newspapers that games such as *The Sims 2* and *RollerCoaster Tycoon 3* (and particularly the *Soaked!* expansion) are causing our nation's youth to sing out-of-key top ten hits from the '80s in shopping centres.

Is this true? If so, what are you going to do about it? Think of the children.
Dan Griffiths

You're right: videogames are the sole reason for all the disease, bloodshed and misery in the world, and *PC ZONE* isn't doing anything about it. Nowt. We categorically do not care at all - have a graphics card!

WIN!

ONE OF THESE!

You need a good graphics card. We need letters. (Good ones, mind, not rubbish ones like 'PC ZONE rulez, can I have a graphics card please?')

Well, serendipity now! The two needs have collided, right here, right now. Write us a letter today. If it wins Letter of the Month, we'll send you a prize tomorrow.



ACTION!

It's funny how some films put you in the mood to play certain games. After watching *Enemy At The Gates*, I had a sudden urge to play *Call Of Duty* with the sniper, running around picking off the Germans one by one. Then I enjoyed the battle scene in *Gladiator*, which put me right in the mood to have a massive Romans versus Gauls battle on *Rome: Total War*. Trust me, if you watch *Scarface*, you'll be on *GTA: Vice City* within no time.

Joe Bernard

That's so true. I watched *Love Actually* on DVD the other day

@ letters@pczone.co.uk

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SAY WHAT?

I'll never see a game like *F.E.A.R.*'s true potential because I'm going to be too frightened to enjoy it



Jerry's Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough ice cream; Suzy Wallace: Jammie Dodgers; Steve Hogarty: carrot sticks; Will Porter: Wotsits and/or Twiglets; Paul Presley: roast caribou squares. We'll have an in-depth investigation of essential gaming snacks in a future ZONE - just so Porter and new staff writer Hogarty can eat.

SCAREDY CAT

Now, call me a wuss here, but in a way I'm starting to get a little bit annoyed about where games are going these days. It seems that the last couple of PC games and some major future releases all seem to be scary.

Take *F.E.A.R.* for example. I played the single-player demo from your super-shiny DVD last issue, hoping it wasn't going to be as horrible as Will Porter said so. I was cacking myself the whole time! I didn't even move for a whole five minutes when I saw the little girl close-up for the first time. I'm not sure if I speak for many others here, but



it seems kind of a shame that I'll never see its true potential because I'm going to be too frightened to enjoy it. In a way, Monolith could regard this as a success, in terms of scaring people with its game, but I do feel a bit annoyed that I may miss out. Love the redesign and keep up the great work. Mark Foley

Games such as *Doom 3*, which are relentlessly frightening - at least for the first few hours - can be emotionally and physically wearing. However Mark, if you play the full retail *F.E.A.R.*, you'll find out (as Will said in his review) that the game is actually much more of an action-blaster than an atmospheric scare-a-thon, so you should be OK. You big wuss.

TEA LEAF

On the issue of abandonware, I have to say I'm all for it. I know many people

consider it piracy, but what else are we to do? *System Shock 2*, a game that can no longer be purchased in a shop is only available on eBay. I know the prices may not be extreme, but a lot of buyers only accept payment via PayPal or by credit card, and seeing as I have no credit card, what can I do? If downloading this game is the only option left, who am I hurting? The publisher who no longer manufactures the game? The developer who has no legal ownership of this game?

I understand David Braben's problem (see issue 159) with the fact that many sites are making money from developers' work that they're simply pirating. However, there are far more ways of getting these titles, such as downloading using peer-to-peer programs or via BitTorrent. Abandonware is technically illegal, but if companies like EA hold on to games such as *System Shock* and don't sell them on to a publisher wishing to re-release them, I don't see what the other option is. Paul Hoey

Abandonware and other ways of illegally downloading games such as BitTorrent is a hot topic of discussion at the moment. PC ZONE

Loved sleeping with my ex, particularly seeing as I was deliberately going out of my way to do it. I also liked the mouse movement during the sex and her moans - that was hilarious. -PawsofEvil

I kept making her get back into her underwear. I got pissed off when she wouldn't answer the door in them. -spudy2000

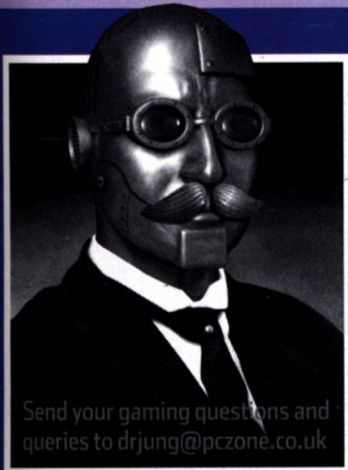
Anyone else notice Carla's magic breasts? Sometimes they're huge, sometimes it's like she's auditioning for the role of Peter Pan, so had to tape them down. -Liquid_Virus

Wow, I can't wait to play *Fahrenheit*. I guess I should get round to buying it... -Fyska

I'm stuck in a button-pressing section: I know I'm pressing the buttons correctly, but I still keep getting killed. I'm off for some self abuse; there's nothing else to do... -G_Man_007

MY IRON JUNG

For three years ZONE staff members have worked to craft renowned creator of Analytical Psychology, Dr Carl Jung (1875-1961), out of metal. A fount of knowledge, fed with gaming data from past and present, he exists for your enlightenment...



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

DEAR DR JUNG

Q What's going on with *Team Fortress 2* then? There's been nowt on it for ages. Yours, DuluxDawg

A Hello there DuluxDawg. *TF2* remains in development with very little leaking from the iron gates of Valve HQ. *Bzzt*. This said, nerd examination of the Source SDK suggests the presence of mini-striders, tanks, barbed wire, plasma guns, mass teleporters and walker striders - prompting speculation that the whole shebang takes place in the *Half-Life* universe. True? Who knows. Although it has been reported that Gabe Newell has scotched claims that it kicks off in the fabled *Half-Life* seven-hour war.

DEAR DR JUNG

Q Which archetypal motifs have you noticed in recent PC games and how do you feel the Internet relates to your theory of the collective unconscious? Tim Judd

A Young Mr Judd, games could not exist without archetypal motifs - they are the basis of our religions, our mythologies, our legends and our fairy tales, why should they not be a part of computer games? There are lots in *F.E.A.R.* and *Doom 3*, for example. There's also a lot of collective unconscious. Erm. *Bzzt*. This isn't really what I do any more. Come back when you want to know how to play as Mona in *Max Payne 2* without any clothes on or how to kill a particularly nasty boss.

LETTERS



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doesn't condone illegal activity, but it's our duty to cover such vital issues that affect today's PC gaming scene. In this issue, you can read Kosta Krauth's Abandonware regular (p128) and Pavel Barter's special report on torrents (p22).

BANG BANG

Looking at my games collection the other day, I noticed something – all my games involve killing people. *Battlefield 2*, *Halo*, *Rome: Total War*, even *The Sims!* How? Make a room with only one door, get an oven and the whole family in there, remove the door and ask them to cook a lot. Instant indoor fireworks.

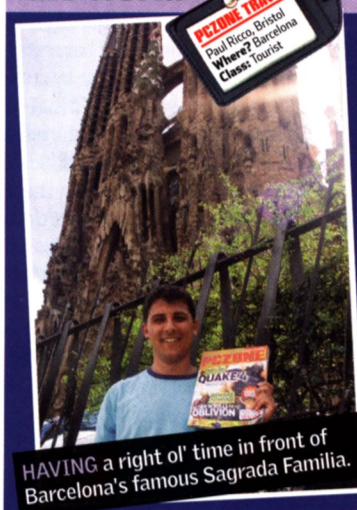
Anyway, as fun as these games are, why don't developers ever expand their ideas into something more original? *The Movies* looks set to be a stunner, although I'm guessing it'll take most people half an hour to realise they can make a film about little computer people hurting each other with sharp broken camera lenses, called 'Attack Of The Kodak Polaroids...'

Josh Edwin

Even the most ground-breaking games, such as *The Movies*, Will Wright's forthcoming universe-spanning *Spore* or the electronic

dreamscapes in *Darwinia* involve killing life-forms in some form or another. It's just a fact that human existence is peppered with

PCZONE Around the World



HAVING a right ol' time in front of Barcelona's famous Sagrada Familia. We want photos of you with PC ZONE in the most exotic or inappropriate locations. Candid celeb shots count double. Every one printed wins a prize!

conflict, war, death and destruction, and videogames will always reflect this darker side. There are games of love out there though – we heartily recommend *Virtually Jenna*.

BUGS ARE FUN!

Your magazine frequently scrutinises the existence of so called bugs in games, most recently in the latest version of *Championship Manager*. In my opinion,



bugs are not always a negative thing and in some games they can only be described as, well, hilarious.

I call these brilliant errors 'fun bugs', and I found a great one in your *F.E.A.R.* demo last issue. After an upwards blast of a shotgun, I was surprised to find my poor victim's head had gone through the roof, with his limp body just dangling there. It made me cry with laughter. Before you go judging harshly in future, give bugs a chance.

Hot Rod

The bugs in the latest *Champ Man* are most definitely not fun, although one of the most famous happy accidents ever was *Quake's* Rocket Jump. The move was not part of developer id Software's original designs for the game, and simply happened as a quirk of the physics model. The exciting thing is that, as PC games get ever more sophisticated, more of these unscripted gaming moments will occur. Send in descriptions of your favourite 'fun bugs' – if we print them, you'll get an infamous PC ZONE goodie bag.

IDIOT'S CORNER

Real calls from real idiots...

PCZONE

Hello, PC ZONE?

IDIOT

Yes, hello. I bought your book last month but I can't find any of the stuff that was supposed to be on my DVDs. I've looked everywhere but...

PCZONE

Did you buy the DVD or the CD edition?

IDIOT

(Silence)

PCZONE

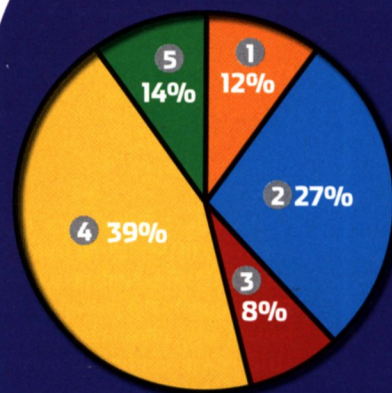
Because we can't get all the content on the two CDs. They hold a lot less data than a DVD.

IDIOT

Goodbye. (Hangs up.)

The Big Question

How will 'episodic gaming' change the way we play?



1 Five minute ad breaks every quarter of an hour: 12%.

2 Replacement textures for lead characters when virtual actors lead mid-season to explore a CGI movie career: 27%.

3 Enough time to forget important plot details between chapters: 8%

4 Unsuccessful spin-off episodes for unpopular minor characters: 39%

5 First series available to all. Subsequent series only on Sky: 14%

VIETCONG 2

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A large, dark tank is the central focus, positioned on a street in a city that appears to be in the middle of a battle. The scene is lit with a warm, orange glow from fire or explosions in the background. To the left, a street lamp is visible. In the bottom right corner, a soldier in a helmet and uniform is partially visible, looking towards the tank. The overall atmosphere is gritty and intense.

COVER STORY BIA: EARNED IN BLOOD

COVER STORY

BROTHERS IN ARMS: EARNED IN BLOOD

Norman conquest! Exclusive review of Gearbox's bloody follow-up to *Road To Hill 30!*



Do you like covering behind broken masonry? Do you like outmanoeuvring the Bosch? We certainly do, which is why we've bagged the exclusive review of the latest chapter in the *Brothers In Arms* games – and not only is it rather good, but it's bloody difficult as well. You can read our deliberations on the page that this giant yellow arrow is pointing at – for this issue only, the safety of Europe is in the hands of reviewer *Will Porter*. Better start brushing up on your German then...

PAGE

62

FEAR™

FIRST ENCOUNTER ASSAULT RECON

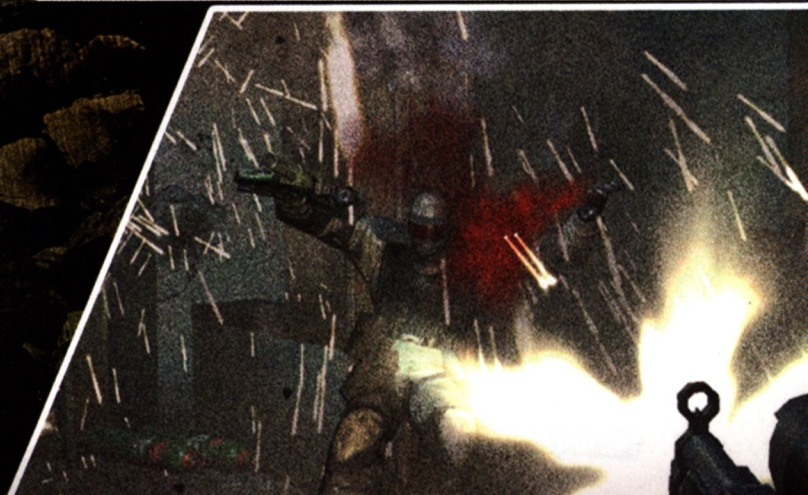
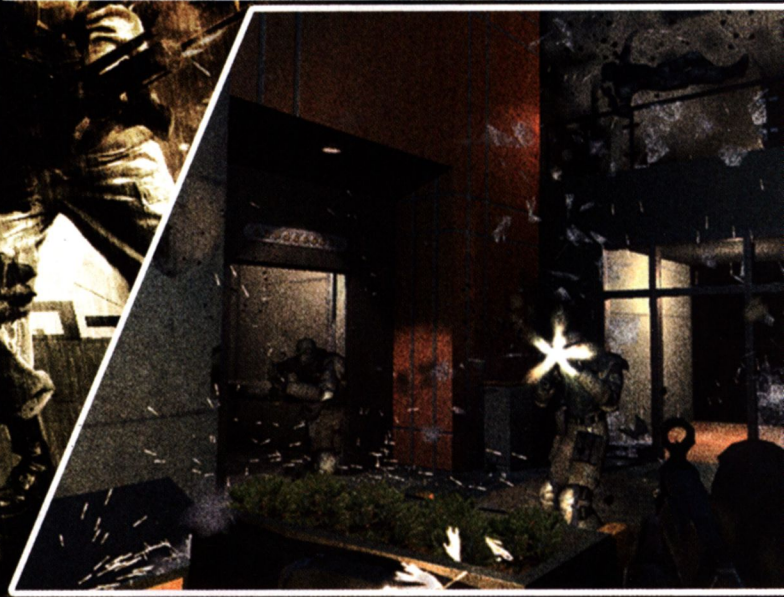
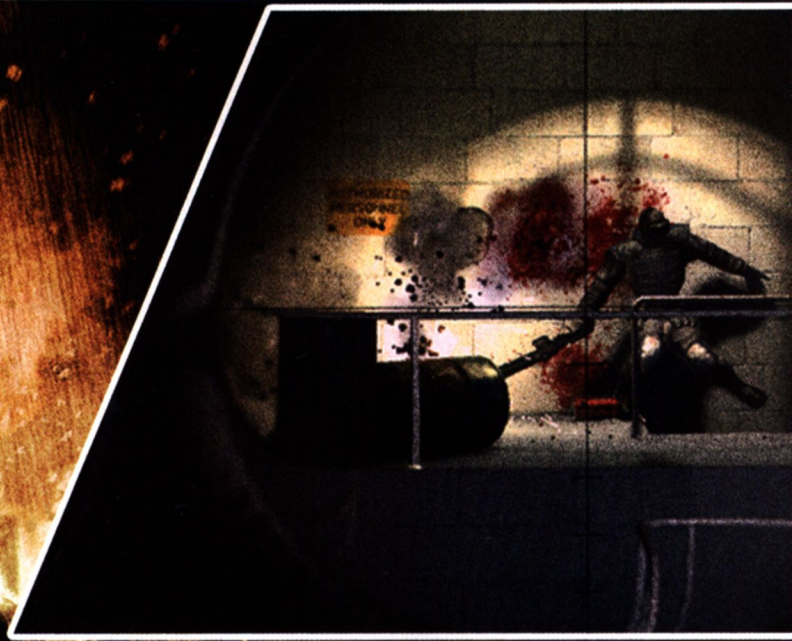
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OCTOBER 2005



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“SOME OF THE MOST VISCERAL AND SATISFYING ENJOYMENT THAT YOU CAN PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY HAVE WITH YOUR PC”

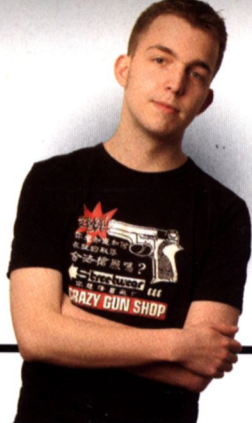
PC ZONE CLASSIC AWARD - 90%

“BEST ACTION GAME”

E3 GAME CRITICS AWARD

“FRIGHTENING. PETRIFYING. CHILLING. THE NEW DEFINITION OF FPS GAMING”





NEWS EDITOR Will Porter

Famous Victory

YES THAT'S RIGHT, the PC ZONE Sam and Max renewal campaign single-handedly brought back our detective chums. It was all us. We waved the flag, you followed, and TellTale obeyed. We are more than willing to accept donations of thanks – envelopes of money to the boss, stuffed toys and fried potato snacks to myself. For our next trick we'll make *Duke Nukem Forever* appear out of thin air.

But, of course, I'm being wildly satirical. The reappearance of the dynamic duo isn't down to us alone, it's down to you lot – your indignation, your righteous anger and your lovable habit of abusing Internet forums and calling people you've never met "gigantic twats". There's no doubt in my mind that the torrents of videogaming emotion that swallowed the LucasArts inbox upon the cancellation spurred on the gang at TellTale, and as such next time you see a fellow PC gamer then please make sure you give each other a well-deserved pat on the back. Say something like, "Well done, friend," as you do it.

Because the good news doesn't stop there, oh no, no, no. Because of the sensibilities of our clever readers, *Fahrenheit* (a game that the men in suits were just itching to see tumble and fall) has become an unparalleled success. If we ignore *The Sims*, as we are wont to do, it was number one! Adventure isn't dead! Gaming remains a bastion of originality! If all the little people band together and shout with one undiluted voice, then we can make a difference. Obviously, this is also the way that Hitler got started. But you get my drift.

BACK ON THE ROAD

Sam and Max saved from mystery vortex by plucky independent developer TellTale Games!

www.telltalegames.com

WE WON! SAM and Max are coming back! After months, nay a year, of clawing at the dashboard and shrieking like a cheerleader at the injustice of the cancellation of *Sam & Max Freelance Police*, the prayers of the many have been answered. TellTale Games, an outfit formed from the smoking embers of said LucasArts project, has agreed terms with dog and rabbit-thing creator Steve Purcell, currently working with other men of godlike comedic stature at Pixar, came down from upon high and give his full endorsement and blessing claiming: "If there's a better match, I don't know who it is... I trust them."

The man speaks truth as well – *Sam & Max* runs through TellTale's veins, arteries and neural networks. A lot of them bumped comedic noses with Purcell himself during his tenure at the Lucas Ranch, while the producer, lead programmer and animation lead on the aborted *Freelance*

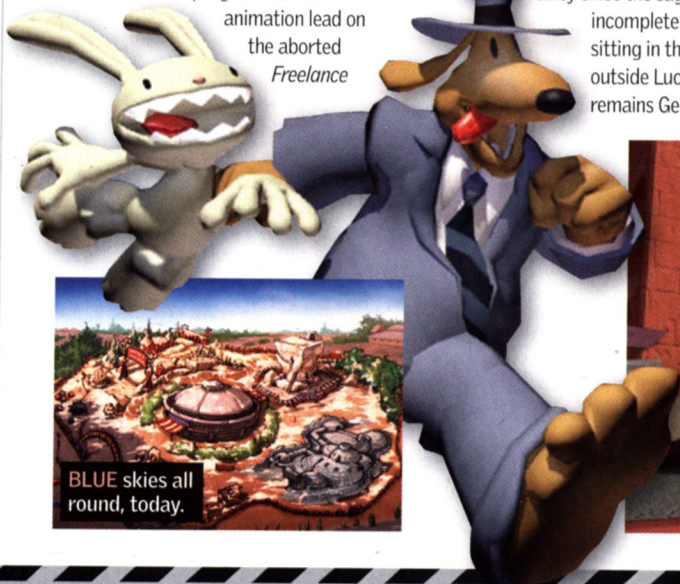


"WE'RE back! Hurrah hurrah!"

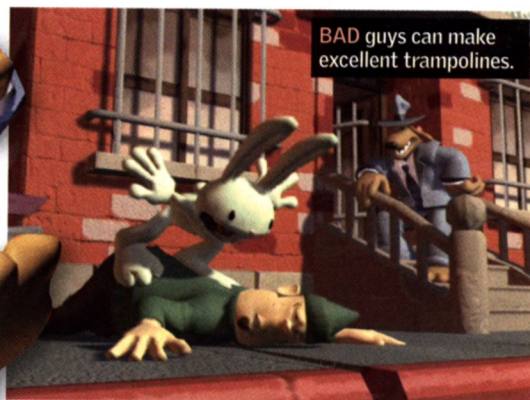
Police all hold positions of absolute power at their new digs. The new game won't bring anything over from *Freelance Police* – it'll be as fresh as a daisy since the sagging and incomplete entity sitting in the skip outside LucasArts remains George

Lucas's property, even though the rights for *Sam & Max* skipped back to Purcell this past May.

TellTale has also just launched itself into episodic gaming with the cute nubbin nose of *Bone* (demo on the DVD). Where will it take our furry heroes? Who knows, my friend, who knows. Will it involve wanton destruction? We can only hope.



BLUE skies all round, today.



BAD guys can make excellent trampolines.

STOP PRESS!

Sims 2 Expansion!

The next *Sims 2* expansion has been confirmed as *Open For Business*. Quite what business is unclear, though brothels and opium dens aren't likely to appear.

Brothers In Arms 3

Bloody hell – Gearbox is churning them out like nobody's business. On Unreal Engine 3, but without firm details as yet, *BIA3* is set for some time in 2006.

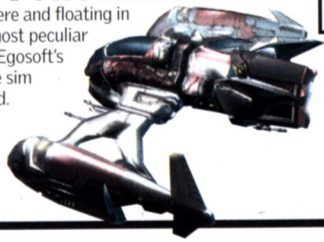
Good, Bad, Ugly

The gallant men behind the (rubbish) *Constantine* have bagged the rights to make a third-person action title out of *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly*.

28

X3: The Return

It's here and floating in the most peculiar way. Egosoft's space sim tested.



34

Battlefield 2: Special Forces

Half war simulator, half exercise in creating an adventure playground to slip and slide around. With guns.



56

City Of Villains

The closest you'll get to real super-villainy without a potentially hazardous dose of radiation.



Get Down On The Ground! Again!

SWAT 4 gets more grannies to pummel in *The Stetchkov Syndicate*

www.swat4.com ETA: Q1 2006



PROTECTING THE INNOCENT from evil drug lords, psychotic gun-wielding maniacs and the dregs of society in general, the SWAT guys are well deserving of a sabbatical by now. But as the old mantra goes, crime doesn't sleep, or pay, or something. What crime does do, however, is make fantastic subject matter for games like *SWAT 4*, and in upcoming expansion *The Stetchkov Syndicate*, that subject matter will involve nothing less than a full-on storyline involving an Eastern European crime syndicate (the best kind of crime syndicate, if you ask us).

The expansion, being made in the Aussie section of Irrational Games, will see the crime-fighting team dispatched to seven new single and multiplayer locales, and will feature new weapons and gadgets to not only foil the plans of plentiful wrong-doers, but piss about with in co-op mode. Night-vision goggles

and glow-sticks are two of many new toys you can get your gloved hands on, but if killing people is more to your taste (and why not?) you'll be pleased to hear that sniper rifles and grenade launchers are on the tactical shooter's menu too – good to see that old-fashioned lethal force isn't being left by the wayside.

Improved AI means that compliant suspects and civilians will be more unpredictable, new commands will allow you to issue delayed orders, and a single, solitary player can be named as squad leader in multiplayer – meaning that one person will be in charge instead of the normal farrago of everyone chipping in with an opinion on exactly which other door we should be breaching, banging and clearing.

What we're really looking forward to, though, is more of the same gritty and tense action offered by *SWAT 4* the first time around. That, and tasing one another repeatedly.



MISCREANTS have shiny floors too, it seems.



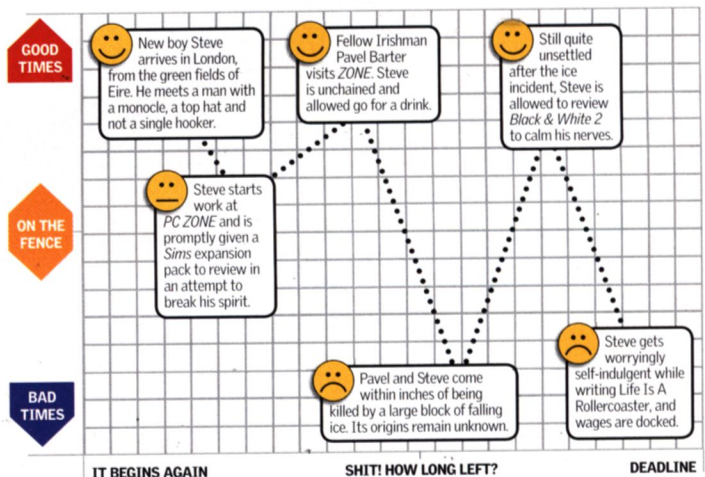
ANOTHER prime case for *DIY SOS*.

STUFF

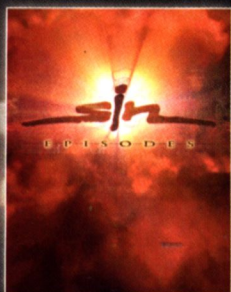
An apparent oversight by *World Of Warcraft* designers has led to players inadvertently contracting an infectious disease from a high-level nasty, and spreading it on contact with other players and NPCs upon their return to civilisation – wiping out all but the most hardened gamers in Blizzard's successful MMOG. It's believed Bono has pledged to single-handedly cure the server-wide epidemic through a series of concerts.



LIFE IS A ROLLERCOASTER



SIN WHEN YOU'RE WINNING



Will Porter takes a second dip into the murky world of Freeport City and *SiN Episodes: Emergence*

HIDDEN deep within the levels of Ritual's *SiN*, a dedicated gamer could find a slightly baity sign that read: 'Caution: Do Not Play With Valve'. Never one to follow their own advice however, the cheeky *SiN* monkeys have found themselves sleeping with those who were once the enemy (of sorts) – playing with their engine, playing with their delivery system and, indeed, playing with the very form of games as we know them. Episodic gameplay, that which bends to the demands of the player, is the name of the game – and my, but isn't it looking tasty?

Sin Episodes: Emergence is winging its way to

your Steam tray, snuggling up nicely next to *Counter-Strike* and *Day Of Defeat* and providing a return to Freeport City, a parade of armed goons and mutants to slaughter and the newly physically-enhanced breasts of Elexis Sinclair.

NEW DAWN

But boob-bounce aside, what exactly has cuddling up with Source brought to the *SiN* universe? "Interactivity was one of *SiN*'s main features," explains lead designer Steve Hessel. "But every little bit of it in that game had to be scripted by hand, even if it was just a bottle you could knock over. Having a fully-fledged

physics engine takes that kind of work from the level designers, so there'll be a lot more objects you can interact with."

Community relations man Shawn Ketcherside agrees: "The physics capabilities offered by the Source engine have let us take the idea of interactivity way beyond what we were doing in the original *SiN*. We don't have a gravity gun, but you can pick up and manipulate most of the objects in the environment. It's a required, really. There's some puzzles in the game where you'll literally need to build a solution – grab some planks and create a ramp, that sort of thing. The engine allows us to keep it all kinetic and fast – it feels organic as it runs through the gameplay so it really helps the immersion. You don't have this sense of 'oh here's a puzzle', you just look around

THE sixth blood-stained entrance hall we've seen this week.




REMEMBER, things in tubes are always alive.



WHEN hideous genetic mutation goes wrong.





LEATHER and mask combo now available from Ann Summers, price £29.99.

and interact with the environment with all the tools you need."

SHARPENED BLADE

But, as we all know, it isn't clever tricks with see-saws and things that sway that make a shooter: it's the relationship between the shooting and that which is shot. *Emergence* will be heavy on damage zones on cars and helicopters alike, which will mean that car doors and gun turrets are thrown around the environment by your firepower with great aplomb. Barrels, meanwhile, won't simply explode; they may leak a bit and allow you to ignite an entire area or perhaps bounce around a room making

never really made it to the finished article. "One of the things we're showcasing in the first episode is a new system, Context Look, which enables non-player characters to respond to what the player is looking at," explains Hessel. "You might be looking for an item in a cluttered room and have no idea what it looks like. Your sidekick JC can guide you and react to what you're looking at, so he'll go, 'Nope, that's not it, that's just a toaster' or 'Blade, get on with the mission and quit staring at those posters'. Having the game react to what you're looking at is something that hasn't been done before and it's another layer that adds to the overall immersion."

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

What's more, seeing as later episodes of *SiN* will be in development while you're

"Once implemented, it'll allow us to flag certain events in an episode so we can see what the community at large is doing; whether they take the time to save Jessica in one segment, or if they leave her to fend for herself. We're taking the Action Based Outcome idea from *SiN* and really pushing it for the next generation of games. That's the beauty of episodic content; we're able to adjust to player feedback so much faster than a traditional development schedule."

SiN: Episodes isn't so much as indicating the way things are going in terms of distribution, as putting on a tattered vest, saying 'Yippee-Ki-Ay-MotherF***er' (or 'Kemo Sabe' if you're watching on ITV), setting fire to a stream of aviation fuel and calling other developers in to land.

This is the way of the future, and with a roadmap that spans several years and an ear open for the wants and needs of spotty herberts such as you or I, then it's hard to see it cock-up – especially when it can be nudged and tweaked through the dull green sheen of Steam. Like it or lump it, in 15 years time you'll probably be locked up or burnt as a techno-witch for even suggesting that games should still come in boxes. Bye bye, High Street. **PCZ**

This is the future, with a roadmap that spans several years and an ear open for the wants of you and I

dents in all and sundry. Or, they may just explode. Some things never change.

SiN Episodes are also geared towards something that was hinted at in *Half-Life 2*'s promo videos (being similar to when Freeman knocks over a computer and is chided by Kleiner), but

playing their beginnings, story and gameplay tweaks will, by and large, be made with the wishes of gamers in mind. Other games may start to flag in their second or third acts, but not *SiN*.

"We're working on a really robust stat tracking system," explains Ketcherside.

TORRENTS OF ABUSE?

Internet torrents: a breeding ground for gallant Robin Hoods or thieving tinkers?



Reporter
Pavel Barter

A SMART ARSE once said: "Nothing is free apart from freedom itself", forgetting about hotdogs at your neighbour's barbecue or booze parties at E3. He also forgot about *Half-Life 2*, *GTA: San Andreas*, *Battlefield 2*, *Doom 3* and just about every other PC game that's ever existed: shared online and as free as a nudist's whatsits.

Of course, downloading these games is more like stealing from your grandma's purse than pocketing promotional swag. It's illegal, morally dubious and very, very naughty, but that doesn't prevent gamers from doing it. The videogame industry's bogeyman of choice? BitTorrent, a massively successful peer-to-peer program and a parrot for pirates worldwide.

BitTorrent is a holy grail for sharing large files that would otherwise hog all your bandwidth, and it reportedly accounts for over one-third of all data sent across the Internet. "Torrents provide a faster download than other P2P systems, due to the Swarm dispersion of the data, which means you receive from multiple sources simultaneously," explains one illegal downloader who asked to remain anonymous in this article.

LIKE, BOVVERED...

Copyright holders have reacted to the orgies of online file-sharing with horror. Hollywood was the first to start dishing out lawsuits – after offering the world an early peek at *Revenge Of The Sith*, EliteTorrents.org disappeared from the Internet faster than a snowman in the Kalahari Desert – and the games industry was not far behind. A man in Los Angeles is currently facing up to three years after being nabbed red-handed downloading *Leisure Suit Larry*. On the bright side, at least he takes to prison a shedload of cheesy chat-up lines.

Torrent sites generally react to legal threats in one of two ways: compliance or defiance. "Sometimes we receive

letters from anti-piracy organisations like MSAntipiracy or from companies like LucasArts. Although we're not afraid of them, it's not smart to quarrel, so in most cases we delete the torrents in question," admitted a spokesperson for Torrent Reactor.

Swedish site The Pirate Bay, which hosts around 150,000 BitTorrent users a day, sticks two fingers in the face of fuming publishers. Protected by liberal Swedish copyright laws, its responses to lawsuits have become the stuff of legend. "It has been brought to the attention of Electronic Arts Inc that the website www.piratebay.org... Is conducting unauthorised activities with respect to *The Sims 2*," reads one letter, requesting that the site be disbanded.

The reply? "Hello and thank you for contacting us. We have shut down the website in question. Oh wait, just kidding. We haven't, since the site in question is fully legal. Unlike certain other countries, such as the one you're in, we have sane copyright laws. But we also have polar bears roaming the streets and attacking people..."

A threat from Sega regarding *Football Manager 2005* torrents was met with: "Please sue me in Japan instead. I've always wanted to visit Tokyo. Also, I'm running out of toilet paper, so please send lots of legal documents to our ISP – preferably printed on soft paper."

FUNNY HA HA

From a publisher's perspective, there's not much to laugh about. "Illegal downloading as a distribution method for piracy is a threat to the games industry. Big losses are a huge risk based on piracy figures," says Codemasters' head of communications Rich Eddy.

Developers struggle to shield their wares but these only stall the inevitable hacking for a few weeks, sighs Martyn Brown, studio director of *Worms*-creator Team 17. "The longer we can protect a

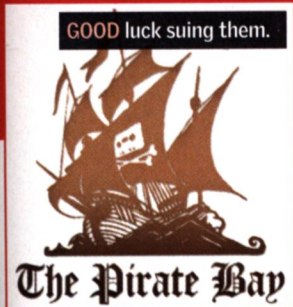
Is there anything you want Pavel Barter to investigate? (Warning: some jobs might be considered too big or too small...)

✉ letters@pczone.co.uk

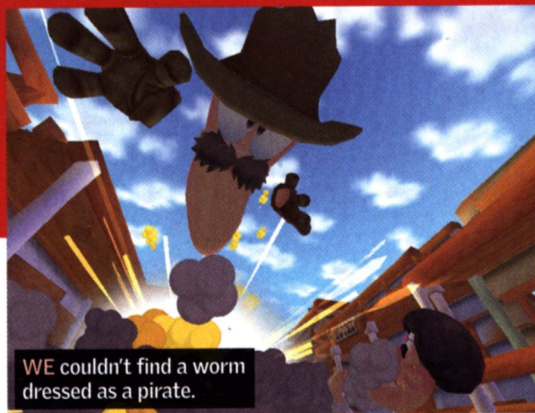
✉ pavel barter, pc zone,
99 baker st, london, w1u 6fp



THESE chaps downloaded the whole series of *Lost* ages ago...



GOOD luck suing them.



WE couldn't find a worm dressed as a pirate.

I'm running out of toilet paper, so send lots of legal documents please

Swedish site The Pirate Bay responds to Sega

BOTH Alliance and Horde feed the torrents.



title upon release, the better we can do initially. I know a lot of people say that protection is punishing the people who buy it, but unfortunately if we didn't protect our games we'd sell far fewer copies."

ZONE's pirate source refused to discuss the process of cracking a game, but would comment that "game copy protections are an infringement of an individual's right to make a backup copy for security and safeguarding their purchase."

READY TO BE RUMBLLED?

So should a downloader be worried? According to industry body ELSA's deputy director general, Mike Rawlinson, people who persistently download games will eventually get caught. "The music industry has identified pirates and have taken action against them. At this stage, there's nothing to say the games industry won't do the same."

There's also the (slightly less intimidating) risk of downloading a game riddled with disease, adds Torrent Reactor's spokesperson. "Sometimes there are torrents infected with spyware or viruses. Users should read comments for torrents they want to download and post comments if they find infections."

San Francisco native Simon Carless hosts Legal Torrents, a site that touts the line. "A lot of people discuss BitTorrent's revolutionary principles and point out that it can be used for legal material too, but there was a lack of good examples of this. Given that people were keen to distribute their games, but didn't have the bandwidth to do so, I set up the site to help them."

For indie developers like Richard Perrin, such seamless sharing has been of benefit. "We wanted to release *The*

White Chamber for free, based on the gamble that the publicity would be worth more than any money we might have tried to make from the game. Thankfully, this paid off."

He adds: "BitTorrent was the natural choice for getting a game over the Net without incurring huge bandwidth bills. We're one of about 20 seeds and countless peers are all passing the game between each other. The upshot is that we pay embarrassingly little for our monthly server costs. I couldn't imagine how we could afford to distribute a 300 meg game with direct downloads from our server."

Could torrents one day be used for the benefit of the industry? BitTorrent creator Bram Cohen is already striking business deals with the entertainment industry. *World Of Warcraft* uses a torrent system for distributing its patches and some online sites are now using torrents for trailers, demos and patches.

Whether or not the games industry will eventually embrace BitTorrent, much like the music industry embraced Napster, remains to be seen. What is clear, however, is that developers are crapping themselves. "Torrents are making it increasingly difficult for us," says Team 17's Martyn Brown. "People seem to have this image of developers swanning around with huge wealth, but that's not the case. The piece of pie gets increasingly smaller and the PC market is particularly difficult."

If illegal downloads lead to fewer PC titles, then it's ultimately us gamers who will suffer. Nothing is free apart from freedom itself? Nah, nothing is free apart from trouble, and it looks like torrents are the only ones who are profiting from that. **PC7**

Undercover torrents

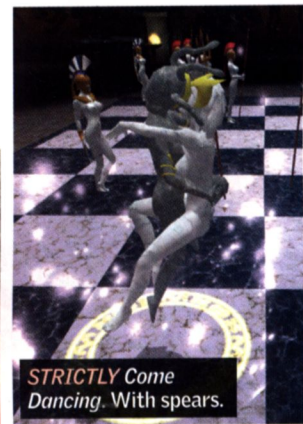
Pirated games can be illegal in more ways than one...



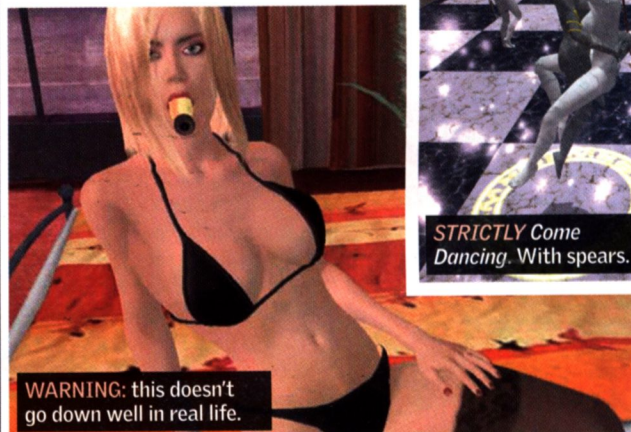
LOOKS like it's about to get messy.



"DON'T you want me baby?"



STRICTLY Come Dancing. With spears.



WARNING: this doesn't go down well in real life.

Come See Me Tonight

Japanese bishoujo about a teenager's quest for a wife, resulting in Paris Hilton home-video levels of filth.

Virtually Jenna

This is the last issue we'll ever mention this game. Honestly. Cross our hearts and hope to die.

Active Dolls

Dress a virtual lady, take faux snapshots of her in alluring poses, then wonder why you can't get a girlfriend.

Love Chess

Giving new meaning to the phrase 'taking the queen', *Love Chess* transforms a gentlemanly game into a deprived orgy. Checkmate, indeed.



**COMING
SOON...**

SOMETIMES we wonder when exactly it was that the above scene became fun...

CALL OF DUTY 2

Anthony Holden goes once more unto the beach

DEVELOPER Infinity Ward PUBLISHER Activision WEBSITE www.callofduty.com PREVIOUSLY IN... Issue 160

THE LOWDOWN

- Buffed up sequel to the best war shooter ever ✓
- Shiny new graphics engine ✓
- More smoke, more noise, more fury ✓
- No more solo missions ✓
- Contentious new 'regenerating' health system ✗

IF THE SIZE of a press junket is any indication of a publisher's commitment to a game, then Activision must have high hopes indeed for *Call Of Duty 2*. The publisher recently took *PC ZONE* on a three-day escapade in northern Poland, a no-expense-spared war-themed extravaganza that took in a bi-plane flight, jeep convoy, Nazi ambush in a forest and a stay at Eva Braun's mansion in the Polish lake district.

COD2 promises fierce infantry warfare, pitched battles in muddy European towns, fields littered with dead cows and the finest war-based action available on the planet.

With each *MOH* or *COD* title, the intensity of the battles has increased, creeping ever closer to the benchmark set in the opening minutes of *Saving Private Ryan*. *Call Of Duty 2* is no exception, ramping up the chaos with more smoke, more shouting, and bigger, somewhat free-roaming levels. But

alongside these improvements, *COD2* introduces some other fundamental changes to the game mechanics.

DRIVING BLIND

For a start, there's the new health system. Gone are health gauges, medi-packs and magical water bottles, replaced with an unusual new recuperation concept. Basically, if you take a bullet or two you get some warning signals, such as a pounding heartbeat and red-tinged vision, letting you know you're close to death. Take another shot and you'll likely cark it, but back off and your health will be restored.

Grant Collier, president of Infinity Ward, explains. "We wanted to stop people backtracking through levels looking for health kits. Now, you just pull back, catch your breath, yank some of those woodchips out of your face and get back into the action." In practice, it plays out very much like *Halo*, with its

recharging power-shield, although there's no rational explanation for your miraculous powers of recovery.

Less controversial is the scrapping of the solo missions. Previously, the British levels were based around Special Forces infiltrations to blow up dams and so on; now they're full-on pitched battles like any other. On top of this, the AI has been completely rewritten to meet the demands of the free-roaming level design. Enemies and friends alike will now redeploy as a group, fall back if pressed, use cover intelligently and flank defended positions. They'll even try to flush you out of a hiding place with grenades, and have people waiting to shoot you as you leave – all very impressive stuff.

Above all, however, it's still *Call Of Duty*. Whatever tinkering has been done, it feels exactly as it should – like a bigger, meaner, more exciting version of the original. Don't miss the exclusive review and demo next issue. **PCZ**

ETA
Nov
'05

WHY YOU SHOULD BE EXCITED...

FREEDOM TO ROAM

In line with new free-roaming level design, some enemies can rove freely through the level, while others are tethered to an area, like a building.

SMART SOLDIERS

Friend and foe now share the same AI, complete with vision cones, hearing radiuses and the ability to share information about the battle by shouting at each other.

BIG HEAD

Under the new health system, you only get killed by a shot to the head or a shot to the chest, so stay low.

UP IN SMOKE

A new particle system means smoke is thicker and hangs around longer – plus the game introduces the idea of portable cover in the form of smoke grenades.

WHAT HEALTH GAUGE?

The new game features no health readout of any kind – you only know you're dying because the screen goes red and your breathing begins to get laboured.



NAZIS, big guns, Polish models, tanks and camouflage – all part of the *COD2* press launch.

This feels exactly as it should – like a bigger, meaner, more exciting version of the original *COD*





The Dell Scared yet?

Dell recommends Windows® XP Professional

The Dell XPS's Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology brings phenomenal power and control to your games.

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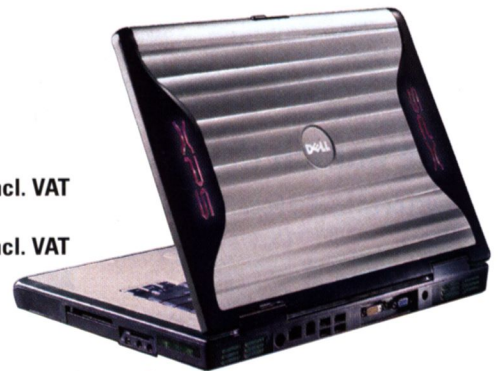
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SPACE – not as dull as NASA would have you believe.



COMING SOON...

X3: REUNION

The launch day has been brought forward. *Paul Presley* has a starry look in his eyes...

DEVELOPER Egosoft PUBLISHER Deep Silver WEBSITE www.x3reunion.com PREVIOUSLY IN... Issue 160

THE LOWDOWN

Is this *the* best-looking game of all time or what? ✓

Seriously, it's effing gorgeous ✓

I mean, just *look* at it! ✓

Oh, there's all that freeform, do what you like, go where you want universe stuff too, of course... ✓

Makes other games cry it's so bloody lovely ✗

THAT X3 IS a beautiful, beautiful game there can be no doubt. But what hasn't really been touched on very much is the more human (or alien) aspect of the game. Luckily, we were able to sit down with Andrew Walsh, the script writer and story director employed by Egosoft to fix the only real problem everyone had with X2 – the plot.

So how is character and story being handled this time round? "When we create characters, there are several questions we need to ask," he explains. "The protagonist, Julian, is there to tell the story, so sometimes he's really interesting like Indy, and sometimes he's not quite as deep, like Luke Skywalker.

"When you watch *Star Wars*, although it's about Luke, you actually learn less and care less about him than you do about Han Solo, Chewbacca and so on. The other characters are more rounded because essentially, they're not telling the plot."

So it's all about the interaction in X3. About filling the universe with characters that help carry Julian's story – to find his father and his home. And his love interest.

THREE'S COMPANY

"Miria is a new character," says Walsh. "Saya is the established female lead who has helped Julian in X2. Miria appears here and creates a triangle of interest between the three characters. When writing a script, you need to throw in aspects of comedy, tragedy and romance, so there's a bit of sexual tension as the game progresses. Miria definitely knows what she wants out of life and she tells you straight away – she's not one to hide her thoughts."

But how much say in this triangle of love does the player have? "Well, it's not a role-playing game. With X3, we had to decide what type of game it is: there are role-playing elements in there, but essentially it's a space game. You won't

find a *Hot Coffee* scene in X3; you won't be able to zoom in on the spaceship and see Miria and Julian shagging."

You will be able to explore a universe that feels alive though. Walsh continues: "The background is massive. We've got a whole universe under attack and there are millions who've died. One of the challenges was trying to give you the idea there's a lot going on. How could we make people identify with our story?"

"We've all seen a war film where a soldier takes out a photograph of his sweetheart and you know he's going to die. It's a cliché, but one that's necessary to convey the horror of war. If you just see people getting shot, well that could be horrific, but it's when you get to know that person before they die that it affects you. You've got to feel that there's more at stake in X3 than just numbers, and when you meet the people who are in danger, it adds emotional depth." We'll find out if he pulls it off in next issue's exclusive review. **PCZ**

ETA
Oct
'05

WHY YOU SHOULD BE EXCITED...

LITTLE GREEN MEN

Borons, Teladi, Paranid and those other ones – all the races you knew, loved and blew to shit in the previous game are back in business, better-looking than ever.

ICON-Y BELIEVE IT

As well as the radar, these icons give your spatial awareness skills a boost, giving you a clearer picture.

THE MACHINE THAT GOES PING

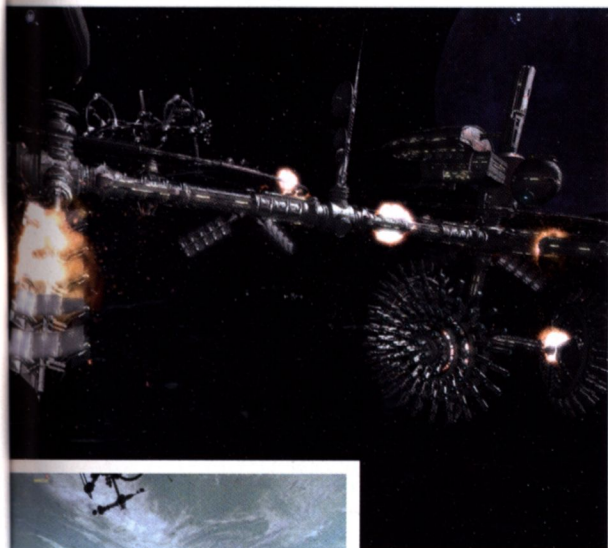
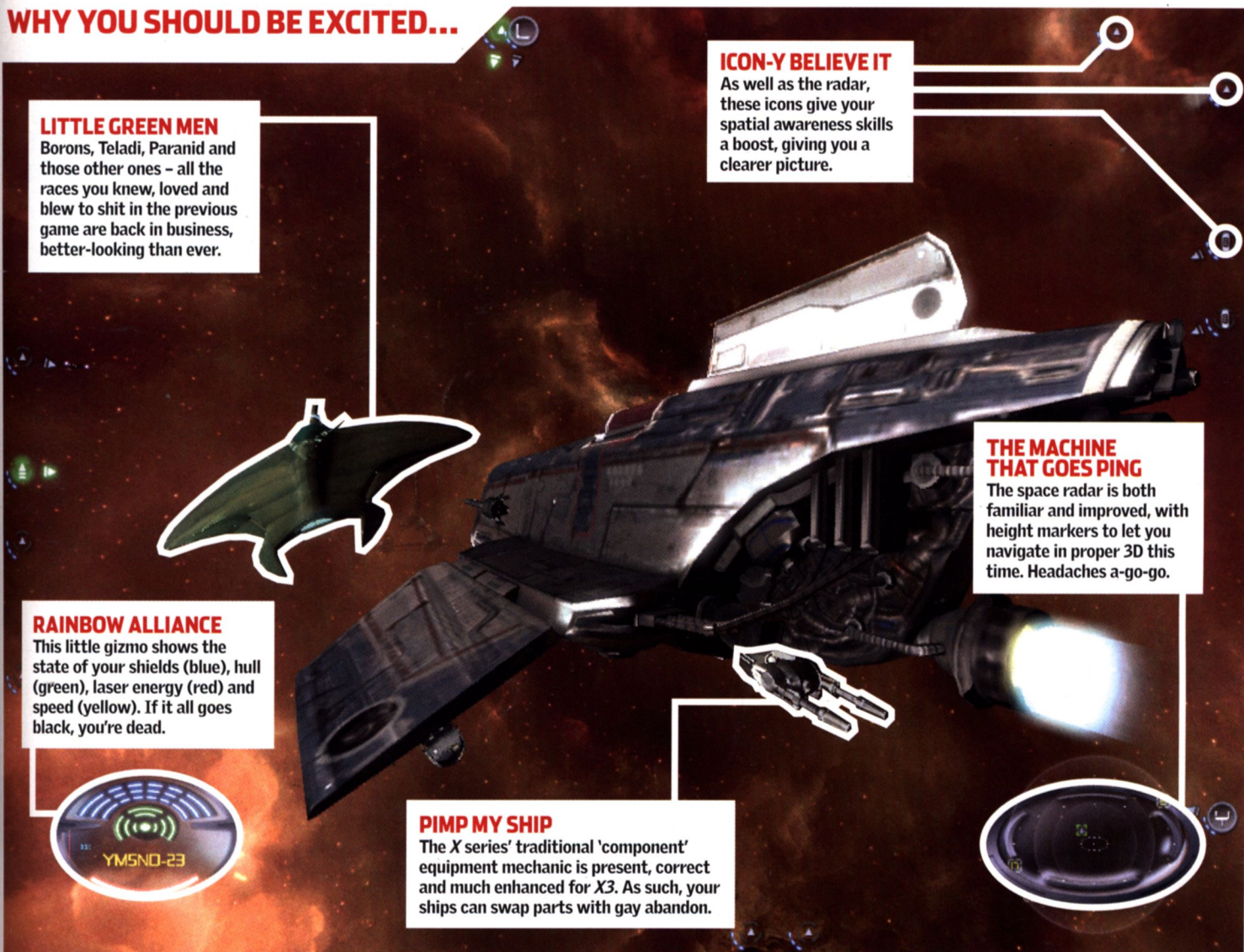
The space radar is both familiar and improved, with height markers to let you navigate in proper 3D this time. Headaches a-go-go.

RAINBOW ALLIANCE

This little gizmo shows the state of your shields (blue), hull (green), laser energy (red) and speed (yellow). If it all goes black, you're dead.

PIMP MY SHIP

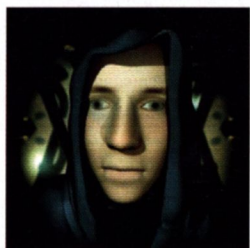
The X series' traditional 'component' equipment mechanic is present, correct and much enhanced for X3. As such, your ships can swap parts with gay abandon.

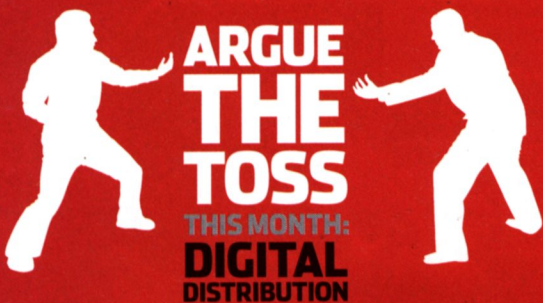


You won't find a *Hot Coffee* scene in X3; you won't be able to zoom in on the spaceship and see Miria and Julian shagging

Andrew Walsh
story director, X3

EVERY size ship you can think of. From just plain huge to frickin' enormous, right up to scary big.





Dear Will,
Digital Downloads, and specifically Valve's decision to distribute its games through Steam, needlessly alienates gamers who, for one reason or another, can't access the Internet. It's confusing, awkward and needs to update itself every two hours to change the shade of green in the menu or something.
Steve Hogarty

Dear Steve,
I agree that Steam is a major annoyance for those not hooked to the Internet. It is, however, one of a first wave of download services that will reflect the way games are handled in the future. It's like when new money comes in, or when TV changes from analogue to digital. It's painful, but also necessary for heralding in a new age of exciting gaming. I also don't like the Steam colour scheme.
Will Porter

Dear Will,
Why do we need change? Everything was fine before: people walked to a games shop to buy their games and they were healthier. Now that people don't leave the house to buy computer games, it'll inevitably become an entirely unhealthy hobby. Sure, they could walk to where the games shop used to be before it was closed down due to lack of sales, but what's the point? Statistically, over 100 million people have died since Steam was launched. SH

Dear Steve,
Your statistics are unreliable at best. Online distribution not only opens up the possibility of episodic gaming, but also means that smaller companies can flip two fingers at publishers and sell games that wouldn't necessarily fit in-depth analysis of 'market-place realities'. Look at TellTale buying up *Sam & Max* for episodic online retail - something that LucasArts dropped like a particularly hot potato now has the potential to sell like hot cakes. The boxed copy of *Half-Life 2* needing an Internet connection was daft in the extreme, but beyond that the future is in online distribution. Honest. WP

Dear Will,
Can you honestly say that you enjoy seeing Steam pop up on your desktop and start downloading a new shade of green every time you turn on your PC? SH

Dear Steve,
Well, um... Yes. I mean no. Not really. Listen new boy, shouldn't you be making me tea or something? WP

Dear Will,
So I'm told. SH

WITHIN STRIKING DISTANCE



Hands-on with *Commandos: Strike Force* suggests life beyond the isometric days of yore

csf.pyrostudios.com | ETA: Q1 2006

TAKING OUR FONDNESS for the *Commandos* games of old and jamming it into the first person was always going to be controversial. But, having given it a playtest, we can report that while we were hoping affairs, now broken down into the FPS shenanigans of *Green Beret*, *Sniper* and *Spy*, would approach something like the realistic air of the *Hidden & Dangerous* games, it actually lands between *H&D* and *Medal Of Honor*.

No hugely bad thing perhaps, (apart from that as entrenched gamers, we mistrust change as we do sunlight), since the game itself is fun and varied. Fears that it's been turned into an outright console game are allayed by the ease and fluidity of mouse control, while the mission at hand (defending a bridge against a build-up of enemy forces on the other side of a river) convincingly uses the dynamic of swapping between characters: first using the sniper to take out mortar positions, then the commando to throw mines all over the bridge, then back to the sniper to deal with a flotilla of boating Nazis, then hearing tanks rumbling and going back to the Commando and... Well, you get the picture.

Gone are the days of green cones of danger and puzzling; incoming are the days of proficient action and greater mainstream appeal. Those with rose-tinted sensibilities may groan, but the final product is at least beginning to look like an enjoyable romp through gaming's most favourite war.



Think tank Shooty shooty, bang bang with *Panzer Elite Action*

www.jowood.com | ETA: November



Rolling over innocent trees, gunning down crowds of German troops, dodging Stuka bombs, making things explode: it's all in a day's work for your average tank driver. Or so *Panzer Elite Action* would have you believe. Placing you in the driver's seat (which is also the gunner's seat, and the 'seemingly superfluous third guy' seat), the game pits you and your team-

mates against the Nazi legions, who, in classic arcade style, are prone to exploding much quicker than you are.



TANKS: a caption-writer's dream come true...





SERIOUS SAM II

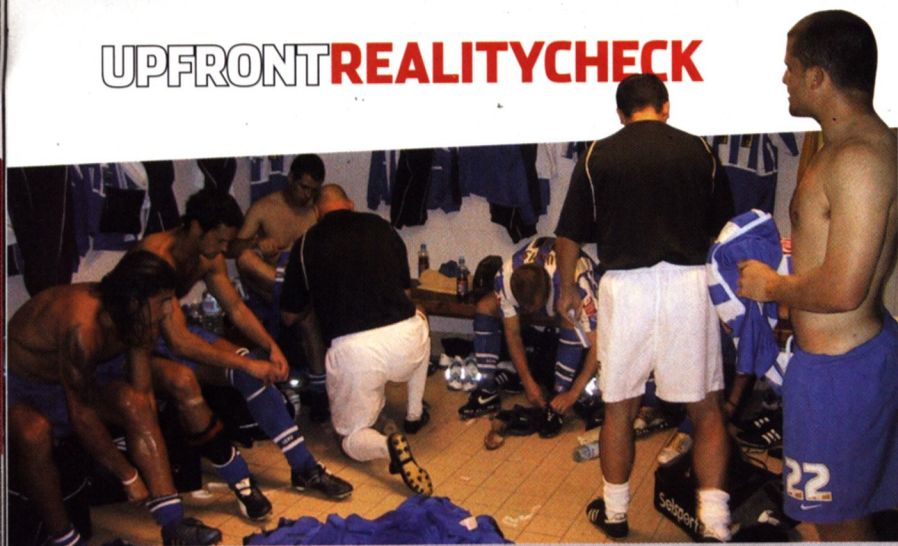
BLOW \$#!% UP... AGAIN.

New kickass game engine.
Wild new physics and game environments.
New, obscenely powerful weapons.
Blowing crap up was never this much fun.
Seriously.

www.serioussam2.com



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STEVE HILL: jinx for hire.



FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006



Steve Hill compares *Football Manager* to being a football manager

DEVELOPER Sports Interactive PUBLISHER Sega WEBSITE www.sigames.com



THE main man: Keith Curle.

I'M SAT ON the substitutes' bench for a Chester City match. The last time this happened was in an essay I wrote for an English exam, scoring an improbable winning goal and an equally improbable 'A' grade. This time it's for real though, with a far more important three points at stake. And while I'm unlikely to get on the pitch – a psychotic episode notwithstanding – I am hoping to influence the result through the magic of *Football Manager*.

With this year's model about to ensnare a slew of wannabe managers, the idea is to ascertain how the game compares to being an actual league manager, a rarefied privilege afforded only to a select 92 men (at any one time, at least). Having supported Chester City through thin and thinner, and played my entire *Championship Manager/Football Manager* career as them, they are the obvious choice, with recently appointed Keith Curle the all-important man at the top.

Despite a playing career spent as a defender – earning three England caps – Curle has adopted an unashamedly offensive approach at Chester, rotating his squad of scousers, Mansfield rejects and nightclub haircuts into a dynamic attacking force, unbeaten in the league prior to my tampering. Indeed, a victory over tonight's visitors, Grimsby Town, would secure a position at the top of League Two.

First though, Curle has the small matter of Chester v Grimsby on *Football Manager* to attend to. He studies the laptop intently and, given that I've managed to get two of our strikers injured on the train journey up, chooses a team as close as possible to that which he's already selected for tonight's real match. In a further nod to reality, he opts for a very attacking, high-tempo approach, selecting counter-attacking to take advantage of our pace.

BRANCH OUT?

The game gets underway, and despite looking slightly bemused, Curle admits that "you can see some of the combinations" in the play. He even appears genuinely relieved when Grimsby have a goal disallowed.

Inbox: 5 messages displayed, 2 unread.

Show Filters

Snapshot

News

Jobs

Notebook

Confidence

Shortlist

Profile

Personal

Information

History

Headline	Type	Date
Branch unhappy with his manager	Media	Thu 14th Jul AM
Unsettled Branch angered by Hill	Media	Mon 11th Jul PM
Carden points finger at Hill	Media	Mon 11th Jul PM
Personal Message from Stephen Vaughan	Messages	Sun 10th Jul AM
Chester hire Hill as manager	Messages	Sun 10th Jul AM

Monday 11th July 2005 PM

Carden points finger at Hill

Chester City's Paul Carden has openly criticised manager Stephen Hill for his comments in the dressing room during Chester's 4-1 friendly victory over Chippenham.

The midfielder remarked that he felt Hill had made a few errors of judgement in his team-talk which had done nothing to help the team.

ALEX Ferguson doesn't have to put up with this. Oh no, hang on...

gaffer overrules me and is proven right when the well-travelled striker poaches the opener on the rebound with 35 minutes to go.

Despite my suggestion to tighten up at the back, Curle's Chester push forward in search of a second, but are caught by the sucker punch when Grimsby's Cohen snaffles a late brace for an unlikely 2-1 win. Visibly disgusted, Curle says: "You can see why I don't play these games," ruefully adding, "I'm going to find out if Cohen's playing."

80 GRAND?

Indeed he is, and among those trying to stop him scoring is Chester defender Luke Dimech, who turned down the chance to play for Malta to be in tonight's squad. As Curle says: "I thought I'd better play him." On such decisions matches are won and lost.

Ensconcing myself in the dressing room for the pre-match talk, there are more expletives than we have asterisks, all to the beat of pounding dance music. As the game kicks off, I take my place on the bench and chat to the subs, with reserve defender Stephen Vaughan correctly opining that *Championship Manager 5* was shit. I inform him that *Football Manager* is the real game, and he's chuffed to

the team are "about 85%", but not taking their chances. We adjourn to the dressing room - I actually lurk in the shower - to relay the tactics to the players, who run out and immediately concede a penalty, which Grimsby tuck away. Parity is restored minutes later

with a well-worked counter-attack resulting in a Ryan Lowe goal, and I leap from the bench to celebrate.

In a nail-biting encounter, numerous scoring opportunities are spurned at both ends, and with Grimsby's supposed danger man Cohen substituted, the impetus appears to be with Chester. But with barely ten minutes left, a Grimsby long ball sees Maltese international Luke Dimech slip on his arse, allowing Reddy to run clear on goal and slot the ball past the keeper.

We throw a big man up front for the final few minutes, but to no avail, and the game ends in a 2-1 defeat, Curle's first in the league (apart from on *Football Manager*). At the final whistle I shake his hand but can barely look him in the eye, convinced that I've jinxed the match. Scarpering before the full-time team-talk, I vow to stick to *Football Manager* and leave the real thing to the pros. Sometimes it's better just to watch. **PCZ**

The Arena

SOMETIMES, this is the best way to watch...

"NO, to the fella in blue..."

Reaching the break goalless, Curle offers encouragement in his half-time team-talk. He also relates the tale of a genuine team-talk he once gave when managing Mansfield: "It went along the lines of 'Imagine you're in a prison cell, the door opens and six huge guys walk in and one of them calls you 'princess'. Now the likelihood is, because there's six of them you're going to get shagged. But you need to know yourself that you fought

At the end I can barely look him in the eye, convinced that I've jinxed the game

like mad.' And that was the emphasis on the players, to go out and play football, go and play as if it matters. And they went and won the game."

Back to the game in hand, Curle brings on a sub and switches to 4-3-3 with overlapping fullbacks. I question the wisdom of playing pacey Michael Branch in the middle of a front three, but the

learn that he's quite good in it and that I'd sold him for 80 grand.

Back on the pitch, Chester lack a little cohesion and reach the break goalless. Curle retires to his office for a chat with his assistant and first-team coach (and me), gauging that

HOW REAL IS... FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006

Uncannily accurate simulation or freak coincidence? The fact that both the *Football Manager* match and the real match yielded the same (unfortunate) result is certainly food for thought. But as we already knew, *Football Manager* is as real as it gets. Yet while you can get over a *FM* defeat in minutes, a 250-mile journey having been beaten is a lot harder to stomach...

PCZONE
5/5





UNDERCOVER ARMY...

BATTLEFIELD 2: SPECIAL FORCES

Goggles, gas masks and rope burns. Just another weekend away for *Paul Presley* and his missus

DEVELOPER Digital Illusions PUBLISHER EA WEBSITE www.battlefield2.com PREVIOUSLY IN... Issue 159



THE LOWDOWN

- Tighter focus for the *Battlefield 2* action
- New maps, new vehicles, new gadgets
- Zip lines for quick and vertiginous travel options across vast distances
- Night-vision goggles and gas masks for that bona fide SAS feeling
- None of the server problems addressed

WHEN IT launched, *Battlefield 2* proved to be both the most excitingly enjoyable online squad shooter ever devised from a gaming standpoint, and the most frustrating from a technical standpoint. Problems with particular brands of graphics cards, a hog on your system hardware, an online ranking system prone to hackable abuse – any ordinary publisher would have thrown in the towel long ago and started again. But then EA is no ordinary publisher and

Battlefield is no ordinary franchise. Hence less than half a year later: the *Special Forces* expansion pack.

We were given access to three of the planned eight maps, specially designed for the titular forces to battle across. Russian Spetsnaz, Navy SEALs, the good old SAS and three variations of insurgent groups fight across a chemical weapons factory, an east European rocket pad and a darkened airbase, all bristling with new vehicles to play with.

environments, adding a sense of purpose to them. These no longer feel like generic war zones but real working locations with actual reasons for your squads to be there (again, in keeping with the special forces nature of the pack).

UPS AND DOWNS

These maps all conform to the usual *BF2* parameters – plenty of chokepoints, siege areas and widespread flag bases to capture. The main difference between these and traditional *BF2* maps is the sense of focus each has. Environmental triggers (lift switches and the like) add a touch more interaction and verticality to things, showing how tiny little touches can make a lot of difference to otherwise static map

That said, the code wasn't working too well at the time of writing as lifts designed to take you to the top of a rocket pad or a cliff-side control centre would just shoot off into the heavens leaving you at ground level, staring up at the rapidly disappearing platform like something out of a *Road Runner* cartoon. I'm sure it'll all be operational on the night, though.



CAPTAIN Hook strikes again.



THE STORY SO FAR...

DIGITAL ILLUSIONS



Pinball

A moment's inspiration for an Amiga pinball game starts the, ahem, ball rolling.

1988



Codename Eagle

The precursor to the Battlefield series fails to trouble anyone. Ahead of its time really.

1999



BF1942

The game that really does change the world is launched and nothing is ever the same again.

2002

Battlefield 2

The mega-sequel appears to critical acclaim and heaps of public huzzahs.

2005

Going up in the world

How to be a sniper and get away with it



FIRST off, find yourself a good vantage point. Somewhere high up and out of the way is perfect.



ALL settled up there? Now make sure no other sneaky buggers can get near you by mining the ladders.



YOU can now commence your reign of death by shooting lots of people until they shout, "Unfair!"



ONCE the artillery starts landing, slide away on your handy zip line of justice. Hey, that looks cool.

Next to parachutes, zip lines are the finest invention ever to hit the world of shooters and *Special Forces* has them in spades

ZIP LINES: they can make you look like James Bond and everything.

Then, of course, there are the zip lines. Everybody loves zip lines. When *Special Forces* was first revealed to us, it was the thought of sliding from rooftop to rooftop that had us most excited. Next to parachutes, zip lines are perhaps the finest innovation ever to hit the world of shooters and *Special Forces* has them in spades.

That is, snipers and special forces classes have them. Everyone else will have to get their rope-sliding kicks down the gym like everyone else. Simply fire your new crossbow weapon at the surface of your choice and a handy-dandy super-fun slide appears, ready to take you to the lower level location of your dreams.

ZIPPY AND BUNGLER

But will zip lines change the dynamic of the base game in a major way? Probably not too much, although it does provide a hefty boon for the busy sniper on the go. In

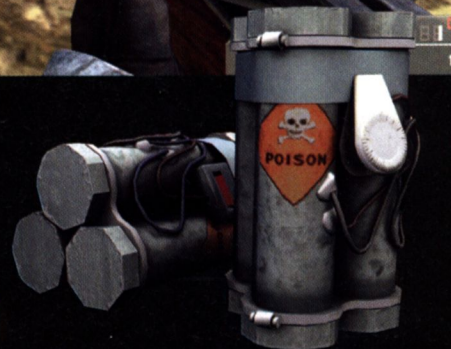
ANOTHER quality motor financed by You'll Pay Later Car Credit.

fact, it's the sneaky element of society that will get most practical use out of them – the rest of us most likely enjoying the novelty factor of impromptu sliding races from atop tall buildings.

Yes, snipers can now add to their already burgeoning survival prospects. Previously, once installed at the top of your giant crane/tower/chimney stack and

having mined all the access points with claymores to prevent people sneaking up the ladders to end your reign of sniping terror, you were sorted for life. At least until the enemy commander got a fix on your position and dropped ten tons of artillery on your head.

Thanks to the manually created zip lines, you can now give yourself





WOULD it hurt these guys to smile once in a while?



"WHAT d'you mean there's no air hostess?"



ROAD rage can get really spiteful.



BILLY always got the coolest toys.



THE end of the Northern Line.

an instant escape route out of the path of fiery barrage death, sliding James Bond-style from your rooftop idyll as it explodes behind you.

HOOK, LINE AND SINKER

I know what you're thinking. Great, snipers are now even harder to kill. Just what we needed. Luckily there's an extra gadget in the non-sniper arsenal, designed to provide additional rooftop access for regular troops. The grappling hook. This little beauty is carried by the assault and anti-tank classes and does exactly what you'd expect of it - you chuck it over a wall or onto a roof and climb the rope it tails behind. Handy for avoiding the sniper's booby traps.

A small annoyance with both grappling hooks and zip lines is that they appear (at present anyway) to be one-shot deals. Shoot your bolt or toss your length once and you'll have to rest up before you can

have another go. Understandable for the zip line as it creates an intricate-looking construction that would be unrecoverable once you've taken the ride, but I can't see any realism-based reason not to let your soldier pick up his line once climbed, other than to avoid turning all the players into wall-scaling monkeys, barely ever touching the floor during an entire round.

Something we weren't able to experiment too much with (annoyingly, the current build hadn't properly activated it) was night-vision. However, from what we've seen in earlier demonstrations it's a dynamic thing, providing substantial illumination in darkened areas but proving to be detrimental if a light source is viewed (something that the new flashbang grenades have been designed to counter). It's probably shaping up to be a nice touch, but

hardly one that's going to be the key selling point for the pack.

EXIT PLAN

So how much will *Special Forces* alter the overall *BF2* experience? Not significantly, it would seem. The core of the game remains the same (it is, after all, beyond the purview of an expansion pack to make any wholesale changes), and all the new additions would seem to be limited to the *Special Forces* maps anyway. This isn't likely to be a different-feeling game, just a different spin on the existing one. The weapon, vehicle and gadget enhancements all look like being novel, but easily assimilated add-ons, and there are barely any changes being made to the command modes - other than providing night-vision filters to help see what's going on.

Is that a good thing? It's no secret that EA and DICE haven't managed to create the all-encompassing, smoother than Kilroy, online war experience that we'd all hoped for with *BF2*, not through faults within the game, but because of bad server management and administration processes. *Special Forces* doesn't do anything to address the myriad problems players are having with the existing game (even the now admittedly ugly front-end has been left untouched), and it's likely

to take more than just some new maps, gadgets and balaclavas to win back the hearts of the notoriously fickle online gaming crowd. Even if the balaclavas are made from 100 per cent real virtual wool. **PC**



Are you destined for great evil?

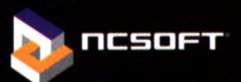


eu.cityofvillains.com

Unleashed October 2005



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MEIER!

WHAT'S YOUR GAME?

Steve Hill talks to the venerable Sid Meier about his latest epic, *Civilization IV*

Who are ya?



NAME Sid Meier

DEVELOPER Firaxis Games

POSITION Director of creative development

AGE Quite old

GAMES WORKED ON *Pirates!*, *SimGolf*, *Civilization II & III*, *Alien Crossfire*, *Antietam!*, *Gettysburg*, *Colonization*, *Night Hawk: F-117A Stealth Fighter*, *2.0*, *Gunship 2000*, *Covert Action*, *Railroad Tycoon*, *M1 Tank Platoon*... And many more!

FAVOURITE GAME *Civilization*

Q Are you happy with the way *Civ IV* is shaping up?

A Yeah. Multiplayer has always been a feature of *Civ* that's kind of lagged behind a little bit, so that was something we started working on from the beginning and it shows in the smoothness of the play. We finally figured out simultaneous turns and stuff like that. Multiplayer adds a whole new dimension to the game and I think it's a lot of fun.

What's the part you're most pleased with, that's going to have the 'wow' factor?

Making the transition to 3D certainly gives the game a really cool, fresh new look, plus the new interface is nice and clean. Everything's right there on the screen, with a lot of RTS conventions that people will feel a lot more comfortable with. So I think the interface and the 3D are some real improvements in the new version.

What's your favourite civilisation and why?

I'm still partial to the Romans, going back to the first *Civ*. That was the first civilisation we put in the game and it kind of represents the idea that you do everything – you build, you fight, you use diplomacy, so I have a soft spot in my heart for the Romans.

I was playing *Civ IV* with your son earlier. He seems to know what he's doing – a budding game designer in the making?

Certainly possible. He enjoys games, we play a lot together. For a teenager, being able to hang out at Firaxis and play a game that's in development is great, and he gets into the different strategies and things like that. If he's interested in doing it and has a talent for it, we wouldn't discourage it.

So the Meier name could carry on in some kind of dynasty?

(Laughs) It could go on for another 50



"MY god, it's sheer brilliance!"

years. That would be great, but I don't want to put that kind of pressure on anybody. We'll see what happens, but he's enjoying himself right now and that's what's important. We'll see how it turns out.

There's another game coming up this year that you might be aware of, *Age Of Empires* or something. How do you think your game will compare with that?

I love *Age Of Empires*. I played *Age Of Empires 1 & 2*, *Age Of Kings* and *Age Of Mythology*. I think it's a different style, it's a different take on a similar topic. If I'm in the mood for a real-time strategy game, I'll play *Age Of*

Civilization IV represents the best thinking of all the *Civ I, II & III* players, together with our designers

Empires. If I'm in the mood for a 'conquer the world' experience, I'll play *Civ*. I think they complement each other in a lot of ways. Our game is a little more strategic.

Is there an archetypal civilisation fanatic? Do they bombard the company with suggestions?

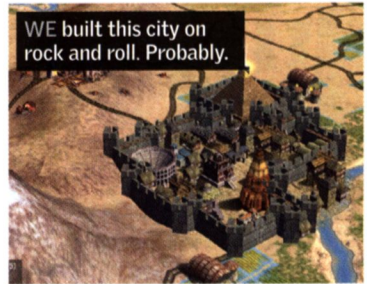
Sure, we get lots of ideas. That's the great thing about *Civ*, everybody gets right into it and starts thinking about 'what would I do differently, what would be a cool thing to add to this?'. Plus, there are numerous websites where the fans get together, so it's great that they can enjoy the game to that extent.

I know you don't like to use the word 'educational', but there's a wealth of historical information in there...

We're not here to make an educational game, but by introducing real-world elements, I think it makes the game richer and more intense for the players. They know they're actually competing with Napoleon or Caesar or some other famous historical character. Plus, using real-world elements makes the game more alive. If you learn something in the process, so much the better.

Either as a fan of the series, or as a newcomer, why buy *Civ IV*?

There are quite a few new features: 3D graphics, the interface, the religion system, new units, new technologies. Also, it evolves. *Civilization IV* represents the best thinking of all the *Civ I, II & III* players and our designers, so I think it's a worthy successor to the previous *Civ* games. **PCZ**



WE built this city on rock and roll. Probably.



WHEN in doubt: irrigate.

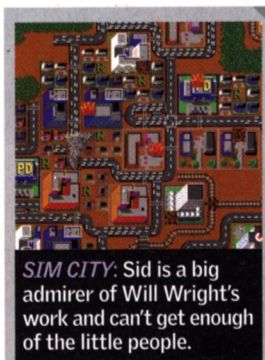


"HI, my name's Davina and I like sewing..."



ENGLAND: rucking at away fixtures since AD100.

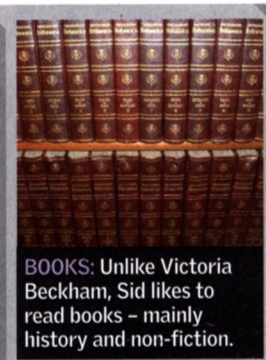
SID MEIER Where he turns for inspiration...



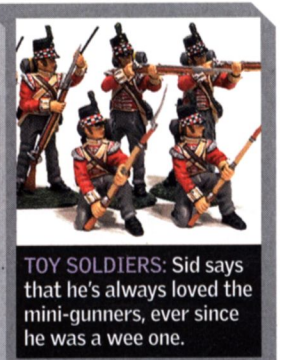
SIM CITY: Sid is a big admirer of Will Wright's work and can't get enough of the little people.



EMPIRE: An ancient title Sid played that has a similar military system to *Civilization*.



BOOKS: Unlike Victoria Beckham, Sid likes to read books – mainly history and non-fiction.



TOY SOLDIERS: Sid says that he's always loved the mini-gunners, ever since he was a wee one.





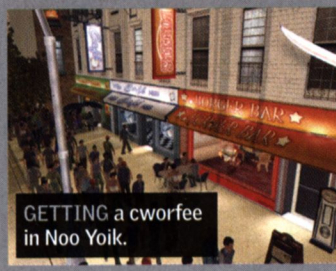
Tycoon City: New York

Can you top Trump?

www.atari.com/us/games/tycoon_city/pc
ETA: February 2006

FROM THE GUYS that brought you casino-sim *Vega\$: Make It Big*, comes *Tycoon City: New York*, a game which gives you the chance to play out a rags to riches story in the greatest city in the world – New York. Or so the PR blurb reads. Actually, we think Worthing is the greatest city in the world, but let's not split hairs.

Starting off with a small business in one of the less exquisite areas of the metropolis, you must use all of your entrepreneurial ability to become a Manhattan mogul of Trump-like stature. Offering the possibility of hosting huge events in high-profile venues such as Central Park and Times Square, *Tycoon City* looks set to cover every aspect of the city of insomnia – right down to the last piss-stained hobo.



GETTING a cworfee in Noo Yoik.

FANTASY FIGHTING



The brains behind *Savage: Battle For Newerth* go solo, venturing into epic fantasy FPS waters with *Project Offset*



SAVAGE'S CHEEKY MIXTURE of FPS shootery, RTS resource diggery and technology trees that ranged from bows and arrows to apparent nuclear assaults made us do backflips last year – now though, the creators of the game have made like a tree and gone.

Currently being made independently by the three former project leads on *Savage*, and being touted to lucky publishers for vital cash injections, is a game set to return the FPS to a long-abandoned fantastical environment. "A few years back there was *Heretic*, *Hexen* and the *Thief* series – but we haven't seen a FPS that's truly epic in proportion," explains programmer and founder Sam McGrath. "It includes Tolkien-style dragons, elves, dwarves, beautiful vistas and massive battles. Just the idea of playing that kind of game is giving us our motivation."

Working in seclusion for 18 months, McGrath has created an engine that sings – loudly – but it's the sheer scope of the proposed multiplayer game that's the hard-sell: horses to ride, dragons to fly and use to swoop and chomp enemies, siege engines within which you can cry havoc and let loose the dogs of war.



SAVAGE 2: A TORTURED SOUL

www.savage2.s2games.com
ETA: TBA

Because the last one was pretty good

DESPITE THE FACT that a trio of important developer-folk have left to work on *Project Offset* (see above), franchise *Savage* is still alive and well, with a sequel on the way. It's not getting a top-to-bottom revamp, but it is getting a good wash and brush up that'll tweak the interest of *Savage* fans without

necessarily climbing on the mainstream bandwagon, presenting its nether regions and asking bystanders to 'hop on'.

Lots of technical terms are being bandied about in terms of graphical cleverness, none of which we'll bore you with, but within *Savage* proper the action component of the game is being majorly improved – with





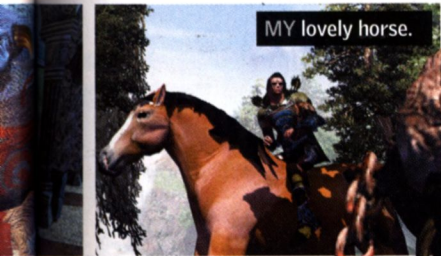
A definite touch of the Garretts here. And no bad thing either.

"We learned a lot about what does and doesn't work in a multiplayer game from working on *Savage*," continues McGrath. "So we're bringing that experience to the multiplayer portion of this game. There will be a few similarities in the gameplay - an emphasis on melee combat, for example. But *Project Offset* is largely a very different creation. Each map you play in the multiplayer game will have a different set of objectives. There are several character classes and creatures to ride too, from dragons to giant trolls." But how far away is all this? Well, a way away at least. Perhaps even a way away away, seeing as the gang are still on tour touting their wares. "The multiplayer portion of our game is designed and ready to go," points out McGrath. "However, the single-player design is still being hashed out. The depth we'll be able to put into the single-player is going to be dependent on the amount of funding we can get, so we're not setting anything in stone yet!"

For a meagre team of three, *Project Offset* is already a mightily tasty proposition - and there's no justice or, indeed, ruling autocratic deity if an EA or a VU or even an aspiring Davilex doesn't snap them up. Although maybe not Davilex. One to watch and, come to think of it, one to pray for.



A dangerous portrait to pose for.



MY lovely horse.

greater control, better melee sparring and some gigantic troll creatures that can knock seven shades out of anything that moves - and quite a lot out of anything that doesn't.

We'd like it to rewrite the rulebook a little more, but seeing as the original game was far ahead of its time, the sequel should still seem pretty fresh.



THE MAN WHO KNOWS



Whore-mongering has tainted the otherwise **pure** and **wholesome** realms of the Internet. *World Of Warcraft*, previously a haven for the **pursuit** and **murder** of small animals and the trade of items that have no apparent real-world value whatsoever, has been infected by the **filth** of fallen women. And Elves. Appearing on eBay, a **harlot** and **jezebel** of Dolonaar known as **jailbait15** pandered her feminine wares. "Black Wing Lair bumming you out?" she asked. "Tired of grinding that next level? I will do anything, yes **ANYTHING** you want me to. Let me dance my **sultry Night Elf** dance for you. Let me run my fingers through your hair and shower you with kisses. Want some **hot girl-on-girl action**? I'll invite one of my girlfriends over and the two of us will **blow your mind**. I am waiting for you to **command me!**" She went on to explain, in a sultry fashion that belied her otherwise noble origins, that the encounter would be nothing less than no holds barred. Ignoring the fact that occupants of Azeroth have **no genitalia**. "What you are bidding on is one in-game hour of my time," claimed the **Scarlet Elf**. "During that hour, I will do anything you ask of me that is possible using emote, character control and chat **interface**. I have **several sexy outfits** I can wear for you and am getting new ones every day. I love to **dress up**. You are welcome to take screenshots and make movies of our time together. I am very photogenic!" There were **no bids**.

NYPD Cop **Carla Valenti**, normally otherwise engaged in the pursuit of **itinerant stabber** and madman Lucas Kane in *Fahrenheit*, has agreed to be part of a lewd pictorial in famous **masturbation-aid Playboy**. Appearing alongside the prominent top-halves of characters from both *Playboy: The Mansion - Private Party* and the upcoming *Hellgate: London*, Carla claimed she was **delighted to have been included**. Adding that, anyone who actually did massage themselves in front of her image while their mothers have gone **shopping** should be signed up for **chemical castration**. Or, at least, she would have done if she were **real**.

"Want some hot girl-on-girl action? I'll invite one of my girlfriends over and the two of us will blow your mind. I am waiting for you to command me!"



DARK MESSIAH

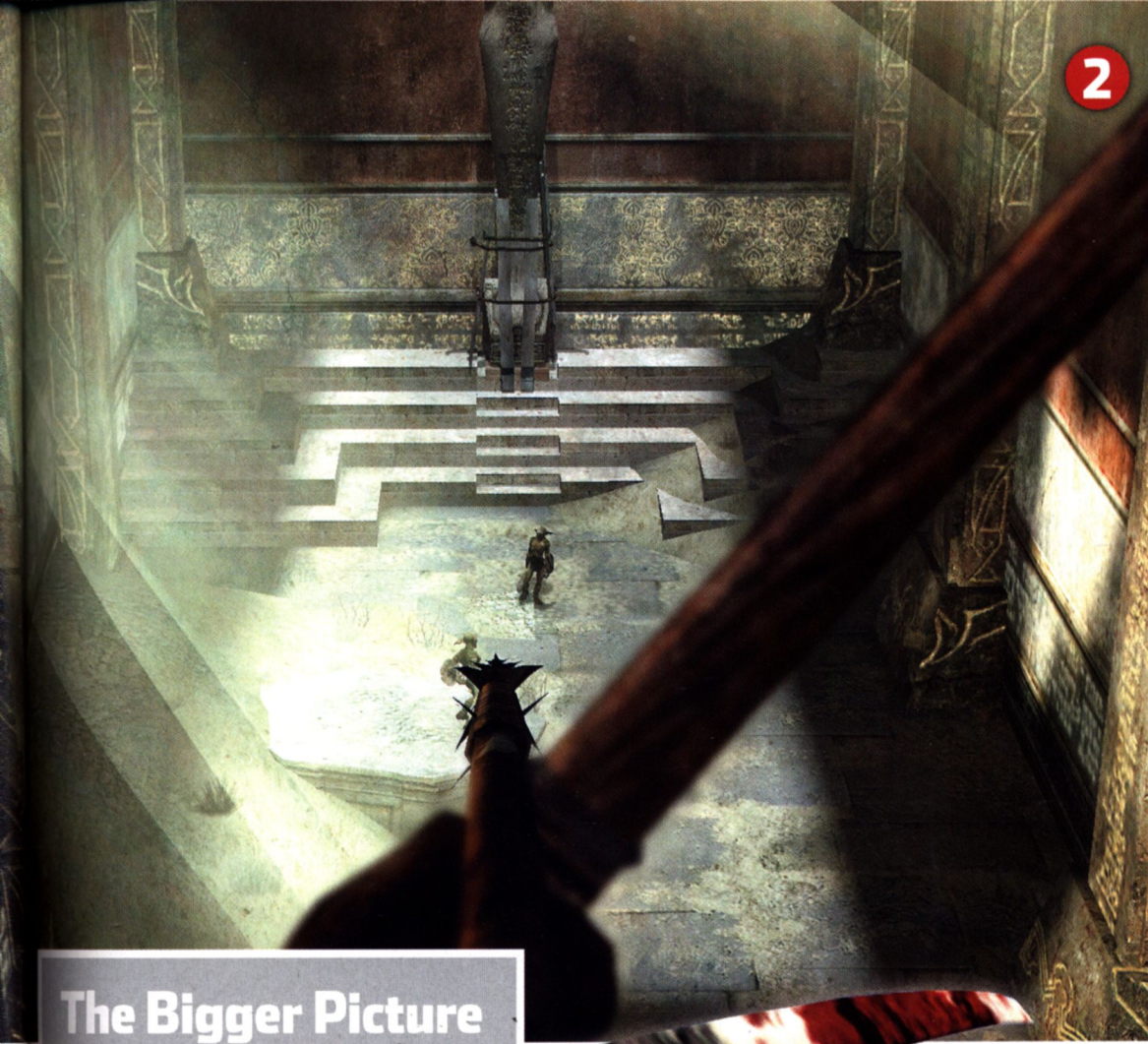
DEVELOPER Arkane Studios **PUBLISHER** Ubisoft
WEBSITE www.mightandmagic.com/us/darkmessiah/teaser/ **ETA** Summer 2006

THE **HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC** series is widely believed to be the domain of the social recluse, the curtain-pullers and the sun-dodgers. It's a sentiment shared by many, including Arkane Studios, developer of *Dark Messiah*, the next in the *Might And Magic* series and the one which looks set to break the beard-shaped mould.

Armed with nothing more than the ambition to put right what so many have done wrong (and Valve's cutting-edge Source engine), Arkane is hoping to show us what *Might And Magic* is really about. Expect gory sword-fights, powerful spells and an endless supply of orcs, goblins and dragons to slice through. If this is beardy, then beard us up.



8



The Bigger Picture

1 AND FOR MY NEXT TRICK...

You have access to a range of spells, and fire spells can be used to set objects alight and trigger chain reactions.

2 BOW DOWN

Ranged weapons enable you to take out enemies from a distance – they also make you feel like cool archer Legolas.

3 EASY DOES IT

If loud and painful decapitations aren't your thing, you can always dispatch your foes using stealth kills.

4 TASTE THE STEEL

The sword-fights feel solid and look amazing – sparks fly and blood splatters as combatants attempt to impale one another.

5 LOSE YOUR HEAD

Arm yourself with a sharp enough blade and you can take an orc's head right off his shoulders.

6 BLOODY ORCS

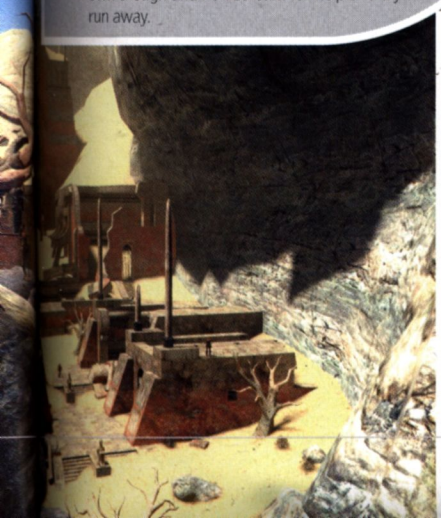
The crimson liquid of your enemies stains your weapons as you hack and slash your way through their ranks.

7 SET THE SCENE

Dark Messiah uses the Source engine to its full potential to create some simply breathtaking locales.

8 KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Goblins tend to attack in groups: catch one on his own though and he'll scream for help and try to run away.





A Game By



idsoftware.com

Developed By



Published By



WWW.GUAKE4GAME.COM

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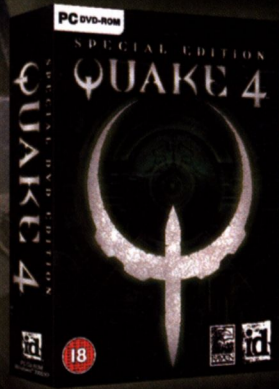
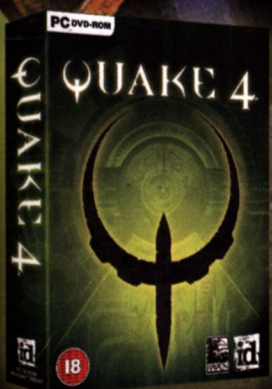
PREPARE FOR THE
ULTIMATE WAR...

QUAKE 4™

In a war for Earth's survival, against an unrelenting enemy - the only way to defeat them, is to become one of them.

- ☉ Battle outdoors using tanks and walkers
- ☉ Fight with the support of an elite squad
- ☉ Annihilate the alien enemy with an arsenal of hi-tech weaponry
- ☉ Compete online in fast action, arena-style multiplayer

...THE INVASION BEGINS
AUTUMN 2005



GLASTONBURY'S winter festival was shaping up to be a surefire hit.

COMING SOON...

AGE OF EMPIRES III



Rhianna Pratchett heads to the New World for a bit of exploration, some conquest and a slap-up turkey dinner...

DEVELOPER Ensemble Studios PUBLISHER Microsoft WEBSITE www.ageofempires3.com PREVIOUSLY IN... Issue 156

THE LOWDOWN

- Beautiful new graphics engine
- Innovative card-based gameplay and deck building
- Persistent, upgradeable cities on offer
- Card system might be too complicated for casual RTS players

THE AGE OF EMPIRES series has been a bit like a friendly uncle to strategy gamers. One of those who wasn't actually related to you, but who'd turn up at Christmas and fill you full of sweets until you vibrated on the spot. In short, it's always been a solid, dependable favourite.

Contrary to popular belief, *Age Of Mythology* wasn't *Age Of Empires III*, and was never meant to be. It was more of a short-side diversion to try out some new ideas in preparation for the game that was to follow, focusing on the discovery of the New World. And here it is. Pretty isn't it? In fact graphically, *Age Of Empires III* is almost unrecognisable from its predecessors. It's only when you observe the game in motion and see all the little gatherers chopping, mining and farming that familiarity filters through.

It's not only things like water, smoke and fog effects that have been added. No, Ensemble has also used the Havok

engine to bring ragdoll physics to *AOE3*. Yes, when you shoot troops with a cannonball they actually do fly through the air and bounce off things.

Perhaps even more impressive is how buildings break down during battles. Again this is through physics rather than animation. When you attack buildings like windmills, even the movement physics of the sails change as they're blown apart. Marvellous stuff.

CARD SHARP

But the feature Ensemble believes to be the biggest innovation in *AOE3* is a card-based improvement system, which sounds a bit complex to us. Basically, each civilisation (there are eight in total) has its own home-city screen. As they accumulate experience points through building, gathering and fighting, they earn shipment points from their main city. Then all you need to do is flick to your home-city screen and cash in your

points for shipment cards such as troops, technologies and resource packages.

There are many different cards available as you go through the five ages. Unfortunately, you can only use 20 in a game, but you can create different decks of cards for varying situations: naval battle, cavalry-focused, economy-focused and so on.

Your home-city itself is like a giant role-playing character, in that it levels up as you progress through your games, independently of how you level up ages within a single game. Then, as your city evolves, new cards with technologies, buildings and other goodies open up.

This suggests some very intriguing multiplayer battles, as when you go online, you're not just evolving your own gameplay experience but also that of your own city, from a cooing baby township to a sprawling metropolis. Complicated? Probably. Intriguing? Most definitely. **PWT**



WHY YOU SHOULD BE EXCITED...



NO-GO TEEPEE

Ensemble isn't going for historical realism, so you can't attack the Indian settlements and steal all their food.

HAVE A CASSEROLE

Befriend the locals and they'll supply you with unique units, open up new technologies and occasional pop round to borrow the lawnmower.

BIG UM CHIEFS

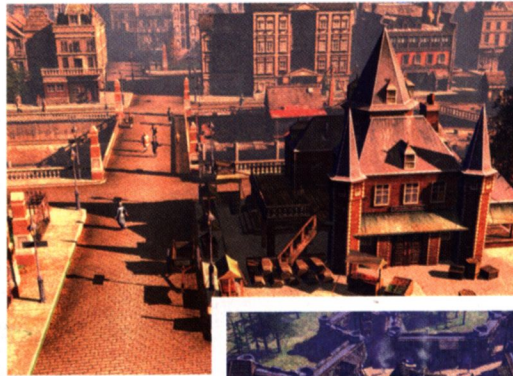
The native tribes you encounter will be relevant to the setting you're playing in, at least in theory.

FEED ME

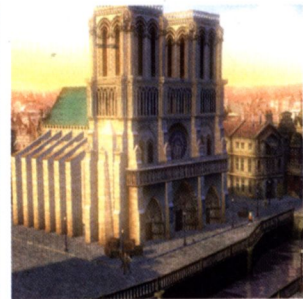
Ahhh cuddly livestock, an *Age Of* favourite. Round up these beasts in the wild, fatten them up at home and then bring on the meat.

PAINT YOUR WAGONS

Tap into trade routes to boost your economy. They can also be upgraded from these *Little House On The Prairie*-style wagons to roaring iron dragons. That's trains to you.



GRAPHICAL loveliness abounds – you can't move for real-time shadowing, particle physics and wobbly water.

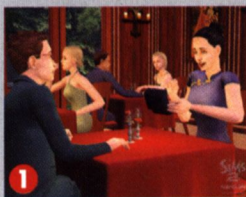


Shoot troops with a cannonball and they fly through the air and bounce off things

PCZONE CHARTS



- 1 **NEW** THE SIMS 2: NIGHTLIFE
Issue 161: 58%
- 2 **NEW** FAHRENHEIT
Issue 159 90%
- 3 **NEW** DUNGEON SIEGE II
Issue 159 80%
- 4 **↓** BATTLEFIELD 2
Issue 157 94%
- 5 - THE SIMS 2
Issue 147 82%
- 6 - GUILD WARS
Issue 156 94%
- 7 **↓** THE SIMS 2: UNIVERSITY
Issue 153 57%
- 8 **↓** FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005
Issue 149 90%
- 9 **↓** HALF-LIFE 2
Issue 148 97%
- 10 **↓** WORLD OF WARCRAFT
Issue 152 95%
- 11 **NEW** EARTH 2160
Issue 158 83%
- 12 **↑** BRIAN LARA INTERNATIONAL CRICKET 2005
Issue 158 68%
- 13 **↓** CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 5
Issue 154 50%
- 14 **↓** ROME: TOTAL WAR
Issue 148 93%
- 15 **↑** COMMAND AND CONQUER: GENERALS - DELUXE
Issue 127 86%
- 16 **↑** ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3
Issue 149 79%
- 17 **↑** MS FLIGHT SIM 2004: CENTURY OF FLIGHT
Issue 133 89%
- 18 **↓** GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
Issue 157 92%
- 19 **NEW** EVERQUEST II: DESERT OF FLAMES
Reviewed Next Issue
- 20 (RE) STRONGHOLD 2
Issue 155 85%



1 THE SIMS 2: NIGHTLIFE
We now officially hate *The Sims 2*. It's taken a while, but forcing *Fahrenheit* into second place is a crime against nature.



2 FAHRENHEIT
They said it wouldn't sell and that it was too clever. They were wrong and Atari find themselves as a sudden bastion of innovation.



3 DUNGEON SIEGE II
It slightly lacks the impact of sieges gone by, yet the game still packs a hefty commercial punch, due in part to the donkeys.



12 BRIAN LARA CRICKET 2005
Sales of *Brian Lara* have no doubt been buoyed by a sudden English realisation that not all their sportsmen are binge-drinking goons. Sort of.



CRASH AND BURN

www.crashday.com
ETA: Feb 2006

Meet *Crashday*. Otherwise known as *TrackMania* with guns

THEIR NAME ARE legion: *Stunt Car Racer*, *Destruction Derbies 1, 2 & 3*; *Carmageddon*. Erm, other car titles. Games in which your aim is to recreate incredible roadside carnage of a magnitude only before seen in playgrounds of the late '80s that had been infected by Matchbox HotWheels cars. The ones that had a door panel that would flip around to reveal a dent after a hefty collision.

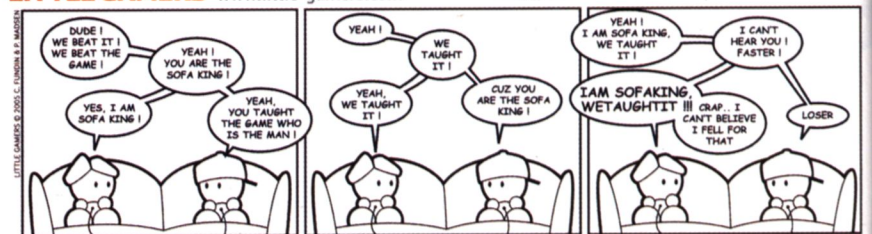
You see, *TrackMania: Sunrise* is nice and everything, but unfortunately there's no option (as yet) to attach missile launchers and chain-guns to your bonnet. Enter *Crashday* - a PC-exclusive title that features 15 shimmering, shiny and

beautifully rendered cars, as many loops and jumps as its gallic opposition, plus far, far more destructive game modes. We spent most of our hands-on with the code embarrassing ourselves in front of the game's representatives by driving into walls and turning our car into a fine puree - but we couldn't help but notice the fun we were having despite the acute embarrassment.

There's your every day Stunt Show for starters, in which you perform death-defying feats of courage before a crowd of dribbling hicks; but where our hands-on really ignited our interest was in the fast-paced and nitro-fuelled wrecking matches. Missile trails fill the air, cars leap and dive and some real destructive fun comes to the fore - something further compounded by modes that involve flag-chasing, bomb-passing and even, whisper it, racing. Not, perhaps, the most educated nor serious of endeavours then - but for a project started by two blokes back in 1997 to have come this far, and with destructible bonnets this shiny, is still a cause for celebration.



LITTLE GAMERS www.little-gamers.com



IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

The guy who brings Potter to PC

JUSTIN MANNING – producer on *Harry Potter And The Goblet of Fire*

Having come to EA via Eidos and the now defunct Microprose, Justin started out testing and working on the stellar *X-Com* and *Grand Prix* series. Now firmly ensconced within the *Potter*-verse, he's a lovely chap and more than knows his muggles from his mudbloods.

Q Who stamps approval on what you do? Does JK Rowling have any involvement with the game?

A JK Rowling reviews our game scripts and documents, and we also work with her literary agents, the CLLA, to ensure that we stay true to the story. We've got a really good relationship with Warner Bros as well, and it ensures that we get access to stuff like film scripts, set visits, concept work and unit photography. All that allows us to see what the film is focusing on and how it's going to look at each stage of its development – it allows us to exactly recreate the way characters look, as well as see how the film is interpreting key scenes from the book.

When making a *Harry Potter* game, are you concentrating on following the book or the film?

This year, we've taken our game closer to the movie than in previous versions of *Harry Potter*. We highlighted the key movie bits from the film's script, like the Triwizard tournament, and have

used them as the game's foundation. We looked through the story and picked out the moments that we thought players would love to experience for themselves.

There's also been some areas that we've been able to explore that aren't in the film – bits like our Prefects' Bathroom and Herbology levels. In the movie, there are some key points where Harry takes the Egg to the Prefect's Bathroom to discover the second Triwizard task, and another where Neville gives Harry the Gillyweed so that he can breathe underwater. We wanted to keep these events but create a bigger experience around them, so Harry is now joined by Ron and Hermione as they explore Hogwarts



WHY rocks hate magic.

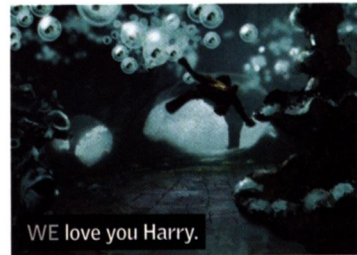


underneath the bathroom after the Egg escapes Harry, and in the Herbology greenhouses to find Gillyweed.

Is it at all intimidating reworking the words of such a popular and admired author into the form of a game?

Seeing as JK Rowling has created this wonderfully rich world that appeals to millions of fans worldwide, it's a real challenge to ensure that we make a great game while staying true to the fiction. Fortunately for us though, this is the fifth *Harry Potter* game that we've made, so we've got a wealth of experience that can really deliver a compelling *Harry Potter* title that'll please the fans.

As the novels and films have gone on, they've become progressively darker and more adult – but I'd say that the videogames haven't followed suit.



WE love you Harry.



NO, you're still not technically allowed to fancy Hermione.

Why is this? Is this something that will change?

As we all saw in the *Prisoner Of Azkaban* movie, the story is getting darker every year. We've tried to reflect this change with a more mature art style in the games, but the audience for the *Potter* films and books remains pretty young. Because of this, we're careful to make the game with cues from the tone of the movie, while still appealing to the younger gamers.

Following on from this, how have you managed to incorporate something as shocking as the death of a Hogwarts pupil in *Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire* into the more 'family' atmosphere of the game series?

Well, we've changed our approach in relaying the story to the player. All storytelling is done with movies as you enter each level, so that we keep the gameplay in-game. Seeing as our narrative sequences are a stylised blend of game and film, they create a storybook feel. With this, we reckon that we've made some of the darker parts of the fiction more accessible to our younger audience.

LIVING IN A MATERIAL WORLD

Because we've been told that the pile of crap underneath our desks constitutes a fire hazard

It's a long-standing tradition that after a night on the piss, a black gaming T-shirt should be retrieved from a long-lost pile of tat in the ZONE office to avoid wafts of general smelliness upsetting co-workers. Or, at least, it was a long-standing tradition until we started up this section. Now we donate our new T-shirts to a good cause. The ESC video-gaming charity to be precise. With the ebay tag 'pczoners', as soon as every issue hits the shelves, we'll be do-gooding and awaiting for your bids.

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



THIS MONTH'S TAT



ARCHIMEDEAN DYNASTY SUIT
Dating from 1997, it's a piece of gaming history.



CITY OF VILLAINS BAG
Containing T-shirt, notepad and mouse mat.



SCRAPLAND BUST
Metal robot chap. No boobs unfortunately, as name suggests.



CODENAME PANZERS HAT
A bit Sherman Tank.

THE TAT BOARD

COMPARE	ITEM TITLE	SOLD FOR	BIDS
	SUPREME COMMANDER T-SHIRT Not too bad. Could've been better seeing as Chris Taylor might have touched it or breathed on it. But still...	£18.00	12
	ONE-OFF PCZ LENTICULAR LOGO Our art department never knew you loved them so much. This one sounds even better when you scratch it.	£12.50	11
	KING KONG NOTEPAD And there was us thinking that big monkeys were brilliant. Turns out they're worth less than a tenner.	£8.65	8
	KULT HERETIC KINGDOMS T-SHIRT Oh dear. This was perfect LAN-party wear and you lot just turned your noses up at it. What do you want? Blood? Style? Fashion?	£6.55	7

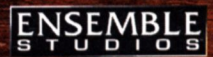
AGE of EMPIRES

III

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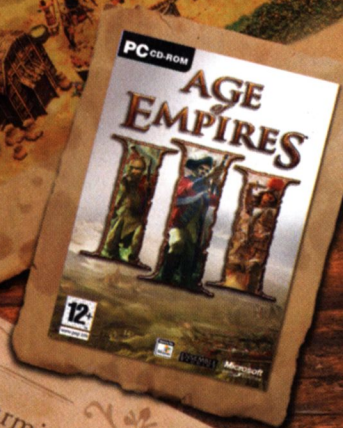
ULTIMATE GOAL
 Shape the face of the new world.





IMMEDIATE GOAL

Make it through the next ten minutes.



Deploy armies. Command armadas. Inspire a nation. With brilliant strategic planning and shrewd combat tactics, a new world full of promise is yours for the taking. A new empire is yours to build. But will you survive long enough to enjoy it?



**HOT
SHOT**

RISE & FALL: CIVILIZATIONS AT WAR

DEVELOPER Stainless Steel Studios **PUBLISHER** Midway
WEBSITE www.stainlesssteelstudios.com **ETA** February 2006

ANY GAME THAT has whacking great elephants stomping on soldiers is worthwhile we reckon. *Rise & Fall: Civilizations At War* is an epic RTS in the true sense – massive battles involving four ancient races. Not only can you build up your cities and wage war in the usual RTS way, you can also jump right into the gory fights with one of eight mighty heroes. For example, you can see Caesar's busy bit-on-the-side Cleopatra twatting a few Romans here. "We want to give gamers a really action-orientated experience different to every other RTS," says designer Rick Goodman. But will it still challenge *Age Of Empires III* and the other strategy big boys? Full playtest soon.

CRIMSON TIDE

Being able to control third-person characters enables you to see the historically-accurate skirmishes up close and personal for in-your-face bloody action. As well as resources for gold and wood, there's glory – perform well in battle and your hero can climb to a god-like level-ten warrior.

CARRY ON CLEO

Famous for bathing in ass milk (that's ass as in donkey), the Egyptian harlot Cleopatra is one of the game's eight heroes that you can control directly. Each hero has unique abilities, weapons and power-ups, but you have to keep an eye on your character's stamina during third-person melees, and top them up on holy water (seriously).

WHERE'S RUSSELL?

Each civilisation has special units that you can call upon to stick a sword, arrow or other sharp gouging object into the flesh of the enemies. Romans can call upon the services of their brave gladiators – although you have to watch their tendency to lose concentration, swear loudly and punch any nearby paparazzi.



ROMAN AROUND

Rise & Fall features four civilisations – the Greeks, Romans, Persians and Egyptians – each with 20 unique units. These range from siege weapons used to fire rocks at enemy cities, to drummers onboard ships, who can be used to make oarsmen row faster and ram other vessels. Keith Moon, where are you now...

ALL OF A QUIVER

Weapon tech trees are incredibly important in *Rise & Fall*, and could give you the technological edge in any ancient scuffles. For example, training swordsmen out at sea can be vital, enabling you to use grapplers to board ships, slice and dice the crew and capture the vessel.



THAT guy just there has been 'pwnt'.

THE APE'S ESCAPED...

PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG

Steve Hogarty wanders into the wilderness to investigate some monkey business

DEVELOPER Ubisoft Montpellier PUBLISHER Ubisoft WEBSITE www.kingkonggame.com PREVIOUSLY IN... Issue 158

THE LOWDOWN

- Based on the new Peter Jackson movie
- Running away from T-Rexes
- Detailed and beautiful environments
- Linear level design
- Console controls

ETA
Nov
'05

AFTER A BRIEF search on Google Earth, I've finally accepted that Skull Island doesn't exist and that giant apes and prehistoric lizards will forever be confined to movies, games and some of my stranger dreams. And after playing Peter Jackson's *King Kong*, my disappointment with the non-existence of the isle is also met with some relief. Skull Island is a terrifying place - valleys dotted with ruins of ancient and forgotten civilisations, seemingly bottomless chasms spanned by rickety old rope bridges, and of course, the improbable abundance of supposedly extinct T-Rexes - and one absolutely massive monkey.

ON SAFARI

I'm in the waterlogged safari suit of Jack Driscoll, trying to keep up with my

expeditionary chums as we wander through a dull green valley bordered by sheer stone faces on either side. The lack of any sort of on-screen information is as apparent as a missing front tooth, there's no ammo count or health readouts, no compass or map. It's a far more literal take on a first-person viewpoint, complemented by the sort of bobbing, stumbling and jerking movements you'd expect as you traverse the vine-smothered floors of an ancient ravine. It's not an entirely innovative feature, but I struggle to think of a time I've felt as immediately drawn into in-game surroundings.

The rain continues to pound the scenery as we exit the narrow valley and spy some of our comrades sprinting hastily across a bridge far above our heads. They've seen some sort of monster, they inform us, but

they don't know where it's gone now... And like some connoisseur of dramatic and predictable timing the colossal figure of a T-Rex emerges from behind them, decimating the fragile bridge and tearing people to shreds in a scripted flurry of teeth and limbs. Just like in the movies.

Every stomp of the tyrannical lizard's massive feet shakes the world around it, and every subtle nuance of his animation conveys his intent. Far be it from me to explain the psychology behind instinctive interactions between two species that have never co-existed, but when the prehistoric beast looks at you, you know what he's thinking (usually something along the lines of "I want to eat that scrawny, annoying thing"). The fear of being faced with a T-Rex is also strangely primal, jamming your fight or flee instinct firmly into the

THE STORY SO FAR...

**UBISOFT
MONTPELLIER**



Armless...

Ubisoft Montpellier creates Rayman and somewhere a kitten dies. An instant success.

1995



Infinity and beyond

As if to apologise, Ubisoft gives us *Beyond Good & Evil*. Well, apology accepted!

2003



Monkey business

Working as hard as ever, Ubisoft Montpellier puts the finishing touches to *King Kong*.

2005

In the future

After finding some buried treasure, Ubisoft uses its wealth to move to the moon. Maybe.

2021



KONG'S dancing skills are impeccable.



KONG enjoys renovating in his spare time.



MONKEY versus dinosaur – the circle of life continues.

King Kong vs Black & White 2
They both feature large angry monkeys (well apes, but let's not be pedantic), but which game teaches us the true nature of mutated simians?

	KING KONG	BLACK & WHITE 2	WINNER
Magnitude	45m	80m	B&W2!
Ladies wooed	1	0	KK!
People eaten	0	Potentially hundreds	B&W2!
Dinos slapped	About 271	0	KK!
Trips to New York	1	0	KK!
Trips to pavement	1	0	KK!
Number of poos	Worryingly, 0	Several hundred	B&W2!
Bi-planes required to defeat	About 7 or 8	Probably just 1	KK!

Overall winner: **King Kong!** The big ape is as hard as nails!

Like some connoisseur of dramatic and predictable timing, the colossal figure of a T-Rex emerges and tears people to death

'flee' position. Opening his giant gob to reveal a mouth that looks not entirely unlike a fleshy dagger shop, he lets out a roar that's as close to deafening as the limits of my headphones allow. In the game I'm visually shaken, and the world blurs as the noise reverberates about my cavernous surroundings. As my associates attempt to find an escape route, I'm left holding the short straw, or rather the long bamboo spear, as the monumental creature lumbers towards me with worrying speed. Like rock legends Abba once said, "I'm up shit creek without a paddle, Fernando."

MONKEY ACT

There are a number of reasons why *Kong's* hairy arse won't sit comfortably in the FPS chair. Its sequences and set-pieces, the invisible interface, the cinematic presentation and the fact that there are entire sections in which you play as the eponymous King from a third-person perspective. These sections have you



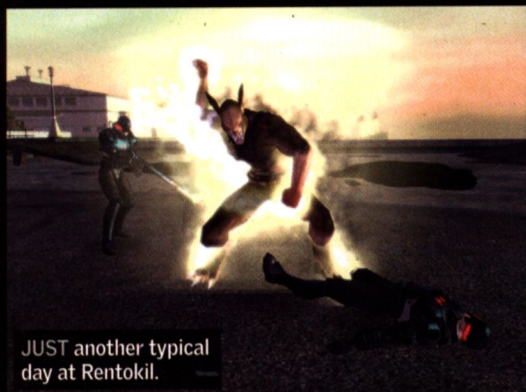
I think he's spotted me.

chasing Fay Wray (or Naomi Watts at least), protecting her from danger, leaping about Skull Island with surprising acrobatic grace for such a big ape, and getting into bloody scraps with the local wildlife. The combat controls are simple: left-click to swing Kong's tree trunk arms about, shattering the bones of anything they come into contact with, and right-click to grab – a move which opens a few more combat options such as throwing and slamming.

For all its simplicity, the action on screen looks superbly choreographed and intense. Punches connect with a stunning sense of force, and the animations give a feeling of weight and epic magnitude. However, the

console leanings we noticed with our last playtest are unfortunately still very much present, with mindless button mashing and frantic clicks of the mouse being the key to coming out successful in most confrontations. Despite this, *King Kong* looks set to be a thrilling and involving experience if nothing else, and will undoubtedly be a (probably largely ignored) benchmark for future movie tie-ins. Ubisoft Montpellier plans to couple the legendary tale of the skyscraper-scaling simian with the storytelling abilities of *Beyond Good & Evil* creator Michel Ancel, so chances are we're in for a treat. **PCZ**





JUST another typical day at Rentokil.

CREATE YOUR COSTUME



HE needs to eat a pie or two.



THE Adam And The Ants reunion tour was going well.

WE'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU...

CITY OF VILLAINS

Heroes have had their day. For *Paul Presley* the future is down, dirty and dastardly...

DEVELOPER Cryptic Studios PUBLISHER NCsoft WEBSITE www.cityofvillains.com PREVIOUSLY IN... Issue 157

THE LOWDOWN

- Unleash your inner criminal
- Standalone game from *City Of Heroes*, although designed to work together
- Bases allow for PvP action across both games
- Masterminds can control ninja armies. Robot undead ninja armies
- Not sufficiently different from *COH* at present



TO SAY THAT we'd been anticipating the darker spin-off from all-conquering superhero MMO, *City Of Heroes*, for some time now is a mild understatement. There's a little psycho in all of us, and the thoughts of spending another long day fastidiously patrolling the streets of Paragon City, fighting crime and wrong-doing was starting to get to us. Time to release the pressure valve a little. Would *City Of Villains* hold the answer? Luckily, we were invited into the closed beta test to get a hands-on experience to see for ourselves.

Much relief greeted us with the character-creation screens. At first, it seemed as though Cryptic had really gone to town with the 'baddie' concept, giving you choices between Brute, Dominator, Stalker, Corruptor and Mastermind archetypes. All promising options, and while it didn't take long to realise these were mostly the same classes as in *COH* but with different names and one or two

tweaks, it was forgivable as soon as we encountered all the new clothing options.

At least the Mastermind class gives you something new to play with. Essentially, you're given control over zombies (harrumph), robots, or our favourite, a team of ninja warriors to do your bidding. Here, our notions of building our dark army of the night grows ever stronger, although you only get to control between one and three henchmen at first, and their powers are limited to basic fighting moves until you unlock higher-level training powers.

DARK DAYS

The background to *COH* concerns the dastardly Lord Recluse and his chain of seven independent islands, the Rogue Isles – home to every kind of ne'er-do-well you can imagine. Recluse has dominion over the inhabitants, allowing gangs and factions to conduct whatever business they desire as long as his own schemes aren't disrupted. One of which is the rescue of your good self

from the infamous Ziggurat prison, a set-piece that forms *COV's* tutorial.

Presently, the atmosphere is very grim. Dark, with a capital bleak. It feels as though someone attacked *City Of Heroes* with a giant fun vacuum then, once all vestiges of camp tomfoolery had been eradicated, flipped the switch to blow and covered everything with a coating of depression and misery. Citizens wander about the islands in a permanent state of paranoia and helplessness. Gangs roam (well, hang about their spawn points) with abandon, beating on each other for no reason other than it's something to do. Desolation and oppression abound and the day-glo, colourful world of Paragon City is as distant a memory as it gets.

SAME OLD

An interesting premise, but there's a currently rogue purple sock of concern in the whites-only wash of potential. Namely, that all this gloom and doom doesn't quite

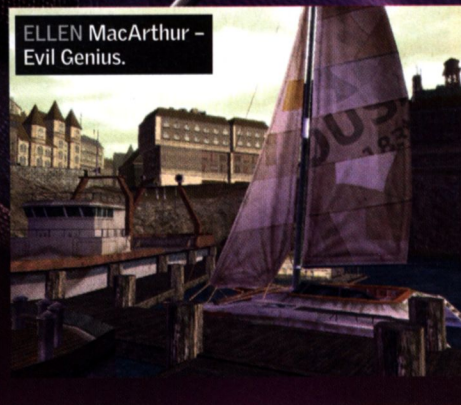
Desolation abounds:
day-glo Paragon City
is a distant memory

have the same wide-reaching appeal and lofty scope as the bright environs of *City Of Heroes*. *COV* is quite definitely not a sequel, more a re-imagining of the original, the *Star Trek* mirror universe of super-powered MMOs. Playing these early levels with each of the different villainous archetypes, we were slightly disappointed to see that the path of progression was the same whatever type of criminal powersets we boasted.

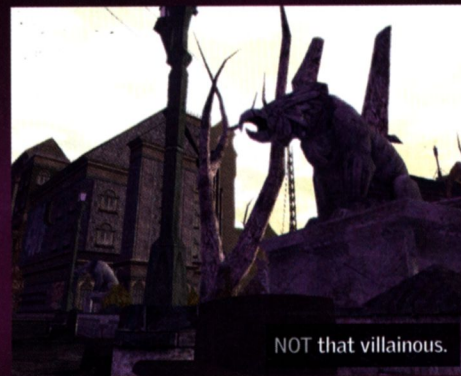
COH had the good grace to give each hero class a mission path of their own to follow, while including enough random and group-based content to cater for almost all types of player. *City Of Villains*, it seems from this early play, makes the first eight levels identical whoever you are.



"NO, I can't remember my PIN number."



ELLEN MacArthur - Evil Genius.



NOT that villainous.



HERE they come, walking down the street...



YOU can try to fight it, but orange always wins.

Hollow Volcanoes

"More shark pits, I need more shark pits. Next to the piranha bays and squid pens..."

Easily the most anticipated part of *City Of Villains*, and sadly one that wasn't activated at the time of our hands-on with the game, is the ability to create your own villainous dungeons, criminal HQs and secret hollowed-out volcano lairs. Unfortunately, bases are only available to teams, not solo sadists.

Still, should your League of Anti-Justice crims want to hollow out their own volcano HQ (or evil office block, or hi-tech lab etc), the tools are simple enough. You get to build things from the ground up, *Evil Genius*-style. Place walls, floors, ceilings, rooms, lighting, curtains, throw rugs – the works. Rooms can contain teleports, hospital equipment, weapons, traps and plenty more. In fact, Cryptic is boasting that the base construction tools are almost as in-depth as the ones for costume-creation.

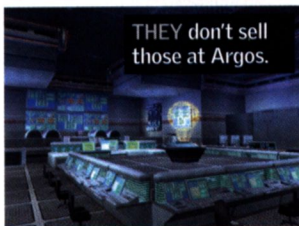
The purpose of a hollowed-out volcano base is part trad-MMO guild hall, part potential PvP raid zone. Items Of Power™ exist in the world, stolen by the inter-dimensional conqueror Rularuu (it says here), and available to plucky teams that manage to raid his home-base.

Aside from bestowing special bonuses and abilities on your group, they can be displayed on your super-mantlepiece, surrounded by remote gun turrets and killer clown zombie robots (probably), acting as beacons for rival groups of both villains and heroes. The former craving power for their own hollowed-out volcano lairs, the latter taking umbrage at such mightiness being in the wrong hands and used for naughtiness.

Hence the new PvP raiding aspect of the game. Gang up, hunt down the hollowed-



THOSE building tools in full.



THEY don't sell those at Argos.

out volcano base in question and let the raid commence in order to secure the items for your own use. Oddly, you get to dictate the opening times of your volcano, ostensibly so you can't be raided while offline, but in practice giving things a strange theme park feel: queuing time from this sign to ride the PCZ Hollowed-Out Volcano Lair Of Terror™ is 45 minutes. You must be this tall and at least this villainous to enter.

Interestingly, if you've got an active *COH* subscription, the base-building feature from *COV* will also carry over, enabling you to also construct hero bases. Finally, the *PC ZONE* Super League Of Justice Friends Mega-Tower HQ (Starbucks outlets on third and 89th floors) can finally be a reality.

without the valiant nature to your actions. For goodies, this mechanic works perfectly. As a young man suddenly gifted an ability to shoot fireballs out of your penis, you're naturally going to start small, blasting a few muggers and low-rent hoodlums with your rod of justice, before working your way up to tackling ultra-baddies, alien invaders and world-threatening plots of diabolical cunning. All fine, dandy and in-keeping with traditional comic-book norms.

Trouble is, when we set about creating a super-villain character, the back story is already there in our minds. Our Fu Manchu, Blofeld or Dr Doom types already have their secret bases, evil army of robot zombies and global domination plans intact. To therefore be running around with The Ginger Ninjer (evil Dr No type with control over an army of ninja drones) having to pound on the same bunch of low-level thugs as

our hero characters did (ostensibly), just doesn't feel right.

SMASH 'EM UP

What *City Of Villains* does cater for is the 'action' villain types. Those with similar powers to your heroes, but who've decided to use their X-Ray vision to peer through women's toilets rather than expose robberies. Think Rhino, Venom, Sabertooth, Wolf from *Gladiators* – the kind of bad guy that would pop up just to have a scrap, rather than the ones engaged in grand schemes to take over the Earth. Of course, don't try to create those specific ones or you'll have the 'Legal Team Of Doom' down on you quicker than you can say, "Mu hah hah hah ha ha!" Even that's probably copyrighted somewhere...

Hence I had a far more rewarding experience running around with Baddie Thugeson (supposed to be Thuggesson but there's an annoying limit on the amount of

THE STORY SO FAR...

CRYPTIC STUDIOS



Doors open

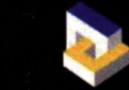
Jack Emmert sets up his own super-team, destined to bring heroics to the masses.



2000

Game saved

After drifting from one uninterested publisher to another, a deal is struck with NCsoft.



2002

City slickers

The lights are on and the servers are live. *City Of Heroes* lives and is a major hit.

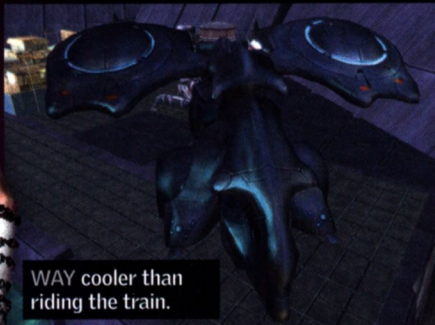


2004

Hero vs Hero

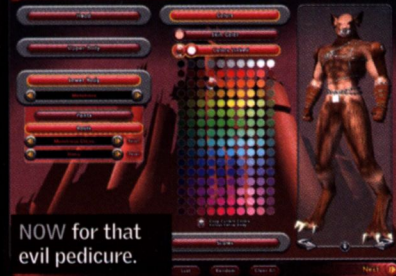
Marvel sees some players have heroes similar to theirs & files a lawsuit. The case continues...

2004



WAY cooler than riding the train.

CREATE YOUR COSTUME



NOW for that evil pedicure.



THAT ain't no way to treat a lady.

You're not so much a do-as-you-please villain, more a thug for hire

Money makes the world go round

Robbing banks in *COV* is one way to earn a crust. It certainly beats sitting at a computer desk for hours on end... Oh, wait...



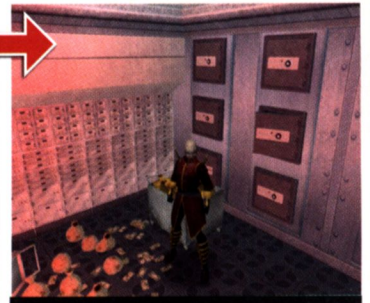
THE bank. Centre of commerce. Symbol of capitalism. Imposer of random one-day holidays. In I go.



I'D like a mortgage please. A mortgage of VILLAINY! Har har. Mental note: work on my one-liners.



MUST. Smash. Vault. Also. Must. Return. Speech. To. Normal. Speed. Sorry, don't know why I do that.



MONEY. Mine, all mine. Enough jobs like this and I can afford the first interest payment on my bank loan.

characters you can have in your name) – a thawed-out Viking maniac of low brain wattage, imbued with dark auras and a giant stone mallet, out to smash everything he sees. This at least gave all the random combat some sense of meaning, and meant I was able to progress far easier than with the more cerebral villainy of Ginger.

HIT LIST

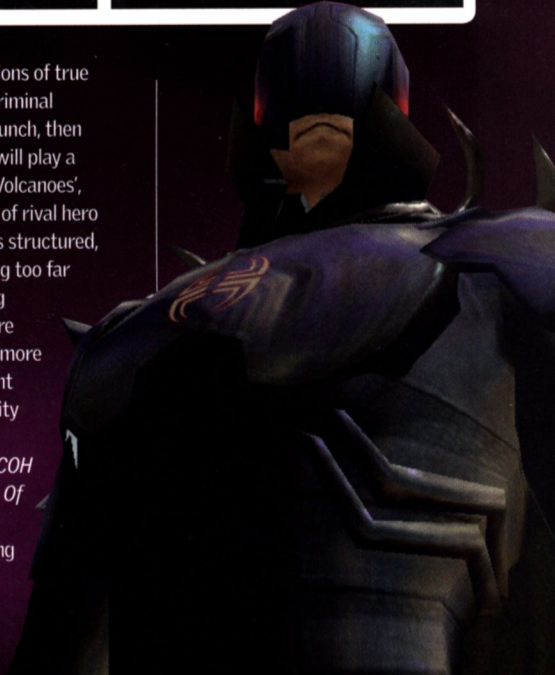
The early, pre-11 levels also give you your first taste of the different criminal factions inhabiting the Rogue Isles – some familiar from the previous game, some new. The Vahzilock, Hellions and Circle Of Thorns are joined by Mafiosi types, golden jetpack wearers, violence gangs, evil sprites feeding off power lines – all promising to react to you differently depending on your interactions with them. However, in this current build it was pretty much a case of

blast on sight, work out who you are from your charred dental remains later.

Once you've picked up a few contacts, missions offer some structure to things. In fact, the notions of plot are much stronger here than in *Heroes*, with missions containing little in-game cut-scenes to set the stage. You'll be tasked with cleaning up rival gang attacks, robbing banks to provide funding for Arachnos, planting bombs in tactical sites, helping out Arachnos's troops on attacks and so on. You're not so much a do-as-you-please villain, as a thug-for-hire hoping to rise the ranks of Lord Recluse's power structure. By the end of level ten, we had a firm idea of our place in the overall scheme and had given up any notions of being a megalomaniac of our own. Always the henchman, never the bride.

The promise is there for the higher levels, although we really hope Cryptic sees

its way to improving the notions of true villainy, of playing as a real criminal mastermind if not prior to launch, then soon afterwards. The bases will play a key part in this (see 'Hollow Volcanoes', opposite), as will the actions of rival hero groups. Given the way *COV* is structured, it's hard to see things straying too far from the established levelling template. However, with more variety in your career paths, more specialisation for the different classes and more of an identity of its own (rather than the current impression of being *COH* wearing an evil goatee), *City Of Villains* could prove a big enough draw if you're becoming bored with pulling on the spandex and being so damn good all the time. **PCZ**





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PCZONE

REVIEWS

Putting the colour back into PC gaming

SECTION EDITOR Paul Presley

Dull month

NOT MANY GOOD games about are there? (*What about Black & White 2?*

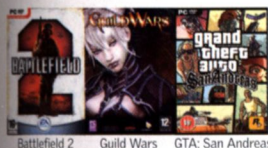
-Ed) I mean, how's a chap supposed to put any pizzazz into a review section when it's nothing but sub-standard dross? (*Or how about Pro Evo Soccer 5?* - Ed) Just one pallid shooter clone after another, all rehashing the same tired clichés. (*Brothers In Arms: Earned In Blood?* - Ed) It's a wonder we give anything more than half a page these days. (*GT Legends?* - Ed) Yes, it has to be said, the PC gaming industry is in a serious state of decline. (*Do you even read your section?* -Ed)

What? Oh! I see, a-hah-ha-ha. What an almost amusing misunderstanding. No, that was me rehearsing my keynote speech for the annual gathering of the International Deluded Opinion Holders conference being held later this month in the Grimsby Plaza Convention Suite & Bingo Hall.

No, of course any fool with half a plimsoll for a brain can see that following a couple of drier gaming months, this issue sees more Classic awards than a Classic FM-sponsored award ceremony for classical music. And more Recommended awards than, er, a Recommended award ceremony for, uh... Ahem. Look, just go and read the mag, will you....

Must Buys!

PC ZONE Classics are rare beasts, indeed. These are our personal top tips for sheer gaming excellence...



"I CAN never find a bra that fits."

GAME OF THE MONTH

74

BLACK & WHITE 2

Return to monkey island

The PC ZONE Awards



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



RECOMMENDED (75-89%)
Pretty, pretty, pretty. Any game that turns ZONE's head is worthy of your love.



DUMP (0-19%)
Don't shirk your duty - it's the only responsible thing to do to a game like this.

AND THE REST



ONLINE ONLY
Don't have an Internet connection? Then you're wasting your time. Move along please.



EXPANSION PACK
See this and you're going to have to own the original to play the expansion. We know - life's not fair.



ON THE DISCS
Good news! Check out the cover discs for a playable demo.

The PC Class System

Not all games are created equal, so how do you know if your PC's up to the job? Using real science we've graded your system from 1-5. Match it with the icon on each individual review to see if your PC will play the game. We review all games on a variety of systems, including our top-spec, very desirable Alienware Area-51.

	1	2	3	4	5
CPU	1.2GHz	1.8GHz	2.4GHz	3.0GHz	3.8GHz
RAM	128MB	256MB	512MB	1GB	1GB
Video	32MB	128MB	256MB	512MB	512MB

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PCZONE SWEARS...

- To only review code signed off by the publishers AND the developers
- To give you our honest opinion. We're gamers. We love games. And we hate bad ones. Just like you
- To tell you if a company refuses to send a game to us before it's on sale. There's always a reason
- To hang up on companies who say that 79% isn't a good score. What do they know?
- To listen to you if you think we've got something wrong. Email us at yourshout@pczone.co.uk

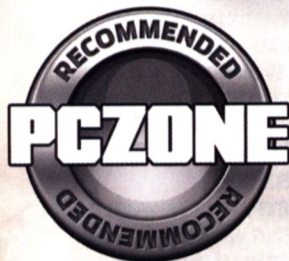
BROTHERS IN ARMS: EARNED IN BLOOD

DVD ONLY



Will Porter earns his keep through sweat and tears. We haven't got any blood out of him as yet

DEVELOPER Gearbox Software
PUBLISHER Ubisoft
WEBSITE
www.brothersinarmsgame.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99



AT A GLANCE...

Squad combat on the war-torn fields of France, as before but with some nips and tucks. The sense of it being an expansion pack in disguise are annulled by excellent multiplayer and extra modes.

System requirements 3

HOW IT STACKS

BIA: EARNED IN BLOOD **85%**

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR **80%**

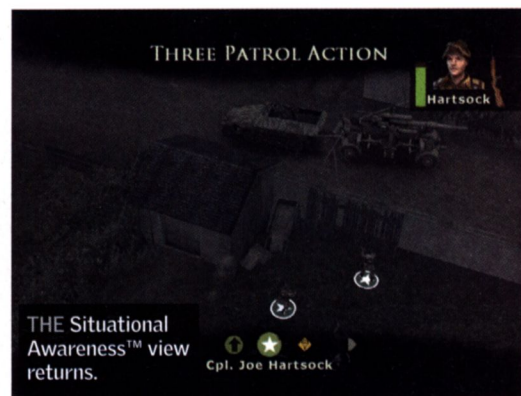
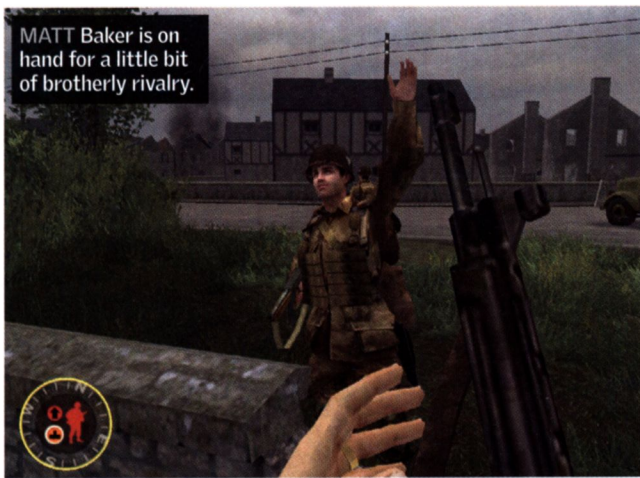
FREEDOM FIGHTERS **75%**

WHAT, ALREADY? BUT we only just finished the first one...

Yes, that's right - it may seem like we've only just stepped off the ferry with the traditional armfuls of flick-combs, bangers, shurikens and exotic playing cards, but it's time to turn right around and go back to the fields of Normandy. Ladies and gentlemen, boys and heavily-armoured girls, bid welcome to *Brothers In Arms 2!* Or, more precisely, *Brothers In Arms 1-and-three-fifths!* And a bit! But more of that later.

For those late to the battlefield, *Earned In Blood* follows its predecessor in its earnest portrayal of squad shootery. From a first-person perspective, it's down to you to deliver orders to two units of men (or sometimes one unit of men and a dinky little tank) through the magical medium of right-clicking. Gameplay revolves

around ordering one fire-team to position themselves behind something solid and lay suppressing fire on the enemy, giving your assault team time to nip on over to another patch of cover to lay down further support or, indeed, to flank and find a line of sight that'll allow you to take down the bothersome Nazis. Guns are inaccurate and it's tactics that win the day, rather than headshots taken from a mile away. It's then the game's job to throw into the mix a cavalcade of unexpected tanks, heavily fortified gun emplacements and a seeming myriad of possible points of cover (far more than the previous offering), to ensure that



you think on your feet or, indeed, face-down in a muddy ditch.

BACKTRACK

A little bit of scene setting is perhaps required before we get to the nitty gritty. *Road To Hill 30* got an odd reception. The powers that be (like us) really quite enjoyed it, and a lot of you did as well. Some, however, didn't – and waved their angry sticks all through grumpy town in protest. *Brothers In Arms* was a hard game to 'get', especially when the forced simplicity of earlier levels gave off very little of the fast-paced and tactical thinking needed later in the game. The first two or three hours were spent thinking, 'Meh. Not *Call Of Duty*,' beyond which point thoughts became, 'Ooh. Not really that comparable to *Call Of Duty* at all.' *Road To Hill 30* was not a run-of-the-mill shooter: it was a high-intensity tactical puzzle game with a sideline in heavy weapons. That said, in this reviewer's opinion, in the face of other accusations the band of armed brothers

stood guilty as charged: a definite tang of Xbox cosiness, enemies who didn't like moving very much and bizarre invisible walls blocking your way should you dare to stray from the straight and narrow.

And so we come to *Earned In Blood*, a game that ratchets the format up in the necessary departments (though sadly not very much graphically) and rolls off the production presses with less rough edges and a cheeky gleam in its eye. It won't stop the nay-sayers from repeating their mantra of 'hay', especially since the good stuff (as in the first game) doesn't really start to shine until a third of the way through, but it certainly builds sufficiently on the foundations of *Hill 30*.

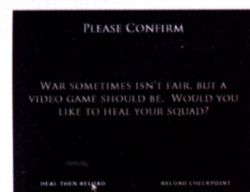
RED MENACE

For one, storytelling and character interaction is far improved from the last jaunt. Rather than continuing with the tale of Matt Baker, you're now beneath the ginger mop-top of 'Red' Hartsock, Baker squad-member and antagonist. Instead of going down the obvious route of picking up with Red's promotion at the close of *Hill 30*, events runs in parallel with the first game – covering the times



Helping hand

Because rubbish people play games too



There are times when *EIB* pulverises you. With no magical health-packs deep inside missions, you're free to die often and repeatedly. Thankfully though, the game takes pity on you and your feeble ways – as seen in the above screen; after collapsing in a trench for the fourth or fifth time, it'll tell you that games should be fair even if you only get one shot in real life. And everyone gets their health back! Which is great! Thanks Uncle Gearbox, we'll go and make you proud by killing some more people.

IT'S still tactical Marmite. But some of us like Marmite.



CONSIDER yourself flanked, you evil Nazis.

Run away! Run away!

Beware Lieutenant Gruber and his Little Tank



Tanks, historically the vehicle with the most coverage in PC games mags thanks to the German games industry, are fundamentally brilliant in the *BIA* games – as they're absolutely bloody terrifying. There's no simple option of creeping up behind them and tossing a grenade in anymore either – just you, a distant box of Panzerfausts, a large patch of ground without very much cover and a gargantuan piece of rolling artillery for company.

in which Baker was tying his shoelaces and didn't notice that Red was off liberating churchyards and laying down flares for incoming gliders. The first half of the game, then, is rather neatly placed within the span of the first – and as you would expect there are a number of plot dovetails and alternate takes on key *BIA* scenes. There are some clever storytelling techniques bobbing about (flashbacks, carefully considered slow-motion and the like), and it's all rather enjoyable; despite the fact that a lot of this is unfortunately offset by some fairly cumbersome narration.

The story tells itself through the pouring of Red's deepest feelings upon a kindly military journalist, but it really is a little too earnest and deliberately tear-jerking for this journalist's sensibilities. Both *Brothers In Arms* games have, for me,

fallen between the two stools of high-intensity and cloying emotion: never really bridging the gap between characters getting blown up by tanks and shouting "F***!" and the swirling violins of emotion that smother the cut-scenes. A lot of effort has clearly been put into characters, but a distance remains between yourself and your squad – simply because you think of them not as real people, but instead as the sort of stock characters replete with the same stock phrases that claw for audience sympathy in the works of Jerry Bruckheimer et al. Harsh words perhaps, and words that I suspect are more apt for this side of the Atlantic than the other, but it's true, despite the clear improvements in the plot and storytelling that lie elsewhere.

Contrary to expectation, the game doesn't play itself out entirely around the

wrecked boulangeries of gallic towns. There's still an awful lot of fields and farmhouses to navigate – which is a shame, since the best levels are without a shadow of a doubt those that take place around railways, warehouses and the back-garden washing lines of civic properties.

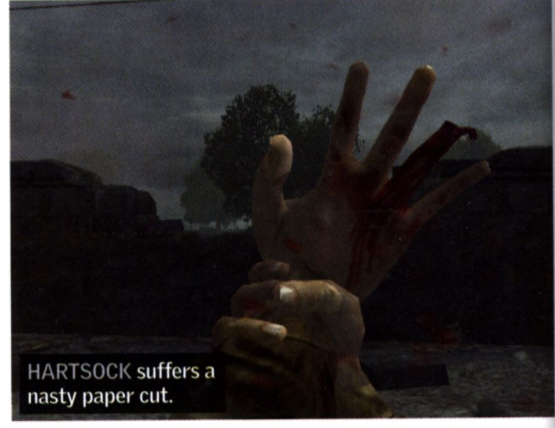
This is perhaps because, despite all the tomfoolery associated with the game and authenticity, wrecked towns are a lot easier to identify with for us armchair commandos than fields with odd hedge formations. The zones of action, meanwhile, are certainly wider than before and give off a reduced tang of linearity – you still can't climb over some clearly scalable gates and hedges, but a ton of extra points of cover give you far more choice in terms of the way you plough headlong into (or neatly sidestep) the action.

VER, VER CLEVER

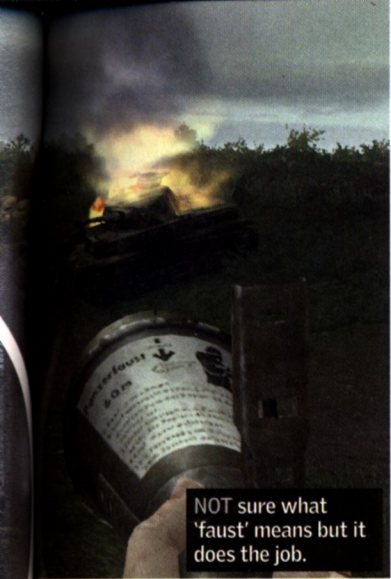
The ante has also been slightly upped in the opposition. The Reich are a bit brainier and move around the shop in response to whatever tricks you're trying to pull. Now this doesn't mean that they regularly jump out around corners or hunt you down – that would destroy the rubric of the game. But if you leave your team suppressing a group of Nazis on one side of a warehouse and get



US tanks don't look as cool as Fritz's ones.



HARTSOCK suffers a nasty paper cut.



NOT sure what 'faust' means but it does the job.

spotted creeping around to the other side in an attempt at flanking, then they'll split up and some will race across to the side in an attempt to cut you off at the pass. They'll also flank you from time to time, often being funnelled down towards you by the level design, or pile towards you if you've worked your way behind them and are looking dangerous. In short, the AI action of *Earned In Blood* certainly exceeds that of its predecessor – even if your buddies still occasionally prefer to dash through enemy fire, or sometimes stand in it, rather than taking the safer, scenic route.

As before, the game ensures that you perpetually feel that death is only ever an inch away. Death in *Earned In Blood* is frequent – extremely frequent. It can often become frustrating, but there really is no feeling quite like having your fire-team bullet-ridden and your assault team vaporised by a distant tank and being forced into becoming a lone-

Brothers that play together, stay together

Go on co-op missions with your real brother. Or even your sister



CO-OP: the way the war was won.

wolf, one-man-army. It hardly ever works, but when it does – and you finally reach that crate of Panzerfausts with a shred of health left and take out that final rumbling tank – you really get the feeling of elation and heroism that Gearbox has been so intent on capturing. *Earned In Blood* is a game for people who liked to be seriously challenged; there's a lot of slamming of keyboards involved, but the satisfaction of a well-executed manoeuvre is second to none.

QUOI DE NEUF?

The issue remains, however, that this is being touted as a sequel. And it doesn't feel like a sequel – it feels like a really good expansion pack. It's because we're fighting in the same sorts of places as before; it's because it all seems pretty similar graphics-wise; it's because it feels like we only completed this game the other day; and it's because all the advances Gearbox has made are tweaks rather than

The brightest innovation in *EIB* are the Skirmish modes – whose objectives, timed assaults and attributed missions can be enjoyed in some nifty co-op. I suffered though, since my co-player was a dullard of immense proportions, who wouldn't know tactics if they flanked him from two inches in front of his ginger face and so kept getting himself shot (should one of you die then that's it – Gearbox think spawning is for sissies). When he got his act together though, we had a rip-roaring time – each assisted by our own fire-team,

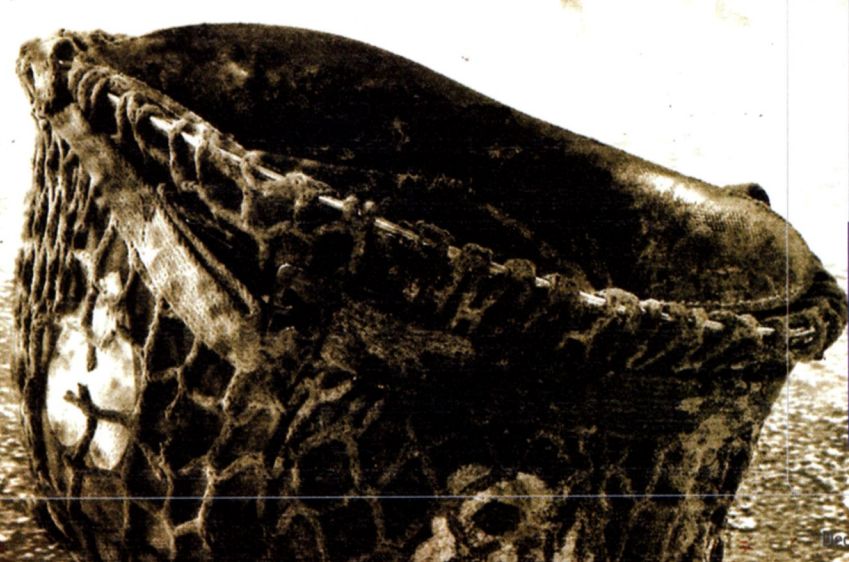
creeping up to bunkers through a myriad of trenches and hails of bullets, sneaking around farmsteads at the dead of night to knock back the swinehunt Allied counter-offensive. Skirmish modes allow you to play as the Germans y'see, bringing a slice of variety even if you can't understand what anyone's saying. This, along with an improved take of *Hill 30's* deathmatch modes (that mix AI squads with your own FPS agilities in 1v1 or 2v2 on some impressive maps) adds to the shelf-life no end. Easily what earns the game its stripes.

revolutions. Remarks such as, 'The developer has also fixed mouse-look in the handy top-down Situational Awareness mode!' shouldn't really be the preserve of a review of a true sequel. What saves it, however, is a veritable treasure trove of additional features – the discovery of which is much akin to the first time you feverishly flip through disc two in the collectors' edition of your favourite DVD. Whoever came up with the skirmish modes (see 'Brothers That Play Together', above) should be given one of the much-coveted *Brothers In Arms* medals. And while we're at the medal-giving ceremony, the sound guy who came up with the idea of recording drizzle splattering against gun metal

should also be similarly celebrated.

Pleasing the fans then, but not likely to win a barrelful of new ones, *Earned In Blood* is content to plough the self-same furrow as its forbear – albeit a deeper and more 'furry-ey' one. Buoyed by extra content, yet lacking a proper sense of real progression from the last outing, it nevertheless remains a well-designed foray that taps into parts of the gaming brain that habitually lie dormant. It still seems to think that bales of hay are bulletproof though, something that as a farmer's son I'd like to call into question. **PCZ**

Though well designed, it still seems to think that bales of hay are bulletproof



PCZONE

Graphics Not bad, slightly console-geared
Sound Authentic gunshots, alright voice-acting
Multiplayer Great co-op, good deathmatch

- ✓ Better AI, better storytelling, wider levels
- ✓ Excellent skirmish mode and co-op
- ✓ A satisfying, but pretty tricky, challenge
- ✗ Feels an awful lot like an expansion pack
- ✗ Won't win over nay-sayers

85

It's still heavy, and it's still our brother



HE might have a monk's hairdo, but the boy can play.



THE crowd were shadows of their former selves. Sorry.

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5



THAT scoreline looks familiar...



God isn't a DJ, he's a footballer, says *Jamie 'LUFC Forever' Sefton*

DEVELOPER Konami
PUBLISHER Konami
WEBSITE
www.konami.co.uk
ETA October 28
PRICE £29.99



AT A GLANCE...

PES5 is the best arcade kickabout on PC, bar none. *FIFA 06* has all the official licences, but it's not in the same league as *PES4*, let alone the new *PES5*.

System requirements 3

HOW IT STACKS

PES 5	93%
PES 4	89%
FIFA 06	77%

I'VE JUST LEAPT off my rickety editor's chair in triumph. Challenging one of our freelancers, Sam Kieldsen, to a quick game of *Pro Evolution Soccer 5*, I've swung in a mean corner that Michael Owen has spectacularly volleyed into the top right-hand corner of the Brazilian goal. An absolute screamer – and the goal wasn't bad either (ho ho).

Pro Evolution Soccer is the game that has deafened the *ZONE* team, due to my daily battles with previous editor Dave Woods that once filled the office air with guttural snorts, loud exclamations and language that would embarrass Billy Connolly (see the secretly-filmed video footage on issue 150's DVD for proof).

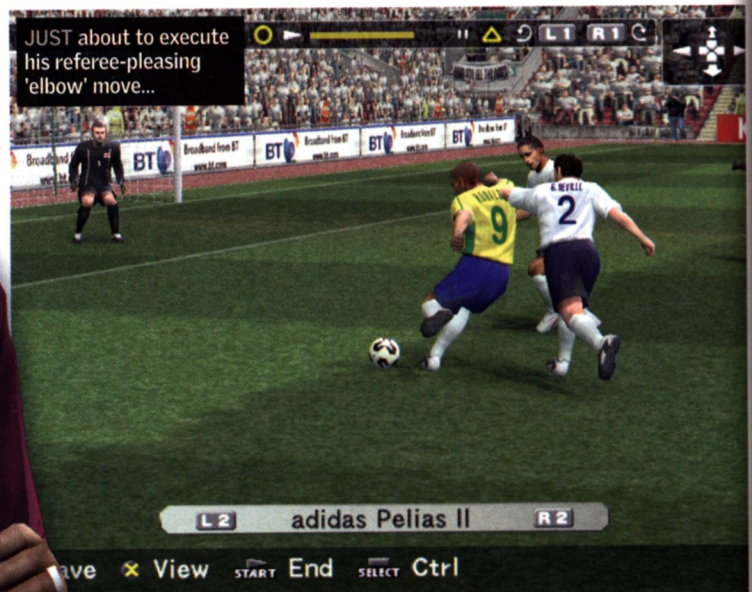
Now the fifth iteration of Konami's footie extravaganza is here. Like the beginning of a new season, there's excitement, hope, trepidation – maybe even a little fear – about *PES5*. Can it improve on last year's version? The answer is most definitely yes, but like any successful team, you're going to have to work hard to achieve results...

BORING, BORING PES?

Yep, the main difference you'll notice immediately is that you have fewer chances to score goals. While this may seem unbelievable for a football game, it doesn't make *PES* any less enjoyable – it just makes it more addictive, as you work out new ways to beat it. Some matches may be ugly, but a piece of skill or a clever passing move may unlock the opposition defence – and the reward of scoring a goal is so much greater.

You'll probably have a few frustrating 0-0 results before you start pingting them in from all angles, because *PES5* is physically demanding, especially in midfield. Konami has increased the emphasis on personal one-on-one player battles, which means you have to fight to retain possession – guarding the ball, getting foot-ins, closing players down quicker and intercepting passes.

Early games can often degenerate into a series of niggly fouls; the referee seemingly stopping the action every few seconds for any infringement, be it a stray leg, little trip, barge from behind or sliding tackle. The AI has been improved, so that even on a three-star average difficulty versus the CPU, you'll have to keep tapping the joystick buttons constantly to evade their advances. Not only that, but passes now go astray increasingly often ("Not to him! Him!"), and the ball



Man Down! PES5 introduces sporting gameplay, with new 'live' in-game injuries



A Spanish player goes down after another tackle. He writhes around in convincing agony as play continues.



AFTER a few seconds, I decide the Spanish chap isn't play-acting (for once), and boot the ball out of play.



THE injured Spanish player is given time to receive attention – the magic sponge isn't needed and he gets up.



FROM the throw-in, a CPU-controlled Spanish player sportingly boots the ball to my England keeper. Top stuff.

bobbles and bounces more than Jordan cycling down the Odessa steps.

HEADS UP

So after reading the last few paragraphs, you may be wondering why *PES5* is a classic. Well, just because the game is more demanding, doesn't mean it's any less

The ball bobbles more than Jordan cycling down the Odessa steps...

enjoyable – it just requires you to, as Yoda/Bobby Robson would say, "unlearn what you have learned".

For example, one of my favourite moves in the old *PES* was a fast run down the wing, then a double-tap cross to whip the ball into the box for my forward to head into the back of the net, usually seven times out of ten. This has been curtailed somewhat, so that in *PES5* it now probably only works, oh, once every third visit of Halley's comet.

OK, this may be a slight exaggeration, but the point is you're going to have to work

at learning new tricks; inspired new ways of scoring those wonder goals that have you punching the air and gloating in the face of your unfortunate opponent.

A key to this is utilising your skilled players, such as Zidane, Beckham, Ronaldinho and Rooney, whose individual brilliance could be the spark you need to

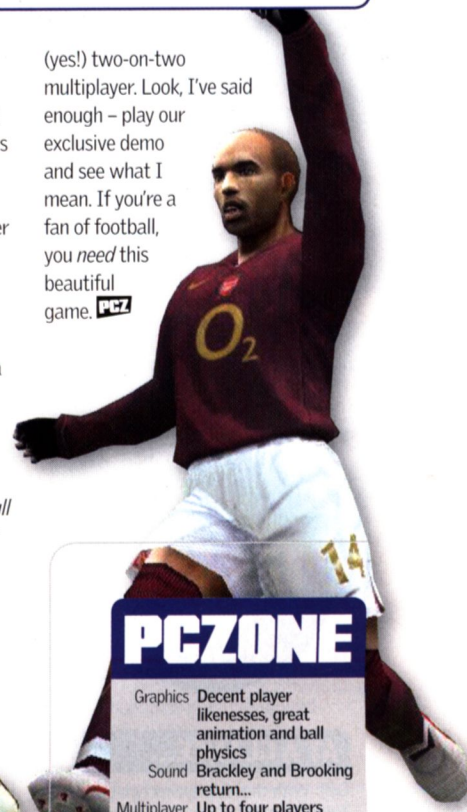
produce a wondrous finish or an inspired through-ball that creates the killer shooting opportunity. Using a quick change of pace, you can skip past opposition players, or even nutmeg them, before blasting home a 30-yard goal – especially if your player has the excellent new star attribute of 'middle shooting'. This is aimed at personalities such as Scholes or Lampard, who

can burst into the space on the edge of the box and unleash vicious shots.

Suddenly, after a day or two, you'll start to truly appreciate *PES5* – the little nuances of gameplay, the fantastic fluid animation, and the way the ball spins and moves realistically in the air – something that other football games still have yet to master. Again, it *feels* like real football – and even more so in the new game.

There's also some important additions, with officially-licensed Arsenal and Chelsea teams and stadia, a Memorial Mode that enables you to load in multiple option files so you can keep a tally of match stats between mates, an improved Master League (a cut-down *Football Manager* to the uninitiated) and of course, proper online options with

(yes!) two-on-two multiplayer. Look, I've said enough – play our exclusive demo and see what I mean. If you're a fan of football, you *need* this beautiful game. **PCZ**



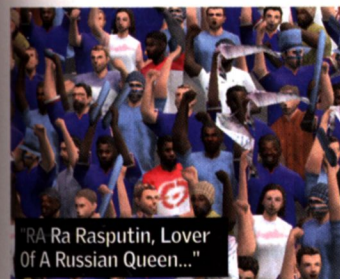
PCZONE

Graphics Decent player likenesses, great animation and ball physics
 Sound Brackley and Brooking return...
 Multiplayer Up to four players

- ✓ The best videogame representation of football ever
- ✓ Utterly addictive, especially in multiplayer
- ✓ Superb new moves and player animations
- ✓ You'll play it until this time next year, when *PES6* comes out
- ✗ Can be initially frustrating
- ✗ Tough on beginners

93

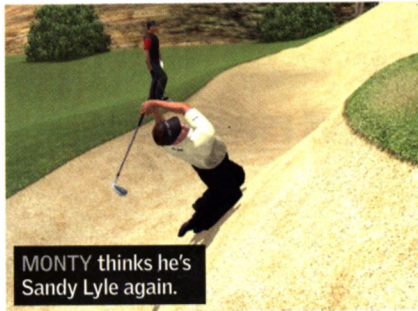
Football from heaven



LISTEN carefully and you can hear Ashley humming Girls Aloud...



SEE. It's miserable being ginger.



MONTY thinks he's Sandy Lyle again.

THE mysterious man statues were beginning to weird her out...

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2006

Plus fours on a par three 17th. *Paul Presley* reaches for the abacus

DEVELOPER EA Sports
PUBLISHER EA
WEBSITE
www.easports.co.uk/tigerwood
ETA Out Now
PRICE £29.99



AT A GLANCE...

Golf. With that EA Sports twist. Tiger Woods in silly period costume, hitting balls through time...

System requirements **3**

HOW IT STACKS

TIGER WOODS '06 **85%**

TIGER WOODS '05 **82%**

GAMETRACK: REAL WORLD GOLF **72%**



SQUEEZE those buttocks. And relax...



TOP hat golf? I say, that's splendid!

AND CUT AND paste and find/replace 2005 with 2006... Oh! Hello! Ah hah ha. No, no, this will be a proper review. After all, EA Sports appears to have made a proper attempt at changing things with this latest version of the popular golfing sim, so it's only fair.

I say change. The core of the game is pretty much as was. TrueSwing is present and correct, the graphics are as shiny as ever, the create-a-golfer tool allows for the usual circus of imagined grotesques to have their day on the links of the world and the officially licensed music is, as usual, designed to annoy anyone with an actual interest in playing golf.

SURELY NOT...

What is new is that someone seems to have been listening to my usual rants and raves over what should be done to this series. About bloody time too: I didn't get this job for my sparkling good looks you know (*That helped - Ed*). Sometimes, I actually know what I'm talking about. So my pleas for some sort of career have been answered. Twice!

Take a traditional PGA career, starting as an amateur, playing in tournaments and challenges, and slowly working your way through the world rankings to take on the best. Solid, entertaining and providing a decent sense of structure to a usually pretty random game.

Or, brilliantly, you can try the Rivals mode, in which you decide to follow Tiger Woods as he, ahem, travels back and forth through time in an effort to be the greatest golfer of all time. Cue lots of silly period costumes, moustaches, hairstyles and an odd reluctance by the Victorian slave owners to lynch the dazzling urbanite for setting foot on their greens. Stupid it may be, but it's enormous fun and provides as much structure to your golfing 'career' as the standard tournament mode.

In short then, the best golf game currently on the PC and for once in EA Sports' history, not simply because of a lack of competition. Actually on merit. Will wonders ever cease? It's still not as good as *David Leadbetter's Golf* though (one for the long-running PC ZONE 'ongoing' gags crowd there). **PCZ**

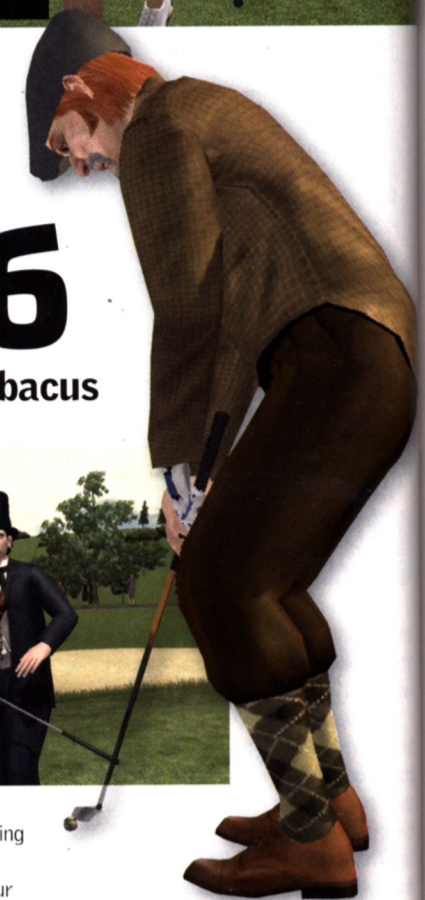
PCZONE

Graphics As good as today's golfer can get
Sound Usual EA Sports musical blah
Multiplayer Typical EA Online - free with ads, subs without

- ✓ Perfectly entertaining and challenging game of golf
- ✓ Well structured career modes, in and out of time
- ✓ The EA Game Face thing
- ✓ Top hats and tails!
- ✗ Online lobby needs a rethink

85

Best costume drama on the PC





FUN, fun, fun on the autobahn.

WORLD RACING 2

Das ist gut, ja?

DEVELOPER Synetic
PUBLISHER Playlogic
WEBSITE
www.worldracing2.com
ETA October
PRICE €39.99 (around £27)
System requirements 3



PAC-MAN lives on.

NO, IT'S NO *GT Legends*, *NFS: Underground* or *TOCA 2*, but *World Racing 2* is, despite what you might expect, a thoroughly entertaining, perfectly playable and, in some ways, surprisingly original arcade racer.

Yes, it's German, and so features an array of annoying European techno garage tunes and character models that scream 'Eurotrash!' from every pore (one is even a German *FHM* model apparently), but that doesn't reduce the enjoyment factor one iota. As long as you put your own tunes in the music folder.

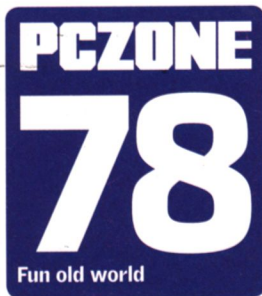
No, it's not the most realistic driving model ever seen and it won't give other racers any sleepless nights in terms of car handling technology, but it still manages to provide enough variety of car styles to keep things interesting as you progress.

Yes, it's heavily biased towards European car manufacturers, especially Mercedes and Volkswagen, but you do at least get to drive everything, from common street cars to off-road urban 4x4s, to prototype sports models that redefine the term bizarre (have a look at www.rinspeed.com for some idea of what we mean).

No, the developer hasn't fixed the scruffy menus, but it hardly matters when you start to explore the range of driving modes on offer – from knockout track races to freely cruising around the huge maps causing havoc with the local traffic. *World Racing 2* is just jam-packed with content.

Yes, the whole thing could use some tightening, but ultimately *World Racing 2* is just a huge amount of fun and worth every Euro.

Paul Presley



SAM Fisher he most certainly isn't.

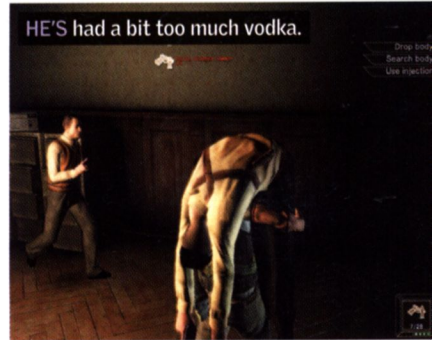
COLD WAR

Wrap up warm

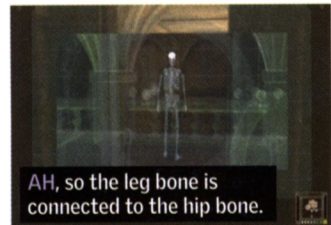
DEVELOPER Mindware Studios
PUBLISHER Dreamcatcher Games
WEBSITE www.coldwar-game.com
ETA October 21
PRICE £29.99
System requirements 2

TOM CLANCY KNOWS his stuff. Take a look at anything he's written and you'll see that while his CIA, FBI or KFC conspiracy chronicles are often far-fetched, they're always believable and vaguely based on truths. Enter *Cold War*, a game where combining plastic bottles with 9mm ammunition can create non-lethal rounds, sticking an alarm clock in a box with some anaesthetics creates a paralysing time-bomb, and pointing your X-ray camera at a bad guy causes him to combust.

You play as Matt Carter, a journalist who's unwittingly become entangled in a *Splinter Cell* clone, and must uncover something to save somebody. If you ignored the clumsy camera, the terrible and often non-existent animations and the appallingly bad wisecracks, and then closed your eyes and spun about on your chair until you were deliriously dizzy, you'd almost think you were



HE'S had a bit too much vodka.

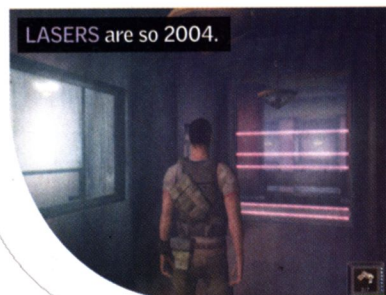


AH, so the leg bone is connected to the hip bone.

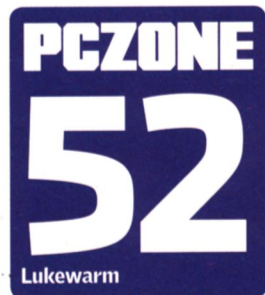
playing *Splinter Cell*. That said, *Cold War* does inherit some of Fisher's stealthy thrills, and the assembly system (which enables you to build the aforementioned unlikely gadgets) is an interesting twist in what would otherwise be a thoroughly boring game.

It looks great too, which redresses the balance somewhat, and then there's the novel X-ray camera which you can use to avoid enemies (or viciously murder them). As for the story, well this is the stuff Tom Clancy will be writing when he's a senile old loon in a home. In all, *Splinter Cell* on a budget.

Steve Hogarty



LASERS are so 2004.





200 BC



216 AD



1206



1334



12+
www.pegi.info

www.CivIV.com

PC
DVD-ROM
SOFTWARE

CHANGE THE FACE OF ANCIENT EGYPT.

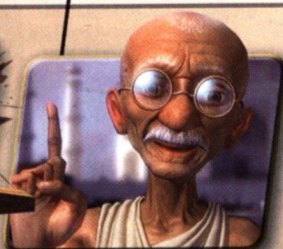
- **OVERHAULED INTERFACE:** RTS style, intuitive interface allows you to manipulate units and cities with greater control and faster speed.
- **3D LIVING WORLD:** Detailed environment where animals roam and smoke billows from small huts, set in a vibrant and colorful world.
- **NEW FEATURES:** Introducing religion, Holy Cities, missionaries, Great People, variable scale games and loads of new civic options: Imagine a communist regime with freedom of the press – or a republic without it.
- **A MODDER'S DREAM:** An unprecedented level of modding power including: Worldbuilder editor, XML, Python Scripting Language, and coming soon: The Civilization IV SDK – mod the A.I., create your own models & interface and transform the gameplay to meet your vision.
- **MULTIPLAYER:** Built from the ground up with dramatic improvements: Era starts, variable game speeds, hot join, team play and a bevy of connectivity options: LAN, internet, PBEM, hot seat, pitboss and more.

SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION AUTUMN 2005

1468



1894



1930



1945





"YEEHAW, Mustang Sally!"



GT LEGENDS



Suzy Wallace discovers she can top 100 smiles an hour in Atari's retro racer...

DEVELOPER Simbin
PUBLISHER Atari
WEBSITE
www.gt-legends.com
ETA November 4
PRICE £34.99



AT A GLANCE...

Super-realistic racing simulator that gives you a taste of the classic race cars of the '60s and '70s.

System requirements **3**

HOW IT STACKS



THE '60S WAS a time of long-haired hippies, a liberal attitude to sex and prolific drug-taking: a bit like an average night out with *PC ZONE* then. *GT Legends* may not offer any of the above, but it does give you the chance to take the wheel of some of the greatest race cars from the era. If you love driving games, you should be very excited indeed.

You see, what *GT Legends* does is take all the great bits of *GTR*, polish them to a shiny sparkle, improve on the not-so-hot bits and

finish by making the entire title more enjoyable to play. While *GTR* may have been a superbly engineered piece of machinery, there were some minor flaws marring its otherwise perfect finish (namely a slightly outdated graphics engine and a steep learning curve).

However, with Simbin proving itself to be of that special breed of developer who actually listens to feedback, the software mechanics have got their hands greasy and fixed the problems. The updated

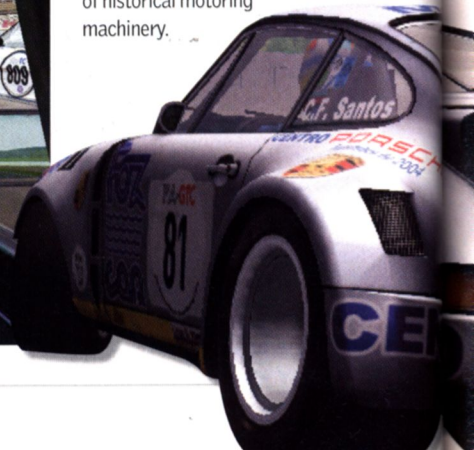
graphics engine makes pretty use of DirectX9.0 features and all races can be played in any difficulty level, giving learner drivers just as much of a chance to hoist that trophy as the petrolheads.

REV IT UP

From the very first screen, it's obvious that Simbin has worked hard on making the game more accessible. With money to win, cars to purchase and a series of specialised championships and classes to conquer, it feels like there's much more to do this time around than just a series of individual races. This makes it much more fun to play, and we can't help but salivate at the thought of winning another hunk of historical motoring machinery.

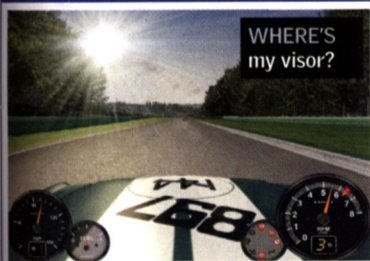


"OH crap, out of petrol."



Making Light Work

Shedding a little light on the subject



Making the overhauled graphics engine look positively breathtaking is the glorious new dynamic lighting system. This accurately models the time of day by providing the correct lighting – and for an extra-special treat, you can pre-set the race to accelerated time to enable you to witness the entire spectrum of lighting effects. Although you may wish you had a sun visor to cut out that glare...

A classy motor.



GTR's fantastic driving model is back too, but this time round the driving experience itself feels noticeably different, with more than a few cars featuring massive oversteer that will have you frantically wrenching your steering wheel (a necessity) to prevent you from fishtailing down the entire track. Quick customisation options are available from the pre-drive menu though, so if the oversteer's too much, you can simply turn it down without getting your mitts dirty in the set-up screen. And there's no missing the fantastic sound effects either, from the quiet burble of your first car to the outright raucousness of the top-end vehicles.

PRISTINE BODYWORK

But can it really be improvement all round? Will *GT Legends* pass its MOT with flying colours, or is it likely to blow a gasket at the most inopportune moment? If we had to nit-pick, we noticed a marked difference between qualifying times and actual racing laps; plus, on occasion the AI opponents seemed to ram into your car if

you'd taken the optimum driving line. However, these are minor quibbles.

So with everything ticking over happily, we reckon Simbin has come up trumps. Fans of *Grand Prix Legends* will love it, fans of *GTR* will love it and we reckon it's just possible that a host of newcomers could also be taken in by the thrill of driving the car you spent your youth pining for. Assuming you're as old as we are anyway. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Well-modelled cars, beautiful lighting
Sound Stunningly realistic engine noises
Multiplayer Race online

- ✓ Fantastic driving model
- ✓ Gorgeous lighting effects
- ✓ Amazing sound effects
- ✓ Meticulous modelling
- ✓ Accessible to all
- ✗ Racing seems easier than qualifying

92

Firing on all cylinders



GAMETRAK: REAL WORLD GOLF

The swinger takes it all...

DEVELOPER Aqua Pacific
PUBLISHER In2Games
WEBSITE www.realworldgolf.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £39.99

System requirements 2

THE HUMBLE SPORT of golf is one of many recreational activities which loses some authenticity when ported to the virtual world of our desktops. Swinging a great big stick around in an attempt to make a ball go down a hole just doesn't translate well to a keyboard and mouse combo. What's more, whereas games like *Virtually Jenna* now provide 'experience-enhancing' USB peripherals, golf fans are left stroking their spacebars enviously.

If only somebody was crazy enough to invent a pair of gloves attached to a gyroscopic sensor capable of accurately detecting 3D motion, thus converting a game like *Real World Golf* into the most realistic golf simulation you can play in your living room, golf fans the world over could stop trying to putt with a 12-inch phallic peripheral and play the sport the way it was meant to be played...

Trading your dignity for a miniature plastic golf club and a



pair of gloves with strings coming out, you'll soon realise how well the controller actually works. Even subtle movements like tilting your club slightly are mimicked by your on-screen avatar, and my clumsy swings were faithfully translated with frightening accuracy.

Real World Golf (not unlike *Virtually Jenna*) is best played with open-minded friends, especially when the computer players possess the golf skills of a herd of quadriplegic donkeys. If you're a golfer who's prepared to look a little more ridiculous than usual – like Prezzer, below – *Real World Golf* is for you.

Steve Hogarty

PCZONE

72

On the green



PANCAKES, made in Japan.



MYSTERIOUS polar bear not included.



EXPERIENCED soldiers are far more effective.



SIMILAR to a disco inferno. Only different.

BLACK & WHITE 2

Steve Hogarty is a god amongst men and enormous cows

DEVELOPER Black & White Studios
 PUBLISHER EA
 WEBSITE www.lionhead.com/bw2
 ETA October
 PRICE £39.99



AT A GLANCE...

Take on the role of a divine being who leads his people to victory in a game where everything you do has a consequence. With giant bovine.

System requirements - 3

HOW IT STACKS	
BLACK & WHITE 2	93%
ROME: TOTAL WAR	93%
STRONGHOLD 2	85%

DAISY THE 50FT cow has just proudly defecated on the scattered remains of a massive Japanese infantry unit, and she thoroughly deserves the pleasure – she’s just played a crucial role in my masterful ploy to decimate my rival’s military. In what might seem like a childish game, I commanded my bovine beast to run right up to the enemy wall, give it a kick and sprint back home as fast as she could.

Of course, my oriental foes couldn’t resist sending every available army unit after her, and their will to protect the honour of their precious wall carried them right into my territory. Thundering across the green plains with raised swords, the Japanese never saw it coming – blazing fireballs erupted from the blue skies above, shattering their ranks and pulverising the ground. Hundreds of soldiers went skywards, arcing through the air with morbid grace. When the last man had fallen to the ground with a sickening thud, I let my creature off the leash and laughed. My meteor spell had worked and my plan had come together. That’s when she shat on them.

Since the original *Black & White* touched down back in 2001, opinions have been

divided over the epic god-sim. Many people slated it using words like ‘repetitive’ and ‘confusing’ – others sang its praise, hailing it as revolutionary and technically astounding.

It’s safe to say that with *Black & White 2* Lionhead has, with all the precision of a highly paid surgeon, dissected the original, ripping out problems and tossing them into a stinking sack full of old, rotting organs, before replacing them with enhanced features, refined quality and a new RTS aspect (a bit like the six-million-dollar man).

Well, just take a look at the visuals for a start – *Black & White 2* is a work of art. Landscapes stretch off into hazy distances,

icy mountain ranges span horizons and lush forests sway in the breeze. Zoom in to ground level and you can see your villagers going about their daily business, be it chopping down trees, walking their dogs or impregnating the town’s female population – everyone has something to be getting on with. Get even closer and you can make out bugs scuttling around blades of grass. Detail isn’t just visual – children will follow their parents, a well-walked route will become a muddy track and idle troops sit around campfires and spar with one another to pass the time – it all contributes to creating a beautiful and believable game world.

BRIGHT LIGHTS

If you’ve played the original game, you’ll instantly be in familiar territory: you’re a god and you must lead your people to domination and victory by taking over an island. There are two ways of doing this: either create such a majestic and impressive city that people from all over the island will want migrate to it (just like London, except majestic and impressive); or send armies marching across the land to capture enemy towns with oppressive power. Or you can do both – if your sprawling city with its impressive taverns, nurseries and temples doesn’t convince some backward hicks in the





UDDERS. Serving milk... And doom.

Be it walking your dog or impregnating the town's female population, everyone has something to be getting on with

mountains to come running, just take them through unadulterated force.

Building your city has been vastly improved too – gone are the awkward and bewildering scaffolds, replaced with a simple menu enabling you to select the building you want and letting you drop the foundation anywhere you please. It's a fantastic system and makes crafting your towns a joy rather than a necessity. It also means that playing as a benevolent deity is much more rewarding this time around, with well-built cities potentially being just as damaging to your opponents as any number of soldiers.

WAR AND PEACE

And so, onto the most prominent addition to the game: armies. Let's just get one thing straight, this isn't *Rome: Total War* – the RTS side of *B&W2* is nowhere near as complex. There are three unit types: swordsmen, archers and siege weapons, each of which require resources and, obviously, adult men to create. Once you



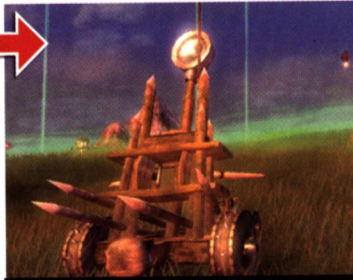
To arms! Super trooper lights are gonna find me...



SWORDSMEN are the bread and butter of your military. With archers to guard them, they can get up close to the enemy for some gritty swordery.



ARCHERS are ranged units who keep their distance from the fray. They're devastating, but let an enemy platoon get too close and they're done for.



CATAPULTS are a great siege weapon, hurling debris and turning defensive walls to rubble. They're slow to move and fire though, so keep them guarded.



MAD cow disease claims another victim.



Sim City

Building a city has never been so much fun



STARTING with a town centre and green space, budding town planners must decide where to place their features such as storehouses and altars.



YOUR villagers' needs for houses mean you'll have to plan roads to allow villas, manors and skyscrapers. Inefficient road building leads to unimpressive towns.



FIELDS can be placed pretty much anywhere: some areas are more fertile and roads can act as boundaries, meaning you can grow crops on any patch of soil.



SIRENS: great blue hussies.



CATAPULTS can launch missiles over walls too.

have a platoon of soldiers, moving them around is as easy as grabbing their flag and placing it down somewhere else. Place it on a town centre and they'll capture it or defend it; place it on a wall and they'll attack it or take up positions on top of it; place it on an enemy platoon and they'll slaughter it or get thoroughly pummelled. It's all context-sensitive and, like city building, its simplicity makes it a joy.

BIG IS GOOD

Basic flanking manoeuvres are possible and some complexity is added, in that you can link platoons to one another to make them work together, but for the most part the combat is basic – whoever has the larger army will most likely win, and when the size of your army is restricted only by the population, looking after your people becomes a priority, regardless of your alignment. The troops' AI can be a little

worrying at times – platoons will sometimes run past one another on the way to an objective – or the enemy might loiter ominously in one of your towns, happy to just worry your citizens instead of capturing the place. They're minor niggles though, and rarely infringe on the enjoyment of watching an experienced platoon charge into battle, led by your towering behemoth of a creature.

Everything hangs together well: it's an exercise in streamlined gameplay

The creature's presence on the battlefield raises troop morale and more importantly, he can flatten entire platoons with ease. Whether stomping, kicking, throwing fireballs or electrocuting, the creature is a lethal (and if you chose the cow, hilarious) force. Coming face to face with another

creature though, the combat becomes decidedly less funny and shockingly gory. My beast, which had previously been knocking enemies about comically with its udder, was now in some sort of death-lock with a similarly-sized wolf. After some sickening yelps, my cow managed to pin the wolf to the ground and quickly went to work slamming its car-sized hooves into the canine's face until it stopped moving, its

bloodied corpse sprawled in a field. I laughed nervously, making a mental note never to piss off a cow.

MONKEY SEE

Of course, if you'd rather your creature didn't get his hands/paws/hooves dirty, you could



always keep him at home, safely behind your city walls. His career paths aren't only limited to that of a soldier either – you can command him to serve as a gatherer, a builder, an entertainer or just let him do his own thing. Training him has become less about blind intuition, instead giving you clear indications as to what your creature is thinking and whether or not he thinks he should do certain things.

For example, if your creature contemplates eating a villager (clearly marked by a 'Should I eat this villager?' thought bubble above his head), you can stroke him to praise the action or beat the crap out of him to punish it. Plus, if you're off doing something godly and happen to miss an action, you can access a menu listing all of your creature's recent actions. Clicking on an action means you can praise or punish him for that action, with the amount of praise being shown on a handy meter above the creature's head. Lionhead has successfully balanced complex creature AI with a simple and practical interface, and like almost everything else in the game its simplicity is what makes it fun to use.

BELIEVE IT

What else then? Well, the belief system has been removed, meaning you no longer have to chuck rocks about until a village notices you exist, and in its place is the tribute system. Tribute can be earned much like belief, by completing quests and objectives and by generally impressing people with

your divine benevolence and/or wrath. Used like currency, tribute can be used to buy new spells for both you and your creature, new buildings and even features like 'hand forcing', which enables you to briefly give your hand a physical force in the world, capable of slapping an unsuspecting sheep or punching holes in houses.

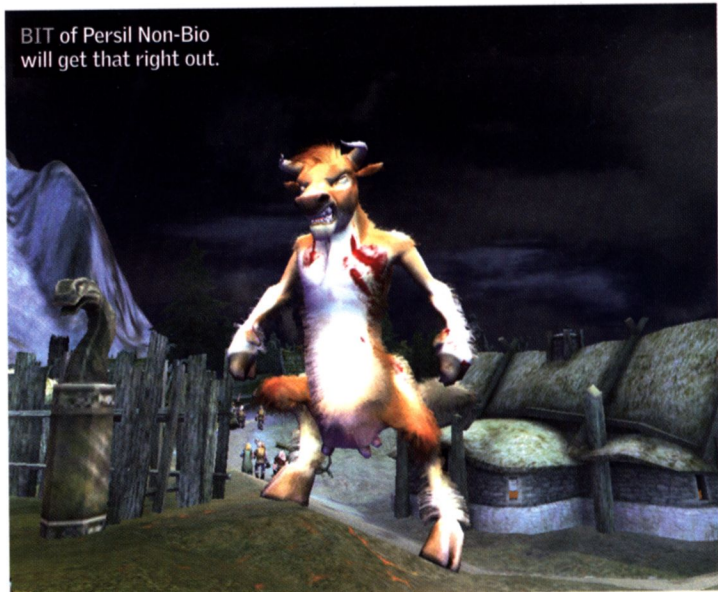
In broken-record style, I have to re-iterate how simple all of these systems are, and how seamlessly they hang together. *B&W2* is an exercise in streamlined gameplay: the confusing intricacies of the original have been removed entirely or completely reworked, and what you're left with is the game *Black & White* should have been.

Yes, there are some let-downs: the RTS side of things, for instance, despite working well in the game, is sure to disappoint fans of the genre; there's an introductory tutorial that's beyond patronising; and the aforementioned AI problems and some occasionally irritating side-quests too



MONKEY magic.

BIT of Persil Non-Bio will get that right out.



(thankfully never as bad as the original's mini-game which had you stalking a man on a mountain), along with a current lack of multiplayer. However, none of these hinder the game in any serious way.

With this effort, there's no doubt that Molyneux and his team have succeeded in surpassing their original efforts. *Black & White 2* is a work of art, beautiful in both its stunning visuals and genius gameplay. **PCZ**

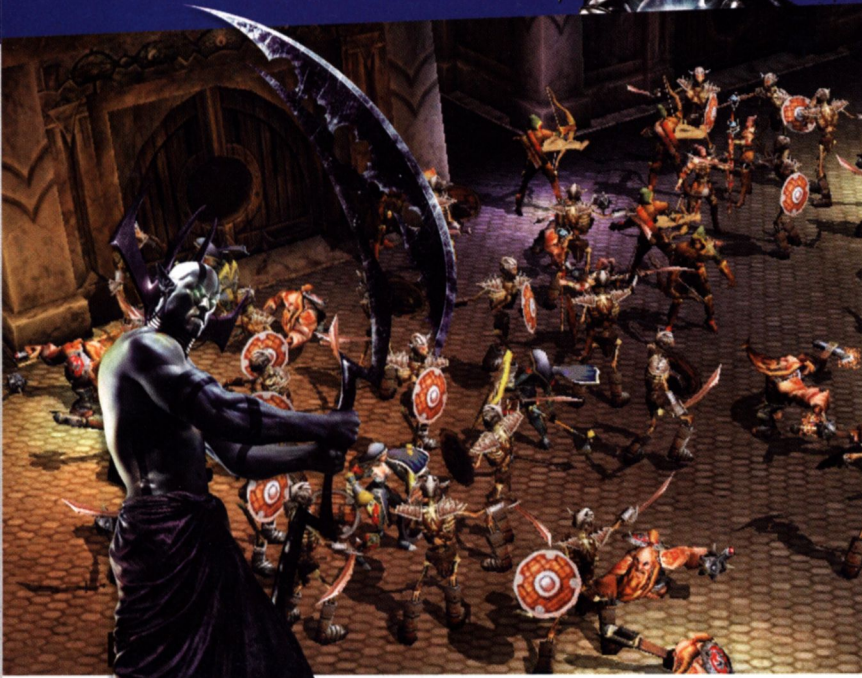
PCZONE

Graphics Utterly breathtaking
Sound Suitably epic and moving
Multiplayer To be added in a later patch

- ✓ Amazing creature AI
- ✓ Beautiful landscapes
- ✓ Intense battles
- ✓ Highly intuitive
- ✓ Giant monkeys
- ✗ RTS could've been better

93

Truly divine



A few pot plants will brighten this place up.



DRAGONSHARD

Dan Griliopoulos balances the hack against the slash...

DEVELOPER Liquid Entertainment
PUBLISHER Atari
WEBSITE www.dragonshard.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99



AT A GLANCE...

Dungeons & Dragons abandons role-playing and tries its hand at an epic conquest, RTS-style.

System requirements

3

HOW IT STACKS

LOTR: BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH 91%

DRAGONSHARD 78%

ARMIES OF EXIGO 66%

WE'VE BEEN DETECTING some running themes in games lately. FPS titles have plenty of mono-syllabic heroes; WWII games have spent more time on Normandy than lost booze cruises; and RPG worlds all seem to be under attack from giant dragons and sweeping orc hordes. Anyone would think the developers are all living under the same roof.

The first time you look at *Dragonshard* you'll think the same; cheesy cash-in, expanding the *D&D* franchise into a new yawn-worthy area. But then you look closer and you realise there's more to this. The guys at Liquid (the villains behind the so-so *Battle Realms* and *War Of The Ring*) have been paying attention to what's done well over the last ten years, and they've learnt all the tricks. They're not plagiarising a particular game; they're imaginatively ripping off good ones.

So there's the triumvirate of races from *StarCraft*: the good (elves, dwarves, humans); the bad (the umbragen, dark elves by any other name) and the ugly (the lizardfolk). There's the innovative city-building system from *Kohan II*, the curious troop levelling system from *The Battle For Middle-earth*, the heroes from *Warcraft* and of course the cheesy, work-a-day, more-twists-than-kosher-bread plot from *Neverwinter Nights*.

Surprisingly, it all hangs well together on a *Warcraft III* backbone.

NOTHING NEW HERE...

That meandering plot isn't too bad either; it's set in the new *D&D* setting of Eberron, a planet surrounded by a ring of peripatetic asteroids (dragonshards) that are the source of all magic in the world. Old *Baldur's Gate*/*NWN*/*Planescape* fans will be askance at the lack of familiar faces and locations, while new players will be heartily sick of yet another unoriginal fantasy world to stomp over – but it's no worse than any other. The

three races are different enough to keep everything interesting, with a cross-cutting plot that involves them all in a race to regain the mythical Heart of Siberys (a giant dragonshard).

There are only two resources in *Dragonshard*: gold and the eponymous dragonshards. These both slowly tick up as you play the game (so you'll never quite run out, a nice touch), but you get most from your troops gathering them as they wander the world (nearly every unit can gather). Dragonshards fall from the sky whenever you've exhausted the surface supply, though not always near you; it can be difficult to build up an army when all



THE Grand National gets sidetracked.

Underground, overground, wombling free

And they call this a mine?



Following the split-level layout of last year's not-that-good *Armies Of Exigo*, *Dragonshard* has you wandering underground half the time. Here, you loot gold from abandoned elven cities and find ways to isolated map locations. However, your enemy's lack of aggression and the natural ease of defending your strong bases means that travelling underground isn't the balancing act it should be. You can, to all practical purposes, ignore the world above ground while your heroes and henchmen butcher Uncle Bulgaria and steal his junk.

the resources are behind enemy lines. Gold, on the other hand, is found mainly in the abandoned cities of the underworld, necessitating expeditions of heroes and henchmen into the depths, infested with monsters and rewarding side-missions.

MANY BECOME ONE

Curiously, these heroes don't level up, relying solely on magic items to improve their stats. However, your normal troops do gain levels both from experience and from building multiple identical factories in a base. As the troop levels go up, each warrior gets more midget henchmen to follow him around, meaning that your army expands into a million easily-controllable little warbands. When you go underground, all these midgets fold into their main guy, making for an intimate RPG experience with a smaller warband that expands into a massive army when it emerges again. It gives the two halves a satisfyingly different feeling, though in reality you're controlling the same units and, individually, both are at best average genre games with freewheeling combat and standardised enemies, special moves and characters.

So, a passable RPG/RTS that wants to be a *Star Trek* chess set in the *D&D* universe, but not as beards know and love it.

Maybe this genre isn't stagnant after all... **PCZ**

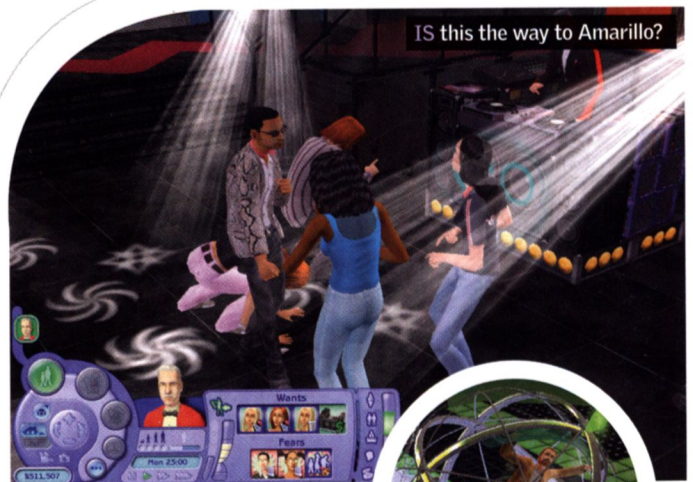
PCZONE

Graphics **Pretty like Pat Butcher**
Sound **Thrilling twangy tosh**
Multiplayer **The usual features**

- ✓ Innovative army expansion
- ✓ Dual level system
- ✓ (Relatively) new universe.
- ✗ Mostly hands-off battles
- ✗ Cheesy like fondue

78

Entertaining and nicely plagiaristic RTS



THE SIMS 2: NIGHTLIFE

BEST not to ask.

A night on the town, at home

DEVELOPER Maxis

PUBLISHER EA

WEBSITE

www.eagames.co.uk/thesims

ETA Out now

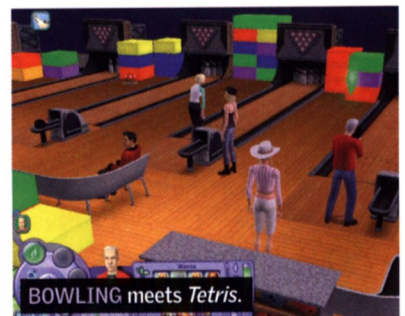
PRICE £19.99

System requirements 2

A FEW DRINKS with your mates, a bit of bowling and the offer of probably-not-legal substances from a mystical lady who lives in an alleyway – it's clear that *The Sims 2: Nightlife* is the result of arduous research and monitoring of my own nightly habits.

Yep, here's the next link in the chain of *Sims 2* expansion packs, adding, just as you'd expect it to, a whole bunch of new things for your Sims to see, do and ingest. *Nightlife's* new features revolve around the addition of a downtown neighbourhood which contains restaurants, bars, nightclubs and a worrying amount of bowling alleys, all of which are available

as virtual dating venues should you wish to fling yourself ever further into that pit of anti-social doom that can only



come from watching little computer people get it on with one another.

Alternative nightlife activities are also explored with the addition of vampires, allowing your Sims to become creatures of the night, stalking nubile young ladies and prancing about in capes trying to bite people. Plus, you can now buy cars, so your Sims no longer have to rely on taxis to get around.

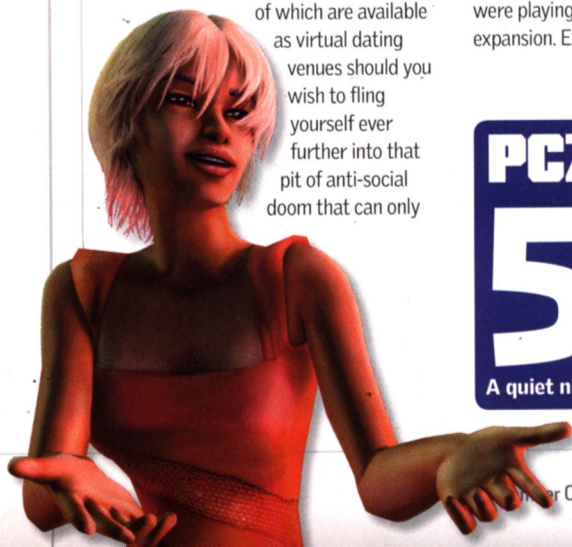
Unsurprisingly however, there's no real added depth to the original gameplay, and behind the complex conversation options you'll find the same game you were playing before you installed the expansion. Except with more bowling.

Steve Hogarty

PCZONE

58

A quiet night in





SERIOUS SAM 2

More of the same? For £35? "You cannot be serious!" cries *Martin Korda*

DEVELOPER Croteam
PUBLISHER 2K Games
WEBSITE
www.croteam.com
ETA October 14
PRICE £34.99

AT A GLANCE...

All-out old-school action rammed into an array of zany levels, but it's not long before repetition takes its crippling hold and throttles the fun-factor.

System requirements 2

HOW IT STACKS

PAINKILLER 83%

SERIOUS SAM: THE SECOND ENCOUNTER 83%

SERIOUS SAM 2 67%

IMAGINE SPENDING SEVERAL hours locked in a room, incessantly swatting away swarms of flies that circle around you like you're a giant turd, while listening to Hulk Hogan spew out over-acted, clichéd one-liners.

I'm guessing that – with the exception of those six readers who do actually spend their free time like this – this doesn't sound like too much fun. Sadly, this is exactly what a protracted session of *Serious Sam 2* is like.

JUST A QUICKIE

Now don't get me wrong, it is fun in its own special way. As relentlessly action-packed as the first two games, it's the kind of old-school blaster that throws wave after ever-larger wave of enemies at you from every direction (and gives you ever bigger weapons to kill them with), over the course of numerous wacky-looking levels. You can even play them through with some friends. Which is nice. And quite fun. In short bursts.

However, the problem doesn't lie with the game's lunchtime blast fun-factor, but with its utter lack of invention. Within

an hour, you're not only starting to get bored of the blatantly made-for-console gameplay, but irritated by the countless shortfalls too...

DON'T PLAY IT AGAIN SAM

...Like the atrocious acting where accents slip more than a sock on shit. Jokes that are less-funny than turning up in New Orleans and shouting, "Have any of you heard the one about the hurricane!" through a megaphone. Physics sporting less weight than an anorexic with a helium balloon stuck up their arse. Enemies that charge at you in a straight line. Worse still, is the total overdose of satire that pokes fun at the very conventions that drive the game – bosses at the end of levels, a square-jawed, gravelly-voiced, incessantly wisecracking hero etc – which only highlights how simplistic and dated a shooter this really is. Sure, *SS2* doesn't take itself too seriously, but that's only because if it did, it wouldn't be that good.

Quite frankly it's an insult to have to pay 35 quid for something that starts

getting irksome in under half a day and is only genuinely entertaining in 20-minute bursts. Mindlessly fun and manically intense it is, innovative and essential it seriously isn't... **PC7**



PCZONE

Graphics **Colourful and chunky**
 Sound **Music is good, SFX are irritating**
 Multiplayer **Fun co-op mode**

- Mindlessly entertaining in short bursts
- Fun co-op mode
- Frenetic
- Painfully repetitive
- Hugely dated gameplay
- Often feels like a console game

67

Seriously Samey



"LOOK up there, it's a goal!"

FIFA MANAGER 06

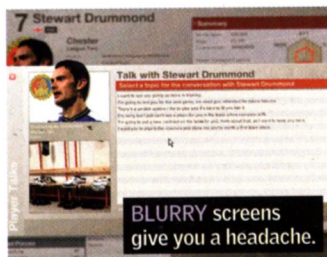
Can you manage another?

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

System requirements 1

HAVING CONSOLIDATED ITS position as the 'other' management title, the game formerly known as *Total Club Manager* returns with a new name for its annual attempt to dislodge *Football Manager* as our favourite waste of time. The *FIFA* tag makes sense: EA practically owns the licence, and the game features an iteration of the *FIFA* match engine. However, with *FIFA 06* featuring management options itself, *FIFA Manager 06* could arguably be dismissed as superfluous.

It's a considerably more complex affair though, with a decidedly German approach, perhaps unsurprisingly given that it outsells *FM* by roughly eight to one in that territory. Thankfully, such nonsense as selling advertising hoardings can be delegated, leaving you to concentrate on team affairs. Even so, you're still



BLURRY screens give you a headache.

hampered by an unwieldy interface, with pop-up menus and faux Web pages lurching towards your face at regular intervals. While the clean lines are aesthetically acceptable, the sheer amount of information on-screen can be bewildering.

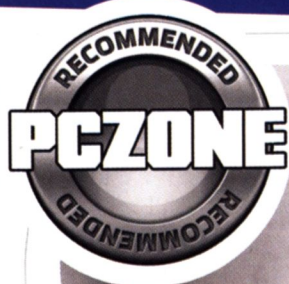
With a full match highlights package clocking in at around the quarter-of-an-hour mark, your patience is tested long before your management skills. As ever, the presentation is imbued with the trademark EA Sports slickness, which largely boils down to having a Stereophonics track kick in at any available opportunity. In fairness, you can add your own tunes and even your own face. Not, as they say, a deal breaker.

Steve Hill



SIT back and watch, for 15 minutes.

PCZONE
70
New name, same game



ENTER the big deadly tank called Baneblade.

WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR - WINTER ASSAULT

Now is the winter of our content...

DEVELOPER Relic
PUBLISHER THQ
WEBSITE www.dawnofwargame.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £24.99

System requirements 2

IT'S ARGUED BY many that *Dawn Of War* was the finest RTS of 2004. We'd prefer to bestow that honour on *Rome*, but *DOW* was (and is) a cracking game nonetheless; full of visceral excitement, frenetic action and steeped in all the iconic imagery that the *40K* universe has been hoarding for the last 20 years.

With *Winter Assault*, developer Relic has followed the add-on formula to the letter. One new unit for each of the four established races, two six-mission campaigns (same story played out by the two sides), and one new race, the Imperial Guard.

But to reduce *Winter Assault* to a feature list is to do it a great disservice, because while the campaigns do add more of the



same, albeit across a snow-covered landscape, by their very appearance the Imperial Guard almost change the strategic make-up of the game.

You see, the Guard are merely weak-willed conscripts; the poor lowly scum of the Earth (and a million other worlds), whose nature is to wall in, defend, build up and break out. *DOW*'s established races instead prefer to dive into combat from the get-go, and so multiplayer games are now way more interesting and can last – gasp – as long as half an hour.

But what does all this mean? In a nutshell, if you're a *Dawn Of War* fan, *Winter Assault* is absolutely essential.

Richie Shoemaker



WE can't fault the cut-scenes.

PCZONE
86
Season's greetings

Moo

www.peacefulgod.com



If you had the power, would you create or destroy? Play good. Play bad. Play god.

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Shove

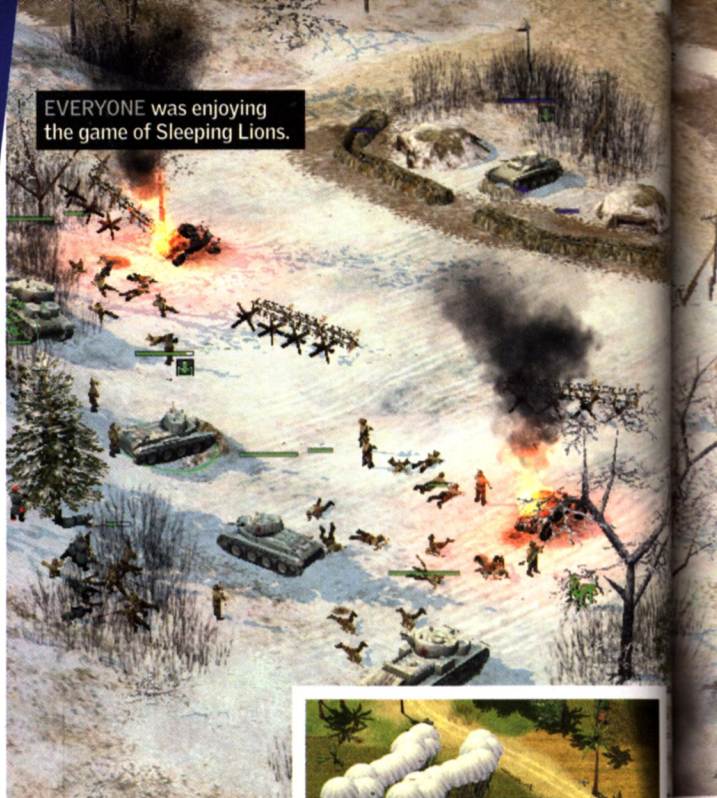
www.destructivegod.com



If you had the power, would you create or destroy? Play good. Play bad. Play god.

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BLITZKRIEG 2 DVD ONLY

Nobody told *Richie Shoemaker* that lightning never strikes twice...

DEVELOPER Nival Interactive
PUBLISHER CDV
WEBSITE www.cdv-blitzkrieg.com
ETA October 14
PRICE £34.99

NASAL HAIR GROWS at an alarming rate. If you're of a certain age (as I am), or of a particularly hairy persuasion (like King Kong or Robbie Williams for example), then you'll know what I'm on about. No sooner have you managed to shove a thumb and forefinger up the offending nostril in an audacious pincer movement to root out the offending bushel, than a new clump of neo-pubes has already begun sprouting from the shady clearing and set its roots even deeper.

Although not quite as socially stigmatising, WWII games can be just as alarmingly frequent. Once you've completed the trials of, say, *Medal Of Honor*, the expansion is almost upon you. Then another. Its developer then splits in two, one half pursues a sequel, the other a game to counter it – and the cycle begins again... And we haven't even tackled the other nostril yet; the similarly overgrown RTS genre that's been constantly plucking at WWII for inspiration.

TAKE YOUR PICK

Blitzkrieg 2 then: sequel to 'Ten Expansion Packs' *Blitzkrieg 1*, the one time *Sudden Strike*-killer (itself superseded by a sequel and soon to be again by another). Dare we mention *Panzers*, *Commandos* or *Soldiers*? In short, there are bewildering array of games out there demanding your attention, and in essence there's very little to choose

between them. They all cover much the same scenarios (predictably *Blitz 2* devotes one of the three campaigns on the war versus Japan); they all eschew resource hoarding and base-building in favour of get-what-you're-given man-management; and every one features all the units you'd ever want or need.

KEEPING IT REAL

To be fair, *Blitzkrieg 2* looks better than its predecessor, but not by much, and there's some pleasing degree of refinement both with regard to interface and the fact that

If you've vigorously devoured all the recent WWII RTS games, you'll notice the refinements and welcome them – but they are subtle to the point of being unnoticeable if you're new to the setting. Truthfully, we passed the point of diminishing returns long ago. *Blitzkrieg 2* is like an old soldier: reliable, loyal and vastly experienced. But it's way past its prime and if Relic's *Company Of Heroes* is going to sweep in a new order, as we hope it will, this doddering old hero will soon be left behind, no doubt tripping up on his own nasal hair. **PCZ**

In terms of realism, *Blitzkrieg 2* beats its WWII stablemates hands-down

the entire game can't be won with artillery alone. The density of the battles is satisfying too, with you taking up the role of a divisional commander rather than a five-star general, with maps that are compact without being constrictive and units that are numerous without being unmanageable.

Where *Blitzkrieg 2* does score points is for its realism. It still has some way to go to beat the *Football Manager*-esque depth of *Hearts Of Iron II* (and in doing so it would lose much of its immediacy and fun), but as far as cookie-cutter RTS games go, it beats its WWII stablemates hands-down. Bullets never challenge a tank, cover works well and infantry are, for all their fleshy failings, the core of your force.



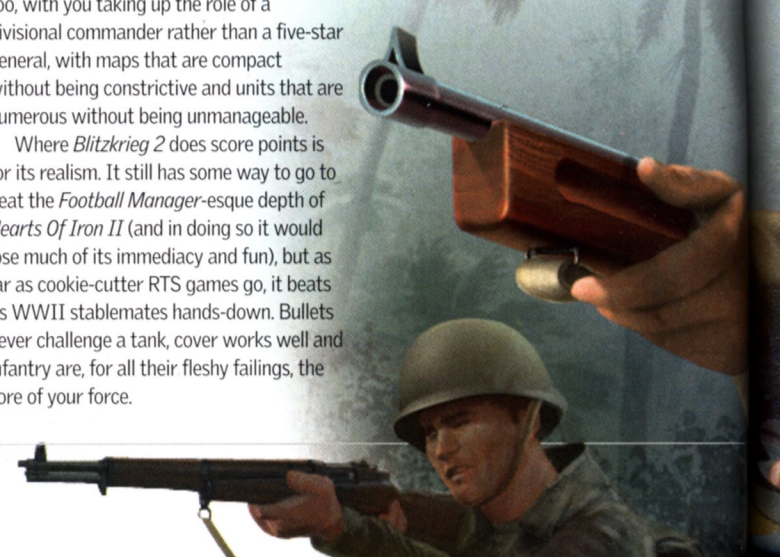
AT A GLANCE...

More realistic than most WWII efforts, although you'd have to be a serious tweed-wearing war buff to notice.

System requirements 3

HOW IT STACKS

SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WWII	90%
BLITZKRIEG 2	74%
CODENAME PANZERS: PHASE 2	72%





A nicely camouflaged plane is always pleasing.



BOATS for hire: £20 an hour.

In mod we trust

Is it the end of the beginning, or the beginning of the end?

BLACK! All black!



When it first blitzed (ho ho) onto our screens in 2003, *Blitzkrieg* was seen as little more than a 3D reworking of *Sudden Strike*, although back then the concept of resourceless management hadn't been flogged to death. WWII fans, however, stuck with the game and it continues to be updated and expanded via a steady stream of mods – *Close Combat* and *Real Life* being among the most popular. If the modding community lavish as much attention on the sequel as they have on the original and provide as many mods, tweaks, extra maps and wholesale additions, *Blitzkrieg 2* surely has a great future ahead of it. If they don't, it hasn't. Simple really.

PCZONE

Graphics **Pleasing spinnable detail**
 Sound **Gruff voices and fake classical themes**
 Multiplayer **2-8 players**

- ✓ Marginally more realistic than the competition
- ✓ Plenty of units
- ✓ Rarely a dull moment
- ✗ Hardly unique
- ✗ No skirmish option
- ✗ Nothing special to look at

74

The war goes on



NOW with distressed wood panelling!

BET ON SOLDIER

Gamble with your life in bleak surroundings

DEVELOPER Kylotonn Entertainment
PUBLISHER Digital Jesters
WEBSITE www.betonsoldier.com
ETA Out Now
PRICE £34.99

System requirements 2



AH, grey. Such a pleasing colour.

FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS are a dime a dozen these days (that's one money reference already – yay!), leaving developers with a bit of a problem: how do we make ours stand out from the crowd?

While something like *F.E.A.R.* shrewdly slips in horror elements and a bullet-time rip-off, *Bet On Soldier* is all about the Benjamins. Dough. Moolah. Wonga. Or cheddar, as I believe it's known in certain circles.

With no health packs or ammo clips lying conveniently around the huge levels (a pleasing mix of open spaces and cramped close-quarters stuff), you must buy your war gear beforehand, occasionally topping it up at the vending machine-style consoles dotted around.

You even have to dip into your wallet to save the game.

Money is earned by despatching enemies (headshots and other 'interesting' kills provide a bonus), with the real megabucks available in the mano-a-mano duels against the hardnut Champions.

Sadly, despite this commendable attempt at innovation and the lush graphics, *Bet On Soldier's* combat and (non-linear) story doesn't engage on the same level as the real shining lights of the FPS genre. Yeah, it's got nice ragdoll effects and big walker robots, but it's missing that feeling of true quality. Would we rather be playing *F.E.A.R.*?

You bet your arse we would.

Sam Kieldsen



PCZONE

59

A rank outsider

You won't find any of these indie games in the shops, but you can download them or get trial versions on our discs.

Indiezone

CD & DVD

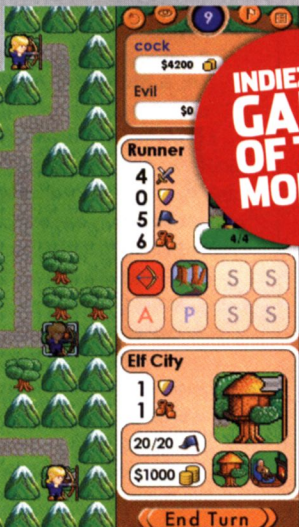
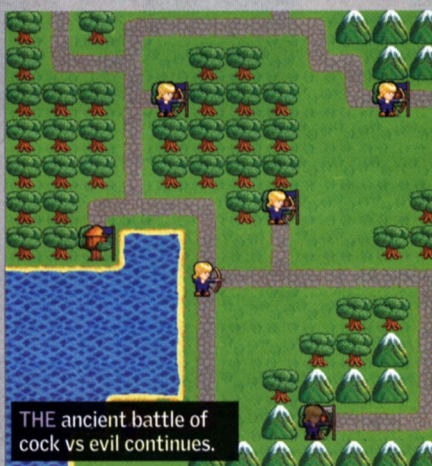


This month, *Anthony Holden* grapples with paint, paddles and a whole load of 'ickle green trees...



LAND OF LEGENDS

DEVELOPER Tiny Hero Game Studios WEBSITE www.shrapnelgames.com/Tiny_Hero/Land_of_Legends PRICE \$34.95 (€19.60)



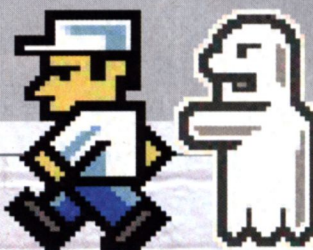
HOW DO YOU make the gameplay of Nintendo's superb *Advance Wars* more palatable to PC gamers? You stick it in a world of elves, knights and druids of course, because as we all know, PC gamers are all inveterate goblin-fanciers with a penchant for pseudo-medieval fantasy worlds.

That seems to be the idea behind *Land Of Legends*, a cartoonish turn-based strategy affair that takes its lead from the aforementioned GBA classic. It's actually the second such game to appear on PC this year,

the first being *Battalion: Head 2 Head*, an ostensibly free version of the same thing. LOL is the more complete game, offering eight unique races, a better developed set of abilities and units and a 32-mission single-player campaign.

Both share the bright, iconic graphics of the Nintendo game and both are in fact very charming PC conversions. The main problem here is the price. *Battalion* is playable (albeit in slightly crippled form) for nothing, so asking 20 quid for this fantasy makeover is a mite rich. It's still fun though.

PCZONE
70



BRICKMAN

DEVELOPER Fortress Game Studio WEBSITE www.runinteractive.com PRICE £8.59

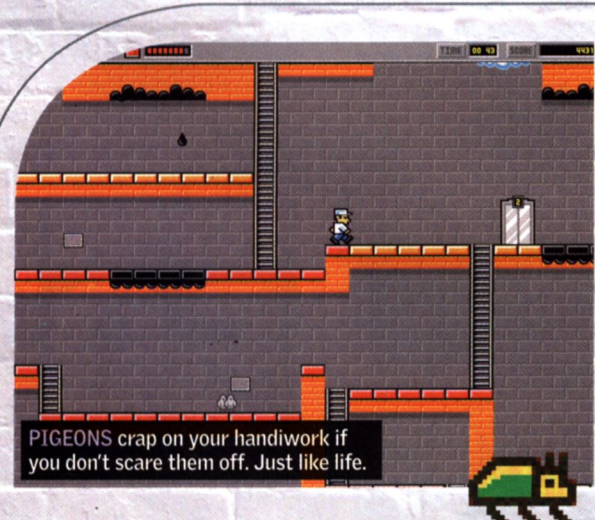
EITHER A TEAR has appeared in the time-space continuum (in which case somebody call Billie Piper), or this game is the most uncannily convincing retro-game since *Tomb Raider: The Angel Of Darkness* (cheap shot, sorry).

A 2D platformer in the vein of *Manic Miner*, *Donkey Kong* and countless others, *Brickman* puts you in the role of a painter tasked with re-colouring all the platforms in a given level by walking on them (I said WALKING...). It's old-school arcade gameplay as you climb chains, slide

on ice, spring off bounce pads and generally do things most tradesmen would deem a flagrant violation of health and safety standards.

As you'd expect from any trip back to the late '80s, it's enjoyable enough, but the gameplay is a bit over-familiar, the levels repetitive and the concept of painting just not quite as satisfying as other, more familiar platforming tasks (such as killing monkeys and chickens). This is a polished effort, but not half as good as your illegal MAME stash.

PCZONE
59



LITTLE GODS

DEVELOPER Grim Inventions WEB www.griminventions.com PRICE \$19.99 (£11.20)

AS GAMEPLAY CONCEPTS go, things don't get much simpler than *Pong*: two paddles, a ball and a score. *Little Gods* is a gaudy-looking *Pong* clone that proves no amount of power-ups, karma points or unlockable items can improve what is essentially a very dull concept.

Starting with the same basic layout, the paddles are replaced with little creatures. There are also two balls to

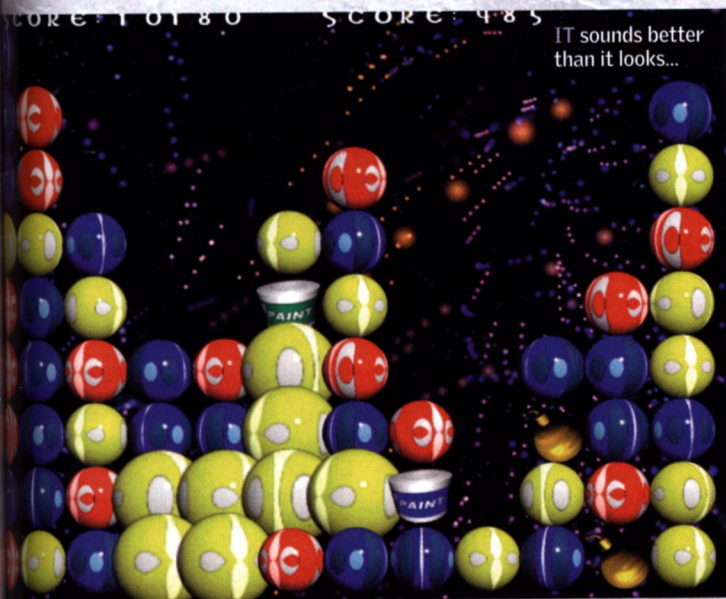
deal with, as well as a bunch of pinball-style obstacles in the middle of the play-field. The various ricochets and deflections makes the path of the balls that much more difficult to track, but otherwise it's largely the same game.

All the added gimmickry makes for a more fun game, largely because there's more to look at. Beyond that though, it's a bit pongy really.

PCZONE
36



PONG, the way the LSD generation always wanted it.



IT sounds better than it looks...

XOLOX

DEVELOPER Swargo Studio WEB swargo.com/xolox.htm PRICE £11.95

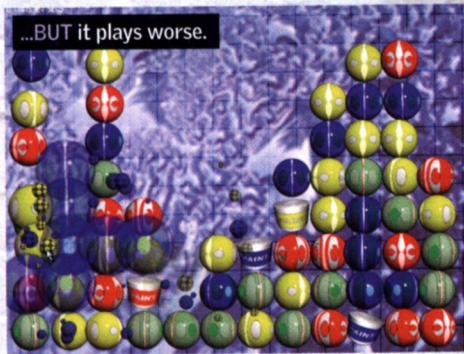
XOLOX IS A bizarre and terrible puzzle game involving a lot of clicking on coloured balls. As ever, the object is to clear the screen, though in this case there's even less than usual rhyme, reason and skill involved in doing so. Honestly, you just keep clicking on groups of like-coloured balls till they're all gone. It's like a slightly broken version of *Collapse* – itself a dire, watered-down version of *Bejeweled*.

Clearly fit only for infants, it's a terrible concept that has somehow spawned three game modes – strategy, arcade and survival. They're all as soul-

crushingly dull as the next, the dreadful monotony broken only by some extremely strange sound effects. In particular, the sound when you spill a pot of paint (a power-up of sorts) is ridiculous enough to almost justify the energy exerted in clicking your mouse button. Almost.

Clearly, however, these colour-matching games have got to stop.

PCZONE
7



...BUT it plays worse.

SILVER WINGS

DEVELOPER Bampusht WEBSITE www.bampusht.ro PRICE \$19.99 (£11.20)

RUBBISH – the wings aren't even silver. They're more silvery-black.



NOW HERE'S SOMETHING you don't see every day – a vertical shooter from Romania, built on a modified *Quake* engine. It looks OK too, showing off its graphical clout with effects such as bump mapping, dynamic lighting and advanced particle effects. The gameplay owes an acknowledged debt to classics such as *Tyrian* and *Raptor*, which means lots of weapons, frequent upgrades and a fully integrated storyline.

Sadly, the story is not only poor, but delivered with all the skill of a pre-school nativity play (the developer seemingly having opted to do the acting itself). Worse still, the gameplay displays



EVEN the HUD is largely impenetrable.

absolutely no grasp of good shoot 'em up dynamics, with poor enemy attack patterns, weak bosses and a noticeable flatness of tempo. With countless weapons at your disposal – and frequently no real possibility of evasion – winning becomes more a matter of good weapon management than skill. Shmup-nuts may want to give it a cursory glance, but only for the pretty explosions.

PCZONE
35

BUDGET

Eating from the bin? *Paul Presley* shows you how to save money...



**BUDGET
GAME
OF THE
MONTH**

X2: THE THREAT

PUBLISHER White Label WEBSITE www.egosoft.com PRICE £9.99

OH X2: THE THREAT, how do I love thee? Let me count the ways... 1... 2... 3... Er, 4...? Well quite a few anyway. Yes, you can be slow. You can be ponderous. You can take bewilderment, bafflement and befuddlement to all-new heights. But you so pretty. Pretty, pretty, pretty. And you're in space. Which always helps.

Yes, with X3 looming over the horizon like a giant space-sim sun, what better time than now to revisit this mind-numbingly dull classic? It's not your fast-paced, action-packed, *Star Wars*-in-space, arcadey-shootery-thing. No, this is your modern-day *Elite*.

Explore a vast, huge, rather big galaxy however you see fit. Trade, fight, pirate and bounty-hunt to your heart's content. Build entire manufacturing industries and own fleets of ships. Fly around in a little spacesuit/jetpack thing. I could go on... But I won't. It's a thing of beauty and



WE like space.



IT'S like *Elite*, only betterer.



RED sky at night, alien's delight.



FLY my pretty, fly!

deserves your attention. Unless you like spaceships that shoot each other – if that's the case, get *Freelancer*.

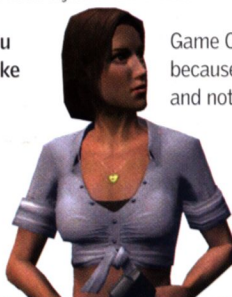
**PCZONE
91**

FAR CRY

PUBLISHER Mastertronic WEBSITE www.farcry.ubi.com PRICE £9.99

A WORD ON that URL. Make sure you don't go to www.farcry.com by mistake or you'll end up with an adventure in very different animal genetics.

Anyway, *Far Cry*. It's on budget. Blimey. Are we that old already? Everyone in the world should own this game, especially at less than a tenner. The only reason it isn't 'Budget

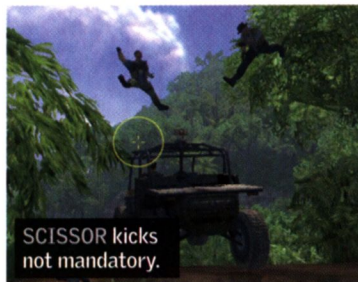


Game Of The Month' is because I write these pages and not Will, and I love X2.

It's on a par with *Half-Life 2* for being the best shooter in the world ever (some say better) and

is worth the money for the lush island landscapes alone. Other than all the bad men trying to shoot your nose off, it's like the cheapest tropical holiday you'll ever have. Unless you have a caravan. Caravans are cheap too. Sorry, I'm drifting. *Far Cry*. £9.99. Buy it.

**PCZONE
91**



SCISSOR kicks not mandatory.



LIKE *Lost*. But with less polar bears.



SOMEONE'S been eating their Weetabix.

**THIS
MONTH
PCZONE
SAVED MONEY BY...**

Clare's hairdresser charging less than usual for follicle manipulation:
Saving: £4



Steve's rent refunded following first-week eviction:
Saving: £90



Spreading rumours about global oil level reductions:
Saving: £136 per head per capita



DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR

PUBLISHER Mastertronic WEBSITE www.deusex.com PRICE £9.99



"...TWO, one. Coming, ready or not!"

I'M ABOUT TO get controversial, so unless you're easily offended I suggest you go to the *Hitman* review which is less flame-baiting and has jokes about baldies in it. Ahem, cough. Ready? *Deus Ex: Invisible War* isn't actually that good. There I've said it. Can's open, worms are wriggling, cats and bags are in a state of separation.

Actually, this isn't that controversial. Almost everyone recognises *Invisible War's* flaws. Its simplification due to Xbox. Its illusory mask of freedom that isn't nearly as deep as it would like to believe. Its ultra-confusing story. Its basic lack of *Deus Ex*-ness. For all the technical competence on show, it will always be a pale shadow of its forebear and as such, a disappointment.

PCZONE
71

HITMAN: CONTRACTS

PUBLISHER M.A.D WEBSITE www.hitmancontracts.com PRICE £9.99

HAVING JUST SLAGGED off a much-loved title and accused its defenders of being misguided fools and fanboys, I'm about to spin the wheel of hypocrisy with the *Hitman* series. Personally I think it's da bizniz, and that people who reject it are simple-minded fops who haven't given it enough time.

However, I'm not so blinded by my faith that I can't see their point. Yes, the control system could use some work. Yes, the game mechanics perhaps never quite live up to the potential. Yes, he's got a bald head and is about as convincing a master of disguise as Val Kilmer's Saint, Bruce Willis's Jackal, or Peter Seller's Inspector Clouseau. But I love the barcode-wearing slaphead and always will. *Contracts* is a neat re-telling of the series to date with plenty of nice touches,

providing solid entertainment for your money. So there.

PCZONE
82



CHAIRS from Ikea, priced £10.99.



MMMM, leather...

And the rest...

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



DELTA FORCE: BLACK HAWK DOWN

£9.99, White Label

I wasn't much taken with this when it first arrived. Stupid team AI, repetitive bad guys and a hideously blasé and irresponsible attitude about the conflict it's based on. Nothing's changed. Except the price, obviously.

PCZONE
62



THE SUDOKU CHALLENGE

£4.99, Sold Out

The only thing worse than numbers is games that force you to think about numbers when you should be hitting alien terrorists in the face with shovels or something. Anyway, it's Sudoku on your computer and it's for your gran.

PCZONE
27



THE MYSTERY OF THE DRUIDS

£9.99, White Label

This is the 'special edition' of *MOTD* (minus Gary Lineker), meaning you get some beefed-up Dolby Sound music to go along with your time-travelling, badly-aged adventuring shenanigans. Still the worst cover art ever, by the way.

PCZONE
47

PCZONE TOP 5 BUDGET BUYS



1 BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

£9.99, Focus Multimedia

Glorious storytelling, engaging gameplay and the greenest lips in all of gaming-dom make the badly overlooked *BG&E* a must-buy. Deep, imaginative, brilliant.



2 SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WWII

£12.99, Codemasters

One of the finest recent strategy titles, *Soldiers* is a near-perfect blend of tactical thought, balls-out action and historical accuracy. War can be good.



3 BLACK & WHITE

£4.99, Sold Out

Molyneux's opus split opinion on release, but at this price you can't fault its ambition and gameplay. Monkey slapping has never been so cheap.



4 CIVILIZATION III

£9.99, Atari

Sid Meier, a genius of modern times. The *Civ* series continues to eat valuable life hours from us like no other game. The graphics are still a bit shit though.



5 FREELANCER

£9.99, Xplosiv

The space sim reborn! Thrills, spills and probably gills in this all-action, freeform universe of spaceships and trading. The 'fun' alternative to *X2: The Threat*.

YOUR SHOUT!



Speak your brains on the latest releases...

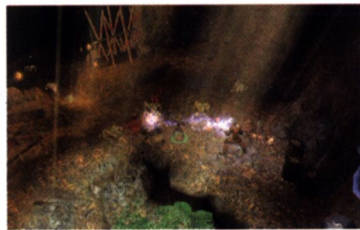


WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR

OUR SCORE: 81%

So maybe I'm a bit biased. My love affair with *Warhammer 40,000* has been long-lived and expensive, but by god it's always felt good to crush my opponents underfoot. Now I have a way to do it without crippling my bank account! From the game's bone-juddering opening I knew this was what I'd hoped for. The pain of lacklustre previous titles was washed away in the continuous onslaught of fire and flame as I played through the well-written campaign mode. This is more than just a title for Games Workshop fans, this is a great game, and I wait with baited breath for the forthcoming *Winter Assault* expansion.

Adam Chamberlain: 90%



DUNGEON SIEGE II

OUR SCORE: 80%

Are you sure? 80? I tried the demo and was sufficiently satisfied by it to buy the full game, but to be honest, after slogging my way through a mind-numbing amount of relentless bad guys, monsters and creepies, enough was enough. It's just too much. I can't take it. The monsters keep coming and coming. I wouldn't mind if there was some variety to the game, but it's just one dungeon after another. Then a forest bit. Then another dungeon. I can't take it any more.

Jatin Baig: 67%

Review of the Month



BOILING POINT: ROAD TO HELL

OUR SCORE: 70%

Boiling Point has probably been the subject of more debate than the colour of the furniture in the Oxford Union's reading room, but it's understandable considering the content. Huge maps, a decent story and a good selection of weaponry have made for an engrossing game, but I don't think it can be fixed by patches - the problems are too fundamental. Awful physics, appalling hit boxes and vehicle handling, ropey AI, holes in the story and the plethora of bugs still infesting the game are just some of the things unlikely to ever get fixed, even if the game is patched up to the eyeballs. So why am I still playing the damn thing? Please, please, Atari, commission a sequel, play test it properly and change the PC gaming industry forever!

Yann Ryan: 70%

Boiling Point can't be fixed by patches - the problems are too fundametal



DUNGEON SIEGE II

OUR SCORE: 80%

Spot on with your review. *Dungeon Siege II* could have been a superb, action-packed journey through an exciting fantasy world. Unfortunately, the developer seems to have got fixated on the 'action' part and not enough on the 'exciting' bit. It's a lot of fun while you're playing it, but it does drag. Worth a bash though.

Spyros Tacticos: 80%



FAHRENHEIT

OUR SCORE: 90%

An interesting idea, but I don't know if it works as a game. You did point out that the game side of *Fahrenheit* wasn't its strongest aspect, so it depends on whether the story grabs you. The first few sections showed a lot of promise, but by the second half the variety seemed to have thinned out. Good, but not a classic.

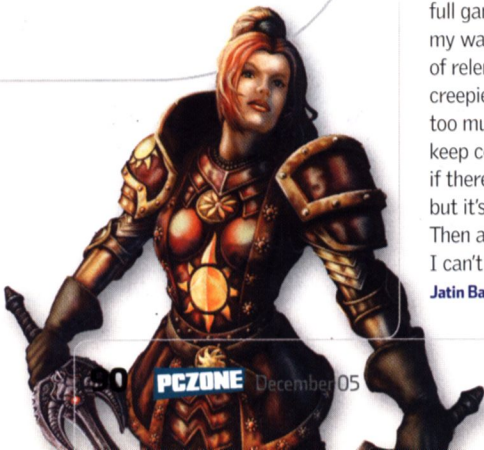
George Andreau: 81%

YOU DO THE REVIEWS!

Agree? Disagree? Well the world wouldn't be the wonderful place it is if we all thought the same way. If you fancy sharing your thoughts with your fellow readers then jot them down (we find the recent advancements in parchment and ink technology to be handy), trim the amount of words to a MAXIMUM of 100, add a score out of 100 and send them to the address below. If we think they're worthy of sharing, we'll print them here. Better yet, one of you will be awarded our coveted Review of the Month award and be showered with a gift of some description.

Send your reviews to: yourshout@pczone.co.uk, with 'Your Shout' in the subject line.

Or use pen and paper and send them to: PC ZONE, Your Shout, Future, 99 Baker St, London, W1U 6PF.



THE OFFICIAL ROME: TOTAL WAR EXPANSION

ROME™

TOTAL WAR

BARBARIAN INVASION

PCGAMER
MUST BUY
★★★★★

91%

DARKNESS FALLS...

It is 363 AD and the last Emperor of the unified Roman world is dead. His successors now rule a divided Empire. Each calls himself supreme ruler and each would happily see the other dead. Beyond the frontiers of the sundered realm new enemies are lurking. This will be a sword-time – an age that is arrow-bitten and deadly. The Barbarians are at the gates in the official expansion pack for Rome: Total War.

- A brand new campaign game
- 10 new playable factions – defend and unite the Eastern and Western Empires, or burn them to the ground as one of 10 new factions, including the Huns, Franks, Saxons and Goths
- 100+ new units – each with their own tactical strengths, weapons and abilities, including Schiltrom and Shieldwall formations, swimming and axe-throwing, crossbows and Carroballistae
- Barbarian Hordes – march your entire people in search of a new homeland

You were there for Rome's glory. This September you can be there for the Empire's fall.



12+
www.pegi.info

PC
CD
ROM

TOTAL WAR

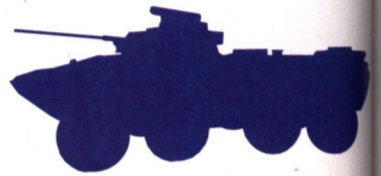
THE
CREATIVE
ASSEMBLY

OUT 30th SEPTEMBER

Requires original Rome: Total War game to run

SEGA
www.sega.co.uk

BUYER'S GUIDE



You asked, we listened. Presenting the updated, improved and just plain better guide...

PCZONE TOP 5 GAMES THAT REALLY, REALLY SHOULD BE MADE INTO FILMS

- 1 THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND**
PCZ ISSUE: N/A
- 2 FAHRENHEIT**
PCZ ISSUE: 159
- 3 MAX PAYNE 2**
PCZ ISSUE: 136
- 4 THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS**
PCZ ISSUE: 144
- 5 MAFIA**
PCZ ISSUE: 119

PCZONE TOP 5 GAMES WITH HORSES

- 1 PIPPA FUNNELL'S STUB FARM INHERITANCE**
PCZ ISSUE: 155
- 2 ROME: TOTAL WAR**
PCZ ISSUE: 148
- 3 WORLD OF WARCRAFT**
PCZ ISSUE: 152
- 4 JOHN MCCRIRICK'S STARTERS ORDERS**
PCZ ISSUE: N/A
- 5 THE GODFATHER**
PCZ ISSUE: N/A

PCZONE TOP 5 GAMES OF DUBIOUS EROTICISM

- 1 VIRTUALLY JENNA**
PCZ ISSUE: 156
- 2 PLAYBOY: THE MANSION**
PCZ ISSUE: 153
- 3 LEISURE SUIT LARRY: MAGNA CUM LAUDE**
PCZ ISSUE: 149
- 4 7 SINS**
PCZ ISSUE: 158
- 5 SAMANTHA FOX STRIP POKER**
PCZ ISSUE: N/A

Shooters



MUST BUY!
HALF-LIFE 2
PCZ Issue: 148 - 97%
Everyone knew this would be good, but no-one quite expected the tour de force that Valve managed to pull off. Easily a contender for the best game of all time, *Half-Life 2* is just one stunning set-piece after another, and is guaranteed to leave you dribbling with awe. Be warned though, a (fast) online connection is needed for Valve's mandatory Steam delivery service.

BATTLEFIELD 2
PCZ Issue: 157 - 94%
If it's online action you want, look no further. *BF2* sets the gold standard for team-based shooting, with huge 64-player maps, squad and commander modes and the best graphics ever. Just make sure you have a ninja PC.

CALL OF DUTY
PCZ Issue: 136 - 94%
The definitive war-shooter, full of bombast, brutality and the rare FPS feeling that every bullet counts. It manages to conjure up feelings of awe, exhilaration and real fear - shooters rarely get this raw.

FAR CRY
PCZ Issue: 140 - 93%
In many eyes, Crytek's shooter outweighs even the mighty *Half-Life 2* in its tension, tactics and expansive level design. It's a mighty achievement with seemingly freeform action and the best sniping money can buy.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004
PCZ Issue: 138 - 91%
UT2004 packs so much punch, you'd be hard pushed to find a flaw. Team games, deathmatches, tactical thinking in the Onslaught mode - everything the sci-fi shoot 'em up fan could want.

NEW ENTRY!
F.E.A.R.
PCZ Issue: 160 - 90%
With more shocks and scares than an episode of *Rentaghost* (and a much higher body count), *F.E.A.R.* pushes the shooter part of FPS to the limit. It might not be the scariest game ever, but it will make you jump.

SWAT 4
PCZ Issue: 154 - 86%
SWAT 4 is a tactical squad shooter that sings. Dark in places, brutal in others, it's the only shooter that allows you to tazer old ladies and drown them in pepper spray. Probably the best co-op experience around to boot.

Strategy



MUST BUY!
ROME: TOTAL WAR
PCZ Issue: 148 - 93%
Once upon a time, all strategy games were visual abortions and strictly for the hardcore (OK, a bit of a sweeping statement). But *Rome: Total War* changed all that, mixing breathtaking 3D with troop numbers reminiscent of a Hollywood epic, as well as staggering historical accuracy. The result is a masterpiece and a game just about anyone can enjoy. Hell, how many other titles are made into TV shows?

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH
PCZ Issue: 149 - 91%
Although the *LOTR* RTS doesn't hold a candle to the *Total War* franchise, there's nothing quite like ordering a Balrog around for guaranteed strategy fun.

BUDGET
SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WORLD WAR II
PCZ Issue: 144 - 90%
The strategy of *Command and Conquer* meets the fun of *Cannon Fodder* in this top-down game of tactics. Being the underdog has never been so much fun, and the rumble of tanks never so worrying.

AGE OF MYTHOLOGY
PCZ Issue: 123 - 90%
The *Age Of* series goes 3D in its best outing to date. Great gameplay, superb attention to detail and a strong story give this an unparalleled sense of atmosphere. What's more, it also boasts a decent map editor.

RISE OF NATIONS
PCZ Issue: 129 - 90%
One of the best of the 'last generation' of Empire builders, *Rise Of Nations* - coupled with exemplary expansion pack *Thrones And Patriots* - is a uniquely satisfying and addictive treatment of the *Civ* genre.

SID MEIER'S PIRATES!
PCZ Issue: 149 - 88%
If you've got some downtime at the close of the day, then *Pirates!* is the most relaxing (and swashbuckling) game around. Drifting around the Caribbean with a flotilla of ships and mischief on your mind is escapism at its finest.

GROUND CONTROL II: OPERATION EXODUS
PCZ Issue: 143 - 84%
Despite a few AI glitches, *GCII* is a great game if you prefer tactics to boring old resource management. A superb sci-fi effort with some intense freeform missions. Strat-fans should check it out.

Action/Adventure



MUST BUY!
MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE
PCZ Issue: 136 - 93%
The chosen poison for certain PCZ staffers after a long hard day, Payne's second outing is perhaps the most pixel-perfect example of joy-through-excessive-destruction on the market. Slicker than slick, breathtaking and quite beautiful, *Max Payne 2* provides the greatest gaming kicks that money can buy. It's extremely short, but so tense, well designed and replayable that you just won't care.

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
PCZ Issue: 155 - 92%
To think that the simple top-down car game has turned into this - a work of creative genius. Violent, brutal, smutty, freeform and hilarious - *San Andreas* is the summit of gaming achievement.

SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY
PCZ Issue: 154 - 91%
A tour de force from Ubisoft, *Chaos Theory* takes the *Splinter Cell* format and runs with it in solo, co-op and the now well-established spies vs mercs multiplayer. Smooth, lithe and good with a knife.

FAHRENHEIT
PCZ Issue: 159 - 90%
Murder most foul, with you as the killer. This twisting, turning, brilliantly-told plot features multiple character control, split-screen tension, branching scenes and several endings. From the brains behind *The Nomad Soul*.

PSYCHONAUTS
PCZ Issue: 156 - 90%
Clever, witty, impeccably detailed and absolutely off its rocker - *Psychonauts* is proof that the anarchic edge of LucasArts hasn't completely left us. A slightly flawed game in some respects, but still a dazzling feat.

BUDGET
BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
PCZ Issue: 138 - 89%
We heap praise on this game on a monthly basis, but it's for a reason. Michel Ancel's superb journey through the strange land of Hillis is nothing short of storytelling magic. It's cheap now, so go out and buy it.

THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS
PCZ Issue: 144 - 85%
Deadly Shadows not only brings *Thief's* sneak-and-steal mantra bang up-to-date, but also has some of the best level design in living memory. Play through *The Cradle* and you'll know true fear.

MMOs



EVERQUEST II
PCZ Issue: 150 - 95%
A *Star Trek* to *WOW*'s *Star Wars*, *EQII* gives the original a much needed lick of paint, a whole new world to play in and a greater sense of depth and immersion. A time-sink in the true, classic sense.



WORLD OF WARCRAFT
PCZ Issue: 152 - 95%
Blizzard's recreation of the classic strategy world in MMO form doesn't disappoint. Beautiful to look at, absorbing to play and with more content than you can shake a magic stick at.



GUILD WARS
PCZ Issue: 156 - 94%
How to make a gaming genre accessible to the masses. It shines with polish, thought and lack of monthly subscription fees. Newbies can feel at home too, thanks to a totally skills-based set-up.



EVE ONLINE
PCZ Issue: 130 - 88%
Elite online has been a long-held fantasy and this space sim is the closest yet to making it a reality. Its slow pace belies the options on offer, from mining or trading to piracy - it's up to you.



CITY OF HEROES
PCZ Issue: 155 - 86%
Nothing beats the feeling of spandex and fire-beams shooting from your eyes. This super-powered MMO lets you live all those heroic dreams to the full. Nietzsche would have a field day.

Simulation



X2: THE THREAT
PCZ Issue: 138 - 92%
Mesmerising in its detail and beauty, *X2* is the best modern-day *Elite* to date. More than a little intimidating to the casual gamer, the scope for exploration seems limitless.



IL-2 STURMOVIK: FORGOTTEN BATTLES
PCZ Issue: 128 - 92%
While flight sims are becoming rarer and rarer, at least the quality remains high. None more so than this ultra-classy WWII combat sim. Chocks away, comrade!



MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2004: A CENTURY OF FLIGHT
PCZ Issue: 133 - 89%
No, you don't shoot things, but there's no mission structure, yes there's the best non-combat flight experience to date. History can be fun.



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



FALCON 4.0
PCZ Issue: 158 - 82%
An example of fanbase enthusiasm saving a once-dead series, *Falcon 4.0* lives on thanks to the dedication of its hard-working players. The best modern-day fighter sim on the market.

Driving/Racing



GTR
PCZ Issue: 153 - 90%
As real as it gets. Probably. The complete driving solution on a PC, with all the drifting, shunting and racing you need. Invest in a decent force-feedback steering wheel and pedals set-up though.



LIVE FOR SPEED
PCZ Issue: 158 - 90%
Online racing at its best. Realistic handling, hilarious crashes and a racing community second to none. On the right servers that is. A remarkable achievement by such a small team.



TOCA RACE DRIVER 2
PCZ Issue: 142 - 89%
The most comprehensive driving game on the PC, *ToCA 2* is a must-have if you're into motors. 15 different motorsports to master, 52 tracks and rival drivers with top AI smarts.



NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND 2
PCZ Issue: 150 - 84%
Both bling and wicked, *NFSU2* builds on the first outing's might with a superb free-roam mode, astounding graphics and even more pimping of your ride. Whack.

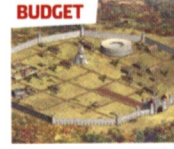


TRACKMANIA: SUNRISE
PCZ Issue: 154 - 83%
Falling midway between driving sim and puzzle game, *TrackMania* is an oddity that captures your attention through sheer breakneck speed. As mad as they come.

God games



BLACK & WHITE
PCZ Issue: 100 - 95%
It's had its critics, but it's still one of the most important PC titles of recent years. For scope, vision and giant creatures, there's not much to match Molyneux's vision.



CIVILIZATION III
PCZ Issue: 111 - 86%
What Buyer's Guide omits Meier's masterpiece? The *Civ* series is the backbone of PC gaming - they're the most addictive, compulsive and overtly playable strategy games ever made.



EVIL GENIUS
PCZ Issue: 147 - 84%
Ever wanted to say "No Mr Bond, I expect you to die", or create giant evil lairs inside hollow volcanoes? Well now you can with this great megalomaniac sim. It's always fun being bad.



VEGAS: MAKE IT BIG
PCZ Issue: 135 - 84%
An in-depth tycoon game with all the 3D graphical glitz and glamour of Vegas itself. Provide hotels, casinos and over-priced magic shows that suck the money out of the punters.



THE SIMS 2
PCZ Issue: 147 - 82%
Even the most churlish of gamers couldn't grant *The Sims* recognition of both gaming cleverness and achievement. Mass-market it may be, it still deserves a place in the Buyer's Guide.

Sport



FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005
PCZ Issue: 149 - 90%
Now rid of the *Champ Man* tag, SI has continued to ladle goodness upon goodness into *Football Manager* - and it remains the premium creator of late-night manage-athons.



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4
PCZ Issue: 161 - 93%
The finest arcade football game ever. No other game even comes close. Bringing bile, tears, joy and rapture up and down the country, it's the definitive soccer sim.



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



MADDEN 2005
PCZ Issue: 152 - 84%
Although the 2006 version is now upon us, this is actually the better option (at least until 2007 arrives). In truth, there's little to differ between the versions, but this one just feels more fluid.



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005
PCZ Issue: 148 - 82%
A good walk made infinitely better thanks to custom players, career modes and the best sense of hitting a little ball since Tommy Cannon was on our screens.

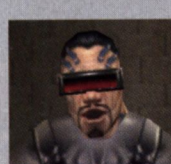
RPGs



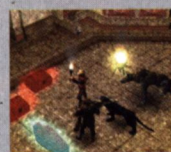
KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC
PCZ Issue: 137 - 94%
KOTOR is the best *Star Wars* game of recent years. Moving, dramatic and fairly adult in tone, it also has a hefty dose of lightsabers to keep you happy.



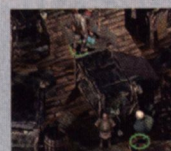
THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND
PCZ Issue: 116 - 94%
Possibly the most intimidating, yet wonderful game we've played - the breadth and depth of *Morrowind* remains a remarkable achievement.



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



NEVERWINTER NIGHTS
PCZ Issue: 118 - 91%
It may not have the depth of *Fallout*, but the customisation options in this are so extensive that it's been granted a very long life. Still a wonderfully immersive game.



PLANESCAPE: TORMENT
PCZ Issue: 86 - 87%
Compelling storylines, great characterisation and a heart of pure darkness - *Planescape* is the best thing Interplay's Black Isle Studios ever gave us.

INCOMING!

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

November

CALL OF DUTY 2
THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
CRAZY FROG RACER
DARK AND LIGHT
FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006
GUN
HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE
NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED
PANZER ELITE ACTION
PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG
PRINCE OF PERSIA 3
RISE & FALL: CIVILIZATIONS AT WAR
SPELLFORCE II
STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT II
STAR WARS GALAXIES: TRIALS OF OBI-WAN
THE MATRIX: PATH OF NEO
TYCOON CITY: NEW YORK
X3: REUNION

ACTIVISION
BUENA VISTA
DIGITAL JESTERS
FARLAN ENTERTAINMENT
SEGA
EA
EA
EA
JOWOOD
UBISOFT
UBISOFT
MIDWAY
JOWOOD
LUCASARTS
LUCASARTS
ATARI
ATARI
DEEP SILVER

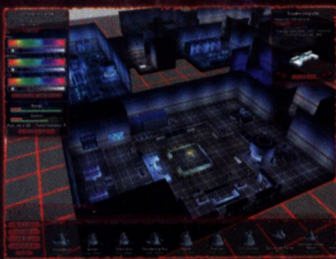
December

AGE OF EMPIRES III
AUTO ASSAULT
CITY OF VILLAINS
THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION
GHOST RECON: ADVANCED WARFIGHTER
HALF-LIFE 2: AFTERMATH
LULA 3D
SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION IV
SIN EPISODES: EMERGENCE
STUBBS THE ZOMBIE
VIETCONG 2

MICROSOFT
NCSOFT
NCSOFT
2K GAMES
UBISOFT
VALVE
CDV
2K GAMES
VALVE/TEAM
ASPYR
2K GAMES



Create your ultimate villain, and embark on a devious criminal career



Stand alone as a scourge of the streets, or build a customisable lair for your coalition of evil



Heroes versus villains: take on City of Heroes players in epic battles

Are you destined for great evil?



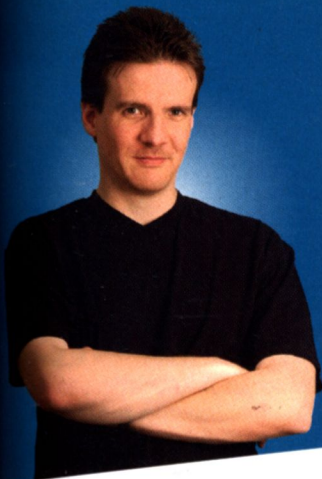
eu.cityofvillains.com

Unleashed October 2005



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PCZONE

HARDWARE

Better gaming through technology

HARDWARE EDITOR Phil Wand

Lapping it up

A FRIEND OF mine recently spent a whisker over £1,000 on an IBM ThinkPad R52, replacing the one that flapped gracefully through the air when a man in a big white van wrote his car off. I do know that no IBM is designed to set your heart racing, but the ThinkPad range is like the picture of me on this page – handsome and solid, if slightly geeky. And as we recently found out, ThinkPads are pretty damn amazing for games.

The R52 model features a 1.8GHz Pentium M Processor 750 with an ATI Mobility Radeon X300 which, if I could just ask that you put your hand in front of your mouth when yawning, is a lot faster than you think. With a 1GB memory upgrade, the R52 plays *Battlefield 1942* smoothly like any desktop. When loading new levels, it ties with my 3.2GHz Pentium 4 and its Radeon X850 XT. No, I'm not bloody kidding. It's so fast it's actually really quite annoying.

It's not even a DTR laptop; a desktop replacement. It's a regular, run-of-the-mill product for people wanting to get stuff done on the move. And it made me realise just how far portable products have come.

Think how an R52 fitted with NVIDIA's new GeForce Go 7800GTX would perform – combined with a 1400x1050 screen, integrated wireless, Bluetooth and all the usual PC accoutrements (DVD writer, Gigabit Ethernet and so on), you'd wonder if it was worth keeping your desktop. I know I do.

VELOCITY RAPTOR

Fast new ATI range moves in for the kill

ATI'S R520 ARCHITECTURE, originally codenamed Raptor, is rapidly approaching. The boxed products will be known as the Radeon X1800 XT, Radeon X1800 XL and Radeon X1800 Pro, with other variants likely to hit the shelves for Christmas. How much they'll cost is not yet known.

Although the cards' specs are subject to change, the PCI-Express newcomers will feature at least 256MB RAM and 16-pixel pipelines, eight fewer than the 24-pipeline G70 chip inside NVIDIA's 7800 GTX. Early photos tell that the higher ranks of ATI's

new army will also feature a dual-slot cooler, making the Radeon twice the width of the GeForce. The poor Raptor has its work cut out.

But you shouldn't worry. ATI will not release a product which pegs it lower than NVIDIA. With the X1800 XT's 600MHz core and 1400MHz memory likely to be pumped up for this month's launch, not to mention talk of 24- and 32-pipeline products planned for next year, the race ain't over yet.



FOUR months late, the new Radeon range needs to impress.

NEWS ROUND-UP

It's not going to score the company huge profits, but word is that ASUS is developing an oversized dual-chip card based around the GeForce 7800GT – spy shots of a naked prototype board show each GPU with 256MB of memory. You may recall the company tried the same stunt with the 6600GT and 6800GT GPUs earlier this year, claiming the cards were almost twice as fast as the equivalent single-chip solutions, but shelved its plans when the technology was superseded by the 7800. Pricing is unknown. uk.asus.com



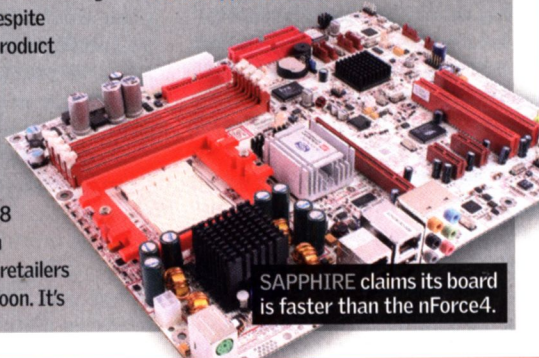
PURE ABSENCE

Sapphire actually release exciting product shocker...

Sapphire makes video cards: it's a trustworthy brand, but not one to set your heart racing. So when the company announced a Radeon cooled by liquid metal, and a 939-pin gaming motherboard, hearts were set racing. Five months later and despite the hullabaloo, neither product has surfaced.

However. Although the Blizzard appears to have sunk without trace, the PURE Innovation PI-A9RX48 is likely to appear in stock at online retailers very soon. It's

based around ATI's Radeon Xpress 200 chipset and features IDE and SATA, support for up to 4GB RAM, Azalia 7.1 audio, plus an impressive array of tweaker-friendly options. www.sapphiretech.com



SAPPHIRE claims its board is faster than the nForce4.

Toshiba has shown prototypes of the world's smallest direct methanol fuel cell-based (DMFC) MP3 players. The company claims that a single 3.5ml squirt of methanol – less than a teaspoon – will power its flash-based player for almost three days. The HDD-based players takes a 10ml squirt and works for a week. The fuel cell, meeting standards set by the International Electrotechnical Commission, replaces batteries and works by methanol reacting with water in the presence of a catalyst – the two by-products are carbon dioxide and electrical power. www.toshiba.co.jp

WARNING:
THIS MONTH'S HARD WORDS

BY STEVE HOGARTY

24-BIT CRYSTALISER: Speeding up cocaine production ten-fold. **XTREMEMUSIC:** Really, really shit music being played really, really loud. **UNIFIED DRIVER:** The Power Ranger who gets to control the Megazord. **MOLEX CONNECTORS:** One of many pain-inflicting devices possessed by dentists. **THINKPADS:** Now with wings for added comfort. Soaks up ten times more mysterious blue fluid than other leading brands. **ON-BOARD VIDEO:** Today will be *Grosse Pointe Blank*, featuring John Cusack. Earphones are \$10, please ask a flight attendant for assistance. **OVERCLOCKING:** Owning far too many timepieces, much like the country of Switzerland. **WMA PRO:** When Wild Mongoose Archery gets serious.

DVD, EH?

It's not just about the games

There are four products in the X-Fi range: the £99 XtremeMusic, the £149 Platinum, the £179 FatalIty FPS and the £249 Elite Pro. Each card features three modes: Gaming, Audio Creation and Entertainment.

Entertainment is tuned for your music and DVDs. Along with Crystalizer and CMSS-3D, SuperRip enables you to copy tracks from CDs in two high-quality formats: WMA Pro and WMA Pro Lossless. The card will also play DVD-Audio (24-bit/192kHz) and includes a graphic equaliser, bass booster, karaoke mode for those boozy nights in, audio clean-up tools, smart volume management, smart cross-fading and time scaling.

Movie buffs will love discrete DTS-ES 6.1 and certified Dolby Digital EX 6.1 support. However, no X-Fi is capable of real-time encoding (ie Dolby Digital Live), which means you won't be able to plug your PC into a home cinema amplifier and enjoy anything but stereo. Given that Creative says its new cards are as powerful as 34GHz CPUs, I can't imagine there are any technical reasons for the omission.

Lastly, Audio Creation mode features high-precision sample-rate conversion, low latency ASIO recording and other musician-friendly tools which are likely to send the majority of users into a coma.



SOUND BLASTER X-FI FATALITY FPS

PRICE £179 MANUFACTURER Creative Labs PHONE N/A WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

CREATIVE TOLD ME that the 24-bit Crystalizer inside every X-Fi card would make my music sound better than the original, which is like a glazing firm telling me its patio doors would make my shed look like the Temple of Artemis. It must be hard work selling soundcards, and sometimes the hype gets ahead of reality. Was this really just Audigy 3?

In a word, no. Creative has spent the last five years developing Xtreme Fidelity, and although the differences between it and its forebears are subtle, the sound it produces can be quite distinct. The £179 FatalIty FPS is the pro-gamer variant, and together with the even more expensive Elite Pro comes with a front-facing drive bay and 64MB X-RAM. This memory caches the various samples inside games, and while it can't promise to turn crap effects into stunning ones, it does provide room for higher-quality

data and up to 128 simultaneous voices.

And what of the amazing Crystalizer? It seems to be a multiband compressor, which, while hardly radical, it's a feature most people will leave on. A switch in the X-Fi control panel causes it to wave its wand over whatever you're listening to, be it games, music, or Terry Wogan.

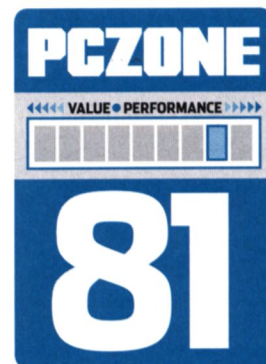
More impressive is CMSS-3D, a way of taking plain stereo signals and mixing them into a multi-channel soundscape. I've yet to find an album or a game that CMSS-3D doesn't improve over headphones, and although there are times when it's tricky to tell whether noises are ahead or behind, the added spatial awareness is impressive.

But can any amount of audio trickery be worth £179? If you're looking to upgrade your system, putting the money towards a monster video card will have a greater impact on your senses. And if you already

have an Audigy, the X-Fi is cleaner-sounding but excessive. You need to wait for the price to drop, and for Creative to introduce a model without the drive bay nor with a percentage from every sale going towards Johnathan Wendell's next Ferrari. Until then, it won't win any serious praise from me.

SPECIFICATION

5 audio engines capable of 10,340 (424) MIPS total from 51.1m (4.6m) transistors, 4,096 (64) internal audio channels, and 8 (4) simultaneous real-time effects (Audigy specifications shown in brackets). 24-bit ADC/DAC, 64MB X-RAM, EAX 5.0, CMSS-3D, 24-bit Crystalizer. PCI card connections: 3-in-1 flexi-jack 3.5mm, 7.1 output via 3 x 3.5mm jacks, 26-pin AD_Link to console (cost option). I/O Drive connections: 2 x RCA SPDIF in+out, 2 x RCA aux in, 2 x optical SPDIF in+out, 2 x mini MIDI in+out, 1/4-inch headphone jack with rotary headphone volume, line-level analogue line/mic shared via 1/4-inch jack.



EN6600GT SILENCER

PRICE £150 MANUFACTURER ASUSTek
WEBSITE uk.asus.com

SPECIFICATION

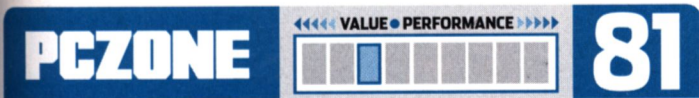
Hardware: 256MB DDR3 NVIDIA GeForce 6600 GT
Ancillaries: VGA to DVI converter, HDTV junction box
List of undesirable games: *Joint Ops*, *Xpand Rally*, *Bonus Gamepack*

UGLIEST CARD IN the universe? You decide. What's certain is that while the cooler looks peculiar, it remains very effective. My one concern is that a heat-pipe is best suited to machines where noise and temperature are key issues - in other words, small PCs. When the heat-pipe in question looks like it has Recklinghausen's disease, how's it going to fit in a case where space is at a premium?

The card itself feels delightfully over-engineered and the box it comes in is the size of Brocket Hall - you do feel like you're getting your money's worth. However, the



ASUS performs no better than any other vanilla flavour 6600GT, and like the GIGABYTE struggles to keep up with the Radeons. It's a reminder of how different cards with the same engine are barely distinguishable from one another, and how manufacturers must resort to huge boxes and outlandish designs to make them stand out.



X800 GT

PRICE £110 MANUFACTURER GECUBE
WEBSITE www.gecube.com

SPECIFICATION

Hardware: 256MB DDR3 ATI Radeon X800 GT
Ancillaries: VGA to DVI converter, HDTV junction box
List of undesirable games: *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero*

ATI MUST HAVE hurt each time NVIDIA's 6600 GT won another award, because the company's X800 GT is such a dazzling comeback that it's almost vengeful. I honestly don't see how it's possible to squeeze more go from a mainstream card whose

performance is already achingly close to the rank above - there's not much more than a gnat's chuff between it and the X800 XL in benchmarks. The fact it costs just over £100 is the end of it: you really can't go faster for cheaper.

Because of the price, there aren't many downsides worthy of mention. You could argue that without a silent cooler ('0dB SUPREME QUIET' according to the ASUS box), the Radeon pair are inappropriate for small form factor PCs. However, if you must have hush, wait a couple of months for the fanless variants to appear. Noisy or not, the X800 GT is a winner.



GV-NX66T256D

PRICE £125 MANUFACTURER GIGABYTE
WEBSITE uk.giga-byte.com

SPECIFICATION

Hardware: 256MB DDR3 NVIDIA GeForce 6600 GT
Ancillaries: VGA to DVI converter, HDTV junction box
List of undesirable games: *Xpand Rally*

I TRUST

YOU'RE familiar with the GV-NX66T128VP

Turbo Force, *PC ZONE's* favourite mainstream card based around the GeForce 6600GT? The GV-NX66T256D here is its baby and bigger brother - cheaper and without the Turbo Force overlocking apparatus, it's slower in the benchmarks but has twice the onboard RAM. Which doesn't help. As I've demonstrated countless times before, lots of memory on a middling card is rather wasteful - your eyeballs won't know the difference.

Like the ASUS, the GV-NX66T256D is SLI-ready and is cooled by a fanless heat-pipe



arrangement, making it no more noisy than a plate of mashed potatoes. Unlike the ASUS, it's an old-fashioned layout and sheds heat just as effectively - the EN6600GT really doesn't have to look so peculiar. No, wait, I think we covered that. Ugly is a talking point.



X800 GT

PRICE £105 inc. MANUFACTURER Sapphire
WEBSITE www.sapphiretech.com

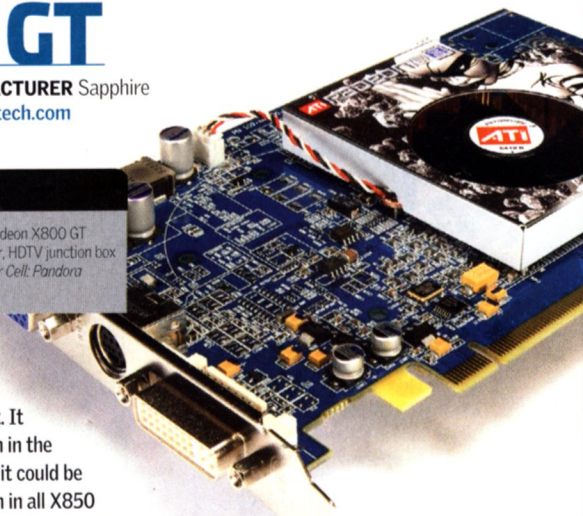
SPECIFICATION

Hardware: 256MB DDR3 ATI Radeon X800 GT
Ancillaries: VGA to DVI converter, HDTV junction box
List of undesirable games: *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow*

CHOOSE AN X800 GT

and it'll have one of two Radeon engines powering it. It could be the R423 chip seen in the X800 XT and X800 Pro, or it could be the reconfigured R480 seen in all X850 derivatives. Both the GECUBE and Sapphire cards are based around the latter. The theory is that the more recent X850 technology will allow for more heroic overlocking, and may even hold secrets that BIOS hackers can unlock.

In standard trim there's no real difference. Brief testing with a hastily located PowerColor revealed that it and the



Sapphire card are almost identical, although the latter does lack the dual DVI outputs of the former. Along with the GECUBE, they whoosh out front of the GeForces and represent phenomenal value for money. Owners of AGP motherboards will be disappointed, though, as the new Radeon is PCI-Express only.



HOW TO...

CHANGE YOUR VIDEO CARD

Things aren't always as complex as they seem. Not with *Phil Wand* on hand to help...

Need:

Crosshead screwdriver,
new video card

Time

15 minutes

Difficulty level



Phil Wand

HAL 9000

Medium Doofus

Big Brother contestant

Jamie Sefton

SO THEN, YOU'VE done your homework and you've found yourself a new video card. Just the thing to breathe new life and fresh vigour into your ageing crapheap before it's time to turn the whole system over to eBay and pray someone bids more

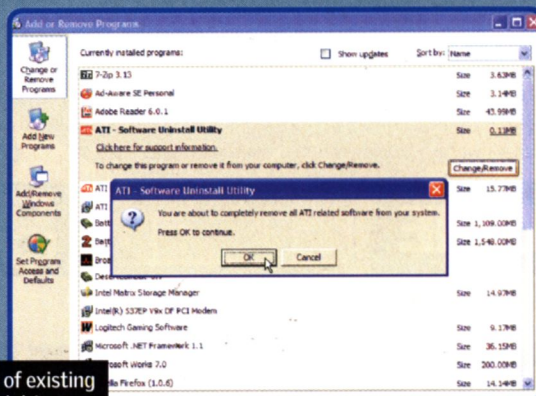
than a fiver for it. No, no, just kidding. Your PC is lovely and so are you.

There's a problem though. How do you go about installing your sparkly new video card? And wait a cotton-picking moment, what about the one that's already in there? Fear not, for all the answers are

here. All you have to do is make sure you've not bought a PCI-Express card for your AGP motherboard, because if you have, you're not going to get very far. Return to the shop and tell them your name is Jamie Sefton. They'll be gentle with you...

01 Messing around with drivers

The first and most common mistake people make is not downloading new drivers before they open the lid. Make sure you visit www.nvidia.com or www.ati.com for GeForce and Radeon drivers respectively – do not install drivers from the CD which accompanied the card. The next job is to open Add/Remove Programs by clicking Start, Settings, Control Panel and double-clicking the icon. Locate your existing drivers in the list and remove them. When prompted, do not reboot your machine but shut it down yourself.



GET shot of existing video card drivers.



AGP is the video interface on your motherboard which accepts AGP video cards. PCI-Express is a bus with an interface which accepts PCI-Express video cards. The two types are not interchangeable. ATI is the Canadian company behind Radeon cards; the name is an acronym for Array Technologies Incorporated. NVIDIA is the American company behind GeForce cards; the name is pronounced 'Envidia'. A unified driver is a package which suits all video cards within a range of products, meaning you needn't download software specific to the model you bought. Static electricity involves little current but a large number of volts, wreaking havoc with electronic equipment. Power sources inside your case are often referred to as Molex connectors, after the company which patented the design.



WARNING: DON'T BLOW YOURSELF UP

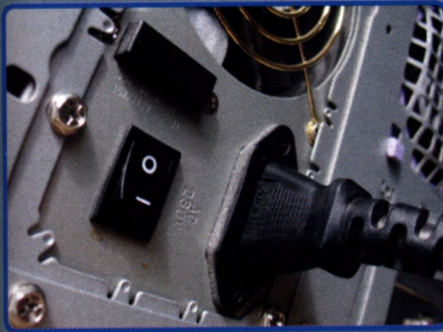
Installing a new video card is a cinch, but if you're not careful you can damage your hardware irreparably. Never remove or insert cards while the machine is running. It would indeed be interesting to see what noises came out, but there's a huge risk you'll blow something up. Also, make sure your power supply is up to the job, because if it's below the recommended rating, your system will be less stable than a Russian reactor. And lastly, don't forget that with performance comes heat. If you're already running hot, a beefy video card will tip things over the edge.

02 Open up the case

Free your PC from its cables and put it on a desk with the lid facing upwards. On a tower case, such as the system shown in our pictures, that means tipping it on its side. Reconnect it to the mains but ensure the socket is off at the wall – this step ensures the case is properly earthed but won't electrocute

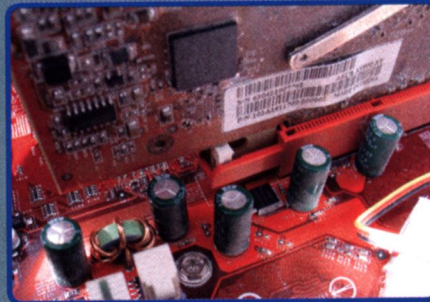
you. Remove the screws which hold the lid in place, or push the lever to release it and simply lift it off.

KEEP the case plugged in but switched off.



03 Out with the old

Touch the metal framework of the case to make sure you discharge any static. Now, locate the video card on your board – it's the one you plug your monitor into. Remove the screw holding it to the back plane and, checking carefully where the card meets the motherboard, make sure any clasps holding the card in place are open or held out of the way. Pull the card straight up and set it down on your desk.

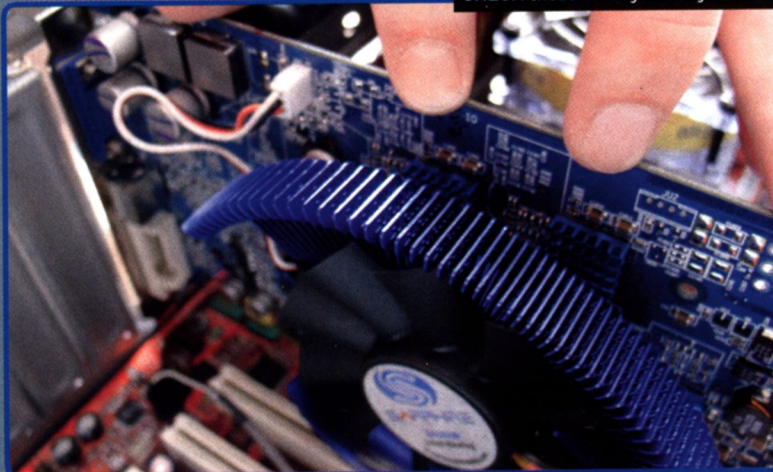


MOST AGP interfaces have clips to hold the card in place.

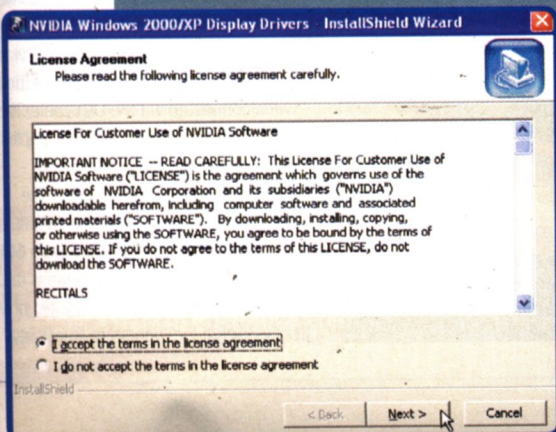
04 In with the new

While in contact with the case, remove your new card from its anti-static bag and lower it inside the PC until its interface is just sitting on the connector. Put your fingers along its upper edge, and making sure you keep the card at right-angles to the motherboard, increase pressure until it pops into place. Replace the screw which secures it. If the card requires power, use connectors from the wiring loom inside the case to hook up the card to the power supply.

CHECK those steady Wandy hands.



05 Brave new world



Replace the lid, disconnect the machine from the socket and take it off the desk. Reconnect all the cables and turn the machine on. Don't be surprised to see everything looks very different – Windows may not know what your video card is, and if you see prompts to install new hardware, click Cancel to close them. Double-click the file you downloaded in Step 1 and follow the prompts to install the drivers. When prompted to reboot, do so. And don't say that was hard.

RUN the installation for new drivers.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Feel the world is out to get you? Check below, it might be something more simple...

X I've turned the machine on and nothing happens.

✓ If you were using onboard video, deactivate it in the BIOS. Make sure the new card is firmly seated and check the cable isn't loose. If it still won't wake up, replace the old card: if that works, the new one is dead.

X I hear beeping noises but my food's not ready.

✓ Your card requires power. Refer to Step 4 and if necessary, the instruction manual for full details.

X There are coloured squares all over the place.

✓ This is normally a sign that the card is defective, although it could also be that you've clocked it too high. Don't overclock until you're satisfied that the card is working OK.



DEAR WANDY

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. If it ain't working, don't panic...



Problems?

We've all got them you know... Up to your neck in debt? Partner sleeping around? A propensity to wake up on Saturday morning not knowing what the hell happened? We can't help with any of those (but if you know the answers, let us know), but we can solve all of your hardware hassles. Wandy knows everything and is willing to help if you email him at wandy@dearwandy.com, including as much information as necessary and system specs where applicable.

BREWING UP A SYSTEM

Q I'm upgrading my PC and I've decided to go for an ASUS A8N-SLI Deluxe motherboard with 1GB Corsair RAM. But here's my dilemma. I want a system that has headroom for upgrades, so that in the future I can play demanding games on maximum settings. Do I go for a more powerful processor, such as the AMD Athlon 64 3500+ and a graphics card like the MSI 6600GT 128MB PCI-E, or is it better to go for an Athlon 64 3000+ with a bigger 6800GT 256MB PCI-E card? My budget is between £400 and £500. Additionally, what graphics manufacturer would you recommend? MSI, LeadTek, ASUS, XFX, GIGABYTE, Gainward, Sapphire, Sparkle, BFG... There are just too many to choose from.

Martin Kingsnorth

A While I could suggest you went for ABIT's Fatal1ty motherboard instead of the ASUS, there's little point dissuading you from the A8N-SLI. Like many products in the £90-£150 price range, it's a superb product and makes a lot of sense if you can track one down at a decent price - anything under £100 is a good buy. I'd also stick with the RAM you've chosen, as once installed you'll quickly forget who made it.

When it comes to a processor, things are different. The 939-pin Athlon 64 3500+ (£150) and Buyer's Guide favourite 3000+ (£80) are both admirable choices for a gaming rig, but the former is almost twice as expensive as the latter, despite delivering only a slim real-world performance advantage over the 3000+. So straight away, the cheaper chip looks the most sensible choice.

But there's more to it than that. If you decide to go for the GeForce 6800 GT (£210) and overclock it, it's likely that the 3000+ processor will become a bottleneck for benchmarks. Similarly, if you go for the smaller 6600 GT (£130) or rival Radeon X800 GT (£110), then the 3500+ isn't going to get the chance to strut its stuff. I would suggest going for the ATI card together with the 3000+ and looking to upgrade both at a much later date.

As for which card manufacturer you choose, look for a low price and a decent bundle. When buying an X800 GT, check to

see which type of video processor it uses - the PowerColor cards use later chips and are the ones to aim for.

UNLUCKY 7

Q I'm thinking of upgrading to a GeForce 6800 GT, but with NVIDIA's new 7 series available, do you think I should wait? Trouble is, I don't have £600 to throw at a video card.

Greg Moroney

A Right now is not a good time to buy a high-ranking video card. Although the new 7800 is faster than any outgoing model, it's also more pricey - the GT variant is £100 more than the old 6800 GT.

At the time of writing, there are also question marks over how NVIDIA drivers are allegedly massaging benchmark results. Two prominent German hardware review sites have concluded that: 'NVIDIA has reduced the quality, hoping that no-one notices or feels bothered by it, in order to make benchmarks look better than those of the older generation of the competition.'

Added to which, a whole new range of Radeon cards is due out soon, meaning that the 7800 won't be the only power-user option out there. I'd stick with what you have until much later in the autumn.

HITACHI UPDATEY

Q I'm writing in response to Ian Marriott's letter in issue 158. Ian was having problems running games at 1280x1024 on his Hitachi CML174SXWB with an NVIDIA 6800 GT. I have the same monitor myself and had a similar problem recently.

What happened was that, after an NVIDIA driver upgrade, 1280x960 was no longer recognised as a valid resolution when connected via the DVI cable. This meant that many games - for example C&C: Generals and Battlefield 1942 - offered 1024x768 and no higher. The solution was to go into the ForceWare settings and add 1280x960 at both 60Hz and 75Hz in the Change Resolutions tab. Since then, whenever I've upgraded drivers, the first thing I've done is to tweak my



At the moment, PowerColor's X800 GT is the mainstream monster of choice.

DRIVER WATCH
Keep your PC happy

GRAPHICS

MANUFACTURER	DESC	RELEASED
ATI	CATALYST 5.8	11-AUG-05
NVIDIA	FORCEWARE 7777	11-AUG-05

SOUND

MANUFACTURER	DESC	RELEASED
Creative	AUDIGY 2.1.84.55	12-MAY-05
M-Audio	REVON 1.0.2.8	13-FEB-04

@ wandy@dearwandy.com

✉ dearwandy, pc zone, future publishing, 99 baker st, london, w1u 6fp

Unless you're writing, recording or remixing music, don't pay for bells and whistles that you'll never use

Sound advice for Dan Jones from MC Wandy



with my motherboard – an ABIT KD7. Can you tell me if the Audigy 4 will work, and if not, are there any alternatives?

Dan Jones

A There's no obvious reason why any new soundcard should play you up, but I have read complaints from people trying to get later Creative cards to work with their KT400 chipsets – and that's what you have. Since Creative is crap at updating its drivers, you might want to think before updating one Creative card for another. I'd also ask you to consider why you want the Audigy 4, in that it offers very little above a vanilla flavour Audigy like the 2 ZS and you won't be able to hear any difference. Both have been eclipsed by Creative's new X-Fi range anyway.

In addition, can I ask what you're after from a soundcard? If, as I suspect, you're a casual gamer, the KD7 includes six-channel AC97 audio architecture integrated on the board, meaning you don't need extra hardware. The AC97 is out of date now, but it remains more than adequate for the

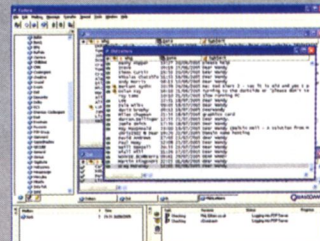
50 UTILITIES YOU HAVE TO USE BEFORE YOU DIE

3 EUDORA

EXPECT TO PAY \$49.95 (about £29) www.eudora.com

Back in the early 1990s, hardly anyone knew what email was, and email clients were few and far between. If you were a PC user, messages were invariably sent using a text-mode abomination for MS-DOS called cc:Mail, which was so hard to configure and so costly to buy that only businesses used it. Apple Macintosh users had something much nicer: a no-nonsense, easy-to-use graphical application developed by a university guy who'd been inspired by a Eudora Welty short story. He subtitled his program: 'Bringing the post officer to where you live.'

It's hard to describe just how nice Eudora was in comparison to the awful cc:Mail. Since becoming a Windows product ten years ago, Eudora's fanbase has grown exponentially. In 1999, Qualcomm reported there was over 20 million users of its product worldwide; considering at the time there were fewer than 30 million Mac users, you get an idea of how popular the program had become.



Eudora has been handling my email for almost 15 years.

It's a little daunting if you're used to the way Microsoft Outlook treats you like a doofus, but then if you're fed up with the way Outlook crashes the whole time (in comparison, Eudora is more stable than a billiard table), or the way Microsoft crams all your emails into a single database file (Eudora stores your messages as individual text files, meaning you're less likely to lose them all in the event of a disk problem), then download a free trial from the Qualcomm website.

ForceWare settings. Your reader's problem sounded very much like the one I had, so it would be worth trying.

John Wilson

A It certainly sounds like something Ian should try. I'd forgotten that ForceWare gave you the option to add in new resolutions, and if Ian's a Battlefield player, it may well solve his problem. Thanks for writing in.

SOUND BARRIER

Q I've recently been having some issues with my Sound Blaster Live! 5.1, and I've been looking to upgrade the card to an Audigy 4 Pro. The only problem is, I don't know if the new Audigy will work

majority of users – before spending any money, haul out the existing Sound Blaster, enable the onboard AC97 device in the BIOS, then suck it and see. If you like it, keep it, and if you don't, go for something lower down the Audigy range. Unless you're writing, recording or remixing music, or are seriously involved with home theatre, you shouldn't go paying for bells and whistles that you'll never use.

CELEBRITY SQUARES

Q I've just built my first system. I bought my graphics card from a friend and it's playing up. The POST screen has tons of sparkling squares on it; so does the Windows loading screen, but when showing the Windows desktop and using

applications such as Dreamweaver it's fine.

However, when you open a game, it complains the card needs to be DirectX 8 or better. When I try to install drivers it usually crashes. My system specs are AA8XE Fatal1ty, 3.4GHz Pentium 550 running at 4032MHz (288x14) and Corsair RAM. I've tried everything at stock settings but get the same problem.

Ben

A My first thought was that you'd clocked your system too far, but if you have the symptoms with your BIOS set to default then I'm certain the card is broken. Coloured squares when you turn your machine on are a sign that the hardware is sick – it can't be a driver problem! **PCZ**

**WARNING:
DON'T TRY
THIS AT HOME!**

An acquaintance recently knocked at my door. "I'm having bother with my PC," she explained. "I keep having to add Windows." Unsure of what she meant, I put the machine on the desk and plugged it in, only to be faced with a menu asking me which of the eight versions of Windows I'd like to boot. Eight. When questioned, she explained that each time her system crashed, the store where she'd bought it told her to reinstall Windows. Only rather than overwrite what was already there, she'd created a new folder each time. Eight different Windows on one drive. A new record?



WATCHDOG

Rotten companies need sorting – and good ones need praising...

Here to help!

Companies pissing you off? Don't feel your voice is strong enough to shout down the suits? Email Suzy at watchdog@pczone.co.uk with the subject heading 'Watchdog', or write to her at the address above. Pleased remember to include your name, address and contact number, and all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers.



THE Radeon 9800 before 'going Dutch'.

CARD TRICKS

Back in December 2003, Mark Wilde purchased a Connect3D Radeon 9800 from local company CCL Computers. Fast-forward to July this year and the card finally gave up the ghost. Knowing that his one-year warranty with CCL had now run out, but aware that the card came with an extra year's manufacturer warranty, Mark contacted Connect3D.

However, Connect 3D weren't very obliging and Mark was referred back to CCL, who he promptly returned his card to. Two weeks passed without any news, so Mark phoned CCL to see what was going on and was promised a return call with full details, which never materialised.

Four calls to CCL later, it turned out that the card had been sent to Holland for repair. As Mark points out: "It's now coming up to seven weeks without my card." So just where has Mark's card gone?

Off Watchdog went to see what kind of response we could get from CCL. A few phone calls later and it informed us that the delay was down to the card no longer being produced, so it had to be returned to the manufacturer in Holland for testing. CCL

A threat of debt recovery three months after the account's been cancelled? That can't be right...

also stated: "CCL would like to apologise to Mark for any shortfall in communication while we arranged for the return of the faulty graphics card to the manufacturer. The matter has now been resolved, as Connect3D has issued us with a refund for the card, which we've passed on to Mark as a credit against replacement goods. We've also agreed to send him out a 425W Hiper Power supply to make up for the delay."

WANADON'T

Kevin Furlong had been pretty happy with his Wanadoo account until it sent him a letter on April 1. No, it wasn't an April Fool's joke, but it might as well have been for Kevin. Wanadoo had decided to change its terms and conditions by slapping on a monthly usage policy. Not at all happy with this, Kevin contacted the company to see if anything could be done, but after some



discussion, he informed Wanadoo of his wish to cancel his account. Thinking that would be that, he changed ISP on April 25.

Then in June, a mysterious letter dropped through his door stating that there was a problem with his Wanadoo payment, but a quick phone call seemed to resolve this. So when a letter threatening debt recovery dropped through his letterbox in July, he was taken aback. Sending Wanadoo a miffed reply, he now thought the matter was finished, but August heralded another warning letter.

A threat of debt recovery three months after the account's been cancelled? That can't be right. We contacted Wanadoo,

who explained that despite Kevin's request to cancel his account, gremlins in the system meant that it hadn't been done. Come June and when Wanadoo tried and failed to get its normal payment for the account, a standard warning letter was issued. "I can see that Mr Furlong has written to us to dispute the outstanding balance on his account and regret that his complaint has not been resolved to date. I have requested for the outstanding balance of £27.99 to be removed from his account immediately. We would like to take this opportunity to apologise for the time it's taken to resolve this issue for Mr Furlong." With the debt collectors off his back, we hope Kevin's back to gaming in peace.

THE ACCUSED



Guilty until proven innocent

SAINTS NOT SINNERS



It seems that some companies have been studying the pages of Watchdog recently. After reading issue 159's fiasco when Asus was In The Doghouse, Lewis Burnell felt compelled to let us know about his Asus experience.

Having experienced exactly the same problem, namely a noisy fan on his Asus motherboard, he got in contact with the supplier who persuaded Asus to deliver a brand new motherboard the very next day. Not only that, but an engineer was also sent out the day after to fit it. It appears Asus has learnt its lesson. Praise be.

More happy news: when Jim Harvey's 5800 Ultra card broke, he contacted BFG Tech about a replacement. The old card was sent back to them and within two weeks, Jim received a replacement 6800GT. He was understandably pretty chuffed: "I'm writing to point out BFG's amazing and fast customer service, and the fact that it upgraded me for free as an apology for the inconvenience caused." Well done indeed.



[BFG Tech]



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RTS ACTION
ABOVE GROUND,

◆ DRAGONSHARD ◆

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WWW.ATARI.COM/DRAGONSHARD



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BELOW GROUND.



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ATARI

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REMEMBER:
YOU ALSO NEED
MONEY FOR FOOD
AND CLOTHING

We are legally required to remind readers that money splashed on hardware may be better spent on families, wives and girlfriends. PC ZONE isn't liable for any estrangement that may ensue.

HARDWARE DIVIDE

The best on the market whether you're Lord of the Manor or a toiling slave to capitalism...

LOADED?

GRAPHICS

GEFORCE 7800 GTX

EXPECT TO PAY £399

MANUFACTURER XFX

WEBSITE www.xfxforce.co.uk

It's hard to imagine, but NVIDIA's GeForce 7800 GTX is more complex than your CPU. It has more rendering pipelines, more memory bandwidth and more grunt than any other video card on sale. The XFX version stands out as it comes bundled with *Far Cry* on DVD, plus *X2: The Threat* and *MotoGP 2*. If performance is the object it's the only card to buy, but do make sure your PSU is rated at 400W or more.



PROCESSOR

ATHLON 64 FX-57

EXPECT TO PAY

£700

MANUFACTURER

AMD

WEBSITE www.amd.co.uk

For extreme performance, the flagship Athlon is the only processor to buy – even if it makes the same dent in your bank account as last month's mortgage payment. With AMD's new memory controller, unlocked multiplier and highest ever clock speed, the latest FX is the fastest thing inside any PC.

MOTHERBOARD

FATALITY AN8 SLI

EXPECT TO PAY

£130

MANUFACTURER

ABIT

WEBSITE www.abit.com.tw

Designed specifically for gaming, the nForce4 SLI-based Fatality AN8 supports all 939-pin AMD processors. As well as SLI support it features ABIT's Guru Panel, a front-mounted display unit for overclockers. The board also uses a bevy of ABIT features, including OTES cooling and AudioMAX 7.1 onboard audio.

HDD

RAPTOR 74GB

EXPECT TO PAY

£118

MANUFACTURER

Western Digital

WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com

Travelling at 10,000rpm and with a 4.5ms seek time, the Raptor is billed as the world's fastest SATA drive. And although it's not especially large, it's big enough for a dedicated gaming rig. Two of them in RAID 0 configuration will give you almost 150GB and really make *Battlefield 2* fly.

SCREEN

MULTISYNC LCD1970GX

EXPECT TO PAY

£360

MANUFACTURER

NEC Mitsubishi

WEBSITE

www.nec-display-solutions.co.uk

The LCD1970GX is a 19in LCD screen, with an 8ms response time and an inky black glass screen that saturates all the colours and darkens the shadows. It includes a joystick controller for the on-screen display, and a four-port USB hub.

SOUND CARD

SOUND BLASTER X-FI FATALITY FPS

EXPECT TO PAY

£179

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

Slightly bonkers soundcard for audiophiles with deep pockets. Supports EAX 5.0, with 64MB X-RAM for top quality sound effects. CMSS-3D works magic on a stereo signal and makes headphone gaming crystal. Sounds nicer than an Audigy, but still painfully pricey.

SPEAKERS

Z-5500

EXPECT TO PAY

£220

MANUFACTURER

Logitech

WEBSITE www.logitech.co.uk

They'll cost you over £200, but they're also the best speakers we've ever tested at PC ZONE. They make both games and movies ravish your ears, and you'll soon find yourself blowing the dust from your old CDs and DVDs just so you can sit in the middle of the sound and revel in it.

SKINT?

GRAPHICS

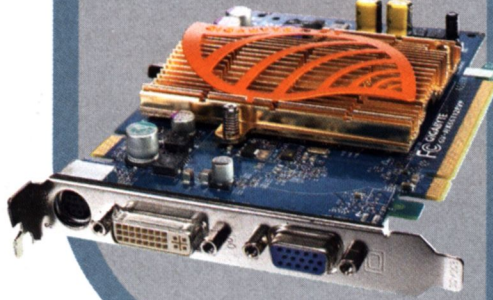
GV-NX66TI28VP TURBO FORCE

EXPECT TO PAY £133

MANUFACTURER GIGABYTE

WEBSITE uk.giga-byte.com

A fanless heat-pipe arrangement keeps this GeForce cool and silent. GIGABYTE claims a 38 per cent speed hike over a regular card – not quite, but the boost is noticeable – and it's definitely the fastest 6600GT we've tested. *Thief: Deadly Shadows* and *Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising* are bundled, and full VIVO capabilities allow you to capture and edit video from an external source – PowerDirector comes free. A stunning package at a stunning price.



PROCESSOR

ATHLON 64 3000+

EXPECT TO PAY

£95

MANUFACTURER

AMD

WEBSITE www.amd.co.uk

If you don't mind getting your hands dirty in the BIOS, Athlon 64s can be highly rewarding – particularly so on an nForce4 motherboard. Famous for overclocking and top performance in games, there's really no alternative. This AMD chip is the one to have if you're building to a budget.

MOTHERBOARD

A8N-E NFORCE4 ULTRA

EXPECT TO PAY £80

MANUFACTURER

ASUSTek

WEBSITE uk.asus.com

The A8N-E supports the full range of Athlon 64 FX, dual-core Athlon 64 X2 and Athlon 64 chips, plus PCI Express and 7.1 channel audio. The nForce4 Ultra chipset has more features than a circus has clowns, and ASUS includes a raft of its own, as well as some serious overclocking tools.

HDD

1200JD SATA

EXPECT TO PAY

£55

MANUFACTURER

Western Digital

WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com

It's not like a 120GB hard drive is unfeasibly huge any more, but it's more than enough for the casual gamer to do a spot of casual gaming. A few good titles, a couple of hundred music files and the odd porn flick will still leave plenty of room for Windows to manoeuvre.

SCREEN

VE710S

EXPECT TO PAY

£152

MANUFACTURER

ViewSonic

WEBSITE www.viewsonic.co.uk

Not a lot of dosh buys you an awful lot of screen. The VE710s is a budget-priced 17in flat panel featuring an 8ms response time and 1,280x1,024 resolution and producing bright, crisp images worthy of the ViewSonic name. The company's UltraBrite technology gives rich and vivid colours in games.

SOUND CARD

SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY 2 VALUE

EXPECT TO PAY

£34

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

If you're a casual gamer, there's little point throwing half a mortgage payment at your soundcard because you'll not be able to tell the difference. The cheap Audigy features EAX 4.0 and Dolby Digital EX support, and makes an awful lot of sense.

SPEAKERS

INSPIRE P5800

EXPECT TO PAY

£40

MANUFACTURER

Creative

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

You can go cheaper, but to meet the quality of the P5800 you'll need spend a lot more, as there's no better set in this price range. The subwoofer is deep and creamy, the satellites crisp and clean. A wired remote, line-in and headphone jack complete a very decent little package.

EXPANSION TO COMPUTER GAMING WORLD'S 2004 RTS GAME OF THE YEAR



OUT NOW

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40,000

DAWN OF WAR

WINTER ASSAULT

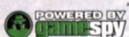


ALSO AVAILABLE

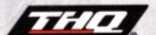
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PC CD-ROM



www.dawnofwargame.com



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the choice of professionals



PCZONE

FREEPLAY

Got no money? No worries...

DISC EDITOR Suzy Wallace

WHAT'S FREE THIS MONTH

FREE GAMES!

No Girls Allowed

I'VE BEEN RATHER nervous over the last month. You see, I pride myself on my non-girlie abilities, but in the last month I've been swaying dangerously close to fully-fledged girliness. I wore skirts three days in a row and one of them even had pink on it. Pink! If I didn't do something about it, I'd soon be knitting tops for fellow staff members and taking in stray kittens that I'd name Dinkums and dress up in pink doll's dresses.

This had to stop. So, with my worries mounting, I was relieved when the Freeplay section arrived to banish my feminine leanings. Demos that included shooting Nazis and playing football soon saw the girliness slip. Next up, the awesome *Killing Floor* (p120) helped me another step along as I wandered the streets of London blowing zombies' heads off. A dose of intriguing *Half-Life 2* mayhem with *Metastasis* (p118) and I was almost feeling normal. Then a peek of what not to miss in *F.E.A.R.* (p126), a bit of *NeverQuest* (p133) and I felt like I'd returned to normal. Welcome home, androgyny...

Try this!

Giggle at the ridiculously-sized heads in *EverQuest III*!



If you're a fan of anime or manga, you may be familiar with deformed figures, but a MMORPG is the last place we'd expect to find them. Despite this, type /cutemode and all the character's heads become twice the size, including NPCs and enemies.



BROTHERS In Arms and more...

108 Demo Pages

Your first port of call for free games!

ON THE DISC



CITY Of Heroes oscar's!

110 Buzz

News and culture from a world of free PC gaming



GUNZ: The Duel - free MMOG

114 Freeware

The best darn free games on t'Internet



KILLING Floor - zombies galore

118 Play!

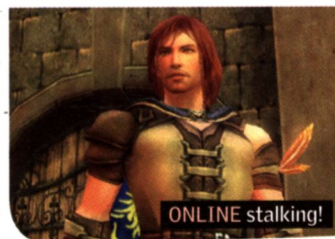
Essential reviews of the latest mods, maps and add-ons



IT'S not all about the girl...

126 Make the most of F.E.A.R.

Frightening gaming secrets revealed



ONLINE stalking!

133 NeverQuest

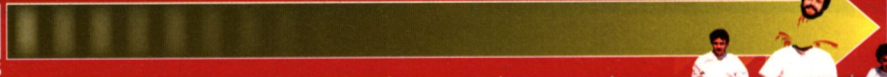
Steve Hill discovers a kindred spirit in *Guild Wars*



PCZONE FREE-O-METER



0 HOURS



209 HOURS*

*Approximate amount of completely free stuff this month



Demos

On the discs – free games galore!



25
PLAYABLE
DEMOS
ON THE DVD!



DISC TROUBLES?

Having problems getting something off our discs to work? Phone our helpline on **01225 442244** and ask for cover disc support. Alternatively, email support@futurenet.co.uk, including as much information as possible about your system and the nature of your problem.



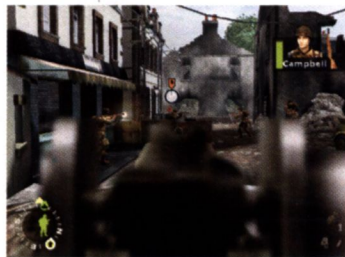
EXCLUSIVE!



BROTHERS IN ARMS: EARNED IN BLOOD

Flank Krauts in the WWII tactical shooter

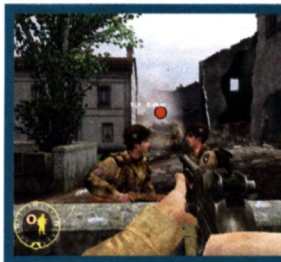
www.brothersinarmsgame.com/us/earnedinblood | ETA: October



WHAT WOULD YOU do when you'd finally finished work on a project that's taken you years of hard work to produce? Personally, we'd be quite happy to rest on our laurels and quaff some obscenely expensive bottles of champagne while scantily-clad ladies jiggle their assets in the background. But not Gearbox. Oh no, the company has already produced this

Earned In Blood demo that will allow you to get a taster of the follow-up to *Brothers In Arms*.

In it, you'll be able to unleash your Panzerfaust in a single-player Story mode and also in three different Skirmish modes (see 'Pick Your Poison', left). Even better, all of these modes can be played not just on your own but co-operatively with a friend via LAN! With each of you taking charge of your own squad and working together, the Nazis should be quaking in der Rekruts (that's boots to you and me).



STORY

Get your mitts dirty in this Close Quarters mission – you're tasked with clearing the town of Carentan of those pesky Nazis. Much of the combat takes place in an urban setting, so you'll be bound to witness lots of close-up fighting.



SKIRMISH

Objective. Take one map and your fire-teams around this map as you're tasked with blowing up the bridge and destroying the resupply train car. You've work to do, so don't get killed by 'ze Germans' before you've reached your objectives!

PICK YOUR POISON The *Earned In Blood* demo offers up four modes for you to sample



SKIRMISH

Timed Assault. If you think you're a bit nifty in command, this level will test just how speedy you are. You're up against the clock and the map is swarming with German aggressors. Take them out to increase that time limit!



SKIRMISH

Defence. Finally, if you're a bit of a glutton for punishment, you can try out this mode in which you and your men must stay alive against wave after wave of incoming enemies. Who'll be the last man standing?



EXCLUSIVE!

DVD ONLY



THE MOVIES: STARMAKER

A star is born

www.lionhead.com/themovies/
ETA: November

ARE YOU BORED of movie stars? Then load up this exclusive StarMaker and create your very own Hollywood sweetheart. You start off with a multitude of base heads which can be mixed and melded as you see fit. Next you'll go through the base features and then onto the advanced modelling where you can tweak every cheek and dimple to your heart's content.

Once you've saved the next big thing in show business, you'll be able to drop him/her straight into *The Movies* and get them to start earning you some moolah straight away.



Beauty And The Beast

No Disney film here, just a stunner and a munter...



Beauty

Our star girl has got the looks to bring Hollywood to its knees and with good ability in both action and horror, we're hoping that she'll turn out to be a bit of a kick-ass vixen. Men should beware!

Beast

Unfortunately, our hero of the moment wasn't blessed with good looks. In fact, a side view reveals a striking resemblance to Cro-Magnon man. But he'll be great for romantic sci-fi flicks.

DVD ONLY



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5

Konami's classic kickabout is back

uk.gs.konami-europe.com | ETA: October

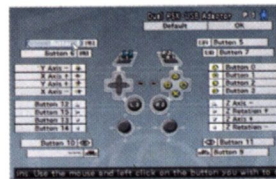
IT'S HERE! *Pro Evolution Soccer 5* has finally arrived, and your footie-mad PC ZONE has a world-exclusive demo for you to play right now! If you've never played *PES* before, you're in for a feast of football (see review, page 66), with goalmouth scrambles, world-class tackles,

super saves, daring dribbles and scorching shots. The demo features four officially licensed teams – Arsenal, Chelsea, Real Madrid and Valencia – plus five difficulty settings, two stadia and a full first-half of scintillating soccer skills. Warning! *PES5* may take over your life...

WORLD EXCLUSIVE!

Read this first!

How to set up PES5 for PC



After you've installed the game, you need to set up *PES5*'s screen resolution and controller configuration. In the *PES5* game folder you'll see 'Setting' – double-click on this to access all the options before you play the game.

Boot up the *PES5* demo, choose 'Options' and set the player input to your chosen game controller. Then check your 'button settings' to ensure that it has your favourite footie game controls. We use a PS2/USB adaptor – no other USB pad comes close.

FOOTBALL CRAZY, FOOTBALL MAD

PC ZONE's Pocket Guide to PES5



- 1** *PES5* is a more physical game in midfield, so you'll have to battle for the ball harder. Use X and Square to close down opposition players.
- 2** Still one of the most devastating passes is the lifted through-ball, which can bypass defences with ease. Use L1 and Triangle together.
- 3** The map is useful when you can't see your players, and when you're crossing balls into the box from the wings.
- 4** Don't give up in injury time! The ref will often let play continue if either team has a goal-scoring opportunity.

CHALLENGE SEFTON! **KRAZY KEEPER**
Can you score a goal with your keeper on the easiest difficulty setting?

THE BEST OF THE REST



AGE OF EMPIRES III

Draw upon your knowledge of American history and take on the role of the blue guys, fighting against the red guys for domination of some trading posts. Grab a blunderbuss and prepare for some classic skirmishing. www.ageofempires3.com



BET ON SOLDIER

In a bleak future where war is all people know and killing each other is the only way to put food on the table and bullets in your gun, this demo lets you experience two missions from the upcoming FPS from Digital Jesters. Place your bets! www.betonsoldier.com



FIFA 06

It's all balls in our opinion, but should you want to compare EA's latest iteration of its ball-kicking sim against the almighty *Pro Evo 5*, then this demo allows you to play one half as one of five top international clubs. www.easports.com/games/fifa06/index.jsp



BONE

Guide Fone Bone and his cousins through the wilderness as they try to find their way back to Boneville, through a mixture of both pointing and clicking in this point 'n' click adventure from TellTale Games. Watch out for the swarm of locusts and the irritating banjo tunes. www.telltalegames.com

PCZONE HOT DOWNLOADS

SERIOUS SAM 2 DEMO
files.seriouszone.com



Get your hands on Sam's entire arsenal of weaponry and one vehicle from the full game, as you take to the mean streets of Seriousopolis in this single- and multiplayer demo. Crazy hybrid tank-demon creatures and swarms of angry flying metal things are guaranteed.

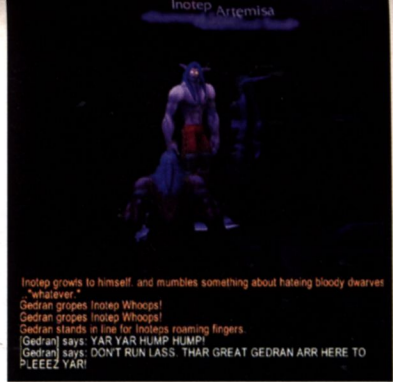
TOTAL OVERDOSE DEMO
www.fileshack.com/file.x?fid=7693



Bother the space-time continuum in this charming demo of *Max Payne*-meets-*GTA* third-person shooter. You've got one level in which to dive about in slow-mo killing Mexicans, culminating in sombrero theft and massive combo scores for racking up successive kills.

ROLEPLAY ELVES IN MMOGING SHAME!

Sick woodland folk caught having nookie in Azeroth public transport network



www.discordguild.org

IT'S a sexual elf scare!

FORGET DOGGING IN car parks, the future of erotica lies in MMOging – the pursuit of lust and naughtiness within the pixellated walls of online gaming. The best recent example of this frightening new trend can be seen at www.discordguild.org, where a plucky dwarven *World Of Warcraft* player, Gedran, discovered something shocking when he ventured into the tunnels of the Deeprun Tram. Two elves, in flagrante and a dialogue box steadily filling up with such filth as: "Artemisa groans, biting your neck, her breath hard against your neck," or "Artemisa's gasp is muffled by the kiss and her nails dig slightly into your arm," and "Inotep grins and withdraws his finger".

Spicy stuff. As any noble dwarf would do, our boy Gedran stood in the shadows for a bit, but then leapt right on in with:

To [Inotep]: i wanna apologize
To [Inotep]: do you accept?
You kneel before Flaminger.
[Inotep] whispers: You've done quite enough...and no...I do not accept an apology from someone who would have that kind of gall and indecency... (plus this is an RP realm...you sir...are a fool...and you need to take your ass to a Normal realm.)

"Gedran reveals his head from the shadows and begins to unzip his pantaloons," and "Gedran removes his Dwarven Hand Cannon and begins to stroke the barrel ever so slowly."
The response? A curt: "Your mother is raped by a troll, and then killed and brought up among the ranks of the undead so that I may kill her myself. Good day, sir." Sick? Wrong? Well, maybe. Definitely funny though.

What do you think?

Have you come across examples of this sick new trend of MMOging? Are you an experience MMOger yourself? Does a relative or partner indulge in MMOging and you've had enough of it? Do you find MMOging sick and wrong? Contact **ZONE** on letters@pczone.co.uk and we could make you a star.

To [Inotep]: speaking of indecency... I wasn't aware that cyber fucking in the tram was considered "roleplaying". Perhaps it's just me.
To [Inotep]: I should have given a reach around. I truly am sorry.
Inotep is ignoring you.



Bond gets Source-y

www.goldeneyesource.com

Bond's most beloved outing gets a Source-style makeover

HOW'S THIS FOR a cocktail? Take one part classic first-person shooter and mix it with two parts of the engine powering the current FPS champ. Oh, and make sure that it's shaken, not stirred. Sounds tasty, eh?

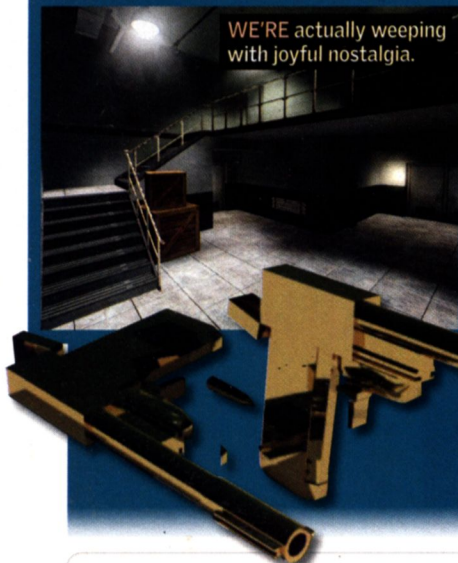
Well, this is exactly what a team of modders are doing with *GoldenEye: Source*, a *Half-Life 2* mod that recreates the multiplayer portion of the treasured N64 shooter – a game that, if you are anything like us, you probably spent far too much time playing back in the carefree days of the late '90s (sniff).

All of the original levels are being rebuilt – Facility, Library, Bunker, Cradle etc – and the team are also working on some brand new ones. *GoldenEye's* full arsenal of weaponry will also be available, from sneaky git favourites like the proximity mine to throwing knives and the one-shot, one kill golden gun. The John Woo-style dual wielding of guns is back too, and all the original's characters will be available for selection (with updated models).

This being a Source engine game, we can also look forward to the inclusion of physics and ragdoll death animations,

while sound effects are also being brought up to date.

With the mod currently in alpha testing it hopefully won't be too long until we're karate chopping our mates to death again. And nobody's allowed to be Oddjob, OK?





"OMG, you've blown my face off."



LIVE action: DULL!

HEROES ON FILM

Not so much Cannes as can't

www.cityofheroes.com/media/film_festival_winners_2005.html



ISN'T THERE ENOUGH evil in Paragon City to keep its heroes occupied? Obviously not, as NCsoft has just announced the winners of its second film festival. Following on from last year's event, participants were invited to send in their videos for consideration in five categories: action; comedy; animated; live action and best overall.

But take a look at the winners and runners-up on the site, and you may be

reminded more of Uwe Boll than Ridley Scott. OK, that may be a little harsh, but the live action clips felt a bit dull and things didn't really pick up that much until we hit the comedy category, which at least raised some chuckles.

Highlights of the *City Of Heroes* competition were undoubtedly the brilliant animated entries, with the winner well deserving its lofty place at the top. Just don't give up your day jobs heroes!



LEGO goes punk.

Beside the Seaside

Valve prepares for the release of *Lost Coast*

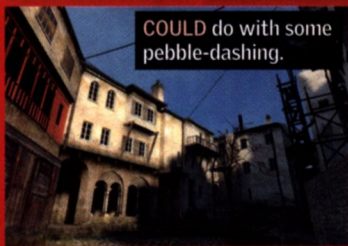
www.steampowered.com

WITH DOD: SOURCE now out of the door, Valve can finally concentrate on releasing *Lost Coast* to the masses. More of a tech demo than a proper level, it will probably only feature around 15 minutes of play, but its main purpose is to show off the new High Dynamic Rendering technique.

This rather snazzy form of lighting mimics the way we see, much like the way it takes your eyes a while to adjust when walking from a dark room into



COULD do with some pebble-dashing.



bright sunshine. It's all very pretty (albeit an effect for top-end rigs only) and will be available via Steam around November. Just remember your bucket and spade.



ISN'T this from a postcard?

THE Lost Coast: where ships go to die.



KEEP ON BANGING

INXS release *Bang The Drum* game

www.inxs.com

"BY THE BEARD of Zeus! You're dead, asphyxiated and hanging naked from a door!" That's what we would've said, had we been the unfortunates who found the body of INXS singer Michael Hutchence. But we're not. We're sweaty games journalists writing about a game called *Bang The Drum*, which lives on the band's official website. Assuming the role of drummer, you must bang the drum in rhythm with INXS classic, *Need You Tonight*. Hit the wrong drum three times and you fail, forcing the band to appear on reality TV shows in an attempt to regain its popularity.

SO, YOU WANT TO BE A... Games PR



NAME Leo Tan
WORKING ON NCsoft's behalf
AGE 29
PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE I was a hairdresser for about a decade before I went into PR

PCZ How did you get started?

LT I used to spend a lot of time on the old *Edge* forum. It was there I met Simon Byron, an established PR legend. I asked him if I could join him and talk about games for a living, and he said yes.

PCZ What's the pay like?

LT I've just put a down payment on a Ferrari. Honest.

PCZ What does your job involve?

LT Sending emails, playing games, phoning people, showing demos to journalists and organising press trips - in the UK and abroad.

PCZ How rewarding is the job?

LT Immensely. Not many of my fashion industry clients or co-workers wanted to hear about how I'd modded my joystick to contain the exact same parts that they use in arcades in Shinjuku. Joining the games industry has been like coming home after spending years in a foreign land. I am among my brethren.

PCZ What's the most annoying part of the job?

LT Admin. I hate Excel with every fibre of my being.

WE SAY... DIY

Love your games and don't be ashamed to tell people. Surprisingly, there are few people in games public relations who play them as seriously as the journalists, so if you've got good communication skills, enthusiasm and a passion for games, the best way to demonstrate them to a potential employer is on a work experience placement.

NEXT MONTH Become A... Freelance games journo

SNIPPETS



STAND-UP COMIC

Remember Apostasy, the *Half-Life 2* comic created using *Garry's Mod*? Well, this site features a host of game-based comic strips. With everything from *EverQuest II* to *Beyond Good & Evil* and the chance to volunteer your favourite game for the treatment, there's really something for everyone. www.gamics.com



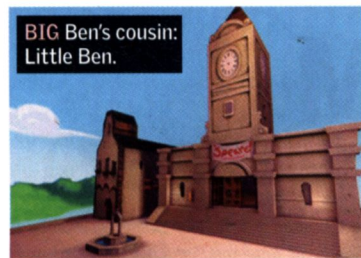
BACK TO THE FUTURE

Maybe taking their cue from *Guild Wars*, the good chaps at Funcom have recently announced that the free offer for *Anarchy Online* will extend into 2007. It's the long-term goal for Funcom to make sure that the removal of subscription fees, client costs and the need to have a credit card when registering for *Anarchy Online* remains a permanent offering. Free futuristic fun at the following link: funcom.vnewscenter.com/press.jsp?id=1126529444562

THE SECRET OF PLUNDER ISLAND

plunder3d.net/

UT2004 mod to feature LucasArts' *Monkey Island!*



BIG Ben's cousin: Little Ben.

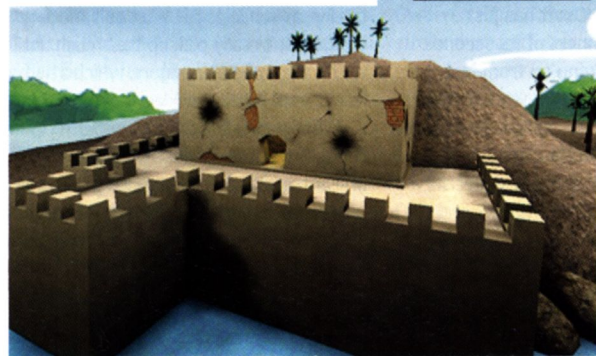
AVAST! IT'LL BE a point-and-click adventure with a difference then... In that you'll point, click and frag every scurvy dog that crosses ye path. Divert yer course away from that buxom siren

o't'Interweb and ye shall discover *Plunder Island* – based upon the fair township in *The Secret of Monkey Island*.

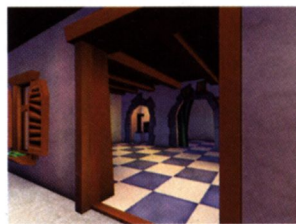
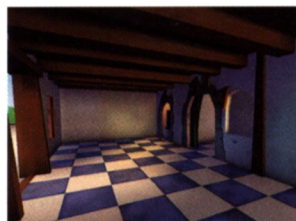
OK, we'll give up with the pirate-isms (it's September 19 and International Talk

Like a Pirate Day at the time of writing), but a mod based on the points-and-clicks of yore is a fairly intriguing nugget of information.

We strongly urge the team behind it to involve a three-headed monkey skin of some variety and taunts based on "I am rubber, you are glue" or we'll hoist the mainsail on the dirty bilge-rats... Or something along those lines...



THREE-HEADED monkey not pictured.



DON'T SHOOT THE MESSENGER

www.xfire.com

New version of Xfire adds essential features

IF YOU'RE NOT familiar with the free gaming messenger utility Xfire, then get with the programme girlfriend. It's an application designed for gamers, that lists all your friends and the titles they're currently playing online. If you have a copy of said game, Xfire allows

you a one-click ability to join in with your buddies immediately, with no fuss and faffing about searching for servers and IP addresses.

The new version (free to download or grab from the *PC ZONE DVD*) now includes a very useful in-game messenger system that can be customised to save any communiqués from your mates, avoiding nasty untimely interruptions in the middle of a *Counter-Strike* sesh. With other

features such as voice chat and file downloads from different gaming channels, Xfire is definitely worth checking out.

Far Eastern Promise

www.plaync.co.kr

NCsoft's bonkers online gaming portal debuts in Korea

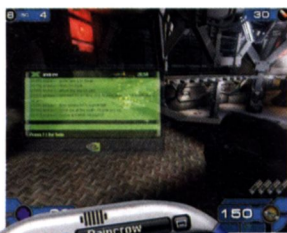
PONCY FASHION TYPES

would have us know that skinny jeans and Dr Jack from bizarre TV series *Lost* are the hottest things in the trendy world. But when it comes to PC gaming, online portals seem to be the newest accessory hanging from the arms of major publishers.

NCsoft's PlayNC website might only be for the crazy Koreans at the moment, but we reckon it's sure to come to the UK. Armed with translating website Babel Fish (babelfish.altavista.com) and a large dollop of patience, you'll initially need to deposit some money into an account (this is only used to purchase in-game items as the games are free) before picking up such crazy titles as *Smash Star* (bizarre Korean tennis), *Toy Strikers* (mental online cartoon shooter) and *Exteel* (barmy online mecha title). Titles are already backed up for the portal too, from a *Puzzle Bobble*-influenced *Puzzle Pang* to snowboarding title *SPJam*.



THEY love their stompy robots.



PHYSICS LESSON

www.garry.tv/garrysmod/

ZONE talks to Garry Newman (no relation), creator of the insanely popular *Garry's Mod* for *Half-Life 2*

PC ZONE What was your inspiration for creating the mod?

GARRY Everyone was playing a mod called *JBMod*. It was pretty awesome as it enabled the blue physgun and let you stick things together. People were making contraptions and stuff, but there really wasn't an easy way to rope things together. So I set about trying it myself.

PCZ Did you have any idea how popular it would become?

GARRY Not at first. There were points though. One day I had been up all night programming (literally all night - it was 6am). I wanted a way to freeze objects to make welding easier, so I coded it in, tried it in-game and it worked! Then I tried it out on a ragdoll and was knocked out. Ragdoll posing! I got a warm glowing feeling in the back of my head as all the possibilities rushed past my eyes.

PCZ Do you have any idea how many downloads *Garry's Mod* has had?

GARRY Quite a few spreading over all



the different versions! In August *GMod* v8.3 was downloaded 98,970 times just from my website.

PCZ Have Valve been in contact about the mod and if so, what did they say?

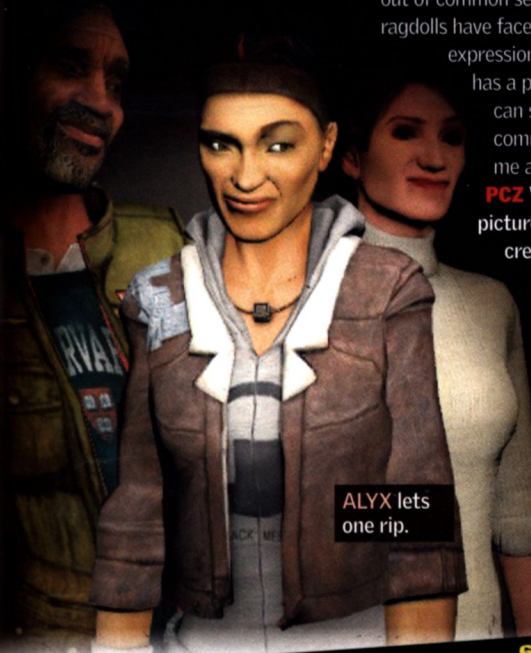
GARRY Yeah, Valve contacted me early on to say how much they were playing it. They're always on hand when I get stuck with something in the SDK too.

PCZ Who comes up with the new feature ideas? Do you think them all up yourself or do some come from the community?

GARRY Most of the features were born out of common sense I think. Like "Hey, ragdolls have faces - lets change their expression" or "Hey, that horse has a penis, lets make it so you can spawn it". That said, the community does pressure me a lot to add things.

PCZ What's your favourite picture that you've seen created with your mod and could we see it?

GARRY There have been tons, but the one that springs to mind that consistently make me laugh is this one - www.garry.tv/img/sa/mymod/women_drivers.jpg. Mainly because of the filename.



SNIPPETS



ROCKSTAR'S REVENGE

Rockstar has hit back at its critics with a spoof website. It begins with an email from JT@CitizensUnitedNegatingTechnology and a link to the website. Could it be a subtle attack on notorious US lawyer Jack Thompson? www.rockstargames.com/libertycitystories



DIE LIVES

Fans of *C&C* will be happy to know that Frank Klepacki, the genius who supplied the original music for the title has released a track that never made it into the game via his website. Apparently a 'thrashy metal number', *Die!* is definitely one to relive those heady days of commanding and conquering. www.frankklepacki.com

Bug-Fix of the Month

THIS MONTH: UNIVERSAL COMBAT



Patch v2.00.30 fixes the bug where "some naval units were placed on the seabed instead of floating at sea level".

Movie of the Month

DARK MESSIAH

Might & Magic's younger and much hotter cousin is a gorgeous first-person fantasy title that's been brought to life by the Source engine. Check it out in this superb movie - download it from www.fileshack.com.



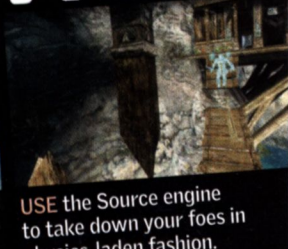
RUN away! Cowardly enemies attempt to scarp from your deadly blades.



A wizard's arsenal at your fingertips allows you to toast some goblin arse!



MELEE combat is looking like some of the most impressive we've seen yet...



USE the Source engine to take down your foes in physics-laden fashion.



Freeware

DVD ONLY



They may waste our lives, but they'll never take our freedom. Or our freeware...

Freeware is dedicated to bringing you the best free games content the Net has to offer, be it freeware, homebrews, remakes, webgames or emulation – you'll never have to buy another game again. This month you can get handy with a Korean oddity, some little blocks and a creature who's always hungry...



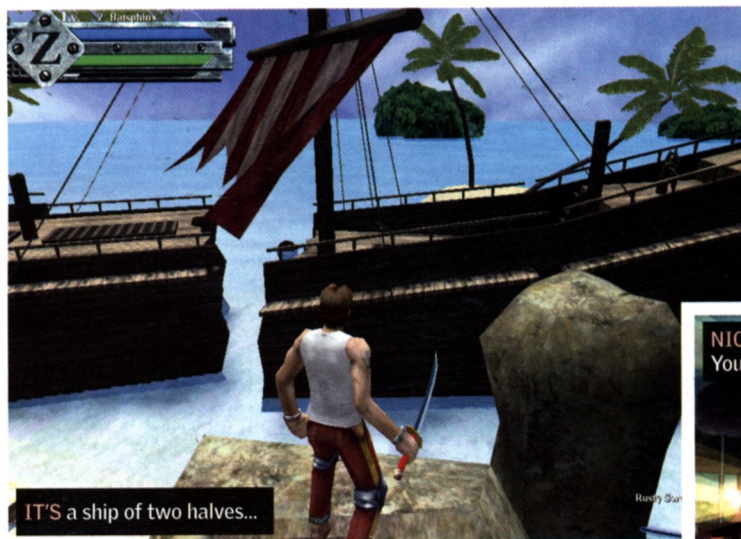
RUMBLE BOX

Geometry fun

Developer: DigiPen Institute of Technology
phackett.com/rumblebox/

Fully 3D beat 'em ups are rare, but rarer still are ones in which you, a vaguely human collection of geometric shapes, fight and destroy similar enemies, piling up and continuing to fight on their cubic remains before using the disjointed bodies of your foes to escape.

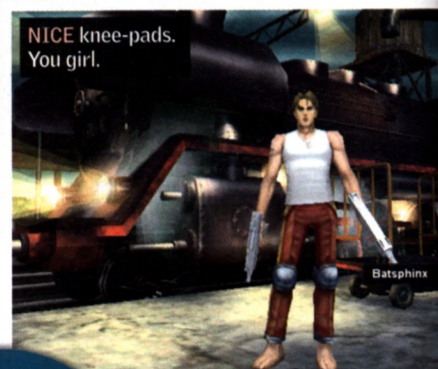
The combat is reminiscent of the red and blue rock-em-sock-em robots, right down to the ability to knock your opponents' spheres off their cubes. Complexity is added in the form of bomb-headed enemies and bonus levels, but this is about escaping from tail rooms by clambering on the corpses of the fallen. *Rumble Box* is highly addictive and great fun.



IT'S a ship of two halves...



DIG those orange trows.



NICE knee-pads. You girl.

GUNZ: THE DUEL

Developer: MAIET Entertainment
www.gunzonline.com

John Woo would approve

TAKE THE LEAPING and jumping of *Total Overdose* and stick it into deathmatch oddly reminiscent of a more basic bout of sabre-play in *Jedi Knight mp*, then put it through the, now trademarked, Korean 'odd' filter. What you get is *GunZ: The Duel* a sort-of persistent deathmatch universe with MMOG knobs on – levelling you up, selling you bigger weapons and reeling you in with its free simplicity.

There are extremely few international servers – the game

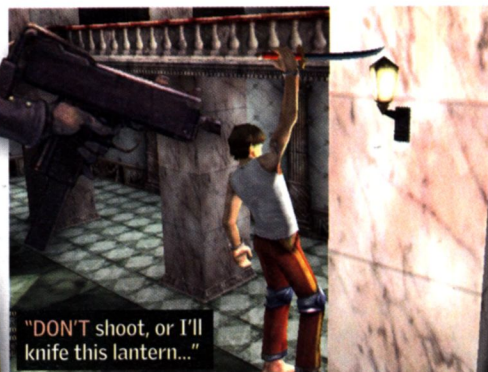
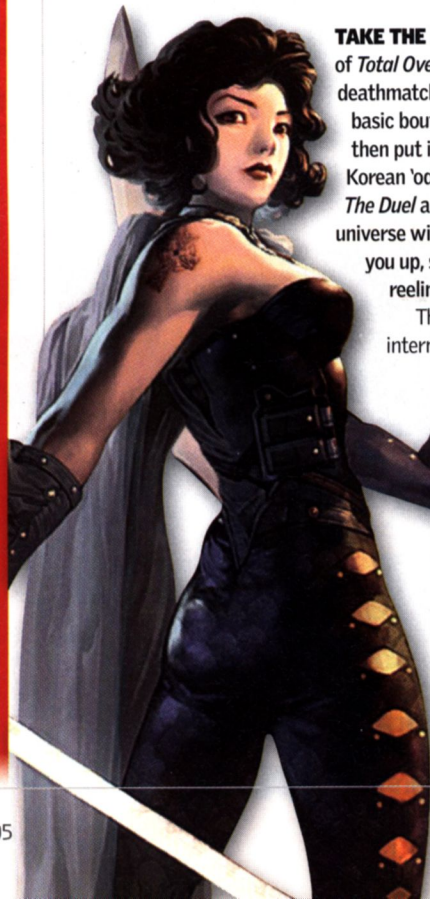


remains in beta outside of Korea – but should you wangle a connection in the packed halls of *GunZ*-play, then a lot of fun is to be had. It is basic, but an element of skill and complexity is rustled up by the acrobatic abilities of your avatar: running along walls, shoot dodging and jabbing your sword into hard-to-reach areas and hanging there for a little while – all easy to use but hard to master.

The mix of sword-swishing and gunnery, surprisingly, means that athletic face-offs between blade and Uzi are really quite fun – and not at all as unbalanced as you would have thought. Levels, too, are basic but imaginative – whether you're in an ancient coliseum or

shimmying up wrecked ships around a sunny beach. Overall, there's plenty of mindless fun to be had, even though anyone who fights beyond level ten will probably be in the minority.

You should be warned though, that this iteration, still in beta, can get extremely twitchy – especially if you're behind any variety of firewall. Also, be warned that everyone's first bout involves wearing identical orange trousers.



"DON'T shoot, or I'll knife this lantern..."

CONTROL MONGER

Get ready to mong some controls

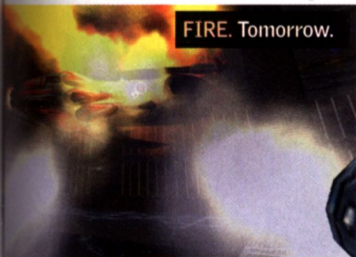
Developer: Mindsurge Entertainment | www.controlmonger.com

In the future, civilisation will collapse and mankind will become intent on destroying itself in large, rusty machines – this much is certain.

Sci-fi experts estimate that we have a good 80 years before this happens, at which point, statistically, we'll all be dead and ejected into space. Floating about in your space-coffin, you can relax

knowing you're far away from the sort of carnage and destruction so prevalent in futuristic online FPS *Control Monger*.

It's a standard deathmatch affair, giving you seven different classes of mech to play with, each with their own strengths, weaknesses and abilities. The Repair Bot, for example, can heal team-mates, while the likes of the Spy Bot can administer stealthy doom. At the time of writing there's not much happening online, with vacant beta servers feeling like virtual ghost towns. However, get enough people together and there's fun to be had here.



FIRE. Tomorrow.



ROBOT Wars gets extreme.



We are the polite and courteous Thraddash!

OF course you are.

SCII: THE UR-QUAN MASTERS

Get the baddies!

Developer: Toys For Bob | sc2.sourceforge.net/

Some games fade from the popular memory instantly, despite their shining brilliance: *Sanitarium*, *Circle Of Blood* and this, *Star Control II: The Ur-Quan Masters*. In *SCII*, Earth allies itself with other friendly alien races, but is crushed by the Ur-Quan. You have the last free Earth spaceship and your task is simple: you must liberate Earth and defeat the Ur-Quan.

We know this looks like a Borg's arsehole. Despite this, *UM* isn't simply another cheesy *Elite* rip-off. Yes, you spend a large amount of time hunting resources on planets and upgrading ships. Yes, there are randomised space

battles you *really* want to avoid. But *UM* has a strong RPG plot, where you must explore the universe's oddities, research alien races and strange worlds, and find out the Ur-Quan's weakness to exploit it.

Moreover, it's not just an RPG; it battles with *Sam & Max* for comic genius but has better gameplay. Cowardly alien races, impossibly daft gadgets, crazy mini-games disguised as mining or combat: it's a wonder you've not played this before...

EETS

Developer: Klei Entertainment
www.eetsgame.com

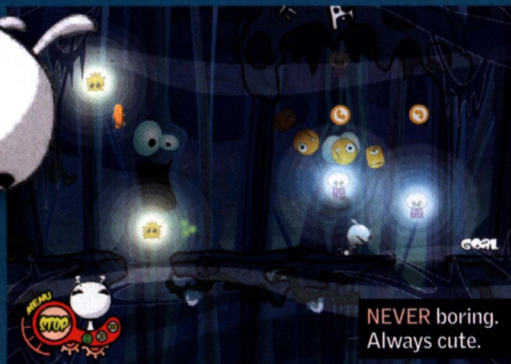
Feed me. Feed me now

Eets is one of those amorphous creatures that PC gaming so regularly spits out – in this case lying somewhere between *Futura's* Nibbler and the *House Of Mouse's* charming alien Stitch. He lives in a platform puzzle game in which it's your task to lay a trail of mood-inducing stimulants in his path – in turn, when he's angry he'll jump far, when he's scared

he'll refuse to jump and when he's vacantly ambling then he'll

do very little out of the ordinary at all. Apart from, perhaps, getting eaten by a whale and getting blasted out of its blowhole or having a pig fire a missile at a nearby wall from its arse.

Kneading the same part of your brain that *Lemmings* once pounded, *Eets* filters new oddities and gameplay tweaks as levels go on – meaning that while this isn't the most divine puzzler ever, it certainly never lets you get bored. Even though the moral message of making a cartoon character guzzle stimulants is somewhat dubious.



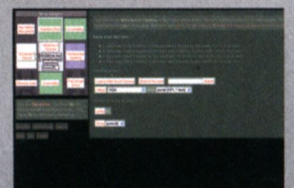
NEVER boring. Always cute.



WE like the candy floss tree.

WEBGAME OF THE MONTH

Urban Dead



Developer: Kevan Davis
www.urbandead.com

Finally, and at long last: a massively multiplayer zombie infestation text-adventure. To think that it took this long. You can choose to be a member of the shambling horde or simply a terrified civilian – and get 50 action points delivered to your account every day.

It's extremely odd and still being built, but essentially if you're a human then the idea is to avoid death and zombification – scavenging the wasteland and making sure you get behind barricades before your turns run out. Yes, it's confusing. Yes, you need some imagination. No, we don't think the maker wants to be taken particularly seriously either.

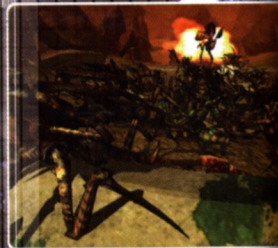
EVERYONE FIGHTS

"THE SCALE IS ASTONISHING AND IT LOOKS THE PART...
THE NUMBER OF ENEMIES IS UNLIKE ANYTHING
EVER EXPERIENCED IN AN FPS BEFORE"

PC GAMER JULY 2005

STARSHIP TROOPERS™

SCENE PROGRESS



PC DVD-ROM

STRANGELITE

Download the playable demo from
www.starshiptroopersgame.com

Starship Troopers: TM & © 1998, 2005 TriStar Pictures Inc. All Rights Reserved.
Empire and ® are either trademarks or registered trademarks of Empire Interactive
Europe Ltd in the UK/Europe and/or other countries. All Rights Reserved

... NO ONE QUILS



COMING TO PC OCTOBER 2005



JOINT OPERATIONS: REALITY

Steve Hogarty reckons war has never been so real

www.brutal-arts.com



"SOMETHING I said?"

APPARENTLY, NOVALOGIC is a liar. According to Brutal Arts, war is only vaguely like *Joint Ops* would have us believe, and it's set out to rectify this by creating *Joint Ops: Reality*, a tweak mod for the online shooter.

As is the nature of these mods, the changes are as pedantic as they are numerous. For example, the M4, M24, SR-25, M249 and AT4s have been removed from the rebel armoury, as rebels would supposedly have limited or

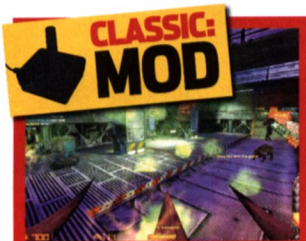
no real-world access to these weapons; the mini-map has been removed and replaced with a compass; weapon names and erroneous text have been cut; and new weapon models and new uniforms have been added.

Obviously, Brutal Arts has been doing its homework, but whether or not it's made improvements is dependent on how much you care about authenticity.

Do you really care if the mortar ammunition levels have been reduced? Will you even notice the minute ballistic tweaks on certain weapons? Would the lack of a mini-map irritate you, or would it make you grin like a big army nerd? If you answered "yes, yes and the second one", you should check this out.



COULD do with some varnishing...



NATURAL SELECTION Survival of the fittest

www.natural-selection.org

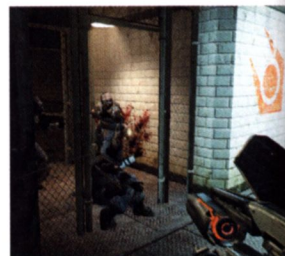
ANOTHER HALF-LIFE MOD, another classic. *Natural Selection* is still one of the most popular mods for Valve's original Gordon Freeman outing, with full-on marines vs aliens team-based action. What makes it so special is that one marine can play commander from a top-down view, leading attacks on the non-human creatures. The aliens, meanwhile, have a communal command structure and can evolve lethal upgrades such as cloaking, and even transform into more lethal beings that can run across walls and scoff marines with a single bite. Plans are afoot for a conversion to the Source engine, with *Natural Selection 2* confirmed to be launching as a standalone game. Check out this belting mod for nowt on our DVD.

MINERVA: METASTASIS

www.hylobatidae.org/minerva/



Suzy Wallace worships at the altar of Minerva



MINERVA'S AN INTERESTING concept. Metastasis is just one single-player map, but it's also the first part of this episodic mod, meaning that the tantalising storyline introduced here will slowly be unravelled one map (or episode) at a time.

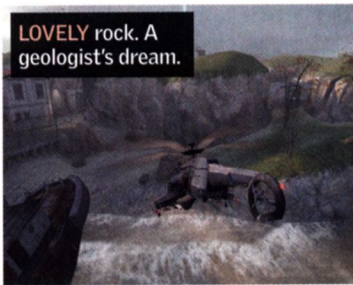
And having just completed the first episode, we're already hooked.

As far as content goes, it's pretty vanilla *Half-Life 2* stuff, but it's the story that will draw you in. The level starts as you're deposited in style on a mysterious island brimming with Combine soldiers, and soon after you begin to receive cryptic messages and directions from an unknown third party.

Just what the island's purpose is isn't yet clear, but the mystery deepens as you make your way into the heart of the facility. By handing you enough titbits to pique your interest, the map leaves you begging for more. You'll have to wait to see whether *Minerva* can pull off its convoluted story, but initial signs are looking promising...



THE leccy bill will be huge.



LOVELY rock. A geologist's dream.

FREEPLAYPLAY!

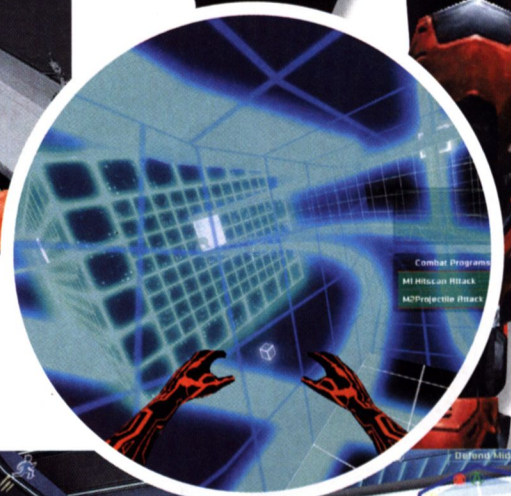


PLAY: MOD

DYSTOPIA

DVD ONLY

 dystopia-game.com



Steve Hogarty goes back to the future

SOMEWHERE ALONG OUR timeline, in between being conquered by damned dirty apes and the invention of the chrome-laden self-driving hovercar, lies that bit of the future (circa *Deus Ex*), where cybernetically enhanced nerds get their sweaty hands on some hi-tech weaponry and attempt to take down mega-corporations through a mixture of 133t hax0ring skillz and all-out blasting.

It's in this inevitable era that *Half-Life 2* mod *Dystopia* is set, and rather than crowbaring it into a standard deathmatch mould, Team Dystopia has carefully and expertly crafted the cyberpunk concept around the original gameplay, creating the best multiplayer mod for *Half-Life 2* we've seen so far.

DIGITAL LOVE

First impressions smell faintly of *UT's* Assault mode, in that games are objective-based with attacking and defending teams, each team has three available classes from light to heavy, and each class has varying levels of cybernetic implants and different weapons to choose from.

So far, so standard, but where this mod really innovates is with the inclusion of a

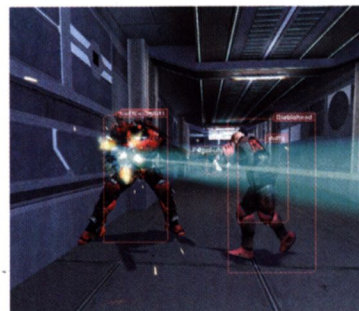
fully 3D cyberspace (think *Tron*), accessible from terminals dotted about the map. Jacking in to one of these terminals, you leave your corporeal body behind and enter what looks like a mix between a gay '80s disco and an Escher painting. Resisting the urge to hum Bee Gees tunes, you must float about the ethereal digital world hacking real-world turrets and opening real-world doors for team-mates while they, hopefully, guard your motionless body back at the terminal. It's a feature that works really well, as proper co-ordination between team-mates in cyberspace and the real world can result in highly satisfying victories.

Back on solid ground (or at least as solid as ground gets in a computer game), you'll find the weapons and classes nicely balanced, and while the graphical style doesn't stress the Source engine, it more than impresses with its shiny, futuristic and of course, dystopian style.

At the moment, the mod is still in its demo state, meaning there's only one map on show. However, with the full version promising vehicles (and the ability to shoot from vehicles), this is definitely a mod to keep an eye on. Keep both eyes on it actually. Unless you're driving or performing surgery.



LIKE Bluewater. But with less chavs.



FREEPLAYPLAY!



PLAY: MOD



KILLING FLOOR



Suzy Wallace mops up the mess left by this zombie mod

www.killingfloor.freedomnet.net/



THE STREETS OF London are filled with shuffling, brain-dead flesh-eaters. And no, we're not talking about your average commuter here but *Killing Floor*, the latest zombie mod to be released for *UT2004*.

Booting the mod up, it's obvious that the brains behind this have focused on making it as dark and gritty as possible. The first level sees overturned double-deckers smouldering at the edges of empty roads, police cars and barriers lying strewn around the deserted

streets and fires burning into the night. This grimy ambience is continued right through all five levels, from sewers to laboratories, with some of the darkest levels we've seen outside of *Doom 3* making an appearance. Such atmospheric detail does set the scene beautifully, but it also makes it easy to miss things in the gloom. The team have also implemented basic physics into the Unreal engine – some full-time developers may be quaking in their boots right about now.

Your first encounter with the walking dead is a bit of a shocker. One moment you're wandering around the deserted streets, spooking yourself; and the next, you're stood in the aisle of a church as an entire swarm of undead amble towards you.

COMING TO GET YOU...

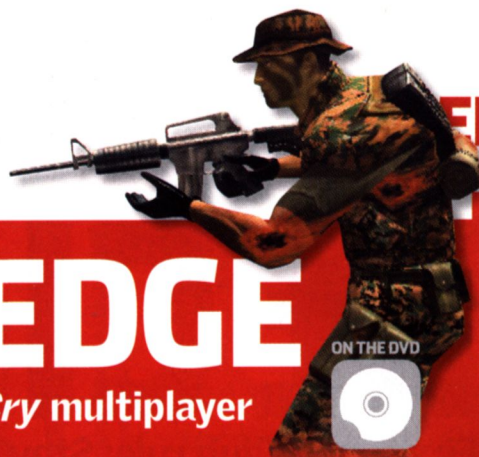
Normally this would herald the beginning of zombie giblets for all, but *KF* features neither a crosshair nor ironsights. Add to this that head-shots are needed to take down these beasts cleanly, your movement is directly related to your health (so you can't run away when nearly dead), plus the wholesale lack of ammunition, and what you end up with is a game that's about as hard as Vinnie Jones on steroids. If you've played any of the *Resident Evil* titles you'll feel right at home, as the best survival policy often seems to be running away.

The multiplayer side of the mod sees you and your buddies teaming up to defend against waves of incoming zombies. Luckily, the weapons on offer in *KF* are suitably meaty and offer enough blasting variety to keep you coming back for more.

So it's bloody tough, beautifully presented and crammed with all manner of undead beings baying for your flesh. Despite its subject, *Killing Floor* is far from lifeless.



**PLAY:
MOD**



REPLAYPLAY!

OBSIDIAN EDGE

Steve Hogarty shifts up a gear in *Far Cry* multiplayer

www.obsidianege.net



CAN YOU IMAGINE that, as you get shot in the face for the eighth time by some unknown jungle entity, there are people out there who think that multiplayer *Far Cry* is too easy? Well, these people exist, and after mysteriously disappearing for 15 months they've emerged with funny beards and a mod for the jungle sim, injecting it with some realism and tweaking the gameplay for a more intense (and difficult) multiplayer experience.

Major additions include three new game types, the obvious enough Last Man Standing mode, the Very Important Person mode in which keeping a certain team member alive is vital to your success, and Domination, which is the lovechild of *Far Cry's* Assault mode and *Battlefield's* control point-snatching

"SUNNY day, sweepin' the clouds away..."



gameplay. Aside from game types, there are reams of minor changes too, things like reduced running speeds, lengthened stamina bars, a greatly improved and bloomified night vision mode, new weapons and a range of other tweaks you won't notice until you take a look at the manual.

With over 25 maps, *Obsidian Edge* feels more like a rethinking of, and an upgrade to, *Far Cry's* multiplayer, rather than a complete modification of it. While it's let down by the lack of players (getting a good game on some of the larger maps is rare), it's definitely worth a shot for anybody tired of sniping me in the face with such ease.

HI-RES HALF-LIFE 2 FACE PACK

Tart up *Half-Life 2* with these hi-res skins

half-life2.filefront.com

ON THE DVD

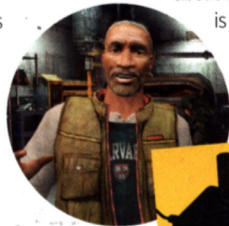
THINK HALF-LIFE 2'S character textures are a bit sub-par? No? We didn't either, until we downloaded and installed these hi-resolution skins, which come courtesy of some clever bugger by the name of 'Fakefactory'.

Not his first *Half-Life* mod, this shows that the lad knows how to make a darn fine skin. Check out the revamped Barney (now with a distinct whiff of George Clooney about him if you ask us), or the incredibly detailed faces of Eli, Mossman and the rest of the resistance. And Alyx just got hotter. Yowza.

The good guys aren't the only ones to get a makeover, with all varieties of Combine soldiers and baddie big cheese Dr Breen receiving the re-texturing treatment. Just

look at his smarmy grin and added wrinkles.

Is there a downside to all this? Well, if you aren't in possession of a fairly beefy rig (at least 1GB of RAM), then you might experience a bit of chugging, but that's about it. The only real flaw in our eyes is that it didn't appear in time for us to use it the first time through *Half-Life 2*. Oh well, any excuse to play again...



**PLAY:
MOD**



...AND after.



PCZONE TOP 5 BATTLEFIELD 1942 MODS



- 1 DESERT COMBAT**
So good that DICE decided to take on most of the team full-time, *Desert Combat* provides modern-day Middle Eastern thrills and spills for *BF1942*.
- 2 FORGOTTEN HOPE**
Expands the WWII content with more realistic gameplay, new vehicles and maps. The game that *BF1942* could have been.
- 3 GALACTIC CONQUEST**
Brings the world of *Star Wars* to DICE's shooter. Featuring accurately reproduced vehicles and space battles, the force is strong with this one.
- 4 BATTLEFIELD PIRATES**
Avast! Here be a pirate mod for you landlubbers. Man your ships to sail on the high seas as you battle against the scallywag opposition.
- 5 INTERSTATE 1982**
Mad Max-style dealings in this vehicle-based mod. Smoothly blending the genres of intense combat and racing, this is hi-octane stuff.

Fight Club



First Fight Club rule: Stay low, watch your ammo, don't scream

COME AND TAKE ON THE ZONE STAFF IN OUR MONTHLY ONLINE GAMING FREE-FOR-ALL!



WHAT IS FIGHT Club? Many say it's a home for the best of the best. Others maintain it's an bloodthirsty arena of online gaming action. Yet more insist it's a monthly showcase of the finest gamers in the land. In truth, it's your chance to show the PC ZONE staffers exactly how bad they are at competitive gaming by kicking their arses in a different online game each month!

For several hours every four weeks, we say goodbye to our social lives, padlock the office doors and do our best to make an organised assault on anything from *Battlefield 2* to *Counter-Strike: Source*. From *UT2004* to *City Of Heroes*. From *SWAT 4* to *Call Of Duty*. If there's an online deathmatch mode, we'll

play it. We won't be any good at it. But we'll play it nonetheless.

Fight Club is your chance to join us online for several hours of madness, mayhem and marauding malevolence. Our next meet-up will be **Thursday, November 10 at 6.30pm**. The game of choice? *SWAT 4* – one we're actually quite good at in fact.

To join in, simply install the game in question, check out www.zonegames.co.uk for the server address and jump in when the time is right. If the server is full, just keep trying as we have a regular turnover of players every 30 minutes or so. Everyone's welcome, so don't be shy. You won't embarrass yourself. No more than we do month in, month out anyway...



THIS is the most organised the ZONE boys have ever got.

Command

FALL IN

ZONE CHAT



Join us for our monthly online fireside gaming chats

READ THE FULL TRANSCRIPT AT
WWW.ZONEGAMES.CO.UK!

OUR MONTHLY ONLINE chat session proved to be another roaring success – talk about *F.E.A.R.*, the authenticity of Jaffa cakes and ex-ZONE staff members providing much of the fun. Plus the fabled ZONE Chat competition finally returned! Up for grabs were special-edition Tom Clancy (see page 134) and *Rayman* packs, plus a limited edition *Scrapland* metal bust (such generosity). The lucky winner was one Stuart Reid from Middlesex who came up with the funniest reason why the armless French platform mascot is better than Sam 'Sneaky' Fisher. Well done to him!

We'll be back on Wednesday, November 9 at 5pm for an hour of mirth and mayhem. Feel free to join us and say hello – there's never been a better time.

How to join in!

DVD ONLY Taking part in ZONE Chat is as easy as ABC... Or in this case IRC (ho ho). Simply grab a copy of mIRC from our cover-disc, install it onto your super-spangly PC, think of an online 'handle' for yourself, then at the appointed hour simply don your ceremonial robes, lower the lights in not only your house but those of your neighbours too, light the candles, commence chanting and connect to one of the Quakenet servers. Then simply type /join #pcz into the command line and as if by magic you'll find our home away from home, filled with the cream of our reader crop. Say hello, be polite and you'll soon be one of us.



THE much-talked about *F.E.A.R.*

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PCZONE

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Only two months left for you to enter our spectacular prize-giving gaming tournament! Sign up for solo or team matches at www.pczone.jolt.co.uk and prove your chops to win a host of top prizes!

DAY OF DEFEAT – 1V1 SNIPER

SEMI FINALS

Saintz|Ayanami 11 – 12 zCore` Joeri
s0x 11 – 12 Smackdaddy

FINAL

zCore` Joeri 16 – 12 Smackdaddy

WINNER Joeri "zCore` Joeri" Franken

QUAKE 3 – CTF 4V4

SEMI FINALS

aAa 3 – 2 EYE
RaWR! 2 – 5 FOE

FINAL (OVER THREE MAPS)

aAa 2 – 1 FOE
aAa 1 – 3 FOE
aAa 1 – 0 FOE

WINNER aAa aka Against All Authority

DAY OF DEFEAT – 6V6

SEMI FINALS

sH 755 – 397 ince
Nova 336 – 771 eXception

FINAL

sH 670 – 430 eXception

WINNER sH aka steelHand

Readers' Challenge is proudly sponsored by the following companies



The V9950 series from leading graphics card manufacturer Asus takes GeForce FX performance to a new level.



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The home of online gaming, Jolt provides services from basic *Quake* clan ports to managed corporate game server solutions.

Can't make Fight Club?

Can't make Fight Club? Worry not, we have the following public servers running 24/7, so drop in any time you feel like taking on a fellow PCZ reader. You may even catch the ZONE staff in there. As always, you can find up-to-the-minute server information at www.zonegames.co.uk

WHO'S WHO

Jamie Sefton PCZ_NorthernScum
Paul Presley PCZ_Prezzer
Will Porter PCZ_Batsphinx
Suzy Wallace PCZ_Uzibat
Jamie Malcolm PCZ_Jimlad
Phil Wand PCZ_People's Front Of Judea
Steve Hogarty PCZ_escaped_monkey

- 1 SWAT 4**
swat4.zonegames.co.uk
- 2 COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE**
cs1.zonegames.co.uk:27015
cs2.zonegames.co.uk:27025
- 3 HALF-LIFE 2: DEATHMATCH**
hl2.zonegames.co.uk:27055
- 4 HALF-LIFE DEATHMATCH**
hl.zonegames.co.uk:27035
- 5 TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC**
tfc.zonegames.co.uk:27045
- 6 CALL OF DUTY**
cod.zonegames.co.uk:28960
- 7 UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004**
ut1.zonegames.co.uk:7777
ut2.zonegames.co.uk:8888
- 8 WOLFENSTEIN: ENEMY TERRITORY**
et.zonegames.co.uk:27960
- 9 SAVAGE**
savage.zonegames.co.uk:11235
- 10 JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING**
Listed on NovaWorld



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How to vote...

Text your vote and you will be entered into a draw to win a fabulous VIP trip for two to this year's Golden Joystick Awards and party in London PLUS hundreds of games to be won!

Example: If you think *Tekken 5* was the best *PlayStation 2* game of the year, text **VA 9** to **80889** - don't forget to leave a space between the code and the number!

PC GAME OF THE YEAR

TEXT VE 1 TO 80889 > CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 5
TEXT VE 2 TO 80889 > DOOM 3: RESURRECTION OF EVIL
TEXT VE 3 TO 80889 > FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005
TEXT VE 4 TO 80889 > GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
TEXT VE 5 TO 80889 > HALF-LIFE 2
TEXT VE 6 TO 80889 > ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3
TEXT VE 7 TO 80889 > STAR WARS KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC II: THE SITH LORDS
TEXT VE 8 TO 80889 > THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE EARTH
TEXT VE 9 TO 80889 > THE SIMS 2: UNIVERSITY
TEXT VE 10 TO 80889 > WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR - WINTER ASSAULT

HANDHELD GAME OF THE YEAR

TEXT VC 1 TO 80889 > ADVANCE WARS: DUAL STRIKE
TEXT VC 2 TO 80889 > ANOTHER CODE: TWO MEMORIES
TEXT VC 3 TO 80889 > BURNOUT LEGENDS
TEXT VC 4 TO 80889 > FINAL FANTASY I & II: DAWN OF SOULS
TEXT VC 5 TO 80889 > LEGO STAR WARS
TEXT VC 6 TO 80889 > RIDGE RACER
TEXT VC 7 TO 80889 > SUPER MARIO 64 DS
TEXT VC 8 TO 80889 > THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE MINISH CAP
TEXT VC 9 TO 80889 > WARIOWARE TOUCHED!
TEXT VC 10 TO 80889 > WIPEOUT PURE

HERO OF 2005

TEXT VO 1 TO 80889 > CJ FROM GTA: SAN ANDREAS
TEXT VO 2 TO 80889 > GORDON FREEMAN FROM HALF-LIFE 2
TEXT VO 3 TO 80889 > LEON FROM RESIDENT EVIL 4
TEXT VO 4 TO 80889 > MASTER CHIEF FROM HALO 2
TEXT VO 5 TO 80889 > SNAKE FROM METAL GEAR SOLID 3

PLAYSTATION 2 GAME OF THE YEAR

TEXT VA 1 TO 80889 > DESTROY ALL HUMANS!
TEXT VA 2 TO 80889 > DEVIL MAY CRY 3
TEXT VA 3 TO 80889 > GOD OF WAR
TEXT VA 4 TO 80889 > GRAN TURISMO 4
TEXT VA 5 TO 80889 > GTA: SAN ANDREAS
TEXT VA 6 TO 80889 > LEGO STAR WARS
TEXT VA 7 TO 80889 > METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER
TEXT VA 8 TO 80889 > PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4
TEXT VA 9 TO 80889 > TEKKEN 5
TEXT VA 10 TO 80889 > TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT

PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR

TEXT VI 1 TO 80889 > ACTIVISION
TEXT VI 2 TO 80889 > CAPCOM
TEXT VI 3 TO 80889 > ELECTRONIC ARTS
TEXT VI 4 TO 80889 > KONAMI
TEXT VI 5 TO 80889 > MICROSOFT CORPORATION
TEXT VI 6 TO 80889 > NINTENDO
TEXT VI 7 TO 80889 > ROCKSTAR GAMES
TEXT VI 8 TO 80889 > SONY
TEXT VI 9 TO 80889 > THQ
TEXT VI 10 TO 80889 > UBISOFT ENTERTAINMENT LTD.

VILLAIN OF 2005

TEXT VP 1 TO 80889 > DEATH'S HAND FROM JADE EMPIRE
TEXT VP 2 TO 80889 > DR BREEN FROM HALF-LIFE 2
TEXT VP 3 TO 80889 > OFFICER TEPENNY FROM GTA: SAN ANDREAS
TEXT VP 4 TO 80889 > SADDLER FROM RESIDENT EVIL 4
TEXT VP 5 TO 80889 > VOLGIN FROM METAL GEAR SOLID 3

XBOX GAME OF THE YEAR

TEXT VD 1 TO 80889 > CONKER: LIVE AND RELOADED
TEXT VD 2 TO 80889 > DOOM 3
TEXT VD 3 TO 80889 > FORZA MOTORSPORT
TEXT VD 4 TO 80889 > GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
TEXT VD 5 TO 80889 > HALO 2
TEXT VD 6 TO 80889 > JADE EMPIRE
TEXT VD 7 TO 80889 > ODDWORLD: STRANGER'S WRATH
TEXT VD 8 TO 80889 > PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4
TEXT VD 9 TO 80889 > STAR WARS KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC II: THE SITH LORDS
TEXT VD 10 TO 80889 > TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY

THE SUN ONE TO WATCH FOR 2006

TEXT VM 1 TO 80889 > AGE OF EMPIRES III
TEXT VM 2 TO 80889 > ANIMAL CROSSING DS
TEXT VM 3 TO 80889 > BURNOUT: REVENGE
TEXT VM 4 TO 80889 > FINAL FANTASY XII
TEXT VM 5 TO 80889 > GEARS OF WAR
TEXT VM 6 TO 80889 > MARIO & LUIGI 2
TEXT VM 7 TO 80889 > RESIDENT EVIL 5
TEXT VM 8 TO 80889 > S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: SHADOW OF CHERNOBYL
TEXT VM 9 TO 80889 > THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION
TEXT VM 10 TO 80889 > UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2007

BEST FILM-BASED GAME OF 2005

TEXT VG 1 TO 80889 > RESIDENT EVIL 4
TEXT VG 2 TO 80889 > SPIDER-MAN 2
TEXT VG 3 TO 80889 > STAR WARS KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC II: THE SITH LORDS
TEXT VG 4 TO 80889 > STAR WARS: EPISODE III - REVENGE OF THE SITH
TEXT VG 5 TO 80889 > THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY - DEVELOPER'S CUT

GAMECUBE GAME OF THE YEAR

TEXT VB 1 TO 80889 > CALL OF DUTY: FINEST HOUR
TEXT VB 2 TO 80889 > DONKEY KONG: JUNGLE BEAT
TEXT VB 3 TO 80889 > KILLER 7
TEXT VB 4 TO 80889 > MARIO PARTY 6
TEXT VB 5 TO 80889 > METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES
TEXT VB 6 TO 80889 > PAPER MARIO: THE THOUSAND YEAR DOOR
TEXT VB 7 TO 80889 > RESIDENT EVIL 4
TEXT VB 8 TO 80889 > TALES OF SYMPHONIA
TEXT VB 9 TO 80889 > THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS ADVENTURES
TEXT VB 10 TO 80889 > TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT

THE ONE TO WATCH FOR XMAS 2005

TEXT VL 1 TO 80889 > BLACK & WHITE 2
TEXT VL 2 TO 80889 > CALL OF DUTY 2: BIG RED ONE
TEXT VL 3 TO 80889 > F.E.A.R.
TEXT VL 4 TO 80889 > GRAND THEFT AUTO: LIBERTY CITY STORIES
TEXT VL 5 TO 80889 > MARIO KART DS
TEXT VL 6 TO 80889 > PERFECT DARK ZERO
TEXT VL 7 TO 80889 > RESIDENT EVIL 4
TEXT VL 8 TO 80889 > STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II
TEXT VL 9 TO 80889 > THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS
TEXT VL 10 TO 80889 > THE MOVIES

THE GIRL'S CHOICE FOR 2005

TEXT VQ 1 TO 80889 > EVE ONLINE: EXODUS
TEXT VQ 2 TO 80889 > GTA: SAN ANDREAS
TEXT VQ 3 TO 80889 > HALO 2
TEXT VQ 4 TO 80889 > RESIDENT EVIL 4
TEXT VQ 5 TO 80889 > THE SIMS 2

THE SUN ONLINE - ONLINE GAME OF THE YEAR

TEXT VF 1 TO 80889 > BATTLEFIELD 2
TEXT VF 2 TO 80889 > CITY OF HEROES
TEXT VF 3 TO 80889 > EVE ONLINE: EXODUS
TEXT VF 4 TO 80889 > EVERQUEST II
TEXT VF 5 TO 80889 > GUILD WARS
TEXT VF 6 TO 80889 > PHANTASY STAR ONLINE BLUE BURST
TEXT VF 7 TO 80889 > STAR WARS GALAXIES: EPISODE III RAGE OF THE WOOKIEES
TEXT VF 8 TO 80889 > STAR WARS GALAXIES: THE TOTAL EXPERIENCE
TEXT VF 9 TO 80889 > THE MATRIX ONLINE
TEXT VF 10 TO 80889 > WORLD OF WARCRAFT

NUTS MAGAZINE ULTIMATE GAME OF THE YEAR

TEXT VN 1 TO 80889 > BATTLEFIELD 2
TEXT VN 2 TO 80889 > EVE ONLINE: EXODUS
TEXT VN 3 TO 80889 > GOD OF WAR
TEXT VN 4 TO 80889 > GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
TEXT VN 5 TO 80889 > HALF-LIFE 2
TEXT VN 6 TO 80889 > HALO 2
TEXT VN 7 TO 80889 > METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER
TEXT VN 8 TO 80889 > PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4
TEXT VN 9 TO 80889 > RESIDENT EVIL 4
TEXT VN 10 TO 80889 > WORLD OF WARCRAFT

RETAILER OF THE YEAR

TEXT VJ 1 TO 80889 > AMAZON
TEXT VJ 2 TO 80889 > GAME
TEXT VJ 3 TO 80889 > GAMEPLAY
TEXT VJ 4 TO 80889 > GAMESTATION
TEXT VJ 5 TO 80889 > PLAY.COM

GAME ONE INNOVATION OF THE YEAR

TEXT VK 1 TO 80889 > HALO 2 ONLINE RANKING
TEXT VK 2 TO 80889 > NINTENDO DS
TEXT VK 3 TO 80889 > NVIDIA SL
TEXT VK 4 TO 80889 > SONY PSP
TEXT VK 5 TO 80889 > VALVE STEAM

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RULES: To be in with a chance of winning the VIP trip to this year's Golden Joystick Awards, simply text your vote and wait for the instructions on how to enter. All you have to do is answer the question sent to you following your vote. All texts cost 50p per message plus your standard operator cost. Please ask the person who pays the bill before you send your vote. Service supplied by Mediacat Ltd, Grindhall, Henham, Herts, CM22 6AY
No purchase necessary: You may also vote online at www.goldenjoystick.co.uk

BEST GAME SOUNDTRACK OF 2005

TEXT VH 1 TO 80889 > GRAN TURISMO 4
TEXT VH 2 TO 80889 > GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
TEXT VH 3 TO 80889 > HALO 2
TEXT VH 4 TO 80889 > NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND
TEXT VH 5 TO 80889 > TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2



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Get the most out of F.E.A.R.

Fantastic Expectations. Amazing Revelations. *Will Porter's* got the *F.E.A.R.*

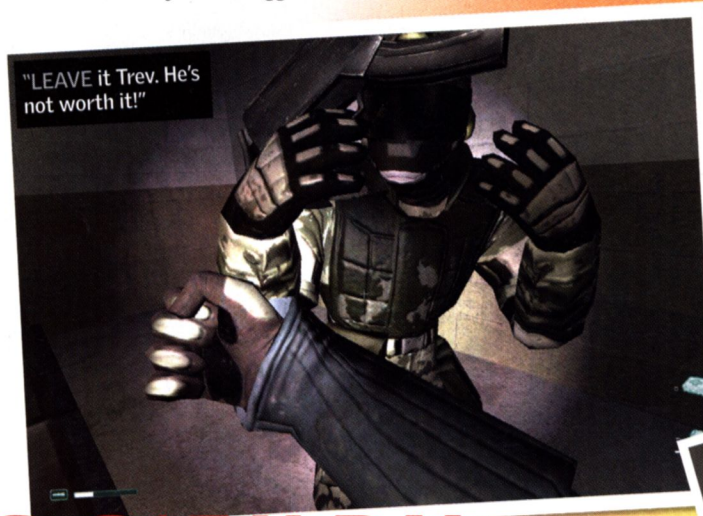
I'M NOT GOING to spoil anything about her with the darkened eyes and the dingy red dress, nor am I going to say anything that should have 'SPOILER' daubed in red above every single word. What I will tell you, however, is how to eke the most enjoyment out of Monolith's classy shooter. The only thing to add to the list below is never underestimate the power of your pistols. Oh, and don't forget to use the slo-mo – otherwise you'll be buggered.

Need:

A copy of *F.E.A.R.*
Working brain and associated motor skills
Thirst for blood

What you'll get:

Slightly less time being shot to ribbons ✓
Knowledge of where to expect a couple of Easter Eggs ✓
The game ruined for you ✗
Less scared ✗



01 F.I.S.T.S. Of F.U.R.Y.

There's nothing more satisfying than clearing a room without the use of boom-sticks, and *F.E.A.R.*'s melee moves are certainly a cut above the rest – especially when in slo-mo. Unless you're really dim you'll have realised that you've got your super chop-socky leaping kick, and you'll probably be aware that there's a sliding tackle move that you can use by crouching and right-clicking. It's easy to miss the fact, however, that by jumping on the spot and using your alternate fire button without jabbing in any particular direction will see you perform a neat round-house kick. It's even easier to miss the fact that holstering your weapons (default: H) will bring out your dukes, and allow you to batter leather-clad goons in the traditional way.

02 Jar Jar Mapes

We hate him, hate him lots. But if you were wondering exactly what the initials RTFM emblazoned on his belt buckle mean then you've come to the right place. It stands for 'Read The F**king Manual' – something Mapes would be accustomed to saying seeing as he works in computer support and is a phenomenal twat. Of course, Monolith probably isn't immune to having the same reaction when idiots call up with enquiries about guns that don't work and computers that don't turn on.



03 Things Fall Apart

It's tricky to predict exactly how dismemberment works in *F.E.A.R.* – there are a lot of random factors involved and as such, the more spectacular limb-tosses are pretty spaced out. That said, the shotgun is the easiest and most effective way of tearing flesh asunder, while slightly mis-aimed shots from the battle-cannon can also have a similar effect – if you can avoid your enemy simply disappearing into a shower of red mist, that is.



04 Turrets Syndrome

These turrets are bastards. Absolute shits. Obviously slo-mo is your friend here, but the neatest and most effective way of taking them out is with the grenades strapped around your waist. It can be quite tricky to hit them dead on with an explosive though, so my trick is to equip your shotgun and jam on your heightened reflexes – shoot the grenade as it gracefully arcs beneath the automated guns and it'll be fit for the scrap heap in no time.

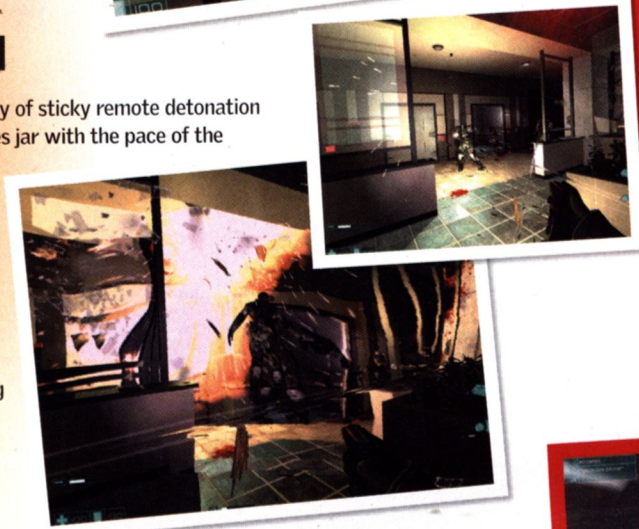
05 Know Your Enemies

Every squad will have a leader, and even though they're quite hard to distinguish from their minions they'll be the one's doing most of the talking – ordering some to hold position, telling others to wait, regroup or attack. Knock him out and the fighting unit will become weaker. You'll know that you're getting through the numbers when soldiers run off shouting for reinforcements, although be aware that they sometimes don't run all that far.



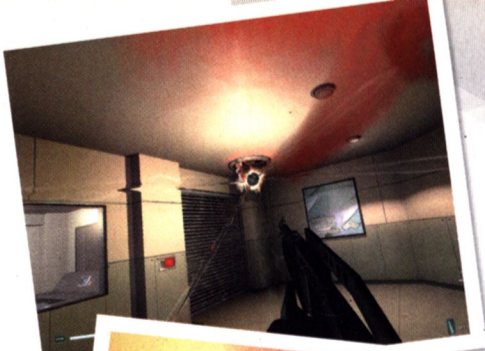
06 Stuck on You

Don't ignore the beauty of sticky remote detonation mines. Using them does jar with the pace of the game somewhat, but there's nothing more satisfying than a game of chasey-chasey back through a level, leading an ignorant mass of snarling black leather underneath a groaning arch of explosives you placed earlier. Remember, they stick to anything – so be as creative as you like.



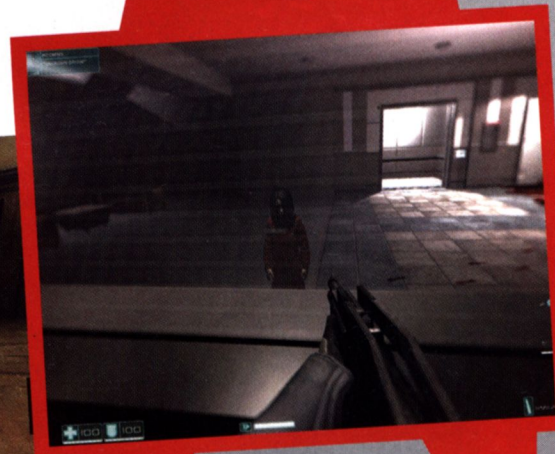
07 When Characters Interact

Two thirds of the way through the game you find yourself stranded in some abandoned slums with Jin Sun-Qwon and Douglas Holiday after a helicopter crash. They tell you to move on ahead and nail some patrolling enemies, but if you hang around then you'll see Holiday desperately trying to chat up the wounded Jin. "Why don't you move along so I can do my thing?" barks Holiday, having explained his predilection for Asian ladies. "Please stay," begs Jin.



08 We Made This

After the tale has panned out and you're faced with a cascade of Monolith production staff, don't automatically reach for the escape key. There's a nugget of story development (and we mean nugget, it's hardly earth-shattering) that plays out after the credits. After the promise that 'No actual Delta Force Operatives were harmed in this production,' it'll play out in audio form.



abandonware

DVD ONLY



Kosta Krauth's monthly focus on abandonware games and utilities

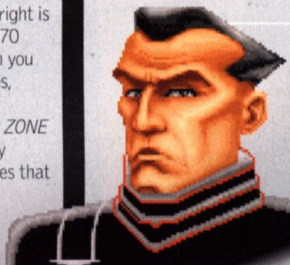
What is abandonware?

Abandonware is computer software that is no longer being sold or supported by its copyright holder, such as the classic sci-fi RPG shooter *System Shock 2*. However, game copyright is protected by law for 70 years, so even though you can't buy these games, downloading them is technically illegal. PC ZONE doesn't condone filthy criminals. Or even ones that have had a wash.

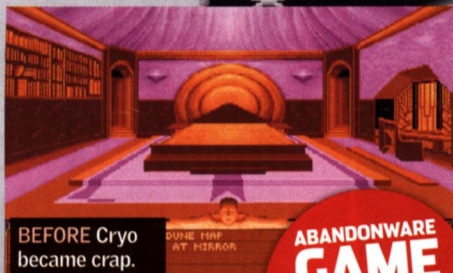
IN THE SECOND part of our series on DOSBox – an open-source DOS emulator essential for running old PC titles – we take a look at some useful shortcuts that can make fine-tuning the utility quick and easy. DOSBox has an internal CPU clock that allows each game to

use only as much CPU power as you give it. This is set by the amount of CPU Cycles, and can be seen on the program's top window bar. You can increase it by pressing CTRL+F12, or decrease with CTRL+F11. Why is this useful? Well, for example, it allows you to play very old games which would

normally run too fast, simply by decreasing the amount of CPU cycles. Clever eh?



FRANK Herbert's novel, in videogame form.



BEFORE Cryo became crap.

ABANDONWARE GAME OF THE MONTH

Dune

DEVELOPER Cryo Interactive YEAR OF RELEASE 1992



The saga about the worm-ridden sandy planet of *Dune* began back in 1965, when Frank Herbert began writing his highly-praised and successful sci-fi novels. The franchise's popularity grew with each consecutive

book, and in 1984 David Lynch turned them all into a movie, which became an instant (if confusing) cult classic.

However, in 1992, new company Cryo Interactive was looking to make a big breakthrough into the gaming scene, and chose *Dune* for its first project. Although the French developer based the visual aspects on the movie, it took a different approach when it came to

the storyline. By using only its key elements, the company managed to keep the plot focused and back it up with (at the time) breathtaking visuals in order to create one of the most engaging strategy/adventure titles ever.

The story is simple. Revolving around your character, Paul Atreides, your task is to meet the planet's natives, the Fremen, organise spice harvesting expeditions and defeat the pesky neighbours that scare your children on their way to school – the Harkonnen. But don't let this apparently simple storyline turn you away. *Dune* progresses smoothly, and before you know it, you'll find yourself immersed in the exciting world of Fremen caves and vast deserts covered with priceless spice melange. **PCZ**



Cryo Interactive was a French company that was founded in 1992 by Jean-Martial LeFranc, Rémi Herbulot and Philippe Ulrich. Prior to that, it existed as a small gaming studio called Exxos. *Dune* was Cryo's first game, and following its success the company released *KGB*, *Dragon Lore*, *MegaRace* and many more. In the four years to come, it managed to publish and produce over 40 games (most of them shit, it has to be said – apart from that dinosaur adventure thingy *Lost Eden*), as well as expand to Belgium and Holland by acquiring Homestart. However, the company's policy of churning out sub-standard games finally caught up with it, and in 2002 it declared itself bankrupt. Cryo's subsidiary, DreamCatcher Interactive, remains in business.

You can check out Kosta's abandonware website at www.abandonia.com



HOW TO...

Make a game **PART THREE**

Dan Marshall finds things getting serious...



THIS MONTH, THERE'S been a defining moment in my progress from layabout gamer to indie developer, in that I've been feeling a little bit like both Clark Kent and Superman. From 9-to-5, I've been leading my normal, everyday, humdrum existence. But I've got a cool secret: for when Eric eats a banana, he writes computer games.

There I was, sitting in the dullest meeting of my life – my mind was clearly on other things, namely my superhero lifestyle outside of work. Before I knew it, my boss was questioning me on the intricate design for a futuristic weapon I'd doodled on the pad in front of me. This, believe me, is not an easy situation to get yourself out of, and suffice it to say I no longer work for this company...

On the plus side, unemployment means progress on *Gibbage* has come thick and fast this month. The cyber-world I've created now has definite rules: gravity, friction, momentum and other such words I haven't had to think about since my GCSEs. It turns out that physics, the subject we all ignored at school, is actually surprisingly useful. If only they'd taught it to me from a gaming point of view, I might have understood vectors, velocity and centrifugal forces – not to mention why green barrels are as prone to popping as a hamster in a microwave. It also turns out that writing a game isn't quite the slacker's paradise I'd anticipated, in that I've found I need to have a grasp of even the most demanding of subjects, including art.

BUT IS IT ART?

Yes, I've also spent a great deal of time recently on the design and animation of the characters, and I can safely say that after just three months, certain visual aspects of

Gibbage are finally somewhat on a par with mid-1990s titles such as *Heart Of Darkness*.

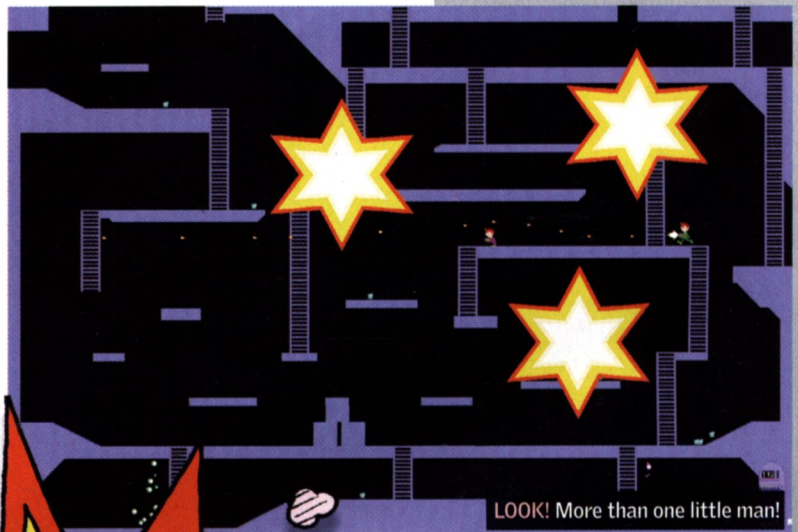
Now, I know what you're thinking: Dan, there's still no actual game. Beautiful though it is, playing *Gibbage* is akin to wandering around in *Morrowind*. It's an intricate universe, granted, but there's nigh-on naff-all of interest to do. But think about it – all I have to do now is add a second character and you've pretty much got *Quake III*. Albeit in two dimensions – which is how the gods always intended videogames to be in the first place, right?

Quicker than a university student can say 'plagiarism', I'd copied and pasted the code for my character and voilà: *Gibbage's* population had been upped to two. All of a sudden, I found myself sitting in front of a playable game. Something infinitely more exciting than both *Pong* and *Space Invaders*. It's finally happened: I have created a game. Man, I am so goddamned cool – now all I need to do is make the main characters women so I can have my own booth babes at E3 next year... **PCZ**

Animation is an arse

Hurry up, hurry up, I'm soddin' bustin'...

You've got to hand it to Disney. Although much of the mega-corporation's recent output has been a bit rubbish (apart from the Pixar-created stuff), it's certainly got animation down to a T, and I have a new-found respect for that. This month, I've been struggling to make my character run convincingly – why not try it yourself? I guarantee it'll just look like a fat man waddling in a hurry because he desperately needs a poo. Now there's an idea for a game...



LOOK! More than one little man!

Need:

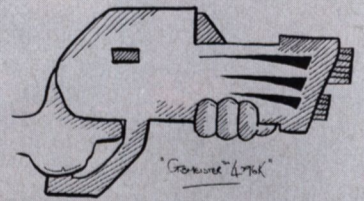
To be unemployed
To spend plenty of time playing...
Uh... 'Research material' like *Unreal Tourney*.
God-like patience

Time:

Six months

What you'll get:

- A playable game! ✓
- Something more exciting than *Pong* ✓
- Blood, violence and gibs-a plenty ✗
- Something that gives *Unreal Engine 3* a run for its money ✗



If you want more...

www.gamedev.net

An excellent site for beginners, where you can ask as many stupid questions as you like without getting flamed.

www.gamasutra.com

This isn't programming-based as such, but has tons of articles on game design and concepting. For when you're feeling bogged down in code and need to step back.

www.indiegamer.com

Business-slanted, but some important threads nevertheless.



**BOTH OUT
4th NOVEMBER**

88% "Fire Emblem:
Sacred Stones is a rare
and beautiful thing."

NOM Magazine

87% "A must have GBA title."

Gamesmaster Magazine



GAME BOY ADVANCE SP™

89% "One of the most
rewarding experiences
you will come across."

NGC Magazine

87% "An immensely
enjoyable game."

RPG Fan Website



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STEVE HILL'S NeverQuest



The *Guild Wars* odyssey takes a sinister turn...

RULE NUMBER ONE: be careful what you wish for. If you're a regular reader, you'll be aware that I am touring the badlands of *Guild Wars* under my own name, in the vague hope that I can meet up with some 'fans' and have a rare old time smiting the hordes of Ascalon. Thus far, I have had this much response: no response at all. Until one fateful night, when the following exchange took place:

Lady Elle Semell: "Mr Hill! I stole my brother's *PC ZONE* mag and read the NeverQuest article... Thought I'd say hi."

Steve Hill: "Hello. Where are you? Come and join my party."

L: "I'm in Yak's bend. So where are you then, still in the pretty green prelude? My name is Ellen by the way."

S: "I'm Steve, but you probably knew that."

L: "Well, yes. You looked lovely with face paints and a sniper rifle."

S: "We can do a quest or something. I need something to write about."

L: "Oh good. What level are you?"

S: "Four."

L: "Ooer, not been playing much have you?"

S: "No. Other things to do. I only play when deadline is close."

L: "Ah yes, the life of a real person. I only play when I'm not at uni."

S: "Which uni?"

L: "Durham. Don't freak out though, I'm not posh or rich."

S: "Or play rugby?"

L: "Hehe, no. I'm a very small girl, rugby would break me."

S: "But you're not there now, so where are you?"

L: "I'm at home with my parents in Huddersfield."

S: "And you're playing *Guild Wars* on a Saturday night..."

L: "I'm not a boring person, honest."

S: "I believe you."

L: "Well, there's not a lot to come here for. We have a nice cinema."

S: "So your brother reads *PC ZONE*?"

L: "Yes, and then me and my Dad fight over it when he's finished reading it."

S: "Cool, what's your favourite bit?"

L: "Dunno, the reviews I guess."

S: "Right. What you should have said is NeverQuest."

L: "Oh sorry, ahem, NeverQuest. The writer is a genius. Such wit."

S: "Flattery will get you everywhere."

L: "Well in that case, you're the best person working on the mag, Mr Hunky Writer,

Mr Wonderful. Aha, I found you. Woo and yay."

S: "Looking good. Do you look like that in real life?"

L: "Well, I'm very short and skinny with long

red curly hair. So... Ish."

S: "Interesting."

L: "I'm not wearing stockings at the moment though."

S: "Me neither."

L: "Damn, spoil my mental picture of you now."

S: "Sorry."

L: "Just tell me there's a feather boa somewhere and I'll be happy."

S: "Can't help there I'm afraid."

L: "Boo. Gimp mask?"

S: "Is that what you're into?"

L: "No, but it made me chuckle. Although someone bought me a whip for my 20th birthday, along with a spacehopper."

S: "Used it yet?"

L: "Only when my brother wouldn't give me his PC mag. Well, I did on my birthday, down the street, until I fell off and hurt my bum."

S: "Got any pictures?"

L: "Hehe, I think my friend might have. It's quite hard to ride a spacehopper one-handed. I wasn't even drunk."

S: "Can you pose for a screenshot?"

L: "Want me to do anything?"

S: "Dance bitch. Sorry."

L: "Hehe (starts dancing)."

S: "Take your top off. Sorry."

L: "lol (takes top off)."

S: "Wow, this is great."

L: "That better for a screenie?"

S: "Certainly is. Can you bend over or anything?"

L: "(bends over with cape obscuring arse) The cape is in the way. Ooer, I'm holding my knickers."

S: "Bend over again. I take it the rest of the clothes don't come off."

L: "Unfortunately not. This is my favourite colour, but I generally wear clothes on top of it. However, if you buy me some boots like these, I'll gladly wander round in them with fishnet stockings. I have butterflies on my knickers and Winnie The Pooh socks too. They were in my Xmas stocking."

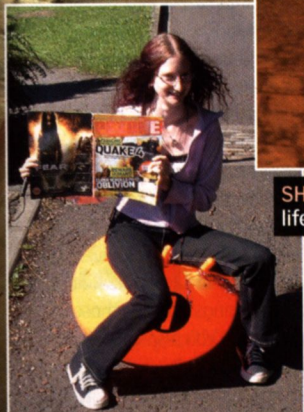
S: "Are you drunk?"

L: "Nope, Robinson's Summer Fruits squash is non-alcoholic. Do you think I'm rather strange?"

S: "Are you going to become my stalker?"

L: "Only if you want me to be."

S: "I'll see." **PCZ**



SHOCKING! Ellen in real life and computer form.

I have butterflies on my knickers and Winnie The Pooh socks too...



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IN THE BOX

- Splinter Cell
- Rainbow Six Rogue Spear Platinum Pack Edition
- Rainbow Six Rogue Spear – Black Thorn
- Ghost Recon



ANYONE CAN WRITE like Tom Clancy, it's easy. You just spend pages and pages reciting the technical specifications of a really modern piece of military hardware, throw in some dubious conspiracy-wielding politicos, stick some commies/terrorists/cyber-criminals into the mix and then have a virtuous more-moral-than-Ghandi hero capable of being played by Harrison Ford at the centre of it all. The conspiracy has to go All The Way To The Top™. Then you list some more specs about stealth planes or submarines and then everything blows up. The end. Sign the movie deal, build another garage to store all the cash and pose for the dust jacket in a pilot's jacket and some over-sized sunglasses. Easy really.

Tom Clancy games follow a similar path. They started out as a series of specialist-interest tactical strategy titles with a touch of shooting thrown in for good measure. Since then, they've spawned into a series of console-platform accessible action titles, just as Clancy's books seem to have travelled along a path of increasingly paranoid, hardly taxing techno-thrillers, not even penned by the man himself, with Tom promoted/relegated to a 'Presented by' credit.

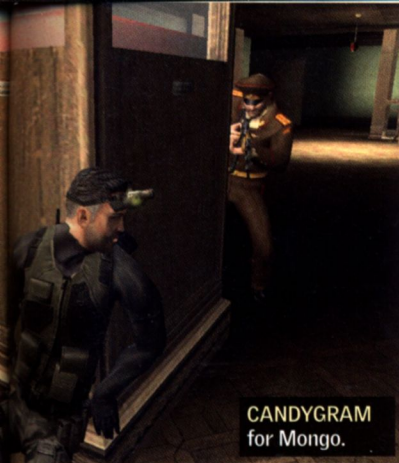
The *Tom Clancy's Collectors Edition* pack focuses on four (well, three and an

expansion pack) tales of terrorist takedown, from back when the Clancy name still stood for meaty, hardcore entertainment. The earliest of the bunch is *Rainbow Six's* sequel, *Rogue Spear* and its *Black Thorn* add-on and both, surprisingly, stand up well by today's standards. Certainly the visuals have aged worse than a '70s sitcom, but the appeal is still there, mostly down to the solid gameplay structure.

TERROR WRISTS

Because this isn't a basic, all-guns blazing affair, but a game that requires you to slow things down, creep around every corner and make every shot count, it automatically creates a tense atmosphere that draws you in and holds you there. Plus, because you've spent hours planning your assault beforehand, when it all goes wrong, the emotional investment is far greater and you become far more obsessed with getting it right next time.

The Platinum edition of *Rogue Spear* included here comes with the *Urban Operations* add-on pack and gives you over 30 missions to tackle, as well as an editor to mix things up once those have been completed. You also get five of the original *Rainbow Six* levels to try out for a sense of novelty. On top of that, *Black Thorn* throws a further nine missions



CANDYGRAM for Mongo.

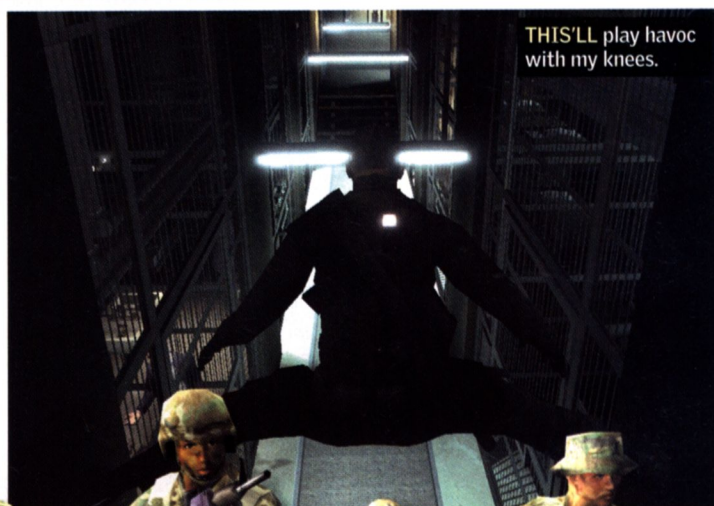
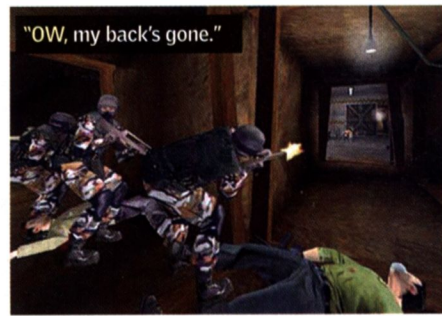
Also available... This isn't the first time *Splinter Cell* has snuck down the 'special edition' route...



A lovely padded wallet accompanied Sam Fisher's last sojourn into the world of added extras, presumably so that if he dropped it, it wouldn't make any noise and blow his hi-tech game of hide and seek. As well as the game, you got extra levels (Kola Cell, Vselka 1 and 2) and several bonus trailers, cinematics and a fun 'interview' with Sam Fisher in the Ubisoft office. And of course, a presentation case 'fold out' package for the CDs, which always looks good on the shelf.



GHOST-busting, Tom Clancy style.



(something about a terrorist copycat) and a major enhancement of the multiplayer game (quite good, it has to be said).

G-G-G-GHOSTS

Ghost Recon, meanwhile, was an attempt to take the terrorist hunting scenario in a slightly more militaristic direction. It's the near future and an elite section of the US Army has to stop those pesky commies (keep the fight alive, comrade) from gaining power in Russia again. It's different from the *Rainbow Six* series, both in the more pro-active nature of your missions and in the more immediately tactical nature of the gameplay mechanics. Each of your four-man squad has a different speciality and the key to success in each mission is in how well you utilise them all at the same time.

A quality title in fact and, much like the *Rogue Spears*, much of the appeal

stood the test of time too well, but it's still perfectly playable and serves as a decent warm-up to the incredibly impressive-looking *Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter* just on the horizon.

SNEAKY FELLER

Easily the standout title in the package is *Splinter Cell*, although it's also the one most at odds with the hardcore nature of the rest of the pack. When this first arrived back in 2002, it raised the bar for sneaky, stealthy, shadowy action. Far more 'action movie' based than the other games here, it's also the one that stands up best today, with a graphics engine that still impresses with its subtle depictions of light and shadow, and believable animation all present and correct.

In all, this is a decent package of action strategy and well worth it if you



THE RAVAGES OF TIME

SWAT 4	1st
GHOST RECON	2nd
RAINBOW SIX: ROGUE SPEAR	3rd

While all these titles still hold up in a gaming sense, VU Games' *SWAT 4* is the current market leader in terms of squad-based tactical action.

The visuals have aged worse than a '70s sitcom, but the appeal's still there

comes in the softly, softly tactical nature of the action. *Ghost Recon* is slightly more gung-ho than its stablemate, but none the worse for it. Again, the visuals haven't

haven't got at least half of the titles included. That said, you can't help feeling there's a missed opportunity to add some real 'collector's edition' material.

Developer interviews, behind-the-scenes footage, artwork, documentaries on real military/counter-terrorist units – even one of Mr Clancy's books would have spiced things up a little. Come on people, let's show some thought shall we? **PCZ**

SUPERTEST

FILM-BASED GAMES

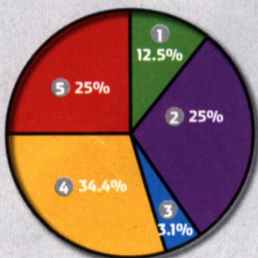
Hooray for Hollywood as *PC ZONE* shuffles along the cinema aisles clutching hotdogs, popcorn buckets and cups of Kia-Ora

DVD ONLY



YOUR VIEW

Last month's subject: scary games. So, which game made you scream like a girl the most?



F.E.A.R. 1

HALF-LIFE 2 2

DOOM 3 3

THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS 4

ALIENS VERSUS PREDATOR 5

Spudy2000:

"Thief just because I played the Cradle level late on a Sunday night, and after getting half way through it I saved and turned off the game. I waited until morning when it was bright and I wasn't alone to finish it. AND I'M MAN ENOUGH TO ADMIT IT!"

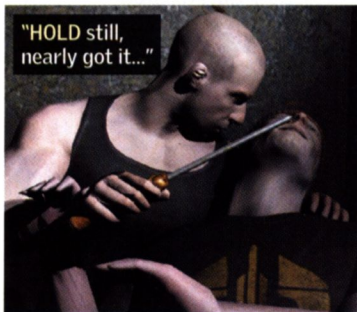
TheTingler: "I must take issue with the bigging-up of *Half-Life 2*'s scariness. It's not in any way scary. It's great, it's wonderful, it's the best shooter available, but it's NOT scary."

Frosty440: "Scariest game ever? *Pong!* Remember the fear that gripped you as you realised you weren't going to get there in time, the terror you felt as the innocent little ball disappeared into oblivion off the edge of the screen?"

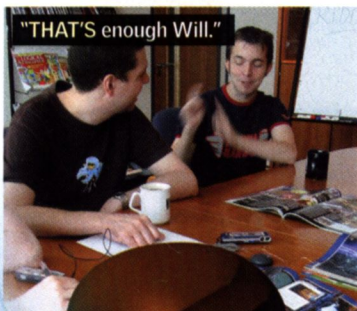
Righteous_Fury: "I was listening to the Supertest and I thought they were saying *FIFA*, not *Thief*. Although maybe *FIFA* should get a mention - Ronaldinho AND Rooney on the front cover?"



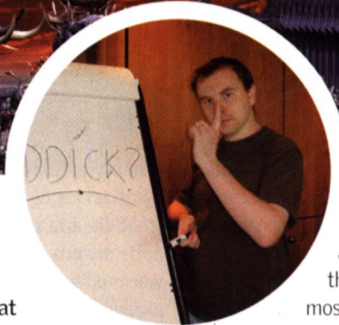
JOLLY ZONE japes!



"HOLD still, nearly got it..."



"THAT'S enough Will."



IS it just us, or is that about to crap on Prez's head?

A TRIP TO the pictures this month (appropriate, given that *The Movies* will soon be upon us), as we rate the best of the recent batch of film-based games.

Under our withering critical gaze, were fanboy favourite *Lego Star Wars*, EA cash-ins *LOTR: The Battle For*

ignores that rule and votes for the one they enjoyed playing the most. One day we'll do this properly. One day...

As well as discussing the merits of these fine film-based games (and *The Punisher*), this month also sees the Supertesting debut of *PC ZONE*'s freshest face, Steve 'Escaped_Monkey'

As always, everyone just votes for the one they liked playing the most

Middle-earth and *Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban*. We also considered Vin Diesel vehicle and winner of every Silliest Game Name award going, *The Chronicles Of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay*, and finally, just for good measure (and because nobody wanted to sully themselves by playing *Catwoman*) we looked at *The Punisher*. As always, it's not which is the best game, but which, in this case, is the most faithful interpretation of the film it's based on. And as always everyone just

Hogarty. Sweating under the pressure and filled with first-time performance anxiety, Steve was a bit nervous too (ooh no, madam).

As has rapidly become the norm now, once you've finished listening to us prattle on about god knows what, you can have your say on these weighty issues by logging on to the reader forums at www.pczone.co.uk and clicking on the 'Supertest 161' thread found therein. Vote for your favourite of the five, leave a comment justifying your choice and we'll print the results next issue. Last month it was scary games, and you can see the results over to the left. **PCZ**

PC DVD

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DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY

CITY OF HEROES

We talk to the man who makes sure that every hero in his game is just super...



WHAT GOES THROUGH the minds of the creators of your favourite games? This month, we sit down and go through the super-powered MMO of choice with Cryptic Studios' creative director, Jack 'Statesman' Emmert...

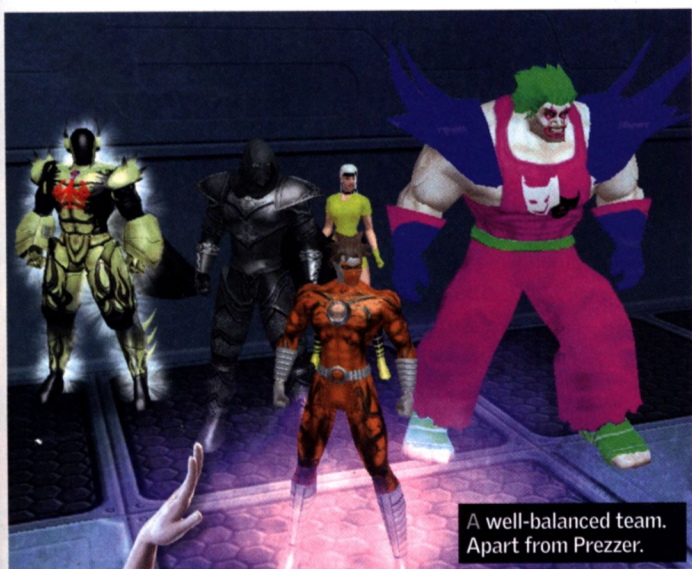


01 **CONCEPT:** "The superhero theme wasn't my idea to begin with. Rick Dakan, one of our founders and Michael Lewis, our original investor, thought MMOs were great and they thought it'd be natural to do a superhero game. Good ideas are nearly always the most obvious, but when trying to market the game nearly every publisher turned us down. We only found two takers, one of which was NCsoft."

We were extremely aware of copyright issues, so there's no big 'S', no bat symbols and no spider insignias

Jack Emmert, creative director

02 COSTUMES: "We planned the costume creation tool from the start – we had guys working on that from day one. No two heroes look the same and that was what we aimed for. We were extremely aware of copyright issues – I know a lot about comics – and there are things that I specifically made sure weren't in there. You'll notice there are no web patterns or spider insignias; those are things I didn't allow. Typically, there's no big 'S', there are no bat symbols: we deliberately avoided them."

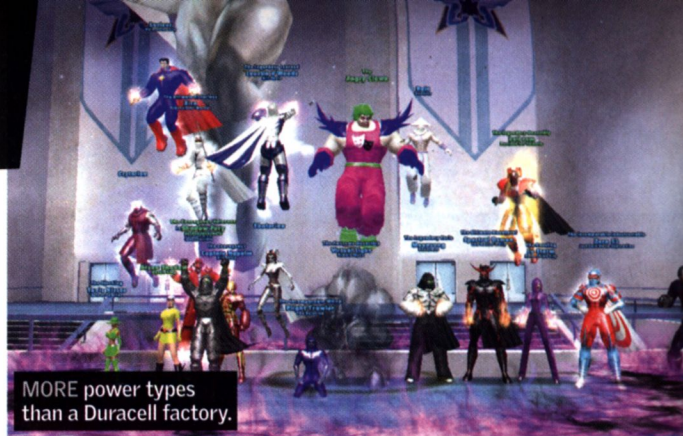


03 CHARACTER ARCHETYPES: "I took a look at characters from comic-books, novels and movies, and wrote down their capabilities. I ended up with several hundred and so I started looking for categories such as what role they fill, what they do and how they act. Once I'd figured out the categories, the archetypes began to fall into place. There are two archetypes which are extremely common: one is the speedster and the other is the guy with wings. We decided to make super-speed a travel power instead of making it an archetype in itself, and we decided to allow everyone to fly."



LOOKINGBACKCOMMENTARY

04 POWERS: "We'll never reach the point at which we've added enough powers. There are a list which I feel are a part of the comic-book universe, and I want to cover them. Off the top of my head there are shields, magnetism, pistols and staffs, various underwater abilities, pets and so on. There are powers which wouldn't work in the game: shrinking and growing for example, they just wouldn't make any sense. Shrinking would be another form of invisibility and growing is impossible as you wouldn't be able to move around, but those are staples of comics that we had no way of recreating. We'd like to add new powers with the expansions we do; every four or five months we plan to add two or three new sets."



MORE power types than a Duracell factory.



THE rejected Trafalgar Square statue showed its displeasure.



GOD, I've got such a headache.



THE barbecue got a touch out of hand.



"NO, I'm not talking till you apologise. I haven't put on weight..."

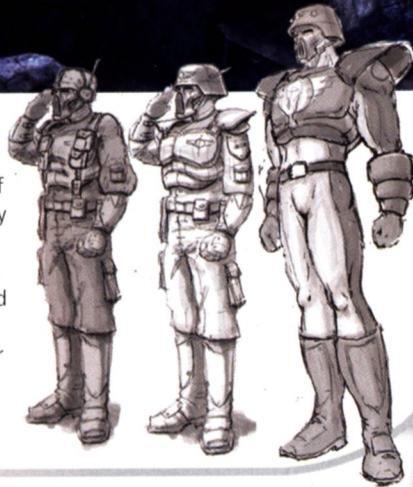
05 SIDEKICKS: "The sidekick feature was implemented pretty early; I was particularly frustrated with my inability to venture with my higher-level friends because they played more than I did. It just seemed natural; a good, innovative idea at the time. The players definitely use it more than I thought they would, and they abuse it more than I thought they would too, which leads to some unforeseen realities. The fact that other games like *Dark Age Of Camelot* have adopted the sidekick system was a huge compliment."





COH was almost dead before it was born.

06 DESIGN CHANGE: "COH underwent a significant design change once. We were about two-and-a-half years into development, we only had one city zone, one villain group, a handful of powers and we just hadn't made progress. We were badly organised and we'd really mismanaged our resources, so we cleaned house: two of the founders left, Michael Lewis our investor came in and applied some discipline and we redesigned the entire game from that point. We'd wasted two years of development."



BEWARE the power of Captain Hood Ornament!

07 VEHICLES: "The problem with having vehicles is that, let's say you have a car, what would you do with it? You'd want to drive, but our zones aren't that big. If there were 50 people with cars, they'd be running into each other all the time. You'd have to design the entire game just to be able to use cars, and that would be a significant effort which I'm not really sure is needed in the game. I'd like to do them, but we're not ready to think about it at the moment."

08 PARAGON CITY: "Comic-books always focus on a single city. Batman has Gotham City, Superman has Metropolis, The Flash has Central City and so on. Superheroes are tied to their urban environment, so setting COH in a single-city world made sense."

A million stories in the naked city. Most about hitting criminals to level up.



09 CITY OF VILLAINS "The more points you earn throughout COV, the more things you can get for your base, things like teleporters and hospitals - no torture devices though! We couldn't get past the ratings boards with those. We didn't find the ratings restrictive though, as I had no interest in creating a game where you can randomly kill people; as long as you don't have that, you can avoid the 'mature' rating. You can't go and kill some man in the street; it just isn't the game I wanted to make. There are many other fun games which allow you to do that and that's great, but I wanted to create comic-book villains which are in comics today and were in comics 20 years ago." **PC7**



JON HARE

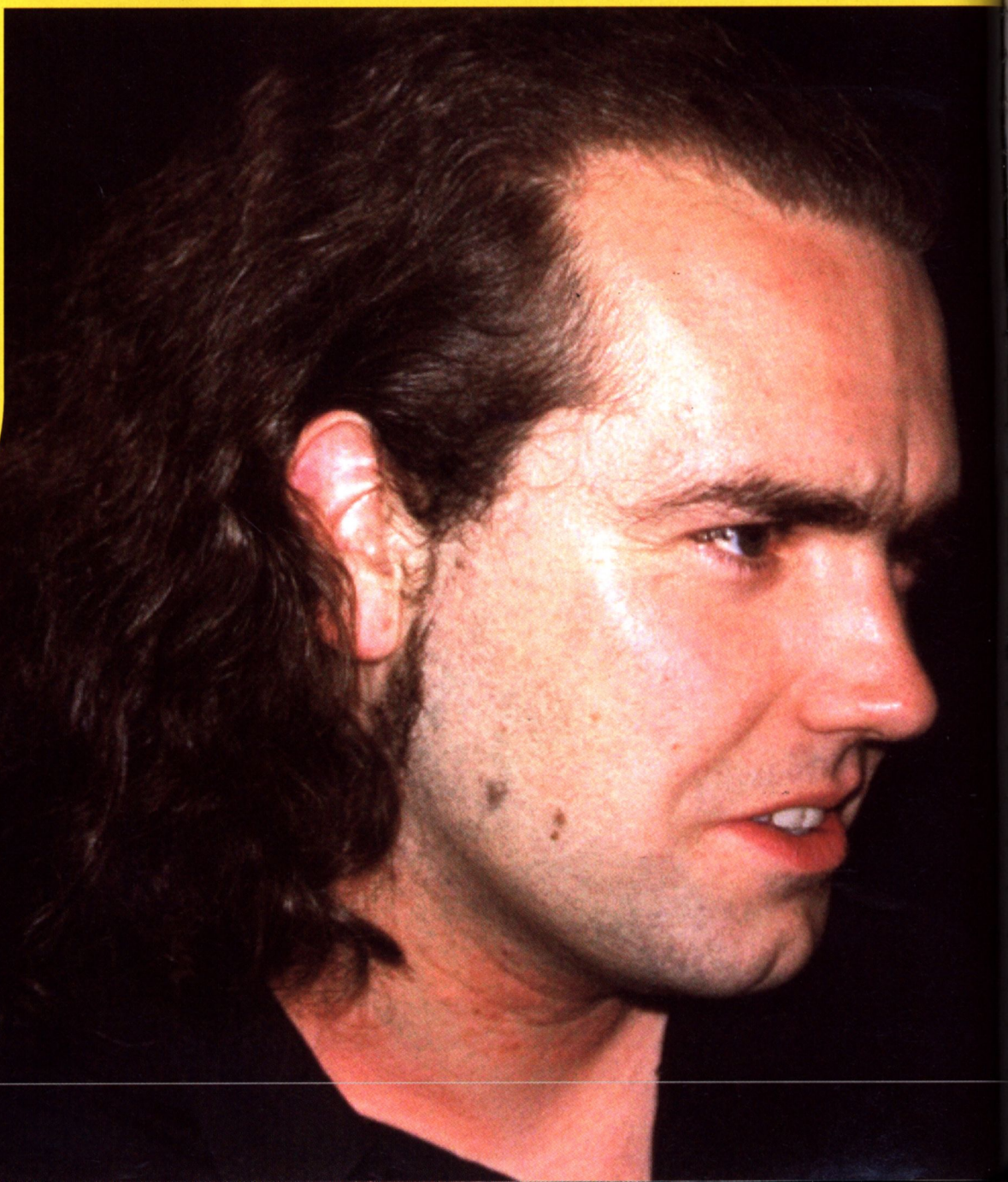
PC ZONE plays table football with the creator of the classic footy game *Sensible Soccer*

Why Do We Care?

Jon Hare was the main man behind *Sensible Software*, the British developer that ruled the gaming world in the early '90s. Hare is most famous for *Sensible Soccer* – the first great arcadey kickabout. *Sensible Software* also produced another mega-hit in *Cannon Fodder*. He's also notorious for developing a game known as *Sex, Drugs & Rock 'n' Roll*, which was unfortunately never released.

What's He Doing Now?

Hare is running a mobile phone games company with Mike Montgomery and John Phillips from The Bitmap Brothers. *Sensible Soccer*, his first mobile game, came out at the end of last year (a top-seller) and *Cannon Fodder* has just been released. He's also games consulting, recently on *GameTrak: Real World Golf*.



Remember This?

SENSIBLE SOCCER

Sensible SOCCER

AH, the title screen of *Sensible Soccer*. 'Tis a 16-bit thing of beauty. The excitement starts to build from this moment on...

THE teams proudly scuttle onto the pitch, the collection of tiny footy players in authentic strips meaning a match is about to kick off.

AN early break, as you deliver a beautiful lifted through-ball, then pull back on a joystick to give the pass its height.

YOU dribble the ball past several players and shoot, bending the flight of the ball by moving the joystick to the left. Gooooaaaaaallll!

Q How did you get into the games industry?

A I went to the same school as fellow Sensible Software founder Chris Yates. We both dropped out of college and got into computers. Chris did a little demo of Snoopy playing in a kennel and got a job with LT Software, but he was struggling with the graphics. Having done art at school, I started helping him out and LT Software offered me some work on a game called *Twister*. Soon we discovered that our employers were taking 80 per cent of the money for doing f*** all, so we decided to set up ourselves.

So why 'Sensible' Software?

The name was Chris's idea, although we can't remember how it came about. We started working on a demo for the Commodore 64 that would eventually become *Parallax*. We took the game to Ocean Software, the first company we'd seen and they signed us up. They gave us a cheque for a grand, and a contract, that in retrospect, was diabolical. We smoked cigars on the train back to celebrate. In the end, we made three games for Ocean: *Parallax*, *Wizball* and *Wizkid*.

How did you get the idea for *Sensible Soccer*?

We did *Microprose Soccer*, which was the best sports game around at the time and the kernel for *Sensible Soccer*. Chris Chapman and I had put in a lot of late nights on *Mega Lo Mania*, and during our breaks we'd play a lot of Dino Dini's *Kick Off* and *Kick Off 2*. We really enjoyed the games, but there were some irritating niggles which ruined them. So, towards the end of *Mega Lo*

Mania we decided to have some fun by dressing the players up in football kits, in what would become the *Sensible Soccer* style. *Sensible Soccer* is basically *Mega Lo Mania* in football kits; that's why they have big hair and stuff – they're cavemen in kit.

Just like Rooney then?

Yes! Chris Chapman knocked up some clothes, made a pitch and got some gameplay going, all in two months – it was brilliant. Everything just seemed to work right away. We'd found a formula that from that point on we didn't tamper with because the gameplay was just magic.

When *Cannon Fodder* was released, were there complaints about the poppy on the cover?

Yeah, the British Legion said they weren't happy with the moral aspect of us using the poppy in a game. If they'd played it, they'd understand there's an underlying message about how war is bad, and the expendability of your soldiers shows this. They've all got names and their own gravestones – it was a subtle message.



Why was *Sex, Drugs & Rock 'n' Roll* never finished?

With *Sex, Drugs & Rock 'n' Roll*, we signed with Warners and it paid us a seven-figure sum. It wasn't some pipe-dream idea. However, Warners wanted control – it wanted us to change cocaine to 'space dust' and stuff like that. The game was like *Leisure Suit Larry* but didn't pull its punches, so you could go shag women, snort cocaine and tell somebody to f*** off. I'd written 1,500 pages of script and we were about 75 per cent finished when we ran into problems. We needed Warners to drop the game so we could let staff go. It was a huge financial relief when it did.

Where did Sensible Software go wrong?

We probably got a bit greedy. We used the same engine for *Sensible Golf* and *Cannon Fodder 2*, and both games suffered because of it. We were 3D virgins and we totally underestimated the knowledge and manpower needed. We'd moved into a huge, modern office – at one point there was just myself and Chris there. We used to play cricket with an Amstrad computer as a bat, the box as a wicket and a rolled up ball of masking tape for the ball!

Which games would you consider to be your best?

Sensible Soccer obviously, the last version of *SWOS* on the Amiga. I liked *Wizkid* a lot too. That was the kind of direction we wanted to go in – if you look at our games, we always tried to do safe stuff and adventurous stuff. Unfortunately, that's a direction the industry just doesn't want to go in now. **PCZ**



WRITING and playing music. "I'm a big Rush fan."



FOOTBALL – he plays and watches his team Norwich City.



COOKING – Jon loves a good British Sunday roast.

We used to play cricket with an Amstrad computer as a bat and the box as a wicket...

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ON SALE THURSDAY 10 NOVEMBER!

DOMINIK DIAMOND

Great news this month, as for the first time in my life I'm being paid to wank off! And there was me thinking I'd have to wait until I got a column in *The Guardian* for that...

I've always wanted to decorate Jenna's interior, but this is completely different

COMPUTER PORN IS responsible for many evils: one being that you never find porn mags in the woods now. In days of yore, the local forest was awash with gaily-coloured introductions to the adult world, torn up in such a way that you really couldn't work out if it was a moustache or a mons veneris you were gazing lustily upon. Now it's all discarded laptops with torn-up screens.

Well, if you can't beat 'em, beat off to 'em. So I thought I'd see how my (attention: product placement) Alienware PC with NEC monitor handled a bit of truly hardcore gaming action with *Virtually Jenna*. The problem is masturbation is not a spectator sport. And I'm not alone.

I'm filming a show called *At Home With The Diamonds* for Discovery. Being billed as *Grand Designs* meets *The Osbournes*, it involves me and Mrs D rebuilding our house while shouting at each other. Builders and cameramen litter the house, which makes watching porn problematic.

So I tell the director I have a bit of serious writing to do, nip off to my office and boot up *Jenna*.

The game gives me two options at the start: "Do you wanna take the nice tour? Or do you just wanna f*** me." I opt for 'gentleman' rather than John Leslie and am launched into a basic tutorial of how to drag a plastic object in and out of a lady's mouth. "Give it to me baby" she exorts. "But I might chip your teeth!" I squeal. At this point the director pops his head in the door without knocking. "Ready for a quick shot?" he asks as I hurl a coat over the screen. He's obviously a mind-reader.

LAYING PIPE

Half an hour and a scene of me moaning about a quarter-inch of chrome wastepipe later, and I'm back. "I bet you can't wait to f*** me!" exorts Jenna. I haven't heard a sentence like that since Zoe Ball appeared on *Gamesmaster*. And sadly that was what I said to her.

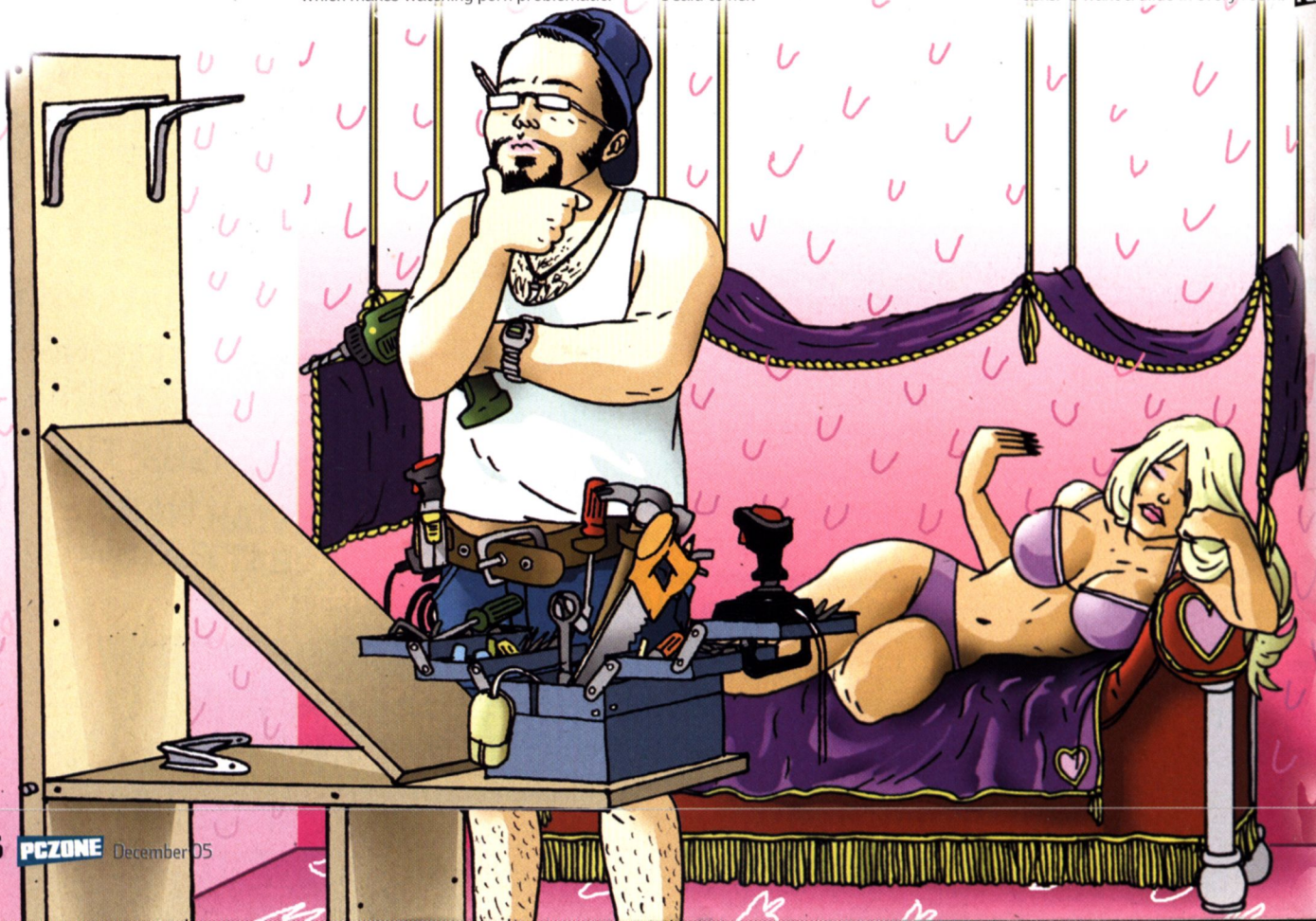
Then the amazing happens. I start to get turned on. It's at the point I'm told to hold down the left mouse-button so I can rotate around her nipple, and I notice she has a cracking apartment.

The more I fiddle with Jenna, the more I'm distracted by her building work. She has exposed brickwork on the wall behind her pudenda. Would that work in our kitchen conversion? Laminate flooring, perlata-polished plaster walls, gargantuan uncluttered shelves. A minimalist's dream.

So, buoyed by this DIY bonus, I google 'Interactive Adult Games' and find *3D Sex Villa*. *Sex Villa* also has laminated flooring! This time with a dovetail pattern!

I see exposed wood, but on her walls rather than poking out of my pants. I've always wanted to decorate Jenna's interior, but this is something entirely different.

I run up to the director and gasp: "I've been inspired by *Virtually Jenna* - I want to change the whole design!" "To what?" he asks. "I want a dildo in every room!" **PCZ**

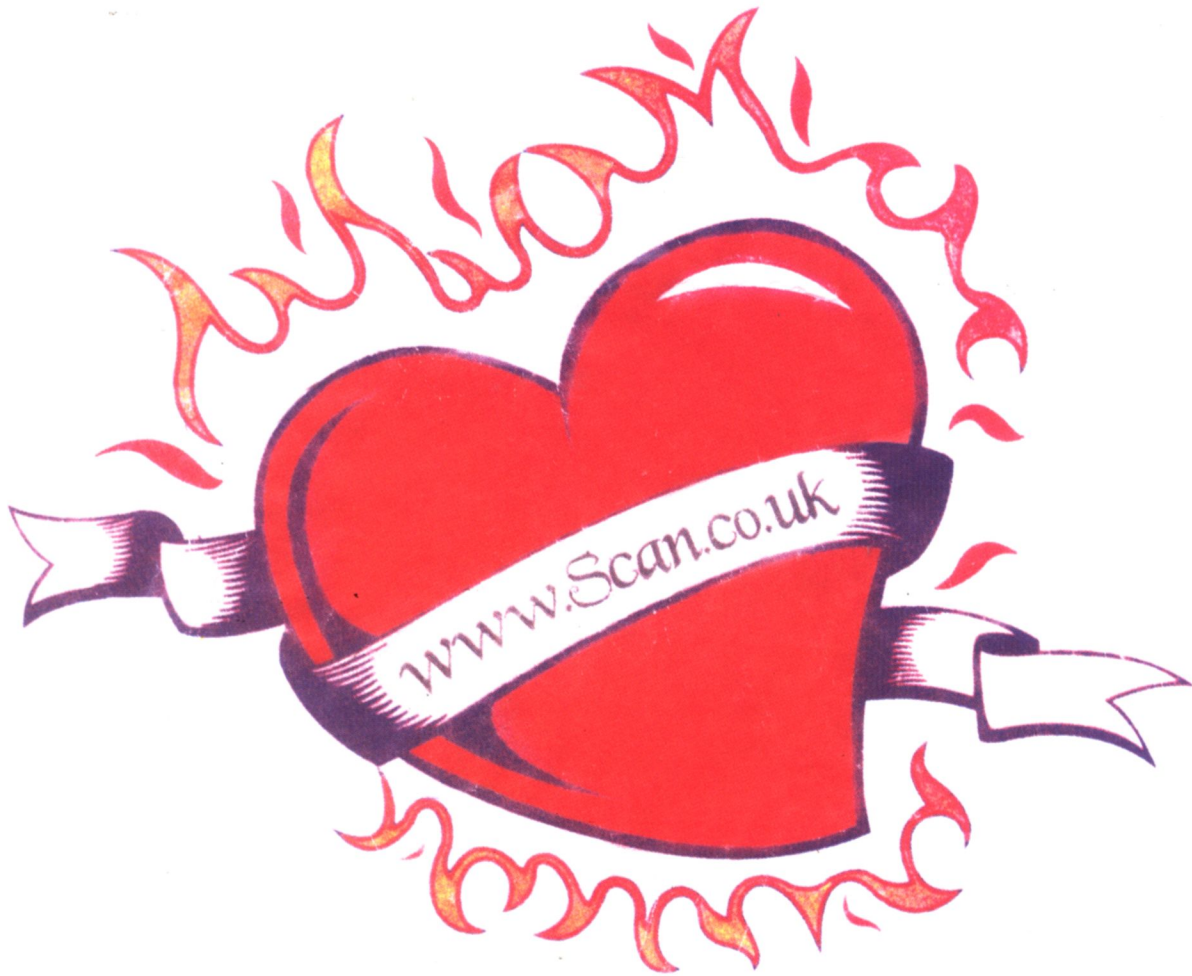


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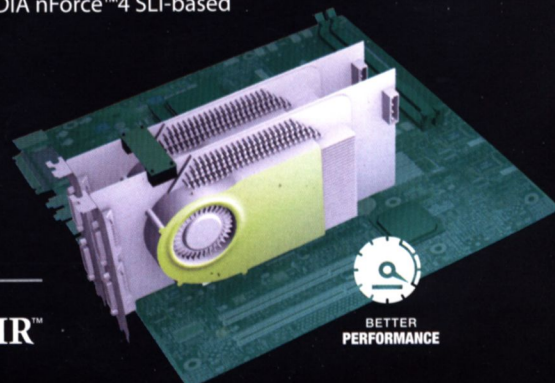
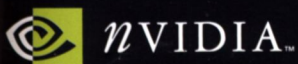
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